

Carroll County, Maryland

State of the
COUNTY
2009



A great place to live, work, and play!

*C*arroll County boasts a longstanding conservative approach to the way taxpayers' money is spent.

Over the past few years, when the housing bubble boosted revenues, we used that money for one-time capital projects. For example, we repaired bridges and upgraded the Freedom Water Treatment Plant. Other areas put revenues into programs and services instead, which created ongoing expenses. Our approach has made it easier – not painless, but easier – to address the challenges we face today.

The financial processes we put in place have been recognized nationally, both at the budgeting stage and at the year-end audit. Carroll County won the Government Finance Officers Association's distinguished budget presentation award for the current spending plan. We have to prove our proficiency, according to national guidelines, in several key areas. Our budget was assessed on how well it sets policies, outlines our financial plan and guides our operations.

In addition to the budget award, an outside auditor gave Carroll a clean report for fiscal year 2008. The unqualified opinion had no findings, questioned no costs, and identified no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses.

Our commercial/industrial base reached \$2 billion in 2008. Developers are talking with us about adding more than half a million square feet of new commercial space across the county. These developments, coupled with our history of strong financial policies and practices, led to an upgrade this fall in our bond rating by Standard and Poor's to AA+.

While the challenges faced in 2009 are significant, we are excited about the opportunities this year will bring.

Julia W. Gouge
President

Dean L. Minnich
Vice President

Michael D. Zimmer
Secretary

Bond Rating

Each year the county sells bonds to pay for a portion of the costs of capital expenses such as schools, roads, parks, and government buildings. The bonds are rated on the county's credit-worthiness and ability to repay the investors who purchase the bonds.

In November, amid a flailing national economy, Standard and Poor's upgraded Carroll County's bond rating to AA+. The firm cited our "excellent management practices with long-range planning that guides county growth and development."

Both of the other national bond rating agencies, Fitch Ratings and Moody's Investors Services, maintained their high evaluations of the county, as well, issuing AA+ and Aa2 ratings, respectively.

As a result, the county's interest rate was 4.369 percent on the \$80,000,000 in bonds it issued November 13, 2008. That was much lower than the national benchmark Bond Buyer Index, which at the time stood at 5.13 percent for similarly rated municipalities. The lower the interest rate, the less money the county must pay back over the life of the bonds.

To gain the high ratings, the Departments of the Comptroller, Economic Development, and Management and Budget presented information to the rating agencies about the county's finances, management, economy, and demographics.

In their analyses, the rating agencies commented on Carroll County's financial practices.

*"Carroll County's financial position remains strong, bolstered by established and well-adhered to fiscal policies and long-term planning."
~ S&P's analysts*

"The Aa2 rating reflects the county's sound financial position, characterized by comprehensive fiscal policies, satisfactory fund balance levels, and an affordable debt position." ~ Moody's analysts

Fitch was impressed by Carroll's steady tax base, "Fitch expects that the county's debt burden will remain manageable given steady tax base and population growth, extensive pay-as-you-go funding, and rapid retirement of existing debt." ~ Fitch press release

The impartial judging panel said Carroll's annual report met high standards, including demonstrating a "spirit of full disclosure" to communicate clearly the county's financial story.

2008 by the numbers



Agriculture

- ▶ Acres of ag land preserved in 2008: 2,465
- ▶ Acres of ag land preserved (total): 53,764
- ▶ Carroll's national ranking for total preserved acres of farmland: 5th

Money

- ▶ Job Growth from 2006 to 2007: 2.1%
- ▶ Job growth since 2002: 13.7% (region grew 4.7%; state 4.9%)
- ▶ Unemployment rate as of November 2008: 4.5%
- ▶ Growth of commercial and industrial real property assessed value: nearly 10% (Since FY04, it has grown by 58%)
- ▶ Vacancy rates of property: commercial 6.75%; industrial 8.7%
- ▶ Tax base: \$17,902,568,898 in FY08
- ▶ Real estate tax bills issued: 63,500
- ▶ Percent of property taxes collected by year's end: 99.45%
- ▶ Federal, state & other grant funds secured: \$12,025,408
- ▶ Money saved by buying power through co-op: \$367,768
- ▶ Cost avoidance by re-funding bonds: \$1,091,154
- ▶ Number of consecutive years Carroll has earned national excellence awards for its annual financial report: 23

Roads

- ▶ Miles of roadway cleared of snow and ice: more than 970
- ▶ Bridges maintained by county: 139
- ▶ Miles of centerlines painted on roads: 600

- ▶ Fuel costs saved over 2 months using Fuelman cards when contracted price was higher: \$54,080
- ▶ Tons of asphalt placed on county roads in 2008: 85,300
- ▶ Percent of complaints resolved within 5 days by construction inspection division: 98%
- ▶ Miles of county roads with poor paving conditions: 22 (down from 65 in 2006)



Recreation & Park Activities

- ▶ People enrolled in recreation league programs: 44,547
- ▶ Community recreation courses offered: more than 500 in FY08
- ▶ Groups camping at Hashawha: 34 weeks of Outdoor School, 54 weekend groups, and 7 weeklong summer groups
- ▶ Visitors to Piney Run Park: 115,508
- ▶ Volunteer hours through recreation councils: 760,706
- ▶ Money raised by rec councils & reinvested in county parks: more than \$4.2 million
- ▶ Shooting enthusiasts visiting Hap Baker Firearms Facility: 6,100
- ▶ Survival rate of newly planted trees, plants at Hashawha: greater than 75%
- ▶ Public programs offered at Bear Branch Nature Center: 162
- ▶ Other Bear Branch uses: 18 birthday parties, 153 field trips, 4 summer camps
- ▶ Park facilities' costs recovered through admission & user fees: 80%
- ▶ Softball tournaments held at Sports Complex: 30
- ▶ Slow-pitch softball teams using Sports Complex: 92





Recycling

- ▶ Recycling rate: 31% in 2007
- ▶ Tons of recyclables collected curbside and from drop-off sites: 17,449
- ▶ Tons of aluminum cans sold by the Recycling Center: 31
- ▶ Tons of newspaper sold by the Recycling Center: 214
- ▶ Tons of scrap metal sold by the Recycling Center: 2,148
- ▶ Tons of electronics dropped off during special collections: more than 254
- ▶ Money generated from the sale of recyclable materials: \$326,829.13 FY08
- ▶ Number of visitors to the Swap Shop: est. 4,000 each month
- ▶ Tons of yard trimmings processed at the Northern Landfill: 10,573
- ▶ Tons of waste put into Northern Landfill in 2007: 9,160
- ▶ Tons of waste shipped out of county in 2007: 95,839
- ▶ Number of closed landfills still monitored & maintained: 5

Citizen Services

- ▶ Clients served through Citizen Services agencies: 16,704
- ▶ Money saved by residents who used the county's NACo prescription drug card: \$389,432.33 (through November).
- ▶ Average savings was 25.30%.
- ▶ Section 8 housing vouchers: 549
- ▶ Families on waiting list for Section 8 vouchers: 1,192
- ▶ Volunteer hours in senior centers: 39,312 in FY08



- ▶ Estimated value of senior volunteer time: \$804,717
- ▶ Referrals made by Get Connected Family Resource Center: 1,813



Emergency Management

- ▶ 911 calls answered: 61,140
- ▶ Money spent on physicals for volunteer fire fighters: \$295,000 in FY09
- ▶ Cost to provide paid medical personnel and drivers for the Volunteer Emergency Services Association: \$4,245,370 in FY09

Technology

- ▶ Progress on the multi-agency Carroll County Public Network fiber system: overall 62% complete. (The phase running between Sykesville to the Sports Complex on Route 97 is 82% complete.)
- ▶ Square footage built to date at new Westminster Technology Park: 40,000

General

- ▶ Percent of job applications submitted online: 70%
- ▶ Locations maintained by Facilities Bureau: 45 (with multiple buildings at several sites)
- ▶ Square feet of interior space added to county facilities: 94,809
- ▶ County and allied agencies served by Warehouse Operations: 50+
- ▶ Warehouse deliveries made within 24 hours: more than 85%
- ▶ Additional revenue from Management Analysis's update of detention center rates for immigration detainees: \$100,000 annually



Water

- ▶ Gallons of water secured through easements: 112,582 per day
- ▶ Acres of land under easement to offer water recharge: 522.85
- ▶ Water and/or sewer customers served: 10,516
- ▶ Miles of sewer collection lines in Freedom District: 98
- ▶ Miles of water distribution lines in Freedom District: 120



Permits & Inspections

- ▶ Building inspections conducted in FY08: 18,223
- ▶ Electrical inspections conducted: 11,381
- ▶ Plumbing inspections conducted : 10,758

- ▶ Percent of permits processed within one day: 90%
- ▶ Percent of permits processed within 10 days: 99%

Public Outreach

- ▶ Subscribers to email notification system: 1,128 (91% increase in one year)
- ▶ Email notices sent to residents & vendors through GovDelivery: 169,985
- ▶ Locally produced television programs: 180

Growth

- ▶ Development plans processed in FY08: 2,350
- ▶ Environmental inspections performed: 10,870

continued



Legal

- ▶ Delinquent amount collected through County Attorney's Office: \$632,772
- ▶ Documents reviewed for legal sufficiency: more than 1,250
- ▶ Liquor Board inspections performed: 906
- ▶ Decisions issued by Board of Zoning Appeals: 52
- ▶ Average time to issue BZA decisions: within 30 days



Global Recognition

- ▶ States represented by guests at Maryland Wine Festival: 50 (plus nearly two dozen nations)

The 58th Board of Carroll County Commissioners looks forward to the challenges and opportunities 2009 will bring.

Julia W. Gouge, President

Dean L. Minnich, Vice President

Michael D. Zimmer, Secretary



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