

# Town of Preston, MD

## Municipal Growth Element

Adopted 3-5-12 by Town of Preston Resolution 12-0214

### 1.0 Introduction

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This chapter is the newly required Municipal Growth Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Its purpose is to develop a logical plan for infill, annexation and redevelopment to respond to anticipated population growth. The plan begins with an analysis of past growth trends and projection of future growth pressures. The chapter also includes an overview of current land use and vacant parcels, impact growth may have on community facilities, services and infrastructure, and a plan for directing growth to appropriate areas over the coming twenty years.

Preston is located in southern Caroline County on Maryland's Eastern Shore, straddling MD-331 about eleven miles east of the Town of Easton and seven miles west of the Town of Federalsburg. Seaford DE, Easton MD, Denton MD and Cambridge MD are regional employment centers approximately 10-15 miles from town. Regionally, Salisbury, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia are all within close driving distance (up to two and a half hours). The immediate area around Preston is primarily rural and land use is primarily agricultural. Further, Preston has an important history as a regional trading and activity center for the local farming community.

Despite Preston's regional importance it has remained a small town and residents value the qualities inherent in a small Eastern Shore town. Future growth plans should meet the goals of Town residents that support the desire to remain small town charm.

#### Goals:

- The Town prefers a slow pace of growth that emphasizes natural and organic growth of the Town fabric.
- New growth must fit into the pattern and aesthetic of the historic town housing and building stock.
- New development must not add new burdens to Town residents; rather it should contribute its fair share to the financial and infrastructural burdens created by growth.

## 2.0 Growth Trends

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While Preston and the nearby historical sites of Linchester and Choptank have a long settlement history—dating back to the Colonial era—the town’s population has been relatively stable until recent years. Like most towns on the Eastern Shore, the arrival of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and more recently a booming residential real estate market precipitated significant growth in the area. However, as with the rest of the region, an economic recession and a burst bubble in the housing market has meant that those unusual growth patterns have come to an end. Table 1 below show past growth trends and patterns.

### Population: Past Growth Trends and Patterns

Preston has experienced several periods of growth and several instances of population decline. The average annual growth rate since 1940 is 0.66%. Since 2000, the growth rate has been 1.87%, though regional trends indicate that growth rates experienced in the early 2000’s have recently slowed significantly and will likely not reach that same level again soon.

**Table 1. Past Population Growth Trends**

Population Trends	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008
Caroline County	17,549	18,234	19,462	19,781	23,143	27,035	29,772	33,138
Election District 4	2,241	2,201	2,405	2,675	3,293	3,476	3,381	
Preston	369	353	469	509	498	437	566	672

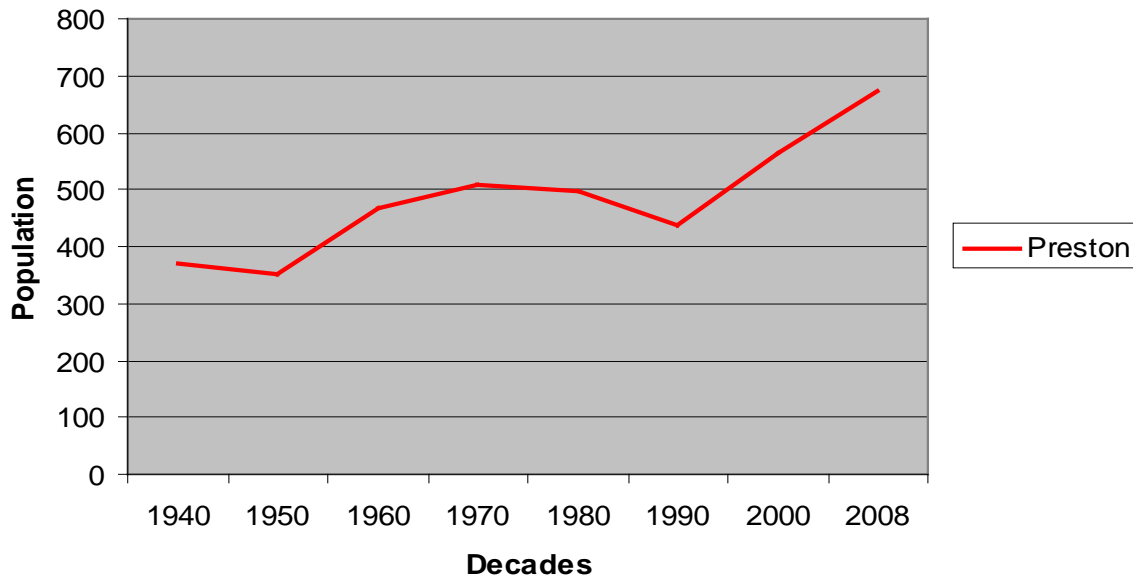
Source: Maryland Department of Planning, US Census Bureau

**Table 2. Average Annual Growth Rates**

Population Trends	1940-50	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-2000	2000-08
Caroline County	0.39%	0.67%	0.16%	1.69%	1.44%	1.01%	1.41%
Election District 4	-0.18%	0.92%	1.12%	2.31%	0.54%	1.02%	
Preston	-0.43%	3.29%	0.85%	-0.22%	-1.22%	2.95%	1.87%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, US Census Bureau

Chart 1. Preston Growth 1940-2008










Source: Maryland Department of Planning, US Census Bureau

### Land Use Change

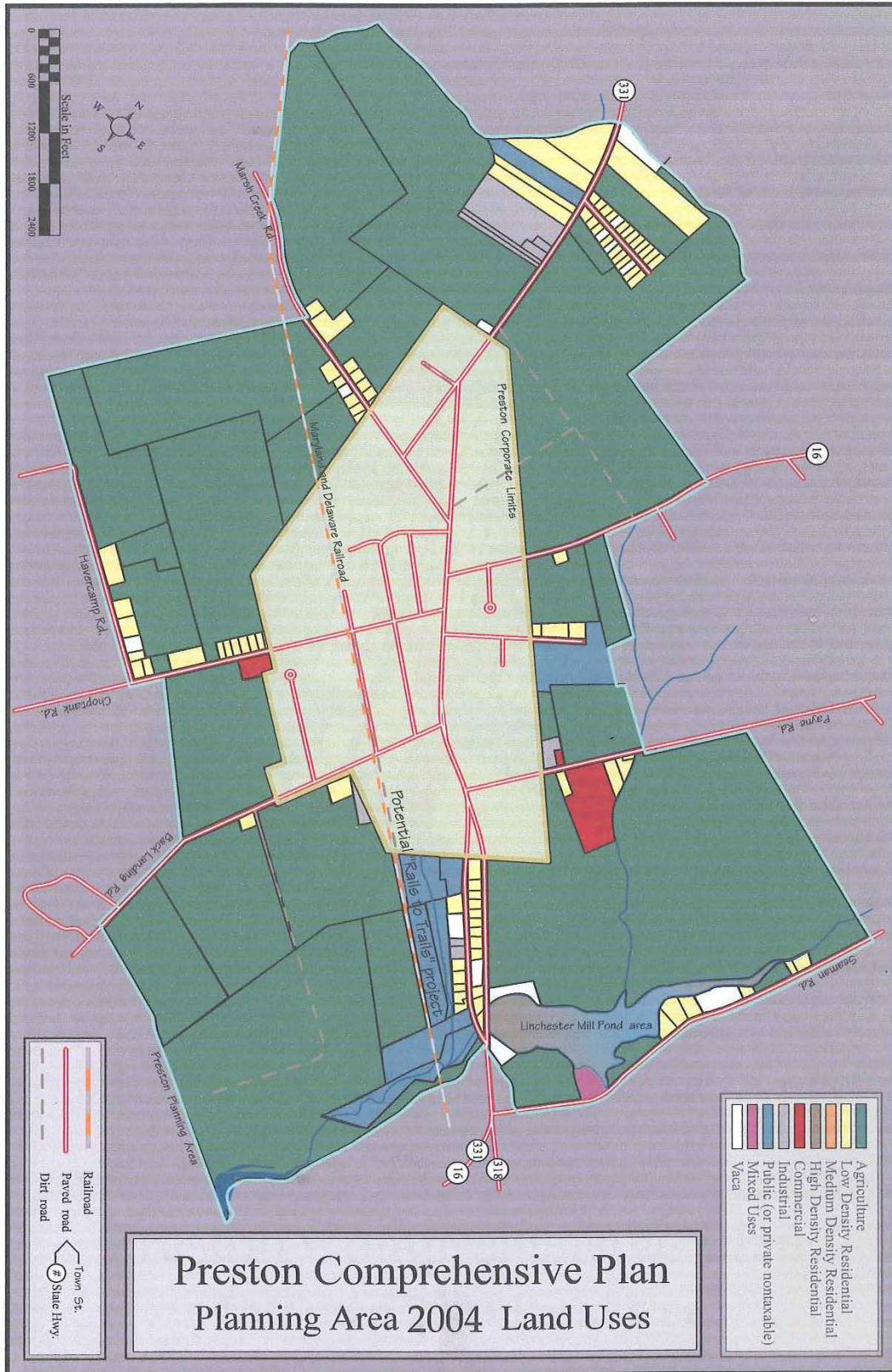
Preston remains a primarily residential community, with a small commercial core. Future growth will likely not be significantly dissimilar, but should encourage and incorporate mixed-use development. Much of the planning area around Preston is agricultural and we hope that a significant portion of this can be preserved as greenbelt or rural buffer, in accordance with the principles of the 2009 Caroline County Comprehensive Plan and the Town’s own 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

Table 3. Existing Land Uses - Town of Preston 2004

	Agriculture	95 acres	27%
	Residential	99 acres	28%
	Commercial	45 acres	13%
	Industrial	18 acres	5%
	Mixed Uses	3 acres	1%
	Public (or nontaxable)	45 acres	13%
	Vacant	48 acres	13%
<b>Totals:</b>		<b>353 acres</b>	<b>100%</b>

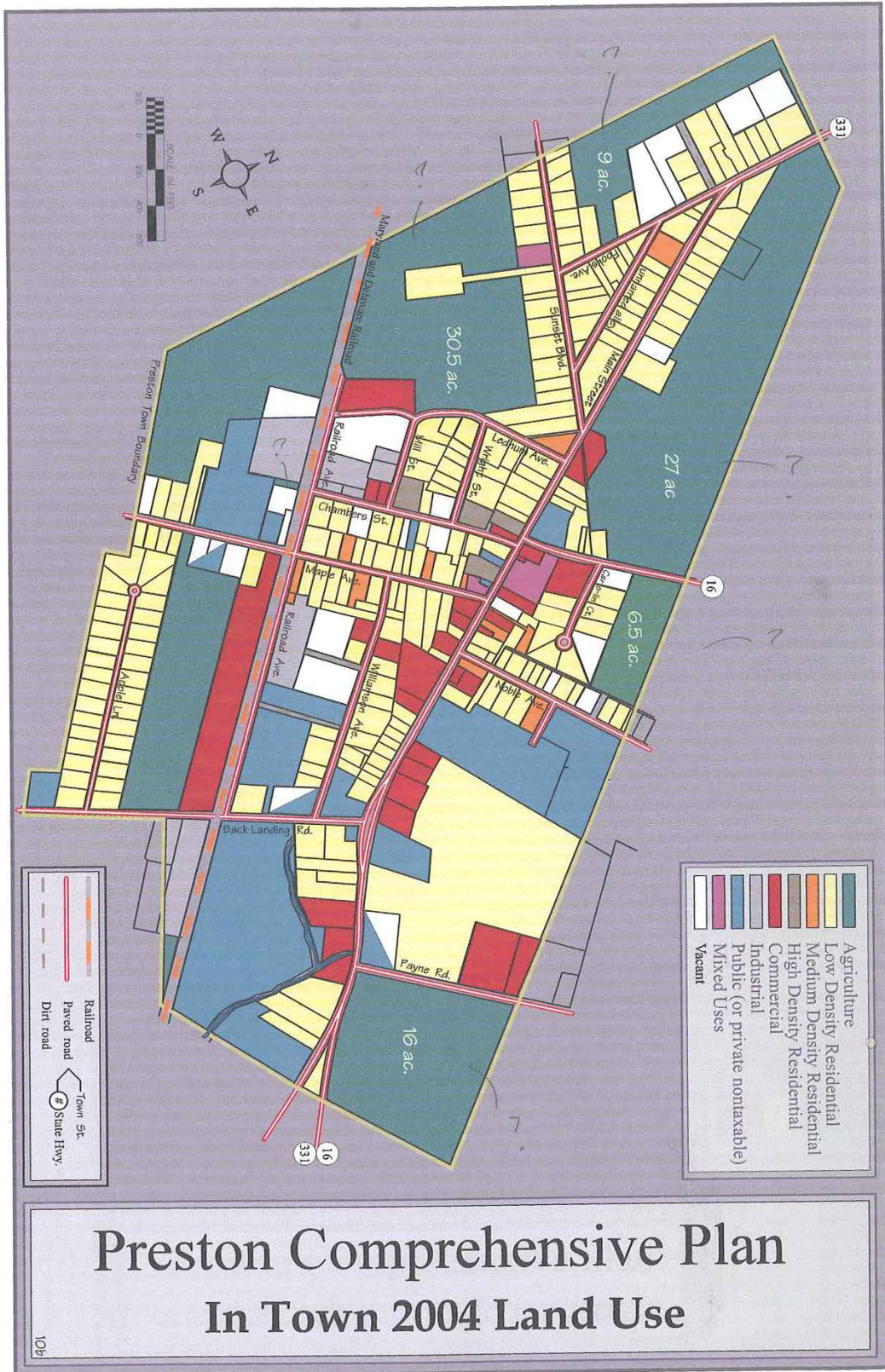
Source: Town of Preston Comprehensive Plan

Map 1. 2004 Existing Land Use Map (Planning Area)



Source: Town of Preston Comprehensive Plan

Map 2. 2004 Existing Land Use Map (Town)



# Preston Comprehensive Plan In Town 2004 Land Use

Source: Town of Preston Comprehensive Plan



### 3.0 Determining Land Needs

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#### Future Population Growth Projection

Determining Preston’s land needs over the coming 20 years requires us to first estimate the 2010 population and then to predict growth patterns through 2030. For this we will use an extrapolation of the 2008 population figure provided by the US Census Bureau – 672 and multiply this figure by the growth rate experienced from 2000-2008 (1.87%) for the final two years of the decade. The resulting figure is 697 (an addition of 25 persons).

The anticipated growth rate for 2010-2030 warrants some discussion. The Maryland Department of Planning projects the following growth pattern.

**Table 4. Population Growth Projection (Using MDP growth projections)**

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Preston Population	697	823	912	1008	1109
Avg. Annual Growth Rate		3.61%	2.16%	2.10%	2.00%

Source: Caroline County, Maryland Department of Planning

While the anticipated rates are not exorbitant, for the reasons discussed in earlier components of this chapter, these rates are higher than our region, our County or our Town will likely see. Furthermore, our community has expressed clearly that while we would rather accept growth than lose our precious and limited farmland, and while we are prepared to accept growth, there are communities in our region better suited for the majority of growth. For these reasons, we feel that a rate of population growth less than or equal to the rate experienced since 1990 would be a more realistic and appropriate growth rate. Table 5 lays out what a more conservative growth rate would mean over the coming twenty years.

**Table 5. Final Population Growth Projection**

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Preston Population	697	760	814	870	928
Avg. Annual Growth Rate		1.81%	1.42%	1.38%	1.33%
% Change from MDP Rate		-50%	-33%	-33%	-33%
Change in population		63	117	173	231

The rate for 2010 to 2015 was reduced by half primarily because the Town has accepted so much growth in the past decade and because there is little to no interest in development in the foreseeable future or in any phase of approval. The ensuing rates

from 2015-2030 were reduced by one-third, again to better reflect the realities of development pressures on our town and in our area.

## Assumptions

- Identify desired characteristics of growth and general desires for growth direction and scale
- Identify desired community design and land use characteristics that will help shape the zoning that will be applied to future growth
- Provide a vision for the shape and style of future growth in and around the town
- Identify the share of population growth anticipated to be in mixed-use, single family detached, single family attached, and multifamily housing

## Residential Zoning Performance

Table 6 below shows the development capacity of each zoning district within the town of Preston by zoning classification.

**Table 6. Residential Zoning Performance**

Zoning Ordinance	Description	Maximum Density Dwelling Units/acre (DU/ac)	Actual Density Yield *
R-1	Single-Family Detached Residential	2.7	2.0
R-2	Multifamily Residential	12.1	9.1

\*Assumed to be 75% of maximum density allowed per acre

## Development Within the Existing Town

A significant portion of the land needed to accommodate future growth is vacant residentially zoned land already annexed into Town.



**Table 7. Developable Acreage by Zoning Category**

Classification	Vacant Parcels	Acres	Potential # of DU's
R-1	24	11.6	23
R-1 (recently annexed and with 5-yr plans for water/sewer service)	2	36.0	72
R-1 (recently annexed and with 10-yr plans for water/sewer service)	4	73.0	146
R-2	3	2.4	22
Total	33	123	263

**Table 8. Anticipated Dwelling Units from New Development**

	Present-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Population Change	25	63	54	56	58
Population/DU	2.57	2.54	2.52	2.49	2.47
Anticipated DU's	10	25	21	22	23

Growth should begin with infill development, redevelopment of underutilized properties, continue with the development of recently annexed large parcels and only later utilize annexation of adjacent lands when necessary. If this progression is followed, the R-1 and R-2 zoned vacant properties in town should be sufficient for all anticipated development through 2015. From 2015-2030, the 66 anticipated dwelling units will be more than accommodated by the 72 potential dwelling units in R-1 zoned vacant land within the town limits that has plans for 5-year water and sewer service. There will be a remaining potential for 16 infill dwelling units and a further 146 R-1 zoned dwelling units on four farms that have been annexed and are planned for water and sewer service in 10 years.

The fact that an additional 162 units remain to accommodate unanticipated growth shows just how much land is already available in the Town of Preston for residential growth. Thus no land is needed to be annexed to accommodate additional residential growth through 2030.

## 4.0 Development Beyond Present Town Limits

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### Land Needs

While the anticipated population growth over the coming 20 years will be met by existing land within the Town of Preston, the Town has several strategic annexations which will support the Town's historical, tourism and commerce goals. This must happen within the context of applicable Land Use Objectives set forth in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

*Excerpted from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Objectives:*

- 1. Discourage additional residential development along Route 16, both within Preston and elsewhere.*
- 2. Maintain and increase commercially zoned land along Route 331 within town and focus on the immediate commercial needs of town residents.*
- 3. Encourage limited development north and south of Route 331 (in town) focusing new development on the western and eastern ends of town. Use annexation and infill to promote a compact pattern of buildings, streets and sidewalks.*
- 4. Discourage development outside Town within our planning area. We want to discourage potential large lot residential sprawl on well and septic that will be very difficult to absorb in the future. Suburban scale development is inefficient to serve with public facilities, is inconsistent and incompatible with our goal to protect and preserve existing community character, and will be an impediment to future annexation and controlled growth within our planning area.*
- 5. Encourage new development only in areas which can be economically served by Town sewer and water and incorporated into our existing Town pattern and character.*
- 6. Provide and maintain adequate open space and park areas within Town, and evaluate the feasibility of annexing and creating a new park within the Linchester Mill/Pond area.*

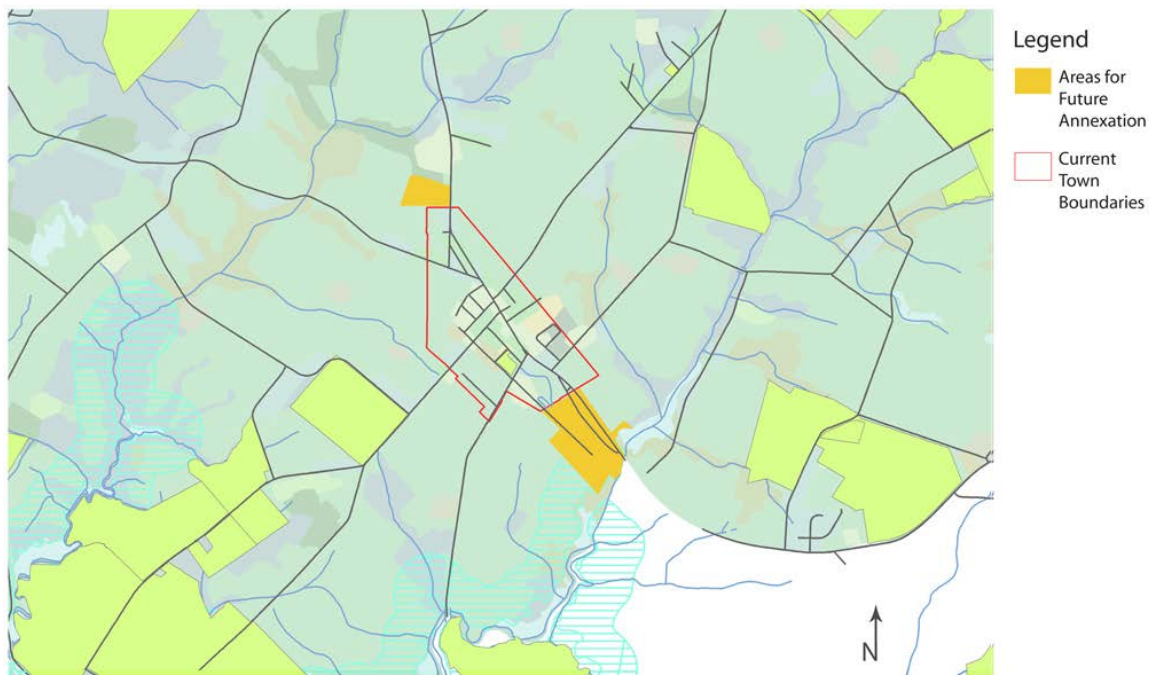
With these objectives in mind, only two areas presently warrant outward expansion of the town boundaries. Both of these extensions capture areas that are already developed, but provide unique opportunities.

The first is to the west, where land would be annexed along Route 331 to include Preston Trucking. The principal use of annexed land should be light industrial, supporting the existing Preston Trucking facilities. The second extension is to the east side of Town, extending along Route 331/16 to Linchester Mill Pond historic site.

The western extension incorporates 134.7 acres including 29 developed residential lots, 2 undeveloped residential-zoned lots, a church, 17.76 commercial-zoned acres (Preston Trucking) and 54.92 agriculture-zoned acres. The two undeveloped residential-zoned lots allow only two dwelling units. The primary source for developable land would be the approximately 55 agriculture-zoned acres and the primary use would be light industrial and commercial uses, similar to Preston Trucking.

The eastern extension incorporates 61.3 acres including 15 developed residential lots, 3 undeveloped residential-zoned lots, a church cemetery, a public works property, 0.775 commercial-zoned acres, 0.517 vacant industrial-zoned acres, 15.18 exempt acres owned by the Historical Society with two structures present, and 19.6 agriculture-zoned acres. These acres would serve the Town's vision of a welcome center and historical tourism center focused on Linchester Mill and Pond.

**Map 4. Map of Preston's Areas for Potential Annexation 2010-2030**



While Preston may have future growth needs beyond 2030, regional, County and State efforts indicate that we are heading toward a point at which our ecosystems and economy will reach a maximum number of residents the region can handle. Our plan leaves several properties undetermined, primarily because those properties represent areas that could handle development, but for which there is no immediate or long-range development pressure which would justify calling for development upon them. If the pace or regional desire for development were to change significantly, several

objectives and values already iterated in this plan should remain constant or even be strengthened. First, housing density should be increased, at least to a performance of 3.5 DU's per acre (Priority Funding Area density); second, street connectivity should be a requirement for any new structure or development of multiple structures; third, the character of the town should be preserved and replicated in any new development.

## 5.0 Growth's Impact on Public Services and Facilities

### Schools

With the inclusion of development that has occurred inside Preston's town limits between 2006-2008, public school enrollment has been determined to be as follows:

**Table 9. School Enrollment and Capacity**

Preston Elementary	432	431
Colonel Richardson Middle	387	542
Colonel Richardson High	579	717
Federalburg Elementary	451	510

As can be seen from Table 10, Preston Elementary is already beyond capacity. The middle and high schools, which also serve the larger municipality of Federalburg, are well below capacity.

Thus, while the two regional schools can withstand a significant amount of population growth, the elementary school which serves only Preston cannot. The present school building functions well and there are no County plans to build a new facility. As the County owns significant acreage behind the school, they may choose to expand the current building in the future. The annexation of the Linchester Mill area and the area north of Town will not affect the school populations as those students already fall within the school districts.

The projected population growth over the next twenty years is anticipated to have the following impact on the school populations:

**Table 10. Projected School Populations**

School	Anticipated Enrollment Increase	# over capacity
Preston Elementary	25	36
Colonel Richardson Middle	13	-142
Colonel Richardson High	17	-121

Source: Caroline County Department of Education

### **Libraries**

Currently, persons in the Town of Preston may either use the County library in Denton or take advantage of the weekly visits of the Library Book Mobile which makes two stops in town for one hour each. As the current town population of 672 falls far below the American Library Association's approximation of the population necessary to support a library facility (10,000) there is not now, and will not be a large enough population to warrant a local branch.

As the Book Mobile serves the towns over twice the size of Preston now, it would be able to continue to serve Preston even if the town were to grow far beyond current plans and projections.

### **Public Safety**

Preston's population is expected to grow to 928 by the year 2030. The International Association of Chiefs of Police standard of 2.6 officers per 1,000 people can be met with two full-time and one part-time officer. The rate given indicates that even through the anticipated 2015 population of 760 residents, Preston should be more than adequately served by two full-time officers. While Preston would like to have three officers on the force, it is only able to fund two. Thus, any new resident should be required to pay a police service fee equal to the amount needed to support the half-time or part-time officer, just as a portion of current residents' local taxes fund police services.

The new town office/police station facility is located near the public works building, ensuring the police force of a professional station with law enforcement enhancements.

Additional assistance is provided by the Caroline County Sheriff's Department and the Maryland State Police Barrack 'H'. Neither of these will be affected by the population increase of Preston alone.

The all-volunteer fire department, which has recently built an expanded fire hall, is dependent partially upon a percentage of tax revenue from the Town. The remainder of their budget is funded through fundraising events held monthly by the department volunteers. With the increase in the costs of fuel and supplies, the fire department has already expressed concern over being able to cover its expenses at the current tax rate.

While much of new development will be greenfield development, most of that land has already been annexed and within the service area of the fire department. Thus it will have little effect on the operations of the fire company. Annexation of the already

built-up Linchester Mill and Preston Trucking areas will increase the station's income slightly through municipal taxes for an area which the fire department already covers. Despite adequate facilities, the number of calls for service from new development will likely put a strain on the department. As has been discovered, the offset of new tax dollars at the current rate from new development has not covered the cost incurred by the Town residents as a result of the additional population. An additional tax or fee will need to be developed to adequately sustain fire department operations.

Emergency Medical assistance is provided through both a volunteer crew, housed in a new building across from the fire station, and through a paid County staff. The Caroline County paramedics have recently completed a building within Preston town limits to house their staff which responds to calls throughout the southern half of the County.

### **Water and Sewerage Facilities**

According to the 2005 Preston Comprehensive Plan, there is adequate water available in the current aquifer to supply the expected growth through 2030. However, in periods of seasonal drought, there are already times when voluntary usage restrictions are put into place, calling into question the assumption that the town plant's 120,000 gpd is sufficient for more customers.

Sewage treatment, however, is a different story. Between the years of 2006 and 2008 the State capped Preston's ability to add any new sewer connections because the treatment plant was running at capacity (*Please refer to p. 11 of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan for details*). Since then, the plant has been running slightly lower and Preston was granted 9 new allocations, all of which have been taken by in-town builders who were on a waiting list.

This has serious consequences for both annexation of the Linchester area, the Western Preston area, and any development of already-annexed areas. While houses in the Linchester area could still be annexed into Town and left on their septic systems for now, this would only be a temporary stop-gap measure.

All further development, including infill, will not be handled by the current treatment plant. Thus, no development can occur until there is a new treatment plant online. As Preston operates on an extremely tight annual budget, there is no plan to change the current system. Expansion is not possible because the lagoon is at capacity. Therefore, any new development must participate in the planning for and funding of a new wastewater treatment plant for the Town of Preston prior to and conditional for approval. The Town of Preston will adopt ordinances requiring builders to implement conservation standards to use and dispose of less waste water to ease the burden on developers and the community in funding a new treatment plant.

### **Stormwater Management**

Stormwater management criteria for any development—beyond the small amount of infill in the village—is regulated by the County. The Town of Preston will look at ways to improve stormwater runoff through new building ordinances for subdivisions. It should be noted that neither adopted policy nor stormwater management site design should preempt the identified principles of buildings sited close to the street, minimal surface parking lots (set behind buildings), walkable street design, a modified grid street system and continuation of a highly connective rectilinear grid.

## Recreation

Currently, Preston owns one park, the James T. Wright Park on Backlanding Road. It is approximately 4 acres in size. Caroline County maintains a recreation area behind the elementary school of about 8 acres which is configured for athletic facilities. The Preston Lion’s Club also has almost 5 acres of parkland which is used for occasional public functions.

Population expectations of near 1,000 people will require the Town to increase its parkland to 30 acres, 15 of which should be owned by the Town itself. With 17 acres of parks, a remaining 13 acres will be needed at the rate and with the ownership indicated in Table 12.

**Table 11. Preston Recreation Facilities**

Park	Owner	Acreage	Date to be Built
James T. Wright Park	Town of Preston	4.0	Exist.
County Park (Elementary School)	Caroline County	8.0	Exist.
Preston Lion's Club Park	Preston Lion's Club	4.8	Exist.
Preston Railroad Historic Trail	Maryland & Delaware Railroad	1.5	2015
Linchester Mill Pond Historic Park	NPF Historical Society & Town of Preston	12.0	2020
Northwest Park-proposed	Town of Preston	3.5	2025
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33.8</b>	

A total of 33.8 acres of parkland could be developed to meet the anticipated growth for 2030 and further serve growth beyond. Along with an existing 4.0 acres of parkland owned by the Town of Preston, a 3.5 acre proposed Northwest Park and ownership of parts of the Linchester Mill Pond Historic Park would more than satisfy the recommended 50% (15 acre) of Town-owned parkland.

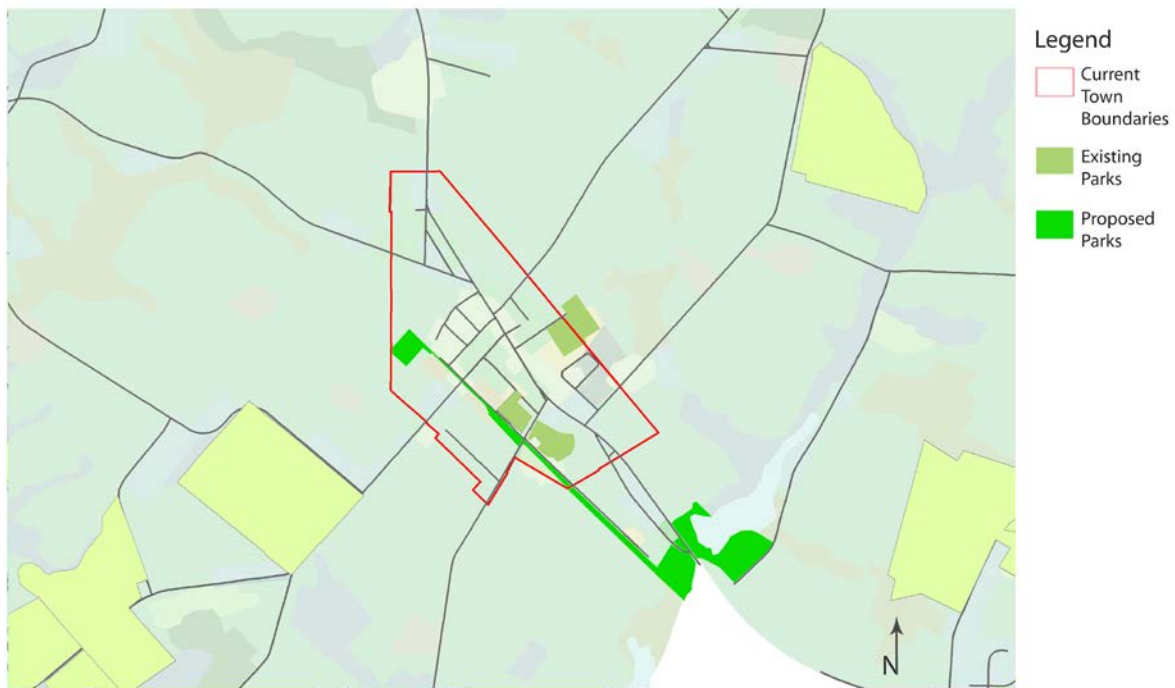
The geographic distribution of proposed parks would best serve a built-out future Town of Preston. Today, the three parks are centrally located which is advantageous, but are located to the southeast and east of the ultimate projected form of the Town. The first proposed park (Linchester Mill Pond Historic Park) will not only establish a park to the far east extent of the Town, it will establish a gateway and reconnect

Preston with the historic sites around Linchester Mill Pond. Ultimately, this would include a visitor welcoming facility. Financing for this project would need to be found outside the Town's existing budget.

The second proposed new park is a Rails-to-Trails project which would re-purpose the line or adjacent strips of land for walking, hiking, recreation and pedestrian movement along the Maryland and Delaware Railroad line. Further, this would connect the Linchester Mill Pond Park, the Lion's Club Park, the James T. Wright Park and the proposed Northwest Park. Financing for this would also need to be found outside the Town's current budget.

The third and final proposed park would be the Northwest Park. This would need to be added by the developer of this area, either within the development land, or purchased elsewhere in this part of town. In either case, ownership would ultimately need to be granted to the Town.

### Map 12. Preston Park System



### Burdens on Municipally Provided Services and Infrastructure Beyond Proposed Growth Area

The Town of Preston does not have any services or infrastructure beyond its proposed growth area. Stormwater management areas created by any developers outside of the proposed growth area will have to comply with Caroline County regulations.



## **6.0 Financing of Needed Infrastructure Expansions**

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified several fiscal objectives for the Town: 1) to maintain a balanced budget and adequate reserve, 2) to maintain the full fiscal benefits from commercial and/or industrial development within town, and 3) to seek additional outside funding sources for identified town needs.

While the Town will use every practical means to continue to upgrade public services and facilities consistent with the intensity of development, innovative partnerships with developers and County and State government agencies will be the only way our infrastructure will keep pace with even measured development.

The list below is a collection of the various services and facilities which will be impacted by growth or are already stretched to their limit and can accommodate no further growth. As mentioned earlier in this Municipal Growth Element, every future development will need to contribute to ensuring these infrastructures are adequately prepared to handle the additional demand, in accordance with this plan. Each service or facility may require a different financing tool or partnership.

**Preston Elementary School** – The School is already over capacity and while 2005 estimates predicted a declining enrollment, this has not been borne out over the ensuing four years. While new developments will undoubtedly impact the School facilities and staff, the County has not yet implemented a plan for expansion and as this is a County facility, the County will determine their plans for expansion.

**Parks** – One of the Town's Land Use objectives is to provide and maintain adequate open space and park areas. Included in this objective is the desire to annex and create a new park in the Linchester Mill Pond area. Coordinating with the NPF Historical Society, any additional development here should include conversations for land donation for Town park and visitor facilities. The Railroad Trail Park may be developed through a lease agreement with the Maryland and Delaware Railroad either of narrow parts of the Railroad's right-of-way, or more. Any development should celebrate the history of the railroad and its presence in Preston. All development in the northern areas of Town should include discussions of donated pieces of land for a Town-owned public park.

**Water & Sewer** – The most challenging component of Preston's infrastructure systems and the greatest inhibitor of any future development is the wastewater treatment facility. The Town is committed to maintaining adequate water and sewer services to meeting our growing needs, but standard and current operating budgets will not enable us any upgrade to these facilities. Furthermore, our current wastewater treatment plant is not expandable. Thus, a new facility is needed. Funding of this facility may be accomplished in part through Federal or State grants, but it will likely depend on the willingness of developers and new residents to take on the burden of partially financing and funding the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant. Without this type of partnership, no further development can occur in Preston. Naturally, any such agreement would necessitate the construction of a wastewater

treatment plant which had an even lesser impact on Hunting Creek, the Choptank River, the Chesapeake Bay and our other environmental assets. Additionally, while our water infrastructure is not at capacity, we must remain aware of the necessity of long-term replacement of water pipes whose flow has been dramatically reduced in recent years due to corrosion. This decrease in flow pressure limits the possibility of expansion and ought to be included jointly in a sewer and water financing and funding agreement with developers. Similarly, the County should be engaged in any conversations about funding and development of water and sewer facilities as a potential partner.

**Sidewalks & Streetlights** – The Town wishes to continue its extension of sidewalks and pedestrian-scaled streetlights to every existing and new street in Town. Much of this will be funded through current operating budget procedures, but new and innovative partnerships with developers should be explored in any future development negotiation. Additionally, site design should reinforce a compact town feel that both adheres to the principles of good urban design and reduces impact on the regional environment through low-impact site design.

**Police** – If a half-time police officer position starts with base salary and benefits worth \$18,500 (International Association of Chiefs of Police), that amount would need to be collected annually through a fee or tax by 2030. The fee would only need to be collected once a part-time officer was hired and could begin with less than half-time long before 2030. This presents practical problems, but an arrangement for additional support with County or State officers could be completed in the interim. The fee need not be designed today, but should be associated with new and increased population. Thus, any new resident should be required to pay a police service fee equal to the amount needed to support the half-time or part-time officer, just as a portion of current residents' local taxes fund police services.

**Fire** - Despite adequate facilities, the number of calls for service from new development will likely put a strain on the department. As has been discovered, the offset of new tax dollars at the current rate from new development has not covered the cost incurred by the Town residents as a result of the additional population. An additional tax or fee will need to be developed to adequately sustain fire department operations.

## **7.0 Rural Buffer**

Preston's goal has always been to maintain its small town character, rural lifestyle, and ultimately to continue to support the area's farming community. Thus, Preston wishes to set permanent limits to its growth. This is not out of a desire to limit private land owners' opportunities, rather it is to serve our community's way of life. We propose that Town identification of Rural Buffer in the planning area and coinciding County agricultural zoning act as the first step in assuring to the community, developers and farmers that there will be no residential, commercial, industrial or other development on these lands.

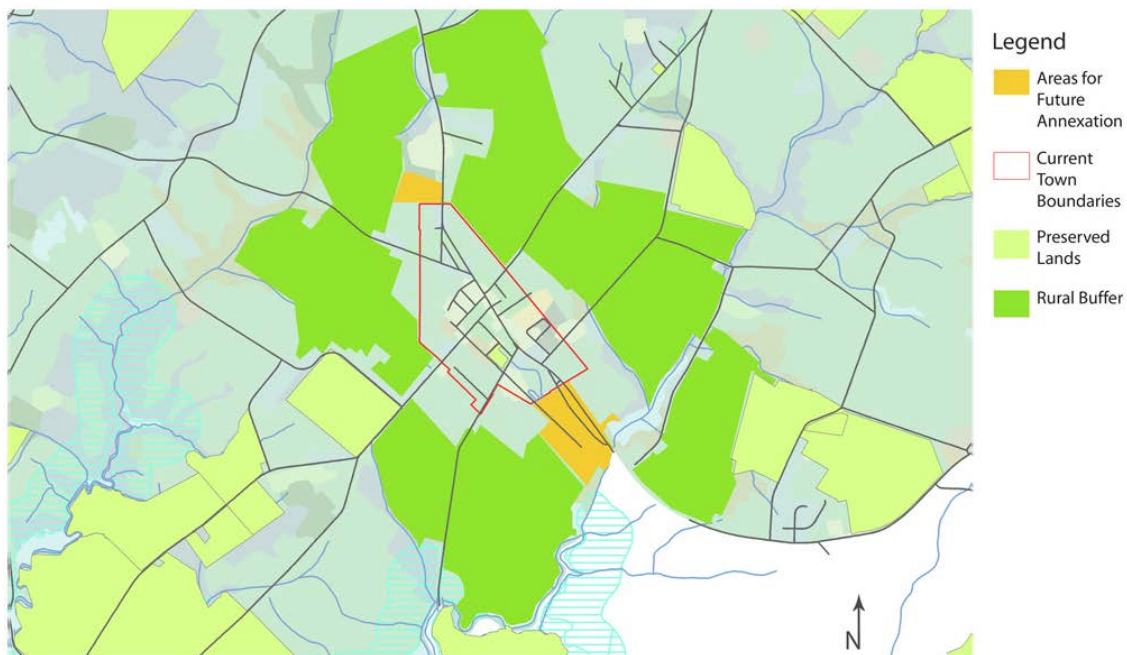
The Town would like to work with the County and landowners to implement an inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights program to facilitate the building and financing of development in Town and to permanently protect the lands targeted for our Rural Buffer. Additionally, we are prepared to partner with farmers, landowners and preservation groups such as the Maryland Environmental Trust and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy to secure easements on these properties.

In the timeframe of this plan, we will not be identifying the intended use of any properties identified as Rural Buffer. In fact, we place a premium on existing use. In other words, farms should remain as farms, open space should remain as open space and natural habitat and forests should remain as such.

The Rural Buffer will hopefully one day provide opportunities for circumferential park linkage and will connect to the Linchester Mill Pond Historic Park, the County park behind the elementary school and the Railroad Trail Park. These linkages will actually allow town residents and children to move safely around, into and through our village safely. This will ultimately connect residents not only to nature, but also to views of the farms that make our region special and productive.

The land not identified as Areas for Future Annexation or as Rural Buffer, but not yet annexed is not prescribed a use for two reasons. First, some of that land is developed with residential and commercial development but is not presently appropriate for annexation. Second, the remainder may one day be suitable for development, and following 2030, we will have an opportunity to re-evaluate the status of this land. For the moment, it is neither appropriate for Rural Buffer nor for development of any kind.

**Map 13. Preston's Rural Buffer**



For more information on the protection of Sensitive Areas, including steep slopes, floodplains, streams and wetland buffers, please refer to the Sensitive Areas Element in the adopted 2005 Comprehensive Plan pp.29-34.

### **8.0 The Relationship of Development Policy to a Vision of the Municipality's Future Character**

Preston's 2005 Comprehensive Plan significantly and adequately addresses what the community expects from any future development in terms of appearance, form, land use, density, intensity and walkability. Strict adherence to the tenets of urban design identified for our village in the Implementation chapter of our Comprehensive Plan is fundamental to maintaining Preston's character. More information can be found on pages 49-55 of the Implementation chapter. For this implementation to be truly effective, however, we will need to implement the Design Guidelines called for by the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan may be viewed or downloaded