



## **Planning Commission MEETING AGENDA**

Tuesday, June 17, 2025 - 1:00 PM  
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office  
14 S Harrison Street

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Draft Chapter Review**

- a. Draft review of the following chapters: Economic Development, Transportation, and Implementation.

**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](mailto:planningandzoning@eastonmd.gov).

**4. Adjournment**

Topics for June 17, 2025  
Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop

The intended focus of the second Planning Commission review of the final group of Comprehensive Plan Chapters in their initial Draft format, will be the Economic Development, Transportation, and Implementation Elements. The following is a list of potential questions/issues/talking points on which to center discussion at this Workshop:

**Economic Development**

1. The chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of a diversified local economy. Do you agree with this strategy? Regardless of whether you do or not, should we call out any particular segment or aspect of our economy (or potential aspect) for more detailed discussion or specific recommendations?
2. Downtown is a focus of the Plan in general (for various reasons) and specifically as a Economic focal point as it relates to this chapter. Is this appropriate?
3. Do we need to add something addressing new business growth in the more traditional sense of light industry/manufacturing, research and development, office work, etc? If so, what does this section need to say? Is there a particular type of business or segment of the economy that we should focus on?
4. Do you have any suggested revision to the Goals & Objectives for this chapter?

**Transportation**

5. This chapter combines multiple documents, including the existing transportation chapter, as well as work by Talbot Thrive to address bicycle/pedestrian issues specifically, as well as our transportation network generally. As such, there certainly could be issues with things like formatting, transitions, etc. Do you see any such issues?
6. Is the Town's pursuit of a Complete Streets system appropriately described and discussed
7. Are there any transportation issues not covered or addressed that should be?
8. Are the various proposed improvements (see page 306) (and, we owe you a map of these improvements) appropriate? Should anything more be said about any of them? Should anything be added to the list?
9. Are there any revisions/additions to the Goals & Objectives?

**Implementation**

10. Is the proposed Growth Management Strategy for Easton appropriate? Should any of the components be tweaked? Should any strategy be added?

11. Is this the right place to include the Urban3 Findings? Does the Draft appropriately address the subject?
12. Are you still onboard with replacing the Priority Growth Area with Annexation Policies? Are the proposed Annexation Policies (page 339) appropriate? Are there any additions?
13. Is the description of the Five potential development Areas (page 344-346) appropriate? Are there any other areas to add to this list?
14. Are you ok with the 2025-2035 Growth Strategy, in general? And, specifically the bolded statement on page 348, which sets the stage for focusing on infill/redevelopment and turning away from annexations for the next 10 years?
15. What do you think of the Future Growth Areas Map and its distinction between future Traditional and Suburban types of development? Is it appropriate in general? Do you have any specific suggestions for changes to how any area is shown?
16. Are there any revisions/additions to the Goals & Objectives?

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Providing jobs and the necessary means to enter and advance in the workforce 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 Economic Development Chapter of any Plan generally relies fairly heavily on Tables, Graphs, and Charts. This Plan will attempt to minimize the number of such sources of data, but Tables 13 and 14 below summarize some of the more pertinent data from the 2020 Census.

- o Income was lower and poverty higher in Easton than in either Talbot County or the State of Maryland.
- o Talbot County's Median Household Income was less than the corresponding figure for the State as a whole and Easton's was even lower.
- o The percentage of both high school and college graduates was lower in Easton than in either Talbot County or the State.
- o The percentage of residents 65 years of age and older was significantly higher than the State average in Easton, and higher still for Talbot County.
- o The average commute time for Easton residents was slightly less than those of either Talbot County or the State as a whole.
- o The percentage of homes that are owner occupied in Easton is lower than the State as a whole, while Talbot County exceeds the State percentage.

Table 13 - Select Economic Characteristics

	EASTON	TALBOT CO.	MARYLAND
PER CAPITA INCOME (2022 dollars)	\$43,844	\$52,555	\$49,865
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022 dollars)	\$75,198	\$81,667	\$98,461
PERSONS IN POVERTY, PERCENT	11.5%	10.2%	9.6%
IN CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, TOTAL, PERCENT OF POPULATION AGE 16+, 2018-2022	58.3%	55.7%	66.6%
IN CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, FEMALE, PERCENT OF POPULATION AGE 16+, 2018-2022	51.3%	49.5%	62.7%
TOTAL RETAIL SALES, 2017 (\$1,000)	\$598,129	\$716,678	\$84,966,185
TOTAL RETAIL SALES PER CAPITA, 2017	\$36,204	\$19,340	\$14,095
MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK (MINUTES), WORKERS AGE 16+, 2018-2022	24.9	26.4	32.0
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR HIGHER, PERCENT OF PERSONS AGE 25+, 2018-2022	90.1%	92.2%	91.0%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER, PERCENT OF PERSONS AGE 25+, 2018-2022	39.3%	41.5%	42.2%
ALL EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2017	686	1,259	104,529
MINORITY-OWNED EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2017	48	60	23,789
NON MINORITY-OWNED EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2017	480	987	72,623
VETERAN-OWNED EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2017	52	86	7,365
NON VETERAN-OWNED EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2017	433	886	87,818

Source: 2020 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.

Subject	Easton	Talbot County	Maryland
Total Population	17,101	37,526	6,177,224
% Female	53.6%	52.2%	51.4%
Median Age			
% < 18	21.8%	18.3%	22.0%
% 65+	26.8%	30.5%	17.3%
% White	69.9%	82.1%	57.2%
% Black or African American	16.1%	12.9%	31.6%
Total Households	7,195	16,270	2,318,124
Average Household Size	2.32	2.29	2.60
Total Housing Units	Not Reported	19,861	2,572,412
% Owner-occupied	58.9%	72.9%	67.5%
Median value of owner-occupied homes	\$328,000	\$382,000	\$380,500
Growth Rate (%) in 90's	24.9%	10.7%	10.8%
Growth Rate (%) in 00's	36.2%	11.7%	9.0%
Growth Rate (%) in 10,s	7.2%	-0.7%	7.0%

## **DIVERSITY**

The concept of business 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. Two decades ago this was made obvious 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 have been devastating to Easton's local economy.

Regional cooperation is especially important for Economic Development. Easton, the County seat of Talbot County, is located within the Mid-Shore Region of the Eastern Shore. Economic Development planning and assistance is provided to the counties (Talbot, Caroline, and Dorchester) and municipalities of this region by the Mid-Shore Regional Council. Their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is especially applicable to this effort.

The Mid-Shore region of the Eastern Shore of Maryland is facing significant economic challenges due to the diminishing returns in natural resource-based industries and the loss of large manufacturing and food processing companies that have traditionally been the foundation of the region's economy. Recent economic downturns have the further detrimental impact of reduced real property tax revenues and income revenues to the counties, further curtailing funding for services and infrastructure. This speaks to the need for continued diversification of the local economy.

An important and growing segment of Easton's economy is tourism. Diversity is important within 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.

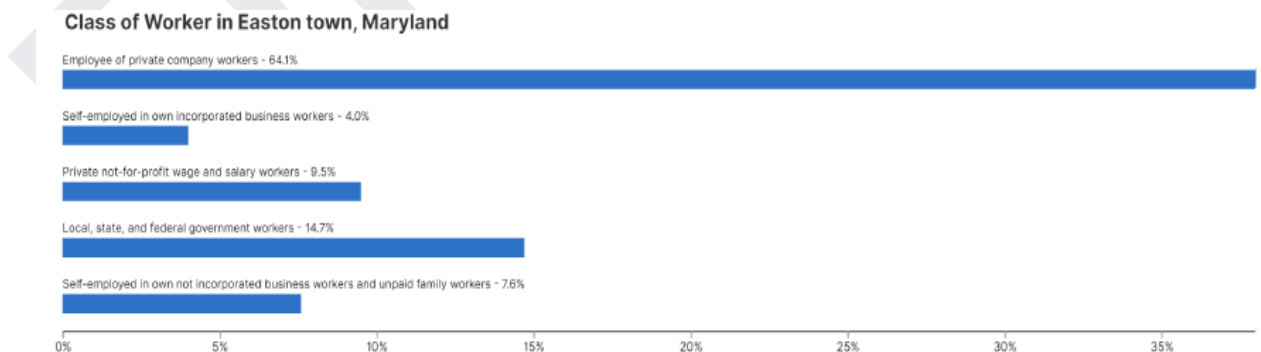
The level of diversity in the local job base is illustrated by the following list of businesses in Easton with more than 80 employees:

<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
Lowe's 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 (NOTE - TABLE NEEDS TO BE UPDATED)

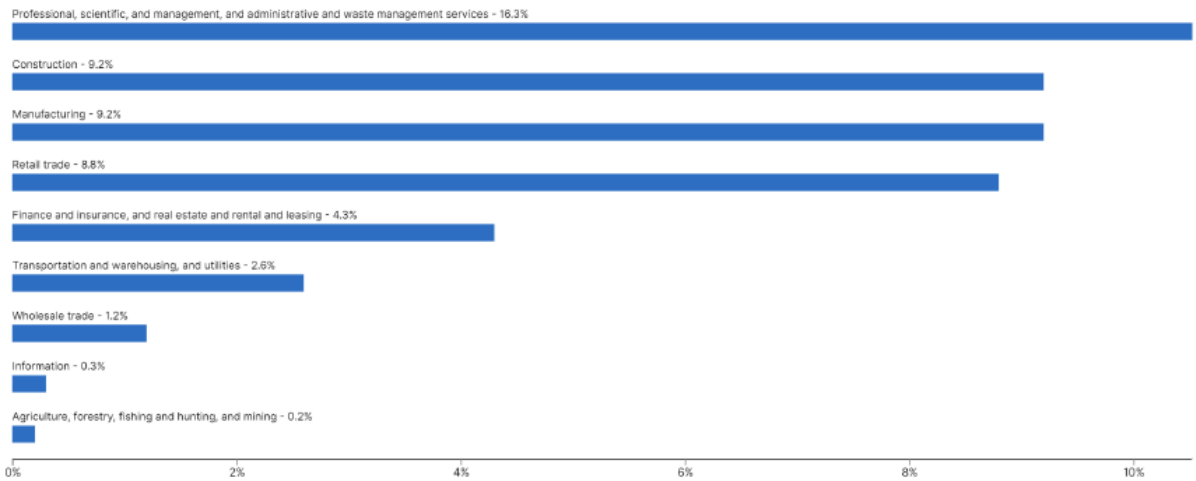
This table indicates the relatively small number of major employers in Easton. With a lack of such large-scale employers, Easton's job base is already fairly diverse in terms of number of employers. Future diversification might therefore be focused more on attracting different types of businesses.

More recent data (from the 2022 ACS) provides the following profile of employment types in Easton:



This indicates that by quite some margin, the majority of workers in Easton are employed by private companies (64.1%). In terms of the occupations of employees in Easton, the following graph illustrates those findings:

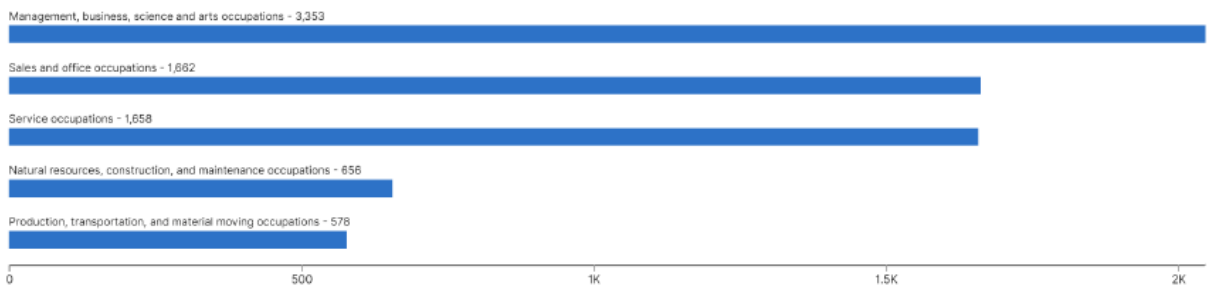
**Industry for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over in Easton town, Maryland**



This graph indicates that the major category of employment type, by industry, is “Professional, Scientific, and Management and Administration and Waste Management Services” (16.3%), the category with the most employees, followed by “Construction” and “Manufacturing” (at 9.2% each).

Finally, this graph depicts the occupation types of employees in Easton:

**Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over in Easton town, Maryland**



This graph indicates that the greatest number of employees work in Management, business, science and arts occupations, followed by Sales and office occupations and Service occupations.

The next table provides a profile of Easton’s workforce (i.e., the residents of Easton who work):

<b>Workers 16 years and over</b>	<b>7827</b>
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK	
<b>Car, truck, or van</b>	81.5
Drove alone	73.1
Carpooled	8.4
In 2-person carpool	6
In 3-person carpool	1.3
In 4-or-more person carpool	1.2
Workers per car, truck, or van	1.06
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0.8
Walked	1.5
Bicycle	1.8
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.6
<b>Worked from home</b>	12.8
PLACE OF WORK	
<b>Worked in state of residence</b>	98.7
Worked in county of residence	77.3
<b>Worked outside county of residence</b>	21.4
Worked outside state of residence	1.3
<b>Living in a place</b>	100
Worked in place of residence	65.9
<b>Worked outside place of residence</b>	34.1
Not living in a place	0
Living in 12 selected states	0
Worked in minor civil division of residence	0
Worked outside minor civil division of residence	0
Not living in 12 selected states	100
<b>Workers 16 years and over who did not work from home</b>	6828
TIME OF DEPARTURE TO GO TO WORK	
<b>12:00 a.m. to 4:59 a.m.</b>	4.5
5:00 a.m. to 5:29 a.m.	2
5:30 a.m. to 5:59 a.m.	4.4
6:00 a.m. to 6:29 a.m.	6.8

6:30 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	10.3
7:00 a.m. to 7:29 a.m.	12.4
7:30 a.m. to 7:59 a.m.	18.8
8:00 a.m. to 8:29 a.m.	10.8
8:30 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.	5.8
9:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.	24.2
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK	
Less than 10 minutes	25.2
10 to 14 minutes	20.2
<b>15 to 19 minutes</b>	11.6
20 to 24 minutes	8.2
25 to 29 minutes	5.7
30 to 34 minutes	9
35 to 44 minutes	2.2
45 to 59 minutes	7.1
60 or more minutes	10.8
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	24.9

*Source: 2022 American Communities Survey*

This survey indicates that 7,827 of Easton’s residents were in the workforce in 2022 and of those, 65.9% (or 5,158) also worked in Easton. Of the 34.1% who worked outside of Easton, 892 of them worked elsewhere within Talbot County. 21.4% (1,675) of Easton's resident workforce traveled beyond Talbot County for employment. In addition, other ACS data indicates that there are a total of 17,100 employees in Easton, meaning that some 11,942 non-Easton residents commute into Easton for work. These statistics also allow for a calculation of Easton’s “functional population”, which might alternatively be considered our “Daytime” population, which consists of the number of residents not working (9,273) + the number of residents working in Easton (5,158) + the number of workers in Easton who commute in from outside of the Town (11,942). This figure is 26,373, meaning there is a need for a number of public facilities and services far in excess of what might otherwise be assumed based on just the population. In fact, our Daytime or functional population is more than 50% greater than our standard population.

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 worked diligently with the Town to implement a number of these changes beginning in 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 were all accomplished and are 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 was responsible for assisting existing Town businesses and attracting new ones. The position also served as the Town's Main Street Manager. Easton was also assisted by the Talbot County Economic Development Commission, the Mid-Shore Regional Council, the Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders in attracting and retaining business in the Town.

Easton was fortunate enough to be selected as 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 as one of the factors to guide downtown Easton's future economic development.

There are a great variety of opinions over what downtown Easton's future should include. 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 and events.

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 Starbucks or a local coffee shop such as Rise Up or The Weather Gage? Bonheur/Storm and Daughters/Michoacana or TCBY/Baskin Robbins/Cold Stone? Barnes and Noble or Flying Cloud Booksellers? 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 to 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 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 the government, such as attorneys, civil engineers and surveyors, title companies, etc...

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:

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>	<b>COST FACTOR</b>	<b>COST RANGE</b>	<b>SPONSOR/COMMENTS</b>
<b>BRANDING AND MERCHANDISING</b>				
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
<b>GREEN RING IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
Conduct feasibility and design studies for streets	Mid-term	medium	\$50,000 to \$75,000	Town, seek to leverage transportation infrastructure improvements with
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
<b>TRAFFIC, PARKING, CIRCULATION</b>				
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
<b>DESIGN GUIDELINES/INFILL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES</b>				
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
<b>REVISE/AMEND HISTORIC DISTRICT RESOURCES INVENTORY</b>				
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.

More recently, significant investment and improvements have been made to a number of historic Downtown buildings, most prominently by Blue Point Development. While these improvements have clearly been a shot in the arm for Downtown Easton, the new activity has, in some circles, raised the issue of the need for more parking generally, and structured parking specifically, in Downtown.

#### 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. Two specific areas with cultural tourism growth potential are the various sites related to the life of the great American abolitionist and statesman, Frederick Douglass, who has been described as nothing less than "...most important leader of the movement for African-American civil rights in the 19th century" and the neighborhood known as "The Hill." The Hill is located just east of Downtown and is nationally significant in that it has recently been identified as one of the oldest free African American neighborhoods in the United States, dating back to the country's earliest days. The picture below is of a marker recently erected to commemorate the neighborhood's significance.



## **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.
- ✓ Update the Downtown Plan for Infill Development during the next Planning period (i.e., by 2034).

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Coordinate with the Mid-Shore Regional Council to define and promote the appropriate role of Talbot County and Easton in the regional economy.

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.

## TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

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 50 to 60 years, due in no small part to the presence of high traffic volumes on a major highway, U.S. Route 50.

Transportation planning is intricately tied to land use, the pattern of development, and the local economy that evolves as a municipal area grows. This is not unique to Easton, as human settlement patterns have long been closely tied to transportation routes, as evidenced by ancient cities and towns being generally located on coasts, along rivers, or on overland "roads." In the post World War II era in the United States, the overwhelming majority of transportation planning has been devoted to that sector which accommodates the private automobile. However, as described throughout this Plan, this overemphasis and overreliance on the private automobile has had a number of negative consequences. In light of this, many communities are beginning to move to what might be described as a more balanced consideration of its transportation network, wherein the road system is but one competent of a broader organization.

The Town of Easton's multimodal transportation system includes various travel modes such as pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, truck, and airplanes. As such Easton must strive to provide, manage, and maintain safe, well-connected **complete networks** for major modes of transportation and users. The ability for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to travel safely, comfortably, and

efficiently, using various means of transportation, contributes to the high quality of life that Easton residents enjoy.

The purpose of the Transportation Chapter is to:

- Highlight and elaborate upon the **Town Council Legacies and Strategic Commitments for Mobility and Connectivity**.
- Update **goals, policies, and implementation strategies** for townwide multimodal transportation improvements, including arterial streets within the town's growth area.
- Provide guidance for the development of a **Complete Networks** approach for the Town for annual tracking, monitoring, and reporting on progress made toward achieving multimodal transportation planning goals.

These concepts are further defined under the following five categories, which form the organizational basis for the goals and policies of this chapter:

**Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning**  
**Complete Networks**  
**Non-Motorized Transportation**  
**Single-Occupancy Vehicles**  
**Transportation Planning Requirements**

The chapter's six themes emphasize the interdependence of the environment, economy and society. They are consistent with and build upon goals and policies emanating throughout this Plan. They are:

- **Limit sprawl by linking land use and transportation planning.**
- **Provide safe, well-connected, and sustainable mobility options for all users.**
- **Increase infrastructure for bicycles, pedestrians, and**

**non-single occupancy vehicle modes of transportation.**

- **Reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.**
- **Maintain and improve streets, trails, and other infrastructure.**
- **Ensure that social equity needs are addressed in all transportation projects.**

These six themes will be explored in a bit more detail below.

**Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning**

The Town of Easton is the largest population, employment, and service center in Talbot County. In addition to the approximately 18,000 people who call Easton home, numerous county residents live outside the town's boundaries but rely on Easton as their central location for daily life, and thousands more commute into Easton daily for employment, shopping, entertainment, etc. Therefore, the local multimodal transportation network is significantly affected by regional traffic generated from outside the Town limits. The affordability of housing options, individual choice to live in the county or another county and commute to work in Easton, and the attraction of regional shoppers from all parts of Talbot County as well as adjacent counties all contribute to vehicle traffic generated from outside the Town. This presents Easton with significant challenges in using land use and transportation planning policies to encourage infill development, maintain a compact downtown, and promote transportation mode shift, while also managing increasing vehicle traffic congestion on the Town's existing transportation routes.

Commutation data from the 2020 Census indicates that 3,210 of Easton's 11,860 workers are Easton residents, meaning that 8,650 workers commute into Easton daily. At the same time 2,432 Easton residents commute beyond the Town for employment. Together that is 11,082 commuting into and around Easton, from outside our Town limits, every working day. The 2022 update indicated that of the Town's 12,232 workers at that time, 9,190 lived outside of Town and commuted into Town for work. 2,322 commuted from Easton for work.

Easton has the highest concentrations of residential density in the Talbot region. Well connected pedestrian and bicycle networks and convenient high-frequency transit service become more cost-effective and efficient as density increases. For this reason, Easton must strive to employ integrated land use and transportation planning policies and regulations that support and incentivize higher-density residential areas located close to employment, shopping, and service centers to provide residents with more opportunities to walk, bicycle, or choose alternate forms of transportation.

### **Complete Networks**

Easton's focus of transportation planning ought to include multiple modes of transportation with goals, policies, and project recommendations to balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, as well as vehicle drivers on all streets. Although there is a minimal transit system in Talbot County at present, planning should include provisions for transit as the Town of Easton grows.



This process of multimodal transportation planning aims to evolve into a **Complete Networks** approach, which incorporates the principles of the Complete Streets movement and also provides an annual assessment of the progress made toward the completion and improvements to each modal network. This annual assessment of progress and inventory can include chapters on each mode of transportation with performance measures and status reports for each as well as an overall review of the transportation network as a whole.

### **Non-Motorized Transportation**

The Town's Complete Networks approach to transportation planning is geared toward completing mobility networks for all users. Much of this effort involves

building new sidewalks or bikeways on the existing street network or including sidewalks and bikeways on new streets when they are constructed by either public or private interests.

Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (See Appendix) identifies a 266-mile Primary Pedestrian Network and 343 individual sidewalk and intersection crossing projects that have been subject to significant analysis and prioritized according to the needs of pedestrians. The same Plan also identifies a 160-mile Primary Bicycle Network and 185 individual bikeway projects that have been subject to significant analysis and prioritized according to the needs of bicyclists. Both of these extensive multi-year planning efforts were informed with broad community input and are incorporated into the Transportation Chapter by reference.

### **Transit and Single-Occupancy Vehicles**

The Town continually strives to increase opportunities for, and the convenience of, making trips by walking, biking, or riding transit, while also encouraging people to make fewer SOV trips. The Town's aim is not to eliminate private automobiles, but to encourage the use of other transportation modes, while reducing the costly transportation capacity demand made by private automobiles on Town arterial streets.

As illustrated in the inflow/outflow graphic on page three of this chapter, Easton's multimodal transportation network is significantly affected by regional traffic generated from outside the Town limits, much of which is work-related. Constructing sidewalk and bikeway infrastructure creates more opportunities for walking and biking and promotes non-automotive trip making whenever possible.

Regardless of fuel source, it is likely that private automobiles will continue to be the dominant mode choice for the majority of the regional population for the next 20 years. However, there are important technological innovations occurring in the transportation industry that will affect both individual mode choices, as well as the availability, safety, and efficiency of various transportation modes. Examples include

car sharing organizations, ride sharing networks, working remotely from home, and innovations in driverless and connected vehicle technology. The Town will continue to provide a safe and efficient transportation network for automobiles while also incorporating and adapting to technological innovations.

Given Easton's circumstances as the major population, employment, and service center in Talbot County, Town leaders recognize that they cannot build their way out of traffic congestion by continually widening arterials and intersections to add capacity for automobiles. Instead, Town leaders expect that there will be vehicle traffic congestion in some locations, especially during the local morning and evening rush hour (p.m. peak period), and that this is a normal condition.

The Town focuses transportation funding on improvements that will make walking, bicycling, and transit safe, comfortable, and convenient. The Town is committed to enhancing the public realm at the street level, which is everyone's community space, and designing the streetscape primarily for people rather than automobiles. At the same time, there are some significant vehicular transportation improvements needed to support regional economic development, especially in the eastern portion of Easton. Easton's overarching goal for transportation is to provide facilities and opportunities for safe, convenient, and reliable movement of people and goods throughout the Town by multiple modes of transportation.

### **Maintain and improve streets, trails, and other infrastructure**

In order to maximize benefit and minimize cost, it is important to look for opportunities to take advantage of cost efficiencies when preparing and prioritizing publicly-funded transportation capital improvements. For example, when underground sewer, water, or stormwater utilities need repair, it may provide an opportunity to add a bikeway identified in the Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. When asphalt resurfacing is scheduled, sidewalk and curb ramp upgrades are automatically required by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, which offers an opportunity to include improvements identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan. Asphalt resurfacing also offers an opportunity to

re-channelize an arterial street to include bikeways identified in the Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Likewise, if infrastructure improvements are scheduled on a corridor that has been identified for placemaking opportunities, efficiencies may be gained in constructing both the transportation and placemaking improvements, provided funding can be allocated for all of the work. All of these examples also provide an opportunity to make these improvements using funding from sources (sewer, water, stormwater) other than transportation-specific funds (list funding sources).

The Town also requires private development to help fund and construct transportation infrastructure that is needed to accommodate new growth and development. Both new development and redevelopment in Easton is subject to review to ensure that projects meet both local and state transportation planning regulations.

### **Multimodal Transportation Concurrency**

The [legislative action/act] of Maryland requires local jurisdictions to adopt level of service (LOS) standards for local arterials and transit service, as well as transportation concurrency management ordinances, to monitor and maintain locally adopted LOS standards [add reference for act and sections]. These growth management requirements are intended to ensure that local transportation infrastructure is adequate to serve the level of planned future growth in the community. The state does not dictate any particular LOS standard, concurrency methodology, or what constitutes adequate transportation infrastructure in any community. These important decisions are made by each local jurisdiction, but coordination and consistency with other agencies and adjacent jurisdictions is required. In Easton, providing adequate transportation infrastructure to serve future planned growth occurs through the completion of mode-specific networks that have been adopted and constitute Easton's Complete Networks approach described above.

### **Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA)**

The Town's [Development Guidelines and Improvement Standards](#) require that a

Transportation Impact Analysis ("Traffic Study") be completed for larger development projects that produce significant new p.m. peak hour vehicle trips or where there are known traffic congestion or public safety issues at nearby signalized intersections. Development projects that are required to complete a TIA will not be issued Transportation Concurrency Certificates until the TIA is complete and accepted by the Town, including any off-site mitigation that may be required through State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) regulations.

### **Multimodal Street Standards**

The Town requires all new development abutting substandard public streets to fund and construct multimodal improvements to bring the street edge up to current Easton multimodal street standards. If a subdivision is proposed, then the developer must provide residential streets that have concrete curb, gutter and sidewalks unless there are special circumstances. If new development abuts an arterial street, then it must provide concrete curb, gutter, and sidewalk, as well as bicycle lanes at a minimum.

### **Environmental Justice**

Public Works produces a Title VI Annual Update Accomplishment Report to the Mayor, which demonstrates the measures that have been taken to comply with federal Title VI requirements for non-discrimination. This annual report provides a policy statement which assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100.259) be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity. The policy statement further assures every effort will be made to ensure non discrimination in all of its programs and activities.

Public Works incorporates social equity and socio-economic needs into all multimodal transportation plans. Low-income housing, social services, and public transit needs were weighted heavily in the project prioritization

process for Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and transit operators specifically focused on under-served populations.

## **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. It is why the appropriate reference to this route is the "Parkway", rather than the oft heard "Bypass." Despite the growth in signalized intersections, the Parkway still serves its intended 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 Visioning opinion surveys from this and the previous three Plan Updates, was to reroute Rte. 50 to the Parkway. This option has consistently received the lowest preference of all possible options. The leading option in this (and the previous) survey was to construct a Salisbury-style bypass around Easton.

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. They would be undelayed by traffic signals, and locals would enjoy quieter streets with significantly less wait times at signals. 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 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. 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 could also achieve the benefit of getting this intersection away from its current location immediately adjacent to the airport where a grade-separated interchange would pose a major aviation hazard. At one time, 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.

## **Complete Streets**

Earlier in this chapter the concept of developing a Complete Streets system was discussed. In general terms, this refers to designing a street system which considers all modes of transportation, as well as varying degrees of proficiency of potential users of the system. It is also seen as a potential way to begin to place greater emphasis on prioritizing local streets, for local needs as opposed to what has often been the traditional focus on getting travelers to and through Town as quickly as possible.

In January of 2025, the Town of Easton Engineering Department initiated a Complete Streets process by contracting with the Transportation Engineering firm of Wallace Montgomery. According to the Scope of Work for this project, this initial phase will involve the following tasks:

*Wallace Montgomery (WM) will collaborate with Town officials to align the Comprehensive Plan's transportation goals and objectives with this Complete Streets product.*

*The **WM** Team will draft a commitment letter indicating the Town's support of local initiatives that will reduce fatal and serious injury crashes for the Town staff to approve. The letter will include a target date to eliminate severe injuries and fatalities on Town streets as well as the percentage reduction of roadway fatalities and serious injuries by a specific date with an eventual goal of eliminating roadway fatalities and serious injuries. This letter has value for future Town initiatives, communication with Town residents and business owners, land development application reviews, and can be referenced in federal (SS4A) and state grant applications.*

*Our Team will develop a default modal hierarchy for Town streets, providing guidance for future planning, design, operations, and maintenance efforts. The hierarchy will be the product of a facilitated discussion led by **WM** including key internal (and if appropriate) external stakeholders.*

*Design Guidance: While facilitating the development of the default modal hierarchy, **WM** will use the same forum / process to draft guiding principles for street designers that address system performance, equity, sustainability, and community culture. These principles will be the starting point for street projects, ensuring the project teams follow the principles in delivering the transportation improvements.*

*Equity Lens: The **WM** Team will build an equity analysis tool using population characteristics to identify underserved communities that rely more on safe multimodal transportation options. **WM** developed a nationally recognized equity analysis tool for the City of Baltimore. The GIS-based tool applies emerging methods to identify and help underserved communities with transportation improvements using readily accessible ESRI GIS software and best available national, regional, county, and town social-economic demographic data.*

*Prioritization Process: The **WM** Team will develop a methodology to prioritize strategies and projects for the Town. The prioritization process will consider safety (crash reduction efficiency/mitigation), equity impacts, project cost / implementation feasibility, and overall staff capacity to support recommendations related to ongoing programming.*

*Deliverables:*

- *A commitment letter with a goal and timeline for eliminating roadway fatalities and serious injuries*
- *A default modal hierarchy*
- *Guiding principles linking Comprehensive Plan goals to project planning and street design*
- *A GIS-based equity analysis tool using the Town's GIS software*
- *A methodology to prioritize strategies and projects*

***WM** will draft a set of street types that reflect the Town's community values and street functions, representing a vision for each street type. The street types will reflect the function of the street in the transportation network such as downtown mixed-use streets, multimodal streets connecting to the downtown, residential streets, industrial streets, and other types. Each street type identified will have an associated typical cross section with attention to travel lanes, medians, curbside management needs, potential on-street bike facilities, sidewalk treatments, and green stormwater management opportunities. This section will also address how the modal priority of the street would impact the optimal / prioritized use of limited right-of-way within the cross section components.*

*Deliverable: The product of this task will be a chapter in the final report that identifies street types for public streets in the Town. Each street type will have a typical cross section and recommendations for the use of the right of way elements: sidewalk, curb space, travel lanes, and median.*

Upon concurrence with the typical sections developed as part of Task 3, the **WM** Team will develop design guidance for each street type and the associated Complete Streets elements.

The design guidance will define specifications for travel lanes, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, green infrastructure, roadway crossings and intersections, curb management, and corner radii. The typical sections will not address underground utilities and stormwater management. The specifications will originate from either the State of Maryland or industry best practices from FHWA, NACTO, or ITE.

Supporting subsections will include:

*Interim / Quick-build / Safety Countermeasure Strategies:* The design guidelines will also include short-term "tactical" solutions, with examples, which could be implemented on a trial or permanent basis.

*Sustainable Stormwater Management:* "Green" stormwater management features will be incorporated into the design details where appropriate, with notes to the designer advising the ability to incorporate the features are dependent upon the location of underground utilities.

*Complete Streets Curbside Management:* This subsection will address the competing needs for curbspace now and in the future in the downtown area. This subsection will address prioritization and design standards, as well as eliminating or moving parking for multimodal mobility opportunities.

*Deliverable:* Documentation containing design guidance for the Town from the State of Maryland, FHWA, NACTO, and other applicable nationally recognized sources.

**WM** will draft trackable performance measures related to safety, mobility, livability, accessibility, equity, and economic development goals, consistent with the Town's small area plans and draft comprehensive plan.

The final products of this exercise are envisioned to include a host of specific policies and projects which will represent a new direction of Transportation Planning in Easton. It should direct us how to coordinate with State agencies and suggest local actions that we can take to both improve traffic to and around Easton, but also to facilitate an easier and more efficient system for those merely seeking to move about within 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.

Easton Airport/Newnam Field (ESN) is a public-use general aviation airport owned by Talbot County. Located on the Delmarva Peninsula approximately 2 miles north of Easton, it has two intersecting runways with full parallel taxiways. It has a precision and non-precision instrument approaches and an FAA contract air traffic control tower. The airport is included in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), making it eligible to receive federal funds. As a General Aviation Airport, it accommodates the basic needs of general aviation aircraft and pilots.

The airport has two runways, Runway 04/22, that is 5,500-feet-long by 100-feet-wide, and Runway 15/33 that is 4,000-feet-long by 100-feet-wide. There are 220 based aircraft consisting of single- and multi-engine aircraft, jets, and helicopters. Additionally, a few gliders are based on-site. Four Fixed Base Operators (FBOs) are based on the field: Easton Jet Service, Maryland Air, NexGen Flight Solutions, and Trident Aviation. The services they provide include fuel (100LL and Jet A), aircraft parking and storage (tie-downs and T-hangars), professional air charter services, rental cars, aircraft rentals, hangar space, catering, conference room, work-out gym, weather centers, and courtesy cars. There is a café located in the terminal building.

Several other aviation-related businesses are conveniently located at the airport. Aircraft repair services are available from Air Repair and Trident Aviation, while aircraft sales are offered by Trident Aviation and Omni Jet Trading. Aloft Biplane Rides affords the opportunity to soar the skies over Talbot County in a 1942 open cockpit Boeing Stearman. East Coast Flight Services offers air charters. Flight training and aircraft rentals are available from Easton Aviation and Trident Aviation.

The Maryland State Police base one of their helicopters at the airport providing emergency medical services, search and rescue, and law enforcement. Additionally, the Talbot County Emergency Medical Services division operates five Advanced Life Support (ALS) units out of the airport providing the community access to advanced medical treatment during emergencies and rapid transport to hospitals.

## 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 - 143

Multi-engine aircraft - 24

Corporate Jets - 20

Helicopters - 3

**Total Aircraft - 190**

### Annual Aircraft Operations

Local GA 44%

Transient GA 31%

Military 20%

Air Taxi 5%

**Total Operations 73,543**

A 2023 Report on the Economic Impact of Airports found that Easton Airport/Newman Field provided a total employment of 542 jobs, with personal income of \$36,918,000 and State and Local taxes of \$11,342,000, creating an overall Business revenue of \$91,447,000. Clearly, Easton Airport is not just a transportation amenity, but also an economic driver.

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 aviation 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 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.*

## **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. Such a scenario was the outcome of a Small Area Plan developed for Easton Point/Port Street, which is described in the Implementation Chapter of this 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. Part of the previously mentioned Complete Streets project that the Town is initiating addresses this situation.

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, in the update of the Plan, the Town worked with representatives of Talbot Thrive, who graciously reviewed and updated the **“Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan”** included as part and parcel of this Plan in the Appendix.

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.

Insert Proposed Bicycle Routes Map Here

DRAFT

Insert Proposed Pedestrian System Map Here

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## **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. Michael's Shuttle runs between 6:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

In FY '23 ridership on Route C was 8,337 and on Route D was 5,868. The corresponding figures as reported in the 2010 Plan were much higher for Route C and virtually the same for Route D. Additionally, ridership on the St. Michael's Shuttle was not reported in 2010, but was 6,030 in FY23.

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 several 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. It should be noted also that this list will almost certainly be modified (perhaps significantly) as a result of the previously referenced Complete Streets Study.

**(1) A Grade Separated Crossing of US Route 50** – A project that would go a long way in providing local traffic relief to Easton residents is creation of a grade-separated interchange of Ocean Gateway (US 50). Although none would likely be a simple or inexpensive project, a number of options exist, be it something as complex as the redesign and relocation of the northern 50/322 intersection and connection to MD 309, or something as relatively straightforward as an under or overpass at one or more of Route 50 and Chapel, Goldsborough, Dover, and/or Dutchman's Lane.

**(2) East Side Residential Collector Grid** – The issue which generated the most interest in the 2010 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 was proposed was the establishment of a gridded street system on the eastern side of Town, replicating the street system of the older parts of Easton. No single collector road was proposed. A significant part of the Complete Streets Study, and anticipated follow-up of an overall Town Transportation model, will include a closer examination of this concept.

**(3) 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 2 above.

**(4) 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 alternative to Route 50.

**(5) 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.

**(6) Chapel Road/Route 50 Intersection Improvement** – Traffic capacity improvements for this intersection is a high priority project of both Easton and e Talbot County. The exact nature of any such 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. One improvement has been the introduction of split phasing of the signal at this intersection. Additional work of this nature is expected in the future.

**(7) Norris Taylor Drive** - A new signalized intersection on Route 50 is presently in the process of being installed and becoming operational in association with the development of the new Royal Farms and Burger King stores. In addition to serving these businesses, this road will provide significantly improved access to John F. Ford Park. and could facilitate a West Side Service Road; a concept that mirrors the improvement described for the east side in number 3 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 the Town assesses new development 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.

**\*\*\*\* - ADD DESCRIPTION OF MARLBORO IMPROVEMENTS \*\*\***

**(9) Goldsborough Street/Ocean Gateway Intersection Improvements and**

**Dover Street/Ocean Gateway Intersection Improvements**

- These intersections are possibly the worst in Easton. There are two measures of an intersection's effectiveness. The 2010 Plan noted that the Goldsborough Street intersection then failed on one of the two measures in the morning peak and on both measures during the afternoon peak. Worse yet, it was projected to continue 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 and Dover can be accommodated from lanes dedicated for each as far west and east as possible.

**(10) Intersection Improvements, 5-corners** - A roundabout has previously been mentioned as a potential solution to the traffic situation at the unique intersection known as "Five Corners" (the intersection of Washington, Harrison, Idlewild, and Peachblossom) beside Idlewild Park. This should be explored further for feasibility and effectiveness. In the near term, a planned new "Smart Signal" should improve the efficiency of movement and minimize unnecessary wait times at this intersection.

**(11) 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 potentially shaving off several

minutes from this trip. Talbot County's recent purchase of the "Poplar Hill Farm" could either remove this improvement from consideration or facilitate its construction. The Town and County should coordinate the usefulness and viability of such a road.

**(12) through (15) 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 18 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. Portions of these extensions have been constructed during the previous Plan period and are great additions to the Town's Trail system.

**(16) 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. Where feasible, any such extension should include a Trail.

**(17) 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).

**(18) Chesapeake Avenue** – Chesapeake Avenue is a potential Trail extension and potential new road for which the right-of-way actually exists today (and has existed for quite some time). It could represent the primary source of east-west access for much of the hundreds of undeveloped acres

located between Dutchman's Lane and Chilcutt Road. In the near term, a Trail should be constructed to serve the residents of the east side of Town. Additional right-of-way (which should be obtained in conjunction with future development of adjacent properties) could facilitate a road to be co-located with the Trail. Such a road would intersect Route 50 just north of Idlewild Avenue and could possibly tie in with an extension of Idlewild (see #21 below). In this scenario Idlewild would provide the vehicular intersection with Route 50 while Chesapeake would provide a grade-separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing.

**(19) 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. Some of the offices of the Talbot County Government are located in the Bay Street Condominiums. As such, this road is desirable, not so much as a shortcut between Bay and Marlboro, but for access to these offices.

**(20) 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.

**(21) 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.

GOAL: To manage growth by linking land use and transportation planning.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Continue to develop and implement plans, programs, and regulations that incentivize infill and emphasize multimodal transportation in the community. Examples include:
  - This Comprehensive Plan, Small Area Plans and mixed-use districts; and
  - 2023 Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (incorporated herein by reference).
- Balance land use efficiency with transportation safety and mobility by prioritizing street connectivity within the Town limits, mobility for people and goods, and high occupancy vehicles over single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs). Implementation strategies include:

- Recognize that peak hour vehicle traffic congestion is to be expected in higher density and commercial areas, as well as entry/exit points to Easton;
  - Prioritize safety and connectivity improvements for all modes of transport over improvements focused solely on reducing vehicle traffic congestion
  - Develop a strategic transit plan as a key high occupancy mode of transportation between the Town's employment, education, parks and recreation, shopping, and entertainment centers and residential concentrations in Talbot County;
  - Promote active forms of transportation over motorized forms of transportation to improve public health and minimize environmental impacts.
- Encourage higher-density development/redevelopment along primary transit routes. Implementation strategies include:
- Documentation of existing zoning, allowable densities, housing types, and commercial or office development along transit routes.
  - Engaging neighborhood associations, other interested stakeholders, and the development community to create a TOD overlay mechanism that could allow higher-density development along transit routes if TOD performance measures, such as those listed below, can be met.
  - Design review is required for any new development;
  - Mixed-use (ground-floor commercial, upper-floor residential) development is encouraged;
  - Commercial development: Non-auto-oriented uses, no drive-thru windows, and no vehicle parking fronting high-frequency transit corridors;
  - Residential development: Development is primarily oriented towards trails, characteristics include townhomes, small-lot development, and multi-family housing;
  - Auto parking: On-site parking requirements are reduced or waived with criteria. Street parking and/or off-site parking along the transit corridor may count toward commercial parking requirements;
  - Bike parking: Adopt long- and short term bike parking requirements.
  - If a TOD overlay is approved, work with transit authority or provider to coordinate higher-density development proposals transit plans to maintain or increase high-frequency transit service along various corridors.
- Continue to work with Talbot County to develop a unified standard for the Easton growth area to provide safe and efficient multimodal movement of people and goods and adequate levels of service as these areas develop to densities and are ultimately annexed into the Town.

GOAL: Provide safe, well-connected, and sustainable mobility options for all users.

OBJECTIVES:

- Connect missing links within the Townwide multimodal transportation network for all modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit bus, freight trucks, and private automobiles.
- Design multimodal transportation improvements on existing and new streets with the safety and mobility needs of all user groups considered and with priority emphasis placed on the most vulnerable user groups [ add photo].
- Provide mobility choices and opportunities for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, school children, senior citizens, and low income populations.

GOAL: Increase infrastructure for bicycles, pedestrians, and non-single-occupancy vehicle modes of transportation.

OBJECTIVES:



- Incorporate sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways identified in Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans into all transportation capital improvements on public streets, wherever feasible.
- Require all new development to construct sidewalks on all public streets identified as part of Easton's Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan or as per Town street standards (reference TOE Code here). Where possible, sidewalks should be separated from roadways with landscape strips, street trees, rain gardens, or other low impact development techniques. Safe crossings of roads should be provided.
- Require all new development to construct bike lanes on all arterial streets identified as part of Easton's Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan or as per Town street standards (reference TOE Code here). Where possible, bike lanes should be constructed of previous asphalt or concrete.
- Develop an administrative process that allows for departures from required infrastructure improvements in cases where no public

purpose would be served by strict compliance with the required standard.

- Work closely with the Talbot County Public Schools to prioritize the construction of sidewalks and bikeways to support Safe Routes to School.
- Incentivize private developers to fund and construct sidewalk and bikeway improvements identified in Easton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans.
- Employ Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies, including, but not limited to, those listed below to increase the safety, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the Townwide multimodal transportation system.

**TDM Actions:**

- Educate and encourage the public to use bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation;
- Implement village plans and Multifamily Design Review Guidelines to encourage development to be transit supportive, pedestrian oriented, and bicycle friendly;
- Encourage compact land use patterns that reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled;
- Monitor U.S. Census data and report annual progress in the TRAM toward achieving transportation mode shift goals for increasing the share of work trips made by bicycle, pedestrian, and transit trips and reducing work trips made by SOVs;
- Support and implement a Commute Trip Reduction program aimed at reducing congestion, air pollution and energy consumption by requiring large employers and major new developments to reduce the number of SOVs being driven to and from those projects;
- Encourage the presence and success of ride sharing organizations to offer alternatives to making unnecessary SOV trips; and
- Review parking standards to reduce the impacts of parking lots on pedestrian mobility, and the natural environment. Continue to pursue parking management best practices.

### **TSM Actions:**

- Complete pedestrian and bicycle networks, which help to reduce energy consumption and promote physical activity to improve public health;
- Explore the financial feasibility of a privately-funded bike share program for Easton;
- Identify opportunities to improve local arterial street connectivity of the Townwide transportation network that will create better mobility throughout the Town for all transportation modes;
- Identify and seek available state and federal transportation grant funding and collect transportation impact fees to support necessary multimodal transportation system improvements; and
- Demonstrate the success of local funding sources such as Transportation Benefit Districts.

GOAL: Reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Strive to decrease SOV work trips, while increasing work trips made by walking, biking, public transit, and ridesharing, as illustrated in the Mode Shift Goals graphic.
- Report standardized ACS data from the U.S. Census Bureau to track transportation mode to work patterns, with five-year averages reported at the beginning of each year.
- In partnership with the County and State of Maryland, create a Commute Trip Reduction program for employers to help both employees and customers make local trips by walking, biking, and riding transit or sharing rides.
- Encourage MDOT to continue reinforcing the link between Town sidewalk, bikeway, and transit infrastructure improvements and travel decision-making by Easton residents and employees. [Stronger language here, given that state roads are big challenge?]

GOAL: Maintain and improve streets, trails, and other infrastructure.

- The Town's LOS standards provide measurable criteria to judge the adequacy of the multimodal transportation system for new development by calculating

person trips available for transportation concurrency evaluations, which are a pre-application requirement. New development will be prohibited unless adequate person trips are available or multimodal transportation system improvements are made concurrent with the development. While adding vehicle capacity to an arterial street or intersection may be necessary in some circumstances, continual road widening is not a long-term solution to p.m. peak (rush-hour) traffic congestion. The Town's transportation policies are focused on managing the multimodal transportation network safely, efficiently, and sustainably for all modes without unnecessarily widening arterial streets simply to add capacity for automobiles.

- Allocate adequate levels of local funding for ongoing maintenance and repair to sustain the investments that the Town has made to construct the sidewalk, bikeway, freight, and street networks.
- New transportation facilities should be sited, designed, and constructed to avoid or minimize environmental impacts to the extent feasible, consistent with the mitigation sequencing requirements in the Critical Areas Ordinance.
- Develop innovative new methodology to measure, forecast, and mitigate negative impacts that new vehicle traffic may have on pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit bus service when Transportation Impact Analyses are completed for new development.
- Incorporate the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicle drivers of all ages and abilities into Easton's multimodal street standards.
- Request MDOT and Talbot County to improve bicycle and pedestrian facility safety in all state or County highway projects, wherever possible.
- Explore opportunities to retrofit existing streets using Green Street features and traffic calming.

GOAL: Ensure that social equity needs are addressed in all transportation projects.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery, and capital investment.
- Through a balanced prioritization process, invest in pedestrian and bicycle

infrastructure in all Easton neighborhoods.

- Provide opportunities for Easton residents regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or income to engage in pedestrian and bicycle related activities.
- When communicating about multimodal transportation programs or projects, develop outreach materials that are accessible through various media to a wide range of constituents in multiple languages.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

**"A plan without action is not a plan. It's a speech."**

~ T. Boone Pickens

**"Planning without action is futile; action without planning is fatal."**

~ Cornelius Fichtner

**"Action without planning is the cause of all failure. Action with planning is the cause of all success."**

~ Brian Tracy

### **INTRODUCTION**

The quotes cited above all speak to the necessity to connect planning and action. The bulk of this Plan frames the context of the present day and outlines the Plan for the future. If the Plan is to avoid the fate of "sitting on the shelf and gathering dust" this final chapter on Implementation will likely be largely responsible.

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 many of the subdivisions of the last 40 to 50 years and yet, these older historic parts of Easton are consistently identified through public input as the best parts of Easton.
- 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. To this point, public input in the early stages of this Plan's preparation indicated a clear and strong preference for accommodating the majority of growth during this Planning cycle in the form of Infill, Redevelopment, and Adaptive Reuse rather than on newly annexed Farmland and Forests.
- 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 for Easton is proposed. It is identical to that which was first proposed in the 2010 Plan, with one notable addition and a modification.

### **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 10 years as part of the next Comprehensive Plan update, just as it has been in association with this Plan revision.

This 2010 Plan Update proposed no changes to the UGB and this Update does not as well. 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.

While the establishment of an Urban Growth Boundary and Green Belt can achieve the objective of containing the outward expansion of the Town’s urban footprint, the character of

Easton of the future could still be a wide variety of things, depending on what is allowed or encouraged to happen on the in-Town side of the boundary. Filling in the growth area with single-family detached homes at the 2.0 du/ac or so density of many of the subdivisions built since 1980 would be an inefficient, unsustainable use of this land. On the other hand, dramatically increasing density in the name of greater sustainability could also lead to a future Easton that would be out of the expressed desired character for our community. This Plan seeks to narrow that range of possible future outcomes and this chapter in particular begins to prescribe how to achieve that future.

In 2024, the Planning/Economic Development Firm Urban3 modelled the fiscal impacts of land uses on the Eastern Shore in general, and then in Talbot County specifically. The basis of Urban3's methodology involves examining "value per acre" for the area being analyzed. The following is excerpted from the Urban3 study for Talbot County.

### ***Land Use Patterns***

*The Value per Acre model reveals patterns that otherwise may not be as visually apparent. Land uses can be categorized in order to compare their value potency. The chart in Figure 8 reveals a clear correlation that higher density development is significantly more productive than less dense land uses.*

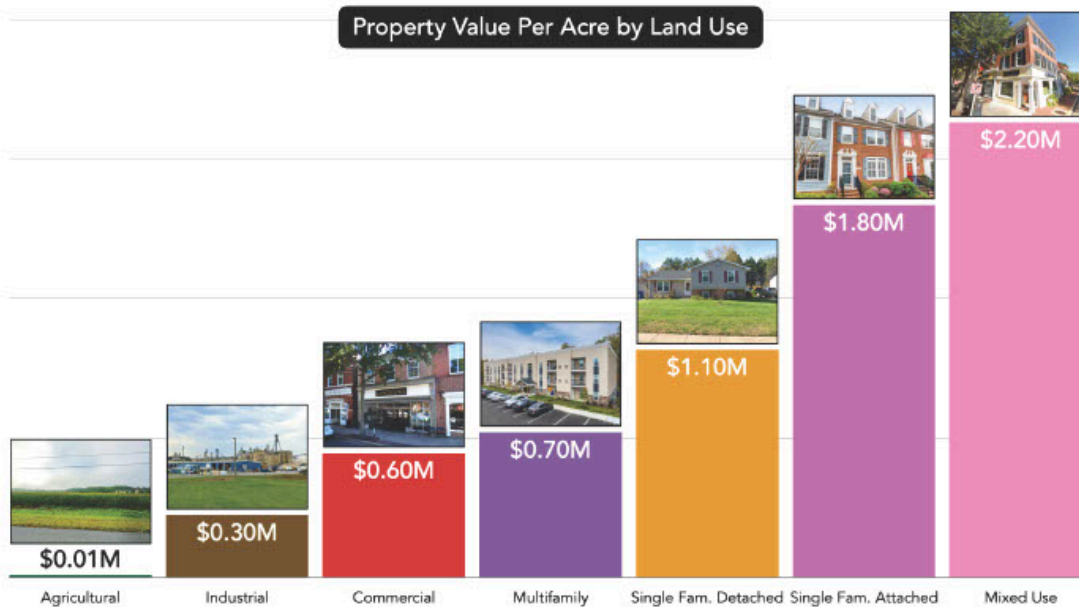


Figure 8. Comparison of values per acre by land use in Easton  
 Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps



Figure 9. Comparing value vs. dwelling units on a per acre basis for nine example properties in Easton  
 Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

Land use patterns can further be explored within the context of housing availability by comparing the number of dwelling units per acre with value per acre. The chart in Figure 9 highlights specific residential properties in Easton, ranking their level of density and their value productivity. In the bottom left corner of the chart, a standard farmhouse is displayed. If

*situated on a half-acre property, this housing type has the capability of hosting 2 dwelling units per acre, while earning a modest \$200,000 in taxable value per acre. Moving right along the bottom row, detached single family homes in a suburban and urban context are ranked, revealing that a historic neighborhood home has the potential to host 5 dwelling units, and \$2 million in taxable value, per acre. Moving up the chart, the analysis was applied for attached single family (townhomes) and apartment complexes throughout the community. The message is clear: higher density development not only provides more taxable revenue, but also increases housing availability for the town's residents.*

*As Easton continues to grow, the town will be able to make choices regarding how that growth will look and the resulting financial implications of that growth. Urban3 conducted three Growth Projections Scenarios for the following sites within Easton: Poplar Hill, Four Seasons, and Gannon Ridge. These scenarios leverage the values and productivity of existing land uses and building types within Easton (Figure 14), and then apply them to conceptual site plans provided by Easton (Figure 15).*



Figure 14. Example properties used in projections scenarios for the Town of Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps



Figure 15. Example site plans used for projections scenarios for the Town of Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

In Figure 16 we look at the Four Seasons location and the potential for this site to become a single family residential development, while also comparing the difference in value change between the use of single family attached and detached building types. We see that the Four Seasons site, if developed as single family attached comparable to the homes on Jasper Lane, would have a taxable value increase that is 743 times its current value. If developed as traditional single family detached housing, this site's value potential increases less than that with more compact single family homes. It is important to consider building type alongside the development pattern of these sites when determining best use with the highest potential in property tax revenue for the Town of Easton.

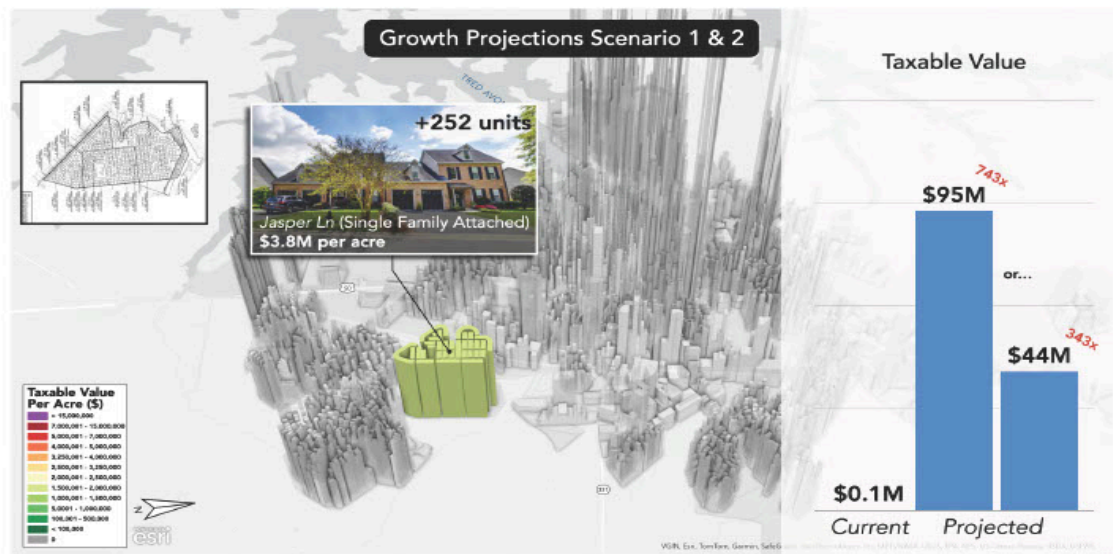


Figure 16. Two growth projections scenarios for the Four Seasons site  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

Growth Projections Scenarios		Taxable Value Per Acre Most Least	Development Type	City Property Tax Revenue
Poplar Hill			Commercial/Multifamily/Townhomes/ Single Family Attached	\$637K
Four Seasons Scenario 1			Single Family Attached	\$494K
Four Seasons Scenario 2			Single Family Detached	\$228K
Gannon Range Scenario 1			Commercial/Single Family Attached	\$347K
Gannon Range Scenario 2			Commercial/Single Family Detached	\$230K

Figure 17. Summary of all projections scenarios at the three sample sites in Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

Figure 17 shows a summary table of the scenario projections for each site, the scenario development type, and the potential amount of property tax revenue for the Town of Easton. While the Poplar Hill site (now owned by Talbot County) may no longer have this mixed use development planned for the future, the scenario and resulting value can be a model for the Town of Easton to consider when looking at future mixed-use development patterns.

# Key Takeaways

## How can we increase our Value Per Acre (VPA)?

### Understand Current Revenue and Spending Patterns

*Urban3's analysis shows how land use can be tied to the economic cash flow in the Town of Easton and how it impacts the town's ability to act as a corporation. Understanding how different land uses affect property tax revenue will allow Easton to make informed development decisions that maximize revenue productivity that can then be used in providing services such as public safety and continuing economic development.*

### Repeat What Works

*Inspecting the Value Per Acre (VPA) model allows communities to link fiscally productive areas with their associated land use types. Using a moderate to high productivity sample development, such as mixed use commercial or missing middle housing types, as an example for how to build in the future can guide community conversation, vision, processes, and future regulations.*

### Increase Density Incrementally

*Allowing greater density is a simple way to increase VPA. Increasing the numerator in the "value divided by acres" equation will naturally yield a higher value per acre. Stacking your stories means stacking your dollars. Increasing density by just one or two stories can have a significant impact on productivity. Density increases typically are achieved with land development regulation changes, which may be contentious.*

*As Easton continues to grow, the town will be able to make choices regarding how that growth will look and the resulting financial implications of that growth. By using Urban3's analysis, Easton can continue to locate and reproduce some of its most highly productive land use patterns and building types.*

## ***How can we increase our VPA and lower our costs?***

### ***Understand the Cost to Maintain Infrastructure Systems***

*Urban3 has seen that funding for infrastructure systems(roads, sewer, water, stormwater) is insufficient in covering the lifecycle expenses for these systems. Certain users of these systems may not be paying for the true cost of what it takes to serve them (meaning other users are subsidizing them). Adjust fees, with geography in mind, to adequately cover the costs of operation and maintenance or encourage infill development rather than servicing new areas.*

### **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. This has a number of implications, including promoting the suburban style of development that is generally disparaged throughout this Plan, representing a wasteful use of land, and inefficiently serving the resulting homes with various utilities and public services.

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 development 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. In an effort to increase the likelihood that future development patterns are more traditional and less suburban, the TND concept has been reintroduced in this Plan Update, as described in the Community Character Chapter.

### **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. Furthermore, over the course of the past year, the Town's Engineering Department has begun striping some of our major in-Town roads to better define parking and traffic lanes and to "calm" traffic. Aurora Street and Brooklets Avenue serve as two examples where this has been accomplished.



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.

- Allow for residential uses more generally in commercial zoning districts. When discussing the encouragement of mixed uses, the notion of allowing commercial uses in residential developments is often raised. However, it may be more feasible to add residential uses to commercial areas. Allowing multi-family housing in commercial zoning districts seems particularly appropriate given two recent apartment projects, on Brant Court and Elliott Road, in a shopping center/industrial park and along a commercial corridor, respectively.
- Explore options for the development of vacant land adjacent to “suburban” style subdivisions. In such scenarios requiring a TND style development may not always be compatible with the adjacent suburban form of development. In such locations, something that can serve as a transition between these two types of development is appropriate. They may, for example, contain some of the lower unit count middle housing types but not, perhaps, the higher unit counts or at the overall density we anticipate in the TND form of development.

### **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 and has remained as such in subsequent updates, including this one. Since the issue first appeared on the Town's radar in 1997, there is no question 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 stores have been built in a manner that is such a significant departure from their prototype that if not for their signs, those more familiar with those stores' corporate architecture may not recognize them. At the other end of the scale 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.
- Update/Create Design Guidelines for various types of development (including residential).
- 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. Historically the Planning Commission and Town Council have elected to allow the free market to determine Easton's growth rate. However, in the 2010 Plan the Planning Commission decided that indeed the dominant theme of that Plan to retain and/or return to an older way of doing things in Easton was endangered by a continued rate of growth in the range that we had experienced in the previous 20 years or so. The fear was 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 achieve. As a result, the Planning Commission and Town Council ultimately enacted a Plan which identified a preference for a 1% annual rate of growth.

They also recognized 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 that Planning period, the 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 were viewed as 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. This Plan proposes two revisions to this policy. First, after a decade where the

average annual growth rate has dropped to 0.7%, the “targeted” or “preferred” growth rate for this Plan period is proposed as 1.75% rather than 1%. Second, the Commission is proposing to eliminate the Priority Growth Areas concept and replace it with Annexation Policies.

### **Encourage More Sustainable Development Patterns**

The one addition to the Town’s overall growth management policy presented in this update is to encourage more sustainable development patterns. As discussed in the Sustainability Chapter, this should be considered broadly to include environmental and economic sustainability. It should also be noted that a more sustainable Easton helps to achieve a more sustainable Talbot County. For example, Easton functioning as a growth center improves the chances of Talbot County successfully avoiding sprawling development throughout unincorporated parts of the County and enhances the likelihood of successful agricultural preservation.

Environmental sustainability can be advanced by such actions as protecting and enhancing natural features of proposed development sites and planning for development with sea-level rise in mind. Development with a mix of uses and which accommodates multiple modes of transportation can also enhance environmental sustainability by decreasing vehicle miles travelled, thereby improving air quality (in addition to the overall transportation system benefits).

Economic sustainability can be thought of in at least a couple of different ways. One is the cost to serve new development. By this measure, infill and redevelopment is clearly preferred over new “greenfield” development and new greenfield development that is more compact and more proximate to existing development is preferred over more sprawling and isolated projects.

Another way to consider economic sustainability is the net fiscal benefit to the Town. That is, what forms or types of development provide more to the Town in terms of new revenue, after factoring in the cost to provide services to those same developments?

## **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 Easton's 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.

## **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. The primary difference between the two is that whereas the Land Use Element looks at things as they are now, this Chapter contemplates how things might be in the future. In most communities, the number one predictor of future land use, is current land use. As such, the focus of the Future Land Use Map is generally on two areas: (1) those parcels identified as appropriate for (or needing to) change and (2) those areas

not currently within the Town limits but as envisioned as someday being so; in other words, the Future Growth Area.

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.

In previous iterations of this Plan, the Growth Map was primarily about the appropriate sequence of development for the ultimate Town of Easton. It began with the (then) current Town boundary. Next, it depicted the Urban Growth Boundary that represents the "ultimate" Town limit. It then examined the area between these two lines and considered the appropriate priority for development of this area in terms of a sequence.

The next step was to consider what areas within the Urban Growth Boundary were not then within the Town of Easton but should be already for a variety of reasons. These were labeled "Priority 1 - Boundary Refinement" on the Growth Area Map. Generally these consisted of already developed areas like Crofton, Old Stoney Ridge, Old Beechwood, and most of Easton Point. They had 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 already be in the Town of Easton corporate limits. It was stated that it was 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.

The future growth area was further partitioned into three levels of priority for development. Priority 1 Areas were the "Boundary Refinement Areas" as was described previously. Priority 2 and 3 Areas were undeveloped, and generally (although not always) located the greatest distance from the existing Town Boundaries. There was no time-frame associated with the development of these latter two growth areas except that they were not deemed appropriate for development during the last Planning period (i.e. originally 2010 through 2016), and that when developed, Priority 2 Areas ought to be developed before Priority 3 Areas.

With this Plan Update, the Planning Commission is proposing to change the Priority Growth Areas System. It is still believed that the areas identified as Priority 1 in previous Plans should be entertained for Annexation any time they are ready to apply. The Commission believes there is little reason to continue with Priority 2 and 3 Growth Areas and alternately, this Plan proposes that any proposed Annexation in what was formerly Priority 2 or 3 on the Growth Areas Map should be evaluated against the following Annexation Policies:

- Proximity to Town Boundaries should be a significant consideration. Any area annexed must be adjacent to the Town, preferably for a considerable distance and 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 (in this Plan, a Small Area Plan, or functional Plan such as EUCs Water & Wastewater Master Plan or the soon-to-be completed Town Complete Streets Plan) 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.
- Land that facilitates the annexation of long-standing enclave Priority 1 Areas, if

applicable, should be given strong preference over other areas.

- Annexations which include an affordable housing component should take precedence over those that do not.
- Proposed annexations should include aspects that provide some form of benefit to the Town. This could take the form of job creation, a demonstrable positive fiscal impact or the provision of the regional-scale park on the east side of Town mentioned elsewhere in this Plan.
- Annexations must propose to minimize harm to sensitive environmental features, which should be protected and enhanced rather than ignored or eliminated.
- Projects which propose to develop pursuant to the Traditional Neighborhood style of development or serve as a transition between existing suburban development and future Traditional development should be prioritized over additional strictly suburban development.
- Projects that “align” with Town infrastructure with regards to timing, location, etc., should be given priority over more isolated and remote projects.
- Projects that propose to provide Capital Improvements for a future multi-modal transportation system should take precedence over those that do not.

While the Priority Growth Areas are proposed to be replaced with this list of policies for annexation, the Future Growth Areas Map is still a part of the Plan. It has just changed in nature. Instead of identifying a sequence for future annexations, it instead suggests the type or character of development envisioned for the Growth Area. Five such types are identified. The first is identified as “Boundary Refinement/Extension of Services” and it is essentially a carryover of the Priority 1 areas depicted on the previous Growth Area Map. The next two areas look at the lands envisioned for future residential development and characterize them as either “Future Traditional Neighborhoods” or “Future Suburban Development”. The final two classifications are for non-residential development. One simply identifies “Non-Residential” areas and the other is specific to Easton Point and identifies it as “Mixed-Use Waterfront”.

These classifications now become less about a sequence of development and more about the character of development, regardless of when or in what order it occurs. The Boundary Refinement areas represent lands that have developed under Talbot County rules and regulations. Most even casual observers would likely assume that they are already within the Town limits of Easton. The advantage of annexing these lands for the property owner is that they can receive Town services, most notably municipal wastewater service as opposed to septic systems. This is clearly beneficial from an environmental perspective. Another advantage is that being in the Town opens up possible intensification of the development of the property since (a) Town Zoning rules and regulations are generally more permissive in terms of the range of uses permitted and the intensity of development allowed, and (b) more of the property can be developed since septic reserve areas are no longer necessary once connection to the Town's wastewater service is established. From the Town's perspective such annexations represent an opportunity to improve the design and appearance of these properties through conditions of Annexation and/or during review of any proposed redevelopment or additions to the properties. It also adds a source of revenue through new property taxes on these properties. Lastly, in some cases it may alleviate hurdles to future development by removing potential enclaves of non-Town land that could be surrounded by Town, which is illegal under Maryland Annexation Law (thus when it could occur, annexation of properties around such areas is precluded).

Land envisioned for future residential development is classified as either Traditional Neighborhood or Suburban. The majority of such land is planned for the Traditional Neighborhood style that is described throughout this Plan, particularly in the Community Character Chapter, which includes the outline of a potential new TND Zoning District. These areas are intended to eventually be developed in accordance with New Urbanist or Neotraditional principles. They would have a variety of lot sizes and housing types, with an associated range of price points. Where it makes sense, they would provide a mix of uses. They should be built with a gridded or modified gridded street system that emphasizes walkability.

Much of this Plan decries a lot of the residential development of the last 50 years or so as inappropriately Suburban in nature, especially that which has occurred on the east side of U.S.

Route 50. The lands identified as suitable for future Suburban Development are a recognition that given the development patterns surrounding such parcels, a TND style development may not necessarily be compatible with neighboring properties and thus further suburban development may make sense in these limited circumstances. Even in these instances, however, we envision improvements over existing Suburban development patterns through improved connectivity, better design, transitional housing types and densities, and more walkable communities.

The remaining two categories on the Growth Areas Map are reserved for lands planned for non-residential development. One is very general and identifies areas for Non-Residential development. These correspond to lands largely considered appropriate for future job creation (i.e., Industrial) opportunities. The other classification is very specific, Mixed-use Waterfront. It corresponds to Easton Point and reflects the vision of the Port Street Small Area Plan and the Mixed Use Waterfront (MXW) Zoning District we created to facilitate that vision.

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. Depending on the location, these neighborhoods may be created entirely in the form of new development, or by combining and harmonizing with adjacent development to compliment what already exists and provide any elements lacking to create true neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods should contain a variety of housing types, as well as limited, neighborhood-scale commercial development where it is feasible and makes sense to do so. 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 unit (See *Visions for a New American Dream*, Anton Clarence Nelessen, Planners Press, 1994.). As an example of the scale this implies, even a 300 unit development (among the largest in Easton) would, per this standard, only generate a need for 7,800 to 15,600 sq. ft. of retail space. For comparison purposes, the Aldi's (18,076 sq. ft.) and former Safeway (22,547 sq. ft) grocery stores are both larger than even the high end of this range. The CVS (10,107 sq. ft) and Walgreen's (14,465 sq. ft.) pharmacies are examples of stores within this size range.

The first step in the preparation of the Future Land Use Map was to identify those areas that, for whatever reason, 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.

There is a maxim in Planning to the effect of "80% of Future Land Use is Current Land Use." In other words, once uses are established, they very rarely change. The majority of the remaining 20% that will propose a new land use, is represented by our Future Growth Areas, which are largely unimproved. The vision for these areas is more particularly described in the discussion concerning the Growth Areas Map above. The remaining areas that are subject to a different future land use are those areas already within Town and envisioned for something different than exists today. This could be vacant land that becomes developed through infill, or it could be in the form of adaptive reuse of existing buildings and/or redevelopment of improved sites. The perceived potential for these types of projects was discussed in the Municipal Growth Element. As was noted in that chapter, it can be very difficult to predict when and how such sites might redevelop for a number of reasons. We can, however, identify the sites that we see

as appropriate or desirable for change and describe what we envision as the replacement land use on such parcels.

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. Previous versions of this Plan included as many as 8 such areas. However, the number is dwindling as the development of some of the sites has occurred (or is in the process of occurring). Each remaining area will be briefly described below:

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 was constructed on a portion of this parcel prior to the 2010 Plan and during this (2010-2025) cycle. Saints Peter and Paul has relocated their private high and middle schools to the same parcel. Ultimately, the elementary school is envisioned to follow. To the extent that the balance of the parcel has additional development potential, it seems appropriate to take the form of any number of church-affiliated uses. It should be noted that this is a highly visible parcel of land and as such, when/if the balance of the site develops, special consideration should be given to the design of whatever is built given its visibility and that it will essentially serve as one of the major gateways into Easton.

Area 2 – Area 2 is the farm on Dutchman’s Lane described earlier in this chapter, plus an adjacent farm that is already in the Town. The in-Town parcel is in the early days of being developed as an age-restricted residential community. It is separated from Easton Club East (a similar type of project) by a wedge-shaped parcel that is not (as of 2025) within Town limits. Collectively, these properties should be developed in the mode of a new neighborhood as has been described extensively throughout this plan, although given the nature of what is (and will) surround the out-of-Town parcel, it is one of those classified on the Growth Areas Map as appropriate for Suburban development. This likely means developing the parcel in a manner similar to what will occur at Four Seasons and already exists at Easton Club East, but to do so in a way which connects all three developments, with perhaps a modestly higher density and variety of housing types.

Area 3 – Area 3 is land owned by Talbot County. Until recently, this land was owned by Shore Health Systems and was at one time envisioned to be the site of a new hospital campus to replace the existing Memorial Hospital at Easton facility. More recently such plans changed. SHS is in the process of constructing a new regional Hospital and medical campus north of the Easton Airport. While the site is still suitable for development, under Talbot County ownership that seems highly unlikely other than for potential County Offices or uses. Prior to Talbot County’s purchase of the property, the site was proposed for a predominantly residential development, with limited commercial/service uses and a large area proposed to be dedicated to active park space in the form of new athletic fields. Given that the parcel lies immediately adjacent to the Town-owned Easton Woodland Park, the opportunity exists for mutually beneficial and synergistic park development at this site.

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. It has, in fact, subsequently been developed with such uses, including four sit-down restaurants (formerly five, but the burned-down Bob Evans restaurant has never been rebuilt) and a hotel. There are still two parcels of just under 2 acres on the west side of Sunflower Drive and a larger (17 acre) parcel on the east side of Sunflower. These lots represent a logical opportunity for additional transient-oriented uses. The larger lot 7 could potentially also be improved with multi-family housing, as a transition between the single family detached homes in Chapel East to the east and the sit-down restaurants located between Sunflower Drive and Route 50 to the west.

Area 5 – Area 5 represents the large undeveloped area on the west side of Route 50, south of Chapel Road, generally referred to as the “Lapides” property for a long-time owner of the property. Given its location, it is perhaps the parcel with the greatest development potential,

at least in terms 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 predominantly 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.

These five areas are envisioned by this Plan as the primary location for new development that does not require Annexation of property. It should be noted that only Area 3 and Area 5 currently remain undeveloped as of 2025, and Area 3 would seem to be out-of-play for development since it has been purchased by Talbot County. Combined with the existing planned and/or approved lot inventory and potential infill/redevelopment, growth at our target rate of 1.75% may exhaust the development potential of these areas. Thus, in planning for the time when this does occur, either in this or a future Planning cycle, 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 were a new addition to the 2010 Future Land Use Map and have been continued in this edition of the Plan. 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 future 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. The development potential of this area is so significant that the Town completed and adopted a Small Area Plan for Easton Point and the Port Street Corridor during the most recent Planning period. That Plan envisions a waterfront largely dedicated to public use and access, with graduated tiers of mixed-use development moving further away from the water. Subsequently, a new Mixed-Use Waterfront Zoning District (MXW) was carefully crafted by the Town with the intent to facilitate the development of the area consistent with the Small Area Plan and with special sensitivity to the quality of design and environmental protection.

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. This thinking has recently been reflected in the creation of a new Zoning District (Business Commercial - BC) to legitimize this shift, while at the same time tightening up on the remaining Select Industrial Zoning Districts so that we will have land available for truly industrial uses. Uses in the Business Commercial District include light manufacturing, but also offices, service uses, and warehousing.

When evaluating future development proposals both of these maps should be consulted. Together they will indicate the type of use the Town expects to see on a given parcel, both in terms of the nature of those uses, as well as its proposed development style. 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.

## 2025 - 2035 GROWTH STRATEGY

Throughout the course of developing this Plan, the Planning Commission has grappled with the question of what the appropriate strategy should be for accommodating the expected growth during the life of this Plan. The rationale for targeting 1.75% growth rather than 1% has previously been discussed. In short, this was picked for a number of reasons including an expectation that there is some demand in our housing market that will naturally result in more growth, that 1.75% corresponds to a rate that the Town can comfortably handle in terms of administrative processing, and the Town's infrastructure is more than adequate to accommodate such growth.

Another aspect of growth is where it will occur. This Plan has described the options for future growth in terms of inward-looking options (i.e., Infill Development, Redevelopment, and Adaptive Reuse) or the more outward-focused options of annexing more of the Future Growth Area to accommodate future "Greenfield" development applications. The question of how much of our growth should come from these options during this Planning period was a focus of the public input phase, where an overwhelming preference for Infill/Redevelopment options was expressed. The Municipal Growth Element of this Plan estimates that 2,745 additional housing units can be constructed within the existing Town limits of Easton. These would all be considered of the inward-focused type of development. **Given this convergence of a preference for Infill/Redevelopment and the ability to accommodate the residential growth needs of this 10 year Planning cycle, the Planning Commission has determined that it is both possible and appropriate to not prioritize annexation of additional lands for residential development until at least the next Comprehensive Plan Update.** This statement is made with a number of caveats. One, it assumes that development in the pipeline proceeds through to project completion. Two, it assumes that there will be sufficient landowners willing to develop or redevelop their properties to accommodate the remaining projected growth for the next 10 years. Finally, it does not preclude new annexation. Boundary refinement annexations should be welcomed at any time. Non-residential annexations are also not subject to this determination. Lastly, it does not definitively preclude annexing new land for residential development. It does, however, suggest that doing so would be limited strictly to development

proposals of extraordinary quality that have minimal adverse impacts to the environment or the Town's fiscal sustainability, and that adequately address the aforementioned annexation policies.

## **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, as such development will be discouraged, if not prohibited, in the future and we will be looking to "retrofit" those parts of our Town that are suburban in nature to a more urban scale, albeit in a Small Town context.

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, etc., so that all existing and future residents have the greatest possible opportunity to participate in shaping our community in the future.

Generally speaking, the two principle tools that will be utilized to implement this Plan are (1) the review and updating (as necessary) of Town Land Use Guidelines and Regulations and (2) the closer examination of specific areas through the completion of Small Area Plans. Both should begin as soon as possible following the adoption of this Plan and are envisioned to continue throughout the Planning cycle, a reflection of the fact that effective planning is a continuous process of experimentation and evaluation.

Critics of Urban Planning often point out that while Comprehensive Plans often describe the Smart Sustainable type of community that this Plan envisions, they are rarely achieved. This is usually because there is a disconnect between the Plan, which lays out the desired vision, and the community's land use regulations, which actually specify what can and cannot be built in the community. There are a number of reasons that suburban, sprawling, non-sustainable development patterns consume so much of the built environment, but the fundamental reason is that such a development pattern is a product of what developers/landowners are allowed and required to build.

If the Town of Easton is truly serious about facilitating the type of community described

throughout this Plan, it will be imperative to take a critical look at our various development regulations, audit them, and change them wherever necessary to make sure that they allow the Easton we want to see become a reality. This examination should include the Zoning Code, the Subdivision Regulations, Design Guidelines, and any other regulation, standard, or guideline that affects the built environment. An audit of such documents will identify prohibitions and impediments to infill and redevelopment and the creation of the new more Traditional Neighborhood form of development we (eventually) would like to see in our Growth Area.

The second major way in which the Vision of this Plan gets advanced is through the exercise of Small Area Planning. A Small Area Plan is essentially a Comprehensive Plan for some subset of the overall Town. This often takes the shape of a Neighborhood Plan or a Corridor Plan.

We have done a bit of Small Area Planning in Easton to this point in time. The Downtown Area has had Small Area Plans, the most recent of which is summarized in the Economic Development Chapter of this Plan. In 1997, Town Planning staff facilitated a citizen-driven Small Area Plan for the East End Neighborhood. That Plan is in the process of being updated and should be reviewed concurrent with, or shortly after this Plan. Lastly, the Small Area Plan for Easton Point/Port Street has been referenced a number of times in this Plan.

Small Area plans are advantageous in that due to the significantly smaller area of their scope, they often go into greater detail with proposed land use changes, sometimes down to the parcel-by-parcel level. Such Plans should generally be consistent with the overall Comprehensive Plan, but they represent an opportunity to present more specific recommendations and actions than a Plan for the entire Town is usually able to do. As such, when reviewed and adopted (via the same process as for the Comprehensive Plan), Small Area Plans should be given the same standing as the Comprehensive Plan and considered an extension of the Plan.

The core of Town is already covered by Small Area Plans. The one for the East End, as mentioned above, is in the process of being updated. It is now an appropriate time to update the Small Area Plan for the Downtown. Given the potential it possesses, a Small Area Plan focused on the redevelopment of the current Hospital site would be prudent, although if it only

considers the hospital properties alone, that is better suited to something like a design charrette with extensive community involvement. Finally, although not envisioned as being developed during this Planning Period, a Small Area Plan for one or more portions of the Future Growth Area represents a way to be especially proactive, rather than reactive, in planning for the eventual development of these areas.

## **IMPLEMENTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**GOAL:** To ensure 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.
- ✓ Audit the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to insure that future growth of the Town occurs in a system of neighborhoods rather than a collection of single-use, suburban style subdivisions, and that sufficient tools exist to facilitate Infill, Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse of buildings.
- ✓ 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 Small Area Plans similar to that done by the East Side neighborhood several years ago. 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 1.75% 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 determine the feasibility and practicality of an Inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program, should the Talbot County TDR ever be revived.

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.
  
- ✓ Create a Citizen's Planners Academy to inform and educate interested members of the public about planning and planning issues and provide a pathway to increased civic involvement through membership on various Planning-related boards, commissions or task forces.