

ENVISION MAYO

A Report on Community Goals
for the Mayo Peninsula

Anne Arundel County, MD June 2018

*Sponsored by the
Neighbors of the Mayo Peninsula*



Purpose & Structure

The Envision Mayo project was launched by a volunteer group, the Neighbors of the Mayo Peninsula, to engage the residents of Mayo, Maryland, in a community conversation about a vision for Mayo's future and how to achieve it.

Eighty-five Mayo residents participated in seven meetings that took place between September 2017 and April 2018. Major topics of discussion included:

1. Health and safety
2. Infrastructure/ transportation
3. Parks/natural areas
4. Environment
5. Growth and development
6. Community character/quality of life

The meetings were facilitated by Mayo resident Jim Lyons and supported with donated time by landscape architect Bob Snieckus. Guests in attendance at various meetings included members of other nonprofit organizations and communities in Anne Arundel County, officials from the county office of Planning & Zoning and the Planning Advisory Board, county council and state legislature candidates, a county executive candidate, and local media. We thank the community for their invaluable participation and our guests for their interest in our community.

The Need for Envision Mayo

The Mayo Peninsula in Edgewater, MD, extends from the intersection of State Route 214 and Muddy Creek Road east for approximately 4.2 miles. Route 214, running nearly the full length of the peninsula, provides sole access to its side roads and neighborhoods. The peninsula is bordered by the South River to the north and by the West and Rhode Rivers to the south; both rivers flow into the Chesapeake Bay, which wraps the shore of the peninsula at its eastern edge. The peninsula has a breadth of roughly 1.5 miles at its widest points and 2,000 feet at its most narrow pass. Mayo is home to more than 8,000 residents, one elementary school, and several churches, marinas, and parks.

Like other peninsulas in Anne Arundel County, the Mayo Peninsula is defined by its sensitive shoreline environment, confined by limited road access, and confronted with significant pressure for development. The community became increasingly engaged with these issues over the past two years as the county launched plans to significantly increase the development of five parks on the peninsula and to lift an eight-year building moratorium. The building moratorium, imposed until wastewater treatment upgrades were complete, ended in November 2017.

The community's greatest concern was the lack of a proactive land use plan to effectively manage the combined impact of park and residential developments on traffic, emergency services, groundwater supplies (Mayo is served entirely by well water), and the environment. The last land use plan to address the peninsula was the 2002 Edgewater/Mayo Small Area Plan, which was created through a lengthy but detailed and popular public process; however, county officials failed to pursue most of its recommendations.



Mayo Community Concerns

By the spring of 2017, the Mayo community outlined a range of concerns, discussed by residents and presented to county officials as follows:

Population: Previously, the county had predicted that Mayo’s population would reach 8,727 people by 2035. But the population reached 8,799 in 2015 — twenty years faster than projected.

Development: The county predicts at least 630 new “units” will be built on the Mayo peninsula under the current zoning. Mayo’s Small Area Plan hasn’t been updated since 2002.

Traffic: The only road onto the peninsula is State Route 214. Backups are frequent. The state has graded the road at E/F for “heavy congestion.” At just 2 cars per household, the predicted 630 new homes could add more than 1,200 vehicles to daily traffic. The county has since conducted a study that will be combined with a pending study on the impact of residential development, but lifted the building moratorium before this study was completed.

Parks: The county is expanding 5 parks in Mayo — with a potential combination of sports fields, trails, and swimming beaches — with a total of approximately 1,100 parking spaces (covering 8 acres) and related potential for impact on traffic, wildlife habitat, and stormwater runoff from increased impervious surface.

EMS: Fire and EMS response times are longer than the nationally recommended response times WITHOUT traffic. Most roads lack shoulders. When an accident shuts down State Route 214, emergency vehicles cannot pass through. Cyclists and pedestrians are not safe. A pedestrian fatality occurred in 2016. (The county has since opened a part-time substation in Mayo on a trial basis, served by one ambulance.)

Aquifers: The capacity of the aquifers serving Mayo is unclear. Some wells have failed. Mayo residents requested a study of aquifer capacity to meet growth projections in 2002, but none was done. Residents again requested a study in 2016 in anticipation of the county’s decision to lift the building moratorium. The county agreed to conduct a study, with results expected in summer 2018, but building has resumed and is accelerating.

Water pollution: Six of the seven major creeks and small bays on the peninsula are polluted according to federal standards in the Clean Water Act. The primary source of pollution is stormwater runoff from roads, parking lots, and deforestation associated with new construction. The South River is under TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads) for nutrients, sediment, fecal coliform, and PCBs. Impervious surfaces associated with development (roof tops, roads, and parking lots) are main sources of water pollution. A 2016 study by the University of Maryland found that Anne Arundel County approves 89% of the variance requests for construction projects on protected shoreline land known as the Critical Area, but the extent to which these variances harm water quality is not clear.



Envision Mayo and the 2002 Small Area Plan

The county began work to revise its General Development Plan in 2017, but will not update the Small Area Plans until at least 2020, after the General Development Plan is complete.

With park and residential development currently underway, the Neighbors of the Mayo Peninsula wanted to gather community input into land-use planning with an organized process for collecting and sharing the community's concerns and views. Envision Mayo was the result.

The Envision Mayo report does not replace the Small Area Plan or eliminate the need for its update. This report is a summary of community vision and goals, and it provides a foundation for engaging with county officials and staff, elected officials, political candidates, and other organizations to enact solutions that guide future growth and development on the Mayo Peninsula. It is critical that we find innovative and proactive strategies for balancing land use and resource management on this geographically constrained and environmentally sensitive peninsula.

The community conversation about Mayo's future is still underway. This report is intended to be the catalyst for more conversation and participation in the General Development Plan process and the future Small Area Plan. The feedback and suggestions presented here send a clear message about why we value our community, the quality of life we enjoy and would like to protect, and the things we'd like to change.

We thank the 85 Mayo residents who gave their time and enthusiasm to this project and hope to hear from many more.

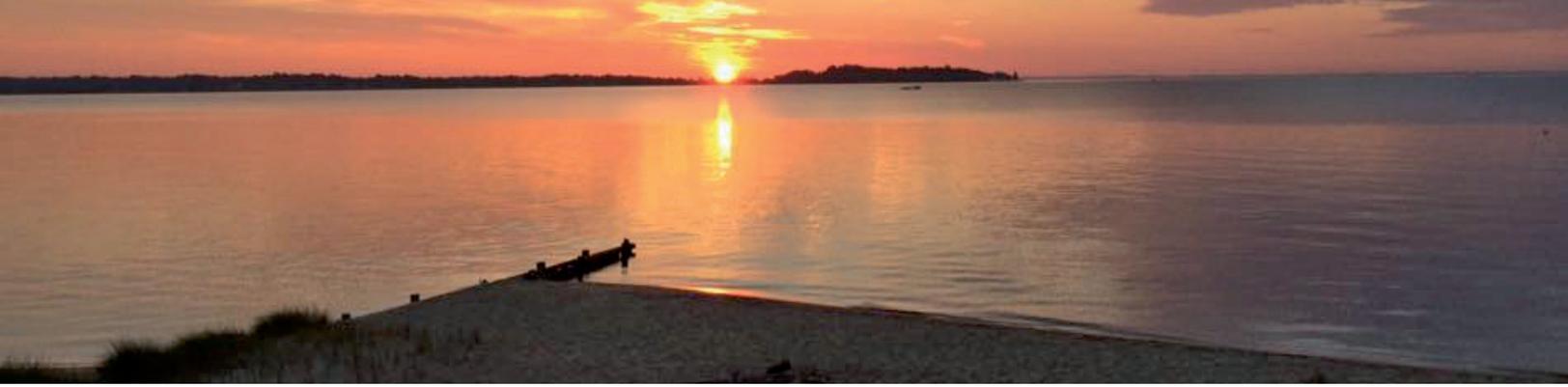
Envision Mayo Process

- ✓ Reviewed existing 2002 Small Area Plan.
- ✓ Discussed values we associate with life on the Mayo peninsula.
- ✓ Identified issues/concerns affecting peninsula residents and quality of life.
- ✓ Discussed impediments to overcoming them and identified potential solutions.
- ✓ Created "2030" vision of Mayo community and quality-of-life objectives.
- ✓ Described growth and development to overcome impediments and achieve 2030 vision/values.

The 2002 Vision for 2030

Envision Mayo participants reviewed the 2002 Small Area Plan and found that the community's vision statement – produced 15 years ago – still apply. Here's a re-cap:

- The county and community manage collaborative programs designed to protect and preserve the delicate balance of life and health of the rivers and creeks.
- The only access road to the peninsula — State Route 214 — is a tree-lined, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly road. (Safe, convenient pedestrian and bicycle access is provided all along the peninsula.)
- Improvements to safety on Route 214 include shoulders, widening of intersections and turn lanes.
- Communities are well served by emergency and public safety services.
- Development has not been allowed to unduly stress aquifers and cause salt water intrusion.
- The loss of trees and forested areas has been limited, as well as the fragmentation of large forest tracts.
- Development practices protect and enhance open space and forest and minimize impact to sensitive areas.
- The Critical Area Law and other wetlands regulations are adhered to strictly.
- Stormwater management is improved so that cumulative impacts of land use changes are fully addressed prior to their implementation.
- A minimum 100-foot forested buffer is preserved or restored where possible along the edge of rivers and beside perennial and intermittent streams.
- Use of parks in the Resource Conservation Areas is limited to passive activities to keep land disturbance to a minimum.



Envision Mayo participants helped to expand this vision for their community in 2030:

Mayo is a safe, vibrant, quiet, and connected community. Growth has been managed to respect and emphasize the community's connection to the water and wildlife, nature, our history and culture, and each other. A system of walking trails and bicycle paths was created to connect residents and communities to appropriately scaled stores, restaurants, and parks and to provide opportunities for exercise and places to interact. Wildlife habitat and travel corridors connecting wildlife on the peninsula and in surrounding areas have been restored to bring back fish and wildlife in areas where their demise was imminent.

A Mayo Community Center provides a place for residents and visitors to meet, attend special events, shop at a weekly farmers' and watermens' market, and explore displays that highlight the area's historical, cultural, and natural resources, including the history of people who have lived and worked on the peninsula and drawn sustenance from its land and waters.

The loss of Mayo's remaining forest was checked and investments were made in restoring degraded shorelines and disturbed habitats. Headwater areas for the streams flowing into the South, West, and Rhode Rivers were preserved. And, through land conservation and restoration efforts and a "no net loss" requirement to mitigate land disturbance activities on the peninsula, water quality in the surrounding waterways is improving.

The public enjoys Mayo parks, managed through a cooperative plan that defines the appropriate scale and usage of each park to minimize negative impacts to natural resources and traffic congestion. Through an innovative partnership with local marinas, private boat ramps were made available for launching boats on the peninsula at a discounted rate, providing more business for local marinas and limiting additional disturbance to shorelines where aquatic grasses are being planted to improve water quality.

Schools serving Mayo consistently accommodate students with no threat of overcrowding. Additional traffic that comes with morning and afternoon rush hours is alleviated by improvements in the area of its intersection with Loch Haven Drive. Emergency response times have improved thanks to a two-bay emergency substation now located on the peninsula, with an ambulance and fire truck. A bike lane extends the length of the peninsula (with gas and electric lines buried beneath it) and provides emergency vehicles with passage when needed.



Concerns & Strategies

Achieving such a vision, or one similar to it, depends on addressing a number of current challenges and creating a comprehensive, pro-active plan for sustainable growth and development. Support and leadership from county officials is critical. Mayo residents have identified their greatest concerns — and ideas for addressing them — as follows.

1. Health and safety

- a) Emergency response times are longer than the recommended national average.

Add a substation on the peninsula for fire and EMS services. Note: a part-time substation for EMS only has been added on a trial basis off of Loch Haven Road.

- b) Concern for adequacy and quality of groundwater supplies. Wells are failing and contaminants such as arsenic have been identified in select areas.

Assure aquifers are adequate to support added development. Ensure that water quality information is updated and communicated to residents.

- c) Roadways lack shoulder/safe areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

Create a bike lane and/or a connected network of walking and biking trails. Address cyclist and pedestrian safety issues along the curve and roadway approaching Beverly-Triton park.

- d) Frequent road flooding and no plans to deal with sea level rise.

Identify steps to minimize climate impacts on flooded roads, septic systems, shorelines and wells.

- e) Some homes on the peninsula experience backflows of sewage into their basement during heavy rains.

Upgrade pumps and improve the system to prevent leaks and backflows during heavy rains and floods.

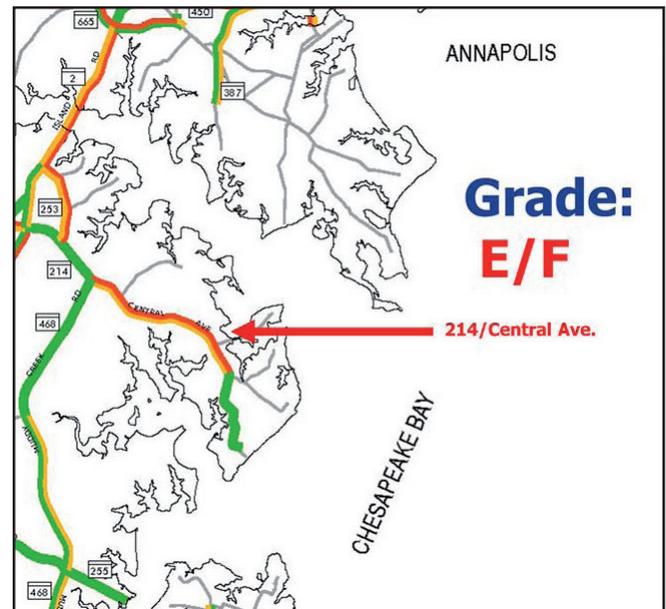
2. Infrastructure/transportation

- a) Inadequate road system leading to frequent traffic delays, congestion, accidents.

Supporting infrastructure should be planned in advance of anticipated development. Seek solutions with community input to improve safety and alleviate traffic congestion on the peninsula, especially near the Loch Haven intersection. Make only conservative additions to parking areas at Mayo parks.

- b) Frequent power outages due to inadequate maintenance of overhead lines.

Bury future utilities to limit future power losses, preferably under a bike lane.

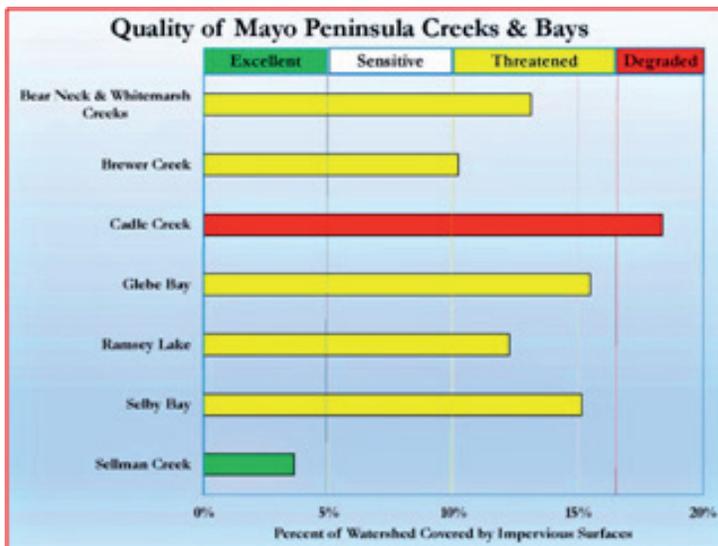




3. Parks/natural areas

- a) Expansion of parks will increase traffic and impacts to the natural resources, in addition to impacts from existing sites such as the Carr's Wharf fishing pier and boat ramp and Glebe Heights dog park.

Plan for a system of parks that complement each other. Carefully plan for park capacity with regard to its full range of impacts. Retain natural and targeted environmental areas and each park's character (e.g., Beverly-Triton as a nature area and Mayo Beach for swimming). Limit development of natural areas at South River Farm Park and Beverly-Triton Park as passive recreation areas. Create a comprehensive environmental restoration and management plan for South River Farm Park and Beverly-Triton park.



4. Environment

- a) Increased impervious surfaces will worsen polluted stormwater runoff.

Enforce the enacted codes and set a goal to create no increase in runoff from new development (often referred to as "no-net-loss" of stormwater from a site). Improve regulations to require more pervious surfaces where possible, including in parks.

Develop a comprehensive plan for addressing stormwater runoff from all anticipated development, deforestation, and anticipated increases in impervious surfaces on the peninsula to support the legally mandated role that Anne Arundel County must play in the regional Bay clean-up effort.

- b) Development will accelerate loss of forests/wetlands and may provide inadequate mitigation.

Require effective mitigation, to be located on the peninsula, to offset any forest or wetland loss. Enforce laws to conserve lands in the Critical Area. Encourage plans that retain forests and wetlands. Investigate options for conservation easements or Transferable Development Rights programs. Avoid development in headwater areas and establish a minimum 100-foot buffer for all streams that feed into the South, West and Rhode Rivers and associated wetlands.

- c) Maintain existing wetlands, wildlife habitat, and connectivity with surrounding natural areas. Ensure that the county submits required reports on resident, threatened, and endangered wildlife in the state-defined Critical Area of the Mayo Peninsula.

Encourage plans that retain forests and wetlands, working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Smithsonian Environmental Research Center to identify important habitat area and support habitat for species that migrate between Mayo and adjacent Smithsonian land. Investigate options for conservation easements or Transferable Development Rights programs. Protect and restore highly erodible lands, shorelines, and wetlands on the peninsula.



5. Growth and Development

- a) Accelerated pace of development is taking place without adequate infrastructure in place.

Produce a comprehensive study of the infrastructure needed to support current and anticipated growth; the study should be conducted in full transparency with active and meaningful public participation.

Use the study results to review and revise impact fees to cover the real impacts to peninsula residents and the environment. Set fees to encourage building in preferred locations and to discourage in sensitive areas.

- b) Communities lack notification/information to understand impacts of new development.

Improve the county's internal information systems and require pro-active and timely outreach to communities with opportunities for public participation in plans as new development is proposed. Treat our community as a partner in planning for growth, with the community's vision in mind and not solely the developers' desires.

- c) Frequent variances are granted from existing zoning requirements.

The county should develop a transparent process to inform the public of requested variances in the Critical Area in reasonable advance of hearings that will determine whether the variances will be granted. Variances in the Critical Area should be avoided and, when granted, should be rare, rather than the rule.

- d) The existing Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances fail to achieve their intended goals, and current building codes fail to account for the environmental fragility and limited emergency ingress/egress on peninsulas.

Enforce the existing APFOs. Revise the APFOs to cover the full costs of development and revise the APFOs and/or create an overlay in the building code that addresses issues specific to peninsulas.

6. Community Character

- a) Create an active community center, preferably using an existing or historic building.
- b) Improve communications between neighborhood associations.
- c) Improve Mayo representation on committees and in processes at the community, county, and state levels.





Moving Forward

A Visible, Active Community

The key to achieving these goals, or others that may be identified in the future, is meaningful public participation. We must continue asking for plans and policies that are shaped in true partnership with people they affect and hold our elected leaders accountable for encouraging this partnership. County departments should proactively inform and engage the public in all aspects of land use development and project planning. We invite the county to consider developing a partnership and process for working with the Mayo community to serve as a pilot project illustrating how to improve the planning and development process for all Anne Arundel communities.

We should also do our part: research the problems, listen to different perspectives, learn from those who've worked on these issues in the past, monitor development projects and their impacts, and share what we learn with others. And, of course, we should continue to speak up — by writing letters, making phone calls, attending meetings and doing a better job of communicating with county leadership, elected officials, and each other. Mayo is a great community, with lots of talent, energy and ideas. We encourage you to make your views known and to take an active role in helping to shape the future of our community.

About Neighbors of the Mayo Peninsula

The Neighbors of the Mayo Peninsula is a volunteer group that formed in 2016 to raise awareness and take action on issues that impact quality of life on the peninsula. There are lots of ways to be involved.

Sign up for the newsletter at

www.

NeighborsoftheMayoPeninsula.org

Email us at NeighborsofMayo@gmail.com.

