

Scenic Maryland PRESS RELEASE

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Scenic Maryland Names Charles Street One of State's "Last Chance Scenic Places"

-- New Designation Spotlights Threatened Areas—

Scenic Corridor Will Receive Designation at Press Event April 25

(Baltimore, MD) — Scenic Maryland, a nonprofit scenic conservation organization, today named Scenic Route 40 in eastern Allegany County one of the state's seven Last Chance Scenic Places because of threats from housing and commercial development that could erode its historic value.

The designation identifies a seven-mile segment of Scenic Route 40 and its surrounding viewshed as an area at risk of permanently losing its scenic integrity. The list of designees was announced at back-to-back press conferences in Baltimore, Maryland and along the banks of the Potomac River today. Scenic Route 40 will officially receive its designation at a local press event at the Town Hill B&B Route 40 at 11 a.m. on April 25.

This portion of the Maryland Historic National Road Scenic Byway is one of the best preserved in the state, said Scenic Maryland Executive Director Elizabeth Buxton. Adding excessive amounts of traffic to accommodate thousands of housing units and commercial shopping strips that also denude local forestland would permanently mar the landscapes enjoyed by so many in this area. We hope that designating it a Last Chance Scenic Place will strengthen efforts to protect this area for generations to come.

Other sites named by Scenic Maryland today include the C&O Canal and Potomac River corridor; the Potomac-to-Doubs Route of the Underground Railroad in Frederick County; tobacco barns of St. Mary's County; the Chincoteague Bay; Bucktown Village; and the historic Charles Street corridor in Baltimore.

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Scenic Maryland chose the sites based on their natural beauty or distinctive character and the degree to which they risked losing their uniqueness due to neglect, insufficient funds, inappropriate development or insensitive public policy. The designation mirrors a program sponsored by Scenic America, which recognizes threatened landscapes nationwide.

Nominees were judged by a geographically diverse panel of leaders from around the state with expertise in the identification, protection, preservation or promotion of Maryland's scenic resources. Judges included representatives from local government as well as from leading community and advocacy organizations.

While Scenic Maryland's Last Chance designation offers no legally binding protections to the selected sites, it should help raise awareness and visibility of these places and the threats that they face, Buxton said.

Scenic Maryland was formed to provide a strong voice for Maryland's exceptional beauty, she said. Urban sprawl, out-of-control development and other visual blights on our landscapes make it more challenging than ever today to build and maintain quality communities. Scenic landscapes aren't just pretty to look at. They add to our quality of life and our peace of mind. They provide a value that cannot be measured, and they are far too quickly slipping away. We hope this designation will help stop the visual degradation that robs us of these important and often undervalued natural resources.

Scenic Maryland is a statewide nonprofit scenic conservation organization that works to protect, enhance and celebrate the beauty of Maryland. Founded in 2001, Scenic Maryland seeks to reclaim the visual environment of Maryland's established neighborhoods, provide critical assistance to communities seeking to protect their sense of place, preserve the scenic countryside and historic landscapes of the state, and promote transportation planning and design that preserves scenic resources. Scenic Maryland is an affiliate of Scenic America, and works closely with this organization to further these goals at the national level.

For more information on individual sites, the threats they face and the unique character of their landscapes, or to set up interviews with representatives for individual sites, please call Laura Williamson at 703-435-3923.