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# *Getting Good Growth*



***Queen Anne's  
County Is  
Growing Fast –***

***But Is It  
Growing Right?***

***Look Inside...***

Printed on recycled paper.  
September 2005

# *Getting Good Growth for Queen Anne's County*

The mission of Queen Anne's Conservation Association is to promote stewardship of our natural resources. We recognize that an informed citizenry is the most important resource of all.



*Dear Queen Anne's County Citizen:*

*We, the concerned members and supporters of the Queen Anne's Conservation Association, have worked for decades to promote stewardship of our County's magnificent natural resources. In the 1970's the threat we confronted was a nuclear facility near Centreville. Today the threat is excessive, inappropriate growth.*

*Overwhelmingly, polls and election results show that the citizens want to save our County from bad growth. We value deeply the way of life that is still possible here—but somehow we don't seem to get the leadership that will secure it for us.*

*Next year is an election year when, once again, we will have the opportunity to choose five County Commissioners. How can we be better judges of which candidates, once in office, will be effective in dealing with the tremendous growth pressure we face?*

*The candidates ought to tell the citizens—clearly, specifically, and honestly—how they will act on the issues raised by growth. But to make this happen, we citizens have to do our part. We must be informed.*

*We must ask good, tough questions of the candidates, and pay close attention to their answers. We must vote, in our party's primary as well as in the general election, only for those candidates who have shown us that they understand the issues and will make the right decisions.*

*Here are some of the critical issues as they relate to [Good Growth](#). Look for additional mailings in the coming days. Please read these letters carefully, compare them to what the pro-development groups are saying, and be prepared to make informed decisions at the polls next year.*

*Sincerely,*

**Queen Anne's Conservation Association**

# Getting Good Growth for Queen Anne's County

Queen Anne's County is growing  
—fast:

- On Kent Island: a green light for large-scale subdivisions with 2000 more houses, a new sewer plant under construction with capacity for up to another 5000 houses
- In the North County: 1700 perc tests in the last two years for new residential developments scattered over our farmlands
- In the Towns: town officials under siege from developers seeking annexations, thousands of new houses, millions of square feet of commercial development

Some say growth is inevitable.

But inevitable or not, growth in Queen Anne's County does **not** have to be too much too fast. It does **not** have to consist entirely of unaffordable houses. It does **not** have to be ugly. It does **not** have to be in all the wrong places.

Whatever one thinks about growth, surely we can agree that **bad** growth is **not** inevitable.

How can we achieve **Good Growth**? Here are six steps to get us there:

Photo by Rick Darke



## **GOOD GROWTH IS:**

**steady growth at the County's historic rate—not accelerated growth that destabilizes communities**

## **GOOD GROWTH IS:**

**growth that creates homes for our own young families and public service providers—not growth that makes our County a pricey suburb for the very rich.**

The Commissioners elected in 2002 promised us that they would manage the County's residential growth, but they haven't. Instead, they've congratulated themselves on a temporary decline in applications for County building permits (which they had nothing to do with)—while allowing the development pipeline to be stuffed full of subdivisions that will pour out unprecedented numbers of new houses after they're gone from office. They've had almost three years to enact a **Growth Management Ordinance** to ensure that going forward, total County growth, inside the towns and out, will not exceed the historic average of 400 new houses per year. So far they haven't gotten the job done, and soon we'll start paying the price. What will the candidates for election in 2006 have to say to us on this subject?

Our County has an impressively detailed affordable housing program, but, typically, it asks far too little of the developers. We're overdue for a **Serious Affordable Housing** program for Queen Anne's County. Developers are making enormous profits here. They should be required, whenever they develop five (5) units anywhere (not 20 in "growth areas" or 60 outside them), to construct, on site or elsewhere, a "moderately priced dwelling unit" as defined in the law. That could well mean that the developer will have to sell the one affordable unit at a price below his cost of buying the land and building the unit—but he'll more than make that up on his profits from the other five units. Will there be candidates in 2006 who are serious about affordable housing?

### GOOD GROWTH IS:

growth that reflects the character and heritage of the Eastern Shore—not growth that turns us into Anywhere, USA.

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### GOOD GROWTH IS:

growth that puts Centreville, our County seat, in the same league with Chestertown and Easton—not growth that strangles it with disconnected subdivisions and strip malls.

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We should not be getting Western Shore suburban development—big-box houses on featureless sites, isolated cul-de-sac developments, strip malls of look-alike franchises. But we are. We have a Planning Commission of businessmen and developers and a Planning and Zoning Department with no design competence. We need to add to the development approval process a **Development Design Review Board**, made up of citizens engaged in historic preservation and landscape design, active in arts and crafts, alive to the natural and man-made beauty of our surroundings. Then, and only then, we will get development that isn't steadily making this special place into one more endless, anonymous suburb.

It really could happen: the people, not the developers, could determine how Centreville will grow. Working together in the community planning process, County and Town could commit to **Traditional Neighborhood Design for Centreville**. As part of this approach, they could adopt an Official Map for Centreville—a grid or pattern of streets, legally binding on developers and mapped in advance, that would connect neighborhoods, make walking safe and front porches worth having, route heavy traffic around the town, and, in all, make a future, larger Centreville worthy of its historic center.

## GOOD GROWTH IS:

**growth that is compatible with farming, our dominant land use—not growth that drives agriculture out of Queen Anne’s County.**

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Dense residential subdivisions and farming don’t mix. That’s why our basic agricultural zoning allows only one residence per twenty (20) acres. But, as usual, the special interests have been at work, and loopholes allow developers to increase density to as much as one unit per two (2) acres! A program that would enable farmers to sell development rights from their farms to developers in non-agricultural “growth areas” has been structured so that in practice the developers never need to buy the rights. So we’re well on our way to destroying agriculture in Queen Anne’s County.

### **Reform of Agricultural Zoning**

is a top priority. What we have now, as the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy has pointed out, are “the weakest rural zoning standards of any Eastern Shore county north of the Nanticoke River”.

## GOOD GROWTH IS:

**growth that preserves the “Island Character” of Kent Island—not growth that sinks this still beautiful place into a sea of congestion, pollution, and crime.**

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In 2003-04 a citizens’ advisory committee (CAC) worked hard to plan a future for Kent Island that would shrink over-large “growth areas” (reducing potential residential development by over 3000 units), reserve land for business development, preserve rural and shoreline areas, encourage reforestation, and respect traditional neighborhood design. The **CAC’s Vision for Kent Island** reflects the values of the people who live there. The County’s planners and zoners should have respect for those values and that Vision. What will be the response of the 2006 Commissioner candidates to the CAC’s Vision? ◆

***We’ll have more to say about the special issues facing Kent Island in our next mailing.***



*Photo by Jobby Wilkes*

**Questions? Further Information?**  
**Contact us at [qaca@atlanticbb.net](mailto:qaca@atlanticbb.net)**