



Eastern Shore 2010: A Regional Vision

Attaining the Growth Center Goal: Current Data

November 2005

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Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by Town Creek Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Special thanks to members of the Land Protection Task Force for their ongoing participation in this project: Tony DiGiacomo, Steve Dodd, Faith Elliot-Rossing, Frank Hall, Tom Hamilton, Karen Houtman, Roby Hurley, George Kinney, Betsey Krempasky, Carla Martin, and Martin Sokolich. Jennifer Hicks, Principal and consultant for Positive Force Consulting, developed and wrote this report. Amy Owsley, former community planner for the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, originated the project. Elizabeth Watson, AICP, executive director of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, provided final editing.

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Eastern Shore Land Conservancy is a private, nonprofit land conservation organization dedicated to promoting sound land use planning and strategic land protection on the Eastern Shore. A 32-member volunteer board of directors, chaired by former Gov. Harry Hughes, includes a diverse group of Eastern Shore landowners representing the agricultural and business communities as well as local governments.

Since its inception in 1990, ESLC, funded by member contributions, has helped landowners to protect more than 36,000 acres of farmland and important habitat on 196 properties on the Eastern Shore.



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Executive Summary

The intent of this “white paper” is to document growth trends in the upper six counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore – specifically Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s, and Talbot Counties. Specifically, the paper’s intent is to present the success counties have experienced in meeting the third goal of the Eastern Shore 2010 agreement, which says that the counties are to “guide at least 50% of new annual development into locally-designated growth areas by 2010.” (from *Eastern Shore 2010: A Regional Vision*).

Data collected and analyzed in the process of developing this report indicated that as of 2004, on an annual basis, all six counties have directed at least 50% of their growth into their designated growth areas. That is, they have met the 2010 goal. The growth trend for each county shows that growth within growth areas is increasing while growth outside of the growth areas remains relatively stable.

Though the goal was met, maintaining and improving on this trend will be a challenge. A second report is pending, to lay out tools available to the counties and towns that can provide support to meet such a challenge.

The hope is that counties and towns will use the information presented in this paper as a basis for deciding on policies that will continue to sustain and reinforce their current trends.

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I. Introduction

Eastern Shore 2010: A Regional Vision is an inter-county agreement that sets the highest expectations for the care of the Eastern Shore landscape. Similar in intent to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement but tailored for the specific regional needs of Eastern Shore lands and communities, this agreement sets four important land use goals (Table 1).

Table 1

Eastern Shore 2010 Goals

1. Strive to protect from development through the use of voluntary preservation programs 50% of Eastern Shore land outside of locally designated growth areas by 2010.
2. Recognize our resource-based economy as a key part of the Eastern Shore heritage and future by integrating agriculture, fisheries, and forestry into each county's economic development plan by 2005.
3. Work with existing communities to guide at least 50% of new annual growth into locally-designated growth areas by 2005
4. Develop a regional transportation plan that integrates the use of public transportation and alternative modes of transport within and among communities by 2010.

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy proposed the agreement in 2002, with the guidance of the Upper Shore Association of Counties and under the leadership of Congressman Wayne Gilchrest and former Governor Harry Hughes. Following extensive regional discussion about the agreement, in fall 2002, Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties passed resolutions of endorsement for Eastern Shore 2010.¹

To garner the research and resources that will be needed to reach these goals, four regional task forces are being organized to explore the strategies available for each *Eastern Shore 2010* goal. The deliberations and ideas developed by each task force are being documented in individual research white papers, which then will be presented to local governments and the public to provide voluntary options for individual county and town consideration.

This white paper focuses on the third of the *Eastern Shore 2010* goals, the "growth center" goal. This goal was developed to launch regional momentum toward a key Eastern Shore priority: directing high-quality development into locally designated growth centers, to stave off the erosion of the region's rural lands by sprawling growth unrelated to working farms and other rural pursuits. The amount and timing of the goal were established as starter

¹ Cecil County opted not to sign onto the 4th goal as the county has already achieved it through participation in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

benchmarks to encourage redoubled growth management efforts, and to do so in time to preserve the unique character and quality of Eastern Shore communities, villages, and towns.

Methodology

To develop this white paper, each of the six signatory counties designated a representative to participate on a research task force (see Acknowledgments for full list of task force members). Coordinated by the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, a task force consisting of county planners, town planners, and Maryland Department of Planning representatives met over the course of several months in 2004 and 2005 to define the growth center goal, hone available data, and explore possible implementation strategies.

The majority of the information of this paper was gleaned from the knowledge and experience of the task force members. One of the task force meetings resulted in the determination of the paper's scope and purpose, while in the following meetings participants brainstormed and provided feedback as a vehicle to collect ideas and concepts necessary make this paper a relevant resource. The data to determine the percentage of growth within growth areas came from county and town planning offices (which are responsible for issuing building permits, with the recent exception of Talbot County since 2002), and in some cases from the planners themselves.

Purpose

The *Eastern Shore 2010* growth center task force was charged with developing a research white paper with two sections: one that explores current growth trends in each of the participating counties and a second that offers information and strategies that could help the region attain, if it has not already, and maintain the third goal of Eastern Shore 2010. Ultimately, it was determined that the two sections should be separate reports, with this report summarizing the drivers of development and current growth trends, the task force definitions of the current baseline for development on the Eastern Shore, and the development goals of the region. This report is primarily targeted for an audience of Upper and Mid-Shore county officials and staff, and intended be a working document subject to revision throughout the life of the Eastern Shore 2010 agreement.

II. Growth Challenges

Drivers of Development

Much of this region is facing the development pressure today that neighboring coastal lands on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay experienced a generation or more ago. Before the Bay Bridges and the expansions of Interstate 95, U. S. Route 301, and U. S. Route 50, much of the Eastern Shore lay isolated from much of Maryland's growth, remaining an enclave of small towns supported by resource-based economies. But while limited

transportation options protected lower counties of the Eastern Shore in the past, improvements to major transportation routes has set the course of growth and development in the region for the future. Cecil and Kent Counties, the northernmost and most accessible by land routes, experience somewhat different sources of the same trends in growth, driven by transportation improvements and development trends in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and points north. All counties have long experienced second-home ownership, a trend that has both expanded and seen shifts to year-round occupation, and a larger proportion of retirees in the population, a trend now being augmented by the first retirees of the enormous (and generally quite wealthy) Baby Boom generation.

A New Frontier

Development started to dot across Queen Anne's County in 1953 when the first span of the Chesapeake Bay's first bridge opened. The completion of the second span of the William Preston Lane, Jr., Bridge in 1974 brought the next level of growth with commercial development and even more residential construction appearing on the landscape, including the strip malls across Kent Island visible along U. S. Route 50. But dramatic changes were not seen until 1987 when the State of Maryland instituted the "Reach the Beach" campaign, changing the commute time from the Bay Bridge to the Atlantic Ocean from four hours to two.

The next wave of development would be driven by demographics. Buyers of second homes, vacation homes, retirement homes, investment land, and commuters now dominate the real estate market. This trend was augmented by the upturn in the economy of the late 1990's, when interest rates dropped to record lows, making real estate investment highly attractive. Further complicating this were escalating real estate prices and a declining base of available land for construction on the western shore. Builders and developers began to seek new frontiers. Each county, however, experienced these trends in ways as unique as the counties themselves. Table 2 provides a synopsis of each county's growth history.

"Smart Growth"

Well before the term "smart growth" entered planning parlance in the late 1980's, counties on the Eastern Shore were working to shape their growth management and land conservation efforts in ways that reinforced the local economy and growth patterns. Talbot County undertook a major downzoning (generally east of U. S. Route 50) in the early 1990's, for example, and all counties implemented cluster zoning and protections for sensitive areas in varying ways by that time. See Table 3 for summary of each county's growth strategy in comprehensive plans.

State action provided an important context for county and town policies on growth. A commitment to state funding for land protection began in 1969 in the land transfer tax that

Table 2

Characterizations of Growth by County

Caroline: A highly agricultural county, Caroline has had a steady average annual growth rate of 1% since 1970, increasing from a population of 20,000 to 30,000 from 1970 to 2000. Currently, 30% of the population is in existing growth areas.

Cecil: Cecil County contains both densely populated regions and rural enclaves. Unlike the other five counties studied here, Cecil was not isolated from much of growth before the Bay Bridge was built. In fact, Cecil County has for many decades been exposed to growth pressures that came with the establishment of the rail lines, Interstate 95, and dozens of state and local roads connecting Cecil to Delaware, Pennsylvania, and the northeast transportation corridor. The events that have opened most of the Eastern Shore to growth like the Bay Bridges and the “Reach the Beach” campaign had virtually no effect on Cecil County.

Dorchester: Dorchester County’s recent past has been one of little growth. From 1970 to 2000, the countywide population has increased by only about 1200 people. That trend has recently reversed with a tremendous influx of net in-migration resulting in over 7000 new dwelling units in the current development review pipeline county-wide.

Kent: Founded in 1642, Kent is Maryland’s second oldest county. Rich in history and with 57% of the County considered prime farmland, Kent County is an ideal location for agriculture to thrive. Since 1970, the county’s population increased at a gradual rate, ranging from .16% to 1.3% annual growth. During the period 1990-2005, the County’s population increased by 12% or 2,458. Though fairly constant, the growth rate in Kent County has been significantly lower than nearby counties, the region, and the state. This population growth rate does not reflect the large number of second homes in the county. During the last twenty years, the average age of county residents has increased with more than 24% over age 60.

Queen Anne’s: Over the last 30 years, Queen Anne’s County population has grown fastest among these six counties. Location and proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, the Bay Bridge, and the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area were key factors influencing this growth pattern. The construction of the second span of the Bay Bridge, transportation improvements that opened up accessibility to other Eastern Shore counties (including a new bridge over Kent Narrows), and the construction of the sewage treatment plant to serve Kent Narrows, Stevensville and Grasonville to address failing septic systems and their adverse impacts on shellfish waters have all contributed to additional development pressures in Queen Anne’s County.

Talbot: Ever since the opening of the first Chesapeake Bay Bridge in the early 1950s, Talbot County has become increasingly less isolated and more accessible to nearby urban centers located on the western shore. Between 1970 and 2000, Talbot County’s population increased by 11,130 persons or 33%. Population growth in recent decades is largely attributable to in-migration rather than natural increase. The Easton Election District, the County’s most populous, contains slightly more than 50% of the County’s total population. About 40% of all Talbot County residents live within the County’s five incorporated towns. Over the last twenty years the population’s average age is increasing; as much as 22.3% is projected to be 65 years of age or older by 2010.

funded Program Open Space (which in later years also funded the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Rural Legacy program, and the Maryland Heritage Areas Financing Fund). In 1984 the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Program, affecting land within 1000 feet of the tidal influence of the Bay. In the 1990's, the State of Maryland instituted its "Smart Growth" programs, ultimately to national acclaim. The best-known feature of these programs was the designation of growth areas, termed Priority Funding Areas (PFA's), marking where development was envisioned to occur in the future. State funds for such infrastructure as water and sewer would only be directed within these boundaries, thereby stopping the bulk of state investment in sprawl-type development. These PFA's, designated for the state by the counties under state guidelines, generally fall within municipal boundaries or near existing water and sewer, and they can sometimes differ significantly from county-designated growth areas. (For more on this fine but quite important point of growth management, see Appendix 2.)

Coming on top of counties' efforts to limit development beyond growth areas of any type, the smart growth legislation has been an important driver of the most recent growth phenomenon—a surge of development proposals within or hard by town boundaries (where annexation would be feasible). While this is preferable to sprawl development, this instituted a dramatic change of focus in land use planning. In what seems to be a short space of time, as this fact converged with other development trends within and beyond the region, many small towns have become major decision makers in deciding the pattern of the next generation of development on the Shore.

III. Growth Trends: Establishing a Baseline for Development Patterns

The growth pressures described in the preceding section are undeniable, and so it is imperative that the current growth trends experienced by communities of the Eastern Shore are understood. To accomplish this objectively and within the mandate of Goal 3, the task force decided to analyze residential development inside and outside designated growth areas.

Methodology

Definitions

The task force determined that this report would not use data from the Maryland Department of Planning's (MDP) Priority Funding Areas (PFA's). The group sought to illustrate a growth trend and establish an effective process for tracking of development in the region over the long term. Significant enough differences existed between PFA's and locally designated growth areas to detract from this purpose (more information in Appendix 2). In lieu of the state data associated with PFA's, the group decided that new residential building

Table 3

Growth Strategies Outlined in County Comprehensive Plans

Caroline: The principal land use policy is to encourage growth in and around town centers. In the rural lands outside of towns, steps were taken in the early 1990's to minimize the number of subdivisions. For those subdivisions already developed, current efforts are to encourage infill in platted lots.

Cecil: The most intense development is envisioned for the Development Districts encompassing the Towns of Charlestown, Elkton, North East, Perryville, and Port Deposit, where water, wastewater treatment, and transportation infrastructure capacity exists. Outside of this corridor, "quality growth" and "appropriate expansion" are envisioned in the Town Districts of Rising Sun, Chesapeake City, and Cecilton. Finally, the Suburban District is a place of "orderly suburban growth" consistent with provision of adequate facilities. This district stretches mainly across the Interstate 95 corridor outside of Development Districts where existing development patterns reflect a transition zone between urban and rural areas.

Dorchester: Growth is envisioned in and around incorporated towns (Cambridge, Hurlock, East New Market, Secretary, Vienna, and Church Creek). In addition, three Development Areas are expected to absorb up to 60% of projected low to medium growth densities: the Cambridge district (area west and south of Cambridge); the district from Mount Holly to Secretary (north side of Route 16); and the North Dorchester district west of Hurlock (west of Route 16 and 331). In the county's villages—incorporated towns without public water and sewage such as Eldorado, Brookview, and Galestown—rural development is encouraged but only as is consistent with protection of environmentally sensitive areas and in harmony with traditional development patterns of scale, layout, and design.

Kent: A guiding principle is to encourage growth in and around designated growth areas: Town Growth Areas (Betterton, Chestertown, Galena, Millington, and Rock Hall) and Village Centers, villages with public water or sewer (Edesville, Georgetown, Kennedyville, Worton). Emphasis is placed on using growth in towns and villages to enhance attractiveness and sustain uniqueness.

Queen Anne's: Six primary growth areas have been delineated with distinct boundaries: Centreville, Queenstown, Grasonville, Stevensville, Chester, and Kent Narrows. Each growth area has an adopted plan. Aside from the incorporated towns of Queenstown and Centreville, each growth area also now has zoning that is consistent with these plans.

Talbot: Primary locations for new development are envisioned around the county's five incorporated towns (Easton, St. Michaels, Oxford, and Trappe), with incremental annexations from the town edge to avoid leapfrogging. Future growth areas are all encompassed by greenbelts that outline the limits of urban growth around towns.

permits divided by locally designated growth and non-growth areas would be the best overall data type to use in establishing a baseline for the goal. To capture this information, the group developed a template (spreadsheet) for collection of annual building permit information for growth areas and non-growth areas. Subtracted from this were those permits associated with replacement development.

The Data Collection Process

As the building permit data collection process moved ahead, it was clear that the task would be challenging. Each county has its own methods of collecting building permit information and in each, towns and counties shared the record-keeping responsibility differently. There was no single, reliable procedure for collecting the data.

With a few exceptions, incorporated towns make up the majority of the growth areas. While that made segregating growth areas from non-growth areas simple, in many cases, towns have limited ability to provide all the data sought. Most lack the resources required to collect and maintain records or have a limited role in issuing permits (often both). And in growth areas outside of incorporated towns, permits are not always designated by their relationship to the growth areas.

In addition, the date range of records varies significantly for each county. Not every growth area could provide data as far back as 1990. For example, Rock Hall, an incorporated town designated as a growth area for Kent County, has building permit records only as far back as 1999. Even though the county has records that date back as far as 1990, the absence of nine years of building permit information from Rock Hall dictates how many years we could analyze growth in Kent County. All of Caroline and Talbot County growth areas, on the other hand, were able to provide permit records as far back as 1990.

Results from the Data

To meet the goal for ES 2010 Goal #3, 50% or more of new annual development in the region should be within locally designated growth areas by 2005. The results from the baseline data show some hopeful growth trends.

To clearly illustrate where a majority of growth has been directed, the permit numbers were entered into various graphs. The numbers were graphed both as counties and as a region showing:

1. Number of permits within growth areas per year (Figure 1);
2. Number of permits outside growth area per year (Figure 2);
3. Percentage of permits within the growth area per year (Figure 3);
4. Number of total new permits in the region, within and outside growth areas per year (Figure 4); and
5. Percentage of total new permits in the region issued within growth areas (Figure 5).

Again, the goal is to see permit numbers increase in growth areas and decrease in non-growth areas, with 50% or more of these permits issued within growth areas. The raw data by county can be found in Appendix 3.

Growth Data by County

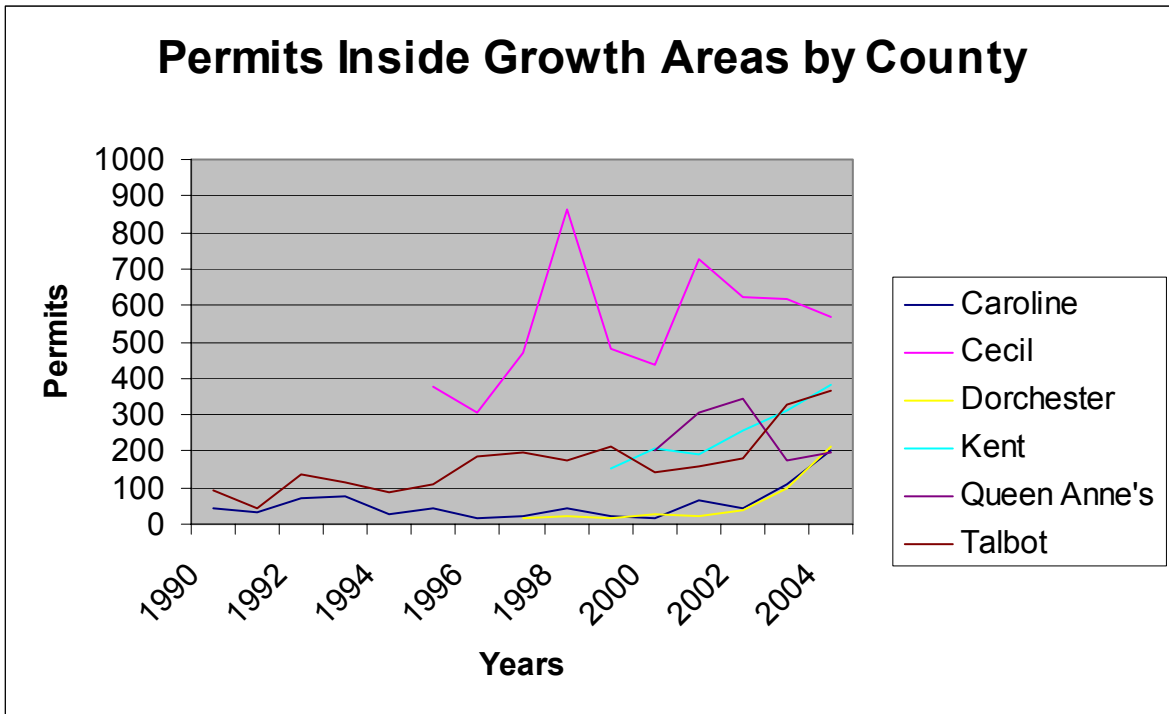


Figure 1

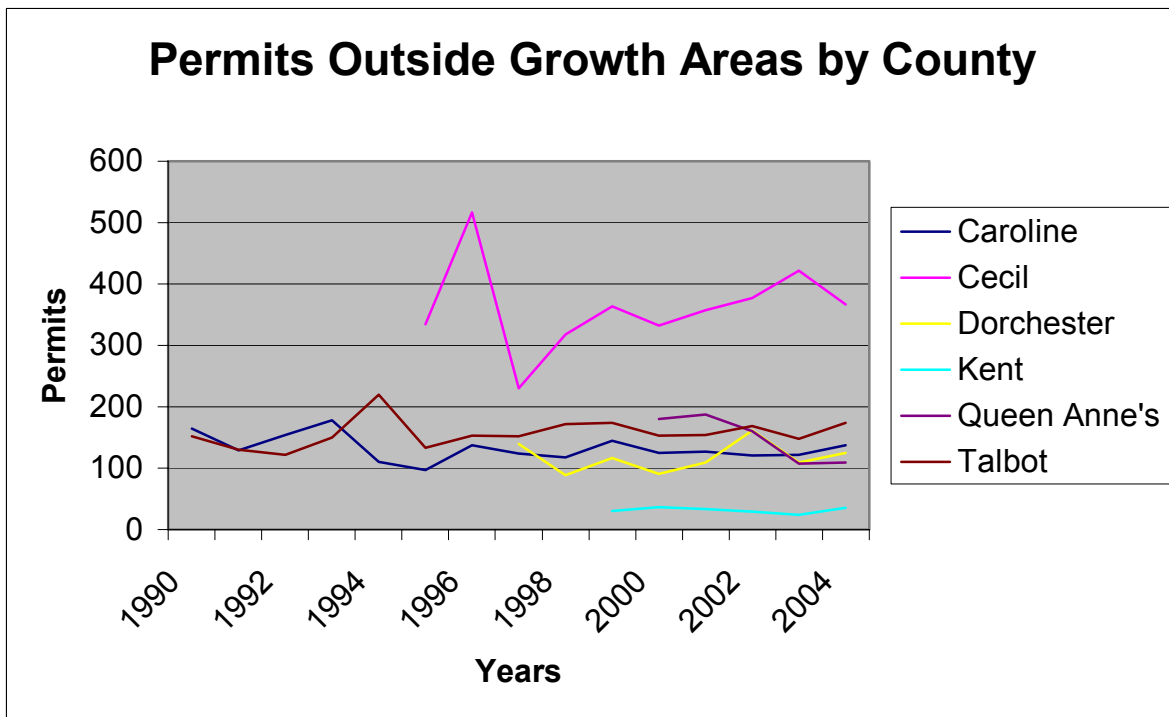


Figure 2

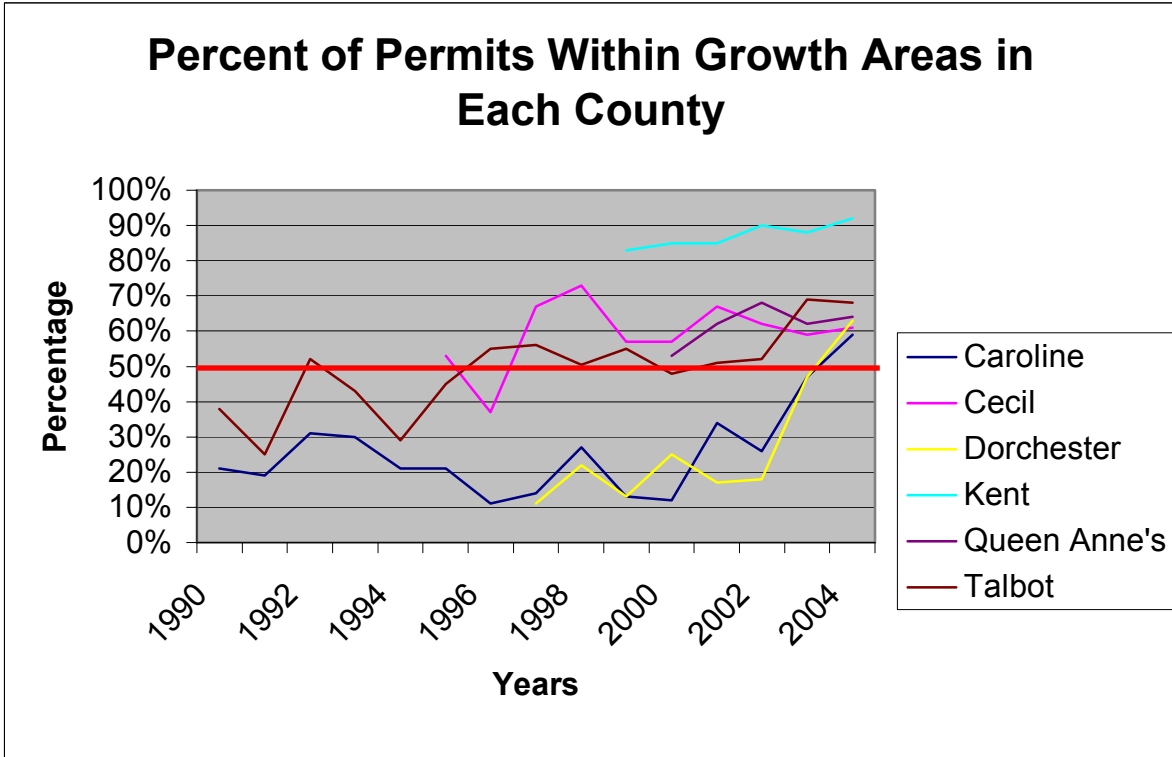


Figure 3

Growth Data by Region

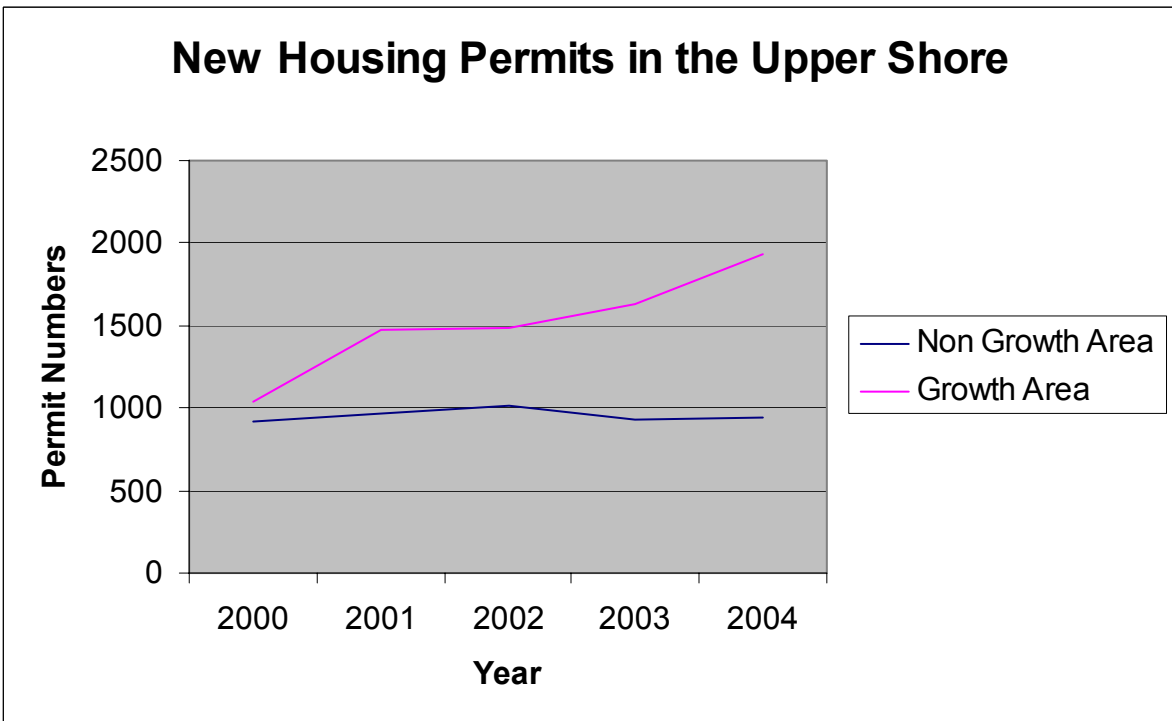


Figure 4

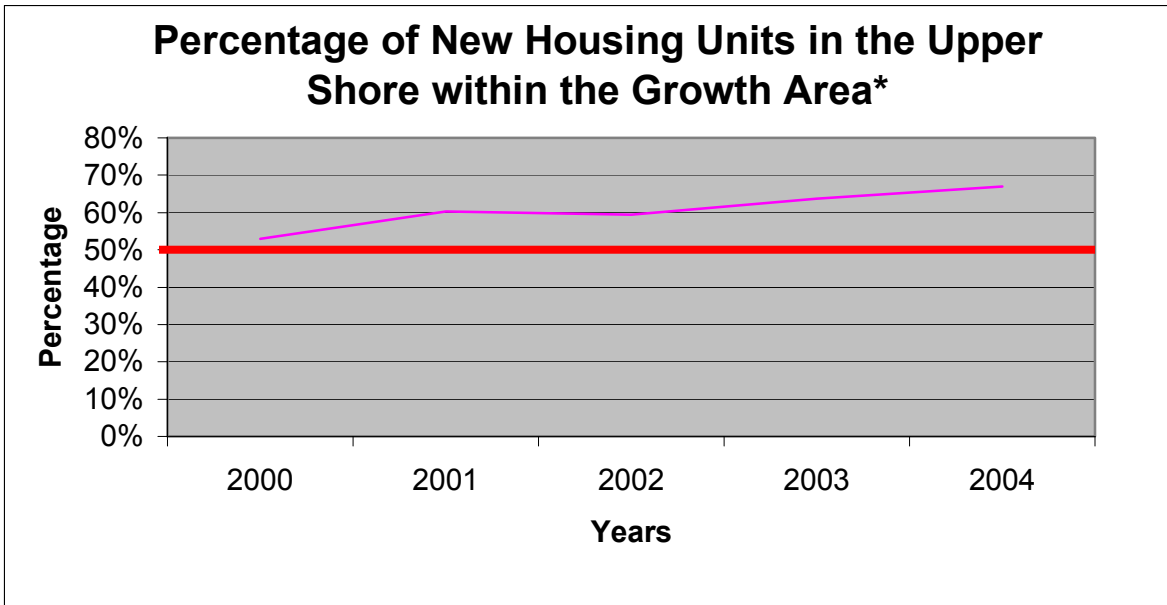


Figure 5

**The data for this chart starts at the year 2000 because this is the first year that all six counties had permit data designated by growth area.*

Meeting Goal Three

In general, the news is good. As a region, the goal of 50% of growth inside growth areas has been exceeded since 2000, an encouraging pattern. Effectively, however, this goal has been achieved by an increase in the numbers of units permitted within growth areas so that they more than match the numbers permitted outside growth areas (compare Figure 1, showing upward trends in each county, to Figure 2, with flat trend lines, or see the data aggregated by region to compare permits in growth and non-growth areas in Figure 4). In other words, the amount and pace of growth outside growth areas remains generally the same.

Within counties, the numbers are also good but more mixed. All six of the Upper and Mid-Shore counties have been meeting or exceeding ES 2010's Goal #3 since 2004. Some counties, like Talbot and Kent, have been meeting the goal since 1996 and 1999 respectively, whereas Caroline and Dorchester started meeting the goal in 2004.

As a gateway to the Delaware and Maryland beaches, Caroline County faces increasing pressure to grow. And as one of the last bastions of affordable housing in Maryland, Dorchester County will be heavily sought out as a retirement location. More must be done to deal with these potential threats to directing growth in growth areas.

With the region meeting Goal #3, consideration should be given to increasing the goal to 75%, with a focus on additional quality criteria, and adding other measures promoting long-term maintenance of the quality of our growth areas.

IV. Conclusion

One of the main challenges for communities in this time of rapid growth is the search for the silver bullet solution when the pressure is on to grow. Unfortunately, there is none. The good news, however, is that modern land use planning is at its most sophisticated and mistakes have been made in other areas that offer lessons to be learned for regions like Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore. But these lessons will have been discovered in vain if this region fails to apply what is known or consider the impacts of unfettered growth too late.

We know Eastern Shore 2010's Goal #3 of 50% of growth within growth areas is attainable because all six counties have met that goal for at least a year. Maintaining this standard, however, could prove to be as challenging as reaching the goal initially.

Appendix 1: Task Force Members

Steve Dodd - Director of Planning, Dorchester County

Tony Di Giacomo - Principal Planner, Cecil County

Faith Elliott-Rossing - Director of Planning, Queen Anne's County

Frank Hall - Planning Administrator, Trappe

Thomas Hamilton - Town Planner, Easton

George G. Kinney - Planning Officer, Talbot County

Betsey Krempasky - Director of Planning, Caroline County

Carla Martin – Community Planner, Kent County

Gail Owings - Director of Planning, Kent County

Eric Sennstrom - Director of Planning, Talbot County

Martin Sokolich - Long Range Planner, Talbot County

Appendix 2: Growth Data Collection

Use of Priority Funding Areas to Define “Growth Areas”

It was determined by the task force that the white paper developed will not use data from the MD State Dept of Planning on growth area versus non-growth area development because there is a significant difference between PFA’s and locally designated growth areas, including:

- Intent: PFAs are a financing tool;
- Criteria: Some growth areas are not qualified to be in a PFA; in addition some non-growth areas are considered PFAs because they are served by sewer (for health reasons); and not all PFAs are towns (Kent Island example)
- Issues Specific to Rural Areas: PFAs do not include efforts to infill existing rural subdivisions and there is no distinction between new development and replacement homes (for example, trailer homes replacements could be a significant percentage of that classified as non-PFA new growth, particularly after Hurricane Isabel).

Other Possible Data Sources




Other data measures considered were: The Hill, Dodge, and related reports (only capture closures and sales) and census data (not great enough accuracy and difficulty with ground-truthing and with matching with timeline and definitions with local data).

For the purpose of this white paper, a snapshot of building permits’ locations from 1990-2003 was collected, with growth areas defined as of their size at the signing of the *Eastern Shore 2010* agreement in 2003.

Appendix 3: Growth Data

New Housing Unit Permits Granted Within and Outside Growth Areas

Below are the numbers used to determine whether counties are meeting Eastern Shore 2010's Goal #3. Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, & Talbot counties all met the goal of 50% of new housing in designated growth areas in 2004. Only Kent County has met the goal every year that numbers were available. 2004 was the first year Dorchester County met the goal.

 = Permits outside growth area  = Permits inside growth area  = Percent of permits inside growth area

	Caroline			Cecil			Dorchester		
1990	165	44	21%						
1991	129	31	19%						
1992	154	70	31%						
1993	178	76	30%						
1994	110	29	21%						
1995	97	41	21%	334	376	53%			
1996	137	17	11%	517	307	37%			
1997	124	21	14%	230	470	67%	140	17	11%
1998	118	44	27%	318	863	73%	89	20	22%
1999	145	21	13%	364	482	57%	117	18	13%
2000	125	17	12%	332	436	57%	91	30	25%
2001	127	66	34%	357	725	67%	109	23	17%
2002	121	44	26%	377	624	62%	161	37	18%
2003	122	109	47%	422	617	59%	109	97	47%
2004	138	202	59%	367	571	61%	125	215	63%
TOTAL	1,990	832		3962	5471		941	457	

	Kent*			Queen Anne's			Talbot		
1990							152	95	38%
1991							130	45	25%
1992							122	136	52%
1993							150	114	43%
1994							220	89	29%
1995							133	108	45%
1996							153	188	55%
1997							152	199	56%
1998							172	175	50.4%
1999	30	151	83%				174	214	55%
2000	36	208	85%	180	201	53%	153	141	48%
2001	33	191	85%	187	307	62%	154	161	51%
2002	29	257	90%	160	343	68%	169	182	52%
2003	24	311	88%	107	176	62%	148	326	69%
2004	35	382	92%	109	195	64%	174	365	68%
TOTAL	455	1500*					4150	3599	

* All growth centers except Millington

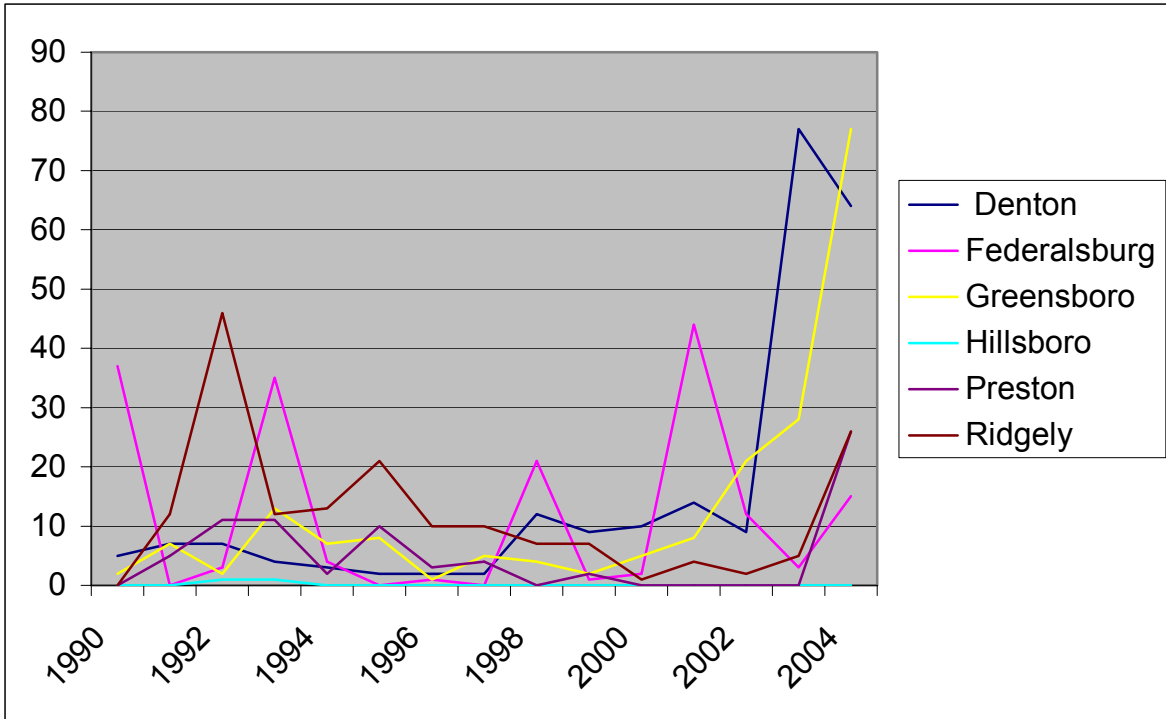
Growth Data by Town

The following charts illustrate the number of new home permits in some of the incorporated towns in four of the six counties. This directs attention to the increased number of new homes being built within towns. Some towns, like Oxford and St. Michaels, show stagnant growth, where others, like Chestertown, show a major decrease and then recently, a gradual increase in permits. Finally, towns like Denton, Easton, and Cambridge show major increases in the past five years.

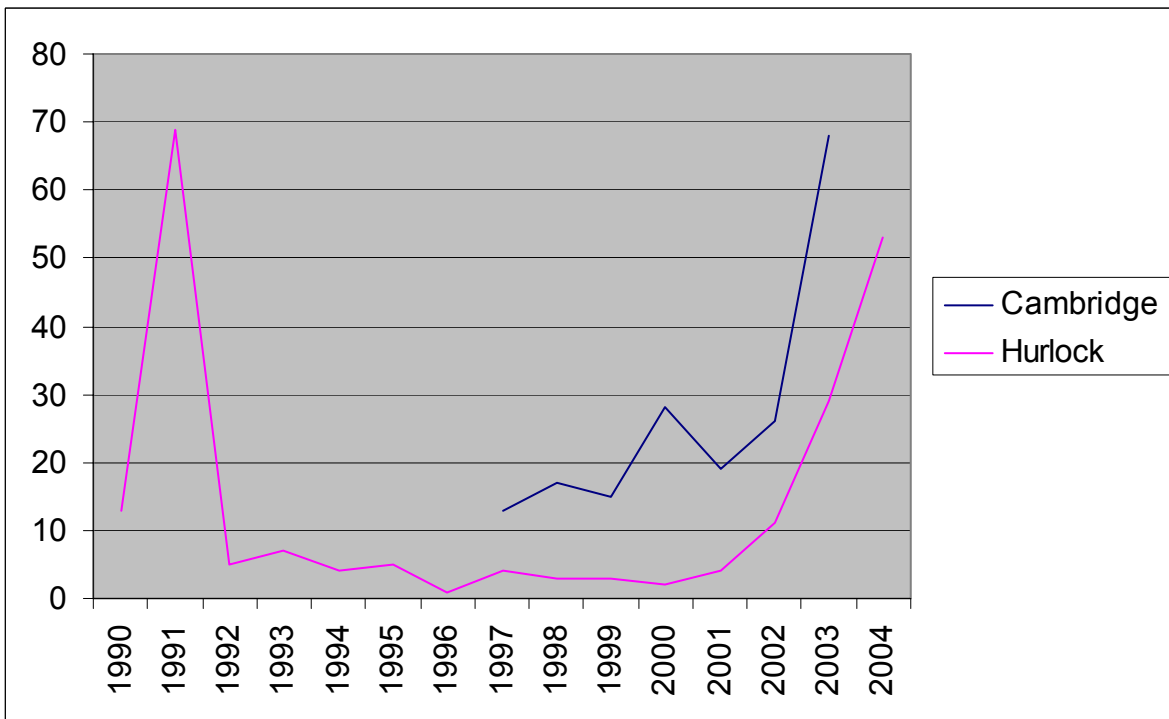
Not all incorporated towns are graphed. The reasons are below:

- Queen Anne's County's designated growth areas are primarily outside of incorporated town. The exceptions are Centreville & Queenstown.
- Cecil County had no reliable new home building permit data available by town.
- Millington and Betterton, in Kent County, had no new home building permit data available.
- Brookview, Church Creek, East New Market, Eldorado, Galestown, Secretary, and Vienna, in Dorchester County, had no new home building permit data available, had negligible growth, or is not considered part of the designated growth area.
- Queen Anne, in Talbot County, had no new home building permit data available or is not considered part of the designated growth area.
- Goldsboro, Henderson, Marydel, and Templeville, in Caroline County had no new home building permit data available, had negligible growth, or is not considered part of the designated growth area.

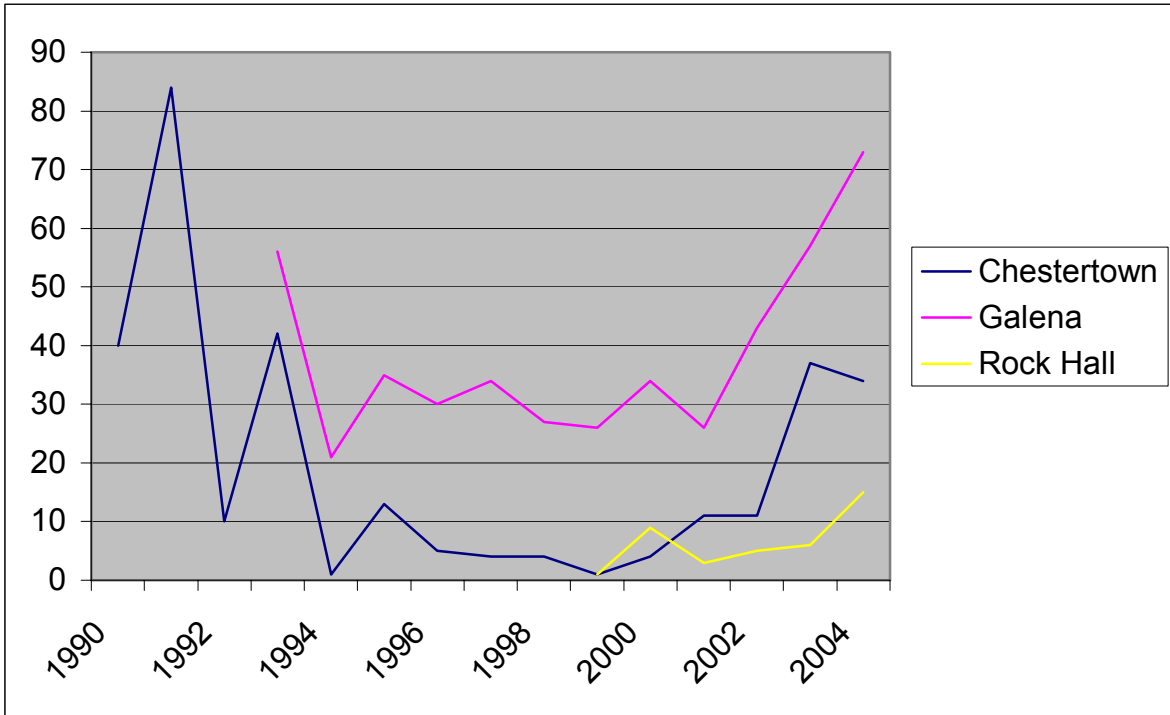
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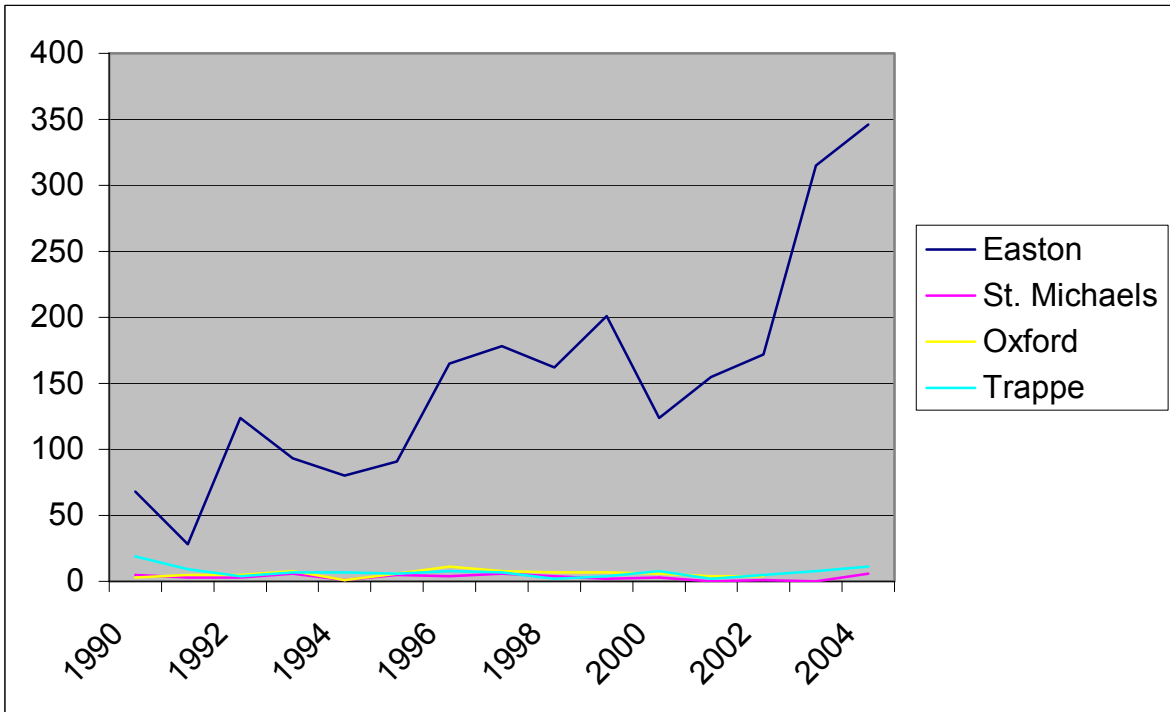
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