

Economic Development Strategic Plan for Talbot County and the Towns – an Opportunity for Alignment

*By: Anirban Basu
Sage Policy Group, Inc.*

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Purpose & Methodology

- The Talbot County Office of Economic Development hired Sage Policy Group, Inc. to develop a long-term Economic Development Strategic Plan for Talbot County, including the Towns of Queen Anne, Easton, Oxford, St. Michaels and Trappe, and the County's 22 villages. This Plan will help guide future management, prioritization and allocation of resources for the development of infrastructure to support a viable tax base for the County and Towns.
- To develop this strategic plan, the Sage study team engaged in a number of activities, including conducting SWOT sessions with stakeholders representing virtually every Talbot County community, reviewing strategic planning and other reports that have been produced over time and analyzing reams of county- and town-specific data.

Population Change

2000-2010

	2000 Population	2010 Population	Absolute Chg.	Percent Chg.
U.S.	281,421,906	308,745,538	27,323,632	9.7%
Maryland	5,296,486	5,773,552	477,066	9.0%
Talbot County	33,812	37,782	3,970	11.7%
Easton	11,708	15,945	4,237	36.2%
Oxford	771	651	-120	-15.6%
St. Michaels	1,193	1,029	-164	-13.7%
Trappe	1,146	1,077	-69	-6.0%
Queen Anne	176	222	46	26.1%

Source: Census Bureau, 2000 & 2010 Decennial Census



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Total Households, 2000-2010

	2000	2010	Absolute Chg.	Percent Chg.
U.S.	105,480,101	114,235,996	8,755,895	8.3%
Maryland	1,980,859	2,121,047	140,188	7.1%
Talbot County	14,307	15,603	1,296	9.1%
Easton	5,031	6,441	1,410	28.0%
Oxford	396	298	-98	-24.7%
St. Michaels	548	457	-91	-16.6%
Trappe	425	473	48	11.3%
Queen Anne	67	89	22	32.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 & 2010 American Community Survey 5 year estimates

Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Talbot County Residents, Age 25 and over

	2000	2010	Absolute Change	Percent Change
<i>Population 25 and over</i>	24,809	27,431	2,622	10.6%
Less than 9 th grade	1,067	1,003	-64	-6.0%
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	2,795	2,294	-501	-17.9%
High school graduate	7,625	7,600	-25	-0.3%
Some college, no degree	5,057	5,589	532	10.5%
Associates degree	1,370	1,967	597	43.6%
Bachelor's degree	4,212	4,702	490	11.6%
Graduate or professional degree	2,683	4,276	1,593	59.4%
High School or more	84.4%	88.0%	3,187	15.2%
Bachelor's degree or more	27.8%	32.7%	2,083	30.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

Average Weekly Wage, MD Eastern Shore Counties, 2011

County	Average Weekly Wage
Cecil	\$783
Somerset	\$737
Talbot	\$716
Wicomico	\$715
Kent	\$686
Dorchester	\$659
Queen Anne's	\$657
Caroline	\$655
Worcester	\$563
Maryland	\$1,019

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Median Household Income

2000 vs. 2010

	2000	2010	Percent Change
U.S.	\$41,994	\$51,914	23.6%
Maryland	\$52,868	\$70,647	33.6%
Talbot County	\$43,532	\$63,017	44.8%
Easton	\$36,464	\$59,234	62.4%
Oxford	\$52,054	\$58,750	12.9%
St. Michaels	\$32,578	\$43,523	33.6%
Trappe	\$40,625	\$50,469	24.2%
Queen Anne	\$45,000	\$80,313	78.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 5 year estimates



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Total Business Establishments & Employment

2005 vs. 2011

	Total Number of Establishments			
	2005	2011	% Chg.	Absolute Chg.
Maryland	160,084	164,665	2.9%	4,581
Talbot County	1,753	1,645	-6.2%	-108

	Total Employment (Average Annual)			
	2005	2011	% Chg.	Absolute Chg.
Maryland	2,497,487	2,478,505	-0.8%	-18,982
Talbot County	19,148	17,873	-6.7%	-1,275

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Talbot County Employment by Sector

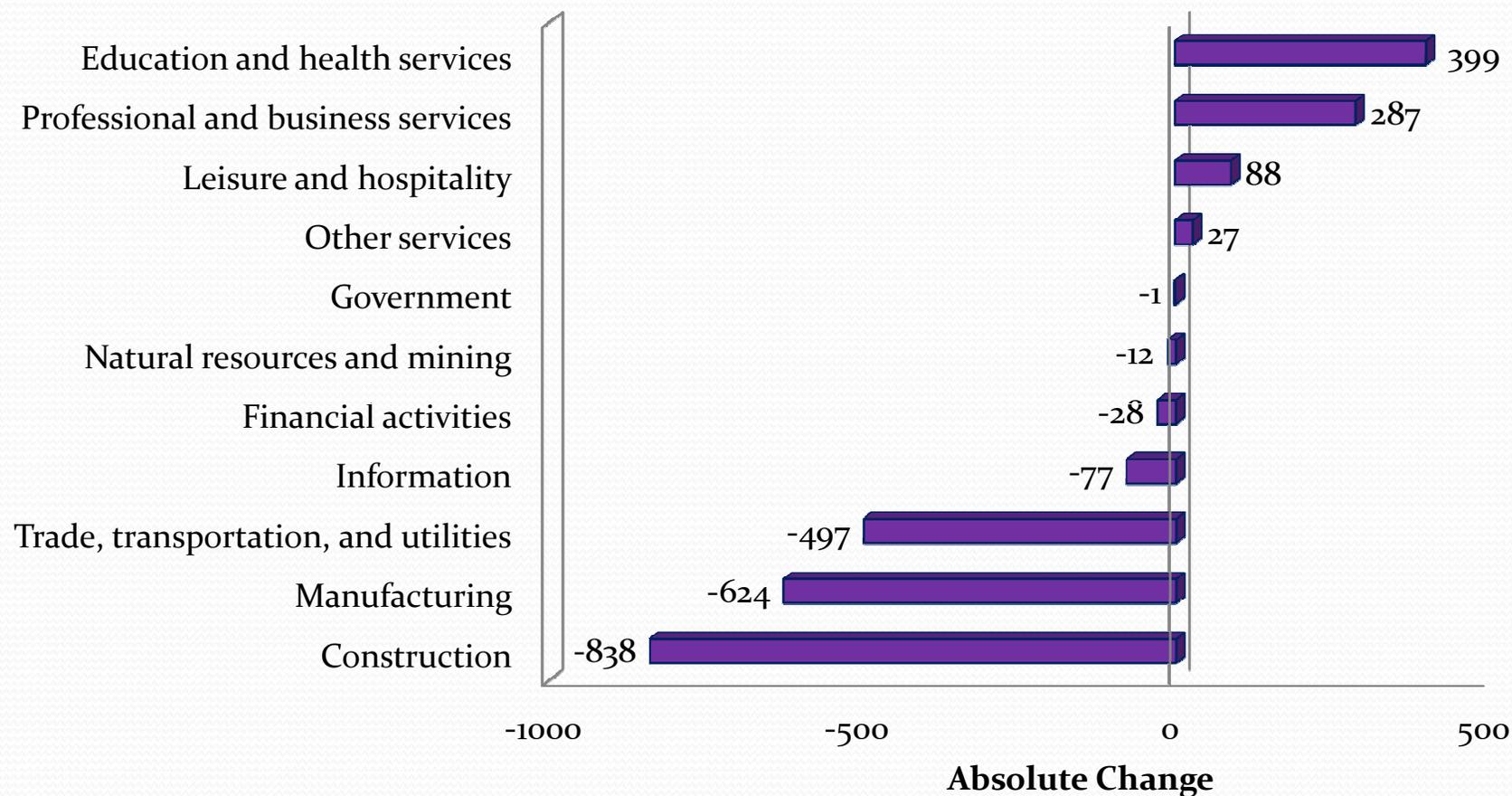
2005 vs. 2011

	Total Employment (Average Annual)			
	2005	2011	Absolute Chg.	% Chg.
Total Employment	19,148	17,873	-1,275	-6.7%
Public Sector Total	1,845	1,844	-1	-0.1%
Private Sector Total	17,303	16,029	-1,274	-7.4%
Goods-Producing	3,370	1,897	-1,473	-43.7%
Service-Providing	13,934	14,132	198	1.4%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Employment Changes by Industry Sector

2011 vs. 2005



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages



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Primary Opportunity Areas for High- Wage Job Growth

- 1) Manufacturing, including segments related to government contracting, the environment and technology generally;
- 2) Ambulatory health services including offices of primary & specialty practitioners and home health care services;
- 3) Management, technical consulting and corporate back office operations;
- 4) Finance and insurance, including financial advisory services, estate planning, and life insurance agencies/brokerages, and accounting/bookkeeping; and
- 5) General aviation (development at Easton Airport).

Recommendations: Talbot County

1) Business-friendly initiatives

Goal: Create a culture within County and Town governments that embraces small business owners, including by expediting the granting of permits, creating greater transparency with respect to when businesses qualify for available tax credits, and considering applications for zoning modifications more aggressively and favorably

2) Aggressively pursue target industries for retention and attraction by creating new resources for economic development

Goal: Support business retention, expansion and attraction through effective economic development resources

3) More pragmatic approach for the real property tax credit for commercial or industrial businesses

Goal: Accelerate investment, particularly in high-wage manufacturing activities

Recommendations: Talbot County

- 4) Increase the amount of strategically-situated industrial & commercially-zoned land in Talbot County, including in larger towns**

Goal: To leverage available industrial and commercial land to accommodate the development of industrial and/or technology-based businesses in order to attract high-wage jobs and enhance the County's tax base

- 5) Create a new private nonprofit economic development corporation/partnership**

Goal: To encourage collaboration between County and Town stakeholders in order to ensure a well-defined, consistent vision for economic development throughout Talbot County

- 6) Embrace role as senior living/retirement community**

Goal: Attract affluent retirees and near-retirees to reduce the community's presently elevated supply of unsold homes and drive greater revenues to local businesses

Recommendations: Easton

7) Continue to facilitate growth in healthcare delivery

Goal: Leverage community demographics, the presence of Memorial Hospital and the existing cluster of independent healthcare providers in Easton to further expand healthcare employment and entrepreneurship

8) Improve appearance from Route 50 to attract visitors passing through

Goal: First impressions matter. The goal is to enhance the appearance of Easton from Route 50 in order to encourage economic activity in Downtown Easton.

9) Encourage infill development/redevelopment of vacant property downtown

Goal: To create a more vibrant downtown that offers an attractive mix of professional and cultural services

Recommendations: St. Michaels

10) Improve signage throughout the town

Goal: The goal is to encourage visitor to walk greater distances and visit more attractions beyond the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, etc. St. Michaels has much to offer, but poor signage and inconsistent streetscapes cause many visitors to limit their experience to a handful of very well-known attractions.

11) Address parking

Goal: Scarce parking accessibility for visitors in parts of downtown inhibits visitor circulation, which translates into diminished economic impact. The goal is to provide more parking at the “ends” of downtown to encourage greater circulation, more economic impact and higher property values.

12) Attract more professional business establishments downtown

Goal: Reduce vacancy rates in downtown St. Michaels and address the heavy reliance upon seasonal business

Recommendations: Trappe

13) Establish Trappe as the County's primary industrial recruitment community

Goal: Because of a combination of infrastructure availability (e.g., water and sewer capacity), labor force and land values, Trappe is arguably Talbot County's most promising destination for industrial investment and expansion. The goal should be to position Trappe to better fulfill this role in Talbot County's economy.

14) Accelerate mixed-use development

Goal: Diversify Trappe's tax base and increasing the size of the local labor force by attracting significant mixed-use development

Recommendations: Queen Anne, Oxford & the Villages

15) Strategically situate new housing to attract young, upwardly mobile professionals

Goal: The objective is to help diversify the community's demographic base by attracting more young people, particularly highly educated professionals with substantial incomes and elevated likelihood for entrepreneurship.

16) Ongoing land/natural resource preservation

Goal: To preserve Talbot County's land and water resources, maintain the community's high quality of life and rural character

Concluding Remarks

- Above all, we hope Talbot County and local policymakers see a need for coordinated economic development;
- Depending heavily upon the wealth of retirees and seasonal businesses represents a risky strategy (particularly in Maryland);
- At the same time, preservation of the County's historic and rural character is an imperative and represents an important aspect of attracting the best and the brightest workers, the most desirable companies and well-heeled visitors and retirees.