

Talbot County

Smart Growth Successes



Maryland Department
of Planning



Smart, Green & Growing

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Cover photo: Sailing on the Avon River

Page 1 image: The Inn at 202 Dover Street, Easton

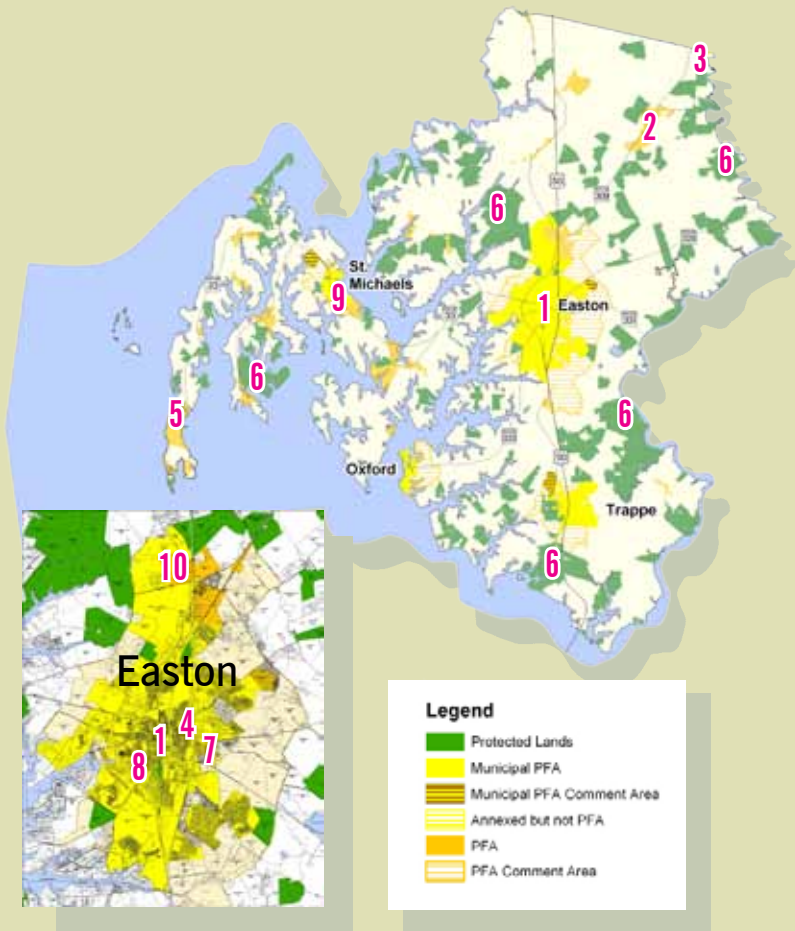
Talbot County

Smart Growth Successes

The story of Talbot County can be told through its history. The land and water are inextricably linked to the people and prosperity of its communities. Generations of families who worked the water and tilled the lands provide a strong foundation for those who come to visit the towns of Talbot County. The abundant natural resources and history and cultural significance are not lost in the advance of progress and economic development. Talbot County is a great example of how to protect things that we hold sacred and still innovate for the future using Smart Growth principles. Connecting the past and future, the land and the water, our rural landscapes and our downtowns - Talbot County is where these worlds intertwine.



Maryland, Smart, Green & Growing



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Priority Funding Areas & Protected Lands

The map above illustrates the promotion of Smart Growth in Priority Funding Areas and the protection of land outside of Priority Funding Areas. It illustrates where to grow and where not to grow to adhere to environmentally sound Smart Growth principles.

The map is indexed to examples in this booklet:

1. Easton Downtown Plan
2. Wind and Solar Demonstration Project
3. Lewiston Road Park (County)
4. Avalon Theatre (Easton)
5. Tilghman Watermen's Museum
6. Countryside Preservation (County)
7. The Inn at 202 East Dover Street
8. Infill and Redevelopment in Easton
9. St. Michaels Water Trail
10. Easton Hospital Relocation



1. Easton Downtown Plan

In 2007, Historic Easton Inc. commissioned a plan to guide the revitalization and enhancement of Easton's downtown. Many in the community had recognized the need to strengthen the existing commercial downtown and to identify ways to increase infill development. However, a comprehensive analysis of the issues and opportunities had not been completed. The non-profit organization coordinated closely with Town Planning staff and knowledgeable local representatives and enlisted the services of a strong planning consultant group. The partners analyzed market conditions, identified potential infill sites, assessed merchandising, inventoried historic resources and reviewed existing and planned infrastructure. The resulting series of recommendations and strategies helped decision-makers better incorporate development in the future plans for Easton and helped strengthen the economic health and community character of downtown Easton.



The power demonstration project will include three wind turbines and solar arrays that will produce up to 600 kilowatts of green electricity.

2. Wind and Solar Power Demonstration Project

Talbot County has taken a proactive approach to renewable energy using federal stimulus funds to help finance a wind and solar power demonstration project at the County's Bio-solids Utilization Facility. The project will demonstrate renewable forms of energy that can be produced locally. As an example of community electricity distribution, energy produced at the facility can be sold to the Choptank Electric Cooperative for distribution into the grid. The County will own the Renewable Energy Credits generated by the facility. The County is already exploring options to enhance its renewable energy portfolio at the site to potentially upgrade the bio-solids facility for other renewable energy projects.



Talbot County Department of Parks and Recreation used Project Open Space funds to purchase 107 acres of undeveloped land at the confluence of the Tuckahoe River and Norwich Creek.

3. Lewistown Road Park

While many parks departments mostly acquire property to build active use ballfields and trailer boat launches, Talbot County is creating a passive use park with public water access to the Tuckahoe River and Norwich Creek. The property at the northern tip of Talbot County could have become seven exclusive waterfront residences. Instead, it will feature walking trails, non-motorized boat launches, restored meadowland, and a 40- acre organic best practices farm. The park is a good example of ways that local governments can improve quality of life, promote resource conservation and provide special places for residents to enjoy year-round.



The Avalon Theatre is a mainstay of downtown Easton.

4. Avalon Theatre

Built at a cost of \$100,000 in 1921, The Avalon Theatre originally boasted leaded glass, a second-floor ballroom, a 300-tube pipe organ and an 18-foot dome complete with 148 lights. Renovated in 1934 under new ownership, the exterior was changed to the Art Deco style that appears today. The Avalon became a well-known movie house, hosting three world premier events. After 64 years, however, the movie house closed in 1985 and began to fall into disrepair. Under local leadership, the Avalon was restored with a \$1.3 million renovation and sold as a performing arts center. When the arts center was unsuccessful, the theater was sold at auction in 1992 to the only bidder – the Town of Easton. Since 1994, the Town leased the theater to the Avalon Foundation, a non-profit headed by local residents. The Avalon Theatre has remained a cornerstone for the community and a regionally important arts venue on the Eastern Shore.



Once rehabilitated, the Lee House with its distinctive "W" facade will serve as the new home of the Tilghman Watermen's Museum.

5. Tilghman Watermen's Museum

The Tilghman Watermen's Museum, Inc. on Tilghman Island was awarded \$90,000 from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to restore and rehabilitate the Lee House, a historic Tilghman "W" house. The Lee House is one of roughly 13 "W" houses built on the Island between 1890 and 1900. The Lee House remains very much in its original configuration. The museum is dedicated to the preservation of the vanishing history, heritage and culture of this Maryland island community. The museum is currently housed in leased space. The Lee House will provide a permanent home, allowing for improved display, storage and security for the museum's growing collection. Visitors will be able to experience the island way of life as well as Eastern Shore seafood delicacies.



The County goal for the Priority Preservation Area (PPA) is to preserve 56,000 acres over the next 20 years.

6. Countryside Preservation (County)

Talbot's Priority Preservation Area (PPA) contains 83,000 acres, including the Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Area. Almost 29,000 acres are under easement in Talbot, which is more than is protected in 12 other counties in Maryland. A number of these easements also protect sensitive waterfront land on the western edge of the County. Through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) alone, Talbot has preserved about 11,000 acres. The pace of easement acquisition is relatively slow. However, since 1990, Talbot has lost just 5,941 acres of farmland. That is less than half the average for most other Maryland counties. The County also established moderately protective rural zoning allowing no more than three lots per the first 20 acres, then one unit per 20 acres and maintains a program for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) away from sensitive lands.



Before



After

7. The Inn at 202 East Dover Street

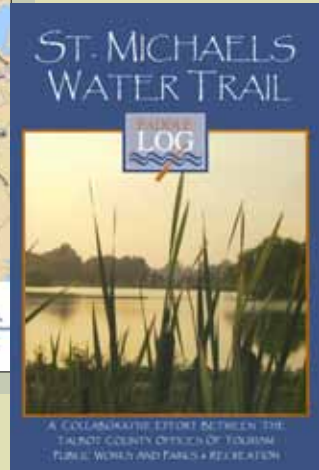
The Wrightson House was originally constructed in 1874 and remodeled in the early 1900s. The building at 202 East Dover St. in Easton's Historic District was originally an Italianate mansion that underwent significant internal subdivision and became nine apartments and medical offices following World War II. Over many years, the building suffered from rot, fire, termites and intensive additions and construction. Purchased by Ronald and Shelby Mitchell, the building underwent major rehabilitation using the Maryland Heritage Structures Rehabilitation Tax Credit. The owners worked closely with architects from the Bucher/Borges Group and transformed the dilapidated building into an Inn with five guest suites, an owner's unit and a restaurant. The result is a catalyst for inspiring restoration, rehabilitation and new development in a formerly neglected part of the Easton Historic District.



Commercial redevelopment at Dover and Aurora streets (top) and affordable residential housing built by Habitat for Humanity on Clay Street in downtown Easton.

8. Infill and Redevelopment in Easton

The Town of Easton has encouraged infill development and the rehabilitation and redevelopment of existing buildings and providing affordable housing for the community. Two examples are the Genova development, at Aurora and Dover streets, and Milestone on Clay Street. The Genova project is an infill and rehabilitation project undertaken by local developers at the site of a former gas station. It houses multiple uses and includes office space, reasonably priced apartments, retail and restaurants. Milestone is Habitat for Humanity Choptank's first multi-unit project and when complete will include four moderate income homes and six low income homes. These examples showcase local commitment to reuse land within the Town boundary for projects that will benefit the community. Both projects received awards from the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy for promoting infill and growth in appropriate areas.



The Water Trail, one of many along local rivers like the Choptank, is a partnership between Talbot County offices of Tourism, Public Works, and Park and Recreation. It is supported by the Maryland Department of Transportation and the American Canoe Association.

9. St. Michaels Water Trail

One of the best ways to experience the character of a coastal community is by kayak. That's why a group of partners in Talbot County have teamed up to promote the St. Michaels Water Trail. Four possible trails allow paddlers to leave from various public landings and travel for 2, 3 or as many as 8 miles around coastal creeks, into harbors and through undisturbed wetlands.



The Easton Hospital agreement resulted in retaining a major employer and important regional medical center within the town.

10. Easton Hospital Relocation

Shore Health Systems, part of the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), has operated the Memorial Hospital at Easton since 1996. The hospital employs more than 1,000 Town and County residents and provides medical and emergency services to nearly 70,000 residents in Caroline, Talbot, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Kent counties. With the need to expand and available land at a premium, a proposal was initially made to move the hospital to a rural location outside of the Town. The County, Town and multiple State agencies worked to keep Easton Hospital near the existing Town. Shore Health Systems will instead relocate to an area that is now within the Town boundary adjacent to the Easton Airport.



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