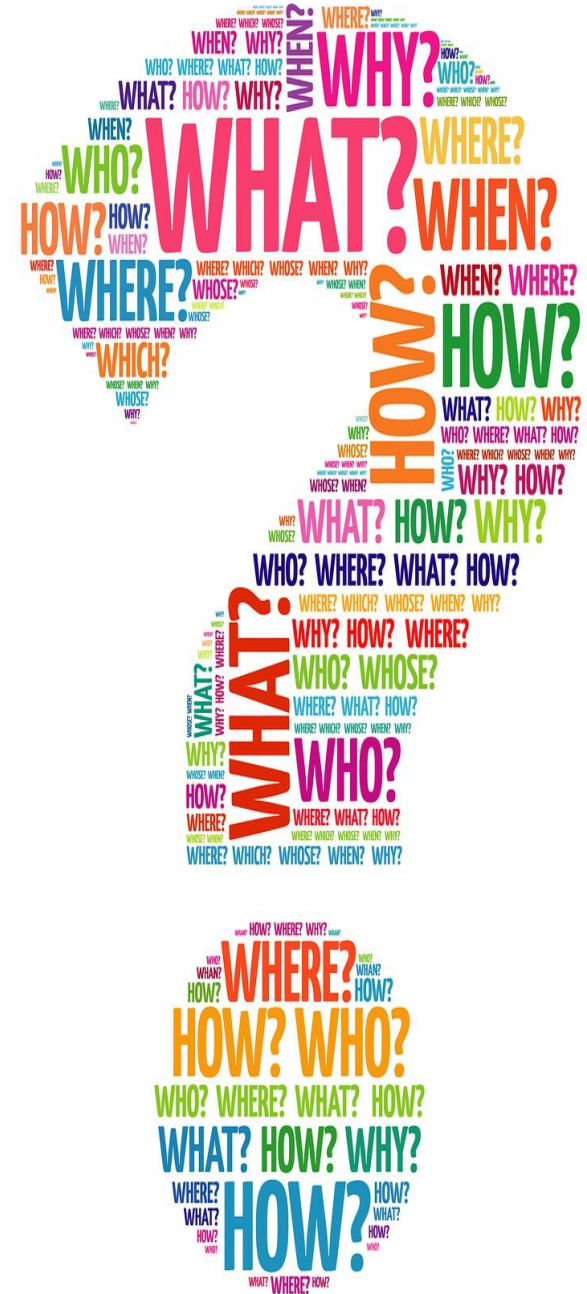


# What is a Comprehensive Plan?



## 2026 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Department of Planning and Codes  
Caroline County  
2025

0 1 2 4 6  
Miles  
1:240,000

ERTI, NASA, NOAA, USGS

A Comprehensive Plan is a guide for how the County will grow and develop to meet future needs and reflect the community's vision.

- The towns within Caroline County are all incorporated municipalities that develop and adopt their own Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Codes.
- The County Comprehensive Plan applies to all unincorporated areas outside of town limits.

# What is in the Comprehensive Plan?

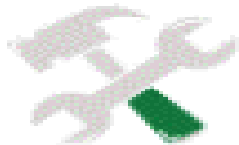
## TOPICS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COVERS



**Natural Resources &  
Environment**



**Transportation &  
Mobility**



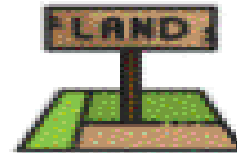
**Infrastructure &  
Utilities**



**Housing**



**Economic  
Development**




**Future Growth &  
Land Use**

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# What is *NOT* in the plan:

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- Specific regulations and ordinances such as zoning codes, subdivision regulations, or approval processes which are adopted to implement the direction of the plan.
- A public improvement funding (or capital) plan, but it can provide direction for future studies and projects.



**THIS  
IS  
NOT  
THAT**

# What is the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code?

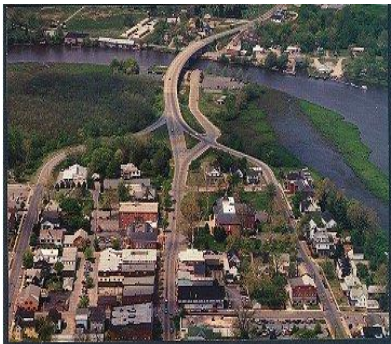
The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for how land should be used to meet the needs of the community. Once it is adopted, the Zoning Code—which sets rules for land use and development—will also be updated to support the Comprehensive Plan goals. It's important to get involved in updating the Comprehensive Plan because it shapes future zoning rules.



# How often is the Comprehensive Plan updated?

## Caroline County Comprehensive Plan

April 2010



- The next Caroline County Comprehensive Plan

# 2026

Caroline County wants to hear from  
you! Your thoughts, concerns,  
suggestions





# Commercial and Residential

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# Farmland, Open Space and Recreation Areas



# Impact of new legislation:

- The Renewable Energy Certainty Act (HB 1036/SB931) was adopted on April 7, 2025. This bill prohibits local governments from making zoning changes that prevent solar and energy storage projects from being developed. The new law includes a cap to limit solar development in designated County Priority Preservation Areas to a maximum of 5% of the total Area. Caroline County's designated Priority Preservation Area is approximately 126,468 acres and comprises most of the R-Rural zoning district.
- This will impact the predominant landscape of farm fields that has been the vista in Caroline County for many decades. Solar farms can take up large areas of agricultural land, reducing food production, poultry farms and open fields for livestock grazing. This land-use conflict will impact local farming economies and food security.



# CAUTION!

- If you're considering leasing your farmland for solar panel installation, be sure to carefully review the agreement and consult a land use attorney for sufficient legal review of all documents. Ensure that all proposed activities—before, during, and after construction—are thoroughly detailed in the contract and structured to protect your best interests.
- Detailed information is outlined in a letter dated January 14, 2025, to Caroline County Property Owners from the Caroline County Commissioners available on the county website [www.carolinemd.org](http://www.carolinemd.org)



**CAROLINE COUNTY URGES PROPERTY OWNERS  
TO CAREFULLY  
CONSIDER SOLAR LEASE AGREEMENTS**

# Maryland Statewide Legislation & Policies



State of Maryland

# House Bill 538 – Housing Expansion and Affordability Act

- Allow certain manufactured or modular homes in residential zones that allow single-family homes, with specific criteria.
- Promote additional density.
- Effective January 1, 2025



# House Bill 1466 – Accessory Dwelling Units Act of 2025

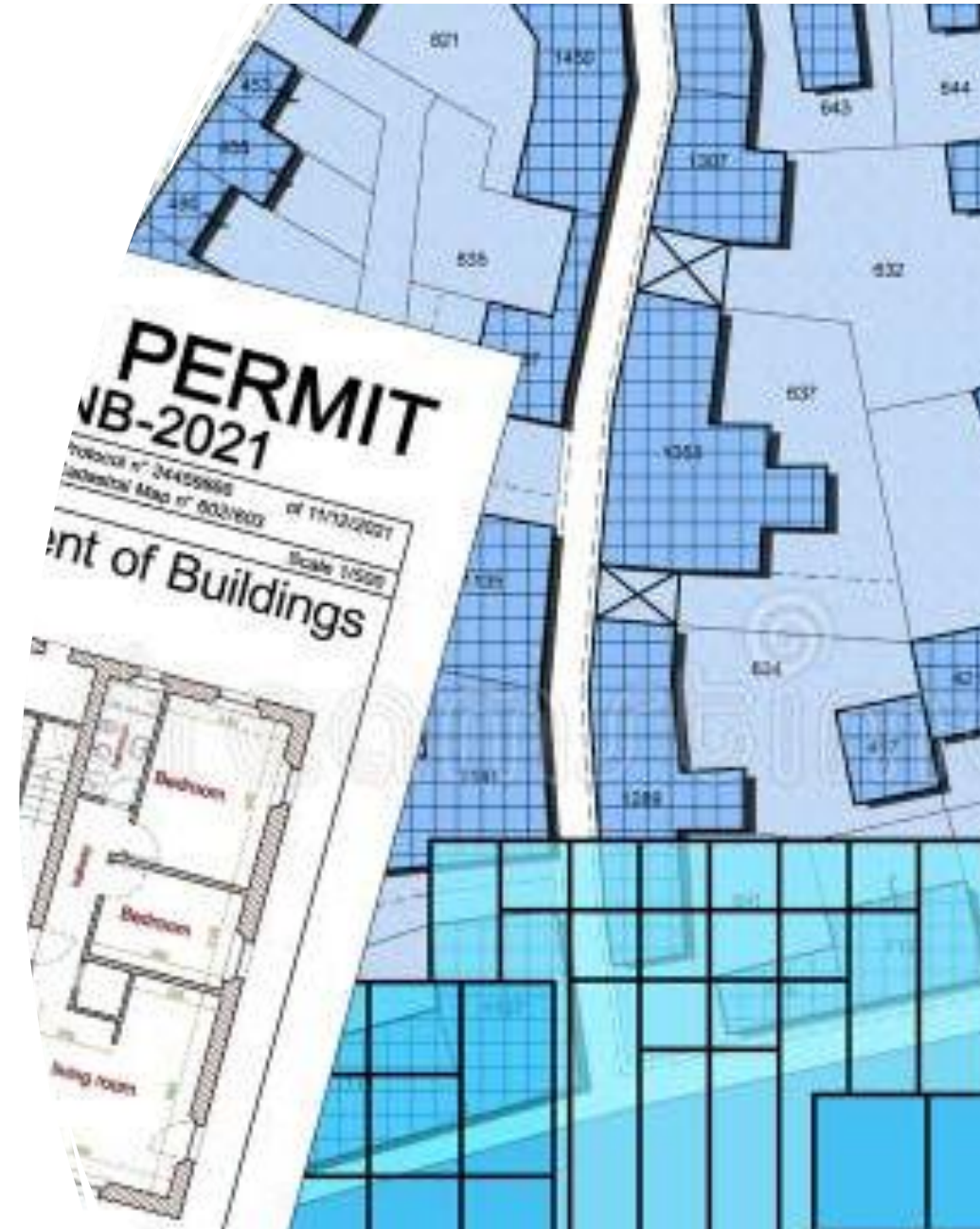


- To promote and encourage the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on properties zoned for single-family homes.
- Increase housing availability and affordability by allowing a secondary dwelling unit on property.
- ADUs can be detached, attached to the primary house, or conversion of an existing basement or accessory structure.
- Implementation of a Statewide policy framework to promote the development of ADUs, prohibits unreasonable restrictions or regulations, and requires updating of all homeowners' association (HOA) rules to allow ADUs.
- Effective October 1, 2025. Local governments must adopt or revise their own ADU laws for consistency by October 1, 2026.

# “Housing Starts Here”

Executive Order September 3, 2025

- Builds on the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act.
- Key objectives are to streamline state permitting timelines, leverage state-owned property for transit-oriented development, set local housing goals and State to appoint an ombudsman to assist with permits and projects.
- Requires Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to work with local jurisdictions to set housing production targets – to be published January 2026, updated every 5 years.
- Part of the strategy to make housing more affordable and to address the housing shortage.



# 2022 Citizen Survey

In 2022 , a citizen survey was conducted to gather feedback and collect input on a wide range of local issues and services.

The compiled results are available on the county website under the Comprehensive Plan section.



# SURVEY SUMMARY

## Key Community Concerns:

- **Housing & Infrastructure:** More affordable housing is needed, but growth must be supported by improved utilities, roads, schools, and healthcare. Public water and sewer are essential for development.
- **Economic Development:** Residents want more jobs, diverse retail, and dining options—though there's concern about sprawl affecting the rural character.
- **Quality of Life:** Priorities include better school programs, healthcare access, high-speed internet, and more entertainment and recreation spaces.
- **Preservation & Safety:** Balancing growth with protecting the rural landscape is important, along with efforts to reduce substance abuse issues in the community.



# UPDATED CITIZEN SURVEY

- A citizen survey was done in 2020, however that data no longer reflects current conditions following COVID-19, new legislation and the ongoing housing crisis.
- An updated survey is being distributed to gather more relevant feedback on current concerns and gain additional insights.
- The 2025 Citizen Survey is available online at [www.carolinemd.org/654/Caroline-County-Comprehensive-Plan](http://www.carolinemd.org/654/Caroline-County-Comprehensive-Plan)
- Please let your family, friends, and neighbors know so they can participate as well.



# Comprehensive Plan Required Elements (chapters)

- Resource Conservation
- Mineral Resources
- Land Use
- Priority Preservation Area
- Water Resources
- Community Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Housing

## EACH ELEMENT INCLUDES:

- Relevant statistical data (population, demographics, acreages, inventories of resources, etc.)
- Summary of regulatory protections and issues
- Long-term goals and priorities for improvement, protection and preservation along with implementation outlining the actions, policies, and resources necessary to achieve the goals.
- All elements must address State requirements for comprehensive plans

# Resource Conservation

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, vibrant green field, possibly a cornfield, with distinct rows of crops. To the right of the field, a dense, lush green forest stretches towards a body of water. The water is calm and reflects the surrounding greenery. In the background, a brownish field, likely a soybean field, is visible under a hazy sky. The overall scene depicts a mix of agricultural and natural environments.

- Areas that are characterized by natural environments such as forests and wetlands, or resource-utilization activities like agriculture and forestry.
- These areas are intended to be protected and managed to maintain their ecological value, support natural resource-based industries, and preserve habitat for wildlife.

# Mineral Resources

A large-scale sand and gravel quarry is shown under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, there are several large, conical mounds of sand and gravel. A prominent feature is a long, inclined conveyor belt structure that extends from the left side of the frame towards the center. The ground is uneven and shows signs of heavy machinery activity.

- Mineral resources are recognized as a priority resource essential to the regions' economic development.
- This section identifies lands with the potential for mineral extraction – predominantly sand and gravel – and acknowledges existing mining locations.
- This plan considers how to balance the extraction and use of mineral resources with other land uses while addressing potential environmental and social impacts.

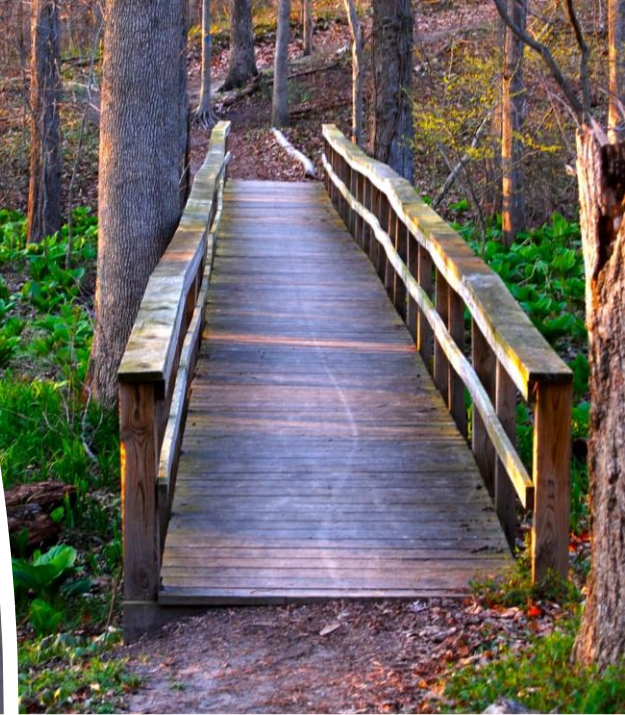
# Transportation

- This element covers how many transportation systems like roads, public transit, sidewalks, and bike lanes, are planned and developed.
- It focuses on identifying existing transportation infrastructure along with the communities needs – both for people and goods – now and into the future.



# Community Facilities

- Community facilities refers to public and semi-public buildings, lands and facilities that are essential for community life.
- This element of the plan identifies their locations and character, ensuring they are adequate to meet community needs and are consistent with other elements of the plan, like land use.



# Land Use

- Land use refers to the intended use of land for various purposes, such as residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and agricultural.
- It is a core component of the plan, outlining goals for growth and development within a jurisdiction.



# Housing

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- This element assesses a community's housing needs, addresses housing affordability for workforce and low-income households along with types of housing.
- It outlines strategies, policies, and implementation measures to meet these needs and guide future growth and development.

## Different types of houses



Single-family



Townhouse



Multi-family



Modular home



Bungalow



Ranch home



Condos & Co-ops

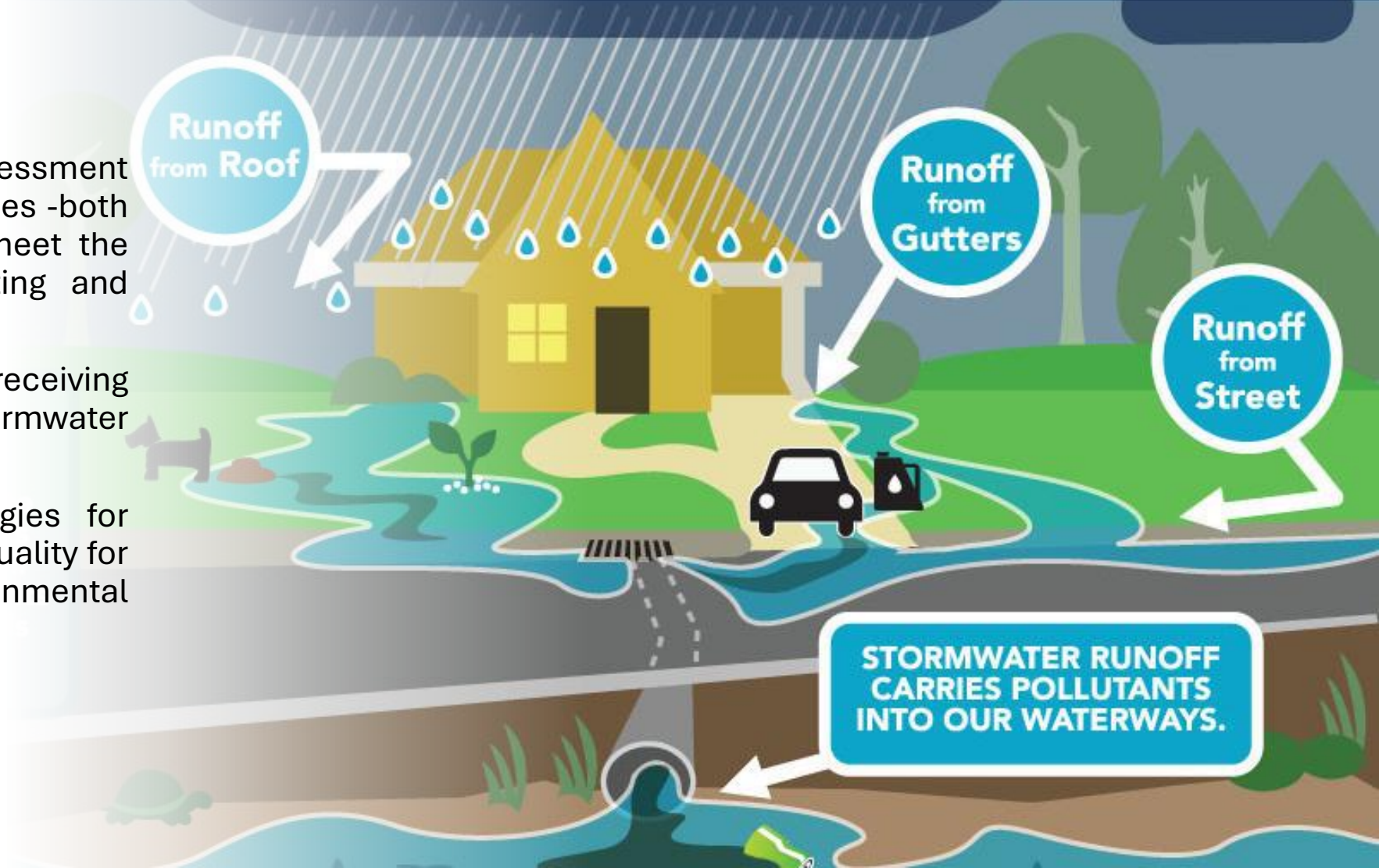
# Water Resources



# Stormwater Runoff Pollutes



- Water resources refers to the assessment and management of water supplies -both surface and groundwater - to meet the needs of a community's existing and future population.
- It also considers suitable receiving waters for wastewater and stormwater management.
- This plan also outlines strategies for protecting and improving water quality for sustainable growth and environmental health.



# Your County, your plan, our future



**Caroline County RECREATION and PARKS**  
FALL // 2025 [carolinecountyrecreation.org](http://carolinecountyrecreation.org)

**1st Annual Purple Paddle**  
A fun paddle to raise awareness for substance abuse prevention.  
Page 1

**Youth Wrestling**  
Added North Carolina location!  
Page 2

**Pickleball**  
Moves to Wednesday evenings!  
Page 3

**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2025**  
**Turkey Trot**



# How can I participate or get additional information on the Comprehensive Plan update?



Email questions or concerns. Request to be part of the updated survey at [compplanupdate@carolinemd.org](mailto:compplanupdate@carolinemd.org)



Visit the Caroline County government website at [www.carolinemd.org/654/Caroline-County-Comprehensive-Plan](http://www.carolinemd.org/654/Caroline-County-Comprehensive-Plan)

Facebook = Caroline County Government

Updates on the Planning Commission meetings, Public Outreach Schedule and more will be listed and updated regularly.