

DEMOGRAPHIC *TRENDS*

* * * * * **2004 -THE YEAR IN REVIEW** * * * * *

CURRENT
POPULATION
ESTIMATE
136,192

The year 2004 had a mixed record in terms of development in the County:

- Residential development appears to have experienced a slowdown, as the total number of permits issued for residential units during the year was only 785, as compared to 913 in 2003 (a 14% decrease). This reflects a continuing decline in building permits since a peak of 1,319 in 2002.
- The decline in permits is also mirrored by a decrease of approximately 17% in the number of preliminary subdivision lots approved in 2004.
- The number of final subdivision lots approved did increase by almost 10% compared to the previous year; however, this merely reflects a previous increase in the number of preliminary subdivision lots approved in 2003 that became final in 2004.
- On the other hand, the number of commercial site plans submitted increased from 56 in 2003 to 88 in 2004 (an increase of 57%), indicating a pickup in future commercial building activity. Details of the 2004 approvals are provided below.

PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION PLANS AND PRELIMINARY LOTS

The process of subdividing a tract of land begins with the submission of the Preliminary Plan, illustrating the layout of the community, community amenities, protected areas, and open space. During 2004, the Charles County Planning Commission approved a total of 21 preliminary subdivision plans. The number of lots located in these 21 subdivisions totaled 1,642. Thirteen hundred and forty-nine (1,349) were located inside the County Development District, while the remaining 293 were located outside. The overall number of preliminary lots approved decreased by approximately 17% from 2003, while the overall acreage approved decreased by approximately 47% from 2003. The following table shows the breakdown of preliminary plan lots approved during 2004:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Preliminaries</u>	<u>No. of Lots/Percentage</u>	<u>Acreage/Percentage</u>
Inside Dev. District	15	1,349 (82%)	642 (55%)
Outside Dev. District	<u>6</u>	<u>293 (18%)</u>	<u>523 (45%)</u>
TOTAL	21	1,642	1,165

FINAL SUBDIVISION PLATS AND FINAL LOTS

A total number of 831 lots on final plats were approved during 2004. The total number of final platted lots approved increased by almost 10 percent from the previous year (758 lots in 2003); however, the total acreage platted for development actually decreased by approximately 16% (2,457.72 acres in 2003). Although the majority (approximately 75%) of approved lots were located inside the County Development District, the majority (approximately 62%) of the total approved acreage was located outside. The following table shows the breakdown of approved plats for 2004 (the numbers include both residential and commercial projects):

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of Lots/Percentage</u>	<u>Acreage/Percentage</u>
Inside Development District	627 (75%)	786 (38%)
Outside Development District	<u>204 (25%)</u>	<u>1,275 (62%)</u>
TOTAL	831	2,061

FOREST CONSERVATION



In an effort to preserve the environment and minimize impacts from development, a forest stand delineation and a Forest Conservation Plan must be submitted as part of the subdivision or site plan approval process. The conservation plan must be approved prior to any site clearing or grading taking place.

During 2004, approximately 408.65 acres were retained or reforested/afforested and placed in forest conservation easements. Approximately 461.74 acres were approved for clearing, which is five percent less than the amount of acreage cleared in 2003. A total of twenty-five (25) Forest Conservation Plans were approved for 2004.

SITE PLANS

During 2004, eighty-eight (88) site development plans were submitted to the County for review. Of the 88 site plans submitted for 2004, 45 received approval for development. These approved plans consisted of 19 plans for new construction, 19 plans for commercial additions, and 7 plans for a change in use of a commercial structure.

When including previously submitted plans, the total number of site plans approved for development in 2004 was 61. The total square footage approved for new construction applied for in 2004 was 413,707 square feet. When including plans received prior to 2004 (158,441 square feet), the total square footage approved for construction was 572,148 square feet.

ZONING VIOLATIONS

County zoning officials performed 5,538 inspections on properties during the year 2004. The total number of inspections performed in each category is shown below:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Inspections</u>
Inoperable/Unlicensed Vehicles	1,213
Heavy Trucks	257
Manufactured Homes	40
Junk/Dump	120
Critical Area	204
Special Exceptions	22
Zoning Permits	9
Variances	5
Forest Conservation	1,012
Site Plans	564
Nuisance	83
Signs	1,272
Miscellaneous	<u>737</u>
TOTAL	5,538

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

In an effort to preserve the rural and agricultural land, Charles County works with the Maryland Department of Agriculture and Maryland Department of Natural Resources to implement several land preservation programs. The most active programs include the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), the Rural Legacy Program and the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Program.

Through these programs the County was able to work with land owners to preserve 1,287 acres in 2004. This is 36% more than last year's total of 949 acres preserved. The use of TDRs in particular increased dramatically in 2004 (205% more acres preserved in 2004 than 2003). The following table shows the acreage preserved by each of these programs:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Land Preserved (Acres)</u>
MALPF	416
Rural Legacy Program	408
Transferable Development Rights Program	463
TOTAL	1,287

DID YOU KNOW???

The recent slowdown in building permit activity in Charles County appears to be part of an overall decline in permits in the Southern Maryland region. According to a recent article in the *Maryland Independent*, building permit activity was down 7% in the region in the past year compared to 2003. This decline in building permits is attributed at least in part to more restrictive land-use and growth management policies in Charles and Calvert counties. Calvert County has experienced the largest slowdown, with a decrease in permits of 33 percent during the first 11 months of 2004.

The article further states that St. Mary's County bucked the trend with an overall increase of 26% in the number of building permits in the first 11 months of 2004, as compared to the same period in 2003. This increase is attributed in part to less restrictive building regulations in St. Mary's County. (Source: Kevin Conron, *Maryland Independent*, January 14, 2005)

Vision Statement

Charles County is a place where ...

- * *Private initiative is rewarded and businesses grow and prosper, while the preservation of our heritage is paramount,*
- * *Government services have reached the highest level of excellence, and*
- * *The quality of life is felt by its citizens to be the best in the region and its government is recognized as a leader in support of these expectations.*

Mission Statement

The mission of the Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long and short term planning, and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility.

This information is provided by the Charles County Government, Department of Planning and Growth Management, Planning Division, Post Office Box 2150, La Plata, Maryland 20646, home page address www.charlescounty.org/Amy M. Blessinger, Editor