



**STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022**  
**WICOMICO COUNTY,**  
**MARYLAND**

**Prepared for:**  
Wicomico County Executive and  
Wicomico County Council

# WICOMICO COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wicomico County, Maryland was founded in 1867 with land from portions of Somerset and Worcester Counties. The county is located in the southeastern part of the State of Maryland, near the center of the Delmarva Peninsula. It is situated between: the Nanticoke River, which runs along the western border of the County; the Wicomico River and Wicomico Creek, which portions of these waterbodies run along the southern border of the County; and the Pocomoke River that forms the eastern boundary of the County. The County is named after the Wicomico River and the Native American words wicko mekee, meaning “a place where houses are built,” referring to a small Native American town on the banks of the river.

Wicomico County consists of approximately 400 square miles, of which approximately 23 square miles is water. The County contains two incorporated cities: Salisbury and Fruitland, and six incorporated towns: Delmar, Hebron, Mardela Springs, Pittsville, Sharptown, and Willards. The City of Salisbury serves as the county seat of Wicomico County.

## STATUTORY AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

A Home Rule Charter was adopted in 1964 and until December 2006, the County was governed by an elected seven-member council. Under the Home Rule Charter, the County Council decided the public policies and enacted local laws. It determined what services were provided locally and established the local tax rates. The County Council also created and oversaw the departments, offices and personnel of the county government.

In November 2004, the voters elected a Council-Executive form of government. This form of government is completely different than the Home Rule Charter that was adopted in 1964. The first County Executive was elected in November 2006 and took office in December 2006.

The County now operates as a Council-Executive form of government. The County Executive oversees the executive branch of County government that consists of a number of offices and departments. The executive branch is charged with implementing County law and overseeing the operations of County Government. The legislative functions of government are vested in the County Council. The County

Council consists of seven members, five of whom are elected from voting districts and the other two are elected at-large.

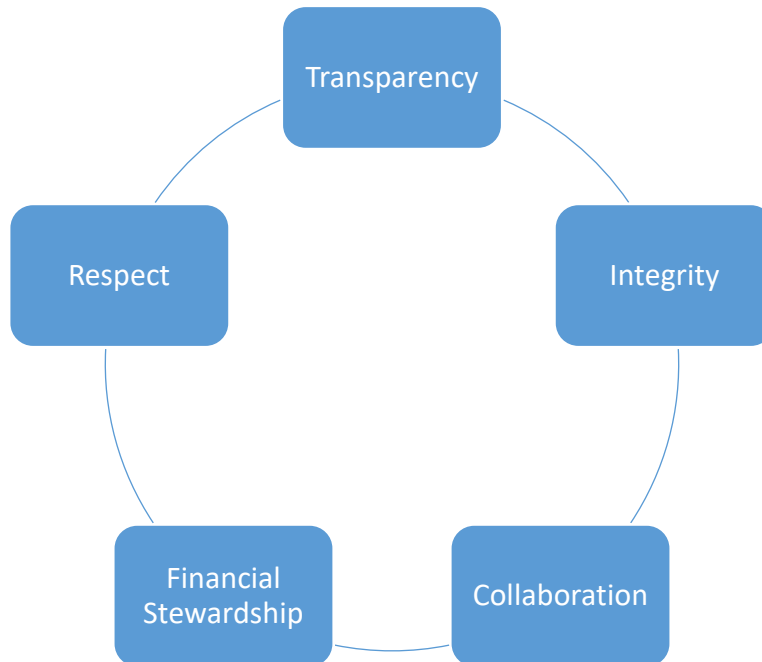
### MISSION STATEMENT

To provide the best possible government for the citizens of Wicomico County by maximizing resources, responding to citizen concerns, and investing in our future.

### Strategic Vision

To provide outstanding government services that are responsive to the needs of our citizens.

## FIVE CORE VALUES



- ❖ **Transparency**- Openness, accountability and honesty
- ❖ **Integrity**- Truthful, committed, acknowledging of mistakes, doing the right thing
- ❖ **Collaboration**-Our success is interdependent on one another, both inside County government and with the community, residents, municipalities and businesses at large
- ❖ **Financial Stewardship**- Responsibly managing the financial resources entrusted to us
- ❖ **Respect**- We respect the dignity, opinions and contributions of all citizens and county employees

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### **Goal A: Responsible Management of County Budget to Ensure and Sustain Fiscal Strength and Stability.**

#### *Objectives:*

(1) Effective allocation of resources to meet current and future operating and capital needs

#### *Strategies:*

- Completion of an effective, annual, balanced operating and capital budget
- Completion of an effective five year Capital Improvement Plan and Capital Budget
- Maintain and Track 54 funds
- Provide Timely Revenue and Expense forecasting
- Ensure adequate revenue streams, such as local property taxes.
- Ensure responsible debt management
- Budget support and consultation to all County departments
- Provide timely, regular expenditure tracking against adopted budgets
- Maximize revenues by pursuing grants, legislative appropriations, and other opportunities for funding of services, programs and infrastructure

#### *Performance Measures:*

- Bond rating evaluation by Moody's, Standard and Poor, and Fitch
- General Fund Balance as a percentage of revenue
- Unassigned Fund Balance of 17% but not less than 12%, pending approval
- Debt coverage ratios
- Number and value of grant applications and funding opportunities pursued by a grant writer for the County.

(2) Maintain stable, protected reserves

#### *Strategies:*

- Adequately Maintain and protect reserves while addressing needs
- Regular Monitoring of reserves
- Comply with County reserve policies

#### *Performance Measures:*

- Percentage of "Reserve Fund" also known as "Rainy Day Fund" at a minimum of 5 percent of the County's annual Operating Budget as designated in Resolution 462 adopted November 5, 1996

- To work in collaboration with Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development (SWED) to enhance economic development opportunities pursued to support and diversify tax base.

(3) Maintain affordable, competitive tax levies

*Strategies:*

- Maintain stable tax rate, in accordance with Charter Section 706, titled “Tax levy, balanced budget, and property tax limitation,” by pursuing cost-saving and revenue-enhancing measures that reduce need for County taxpayer funding; pursuing federal, state, and other funding and financing strategies that reduce the need for County taxpayer funding and pursuing legislative actions and reforms that reduce mandates
- Maintain a strong tax base
- Diversify property tax base.

*Performance Measures:*

- Percentage of reserves
- To work in collaboration with Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development (SWED) to enhance economic development opportunities pursued to support and diversify tax base

(4) Procuring “Best Value” and “Lowest-Cost” goods, services and assets that responsibly and efficiently support County operations.

*Strategies:*

- Acquire best value and lowest-cost goods and services in a timely manner
- Implement improvements for a streamlined and responsive procurement process
- Manage open, competitive procurement and cost-effective purchasing services
- Provide training on procurement issues and skills for key staff in user departments
- Promote Business Friendly Procurement

*Performance Measures:*

- Number of Purchase Orders compared fiscal year to fiscal year
- Number of Requests for proposals/requests for quotations compared fiscal year to fiscal year
- Reduce number of days to process requests for proposals to optimal standards
- Reduce number of days to process bid invitations to optimal standards
- Reduce percentage of goods and services contracts that require modifications (other than time) compared fiscal year to fiscal year
- Reduce professional services agreement internal processing time compared fiscal year to fiscal year

## **Goal B: Responsible Management of Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport**

*Objective:* To have a safe, Well-Maintained, Enterprise Airport

*Strategies:*

- Operate the Airport in a safe, efficient, and fiscally responsible manner
- Ensure compliance with all FAA requirements and County standards
- Provide and maintain a facility for air travel and associated/complementary businesses and services
- To fully support the Airport Manager's 5 year plan
- Bring together Lower Shore regional leadership to discuss how to expand the Airport.

*Performance Measures:*

- Improve customer and resident satisfaction with airport services
- Percentage deviation from aggregate budget
- Maintain Enterprise Standards and Optimization

## **Goal C: Water and Sewer Expansion**

*Objectives:*

- Provide Water and Sewer Services to the most needed areas in the County where it can efficiently be delivered
- Provide Sewer Services to Reduce Number of Failing Septic Systems in the County
- Expand Water to Airport Business Park

*Strategies:*

- Conduct a Countywide Study
- Provide funding plan to support implementation of water and sewer expansion projects, design and support services for water and sewer expansion
- Ensure Compliance with Statutory requirements and consistency with Comprehensive Plan
- Work in collaboration with municipalities

*Performance Measures:*

- Completion of Updated Countywide Study
- Number of Failing Septic Systems
- Increase Potential for Future Economic Development

## **Goal D: Provide Well-Maintained Transportation Infrastructure**

*Objectives:*

- To have Safe, Well-Maintained, Attractive Roadways and Bridges
- To have Safe, Well-Maintained, Storm Water drainage

- To control flooding during heavy rain events on County roads
- To have Safe, Well-Maintained, Ferries

*Strategies:*

- Ensure safe, well-maintained, ferries, attractive roadways and rights of way, patching/paving, guardrails, cleaning, storm water drainage, signage.
- Maintain safety of county bridges, dams and ferries
- Plan, oversee and administer road, bridge and dam improvement/repair contracts
- Timely removal of storm debris from roadways
- Maintain an accurate, updated County road, bridge and dam condition inventory
- Maintain an updated, multi-year County road maintenance program
- Develop a cost-effective plan to control direct storm water discharge into appropriate ditches and/or drainage areas

*Performance Measures:*

- Number of requests for road improvement versus number completed
- Dollar value of road and bridge contracts
- Increased resident satisfaction with management of traffic flow on County roadways
- Increased resident satisfaction with appearance, cleanliness, landscaping, road signs, street flooding, pavement
- Number of complaints about flooded County streets
- Increase resident satisfaction with prevention of flooding on major and side streets
- Costs per year to maintain drainage systems on County streets
- Percentage of Road Plan completed
- Reduce percentage of bridges with structurally deficient ratings

**Goal E: Preserving and Protecting Public Safety**

*Objectives:*

- To Work in Close Collaboration with our Public Safety Partners, Volunteer Fire Companies/EMS, Municipalities, local Humane Society, State of Maryland, etc.
- To be prepared for emergencies and be able to respond effectively to minimize risk, injury and loss of life and property damage.
- To provide adequate number of correctional officers at the Wicomico County Detention Center
- To provide adequate number of law enforcement officers for the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office
- Provide a new Public Safety Building

*Strategies:*

- Promote outreach and education to promote fire safety and prevention
- Recruit and retain highly qualified correctional officers and law enforcement officers
- Promote and enforce high ethical standards

- Promote employee accountability and performance
- Identify, develop and promote use of existing and new policies and programs to improve recruitment and retention.
- Maintain updated standard operating procedures for all emergency protective measures (evacuations, sheltering, mutual aid agreements, etc.)
- All department's knowledge of their roles and responsibilities with regard to emergency protective measures, care of vulnerable citizens, and clean-up and recovery
- Provide/assist with design, oversight, bid documents, etc. for Public Safety Building

*Performance Measures:*

- Percentage of non-probationary correctional officers
- Percentage of non-probationary law enforcement officers
- Number of resignations of correctional officers employed less than 3 years
- Number of resignation of law enforcement officers employed less than 3 years
- Annual turnover rate for correctional officers and law enforcement officers
- Standard operating procedures are reviewed/updated annually
- Number and types of training exercises and drills, including fire drills
- Percentage of residents who state that they are prepared for a hurricane or emergency
- Percentage of residents who state they know where to get information during an emergency, such as "Know Your Zone"
- Percentage of Public Safety Building completed on time
- Satisfaction with emergency/ambulance services
- Increased satisfaction with fire services

**Goal F: To Have A Professional County Government Workforce**

*Objective:* To have a County Workforce that is competent, committed and customer satisfaction-oriented.

*Strategies:*

- Update Personnel Manual
- Promote and enforce high-ethical standards
- Develop training programs to build competencies and share knowledge throughout all county departments
- Minimize the number and length of position vacancies
- Build new competencies within departments, and develop critical skills for accomplishing the County's mission
- Promote Employee Accountability and Performance
- Apply and carry out personnel policies and regulations for recruiting, hiring, and career advancement.
- Amend County Charter, Section 202-C, to allow for those employed by the County Board of Education to serve in the County's Legislative Branch.



*Performance Measures:*

- Percentage of Personnel Manual Update Completed
- Number of new employment applications processed compared annually
- Number of resignations of those employed less than 3 years compared annually
- Number of Employee Grievances filed compared annually
- Annual turn-over rate
- Percentage of staff with Bachelor's degrees compared annually
- Percentage of staff with Master's and higher level degrees compared annually
- Percentage of staff with specialized certifications compared annually
- Number and Types of training and professional development opportunities
- Average time to fill a position vacancy

**Goal G: Responsible Management of County Parks and Recreational Areas**

*Objective:* To have well-maintained parks and recreational areas

*Strategies:*

- Maintain park land and recreational areas (approximately 25,527 acres of land per 2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreational Plan)
- Monitor ongoing renovation projects
- Actively seek revenue generation opportunities that offset park and recreational area maintenance
- Support the Five Year Strategic Plan for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism
- Preserve unique natural resources
- Promote the County parks and recreational programs to attract visitors
- Develop Master Plan for Pirate's Wharf to be completed by 2022.
- Perpetuate Volunteerism

*Performance Measures:*

- Increased resident satisfaction with quality of parks and recreational areas
- Dollar per acre to maintain parks and recreational areas
- Completion of Pirate's Wharf Master Plan and Projects
- Number of volunteers compared annually

**Goal H: Continuous Improvement to the Wicomico County Public School System**

*Objective:* To have a public school system that is listed as one of the top 10 schools for the State of Maryland that provides continuous learning to students in Pre-kindergarten through high school graduation.

*Strategies:*

- To provide full support for accomplishing the strategic priorities of the Superintendent of Schools Achieve! 3.0 plan, as well as Dr. Hanlin's Imagine 2022 vision points for Wicomico County Schools
- To provide full support for Universal Pre-kindergarten
- To provide support in recruiting and retaining a high performing teaching workforce
- To provide full support for a safe and positive school environment

*Performance Measures for Wicomico County Board of Education:*

- Star Ratings given by the State of Maryland
- Increase appropriation with accountability and fiscal stewardship to the Board of Education
- Increase resident satisfaction with the Wicomico County Public Schools
- Increase Prekindergarten Enrollment
- Increase percentage of students graduating from high school
- Increase Number of children entering kindergarten that demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to fully participate in the kindergarten curriculum.
- Decrease the 3-year average turnover rate from more than 20% to at most 15% by 2022 by recruiting and retaining a high performing teaching workforce
- Increase English Language Arts and Mathematics Proficiency Scores

**Goal I: Enhance Economic Growth and Development in Wicomico County**

*Objective:* To retain, attract, and grow businesses in Wicomico County.

*Strategies:*

- Encourage the Expansion and Diversification of the County's economic base by supporting and recruiting businesses to provide a wide variety of skilled jobs
- Encourage Entrepreneurship
- Collaborate with strategic partners on the local, state and federal level to identify business needs
- Encourage the development and growth of the local renewable source industry
- Support the creation of clean energy jobs in the County
- Plan and Implement Economic Development Activities in Coordination with Salisbury-Wicomico County Economic Development (SWED)
- Promote tourism activities and attractions within Wicomico County
- Create and Communicate a County Brand to attract tourists and businesses

*Performance Measures:*

- Increase taxable base compared annually
- Number of full time and part time jobs created compared annually
- Number of new businesses opened compared annually
- Expansion of local business

- Number of Commercial Vacancy Rates
- Number of Retail Vacancy Rates
- Retail Sales Growth
- Number of New Commercial Permits
- Review Marketing Activities to determine which ones are the most effective

**Goal J: Ensure the Viability of the Agriculture Economy**

*Objective:* Support the Agricultural Industry and Associated Jobs

*Strategies:*

- Promote AgriTourism in Wicomico County
- Afford Agriculture uses with Maximum Protection and Freedom from Nuisance Complaints in Zoning Regulations.
- Identify Emerging Markets in Agriculture
- Expansion of Ag Zoning District Conducive to the Rural Areas of the County.
- Coordinate policies, programs, regulations and capital improvement decisions that provide opportunities for new development in the rural areas, but encourages new residential development in designated growth areas of the County in an effort to preserve agricultural resources.

*Performance Measures:*

- Increased Percentage of Public Improvements directed toward agricultural uses, such as improvement of rural roads to allow for improved farm vehicle movement compared each year.
- Maintain the integrity of Agricultural lands and resources

## **REFERENCES**

2017 Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan-Adopted March 21, 2017

Wicomico County Department of Law Strategic Plan 2013-2015

Whitepaper titled "Toward a Council-Executive Government? Proposed Changes to the Wicomico County Charter" dated September 2004

Monroe County Board of County Commissioners Strategic Plan 2013-2018

2017 Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

Wicomico County Superintendent of Schools Achieve! 3.0 Plan; Imagine 2022