

THE TOWN OF DENTON 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Denton, Maryland
December 11, 2023**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the following officials, staff, and advisors for their contributions to preparing the 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan. In addition to those listed below, we would like to thank the many citizens of the Town of Denton who participated in the planning process by attending public meetings and workshops or otherwise providing comments.

TOWN COUNCIL

Abigail W. McNinch, Mayor

Lester L. Branson

Dallas Lister

Walter Keith Johnson

Frank Taylor

PLANNING COMMISSION

William Quick (Chairperson)

David Burroughs (Vice-Chairperson)

Doris Walls

Stephen Mead

Kevin Waterman

Joseph Mayer, Jr. (Alternate)

George Schwaeble (through January 2023)

Lauren Shilling (through June 2021)

Sue Cruickshank (through December 2020)

CONSULTANTS

Peter Johnston & Associates, LLC – Town Planner

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Scott Getchell

TOWN STAFF

Donna Todd, Director - Department of Planning and Codes

Don Mulrine, Project Manager - Department of Planning and Codes

April Neall, Secretary I - Department of Planning and Codes

TOWN ATTORNEY

Christopher F. Drummond

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
A Vision for Denton.....	1
Denton's Vision.....	1
The Framework for Planning.....	2
Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning.....	3
The Land Use Article – Planning & Zoning Enabling Act.....	3
Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act Of 1992	3
Sensitive Areas.....	4
2006 Maryland House Bill 1141.....	4
Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012	5
Other Changes.....	5
HB 1045 (2019)	6
HB 90 (2021)	6
Components of a Growth Management Program	7
CHAPTER 2 - COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATION	8
Population Trends	8
Age and Education.....	8
Educational Attainment	9
Race and National Origin.....	10
Employment and Income	10
Households.....	14
Housing Characteristics	16
CHAPTER 3 – LAND USE PLAN	19
Introduction.....	19
Goals, Objectives, And Policies.....	19
Goals	19
Objectives	20
Policies.....	21
Existing Land Use.....	21

Current Zoning.....	22
Base Zones.....	22
Overlay and Floating Zones.....	24
Transects.....	26
T-6 – Urban Center.....	27
T-5 – General Urban Zone.....	27
T-4 – Urban Fringe Zone.....	27
T-3 – Suburban Zone.....	28
T-2 – Rural Zone.....	28
T-1- Rural Reserve Zone.....	28
Special Use.....	28
Planning Districts.....	28
Urban Center (T-6).....	29
Core Neighborhoods (T-6).....	31
General Urban (T-5).....	31
Urban Fringe (T-4).....	32
Suburban (T-3, T-1).....	32
Special Commercial (T-5, T-3).....	34
Neighborhood Commercial (T-5, T-4).....	34
Regional Commercial (SU).....	35
Urban Employment (SU).....	36
Planned Employment (SU).....	36
Rural Reserve (T-2).....	36
Sensitive Environmental Areas (T-1).....	37
Recommendations.....	37
Development Regulation.....	38
Capital Improvements.....	39
CHAPTER 4 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT.....	40
Introduction.....	40
Goals and Objectives.....	40
Goal.....	40

Objectives	40
Town Services.....	40
Sewer.....	40
Water.....	41
Administrative Offices.....	41
Public Works.....	41
Town Police Department	41
Solid Waste Collection and Disposal.....	42
County Services	42
Emergency Management	42
Emergency Medical and Advanced Life Support Services	42
Medical Facilities.....	43
Library	43
Schools.....	43
Parks and Open Space.....	44
Inventory	44
Board of Education Land	46
State and Private/quasi-public land.....	46
Park Equity.....	47
Other Services.....	48
Other Community Facilities.....	48
Caroline County Health Department	48
Courts for Caroline County.....	49
County Administration.....	49
Caroline County Department of Corrections	49
County and State Police	49
Community Facilities Policies	49
Recommendations.....	50
CHAPTER 5 - MUNICIPAL GROWTH ELEMENT	53
Introduction.....	53
Population and Housing Growth Scenarios	53

Growth Scenarios.....	54
Development Capacity Analysis.....	55
Residential Capacity – Within the PFA	55
Nonresidential Development Capacity	60
Growth Impacts.....	60
Town Facilities and Services	60
Sewer and Water.....	61
Parks and Recreation.....	62
Public Schools.....	62
Public Library	63
Fire and Rescue.....	63
Budget Impacts and Financing.....	64
Sewer and Water.....	64
Taxes and Fees	64
Developer Rights and Responsibility Agreement (DRRA).....	65
Annexation Plan.....	67
Annexation Areas.....	67
West Denton Provisional Annexation Area.....	67
Rural Buffer	68
TIER Map	68
CHAPTER 6 - NATURAL RESOURCES AND SENSITIVE AREAS	71
Introduction.....	71
Goals and Objectives	71
Goals	71
Objectives	72
Chesapeake And Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area.....	72
Sensitive Areas.....	73
Streams and Stream Buffers.....	73
100-Year Floodplain	77
Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species.....	77
Steep Slopes	78

Other Natural Resource.....	78
Nontidal Wetlands	78
Forest.....	79
Habitat Areas for Plant and Wildlife Diversity.....	81
Green Infrastructure	81
Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet)	83
Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Species (FIDS) Habitat	83
Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs).....	83
Recommendations.....	88
Watershed Management.....	88
Resource Conservation	89
CHAPTER 7 - WATER RESOURCES ELEMENT	92
Introduction.....	92
Water Resources	93
Groundwater Resources	93
Water Systems	96
Water Storage Capacity	96
Water Distribution System.....	96
Wastewater System.....	96
Water and Sewer Service Plan.....	100
Projected Water and Sewer Demand	100
Water Quality Issues.....	102
The Upper Choptank Watershed.....	102
Point Source Pollution	108
Nonpoint Source Pollution and Stormwater Management	109
Summary.....	112
Point and Nonpoint Source Loads	112
Drinking Water	112
Wastewater Treatment	112
Stormwater Management.....	112
Climate Change.....	113

Assessment.....	114
Water Hazard Risks	114
Sea Level Rise Impacts.....	115
100-Year Floodplain	115
Sea Level Rise.....	116
Nuisance Flooding	116
Water Resource Strategies and Recommendations.....	117
Existing Regulations and Programs	117
Comprehensive Soil Conservation Plans	118
Tier II Streams	118
Climate Changes	118
CHAPTER 8 - TRANSPORTATION PLAN	120
Introduction.....	120
Goal, Objectives, and Policies	120
Goal.....	120
Objectives	120
Policies.....	121
Functional Classification System	121
State/County Roads System	122
MD Route 404.....	122
MD 404 Business.....	122
MD Route 313.....	123
MD Route 328.....	123
Other Collector Routes	123
Town Functional Classification System	123
Transit	124
Level of Service (LOS).....	125
Crash Data.....	128
Roads and Streets Policies.....	128
Planned Improvements State Improvements	129
Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).....	129

State Highway Needs Inventory	129
Programmed Town Transportation Capital Projects	130
Highway Roadway Improvement Plan	131
Denton Parkway	131
Key Intersections	132
Pedestrian Systems Plan	132
Maryland Scenic Byways® Program	134
Implementation	135
CHAPTER 9 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	138
Introduction.....	138
Goals and Objectives	139
Goal.....	139
Objectives	139
Caroline County Five-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development	139
Downtown Denton Main Street, Inc.	141
Recommendations.....	143
CHAPTER 10 - HOUSING.....	147
Introduction.....	147
Goals and Objectives	147
Goals	147
Objectives	147
Policy	147
Background.....	148
Unit Type	148
Age.....	148
New Housing Production.....	149
Tenure	149
Home Prices and Homeowners.....	150
Affordable Housing	151
Summary Conclusions	154
Fair Housing - Town Council Resolution No. 894.....	154

Fair Housing.....	154
Policy Options.....	155
Regulations and Affordable Housing.....	156
Affordable Housing Mandates (Inclusionary Zoning).....	157
Recommendations.....	157
Neighborhood Conservation.....	158
CHAPTER 11 - HISTORIC FEATURES	161
Introduction.....	161
Goals and Objectives	161
Goal.....	161
Objectives	161
Brief Historical Perspective	162
Historic Resources	163
Historic District Overlay Zone.....	166
Protection and Preservation Programs	167
Federal and State.....	167
Recommendations.....	170
Adaptive Reuse	170
Denton Pattern Book.....	170
Development Policies	171
Heritage Tourism	171
Heritage Center for Caroline County.....	172
CHAPTER 12 – PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.....	174
Introduction.....	174
Community Facilities.....	174
Municipal Growth.....	174
Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas	174
Water Resources	175
Economic Development.....	175
Housing.....	175
Historic Features	176

Transportation	176
Land Use	176
Zoning	177
Revise the Table of Use Regulations	177
Conservation Overlay Zone and Regulations	179
RP Recreation and Parks Zoning District	179
RD Redevelopment Floating Zone	180
MI Mixed Industrial Zoning District	180
PRD Planned Residential Developments (§ 128-84).....	181
PUD Planned unit development, Mixed-use District floating zone (§ 128-30).....	181
Cottage Housing Development	181
Parking Reform.....	182
Historic District.....	182
Denton Sustainable Communities Action Plan.....	182

List of Maps

Map 3-1 Existing Land Use	23
Map 3-2 Current Zoning	25
Map 3-3 Transects.....	30
Map 3-4 Land Use Plan	33
Map 4-1 Community Facilities	51
Map 4-2 – Denton Parks	52
Map 5-1 Residential Development Capacity	59
Map 5-2 Nonresidential Development Capacity.....	66
Map 5-3 Growth/Annexation Plan.....	69
Map 5-4 Tier Map	70
Map 6-1 Chesapeake Bays and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area.....	74
Map 6-2 Sensitive Areas	76
Map 6-3 Natural Resources	82
Map 6-4 Green Infrastructure	84
Map 6-5 Bio-Diversity	85
Map 6-6 Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Habitat	86
Map 6-7 Targeted Environmental Areas	87
Map 6-8 Conservation Corridor.....	91

Map 7-1 Water and Wastewater Facilities.....	99
Map 7-2 Water and Sewer Service Plan.....	101
Map 7-3 Land Use Land Cover 2010	104
Map 7-4 Tier II Streams and Catchment Areas.....	107
Map 7-5 MDE Coastal Smart – Climate Ready Action Boundary (CRAB) Inundated Zones....	119
Map 8-1 Federal Functional Classification.....	126
Map 8-2 Town Functional Classifications	127
Map 8-3 Roadway Improvement Plan	136
Map 8-4 Trail System Plan	136
Map 9-1 Trade Area	144
Map 10-1 Neighborhood Conservation Areas	160
Map 11-1 MHT Inventory.....	165
Map 11-2 Historic Resources.....	168
Map 11- 3 Target Investment Zone	173
Map 12-1 Sustainable Communities Area	186

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Population Change, 1990 - 2020 Denton, Md.....	8
Table 2-2: Denton Population as a Percent of Caroline County – 1950 to 2020.....	8
Table 2-3: Population Change by Age Group, Denton 2010 to 2020	9
Table 2-4: Educational Attainment – Denton & Caroline County 2010 and 2021	9
Table 2-5: Comparison Race 2020: Denton, Caroline County, Maryland.....	10
Table 2-6: Comparison of Race and Hispanic or Latino 2020: Denton, Caroline County, Maryland	10
Table 2-7: Employment Status Labor Force – Denton and Caroline County	11
Table 2-8: Occupation – Denton 2017	11
Table 2-9: Industry Sectors of Employment – Denton 2017	12
Table 2-10: Comparison of Industry Sectors of Employment - Denton 2000 to 2017.....	12
Table 2-11: Income and Poverty Status – 2017: Denton, Caroline County, and Maryland.....	13
Table 2-12: Household and Family Income – 2017: Denton.....	13
Table 2-13: Comparison of Household Income – Denton 1999 to 2017	14
Table 2-14: Comparison of Family Income – Denton 1999 to 2017	14
Table 2-15: Comparison of average household size 2010 – Denton, Caroline County, Maryland.....	15
Table 2-16: Comparison of Household Types 2020 - Denton, Caroline County, Maryland.....	15
Table 2-17: Household Size – Denton 2010 to 2017	15
Table 2-18: Family Type and Presence of Related and Own Children- Denton 2010 and 2017 ..	16
Table 2-19: Occupancy and Tenure – Denton 2000, 2010 and 2020	17
Table 2-20: Residential Unit Mix - 2017	17
Table 2-21: Year built – 2010.....	17
Table 2-22: Year householder moved into unit, Denton 2010	18
Table 2-23 – Comparison of Housing Values – Denton 2010 and 2017.....	18

Table 3-1: Existing Land Use	22
Table 3-2: Zoning districts by acres and percent of total	22
Table 3-3: Land Use Planning Districts Summary	29
Table 5-1: Denton Population as a Percent of Caroline County – 1940 to 2020	54
Table 5-2: Caroline County's Share of Projected Regional Population Growth	54
Table 5-3: Growth Scenario Population Projections	55
Table 5-4: Projected Dwelling Units	55
Table 5-5: Residential Dwelling Unit and Population Capacity – Priority Funding Area	57
Table 5-6: Residential Development Capacity Outside Municipal PFA	58
Table 5-7: Vacant and Underutilized Nonresidential Land per Capita	60
Table 5-8: Nonresidential Land Demand by Scenario	60
Table 5-9: Impacts - Administration, Public Works, and Police	61
Table 5-10: Sewer and Water Impacts	61
Table 5-11: School Facility and Personnel Impacts	62
Table 5-12: School Capacity Projections	63
Table 5-13: Fire and Rescue Impacts	63
Table 5-14: Police	63
Table 5-15: County Budget Impacts Estimate	64
Table 5-16: Town Budget Impacts Estimate	65
Table 5-17: County and Municipal Cost and Revenues Comparison	65
Table 6-1 Forest Conservation Threshold Requirements	80
Table 7-1: Service Area Categories Water and Sewer Plan Delineation	100
Table 7-2: Sewer and Water Demand	102
Table 7-3: Upper Choptank Watershed Land Use Land Cover (LULC) 2010	103
Table 7-4: Reported TN and TP, Denton WWTP 2018-2019	109
Table 7-5: Point Source Loading	109
Table 7-6: TN and TP Loading Comparison – Denton and the Upper Choptank River Basin, 2010	110
Table 7-7: TN and TP Loading 2040 scenarios and buildout	110
Table 8-1: Annual Average Daily Traffic Volume – 2010 through 2018	124
Table 8-2: Level of Service (LOS)	125
Table 8-3: Crash Summary	128
Table 8-4 – Street Improvements	130
Table 8-5 - Combination Projects	131
Table 10-1: Residential Unit Mix - 2017	148
Table 10-2: Year built – 2010	148
Table 10-3: Occupancy and Tenure – Denton 2000, 2010 and 2017	149
Table 10-4: Owner and Rental-Occupied Units as a Percent of Total, Denton, Caroline County, Easton, and Talbot County, 2019	150
Table 10-5: Existing Home Sales and Median Home Prices 2017 -2021	151
Table 10-6: Median Household Income 2019	151
Table 10-8: Caroline 2020 AMI	152
Table 10-9: Denton 2020 AMI	153

Table 10-10: Average Household Income in the Past 12 Months - Denton..... 153

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan is the official statement of the Town Council and Planning Commission of Denton, setting forth policies concerning desirable future growth and serving as a general guide to public and private development decisions. In addition, it is the basis for specific policies, programs, and legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, and other actions that implement the growth policies outlined in the Plan.

The Plan's elements form an integrated, unified document for evaluating and guiding future growth and development. As a policy document, it is general, comprehensive, and long-range. It is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geographic area of the Town and projected growth areas outside the current corporate limits. The Plan includes all functional elements that bear upon its physical development, such as transportation, land use, and community facilities. It is general in that it summarizes policies and proposals but does not establish detailed regulations or indicate precise locations. It is long-range in that it looks beyond current issues to problems and opportunities related to future growth in the planning period.

A Vision for Denton

By characterizing local resources, identifying local values and needs, and developing a strategy to ensure that the needs and values of the community are met, the Town of Denton has developed its Comprehensive Plan. The Plan represents the Town's strategy for addressing growth and development issues important to the Town's future quality of life. Although goals and objectives exist in each of the Plan's elements, the overall vision for the Town is an integral unifying element. In addition, the vision underscores the key community expectations reflected in the Comprehensive Plan and provides a conceptual benchmark for future Town decisions. The following vision statement provides a normative framework for growth and development that supports the community's values and the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives.

Denton's Vision

Denton will be an innovative, healthy, safe, well-balanced community that protects its historical integrity, preserves its unique natural resources, enhances its economic vitality, and maintains its unique small-town character. Denton's population will increase at an acceptable rate consistent with the ability of the Town and County to provide essential services and facilities.

The following, *Small Town Bound*¹, helps put the notion of "small town" as used here into a proper perspective.

"What is a small town?"

Ask five people to define a small town, and you'll probably get five different answers. (Ask the Census Bureau to define a small town, and they'll refuse to answer: a population of 25,000 constitutes a "city," they say, and 2,500 to 25,000 is a "place," but a small town has no official definition.) To one of the seven million residents of New York City, a

population of 100,000 residents may constitute a small town. On the other hand, Wyomingites see Cheyenne, with a population of 50,008, as not just a city but a metropolis.

Some urbanites use the terms "small town" and "country" interchangeably. Either is simply a place with fewer people than the city or its suburbs. On the other hand, some people make an important distinction: a "small town" (the term "village" is frequently used in the Northeast) is a place with businesses, shops, and residential neighborhoods; "the country" is simply farmland, forest, or desert, perhaps with a residence every mile, or every twenty miles.

Nevertheless, when you think about moving to a small town, you're probably not thinking about a specific population figure. You're thinking about the benefits of a relative difference in population density, intangibles such as neighborliness, community, or a perceived simplicity of life. This book uses the term "small town" in that sense -- as a difficult-to-describe atmosphere rather than a strictly- defined product of population or architecture. Perhaps the best summation of this state of mind was offered by a resident of my Town, trying to define the most valuable characteristic of our friendly, close-knit community, who said, "Only in a place like this can you have a conversation with a misdialed phone number."

It's a quality of life you seek rather than a population figure. You may find that quality of life in a town with 50 people or 50,000; you may find it "downtown" or in place where your nearest neighbor is seven miles up a dirt road. It depends on your personality and that of the surrounding community. But regardless of how you define the small Town, it's far different from the city or suburb you're leaving."¹

The Framework for Planning

As Denton and the surrounding environments grow and change over the next twenty years, this Comprehensive Plan will guide public and private decisions regarding the Town's growth and development. This Plan presents a future vision of Denton into the year 2040, along with recommendations for bringing that vision to fruition. The ideas of the Plan are a distillation of the community's many desires, tempered by what seems feasible and reasonable. This Plan is not intended to be a static document. Instead, it will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect new development trends, economic shifts, or changes in the community's goals and objectives.

In 1999, the Town encompassed approximately 1,382 acres. Denton has grown its land area by over 149 percent and currently encompasses approximately 3,444 acres distributed upon approximately 1,960 individual parcels of land. Most of the annexations have been properties located in the future growth areas identified in the 1997 Denton Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, planning for the future will be primarily about efficiently using the land resources already within the corporate limits.

¹ 1 Small Town Bound, John Clayton, Copyright © 2005 John Clayton

Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

The Land Use Article – Planning & Zoning Enabling Act

The Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland is the Planning and Zoning enabling legislation from which Denton derives its powers to regulate land use. Title 3, Subtitle 1 of the Land Use Article sets forth the minimum requirements for a comprehensive plan, which shall include, among other things:

- A community facilities element.
- An area of critical State concern element.
- A goals and objectives element.
- A land use element.
- A development regulations element.
- A sensitive areas element.
- A transportation element.
- A municipal growth element.
- A water resources element.
- A mineral resources element if current geological information is available.

Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act Of 1992

The context for planning in Denton must also consider the Town's role in implementing the overall growth management policies established by the State of Maryland in the Planning Act of 1992. Therefore, planning for Denton has been guided by the twelve components of Maryland's visions outlined in § 1-201 of the Land Use Article. Maryland's "Visions" are as follows:

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability: A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air, resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.
2. Public Participation: Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementing of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. Growth Areas: Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.
4. Community Design: Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.
5. Infrastructure: Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.

6. Transportation: A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. Housing: A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provide residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. Economic Development: Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities is encouraged.
9. Environmental Protection: Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake Bay and its coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. Resource Conservation: Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
11. Stewardship: Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for creating sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. Implementation: Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, State, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.

Sensitive Areas

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 also required that the comprehensive Plan contain a Sensitive Areas Element, which describes how the jurisdiction will protect the following sensitive areas. Denton's plans and development codes were amended to protect the following:

- Streams and stream buffers,
- 100-year floodplains,
- Endangered species habitats,
- Steep slopes, and
- Other sensitive areas Denton has determined require protection from the adverse impacts of development.

2006 Maryland House Bill 1141

In 2006, the Maryland State Legislature passed House Bill 1141 (HB 1141), which provides Amendments to the Land Use Article and Article 23A: "Municipal Annexation Act" of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Amendments include provisions for including a "Water Resources Element" and "Municipal Growth Element" in local comprehensive plans. In addition, HB 1141 established additional substantive and procedural requirements for municipalities preparing

Comprehensive Plans. Procedural requirements include inter-governmental coordination for land use and growth management planning. Substantive procedural requirements include the following:

- The Town must include a "Municipal Growth Element" in its Comprehensive Plan that specifies where Denton intends to grow outside its existing corporate limits during the planning period. It also must discuss how the Town intends to address the Growth Area's services, infrastructure, and environmental protection needs.
- The Town must develop the "Municipal Growth Element" with Caroline County. Before approving a Growth Element, the Town must provide a copy to the County, accept their comments, meet and confer with the County, and, on request from either entity, mediate any differences.
- The Town and County must include a "Water Resource Plan Element" in their comprehensive plans that identify drinking water and other water resources to meet current and future demands. It also must identify suitable water and land areas to receive stormwater and wastewater derived from development.
- For land annexed after September 2006 to qualify for State assistance as a Priority Funding Area-PFA, the Town must complete an analysis of land capacity available for development. This analysis must include infill and redevelopment capacity. It also includes an analysis of land needed to satisfy the projected need.

Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012

The Maryland General Assembly approved the Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, also known as the septic law, during the 2012 General Assembly session. Mapping the Growth Tiers (Tiers) is intended to be a straightforward exercise based on existing local government plans and goals for growth and land preservation. Tier mapping will reflect existing zoning, comprehensive plans, and sewer service. The law applies only to residential subdivisions, not to non-residential developments.

Four Tiers of land use categories are created to identify where major and minor residential subdivisions may be located in a jurisdiction and what type of sewerage system will serve them. Sewerage systems currently serve Tier I areas. Tier II areas are planned to be served by sewerage systems. Tier III areas are not planned to be served by sewerage systems. These are areas where growth on septic systems can occur. Tier IV areas are planned for preservation and conservation, prohibiting major residential subdivisions. **Denton approved a Growth Tier Map in August 2012 (see Map 5-4).**

Other Changes

Since 2006, other changes in Maryland planning requirements have been instituted. Local Jurisdictional Annual Reporting Requirements include quantitative measures and indicators. In

addition, a Five-Year Mid Cycle Reporting is required. Planning Commissioners must complete training, and comprehensive plans must be updated at least every ten (10) years.

HB 1045 (2019)

HB 1045 (2019) amended Sections 3-102 of the Land Use Article, adding Section 3-114, which requires the Plan to include a housing element. Per this requirement, Denton must include a housing element that sets out goals, objectives, policies, plans, standards, and strategies that, among other things, address the need for affordable housing within the jurisdictions, including workforce housing and low-income housing. HB 1045 (2019) requires that housing elements use the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Area Median Income (AMI) calculations when planning for workforce and low-income housing.

HB 90 (2021)

In addition to addressing workforce and low-income housing needs, starting from January 1, 2023, HB 90 (2021) mandates that all housing plans for towns and non-charter counties must actively promote fairness in housing. HB 90 defines "affirmatively furthering fair housing" as taking concrete steps to achieve the following objectives:

- Eliminating patterns of housing segregation.
- Creating inclusive communities without barriers that limit housing access based on protected characteristics.
- Addressing significant disparities in housing needs and access to opportunities.
- Replacing segregated living patterns with genuinely integrated and balanced living arrangements.
- Ensuring compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws.

The law does not prescribe specific actions that local jurisdictions must take. Instead, it allows them to devise approaches for advancing fair housing in their communities, provided these approaches include meaningful actions to tackle the abovementioned issues.

Specifically, HB 90 adds the following provisions to § 3-114 of the Land Use Article, which apply exclusively to municipalities and non-charter counties:

1. Local jurisdictions must actively promote fair housing through their housing and urban development programs.
2. Any comprehensive housing plan enacted or amended on or after January 1, 2023, must include an evaluation of fair housing to ensure that the local jurisdiction is actively promoting fair housing.

Components of a Growth Management Program

This Comprehensive Plan provides the basic framework and direction for all components of what may be considered the Town's overall Comprehensive Planning Program. It is not a stand-alone document but is supported and, in turn, supports related Planning Program documents such as the ones listed below.

- Zoning Ordinance
- Subdivision Regulations
- Capital Improvements Budget
- Development Standards and Guidelines
- Denton Pattern Book

These documents and others, when used concurrently, are the basis for directing and managing growth in Denton. Since 1997, Denton has revised these growth and development management tools to reflect current conditions and needs.

CHAPTER 2 - COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATION

Population Trends

Except for declines in the 1960 to 1970 and 1990 to 2000 decades, Denton’s population has steadily increased, with substantial increases occurring between 1980 to 1990, during the real estate boom, and the 2000 to 2010 decade, post real estate bust (see Table 2-1). From 2000 to 2010, Denton experienced its most substantial population increase, nearly eclipsing growth in the 1980 to 1990 decade. According to Census Bureau figures, Denton’s population increased from 2,960 to 4,418, an annual growth rate of over four percent between 2000 and 2010. Denton’s annual growth rate slowed slightly to less than one percent between 2010 and 2020. Perhaps of equal significance is Denton, which has an estimated daytime population of 5,464. During the typical workday, these people enter or leave the community for work, entertainment, shopping, etc.²

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population	1,938	1,561	1,927	2,977	2,960	4,418	4,848
Change	---	-19.5%	23.4%	54.5%	-0.6%	49.3%	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Denton remains the largest municipality in Caroline County; however, it ranks sixth among Caroline County municipalities in density (population per square mile). **From 2010 to 2020, Denton’s population grew from slightly more than eight percent of the County population in the 1980s to over 14 percent by 2020 (see Table 2-2).**

YEAR	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Denton	1,806	1,938	1,561	1,927	2,977	2,960	4,418	4,848
Caroline County	18,234	19,462	19,781	23,143	27,035	29,772	33,066	33,293
Percent of County	9.90%	9.96%	7.89%	8.33%	11.01%	9.94%	13.36%	14.56%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age and Education

Since 2010, the distribution of the population by age group has changed. For example, the age group 15 to 24 decreased slightly while under 5 (pre-school age) and 45 to 54 (senior labor force) decreased significantly. (see Table 2-3). The percentage of the community in the age groups 65 years and older increased substantially along with those aged 5 to 14 (school age). These shifts caused the median age to slightly increase from 36.5 to 36.6 years.

² <https://www.cleargov.com/maryland/caroline/town/denton/2017/demographics>

In comparison, the median age in Caroline County increased from 38.7 to 40 years between 2010 and 2020. The most significant shifts recorded are decreases in the age groups 15 to 24 and 45 to 54 and increases in the age groups 65 and over. Coincidentally, the median age for Maryland also increased from 38 in 2010 to 38.8 in 2020.

Table 2-3: Population Change by Age Group, Denton 2010 to 2020					
	2010		2020		
Age Group	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percentage Change
Under 5	340	7.70%	317	6.54%	-1.16%
5 to 14	657	14.87%	775	15.99%	1.12%
15 to 24	537	12.15%	581	11.98%	-0.17%
25 to 44	1,200	27.16%	1,270	26.20%	-0.96%
45 to 54	571	12.92%	552	11.39%	-1.53%
55 to 59	248	5.61%	260	5.36%	-0.25%
60 to 64	198	4.48%	267	5.51%	1.03%
65 and over	667	15.10%	826	17.04%	1.94%
Total	4,418	100.00%	4848	100.00%	
Median Age	36.5		36.6		
Source: U.S. Census Bureau					

Educational Attainment

Compared to 2010, in 2021, less of Denton and Caroline County’s population 25 years and over graduated high school. The trend indicates the Town and County's increased population with a graduate or professional degree. Still, unlike Caroline County, Denton had fewer with an associate or bachelor’s degree by 2021 (see Table 2.4). Conversely, in 2021, a higher percentage of the population had some college credit, whereas Caroline County had less.

Table 2-4: Educational Attainment – Denton & Caroline County 2010 and 2021				
Year	Denton		Caroline County	
	2010	2021	2010	2021
Population 25 years and over	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Less than 9th grade	1.40%	4.45%	5.00%	5.05%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	11.20%	15.86%	13.40%	10.09%
High school graduate (incl. equivalency)	43.80%	38.72%	40.40%	39.34%
Some college credit, less than one year	19.10%	23.99%	25.70%	19.59%
Associate degree	8.20%	3.92%	6.80%	6.94%
Bachelor's degree	13.30%	7.63%	17.00%	11.48%
Graduate or Professional degree	3.00%	5.44%	5.00%	7.52%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates				

Race and National Origin

By comparison, in 2020, Denton had higher percentages of Black or African Americans and two or more races than Caroline County, but not as high as the State (see Table 2-5). Hispanic or Latino populations in Denton also were a smaller percentage of Denton's overall population than Caroline County and the State (see Table 2-6).

	Denton		Caroline County		Maryland	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	4,848	100.00	33293	100.00	6,177,224	100.00
One Race	4,500	92.80	31124	93.49	5,695,323	92.20
White	3,128	64.50	24479	73.53	3,007,874	48.70
Black or African-American	1,065	22.00	4434	13.32	1,820,472	29.50
American Indian and Alaska Native	41	0.80	146	0.44	31,845	0.50
Asian	120	2.50	350	1.05	420,944	6.80
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2	0.00	19	0.06	3,247	0.10
Some Other Race	144	3.00	1696	5.09	410,941	6.70
Two or More Races	348	7.20	2169	6.51	481,901	7.80

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

	Denton		Caroline County		Maryland	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One race	4,500	92.82%	31,124	94.13%	5,695,323	92.20%
Hispanic or Latino	298	6.15%	2,820	8.53%	729,745	11.81%
Not Hispanic or Latino	4,550	93.85%	30,473	92.16%	5,447,479	88.19%
Total population	4,848	100.00%	33,066	100.00%	6,177,224	100.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Employment and Income

From 2000 to 2017, Denton's labor force (population 16 years and over) increased by nearly forty-nine percent, while its participation rate (percent of the population 16 years and over in the labor force) increased to about eleven percent. The percentage of the civilian labor force unemployed more than doubled from 4.3 to 8.8 percent (see Table 2-7). During the same time frame, Carline County's labor force grew by less than 14 percent, and its participation rate decreased by less than two percent (from 66 to 65 percent). The unemployment rate in the civilian labor force increased in both jurisdictions, with Denton's doubling while Caroline County's increased by about a third. Compared to the State, Denton's participation rate in 2017 was lower, 64 percent versus 68.05 percent, and its percentage of the unemployed civilian labor force was higher, 8.8 percent versus 6.12 percent.

Employment Status	Denton		Caroline County	
	2000	2017	2000	2017
Population 16 years and over	2,189	3,261	22,743	25,875
In labor force	1,168	2,095	15,045	16,774
Civilian labor force	1,162	2,095	15,016	16,761
Employed	1,112	1,911	14,297	15,674
Unemployed	50	184	719	1087
% of the civilian labor force	4.3%	8.8%	4.8%	6.5%
Armed Forces	6	0	29	13
Not in the labor force	1,021	1,166	7,698	9,101
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census</i>				
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>				

In 2017, the principal occupations of civilian employees 16 years and over were service, followed by management, business, science, and arts and sales and office occupations. These three categories accounted for nearly three-quarters of all occupations (see Table 2-8).

Occupation	Number	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,911	100%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	447	23.40%
Service occupations	549	28.70%
Sales and office occupations	404	21.10%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	365	19.10%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	146	7.60%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>		

The leading industries of employment of Denton residents in 2017 in order of magnitude were public administration, other services, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, food services, educational services, health care, and social assistance (see Table 2-9). These industry categories account for sixty-six percent of Denton’s workforce’s employment. Along with public administration and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services, retail trade and finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing were the principal employment growth sectors from 2000 to 2017 (See Table 2-10).

	Number	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1911	100%
Public administration	516	27%
Other services, except public administration	308	16%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	240	13%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	194	10%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	161	8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	155	8%
Information	151	8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	90	5%
Retail trade	66	4%
Wholesale trade	16	1%
Manufacturing	9	1%
Construction	5	0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0	0%
Source: US Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Industry Sector	Percent
Declining sectors	
Educational, health, and social services	-7.30%
Information	-5.30%
Wholesale trade	-4.40%
Manufacturing	-1.90%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	-1.90%
Other services (except public administration)	-2.40%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	-0.50%
Growing sectors	
Construction	8.70%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	7.20%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	5.40%
Public administration	2.90%
Retail trade	1.60%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	0.30%
Source: 2000 US Census Bureau	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	

According to 2017 estimates, Denton residents fall below the income and poverty level in all categories, i.e., households, families, and non-family households (see Table 2-11). Denton and Caroline County have substantially higher poverty rates than the State. This position changed from the 1999 picture when Denton’s poverty percentage was less than that of the County and State.

Compared to the State, household income in Denton was 74 percent lower than the state average in 2017. Median income was 41 percent lower than the State, and persons with incomes below \$25,000 were 113 percent higher than that of the State.³

Jurisdiction	Per Capita Income	Median Income			Persons Living In Poverty	Households With an Income of \$100,000 or More
		Households	Families	Non-Family Households	Percent	Percent
Denton	\$22,063	\$46,494	\$60,082	\$21,771	18.20%	18.20%
Caroline Cty.	\$25,355	\$52,469	\$63,584	\$31,629	16.50%	21.20%
Maryland	\$39,070	\$78,916	\$95,597	\$48,872	9.70%	39.10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

2017 data indicates that over 50 percent of households and half of the families have an annual income below \$50,000 (see Table 2-12). Trends imply a widening difference in the distribution of household and family income in Denton. Since 1999, household incomes less than \$10,000 have increased by over 68 percent. Households with incomes between \$10,000 and \$49,999 have decreased, while households with incomes exceeding \$50,000 have increased, with the most substantial percentage increases in the income categories \$100,000 and over. Family income follows a similar pattern except for a decline in the income category of \$75,000 to \$99,999 (see Tables 2-13 and 2-14).

Income in 2017	Percent	Income 2017	Percent
Households	100.0%	Families	100.0%
Less than \$10,000	13.3%	Less than \$10,000	10.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2.4%	\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.5%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	14.5%	\$15,000 to \$24,999	13.3%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6.9%	\$25,000 to \$34,999	3.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.3%	\$35,000 to \$49,999	16.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.4%	\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.0%	\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14.2%	\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1.2%	\$150,000 to \$199,999	1.7%
\$200,000 or more	2.8%	\$200,000 or more	3.9%

³ 2017 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 2-13: Comparison of Household Income – Denton 1999 to 2017			
	Income in 1999 Percent	Income in 2017 Percent	Percent change
Households	100.0%	100.0%	
Less than \$10,000	7.9%	13.3%	68.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.9%	2.4%	-65.2%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	17.6%	14.5%	-17.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	17.7%	6.9%	-61.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	20.8%	15.3%	-26.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.1%	20.4%	19.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.8%	9.0%	2.3%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2.0%	14.2%	610.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.5%	1.2%	140.0%
\$200,000 or more	0.7%	2.8%	300.0%
<i>Source: 2000 US Census Bureau</i>			
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>			

Table 2-14: Comparison of Family Income – Denton 1999 to 2017			
	Income in 1999 Percent	Income in 2017 Percent	Percent change
Families	100.0%	100.0%	
Less than \$10,000	5.7%	10.4%	82.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.9%	0.5%	-44.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	13.7%	13.3%	-2.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	19.5%	3.4%	-82.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	19.8%	16.0%	-19.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.1%	21.9%	3.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.1%	9.8%	-30.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3.2%	19.0%	493.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.8%	1.7%	112.5%
\$200,000 or more	1.2%	3.9%	225.0%
<i>Source: 2000 US Census Bureau</i>			
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>			

Households

In 2000, the State of Maryland calculated that the average number of persons per household in Denton was 2.29 and that the average number of persons per household would remain constant over the next several decades. Denton households did not follow this prediction, with the average household size increasing to 2.56 by 2010. The average household size was smaller in Denton than in Caroline County and Maryland, but the average family size was slightly larger.

	Denton	Caroline County	Maryland
Average household size	2.56	2.68	2.61
Average family size	3.17	3.12	3.15

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

In 2020, approximately 38 percent of households in Denton were married couple households (see Table 2-16). In comparison to the State, in 2020, married couple households were seven percent lower than the State average.

In 2020, Denton had a higher percentage of female households, no spouse or partner present with own children under 18, and households with individuals under 18 years than Caroline County or the State.

	Denton	%	Caroline County	%	Maryland	%
Total Households	1,730	100.0	12,327	100.0	2,321,208	100.0
Married couple household	670	38.70	Not reported		1,060,621	45.70
With own children under 18	311	18.00	Not reported		422,330	18.20
Cohabiting couple household	145	8.40	Not reported		146,165	6.30
With own children under 18	73	4.20	Not reported		48,522	2.10
Male householder, no spouse or partner present:	275	15.90	2,000	16.22	409,151	17.60
Living alone	188	10.90	Not reported		266,540	11.50
65 Years and Over	64	3.70	536	4.35	78,689	3.40
With own children under 18	39	2.30	209	1.70	37,243	1.60
Female householder, no spouse or partner present:	640	37.00	3,228	26.19	705,271	30.40
Living alone	299	17.30	Not reported		360,512	15.50
65 Years and Over	147	8.50	892	7.24	166,526	7.20
With own children under 18	162	9.40	682	5.53	133,944	5.80
Households with Individuals Under 18 Years	671	38.80	4,122	33.44	737,771	31.80
Households with Individuals 65 Years and Over	549	31.70	4,395	35.65	709,796	30.60

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

By 2017, the Census Bureau estimates that three-person households as a percentage of all households increased by approximately 14 percent while one-person households decreased by over four and one-half percent (see Table 2-17).

	2010		2017	
	Number	Percent of total	Percent of total	Change
Total households	1,606	100.0%		
1-person household	470	29.3%	27.9%	-4.7%

	2010		2017	
	Number	Percent of total	Percent of total	Change
2-person household	481	30.0%	30.0%	0.0%
3-person household	258	16.1%	18.4%	14.4%
4-person household	210	13.1%	23.7%	-4.4%
5-person household	116	7.2%		
6-person household	36	2.2%		
7-or-more-person household	35	2.2%		
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census</i>				
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>				

By 2017, families with school-age children were estimated to decrease by 3.7 percent (see Table 2-18). However, school figures show increased enrollment in the elementary, middle, and high schools and projected enrollment increases through 2027 at the Denton Elementary and North County High School. On the other hand, enrollment in Lockerman Middle School is expected to decrease by about seven percent. At the other end of the spectrum, households with children are households with individuals 65 years and over. This household segment increased from 319 in 2000 to 401 in 2010, slightly over 25 percent, despite a nearly seven percent decrease in this age group between 2000 and 2010.

	2010		2017	
	Number	Percent of total	Percent of total	Change
Families	1,034	100.00%		
With related children under 18 years	607	58.70%	45.51%	-22.5%
With own children under 18 years	540	52.20%	45.51%	-12.8%
Under 6 years only	126	12.20%	10.48%	-14.1%
Under 6 and 6 to 17 years	130	12.60%	10.48%	-16.8%
6 to 17 years only	284	27.50%	26.48%	-3.7%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census</i>				
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>				

Housing Characteristics

Over ninety percent of the Town’s housing units were occupied in 2020, with about half owner-occupied (See Table 2-20). From 2020, trends include a decrease in owner-occupied units and a **decrease** in vacant units.

	2000		2010		2020	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	Percent of total
Total housing units	1,264	100%	1,791	100%	1,864	100%
Occupied housing units	1,140	90%	1,606	90%	1,730	93%
Vacant housing units	124	10%	185	10%	134	7%
Owner-occupied housing	645	57%	906	56%	1,008	58%
Renter-occupied housing	495	43%	700	44%	722	42%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau						

Of the total inventory of dwelling units in the 2017 Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation database (1,668 units), the majority, 70 percent, were classified as single-family detached homes. Multi-family and townhouse units accounted for 28 percent (see Table 2-20).

Unit Type	Number	Percent
Detached Single-Family	1,169	70%
Townhouse	153	9%
Multi-family	325	19%
Mobile Home	9	1%
Mixed-Use	12	1%
Total	1,668	100%
Source: Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation, MdPropertyView©		

Census data shows Denton’s overall housing stock was slightly newer in 2010 than a decade before. Approximately fifty-seven percent of Denton’s housing units were over fifty years old in 2010 (see Table 2-21) compared to sixty percent in 2000.

	Number	Percent of Total
Total housing units	1,744	
Built 2005 or later	169	10%
Built 2000 to 2004	108	6%
Built 1990 to 1999	88	5%
Built 1980 to 1989	187	11%
Built 1970 to 1979	197	11%
Built 1960 to 1969	251	14%
Built 1950 to 1959	310	18%
Built 1940 to 1949	87	5%
Built 1939 or earlier	347	20%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census		

Over one-third of residents of owner-occupied housing moved in in 2005 or later, and over 57 percent since 2000 (see Table 2-22). However, in 2000, only about eleven percent of owners had moved into a unit.

	Number	Percent of total
Occupied housing units	1,428	100%
Moved in 2005 or later	543	38%
Moved in 2000 to 2004	227	16%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	258	18%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	147	10%
Moved in 1970 to 1979	136	10%
Moved in 1969 or earlier	117	8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

The value of owner-occupied housing units decreased by over 18 percent, falling from a median home value of \$216,000 in 2010 to an estimated \$182,300 in 2017 (see Table 2-23). However, recent data indicates a 3.5 percent increase from 2016 values.⁴ The downward trend in value is undoubtedly the lingering effect of national housing value drops beginning in 2008. Still, more units may also move from owner-occupied tenure status to renter-occupied.

VALUE	2010		2017		2010 to 2017
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Percent change
Owner-occupied units	949	100%	836	100%	-11.9%
Less than \$50,000	0	0%	9	1%	1%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	79	8%	92	11%	32%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	83	9%	187	22%	156%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	261	28%	237	28%	3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	254	27%	191	23%	-15%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	217	23%	120	14%	-37%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	55	6%	0	0%	-100%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0%	0	0%	0%
Median (dollars)	\$216,000		\$182,300		-18.49%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁴ 2017 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

CHAPTER 3 – LAND USE PLAN

Introduction

The Land Use Plan describes the preferred land use for various areas of the Town in the context of the vision, goals, and objectives outlined in this comprehensive plan. It establishes a policy framework for allocating land to categories of use (e.g., residential, commercial, etc.) and managing the community's land resources to address the needs of residents for an environment in which to conduct everyday life. It also is the intent of the Land Use Plan to establish policies and a spatial organization that supports the goal of a sustainable, productive, and less costly future for the community. Finally, they relate the comprehensive plan to the State's Visions.

The Land Use Plan mirrors current land-use patterns and how the community organized overtime to meet the needs of its residents. This accounting includes how land use, buildings, structures, travelways, and public facilities are arranged. Noted is how these built environment components fit into the natural environment and the role features like topography, streams and rivers, soils, and vegetation play in sustaining Denton's quality of life.

The concept of "sustainability" expands the perspective from which Denton considers the direction set by the plan's goals and objectives for improving Denton's environmental, social, and economic footprint while reflecting its residents' unique qualities, situations, and aspirations. Sustainability implies that poorly managed resources are vulnerable to a slow-moving disaster scenario where humanity runs out of critical physical resources, overshoots ecological carrying capacity, or is subjected to unforeseen catastrophic events. Conversely, a resilient Denton finds the most effective way to maintain and enhance property values, stimulate business, provide quality services to its residents, and preserve the special features that give the Town its unique character while concurrently conserving land, natural and energy resources, and reducing negative environmental impacts and prosper.

Goals, Objectives, And Policies

Goals

- A sustainable and efficient land utilization pattern. One that meets current and future residents' needs protects the environment and results in the least cost for infrastructure expansion, operation, maintenance, and life cycle costs.
- Compact, balanced, and sustainable development.
- Demographically diverse neighborhoods that provide safe, independent living at all life stages.

- Long-term financial stability and adequate revenues to meet expenditures without relying on outside sources.
- A physical layout that enhances the public realm and adds value to properties.
- Integrated neighborhoods that reflect the positive characteristics of existing residential neighborhoods.
- A viable economic base that encourages further financial investment, business retention, diversification, and expansion.
- An economy that offers a broad range of employment and business opportunities.

Objectives

The Land Use objectives intend to advance plan goals and set a course for implementation actions. They are the framework for public policies and regulations affecting individual and collective well-being. They are critical milestones toward achieving environmental sustainability, economic stability, and social inclusion. These objectives are:

- Accommodate future growth through infill and redevelopment that enhances neighborhood stability and property values.
- Ensure that the demands of new development do not adversely impact the provision of Town services and facilities.
- Ensure new residential neighborhoods are fully integrated into the community and reflect existing residential neighborhoods' positive characteristics.
- Require physical connection between new and existing neighborhoods.
- Encourage a diverse mix of housing types and costs.
- Support re-investment in the Central Business District and along the waterfront.
- Encourage further economic investment, business retention, diversification, and expansion and offer various employment and business opportunities.
- Set aside land for the development of employment uses, including small businesses and light industrial uses, to meet the projected needs of residents.

- Work with the County to address the impacts of new development on facilities and services.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas and conserve natural resources.

Policies

The following policies recognize that the land use plan and environmental and building code regulations that affect land use do not always coincide with how random and unexpected events influence, e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic or how individuals and businesses need to use land. Overly restrictive or unresponsive codes can thwart community development efforts, leading to income disparities, uncoordinated development, inefficient land use, and housing problems. The Comprehensive Plan's land-use policies emphasize flexibility to adjust to shifting community needs and economic conditions while requiring a rigorous accounting for public revenues, expenses, assets, and long-term liabilities. Accordingly, Denton's land-use policies are as follows:

- Future residential development will occur primarily through infill and redevelopment within the incorporated area.
- Employment uses are a priority.
- The Denton Pattern Book will be used as a model for determining the context-appropriateness of the proposed infill and redevelopment.
- Regulations will be assessed for their impact on infill and redevelopment investment and revised as appropriate.
- New development will be revenue neutral or revenue positive. If not, appropriate offsets will be required.

Existing Land Use

Map 3-1 shows the current land use development pattern based on the Department of Assessment and Taxation classification system. Table 3-1 provides a tabular summary. Rather than uniform spatial patterns with each use type located in a separate district, the existing land use data reveals a historical pattern of mixed uses throughout all residential neighborhoods. This mix of uses is one feature that defines Denton's unique character. These patterns should inform the range of allowable uses under zoning as the urbanization of Denton continues in the planning period and beyond.

Table 3-1: Existing Land Use		
Land Use Classification	Acres	Percent
Single-Family	943	27.2%
Townhouse	30	0.9%
Multi-family	20	0.6%
Commercial	357	10.3%
Mixed-Use*	7	0.2%
Public	287	8.3%
Semi-public	108	3.1%
Industrial	51	1.5%
Agriculture	1,310	37.8%
Made Land	8	0.2%
Unclassified	2	0.0%
Water	99	2.8%
Other	246	7.1%
Total	3,467	100.0%
* Includes properties classified as Residential Commercial and Commercial Residential		
Source: Maryland Property View		

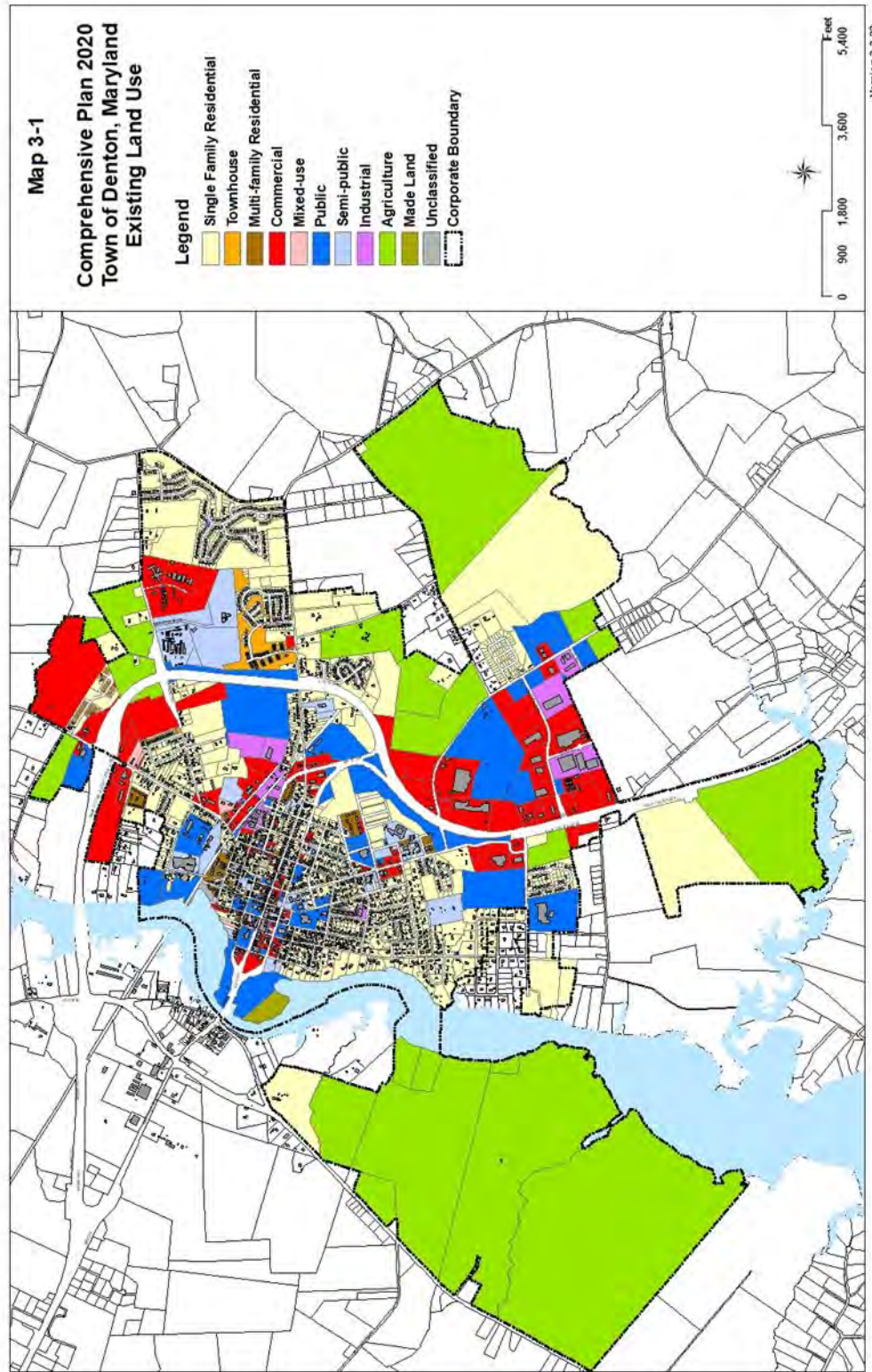
Current Zoning

Base Zones

Denton's corporate area is divided into eleven base zoning districts, as shown on Map 3-2. The zoning district coverage details are summarized in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2: Zoning districts by acres and percent of total		
Zoning Districts	Acres	Percent of Total
CBC	51	1.5%
CM	50	1.5%
GC	53	1.6%
I	281	8.2%
MI	7	0.2%
MR	333	9.8%
RA	963	28.2%
RHC	292	8.6%
RP	226	6.6%
TR	319	9.4%
SR	834	24.5%
Total	3,408	100.0%

Map 3-1 Existing Land Use



Among the current zoning districts, three are primarily intended for residential use with varying intensity. These districts are MR (Mixed Residential), TR (Town Scale Residential), and SR (Suburban Residential), and they collectively cover about forty percent of the Town area.

The CBC (Central Business Commercial District) is primarily designated for retail and office development, with some residential options allowed. The CM (Commercial Medical District) was established to encourage the clustering of medical-related uses and assisted living facilities.

RHC (Regional Highway Commercial) and GC (General Commercial) are the primary commercial zoning districts. RHC serves areas for various retail and office establishments, commercial services, and regional markets, catering to residents and travelers on major roads or streets. The GC District provides space for less intense commercial and business activities, meeting local needs, and is located within the core areas of the Town.

The I (Industrial District) is designated for light manufacturing, fabricating, warehousing, and wholesale distributing facilities, most of which are in the Denton Industrial Park. The MI (Mixed Industrial District) includes an area with existing light industrial and commercial uses, some transitioning into a commercial and residential mix.

The RP (Recreation and Parks District) was created to preserve and protect areas in the Town with a recreational character. However, the Town intends to eliminate this district due to potential fairness and takings issues.

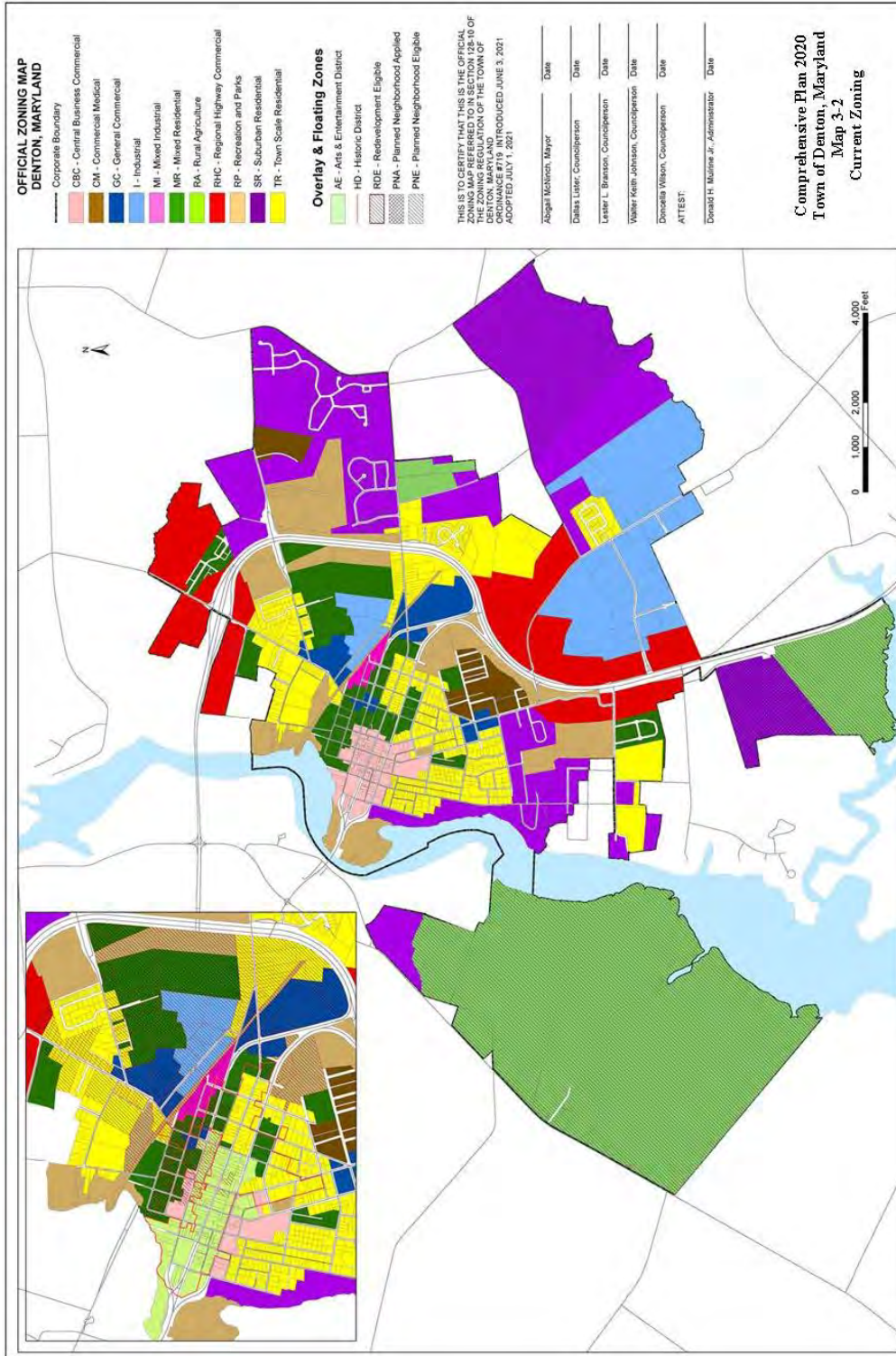
The RA (Rural Agriculture District) is intended to maintain the Town's rural or agricultural character until adequate public facilities become available. A significant portion of the RA District is included in the Atlantic and Chesapeake Bays Critical Area, reducing the developable area significantly.

Overlay and Floating Zones

In addition to the base zoning districts, the Town has adopted several overlay and floating zones. Overlay zones impose additional standards and processes on the underlying base zone. Examples include the Denton Historic District, which aims to preserve the Town's heritage, and the CA Critical Area, which addresses water quality and habitat conservation.

Floating zones, such as the RD (Redevelopment District) and PN (Planned Neighborhood), offer additional development options and special review procedures for eligible properties, subject to approval by the Town Council. The AE (Arts and Entertainment District) allows for mixed-use infill and redevelopment, emphasizing artistic, cultural, educational, and musical uses. The RD (Redevelopment District) permits the rehabilitation and redevelopment of blighted properties, preserving the character of surrounding neighborhoods while expanding job opportunities. The PN (Planned Neighborhood) floating zone facilitates master-planned, mixed-use developments with various housing types and densities.

Map 3-2 Current Zoning



Transects

Denton's land use plans historically reflected the assessed value and zoning classification of properties, emphasizing a static perception of the land's potential role, especially under changing demographic and economic conditions. Implementing the land use plan supported a regulatory framework based on best practices from a previous generation. Implementation was heavily influenced by separating land use categories, rigid development standards, and off-street parking requirements emphasizing automobile needs.

This comprehensive plan establishes a land-use platform for promoting urban design and creative use patterns, paying attention to the physical, cultural, and social systems that define the place and support its ongoing evolution. Proposed land use districts decouple the land use plan from an identity based on assessment classification or zoning. Instead, they reflect the physical characteristics of Denton's evolution from a rural crossroad village to a municipal center. They refine the Transect concepts outlined in the Denton Pattern Book. Finally, they set the stage for incremental growth of Denton through infill and redevelopment using building forms such as those depicted in the Denton Pattern Book to measure how to create flexible and financially sound buildings that give back for generations.

Transects are a geographic tool that defines a development hierarchy by the scale and location of different settlement types. Transects typically include six zones ranging in intensity from the most natural undeveloped areas to urban centers. Denton's Transects are like the rings in a tree trunk with the characteristics of each district, a reflection of the effects of changes occurring in the world, nation, region, County, and community that influenced investment and settlement patterns (see Map 3-3).

However, unlike tree rings, the Transects will continue to change while maintaining the relative spatial distribution within the community as they move through their growth and decay cycles. The objective for each Transect is to guide incremental change, ensuring it complements what came before while responding to the community's changing needs.

Describing the transects is intended to emphasize character features that should influence infill, redevelopment, and evolution to the next level of intensity, particularly in the older parts of the Town. Here, the physical characteristics of the buildings, such as those illustrated in the Denton Pattern Book, set a design framework for incremental changes that respect the unique existing physical patterns that define the neighborhoods. The development patterns that characterize these areas also reflect resilient development that produces revenues more closely aligned with public capital expenditures.

In outlying transects characterized by scattered residential enclaves and large vacant areas, infill and redevelopment aim to develop place-based, traditional neighborhoods that leverage physical form to enable connectivity, exchange, and a sense of belonging. In addition, the intent in these areas is to allow the eventual maturation of these scattered suburban settlements into vibrant neighborhoods exhibiting the following characteristics:

- A unique identity, one that has a name;

- Resident awareness of where it is, what it is, and whether they belong to it;
- At least one place that serves as its center;
- A generally agreed-upon spatial extent;
- Access to everyday facilities and services;
- Internal and external connectivity;
- Social diversity within it, or it is open to its enabling and
- A means of representation - a way residents can be involved in its affairs and an ability to speak with a collective voice.

Based on existing features, Denton is characterized by the following Transect (see Map 3-3):

T-6 – Urban Center

The Urban Center Zone is the historic shopping and business area for the community and surrounding region. People work, transact business, shop, dine, and reside here. The land-use categories include single-family residential and apartment units, retail, service, eating and drinking establishments, lodging, office, finance, public, civic, and institutional uses. Intensification in this Transect will primarily occur through redevelopment, as the zone has minimal vacant land.

T-5 – General Urban Zone

The General Urban Zone includes residential uses, including single-family, townhouse, and apartment units interspersed with various nonresidential uses. The use categories found here include retail and service, office, industrial, warehouse, personal vehicle service, and public, civic, and institutional uses. Also found are groups and assisted living establishments. In addition, the vacant and underutilized land in the Transect presents opportunities to accommodate additional population and neighborhood-scale commercial development.

T-4 – Urban Fringe Zone

Detached single-family residential units dominate the Urban Fringe Zone, with some townhouse units in planned developments and multifamily units. The land use in this Transect has started to define a low-density character, mainly because of current zoning. Infill and redevelopment in this Transect and the adjoining Suburban Zone will respond to market demand. However, because of increasing development costs, it wants to trend toward higher densities and various residential unit types, more characteristic of the Urban Center Zone. The development and placement of neighborhood-serving commercial, service, and civic uses in and adjacent to this zone are significant in this evolution, influencing vehicle trip frequency and length and the zone's walkability.

T-3 – Suburban Zone

A significant portion of the land use category in this Transect is public, civic, and institutional uses. These are uses requiring a larger land area than was available in the urban transects but requiring access to urban services and proximity to population centers. Low-density single-family and agriculture are the dominant use categories. This Transect and the adjoining Rural Zone are the primary locations for master-planned developments that allow higher densities and various residential unit types. Master-planned development also presents opportunities to develop neighborhood-serving commercial, office, and service uses near residential clusters.

T-2 – Rural Zone

The Rural Zone is almost exclusively agricultural even though urban services, e.g., public sewer and water, are accessible. Therefore, the Rural Zone functions as a holding area for future master-planned developments, with its development will be influenced by market forces and public infrastructure coverage and capacity.

T-1- Rural Reserve Zone

The Rural Reserve, like the Rural Zone, is almost exclusively agricultural. Unlike the Rural Zone, access to urban services, e.g., public sewer and water, is unavailable and cannot be provided except at a high cost. The total maximum daily load caps applicable to the Denton wastewater treatment plant significantly multiply the cost of serving the area, requiring a separate treatment facility and likely requiring land application as the treatment method.

Special Use

The Special Use transect designates areas with specialized purposes, e.g., institutional, industrial, and commercial. The land-use category in this Transect is almost exclusively commercial or industrial, including the Denton wastewater treatment plant. In addition, the zone encompasses current nonresidential zoning districts intended to maintain these areas for commercial and industrial uses that support the local economy and present employment opportunities for residents.

Planning Districts

This Land Use Plan divides the Town into planning districts based on the built environment, land use, intensity patterns, and other physical characteristics (see Map 3-4). The mixed-use transects, primarily consisting of residential uses and containing a variety of nonresidential uses, cover approximately one-third of the incorporated area of the Town. Specialized nonresidential districts encompass use clusters in roughly 22 percent of the corporate area. Slightly less than a third of the corporate area consists of rural areas not currently served with public water and sewer and regions of the Town being held out from development due to sensitive environmental features. The "Other" category in Table 3-3 includes service, street, and highway corridors and set aside land unavailable for development.

Planning District	Acres	Percent
Urban Center	27	1%
Core Neighborhood	31	1%
General Urban	137	4%
Urban Fringe	412	12%
Suburban	772	22%
Neighborhood Commercial	53	2%
Special Commercial	50	1%
Regional Commercial	283	8%
Urban Employment	41	1%
Planned Employment	333	10%
Transition	23	1%
Rural Reserve	639	18%
Sensitive Area	413	12%
Other	264	8%
Corporate Area	3,476	100%

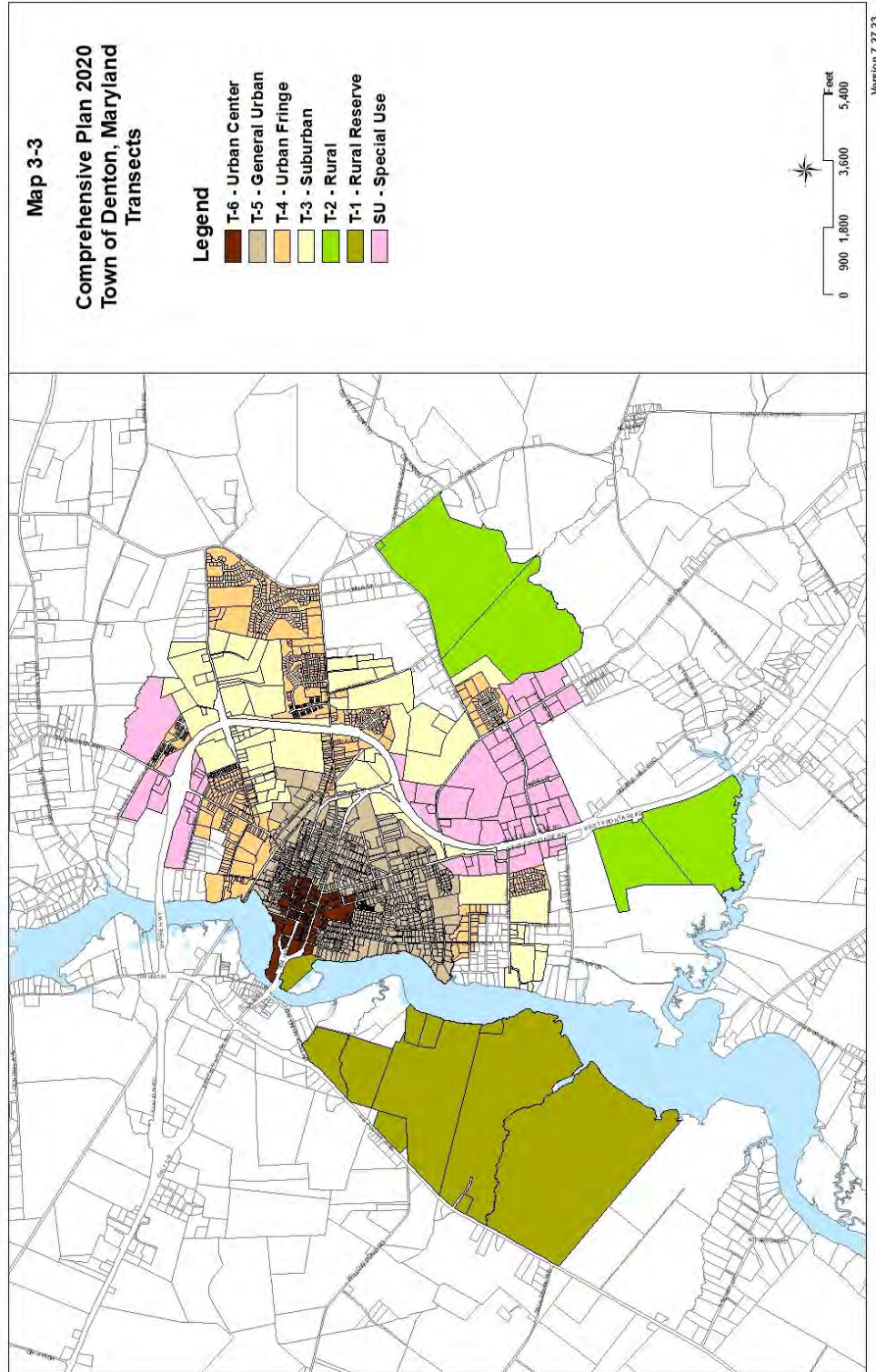
Urban Center (T-6)

The Urban Center is the historic shopping and business area for the community and surrounding region. People work, transact business, shop, dine, and reside here. The Urban Center is the smallest and most intensely developed planning district. It includes the County Court House, library, municipal office, private offices, retail shops, restaurants, personal service establishments, and mixed-use residential, including live/work units and residential uses above retail stores. The Urban Center is centrally located within comfortable walking distance of the surrounding neighborhoods. Although residential use is allowed in the district, office, institutional, and mixed-use redevelopment are preferred due to their role as a vital service center for the County and surrounding neighborhoods.

The overall intent of this planning district is to maintain and enhance the economic vitality and aesthetic appeal of the downtown area as it continues to transition from a traditional commercial center to an area more oriented toward specialty retail services, offices, and governmental uses. Accordingly, town programs will focus on the following:

- Continue to promote the development of the Town center as an economically important and aesthetically pleasing place to live, work, visit, and shop.
- Initiate streetscape improvements and support public/private initiatives to improve the physical appearance of the streetscape.

Map 3-3 Transects



- Support and encourage the efforts of property owners and merchants to promote physical and commercial revitalization, including measures to address traffic and pedestrian circulation issues and parking demand.

Apply design controls to ensure the historic and aesthetic character of the downtown is maintained and improved.

Core Neighborhoods (T-6)

The Core Neighborhoods planning district includes properties adjacent to the Urban Center. The planning district is a mixed-use district comprising service, employment, commercial, and residential properties. Public and semi-public uses occupy much of the land in the district and include government offices, churches, a public park, a police station, parking lots, and facilities of non-profit organizations and telecommunications utilities. Residential uses include detached, attached, and small-scale multifamily units. Commercial uses in the Core Neighborhoods planning district include a convenience market, food store, laundromat, office, and retail with second-floor apartments.

This planning area will include various household living options, including detached, attached, and multifamily units. Additionally, the area will continue to include public buildings, schools, churches, public recreational facilities, and accessory uses compatible with residential surroundings. Redevelopment of existing properties will be the primary means of intensification in this planning district.

General Urban (T-5)

The General Urban planning shares many of the characteristics of the Core Neighborhood district, albeit more residential, but also commercial, public, and semi-public uses. The General Urban planning district reflects the evolution of land use and buildings in the community, a pattern beginning over 150 years ago and completed in the 1970s. Nearly a quarter of all residential units were built from 1860 to 1889. Over half of the units are 100 or older, and the average age of all dwellings is nearly 92 years. The district includes a mix of multifamily, detached single-family, and townhouse units. In addition, this district has approximately twelve acres of vacant land that presents an opportunity for residential or small-scale commercial infill development.

The intention is for this planning district to continue to include various household living options, together with such public buildings, schools, churches, public recreational facilities, and accessory uses as may be necessary or are generally compatible with residential surroundings. Land-use change will occur through infill and redevelopment projects. One and two-family units will be allowed by right. Small, stand-alone, context-appropriate multifamily (e.g., triplex, fourplex units) infill units may also be allowed. Townhouses and multifamily unit groups may be permitted in a master-planned development. Additional small-scale, primarily neighborhood-serving retail and service uses compatible with their surroundings may be permitted.

Urban Fringe (T-4)

The Urban Fringe planning district reflects town growth from rural to early suburban beginning post-WWII. Land use in the Urban Fringe planning district is almost exclusively residential. This district's character is less dense than the older Urban Core and General Urban districts. Residents in the Urban Fringe planning district are within a reasonable walking distance of the Urban Center Core and contribute to the market area strength for retail and service uses.

Land-use change will occur through infill and redevelopment projects, including master-planned communities. The district has vacant and underutilized land that presents residential or neighborhood-scale commercial infill and redevelopment opportunities. The district aims to accommodate future residential development in patterns, forms, and densities similar to the neighboring Core Neighborhood and General Urban planning areas. Public buildings, schools, churches, public recreational facilities, and accessory uses compatible with the residential surroundings will also be located here. One and two-family units will be allowed by right. Small, stand-alone, context-appropriate multifamily (e.g., triplex, fourplex units) infill units may also be allowed. Multifamily unit groups may be permitted in a master-planned development.

Suburban (T-3, T-1)

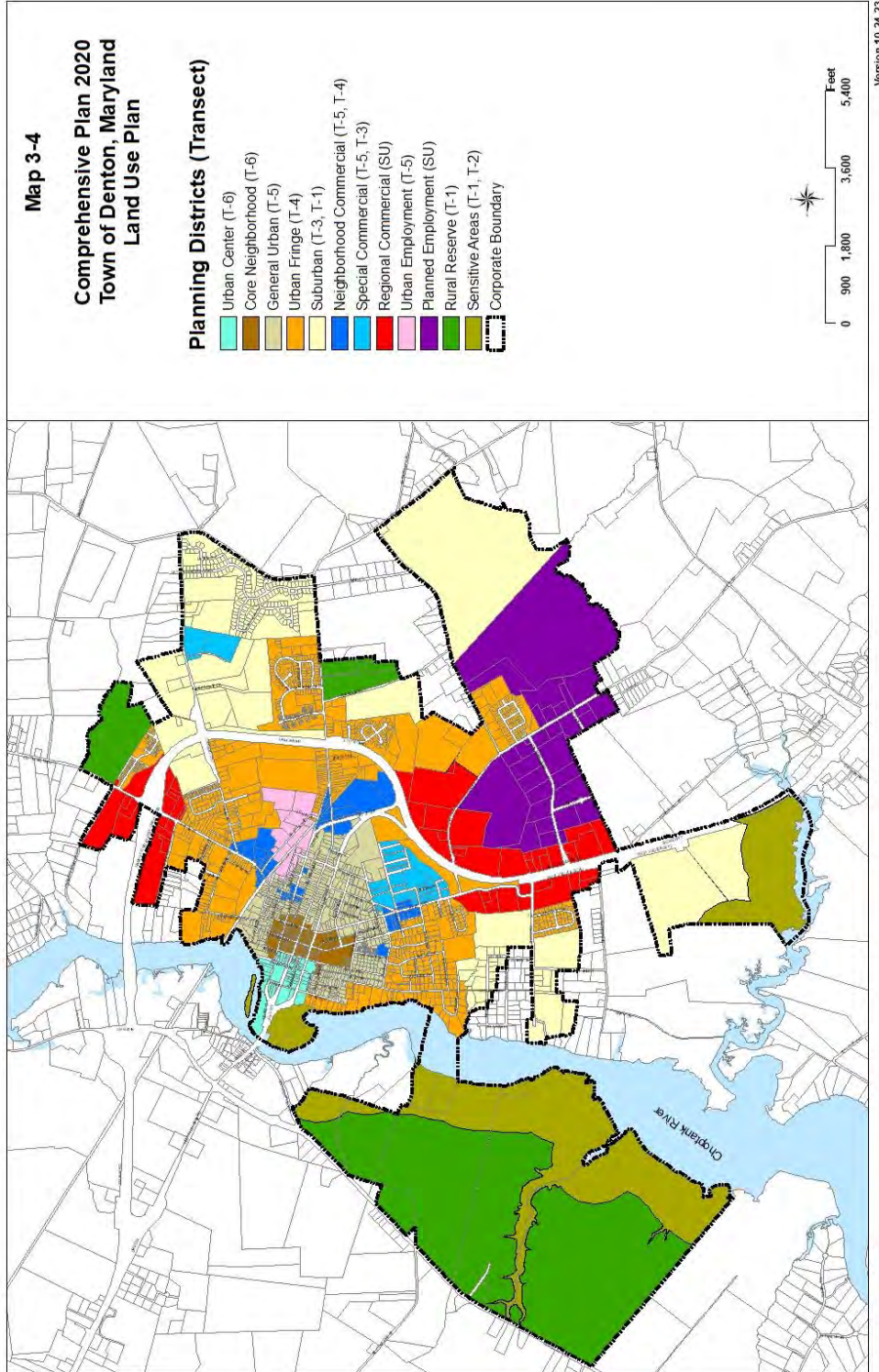
The Suburban Planning district is the most extensive planning district, with the most potential for infill development. The district already includes a mix of detached single-family, townhouse, and multifamily units and over 214 acres of vacant land.

This planning district intends that infill development will eventually mature the planning district into a pattern of vibrant and connected neighborhoods. Infill development will include additional single-family residential areas of spacious character and public buildings, schools, churches, public recreational facilities, and accessory uses as necessary or usually compatible with residential surroundings. Over sixty percent of the Suburban planning district is located east of the MD 404 corridor, presenting challenges to linking neighborhoods with the goods and services offered in the older parts of Denton.

Infill development will also include master-planned developments that increase household living options in the planning area and bring the overall residential density to fiscally sustainable levels. These master-planned developments will play a significant role in urbanizing this planning district and setting the stage for future public investment in neighborhood-serving services and facilities. The Town's expectations for master-planned developments are that they exhibit the following characteristics:

- An integrated mix of uses, including residential, commercial, employment/office, civic, and open space.
- A range of housing types and densities.
- Compact design

Map 3-4 Land Use Plan



- Interconnected streets are designed to balance the needs of all users with sidewalks and on-street parking.
- Open spaces are integral to the community.

Special Commercial (T-5, T-3)

The Special Commercial Planning District contains medical-related uses, including care and assisted living facilities. Its purpose is to set aside an area for medical-related uses and assisted living facilities. Permitted uses in the district are customarily associated with medical care and assisted living.

This planning district has substantial capacity for additional development, and policies and regulations should continue to encourage and support this purpose. Development can generally be described as infill and redevelopment. In this sense, development and design objectives are the same as for any commercial infill and redevelopment project, namely that development:

- Protect the character of existing historic commercial areas.
- Improve the visual appearance along major highway and street corridors.
- Improve access and circulation to and within commercial and business sites.
- Improve sales and property values.
- Encourage appropriate design linkages between sites.
- Require context-sensitive site planning and building design.

Neighborhood Commercial (T-5, T-4)

The Neighborhood Commercial planning district encompasses properties along main travel routes in three locations within the corporate area. Over time, these areas have evolved in response to the demand for goods and services from surrounding neighborhoods and close-in market areas. The district includes clusters along the Sixth Street corridor, Fifth Street north of Kerr Avenue, and Gay and East Market Street. Current uses include auto, office, personal, medical, warehouse, and retail. In addition, the district includes apartments, single-family units, and mixed retail and residential. They are located within reasonable walking distance of surrounding areas and play a vital role in the Town's walkability.

This district aims to provide areas for commercial uses, primarily catering to local needs within the core areas of the Town. Development and redevelopment will be compatible with surrounding residential neighborhoods. Additional commercial areas will likely be needed to serve neighborhoods on the east side of MD 404.

Regional Commercial (SU)

The Regional Commercial Planning District includes retail, service, and office uses serving regional markets with access from major roads or local streets. Land uses here include big box and shopping center establishments and convenience establishments catering to the traveling public. In addition, the Regional Commercial Planning District includes over 100 acres of vacant land, sufficient to meet current and future demand.

This zoning district is intended for more intense, auto-oriented regional commercial and office development at appropriate locations along MD 404 where easy and safe access is available or can be provided. It provides land for retail and office establishments and commercial services serving regional demand and for the traveling public on or near major roads or streets in the Town. At the same time, it is intended to maintain the appearance of the highways and their access points by limiting outdoor advertising and establishing high standards for development. Commercial development in this area will be well-planned commercial concentrations instead of traditional forms of highway strip commercial. Commercial development in this district will be subject to high design standards and require other site design amenities that enhance aesthetic appeal. Planning objectives for this district are:

- Locate future regional commercial development in areas designated in the Land Use Plan.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment of regional commercial sites.
- Improve the visual appearance along major highway and street corridors.
- Provide for these roadways' continued safe and efficient use and pedestrian and traffic safety.
- Improve access and circulation to and within commercial and business sites.
- Implement access control standards to minimize intersection and site access points.
- Encourage appropriate design linkages between sites.
- Require context-sensitive site planning and building design.
- Provide good, orderly, and effective outdoor advertising displays compatible with their surroundings.
- Enhance overall property values and the visual environment in the Town by discouraging signs that contribute to the visual clutter of the community.

- Ensure new larger-scale commercial development is located in well-planned and designed commercial parks or plazas.
- Discourage typical strip-commercial forms of development.

Urban Employment (SU)

The Urban Employment Planning District is a remnant nonresidential district located off main highway corridors and proximate to the older urban neighborhoods. It contains a mix of commercial, industrial, public, and semi-public uses, including auto service, warehouse, and transportation establishments. Public and semi-public land uses include municipal and state-owned properties and a church cemetery. This planning district has some vacant and underutilized land targeted for employment uses. The transitional nature of the district suggests a broad range of infill and redevelopment uses may fit in the district.

Planned Employment (SU)

The Planned Employment planning district encompasses industrial and commercial establishments that benefit from significant thoroughfare access and sites of adequate size to address parking, maneuvering, screening, and other uses requiring large sites. Current uses occupy over one-half million square feet of warehouse, light manufacturing, and flex space. In addition, the Planned Employment planning district has adequate room for other industrial and commercial employment establishments and should continue to be retained for these types of uses.

The Planned Employment district is intended primarily for light manufacturing, fabricating, warehousing, and wholesale distribution in low buildings, with off-street parking for employees and access from major thoroughfares. This district includes land containing existing or planned "light" industrial development. The Town intends to ensure that development in these areas is consistent with the following policies:

- Future industrial development will be encouraged to be located in planned employment parks.
- Industrial development must provide controlled access and adequate bufferyards to screen adjacent non-industrial development from potential adverse visual, traffic, noise, dust, odor, and glare impacts.

Rural Reserve (T-2)

The Rural Reserve planning district includes several hundred vacant acres at the Town's southern and eastern borders and on the west side of the Choptank River. Most of the land is agricultural and includes several large-lot residential uses, primarily along the eastern border. This district is intended to protect and preserve areas of the Town which are presently rural or agricultural and to protect the watershed. Land management practices that conserve the existing forest, buffer

wetlands, and conserve fish and wildlife habitats are essential in this area. Hence, an essential objective for these areas is the application of best management practices to control nonpoint pollution into receiving streams for all agricultural practices and habitat loss.

Due to water and wastewater constraints, land west of the Choptank River will see no substantial development during the planning period. However, parcels east of the Choptank River may see development as Planned neighborhoods if water and wastewater capacities are allocated and facilities provided.

Sensitive Environmental Areas (T-1)

The Sensitive Environmental Areas planning district encompasses features, the appropriate management of which has been determined as essential to efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and achieve the goals of the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Program. This planning district has little development capacity due to regulatory and environmental constraints. Sensitive areas not shown in this planning district occur elsewhere in the Town. The vulnerable nature of these areas, e.g., stream corridors, significant drainage ways, forests, and sensitive plant and wildlife habitats, is addressed through development regulations such as the Stormwater Management and Forest Conservation Ordinance. If developed, density will be limited to one dwelling unit per 20 acres. The Town's policies for this planning district are:

- Conserve, protect, and enhance the overall ecological values of the Critical Area, its biological productivity, and diversity.
- Conserve existing breeding, feeding, and wintering habitats for those wildlife populations that require the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, or coastal habitats to sustain populations of those species.
- Conserve the land and water resource base necessary to maintain and support land uses such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture.
- Conserve the existing developed woodlands and forests for water quality benefits.
- Protect the large forest areas that provide habitat for the successful forest interior dwelling birds (FIDS) breeding and population maintenance.

Recommendations

The following outline recommended actions to implement the Land Use goals and objectives and the intent of each of the Planning Districts.

Development Regulation

Objective: Facilitate context-appropriate infill and redevelopment in the Urban Center, Core Neighborhoods, General Residential, Urban Fringe, and Transition planning districts.

One strategy Denton can follow is increasing their housing, jobs, and community amenities without expanding its footprint into undeveloped lands. Of course, infill development has always taken place within Denton. Still, the percentage of infill growth instead of "greenfield"—on open space or agricultural land at the urban fringe—has been relatively small. The primary aim of the objective is to construct new housing, workplaces, shops, and other facilities within existing urban or suburban areas. This development can be of several types:

- building on vacant lots,
- reuse of underutilized sites (such as parking lots and old industrial sites), and
- rehabilitation or expansion of existing buildings.

Infill development is an essential strategy for Denton's suburban areas and its urban neighborhoods. In older built-up neighborhoods, infill and redevelopment will be a lot-by-lot process. In suburban areas, the incremental development of subdivisions and master-planned communities should result in active neighborhood centers, foster a "sense of place," and add a broader range of housing options and a better balance of workplaces, homes, shops, and community amenities.

Flexible development standards and processes for infill and redevelopment proposals should apply in the old town Denton neighborhoods. These are areas of the Town where most lots are nonconforming in some respect. Projects deemed context-appropriate should be provided with a path forward to approval.

All large vacant or underdeveloped properties in the Urban Fringe and Suburban planning districts of ten acres or more should be eligible to apply for the Planned Neighborhood floating zone. This change to the current zoning ordinance will incentivize infill development within the existing corporate area.

Objective: Streamline review processes and allow more flexibility to vary standards for context-appropriate projects, including mixed-use.

Anything that makes development more costly for developers makes housing more costly for people. Time is money; a convoluted permitting process makes housing more expensive. Therefore, infill and redevelopment projects in the expanded Redevelopment District should not be subject to lengthy and expensive review processes, e.g., rezoning or special exceptions. Instead, if determined to be context-appropriate, these projects should be approved by the Planning Commission.

Objective: Embrace some mixed-use and allow more residential unit types as infill and redevelopment, including the "missing middle" housing types.

By-right permitted residential unit types should include the next intensity increment in all residential districts. In this context, no planning district should be exempt from change, and at the same time, no planning district should experience sudden, radical change. Thus, for example, a duplex should be allowed in exclusively single-family unit districts, and accessory dwelling units should be permitted in all districts that allow detached single-family dwellings. In addition, context-appropriate stand-alone multi-plex units should be allowable when determined to be context-appropriate, consistent with the guidance provided in the Denton Pattern Book.

Objective: Ensure regulations support and encourage local small businesses and local entrepreneurs.

Local entrepreneurs and small businesses serving local markets often begin as home-based businesses that evolve. Likewise, the space needs of these businesses change over time, e.g., moving from the garage to an affordable downtown space or elsewhere in the Town. Therefore, zoning regulations, administrative processes, and procedures should be flexible enough to allow for the evolution of small businesses while ensuring appropriate protection for neighboring properties.

Capital Improvements

Objective: Ensure new development is productive (income versus liabilities).

Conducts a thorough analysis of the cost versus benefits of significant developments to ensure the project does not adversely impact the provision of Town services and facilities. This analysis should include evaluating the public costs versus benefits, including the cost associated with infrastructure expansion, operation, maintenance, and life cycle replacement.

Objective: Prioritize capital investment on infrastructure maintenance and incremental improvements to resolve neighborhood service issues.

In a time of dwindling funding from federal and state sources, it is imperative that the Town target local financial resources to maintain existing infrastructure and improve community areas where residents struggle. Small investments in existing neighborhoods are the best rather than significant investments in "shiny" big capital projects. The community's tax base is an asset, but its infrastructure is a long-term liability.

The lowest risk, highest return investments the Town can make are small and incremental. They are based on maximizing the return on existing investments in public facilities. Prioritizing maintenance sustains core and critical systems and enables more productive use of built infrastructure. Financing small, incremental investments in maintenance and small system expansions supports growth and productivity without adding substantial long-term liabilities. In addition, it recognizes that targeting investment and responding to feedback better enables individuals and businesses to adapt their places incrementally over time.

CHAPTER 4 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Introduction

The "Community Facilities Element" in the Comprehensive Plan addresses supply and demand for community facilities and services, including streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, storm drainage systems, emergency medical, police, fire protection, etc. This Comprehensive Plan element examines existing conditions and establishes Town policies for community facilities and services most directly affected by population growth. It recommends actions the Town should take to ensure an appropriate level of investment in facilities and services that meet the needs of existing and future populations and support economic development.

Goals and Objectives

Goal

Provide adequate community facilities and services required to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Denton.

Objectives

- Maintain and expand needed public facilities and services commensurate with demand for services and financial capabilities.
- Serve all areas of the Town with adequate and affordable public services and facilities.
- Assure the provision of community services and facilities in a manner that is the least disruptive to the environment.

Town Services

Community facilities serving Denton are shown on Map 4-1. The facilities and services described in this section are primarily a Town community facility responsibility.

Sewer

The Denton wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) can treat 0.80 million gallons per day (mgd). The WWTP utilizes enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) capabilities and is designed for a peak daily flow of 2.67 million gallons. The plant operates at a three-year rolling average of 478,794 gallons per day (gpd), about 60% of the design capacity⁵. The WWTP can treat an additional 321,206 gpd of sewer based on this average. This estimate of remaining capacity includes committed but not used sewer allocations.

⁵ Town of Denton, Flow Allocation -12/31/2021

Water

Denton's water system comprises potable water wells, treatment, storage, and distribution facilities. Source water is taken from wells in the Piney Point Aquifer. In addition, Denton has three water storage tanks and water treatment facilities. One water storage tank has a storage capacity of 100,000 gallons, and two tanks have a storage capacity of 300,000.

The water system capacity is 720,000 gallons per day (gpd smallest well running 24 hours), and a withdrawal capacity of 620,000 gpd is permitted. The average flow for the last three years is 334,739 gpd for the water system, or approximately 54 percent permitted withdrawal.

The Town must treat water and sewer facilities as an enterprise fund. Therefore, charges must reflect capital, operation, and maintenance costs. The Town assesses water and sewer connection charges and capacity fees for any new development. Also, as part of any annexation, the Town requires the capital cost for water and sewer extensions and/or service upgrades necessitated by the development to be paid for by the property owner.

Administrative Offices

The 9,876 square foot facility at the southwest corner of North Second and Market streets houses Town administrative offices, including meeting space, administrative, planning, codes, and finance functions. Administrative staff manages the activities of the Mayor and Council. The Finance Department establishes and implements the financial policies and procedures of the Town, invests funds, and handles the deposits and payments of Town revenues and expenditures. Planning and Codes are responsible for development review, inspections, and enforcement of land development and building codes. Staff also manage the work of the Denton Planning Commission, Historic and Architectural Review Commission, and the Board of Appeals.

Public Works

The Public Works Department provides many essential Town services by establishing, maintaining, and operating the Town's infrastructure and facilities. The Department of Public Works' main facility is on the WWTP site at 650 Legion Road and 504 Choptank Avenue.

Town Police Department

The Denton Police Department staff includes fourteen sworn Police Officers and two civilian Administrative Aides. The administrative division consists of two sworn officers and two administrative staff, one sworn officer in criminal investigations, and eleven sworn patrol personnel. Housed in a facility located at the northeast corner of Third and Gay Street, the Department patrols the Town and answers calls for service 24 hours daily.

Solid Waste Collection and Disposal

A private waste hauler collects solid waste from Denton residences, businesses, and industries. Solid waste disposal occurs at the Mid-Shore II Regional Landfill in Caroline County.

The Mid-Shore Regional Recycling Program Recycling (MRRP) The MRRP, formed in 1993, is a cooperative partnership between Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties that provides free recycling services to residents of the four counties. The Caroline County Public Works Department coordinates the program for municipalities in Caroline County. Curbside pickup is available to residents of Denton, but it is limited to yard waste and bulky items only. The Denton Plaza on Route 404 is a 24-hour drop-off facility and accepts newspaper, mixed paper, aluminum cans, glass, aluminum, steel cans, plastic bottles, and high-grade office paper. MES provides the containers at Denton Plaza.

The Town provides Cardboard pick up for Town Residents as part of the curbside pickups, including bulk items, branches for chipping, and bagged yard waste if they call it into the Town office by Noon on Tuesday. The Town also provides leaf pick up in the spring and late fall as long as it is called into the Town office.

County Services

Emergency Management

The Caroline County Emergency Operations Center, located at 403 South Seventh Street, is responsible for emergency planning and coordination for the county. The Center provides emergency planning and coordination, natural disaster relief, and 911 system management. The agency also provides police communications for the Sheriff's Department and five town police departments and fire and rescue units for eight Fire/EMS-Medical Departments and manages the National Crimes Information Computer System for police agencies.

In addition to communications, the Center is responsible for the development and maintenance of the countywide Emergency Operations Plan and all related emergency/disaster preparedness functions, including writing and updating all-hazards emergency plans, shelter, and mass care plans, evacuation procedures, mutual aid agreements, and grant projects for response and recovery efforts. The Center also manages the State Fire Aid Program.

Caroline County EMS operations are housed in the County facility located at 9391 Double Hills Road. The Sheriff's Department is located at 9305 Double Hills Road on the County-owned 70-acre parcel just south of Denton. The site is an identified growth area planned for annexation.

Emergency Medical and Advanced Life Support Services

The Caroline County Department of Emergency Medical Services augments the 24-hour essential life support (EMS) service provided by the County's eight volunteer fire companies. In addition, it is the County's primary provider of advanced life support (ALS) services.

Denton Volunteer Fire Company, Basic Life Support members respond to calls within the Company's first-due response area and provide supplemental support to services of second and third-due response areas. In addition, because employment responsibilities prevent many volunteers from responding to daytime calls, the EMS Department provides trained ambulance crews during the day to ensure adequate coverage for the Town.

Caroline County operates an Advanced Life Support System (ALS), providing immediate medical attention to victims and transport to Easton, Maryland, and Seaford, Delaware, hospital facilities. ALS services are provided on a 24-hour basis by trained and certified ALS staff. In addition, the University of Maryland, Shore Health, owns and operates a diagnostic lab on Blades Farm Road.

The EMS Department regularly monitors the level of service provided by ambulance and ALS crews to ensure that adequate personnel are in place 24 hours a day to serve the emergency medical needs of the entire County. The Department also reviews population projections to anticipate types and rates of emergency service needs in response to population and demographic characteristics (elderly, special needs, etc.). An ambulance crew operating at optimum capacity can respond to 100 percent of the calls in its first-due area. The Department recommends adding an ambulance within the first-due response area when coverage falls to 50 percent (with the remaining 50 percent of the calls answered by nearby second-due ambulances).

Medical Facilities

The Choptank Community Health System, Inc. (CCHS), a private, non-profit community health center, provides primary health care services in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot Counties, and the surrounding areas at 808 South Fifth Avenue. Services include primary care, pediatrics, behavioral health, medical-assisted treatment, urgent care, and non-urgent follow-up. Patients needing hospital care are referred to the University of Maryland Medical Center in Easton.

Library

The Denton Branch of the Caroline County Public Library is a 20,338-square-foot facility located at 100 Market Street. The facility serves as the central facility for the library system for Caroline County. In addition to reading and lending materials, the library provides public access to the Internet and meeting rooms. According to the 2010 Denton Comprehensive Plan, the library branch in Denton has a service area classification of 30,000 residents.

Schools

Three public schools currently serve Denton. The public schools are:

- Denton Elementary School, located on the +/-20-acre Sharp Road site, serves pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. According to the Facilities Master Plan, this facility has a State Rated Capacity (SRC) of 736 students. As of May 2021, enrollment was 601, or 82 percent of SRC. Enrollment is projected to increase to 691 by 2031, 94 percent of SRC.

- Lockerman Middle School, situated on 18.78 acres at 410 Lockerman Street, serves grades 6 through 8. According to the Facilities Master Plan, this facility has a State Rated Capacity (SRC) of 945 students. As of May 2021, enrollment was 895, or 94 percent of SRC. Enrollment is projected to increase to 929 by 2031, 98 percent of SRC.
- North Caroline High School occupies approximately 50 acres on Central Avenue (west of and outside Denton's corporate limits). This school serves grades 9 through 12 and includes a career and technology center. According to the Facilities Master Plan, this facility has a State Rated Capacity (SRC) of 1,263 students. As of May 2021, 1,164 or 932 percent of SRC were enrolled. Enrollment is projected to decrease to 1,112 by 2031, about 883 percent of SRC.⁶

The School Master Plan includes a Facilities Needs Summary that lists the following planned improvements to address projected needs:

- renovation and addition to the Denton Elementary School;
- the partial renovation of the Lockerman Middle School, and
- addition to North Caroline High School.

Parks and Open Space

As part of its mandate for the residents' health, safety, and welfare, Denton wants to provide adequate parks, recreation areas, and open space opportunities equitably distributed throughout the Town for existing and future residents. Addressing the community's park and open space needs is a shared responsibility that includes federal, state, county, and municipal agencies, and sometimes the private sector. For this reason, the Town will continue to partner with Federal, State, County, and private organizations where appropriate to ensure its objectives are realized most efficiently and effectively.

Inventory

Including County and municipal parkland and park facilities provided on Board of Education land, approximately 116 acres of parkland, about 24 acres per 1,000 people, are available to Denton residents (see Map 4-2).

⁶ Source: 2021 Educational Facilities Master Plan, Caroline County Public Schools, Caroline County Board of Education, Revised May 2021

County and Municipal Land

This category includes recreation land actively developed for public use and resource land currently unimproved but reserved for future development and use for public recreation. Included in this category are the following:

- Towers Park - a 7.16-acre natural area located off Fifth Street in the southern portion of the Town. The local Boy Scout Troop frequently uses this wooded site.
- Sharp Road Park – an approximately 24-acre community park, is included in this category. The park includes a multipurpose field, basketball court, public bathrooms, and parking. The Park Playing surfaces have been leveled and seeded to create several Practice Fields for local Sporting Organizations. In addition, a walking trail was installed along the park's perimeter in late 2019.
- Wheeler Park – a 3.77-acre Town-owned community park located on the west side of Lockerman Street. Park facilities include tennis courts and a picnic pavilion.
- James Coursey Sr. Memorial Park - a quasi-public neighborhood park and playground for the residents of the adjacent housing project. The site is owned and maintained by the Rural Housing Association. The park, previously named North Park, expanded after the Town acquired additional land in 1995.
- Fourth Street Park - a 1.34-acre facility owned and maintained by the Town of Denton and located next to the Armory. Facilities include a children's playground, with tot lot facilities and tennis courts.
- General James F. Fretterd Community Center (Denton Armory - This Community Center, formerly the National Guard Armory, serves as staff headquarters for the Caroline County Department of Recreation and Parks. Facilities include three multipurpose rooms, one conference room, and a gym. In addition, the facility shares parking with St. Luke's United Methodist Church.
- Daniel Crouse Memorial Park – This town-owned facility encompasses approximately 49 acres and includes a visitor center, meeting facilities, two boat launch ramps, a picnic pavilion, shoreline access for public fishing, and walking trails along the natural shoreline. In addition, the site has the potential to develop supportive private facilities, e.g., a waterfront restaurant.
- Caroline County Courthouse – The grounds provide public space for various community programs and public assemblies, often produced or coordinated by the Caroline County Department of Recreation and Parks. Events held on the Courthouse grounds include

Shakespeare in the Park, the annual holiday Lighting of the Green, and Summerfest. In addition, the grounds include wayfinding signs associated with the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad trail, a Tourism Information Kiosk open 24-7, and shaded picnic tables.

Board of Education Land

Some facilities on school grounds are available for public use for programs operated or coordinated by the Caroline County Department of Recreation and Parks when the schools do not need them. The facilities include the grounds of the County's Lockerman Middle and Denton Elementary schools. In addition, under a continuing partnership between the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Caroline County Public Schools (CCPS), indoor recreation programming is provided at the Lockerman Middle School.

- Lockerman School Park - a 9.2-acre community park located on the grounds of Lockerman Middle School and owned by the Caroline County Board of Education. Facilities include a baseball field, running track, and soccer field.
- Lockerman Middle School and Lockerman Middle School running track. The Lockerman School Park is located across the street next to Wheeler Park.
- Denton School Park - a 6.67-acre community area co-located with Denton Elementary School. Facilities include a hard surface area, two ball fields, a nature trail, a playground, and a soccer field.

State and Private/quasi-public land

Recreation lands include State parks and private land offering public access. Resource lands are those whose primary objective is natural resource protection. Although public recreation is valuable to these properties, that use is secondary to the needs of wildlife and natural resources that the land protects. The category includes Martinak State Park, Camp Mardela, and the Denton Lion Club Park.

- Martinak State Park - The 105-acre park on the Choptank River includes hiking trails, camping areas, picnic pavilions, an amphitheater, a boat ramp, and a ball field.
- Camp Mardela - A privately owned facility that provides group camping, cabin, and conference facilities.
- Denton Lions Club – This 9.5-acre facility on Maryland Avenue includes a Little League baseball field.

Need Assessment

As crucial as park and recreation facilities are to the community, making them accessible to all, including by non-motorized means, i.e., walking and bicycling, are equally important. In addition, pedestrian connections to mini-parks and neighborhood parks are essential to the purpose of these facilities.

The sidewalk systems are extensive within the older developed portions of Denton, west of MD 404, providing access to the 4th Street neighborhood park and the Sharp Road community park. East of MD 404, pedestrian access is provided to open space areas within developments like Savannah Overlook and Mallard Landing. However, using national guidelines to measure service levels, neighborhood park facilities serving this area are needed (see Map 4-2). This deficiency will become more pronounced when the DiDonato property (formerly known as the Vineyards) is developed. At least one neighborhood park is already needed east of MD 404 to serve existing and future developments. A second may be required when the Gannon parcel (Village at Watts Creek) develops.

The 4th Street Park meets some of the neighborhood park criteria but cannot fully function as a neighborhood park due to the limited land area, slightly more than an acre. Therefore, additional neighborhood park facilities serving the older Denton neighborhoods west of MD 404 should be considered.

The Denton Zoning Code establishes a minimum open space requirement for all residential developments, ranging from 15 percent of the net site area for conventional residential subdivisions to 25 percent for planned developments. The Planning Commission may permit a fee instead of the dedication of common open space when the applicant cannot adequately meet the open space requirements or if the proposed development is for less than 20 lots or units. Together with the park impact fees that the Town assesses for each residential unit, these in-lieu fees should be allocated to land acquisition and facility development where needed.

Park Equity

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources “Park Equity Analysis” identifies parkland needs based on four factors:

- Concentration of children under the age of 17;
- Concentration of older adults;
- Concentration of the population with incomes below the poverty threshold and
- Population density.

The results of the analysis of Denton are as follows:

- Denton lacks public parks in the growth area on the east side of MD Route 404.
- A neighborhood park will benefit this area if additional subdivisions develop east of Route 404. Effective use of subdivision open space could address the need. However, current trends in new residential development do not indicate that there will be significant growth in the need in this area over the next 5–10 years.
- Public recreation facilities in northwest Denton are limited in scope. However, the population density and subsidized housing make pedestrian access to recreation facilities essential for this area.

Other Services

Fire Department

Volunteer organizations provide fire protection with assistance from the financial assistance provided by Caroline County and the municipalities. The Denton Volunteer Fire Department (DVFD), housed in a 15,060-square-foot facility at 400 South Fifth Street, provides fire protection for the Town and surrounding area. The Fire Department serves a population of approximately 6,200 and 2,300 households. Its service area encompasses approximately 70 square miles and 3,500 improved properties valued at over \$925 million. The Denton Volunteer Fire Department currently consists of 40 volunteer firefighters and 10 volunteer non-firefighters. According to the DVFD web page, the fire department responded to 183 fire incidences in 2018.⁷ DVFD equipment includes an incident command unit, brush truck, ambulance, two engines, rescue, and tower vehicles.

Other Community Facilities

Caroline County Health Department

The Caroline County Health Department, located at 403 South Seventh Street, the local office of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, is responsible for infectious disease prevention, wellness promotion, and environmental protection for the County. The Department operates ten programs concerned with addictions, developmental disabilities, health education and vital statistics, adult health and geriatrics, child health, infectious disease control, the environment, maternity and family planning, mental health, and wellness promotion.

⁷ <https://www.dentonvfc.com/>

Courts for Caroline County

The Circuit Court for Caroline County operates from the Court House at 109 Market Street. Circuit Courts are where jury trials are held. The Circuit Court generally handles more serious criminal cases and major civil cases. These include juvenile and other family law cases such as divorce, custody, and child support. In addition, the Circuit Court hears most cases appealed sent from the District Court, orphans' courts, and some administrative agencies. Circuit Courts also hear domestic violence cases.

The District Court of Maryland for Caroline County is at 207 S. Third Street, Denton. The District Court hears landlord/tenant cases, replevin actions, traffic violations, criminal cases classified as misdemeanors and certain felonies, and civil cases for \$30,000 or less. The District Court does not conduct jury trials.

County Administration

The Court House on Market Street is the location of the County administrative offices for the County Commissioners, and the Health and Public Services Building located at 403 South Seventh Street houses other county offices.

The Caroline County Department of Public Works is at 520 Wilmuth Street in Denton. Services here include administration, central shops, roads, and special services. Special services include Mosquito Control, Noxious Weed Control, Gypsy Moth Control, Recycling, Building Maintenance, and Solid Waste.

The Caroline County Soil Conservation District is at 9194 Legion Road in Denton. The Caroline Soil Conservation District serves a predominantly agricultural region. Farming operations include dairy, swine, beef, and the growing poultry industry.

Caroline County Department of Corrections

Located at 101 Gay Street, the Caroline County Detention Center houses facilities for the detention and confinement of pre-trial detainees and adjudicated offenders in a safe and secure institution.

County and State Police

The Caroline County Sheriff's Department offices are at 9305 Double Hills Road. The Sheriff's Office includes administration, patrol, criminal investigations, narcotics, canine, Court Security, Civil Process, Teen Court, and Records. In addition, the State Multi-Service Center at 207 South Third Street houses the Maryland State Police facilities for Caroline County.

Community Facilities Policies

The following policies shall apply to the provision of community facilities within Denton:

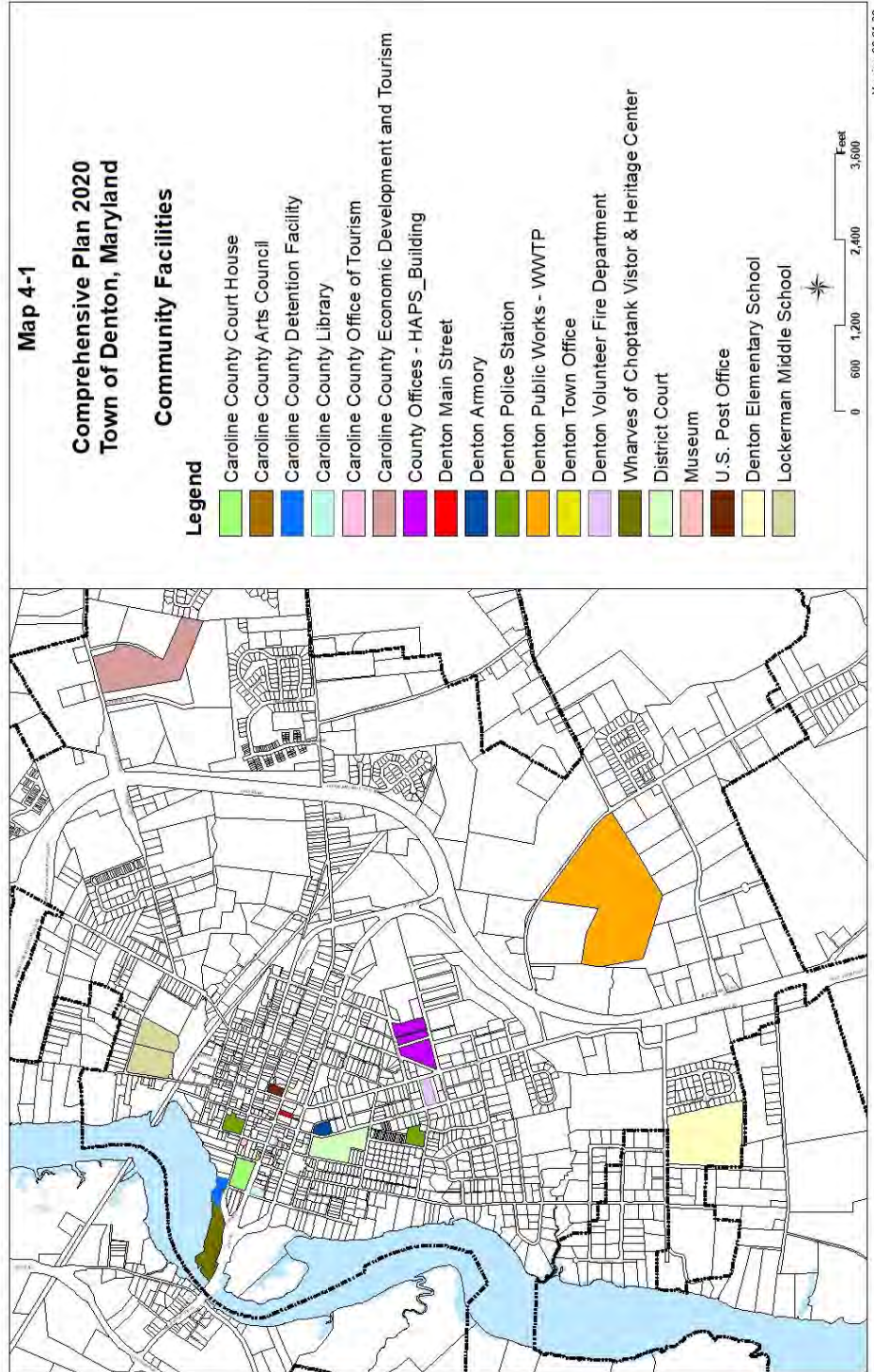
1. The Town will develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) coordinated with the Town's Annual Budget to outline the scheduling and phasing of public improvement projects for a revolving five (5) year period. As outlined in the CIP, the provision of public improvements will be balanced against the financial ability of the Town and the Town's objectives for managing the location and rate of growth.
2. The Town has established priorities for sewer and water service extension.
3. The Town requires all new development to pay for service extensions (sewer and water) and a "fair share" of the costs for capital improvements to community facility systems, which will be necessary to accommodate the new development's community facility and service demands. In addition, town-levied impact fees will recoup some of the costs associated with providing community facilities and services.
4. The Town requires adequate roads, sewerage, water, storm drainage, schools, fire, police protection, and solid waste collection and disposal as a condition of approval of all new developments.
5. Annexation is a condition for extending Town community facilities and services outside the Town's corporate limits.
6. Future large-scale developments will be required to provide exactions (proffers) of land dedications or fees-in-lieu of dedications to provide community facilities, including parks, schools, and open spaces.

Recommendations

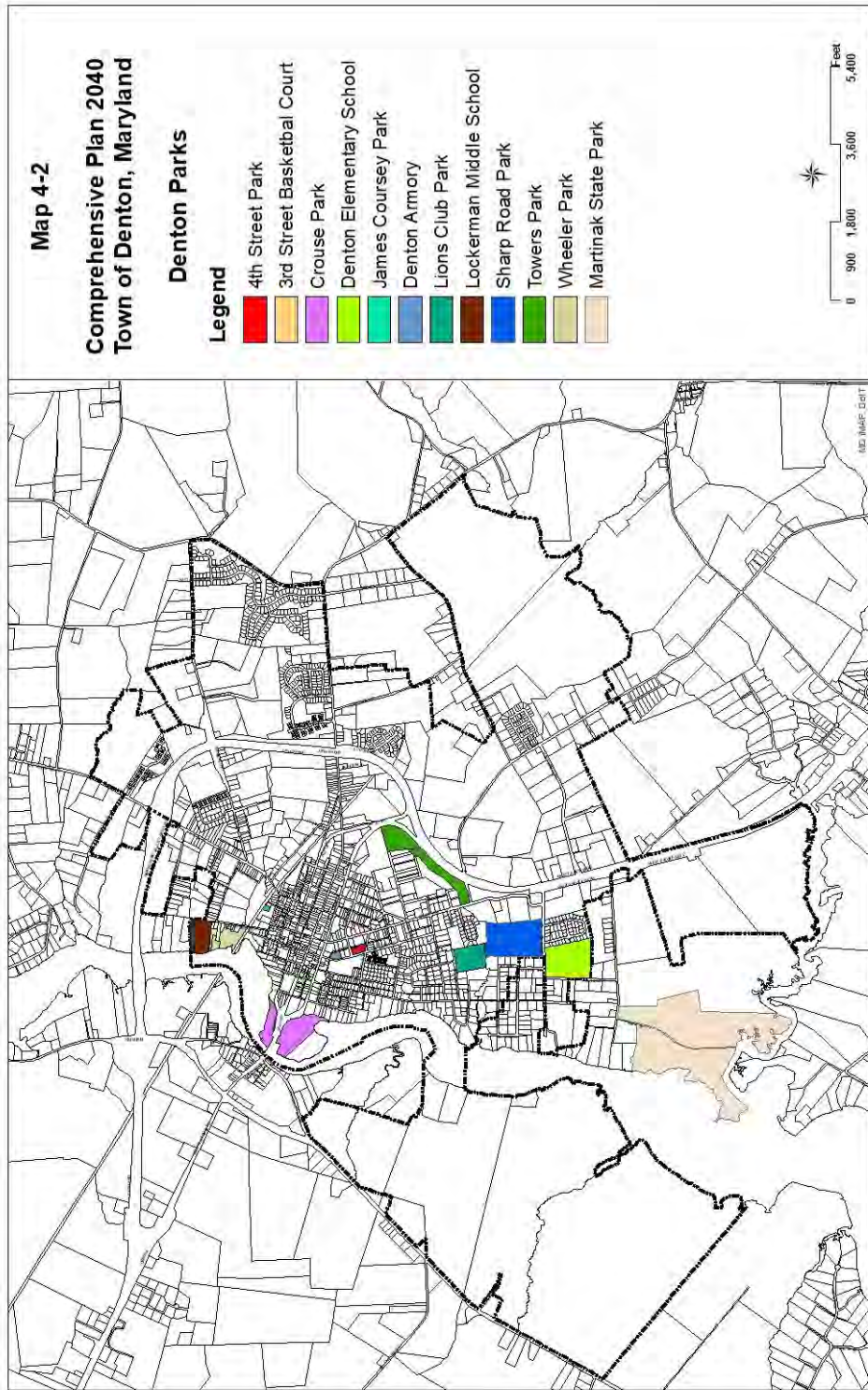
The following are recommendations relative to Town-supplied community facilities and services.

1. Assess the impact of large-scale developments on Town and County public facilities and services to ensure they are adequate and appropriately funded.
2. Working with the Caroline County Department of Parks and Recreation, identify opportunities to develop neighborhood parks to serve current and future needs on the east side of MD 404. In addition to land and facilities, consideration should be given to opportunities to enhance pedestrian access to these park(s). Additional neighborhood park facilities serving the older central neighborhoods, those in the 4th Street Park service area, should also be considered (e.g., at the former Southern States property).

Map 4-1 Community Facilities



Map 4-2 – Denton Parks



CHAPTER 5 - MUNICIPAL GROWTH ELEMENT

Introduction

The Land Use Article, § 3-112, requires a municipal plan to include a Municipal Growth Element (MGE). An MGE must project population growth in the planning horizon and:

- Assess development capacity (land, infrastructure);
- Evaluate public services and infrastructure needed to accommodate growth;
- Identify future municipal growth areas (Annexation Plan);
- Designate rural buffers and transition areas;
- Identify sensitive areas potentially impacted by development and
- Outline anticipated financing mechanisms to support necessary public services and infrastructure.

The findings of the MGE provide a basis for assessing and updating Town policies, processes, and regulations that affect development and for coordinated growth management policies and strategies with Caroline County and Maryland.

Population and housing growth scenarios are the basic premises examined in the MGE. They provide the platform for assessing the Town's capacity to accommodate population growth within the corporate limits and any proposed annexation areas. In addition to land capacity, the MGE assesses potential impacts on public services and infrastructure needed to accommodate growth. Spatial development patterns are also assessed for their potential to convert resource land (agriculture and forest) to urban use and adversely impact known sensitive environmental areas. To coordinate with Caroline County, the MGE defines the Town's geographic growth expectation by establishing an urban/rural boundary or rural buffer. Along with sensitive areas, the rural buffer reflects current policies concerning an acceptable extent of urban growth and land that should remain largely undeveloped.

Population and Housing Growth Scenarios

Staff "best guess" reported in the 2010 Denton Comprehensive Plan was population growth through 2030 at a compound rate increase of 2 percent. Continuing this assumed average annual growth rate and starting at a population of 4,848, as reported in the 2020 Census, would be a dramatic uptick in the Town's population. At an average annual growth rate of two percent, the projected 2040 population would be 7,210, increasing the Town's population by 2,362. This population increase, translated into dwelling units, would have the Town issuing an average of

forty-six building permits per year, a highly unlikely divergence from 2018 through 2020 averages of about seventeen permits.

Denton's share of Caroline County's population has historically ranged from fewer than nine percent to over fourteen percent (see Table 5-1). However, the share has been slightly more than ten percent in the last eighty years. In the last three census counts, from 2000 to 2020, the percentage has grown to over twelve percent, and according to the 2020 Census, Denton's population was almost fifteen percent of Caroline County.

The Maryland Department of Planning projections show a steady growth trend for Caroline County. It projects Caroline County will capture approximately fourteen percent of the Upper Eastern Shore population growth (see Table 5-2).

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Denton	1,572	1,806	1,938	1,561	1,927	2,977	2,960	4,418	4,848
Caroline County	17,549	18,234	19,462	19,781	23,143	27,035	29,772	33,066	33,293
Percent of County	8.96%	9.90%	9.96%	7.89%	8.33%	11.01%	9.94%	13.36%	14.56%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Upper Eastern Shore Region	244,820	254,230	266,620	280,630	292,490
Caroline County	33,660	35,550	37,700	40,000	42,200
Percent of Upper Eastern Shore Region	13.75%	13.98%	14.14%	14.25%	14.43%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center, December 2020

Growth Scenarios

Population Projections

Like all projections, the growth scenarios outlined below are the best guesses that reflect assumptions about future conditions. The assumption that Denton's population will continue to increase as it has with few exceptions over the last seven decades is common to both scenarios. There is also the belief that because population projections are central to assessing land development capacity and community facility and service impacts, it is best to err on the high side.

Both population growth scenarios summarized in Table 5-3 are based on the fact there are no indications that the Upper Shore Region or Denton will experience unprecedented rapid growth during the planning period. Scenario 01 assumes Denton will capture a constant share of the County population growth in the planning period, approximately equal to the County's share of regional population growth as projected by MDP and summarized in Table 5-3.

Scenario 02 reflects a higher average annual growth rate and assumes Denton's population growth at an average annual growth rate roughly equal to Caroline County's during the planning period.

Growth Scenarios	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Chg.	Average Annual Rate
01	4,848	5,030	5,215	5,410	5,615	767	0.73%
02	4,848	5,300	5,445	5,780	6,120	1,272	1.17%

Dwelling Unit Projections

Average household size is a surrogate factor for converting population counts into dwelling units used here. The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) projects that the average household size for Caroline County will decrease by about two percent during the planning period. The Census Bureau estimated the average household size for Denton was 2.63 in 2019. Assuming Denton experiences a commensurate decreasing average household size trend, the average household size during the planning period is expected to decrease from 2.62 in 2020 to 2.58 by 2040. The estimated number of additional dwelling units needed to accommodate projected population growth as applied to the scenarios is derived based on this trend and summarized in Table 5-4.

Dwelling Units	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Chg.
Scenario 01	1,864	1,920	2,005	2,080	2,175	311
Scenario 02	1,864	2,023	2,094	2,222	2,371	507
Avg HHLd size	2.62	2.62	2.60	2.60	2.58	

Development Capacity Analysis

The residential capacity analysis examines the Town's land capacity to accommodate future population and housing growth based on assumptions about future demand. Nonresidential development capacity analysis estimates the potential need for commercial and industrial land based on current acres per capita. Both are derived from current land-use patterns and account for environmental constraints and development policy factors. Although not directly applicable, assumptions about future land use consider expectations created by the existing zoning.

Residential Capacity – Within the PFA

Assessing residential capacity examines land with potential for more intense use, either through subdivision or site plan processes, based on assumptions. The results are a rough calculation of the Town's land capacity to accommodate the population and dwelling unit increases outlined in the growth scenario summarized in Tables 5-3 and 5-4.

The trend analysis assumes the current average land area per dwelling pattern would continue. An alternative pattern assessed assumes a lower average land area per dwelling, reflecting a different mix of unit types and more efficient use of land resources. This latter scenario may come about because of a combination of forces, including inflation, higher construction costs, increasing need/demand for affordable housing, changes in land-use policies, and consumer preferences. The trend scenario assumes an average land area of 12,000 square feet per dwelling unit. The

alternative scenario assumes an average of 9,000 square feet of land area per dwelling unit, roughly consistent with a "smart growth" objective of at least 3.5 dwelling units per net acre.

The residential capacity analysis examined two types of land within Denton's Priority Funding Area (PFA): vacant or unimproved land and underutilized land (see Map 5-1). Vacant and underutilized land with no or limited development potential, for example, insufficient space to accommodate stormwater management areas, open space set-asides, parking lots, and the like, were culled from the data set. Also, properties with access issues affecting marketability were removed. Land with environmental constraints, e.g., wetlands or sensitive species habitats, or regulatory constraints, e.g., floodplain, Resource Conservation Areas (RCA) in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, were only eliminated if the constraint significantly affected the property's developable space.

Vacant property less than one acre in size was assumed to have the capacity for one dwelling only. One acre or fewer vacant properties were screened to determine if any might be subdivided or support more than one dwelling unit. A vacancy was verified from recent aerial photos and field inspection. Properties eliminated included:

- publicly owned exempt
- utilities
- lots in already platted subdivisions (e.g., Fearins Crossing, Parkview Estates)
- lots less than 8,000 square feet
- properties not zoned residential
- open space set aside
- land-locked properties

Applying these filters, 25 properties, one acre or less, remained. Only four properties have a lot width between 100 and 102 feet. Most were less than 75 feet wide. In this group, lot sizes ranged from 0.98 to 0.187 acres; the average was 0.38 or about 16,000 square feet.

Although some of these properties may be further subdivided, it was assumed that the costs associated with land subdivision would be a disincentive for re-subdivision. Also, in many cases, the entire property was improved with existing structures that would likely preclude further subdivision.

The same reasoning was applied to smaller underutilized parcels, in this case, less than five acres. Again, smaller properties were eliminated from consideration where existing development, configuration, or potential access issues were noted. Potential development capacity for smaller underutilized properties was assessed based on eighty feet of street frontage per lot. The underlying assumption here was lot yield would be insufficient to offset the cost of building internal streets and extending utilities serving small lots.

It was assumed that the remaining vacant parcels greater than one acre and underutilized parcels greater than five acres could be subdivided. The capacity of vacant parcels greater than one acre and underutilized parcels greater than five acres was determined as an average land area per dwelling unit of 12,000 square feet and 9,000 square feet, respectively. In both scenarios, the base parcel area was adjusted to 75 percent of the total, assuming at least a quarter of development sites would be set aside for streets, utilities, stormwater management, and open space. The capacity assigned to the Village at Watts Creek and Fearins Crossing projects is based on previously approved development plans. Residential capacity was assigned to the JPA Venture LLC parcels based on a mixed-used development, with approximately ten percent of the properties set aside for commercial development.

The results of the development capacity analysis for residential properties within Denton's PFA are summarized in Table 5. Residential dwelling unit capacity is between about 1,200 to 1,500. Assuming Denton's average household size remains at 2.58, the Town has an estimated population capacity within its Municipal PFA of 3,200 to 3,800, sufficient to accommodate growth in either scenario outlined in Table 5-5.

Category	Acres	# of parcels	Capacity, units @	
			12,000 sf	9,000 sf
Vacant Land in PFA				
Under one acre	25	11	118	118
Over one acre	201	21	548	731
Village at Watts Creek*	75	3	257	257
Fearins Crossing*	14	1	72	72
Subtotal	315	36	995	1,178
Underutilized Land in PFA				
Underutilized Parcels greater than six acres	71	3	236	315
Underutilized Parcels less than six acres	13	3	12	12
Subtotal	83	6	248	327
Total Dwelling Unit Capacity	399	42	1,243	1,492
Population capacity PFA			3,207	3,850
* Capacity based on prior approved plans				

Residential Capacity – Outside the PFA

When property outside Denton's PFA is added to the calculations, population capacity increases by about 8,400 to over 10,000. Approximately 1,229 acres of vacant or underutilized land are available for residential development within the corporate limits outside the Municipal PFA. Because building coverage was not a limiting factor, all properties were treated as vacant for calculating potential development capacity.

For many properties outside the PFA, development capacity is constrained by the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area land-use designation. Any part of a property within the Critical

area classified as a Resource Conservation Area (RCA) is limited to a density of one dwelling unit per twenty acres. Approximately 361 acres, or about a third of the corporate area outside the Municipal PFA, is designated RCA. However, higher densities may be permitted if the land-use designation is changed through the Growth Allocation process to Limited Development Area (LDA) or Intensely Developed Area (IDA).

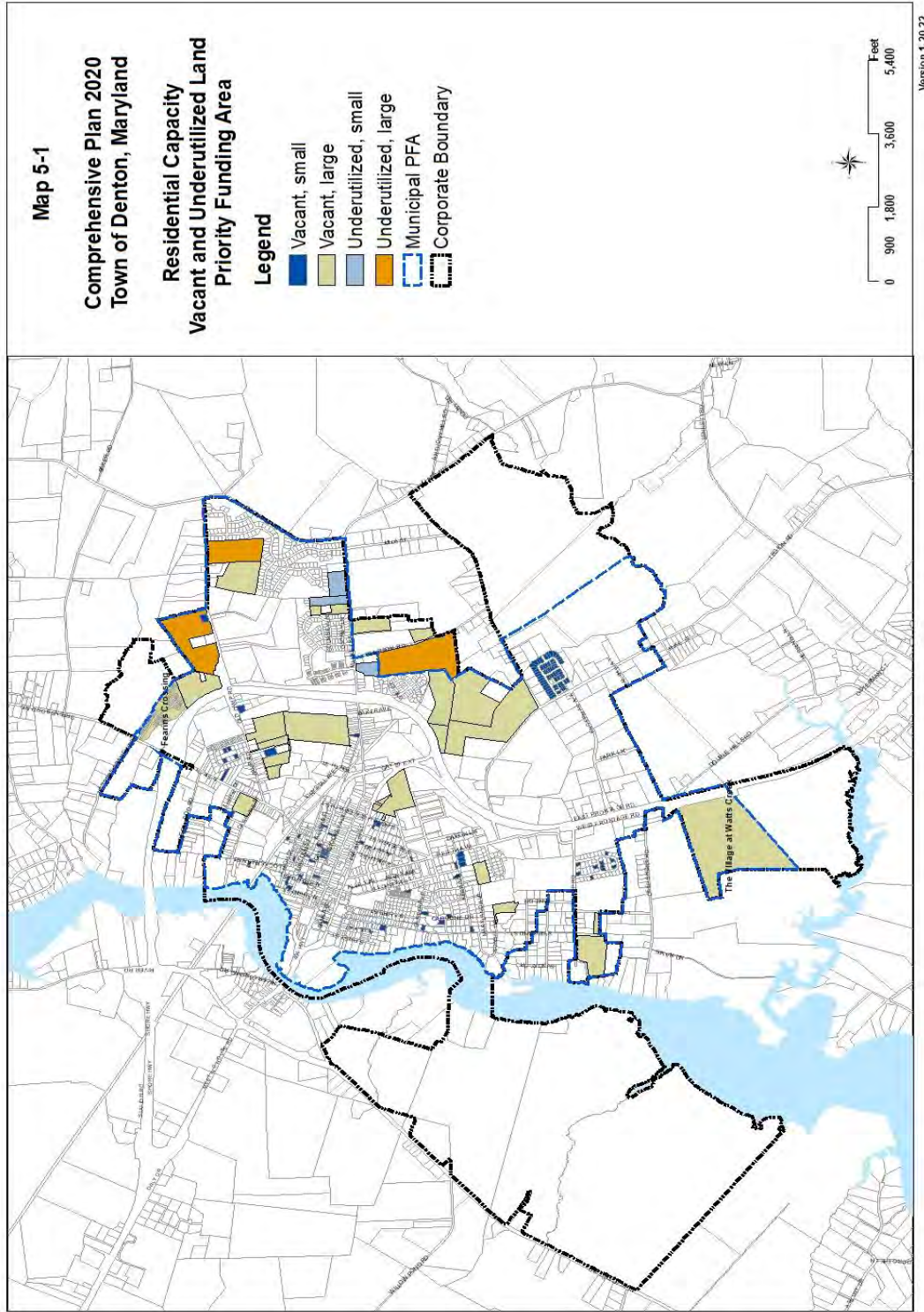
Land development capacity outside the Critical area was estimated using the assumed lot yield factors unit applied in the PFA. The base parcel area was adjusted to 75 percent of the total, assuming at least a quarter of development sites would be set aside for streets, utilities, stormwater management, sensitive area protection, and open space. Residential development capacity is approximately 2,000 to 2,700 units outside the PFA, assuming no Critical Area land designation change. If the Critical Area land designation changes, capacity increases to 3,000 and 4,000 residential units. Applying an average of 2.58 persons per household, the population that could be accommodated on land outside the PFA is between approximately 5,300 and 10,300 (see Table 5-6).

Table 5-6: Residential Development Capacity Outside Municipal PFA						
				Capacity, units @ sf per unit		
	Total	Non-RCA	RCA	12,000	9,000	871,200
Land Area (acres)	1,106	749	361			
No Growth Allocation				2,039	2,719	10
With Growth Allocation				3,011	4,015	
Population Capacity						
No Growth Allocation				5,261	7,015	25
With Growth Allocation				7,769	10,358	

Residential Development Capacity Conclusion

Denton has sufficient land development capacity within the current Municipal PFA to accommodate projected population increases during the planning period. In addition, there is substantial additional capacity outside the Town's PFA. However, providing municipal facilities to properties west of the Choptank River presents significant challenges.

Map 5-1 Residential Development Capacity



Nonresidential Development Capacity

Nonresidential properties assessment classified properties by land use type and intensity based on the Denton Zoning Ordinance and the Official Zoning map (see Map 5-2). Approximately 628 acres are zoned for nonresidential uses, including industrial, neighborhood, regional, and special commercial. Of this total, approximately 355 acres are improved, and the balance, 273 acres, are either vacant or underutilized (see Table 5-7).

Land Use	Acres	Improved	Vacant & Underutilized	Acres per Capita
Industrial	281	160	121	0.03
Regional Commercial	247	110	136	0.02
Neighborhood	51	50	1	0.01
Special, medical	50	35	15	0.01
Total	628	355	273	

The estimated demand for commercial and industrial land under the two scenarios is shown in Table 5-8, using the per capita acre ratio from Table 5-7. It is based on the current ratio of nonresidential land to population.

Land Use	Scenario 01 (acres)	Scenario 02 (acres)
Industrial	25	42
Regional Commercial	17	29
Neighborhood	8	13
Special, medical	6	9
Total	56	93

Nonresidential Development Capacity Conclusion

Except for neighborhood commercial, Denton has sufficient land zoned for nonresidential development within the current Municipal PFA to maintain the current land-to-population ratios.

Growth Impacts

This section examines the potential community facility and service implications of population and housing growth outlined in Tables 5-3 and 5-4.

Town Facilities and Services

Assuming current service levels represent total capacity, the population and dwelling units outlined in the growth scenarios will require the Town to increase administrative building space and personnel and public works personnel (see Table 5-9). However, the existing public works building

space is probably sufficient. In addition, the police department will require two to four officers and additional facility space to maintain current ratios.

Administration, Public Works, and Police

Table 5-9: Impacts - Administration, Public Works, and Police			
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
Demand Factors			
Added Population	767	1,272	
Impacts			
Municipal Administration			
Personnel	2	3	Staff per capita
Building Space	1,562	2,591	Gross floor area per capita
Municipal, Public Works			
Personnel	1	2	Staff per capita
Building Space	371	616	Gross floor area per capita
Police			
Personnel	2	4	Officers per capita
Facilities	767	1,272	Gross floor area per capita

Sewer and Water

Table 5-10 shows that the Town has enough sewer and water capacity to service the projected population and housing growth in the planning period. What is apparent, and need not be explored in-depth, is that a build-out population of 3,000 to 4,000 within the Municipal PFA, plus 7,800 to 10,300 outside the Municipal PFA, would significantly exceed Denton's sewer system capacity.

Table 5-10: Sewer and Water Impacts			
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
Demand Factors			
New Dwelling Units	311	507	
Added Population	767	1,272	
Added Nonresidential (GFA)	415,911	689,751	
Demand			
Residential (GPD)			gpd
Sewer	70,000	114,016	225 gpd per unit
Water	70,000	114,016	225 gpd per unit
Additional Nonresidential (GPD)			0.0574 gpd per sf gfa
Sewer	23,873	39,592	gpd
Water	23,873	39,592	gpd
Total Demand			
Sewer	93,874	153,607	gpd
Water	93,874	153,607	gpd
Remaining Capacity			

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
Sewer	227,332	167,599	gpd
Water	191,387	131,654	gpd

Parks and Recreation

As discussed in the Community Facilities element, providing park and open space facilities is a shared federal, state, County, and municipal responsibility. According to the 2022 Caroline County Recreation and Park Department’s Land Preservation, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (LPPRP), the park and recreation goal is 30 acres per 1,000 residents. It would be misleading to assume this performance goal is solely the responsibility of the Town, whose population is approximately fourteen percent of that of the County. The 2022 Caroline County LPPRP reports Denton's local resources to include 62.5 acres of recreation and resource land or about 13 acres per thousand population. The State-owned Martinak State Park adds 105 acres to this total, for a total of 171 acres. Considering that Denton currently provides 13 acres per thousand population, the Town is well above the ten-acre per 1,000 population observed in data from 1,053 park and recreation agencies across the United States, published by the National Parks and Recreation Association in their 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review. Based on a municipal goal of providing parkland at a ratio of ten acres per thousand, there is adequate existing park and recreation land for both projected growth scenarios.

Public Schools

Population and housing growth in the planning period will increase the number of students attending public schools (see Table 5-11). Also, additional teachers will be needed if current student-teacher ratios are maintained.

Demand Factors	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
New Dwelling Units	311	507	
Impacts			
New students			
High School	72	117	Students per household
Middle School	29	47	Students per household
Elementary School	41	66	Students per household
Additional teachers			
High School	4	7	Teacher/student ratio
Middle School	2	3	Teacher/student ratio
Elementary School	3	4	Teacher/student ratio

According to the Caroline County Board of Education, Denton's projected population growth will most impact Denton Elementary and Lockerman Middle Schools. Table 5-12 shows that both

schools are projected to be at or above State Rated Capacity (SRC) based on the projected household growth outlined in the two scenarios.

School	SRC	2021		2031	
		Enrollment	Percent SRC	Projected Enrollment	Percent SRC
Denton Elementary	736	601	82%	691	82%
Lockerman Middle	945	895	94%	928	98%
North Caroline High	1,263	1,180	93%	1,112	88%

Source: Email from Derek L. Simmons, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools, Caroline County, MD.

Public Library

American Library Association standard is 1,000 square feet of library space needed per 10,000 residents. Consequently, neither predicted population increase outlined in the two scenarios would facilitate a need for expanding the Denton Branch of the Caroline County Public Library. The library branch in Denton has a service area classification of 30,000 residents.

Fire and Rescue

Both growth scenarios would have minimal effect on the fire and rescue services (see Table 5-13). Neither scenario would significantly impact personnel or buildings. Also, the Insurance Services Office, Inc.'s service standards suggest the need for additional engines is marginal.

Demand Factor	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
Added Population	767	1,272	
Impacts			
Personnel	1	2	Firemen/EMTs per capita
Facilities (GFA)	2,037	3,318	Gross Floor Area per capita
Engines	0.767	1.272	Per capita

Police

Both growth scenarios will require additional police officers to maintain the current level of service per capita. In addition, the current building facilities may need to be expanded (see Table 5-14).

Demand Factor	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Measure
Added Population	767	1,272	
Impacts			
Personnel	2	4	Officers per capita
Facilities (GFA)	767	1,272	Gross Floor Area per capita

Budget Impacts and Financing

Public services and infrastructure costs are financed through six mechanisms: 1) property taxes, 2) water and sewer allocation fees, 3) impact fees, 4) developers, 5) negotiated exactions associated with Development Rights and Responsibility Agreements (DRRAs), and 6) State funding.

Sewer and Water

The users bear current sewer and water capital and operation costs. The developers will bear any costs associated with expanding the distribution components of these systems for development projects. Since no substantive system capacity upgrades are required, additional capital costs during the planning period are not anticipated.

Taxes and Fees

The growth scenarios will affect many facilities and services Caroline County provides. Table 5-15 outlines projected County fiscal impacts based on per capita facility and service delivery costs derived from the FY 2021 County budget. In addition, Table 5-16 outlines projected Town fiscal impacts based on per capita facility and service delivery costs derived from Denton's FY 2020 budget.

Demand Factors	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Per Capita costs
Added Population	767	1,272	
Impacts			
County Services & Facilities			
General Government	\$107,128	\$177,663	\$140
Judicial	\$32,560	\$53,999	\$42
Public Safety	\$390,625	\$647,815	\$509
Public Works	\$90,632	\$150,305	\$118
Health	\$11,185	\$18,549	\$15
Social Services	\$6,708	\$11,124	\$9
Education	\$399,635	\$662,759	\$521
Recreation and Parks	\$24,836	\$41,189	\$32
Arts	\$115	\$191	\$0
Library	\$28,860	\$47,862	\$38
Extension Service	\$3,486	\$5,781	\$5
Economic Development	\$2,438	\$4,044	\$3
Total	\$1,098,210	\$1,821,281	\$1,432

Demand Factors	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Per Capita Costs
Added Population	767	1,272	
Impacts			
General Government	\$89,719	\$148,790	\$117
Public Safety	\$384,338	\$637,389	\$501
Community Development	\$15,158	\$25,138	\$20
Public Works	\$74,505	\$123,560	\$97
Total	\$564,797	\$936,656	\$735

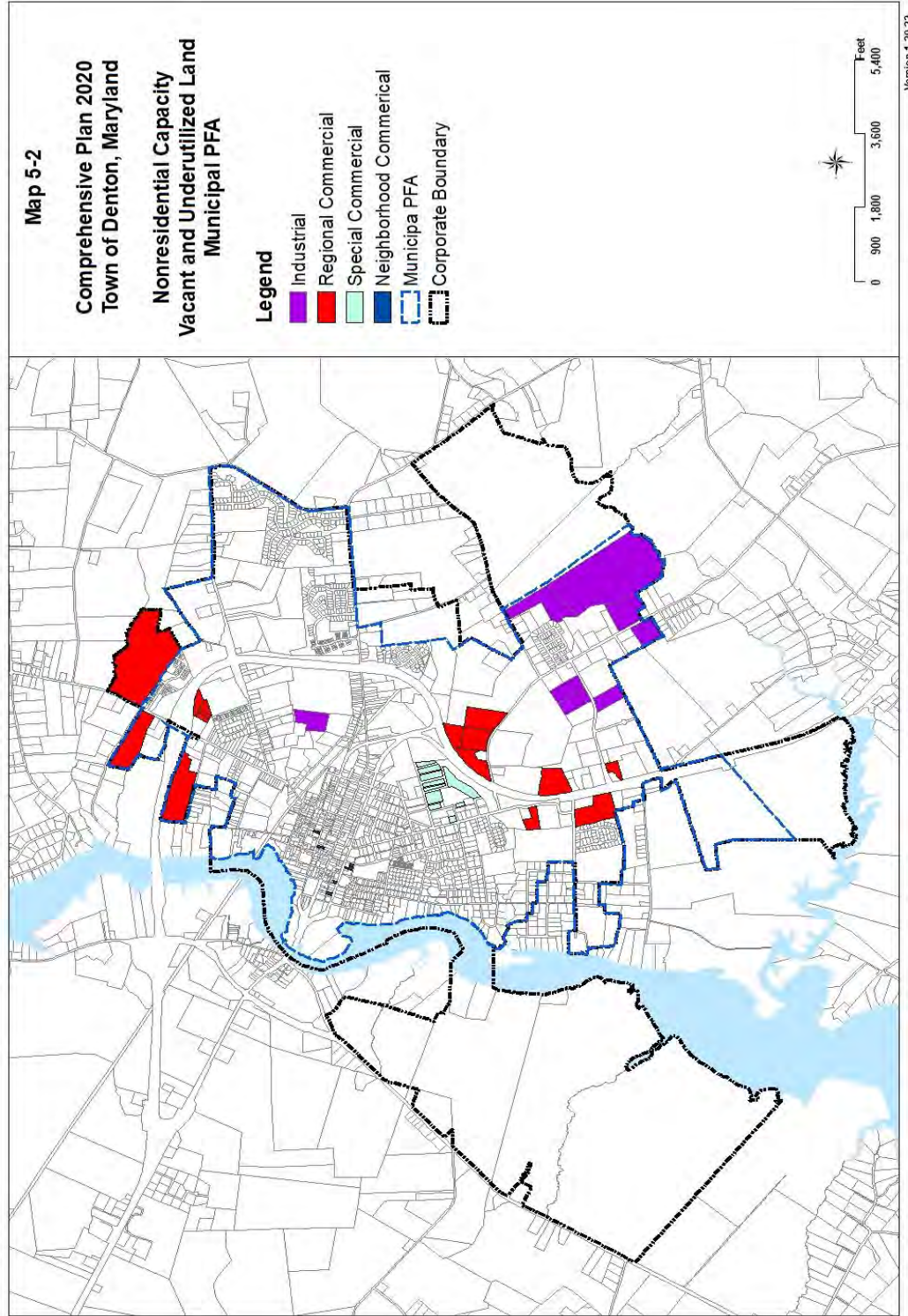
Table 5-17 summarizes County and municipal revenue collection in the same fiscal years. Note Caroline County collects a Development Impact Fee of \$5,000 per single- and multi-family dwelling. The comparisons show that if property assessments, property, income tax rates, and impact fees keep pace with cost-of-living measures, Caroline County will collect sufficient revenues to offset costs, whereas Denton will experience a small deficit.

Factor Multiple	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Added Population	767	1,272
Revenues		
Taxes County	\$1,044,940	\$1,732,939
Impact Fee (\$5,00 per unit)	\$1,555,561	\$2,533,684
Tax Revenues County	\$2,600,502	\$4,266,623
Tax Revenues Town	\$520,323	\$862,908
Costs		
County	\$1,098,210	\$1,821,281
Town	\$563,719	\$934,877
Surplus/Deficit		
County Gain/Loss	\$1,502,292	\$2,445,341
Town Gain/Loss	-\$43,397	-\$71,969
Surplus/Deficit Per Unit		
County	\$3,529.95	\$3,594.14
Town	-\$139.49	-\$142.02

Developer Rights and Responsibility Agreement (DRRA)

Some of Denton's losses may be offset based on the terms of a DRRA in the case of planned developments. DRRA exactions are determined through negotiations with the developer to ensure adequate funding for the provisioning of facilities and other negotiated items. Currently, Denton has only one fully executed DRRA. All future Planned Neighborhoods will require DRRAs.

Map 5-2 Nonresidential Development Capacity



Annexation Plan

Annexation Areas

Denton does not need to annex additional land to accommodate projected population growth. However, as previously discussed, a complete build-out of corporate limits would result in a substantial population increase if it were to occur. In addition, that level of growth would significantly exceed Denton's sewer treatment capacity, which is constrained by the current Total Maximum Daily Load limits in effect for the Choptank River.

The Town will consider annexing several properties (see Map 5-3). Commercial and industrial labeled properties may be annexed to increase the Town's commercial and industrial land inventory. The objective is to expand the tax base with ratables with low fiscal impacts and that support increased employment opportunities. Some of these properties may also be annexed to accommodate public institutional uses serving the community. In addition, the Town will request these properties be added to the municipal PFA at the time of annexation.

Properties on Map 5-3 labeled Suburban Residential and Town Residential may also be considered for annexation. These properties are enclaves of smaller periphery lots served by individual septic systems that are failing or may fail in the future. In this case, Annexation presents an opportunity to address a potential public health issue and improve water quality in the Choptank River.

West Denton Provisional Annexation Area

Although the Town has sufficient land within its corporate area to accommodate population growth in the planning period and beyond, additional land on the west side of the Choptank River is included in the annexation plan. There are several considerations underlying this policy. Considerations include addressing potential health issues associated with failing septic systems and, as a result, reducing nitrogen loading to the Choptank River. In addition, providing urban services will enable value-added infill and redevelopment along the waterfront, strengthening the market area surrounding the central business district.

This annexation area, West Denton, encompasses 65 parcels and approximately 35 acres. The area includes a combination of detached single-family dwellings, commercial properties, and a church. Most properties are within the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Critical Area, with a Limited Development Area (LDA) land use designation. In addition, West Denton is a designated growth area for Caroline County and is included in the Caroline County Priority Funding area. With two exceptions, the Caroline County zoning classifications for these properties are Village Center and Village Neighborhood Zoning Districts.

West Denton is included as a "provisional" annexation area (see Map 5-3) because there is a question concerning the feasibility of providing urban services. Any final determination of its annexation plan status is contingent on demonstrating the feasibility of extending sewer service to

the properties. A Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) commissioned by Caroline County will examine alternative methods of providing sewer service to West Denton. The area will be included in Denton's Annexation Plan if the PER demonstrates the costs of providing sewer service and other Town services and facilities are supportable.

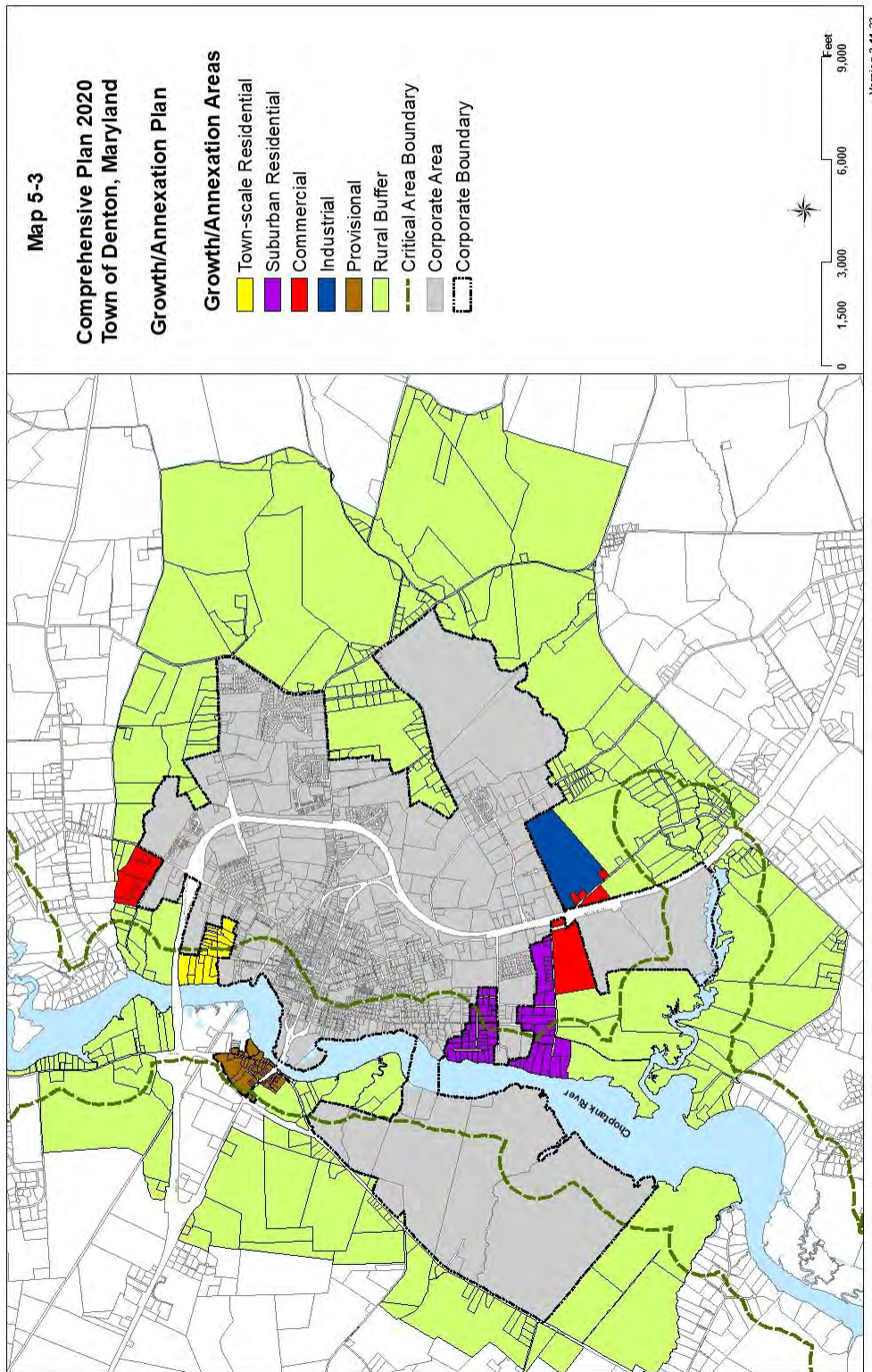
Rural Buffer

"Rural buffer" refers to undeveloped natural land adjacent to urban or developed land regulated to provide open space, offer low-intensity recreational opportunities, and/or contain urban development. Denton's Rural Buffer, outlined on Map 5-3, encompasses approximately 5,255 acres where the Town envisions very low-intensity uses dominated by agriculture, open space, and forestry area surrounding and at its gateways. In addition, about a third of the area is categorized as "green infrastructure," a natural support system that provides ecosystem services for humans, plants, and animals. The Rural Buffer is also a boundary defining current Town policy about the geographic limits of Denton's future growth. The Town will work with Caroline County to enact strategies to protect this Rural Buffer.

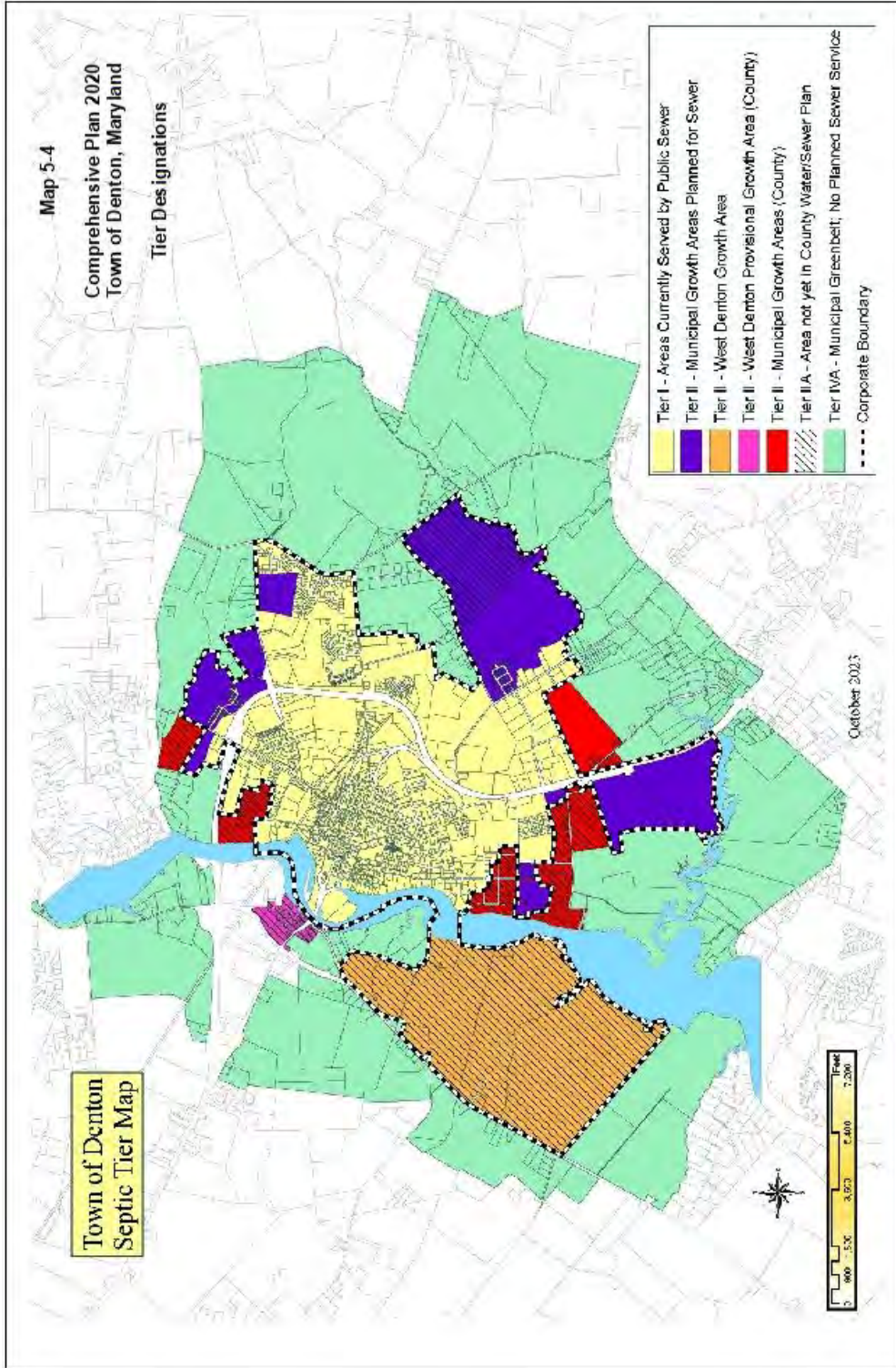
TIER Map

Denton's annexation plan modifies the Town's policies concerning the tier designations required under the Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. Applicable to Denton and the Tier I designations, areas are currently served with public sewer, Tier II areas, future growth areas planned for sewer service, and Tier IV areas planned for conservation and no major subdivisions on septic. The revisions on Map 5-4 include the potential annexation of several West Denton properties and a modified municipal greenbelt, Tier IVA.

Map 5-3 Growth/Annexation Plan



Map 5-4 Tier Map



CHAPTER 6 - NATURAL RESOURCES AND SENSITIVE AREAS

Introduction

Caroline County is blessed with abundant valuable natural resources that contribute to the County's pleasant quality of life. We get glimpses of the life that coexists with us just beyond our backyards when we see a fish jump in the river and deer feeding in fields at the highway's edge. These life forms have basic needs for the shelter and sustenance provided by the natural environment. Maintaining the natural components that support the area's diversity of life requires us to consider the impacts of growth and development on the area's natural resources and environmental quality – to make it an issue of public concern. The adverse effects of increased population and physical development can manifest themselves in the natural environment in many ways, including:

- Loss of trees and natural vegetation;
- Degradation of wildlife habitats and diminished plant and animal populations;
- Loss of farmlands;
- Loss of essential wetlands and aquatic habitats;
- Contamination of groundwater for drinking supplies;
- Reduced surface water quality in streams, rivers, and the Bay;
- Disruption of natural water drainage systems;
- Increased air pollution and
- Loss of scenic natural views.

Environmental deterioration does not have to be an inevitable consequence of growth and development. For example, the construction of the new homes, businesses, industries, schools, and roads necessary to accommodate growth can occur without unduly threatening the area's environmental quality if steps are taken to ensure that new development is designed and implemented in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Some areas are much more susceptible to environmental degradation than others due to the presence or proximity of sensitive natural features. Therefore, future development should be directed away from sensitive environmental areas and towards areas where environmental impacts would be less severe. Regardless of location, all future developments should be subject to minimum performance standards for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Preserve and protect the Town's most vulnerable natural features, including streams, wooded areas, wildlife habitats, and other sensitive natural areas.
- Improve water quality in the Choptank River.

Objectives

- Protect 1) Streams and stream buffers, 2) 100-year floodplain, 3) endangered species habitats, and 4) steep slopes.
- Account for the effects of climate change and sea-level rise.
- Enforce proper stormwater management and sediment and erosion controls.
- Conserve forest and woodland resources.
- Ensure that all new developments and redevelopments minimize pollutant loadings and runoff from the site.
- Work with Caroline County to protect and preserve the most valuable remaining ecological lands (Green Infrastructure) in and around the Town.

Chesapeake And Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Within the Town of Denton, environmentally sensitive areas are adjacent to the Choptank River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The Environment Article of the Maryland Annotated Code and the Code of Maryland Regulations required Denton and other local jurisdictions to develop a Critical Area Program to manage these natural resources in light of their relationship to water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Critical Area Law evolved out of recognition by the State of Maryland General Assembly that the effects of human activity have resulted in deteriorating water quality and productivity of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries depends on improving water quality and minimizing adverse impacts to the natural habitats along the shoreline and adjacent lands. Therefore, the primary focus of this law is to provide for more sensitive development and conservation measures for shoreline development and uses for all land within 1,000 feet of the landward boundaries of the State or private wetlands and the heads of tide (mean high tide).

The Town of Denton Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Local Program was approved in 1988 and updated in 2022. Map 6-1 shows the area included in the Town's Critical Area Program. The Denton Critical Area Program establishes criteria and standards intended to accomplish the three protective goals of the Critical Area Act, namely:

- Minimize adverse impacts on water quality that result from pollutants that are discharged from structures or conveyances or that have runoff from surrounding lands;
- Conserve fish, wildlife, and plant habitat; and

- Establish land-use policies governing development in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area that accommodate growth and address the fact that, even if pollution is controlled, the number, movement, and activities of persons in that area can create adverse environmental impacts.

Sensitive Areas

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 added provisions to the Land Use Article of the Annotated Maryland Code requiring the Denton Comprehensive Plan to contain a Sensitive Areas Element. The Sensitive Area Element included herein describes how the Town will protect the following sensitive areas:

- Streams and stream buffers;
- 100-year floodplains;
- Habitats of threatened and endangered species; and
- Steep slopes.

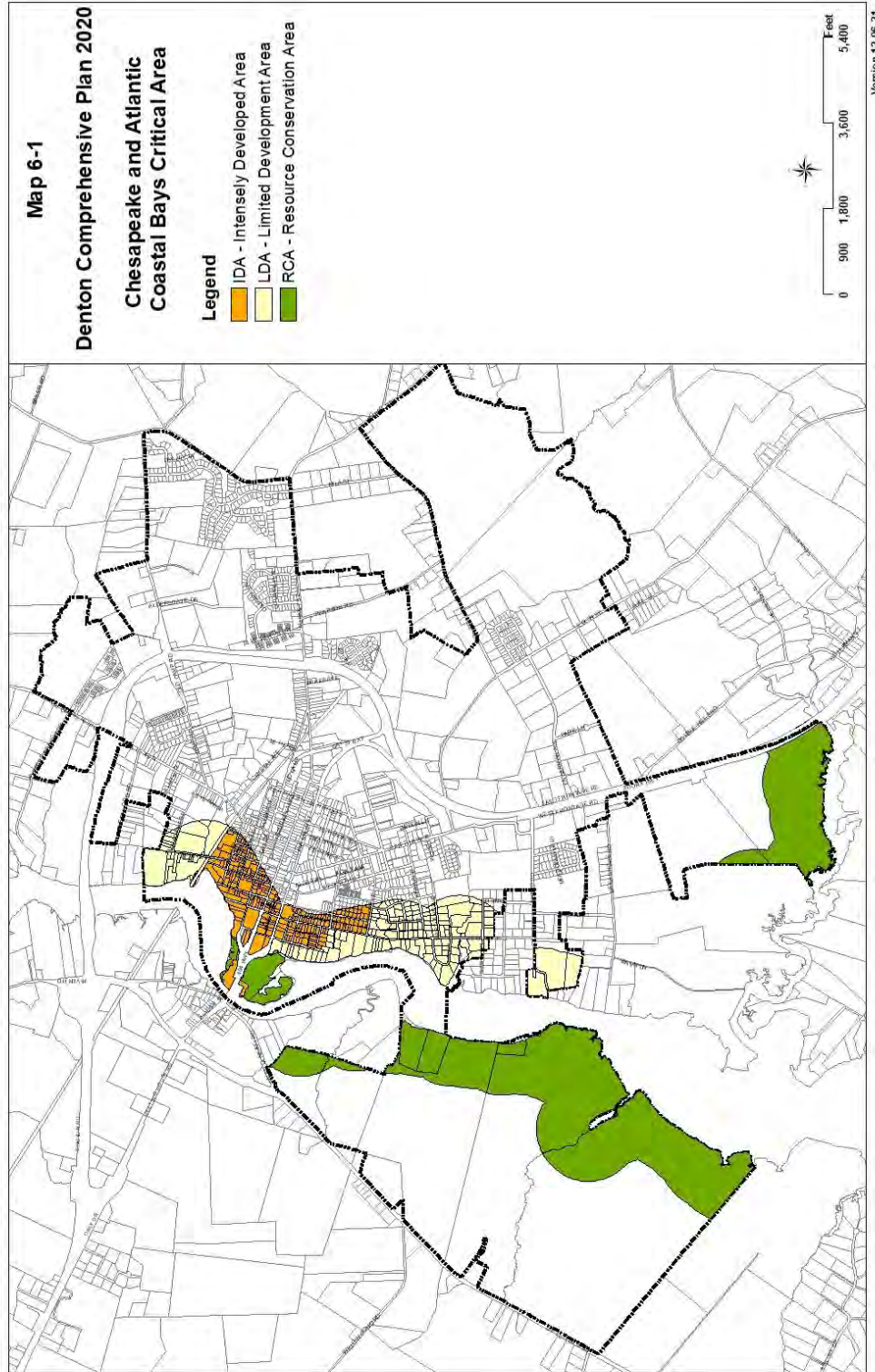
Performance standards to protect these sensitive resource areas have been included in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. These standards establish minimum protection levels for streams, wetlands, forests, wildlife habitats, and sensitive soils.

Streams and Stream Buffers

Streams are essential components of the natural environment. Streams support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock. Development near stream areas subject to flooding can result in the loss of life and property. Streams and their adjacent buffers are home to countless species of animals and plants. Streams also are the transport medium moving valuable nutrients, minerals, and vitamins to rivers and creeks and, in turn, the Chesapeake Bay. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are essential to the ecosystem. Maryland designates especially valuable streams as Tier II water bodies. Two Tier II streams, Saulsbury and Watts Creeks, are along the Town's current boundary within the growth area and in the Town's Greenbelt.

Stream buffers serve as protection zones adjacent to streams (see Map 6-2). These buffers reduce sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and other runoff pollutants by acting as filters, thus minimizing stream damage when adequately managed. However, development activity that disturbs land and/or removes forest cover and natural vegetation in stream corridors negates buffer effectiveness, adversely affecting water quality. In addition, the cumulative loss of open space and natural growth throughout the stream corridors results in accelerated stormwater runoff carrying higher sediment loadings and nutrient pollution. Ideally, an effective buffer incorporates sensitive features, including steep slopes, highly erodible soils, wetlands, and floodplains. In addition, created buffers incorporate vegetation that is most effective at nutrient uptake and slowing runoff.

Map 6-1 Chesapeake Bays and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



Buffers also provide a habitat for wetlands and upland plants, forming the basis of healthy biological communities. Various animals use the natural vegetation as a corridor that supplies food and cover. A natural buffer system often connects the remaining forest patches to support wildlife movement.

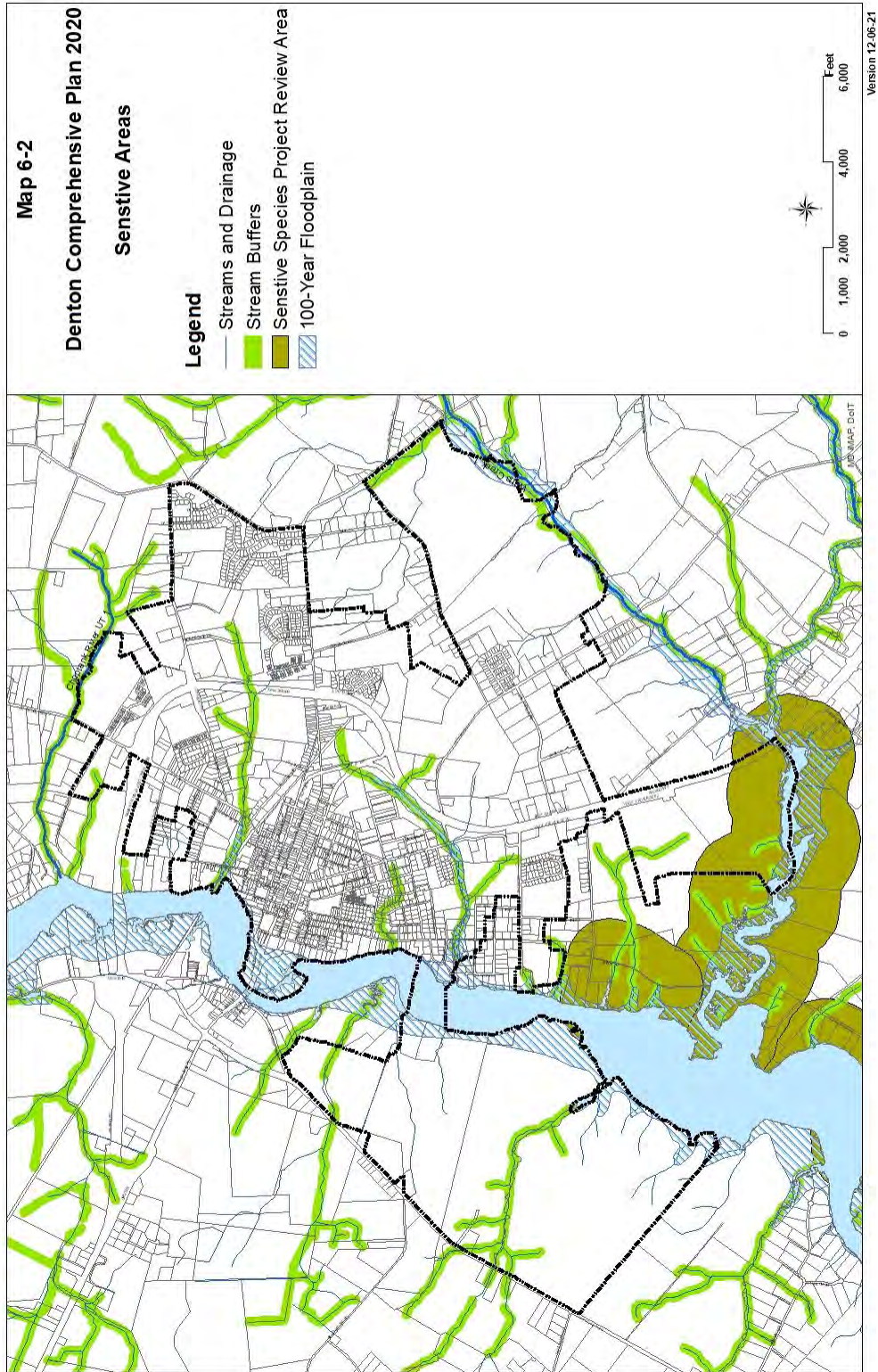
The Town of Denton has established development standards to protect sensitive environmental areas that apply to all subdivisions and developments requiring site plan approval. These standards require retaining or creating natural buffers along all perennial and intermittent streams. Perennial streams require a 100-foot natural buffer, and intermittent streams require a no-disturbance 50-foot buffer. In addition, the minimum perennial stream buffers must be expanded to include contiguous one-hundred-year floodplain and nontidal wetlands, hydric soils, highly erodible soils, and soils on slopes greater than 15% to a maximum distance of 300 feet.

The Federal Clean Water Act requires the State of Maryland to identify water bodies that are high in quality (Tier II water bodies). Denton has two Tier II streams within its jurisdiction that require a 100-foot buffer and must comply with Maryland's antidegradation policy. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources notes that both streams have no assimilative capacity.

Denton's Critical Area Program requires a minimum 100-foot Buffer (spelled with a capital B) landward from mean high tide or the tidal extent of wetlands. This Buffer must be expanded to include contiguous sensitive areas. In addition, a 200-foot Buffer is required under specific conditions within Denton's Resource Conservation Area. The Critical Area Buffer must be expanded to incorporate the following adjoining features as follows:

- Steep slopes at a rate of four feet for every one percent of the slope or to the top of the slope, whichever is greater,
- Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern to include the wetland and its regulated (by MDE) 100-foot buffer,
- Nontidal wetlands to the upland boundary of the nontidal wetland and
- Highly erodible and hydric soils to the landward edge of the soil or 300 feet, whichever is less.

Map 6-2 Sensitive Areas



100-Year Floodplain

Some areas of Denton are subject to periodic flooding, which poses risks to public health and safety and potential property loss. Flood and flood-related losses are created by inappropriately located structures that are inadequately elevated or otherwise unprotected and vulnerable to floods or development, which increases flood damage to other lands or development (see Map 6-2). While protection of life and property provided the initial basis for the protection of floodplains, there has been a growing recognition in recent years that limiting disturbances within floodplains can serve various public purposes.

Floodplains moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands within floodplains help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife.

The minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program do not prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain. However, to adhere to the minimum federal requirements, the Town requires development and new structures in the floodplain to meet flood protection measures. Measures include elevating the first floor of structures at least two feet above 100-year flood elevations and utilizing specified flood-proof construction techniques. Moreover, where alternative building sites on a parcel are available for construction outside the 100-year floodplain, construction in the floodplain is prohibited. These requirements are found in Chapter 58 of the Town code.

Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species

Habitat destruction and degradation threaten an estimated 400 native Maryland species with extinction. The key to protecting threatened and endangered species is protecting the habitats in which they exist. The Maryland Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (Natural Resources Article, 10-2A-01 through 06) provides definitions of threatened and endangered species. However, Maryland law and regulations do not currently define habitat. Therefore, as a basis for establishing protection measures for habitats of threatened and endangered species, habitat is defined in this Plan as "areas which, due to their physical or biological features, provide important elements for the maintenance, expansion, and long-term survival of threatened and endangered species listed in COMAR 08.03.08. Such areas may include breeding, feeding, resting, migratory, or overwintering areas".

Map 6-2 is the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) statewide vector file showing buffered areas that primarily contain habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species and rare natural community types in and around Denton. It generally includes but does not explicitly delineate such regulated areas as Natural Heritage Areas, Wetlands of Special State Concern, Colonial Waterbird Colonies, and Habitat Protection Areas. This data layer was created to inform local jurisdictions and state agencies to assess environmental impacts and review potential development projects or land-use changes.

The Town requires that development (as described by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program) avoid rare, threatened, and endangered species habitats. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources must review proposed development projects. When a project is within a Wildlife Habitat (Sensitive Species Project Review Area or SSPRA), the developer must contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources's Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation Program (HBCP) and address any comments and/or recommendations made by that State agency.

Steep Slopes

Slopes provide an environment that facilitates soil movement and pollutants when land disturbances occur. Steep slopes are associated with accelerated soil loss, resultant sedimentation, and pollution of streams. Control of erosion potential is usually achieved by regulation of development on steep slopes, limiting or prohibiting disturbance, and requiring stabilizing practices. For regulatory purposes, steep slopes should include at least any slope with a grade of 25 percent or more covering a contiguous area of 10,000 square feet or more.

Structure or impervious surface may not be placed on any slope with a grade of 15% or more covering a contiguous area of 10,000 square feet or more. On slopes between 15% and 25%, sound engineering practices must ensure sediment and erosion control and slope stabilization before, during, and after disturbance activities and minimize cut and fill. In addition, a minimum fifty-foot buffer must be established between the development and the crest of slopes of more than 25%. The buffer requirements are expanded within the Critical Area to incorporate steep slopes.

Other Natural Resource

In addition to the sensitive species the Land Use Article requires Denton to address, wetlands and forests are critical components of the natural systems in and around the Town that require thoughtful management to achieve the natural resource objectives (see Map 6-3). Therefore, a no-net-loss policy should apply to these natural features.

Nontidal Wetlands

Wetlands are transitional areas between permanently flooded deepwater environments and well-drained uplands. The water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water. Wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Tidal and nontidal wetlands are home to many fish, birds, reptiles, crabs, oysters, and other animals. In addition, they export organic matter that supports aquatic food webs in adjacent estuaries and helps protect inland areas from storm surges during tropical storms or hurricanes. They also protect and improve water quality and control flooding and erosion, benefiting people living in the watershed.

A twenty-five-foot setback from all nontidal wetlands (except for the conditions mentioned above concerning nontidal wetlands in the Critical Area) is required for all development around the extent

of the delineated nontidal wetland except as may be permitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources, Nontidal Wetlands Division.

Forest

Protecting forests is an essential element of attaining Denton's natural resource objectives. Forested areas provide an array of benefits to the environment. For example, forest cover supports water quality protection, including sediment and erosion control, streambank stabilization, absorption of stormwater runoff, and reduction of nutrients and pollutants entering local water bodies. Forests also provide a wide range of habitats for protection and nesting and various food sources for many animals and aquatic ecosystems. In addition, tree cover helps protect the aquatic ecosystem from harmful temperature fluctuations by decreasing the amount of light that reaches the water's surface. The ability of the forest to decrease the amounts of sediments reaching surface water and the amount of erosion of banks, shorelines, and other areas also helps preserve the quality of aquatic habitats.

Forests also play a significant role in helping to reduce the levels of carbon dioxide (also known as a "greenhouse gas") in the atmosphere. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and replace it with oxygen as they grow. The carbon is stored in tree trunks, branches, and leaves. While young, actively growing re-growth forests take in the most extensive amounts of carbon dioxide from the air, older and mature forests are an essential carbon storehouse.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1991 (Natural Resources Article, § 5-1601, et. seq.) was enacted to protect the forests of Maryland by making forest conditions and character an integral part of the site planning process. It is regulated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources but implemented and administered by local governments. The Forest Conservation Act seeks to maximize the benefits of forests and slow the loss of forest land in Maryland while allowing development.

The Denton Forest Conservation Ordinance requires applications for subdivision and site plan, a grading permit, or a sediment control approval on units of land 40,000 square feet or greater to submit a forest stand delineation and a forest conservation plan. A qualified professional reviews forest stand delineation and forest conservation plans for the Town to ensure accuracy and compliance with the Town code.

The Ordinance establishes forest conservation thresholds for all land use categories. The forest conservation threshold sets the percentage of the net tract area. The reforestation requirement changes from 1/4 acre planted for each acre removed above the threshold to a ratio of 2 acres planted for each acre removed below the threshold. Each acre of forest retained above the applicable forest conservation threshold will be credited toward the total number of acres required to be reforested.

After reasonable efforts to minimize the cutting or clearing of trees and other woody plants have been exhausted, the forest conservation plan must provide for reforestation or payment into the forest conservation fund based on the following forest conservation thresholds:

Category of Use	Threshold Percentage
Agricultural and resource areas	50 percent
Institutional development areas	20 percent
High-density residential areas	20 percent
Mixed-use and planned unit development areas	15 percent
Commercial and industrial use area	15 percent
Source: Forest Conservation & Critical Area Program, Town of Denton	

If little or no forest exists on the site, the applicant must conduct afforestation on the lot or parcel. An agriculture or resource area tract having less than 20 percent of the net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 20 percent of the net tract area. Institutional development areas, high-density residential areas, mixed-use and planned unit development areas, and commercial and industrial use areas with less than 15 percent of net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 15 percent of the net tract area.

In 2009, Maryland enacted a "No Net Loss of Forestry Policy" and modified several provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, including:

- limiting the exemptions for forest clearing associated with a single lot, a linear project, and a dwelling house to a maximum disturbance of 20,000 square feet of a forest.
- limiting the exemption for constructing dwellings for owners and their children and eliminating authority for an owner's grandchildren.
- eliminating an exemption for previously developed areas covered by paved surfaces.
- authorizing the use of an off-site protective agreement that applies to temporarily protected forests as a mitigation practice for meeting afforestation or reforestation requirements.
- broadening the acceptable uses of State and local Forest Conservation Funds to include maintenance of existing forests and achieving urban tree canopy goals and
- requiring that priority be given to specified trees, shrubs, plants, and areas for retention and protection unless a variance is granted.

Related regulation altered the fee-in-lieu contribution rate to State and local conservation funds required under specified circumstances from 10 cents per square foot to 30 cents per square foot of the area of required planting until September 30, 2014. After September 30, 2014, the rate must be adjusted for inflation as determined annually by DNR via regulation.

Habitat Areas for Plant and Wildlife Diversity

The following are essential environmental areas for maintaining plant and wildlife diversity whose importance is related to their coverage extent. Man-induced impacts on these features are not strictly regulated except for those parts collocated with sensitive areas. Unlike forest conservation, for example, there are no threshold conservation requirements, even though most are valuable for the extent of the intact feature. The Department of Natural Resources provides the coverage shown on each map.

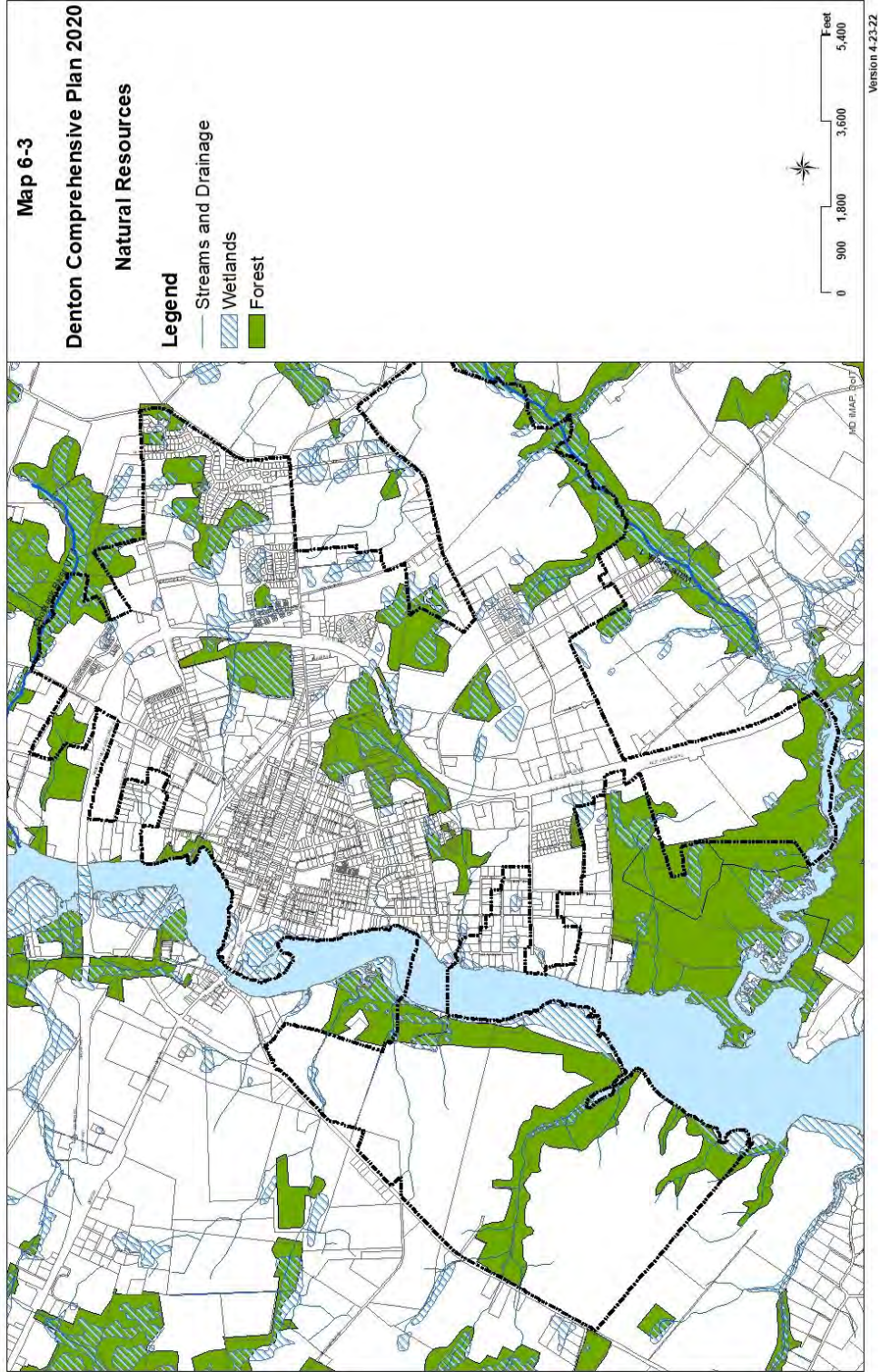
Green Infrastructure

"Green Infrastructure" is defined as lands critical to long-term ecological health. These lands provide the natural foundation needed to support a diverse plant and animal population and enable valuable natural processes, like filtering water, to take place. Maryland's green infrastructure has been mapped using sophisticated satellite imaging technology, with the results being reviewed by scientists, local government officials, and conservation groups. The first step in the mapping process identified the heart of green infrastructure, called "Green Hubs" (see Map 6-4). These are typically broad areas, hundreds of acres in size, vital to maintaining the County's vibrant and unique ecology. The second step is connecting hubs with "corridors" - linear remnants of natural land such as stream valleys that allow animals, seeds, and pollen to move from one area. They also protect the health of streams and wetlands by maintaining adjacent vegetation. Preserving linkages between the remaining habitat blocks will ensure the long-term survival and continued diversity of Maryland's plants, wildlife, and environment.

Protecting green infrastructure is vital in preventing the shrinking and fragmentation of undeveloped open space. Fortifying and restoring the green infrastructure can maximize the ecological potential of the landscape. In Green Hubs, distinctive wildlife will have access to a full range of habitats, enabling animals to flourish amidst vast stretches of protected lands. Green Hubs also reduce the stress placed on forests, helping to renew woodlands and prevent their collapse into isolated pockets of trees. Preserving linkages between the remaining significant habitat areas will help ensure the long-term survival and continued diversity of natural resources and the environment.

Natural systems do not follow political boundaries. Consequently, any efforts to manage adverse impacts on the natural environment must recognize the regional context for protection efforts and involve coordinated efforts at all levels of government to have any hope for success. State, County, and town strategies for environmental protection, including land acquisition and protective easements, should be based on coordinated resource protection strategies focusing on green infrastructure.

Map 6-3 Natural Resources



Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet)

The BioNet of Maryland layer systematically identifies and prioritizes ecologically essential lands to conserve Maryland's biodiversity (i.e., plants, animals, habitats, and landscapes). This dataset aggregates numerous separate layers hierarchically according to the BioNet Criteria Matrix (see Map 6-5).

Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Species (FIDS) Habitat

Many Forest Interior Dwelling Bird species (FIDS) populations are declining in Maryland and the eastern United States. The conservation of FIDS habitat is strongly encouraged by the Department of Natural Resources. Map 6-6 shows potential habitat for Forest Interior Dwelling Species in Maryland. These data are only the results of a model depicting where FIDS habitat might occur. This file was created for planning and analysis to conserve a group of species called Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS), known to require habitat conditions in the interior of forests for optimal reproduction and survival.

Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs)

TEAs are lands and watersheds of high ecological value identified as conservation priorities by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for natural resource protection (see Map 6-7). These areas represent the most ecologically valuable areas in the State. Therefore, TEAs are preferred for conservation funding through Stateside Program Open Space.

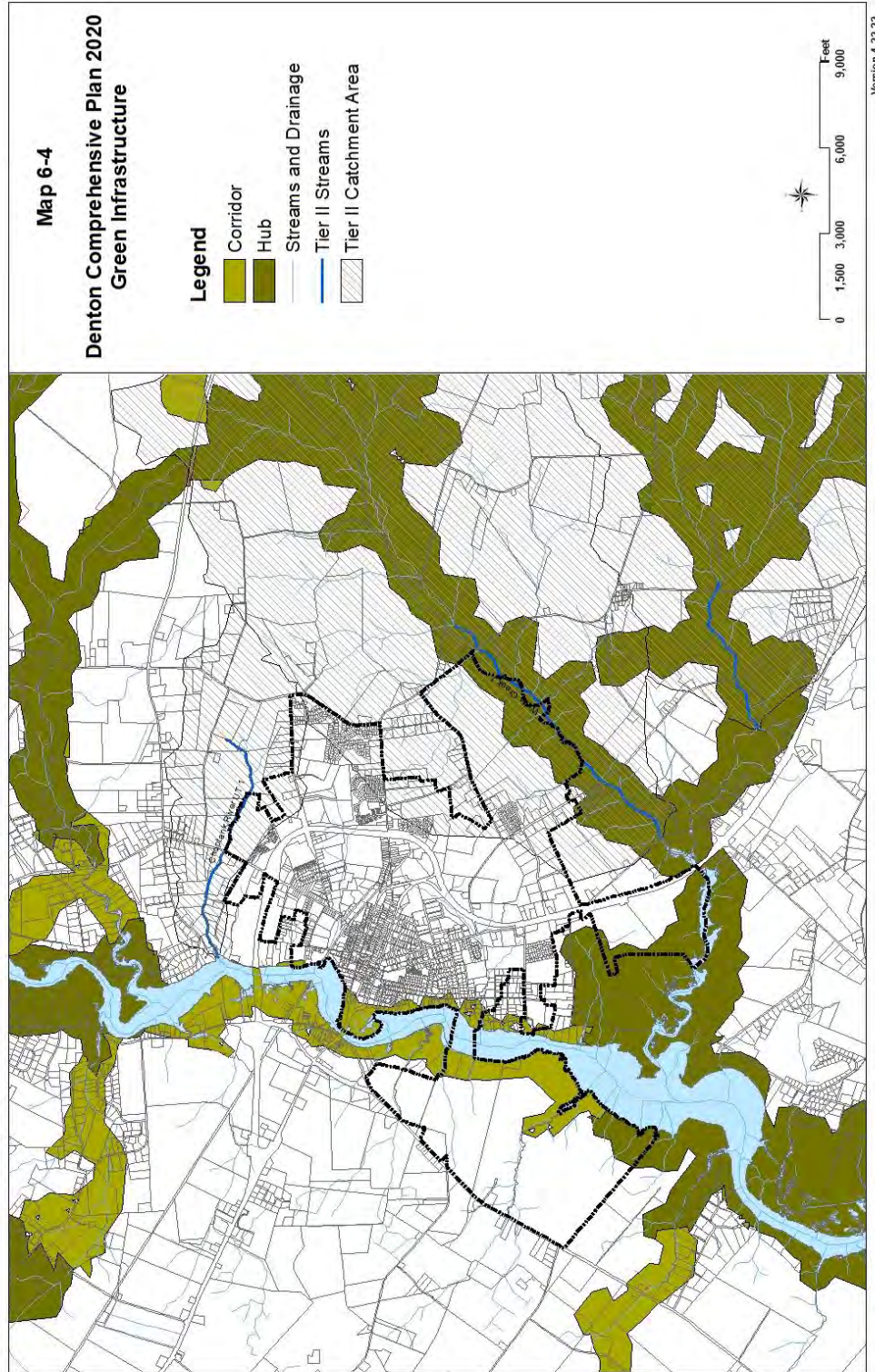
The first component is the updated Green Infrastructure Assessment (circa 2010), which identifies large, contiguous blocks (hubs) of significant forests and wetlands and their connecting corridors. The Green Infrastructure's habitat hub and corridor network allows plant and animal migration, reduces forest fragmentation if protected, and provides essential ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, cleaning air and water, storing nutrients, and protecting areas against storm and flood damage.

The rare species and wildlife habitat component identifies areas that support Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species, rare plant and animal communities, species of Greatest Conservation Need, and wildlife concentrations.

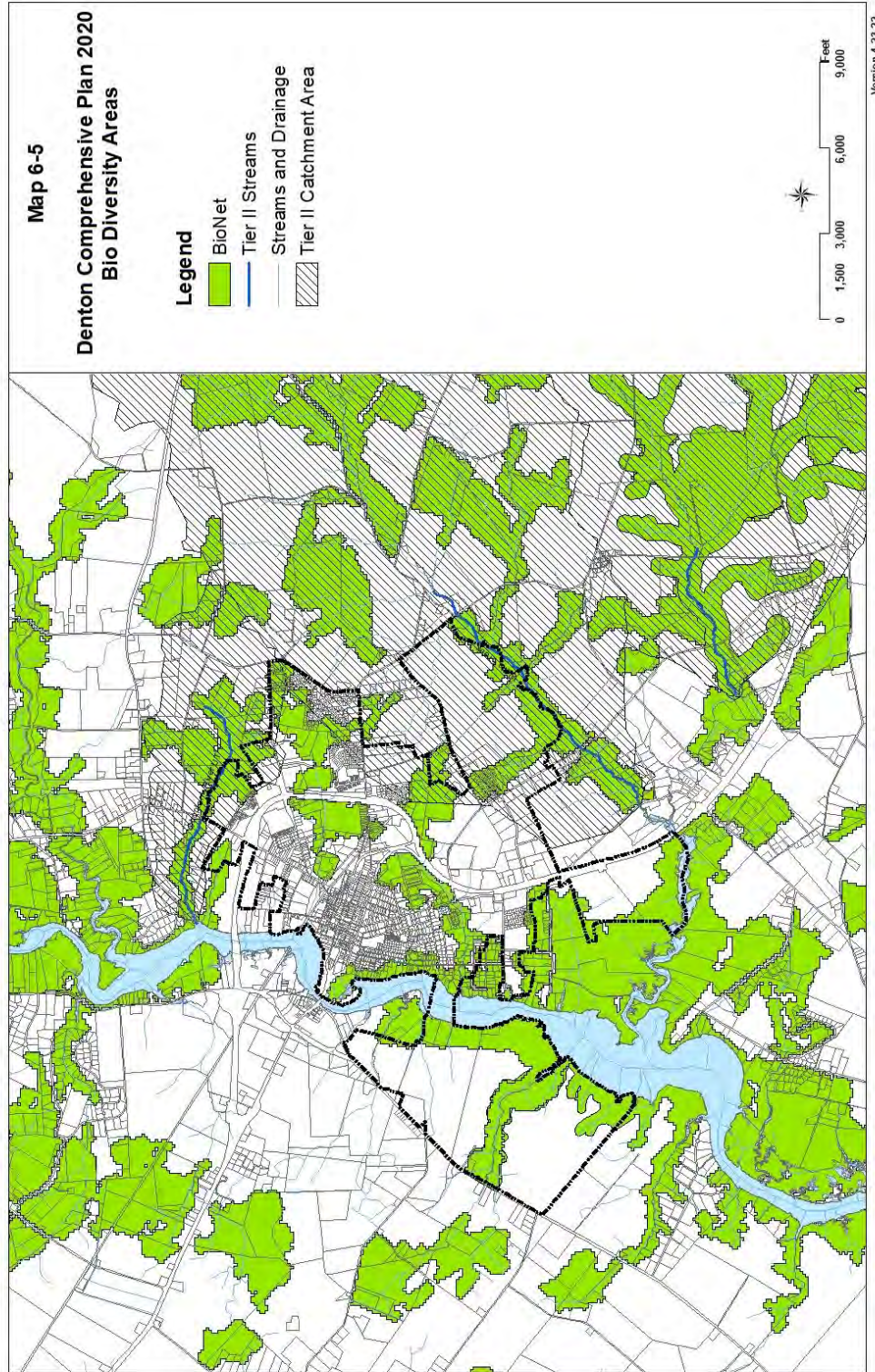
The aquatic life hotspots component identifies watersheds supporting freshwater stream ecosystems. Conservation is needed to protect and restore areas of high aquatic biodiversity, Tier II regulated streams, and brook trout streams.

The water quality protection component identifies sensitive lands such as forests, wetlands, and steep slopes where preservation is vital for water quality.

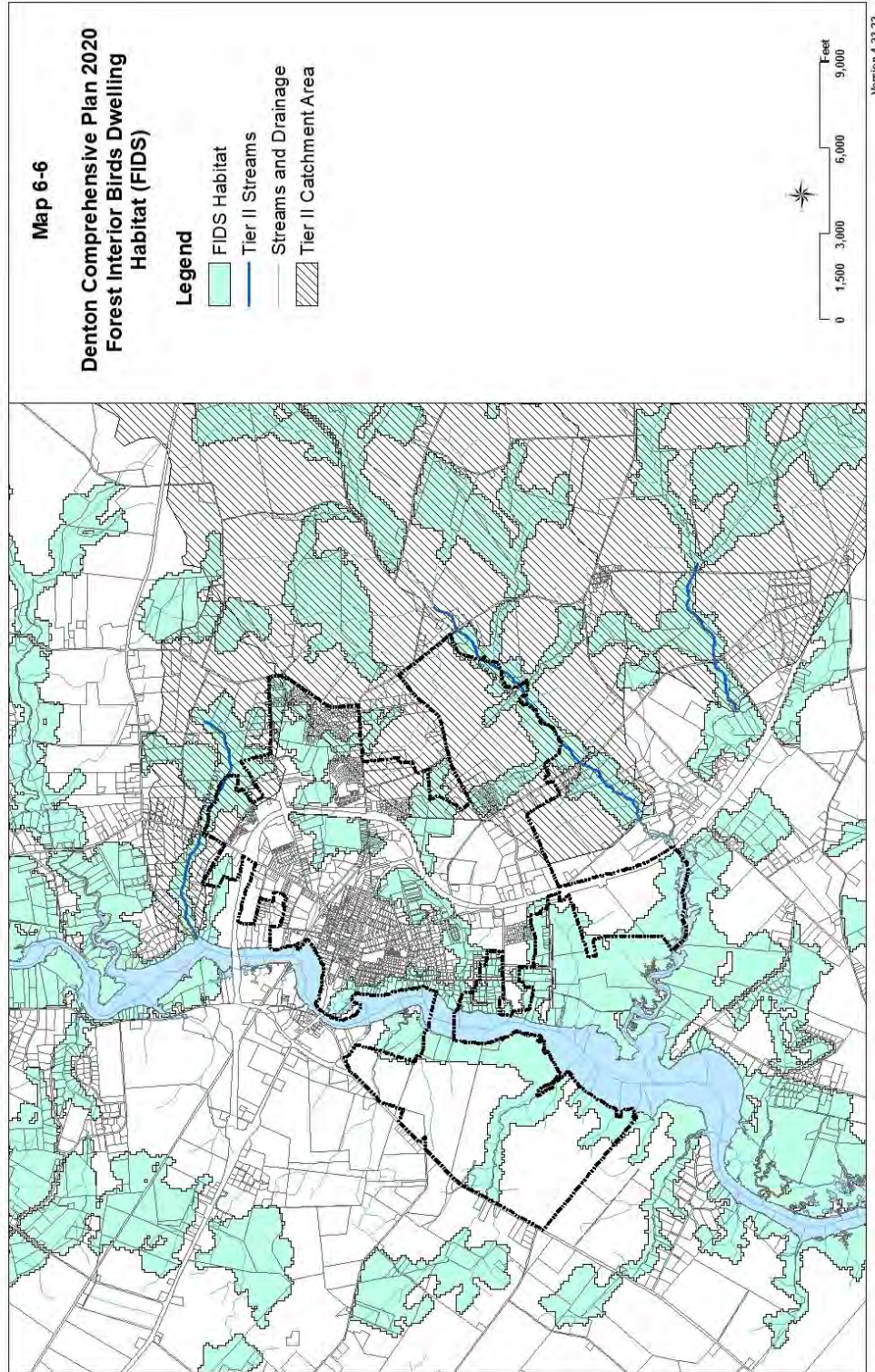
Map 6-4 Green Infrastructure



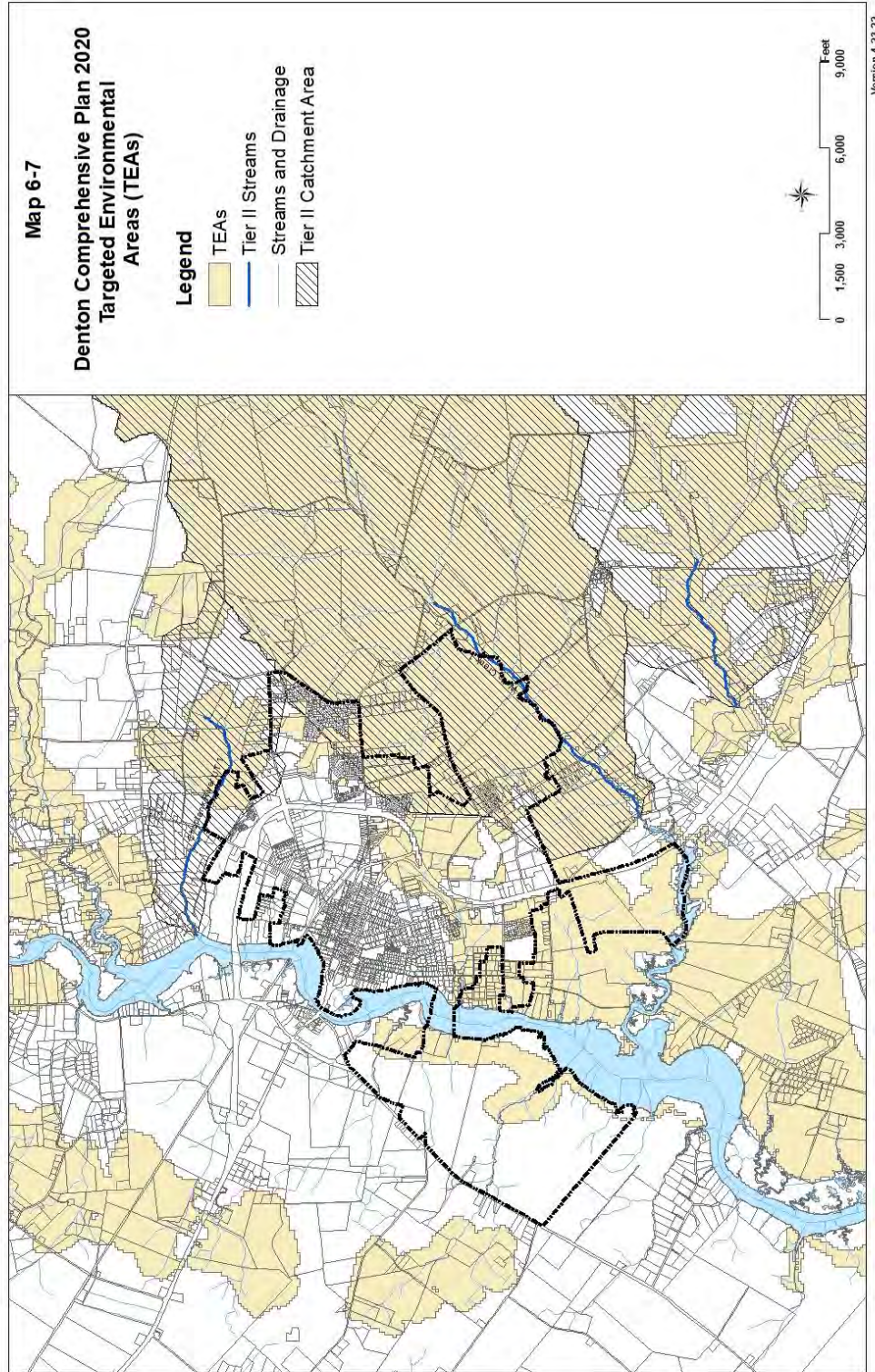
Map 6-5 Bio-Diversity



Map 6-6 Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Habitat



Map 6-7 Targeted Environmental Areas



The coastal ecosystems component identifies Blue Infrastructure shoreline and watershed protection priorities. These are important for sustaining coastal and tidal ecosystems and identifying land areas essential for sustaining spawning and nursery areas for important commercial and recreational fisheries.

The climate change adaptation component identifies areas essential for sustaining wetlands ecosystems that change and move landward in response to sea-level rise.

The purpose of TEAs is to define areas that present opportunities for multiple land conservation efforts to work together by leveraging Stateside Program Open Space (POS) resources. Land trusts, conservancy organizations, and other government programs can use this map to identify cooperative projects that meet Stateside POS ecological criteria. TEAs can help local governments identify areas suitable for resource conservation that support state land conservation investments and complement these designations with suitable zoning. Since TEAs represent the most ecologically valuable areas in the State, additional consideration should avoid environmental impacts within these areas.

Recommendations

Watershed Management

Along with the County, the Town recognizes the importance of natural resource protection. Many of the most sensitive or fragile natural resources are present in the Rural Buffer discussed in the Municipal Growth Element. Because natural systems, including the most sensitive, are not confined to the corporate area, the Town and County share responsibility for their protection and thoughtful management. Consequently, any efforts to manage adverse impacts on the natural environment must recognize the regional context for protection efforts and involve coordinated efforts at all levels of government to have any hope for success.

State, County, and town strategies for environmental protection should be based on sound watershed management principles and coordinated resource protection strategies. Two components of regional strategies for natural resource protection are based on the region's geographic components: watersheds and green infrastructure.

Impervious surfaces strongly influence watershed quality. Accordingly, critical analysis of the degree and location of future development (and impervious cover) expected in a watershed is essential to the long-term health of the land and receiving waters. Planning at the watershed and sub-watershed level presents the opportunity to comprehensively address land use and environmental protection as intricately related topics. It enables decision-makers to understand better the potential impacts of land use on stream health, water quality, and wildlife diversity and devise strategies to offset or address potential adverse results. The Environmental Protection Agency's Watershed Web Academy, under the topic of watershed planning importance, makes the following points:⁸

⁸ <https://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/online-training-watershed-management>

"Because watersheds are defined by natural hydrology, they represent the most logical basis for managing water resources. The resource becomes the focal point, and managers are able to gain a more complete understanding of overall conditions in an area and the stressors that affect those conditions. Traditionally, water quality improvements have focused on specific sources of pollution, such as sewage discharges, or specific water resources, such as a river segment or wetland. While this approach may be successful in addressing specific problems, it often fails to address the more subtle and chronic problems that contribute to a watershed's decline. For example, pollution from a sewage treatment plant might be reduced significantly after a new technology is installed, and yet the local river may still suffer if other factors in the watershed, such as habitat destruction or polluted runoff, go unaddressed. Watershed management can offer a stronger foundation for uncovering the many stressors that affect a watershed. The result is management better equipped to determine what actions are needed to protect or restore the resource."

Denton and Caroline County share jurisdiction in the sub-watersheds, where cooperative planning benefits the natural resources and presents an opportunity to strengthen the comprehensive plans of both jurisdictions. Coordinated strategies should include regulations that support new development design that minimizes impervious surfaces and loss of existing resource values in green infrastructure hubs and corridors to the maximum extent possible. Strategies should also emphasize the land's restoration to a condition supporting its natural resource protection values.

Resource Conservation

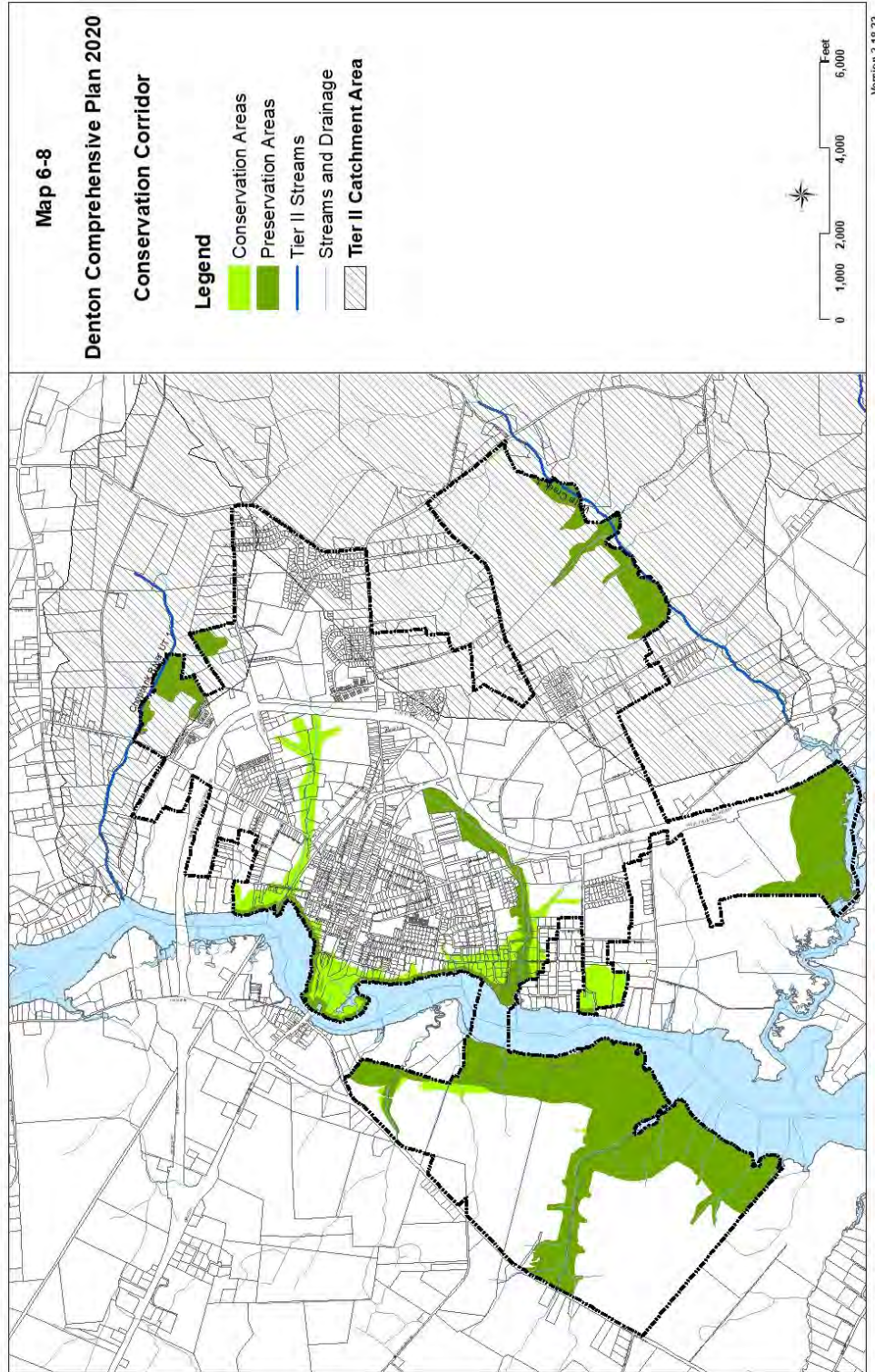
Finding a balance between protecting natural resources and water quality in receiving waters, resource utilization (e.g., agriculture and forestry), and development will challenge both jurisdictions. An essential first step is identifying priority focus areas to preserve and areas to apply best management practices that minimize destructive change. Environmental features include wetlands, the Choptank River, tributary streams, and priority preservation areas. In addition, key management areas include forests, the 100-year flood plain, stream buffers, the Resource Conservation Area (RCA), and Critical Area Buffer, where existing protective regulations apply. Finally, adding fragile environment features such as threatened and endangered species and habitat areas for wildlife diversity defines conservation areas where maximizing protective values and minimizing loss take precedence in land management and development design.

These features comprise natural resource protection areas within the Town that should be managed to preserve the functions that implement the objectives of this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, Denton has defined natural resource areas that will be protected (see Map 6-8). These are areas where the Town will apply best management practices that focus on minimizing impacts on and losing resources with the added benefit of lessening the potential impacts of climate change sea-level rise. Natural Resource Protection Areas should be managed similarly to Denton's Resource Conservation Areas (RCA). Principle structures should be located outside the area to the maximum extent possible. For example, forest removal should be prohibited except in a demonstrated hardship situation. Stormwater management measures should be outside conservation corridors except when no alternative exists. Standards should strictly apply in

preservation areas and may be modified in conservation areas when strict adherence creates hardship.

The Town should work with Caroline County officials to extend similar natural resource protection areas along Saulsbury, Watts Creeks, and Poor House Run. Managing impacts from current land use and changes to the land from sea level rise are significant in the catchment areas of the Tier II streams.

Map 6-8 Conservation Corridor



CHAPTER 7 - WATER RESOURCES ELEMENT

Introduction

The Water Resources Element (WRE) is a fundamental planning requirement mandated by Maryland House Bill 1141 (HB 1141). The WRE aims to assess water resource capacity to meet current and future needs. Specifically, the statutory requirements are to:

- Identify drinking water and other water resources that will be adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the plan's land use element, considering available data provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).
- Identify suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet the stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs of existing and future development proposed in the plan's land use element, considering available data provided by MDE.

The Water Resources goals for Denton are:

- Maintain a safe and adequate water supply and adequate capacities for wastewater treatment to serve projected growth.
- Protect and restore water quality.
- Reduce nutrient loads that contribute to loading in the Choptank River Watershed.
- Protect the habitat value of the Choptank River and tributary streams.

Objectives to support these goals are:

- Meet water quality regulatory requirements in the Upper Choptank River Watershed.
- Assure that existing and planned public water systems meet projected demand.
- Assure existing and planned public wastewater collection and treatment systems meet projected demand without exceeding the permitted discharge parameters.
- Assure that the Town's stormwater management policies reflect the most current state requirements.
- Promote land use development patterns that limit adverse impacts on water quality.
- Conserve open spaces and preserve forested lands to help decrease nutrient runoff.

Federal, State, regional, and local government agencies, institutions, private companies, and concerned citizen volunteer organizations are focused on identifying and addressing the sources of impairment to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Denton has a role to play in these efforts. The WRE provides a broad overview of the water resource and related capacity issues, current programs to address these issues, assesses the water resource impacts of Denton's growth, and recommends strategies.

Water Resources

Located in Caroline County and on the Choptank River, Denton's ability to provide a high quality of life to its residents and visitors is inextricably linked to the quality of the water resources. "Water resources" refers to the ground and surface water supply.

Groundwater Resources

Several aspects of drinking water are considered: groundwater supply, allowable withdrawals, and the capacity to store, treat, and distribute water to end users. Groundwater supplies are the primary resource, while the Town's water systems are the delivery components necessary to serve current and future uses.

The Delmarva Peninsula relies primarily on groundwater for its freshwater supplies. It is the sole source of drinking water and supplies industrial and agricultural processes. Groundwater is an abundant, renewable natural resource in Maryland. Although groundwater can be depleted by harvesting more than the replacement rate, natural processes will replace the groundwater with sufficient time and the right conditions. These processes take thousands of years, so the key to maintaining this life-sustaining necessity's availability is keeping the use rate below the natural replacement rate.

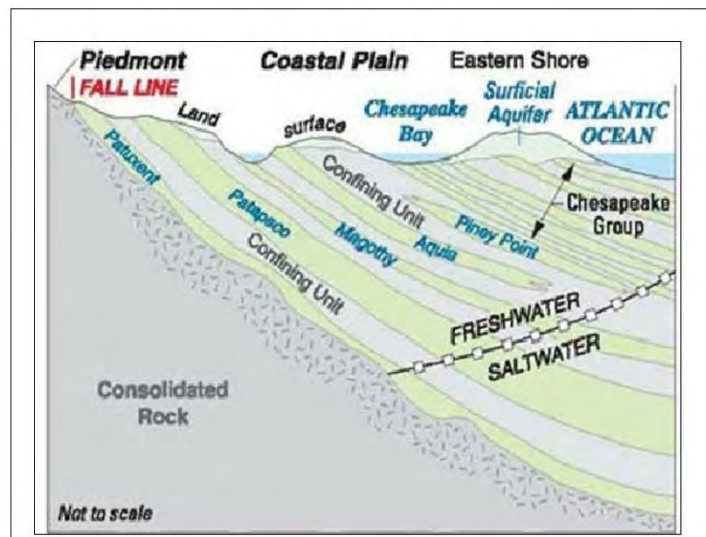
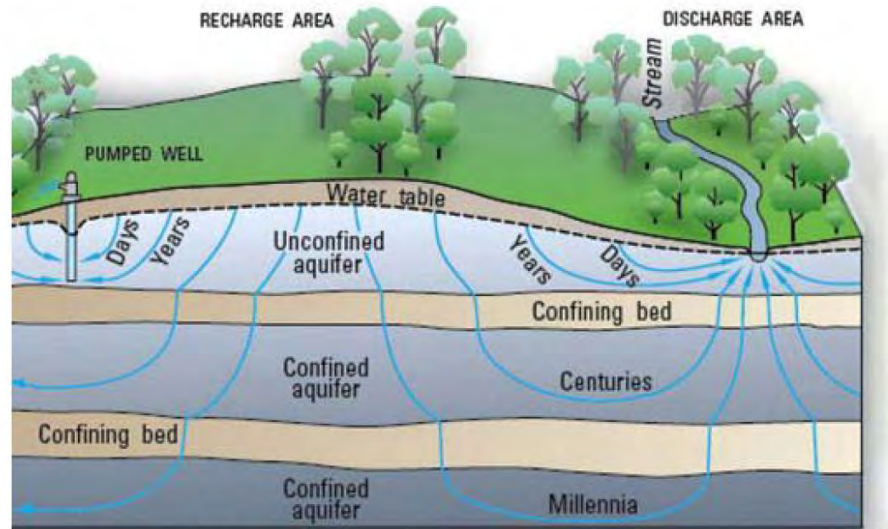


Figure 7-1

Caroline County lies within the Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain (NACP) aquifer system (Figure 7-1). The NACP system extends from the North/South Carolina border to Long Island, New York. In Maryland, the NACP is bounded west by the Fall Line and east by the Atlantic Ocean.

The Coastal Plain system consists of sand and gravel aquifers interspersed with layers of silt and clay called confining beds. Beneath this system lies a layer of consolidated rock at depths ranging from zero at the Fall Line (an area where an upland region -- continental bedrock -- and coastal plain -- coastal alluvia meet) to about 8,000 feet at Ocean City. Water may become added to aquifers naturally as it infiltrates into the soil. The area over which water infiltrates an aquifer is called the "recharge zone." The recharge zone above unconfined aquifers is generally above the aquifer because water can move directly from the surface into the aquifer. However, the recharge zone may be limited to the range where the impermeable layer reaches the surface of a confined

aquifer. A confined aquifer has an impermeable layer called an aquiclude overlying the aquifer. These aquicludes are particularly important in segregating relatively clean groundwater from brackish or contaminated groundwater. Figure 7-2 illustrates the difference between unconfined and confined aquifers.



Source: Google Images, artmax_388.jpg

Figure 7-2 Confined Aquifer

The major aquifers in the Coastal Plain system in Maryland are the Patuxent, Patapsco, Columbia (a surficial aquifer), Magothy, Aquia, Piney Point, and the Chesapeake Group. Except for the Columbia Aquifer, the Coastal Plain aquifers generally are confined.

Withdrawals from Maryland Coastal Plain aquifers have caused groundwater levels in confined aquifers to decline by tens to hundreds of feet from their original levels. The current rate of decline in many of the confined aquifers is about two feet per year. The declines are substantial in southern Maryland and parts of the Eastern Shore. Continued water-level declines at current rates could affect the long-term sustainability of groundwater resources in Maryland's heavily populated Coastal Plain communities and the agricultural areas of the Eastern Shore.

Water quality in the Coastal Plain aquifers is a concern for several reasons. First, contamination by saltwater intrusion is a significant water quality issue for confined aquifers and has been documented in several of Maryland's waterfront communities. However, the potential for saltwater intrusion is not well known in the deeper parts of the aquifer system because little data is available. Second, some areas have problems with naturally high concentrations of trace-element contaminants (including arsenic and radium), and further evaluation of these public health issues is warranted. Finally, elevated nutrients and agricultural chemicals in the surficial aquifer are a significant concern, especially on the Eastern Shore, where shallow groundwater is the water supply source for many homeowners and provides much of the base flow to streams.

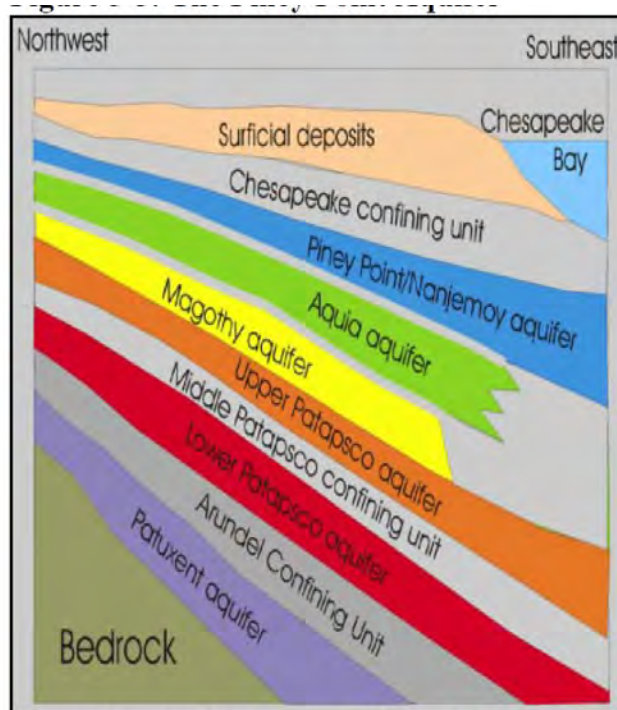
Groundwater sources in Caroline County include the Piney Point, Columbia, Aquia Aquifers, and the Chesapeake Group, including aquifers within the Calvert and Choptank Formations. Aquifers within the Choptank and Calvert Formations yield small amounts of water, primarily to shallow, domestic wells. The Columbia aquifer is the surficial aquifer on most of the Eastern Shore. The

Piney Point aquifer is tapped by wells in an area of about 40 miles wide between Caroline and St. Mary's Counties and is a significant water source for Caroline County. The Aquia is a significant water source for parts of the Eastern Shore (including northern Caroline County), southern Maryland, and Anne Arundel County. In the western half of Caroline County, which contains gently rolling, well-drained land, the water table lies between 10 and 30 feet below the surface. The county's eastern half is flat with poorly drained land, and the water table is generally within ten feet of the surface.

Potential sources of contamination in confined aquifers include leaking storage tanks, landfills, sewer treatment discharges, and large-scale animal feeding operations. However, wells drawn from confined aquifers can only be contaminated by directly injecting a pollutant into the aquifer from poorly constructed or abandoned wells and underground injection wells.

The Piney Point aquifer supplies Denton's water system (Figure 7-3). The Piney Point aquifer is one of the principal aquifers underlying the Delmarva Peninsula. This aquifer extends from North Carolina to New Jersey. Within Maryland, it provides 360 million gallons per day of potable water in Calvert and St. Mary's counties on the Western Shore and Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, and Dorchester counties on the Eastern Shore. Within Caroline County, it is 100 feet down at its most shallow and 500 feet at its deepest.

The Maryland Department of the Environment reported that water resource indicators for Maryland suggest abundant water to meet present and future needs.⁹ At the same time, there are some localized problems, including naturally occurring arsenic above the federal drinking water standard in the Piney Point aquifer in southern Maryland and the central Eastern Shore. Denton's Annual Drinking Quality Report for 2020 states that drinking water meets all Federal and State requirements.



Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Maryland Geological Survey, David D. Drummond

Figure 7-3

⁹ Groundwater Protection Program Annual Report to the Maryland General Assembly, Maryland Department of the Environment, Water Supply Program, July 2013, pg. 7. https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/Water_Supply/Source_Water_Assessment_Program/Documents/SJR25-JR5_1985%282013%29.pdf

Water Systems

Denton's water source is three potable wells in the Piney Point Aquifer. Two are active wells. Well #3, drilled in 1970, is off Kerr Avenue and MD Rt. 404 has a pumping capacity of 500 gallons per minute (gpm). Well #5, drilled in 2000, is located south of Engerman Avenue and West of Park Lane and has a pumping capacity of 600 gpm. Well #6, located on Old Camp Road, has a pumping capacity of 500 gallons per minute (gpm) (see Figure 7-3). Well #1, located off Fifth and Gay Streets, has been abandoned because of silting problems, and Well #4, a test well collocated with Well #5, is capped.

In 2017, 2018, and 2019 (3-year average), the average daily demand for Denton's water system was 317,250 gallons per day (gpd), about 51% of the system's permitted daily capacity. State design recommendations for water systems call for well capacity equal to the peak daily flow rate, with the largest well out of service and remaining well(s) pumping 24 hours daily. Under the current maximum daily demand of 1,000,000 gallons per day and a pumping capacity of 500 gallons per minute (Well 3) with the largest well out of service (Well 5), the total well field in Denton can produce 632,160 gallons per day.

Water Storage Capacity

Denton has three water storage tanks. One tank has a storage capacity of 100,000 gallons, and two tanks have 300,000 gallons each (see Map 7-1).

Water Distribution System

The water distribution system has 2 to 12 inches of main lines, two operational artesian wells, and three elevated storage towers. Presently, the Town produces its water from two active artesian wells. For pathogenic disinfection, the water is treated with Sodium Hypochlorite. However, the natural water quality warrants no other treatment methods. The water passes through the water meter at the main well and is distributed between the Town's three storage tanks. The water is then distributed via gravity flows through an estimated 20-mile pipe system.

Wastewater System

Denton's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is designed for an average daily flow of 800,000 gallons and a peak daily flow of 2.67 million gallons. The plant operates at a three-year rolling average of 455,034 gallons daily, 57% of the design capacity. In addition, the WWTP is an enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) compliant facility. With ENR technologies, the WWTP can achieve annual average nutrient goals of wastewater effluent quality of Total Nitrogen (TN) at three mg/l and Total Phosphorus (TP) at 0.3 mg/l. In addition, the Town's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the facility stipulates that the quality of the total nitrogen and phosphorus discharged by the facility is limited to 9,746 lbs/yr for nitrogen and 731 lbs/yr for phosphorus.

Denton completed a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) that evaluated sludge process upgrades for the Town's wastewater treatment plant in March 2023. The evaluation focused on selecting a preferred alternative for sludge processing and dewatering because the current sludge management system has nearly reached capacity, leaving no room for delay.

Currently, the WWTP utilizes reed beds for sludge dewatering. Historically, these reed beds have operated well and have been the sole form of sludge treatment. However, the reed beds have become challenging to maintain over the last ten years and have limited sludge processing capacity. All sludge removed from the reed drying beds is hauled to a landfill for disposal. Because the debris removed is blended with phragmites plants, considered invasive species, it cannot be land-applied, and only landfill disposal is allowable.

Sludge upgrade alternatives were evaluated, including providing a new mechanical dewatering system or additional reed beds, as the current reed beds operate at design capacity. However, the facility is operating at approximately half the design flow.

Four mechanical dewatering equipment types were considered: a belt filter press (BFP), screw press, volute press, and rotary press. The equipment manufacturers performed bench-scale tests to estimate potential cake total solids and polymer consumption requirements.

The mechanical systems would be paired with a covered cake storage area to store dewatered cake before hauling. The mechanical dewatering systems were evaluated in comparison to doubling the size of the reed bed system. No upgrades for stabilization or drying were considered, and continued disposal at the landfill was assumed. Construction cost and project cost estimates were developed. Operating and maintenance costs were also estimated and used to develop net present value estimates of the alternatives.

The consultant that prepared the PER recommended the Town consider the volute press and the rotary press alternatives for piloting. They pointed out that both technologies are fully enclosed and require little operator attention when running. Based on implementing mechanical dewatering, the following components would be included in the Denton WWTP sludge processing upgrades project:

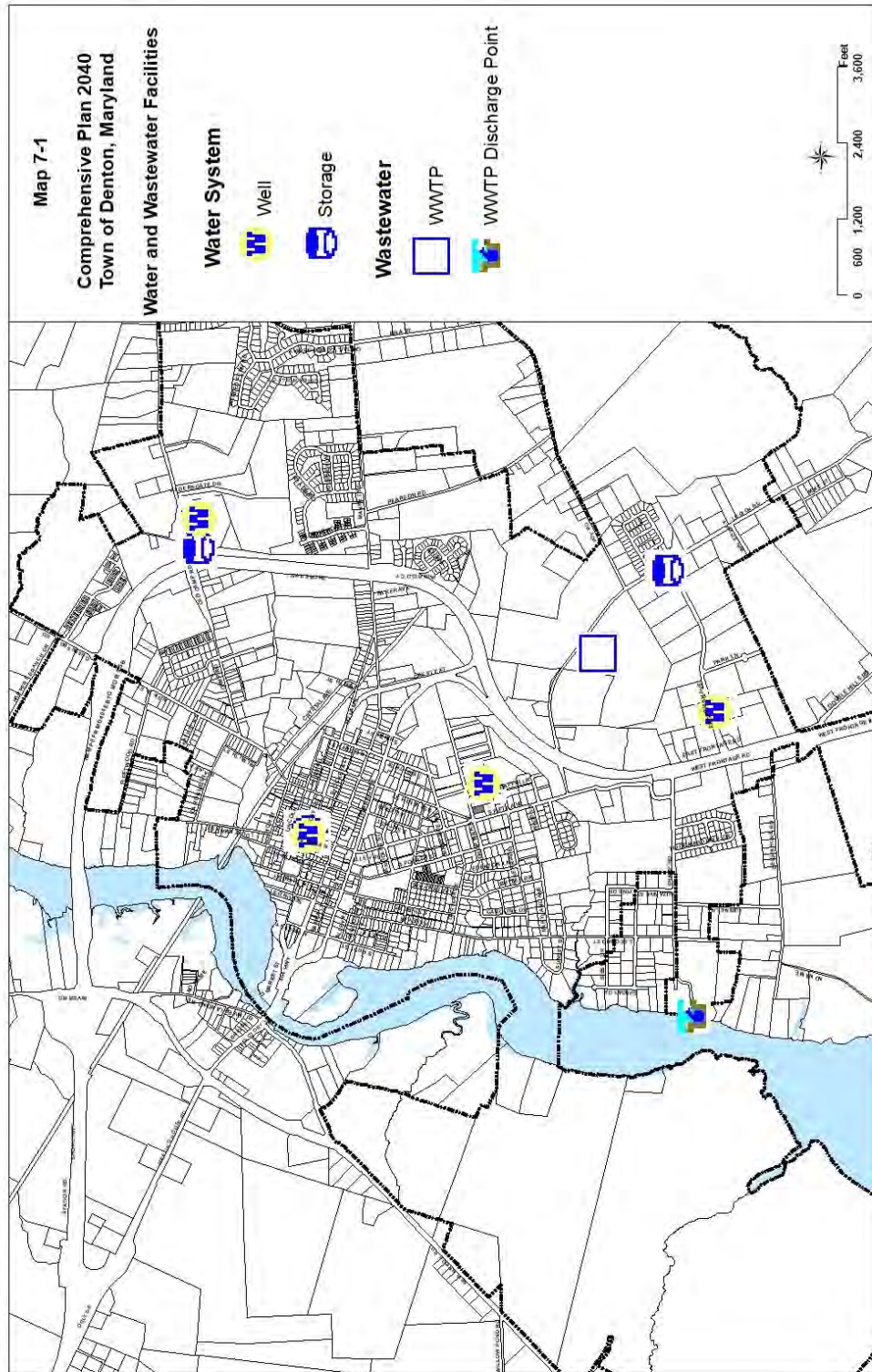
- New sludge feed pumps
- New dewatering building housing dewatering equipment, polymer system, electrical room, and sludge cake conveyor
- New yard piping for conveyance of sludge, filtrate, and utility water
- New utility water system
- New covered cake storage pad
- Rehabilitation of the existing reed beds
- Rehabilitation of Biolac No. 1
- All associated site improvements, including stormwater management structures
- All associated electrical and I&C upgrades

While user rates and connection fees may need to be increased to fund these improvements, the Town will seek assistance through loan and grant funding provided through the State Revolving Loan fund administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) or through funding by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Services (RUS) funds.

Figure 7-3 Wells



Map 7-1 Water and Wastewater Facilities



Water and Sewer Service Plan

Maps of planned water and sewer service areas are contained in the Caroline County Master Water and Sewer Plan. Service areas are delineated as water and sewer services categories (see Table 7-1). Denton's Water and Sewer Service Plan, Map 7-2, illustrates the existing and projected service areas. Therefore, the service areas shown on Map 7-2 should be reflected in the Caroline County Master Water and Sewer Plan.

Classification	Description
W-1 and S-1	Existing or under-construction
W-2 and S-2	Areas to be served by extensions of the existing community and multi-use water supply and sewerage systems that are in the final planning stages
W-3 and S-3	Areas where improvements to, or construction of, new community and multi-use water supply and sewerage systems will be given immediate priority
W-4 and S-4	Areas where improvements to, or construction of, new community and multi-use water supply and sewerage systems will be programmed for the 3 to 5/6-year period
W-5 and S-5	Areas where improvements to, or construction of, new community and multi-use water supply and sewerage systems are programmed for inclusion within the 6/7 through 10 years
W-6 and S-6	No planned service

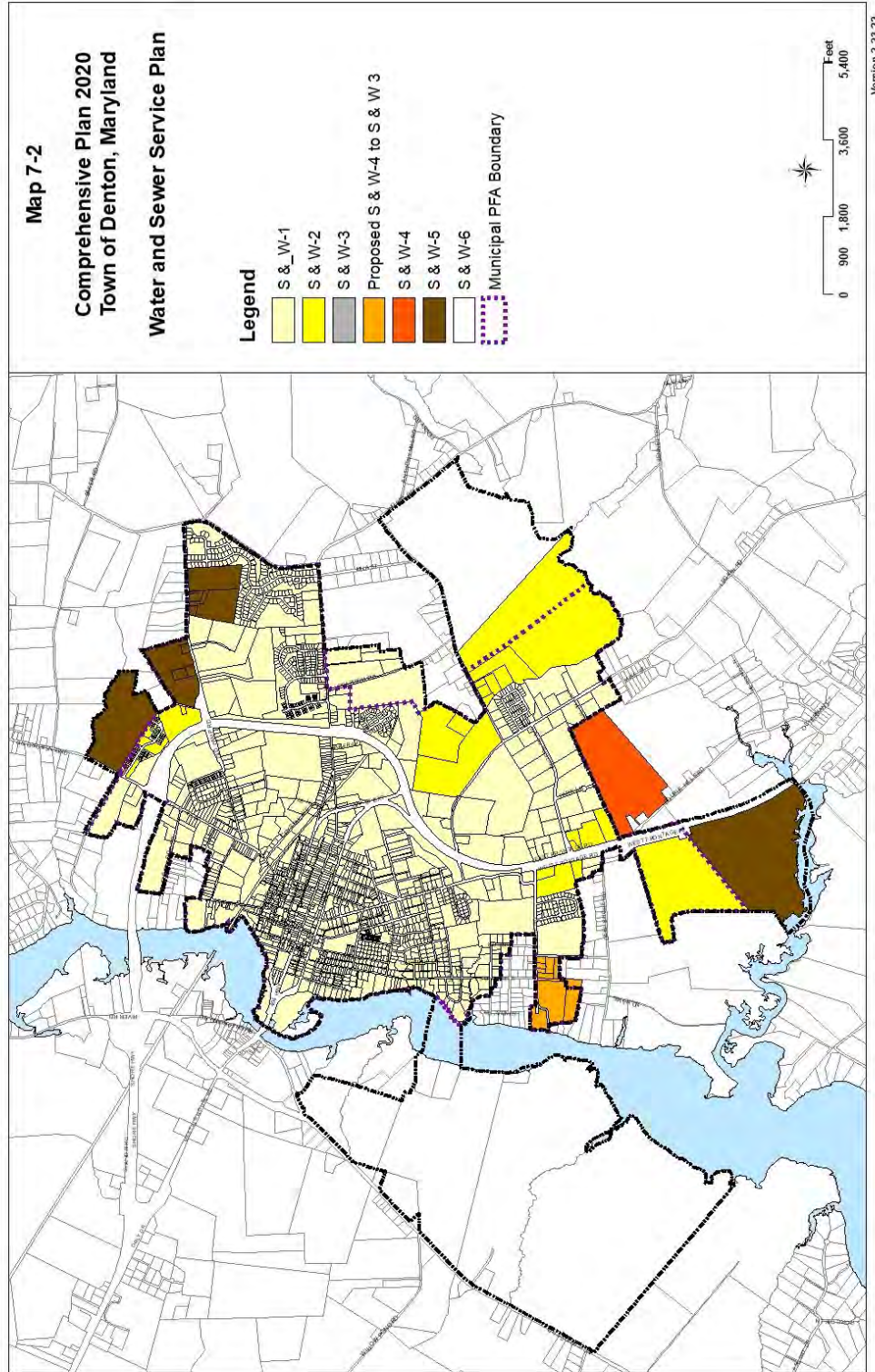
Projected Water and Sewer Demand

The Municipal Growth Element demonstrated Denton has sufficient land available to accommodate substantial growth in the future. The water and wastewater systems have functional and permitted capacities (Table 7-2) to support projected growth in the planning period (2040). The water system capacity is 620,000 gallons per day (gpd). The wastewater treatment plant capacity is 800,000 gpd. The averages from 2017 through 2019 were 317,250 gpd and 455,034 gpd, respectively, for the water and sewer systems.

In projecting demand for water and sewer services, each dwelling unit (household) equals one Equivalent Dwelling Unit or EDU. In April 1992, the Caroline County Health Department authorized an EDU rate of 225 gallons per day (gpd) for Denton; one EDU is estimated to consume 225 gpd of drinking water and contribute 225 gpd to wastewater flow.

There is adequate existing reserve water and sewer capacity to serve projected residential and nonresidential growth in the planning period under either of the growth scenarios evaluated in the Municipal Growth Element. In addition, there is adequate water and sewer capacity to serve the buildout in the Municipal PFA, depending on variables such as growth rates, the average density of residential development, and how much capacity is used to serve nonresidential uses. However, there is insufficient sewer and water capacity to serve all development outside the Municipal PFA, including properties on the west side of the Choptank River.

Map 7-2 Water and Sewer Service Plan



		Projected 2040		Build Out within PFA	
Reserve Capacity		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Water	302,750	75,484	101,925	272,925	329,400
Sewer	344,966	75,484	101,925	272,925	329,400

Should the West Denton village be annexed, sewer and water demand may increase an additional 10,000 gallons daily.

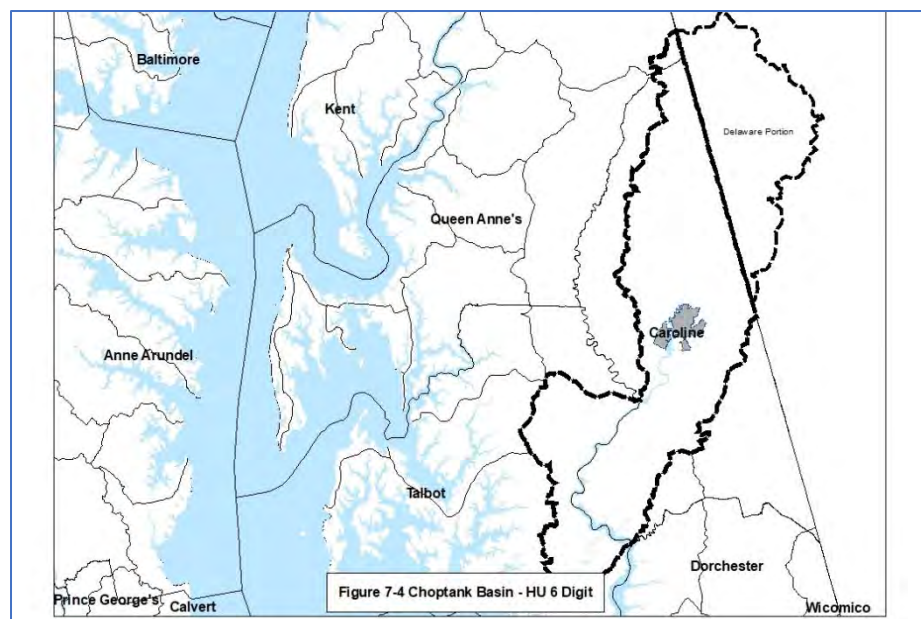
Water Quality Issues

The Upper Choptank Watershed

Hydrologic units (HU) define drainage areas within a multi-level, hierarchical drainage system. Its boundaries are defined by hydrographic and topographic criteria that delineate an area of land upstream from a specific point on a river, stream, or similar surface water. The United States is divided into successively smaller hydrologic units classified into four levels: regions, subregions, accounting units, and cataloging units. This WRE focuses on the Maryland portion of the Upper Choptank Watershed (8-digit HU) and sub-watersheds (12-digit HU) into which urban runoff and discharge from the WWTP from Denton enter receiving waters.

The Chesapeake Bay Program, a partnership among federal and state agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions, uses HUs in water quality modeling. In the model, the maximum allowable loading of point and nonpoint source pollutants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, or sediment may be assigned at the subbasin lever (eight-digit HU). In addition, HUs may define geographic areas to which specific regulations or policies apply.

The Upper Choptank watershed is part of the 6-digit Choptank River basin, including the Lower Choptank, Little Choptank, Tuckahoe Creek, and Honga River watersheds (see Figure 7-4). The Upper Choptank extends through three Maryland counties and into Delaware. Most of the Maryland 8-digit watershed is located in Talbot and Caroline Counties, with only 3 square miles within Queen Anne's County. Approximately 61,369



acres, or twenty-seven percent of the Upper Choptank River watershed, are in Delaware (see Map 7-3). The Upper Choptank River is tidal throughout its navigable reach, extending from its boundary with the Lower Choptank River watershed for approximately 35 miles upstream to an area north of the Town of Greensboro. The total drainage area of the Maryland 8-digit watershed is approximately 159,000 acres, not including water/wetlands.

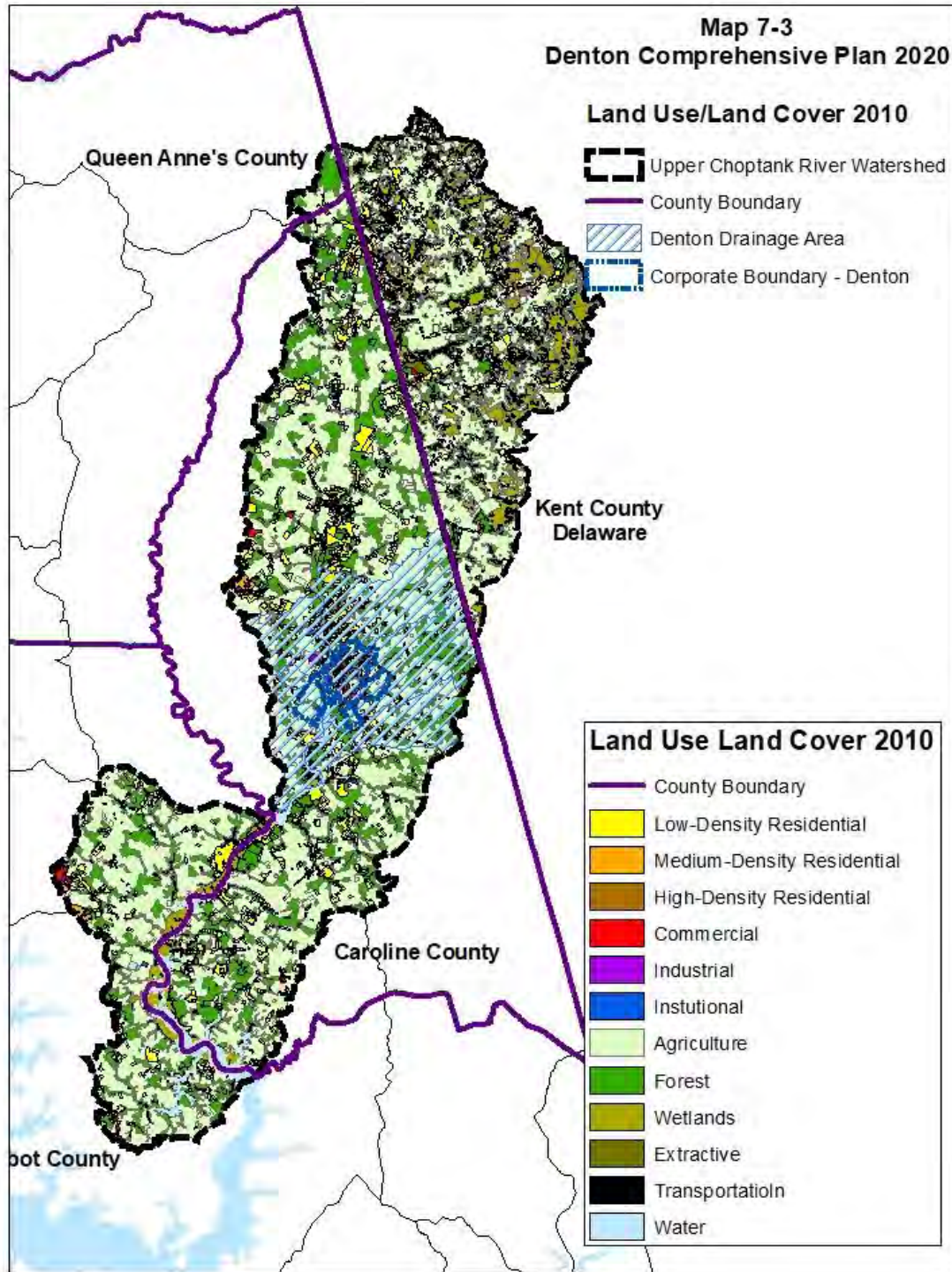
Larger water bodies in the Choptank River Basin include the Choptank, Little Choptank, Tred Avon Rivers, Broad, Harris, and Tuckahoe Creeks. The basin supports over 80 fish species in its freshwater streams and brackish waters, including striped bass, largemouth bass, and flounder. In addition, the lower portion of the watershed is a concentration area for waterfowl.

Table 7-3 summarizes the various land uses and cover types in the watershed, based on 2010 data for Maryland and 2007 data for Delaware. Agriculture remains the dominant land use in the Upper Choptank River watershed. As can be seen, over half of the watershed was in agricultural use in 2007 and 2010.

Land use, Land Cover	Maryland 2010	Delaware 2007	Combined	Percent of Total
Low-Density Residential	17,766	5,512	23,278	10.34%
Medium-Density Residential	1,322	39	1,361	0.60%
High-Density Residential	181	0	181	0.08%
Commercial	837	76	913	0.41%
Industrial	293	11	303	0.13%
Institutional	492	20	512	0.23%
Agriculture	90,741	30,714	121,455	53.97%
Forest	42,361	7,739	50,100	22.26%
Wetlands	4,887	16,517	21,403	9.51%
Open Water	4,448	230	4,677	2.08%
Transportation	132	13	146	0.06%
Extractive	242	455	697	0.31%
Total	163,702	61,325	225,027	100.00%

Agriculture's nonpoint source loading was disproportionate to its portion of the watershed. For example, the Maryland Tributary Strategy Choptank Basin Summary Report for 1985-2003 data reported agriculture was responsible for 72 percent of nitrogen, 66 percent of phosphorus, and 86 percent of sediment nonpoint source loading in the Maryland portion of the Upper Choptank River watershed (see Figure 7-5).

Map 7-3 Land Use Land Cover 2010



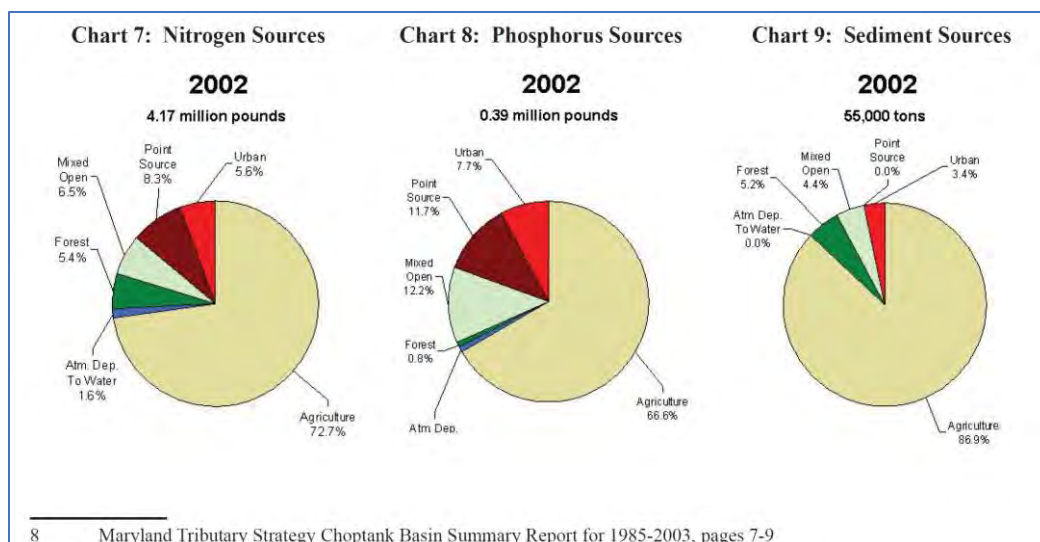


Figure 7-5

Federal Clean Water Act (CWA)

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the primary federal law in the United States governing water pollution. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act passed in 1972, aims to restore and maintain the nation's waters' chemical, physical, and biological integrity by preventing point and nonpoint pollution sources. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) delegated authority for implementing the Federal Clean Water Act (33 USC §§ 1251-1387) to Maryland, requiring the State to implement a systematic technical and administrative framework for managing water quality. Delegated responsibilities include setting water quality standards, assessing water quality, identifying waters that do not meet standards, establishing limits on impairing substances, and issuing permits to ensure consistency with those pollutant limits.

Maryland must submit a list of impaired waterbodies and proposed management measures for EPA approval every two years. In addition, the State must conduct scientific studies for waters that do not meet water quality standards due to an excessive pollutant load and determine the maximum amount of the pollutant that can be introduced to a water body and still meet standards. That maximum amount of pollutant is called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), and the studies are called "TMDL Analyses," or simply TMDLs. TMDLs are a regulatory mechanism to identify and implement additional controls on point and nonpoint sources that discharge into water bodies that are impaired from one or more pollutants and are not expected to be restored through normal source controls.

In compliance with Sections 303(d), 305(b), and 314 of the Clean Water Act, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) published its Final 2018 Integrated Report of Surface Water Quality (IR), which EPA approved on April 9, 2019. Maryland's Integrated Report (IR) combines water quality reports required under Sections 305(b), 314, and 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. Section 305(b) requires states to perform annual water quality assessments to determine the status of jurisdictional waters. Section 314 requires states to classify lakes according to eutrophic conditions and identify lakes that do not meet water quality standards. Section 303(d)

requires states to identify waters assessed as not meeting water quality standards. Waters that do not meet standards may require a TMDL to determine the maximum amount of an impairing substance or pollutant that a particular water body can assimilate and still meet water quality criteria.

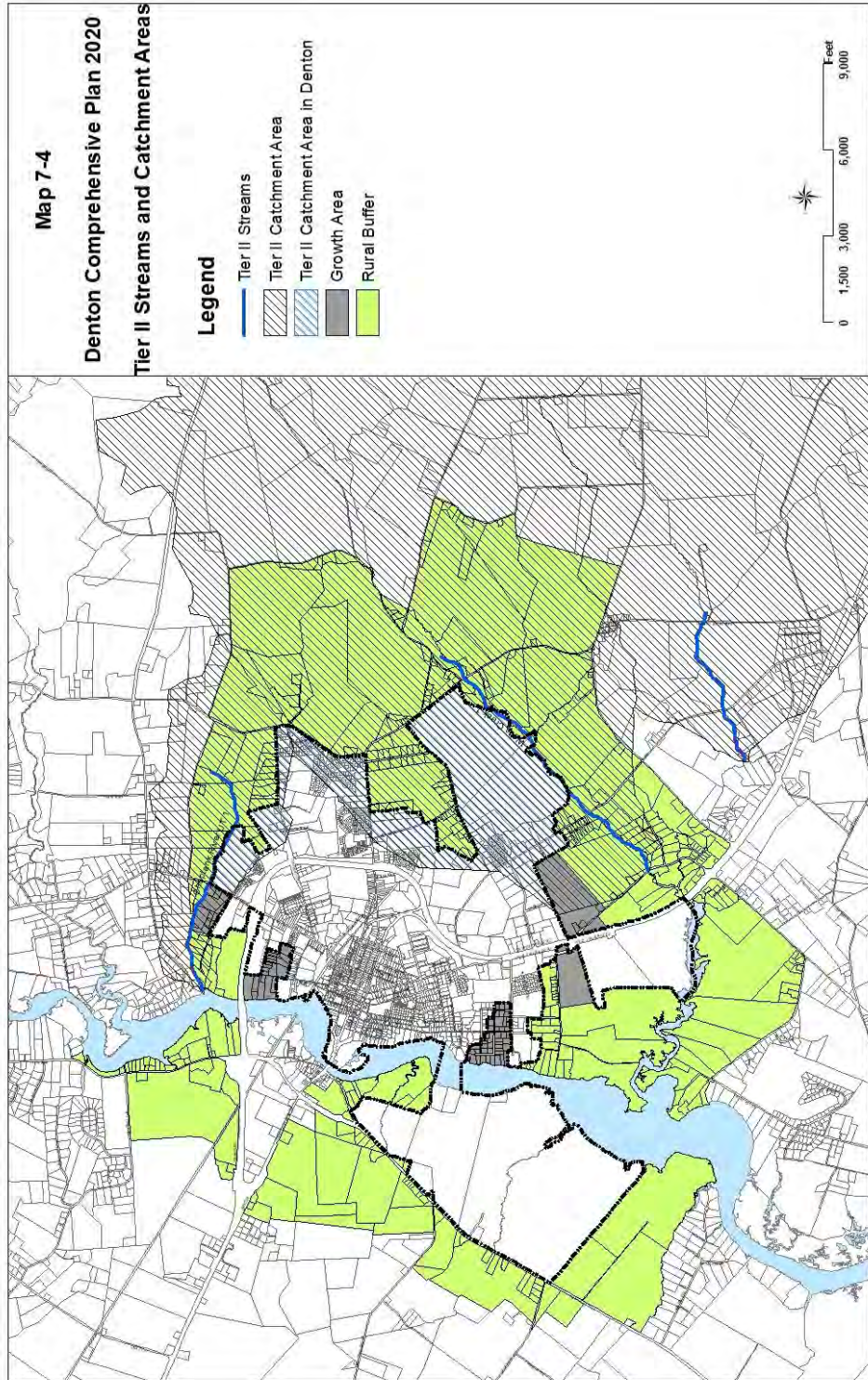
Water quality issues in the 2018 IR are reported in several categories. Category 2 waterbodies meet the standards for which they have been assessed. Category 3 includes water bodies with insufficient data or information to determine whether any water quality standard is being attained. Category 4 includes three subsets. Category 4a is waterbodies still impaired but have a TMDL that establishes pollutant loading limits. Category 4b is water bodies impaired, but a technological remedy should correct the impairment. Category 4c includes waterbodies impaired but not from a conventional pollutant. Finally, Category 5 is water bodies historically on the 303(d) list and includes water bodies that may require a TMDL.

The Upper Choptank River is included in most of these categories. In Category 2, the IR report states the Upper Choptank River meets PCBs and fecal coliform standards. In Category 3, there is insufficient data to determine compliance with Benthic standards (related to animals and plants living on or at the bottom of the river). Category 4a includes TMDLs applicable to the Upper Choptank River for nitrogen and phosphorus. These TMDLs are designed to bring the water body into compliance. The Upper Choptank River is not listed in Category 4b. In Category 4c, the Upper Choptank River is cited for habitat alteration in 1st through 4th-order streams due to channelization associated with agriculture. Category 5, historically listed impaired waters, includes the Upper Choptank River for excess sediment.

With approval from the EPA, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) established total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) in the Upper Choptank River for total suspended solids in 2019 and total nitrogen and phosphorus in 2010. A TMDL analysis calculates the maximum amount of point sources and nonpoint source pollutants a waterbody can receive and meets water quality standards. An allocation system establishes limits or "caps" on pollutant loads permitted from sources. TMDLs are expressed as allowable loads of a specified pollutant by point and nonpoint sources. Point sources include wastewater treatment plants with direct discharge permits into waterways (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permits-NPDES) and urban storm sewer systems. For example, TMDLs for the Upper Choptank River limit total nitrogen loading from the Denton WWTP to 9,746 and 731 pounds per year of total phosphorus. Nonpoint sources include discharges other than point source discharges, including stormwater runoff from land and erosion of streams and riverbanks.

The Federal Clean Water Act requires the State of Maryland to identify water bodies that are high in quality (Tier II water bodies). Two Tier II designated water bodies are proximate to Denton's corporate boundary and include catchment areas within the Town, proposed growth areas, and the Rural Buffer (See Map 7-4). Potential developments in the catchment areas of these streams must address potential impacts on water quality. If a discharge permit is required, the discharge permit process requirement will follow Maryland's antidegradation policy.

Map 7-4 Tier II Streams and Catchment Areas



Legal responsibilities for water quality management broadly fall to local government. This responsibility includes regulation of sediment and erosion control, stormwater, and land use that strongly affect water quality. "To maintain control over decisions that affect their communities, local jurisdictions have a stake in how the State's legal responsibilities for maintaining water quality standards are executed. In particular, local governments have an interest in the implementation of TMDLs. They are also best situated to address many implementation aspects due to their proximity to the impaired water bodies and their direct role in decisions that affect local water quality."¹⁰

Point Source Pollution

Two types of pollution characterize sources affecting receiving waters: point and nonpoint. Pollution originating from a single, identifiable source, such as a discharge pipe from a factory or sewage plant, is called point-source pollution. Point sources are measurable inputs of pollutants discharged into streams, rivers, and lakes. Nonpoint sources are all discharges other than point source discharges, including stormwater runoff from land and erosion from streams and riverbanks.

All point sources must apply for an individual National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit except for the separated storm sewer discharge and water source heat pumps discharging to waters of the State. An NPDES permit (required federally but administered through MDE) specifies allowable discharge limitations, where applicable, of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), suspended solids, coliform organisms, pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, temperature, flow, heavy metals, and pesticides.

A TMDL relates output from a point source to a public policy concerning receiving water's assimilative capacity. TMDLs address a single pollutant for each water body. TMDLs are a tool for compliance with the CWA and implementing Maryland's water quality standard. As discussed previously, a TMDL calculates the maximum amount of pollutant that a body of water can receive and still meets water quality standards. TMDLs also allocate that load (amount) among pollution contributors. For example, Maryland has listed the Choptank as impaired on the 303(d) list for failing to meet the state standard for dissolved oxygen in the water caused by excessive Total Nitrogen (TN) and Total Phosphorus (TP).

A portion of a TMDL is allocated to a point source through limits established in the NPDES. For example, Denton's WWTP NPDES caps TN loading from the plant at 9,746 pounds annually. TP is capped at 731 pounds per year, and TSS at 73,000 per year. Table 7-4 demonstrates that concentrations and loadings for the last four years (2018-2021) are well within the TN and TP caps.

¹⁰ MD's 2006 TMDL Implementation Guidance for Local Governments, Maryland Department of the Environment, Document version: May 24, 2006

	TN		TP		Percent of TMDL	
	Average Monthly (mg/L)	Total (lbs./M)	Average Monthly (mg/L)	Total (lbs./M)	Total N	Total P
2021	3.06	4365	0.24	304	45%	42%
2020	2.35	4044	0.21	361	41%	49%
2019	3.08	4425	0.16	222	45%	30%
2018	2.22	3407	0.16	229	35%	31%

Table 7-5 summarizes the estimated Denton WWTP load based on the projected residential and nonresidential growth in the two scenarios outlined in the Municipal Growth Element. The table demonstrates that provided current efficiencies are maintained, Denton's WWTP can treat effluent through the planning period and remain below the caps established under the NDPES permit. Estimates also indicate the WWTP could continue to operate below the caps in the NPDES with the buildout of the corporate area on the east side of the Choptank River but not the full buildout of the corporate area when the west side of the Choptank River is included.

	Total Nitrogen (TN) (lbs/yr)	Total Phosphorus (TP) (lbs/yr)
Scenario 01	4,158	291
Scenario 02	5,090	356
Buildout	19,188	1,343
Buildout East Side Only	8,029	652
TMDL, NPDES Permit Limits	9,746	731

Nonpoint Source Pollution and Stormwater Management

Nonpoint source pollution occurs when surface runoff generated by rainfall, snowmelt, or irrigation is conveyed over the land, gathering pollutants along the way. The collected pollutants are deposited directly into waterways or infiltrated into native soils. The primary source of nonpoint loading from Denton is stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff is part of the natural hydrologic process. Still, human activities and the urbanization created by both new and infill development can alter natural drainage patterns and add pollutants to local waterways.

Denton's contributions (loading) of point and nonpoint source pollutants to receiving waters in the Upper Choptank River are of particular concern. Estimating the loading impacts of existing and projected land-use changes is influenced by many variables, such as annual rainfall, soil characteristics, vegetative cover, and best management practices (BMP) applied.

Although model calculations can be refined, for example, with sample data to verify a formula, in the end, the results of modeling at the watershed level remain an estimate. Analysis of nonpoint loading for this WRE was based on a spreadsheet model that applies loading rates by land use and adjusts for implementing best management measures.

Denton's immediate drainage area encompasses approximately 35,853 acres, about 23 percent of the Upper Choptank River watershed. The drainage area is included in the sub-basins shown on Map 7-3. In 2010, Denton's loading was estimated at two percent of total Nitrogen and Phosphorus in the Maryland portion of Upper Choptank Watershed and nearly ten percent in the drainage area (see Table 7-6).¹¹

	Total Nitrogen (TN) (lbs./yr.)	Total Phosphorus (TP) (lbs./yr.)
Upper Choptank River Watershed	1,076,223	95,091
Denton	21,986	1,889
Percent of Watershed	2.04%	1.99%
Percent of Subwatershed	10.35%	9.32%

Table 7-7 summarizes TN and TP loadings from nonpoint source runoff based on the projected 2040 growth in the two scenarios outlined in the Municipal Growth Element and the buildout of the corporate area. These estimated nonpoint TN and TP loadings are compared to the base 2010 conditions in the watershed and drainage area. The 2010 data was adjusted to reflect ENR capabilities at the Denton WWTP for comparison purposes. The analysis indicates that growth in the planning period will decrease TN and TP loading. The relative decreases are minor compared to the watershed but significant when considered in Denton's immediate drainage area. It also indicates that the buildout of the corporate area growth may increase TP loadings to the watershed and drainage area.

The TN and TP decrease in Table 7-8 result from assuming that a significant portion of the developed land will replace agricultural cropland. Conversion from cropland to residential use reduces TN and TP loading. Estimated per-acre loading rates for agriculture are thirty and fifty-six percent higher than residential loading rates.

	Total Nitrogen (TN) (lbs/yr)	Total Phosphorus (TP) (lbs/yr)
Projected Loading from Denton		
Scenario 01	21,048	1,747
Scenario 02	20,534	1,770
Buildout	18,867	1,245
Estimated Change		
Scenario 01	-938	-143
Scenario 02	-1,452	-644
Buildout	-3,119	644
Percent Change		
Watershed		
Scenario 01	-0.09%	-0.01%

¹¹ Based on desktop spreadsheet model with loading rates from the Chesapeake Bay Program data hub and other inputs from the Department of Natural Resources publication, A User's Guide to Watershed Planning in Maryland.

	Total Nitrogen (TN) (lbs/yr)	Total Phosphorus (TP) (lbs/yr)
Scenario 02	-0.13%	-0.06%
Buildout	-0.29%	0.06%
Subwatershed		
Scenario 01	-4.26%	-0.65%
Scenario 02	-6.60%	-2.93%
Buildout	-14.19%	2.93%

Should the West Denton village be annexed and included in the buildout estimates, with the elimination of existing septic systems, TN loading would be reduced by approximately 355 pounds per year. Conversely, TS loading would increase by approximately 17 pounds per year.

Impervious Surfaces

"Roads, parking areas, roofs, and other human constructions are collectively called impervious surface. Impervious surface blocks the natural seepage of rain into the ground. Unlike natural surfaces, impervious surface concentrates stormwater runoff and accelerates flow rates to receiving streams. Watersheds with small amounts of impervious surface tend to have better water quality in local streams than watersheds with greater amounts of impervious surface. Side effects of impervious surfaces become increasingly significant and negative as the percentage of impervious area increases. Examples of related problems include reduction of groundwater infiltration, increased soil and stream bank erosion, sedimentation, destabilization or loss of aquatic habitat, and "flashy" stream flows (reduced flow between storms and excessive flows associated with storms.) The Maryland Biological Stream Survey has related the percentage of impervious surface in a watershed to the health of aquatic resources. For areas with less than 4% impervious cover, streams generally rate "Fair" to "Good" for both fish and in-stream invertebrates. Beyond about 12% impervious surface, streams generally rate "Poor" to "Fair" for both."¹²

The drainage area for Denton is within 12-digit subbasins, totaling 35,764 or about sixteen percent of the Upper Choptank watershed. Based on 2010 Land Use Land Cover (LULC) data, impervious surfaces were approximately three percent of the drainage area. Growth scenarios through 2040 remain at this level. Buildout of the corporate area would increase the percentage of impervious surfaces in the drainage area to nearly five percent.

¹² Upper Choptank River & Tuckahoe Creek Watershed Characterization, Caroline County Planning & Codes Administration, November 2007

Summary

Point and Nonpoint Source Loads

The Chesapeake Bay Programs' EPA's annual progress report for 2018-2019, Bay Barometer, discusses progress on Bay cleanup. The Bay Barometer reported that as of 2018, "pollution-reducing practices are in place across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to achieve 39% of the nitrogen reductions and 77% of the phosphorus reductions necessary to attain applicable water quality standards as compared to the 2009 baseline established by the EPA as part of the Bay TMDL. Pollution controls between 2009 and 2018 have lowered nitrogen loads by 10% and phosphorus loads by 13%, mainly attributed to upgrades to wastewater treatment plants. For the short term, between 2017 and 2018, most nitrogen load reductions (55%) came from the agricultural sector."¹³

Drinking Water

Denton's water supply source and infrastructure are adequate for existing and future development needs in the two scenarios outlined in the Municipal Growth Element. However, additional withdrawal will need to be permitted in Scenario 2. There are no significant limiting issues with groundwater supply from the Piney Point aquifer. The only apparent limiting factors are those associated with the current Water Appropriation Permits.

In addition, there is sufficient drinking water supply and infrastructure capacity to service most of the buildout of the corporate area and identified growth areas east of the Choptank River. However, with the possible exception of the West Denton village, Denton's water system capacity is insufficient to support significant growth in the corporate area west of the Choptank River.

Wastewater Treatment

There is adequate treatment capacity in the Denton WWTP to meet the disposal needs of existing and future development in the two scenarios outlined in the Municipal Growth Element and remain within the TMDL caps for TN and TP. In addition, the WWTP has sufficient capacity to meet the disposal need associated with the buildout of the corporate area and identified growth areas east of the Choptank River. However, as shown in Table 7-6, insufficient treatment capacity exists to serve significant growth in the corporate area west of the Choptank River and meet the TMDL caps for TN and TP.

Stormwater Management

The results of the spreadsheet model used to evaluate nonpoint source loading associated with the growth scenarios outlined in the Municipal Growth Element indicate an overall reduction in nonpoint source TP and TN loading to receiving waters, primarily through the conversion of

¹³ https://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/bay-barometer-18-19_final.pdf

agricultural land for development. However, any conclusions based on the spreadsheet model employed in the evaluation or any model must be tempered by the shortcomings of applying simple formulas to evaluate complex systems. For example, this evaluation does not factor in growth that may have occurred elsewhere in Caroline, Talbot, or Queen Anne's counties.

Suffice it to say that even though Denton's nonpoint loading contributions to the watershed are a small percentage of the total, the Town should continue to ensure that all best management practices are rigorously applied to land under the Town's jurisdiction. In addition, Denton's role in restoring and maintaining healthy water, natural systems, and living resources requires collaboration to balance efficient growth with resource protection. This collaboration includes inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation with Caroline County and other municipalities in the watershed that are responsible for implementing land use and growth management strategies based on sound watershed planning principles to reduce nonpoint loadings.

Climate Change

Climate change encompasses a wide range of policy considerations, including the actions taken by communities to tackle greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), climate change challenges infrastructure planning and management. It may necessitate adjustments, as infrastructure and systems designed for past climate conditions could be overwhelmed or damaged. There are various potential changes associated with climate change, each presenting distinct challenges:

- Increased temperatures - By 2060, there could be a 5.4-degree Fahrenheit rise in the average annual temperature and an increase of nine days with temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit yearly.
- Greater precipitation - Predictions suggest an 11.76% change in annual precipitation and a 20.17% increase in the occurrence of 100-year storms by 2060.
- Decreased precipitation - There might be a 2.96% reduction in annual precipitation by 2060.
- Rising sea levels - Projections indicate a sea level rise from 9.92 to 31.18 inches by 2060.

Environment Article §2-1301 through 1306 mandates State agencies evaluate their planning, regulatory, and fiscal programs to identify and propose actions for better incorporating Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction objective and the impacts of climate change. Specifically, the law addresses sea level rise, storm surges, flooding, increased temperatures, precipitation, and extreme weather events. State agencies are also directed to assist local governments in conducting climate vulnerability assessments at the community level and in developing and integrating climate strategies into local plans and ordinances.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan's Water Resource Element (WRE) must now address the effects of climate change to meet the Land Use Article requirements fully. The WRE assesses the quantity and quality of water needed to ensure that drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater

management programs can support planned growth while safeguarding public health and safety from known or reasonably foreseeable climate-related hazards, among other considerations.

Assessment

Denton identified property and infrastructure potentially vulnerable to climate change's effects, including storm surge, sea level rise, and nuisance flooding, utilizing data from the National Weather Service's SLOSH (Sea, Lake, and Overland Surge from Hurricanes) Model, the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration's Climate Change Vulnerability, and the Maryland Department of the Environment's Maryland Coastal Smart – Climate Ready Action Boundary (CRAB) Inundated Zones data product (See Map 7-8) which represent the areas of Caroline County impacted by inundation (0 to 1ft, 1 to 2ft, and 2ft or more).

From this data, the Town has identified critical infrastructure components, including water, sewer, stormwater components, street segments, and land and structures at risk during a catastrophic event and over time. Storm event information will be used to assess emergency response protocols. Sea level rise information will be used in the Town's facilities planning and management processes.

Water Hazard Risks

An objective of the WRE is to maintain water quality in receiving waters from the impacts of stormwater runoff and wastewater discharge. Receiving waters most impacted by what happens in Denton include the Choptank River and tributary streams. The Choptank River is a designated Use Class II water that supports estuarine and marine aquatic life and shellfish harvesting. Tributary streams included are Saulsbury, Poor House Run, and Watts Creeks, all designated Use Class I Waters managed for contact recreation and protection of nontidal warm water aquatic life.

The WRE should be used to plan for more frequent floods caused by climate change and reduce flood-induced pollutants to local waters and the Chesapeake Bay. In this context, the following Department of Environment and Department of Planning checklist outlines potential climate change adaptation issues Denton should consider:

Water supply availability – Based on current data, climate change will have minimal effect on source potable water supply, treatment, and delivery. Wells and treatment facilities are outside areas potentially vulnerable to inundation. However, studies performed by state and/or federal agencies on aquifer recharge under climate change conditions may be required.

Water demand projection – Projected water demand under buildout conditions is addressed in the WRE chapter.

Wastewater flow projection – Wastewater flows in the planning period and at buildout are addressed, including in the context of the current TMDLs for the Choptank River.

Stormwater quantity (local flooding impacts) – Urban flooding has been modeled and is addressed in Denton's Nuisance Flooding Plan.

Stormwater quality (pollutant impacts) – Stormwater quality is addressed through the planning period and buildout. Meeting the plan objectives depends on implementing State and local Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs). WIP strategies may have to be revised in response to climate change conditions.

Sensitive Areas Element – The Sensitive Areas Element and the WRE identify Tier II streams and catchment areas. Tier II streams are high-quality waters with an existing water quality significantly better than the minimum requirements specified in water quality standards. Managing land use in the Tier II stream catchment is essential to protect wetland and coastal forest adaptation areas (i.e., corridors along which coastal habitats are expected to migrate naturally as sea level rises). It is significant for the Tier II streams near Denton because, according to DNR, the Tier II stream catchment areas have no assimilative capacity remaining.

The MGE identifies a Rural Buffer with several sensitive and vital environmental areas, including Tier II stream catchment areas. Successfully managing these areas will require the Town and Caroline County to work together to protect wetland and coastal forest adaptation areas.

Wellhead protection – Wellheads will not be impacted by sea level rise and storm surge events.

Flood Management Process - The WRE should identify recurrent urban flooding areas and evaluate whether climate change and planned development exacerbate those conditions. Urban flooding areas are identified in Denton's Nuisance Flooding Plan. In addition, Denton has identified infrastructure, properties, and structures potentially impacted by climate change, which will be incorporated into facilities planning and management and emergency response protocols.

Sea Level Rise Impacts

Maryland's Sea Level Rise (SLR) Projection (2018 Report) states a 66% chance of a 0.8-1.6 ft SLR in MD between 2000 and 2050, roughly equivalent to the comprehensive plan time horizons. Fortunately, the potential impacts of moderate sea-level rise should result in minimal property loss and damage to infrastructure. The report states that the likely range of sea-level rise experienced in Maryland is 2.0 to 4.2 feet over the century. The following discusses the potential effects of sea level on Denton's flood-prone areas, including a two-foot increase by 2050 and the extreme potential of a five-foot increase in sea level by 2300.

100-Year Floodplain

The 100-year floodplain includes land predicted to flood during a 100-year storm, a storm event with a one percent chance of occurring in any given year. Floodplain properties are subject to this periodic flooding, which poses risks to public health and safety and potential property loss. To adhere to the minimum federal requirements, the Town requires development and new structures in the floodplain to meet specific flood protection measures, including elevating the first floor of structures a minimum of one foot above 100-year flood elevations and utilizing specified flood-proof construction techniques.

While protecting life and property is the legislative basis for protecting floodplains, limiting disturbances within floodplains can serve various additional functions with critical public purposes and benefits. For example, floodplains moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies and reduce erosion and sedimentation, critical to protecting water quality in receiving waters. In addition, floodplain wetlands help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife.

There are about 161 acres, 88 parcels, and twenty-nine structures with an assessed value of approximately \$2.19 million within Denton's 100-year floodplain. Of the total land in the floodplain, slightly less than twenty percent is publicly owned. Structures include the Crouse Park Visitor and Heritage Center, the Caroline County Detention Center, and the County Road facility. In addition, the Town owns two other properties in the floodplain, including a recreation area and a sewer pumping station. Also included are sixteen detached residential units, most located southeast of Town off Sunset Drive and South Second Street.

The 100-year floodplain is collocated with sensitive environmental areas, including Tier II streams. Over half of the 100-year floodplain in Denton is wetlands, and over sixty percent is forested. Preserving floodplains for their multiple roles in maintaining water quality, protecting fisheries, and providing habitat and natural corridors for wildlife should be an objective of the WRE and SAE elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Sea Level Rise

Rising sea levels extend the reach of impacts associated with flooding and extreme storm events in the 100-year floodplain. A sea-level rise of two feet increases the area of the Town's potential impact from approximately 160 to 209 acres, or about a 31 percent increase. The potential impact area from a sea-level rise of five feet increases to approximately 215 acres or about a 35 percent increase. Fortunately for Denton, the additional area affected does not include any additional structures. With the possible exception of the 2nd Street sewer pump station and the WWTP outfall, the Town's sewer, stormwater, and water systems have little infrastructure within projected sea-level rise limits through the end of the century.

Nuisance Flooding

Nuisance flooding is currently limited to Crouse Park and the boat ramp. However, according to the Town of Denton Nuisance Flooding Plan prepared in July 2020, the Crouse Park property experiences the following types and frequency of nuisance flooding:

- During normal high tide, 3-4 inches of flooding occur in the boat ramp parking lot.
- A south wind blowing from the north holds the tide in the boat ramp area during certain weather conditions. As a result, one to one and a half feet of flooding occurs in the boat ramp parking lot area and ends at the sidewalk at the Crouse Park Visitor and Heritage Center.
- Crouse Park Lane is closed six times yearly for approximately 4-5 hours due to these flooding events.

- The Water Quality Garden at the Crouse Park Visitor and Heritage Center receives daily tidal influence from the Choptank River.
- Due to the changing tidal conditions, the Water Quality Garden has been converted into a stormwater pond.

The first floor of the Crouse Park Visitor and Heritage Center building is raised well above base flood elevation and should not be affected by sea level rise. However, nuisance flooding may increase, resulting in extended parking areas and boat ramp shutdowns.

Water Resource Strategies and Recommendations

Existing Regulations and Programs

Several existing ordinances and permits contain specific best management practices to minimize nonpoint source loading to receiving water that Denton will continue to apply. These are described below:

Sediment and Erosion Control - Construction activities that disturb at least 5,000 square feet or 100 cubic yards of the earth must follow a plan approved by the Soil Conservation District (SCD). The plans outline erosion and sediment control practices that protect water resources from the impacts of construction activities. These practices prevent rainwater from carrying soil particles as water flows off a construction site. Practices generally work by filtering sediment or allowing sediment to settle out of the runoff. By retaining the soil on the site, sediment and nutrients are prevented from polluting streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

Stormwater Management Ordinance – Denton's Stormwater Management Ordinance implements criteria and procedures for stormwater management, including environmental site design (ESD) to the maximum extent practicable (MEP). ESD uses small-scale stormwater management practices, nonstructural techniques, and better site planning to mimic natural hydrologic runoff characteristics and minimize the impact of land development on water resources. It also includes conserving natural features, drainage patterns, and vegetation, minimizing impervious surfaces, slowing runoff, and increasing infiltration.

Forest Conservation Ordinance – Nonpoint source loading rates for forest lands are the lowest of all land use or cover types. The primary purpose of Denton's Forest Conservation Ordinance is to minimize the loss of forest resources during land development by making the identification and protection of forests and other sensitive areas an integral part of the site planning process. Identification of priority areas before development makes their retention possible. Of primary interest are areas adjacent to streams or wetlands, those on steep or erodible soils, or those adjacent to large contiguous blocks of forest or wildlife corridors.

NPDES permit - MDE's Wastewater Permits Program (WWPP) issues an NPDES permit to jurisdictions to operate facilities. Discharge parameters established in individual plant NPDES permits are set to protect Maryland's water resources by controlling wastewater discharges. Denton's NPDES permit limits total TN and TP discharge to a maximum level consistent with

TMDLs established for the Upper Choptank watershed. These are caps the WWTP is not permitted to exceed. The caps also set an upper limit on the feasible capacity of Denton's WWTP without resorting to nutrient trading. This cap is the primary limiting factor for development on the west side of the Choptank River. The primary limiting factor is TP, which at 0.21 mg/L limits the WWTP capacity to about 600,000 gpd or approximately 950 additional dwelling units. When completed, the WWTP Facilities Management Plan will evaluate alternative strategies to address limitations.

Comprehensive Soil Conservation Plans

The Town should consider requiring properties that benefit from preferential assessments to implement a comprehensive soil conservation plan as a condition for maintaining that status.

Agriculture is the most significant contributor to nonpoint source nitrogen and phosphorus loading in the Choptank River Basin. An effective means of addressing nonpoint loading from agricultural land is implementing agricultural best management practices outlined in comprehensive soil conservation plans that meet the USDA-NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (USDA 1983).

As mentioned earlier, Denton's plan to limit development on the west side of the Choptank River due to water constraints will keep more agricultural land in production. According to the 2010 Land Use Land Cover data, 1,446 acres, or 42 percent of Denton's corporate area, were in agricultural use. Even after the buildout of the corporate area on the east side of the Choptank River, approximately 850 acres of agricultural land will remain.

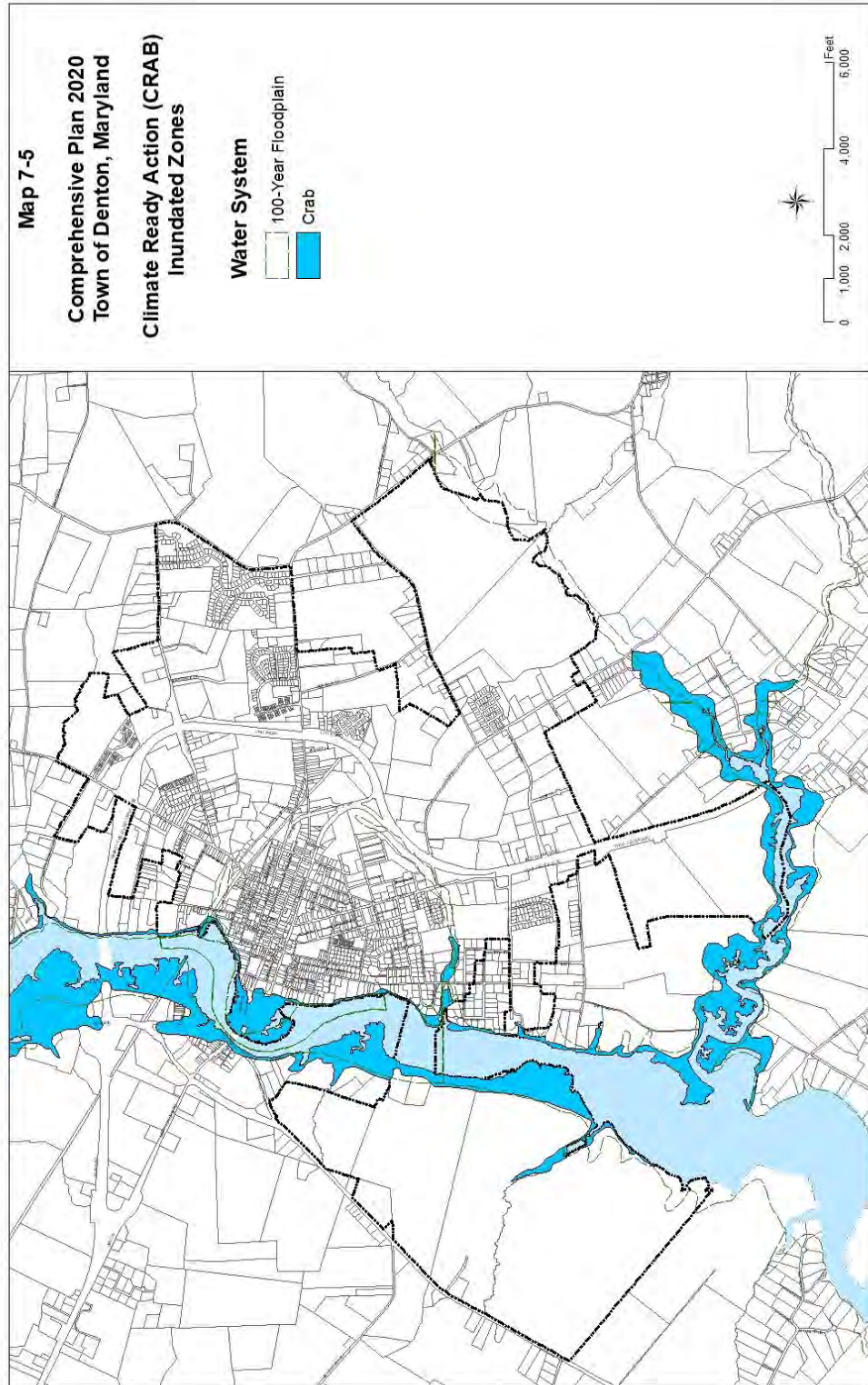
Tier II Streams

Two Tier II stream segments are located at Denton's corporate boundary. Approximately six percent of the catchment area for these streams is within the Denton corporate limits. Nearly twenty percent of these streams' catchment area is Denton's rural buffer (see Map 7-4). Inside the corporate limits, development reviews (stormwater management, sediment and erosion control, and forest conservation) should emphasize measures that prevent potential stormwater runoff loading to Watts Creek and the unnamed creek along the northern corporate boundary. For example, vegetative buffering along primary drainage ways may be required, and forest clearing in these areas is prohibited.

Climate Changes

The climate change assessment identified infrastructure, land, and structures potentially impacted by climate change, including sea level rise and extreme weather vents. This information should be incorporated into the Town's facilities planning and management processes and emergency response protocols.

Map 7-5 MDE Coastal Smart – Climate Ready Action Boundary (CRAB) Inundated Zones



CHAPTER 8 - TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Introduction

This element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the requirements of § 3-105 of the Land Use Article that comprehensive plans include a transportation element. The element must propose the general location, character, and extent of channels, routes, and terminals for transportation facilities, address the circulation of individuals and goods, and provide for bicycle and pedestrian access and travel ways.

Improved transportation systems were central to the evolution of societies and economies from the dawn of civilization. They continue to serve a vital role in protecting the community's health, safety, and welfare. However, an effective program for enhancing mobility choices is needed as we enter an age of declining resources. While essential to maintaining the quality of life for residents and visitors and promoting a stable local economy, it must rest on the premise that each incremental addition or improvement to the Town's overall transportation system be viewed as a means of creating prosperity in the community in a sustainable manner, not an end unto itself.

Goal, Objectives, and Policies

Goal

Ensure the mobility needs of the community are met.

Objectives

- Maintain a functional road and street system for the safe, convenient, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.
- Provide balanced transportation facilities that meet the needs of Denton.
- Coordinate various modes of transportation so that they complement each other.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle opportunities by ensuring that pedestrian and bicycle facilities are integral to transportation project design.
- Coordinate local transportation planning with County, State, and Federal efforts to provide an efficient transportation system.
- Require that the layout of new street connections in undeveloped areas assures connectivity to the overall Town street system.
- Identify and address safety issues in the transportation system.
- Maintain the existing system to maximize the effective lifespan of transportation investments.
- Manage the existing system to maximize performance.

- Expand transportation system capacity where necessary to support existing centers, planned growth areas, and increased demand for goods movement.
- Implement development standards and regulations that enable EV use.

Policies

- New developments will be designed to improve safety and traffic flow to the maximum extent reasonable.
- Vehicular, biking and pedestrian access to community facilities within the Town and significant activity centers will be encouraged.
- New development abutting existing neighborhoods will provide vehicular and pedestrian movement continuity by maximizing connectivity consistent with good site planning.
- Denton supports the development of charging infrastructure.

Functional Classification System

Federal and State departments of transportation classify highways based on their function, including the type of trips and the amount of traffic. In this hierarchical system, roads and streets are classified as arterial, collectors, or local access streets with access management based on functional priority through traffic movement versus access to land.

Principal arterials are major highways of regional and statewide significance intended to serve large amounts of traffic traveling relatively long distances at higher speeds. Direct property access requires careful management to preserve traffic mobility and avoid creating unsafe and congested traffic operations. MD 404 is a principal arterial (see Map 8-1).

Minor arterials interconnect with and augment the principal arterial system. Minor arterials distribute traffic to smaller geographic areas, providing service between and within communities. Connection from properties to an arterial is restricted so as not to impede the facility's traffic movement function. MD 328 (New Bridge Road) and MD 313 (Greensboro Road) are classified as rural minor arterials intended to link towns and provide relatively high overall travel speeds, with minimum interference to through movement.

Collectors provide access to land uses and traffic circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes traffic from the arterials through the area to the motorist's ultimate destination. Collectors also collect traffic from local streets in residential neighborhoods and channel it into the arterial system.

Major collectors primarily serve the more critical intra-county travel corridors and the county seat. For example, major collectors in Denton include 6th Street, 5th Avenue, Legion Road (west of MD 404), Business MD 404 (Meeting House Road), Gay Street, and Franklin Street.

The Minor Collector collects traffic from local roads and streets and provides access to the next-level roads, primarily major collectors. In Denton, Market Street, Second Street, a portion of 5th Street, and Sharp Road are classified as rural minor collectors.

Local streets provide access to adjacent land and relatively short-distance trips. Denton is responsible for approximately 23 miles of streets, classified as "local" in the Federal Functional Classification system.

Access distinctions are essential, especially on local streets, when considered in the context of other community objectives, e.g., safe streets and their impact on neighborhood character. Local streets cease performing as a positive component of neighborhood quality when they become a bad combination of two types of vehicular pathways. It is part of the street intended to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in a safe environment. Buildings are close to the sidewalk. Adjoining properties have driveways that access the Street. There are spaces for temporary parking and delivery vehicles. At the same time, it functions as a road, offering higher-speed and higher-volume connections between two places. The distinction needs to be considered in the transportation plan, the layout of circulation systems in new subdivisions and master-planned communities, and street specifications.

State/County Roads System

MD Route 404

MD 404 is a major east-west highway serving the Eastern Shore. It runs 24.61 miles from MD 662 in Wye Mills to the Delaware State line, which continues to Nassau, DE (near Rehoboth Beach). Approximately 3.3 miles are within Denton. It provides the most direct vehicular route from major metropolitan areas to the west (Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Annapolis) via U.S. Route 50 to the Delaware coastal resort towns. Peak use occurs during summer weekends when beach traffic is heaviest, and the road has a high accident rate.

MD Route 404, which bypasses Denton's northern and eastern portions, is classified by the State as a Principal Arterial. It is a four-lane highway from U.S. 50 to just beyond the MD 16 intersection. At-grade intersections are River Road (MD 328), Business Route 404 (Gay and Franklin Streets), Legion Road, and Deep Shore Road. In addition, there is a grade-separated interchange at MD 313 (Sixth Street) and a signalized intersection at Legion Road and Deep Shore Road.

MD 404 Business

MD 404 Business starts and ends at two intersections with MD 404 and is classified as a Rural Major Collector, along with MD 619 and Sixth Street.

MD Route 313

MD 313, approximately 3.5 miles within Denton, is classified as an undivided Rural Minor Arterial. This north-south highway traverses directly through the Town of Denton, becoming MD 619 (6th Street, also classified as an undivided Major Collector), connecting Denton to Federalsburg to the south and Greensboro and Goldsboro to the north. In addition, state Routes 404, 328, and 313 afford access from Denton to other primary highways serving the region, including U.S. Routes 50, 301, and 13.

MD Route 328

The State classifies MD Route 328 as an undivided Rural Minor Arterial. It runs north-south along approximately 1.70 miles of the westernmost Town border.

Other Collector Routes

Denton is also served by several collector roads that connect the Town to other areas of the County and points beyond. Camp and Foy Roads, Market Street (Town Major Collectors), Hobbs, Garland, and Legion Roads (Town and County Major Collectors, depending on segment) provide access to points east of Denton. In addition, an undivided Major Collection under the State system, MD 619 (Sixth Street), makes up approximately 1.1 miles of the Denton street system.

Town Functional Classification System

The Town has classified its streets as Town Major Collectors, Town Minor Collectors, and Local Access Streets (Map 8-2). Major Collector routes include Market Street, Legion Road, Foy Road, Hobbs Road, Camp Road, and Garland Road. Minor Collector routes include Caroline Street, Lockerman Street, Second Street, Fifth Street, and High Street, and portions of Third Street, Sharp Road, Carter Avenue, and Engerman Avenue.

Within Denton, functional classification has a slightly different purpose. While these routes are essential connectors, from neighborhoods and activity centers to higher order State routes, they also serve as links between and within neighborhoods. The Camp Road and Market Street extended pair, and Market Street extended, Foy Road and Legion Road form superblocks. As infill and redevelopment occur, subdivision and master-planned street systems will extend the Town's grid system. Care must be taken to ensure this system of streets is interconnected to ensure mobility and route choice while concurrently managing vehicle speeds to levels consistent with urban environments. Table 8-1 below summarizes traffic volume observations during the last eight years:

- Volume on MD 404 has increased, especially east of the MD 313 interchange (MD 404-3), perhaps because of increased nearby shopping and services.
- Volume on MD 404 Business has declined over the last five years.
- Volume on Franklin Street (eastbound MD 404B) has declined.
- Volume on Gay Street (westbound MD 404B) has decreased significantly.

- Volume on MD 313 increased slightly.
- Volume on MD 619 (sixth Street) has decreased steadily.
- Volume on MD 328 has increased.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% chg.
MD 404-1	16,002	17,480	17,531	17,462	18,350	20,240	20,671	21,132	19,650	22.80%
MD 404-2	20,642	20,320	20,381	20,302	26,310	27,421	28,002	24,920	24,771	20.00%
MD 404-3	15,542	17,370	17,421	17,352	23,820	24,821	25,342	22,740	22,601	45.42%
MD 404-4	19,092	23,350	23,401	23,282	22,560	23,511	24,012	22,760	22,621	18.48%
MD 404-B	2,432	2,393	2,404	2,395	2,130	2,181	2,232	2,283	2,274	-6.50%
Franklin Street	1,422	1,403	1,414	1,415	1,250	1,281	1,312	1,343	1,344	-5.49%
Gay Street	1,792	1,763	1,774	1,775	1,340	1,371	1,402	1,433	1,424	-20.54%
MD 619 (Sixth Street)	6,751	6,622	6,643	6,614	6,615	6,240	6,381	6,522	6,483	-3.97%
MD 313	10,951	10,742	10,490	10,451	10,462	10,903	11,134	11,385	11,070	1.09%
MD 328	5,810	5,701	5,712	5,683	5,684	5,825	6,110	6,241	6,202	6.75%

Source: State Highway Administration

Transit

Public transit service in Caroline County is provided through Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST) through a collaborative fixed route service in Caroline, Kent, and Talbot Counties as USTAR (Upper Shore Take-A-Ride), Dorchester County as DCT (Delmarva Community Transit), and in Queen Anne's County as County Ride.

MUST services provide for the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled persons of the service area and the public, with regular routes to shopping centers, medical offices, and employment areas within a five-county radius. The program also provides for the transportation needs of Medical Assistance clients and coordinates services with other social service agencies. In addition, special services are available for people unable to use regional fixed routes.

DCT operated three routes serving Denton. These are "deviated routes," meaning buses will deviate $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the ground route corridor for anyone calling in with at least two (2) hours advanced notice. DCT's Route 5 provides service between Denton and Easton. Pickup points include Village Circle, the HAPS building, and the Town parking lot, beginning at 7:30 AM and returning at 12:35, 2:00, 3:00, and 5:15 PM. Route 6 provides service between Denton, Federalsburg, Preston, and Easton. Pickup points include the Town parking lot and Caroline Apartments, beginning at 5:35 AM and returning at 5:11 PM. Finally, route 7 provides service between Greensboro, Denton, and Easton. Pickup locations include Village Circle, Caroline Apartments, Walmart, Royal Farms Store, and the Town parking lot, beginning at 6:08 AM and returning at 5:25 PM.

Adequate and reliable funding to support transit is critical, especially for the transportation disadvantaged. Such transportation-disadvantaged populations may include those who are elderly, have disabilities, or have low incomes. Older adults represent the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population, and access to transportation is critical to helping individuals remain independent as they age. Town officials should work with County and State governments and organizations to ensure funding for critical transit services for Town residents.

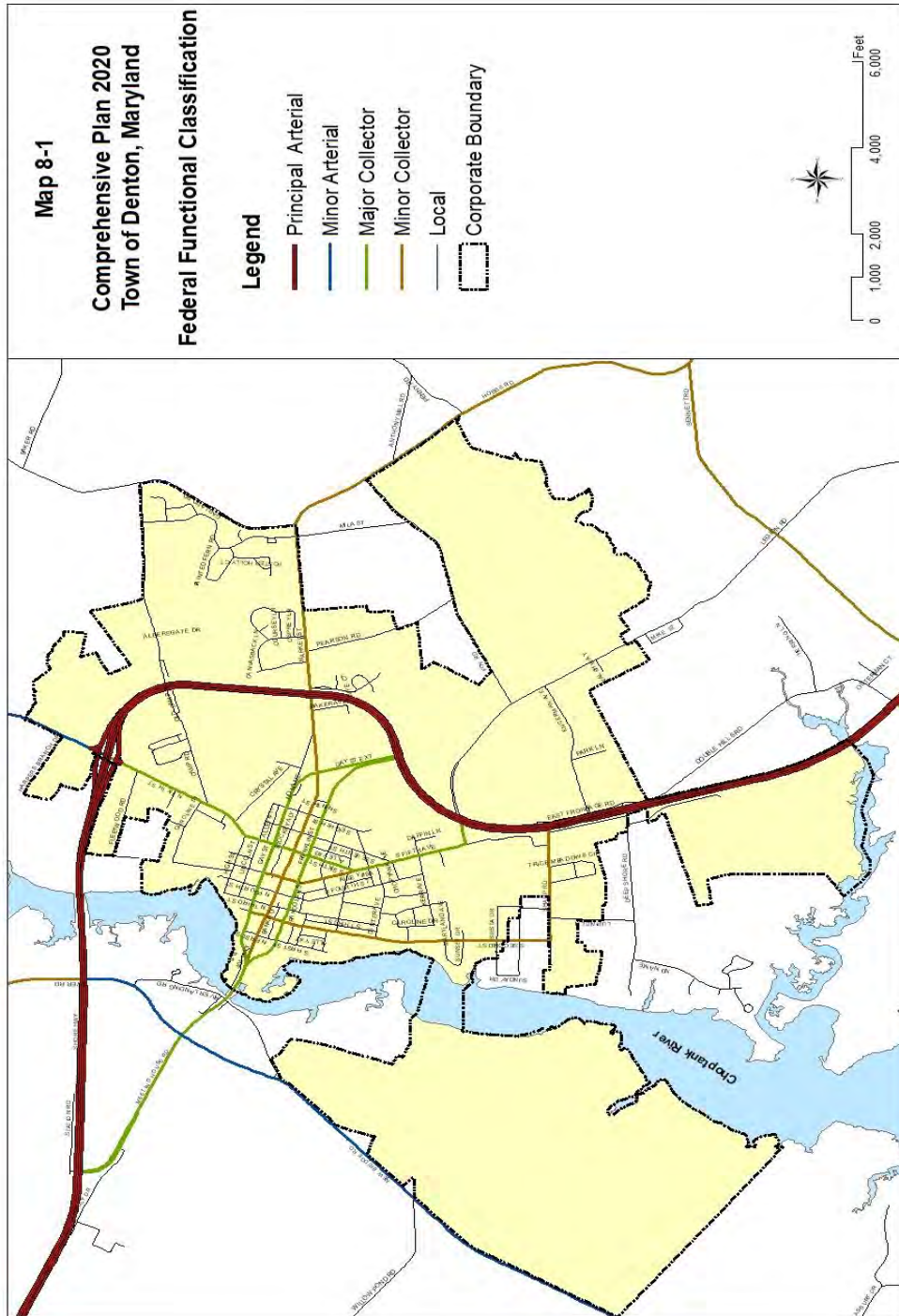
Level of Service (LOS)

Congestion is a level of service based on volume versus capacity on roadway segments or intersections. As traffic volume on any given roadway or intersection increases to approach the design capacity for traffic during peak traffic, the level of service decreases. Table 8-2 describes the traffic condition for various service levels.

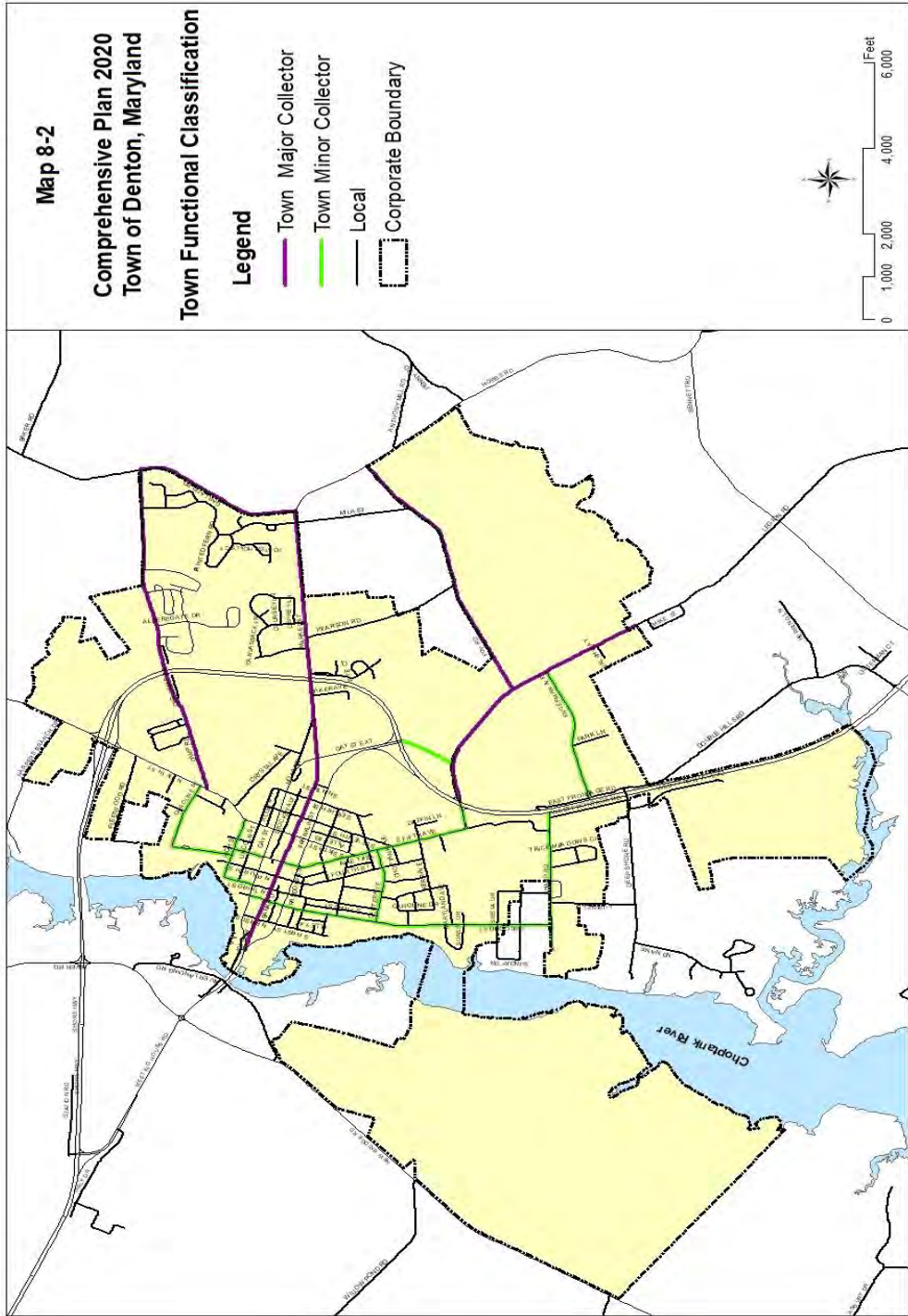
Table 8-2: Level of Service (LOS)			
Level of Service			Volume to Capacity Ratio
LOS	Condition of Flow	Condition of Intersection	
A	Free Movement, Smooth Flow	Open	0.3
B	Occasional Restriction of Movement	Infrequent Backups	0.5
C	Movement is Steady, Somewhat Restricted	Occasional Backups	0.8
D	Periodic Congestion, Movement Restricted	Frequent Backups	0.9
E	Frequent Congestion, Movement Very Restricted	Maximum Traffic Moves with the Cycle	1
F	Maximum Congestion, Very Slow, Very Restricted	Jammed traffic occasionally Fails to Move on Signal Cycle	1.0+

Traffic volumes in Caroline County are relatively low on all but MD 404, and congestion is not an issue. LOS B, C, or D is typical in small urban centers such as Denton, with LOS A, B, or C preferred. Level of Service D is acceptable if confined to only brief periods during the peak hour of traffic. It represents a balance between convenience and cost. In no case should the proposed new development be allowed to impact Traffic flows on adjacent streets or adjacent intersections to LOS E or F.

Map 8-1 Federal Functional Classification



Map 8-2 Town Functional Classifications



Crash Data

According to crash data for Caroline County provided by the Maryland Highway Safety Office, between 2016 and 2020, crashes increased. Interestingly, 2019 total crashes dropped below 2018, and fatalities and injuries decreased in 2019 and 2020, possibly attributable to the COVID pandemic lockdowns (see Table 8-3).

Crash Summary	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5-year avg.	Percent
Fatal	7	8	10	5	5	7	1.4%
Injury	164	169	158	161	131	157	32.0%
Property Damage	301	300	352	349	329	326	66.6%
Total	472	477	520	515	546	490	100.0%
Total of All Fatalities	9	8	11	5	5	8	
Total Number Injured	266	244	252	235	201	240	

Source: Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, Maryland Highway Safety Office

Over sixty percent and nearly one-quarter of all crashes, injuries, and fatalities resulting from crashes occurred on State and County highways. Drivers between the ages of 21 and 39 accounted for 38.6 percent of all crashes and 46.1 percent of fatal crashes between 2016 and 2020.

From 2016 to 2020, 86.7 percent of crashes occurred on State and County roads, including fatal crashes. On average, municipalities accounted for less than seven percent of all crashes, five percent of property damage crashes, and 2.9 percent of fatal crashes. Between 2015 and 2022, 631 crashes were recorded on MD 404; 198, or slightly less than one-third, occurred within Denton. Additionally, 89, or about 45 percent, were intersection-related and included three with fatalities.

Roads and Streets Policies

The following policies will apply to the construction of any new roads and streets within Denton:

1. All new streets will conform to the Town's functional classification of street types (Map 8-2).
2. The general layout of all new streets shall meet all safety and access requirements for fire, police, and emergency services.
3. The flow of arterial highways should not be significantly impeded. Local street intersections should be spaced to minimize interruptions of arterial traffic flow.
4. New streets should provide an appropriate connection to streets in adjacent subdivisions or neighborhoods.

5. Vehicular movement at design speed must be assured. Therefore, all streets must have proper rights-of-way widths, curb-to-curb width, and radius of curvature of horizontal and vertical curves for the required LOS.
6. All streets shall be designed and built per the recently adopted Town Subdivision Regulations and the Denton Standard Specifications and Details for Public Works Construction.
7. Private streets shall be discouraged.
8. Cul-de-sacs shall be discouraged.
9. New development will be served by access streets adequate to accommodate the vehicular traffic projected to be generated by the development. Developers will be required to pay for the construction of all new streets following Town standards and may be required to pay for improvements to existing offsite streets impacted by the development.
10. According to Town standards and specifications, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks shall be provided. Sidewalks shall address the needs of people with disabilities. The Planning Commission will determine where sidewalks, curbs, and gutters are necessary and appropriate based on the pedestrian circulation recommendations in this planning element.
11. Streetlights and fire hydrants shall be provided on all future town streets per Town specifications.

Planned Improvements State Improvements

The Maryland Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) identifies transportation projects throughout the State. The State identifies projects in consultation with the County for funding over five years. The State also prepares a long-range Highway Needs Inventory (HNI), which identifies transportation projects by County jurisdiction. The CTP is updated annually by the Maryland Department of Transportation and reflects funded projects.

Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP)

The Maryland Draft Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program for Fiscal Year 2021 – 2026 lists two mill and resurface projects at various locations in Caroline County described as "under construction."

State Highway Needs Inventory

The Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) is a listing of projects developed by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to address transportation needs throughout the State over the long term (20 years). The State has not identified funding for most projects on this list. Typically, projects on this list are eligible for inclusion as part of the Consolidated Transportation Program. The Highway Needs Inventory is also updated by MDOT every three years. The Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) is a technical reference and planning document that identifies

highway improvements to serve existing and projected population and economic activity in the State and addresses safety and structural problems that warrant major construction or reconstruction. The HNI may be considered a compilation of projected significant highway deficiencies.

The State Highway Administration HNI for Caroline County anticipates MD 404 becoming a four-lane highway from U.S. 50 to the Delaware State line. The remaining 6.1-mile segment to be constructed, Sennett Road to the Delaware line, is estimated to cost \$82.9 million. The Highway Needs Inventory also includes the construction of an interchange on MD 404 at MD 328, estimated to cost \$83.9 million.

Programmed Town Transportation Capital Projects

The Town's Five-Year Capital program includes the priority transportation improvement projects shown on Map 8-3 and summarized in Table 8-4. The scheduling and completion of these improvements are subject to phasing-based bid costs and annual capital budgets, including state-provided funding.

Table 8-4 – Street Improvements				
Priority	Location	Type Of Project	Miles	Est. Cost
1	Foy Road	Mill & Overlay	1.16	\$ 1,415,866
2	Market & 3rd	4-Way Stop @ Market & 3rd		\$ 135,000
3	Engerman Ave & Park Ln	Overlay Only	0.72	\$ 375,841
4	Siesta & Pine Drives	Overlay Only	0.23	\$ 63,084
5	Alley 5	Mill & Overlay	0.08	\$ 52,878
6	1st Street (From Gay to Market)	Mill & Overlay	0.05	\$ 37,002
7	2nd Street (From Franklin to Market)	Mill & Overlay	0.06	\$ 33,317
8	4th Street (From Gay to High)	Mill & Overlay	0.11	\$ 61,950
9	5th Street (From Market to High)	Mill & Overlay	0.19	\$ 99,939
10	Church Street	Mill & Overlay	0.05	\$ 31,332
11	Stockley Alley	Mill & Overlay	0.12	\$ 76,692
12	Lockerman & Caroline Streets, Elaine Ave.	Rehabilitation	0.44	\$ 1,299,491
13	7th Street (Franklin to 5th)	Rehabilitation	0.30	\$ 1,369,219
14	Lincoln Street	Mill & Overlay	0.43	\$ 217,875
15	Fleetwood Road	Mill & Overlay	0.19	\$ 232,504
16	Fairfield	Mill & Overlay	0.46	\$ 237,720
17	Edenton Lane	Rehabilitation	0.08	\$ 330,656
18	Sunnyside Ave (From 7th to 4th)	Partial Rehabilitation	0.14	\$ 262,480
19	Academy Ave	Partial Rehabilitation	0.15	\$ 231,276
20	Fountain Ave, 2nd Street & Riverton Ave	Partial Rehabilitation	0.27	\$ 386,830

Table 8-4 – Street Improvements				
Priority	Location	Type Of Project	Miles	Est. Cost
21	Randolph Street (From 1st to 2nd)	Rehabilitation	0.08	\$ 382,258
Totals			5.30	\$7,333,210

Privately funded commercial and residential development projects include Legion Road widening from MD 404 to Foy Road to four median divided lanes. These projects will be funded by commercial property development on both sides of this corridor.

The Town's Capital program includes long-range planned transportation improvement projects and water main replacements through FY 2034 (see Table 8-5). As previously noted, the scheduling and completion of these improvements are subject to phasing-based bid costs and annual capital budgets, including state-provided funding.

Table 8-5 - Combination Projects						
Priority	FY	Location	Type Of Project	Feet	Water Costs	Est. Total Cost
1	26	7th Street (Franklin to 5th)	Water Main Replacement / Street Rehabilitation	1,600	\$ 893,293	\$ 2,178,595
2	28	Gay Street (5th to 10th)	Water Main Replacement / Trench Restoration	2,500	\$ 823,060	\$ 823,060
3	30	5th Street (From Market to High)	Water Main Replacement / Mill & Overlay	1,000	\$ 629,473	\$ 729,083
4	32	Lincoln Street	Water Main Replacement / Mill & Overlay	1,400	\$ 1,009,544	\$ 1,234,076
5	34	Market Street (1st to 3rd)	Water Main Replacement / Mill & Overlay	750	\$ 112,248	\$ 191,038
Totals				7,250	\$ 3,467,618	\$ 5,155,853

Highway Roadway Improvement Plan

The Highway Improvement Plan (Map 8-3) designates future recommended street improvements and new alignments to improve traffic circulation in the Town. These projects support the build-out of Denton and anticipate that the required rights-of-way for new alignments can be acquired through dedication during subdivision or pre-platted mapped streets. In addition to projects included in the Town's Five-Year Capital Program, Map 8-2 includes proposed improvements and new alignments include:

Denton Parkway

The proposed Denton Parkway will serve as a major collector street in the Town System. In addition, it will provide vehicular, bike, and pedestrian access to and secondary access from the Town's regional shopping district and several future projects along the route to Sixth Street, the

northern part of MD 619, and the MD 404 / MD 313 interchange. This improvement will give local traffic an alternative means of reaching the downtown business district and MD 404. The proposed Denton Parkway East includes the following segments:

1. Reconstruction of Legion Road to a 4-lane divided street with median and sidewalks from MD 404 to the intersection with the proposed Commerce Drive extension to MD 404 and Gay Street.
2. Reconstruction of Legion Road to a 2-lane median divided street extending from Commerce Drive to the intersection with Foy Road.
3. Reconstruction of Foy Road to a 2-lane median divided Street from Legion Road to the Garland Road intersection.
4. Reconstruction of Garland Road to a 2-lane median divided Street north from Foy Road to the Camp Road intersection.
5. Reconstruction of Camp Road to a 2-lane median divided Street from the Garland Road intersection Sixth Street (MD 619).
6. Legion Road to Foy Road Connector (additional roadway improvements intended to improve mobility by creating a more refined-grained collector system within the proposed Town growth area).
7. Commerce Drive to Gay Street Connection.
8. MD 404 north/south service road extension from Legion Road to the existing service road.

Key Intersections

In addition to the new street segments discussed above, improvements will likely be required at critical intersections. Considering the impact seasonal traffic on MD 404 has on local mobility, the Gay Street/Commerce Drive/MD 404 intersection improvements are significant. For this reason, the State and the Town should coordinate planning efforts. For its part, the State should consider the Denton Parkway concept in terms of how it supports the development of the Town's commercial and residential growth.

Pedestrian Systems Plan

The following policies will apply to pedestrian systems within the Town of Denton:

- Large and small streets should safely and comfortably accommodate motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- The Town will plan for the needs of non-motorized travel in the community.
- Pedestrian trails should link the neighborhoods with destinations such as schools, parks,

commercial areas, and employment centers to reduce dependence on automobiles.

The pedestrian systems shown on Map 8-4 represent an ambitious, long-range plan for providing pedestrian facilities throughout the Town. The system includes sidewalk extensions, pedestrian trails to accommodate walkers and bicyclists, and a recreation greenway trail system.

Sidewalks serve the central part of the community. The Town requires sidewalks in new developments, and where appropriate, offsite sidewalk improvements are required to connect new systems to the existing system. Further enhancements to curbs and sidewalks downtown are also recommended in the Plan. Sidewalks must also be along Camp Road, Market Street (east of MD 404), and Gay Street (at the proposed Gay Street / MD 404 intersection). In addition, pedestrian trails (hiker/biker trails or sidewalks) are proposed as part of the Denton Parkway system to provide a route whereby pedestrians and bicyclists can reach the MD 404 underpass at MD 313. The pedestrian trail component will also provide access to shopping areas located at MD 404 and Legion Road.

Following the Market Street Plan, the Town has provided better access to the river and improved Crouse Park to increase recreational opportunities while promoting alternative modes of transportation. In addition, this Plan recommends the establishment of a greenway along the abandoned rail line. These recommendations build on the existing pedestrian (sidewalk) system, expanding it to provide pedestrian connections between the CBD, the waterfront, and activity centers of interest to residents (e.g., schools and neighborhood parks) and visitors (Martinak Park, the Choptank River, as well as local historical sites).

Map 8-4 includes proposed greenways along the Choptank River in the western part of the Town, Watts Creek in the southern part, and a pedestrian trail along the abandoned railroad right-of-way. Particularly in the case of the proposed rail trail, there are opportunities for the Town to work with the County to establish a county-wide greenway program. The greenways should be a place to walk, jog, and bike, allowing residents and visitors to travel between neighborhoods to school, recreation areas, and other areas of interest.

An important factor will be connecting the Central Business District to the pedestrian trails and greenways. The sidewalk and path system along 2nd Street should be extended east to meet with a pedestrian trail along Deep Shore Road (to Martinak State Park). Similar measures should be taken to connect the elementary school to the greenway. Sidewalks should also be extended along 5th Avenue to Sharp Road to provide access to shopping and recreation areas.

The Town zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations should require an appropriate dedication-to-public-use or a cross-use easement along the greenway or any 100-foot perennial stream buffers that feed into designated greenways when properties include portions of a designated greenway are developed.

Bike riders must also be encouraged with good bike routes, bike racks at destinations, and showers and lockers at work and school. Streets, homes, and businesses need to be built in ways that make

streets inviting to encourage people to walk. The network of pedestrian trails and greenways recommended in this Plan should be implemented for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. Existing roads and new bikeways can serve as the system to provide for bicyclists' travel needs, including recreational biking and commuter biking. Planning for bicycles should be conducted in conjunction with planning for other transportation modes.

The Town has amended the zoning ordinances to require space for parking bicycles in non-residential developments. It permits an appropriate reduction in parking based on the availability of bicycle parking facilities. In addition, the design of planned bike routes should include rights-of-way for bicycle lanes to provide for a paved lane of eight (minimum) to ten (desirable) feet in width, separated by a minimum six-foot shoulder wherever possible.



Figure 8-1

Maryland Scenic Byways[®] Program

Maryland has designated 19 byways that encompass 2,487 miles of beautiful roads. Scenic byways give motorists a glimpse of Maryland's scenic beauty, history, and culture. America's Byways[®] is a collection of routes recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation as the most significant routes throughout the country based on their scenery, culture, history, archaeology, and recreational opportunities.

The following is a citation from the "Maryland Byway's" document for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, which includes highways within Dorchester and Caroline Counties (Figure 8-1).

"Along a secret network of trails, waterways, and sanctuaries known as the Underground Railroad, enslaved people fled north out of Southern states to escape bondage. For them, the Civil War couldn't end quickly enough, and the thirst for freedom far outweighed the dangers involved with trudging across strange lands, trusting no one, and yet often counting on the selfless kindness of strangers.

Maryland is a state rich with African American heritage but was often torn during the 19th century by divided opinions concerning the institution of slavery. Here, you can learn more about these freedom seekers.

This Eastern Shore byway follows a mostly northern path across a landscape that has changed little in the last century and a half. It allows you to better understand the stories of the Underground Railroad, many of them as told by local anti-slavery activists who risked their own lives to aid their fellow Americans."

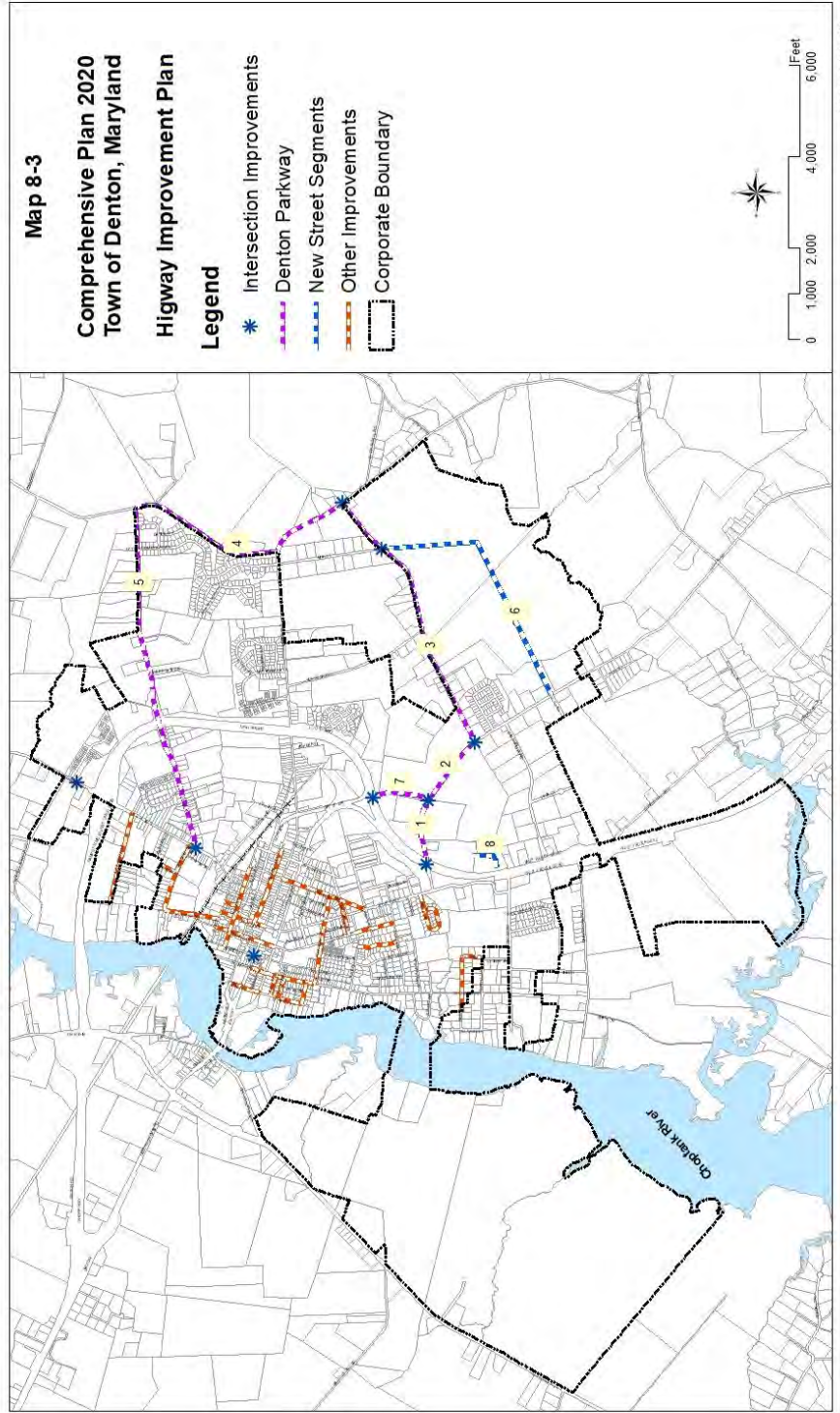
The second leg of the byway travels through Caroline County and includes Denton.

Implementation

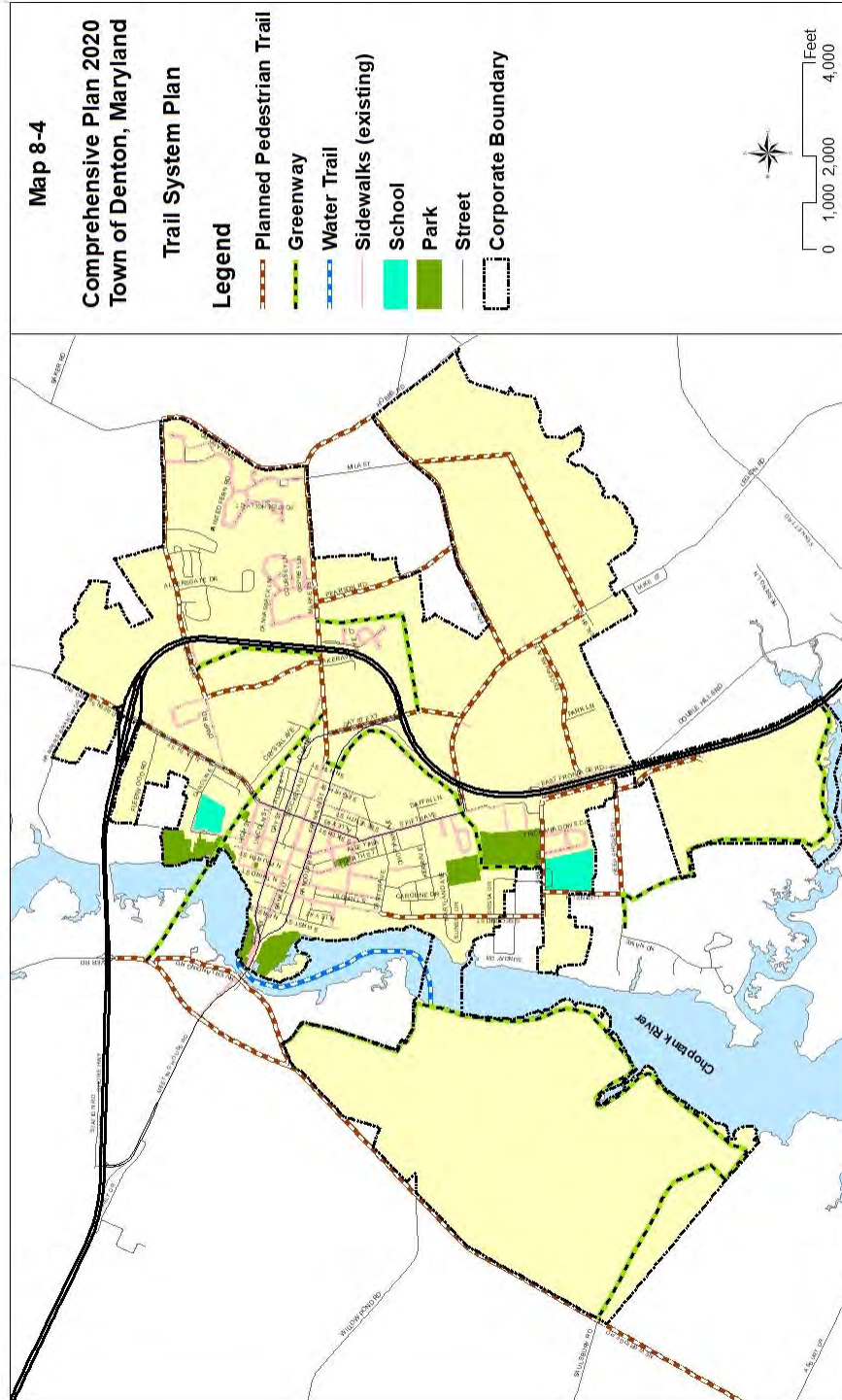
The Highway Improvement Plan will be implemented through capital improvement programming, requiring coordination with Maryland DOT and Caroline County.

Denton should prepare a trail master plan that includes pedestrian trails linking neighborhoods with destinations such as schools, parks, commercial areas, and employment centers to reduce dependence on the automobile. Once pedestrian and bike routes are feasible, whether as a retrofit to an existing street or road, the Town needs to commit to implementing the plan. An official map should be adopted to forewarn developers of the Town's intent to extend pedestrian and/or bicycle lanes along a street or through a property. Implementing the pedestrian system is also a capital improvement, especially maintaining existing sidewalks. Implementing pedestrian and bike system improvements will also require adequate right-of-way in the development process, requiring developers to provide access along new streets, road frontages, or through properties. When a development project is submitted, the Town should require the necessary right-of-way dedication if the official map includes a link through the development. Consistent with the Pedestrian Systems Plan, the Town should require the developer to include pedestrian and bike paths. Exactions of this type are typically required when approving subdivisions and may also be required in planned developments.

Map 8-3 Roadway Improvement Plan



Map 8-4 Trail System Plan



CHAPTER 9 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Economic development is a term that describes concerted actions taken for economic progress. In a comprehensive planning context, economic development can be defined as actions employed by the public sector (e.g., land-use and tax policies, business programs, and capital projects) that facilitate private-sector investments. As pointed out in the Caroline County Five-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development Fiscal Years 2022 – 2027, the topic of "economic development" means different things to different people. For businesses, economic development is about opportunities for site selection or infrastructure support and access to the workforce, the market, and capital. For elected and other public bodies, economic development is about collaboration for workforce development and supporting the development of new facilities. Finally, economic development relates to the quality of life for the average citizen – their ability to earn a decent living and provide for their needs.

The directions set by the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of Denton's Comprehensive Plan reflect these perspectives and the goal of generating and sustaining wealth utilizing the community's unique assets to attract and support employers and investment. A community focused on the quality of life for its people must be economically healthy, with a broad mix of employment opportunities. Livability and economic development are permanently linked - neither can progress without the other. Therefore, economic development is an integral part of the planning process because sustaining a healthy economy is essential to the quality-of-life objectives embodied in this Plan.

A strong economy is diverse enough to absorb the inevitable market changes and business fluctuations. In addition, a diverse economy provides a wide variety of job opportunities suited to the skill levels in the workforce. Ensuring adequate employment opportunities for all residents, thereby reducing unemployment, helps reduce the social stresses of crime, mental illness, suicide, and domestic violence.

Any efforts on the part of Denton to maintain and enhance the quality of life for its residents will depend on a collective ability to strengthen the regional economy. Recognizing they are not alone in this effort, the Town supports County, State, and regional economic development programs through thoughtful consideration for policies and activities affecting land use, community amenities, infrastructure, and regulations as part of the framework for economic development.

The primary goal of economic development is a robust and sustainable economy, a goal directly affected by policies and strategies concerning land use and public facilities and services. The fiscal result of positive economic growth is to strengthen the Town's tax base, enabling it to support a higher quality of life through the types, quantity, and quality of the community services and amenities it provides.

Goals and Objectives

Goal

- Improve the material living standards by raising the absolute per capita incomes.

Objectives

- Provide the land use and infrastructure framework for attracting new economic activity and retaining existing establishments.
- Work cooperatively with government and nonprofit organizations with common objectives.
- Encourage diversified employment growth.

Caroline County Five-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development

The recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan intersect with the objectives, action strategies, and focus areas for creating jobs and expanding the revenue base outlined in the Caroline County Five-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development FY 2022-2027 (Strategic Plan). The Strategic Plan supports Denton's commercial and industrial land-use policies to increase property value, revenue base, and job opportunities. This effort relies on the Town to provide information on vacant commercial and industrial sites and as partners in attracting new enterprises, both goods-producing and knowledge-based. Denton supports the Strategic Plan's strategic initiatives by:

- continuing to identify vacant commercial and industrial properties and make inventories available to County and State economic development agencies.
- expand the inventory of commercial and industrial land as needed.
- through feedback from Caroline County Economic Development, identify potential issues affecting sales and address them, and
- ensure potential commercial or industrial land, including planned annexation areas, are identified in planning documents that may affect financing or permits.

Denton enjoys location advantages few other municipalities in Caroline County can match. These assets include access to a major highway, housing options, commercial offerings, and infrastructure capacity. Therefore, Denton's location assets are a valid reason to ensure the Strategic Plan's strategy to attract data centers includes Denton as a prime location.

Like Denton, the Strategic Plan recognizes the vital role of small business entrepreneurs and home-grown businesses in achieving its goals and objectives. Efforts to encourage and support entrepreneurship and small business development, a form of economic "gardening," akin to

tending to a seedbed as compared to industrial recruiting, the hunt for a trophy animal. Community benefits of entrepreneurship and small business development include:

- Create jobs.
- Spark innovation.
- Provide opportunities for many people, including women and minorities, to achieve financial success and independence.
- Bring new dollars into the economy.
- Attract new people to the community.

"Locally owned and managed businesses have a unique place in a community's economy. They are less likely to relocate as the business grows and changes. Revenues are more likely to be reinvested locally. Employment opportunities for young people add dynamism that can help sustain a community. The sense of community tends to be stronger, enhancing charitable causes and civic investments. They provide stability and community spirit that becomes infused in other public organizations and businesses, leading to a more robust quality of life.

In addition, expanding research is being carried out examining the contributions of entrepreneurs, proprietors, and small businesses to communities. These studies provide strong evidence that such businesses positively impact the civic vitality of communities, especially in smaller populated communities. For example, they increase the involvement of business owners in local community improvement activities, and they help reduce the number of people living in poverty (since these firms are more likely to hire local people for job openings). They are also more likely to mentor young people who want to work alongside local entrepreneurs. All in all, entrepreneurs can be an essential asset to many communities."¹⁴

"The pandemic triggered a surge of entrepreneurship, much of it quietly taking place at home, conducted from kitchen tables and garages. As early as 1992, over half of all firms operated exclusively out of the home. The practice has only boomed since, with millions of Americans running everything from salons to eBay stores to computer repair out of homes and apartments. By one estimate, home-based businesses currently collectively generate nearly \$500 billion a year in revenue."¹⁵

Zoning standards for home-based and cottage industries affect the climate for entrepreneurs, home-grown businesses, and the small business ecosystem. Rules regulating essential health, environmental, and safety standards make sense. However, overregulating home-based businesses results in them going underground, unable to grow, and forever at risk of code enforcement. Overlay restrictive code provisions especially disfavor the women and people of color, who — often excluded from traditional labor markets and access to capital — disproportionately run home-based businesses.

¹⁴ <https://community-planning.extension.org/what-are-the-economic-benefits-of-entrepreneurship/>

¹⁵ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-31/zoning-rules-shouldn-t-hurt-home-based-businesses#:~:text=Many%20entrepreneurs%20starting%20companies%20in,have%20boomed%20during%20the%20pandemic.>

Home-based businesses are an essential segment of the local economy to cultivate. The internet has evolved how small businesses operate and allowed home occupations to become an incubating force for new businesses that capitalize on creative talent in the community. These nontraditional enterprises do not begin by putting up a sign at a storefront and posting ads in the local newspaper. Instead, they are those creative entrepreneurs who start by taking advantage of the internet's many tools, smartphones, tablets, computers, etc. In addition, the Internet allows small businesses to expand their geographic limits. For example, a small business working out of a home in Denton with the internet could have customers worldwide and capitalize on the opportunity to grow and increase revenue through technology-enabled commerce.

Downtown Denton Main Street, Inc.

Developing and maintaining networks of organizations that support small businesses is another action item outlined in the Strategic Plan, for which the Downtown Denton Main Street program plays an important role. Downtown Denton Main Street, Inc. (DDMS) was created in 1999 to implement a downtown revitalization program created by the Maryland Department of Community Development (DHCD). The program "strives to strengthen the economic potential of Maryland's traditional main streets and neighborhoods." It focuses on promotion, organization, economic development, and design, emphasizing small business success and creating a place where people want to go and visit, following its guiding principles:

- Comprehensive: Simultaneous, comprehensive strategy focusing on all aspects (Design, Promotion, Economic Restructuring, and Organization).
- Incremental: Start with simple activities and build to more complex, ambitious projects.
- Self-Help: Mobilize local investment of time and money to benefit the community.
- Partnerships: Both private and public sectors have a vital interest in the commercial district.
- Assets: Capitalize on unique assets to give people a sense of belonging and pride.
- Quality: A high standard must be set for every aspect of the commercial district.
- Change: Bring about an essential change in attitude and practice to improve downtown's use, purpose, and future.
- Implementation: Make a difference TODAY by creating visible change and activity NOW.

In addition to assisting with the small business loan program administered by the Town and providing low-cost co-working space downtown, DDMS periodically commissions studies to identify market characteristics and potential opportunities for local merchants to capture increased sales. The information gleaned in these studies provides data about market characteristics that

enable small businesses to tailor goods and service offerings most appealing to households within the trade area.

The first study, A Retail Market Study and Branding Strategy for Denton, Maryland,¹⁶ was completed in December 2009. Market Update 10 Years Later¹⁷, completed in 2019, revisited the original study's findings. Market definition in both studies was based on zip code surveys of customers. In the 2009 study, eleven retail businesses generated information on 990 individual customer visits. In the 2019 update, six participating businesses with 357 customers were surveyed.

The 2009 study concluded that within the trade area defined by the zip-code survey, the primary market for downtown Denton was the Denton area zip code 21629 (see Map 9-1). Over sixty-five percent of survey results came from the Denton, Greensboro, Ridgely, and Goldsboro zip codes, with Greensboro, Ridgely, and Goldsboro described as the secondary market. Over seventy percent of market activity was generated by customers from Caroline County and nearly all from Maryland locations.

Over half of all customers reported this as their resident location. Within the 21629-zip code, the percentage of in- and out-of-town customers was nearly even, 22.7 percent out of Town versus 28.5 percent in Town in the 2009 results. Similar results were found in the 2019 survey. However, the 2009 study found that when visits per 1,000 population are examined, there is a sharp drop within the Denton zip code, with town residents constituting a much more substantial customer base than unincorporated residents. Therefore, the total customer visits for the Denton zip code are not as robust, and Denton has an opportunity to cultivate more customer loyalty from its residents.

Demographic conclusions from the 2009 study were as follows:

- Denton's downtown shops cater to a solid local population base, with 51% of the traffic from the 21629 zip code and nearly 75% from Caroline County.
- Visits per 1,000 dropped sharply within the Denton zip code, with town residents constituting a much more substantial customer base than unincorporated residents. The total customer visits for the Denton zip code are not as robust as they could be, and Denton has an opportunity to cultivate more customer loyalty from its residents.
- Denton also has an opportunity to cultivate a more substantial customer base from nearby geographies, including Cordova, Federalsburg, Henderson, Preston, and even Easton, particularly for specialty-type retailers.
- Specialty-type retail will also be attractive to the visitor market, which makes up one in ten customers for several downtown businesses.

¹⁶ A Retail Market Study and Branding Strategy for Denton, Maryland, December 4, 2009, Arnett Muldrow and Associates

¹⁷ Market Update 10 Years Later, Denton, Maryland, 2019, Arnett Muldrow and Associates

- Denton's market demographics are quite strong despite some people's opinions that the community is economically distressed. The demographic analysis and the market segmentation figures show a robustly growing market with solid income characteristics.
- A growing and relatively affluent market is fundamental for the success of any community, and Denton is fortunate to have this situation.
- Denton's market must continue cultivating the "bread and butter" local market while growing regional and visitor traffic.

Compared to benchmarks, the 2019 study results indicate these conclusions remain valid.

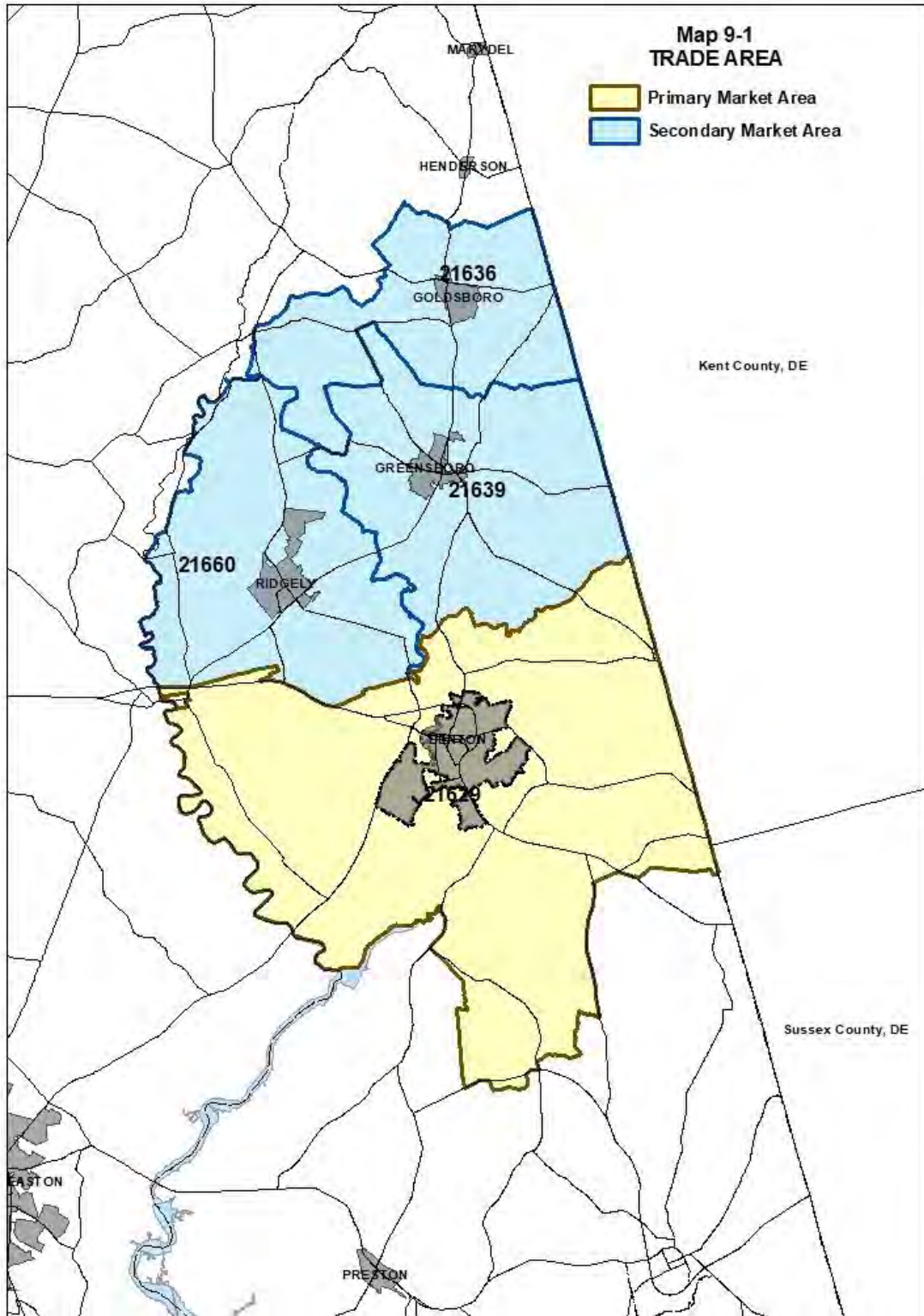
The 2019 study indicates that in the ensuing ten years, retail gain reached \$78,796,734. In addition, the consultants identified trade area retail opportunities in furniture and home furnishings, food and beverage, clothing and clothing accessories, and food services and drinking establishments based on trade area demographics. This list differs somewhat from the 2009 study, which included general merchandise and building materials supply establishments.

Recommendations

Economic development recommendations primarily fall within two overlapping categories. One category is programmatic and involves supporting the efforts of local and State groups and organizations focused on improving economic conditions for residents. The other category is planning and regulatory and involves facilitating the expansion of Denton's economic base through responsive capital programming and land use development regulations. Category one recommendations are to support Downtown Denton Main Street, Inc. and maintain cooperative relationships with Caroline County Economic Development, Caroline County Tourism, the Caroline Chamber of Commerce, and the many downtown stakeholders. Category two recommendations include seeking continuous feedback from merchants and landowners on ways to streamline development review in the downtown when required to adjust to changing economic conditions.

The Economic Development chapter of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan reiterated the findings and recommendations of the 2009 Retail Market Study and Branding Strategy for Denton, Maryland, including the conclusion Denton was positioned to grow as a retail destination in many different categories based simply on the local demand for retail. However, to capitalize on this growth, Denton would need to augment its catalyst plans for growth with a series of marketing and recruitment strategies to retain local customers, create incentives for new retail, and expand the retail appeal of the community to capture a larger market share.

Map 9-1 Trade Area



The 2009 study compiled recommendations under three broad initiatives for Denton designed to organize the tasks around corresponding goals for downtown. These initiatives were:

- Creating the Denton Brand: A **MARKETING STRATEGY**
- Fostering Investment: A **RETAIL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY**
- Welcoming Business: An **ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY**

Most of these recommendations have been implemented, and those requiring an ongoing effort continue to be pursued. An internet search on Denton and its economic development partners, Denton Downtown Main Street, Carline County Economic Development, Caroline County Tourism, Caroline Chamber of Commerce, and others, reflects coordinated marketing. From these points of departure, one can learn about the County's and Denton's many life-quality offerings or gain help with starting or growing a business.

Category two addresses the role of the Land Use Plan and zoning regulations as components of any economic development strategy. As Denton grows, its importance as a regional commercial center will increase. In addition to the market potential of being located on MD 404, a heavily traveled route to Atlantic beaches, expected population, and income growth would reinforce local shopping and create demand for more and a wider variety of commercial goods and services.

The Land Use Plan anticipates this need by identifying land areas for various commercial land uses, each appropriate to the commercial activity's anticipated scale and intensity. In addition to the traditional Central Business Commercial (CBC) area, the Land Use Plan provides for regional, larger scale, highway-oriented commercial uses, general commercial uses at in-town locations, limited commercial in transitional areas within reasonable proximity to MD 404, the specialized commercial where clustering of related commercial and services uses can occur, and neighborhood commercial in appropriate locations as part of a mixed-use, planned neighborhood development.

An essential objective for any community is to achieve the best possible job/housing balance. In simple terms, job/housing balance means having jobs close (e.g., 3 to 5 miles) to where workers live. In addition, the distribution of industrial and commercial land supports opportunities to locate jobs closer to residents, considered an essential aspect of the overall quality of life for County and Town residents. Denton has the capacity, both in terms of land available for commercial and industrial enterprises and existing or planned housing stock, well within the 3-to-5-mile criteria cited.

However, many residents of Denton currently travel much further than five miles to their places of employment. For example, in 2019, the Census Bureau estimated nearly 80 percent of all workers in Denton traveled over 10 miles to their place of work, and nearly 30 percent traveled over 50 miles. It was also reported that of the 2,623 people employed in the Town, 87.3 percent lived in but were employed outside the Town.

Additional GC General Commercial zoning may be required to support available goods and services within a comfortable walking or short commuting distance within neighborhoods.

Increasing opportunities for more neighborhood-serving establishments is particularly critical if recent increases in commuting costs, average gasoline prices approaching five dollars per gallon, and working from home (telecommuting) become the norm.

Development regulations must be flexible enough to adjust to changing economic development requirements. For example, there is a movement to co-locate data centers with greenhouses to provide an energy-sharing system. Data centers produce heat that can be captured and rerouted to greenhouses. Denton should ensure that zoning regulations permit these cooperative uses in commercial and industrial districts.

CHAPTER 10 - HOUSING

Introduction

A primary focus of community planning is decent, safe, and sanitary housing for all Town residents. Facilitating the production of affordable housing options strengthens and makes a more resilient community and helps combat housing discrimination policies and practices that disproportionately affect populations of color.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Provide opportunities for safe, sanitary, decent, and affordable housing for all citizens.
- Denton is an inclusive community without barriers that limit housing access based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability.

Objectives

- Housing that addresses the needs of all segments of the community.
- Expanded housing choices.
- Policies and regulations supporting private and public sector initiatives to provide affordable housing.
- Continued maintenance and upkeep of existing housing and renovation or removal of substandard housing.
- Work with the Town Council, agencies, and stakeholders to assess fair housing practices affecting Denton residents.
- Work with the Town Council to implement the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Plan outlined in Resolution 894.
- Evaluate Comprehensive Plan goals, objectives, policies, and development regulations to ensure compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws and modify them appropriately.

Policy

- If unfair practices are found, take steps to eliminate patterns of housing segregation.

Background

Unit Type

In 2020, the U.S. Census reported 1,864 housing units in the Town of Denton, an increase of 73 units and four percent over the 2010 count. Of the total inventory of dwelling units in the 2017 Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation database (1,668 units), 70 percent were classified as single-family detached homes. Multifamily and townhouse units accounted for 28 percent (see Table 10-1). In addition, the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates confirm the dominance of detached single-family units in the housing inventory.

Unit Type	Number	Percent
Detached Single-Family	1,169	70%
Townhouse	153	9%
Multifamily	325	19%
Mobile Home	9	1%
Mixed-Use	12	1%
Total	1,668	100%

Source: Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation, MdPropertyView©

Age

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, almost 20 percent of Denton's homes were built in or before 1939. About 57 percent were built before 1960 (see Table 10-2). This data indicates that nearly sixty-eight percent of the housing units are over 50 years old. The data reinforces the importance of maintenance and upkeep of the existing housing stock and renovation or removal of substandard housing at the end of its effective lifecycle.

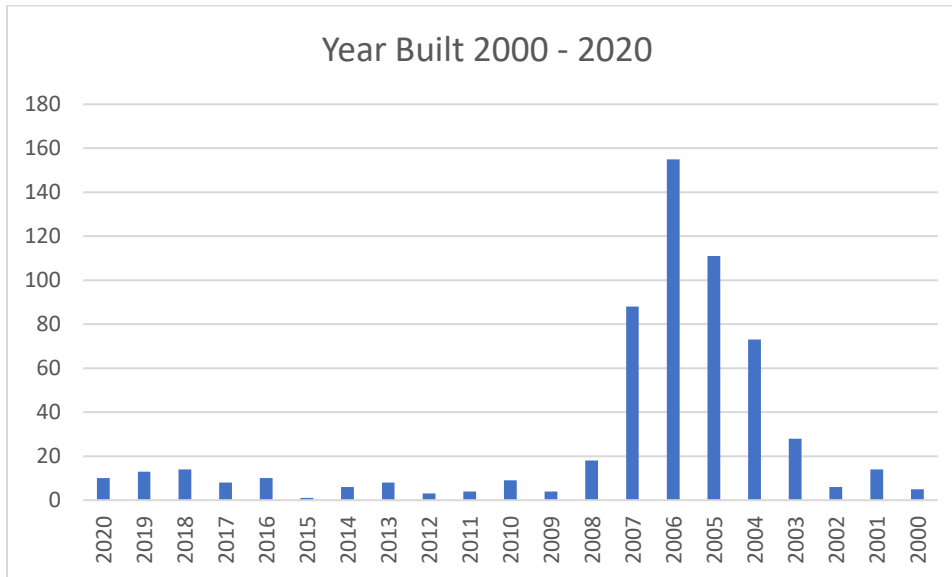
	Number	Percent of Total
Total housing units	1,744	100%
Built 2005 or later	169	10%
Built 2000 to 2004	108	6%
Built 1990 to 1999	88	5%
Built 1980 to 1989	187	11%
Built 1970 to 1979	197	11%
Built 1960 to 1969	251	14%
Built 1950 to 1959	310	18%
Built 1940 to 1949	87	5%
Built 1939 or earlier	347	20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

New Housing Production

Maintaining a healthy balance between housing supply and demand affects the price. When supply falls short of demand, sale and rent prices tend to increase, pricing households at the income margin out of the housing market. According to Department of Assessment and Taxation data, since the 2000 Census, 588 housing units have been built in Denton through 2020 (Chart 10-1). Housing production peaked in 2006, undoubtedly coinciding with the crash of the nationwide housing bubble. Housing production dropped precipitously after 2008. From 2000 to 2010, an average of fifty units were added each year. From 2011 to 2020, eight units were added each year on average.

Chart 10-1: Year Built 2000 - 2020



Tenure

Homeownership is the dominant form of tenure in Denton, with about 54 percent of all units owner-occupied (See Table 10-3). However, following a nationwide trend, since 2010, there has been a decrease in owner-occupied units and an increase in renter-occupied units. Also, there has been an increase in vacant units. According to a Pew Research Center survey, nearly 65 percent of respondents rent due to circumstances, and 72 percent of renters would like to buy a home.¹⁸

	2000		2010		2017	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
Total housing units	1,264	100%	1,791	100%	1,860	100%
Occupied housing units	1,140	90%	1,606	90%	1,553	83%
Vacant housing units	124	10%	185	10%	307	17%

¹⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/19/more-u-s-households-are-renting-than-at-any-point-in-50-years/>

	2000		2010		2017	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
Owner-occupied housing units	645	57%	906	56%	836	54%
Renter-occupied housing units	495	43%	700	44%	717	46%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census</i>						
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census</i>						
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates</i>						

The Census Bureau estimates owner-occupied housing units comprised about 54 percent of the occupied housing stock in 2019, and slightly over 46 percent of homes are renter-occupied. The percentage of renter households in Denton is almost forty percent higher than in Caroline, about a third higher than in Talbot County, and slightly higher than in Easton (See Table 10-4).

Jurisdiction	Total Occupied Housing Units	Owner-Occupied Units as Percent of Total Units	Renter-Occupied Units as Percent of Total Units
Denton	1,553	54%	46%
Caroline	12,024	73%	27%
Easton	7,525	57%	43%
Talbot County	16,826	70%	30%
<i>Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020 ACS 5-year data</i>			

Home Prices and Homeowners

Current data on home sales and prices are unavailable at the municipal level. However, industry, federal, and state data collected from county jurisdictions are available, and as Caroline County data includes Denton, it is relevant and will be used for the following discussion.

Data on Caroline County home sales and median home prices indicate that growth in existing home sales rose by about a third between 2017 and 2021, as did the median home prices (see Table 10-5). However, the sale price for houses in Caroline was lower than in all jurisdictions shown in Table 10-5.

While median house prices are lower in Caroline County than in most surrounding counties, this does not mean housing is more affordable. Household incomes are lower in Denton than in surrounding towns and counties, so people generally cannot afford to pay as much for housing (see Table 10-6).

Existing Home Sales in Units	Total Units Sold 2021	Total Units Sold 2017 - 2021	Average Units Sold 2017 -2021	Unit Increase 2017 - 2021	Average & Median Sales Price		
					Average Sales Price 2021	Median Sales Price 2021	Average Median Increase 2017-2021
County							
Caroline County	509	2,144	429	31%	\$239,907	\$255,000	33%
Talbot	842	3,743	749	20%	\$722,619	\$415,000	57%
Dorchester	633	2,471	494	46%	\$291,003	\$237,000	60%
Kent	498	1,922	384	49%	\$398,605	\$269,000	53%
Queen Anne's	1,207	5,078	1,016	30%	\$512,047	\$410,000	41%

Source: Maryland Association of Realtors, <http://www.mdrealtor.org/Resources/Publications/Monthly-Housing-Statistics>

County	Median Household Income
Caroline	\$58,638
Denton	\$50,081
Easton	\$61,651
Talbot	\$73,547
Queen Anne's	\$86,738
Kent	\$58,598

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020 ACS 5-year data

From 2016 to 2020, median home prices in the County increased faster than median household income. As a result, a substantial gap has grown between Caroline County residents' incomes and housing costs. While this is a State and nationwide trend, the gap is significant in the County. For example, between 2016 and 2020, median home sale prices in Caroline County increased by 36 percent. By comparison, the median household income increased only 12 percent during the same period, significantly less than the median home sale prices increase.

Affordable Housing

Defining terms is fundamental to the discussion of affordable housing. Setting policy and objectives or establishing performance measures is problematic without a basic definition. The Housing Cost Burden and the Maryland Housing Affordability Index provide input to help establish parameters for affordable housing discussions.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, a household has a "housing cost burden" if it spends 30 percent or more of its income on housing. A household has a "severe housing cost burden" if it spends 50 percent or more of its

income on housing. The housing cost burden combines renter and owner-occupied housing statistics. Owner housing costs include mortgage payments, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, or similar debts on the property; real estate taxes; fire, hazard, and flood insurance; utilities; and fuels. Where applicable, owner costs also include monthly condominium fees. Renter calculations use gross rent, the contract rent, and the estimated monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water, sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.). Household income is the total pre-tax income of the householder and all other individuals at least 15 years old in the household.

Table 10-7 illustrates the disparity in income and housing costs of low-income families in Denton, with data from Caroline County, Easton, and Talbot County for comparison purposes. The "low-income" category includes households with incomes at or below 80 percent of the area median income ("middle income" refers to those with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the median, and "high-income" includes those who have an income of at least 120 percent of area median income).

Including renters and homeowners, over half of the low-income families are cost-burdened in Denton, spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing. In addition, a lower yet substantial number of low-income households in Denton are severely cost-burdened (spending 50 percent or more of their income on housing). Although the percentage of housing cost-burdened compares favorably with Easton, Denton has a higher percentage of severely cost-burdened households than Caroline, Talbot Counties, and Easton.

County	Percent of Household Income \geq 30%	Percent of Household Income \geq 50%
Denton	52.05%	18.61%
Caroline	64.69%	14.28%
Easton	61.04%	14.26%
Talbot	67.91%	12.99%

Source: Special Tabulation (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Study) Files, U.S. Census and HUD

HB 1045 (2019) amended 3-102 of the Land Use Article, requiring a housing element in comprehensive plans for all Maryland jurisdictions. The statute requires a housing element to address the need for affordable housing, including workforce and low-income housing. The law directs jurisdictions to use HUD's Area Median Income (AMI) calculations when planning for the workforce and low-income housing. AMI is the commonly used housing industry term reflecting annual Median Family Income (MFI) calculations for non-metropolitan counties, called Income Limit Areas. Approximately 50% of families have an annual income above the AMI/MFI level and 50% below. HUD bases its annual calculations for AMI on the American Community Survey (ACS) Median Family Income in The Past 12 Months. Table 10-8 summarizes the most recent application of this formula to Caroline County. The AMI reported for Denton was lower, \$61,000 (see Table 10-9).

2020 AMI for Caroline County, MD;	\$68,900	
HB 1045 Household Income Levels/Ranges		
Workforce Ownership Range (60% - 120% AMI):	\$41,340	\$82,680
Workforce Rental Range (50% - 120% AMI):	\$34,450	\$82,680

Low Income (< 60% AMI):	\$41,340	
Affordable Homeowner/Rental Monthly Payments (Based on 30% of Household Income)		
Workforce Ownership Range:	\$999	\$1,998
Workforce Rental Range:	\$833	\$1,998
Low Income:	\$999	

Table 10-9: Denton 2020 AMI		
2020 AMI for Denton, MD;	\$61,000	
HB 1045 Household Income Levels/Ranges		
Workforce Ownership Range (60% - 120% AMI):	\$36,600	\$73,200
Workforce Rental Range (50% - 120% AMI):	\$30,500	\$73,200
Low Income (< 60% AMI):	\$36,600	
Affordable Homeowner/Rental Monthly Payments (Based on 30% of Household Income)		
Workforce Ownership Range:	\$884	\$1,769
Workforce Rental Range:	\$737	\$1,769
Low Income:	\$884	

Based on income estimates for 2020, nearly one-third of households in Denton had incomes below the level to afford low-income rental housing costs of \$884 a month. At the same time, over sixty percent of households had incomes below the ranges sufficient to afford ownership housing costs of \$1,769 per month (see Table 10-10).

Table 10-10: Average Household Income in the Past 12 Months - Denton	
Household Income*	
Less than \$10,000	5.30%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.60%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.00%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13.30%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	14.90%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.50%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5.10%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14.10%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.60%
\$200,000 or more	4.50%
*2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates	

Summary Conclusions

- There is a need for an affordable workforce and low-income housing in Caroline County. "Like most areas in Maryland and the nation, Caroline County has an affordable housing issue."¹⁹
- Addressing the problem of affordable housing will require a regional approach at best and a countywide approach at a minimum. "Current demographic trends on the Eastern Shore, primarily an aging population base, conclude that service workers are critical to serving County residents. This includes various services from daily living needs to health care, construction/repair, and government services. In this regard, the County should coordinate housing plans, policies, and regulations closely with municipalities to provide adequate, affordable housing served by public infrastructure."²⁰
- The age of housing, 68 percent over fifty years old, underscores the need to preserve the existing housing stock with affordable rents. The challenge is encouraging reinvestment in existing structures without substantially increasing rents and decreasing the current inventory of affordable rental units.
- Housing needs require multiple response strategies targeted to the full spectrum of housing types. The needs include emergency shelters (e.g., short-term housing for the homeless, transitional housing (e.g., halfway house), subsidized social housing for people with special needs (group homes, assisted living), and affordable rental and ownership housing for low- and middle-income households.

Fair Housing - Town Council Resolution No. 894

Denton Town Council Resolution No. 894, adopted July 6, 2023, wherein Denton certified the Town follows a detailed Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Plan. By this resolution, the Town of Denton committed to creating an environment for its citizens where no one is excluded from participation or benefit due to their race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, familial status, marital status, age, or religion. Denying rights based on these protected classes harms citizens' health, safety, and welfare. It constitutes an unjust denial or deprivation of such inalienable rights, which is within the government's power and proper responsibility to prevent. The following summarizes the Town's Fair Housing commitments.

Fair Housing

Following the federal Civil Rights Act of 1968 (as amended), the federal Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (as amended), and the Fair Housing Act of 1988, the Town of Denton will promote through fair, orderly, and lawful procedures, the opportunity for each person to obtain

¹⁹ Caroline County Comprehensive Plan, April 2010, pg. 187

²⁰ Ibid, pg. 188

housing of such person's choice in this community without regard to race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, familial status, marital status, age, or religion.

To the best of our ability, the Town of Denton will promote and encourage fair housing choices for all its residents. The Town of Denton's administrative practices, policies, and laws will attempt to prohibit:

- Discrimination in the Sale or Rental of Housing
- Discrimination in Housing Financing
- Discrimination in Providing Brokerage Services
- Unlawful Intimidation

The Town of Denton will accept complaints from any citizen who feels that they have been discriminated against concerning their housing choice. The Town of Denton will make an initial investigation and refer the complaint to the State or the federal housing departments.

For housing projects developed or assisted with federal funds, the Town of Denton will ensure that its subrecipients and developers will comply with statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders.

Policy Options

A report published by the Brookings Institute entitled *Rethinking Local Affordable Housing Strategies: Lessons From 70 Years of Policy And Practice*¹ evaluated the effectiveness of three broad approaches to affordable housing—rental assistance, homeownership assistance, and regulatory policies, and discussed the lessons learned over the past seven decades. The key findings reported are informative for discussing potential affordable housing policies and strategies for Denton. These points are:

- The responsibilities for implementing affordable housing are increasingly shifting to state and local actors.
- Rental assistance programs require deep subsidies if they are to reach the neediest households; moreover, to be successful, rental assistance programs should avoid clustering affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods and include efforts to raise the incomes of low-income households and
- Land use and other regulatory policies can profoundly affect the location and supply of affordable housing.

The authors point out that "the success of affordable housing programs is determined by how much it achieves a narrow set of objectives, such as the number of new units created or households with affordable housing cost burdens. Although important, these narrow criteria do not reflect the demands on affordable housing programs. Today, affordable housing policies must help

promote healthy families and communities."²¹ The authors suggest that the following seven goals provide a comprehensive framework by which local leaders should evaluate the effectiveness of affordable housing programs:

1. Preserve and expand the supply of good-quality housing units.
2. Make existing housing more affordable and more readily available.
3. Promote racial and economic diversity in residential neighborhoods.
4. Help households build wealth.
5. Strengthen families.
6. Link housing with essential supportive services.
7. Promote balanced metropolitan growth.

Although not all housing programs can meet all housing objectives simultaneously, the list provides a baseline for aligning housing policy with other desired community outcomes. The past lessons also suggest principles to guide local housing policy. As the authors state, "...some of these principles may seem obvious but are frequently ignored. Others run counter to the conventional wisdom, but following them could avoid some of the more dismal failures for which conventional thinking is responsible."²² The principles are:

- Regulation can be a powerful housing policy tool.
- Housing strategies should be tailored to local market conditions.
- Housing markets are regional, so housing policies should be.
- Income policy is housing policy.
- Race matters.
- Implementation matters.

Regulations and Affordable Housing

Perhaps most directly related to affordable housing recommendations are those that may impact land use and other development regulations and policies. The Brookings Institute research and other studies demonstrate that regulations governing land use, residential development, construction standards, subdivision design, and property maintenance play critical roles, even when they are not considered part of an affordable housing strategy. For example, the Brookings study suggests that local land use and development regulations that include large lot sizes, expensive subdivision design standards, construction codes, prohibitions against manufactured housing, townhouses, or multifamily development, and time-consuming permitting processes make

²¹ Rethinking Local Affordable Housing Strategies: Lessons From 70 Years Of Policy And Practice, Bruce Katz and Margery Austin Turner, The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, The Urban Institute, December 2003

²² Ibid

housing more expensive. They also state that regulatory barriers have prevented affordable housing development and reinforced economic and racial separation patterns.

Affordable Housing Mandates (Inclusionary Zoning)

A recent zoning technique that is becoming more popular as an affordable housing strategy is inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning is a technique that can be used to increase the number of affordable units—for both ownership and rental. Inclusionary zoning can be either mandatory or voluntary. In either case, developers "set aside" some units in new residential developments for low- and moderate-income households. Zoning usually provides developer incentives such as density bonuses and/or reduced fees. The intent is that these incentives reduce or offset some of the cost of producing affordable units. In addition, some communities accept an in-lieu fee. These cash contributions are allocated to an affordable housing fund. These fees may be used by a local housing authority and/or nonprofit organization to buy and/or develop affordable units.

Inclusionary zoning is not recommended as a housing strategy for the Town. The potential of affordable housing mandates is generally modest, and unless housing demand is robust, it will reduce total housing development, particularly middle-priced units. Inclusionary zoning requires developers to sell or rent a portion (typically 10-20 percent) of the units they build at below-market prices. It effectively requires higher-income households to cross-subsidize their lower-income neighbors. If required of all development in an area, these costs are partly capitalized into land values, minimizing the burden on individual developers. However, this strategy is only successful if new housing demand is robust; if not, developers will tend to build fewer moderate-priced units, resulting in less total affordable housing supply. In addition, recent studies of the effect of inclusionary zoning in California, Boston, and the Baltimore-Washington region found that such regulations increase market rate prices and decrease supply in some cases under varied market conditions.²³

Recommendations

The Comprehensive Plan can recommend several actions related to regulatory and other policies that impact affordable housing, including the following:

- Ensure that regulatory policies align with affordable housing goals and correct regulations or requirements that exclude affordable housing types or unnecessarily raise construction costs.
- Maximize density in development or redevelopment projects where appropriate, permitting townhouses and multifamily in a project mix of residential units.
- Implement public water and sewer projects that enable higher-density residential development and mixed-use neighborhoods in designated growth areas and encourage a mix of housing densities and types in new subdivisions.

²³ <https://www.mercatus.org/research/policy-briefs/inclusionary-zoning-hurts-more-it-helps>

- Modify building codes and/or make them more flexible to eliminate unnecessarily costly construction requirements where possible.
- Streamline approval processes to make the development process less time-consuming.
- Work with Caroline County to waive or reduce fees (e.g., impact fees) and infrastructure requirements for affordable housing developments to make them financially feasible.
- Support the efforts of Habitat for Humanity Tuckahoe, Inc., and similar groups providing safe, decent, and affordable housing.
- Facilitate infill development on vacant or underutilized land that produces affordable housing.
- Modifying zoning regulations to permit the full spectrum of housing types where appropriate.
- Participate with State agencies, Caroline County, and others to coordinate affordable housing activities and programs.
- Assist agencies and organizations required to prepare a comprehensive housing plan to identify local data and knowledge sources and collect metrics, statistics, and other quantified information relevant to Denton gathered by consulting agencies, academics, and others with knowledge of the Denton housing situations or whose work impacts housing. This task includes working with the His Hope Ministries (emergency shelters) and other housing providers to assess the housing needs of these groups, identify barriers and issues, and recommend actions to address them.
- Evaluate strategies that address identified fair housing issues and make recommendations.

Neighborhood Conservation

The qualities of neighborhoods that brought people to live in them should be respected and protected. For this reason, the Town is concerned with the conservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock and the stability of housing values in existing neighborhoods. At the same time, it is incumbent on the community to utilize its land and infrastructure resources efficiently. Neighborhood conservation is about controlling the pace and degree of change, allowing each neighborhood to evolve while retaining its essential positive features.

Neighborhood conservation does not just mean ensuring housing is decent, safe, and sanitary or that properties are adequately maintained. It means ensuring that when properties are developed or redeveloped, the architectural style of the residence and the way it is placed on the site are compatible with and contribute positively to the existing neighborhood character. Each new home built in the neighborhood should be viewed as a part of an incremental growth process, creating an identity of its own but integrated with the current neighborhood character. New

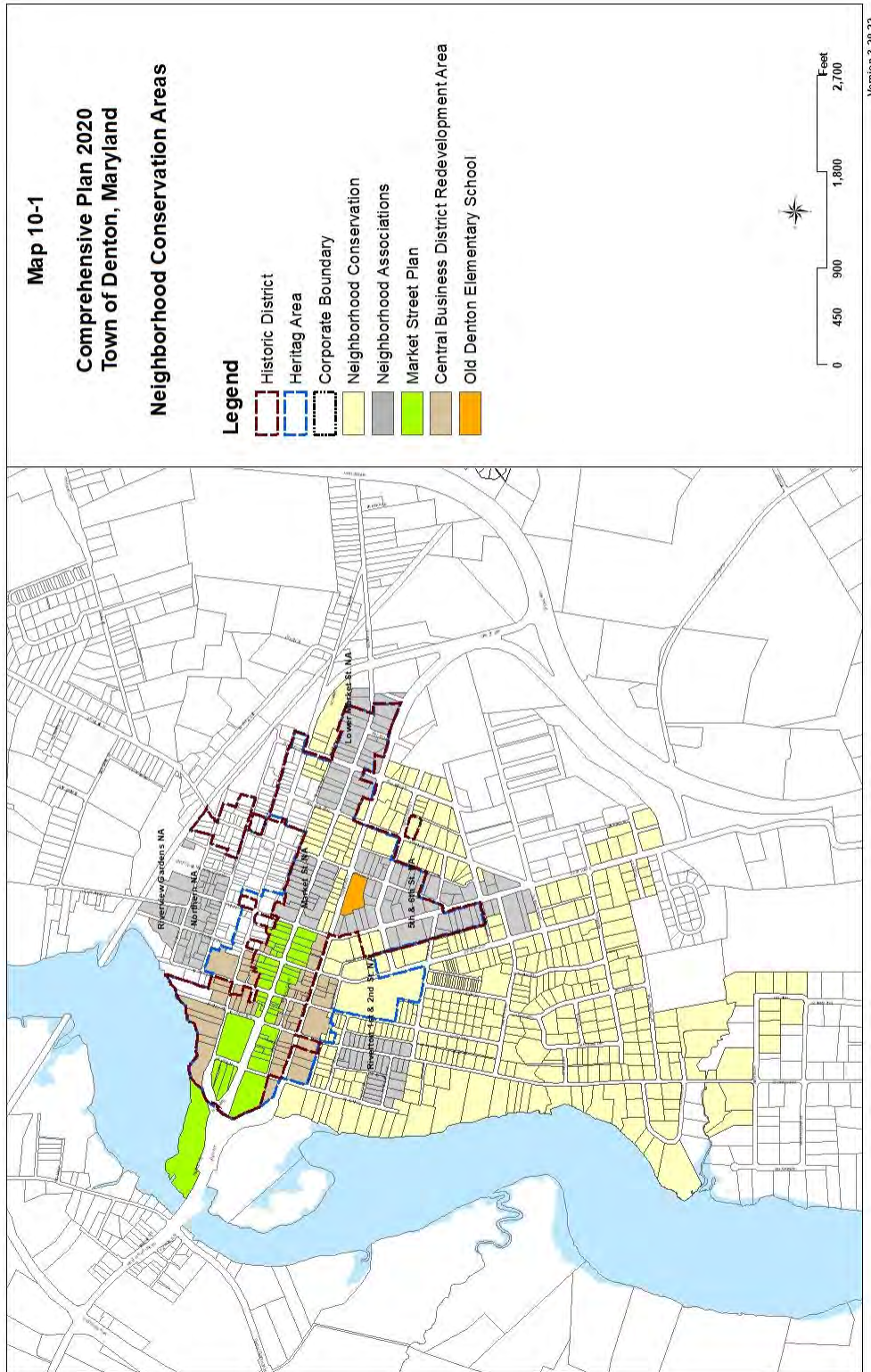
residences should reflect unity and a positive relationship to the overall character of the neighborhood. In this way, new homes can enhance the order and richness of the community.

Infill, new development, or redevelopment in existing residential neighborhoods should conform, to the extent possible, with the neighborhood's site development and architectural character. The Denton Pattern Book provides detailed guidance in this respect. In addition, the 1997 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommended Neighborhood Conservation areas where incentives for development and redevelopment in character with the existing residential neighborhoods should apply (see Map 10-1). The incentives might include the following:

- Waiver of basic permitting fees
- Short-term tax relief
- Reduced development standards
- Others

The Town encourages neighborhood associations to present a collective neighborhood perspective on matters of Town policy. Neighborhood Associations can play a valuable role in defining housing and community conservation policies, helping define the balance points among community character, affordable housing, and efficient resource utilization objectives.

Map 10-1 Neighborhood Conservation Areas



CHAPTER 11 - HISTORIC FEATURES

Introduction

A community that perpetuates the use of its original or historical features to serve the needs of current and future generations maintains a physical and emotional link with its past. It ensures that the Town's unique identity will not be lost. The past is a building block for the future, and if a plan is to be comprehensive, it must incorporate its past as an element of planning for its future. Therefore, preserving Denton's historical heritage is vitally important and recognized as necessary by the community.

The overall goal is to preserve places and structures of historical significance. It is understood that this is best accomplished by various methods, including:

- Encouraging the preservation, renovation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of buildings with historical and architectural significance.
- Supporting the promotion of historic sites through tourism efforts and business services that are complementary to historic areas.
- Supporting the efforts of preservation and cultural organizations in the Town.
- Encouraging school and community participation in historical resource management programs through education and public awareness and
- Utilizing Federal and State funding programs that might assist in the restoration and upkeep of the buildings.

Goals and Objectives

Goal

- Preserve structures of historical significance.

Objectives

- Encourage the preservation, renovation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of buildings with historical and architectural significance.
- Support promoting historic sites through tourism efforts and business services complementary to historic areas.
- Support the efforts of preservation and cultural organizations in the Town.

- Encourage school and community participation in historical resource management programs through education and public awareness.
- Consider the use of Federal and State funding programs that might be used to assist in the restoration and upkeep of the building.
- Enhance Denton's visibility in Stories of the Chesapeake Bay Heritage Management Area.

Brief Historical Perspective

Denton is the seat of Caroline County, located on the banks of the Choptank River and near the County's geographic center and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Today, Denton is a large rural area's governmental, commercial, and employment center. The Town began as a small settlement on Pig Point, which projects into the Choptank River. About 1773, the settlement was named Edentown in honor of Sir Robert Eden, a contemporary English statesman. Soon after the American Revolution, the village's name was changed to Edenton. In 1790, when the Assembly Act provided for relocating the County Seat from Melvill's Warehouse, it was shortened to Denton. By this time, the Town was a trade center of some importance. A wharf was constructed in the Town on the Choptank River in 1792. In 1793, four acres were secured to construct a Court House. The original Court House was replaced by a larger one in 1895, which remains in use today (a major addition was completed in 1967).

In 1827, a marketplace was opened where the Masonic Hall now stands, facing the public square. Farm produce was sold here, as were enslaved people. Then, in 1835, the first factory was built in Denton to manufacture plows.

During the early 1800s, Courthouse Square was the site of a slave market and a jail that held fugitive slaves and Underground Railroad operators. Slavery was a significant part of the Nation's economy until the Civil War, and by 1804, slavery was abolished in all the states north of Maryland. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway traces the likely movements of freedom seekers across the landscape, connecting several historic towns, including Cambridge, East New Market, Preston, Denton, Hillsboro, and Greensboro. It also provides access to historic landscapes connected to slavery, the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and numerous others who risked everything to secure freedom for themselves and others.

Early travel to Denton was by water. The first steamboat came up the Choptank River to Denton from Baltimore before 1850. It made only one trip, but later, the "Dupont" made weekly trips between Denton and Baltimore with freight and passengers. In about 1792, probably to shorten the distance of the ferry across the Choptank, a causeway was built across the marsh on the east side of the river. 1811, the Denton Bridge Company was formed, and a toll bridge was constructed. This bridge remained a toll bridge until shortly before the Civil War when it was sold to the County. In 1875, it was replaced by the iron bridge, which remained standing until 1913, when another iron bridge was constructed. This bridge lasted until March 1976. At that time, extensive reinforcement

was done on the bridge until a new concrete bridge could be built. Construction of the new bridge was begun in early 1980, and the present bridge was dedicated on Memorial Day weekend, 1981.

Sometime before 1860, a stage line started via Denton between Easton and Felton, Delaware. After 1860, the stage met the Chester Riverboat at Queenstown. Improved transportation routes enhanced Denton's position as a trade center, and by the time of the Civil War, new stores, shops, schools, and churches were constructed. Unfortunately, most of the business district was wiped out by a fire in 1863, when a company of Union soldiers stationed as guards in the Town, celebrating the Fourth of July with fireworks, accidentally set fire to a shop building. The ensuing fire burned almost all of the business area, which consisted of several stores, a hotel, and a rum shop.

Historic Resources

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP), a repository of information on districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of known or potential value to the prehistory and history of the State of Maryland, includes over 100 properties in Denton and two separate inventory areas or districts (see Map 11-1). According to the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT), the resource inventory contributes information to our understanding of Maryland's architecture, engineering, archaeology, and culture. The MHT inventory contains examples of various styles of nineteenth and early twentieth-century residential and commercial architecture, including Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Federal, Victorian, Victorian Gothic, Gothic Revival, and Romanesque. Many of the structures found in the MHT inventory are good examples of a particular architectural style; however, several buildings are vernacular interpretations of popular styles, and their decorative detailing reflects the influences of these styles. Most buildings, places, and structures within the Denton MHT inventory are considered to contribute to the district's significance by their age and architectural character. The most significant properties listed in the MHT inventory are:

- Christ Episcopal Church, 1874
- Caroline County Courthouse, 1791, 1895, 1966
- 328 Market Street, late 19th century
- 12 Fifth Avenue, Horsey Deakyne House, circa 1883
- Colored School, early 20th century
- Annie Taylor House, circa 1800
- 7 N. Fourth Street, Early Denton Dwelling, circa 1810, with additions
- Denton Schoolhouse/Woman's Club of Denton, 1883
- Peoples Bank; Kent, Ogletree, and Thornton Law Offices, circa 1900
- Emerson-Fisher-Horsey House, circa 1879
- Law Building, circa 1905
- Denton Armory, circa 1938

The MHT inventory area begins at First Street and extends east along Market Street to Ninth Street, incorporating many of the Town's original streets. It continues north of Market Street and includes the blocks between First and Second Streets and all properties extending to the river, including the

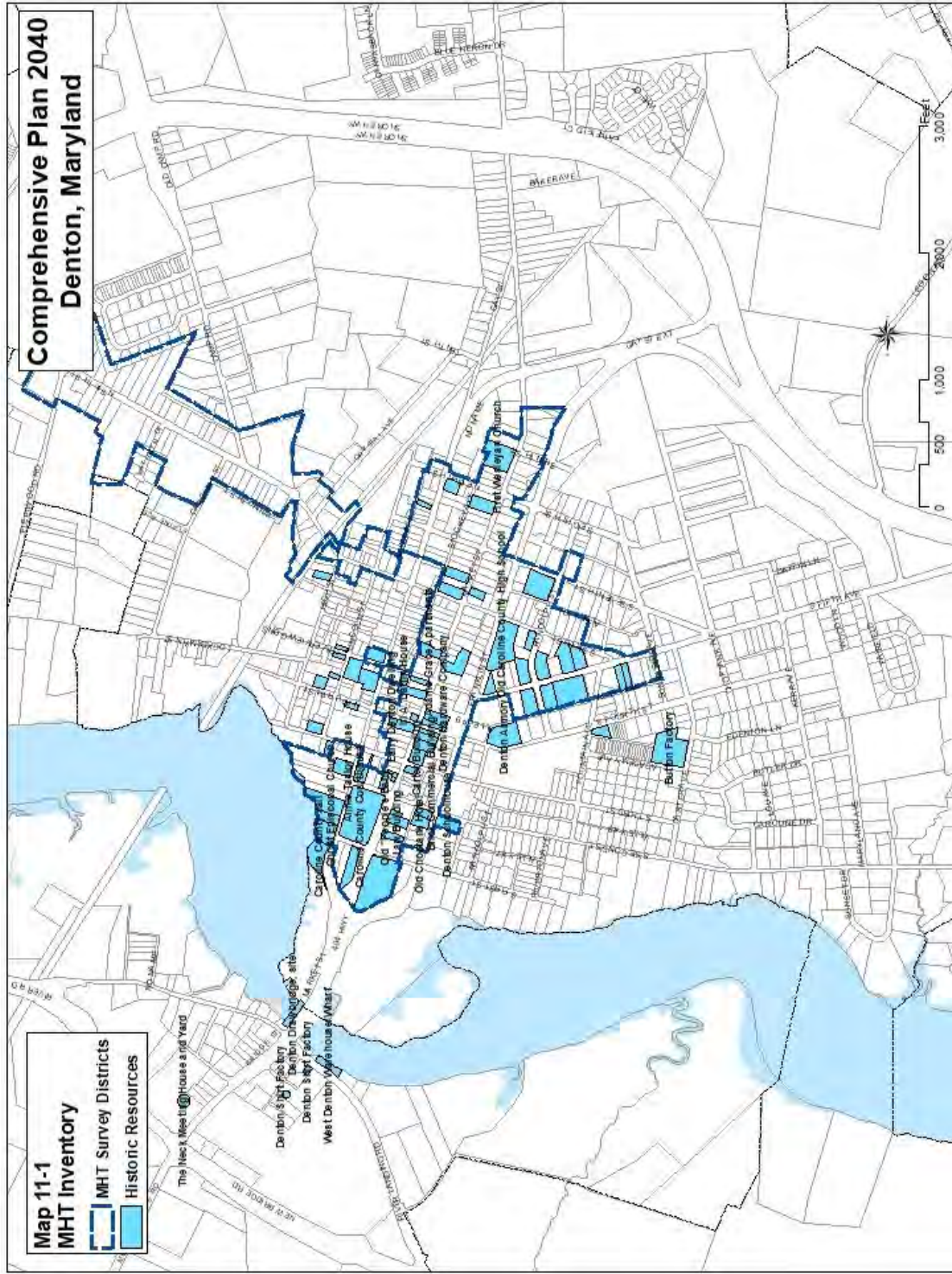
courthouse and the courthouse square. Several structures dating from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries surround the square. The simple architecture of these flat-fronted, symmetrical buildings reflects strong influences from the Federal period of architecture. Popular on the East Coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, houses built in the Federal style were commonly made of brick; however, the frame buildings surrounding the courthouse square exhibit the hallmarks of this style: low-pitched roofs, flat facades, doors with sidelights and fanlights, and restrained classical ornamentation on cornices around doors and windows.

East of the square, along Market Street, is a mixture of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century frame residences, two-story brick storefront buildings, and one-story concrete block commercial structures. Typical residential architecture forms of this period included the two- or three-bay wide, two-story, gable-front house, sometimes with a one-story front porch, bungalows, and hip-roofed houses showing a Colonial Revival influence. South of Market Street, the MHT inventory area encompasses the blocks between Market and Franklin Streets. The Denton Schoolhouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, sits at the corner of Franklin and Second Streets. The schoolhouse was built during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with a Latin Cross plan and incorporated several features of the Gothic Revival style. In addition, the use of a style most often found in ecclesiastical architecture gives the schoolhouse an unusual character.

The MHT inventory area continues south of Franklin Street down both Fifth and Sixth Streets, ending on Sixth Street at Fountain Avenue and continuing down the west side of Fifth Street to Sunnyside Avenue. The houses along Fifth Street sit well back from the street on expansive lots and are larger and more elaborate than those in the rest of the district. Domestic architectural styles along Fifth Street include Colonial Revival and Shingle Style, both fashionable in the early twentieth century. The colonial design was revived as a popular style in the 1870s when the United States celebrated its first centennial. The style is reminiscent of early American architecture and is typically seen in the design of residences but is also apparent in many bank buildings and churches of the period. Common characteristics of Colonial Revival include symmetrical facades, side porches, and architectural embellishments such as domes, classical cornices, fanlights, and sidelights at entryways, and classical window detailing, including swags, garlands, and urns.

The influence of Victorian architecture is also visible in the MHT inventory area. Popular at the end of the nineteenth century, Victorian architecture was more elaborate than the classical, stately styles of the Federal and Colonial Revival periods. Victorian architecture was decoratively rich, including its Queen Anne and Gothic Revival forms. Specific details included irregular rooflines, cross gables, gingerbread, eaves on several levels, and asymmetrical window and door openings.

Map 11-1 MHT Inventory



In the downtown business district of Denton, the historic commercial buildings are the defining feature of the landscape. Historic storefronts along Market Street share many common characteristics, including height and width, setbacks from the street, proportions of window and door openings, and roof profiles. A typical nineteenth-century storefront consisted of a centrally located door recessed for protection from inclement weather and flanked on either side by commercial buildings with large display windows. Many storefronts featured glass transoms above doors and windows. Canvas awnings were often installed to shade the storefront, and a signboard placed above the storefront was a prominent part of the facade. The commercial buildings along Market Street exhibit these features and invoke a strong sense of Denton's historical identity as a regional market center during the nineteenth century.

The MHT inventory area also includes some good examples of ecclesiastical architecture. The Town's first substantial church building, constructed on Market Street in 1867, was a brick Romanesque-style structure for the local Methodist Episcopal congregation. The Romanesque style of this church was reflected in the design of two buildings that appeared later as fixtures in the landscape of downtown Denton: The First National Bank building, constructed circa 1885 at the corner of Market Street and Fourth Street, and the Caroline County courthouse, which was built in 1895. A second, smaller church, built in the Victorian Gothic style, was erected circa 1873 by the Town's Protestant Episcopal congregation. The Town's third church, the Methodist Protestant Church, was erected on Market Street in 1897.

Historic District Overlay Zone

It is important to Denton to preserve the buildings and properties that are the vestiges of its past. Therefore, the Town Council established the Historic District and Historic District Overlay Zone to ensure significant properties and structures are recognized, appreciated, and protected from demolition, neglect, or alterations that damage or destroy historical integrity. The Denton Historic Overlay Zone (Article IX, "Special District: Historic Overlay Zone," Denton Town Code § 128-43) was adopted in 1997 and is defined as an area designated by the Denton Town Council that contains significant features, woodlands, vegetation, structures, sites, monuments, landmarks, farmland, and/or archaeological sites (Map 11-2).

In 2002, a Historic and Architectural Review Commission (Historic Commission) was created with appointments to oversee the Town's Historic District as defined by the Historic Overlay Zone. The Commission comprises five members who must be qualified by particular interest, knowledge, or training in history, architecture, archaeology, preservation, or urban design. In addition, four of the five members are required to be residents of the Town, and two of the five have professional qualifications in one or more of those mentioned above or related fields. Members serve three-year terms and appoint a new Chairman annually.

The Historic Commission holds regular meetings no less than every three months and accepts submissions of applications for rehabilitation or construction involving the exterior of structures located in the Historic District and designation or removal of structures located in the Historic Overlay Zone. Meetings are open to the public. All decisions are made publicly, and applicants receive written notification.

In 2005, the Town adopted Historic and Architectural Review Commission Guidelines to provide a basis for discussing the appropriateness of proposed changes to historic structures and new construction in the Historic District. The procedures in the guidelines are designed to ensure compliance with existing Town codes and afford every applicant the same consideration of fairness and due process. The guidelines are also meant to assist owners of historic properties, architects, builders, members of the Historic and Architectural Review Commission, and others in understanding the appropriate treatment of historic sites, structures, and districts in Denton. The Commission, in turn, may use these guidelines as they apply to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to evaluate the appropriateness of changes to buildings or properties in the Historic District.

Protection and Preservation Programs

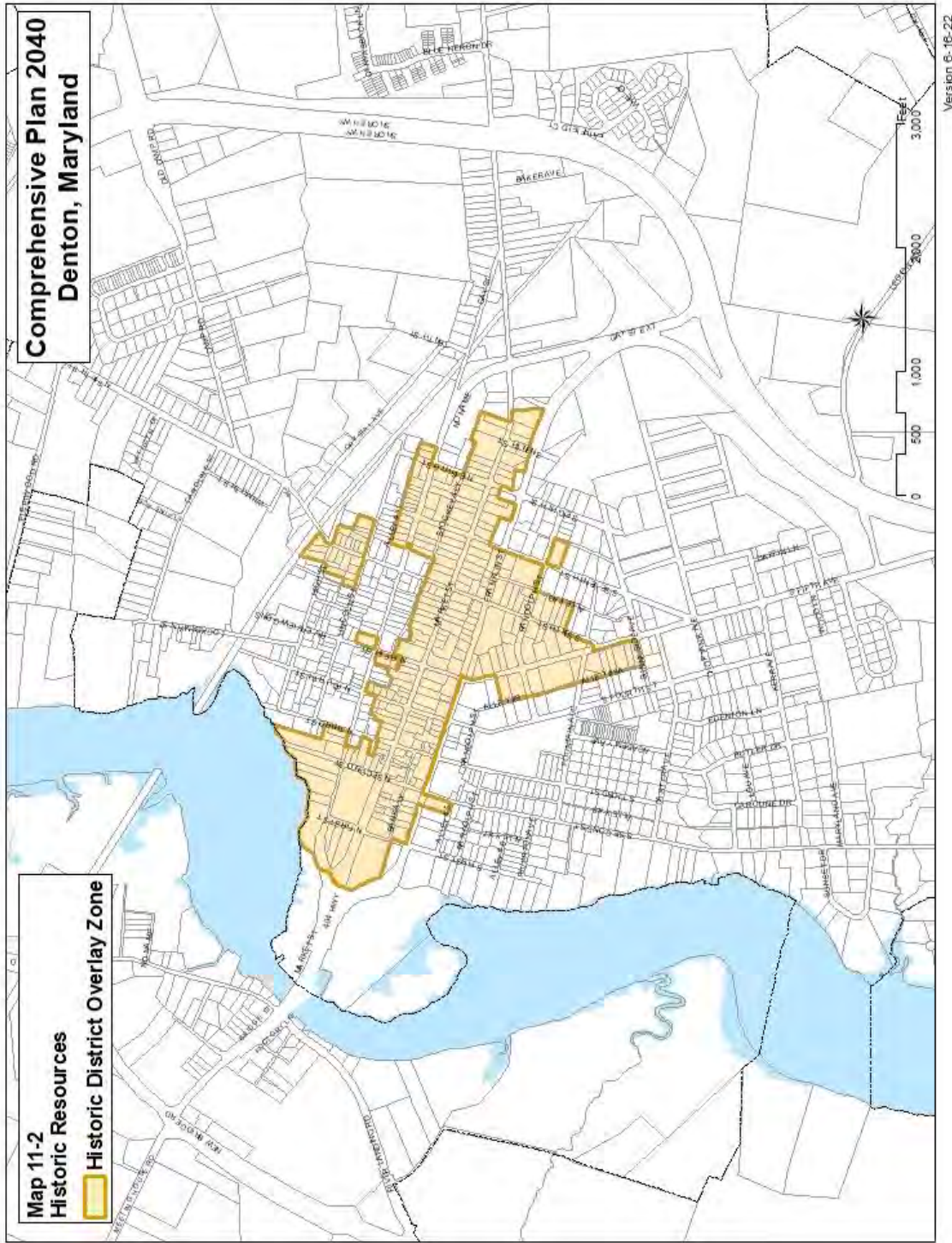
Federal and State

Several existing federal and State programs assist in protecting or preserving significant properties and offer tax benefits, professional historical/architectural consulting, and other resources to assist homeowners and property owners. More detailed information on programs, including the National Historic Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, Conservation and Preservation Easements, and Historic Overlay Districts, can be found in various historic preservation organizations such as the Maryland Historical Trust.

National Register of Historic Places - In 1966, Congress established the National Register of Historic Places as the Federal Government's official list of properties, including districts significant in American history and culture. In Maryland, the Register is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. Some benefits resulting from a listing in the National Register include the following:

- National recognition of the value of historic properties individually and collectively to the Nation.
- Eligibility for Federal tax incentives and other preservation assistance.
- Eligibility for a Maryland income tax benefit for the approved rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential buildings.
- Consideration in the planning for federally and state-assisted projects.
- The listing does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage, or dispose of the property.

Map 11-2 Historic Resources



Maryland Historical Trust - The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) surveys historic buildings, structures, and archaeological sites, which is used to determine listing eligibility on the state register. As with being on the National Register of Historic Places, the listing does not limit or regulate the property owner in what can or cannot be done with the property. To be considered for listing on the National Register or having an easement on the property to be accepted by the MHT, the site must first be listed on the Maryland Historical Trust Register.

Maryland Historic Preservation Easement - A state-held historic preservation easement monitored by the MHT is an excellent means of perpetually preserving a historical structure and property for future generations. Regulations state easements may be assigned to other parties or run with the land. The benefits for a property owner to donate his land to the MHT include income, estate, inheritance, gift, and property tax benefits. In exchange, the owner gives the MHT the final word regarding proposed alterations. However, for properties whose fair market value is primarily based on the value of development rights, this preservation method may not be the most financially suitable for the property owner or the MHT.

Preservation Incentives - The Maryland Historical Trust also provides financial assistance programs to encourage heritage preservation projects through several grant, loan, and tax credit programs. These include Capital and Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grants, the Museum Advancement Program, the Certified Local Government Subgrant Program, the Historic Preservation Loan Program, the State Tax Credit Program, and the Federal Tax Credit Program.

Historic Preservation Grant Fund - The Historic Preservation Grant Fund was created to encourage the preservation of historic properties statewide. Capital grant monies are available to nonprofit organizations, local governments, business entities, and individual citizens committed to preserving their historic resources. The funds can be used for development activities, including acquiring, rehabilitating, and restoring historic properties that offer a public benefit. The maximum grant award is \$50,000 for capital and non-capital grant funds. Matching requirements apply to local governments, individuals, and business entities. Non-capital grant monies are available to nonprofit organizations and local governments. Funds can be used for research, survey, planning, and educational activities involving architectural, archeological, or cultural resources. Special priority will be given to projects within State-certified Priority Funding Areas (PFA's). A perpetual preservation easement between the property owner and the Trust may be required before funds are released from the Maryland Historical Trust. The easement coverage will be on the land or such portion acceptable to the Trust, which protects the historic buildings, structures, and associated archeological resources.

Museum Advancement Program - This program offers Museum Education and Planning Grants that support long-range planning activities and include Challenge Grants that support museum projects and Enhancement Challenge Grants that support the State's flagship museums.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Subgrant Program - This federal pass-through matching grant is available only to local jurisdictions with CLG status. This program supports historic site research and survey work, National Register nomination development, community planning, and public education.

Historic Preservation Loan Program - The Historic Preservation Loan Program provides loans to nonprofit organizations, local jurisdictions, business entities, and individual citizens to assist in protecting historic property. Loan funds can be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or restore a historic property. They may also be used for short-term financing of studies, surveys, plans, specifications, and architectural, engineering, or other special services directly related to pre-construction work. Low-interest loans are available on a first-come, first-served basis throughout the year. Successful applicants must convey a perpetual historic preservation easement to the Trust.

Rehabilitation Tax Incentive Programs - Historic structure rehabilitation tax incentives are available at the federal and State levels. The federal tax program allows owners or long-term leaseholders of income-producing certified historic structures to receive a federal tax credit of up to twenty percent of the cost of the rehabilitation that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The state program allows owner-occupants and owners of an income-producing property to receive a state income tax credit equal to 20 percent of the qualified capital cost of rehabilitation.

Recommendations

The following programs and strategies are designed to facilitate achieving this Plan's goal of preserving and enhancing the Town's rich cultural and historical heritage.

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is taking an existing structure and updating or adapting it for a new use or purpose. It is a form of infill and redevelopment, converting obsolete buildings into new uses that optimize built assets' operational and commercial performance while maintaining original elements. The 2010 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommended the Town adopt zoning provisions that promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures for public and private uses, including, but not limited to, bed and breakfast establishments, restaurants, craft/gift shops, museums, and studio space for artisans, when such uses minimize exterior structural alteration.

Following the adoption of the 2010 Plan, the Denton Zoning Code was amended to permit the Board of Appeals to allow by special exception the adaptive reuse of a historically significant structure identified by the Historic and Architectural Review Commission and located in the historic district. The Historic and Architectural Review Commission must approve adaptive reuse projects that involve minimal exterior changes and limited extensions or enlargement of structures. Further, the use is complementary to the structure's character, and the number of dwellings may not exceed that permitted in the district where the structure is located.

Denton Pattern Book

Adaptive reuse resulting in increased density, though permitted by the underlying zoning district, or for nonresidential use, e.g., a coffee shop, small bakery, or newsstand, may seem inappropriate to surrounding residents even though it achieves the stated objectives. The "Denton Pattern Book"

provides a sound basis for evaluating such uses from an architectural context. It establishes comprehensive architectural guidelines for constructing and renovating houses in Denton based on the Town's historic architectural character and development patterns. Although the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties mandates that additions to historic buildings differentiate new from old and imply that a Modern or Postmodern approach is best for additions to historic structures, the Town should continue to use the Pattern Book as a guide to preserving the traditional identity of Denton's buildings and neighborhoods.

Development Policies

The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations for the Town should require developers to identify cemeteries/burial grounds/archaeological sites/historic structures on a property before any site disturbance. In addition, every effort should be required to support archaeological and historical research and preserve significant sites to the maximum extent practical.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism is an economic development strategy that attempts to increase visits by persons from outside the area who are interested in the historical or lifestyle offerings of the community. Heritage Tourism emphasizes the linkages and interconnections between the area's physical features (rivers, streams, forests, wildlife) and its cultural features, such as roads, buildings, towns, history, art, etc. Nationwide studies have determined that cultural landscapes and regions with unique natural and historical qualities are among the most important attractions to tourists.

Denton was certified in the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area in 2004. This Heritage Area encompasses Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties. The Maryland Heritage Area Authority has certified, with conditions, "The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area," thereby recognizing heritage areas in Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Caroline Counties and their municipalities and offering a mechanism for coordinated and enhanced heritage tourism in these counties. Denton recognizes and references "The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan" to further opportunities for heritage tourism and economic development. Therefore, this update of the Comprehensive Plan incorporates by reference all portions of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area Management Plan, except those portions solely relating to other jurisdictions within the Heritage Area, as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area's Management Plan designates several potential Target Investment Zones (TIZs), sites, and areas where significant private investment supporting heritage tourism will be encouraged. The program requires that TIZs be able to "encourage demonstrable results and return on public investment within a relatively short period " – generally five years – and be defined based on state criteria. Certain financial benefits from the State of Maryland supporting heritage areas are available only to projects within a TIZ. The Central Business District and the Historic District are designated TIZs (see Map 11-3).

Heritage Center for Caroline County

The Town should continue to support the efforts of the Caroline Historical Society to extensively renovate the former Denton Town Hall as a center for tourism development. The Heritage Center for Caroline County is an example of a capital project in Denton's Targeted Investment Zone (TIZ) eligible for funding under Maryland's Heritage Areas Management Program.

When completed, the Heritage Center is expected to enhance the Heritage Area by creating a significant opportunity for interpretation via many exhibits, audio-visual programs, and signage along the Harriet Tubman Byway and Civil War Trail. In addition, this Heritage Center will offer an additional stop along the route, with visitors more inclined to extend their visit and spend money, thus improving the local economic development of Caroline County.

Once completed, the Heritage Center will attract tourists by developing or sustaining intra-county and inter-county partnerships. In addition, the Heritage Center will be connected to the Museum of Rural Life on Second Street. Visitors will learn how this area's unique landscape and people have helped shape history and continue to change agricultural practices. They will see how these unique features have affected evolving business opportunities and new immigrant communities.

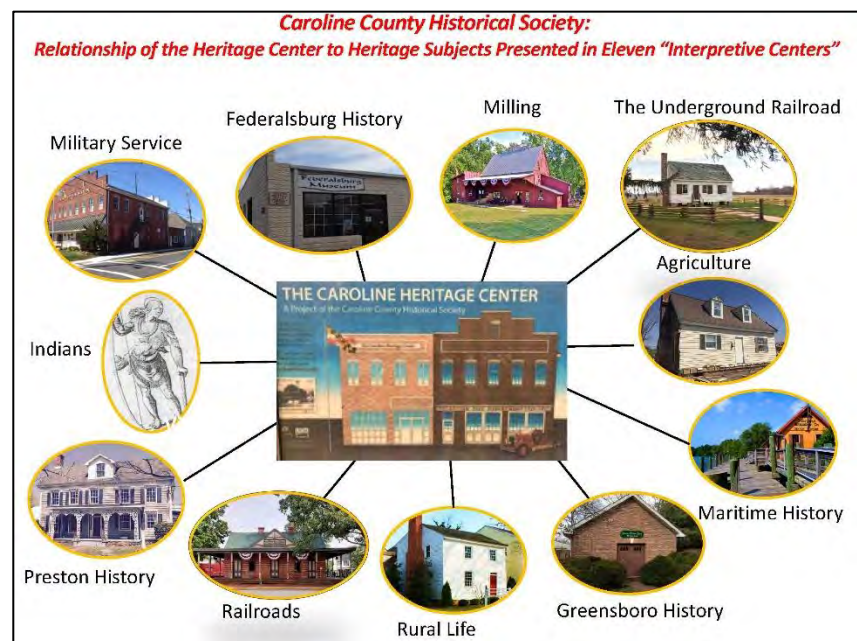


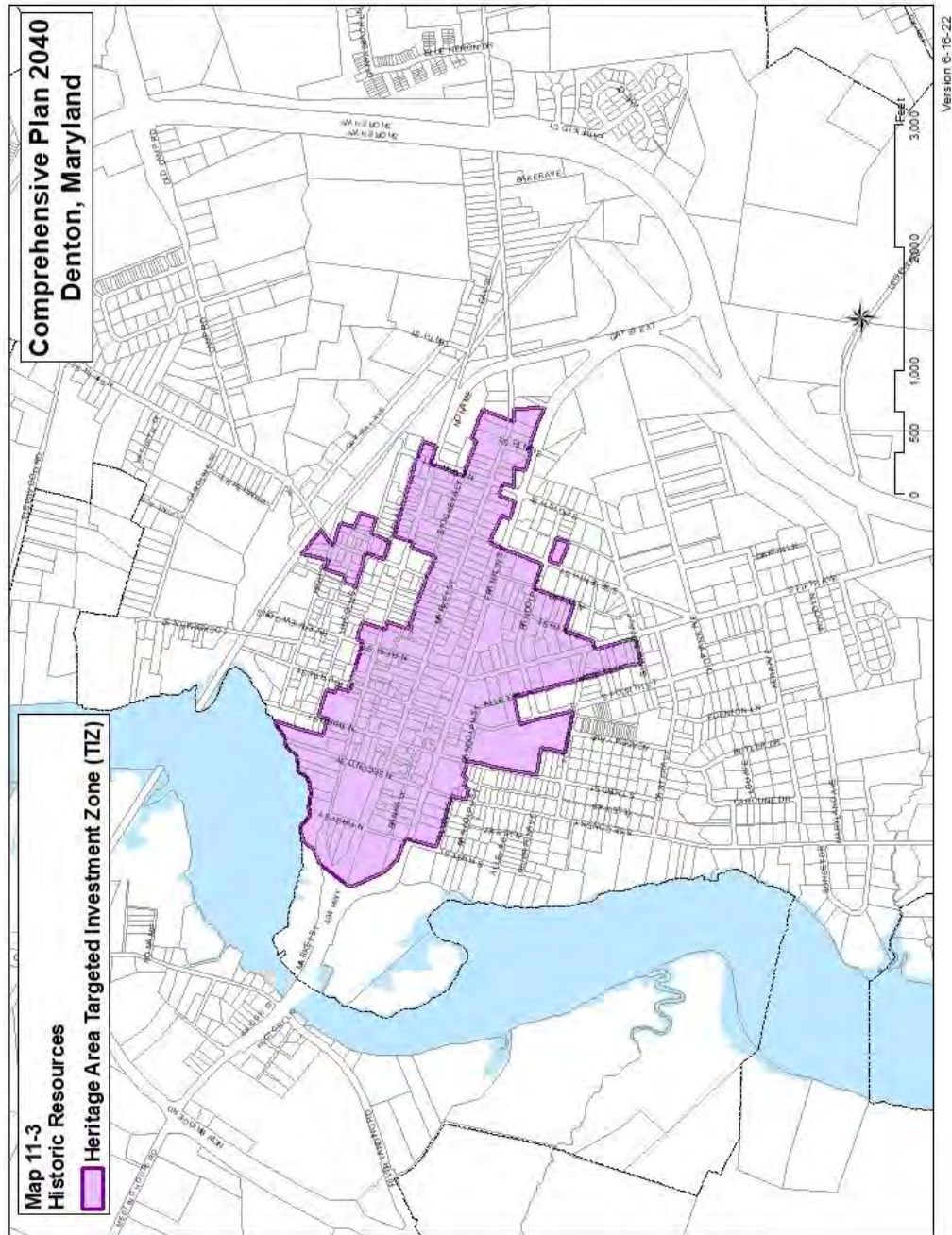
Figure 1

Finally, they will better understand how the land and the waters of the Bay and rivers have played a significant role in all the changes.

The Caroline Office of Tourism includes the Museum in all its marketing endeavors and is on all Byway map guides. In addition, the Heritage Center will give a central location for group tours and meetings of groups specializing in the research of Caroline County's history. These tours will then be able to continue further into the county and its towns and visit other locations such as The Ridgely Railroad Park, the Linchester Mill Complex, the Federalsburg Museum, etc.

This project will contribute to and fulfill the goals and objectives of the Heritage Area, as the Town of Denton is currently listed in its management plan. Additionally, when all Phases are completed, this project will enhance the ability of the mission of the Museum of Rural Life to relate to and interpret the stories of the Chesapeake (see Figure 1).

Map 11-3 Target Investment Zone



CHAPTER 12 – PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The following are summaries of actions to achieve the Plan's goals and objectives recommended in each element. These recommendations affect public and private actions and development-related decisions by public officials and private landowners. In addition, they provide general guidelines so that piecemeal improvements or day-to-day decisions can be evaluated appropriately against their long-range impact on the community and their relationship to existing settlement patterns. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan outlines general or conceptual development patterns expected through build-out. It is not a detailed blueprint. However, it is a guide that delineates patterns of development that permit orderly growth of the community in a manner that can be more efficiently served with government services and facilities.

Community Facilities

- With the Caroline County Department of Parks and Recreation, identify opportunities to develop neighborhood parks to serve current and future needs on the east side of MD 404.
- Enhance pedestrian access to neighborhood parks.
- Plan additional neighborhood parks serving central neighborhoods.
- Assess the return on investment for all capital improvement expenditures.

Municipal Growth

- Accommodate future growth primarily through infill and redevelopment.
- Annexation Plan – limit future annexations to land for commercial and industrial use that expands the tax base without substantive fiscal impacts, supports increased employment opportunities, or for public institutional uses serving the community.
- Work with Caroline County to enact strategies to protect the Rural Buffer, including prioritizing this land for preservation through Federal, State, and/or County programs.

Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas

- Work with State and County officials and agencies to implement strategies to protect sensitive environmental areas, preserve natural resources that form green infrastructure, and improve water quality in the Choptank River.

- Define natural resource protection areas encompassing wetlands, streams, priority preservation areas, forests, the 100-year flood plain, stream buffers, and threatened and endangered species habitats. Regulate these areas with standards similar to those applicable to the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area.
- Work with Caroline County Officials to extend similar natural resource protection areas along Saulsbury, Watts Creeks, and Poor House Run and to mitigate changes to the land from sea level rise, which are significant in the catchment areas of the Tier II streams.

Water Resources

- Require agriculture properties within the corporate limits to implement Comprehensive Soil Conservation Plans to maintain a preferential assessment.
- Strictly limit forest clearing and apply best management practices to protect water quality in the catchment area of Tier II streams in and near Denton.

Economic Development

- Provide the land use and infrastructure framework for attracting new economic activity and retaining existing establishments.
- Work cooperatively with government and nonprofit organizations with common economic and marketing objectives.
- Encourage diversified employment growth, including small businesses and local entrepreneurs.

Housing

- Align regulatory policies with affordable housing goals and correct regulations or requirements that exclude affordable housing types or unnecessarily raise construction costs.
- Modify zoning regulations to permit the full spectrum of housing types where appropriate.
- Implement public water and sewer projects that enable higher-density residential development and mixed-use neighborhoods in designated growth areas and encourage a mix of housing densities and types in new subdivisions.
- Modify building codes and/or make them more flexible to eliminate unnecessarily costly construction requirements where possible.

- Streamline approval processes to make the development review process less time-consuming.
- Work with Caroline County to waive or reduce fees (e.g., impact fees) and infrastructure requirements for affordable housing developments.
- Support the efforts of Tuckahoe Habitat for Humanity and similar groups providing safe, decent, and affordable housing.
- Facilitate infill development on vacant or underutilized land that produces affordable housing.
- Participate with State agencies, Caroline County, and others to coordinate affordable housing activities and programs.

Historic Features

- Utilize the Denton Pattern Book for review of adaptive reuse and infill projects.
- Continue to support the efforts of the Caroline Historical Society to renovate the former Denton Town Hall as a center for tourism development.

Transportation

- Implement the recommended street improvements.
- Implement the recommended improvements at key Intersections.
- Ensure rights-of-way widths accommodate motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists in safety.
- Prepare a trail master plan that includes pedestrian trails linking neighborhoods with destinations such as schools, parks, commercial areas, and employment centers to reduce dependence on the automobile.
- Amend development codes to require dedication-to-public-use or a cross-use easement along the greenways.

Land Use

Following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town should undertake a comprehensive review of development regulations and the Official Zoning Map for consistency with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. Revisions should include appropriate processes and standards to facilitate context-appropriate infill and redevelopment in the Urban Center, Core

Neighborhoods, General Residential, and Urban Fringe planning districts. In addition, review processes should be streamlined and allow flexibility to vary standards for context-appropriate projects, including mixed-use projects, whenever possible. Flexibility is critical in older neighborhoods where nonconforming issues hamper infill and redevelopment. Finally, expanding the types of permitted residential options will support the Plan's objective of increasing the supply of "missing middle" housing.

The importance of small businesses and local entrepreneurs was highlighted in the economic chapter. Reviewing current zoning standards should ensure regulations support and encourage these enterprises, particularly in the central business district.

Denton has large vacant parcels intended for mixed-use, planned developments. Reviewing large-scale developments should ensure that new development is productive (income versus liabilities). Finally, the older neighborhoods are the most productive areas of the Town when considering revenues versus expenses. Prioritizing capital investment on infrastructure maintenance and incremental improvements that resolve neighborhood service issues is an excellent public investment strategy.

Zoning

Most of the implementation strategies previously outlined are directly or indirectly affected by the Zoning Ordinance and/or Official Zoning Map. For example, the Zoning Ordinance prescribes what land uses are allowed in a zoning district and how applications will be considered e.g., by-right, special exception, and conditional use. For this reason, the Zoning Ordinance and Official Zoning Map should be carefully assessed and revised to be practical tools for implementing the recommendation of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan's recommendations call for more flexibility in the Zoning Code to use Denton's land more efficiently. Under efficient land use, the Plan emphasizes infill and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized land. The Plan also calls for streamlined review and approval procedures that allow quicker decisions and reduced development costs. For example, strategies like streamlining review processes, expanding the range of permitted residential unit types throughout the Town, and flexible parking standards are some steps the Town can take to support affordable housing production.

The following outlines recommendations for a comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance and official zoning map.

Revise the Table of Use Regulations

Many older zoning ordinances list individual permitted uses. Typically, an ordinance would require a requested use not explicitly listed to be forwarded to a Board of Appeals for interpretation. In this case, the Board would determine if the proposed use was like other uses in the zoning district and, considering its potential impacts should be permitted. In some cases, listed permitted uses

may include a modifying or expanding statement, such as "or similar uses." When the Board of Appeals approves a specific land use, the zoning text is amended to incorporate the new use. In cases of uncertainty, the Denton Board of Appeals is authorized to determine the classifications as to district of any use not explicitly named provided; however, such use is determined to be in keeping with uses named explicitly in the district regulations.

Another way a specific permitted use can be added to the ordinance permitted uses list is a text amendment to add the use to the list of permitted uses. Text amendments proceed through a legislative process and may require comprehensive plan amendments.

Both preceding processes involve considerable delay for an applicant. Board of Appeals proceedings require a notice period of at least fourteen days before any hearings. In addition, scheduling the Board may add delay to the process. Finally, additional delays may be associated with the formulation of findings and a written decision. Text or map amendments, a legislative process, also require mandatory notice periods and include a recommendation by the Planning Commission, the introduction of legislation, hearing(s), and a decision. At a minimum, the Board of Appeals or text amendment process delays a decision on an application and may require ninety days or more to resolve. Both processes run counter to the comprehensive plan objective to streamline review processes.

Listing every specific use appropriate for a given zoning is nearly impossible. Attempting to list every specific permitted use inhibits the community's ability to adapt to a changing economy and flexibility to capture new uses and emerging market opportunities. In addition, it adds unnecessary time and expense to the development process, factors of particular concern to small start-up businesses. Finally, it can work against the objective of attracting new economic activity.

The Denton Zoning Ordinance should be amended to incorporate a description and listing of permitted uses based on broad categories and subcategories instead of a specific enumeration of uses. Categories provided a general description of the types of uses allowed in the various districts. Categories give planning officials a broad basis for interpreting the code requirements and the appropriate zone for proposed uses. Subcategories, a further distinction of uses, allow planning officials to establish specific conditions based on the land use's characteristics, such as trip generation and potential traffic impacts.

The Denton Zoning ordinance should be revised to classify principal land uses into major groupings or "use categories," e.g., residential, public, civic, institutional, commercial, and industrial. Within each category, there should be subcategories. For example, the "residential" category could be further broken down into the subcategories "household living" and "group living." Household living encompasses the occupancy of a dwelling unit by a household. Group living captures occupancy by a group other than a household. The household living subcategory can be further expanded into specific use types, including conventional dwelling types, detached

and attached, and mobile homes, thus allowing the Town to establish which unit types are permitted in each zoning district.

Equally important, the Denton Zoning Ordinance should authorize the Planning Commission to classify requested uses based on these category and subcategory descriptions. If the Planning Commission cannot classify a use based on the category and subcategory descriptions and where the land use is not explicitly prohibited, authorize the Board of Appeals to decide.

Conservation Overlay Zone and Regulations

The Natural Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town define natural resource protection areas encompassing wetlands, streams, priority preservation areas, forests, the 100-year flood plain, stream buffers, and threatened and endangered species habitats. In addition, it recommends that land use in this area be regulated with standards like those applicable to the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area.

A Natural Resource Protection overlay zone that encompasses the conservation corridors identified in the Comprehensive Plan should be incorporated into the Denton Zoning Ordinance. The overlay zone should delineate preservation and conservation areas. Properties outside the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area should be subject to supplemental development standards. These standards include prohibiting new structures or coverage in preservation areas and limiting the location of structures in conservation areas. Standards that limit clearing natural vegetation, lot coverage, and disturbance to sensitive environmental features should apply in both areas. Forest removal should not be allowed except in hardship situations. Stormwater management measures should be outside conservation corridors except when no alternative exists. Standards should be strictly applied in preservation areas and may be modified in conservation areas when strict adherence creates hardship.

RP Recreation and Parks Zoning District

Following the adoption of the 2010 Denton Comprehensive Plan, the RP Recreation and Parks classification was added to the Official Zoning Map and Ordinance. The stated purpose of the RP District was "to protect and preserve areas of the Town which are presently or proposed to be recreation-oriented areas in character and use. This zoning district provides for passive and active recreational, semipublic, educational, cultural, religious, philanthropic, social, and fraternal uses." Several properties are included in this zoning district, some privately owned.

Zoning that severely limits the range of permitted uses to government and institutional uses is unfair and may approach confiscatory. To avoid this criticism, the zoning of every property should provide an opportunity to develop at its highest and best use under market conditions. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town eliminate the RP Parks and Recreation zoning district and return the properties of their prior zoning classification or some other base zoning classification consistent with the Comprehensive Plan to correct this issue.

RD Redevelopment Floating Zone

The Denton Zoning Code already contains some flexible development provisions supportive of local entrepreneurial initiatives, including the Arts and Entertainment District, Adaptive reuse of historic structures, and the Neighborhood Centers Special Exception. Less practical is the RD Redevelopment District, currently administered as a floating zone grounded through a process requiring a potentially long, tedious, and expensive process to accomplish, features not conducive to small-scale initiatives, incremental investments, or improvisation and innovation.

It is recommended that the Town eliminate the RD Redevelopment floating zone. Despite its potential applications in the Town, no projects have been proposed since the RD district's inception. The primary issues with floating zone approval involve the costly, protracted legislative process and a lack of flexibility in supporting innovative redevelopment schemes.

MI Mixed Industrial Zoning District

As the boundary of the Town expanded, the railroad tracks were removed, and Route 404 was improved and became the primary transportation route in Denton, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan anticipated that the character of properties in the MI Mixed Industrial District would slowly begin to change. As a result, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan proposed a new zoning district known as MI Mixed Industrial. The purpose of the Mixed Industrial district was to encourage a transition, allowing residential use to replace the existing industrial uses gradually.

The MI Mixed Industrial zoning district comprises 12 parcels encompassing 7.7 acres northeast of Lincoln Street and Gay Street and southwest of the old railroad spur. This area is close to downtown, and the current businesses offer job opportunities for residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

The objective of the MI district was to allow the properties to change over time to residential use in response to market demand. However, since 2010, there has been little interest in new residential development in the Mixed Industrial district. The limited development that has taken place in the district has been primarily commercial. Only five older residences remain, all but one built before 1940. A number of the parcels are vacant or are improved with structures no longer in use.

Since 2010, the Town has received several inquiries about commercial or mixed industrial/commercial uses not currently permitted in the district. While the Town remains committed to encouraging residential uses in this area, adding other appropriate, limited commercial uses is more responsive to changing market conditions and presents an opportunity to encourage infill and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties. In addition, the Town believes an appropriate mix of residential and nonresidential uses can coexist here by controlling such things as scale, intensity, appearance, and offsite impacts of nonresidential uses.

In the comprehensive rezoning process following the adoption of this comprehensive Plan, the Town should consider adding additional commercial categories to the permitted uses in the district. In addition, property owners in the adjacent Industrial district should be included in the MI district if desired to support adaptation to changing economic conditions and the apparent shift from industrial to mixed-use development.

PRD Planned Residential Developments (§ 128-84)

According to the Denton Zoning Ordinance, "the planned residential development use classification permits multifamily residences in single-family zoning districts only in the context of a well-planned development containing both single-family and multifamily dwellings, with the single-family units acting as a buffer between the development and the preexisting single-family neighborhoods." This option is available to large tracts of land, thirty acres in the SR district, ten in the TR district, and five in the MR and MI districts. However, the PRD zone is not included on the official zoning map, nor is the process by which an applicant obtains this classification clear.

Based on these district standards, sixteen properties, none in the MI Mixed Industrial zoning district, meet the acreage criteria for the classification. Therefore, the official zoning map should show areas of the Town where the PRD is applicable. Also, the zoning ordinance should be revised to allow this as an option approved by the Planning Commission, which is subject to finding that the proposed development is consistent with the Residential Infill and Redevelopment Guidelines in Appendix IV of the Zoning Ordinance.

PUD Planned unit development, Mixed-use District floating zone (§ 128-30)

The PUD floating zone was added to the zoning ordinance following the adoption of the 2010 Denton Comprehensive Plan. The floating zone is intended "to control the placement, design, use, and density of well-planned residential developments which will offer a variety of building types and a more efficient overall use of land and, within these limits, permit the optimum amount of freedom and variety in the design and management of such varying types of residential structures, including one- and two family units, townhouses, and garden apartments" and is similar to the PN Planned Neighborhood floating in the zoning ordinance (§ 128-21.3). Therefore, it is recommended that the PN and PUD districts be combined into one floating zone.

Cottage Housing Development

Cottage housing development refers to projects with a cluster of units – often between four and twelve – built around a shared open space. Typically, each cottage is limited to around 1,000 square feet or less. As another means of providing housing choice, the Denton Zoning Ordinance is recommended to include cottage clusters as a development option. Specifically, amend the Denton Zoning Ordinance to permit the Planning Commission to approve a Cottage Cluster Development following the flexible procedures outlined for infill and redevelopment projects, including notice

and public hearing. In addition, the review process should make clear the Planning Commission may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application.

Parking Reform

Parking requirements can create a wasteful element of transportation and land use systems, parking spaces that are rarely needed. Each space requires over 300 square feet of valuable land or building area. Spaces for workplaces may be well-used during the day but remain unoccupied in the evening because they are not shared with other land uses. Sometimes, the parking required is greater than the amount of parking ever used. The Planning Commission should consider reviewing the current minimum parking requirements with the objective of matching requirements more closely with observed demand.

Historic District

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties lists one property in the West Denton Village provisional annexation area. This list includes the Denton Shirt Factory. If West Denton Village is annexed, the Town should consider expanding the historic district to include this property.

Denton Sustainable Communities Action Plan

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development runs the Sustainable Communities Program, a place-specific initiative offering comprehensive resources to support well-rounded strategies for community development, revitalization, and sustainability. This program, led by the Department, provides local governments with a framework to encourage responsible growth and development in older existing communities, focusing on environmental, economic, and social aspects.

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 established a shared geographical designation to promote the efficient allocation of limited State resources based on local sustainability and revitalization plans. This program consolidated resources for historic preservation, housing, and economic development within a single designation. It places a particular emphasis on enhancing infrastructure, creating multi-modal transportation options, and strengthening existing communities. The legislation also designated the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet to finalize Sustainable Communities designations.

To participate in this program, Denton submitted an application defining a specific geographic area with an existing built environment needing revitalization or additional state investment to bolster the local market (Map 12-1). The Town's application included a Sustainable Community Action Plan summarizing its initiatives and projects for revitalizing the designated Sustainable Community Area.

Applications for Sustainable Communities designation undergo review by an interagency panel led by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and they are

subsequently presented to the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet for approval. Once approved, newly designated Sustainable Communities maintain their status for five years.

As outlined below, many of the implementation recommendations in this comprehensive plan align with the strategies and action items for community development, revitalization, and sustainability outlined in Denton's Sustainable Communities Action Plan.

Energy - This category includes projects focusing on (but not limited to) the quality of land, water, and air; tree canopies and green spaces; green infrastructure; habitat improvement, climate change mitigation and adaptation; nuisance flooding, stormwater infrastructure, and management; water and sewer capacity; energy conservation; recycling, pet waste, and organic waste programs; the mitigation of environmental hazards; and parks and recreation improvements.

- Denton adopted a Nuisance Flooding Plan (July 2020) with emergency response protocols. More recently, the Town has identified potential nuisance flooding areas resulting from sea level rise and increased storm severity for inclusion in infrastructure planning, management, and emergency response protocols.
- The 2020 Comprehensive Plan includes a proposed conservation overlay zone that encompasses the most sensitive natural resources and habitats and adds extended buffer and resources management requirements for development.
- As part of the 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan update process, the Town identified green infrastructure, e.g., wetlands and forests threatened by climate change, for consideration in revisions to development regulations, capital improvements planning and programming, and development review processes.

Economy - This section is centered on economic growth and management and encompasses business attraction and retention; improving and maintaining the health of business districts, downtowns, and main streets; commercial vacancy reduction; workforce attraction and retention; employment/job training; marketing, branding, and improving or creating an economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing technical and financial assistance to businesses; commercial building acquisition, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping and beautification.

- Denton participates in the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Management Program and has mapped target investment zones (TIZs) where projects are eligible for Heritage Area Matching Grants.
- Denton conducts Summerfest, an annual event in the Downtown that directly supports tourism.

- Denton has adopted a Historic District Overlay Zone, including adaptive reuse provisions to conserve its cultural and historic assets for these resources' role in creating a sense of place, vibrancy, and economic development.
- Denton has adopted an Arts and Entertainment Floating Zone that permits profit and nonprofit artistic, cultural, educational, and musical uses of properties in identified redevelopment areas of the Town.

Transportation - This section describes how people in your community get from place to place. Strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes focus on access to transit corridors; pedestrian safety and accessibility transportation, such as bikeways and trails; public transit, such as bus and rail; carpooling; proximity to transportation centers; and parking and road conditions.

- Denton has amended its Zoning Ordinance to incorporate flexible off-street parking requirements in the Central Business District.
- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town undertake a comprehensive parking study to determine if it is most efficiently using its land resources.

Housing – This section focuses on affordability, increasing homeownership, increasing rental housing, diversifying the kinds of housing available, improving housing conditions (interior and exterior), housing programs, aging in place, preventing foreclosures, and reducing vacancies.

- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan emphasizes infill and redevelopment as the primary accommodation means for future population and housing growth.
- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town Council amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit context-appropriate infill and redevelopment, address housing affordability, and increase housing type choice as follows:
 - permit missing middle housing in more zones
 - add flexible zoning standards for infill and redevelopment projects
 - reduce lot area standards to make more properties eligible for an accessory dwelling unit
- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town work with Caroline County to waive or reduce fees (e.g., impact fees) and infrastructure requirements for affordable housing developments to make them financially feasible.

Community Health and Quality of Life - This section addresses public health, community culture, and the day-to-day life of community residents. It promotes healthy behaviors such as walking and strengthening community support and connectedness through health and wellness programs and facilities multi-generations; senior facilities and programs; youth facilities and

programs; facilities and programs for people with disabilities; civic amenities, access to quality food options; collaborations with faith-based organizations; arts and entertainment education; and homelessness prevention, services, and facilities. Projects should include community engagement, selecting strategies and outcomes, progress reports, and evaluation.

- The Town recently surveyed to determine residents' preferred mediums for public announcements.
- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan includes a bike and pedestrian component that recognizes the importance of the extent and location of bike, pedestrian, and recreation facilities for community health.

Local Planning and Staffing Capacity –This section is concerned with a local government's ability to plan for the community's future and to meet the current needs of residents. Strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes focus on the following: updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc.; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans; updating zoning ordinances or land use to support the implementation of Denton's Sustainable Community Action Plan strategies and action items.

- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan recommends updating municipal policies to include goals, objectives, policies, and implementation recommendations addressing affordable workforce, low-income housing, and affirmative furthering fair housing.
- Denton has increased its planning staff.
- The 2020 Denton Comprehensive Plan Update includes considerations for affordable and fair housing, the impacts of climate changes on property, structures, infrastructure, and capital improvements, increased conservation of natural features, and sensitive environmental areas.

Map 12-1 Sustainable Communities Area

