



2010

Comprehensive Plan



Adopted by Easton Planning & Zoning
Commission
3/18/2010



TOWN OF EASTON
2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Approved by Easton Town Council - March 1, 2010

Adopted by Easton Planning & Zoning Commission - March 18, 2010

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FOREWORD

Comprehensive Planning in Easton has a long history, dating back at least to 1950 when Elements of the first Plan were adopted by the Planning Commission. Citizen involvement in Comprehensive Planning underwent a sea change in the mid 1990's with the development of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. That Plan was developed with what was then an unprecedented level of community involvement throughout a two and one-half year process, the cornerstone of which was two meetings designed to solicit citizen input through a variety of interesting and clever techniques. Thematic stations were set up and techniques ranging from surveys to interviews to quasi-gaming exercises collected responses from hundreds of attendees. In large part because of this community involvement, the 1997 Plan remains relevant today to the extent that much of what it says still pervades throughout this latest Plan.

This Plan, as well as the one adopted in 2004, are generally refinements of the themes first discussed and described in the 1997 Plan. The 2004 Plan added elements of Growth Management to the primary premise of the 1997 Plan, which was that the quality and appearance of all types of development in Easton needed to be improved. The Growth Management Strategy that was added in 2004 established a Growth Boundary beyond which the Town should not grow. Furthermore, within this ultimate boundary the area between the current Town boundary and the growth boundary was divided into three priority areas for future growth. This has had a profound effect on Annexation policy since 2004 as the only Annexation requests approved were those that were classified as Priority One Growth Areas.

This 2009 Plan refines these Growth Management Strategies further, is somewhat more technical in nature, and reflects changes mandated by the Maryland Legislature in the form of HB 1141. It was rewarding to see that much of what was required in these

new Elements, particularly the Municipal Growth Element, are things that we in Easton already do and/or reflect existing policies of Easton and Talbot County.

Comprehensive Planning is of paramount importance today. 1.1 million new residents are expected to move to Maryland by 2030 and an ever increasing number of them are choosing the Eastern Shore as their home. Maintaining the character, the very essence of this place that makes it so unique and special, will be an enormous challenge. This Plan lays the groundwork for insuring that happens here in Easton. If we find we have missed the mark, we will revise the course along the way and we will once again take a Comprehensive look in 2016. Our hope is that we will still be close enough to the right path that that Plan will represent one more refinement and not a whole new change of direction.

INTRODUCTION

Planning in both Easton and the State of Maryland has advanced greatly over the course of the last 20 years. On April 17, 1989 the Easton Town Council adopted a new Comprehensive Development Plan. This represented the first update to the Town's Comprehensive Plan in 15 years. It was also the last that utilized the traditional "draft and response" technique for gathering public input, whereby a consultant drafts all or portions of the Plan and refines it based on the public input that is received. There is little, if any, public input on the front end of the process. As described in the Foreword, that process has been completely turned around in Easton as since 1995 the Plan has been prepared by the Planning Staff with vast amounts of public input up front and throughout the process.

At approximately the same time that the 1989 Plan was being prepared, the State of Maryland was in the midst of examining its role in local Growth Management on a coordinated statewide basis. The roots of this examination by the State go back to 1987, when the governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission signed the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. This agreement committed the signatories to a region-wide examination of potential impacts of future growth in the Chesapeake watershed through the year 2020.

In December of 1988 the so called "2020 Panel" issued a report in which six widely acclaimed and accepted "Visions" were suggested to guide future growth in the Chesapeake region. These six visions were as follows:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas.
2. Sensitive areas are protected.

3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.
4. Stewardship of the Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including reduction in resource consumption, is practiced through the region.
6. Funding mechanisms are in place to achieve all other visions.

Following the release of these visions, Maryland's Governor Schaefer appointed a committee to report on how best to implement these visions in our state. This "Growth Commission" released a report in November of 1990, which recommended a substantially increased State role in what had traditionally been local planning and growth management decisions. The report recommended legislation that went as far as to set densities for various land uses on a statewide basis. That is, the density of a particular land use was prescribed the same in, for example, Baltimore City or Anne Arundel County, as it was in the Town of Easton or Talbot County.

Due in part to strong opposition from local governments, this proposed legislation failed to gain passage during the 1991 session of the State Legislature. However, the Growth Commission returned to work over the summer, this time in conjunction with representatives of local government, and the result was the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, which received relatively easy passage in the following Legislative Session.

This Act amended Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland to require, among other things, certain new elements in local Comprehensive Plans, as well as a schedule for updating these plans (at least every six years). At approximately the same time that all these changes were occurring at the State level, Talbot County was making changes to its

land use policy that would have a dramatic effect on the Town of Easton. Specifically, the County instituted a policy whereby the vast majority of the County was down-zoned (i.e. was permitted less development rights than existed at that time) and growth was directed to and around the incorporated Towns of Talbot County.

The Talbot County land use changes actually foreshadowed what would come next at the state level. In 1997 the State Legislature enacted Governor Parris Glendening's Smart Growth Initiatives. These policies to a large extent did at a State-wide level what the Talbot County land use changes accomplished at the local level. That is to say that as a result of the Smart Growth Initiatives, the legislature and Governor Glendening created a policy whereby the State directed all its resources to support growth in existing communities (or other designated places) with the hope of halting the spread of development outside of such areas. The end result of these changes for Easton was even more growth pressure at a time when the Town was already under a great deal of such pressure.

In many ways little has changed since 1997. The State continues to study state-wide growth patterns and issues and debate the degree to which it should become involved in what have to this point always been local decisions. In 2006 more than 1,000 people participated in a Visioning exercise called Reality Check plus, sponsored jointly by the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland, the Urban Land Institute's Baltimore District Council and 1000 Friends of Maryland. This exercise used a hands-on technique to distribute future growth around each of the four regions in which the event was held. In short, the results mirrored Smart Growth principles. That is, the participants placed future growth in and around existing cities and towns and protected rural forested and agricultural areas.

Also in 2006, a Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland was created to look at a host of planning issues. The findings of this group will be released

concurrent with the Drafting of this Plan and depending upon what they are, they may necessitate changes to the Plan before it is adopted.

Some things that will be new in this Plan are new elements required as a result of House Bill 1141, also passed in 2006. Specifically as a result of this legislation, Comprehensive Plans must now include an Element on Water Resources and one on Municipal Growth. Also the resources that must be addressed in the Sensitive Areas Element has been somewhat expanded.

Another change that has been made to Planning legislation and that will be reflected in this Plan is to the eight Visions described earlier. These have been replaced via SB 273/HB 294 with 12 new State Planning Visions and required reporting on Adequate Public Facilities matters. The spirit, goals, objectives and policies of this Plan are centered on these new Visions. The new Visions are:

(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 IMPLEMENTATION 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 PROVIDES 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 ARE ENCOURAGED;*

(9) *ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: LAND AND WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING THE CHESAPEAKE AND 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 THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BY COLLABORATING TO BALANCE EFFICIENT GROWTH WITH RESOURCE PROTECTION; AND*

(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.*

Article 66B of the Maryland Annotated Code, entitled *Zoning and Planning*, delegates basic planning and land use regulatory powers to the Town of Easton. When these powers

are exercised, they must be exercised in accordance with the applicable provisions of the statute. Accordingly, this Comprehensive Plan for Easton is prepared in compliance with Sections 3.05, 3.06, 3.07, and 3.08 of the statute. Sections 3.05 and 3.06 address the Plan's content and organization, and Sections 3.07 and 3.08 address procedures for the Plan's review and adoption.

The Easton Comprehensive Plan establishes Town policies relative to the most desirable development patterns for Easton and environs. It identifies in both narrative and graphic form proposed areas for living and working activities and related services that are required to assure a quality environment for all residents. Implementation proposals are included as methods for coordinating public and private development activities, which together will influence Town development form and function. Attention is also given to the Town's role in the development of Talbot County.

The Town Council is responsible under Maryland law for adopting the Plan. The Town Planning Commission is responsible for general administration and enforcement of the Plan. All development proposals should be reviewed for conformance to basic policies and programs identified by the Plan.

After adoption, the Plan will serve as:

- * A unified statement of desirable development policies.
- * A framework within which specific development issues can be evaluated and public policy effectuated consistent with the long-range growth and development goals and objectives of the Town.
- * An information document for local elected officials, citizens, developers and special interest groups concerning critical development issues as well as Town development policies.

Preparation of the Easton Comprehensive Plan represents an important step in the complex process of guiding future development in the interest of the general public. Adoption of the Plan will constitute another logical step in the evolution of directing the forces of development in a desirable spatial pattern. Future Planning Commission and Town Council activities will be directed towards reviewing specific development proposals, periodic revisions of the Plan in view of new conditions, broadening or narrowing the scope of the Plan as necessary and facilitating Plan implementation in a continuing effort to improve the quality of life for all Easton residents.

EASTON'S IDENTITY

Easton is a small town which offers to residents and visitors a quality of life difficult if not impossible to duplicate anywhere else in the United States. As an example, Easton was recently ranked as one of the ten best small towns in America and as one of the best small towns in America for the arts. It is the only small town in Maryland to appear on either list. See N. Crampton, *The 100 Best Small Towns In America* p. 121 (2d Ed., 1995) and J. Villani *100 Best Small Art Towns In America: Discover Creative Communities, Fresh Air and Affordable Living* (3rd Ed., 1998).

Easton derives its identity in considerable part from its rural character, its close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, its historic Downtown area, and the historic and contemporary residential neighborhoods which are in easy walking distance of the Downtown, public facilities such as schools and parks, civic and cultural organizations such as the Academy of the Arts, the Avalon Theater, the Talbot County Historical Society and the YMCA, churches and volunteer organizations such as the Volunteer Fire Department. Easton is also one of several retailing centers for Talbot County and surrounding counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, as well as a location for health,

professional, service and light industrial activities. To some extent these various elements of Easton's identity complement each other and to some extent they conflict; however, it is important that various types of development be balanced and controlled as to timing, location, appearance and impact upon surrounding properties as well as the Town as a whole. Only through this process shall Easton maintain its enviable character in the future.

The Town's identity is subject to change for several reasons:

- to some extent, the Town is a victim of its own success as its reputation for small-town charm and livability spreads, increasing numbers of new residents who wish to relocate here;
- improvements to US Route 50 in the 1980's (the "Reach the Beach" program) have made Easton an easy commute to the Annapolis and, to a lesser extent, the Baltimore and Washington areas;
- changes in retail marketing practices have shifted retail development towards - "big box" type stores and "power centers," which pose a number of potential problems:
 - A. impacts on existing and proposed residential development adjacent to a proposed locations;
 - B. impacts on local and regional traffic in the vicinity of a proposed big box location;
 - C. impacts on public services such as police, fire and other emergency response teams;
 - D. impacts on public water and sewer services;
 - E. impacts on public safety, especially during severe storms and catastrophic events;
 - F. impacts on the natural resources of the Town, County and State;

- G. potential impacts of derelict Big Box structures abandoned due to changed circumstances or financial embarrassment of the owner; and
- H. impacts on the aesthetic qualities of the Town which have assured its preservation as the commercial and cultural heart of Talbot County for more than two centuries.

Equally threatening to Easton's ability to maintain its identity are the environmental stresses which development (both local and regional) and modern agricultural practices have imposed upon the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In the very broadest sense, the purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to balance all of these influences and interests to maintain Easton's identity and improve the quality of life for all who live, work, shop, or visit here.

PLAN BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Before diving into the heart of this Plan, it is important to understand some background and the context in which it was written. Although adopted in 2009, the preparation of this particular version of the Comprehensive Plan started in 2007, with the lion's share of the work, particularly the community input and information gathering, occurring in 2008. In actuality though, this Plan is simply the latest evolution of the one that was adopted in 1997. That Plan represented a distinct break in substance and style and talked about ideas and issues that had generally not been covered in Easton's Comprehensive Plan before. It was also produced of, for, and by the people, the citizens of Easton and those who work in Easton. That Plan was modified somewhat in 2004 and thus we come to the 2009 Plan when it is time to look again at our Town and ponder our future.

The framework for this Plan was laid in 2007 with a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Town Council where it was generally agreed that the 2004 Plan was a good one and as such, little should be changed in it to create this 2009 Plan. It contains solid ideas concerning the future growth of the Town, limiting the ultimate geographic size of the Town, and improving the design of everything from neighborhoods to individual buildings. There is no desire to throw any of those thoughts out. Rather, the decision was made to build on these ideas, improve them where possible, but essentially just add the new requirements for Comprehensive Plans that were imposed by the State through the provisions of HB 1141. In a nutshell, that is the context and spirit in which this Plan was created.

HISTORICAL SETTING

In order to understand what comprises present-day Easton and contemplate what the Easton of the future might be, it is important to understand the Easton of the past. As might be expected of a Town nicknamed the "Colonial Capital of the Eastern Shore," Easton has a long history. In 2010, Easton will celebrate the Tri-centennial anniversary of its founding.

The Town of Easton seems to have received its official beginning from an Act of the Assembly of the Province of Maryland dated November 4, 1710. The Act was entitled, "An Act for the Building of a Court House for Talbot County, at Armstrong's Old Field near Pitt's Bridge". Pitt's Bridge crossed a stream forming the headwaters of the Tred Avon or Third Haven River. It was located at a point where North Washington Street crosses this stream, now enclosed in culverts, north of the Talbottown Shopping Center, and passes under the Electric Plant property.

Prior to this date, the Court had met at York, a small settlement located on Skipton Creek. The Court decided that this location was not convenient to all sections of the County and, in order to change the location, the 1710 Act of the Assembly was passed.

As a result of this Act, two acres of land were purchased from Philemon Armstrong, at a cost of 5,000 pounds of tobacco, the currency of the times. Upon this tract, the same plot upon which the present Talbot County Court House now stands, the Court House, a brick building 20 x 30 feet, was erected at a cost of 115,000 pounds of tobacco. The Courts of the County were held in this building from 1712 until 1794. A Tavern to accommodate those who attended Court was one of the first buildings erected; stores and dwellings followed. The village was then known as Talbot Court House.

These were not the first buildings in the area. The frame meetinghouse of the Society of Friends was built between 1682 and 1684. Undoubtedly some homes were built nearby.

This Court House building continued to be used until the State Legislature, at its first Session after the adoption of the State Constitution in 1777, authorized the General Court, the forerunner of the present Court of Appeals, to sit alternately on the Western Shore and on the Eastern Shore at "Talbot Court House in Talbot County". To care for the needs of the General Court, the Legislature in 1789 enacted "An Act for the building of a Court House in Talbot County for the Accommodation of the General Court for the Eastern Shore and the County of Talbot". This building, built at a cost of 3,000 pounds sterling, paid by the State and County, was completed in 1794, and still serves as the seat of the County Courts. Its use by the General Court and the Court of Appeals has long since been discontinued. It is, however, after many remodelings, the last being in 2001, still used by the United States District Court, which customarily sits in Baltimore.

On March 12, 1785, the Legislature passed an Act to erect the Town in Talbot County, and a Commission headed by Jeremiah Banning, was appointed to purchase land and "Lay it Out in the Best and most convenient manner into lots not exceeding one-half acre each". This Act also authorized the Commission to survey the land and lay out the streets as well as name them. The name of the Town was to be known as "Talbot". In 1788 another Act of the Legislature changed the name to "Easton". It is not definitely known why this change was made. Some writers believe that the Town was first known as "East Town" or "East Capital", as it was the seat of State Government of the Eastern Shore, and from this later became Easton.

In 1790 the Legislature provided for the election of five Commissioners to whom was entrusted the administration of the Town. The Commission was charged with the

preservation of order, the maintenance of the roadways in passable condition, keeping open the drainage ditches, providing plank footwalks where necessary and making and enforcing such regulations as were needed for the preservation of the peace and welfare of the Community.

The powers of the Commission were rather limited and it appears that at times it almost ceased to function. This may account for the fact that some of the streets of the Town as originally laid out have been encroached upon to such an extent by the abutting property owners. Dover Street, which was laid out at a uniform width, is one example. Magazine Alley originally provided vehicular passage but has now become a narrow pedestrian walkway.

Prior to 1906, Easton was a village with unpaved streets, which had to be crossed at the corners where plank crossings were provided. Electricity for streets and homes has been provided since 1887. The electric service at the turn of the twentieth century, however, was discontinued at midnight, causing late visitors to scurry home before the old carbon globes gradually died out as the Town Clock struck the hour of midnight. After midnight, the only lights about the Town were half a dozen gas jet lamps encased in square glass lanterns set on top of wooden poles.

In 1906 the Legislature authorized a new Charter setting up the Mayor and Council form of government. Martin M. Higgins was elected as the first Mayor and served for six years, or a total of three terms.

Under Mayor Higgins, Easton developed rapidly into a modern municipality. In 1911, Easton was a pioneer in Maryland in constructing a complete municipal sewerage system. In 1912 the main residential and business streets were paved. In 1914 the Town purchased and began operation of a municipal water system, and in the same year commenced the operation of a municipal electric plant. In 1922 the Town purchased and

commenced operating a local gas plant. Since that time, it has been one of the few municipalities in the United States that owns and operates all of the public utilities: electric, gas, water and sewer, and more recently, cable television and Internet service.

Planning in the Town of Easton has a relatively long history for a community of its size. The first meeting of the Easton Planning and Zoning Commission was held October 18, 1946. The purpose of this meeting was to hear from members of the Maryland Department of State Planning and the St. Mary's County Planning and Zoning Commission about the steps necessary to establish and empower a Planning and Zoning Commission in Easton. This was later done by Charter Ordinance approved December 17, 1946. The original members of the Easton Planning and Zoning Commission were Louis S. Welty, Chairman, Calvin Skinner, Vice-Chairman, Robert Johnston, William C. Meintzer, and W. H. Corkoran, Jr.

The first Subdivision Regulations were adopted in 1947; the first part of the first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1950, and the original Easton Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1953. More recently the Town has been much more active in land use planning, both in terms of long-range comprehensive planning and day-to-day planning activities. The hiring of a professional Planner in 1988, recent revisions to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, and the adoption of a Critical Areas Program and Forest Conservation Ordinance evidence this. This current update of the Comprehensive Development Plan is the latest undertaking in what has become a nearly continuous effort to assess and revise the Town's development-related regulations. Since the 2004 Plan was adopted the Town has followed up with comprehensive revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, adopted Design Guidelines for New Development of properties outside of the Historic District, and most recently adopted a Plan prepared under the auspices of Historic Easton, Inc., for Downtown Infill Development.

REGIONAL SETTING

When planning for Easton's future, the location of the Town and the interdependence of the Town with other geographic and economic regions are of prime importance. The future population and economic vitality of Easton is determined, not only by local activities, but also by activities in the larger region of which Easton is a part. To this extent, it is essential to relate the Town of Easton to Talbot County, the Eastern Shore, the Delmarva Peninsula, and larger metropolitan areas within close proximity.

Easton, the County seat, is situated in the central portion of Talbot County. The Town is located near the headwaters of the Tred Avon River, which provides access to the Chesapeake Bay. In 2000, the Town was the third largest municipality on the Eastern Shore with a population of 11,708 inhabitants, smaller than only Salisbury and Elkton. Based on the number of Occupancy Permits that have been issued since the date of the Census, the 2009 population is estimated to be 15,249 (1/1/09 estimate). In 2000 the Town contained 34.6% of the County's population. Easton remains the market and service center of the central portion of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Easton is bisected by U.S. Route 50, which provides excellent access to many other major highways. U.S. Route 50 is a major route connecting the Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area to the coastal resort of Ocean City on Maryland's lower shore. The Town is home to a regional municipal airport and is only about one hour's drive from Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

Talbot County, in the central portion of the Eastern Shore, is characterized by gently rolling land areas virtually surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay and four of its major tributaries. Talbot County contains over 600 miles of waterfront. Its land and adjacent waters support agriculture and seafood processing activities that have historically formed a substantial portion of the County's economic base. Development in recent years reflects



Map 1, Easton Regional Context

diversification of this base economy to include a broader manufacturing, service, and tourism economy. Over 75% of the 279 square miles of County land is arable. In 2000, 33,812 people lived in the County, an increase of 11% over 1990. This was a substantial decrease in the rate of growth of the 80's when the population expanded by 19%.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland contains nine counties with a 2000 population of 395,903. This represents an increase of 15% over the 1990 population. An abundance of fresh water and favorable soil characteristics enhance the Eastern Shore's value for agricultural purposes; although in recent years agricultural lands across the Shore have become increasingly threatened by development. Industrial activity in the region has historically been related primarily to agricultural activities and processing of seafood taken from the numerous waterways. However, since 1970 several industries have located on the Shore, which are not reliant upon food products. These include manufacturing, electronics assembly and commercial services, resulting in significant industrial diversification. In the early to mid part of the present decade, the Talbot County Economic Development Commission embarked upon a strategy of concentrating on attracting environmental research and technology businesses to the County with the ultimate goal of becoming the "Silicon Valley" or "Research Triangle" for this particular segment of the national economy.

"Delmarva" is a term that describes the 6,057 square mile peninsula encompassing the nine Eastern Shore of Maryland counties (although some do not include Cecil County as part of Delmarva; for the purposes of this Plan it is included), all of the State of Delaware and the two counties on Virginia's Eastern Shore. In 2000 the population of Delmarva was 1,230,901. Fifty-five percent of the land area and roughly 1/3 of the population of the Delmarva Peninsula is in Maryland. The peninsula is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay on

the west and south, and the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The peninsula lies almost entirely within the Atlantic coastal plain region.

Table 1 below lists the population of Easton, Talbot County, and the Eastern Shore since 1960. This table indicates Easton's continued significance as a population center in both Talbot County and the Eastern Shore.

TABLE 1 POPULATION FIGURES

	2000	Easton as %	1990	Easton as %	1980	Easton as %	1970	Easton as %	1960	Easton as %
Easton	11,708	--	9,372	--	7,536	--	6,809	--	6,337	--
Talbot County	33,812	34.6	30,549	30.7	25,604	29.4	23,682	28.8	21,578	29.4
Eastern Shore	395,903	3.0	343,769	2.7	296,620	2.5	258,329	2.6	243,570	2.6

Enjoying relative proximity to surrounding states, Easton is located approximately 20 miles from Delaware, 80 miles from Pennsylvania and 85 miles from Virginia. The Town enjoys excellent access to major metropolitan areas. From Easton, it is 59 miles to Baltimore, 62 miles to Washington, 85 miles to Wilmington and 114 miles to Philadelphia (See Map 1). The Capital's of five states are also located nearby. Easton lies only 37 miles (via highway) from Annapolis, 46 miles from Dover, Delaware, 174 from Richmond, Virginia, 127 miles from Trenton New Jersey, and 133 miles from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Thus Washington D.C. and five State Capitals are located within three hours driving time of Easton.

With today's modern highway facilities, distance ceases to be as important a consideration as travel time. Easton is 60 – 90 minutes from the fourth largest consumer market in the United States, the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Philadelphia and New York, two larger consumer markets, are 2-3 hours travel time from Easton.

Within 350 miles of Easton live approximately 34% of the U.S. population and 40% of the U.S. industrial market.

Furthermore, with today's communication infrastructure, travel time is also becoming less important. Many entrepreneurs are able to run a business from practically anywhere. In such circumstances, quality of life factors become extremely important in attracting such people. Easton and Talbot County generally are viewed as scoring highly on such factors. Because of the natural attractiveness of its living and working environments, Easton will increasingly be considered as a possible relocation site for people and industries. As other areas become less attractive, the Easton area will be encouraged by outside influences to grow and develop. However, this is no guarantee that these people and jobs will ultimately locate in Easton. For example, a lack of adequately sized, sited, and zoned land can keep away potential new business or industries. It is the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan to provide the Town with a guide to organize its growth in a pattern and at a rate that can be accommodated within the human and fiscal resources of the Town and in a manner that does not destroy the character of the place that so many people love and enjoy.

2009 GROWTH DYNAMICS

Easton has experienced moderate but consistent population growth since its founding. In recent years the rate of growth has increased substantially. Table 2 indicates Easton's population at various years since 1800. The 1800 population is an estimate from an article in the Maryland Room of the Talbot County Free Library which stated that in 1800 Easton was a Town of "about 1,000 inhabitants." All other figures are U.S. Census figures, although the figures for 1910 and 1920 are interpreted from a graph of Easton's population.

TABLE 2 TOWN OF EASTON HISTORIC POPULATION

YEAR	POPULATION
1800	1,000
1810	NA
1820	NA
1830	NA
1840	1,358
1850	1,413
1860	NA
1870	NA
1880	3,005
1890	NA
1900	3,074
1910	3,100
1920	3,400
1930	4,092
1940	4,536
1950	4,836
1960	6,337
1970	6,809
1980	7,536
1990	9,372
2000	11,708

The racial composition of the Town's population appears to be becoming more constant. The non-white population represented 28% of the total population in 1980. This represented a 4.1% increase during the 1970 - 1980 period. However, during the 1980's and 90's this figure stabilized as both the 1990 and 2000 Census indicated that the non-white population remained at 28% of Easton's total.

The age composition of the population is changing. Table 3, located on the following page, Age Distribution shows the patterns of age distribution from 1970 to 2000. Two numbers stand out on this Table. One is the high growth in the older population. In

fact, the “Over 74” age group has grown by 176% since 1970. The other notable observation is that in the 1990’s, every single age category except the “25 to 29” showed an increase.

Changes in the general age distribution reveal a complex series of demands on the level of local services. The increase in the number of young and middle-aged adults reflects a larger number of people potentially available for the labor market. When older populations increase, medical facilities and convenience services normally reflect a corresponding increase, as evidenced by the Hospital expansion (and most recently its proposed move to a new site on the edge of the Town’s Growth Area) and development of related services along Dutchman's Lane and Idlewild Avenue, as well as the growth in Assisted Living and Senior Housing during the most recent decade. As the characteristics of the population change, so must the direction and focus of community services.

Age	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Total Number	% of Total						
Under 5	472	6.9	407	5.4	658	7.0	743	6.3
5 to 9	569	8.4	363	4.8	581	6.2	768	6.6
10 to 14	575	8.4	506	6.7	504	5.4	739	6.3
15 to 19	580	8.5	599	7.9	502	5.4	649	5.5
20 to 24	494	7.3	710	9.4	621	6.6	631	5.4
25 to 29	420	6.2	691	9.2	869	9.3	745	6.4
30 to 34	308	4.5	541	7.2	793	8.5	904	7.7
35 to 44	732	10.8	739	9.8	1,315	14.0	1,839	15.7
45 to 54	847	12.4	736	9.8	805	8.6	1,475	12.6
55 to 64	785	11.5	882	11.7	825	8.8	962	8.2
65 to 74	546	8.0	746	9.9	867	9.3	925	7.9
Over 74	481	7.1	616	8.2	1,032	11.0	1,328	11.3
Totals	6,809	100%	7,536	100%	9,372	100%	11,708	100%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

Furthermore, all of this change is coming within the overall context of increasing regional and State-wide growth pressures. The State of Maryland is quite concerned about the projected State population growth or more particularly about local government's ability to accommodate this growth in a "Smart" manner. That is, they would like to see this growth occur in designated growth areas, especially within municipalities where the infrastructure to accommodate growth is most likely to exist. Figure 1 below graphically depicts Eastern Shore growth. Note that growth on the Shore now represents about 25% of the overall State growth according to the Maryland Department of Planning.

Refusing to grow and hoping that it simply goes somewhere else seems like an unlikely option as well. Delaware is growing every bit as fast, if not faster, than the Eastern Shore. To a certain extent, people are fleeing the Western Shore and the one place with a lot of capacity to accommodate additional growth, Baltimore City, is the main place people are fleeing. The Base-Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) promises to bring thousands of new homes and jobs just beyond the Shore, with the likelihood that some will reside on the western and northern edges of the region. Finally, along our southern border a planned aggressive expansion of NASA's Wallop's Island Flight Center on Virginia's Eastern Shore promises to bring more growth to that portion of our region. It just does not appear, unlike so many times in our past, that this time we can just hold steady and let the latest wave of growth pass the Shore by.

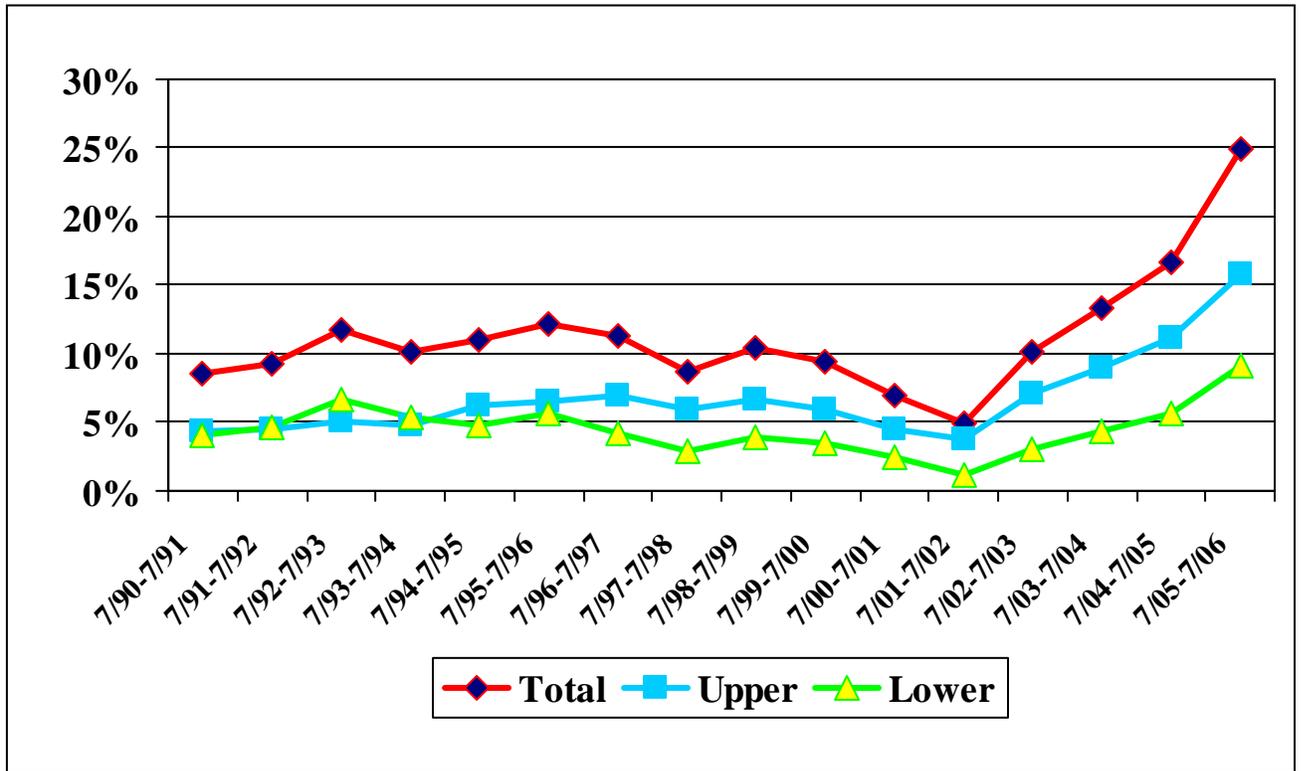


Figure 1 – Eastern Shore Growth 1990 – 2006

Source – *Maryland Department of Planning*

INCOME

Income statistics present an overall view of the community's economic health. Without a suitable distribution of income, many facets of the Town's economy are restricted because local residents cannot provide for their own needs in the private market.

Extreme income groups, upper and lower, demand different and sometimes conflicting types of housing, retailing needs and community services. The high-income groups demand a more expensive life style than the low-income groups are able to afford. Lower income groups are less able to provide for their own needs and in turn look to

governmental agencies for community services. Both categories are significantly large in Easton indicating that the diverse needs of each group will need to be considered.

The 2000 Census indicates that incomes rose significantly in Easton during the 1990's. According to the 2000 Census, for example the percentage of households with incomes less than \$10,000 declined from 17.9% to 10.6% of all households. (See Table 4).

Still, while incomes continue to rise, inflation and adjustments to the definition of poverty, established by the Bureau of the Census, result in a large number and percentage of households within the Town that can be considered low and moderate income. Housing affordability continues to be a problem for families in these income groups. Other Census results describe an Easton that is not nearly as affluent as Talbot County or even the State as a whole. The 2000 Census indicates that the median household income in Maryland in 1999 was \$52,868. The corresponding figure for Talbot County was \$43,532. Easton's 1999 median household income was \$36,464. Table 5 below shows the corresponding figures for the most recent update available (2007). The median household income went up by more than 25% for all jurisdictions, although Easton grew by the lowest percentage (27.2% vs. 28.8% for both Talbot and Maryland).

TABLE 4 HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 1999		
Income Category	Number of Households	Percent
Under \$10,000	527	10.6%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	393	7.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	839	16.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	658	13.2%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	858	17.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	962	19.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	300	6.0%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	312	6.3%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	50	1.0%
\$Over \$200,000	72	1.4%
Median Income = \$36,464	Total Households = 4,971	

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

Table 5 Median Household Income			
	Easton	Talbot County	Maryland
1999	\$36,464	\$43,532	\$52,868
2007	\$46,378	\$56,057	\$68,080

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Table 2 earlier indicated the historic population growth of the Town of Easton. A closer examination of these numbers reveals distinctive growth rates at various points. This is perhaps more clearly evident by looking at a graph of this data. Figure 1 below shows this information graphically.

Town of Easton Population

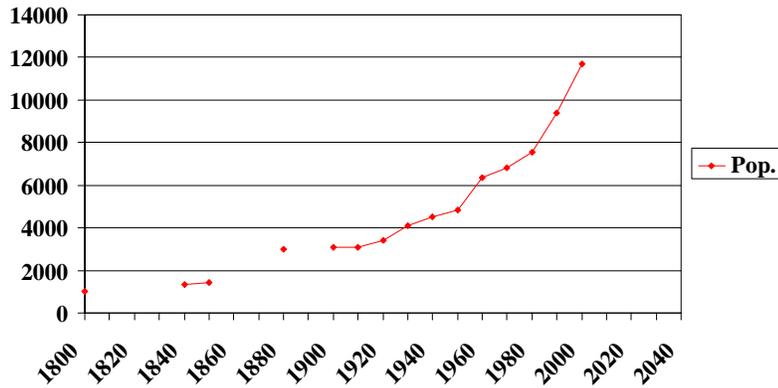


Figure 2 – Historic Town Growth 1800 – 2000

This graph indicates that there are two distinct points at which the rate of growth increases. The first is at 1950 and the second is at 1980. Looking at the population figures corresponding to these different periods of time, it is possible to calculate the growth rate for each. On an average annual compounded basis, the growth rate of the Town from 1800 to 1950 was approximately 1.06%. For the period 1950 to 1980, it was approximately 1.5%. Finally, for the most recent twenty-year period, it was approximately 2.3%.

Figure 2 above looks only to the year 2000, using the Census population counts for each year on the graph. We are now almost through this first decade of the new millennium, and as such it can be useful to look at growth throughout this decade. The Planning Office annually reports on the number of new residential units that received permits during the previous calendar year. Using this data as well as information from the Building Department concerning the number of demolitions, estimates are prepared of the

Town's population as of January 1st of each year. Table 6 below summarizes these estimates.

Year	Net Units Approved	Population Added	Annual Growth Rate	Following Year's Population Estimate
2000	147	228	2.5	11,936
2001	177	366	3.1	12,302
2002	306	633	5.1	12,935
2003	315	652	5.0	13,587
2004	346	716	5.3	14,303
2005	188	389	2.7	14,692
2006	95	197	1.3	14,889
2007	90	186	1.3	15,075
2008	84	174	1.2	15,249

147 units approved in 2000, however since the Census figure is as of April 1st, 75% or 110, was used to estimate population growth for 2000 from the time since the Census figure was released. The growth rate for that year was similarly adjusted so that it reflects a full year.

Net Approved Units derived from subtracting the number of units demolished from the total approved.

Population estimates developed by multiplying the net units approved by the household size (2.22) and occupancy rate (93.2%) reported in the 2000 Census.

While observing and analyzing the historic growth of the Town of Easton is an interesting exercise, the more important task for a Comprehensive Planning effort is to look forward. The various growth rates can be used as a basis for doing this. Table 6 below

projects Easton’s population to the year 2030 at each of the distinctly different historic growth rates. There is also one addition. That is a 3% growth rate. 3% is the figure used in each of the previous two Comprehensive Plans as the “High” projection. It is also the rate at which the Town has been growing since the latter half of the 90’s. It is also almost exactly the average annual compound growth rate of the current decade, which given that we are 90% through it, it seems reasonable to assume will be very close to the figure for the decade as a whole.

TABLE 6				
POPULATION PROJECTIONS				
TOWN OF EASTON				
GROWTH RATE	2010	2020	2030	2040
1.06%	15,410	17,124	19,029	21,145
1.5%	15,478	17,963	20,846	24,193
2.3%	15,600	19,583	24,583	30,859
3.0%	15,706	21,108	28,368	38,124

During the Visioning phase of each of the last two Comprehensive Plan Updates there was a great deal of discussion and comment concerning the rate of growth in Easton. In 2004, after careful consideration the Planning Commission and ultimately the Town Council decided that the most appropriate method to manage growth was to specify geographic limits where growth should occur and establish an order in which different areas should come into Town to accommodate new growth, until the point at which we reach the ultimate Growth Boundary. This Plan modifies that strategy somewhat, but essentially reinforces it. Specifically, the Plan identifies areas and a sequence for when and where growth should occur. The quality and appearance of both new and existing

development is also an important element of this Plan and measures to reach that goal are also included. Town Officials believe this combination of growth management techniques will maintain Easton’s character and charm while allowing for limited and deliberate growth so that the Town can continue to provide the services needed by its citizens and visitors.

By far the biggest change to this strategy is the establishment of goals, policies, and objectives designed to limit future residential growth to no more than 1% annually. This will be a challenge to achieve given the projections of 3% annual growth that would likely occur absent any actions to either inflate or retard the growth rate. 1% is significantly less than Easton’s recent historic growth rate. However, the Planning Commission believes that Easton has reached a point where growth at a rate faster than 1% endangers our ability to keep up with the provision of the services necessary to accommodate that growth, contributes to making already bad problems (i.e. traffic) worse, and threatens the small-Town charm and atmosphere that so many love about Easton.

Growth at a 1% Annual Rate produces the following population projections:

2010	2020	2030	2040
15,401	17,013	18,793	20,759

Elements of this refined, limited growth strategy will permeate throughout this Plan. However, it is most clearly and comprehensively outlined in the Municipal Growth and the Implementation Chapters of the Plan.

LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

During the historical development of Planning in the United States, the scope of what a Comprehensive Plan encompasses has grown ever broader. At its heart, however, a Comprehensive Plan remains first and foremost a land use plan. This Land Use Element provides the foundation upon which later plan elements are based. As such, it is the blueprint for the future development of the Town.

One of the new requirements for Comprehensive Plans resulting from the enactment of HB 1141, is for a Municipal Growth Element. It obviously must be closely coordinated and work in harmony with the Land Use Element. In fact, most of what was in the Land Use and Growth Element of the 2004 Plan, will be moved to the Municipal Growth Element of this Plan. This Land Use Element will now focus more narrowly on future land uses and less on growth projections, demand, and development capacity.

Together with the Municipal Growth Element the Land Use Element outlines policies for the orderly and planned development of the Town of Easton. The Future Land Use Map contained and described more thoroughly in the Implementation Element, provides a graphic representation of the desired pattern of land uses within the Town.

The use of land within the Town is the result of many physical, economic and social forces. The Land Use Element reflects an attempt by the Town to equitably balance the attainment of Town goals and objectives for development with private property rights and interests. The Land Use Element addresses

issues and identifies Town policies relative to residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as the provision of lands for parks and open spaces. It analyzes the appropriate mix of uses in the short and long term given our projected growth. It will also address the monumental task of reversing and rectifying what are now viewed as poor land use decisions (made not just in Easton but throughout the nation) that were made in the past, primarily since the late 1940's. In short, it lays the groundwork that will be repeated throughout the Plan for ensuring that future growth is not in the form of auto-centric, isolated, suburban style subdivisions but rather takes the form of multi-use, integrated, and connected neighborhoods.

Directing growth is a critical task facing local governments throughout the country today. Many communities view growth as essential to their economic health. Communities without growth may be forced to continually raise taxes on existing residents and businesses since the tax base does not expand. On the other hand, unchecked, unmanaged growth can also cause many problems. Achieving the right balance of land uses is critical in avoiding these problems. For example, a community that focuses primarily on residential growth may become a bedroom community where the residents are forced to travel to other places for everything from work to shopping. A community with an overabundance of commercial development invites traffic congestion. And unless the community has adequate design standards, whatever development occurs may not be aesthetically pleasing.

BACKGROUND

Like nearly every community, Easton's land use pattern is primarily a reflection of the influences of the dominant mode of transportation over time. At its founding in 1710, Easton was located at the headwaters of the Tred Avon

River. Current visitors to Easton may well be confused by that statement and wonder why the Town moved from that location. Actually the Town did not move. Rather, the river changed. It does still exist in this area, but has been reduced to a stream that has been enclosed in culverts in the vicinity of Talbottown Shopping Center and the Easton Utilities Electric Generating Plant.

The following table lists every annexation of the Town, beginning with the initial survey in 1786. At that time Easton was a mere 94.5 acres. Not only was the overall size of the Town small, but also the pattern of development was dense, reflecting that the primary means of travel at that time was walking. Today, Easton consists of almost 6,600 acres and within the most recently developed parts of the Town the development pattern is relatively sparse. This reflects the mode of travel of today, the private automobile, which has had the effect of spreading out development and greatly separating the places where people live, from the places where they shop and work.

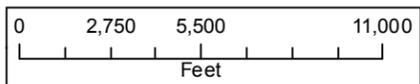
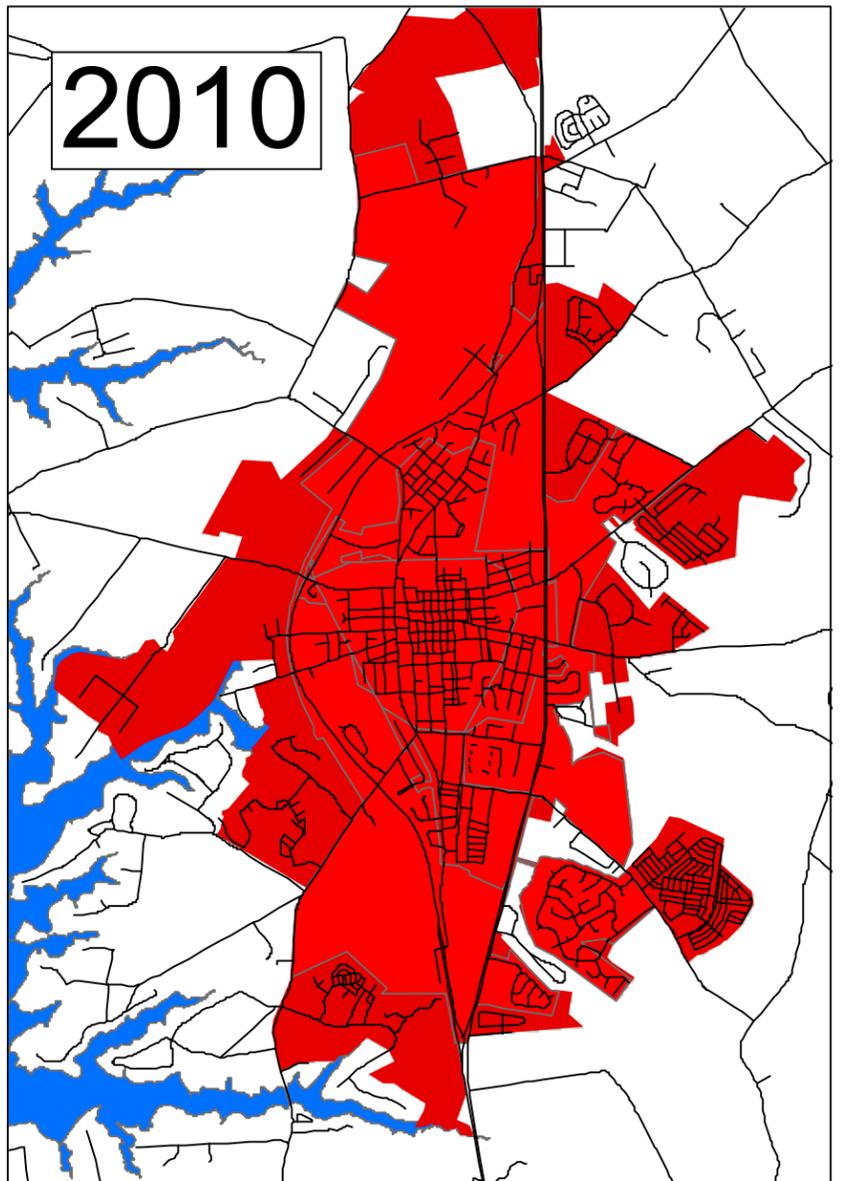
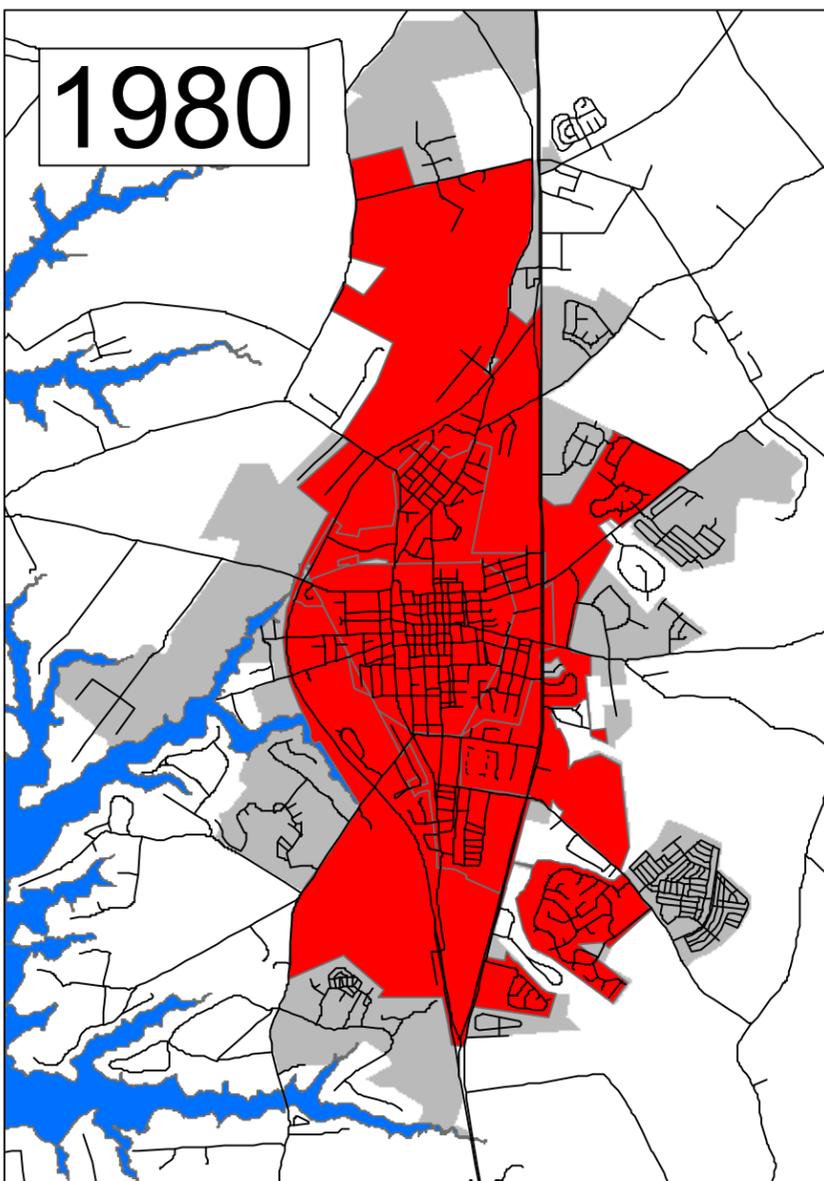
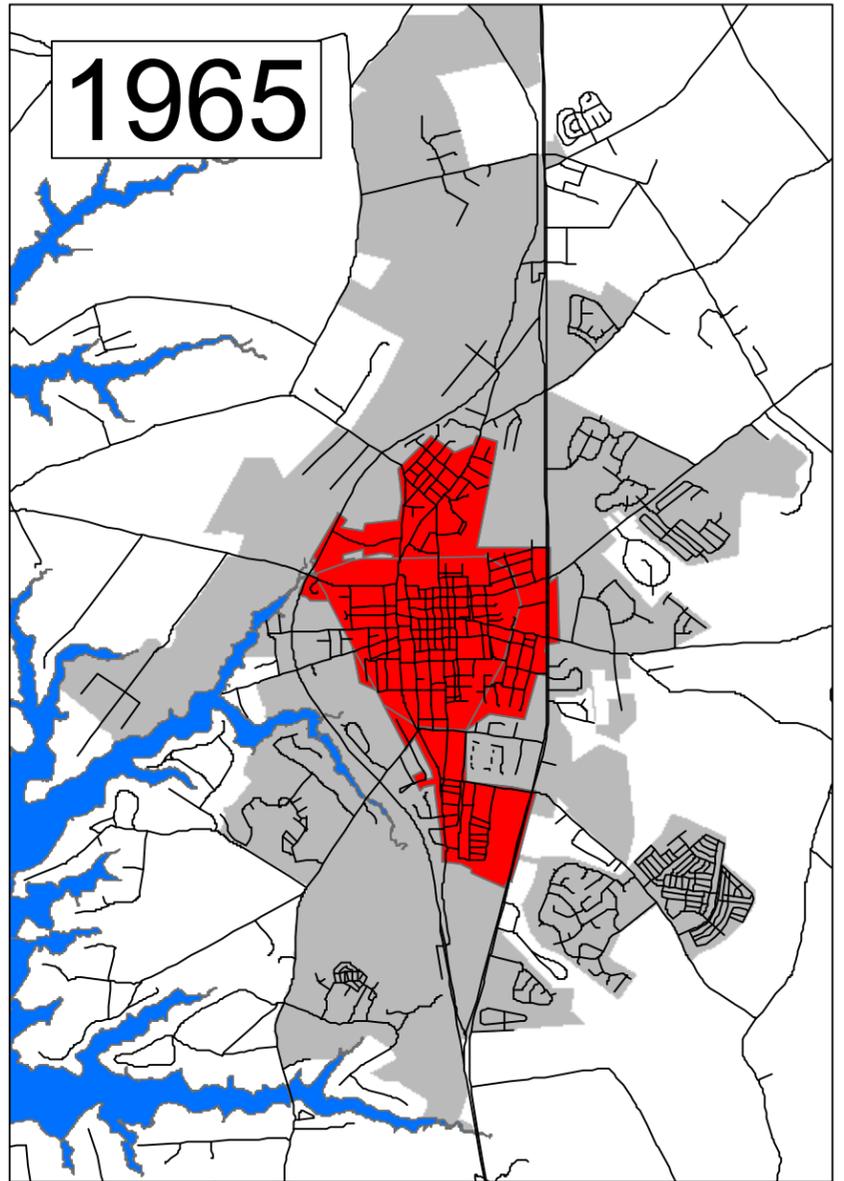
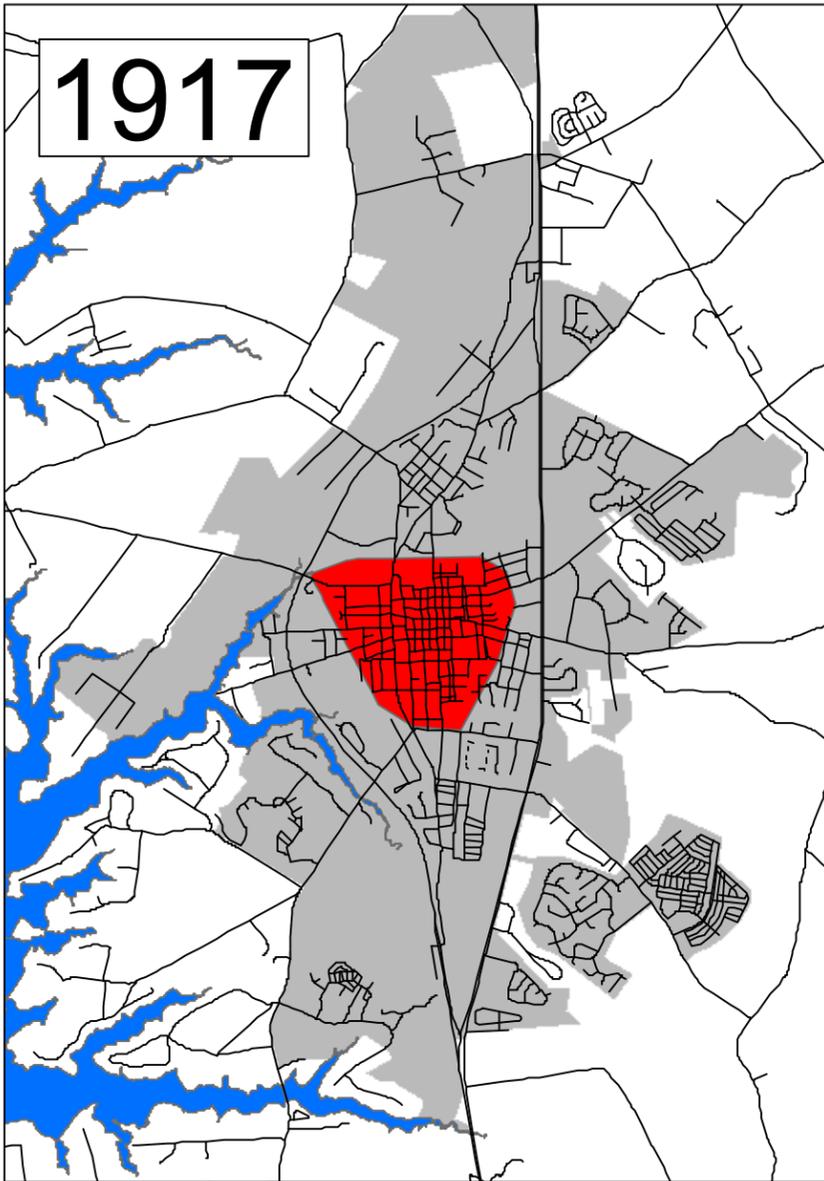
TABLE 6 HISTORICAL ANNEXATIONS					
NO.	DATE	ANNEXATION	AREA (AC)	TOTAL (CUM.)	SQ. MILE (CUM.)
1	3/12/1786	1785 John Needles Survey	94.500	94.500	0.14766
2	Nov. 1806	John M. G. Emory Survey	24.200	118.700	0.18547
3	1/26/1880	J. M. Tharp Survey	186.300	305.000	0.47656
4	1916	Kastenhuber Survey	195.352	500.352	0.78180
5	1927	Community Park	45.00	545.352	0.85211
6	June 1951	Wm. H. Corkran Survey	445.339	990.691	1.54795
7	2/02/1961	Hughlett Street	4.551	995.691	1.55507
8	6/02/1961	Part of Marlboro	20.000	1015.242	1.58632
9	7/05/1962	Easton Motels – Rte 50	2.400	1017.642	1.59007
10	5/02/1963	Marlboro	17.618	1035.260	1.61759
11	2/17/1965	Brookwood	3.502	1038.762	1.62307
12	4/29/1965	Mecklenburg	101.524	1140.286	1.78170
13	8/20/1965	Third Haven Heights	12.065	1152.351	1.80055

14	9/02/1965	Applewood Court	6.288	1158.639	1.81037
15	12/03/1965	North Glenwood	10.020	1168.659	1.82603
16	6/02/1966	Hallowell	16.431	1185.090	1.85170
17	6/30/1966	The Easton Parkway	164.694	1349.784	2.10904
18	6/30/1966	Maryland National Bank	4.673	1354.457	2.11634
19	6/30/1966	Frankford	214.196	1568.653	2.45102
20	12/01/1966	Pennsfield	176.840	1745.493	2.72733
21	3/02/1967	Witt Woodland	198.889	1944.382	3.03810
22	6/02/1967	Mulberry Hill	385.948	2330.330	3.64114
23	10/21/1967	Glenwood Heights	136.404	2466.734	3.85427
24	8/02/1968	Trippe Avenue	12.528	2479.262	3.87385
25	10/30/1969	Maryland State Police	8.630	2487.892	3.88733
26	10/01/1970	Airport Industrial Park	241.786	2729.678	4.26512
27	12/03/1970	Idlewild Lots	4.049	2733.727	4.27145
28	4/30/1970	North Clifton	5.549	2739.276	4.28012
29	11/04/1971	Carroll's Addition	24.547	2763.823	4.31847
30	6/01/1972	Golt Farm	129.354	2893.177	4.52059
31	4/05/1973	Idlewild Lots	5.740	2898.917	4.52956
32	4/19/1973	South Beechwood	36.546	2935.463	4.58666
33	11/01/1974	West Galloway	15.529	2950.992	4.61093
34	1/02/1975	Poplar Hill	174.358	3125.350	4.88336
35	6/05/1975	Central Clifton	24.189	3149.539	4.92115
36	7/02/1976	North Clifton	30.703	3180.242	4.96913
37	7/23/1976	Stoney Ridge Farm	222.976	3403.218	5.31753
38	10/01/1976	Reward Farm	110.705	3513.923	5.49050
39	11/05/1976	Ashby Woodland	43.338	3557.261	5.55822
40	2/03/1978	Elliott Road	5.993	3563.254	5.56758
41	3/02/1978	Idlewild Farm	128.626	3691.880	5.76856
42	1/18/1979	Easton Airport	595.809	4287.689	6.69951
43	4/02/1981	Woodland Farm	309.686	4597.375	7.18340
44	3/03/1983	Lutheran Church – Rte 50	6.006	4603.381	7.19278
45	9/18/1986	Craft Farm	102.670	4706.051	7.35320
46	12/05/1986	Mulberry Hill/W. Galloway	233.844	4939.895	7.71859
47	7/02/1987	William Favinger	10.260	4950.155	7.73462
48	3/03/1988	John O. Brooks	31.551	4981.706	7.78392
49	5/23/1989	County Roads Facility	6.080	4987.786	7.79342
50	4/06/1990	Londonderry	25.430	5013.216	7.83315
51	1/13/1991	Ewing – Dover Rd.	2.130	5015.346	7.83648

52	2/17/1991	RGA/Davis – Denton Rd.	27.900	5043.246	7.88007
53	5/03/1991	Dudrow (N. Glenwood)	187.850	5231.096	8.17359
54	6/18/1992	Ward/Benhoff – Dover Rd.	13.595	5244.691	8.19483
55	8/16/1993	Lyon’s Farm	217.100	5461.791	8.53405
56	3/18/1995	Cooke’s Hope	162.365	5624.156	8.78774
57	10/23/1995	Public Works Facility	15.451	5639.607	8.81189
58	2/03/1996	Swann Farm	80.540	5720.147	8.93773
59	7/24/1996	Celeste Industries (Jettison)	-16.322	5703.825	8.91223
60	11/24/1996	Swann Haven L.P.	30.442	5734.267	8.95979
61	11/24/1996	Wickersham Farm	162.570	5896.837	9.21381
62	5/30/1997	Talbot Bible Church	10.361	5907.198	9.23000
63	12/07/1998	Trippe’s Creek/Cheston L.P.	217.851	6125.049	9.57039
64	1/18/1999	Charles O. Parks	7.598	6132.647	9.58226
65	4/17/1999	Swann Haven L.P.	75.743	6208.390	9.70061
66	6/25/1999	Ratcliffe Manor	386.440	6594.830	10.30442
67	4/30/2000	Ratcliffe Manor Lane	3.176	6598.006	10.30939
68	8/26/2001	Town Properties (4)	7.926	6605.932	10.32177
69	10/15/2001	Swann Farm	79.014	6684.946	10.44523
70	7/26/2002	Hoffman	52.291	6737.237	10.52693
71	7/26/2002	UP Associates	23.084	6760.321	10.56300
72	7/3/2003	Kennedy Street	26.866	6787.187	10.60498
73	6/11/2005	West Glenwood	30.192	6817.379	10.65216
74	5/15/2006	Londonderry	13.492	6830.871	10.67324
75	8/03/2007	Clifton Industrial Park	35.41	6866.281	10.72856

Map 2 is an insert which depicts this information as a map, showing graphically the growth of the Town over time. Both the Table and the Map were first included in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. Thus in many ways the most interesting aspect of this information may be what has occurred since 2004. In short, we followed our Plan. There were only three annexations approved during the Planning period. Two of these were shown as Priority 1 Growth Areas in the 2004 Plan. The third was not, but we went through a

Historic Annexations



Historic Annexations

Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Date: 4/16/09

Scale: 1:36,000

Created: Easton Department of Planning

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process to make it a Priority 1 Area. One other annexation was reviewed, but it was rejected because the Plan indicated the area as a Priority 3 Growth Area, therefore it was determined by both the Planning Commission and the Town Council to be inconsistent with the Plan.

EXISTING LAND USE

The first step necessary in making decisions relative to how to best use land in the future is to determine just how land is being used today. One indicator of this is given in the table below which shows the acreages of the various zoning districts as established in the 2006 Zoning Ordinance, as well as an estimate of the amount of unimproved land in each district.

Table 7 AVAILABLE LAND BY ZONING CLASSIFICATION				
Zoning	Total Acreage	Estimated Acreage **	Unimproved	Percentage of Total Town Area
A-1	190	125		
R-10A	2,570	550		
R-10M	0	0		
R-7A	475	10		
Total Residential	3,235	685		47%
CR	125	10		
CG	580	55		
CL	126	108		
HC	190	100		
Total Commercial	1,021	273		15%
I-1	1,340	370		
I-2	0	0		
Total Industrial	1,340	370		20%
PUD	1,270	215		18%
Total all Districts	6,866	1,543		

** Not all unimproved acreage is conducive to development, i.e. environmental factors, open space, etc.

Source: Estimates prepared by Brent Spicer, Easton Utilities Commission, on January 3, 1994, and updated to include new annexations and rezonings. Estimates of unimproved acreage prepared by Current Planner Zach Smith on September 23, 2009.

Together Tables 6 and 7 give an accurate sense of the existing situation in terms of the relative mix of land uses in Easton, and the availability of land for development for each of these different land uses. This becomes important in planning the appropriate mix of uses for the future of the Town. Balance is the key in achieving a healthy, vibrant community and in order to propose the future balance, it is essential to first determine whether or not Easton is already imbalanced in some way.

The 2004 Plan talks at some length about the most appropriate mix of land uses (or what the most ideal ratio of residential to commercial to industrial uses

should be). We have dropped that discussion from this Plan because it represented a limited number of sources and there are doubtless unlimited points of view on this issue. The purpose of including that the last time around was never to stop, say all commercial development until it dropped to the identified appropriate rate. Rather it was to point out where perhaps Easton might be markedly “out-of-balance” from a land use perspective. It seemed clear from the analysis of the 2004 Plan and from public comment, that Easton has significantly more commercial development than a community of our population would normally dictate.

This is further complicated by the finer breakdown of commercial uses into four major categories which are all present to varying degrees in Easton. These are Neighborhood Retail, Regional Retail, Transient-Oriented Retail, and the Downtown (or Town Center or Central Business District). We do not seem to universally share the same degree of oversaturation of each of these subcategories of retail development. This has implications when considering future commercial land use needs.

In terms of future land use needs, these subcategories of retail can be summarized as follows:

- **Neighborhood retail** – Is virtually non-existent beyond the Town Center. Older developed areas of Town should be encouraged to add this type of retail use to retroactively create more legitimate neighborhoods. New residential development should be discouraged if it does not contain neighborhood commercial centers. The future Easton this Plan envisions is not a continuation of uniform, single-use subdivisions, but rather a series of connected, well-defined neighborhoods, one of the most important components of which is retail uses limited to a truly neighborhood scale.
- **Regional Retail** – This is the subcategory of retail that is largely responsible for Easton’s per capita retail ratio of 80

square feet (approximately twice the ratio recommended by the source cited in the 2004 Plan). It is also the kind of retail that many people object to when they talk about the over-commercialization of Easton. For these reasons, the role of new regional scale retail development in Easton's future will be limited. This is not to say that new regional retail will be prohibited. It will simply be limited to existing undeveloped commercially zoned properties and redevelopment of Easton's older shopping centers. No new areas of regional retail are proposed for near-term development on the Future Land Use Map. In addition, whatever new development is permitted at this scale, will be only allowed under strict design guidelines. Unrestrained, this level of retail development is the one that can make Easton look the most like "Anyplace, USA." On the other hand, with a little flexibility on the developer's part, it can instead help us greatly in establishing a unique character for our community.

- **Transient-Oriented Retail** – Another subcategory with both limited future growth potential and great redevelopment possibilities. Clearly, with the volume of traffic that passes through Easton, unless we have no interest in serving these travelers, there is a need for this type of retail development. It is also desirable from a Town resident and worker standpoint in that these are frequently the places we go to eat lunch, get gasoline, etc... It is also, however, along with regional retail, the subcategory most in need of strict design guidelines in order to improve the image of our Town, particularly in the eyes of the visitor. The future Land Use Plan proposes limited areas for Transient-oriented retail. One of these is the land just north of the current Town boundary that is largely developed (particularly on the east side of Rte. 50). Future growth in this retail segment will therefore largely come from redevelopment of existing businesses and improvement of undeveloped commercially zoned property on the Rte. 50 corridor.
- **Downtown** – Easton's downtown or Town Center, as the two are often interchangeably used, is truly a unique place.

In large part it defines the character of Easton, at least what so many people like about Easton. In it one will find many historic buildings, a County Courthouse dating to 1794, local government offices, restaurants, the Historic Avalon Theatre, museums, a hotel, an inn and bed and breakfast establishments, and numerous specialty shops. Obviously, in an area that has been developed for so long, new development opportunities are limited. Redevelopment opportunities do exist however. In fact the Town Council adopted earlier in 2009, a Plan for Redevelopment and Infill Development in the Downtown. This Plan is described in greater detail in the Economic Development Chapter of this Plan. It is the hope that whatever development/redevelopment does occur can be coupled with steps to strengthen existing Downtown businesses to maintain and revitalize what is really the heart of Easton.

The role and characteristics of various types of commercial retail development is summarized in the following table. Neighborhood retail is analogous to the description above. Community and Regional are both similar to the Regional discussion above.

Table 9
Commercial Standards

	Neighborhood	Community	Regional
Location	- within convenient walking distance of residential areas - intersections of collector and secondary roads	- intersection of major roads and expressways	- intersections of expressways
Service Radius	0.5 mile	2 miles	4 miles (urban setting) 8-10 miles (suburban) 15+ miles (rural area)
Catchment Area	5 - 10 minute travel	10 - 20 minute travel	30 - 60 minute travel
Population Served	4,000 – 10,000	35,000 – 50,000	Over 150,000
Max. Desirable Size for Shopping Centers	1 acre/1000 served	0.75 acres/1000	0.67 acres/1000
Total Size	4 - 8 acres	10 - 30 acres	40 - 100 acres
Avg. Gross Floor Area	30,000 - 75,000 sq. ft.	100,000 -250,000 sq. ft.	400,000 - 1,000,000
Number of Stores for Shopping Center	5 - 20	15 - 40	40 - 80

Source: Adapted from Urban Land Institute (1982); Lynch and Hack (1984); Leung (1989).

Residential Land Uses are generally not described in terms of a ratio. In fact, to the contrary, the other land use ratios are based on the number of residential units (or population) in the community. The discussion about residential land uses tends to focus more on the arrangement, appearance, and density of this land use. That is discussed thoroughly in the Neighborhood Character Element. Suffice it to say that we see things changing for this land use. We do not envision the future of Easton as a series of disconnected, isolated, monotonous

subdivisions. Rather we want to see a seamless, attractive, interesting, Smart Growth inspired Easton; one Easton, not a collection of suburban residential enclaves.

The next land use to examine is industrial. The discussion in the 2004 Plan did not talk about a ratio of industrial land acreage or square footage to residential units, but rather talks about jobs to housing ratio. For this land use, the 2004 Plan concludes that there were more jobs in Easton than the population would suggest is necessary. However there are a number of factors that would skew this estimate. These include:

- The fact that a large proportion of Easton's population is retired. Thus there are a lot of dwelling units for which no jobs are necessary.
- The simple ratios tell us nothing about the type of jobs available in Easton. There seems to be a shifting in the focus of jobs away from the manufacturing and traditional "industrial" type jobs towards service-oriented jobs.
- Tourism seems to be becoming more important in Easton and more jobs are found in the food and hospitality sectors of the job market.
- Easton is the governmental center of Talbot County. As such, there are a number of government jobs, as well as jobs in allied professions such as legal, real estate, accounting, surveying and engineering, etc...
- Easton serves as an employment hub for a much larger area than Talbot County.

Simple ratios suggest that there is little need to propose new areas for industrial development beyond those already planned as such in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. However as we have recently seen by the fact that the 2004 Plan has been amended three times to accommodate industrial growth since it

was adopted, a close examination of the appropriate use of our industrially zoned lands is in order. It is clear that there has been a gradual erosion of the availability of this land for classic industrial uses by allowing more and more commercial and service uses. Furthermore, the fact that so many people commute to Easton for work suggests that we need to look at the workforce characteristics of adjacent counties and look at the transportation implications of this phenomenon.

The other side of the coin of having so many people commuting into Easton for work is the fact that many Easton residents are commuting out of Town to work. Thus while there is little need to add jobs from an overall jobs to housing ratio perspective, jobs which better meet the needs of Easton residents would be of great benefit in reducing traffic and all the associated environmental impacts. For this reason specifically there are industrial areas proposed on the eastern side of Town for development in the long-range planning period.

The benefits of mixed land uses will be a recurring theme throughout this Plan, particularly in the Community Character and the Transportation Elements. In short, the benefits include that mixed uses:

- Increase housing options for more diverse household types.
- Provide more transportation options.
- Reduce automobile dependence.
- Create a truer sense of place than single-use suburban style development.
- Activates urban areas throughout more times of the day.
- Provide greater opportunity for social interaction.
- Reduce a community's carbon footprint by encouraging walking and biking as an alternative to automobile use.

- Increase the safety of the neighborhood by putting more eyes on the street.

LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To limit the geographic outward expansion of the Town of Easton.

Objectives:

- ✓ Reaffirm the Urban Growth Boundary around the Town defining the ultimate geographic size of Easton.
- ✓ Work in association with Talbot County and various land preservation organizations to secure easements and other long-term protection devices on properties along and in close proximity to the Urban Growth Boundary on the County side of the line.
- ✓ Limit annexation in the six-year planning period to only those areas that will “clean-up” the existing Town boundary.
- ✓ Explore incentive annexation to gain control of land on the town’s border and to implement a strict pattern which will guide growth in the future.
- ✓ Slow the demand for more land by increasing the density of future residential areas. At a minimum, the “Smart Growth” Priority Funding Area net density of 3.5 units per acre should be achieved in these developments.
- ✓ Consider implementation of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) to assure the availability of public services is sufficient to meet the resulting needs of growth.
- ✓ Follow a Capital Improvement Program which will allow the Town to provide a rational basis for implementing improvements and increase funding opportunities.

Goal: To achieve a more balanced and integrated mix of land uses within the Town.

Objectives:

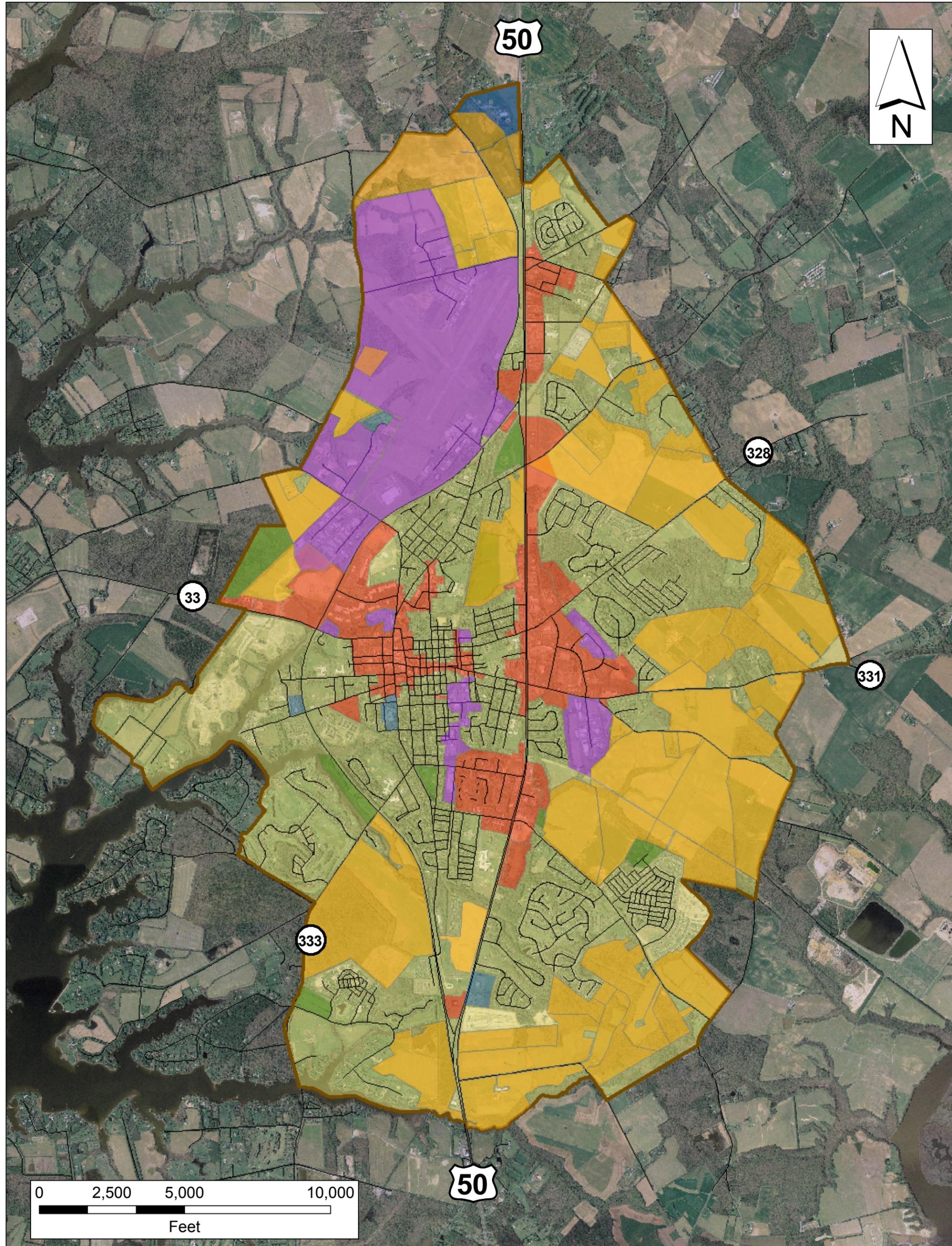
- ✓ Develop future areas of the Town in a series of well-defined connected neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods should contain an integrated mix of residential, neighborhood-scale commercial, civic, and open space uses.
- ✓ Begin to “retro-fit” developed subdivisions within the Town by adding much greater flexibility to add neighborhood-scale retail, civic and open space elements to existing residential subdivisions.
- ✓ Amend the Town’s Zoning Ordinance to change the focus from regulation by building use, to building type and site impact.

Goal: To improve the appearance of all aspects of development in the Town of Easton.

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to refine and work with Design Standards that ensure that Easton stands out as a unique place rather than looking like “Anyplace USA.”
- ✓ Utilize the Town’s Forest Conservation Account and other sources to add landscaping along heavily traveled corridors.
- ✓ Use the Special Exception review process to impose design improvements as a condition of approval.
- ✓ Explore options to expedite permit approvals for permitted uses if extraordinary design improvements are included.
- ✓ Develop an Urban Forestry Plan to expand the Town’s tree canopy.

Existing Land Use



	Industrial		Residential		Undeveloped
	Commercial		Institutional		Open Space



Existing Land Use Map
Created By: Zach Smith
Easton Planning Office
4/15/09

MUNICIPAL GROWTH

INTRODUCTION

One of the consequences of HB 1141 that was passed in the 2007 legislative session is that municipalities have to prepare two new elements as part of the Comprehensive Plan. One of these new elements is Municipal Growth. The law specified that this element shall include consideration of:

1. Anticipated future growth areas outside the existing corporate limits of the municipal corporation;
2. Past growth patterns of the municipal corporation;
3. The capacity of land areas available for development within the municipal corporation, including infill and redevelopment;
4. The land area needed to satisfy demand for development at densities consistent with the long-term development policy;
5. Public services and infrastructure needed to accommodate growth within the proposed municipal growth areas, including those necessary for:
 - A. Public schools, sufficient to accommodate student population consistent with State rated capacity standards established by the Interagency Committee on School Construction;
 - B. Libraries;
 - C. Public Safety, including emergency medical response;
 - D. Water and sewerage facilities;

- E. Stormwater management systems, sufficient to assure water quality both inside and outside the proposed municipal growth area; and
 - F. Recreation;
6. Anticipated financing mechanisms to support necessary public services and infrastructure;
 7. Rural buffers and transition areas;
 8. Any burden on services and infrastructure for which the municipal corporation would be responsible for development in areas proximate to and outside the proposed municipal growth area;
 9. Protection of sensitive areas, as defined in Article 66B, § 1.00 (j) of the Code, that could be impacted by development planned within the proposed municipal growth area;
 10. Population growth projections; and
 11. The relationship of the long-term development policy to a vision of the municipal corporation's future character.

Much of this required information already exists within the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, particularly in the Land Use and Growth and Implementation Elements. Thus this new chapter will have some new information, but will primarily involve a restructuring of the current Plan. What is slightly different is that this new Municipal Growth Element requires a higher degree of quantitative analysis than has previously been conducted in Easton. However, that was something that was planned for this update anyway as we look more closely at the amount of development that might be accommodated by infill, try to get a better handle on how many homes will be coming to Easton in the future (and the impact of those homes on public facilities and services), etc...

So this chapter will be laid-out consistent with the requirements listed above and will contain a lot of the same information from the previous Plan (just in this new location) along with a new level of analysis.

FUTURE GROWTH AREAS OUTSIDE OF EXISTING CORPORATE LIMITS

The first requirement of this new Element is an identification of future growth areas beyond the existing corporate limits of the Town. This was done in the 2004 Plan when we enacted an Urban Growth Boundary. This established the ultimate geographic limits of Easton's future growth. The land lying between the Town boundary as of April 2004 and the Growth Boundary thus became our future growth area(s). The 2004 Plan further partitions the growth area into future growth areas and assigns a three level sequential priority system concerning when it might be appropriate for the various parts of the growth area to be annexed into Town.

This Plan continues this three-tiered partition system. Priority 1 Areas are classified as Boundary Refinement Areas. In most cases they correspond to areas that are already developed in Talbot County and they are deemed appropriate for consideration for Annexation during the life of this Plan. Priority 2 Areas are referred to as Intermediate Growth Areas and Priority 3 Areas are referred to as Long Range Growth Areas. Neither is envisioned as being necessary to develop in order to accommodate any growth during the upcoming Planning period.

Some of these growth areas, particularly the Immediate Growth Areas, have already been developed under the rules and regulations of Talbot County. Thus, they will generally not represent new growth. There may be some opportunity for redevelopment of these sites or an intensification of

development as a result of moving from the zoning and health department regulations (i.e. septic systems and the limitations thereof) of Talbot County to those of the Town of Easton, but generally little if anything will change when these properties change jurisdictions. Often times the only reason that such properties do come into Town is to take advantage of Town water and/or sewer service. The point is simply that while the Growth Areas Map depicts 1,200 acres of land classified as Boundary Refinement Area, this raw number is misleading as only a relative few acres are largely undeveloped.

Growth over the next planning period (i.e. until 2015) is expected to occur in areas already within the corporate limits of Town, or in Boundary Refinement Areas that are annexed into Town. The Intermediate and Long Range Growth Areas are not envisioned to be needed to accommodate the growth of the next six years.

HISTORIC GROWTH PATTERNS OF EASTON

The next characteristic we are required to examine is previous growth patterns of the Town. Here we are fortunate to have a complete record of every annexation to have occurred in Easton and have used that information to produce maps of the Town's boundary at various points in time. The list of annexations was given in the Land Use Chapter as Table 6. The maps of Easton's corporate limits at various points in time were also depicted on Map 2 in that chapter.

The historic pattern of annexations clearly shows that Easton maintained a small, compact size from its formal incorporation in 1710 until 1917 and beyond. By 1965, while the Town had grown significantly in a north-south direction, it was still completely confined to lands between US Route 50 and what would

become MD Route 322 (Easton Parkway, which wouldn't open for another year). We did not grow beyond these confines until 1966 and growth really took off in these areas in the 1970's through today after the area within the Parkway/Rte. 50 Corridor was totally annexed.

The Map tells the story of the geographic spread of the growth of the Town. What it does not tell is equally, if not more, important. That is the way in which the design and appearance of development changed throughout time. Like much of the country, Easton began to drift away from compact more urban forms of development to more of a spread-out, suburban style. Reversing this trend is a large part of what this Comprehensive Plan sets out to do. Much more is written about this problem in the Community Character Element of this Plan.

CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN EXISTING TOWN LIMITS

This subsection of the Plan delves into the more technical realm of Planning mentioned in the Introduction to the Element. One of the new requirements for Comprehensive Plans is to estimate the capacity for development within the existing Town boundaries. This requires that we look at undeveloped land, land suitable for infill development, and land with potential for redevelopment. In order to complete this exercise, certain assumptions have to be made concerning each of these types of development. For example, we are assuming that future development will occur at a more urban density than has occurred in recent years. At a minimum we will assume that we can achieve the Maryland Smart Growth minimum density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre (3.5 du/ac), the minimum density required to satisfy the requirements of being designated a Primary Funding Area (PFA). We have also used guidance provided by the MD Department of Planning in their Models and Guidelines

Series publication “Estimating Residential Development Capacity.” Finally, some assumptions are based on our past experience with development review in Easton. The following table walks through the development of our estimate for residential development capacity within the current Town limits:

Estimating Residential Development Potential in Easton

A. Estimate Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (i.e. what we could get with no additional annexations)

Look back at the "Priority Development Areas" from current (2004) Comp Plan

~~Area 1 – SSPP – non-residential (institutional)~~

Area 2 – Brooks Farm (in-Town portion)

Area 3 – Hospital-owned Oxford Road site (possible quasi-residential development on a portion of site)

Area 4 – Ashby Commons (89 du approved)

~~Area 5 – Easton Commons Site (non-residential)~~

~~Area 6 – Waterside Village (non-residential)~~

Area 7 – Alvin Lapiques Property

Area 2 (100.187 ac x 3.5 du/ac x .75 (underbuild factor recommended by MDP)) = 262 units

Area 3 (using same factor as above for half of site and Londonderry density for half of site (4.0 du/ac)) = 404 units

Area 4 – 89 units already approved

Area 7 – (56 ac x 3.5 du/ac x .75) = 147 units

Total estimated possible units from Priority Development Areas in 2004 Plan = 902

B. Other Parcels with Infill Potential

Unimproved parcels ≥ 5 acres (using same build-out factors as above) = 455 units

Unimproved parcels ≥ 1 acre in the PR District (substituting the PR density of a max. 20 du/ac for 3.5 in the equation above) = 305 units

Total estimated possible "other" infill units = 760

C. Completion of Approved or Pending Project

Residential Projects Under Construction = 347 units

Residential Projects Under Review = 355 units (excludes Ashby Commons which is already counted above)

Total Units in Approved/Pending Projects = 702

D. Downtown Residential Development Potential (per AKRF study) = **100**

E. Redevelopment Potential (Parcels w/ improvements assessed at $\leq \$50,000$; ≈ 47 acres x 3.5 du/ac x 0.75) = 123 – 95 existing units = **28** (net new units)

Total Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (A+B+C+D+E) = 2,492 units

The net result is that our best estimate is that we can accommodate 2,492 more dwelling units within the Town, without the need to add any additional land for residential development. Obviously it is not as simple as saying we do not need to add any land for growth until these units are built. There will be some parcels that have environmental constraints making it difficult to develop. There will also be the landowner who has no interest in developing, at least for the time being. Finally, simple supply and demand economics dictate that at some point some of the growth areas will need to be tapped or housing prices will escalate, thereby exacerbating an already serious problem in Easton. This is a problem we will have to grapple with when we ultimately reach the limits of the urban growth boundary, but while we have growth areas available, it would seem unwise to artificially inflate housing prices by restricting supply.

The point is simply that there should be an adequate supply of potential dwelling units within the existing Town limits to forestall the need to annex additional land for some time. In fact, 2,492 units should last approximately 10 years at the 3% annual growth rate that Easton has experienced in the recent past and approximately 30 years at the target rate of 1%. Furthermore this exceeds the growth in total units we have witnessed in the most recent 10 years (i.e. 1999 – 2008) during which Easton has added about 1,900 dwelling units, thus reinforcing the notion that the existing Town limits can accommodate growth for the next ten years. It should be noted also that the previous ten years would seem to be a very representative time period as there were both very high and very low growth periods throughout these last ten years. Thus it seems that it is not necessary to tap into the identified long range growth areas for the next planning period and possibly also for the one to follow (i.e. 2015 – 2021) for the

purpose of providing land for residential development. Depending on how successful we are in achieving the targeted growth rate of 1%, it may not be necessary to develop beyond the existing Town Boundaries plus Priority 1 growth areas for as much as 30 years.

On the other hand this is tempered by the fact that clearly not all land that is as yet undeveloped is suitable for development, or at least not at the theoretical maximum density. Likewise land identified as potential for redevelopment may be constrained from such activity by any number of economic or environmental factors. On balance though, it appears that there is no need for large-scale annexation of land beyond identified Priority 1 Growth Areas during the current planning period.

LAND AREA NEEDED TO SATISFY DEMAND

By enacting an Urban Growth Boundary in the 2004 Plan, this subsection essentially becomes unnecessary. Regardless of what the demand might be for development, we now only have a certain, fixed amount of land available. Nevertheless, this is a Plan with a 30 year time-frame and we can project out 30 years to determine whether or not we will likely be essentially built-out or still have available growth areas at that time. In order to do so, an exercise similar to that performed for estimating the development potential of land within the existing Town boundary will be conducted as follows:

Total acreage of Future Growth Area = 3,880 acres
Less acreage already developed and/or non-residential – 1,300
= 2,580 acres x 3.5 du/ac x 0.75 (underbuild factor) = 6,773 du's

This simple exercise indicates that the Growth Area has the potential to accommodate 6,773 new residential units. This information can be combined with other calculations already made to give us more useful information, such as:

- A. Residential Build-out Potential of Existing Town = 2,492 units
- B. Additional Residential Unit Potential in Growth Area = 6,773 units
- C. Existing Units in Growth Area = 727 units
- D. Potential Residential Capacity of Growth Area (B + C) = 7,500 units
- E. Total Potential New Units in Easton (A + B) = 9,265
- F. Existing Units in Easton = 7,350
- G. Total Residential Build-out (E + F + C) = 17,342
- H. Estimated Population at Build-out ($17,342 \times 2.22$) = 38,499

Without the confinement of the Growth Boundary, assuming that we continue to grow at the 3% average annual compound rate that we have in recent years, then in 2040, Easton would, all other things being equal, have approximately 18,350 dwelling units. This exceeds the 17,342 units estimated as our Built-out capacity. Thus we would anticipate achieving effective build-out before 2040. In fact using these assumptions, we would achieve build-out sometime in the 30th year from 2009 (i.e. 2039). However, Easton does have an Urban Growth Boundary and this Plan seeks to achieve an annual future growth rate of no more than 1%. Given these policies, we should be nowhere near effective build-out in 2040. In fact build-out does not occur under this scenario until the decade of the 2090's (80 to 90 years in the future).

PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

This subsection of the Plan delves into issues that have in the past been addressed in the Community Facilities and Services Element. So, again, this subsection will largely involve moving existing language from one place in the 2004 Plan to this new Element. Additionally, there are some elements that the Town has traditionally not addressed in the past as they are either a County responsibility or are more germane to County interests.

Public Schools

The first requirement we are required to examine within the general realm of public services and infrastructure is public schools. Public Schools in Talbot County are funded and administered by the County government. The Town has two “roles” in this process. First, as the major population center in Talbot County, we are a significant source of students attending public schools. Second, four of the County’s public schools, plus the Board of Education Main Offices, are located within the Town’s jurisdiction.

Although the Town has no role in terms of providing public school service, we work cooperatively with the County to supply them with the most updated demographic information for their use in preparing the Annual Educational Facilities Master Plan. According to the 2009 version of this document, the four Easton Schools, Easton Elementary – Dobson Building, Easton Elementary – Moton Building, Easton Middle School, and Easton High School were experiencing utilization rates ranging from 83% (Moton) to 112% (Dobson). Looking ahead, this Plan states:

In summary, the Talbot County public school system has adequate existing capacity on a countywide basis to accommodate

enrollment projected during the next ten years (through the 2018-19 school year). Easton Elementary-Dobson, Easton Elementary-Moton, and Easton Middle are expected to exceed 100% of State-Rated Capacity during the next 10 years with peak utilization rates of 127%, 104%, and 102, respectively. Therefore, these schools have no additional capacity available to absorb any unanticipated enrollment from increased residential growth or from a change in the orientation of new housing to more family occupied units. However, as noted, this overcrowding will be reduced as the 2009 redistricting takes effect.

The redistricting referenced in the passage above refers to increases in the attendance zones for St. Michaels Elementary, White Marsh Elementary, and Chapel District Elementary in order to decrease Easton Elementary enrollment. Thus, looking ahead as far as it does (i.e. ten years), the Educational Facilities Master Plan indicates that the Talbot County Public School system can accommodate expected growth in Easton, albeit barely. It is unanticipated growth that would pose a problem. The Plan notes that there are a number of residential developments planned in the Easton area, but that these are primarily planned to target the high-end or age-restricted markets. Age-restricted developments obviously impose very little demand on public school systems as there are few, if any, children in these types of projects. High-end projects may very well have children living in the development, but often times these children attend one of Easton's private schools, thus the impact of these developments on the public school system is also diminished. Enrollment at private schools in Talbot County now totals approximately 1,200 students, which is 28.5% of the

corresponding figure for public schools. This takes substantial pressure off of public school utilization, but may bear watching as the economic situation continues to deteriorate as these students represent potential new impacts on the public school system if their parents, by choice or necessity, switch from private to public school education for their children.

Libraries

Library service in Talbot County is provided by the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL), the main branch of which is located in Easton at the corner of Dover and West Streets. According to the Library's website, the TCFL receives 75% of its funding from Talbot County, 18% from the State of Maryland, and the balance from fines and fees.

TCFL recently completed planning for enhancements/expansion of their services and facilities. Some of the key improvements that have been designed, internal to the library are:

- Space for improved ADA accessibility and collection expansion
- Shelving improvements within reach and elimination of current bottom shelves
- Young adults collection with substantial growth in the collection
- Maryland Room improved accessibility and space
- Periodicals located and displayed together
- Network server upgrades
- Personnel and support space improvements
- Conference facility

The study also indicated that future needs of the Library can continue to be met in the existing facility through the year 2012. After that date the facility will need to be expanded or relocated.

The TCFL has developed a Strategic Plan through the year 2014 and as it is rather concise, it is copied below:

Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2009 - 2014

Goals

Young children (age five and under) will have materials, programs and services that will prepare them to enter school ready to read, write, and learn.

- By FY14, the circulation of materials for young children will increase by 20%, from 28,158 (FY08) to 33,790
- Annually a minimum of 5,000 young children (age five and under) will attend library programs.
- By FY14, a minimum of 80% of parents and caregivers surveyed will indicate that the library's services for young children are very good or excellent.

Children (ages 6-12) will have materials and programs that satisfy their curiosity, stimulate their imaginations, and encourage them to explore topics of personal interest.

- By FY14, the number of children attending library programs will increase 20% from 3,893 (FY07) to 4,672.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile fiction will increase by 20%, from 12,318 (FY08) to 14,782.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile non-fiction will increase by 20%, from 14,715 (FY08) to 17,658.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile media (CDs, videos, DVDs, etc.) will increase from by 20%, from 11,590 (FY08) to 13,908.

Teens (age 13 and older) will have materials and programs that respond to their current interests and provide pleasurable reading, viewing, and listening experiences.

- By FY14, the circulation of young adult materials (fiction and non-fiction) will increase by 20%, from 4,624 (FY08) to 5,549.
- By FY14, a majority of teens surveyed will indicate that they found something good to read, listen to, or view at the library.
- By FY14, attendance at teen programs will increase by 20%, from 500 (FY08) to 600.

Adults will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and

continue to learn throughout their lives.

- By FY14, the circulation of adult fiction books will increase by 20%, from 73,521 (FY08) to 88,225.
- By FY14, the circulation of adult non-fiction will increase by 20%, from 33,076 (FY08) to 39,691.
- By FY14, the circulation of adult media (CDs, DVDs, etc.) will increase by 25%, from 74,441 (FY08) to 93,051.
- By FY14, a minimum of 80% of adults surveyed will indicate they found the material they wanted and needed.
- By FY14, the number of adult informational transactions will increase 20% from 6,784 (FY07) to 8,141.

Residents and visitors will have access to the digital world so they can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

- By FY14, the number of uses of the library's 24/7 research databases will increase by 20%, from 12,209 (FY07) to 14,651.
- By FY14, 80% of web site users surveyed will rate the library's web site as informative and easy to use.
- By FY14, the number of page views on the library's web site will increase 20% from 581,140 (FY07) to 697,368.
- By FY14, the number of user sessions on library-provided Internet access computers will increase by 25%, from 40,080 (FY07) to over 50,100.

Residents and visitors will have attractive, safe, and welcoming places to meet and interact with others or sit quietly and read.

- By FY14, the number of visitors to library facilities will increase 20% from 166,533 (FY07)* to 199,840.
- By FY14, the number of registered borrowers will increase 10%, from 25,769 (FY07) to 28,346.
- By FY14, 80% of library visitors surveyed will indicate that the library was an attractive, safe, and welcoming place.

Residents and visitors will have access to resources and services about the history and culture of Talbot County and Maryland.

- By FY14, the number of local history and genealogy questions answered

- by staff and volunteers will increase by 25%, from 6,300 (FY08) to 7,560.
- By FY14, 80% of Maryland Room users surveyed will evaluate the collections as very good or excellent.
 - By FY14, the attendance at programs on local history or genealogy will increase 25% from 500 (FY08) to 625.

Residents and visitors will have convenient and timely access to services and programs that help them find, evaluate, and use information effectively.

- Annually a minimum of 300 people will attend programs on library resources.
- By FY14, the number of people receiving instruction on using computers and the library's electronic resources will increase 25% from 1,824 (FY07) to 2,189.

*Only Easton branch was counted in FY07.

Organizational Competencies

By September 30, 2008, and each year thereafter, print and non-print committees will evaluate the library's collection for needed additions, withdrawals, and replacements.

By January 31, 2009, and each year thereafter, the process by which library activity data is collected, compiled, and distributed will be reviewed and revised as necessary to provide the data needed to monitor progress on the strategic plan.

By June 30, 2009, a plan will be developed by the Library Board, Friends, and Foundation to coordinate efforts that support effective fundraising.

By June 30, 2009, the library staff will have developed a methodology to regularly update the Library Board on progress on all objectives included in the strategic plan.

By June 30, 2010, TCFL will have completed a survey in each of the areas outlined in this plan's goals and objectives.

By January 30, 2014, TCFL staff will have completed the revision or development of public service policies that support this plan's goals and objectives.

The Talbot County Free Library will plan and allocate space in accordance with established service priorities.

Beginning in 2008, planning began on the renovation of the Main Library in Easton.

By July 1, 2009, a Facilities Master Plan will be adopted.

The Talbot County Free Library will use technologies that improve access to information, improve service to library patrons, and maximize efficient service delivery.

By June 30, 2009, TCFL staff will have evaluated the library's web site and determined content and navigation changes that need to be made to support the Library's service priorities.

By in July 1, 2010, TCFL, with the help of Eastern Shore Regional Library, will have completed an authority records clean-up of its online catalog, thus improving its searchability.

By December 30, 2009, TCFL will have formalized its partnership with Carroll County Public Library for a shared integrated library system, thereby providing significant cost savings and ensuring patron access to the library's catalog during the renovation of the main library.

By June 30, 2010, TCFL will have replaced all public access internet computers at all its branches.

The Talbot County Free Library will actively seek and maintain partnerships with organizations and institutions to enable the Library to enhance service to its patrons.

By January 30, 2009, all current partnerships and the library's obligations in support of them will be identified.

By June 30, 2009, criteria for ongoing partnerships will be developed.

By September 30, 2009, staff at all levels will be trained to identify partnership opportunities that help advance the Library's goals and objectives.

The Talbot County Free Library will continue its staff development and volunteer training initiatives to ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills and training they need to respond to current and emerging patron demands.

By December 30, 2009, the library will have a revised Volunteer Manual.

By June 30, 2010, staff will be trained to provide proactive service that meets the needs

of our library patrons.

By June 30, 2010, a plan will be in place to address the training needs of staff and volunteers.

Public Safety

This subsection of the Plan examines the adequacy of police, fire and emergency medical services now and throughout the Planning period. Many issues relative to public safety fall within the realm of a community's overall quality of life that is the subject of the Community Character Chapter. However, as a part of this Element, it is appropriate to address issues such as the adequacy of existing police services, the expected future needs of the police force, and the need for new offices, substations, etc... The 1997 Comprehensive Plan quoted the International City Managers Association's recommended ratio of 1.75 police personnel per 1,000 people served. That standard was the subject of criticism from previous Police Chiefs. Therefore the 2004 Plan utilized a different standard, that of the International Center of Prevention of Crime, which finds that the national average across the U.S. is 3.36 officers per thousand people served.

With 51 sworn officers in a Town of approximately 15,200, Easton exceeds the ICMA recommended ratio, but is exactly on target with the reported national average. There are some factors in Easton that suggest being towards the upper end of the recommended range is appropriate. First, Easton is a regional center for employment, entertainment and commerce. Thus, the population served is much higher than simply the resident population of the Town. Second, Easton's

citizens have repeatedly called for strong and active community policing. Finally, Easton is subject to extremely heavy volumes of seasonal traffic traveling between Ocean City and the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area and Easton itself has a modest tourism industry. Factors such as these, place a stronger demand on police resources than may normally be found in another municipality of a similar size.

In light of the above, it would seem that police staffing is adequate for the present time and growth in the number of sworn officers along the rates that Easton has recently experienced, should be adequate for the future. One area that needs to be upgraded, however, is the police station itself. The issue is not as much the size of the building as it is the efficiency and adequacy of the layout of the facility. A modest addition has recently been approved and work to modernize the current facility on Dover Street is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed in February 2010.

The Easton Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection in the Town of Easton and the surrounding County area. The department is an all-volunteer organization with financial support from the Town and County. The Fire Department discontinued providing ambulance service as of December 1, 2002. The ambulance equipment and supplies were sold to Talbot County. The County is now the primary provider of emergency services throughout the County including the Fire Department's service area. There is a State Fire Marshal responsible for Fire Code enforcement in the Town and County.

Fire Protection services should be expanded throughout the Plan period as the Town and County's population continues to increase. As a result of recent growth in and around the Town a new fire substation was constructed on

Matthewstown Road on the lot of the Town's water tower. This should be a good location in that it offers better access to US Route 50 and is located in proximity to development activity. One of the consequences of uncontrolled growth, either in terms of rate or location, is the increased potential that Easton would have to move from an all-Volunteer Fire Department to a paid department in order to continue to provide acceptable coverage. This would have negative impacts both in terms of the loss of the community spirit that is engendered by the Volunteer Fire Department as well financial implications, including possible (if not probable) tax increases.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) services have recently been established in Talbot County. ALS provides 24 hour emergency response by trained paramedics and cardiac rescue technicians. ALS services are provided by volunteer and paid staff. Funding for ALS is derived from the County, fundraising activities and private donations. ALS service has also been experiencing difficulty in securing funds for equipment needs related to an increasing number of calls.

In assessing the adequacy of fire and emergency management services for Easton's future, it is necessary to look at more than just population projections. Traffic projections, particularly for US Route 50, will have a great influence on both the number of accidents that will likely occur on that highway as it traverses our Town as well as the ease (i.e. speed) with which emergency responders can reach their destinations.

The form of development is also extremely important when it comes to emergency response time. Studies¹ show that emergency responders can cover

¹ See, for example, research by Matt Magnasco of the Charlotte (NC) Department of Transportation.

more households within a given response time in neighborhoods with a more traditional style of development (i.e. multiple connections). This means that response time from a given fire/rescue station is lower when the community is predominately built in this form of development. On a larger scale, it also means that the need for additional substations is lessened when the community is built in the traditional pattern as opposed to a suburban style of development.

Water and Sewerage Facilities

The adequacy of the Town's Water and Sewerage facilities to serve Easton through the Year 2040 is detailed much more in the Community Facilities and Services and Water Resources Elements of this Plan. In fact, one might logically ask, what type of information belongs in which Element? The Maryland Department of Planning has considered this same question and suggests in its *Writing the Municipal Growth Element* from their Models and Guidelines series, that with regards to community facilities, "the Community Facilities Element presents the complete picture for the entire jurisdiction [while] the municipal growth element looks only at those facilities affected or necessitated by future growth."² That should make this exercise a fairly straightforward mathematical one for this Municipal Growth Element.

We have already calculated in the Future Land Area Needed to Satisfy Demand subsection of this Element that Easton will likely see approximately 6,800 (6,773 was the figure derived) units in future growth areas outside of the Town and another approximately 2,500 (2,492) units in growth within the existing Town

² See the aforementioned Model and Guideline, page 3.

limits. There are also 727 units that already exist outside the Town but within the Growth Area.

The June 2002 Town of Easton Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Increase and Improvement Plan prepared by Easton Utilities, projected the number of residential customers in Easton to be 10,619 by 2025 (11,257 total, including 908 non-residential customers) based on population growth trends and projections. It should be noted that this was prepared prior to the 2004 Comprehensive Plan which enacted the Growth Boundary for the first time. At any rate, this figure exceeds the projected 6,773 dwelling units by 3,846. As a result of this study, a new wastewater treatment facility was constructed (brought on line in 2007) with a capacity to treat 4 million gallons per day (MGD) or 16,000 EDU's. According to the February 12, 2009 report on Wastewater Flow Allocations prepared by Easton Utilities Commission, there were 5,404 EDU's remaining to be allocated to the existing wastewater treatment facility, which has a design lifespan of 20 years (until capacity is reached). Land is allotted adjacent to the existing facility to build another such facility and increase capacity as necessary at that time.

EDU's equate to dwelling units on a one for one basis, but also to non-commercial uses which vary depending on the nature of the use. These can vary to a large degree and do not necessarily equate simply to size of the building. For example, a large major retail store will likely only contribute to the wastewater system through employee/customer restrooms. On the other hand relatively small industrial uses might have a large demand if, for example, they use large quantities of water for washing, cooling, etc. The point for the purpose of this Element is that at some point, an expansion of wastewater treatment capacity will be necessary to accommodate the development of our ultimate

growth area. The current facility was planned for this expansion to occur in the year 2025. It seems reasonable to assume that the actual need for this expansion will occur within a few years of this date depending on future growth rates and the percentage of future growth that is devoted to residential growth. It would also seem reasonable to expect that this future expansion need only be of relatively modest size (i.e. capacity).

The same logic applies to water usage. Currently the Town of Easton is served by six production wells and has a production capacity of 4.12 MGD.

Easton Utilities has prepared a Water Master Plan that looks at the 2004 Plan and evaluates the ability to supply water to the entire Growth Area. Table 10 below is copied from the Water Master Plan's Executive Summary and looks at future water demand. It assumes that the population of Easton will grow at an average annual rate of 3%. In addition to demand within the existing Town limits, most of the additional demand will come from residential and commercial development within Priority 1, 2, and 3 Growth Areas as defined in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan.

Table 10

Future Water Demand and Capacity

Year	Population	Growth	Ave Demand (MGD)	Max Day Demand (MGD)
2007	14,889	3%	2.04	3.69
2010	15,799	3%	2.16	3.92
2015	18,316	3%	2.51	4.54
2020	21,233	3%	2.91	5.27
2025	24,615	3%	3.37	6.10
2030	28,535	3%	3.91	7.08
2033	31,181	3%	4.27	7.73

The Plan concludes that additional water supply will be required in 2011/2012. The additional water requirements grow to a total of 7.73 MGD by the year 2033. To meet this demand, 4.6 MGD in additional production is required. Additionally, two new 1,000,000 gallon storage tanks are needed to insure adequate pressure and volumes for firefighting capability.

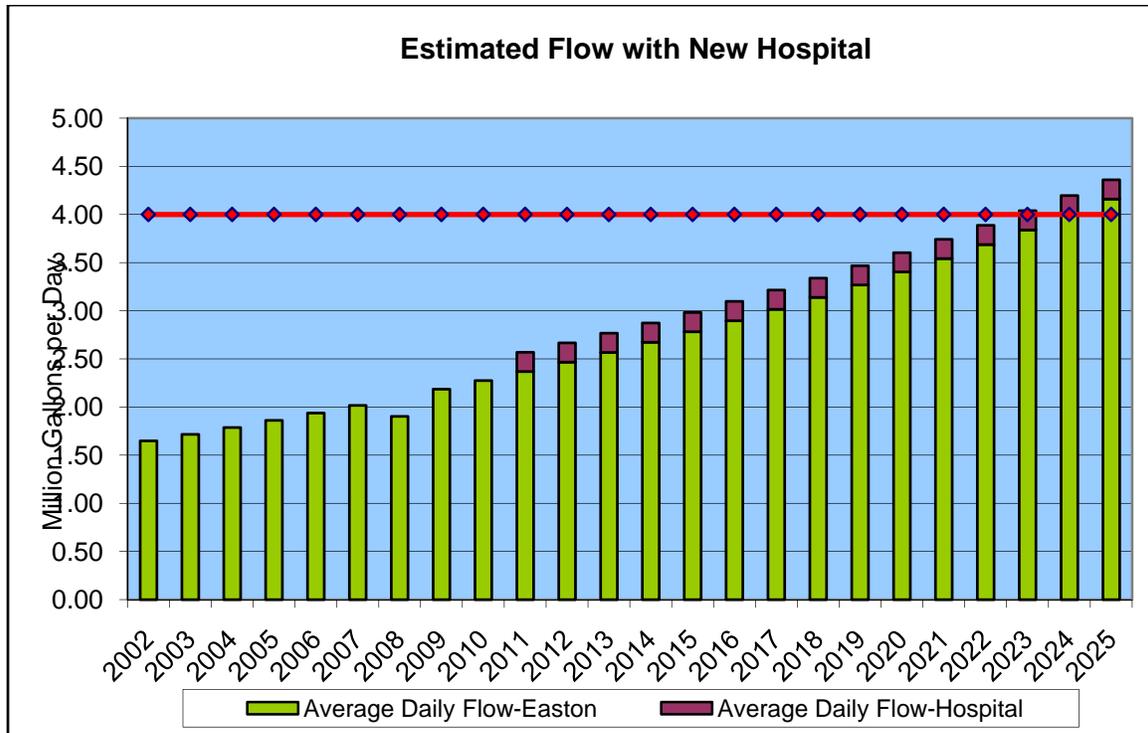
Finally the Plan recommends Capital Improvements designed to satisfy the water demand generated by growth in the future. The following summarizes these demands:

Table 11
Planned Water System Capital Projects

Component	Year	Capital Cost (2009 \$)
16" Downtown Water Main	FY-10	1,600,000
GWTP 2.5 MGD Expansion	FY-11	500,000
2.0 MGD WTP #2	FY-13	2,000,000
1.0 MGD Well # 13	FY-13	500,000
1.0 MG Elevated Storage Tank #3	FY-16	2,600,000
1.0 MGD Well # 14	FY-20	500,000
WTP #2 Expansion to 4.0 MGD	FY-26	1,000,000
1.0 MGD Well # 15	FY-26	500,000
1.0 MG Elevated Storage Tank # 4	FY-30	2,600,000
1.0 MGD Well # 16	FY-31	500,000

In the matter of wastewater service, Easton Utilities has recently examined the potential impact of the proposed new regional hospital on the Town's wastewater system. The findings are summarized in the following table and graph:

Year	WWTF Design Capacity	Average Daily Flow-Easton	Average Daily Flow-Hospital	With Hospital	Actual Flow	Column2	Actual Peak Load
2002	4.00	1.65		1.65	1.65		1.65
2003	4.00	1.72		1.72	2.487		2.49
2004	4.00	1.79		1.79	1.832		1.83
2005	4.00	1.86		1.86	1.868		1.87
2006	4.00	1.94		1.94	1.787		1.79
2007	4.00	2.02		2.02	2.019		2.02
2008	4.00	1.90		1.90	1.904		1.90
2009	4.00	2.19		2.19			
2010	4.00	2.28		2.28			
2011	4.00	2.37	0.20	2.57			
2012	4.00	2.47	0.20	2.67			
2013	4.00	2.57	0.20	2.77			
2014	4.00	2.67	0.20	2.87			
2015	4.00	2.78	0.20	2.98			
2016	4.00	2.90	0.20	3.10			
2017	4.00	3.02	0.20	3.22			
2018	4.00	3.14	0.20	3.34			
2019	4.00	3.27	0.20	3.47			
2020	4.00	3.40	0.20	3.60			
2021	4.00	3.54	0.20	3.74			
2022	4.00	3.69	0.20	3.89			
2023	4.00	3.84	0.20	4.04			
2024	4.00	4.00	0.20	4.20			
2025	4.00	4.16	0.20	4.36			



Thus it is clear that upgrades will be necessary to the Town’s water and wastewater systems to accommodate planned growth, including that of the Hospital, and that Easton Utilities is planning for such upgrades well in advance of the need for them. The Easton Utilities Tariff requires that each new development project pay a water and wastewater capital charge. The capital charges collected are used to fund construction or to repay loans used to construct the new plants or wells. In addition to the capital charge, developers are required to construct certain sections of distribution and collection systems. If the Town is ultimately successful at establishing a 1% annual rate of growth, the aforementioned projection of future water and wastewater needs will have to be adjusted. Obviously, though the needed improvements will be pushed further out into the future so the projections above might be taken as a “worst-

case” scenario. Talbot County’s (Draft) Water Resource Element assumes 1% growth for Easton and it concludes that by 2030, Easton will still have a net available water system capacity of 1.28 MGD or 5,120 EDU. For wastewater the County’s projections for the Easton municipal system show a net available capacity in 2030 of 1.00 MGD or 3,983 EDU.

Stormwater Management Systems

Much of the discussion concerning Stormwater Management will occur in the Water Resources Element of this Plan. As might be expected in a Town as old as Easton, the degree of stormwater management varies throughout the community. While in recent years the critical importance of stormwater management has been recognized, this was not necessarily always the case in the past and depending on when a given area was improved, it may have been subject to a wide variety of stormwater management standards.

Development in Easton today is subject to the Town’s Stormwater Management Ordinance which regulates both the quality and the quantity of run-off. The basic quantity requirement is that the amount of run-off leaving a site must be no greater after development than it was prior to being developed. This is a fairly standard requirement. Where Easton raises the bar in comparison to many communities though, is with regards to the quality of runoff. Several years ago the Town adopted the 10% pollutant reduction standards of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area for ALL land within the Town’s borders. Furthermore, we have increasingly required bio-retention and other “innovative” stormwater management techniques in our major projects. The recent Lowe’s and Waterside Village projects are examples of this.

The one area where there is the greatest potential to come up short in stormwater management is in the already and long developed parts of Town. Here we have had to retrofit systems and depending on when that occurred, the quality will vary greatly. To that end, the Town is always interested in improving stormwater management in such areas. Sometimes this is accomplished by requiring developers of adjacent land areas to address the problem. Sometimes the Town will initiate a project to do so. Most recently, the Town has joined together with a number of environmental advocacy organizations and Talbot County, who secured grant funding to upgrade stormwater management on the Tanyard Branch. Much of the proposed improvements will occur within the Town of Easton, including the construction of a sediment pond along and adjacent to the Town-owned RTC Park parcel. This should help improve the quality of runoff entering the headwaters of the Tred Avon River, and also alleviate flooding issues in some areas of Town subject to recurring problems. Stormwater Management should not be a limiting factor in future growth of the Town provided that new development continues to comply with State and Local regulations and redevelopment areas are incorporated with newly developed areas, where possible.

Recreation

Easton has an extensive Park system that is examined more closely in the Parks and Recreation Element of this Plan. For the purposes of this Element, the focus is on the needs generated by future growth. The 2004 Plan already identifies the need for a new Community (or Regional) Park on the eastern side of Town. This Park may have been located during the discussion concerning the Transportation Plan Element of this Update. As part of the resolution of the issue of the future

path of Beechwood Drive, it was decided by the Planning Commission to extend this road only as far north as the property line in common with the adjacent parcel where it would terminate in a parking lot for this park (and not be connected to any other road via the parking lot). This location has the added benefit of offering the potential to preserve forest area adjacent to the Seth State Demonstration Forest thereby preserving a sizeable piece of forest land.

Assuming that we have previously determined that the existing park system is adequate to serve the population of Easton, we should focus on what is necessary for the future residents of Easton. It has already been calculated that, under the general assumptions of this Plan with regards to density, household size, etc..., the future growth area can accommodate 6,773 housing units. Additionally, there is the potential for 2,492 new units to be built within the existing Town Boundaries for a total potential of 9,265 new units. At the 2.22 person per household count that Easton had in the most recent Census, this equates to 20,568 more people at total build-out of the Town (not including those already living in the Growth Area).

The State of Maryland recommends a standard ratio of 30 acres of parkland per 1,000 population (one-half of which should be owned by the Town). This equates to 617 acres of new parkland (309 of which would be Town-owned land). Some of this would be required to be provided appurtenant to the subdivision review process. Easton's current standard requires developers to provide a minimum of 35% of their site as common open space, including land to be dedicated for parks or playgrounds (1,200 sq. ft. per dwelling unit). The 9,265 new units that can potentially ultimately be built within the Town and Growth Area equates to 255 acres of parks or playgrounds within subdivisions. This

leaves the need for 362 acres of parks to be provided via other means to meet the State guideline.

FINANCING MECHANISMS

Current analysis of growth shows that the Town of Easton already has (or is already planning to have) sufficient infrastructure to handle the projected Growth of approximately 2,500 homes that could be accommodated within the Town's current boundaries, as well as at least some of the Future Growth Areas that may be considered for annexation.

New development will always require:

- Water and Sewer lines
- Stormwater Management
- Roads
- Areas for Parks/Playgrounds

The Town should require developers to incur these costs as part of the cost of doing development in Easton, as is currently the case. Other costs that will be necessary to incur farther down the line to accommodate planned growth include:

- Water System Upgrades
- Wastewater Capacity Upgrade
- New Police Officers
- Additional Parks
- Public Safety Enhancements (new equipment, personnel and facilities)

State and County financial help should be examined for help updating the existing infrastructure for redevelopment areas. Community Legacy and similar programs can help maintain streets and create streetscapes. Additionally,

Neighborhood Conservation programs can help improve the infrastructure to increase redevelopment potential. Program Open Space (working cooperatively with Talbot County) and a new Municipal Parks Program can help offset the cost of establishing new parks beyond those that are acquired via the development review process. Parkland (and land for any number of other amenities) can also be acquired during the Annexation Process as part of an Annexation agreement. Since Annexations are a completely discretionary power of the legislative body, this is potentially a particularly powerful tool to use to acquire at least the sites for some of these facilities. Finally, both Talbot County and the Town of Easton have passed Impact Fee Ordinances since the 2004 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The Town now collects fees to pay for Parks and Recreation, Municipal Facilities, Transportation, Police, and Fire services necessitated by new growth. Similarly, Talbot County assesses Impact Fees both within and outside of municipalities, which cover the costs associated with new Library, Parks and Recreation, Public School, Community College, General Government and Transportation services/facilities. This funding mechanism should continue to be utilized to insure that the financial burdens resulting from new development is borne by said development and not by the taxpayers of Easton as a whole.

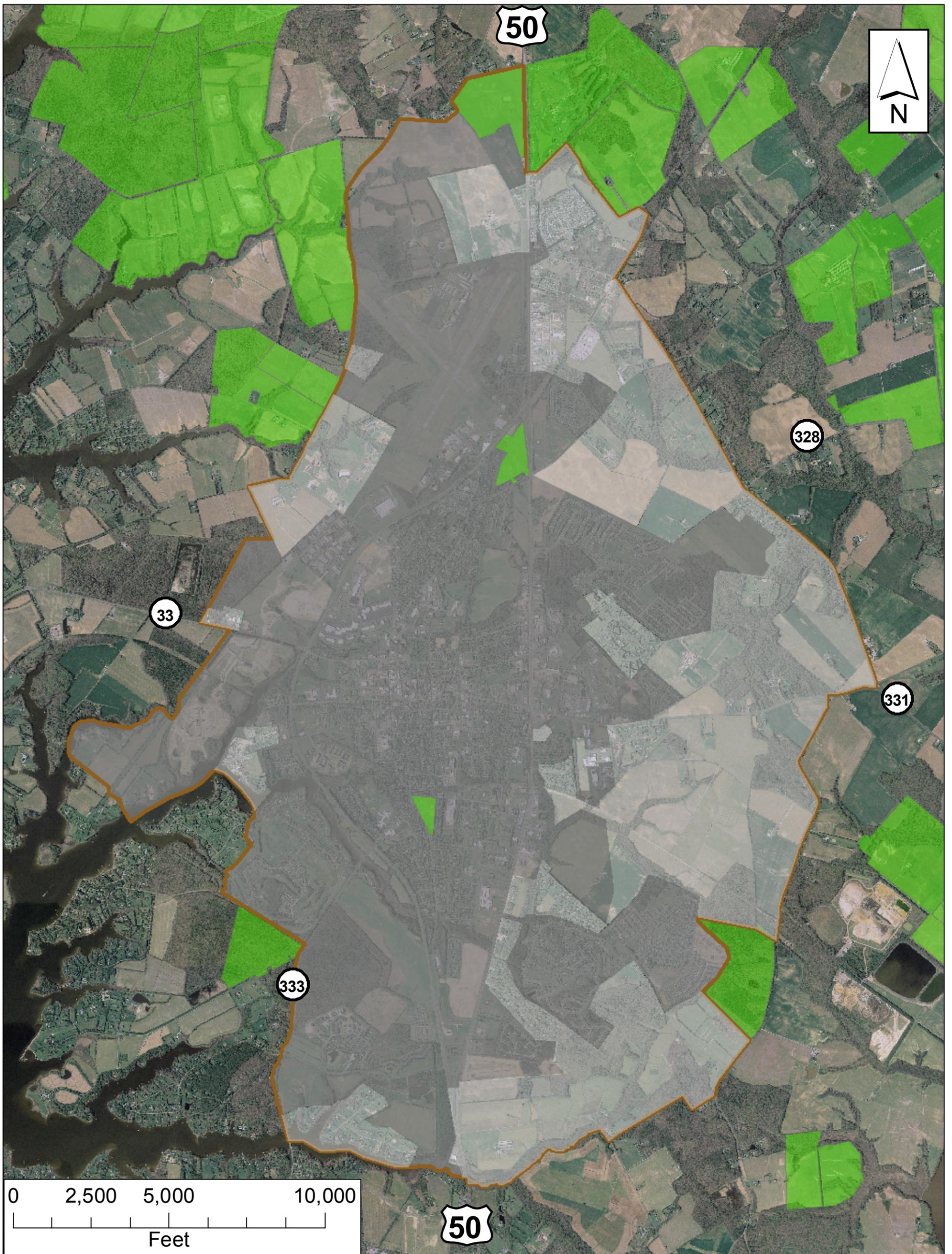
RURAL BUFFERS AND TRANSITION AREAS

In the Town's 2004 Comprehensive Plan and the Talbot County 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Easton is depicted with a Growth Area surrounding the municipal boundaries and a greenbelt located immediately adjacent to the limits of this Growth Area on the County side of the line. The purpose of this greenbelt is primarily to work in conjunction with the Urban Growth Boundary to limit the geographic spread, or sprawl, of Easton out into

rural parts of the County. It also establishes a clear delineation between Town and county such that at build-out, it will be clear whether one is in Town or out in the country, as opposed to some hybridized suburban netherworld.

The Town should work with Talbot County and with Agricultural/Forest Preservation Organizations to preserve or permanently protect these areas. A decent amount of such land is already protected as is depicted on the following Map.

Protected Lands



 Protected Lands	 Growth Boundary	 Protected Lands Map Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan Date: 3/23/09 Scale: 1:36,000 Created: Easton Department of Planning

BURDEN ON SERVICES FOR AREAS OUTSIDE OF TOWN BUT UNDER TOWN'S RESPONSIBILITY

The Town of Eaton does not, at this time, provide any services or infrastructure to any areas outside of its corporate boundaries, with the exception of fire and rescue service, which is technically not a Town service but a service provided by a Volunteer organization. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the form and rate of future development is critical with regards to impacts on fire and rescue service. If left totally uncontrolled, it is believed that the likelihood of having to switch from a volunteer fire department to a paid department is significantly greater than is the case if we follow a strategy of controlled growth in a traditional, relatively urban-scale development pattern.

PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE AREAS

The identification of sensitive areas in Easton is encouraged as early in the development review process as possible so that these areas can be avoided, protected, and/or enhanced. No less of a standard should govern the eventual development of the Growth Area.

The first sensitive area to be protected is Streams and their Buffers. The Town recently took a step towards greater protection of this resource by amending the Zoning Ordinance in 2008 to include a 100 foot buffer from perennial streams (50 foot for intermittent).

The next area that requires special attention and protection is the 100 year flood plain. There are limited such areas in Easton, but where they do exist they are governed by a Floodplain Ordinance which is consistent with the National Model Floodplain Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program. Given the limited areas of floodplain in and around Easton, there is little impact

anticipated on this resource as generally given the size (i.e. width) of the floodplain on a given lot, there is generally ample room to locate any desired improvements elsewhere on the lot.

The next resource requiring protection is habitats of threatened and endangered species. Again, these are identified at the earliest stage of the development review process possible and adjustments to site planning, if necessary, are made then to afford the maximum protection possible to this resource. Given that most of Easton's future growth will occur on land not presently within the Town limits, this identification could be moved up to the very beginning of the process so that it is considered at the Annexation stage.

The next area of concern is steep slopes. This is one sensitive area that Easton has very little of and virtually all of what we do have will be located in a stream buffer (or the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area) and therefore already protected.

The final area of concern is agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. This is a newly added Sensitive Area for all jurisdictions to address by October 1, 2009. The more detailed discussion will be found in the Sensitive areas Element. For this Element, it is mentioned to examine the impact of projected growth on agricultural and forest areas.

Clearly there will be a significant impact on agricultural and forest areas as Easton grows since that is predominately what the Growth Area consists of today. Agriculture is not precluded in Easton, but it has long been recognized that as Easton grows, the agricultural fields will yield to development to accommodate that growth. Thus, while we do not take action to prevent agricultural activities from occurring within Easton, neither do we take action to

preserve it. The story is a little different with regards to forests. Easton has long had and administered a Forest Conservation program and the intention is always to identify and protect the most valuable forest land, such as those associated with a non-tidal wetland or located along a stream bank serving as a buffer. Furthermore, it has more recently become our policy (and is now a requirement) to not allow these protected forests (nor for that matter wetlands and/or buffers) to be located on individual, privately-owned lots. Instead such areas must now be set aside as their own separate lots to be owned by the Town, an environmental interest group, a homeowners association, etc... As Easton develops the Future Growth Area, we will continue these policies and protect this important resource. In addition, when possible we will explore opportunities to expand on such areas. One example is the Seth Demonstration Forest, which is actually a portion of our Greenbelt. It abuts the Easton Club East subdivision as well as land to the north of that development. The Forest Conservation Area for Easton Club East is located adjacent to the Seth Forest to provide more forest area. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the land to the north of Easton Club East, where Beechwood Drive would access the property, has been identified as suitable as a location for a large-scale park. It also offers the opportunity to enhance the Seth Forest by such actions as protecting additional forest land, planting more forest, adding a woodlands garden, etc...

POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS

Population growth dynamics and projections are provided in the Plan Background Chapter of this Plan. Also, it should be reemphasized that with the adoption and adherence to the Growth Boundary, we know, roughly, what

Easton's ultimate population will be (given certain assumptions about density of development, percentage of residential vs. non-residential development, household size, etc...). We just do not necessarily know when that population might be achieved. The number of future dwelling units for the Town as a whole has been calculated to be 17,342. At the household size of the most recent (2000) Census of 2.22 persons per household, these dwelling units equate to a total ultimate Town population of 38,499. When that population is achieved of course depends on how fast we grow. At the 3% figure that we've experienced and used throughout the last 15 to 20 years, we would achieve our "ultimate" population in approximately 31 or 32 years (i.e. by the Year 2041). However in light of community concern over the speed and amount of growth occurring in Easton, the Planning Commission has identified 1% as the maximum annual growth rate they would like to see occur in the future. The most "appropriate" growth rate for Easton is one which insures that infrastructure is able to keep up with the demands generated by that growth and does not create adverse impacts greater than can be ameliorated. What this rate or level might be is unknown, but it is believed that the recent rate of 3% is too high and our target should be closer to the longer-term average of 1% annually.

Table 11 below provides Population Projections on a yearly basis using the 3% and 1% growth factors. Under the 1% scenario, the ultimate population is not achieved until near the end of the current century, over 80 years down the road. The actual built-out population is likely to actually be slightly less as we will have to accommodate the parkland identified above and there will be some future civic space, institutional uses, and neighborhood level commercial uses, although all are likely to be minimal.

Table 11 Population Growth by Year

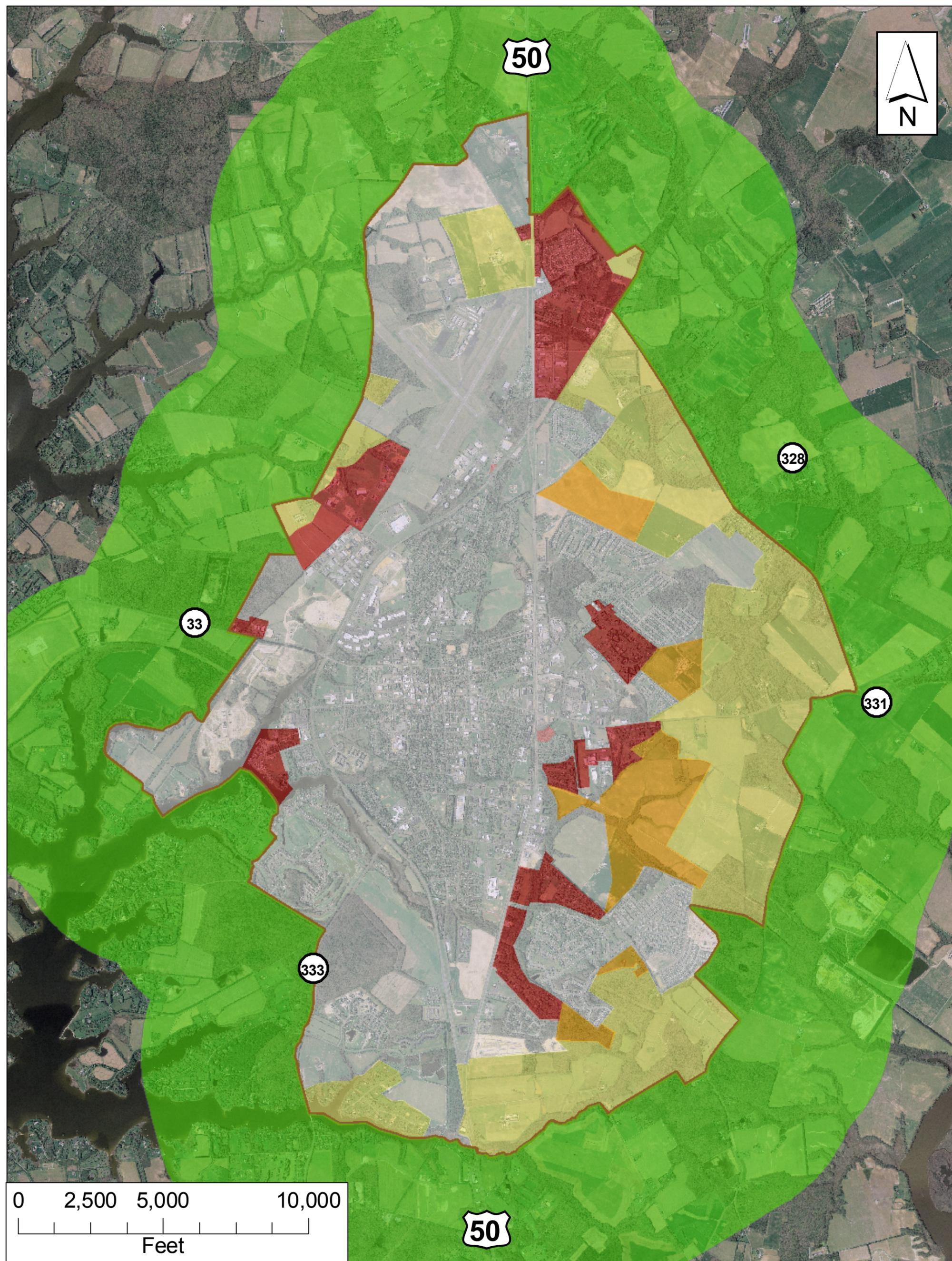
Year	Population @ 3% Growth	Population @ 1% Growth
2009	15,249	15,249
2010	15,706	15,401
2011	16,178	15,556
2012	16,663	15,712
2013	17,163	15,869
2014	17,678	16,028
2015	18,208	16,188
2016	18,754	16,350
2017	19,317	16,514
2018	19,896	16,679
2019	20,493	16,846
2020	21,108	17,014
2021	21,741	17,184
2022	22,394	17,356
2023	23,065	17,530
2024	23,757	17,705
2025	24,470	17,882
2026	25,204	18,061
2027	25,960	18,242
2028	26,739	18,424
2029	27,541	18,608
2030	28,368	18,794
2031	29,219	18,982
2032	30,095	19,172
2033	30,998	19,364
2034	31,928	19,558
2035	32,886	19,754
2036	33,872	19,952
2037	34,889	20,152
2038	35,935	20,354
2039	37,013	20,558
2040	38,124	20,764

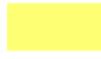
VISION

The Vision that this Comprehensive Plan aims to achieve for the future of Easton can be summarized as something like “A Return to our Roots.” We envision ourselves as the main population center of Talbot County and one of the major Towns on the mid-Shore, along with Cambridge, Denton, Salisbury, Centreville, and Chestertown. We will be a significant place of employment, entertainment and shopping, but on our scale, not that of National Retailers. We have no desire to become *THE* major shopping destination for the region stretching from the Bay Bridge to Chestertown, to Salisbury and the Delaware State line. We are happy to be *THE* destination for the citizens of Talbot County and one of several options for people in the region described above, but nothing grander than that.

The “Return to our Roots” theme stems from our desire to develop much more like we did from our earliest days until the beginning of the Post World War II era than from the 1940’s through roughly the present. We want the same kind of density, mix of land uses, and general character of the earlier days and we want to move away from homogenous uses, cookie-cutter, mass produced looking subdivisions, strip development along our highways, and the general “looks like anywhere Suburban America”. We want to be urban, not suburban, although urban on an Eastern Shore of Maryland scale. And, this subsection is the perfect segue into the next Element, Community Character, where this whole theme is discussed in greater detail.

Growth Areas



-  Priority 1 - Boundary Refinement Area
-  Priority 2 - Intermediate Growth Area
-  Priority 3 - Long Range Growth Area

-  Green Belt
-  Growth Boundary



Growth Areas Map

Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Date: 3/18/10

Scale: 1:36,000

Created: Easton Department of Planning

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

INTRODUCTION

The desire to improve the quality of the built environment (i.e. how things look) in Easton has been a dominant and continuing theme since we initiated the Vision-based Planning first used in Easton in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. Since that time, many attempts have been made to “raise the bar” on the quality of development. Following the 1997 Plan, Site planning and architectural standards were added to the Zoning Ordinance for specific uses. Landscaping standards were greatly upgraded. The sign regulations were comprehensively overhauled and included a halving of the maximum height of a freestanding sign. A size limitation was established for so-called “big box” retail uses and very strict design standards were added for this use as well as for shopping centers. Finally, Town officials began to follow language in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan and take a stand against “corporate-franchise architecture.”

The 2004 Plan reiterated this need to improve the quality of development in Easton. Implementation of that Plan included the adoption of Design Guidelines for New Construction and an extension of this concern about the appearance and layout of development from just the commercial realm into the residential arena as well.

Still, despite all these efforts, much remains to be accomplished if Easton is to succeed in the effort to promote development that creates or enhances the Town as a unique place, rather than a replication of so many other communities. This Plan Element will move this effort the next step down the road in this endeavor. Central to this effort will be a discussion of the Design Principles for Easton first outlined in the 1997 Plan. Once again these principles will be revisited, in some cases revised, and one new principle is added.

The Community Character Element will also be where we revisit the issue of major retail (i.e. “big box”) and its place in Easton. This has clearly been an issue of great concern since the 1997 Plan was adopted, so much so that the ’97 Plan was amended in 2000 to specifically address this issue.

Finally, there will be a discussion about the role of zoning in general in influencing the character of Easton and look at how we might use more modern zoning practices and development review tools in order to reverse the negative influences that traditional zoning and subdivision regulation have played in establishing Easton’s character. We will also talk about the role of infill development in terms of its importance to the Town’s Growth Management Policy as well as recommendations for ensuring that such development is compatible with its surroundings.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan contained the following discussion under the heading “Recommended Design Principles for Easton:”

One of the major recommendations coming from the Visioning Committee, particularly from the group that organized the Growth station, was that Easton's Planning and development regulations need to be less rigid and more design-oriented. That is, a project that is tastefully designed, with good site planning, (including landscaping and architecture), but which may not correspond to, for example the height or density limits of the Ordinance, should be approved more readily than one which meets all the standards but which displays poor site planning. In order to accomplish this, a set of Design Principles needs to be adopted, and existing landscaping regulations need to be strengthened and more stringently enforced.

A number of books have been published, particularly in the last five or six years, on the subject of improving the appearance and livability of our communities. The following books were utilized heavily in the establishment of the list of Recommended Design Principles below:

- o *Rural by Design*, by Randall Arendt with Elizabeth A. Brabec, Harry L. Dodson, Christine Reid, and Robert Yaro, 1994, American Planners Association.

- o *Site Planning and Community Design for Great Neighborhoods*, by Frederick D. Jarvis, 1993, Home Builder Press.

- o *Dealing With Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development*, by Robert D. Yaro, Randall G. Arendt, Harry L. Dodson, and Elizabeth A. Brabec, 1990, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Environmental Law Foundation.

- o *Visions for a New American Dream*, by Anton Clarence Nelessen, 1994, American Planning Association.

Potential developers in Easton are encouraged to review these publications for a more complete understanding of the proposed Design Principles.

While there is certainly not universal agreement upon what constitutes good site planning, there are a number of common elements or themes among the various sources on the subject. Among these are the following:

- ❖ **Mixed Uses are Desirable.** Perhaps the single greatest failure of Planning in the twentieth century has been the concept of segregated land uses. Such

theory has led to traffic congestion, monotonous subdivisions, and a loss of the sense of community.

❖ **Natural Features should Determine Design.**

Developments should be designed in harmony with nature rather than against it.

❖ **Automobiles should not Determine Design.**

Another failure of planning in the twentieth century is the abdication of the planning of our circulation systems to traffic engineers. This has led in many places, until recently, to overly-wide streets. Among other things such streets are visually unattractive, cost more to build and maintain, are less environmentally sensitive, encourage speeding, and discourage social interaction. Streets or roadways whose function is to move large volumes of traffic certainly need to be designed to do so. These streets should be relatively wide. However, streets whose function is solely or primarily to accommodate neighborhood traffic can and should be much narrower than they have been in recent subdivision development.

❖ **Ample Open Spaces should be Provided within and around the Development.**

Open Spaces are a valuable element of design for numerous reasons. They provide recreational opportunities, preserve environmentally sensitive areas, act as a sort of terminal for pedestrian circulation systems, serve as

community gathering places, and provide buffers between incompatible land uses.

- ❖ **Substantial Landscaping should be Incorporated in the Design.** Landscaping is crucial to enhancing the appearance of development, particularly in areas of little or no natural vegetation prior to its development. Landscaping also provides shade, serves as a windbreak, creates benefits for wildlife, screens or buffers unsightly elements (i.e. dumpsters, loading areas, parking lots, etc.) and helps to separate incompatible land uses.
- ❖ **Parking Should not be a Dominant Site Feature.** With today's reliance on the automobile, it is both unwise and impossible to ignore parking as a design feature. However, parking does not need to drive site planning as is all too often the case today. Parking lots should be excluded from front yards where practical to do so. Subdivisions should be encouraged to utilize alley systems for services such as trash pick-up as well as for providing access to parking areas or garages. Lots should be thoroughly landscaped. In cases where there is a degree of doubt over the amount of parking needed, the lower amount should be favored to give a preference to green space over pavement.
- ❖ **Architecture Should Respect Easton's Historical Development.** Easton has a rich architectural history. Contemporary development should reflect that history. Franchises locating in Easton should build structures unique to our community and not look like those in virtually all

other communities throughout the country. The appropriate architecture should also include the scale and density that best fits in the proposed development.

- ❖ **Signs Should Inform but not Dominate.** Signage is important in helping to orient and direct visitors as well as to identify establishments of all types. By their very nature signs attract attention; however they need not be garish or otherwise out of character. Signs should be compatible with the architecture of the development and should be clear and concise. The number of signs should be the absolute minimum necessary to adequately identify the site.

The 2004 Plan added a number of additional publications on the general theme of quality design. In addition to the list outlined above, the following publications contain an overall philosophy that generally corresponds to what we are trying to achieve in Easton:

- *Crossroads, Hamlet, Village, Town: Design Characteristics of Traditional Neighborhoods, Old and New*, by Randall Arendt, 1999, American Planning Association.
- *Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law*, by Christopher J. Duerksen and R. Matthew Goebel, 1999, *Scenic America and American Planning Association*.
- *Better Models for Superstores: Alternatives for Big-Box Sprawl*, by Constance E. Beaumont, 1997, National Trust for Historic Preservation.

- *Saving Face: How Corporate Franchise Design Can Respect Community Identity*, by Ronald Lee Fleming, 1994, American Planning Association and The Townscape Institute.

Before proceeding, a word is probably in order about the purpose of including this list of publications. They are listed merely to provide potential developers (as well as those who are responsible for reviewing developers' proposals) with a resource list of publications that generally contain ideas, goals and strategies that reflect the community's vision for Easton. They should not be taken as a Design Manual for Easton. Their inclusion herein does not infer in any way that each and every part of these publications are necessarily appropriate in Easton. They may even in some cases contradict one another on a given point. The general idea is simply that if one reviews all of these documents, one will gain an understanding of what the Town is trying to achieve in terms of development design.

An occasional criticism of the Design Principles in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was that while the Plan specifies the types of design that should not be encouraged in Easton, it only speaks in broad generalities, at best, about what it is that we want to see. Thus the 2004 Plan reviewed each of the Design Principles, made some revisions, some additions and some deletions and presented a more comprehensive set of Design Principles. We believe it is appropriate for this Plan to repeat this same exercise to develop the Design Principles to guide us throughout the next Planning Period.

2009 DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR EASTON

Principle #1 – Integrated Uses are Desirable

Originally in the 1997 Plan, this Design Principle stated, "Mixed Uses are Desirable." Since that time we have found that it is not enough to simply mix uses within a development. A vast area of residential uses with a disconnected

pod of commercial use is not the concept we are trying to promote. Unfortunately that is often times what was presented. Too often, when any commercial development was presented at all, it was improperly located, of an inappropriate scale, or both.

What we are actually looking for is old-fashioned, neighborhood-style development. That means development that includes housing, with retail located at or near the center of the area, offices, civic space, open space, and possibly industrial development. Each subcomponent is of a size necessary to serve the residents of the proposed neighborhood, which, given the single-use developments of recent years, may also include surrounding and nearby developments. It does not mean a strip shopping center located along a State Road with the remainder of the site devoted to housing. Nor does it mean fast-food franchise restaurants or any level of regional-scale retail. The open and civic spaces are not afterthoughts or the land that can't otherwise be developed. Instead they are prominently and thoughtfully located so as to be a driving force in establishing the character of the neighborhood being created.

The amount of each subcomponent present in a neighborhood, as well as its design, will be different depending on the setting. A couple of options are shown in the illustrations on the next few pages. Perhaps the key to this principle is to provide the right amount of retail and office uses to ensure that a true neighborhood is created. Sufficient office and/or industrial space should be provided so that the neighborhood functions as an employment center. If this component is under-represented, residents will still be forced to commute outside of the neighborhood to work. We recognize that the majority of residents will still commute outside of the neighborhood, but at least in the neighborhoods that we envision, they might have a choice. Unless one works in

a home occupation or home-based business, that choice almost never exists in the developments of the post World War II era.

Similarly, the amount and nature of the retail provided should be sufficient to provide convenience type goods and services for the neighborhood. These might include a convenience or small grocery store, drug store, hardware store, restaurants and similar places that fulfill most daily shopping needs of the residents of the neighborhood. Again, residents might not always choose to frequent these establishments, but at least the option would be available.

Providing an overall mix of uses in a community is important not only from a community character point-of-view, but also for fiscal reasons. Subdivisions of simply single-family housing generate a large number of school children (unless they are age-restricted and/or possibly high-end housing), as well as a large number of automobile trips. Such developments create a negative budgetary impact. That is, they cost more to serve than they create in tax revenue. Commercial and industrial development, on the other hand, usually has a net positive fiscal impact. The goal is to have the two impacts balanced within the same neighborhood (thereby reducing traffic and further reducing costs for the Town) rather than having pockets of positive and negative fiscal impacts spread around Town.

Finally, mixed and integrated use communities are desirable because they are more ecologically-friendly and sustainable. Because they potentially decrease automobile usage, they also potentially decrease the community's carbon footprint. These are important considerations today that are only expected to become more important in the future.

Principle #2 – Natural Features Should Determine Design

The Maryland Smart Growth Initiative that presently shapes so much of what happens relative to growth and development in Maryland is both a pro-

growth and pro-environment program. The issue is not growth or no-growth. Rather, the issue is one of location. Smart Growth dictates that growth should occur in places with the infrastructure in place to handle it, and should not occur in rural, undeveloped areas. Occasionally, these goals come into conflict when, for example, a site is proposed for development within a Town, but that site also contains environmentally sensitive areas. This is most often the case when development is proposed on the undeveloped periphery of the Town.

This Design Principle is about finding the right balance between these two competing goals. It does not mean that all sites within a municipality should be leveled, filled, and developed with no regard for the environment. Nor does it mean that sites with special environmental features should be totally precluded from development. Instead, the Design Principle, “Natural Features Should Determine Design” means simply that sites should be planned based on the environmental resources present. Too often in Easton we have seen situations where, for example, land with gently rolling hills (at least by Eastern Shore standards) is first leveled (and the top soil sold) and then developed (with a much thinner layer of imported top soil) when instead a much more interesting community could be built using the existing topography. Similarly wetlands should be protected, but that does not necessarily mean that they are left on the developed periphery or designated as part of the required open space. They also can be a site amenity as well as an environmental resource.

Under the general theme of this Design Principle, there are several objectives that should be followed in order to achieve environmentally responsible and sensitive design. These include:

- Neighborhoods should only be located on land suitable for development.

- Development should avoid impacts to air, land, water, and vegetation. Any negative impacts on these resources should be mitigated.
- Site landscaping should utilize existing vegetation complemented with native species.
- Important visual features should be preserved and made an integral part of the design of the site.
- Site design and development should consider noise and light impacts on adjacent properties.
- Above all else, neighborhood development can be environmentally responsible by providing adequate opportunities for walking to jobs, convenience retail, and community facilities.

Principle # 3 – Automobiles should not Determine Design

This Design Principle would, at first glance, seem to go without saying. However, so much of what is undesirable with contemporary development is directly related to the automobile. It begins with the very location of uses, which have been separated and isolated, in part, because of the general ready availability of automobiles. With the explosion of automobile ownership after World War II, it became less important, from an availability perspective, to locate jobs and commercial shops and services within walking distance of residences. Now of course this is viewed as a root cause of the demise of the true neighborhood and thus we are trying to return to the way development used to occur.

The separation of uses only describes the problem that the influence of the automobile has from the macro perspective. There are even more problems on the micro scale. These include:

- In many cases garages have become the most prominent feature of single-family homes. They are often times quite large, set closer to the street than the house and have the door opening facing the street.
- Many streets are much too wide. This is not only unattractive, but is also unnecessarily expensive, invites speeding, and negatively impacts water quality.
- Parking lots are generally the least attractive site feature in commercial developments and yet they are usually located such that they are the most prominent site feature. Too frequently parking lots are inadequately screened and are placed between the street and the front of the building.

This design principle is all about reversing this trend. The desire to return to growing by integrated-use neighborhoods was described previously. The three points discussed above are relatively easy to address and in many cases the Town has already adopted regulations to reverse these problems. The one exception is the first item described above concerning the prominence of garages in residential settings. However, this is an easy problem to rectify, at least for future development. Garages are already listed as a permitted accessory use in the Zoning Ordinance. It would be a very simple matter to add supplemental standards specifying the preferred location, size, and orientation of garages.

As for street widths, the Town already permits narrower streets than otherwise required via Planned Unit Developments. The standard details should be examined and compared to new nationally recognized guidelines to determine if Easton's standard street widths can be reduced for conventional subdivisions.

Finally, in the matter of parking lots, the Easton Zoning Ordinance requires screening of lots from public streets, as well as ample landscaping within the parking lots. One of our Zoning Districts requires that all parking be located in the side or rear yard. Major retail uses also have requirements regarding the location of parking spaces. These standards should be examined again, but probably require little adjustment. Also, the next time the Zoning Ordinance is comprehensively updated, we should closely examine the amount of parking required for various uses so that we are not unnecessarily forcing developers to pave more land than is truly required for their use.

Principle #4 – Ample Open Spaces should be provided within and Around Neighborhoods

Part of this Design Principle was discussed previously when it was pointed out that open spaces need to become an integral and prominent part of the design of neighborhoods. Too often they appear to have been an afterthought. Even more often the open spaces that are included as the developers attempt to satisfy the Town’s open space requirements are the lands that are otherwise not developable anyway.

Several things need to change relative to how Open Space is viewed in Easton. First, developers need to provide significant, usable open space as part of their projects. Second, Town officials need to look at ways to make our open spaces more valuable. In some cases this might mean enhancing existing open space areas. In others it might mean planning open space or wildlife corridors so that larger protected areas are actually connected via “green infrastructure.” The 2004 Plan recommended that the Town revisit its 1/35th acre/dwelling unit standard to determine if it was still sufficient in light of our other proposals to change the way development occurs. This was accomplished and the standard was changed such that today a minimum of 35% open space is required in all

conventional residential subdivisions, of which a minimum of 1,200 square feet per unit is required to be provided for parks.

Principle #5– Architecture Should Respect Easton’s Historical Development

This is perhaps the most important Design Principle in the struggle to make Easton a unique place, rather than the latest version of “Anywhere USA.” The mix and layout of development was discussed above and it emphasized that the Town desires to look at the past for a blueprint of the future. Much is the same relative to architecture. New development in Easton, especially new commercial development, should look to buildings constructed prior to the 1940’s for an example of what to emulate.

One thing that is clearly not welcome in Easton is generic, corporate franchise architecture. That was clearly expressed in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, reiterated in the 2004 Plan and emphasized through the Design Guidelines for New Development. A common criticism of the original 1997 language was that while we clearly stated what we did not want to see, we did not give much direction relative to what we do want to see. The 2004 Plan as well as the Design Guidelines attempted to clarify this point and again, to this end, prospective builders should look to the past for guidance. In doing so, one will find many architectural styles from which to choose. In downtown Easton, the predominant architectural style is Federal. Clearly new buildings designed in the Federal style would be appropriate for new development, especially infill development in the downtown area. However, the Federal style is not the only answer. Colonial architecture clearly has a place in Easton as do numerous other styles. The only thing we are specifically trying to avoid is generic buildings, which, if built in Easton would look little, if any, different than those in any other community. Along these same lines, tract housing with little variation is to be discouraged in residential subdivisions, so that these neighborhoods are as

unique architecturally as other areas of the Town. In the 2006 update of the Zoning Ordinance, standards were added to address this issue. A series of so-called “anti-monotony” standards were added to the Zoning Ordinance as a Supplemental Standard for the single-family detached housing. Since we have only reviewed one subdivision since these regulations were adopted (and to date less than ten homes have been constructed in it), we cannot fully assess the success of these standards. Thus we will continue to monitor the effect and the effectiveness of these standards and make modifications as appropriate.

It is not enough, however, to simply provide unique architecture. Context is also important. A grand Victorian building set amongst a development of contemporary structures would not be fitting. Similarly, while a southwestern desert motif would definitely be unique, it would certainly not be suitable in Easton.

Despite this lack of direction as to what is appropriate commercial architecture in Easton, progress was made. The desire to improve the quality of commercial development extends back at least 20 years. Initially, we had nothing more to stand on than the Planning Commission’s desire for “something nice” and, with regards to franchises, “different from their standard building”. Thus the Wal*Mart and the Giant Shopping Center were developed with little in the way of design, site planning, or landscaping standards. Instead, the developers simply had to satisfy the Planning Commission.



*Easton's Wal*Mart and Giant were approved with an expressed desire for "better design" but little to back that desire up other than the comments of the Planning Commission.*

Next, we adopted the 1997 Comprehensive Plan with the first version of these Design Principles and a strong statement concerning the lack of interest in typical corporate franchise architecture in Easton. We followed that up by beginning to add design standards for specific uses and creating Landscaping Standards in the Zoning Ordinance. Examples of buildings developed under these regulations include Boater's World and the Route 50 McDonalds.

Next, the 2004 Plan included even more emphasis on improving design and more standards were added to the Zoning Ordinance. Buildings constructed under these regulations include the Wawa, Royal Farms, and Lowe's.



Easton's Wawa and Royal Farms Convenience Stores represent significant departures from those stores's corporate architecture. Below, the new Lowe's tests the Town's Major Retail design guidelines.



Finally, we adopted Design Guidelines for New Development in 2006. Pizza Hut, Starbucks, Panera Bread, and KFC are examples of buildings constructed under these design standards.



Pizza Hut, Starbucks (above), KFC and Panera Bread (below) are all examples of buildings designed and constructed under the Town's 2006 Design Guidelines for New Development.



The point is simply that this has been a long and evolving process and we are undoubtedly not finished with this evolution yet. It is also important to recognize that there is a necessary lag time between the time when new standards are implemented and the effects of those standards can be seen. The new residential design anti-monotony standards are a perfect example. They were adopted in 2006, yet nothing (but for a handful of houses) built today were subject to those standards. So, while it may be easy and tempting to call for more or stricter standards because we do not like what we see today, we might very well already have the tools that we need. It is often times simply too early to tell.



The new McDonalds (above) on US Route 50. Note the departure from a prototypical McDonalds in terms of roof shape, building materials, and window treatments. Similarly the new Boater's World (below) represents a significant change from that franchise's standard building and even though this franchise is closing nationally, since Easton's store is not franchise architecture it should be more ready for a new user.



Principle #6 – Signs should Inform but not Dominate

This is one Design Principle that has had the most concrete action occur to implement it since first appearing in the 1997 Plan. Since that time the Town has amended the Zoning Ordinance on three occasions relative to sign standards. The first amendment reduced the maximum permitted height of freestanding signs in half, from 20 to 10 feet. The same amendment also required that landscaping be incorporated around the base of the freestanding sign and specified the amount of landscaping to be provided. The second amendment was a more comprehensive overhaul of the sign regulations, which added clarity and a number of design standards. Finally, the most recent amendment to sign regulations cut the maximum permitted size of freestanding signs in half from 100 square feet per face to 50 square feet.

Given the interest in the topic and the fact that we now have several examples of signs constructed throughout Town under various different rules and regulations, it seems reasonable to expect that we will examine the issue once again to determine if we are on the right track, have gone too far, not far enough, etc. In the meantime applicants will be guided by what is allowed under the terms of the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Beyond that signs should be tasteful and architecturally compatible with the building that they identify.

Principle #7 – Neighborhoods Should Contain a Diversity of Housing Types

This was a new Design Principle added to the list in 2004. It is similar in nature to Principle # 1 above concerning mixed or integrated uses. However this Principle goes further to look at one specific component of the mix of uses, residential, and says that this component itself should be mixed.

In recent years Easton has experienced a significant absence of affordable housing. The problem is not just within the realm of low-income housing. That level of housing is certainly needed in Easton, but more recently we have seen

fewer and fewer homes built in the general “entry-level” market, as well as the “move-up” market. In addition, there is a demonstrated need for apartment units in Town.

Compounding this problem from a community character perspective is that to the extent any of this type of housing exists, it is strictly segregated. This is a mistake. It is important to provide a diversity of housing types to enable people from a broad spectrum of economic levels (as well as age groups) to live within the same neighborhood. Taken to the extreme, the recent trend of only providing higher-end housing can lead to the situation where nearly all of the service and “labor” employees have to commute into the community from places where they can afford to live. This is already happening to a certain extent as anyone who has witnessed the regular morning influx of commuters on Dover and Matthewstown Roads can attest. These are people who work in Easton, but live in Caroline and Dorchester Counties (or even farther distant) where housing prices are generally lower.

Principle # 8 – Residential Developments Should be Interesting Places

This is the second new design principle added to the original 1997 list. It was added because of a concern by Easton’s Planning Commission that while we are at least recognizing and starting to address the problem of commercial design, residential design has been overlooked for too long and they see many problems.

There was a time when residents would drive or walk around a particular neighborhood just because they enjoyed the look and feel of that place. To a certain extent that still exists today in places like Oxford, St. Michaels and Easton’s Historic District. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine anyone seeking out most of our subdivisions approved in the last 30 years for this same experience.

Why has this become the case? One simple reason is that such places exhibit little architectural variety. Often times all the houses in these developments are built by one or two contractors (increasingly national homebuilders), and it shows. Here one can find block after block, or worse yet cul-de-sac after cul-de-sac, of monotonous replications of a handful of stock housing models. Lending to the monotony, these houses are often also situated on identically sized lots and covered in no more than a handful of variations of beige-tinted vinyl siding.

By contrast, the older, historic areas of Easton were generally built one house at a time, by many different builders. Here you will find a great variety of lot sizes and configurations as well as house types.

Future residential developers in Easton should note and incorporate the following objectives into their plans:

- Adjacent lots should be different sizes.
- There should be no two lots of the same size and configuration within 300 feet.
- Adjacent detached single-family homes should be architecturally different. This does not mean that one lot has a Cape Cod with red shutters and the next has a Cape Cod with green shutters. There should be significantly different architectural features on adjacent houses, if not different house styles altogether.
- When developments are constructed by one or a limited number of builders, care should be taken to vary such things as the color of roof shingles, siding or paint colors, sizes and styles of porches, etc...

It is this Design Principle that led to the adoption of the so-called residential anti-monotony standards which incorporate much of the objectives outlined above.

Principle # 9 – Neighborhoods Should Connect

The one new Design Principle to be added in this 2009 Plan concerns the connectivity of neighborhoods and subdivisions. In short, we believe that they should be connected to neighboring properties to the maximum extent possible. This is a fundamental characteristic of the older parts of Easton that is essential to emulate in new development projects. There are a myriad of reasons for promoting connectivity. The most important include:

- Connected neighborhoods offer multiple travel options. This diminishes traffic by distributing it amongst the various possible routes, as opposed to forcing all of it onto one particular road. It also affords alternatives in the event that one's usual path of travel is blocked, for whatever reason. If a tree falls across the road, utility work is taking place, an accident occurs, etc., and this happens on the only road into a development, all of the community from that point on is effectively isolated until the road is cleared. In a more traditional, well-connected neighborhood, one generally need only travel one block out of the way to bypass the problem and one block back to get back on route.
- Connected neighborhoods promote community. Neighborhoods that are connected enable residents from one part of Town to easily travel to nearby areas, thus increasing the likelihood for social interaction. They also greatly increase the opportunities for walking between adjacent developments, which has both this social interaction as well as a health benefit. To illustrate this point, consider a real-world example of adjacent non-connected developments is Easton. The illustration below shows two

houses whose lots abut one another. One is in the Old Beechwood Subdivision (a Talbot County Subdivision) and one is in the Woods at Stoney Ridge. The two homes in this example, in adjacent subdivisions are approximately 140 feet apart and yet, in order to walk or drive from one of these houses to the other, one must travel approximately 3 miles. That in a nutshell is one of the major problems created by a lack of connectivity.



- Connected neighborhoods are safer. Bottlenecks are eliminated, alternatives for emergency responders are always available, and studies show that speeds are lower in neighborhoods with urban gridded streets, therefore accidents that do occur are more likely to be towards the fender-bender end of the spectrum than is the case on higher speed arterials or major collector streets common in suburban-style subdivisions.
- Connected neighborhoods are more sustainable. The U.S. Green Building Council's (US GBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development promotes development projects that advance the standards of sustainability, as advocated by the partnership of the US GBC, the Congress for New Urbanism, and the National Resources Defense Council. Among the practices promoted in LEED certified Neighborhood Development projects are well-connected neighborhoods as cited in this excerpt from the US GBC's website:

LEED for Neighborhood Development emphasizes the creation of compact, walkable, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods *with good connections* to nearby communities. Research has shown that living in a mixed-use environment within walking distance of shops and services results in increased walking and biking, which improve human cardiovascular and respiratory health and reduce the risk of hypertension and obesity¹. [Emphasis added]

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF DESIGN REGULATIONS IN EASTON

The history of both the interest in and the regulation of, design in Easton were touched upon in the Introduction to this Element. It has been a long and continuing evolution. This subsection will use illustrations to chronicle this evolution and will also discuss what still remains to be addressed.

¹ See <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=148>

The “pre-history” of this most recent interest in design goes back a number of years, actually, quite a few years. We would not have such a special downtown if it were not first well designed and second preserved. The earliest builders of Easton displayed great foresight and vision when they created what remains the heart of our community. In addition, in order for these buildings to still be standing today, there had to be a great number of thoughtful property-owners and visionary Town leaders. Otherwise it surely would have been far easier at some point in the past to tear down part of the gem that is downtown and replace it with something unsympathetic and wholly inappropriate.

Fortunately for Easton, there have long been individuals and groups interested in preserving the historic and cultural resources of our community. Historic Preservation groups like the Talbot County Historical Society, and Historic Easton, Inc., worked tirelessly through the years to advocate for the protection of Easton’s historic buildings. The Talbot County Historical Society was founded in 1954 and is headquartered in one of Easton’s charming historic buildings with spectacular grounds. Historic Easton was founded in 1973 and the Town appointed the Easton Historic District Commission and established a district in 1976.

The evolution of design standards in Easton is chronicled in the discussion concerning the Design Principles above. The level of interest in this area has been evidenced in a number of other ways in the past. One example was the very strong community participation in 2000 in a County-wide Quality Community Survey. In June of 2000, the incorporated Municipalities of Talbot County hosted a Quality Community Survey (QCS). This was the 14th in a series of 22 surveys that were conducted statewide by the Maryland Mass Transit Authority. In this process, Tony Nelessen administered a Visual Preference Survey to approximately 140 individuals at Easton High School. Mr. Nelessen is

nationally recognized in the use of this planning tool. He is also the author of one of the books cited in the last two Comprehensive Plans as representative of the kind of development Easton seeks.

Talbot's QCS was comprised of 82 slides contrasting options for various aspects of planning and development. It was also accompanied by a 55 question survey.

Many of the results seem obvious, but some are more subtle and the overwhelming theme is that the ideas described previously in this Chapter in the Design Principles section, are, in fact, supported by the general public. This includes support for denser housing, narrower streets, and a new direction for the development of Route 50.

ZONING AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Much has been written of late about the "sins" of our built environment. In fact, the underlying force behind such movements or concepts as Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Neo-Traditional Planning, is that somewhere along the way, for whatever reason, we have gotten away from settlement patterns that made sense, to what so many people decry today. The ills have oft been repeated: decaying central cities, booming but characterless suburbs, farms and forests disappearing at alarming rates to make way for more growth, subdivisions of monotonous homes and ever increasing traffic congestion.

What are the reasons for this transformation? Actually there are several reasons but certainly a large part of it is that the people who created this built environment were simply producing what government regulation required. At the heart of it all is what has come to be the most common and basic of all land use regulatory tools, zoning.

The roots of zoning go all the way back to 1867 when San Francisco, California passed an Ordinance prohibiting development of slaughterhouses,

hog storage facilities, and hide curing plants in certain districts of the city. The concept of prohibiting specific uses in specific places continued to grow, culminating in 1916 when New York City adopted the first comprehensive zoning code in America.

As with any new regulatory tool, many legal challenges ensued until the United States Supreme Court heard *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Company*, (272 U.S. 365 (1926)). In this case the Ambler Realty Company challenged the ability of the Village of Euclid, Ohio, to regulate land use through zoning regulations. In 1926 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Euclid, and thereby established the constitutionality of zoning in America.

There is little doubt that zoning had a legitimate, perhaps even noble, purpose at that time. Developers of that era had no restrictions and thus it was not uncommon to find single-family housing located right next to uses we would consider utterly noxious today. Zoning was created to put an end to that as well as other land use abuses.

However, in the effort to correct such abuses, something went awry. At some point uses became too segregated and zoning districts too specialized. This, coupled with the explosion in the usage of the automobile, created the situation where we were building houses remote from where we worked or shopped. So remote in many cases that the only way to get from where one lived to these other places was to drive.

So the question is, has zoning outlived its usefulness? In many cases the answer is yes. Certainly it is still necessary to protect the places where people live from noxious and potentially dangerous uses. However, there are fewer of such uses today and there are alternate ways to provide this protection. So, the question becomes, should the Town of Easton consider abandoning zoning? Probably not as heavy industrial uses and high-traffic, regional-scale commercial

uses still should be separated from the rest of the community. But, there is no reason to exclude commercial uses and places of employment that are of a scale compatible with the residential portion of the neighborhood. In fact there is every reason to **include** them. That is actually one of the characteristics of the way towns used to be built that so many developers and planners (as well as critics of modern planning) are trying to recreate. We should certainly have an Ordinance that allows this to happen.

A new Zoning Ordinance that encourages traditional neighborhood development would have fewer use restrictions. Obnoxious or potentially hazardous uses should continue to be prohibited or restricted to remote parts of the community. Minimum lot sizes should be reduced and density increased to achieve a development pattern more like that of the historic parts of Easton. Density should at a minimum satisfy the State Smart Growth (Priority Funding Area) criteria of 3.5 units per acre (net density). Perhaps the biggest change of all would be in the way mixed uses are treated. Rather than prohibiting or allowing only via a complicated and onerous review process, mixed-use should be **required**. At the very least mixed uses should be permitted and encouraged.

The 2004 Plan outlined the standards for such a use. It was designed to be ready to be essentially copied verbatim into the Zoning Ordinance following the adoption of the Plan. This was attempted, but never became reality due to public opposition. The reasons expressed for this opposition were not focused on the standards being proposed, but rather on the process. Today it is generally only possible to create the types of places described above as desirable via the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. This is a process that typically involves two (occasionally one, often more) meetings with the Planning Commission and ultimately a Public Hearing before the Town Council. At least in part because of this process, developers tend to avoid it and instead seek the

path of least resistance. This is conventional subdivision review for residential projects and site plan review for non-residential projects. Mixed-use opportunities are limited.

Those opposed to the proposed new Traditional Neighborhood zoning District (TND) stated that the primary reason they opposed it was because it removed the Town Council and the Public Hearing from the review process even though the point was to create standards to give us the kinds of neighborhoods we describe (and thus in theory want) in the Plan through the conventional zoning process, since that was the route most often chosen by developers. The thought process was why make developers jump through extra hoops to give us what we want, and leave the path of least resistance available to proliferate more suburban-style development that we do not want? Why not flip this arrangement so that the most popular and least difficult path gives us the kind of neighborhoods we have said we love, and require the more torturous PUD path to even propose something other than that?

As a result of the TND being defeated, elements of those standards were added to the base zoning districts in the Zoning Ordinance and provisions for greater flexibility in lot design, as well as the previously described anti-monotony standards were added to the Subdivision Regulations and the Zoning Ordinance.

One of the strengths of zoning even today is protecting certain uses, especially residential uses, from potentially undesirable neighboring uses. One such use that the Town is looking into regulating is adult-oriented businesses. The secondary effects of adult-oriented businesses (increased crime and police calls, traffic, late hours, decreased property values, etc...) would seem to preclude them from established residential neighborhoods and for this reason

the Town should consider prohibiting them from all residential zones and establish special setbacks from residential uses.

THE ROLE OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN EASTON'S GROWTH STRATEGY

The Municipal Growth Element of this Plan analyzed the potential for the Town to accommodate growth without annexing any additional land. This would be accomplished through infill development and redevelopment. The analysis indicated that there is the potential for approximately 2,500 units to be produced through infill and redevelopment. Such development has numerous advantages, including:

- More Infill and Redevelopment means decreased demand for new, undeveloped greenfield land.
- Infill development means more mobility for those who do not or cannot drive.
- It is generally less expensive to provide services to infill sites vs. greenfield sites.
- An increased supply of smaller-sized housing units can offer more affordable and lower maintenance housing choices for smaller households.
- Infill development can bring new opportunity and improved quality of life for in-Town residents.
- Infill development can save energy and the environment.
- Infill development is consistent with State Smart Growth Policies.

While there are clear advantages to encouraging infill and redevelopment, it should not simply be permitted carte blanche. Infill and redevelopment projects are by their very definition generally going to be located such that they will have many neighboring and nearby properties. Thus extra attention needs to be given

to compatibility and neighborhood impact issues. The following are points for consideration with any infill or redevelopment project, design principles for infill development in a sense:

- Ensure Housing Types that are Compatible with Existing Types.
- Employ Appropriate Traffic Calming Measures.
- Adopt Design Standards/Guidelines for Improved Compatibility.
- Provide A Continuous Pedestrian Network.
- Encourage Convenient, Appropriately Scaled Commercial Services to Support Neighborhood Needs.

THE ROLE OF MAJOR RETAIL IN EASTON IN 2010

In May of 2000, the Easton Town Council approved an amendment to the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. This unique action was the result of a moratorium on applications for Major Retail projects, instituted upon the receipt of applications for major retail projects and shopping centers totaling approximately 766,000 square feet of new retail space. The end result of this moratorium was to add language to the 1997 Plan discussing the role of large scale retailing in Easton and to amend the Town's Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance Amendments defined single use retail establishments of 25,000 square feet of gross floor area or more as "Major Retail". Major Retail projects of up to 65,000 square feet could be considered via a new Planned Major Retail floating zone. Any retail project in excess of 65,000 square feet was prohibited. Finally, numerous design standards were added for stand-alone Major Retail projects as well as shopping centers.

The issue was very prominent in the Town at the time and the 65,000 square foot cap was a compromise between competing interests. Those who

wanted this use in Easton felt the cap was too low or that there should be no limit at all. Those who desired a more limited role for this type of retailing felt that the cap was too high or that the use should be expressly prohibited.

The issue of the appropriate role of major retailing remained a debated topic since the 2000 amendments. As such, it was one of the topics on which the Planning Commission specifically sought community input during the Visioning phase of this Plan update. A question in the opinion survey administered during the “Road Shows” asked when various uses should be added to the Town. For major retail, 45.7% of the 446 respondents answered “Never.” This was nearly twice the next most common response, which interestingly was “Now” (26.9%). Another question asked specifically about the respondents’ opinion of the retail use size limitation. Out of 446 total responses, there was an absolute tie for the most common answer between those who thought the restrictions were “just right” and those who felt that there should no restriction at all.

After considering all of these factors in the development of the 2004 Plan, the Easton Planning and Zoning Commission decided that the role of major retailing in Easton remained limited. However, they did not believe that an absolute size cap should be a part of the way that this use was regulated. Rather, the Commission recommended that the Town maintain a split based on the 25,000 square foot threshold, but to also remove the 65,000 square foot cap.

In proposing this change, the Commission did not alter its position that big box retailing has only a limited role to play in Easton. Instead this change was about two things: (1) to not completely shut the door to allowing major retail projects in situations and places where they actually work and (2) to insure that the review of such applications remain focused on land use issues.

As a result of these changes, the Town’s view of the role of major retailing in Easton in 2004 was summarized in that Plan as follows:

- Major retail has only a limited role to play in Easton in the planning period 2002 – 2009.
- Preference for new major retail opportunities should be given to expansion of existing establishments, especially if part of the redevelopment of an existing shopping center, followed by the development of new sites identified in this Plan as appropriate for new Regional-scale commercial development.
- The regional market that prospective developers should look to serve if developing a major retail or shopping center in Easton is primarily Talbot County and to a lesser extent portions of Caroline, Dorchester, and Queen Anne’s Counties. The Town has no desire to become the regional shopping destination for an area larger than that.
- Existing major retail establishments that seek to build a new store on a new site in Town should couple the new application with detailed plans for the reuse of the existing store.

In 2010, little has changed to alter this perception of major retail. For this Comprehensive Plan Update, the primary source of community input was an online survey. Responses germane to this issue include:

- 47.9% of 791 respondents thought that the Town had about the right number of shopping centers. 36.4% thought there were too many. Only 15.7% thought there were too few.
- 77.8% of 760 respondents thought that the current design standards have created nice additions to the Town or still don’t go far enough. Only 18.5% thought that the standards go too far or that the Town should not be regulating design at all.
- 65.4% of 766 respondents thought that the Planning Commission should not concede to developers over design issues even if it

ultimately meant that their favorite store would choose not to locate here.

- 69% of 727 respondents either agree or strongly agree that Downtown Easton should receive preferential treatment over other commercial areas from the Town government. 16.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Taking all of the aforementioned into account, the Planning Commission proposes no change to the Town's general policies towards Major Retail and again views its role throughout the next (2010 – 2016) Planning Period as very limited. The one exception is cases where it is necessary to redevelop or redesign existing shopping centers. In such cases expansion or addition of major retail should be encouraged, but only in exchange for significant design improvements (and, where possible, circulation/access improvements).

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To encourage future development of mixed, integrated-use, old-fashioned neighborhoods rather than single use subdivisions or projects.

Objectives:

- ✓ Monitor the effectiveness of the TND and anti-monotony standards added to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations in 2006.
- ✓ Revise review processes so that traditional neighborhood developments are streamlined and suburban-style subdivisions are difficult to get approved.

Goal: To improve the appearance of existing development in Easton.

Objectives:

- ✓ Work cooperatively with the State Highway Administration to secure landscaping along the State Highways within the Town, with special attention to the highly visible Route 50 corridor.
- ✓ Use the Forest Conservation Account to retroactively landscape streetscapes in areas where it is lacking or deficient.
- ✓ Require renovations to existing buildings and/or changes of use that require Special Exceptions or Variances, to meet all current design standards as a condition of approval (i.e. no grandfathering on design issues).
- ✓ Develop a Route 50 Corridor Plan which emphasizes design and access improvements.

Goal: To improve the appearance of all new development.

Objectives:

- ✓ Vigorously apply the recommended Design Principles for Easton as outlined previously in this Chapter.
- ✓ Prohibit the construction of new buildings that are designed with corporate-style franchise architecture.
- ✓ Adopt Design Standards for all new development, including residential and infill/redevelopment, in Easton.
- ✓ Review and if necessary revise the Design Guidelines for New Development.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

The History of the Town is chronicled in the Background Chapter of this Plan. An important part of what makes Easton so unique and so special is the number and quality of historic buildings and settings. This chapter of the Plan talks about the importance of these historic and cultural resources and makes recommendations for how they can further be protected.

BACKGROUND

The history of Easton can be seen in its historic buildings and neighborhoods which date back over several centuries. Physical reminders of early history give depth and richness to the Town, to past events and to people's lives.

The preservation of historic buildings and structures includes consideration of the integrity of the location, neighborhood, design, setting, materials and workmanship. Historic preservation allows the legacy of the past to be protected and remembered. It allows for the past to be integrated with the present and reminds us that the old has a useful place alongside the new.

Easton has a substantial and well-documented stock of historic structures, streetscapes, sites, and settings. Some 944 parcels in the Historic District have been surveyed and documented.

Preservation and rehabilitation of these structures and streetscapes enhances the historic character of the town, stabilizes neighborhoods, protects property values, and attracts visitors to Easton.

Easton recognizes the importance of its historic resources and supports and encourages preservation and rehabilitation efforts by private owners, non-profits and local governments. Private houses and public buildings are often carefully restored.

New uses are found for historic buildings which no longer serve their original functions.

Continued historic preservation will provide Easton with a number of aesthetic and economic benefits, including:

- Promotion of a strong sense of community pride and tradition;
- Community revitalization through the restoration and adaptive reuse of older structures;
- Increased property values and tax revenues as a result of renovation and restoration; and
- Increased revenues from tourism activities generated by an interest in historic buildings and sites.

The “Stories of the Chesapeake” Certified Heritage Area encompasses heritage sites and places in Talbot and adjacent Counties which were designated a certified heritage area by the Maryland Heritage Area Authority on April 20, 2005. This program recognizes Easton as offering a number of heritage resources of import to the region.

Easton is also a “Targeted Investment Zone”, a state designation that permits the town to get state financial support for a certified heritage area.

New commercial and residential development and rehabilitation projects in the Historic District have been designed to complement historic buildings, rather than compete with them. The Town, business community, and residents have invested in preservation and restoration.

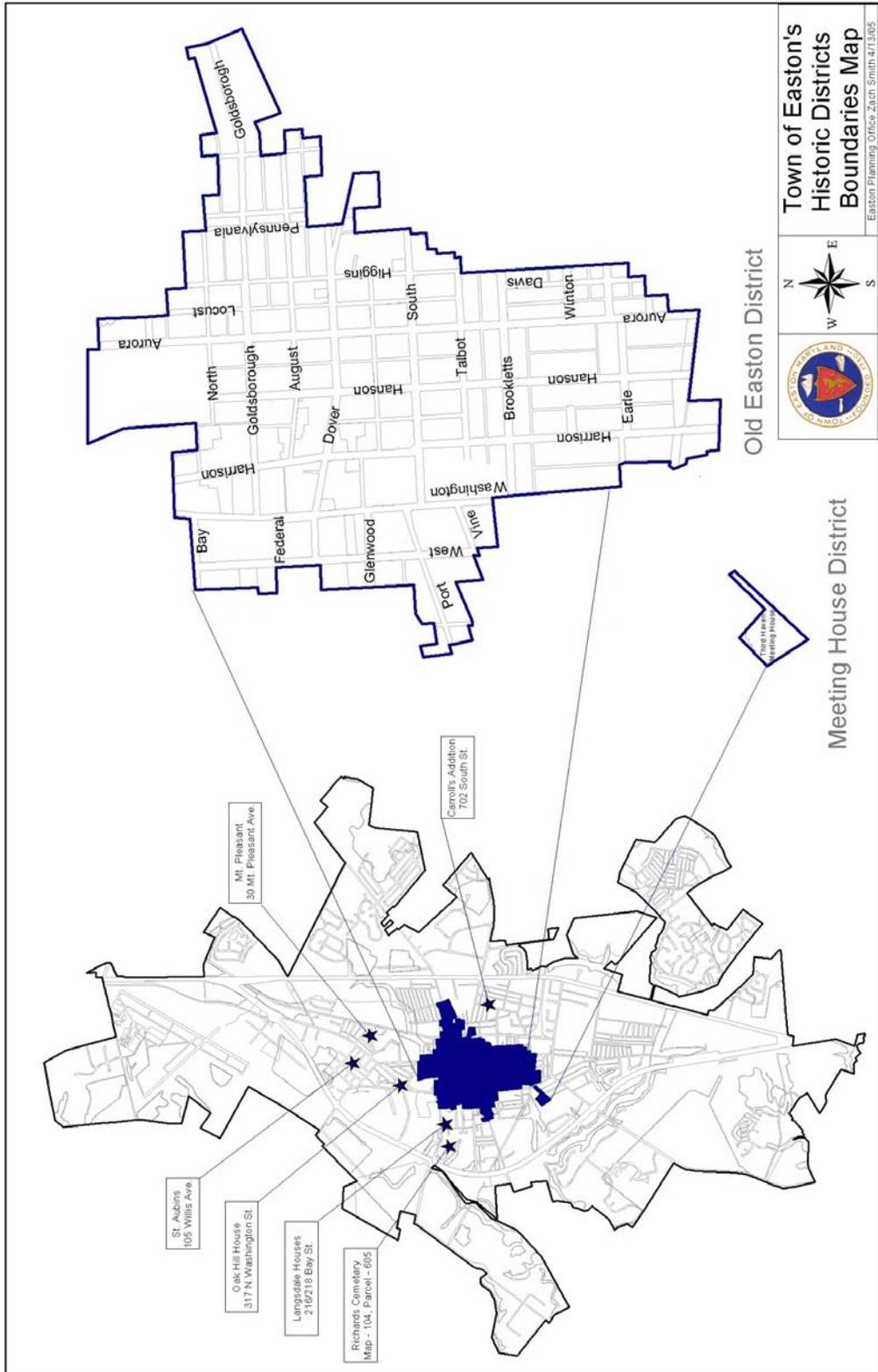
National Register Historic District

The National Register of Historic Places, an inventory of historic resources, is maintained by the National Park Service. Listing in the National Register provides recognition to sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts that are significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. An Easton National Register Historic District was surveyed, nominated, and approved in 1980. In addition to providing recognition of significance, listing in the National Register mandates consideration in the planning of any federal or federally-assisted project and provides eligibility for federal and state tax credits for historic preservation projects.

Easton Historic District

The Town has a Historic District Commission and has two museums, (the Art Academy Museum and the Historical Society of Talbot County Museum). It also has the historic Avalon Theatre where many cultural and community events take place. The Easton Historic District was created in the late 70s and expanded in 2005. The seven-member Historic District Commission is composed of volunteer citizens with interest or specific expertise in historic preservation and appointed to three-year terms by the Mayor. The Commission reviews proposed exterior changes to any structure or appurtenance in the defined district, according to an approved and published set of guidelines. In addition to the review of proposed projects, inclusion in the Historic District also provides eligibility for a state historic preservation tax credit to property owners who undertake historic preservation projects, whether or not the property produces income.

A map of the Easton Historic District reflecting its boundaries as of 2009 is included on the following page. This is followed by representative photographs of some of the structures and the setting of the Easton Historic District.





Easton's Historic District includes buildings encompassing a wide spectrum of type and use, including commercial (Washington Street, upper left), institutional (Christ Church, upper right and Talbot County Court House, middle right), and residential structures (middle left and bottom right and left).

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To encourage continued restoration, adaptive rehabilitation and preservation of historic structures, sites, streetscapes, and settings. Encourage compatible infill in the Historic District.

Objectives:

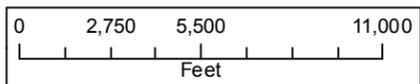
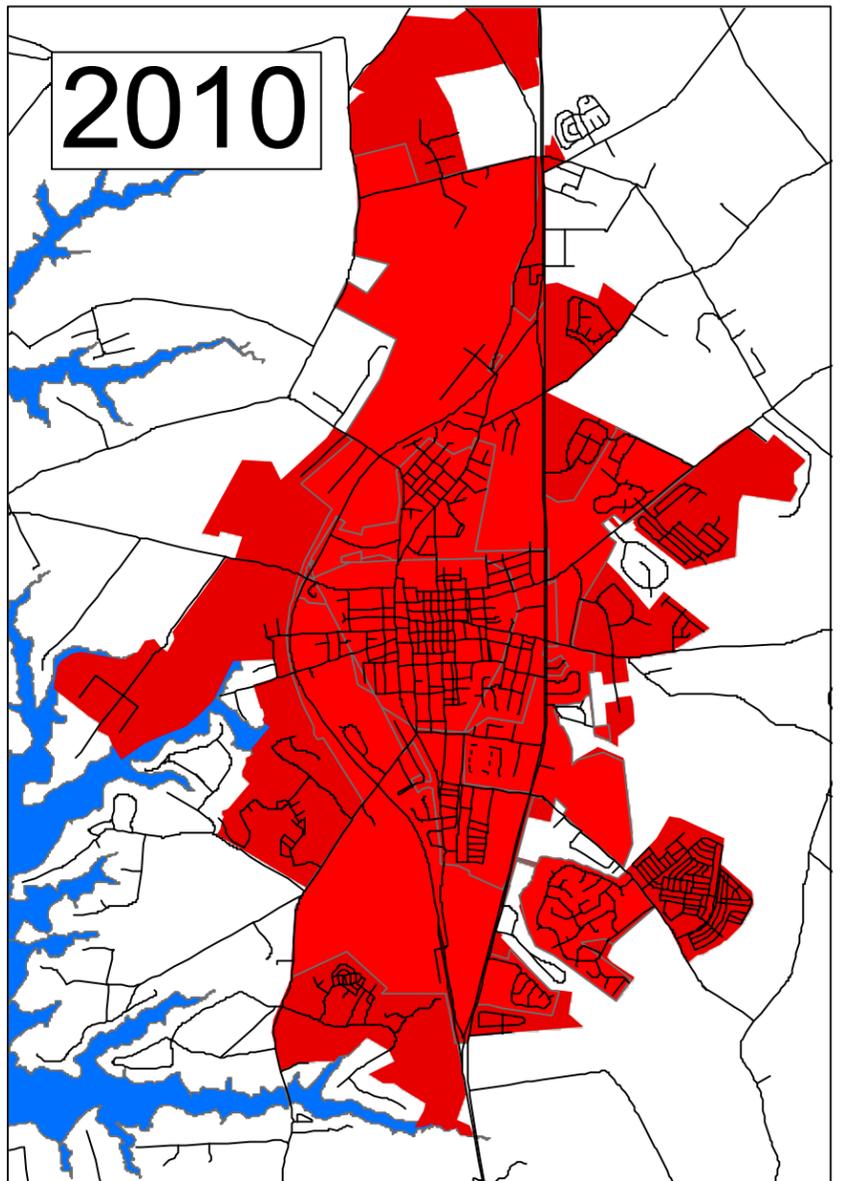
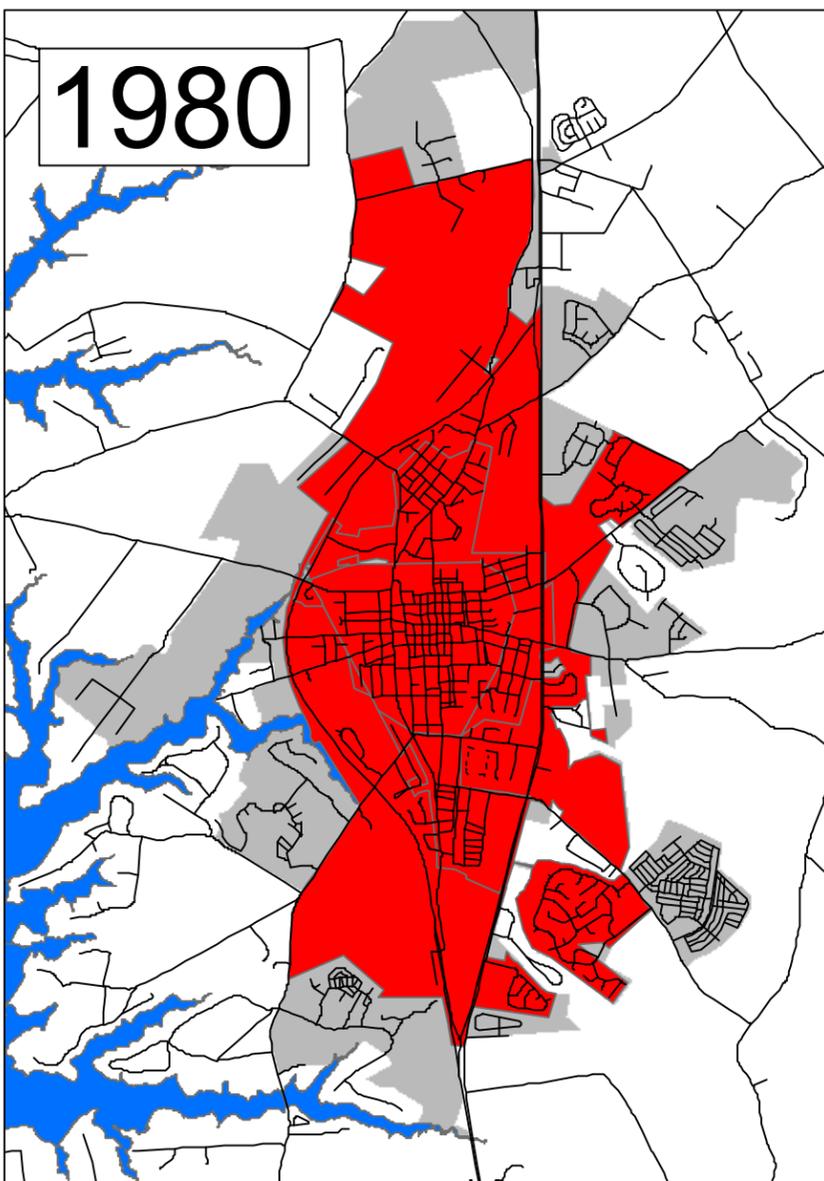
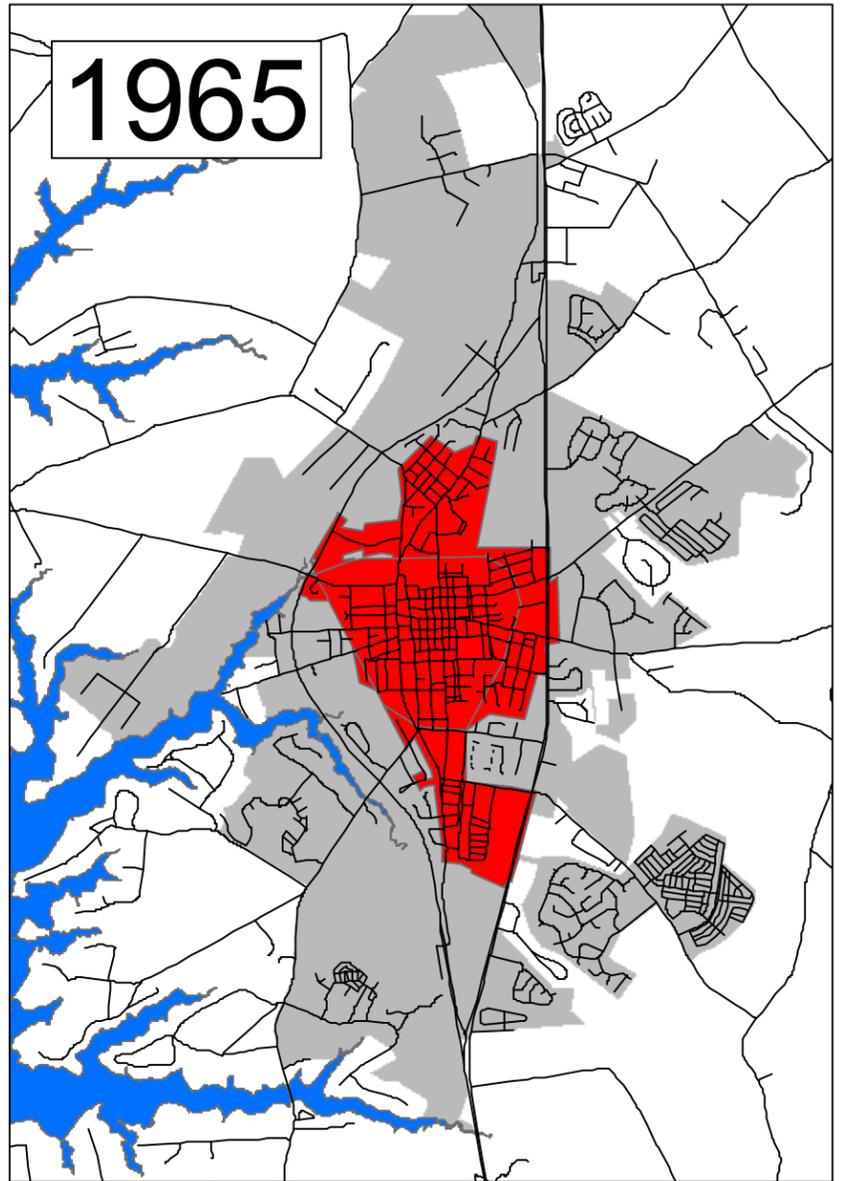
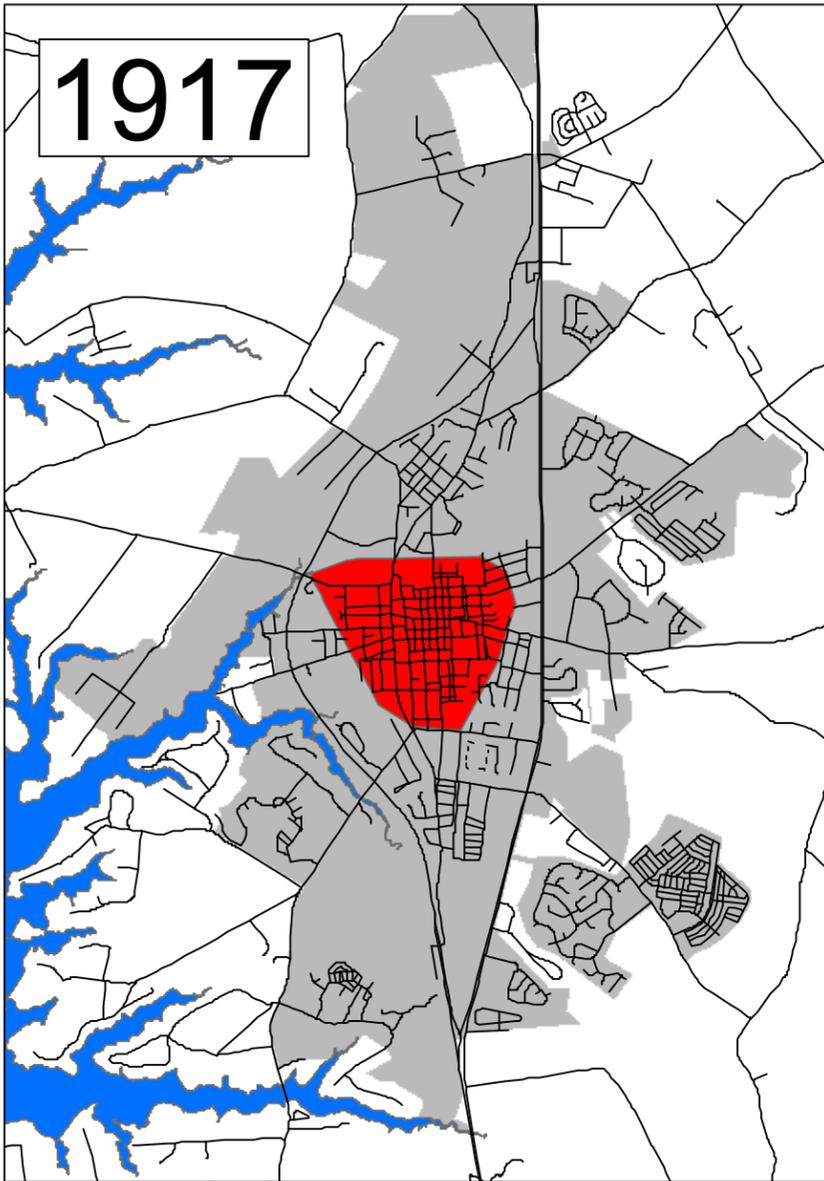
- ✓ Increase the size of the Historic District in only one area. This is the “notch” in the district bounded by Spring Hill Cemetery, Brewers Lane and the alley running south from Talbottown shopping center. The purpose of this increase is to ensure that any new construction on this currently vacant lot meets the standards for compatibility with the encompassing Historic District.
- ✓ Educate residents/realtors and property owners about the benefits, boundaries and requirements of the Historic District review process and design standards and about the availability of state and federal tax credits for historic preservation projects.
- ✓ Establish a Local Tax Incentive program in Easton that encourages historic property owners to rehabilitate their property. This local tax incentive will compliment existing state and federal tax incentives that encourage historic rehabilitation/restoration. Some 19 counties and municipalities in Maryland already have some form of local tax incentive.
- ✓ Encourage a “Rebuilding Together” chapter in Easton or Talbot County. This is a national organization whose objective is no cost repairs to homes of low income, over 60 home owners.

Goal: To continue to support the Easton Historic District.

Objectives:

- ✓ A consistently enforced historic district is the most effective historic district for fostering investment and economic development. Ensure consistent enforcement of Easton's Historic District by utilizing the services of various staffs within the town administration.
- ✓ Any new development which may impact historic resources is to be referred to the Historic District Commission for comment.
- ✓ Provide in-service training for the staff and Historic District Commission members.
- ✓ Investigate Certified Local Government status with the Maryland Historical Trust to provide eligibility for grants for continuing education for staff and members of the Historic District Commission, as well as other projects.
- ✓ Investigate a project to resurvey the Historic District. A new survey will update information contained in the original National Register nomination and facilitate enhanced processing of applications. Such a survey could also lead to a new nomination to expand the National Register District, including neighborhoods that did not meet the criteria for listing in 1980, but now may nearly three decades later. Such a project could be supported by grant funding and could potentially be done under the auspices of a partner organization.

Historic Annexations



Historic Annexations

Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Date: 4/16/09

Scale: 1:36,000

Created: Easton Department of Planning

HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most basic need of any community is housing. The provision of safe, decent, sanitary housing for all Town residents is a paramount concern. When a community begins to lose sight of this fact, a slow process of decay can result in dilapidated and inadequate living units, and eventually lead to vacant businesses as well. Furthermore, a cumulative feeling of despair can be brought on by the poor physical appearance of the community and its housing stock.

Housing in Easton encompasses a broad spectrum of types. It includes the stately homes built in the nineteenth century near the Downtown, public housing such as the Graham's Place project, and modern subdivisions such as Cooke's Hope, and Mulberry Station.

The quality of housing in Easton has long been a concern as has been the case in most communities. What is a relatively new concern in Easton is the cost of housing. Many people are concerned that new subdivision activity exclusively targets housing for high-income individuals.

Housing was first added as an Element of the Comprehensive Plan in the 2004 version of this document. This Plan will update that effort, but leave much of the Element unchanged. Unfortunately many of the issues associated with this Element remain essentially the same today in 2010 as they were in 2004. They are only further complicated by the economic climate of 2010 in which foreclosures are rising, little new housing is being built, and there is a general sense that it will still be a while before things begin to improve.

HOUSING ISSUES

There are a myriad of housing issues in Easton, but they can all be generally categorized as one of three problems: housing cost, housing quality, and housing availability. To some extent these problems are inter-related.

The cost of housing in Easton is a growing concern. In the 1997 Plan it was mentioned as a concern and several options for providing more affordable housing were outlined. Several of these options have been pursued since that time. The 2004 Plan devoted an entire chapter or element to the issue of Housing. It also included an analysis of sales information which helped illustrate the magnitude of the problem. A review of all residential real estate sales in the Town of Easton during the period 1/1/02 to 4/15/02 showed 97 sales. The lowest transaction was \$14,500 for a structure on Talbot Street and the highest was \$640,000 for a house on Old Pasture Drive in the Cooke's Hope Subdivision. The average sales price was \$153,958 and the median sales price was \$128,000.

According to information provided by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, the median family income for FY 2002 for Talbot County was \$65,300. Utilizing the commonly accepted "28 - 36" guideline (monthly PITI payments should be no more than 28 percent of income and PITI + any other monthly credit debt should be no more than 36 percent of income), the Talbot County median income projects (using the 5/1/02, 30 year mortgage rate of 6.672 % APR) to the purchase of a house in the \$202,000 to \$279,000 range. Of the 97 homes that sold during the time frame studied, all but 10 fell within the upper limit of this range and all but 18 fell within the lower limit.

This would seem to indicate that the housing market in Easton is simply meeting what the market will bear. While it is true that housing prices in Talbot

County are generally higher than for the rest of the Eastern Shore, incomes are as well. In fact the Talbot County FY 2002 median income was some \$18,000 higher than the corresponding figures for the adjacent counties of Caroline and Dorchester (Queen Anne is also an adjacent County, but its income is lumped together with all the Baltimore Metropolitan Area counties). This is tempered, however, by the fact that Talbot County incomes are traditionally higher than those in the Town of Easton alone. Census figures for 2000 indicated that Easton's median household income in 1999 was approximately 16% less than the County as a whole.

Additionally, while it can be argued that Easton's housing prices are simply a reflection of what the market will bear, it does mean that a significant segment of the community is not being served. This is not even the low-income segment that communities traditionally struggle with in finding ways to provide housing that they can afford. This is indeed a problem in Easton, but it is being addressed to some level by the Talbot Housing Authority and programs like Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc. The other market segment that is being underserved in Easton is the one that consists of first time homebuyers and moderate-income professionals (e.g. policemen, teachers, government employees, etc.). These are people who may be looking at homes in today's market in the \$140,000 to \$160,000 range. The recent sales data mentioned above revealed that only 13 of the 97 homes sold from January 1 to April 15 of 2002 fell within this range, and none were new homes. This is perhaps the most alarming aspect of this problem: that no new units are being constructed for this, let alone the low-income, market.

In order to determine whether in fact this was a valid concern or not, this same exercise was repeated in 2007. A table summarizing the comparison is shown below:

Comparison of 2002 and 2007 Home Sales Data in Easton¹

	2002	2007
Sales	97	84
High Sale	\$640,000	\$2,100,000
Low Sale	\$14,500	\$77,375
Mean	\$153,958	\$392,370
Median	\$128,000	\$302,500
Median Income ²	\$65,300	\$67,000
Median Income as Percentage of Median Sales Price	51.0%	22.3%

This would seem to indicate that the problem has only gotten worse, and more alarmingly, it has done so in a somewhat down economy. This would not seem to bode well for the future when the economy recovers and we once again see a very active housing market in Easton.

Furthermore, this is only the home-ownership aspect of the housing problem in Easton. A similar, perhaps more significant problem exists in the rental housing market. Here one can find a wider range of incomes being served, if, in fact, one can find an available unit. That is to say that the rental problem is more one of the availability of units than the cost of those units. There simply are not many apartments in Easton. Those that do exist, rather subsidized apartments or market-rate, have waiting lists for units.

The quality of housing in Easton has long been a concern of Town officials. Easton has had a Building Official for decades. The Town Building Code regulates the quality of construction of housing. The Town utilizes the International Building Code to specify standards of construction. Today the

¹ Based on MD Dept. of Assessment and Taxation Sales Data for the period 01/01 through 04/15 of the given year for consistency purposes.

² For Talbot County. Note that these figures are Median *Family* Income as opposed to Median Household Income figures discussed in the data presented in the Plan Background.

Building Department operates with the Town Building Official who primarily conducts plan reviews, two field inspectors, a rental-housing/property maintenance inspector, and a secretary.

The Rental Housing Inspection Program was created in 1995 to insure that rental housing units, particularly those that were older, continued to meet minimum livability standards. Landlords are required to obtain a Rental Housing license in order to rent a unit and these units are subject to subsequent inspections. This Program was extensively reviewed and revised in 2008.

EXISTING HOUSING PROGRAMS

The provision of housing in the Town of Easton is overwhelmingly handled by the private sector. There are, however, a few public sector and non-profit programs that supply a limited amount of affordable housing. These include programs and projects of the Housing Commission of Talbot County, publicly subsidized but privately constructed housing (for example Chatham Village Apartments), and houses built through Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc.

The Housing Commission of Talbot County (Formerly the Easton Housing Authority) maintains and manages all public housing in the Town of Easton. This includes 50 units at Doverbrook, 26 age-restricted units at Asbury Place, 15 age-restricted units at Westport, and the Graham's Park development, which provides home-ownership opportunities for 12 low-income families/individuals.

Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc has been responsible for the construction of 25 units in Easton. These units were constructed using the Habitat methodology whereby Habitat volunteers build houses from the ground up in the community. Significant hours are required to be put in by the family who will live in the new house and, thereafter they help other new Habitat

families get started on their homes. Because the land is often donated or sold to Habitat at a preferred rate and there is no labor cost, the overall cost of the houses is significantly reduced.

The Easton Town Council has succeeded in adding affordable housing units to the Town since the adoption of the 2004 Plan. Moonyene Jackson-Amis spearheaded an effort to require the provision of off-site affordable units from Elm Street Development as a condition of approval of the PUD for the Easton Village Project. Scott Jensen attempted the same approach with the same developer for proposed projects in the second ward. These projects never proceeded thus those units were never successfully obtained, but the units in the fourth ward have been provided and are available today.

New since the 2004 Plan was adopted is the Easton Affordable Housing Board. This Town-appointed Board has been charged with developing criteria and policies concerning Affordable Housing in general, and the administration of Affordable Housing Units acquired by the Town Council as conditions of approval for several development projects (such as those cited above). Much of their effort has been devoted to developing the criteria and the selection process for purchasing these affordable units.

One bigger picture issue that the Board has studied is the possibility of instituting Inclusionary Zoning in Easton. Inclusionary Zoning is a tool that essentially requires that all residential developments of a minimum size include a certain percentage of units that are affordable to those of a pre-identified income. They have produced several Draft versions of an Inclusionary Zoning Article and have met jointly with both the Planning Commission and the Town Council, but have yet to resolve all of the issues raised in those work sessions. Thus, Inclusionary Zoning can only be described as a work in progress at this time, at best. The intention of this tool is to provide a more predictable and

consistent method for obtaining affordable units than the case-by-case imposition of conditions of approval by the Council for projects subject to their approval.

POTENTIAL NEW HOUSING PROGRAMS/POLICIES

There are two distinctly different housing problems in Easton. One is the lack of housing for individuals/families of low or extremely low income. Oft times the problems of this economic group are closely related to other social and/or familial problems. As such, we will likely always have this housing problem to deal with. In the meantime, the Town should continue and expand its efforts to provide housing for this group. The Housing Authority will continue to be the leading provider of this service. In addition, the Town should support the efforts of Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc and encourage any similar groups in their efforts to provide more safe, decent and affordable housing in Easton.

One such similar effort that was at one time discussed in Easton is the establishment of a Self-help Housing Program. This program would be modeled after a highly successful one that operates on the lower Eastern Shore under the direction of MD State Delegate Rudy Cane. Self-help housing is similar to the Habitat model. It has been described by the USDA as a program used primarily to help very low- and low-income households construct their own homes. The program is targeted to families who are unable to buy clean, safe housing through conventional methods. Families participating in a mutual self-help project perform a minimum amount (for example 65 percent) of the construction labor on each other's homes under qualified supervision. The savings from the reduction in labor costs allows otherwise ineligible families to own their homes. If families cannot meet their mortgage payments during the construction phase, the funds for these payments can be included in the loan. The Town attempted to obtain funding to establish a local version of this Program through the initial

Community Legacy Program. Unfortunately this aspect of the Town's request was not funded at that time.

The second aspect of housing that is a problem in Easton is the availability of housing for the first time homebuyer and the move-up homebuyer. Increasingly, subdivisions in Easton are targeting the upper levels of the market and opportunities for people in this market are disappearing.

Compounding the general lack of housing in the lower income markets is the fact that what housing there is available for this segment of the population is segregated. Easton is becoming a collection of income-segregated developments, where the very poor live in one area, the blue-collar workers in another area, and higher income residents live yet somewhere else, and never the twain shall meet. As was discussed in the Community Character Element, this is undesirable for our community.

One way to combat this situation is to require that all residential development contain a minimum percentage of housing at various price points. Something along this line is being done in the Easton Village on the Tred Avon project. In this case the developer is setting aside 10% of both the single family attached and detached units for "affordable" housing. Furthermore, the developer promises that these units will be indistinguishable from the market rate houses and that they will be incorporated amongst these units throughout the development (i.e. they will not be isolated and segregated). There is even a resale provision such that the units could not be resold for more than was paid for them plus an annual appreciation factor.

Another option that has been used from time to time is to require developers to either contribute to an Affordable Housing Fund or to construct affordable housing units off-site from their project. At least some of the

affordable units originally required to be built in Easton Village were subsequently provided by a variation of this alternative.

The desire to replicate this program more uniformly across the Town in virtually all development projects is what led the Affordable Housing Board to consider Inclusionary Zoning for Easton. As this is as much, if not more, of a problem today as it was in 2004, work should continue towards the development and adoption of a workable Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance.

HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To insure that housing in Easton is safe, sanitary, structurally sound and safeguards or upgrades neighborhood design.

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to adequately fund, staff, and train the Town Building Inspection Department and strengthen the Town's Rental Housing Inspection Program.
- ✓ Partner with state, county and non-profit agencies to direct available housing rehabilitation funds to qualifying low and moderate income households.
- ✓ Establish design standards and require physical distribution of different housing types that provide visual interest and a smooth blend of affordable housing in the community.
- ✓ Achieve a density that creates a sense of place, uses infrastructure efficiently, produces pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and accommodates plans for transit.
- ✓ Provide open spaces; use landscaping to accentuate the natural environment and give visual connectivity; preserve natural assets, community identity and environmental and health standards.

Goal: To increase the supply of low-income housing in the Town of Easton.

Objectives:

- ✓ Support the efforts of the Talbot Housing Authority and the Easton Affordable Housing Board to provide both home-ownership and rental opportunities for individuals/families of low income.
- ✓ Consider amendments to the Easton Zoning Ordinance to make the development of apartments more attractive to private sector developers and to allow flexibility in rehabilitating existing and/or historic buildings for an alternative use.
- ✓ Work in partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc (or any similar organization) to find sites for new homes.
- ✓ Establish a Town-initiated self-help housing program.
- ✓ Insure the development of Smart Neighborhoods by encouraging and facilitating new infill development, including manufactured homes, on vacant or underutilized land within areas currently served by adequate infrastructure and public facilities.
- ✓ Institute some form of Inclusionary Zoning.

Goal: To insure a more heterogeneous mix of price points in future residential projects.

Objectives:

- ✓ Provide density bonuses in projects for the inclusion of low and moderate-income housing units.
- ✓ Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning or Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance whereby all residential developments will be required to provide a minimum number of units at various price points.

Goal: To partner in a countywide affordable housing effort.

Objectives:

- ✓ Participate in a Joint Commission with Talbot County and the other towns and unincorporated villages to initiate and implement a coordinated countywide affordable housing program.
- ✓ Support the creation of a county wide Housing Trust Fund to help provide homes for low-income residents.
- ✓ Investigate ways in which Easton may continue to house the majority of affordable housing in Talbot County (since this is where the infrastructure exists), but at the same time the County might contribute towards this effort as a way of satisfying their obligation to address this issue.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical components in maintaining and enhancing a community's quality of life is its system of parks, recreation, and open space. The careful location of parks and open space areas and preservation of the Town's natural resources as a complement to existing development can be a useful tool in guiding the Town's development into a logical, orderly and environmentally sensitive pattern. In addition to recreational and aesthetic benefits, open spaces provide a framework for various land uses. Properly located, they become boundaries and buffers between conflicting uses of land and a nucleus for building neighborhood areas. Natural features can be preserved as valuable scenic and environmental attributes of the Town. A park system and recreational program can also go a long way toward resolving the age-old problem of a community offering nothing for young people "to do."

This chapter examines the current state of Easton's Parks and Recreation system and proposes methods by which it might be improved. It also calls for the establishment of a Town-wide system of "green infrastructure." This refers to the parks and open space areas, as well as the paths and corridors that link these areas. It also proposes areas for new parks to be developed in the future as the Growth Area becomes developed.

BACKGROUND

Table 12 represents an inventory of existing Town parks and opens space areas. One of the most notable points is that there are a fairly large number of parks (14) in Easton. In 1995 at the Town Planning Workshops, however, participants confirmed that they overwhelmingly use only one park, Idlewild.

Taken together, these two findings suggested that while Easton had a sizeable acreage for parks, much of it was undeveloped and/or underutilized.

Since the adoption of the 1997 Plan, much work has occurred in the area of parks. Improvements have been made at Idlewild and Moton Parks. The Rail-Trail has been extended and the North Easton Park has been developed into a first class sports complex, to the degree that it has since hosted a number of State and Regional Championship Tournaments.

Multiple entities are responsible in some way for Easton's overall Park System. The Planning and Zoning Commission obtains land for parks through the subdivision process as one of the requirements for subdivision is the provision of 1,200 square feet of parkland per dwelling unit. The Commission also is involved in the specifics of where the parks should be located, how many there should be, etc... for a subdivision during the review process.

Once the land is obtained, it becomes the responsibility of the Easton Park Board to determine how that parkland should be improved. This group operates with the assistance of a full-time Parks and Recreation Director who also is responsible for Easton's summer recreation program.

The ongoing maintenance of Town parks is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works, providing trash pick-up, grass cutting, and installation and maintenance of equipment, furniture, etc... With a growing system of parks, this area of responsibility grows proportionally as well.

Finally, the Mayor and Town Council have the important role of prioritizing the development of the Town's park system, primarily through the budget process. They determine which improvements are implemented (and when) and occasionally also approve funds for the acquisition of park land. These tend to be the larger, regional-scale parks as opposed to the smaller

neighborhood parks that are more customarily obtained by the Planning and Zoning Commission through the subdivision process.

TABLE 12 EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

TYPES AND AREAS	SIZE (ACRES)	OWNERSHIP	FACILITIES
Mini-Parks			
Thompson	0.5	Town	Benches/Fountain
Clifton	0.25	Town	Passive
Neighborhood Parks			
South Clifton	10.0	Town	Undeveloped
Chapel East	1.7	Town	Playground Pavilion
Matthewstown Run	1.2	Town	Playground Picnic Area and Table Baseball Field
Tots Park	0.70	Town	Undeveloped
Golton II	0.8	Town	Playground
Glenwood Elementary*	10.0	County	Playground Softball Field Baseball Field Basketball Courts
Mount Pleasant	6.46	County	Playground Fields
Mulberry Station (3 different parcels)	3.95	Town	Playground
Waylands	0.468	Town	In 2010 adding: Playground Picnic Area Benches
Brettridge	1.344	Town	Undeveloped

Community Parks			
Idlewild	15.0	Town	(2) Softball Fields Track Picnic Area & Tables (3) Tennis Courts Basketball Court Football Field Playground Children's Park Area Fountain/Garden Area Pavilion
North Easton Park	26.2	Town	(4) Baseball Fields Playground (3) Football/Soccer/Lacrosse/Field Hockey Fields Picnic Area Pavilion
Moton Park	12.2	Town	Track Picnic Tables & Pavilion Playground Basketball Court
County Swimming Pool	2.8	County	Swimming Pool
Easton High School*	18.0	County	Football Field Soccer Field Field Hockey Field Lacrosse Field (3) Ball Fields Track
Easton Middle School*	12.5	County	(3) Ball Fields Football Field (2) Field Hockey Fields Lacrosse Field
Stoney Ridge	20.0	Town	Playground Picnic Area Benches
Special Park Areas			
Rails-To-Trails	8.0 (est.)	Town	Walking/Bicycling Path

Talbot County YMCA	10.0	Quasi-Public	Indoor Facilities (14) Tennis Courts Deck Tennis
VFW	5.0	Quasi-Public	Baseball Field
Talbot County Historical Society	1.0	Quasi-Public	Historic Structure & Gardens
Warner Wildlife Sanctuary	8.0	Quasi-Public	Nature Conservancy
Skate Park	2.197	Town	Fenced-in Skate Area Benches
RTC Park	58.344	Town	Undeveloped
Easton Village		Town	Canoe/Kayak Launch

Source: *Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan Draft, 1987 & Easton Comprehensive Development Plan, 2004.*

* - *Although listed in the inventory here, the recreational amenities are not generally available for use by the general public.*

FUTURE PARKS

One area, in which it is crucial for the Planning Commission and Park Board to work together, is the planning for future park sites. The 1997 Comprehensive Plan made the following recommendations for future parks:

- The Rails-to-Trails Park should be built in its entirety, from approximately Idlewild Avenue to the North Easton Park. Furthermore, the Town should work with the County to extend this trail wherever possible. Such an extension in a westerly direction towards St. Michaels seems particularly feasible. The portion of the trail presently planned to open in the summer of 1997 should be extended northward. However, in recognition of the concerns of residents from the neighborhoods north of Tanyard Branch, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that once the trail

crosses this stream, it should veer eastward and follow the eastern boundary of the former RTC property that was acquired by the Town in 1996. The final link in the trail, from this parcel to the North Easton Park should be built when the intervening parcel develops, using a corridor as the park dedication required for its development. It should then cross Chapel Road across from the North Easton Park entrance. Furthermore, this entrance should be developed only for non-motorized access in conjunction with the downgrading of the intersection of Chapel Road and U.S. Route 50 as described in the Transportation section of this Plan.

- A plan should be formulated for the development of the recently purchased park on the land that was formerly to be developed as future phases of the Chapel Farms Subdivision. Given the relatively vast size of this property (and particularly of usable land), a wide array of uses is possible.
- The Town should work with the State of Maryland to help insure the preservation of Seth Forest. The Town should also ask the State to consider the possibility of making this property more accessible. This property might be appropriate as a Regional Park of some sort rather than simply as passive and largely unused, unknown, and perhaps unappreciated open space.
- Two areas on the western side of Easton should be considered as waterfront parks. One is located along the Easton Parkway and a portion of the site is already used informally as a place where people pull off the road to have lunch or just to look at Papermill Pond. This site is identified in Easton's Critical Area Program as appropriate for a park, perhaps with a boardwalk/nature trail,

- (Not depicted on Future Land Use Map) In the long-range planning period (i.e. by 2020) a new Community (or Regional) Park, on the scale of Idlewild or Moton, should be secured and developed on the eastern side of Town, east of U.S. Route 50. This is the portion of Town anticipated to accommodate the majority of future growth and as such, a community park is essential within this area. Furthermore, this area may not necessarily be provided by any one development. As an alternative, the area for the park might be pieced together by adjoining subdivisions.

As first reported in the 2004 Plan, this is an area in which great progress has been made since 1997. The Rail Trail has been extended and instead of veering off of the logical path down the former rail line, the trail continued down this line. Neighborhood concerns were addressed through landscaping in this area. The development (and future planned development) of the Rail-Trail is described further in the Transportation Element of this Plan. In short, it calls for the gradual continued expansion of this trail in as many directions as possible. It is hoped that it will eventually connect to a wider-scale County-initiated Trail System.

The Town also has held discussions with the State concerning the use of Seth Forest and this resource seems to be in no danger of being lost. Finally, a vast waterfront park is part of the development plan for Easton Village on the Tred Avon River, a project located on the property described in the 1997 Plan, which is currently in the review process. Better still, this park is proposed to be connected to the land across the river via a pedestrian bridge. Funds for this bridge have been allocated by the developer and we are merely awaiting the appropriate time to construct it.

The RTC Park has been owned by the Town since 1995. It still remains undeveloped although its possible use was studied in 2003. This study was conducted by a consultant working closely with a Council member and a citizens committee. It presented two possible development scenarios for the park, with the favored one being what it described as “A Central Park for Easton”, which was characterized as a “modern Olmstead Park.” Although never officially approved by the Town, this Plan was valuable in establishing some parameters for the development of the site and for illustrating the wide array of possibilities for that development.

One question that has been asked for a while now is just what does the Town want/need in the way of future parks as well as development of existing parks? In an effort to shed some light on this question, an intern working for the Planning department studied this issue and produced a report on the matter. The Report’s findings can be summarized as follows:

- While Easton is consistent with National Standards for the number of parks for our population, the size of some of these parks is below the Standard.
- The Town meets the general standard for the provision of most active amenities (i.e. ball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, etc...).

- There is a shortage of most of the more passive elements of a park system. These include amenities like walking trails through undeveloped parkland, picnic areas, and open space that is just plain open instead of dedicated to some structured activity.
- While Easton may be consistent with National standards for most park uses, some needs may not be met when one considers the actual local demand for certain uses. This may be due to differences in local or regional preferences for a given sport or activity as compared to National averages. For example, one would expect lacrosse to be much more popular here than in the nation as a whole and therefore Easton would need to provide more lacrosse fields than a national standard would suggest.

As pointed out in the Municipal Growth Element of this Plan, State guidelines for parkland indicate that the potential future population of the Town will require about 315 acres of Town-owned parkland (630 acres total) above and beyond what the 1,200 square feet per dwelling unit that should be acquired via the subdivision process. The need for all of this space may be reduced somewhat by the future addition of the Talbot County Community Center to the Town Limits (now outside of Town at the very edge of the Growth Area) and by the presence of a public golf course located outside of Town, but in the Greenbelt, immediately adjacent to the Growth Boundary. These two areas represent an additional 51 acres at the Community Center (which includes both indoor and outdoor recreational activities) and 265 acres at Hog Neck Golf Course. Together, these 316 acres would satisfy the non-Town-owned half of the projected shortage, leaving just the need for 315 acres of Town-owned parks to be provided in our Growth Area.

Since virtually all of the future residential development of Easton will occur to the east of the current Town boundaries, it seems logical that the parks required to serve those people be located in this area as well. One possible location has been discussed previously. That is at the terminus of the current section of Beechwood Drive that traverses through Easton Club East on the parcel of land immediately north of that development. Since this parcel is adjacent to an age-restricted community and very near the edge of the Seth Forest, it seems like an appropriate location for a large park devoted to passive recreation needs. Forested area can be protected and/or added adjacent to Seth Forest and walking trails and woodland gardens would seem to be suitable at this location.

The Park described above would be very convenient for people in the southern portion of the future growth area. It would then seem logical to look for a second park in the central portion of the growth area, in the general vicinity of the Waylands/Matthewstown Run/Dover Road/Black Dog Alley area, and a third one in the northern portion of the growth area that would be convenient to the Mulberry Station and Chapel East subdivisions as well as future growth in surrounding areas. General locations for each of these potential parks are shown on the Future Land Use Map found in the Implementation Element of this Plan.

A special type of park that is very desirable to Easton residents is a waterfront park. There is a significant element of undeveloped waterfront land as part of the Easton Village project. This will eventually include a pedestrian bridge across the Tred Avon to Easton Point. The redevelopment of Easton Point is discussed elsewhere in this Plan. A number of possibilities exist for the redevelopment of Easton Point if/when it should come into Town. A significant public waterfront park should be part of any such scheme.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The concept of green infrastructure was first introduced to the Easton Comprehensive Plan in 2004 when the term was still relatively new in the field of planning. It refers to the system of parks and open spaces in a community, as well as the linkages or connections between these areas. A community's green infrastructure is important because just as the more commonly known infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, sewer, etc...) is essential to support a community's physical development, so to a community's green infrastructure supports its ecological functions. It also is important for making communities more livable.

The Conservation Fund defines green infrastructure as "the Nation's natural life support system - a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to the health and quality of life for America's communities and people."

There are numerous benefits provided by a system of green infrastructure. These include both ecological and economic benefits. From an ecological perspective the benefits include:

- Ensuring plant and animal biodiversity.
- Creating pathways to allow for interchange between native plant and animal communities.
- Maintaining the health of native ecosystems and landscapes by sustaining their physical, chemical, and biological processes.
- Filtering pollutants from air, water, and soil.
- Helping to cool streams and soil through shading.
- Buffering developed areas from floodwaters.

The economic benefits include:

- Increasing property values as homes located near parks and greenways sell for more than those that are not.
- Raising the community's quality of life. Communities that have planned systems of open space, including greenways, parks and trails, generally develop the reputation of being desirable places to live. Seattle, Washington, Boulder, Colorado, Portland, Oregon and Raleigh North Carolina are examples of such places.
- Attracting businesses. The communities cited above, not coincidentally, also have had great success in attracting new businesses as often times a community's quality of life is a key factor for businesses when deciding where to relocate or open a new business.
- Increasing tourism and tourism-based businesses.
- Attracting environmentally sensitive development and the developers who specialize in that niche.

Given these benefits, as well as the existence of at least a skeletal system of green infrastructure, it seems like a classic “no-brainer” for Easton to develop a more formal and planned green infrastructure system. Elements of this are discussed in the Economic Development Chapter of this Plan where the AKRF Plan for the redevelopment of Downtown Easton is described. Two of the more significant projects proposed in that plan involve the day-lighting of Tanyard Branch and the development of a “green ring” of heavily treed streets and open spaces around downtown.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To meet the park and recreational demands of all of Easton's citizens.

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to study and monitor the demand for various park and recreation uses (above and beyond National Standards, which the Town largely meets).
- ✓ Further develop a Plan for the use of the "RTC" park.
- ✓ Locate and acquire more passive-use open space.
- ✓ Coordinate the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Park Board, and Town Council in acquiring and planning parks.
- ✓ Coordinate park planning with Talbot County to prevent duplication of amenities/services and to insure that between the two entities, all of Talbot County's recreational needs are being satisfied.

Goal: To provide a system of green infrastructure (see Future Land Use Map).

Objectives:

- ✓ Identify appropriate open space areas to serve as green centers or anchors and connect them through a series of pathways and green corridors.
- ✓ Plan future parks, open spaces and corridors in a manner that compliments and helps to build the green infrastructure system (Two such parks are proposed on the Conceptual Land Use Map for the long-term planning period on the Eastern Side of Town).

SENSITIVE AREAS

INTRODUCTION

The mandate to include a Sensitive Areas Element in local comprehensive plans has been codified in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland as follows:

[The plan shall include] a sensitive area element that contains goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards designed to protect, from the adverse effects of development, sensitive areas, including the following: 1) streams and their buffers; 2) 100-year floodplains; 3) habitats of threatened and endangered species, 4) steep slopes, 5) Agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation, and 6) Other areas in need of special protection, as determined in the plan. (§ 3.05 (a)(1)(viii), Article 66B, Annotated Code of Maryland.)

Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to discuss these areas as well as ways in which they might appropriately be protected in Easton.

Since the adoption of the 1997 Plan, Sensitive Areas have received a lot of attention in Easton. In particular, the protection of our rivers and streams has taken on a new sense of urgency. This is not unexpected. Everyone, regardless of their opinion of development, has a stake in protecting our rivers and streams. Obviously the environmental advocacy groups see this as an important issue. However, it is also an important issue to the development community. Simply stated, it is difficult to sell waterfront development and the lifestyle associated with living on or near the water if that same water is degraded.

BACKGROUND

When discussing sensitive areas in Easton it is important to note several issues. The first issue is the nature of Easton itself. Easton is a modest-sized town (some would say a

small city) experiencing growth pressures akin, in many ways, to those present in towns and suburbs in metropolitan areas. In addition, the Growth Act has the potential to escalate these pressures as State and County policies direct growth into Easton and its environs. Another issue is that Easton is very unique, particularly among Eastern Shore jurisdictions, in that it has not until very recently been located on a major body of water (a recent annexation provided Easton some frontage on the upper reaches of the Tred Avon River). Finally, it must be noted that Easton has a fairly extensive system of Environmental Protection regulations already in place. Easton's Critical Area Program, Forest Conservation Ordinance, Floodplain Ordinance and Storm Water Management Ordinance provide a high level of protection to a number of sensitive areas, including those identified by the Growth Act.

STREAMS AND THEIR BUFFERS

The importance of streams has been rather well documented, particularly in recent years with rising concern over the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland Department of Planning has summarized the justification for protecting streams rather succinctly as follows:

Streams and their buffers are valuable to people and vital to our natural resources. Streams provide drinking water for local communities, and crop-saving irrigation for farmers during droughts. Streams support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock; and streams attract many outdoor enthusiasts such as hunters, bird-watchers, and nature photographers. Without adequate and sustained cooling water in streams and rivers, industries and power plants would pass higher costs on to consumers. Development near stream areas subject to flooding could result in the loss of life and property.

Streams and their buffers are home to countless species of animals and plants; and streams themselves serve as lifelines to the Bay, transporting valuable nutrients, minerals, and vitamins to the Chesapeake. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are very important parts of the stream ecosystem, and in many ways determine the diversity and health of a stream. (From *Managing Maryland's Growth: Models and Guidelines - Preparing a Sensitive Areas Element for the Comprehensive Plan*, Maryland Office of Planning, May 1993).

The importance of streams is irrefutable. It is also perhaps better understood by residents, particularly long-time natives, of Maryland's Eastern Shore than the average citizen in any other part of the State. Streams have been of paramount importance on the Eastern Shore since the founding of the region. Early in this history, streams were used as transportation routes and virtually every Town or settlement of any size was founded along the shores of a river or stream. As the region grew, streams remained crucial for the many links they provided to the seafood industry on which much of this region depended.

While the importance of streams is well documented and fairly readily accepted, the need for additional protection measures in the Town of Easton is not as readily apparent. This is due to the fact that all streams receive some level of protection. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law and the Town's Critical Area Program protect tidal streams. This requires, among other things, that runoff from properties within this area reduce the levels of pollutant loading by 10% based on the pre-development conditions and that virtually no development whatsoever occur within 100 feet of the mean high water line of the corresponding body of water. As a result of new legislation in 2008 this buffer is expanded to 300 feet in virtually all development scenarios. Non-tidal streams are governed by State and/or Federal non-tidal wetlands laws and include a 25-foot buffer within which no

development can occur. State officials have suggested that to be truly effective, this width should be increased to 50 to 100 feet. Easton adopted a 100 foot buffer for perennial streams and a 50 foot buffer from intermittent streams in 2008.

One area with regard to streams which is of special concern are areas under development where land has been stripped for grading and then rains produce a great deal of sediment that is not caught due to inadequate silt fences and winds up in various waterways. More stringent monitoring of runoff requirements during construction should be a priority to help ensure the health of our local water bodies.

Given these conditions and the reality that State, County, and Town of Easton growth policies all assert that growth should be concentrated in and around Easton, little additional protection is necessary or practical, beyond increasing the stream buffer width to 50 feet. The most effective way in which streams and their buffers can be protected in Easton is through the early identification of this feature in the site planning and development process and adherence to the Design Principles as outlined in the Land Use and Growth Chapter. The principle "Natural Features should Determine Design," is particularly appropriate.

Beyond buffers, the quality of rivers and streams is protected through storm water management. Stormwater management simply refers to the way in which rain that runs off a site is treated. Traditionally swales and ponds have been used to manage stormwater. However, the State of Maryland has recently updated the 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual. The new Manual contains requirements for the use of a number of alternative stormwater management practices with strict new limits. The Town last adopted a new Stormwater Management Ordinance in June of 2001. Two significant aspects of this Ordinance are that (1) it required that the 10% pollutant reduction rule of the Critical Area apply Town-wide and (2) it incorporated the 2000 Maryland Stormwater

Design Manual. A new Town Stormwater Management Ordinance will need to be adopted in late 2009/early 2010 in order to implement the new State standards.

Despite the recent emphasis on alternative stormwater management practices, there are several factors hampering their implementation. These include:

- There is a certain comfort level with more traditional practices such as ponds. Engineers are familiar with their design and capabilities. The computations used are familiar and well proven whereas computations used in the design of some of the alternatives are less certain.
- Ponds are relatively inexpensive to design and construct.
- Generally speaking, the alternative practices require more area.
- Site conditions dictate which options are feasible. For example, in our area the relatively flat topography can be a drawback. An integral part of many of the alternative systems, including bio-retention, is an underdrain. Unless there is significant relief or an accessible storm drain network of adequate depth it can be difficult, if not impossible, to discharge from the underdrain system.

100-YEAR FLOODPLAINS

The 100-year floodplain is another Sensitive Area that is not very prevalent in Easton. In fact, in a recent Community Assistance Visit with the State Department of Natural Resources concerning Easton's Floodplain Program, it was estimated that there are only 15 persons residing in the floodplain in the Town of Easton. In addition, it was estimated that there are six residential structures, two publicly owned structures (utilities complex) and seven "other" structures located in the special flood hazard area. There were no permits issued for any structures in the floodplain between Community Assistance Visits (1993-1996).

The Town of Easton's Floodplain Ordinance does not prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain. This is consistent with the National Model Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program. Structures may be constructed in the floodplain provided they are either elevated above the level of the 100-year flood or otherwise flood-proofed in an acceptable manner. Severely limiting development in floodplain areas protects not only human life and property; it also protects sensitive ecological areas and water quality from degradation.

While the Town does not explicitly prohibit development in the floodplain, it strongly discourages such activity. This is almost never a problem because (1) the floodplain in Easton is generally very narrow; (2) it is usually otherwise undevelopable; and (3) there is virtually always ample room elsewhere on the lot or parcel in question on which to develop. Given these factors, no additional protection measures for 100-year floodplains are deemed to be necessary in Easton at this time.

HABITATS OF THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species receive a fair amount of protection in Easton, primarily through State programs. Presently, development within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area must address the issue of Threatened and Endangered Species, as do any projects subject to the full requirements of the Forest Conservation Ordinance. Most projects, particularly large projects will require at least a Simplified Forest Stand Delineation, which would indicate Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species. This would then become a basis for designing the development with such sensitive areas being the prime location for protection.

The Delmarva Fox Squirrel, a state and federally listed endangered species, is known to occur on the property designated as future residential development to the southwest of the Town of Easton. Delmarva fox squirrel habitat is generally characterized

as forests with relatively mature trees, either hardwoods or loblolly pine, with a relatively sparse understory. At least three development projects have been significantly impacted by the presence of Delmarva Fox Squirrel habitat since the 1997 Plan was adopted. It is reasonable to expect the same to occur in other growth areas during the upcoming Planning period.

If proposed activities do not occur within the forested areas on the property, then Delmarva fox squirrel habitat will not be impacted. However, if development in the forested areas or timber harvesting is being planned, the following should be considered:

1. As much contiguous forested acreage as possible should be retained.
2. If clearing is necessary, at least 25% of the suitable forested area should remain unaltered or a minimum of 10 acres whichever is greater.
3. This unaltered Delmarva fox squirrel habitat should be retained as a contiguous forested tract, not as small disjunct parcels.
4. Required forested buffers, such as buffers along streams or nontidal wetlands, should be expanded to at least 100 feet and preferably 300 feet in width.
5. Retention of mast producing trees such as oaks, hickories and beech is encouraged.

HBCP biologists use these general guidelines for Delmarva fox squirrel habitat protection. For more specific technical assistance regarding projects relative to Delmarva fox squirrel protection interested individuals should contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

There are Least Tern colonies located at Easton High School, at the United States Post Office Sorting Center on Commerce Drive and the roof of the Giant supermarket off Elliot Road. Least Terns are listed as a threatened species in Maryland. State law (§10-2A-01/09) requires the Department of Natural Resources and all other units of Maryland state government to take every practical step to conserve listed species. Significant mortality of chicks or eggs resulting from disturbance of the colony during the breeding season is a violation of the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Least Terns establish nesting colonies at predator and disturbance free barren areas of sand and/or gravel. In natural situations these areas are beaches or small islands. High quality locations, such as coastal barrier beaches can be used for many years, poorer locations are normally only occupied for a few years. The pressures of growth and development in Maryland have resulted in a scarcity of high quality natural sites and Least Terns now frequently nest at “unnatural” locations such as building roofs, dredged material islands, and areas graded just prior to development. Most colony sites are located within 1 mile of water, and often within sight of water.

To protect natural Least Tern colonies the Maryland Department of Natural Resources uses the following guidelines:

1. Establish a protection area of 660 feet from the colony’s outer boundary. Within this area, establish two zones of protection: Zone 1 extends from the outer boundary of the colony to a radius of 330 feet, and Zone 2 extends from 330 feet to 660 feet in radius.
2. During the breeding season, all human entry into Zone 1 should be restricted to only that essential for protection of the Least Tern colony. Human disturbance of colony sites that

results in significant mortality of eggs and/or chicks is considered a prohibited taking under various state and federal regulations.

3. No land use changes, including development and intensive recreational use, should occur in Zone 1.
4. Construction activities, including clearing, grading, building etc. should not occur within Zone 1.
5. No construction, or other disturbing activities, should occur within Zones 1 and 2 during the Least Tern breeding season, from 15 April through 31 July.

Building roofs, dredged material disposal areas and other situations where Least Terns have been attracted to unnatural nest sites are treated on a case-by-case basis. For specific technical assistance regarding Least Terns, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources should be contacted for technical assistance. In these unnatural situations, even seemingly routine actions, such as air conditioner repair, pose a serious risk of egg and chick mortality and must be avoided. For roof nesting Least Tern colonies, roof work during the period 15 April through 31 July must be severely restricted. Planned roof work should be conducted outside the breeding season, when terns are not using the roof for nesting. If emergency repairs are necessary during the April-July period, contact the technical expert identified below before initiating any work. The DNR will provide assistance with protecting the terns while the emergency work is conducted.

In addition, there are two sites that are known historic waterfowl concentration areas, which occur immediately adjacent to areas delineated on the comprehensive plan draft map. These are Papermill Pond, off the Tred Avon River, and a portion of Peachblossom Creek.

STEEP SLOPES

Whereas Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species was the one component of the Sensitive Areas Element requiring the most extensive protection in Easton, Steep Slopes is the component requiring the least. The Maryland Office of Planning recognized this in their guidelines on this subject when they stated:

Some parts of the Eastern Shore have few steep slopes. The objective in these areas should be to effectively protect steep slopes, but to do so efficiently. If the background study from the Comprehensive Plan indicates, for example, that most of the significant steep slopes are along rivers and streams, then steep slope protection may be more reasonably accomplished by protecting the stream buffer system, rather than by a separate "slope" regulation. (Maryland Office of Planning, May 1993).

The situation described in this passage is, in fact, the case in Easton. Virtually all steep slopes are located either in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area or adjacent to a non-tidal wetland. In both cases they are included in buffers within which no development may occur. If there are any rare cases in which steep slope exist outside one of these two areas, they should be identified during the sketch site plan or subdivision plan step in the development review process. Again, adherence to the design principle, "Natural Features Should Determine Design" should adequately protect this sensitive area.

AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LANDS

A new sensitive area required to be addressed in the Plan in 2009 is agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. Generally this would seem to be a requirement more germane to Counties. As a rule one will not find a lot of

agricultural land within a municipal boundary and forest land is protected, to a degree, through the State Forest Conservation and Critical Area laws.

There are a handful of areas within Easton's corporate limits that are zoned and/or used agriculturally. The A-1 zoning district is ostensibly an agricultural district. It is probably more accurate to describe the A-1 as the zoning classification assigned to land that for any number of reasons is not ready to be developed yet (e.g. lack of infrastructure).

It is, however, within the Town's interest to see that land outside of the corporate limits of Easton, but within our future growth area, remain primarily in agricultural production or forested. When development occurs in this area, it is often times not compatible with the municipal scale of development that it would have assumed had it occurred within the Town limits. For example, it is simply not possible to develop housing on wells and septic systems at the level of density possible on municipal systems. If such development occurs within the Town's growth area, it becomes a hindrance to the Town's ability to grow in that general area as it is illegal to surround an area of county with areas under Town jurisdiction (i.e. we cannot create an island or enclave of county within a Town). The Town's ability to grow is hindered because unless the development for some reason needs to come into Town (e.g. they have failing septic systems), they rarely have any incentive to do so as they are generally enjoying the benefits of being in close proximity to Town goods and services, without the burden of paying Town taxes.

For these reasons, it is important that the land outside Town limits but within the Growth Area, remain undeveloped as much as possible and that generally will mean that it remain forested or in agricultural use. The Town therefore supports the continuation of such uses in our Growth Area until such time as these parcels are ready to be annexed and developed.

SENSITIVE AREAS MAP

A Sensitive Areas Map is located at the conclusion of this chapter. It includes the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area boundary, floodplains, forest areas, and streams with a 100 or 50-foot buffer (50' for intermittent streams, 100' in all other situations). This Map should be consulted early in the site planning process by prospective developers in the Town of Easton. However, it must be emphasized that this Map is very general. It should not be taken as anything more than a general guideline of potential environmental constraints to development and to identify features that may be more beneficial to the Town's residents in a natural state rather than as developed land. The most important part of this stage of site planning still involves fieldwork to determine the exact location and inclusion of all of the environmental features on a given site.

SENSITIVE AREAS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To protect and, where possible, enhance the natural environment of the Town of Easton and its environs while recognizing the role of the Town as a regional growth center.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Identify, through an environmental impact analysis, and protect environmentally sensitive areas during the initial stages of the development review process.
- ✓ Direct development, whenever possible, away from environmentally sensitive areas so that impacts are avoided to the greatest extent possible.
- ✓ Coordinate, and where necessary enhance, sensitive areas protection with other Town environmental programs such as the Critical Area Program, the Forest Conservation Ordinance, the Floodplain Ordinance, and the Stormwater Management Ordinance.

- ✓ Encourage the use of innovative and flexible development techniques as a means to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- ✓ Monitor runoff from construction projects for compliance with existing stormwater requirements and action taken to correct any deficiencies.
- ✓ Ensure in large scale developments, that only the phase(s) currently under construction are cleared of ground cover so unnecessary runoff from these sites will be prevented.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of providing curbside recycling for all Town residents in order to preserve the life of the present landfill.
- ✓ Consider, where practical and feasible, the purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles.

GOAL: To incorporate environmentally sensitive areas in the Town's proposed system of green infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Link larger environmentally sensitive areas, such as forest conservation retention areas, Delmarva Fox Squirrel Habitat areas, wetlands, etc..., by establishing wildlife corridors.
- ✓ Enhance existing corridors by protecting additional adjacent area and planting with native plant species.
- ✓ Establish new, or add to, existing corridors by encouraging developers to link forested areas they must either preserve or provide in order to comply with the Town's Forest Conservation Ordinance.

GOAL: To minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to water quality.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Encourage the use of innovative alternative stormwater management techniques.
- ✓ Annex Easton Point and connect the homes located there to the Town's wastewater system and eliminate private septic systems.

GOAL: To protect the 100 year floodplain throughout Town.

OBJECTIVE:

- ✓ Continue to administer a Town Floodplain Ordinance and to discourage construction within the 100 year floodplain.

GOAL: To identify and protect Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species.

OBJECTIVES:

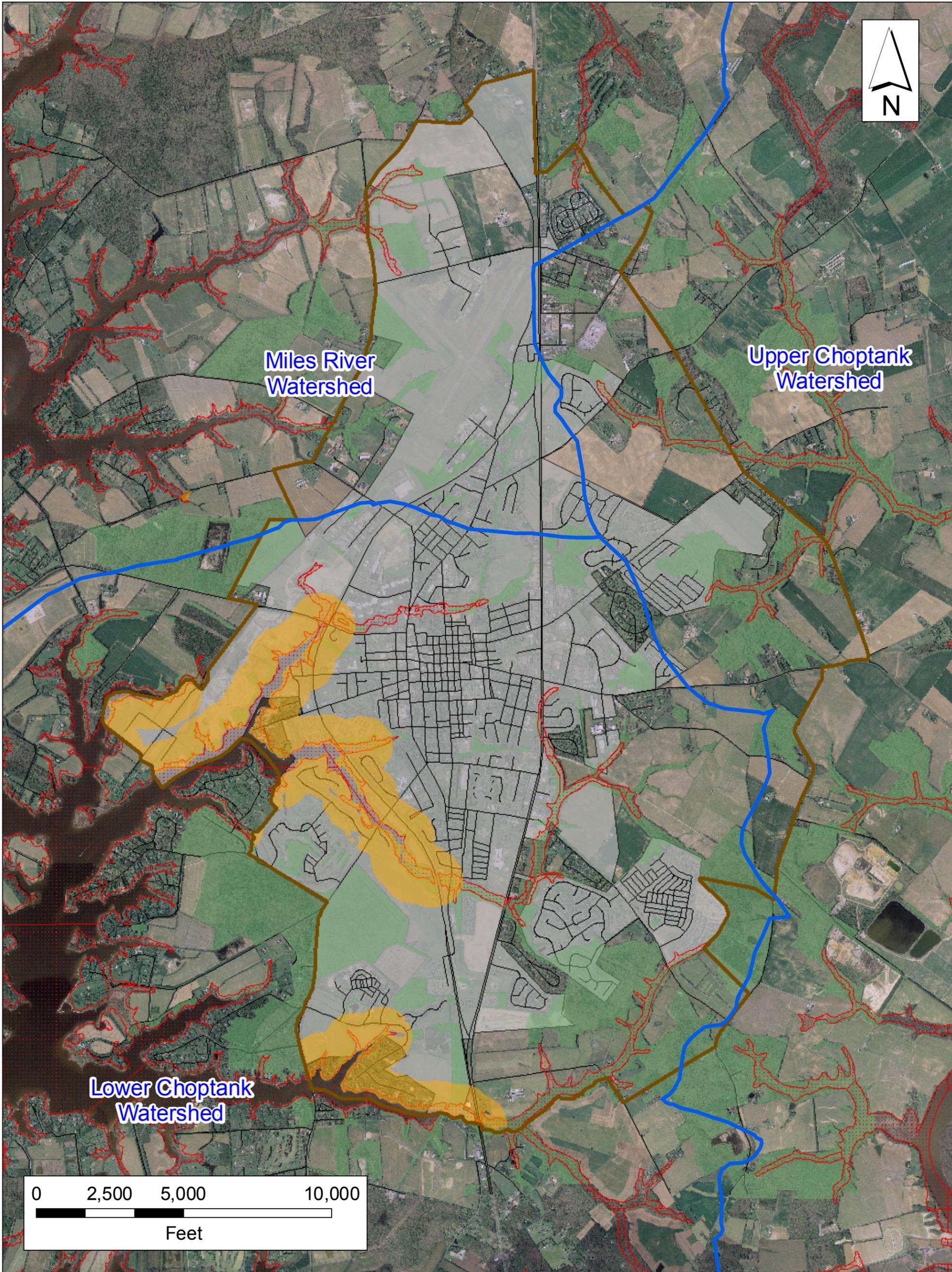
- ✓ Work with appropriate State and Federal agencies to identify Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species in the Town.
- ✓ Protect Habitat areas by preserving, enhancing, and connecting identified areas via the development review process.

GOAL: To preserve agricultural and forest lands beyond Easton's Town limits, but within our Future Growth Area.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Work with Talbot County to develop policies and regulations within the County that favor agricultural use and discourage development for lands in the Growth Area, unless said land is annexed into to the Town.

Sensitive Areas



 100-Yr Floodplain  Watershed  Critical Area  Forest



Sensitive Areas Map
Created By: Zach Smith
Easton Planning Office
3/22/10

WATER RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

As described previously in the early chapters of this Plan, HB 1141 imposed several requirements concerning the composition of Comprehensive Plans. The most significant requirements are for the addition of two new chapters or Elements. One of these is the Municipal Growth Element and has already been presented in this Plan. The other is the Water Resources Element, which is the subject of this chapter. In a nutshell, the purpose of this Element is to insure that the Town has or is planning to have, adequate water supply to serve the projected population of the Town, as well as adequate wastewater capacity, and the ability of the local waterways to assimilate projected stormwater from both point and non-point sources.

As was mentioned in the Municipal Growth Element, there are three different required elements of a Comprehensive Plan that must address water, sewer, and stormwater management issues; Municipal Growth, Water Resources, and Community Facilities and Services. There is also actually a fourth Element involved when the impact of water and sewer availability and systems is factored into the Land Use Element. Given the fact that we are required to address these issues in three, if not four, different parts of the Plan there will necessarily be an awful lot of overlap and there must be coordination between the Elements. The focus of the Water Resources Element is distinguished from the other Elements in that it focuses primarily on the following questions:

- Is there adequate water supply to meet current and future needs?
- Is there adequate wastewater and septic supply to meet current and future needs?
- What, if any, impact will meeting these needs have on water resources?

These are essentially the same issues the Municipal Growth Element was required to examine for a host of services. The Water Resources Element is simply more narrowly focused on just water, wastewater, and stormwater. It may therefore be more detailed than was the analysis presented in the Municipal Growth Element, but the two should be consistent, if not identical in this analysis.

Before looking at the specifics of these services and resources, it is important to reiterate a general longstanding and overriding principle of the Town of Easton. That is that no water or wastewater service is extended to properties located outside of Town boundaries. Property-owners or developers that desire our services are required to annex into the Town. Furthermore property that is developed within the Town is required to connect to our municipal system. As a result of this policy, there are very few private wells or septic systems within the Town limits.

There are only two known exceptions to this policy. One is for the Ratcliffe Farm Subdivision. This a 15 lot large-lot waterfront subdivision located distant from the 16th lot, on which the more Town-scale Easton Village project is presently being developed. These 15 lots were allowed to develop on private wells and septic systems. The other exception is for a handful (less than a dozen) houses which were in existence and served by well and septic at the time that they were annexed. They have been allowed to remain as such until it is necessary for them to connect to the Town's municipal system.

For the reason outlined above, this Plan does not include a map of the Town's water and wastewater service areas. They are virtually identical to the Town boundary. The only exceptions are the South Clifton subdivision located off of Route 50 and one property which receives water service (but not wastewater) on St. Michael's Road.

WATER SUPPLY AND SYSTEM

Public water service in the Town of Easton is provided by the Easton Utilities Commission (EUC), an independent agency owned by the Town. The following language is taken directly from EUC's website and provides an excellent overview of the state of the Town's water supply and distribution system:

Since 1914, Easton Utilities has been dedicated to providing clean, clear, healthy water in plentiful supply to all of the town's residents. Throughout each year, our fully trained and certified staff carefully monitors water quality.

The Water Department currently serves 6,000 customers through 84 miles of water mains and over 550 fire hydrants. Easton Utilities pumps water from naturally filtered underground aquifers (water-bearing sands) through six wells that are 600 to 1,200 feet deep. We then treat the water as required and pump it into the distribution system. The water that comes out of a customer's tap includes water from each of these wells. No single well provides all of a customer's water. Of those wells, one is drilled 600 feet into the Aquia Greensand Aquifer. Another three wells are drilled 1,000 feet into the Magothy Aquifer. The final two wells are 1,200 feet deep drilled into the Upper Patapsco Aquifer and feeds directly into a state-of-the-art water treatment plant on Glebe Road.

The storage capacity of Easton's Water Department is 2 million gallons, which is met through two separate 1 million gallon storage tanks. In 2005, Easton Utilities added the second 1-million gallon elevated water storage tank to improve fire flow capability, boost system-wide water pressure, and add capacity sufficient to accommodate the Town's future needs.

The Municipal Growth Element (see especially Table 10) indicated that EUC has planned for expansion of the water system to accommodate a population of 31,181 in 2033, using an average daily demand of 4.27 MGD (7.73 MGD maximum). Our 3% annual average compound growth rate reaches the same conclusion in terms of the Town's population in 2033. Thus this seems to be a reasonable projection and assumption. Furthermore, since our targeted growth rate is actually 1%, this planned expansion will obviously accommodate this amount of growth. It may not even be needed at all for a number of years beyond 2033. It can be concluded therefore that EUC both accommodates the existing water demands of the Town and is planning to continue to do so well into the future (i.e. to the year 2033). Since we have also calculated that effective "build-out" of the Town will likely be achieved beyond the long range 2040 timeframe of this Plan, it seems logical that only minimal upgrades will be necessary beyond what is already planned in order to serve the Town's ultimate population (and there is ample time to do so).

One of the mandated requirements of this Element is to examine current and future water sources and include planning strategies to protect them from pollution and over-allocation. This is difficult, if not impossible to do given that (1) Easton's source of water is located well outside of our jurisdiction and (2) it is shared by many other users. This is also recognized by Talbot County and the problem is summarized well in their Draft Water Resource Element as follows:

Talbot County's public and private water users draw drinking water from several major confined groundwater aquifers, many of which (particularly the Aquia and Piney Point) are widely used throughout the Eastern Shore. The capacity of these confined aquifers is increasingly strained by new development throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. The US Geological Society (USGS) reports that "withdrawals from Maryland Coastal Plain aquifers have caused ground-water levels in confined aquifers to decline by tens to hundreds of feet

from their original levels. Continued water-level declines could affect the long-term sustainability of ground-water resources in agricultural areas of the Eastern Shore.”³ In most cases, the recharge areas for these aquifers (particularly the Piney Point and Aquia), are not necessarily found on the Eastern Shore.

Groundwater and surface water resources are also linked. Water from surficial aquifers can comprise a significant amount of the base flow of streams and rivers. While groundwater withdrawn through wells is typically returned to the ground or surface via point source discharges, septic systems, and absorption of runoff from outdoor water uses (such as watering of lawns), large withdrawals can potentially impact the quality and quantity of flows in nearby surface water bodies.

There exists no comprehensive study of the water-bearing formations used by Talbot County residents and businesses. Individual (e.g., project-specific) groundwater studies do not take into account the cumulative impacts of heavy demand on the Aquia and other formations from both the Eastern and Western Shore. In addition, the Water Balance methodology recommended by Models and Guidelines #26 (the state’s official guidance for preparation of the Water Resources Element) is not applicable for the Coastal Plain. Thus, while the County understands that its groundwater supplies are limited and declining, there is no reliable measure of water supply against which to compare current and especially projected water demands.

MDE, the Maryland Geological Survey (MGS), and the US Geological Survey (USGS) have begun work on a Coastal Plain Aquifer Study, but that study remains incomplete. The County should use the data and recommendations of the Coastal Plain Aquifer Study (once completed) to shape its own water use policies and ordinances. However, the County also recognizes the need for and supports the development of broader regional water policies to protect already scarce resources.

For purposes of this Water Resources Element (and lacking specific evidence to the contrary), this Water Resources Element presumes that the MDE groundwater permit issued for each public drinking water system reflects the maximum safe yield of the aquifer(s) used by that system.¹

WASTEWATER SERVICE AND CAPACITY

Easton Utilities is also the provider of wastewater service in the Town of Easton. Their description of the state of this service is as follows:

Easton began construction on its first sewage system in 1911. In operation by 1914, it was the first separate storm and sanitary wastewater system in the State of Maryland. Currently, the Wastewater Department serves about 6,000 customers through over 70 miles of wastewater mains, six major pumping stations and an environmentally-friendly wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater treatment facility, one of Maryland's most environmentally friendly, is anticipated to meet Easton's wastewater needs to 2030 while exceeding Chesapeake Bay water quality goals for reducing nitrogen and phosphorus. The process is designed to reduce effluent concentrations of nitrogen to 3 milligrams per liter (mg/l) and phosphorus to 0.3 mg/l—a decrease of 83 percent (182,000 pound) and 81 percent (16,000 pound) respectively. The new facility began operation in 2007.

As the description above indicates, EUC brought online a new, state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility in 2007. This plant utilizes enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) technology and has a design treatment capacity of 4 MGD, of which slightly more than half (2.09 MGD) was being utilized as of 12/31/08. Taking into account committed allocations

¹ Talbot County, Maryland Water Resources Element, Planning Commission Draft, June 3, 2009.

and a reservation for Infiltration and Inflow (I&I), this plant has a remaining allocable capacity of 1,351,051 GPD. This equates to 5,404 EDU's (Equivalent Dwelling Units) as of January 2009.²

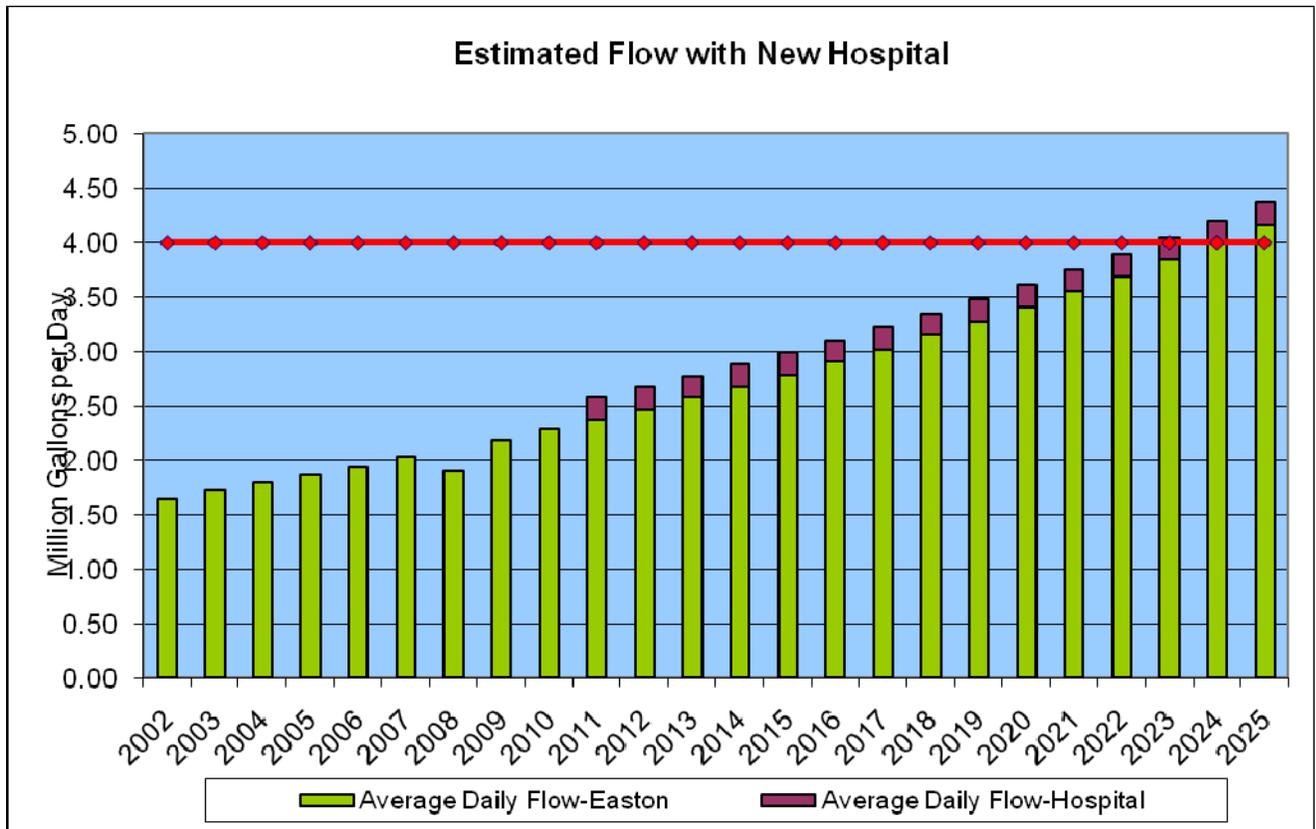
The wastewater treatment plant brought online in 2007 was designed to accommodate the Town's projected growth of 18 years (i.e. until 2025) and to facilitate a relatively simple expansion to increase the plant's treatment capacity. Given that we are projecting to achieve effective build-out in 2041 if we continue to grow at 3% per year we would need to expand treatment capacity prior to 2025 to accommodate the remaining projected growth of the Town, which is projected to be about 14,000 people (14,431), from 24,470 in 2027 to 38,901 at build-out. Given current household size this forecasts 6,500 additional dwelling units that would need to be accommodated in a "final" capacity expansion.

There are two wild cards in attempting to estimate future demand for wastewater capacity. The first is the future growth of the Town. If growth rates change, the year in which capacity is reached at the plant is likewise changed. Obviously this date may get pushed significantly into the future depending on how successful we are in achieving our targeted 1% growth rate. Similarly, if the Growth Boundary is changed, the Town's ultimate population is changed, and therefore the size and possibly even the need for the 2025 capacity expansion may not be warranted.

One future user that seems near certain to connect to the Town's wastewater system is the proposed new Regional Hospital. Easton Utilities Commission (EUC) has examined this issue and according to Hugh Grunden, President and CEO of EUC, the proposed hospital and associated buildings are projected to generate approximately 200,000 gallons

² Per letter from Talbot Bone, P.E., Manager, Water and Wastewater Department of Easton Utilities to Kathy Foster, R.N., MSN, Talbot County Health Officer dated 02/12/09 representing EUC's annual report to the County Health Dept.

of wastewater per day. At the projected level, the hospital would consume approximately 5% of the treatment facility's total design capacity and less than 10% of the remaining capacity. The impact of the hospital in terms of any future expansion needs is that if it is constructed as currently planned, then the wastewater treatment plant would reach capacity in 2023, two years ahead of the original plan. This is summarized graphically below.



In summary, the Town's wastewater treatment facility currently provides state-of-the-art treatment for all of the Town's residents and can easily accommodate growth of the upcoming planning period, as well as one or two beyond that. Based on current assumptions concerning household sizes, growth rates, and extension of services beyond the Town limits (which is not currently allowed), it is expected that the capacity of the plant

will need to be increased effective in 2025. The addition of the new Hospital to this system causes this expansion to be needed approximately two years sooner (i.e. 2023). On the other hand, if the growth rate is effectively reduced to 1%, the WWTP would not need to expand during the 30 year time-frame this Plan contemplates.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND POINT AND NONPOINT SOURCE LOADING STATUS AND REMEDIATION

Stormwater management in Easton is governed by the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance. According to that Ordinance, its purpose is: "to protect, maintain and enhance the public health, safety, and general welfare by establishing minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse impacts associated with increased stormwater runoff. Proper management of stormwater runoff will minimize damage to public and private property, reduce the effects of development on land, control stream channel erosion, reduce local flooding, and maintain after development, as nearly as possible, the pre-development runoff characteristics."

The Scope of the Stormwater Management Ordinance is copied below.

No person shall develop any land for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional uses without having provided stormwater management measures that control or manage runoff from such developments, except as provided within this section. The stormwater management measures must be designed consistent with the Design Manual and constructed according to an approved plan for new development or the policies stated in section 3.4 for redevelopment.

3.2 Exemptions

The following development activities are exempt from the provisions of this Ordinance and the requirements of providing stormwater management:

- A. Agricultural land management activities;
- B. Additions or modifications to existing single family detached residential structures if they comply with 3.2 C of this section;
- C. Developments that do not disturb over 5,000 square feet of land area.
- D. Land development activities that the Administration determines will be regulated under

specific State laws, which provide for managing stormwater runoff.

E. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the Town Engineer from requiring stormwater management controls upon evaluation of accumulative effects of previous exemptions.

3.3 Waivers / Watershed Management Plans

A. Stormwater management quantitative control waivers shall be granted only to those projects within areas where watershed management plans have been developed consistent with F. of this section.

B. If watershed management plans consistent with F. of this section have not been developed, then stormwater management quantitative control waivers may be granted to projects:

(1) That have direct discharges to tidally influenced receiving waters;

(2) That do not increase the post-development peak discharge for the 2-year and 10-year storm events by more than 10 percent.

(3) When all stormwater from the development will flow to an existing regional stormwater facility that was designed and constructed to accommodate the stormwater from the development consistent with the quantitative control requirements of this Ordinance.

Adequate conveyance must exist from the site to the regional facility. Unmanaged runoff must not be allowed to discharge into natural drainage systems.

C. Stormwater management qualitative control waivers apply only to:

(1) In-fill development projects where stormwater management implementation is not feasible;

(2) Redevelopment projects if the requirements of §3.4 of this Ordinance are satisfied; or

(3) Sites where the approving agency determines that circumstances exist that prevent the reasonable implementation of quality control practices.

D. Waivers granted must:

(1) Be on a case-by-case basis;

(2) Consider the cumulative effects of the Town of Easton waiver policy; and

(3) Reasonably ensure the development will not adversely impact stream quality.

E. If the Town Engineer has established an overall watershed management plan for a specific watershed, then the Town Engineer may develop quantitative waiver and redevelopment provisions that differ from sections 3.3B and 3.4.

F. A watershed management plan developed for the purpose of implementing different stormwater management policies for waivers and redevelopment shall:

(1) Include detailed hydrologic and hydraulic analyses to determine hydrograph timing;

(2) Evaluate both quantity and quality management;

(3) Include cumulative impact assessment of watershed development;

(4) Identify existing flooding and receiving stream channel conditions;

(5) Be conducted at a reasonable scale;

(6) Specify where on-site or off-site quantitative and qualitative stormwater management practices are to be implemented;

(7) Be consistent with the General Performance Standards for Stormwater Management in Maryland found in Section 1.2 of the Design Manual; and

(8) Be approved by the Administration.

G. The Town Engineer may grant a waiver of quantitative stormwater management requirements for individual developments provided that a written request is submitted by the applicant containing descriptions, drawings, and any other information that is necessary to evaluate the proposed development. A separate written waiver request shall be required in accordance with the provisions of this section if there are subsequent additions, extensions, or modifications to a development receiving a waiver. A waiver request submitted for subsequent additions, extensions, or modifications to a development receiving a waiver shall be evaluated based on the cumulative impacts of the development.

H. Waivers within the Tanyard Branch watershed shall not be granted unless the impacts are determined negligible by the Town Engineer. (See "Exhibit A" (map of Tanyard Branch Watershed) attached to this document).

3.4 Redevelopment

A. The recharge, channel protection storage and overbank flood protection volume requirements specified in the Design Manual do not apply to redevelopment projects, provided that the redevelopment does not increase the 2-year and 10-year storm event discharge rates over the preredevelopment discharge rates for the 2-year and 10-year storm events. Where redevelopment results in an increase in the pre-development 2-year and 10-year storm flows, quantitative management per Section 4.0 shall apply.

B. All redevelopment projects shall reduce existing site impervious areas by at least 20 percent. Where site conditions prevent the reduction of impervious area, then stormwater management practices shall be implemented to provide qualitative control for at least 20 percent of the site's impervious area. When a combination of impervious area reduction and stormwater practice implementation is used, the combined area shall equal or exceed 20 percent of the site.

C. Where conditions prevent impervious area reduction or on-site stormwater management, practical alternatives may be considered, including but not limited to:

(1) Off-site BMP implementation for a drainage area comparable in size and percent imperviousness to that of the project. Off-site BMPs shall be located within the same watershed as, and in proximity to the proposed redevelopment;

(2) Watershed or stream restoration; the Applicant shall obtain all necessary permits and other required approval from appropriate State and federal agencies;

(3) Retrofitting; or

(4) Other practices approved by the Town Engineer.

D. In the case of site demolition prior to site plan approval, pre-development impervious areas may be considered with proper documentation as determined by the Town Engineer.

3.5 Variance

The Town Engineer may grant a written variance from any requirement of Section 4.0, Stormwater Management Criteria, of this Ordinance if there are exceptional circumstances applicable to the site such that strict adherence will result in unnecessary hardship and not fulfill the intent of the Ordinance. A written request for variance shall be provided to the Town Engineer and shall state the specific variances sought and reasons for their granting. The Town Engineer shall not grant a variance unless and until sufficient justification is provided by the person developing land.

As mentioned previously the State's Stormwater Management Design Manual has been updated and the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance will have to be updated accordingly. One of the more significant changes is likely to focus on the waiver section reproduced above.

Stormwater in Easton contributes both point and non-point loads to local waterways. The stormwater management system of Easton filters, collects, and treats runoff at the wastewater treatment plant located east of Town on the banks of the Choptank River. Nonpoint run-off that eludes the stormwater management system enters either the Choptank or the Miles River watershed. The Town is actually split into three 8-digit watersheds, the Miles and the Upper and Lower Choptank. All three of these watersheds are listed as impaired by nutrients by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Lower Choptank has completed a TMDL. TMDL is an abbreviation for Total Maximum Daily Load and it often refers to a plan or strategy for limiting the maximum amount of the identified pollutant that may enter the impaired water body.

There is not yet in place a TMDL strategy which affects Easton, but we are trying to do our part to reduce pollutant loadings by imposing the 10% pollutant reduction standard of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area throughout the entire Town. Thus as development

occurs in Easton, water quality should theoretically improve, at least for the newer areas of Town. The problem areas are then confined to the older parts of Town. All of these areas drain into the Tanyard Branch via storm drains installed over 100 years ago (in approximately 1905).

A significant portion of the Town drains into Tanyard Branch, which empties into the headwaters of the Tred Avon River, which travels southwestward from Easton, by Oxford and into the Choptank River. The Tanyard Branch is subject to significant attention by the Town. Projects located in this basin are subject to specific additional stormwater management requirements. In short, within the Tanyard Branch watershed the discharge quantity volumes are required to be evaluated for the 2-year and 10-year storm events to the extent that the maximum post development release rate from the site shall not exceed the 2-year predevelopment rate for both storm events. As an alternative, developers may propose improvements within the watershed that will provide a similar level of benefit, as determined by the Town Engineer. Waivers within the Tanyard Branch watershed are not granted unless the impacts are determined negligible by the Town Engineer.

In addition to these higher standards for Tanyard Branch, the Town is also working cooperatively with Talbot County on a new grant-funded project to implement a number of innovative stormwater management practices along the stream. This includes the construction of a large regional sediment pond and inlet filter bags designed to catch litter before it enters the waterway. These activities are already funded and should be implemented in the near future. Additional projects for which the Town is seeking grant-funding in 2010 include the installation of a constructed wetland at the site of the Easton Utilities administration building and the design of a replacement conveyance system with sediment removal devices and Best Management Practices (BMP's) which will reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loadings to the watershed. This proposed project is parallel

with the Town's Rails-to-Trails network and therefore natural filters and subsurface BMP's will be employed.

An analysis of the impact of the Easton WWTP on the Choptank River is included in Talbot County's Water Resources Element. It finds that this facility will have adequate nitrogen and phosphorous discharge capacity to support projected growth through 2030 and beyond. In fact in 2030 it finds that the Easton WWTP will have 21,314 pounds per year of TN and 913 pounds per year of TP in remaining discharge capacity. It should be noted that the County's projections assume a 1% population growth rate for the Town of Easton, which the Easton Planning Commission has also adopted as a target for this Comprehensive Plan. In the preparation of its Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Increase and Improvement Plan in June of 2002, Easton Utilities Commission proposed the following treated effluent concentrations for the new WWTP:

Parameter	Concentration	Quantity (Load)
Flow (Average Annual)	4.01 MGD	N/A
Biochemical Oxygen Demand	10 mg/l	334 pounds per day
Total Suspended Solids	10 mg/l	334 pounds per day
Total Nitrogen	3 mg/l	100 pounds per day or 36,621 pounds per year
Total Phosphorous	0.5 mg/l	17 pounds per day or 6,103 pounds per year

On the more individual scale, the impact of fertilizer can be significant on the water quality of receiving waters. There is very little agriculture practiced within Easton's

corporate limits and therefore not a lot of impact from this source of nutrients. However there are large areas of agricultural production within our Future Growth Area. Depending on the amount of fertilizer these farms use as well as how the application of this fertilizer is managed, the impact of such nutrients should be reduced upon annexation and development in the Town. However, the impact of lawn-applied fertilizer on the water quality of streams and rivers can be significant as well. This is obviously a concern within the already developed portion of the Town and will be a concern as farmlands (and forested areas) are converted to developed lands in the future. The State of Maryland is requiring home improvement and similar stores to begin selling non-Phosphorous lawn fertilizer. This will hopefully help to reduce the negative water quality impact associated with lawn fertilization in the future.

The impact of the reduction of agriculture on the waterways surrounding Easton can be seen in the following summary table. It is the result of the MDE Nutrient Loading Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet analyzes the impact of future growth in Easton under three different scenarios. The first represents 3% growth, which is also the Build-out scenario for a 30 year time-frame. The second and third scenarios represent the Planning Commission's stated goal of 1% growth, again projected to a 30 year horizon. The difference between the two 1% scenarios is in the proportion of infill/redevelopment vs. Greenfield development. The first 1% scenario assumes that 75% of future development will occur in infill/redevelopment sites (i.e. anything within the 2009 Town Limits) and 25% will come from the development of land that is currently agriculture outside of Town limits. The second 1% scenario assumes that this split will be 50-50.

Nutrient Loading Analysis Spreadsheet - Summary Results

Land Use and Septic Systems

(See Scenario Descriptions Below)

	2007 LU, 2007 BMPs	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs
	(Acres)	(Acres)	(Acres)	(Acres)	(Acres)
Development	0	3,818	8,246	5,252	5,382
Agriculture	0	4,927	279	3,274	3,143
Forest	0	1,813	1,813	1,813	1,813
Water	0	112	112	112	112
Other	0	684	904	904	904
Total Area	0	11,354	11,354	11,355	11,354

Residential Septic (EDUs)	0	557	56	269	269
Non-Residential Septic (EDUs)	0	375	38	188	188

Total Nitrogen Loading

	2007 LU, 2007 BMPs	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs
	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)
Development NPS	0	22,900	49,572	31,535	32,322
Agriculture NPS	0	42,567	2,441	28,178	27,038
Forest NPS	0	2,507	2,507	2,507	2,507
Other Terrestrial NPS	0	4,145	5,473	5,473	5,473
Total Terrestrial Load	0	72,119	59,992	67,692	67,339

Residential Septic (EDUs)	0	4,912	348	1,677	1,677
Non-Residential Septic (EDUs)	0	1,180	89	421	421
Total Septic Load	0	6,092	436	2,098	2,098

Total NPS Nitrogen Load	0	78,210	60,429	69,790	69,437
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Total PS Load	0	23,800	48,729	27,415	27,415
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Total Nitrogen Load (NPS+PS)	0	102,010	109,158	97,205	96,852
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Total Phosphorus Loading

	2007 LU, 2007 BMPs	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs
	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)	(Lbs/Yr)
Development NPS	0	2,441	5,451	3,414	3,507
Agriculture NPS	0	3,977	224	2,690	2,588
Forest NPS	0	34	34	34	34
Other Terrestrial NPS	0	500	651	651	651
Total Terrestrial Load	0	6,953	6,360	6,789	6,779

Total PS Load	0	2,400	3,655	2,742	2,742
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Total Phosphorus Load (NPS+PS)	0	9,353	10,015	9,531	9,521
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Impervious Cover and Open Space

	2007 LU, 2007 BMPs	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs
Total Impervious Cover	0	1,865	3,497	2,449	2,485
Agriculture	0	4,927	279	3,274	3,143
Forest	0	1,705	1,705	1,705	1,705

Scenario Description	Scenario List
Year 2007 with 2007 Level of BMP Implementation	2007 LU, 2007 BMPs
Year 2007 with TS BMP Implementation	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs
Scenario 1 Build-out (or 3% Growth 2040)	Scenario 1
Scenario 2 - 2040 1% Growth, 75% infill, 25% greenfield	Scenario 2
Scenario 3 - 2040 1% Growth, 50% infill, 50% greenfield	Scenario 3

The spreadsheet that produced these calculations was prepared by the Maryland Department of the Environment, who also supplied much of the baseline data. The data inputted by Town Staff required a large number of assumptions. These assumptions are listed in Appendix 2 of this Plan.

Among the conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis are the following:

- Due to the reduction of agricultural land (and thus the reduction in fertilizers) there is a decrease in the amount of non-point source (i.e. run-off) nitrogen and phosphorus in all three scenarios.
- Similarly the removal of existing septic systems currently outside of the Town of Easton but in the Growth Area, provide benefits in terms of nutrient reduction when these houses are connected to the Town's Wastewater System.
- Both of the 1% scenarios also have a reduction in Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus loads (including point, i.e. the wastewater treatment facility, and non-point).
- The 3% or build-out scenario uses the expected nutrient caps for the nutrient loads as otherwise it would exceed them. This implies that enhanced nutrient reduction techniques are implemented at some point in the future. At the time that this becomes necessary, the Town will have to evaluate the cost/benefit of such enhancements as it has done in the past each time the system is upgraded. It is conceivable that the Town Council at that time will decide that the cost associated with such enhancements is greater than they believe is worth bearing. If so, development will cease, except for redevelopment projects, before reaching the limits of our Growth Boundary.

WATER RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To ensure that the Town has an adequate, safe and sanitary water supply.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Continue to coordinate water system master planning with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Construct the capital improvements outlined in Easton Utilities' Master Water Plan.

GOAL: To provide adequate wastewater treatment service to the Town.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Continue to coordinate Sewer planning with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Monitor growth rates and be prepared to expand the capacity of the Wastewater Treatment Facility (currently expected to be required in 2025) well in advance of the need to do so.

GOAL: To effectively treat stormwater runoff and reduce pollutant loadings entering Easton's waterways.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Continue to administer and enforce the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✓ Review the effectiveness of the existing practice of installing silt fences at construction sites. Adopt policies that establish more effective run-off protection and/or ensure more careful monitoring by responsible inspection agencies.
- ✓ Incorporate the latest guidance and requirements as found in the State Stormwater Design Manual following its approval.

- ✓ Continue to work cooperatively with Talbot County to obtain grant funding for projects that clean up Tanyard Branch.
- ✓ Work independently and with Talbot County to develop comprehensive projects and strategies to improve the water quality of stormwater runoff.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Community Facilities and Services includes the basic infrastructure of the Town such as water and sewer service, essential services such as solid waste disposal, and public safety services such as police and fire and rescue.

This chapter examines the community facilities and services provided in Easton. It offers brief background information on each component of this system and incorporates the input received throughout the Comprehensive Plan Update process into a series of goals and objectives.

Also, while not specifically mentioned in this Chapter, the concept of sustainability is covered elsewhere in this Plan. It is worth at least noting here because the more sustainable development projects become, the less their impact upon many community facilities and services.

BACKGROUND

Easton's public services and utilities are of vital importance to the continued physical, economic, and social improvement of the Town and the surrounding region. Expansion of certain basic economic activities can be more readily accomplished provided that public and private utility and service systems are adequate for the existing and projected population of the Town. A major goal of the Town is to ensure the continued adequate maintenance and expansion of community facilities and public services necessary to guarantee public health, safety and welfare and enhance resident's quality of life. This goal is balanced against the fiscal ability of the Town to provide necessary community facilities and services and its objectives for managing the location and rate of the Town's growth and development. It must also be remembered that because of the Town's dominant function as a regional commercial and employment center, Easton must consider

the demands of the surrounding region, as well as the needs for local residents, upon Town facilities and services.

UTILITIES

Utility service in the Town of Easton is predominately provided by Easton Utilities, who is responsible for the operation, management and maintenance of the electric, water, sewer, and natural gas (as well as internet and cable television) systems for the Town (and some surrounding areas for some services). In 1923, Easton became the first municipality in the state to own all of its utilities, and this arrangement is still unique today.

The Easton Utilities Commission, a three member board, two of which must be Easton residents with the third only residing in the electric service territory, who are appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the Town Council, governs Easton Utilities. A full-time President/CEO has day-to-day responsibilities for executing the policies and regulations as determined by the Commission.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity first came to Easton in 1887, but was not under town jurisdiction until 1915. Electric service is now provided by Easton Utilities to over 10,000 customers in a 54 square mile service territory through 16 diesel engine generators and through PJM Interconnection, LLC. Easton residents benefit from this arrangement because Easton Utilities is able to choose the most economical and reliable source of electric power on an hourly basis, either through PJM, through its own generators, or a combination of these sources.

Easton's installed electrical generation capacity is 70 megawatts, which is more than adequate to meet the town's current demand. This represents a 10 megawatt increase since the 2004 Plan was adopted.

Until very recently, Easton Utilities provided all of Easton with electrical service. However, some of the most recent projects in Town fall partially within the service areas of

other electricity providers. As the Town grows, this will be the case more frequently. The two other providers of electricity in Easton are Choptank Electrical Cooperative and Delmarva Power and Light. Now with multiple service providers, the need for coordination and cooperation among the various electric companies in order to continue to provide Easton with the most optimum service is vital. For example, the various companies should work together to transfer service areas when necessary to avoid situations where single subdivisions or projects would be served by two (or three) different companies.

WATER AND SEWER

The Easton Utilities Commission also provides water and sewer services for the Town. The Easton Utilities Commission is responsible for the operation, construction and maintenance of the Town's water and sewer systems. It is anticipated that the Town will remain the sole supplier of water and sewer services in Easton throughout the plan period.

The Town's water source currently is derived from wells tapping into deep fresh water aquifers. The Town has supplied water service to its residents since 1914.

The Town of Easton first constructed a sanitary sewage collection system in 1911. Through the subsequent years, as the Town grew so too did the need for additional capacity and treatment. In 1938, a treatment plant was constructed along the banks of the Choptank River. In 1988, construction was completed on an innovative treatment facility. This new facility utilizes an Overland Flow Treatment Process which at the time of construction was the fifth largest such system in the United States. In 2007 a new state-of-the-art enhanced nutrient removal treatment facility was brought online.

Extensions of the Town's public water and sewer systems are currently based upon a County-wide Water and Sewer Facilities Plan and "on demand as required" by new development. In order to more effectively manage the location and rate of growth and development in Easton, it is recommended that, in the future, sewer and water service

extensions be based upon a Capital Improvement Program that is in accordance with this Comprehensive Plan.

The Town should continue to provide water and sewer delivery services to only those areas within the corporate Town limits. Annexation decisions should carefully consider the costs and benefits of extending services to proposed annexation areas.

The Easton Utilities Commission has established capital and connection fees for water and sewer for all new development within the Town. These fees compensate for the Town's expense of connecting service to new development and an equitable proportional share of future capital improvements costs for sewer and water systems maintenance and expansion. The cost of extending sewer and water lines to any new development is borne in full by the developer.

More recently the Town has enacted legislation that limits the amount of sewer service available to any one development in any one-year to not more than ten (10) percent of the Town's annual net available capacity. Annual net available capacity is determined by subtracting the Town's annual obligations for sewer capacity from the annual gross available sewer capacity as determined by the State. The basis for this new regulation is to extend the availability of the Town's sewer capacity over a longer period of time and also to ensure an equitable distribution of that capacity to a number of different development projects in different areas of the Town. Without this annual ten (10) percent cap it is possible that a single large development project could consume the Town's entire annual sewer capacity in one year thereby necessitating the Town to undertake expensive expansion of its treatment facilities. The closer the plant gets to its capacity, the more important this cap becomes.

More detailed information, particularly with regards to the requirements for water and wastewater service required to satisfy the needs of future growth, are provided in the Municipal Growth and the Water Resources Elements.

NATURAL GAS

Acquired by the Town in 1923, Easton's Gas Department is the only municipal gas utility in the state today. Originally, burning coal at a plant on West Street derived Easton's gas. However, Easton Utilities converted to natural gas in 1966 when it signed an agreement to purchase its gas supply from Eastern Shore Natural Gas Company.

The town's gas supply is now piped in from the Federalsburg, Maryland area, and distributed to over 4,500 customers through 38 miles of steel and plastic mains. The Gas Department distributes an average of 1,200,000 cubic feet of natural gas per day to Easton's residents living in its 8.5 square mile service territory.

HOSPITAL FACILITIES

Hospital Services in the Town of Easton are provided by Shore Health Systems at Memorial Hospital. In the realm of the Comprehensive Plan, this facility has two kinds of impact. The first is the service provided to the community. The second is the impact this facility has on the Town in general and its neighborhood more specifically. In the former area, the impact is unquestionably positive. In the latter though, the results are mixed.

As Memorial Hospital has expanded, the Hospital and surrounding residential areas have encountered increasing conflicts. The Hospital is unable to consolidate all related facilities on a single parcel of land because of a lack of space. As a result the Hospital and its parking facilities have begun to encroach upon the surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood residents are disturbed by traffic, parking and the intrusion of intensive activities into their residential environment. Activities to reduce conflict between the Hospital and adjoining residential areas include: continued coordination of any remaining Hospital expansion plans with the Town, and improvement of the traffic circulation and parking pattern in the area.

In recent years Shore Health Systems has made a decision to seek a site for a new, state-of-the-art regional medical facility. They studied a site in the Wye Mill's area as well as a new Easton site located between the Talbot Community Center and the current Town boundary adjacent to the airport. Late in 2008, Shore Health Systems announced that they had selected the Easton site.

This is terrific news for Easton and its residents. In addition to the medical care that is provided, the Hospital is also a major employer and attracts numerous labs, doctor's offices, physical rehabilitation centers, pharmacies, etc... to Easton. This is both more service for Easton residents, as well as more medically-related jobs.

Remaining to be seen is whether these businesses will move from the Idlewild/Dutchman's Lane area up to the vicinity of the new hospital and what becomes of the current hospital facility. These are issues that will need to be explored in detail as the prospective move comes closer to reality.

SOLID WASTE FACILITIES

The citizens of Easton receive collection of their solid waste from the Town. The Town of Easton in turn contracts with Talbot County to dispose of this waste at the Mid-Shore Regional Landfill located on Barkers Landing Road, southeast of town. In 1993, the Town adopted a residential disposal fee to cover the tipping charges associated with solid waste disposal at the landfill.

At the present time the Mid-Shore landfill adequately meets the needs of the citizens of Easton. However, it is scheduled to close on December 31, 2010 and the next Regional Landfill will open the next business day, January 3, 2011 in Caroline County. At that time the Town will need to provide a site or sites for a transfer station(s). The logical location is at the site of the current landfill.

Facilities, in the form of "igloos", for recycling are located at the landfill and at several sites in and around Easton. At present time there is no public curbside recycling

service in Easton. A private company (Infinity Recycling) will provide such service for a fee. The County is also exploring options for the reuse of the current landfill site which include a transfer station and recycling center. Curbside recycling is a service that continues to be frequently mentioned whenever we collect public opinion about issues like what service or facility would you like to see expanded or started in Easton. As the Town grows, particularly if it does so in a more dense urban setting, this becomes more feasible. In fact, it is expected that single-stream curbside recycling will begin in Easton in July 2010.

SETTING THE STANDARD WITH PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The previous Comprehensive Plan Visioning process kicked off with a presentation by Ed McMahon of the Conservation Fund. Mr. McMahon has spoken in Easton on a number of occasions on the general theme of improving the quality of the built environment. One of many excellent points that Mr. McMahon makes concerns the importance of government setting the standard for a community through its public buildings. The following passage is from Mr. McMahon's book, *Better Models for Development in Virginia*.

People have long understood that public buildings can help nurture feelings of heritage and community that enrich a nation and its people. Public buildings and spaces create identity and sense of place. They give communities something to remember and admire. The challenge facing public architecture is to provide every generation with structures that link them with their past, fill them with pride, and reinforce their sense of belonging.

Public buildings should set the standard in a community. Public buildings with civic stature, quality materials, and prominent settings project

a sense of permanence and human scale that expresses the dignity and importance of public institutions.

During the 18th, 19th, and first half of the 20th centuries, public buildings [in Virginia] such as city halls, courthouses, post offices, and public schools were always the community's most beautiful and important buildings. In the last half of the 20th century, however, public buildings often have been relegated to little more than utilitarian boxes. We sometimes have designed schools and libraries that resemble correctional facilities. We have built fire stations and post offices that look like warehouses, and we have moved many of our public buildings from downtown to new locations on the strip outside of town.

People appreciate public buildings that express the dignity, permanence, and importance of civic institutions and which harmonize with their surroundings.

Easton is blessed with some wonderful public buildings, almost all of which are located, as they should be, downtown. But, it was not without some close calls that this occurred. In the last two decades, Talbot County has advertised for bids to acquire land for new administrative offices and some of the bids were well outside of the downtown. The Post Office recently substantially upgraded its existing facility but it originally entertained moving out of downtown.

On the positive side of things, the Easton Utilities Commission opened a new Customer Service Center in 2000. This facility is clearly the most significant addition to the Town Center in decades and is a beautiful building that looks as if it belongs in an historic downtown, which of, course, it is. It stands as an example for Town, County and possibly State governments to try to emulate when building new office space in Easton.

One new governmental building that may be necessary in the not-too-distant future is a new Town Office. The current facility at 14 South Harrison Street has proved adequate for many years and is an excellent example of adaptive reuse of a former firehouse and then police station. However it is running short on space to house employees. There may be additional opportunities to add onto the building or it may ultimately prove to be more feasible to build at a new site. If so, the new building should follow the lead of the Easton Utilities Building by (1) being located in downtown and (2) being a building that all of Easton's citizens can be proud of.



The Easton Utilities Commission's Customer Service Center

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To continue to provide a high-quality of community services and facilities through adequate maintenance of existing systems and the addition of new facilities/services when necessary to guarantee public health, safety and welfare and enhance the quality of life of those who visit, live, or work in Easton.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Distribute the cost of community facilities and services equitably between the public, the developer and future users.
- ✓ Require that in conjunction with annexation, developers shall bring any deficient community facilities that serve their project up to Town standards for that facility, on a proportionate basis.
- ✓ Require all community facilities and services users to pay their "fair-share" of capital costs for necessary systems improvements.
- ✓ Ensure that the provision of community facilities and services are coordinated and consistent with the growth and development policies established in this Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ Ensure that community facilities and services are provided equitably to all Town residents and businesses.
- ✓ Require all development to pay for all road, water, sewer, and other community facilities and services extensions and additions needed as a result of new development utilizing the Town's recently adopted Impact Fee Ordinance and whatever additional tools may become available.
- ✓ Encourage development to occur in an orderly and logically progressive manner through Town provision or extension of utilities to desirable growth areas with the provision for recapture of the cost thereof from future development.
- ✓ Expand opportunities for Town residents to participate in recycling programs.

- ✓ Plan for the location of a solid waste transfer station when the Regional Landfill located east of Town closes and the new one opens in Caroline County.
- ✓ Encourage the development of a Community Center and/or more recreational/entertainment opportunities for Easton's youth.
- ✓ Encourage regional and innovative approaches to storm water management.
- ✓ Encourage a college to locate a general purpose satellite campus in Easton.

GOAL: To coordinate Town community facilities with Plans and services of other agencies.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Encourage Talbot County to amend its Master Water and Sewer Plan to reflect the readiness of projects to proceed within the Easton Growth Area.
- ✓ Avoid having subdivisions served by multiple electric companies by supporting efforts of the Easton Utilities Commission to trade service areas with Delmarva Power and/or Choptank Electric in order to create more logical areas of service within the corporate limits of the Town.
- ✓ Create a Capital Improvement Program to better coordinate operations and projects between various agencies.

GOAL: To express the dignity and stature of public institutions by constructing great public buildings.

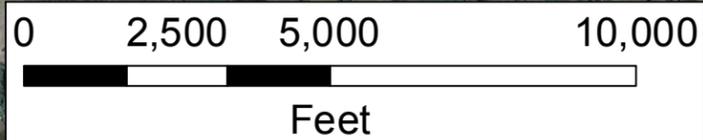
OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Construct public facilities with materials and in a style such that they are generally among the finest buildings in Easton.
- ✓ Build public facilities that are large enough and have ample opportunities for expansion, in order to insure that they will remain for a very long time.

- ✓ Locate public buildings in, or in close proximity to, the historic Town Center of Easton (one exception may be for smaller “sub-stations” which should be located in outlying neighborhoods, nearer the population they are intended to serve).
- ✓ Encourage Talbot County to locate their public buildings in or near the Town Center as well.
- ✓ Investigate the need for a new Town Office Building or the feasibility of an expansion of the existing building.

Public Facilities Map

1. Easton Town Office
2. EUC Office
3. EUC Power Generator
4. EUC Cable Head End Station
5. Easton Public Works Dept.
6. Water Tower
7. Easton Police Dept.
8. Talbot County Sheriff's Office
9. District Court
10. Talbot County Courthouse
11. Talbot County Free Library
12. Easton Memorial Hospital
13. School
14. Talbot County Government Offices
15. Talbot County Public Schools Office
16. MD State Police: Easton Barrack
17. MD National Guard Armory
18. Talbot County Health Dept.
19. Fire Dept.
20. Post Office
21. MD State Highway Administration
22. Easton Airport
23. Landfill
24. Easton Waste Water Treatment Plant
25. Talbot County Public Works



Town of Easton



Growth Boundary



Public Facilities Map
Created By: Zach Smith
Easton Planning Office
3/22/10

TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

To say that transportation issues are important to Easton would be an understatement. The various routes and terminuses that comprise the transportation system of Easton have a profound impact on Town residents, workers, and visitors. This system provides the means for all of these people to get from home to work as well as to reach shopping, entertainment, and cultural, attractions both within and beyond Easton. Ensuring that this system operates efficiently, yet in a manner that respects the numerous and sometimes conflicting needs of all who use and are impacted by the system, is the general theme of this chapter.

Usually the transportation issue that piques people's interest in Easton has something to do with US Route 50. In this Plan Update, however, issues concerning the design of roads within subdivisions, and the degree of connectivity of those subdivisions to the rest of the road system of Easton sparked a great deal of interest and brought hundreds of new people into the planning process. There were also a significant number of people interested in alternate modes of travel (i.e. other than automobile). All of these issues and more are the subject of this Element.

BACKGROUND

One of the major factors influencing the way in which land is used is the transportation system. This is certainly true in Easton. The earliest estates in Talbot County, including some in the Easton area, date back over 300 years to locations chosen out of the necessity to be located on the water. The large industrial buildings which seem out of place in the middle of Easton, make more sense when one considers that they were once located on a thriving rail line dating back to the mid 1800's. Finally, Easton has grown

eastward in the last 40 to 50 years, due in no small part to the presence of high traffic volumes on a major highway, U.S. Route 50.

Road System

Clearly one of the major factors shaping both the type and location of growth (particularly commercial growth) over the past few decades has been U.S. Route 50. With the opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952 came the opportunity for millions of Western Shore residents to easily travel to the Eastern Shore, primarily to Ocean City and nearby resorts. Over the years since that time, entrepreneurs have built a variety of establishments, particularly fast-food restaurants and gasoline stations, along the Route 50 corridor in an attempt to entice this large migrating market to stop in Easton.

There is little doubt that many business owners have benefited from Route 50 and its seasonal traffic. However, this same traffic carries numerous negative impacts ranging in scope from minor inconveniences to life-threatening dangers. In most basic terms the source of these negative impacts is two-fold: (1) too many points of direct access onto/off-of Route 50 and (2) Route 50 trying to essentially be two kinds of road at once, a local service route and a quasi-interstate highway.

While it is clear that improvements are desperately needed to Route 50, it is less clear what form those improvements should take. There is a concern among many local residents that the State Highway Administration will dualize the Easton Parkway and have it serve as an Easton Bypass. Some highway-oriented businesses located on Route 50 could see a decrease in business. However the larger concern is that such a change would essentially solve nothing and would cause new problems. With the growth of the Town toward and along the Parkway in recent years, numerous signalized intersections would be necessary, probably even more than exist now on Route 50. The alternative to signalized intersections is grade-separated intersections, but that would seem to be precluded at

several locations (e.g. MD 33 & MD 333) by environmental constraints. In fact, environmental concerns make it seem unlikely that the Parkway could even be widened.

Another objection to such a major change in traffic patterns is based on the impact it would have on the western portion of Easton and Talbot County. When the Easton Parkway was constructed in the 1960's it was for the purpose of affording residents of Western Talbot County the opportunity to travel north or south without having to make the circuitous trip through Downtown Easton and out to Route 50 on either Dover or Goldsborough. Despite the growth in signalized intersections, the Parkway still serves that function well. However, it is doubtful this would still be the case if the Parkway became "Route 50 - Bypass".

With this as the backdrop, it is not surprising that the least supported option for the future of Route 50 through (or around) Easton, as expressed in the Visioning opinion survey used with the 2004 Plan, was to reroute Rte. 50 to the Parkway. This option received only 5.9% of the 446 responses. What is most interesting about this survey, are the next choices because they represent a clear and dramatic shift from the opinions expressed in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. In 1997, it was clear that the participants who helped draft that Plan felt that Route 50 should remain exactly where it is today, but with significant access and intersection improvements, as well as improvements/enhancements to the appearance of buildings along this corridor. During the public-input phase of both the 2004 and this Plan, however, this option was not nearly so supported. In the online survey conducted for this Plan only 13.1% of the respondents indicated that Route 50 "was not a problem". 24.8% recommend keeping it where it is but constructing overpasses or underpasses. The leading option was to construct a Salisbury-style bypass around Easton, selected by 36.6% of the 763 respondents to this question.

There are attractive advantages to this option. For instance, it would in essence make the existing Route 50 in Easton a local road. Gone would be the waits through multiple signal cycles. There would be no more being trapped in places like South Beechwood, Clifton, or even Stoney Ridge because traffic is bumper-to-bumper and slow moving. If this scenario were to unfold, Route 50 could be reduced in width which would offer tremendous opportunities to enhance the design of this corridor. Those travelers who needed to stop in Easton for services would be directed down this new “Business 50” and those who did not would continue on around our community on the new bypass.

A word or two should be said about this proposed bypass. A number of people who participated in the Update process were under the impression that the bypass that we are talking about here would essentially be the Eastside Collector previously referenced in earlier versions of this Plan. That road has been stricken from this Plan, but it was only ever intended to connect neighborhoods on the east side of Town and provide a much needed alternate means of travel to the congested Route 50 or the meandering, generally poorly constructed and/or maintained Dover Neck – Manadier-Black Dog Alley routes. The bypass that we are referring to here would be on the scope and scale of the one around Salisbury and would pass well to the east of the existing Town and the Future Growth Area.

So how do we reconcile these conflicting realities/possibilities and effectuate a bypass around Easton? At this time about the best that we can do is plant the seed of this idea and the best place to do that is here in this Comprehensive Plan. Thus it will be supported as a long-range option. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the State for landscaping enhancements, intersection improvements, and access management along the existing Route 50 corridor through Easton.

Another commonly expressed transportation problem in the Town is east-west access. This has been a long-standing problem and, as discussed above, was part of the reason for building the Easton Parkway. The Parkway does work well for travelers from the west who want to go north or south without having to travel through Town. However, for travelers who want to move between the East and West sides of town, there is no particularly efficient route.

There have been some recent improvements that help with the issue of east-west (i.e. local) traffic. For example, the recently completed synchronization of traffic signals along Route 50 provides longer crossing time for east-west traffic.

This difficulty in moving in an east-west direction is largely at the root of many neighborhood-level traffic concerns. At one time or the other in recent years, residents in St. Aubin's, the East End neighborhood, and the Goldsborough Street corridor have complained about inordinate volumes of traffic. The reason is that the current east-west path through Town routes traffic through residential neighborhoods. If an alternative existed, these neighborhood complaints would lessen. Alternatives for East-West travel are discussed later in the Planned Transportation Improvements Map section of this chapter.

One proposed improvement that could provide significant relief to the east-west traffic problem is the relocation of MD 309 to the point where the former railroad crosses US Rte. 50. The new 309 would follow the rail line for a short distance before rejoining its current route.

This move is necessitated by a desire to get this intersection away from its current location immediately adjacent to the airport where a grade-separated interchange would pose a major aviation hazard. The State Highway Administration proposed this concept to local officials as a means to improve safety at the U.S. 50 and Airport Road intersection. The concept has since been endorsed by both Town and County officials as well as regional

elected leaders, in that the SHA continue and advance further planning for this improvement. The benefit to east-west traffic in Easton is that the proposed interchange would also include linking the Easton Parkway with the Paper Run Road via a grade separated interchange, thereby providing significant relief, for the East-West movement on the north side of Town.

Airport

Easton is fortunate to have air service within town limits. The Easton Airport is a County-owned facility located at the northern end of the Town just west of Old Centreville Road (MD Rte. 662) and south of Airport Road. Primary access to the airport is via U.S. Rte. 50. The County Council and an Airport Manager manage the operation of the Airport with the assistance of a five member Airport Advisory Board appointed by the County Council.

The operational characteristics of the Airport may be summarized by the following information taken directly from the Airport section of the Talbot County web page:

Operational Statistics

According to the Maryland Aviation Administration, ESN is one of the top three busiest general aviation airports in the state. The operational statistics below detail the airport's based aircraft and annual aircraft operations.

Based Aircraft

Single-engine aircraft 125
Multi-engine aircraft 21
Corporate Jets 13
Helicopters 3
Total Aircraft 161

Annual Aircraft Operations
Local GA 20%
Transient GA 65%
Military 4%
Air Taxi 11%
Total Operations 51,015

Airport Operators

Air Repair
410-822-2999

WestAir Aviation (Maintenance, Avionics, Sales, Service, FAA certified repair stations)
Repair Station LI1D297K
410-763-7985

Clark Transportation (Limos, shuttles)
410-822-6335

Easton Aviation, LLC (Charters, Rentals, Flight Training)
410-822-8181
888-454-5909

East Coast Flight Services (Domestic & International Charter)
410-820-6633
410-770-9093

Easton Jet Service
410-820-8770

Maryland Air (Charters, Rentals, Flight Training)
410-822-0400
800-451-5693

With the growth of Easton Airport there have increasingly come conflicts between the airport and its neighbors as a result of the increase in traffic, noise, etc. In response to this conflict, Talbot County has instituted special zoning requirements for County lands surrounding the airport. In addition, the County has obtained several avigation easements

on properties adjacent to the facility that essentially prohibit any use or activity that would interfere with flight operations. The County plans to acquire more aviation easements as opportunities arise in the future.

Much of the land surrounding the Airport lies within the Town of Easton. This area is not subject to any special airport-related zoning requirements at this time. This is an option that could perhaps be added in a future revision of the Town's Zoning Ordinance. In the meantime, all of the land immediately surrounding the airport is zoned for industrial uses. Provided that airport clear zones are respected and that uses are restricted to something like warehousing or storage on those properties potentially at risk to an aircraft accident, this should be sufficient to minimize future conflicts in this area.

In another area, the residential areas of North Easton and County land surrounding the northern part of Easton, the conflict is not the potential for accidents as much as it is the inconvenience created by the increased air traffic. This calls for sacrifice on the part of both parties. Residents of these areas live in the proximity of an airport and that does in fact create a certain amount of nuisance, including noise, fumes, and vibrations. On the other hand, the airport should do its part to minimize such impacts on these areas by channeling its growth and the associated nuisances towards the industrial and undeveloped neighboring properties as much as possible. The airport does not always have a say in terms of where it is going to grow as evidenced by the continuing struggle to find land for an extended or longer runway. The Airport does, however, have some decisions under its control, for example the length of the runway, and these decisions should be made with an eye toward minimizing impacts on residents as much as possible.

The mission statement of the Airport contains a succinct statement of its goals. In part, it reads as follows:

Talbot County's Easton Airport is and will remain the Mid-Shore's premier non-commercial general aviation airport providing outstanding service and support for its private, corporate and government tenants, transient aircraft users and the Talbot County community at large. It will be a good neighbor by being sensitive to environmental concerns and will support the educational mission of the schools, emergency and medical evacuation services, and environmental and other law enforcement activities. It will strive always to ensure security and safety to persons and property on the ground and in the air and to further the goals of Talbot County's Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to the transportation role of the Airport, it also plays an important economic role. It is an important source of employment, with 40 on-site businesses employing 150 persons. Furthermore, based on a 2005 study by the Maryland Aviation Administration, the Airport directly and indirectly generated \$20.6 million in personal income, \$21.8 million in business revenues, \$7.7 million in local purchases, and \$2.1 million in tax revenues.

Port

Port facilities for the Town of Easton are provided at Easton Point. Easton Point is a triangular-shaped piece of land surrounded on two-sides (and at the point) by water. The area generally referred to as Easton Point extends east to the Easton Parkway. Much of the land on Easton Point is not within the Town of Easton. The exceptions are the Town Public Works Facility, the Talbot County Public Works Facility, the Londonderry Retirement Community and a few small intervening parcels.

The present mix of uses on Easton Point is quite diverse. Right on the point is a small marina with a small restaurant, and a public boat ramp. Both are heavily utilized.

There are also some industrial uses that still rely on the river for deliveries of bulk materials. There are a limited number of commercial uses including two gasoline stations. Nearer to the Parkway are the aforementioned Retirement Community and the County Public Works Facility, which is in the process of closing. The intervening parcels consist of fairly low-end housing and the Town Public Works Facility.

The future role of Easton's port facilities is clouded. A great many people have suggested that this area has tremendous redevelopment potential, although no one has come forth with a proposal to annex and redevelop it. If this ever comes to be, the future of the port is most likely a mixed use project with a strong recreational component to include uses such as an expanded marina, boat ramp, and a waterfront park or open space with less emphasis on truly industrial uses. Higher density (i.e. Townhouse or apartment) residential and commercial uses would also seem to be an appropriate part of the mix in any redevelopment plan.

Rail

Rail service in Easton and in all of Talbot County has been discontinued for several years. The remaining rights-of-way have generally either been retained by the State Rail Administration or reverted to private property owners. This makes the restoration of rail service unlikely during the planning period.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

Transportation Plans often focus almost exclusively on the highways of a community, with perhaps a little attention directed to air, rail, and/or port service. What is often totally neglected is the most fundamental mode of transportation, walking, and the system to accommodate these pedestrians, sidewalks.

The older sections of Easton have long had sidewalks and recently some parts of this area have undergone sidewalk and streetscape improvement projects. Since the early

1980's, the Planning and Zoning Commission has required sidewalks as one of the elements of infrastructure necessary to approve a subdivision. The problem areas are those that developed in the interim, primarily during the 1950's, 60's and 70's. In these areas there are no sidewalks and pedestrians are forced to use the roadway. Obviously this is not the safest situation. Areas such as these are prime locations for the Town to retroactively install sidewalks.

Bicycles

In recent years planning for bicycle travel has become more important. Bicycle path design and construction is one of the most frequently used projects for Federal Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) monies. Such projects may not be as high profile as a light rail or subway system, but they are imminently more affordable and can potentially be just as effective in spreading the total transportation demand among a wider variety of modes of travel.

The State is also interested in promoting bicycle travel. One of the mandates of the Growth Act is that Transportation elements of Comprehensive Plans must now address pedestrian and bicycle trails as potential modes of travel.

In that vein, the Town adopted the **“Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan”** in 1999. This Plan has been updated concurrent with this overall Comprehensive Plan. A copy is included in the Appendix to the Plan and it should be considered part and parcel of this Plan. This Plan was drafted by Judy Grillo and an advisory committee comprised of members of WalkBikeTalbot, a local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy group.

As stated in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, its guiding principles are that Easton will:

- Provide quality pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

- Provide all its citizens, regardless of age or ability, with accessibility and mobility.
- Further transportation policies that enhance quality of life, support livable, in-town land use and encourage neighborhood preservation.
- Lead Talbot County in promoting environmentally-friendly transportation policies.
- Ensure accessible, reliable and safe transportation for older and disabled citizens.
- Develop innovative local and regional transit options.

The purpose of the Plan is stated as:

This is a long-range plan which identifies proposed new and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities for the Town of Easton. It identifies a strategy to implement the plan and also a number of education and promotion actions to improve conditions and facilities, and encourage walking and bicycling as a means of transportation and recreation. The goal is to provide a roadmap for the next 5-10 years so that Easton can prioritize the limited funding available for infrastructure improvements and improve access for persons with disabilities, older adults, pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Plan includes a number of recommendations for physical improvements to the Town's Bicycle/Pedestrian infrastructure. The Maps on the following two pages depict the location of these suggested improvements. There is one map depicting the Bike routes proposed in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan and one showing proposed improvements to the Pedestrian System. The changes are described more completely in the Plan contained in the Appendix. In short the Bicycle Routes build on the Rail/Trail and include recommended improvements/upgrades to a number of Town Streets to make them more suitable for Bicycling. Likewise the Pedestrian improvements include both recommended intersection improvements/new

crosswalks and proposed extensions or creations of the Town's sidewalk system. There is also one proposed Bicycle Route that is outside the limits of the map. It follows Black Dog Alley which in part forms the eastern boundary of the Town's ultimate Growth Area.

Public Transportation

The Town of Easton does not offer any form of Public Transportation. This is not expected to change during the Planning period. However, Delmarva Community Services offers a Delmarva Community Transit service to which the Town regularly contributes. Delmarva Community Transit operates two fixed routes in the Town of Easton (routes C and D). The hours of operation are from 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. A St. Michaels Shuttle runs between 6:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

In FY '08 ridership on Route C was 14,046 and on Route D was 5,588. Officials from Delmarva Community Services have indicated that there was an obvious increase in ridership in March/April of 2008, coinciding with the rapid escalation of gasoline prices that was occurring at that time.

While little, if anything significantly more sophisticated in the realm of public transportation is expected to be feasible to accommodate Easton's future growth, we should not dismiss such possibilities out-of-hand. An expanded transit system from Delmarva Community Transit (or someone else for that matter) is certainly not undesirable from the Town's perspective. Also, we should initiate discussions with the appropriate State Transportation officials concerning the need/desirability for demand management strategies (e.g. park and ride lots). A number of people have been observed utilizing some of our businesses parking lots informally for park and ride. It may be appropriate to establish an officially designated lot for this purpose.

TRANSPORTATION MAP

Proposed improvements, enhancements, and expansions to Easton's transportation system are presented graphically on the **Transportation Map**. The Transportation Map depicts some 24 proposed Improvements which are briefly described below. In most cases

neither the timing of these improvements nor the exact nature of the improvements is known at this time. Generally they will occur in association with development of adjacent property. Similarly they will be paid for by the developers of adjacent properties unless they become specifically identified and budgeted projects of either the Town, Talbot County, the State of Maryland, or some combination thereof, or are identified by the Town as one of the projects to be paid for with the Transportation component of the Town's impact fees.

(1) Revised MD Rte 309 tie to US Rte 50 – A high priority of both the Town of Easton and Talbot County is the redesign and relocation of this intersection which is presently located immediately east of the Airport. The proposed plan is to move this intersection south to the Rte 50/Rte 322 intersection and to make it a grade-separated interchange. This would have the added benefit of creating the first means of crossing Rte 50 without being stuck at a traffic signal and enabling traffic from west of Rte 50 to access the Easton Commons shopping area more easily.

(2) Proposed Bridge Connecting Rte 322 – See above

(3) East Side Residential Collector Grid – The issue which generated the most interest in this iteration of the Comprehensive Plan Update process, was undoubtedly a road identified in the 2004 Plan as the East Side Collector Road. Following much debate and discussion, the Planning Commission decided to terminate a portion of it (Beechwood Drive as it travels through Easton Club East) at the northern boundary of Easton Club East. Instead what is now proposed is the establishment of a gridded street system on the eastern side of Town, replicating the street system of the older parts of Easton. There is no single collector road proposed.

This street system is proposed for a number of reasons, many of which have been discussed elsewhere in this Plan. Two are most important. First, such a system provides better access within and between different neighborhoods. Second, it is our belief that this sort of road system will facilitate the kind of urban-type of development we want to see as described throughout this Plan. There is evidence to suggest that the arterial/collector road hierarchical system encourages the suburban-style of development that we so adamantly oppose. For all of these reasons and others specified throughout this Plan, the grid system should be established for new development on the eastern side of Town. However, it should be implemented with sensitivity to existing neighborhoods. Given this and the fact that little, if any, development is expected to occur during this Planning period on the east side of Town (except possibly for some portion of the Brooks Farm), this issue should be further developed through the preparation of a Small Area or Specialty Plan that focuses on the issue of connectivity and traffic and circulation on the east side of Town.

(4) Service Road East Side of Route 50 – A service road is proposed running behind the businesses fronting on Route 50 between Matthewstown and Chapel Roads. This would allow for travel between the various businesses on Route 50 without having to actually re-enter and exit Route 50. This helps address one of the problems of Rte. 50, that of serving as both a local road and a major through road on the same stretch as it travels through Easton.

(5) Chapel Road/Route 50 Intersection Improvement – Traffic capacity improvements for this intersection is the highest priority project in the Talbot County Consolidated Transportation Program. The exact nature of these improvements is unknown and will depend on the nature of the further

development of the “Easton Commons” site, as well as the development of the lands between Chapel Road and Mulberry Drive. A recent improvement is the introduction of split phasing of the signal at this intersection.

(6) RTC Park Property Access - The Town should develop a plan for the development and use of the parcel known as the RTC Park. Part of this plan should include the identification of the most appropriate means of accessing (and possibly traversing) the property.

(7) West Side Service Road – This mirrors the improvement described for the east side in number 4 above. It involves the extension of Calvert Street into the RTC property and thence northward to Chapel Road.

(8) East/West Connector - A proposal to improve east-west access is outlined. It involves the extension of Marlboro Avenue to Creamery Lane. The traffic would then turn onto Aurora Park Drive, cross Aurora to Magnolia, which would extend across the RTC property and eventually over to Route 50 in the vicinity of the current Taylor Contractors property. It is shown as continuing across Rte. 50 to an extension of Elliott Road. It can also tie into Mulberry Drive via the service road system described in number 4 above. This project has been thoroughly studied since it was first included in the 2004 Plan. A portion of the Impact Fees that we began collecting a few years ago are dedicated to this project. It will likely, however, still be some time until sufficient funds are available to initiate this project and it may have to proceed in logical segments rather than being built all at once.

(9) Goldsborough Street/Ocean Gateway Intersection Improvements – This intersection is one of the worst, if not the worst, in Easton. There are two measures of an intersection’s effectiveness. This intersection currently fails on

one of the two measures in the morning peak and on both measures during the afternoon peak. Worse yet, it continues to fail by one of the measures, even if the East-West Connector Road is built, which would presumably divert much of the traffic off of this road. Clearly more improvements are necessary and at least as a first step, additional land should be acquired so that all three movements on Goldsborough can be accommodated from lanes dedicated for each as far west as possible.

(10) June Way Extension – This is a simple extension of the existing June Way in the Waylands Subdivision to what would be an extension of Fisher Range Road coming south out of Matthewstown Run to form part of the East Side Residential Collector Grid system described in item 3 above.

(11) Clifton Road Improvements – This proposed improvement connects Dover Road and Chesapeake Avenue (see item 21 below) and would potentially connect to North, South, and Middle Clifton offering these three residential subdivisions an alternate to Route 50.

(12) Intersection Improvements, 5-corners - A roundabout is proposed at “Five Corners” (the intersection of Washington, Harrison, Idlewild, and Peachblossom) beside Idlewild Park.

(13) Dutchman’s Lane road/intersection Improvements – Improvements are designed and some have already been made to Dutchman’s Lane. Additional improvements should begin to be constructed this year (2009) to make this heavily travelled road safer and more pedestrian friendly.

(14) Connector, Tristan Drive to Oxford Road – This proposed improvement would connect Tristan Drive and ultimately Easton Parkway with Oxford Road

(MD 33) thus eliminating the need to travel all the way to the Oxford Road Easton Parkway intersection and shaving off several minutes from this trip.

(15) through (18) Rails to Trails extensions – Extensions to the Rails to Trails system are proposed in every direction. The current trail runs north-south through Town and it is proposed to be extended across Route 50 on the north to follow the rail bed and across Easton Parkway on the South to tie into the Trail system of Cooke’s Hope and surrounding properties. The trail is also proposed to be established in an east-west direction by building it concurrent with and alongside of Chesapeake Avenue (see item 21 below) and along the former Claiborne rail line running to the west, across the Easton Parkway and across the Tred Avon River over a bridge already funded by the developers of Easton Village.

(19) Beechwood Drive Extension – Actually there are two Beechwood Drives and as they are no longer proposed to connect, one of them needs to be renamed. This extension refers to the one that runs adjacent to the Lakelands project. The proposed extension would connect the current end of that portion of Beechwood Drive with Dutchman’s Lane, east of the Easton Club East Subdivision.

(20) Hemlock Lane Extension – This would extend this road which currently dead-ends in the Woods at Stoney Ridge to the aforementioned Beechwood Drive Extension and form part of the East Side Residential Collector Grid System (see item 3 above).

(21) Chesapeake Avenue – Chesapeake Avenue is a proposed new road for which the right-of-way actually exists today (and has existed for quite some time). It would represent the primary source of east-west access for much of the hundreds of undeveloped acres located between Dutchman’s Lane and Chilcutt

Road. An eastern extension of the Rail-Trail is proposed to be co-located with the road, which would intersect Route 50 just north of Idelwild Avenue and could possibly tie in with an extension of Idlewild (see #24 below). In this scenario Idlewild would provide the vehicular intersection with Route 50 while Chesapeake would provide a grade-separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing.

(22) Bay Street – Marlboro Avenue Connector – This proposal would formalize a movement that a number of people are making by traveling a circuitous route through a series of private drives and parking lots between Bay Street and Marlboro Avenue. Talbot County has recently purchased property in the Bay Street Condominiums and should they locate some portion of their government offices there, this road will become significantly more important, not so much as a shortcut between Bay and Marlboro, but for access to these offices.

(23) Industrial Park Road Extension – Industrial Park Road runs through the Clifton Industrial Park which was annexed into the Town in 2007. Concurrent with that annexation, Industrial Park Road was significantly upgraded to Town standards. This proposal would extend this road southward to Chesapeake Avenue. Once this extension is constructed and Chesapeake Avenue is built, along with the residential streets leading to it, it would be possible for people in the Stoney Ridge/Easton Club East/and To-be Developed Farms to travel this system up to Industrial Park Drive to Dover Road and a fully signalized intersection at Teal Drive.

(24) Idlewild Avenue Extension – This proposal would take Idlewild Avenue across Route 50, where it currently ends. Ideally it would also then connect to Chesapeake Avenue (see # 21 above). If feasible, this crossing of Route 50 should

be grade separated, which would also ease traffic on Dutchman's and Dover, the next intersections in either direction.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To provide a functional road and street system for the safe, convenient and efficient movement of people, goods and services among places of residence, employment, shopping and recreation and to provide a circulation system which is compatible with, and promotes, the logical and rational development of the Town of Easton.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Work with State and County officials to expedite the MD 309 relocation.
- ✓ Maximize the capacity, safety, and efficiency of the existing street and highway system.
- ✓ Improve access to, and movement within, the Central Business District.
- ✓ Improve the Route 50 circulation system with an emphasis on a better separation of through and local traffic.
- ✓ Consolidate driveway access points onto Route 50 and develop an intersection control plan that limits left turning movements onto Route 50.
- ✓ Build a network of local roadways and streets to support planned development and existing communities, avoiding using Route 50 for local traffic as much as possible, and providing convenient roadway access from neighborhoods to commercial and business centers.
- ✓ Develop a Small Area Design/Transportation Plan to better understand and describe the options available for creating the most efficient transportation system (for automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians) on the east side of the Town and the Town's future Growth Area.

- ✓ Discourage strip forms of development and instead cluster development at strategic points along Route 50.
- ✓ Improve east-west access through Town.
- ✓ Work cooperatively with Talbot County and the State of Maryland to improve east-west movements at specific intersections (i.e. Goldsborough and Dover)
- ✓ Require future development to occur based on a gridded street system which includes accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles.
- ✓ Where possible, retrofit existing subdivisions with road connections within and between subdivisions to more closely approximate a gridded street system and increase connectivity between neighborhoods.
- ✓ Reduce the growth in the number of commercial accesses on Route 50.
- ✓ Work diligently with the State Highway Administration to improve all roads that intersect with Route 50.
- ✓ Improve the appearance of uses bordering Route 50 and concentrate efforts on correcting functional problems on the existing Route 50 Corridor rather than on rerouting this traffic onto Easton Parkway.
- ✓ Support, in the long-term, any State plans to construct a Route 50 Bypass around the east side of Town. This would be coupled with the conversion of the existing Route 50 through Town to a boulevard-type road.
- ✓ Enhance the Town's "Public Transportation" system.
- ✓ Work with the appropriate State Transportation officials to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a park and ride lot in Easton.

GOAL: To expand the Town's Trail system and create more and safer opportunities for people to walk and bicycle throughout the Town.

OBJECTIVES:

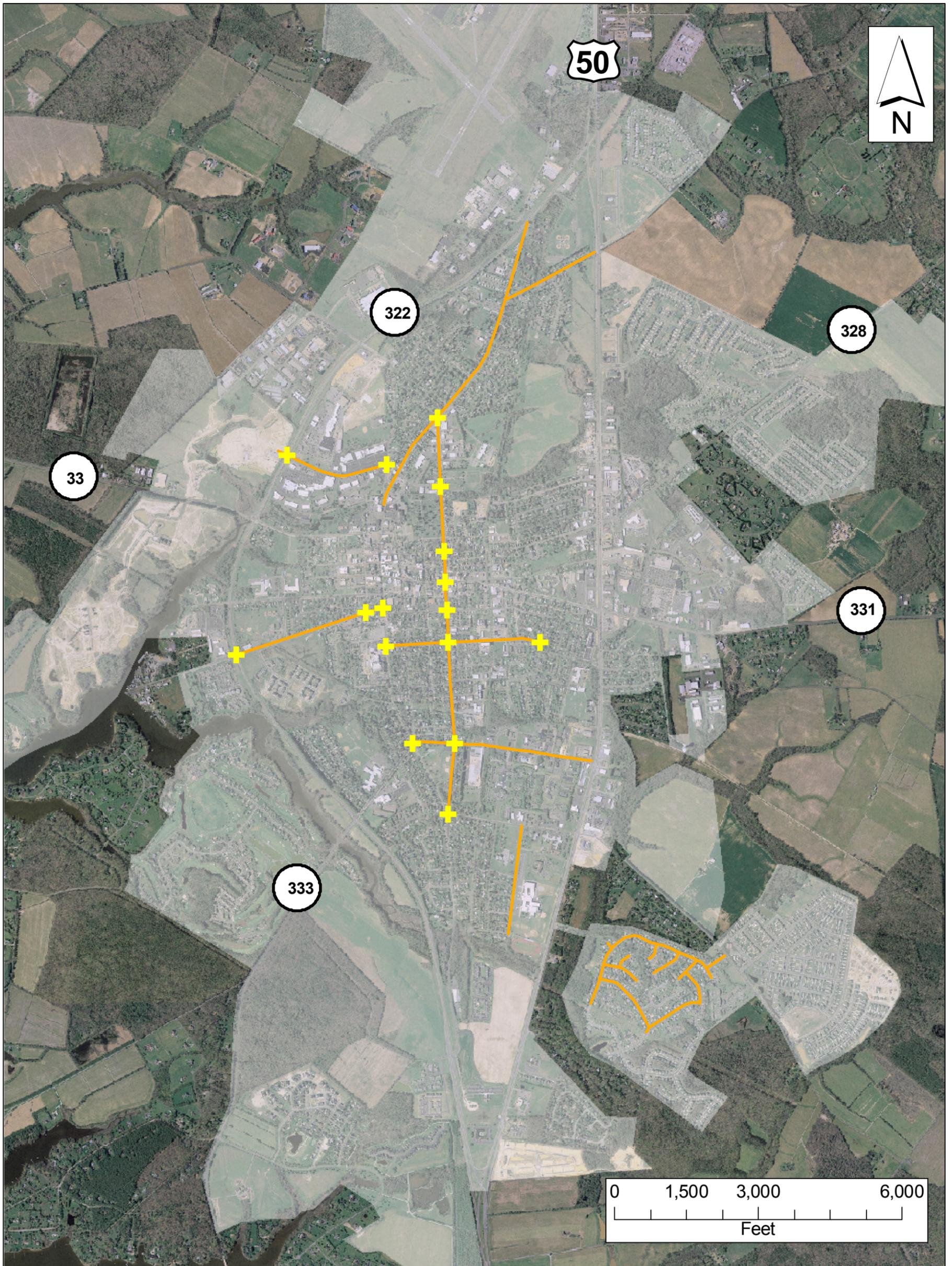
- ✓ Work with the MD Department of Transportation and find whatever grants may be available to construct a bicycle/pedestrian grade-separated crossing of Route 50 at Chesapeake Avenue.
- ✓ Implement the Goals and Objectives of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- ✓ Work with Talbot County to coordinate and connect Town projects with County (and inter-county) projects to become part of a larger network of pedestrian/bicycle trails.
- ✓ Include as part of any Route 50 or Easton Parkway intersection improvements, the addition of safe and effective crosswalks.

GOAL: To provide for the growth of Easton Airport in a manner that is least intrusive on neighboring residents.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Control development adjacent and near the Easton Municipal Airport so as to not allow incompatible land uses to develop which could possibly restrict the future growth of air service and facilities.
- ✓ Work with the Easton Airport, possibly in review of the Airport Master Plan, to encourage the use of whatever methods or policies might alleviate impact on all residential areas of the Town in general, and those adjacent to the Airport in particular.

Proposed Pedestrian System



<p>+ Proposed Crosswalk</p> <p>— Proposed Sidewalk</p>		<h3>Transportation Map</h3> <p>Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan Date: 3/23/09 Scale: 1:36,000 Created: Easton Department of Planning</p>
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Proposed Bicycle Routes



← - - - → Proposed Bicycle Route



Bicycle & Pedestrian Action Plan

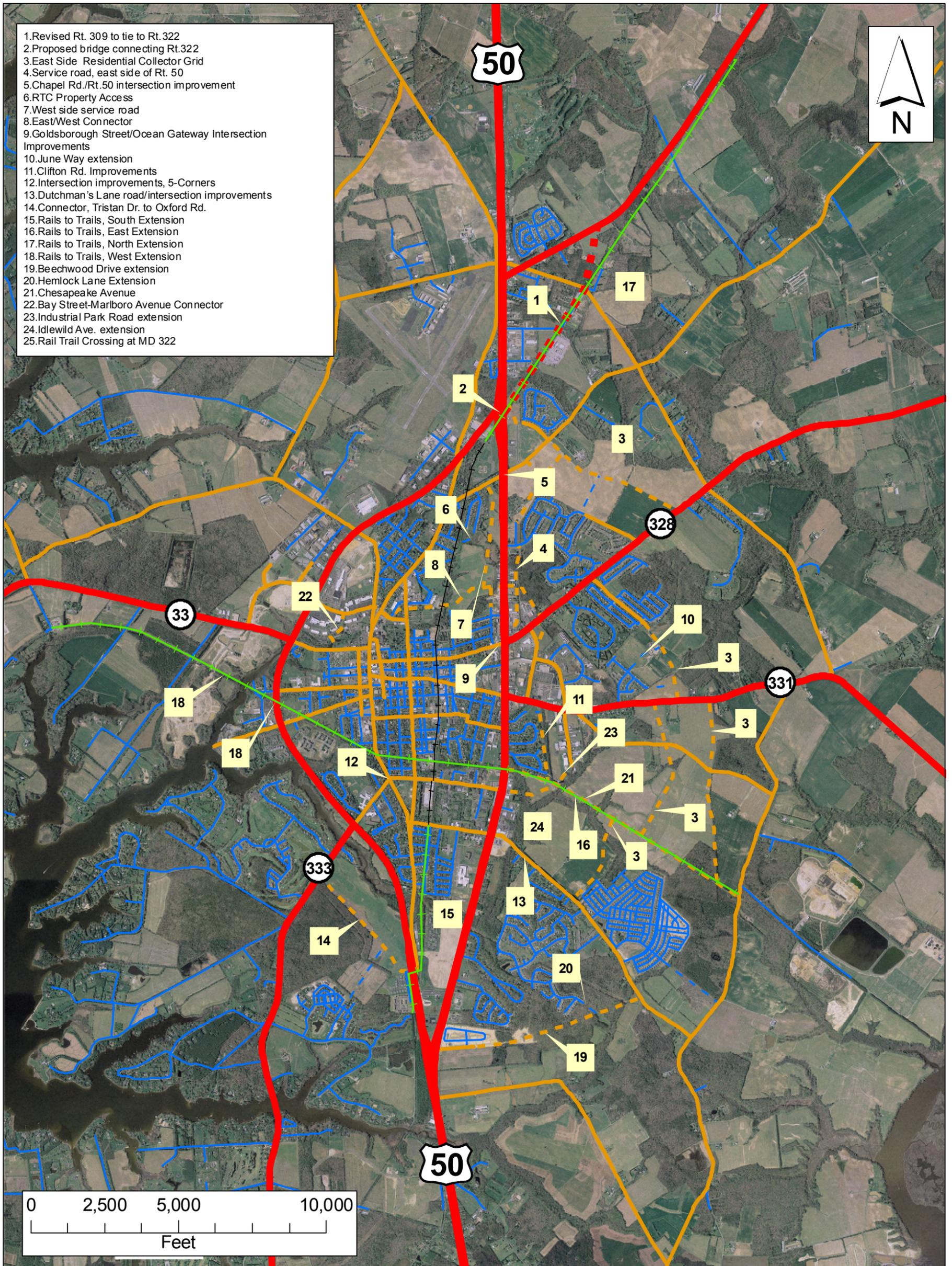
Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Date: 1/12/10

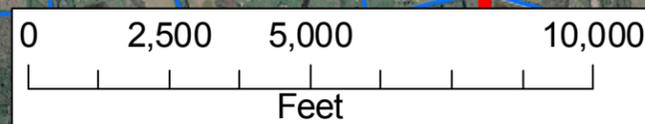
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Created: Easton Department of Planning

Transportation



1. Revised Rt. 309 to tie to Rt. 322
2. Proposed bridge connecting Rt. 322
3. East Side Residential Collector Grid
4. Service road, east side of Rt. 50
5. Chapel Rd./Rt. 50 intersection improvement
6. RTC Property Access
7. West side service road
8. East/West Connector
9. Goldsborough Street/Ocean Gateway Intersection Improvements
10. June Way extension
11. Clifton Rd. Improvements
12. Intersection improvements, 5-Corners
13. Dutchman's Lane road/intersection improvements
14. Connector, Tristan Dr. to Oxford Rd.
15. Rails to Trails, South Extension
16. Rails to Trails, East Extension
17. Rails to Trails, North Extension
18. Rails to Trails, West Extension
19. Beechwood Drive extension
20. Hemlock Lane Extension
21. Chesapeake Avenue
22. Bay Street-Marlboro Avenue Connector
23. Industrial Park Road extension
24. Idlewild Ave. extension
25. Rail Trail Crossing at MD 322



	Existing Arterials		Other Existing Streets
	Proposed Arterials		Other Proposed Streets
	Existing Collector Streets		Existing Rail Trail
	Proposed Collector Streets		Proposed Rail Trail



Transportation Map

Town of Easton 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Date: 3/23/09 Scale: 1:36,000

Created: Easton Department of Planning

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Providing jobs and the necessary means to enter and advance in the work force is the subject of the Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. It considers such things as the existing and desired job mix, the level and diversity of job training, the appropriate level of government involvement in attracting major employers, and the future of the downtown as a provider of jobs.

BACKGROUND

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan noted that the Economic Development Chapter of any Plan generally relies fairly heavily on Tables, Graphs, and Charts. Highlights from three tables included in the 1997 Plan from the 1990 Census include:

- o Income was significantly lower and poverty significantly higher in Easton than in either Talbot County or the State of Maryland.
- o While Talbot County exceeded the State Median Income, Easton did not.
- o Poverty levels in Easton were high across all age groups.
- o Easton exceeded both the State and Talbot County in percentage of students enrolled in Private Schools.
- o The percentage of both high school and college graduates was lower in Easton than in either Talbot County or the State.
- o Both Talbot County and Easton had lower unemployment rates than the State, although the County's was much lower than Easton's.
- o The percentage of Easton Residents who used carpools in order to get to work was higher than both Talbot County's and the State's.

- o Public Transportation usage was almost non-existent in Easton and Talbot County.
- o Easton had a very high percentage of females with young children in the labor force.

The 1997 Plan suggested that some immediate implementation options come to mind in reviewing this list. For example, with relatively high poverty and low education levels, greater exposure to high school equivalency or GED classes seems appropriate. Second, with a high percentage of workers willing to use carpools, but with almost no public transportation available, it seems as if Easton residents might be more inclined to support some sort of public transportation than might be the case in other rural communities where usage rates are generally quite low. Finally, the high percentage of working mothers suggests a need for more day care opportunities and perhaps other support services for young children and their parents.

Those figures were from the 1990 Census. Table 13 summarizes the available economic data from the 2000 Census. There are some changes. For example according to the Census Talbot County went from exceeding the State median income in 1990, to being less than the State in 2000.

Table 13 - Select Economic Characteristics

	EASTON	TALBOT CO.	MARYLAND
PER CAPITA INCOME (1999)	\$21,250	\$28,164	\$25,614
MEDIAN INCOME (1999)			
HOUSEHOLDS	\$36,464	\$43,532	\$52,868
FAMILIES	\$48,825	\$53,214	\$61,876
INDIVIDUALS W/ INCOME IN 1999 BELOW POVERTY LEVEL			
ALL AGES			
NUMBER	1,314	2,771	438,676
PERCENT	11.8	8.3	8.5
RELATED CHILDREN			
UNDER 18 YEARS			
NUMBER	383	755	135,892
PERCENT	15.0	10.5	10.3
5-17 YEARS			
NUMBER	303	574	95,561
PERCENT	16.4	10.5	9.8
PERSONS 65 YEARS AND OVER			
NUMBER	229	520	48,854
PERCENT	12.3	7.9	8.5
FAMILIES WITH INCOME IN 1999 BELOW POVERTY LEVEL			
NUMBER	199	510	83,232
PERCENT	7.0	5.3	6.1

Source: 2000 Census, U.S. Census Bureau

Table 14 below provides a broader comparison of Easton, Talbot County, and the State of Maryland in a number of economic and non-economic characteristics.

Table 14 - Comparison of Easton, Talbot County and State of Maryland in Selected Demographic Characteristics from the 2000 Census			
Subject	Easton	Talbot County	Maryland
Total Population	11,708	33,812	5,296,486
% Male/Female	45.7/54.3	47.7/52.3	48.3/51.7
Median Age	38.6	43.3	36.0
% < 18	23.6	21.7	25.6
% 65+	19.2	20.4	11.3
% White	71.8	82.0	64.0
% Black or African American	23.5	15.4	27.9
Total Households	5,031	14,307	1,980,859
Average Household Size	2.22	2.32	2.61
Total Housing Units	5,399	16,500	2,145,283
% Owner-occupied	53.6	71.6	67.7
% High School Graduate or higher	81.4	84.4	83.8
% Bachelor's Degree or higher	23.4	27.8	31.4
% born in MD	64.7	62.4	49.3
Average (mean) commute	19.0 minutes	22.4 minutes	31.2 minutes
Median Household Income	\$36,464	\$43,532	\$52,868
Median value of owner-occupied homes	\$118,800	\$149,200	\$146,000
% lived in home 10+ years	25.3	37.3	36.5
Growth Rate (%) in 90's	24.9	10.7	10.8

DIVERSITY

The concept of diversity in the Economic Development Strategy of Easton is vital for many reasons. The most obvious is the desire to avoid over-reliance on any one business or type of industry. This recently took on renewed importance in Easton with the announcement that Black and Decker, one of the Town's largest employers, would be ceasing operations in 2003. Without a diverse economy, this could be devastating to Easton's local economy.

The concept of diversity becomes especially important in tough economic times. In 2009, as of the drafting of this Update in April, Easton has lost an Automobile Dealership, Bob Smith Automotive, and a printing company, Cadmus. Cadmus was a major employer for an industry that is quickly losing its presence in the United States, however; Cadmus' employees were well-trained and very good in the specialty work that they performed. Thus there is a relatively skilled (and specialized) workforce out-of-work in Easton. Bob Smith Automotive provided automotive goods and services and served as a significant employer in the Town. Both businesses will be sorely missed, but fortunately the Town did not have all of its economic eggs in either of those businesses or even in those particular sectors of the economy. If we had made the mistake in focusing too singularly on the printing and publishing business or in automobile dealerships, we would be in an even worse situation today.

Furthermore, as unfortunate as it is to lose two major employers like Cadmus and Bob Smith Automotive, it does present an economic development opportunity. It appears (as of the Drafting of this Plan in September of 2009) that the Bob Smith property has been purchased by another automobile sales business and will reopen as such in the not-too-distant future. The Cadmus site is somewhat more challenging in that it was built for a business that is in low-demand today. Additionally it is not in a traditional industrial

location. However the space appears to be flexible enough to be suited to adaptive reuse for a number of possible businesses or industries. It is also located in an area characterized by medically-related uses and elder-care. Something that fits in with these types of uses would certainly be compatible.

An important and growing segment of Easton’s economy is tourism. Diversity is important to this segment as well. Simply put, the more things there are to do in Easton, the more tourist-appeal the Town has. Similarly, the more Easton differs from other communities in our region, the more it stands out from those communities and thus the more attractive it becomes to the tourist looking for something a little different.

The level of diversity in the local job base is illustrated by the following list of businesses in Easton with more than 80 employees:

<u>Business</u>	<u>Number of Employees*</u>
Shore Health System	1,700
Shore Bancshares	350
William Hill Manor, Inc.	300
Quality Health Strategies	250
Wal-Mart	220
The Pines-Genesis Eldercare	186
Pro Temps Staffing Solutions	175
Global Strategies, Defense Eng.	150
Acme Markets	145
Chesapeake Publishing Corp.	140
Giant Food	135
Lowes Home Center, Inc.	130
McDonald’s	119
Wildlife International, Ltd.	95
Celeste Packaging	90
Sea Watch International	80

* - Based on data supplied by the Talbot County Economic Development Officer, September 23, 2009

This table indicates the relatively small number of major employers in Easton. With a lack of such large-scale employers, Easton's job base is already fairly diverse in terms of number of employers. Future diversification might therefore be focused more on attracting different types of businesses.

One area which may play a significant role in Easton's future is Environmental Technology. This is due to the fact that this particular segment of the economy has been identified by the Talbot County Economic Development Commission as the future basis of Talbot's economy. Their ultimate goal involves Talbot County becoming something akin to the Research Triangle or the Silicon Valley of this type of business. Clearly, with an estimated 75-80% of the jobs in Talbot County being located in Easton, the Town would play a large role in hosting such companies.

DOWNTOWN

Easton's downtown (or Town Center as the area is sometimes described) is a tremendous community asset. Concern over its viability and its future are evident amongst not only the existing downtown business community, but also residents, visitors, and the Town Government.

Easton's downtown is unique in several respects. Most notably is that it continues to function as a healthy and vibrant center for entertainment, commerce, and government. So many downtowns today are either largely abandoned or are struggling to find an identity. Easton's downtown is also unique in that it has been wonderfully preserved at a time when many downtowns are physically deteriorating.

Concern over the future of downtown led the Mayor and Town Council to form the Easton Business Management Authority (EBMA) in 1993. This organization was founded to represent the business community of all of Easton and to work in partnership with the Town government on business issues. The impetus for forming the organization and the

group's initial focus was concern over the future of the downtown area. One of the first tasks of the group was to work with a consultant on a study of the downtown, or as it was renamed, the Town Center. The consultant, LDR International, Inc., submitted a Revitalization Strategy for the Easton Town Center in July 1994. This study included a number of recommendations ranging from simple policy changes to bold new physical improvements. EBMA has been working diligently with the Town to implement a number of these changes since 1994. Such things as the Farmer's Market, the revamped parking management, the more active and visible promotion of special events, and the hiring of a full time Executive Director for EBMA are all consistent with the Plan.

In 2000, rather than directly funding EBMA again, the Mayor and Council decided a different approach might better serve the Town. Eventually, they created a new Town Department Head-level position of Economic Development Manager. This position is responsible for assisting existing Town businesses and attracting new ones. The position also serves as the Town's Main Street Manager. Easton is also assisted by the Talbot County Economic Development Commission, the Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders in attracting and retaining business in the Town.

Easton was fortunate enough to be selected a Main Street Community in the program's initial year in Maryland. The Main Street program is both an honor recognizing the quality of Easton's downtown, as well as a tool to help ensure that it remains the special place that it is today. It does this by emphasizing a four-point approach to problem solving by looking at the downtown in terms of Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Promotion. It is a tried and proven system that has worked in hundreds of communities across the nation and it should remain the foundation for downtown Easton's future economic development.

There are a great variety of opinions over what downtown Easton's future should include. One particular area which received a fair amount of attention in the last Comprehensive Plan, and which continues to grow as a key segment of Easton's economy, is tourism. Tourism continues to hold a great deal of potential for future economic development in Easton. Further, this type of economic development is particularly beneficial for the local community due to the spin-off effects associated with it. For example, say a family of four comes to Easton for a weekend. Besides the obvious impact they have on the economy by staying at a local hotel, other businesses such as restaurants, shops, museums and other attractions all benefit. Furthermore, the increased business realized by these establishments theoretically means that their owners and employees have more money to spend in the local economy. Thus a dollar generated by tourism has the potential to turn-over many times in Easton.

Tourism relates to the Downtown area in several ways. One, it is one of the destinations, undoubtedly the primary destination, for tourists who target Easton as a place to visit. Second and directly related to the first point, the Downtown is the location of many tourist-based uses like restaurants, lodging facilities, and cultural and entertainment uses.

One issue that comes up from time-to-time directly relates to the future of the Downtown and its role in attracting tourists. That is the appropriateness of franchises in this area. On the one hand franchises can fill a void in the Town. On the other hand, they can diminish Easton's uniqueness by helping to make the Town be much like so many other places. For this reason, the role of national franchises in downtown Easton is limited. When one can truly fill a need that local businesses are not meeting, they should be welcomed. However less emphasis should be placed on attracting franchises that would immediately or potentially compete against local businesses. For example, would Easton

be a more unique place with a Starbuck's or Coffee Cat? The Olde Town Creamery or TCBY? Ritz Camera or Hobby Horse? Obviously, the locally owned and operated businesses do more to define a special character than would a franchise that would have Easton be the site of their "store number 3,317." This is not say that such places should or even can be prohibited. They should not, however, be the focus of Easton's Economic Development Strategy.

Another aspect of Downtown is its role as a governmental center. Many Town and County offices and a handful of State offices are located in the Downtown. This is beneficial in a number of ways, plus it makes sense from the perspective of providing such services in the most centralized location in the County. The presence of these government facilities also provides a reliable base of customers for potential downtown businesses. They also attract businesses that rely on frequent interaction with government, such as attorneys, civil engineers and surveyors, title companies, etc...

The Downtown should remain the focal point of governmental activity. In fact, where possible this role should be expanded. Future government offices should be located in the Downtown and in as close proximity to existing offices as possible to develop a true government office complex campus.

Downtown plays such an integral part in what makes Easton unique that from time to time various plans and strategies for its maintenance, preservation, and improvement have been prepared. Earlier the 1994 Plan prepared by LDR International was mentioned. This served the Town well for a number of years, but was becoming outdated. This led to a 2008 Plan by AKRF and Streetworks, LLC. entitled the "Easton Downtown Plan for Infill Development. As the title suggests its focus is on infill development, identifying infill opportunities, suggesting appropriate design standards, and suggesting a number of new projects. Generally speaking it consists of the following ten strategies:

- Enhance Marketing, Branding and Merchandising
- Define Downtown's Edge/Create a Green Ring Around Downtown
- Daylight Tanyard Branch
- Reconnect the Northern and Southern Parts of Downtown
- Focus on Filling-in Building Gaps and Activating the Street at Ground Level
- Strengthen the Existing Retail Core
- Create Contextual and Compatible Development
- Encourage Downtown Residential Development
- Create a Unified Parking Strategy and Parking District
- Coordinate Open Spaces

The Implementation Priorities of this Plan are summarized in the following table:

RECOMMENDATION	TIME FRAME	COST FACTOR	COST RANGE	SPONSOR/COMMENTS
BRANDING AND MERCHANDISING				
Establish dynamic retail inventory	Immediate	low	\$0 to \$10,000	Merchants Association, Historic Easton, Town
Establish working group to track merchandising opportunities	Immediate	low	\$0 to \$10,000	Merchants Association, Historic Easton, Town
Conduct annual merchants/property owners workshop	Short-term	medium	\$25,000	Merchants Association, Historic Easton, Town
GREEN RING IMPLEMENTATION				
Conduct feasibility and design studies for streets	Mid-term	medium	\$50,000 to \$75,000	Town, seek to leverage with transportation infrastructure improvements
Conduct feasibility and design studies for Tanyard Brook	Short-term	high	\$100,000 to \$300,000	Town, seek environmental enhancement grants
Implement capital improvements for Green Ring	Long-term	high	To be determined	Town, seek to leverage with other infrastructure investments
TRAFFIC, PARKING, CIRCULATION				
Crosswalk enhancement and signal improvement study	Short-term	medium	\$25,000 to \$50,000	Town
Crosswalk enhancement and signal implementation	Mid-term	high	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Town, seek to leverage with other transportation improvements
DESIGN GUIDELINES/INFILL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES				
Use guidelines and concepts to work with and review development proposals	Immediate	low	\$0 to \$10,000	Town, Historic Easton
Refine and codify design guidelines	Short-term	medium	\$10,000 to \$50,000	Town, consider visual or form-based code
REVISE/AMEND HISTORIC DISTRICT RESOURCES INVENTORY				
Use study inventory to implement amendments as appropriate	Short-term	low	\$10,000 to \$50,000	Historic Easton, Town

The Easton Downtown Plan for Infill Development is essentially an extension of this Comprehensive Plan. It simply plans for a smaller area and as such can do so in more detail and look into issues more specifically relevant to that area.

One such issue is parking. Parking has been raised as a concern in Easton probably since shortly after the introduction of the automobile to our Town streets. Through the years, numerous studies have been conducted on this issue. They have generally and fairly consistently found that Downtown overall has a more than adequate supply of parking, but that it could potentially be utilized more efficiently by changes to the management of the spaces. These include things like changes to the mix and/or location of metered/free/permit parking, policies regarding maximum length of parking, etc.

While the need for structured parking (i.e. a garage) has never been established, the most recent AKRF study anticipates a significant amount of new parking demand and therefore the likelihood of needing a garage increases. Their study identifies two locations for potential parking garages, one to the east of Talbottown and one on the Town-owned parking lot across the street from Town Hall.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL TOURISM

As mentioned previously, tourism plays a vital role in the economy of Easton and Talbot County and obviously the Eastern Shore in general. Eastern Shore Heritage Inc. (ESHI) is a partnership of government, business and civic organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting the historic, cultural, economic and natural resources of Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties. A management action plan has been prepared to help the four counties and the various municipalities work together and complement each other's resources. This management action plan enabled ESHI to become a Certified Heritage Area and become eligible for tax credits which can be used to further promote ESHI's mission. There are eight interpretive themes that have been identified for heritage

tourism development. Easton is particularly rich in several of these themes, including Colonial and Early National History, Religion, African American Heritage and Small Town Life. Support of ESHI by the Town can only increase the local tourism economy.

According to the Management Plan:

Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area has offered a significant new way to bind the region as a whole. It has stimulated effective regional cooperation to preserve community character and historic resources, and to undertake economic development relating to tourism, the arts, agriculture, and maritime industries. Residents and officials recognize that heritage tourism and preservation are key factors in economic sustainability, bringing increased prosperity, increased property values, new jobs, more entrepreneurs and economic diversity, community pride and care, and revitalized downtown cores that are vibrant and alive.

The Town of Easton is part of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area and thus obviously supports its mission and goals. Cultural tourism has the potential to play a major role in the future economic development of the Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To nurture a healthy and diverse local economy in Easton.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Promote tourism by making Easton a vacation and leisure time destination.
- ✓ Continue to provide Town funding for Economic Development.
- ✓ Work with Talbot County to develop a training program to ensure that Easton's workers are adequately prepared for our job market and that Easton's businesses can hire workers with the proper training.

- ✓ Encourage the diversification of Easton's industrial base and work to reuse existing underutilized industrial and commercial buildings.
- ✓ Prepare for emerging technologies such as computers, telecommunications, and medical/biotechnology by ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support these industries.
- ✓ Work to retain and expand existing businesses and industries.
- ✓ Work with Eastern Shore Heritage Inc. to help promote Easton as a destination for heritage tourism as part of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area.
- ✓ Revise Easton's Zoning Map to ensure that there is an adequate supply of land zoned for the types of businesses we are seeking to attract and evaluate the standards of the Ordinance to ensure that the mapped zoning districts allow these uses.
- ✓ Provide the infrastructure necessary to attract desirable businesses and enable our existing businesses to grow and prosper. This should include the wide-scale availability of broadband internet service which is in the process of being made available throughout the Eastern Shore. Town/EUC officials should do whatever is necessary to ensure that this project is completed to fruition here in Easton.

GOAL: To maintain and, where necessary, recreate a vital Downtown.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Protect the historic character of Easton and support projects and efforts which enhance that character.
- ✓ Support projects that implement the Downtown Plan for Infill Development.

- ✓ Seek grant funding for Town projects recommended in the Downtown Plan for Economic Development.
- ✓ Reinvigorate the Main Street Easton Board of Directors and associated committee structure.
- ✓ Publicize the availability of State and federal tax credits for Historic Preservation and the use of Maryland Smart Codes as a means to rehabilitate historic structures.
- ✓ Encourage national franchises that meet an unfilled need to locate in Downtown Easton.
- ✓ Discourage national franchises that will directly compete with existing locally owned and operated businesses from locating in Downtown Easton.
- ✓ Encourage infill development and commercial rehabilitation and redevelopment in the Downtown as the top priority for future commercial development. The next priority involves redevelopment of those shopping centers located in close proximity to the Town Center followed by those more removed from Downtown. The final and least desirable priority is for new development on Greenfield sites located remote from the Downtown.

GOAL: To work cooperatively with Talbot County to provide an efficient Economic Development Program.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Coordinate the goals and activities of Easton's Economic Development Program with those of the Talbot County Economic Development Commission and the County Tourism Board in order to avoid duplication of effort.

- ✓ Support Talbot County's Economic Development policy of targeting Environmental Technology companies.
- ✓ Work with Talbot County on Economic Development issues of mutual interest, including the development of a collaborative marketing strategy.

GOAL: To strengthen the government services segment of the Downtown Easton economy.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Locate all future Town of Easton governmental services (with the exception of Public Works Facilities) in the Downtown.
- ✓ Encourage Talbot County to locate future County governmental offices in the Downtown.
- ✓ Initiate discussions with the State to locate a State Government multi-service center in Downtown Easton.

MINERAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the law which governs planning and zoning for most local governments, including Easton, requires that Comprehensive Plans include a plan element on mineral resources. The purpose of this element is basically three-fold. First it is to identify undeveloped land that should remain undeveloped until the land can be used to provide or assist in providing a continuous supply of minerals (as defined by another state law). Second, this element should identify appropriate uses for such lands following the extraction of the identified minerals. Finally, this element should incorporate land use policies and recommendations for regulations to balance mineral extraction with other land uses and, to the extent feasible, to prevent the preemption of mineral resources extraction by other uses.

BACKGROUND

Previous Comprehensive Plans in Easton have devoted little attention to mineral resources. The 1989 Comprehensive Plan includes one paragraph that states, among other things, that surface mining of mineral resources does not take place within the Town of Easton and that no potential mineral resources have been identified within Easton. While the former half of this sentence may be true, the latter is not.

There is, in fact, at least one and possibly two, mineral resources located within Easton. Map 8-1 of the 2005 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan identifies Sand and Gravel bearing units. A large portion of eastern Talbot County is identified as having such deposits. The western boundary of the identified area runs directly through the Town of Easton. Based on this map, approximately the eastern one-third to one-half of the Town is

located on potential sand and gravel bearing units. Furthermore, all of the future growth areas to the east of the current Town boundary are similarly located over such units.

Clearly it will not be a policy of the Town to allow for the extraction of sand or gravel within the already developed portions of the Town. However, it may be wise to allow for the extraction of such resources in future growth areas, both those presently located in Talbot County and those already within the Town limits, but as yet undeveloped. Such extraction should be conducted in conjunction with the development of the site as one of the very first steps. There should be no continuous sand and gravel extraction operations within the Town. The identification and use of sand and gravel prior to the development of a given site represents wise use of available resources. To go beyond that to the establishment of ongoing sand and gravel operations would be an unwise promotion or encouragement of incompatible land uses.

A related issue that occurs from time to time in Easton concerns the practice employed by some developers/land-owners whereby the topsoil on a development site is stripped and sold, then the land is developed. If the removed topsoil is not replaced, future homeowners buy into a situation whereby they have very hard, often compacted soil. It is difficult to grow anything in and hard to work in.

In order to mitigate this situation, developers should be required to finish all building lots with topsoil of a depth sufficient to satisfy growing needs for lawns, gardens, and landscaping. This should be made one of the standard requirements for land development. If the cost of replacing the topsoil becomes too prohibitive, then the hope is that it is not removed in the first place.

MINERAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To enable the use of identified mineral resources in appropriate locations as a prerequisite to the eventual development of those sites.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Identify mineral resources on a given site as early as possible in the development review process.
- ✓ Examine Town regulations to insure that mineral extraction is permitted in limited circumstances with appropriate safeguards against undue neighborhood impacts.

GOAL: To ensure that home sites contain topsoil of a quantity and quality necessary to support lawns, gardens, and/or landscaping.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Review the Town's adopted Standard Details to insure that the standard for topsoil on newly developed lots is adequate to support the growth of healthy plant life.

IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

As much as any element in the Comprehensive Plan, this, the Implementation Element, ponders the future. In particular it considers the future that the rest of the Plan envisions and describes the means to make that vision a reality. It also addresses certain requirements of state law. Finally, it touches on the general topic of inter-jurisdictional coordination. Specifically it will describe how Easton's Plan relates to Talbot County's Plan for the same area and discuss the roles of the two governing bodies in making these Plans become reality as envisioned.

The stage for much of what will be written in this chapter has been set in previous elements of the Plan, particularly the Land Use, Municipal Growth and Community Character chapters. This chapter will take the conversation one step further by tying the whole discussion together, and proposing concrete actions that will be necessary to make the vision of this Plan a reality.

A GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR EASTON

In contemplating a growth management strategy for Easton, it is necessary to first consider what the community feels is undesirable with the current situation. In doing so, it is apparent that there are many great aspects to the Town. What drives the desire for a growth management strategy is the recognition of trends contrary to these aspects. These include:

- Development that is too wasteful. Density in the older, historic parts of Easton is two to three times as dense as that found in the subdivisions of the last 30 to 40 years.
- Commercial development that is too ubiquitous. That is to say, it is virtually indistinguishable from that in any other community.

- Growth that is spreading outward too quickly. There is concern amongst many residents that Easton is spreading too far, too fast. Much of this problem relates to the first point above. That is, since density is so low in Easton, more and more land is necessary to accommodate even a constant rate of growth.
- The construction of single-use subdivisions rather than neighborhoods. Again, this causes a need for more land and also necessitates increased automobile usage.

With this as the backdrop, the following Growth Management Strategy is proposed.

Contain Sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)

The first step in Easton's proposed Growth Management Strategy is designed to contain the seemingly endless outward expansion of the Town. This is accomplished through the establishment of an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), as first implemented in the 2004 Plan Update. An UGB is essentially "a line in the sand." On the Town side of this line, town-scale development will occur. On the other side of the line, development is much less dense. In Easton and Talbot County's case, the difference will be even more dramatic because both jurisdictions are proposing that the UGB be bounded on the County side of the line by a greenbelt. This would be a green ring surrounding the future ultimate Town limits consisting of forests, wetlands, and farms. This greenbelt would become a top priority area for land preservation programs and initiatives at the County level.

The UGB is depicted on the Growth Area and Future Land Use Maps. It has been sized to correspond to the size of a community that we ultimately feel comfortable with in terms of the ability of Easton to maintain its charm and quality of life. What this translates into in terms of future populations depends on the density of development within the UGB as well as how successful we are in terms of encouraging revitalization and infill

redevelopment. What this population is or when we achieve it is less important than ensuring that when we get there, Easton is the kind of place that current and future residents will be proud to call home.

The location of the UGB was based upon consultation with the Talbot County Planning Commission, current development trends, anticipated trends due to goals and objectives suggested in this Plan and logical boundaries established by property lines, roadways and natural features. Thus while it is viewed as a permanent dividing line demarcating urban and rural development, the precise location of the UGB will be examined again in 6 years as part of the next Comprehensive Plan update, just as it has been in association with this Plan revision.

This 2010 Plan Update proposes no changes to the UGB. It has, in fact, remained unchanged since the adoption of the 2004 Plan with one exception. That was the expansion of the growth area (and thus the Growth Boundary and Green Belt) to accommodate the site of the proposed future Hospital and the Talbot Community Center.

Increase Density

Perhaps the most readily apparent difference between the Downtown area that so many people love and hope to see replicated and the newer “suburban” scale development that has occurred more recently, is the density of these two types of development. Accomplishing the first step in the Growth Management Strategy, establishing an Urban Growth Boundary, will accomplish little if within its borders development continues at a scope and scale such as we have seen for much of the last 30-50 years.

The most telling indictment of Easton’s recent densities is the fact that in and of themselves, they would not even come close to qualifying as Priority Funding Areas under the terms of the State’s guidelines. The minimum density necessary to qualify as such is 3.5

dwelling units per acre (net). Easton's more recent developments have a density of just less than 2 dwelling units per acre.

In order to reverse this trend, the previous Plan proposed the creation of a new zoning district that would be assigned to all future residential areas. The Plan even suggested the developments standards for this new district. As described in a previous chapter of this Plan, this new Traditional Neighborhood Zoning District was proposed but never adopted by the Town Council. Instead changes were made to the existing R-10A and R-7A zoning districts as well as to the Subdivision Regulations, in an attempt to get some of the suggested changes added to our existing development standards.

One of the most important changes was the way in which density is calculated. Previously, there was no density standard except for PUD's and multi-family projects. Single family detached projects were simply entitled to as many lots as they could create in conformance with the other development standards of the Ordinance. This typically resulted in a density of somewhere between just less than 2 du/ac to about 2.5 du/ac. Our goal was to increase this to the minimum "Smart Growth" density of 3.5 du/ac. Thus the way in which density was calculated was changed by specifying a density standard. Now developers know right at the beginning of a project that they are entitled to 3.5 units times the total acreage. Admittedly, 3.5 du/ac will still not likely be achieved, but this change coupled with greater flexibility with lot configurations and sizes should allow us to substantially increase the densities that we have achieved in recent years.

Build Neighborhoods

This concept has been a recurring theme throughout this Comprehensive Plan. It was discussed extensively in the Community Character chapter and touched upon in several other places. The key is to ensure that this approach is the easiest one under which to develop and that the more recently commonplace suburban type of development is the

difficult method that would only be approved under truly unique and extenuating circumstances.

Assuming these changes in future development patterns can be achieved, only part of the problem will be addressed. Easton will still ultimately be left with a suburban-style middle surrounding a truly traditionally developed core with a neo-traditional style collection of neighborhoods on the periphery. Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge facing the Town is in creating ways to “retrofit” the suburban-style subdivisions to make them denser, more connected, and more mixed use. This will be difficult and ultimately may never be fully achieved, but some things can be done to improve the situation, and some were implemented following the original suggestion for such changes in the 2004 Plan. These include:

- Permit additions to be made to single-family houses to create granny flats or duplexes as an outright permitted use. This change was made to the Ordinance, but little development activity of this type has occurred.
- Effectively narrow streets by striping or using a textured surface to create a pedestrian/bicycle lane. This concept was illustrated in the Quality Community Survey and the results were striking. The image of the existing wide street (in this case, Corbin Parkway) received a -1.7 rating. The computer-simulated image with a textured bike lane on both sides of the street received a +2.5 rating. This has not been accomplished, although the concept has been discussed for possible implementation at another location.



Corbin Parkway Existing Situation



Corbin Parkway "calmed" with paving

- Permit more neighborhood scale commercial uses by special exception in residential zoning districts. This has recently been accomplished for offices, which are allowed by Special Exception in the R-10A and R-7A Zoning Districts. A number of supplemental standards apply in order to assure that the neighborhood is not adversely impacted. Similar standards can and should be added for whatever other commercial uses might be permitted in the suburban-style subdivisions (since hopefully the newer developments will be mixed-use in nature to some degree). There has been no further progress on this recommendation beyond the limited office uses that are allowed as discussed above.
- Budget for and strategically purchase houses as they become available in order to demolish them and redevelop the sites for civic or park use. This has not been accomplished or even discussed since the last Plan. The current economic climate makes it difficult for the Town to consider such investments, even though more opportunities exist to purchase such properties at reasonable prices in such times. Going forward this is a concept that should at least be discussed for possible implementation.

Improve Design

The steps outlined above will go a long way towards making Easton a better place to live. The establishment of a UGB will contain the outward spread of development and the establishment of a greenbelt in the County adjacent to this UGB will offer some permanence to this limit. Increasing the density within the Town will improve the appearance and function of neighborhoods as well as decrease development pressures on other areas in and around the Town, not yet as ready to be developed. Building neighborhoods rather than subdivisions or developments will dramatically improve the livability of Easton and will decrease traffic by offering more goods and services within walking distance of where people live. Still, with all these changes, the Town will not generate a “sense of place” feeling unless improvements are made to the way the built environment looks.

This issue was discussed extensively in the Community Character chapter so there is little need to repeat. Suffice it to say that this was an issue that first rose to the surface in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. It took on a prominent role in the 2004 Plan. In that Plan Community Character received a chapter all its own for the first time. It was undoubtedly one of the major themes of that Plan, much as it is again in this one. Since the issue first appeared on the Town’s radar in 1997, there is no question but that the design of buildings in Easton has improved. Consider simply the most recent commercial projects approved or built in the Town: A rebuilt McDonald’s that is an attractive building and does not remotely resemble the prototypical McDonald’s. The Easton Utilities Customer Service Center is a fine example of the civic pride that used to be evident in all public buildings and still should be. Wawa and Royal Farms convenience store have been built in a manner that is such a significant departure from their prototype that if not for the sign, those more

familiar with those stores' corporate architecture may not recognize them. Finally, most recently we have witnessed the construction of Target and Lowe's, two very large major retail buildings that extend this concept of departing from typical franchise architecture to much larger buildings.

The challenge of this Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that this effort to achieve improved design continues, in fact advances even more, rather than retreats. In order to accomplish this, the following recommendations are offered:

- Vigorously and consistently promote and require compliance with the "Design Principles for Easton" as described in the Community Character Element.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Design Guidelines for the various types of development (including residential) and revise if necessary.
- Utilize Forest Conservation monies and off-site plantings to enhance sparsely landscaped areas along Route 50 and the Easton Parkway.
- Develop a Tree or Urban Forestry Plan outlining areas proposed for new tree plantings, identifying sites/locations suitable as receiving areas for off-site planting that developers cannot accommodate on their properties, and establishing priorities and tools for establishing the "Green Ring" around downtown called for in the AKRF Downtown Study.
- Accept (if not solicit) annexation requests from those businesses located on Route 50 north of the current Town Boundary and require conformance with the Town's architectural, signage, and landscaping requirements as a condition of annexation, in order to improve this key visual gateway into Town.

Restrict the Rate of Growth

The issue of actively and purposely controlling Easton's rate of growth has been the subject of a great deal of debate for each of the last three Comprehensive Plan Updates, including this one. Up to this point the Planning Commission and Town Council have elected to allow the free market to determine Easton's growth rate. This was actually the case again in the earliest draft of this Plan. However, after hearing much testimony on the subject, the Planning Commission decided that indeed the dominant theme of this Plan to retain and/or return to an older way of doing things in Easton is endangered by a continued rate of growth in the range that we have experienced in the last 20 years or so. The fear is that at 3% growth (or more) development pressures are so great that it becomes more and more difficult to achieve all the goals relative to the type and form of development we want to see. Furthermore, growth at such a rate makes some of our most challenging problems, such as improving traffic conditions, or lessening our impact on the environment, even more difficult, to the point where it borders on the impossible.

The Commission recognizes that by merely stating that we want to achieve growth closer to our long-term average of 1%, absolutely nothing changes to make that happen. The Commission and Town Council discussed this issue at great length and ultimately decided that, for now at least, this issue should most appropriately be addressed by adhering to an Annexation Policy that does not allow for an exceedingly high rate of growth. The Priority Growth Areas are ideally suited to do this. The only potential shortcoming of this policy is the rate at which infill/build-out occurs. For this reason, the staff is directed to explore policies and tools which could achieve a specified targeted growth rate, in the event that growth gets out of control. The Commission also recognizes that it will take time to develop such policies, possibly until the enactment of the next Plan

in 2015, but they also realize that the longer this task is delayed, the more difficult it will be to achieve the vision of this Plan.

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

Throughout this Comprehensive Plan there have been numerous references to Talbot County and the relationship between Easton's Planning effort and that of the County. This suggests the strong need for inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation between these two entities.

Due to the requirements specified by the Growth Act, it is imperative that the Town and County work closely together to coordinate growth policies. This occurred during the development of the 2004 Plan, as well as the County's 2005 Plan, at an unprecedented level. In particular, a great deal of thought went into planning the future of that area located between the present Town boundary and the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. The County's 2005 Comprehensive Plan consultant (Redman/Johnston Associates, Ltd.) prepared a conceptual development plan for this area. A copy of this map, as well as a proposed concept for what a future neighborhood development might look like is included on the following pages. A close examination between the County's proposed Plan for Easton's Growth Area and Easton's Plan for the same area, reveals that the two Plans are virtually (if not actually) identical.

In the preparation of this Plan Update, there was less direct coordination with the County, but that is largely because neither entity is proposing any changes to the boundaries of the Growth Area. We have worked very cooperatively regarding the one issue that has changed in this area, namely the proposed relocation of the Hospital.

One idea that has been discussed conceptually in previous Comprehensive Plans at both the Town and County levels is that of an inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. A TDR program simply refers to a system whereby the right to

develop a particular property is separated from that property so that it can then be sold (i.e. transferred) from a location where the community wishes to see land preserved and protected, to another location that has been identified as appropriate for growth. A handful of such programs exist throughout the country. What would be unique about this program is that it would involve the transfer of development rights from one jurisdiction (Talbot County) to another (the Town of Easton). Such a program would be another tool in helping to preserve the areas in the county (particularly those in close proximity to the Town's growth boundary) that are slated for preservation rather than growth. It may also represent an incentive for increased density on parcels located in the Town. The County has done some initial work on this issue and has kept the Town Planning staff up-to-date on this work. It is admittedly still in the very preliminary stages though.

GROWTH AREAS AND FUTURE LAND USE MAPS

The Land Use Chapter of this Plan mentioned that the heart of a Comprehensive Plan is its treatment and recommendations concerning land use. That chapter also contained many recommendations concerning land use. It is tied to this, the Implementation Element, via the maps that will implement those recommendations.

This Comprehensive Plan contains two maps relative to land use. The first is the Growth Map and the second is the Future Land Use Map.

The Growth Map is primarily about the appropriate sequence of development for the ultimate Town of Easton. It begins with the current Town boundary. Next, it depicts the Urban Growth Boundary that is the "ultimate" Town limit. It then examines the area between these two lines and considers the appropriate priority for development of this area in terms of a sequence.

The next step is to consider what areas within the Urban Growth Boundary are not presently within the Town of Easton but should be already for a variety of reasons. These

are labeled “Priority 1 – Boundary Refinement” on the Growth Area Map. Generally these consist of already developed areas like Crofton, Old Stoney Ridge, Old Beechwood, and most of Easton Point. They have long ago been developed under Talbot County rules and regulations and have increasingly become surrounded by properties developed under Town of Easton guidelines. To virtually any outsider, these areas would be assumed to currently be in the Town of Easton corporate limits. It is important to bring these areas into Town for at least three reasons. First, all of these areas are served by septic systems and most utilize individual private wells for water. This is both potentially environmentally damaging and inefficient given the relative close proximity and availability of Town water and sewer.

The second reason these properties should be in the Town of Easton is that given their location, they enjoy many of the conveniences of being in Town without paying a fair share. Finally, from the Town’s perspective the most important reason these areas should be in Town is that they preclude the Town’s ability to grow in the future. This is due to the fact that Maryland annexation law makes it illegal to create an enclave or island of unincorporated land surrounded by a municipality. Thus when such areas exist, they have the short-term effect of causing some rather strange Town boundaries as developers annex in such a way as to technically comply with this requirement. The long-term effect is that growth is stopped in a given direction. As indicated in the Land Use chapter, these are the only areas that should be annexed during the next planning period.

One area that merits special mention is the one that includes the commercial properties on Route 50 just north of Town, across from the Easton Airport. These are classified as a Priority 1 area largely because of their high visibility. For millions of travelers each year, they form the first impression of Easton, even though at the present time they are not actually in Easton. Thus they are deemed to be a top priority annexation

area with the thought that as a condition to annexation, these properties will be required to comply with the Town's signage and landscaping requirements and in the future if and when they expand, change use, etc..., they should be made to comply with the full range of design standards, including those for architecture.

The future growth area is further partitioned into three levels of priority for development. Priority 1 Areas are the "Boundary Refinement Areas" as was described previously. Priority 2 and 3 Areas are undeveloped, and generally (although not always) located the greatest distance from the existing Town Boundaries. There is no time-frame associated with the development of these latter two growth areas except that they are not deemed appropriate for development during the current Planning period (i.e. 2010 through 2016), and that when developed, Priority 2 Areas ought to be developed before Priority 3 Areas. Depending on the amount of development that does occur during this Planning Period, Priority 2 Areas may or may not be ready for development beginning with the next Planning Period in 2016. Priority 3 Areas are not envisioned as being necessary to accommodate growth for several Planning Periods.

Eventually though, it will be necessary to upgrade some Priority 2 Areas to Priority 1. Since it seems unlikely that the most suitable land to be added first will simply be the one whose owner asks first, some guidelines for deciding what lands should be added seem in order. Thus at such time as the Planning Commission determines that it is necessary to increase the supply of Priority 1 Areas, the following points should be considered:

- Proximity to Town Boundaries should be a significant consideration. Any area upgraded should be adjacent to the Town, preferably on more than one side. The higher the degree of contiguity, the higher the preference should be given to the parcel.

- Land on which a future amenity or public facility is identified should be given favorable consideration. This is especially true when the need for such amenity or facility is significant and/or imminent.
- Developers/Landowners who propose to provide land for amenities or public facilities which are specified in the Plan or in other Town Plans as being needed, but have no specific location attached thereto, should be afforded favorable consideration.
- Parcels/Farms should not be split between Priority 1 and Priority 2 Growth Areas unless there is a clear, obvious, and logical division based on a landform or a natural or manmade feature.
- Land that facilitates the annexation of long-standing enclave Priority 1 Areas, if applicable, should be given strong preference over other areas.

The second map that will guide the future growth and development of the Town of Easton during the planning period is the Future Land Use Map. This is the more traditional Map found in a Comprehensive Plan. It maps proposed land uses throughout the Town and within the Urban Growth Boundary.

The dominant land use in this Plan, as in the past, is residential. However, as has been discussed throughout the Plan, the way in which this development will occur in the future is proposed to change. Rather than simply designating land for future residential growth, collections of neighborhoods are proposed. Such neighborhoods should contain a variety of housing types, as well as limited, neighborhood-scale commercial development. The types of uses in this neighborhood scale commercial development are residentially-compatible office uses, and small, convenience type retail uses such as small grocery or convenience stores, service uses like Laundromats, beauty/hair salons, fitness centers, movie rental stores, and small sit-down or carry-out café-style restaurants or delis, as

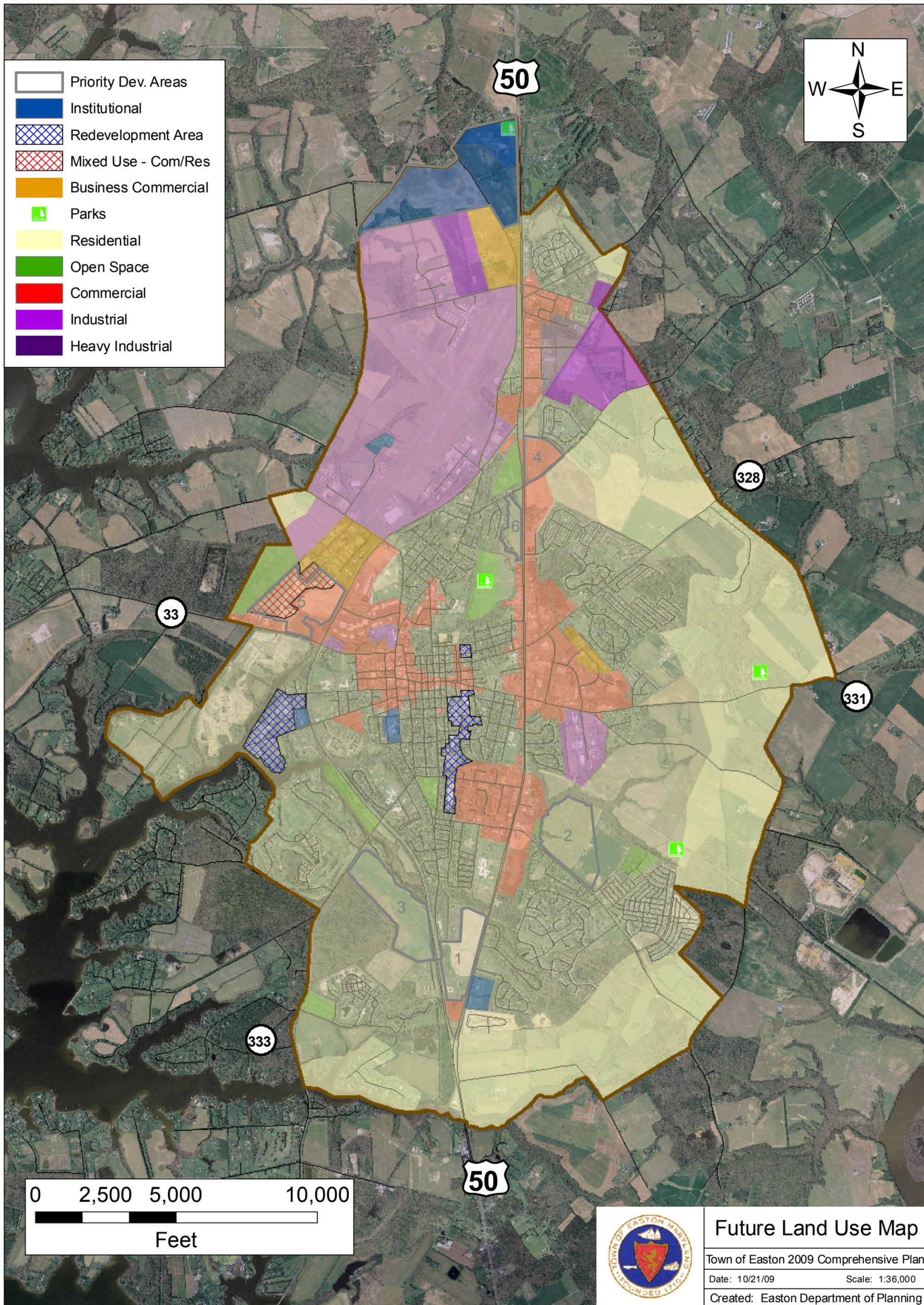
examples. The size of these commercial areas should be relatively small as again, they are intended to provide what are essentially convenience goods and services to a neighborhood, not such goods or services at a regional or even Town-wide scale. One standard for this kind of use is 26 to 52 square feet per dwelling unit¹. Table 9 back in the Land Use Chapter also recommends that Neighborhood Retail serve a population of between 4,000 and 10,000 people and that such uses take up between four and eight acres of land. This means that although not mapped, we should plan for somewhere around 12 acres of land being devoted to future neighborhood commercial spread amongst the various future residential neighborhoods (based on a future 6,800 dwelling units, 39 sq ft of commercial space/du (265,200 sq ft), and 52,000 sq ft per 7,000 people [all midpoints of recommended ranges], $6,800 \times 2.2 = 14,960$ people, which equates to the need for two such centers, which requires 8 to 16 acres of land). In Easton, dividing this space amongst just two centers may not make it truly neighborhood-friendly. Thus it may be necessary to spread it out even more in smaller centers.

The first step in the preparation of the Future Land Use was to identify those areas that are either now or are planned to be out of play for development. These are depicted on the map as existing and proposed green spaces. These spaces consist of existing and planned parks, forest that is protected via the Town's Forest Conservation Ordinance, existing and proposed extensions to the Rail-Trail, and a network of stream buffers and wildlife corridors.

The next step in creating the Future Land Use Map was to identify those areas which are already within the Town limits, but which are undeveloped. The larger of these areas are identified on this map by a series of numbers (1 through 7). Each area will be briefly described below:

1 See *Visions for a New American Dream*, Anton Clarence Nelessen, Planners Press, 1994.

Future Land Use Map



Area 1 – Area 1 is a highly visible parcel located on the west side of US Route 50 at the southern gateway into Town. Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church owns the property. A new Church has been constructed on a portion of this parcel. Ultimately Saints Peter and Paul may relocate their private school to the same parcel.

Area 2 – Area 2 is the undeveloped farm on Dutchman’s Lane described earlier in this chapter, plus an adjacent farm that is already in the Town. These properties should be developed in the mode of a new neighborhood as has been described extensively throughout this plan. This would include high density residential (at least compared to recent developments), neighborhood-scale retail, office and/or industrial space, civic space, and open space (including parks).

Area 3 – Area 3 is land owned by Shore Health System, Inc. (“SHS”). At one time this land was envisioned by SHS to be the site of a new hospital campus to replace the existing Memorial Hospital at Easton facility. In light of these plans, in 1993, a portion of Area 3 was pre-mapped with the Town’s Commercial Medical zoning district (now known as the “Planned Healthcare” district) based upon the likelihood that the size of the site was sufficient to accommodate a new hospital as well as other hospital-related uses, such as medical offices, labs and diagnostic facilities, staff/nurses apartments, and assisted living facilities. Since that time, SHS has undertaken several major endeavors, including: (i) decentralization of many functions, such as labs and diagnostic services, to other locations including Idlewild Avenue; (ii) expansion of the Memorial Hospital emergency department; and (iii) most recently, conceptual selection of property located north of the Easton Airport and offered by Talbot County as the site for a new hospital and medical campus. The timing of SHS’ development of the County hospital site remains uncertain. For the current planning period, it makes sense to keep Area 3 zoned Planned Healthcare.

If not developed as a hospital, the non-hospital medical uses described above could still be developed in Area 3.

Area 4 - Area 4 represents the site previously proposed for first a Shopping Center and later a Home Depot. These proposals were the driving force in the enactment of the moratorium on big box applications and subsequent amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The biggest problem with the previous proposals is that they contemplated regional-scale commercial development at a site ill suited to handle such development. This site is more logically suited for transient-oriented commercial development and its depth affords the opportunity to do so in an attractive alternative to typical highway strip development.

Area 5 – Area 5 is another area that has been the subject of numerous development proposals over the past few years. The most recent proposal involved a mixed-use development with a small shopping center anchored by a grocery store, a new movie theatre, a hotel, office space, and second floor residential space. This development scheme seems like a logical option if the shopping center and any big box uses are sized such that they target a reasonably tight market area. That is to say some level of regional-scale commercial development seems appropriate here, but it should not be of a scope and magnitude that it would attract a level of traffic that would overwhelm the site.

Area 6 – Area 6 represents the large undeveloped area on the west side of Route 50, south of Chapel Road. Given its location, it is perhaps the parcel with the greatest development potential, at least in term of the number of options for development. Its elongated shape may preclude a true neighborhood style of development, but something along that line modified to accommodate the size and shape of the property seems in order. This would involve predominately residential development. The northern portion adjacent to Chapel Farms would be logical for continued single-family housing. The

portion of the property that borders the RTC Park seems ideally suited for residential development fronting on this park. A small area for commercial development to serve the users of the Park is appropriate as well. Access to the Park from Route 50 should be provided across Area 6. Finally, the southern portion of the site could serve as a combination of transient commercial, offices and/or apartments, the latter two of which would seem ideally suited to overlook the park and greenway corridor.

Area 7 – Area 7 is the one area not currently within the Town as of 2009. It represents the site of the proposed new Regional-scale medical facility of Shore Health Systems. Based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed by SHS, The Town of Easton, and Talbot County, the Zoning of this site is to be assigned concurrent with its annexation and is to be a new zoning district which applies only to Regional Hospitals. The development of this site is envisioned as a campus-style facility with medical offices and other related services in addition to the hospital itself.

These seven areas are envisioned by this Plan as the primary location of any development not already “on the books” at this time during the upcoming Planning Period. The first six are already within the Town boundaries and the seventh is a special situation which may or may not begin the development process during this Planning Period. Combined with the existing planned and/or approved lot inventory and potential infill/redevelopment, growth at our recent rate of 3% should not exhaust the development potential of these areas. However, in planning for the time when this does occur, the Future Land Use Map identifies properties that represent the next logical step in the development sequence of the Town. In addition, the Future Land Use Map also shows future commercial, industrial, park, and institutional uses. Commercial Use, presumably a continuation of the Transient-oriented retail already present, is shown along much of U.S. Route 50. Institutional Uses are indicated, a new addition to the Future Land Use Map. So

too are two Redevelopment Areas, a Mixed Use Commercial/Residential Area and areas identified as Business Commercial.

The Institutional Uses reflect both the current and proposed site of the Hospital as well as larger government facilities (i.e. Police Barracks, Public Works Barns). One of the Redevelopment Areas shown corresponds to the industrially-zoned land along the Rail-Trail that was the inspiration for the establishment of the Planned Redevelopment Zoning District. These properties have long been identified as suitable for redevelopment and several have been. The other Redevelopment Area is Easton Point. To date this area has slowly been redeveloped with the location of the County's Public Works Facility and the establishment and expansion of the Londonderry Retirement Community. As redevelopment occurs on lands closer to the water, more of a mixed-use project(s) is envisioned with open space and public access to the waterfront, commercial uses along the water or this open space, and residential uses located landward of the commercial uses. Ground Floor commercial with upper floor apartment or condominium space is not inappropriate either. One catalyst to the redevelopment of Easton Point may be the former site of the Town's Public Works Facility, which was just relocated in January of 2009. It will presumably soon be on the market and could help facilitate redevelopment of the area.

The one Mixed Use – Commercial/Residential Area that has been identified is for future phases of the Waterside Village Shopping Center. This is seen as a mix of the continued build-out of the Shopping Center and Garden Apartments. If the Shopping Center is made truly pedestrian friendly, these apartments could be a great place for those who are (or want to be) less dependent on the automobile to locate. This is not to say, however, that mixed use at this site is mandatory. Rather, it is permissible, even encouraged. An early proposal for the original development of the site included a mixture of residential and commercial uses, but it was soon abandoned when it was determined

that the Town's Zoning Ordinance at that time did not permit such a combination of uses. That is no longer the case today in the Zoning Ordinance and this Plan supports the concept of mixed use here as well.

The Business Commercial Areas are those that correspond primarily to existing industrially-zoned land that has slowly become less industrial and more commercial in nature. The thinking here is to eventually create a new Zoning District to legitimize this shift, while at the same time tightening up on the remaining Select Industrial Zoning Districts so that there we will have land available for truly industrial uses. Uses in the Business Commercial District will likely include offices, service uses, warehousing, and perhaps some limited, low-traffic retail.

When evaluating future development proposals both of these maps should be consulted. One will indicate what kind of use the Town expects to see on a given parcel and the other will indicate when we expect to see it. In addition, specific parcels are discussed throughout the Plan and some may be subject to planning issues that can only be found in the Parks or Transportation elements. Thus it is essential to consider what the whole Plan says about a given parcel, not just one Map or Element in isolation.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

This Comprehensive Plan for Easton lays out a future that accommodates significant growth, but does so in a manner with which we are comfortable. It acknowledges mistakes of the past, specifically in decreasing density beginning in about the 1950's and allowing a suburban-style of development to take root in Easton in the 1970's and 80's. It calls for a marked departure from these mistakes and a return to the traditional small-Town Eastern Shore style of development that shaped this community for 250 years.

Easton is not a suburban community like those found on Maryland's Western Shore or in numerous other metropolitan areas. We are a small but growing community in the

heart of a rural, agricultural and maritime region. Ubiquitous power centers and strip shopping centers are not part of what we are about. Neither are cul-de-sacs, disconnected streets and subdivisions that might as well be gated because they are so isolated. Clearly Easton has some of these types of development and the people who live, work, or shop there are no less valued members of our community than anyone else. We simply have decided such developments are an inappropriate form of development going forward in Easton. Those considering Easton as a future home that desire such a community should frankly look elsewhere.

In order to achieve the Vision laid out in this Plan, much help will be required. Fortunately Easton is blessed with a well-educated and involved citizenry. The level of involvement of many of these citizens throughout the process of preparing this and previous Plans has been described elsewhere in this document. In order to make the Easton we have all said we want, these same people and more must continue with this same level of commitment, interest and caring for our community. The authors of this Plan will eventually become less active and ultimately pass away, but the Vision we have created and the policies set forth herein will share this community well beyond our years here. If we want our children and our grandchildren to care about Easton as much as we all do, we need to maintain the passion and commitment to this Plan and its Vision.

By the same token, the Town should be as clear as possible to those seeking to move to Easton in the future about the kinds of things we envision. Ultimately the final responsibility lies with those contemplating a move here, but the Town can help make our goals, policies, and plans more clearly known so that this decision about whether to locate to Easton is as informed as possible. We should strive to communicate in as many means and mediums as possible. Our website should be easily navigable and up-to-date and we should look into means of communicating that are just now exploding in other realms, such

as blogging, podcasts, streaming audio (or video) of meetings, social networking sites (e.g. Twitter, Facebook), etc., so that all existing and future residents have the greatest possible opportunity to participate in shaping our community in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL: To insure that future development, proposed development related programs and redevelopment projects are implemented consistent with the spirit of this Comprehensive Plan.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Provide an analysis of the implementation progress of the Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Objectives each July as part of the Annual Report of the Easton Planning & Zoning Commission.
- ✓ Monitor the effectiveness of recent amendments to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations which were designed to insure that future growth of the Town occurs in a system of neighborhoods rather than a collection of single-use, suburban style subdivisions.
- ✓ Develop, evaluate and refine Design Standards for all types of development in all parts of Town.
- ✓ Work with various local groups in order to prepare Neighborhood Plans similar to that done by the East Side neighborhood several years ago. The West Side has been suggested as a likely starting point for such an endeavor. Where the institutional capacity exists, these neighborhood plans can be largely prepared by the neighborhood groups themselves.

GOAL: To realize the benefits of revitalization with a Smart Growth focus in order to make our older neighborhoods more affordable, more attractive, more varied, walkable, safer and healthier, utilizing existing infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Target public investment in infrastructure and infrastructure upgrades to already developed areas since opportunities to acquire such infrastructure from new development are rare.
- ✓ Support efforts to revitalize neighborhoods through infrastructure grants, housing rehabilitation loans and programs, environmental clean-ups, etc.
- ✓ Establish policy that builds on the strengths of existing housing stock, thus preserving Easton's history and sense of place

GOAL: To research and where appropriate enact policies and measures which implement the Vision and spirit of this Comprehensive Plan.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Research the legality of various methods of limiting growth to achieve an annual growth rate of no more than 1% per year.
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness of existing rules and regulations in achieving the design goals and principles of this Plan.

GOAL: To coordinate planning efforts for areas and issues of mutual concern to both the Town of Easton and Talbot County.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Work with County Planning officials to ensure that areas designated for future growth of the Town are treated similarly by the Plans of both jurisdictions.
- ✓ Continue to work cooperatively with Talbot County to institute an Inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program.

GOAL: To facilitate an informed and involved citizenry.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Investigate methods to insure that significant future projects (e.g. roads, community facilities, parks, etc.) are known by prospective homebuyers prior to the finalization of the sales process.
- ✓ Explore more and innovative ways to inform and involve the general public in planning issues.