

**To: Kimberly Golden Brandt, Director of Smart Growth Maryland
Preservation Maryland**

**From: Steve Raabe, President
OpinionWorks LLC**

Date: October 29, 2018

Subject: Calvert County Voter Poll

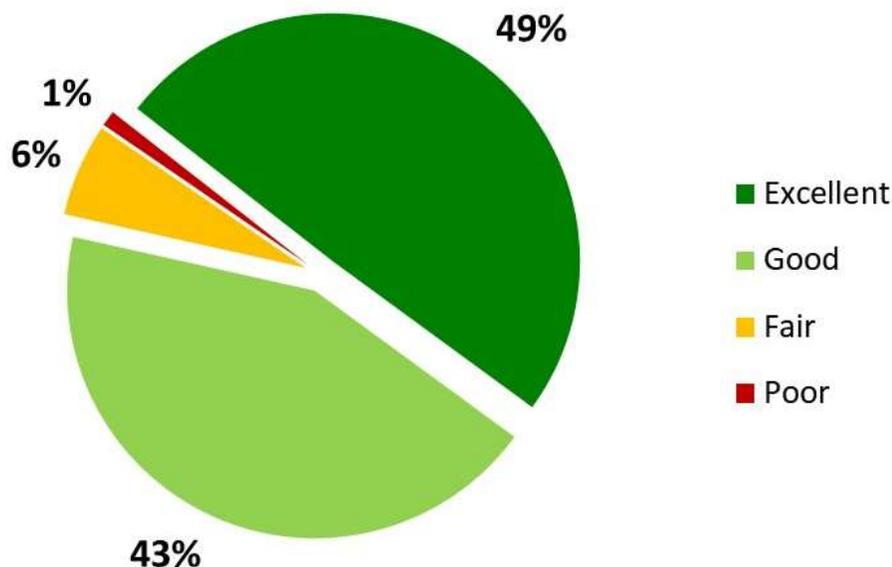
This memorandum summarizes the results of our countywide poll of 400 Calvert County registered voters, conducted October 5-24, 2018, on topics related to the County's proposed comprehensive plan.

This poll demonstrates a strong desire among Calvert County voters to protect the rural character of their communities, palpable concerns about the pace of residential development, and widespread frustration with traffic congestion. Voters want to protect agricultural lands and other open space, and they demonstrate a strong environmental ethic that reaches unusually high levels. Voters oppose policies that will create more traffic congestion or sprawl, particularly new residential development, and said they want the comprehensive plan to encourage communities where they can walk and bike, with access to good jobs and services close to where they live. Details of the poll follow.

Satisfaction with the County Today, But Concerns about Its Direction

There is great satisfaction with Calvert County as a place to live today. Nearly half (49%) of voters rate Calvert County as an "excellent" place to live, and another 43% call it a "good" place to live. Only about 7% of voters would call the County a "fair" or "poor" place to live.

Calvert County as a Place to Live



In general, how would you rate Calvert County as a place to live?

Note that numbers will not always appear to add to 100% due to rounding.

Looking forward, however, voters have significant concerns about the future direction of Calvert County, and those concerns are largely concentrated on overdevelopment and resulting traffic congestion.

Voters were asked to name the most important and the second most important “long-term issue or challenge facing Calvert County...the one you would most like to see the County’s leaders do something about.” This was an open-ended question, allowing voters to mention anything that was on their mind.

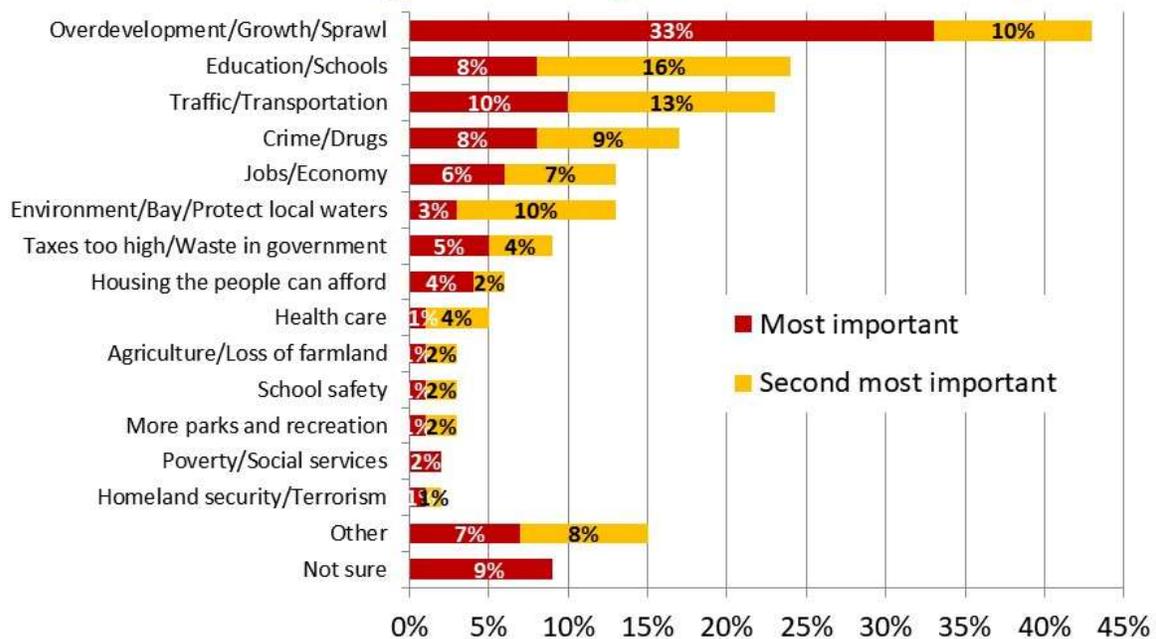
One-third (33%) of voters mentioned overdevelopment, excessive growth, or sprawl as the most important long-term issue or challenge facing the County, and another 10% mentioned it second. The resulting 43% is nearly twice as high as any other concern.

The related concern of traffic congestion was mentioned by a combined 23% of voters, placing it about on par with schools, which was mentioned by 24%.

Concern about crime or drugs was mentioned by 17% of voters, and the economy was cited by 13%. Also mentioned by 13% was protecting the environment, with voters mentioning protection of the lands and the waters that flow through and surround Calvert County.

The full array of issues is illustrated in the chart below.

Most Important Long-Term Issue or Challenge Facing Calvert County

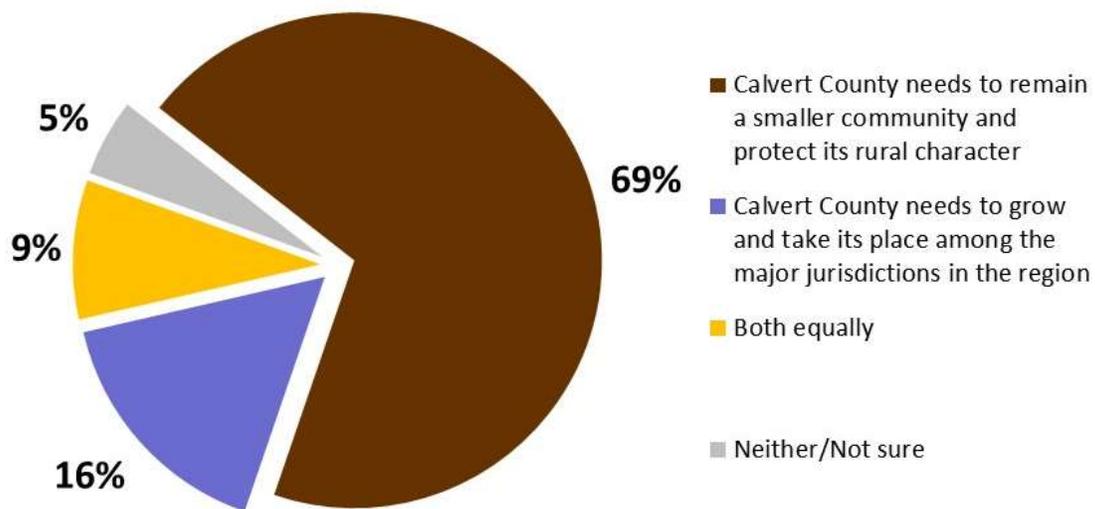


Just based on your own opinion, what is the most important long-term issue or challenge facing Calvert County – I mean the one you would most like to see the County’s leaders do something about? And what is the second most important? (Open-ended question. Categorized responses shown.)

An Aspiration to Remain a Smaller Community with Rural Character

This is a county that wants to retain its rural character and small-community feel. Asked to choose between two visions of the County, more than two-thirds of voters (69%) said “Calvert County needs to remain a smaller community and protect its rural character.” By contrast, only 16% said “Calvert County needs to grow and take its place among the major jurisdictions in the region.” An additional 9% said they would like to think that both apply to Calvert County, suggesting that any growth would need to protect the rural character of the community today.

How You Would Like to Think of Calvert County

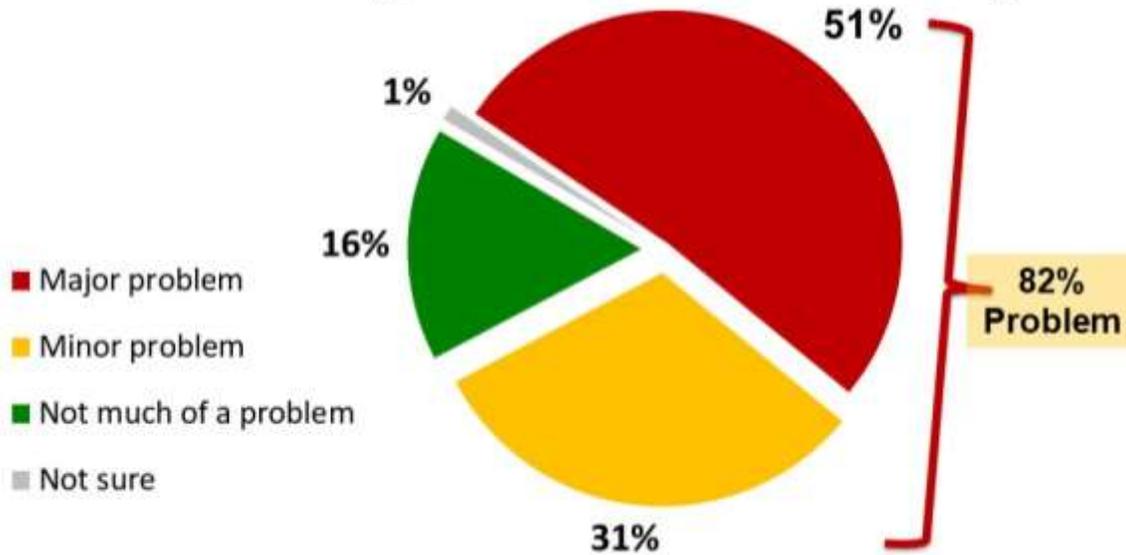


Which of these comes closer to how you would like to think of Calvert County?

Concerns about Traffic and the Pace of Growth

Traffic congestion is viewed as a problem by an overwhelming 82% of voters. In fact, a 51% majority consider traffic congestion in Calvert County “a *major* problem.” Another 31% called traffic congestion a minor problem,” while only one voter in six (16%) said traffic congestion is “not much of a problem.”

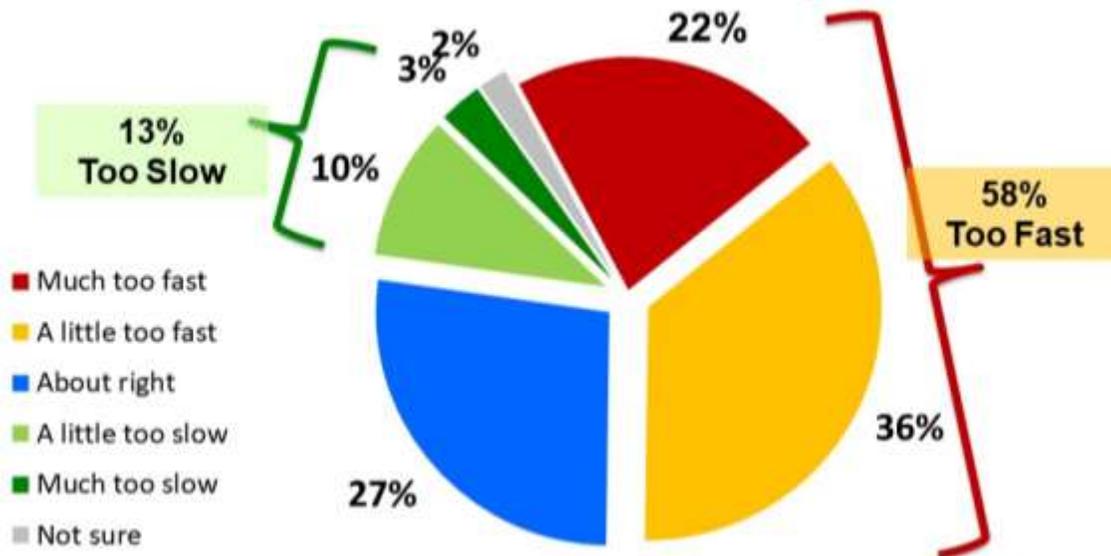
Traffic Congestion in Calvert County



Do you think traffic congestion in Calvert County is becoming a major problem, a minor problem, or not much of a problem?

Asked directly about their impression of “the pace of growth and development in Calvert County over the last few decades,” nearly six voters in ten said the pace is too fast. Twenty-two percent said it is “much too fast,” and 36% said growth and development is “a little too fast.” Meanwhile, 27% said the pace of growth is “about right,” while 13% said it is too slow.

Pace of Growth and Development

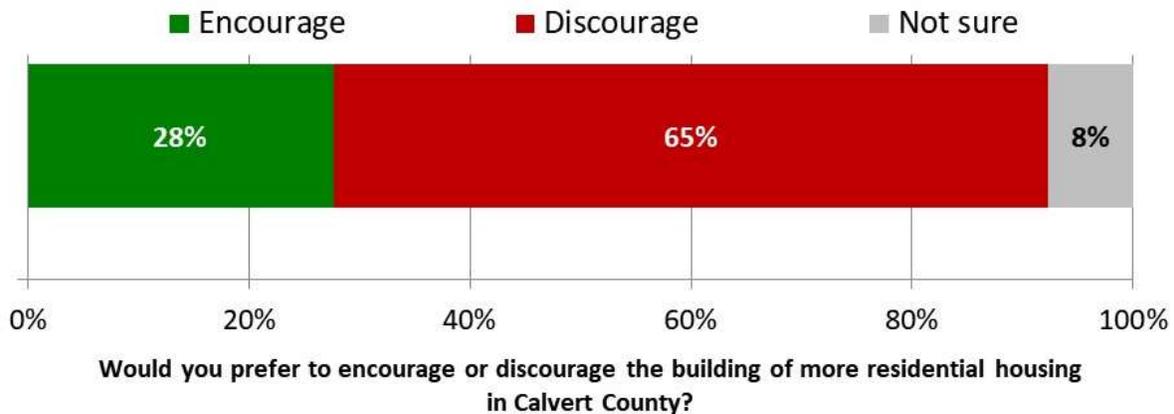


How would you describe the pace of growth and development in Calvert County over the last few decades? Would you say it is much too fast, a little too fast, about right, a little too slow, or much too slow?

Strong Resistance to New Residential Housing

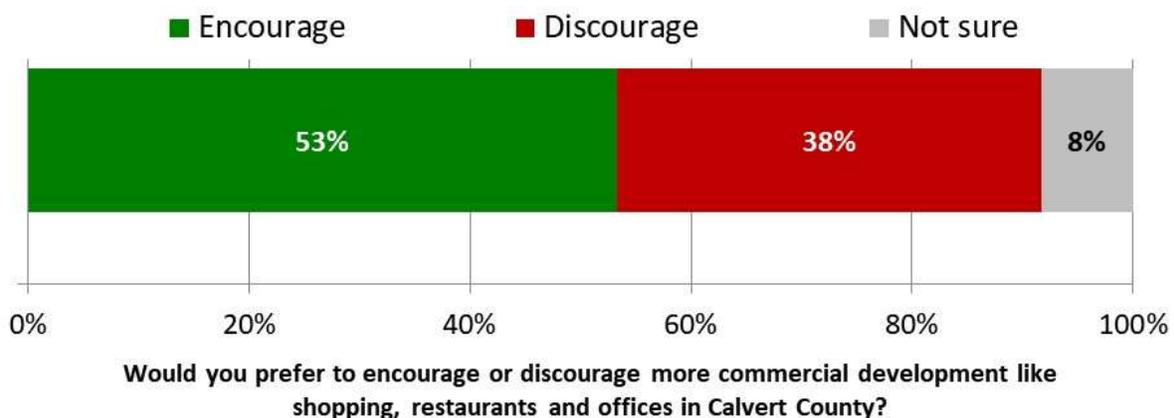
These concerns about rapid growth and traffic congestion translate into a strong desire to limit future residential development. About two-thirds (65%) would discourage the building of more residential housing, compared to fewer than half that number (28%) who would encourage more housing.

**Encourage or Discourage
More Residential Housing in Calvert County**



The result is somewhat different for “commercial development like shopping, restaurants and offices in Calvert County.” A 53% majority would encourage more shopping, restaurants, and offices, while 38% would discourage that. This is not uncommon in Maryland’s rural communities, which typically want better access to a diversity of shopping, restaurants, and other activities. But voters are clearly saying they want to accomplish this without creating more traffic and sprawl.

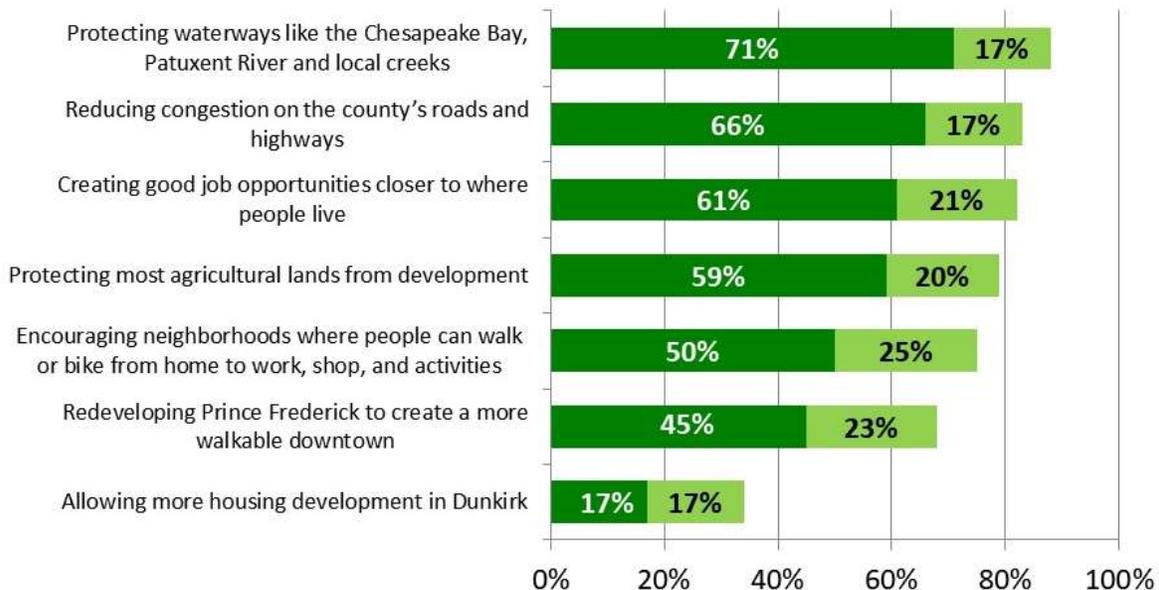
**Encourage or Discourage
More Commercial Development in Calvert County**



The mixed result on preferences for development are better explained when voters are asked about their own priorities for the County’s new comprehensive plan. Seven possible priorities of a plan were tested, with voters asked to indicate whether they personally support or oppose each one. The chart below shows the percentage who said they “strongly support” (in dark green) and “somewhat support” (in light green) each priority.

Priorities for the Comprehensive Plan

Strongly Support + Somewhat Support



Calvert County is currently rewriting the long-term plan for how the county will develop over the next 20 years. Following is a list of priorities that could be included in the plan. For each one, please indicate if you strongly oppose it, somewhat oppose it, are neutral, somewhat support it, or strongly support it.

What emerges from this evaluation of voter priorities is an electorate that is extremely focused on environmental protection, with 88% supporting – and 71% *strongly* supporting – the priority of “Protecting waterways like the Chesapeake Bay, Patuxent River and local creeks.”

“Reducing congestion on the county’s roads and highways” is number two, with 83% supporting that, 66% *strongly*. Also highly rated is “Protecting most agricultural lands from development,” with 79% in support of that priority, 59% *strongly*.

“Allowing more housing development in Dunkirk” is by far the lowest-rated priority, with only 34% of voters in support. When it comes to growth it is clear that what voters want is, “Creating good job opportunities close to where people live.” More than four out of five (82%) support that priority, with 61% supporting it *strongly*.

Calvert County voters want communities that are mixed-use and walkable.

- Seventy-five percent – and 50% strongly – support the priority of “Encouraging neighborhoods where people can walk or bike from home to work, shop, and leisure activities.”
- Sixty-eight percent – and 45% strongly – support “Redeveloping Prince Frederick to create a more walkable downtown.”

Voters in Calvert County strongly disapprove of the construction of more housing, particularly at the cost of agricultural lands, water quality, or the country feel of their county. What they do want is access to jobs, shopping, and leisure activities in a way that is walkable and bikeable and does not add to their traffic woes.

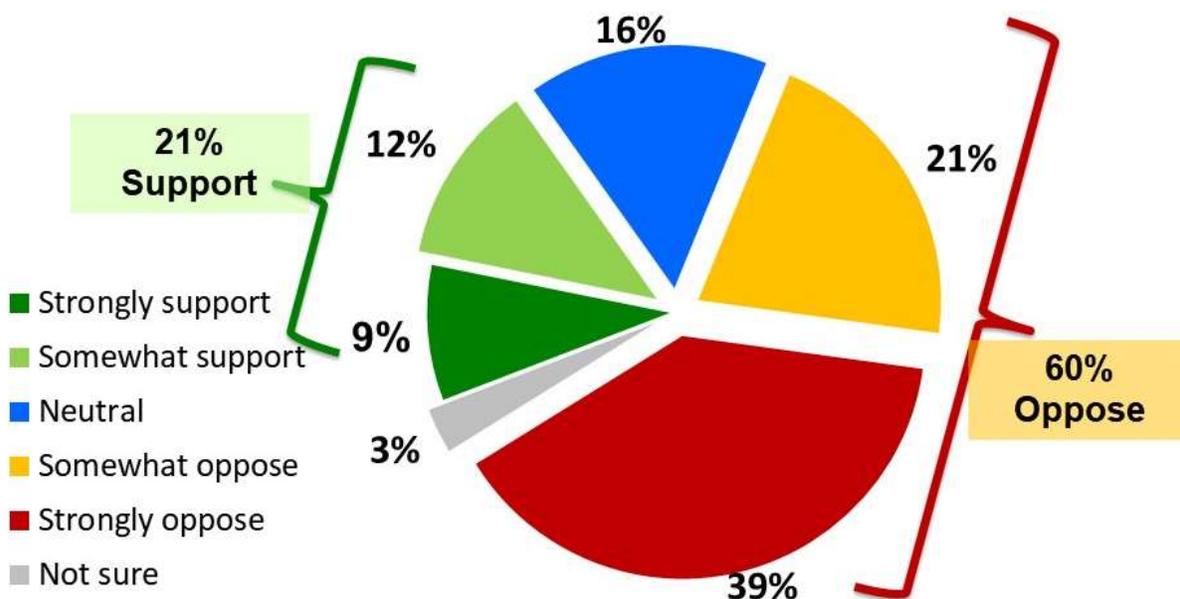
Strong Opposition to Two Policies

Two current or proposed policies were tested on the survey. In both cases, large majorities indicated clear opposition. The first of these is a proposal in the draft comprehensive plan to end restrictions on new residential growth that exceeds the capacity of the County's infrastructure. The question was worded this way:

"Since the 1990s, the County has not allowed residential growth that exceeded the capacity of infrastructure like roads, schools, and water supply. The County's proposed new comprehensive plan would end those restrictions. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, are neutral, somewhat support, or strongly support ending restrictions on residential growth in Calvert County?"

Sixty percent of voters oppose ending these restrictions (39% strongly), compared to only 21% in support (9% strongly).

Ending Restrictions on Residential Growth

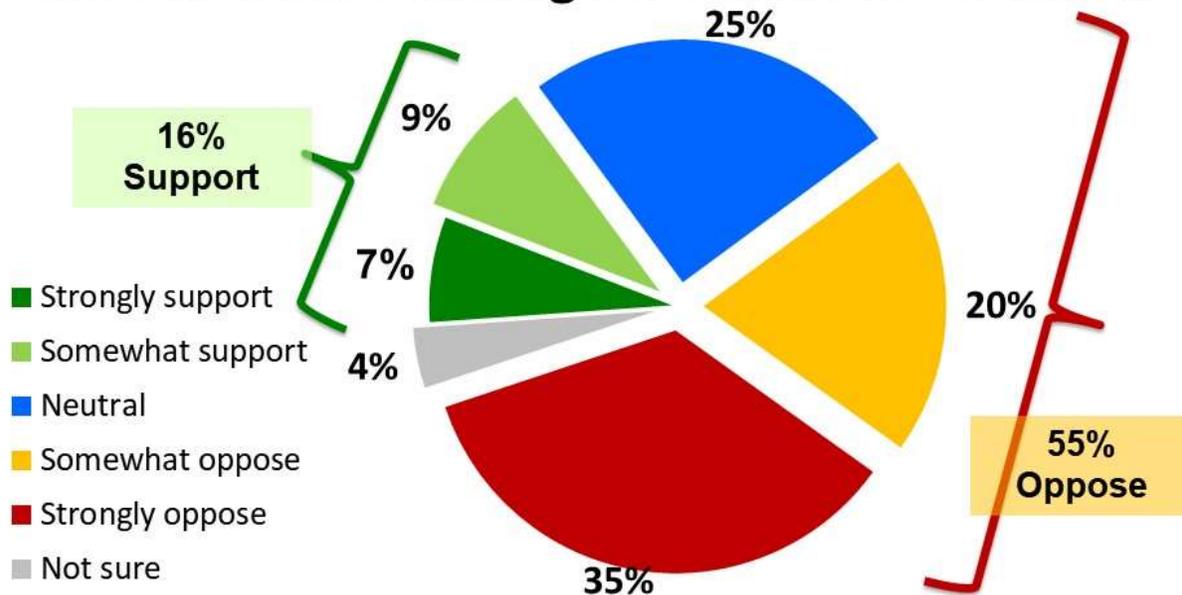


Since the 1990s, the County has not allowed residential growth that exceeded the capacity of infrastructure like roads, schools, and water supply. The County's proposed new comprehensive plan would end those restrictions. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, are neutral, somewhat support, or strongly support ending restrictions on residential growth in Calvert County?

A second question asked voters for their opinion on the actions of the Board of County Commissioners regarding land preservation applications and funding. This question was asked:

“The Board of County Commissioners has not considered any new applications for preservation of farm and forested land since 2013, and they have diverted funding that was intended for land preservation since 2010. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, are neutral, somewhat support, or strongly support these actions?”

No New Land Preservation Applications and Diverted Funding for Land Preservation



The Board of County Commissioners has not considered any new applications for preservation of farm and forested land since 2013, and they have diverted funding that was intended for land preservation since 2010. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, are neutral, somewhat support, or strongly support these actions?

A 55% majority of voters oppose these actions of the Board of County Commissioners (35% strongly), compared to only 16% in support (7% strongly).

In both cases, significant majorities are looking for a policy direction that will encourage land preservation and restrict growth that exceeds the County’s capacity.

Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks conducts frequent opinion studies at the state and local level across the country. Since 2007 we have been the polling organization for *The Baltimore Sun* newspaper in Maryland, and have polled for numerous other media throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. We are currently engaged by state and local government agencies in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New York to assess public needs and preferences. Our recently released Citizen Stewardship Indicator, conducted for the Chesapeake Bay Program, is a model nationally for measuring behavior adoption and potential behavior change on behalf of water restoration. We measure health attitudes and practices for the Horizon Foundation and public health departments across the country. In addition to these public surveys, we assess donor and customer relationships for a variety of non-profit and for-profit entities nationally and internationally, with a growing body of work in Latin America.