



Planning Commission MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, December 12, 2024 - 1:00 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Draft Municipal Growth Chapter**
 - a. Draft Municipal Growth Chapter
- 3. Discussion**
 - a. This meeting will be conducted as a workshop. As such, it will be informal in nature and there is no scheduled opportunity for public comment. Written public feedback may be forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Department at planningandzoning@eastonmd.gov.
- 4. Adjournment**

Topics for December 12, 2024
Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop

The intended focus of the first of what will likely be 2 or 3 meetings to have the Planning Commission review the next group of Comprehensive Plan Chapters in their initial Draft format, will be the Municipal Growth Element. The following is a list of potential questions/issues/talking points on which to center discussion at this Workshop:

1. This chapter introduces the idea of replacing the Priority Growth areas system with Annexation Policies. Coincidentally, the Town Council has scheduled a workshop in January to discuss Annexation Policies. Is the Commission still on board with this idea and if so, do you have any thoughts at this time as to what might be included amongst these new Annexation Policies?
2. The Worksheet that estimates Residential Development Capacity in Easton (6 or 7 pages into the Chapter) relies on a number of assumptions about anticipated density of development for unimproved parcels as well as infill and redevelopment. These assumptions are largely based on historic development patterns and trends (see for example, the estimated units for Area 7 and Area 8 identified on this worksheet). Is the Commission comfortable with these projections or is it appropriate to essentially assume a departure from the identified historic development patterns for these areas? If so, what density should we assume?
3. The Redevelopment Target Areas Table identifies 6 potential redevelopment sites and assumes they will be developed at the PUD–Redevelopment density of 30 du/ac. One of the sites is the Safeway site, so that line item should be updated to reflect the actual number of approved units for this site. We can likewise update the Perdue site(s) based on recent/ongoing plans. Beyond those updates, is the Commission comfortable assigning 30 du/ac as the basis for projecting the potential number of new units on these sites? Also, does the Commission have any additions (or deletions) to the list of six potential redevelopment sites?
4. Related to the above, but in the bigger picture sense – how does the Commission wish to address the significant support received in the various public input forums to date for concentrating a major portion of future growth within the existing confines of the Town (i.e., prioritizing Infill and Redevelopment over “Greenfield” development)? That is, the higher the percentage that such growth is (Infill/Redevelopment) the more it becomes necessary to see such development occur at a scope/density that will be, potentially at least, substantially different from that which surrounds it. Should we explain that and advocate for more of a status quo in terms of infill vs Greenfield, or support more Infill, but lay the groundwork for increased residential density in such locations? (Or something else?)

5. Similar big-picture question – future growth can/will occur in one of two ways, either “Inward” in the form of Infill/Redevelopment or “Outward” through Annexations and the development of our Future Growth Area. How does the Commission foresee the split amongst those two approaches for accommodating Future Growth (particularly for the 10 year scope of this Update)? Does the Commission envision changes to the historic development patterns/densities of either or both of these areas?
6. Does the Commission see the need to propose any additions or expansions to any of the public facilities/services described in this Chapter, based on the growth projections for the next 10 years?
7. Would the Commission like to make any revisions to the “Vision” of Easton as described in the last two pages of this Municipal Growth Element?

MUNICIPAL GROWTH

INTRODUCTION

The content of Comprehensive Plans are largely dictated by the State Land Use Article and from time to time, it changes. One of the more recent additions to the list of required elements for Comprehensive Plans in Maryland municipalities is the Municipal Growth Element. The Land Use Article specifies 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 (now the MD Land Use Article), § 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.

The 2010 Plan was the first Town of Easton Plan to include this plan element and this version represents a refinement of that initial version.

FUTURE GROWTH AREAS OUTSIDE OF EXISTING CORPORATE LIMITS

The first requirement of this Element is an identification of future growth areas beyond the existing corporate limits of the Town. This was done in Easton before it became required by State law when the 2004 Plan included 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 partitioned the growth area into future growth areas and assigned 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.

The first Municipal Growth Element as contained in the 2010 Plan continued this three-tiered partition system. Priority 1 Areas were classified as Boundary Refinement Areas. In most cases they corresponded to areas that were already developed in Talbot County and they were deemed appropriate for consideration for Annexation during the life of that Plan. Priority 2 Areas were referred to as Intermediate Growth Areas and Priority 3 Areas were referred to as Long Range Growth Areas. Neither were envisioned as being necessary to develop in order to accommodate any growth during that Planning period.

Parts of the growth area, particularly much of the Immediate Growth Area, 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 of the 2010 Plan depicted 1,200 acres of land classified as Boundary Refinement Area, this raw number is misleading as relatively few acres of such areas were actually undeveloped.

After utilizing the tiered future growth areas as part of the previous two Comprehensive Plans, extending back 20 years, we are proposing a slightly different direction in this Plan. Rather than rely on what can at times appear to be at least arguably arbitrary distinctions in future growth priority classifications, this Plan

replaces that system with a series of Annexation Policies to guide future requests to expand Town boundaries.

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 walkable, compact, traditional urban forms of development to more of a spread-out, suburban pattern. Reversing this trend has been an emphasis of the past few Easton Comprehensive Plans and 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 more recent 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 a density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre (3.5 du/ac), the minimum 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:

Draft

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 (2010) Comp Plan

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

Area 2 – Brooks Farm (in-Town portion)

Area 3 – Hospital-owned Oxford Road site (purchased by Talbot County in 2024, likely removing it from consideration for development)

Area 4 – Ashby Commons (89 du approved)

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

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

Area 7 – Alvin Lapidis Property

Area 8 – Easton Point

Area 2 - 252 units approved in 2022

Area 7 – (Approx. 20 ac zoned residential, assumed to be multifamily [assume Londonderry density of 4.0 du/ac] x 4.0 du/ac x .75) = 60 units

Area 8* - 332 units (residential units reflected in the Port Street Small Area Plan. NOTE: This includes lands not within the Town of Easton. For the purpose of this projection, they are treated as being within Town Limits)

Total estimated possible units from Priority Development Areas in 2004 Plan = 644

B. Other Parcels with Infill Potential

Unimproved parcels ≥ 1 acre (using same build-out factors as above) = $(49.9 \text{ ac} \times 3.5 \times .75 = 131)$ units

Unimproved parcels ≥ 1 acre in the PR District (substituting the PR density of a max. 40 du/ac for 3.5 in the equation above) = $(3.3 \text{ ac} \times 40 \times .75) = 99$ units

of unimproved residentially-zoned parcels < 1 ac (assume one triplex middle housing type per parcel) = $94 \text{ parcels} \times 3 \text{ units} = 282$ units

Total estimated possible "other" infill units = 512

C. Completion of Approved or Pending Project

Residential Projects Under Construction = 189 units

Residential Projects Under Review = 415 units (excludes Area 2 (Brooks Farm - Four Seasons) and Area 3 (Poplar Hill) which are already counted above)

Total Units in Approved/Pending Projects = 604

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

E. Redevelopment Potential (Parcels w/ improvements assessed at $\leq \$50,000$; = $63.7 \text{ acres} \times 3.5 \text{ du/ac} \times 0.75$) = $167 - 158$ existing units = **9** (net new units)

Total Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (A+B+C+D+E) = 2,745 units

Table ____ Redevelopment Target Areas		
Project/Area	Acres	Potential Residential Units (acres x 30 du/ac x 0.75)
Hospital	14.84	334
Easton Plaza (Parking lot)	12.456	280
Perdue - Brookletts	6.548	147
Brookletts Building	1.787	40
Perdue - Maryland Ave	2.36	53
Safeway	1.46	21 (net, after deducting 12 units already included in the AKRF Study)

The net result is that our best estimate is that we can accommodate 2,745 more dwelling units within the Town, without the need to add any additional land for residential development (other than the portions of Easton Point per item A 8 that are currently beyond Town Limits). 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. We have accounted for the more obvious such lands, but there is undoubtedly more that will not be as evident until we are actually reviewing a development proposal for such sites. 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 2,745 represents a slight increase from the 2,492 units projected in the 2010 Plan, despite 14 years of growth. The increase is primarily the result of the addition of Area 8 (Easton Point) as a “Priority Development Area” and a more detailed analysis of redevelopment potential through the inclusion of specific properties believed to possess significant opportunities for redevelopment (Table ____ above). This is offset by the removal of “Area 3” as a potential for development as the result of its purchase by Talbot County.

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 significant additional land for some time, at least solely for the sake of accommodating projected residential growth. In fact 2,745 units should last approximately 18 years at the 1.75% annual growth rate that this Plan targets. Furthermore this far exceeds the growth in total units we witnessed in the most recent Census Interval (i.e. 2010 – 2020) during which Easton added only 516 dwelling units, thus reinforcing the notion that the existing Town limits can accommodate growth for the next ten 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, not to mention the politics of development approval, which often results in projects being approved at less than the “Smart Growth Density,” if not denied. Also, there is clearly an argument that one of the issues (and arguably, the most critical issue) regarding housing affordability in Easton is a simple issue of a lack of a supply of available units, thus to the extent that

Easton seriously tackles the housing affordability, one approach could very well involve an effort to increase housing supply.

Finally, none of the foregoing discussion factors in the possibility of large-scale rezoning and/or Zoning text amendments that would allow residential uses in non-residential zoning districts. If, for example, we made it permissible to build multifamily units in the General Commercial and Limited Commercial Zoning Districts, the 155 currently unimproved acres in these two districts could accommodate up to an additional 1,240 units (assuming an allowable density of 8 du/ac). Furthermore, this is without consideration of the possibility of redevelopment or further development of improved parcels.

LAND AREA NEEDED TO SATISFY DEMAND

By enacting an Urban Growth Boundary in the 2004 Plan (and reaffirmed in the 2010 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 = 2,745 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) = 9,518 units
- F. Existing Units in Easton = 7,350 units
- G. Total Residential Build-out (E + F + C) = 17,595 units
- H. Estimated Population at Build-out ($17,595 \times 2.19$) = 38,533 persons

Without the confinement of the Growth Boundary, assuming that we grow at our targeted 1.75% average annual compound rate, then in 2070, Easton would, all other things being equal, have reached approximately the 17,595 dwelling units representing our residential build-out capacity. For the purposes of the statutory requirement of projecting a ten year build-out capacity, Easton certainly has no issues in this regard as under this scenario, build-out would not occur for another 45-50 years.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

This subsection of the Plan was also a new requirement as of the 2010 Plan. As such, that Plan noted that it would delve into issues that have in the past been addressed in the Community Facilities and Services Element and also include 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. Beginning with the 2010 Plan Update then, this exercise became more of an effort to update the following subsections in terms of the impacts of our projected growth upon a variety of public services and infrastructure, and that effort is continued here.

Public Schools

The first area 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, three 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. The 2022 version of this document, describes the state of, and outlook for, the Easton schools as follows:

Talbot County, a rural county on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, has had a stable public school enrollment that reflects the character of its community. Unlike highly urbanized jurisdictions in Maryland, but similar to other rural jurisdictions with a large retirement and second-home population, in Talbot County the population increase and the student enrollment projections have been dissociated from one another. Population growth has largely consisted of the in-migration of older residents without children, while the school-age population has been driven by the birth rate and the stability of the child-raising portion of the population. Factors that have given rise to increases in the public school population in other areas, particularly the rapid growth of employment opportunities or transportation improvements that allow easy access to nearby employment centers, have been absent in Talbot County. Given the current policies of both the Talbot County government and the principal town of Easton, which emphasize the continuity of the rural and historic small-town qualities of the geographic region and its environmental beauty, these demographic patterns are likely to continue for many

years. The three new housing developments that are described below and more fully in Section II of this report will, at full build-out, bring the first significant change to the composition of the county in decades, with consequences for the school system.

Between 2000 and 2019 the total population of the county grew by almost 12%, from 33,812 to 37,782. At that time the population was projected to grow by a further 16.5% to 44,000 by 2040, and the projected growth was almost entirely restricted to individuals older than 45 years. This age group increased at a remarkable average rate of 30.7% per decade between 1970 and 2010, and was projected to increase by a further total of 25.3% by 2040. By contrast, the age group in the child-raising years between 20 and 44 declined steadily by a total of 10% from a peak of 10,496 individuals in 1990, and in 2010 it was projected to grow by only a modest 4.8% to 2040. The American Community Survey (ACS) for 201 indicated a total estimated population of 37,181. Of this population, 29.7% fell into the age groups 65 years and older, while 18.2% was in the age group under age 18.2. These figures indicate that the overall population of Talbot County continues to age, while the child-raising population remains fairly constant. Since the ACS total figure is only 1% less than the actual 2020 census total of 37,526, these projections are likely to remain valid pending a more accurate assessment of the census data by the Maryland Department of Planning.

Children in the school-attending age group of 5 to 19 also show a long-term pattern of stability: this cohort was only 74 persons larger in 2010 than in 1970, and was projected to grow by only 9% by 2040. As would be expected, the public school enrollment pattern follows a similar trend. Beginning in 2011 with a total full-time equivalent (FTE) K-12 student population of 4,279, by 2019 (the last year before the Covid-19 pandemic) the FTE enrollment had increased by 173 students (4.0%) to 4,452 students (Table IV-3). The K-12 enrollment declined by 160 students between fall 2019 and fall 2020, no doubt due to the Covid-19 situation. The decline slowed somewhat the following year, with 52 fewer students enrolled in the fall of 2021. The Maryland Department of Planning projects that the K-12 student population will remain essentially flat between 2021 and 2031, increasing to 4,300 students in 2023 and ending the decade at 4,290 (Table IV-8).

Elements of Uncertainty. Within this pattern of overall stability, four factors introduce elements of uncertainty:

Changing Student Demographics. Table IV-4 shows that since the 2006-2007 school year, the overall proportion of Hispanic students in the school system has grown by 18.5% percent, while the percent of non-Hispanic white students has been reduced by 18.1% and the proportion of African American students has

declined by 6.82%. In absolute numbers, the Hispanic population increased from 246 in 2006 to 1,090 in 2021, an increase of 4-1/2 times. If this trend continues or accelerates, it implies that teaching methods to address students with special needs, in particular English Language Learner (ELL), will increase. Instruction for these and other special needs groups often requires small learning environments within the larger school context.

The Coronavirus Pandemic. It still cannot be known with certainty how the epidemic, with its extraordinary impacts on social life and the economy, will affect future student enrollments. Optimistic assessments in the summer of 2020 that schools would be fully operational by September were continually undermined by resurgences in community infection rates, forcing school systems to change their plans suddenly and with little ability to notify parents or students. Those conditions continued nationwide during the 2021-2022 school year, with schools required to abruptly open and close as circumstances dictate, introducing uncertainty into the lives of children, parents, and communities at large. At this writing the situation appears more stable, but worrisome new variants of the virus, some highly contagious, present the possibility of continuing uncertainty in both student and staff attendance. A number of pandemic-related factors may affect student attendance in the 2022-2023 school year. These include possible economic impacts, which may affect in-migration into and emigration from the county; birth rates, as families consider whether to have children or not; grade succession ratios, as school systems grapple with the achievement impacts of widespread online teaching and learning; and home schooling and private school patterns, as parents continue to consider the potential safety of their children. These factors will have an impact on school utilization as well as the extent to which hybrid forms of learning will be necessary.

New Housing Developments. For purposes of projecting the student enrollments last year, EFP assumed, as it had in 2020, that there would be little to no new housing activity in Talbot County for the following three years, to be followed by a gradual revival of the market. However, with three new housing projects in various stages of approval and development at this writing, and with two other projects possible in the future, this assumption is no longer valid. These projects may reflect the trend of households leaving urban areas for smaller towns, a phenomenon that appears to be encouraged by telework arrangements. A study conducted in the fall of 2021 indicated that as many as 370 new students could enter the Easton area public schools as result of the three developments. Measured against the recently revised State Rated Capacity (SRC) of 5,436 for the entire school system, Table V-1 shows that schools in the Easton area may experience moderate to severe overcrowding within the next five years. Without taking the new housing developments into account, school utilization (measured as the ratio of full-time

equivalent enrollment to SRC) is projected to increase from 83.8% in 2021 to 85.6% in 2026. With the new developments, the projected overall utilization would be 95.8% in 2026, with Easton Middle School at a manageable 103.0%, Easton High somewhat more crowded at 105.4%, and Easton Elementary at a 117.6%, a figure that represents severe overcrowding. If the enrollments increase as a result of these developments, there will be a need to avoid overcrowding of the Easton schools through some combination of boundary changes and new capital projects for capacity.

Changes in household occupancy patterns may increase the student yield of existing housing. The most likely changes will occur in the occupancy of multifamily units, which are heavily concentrated in Easton. Based on past experience, changes in occupancy are likely to increase the number of non-English speaking students. While the replacement Easton Elementary School has been designed with an ample number of resource spaces to accommodate the special learning requirements of this student population, the design will also ensure that future growth in this population does not strain spaces designed for other purposes (as frequently happens in older school facilities).

The Maryland Blueprint.

Legislation passed in the 2020 session of the General Assembly brings new curricular and administrative requirements to Maryland schools, many of them with facility implications. The expansion of prekindergarten to include all 4-year old children in certain income tiers, and to include many 3-year old children, will put increased demands on classroom space. Dr. Einhorn, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, summarizes the current situation in Talbot County as follows:

TCPS has been proactive in engaging private providers in conversations about partnerships to meet the requirements of HB 1300 specific to serving 3 and 4-year-old students. Through PreK Expansion Grant funds, TCPS has been able to implement districtwide, full-day, universal PreK for 4-year-olds and has been strategic in moving funding to the local budget to sustain this programming beyond the grant period. TCPS facilitates the Talbot Early Childhood Advisory Council (TECAC) meetings every other month with community private childcare providers. TCPS has provided TECAC with an overview of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the provisions for early childhood. Early Head Start and Critchlow Adkins Children's Centers indicated interest in applying for funding to implement 3-year-old slots. Given the requirements for securing funding, both providers opted to wait another year so they can begin to move towards the requirements. As a rural district, TCPS will have challenges in meeting the 30-50% private provider component of the Blueprint. TCPS will continue to provide support to private

providers to engage them in this effort.

While many dimensions of this initiative remain uncertain, including the number of eligible children and the number and capacity of private providers in the county, officials in Talbot County Public Schools are concerned that with the current universal program for 4-year olds, there will be limited capacity for 3-year olds. The legislation also includes a requirement for teachers to devote 40% of their school day to professional learning, small group instruction, and /or individual instruction. This is a facilities concern, as it will require that school systems hire more teachers (thus needing more classrooms) and provide adequate space for them. Insufficient information is available at this time to quantify the impact this will have on the capacity of current buildings or new buildings that may be proposed.

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 (EFMP) indicates that the Talbot County Public School system can accommodate expected growth in Easton, albeit barely, at the middle and high schools, and the just constructed elementary school would require additional capacity either through a physical addition or through redistricting.. Unanticipated growth would pose even more problems, depending on the nature of any such residential developments. The Educational Master 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 oftentimes 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 non-public schools in Talbot County now totals approximately 932 students, which is 17.1% of the total K-12 student enrollment in the County. This takes substantial pressure off of public school utilization, but may bear watching as if the economic situation deteriorates 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.

History suggests that the impact on Easton's public schools may not even be as much as described in the EFMP. This conclusion is arrived at by looking at Easton's change in population and public school enrollment in the years 2000 and 2020. In 2000, Easton had a total population of 11,708, with a public school enrollment of 2,892. By 2020, these numbers had grown to 17,101 and 3,072 respectively. That is a difference of 180 additional students enrolled in Easton's public schools from an overall population increase of 5,393. Looking ahead to the total buildout of the 2023 Town boundaries (an estimated 6,752 new people), if the same ratio of student population:total population can be assumed, this increase of 6,752 people would yield just 225 new students in Easton's public schools.

The counterpoint to this though may well come from the changing demographics noted in the EFMP. Specifically, it noted the growth of the Hispanic student population in Talbot County's Public Schools. This mirrors the increase in the overall Hispanic population in Easton, which, as noted in the Plan Background Chapter, has grown from 3.5% of Easton's population in 2000, to 14.4% in 2020.

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. In addition to the traditional library resources provided here, the Easton branch is an important community resource, providing a series of community events, study rooms, and a moderately-sized meeting room. According to the Library's website, the TCFL receives 76% of its funding from Talbot County and other local governments, 12% from grants and friends support, 6% from the State of Maryland, and the balance from TCFL Foundation and Donations.

The FY 2022 TCFL Annual Report includes the following statistics (NOTE: these figures are for the full system, not just the Easton Branch):

- 23,528 Library Card Holders
- 84,608 physical visits
- 14,179 reference questions answered
- 7,701 computer users
- 13,982 Wi-Fi users
- 383,411 Virtual Library Visits
- 970 Uses of the Meeting and Study Rooms by Outside Organizations
- 125,172 physical volumes
- >1,000,000 virtual volumes
- 405 Adult, Teen & Children's Programs with total attendance of 16,831

The TCFL has developed a Strategic Plan through the year 2025 and as it is rather concise, it is copied below:

2023-2025 Talbot County Free Library Strategic Plan

Vision Statement:

The Talbot County Free Library is an integral part of the community, fostering a spirit of exploration and discovery. We cultivate lifelong learning, creativity, and enrichment.

Mission Statement:

The Talbot County Free Library connects our community to ideas and information to enrich and renew lives.

1. Strategic Direction, Accessibility and Ease of Use:

Create welcoming spaces that are easy to access and incorporate new ideas in library collection practices, services and programming.

Goal 1: User Friendly Spaces- Explore and invests in new ideas and opportunities to update facilities to provide welcoming, accessible, versatile and responsive spaces and technology that meet public demand and support the future success and continued growth of the community.

St. Michaels Library:

Expand and renovate the St. Michaels Library by 2025:

Design and construct the St. Michaels Library to provide inviting, accessible, and flexible spaces, study rooms, a meeting room, and staff work areas to meet the current and future needs of the community

Design and construct the St. Michaels Library to provide children and teens with spaces and technologies that foster exploration, creativity, social interaction, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Replace aged and outdated technologies, mechanical and electrical systems, and finishes to increase user comfort, enhance building appeal and to employ sustainable practices.

Easton Library:

Upgrade and refresh spaces at the Easton Library:

Renovate the youth areas at the Easton Library by 2026 to meet the diverse and age specific social and learning needs of children and teens.

Replace the audio visual system in the meeting room by 2023 to enhance the experience of meeting room users and attendees of library programs.

Identify and prioritize a replacement schedule for aged and outdated technologies, mechanical and electrical systems, and finishes to increase user comfort, enhance building appeal and to employ sustainable practices.

2. Strategic Direction, Community and Outreach:

Develop and expand library services to build strong connections in our community.

Goals:

Goal 1: Awareness – Build awareness throughout our community of the breadth and depth of library services and programs.

Goal 2: Partnerships – Identify and cultivate mutually beneficial partnership opportunities with local government, community groups, organizations, and leaders.

Goal 3: Access Points – Explore the feasibility and resource requirements of introducing additional service points in underserved and outlying areas.

Goal 4: Responsiveness – Seek ongoing input from community stakeholders on how the library's collections, programming, technology, and other resources and services can best meet community needs.

3. Strategic Direction, Diversity and Inclusion:

Cultivate an inclusive environment where every individual feels welcome.

Goals: Goal 1: Rebranding- Demonstrate through branding that TCFL encompasses more than books to include diverse eResources, programming, original content, and staff training endeavors.

Goal 2: Culturally Based Promotion- Integrate languages used in Talbot County in marketing materials and social media posts in order to reach underrepresented communities.

Goal 3: Outreach and Programming- Present diverse voices specifically through outreach and programming events, including through books, brochures, and onsite marketing events.

Goal 4: Cultural Competency- Achieve a greater understanding of different cultures through training.

4. Strategic Direction, Lifelong Learning and Enrichment:

Promote the joy of reading and support learning for all ages.

Goals:

Goal 1: Service Learning- Engage all ages in service learning opportunities for personal growth.

Goal 2: Enrichment- Offer programs and services to all ages that promote literacy, social interaction, cultural enrichment, and encourage creativity and engagement.

Goal 3: Career Learning- Support individuals seeking employment or career changes in an evolving technological economy.

Goal 4: Collection- Offers diverse and rich library materials and resources that connect with and meet the needs of all individuals in our community.

Goal 5: User Friendly Virtual Spaces- Improve upon the appeal, ease of use and satisfaction with the Library's online presence and virtual spaces.

Approved by the TCFL Board of Trustees on October 20, 2022

All told, TCFL is clearly a valuable and multifaceted community resource.

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. Studies² show that emergency responders can cover 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

² See, for example, research by Matt Magnasco of the Charlotte (NC) Department of Transportation.

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."³ 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 3,100 (3,083) units in growth within the existing Town limits. There are also 727 units that already exist outside the Town but within the Growth Area.

A new wastewater treatment facility was constructed (brought on line in 2007) with a capacity to treat 4 million gallons per day. As of December 31, 2023, the WWTF average daily flow was 2.463 MGD. The Easton Utilities Wastewater Master Plan estimates the

³ See the aforementioned Model and Guideline, page 3.

WWTF flow will exceed the 4.0 MGD in the year 2054, assuming a 1.75% growth in flow from 2023. The Wastewater Master Plan also finds that the WWTF property is large enough to accommodate expansion of the facility to increase capacity as necessary at that time.

Residential wastewater use is somewhat predictable and consistent, but non-residential uses vary depending on the nature of the business. 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 five production wells, with a new production well planned for FY25, giving a combined maximum daily production capacity of 4.00 MGD, including the new well, with the largest water source out of service. As of December 31, 2023, actual water production was 1.90 MGD average daily flow and an estimated maximum demand day of 3.36 MGD.

Easton Utilities has a Water Master Plan. Currently an update to this Plan is underway and it looks at this Comprehensive Plan Update and evaluates the ability to supply water to the entire Growth Area. The Water Master Plan estimates it will be necessary to increase water production capacity by constructing a new water production well in the year 2043, and a new water storage tank (1.0 million gallons capacity) in the year 2051. In addition to demand within the existing Town limits, most of the additional demand will come from residential and commercial development within the Future Growth Area as defined in this Comprehensive Plan.

Finally the Water Master Plan recommends Capital Improvements designed to satisfy the water demand generated by growth in the future and maintenance of the system. Easton Utilities updates the Capital Improvement Plan annually as funding and priorities require. The following summarizes these improvements:

Table 10
Planned Water System Capital Projects

Easton Water System Capital Improvement Plan		
Project Description	Proposed Fiscal Year (FY)	Estimated Cost
New Well No. 14 (Magothy Aquifer)	FY2023/2024	\$1,725,000
New Water Treatment Plant (Commerce Drive)		
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2024	\$1,000,000

Matthewstown Tank – Cleaning & Painting	FY2024	\$500,000
Looping Water Mains	FY2024	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2025	\$250,000
Well No. 12 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe		
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2026	\$1,000,000
Looping Water Mains	FY2026	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2027	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacement		
Well No. 8 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe	FY2028	\$130,000
Looping Water Mains	FY2028	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2029	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2030	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2031	\$250,000

Well No. 7 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe		
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2032	\$1,000,000
Looping Water Mains	FY2032	\$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements		
Looping Water Mains	FY2033	\$250,000

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. Water and wastewater flow capacity for phase one of the Regional Hospital is 101,250 gallons per day, or 0.10125 MGD. Future phases, when and if constructed, are estimated to bring the total capacity to 0.2 MGD, which equates to five percent of the WWTF's 4.0 MGD capacity. The impact of the hospital in terms of any WWTF future expansion is that, if the hospital is constructed and expanded as currently planned, then the WWTF may reach its 4.0 MGD capacity two years earlier than given above, that is, in the year 2049 in lieu of 2051. 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.

Like the Water Master Plan referenced in the previous subsection, Easton Utilities also operates with the guidance of a Wastewater Master Plan and that document is also in the process of being updated. However, when assessing the ability of EUC to accommodate the growth anticipated/planned by this Comprehensive Plan, the Wastewater Master Plan concludes “ the WWTF’s nutrient removal capacity is adequate to support Easton’s planned 1.75% population growth through 2045 and beyond. However, the following WWTF components are projected to need modifications when average flow exceeds 4.0 MGD, nominally in the year 2045, assuming that average effluent flow increases linearly at 1.75% per year, proportional with the planned population growth: Headworks, Flow Equalization, Secondary Clarifiers, U.V. Disinfection and Post Aeration.”

The following table gives the Wastewater Capital Improvement Plan from the Wastewater Master Plan. Easton Utilities updates the Water and Wastewater Capital Improvement Plans as funding and priorities require.

EASTON WASTEWATER SYSTEM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR	COMMENTS
Windmill Pump Station Replacement	FY2024	\$2,800,000.
Windmill Force Main Replacement	FY2024	\$2,418,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment		
Calvert Pump Station Refurbishment	FY2024	\$165,000

WWTF Engineering for Larger Capacity Sludge Dryer		
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2025	\$1,000,000.
WWTF Reactor #2- Aerator #503 & #504 Gearbox & Motor Rebuilds, and Repainting Aerator Paddles	FY2025	\$290,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2026	\$1,000,000.
WWTF Clarifiers #1 & #2 Gearbox Replacement and Painting of Skimming Arms, Scapes, and Structure	FY2026	\$540,000.
WWTF UV System Replacement	FY2026	\$325,000.
WWTF Sludge Dryer Replacement	FY2026 & 2027	\$7,400,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2027	\$1,000,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2028	\$1,000,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2029	\$1,000,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2030	\$1,000,000.
WWTF Reactor #1- Aerator #501 & #502 Gearbox & Motor Rebuilds, and Repainting Aerator Paddles	FY2030	\$290,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2030	\$1,000,000.
Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2031	\$1,000,000.

Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment	FY2032	\$1,000,000.
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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 2010 Plan identified the need for a new Community (or Regional) Park on the eastern side of Town and suggested that this Park may have been located during the discussion concerning the Transportation Plan Element of the 2010 Plan 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 sizable piece of forest land.

~~Assuming that we have previously determined that the existing park system is adequate to serve the current 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).~~

While the focus of this Municipal Growth Element is on the ability of the Town to accommodate the build-out of existing Town boundaries, it is easy to make additional calculations to consider what is needed in the way of parks not just today and for a build-out of our current Town, but also of what will be needed to accommodate the eventual development of 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 513 acres to meet the needs of the current (2020 Census) population of 17,101 and an additional 203 (for a total of 716) acres of parkland (358 of which should be Town-owned land) to accommodate the build-out of the existing Town limits. 1,178 acres, total, would be required to accommodate the projected population of the Town including all of the Growth Area.

The estimated total acreage of parks and open spaces, of all types, within the existing Town boundaries (as of 2/14/24) is 910.447 (plus Hyde Park, Elliott Road Apts and Vickers Park). This suggests that at least from an overall area perspective, we currently satisfy the parks and open space needs of our current population and would do so

without any additional park lands for build-out of the current Town boundaries. The ultimate build-out of the Future Growth Areas would require an addition of approximately 268 acres of parks/open space.

Notably, the Town's standard Subdivision requirements, if unchanged, would yield all of this required land. 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 9,400 new units that can potentially ultimately be built within the existing Town and Growth Area equates to 259 acres of parks or playgrounds within subdivisions. This suggests that the Town's typical Subdivision Regulation Park Dedication requirement should be sufficient to meet the State guideline for all our needed parkland.

This does not, however, take into account unique situations, such as the need for a regional-scale park on the east side of Town for equitable geographic distribution of such facilities, or a higher local demand for specific uses or amenities than are accounted for in a standardized per capita ratio. This is likely the case in Easton with regards to a number of organized sports fields/facilities. As the County seat and a regional hub, Easton is looked to as the primary location for such facilities to serve a much larger area than the Town alone.

On the other side of the equation, Easton also benefits from the fact that we have two large recreational sites that are immediately adjacent to our growth boundary such that although not technically within our Future Growth Area, these parcels effectively serve the same function. They are the Seth State Demonstration Forest (124.5 acres) and Hog Neck Golf Course (275.9 acres).

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 the 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 both the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the Talbot County 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. An Urban Growth Boundary has been referred to as the opposite of sprawl. 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.

Draft

Insert Map of Protected Lands in/around Easton's Greenbelt

MAP 3

Draft

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 protects this resource by requiring 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

given the size (i.e. width) of the floodplain on a typical 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. A 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 Seth (formerly 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 17,477. At the household size of the most recent (2020) Census of 2.19 persons per household, these dwelling units equate to a total ultimate Town population of 38,275. When that

population is achieved of course depends on how fast we grow. At the 3% figure that Easton experienced for decades prior to the 2010s, we would achieve our “ultimate” population in approximately 28 years (i.e. by the Year 2052). However in light of community concern over the speed and amount of growth occurring in Easton, the Planning Commission has identified 1.75% 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, but slightly higher than, the longer-term average of 1%. Hence, 1.75% was selected as the target.

Table 11 below provides Population Projections on a yearly basis using the 3% and 1.75% growth factors. Under the 1.75% scenario, the ultimate population is not achieved for nearly another half-century in approximately 2070. 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 Projected Population Growth by Year

Year	Population - Observed	Population - Projected at 1.75%	Population - Projected at 3%
2020	17101		
2021	17,127		
2022	17,430		
2023	17,674		
2024	17,727		
2025		18,037	18,259
2026		18,353	18,807
2027		18,674	19,371
2028		19,001	19,952

2029		19,333	20,550
2030		19,672	21,167
2031		20,016	21,802
2032		20,366	22,456
2033		20,723	23,130
2034		21,085	23,824
2035		21,454	24,538
2036		21,830	25,274
2038		22,212	26,033
2039		22,600	26,814
2040		22,996	27,618
2041		23,398	28,447
2042		23,808	29,300
2043		24,224	30,179
2044		24,648	31,084
2045		25,080	32,017
2046		25,519	32,977
2047		25,965	33,967
2048		26,420	34,986
2049		26,882	36,035
2050		27,352	37,116
2051		27,831	38,230
2052		28,318	39,377
2053		28,814	40,558
2054		29,318	41,775
2055		29,831	43,028
2056		30,353	44,319
2057		30,884	45,648
2058		31,425	47,018
2059		31,975	48,428
2060		32,534	49,881
2061		33,104	51,378
2062		33,683	52,919
2063		34,272	54,507
2064		34,872	56,142
2065		35,482	57,826
2066		36,103	59,561

2067		36,735	61,348
2068		37,378	63,188
2069		38,032	65,084
2070		38,698	67,036
2071		39,375	69,047
2072		40,064	71,119
2073		40,765	73,252
2074		41,478	75,450
2075		42,204	77,714
2076		42,943	80,045
2077		43,694	82,446
2078		44,459	84,920
2079		45,237	87,467

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.” This suggested that we desire for the future growth and development of our Town to occur in a more Traditional sense, not in the modern constructs of suburbia. Furthermore, we envision our Town to continue to function 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. To that end, this chapter is the perfect segue from, and companion to, the previous Element, Community Character, where this whole theme is discussed in greater detail.

This Vision and theme is the same as that set forth in the 2010 Plan. Considering that in terms of the growth of the Town, little changed from 2010 to today, this makes sense. Specifically, in 2024, just as is 2010, Easton finds itself in a period of slow growth, with a housing affordability problem, and with public support for our overall growth strategy. In some ways though, it will be more challenging to implement this strategy, given that there are at least a few factors that are different in 2024 than they were in 2010. These differences include the increased severity of the housing affordability issue, and recent purchases of large parcels of land by the Town of Easton and Talbot County, which while advancing land preservation/parks and open space goals, also remove hundreds of acres of land from consideration of potential new housing. Lastly, there is the existence of the Lakeside at Trappe subdivision located a mere five minutes from our southernmost Town boundary. In 2010, and really for decades, Easton has been "the only game in Town" in terms of residential development. Now, there is significant "competition" in the form of this 2,000 unit subdivision. How that affects the absorption rate of home sales (and prices) in Easton is very much unknown at this point, but potentially a significant factor in both our growth strategy and housing affordability during this planning period.