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Press Release

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Draft of “PlanMaryland,” first State Growth Plan, released

BALTIMORE – The draft of PlanMaryland, the state’s first state growth plan, was released today by Richard Eberhart Hall, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), as a blueprint to strengthen traditional growth areas, to discourage sprawl and to foster sustainable use of the state’s natural and cultural resources. The plan draft begins to realize a vision that the Maryland General Assembly set in motion with the 1974 Land Use Act. It authorized the Secretary of Planning to prepare a state growth plan “to promote the general welfare and prosperity of the people of the state through coordinated development of the state.” Governor Martin O’Malley instructed the Secretary of Planning to fulfill that objective.

“Maryland enacted policies to foster smart growth in the mid-1990s, but the results have fallen short of the original ambition. Since the 1997 Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act sought to encourage development in areas best equipped for it, more than three-quarters of residential growth in acreage has occurred outside those areas,” Secretary Hall said. “Long-standing concerns about the impact of sprawl on agricultural land, on Chesapeake Bay and our rivers and streams have not gone away. And new concerns about energy conservation and public health have joined them.”

The draft plan is the culmination of more than three years of collaborative effort between the Maryland Department of Planning, other state agencies, local government officials and residents. An extensive outreach process has involved more than 50 stakeholder organizations and feedback from more than 2,000 citizens representing a diverse cross-section from throughout Maryland. The plan provides a framework for implementing the 12 Planning Visions that Governor O’Malley signed into law in the Smart, Green & Growing Legislation of 2009.

Maryland is projected to grow by nearly 1 million people during the next 25 years. The draft plan’s framework lays out policies to guide state agencies toward smarter growth. It establishes clearly defined geographic areas where growth and preservation will be treated as priorities.

During a 120-day public comment period through Sept. 1, 2011, MDP will host “open houses” across the state to provide information about the plan and opportunity for feedback. The first is scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 5 at Salisbury University. The full schedule, the draft plan, an interactive map and ways to comment online are available at Plan.Maryland.gov. After the draft is refined following the comment period, Secretary Hall will present the plan to Governor O’Malley in the fall of 2011.