



2020

Charles County Government
ANNUAL REPORT



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The Charles County Board of Commissioners

Charles County is a code home rule county governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners.

The five Commissioners are elected at large to four-year terms of office. The Commissioner President is the presiding officer of the Board at meetings and hearings. The Commissioner President may reside anywhere in the county. The other four Commissioners must each reside in a Commissioner district.

Board Responsibilities

- Generating revenues to fund the county's capital and operating budgets, as well as other county departments and agencies.
- Providing for the public health, safety, and welfare of Charles County residents and visitors.
- Adopting and updating the Charles County Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Plan, and Zoning Ordinance.
- Overseeing the development process.
- Establishing, promulgating, and enforcing county rules, regulations, ordinances, policies, and procedures.
- Appointing boards, commissions, and task forces.
- Fulfilling the mission of Charles County Government.

Commissioner Meetings

Board Meetings — The Board of Commissioners meetings are scheduled regularly and held in the County Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street in La Plata. Commissioner Board Meetings are aired on Charles County Government Television, which broadcasts on Comcast channel 95 and Verizon channel 10. Board meetings also are streamed live at [CharlesCountyMD.gov](https://www.charlescountymd.gov).

Community Meetings — The Commissioners hold community meetings at convenient locations in Charles County. These meetings are open to the public, and provide an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and discuss items important to the community.



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Charles County Government 2020 Annual Report

Production of the Annual Report is managed by the County Administration Office, Media Services Division.

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Equal Opportunity Employer



COVER: **Laurel Springs Park** is located at 5940 Radio Station Road (La Plata, MD). Park Hours: 8:00am–Dusk. The park offers a large playground that has an emphasis on special needs play. Fitness enthusiasts can run or walk our natural surface trail that loops through the wooded perimeter of the park. Two small picnic pavilions and several informal picnic areas are available. There are numerous athletic playing available for official league (permit only).



A Message from Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq.

President, Charles County Board of Commissioners

2020 has been a year like no other. A global pandemic has shifted the way we work, provide public education, operate businesses, and spend time together. Our community has not been immune to the challenges of COVID-19. We have experienced the loss of cherished members of our community, reached out to support those who became ill, and made many sacrifices to keep everyone safe. I am proud of the way our government has responded to this public health emergency, and the many ways in which we have continued to deliver services to our residents, provided support to our local businesses, and kept the community informed throughout our emergency response. Our annual report provides a thorough overview of how we responded to COVID-19, the changes to our operations that ensured the public's safety, and the support we provided to help our community through the crisis.

In the midst of COVID-19, our nation also confronted the reality that we still have more work to do in addressing racial injustice. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Abernathy and many others revealed that we need to identify where we are falling short in the equitable and fair treatment of marginalized groups of people. We have had joint conversations with our Sheriff's Office, State's Attorney, and community leaders to discuss what is happening right here in Charles County, and formed the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to make recommendations.

Additionally, Charles County hired our first-ever Chief Equity Officer to examine the ways in which our internal and external operations may be inequitable and implement strategies to close these gaps. Employees from every department have volunteered to participate in a Racial Equity Work Group to develop a county statement on our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion that will shape how we move forward. Our Economic Development Department also launched a disparity study to analyze whether minority-owned businesses have fair opportunities to compete for government contracts. We are making every effort to ensure we value the growing diversity in our community and make sure everyone's voices are heard and valued.

Despite the challenges we have faced, I am pleased to report that we continued to make progress in our five goal areas: economic development, public education, the environment, quality of life, and good governance. Let me highlight just a few examples:

- We signed an agreement for Waldorf Station, a mixed-use redevelopment project that will combine retail, residential and office space in the area where the final phase of the Western Parkway will be completed in northern Waldorf;

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2019 – 2021

- We received a \$2.9 million broadband grant that will help us expand high-speed internet access into rural parts of Nanjemoy and Cobb Neck in the southern part of Charles County;
- We successfully transitioned many of our government services online during the pandemic, with telecommuting employees continuing to provide high-quality services to residents remotely;
- In just a few short months, Charles County Public Schools launched virtual education for thousands of students to keep the learning going this fall while remaining safely at home;
- We delivered thousands of meals to home-bound seniors; provided virtual fitness and social opportunities while our recreation and senior centers were closed; and kept our parks open as many more residents explored our trails, waterfront, and open spaces during the pandemic.

I am proud of the way our government has operated during this extraordinary year. I am exceptionally grateful to our community for how you have adapted to many changes and came together in unity to respond to the challenges we still face. I am pleased to share this annual report with you and welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,



Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq.
Commissioner President

For additional details, visit:
[CharlesCountyMD.gov/
Commissioners/Goals-and-Objectives](https://www.charlescountymd.gov/Commissioners/Goals-and-Objectives)

Economic Development & Supportive Services

Commercial Development: International Trade, Commercial Tax Base Expansion, Business Attraction, and Opportunity Zone Enhancements

Industry Diversification: Research and Development, Sustainable Natural Resource Based Industries, Tourism, and Entertainment Industry

Infrastructure/Services: Broadband Access, Water and Sewer, Transportation Network, Workforce Development, and Business Support

Institutional Governance and Policy

Operational Excellence: Smart City / County Concept, Streamline Services / Comprehensive Zoning Review, Diversity / Cultural Competency, County Branding (Image/Identity), Employee Engagement, Citizen Engagement, Automated Technology / Cyber Security, Equitable Program Funding, Information and Data Programming, and Form of Government from Code Home Rule to Charter

Public Policy: Legislation, Governance Leadership, Resource Stewardship (*Asset Management, Fiscal Responsibility*), and Buy Local (*Minority Business Enterprise*)

Environment

Conservation Programs: Forest Conservation, Agriculture Land Preservation, Rural Legacy, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (Aquaculture, Agriculture, Forest), Transferable Development Rights, and Climate Change Best Management Practices

Natural Resource Management: Expand Solar Energy, Provide Incentives, Rainwater Collection, Expand Commercial Recycling, and Reduce Impervious Surface

Environmental Management: Wastewater Treatment, Clean Water Supply, and Storm Water Management

Education

Board of Education: Funding and Formal Collaboration (*Board of Education and Board of Commissioners*)

Education Advisory Board/Committee

Human Resource Development (County)

Quality of Life

Public Safety: Collaboration (*Sheriff's Dept./Fire/EMS*)

Healthcare: Accessible and Affordable Healthcare, Collaborate with Non-profits, Collaborate with Health Department (*Opioid Prevention, Treatment, Enforcement*)

Recreation and Entertainment: Parks and Amenities, Stadium, Agritourism, Festivals, and Popes Creek

Affordable/Workforce Housing: Housing Authority Committee, and Equitable Housing

Additional Goals Submitted by Departments

Cardiac Resuscitation Outcomes, Customer Service, Attract Candidates and Retain Employees



A Message from Mark Belton

County Administrator

I'm so proud of our Charles County Government employees. Over the past few months, it has been a privilege to lead them and see firsthand the truly remarkable ways they have responded to adjust operations, shift priorities and continue serving the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been quite a year, and I want to introduce our annual report by highlighting the dedication of our workforce to serving our community, including:

- Pivoting to a work schedule where most employees telework from remote locations;
- Planning for and implementing new procedures within every county building to ensure health and safety for employees and visitors;
- Erecting physical barriers and performing temperature checks to protect public health and safety for those who work in or visit county government buildings;
- Altering policies to make it easier for residents to access county services electronically;
- Establishing loan and grant relief programs to support our local businesses;
- Conducting public meetings virtually; and
- Responding to medical emergencies around-the-clock to lend assistance while increasing the risk of exposure to themselves.

Strong partnerships have also been essential to our pandemic response. We have worked side by side with federal, state and local government agencies and organizations within our community to protect public health and safety, support vulnerable populations and ensure our local economy recovers. Especially noteworthy is the teamwork displayed between our county government, the Charles County Health Department (a state government agency) and the University of Maryland Charles County Regional Medical Center as together we strove to educate the public on how to stop the spread of the virus, diagnose and treat those who became sick, and made every effort to maximize resources available to the public by “flattening the curve.”

We are already looking ahead to prepare for what comes next. The definition of ‘resilience’ is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, and we are implementing strategies to ensure that we can do that. Fiscally, we are changing our budget to reflect new projections for revenue and expenses. Our economy development team is assessing what is needed to help our county businesses endure the crisis and position themselves to succeed in a post COVID economy. We have a task force of employee and community members who are working together to improve broadband access to residents in areas where it has not previously been available. Through these actions, we are striving to make sure we are more prepared for the next emergency and making Charles County among the most resilient counties in the nation.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been the focus of our work, there are so many exciting initiatives that we have accomplished or are underway. Last year I was able to relay how the culmination of years of effort paid off when the federal government announced official designation for the Mallows Bay – Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary. Since that time, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has hired the Sanctuary Superintendent, appointed the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC), and engaged a national architect firm to conceptualize and design infrastructure to support facility development.

In September, a ribbon-cutting ceremony took place for the new Velocity Center in the town of Indian Head. This building project, spearheaded by the College of Southern Maryland and constructed in collaboration with the town, county and state partners, was built to help retain engineers and scientists working at one of our county's largest employment centers, Naval Support Facility Indian Head. This military base is the Navy's premiere facility for ordnance, energetics, and EOD solutions, as well as the largest workforce within the Department of Defense dedicated to that mission.

We developed and began the recruitment process for our county government's first ever Chief Equity Officer to ensure the county programs and services provided to residents are the right fit for our diverse population and offered in ways that ensure equitable access to all. The Board of County Commissioners also invested in our workforce by approving and funding the implementation of a detailed Salary and Compensation Study. This effort will ensure our professional employees are paid on a scale that competes favorably with our neighboring jurisdictions so we can both recruit and retain the most talented people.

Finally, I'm delighted to report that each of the three major bond rating agencies; Fitch, Standard & Poor, and Moody's, have reaffirmed their AAA ratings, the highest possible, for Charles County. Not only did the evaluators review every detail of our government's fiscal health, but they also examined areas of current interest including how we addressed the challenges of the pandemic, what we were doing to prevent cyber security-related problems, and our efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change threats including sea level rise and the advent of more frequent and intense storms. In large part, the high ratings reflect not only our fiscal health, but also the agencies' confidence in how our county government approaches these significant challenges.

Our top-rated government and quality workforce are here for one purpose, to serve our residents and deliver an array of needed and desired public services. We look forward to hearing from you and using that feedback to continually improve our customer service and efficiency of operations.



Mark Belton
County Administrator

COVID-19: Activating the EOC

Emergency Operations Center

The first cases of Coronavirus for Charles County residents were identified on March 16. Upon notification of the first positive case in Charles County, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated to the **Enhanced Level** to support the response to the COVID pandemic. This activation involved daily coordination with our emergency response partners.

EOC Response Partners

- Department of Emergency Services
- Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Department of Health
- Charles Regional Medical Center
- County Government's Media Services Division
- Charles County Sheriff's Office
- Maryland State Police
- Office of Governor Larry Hogan
- Maryland Emergency Management Agency
- Charles County Public Schools
- Department of Social Services
- Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.
- Town of La Plata
- Town of Indian Head
- Naval Support Activity South Potomac, Emergency Management

What is ENHANCED Level

An incident or event that requires additional monitoring. Emergency Services staff will man the EOC. This activation will involve only Emergency Services staffing.

Collaborative Operations

Upon activation of the EOC, the Department of Emergency Services coordinated daily collaborative virtual meetings with our emergency response partners. Information shared in these meetings and situational status information was published in daily reports that were broadcast to a wide audience of stakeholders in the county. These reports and meetings were essential to keeping all responders and stakeholders informed of relevant situational information.

The constantly changing medical and personal protective equipment recommendations were a challenge to navigate and communicate to all field providers for their own protection. In an effort to ensure these immediate changes were communicated effectively, the EOC produced multiple instructional videos in coordination with the county's Media Services Division. The EOC also employed the use of daily safety announcements on the Public Safety Radio System and text/email communications to all subscribers in the emergency responder community with the daily safety announcements.

Charles Regional Medical Center (CRMC) operations were modified to limit cross contamination exposures from and to EMS crews transferring patients. Upon arrival to the hospital, Department of Emergency Services staff began meeting the ambulance crew outdoors to reduce the risks. CRMC also offered outdoor space at their facility for a decontamination station for all ambulances after patients had been transferred to the hospital.



COVID-19: Testing & Health

Testing and Mobile Testing Sites

COVID testing began in mid-March. By mid-April, the positivity rate of COVID in the community fluctuated to as high as 21.28 percent and dropped to as low as 4 percent by early June. As the response progressed, the Department of Health increased the availability and access to COVID testing. In coordination with the State Department of Health, the local Vehicle Emissions Inspection (VEIP) Program building in Waldorf was converted to be used as a drive-thru testing center.

- County testing operations were held from April 1 to September 29 at the VEIP Station.
- 52 days of COVID-19 testing and only one day of testing was cancelled due to the potential impact of Tropical Storm Isaias.
- Department of Health and volunteers from the Charles County Unit of the Maryland Medical Reserve Corp and Charles County Government manned the operation.
- Approximately 4,600 community members were tested at the VEIP site.
- Testing moved to the Regency Stadium parking on Oct. 6 for drive-thru testing on Tuesdays.



Contact Tracing

The Infectious Disease Team initiated contact tracing in March. During this process, the contact tracer called individuals with COVID-19 to identify their close contacts for two weeks prior and then called these contacts to instruct them to begin self-isolation. The purpose of self-isolation is to separate people exposed to COVID-19, self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, and prevent others from developing COVID-19.

Community Partnerships and COVID Response

In mid-March, when personal protective equipment (PPE) was needed nationwide, CSM gathered its PPE, medical supplies, and equipment for local health care providers and offered the campuses for storage space or emergency staging.

Behavioral Health Telehealth Services

The Behavioral Health Service Division, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the National State of Emergency, adapted our practices swiftly and efficiently, in order to continue to reach two of the most vulnerable populations in Charles County: individuals diagnosed with a severe mental illness and individuals battling substance use disorders.

With the need for social distancing and closure of public facilities to slow the spread of COVID-19, the Behavioral Health Services Division utilized telehealth to continue servicing our existing patient population and reach new individuals seeking services efficiently and safely. From the onset of COVID-19 to September 2020, the Behavioral Health Services Division provided 5,561 visits utilizing telehealth to include audio/video visits through the HIPPA-complaint platform, Doxy.me and audio-only services by phone. Counselors and clients were able to engage in meaningful work due to the client's increased level of comfort. The telehealth provision of service has essentially removed some barriers to treatment, such as lack of transportation. This has reduced our client no-show rate by 20 percent and increased our ability to keep individuals connected to care. The Department of Health continues to look for effective evidence-based practices to provide those most at-risk with the care that they need by meeting them where they are.



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND CHARLES REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for health care providers around the country, including hospitals. Fortunately, our award-winning community hospital, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center (UM CRMC), was ready, utilizing local and institutional resources to provide excellent medical care for communities across Charles County throughout the pandemic.

At the outset of the pandemic, UM CRMC, in coordination with all University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) hospitals, activated its Incident Command Structure, which ensures the coordination of information, research, policy development, and implementation of best practices across the 13 affiliate hospitals in the UMMS system.

One of the first steps UM CRMC took in response to the pandemic was to implement a strict no-visitor policy at the hospital. For a period of time, outpatient visits to the hospital were discontinued, further limiting visitor traffic to the hospital. These safety measures helped to negate the ability of the virus to spread to patients and staff within the hospital.

A key safety measure was the implementation of guidance for use of personal protective equipment, helping to ensure adequate supplies of N95 masks, face shields, gloves, gowns, and other equipment staff needed to safely care for patients who tested positive for or displayed symptoms of the virus.

Another critical step taken was to rigorously screen patients who were potentially infected with COVID-19. At UM CRMC, this involved screening patients by taking their temperature and other measures, ordering rapid

COVID testing for patients whose condition required their admittance to the hospital, and providing additional testing for patients required to self-quarantine at home until their health status could be confirmed.

Once admitted, COVID patients were cohorted, or exclusively treated in areas of the hospital outfitted with equipment needed to safely and effectively treat these patients, with care provided by medical and clinical staff who were well-trained to treat patients with the infectious disease.

Finally, as UM CRMC worked from within to treat current patients, the hospital, like all those in the UMMS system, was fully prepared for an anticipated surge in patient volumes similar to those challenging hospitals in other parts of the country. Working within the ICS, UM CRMC developed a plan to enable the hospital to nearly double the capacity of patients it was equipped to handle. The plan included using a large, tent-like structure, obtained in cooperation with state and county emergency response teams.



Despite all the challenges posed by the pandemic, UM CRMC continued to earn plaudits for its high quality of medical care in multiple areas, including treatment of COPD patients, maternity care, wound healing, and diabetes treatment and prevention programs.

COVID-19: Community Safety

Sheriff's Office

The Charles County Sheriff's Office began tailoring their All-Hazards Emergency Response Planning to the possibility of a pandemic prior to the COVID-19 crisis in Maryland. At the onset of COVID-19 and Governor Larry Hogan's initial Stay-At-Home Order, the Sheriff's Office immediately assigned the agency's staff experts to join the county's Emergency Operations Center. The agency worked alongside the Charles County Department of Health, Charles County Government, the Department of Emergency Services, Fire/EMS, Charles County Public Schools, and other entities to ensure an orderly transition into managing the pandemic.

The agency also faced several immediate challenges to include keeping more than 300 frontline police officers safe, as well as ensuring, to the best of our abilities, that 100 inmates and 150 corrections staff remained safe and healthy — all while maintaining peace and order in our communities. Sheriff Troy Berry, the Executive Command Staff, and other leaders from within the agency had daily briefings relating to COVID-19 concerns and made changes to decrease the number of possible COVID-19 contacts while maintaining police services.

Some of the immediate agency changes included a debriefing of all callers for service, when possible, to ascertain if anyone involved in the incident may have had any exposure to the virus. If so, officers were better prepared to handle the call while protecting the safety of all involved. The agency allowed those who could telework to do so and only brought in critical staffing. Further patrol operations changed to minimize the number of possible exposures with those who may be infected while maximizing our ability to provide services if an outbreak were to occur within the organization. The detention center, which has operated as a model for COVID-19 prevention and inmate safety, followed all rules



and procedures set forth by the Charles County Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control.

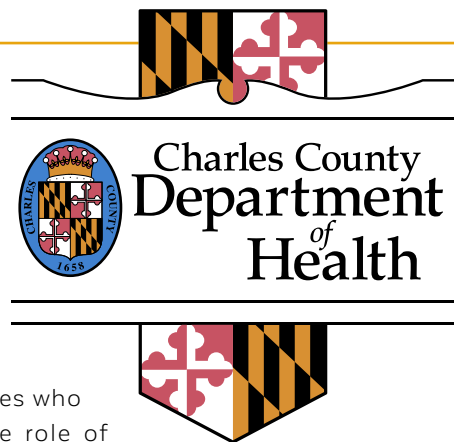
Like many other organizations, COVID-19 has affected the agency with members becoming sick from the virus. Fortunately, the number of confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis have been minimal, and no outbreaks have affected CCSO's ability to respond to the needs of our community. As the agency moves forward, we will continue following all recommendations established by the Governor's Office and the Department of Health while providing excellent police services to our communities.

Environmental Health Services

The Division of Environmental Health conducted 119 complaint investigations related to COVID-19 concerns. The division, with the assistance of Maryland Responds volunteers, distributed COVID-19 prevention information to approximately 800 restaurants, bars, other retail food service facilities, public pools, gyms, and fitness centers. Surveys were conducted electronically to determine access issues to supplies and support services necessary to maintain food safety in food-service facilities during the early stages of the COVID-19 response.

Division employees participated in Maryland Department of Health calls and taskforce meetings weekly. The division also assisted in the development of community health outreach worker training with the College of Southern

Maryland. This training has been administered to the department's nine new employees who will fulfill the role of conducting compliance checks, educating the public and industry, and responding to complaint investigations. The division is working on the development of industry workshops with the College of Southern Maryland.



COVID-19: Meals for Seniors, Families & Children

Seniors and Meal Distribution

Staff with the Department of Community (DCS) services were responsible for managing the delivery of 11,377 senior meals in a socially distanced manner; and created new social media content to help seniors stay socially engaged and healthy with virtual activities, fitness programs, art classes, and informative educational programming. These virtual support services resulted in 119,186 new views to the Senior Centers' Facebook page. Drive-thru service days offering everything from

farm-fresh produce to COVID testing and boxed emergency multi-pack meals have helped to maintain the health and welfare of seniors throughout the county. As senior centers remained closed, the expansion of virtual programs, drive-thru services, and safe, innovative outdoor programming for seniors has become an important part of the division's new normal. Centers have been readied, per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, for eventual re-opening.



CSM Drive-Up Packets and Meals

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Student Services team held drive-thru food distribution events at its campuses to help students struggling financially and experiencing food insecurities. Pastor John Lewis with the Servants of Christ Church, New Life Church, the Charles County Department of Social Services, and Lifepoint Church donated additional food and the CSM Foundation donated large bags for packaging the groceries.

Public Schools Meals Distribution

Since the initial mandated school closure in March 2020, CCPS has provided free meals to families through a no-contact process at identified meal sites throughout Charles County. Meals include breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack for children. Waivers received by CCPS from the U.S. Department of Agriculture have allowed for meals to be provided to families at no cost. Additionally, CCPS is managing a mobile meal service to areas in Charles County. More details about CCPS meal service is posted on the school system website at CCBOE.com.

Summer Meals Program

The Department of Community Services Summer Meals Program, which receives state funds annually through the CCACCYF, is a key program impacted by the Coronavirus. The program helps low-income children and families who are at-risk of food insufficiency to access free, nutritionally-balanced meals at locations across the county during the summer months when schools are closed. Due to COVID-19, this program was especially relevant and essential to community wellness. During summer 2020, participation in the program increased substantially over prior years. The Summer Meal Program locations are chosen based upon a high percentage of the walkable community being eligible for the Free and Reduced Meals Program. This program not only reduces childhood hunger, but also provides nutrition education, referrals, and connection to other community resources to help needy families. During the fiscal 2020, the Summer Meal Program served 93,293 free meals to Charles County's children and families — four times higher than the average number of meals served each year.

COVID-19: Library Services & Outreach



As the COVID-19 crisis began, the Charles County Public Library immediately recognized the need to adapt our services and resources to address the new challenges the crisis presented. In response to this difficult time, the library offered the following assistance to our community:

Our new **Executive Director**, Kenneth Wayne Thompson — who was officially appointed two weeks before the closures were announced — applied for and was awarded a \$20,000 emergency grant from the Governor's Office of Rural Broadband to purchase 100 hotspots with unlimited data and cases. These were in addition to more than 100 hotspots that were already in circulation. We also worked, in partnership with Charles County Public Schools, to connect families in need to internet access, and supported other Charles County community organizations by providing internet access via our hotspots.

Received \$20,000 in **CARES Act funding** from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to purchase personal protective equipment for staff and cover the cost of contracted services to clean and disinfect our branches in preparation for our phased reopening.

Awarded a **Library Services and Technology Act Grant** from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to equip our Outreach Van as a large mobile hotspot.

Provided **free Wi-Fi** at our branch parking lots since the beginning of the closure.

Launched two new, **free streaming services** for our customers: Kanopy, a film stream service; and Freegal, a music stream service.

Expanded the **Nonprofit Foundation Center**, which provides access to the Foundation Directory Online on our website, accompanied by webinars on utilizing these free grant research tools and other nonprofit resources. This was valuable in supporting nonprofits through COVID.

Checkouts and communications were improved. The library increased the number of checkouts for our digital resources (eBooks, audiobooks, e-Magazines) from six to 10. Launched new ways of communication with patrons while our branches have been temporarily closed: Live Web Chat, Telephone Reference, and Email reference.

Launched a new blog, **CCPL @ Home** (www.CCPLonline.org/blog), providing activities for all ages, resource guides, tutorials, recommendations from staff, and other useful articles to help patrons stay busy during COVID. The blog had more than 30,000 visitors from its launch in May to September.

Offered Waldorf West Branch **meeting space to outside agencies**, including voter canvassing for the Charles County Board of Elections and an outdoor cooling center location in partnership with Lifestyles of Maryland.

Transitioned all programming to a virtual setting via Zoom, Crowdcast, and Google Hangouts. We offered more than 400 original programs including virtual story times, special Summer Reading programs and performers, and we also partnered with other libraries across the state to offer access to special speakers and presenters. More than 1,000 people participated in our Summer Reading Program.

Focused on the welfare of our staff. In honor of **Mental Health Awareness Month** in May, we brought in special presenter Stella Griznot virtually to present, "How to Stay Resilient, In Control, and Hopeful in Uncertain Times."



Education & Learning During COVID-19



The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) is called by its mission to serve our community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the college continued to work tirelessly to meet the needs of its learners.

CSM's 20-year long success in online learning allowed a seamless transition to a virtual format. For fields of study requiring hands-on learning, the college stayed poised to offer classes in a sanitized and distanced environment.

Under the CARES Act Student Emergency Aid, CSM received \$1,289,511 from the U.S. Department of Education to cover costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction and an additional \$1,289,511 to provide emergency financial aid directly to students for expenses related to the disruption of on-campus operations or job loss due to the pandemic. By July, CSM distributed half of these funds to 2,141 eligible students. In addition, CSM awarded \$900,000 of the CARES Act funding earmarked for the institution to eligible students.

The CSM Foundation also earmarked \$250,000 through the Help a Hawk Fund to support students. The fund provided nearly \$500 to eligible students to cover one three-credit class. By August 2020, more than \$73,000 was awarded to 149 students.

CSM collaborated with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems to identify three levels of care

that CSM and statewide nursing students could register for, in order to assist Maryland's COVID-19 response. The Nursing Clinical Extern Portal now complements Maryland Medical Reserve Corps volunteers. At least 12 CSM faculty and students registered for the reserve corps and more than 60 students signed up as clinical externs to provide acute care staffing across the state.

Southern Maryland industry leaders say a workforce trained in the essential skills of communication, customer service, and office technology will be critical to their success post-COVID-19. This was the common theme expressed by regional business owners during four virtual town halls sponsored this summer by CSM and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, which focused on "Getting Southern Maryland Back to Work." The initiative is a joint effort to create a transparent, accessible, and coordinated pathway to skills-upgrade training and re-employment for individuals impacted by the pandemic.

CSM enhanced class offerings to include COVID-19 awareness, safe worker, and safe workplace protocols. In addition, new certificate programs are being developed for infectious control, barrier protection, community health liaison, contract tracing proficiency, medical assisting, and communication and customer service skills.





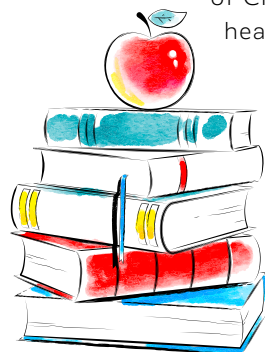
Charles County Public Schools

The Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) 2020-2021 school year began in a virtual platform for both students and staff. Nearly 27,000 students are learning online this fall as school systems adhere to state and local health department COVID-19 recommendations.

CCPS is using a platform within its student information system called StudentVue to provide instruction online for students. StudentVue is connected with an online secure platform through Zoom for live instruction. Prior to the first day of school this year, CCPS provided its high school students — roughly 10,000 children — with new laptops for virtual instruction. Middle school students will receive new laptops in October. CCPS has provided devices, including

laptops, iPads, and hotspots, to families on request. The system's goal is to provide each child with the tools necessary to participate in virtual learning.

CCPS has a reopening plan that outlines five phases of learning. Phase 1 is virtual learning and Phase 5 includes all students and teachers in schools for in-person learning. The movement of phases is dependent upon approval from the Board of Education of Charles County, as well as current available health data and metrics associated with COVID-19. CCPS provides daily COVID-19 data on the system website at ccboe.com.



The reopening plan is posted online at CCBOE.com.

Community members with questions can call 301-932-6610.

COVID-19: County Government Operation Improvements

Planning and Growth Management's Permitting Procedures During COVID

The Department of Planning and Growth Management responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by utilizing technology to continue operations. Staff used the Citizen Self Service portal (CSS) and EnerGov, our online permitting system; virtual meetings; reviews; and remote work to create seamless operations.

The CSS portal and EnerGov allowed users to submit plans, documents, and fees electronically and enabled department staff to review submissions remotely. Users could review the status of plans and permits and upload revised documents or drawings. Though most submissions can be handled online, the department made a drop box available to the public who did not wish to enter the building during the earlier stages of the pandemic.

The department went from 100 percent remote work at the beginning of the pandemic to part-time remote work currently. The office opened to the public on a limited basis and with safety protocols in place. Appointments are and will continue to be encouraged. Virtual meetings have been a resounding success, and most meetings are held in this way. All in-person interactions with the public are held in designated places, and masks and extra cleaning protocols are in place.



Connecting with our Seniors

When senior centers closed due to the pandemic, the Aging and Human Services Division worked to adjust programming and contact senior citizens at home to reschedule service and benefit appointments. Seniors who were already homebound and reliant upon in-home care or home delivered meals were particularly at risk, but still needed care and support services to stay safe and well at home.

From March 13 to June 30, staff made more than 2,000 phone calls to personally check up on seniors and mailed 2,200 postcards to seniors' homes to let them know how to contact staff during the closure and provided information about resources and assistance.



Public Works Operations and Facilities

The Department of Public Works made significant changes to operations in response to the COVID pandemic. The department transitioned to partial or maximum telework for employees; staggered work schedules or alternated workdays for employees that cannot telework; and temporarily reduced operating hours at the landfill to address health and safety concerns and minimize interaction among staff. Contractors were relied upon to assist with litter control services and alleviate workforce gaps which resulted from the Southern Maryland Pre Release Unit suspending work programs.

The department embraced the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and enhanced cleaning procedures in all buildings. The department also installed wellness shields, touchless faucets, and bottle-fill water fountains to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Public Works' inventory warehouses were tasked with the challenge of procuring and stocking personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and wipes for county employees at a time when supplies were limited due to worldwide demand.

Health stations were established at main or select entrances of county buildings, with access limited to those locations to ensure health checks were completed. The department eliminated the use of time clocks, instituted vehicle occupancy limits, installed portable hand



wash stations in specific vehicles used by employees that work primarily in the field, and promoted personal hygiene and vehicle sanitization practices.

Other changes implemented to make operations more efficient or to reduce health and safety risks of COVID included adjusting maintenance processes and efforts in underutilized buildings with plumbing and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. The department also added an online store to sell tag-a-bag tickets, offered curbside pickup for disbursements from the inventory warehouses, and discontinued water shutoffs due to nonpayment prior to the Governor's Executive Order.

Addressing Housing Needs During a Pandemic

In response to the COVID crisis, the Housing Authority worked closely with emergency management colleagues and collaborated with local homeless service providers to facilitate maximum utilization of existing resources. This included identifying residents in transitional housing shelters who were eligible for set-aside housing vouchers that support permanent, stable housing for persons experiencing homelessness. These vouchers assist homeless residents while creating additional capacity within transitional shelters. Furthermore, throughout the COVID period, the Housing Authority temporarily adjusted its standard procedures and policies to give tenants additional time to meet recertification deadlines and halted all program terminations to ensure housing stability.

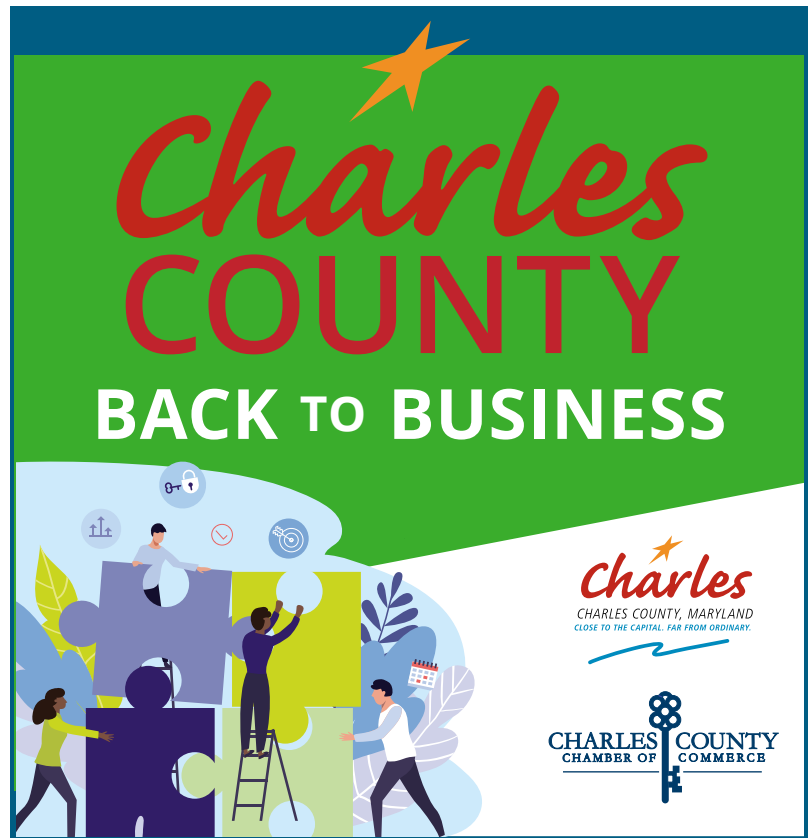
Other accomplishments included re-imagining most essential functions to maintain maximum client services remotely. Staff used livestream technology to conduct required Housing Quality Standards inspections so new leases could be approved quickly without personal exposure; staff converted traditional in-person appointments to virtual and telephonic to meet every scheduled appointment even while facilities were closed. Staff provided immediate housing assistance payment adjustments for at least 100 households who had lost income due to reduced hours, unemployment, or increased medical expenses related to COVID. This action kept rent affordable despite reduced income and assured landlords received uninterrupted payments from voucher participants during the pandemic.

Economic Resiliency During COVID-19

As the COVID-19 crisis reached the community in March, the Economic Development Department redirected efforts to help our local businesses and ensure the best chance for an economic recovery and continued economic growth in Charles County. Initially, the department expanded communications to keep businesses informed and refer them to resources through webpages, social media posts, advertising, and regular e-blasts. A low interest, partially forgivable loan program was also launched, and a series of webinars provided focused content to address the needs of businesses.

The department also began making plans for more long-range efforts to ensure economic stability post-COVID. A Recovery Task Force was created with public and private sector representation; the group held virtual meetings addressing immediate business needs that led to several business-support initiatives. The Task Force will submit a final report with recommendations for next steps. In late fiscal 2020, a grant program funded by the CARES Act was initiated to help businesses impacted by the COVID crisis. With \$2.5 million available, this program will continue to be a significant driver of economic recovery into fiscal 2021 as it will ensure funds are available to assist as many Charles County businesses as possible.

Two efforts were launched to assess and address the long-term, economic impacts of the pandemic. The department joined a regional, three-year study that will provide data at both the county and regional level. This study is a collaboration among six Washington, D.C. Metro area counties in the State of Maryland. The department also has engaged Garner Economics to provide an assessment of current impacts and future opportunities related to the COVID crisis in the context of the strategic plan and its recommendations. The department's response to this crisis has been holistic and designed to assist the business community all while maintaining the county's competitive position.



Charles

CHARLES COUNTY BUSINESSES,

WE HAVE PROGRAMS TO HELP DURING COVID-19

LEARN MORE

www.MeetCharlesCounty.com

County Government Outreach

Spring 2020 Media Services Division Communications Outreach

During the initial weeks of the pandemic and throughout 2020, the Charles County Government Media Services Division kept our community informed and up-to-date on the actions Charles County Government was taking to keep our county safe.

- Video and podcast messages to provide updates, priority information, and awareness to the community.
- Daily website updates on COVID-19.
- Special edition video and podcast on “Safety in Celebrating” during the holidays, which also included a podcast on “Mental Health Awareness.”
- Social media promotions featuring prominent state and local hashtags:

#CharlesCountyStrong
#KeepOnMaryland • #MaskOn

- Regular updates in the CCGTV video news show, “Your Charles County.”
- Mass mail outreach to all addresses within the county regarding Cares Act information, rent relief and eviction prevention, and safety recommendations. The promotion also included radio advertising and social media marketing.
- Weekly “Inside Your County Government” (IYCG) newsletters focused on COVID-19 Updates and vital safety messages.



42 Television News Stories

1,000+ Facebook and Twitter Posts

42 NextDoor App Announcements

35 YouTube Videos

17 Video and Audio Podcasts

9,000+ Recipients per IYCG Enewsletter

9,246 Unique Webpage Views (avg/month)

COVID-19

CRO: Request Submissions
3,399 • 72%



Standard / Non-COVID-19
 CRO: Request Submissions
1,340 • 28%

Community Requests for Information

The Citizens Response Office (CRO) received many requests for information during phase one of COVID-19:

From April to December 2020 the Citizens' Response Office received 4,739 requests

3,399 Requests directly related to COVID-19

1,178 Highest volume was in May 2020

The Charles County Commissioners Citizens' Response Office's purpose is to streamline communications and respond in a timely and effective manner to telephone calls, emails, and letters from the citizens to the County Commissioners. Each request carries with it the concerns of citizens who deserve no less than the full attention of their government.

E-mail: CitizenResponse@CharlesCountyMD.gov

Outreach from State to County



Photo Credit: Executive Office of the Governor



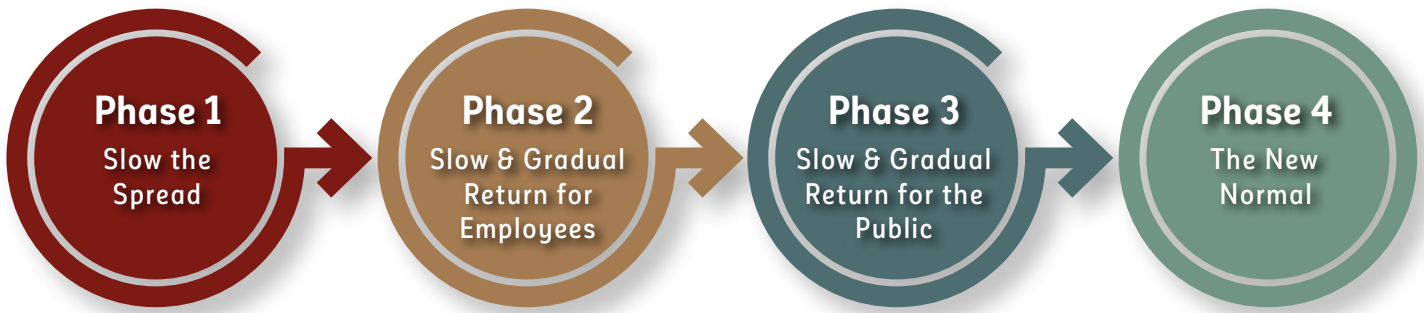
On May 13, Governor Larry Hogan announced that the state was ready to begin the transition to Stage One of the 'Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery,' with a safe and gradual reopening of workplaces and businesses, along with additional personal services effective May 15. The Charles County Commissioners held a special meeting on May 14 and determined that Charles County would need more time to prepare to transition to Stage One and consider implementation beginning Friday, May 29.

In an effort to educate local businesses on the re-opening requirements, the Charles County Department of Health held twice weekly video conferences. Dr. Haft, the county's COVID health officer, presented new COVID precautions and responded to questions from the business

community. The coordination between Media Services staff and the Department of Health public information officer helped to create local awareness for personal prevention and precautions for COVID, as well as reopening guidance for local businesses.

The Commissioners held a press conference on May 26, where they announced that the significant outreach to local businesses and the COVID stats had improved enough that the county was ready to fully move into Phase One of reopening at 25 percent capacity for small businesses, churches and a limited number of other activities. That was followed by expanding reopening efforts to Stage Two beginning on June 12, and the final move into Stage Three beginning on August 28.

County Government New Normal



The 2020 year presented the necessity for county government to temporally transition to a new, virtual approach to providing services to the community. Our mission has been consistent for the public and our employees: “Slow the Spread.” We are proud to say that we have been able to deliver our services with the same efficiency due to our flexible and determined workforce.

During the early months of the pandemic, it was essential for employees who could telework to stay home and do so. For several months (March – June), government services were provided from remote “home office” locations. County government leaders quickly assembled a cross-departmental team, the New Normal Taskforce, to ensure a smooth transition to an online work environment and determine how to provide services virtually wherever possible.

Several months later, the Taskforce developed a plan for employees to begin a partial return to work in county government offices. It was necessary to outline policies for employees as part of the taskforce guide including face mask and hygiene guidelines, health and travel screening guidance in accordance with recommendations from the Governor’s Office, Information Technology needs, communications planning, new inventory supply requests, and upgraded everyday cleaning procedures plus decontamination procedures for post exposure incidents. In June, we began to outfit our buildings and staff with the needed tools to reopen County Government during a pandemic. Our taskforce developed innovative ways to safely welcome back our employees, and later the public.

The Taskforce worked together to outline a phased approach for transitioning the County and our partner agencies workforce into a new normal working environment. The New Normal Taskforce Guide was developed to

provide an interactive reference manual to guide Directors and managers in preparations to welcome employees back to the workplace during the COVID Pandemic. The Taskforce Guide continues to be a living document that can flex as the situation dictates. In the event that COVID infections surge, the guide allows for flexibility to go up and down the phases as required.

For employees, we implemented new procedures, including face mask requirements and mandatory health screenings and temperature checks when coming to work. Social distancing is ensured by new office arrangements and the installation of wellness shields where physical spacing is not possible. Additionally, an internal team has been trained to conduct contact tracing so that, should a positive COVID-19 diagnosis occur, the appropriate plan of action can quickly be put into place. All these efforts are crucial to keep our employees safe.

For the public, we also require temperature checks, face masks, and social distancing when entering any county facility. These expectations are communicated via new signage, website materials, and floor markers. Our overarching guidelines and milestones have been driven by updates from the State of Maryland.

Our workforce has been resilient, and through all the trials and tribulations of COVID-19, we have learned that we are capable and can adapt. Our employees can complete their work from home and often are able to be more productive than working in the office. Teleworking has helped our employees handle multiple issues with childcare, distance learning, and a myriad of other social considerations, not to mention the positive environmental impacts.

We will continue to take the necessary precautions to keep our employees and residents safe and are embracing our new normal.

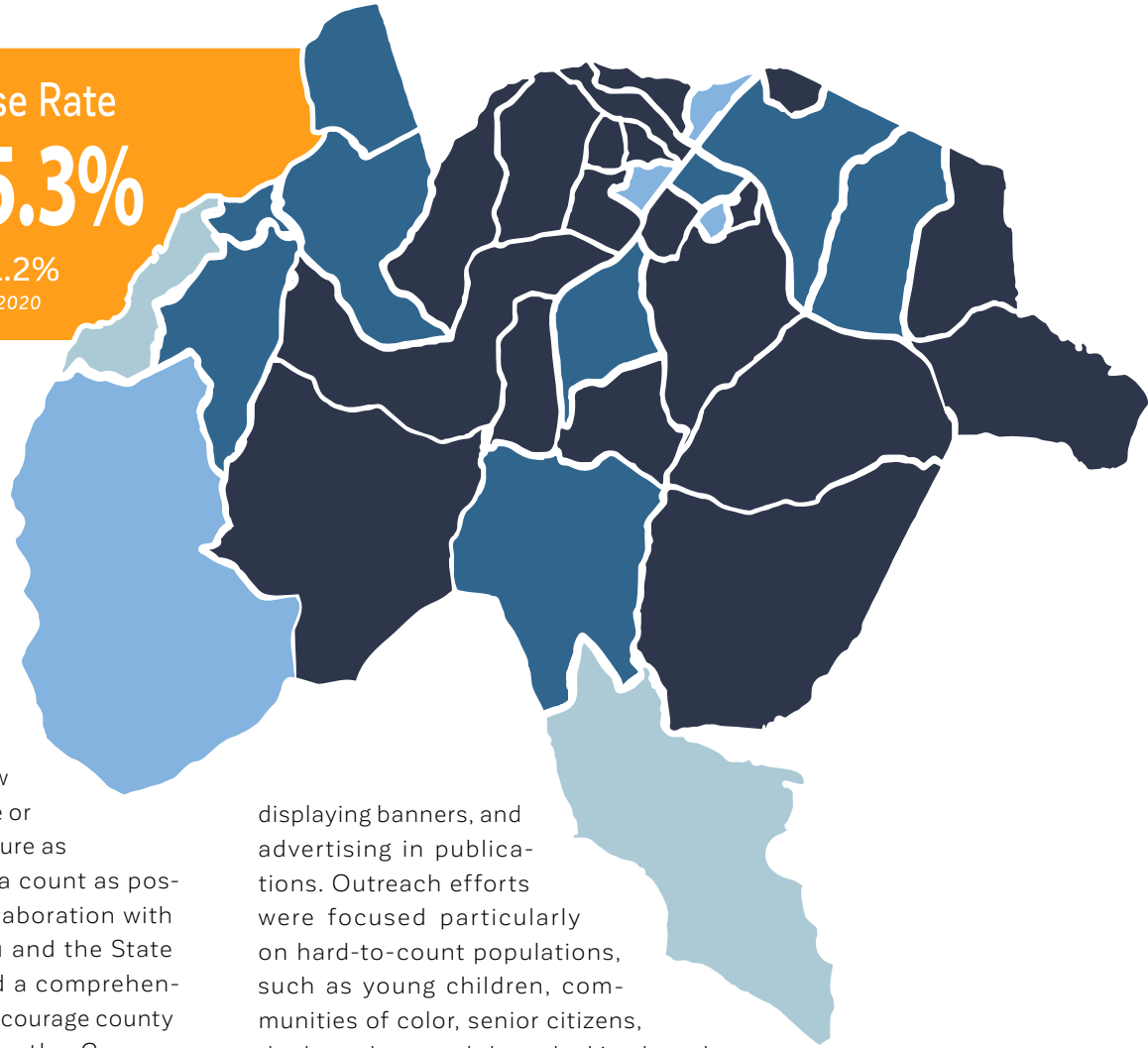
The 2020 Census

Final Response Rate

CHARLES COUNTY 75.3%

Maryland: 71.2%

As of October 27, 2020



Every 10 years, the United States conducts the Census, a count of every person in the country as mandated by the U.S. Constitution. In 2020, it was easier than ever to respond to the Census, thanks to the new options to respond online or by phone. In order to ensure as complete and accurate a count as possible, the county, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and the State of Maryland, conducted a comprehensive outreach effort to encourage county residents to respond to the Census. Accurate Census numbers are vital for the county as they determine appropriate government representation, as well as funding for public services, such as schools, parks, roads, hospitals, first responders, senior centers, and more.

As part of this outreach effort, county staff coordinated the work of a Census 2020 Complete Count Committee comprised of representatives of various county departments, local agencies, and non-profit organizations. The committee members worked to encourage their constituents to respond to the Census. The committee engaged in many forms of outreach including posting Census messages on social media and websites, posting and distributing flyers,

displaying banners, and advertising in publications. Outreach efforts were focused particularly on hard-to-count populations, such as young children, communities of color, senior citizens, the homeless, and those lacking broadband Internet access. Efforts were further focused on increasing response in areas of the county with lower Census participation, including Nanjemoy, Cobb Neck, Indian Head, and parts of Waldorf.

One of the most effective strategies was direct outreach to the community. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic imposed unique constraints to in-person outreach, the partners rose to the challenge to reach people with virtual and drive-thru events and socially distanced in-person events. Local partners incorporated Census outreach at more than 30 community events including drive-thru distributions of groceries, meals, diaper bundles, and school and craft supplies; voter registration drives; and community resource events. Local partners also worked with Census Bureau staff to provide outreach at the La Plata and Waldorf farmers markets, the Market at Middleton Hall, and the Route 301 VanGO transfer stop. At several of these events, participants were able to complete their Census on the spot. This community outreach supplemented the door-to-door Census taking that most people are familiar with. Increases in the county's response rate were often observed following these outreach events.

Census Outreach = Success

The Media Service Division developed and implemented a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy in collaboration with committee members and other local partners, which included:

- Weekly monitoring of response rates in different areas of the county to better target outreach efforts.
- Developing a #CensusChallenge campaign to encourage a sense of competition among the lower responding areas.
- Partnering with the United Way of Charles County and Southern Maryland Blue Crabs to promote the Census via Facebook Live.
- Recording County Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq. and Commissioner Gilbert Bowling (District 1) in a video public service announcement encouraging residents to respond, which ran on the Charles County Government Television (CCGTV) station throughout the Census response period.
- Coordinating local radio on-air feature interviews with Census Bureau partners.
- Implementing local print, screen and online advertising campaigns via radio, newspaper, and the local movie theater.
- Recording Census podcasts, CCGTV commercials, and webpage ads.
- Sending a promotional “Be Counted” postcard that was mailed to zip codes in low-response areas of the county.
- Featuring the Census in Your County Government weekly news shows and several editions of county e-newsletters dedicated to the Census.

The county celebrated an important milestone in late August when it surpassed its 2010 self-response rate of 71.5 percent. The County Commissioners adopted Resolution 2020-23 commemorating this achievement. In the following days, the county’s self-response rate would continue to steadily climb. The community had come together to achieve a count that is accurate and representative of the county. This count will result in data that the county can use not only for funding of programs and services but also for demographic, fiscal, and land use planning analysis, economic development research, and many other activities over the next 10 years.

You Count!

Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States®
Census
2020



Everyone Counts!



Government Alliance on Race and Equity

In fiscal 2020, Charles County Government made a commitment to advance racial equity throughout local government and its associated organizations, policies, and practices. To achieve this important objective, a cohort of executive and senior leaders was selected by County Administration to participate in a regional training initiative, hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), known as GARE, the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.

In September 2019, the Charles County cohort began meeting monthly along with 10 other government jurisdictions in the greater metropolitan area with the goal of addressing concerns about structural and institutional inequities and working collaboratively to establish more equitable policies and practices for the benefit of every

resident in the region. Over the past year, the Charles County cohort gained valuable insight about the root causes of inequality and learned to apply a Racial Equity Toolkit to reimagine, design, and implement more equitable policies and practices in local government services. The goal is to move from transactional approaches focused on individual equity, toward transformative approaches which cut across multiple institutions and policies. Transformative approaches seek to address root causes of inequity and develop meaningful and enduring improvements not merely for individuals, but to change entire systems, organizational structures, and cultures. The result of such efforts is enduring equity for all Charles County residents.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the county GARE cohort identified two transformational projects to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit, which were extending transportation and broadband access. The cohort met regularly outside of the monthly MWCOC

sessions to work at the local level identifying the root causes of racial inequity in these two critical service areas, and developed plans to change these systems to achieve more inclusive and equitable service outcomes for residents. These projects are expected to continue in fiscal 2021.

In fiscal 2021, Charles County will continue its engagement with GARE, and apply the education and training learned through GARE to its broader workforce. Creating a statement for inclusion, equity, and diversity is a small step toward organizational culture change that will begin to normalize conversations about race and equity, and to facilitate better policies and more inclusive practices within County Government and in our community at-large.



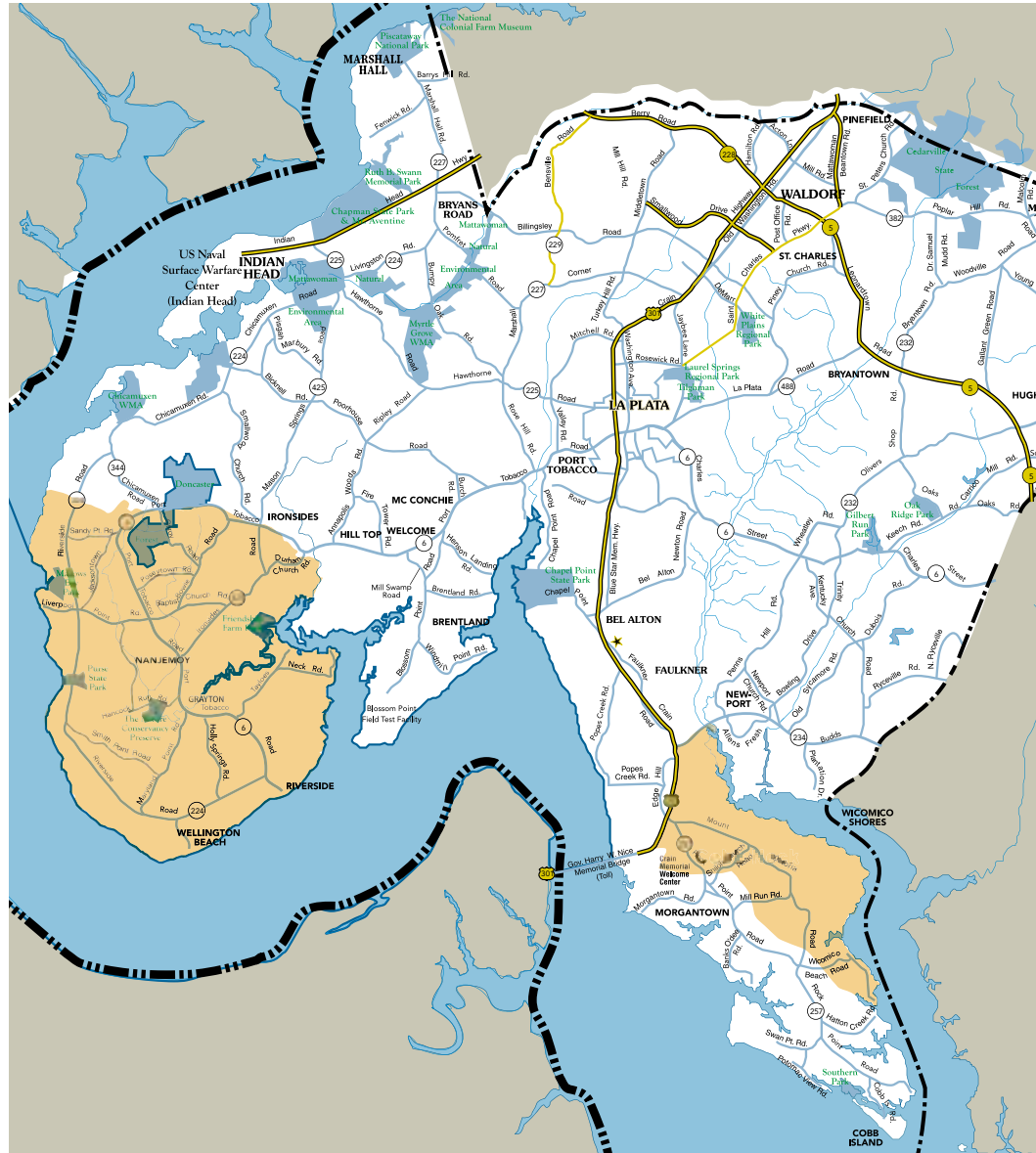
Broadband in Charles County

In 2020, the Rural Broadband Task Force continued its efforts to bring broadband service to the unserved areas of Charles County. The county supported and assisted ThinkBig Networks, LLC to apply for the Broadband Infrastructure Network Buildout Program from the State of Maryland. In late May, the State Board of Public Works approved the \$2.9 million award for the project, with a match from the county for a total of \$5.8 million. This project will provide the ability for 1,408 households and 76 businesses in the **Nanjemoy** and **Cobb Neck** regions to receive high speed broadband.

A subcommittee of the Task Force was formed to lead the project on the county's end. The project management team has five members – Evelyn Jacobson, Chief of IT; Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator; Matt Jacobson, Network Specialist III; Gina Markovich, Assistant Property Acquisition Officer; and Erica Rizer, Program Support Specialist. The county's team meets weekly with the project management team from ThinkBig to collaborate on the tasks that must be accomplished before ThinkBig can break ground later this year. Two of the biggest tasks are negotiating the Public-Private Partnership Fiber Agreement and a perpetual Indefeasible Right-of-Use Agreement.

The project has been divided into five phases based on the technical requirements for laying the fiber. Construction, which involves underground and aerial installation, will proceed in both areas simultaneously. The five phases are expected to take three years to complete.

Charles County and ThinkBig have also been working closely with SMECO, who is an integral partner for this project. ThinkBig and SMECO finalized their pole-attachment agreement this summer. ThinkBig will be laying the majority of its fiber network underground, but in areas where they cannot go underground, the SMECO



pole attachment agreement will allow ThinkBig to put its fiber network on SMECO's poles.

While the Broadband Infrastructure Network Buildout Program will bring service to a large portion of our unserved areas, the Task Force knows there is more work to be done. The Broadband Strategic Plan developed in 2019 lays out approaches for addressing the various types of unserved homes in Charles County.

The Task Force continues to research these approaches in order to further the expansion of broadband service. Additionally, as part of the county's organization-wide focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, Chief Equity Officer Charmaine Brown has joined the Task Force to ensure that their efforts keep these important factors in mind.



Charles County Government Receives Maryland Association of Counties' (MACo) Innovations Award for the Charles County Climate Change Preparedness Program

Charles County Government has identified the impacts of climate change within its geographic boundaries, is building unprecedented competency for climate-smart decision-making among its workforce, reorganized to most efficiently address the problem, identified and proactively took action to reduce carbon emissions while lowering fixed expenses and attracting outside investment, and is providing a leading voice for local government in the state-wide climate change discussion.

Built unprecedented competency for climate-smart decision making

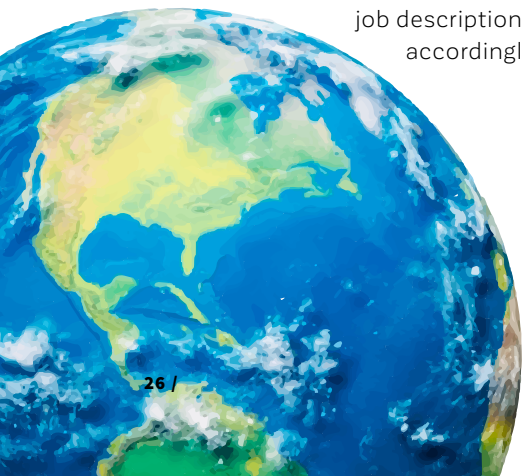
- Requested and hosted at the College of Southern Maryland in La Plata, a cohort of the Maryland Climate Leadership Academy (CLA) dedicated for CCG purposes. More than 20 CCG employees, more than any other county government in the state of Maryland, voluntarily attended the 6-day course, which is a prerequisite for the Climate Change Professional (CCP) credential.
- The CCG Executive Leadership Team (ELT) identified 83 of 822 full-time permanent positions to add climate competency as part of their necessary skill set and adjusted corresponding job descriptions accordingly.

Reorganized county government to most efficiently address the problem

- Introduced a local law to create the "Resilience Authority of Charles County" (Authority). The Charles County Board of Commissioners introduced a local ordinance to establish a nonprofit organization as a government instrumentality capable of financing and contracting for climate change-related projects, both in the public and private sectors. This is the first such entity of its kind in the state of Maryland, and perhaps the entire country. Its benefits include making decisions outside of the political process, taking advantage of a streamlined non-CCG procurement policy, using innovative financing methods to complete projects, and debt-financing without impact to the CCG debt-ceiling fiscal policy.
- Created the Construction Project Management (CPM) Department by consolidating construction project management functions from multiple county government divisions.

Proactively and innovatively acted to reduce carbon emissions, while attracting outside investment and lowering costs

- Contracted with NORESKO to retrofit county government facility systems and installed new equipment to reduce energy costs.
- In 2018, the county entered into a Power Purchase Agreement with Energy Ventures, LLC to construct solar arrays on more than 300 acres of county-owned property, and the Agreement will allow CCG to purchase power at a less-than-market rate. This flips CCG's energy consumption profile from fossil-fuel sourced to renewable-fuel sourced.
- A partnership signed in 2020 with the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO), the local power provider will install at least twenty electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at public locations throughout Charles County at no charge to CCG to encourage clean energy transportation options.



Nuisance & Urban Flood Plan

Maryland lawmakers have recognized that tidally-driven nuisance flood events are happening with more frequency. In an effort to engage state and local officials, Maryland House Bill 1427 (2019), §3-1018(b) and (c), requires local jurisdictions that experience nuisance flooding to develop a plan for addressing it on or before Oct. 1, 2020. While nuisance flooding may not pose a serious threat or result in major damage, it has the potential to interrupt daily routines, close roadways and negatively impact commerce. In addition, per the state legislation the plan is required to be updated every five years. The plan must be published on the county website upon completion and it is required to be reviewed by the Maryland Department of Planning. This legislation is an update to Senate Bill 1006 and House Bill 1350 (2018).

Charles County experiences flooding outside mapped floodplains with increasing frequency, including both nuisance and urban flooding. In fall 2019, Emergency Services began assembling a wide array of local stakeholders to address flooding issues through the development of the Charles County Nuisance and Urban Flooding Plan. The plan goes the extra mile to include urban flooding issues which are beyond what the state legislative

mandate requires. The plan identifies sources of nuisance and urban flooding in Charles County, analyzes these hazards, and recommends actions to reduce flooding and increase community resiliency. The efforts of this plan closely mirror the ongoing county climate resilience efforts. Eventually, the nuisance and urban flooding efforts will be included within the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan on the next required update in 2023.

As a way to engage the public in this process, the online Charles County Nuisance and Urban Flooding Storymap was created (<https://bit.ly/2CnfF9N>). Anyone that has experienced flooding in the county was invited to add their information to the site. This invite was accomplished through an involved media campaign that included multiple social media postings, videos, Charles County Government Television commercials, and podcasts. An email address was also established at flooding@charlescountymd.gov to gather any public comment concerning flooding issues.

The plan is well on its way to being completed utilizing state and local stakeholder information and a significant amount of public input. In the coming year, the plan will be online at CharlesCountyMD.gov.



Crain Highway, Waldorf



Old Washington Road, Waldorf



Gallant Green Road, Hughesville

Learn more...

Listen to Our Podcast

What nuisance and urban flooding are and the efforts to develop the County's Nuisance Flood Plan.

www.CharlesCountyGovernment.gov/Podcasts

Watch Our Video

Your Charles County News Show with featured show on Nuisance and Urban Flooding

<https://youtu.be/KAg5D3urupM>

Planning & Growth Management

Cobb Island Bridge

The Cobb Island Bridge (pictured) carries traffic on Maryland Route 254 across Neal Sound to Cobb Island. The new bridge is nearing completion and includes a new sidewalk facility that is handicapped accessible and has a higher clearance over the navigable channel for local maritime users. The bridge is estimated to be complete by the end of 2020.

Harry Nice Bridge

The Governor Harry W. Nice/Thomas “Mac” Middleton Bridge carries U.S. Route 301 traffic from Newburg, Maryland to Dahlgren, Virginia. In fall 2019, the Maryland Department of Transportation announced the contract award of the design-build team and began construction of the new bridge in summer 2020. The new bridge will consist of four 12-foot lanes, with 2-foot outside shoulder, doubling the capacity of the existing bridge, and converting the toll booths to video tolling or E-Z Pass technology. Estimated completion of the new bridge and removal of the current bridge is slated for fall 2023.



Rural Legacy: Agricultural Land Preservation and Rural Legacy Program

With the desire to protect valuable natural resources and the county’s rural heritage, land preservation is a priority for the County Commissioners. Key programs used to accomplish this task include the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the Rural Legacy Program which depend on partnerships between the local government and state to fund and implement these programs. Over the past year, 1,226 acres of farm and forest land was permanently protected by conservation easements in Charles County through the MALPF Program. As of August 1, 2020, an additional 1,100 acres were under contract for conservation easement purchase by MALPF with a budget of \$2.4 million.

The county initiated the process to designate a new Rural Legacy Area on the western side of the county, currently known as the proposed Nanjemoy Rural Legacy Area. Rich in natural and cultural resources, this proposed area lies west of Nanjemoy Creek and south of Port Tobacco Road, containing 40,000 acres. If approved by the Maryland Board of Public Works, property owners of farm and forest land within this area would become eligible for state grant funding for land preservation.



Fresh, safe, and reliable drinking water

is a top health and safety priority for the county. The Utilities Division is responsible for the operation, maintenance, compliance, monitoring, and reporting of all county-owned water and wastewater facilities. The county operates and maintains 154 facilities to include wells, water storage tanks, treatment plants, and stations; manages 925 miles of water and sewer lines; and provides service for nearly 33,000 water connections.

Charles County conforms to some of the most stringent safe water drinking practices in the country. Employees conduct thousands of tests on the drinking water supply each year and the county publishes its drinking water quality reports annually. In addition, the county provides for tangible return on investment with an aggressive capital infrastructure renewal and replacement program.

To protect our underground facilities, county locators responded to 16,562 Miss Utility tickets protecting lines and Cross Connection Control conducted 244 inspections, received 2,622 backflow reports, and managed the overhaul of 1,846 dual checks, supporting the protection of the drinking water supply. Finally, Charles County is among the top performers in preventing loss of clean drinking water and proactively protects this precious natural resource, while pursuing all avenues to ensure sustainability through 2040 and beyond.

Maintaining Our Drinking Water Supply

Sewer Treatment, Management, and Overflow Mitigation

The county provides treatment of community wastewater to effectively protect the environment. The county's sewer overflow prevention strategies and solutions include a multifaceted approach. The primary projects that are underway to address treatment, management, and overflow mitigation are:

Mattawoman Plant Flow Equalization Tank (\$30 million):

This project will construct an 11.3-million-gallon concrete flow equalization tank and flow distribution chamber with associated equipment at the Mattawoman Wastewater Treatment Plant (MWWTP). The flow equalization tank and distribution chamber will store excess wet weather flow surges and regulate the daily flow to downstream processes. Construction is to start in the fall of 2020.

Manhole Securing Projects (\$985,000):

This project includes modifications to 75 existing manholes near to MWWTP that are at the highest risk for potential sanitary sewer overflows. The project is intended to protect the environment from overflows and protect the sewer system from inflows at times when Mattawoman Creek floods the area. This project is complete.

MWWTP Secondary and Final Clarifier Improvements (\$5 million):

This project includes the replacement of mechanical and electrical components at various clarifiers within the secondary and final clarification processes at MWWTP. Design is complete and construction is expected to start fall 2020. This project will assist MWWTP to process wastewater effectively and will assist in compliance with the Maryland Department of the Environment Discharge permit.

MWWTP Belt Thickener Replacement (\$9.8 million):

This project is the complete replacement of the biosolids dewatering process and is currently under construction. Upon completion, the MWWTP will have a modern, more efficient system that will help the plant process biosolids more effectively and assist in compliance with regulatory requirements.

Infiltration and Inflow Projects (\$1.3 million/year):

A multi-phased, multi-year program to reduce Infiltration and Inflow in the county's public sewersystem. Major rehabilitation of main line sewer and manholes began in 2018 in the Bryans Road area and a portion of the Zekiah area, which were completed in August 2019 and February 2020, respectively. In August 2020, rehab efforts were initiated in the Pinefield Subdivision and expect to be completed in the summer/fall 2021. To improve program efficiency, a pilot project is underway for a contractor to televise and recommend rehab measures for 30,000 feet of sewer in the Zekiah area for county concurrence and subsequent implementation.

Closed Loop Project (\$15 Million):

The project includes the replacement and upgrade of the outdated influent and effluent pumps and associated critical equipment to improve system reliability. Construction commenced in December 2017 and was completed in April 2020. Major improvements include upgraded mechanical, electrical, control, and SCADA systems, a building expansion to accommodate a new Motor Control Center and electrical equipment room, a new overhead crane system, and an increase in the peak pumping capacity from 27 million gallons per day (MGD) to 60 MGD.

Pretreatment and Testing:

Pretreatment conducted 165 inspections and issued 141 permits. The Mattawoman Water Quality Lab provided more than 24,000 analytical results for monitoring and ensuring compliance.

Economic Development New & Expanding Projects

Amazon

Charles County was selected for a new Amazon Last Mile “Delivery Station,” one of seven such facilities slated to open in Maryland. Amazon’s Charles County operations is based in Waldorf’s St. Charles Industrial Park. Amazon’s Waldorf facilities will occupy three existing industrial properties in the St. Charles Planned Urban Development Zone and will reactivate a 192,000-square-foot warehouse/distribution building that has been vacant since 2010. Two other parcels will be used for employee parking and storage of delivery vehicles. The three properties total almost 32 acres with more than 290,000 square feet of existing industrial space. The project is anticipated to employ approximately 200 full-time and part-time workers and is expected to be operational in spring 2021.

Waldorf Station Mixed Use Development

Waldorf Station is a proposed 145-acre mixed-use project in Waldorf at the intersection of U.S. Route 301 and Maryland Route 5, the primary gateway into the county. Construction on the mixed-use project is projected to start in 2021. The developer, Greenberg Gibbons, has submitted a building program in a “town center” configuration with approximately 500,000 square feet of commercial space to include Class A office building, hotel, retail/food and beverage/entertainment, approximately 800 residential units, and a 125-unit assisted living facility.

The Charles County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners have approved a development agreement with Greenberg Gibbons, which has been fully ratified. Concurrent with the construction of Waldorf Station will be the completion of the final phase of Western Parkway, which will link the St. Charles Towne Center in south Waldorf to U.S. 301 at Waldorf Station.

MedStar Shah

The MedStar Shah Medical Group has expanded operations into Charles County with two new ambulatory medical office buildings in Waldorf. The main building is a new, 51,000-square-foot, three-story facility that replaced an old office building at St. Patrick’s Drive. The second building will be a new, 20,000-square-foot facility in the Waldorf Technology Center at Berry Road and U.S. Route 301.

The larger facility opened in September and includes fully integrated healthcare on three floors with primary care, medical specialties, diagnostics, and a pharmacy all co-located together in the same building. Specialties include cardiology, outpatient surgery, sleeping disorders, phlebotomy, and others. The smaller building at the Waldorf Center Technology Park will offer additional medical specialties.

Indian Head

The department continues to work with the Town of Indian Head and community stakeholders to support redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties along the Maryland Route 210 Corridor. The College of Southern Maryland’s (CSM) Velocity Center, which opened in the fall 2020, is the centerpiece of this effort. According to the CSM, this new, 13,000-square-foot facility will be a place of innovation, learning, and collaboration among academia, business, the Navy, and the community.

The facility has already attracted the attention of professional organizations and for-profit companies. The United States Bomb Technology Association moved personnel to Indian Head and will hold membership events in the Velocity Center and other venues in the county. The department is working with several companies that are actively considering locating in Indian Head.

Kaiser Permanente to Develop \$100 Million Medical Center in Waldorf

Kaiser Permanente has purchased a 23-acre site in Waldorf, Maryland and plans to build a multi-phase medical center on the undeveloped parcel. The first phase is on track to open in the first quarter of 2025 at a cost of approximately \$100 million. The facility will be approximately 100,000 square feet.

The new medical center is part of Kaiser Permanente's strategy to improve geographic access to care for its more than 770,000 members, expand capacity for specialty services like advanced urgent care and high-end imaging, and support membership growth in Charles County and adjacent markets. Charles County is currently home to over 14,000 Kaiser Permanente members; membership in the county is projected to increase by 50% over the next eight years.

The Waldorf medical center will be located at the intersection of Crain Highway and Billingsley Road, a major cross-county connector, offering high visibility to commuters in Charles County and Washington D.C. It will be situated near a planned light rail system and future residential and retail development.



The medical center will include primary and specialty care, as well as 24/7 advanced urgent care. These clinical services would be supported by a full complement of ancillary departments including pharmacy, clinical lab, and diagnostic imaging. The new medical center will have approximately 300 staff members, including a number of new hires, bringing job growth to the area.

Health services is one of Charles County's key industries for economic growth and workforce development, and the availability of highly-skilled healthcare professionals will support Kaiser Permanente's new operation and provide a pipeline for talent to sustain it in the long term.

Learn more: www.MeetCharlesCounty.com

Equity in County Contracting Practices Charles County Disparity Study

In fiscal 2020, the Economic Development Department launched a Disparity Study, an objective research tool that looks at county contracting and evaluates whether or not a disparity exists between the number of minority-owned companies available to participate in Charles County Government procurement and those that are awarded county contracts.

The firm of Griffin & Strong was selected to conduct the study based on their outstanding track record undertaking similar work for jurisdictions around the region and the country. The study team will take an in-depth look at county contracting, examining both quantitative and qualitative evidence, as well as current county policies and procedures.

It is anticipated that the study will be completed by spring 2021. The findings of the Disparity Study will result in recommendations by the study team to remedy any discrimination or disparities that are identified.

This effort, launched as a proactive step to ensure that equitable policies are in place, will enhance the county's Minority Business Enterprise program.



Quality of Life



Park Improvements

The Parks and Grounds Division completed Phase II at **Port Tobacco River Park** (pictured). Phase II was designed to enhance the visitor experience with a **wild-life observation deck** to observe the bald eagles nesting and a **wood-gable pavilion shelter** to provide a covered learning station for school outings.

The new maintenance building at Laurel Springs Park replaced outdated sea lockers. This building houses all equipment and tools for the park. This building provides a safe and enclosed work area for staff that also handles operational duties at Port Tobacco River Park and Chapel Point Park.

Thriving in the “New Normal”

Since mid-March, the White Plains Golf Course has flourished with visitors enjoying golf during the new normal. With tee times at 20 minutes apart and each golfer receiving their own cart, each golfer practiced social distancing while enjoying their regular recreational experience playing 18 holes of golf. The number of players and the time of play has been consistent with previous years.

Our park system has seen an increase in visitation with people rediscovering what our parks and trails have to offer. Visitors can socially distance while enjoying time outdoors, engaging in physical activity, and enjoying our disc golf course, skatepark, and organized sports leagues.

Quality Recreation Activities

The focus of the Recreation Division is providing a wide variety of quality activities, sports, and programs to residents of all ages within Charles County. The Recreation Division consists of aquatics, community centers, recreational and leisure programming, sports and the management, and operations of 20 facilities including school-based community centers, indoor and outdoor pools, Port Tobacco Recreation Center, Elite Gymnastics and Recreation Center, and the new Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center, which opened in September 2019.

This past year, a newly developed scholarship program, “RecAssist,” was funded and implemented to provide needed financial assistance to residents that may not have been able to otherwise afford participating in our Recreation programs. RecAssist provided individuals with a RecPass allowing for facility visits at our

community centers, recreation centers, and aquatics facilities, while also allowing for additional funds that could be used towards individual programs, sports, and activities.

COVID-19 caused many disruptions and cancellations of our traditional recreation programs including the closing of our facilities, cancellation of spring and summer sports, and cancellation of our summer camp program. Staff used their creativity and innovation in quickly developing and offering new programs including eSports leagues, virtual programs, Camp2U, and adapting many of our traditional indoor recreation and leisure programs to the outdoors at our various park locations. The Recreation Division continues to be a vital component in meeting quality of life needs in Charles County.

Mallows Bay

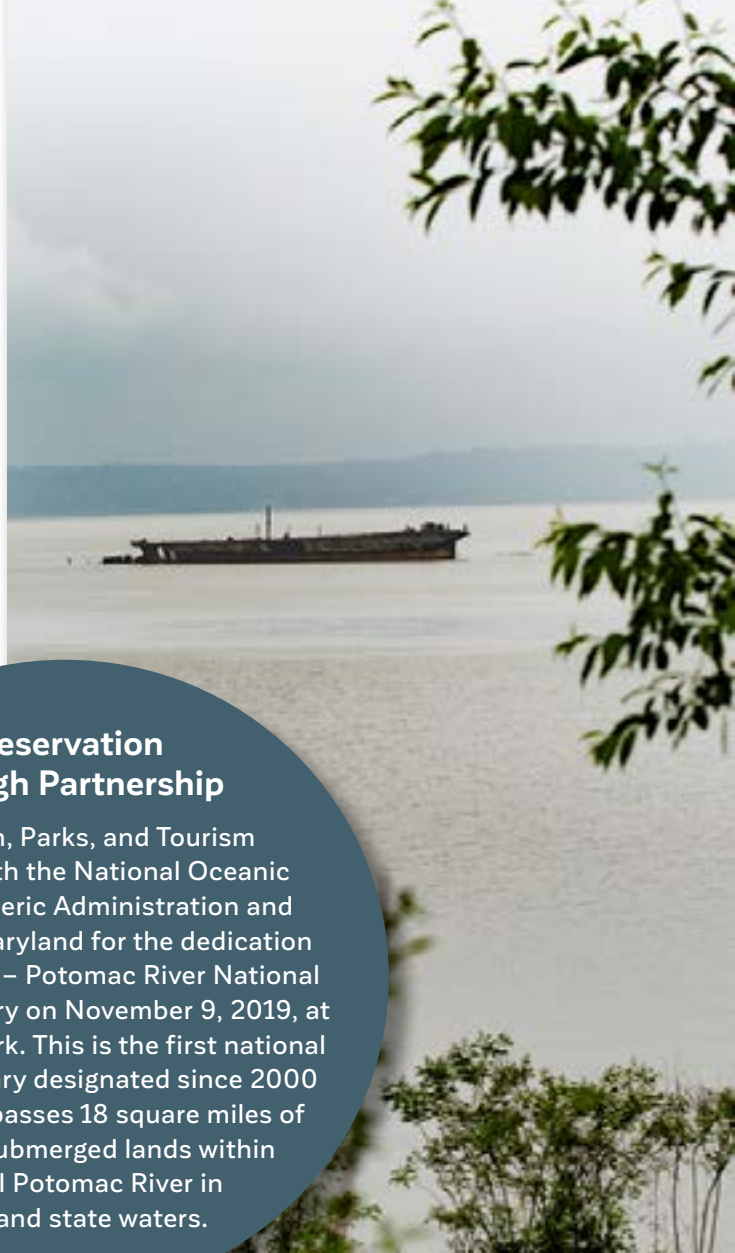
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced the establishment of a sanctuary advisory council for the Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary. This diverse group of community stakeholders will advise NOAA on the sanctuary management plan and will serve as a liaison between NOAA and the community.

There have been 15 voting seats and 15 alternative seats created to span a variety of interests, including: maritime archaeology and history; cultural history, recreation; business and economic development; tourism and marketing; education; research, science, and technology; recreational fishing; commercial fishing; and citizen at-large. Additionally, one non-voting member and one alternate will represent each of these stakeholder groups: NOAA; Charles County, Maryland; Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Department of Navy/Department of Defense; U.S. Coast Guard; State of Virginia; Piscataway Conoy Tribe of Maryland; Piscataway Indian Nation of Maryland; Patowomeck Indian Tribe of Virginia; and youth (a community member age 14-17 at the time of application).

The first public virtual meeting of the Sanctuary Advisory Council was held in early December.

Preservation Through Partnership

Recreation, Parks, and Tourism partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State of Maryland for the dedication of Mallows Bay – Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary on November 9, 2019, at Mallows Bay Park. This is the first national marine sanctuary designated since 2000 which encompasses 18 square miles of water and submerged lands within the tidal Potomac River in Maryland state waters.



Waldorf Senior & Recreational Center

The grand opening of the new Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center (WSRC) was held in fiscal 2020 (Sept. 2019). This new facility allowed the division to greatly expand the variety and volume of services to Waldorf residents, which has a large population of seniors. Enhanced services at the new center include a well-appointed fitness equipment room, a dedicated fitness studio for health and wellness activities, a large art room, several classrooms for group activities/learning, and an indoor gymnasium. The division created an additional benefit coordination office at the WSRC for seniors to meet with staff to determine eligibility and receive application assistance for numerous public benefits. Attendance and participation by seniors at the new center was booming until the pandemic hit. Despite the center

closures, the innovative and swift actions of staff to continue serving seniors in new ways resulted in a substantial increase in services delivered throughout the pandemic. Many of these successful new methods are expected to endure after the centers are re-opened to the public.



Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

Tourism Destination Marketing and Promotion

Branding — A primary focus of Explore Charles County, “Legends, Lore and Room to Explore,” is to invite travelers to discover the recreational, historical, cultural, and natural attractions around the county. During fiscal 2020, the Tourism Division introduced 22 competitive marketing campaigns into the national marketplace. At the beginning of June, the division launched a new stand-alone website that highlights the Explore Charles County brand identity. Additionally, the division contracted with the CrowdRiff, a platform that collects Instagram content related to Charles County assets. This platform enables tourism to increase digital footprint in the marketplace and use traveler-generated content for advertising purposes. The CrowdRiff content is embedded onto the new website to enhance visitor experiences and ultimately inspire travel to the region.

Promotion — The division’s promotional efforts serve to encourage tourists to enjoy everything that is unique to the area while, supporting local businesses, increasing overnight visits, and generating economic impact. In September 2019, the team attended the Mid-Atlantic Public Relation Alliance (MATPRA) marketplace in Richmond, Virginia. The annual marketplace is a place where tourism offices/destinations meet with 50 international travel journalists to pitch story ideas to inspire media coverage on respective jurisdictions. Tourism has built lasting industry relationships through the MATPRA partnership over the years. The division also partnered with the Destination Southern Maryland, also known as Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium, to attract receptive tour operators to the region at Maryland on the Road in October 2019 and American Bus Association in January 2020. In February 2020, tourism joined forces with Maryland Office of Tourism to attend the Great American Outdoor Show. This show is the largest of its kind on the east coast and serves to entice the outdoor enthusiasts to book fishing and hunting trips.

Advertising — In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the division pivoted its marketing strategies to cater to activities that naturally allowed social distancing, like outdoor recreation. The team partnered with the Media Services Division to execute social media campaigns with the overarching theme of “When you are ready to travel, we are open for you.” Market placement for advertising shifted from larger cities in the Mid-Atlantic to drive markets like Richmond, Virginia; and Washington, D.C.

The division partnered with two distribution companies, Getaways on Display and TOTH Distribution Service, Inc., to circulate 35,000 Charles County Visitor Guides to Western/ Southern Maryland, West Virginia, and corporate/ military/ government locations throughout the Washington D.C. metropolitan Area.

Targeted Visitor Attraction

In November 2019, Mallow's Bay-Potomac River was officially designated a National Marine Sanctuary. It is now recognized as one of the largest in the Western Hemisphere. The Parks and Tourism Divisions partnered with the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and the Charles County Commissioners to achieve this designation. The designation solidifies the already popular tourist attraction. Tourism will continue to promote the attraction as it truly unique to Charles County and internationally significant. In June 2020, CBS filmed at Mallow's Bay to cover and bring awareness to this county gem that is located on the western end of Charles County.

Fishing Tournaments — The western region of Charles County is internationally known and recognized for its year-round largemouth bass fishing experiences. The upper part of the Potomac River has a rich history as a natural habitat and breeding area for many native fish. During 2020, the division partnered with Major League Fishing to sponsor two fishing tournaments, Costa Fishing League World Series Northern Division and T-H Marine Bass Fishing League Regional. The tournaments yielded a total of 660 anglers that filled an estimated 2,513 hotel rooms that were sold over a 1 to 11-day period.

Agritourism/ Value Added Agricultural — In spring 2020, the first winery in Charles County opened – Bridgette Vines. Bottling wine since early 2019, their wines are sold at the La Plata Farmer’s Market and other locations. Also, in fall 2019, Hancock Family Farm opened a storefront in La Plata to sell grass fed organic/ farm-raised meat. Tourism continues its collaboration with the Economic Development Department in assisting the value-added agriculture businesses through promotion and advocacy.

Return on Investment — In 2019, Charles County had \$190.1 million in tourism industry sales, with \$51.4 million in total tourism tax receipts. An estimated 1.1 million visitors stayed in Charles County hotels and/or spent money at local businesses, restaurants, and local amenities.

Compiled by Tourism Economics, Inc.



DISCOVER

STORIES OF INTRIGUE



Photo Credit: Matt McIntosh, NOAA



Charles County
MARYLAND


Legends, Lore and Room to Explore

Write your own story at Mallow's Bay

Explore the largest National Marine Sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere. Kayak our WWI ship graveyard while experiencing nature's beauty.

ExploreCharlesCounty.com

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The Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

Budget Planning and COVID-19 Impact

In development of the fiscal 2021 General Fund Operating Budget, the Budget Division provides general guidelines to the departments and agencies involving commissioner priorities, from both a fiscal and political policy and revenue outlook for the coming year. The division makes expenditure recommendations for most of the departments in the fall. Departments and agencies review these recommendations and make additional requests providing justification. During the winter months, the department budget requests are reviewed with the departments, agencies, and the County Administrator. Revenue projections are developed and provide an estimate of the amount of money that is available to pay for the services that the county provides.

Initially, revenue projections were positive and county staff planned for an increased budget that could include new initiatives within the fiscal 2021 budget. However, when the COVID was declared a pandemic and led to stay-at-home orders the closure of most businesses, it contributed to a significant economic decline. In response, staff then evaluated the potential revenue impact. Revenue projections for areas where it was anticipated that there would be immediate declines were revised, such as interest income, income tax, hotel/motel tax, and admission/amusement tax. While revenue growth in property taxes has been stable, economic stability became more fragile due to the impact the pandemic had on residents and the business community.

Maintaining the County's Tax Rate

To maintain the tax rate for our residents and businesses, the county had to make some difficult choices to propose a balanced budget and maintain an adequate reserve fund. To address shortfalls, the county considered efficiencies in county operations. The maintenance of current positions was prioritized but did not include merit increases or cost-of-living pay adjustments for county employees. In April, the County Administrator proposed a budget that distributed revenues among several county priorities, including education, public safety, transportation, community services, and many other government programs. During a series of meetings and work sessions held during April and May, the Board of County Commissioners discussed and made changes to the proposed budget. A public hearing was held in early May which allowed for public input before budget adoption.

General Fund Operating Budget

The fiscal 2021 General Fund Operating Budget, adopted at \$433.4 million, increased by \$8.4 million from the fiscal 2020 adopted budget. Approximately 75 percent of that amount is designated for spending on public education, Sheriff's Office, and emergency services which remain top priorities. The fiscal 2021 budget was adopted without raising property tax or income tax rates. The Board of County Commissioners allocated \$195.7 million to the Board of Education, an increase of \$3.6 million from fiscal 2020. The total amount of funding is \$1.7 million more than the maintenance of effort level required by law.

Capital Improvement Program

The budget process for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) also started in the fall with the September distribution of capital project forms through public hearing and formal budget adoption in May. The CIP requests are reviewed by senior management and department heads are given an opportunity to prioritize their projects and fit those with the highest needs within the county's affordable debt limits. The CIP was presented to the Board of County Commissioners in March with a review of projects within the targeted budget and those projects exceeding budget based on this prioritization. As revenue projections were lowered, it limited the number of new projects that could be added to the plan. The adopted fiscal 2021-2025 CIP provides for \$656.5 million in funding from a combination of sources so that the infrastructure for schools, roads, parks, water and sewer, and public buildings can be constructed and maintained.

Learn more about the Charles County Government Budget

[CharlesCountyMD.gov/BudgetProcess](https://charlescountymd.gov/BudgetProcess)

How is the Budget Developed?

Watch our informational video that shows the process that Charles County Government uses to develop a budget ready for adoption.

<https://youtu.be/ETAniMIMpGc>

FISCAL 2021 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

\$433,441,200 • July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021



County Retains AAA Bond Rating

All three major national bond rating agencies have reaffirmed the county's AAA bond rating. Private independent rating services meet with county leaders and fiscal staff annually to evaluate the county's ability to repay bonds' principal and interest in a timely manner. Top bond ratings are earned by demonstrating the strength of the county's financial position and economic stability. This allows the county to maintain low interest rates when repaying bonds.

"Having our AAA bond rating reaffirmed means that due to careful fiscal stewardship, the Board is delivering on its commitment to prudent financial management, even as we deal with unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic," said Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq. "From an economic standpoint, taxpayers can have peace of mind that we are well positioned to withstand the impacts of this period of economic uncertainty."

S&P Global Ratings highlighted they "view the county's recent hiring of a chief equity officer to work collaboratively with county leaders on ensuring that policy decisions, service delivery, and resource allocation to achieve diversity outcomes for the workers and residents of the county as unique when compared to the sector standard." In addition, S&P Global Ratings sees "the county's proactive and multipronged approach to climate change... as indicative of the management team's overall long-term planning strategy."

Moody's evaluation cites, "The county's strong financial position is supported by long-term financial forecasting and has maintained years of stability."

Fitch Ratings said they view "the county as having the highest level of gap closing capacity, due to its sound reserve levels and superior inherent budget flexibility."

The county issued \$52 million general obligation bonds in October 2020 to fund improvements in schools, general government facilities, and water and sewer projects. The county also pursued the opportunity to refund up to \$48 million of existing bonds in order to realize savings on future debt payments.

Charles County Government Department News

Housing Authority News

Due to the overwhelming number of Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program applications, the Housing Authority closed the program's waiting list in 2012. Staff worked diligently to process more than 4,000 applications on the list since then and in fiscal 2020, the Housing Authority was pleased to reopen its HCV Program application list. Advances in technology enabled the Housing Authority to accept applications online and determine residents with the greatest social and economic needs. Following an initial open application period, an automated lottery system narrowed the applicants from thousands to a prioritized total of 300 low-income elderly, disabled, and veteran households. All of this was accomplished during a global pandemic while traditional offices and services were operating in a mostly remote capacity.

Throughout fiscal 2020, the Housing Authority opened a dozen voucher slots for homeless veterans in Southern Maryland and served an additional 40 households with new vouchers for rent affordability.

New initiatives included an award from United States Department of Agriculture for a Rural Housing Preservation Grant to assist low-to-moderate income homeowners in rural areas with essential home repairs. To assist residents in non-rural areas, the Housing Authority also received \$215,000 from Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Special Loans Program to assist low-to-moderate-income households with essential home repairs. The Housing Authority applied for and was awarded a new \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant to significantly expand the operations of the county's largest homeless shelter. This shelter, operated by the Archdiocese of Washington, is the area's only shelter that can accommodate fathers, mothers, and children in unified family units at the shelter. The division was also pleased to continue processing Settlement Expense Loan Program applications to improve affordability for new homeowners in the county.

Charles County Advocacy Council for Children, Youth, and Families

The Charles County Advocacy Council for Children, Youth, and Families (CCACCYF), also known as the Local Management Board, serves as the designated neutral convener in Charles County for the planning and coordination of state-funded services for children, youth, and families. The CCACCYF Board members receive guidance from the Children and Youth Division, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (CYD) to address priority needs and populations in Maryland, as identified by the CYD. Through a variety of state grants, the CCACCYF administers and monitors performance of qualified local contractors who deliver the priority services to eligible Charles County residents.

Recent accomplishments of the CCACCYF included a free Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training for various members of the community hosted by CCACCYF staff on October 9, 2019. The event had more than 100 registrants and was hosted by Waldorf West Library Branch and in collaboration with Center for Children's Executive Director Cathy Meyers as the trainer; and The Learning Tree, the lead organization for the ACE training programs. The training provides

information to human service professionals and paraprofessionals about how ACE impact an individual's brain, their long-term outcomes, risk factors for future behavioral and physical conditions, and outcomes that impact society as a whole. ACE is a model program that increases providers competencies in trauma-informed care across a variety of educational, supportive care, and therapeutic disciplines.

In January 2020, Local Management Board staff from Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Anne Arundel counties worked together to host two Southern Region Juvenile Justice Reform Council listening sessions. The events were held regionally across the state as part of a statewide listening process that originated from the passage of Senate Bill 856 and House Bill 6062, which established the Juvenile Justice Reform Council. The council works to develop a system of strategies that both increase public safety and reduce recidivism. It also will research best practices for treating juveniles who have encounters with the juvenile justice systems and recommend ways to create improvements.

County Government Classification and Compensation Study

In July 2019, Charles County Government signed a contract to work with Evergreen Solutions to provide a classification and compensation study for full-time county employees and part-time and full-time Sheriff's Office civilian employees. The study's objectives were to provide a comprehensive plan for compensation, grading, job descriptions, best practices for implementation, and ongoing use; and to ensure our compensation was competitive with the labor market. The study was a multi-step process which included employee orientations, focus groups, and completion of job and management questionnaires. Additionally, Evergreen surveyed 22 surrounding jurisdictions to see how our pay compared to other local governments. The information that Evergreen obtained from the review of current conditions was used in conjunction with the market analysis data and internal equity review to develop recommendations for a competitive compensation plan.

The analysis of the classification and compensation system revealed several areas of opportunity:

- Creating new, competitive open-range pay plans for general staff, and transitioning part-time Sheriff's Office employees to the county's existing part-time step plans that reflects our desired market position and best practices; and slot all classifications into plans based on external and internal equity.
- Revising the titles of some classifications, creating general classifications for some positions, and creating new titles as needed for existing employees.
- Revising all job descriptions to include updated classification information provided by employees and appropriate Fair Labor Standards Act status and reviewing job descriptions regularly for accuracy.

In September 2020, the County Commissioners approved funding for the project with a March 1, 2021 implementation date. These recommendations will enhance the county's competitiveness in the labor market. By creating the new pay plans and implementing changes to the assigned pay grades, Charles County will have a responsive compensation system for several years to come. It is anticipated that having a more competitive compensation system will enhance our recruitment and employee retention and continue to make us an employer of choice.

Resuscitation Trailblazer Award

Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is a time-critical, life-threatening condition that requires peak performance from emergency medical services (EMS) professionals and victims receiving the highest quality CPR possible, known to be the cornerstone for survival. The Charles County Department of Emergency Services (DES) took a significant step to improve outcomes, announcing last October implementation of two resuscitation quality improvement programs that prepare public safety responders and 9-1-1 specialists in providing high-quality CPR when responding to cardiac arrest events.

DES was the first agency in the United States to pilot and adopt both Resuscitation Quality Improvement® Telecommunicator (RQI-T) and RQI® EMS, two blended learning programs co-developed by the American Heart Association, Laerdal Medical and the Resuscitation Academy Foundation and delivered by RQI Partners. On June 8, DES was recognized by RQI Partners and the Resuscitation Academy Foundation as a "Resuscitation Trailblazer." The award signifies Charles County's commitment to improving telephone CPR practices and promoting mastery of high-quality CPR for EMS providers to increase cardiac arrest survival. Emergency Services continues this program into the next year where program outcomes will be assessed and reported to gauge the effectiveness of the program's ability to improve patient outcomes.

Mobile Integrated Healthcare Program

The Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) Program concluded its three-year pilot funding from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission. The County's MIH program is an innovative partnership between the Department of Health, the Department of Emergency Services, and the University of MD Charles Regional Medical Center (UMCRM), to target high utilizers of emergent care. The team consists of a paramedic, a registered nurse, and a community health worker. Team members work together to educate patients on their health conditions and to address any barriers they may have to accessing healthcare. From August 28, 2017 to April 30, 2020, the MIH team served 149 clients. In the three months prior to MIH participation, MIH clients had a total of 259 visits to the UMCRM emergency department. In the three months after MIH enrollment, the number of emergency department visits among participants dropped 61 percent, the number of inpatient admissions dropped 65 percent, and the number of 30-day readmissions dropped by 73 percent. Due to their tremendous success and with the support of the partner agencies, the MIH Program will continue to offer the same level of service in fiscal 2021.

GET CONNECTED TO CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT

CharlesCountyMD.gov



About Charles County Government

The mission of Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, our 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. We support and encourage efforts to grow a diverse workplace. Charles County is a place where all people thrive and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation.

It is the policy of Charles County to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, or any other status protected by law.

CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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