



Town of Easton Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop Summary

Tuesday, October 11, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.

Town Hall Chamber 2

14 S. Harrison Street, Easton

Archived video of the meeting is available at:

[Town of Easton Agendas and Minutes](https://www.eastonmd.gov/Agendas/Agendas%20and%20Minutes)
[\(eastonmd.gov\)](https://www.eastonmd.gov/)

Attendance:

Commission Members:

Jennifer Dindinger, Chairperson
Philip Toussaint, Vice Chairperson
Victoria McAndrews
William Ryall
Paul Weber
Tom Klein, Alternate

Staff:

Lynn B. Thomas, Town Planner
Joseph A. Mayer, Plan Reviewer
Nicholas Johnson, Planner
Sharon Van Emburgh, Town Attorney
Samantha Smith, Administrative Specialist

Absent:

Staff:

Miguel Salinas, Planning and Zoning Director

1. Introductions— Chairperson Dindinger called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

2. Comprehensive Plan Work Session — Mr. Lynn Thomas summarized the purpose of the workshop as an ongoing effort to review and discuss early Draft versions of sections presented in the Introduction, Plan Background, Land Use and Community Character chapters of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. This workshop is also for the purpose of seeking the Commission's feedback on the overall direction and consistency of these chapters throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

a. Planned Growth Rate —

- i. The Commission considered the appropriateness of the projected growth rate in the Plan Background chapter. Particular goals and objectives for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan were designed to limit future residential growth to a 1% growth rate which has not been exceeded at this time. Considering

multiple sources of feedback, a projected growth rate increase to 1.75% was proposed. The Commission and staff discussed measures to control the growth rate including the granting of a maximum number of sewer permits and/or building permits per year, and the use of Annexation Policies to regulate the growth rate as consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission favored language that depicts the average annual compound growth rate over a ten (10) year period. Commissioner Weber recommended revisiting the parameters of the Urban Growth Boundary with the elimination of Priority Growth Areas 1, 2, and 3 in that designation; and to prioritize creating incentives for infill and redevelopment to increase density. The Commission favored the language as presented, and recommended additional language acknowledging that the needs of the community have shifted, and an adjustment to the growth rate was increased to a higher density as justification to address the significant need for attainable housing in Easton.

b. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Zoning Classification —

- i. The Commission deliberated over the suggested provisions for a new Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Zoning Classification in the Community Character chapter of the Comprehensive Plan that would encourage a more traditional neighborhood development design for all middle housing types, and fewer use restrictions on undeveloped parcels within the perimeter of the Town and future growth areas. Chairperson Dindinger raised a concern regarding the walkability outside of the traditional neighborhood design of these subdivisions. The Commission suggested clarifying language to the criteria to include all middle housing types, recommended language that increased the minimum and maximum density in the TND Zoning Classification, and suggested the addition of visuals and other example photos to supplement those new design principles.

c. Community Input and Outreach —

- i. The Commission discussed the proposed language detailing the findings from recent community outreach efforts and the input received, and the appropriateness of those findings of the Growth Management strategy as addressed in the Plan Background chapter. The Commission suggested the relocation of the History of Surveys section and Community Questions section into an Appendix of the Comprehensive Plan.

d. Basic Growth Strategy —

- i. Following a discussion regarding the language in the Growth Management strategy, the Commission further refined its details; building upon the components of the general growth strategy for the Town. The basic growth

strategy in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan can be summarized as a five (5) part growth strategy which: contains the outward extent of sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary, increases density, builds neighborhoods, improves design, and restricts the rate of growth. The Commission recommended a revision to the language to replace “...restricts the rate of growth” with “...managing the rate of growth”. The Commission also favored language that recognizes an adjustment of the strategy as a means to adapt to environmental changes and a higher sustainability. The adoption of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) as referenced in the Land Use chapter was revisited however, the Commission was divided on the decision to further pursue and will consider the technical features of an APFO adoption at a later time. Finally, the Commission suggested the addition of a sixth component of an overall growth strategy. The new component should address sustainability and the adaptation of growth and development policies in consideration of the impacts of global climate change.

e. 2023 Design Principles —

- i. The Commission considered the appropriateness of the language presented for the proposed goals and objectives of the 2023 Design Principles as referenced in the Land Use and Community Character chapters. The Commission indicated that certain descriptions of a “*traditional*” and “*old fashioned*” neighborhood are ambiguous, and can be interpreted by different meanings; citing the specific design principles to be found in the Historic District requirements. Commissioner Klein suggested additional language to Design Principle # 4 - Ample Open Space to include: “...*any such required park areas may be provided as either active, passive, or natural park areas, as deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission and with consultation by the Park Board during project review*”.

3. Adjournment— The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.