



Characteristics of Farms and Farmland

This study is based primarily on the U.S. Census of Agriculture data. Additional sources include farmland data from the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Maryland Department of Planning, and Prince George’s Soil Conservation District, as well as Maryland Equine Census data. Interviews with local farmers and experts familiar with the county also provided information to present a comprehensive picture of agriculture in Prince George’s County.

The analysis of Prince George’s County data from the last three censuses of agriculture reveals a significant loss of farmland and an overall decline in agriculture between 1992 and 2002 (see Table 1). Due to changes in definitions and lack of data in some categories, not all data can be compared. However, this shortcoming does not affect the general conclusion based on the 2002 census that traditional agriculture is no longer economically viable in the county.

The most striking finding from the census data is a clear demonstration of development pressure on farmland. Chart 1 shows a comparison between the average estimated market value of farmland and buildings and the average market value of agricultural products sold from all farms in the county over two time

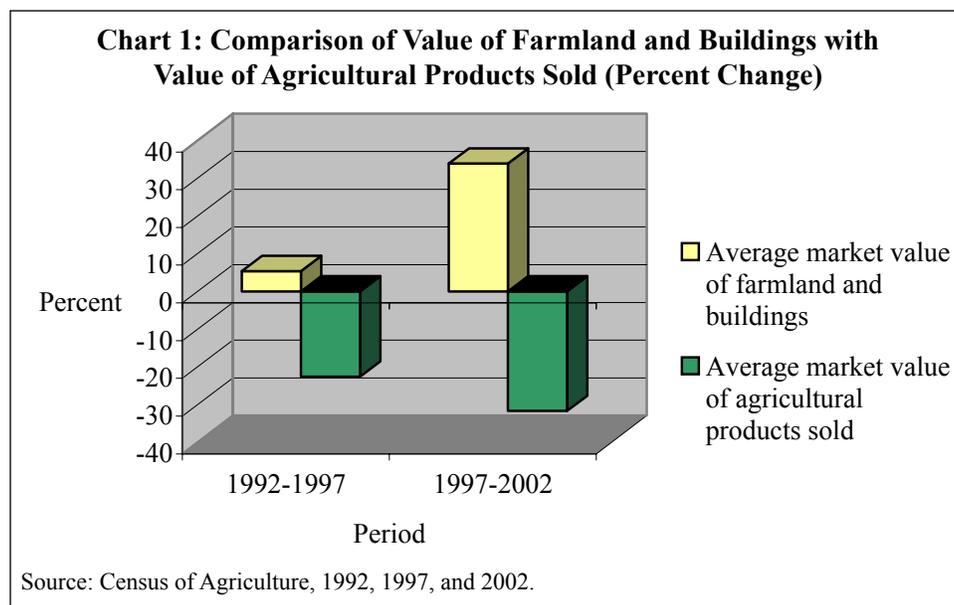


Table 1: Agriculture in Prince George's County					Change	Percent Change	Change	Percent Change	Change	Percent Change
	1992*	1997*	2002		1992-1997	1992-1997	1997-2002	1997-2002	1992-2002	1992-2002
Number of farms	551	526	452		-25	-4.5%	-74	-14.1%	-99	-18.0%
Land in farms (acres)	54,459	49,257	45,462		-5,202	-9.6%	-3,795	-7.7%	-8,997	-16.5%
Percent of land in farms	17.5%	15.8%	14.6%							
Average size of farm (acres)	99	94	101		-5	-5.1%	7	7.4%	2	2.0%
Estimated market value of land and buildings										
average per farm	\$491,936	\$518,746	\$694,515		\$26,810	5.4%	\$175,769	33.9%	\$202,579	41.2%
average per acre	\$4,884	\$5,663	\$6,531		\$779	16.0%	\$868	15.3%	\$1,647	33.7%
Total cropland										
farms	517	480	388		-37	-7.2%	-92	-19.2%	-129	-25.0%
acres	32,325	28,192	23,805		-4,133	-12.8%	-4,387	-15.6%	-8,520	-26.4%
Harvested cropland										
farms	468	424	334		-44	-9.4%	-90	-21.2%	-134	-28.6%
acres	24,211	20,212	17,266		-3,999	-16.5%	-2,946	-14.6%	-6,945	-28.7%
Cropland used for pasture and grazing										
farms	NA	184	154				-30	-16.3%		
acres	4,070	4,636	2,697		566	13.9%	-1,939	-41.8%	-1,373	-33.7%
Total woodland										
farms	NA	281	238				-43	-15.3%		
acres	15,970	14,204	13,620		-1,766	-11.1%	-584	-4.1%	-2,350	-14.7%
Market value of agricultural products sold										
in \$1,000	\$28,169	\$20,807	\$12,208		-\$7,362	-26.1%	-\$8,599	-41.3%	-\$15,961	-56.7%
average per farm	\$51,122	\$39,557	\$27,009		-\$11,565	-22.6%	-\$12,548	-31.7%	-\$24,113	-47.2%
by type of commodity in \$1,000										
Crops	\$12,799	\$18,591	10,526		\$5,792	45.3	\$-8,065	-43.4	-\$2,273	-17.8
Grains	\$3,183	NA	D							
Tobacco	\$2,541	D	\$218						-\$2,323	-91.4%
Vegetables	\$6,163	NA	\$1,903						-\$4,260	-69.1%
Fruits	\$509	\$303	\$212		-\$206	-40.5%	-\$91	-30.0%	-\$297	-58.4%
Nursery and greenhouse products	\$12,953	N/A	D							
Livestock and poultry	\$2,416	\$2,216	\$1,682		-\$200	-8.3%	-\$534	-24.1%	-\$734	-30.4%
Tenure										
Full owners										
farms	362	341	322		-21	-5.8%	-19	-5.6%	-40	-11.0%
acres	NA	27,699	25,757				-1,942	-7.0%		
Part owners										
farms	125	126	96		1	0.8%	-30	-23.8%	-29	-23.2%
acres	NA	15,809	13,706				-2,103	-13.3%		

Tenants	farms	64	59	34	-5	-7.8%	-25	-42.4%	-30	-46.9%
	acres	NA	5,749	5,999			250	4.3%		
Principal operator characteristics										
Sex of operator										
Male		NA	451	391			-60	-13.3%		
Female		NA	75	61			-14	-18.7%		
Place of residence										
On farm operated		NA	395	344			-51	-12.9%		
Not on farm operated		NA	94	108			14	14.9%		
Primary occupation										
Farming		256	214	250	-42	-16.4%	36	16.8%	-6	-2.3%
Other		295	312	202	17	5.8%	-110	-35.3%	-93	-31.5%
Days worked off farm										
None		191	198	244	7	3.7%	46	23.2%	53	27.7%
Any		321	299	208	-22	-6.9%	-91	-30.4%	-113	-35.2%
Selected crops harvested										
Corn for grain										
	farms	102	81	63	-21	-20.6%	-18	-22.2%	-39	-38.2%
	acres	7,532	4,427	4,811	-3,105	-41.2%	384	8.7%	-2,721	-36.1%
Wheat for grain										
	farms	47	32	29	-15	-31.9%	-3	-9.4%	-18	-38.3%
	acres	2,038	1,671	1,587	-367	-18.0%	-84	-5.0%	-451	-22.1%
Soybeans for beans										
	farms	96	97	66	1	1.0%	-31	-32.0%	-30	-31.3%
	acres	6,266	5,731	5,233	-535	-8.5%	-498	-8.7%	-1,033	-16.5%
Tobacco										
	farms	146	94	24	-52	-35.6%	-70	-74.5%	-122	-83.6%
	acres	1,046	791	98	-255	-24.4%	-693	-87.6%	-948	-90.6%
Forage (Hay)**										
	farms	151	147	147	-4	-2.6%	0	0.0%	-4	-2.6%
	acres	3,706	4,544	3,855	838	22.6%	-689	-15.2%	149	4.0%
Vegetables harvested for sale										
	farms	92	63	51	-29	-31.5%	-12	-19.0%	-41	-44.6%
	acres	3,269	1,851	1,177	-1,418	-43.4%	-674	-36.4%	-2,092	-64.0%
* All values are in 2002 constant dollars.										
** Forage (2002) and Hay (1992 and 1997)										
D - Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.										
NA - Not available or not published.										
Source: Census of Agriculture, 1992, 1997, 2002.										

periods. The average market value of farmland and buildings increased 41.2 percent between 1992 and 2002, while the average market value of agricultural products sold decreased 47.2 percent during the same period. The increase in the average market value of farmland and buildings during the period from 1997 to 2002 was six times greater than the increase between 1992 and 1997.

Farm and farmland data are collected by various agencies in addition to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Each agency has a different definition of a farm, which creates discrepancies in data on the number of farms and/or the amount of farmland.

While the 2002 Census of Agriculture data indicates 452 farms and 45,462 acres of farmland for the county, the Prince George's Soil Conservation District data identifies 1,679 farms and 63,816 acres for 2003. The former database includes only private farms with earnings of \$1,000 or more, while the latter includes all farmland, regardless of ownership and earnings. Fifty-seven publicly owned 57 farms and two farms owned by nonprofit organizations comprising 15,013 and 300 acres, respectively, are included in this database.

The State Department of Assessments and Taxation identifies land that is actively devoted to farm or agricultural use. These lands are subject to an agricultural use assessment for tax purposes. Maps 1 and 2 show agriculturally assessed land in the county as of 1992 and 2002, respectively. In 1992, the total amount of this land



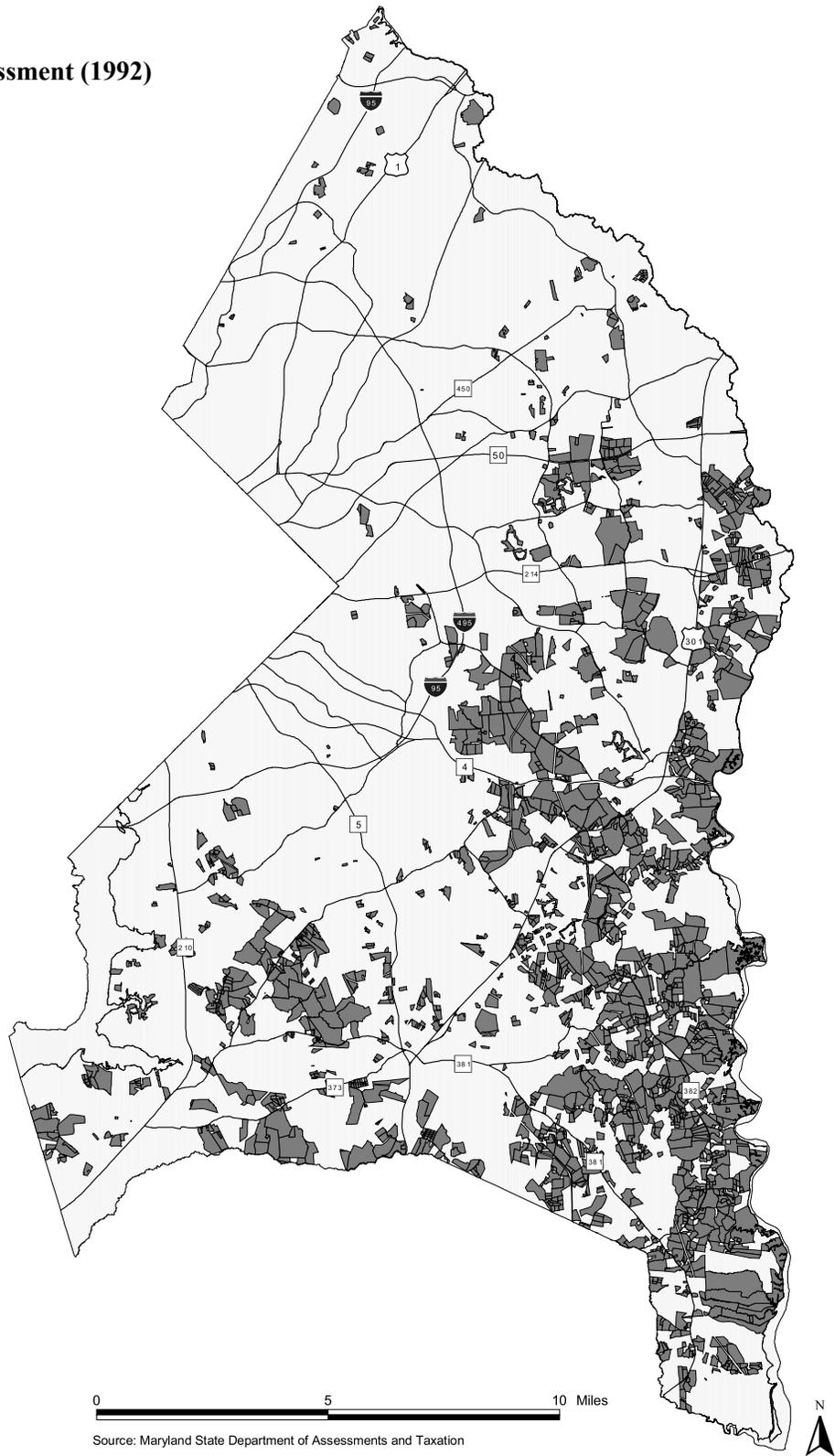


was 72,758 acres. This figure dropped to 61,716 acres in 2002. The amount of farmland lost based on this database is similar to the census data. Both show that about 10,000 acres were lost to development.

The Maryland Department of Planning's land use and land cover database provides information on different kinds of farmland use. As of 2002, total agricultural land was 43,039 acres. This figure does not include woodlands or wetlands. Cropland and pasture comprised 31,000 and 11,000 acres of this land, respectively. Map 3 shows the breakdown of farmland by use in 2002. The bulk of the Rural Tier, especially in the southeastern portion of the county, has significant amounts of cropland and some other agricultural land, including pasture. When this map is compared to Map 4, showing cropland and other agricultural land in 1991, it is observed that the bulk of the farmland lost was outside the Rural Tier. Two significant losses in the Rural Tier are east of US 301 around Central Avenue (MD 214) and east of Croom Road (MD 382) around Marlton.

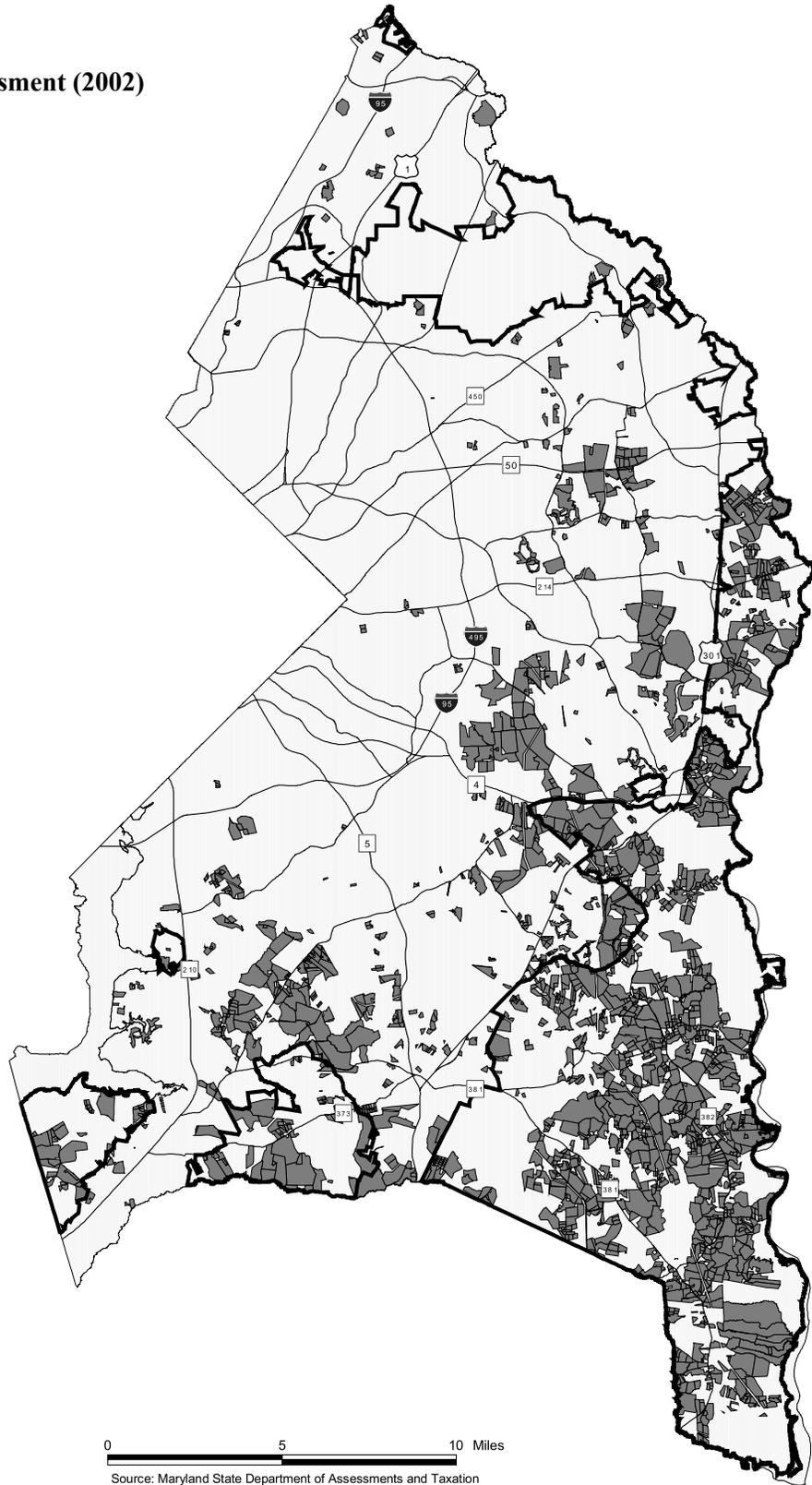
**Map 1:
Land Subject to
Agricultural Use Assessment (1992)**

 Agriculturally Assessed Land



**Map 2:
Land Subject to
Agricultural Use Assessment (2002)**

-  Rural Tier
-  Agriculturally Assessed Land

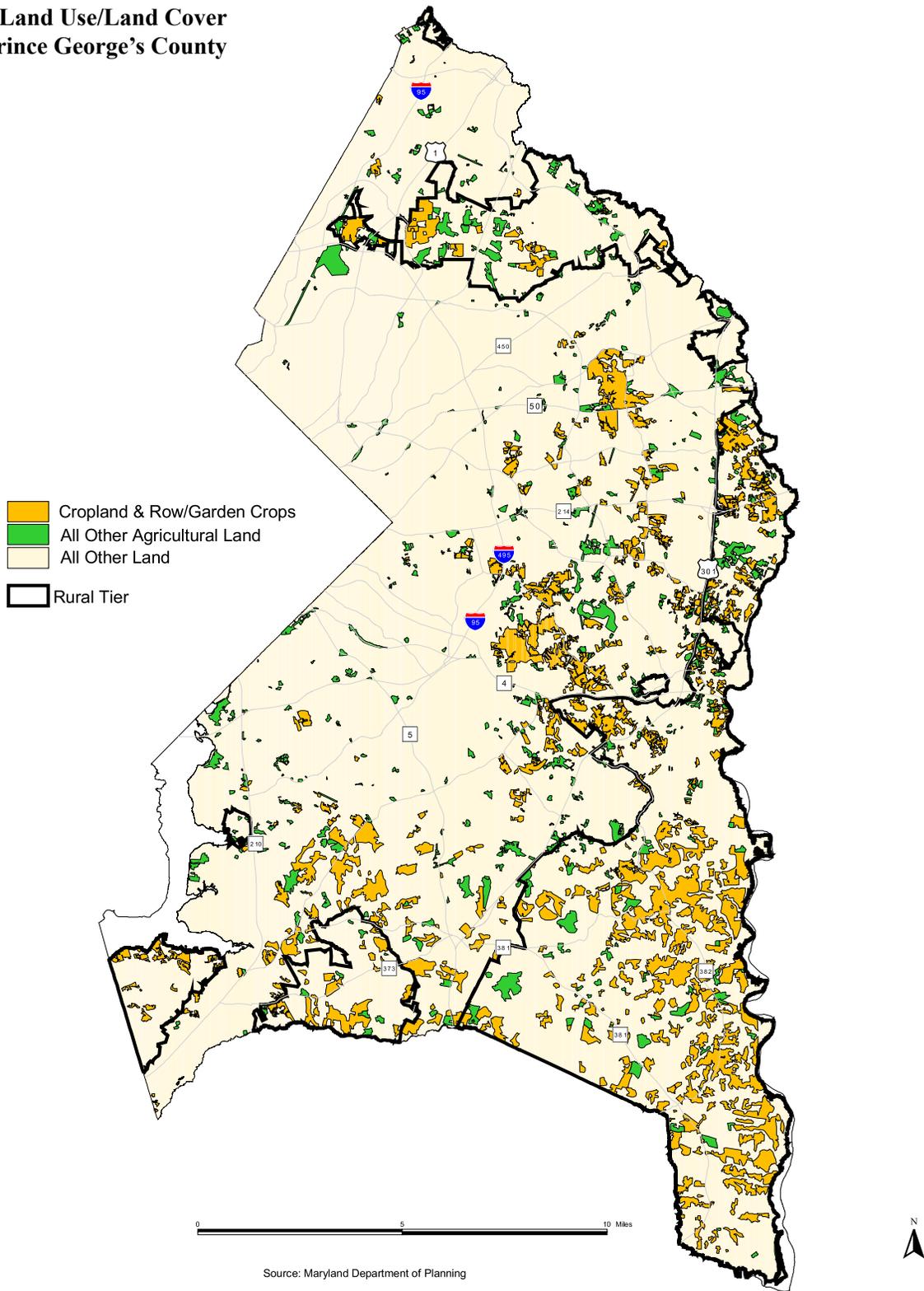


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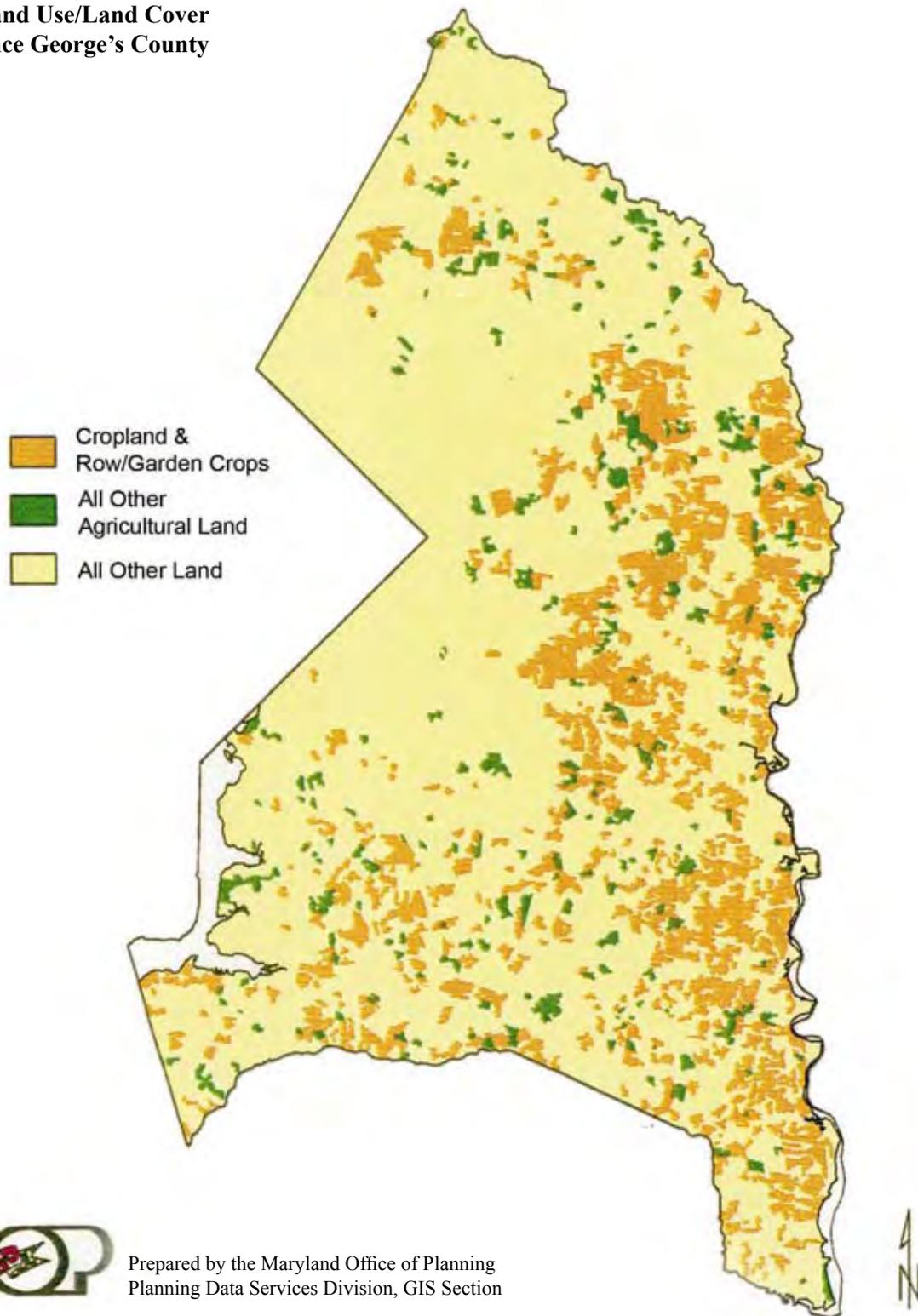
Source: Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation



Map 3:
2002 Land Use/Land Cover
for Prince George's County



Map 4:
1991 Land Use/Land Cover
for Prince George's County



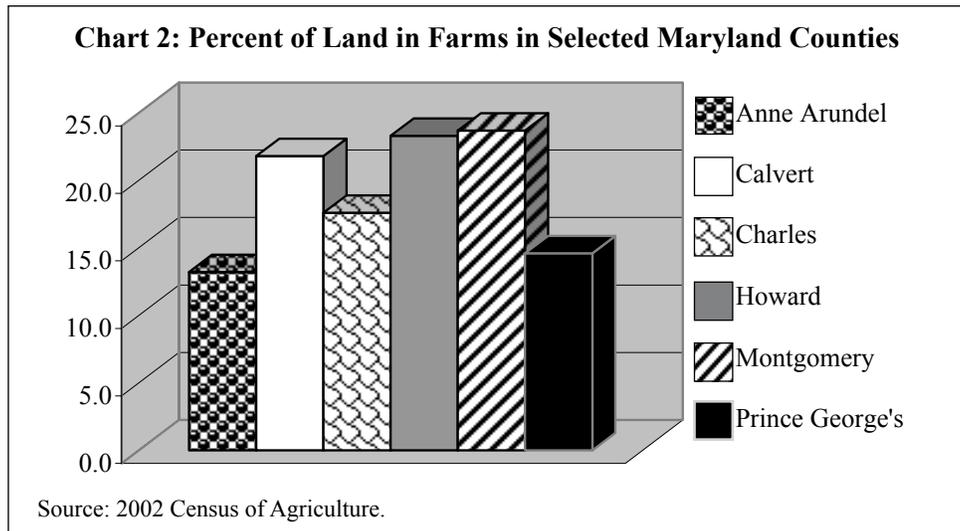
Comparison with Adjoining Counties

Despite the development pressure and sharp decline in farmland, Prince George’s County still has considerable agricultural land. Table 2 shows farm and farmland statistics for Prince George’s County and its five adjoining counties and totals for the state of Maryland. Prince George’s County has over 45,000 acres of farmland, which is 2.1 percent of Maryland’s farmland. Two other neighboring counties have more farmland than Prince George’s County.

Table 2: Farm and Farmland in Selected Maryland Counties and the State of Maryland					
Jurisdiction	Number of Farms	Land in Farms (Acres)	Average Farm Size (Acres)	Percent of Land in Farms	Percent of Maryland Farmland
Prince George’s	452	45,462	101	14.6	2.1
Anne Arundel	432	35,218	82	13.2	1.6
Calvert	321	30,032	94	21.8	1.4
Charles	418	52,056	125	17.6	2.4
Howard	346	37,582	109	23.3	1.7
Montgomery	577	75,077	130	23.7	3.4
Maryland	12,198	2,193,063	180	35.1	100.0

Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture.

When the percent of land in farms is examined, Prince George’s County is ranked second to last among these jurisdictions. Chart 2 illustrates how Prince George’s County lags behind. Counties with successful agricultural preservation programs such as Montgomery, Howard, and Calvert, all have over 20 percent of their land in farms. These data suggest that if Prince George’s County adopts an agricultural preservation program, it is possible to save a significant amount of farmland before it is all lost to development.



Equine Census

Another source of data related to agriculture is the 2002 Maryland Equine Census. Table 3 shows the results of the equine census by county. Prince George's County is in fourth place in the state in terms of both number and value of equine inventory. The county has the seventh largest total equine-related acres and ranks ninth in both number of equine places and number of people involved. The horse industry is certainly becoming an important part of agriculture in Prince George's County.

Counties	Total Equine Inventory (number)	Total Value of Equine Inventory (1,000 dollars)	Number of Equine Places	Total Equine Related Acres	Total Number of People Involved*
Maryland Total	87,100	680,240	20,200	206,000	38,000
Baltimore	10,630	121,800	2,100	31,200	4,200
Montgomery	8,470	60,555	2,590	17,700	4,070
Frederick	8,290	47,310	2,180	22,000	3,570
Prince George's	7,420	63,610	1,170	11,700	1,860
Harford	7,390	73,115	1,360	18,400	2,160
Cecil	6,580	68,345	900	15,300	1,580
Carroll	5,730	31,735	1,290	14,700	2,430
Howard	5,190	61,265	1,200	11,200	2,280
Anne Arundel	4,590	27,035	1,330	8,900	2,320
Washington	4,460	12,295	1,560	10,200	4,090
Saint Mary's	2,710	7,540	620	8,600	1,510
Wicomico	2,260	9,860	650	4,400	1,200
Queen Anne's	2,000	18,070	300	3,800	550
Talbot	1,930	8,375	700	4,200	1,600
Charles	1,640	7,375	490	4,300	1,110
Kent	1,610	29,025	170	4,000	410
Calvert	1,510	9,980	420	3,500	750
Garrett	1,410	2,900	370	3,400	820
Caroline	1,310	7,290	260	3,300	530
Worcester	960	5,995	180	2,200	330
Dorchester	460	5,280	160	1,200	240
Somerset	280	800	80	500	130
Allegany	270	685	120	1,300	240
<i>*Excludes hired labor</i>					
Source: Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Horse Industry Board, and Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service, <i>Maryland Equine</i> , 2002.					



Summary of Interview Findings

Interviews conducted with state and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and more than 20 local farmers offer insight into why traditional farming is declining in Prince George's County. The following is a summary of these findings.



The average age of farmers in the county is over 60. Due to economic reasons, subsequent generations are often not interested in farming. However, there is evidence that new, young, small-scale farming entrepreneurs are moving into the county. These farmers usually purchase small farms to work on part-time while maintaining full-time, off-farm jobs.



Farming costs are increasing due in part to the rising cost of fuel and its impact on farm production input expenses. Crop prices have not, however, kept pace with production costs, causing farmers to experience diminishing returns.



Due to the decrease in farming in the county, certain services are no longer available locally. This adds to the cost to obtain materials and services.



Some farmers farm on multiple noncontiguous parcels throughout the county, which involves considerable expense and danger to move equipment on increasingly congested roads. Further development will exacerbate this problem.



Farming is a difficult lifestyle. Typically farmers do not have health, retirement, or disability benefits. Benefits such as these require supplemental income or assistance from other sources.



Farmland is often seen as a source of retirement income. Once farmers reach retirement age, they often sell their land to developers.



Farmers desire to draw the equity out of their land at a fair market value while continuing to live on the land and preserving it for farming.



Some farmers consider the tobacco buyout program as the urbanization act for Maryland. Although the majority of tobacco farmers took advantage of this program, which required them to cease tobacco farming but to continue in agricultural production for ten years, many old-time farmers found it difficult to switch to alternative crops or nursery operation. Reluctance to learn new farming techniques leads many farmers to sell their land to developers.



There is virtually no networking or organizing among farmers. Due to the lack of successful marketing, the profitability of agriculture is significantly limited.



Vegetable growers are not protected by the federal government's price support programs, as are grain producers. Therefore, traditional farmers are hesitant to switch to vegetable production.