

July 10, 2025

Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop

**AGENDA**

- I. Updates
  - Economic Development (Strategic Plan sent this week)
  - EUC Review (EUC provided info for addition of a section on Internet service and asked to review the whole document. Will have comments, if any, by week of 7/21)
  - Implementation (See Michael's proposed reworked and relocated Design Principles and my suggested outline for content of chapter)
- II. Issues:
  - Removal of 1.75% Growth Rate – implications?
  - Goals & Objectives, how to address?
- III. Scheduling
  - Additional Workshop(s)
  - Council Workshop?

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## INTRODUCTION

**“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”**

**~ Proverbs 29:18**

**“If you don’t know where you are going, you might end up someplace else.”**

**~ Casey Stengel**

**“The future is not completely beyond our control. It is the work of our own hands.”**

**~ Robert F. Kennedy**

**“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency.”**

**~ Daniel Burnham**

When many people think about Planning and the Planning process, they undoubtedly conjure up meetings involving presentations for various types of new development projects. While this is certainly an integral part of that process, it is not the only part. Arguably, it is not the most important part.

The quotes cited above, from a wide-variety of contexts, speak to the long-recognized importance of the other aspect of planning; that of envisioning the future and identifying the steps necessary to achieve it. This Long Range Planning function is most importantly advanced through the establishment of a community’s Comprehensive Plan and that Plan will have a greater chance of being realized if it is prepared with wide scale and broad based input of the members of that community.

On April 17, 1989 the Easton Town Council adopted a new Comprehensive Development Plan. This represented the first update to the Town’s Comprehensive

Plan in 15 years. It was also the last that utilized the traditional “draft and response” technique for gathering public input, whereby a consultant drafts all or portions of the Plan and refines it based on the public input that is received. There is little, if any, public input on the front end of the process. That process has been completely turned around in Easton as since 1995 the Plan has been prepared by the Town’s own professional planning staff with vast amounts of public input solicited and provided up front and throughout the process. This Plan represents the third update since 1995 and can be viewed as an ongoing story, as opposed to four independent and unique documents.

Those interested in the evolution of the Planning process in Easton, the different techniques used in subsequent Comprehensive Plan Updates, and how our philosophy was shaped by, and aligned with, policies at the State level, including those advocating for Smart Growth, are encouraged to review the archive of Comprehensive Plans maintained on the Town of Easton Planning Department’s web page (see <https://eastonmd.gov/186/Comprehensive-Plan>). The bulk of this Plan will focus on the process and conclusions associated with this 2024 Update. Regarding the past, it is sufficient to note that the State of Maryland has a long history of state-level guidance and influence in planning activities and that the Town of Easton has followed their guidance, oftentimes in an exemplary manner, and occasionally before the State directed local governments to do so. This was the case, for example, with the Smart Growth policy of directing growth towards cities and towns and away from rural parts of counties, where Easton and Talbot County jointly enacted such policies several years before the practice became State policy.

Current State Planning Law requires that Comprehensive Plans address 12 State Planning Visions. In many ways, this Plan is centered around fulfilling the spirit and intent of these Visions. The 12 Visions are:

*(1) QUALITY OF LIFE AND SUSTAINABILITY: A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IS*

ACHIEVED THROUGH UNIVERSAL STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAND, WATER, AND AIR RESULTING IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT;

(2) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: CITIZENS ARE ACTIVE PARTNERS IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND ARE SENSITIVE TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN ACHIEVING COMMUNITY GOALS;

(3) GROWTH AREAS: GROWTH IS CONCENTRATED IN EXISTING POPULATION AND BUSINESS CENTERS, GROWTH AREAS ADJACENT TO THESE CENTERS, OR STRATEGICALLY SELECTED NEW CENTERS;

(4) COMMUNITY DESIGN: COMPACT, MIXED-USE, WALKABLE DESIGN CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND LOCATED NEAR AVAILABLE OR PLANNED TRANSIT OPTIONS IS ENCOURAGED TO ENSURE EFFICIENT USE OF LAND AND TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES AND PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL SYSTEMS, OPEN SPACES, RECREATIONAL AREAS, AND HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES;

(5) INFRASTRUCTURE: GROWTH AREAS HAVE THE WATER RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ACCOMMODATE POPULATION AND BUSINESS EXPANSION IN AN ORDERLY, EFFICIENT, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE MANNER;

(6) TRANSPORTATION: A WELL-MAINTAINED, MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FACILITATES THE SAFE, CONVENIENT, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE, GOODS, AND SERVICES WITHIN AND BETWEEN POPULATION AND BUSINESS CENTERS;

(7) HOUSING: A RANGE OF HOUSING DENSITIES, TYPES, AND SIZES PROVIDES RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS FOR CITIZENS OF ALL AGES AND INCOMES;

(8) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED BUSINESSES THAT PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL INCOME LEVELS WITHIN THE CAPACITY OF THE STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES, PUBLIC SERVICES, AND PUBLIC FACILITIES ARE ENCOURAGED;

(9) ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: LAND AND WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING

*THE CHESAPEAKE AND COASTAL BAYS, ARE CAREFULLY MANAGED TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY AIR AND WATER, NATURAL SYSTEMS, AND LIVING RESOURCES;*

*(10) RESOURCE CONSERVATION: WATERWAYS, FORESTS, AGRICULTURAL AREAS, OPEN SPACE, NATURAL SYSTEMS, AND SCENIC AREAS ARE CONSERVED;*

*(11) STEWARDSHIP: GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS ENTITIES, AND RESIDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES BY COLLABORATING TO BALANCE EFFICIENT GROWTH WITH RESOURCE PROTECTION; AND*

*(12) IMPLEMENTATION: STRATEGIES, POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND FUNDING FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, RESOURCE CONSERVATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TRANSPORTATION ARE INTEGRATED ACROSS THE LOCAL, REGIONAL, STATE, AND INTERSTATE LEVELS TO ACHIEVE THESE VISIONS.*

The Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, delegates basic planning and land use regulatory powers to the Town of Easton. When these powers are exercised, they must be exercised in accordance with the applicable provisions of the statute. Accordingly, this Comprehensive Plan for Easton is prepared in compliance with Sections 3.05, 3.06, 3.07, and 3.08 of the statute. Sections 3.05 and 3.06 address the Plan's content and organization, and Sections 3.07 and 3.08 address procedures for the Plan's review and adoption.

The 2024 Easton Comprehensive Plan establishes Town policies relative to the most desirable development patterns for present-day Easton as well as the Easton of the future by looking to our environs and determining which areas might appropriately some day become part of the Town.. It identifies in both narrative and graphic form proposed areas for living and working activities and related services that are required to assure a quality environment for all residents. Implementation proposals are included as methods for coordinating public and private development activities, which

together will influence Town development form and function. Attention is also given to the Town's role in the development of Talbot County.

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

Additionally, after adoption a Comprehensive Plan serves as:

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

Preparation of the Easton Comprehensive Plan represents an important step in the complex process of guiding future development in the interest of the general public. Adoption of the Plan constitutes an important step in directing development in a desirable spatial pattern that maintains and enhances Easton's special and unique sense of place. Planning Commission and Town Council activities are directed towards reviewing specific development proposals, periodic revisions of the Plan in view of new conditions, broadening or narrowing the scope of the Plan as necessary and facilitating Plan implementation in a continuing effort to improve the quality of life for all Easton residents.



## EASTON'S IDENTITY

Previous iterations of Easton's Comprehensive Plan have included the following description of "Easton's Identity:"

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

*Easton derives its identity in considerable part from its rural character, its close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, its historic Downtown area, and the historic and contemporary residential neighborhoods which are in easy walking distance of the Downtown, public facilities such as schools and parks, civic and cultural organizations such as the Academy of the Arts, the Avalon Theater, the Talbot County Historical Society and the YMCA, churches and volunteer organizations such as the Volunteer Fire Department. Easton is also one of several retailing centers for Talbot County and surrounding counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, as well as a location for health, professional, service and light industrial activities. To some extent these various elements of Easton's identity complement each other and to some extent they conflict; however, it is important that various types of development be balanced and controlled as to timing, location, appearance and impact upon surrounding properties as well as the Town as a whole. Only through this process shall Easton maintain its enviable character in the future.*

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

- to some extent, the Town is a victim of its own success as its reputation for small-town charm and livability spreads, increasing numbers of new residents*

*who wish to relocate here;*

- *improvements to US Route 50 in the 1980's (the "Reach the Beach" program) have made Easton an easy commute to the Annapolis and, to a lesser extent, the Baltimore and Washington areas;*
- *changes in retail marketing practices have shifted retail development towards - "big box" type stores and "power centers," which pose a number of potential problems:*
  - *A. impacts on existing and proposed residential development adjacent to a proposed locations;*
  - *B. impacts on local and regional traffic in the vicinity of a proposed big box location;*
  - *C. impacts on public services such as police, fire and other emergency response teams;*
  - *D. impacts on public water and sewer services;*
  - *E. impacts on public safety, especially during severe storms and catastrophic events;*
  - *F. impacts on the natural resources of the Town, County and State;*
  - *G. potential impacts of derelict Big Box structures abandoned due to changed circumstances or financial embarrassment of the owner; and*
  - *H. impacts on the aesthetic qualities of the Town which have assured its preservation as the commercial and cultural heart of Talbot County for more than two centuries.*

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

Throughout the course of gathering public input as a prerequisite to drafting the Plan, this sentiment, or variations of it, rang as true as ever. However, what was also expressed was recognition of the need for new growth in Easton, particularly in regards to housing. This may be from a recognition that if Talbot County as a whole is going to grow, then the overwhelming majority of that growth will and should occur in the Town of Easton, where the capacity best exists to accommodate said growth. It may also be an acceptance that Easton and Talbot County suffer from a housing affordability crisis, caused at least partially by an imbalance of supply and demand.

What was also clearly stated in the initial public input phase of this Plan was that balance is very important. This notion was voiced in a number of comments, which included:

- An acceptance of the need for new housing, coupled with the need to adequately address the negative (real or perceived) impacts of such growth, such as traffic congestion, school capacity, environmental impacts, etc.
- A desire for a greater variety of shopping options, without significant new areas of regional-scale retail.
- A preference for the majority of new growth to be of an infill/redevelopment nature despite there being relatively few opportunities for such development, at least under current zoning rules and regulations.
- The desire to facilitate all of the above while still maintaining a uniqueness and small-Town authenticity in the Easton of the future.

Finding and maintaining such balance will be a recurring theme throughout this Plan. It will undoubtedly also be a continuing challenge for planning staff and elected and appointed officials until the ultimate build-out of Easton is achieved.

DRAFT

## PLAN BACKGROUND

### CONTEXT

Before diving into the heart of this Plan, it is important to understand the background and the context in which it was written. Although adopted in 2025, the preparation of this particular version of the Comprehensive Plan started in 2021, with the lion's share of the work, particularly the community input and information gathering, occurring in 2022 and 2023. In actuality, most of the overarching themes of this Plan originally appeared in the one that was adopted in 1997. That Plan represented a distinct break in substance and style and talked about ideas and issues not previously addressed in Easton's Comprehensive Plan. It was also produced by the people; the citizens of Easton and those who work in Easton. That Plan was modified in 2004 and again in 2010. The groundwork laid in the 1997 Plan will continue to guide and inform much of this 2024 Plan.

Since 1997, each subsequent update of the Comprehensive Plan has continued to refine the Town's basic growth strategy, which was summarized in the 2010 Plan as one which:

- Contains Sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary
- Increases Density
- Builds Neighborhoods
- Improves Design
- Manages the Rate of Growth

The 2024 Plan adds a sixth component to this Growth Management Strategy, which is:

- Encourage More Sustainable Development Patterns

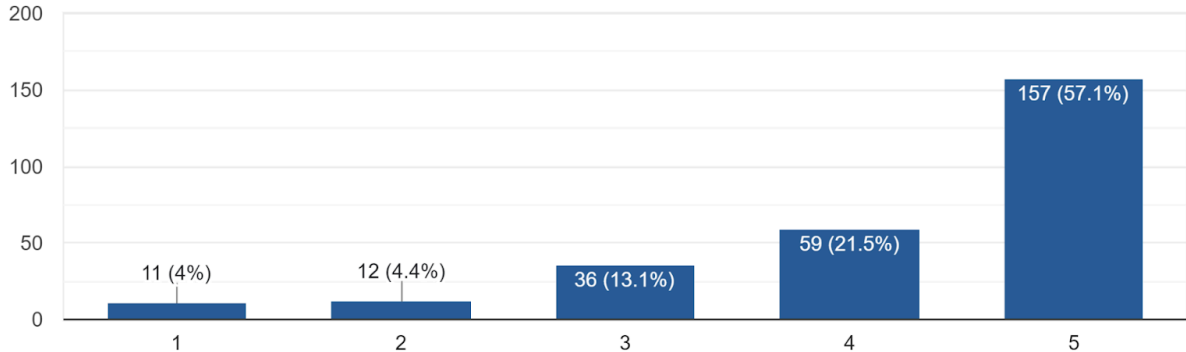
The community input phase of this Plan Update specifically asked about the continued relevance or appropriateness of each component of this Growth Management

strategy. The results were clear: each received something between moderate to very strong support for continuing to be included as a part of Easton’s Growth Management Strategy for the next Planning Period (2025-2035). Thus, this Plan Update begins with the premise that there is no desire to throw any of these strategies out. Rather, the objective is to build on these ideas, refine and improve them where possible, and update them based on new information or issues where necessary. In a nutshell, that is the context and spirit in which this Plan was created.

The results of the questions about these elements of the Town’s Growth strategy are summarized in the following charts (for each response, 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree):

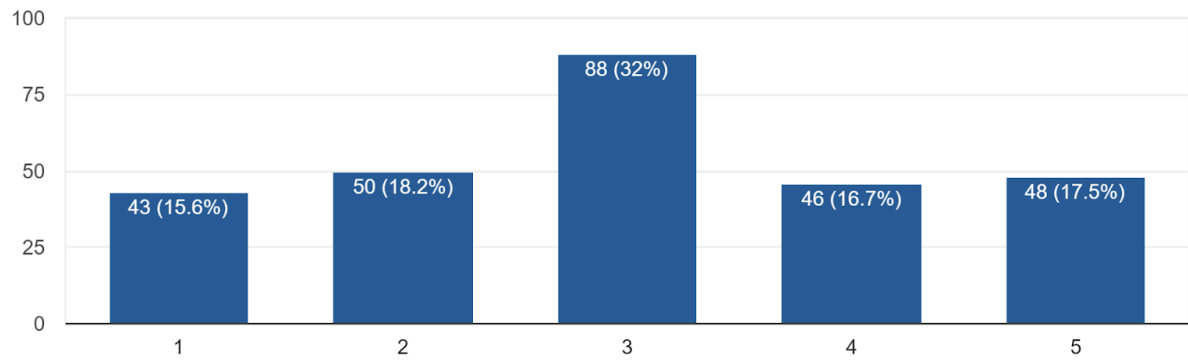
Contain Sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary

275 responses



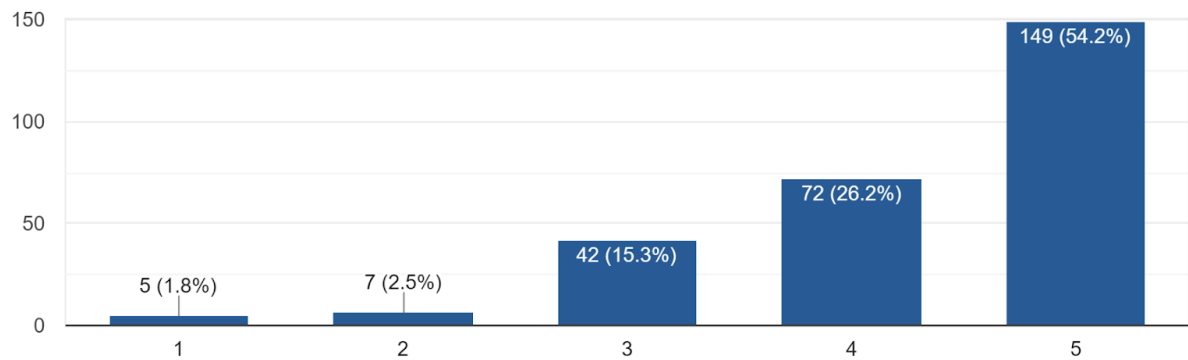
### Increase Density

275 responses



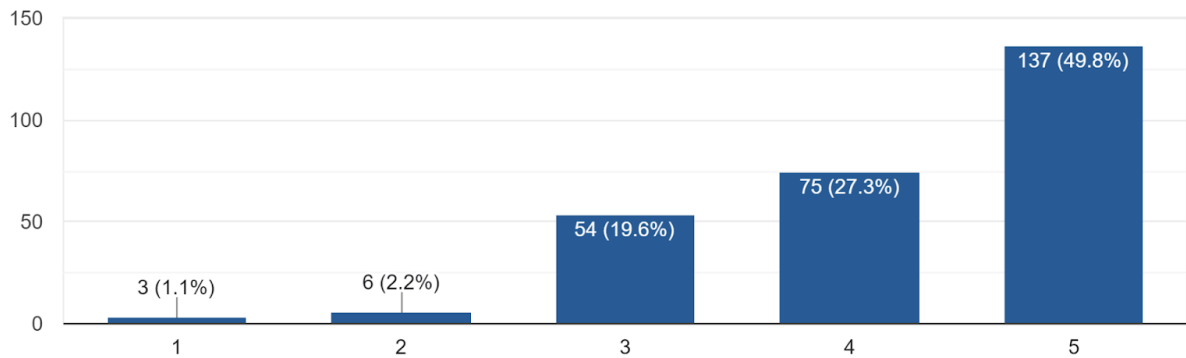
### Build Neighborhoods (as opposed to Subdivisions)

275 responses



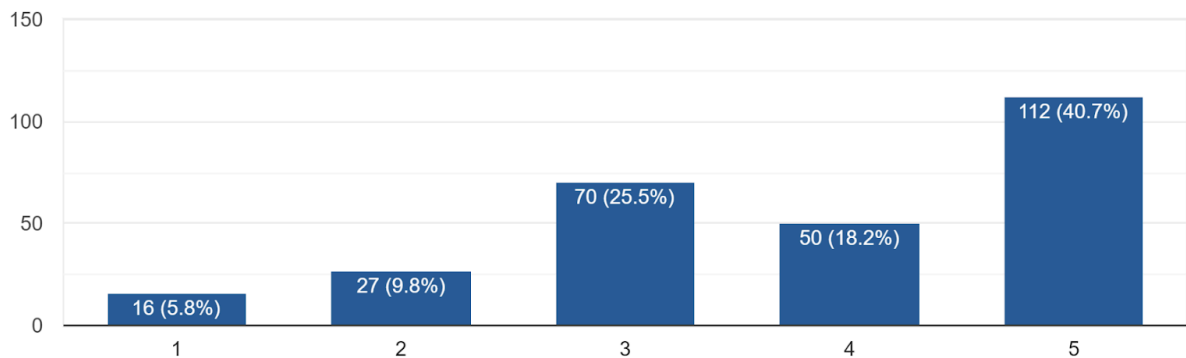
### Improve Design

275 responses



### Restrict Rate of Growth

275 responses



## HISTORICAL SETTING

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



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

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

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

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

This Court House building continued to be used until the State Legislature, at its first Session after the adoption of the State Constitution in 1777, authorized the General Court, the forerunner of the present Court of Appeals, to sit alternately on the Western Shore and on the Eastern Shore at "Talbot Court House in Talbot County". To care for the needs of the General Court, the Legislature in 1789 enacted "An Act for the building

of a Court House in Talbot County for the Accommodation of the General Court for the Eastern Shore and the County of Talbot". This building, built at a cost of 3,000 pounds sterling, paid by the State and County, was completed in 1794, and still serves as the seat of the County Courts. Its use by the General Court and the Court of Appeals has long since been discontinued. It is, however, after many remodelings, the last being in 2001, still used by the United States District Court, which customarily sits in Baltimore.

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

In 1790 the Legislature provided for the election of five Commissioners to whom was entrusted the administration of the Town. The Commission was charged with the preservation of order, the maintenance of the roadways in passable condition, keeping open the drainage ditches, providing plank footwalks where necessary and making and enforcing such regulations as were needed for the preservation of the peace and welfare of the Community.

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

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

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

Under Mayor Higgins, Easton developed rapidly into a modern municipality. In 1911, Easton was a pioneer in Maryland in constructing a complete municipal sewerage system. In 1912 the main residential and business streets were paved. In 1914 the Town purchased and began operation of a municipal water system, and in the same year commenced the operation of a municipal electric plant. In 1922 the Town purchased and commenced operating a local gas plant. Since that time, it has been one of the few municipalities in the United States that owns and operates all of the public utilities: electric, gas, water and sewer, and more recently, cable television and Internet service.

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

The first Subdivision Regulations were adopted in 1947; the first part of the first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1950, and the original Easton Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1953. More recently the Town has been much more active in land use planning, both in terms of long-range comprehensive planning and day-to-day planning activities. The hiring of a professional Planner in 1988, recent revisions to the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, and the adoption of a Critical Areas Program and Forest Conservation Ordinance evidence this. This current update of the Comprehensive Development Plan is the latest undertaking in what has become a nearly continuous effort to assess and revise the Town's development-related regulations. Since the 2010 Plan was adopted the Town has followed up with comprehensive revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, adopted new Design Guidelines for our Historic District, adopted a Small Area Plan for the Easton Point/Port Street Corridor, and created and enacted Zoning regulations intended to facilitate the vision described in that Small Area Plan.

## **REGIONAL SETTING**

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

Easton, the County seat, is situated in the central portion of Talbot County. The Town is located near the headwaters of the Tred Avon River, which provides access to

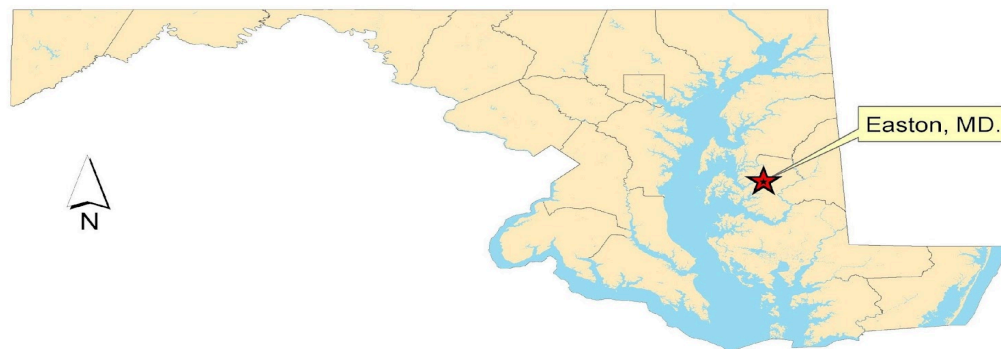
the Chesapeake Bay. In 2020, the Town was the second largest municipality on the Eastern Shore with a population of 17,101 inhabitants, smaller than only Salisbury. Easton remains the market and service center of the central portion of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Easton is bisected by U.S. Route 50, which provides excellent access to many other major highways. U.S. Route 50 is a major route connecting the Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area to the coastal resort of Ocean City on Maryland's lower shore. The Town is home to a regional municipal airport and is only about one hour's drive from Baltimore-Washington International Airport and likewise approximately one hour from Salisbury-Wicomico County-Ocean City Regional Airport, which provides several daily flights to Philadelphia and Charlotte International Airports.

It would be hard to understate the significance of Route 50 in terms of its influence on the Town of Easton. The same convenient access it affords Easton residents to the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area also provides access from those same areas to destinations on the Eastern Shore, most notably the Maryland and Delaware Beach resorts. Traffic during weekends of "Beach Season" oftentimes becomes unbearable to Easton residents, effectively dividing the Town with a constant flow of traffic and miles-long back-ups result from even slight interruptions to this flow. Such is the severity of the issue that the Easton Planning Commission has identified and characterized the problem as effectively creating two Eastons. One encompasses what is presently the majority of the Town, extending from Route 50 to the western limits of Town and the other is the portion of our community located east of Route 50. While this represents a clear minority of the land area of present day Easton, it is significant in

terms of the number of relatively large subdivisions and, notably, the where the overwhelming majority of our Town’s future Growth is envisioned.

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



*Map 1, Easton Regional Context*

diversification of this base economy to include a broader manufacturing, service, and tourism economy. Over 75% of the 279 square miles of County land is arable. In 2020, 37, 526 people lived in the County, a very slight decrease of 256 people from the 2010

Census. This represents a substantial change for Talbot County, which has exhibited slow to moderate growth throughout recent decades.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland contains nine counties with a 2020 population of 456,815. This represents an increase of 1.7% over the 2010 population, which is a significant slowing from previous decades. An abundance of freshwater and favorable soil characteristics enhance the Eastern Shore's value for agricultural purposes; although in recent years agricultural lands across the Shore have become increasingly threatened by development. Industrial activity in the region has historically been related primarily to agricultural activities and processing of seafood taken from the numerous waterways. However, since 1970 several industries not reliant on food products have located on the Shore. These include manufacturing, electronics assembly and commercial services, as well as businesses associated with the tourism industry. This has resulted in significant industrial diversification. Table 1 below provides statistics on recent population growth trends for Easton, Talbot County and the Eastern Shore.

**Table 1: Historical Regional Population Growth**

|                 | Easton | Talbot County | Eastern Shore |
|-----------------|--------|---------------|---------------|
| 1960 Population | 6,337  | 21,578        | 243,570       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 29.4          | 2.6           |
| 1970 Population | 6,809  | 23,682        | 258,329       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 28.8          | 2.6           |
| 1980 Population | 7,536  | 25,604        | 296,620       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 29.4          | 2.5           |
| 1990 Population | 9,372  | 30,549        | 343,769       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 30.7          | 2.7           |
| 2000 Population | 11,708 | 33,812        | 395,903       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 34.6          | 3.0           |
| 2010 Population | 15,945 | 37,782        | 449,226       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 42.2          | 3.5           |



|                 | Easton | Talbot County | Eastern Shore |
|-----------------|--------|---------------|---------------|
| 1960 Population | 6,337  | 21,578        | 243,570       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 29.4          | 2.6           |
| 1970 Population | 6,809  | 23,682        | 258,329       |
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| 1980 Population | 7,536  | 25,604        | 296,620       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 29.4          | 2.5           |
| 1990 Population | 9,372  | 30,549        | 343,769       |
| 2020 Population | 17,101 | 37,526        | 456,815       |
| Easton %        | 100    | 45.6          | 3.7           |

Compound Annual Growth Rates, 1960-2020:

2000-2020

Easton: 1.67%  
Talbot County: 0.93%  
Eastern Shore: 1.05%

1.91%  
0.52%  
0.72%

Absolute Growth 1960-2020:

2000-2020

Easton: 10,764 (170%)  
Talbot County: 15,948 (73.9%)  
Eastern Shore: 213,245 (87.5%)

5,393 (46.1%)  
3,714 (11.0%)  
60,912 (15.4%)

"Delmarva" is a term that describes the 6,057 square mile peninsula encompassing the nine Eastern Shore of Maryland counties (although some do not include Cecil County as part of Delmarva; for the purposes of this Plan it is included), all of the State of Delaware and the two counties on Virginia's Eastern Shore. In 2020 the population of Delmarva was 1,455,913, which was a 4.5% increase over 2010's figures. Fifty-five percent of the land area and slightly less than 1/3 of the population of

the Delmarva Peninsula is in Maryland. The peninsula is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay on the west and south, and the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The peninsula lies almost entirely within the Atlantic coastal plain region.

Enjoying relative proximity to surrounding states, Easton is located approximately 20 miles from Delaware, 80 miles from Pennsylvania and 85 miles from Virginia. The Town enjoys excellent access to major metropolitan areas. From Easton, it is 59 miles to Baltimore, 62 miles to Washington, 85 miles to Wilmington and 114 miles to Philadelphia (See Map 1). The capitals of five states are also located nearby. Easton lies only 37 miles (via highway) from Annapolis, 46 miles from Dover, Delaware, 174 from Richmond, Virginia, 127 miles from Trenton, New Jersey, and 133 miles from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Thus Washington D.C. and five State Capitals are located within three hours driving time of Easton. Despite our relatively modest size and the rural nature of our region, Easton is located in close proximity to a significant share of the US population. In fact, the 2010 Plan noted that Easton is just a 60 – 90 minute drive from the fourth largest consumer market in the United States, the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Philadelphia and New York, two larger consumer markets, are 2-3 hours travel time from Easton. Within 350 miles of Easton live approximately 34% of the U.S. population and 40% of the U.S. industrial market.

Furthermore, with today's communication infrastructure, travel time is also becoming less important. Many entrepreneurs are able to run a business from practically anywhere and as brought prominently to the fore during the height of the COVID pandemic, a significant amount of work can be accomplished without the necessity to be in the traditional office setting. As a result, telecommuting is an attractive option for many workers. Easton and Talbot County generally are viewed as scoring highly on quality of life factors. Because of the natural attractiveness of its

living and working environments, Easton will increasingly be considered as a possible relocation site for people and industries. As other areas become less attractive, the Easton area will be subjected to outside influences to grow and develop. However, this is no guarantee that these people and jobs will ultimately locate in Easton. For example, a lack of adequately sized, sited, and zoned land can keep away potential new business or industries. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide the Town with a guide to organize its growth in a pattern and at a rate that can be accommodated within the human and fiscal resources of the Town. Furthermore, it aims to do so in a manner that does not destroy the character of the place that so many people love and enjoy.

## **2025 GROWTH DYNAMICS**

Easton has experienced moderate but consistent population growth since its founding. In the last few decades of the 1900s the rate of growth increased substantially, before significantly subsiding in 2008, presumably a result of the “Great Recession.” Table 2 indicates Easton’s population at various years since 1800. The 1800 population is an estimate from an article in the Maryland Room of the Talbot County Free Library which stated that in 1800 Easton was a Town of “about 1,000 inhabitants.” All other figures are U.S. Census figures, although the figures for 1910 and 1920 are interpreted from a graph of Easton’s population.

TABLE 2 TOWN OF EASTON HISTORIC POPULATION

| YEAR | POPULATION |
|------|------------|
| 1800 | 1,000      |
| 1810 | NA         |
| 1820 | NA         |
| 1830 | NA         |
| 1840 | 1,358      |
| 1850 | 1,413      |
| 1860 | NA         |
| 1870 | NA         |
| 1880 | 3,005      |
| 1890 | NA         |
| 1900 | 3,074      |
| 1910 | 3,100      |
| 1920 | 3,400      |
| 1930 | 4,092      |
| 1940 | 4,536      |
| 1950 | 4,836      |
| 1960 | 6,337      |
| 1970 | 6,809      |
| 1980 | 7,536      |
| 1990 | 9,372      |
| 2000 | 11,708     |
| 2010 | 15,945     |
| 2020 | 17,101     |

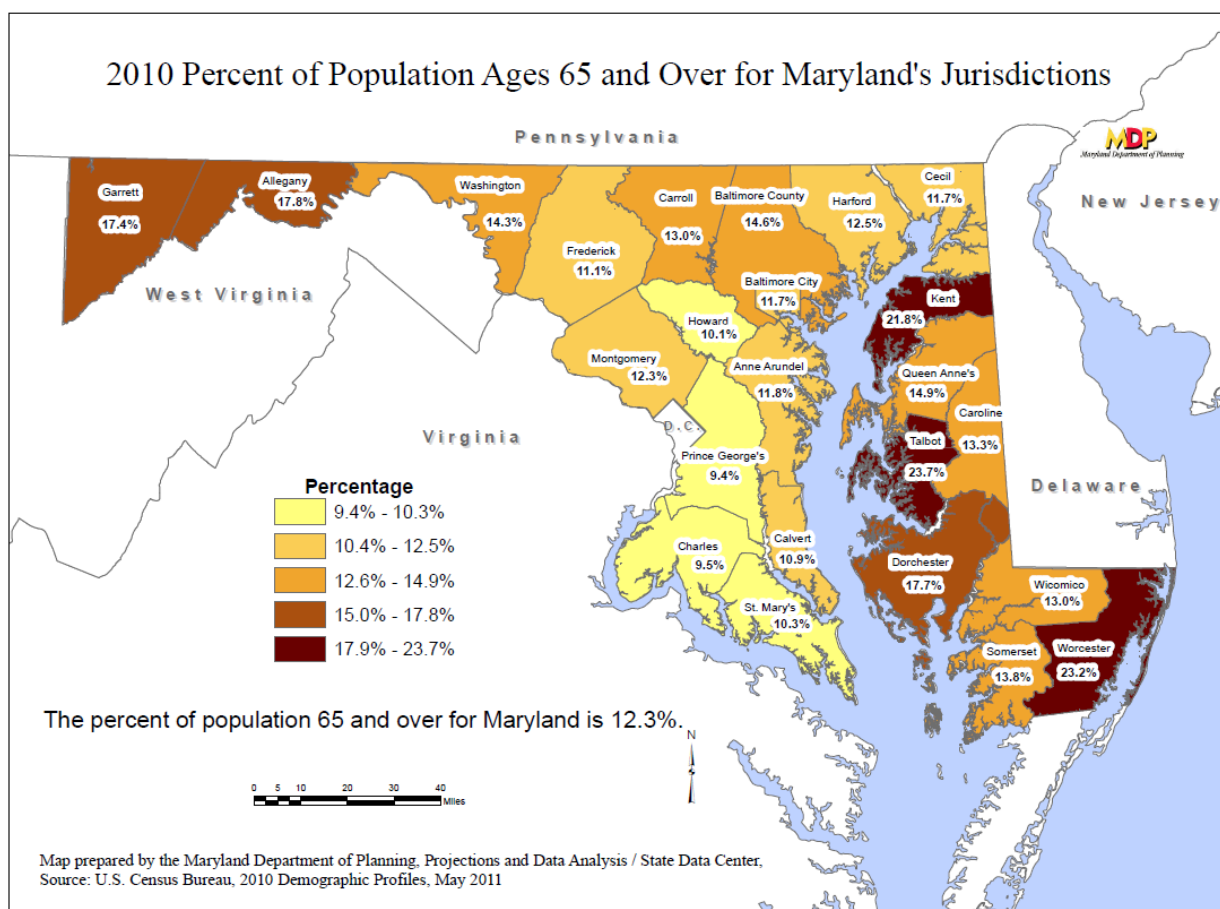
One demographic change evident in (although not unique to) Easton is the growth of the Hispanic population, which mirrors the decline in African-American population. Table 3 Below shows how these components of Easton's population have changed since 1990 when Hispanics were first reported separately.

TABLE 3 AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC POPULATION CHANGE,  
1990-2020

| YEAR | % AFRICAN-AMERICAN | % HISPANIC |
|------|--------------------|------------|
| 1990 | 26.9%              | 0.4%       |
| 2000 | 23.5%              | 3.5%       |
| 2010 | 17.2%              | 9.8%       |
| 2020 | 14.7%              | 14.4%      |

SOURCE : US Decennial Census for Year identified

Both Easton and Talbot County have reputations as places with a preponderance of an older population. The Maryland Department of Planning produced the following map which illustrates and supports this reputation:



In 2010, Talbot County had the highest percentage of population age 65 and over of any County in Maryland. The American Communities Survey data for 2021 indicates that senior citizens remain a significant portion of the local population. It found that while the state percentage of the population that was 65 or over in 2021 was 16.3%, Talbot County's was 29.9% and the Town of Easton's was 24.9%.

It is important to track age distributions in order to anticipate changes in demand for local services. For example, an increase in the number of young and middle-aged adults would reflect a larger number of people potentially available for the labor market. When older populations increase, medical facilities and convenience services typically experience a corresponding increase. The Hospital expansion (and most

recently its proposed move to a new site on the edge of the Town's Growth Area) and development of related services along Dutchman's Lane and Idlewild Avenue, as well as the growth in Assisted Living and Senior Housing during the most recent decade reflect these changing demographics. As population characteristics change, so must the direction and focus of community services.

Furthermore, this change is coming within the context of increasing regional and State-wide growth pressures. The State of Maryland is concerned about the projected State population growth and more particularly about local government's ability to accommodate this growth in a "Smart" manner. That is, they would like to see this growth occur in designated growth areas, especially within municipalities where infrastructure to accommodate growth is most likely to exist. This concern led to the adoption by the State Legislature of Maryland's "Smart Growth" Program in 1997. This resulted in a Nationally-recognized Strategy consisting of a series of programs and policies to direct growth to designated growth centers and to simultaneously preserve and protect much of the land outside of such areas. Interestingly, this mirrored the overall growth strategy of Talbot County that was then approximately a decade old.

By several metrics, this strategy has been effective in Talbot County. Table 1 presented earlier in this chapter, illustrates this well. Following several decades where the population of Easton was approximately 30% of the overall County populations, this figure increased beginning in 2000, to the point where it was 45.6% in 2020. At the same time Talbot County was implementing a successful Agricultural Preservation Program that protects much of the County's farmland and protects it from an inefficient sprawling type development.

By this measure at least, it would seem that the Growth policies of Talbot County and the Town of Easton have been effective. This is especially important given increasing regional-level growth pressures. Delaware is growing every bit as fast, if not faster, than the Eastern Shore. In addition, people continue to flee the Western Shore and the Eastern Shore has long been a prime destination for retirees. This may be more prominent in Talbot County than any place on the Shore. The "Silver Tsunami" of Baby-Boomers attaining retirement age will likely continue this trend. The growth of remote/work-from-home employees following the COVID pandemic is expected to result in similar growth pressures. Finally, along our region's southern border a planned aggressive expansion of NASA's Wallop's Island Flight Center on Virginia's Eastern Shore promises to bring more growth to that portion of the region, although recent Federal workforce and budget reductions may postpone, if not eliminate these plans.

## INCOME

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

Extreme income groups, upper and lower, demand different and sometimes conflicting types of housing, retailing needs and community services. High-income groups demand community amenities that low-income groups may be unable to afford. Lower income groups are less able to provide for their own needs and in turn look to



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

The most recent Census data indicates that incomes rose significantly in Easton during the last 20 years. One indicator of this is shown in Table 5, which depicts a doubling of the Town's median household income between 1999 and 2022.

Still, while incomes continue to rise, inflation and adjustments to the definition of poverty, established by the Bureau of the Census, result in a large number and percentage of households within the Town that can be considered low and moderate income. Housing affordability continues to be a problem for families in these income groups. Other Census results describe an Easton that is not nearly as affluent as Talbot County or even the State as a whole. As shown in Table 5 below, the median household income in Maryland in 2022 was \$91,431. The corresponding figure for Talbot County was \$79,349. Easton's 2022 median household income was \$72,771. While Easton's median household income increased significantly over the last 15 years, it still lags behind Talbot County and the State of Maryland.

**TABLE 4**  
**HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION, 2020 (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars)**

| Income Category       | Number of Households | Percent |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Less than \$10,000    | 289                  | 4.1%    |
| \$10,000 - \$14,999   | 248                  | 3.5%    |
| \$15,000 - \$19,999   | 385                  | 5.59%   |
| \$20,000 - \$24,999   | 300                  | 4.3%    |
| \$25,000 - \$29,999   | 327                  | 4.7%    |
| \$30,000 - \$34,999   | 208                  | 3.0%    |
| \$35,000 - \$39,999   | 188                  | 2.7%    |
| \$40,000 - \$44,999   | 221                  | 3.2%    |
| \$45,000 - \$49,999   | 232                  | 3.3%    |
| \$50,000 - \$59,999   | 527                  | 7.5%    |
| \$60,000 - \$74,999   | 656                  | 9.4%    |
| \$75,000 - \$99,999   | 1,051                | 15%     |
| \$100,000 - \$124,999 | 842                  | 12%     |
| \$125,000 - \$149,999 | 374                  | 5.3%    |
| \$150,000 - \$199,999 | 518                  | 7.4%    |
| \$200,000 or more     | 648                  | 9.2%    |
|                       |                      |         |

|                                    |                              |                           |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Median Household Income = \$72,771 | Per Capita Income = \$40,265 | Persons in Poverty = 9.8% |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, American Communities Survey

| Table 5 Median Household Income |          |               |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                                 | Easton   | Talbot County | Maryland |
| 1999                            | \$36,464 | \$43,532      | \$52,868 |
| 2007                            | \$46,378 | \$56,057      | \$68,080 |
| 2022                            | \$72,771 | \$79,349      | \$91,431 |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, American Communities Survey

### POPULATION PROJECTIONS

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

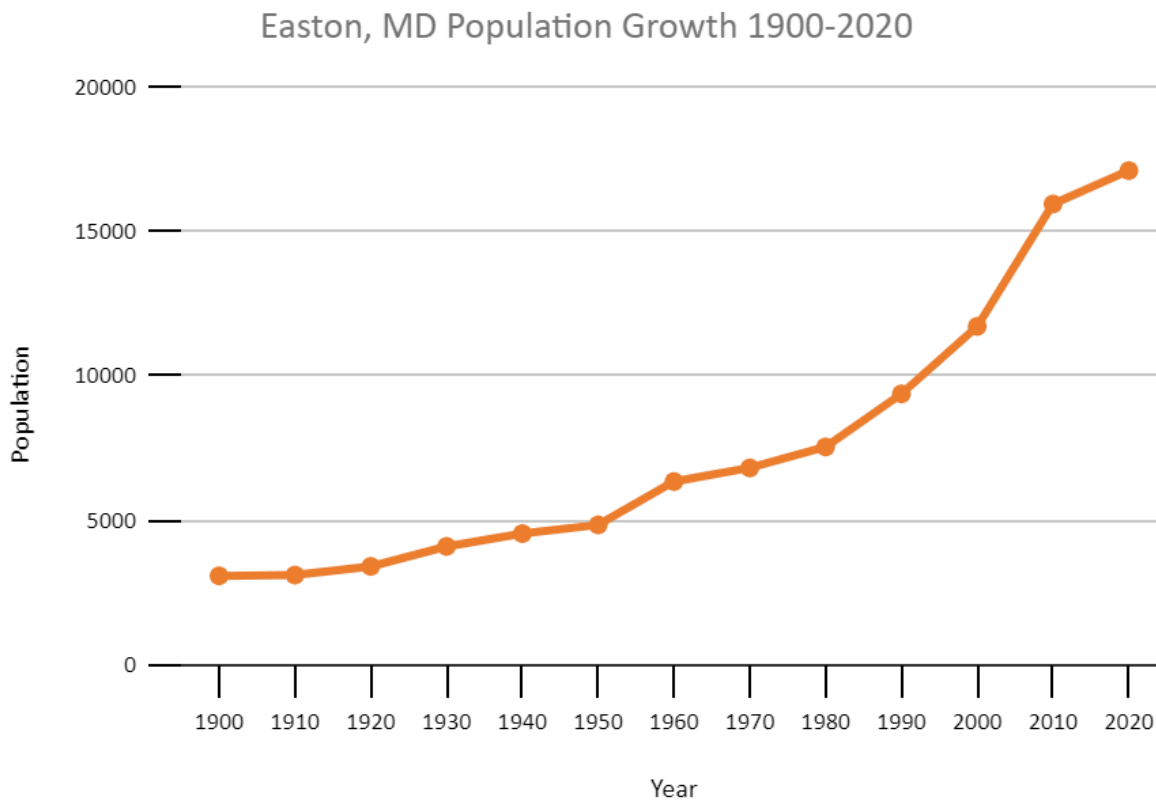


Figure 1 – Historic Town Growth 1900-2020

This graph indicates that there are two distinct points at which the rate of growth increases. The first is at 1950 and the second is at 1980. More recently, a third notable increase occurred in the decade of the 2000s, followed by a significant leveling-off in the 2010's. Table 1 earlier in the Chapter also looked at growth and provided average annual compound growth rates for various periods in Easton's history. Arguably more interesting, and certainly more challenging, is predicting what these trends will look like in the future. Figure 2 above looks only to the year 2020, using the Census population counts for each year on the graph.

While observing and analyzing the historic growth of the Town of Easton is an interesting exercise, the more important task for a Comprehensive Planning effort is to look forward. Varied growth rates can be used as a basis for doing this. Table 6 below projects Easton's population to the year 2050 at each of the distinctly different historic growth rates.

| TABLE 6                                                             |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| POPULATION PROJECTIONS                                              |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
| TOWN OF EASTON                                                      |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
|                                                                     | <b>0.7%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>1%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>2%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>3%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>1.67%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>1.91%<br/>Annual</b> | <b>2.03%<br/>Annual</b> |  |
| 2030                                                                | 18,336                 | 18,890               | 20,846               | 22,982               | 20,181                  | 20,663                  | 20,907                  |  |
| 2040                                                                | 19,661                 | 20,866               | 25,411               | 30,886               | 23,817                  | 24,966                  | 25,561                  |  |
| 2050                                                                | 21,082                 | 23,050               | 30,976               | 41,509               | 28,106                  | 30,167                  | 31,251                  |  |
| Note - 0.7% = Annual Compounded Growth Rate 2010-2020               |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
| 1.67% = Annual Compounded Growth Rate 1960-2020                     |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
| 1.9% = Annual Compounded Growth Rate 2000-2020                      |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |
| 2.03% = Average Annual Compounded Growth Rate per decade, 1990-2020 |                        |                      |                      |                      |                         |                         |                         |  |

During the Visioning phase of each of the last three Comprehensive Plan Updates there was a great deal of discussion and comment concerning various aspects of growth in Easton. In 2004, after careful consideration the Planning Commission and ultimately the Town Council decided that the most appropriate method to manage growth was to specify geographic limits where growth should occur and establish an order in which different areas should come into Town to accommodate new growth, until the point at which we reach the ultimate Growth Boundary. The 2010 Plan

modified that strategy somewhat, but essentially reinforced it. Specifically, that Plan identified areas and a sequence for when and where growth should occur.

The quality and appearance of both new and existing development has also been an important and ongoing element of the Town's Plan. Town Officials continue to believe this combination of growth management techniques will maintain Easton's character and charm while allowing for limited and deliberate growth so that the Town can continue to provide the services needed by its citizens and visitors.

In 2010, a notable change to this overall growth strategy was the establishment of goals, policies, and objectives designed to limit future residential growth to no more than 1% annually. The thought was that Easton had reached a point where growth at a rate faster than 1% endangered our ability to keep up with the provision of the services necessary to accommodate that growth, contributed to making already bad problems (i.e. traffic) worse, and threatened the Small-Town charm and atmosphere that so many love about Easton.

This Plan modifies this growth strategy again, in two ways. First, as is described in much more detail in the Implementation Chapter, we are replacing the Future Growth Area Priority Tiers used in the past two Plans, with a set of detailed Annexation Policies. Second, this Plan maintains an expressed "preferred growth rate" but increases it from the 1% target of the 2010 Plan, to 1.75%.

There are a number of reasons for this proposed increase in the targeted growth rate, such as:

- At least some part of the housing affordability issue is a supply issue. More housing units overall will address that aspect of this issue.

- 1.75% is slightly greater than the average annual growth rate from 1960 - 2020, and slightly less than that of 2000 - 2020, thus it is within the range of magnitudes of growth we have managed in the past.
- There is a need to “replace” a higher percentage of our existing population that exists in many communities given the disproportionately high ratio of senior citizens here.
- Although the rate is not totally irrelevant, we are less concerned with how fast or how much we grow as we are with how we grow. That is, as long as future growth is appropriately located and designed, and mitigates any community facility/service impacts associated with it, there is less concern over the rate at which it occurs.

Growth at a 1.75% Annual Rate produces the following population projections:

| 8/1/2020 (per Census) | 2030   | 2040   | 2050   |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| 17,101                | 20,136 | 23,952 | 28,489 |

Note - Projections made on a proportionate share (5/12) for the remainder of 2020 (since the 8/1/2020 Census date) and then at an annual rate of 1.75%.

Elements of this refined, limited growth strategy will permeate throughout this Plan. However, it is most clearly and comprehensively outlined in the Municipal Growth and the Implementation Chapters of the Plan. This also translates to a population increase of 3,035 over the balance of the current decade. With a 2.19 average household size and a 93% occupancy rate (per the 2020 Census), this equates to a need for an additional 1,490 housing units this decade in order to accommodate the projected

growth. The various options and permutations for how this might be accomplished are covered in greater detail in the Municipal Growth Element.

DRAFT



## LAND USE

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

The use of land within the Town is the result of many physical, economic and social forces. The Land Use Element reflects an attempt by the Town to equitably balance the attainment of Town goals and objectives for development with private property rights and interests. The Land Use Element addresses issues and identifies Town policies relative to residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as the provision of lands for parks and open spaces. It analyzes the appropriate mix of uses in the short and long term given our projected growth. It will also address the monumental task of reversing and rectifying what are now viewed as poor land use decisions (made not just in Easton but throughout the nation) that were made in the past, primarily since the late 1940's. In short, it lays the groundwork that will be repeated throughout the Plan for ensuring that future growth is not in the form of

auto-centric, isolated, suburban style subdivisions but rather takes the form of multi-use, integrated, and connected neighborhoods.

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

## **BACKGROUND**

Like nearly every community, Easton's land use pattern is primarily a reflection of the influences of the dominant mode of transportation over time. At its founding in 1710, Easton was located at the headwaters of the Tred Avon River. Current visitors to Easton may well be confused by that statement and wonder why the Town moved from that location. Actually the Town did not move. Rather, the river changed. It does still exist in this area, but has been reduced to a stream that has been enclosed in culverts in the vicinity of Talbottown Shopping Center and the Easton Utilities Electric Generating Plant.

The following table lists every annexation of the Town, beginning with the initial survey in 1786. At that time Easton was a mere 94.5 acres. Not only was the overall size of the Town small, but also the pattern of development was dense, reflecting that the

primary means of travel at that time was walking. Today, Easton consists of almost 6,600 acres and within the most recently developed parts of the Town the development pattern is relatively sparse. This reflects the mode of travel of today, the private automobile, which has had the effect of spreading out development and greatly separating the places where people live, from the places where they shop and work.

| <b>TABLE 6</b>                |            |                          |              |              |                 |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>HISTORICAL ANNEXATIONS</b> |            |                          |              |              |                 |
| NO.                           | DATE       | ANNEXATION               | AREA<br>(AC) | TOTAL (CUM.) | SQ. MILE (CUM.) |
| 1                             | 3/12/1786  | 1785 John Needles Survey | 94.500       | 94.500       | 0.14766         |
| 2                             | Nov. 1806  | John M. G. Emory Survey  | 24.200       | 118.700      | 0.18547         |
| 3                             | 1/26/1880  | J. M. Tharp Survey       | 186.300      | 305.000      | 0.47656         |
| 4                             | 1916       | Kastenhuber Survey       | 195.352      | 500.352      | 0.78180         |
| 5                             | 1927       | Community Park           | 45.00        | 545.352      | 0.85211         |
| 6                             | June 1951  | Wm. H. Corkran Survey    | 445.339      | 990.691      | 1.54795         |
| 7                             | 2/02/1961  | Hughlett Street          | 4.551        | 995.691      | 1.55507         |
| 8                             | 6/02/1961  | Part of Marlboro         | 20.000       | 1015.242     | 1.58632         |
| 9                             | 7/05/1962  | Easton Motels – Rte 50   | 2.400        | 1017.642     | 1.59007         |
| 10                            | 5/02/1963  | Marlboro                 | 17.618       | 1035.260     | 1.61759         |
| 11                            | 2/17/1965  | Brookwood                | 3.502        | 1038.762     | 1.62307         |
| 12                            | 4/29/1965  | Mecklenburg              | 101.524      | 1140.286     | 1.78170         |
| 13                            | 8/20/1965  | Third Haven Heights      | 12.065       | 1152.351     | 1.80055         |
| 14                            | 9/02/1965  | Applewood Court          | 6.288        | 1158.639     | 1.81037         |
| 15                            | 12/03/1965 | North Glenwood           | 10.020       | 1168.659     | 1.82603         |
| 16                            | 6/02/1966  | Hallowell                | 16.431       | 1185.090     | 1.85170         |
| 17                            | 6/30/1966  | The Easton Parkway       | 164.694      | 1349.784     | 2.10904         |
| 18                            | 6/30/1966  | Maryland National Bank   | 4.673        | 1354.457     | 2.11634         |
| 19                            | 6/30/1966  | Frankford                | 214.196      | 1568.653     | 2.45102         |
| 20                            | 12/01/1966 | Pennsfield               | 176.840      | 1745.493     | 2.72733         |
| 21                            | 3/02/1967  | Witt Woodland            | 198.889      | 1944.382     | 3.03810         |
| 22                            | 6/02/1967  | Mulberry Hill            | 385.948      | 2330.330     | 3.64114         |
| 23                            | 10/21/1967 | Glenwood Heights         | 136.404      | 2466.734     | 3.85427         |
| 24                            | 8/02/1968  | Trippe Avenue            | 12.528       | 2479.262     | 3.87385         |

|    |            |                               |         |          |         |
|----|------------|-------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| 25 | 10/30/1969 | Maryland State Police         | 8.630   | 2487.892 | 3.88733 |
| 26 | 10/01/1970 | Airport Industrial Park       | 241.786 | 2729.678 | 4.26512 |
| 27 | 12/03/1970 | Idlewild Lots                 | 4.049   | 2733.727 | 4.27145 |
| 28 | 4/30/1970  | North Clifton                 | 5.549   | 2739.276 | 4.28012 |
| 29 | 11/04/1971 | Carroll's Addition            | 24.547  | 2763.823 | 4.31847 |
| 30 | 6/01/1972  | Golt Farm                     | 129.354 | 2893.177 | 4.52059 |
| 31 | 4/05/1973  | Idlewild Lots                 | 5.740   | 2898.917 | 4.52956 |
| 32 | 4/19/1973  | South Beechwood               | 36.546  | 2935.463 | 4.58666 |
| 33 | 11/01/1974 | West Galloway                 | 15.529  | 2950.992 | 4.61093 |
| 34 | 1/02/1975  | Poplar Hill                   | 174.358 | 3125.350 | 4.88336 |
| 35 | 6/05/1975  | Central Clifton               | 24.189  | 3149.539 | 4.92115 |
| 36 | 7/02/1976  | North Clifton                 | 30.703  | 3180.242 | 4.96913 |
| 37 | 7/23/1976  | Stoney Ridge Farm             | 222.976 | 3403.218 | 5.31753 |
| 38 | 10/01/1976 | Reward Farm                   | 110.705 | 3513.923 | 5.49050 |
| 39 | 11/05/1976 | Ashby Woodland                | 43.338  | 3557.261 | 5.55822 |
| 40 | 2/03/1978  | Elliott Road                  | 5.993   | 3563.254 | 5.56758 |
| 41 | 3/02/1978  | Idlewild Farm                 | 128.626 | 3691.880 | 5.76856 |
| 42 | 1/18/1979  | Easton Airport                | 595.809 | 4287.689 | 6.69951 |
| 43 | 4/02/1981  | Woodland Farm                 | 309.686 | 4597.375 | 7.18340 |
| 44 | 3/03/1983  | Lutheran Church – Rte 50      | 6.006   | 4603.381 | 7.19278 |
| 45 | 9/18/1986  | Craft Farm                    | 102.670 | 4706.051 | 7.35320 |
| 46 | 12/05/1986 | Mulberry Hill/W. Galloway     | 233.844 | 4939.895 | 7.71859 |
| 47 | 7/02/1987  | William Favinger              | 10.260  | 4950.155 | 7.73462 |
| 48 | 3/03/1988  | John O. Brooks                | 31.551  | 4981.706 | 7.78392 |
| 49 | 5/23/1989  | County Roads Facility         | 6.080   | 4987.786 | 7.79342 |
| 50 | 4/06/1990  | Londonderry                   | 25.430  | 5013.216 | 7.83315 |
| 51 | 1/13/1991  | Ewing – Dover Rd.             | 2.130   | 5015.346 | 7.83648 |
| 52 | 2/17/1991  | RGA/Davis – Denton Rd.        | 27.900  | 5043.246 | 7.88007 |
| 53 | 5/03/1991  | Dudrow (N. Glenwood)          | 187.850 | 5231.096 | 8.17359 |
| 54 | 6/18/1992  | Ward/Benhoff – Dover Rd.      | 13.595  | 5244.691 | 8.19483 |
| 55 | 8/16/1993  | Lyon's Farm                   | 217.100 | 5461.791 | 8.53405 |
| 56 | 3/18/1995  | Cooke's Hope                  | 162.365 | 5624.156 | 8.78774 |
| 57 | 10/23/1995 | Public Works Facility         | 15.451  | 5639.607 | 8.81189 |
| 58 | 2/03/1996  | Swann Farm                    | 80.540  | 5720.147 | 8.93773 |
| 59 | 7/24/1996  | Celeste Industries (Jettison) | -16.322 | 5703.825 | 8.91223 |

|    |            |                                    |         |          |          |
|----|------------|------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| 60 | 11/24/1996 | Swann Haven L.P.                   | 30.442  | 5734.267 | 8.95979  |
| 61 | 11/24/1996 | Wickersham Farm                    | 162.570 | 5896.837 | 9.21381  |
| 62 | 5/30/1997  | Talbot Bible Church                | 10.361  | 5907.198 | 9.23000  |
| 63 | 12/07/1998 | Trippe's Creek/Cheston L.P.        | 217.851 | 6125.049 | 9.57039  |
| 64 | 1/18/1999  | Charles O. Parks                   | 7.598   | 6132.647 | 9.58226  |
| 65 | 4/17/1999  | Swann Haven L.P.                   | 75.743  | 6208.390 | 9.70061  |
| 66 | 6/25/1999  | Ratcliffe Manor                    | 386.440 | 6594.830 | 10.30442 |
| 67 | 4/30/2000  | Ratcliffe Manor Lane               | 3.176   | 6598.006 | 10.30939 |
| 68 | 8/26/2001  | Town Properties (4)                | 7.926   | 6605.932 | 10.32177 |
| 69 | 10/15/2001 | Swann Farm                         | 79.014  | 6684.946 | 10.44523 |
| 70 | 7/26/2002  | Hoffman                            | 52.291  | 6737.237 | 10.52693 |
| 71 | 7/26/2002  | UP Associates                      | 23.084  | 6760.321 | 10.56300 |
| 72 | 7/3/2003   | Kennedy Street                     | 26.866  | 6787.187 | 10.60498 |
| 73 | 6/11/2005  | West Glenwood                      | 30.192  | 6817.379 | 10.65216 |
| 74 | 5/15/2006  | Londonderry                        | 13.492  | 6830.871 | 10.67324 |
| 75 | 8/03/2007  | Clifton Industrial Park            | 35.41   | 6866.281 | 10.72856 |
| 76 | 8/11/2011  | Hyde Park                          | 117.994 | 6984.275 | 10.91293 |
| 77 | 7/1/2012   | Spring                             | 17.170  | 7001.445 | 10.93976 |
| 78 | 10/5/2012  | McNeal                             | 2.469   | 7003.914 | 10.94362 |
| 79 | 10/20/2014 | Talbot Commerce Park               | 125.057 | 7128.971 | 11.13902 |
| 80 | 3/2/2015   | Aphena                             | 22.136  | 7151.107 | 11.17360 |
| 81 | 8/19/2017  | Easton Point (multiple properties) | 6.533   | 7157.640 | 11.18381 |
| 82 | 9/22/2017  | Celeste                            | 4.446   | 7162.086 | 11.19076 |
| 83 | 10/2/2017  | J. D. Oliver                       | 3.960   | 7166.046 | 11.19695 |
| 84 | 8/3/2020   | Dutchman's Lane                    | 7.681   | 7173.727 | 11.20895 |
| 85 | 5/3/2021   | Harrison                           | 1.637   | 7175.364 | 11.21151 |
| 86 | 7/20/2023  | Town Properties (2)                | 4.899   | 7180.263 | 11.21916 |

Map 2 is an insert which depicts this information as a map, showing graphically the growth of the Town over time. Both the Table and the Map were first included in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. Thus in many ways the most interesting aspect of this information may be what has occurred since 2004. In short, we followed our Plan. There were only three annexations approved during the 2004 - 2010 Planning period.

Two of these were shown as Priority 1 Growth Areas in the 2004 Plan. The third was not, but we went through a Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process to make it a Priority 1 Area. There have been 111 Annexations throughout the current Planning Period, but it is important to note that it has been 13 years rather than the previously mandated six years as a result of the amendment to that provision of the State Land Use Article. Notably, all eleven annexed properties were indicated as Priority 1 Growth Areas in the 2010 Plan.

One other annexation was reviewed in the 2004 - 2010 Planning Period, but it was rejected because the Plan indicated the area as a Priority 3 Growth Area, therefore it was determined by both the Planning Commission and the Town Council to be inconsistent with the Plan. Lastly, one Annexation request was also denied in the most recent Planning Period. That one was for a Priority 1 designated area, but it was denied over concerns centered around unknown impacts (primarily, traffic) that might occur with future development/redevelopment of the properties in question.

## **EXISTING LAND USE**

The first step necessary in making decisions relative to how to best use land in the future is to determine just how land is being used today. One indicator of this is given in the table below which shows the acreages of the various zoning districts as established in the 2021 Zoning Ordinance, as well as an estimate of the amount of unimproved land in each district.

# Historic Annexations



*Easton*  
MARYLAND

0 0.5 1 Miles

Cartographer: Nicholas Johnson



D

EASTON.COM/RENEWSEVEN

JULY 2020

| <b>Table 7</b><br><b>AVAILABLE LAND BY ZONING CLASSIFICATION</b> |               |                                 |                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Zoning                                                           | Total Acreage | Estimated Unimproved Acreage ** | Percentage of Total Town Area |
| A-1                                                              | 65            | 24                              |                               |
| R-10A                                                            | 2199          | 107                             |                               |
| R-10M                                                            | 117           | 62                              |                               |
| R-7A                                                             | 332           | 6                               |                               |
| <b>Total Residential</b>                                         | <b>2713</b>   | <b>199</b>                      | <b>41.18%</b>                 |
| CBD                                                              | 131           | 3                               |                               |
| CG                                                               | 391           | 33                              |                               |
| CL                                                               | 153           | 122                             |                               |
| <b>Total Commercial</b>                                          | <b>675</b>    | <b>158</b>                      | <b>10.25%</b>                 |
| BC                                                               | 502           | 113                             |                               |
| I                                                                | 815           | 45                              |                               |
| <b>Total Industrial</b>                                          | <b>1317</b>   | <b>158</b>                      | <b>19.99%</b>                 |
| PUD                                                              | 1373          | 217                             |                               |
| HC                                                               | 100           | 0                               |                               |
| RH                                                               | 233           | 233                             |                               |
| G/I                                                              | 101           | 0                               |                               |
| MXW                                                              | 76            | 17                              |                               |
| Total Floating, Mixed-Use & Governmental/Institutional Districts | 1883          | 467                             | 28.58%                        |
| <b>Total all Districts</b>                                       | <b>6588</b>   | <b>1,398</b>                    |                               |

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

Source: Estimates originally prepared by Brent Spicer, Easton Utilities Commission, on January 3, 1994, and updated to include new annexations and rezonings. Estimates of unimproved acreage prepared by Current Planner Zach Smith on September 23, 2009. Updated for this Plan by Nicholas Johnson on March 17, 2023.



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

Table 7 also shines a light on a significant issue this Plan will need to address: the general lack of unimproved land available for development within the Town Limits. This suggests that future growth will need to be accommodated by either additional annexations in our Future Growth Area or Redevelopment of projects within the existing Town limits (or a combination of the two) as opportunities for Infill are very limited.

The 2004 Plan talked at some length about the most appropriate mix of land uses (or what the most ideal ratio of residential to commercial to industrial uses should be). The 2010 Plan dropped that discussion because it represented a limited number of sources and there are doubtless unlimited points of view on this issue. The purpose of including that in 2004 was never to stop, say all commercial development until it dropped to the identified appropriate rate. Rather it was to point out where perhaps Easton might be markedly “out-of-balance” from a land use perspective. For example, it seemed clear from the analysis of the 2004 Plan and from public comment, that Easton has significantly more commercial development than a community of our population would normally dictate. Public input leading up to the drafting of this Plan suggests that this is still the case in 2023, likely exacerbated by the national decline of traditional brick and mortar retail stores in favor of online shopping, a phenomenon that was already growing and greatly accelerated during the COVID pandemic.

Furthermore, the same public input process that suggested that Easton is generally over-commercialized, also suggested that we generally need a greater variety of retail and food and beverage establishments. Later chapters of this Plan will try to make sense of this seemingly contradictory input. The explanation may lie, in part, in a finer breakdown of commercial uses into four major categories which are all present to varying degrees in Easton. These are Neighborhood Retail, Regional Retail, Transient-Oriented Retail, and the Downtown (or Town Center or Central Business District). We do not seem to universally share the same degree of oversaturation of each of these subcategories of retail development. This has implications when considering future commercial land use needs.

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

- **Neighborhood retail** – Is virtually non-existent beyond the Town Center. Older developed areas of Town should be encouraged to add this type of retail use to retroactively create more legitimate neighborhoods. New residential development should, at a minimum, consider and, if feasible, accommodate neighborhood-scale commercial uses. The future Easton this Plan envisions is not a continuation of uniform, single-use subdivisions, but rather a series of connected, well-defined neighborhoods, one of the most important components of which is accessible retail nodes at the convergence of well-defined neighborhoods. To the extent that this type of commercial development is encouraged in the future, it will be of extreme importance to carefully plan its location, scope and scale so as to maximize its economic viability but also best ensure that it remains a neighborhood/convenience -oriented component and not anything consistently drawing from a significantly larger area. This is essential if such a feature is to serve to reduce traffic within neighborhoods rather than add to it.
- **Regional Retail** – This is the subcategory of retail that is largely

responsible for Easton's per capita retail ratio of 80 square feet (approximately twice the ratio recommended by the source cited in the 2004 Plan). It is also the kind of retail that many people object to when they talk about the over-commercialization of Easton. For these and other reasons, the role of new regional scale retail development in Easton's future will be limited. This is not to say that new regional retail will be prohibited. It will simply be limited to existing undeveloped commercially zoned properties and redevelopment of Easton's older shopping centers. No new areas of regional retail are proposed for near-term development on the Future Land Use Map. In addition, whatever new development is permitted at this scale, will be only allowed under strict design guidelines. Unrestrained, this level of retail development is the one that can make Easton look the most like "Anyplace, USA." On the other hand, with a little flexibility on the developer's part, it can instead help us greatly in establishing a unique character for our community.

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

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

The role and characteristics of various types of commercial retail development is summarized in the following table. In Table 9, Neighborhood retail is analogous to the description of the same name above. Community and Regional are both similar to the Regional discussion above.

Table 9  
Commercial Standards

|                       | <b>Neighborhood</b>                                                                                           | <b>Community</b>                              | <b>Regional</b>                                                      |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b>       | - within convenient walking distance of residential areas<br>- intersections of collector and secondary roads | - intersection of major roads and expressways | - intersections of expressways                                       |
| <b>Service Radius</b> | 0.5 mile                                                                                                      | 2 miles                                       | 4 miles (urban setting) 8-10 miles (suburban) 15+ miles (rural area) |
| <b>Catchment Area</b> | 5 - 10 minute travel                                                                                          | 10 - 20 minute travel                         | 30 - 60 minute travel                                                |

|                                                 |                         |                          |                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Population Served</b>                        | 4,000 – 10,000          | 35,000 – 50,000          | Over 150,000        |
| <b>Max. Desirable Size for Shopping Centers</b> | 1 acre/1000 served      | 0.75 acres/1000          | 0.67 acres/1000     |
| <b>Total Size</b>                               | 4 - 8 acres             | 10 - 30 acres            | 40 - 100 acres      |
| <b>Avg. Gross Floor Area</b>                    | 30,000 - 75,000 sq. ft. | 100,000 -250,000 sq. ft. | 400,000 - 1,000,000 |
| <b>Number of Stores for Shopping Center</b>     | 5 - 20                  | 15 - 40                  | 40 - 80             |

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

Residential Land Uses are generally not described in terms of a ratio. In fact, to the contrary, the needs of the other land uses are often projected based on ratios involving the number of residential units (or population) in the community. The discussion about residential land uses tends to focus more on the arrangement, appearance, variety, and density of this land use. That is discussed thoroughly in the Neighborhood Character Element. Suffice it to say that we continue to see things changing for this land use. We do not envision the future of Easton as a series of disconnected, isolated, monotonous subdivisions. Rather we want to see a seamless, attractive, interesting, Smart Growth inspired Easton; one Easton, not a collection of suburban residential enclaves.

The next land use to examine is industrial. The discussion in the 2004 Plan did not talk about a ratio of industrial land acreage or square footage to residential units, but rather talked about jobs to housing ratio. For this land use, the 2004 Plan concludes that there were more jobs in Easton than the population would suggest is necessary. However, as the 2010 Plan noted, there are a number of factors that would skew this estimate. These include:

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

Simple ratios suggest that there is little need to propose new areas for industrial development beyond those already planned as such in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. However, a number of factors suggest this may not be the case. The 2004 Plan was amended three times to accommodate industrial growth. The Town is developing a Commerce-Business Park, and the lots in it have sold relatively quickly, signaling that we may soon again have a very limited supply of vacant industrially zoned properties.

Lastly, Easton is clearly a regional hub for jobs. 2018 data from the Maryland Department of Labor and Licensing indicates that Easton is the number one municipality where residents of the Upper Shore are employed. In fact, the 8,989 employees in Easton (representing 12.1% of the region's jobs) are more than double that

of the jurisdiction with the second most jobs (Cambridge, with 4,357 or 5.9% of Upper Shore residents).

The 2010 Plan stated “It is clear that there has been a gradual erosion of the availability of this[industrially-zoned] land for classic industrial uses by allowing more and more commercial and service uses.” Changes were made to the Town’s Zoning Regulations in recognition of this issue. Also, a partially developed Industrial Park (Talbot Commerce Park) was annexed into Town in this Planning period, to provide Town infrastructure, which has accelerated its build-out. Finally, in response to this diminishing supply of industrial property, the Town obtained a US Department of Commerce grant to extend and install utilities to the Town-owned Mistletoe Hall property, facilitating its development as a Commerce and Business Park.

Many of the jobs in Easton are filled by residents of jurisdictions other than Easton. This impacts our transportation system. The other side of the coin of having so many people commuting into Easton for work is the fact that many Easton residents are commuting out of town to work. Thus, jobs which better meet the needs of Easton residents would be of great benefit in reducing traffic and the associated environmental impacts. For this reason specifically there are industrial areas proposed on the eastern side of Town for development in the long-range planning period.

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

- Increase housing options for more diverse household types.
- Provide more transportation options.
- Reduce automobile dependence.

- Create a truer sense of place than single-use suburban style development.
- Activates urban areas throughout more times of the day.
- Provide greater opportunity for social interaction.
- Reduce a community's carbon footprint by encouraging walking and biking as an alternative to automobile use.
- Increase the safety of the neighborhood by putting more eyes on the street.

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.*



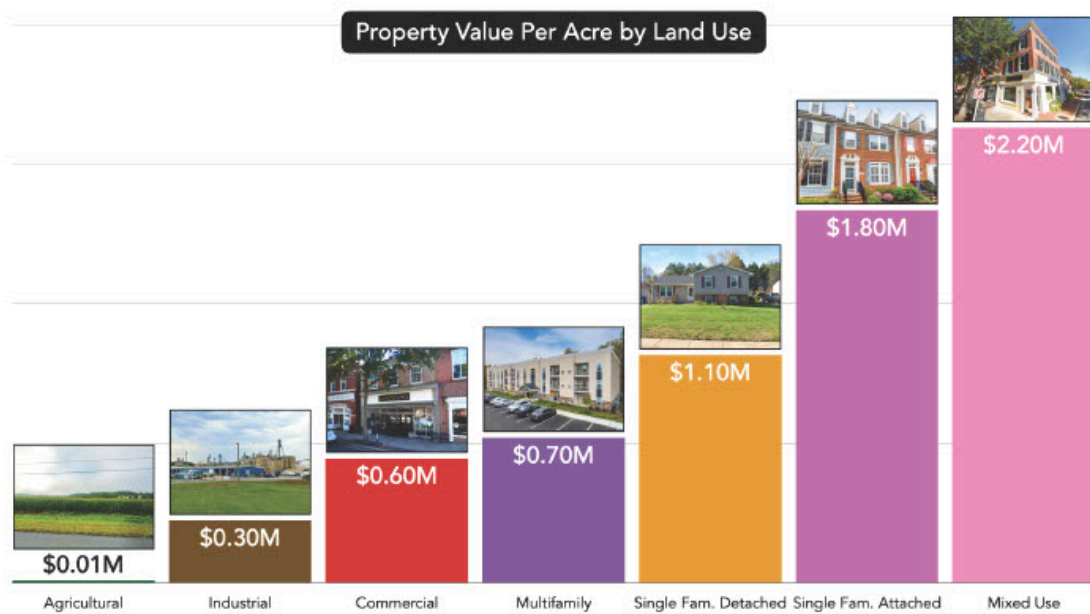


Figure 8. Comparison of values per acre by land use in Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps



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.*

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*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

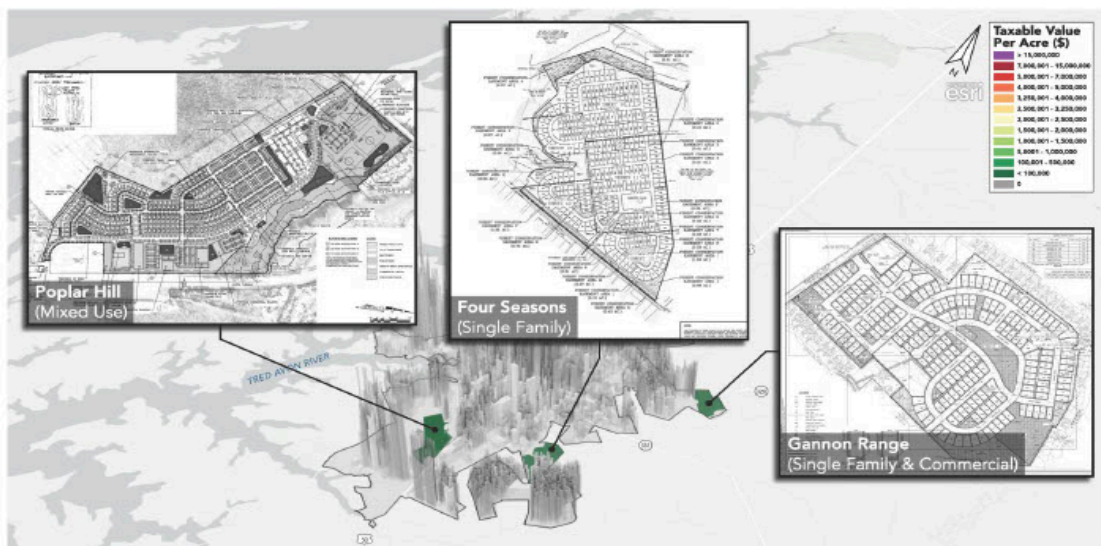
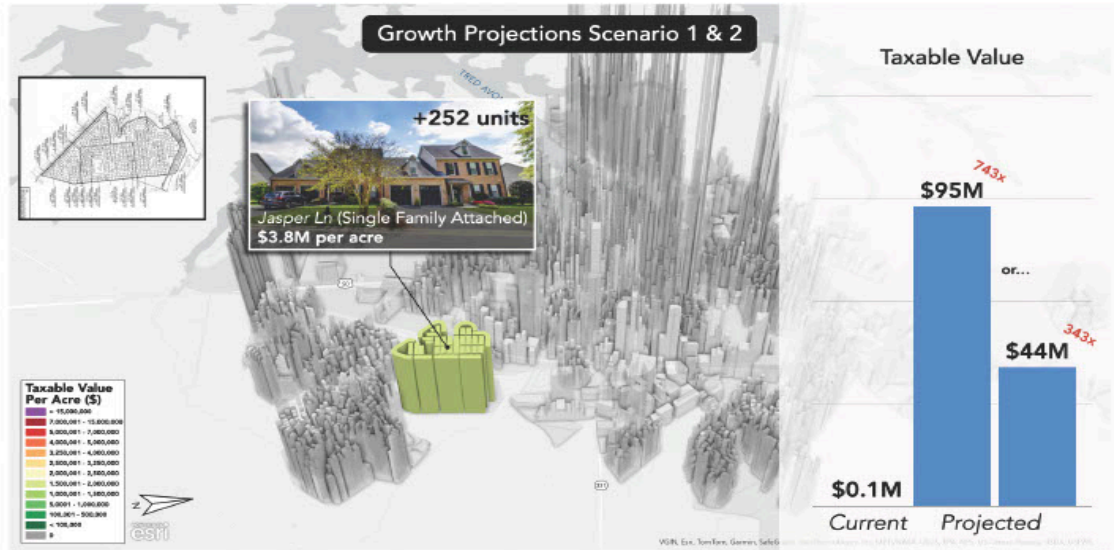


Figure 15. Example site plans used for projections scenarios for the Town of Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

*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.



| Growth Projections Scenarios |  | <div> <div></div> <div> Tenable Value Per Acre<br/> High<br/> Low </div> </div> | Development Type                                            | City Property Tax Revenue |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Poplar Hill                  |  |                                                                                 | Commercial/Multifamily/Townhomes/<br>Single Family Attached | \$637K                    |
| Four Seasons<br>Scenario 1   |  |                                                                                 | Single Family Attached                                      | \$494K                    |
| Four Seasons<br>Scenario 2   |  |                                                                                 | Single Family Detached                                      | \$228K                    |
| Gannon Range<br>Scenario 1   |  |                                                                                 | Commercial/Single Family Attached                           | \$347K                    |
| Gannon Range<br>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.*

## LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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

### Objectives:

- ✓ Reaffirm the Urban Growth Boundary around the Town defining the ultimate geographic size of Easton.
- ✓ Work in association with Talbot County and various land preservation and environmentally-aligned organizations to secure easements and other long-term protection devices on properties along and in close proximity to the Urban Growth Boundary on the County side of the line.
- ✓ Establish an Annexation policy to establish criteria prioritizing the most appropriate areas for annexation, in an orderly fashion and at a rate that the Town has the administrative and infrastructural capacity to serve.
- ✓ Explore incentive annexation to gain control of land on the town's border that might have previously been developed under Talbot County rules and regulations to facilitate more appropriate redevelopment or expansion on such parcels.
- ✓ Slow the demand for more land by increasing the density of future residential areas. At a minimum, the State of Maryland's minimum acceptable density for qualification as a Priority Funding Area of 3.5 units (net) per acre should be achieved in these developments.
- ✓ Consider adoption of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) if the rate of growth is exceeding the current or planned capacity for specific types of infrastructure.
- ✓ Follow a Capital Improvement Program which will allow the Town to provide a rational basis for implementing improvements and increase funding opportunities, in a planned manner to locations where growth may be prioritized.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Develop future areas of the Town in a series of well-defined connected neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods should contain an integrated mix of residential, neighborhood-scale commercial, civic, and open space uses. Projects that achieve this balance should be possible through the simplest process available while those that do not should be subject to greater scrutiny and have to provide adequate justification for not satisfying this objective.
- ✓ Begin to “retro-fit” developed subdivisions within the Town by adding much greater flexibility to add neighborhood-scale retail, civic and open space elements to existing residential subdivisions.
- ✓ Continue to examine and appropriately amend the Town’s Zoning Ordinance to change the focus from regulation by building use, to building type and site impact.

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

Objectives:

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



- ✓ Update the Town's Design Guidelines applicable to properties/projects located outside of the Historic District.

DRAFT

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

The 2010 Plan continued the discussion of the Design Principles for Easton first outlined in the 1997 Plan resulting in some of the principles being revised, and one new principle added. This latest iteration of the Plan will repeat this examination and propose revisions once again, based on development activity and practices that we have observed over the last 15 years and reflecting the direction provided throughout the public input phases of this Plan Update.

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

Finally, there will be a discussion about the role of zoning in general in influencing the character of Easton and look at how we might use more modern zoning practices and development review tools in order to reverse the negative influences that traditional zoning and subdivision regulation have played in establishing Easton’s character. Here we will revisit a concept originally proposed in the 2004 Plan, but omitted in 2010 due to the failure to advance the concept. The issue is Traditional Neighborhood Development and the Planning Commission of 2025 believes the concept should be considered again for the as-yet-built portions of Town, including our Future Growth Areas. We will also talk about the role of infill development in terms of its importance to the Town’s Growth Management Policy as well as recommendations for ensuring that such development is compatible with its surroundings. New in this Plan, is the inclusion of the role of redevelopment as part of this policy.

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

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

One of the major recommendations coming from the Visioning Committee, particularly from the group that organized the Growth station, was that Easton's Planning and development regulations need to be less rigid and more design-oriented. That is, a project that is tastefully designed, with good site planning, (including landscaping and architecture), but which may not correspond to, for example the height or

density limits of the Ordinance, should be approved more readily than one which meets all the standards but which displays poor site planning. In order to accomplish this, a set of Design Principles needs to be adopted, and existing landscaping regulations need to be strengthened and more stringently enforced.

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

- o *Rural by Design*, by Randall Arendt with Elizabeth A. Brabec, Harry L. Dodson, Christine Reid, and Robert Yaro, 1994, American Planners Association.
- o *Site Planning and Community Design for Great Neighborhoods*, by Frederick D. Jarvis, 1993, Home Builder Press.
- o *Dealing With Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development*, by Robert D. Yaro, Randall G. Arendt, Harry L. Dodson, and Elizabeth A. Brabec, 1990, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Environmental Law Foundation.
- o *Visions for a New American Dream*, by Anton Clarence Nelessen, 1994, American Planning Association.

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

While there is certainly no universal agreement upon what constitutes good site planning, there are a number of common elements or

themes among the various sources on the subject. Among these are the following:

- ❖ **Mixed Uses are Desirable.** Perhaps the single greatest failure of Planning in the twentieth century has been the concept of segregated land uses. Such theory has led to traffic congestion, monotonous subdivisions, and a loss of the sense of community.
- ❖ **Natural Features should Determine Design.** Developments should be designed in harmony with nature rather than against it.
- ❖ **Automobiles should not Determine Design.** Another failure of planning in the twentieth century is the abdication of the planning of our circulation systems to traffic engineers. This has led in many places, until recently, to overly-wide streets. Among other things such streets are visually unattractive, cost more to build and maintain, are less environmentally sensitive, encourage speeding, and discourage social interaction. Streets or roadways whose function is to move large volumes of traffic certainly need to be designed to do so. These streets should be relatively wide. However, streets whose function is solely or primarily to accommodate neighborhood traffic can and should be

much narrower than they have been in recent subdivision development.

- ❖ **Ample Open Spaces should be Provided within and around the Development.** Open Spaces are a valuable element of design for numerous reasons. They provide recreational opportunities, preserve environmentally sensitive areas, act as a sort of terminal for pedestrian circulation systems, serve as community gathering places, and provide buffers between incompatible land uses.
- ❖ **Substantial Landscaping should be Incorporated in the Design.** Landscaping is crucial to enhancing the appearance of development, particularly in areas of little or no natural vegetation prior to its development. Landscaping also provides shade, serves as a windbreak, creates benefits for wildlife, screens or buffers unsightly elements (i.e. dumpsters, loading areas, parking lots, etc..) and helps to separate incompatible land uses.
- ❖ **Parking Should not be a Dominant Site Feature.** With today's reliance on the automobile, it is both unwise and impossible to ignore parking as a design feature. However, parking does not need to drive site planning as is all too often the case today. Parking lots should be excluded from front yards where practical to do so. Subdivisions should be encouraged to utilize alley systems for services such as trash pick-up as well as for providing access to parking areas or garages. Lots should be thoroughly landscaped.

In cases where there is a degree of doubt over the amount of parking needed, the lower amount should be favored to give a preference to green space over pavement.

❖ **Architecture Should Respect Easton's Historical Development.**

Easton has a rich architectural history. Contemporary development should reflect that history. Franchises locating in Easton should build structures unique to our community and not look like those in virtually all other communities throughout the country. The appropriate architecture should also include the scale and density that best fits in the proposed development.

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

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

- *Crossroads, Hamlet, Village, Town: Design Characteristics of Traditional Neighborhoods, Old and New*, by Randall Arendt, 1999, American Planning Association.
- *Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law*, by Christopher J. Duerksen and R. Matthew Goebel, 1999, Scenic America and American Planning Association.
- *Better Models for Superstores: Alternatives for Big-Box Sprawl*, by Constance E. Beaumont, 1997, National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- *Saving Face: How Corporate Franchise Design Can Respect Community Identity*, by Ronald Lee Fleming, 1994, American Planning Association and The Townscape Institute.

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

An occasional criticism of the Design Principles in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was that while the Plan specifies the types of design that should not be encouraged in Easton, it only speaks in broad generalities, at best, about what it is that we want to see. Thus the 2004 Plan reviewed each of the Design Principles, made some revisions, some additions and some deletions and presented a more comprehensive set of Design



Principles. The exercise was repeated in 2010, resulting in revisions to many of the Design Principles and the addition of Design Principle #9 - Neighborhoods Should Connect. We believe it is appropriate for this Plan to repeat this same exercise to continue to refine the Design Principles to guide us throughout the next Planning Period.

## **2025 DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR EASTON**

### **Principle #1 – Integrated Uses are Desirable**

Originally in the 1997 Plan, this Design Principle stated, “Mixed Uses are Desirable.” Since that time we have found that it is not enough to simply mix uses within a development. A vast area of residential uses with a disconnected pod of commercial use is not the concept we are trying to promote. Unfortunately that was often what was presented. Too often, when any commercial development was presented at all, it was improperly located, of an inappropriate scale, or both.

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

Finally, all of the aforementioned is designed and built in a way that is walkable, both within the neighborhood and between neighborhoods.

The amount of each sub component present in a neighborhood, as well as its design, will be different depending on the setting and densities. A couple of options are shown in the illustrations on the next few pages. Perhaps the key to this principle is to provide the right amount of retail and office uses to ensure that a true neighborhood is created and that commercial uses are viable. Sufficient office and/or industrial space should be provided so that the neighborhood functions as an employment center, though not on a regional scale so as to not throw the mixes out of balance in the commercial/industrial side of the ledger. However, if this component is absent or under-represented, residents will still be forced to commute outside of the neighborhood to work. We recognize that the majority of residents will still commute outside of the neighborhood, but at least in the neighborhoods that we envision, they might have a choice. Unless one works in a home occupation or home-based business, that choice almost never exists in the developments of the post World War II era.

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

Providing an overall mix of uses in a community is important not only from a community character point-of-view, but also for fiscal reasons. Subdivisions of only single-family housing generate a large number of school children (unless they are age-restricted and/or possibly high-end housing), as well as a large number of

automobile trips and generate a higher need for services than commercial. Such developments create a negative budgetary impact. That is, they cost more to serve than they create in tax revenue. Commercial and industrial development, on the other hand, usually has a net positive fiscal impact. The goal is to have the two impacts balanced within the same neighborhood (thereby reducing traffic and further reducing costs for the Town) rather than having pockets of positive and negative fiscal impacts spread around Town.

Finally, mixed and integrated use communities are desirable because they are more ecologically-friendly and sustainable. Because they potentially decrease automobile usage, they also potentially decrease the community's carbon footprint. The US EPA has found that automobile emissions account for 27% of total US Greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest contributor of US GHG emissions. We can make significant strides in reducing this number by simply designing our communities in ways that at least make it possible to drive less. Mixed and integrated use communities do just that.

## **Principle #2 – Natural Features Should Determine Design**

Smart Growth is the Maryland Initiative enacted in 1997 that still directs and guides much of what happens relative to growth and development in the State. Notably, it is both a pro-growth and pro-environment program. The issue is not growth or no-growth. Rather, the issue is one of location of growth. Smart Growth dictates that growth should occur in places with the infrastructure planned or in place to handle it, and should not occur in rural, undeveloped areas. Occasionally, these goals come into conflict when, for example, a site is proposed for development within a Town, but on a site that also contains environmentally sensitive areas. This is most

often the case when development is proposed on the undeveloped periphery of the Town.

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

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

- Neighborhoods should only be located on land suitable for development.
- Development should avoid impacts to air, land, water, and vegetation. Any negative impacts on these resources should be mitigated.
- Site landscaping should utilize existing vegetation complemented with native species.
- Important visual features should be preserved and made an integral part of the design of the site.

- Site design and development should consider noise and light impacts on adjacent properties.
- Above all else, neighborhood development can be environmentally responsible by providing adequate opportunities for walking to jobs, convenience retail, and community facilities.

A discussion concerning development within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area is appropriate under the heading of this Design Principle. The Critical Area Program and Regulations were created to protect the National Treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay. It does so primarily by regulating activity within 1,000 feet of tidal waters of the Bay and its tributaries. Land most proximate to the water is referred to as The Buffer (100', 200', or 300' from mean high tide, depending on different factors) and development is highly restricted there. Basically, the land is to be left in a natural state and if it lacks vegetation, it is to be planted and maintained. There are limited exceptions for water-dependent activities and shoreline access. The balance of the land within the Critical Area beyond the Buffer, however, may be developed.

There are three levels of intensity with correspondingly different development regulations, but the most intense of which are the Intensely Developed Areas (IDA). IDA's allow for land, *WITHIN THE CRITICAL AREA*, to be developed at the same level of intensity as the non-critical area portions of the community, but does so with enhanced stormwater management requirements for nutrient reduction.

The amount of IDA-designated land is limited. In fact, Easton has essentially no ability to apply new IDA designations to non-IDA land, through the process called Growth Allocation and any such project that desires/requires such Growth Allocation must obtain it from Talbot County. Given the requirement that all development in

Easton connect to our state-of-the-art Wastewater Treatment Facility, we are a logical place to accommodate much of the County's most intense Critical Area development.

### **Principle # 3 – Automobiles should not Determine Design**

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

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

- In many cases garages have become the most prominent feature of single-family homes. They are oftentimes quite large, set closer to the street than the house and have the door opening facing the street, presenting an unattractive and uninviting streetscape.
- Many streets are much too wide. This is not only unattractive, but is also unnecessarily expensive, invites speeding, and negatively impacts water quality.

- Parking lots are generally the least attractive site feature in commercial developments and yet they are usually located such that they are the most prominent site feature. Too frequently parking lots are inadequately screened and are placed between the street and the front of the building. They are also often built to accommodate far more cars than is necessary for all but the most exceptional of occasions.
- Assigning alternatives to automobiles a lower priority in the transportation system, resulting in disjointed or altogether missing sections of sidewalks and little consideration of bicyclists.

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

As for street widths, the Town actually just completed a review of our Standard Street Details pursuant to the Comprehensive review of the Town's Subdivision Regulations. This resulted in some adjustments to the standards. These new standards should be monitored for their appropriateness and will need to be sufficiently wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles, but not significantly wider. The appropriate width will also depend on factors such as the type of road (i.e., roads

whose primary purpose is to connect different neighborhoods should be wider than those which simply provide access to a handful of homes), and whether on-street parking is to be provided. Finally, they should be “Complete Streets” that actively encourage use by not only automobiles, but also pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities. The Transportation Element will describe a Complete Streets Study that is ongoing concurrent with this Plan Update.

Finally, in the matter of parking lots, the Easton Zoning Ordinance requires screening of lots from public streets, as well as ample landscaping within the parking lots. One of our Zoning Districts requires that all parking be located in the side or rear yard. Major retail uses also have requirements regarding the location of parking spaces. These standards should be examined again, but probably require little adjustment. Also, the most recent comprehensive update of the Zoning Code included an extensive revision to the Town’s parking standards. This included a reduction in the minimum parking requirements for a number of uses, the addition of parking maximums to the Regulations, and the imposition of minimum bicycle parking accommodations for the first time in Easton. These standards should continue to be monitored to ensure that we are not requiring more impervious surfaces through our regulations than are truly necessary. We also need to accommodate emerging and changing technologies, such as provisions for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and autonomous vehicles.

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

Part of this Design Principle was discussed previously when it was pointed out that open spaces need to become an integral and prominent part of the design of neighborhoods. Too often they appear to have been an afterthought. Even more often



the open spaces that are included as the developers attempt to satisfy the Town's open space requirements are the lands that are otherwise not developable anyway.

Several things need to change relative to how Open Space is viewed in Easton. First, developers need to provide significant, usable open space as an integral part of their projects. Second, Town officials need to look at ways to make our open spaces more valuable. In some cases this might mean enhancing existing open space areas. In others it might mean planning open space or wildlife corridors so that larger protected areas are actually connected via "green infrastructure." The 2004 Plan recommended that the Town revisit its 1/35<sup>th</sup> acre/dwelling unit standard to determine if it was still sufficient in light of our other proposals to change the way development occurs. This was accomplished and the standard was changed such that today a minimum of 35% open space is required in all conventional residential subdivisions, of which a minimum of 1,200 square feet per unit is required to be provided for parks. Most recently the standard was revised to clarify that any such required park areas may be provided as either active, passive, or natural park areas, as deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission, in consultation with the Park Board, during project review.

#### **Principle #5– Architecture Should Respect Easton's Historical Development**

This is perhaps the most important Design Principle in the struggle to make Easton a unique place, rather than the latest version of "Anywhere USA." The mix and layout of development was discussed above and it emphasized that the Town desires to look at the past for a blueprint of the future. Much is the same relative to architecture. New development in Easton, especially new commercial development, should look to buildings constructed prior to the 1940's for an example of what to emulate. We do not

wish to impose Historic District-level requirements throughout the whole of the Town, but the Historic District is clearly an appropriate place from which direction and inspiration can be taken when contemplating new projects.

One thing that is clearly not welcome in Easton is generic, corporate franchise architecture. That has clearly and consistently been expressed from the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, through the 2004 and 2010 Updates, and also emphasized through the Design Guidelines for New Development.

A criticism of the original 1997 language was that while we clearly stated what we did not want to see, we did not give much direction relative to what we do want to see. The 2004 Plan as well as the Design Guidelines attempted to clarify this point and again, to this end, prospective builders should look to the past for guidance. In doing so, one will find many architectural styles from which to choose. In downtown Easton, the predominant architectural style is Federal. Clearly new buildings designed in the Federal style would be appropriate for new development, especially infill development in the downtown area. However, the Federal style is not the only answer. Colonial architecture also has a place in Easton as do numerous other styles. The only thing we are specifically trying to avoid is generic buildings, which, if built in Easton, would look little, if any, different from those in any other community. Along these same lines, tract housing with little variation is to be discouraged in residential subdivisions, so that these neighborhoods are as unique architecturally as other areas of the Town. In the 2006 update of the Zoning Ordinance, standards were added to address this issue. A series of so-called “anti-monotony” standards were added to the Zoning Ordinance as a Supplemental Standard for the single-family detached housing. The 2010 Update noted that since we have only reviewed one subdivision since these regulations were adopted (and to that date less than ten homes had been constructed in it), we could not fully

assess the success of these standards. Unfortunately from this evaluation perspective, little has occurred in the 2010-2025 Planning Period as well. There have only been two significant subdivisions approved, and both are so recent that they are just now (in 2025) breaking ground. Thus we will need to continue to monitor the effect and the effectiveness of these standards and make modifications as appropriate.

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

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



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

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

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



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



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





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



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

not like what we see today, we might very well already have the tools that we need. It is oftentimes simply too early to tell.



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



**NOTE: Update**

**this photo (Or delete??)**

### **Principle #6 – Signs should Inform but not Dominate**

This is one Design Principle that has had the most concrete action occur to implement it since first appearing in the 1997 Plan. Since that time the Town has amended the Zoning Ordinance on three occasions relative to sign standards. The first amendment reduced the maximum permitted height of freestanding signs in half, from 20 to 10 feet. The same amendment also required that landscaping be incorporated around the base of the freestanding sign and specified the amount of landscaping to be provided. The second amendment was a more comprehensive overhaul of the sign regulations, which added clarity and a number of design standards. The most recent amendment to sign regulations prior to the 2010 Plan cut the maximum permitted size of freestanding signs in half from 100 square feet per face to 50 square feet. Finally, the 2021 Zoning Code Update included an extensive revision of the Sign Regulations,



though these tended to be more focused on legal-issues regarding the treatment of different types of signs (primarily, temporary signs) to ensure compliance with the US Supreme Court's ruling in the case, *Reid v. Gilbert*.

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

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

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

The 2010 Plan noted that "In recent years Easton has experienced a significant absence of affordable housing. The problem is not just within the realm of low-income housing. That level of housing is certainly needed in Easton, but more recently we have seen fewer and fewer homes built in the general "entry-level" market, as well as the "move-up" market. In addition, there is a demonstrated need for apartment units in Town." After somewhat disappearing from the radar as an issue as a result of the national housing slump in the last decade, this same issue has returned and is every bit, if not more, of an issue now in 2025.

The Town is approaching this issue on a couple of different fronts. First, the 2021 Zoning Code's most significant change was undoubtedly the introduction of standards

to promote so-called “Missing Middle Housing” referring to a concept described in a book of the same name authored by Daniel Parolek. The premise is that many communities typically have standards for the traditional single-family detached home, and perhaps a generic, multi-family apartment building, but contain little if anything for the wide spectrum of housing types between these two extremes. These missing middle housing types include duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, courtyard apartments, townhomes, and mansion apartments, among others. Thoughtfully designed middle housing additions can add variety and affordability to existing neighborhoods through infill and adaptive reuse, and do so in a manner that is harmonious with the neighborhood as many of these housing types look little different than single family homes, albeit in some cases, larger single family homes.

The second avenue through which the Town is addressing housing availability is by reconsidering a proposal first reviewed in the mid-2000’s to establish Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary Zoning is a technique which requires that every proposed residential subdivision (above a minimum threshold size) include some minimum number of units that are available to individuals (or families) making no more than a certain income level. The threshold, number of affordable units required, and targeted income levels are all subject to adjustment, but the intent is the same: to ensure that the supply of affordable units increases concurrently with market rate units. The point relative to this Design Principle is that presumably a significant portion of the affordable units might be provided in the form of something other than single-family detached units.

Missing Middle Housing and Inclusionary Zoning are but two options for addressing the diversity of housing types in Easton. We will continue to explore others to further this principle, including potential amendments to the Zoning Code and the

identification of non-zoning barriers and potential incentives to foster more housing options for a wider demographic of residents looking for new housing and potential new residents to our community.

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

#### **Principle # 8 – Residential Developments Should be Interesting Places**

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

There was a time when residents would drive or walk around a particular neighborhood just because they enjoyed the look and feel of that place. To a certain extent that still exists today in places like Oxford, St. Michaels and Easton’s Historic District. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine anyone seeking out most of our subdivisions approved in the last 40 years for this same experience.

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

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

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

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

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

Contrary to the general goal of variety in architecture, one may note that some of the neighborhoods generally regarded as amongst the nicest in Easton, have a good degree of similarity of house types. This may be true, but there are two important distinctions. First, even though the houses may be very similar or even identical in type/style, they still generally have differences in things like the color of the cladding and trim. Secondly, they also tend to be constructed of the highest quality materials in town. Thus, exceptions to any variation requirements the Town may adopt should be limited to projects which promise similar characteristics amongst their homes.

#### **Principle # 9 – Neighborhoods Should Connect**

The one new Design Principle that was added in the 2010 Plan concerned the connectivity of neighborhoods and subdivisions. It is every bit as relevant today. In short, we believe that neighborhoods should be connected to neighboring properties to the maximum extent possible. This is a fundamental characteristic of the older parts of Easton that is essential to emulate in new development projects. There are a myriad of reasons for promoting connectivity. The most important include:

- Connected neighborhoods offer multiple travel options. This diminishes traffic impacts at any single point by distributing it amongst the various possible routes, as opposed to forcing all of it onto one particular road. It also affords alternatives in the event that one's usual path of travel is blocked, for whatever

reason. If a tree falls across the road, utility work is taking place, an accident occurs, etc., and this happens on the only road into a development, all of the community from that point on is effectively isolated until the road is cleared. In a more traditional, well-connected neighborhood, one generally only needs to travel one block out of the way to bypass the problem and one block back to get back on route.

- **Connected neighborhoods promote community.** Neighborhoods that are connected enable residents from one part of Town to easily travel to nearby areas, thus increasing the likelihood for social interaction. They also greatly increase the opportunities for walking between adjacent developments, which has both this social interaction as well as a health benefit. To illustrate this point, consider a real-world example of adjacent non-connected developments in Easton. The illustration below shows two houses whose lots abut one another. One is in the Old Beechwood Subdivision (a Talbot County Subdivision) and one is in the Woods at Stoney Ridge. The two homes in this example, in adjacent subdivisions are approximately 140 feet apart and yet, in order to walk or drive from one of these houses to the other, one must travel approximately 3 miles. That in a nutshell is one of the major problems created by a lack of connectivity.





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

LEED for Neighborhood Development emphasizes the creation of compact, walkable, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods *with good connections* to nearby communities. Research has shown that living in a mixed-use environment within walking distance of shops and services results in increased walking and biking, which improve human cardiovascular and respiratory health and reduce the risk of hypertension and obesity<sup>1</sup>. [Emphasis added]

Perhaps due to the lack of development in the current Planning Period, providing little in the way of evidence against which to evaluate the effectiveness of these Design Principles, no new such Principles are proposed in this 2024 Update, with

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



one exception. That is the proposed addition of a Principle concerning the impacts of climate change on our built environment and is detailed as follows:

### **Principle #10 - The Built Environment Should Consider Climate Change Impacts**

The Earth's temperature is rising at alarming rates. The planet is, on average, about 2°F warmer today than it was in the late 1800's. While some may argue the reasons, it is clear that human activities are at least a contributing factor and some of these actions are attributable to the way in which we have planned and built our communities. Furthermore, climate change, regardless of the cause, clearly has implications for future development patterns and practices. With this in mind, Design Principle #10 has been added to the 2024 Plan so that developers will now be required to consider the impact their projects have on the environment as well as ways in which impacts from climate change may be addressed.

This consideration should be made at multiple scales. Townwide, we must recognize that the way in which we plan our community directly impacts the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. An automobile-centric community that separates uses and thereby requires driving for practically all activities will have a greater impact than a more walkable community, with different uses, services and amenities located close enough (and with the necessary infrastructure) to enable walking and biking throughout the Town.

At the other end of the scale is the site-specific level. Here it is important to recognize and plan for changes resulting from climate change, such as increased intensity and incidences of urban flooding from single day rainstorms as well as the

likelihood of more frequent severe weather events, such as heat waves and tropical storms.

Town government can be a leader with some aspects of this issue. For example, the Town can plant more trees, create more green spaces/parks, and increase energy efficiency of Town buildings. Such measures can help improve air quality and lower temperatures, as well as alleviate flooding conditions. Similar measures should be encouraged or required to be provided by private-sector builders/developers.

## **THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF DESIGN REGULATIONS IN EASTON**

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

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

Fortunately for Easton, there have long been individuals and groups interested in preserving the historic and cultural resources of our community. Historic Preservation groups like the Talbot County Historical Society, and Historic Easton, Inc., worked tirelessly through the years to advocate for the protection of Easton’s historic

buildings. The Talbot County Historical Society was founded in 1954 and is headquartered in one of Easton's charming historic buildings with spectacular grounds. Historic Easton was founded in 1973 and the Town appointed the Easton Historic District Commission and established a district in 1976.

The evolution of design standards in Easton is chronicled in the discussion concerning the Design Principles above. The level of interest in this area has been evidenced in a number of other ways in the past. One example was the very strong community participation in 2000 in a County-wide Quality Community Survey. In June of 2000, the incorporated Municipalities of Talbot County hosted a Quality Community Survey (QCS). This was the 14<sup>th</sup> in a series of 22 surveys that were conducted statewide by the Maryland Mass Transit Authority. In this process, Tony Nelessen administered a Visual Preference Survey to approximately 140 individuals at Easton High School. Mr. Nelessen is nationally recognized in the use of this planning tool. He is also the author of one of the books cited in the last two Comprehensive Plans as representative of the kind of development Easton seeks.

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

Many of the results seem obvious, but some are more subtle and the overwhelming theme is that the ideas described previously in this Chapter in the Design Principles section, are, in fact, supported by the general public. This includes support for denser housing, narrower streets, and a new direction for the development of Route 50. Every Plan Update since the QCS was conducted has reiterated this point. Generally speaking, with few exceptions, regardless of where one falls on the issue of how little or how much growth they would like to see, there is near unanimous support for continuing to improve the quality of design in Easton.

## ZONING AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Much has been written of late about the “sins” of our built environment. In fact, the underlying force behind such movements or concepts as Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Neo-Traditional Planning, is that somewhere along the way, for whatever reason, we have gotten away from settlement patterns that made sense, to what so many people decry today. The ills have often been repeated: decaying central cities, booming but characterless suburbs, farms and forests disappearing at alarming rates to make way for more growth, subdivisions of monotonous homes and ever increasing traffic congestion. This is frequently also referred to as suburban sprawl, which is characterized by strictly segregated land uses, housing built at an unsustainably (economically and environmentally) low density, and utterly automobile dependent. It is essentially the antithesis of the Smart and Sustainable Growth pattern this Plan advocates.

What are the reasons for this transformation from compact, mixed-use, sustainable settlement patterns to the sprawling mess evident in so much of the country today? Actually there are several reasons but certainly a large part of it is that the people who created this built environment were simply producing what government regulation required. At the heart of it all is what has come to be the most common and basic of all land use regulatory tools, zoning.

The roots of zoning go all the way back to 1867 when San Francisco, California passed an Ordinance prohibiting development of slaughterhouses, hog storage facilities, and hide curing plants in certain districts of the city. The concept of prohibiting specific uses in specific places continued to grow, culminating in 1916 when New York City adopted the first comprehensive zoning code in America.

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

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

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

So the question is, has zoning outlived its usefulness? In many cases the answer is yes. Certainly it is still necessary to protect the places where people live from noxious and potentially dangerous uses. However, there are fewer of such uses today and there are alternate ways to provide this protection. So, the question becomes, should the Town of Easton consider abandoning zoning? Probably not as heavy industrial uses and high-traffic, regional-scale commercial uses still should be separated from the rest of the community. But, there is no reason to exclude commercial uses and places of employment that are of a scale compatible with the residential portion of the neighborhood. In fact there is every reason to **include** them. That is actually one of the characteristics of the way towns used to be built that so many developers and planners

(as well as critics of modern planning) are trying to recreate. We should certainly have an Ordinance that allows this to happen.

A new Zoning Ordinance that encourages traditional neighborhood development would have fewer use restrictions. Obnoxious or potentially hazardous uses should continue to be prohibited or those that are on some level necessary should be restricted to remote parts of the community. Residential minimum lot sizes should be reduced and density increased to achieve a development pattern more like that of the historic parts of Easton. Density should at a minimum satisfy the State Smart Growth (Priority Funding Area) criteria of 3.5 units per acre (net density). This should ordinarily be the minimum density proposed as even at this density, the result is often a suburban form of development that is contrary to the character of the community we seek to create. Perhaps the biggest change of all would be in the way mixed uses are treated. Rather than prohibiting or allowing only via a complicated and onerous review process, mixed-use should at the very least be permitted and encouraged and projects that include mixed-uses should have a smoother development review and approval process than those that do not..

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

development community views this process as lengthy, relatively expensive, and, worst of all from their perspective, unpredictable. At least in part because of this, developers tend to avoid the PUD option and instead seek the path of least resistance. This is conventional subdivision review for residential projects and site plan review for non-residential projects. Mixed-use opportunities are limited.

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

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

In light of the fact that nearly 20 years have now passed since the TND standards were defeated at the Council level and as a result of the Planning Commission's frustration over the degree to which they could affect the design of subdivisions through the by-right, conventional subdivision process, we are proposing to revisit this

issue again. The following zoning and/or subdivision changes are recommended to accomplish this:

- Create a TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) Zone or Development Option. The development standards should read similar to that outlined in the text box below.

### **TND Traditional Neighborhood Development Zone**

Minimum Lot size:

5,000 sq. ft. single-family detached  
3,000 sq. ft. single-family attached

Maximum Lot size:

12,500 sq. ft. single-family detached  
7,500 sq. ft. single family attached

Minimum Setback:

5' (0' for commercial uses)

Maximum Setback:

15' (10' for commercial)

Maximum Block Length:

480'

Density (per net acre):



Minimum - 4.0 du/ac  
Maximum – 12 du/ac

All subdivisions shall include a variety of housing types, open space, civic space, office or industrial, and neighborhood commercial space in accordance with the following schedule. **At least 3 of the 5 land uses shall be provided at the ratio specified:**

| <u>Land Use</u>                                                                                             | <u>Ratio</u>                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Residential - Middle Housing                                                                                | A minimum of 10% of the units proposed                                                             |
| Common Open Space                                                                                           | 35% <b>including</b> a minimum of 1200 sq. ft. per dwelling unit for parks                         |
| Neighborhood Commercial<br>(See Table 9 in Land Use Chapter for characteristics of Neighborhood Commercial) | Minimum: 26 square feet gfa per dwelling unit<br><br>Maximum: 52 square feet gfa per dwelling unit |
| Civic Space                                                                                                 | 300 square feet per dwelling unit                                                                  |
| Office or Industrial                                                                                        | 187.5 square feet gfa per dwelling unit                                                            |

Subdivisions prepared in accordance with these standards shall be processed per the Town of Easton Subdivision Regulations.

Subdivisions with single-family detached residential plus **only two** of the land use elements at the ratio outlined above (or with three or more of the land uses but at less than the prescribed ratio) may be approved by the Easton Town Council via the PUD process.

Subdivisions with single-family detached residential and only one or none of the additional land use elements shall be prohibited.

Renderings or conceptual architectural elevations shall be provided for each building

type in the neighborhood and shall be subject to approval by the Planning Commission. Neighborhoods should reflect architectural diversity. For all intents and purposes, they should appear as if multiple builders constructed them, whether or not this is in fact the case.

A minimum of 75% of the lots shall have access via an alley. Garages on lots with alleys shall be detached or rear/side-accessed attached. Lots without alleys shall minimize the impact of garages by locating them behind the front plane of the house, or if in front of the house, accessed from the side.

## **THE ROLE OF INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT IN EASTON'S GROWTH STRATEGY**

The Municipal Growth Element of the 2010 Plan analyzed the potential for the Town to accommodate growth without annexing any additional land. This would be accomplished through infill development and redevelopment. The analysis indicated that there was the potential for approximately 2,500 units to be produced through infill and redevelopment. Such development has numerous advantages, including:

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

- ❖ Infill development can save energy and the environment.
- ❖ Infill development is consistent with Maryland growth policies.

While there are clear advantages to encouraging infill and redevelopment, it should not simply be permitted *carte blanche*. Infill and redevelopment projects are by their very definition generally going to be located such that they will have many neighboring and nearby properties. Thus, extra attention needs to be given to compatibility and neighborhood impact issues. The following are points for consideration with any infill or redevelopment project; design principles for infill development in a sense:

- ❖ Ensure Housing Types that are Compatible with Existing Types.
- ❖ Employ Appropriate Traffic Calming Measures.
- ❖ Adopt Design Standards/Guidelines for Improved Compatibility.
- ❖ Provide A Continuous Pedestrian Network.
- ❖ Encourage Convenient, Appropriately Scaled Commercial Services to Support Neighborhood Needs.
- ❖ Consider parking needs more broadly than for typical developments. Infill/redevelopment projects should be evaluated in terms of parking by examining parking options more expansively, such as the availability of on-street spaces, public parking lots, and any shared-parking opportunities that may exist within a reasonable distance of the development site.

Infill development was a popular option as a mechanism for accommodating future growth of the Town throughout our public information gathering phase of this

update. Many suggested that the majority of growth in the coming Planning Period should be in the form of Infill (and presumably, redevelopment). This Plan will certainly look for ways to further encourage such forms of development, but this may be a case where the expressed desire is not realistically possible, certainly not in the primary built-up areas of Easton where vacant properties are scarce. Thus, if these few parcels are to accommodate the majority of planned growth, it would have to do so in a way that would fundamentally change the character of such areas. A more measured approach would be to encourage infill and to include redevelopment and adaptive reuse of buildings for property in and around the historic core of Town along with a more dense development pattern in infill development projects located outside this core, but within the 2055 Town Boundaries.

#### **THE ROLE OF MAJOR RETAIL IN EASTON IN 2025**

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

The issue was very prominent in the Town at the time and the 65,000 square foot cap was a compromise between competing interests. Those who wanted this use in Easton felt the cap was too low or that there should be no limit at all. Those who desired a more limited role for this type of retailing felt that the cap was too high or that the use should be expressly prohibited. It was also a size that many could relate to as the Giant Grocery Store and the Lowe's (now a Kohl's) were both approximately that size.

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

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

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

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

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

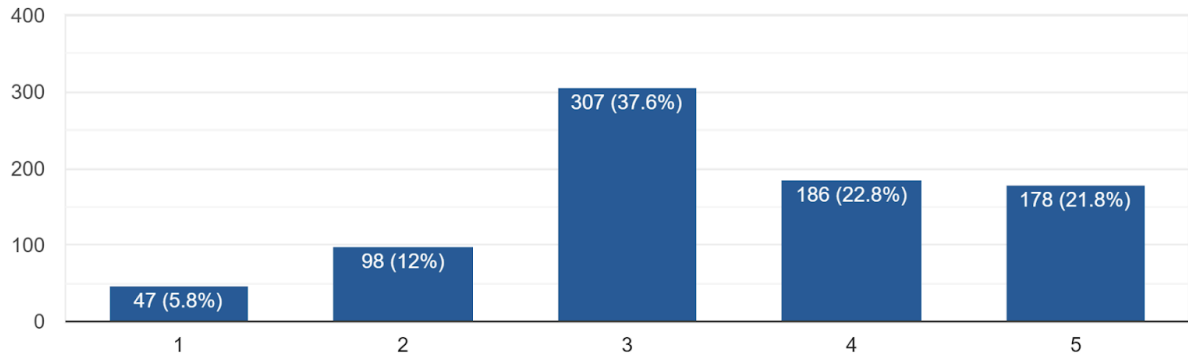
The 2010 Plan noted that little had changed to alter this perception of major retail. For that Comprehensive Plan Update, the primary source of community input was an online survey. Responses germane to this issue include:

- 47.9% of 791 respondents thought that the Town had about the right number of shopping centers. 36.4% thought there were too many. Only 15.7% thought there were too few.
- 77.8% of 760 respondents thought that the current design standards have created nice additions to the Town or still don't go far enough. Only 18.5% thought that the standards go too far or that the Town should not be regulating design at all.
- 65.4% of 766 respondents thought that the Planning Commission should not concede to developers over design issues even if it ultimately meant that their favorite store would choose not to locate here.
- 69% of 727 respondents either agree or strongly agree that Downtown Easton should receive preferential treatment over other commercial areas from the Town government. 16.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

This 2025 Plan revisited the issue of the role of major retail in Easton. An online survey was again employed and one question asked about the amount of regional scale retail shopping in Easton. Over 800 people responded to this question and the results were as follows (1 indicates much too little and 5 indicates much too much, with 3 indicating "about the right amount"):

Please select one

816 responses



The responses indicate that the prevailing opinion is that Easton has about the right amount of regional-scale retail shopping in Town in 2025, though it is worth noting that there were more than twice as many who thought there is too much or much too much of this use than those who think there is too little or much too little.

Taking all of the aforementioned into account, the Planning Commission again proposes no change to the Town's general policies towards Major Retail and again views its role throughout the next (202 - 2035) Planning Period as very limited. The one exception is cases where it is necessary to redevelop or redesign existing shopping centers. In such cases expansion or addition of major retail should be encouraged, but only in exchange for significant design improvements (and, where possible, circulation/access improvements) or conversion to a mixed-use project.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



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

Objectives:

- ✓ Revisit the proposed TND Zoning District as the primary zoning district on undeveloped parcels in Easton (and for those that are annexed in the future).
- ✓ Continue to evaluate the design and anti-monotony standards first added to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations in 2006.
- ✓ In conjunction with the first objective above, revise review processes so that traditional neighborhood developments are streamlined and suburban-style subdivisions are difficult to get approved.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Work cooperatively with the State Highway Administration to secure landscaping along the State Highways within the Town, with special attention to the highly visible Route 50 corridor.
- ✓ Use the Forest Conservation Account to retroactively landscape streetscapes in areas where it is lacking or deficient.
- ✓ Require renovations to existing buildings and/or changes of use that require Site plans, PUD Amendments, Special Exceptions or Variances, to

meet all current design standards as a condition of approval (i.e. no grandfathering on design issues).

- ✓ Encourage additional landscaping for new development and redevelopment of sites adjacent to U.S. Route 50.

Goal: To improve the appearance of all new development.

Objectives:

- ✓ Vigorously apply the recommended Design Principles for Easton as outlined previously in this Chapter.
- ✓ Prohibit the construction of new buildings that are designed with corporate-style franchise architecture.
- ✓ Adopt Design Standards for all new development, including residential and infill/redevelopment, in Easton.
- ✓ Review, update and revise the Design Guidelines for New Development applicable to all projects located outside of the Historic District.
- ✓ Apply Landscaping Standards that use native species to enhance the overall site appearance and more effectively screen objectionable site elements.

Goal: To encourage more redevelopment and infill development.

Objectives:

- ✓ Evaluate the boundaries, standards, and process associated with the Zoning Code's Planned Redevelopment Overlay District to determine if sufficient and appropriate incentives exist to encourage its use.
- ✓ Investigate, in conjunction with the appropriate individuals, any non-Zoning incentives that would potentially encourage more infill and redevelopment.
- ✓ Develop Small Area Plans for more of Easton's neighborhoods to determine the scope, scale, and characteristics of future redevelopment as may be unique to those neighborhoods.

## MUNICIPAL GROWTH

### INTRODUCTION

The content of Comprehensive Plans are largely dictated by the State Land Use Article and from time to time, it changes. One of the more recent additions to the list of required elements for Comprehensive Plans in Maryland municipalities is the Municipal Growth Element. The Land Use Article specifies that this element shall include consideration of:

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

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

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

#### **FUTURE GROWTH AREAS OUTSIDE OF EXISTING CORPORATE LIMITS**

The first requirement of this Element is an identification of future growth areas beyond the existing corporate limits of the Town. This was done in Easton before it became required by State law when the 2004 Plan included an Urban Growth Boundary. This established the ultimate geographic limits of Easton's future growth. The land lying between the Town boundary as of April 2004 and the Growth Boundary thus became our future growth area(s). The 2004 Plan further partitioned the growth area into future growth areas and assigned a three level sequential priority system

concerning when it might be appropriate for the various parts of the growth area to be annexed into Town.

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

Parts of the growth area, particularly much of the Boundary Refinement Area, have already been developed under the rules and regulations of Talbot County. Thus, they will generally not represent new growth. There may be some opportunity for redevelopment of these sites or an intensification of development as a result of moving from the zoning and health department regulations (i.e. septic systems and the limitations thereof) of Talbot County to those of the Town of Easton, but generally little if anything will change when these properties change jurisdictions. Oftentimes the only reason that such properties do come into Town is to take advantage of Town water and/or sewer service. The point is simply that while the Growth Areas Map of the 2010 Plan depicted 1,200 acres of land classified as Boundary Refinement Area, this raw number is misleading as relatively few acres of such areas were actually undeveloped.

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

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

## **HISTORIC GROWTH PATTERNS OF EASTON**

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

The historic pattern of annexations clearly shows that Easton maintained a small, compact size from its formal incorporation in 1710 until 1917 and beyond. By 1965, while the Town had grown significantly in a north-south direction, it was still completely confined to lands between US Route 50 and what would become MD Route 322 (Easton Parkway, which wouldn't open for another year). We did not grow beyond these confines until 1966 and growth really took off in these areas in the 1970's through today after the area within the Parkway/Rte. 50 Corridor was totally annexed.

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

## CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN EXISTING TOWN LIMITS

This subsection of the Plan delves into the more technical realm of Planning mentioned in the Introduction to the Element. One of the more recent requirements for Comprehensive Plans is to estimate the capacity for development within the existing Town boundaries. This requires that we look at undeveloped land, land suitable for infill development, and land with potential for redevelopment. In order to complete this exercise, certain assumptions have to be made concerning each of these types of development. For example, we are assuming that future development will occur at a more urban density than has occurred in recent years. At a minimum we will assume that we can achieve a density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre (3.5 du/ac), the minimum required to satisfy the requirements of being designated a Primary Funding Area (PFA). We have also used guidance provided by the MD Department of Planning in their Models and Guidelines Series publication “Estimating Residential Development Capacity.” Finally, some assumptions are based on our past experience with development review in Easton. The following table walks through the development of our estimate for residential development capacity within the current Town limits:



Estimating Residential Development Potential in Easton

**A. Estimate Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (i.e. what we could get with gg additional annexations)**

Look back at the "Priority Development Areas" from current (2010) Comp Plan

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

Area 2 – Brooks Farm (in-Town portion)

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

Area 4 – Ashby Commons (89 du approved)

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

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

Area 7 – Alvin Lapidis Property

Area 8 - Easton Point

Area 2 - 252 units approved in 2022

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

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

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

**B. Other Parcels with Infill Potential**

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

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

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

**Total estimated possible "other" infill units = 512**

**C. Completion of Approved or Pending Project**

Residential Projects Under Construction = 189 units

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

**Total Units in Approved/Pending Projects = 604**

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

E. Redevelopment Potential (Parcels w/ improvements assessed at  $\leq \$50,000$ ; =  $63.7 \text{ acres} \times 3.5 \text{ du/ac} \times 0.75 = 167 - 158 \text{ existing units} = 9$  (net new units) + 875 units from Table \_\_\_\_ below = **884**

**Total Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (A+B+C+D+E) = 2,744 units**

**\*\* - As of June 11, 2024**

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

The net result is that our best estimate is that we can accommodate 2,744 more dwelling units within the Town, without the need to add any additional land for residential development (other than the portions of Easton Point per item A 8 that are currently beyond Town Limits). Obviously it is not as simple as saying we do not need to add any land for growth until these units are built. There will be some parcels that have environmental constraints making it difficult to develop. We have accounted for the more obvious such lands, but there is undoubtedly more that will not be as evident until we are actually reviewing a development proposal for such sites. There will also be the landowner who has no interest in developing, at least for the time being. Finally, simple supply and demand economics dictate that at some point some of the growth areas will need to be tapped or housing prices will escalate, thereby exacerbating an already serious problem in Easton. This is a problem we will have to grapple with

when we ultimately reach the limits of the urban growth boundary, but while we have growth areas available, it would seem unwise to artificially inflate housing prices by restricting supply, though for the current Planning period, it seems new annexation is not necessary.

The 2,744 represents a slight increase from the 2,492 units projected in the 2010 Plan, despite 14 years of growth. The increase is primarily the result of the addition of Area 8 (Easton Point) as a “Priority Development Area” and a more detailed analysis of redevelopment potential through the inclusion of specific properties believed to possess significant opportunities for redevelopment (Table \_\_\_ above). This is offset by the removal of “Area 3” as a potential for development as the result of its purchase by Talbot County.

The point is simply that there should be an adequate supply of potential dwelling units within the existing Town limits to forestall the need to annex significant additional land for some time, at least solely for the sake of accommodating projected residential growth. In fact 2,744 units should last approximately 18 years at the 1.75% annual growth rate that this Plan targets. Furthermore this far exceeds the growth in total units we witnessed in the most recent Census Interval (i.e. 2010 – 2020) during which Easton added only 516 dwelling units, thus reinforcing the notion that the existing Town limits can accommodate growth for the next ten years. On the other hand this is tempered by the fact that clearly not all land that is as yet undeveloped is suitable for development, or at least not at the theoretical maximum density. Likewise land identified as potential for redevelopment may be constrained from such activity by any number of economic or environmental factors, not to mention the politics of development approval, which often results in projects being approved at less than the “Smart Growth Density,” if not denied. Also, there is clearly an argument that one of

the issues (and arguably, the most critical issue) regarding housing affordability in Easton is a simple issue of a lack of a supply of available units, thus to the extent that Easton seriously tackles the housing affordability, one approach could very well involve an effort to increase housing supply.

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

#### **LAND AREA NEEDED TO SATISFY DEMAND**

By enacting an Urban Growth Boundary in the 2004 Plan (and reaffirmed in the 2010 Plan), this subsection essentially becomes unnecessary. Regardless of what the demand might be for development, we now only have a certain, fixed amount of land available. Nevertheless, this is a Plan with a 30 year time-frame and we can project out 30 years to determine whether or not we will likely be essentially built-out or still have available growth areas at that time. In order to do so, an exercise similar to that performed for estimating the development potential of land within the existing Town boundary will be conducted as follows:

|                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|
| Total acreage of Future Growth Area = 3,880 acres |
|---------------------------------------------------|

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

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

- A. Residential Build-out Potential of Existing Town = 2,744 units
- B. Additional Residential Unit Potential in Growth Area = 6,773 units
- C. Existing Units in Growth Area = 727 units
- D. Potential Residential Capacity of Growth Area (B + C) = 7,500 units
- E. Total Potential New Units in Easton (A + B) = 9,517 units
- F. Existing Units in Easton = 7,350 units
- G. Total Residential Build-out (E + F + C) = 17,594 units
- H. Estimated Population at Build-out (17,594 x 2.19) = 38,531 persons

Without the confinement of the Growth Boundary, assuming that we grow at our targeted 1.75% average annual compound rate, then in 2070, Easton would, all other things being equal, have reached approximately the 17,594 dwelling units representing our residential build-out capacity. For the purposes of the statutory requirement of projecting a ten year build-out capacity, Easton certainly has no issues in this regard as under this scenario, build-out would not occur for another 45-50 years.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS**

This subsection of the Plan was also a new requirement as of the 2010 Plan. As such, that Plan noted that it would delve into issues that have in the past been addressed in the Community Facilities and Services Element and also include some elements that the Town has traditionally not addressed in the past as they are either a County responsibility or are more germane to County interests. Beginning with the 2010 Plan Update then, this exercise became more of an effort to update the following subsections in terms of the impacts of our projected growth upon a variety of public services and infrastructure, and that effort is continued here.

### *Public Schools*

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

Although the Town has no role in terms of providing public school service, we work cooperatively with the County to supply them with the most updated demographic information for their use in preparing the Annual Educational Facilities Master Plan. The 2022 version of this document, describes the state of, and outlook for, the Easton schools as follows:

Talbot County, a rural county on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, has had a stable public school enrollment that reflects the character of its community. Unlike highly urbanized jurisdictions in Maryland, but similar to other rural jurisdictions with a large retirement and second-home population, in Talbot County the population increase and the student enrollment projections have been dissociated from one another. Population growth has largely consisted of the in-migration of older residents without children, while the school-age population has been driven by the birth rate and the stability of the child-raising portion of the population. Factors that

have given rise to increases in the public school population in other areas, particularly the rapid growth of employment opportunities or transportation improvements that allow easy access to nearby employment centers, have been absent in Talbot County. Given the current policies of both the Talbot County government and the principal town of Easton, which emphasize the continuity of the rural and historic small-town qualities of the geographic region and its environmental beauty, these demographic patterns are likely to continue for many years. The three new housing developments that are described below and more fully in Section II of this report will, at full build-out, bring the first significant change to the composition of the county in decades, with consequences for the school system.

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

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

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

**Changing Student Demographics.** Table IV-4 shows that since the 2006-2007 school year, the overall proportion of Hispanic students in the school system has grown by 18.5% percent, while the percent of non-Hispanic white students has been reduced by 18.1% and the proportion of African American students has declined by 6.82%. In absolute numbers, the Hispanic population increased from 246 in 2006 to 1,090 in 2021, an increase of 4-1/2 times. If this trend continues or accelerates, it implies that teaching methods to address students with special needs, in particular English Language Learner (ELL), will increase. Instruction for these and other special needs groups often requires small learning environments within the larger school context.

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

**New Housing Developments.** For purposes of projecting the student enrollments last year, EFP assumed, as it had in 2020, that there would be little to no new housing activity in Talbot County for the following three years, to be followed by a gradual revival of the market. However, with three new housing projects in various stages of approval and development at this writing, and with two other projects



possible in the future, this assumption is no longer valid. These projects may reflect the trend of households leaving urban areas for smaller towns, a phenomenon that appears to be encouraged by telework arrangements. A study conducted in the fall of 2021 indicated that as many as 370 new students could enter the Easton area public schools as result of the three developments. Measured against the recently revised State Rated Capacity (SRC) of 5,436 for the entire school system, Table V-1 shows that schools in the Easton area may experience moderate to severe overcrowding within the next five years. Without taking the new housing developments into account, school utilization (measured as the ratio of full-time equivalent enrollment to SRC) is projected to increase from 83.8% in 2021 to 85.6% in 2026. With the new developments, the projected overall utilization would be 95.8% in 2026, with Easton Middle School at a manageable 103.0%, Easton High somewhat more crowded at 105.4%, and Easton Elementary at a 117.6%, a figure that represents severe overcrowding. If the enrollments increase as a result of these developments, there will be a need to avoid overcrowding of the Easton schools through some combination of boundary changes and new capital projects for capacity.

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

### **The Maryland Blueprint.**

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

TCPS has been proactive in engaging private providers in conversations about partnerships to meet the requirements of HB 1300 specific to serving 3 and 4-year-old students. Through PreK Expansion Grant funds, TCPS has been able to implement districtwide, full-day, universal PreK for 4-year-olds and has been

strategic in moving funding to the local budget to sustain this programming beyond the grant period. TCPS facilitates the Talbot Early Childhood Advisory Council (TECAC) meetings every other month with community private childcare providers. TCPS has provided TECAC with an overview of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the provisions for early childhood. Early Head Start and Critchlow Adkins Children's Centers indicated interest in applying for funding to implement 3-year-old slots. Given the requirements for securing funding, both providers opted to wait another year so they can begin to move towards the requirements. As a rural district, TCPS will have challenges in meeting the 30-50% private provider component of the Blueprint. TCPS will continue to provide support to private providers to engage them in this effort.

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

The redistricting referenced in the passage above refers to increases in the attendance zones for St. Michaels Elementary, White Marsh Elementary, and Chapel District Elementary in order to decrease Easton Elementary enrollment.

Thus, looking ahead as far as it does (i.e. ten years), the Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) indicates that the Talbot County Public School system can accommodate expected growth in Easton, albeit barely, at the middle and high schools, and the just constructed elementary school would require additional capacity either through a physical addition or through redistricting.. Unanticipated growth would pose even more problems, depending on the nature of any such residential developments. The Educational Master Plan notes that there are a number of

residential developments planned in the Easton area, but that these are primarily planned to target the high-end or age-restricted markets. Age-restricted developments obviously impose very little demand on public school systems as there are few, if any, children in these types of projects. High-end projects may very well have children living in the development, but oftentimes these children attend one of Easton's private schools, thus the impact of these developments on the public school system is also diminished. Enrollment at non-public schools in Talbot County now totals approximately 932 students, which is 17.1% of the total K-12 student enrollment in the County. This takes substantial pressure off of public school utilization, but may bear watching as if the economic situation deteriorates these students represent potential new impacts on the public school system if their parents, by choice or necessity, switch from private to public school education for their children.

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

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

### ***Libraries***

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

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

- 23,528 Library Card Holders
- 84,608 physical visits
- 14,179 reference questions answered
- 7,701 computer users
- 13,982 Wi-Fi users

- 383,411 Virtual Library Visits
- 970 Uses of the Meeting and Study Rooms by Outside Organizations
- 125,172 physical volumes
- >1,000,000 virtual volumes
- 405 Adult, Teen & Children's Programs with total attendance of 16,831

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

#### 2023-2025 Talbot County Free Library Strategic Plan

##### Vision Statement:

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

##### Mission Statement:

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

##### 1. Strategic Direction, Accessibility and Ease of Use:

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

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

##### St. Michaels Library:

Expand and renovate the St. Michaels Library by 2025:

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

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

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

#### Easton Library:

Upgrade and refresh spaces at the Easton Library:

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

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

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

## 2. Strategic Direction, Community and Outreach:

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

#### Goals:

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

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

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

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

## 3. Strategic Direction, Diversity and Inclusion:

Cultivate an inclusive environment where every individual feels welcome.

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Strategic Direction, Lifelong Learning and Enrichment:

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

##### Goals:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Public Safety***

This subsection of the Plan examines the adequacy of police, fire and emergency medical services now and throughout the Planning period. Many issues relative to public safety fall within the realm of a community's overall quality of life that is the subject of the Community Character Chapter. However, as a part of this Element, it is appropriate to address issues such as the adequacy of existing police services, the expected future needs of the police force, and the need for new offices, substations, etc... The 1997 Comprehensive Plan quoted the International City Managers

Association's recommended ratio of 1.75 police personnel per 1,000 people served. That standard was the subject of criticism from previous Police Chiefs. Therefore the 2004 Plan utilized a different standard, that of the International Center of Prevention of Crime, which finds that the national average across the U.S. is 3.36 officers per thousand people served.

With 51 sworn officers in a Town of approximately 15,200, Easton exceeds the ICMA recommended ratio, but is exactly on target with the reported national average. There are some factors in Easton that suggest being towards the upper end of the recommended range is appropriate. First, Easton is a regional center for employment, entertainment and commerce. Thus, the population served is much higher than simply the resident population of the Town. Second, Easton's citizens have repeatedly called for strong and active community policing. Finally, Easton is subject to extremely heavy volumes of seasonal traffic traveling between Ocean City and the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area and Easton itself has a modest tourism industry. Factors such as these, place a stronger demand on police resources than may normally be found in another municipality of a similar size.

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

The Easton Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection in the Town of Easton and the surrounding County area. The department is an all-volunteer organization



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

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

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

In assessing the adequacy of fire and emergency management services for Easton's future, it is necessary to look at more than just population projections. Traffic

projections, particularly for US Route 50, will have a great influence on both the number of accidents that will likely occur on that highway as it traverses our Town as well as the ease (i.e. speed) with which emergency responders can reach their destinations.

The form of development is also extremely important when it comes to emergency response time. Studies<sup>2</sup> show that emergency responders can cover more households within a given response time in neighborhoods with a more traditional style of development (i.e. multiple connections). This means that response time from a given fire/rescue station is lower when the community is predominantly built in this form of development. On a larger scale, it also means that the need for additional substations is lessened when the community is built in the traditional pattern as opposed to a suburban style of development.

### ***Water and Sewerage Facilities***

The adequacy of the Town's Water and Sewerage facilities to serve Easton through the Year 2040 is detailed much more in the Community Facilities and Services and Water Resources Elements of this Plan. In fact, one might logically ask, what type of information belongs in which Element? The Maryland Department of Planning has considered this same question and suggests in its *Writing the Municipal Growth Element* from their Models and Guidelines series, that with regards to community facilities, "the Community Facilities Element presents the complete picture for the entire jurisdiction [while] the municipal growth element looks only at those facilities affected or necessitated by future growth."<sup>3</sup> That should make this exercise a fairly straightforward mathematical one for this Municipal Growth Element.

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

<sup>3</sup> See the aforementioned Model and Guideline, page 3.

We have already calculated in the Future Land Area Needed to Satisfy Demand subsection of this Element that Easton will likely see approximately 6,800 (6,773 was the figure derived) units in future growth areas outside of the Town and another approximately 3,100 (3,083) units in growth within the existing Town limits. There are also 727 units that already exist outside the Town but within the Growth Area.

A new wastewater treatment facility was constructed (brought on line in 2007) with a capacity to treat 4 million gallons per day. As of December 31, 2023, the WWTF average daily flow was 2.463 MGD. The Easton Utilities Wastewater Master Plan estimates the WWTF flow will exceed the 4.0 MGD in the year 2054, assuming a 1.75% growth in flow from 2023. The Wastewater Master Plan also finds that the WWTF property is large enough to accommodate expansion of the facility to increase capacity as necessary at that time.

Residential wastewater use is somewhat predictable and consistent, but non-residential uses vary depending on the nature of the business. These can vary to a large degree and do not necessarily equate simply to size of the building. For example, a large major retail store will likely only contribute to the wastewater system through employee/customer restrooms. On the other hand, relatively small industrial uses might have a large demand if, for example, they use large quantities of water for washing, cooling, etc. The point for the purpose of this Element is that at some point, an expansion of wastewater treatment capacity will be necessary to accommodate the development of our ultimate growth area. The current facility was planned for this expansion to occur in the year 2025. It seems reasonable to assume that the actual need for this expansion will occur within a few years of this date depending on future growth rates and the percentage of future growth that is devoted to residential growth.

It would also seem reasonable to expect that this future expansion need only be of relatively modest size (i.e. capacity).

The same logic applies to water usage. Currently the Town of Easton is served by five production wells, with a new production well planned for FY25, giving a combined maximum daily production capacity of 4.00 MGD, including the new well, with the largest water source out of service. As of December 31, 2023, actual water production was 1.90 MGD average daily flow and an estimated maximum demand day of 3.36 MGD.

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

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

Table 10  
Planned Water System Capital Projects

| <b>Easton Water System<br/>Capital Improvement Plan</b> |                                  |                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Project Description</b>                              | <b>Proposed Fiscal Year (FY)</b> | <b>Estimated Cost</b> |
| New Well No. 14 (Magothy Aquifer)                       | FY2023/2024                      | \$1,725,000           |
| New Water Treatment Plant<br>(Commerce Drive)           |                                  |                       |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve<br>Replacements          | FY2024                           | \$1,000,000           |
| Matthewstown Tank – Cleaning & Painting                 | FY2024                           | \$500,000             |
| Looping Water Mains                                     | FY2024                           | \$250,000             |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve<br>Replacements          |                                  |                       |
| Looping Water Mains                                     | FY2025                           | \$250,000             |
| Well No. 12 – Replacement of Pump<br>and Column Pipe    |                                  |                       |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve<br>Replacements          | FY2026                           | \$1,000,000           |
| Looping Water Mains                                     | FY2026                           | \$250,000             |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve<br>Replacements          |                                  |                       |
| Looping Water Mains                                     | FY2027                           | \$250,000             |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve<br>Replacement           |                                  |                       |
| Well No. 8 – Replacement of Pump<br>and Column Pipe     | FY2028                           | \$130,000             |
| Looping Water Mains                                     | FY2028                           | \$250,000             |

|                                                  |        |             |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------|
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements      |        |             |
| Looping Water Mains                              | FY2029 | \$250,000   |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements      |        |             |
| Looping Water Mains                              | FY2030 | \$250,000   |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements      |        |             |
| Looping Water Mains                              | FY2031 | \$250,000   |
| Well No. 7 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe |        |             |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements      | FY2032 | \$1,000,000 |
| Looping Water Mains                              | FY2032 | \$250,000   |
| Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements      |        |             |
| Looping Water Mains                              | FY2033 | \$250,000   |

In the matter of wastewater service, Easton Utilities has recently examined the potential impact of the proposed new regional hospital on the Town's wastewater system. Water and wastewater flow capacity for phase one of the Regional Hospital is 101,250 gallons per day, or 0.10125 MGD. Future phases, when and if constructed, are estimated to bring the total capacity to 0.2 MGD, which equates to five percent of the WWTF's 4.0 MGD capacity. The impact of the hospital in terms of any WWTF future expansion is that, if the hospital is constructed and expanded as currently planned, then the WWTF may reach its 4.0 MGD capacity two years earlier than given above, that is, in the year

2049 in lieu of 2051. Thus it is clear that upgrades will be necessary to the Town's water and wastewater systems to accommodate planned growth, including that of the Hospital, and that Easton Utilities is planning for such upgrades well in advance of the need for them. The Easton Utilities Tariff requires that each new development project pay a water and wastewater capital charge. The capital charges collected are used to fund construction or to repay loans used to construct the new plants or wells. In addition to the capital charge, developers are required to construct certain sections of distribution and collection systems.

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

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

|                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EASTON WASTEWATER SYSTEM<br/>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS</b></p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| <b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>                                                                       | <b>PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR</b> | <b>COMMENTS</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Windmill Pump Station Replacement                                                                | FY2024                      | \$2,800,000.    |
| Windmill Force Main Replacement                                                                  | FY2024                      | \$2,418,000.    |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             |                             |                 |
| Calvert Pump Station Refurbishment                                                               | FY2024                      | \$165,000       |
| WWTF Engineering for Larger Capacity Sludge Dryer                                                |                             |                 |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2025                      | \$1,000,000.    |
| WWTF Reactor #2- Aerator #503 & #504 Gearbox & Motor Rebuilds, and Repainting Aerator Paddles    | FY2025                      | \$290,000.      |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2026                      | \$1,000,000.    |
| WWTF Clarifiers #1 & #2 Gearbox Replacement and Painting of Skimming Arms, Scapes, and Structure | FY2026                      | \$540,000.      |
| WWTF UV System Replacement                                                                       | FY2026                      | \$325,000.      |
| WWTF Sludge Dryer Replacement                                                                    | FY2026 & 2027               | \$7,400,000.    |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2027                      | \$1,000,000.    |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2028                      | \$1,000,000.    |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2029                      | \$1,000,000.    |
| Sewer Main and Manhole Refurbishment                                                             | FY2030                      | \$1,000,000.    |



|                                                                                                        |        |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------|
| WWTF Reactor #1- Aerator #501<br>& #502 Gearbox & Motor<br>Rebuilds, and Repainting Aerator<br>Paddles | FY2030 | \$290,000.   |
| Sewer Main and Manhole<br>Refurbishment                                                                | FY2030 | \$1,000,000. |
| Sewer Main and Manhole<br>Refurbishment                                                                | FY2031 | \$1,000,000. |
| Sewer Main and Manhole<br>Refurbishment                                                                | FY2032 | \$1,000,000. |

### ***Stormwater Management Systems***

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

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

other “innovative” stormwater management techniques in our major projects. The recent Lowe’s and Waterside Village projects are examples of this.

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

### ***Recreation***

Easton has an extensive Park system that is examined more closely in the Parks and Recreation Element of this Plan. For the purposes of this Element, the focus is on the needs generated by future growth. The 2010 Plan identified the need for a new Community (or Regional) Park on the eastern side of Town and suggested that this Park may have been located during the discussion concerning the Transportation Plan Element of the 2010 Plan Update. As part of the resolution of the issue of the future

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

While the focus of this Municipal Growth Element is on the ability of the Town to accommodate the build-out of existing Town boundaries, it is easy to make additional calculations to consider what is needed in the way of parks not just today and for a build-out of our current Town, but also of what will be needed to accommodate the eventual development of the Growth Area.

The State of Maryland recommends a standard ratio of 30 acres of parkland per 1,000 population (one-half of which should be owned by the Town). This equates to 513 acres to meet the needs of the current (2020 Census) population of 17,101 and an additional 203 (for a total of 716) acres of parkland (358 of which should be Town-owned land) to accommodate the build-out of the existing Town limits. 1,178 acres, total, would be required to accommodate the projected population of the Town including all of the Growth Area.

The estimated total acreage of parks and open spaces, of all types, within the existing Town boundaries (as of 2/14/24) is 910.447 (plus Hyde Park, Elliott Road Apts and Vickers Park). This suggests that at least from an overall area perspective, we currently satisfy the parks and open space needs of our current population and would do so without any additional park lands for build-out of the current Town boundaries. The ultimate build-out of the Future Growth Areas would require an addition of approximately 268 acres of parks/open space.

Notably, the Town's standard Subdivision requirements , if unchanged, would yield all of this required land. Easton's current standard requires developers to provide a minimum of 35% of their site as common open space, including land to be dedicated for parks or playgrounds (1,200 sq. ft. per dwelling unit). The 9,400 new units that can potentially ultimately be built within the existing Town and Growth Area equates to 259 acres of parks or playgrounds within subdivisions. This suggests that the Town's typical Subdivision Regulation Park Dedication requirement should be sufficient to meet the State guideline for all our needed parkland.

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

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

## **FINANCING MECHANISMS**

Current analysis of growth shows that the Town of Easton already has (or is already planning to have) sufficient infrastructure to handle the projected Growth of approximately 2,500 homes that could be accommodated within the Town's current

boundaries, as well as at least some of the Future Growth Areas that may be considered for annexation.

New development will always require:

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

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

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

State and County financial help should be examined for help updating the existing infrastructure for redevelopment areas. Community Legacy and similar programs can help maintain streets and create streetscapes. Additionally, Neighborhood Conservation programs can help improve the infrastructure to increase redevelopment potential. Program Open Space (working cooperatively with Talbot County) and the Municipal Parks Program can help offset the cost of establishing new parks beyond those that are acquired via the development review process. Parkland (and land for any number of other amenities) can also be acquired during the Annexation Process as part of an Annexation agreement. Since Annexations are a completely discretionary power of the legislative body, this is potentially a particularly powerful tool to use to acquire at least

the sites for some of these facilities. Finally, both Talbot County and the Town of Easton have passed Impact Fee Ordinances since the 2004 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The Town now collects fees to pay for Parks and Recreation, Municipal Facilities, Transportation, Police, and Fire services necessitated by new growth. Similarly, Talbot County assesses Impact Fees both within and outside of municipalities, which cover the costs associated with new Library, Parks and Recreation, Public School, Community College, General Government and Transportation services/facilities. This funding mechanism should continue to be utilized to insure that the financial burdens resulting from new development is borne by said development and not by the taxpayers of Easton as a whole.

## **RURAL BUFFERS AND TRANSITION AREAS**

In both the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Easton is depicted with a Growth Area surrounding the municipal boundaries and a greenbelt located immediately adjacent to the limits of this Growth Area on the County side of the line. The purpose of this greenbelt is primarily to work in conjunction with the Urban Growth Boundary to limit the geographic spread, or sprawl, of Easton out into rural parts of the County. An Urban Growth Boundary has been referred to as the opposite of sprawl. It also establishes a clear delineation between Town and County such that at build-out, it will be clear whether one is in Town or out in the country, as opposed to some hybridized suburban netherworld. The Town should work with Talbot County and with Agricultural/Forest Preservation Organizations to preserve or permanently protect these areas. A decent amount of such land is already protected as is depicted on the following Map.

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

MAP 3

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

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

## **SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION ACT OF 2012**

During the 2012 Legislative Session, the Maryland general Assembly passed the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. Among other things, this law required all Maryland jurisdictions to map areas of existing and planned sewerage service and classify areas into various tiers of service. For Easton, this exercise was relatively simple and resulted in a Map (adopted by the Town Council in December of 2012) that included just three tiers; Tier I (Existing Sewer), Tier II (Planned for Sewer, Municipal or Growth Area, and Tier IIA (Not yet in County Water and Sewer Master Plan, Municipal or Growth Area. In accordance with this law, the Town's adopted Map was incorporated herein in 2016 and is shown on the following page.



**Map \_\_\_\_ Town of Easton Tier Designations**

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## PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE AREAS

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

The first sensitive area to be protected is Streams and their Buffers. The Town protects this resource by requiring a 100 foot buffer from perennial streams (50 foot for intermittent).

The next area that requires special attention and protection is the 100 year flood plain. There are limited such areas in Easton, but where they do exist they are governed by a Floodplain Ordinance which is consistent with the National Model Floodplain Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program. Given the limited areas of floodplain in and around Easton, there is little impact anticipated on this resource as given the size (i.e. width) of the floodplain on a typical lot, there is generally ample room to locate any desired improvements elsewhere on the lot.

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

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

The final area of concern is agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. A more detailed discussion will be found in the Sensitive Areas Element. For this Element, it is mentioned to examine the impact of projected growth on agricultural and forest areas.

Clearly there will be a significant impact on agricultural and forest areas as Easton grows since that is predominately what the Growth Area consists of today. Agriculture is not precluded in Easton, but it has long been recognized that as Easton grows, the agricultural fields will yield to development to accommodate that growth. Thus, while we do not take action to prevent agricultural activities from occurring within Easton, neither do we take action to preserve it. The story is a little different with regards to forests. Easton has long had and administered a Forest Conservation program and the intention is always to identify and protect the most valuable forest land, such as those associated with a non-tidal wetland or located along a stream bank serving as a buffer. Furthermore, it has more recently become our policy (and is now a requirement) to not allow these protected forests (nor for that matter wetlands and/or buffers) to be located on individual, privately-owned lots. Instead such areas must now be set aside as their own separate lots to be owned by the Town, an environmental interest group, a homeowners association, etc... As Easton develops the Future Growth Area, we will continue these policies and protect this important resource. In addition, when possible we will explore opportunities to expand on such areas. One example is the Seth Demonstration Forest, which is actually a portion of our Greenbelt. It abuts the Easton Club East subdivision as well as land to the north of that development. The

Forest Conservation Area for Easton Club East is located adjacent to the Seth Forest to provide more forest area. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the land to the north of Easton Club East, where Seth (formerly Beechwood) Drive would access the property, has been identified as suitable as a location for a large-scale park. It also offers the opportunity to enhance the Seth Forest by such actions as protecting additional forest land, planting more forest, adding a woodlands garden, etc...

## **POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

Population growth dynamics and projections are provided in the Plan Background Chapter of this Plan. Also, it should be reemphasized that with the adoption and adherence to the Growth Boundary, we know, roughly, what Easton's ultimate population will be (given certain assumptions about density of development, percentage of residential vs. non-residential development, household size, etc...). We just do not necessarily know when that population might be achieved. The total number of future dwelling units for the Town as a whole has been calculated to be 17,594. At the household size of the most recent (2020) Census of 2.19 persons per household, these dwelling units equate to a total ultimate Town population of 38,531. When that population is achieved of course depends on how fast we grow. At the 3% figure that Easton experienced for decades prior to the 2010s, we would achieve our "ultimate" population in approximately 28 years (i.e. by the Year 2052). However in light of community concern over the speed and amount of growth occurring in Easton, the Planning Commission has identified 1.75% as the maximum annual growth rate they would like to see occur in the future. The most "appropriate" growth rate for Easton is one which ensures that infrastructure is able to keep up with the demands generated by that growth and does not create adverse impacts greater than can be ameliorated. What this rate or level might be is unknown, but it is believed that the

recent rate of 3% is too high and our target should be closer to, but slightly higher than, the longer-term average of 1%. Hence, 1.75% was selected as the target.

Table 11 below provides Population Projections on a yearly basis using the 3% and 1.75% growth factors. Under the 1.75% scenario, the ultimate population is not achieved for nearly another half-century in approximately 2070. The actual built-out population is likely to actually be slightly less as we will have to accommodate the parkland identified above and there will be some future civic space, institutional uses, and neighborhood level commercial uses, although all are likely to be minimal.

Table 11 Projected Population Growth by Year

| Year | Population - Observed | Population - Projected at 1.75% | Population - Projected at 3% |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2020 | 17101                 |                                 |                              |
| 2021 | 17,127                |                                 |                              |
| 2022 | 17,430                |                                 |                              |
| 2023 | 17,674                |                                 |                              |
| 2024 | 17,727                |                                 |                              |
| 2025 |                       | 18,037                          | 18,259                       |
| 2026 |                       | 18,353                          | 18,807                       |
| 2027 |                       | 18,674                          | 19,371                       |
| 2028 |                       | 19,001                          | 19,952                       |
| 2029 |                       | 19,333                          | 20,550                       |
| 2030 |                       | 19,672                          | 21,167                       |
| 2031 |                       | 20,016                          | 21,802                       |
| 2032 |                       | 20,366                          | 22,456                       |
| 2033 |                       | 20,723                          | 23,130                       |
| 2034 |                       | 21,085                          | 23,824                       |
| 2035 |                       | 21,454                          | 24,538                       |
| 2036 |                       | 21,830                          | 25,274                       |
| 2038 |                       | 22,212                          | 26,033                       |
| 2039 |                       | 22,600                          | 26,814                       |
| 2040 |                       | 22,996                          | 27,618                       |
| 2041 |                       | 23,398                          | 28,447                       |
| 2042 |                       | 23,808                          | 29,300                       |

|      |  |        |        |
|------|--|--------|--------|
| 2043 |  | 24,224 | 30,179 |
| 2044 |  | 24,648 | 31,084 |
| 2045 |  | 25,080 | 32,017 |
| 2046 |  | 25,519 | 32,977 |
| 2047 |  | 25,965 | 33,967 |
| 2048 |  | 26,420 | 34,986 |
| 2049 |  | 26,882 | 36,035 |
| 2050 |  | 27,352 | 37,116 |
| 2051 |  | 27,831 | 38,230 |
| 2052 |  | 28,318 | 39,377 |
| 2053 |  | 28,814 | 40,558 |
| 2054 |  | 29,318 | 41,775 |
| 2055 |  | 29,831 | 43,028 |
| 2056 |  | 30,353 | 44,319 |
| 2057 |  | 30,884 | 45,648 |
| 2058 |  | 31,425 | 47,018 |
| 2059 |  | 31,975 | 48,428 |
| 2060 |  | 32,534 | 49,881 |
| 2061 |  | 33,104 | 51,378 |
| 2062 |  | 33,683 | 52,919 |
| 2063 |  | 34,272 | 54,507 |
| 2064 |  | 34,872 | 56,142 |
| 2065 |  | 35,482 | 57,826 |
| 2066 |  | 36,103 | 59,561 |
| 2067 |  | 36,735 | 61,348 |
| 2068 |  | 37,378 | 63,188 |
| 2069 |  | 38,032 | 65,084 |
| 2070 |  | 38,698 | 67,036 |
| 2071 |  | 39,375 | 69,047 |
| 2072 |  | 40,064 | 71,119 |
| 2073 |  | 40,765 | 73,252 |
| 2074 |  | 41,478 | 75,450 |
| 2075 |  | 42,204 | 77,714 |
| 2076 |  | 42,943 | 80,045 |
| 2077 |  | 43,694 | 82,446 |
| 2078 |  | 44,459 | 84,920 |

|      |  |        |        |
|------|--|--------|--------|
| 2079 |  | 45,237 | 87,467 |
|------|--|--------|--------|

## VISION

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

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

This Vision and theme is the same as that set forth in the 2010 Plan. Considering that in terms of the growth of the Town, little changed from 2010 to today, this makes sense. Specifically, in 2025, just as in 2010, Easton finds itself in a period of slow growth, with a housing affordability problem, and with public support for our overall growth strategy. In some ways though, it will be more challenging to implement this strategy, given that there are at least a few factors that are different in 2025 than they were in 2010. These differences include the increased severity of the housing affordability issue, and recent purchases of large parcels of land by the Town of Easton and Talbot County, which while advancing land preservation/parks and open space goals, also remove hundreds of acres of land from consideration of potential new housing. Lastly, there is the existence of the Lakeside at Trappe subdivision located a mere five minutes from our southernmost Town boundary. In 2010, and really for decades, Easton has been “the only game in town” in terms of residential development. Now, there is significant “competition” in the form of this 2,000 unit subdivision. How that affects the absorption rate of home sales (and prices) in Easton is very much unknown at this point, but potentially a significant factor in both our growth strategy and housing affordability during this planning period.



## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

### INTRODUCTION

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

### BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

Easton recognizes the importance of its historic resources and supports and

encourages preservation and rehabilitation efforts by private owners, nonprofits and local governments. Private houses and public buildings are often carefully restored. New uses are found for historic buildings which no longer serve their original functions. As more and more focus for future growth is on infill and redevelopment opportunities, such adaptive reuse of historic buildings will become increasingly prevalent and important to maintaining the historic charm and authenticity of the Town in general, and the historic district specifically.

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

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

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

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

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

### National Register Historic District

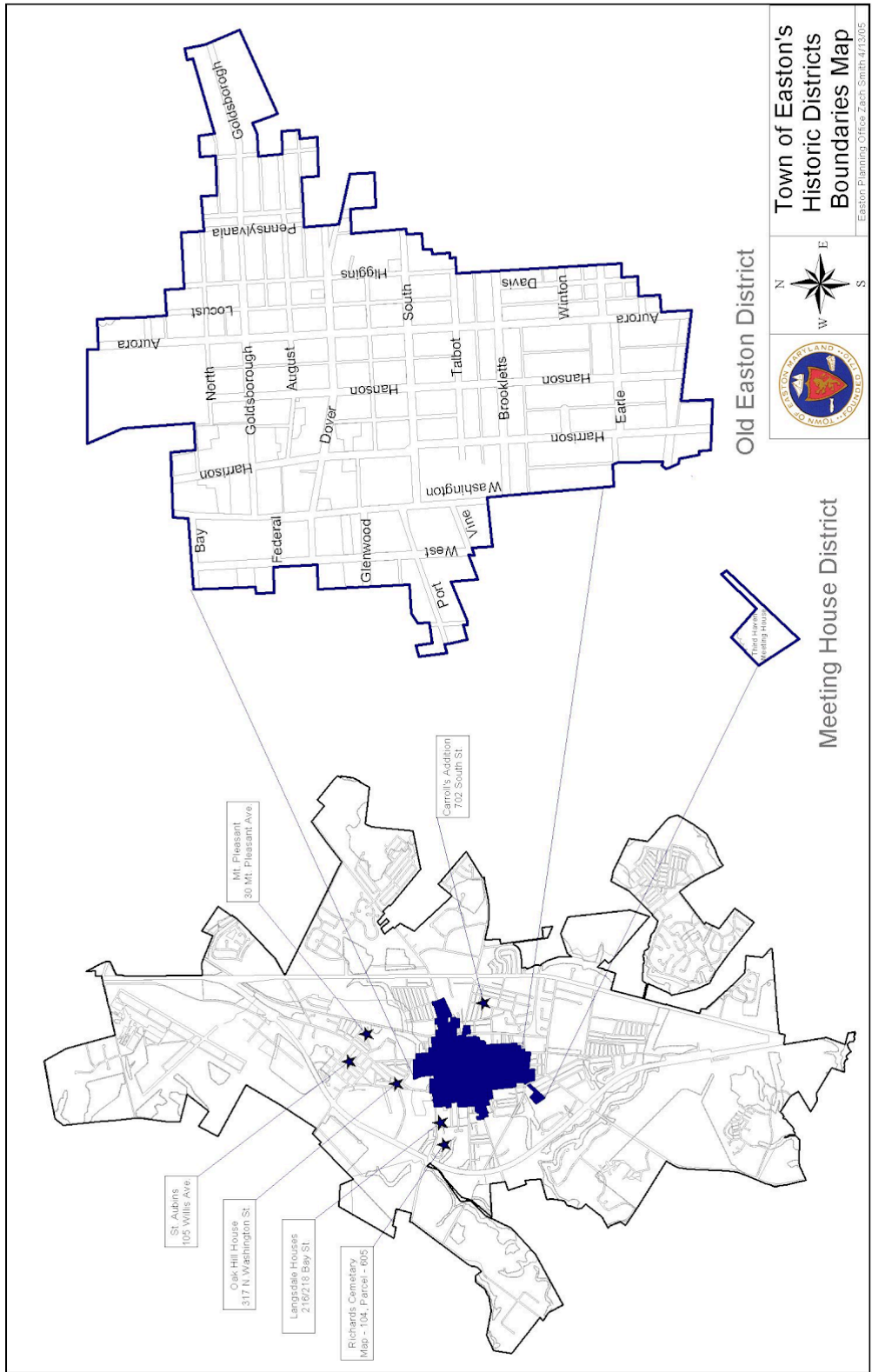
The National Register of Historic Places, an inventory of historic resources, is maintained by the National Park Service. Listing in the National Register provides recognition to sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts that are significant to American history, architecture, archaeology,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

### Easton Historic District

The Town has a Historic District Commission and has two museums, (the Academy Art Museum and the Historical Society of Talbot County Museum). It also has the historic Avalon Theatre where many cultural and community events take place. The Easton Historic District was created in the late 70s and expanded in 2005. The seven-member Historic District Commission is composed of volunteer citizens with interest or specific expertise in historic preservation and appointed to three-year terms by the Mayor. The Commission reviews proposed exterior changes to any site, structure, or appurtenance in the defined district, according to an approved and published set of guidelines, which were recently updated by the Commission. In addition to the review of proposed

projects, inclusion in the Historic District also provides eligibility for a state historic preservation tax credit to property owners who undertake historic preservation projects, whether or not the property produces income.

A map of the Easton Historic District reflecting its boundaries as of 2024 is included on the following page. This is followed by representative photographs of some of the structures and the setting of the Easton Historic District.







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

Historic Preservation programs can be challenging under the best of circumstances. By their very nature, Historic Overlay Districts impose even greater levels of review and scrutiny upon private property owners in order to maintain the overall historic integrity of the district. These extra “hoops” are often not appreciated by individual property owners, especially when required for seemingly minor matters. When the Historic District is also located within an area targeted for redevelopment, the potential for even more conflict exists. Given that a key concept of this Plan Update is to focus the majority of future growth within existing Town boundaries, this is clearly at least a potential issue. Accommodating growth in the already developed portions of Town, but doing so in a manner that is of an appropriate and harmonious scope and scale represents a significant planning challenge for the next Planning period.

One way to somewhat ease the bureaucratic burden of making improvements to properties in the Historic District is to expand the number and types of actions that can be approved administratively. This has the advantage of ensuring that work is done in accordance with Historic District Guidelines, but allows such work to commence without the time and expense of an Historic District Commission meeting and approval.

Another area in which some flexibility may be appropriate is in accommodating energy-efficiency improvements. Such situations may well be an example of competing interests, but unless the structure is of extreme historical significance, the improved energy efficiency (and the associated economic benefits) may well outweigh the preservation arguments in these scenarios. A similar argument can be made for accommodating modern construction technology and products, in an appropriate context.

A specific issue that requires special attention in the Historic District in general and in the Hill neighborhood specifically, is gentrification. The Hill is a small



neighborhood within the Historic District. Its significance can not be overstated and is perhaps best described on the Historical Marker recently placed near the Rail-Trail and Dover Street intersection. It states:: “Founded in 1788, the Hill is one of the oldest free African American neighborhoods in the U.S. still in existence today. Many African Americans in Easton and Talbot County were free from slavery long before the Civil War ended. Free people of color lived alongside white neighbors, working as merchants, sailors, carpenters, midwives and foram laborers. They worked to buy freedom for their relatives while pursuing full equality and liberty for themselves.”

Unfortunately, The Hill also happens to contain many of the structures most in need of repair/rehabilitation in Easton. Public and private efforts are ongoing to make such repairs. While this is undoubtedly a positive trend, it comes with the risk of gentrification - that rising housing prices resulting from these improvements (as well as the associated increased property tax bill as a result of rising property values) will necessitate some long-time residents (perhaps multigenerational) having to relocate. Every avenue should be explored to safeguard against this issue.

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Educate residents/realtors and property owners about the benefits, boundaries and requirements of the Historic District review process and design standards and about the availability of state and federal tax credits for historic preservation projects.
- ✓ Establish a Local Tax Incentive program in Easton that encourages historic property owners to rehabilitate their property. This local tax incentive will complement existing state and federal tax incentives that encourage historic rehabilitation/restoration. Some 19 counties and municipalities in Maryland already have some form of local tax incentive.
- ✓ Encourage a “Rebuilding Together” chapter in Easton or Talbot County. This is a national organization whose objective is no cost repairs to homes of low income, over 60 home owners.
- ✓ Modify the Historic Commission’s Guidelines by adding specific guidance and criteria for adaptive reuse projects.

Goal: To continue to support the Easton Historic District.

Objectives:

- ✓ Ensure consistent enforcement of Easton’s Historic District by utilizing the services of various staffs within the town administration. A consistently enforced historic district is the most effective historic district for fostering investment and economic development.
- ✓ Refer any new development which may impact historic resources to the Historic District Commission for comment.

- ✓ Provide in-service training for the staff and Historic District Commission members.
- ✓ Investigate Certified Local Government status with the Maryland Historical Trust to provide eligibility for grants for continuing education for staff and members of the Historic District Commission, as well as other projects.
- ✓ Investigate a project to resurvey the Historic District. A new survey will update information contained in the original National Register nomination and facilitate enhanced processing of applications. Such a survey could also lead to a new nomination to expand the National Register District, including neighborhoods that did not meet the criteria for listing in 1980, but now may over four decades later. Such a project could be supported by grant funding and could potentially be done under the auspices of a partner organization.

Goal: To balance the importance of historic preservation with other legitimate neighborhood improvement goals.

Objectives:

- ✓ Examine the boundaries of the Historic Overlay District for potential adjustment (by either expansion or contraction).
- ✓ Consider modest compatibility standards for properties outside of, but adjacent to, the Historic District Overlay Boundary.
- ✓ Expand the scope of the types of projects that can be approved by methods that do not require a full HDC review and approval.

Goal: Safeguard against gentrification of neighborhoods resulting from otherwise successful development projects.

Objectives:

- ✓ Pursue incentives to facilitate tenants to become homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods.
- ✓ Expand the Affordable Housing Board's loan programs to cover more emergency and energy efficiency projects to allow homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods to remain in their home.
- ✓ Ease the housing pressure in gentrifying neighborhoods by allowing for more housing throughout Town generally.
- ✓ Encourage the creation of a Community Land Trust and other forms of shared equity homeownership to empower communities and promote long-term affordability.

## SENSITIVE AREAS

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

## **BACKGROUND**

When discussing sensitive areas in Easton it is important to note several issues. The first issue is the nature of Easton itself. Easton is a modest-sized town (some would say a small city) experiencing growth pressures akin, in many ways, to those present in towns and suburbs in metropolitan areas. In addition, the Growth Act has the potential to escalate these pressures as State and County policies direct growth into places like Easton and its environs, where there is infrastructure and capacity in place to best accommodate such growth . Another issue is that Easton is very unique, particularly among Eastern Shore jurisdictions, in that it has not until very recently been located on a major body of water (a recent annexation provided Easton some frontage on the upper reaches of the Tred Avon River). Finally, it must be noted that Easton has a fairly extensive system of Environmental Protection regulations already in place. Easton's Critical Area Program, Forest Conservation Ordinance, Floodplain Ordinance and Stormwater Management Ordinance provide a high level of protection to a number of sensitive areas, including those identified by the Growth Act.

## **STREAMS AND THEIR BUFFERS**

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

Streams and their buffers are valuable to people and vital to our natural resources. Streams provide drinking water for local communities, and crop-saving irrigation for farmers during droughts. Streams support

recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock; and streams attract many outdoor enthusiasts such as hunters, bird-watchers, and nature photographers. Without adequate and sustained cooling water in streams and rivers, industries and power plants would pass higher costs on to consumers. Development near stream areas subject to flooding could result in the loss of life and property.

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

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

While the importance of streams is well documented and fairly readily accepted, the need for additional protection measures in the Town of Easton is not as readily apparent. This is due to the fact that all streams receive some level of protection. The

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law and the Town's Critical Area Program protect tidal streams. This requires, among other things, that runoff from properties within this area reduce the levels of pollutant loading by 10% based on the pre-development conditions and that virtually no development whatsoever occur within 100 feet of the mean high water line of the corresponding body of water. As a result of new legislation in 2008 this buffer is expanded to 300 feet in virtually all development scenarios. Non-tidal streams are governed by State and/or Federal non-tidal wetlands laws and include a 25-foot buffer within which no development can occur. State officials have suggested that to be truly effective, this width should be increased to 50 to 100 feet. Easton adopted a 100 foot buffer for perennial streams and a 50 foot buffer from intermittent streams in 2008.

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

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



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

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

## **100-YEAR FLOODPLAINS**

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

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

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

## **HABITATS OF THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species receive a fair amount of protection in Easton, primarily through State programs. Presently, development within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area must address the issue of Threatened and

Endangered Species, as do any projects subject to the full requirements of the Forest Conservation Ordinance. Most projects, particularly large projects will require at least a Simplified Forest Stand Delineation, which would indicate Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species. This would then become a basis for designing the development with such sensitive areas being the prime location for protection.

The Delmarva Fox Squirrel, until recently a state and federally listed endangered species (removed from Federal list in 2015), is known to occur on the property designated as future residential development to the southwest of the Town of Easton. Delmarva fox squirrel habitat is generally characterized as forests with relatively mature trees, either hardwoods or loblolly pine, with a relatively sparse understory. At least three development projects have been significantly impacted by the presence of Delmarva Fox Squirrel habitat since the 1997 Plan was adopted. It is reasonable to expect the same to occur in other growth areas during the upcoming Planning period.

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

1. As much contiguous forested acreage as possible should be retained.
2. If clearing is necessary, at least 25% of the suitable forested area should remain unaltered or a minimum of 10 acres whichever is greater.
3. This unaltered Delmarva fox squirrel habitat should be retained as a contiguous forested tract, not as small disjunct parcels.

4. Required forested buffers, such as buffers along streams or nontidal wetlands, should be expanded to at least 100 feet and preferably 300 feet in width.
5. Retention of mast producing trees such as oaks, hickories and beech is encouraged.

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

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

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

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

1. Establish a protection area of 660 feet from the colony's outer boundary. Within this area, establish two zones of protection: Zone 1 extends from the outer boundary of the colony to a radius of 330 feet, and Zone 2 extends from 330 feet to 660 feet in radius.
2. During the breeding season, all human entry into Zone 1 should be restricted to only that essential for protection of the Least Tern colony. Human disturbance of colony sites that results in significant mortality of eggs and/or chicks is considered a prohibited taking under various state and federal regulations.
3. No land use changes, including development and intensive recreational use, should occur in Zone 1.
4. Construction activities, including clearing, grading, building etc. should not occur within Zone 1.
5. No construction, or other disturbing activities, should occur within Zones 1 and 2 during the Least Tern breeding season, from 15 April through 31 July.

Building roofs, dredged material disposal areas and other situations where Least Terns have been attracted to unnatural nest sites are treated on a case-by-case basis. For specific technical assistance regarding Least Terns, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources should be contacted for technical assistance. In these unnatural situations, even seemingly routine actions, such as air conditioner repair, pose a serious risk of egg

and chick mortality and must be avoided. For roof nesting Least Tern colonies, roof work during the period 15 April through 31 July must be severely restricted. Planned roof work should be conducted outside the breeding season, when terns are not using the roof for nesting. If emergency repairs are necessary during the April-July period, contact the technical expert identified below before initiating any work. The DNR will provide assistance with protecting the terns while the emergency work is conducted.

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

## **STEEP SLOPES**

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

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

The situation described in this passage is, in fact, the case in Easton. Virtually all steep slopes are located either in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area or adjacent to a

non-tidal wetland. In both cases they are included in buffers within which no development may occur. If there are any rare cases in which steep slope exist outside one of these two areas, they should be identified during the sketch site plan or subdivision plan step in the development review process. Again, adherence to the design principle, "Natural Features Should Determine Design" should adequately protect this sensitive area.

## **AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LANDS**

A new sensitive area that was first required to be addressed in the Plan in 2009 is agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. Generally this would seem to be a requirement more germane to Counties. As a rule one will not find a lot of agricultural land within a municipal boundary and forest land is protected, to a degree, through the State Forest Conservation and Critical Area laws.

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

It is, however, within the Town's interest to see that land outside of the corporate limits of Easton, but within our future growth area, remain primarily in agricultural production or forested. When development occurs in this area, it is often not compatible with the municipal scale of development that it would have assumed had it occurred within the Town limits. For example, it is simply not possible to develop housing on wells and septic systems at the level of density possible on municipal systems. If such development occurs within the Town's growth area, it becomes a hindrance to the Town's ability to grow in that general area as it is illegal to surround

an area of county with areas under Town jurisdiction (i.e. we cannot create an island or enclave of county within a Town). The Town's ability to grow is hindered because unless the development for some reason needs to come into Town (e.g. they have failing septic systems), they rarely have any incentive to do so as they are generally enjoying the benefits of being in close proximity to Town goods and services, without the burden of paying Town taxes.

For these reasons, it is important that the land outside Town limits but within the Growth Area, remain undeveloped as much as possible and that generally will mean that it remains forested or in agricultural use. The Town therefore supports the continuation of such uses in our Growth Area until such time as these parcels are ready to be annexed and developed. Relatedly, this also helps in the bigger picture of how Talbot County achieves this same goal. That is, by accommodating development within the town of Easton, we are also protecting agricultural and forested lands in Talbot County by easing the demand to develop housing in such areas.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### Birds

The Town of Easton lies in the Atlantic Flyway, one of four such migratory routes in North America. The route stretches from Greenland to South America and the Caribbean. Every year, migratory birds travel up and down this route following food sources, heading to breeding grounds, or traveling to overwintering sites. Land located within the Atlantic Flyway is the most densely populated land out of the four major flyways crossing the United States. This is especially notable because not only is Easton in the flyway, but we are also in a relative oasis on the route.



These resources are available to the migratory birds as well as non-migratory birds. Unfortunately, with increased development, habitat is lost. With the loss of habitat that can mean a higher concentration of birds in the area and with that comes the increased possibility of bird-building strikes. Fortunately, options exist to mitigate bird-building collisions, particularly with regards to options for window glazing. The Easton Planning Commission has recently begun asking developers to be cognizant of, and plan for, this issue.

## **SENSITIVE AREAS MAP**

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

## **SENSITIVE AREAS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

#### OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Identify, through an environmental impact analysis, and protect environmentally sensitive areas during the initial stages of the development review process.
- ✓ Direct development, whenever possible, away from environmentally sensitive areas so that impacts are avoided to the greatest extent possible.
- ✓ Coordinate, and where necessary enhance, sensitive areas protection with other Town environmental programs such as the Critical Area Program, the Forest Conservation Ordinance, the Floodplain Ordinance, and the Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✓ Encourage the use of innovative and flexible development techniques as a means to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- ✓ Monitor runoff from construction projects for compliance with existing stormwater requirements and action taken to correct any deficiencies.
- ✓ Ensure in large scale developments, that only the phase(s) currently under construction are cleared of ground cover so unnecessary runoff from these sites will be prevented.
- ✓ Consider, where practical and feasible, the purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles.

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

#### OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Link larger environmentally sensitive areas, such as forest conservation retention areas, Delmarva Fox Squirrel Habitat areas, wetlands, etc..., by establishing wildlife corridors.

- ✓ Enhance existing corridors by protecting additional adjacent area and planting with native plant species.
- ✓ Establish new, or add to, existing corridors by encouraging developers to link forested areas they must either preserve or provide in order to comply with the Town's Forest Conservation Ordinance.

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

GOAL: To protect the 100 year floodplain throughout the Town.

OBJECTIVE:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

GOAL: To minimize bird/building collisions.

OBJECTIVE:

- ✓ Add standards to the site plan review process that require applicants to take actions to minimize bird/building collisions.

## WATER RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

As described previously in the early chapters of this Plan, HB 1141 imposed several requirements concerning the composition of Comprehensive Plans that were first in effect with the Town's 2010 Plan. The most significant requirements are for the addition of two new chapters or Elements. One of these was the Municipal Growth Element. The other was a Water Resources Element, which is the subject of this chapter. In a nutshell, the purpose of this Element is to insure that the Town has or is planning to have, adequate water supply to serve the projected population of the Town, as well as adequate wastewater capacity, and the ability of the local waterways to assimilate projected stormwater from both point and non-point sources.

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

- Is there adequate water supply to meet current and future needs?
- Is there adequate wastewater and septic supply to meet current and future needs?

- What, if any, impact will meeting these needs have on water resources?

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

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

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

For the reason outlined above, this Plan does not include a map of the Town's water and wastewater service areas. They are virtually identical to the Town boundary. The only exceptions are the South Clifton subdivision located off of

Route 50 and one property which receives water service (but not wastewater) on St. Michael's Road.

## **WATER SUPPLY AND SYSTEM**

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

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

*The Water Department currently serves over 7,000 customers through 122 miles of water mains and 788 fire hydrants. Easton Utilities pumps water from naturally filtered underground aquifers (water-bearing sands) through five wells that are 1,000 to 1,200 feet deep. We then treat the water as required and pump it into the distribution system. The water that comes out of a customer's tap includes water from each of these wells. No single well provides all of a customer's water. Of those wells, three are drilled 1,000 feet into the Magothy Aquifer. The final two wells are drilled 1,200 feet into the Upper Patapsco Aquifer and feed directly into a state-of-the-art water treatment plant on Glebe Road.*

*The storage capacity of Easton's Water Department is two million gallons, which is met through two separate one million gallon elevated storage tanks. The water storage tanks ensure adequate fire flow and pressure with capacity sufficient to accommodate the Town's future needs.*

The Municipal Growth Element indicated that EUC has planned for expansion of the water system (adding a production well) in the year 2043 to

accommodate a maximum daily demand above 4.0 MGD. It can be concluded therefore that EUC both accommodates the existing water demands of the Town and is planning to continue to do so well into the future (i.e. to the year 2043). Since we have also calculated that effective “build-out” of the Town will likely be achieved beyond the long range 2040 timeframe of this Plan, it seems logical that only minimal upgrades will be necessary beyond what is already planned in order to serve the Town’s ultimate population (and there is ample time to do so).

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

*Talbot County’s public and private water users draw drinking water from several major confined groundwater aquifers, many of which (particularly the Aquia and Piney Point) are widely used throughout the Eastern Shore. The capacity of these confined aquifers is increasingly strained by new development throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. The US Geological Society (USGS) reports that “withdrawals from Maryland Coastal Plain aquifers have caused ground-water levels in confined aquifers to decline by tens to hundreds of feet from their original levels. Continued water-level declines could affect the long-term sustainability of ground-water resources in agricultural areas of the Eastern Shore.”<sup>3</sup> In most cases, the recharge areas for these aquifers (particularly the Piney Point and Aquia), are not necessarily found on the Eastern Shore.*

*Groundwater and surface water resources are also linked. Water from surficial aquifers can comprise a significant amount of the base flow of streams and rivers. While*



*groundwater withdrawn through wells is typically returned to the ground or surface via point source discharges, septic systems, and absorption of runoff from outdoor water uses (such as watering of lawns), large withdrawals can potentially impact the quality and quantity of flows in nearby surface water bodies.*

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

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

*For purposes of this Water Resources Element (and lacking specific evidence to the contrary), this Water Resources Element presumes that the MDE groundwater permit issued for each public drinking water system reflects the maximum safe yield of the aquifer(s) used by that system.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Talbot County, Maryland Water Resources Element, Planning Commission Draft, June 3, 2009.

## WASTEWATER SERVICE AND CAPACITY

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

Easton began construction on its first sewage system in 1911. In operation by 1914, it was the first separate storm and sanitary wastewater system in the State of Maryland. Currently, the Wastewater Department serves about 7,000 customers through over 120 miles of wastewater mains, twenty pumping stations and an environmentally-friendly wastewater treatment facility.

Completed in 2007, Easton's Enhanced Nutrient Removal Wastewater Treatment Facility is one of Maryland's most environmentally friendly wastewater treatment plants. Utilizing Enhanced Nutrient Removal technology, Easton's new facility meets or exceeds the Chesapeake Bay water quality goals by reducing annual concentrations of nitrogen to 3 milligrams per liter (mg/l) and phosphorus to 0.3 mg/l. These equate to 70 percent and 88 percent reductions respectively. While Easton Utilities' former facility had operated effectively, more stringent nutrient limitations and growing demand reached the point that the facility required a significant upgrade. This new facility was the first to receive funding from the State of Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. The facility employs a wide range of innovative technology including ultraviolet radiation for disinfection and an advanced Solids Handling System to convert sludge into a dry, manageable and useful fertilizer.

As the description above indicates, EUC brought online a new, state-of-the-art wastewater treatment facility in 2007. This plant utilizes enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) technology and has a design treatment capacity of 4 MGD, of which 61% (2.463 MGD) was being utilized as of 12/31/23, as given in the Easton Utilities Wastewater Master Plan.

The Easton Utilities Wastewater Master Plan assumes that wastewater flows will grow at 1.75% per year, and estimate that in the year 2051 WWTF flow will be at 4.0 MGD, noting that in the year 2038 WWF will exceed 3.20 MGD and Easton Utilities will be required to develop detailed plans for WWTF expansion above 4.0 MGD.

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

One future user that seems near certain to connect to the Town's wastewater system is the proposed new Regional Hospital. Water and Wastewater flow capacity for phase one of the Regional Hospital is 101,250 gallons per day, or 0.10125 MGD. Future phases, when and if constructed, are estimated to bring the total capacity to 0.20 MGD, which equates to 5% of the WWTF's 4.0 MGD capacity. The impact of the hospital in terms of any future expansion needs is that if it is constructed as currently planned, then the wastewater treatment plant would reach capacity two years earlier than projected above, that is, in the year 2049 in lieu of 2051.

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

increased effective in 2051. The addition of the new Hospital to this system causes this expansion to be needed approximately two years sooner (i.e. 2049).

## **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND POINT AND NONPOINT SOURCE LOADING STATUS AND REMEDIATION**

Stormwater management in Easton is governed by the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance. According to that Ordinance, its purpose is: "to protect, maintain and enhance the public health, safety, and general welfare by establishing minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse impacts associated with increased stormwater runoff. Proper management of stormwater runoff will minimize damage to

public and private property, reduce the effects of development on land, control stream channel erosion, reduce local flooding, and maintain after development, as nearly as possible, the pre-development runoff characteristics."

The Scope of the Stormwater Management Ordinance is copied below.

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

### **3.2 Exemptions**

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

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

D. Land development activities that the Administration determines will be regulated under specific State laws, which provide for managing stormwater runoff.

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

### **3.3 Waivers / Watershed Management Plans**

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

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

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

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

(3) When all stormwater from the development will flow to an existing regional stormwater

facility that was designed and constructed to accommodate the stormwater from the development consistent with the quantitative control requirements of this Ordinance.

Adequate conveyance must exist from the site to the regional facility. Unmanaged runoff

must not be allowed to discharge into natural drainage systems.

C. Stormwater management qualitative control waivers apply only to:

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

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

(3) Sites where the approving agency determines that circumstances exist that prevent the

reasonable implementation of quality control practices.

D. Waivers granted must:

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) Include detailed hydrologic and hydraulic analyses to determine hydrograph timing;
- (2) Evaluate both quantity and quality management;
- (3) Include cumulative impact assessment of watershed development;
- (4) Identify existing flooding and receiving stream channel conditions;
- (5) Be conducted at a reasonable scale;
- (6) Specify where on-site or off-site quantitative and qualitative stormwater management practices are to be implemented;
- (7) Be consistent with the General Performance Standards for Stormwater Management in Maryland found in Section 1.2 of the Design Manual; and
- (8) Be approved by the Administration.

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

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

### **3.4 Redevelopment**

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

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

area reduction and stormwater practice implementation is used, the combined area shall equal or exceed 20 percent of the site.

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

- (1) Off-site BMP implementation for a drainage area comparable in size and percent imperviousness to that of the project. Off-site BMPs shall be located within the same watershed as, and in proximity to the proposed redevelopment;
- (2) Watershed or stream restoration; the Applicant shall obtain all necessary permits and other required approval from appropriate State and federal agencies;
- (3) Retrofitting; or
- (4) Other practices approved by the Town Engineer.

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

### **3.5 Variance**

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

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

Stormwater in Easton contributes both point and non-point loads to local waterways. The stormwater management system of Easton filters, collects, and treats runoff at the wastewater treatment plant located east of Town on the banks of the Choptank River. Nonpoint run-off that eludes the stormwater management system enters either the Choptank or the Miles River watershed. The Town is actually split into



three 8- digit watersheds, the Miles and the Upper and Lower Choptank. All three of these watersheds are listed as impaired by nutrients by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Lower Choptank has completed a TMDL. TMDL is an abbreviation for Total Maximum Daily Load and it often refers to a plan or strategy for limiting the maximum amount of the identified pollutant that may enter the impaired water body.

There is not yet in place a TMDL strategy which affects Easton, but we are trying to do our part to reduce pollutant loadings by imposing the 10% pollutant reduction standard of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area throughout the entire Town. Thus as development occurs in Easton, water quality should theoretically improve, at least for the newer areas of Town. The problem areas are then confined to the older parts of Town. All of these areas drain into the Tanyard Branch via storm drains installed over 100 years ago (in approximately 1905).

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



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

An analysis of the impact of the Easton WWTP on the Choptank River is included in Talbot County's Water Resources Element. It finds that this facility will have adequate nitrogen and phosphorous discharge capacity to support projected growth through 2030 and beyond. In fact in 2030 it finds that the Easton WWTP will have 21,314 pounds per year of TN and 913 pounds per year of TP in remaining discharge capacity. It should be noted that the County's projections assume a 1% population growth rate for the Town of Easton, which was the targeted growth rate for the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

On the more individual scale, the impact of fertilizer can be significant on the water quality of receiving waters. There is very little agriculture practiced within Easton's corporate limits and therefore not a lot of impact from this source of nutrients. However there are large areas of agricultural production within our Future Growth Area. Depending on the amount of fertilizer these farms use as well as how the

application of this fertilizer is managed, the impact of such nutrients should be reduced upon annexation and development in the Town. However, the impact of lawn-applied fertilizer on the water quality of streams and rivers can be significant as well. This is obviously a concern within the already developed portion of the Town and will be a concern as farmlands (and forested areas) are converted to developed lands in the future. The State of Maryland is requiring home improvement and similar stores to begin selling non-Phosphorus lawn fertilizer. This will hopefully help to reduce the negative water quality impact associated with lawn fertilization in the future.

The impact of the reduction of agriculture on the waterways surrounding Easton can be seen in the following summary table. It is the result of the MDE Nutrient Loading Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was prepared for the 2010 Plan Update and analyzes the impact of future growth in Easton under three different scenarios. The first represents 3% growth, which also corresponds with the Build-out scenario for a 30 year time-frame. The second and third scenarios represent the Planning Commission's stated goal of 1% growth, again projected to a 30 year horizon. The difference between the two 1% scenarios is in the proportion of infill/redevelopment vs. Greenfield development. The first 1% scenario (Scenario 2) assumes that 75% of future development will occur in infill/redevelopment sites (i.e. anything within the 2009 Town Limits) and 25% will come from the development of land that is currently agriculture outside of Town limits. The second 1% scenario (Scenario 3) assumes that this split will be 50-50. The following are the summary tables of this analysis. More information can be found in Appendix B of the 2010 Plan, which can be accessed in the Archived Plans portion of the Town's website.

## Nutrient Loading Analysis Spreadsheet - Summary Results

### Land Use and Septic Systems

(See Scenario Descriptions Below)

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

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

### Total Nitrogen Loading

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

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

|                                |          |               |               |               |               |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Total NPS Nitrogen Load</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>78,210</b> | <b>60,429</b> | <b>69,790</b> | <b>69,437</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

|                      |          |               |               |               |               |
|----------------------|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Total PS Load</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>23,800</b> | <b>48,729</b> | <b>27,415</b> | <b>27,415</b> |
|----------------------|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

|                                     |          |                |                |               |               |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Total Nitrogen Load (NPS+PS)</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>102,010</b> | <b>109,158</b> | <b>97,205</b> | <b>96,852</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|

#### Total Phosphorus Loading

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

|                      |          |              |              |              |              |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Total PS Load</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>2,400</b> | <b>3,655</b> | <b>2,742</b> | <b>2,742</b> |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|

|                                       |          |              |               |              |              |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Total Phosphorus Load (NPS+PS)</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>9,353</b> | <b>10,015</b> | <b>9,531</b> | <b>9,521</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|

#### Impervious Cover and Open Space

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

#### Scenario Description

#### Scenario List

|                                                 |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Year 2007 with 2007 Level of BMP Implementation | 2007 LU, 2007 BMPs       |
| Year 2007 with TS BMP Implementation            | 2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs |
| Scenario 1 Build-out (or 3% Growth 2040)        | Scenario 1               |

|                                                         |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Scenario 2 - 2040 1% Growth, 75% infill, 25% greenfield | Scenario 2 |
| Scenario 3 - 2040 1% Growth, 50% infill, 50% greenfield | Scenario 3 |
|                                                         |            |

The spreadsheet that produced these calculations was prepared by the Maryland Department of the Environment, who also supplied much of the baseline data. The data inputted by Town Staff required a large number of assumptions. These assumptions are what are included in the aforementioned Appendix 2 of the 2010 Plan.

Among the conclusions that were drawn from this analysis are the following:

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

Given the lack of development during the 2010-2025 planning period, as well as the goal of accommodating at least 75% of new development in the form of infill/redevelopment that is a cornerstone of this Plan, the impacts generated by the model for Scenario 2 are believed to still be relevant and accurate. Most significantly for this Plan Element, that Scenario indicates that such a development pattern would yield a reduction in Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus loads (including point, i.e. the wastewater treatment facility, and non-point sources).

## **WATER RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

**OBJECTIVES:**

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

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

**OBJECTIVES:**

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

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

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Continue to administer and enforce the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✓ Review the effectiveness of the existing practice of installing silt fences at construction sites. Adopt policies that establish more effective run-off protection and/or ensure more careful monitoring by responsible inspection agencies.
- ✓ Incorporate the latest guidance and requirements as found in the State Stormwater Design Manual following its approval.
- ✓ Continue to work cooperatively with Talbot County to obtain grant funding for projects that clean up Tanyard Branch.
- ✓ Work independently and with Talbot County to develop comprehensive projects and strategies to improve the water quality of stormwater runoff.



## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

### **BACKGROUND**

The Municipal Growth Element analyzed the adequacy of the Town's overall parks from an acres per capita perspective, based on a State-suggested ratio. It found that the current park system meets this standard and that we would continue to exceed the threshold throughout the buildout of the Growth Area by merely relying upon the

open space requirements of the Town's Subdivision Regulations. With that as background, this chapter looks more closely at the state of Easton's Parks and Recreation system overall and makes recommendations for improving and enhancing it so as to further sustain and improve the quality of life for Town residents and visitors.

Table 12 represents an inventory of existing Town parks and open space areas. One of the most notable points is that there are a fairly large number of parks (30) in Easton. This is even more significant in that when this Table was originally created for the 1997 Plan, there were 14 entries on this Table. Clearly the expansion and development of our Park system has been a significant achievement over the last three decades. Such improvements include enhancements at Idlewild and Moton Parks, two Rail-Trail extensions, the addition of Easton Point Park, and the development of North Easton Park into a first class sports complex, to the degree that it has since hosted a number of State and Regional Championship Tournaments. More recently, even during the drafting of this Plan, the Town has opened its first Dog Park in Downtown (Brewers Lane), opened a new Skate Park/Pump Track at the North Easton Sports Complex, and acquired, Easton Woodland Park, a large (197 acres) tract of land dominated by mature forest that will preserve this land for passive recreation.

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

Once the land is obtained, it becomes the responsibility of the Easton Park Advisory Board to recommend how that parkland should be improved. This group

operates with the assistance of a full-time Parks and Recreation Director who also is responsible for Easton's parks and recreation plans, programs and activities.

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

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

Finally, under the general guidance of Talbot County Parks and Recreation, Easton, along with other towns and entities in the County, work collaboratively on issues of mutual interest and concern. This includes coordinating programs, activities and events; and, formulating plans and policies for public recreation and for the acquisition and preservation of land for public recreation and open space. Easton participates day-to-day via its partnership and ongoing communications with the Town and County Parks and Recreation Directors. In addition, a member of the Easton Parks Advisory Board represents Easton on the Talbot County Parks Advisory Board and provides direct linkage between the Town and County as it relates to parks and recreation.

TABLE 12 EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

| TYPES AND AREAS                                               | SIZE<br>(ACRES) | OWNERSHIP | FACILITIES                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Passive Parks                                                 |                 |           |                                                                |
| Train Station Park<br>46 Pennsylvania Avenue                  | 0.540           | Town      | Drinking fountain<br>Benches                                   |
|                                                               |                 |           |                                                                |
| Memorial Walk<br>100 W. Dover Street                          | 1.07            | Town      | Memorial Bricks                                                |
| Thompson Park<br>30 W. Dover Street                           | 0.316           | Town      | Benches<br>Fountain                                            |
| Easton Woodland Park                                          | 197             | Town      | Planned trails and<br>conservation area.                       |
| Neighborhood Parks                                            |                 |           |                                                                |
| Hunters Mill Park<br>8633 Camac Street                        | 1.78            | Town      | Playground<br>Benches                                          |
| Ian “Mac” Morrell Park<br>(Chapel East)<br>29452 Zinnia Court | 1.9             | Town      | Playground<br>Pavilion                                         |
| Matthewstown Run Park<br>29650 Aldan Street                   | 4.11            | Town      | Playground<br>Picnic Area and Table<br>Baseball/Softball Field |

|                                              |       |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                              |       |      | Open Space<br>Little Free Library                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Stoney Ridge Park<br>29288 Corbin Parkway    | 19.8  | Town | Playground<br>Picnic Area<br>Open Space<br>Benches                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Golton Park<br>29416 Golton Drive            | 0.791 | Town | Playground                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mulberry Station Park<br>8764 Mulberry Drive | 3.169 | Town | Playground<br>Open Space<br>Benches                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Spur Lane Park<br>8688 Spur Lane             | 0.783 | Town | Open Space                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Waylands Park<br>29667 Penny Lane            | 0.859 | Town | Playground<br>Picnic Area<br>Benches                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Bretridge Park<br>29593 Country Lane Way     | 2.76  | Town | Open Space                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Vickers Park (Easton Village)                | 8.839 | Town | Canoe/Kayak Launch<br>Bocce Ball Area<br>Pavilion                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Community Parks                              |       |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Idlewild Park<br>116 Idlewild Avenue         | 12.0  | Town | Restrooms<br>AED station<br>(2) Softball Fields<br>Track<br>Picnic Area, Barbecue Grills &<br>Tables<br>(3) Tennis Courts<br>Basketball Court<br>Football Field<br>Playground<br>Children's Park Area<br>Ornamental Fountain/Garden<br>Areas |

|                                                                           |                                                          |      |                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                           |                                                          |      | Gazebo/Pavilion<br>Little Free Library                                                                                                                                    |
| Moton Park<br>501 Port Street                                             | 12.2                                                     | Town | Restrooms<br>Track<br>Picnic Tables, Barbecue Grills<br>& Pavilion<br>Playground<br>Basketball Court<br>Soccer Field<br>Volleyball Area<br>Benches<br>Little Free Library |
| Easton Point Park<br>672 W. Glenwood Avenue<br>801 Port Street            | 13.021                                                   | Town | Kayak launch<br>Planned Boat Ramp and<br>associated parking<br>Drinking Fountains<br>Benches                                                                              |
| John F. Ford Park<br>100 Plum Street                                      | 58.0                                                     | Town | Restrooms<br>AED station<br>Playground<br>Track<br>Exercise Stations/Equipment<br>Open Space<br>Drinking Fountains                                                        |
| Rails-To-Trails                                                           | 2.75 miles<br>(north/south)<br>0.90 miles<br>(east/west) | Town | Drinking fountains<br>Walking/Bicycling Path<br>Benches<br>Frederick Douglass Mural                                                                                       |
| Special Park Areas                                                        |                                                          |      |                                                                                                                                                                           |
| A James Clark<br>North Easton Sports Complex<br>1078 N. Washington Street | 26.2                                                     | Town | Restrooms<br>AED stations<br>Concession stands<br>(4) Baseball Fields<br>Playgrounds                                                                                      |

|                                                     |       |              |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                     |       |              | (4)<br>Football/Soccer/Lacrosse/Field<br>Hockey Fields<br>Field Lights<br>Picnic Area<br>Gazebo/Pavilion<br>Batting Cages<br>Bounce Back Wall<br>Skate Park/Pump Track |
| Easton Dog Park<br>109 Brewers Lane                 | 0.507 | Town         | Restrooms<br>Gated Small & Large Areas for<br>off-leash play<br>Drinking Fountains<br>Benches                                                                          |
| Others                                              |       |              |                                                                                                                                                                        |
| YMCA of the Chesapeake<br>(Main Facility)           | 10.0  | Quasi-Public | Indoor Facilities*<br>(9) Tennis Courts<br>(6) Pickleball Courts<br>Deck Tennis                                                                                        |
| YMCA of the Chesapeake<br>(Lynn Rich Tennis Center) |       | Quasi-Public | Indoor Facilities*<br>(4) Indoor Tennis/Pickleball<br>Courts<br>(3) Outdoor Tennis Courts                                                                              |
| George P. Murphy Swimming<br>Pool                   | 2.8   | County       | Outdoor Swimming Pool                                                                                                                                                  |
| VFW                                                 | 5.0   | Quasi-Public | Baseball Field*<br>Open Space Fields                                                                                                                                   |
| The Elks                                            | 13.2  | Quasi-Public | Athletic Fields*                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                     | 51.0  | County       | Indoor Facilities<br>Ice Rink                                                                                                                                          |

|                                |            |        |                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Talbot County Community Center |            |        | Curling Rink<br>Basketball Courts<br>Pickleball Courts<br>Volleyball Courts<br>Athletic Fields<br>Playgrounds<br>Concession Area<br>Pavillion |
| Easton Point Landing           | 0.50       | County | Boat Ramp<br>Pier<br>Fishing/Crabbing                                                                                                         |
| Mount Pleasant                 | 6.46       | County | Open Space Fields                                                                                                                             |
| Easton Village Trail           | 0.83 miles | Town   | Walking Trail                                                                                                                                 |
|                                |            |        |                                                                                                                                               |

Source: *Town of Easton Parks & Recreation Annual Plan, 2024 & Easton Comprehensive Development Plan, 2010.*

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

## FUTURE PARKS

One area, in which it is crucial for the Planning Commission and Park Board to work together, is the planning for future park sites. The Park Board is more acutely aware of specific demands and needs in terms of our overall park system. By being aware of such needs, the Planning Commission can be proactive in addressing them through the park dedication requirements of the Subdivision process. Furthermore, special needs (e.g., a new regional-scale park) can be considered by both the Planning Commission and Town Council during the review of discretionary approvals, such as Planned Unit Developments and Annexations.

Previous iterations of The Comprehensive Plan have made a number of recommendations regarding future parks, many of which have come to fruition. Such



parks included the original Rail-Trail, the expanded Rail-Trail, the development of the John F. Ford Park, and a Waterfront Park on Easton Point.

Key priorities over the course of this 2025 Plan's time span include the following:

- Build-out Easton Woodland Park, including a multi-modal accessway, parking area, conservation area, trails, and restrooms.
- Continual build-out of Easton Point Park as described in the Port Street Small Area Plan. Additional amenities to include: a new boat ramp, living shoreline, boardwalk/promenade, and parking area.
- Perpetual upgrades to existing Town parks (i.e., programs, grounds, and amenities) to enhance user experiences and increase utilization rates.
- Extension of the rail trail through Moton Park, across Rt. 322 (Easton Parkway) at Glenwood Ave., and connecting to the bridge over the Tred Avon River at Easton Point Park and Easton Village.
- Seek funding for the extension of the rail trail crossing Route 50 to the east side of Town in the vicinity of Chesapeake Ave. *{It is hoped that future rail trail extensions will eventually connect to a wider-scale County-initiated Trail System.}*
- Consider creating an active community-sized park on the east side of Route 50. Explore the possibilities of requiring future developers to build or fund such a park.
- Seek funding and location for construction of a new indoor sports facility. A project of this scope and scale will likely require a location that is along or easily accessible to a major transportation corridor. Possibilities include a portion of the John F. Ford Park and/or the adjoining property to the east, or (depending on the interest of Talbot County) the Talbot

Community Center site or the property the County purchased in 2024, formerly known as the Poplar Hill Farm.

The following suggestions from previous Plans have not been achieved but are still relevant today:

- The Town should work with the State of Maryland to better promote and help insure the preservation of Seth Forest. The Town should also ask the State to consider the possibility of making this property more usable by enhancing forest trails.
- (Not depicted on Future Land Use Map) In the long-range planning period (i.e. Year 2035) a new Community Park, on the scale of Idlewild or Moton, should be considered on the eastern side of Town, east of U.S. Route 50. This is the portion of Town anticipated to accommodate the majority of future growth and as such, a community park may be warranted. Furthermore, this area may not necessarily be provided by any one development. As an alternative, the area for the park might be pieced together by adjoining subdivisions (i.e., Hunter's Mill Playground and Gannon Range open space). Such a park should be a consideration during the review of any development proposals on the east side of Town.

As pointed out in the Municipal Growth Element of this Plan, State guidelines for parkland indicate that the park needs of the existing Town population are above State guidelines and that the land needed to satisfy the needs of the potential future population of the Town should be met via the subdivision process. In addition, more

recreational land lies immediately adjacent to the current Town boundaries at the previously mentioned Seth Forest and a public golf course (Hog Neck). These two areas represent an additional 121 acres at the Seth Demonstration Forest and 265 acres at Hog Neck Golf Course.

As mentioned, since virtually all future residential development will occur to the east of the current Town boundaries, Easton should consider the merits of creating an active community-sized park to serve residents located in this area. Locations for such a park were discussed in the 2010 Plan and include the following possibilities:

- At the terminus of Seth Drive that traverses through Easton Club East on the parcel of land immediately north of that development. This land is adjacent to Seth Forest and would be in very close proximity to Chesapeake Avenue, a potential connection (or standalone) to the Town's extended Rail-Trail.
- In the general vicinity of the Waylands/Matthewstown Run/Dover Road/Black Dog Alley area.
- In the northern portion of the growth area that would be convenient to the Mulberry Station and Chapel East subdivisions as well as future growth in surrounding areas.

General locations for each of these potential parks are shown on the Future Land Use Map found in the Implementation Element of this Plan.

## **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The concept of green infrastructure was first introduced to the Easton Comprehensive Plan in 2004 when the term was still relatively new in the field of planning. It refers to the system of parks and open spaces in a community, as well as the linkages or connections between these areas. A community's green infrastructure is

important because just as the more commonly known infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, sewer, etc...) is essential to support a community's physical development, so too a community's green infrastructure supports its ecological functions. It also is important for making communities more livable.

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

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

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

The economic benefits include:

- Increasing property values as homes located near parks and greenways sell for more than those that are not.

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

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

## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to study and monitor the demand for various park and recreation uses (above and beyond National Standards, which the Town largely meets).
- ✓ Coordinate the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Park and Recreation Advisory Board, and Town Council in acquiring and planning parks.
- ✓ Coordinate park planning, programs, and activities with Talbot County Parks and Recreation and other local organizations (i.e., schools and YMCA) to prevent duplication of amenities/services, pool resources and to ensure that between the various entities, all of Easton's recreational needs are being satisfied.
- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to finish the design and build-out of an eastward expansion of the Rail-Trail in the right-of-way for Chesapeake Avenue, including a grade-separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing of Route 50, and require future developers of land bordering Chesapeake Avenue to build (or fund the building of) a Rail-Trail within this right-of-way.
- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to continually build-out and upgrade various Town parks, particularly Easton Woodland Park and Easton Point Park.
- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to locate and build an indoor sports facility.
- ✓ Revise the Town's Subdivision Regulations to better define what does and does not count as meeting parks and/or open space requirements associated with conventional subdivisions.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Identify appropriate open space areas to serve as green centers or anchors and connect them through a series of pathways and green corridors.
- ✓ Plan future parks, open spaces and corridors in a manner that compliments and helps to build a green infrastructure system.
- ✓ Encourage green space connectivity and access.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The American Society of Landscape Architects makes the following points about sustainable (urban) development:

*Urban development should be guided by a sustainable planning and management vision that promotes interconnected green space, a multi-modal transportation system, and mixed-use development. Diverse public and private partnerships should be used to create sustainable and livable communities that protect historic, cultural, and environmental resources. In addition, policymakers, regulators and developers should support sustainable site planning and construction techniques that reduce pollution and create a balance between built and natural systems.*

*New sustainable urban developments or re-developments should provide a variety of commercial, institutional, educational uses as well as housing styles, sizes and prices. The provision of sidewalks, trails, and private streets, connected to transit stops and an interconnected street network within these mixed-use developments provides mobility options and helps reduce pollution by reducing vehicle trips. Walking, bicycling, and other mobility options should be encouraged throughout the urban mixed-use core and mixed-use neighborhoods with easily accessed and well-defined centers and edges.*



Fortunately the itemized list of characteristics or outcomes of sustainable urban development in the description above are all perfectly consistent with the Vision of the future Easton that this Plan already contemplates. Furthermore, while the idea of tackling global climate change may seem daunting, if not impossible, the actions described above are do-able. In fact, in Easton we have been moving in such a direction for the past several decades. This merely presents one more reason to continue to pursue such a vision.

The Brundtland Commission of the United Nations (1987) published the report, “Our Common Future” and defined sustainable development, as repeated in the intro to this chapter, as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Since then, the definition of sustainability has expanded to include balance and coordination among the “Three E’s” of environment, economy, and equity as well as development that minimizes the negative impact on the environment and other systems.

Many issues or aspects of sustainability are far beyond the scope of the Town of Easton to address. Actions needed to address climate change, for example, have been subject to International Treaties and will require global support and cooperation in order to make meaningful progress. However, there are actions that Easton can take to anticipate and accommodate the effects of climate change and there are a number of other issues besides climate change that determine just how sustainable our future community will be.

During the Public Input phase of this Plan Update, the scope of possible sustainability issues was evident from the feedback we received. In particular, one exercise invited citizens to “use sticky dots to indicate which of the following issues/items are important to you and should

be addressed in the Town’s updated Comprehensive Plan under the heading of Climate Change and Sustainability.” Table 13 below summarizes the responses from this exercise.

TABLE 13 SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THIS PLAN

| Issue                                                                                             | Number of Dots Placed in Support of Addressing the Issue | Comments |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Air Temperature that is projected to rise by 2.5 degrees above normal average by 2050 (NOAA data) | 12                                                       |          |
| Allowing for more live/work or mixed-use units in Town                                            | 25                                                       |          |
| Allowing small farms in town for local food production                                            | 21                                                       |          |
| Bicycle safety, e.g., bike lanes and trails                                                       | 30                                                       |          |
| Clean Rivers and Streams                                                                          | 37                                                       |          |
| Connecting new neighborhoods to existing neighborhoods to improve walkability                     | 21                                                       |          |
| Converting the Town’s vehicle fleet to Low Emission Vehicles                                      | 23                                                       |          |
| Electric Vehicle charging station availability                                                    | 23                                                       |          |
| Food stores that are walkable                                                                     | 40                                                       |          |

|                                                                                                                                                               |    |                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| for in-town residents                                                                                                                                         |    |                                                                                                                                           |
| Maintenance of town amenities, like parks, street trees, public bathrooms, etc.                                                                               | 29 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Pedestrian safety, e.g., sidewalks and road crossings                                                                                                         | 29 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Precipitation (annual rain volume) that has been above average for the last 26 years and is continuing to rise, with storms increasing in volume and severity | 22 | A commenter added: “Reason to keep waterfront as a public park and not build housing and boat ramps for the wealthy.”                     |
| Public Access to waterfront for a variety of uses                                                                                                             | 37 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Raising the tax rate to increase funding for public education                                                                                                 | 21 | Commenter added, “Please think of ;less advantaged people.”<br>Should be noted that school funding is a County, not Town, responsibility. |
| Relative sea level rise that is projected to be between 1 and 2 feet by 2050 (NOAA data)                                                                      | 23 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Safer access across Route 50                                                                                                                                  | 27 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Street trees for cooling, shade, water retention, and beautification                                                                                          | 40 |                                                                                                                                           |
| Incentives for Green Building and Solar/Renewable Energy                                                                                                      | 24 | Item written in by citizen                                                                                                                |
| Services during extreme events                                                                                                                                | 7  | Item written in by citizen                                                                                                                |
| Composting option                                                                                                                                             | 16 | Item written in by citizen                                                                                                                |
| Solar Panels over big parking                                                                                                                                 | 11 | Item written in by citizen                                                                                                                |

|                                                               |    |                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| lots and big rooftops of commercial and residential buildings |    |                            |
| Community Garden                                              | 1  | Item written in by citizen |
| Renewable Energy Sources for Easton Power                     | 16 | Item written in by citizen |
| More pollinator-friendly solar                                | 2  | Item written in by citizen |

The range of responses and level of concurrence with many of the options as expressed via this exercise was impressive and suggests there may well be community support for a more sustainable future Easton. While the responses are varied by subject, there are at least a few general themes that can be summarized as follows:

- Plan for, and mitigate, the impacts of climate change.
- Facilitate a more sustainable built environment.
- Protect the environment.
- Renewable Energy options
- Food Security

The balance of this chapter will discuss Sustainability in each of these five categories.

### **Climate Change**

In the 2022 Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report, “Planning for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation,” the authors note that the United States is facing a number of “existential threats” but notes that only one of them - climate change - has the potential to “destroy human livability of the entire planet.” According to the former President of the American Planning Association, Leo Asuncion, Jr., in a 2021 statement on the UN Climate Change Conference,

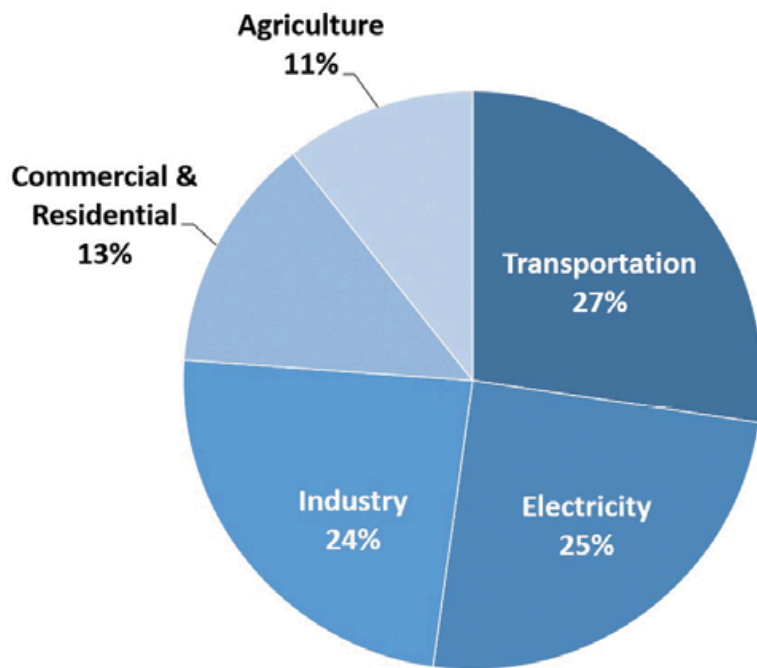
“Now is an essential moment where global commitments, national policies, and *local planning* must all work together to meet the demands of confronting and combating climate change and its impacts on people, places, and our planet.” (emphasis added)

The same PAS Report goes on to state that an effective response to the global challenge that is climate change will require fundamental and systemic changes to the built environment and “inevitably must be addressed policy by policy and project by project in our local communities.” Ultimately, local governments need to shift to, and embrace the concept of, sustainable development in order to make a difference.

In general terms, planning responses to climate change fall into two categories. These are mitigation planning and adaptation planning. Mitigation planning involves planning for and taking actions that reduce the levels of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere or enhance carbon sinks (i.e. things that absorb more GHGs than they emit). Climate adaptation planning involves actions that reduce the vulnerability of people, places, and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. The most effective approach will inevitably utilize both mitigation and adaptation techniques and strategies.

### **Mitigation Strategies**

The sources of US GHG emissions, by sector, are shown in the following chart:



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2022). Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2020

The largest share is represented by the Transportation Sector, which covers all journeys by road, rail, water and air. This sector generated 29% of US GHG in 2019. Of the total GHG emitted from this sector, 58% of them are generated from the fossil fuels burnt for light-duty vehicles (i.e., cars, pickup trucks, sport utility vehicles (SUVs), vans, and minivans), with an additional 24% from medium and heavy duty trucks. The good news on this front is that there are actions that can be taken from a planning perspective to drive these numbers down. These range from site-specific actions, such as providing adequate infrastructure for charging electric vehicles, to bigger-picture and philosophical changes, such as planning for future growth that is less automobile dependent by incentivizing new growth that occurs in the form of compact, walkable, mixed-use communities that provide a variety of housing choices and offer services within easy walking distance of neighborhoods.

While the Transportation sector is the one most directly related to planning, in terms of the possibility to reduce GHG emissions, it is not the only one. To that point, the following are potential mitigation strategies that communities can implement that more broadly can reduce GHG emissions:

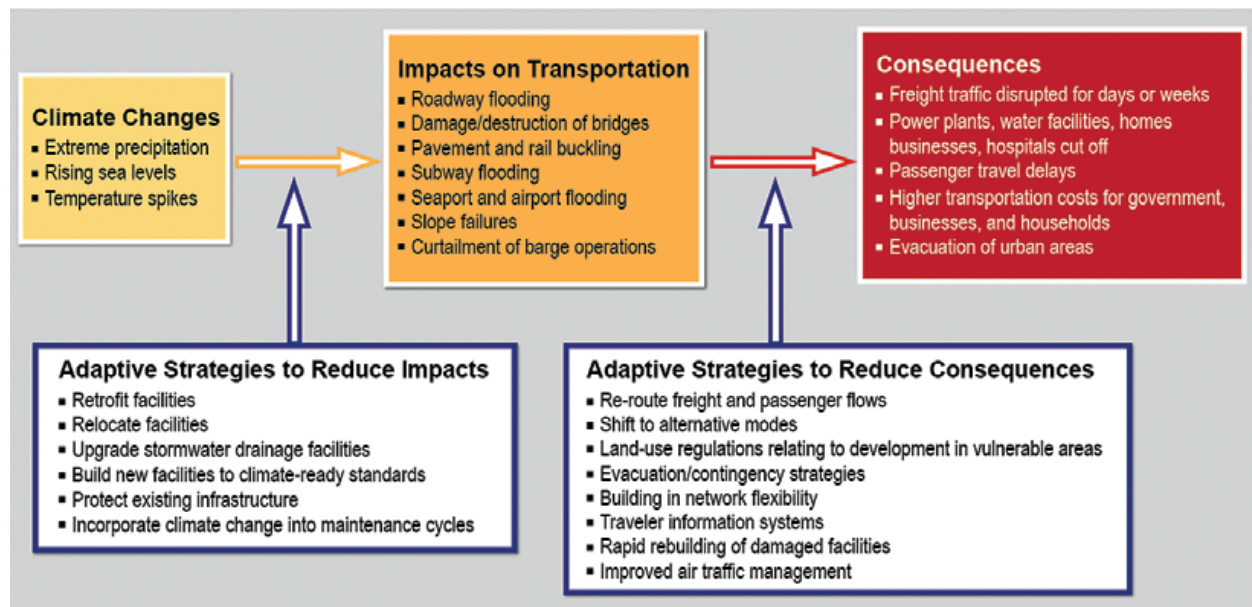
- Increasing the use of renewable energy and access to alternative fuels.
- Providing options for active transportation.
- Designing energy-efficient buildings and resilient infrastructure.
- .Protecting and enhancing natural systems and water resources.
- Maximizing co-benefits of ecosystem services and green infrastructure solutions.
- Purchasing climate-friendly products.
- Educating the public on socioeconomic and public health impacts of climate change.

### **Adaptation Strategies**

The risks posed by climate change include rising sea levels and storm surges, heat stress, extreme precipitation, inland and coastal flooding, drought, increased aridity, water scarcity, and air pollution, all of which will have negative impacts on individual's health, livelihoods, and assets, as well as the community's economy and ecosystems. Adaptation strategies are essential to reducing vulnerability to both the likely everyday, as well as the more extreme or dangerous, outcomes of climate change.

The following flowchart depicts the multiple impacts of climate change on Transportation, the consequences of those impacts, and some adaptation strategies that can be employed (both to reduce impacts and to reduce consequences):

## Role of Adaptive Strategies and Tactics in Reducing Impacts and Consequences



The area where adaptation policies can most directly be impacted by Comprehensive Planning is the general area of land use. This is especially the case when contemplating future growth areas. Preventing future development from occurring in vulnerable locations, such as along waterways, in floodplains, or non-tidal wetlands, is an easy proactive approach to climate change adaptation. It is coincidentally consistent with the essence of this Plan. This is important because as the previously referenced PAS Report notes, comprehensive land use planning that anticipates likely climate impacts can accomplish the following community-wide goals:

- Encouraging coordinated transportation and housing investments, so that people can afford to live in safe conditions with transportation choice in case of emergency.
- Promoting green infrastructure and sound watershed management, which can reduce stormwater runoff, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve public health.



- Rehabilitating wetland riparian or estuarine habitats that provide natural ecosystem services, such as flood protection.
- Reducing the long-term cost of development by building in areas that are less vulnerable to climate impacts and costs.

Impacts can also be made at the individual building level. For example, increased frequency and severity of heat waves pose additional risks for occupants of homes without cooling methods. Very young children, the elderly (who represent a high percentage of Easton's population), and those with infirmities are most susceptible to heat strokes and other health risks associated with extreme heat. High-performance green buildings can have both mitigation and adaptation co-benefits. Adaptation practices are ideally implemented at the time of construction, but mitigation to existing buildings can occur in the form of retrofitting existing homes and buildings with additions such as green roofs or sun shading, water storage space, and smart ventilation.

Finally, it is important to note that although there are specific actions, as outlined above, that a community may pursue in the realm of climate adaptation, monitoring and evaluation of adaptation policies and actions can be challenging for a number of reasons. The Planning for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation PAS Report, lists the following cautions with regards to monitoring adaptation:

## MEASURING ADAPTATION

Monitoring and evaluating adaptation can be challenging for the following reasons (CAP and ICLEI 2015):

- **Adaptation is not an objective or an endpoint.** Adaptation is a process of continual adjustment, and there is no clear measure or benchmark that signals that an adaptation measure is “successful.” Often adaptation evaluation relies on proxy measures that relate to the achievement of broader societal and environmental aims.
- **Uncertainty is inherent in virtually all monitoring and evaluation processes.** With many climate trends not yet clear, planners need to plan for a range of possible scenarios. For example, uncertainty regarding the rate and extent of sea level rise is critical to adaptation planners in coastal areas, but equally uncertain are issues of population growth and aging infrastructure.
- **Adaptation is evaluated by measuring avoided impacts.** Adaptation efforts are designed to reduce adverse impacts of climate change. In the absence of that impact taking place, it can be challenging to measure how much worse the situation would have been without the intervention.
- **Evaluating adaptation entails tracking towards a “moving target.”** In monitoring climate change, natural and socioecological systems undergo continuous change over time and so the use of a fixed baseline may lose some validity. With this consistent variability, baseline data may not always provide a solid reference point.
- **Adaptation requires long time horizons.** Because adaptation activities tend to have long time frames and unclear endpoints that are liable to change over time, it can be difficult to measure them within traditional five-year government planning cycles or political mandates.
- **Adaptation spans multiple scales and sectors.** Adaptation encompasses diverse programming strategies, populations, and locales. While it is predominantly a local process, progress towards it is often examined at much higher levels, and often at a sector scale. It can be very difficult to compare or aggregate results in an effective way because of the eclectic range of sectors, the varying availability of data, and different site contexts.
- **There is no one set of indicators or monitoring and evaluation approaches.** As adaptation is a process rather than an outcome, individual indicators for climate adaptation may not necessarily exist as “good” climate adaptation indicators. In addition, as adaptation cuts across contexts, scales, and sectors, no universal set of indicators will fit these divergent contexts.
- **Assessing the effectiveness and adequacy of adaptation is both complex and challenging.** It demands a practical, replicable approach that provides meaningful, quantifiable information. Recognizing that building resilience is a moving goal in a changing climate, measuring adaptation effectiveness should also be flexible and adaptable to a wide range of contexts and be able to catalyze learning at a variety of spatial and temporal scales (Craft and Fisher 2016).

## A Sustainable Built Environment

The aspect of sustainability that is most directly relevant to a Comprehensive Plan, and which permeates throughout this Plan, is that of the built environment. This includes planning-related areas such as encouraging more energy efficient buildings, to fundamental principles of land use planning such as prescribing a future development pattern that is more sustainable than that which has occurred in the last half-century or so.

With regards to future development patterns, the measure of success will overwhelmingly come from what happens in our Future Growth Area. Certainly accommodating more growth in the form of Infill and Redevelopment of the existing Town boundaries will help achieve this goal, but given the nature of this type of development, the stage has essentially already been set.

Infill/Redevelopment will be more sustainable in that such development is generally more

accommodating of active modes of transportation and is closer to the shopping and services that residents need, thus facilitating such active transportation. However, barring a fundamental (and very large) change in the scope and nature of density of development in the vicinity of Downtown, and despite strong public support for focusing future growth on this aspect, there is a limit to how much can be accommodated in this manner. Eventually, and likely sooner rather than later, the overwhelming majority of growth will occur in what are now “greenfields” in our Future Growth Area. Thus, improving the sustainability of the development of these areas will largely dictate Easton’s overall success (or lack thereof) in improving the sustainability of the Town as a whole.

The elements that will lead to a more sustainable form of development in the future are covered throughout this Plan, so they will not be discussed in detail here. In particular the Implementation Chapter will devote a great amount of detail discussing recommended options for achieving this goal. For the purposes of this chapter, simply listing the options to improve the sustainability of future greenfield development will suffice, and they include:

- Permitting/encouraging/requiring mixed-use development.
- Facilitating residential development at a higher density and with a wider variety of housing options.
- Maximizing connectivity to other future development.
- Providing, where possible, connectivity to existing development.
- Facilitating and accommodating active modes of transportation.

Beyond these environmental and general quality of life aspects of sustainability, future development patterns have even more diverse sustainability implications. One such aspect is the financial sustainability of such development, and ultimately the Town as a whole. In short, there are a multitude of potential development scenarios possible for any given parcel of land in the Growth Area. Some will result in significant revenue for the Town, but might also impose large new costs. Others may not cost that much to serve, but may also contribute very little in the way of new revenue. From the perspective of financial sustainability, development that justifies its cost by providing a net positive fiscal impact to the Town ought to be prioritized over that which will ultimately be a net drain on Town resources.

Although it can certainly vary depending on the local government's tax structure and policies, residential development in general, and specifically single-use, low-density residential development, tends to cost local governments more to serve than it produces in new tax revenue. On the other hand, mixed-use and non-residential development can be cash flow positive for local governments. One way to view/measure such impacts is on a value per acre (VPA) basis. An assessment of Easton's VPA was conducted in 2024 by the firm Urban3 and its results are summarized in the Land Use Chapter of this Plan.

Another aspect of equity that can be affected by development patterns is that of social/cultural equity. Social equity in development patterns refers to ensuring fair and just distribution of resources, opportunities, and public services across all segments of a community. It involves addressing disparities in access to things like housing, healthcare, education, transportation, and employment, aiming to prevent certain groups from being left behind.

Consideration of social equity in planning and future land use patterns is important for a number of reasons, including the following:

- **Reduced Poverty and Inequality** - By addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality, social equity contributes to a more just and prosperous community.
- **Increased Social Cohesion** - When people feel that they have equal opportunities and access to resources, it fosters a sense of community and belonging.
- **Greater Resilience** - Equitable communities are better equipped to withstand economic and environmental shocks.
- **Sustainable Development** - Social Equity is an essential component of sustainable development, ensuring that progress benefits all members of society, both present and future.

### **Environmental Protection**

Similar to the preceding discussion on the built environment, sustainability issues related to environmental protection are covered elsewhere in this Plan. In this instance, the Sensitive Areas Chapter addresses this topic. In short, the point is that while Easton is indeed the primary growth area for Talbot County, and arguably the Mid and Upper Eastern Shore, that does not translate into the development of every square inch of land within our jurisdiction. There are vital environmental features that are important to preserve and protect for a myriad of reasons, including enhancing the sustainability of the Town.

One example of this is the area of stormwater management. Protecting the non-tidal wetlands within Town is a more sustainable option than filling them in and constructing ponds, swales, bioretention areas and the like, to perform the functions that those natural wetlands would provide (and would do so without the cost to construct the facilities or to maintain them).

## **Renewable Energy**

The energy supplier to the vast majority of Easton properties is the Easton Utilities Commission (EUC). Broadly speaking, EUC is pursuing a number of sustainable goals and objectives. Notably, this includes their “Sustainability Campus.” Of note to the topic of renewable energy, the EUC Sustainability Campus includes a solar array, described by EUC as:

Perhaps the biggest effort to offset greenhouse gas emissions was the installation of the 2MW solar field at Easton’s Sustainability Campus located adjacent to the wastewater treatment facility. The array generates more than enough electricity to power the entire treatment plant. On average, 20% of the electricity generated by the panels is fed back onto the local electric grid. Commissioned in 2017, the nearly 10-acre site was constructed for a total of \$4 million. Through a grant by Maryland Department of the Environment, 75% of the construction costs were covered, making Easton Utilities’ total investment \$1 million. This partnership allowed the project to be both cost and environmentally effective, benefiting the community by avoiding almost 1,672 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions per year.

The Town should continue to support EUC’s sustainability and renewable energy initiatives. Beyond that, we can and should explore options for additional solar arrays. In the context of a growing town like Easton, this can be a challenge since arrays can consume large amounts of land. However, there may be opportunities to co-locate panels on the roofs of large buildings or in large surface parking lots.

## **Food Security**

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) describes a sustainable food system as “a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised. This means that:

- It is profitable throughout (economic sustainability);
- It has broad-based benefits for society (social sustainability); and

- It has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability).”

As a growing and vibrant Town, there is little actual agricultural activity occurring within the corporate limits of Easton. However, land that is annexed into Town is often agricultural and sometimes remains as such for several years. There is certainly nothing wrong with this practice of allowing farming as essentially a temporary or interim use until landowner/developer motivation and/or market forces dictate that it is time for the property to develop. Furthermore, the Town envisions the Talbot County side of our Growth Boundary to consist of farms and forests and supports their efforts to permanently preserve these areas.

On a smaller scale, within the Town limits sustainable food systems can be supported through gardens. These can be located on private property for the use and enjoyment of the resident of the property, or in the form of a community garden. One such community garden exists in the East End Neighborhood of Easton, just outside of Downtown (see picture below). This option is especially appropriate in the more densely developed sections of Town where land may be too scarce for individual private gardens.





Another area where the Town can support Sustainable Food Systems is our longstanding and popular Farmer's Market. This should continue to be supported. Opportunities may even exist to expand the vendor capacity of this market, or to relocate and/or improve the existing site such that it could be open more frequently and possibly year-round.



## SUSTAINABILITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**GOAL:** To create a more livable, sustainable, and equitable built environment.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Enact Land Use Laws which prioritize or incentivize compact, mixed-use development accessible to a wide range of household incomes..
- ✓ Establish a robust active transportation system by requiring it to be built in new developments and retrofitting existing streets to include facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ✓ Work with public transportation agencies to support and augment appropriate forms of public transit into/out of and within Easton.
- ✓ Explore options to expand the electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Easton, including requiring new development to provide such infrastructure.
- ✓ Ensure that new growth is coordinated and balanced with the provision of the infrastructure required to support it and that the cost to do so is borne by the development necessitating such infrastructure.

**GOAL:** To reduce the vulnerability of current and future Eastonians to the impacts of climate change.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Restrict development in areas most susceptible to the effects of climate change..

- ✓ Continue to pursue watershed restoration projects.
- ✓ Promote the further establishment of a vibrant green infrastructure system.
- ✓ Evaluate the Open Space/Park requirements of the Zoning Code and Subdivision

Regulations to determine whether they are at the appropriate levels to achieve Sustainability goals and objectives.

- ✓ Plan for the indirect impacts of climate change on Easton's residents, such as the influx of residents of parts of Talbot County who are more vulnerable to the consequences of sea-level rise and may travel to, or through, Easton in extreme weather events.

- ✓ Increase Easton's tree canopy coverage to mitigate the effects of increased heat.

**GOAL:** To reduce the vulnerability of existing buildings and their occupants to the effects of climate change.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Identify the buildings and structures most at risk to climate change impacts and offer assistance to install retrofit measures to reduce the vulnerability of these structures (through, for example, grants or low-interest loans funded by a future grant).

- ✓ Relocate, where feasible, infrastructure located within areas likely to be impacted by climate change.

- ✓ Explore the feasibility and implications of requiring that new construction meet LEED certification (or the equivalent) standards.

**GOAL:** To establish and maintain a sustainable food system for Easton's residents.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Support the agricultural use of vacant land within the Town’s boundaries as well as our Future Growth Area.

✓ Support Talbot County’s Agricultural Preservation efforts in general, and specifically to preserve farmland adjacent to the outside (i.e., County side) of our Growth Boundary.

✓ Explore options to expand the capacity of the Easton Farmers Market as well as opportunities to make it more accessible and open more hours per week and weeks per year.

✓ Look for opportunities to establish more community gardens.

**GOAL:** To increase renewable energy supply in Easton.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Support efforts of Easton Utilities to build upon the success of their Sustainability Campus.

✓ Explore options for contextually-appropriate solar arrays to be established in Easton.

**GOAL:** To accommodate emerging technology that might improve the sustainability of Easton.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Develop plans to accommodate the needs of growing numbers of electric vehicles (EV) and autonomous vehicles (AV).

✓ Evaluate Town development regulations to ensure that provision of EV-charging infrastructure is adequately accommodated.

✓ Evaluate the appropriateness of how renewable energy options (e.g., solar, wind) are addressed in Easton's Zoning Code.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## MINERAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

The Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the law which governs planning and zoning for most local governments, including Easton, requires that Comprehensive Plans include a plan element on mineral resources. The purpose of this element is basically three-fold. First it is to identify undeveloped land that should remain undeveloped until the land can be used to provide or assist in providing a continuous supply of minerals (as defined by another state law). Second, this element should identify appropriate uses for such lands following the extraction of the identified minerals. Finally, this element should incorporate land use policies and recommendations for regulations to balance mineral extraction with other land uses and, to the extent feasible, to prevent the preemption of mineral resources extraction by other uses.

### BACKGROUND

Previous Comprehensive Plans in Easton have devoted little attention to mineral resources. The 1989 Comprehensive Plan included a single paragraph that stated, among other things, that surface mining of mineral resources does not take place within the Town of Easton and that no potential mineral resources have been identified within Easton. While the former half of this sentence may be true, the latter is not.

There is, in fact, at least one and possibly two, mineral resources located within Easton. Map 8-1 of the 2005 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan identified Sand and Gravel bearing units. A large portion of eastern Talbot County is identified as having such deposits. The western boundary of the identified area runs directly through the Town of Easton. Based on this map, approximately the eastern one-third to one-half of the Town is located on potential sand and gravel bearing units. Furthermore, all of the future growth areas to the east of the current Town boundary are similarly located over such units.

Clearly it will not be a policy of the Town to allow for the extraction of sand or gravel within the already developed portions of the Town. However, it may be wise to allow for the extraction of such resources in future growth areas, both those presently located in Talbot County and those already within the Town limits, but as yet undeveloped. Such extraction should be conducted in conjunction with the

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development of the site as one of the very first steps. There should be no continuous sand and gravel extraction operations within the Town. The identification and use of sand and gravel prior to the development of a given site represents wise use of available resources. To go beyond that to the establishment of ongoing sand and gravel operations would be an unwise promotion or encouragement of incompatible land uses.

A related issue that occurs from time to time in Easton concerns the practice employed by some developers/land-owners whereby the topsoil on a development site is stripped and sold, then the land is developed. If the removed topsoil is not replaced, future homeowners buy into a situation whereby they have very hard, often compacted soil. It is difficult to grow anything in and hard to work in.

In order to mitigate this situation, developers are required to finish all building lots with topsoil of a depth sufficient to satisfy growing needs for lawns, gardens, and landscaping. If the cost of replacing the topsoil becomes too prohibitive, then the hope is that it is not removed in the first place.

## **MINERAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**GOAL:** To enable the use of identified mineral resources in appropriate locations as a prerequisite to the eventual development of those sites.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Identify mineral resources on a given site as early as possible in the development review process.
- Examine Town regulations to ensure that mineral extraction is permitted in limited circumstances with appropriate safeguards against undue neighborhood impacts.

**GOAL:** To ensure that home sites contain topsoil of a quantity and quality necessary to support lawns, gardens, and/or landscaping.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

- Review the Town's adopted Standard Details to ensure that the standard for topsoil on newly developed lots is appropriate and adequate to support the growth of healthy plant life.

## HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Housing was first added as an Element of the Comprehensive Plan in the 2004 version of this document. This Plan will update that effort, but leave much of the Element unchanged. Unfortunately many of the issues associated with this Element remain essentially the same today in 2010 as they were in 2004.

They are only further complicated by the economic climate of 2010 in which foreclosures are rising, little new housing is being built, and there is a general



sense that it will still be a while before things begin to improve.

Housing issues are clearly not unique to Easton. This is perhaps exemplified by the fact that the State Legislature has amended the Land Use Article to move Housing from an optional element of Comprehensive Plans to a mandatory one. Furthermore, the law now provides specifics as to what this element needs to address. Specifically, local Comprehensive Plan Housing Elements must now address housing within the following parameters:

(a)

*(1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.*

*(2) "Affirmatively further fair housing" has the meaning stated in § 2-401 of the Housing and Community Development Article.*

*(3) "Area median income" has the meaning stated in § 4-1801 of the Housing and Community Development Article*

*(4) "Low-income housing" means housing that is affordable for a household with an aggregate annual income that is below 60% of the area median income.*

*(5) "Workforce housing" has the meaning stated in § 4-1801 of the Housing and Community Development Article.*

*(b) A housing element may include goals, objectives, policies, plans, and standards.*

*(c) A housing element shall address the need for affordable housing within the local jurisdiction, including:*

*(1) workforce housing; and*

*(2) low-income housing.*

(d)

*(1) Local jurisdictions have a duty to affirmatively further fair housing through their housing and urban development programs.*

*(2) The housing element of a comprehensive plan that is enacted or amended on or after January 1, 2023, shall include an assessment of fair housing to ensure that the local jurisdiction is affirmatively furthering fair housing.*

*(3) On request of a local jurisdiction, the Department of Planning, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, shall provide technical assistance for the purpose of developing the housing element of the comprehensive plan.*

*(4) This subsection does not require a local jurisdiction to take, or prohibit a local jurisdiction from taking, a specific action to affirmatively further fair housing.*

*(Md. Code, LU § 3-114)*

## **HOUSING ISSUES**

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

Housing issues, particularly housing affordability, are of such significance on Easton that the Town formed an ad hoc Attainable Housing Task Force to examine the issue and make recommendations for addressing the issues. The Task Force produced a Report, generally simultaneously with the drafting of this Plan Update. The Full Final Report can be accessed on the Town's website at: [eastonmd.gov/xxxxxxxxx](http://eastonmd.gov/xxxxxxxxx). The Draft Report's Executive Summary includes the following:

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*The Housing Task Force Final Report provides an analysis of Easton's housing landscape, demographic shifts, economic trends, and affordability challenges. The report also expands on the demographic, market, and workforce overview briefly provided to the Task Force at their May 23, 2024 meeting. Any data-driven insights*

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*provided herein are intended to inform housing policies and initiatives recommended by the Attainable Housing Task Force. aimed at ensuring equitable and sustainable housing opportunities.*

## **Key Findings**

### **1. Population Growth & Demographics**

- o Easton experienced rapid population growth between 1980 and 2010, but growth rates have slowed significantly since 2010.*
- o The town's population is aging, with a 42% increase in residents aged 55+ since 2000, while the percentage of younger adults (25-44) has declined by 40%.*
- o The Hispanic population has grown significantly, increasing from 3.5% of the total population in 2000 to 14% in 2020, while the Black population's share has declined.*

### **2. Housing Market Trends**

- o Since 2000, single-family detached homes have dominated new housing developments, limiting the availability of more affordable housing types such as townhomes and multi-family units.*
- o Home prices have risen sharply, with Easton's median home value increasing by 131% since 2000.*
- o Rental costs have also increased, with median rents in 2025 exceeding the affordability threshold for households earning less than 100% of Easton's Area Median Income (AMI).*

### **3. Affordability Challenges**

- o Homeownership is increasingly out of reach for middle-income families, with the home price-to-income ratio rising from 3.03 in 2000 to 4.4 in 2024, indicating a decline in affordability.*
- o Over 50% of renters in Easton are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.*
- o Racial disparities persist, with Hispanic and Black households facing the greatest housing cost burdens and lowest homeownership rates.*

#### 4. Economic & Employment Factors

- *Job growth in Talbot County has remained stagnant since 2000, increasing at an annual rate of just 0.18%.*
- *The local economy has shifted toward lower-paying service jobs, making it harder for workers to afford housing in Easton.*
- *A significant portion (42%) of the workforce commutes from neighboring counties, highlighting the disconnect between housing costs and local wages.*

*Easton faces significant housing challenges, particularly in affordability, supply diversity, and demographic shifts. Without strategic interventions, rising housing costs and demographic imbalances could threaten the town's long-term economic sustainability and community inclusivity. This report serves as a foundation for developing policies that ensure a balanced, affordable, and thriving housing market for all residents.*

The implications of these findings are succinctly summarized in the preceding paragraph. Most significantly, without decisive intervention, the Town is at risk of becoming even more of a community where the people who work here, cannot afford to live here. If the tourist and hospitality sector of the economy grows, the problem is likely to become even more significant. It is more pervasive than that though, as employees such as cashiers, restaurant workers, government employees, teachers, nurses, emergency responders, etc., may find Easton increasingly unaffordable. This can have a ripple effect on Easton's future. There is clearly the social/cultural aspect of having an economically segregated community, but there are potential impacts on the Town's transportation system, for example, as well if such employees are forced to look to neighboring counties (e.g., Dorchester and Caroline) for housing that they can afford. There is also a subsequent economic/workforce impact if these same employees later find new jobs closer to where they live.

The quality of housing in Easton has long been a concern of Town officials.

Easton has had a Building Official for decades. The Town Building Code regulates the quality of construction of housing. The Town utilizes the International Building Code to specify standards of construction. Today the Building Department operates with the Town Building Official who primarily conducts plan reviews, two field inspectors, a rental-housing/property maintenance inspector, and a secretary. **(UPDATE)**

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

## **EXISTING HOUSING PROGRAMS**

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

The Housing Commission of Talbot County (Formerly the Easton Housing Authority) maintains and manages all public housing in the Town of Easton. This includes 64 units at Doverbrook, 26 age-restricted units at Asbury Place, 15 age-restricted units at Westport, and the Graham's Park development, which provides home-ownership opportunities for 12 low-income families/individuals.

Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc has been responsible for the construction of 25 **(UPDATE)** units in Easton. These units were constructed using the Habitat methodology whereby Habitat volunteers build houses from the

ground up in the community. Significant hours are required to be put in by the family who will live in the new house and, thereafter they help other new Habitat families get started on their homes. Because the land is often donated or sold to Habitat at a preferred rate and there is no labor cost, the overall cost of the houses is significantly reduced.

The Easton Town Council has succeeded in adding affordable housing units to the Town in a variety of ways, including requiring the provision of on or off-site affordable units and/or contributions to Affordable Housing as conditions of approval of discretionary projects such as Annexations or PUDs.

One of the more concerted and direct approaches to address housing issues was the creation of the Easton Affordable Housing Board. This Town-appointed Board has been charged with developing criteria and policies concerning Affordable Housing in general, and the administration of Affordable Housing Units acquired by the Town Council as conditions of approval for several development projects (such as those cited above). Much of their effort was initially devoted to developing the criteria and the selection process for purchasing these affordable units.

## LOCAL HOUSING COSTS AND ISSUES

Figure 33: Talbot County ZHVI, 2000 - 2024



### A. Prices: Talbot County

Regarding housing costs, the Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) can be used to understand the general direction of home values in a community over time<sup>5</sup>. Nationally, after September of 2006 home prices peaked. By late 2006 and into 2007, home prices then declined. By

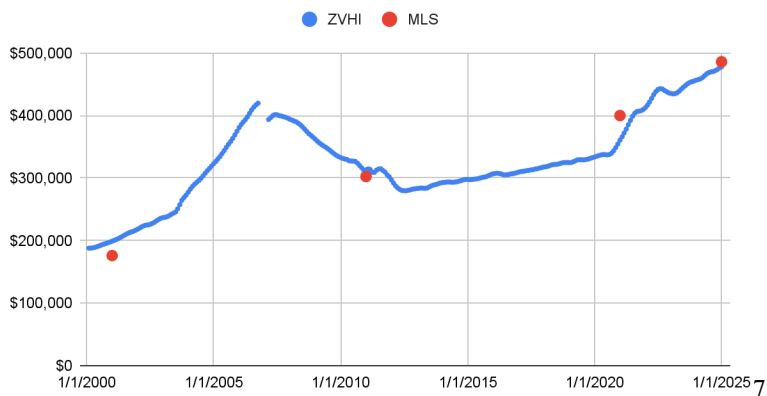
2008, the housing market had fully collapsed leading to a broader financial crisis. The period between 2007 and 2009 was known as the Great Recession. The housing market bottomed out in 2012 and thereafter the market experienced a slow recovery through 2016.

Talbot County showed a similar pattern. Figure 33 shows the ZHVI from January of 2000 through December of 2024<sup>6</sup>. At the end of September 2006, the ZHVI for the County peaked at \$420,000. From September 2006 through 2009, the ZHVI dropped 21 percent. By September of 2012, the ZHVI bottomed out at \$280,000. Thereafter, Talbot County showed a steady increase in the ZHVI. By the end of 2019, the index rose 19 percent to a value of \$334,000. From the beginning of 2015 through 2019, the ZHVI rose at an average annual rate of 2.4 percent. However, the ZHVI then accelerated from the beginning of 2020 where home values rose 43 percent to \$478,000 at the end of 2024. This represents an average yearly rate increase of approximately 9 percent since 2020.

While the ZHVI is a useful tool for understanding general trends in Talbot County, it's important to note that the ZVHI is not a substitute for professional home value appraisals. The ZHVI also tends to be more accurate in areas with strong housing data. Therefore, to assess the general accuracy of the index, other sources of information should be considered.

This report reviewed the median sold price of homes in Talbot County in 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2024 using Bright MLS statistics provided by the Mid-Shore Board of Realtors. The values were then mapped in Figure 34 below and compared to the ZHVI. The chart shows that both followed the same trend from 2000 to 2024. In addition, Table 4 shows the percentage differences between ZHVI and MLS data,

Figure 34: Talbot County ZVHI versus MLS



which ranged from a high of 13% in 2000 to a low of 2% in 2024. The average difference was 7%. This suggests that the ZHVI is reasonably accurate and can be relied on as a valid source of capturing the general trend of home values in Talbot County. In addition, the MLS values may not capture all housing transactions such as

homes sold by the owner. There may also be delays in the sale prices of homes sold during any one year from new construction. In conclusion, there is confidence that both the ZHVI (in addition to MLS data) is a good source of information to measure home values and trends over time.

**Table 5: Talbot County ZHVI vs. MLS and Percentage Difference**

|                     | 2000      | 2010      | 2020      | 2024      |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>ZHVI</b>         | \$199,078 | \$313,231 | \$360,581 | \$478,000 |
| <b>MLS</b>          | \$176,000 | \$302,500 | \$400,000 | \$486,000 |
| <b>% Difference</b> | 13%       | 3.5%      | 10%       | 2%        |

### B. Prices: Easton Median Values

Figure 35 compares the ZHVI and MLS data of home values in Easton from the years 2000 through 2024. Two things are notable. First, the trend of home values during that time was similar to Talbot County. Second, the average percentage difference in these two sources of data (7%) confirms confidence in the use of the ZHVI for Easton.

Figure 35: Easton ZHVI versus MLS

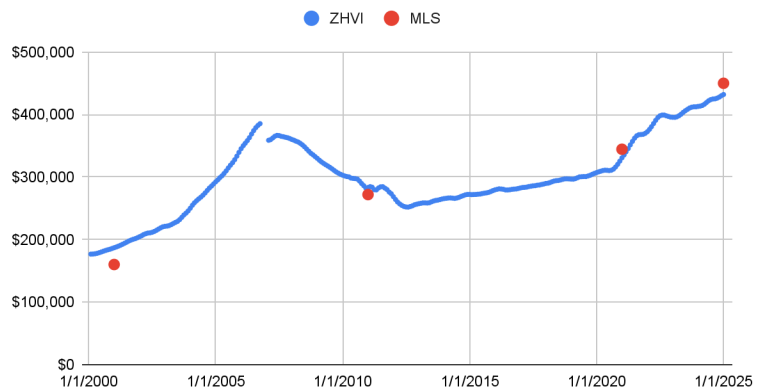


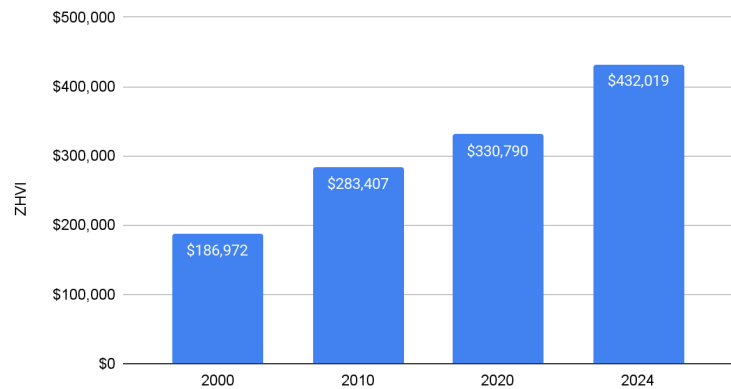
Figure 36 shows the ZHVI in specific years. Home values in Easton have risen 131 percent since 2000. The largest increase was between 2000 and 2010 when home



values rose 52 percent. Between 2010 and 2020, the increase in Easton home values slowed to 17 percent, most likely due to the effects of the Great Recession and its slow recovery. Even so, the impact of the recession on median home values was not negatively impacted; suggesting that high-end sales for wealthier buyers may have been less affected by the recession compared to households within lower-tier incomes.

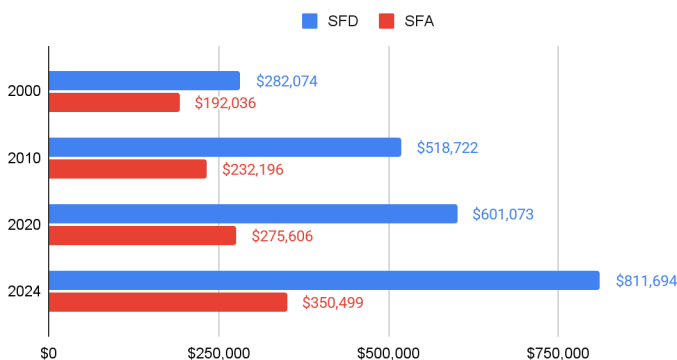
However, since 2020, home values in Easton have risen 31 percent. Even more concerning when related to affordability is that the typical home value of the least expensive homes at the end of 2024, or those homes in the 5th to 35th percentile, was \$300,269<sup>7</sup>. In other words, the least expensive homes in Easton are out of reach for most households making less than 100% of Easton's 2024 AMI of approximately \$98,000 for a family of four, including first-time homebuyers (see Section Four).

Figure 36: Easton ZHVI: 2000 - 20204



### C. Prices: Easton Average Sales Prices

Figure 37: Average Home Sales Price: Easton, 2000 - 2024, Bright MLS



While median home values are a more accurate representation of typical home prices, average home values can provide insights into home value trends as well. Figure 37 shows the average home price of homes sold over time in Easton for detached units and attached units such as townhomes. For attached units, the chart shows the average sales price rose 21

<sup>7</sup> ZHVI All Homes - Bottom Tier Time Series (\$).

percent from 2000 to 2010 and 19 percent from 2010 to 2020. The increase in the average sales price, however, increased 27 percent from 2000 to 2024, outpacing the prior decades. A fairly consistent increase in average sales prices for attached units across the decades suggests steady demand, but a potentially limited supply for this type of housing in Easton. In addition, the steady growth in the average sales price over the decades, although not as dramatic as single-family detached homes (see below), poses affordability challenges for those households seeking this particular housing type.

The percentage increases are far more dramatic for detached units. From 2000 to 2010, the percentage increase in sales price was 84 percent. This was likely due to the housing boom prior to the housing crisis that led to the Great Recession. Average home values still increased between 2010 and 2020, although at a much lower percentage of 16 percent. Since 2020, average home values accelerated their increase to 35 percent. This sharp increase from the prior decade indicates a renewed acceleration in home price growth for single-family detached units, with some of this occurring during a period of lower interest rates and during the pandemic. It will be interesting to observe the effect more recent higher interest rates may have on home sales prices for these types of units.

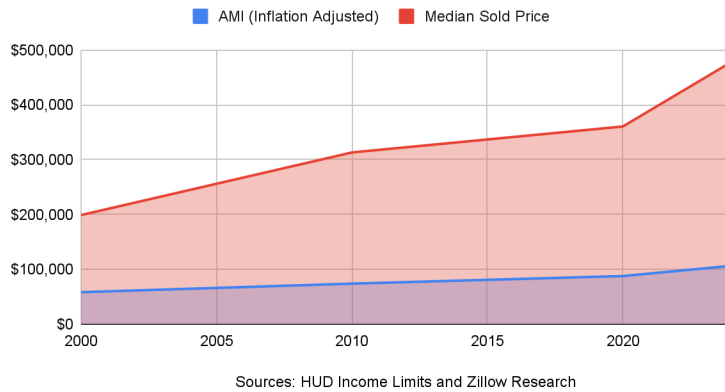
In summary, the high costs of single-family detached units in Easton raises serious concerns about housing affordability for these types of units, especially for first time buyers and those in professions with lower annual wage pay and limited opportunities for income growth.

#### **D. Housing Costs and Income**

In 2024, Talbot County's Annual Median Income (AMI) was \$106,500. Each year, the Easton Affordable Housing Board adjusts the County's AMI to reflect more accurately the median income for Easton residents. In 2020, Easton AMI was \$98,065. Given the fairly small difference, the Home price to Income Ratio for Talbot County can be a key measure of housing affordability in Easton. Using the median sold price data provided by the MSBR, the ratio in 2024 was 4.4; or the number of years it takes to buy a median-priced home in Talbot County. In 2000, the ratio was 3.03. This increase means that housing affordability has declined significantly since 2000. Even after the Great Recession, the ratio increased to 4.12.

Another useful tool is to measure whether income has kept pace with housing costs over time. Figure 38 compares the growth rates of income in Talbot County versus

Figure 38: Talbot County AMI (Inflation Adjusted) and ZHVI



home prices from 2000 to 2024. Table 6 shows the percentage increase in income growth and home price growth over the time intervals. From 2000 to 2010, home prices significantly outpaced income growth, resulting in a rapid decline of affordability. This may have been due to the housing boom up until the housing crash that led to the Great Recession. The rate of growth for both income and

home prices slowed down during the next decade and income growth slightly outpaced home growth, most likely due to the post recession impacts and the slowdown in the Easton housing market. However, in the most recent period from 2000 to 2024, home price growth has again surpassed income growth which means affordability issues, or a lack of more affordable housing, has again become an issue; like that seen in the decade from 2000 to 2010.

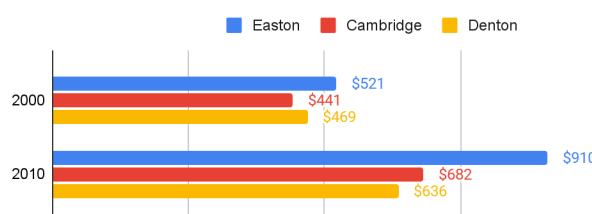
Table 6: Percentages of Income Growth versus Home Price Growth, Talbot County

| Year              | 2000-2010 | 2010-2020 | 2020-2024 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Income Growth     | 26.63%    | 18.69%    | 21.12%    |
| Home Price Growth | 57.34%    | 15.12%    | 32.12%    |

## E. Rental Market

In Easton, 40 percent of occupied households are renters. This number is down five percentage points from 2010. The

Figure 39: Median Gross Rent, 2000 - 2023



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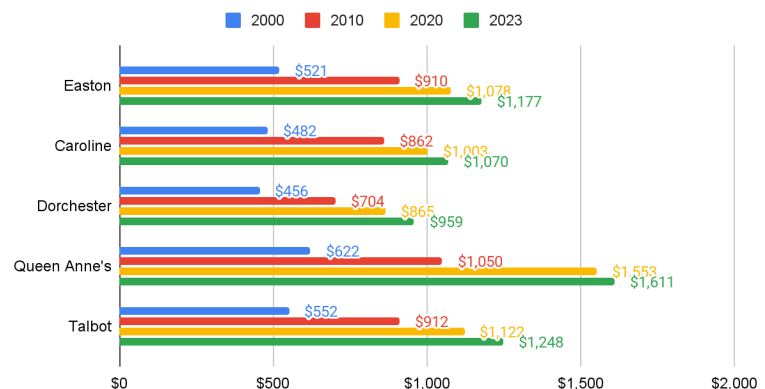
rental vacancy rate is 5.3 percent, a statistically significant difference than the homeowner vacancy rate of 1.4 percent<sup>8</sup>. In 2010, the homeowner vacancy rate was 5.2 percent and the rental vacancy rate was 4.8 percent.

For owner-occupied housing, the extremely low vacancy rate indicates a very tight market that may be reflected by the demand for higher-end housing and a limited supply of more affordable and varied housing types; consistent with the trend of rising home prices. The aging of the population and out-migration of younger adults may have also contributed to the drop in the vacancy rate since 2010; older adults are more likely to be homeowners while younger adults face challenges with entering the homeowner market.

The rental vacancy rate is on the healthy side of supply and demand (normally considered within a range of 5 to 7 percent) and indicates more unit availability in the market compared to for-sale homes.

The recent increase of multi-family residential in the pipeline may help towards balancing the rising price trend of both the homeownership and rental markets given: a) the slower absorption of housing units since 2010, b) the tighter market for homeownership, and c) the tendency towards higher priced homeownership inventory. More multi-family housing units provide alternative options for housing for those households that cannot afford to purchase a home in Easton. They also provide a greater supply of rental units in the market to stabilize or even decrease rents and subsequently affordability for renters.

Figure 40: Median Gross Rent, Easton Versus Counties, 2023



Since 2000, Easton's median gross rent for occupied rental units has exceeded those of Denton and Cambridge. This consistency demonstrates that Easton has long had a more premium rental market when compared to these other two neighboring communities. The biggest increase in Easton was the period between

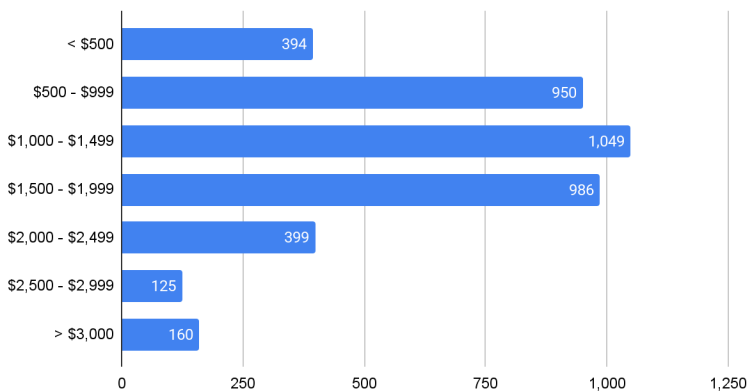
<sup>8</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *Comparative Housing Characteristics* (ACS 5-Year Estimates Comparison Profiles).

2000 and 2010 when median rents increased 74 percent. During this period, 92 percent of the units constructed were single-family detached and attached units. The demand for rental housing, and the limited supply, could have been factors in the large increase in median rent in that decade. While the largest increase occurred between 2000 and 2010, rents continued to rise in the following decade and through 2023<sup>9</sup>.

When comparing with the adjacent counties, Easton's median rent is 94% of Talbot County's but is only 73 percent of Queen Anne's.

When broken down by gross ranges, there are significantly fewer rental options

Figure 41: Easton Gross Rent and Number of Units, 2023



affordable to extremely lower-income households, or those making less than approximately \$25,000 per year. The limited availability of housing at this rent includes impacts to those at-risk of homelessness and those in need of "transitional housing".

There are a relatively substantial number of units in the \$500 - \$999 price range,

which are affordable to households earning less than approximately \$45,000 per year.

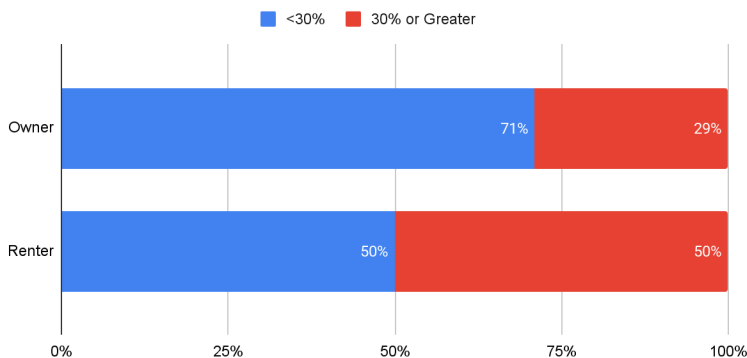
## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

### A. Cost Burdened Households

Cost-burdened households are those that spend a disproportionate amount of their income on housing costs. This financial strain can limit their ability to afford other necessities. Families can be forced to choose between paying their mortgage and paying for other necessities like food, healthcare, transportation, and savings; impacting their overall well-being. A household that spends more than 30% of their gross income on housing is considered cost burdened.

<sup>9</sup> Median rents increased 18% from 2010 to 2020 and 9% from 2000 to 2023.

Figure 42: Easton Cost Burdened Households by Tenure, 2023, ACS 5-Year Estimates

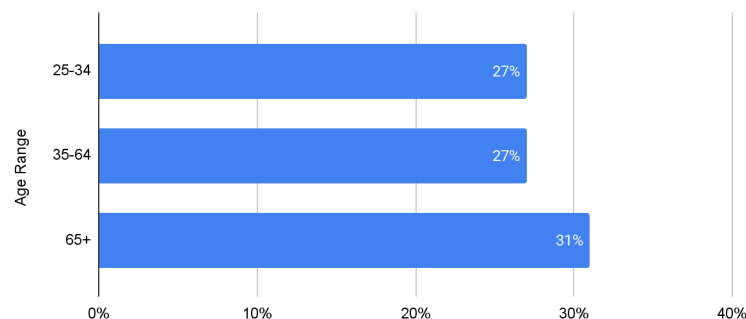


According to 2023 ACS data, 50 percent of occupied households with a mortgage in Easton spend \$2,000 or more on monthly housing costs. However, only 29 percent of these homeowners are considered cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. This suggests a relatively high tolerance for housing costs in Easton.

However, this also indicates that housing costs in Easton are relatively high, even for those considered middle-income. At 80 percent of Easton's 2024 Area Median Income (AMI) of \$98,065, a household should ideally spend no more than \$1,961 per month on housing to avoid being cost burdened. The fact that many homeowners are exceeding this threshold while remaining below the 30% cost-burdened threshold suggests that middle-income households may still be feeling the squeeze and facing affordability challenges when seeking housing in Easton. Indeed, ACA data shows that 62 percent of owner-occupied households making less than \$75,000 in income in the last 12 months are cost-burdened compared to 9 percent of households making \$75,000 or more.

While middle-income homeowners are feeling the squeeze in Easton's housing market, the situation is even more dire for renters, especially those with lower incomes. In 2023, 50 percent of renters were cost-burdened compared to 29 percent of homeowners – a significant difference. This disparity highlights the greater affordability challenges faced by renters in Easton, who are more likely to be spending a disproportionate amount of their income on housing. This can have serious implications for financial stability, housing security, and overall well-being.

Figure 43: Cost Burdened Owner Households by Age of Household Head, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates



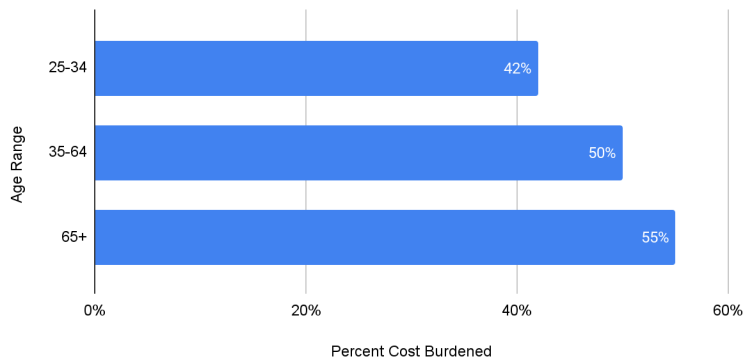
ACA data shows 69 percent of renter households making less than \$75,000 in income in the last 12 months are cost

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burdened. For renter households making less than \$50,000 in the last 12 months, the percentage is 83 percent.

The cost burden for both renters and owners also generally increases with age. Older households, especially renters, appear to be particularly vulnerable to housing cost burden. This could be due to fixed incomes, rising healthcare costs, the death

Figure 44: Cost Burdened Renter Households By Age of Household Head, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates



of a spouse or significant other, or other financial pressures associated with aging. While cost burden is high across all renter age groups, even younger renters (25-34) are significantly burdened. This could impact their ability to save for a down payment and achieve homeownership, invest in their future, or meet other financial goals.

When looking at cost burdened owner and renter households by race, Figures 45 and 46 show significant racial disparities in Easton, with Hispanic households facing the most severe challenges.

White homeowners have the lowest cost burden (24%), followed by Black homeowners (44%), with Hispanic homeowners experiencing the highest cost burden (82%). While Hispanic homeowners have the highest overall cost burden, Black homeowners have a higher percentage of those who are severely cost burdened; defined as spending 50 percent or more of their gross income on housing.

Figure 45: Cost Burdened Owner Households by Race, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

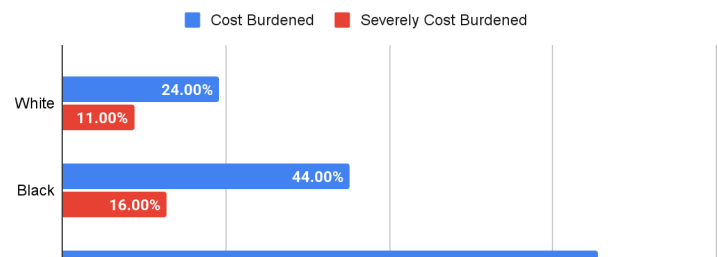
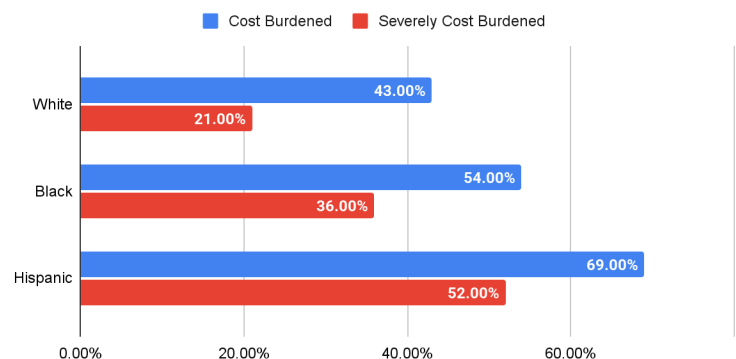


Figure 46: Cost Burdened Renter Households by Race, 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates



White renters have the lowest cost burden (43%), followed by Black

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renters (54%), with Hispanic renters again experiencing the highest cost burden (69%). Hispanic renters also have the highest percentage of those who are severely cost burdened (52%). Black renters also have a high percentage of severely cost burdened households (36%). Across all racial groups, renters experience higher rates of cost burden than owners, further emphasizing the affordability challenges faced by renters in Easton.

These disparities strongly suggest the presence of systemic inequities in Easton's housing market due at least in part to a lack of access to affordable housing. Hispanic households, both owners and renters, appear to be particularly vulnerable to housing cost burden. This could be due to factors such as lower median incomes, limited access to credit, or language barriers. Black homeowners and renters have higher percentages of severe cost burden, indicating that they not only struggle to afford housing but also face significant financial strain as a result. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to also address racial disparities in housing cost burden in Easton to address the specific challenges faced by different racial groups and promote equitable access to affordable housing.

## B. Affordable Home Price

According to the annual Income Limits Summary published by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the FY 2024 Median Family Income (MFI) for Talbot County is \$106,500 for a family of four.<sup>10</sup> The County's MFI is 11 percent higher than the average County MFI for the eastern shore of Maryland (excluding Cecil County) and third highest on the eastern shore, below the counties of Queen Anne's and Kent.

Figure 47: Talbot County Median Family Income, HUD Income Limits

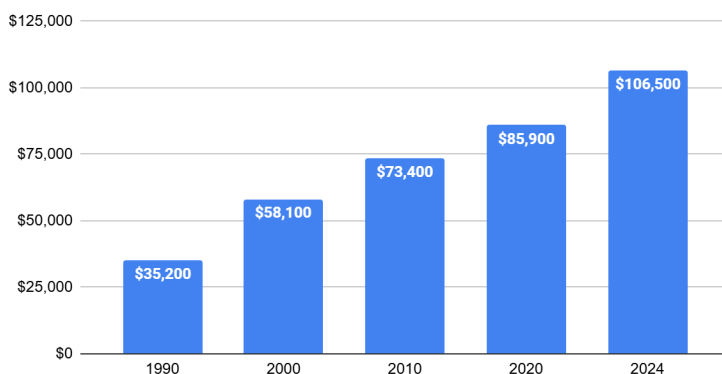


Figure 47 shows the historical growth in Talbot County's MFI. Since 1990, Talbot County families' earnings have increased, showing the overall improvement of economic growth for families. The highest decade of growth was between 1990 and 2000

Community Survey MFY estimate (\$100,321)  
Office projection of the national Consumer



where the County's MFI grew 65 percent. From 1990 to 2024, the County's MFI grew 203 percent.

Using statutory intent and requirements, HUD calculates income limits based on household size and categorizes these limits as Extremely Low Income, Very Low Income, and Low Income. The Summary Table for Talbot County (Table 2 below) income limits are listed in Table 2 below.

The income limits and household sizes based on the MFI are then used by HUD to determine eligibility for assisted housing programs including Public Housing; Section 8 project-based; Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher; Section 202 housing for the elderly; and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities programs.

It's important to note that the Easton Affordable Housing Board (Board) uses a formula to adjust Talbot County's MFI when determining affordability limits for Town of Easton housing programs. This adjustment is done to reflect differences in median income between the Town and Talbot County. For FY 2024, the Towns adjusted MFI is \$98,065.

**Table 7: HUD FY 2024 Income Limits Summary**

| FY 2024<br>Income<br>Limit Area | Median Family Income<br><a href="#">Click for More Detail</a> | FY 2024 Income Limit<br>Category                                              | Persons in Family |        |        |               |        |        |         |         |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
|                                 |                                                               |                                                                               | 1                 | 2      | 3      | 4             | 5      | 6      | 7       | 8       |
| Talbot<br>County,<br>MD         | \$106,500                                                     | Very Low (50%) Income<br>Limits (\$)<br><a href="#">Click for More Detail</a> | 37,300            | 42,600 | 47,950 | <b>53,250</b> | 57,550 | 61,800 | 66,050  | 70,300  |
|                                 |                                                               | Extremely Low Income<br>Limits (\$)*<br><a href="#">Click for More Detail</a> | 22,400            | 25,600 | 28,800 | <b>31,950</b> | 36,580 | 41,960 | 47,340  | 52,720  |
|                                 |                                                               | Low (80%) Income Limits<br>(\$)<br><a href="#">Click for More Detail</a>      | 59,650            | 68,200 | 76,700 | <b>85,200</b> | 92,050 | 98,850 | 105,650 | 112,500 |

A four-person family earning 100% of the 2024 Talbot County Area Median Income, adjusted for Easton, paying 35% of their monthly gross household income for mortgage principal, interest, property taxes, and property insurance (PITI); Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI); and Home Owner Association (HOA) dues, together with a 5% down payment (assuming a 6.95% 30-year fixed mortgage rate), can afford a home at a sales price of \$277,000<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> HOA and property insurance fees are each assumed at \$200 per month. Real property taxes are calculated with a factor of 1.29 per \$100 based on an assessed value of \$419,647, which is a 3-year trailing average of the ZHVI.

According to a 2024 ©MarketStats by Showing Time report provided by the Mid-Shore Board of Realtors, the median sold price for an Easton home in 2024 was \$450,000. The affordable sales price of \$277,000 is 38 percent lower than the 2024 median sales price.

Table 8 also shows that even the average sold price for an attached home, such as a townhome, exceeded the maximum affordable price for a family of four earning 100% of Easton's AMI by 21 percent. To afford a home valued at \$420,000, a four-person household would need to earn 140 percent of Easton AMI, or approximately \$137,000 in annual income.

**Table 8: Easton Maximum Affordable Sales Price vs. Median and Average Sold Price**

| <b>Maximum Affordable Sales Price<br/>(Family of Four @ 100% AMI)</b> | <b>Median Sold Price</b> | <b>Average Sold Price</b> | <b>Average Attached Sold Price</b> | <b>Average Detached Sold Price</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>\$277,000</b>                                                      | \$450,000                | \$736,186                 | \$350,499                          | \$811,964                          |

### **C. Affordable Rental Price**

HUD also calculates Fair Market Rents (FMRs) to determine payment standard amounts for various housing rental programs including the Housing Choice Voucher Program. For Talbot County, the FMRs are calculated starting with a base rent using the average of 2018-2022 ACS estimates, multiplied by adjustment factors to determine the FY 25 FMR. This number is then adjusted if it falls below the Maryland state minimum and then calculates bedroom ratios and multiplies these by the adjusted two-bedroom rent to produce FMRs for unit sizes other than two bedrooms. The FMRs for unit sizes based on the number of bedrooms is listed in Table 7 below.

**Table 9: FY 2025 FMRs by Unit Bedrooms**

|             | <b>Efficiency</b> | <b>One-Bedroom</b> | <b>Two-Bedroom</b> | <b>Three-Bedroom</b> | <b>Four-Bedroom</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| FY 2025 FMR | \$1,210           | \$1,257            | \$1,392            | \$1,951              | \$2,338             |

PMI is based on a credit score in the 660 - 679 range at 1.23% of the loan amount annually. The interest rate is based on the Freddie Mac Priority Mortgage Market Survey U.S. weekly averages for a 30-yr FRM as of 2/01/2025.

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A renter household is cost-burdened if they pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent. For renters paying 30% of their monthly gross income on rent, net of an assumed monthly utility allowance of \$100, a household of four earning 60% of Easton’s AMI (\$58,839) can afford a rent of about \$1,371 for a three bedroom apartment.

Zumper reports that the average monthly rent as of March 2025 for a three-bedroom rental is \$2,400, which is 10 percent higher than the previous year in Easton. 75 percent of rents range from \$1,501 to \$3,000<sup>12</sup>. The median rent for a two-bedroom is \$2,499. For all bedroom counts, the median monthly rent is \$2,549, which is 27% higher than the national average. For apartments, the average rent price is \$2,699<sup>13</sup>. The average monthly rent for a 2-bedroom apartment is \$2,044.

Table 9 below shows that a family of four making 60% of Easton’s AMI cannot afford to rent a one, two, or three bedroom apartment in Easton without being cost burdened. To afford a median monthly rent of \$2,525, a household will need to earn at least 110% of Easton’s AMI without being cost-burdened.

**Table 10: Easton Maximum Affordable Rental Price vs. Median and Average Rental Price**

| <b>Maximum Affordable Rental Price<br/>(Family of Four @ 60% AMI)</b> | <b>Median Rental Price</b> | <b>Median Rental Price 2-Bedroom</b> | <b>Median Rental Price 3-Bedroom</b> | <b>Average Rental Price - Apartment</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>\$1,471</b>                                                        | \$2,549                    | \$2,499                              | \$2,400                              | \$2,674                                 |

## EXCLUSIONARY ZONING

<sup>12</sup> Median rent and rent ranges are based on Zumper inventory in the last 30 days.

<sup>13</sup> The average excludes rentals for rooms, condos, and homes.

Exclusionary zoning refers to zoning regulations designed to limit the types of housing and land uses within a specific area, often for what are seemingly good reasons. This is usually achieved through policies and regulations like minimum lot and building sizes, restrictions on multi-family housing, building height limitations, all of which can increase housing costs and reduce the affordability of housing. However, the unintended effect is the exclusion of certain demographics, particularly lower-income individuals and families, from those areas.

Take for example a legally created lot that is a minimum of one-half an acre, situated within a zoning district specifically designated for single-family residences with minimum lot sizes per dwelling unit. The buyer of that lot has several theoretical construction options: a) a modest 1,200 sq. ft. starter home catering to first-time homebuyers or a re-starter home for a retiree on a fixed income looking to downsize, b) the more dense option of seven townhomes that could provide more affordable entry-level housing, or c) a sprawling very large home designed for affluent buyers. While the developer of that lot would likely realize a significantly higher overall revenue by constructing and selling three townhomes, the existing zoning regulations strictly preclude this higher-density housing type; either by requiring larger minimum lot sizes, smaller lot coverages, lower densities, prohibiting varying housing types or a combination of these restrictions. These regulations, perhaps intended to maintain a certain low-density character within the neighborhood, effectively limit the developer's options. Consequently, in order to maximize their profit within the permissible constraints<sup>14</sup>, the developer will almost certainly choose to build a very large home, likely incorporating high-end amenities and finishes to appeal to a specific, wealthier segment of the market and achieve a sizable profit on a single unit. While each townhome might have yielded a smaller individual profit, the total of seven units would likely generate significantly higher overall revenue compared to a single large home.

The type of housing a community aspires to isn't necessarily the housing a community needs. While there is undoubtedly a market for larger and more affluent homes in Easton and Talbot County, catering to established families and retirees seeking spacious properties, there is also a likely demand from essential workers, young professionals, growing families seeking affordable homeownership, and empty nesters desiring less upkeep, to reside in neighborhoods with a mix and choice of housing. The key is ensuring these diverse housing types are of an appropriate scale and character with each other.

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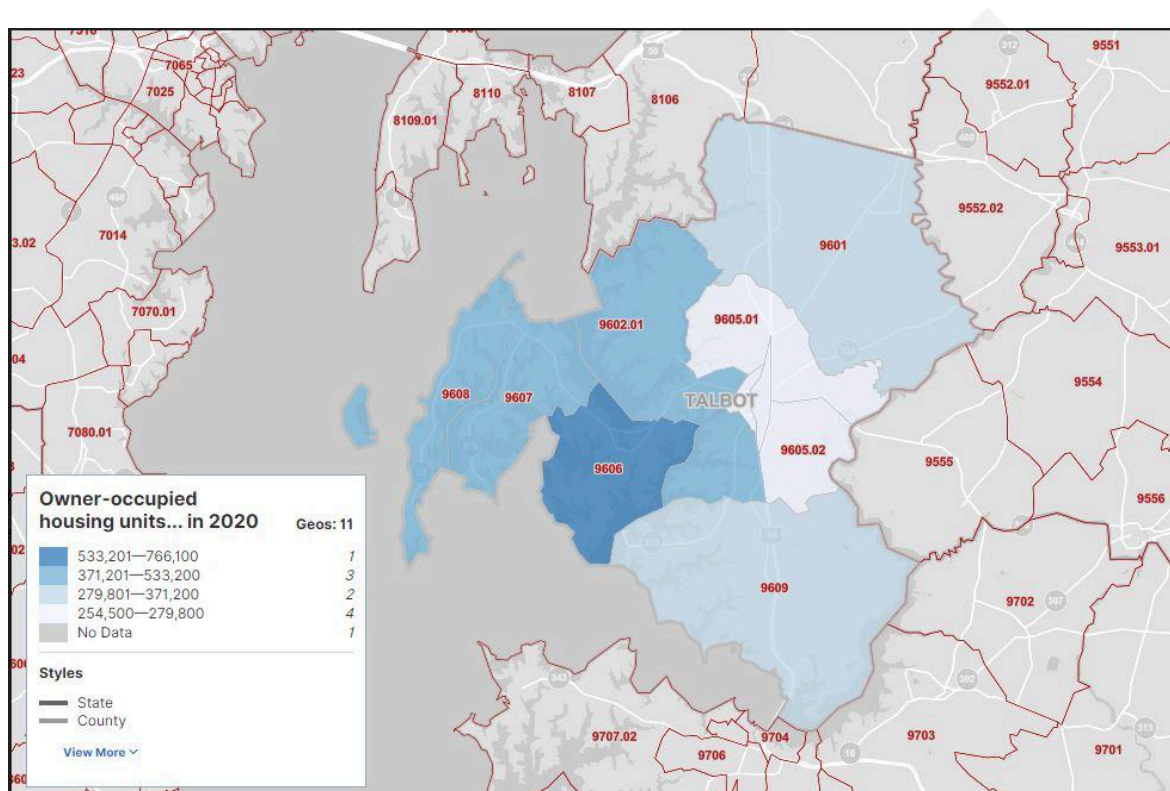
<sup>14</sup> The permissible regulatory constraints which limit profit are on top of additional soft and hard costs for land use approvals, permitting and impact fees, and construction.

This scenario highlights how zoning, while intended to guide development, can inadvertently shape the types of housing available and potentially impact affordability and community diversity. There are virtually no opportunities for more affordable housing in the unincorporated areas of Talbot County. The County's comprehensive plan places high value on the protection of the shoreline, waterway, and agricultural lands, equally important goals as affordable housing. The County's plan to accomplish this is twofold: restrict the extension of sewer outside of development and growth areas that surround the towns and to take a restrictive and exclusionary approach toward the use of land over which it has zoning authority.

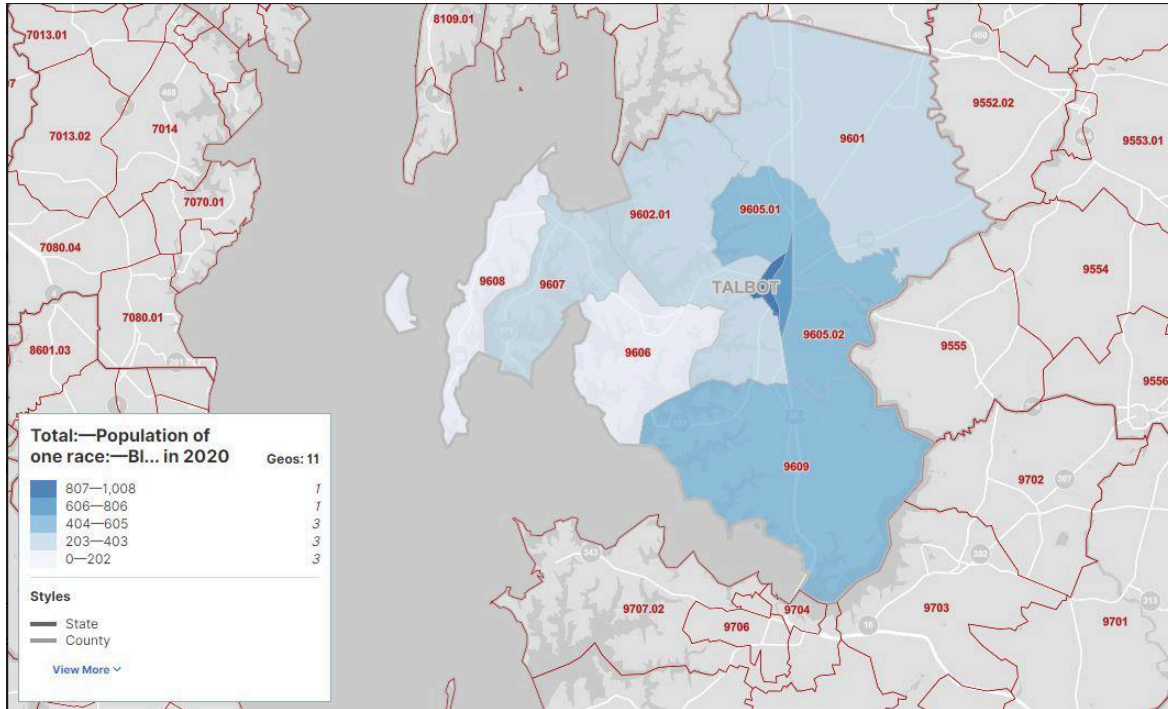
To implement these objectives, the County's zoning regulations prohibit all housing types except primarily single-family detached housing, which limits housing options. The zoning districts are characterized as very low density, further augmented by low maximum height restrictions. The bulk requirements for each lot include large minimum lot sizes and low maximum lot coverage requirements, which makes real estate more scarce and increases construction costs and land prices.

The end effect is housing segregation due to the cost of land and development supporting only new higher-end housing in the unincorporated areas of Talbot County. And as the graphics show below, housing segregation is the door to other types of segregation (see Figures 47, 48, and 49 below).

**Figure 47: Talbot County Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in 2020 by Census Tract**

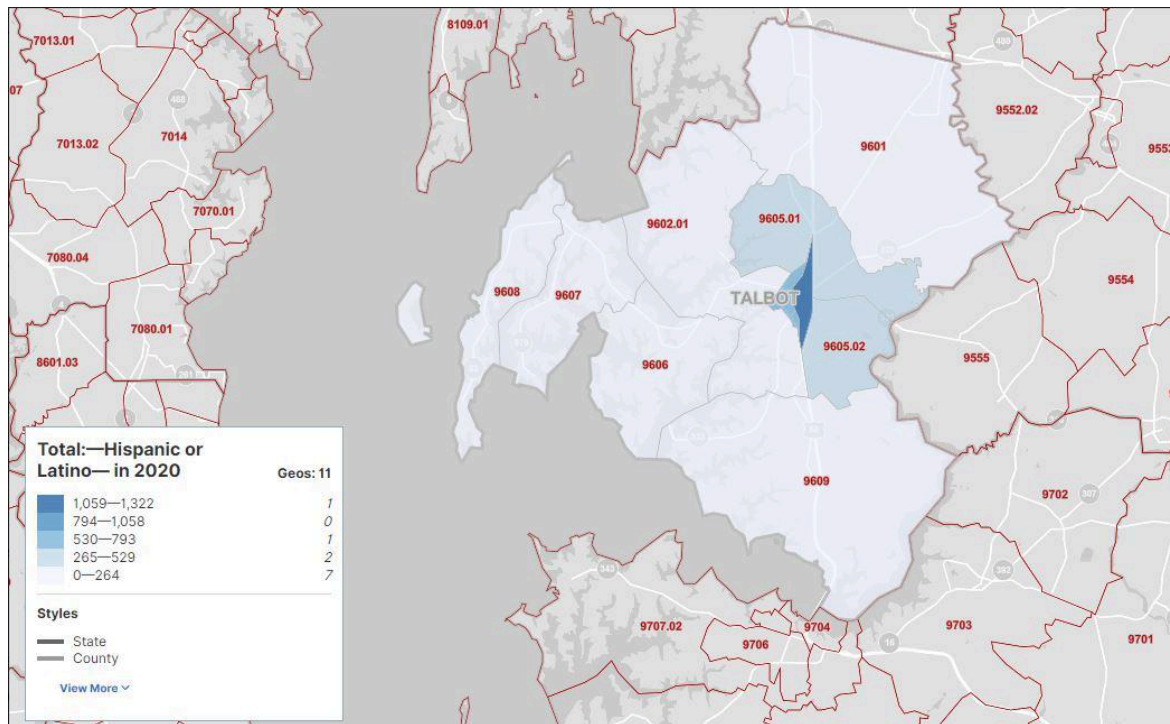


**Figure 48: Talbot County Black Population by Census Tract**



**Figure 49: Talbot County Hispanic Population by Census Tract**





As for the remaining towns outside of Easton, there are extremely limited areas for future growth and development adjacent to Oxford and St. Michaels. While Lakeside at Trappe, the new development in the Town of Trappe, will eventually provide approximately 2,500 homes, the approval of the Planned Unit Development by the Town of Trappe did not require any proffers for affordable or workforce housing.

The cumulative effect of exclusionary zoning comes with negative consequences:

- **Displacement** as lower-earning households are forced to move out of Easton and Talbot County altogether
- **Economic segregation** with wealthier residents living in separate neighborhoods with better amenities
- **Reduced individuality** resulting from displacement as lower income residents are forced out of the community
- **Negative impacts on businesses and the local economy** as the displacement of lower-income workers and the inability of essential workers to live in Easton leads to labor shortages and the difficulty to attract and retain businesses



- **Homogenization** from the influx of higher-income residents and the loss of local businesses and cultural offerings that cater to a diverse population

## FAIR HOUSING

As described earlier, in 2021, the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code was amended to require that comprehensive plans contain a fair housing assessment to ensure they “affirmatively further fair housing”. Fair housing refers to the ability of persons with similar incomes to have the same housing choices regardless of the following characteristics: race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, familial status, or disability. “Affirmatively furthering fair housing”, per Section 2-401 of the Housing and Community Development Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, means preventing discrimination and taking actions aimed at overcoming patterns of segregation and fostering communities free from barriers that restrict access to housing and opportunity based on the above mentioned characteristics.

The Housing Goals and Objectives found at the end of this chapter include a variety of recommended actions aimed at “affirmatively furthering fair housing”. These actions are intended to preserve Easton’s existing affordable housing stock, produce an adequate supply of new housing, and prevent the displacement of low to moderate income families.

The Town of Easton is committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable community where all residents have equal access to housing opportunities, free from unlawful discrimination. This commitment is fundamental to our vision of a vibrant, diverse, and thriving town.

As such, the Town of Easton affirms its dedication to upholding and affirmatively furthering fair housing in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Maryland Fair Housing Act, and any applicable local ordinances.

It is the policy of the Town of Easton to prohibit discrimination in housing based on any of the following protected characteristics:

- Race (including traits associated with race like hair texture, afro hairstyles, and protective hairstyles)
- Color
- Religion

- Sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity)
- Familial Status (families with children under 18, pregnant individuals, and those securing legal custody of a child under 18)
- National Origin
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Marital Status
- Source of Income
- Military Status

The Town of Easton will actively work to eliminate discriminatory housing practices, promote diverse and inclusive neighborhoods, and ensure that all residents have the opportunity to choose housing that meets their needs and preferences within the Town. We are dedicated to fair and equal treatment for all residents and will integrate these principles into our planning, policies, and community development efforts.

### **POTENTIAL NEW HOUSING PROGRAMS/POLICIES**

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

One such similar effort that was at one time discussed in Easton is the establishment of a Self-help Housing Program. This program would be modeled after a highly successful one that operates on the lower Eastern Shore under the direction of former MD State Delegate Rudy Cane. Self-help housing is similar to

the Habitat model. It has been described by the USDA as a program used primarily to help very low- and low-income households construct their own homes. The program is targeted to families who are unable to buy clean, safe housing through conventional methods. Families participating in a mutual self-help project perform a minimum amount (for example 65 percent) of the construction labor on each other's homes under qualified supervision. The savings from the reduction in labor costs allows otherwise ineligible families to own their homes. If families cannot meet their mortgage payments during the construction phase, the funds for these payments can be included in the loan. The Town attempted to obtain funding to establish a local version of this Program through the initial Community Legacy Program. Unfortunately this aspect of the Town's request was not funded at that time.

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

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

One way to combat this situation is to require that all residential development contain a minimum percentage of housing at various price points.

Something along this line was originally proposed in the Easton Village on the Tred Avon project. In this case the developer set aside 10% of both the single family attached and detached units for “affordable” housing. Furthermore, the developer promised that these units would be indistinguishable from the market rate houses and that they would be incorporated amongst these units throughout the development (i.e. they will not be isolated and segregated). There is even a resale provision such that the units could not be resold for more than was paid for them plus an annual appreciation factor. Over the development of this project though, this original affordable housing proposal came to be replaced by contributions to the Town’s Affordable Housing Fund in lieu of constructing the units within Easton Village. One of the primary reasons for the change was that while the units may have been initially affordable, they resulted in a large financial burden to these homeowners in the form of the real estate tax bills and Homeowners Association dues.

Another option that has been used from time to time is to require developers to either contribute to an Affordable Housing Fund or to construct affordable housing units off-site from their project. At least some of the affordable units originally required to be built in Easton Village were subsequently provided by a variation of this alternative.

The desire to replicate this program more uniformly across the Town in virtually all development projects is what led the Affordable Housing Board to consider Inclusionary Zoning for Easton. The 2010 Plan Update stated in its Housing Element, on this issue of Inclusionary Zoning, “As this [lack of affordable housing] is as much, if not more, of a problem today as it was in 2004, work should continue towards the development and adoption of a workable Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance.”

Such work has continued. Through the initial efforts of Easton’s Affordable

Housing Board, to the Attainable Housing Task Force, the possibility, benefits and challenges of adopting an Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance have been analyzed and debated. The outcome of this effort is a proposed Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance currently (as of 2/12/25) pending before the Easton Town Council. Other potential policies/programs that are identified for consideration include the following:

- Expansion of Missing Middle Housing types, to provide greater variety of housing and more affordable housing options.
- Creation of Traditional Neighborhood Zoning, to allow, by-right, neighborhoods built following traditional development patterns, such as more varied (and smaller) lot sizes, limited mixed uses, smaller setbacks,, etc.
- Modification of the Town's development review process to expedite or simplify the approval process for projects that provide affordable housing aligned with Town goals and policies.

## **HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

- 🔊 Continue to adequately fund, staff, and train the Town Building Inspection

Department and strengthen the Town's Rental Housing Inspection Program.

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

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

Objectives:

- ☞ Support the efforts of the Talbot Housing Authority and the Easton Affordable Housing Board to provide both home-ownership and rental opportunities for individuals/families of low income.
- ☞ Consider amendments to the Easton Zoning Ordinance to make the development of apartments more attractive to private sector developers and to allow flexibility in rehabilitating existing and/or historic buildings for an alternative use.
- ☞ Work in partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc (or any similar organization) to find sites for new homes.
- ☞ Establish a Town-initiated self-help housing program.

- ☞ Insure the development of Smart Neighborhoods by encouraging and facilitating new infill development, including manufactured homes, on vacant or underutilized land within areas currently served by adequate infrastructure and public facilities.
- ☞ Institute some form of Inclusionary Zoning.

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

Objectives:

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

Goal: To partner in a countywide affordable housing effort.

Objectives:

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

#### POSSIBLE OTHER GOALS:

- Increasing overall supply of housing.
  - Removing regulatory barriers to home construction.
  - Providing financial relief (i.e., reduced or waived permit fees, impact fees, capital charges, etc.) pursuant to provision of certain types and amounts of housing.
- Incentivizing increased variety of housing types.
- Encourage incremental or small-scale projects to provide housing options, such as missing middle housing types, as a means to produce housing that is affordable to a wider range of people.
- Ensure a more heterogeneous mix of housing types of price points.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### INTRODUCTION

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

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

A Community Facilities element is a common component of Comprehensive Plans and has long been required by the State of Maryland. More recent required elements, such as parts of the Water Resources and Municipal Growth Elements, would seem to overlap with the Community Facilities chapter. The key is that all requirements are addressed, regardless of which chapter it occurs in. With regards to the statutory guidance for Community Facilities though, the direction is fairly straightforward, and states, in total, that it shall include the following:

**(a)** On a schedule that extends as far into the future as is reasonable, a community facilities element shall propose the most appropriate and desirable patterns for the general location, character, and extent of public and semipublic buildings, land, and facilities.

**(b)** A community facilities element may include: (emphasis added)

- (1)** places of worship;
- (2)** fire stations;
- (3)** hospitals;
- (4)** institutions;
- (5)** jails;
- (6)** libraries;
- (7)** parks and recreation areas;
- (8)** police stations;
- (9)** schools and other educational facilities;
- (10)** cultural facilities;
- (11)** social welfare and medical facilities; and
- (12)** other public offices or administrative facilities.

Some of these community facilities will be discussed below. Others are addressed elsewhere in the Plan. The important thing is that the needs for any new or expanded public facilities are based on our growth projections and are consistent with one another.

## **BACKGROUND**

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

## **UTILITIES**

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

The Easton Utilities Commission, a three member board, two of which must be Easton residents with the third only residing in the electric service territory, who are appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the Town Council,

governs Easton Utilities. A full-time President/CEO has day-to-day responsibilities for executing the policies and regulations as determined by the Commission.

## **ELECTRICITY**

Electricity first came to Easton in 1887 but was not under town jurisdiction until 1915. Electric service is now provided by Easton Utilities to over 11,000 customers in a 54 square mile service territory through onsite generators and through the PJM Interconnection, LLC. Easton residents benefit from this arrangement because Easton Utilities is able to choose the most economical and reliable source of electric power on an hourly basis, either through PJM, through its own generators, or a combination of these sources. Easton's installed electrical generation capacity is 66 megawatts, which is more than adequate to meet the town's current demand.

Until recently, Easton Utilities provided all of Easton with electrical service. However, some recent annexations fall partially within the service areas of other electricity providers. As the Town grows, this will be the case more frequently. The two other providers of electricity in Easton are Choptank Electrical Cooperative and Delmarva Power and Light. Now with multiple service providers, the need for coordination and cooperation among the various electric companies in order to continue to provide Easton with the most optimum service is vital. For example, the various companies can work together to transfer service areas when necessary to avoid situations where single subdivisions or projects would be served by two (or three) different companies. Electric service companies must agree to any service territory boundary changes before they may be made.

## **WATER AND SEWER**

The Easton Utilities Commission also provides water and sewer services for the Town. The Easton Utilities Commission is responsible for the operation,

construction and maintenance of the Town's water and sewer systems. It is anticipated that the Town will remain the sole supplier of water and sewer services in Easton throughout the plan period. The Town's water source currently is derived from wells tapping into deep fresh water aquifers. The Town has supplied water service to its residents since 1914.

The Town of Easton first constructed a sanitary sewage collection system in 1911. Through the subsequent years, as the Town grew so too did the need for additional capacity and treatment. In 1938, a treatment plant was constructed along the banks of the Choptank River. In 1988, construction was completed on an innovative treatment facility. This new facility utilizes an Overland Flow Treatment Process which at the time of construction was the fifth largest such system in the United States. In 2007 a new state-of-the-art enhanced nutrient removal treatment facility was brought online. It has adequate capacity to serve the Town to the year 2051, as given in the Municipal Growth Element.

Extensions of the Town's public water and sewer systems are currently based upon a County-wide Water and Sewer Facilities Plan and "on demand as required" by new development. In accordance with Easton's Water and Wastewater Tariffs, the cost of extending sewer and water to any new development is borne in full by the developer. And, the property to be served must be within the Town corporate limit.

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

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

## **NATURAL GAS**

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

The town's gas supply is now piped in from the Federalsburg, Maryland area, and distributed to over 4,500 customers through 100 miles of steel and plastic mains. The Gas Department distributes an average of 525,000,000 cubic feet of natural gas per year to Easton's residents living in its 8.5 square mile service territory.

## **INTERNET SERVICE**

Easton Velocity, a service of Easton Utilities, is the Town of Easton's municipally owned broadband service providing high-speed internet, cable, and phone services to residents and businesses. Easton Velocity combines a hybrid fiber-coax network in town with an expanding fiber network to offer a wide range of services over a state-of-the-art fiber-optic network at speeds that rival or surpass those available anywhere in the area. Customized options, utilizing 100% fiber optic connectivity are available to commercial customers with current speeds up to 10 GB.

Easton Velocity is committed to delivering the best customer experience backed by professional, local, and responsive technical support and customer care. Easton Velocity maintains competitive, market-responsive pricing tiers with positive customer satisfaction. The service plays a key role in supporting digital equity, remote work, education, healthcare access, and economic development.

As a public utility, Easton Velocity is uniquely positioned to support Easton's long-term goals for connectivity, growth, and quality of life.

## **MEDICAL/HOSPITAL FACILITIES**

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

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

In recent years the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) has made a decision to seek a site for a new, state-of-the-art regional medical facility. They studied a site in the Wye Mill's area as well as a new Easton site located between the Talbot Community Center and the current Town boundary adjacent to the airport. Late in 2008, UMMS announced that they had selected the Easton site. However, for a number of reasons the project was not pursued at that time. It was dormant until the middle of this Plan Update. The project has now received local re-approval of the site plan for the facility and State approval to move forward with the project.

This is terrific news for Easton and its residents. In addition to the medical care that is provided, the Hospital is also a major employer and attracts numerous

labs, doctor's offices, physical rehabilitation centers, pharmacies, etc... to Easton. This is both more service for Easton residents, as well as more medically-related jobs.

Remaining to be seen is whether these businesses will move from the Idlewild/Dutchman's Lane area up to the vicinity of the new hospital and what becomes of the current hospital facility. These are issues that will need to be explored in detail as the prospective move comes closer to reality. Also a major unknown at this time is what the impact of the new facility will be on the overall quality of healthcare services for Easton (and Mid-Shore) residents. Many areas of the country are currently suffering from a lack of such services, especially rural areas. The concern becomes all the more acute in Easton and Talbot County where the median age is so high. The issue was clearly on the mind of the public as a number of comments on this topic were made throughout the public input phase of the Plan, despite this not being a common concern in most Comprehensive Plans since there is not, traditionally, a lot the local government can do about the issue.

One thing the Town should do is to be proactive in planning for the eventual relocation and reuse of the current hospital site as well as the area of concentrated UMMS and other medically-related services, primarily on Idlewild and Dutchman's Lane. The hospital site and immediate environs is a logical candidate for a Small Area Plan. The Idlewild/Dutchman's corridors may likewise be the subject of a future Small Area Plan. Alternatively, the zoning classification of this area could be evaluated to determine its suitability for eventual redevelopment in a manner deemed desirable by the Town.

Finally, as an illustration of the importance of internal consistency amongst the various chapters of the Plan, it is worth noting that the issues discussed in the Housing Chapter concerning affordability issues for an ever growing segment of the Town's workforce, is clearly a concern with regards to employees of the Hospital specifically, and the healthcare industry in general. Advancing programs that ultimately supply more affordable housing options in Easton will serve not only potential future healthcare workers, but can also open the door for those who

presently commute to Easton for their jobs to move to the community. This could also have added transportation benefits, as well as helping to address the issue of understaffed medical offices, an oft cited concern in the early public input phase of this Plan Update.

## **SOLID WASTE FACILITIES**

The citizens of Easton receive collection of their solid waste from the Town. The Town of Easton in turn contracts with Talbot County to dispose of this waste at the Mid-Shore Regional Landfill located, since 2011, in Caroline County which replaced the previous facility on Barkers Landing Road, southeast of town. In 1993, the Town adopted a residential disposal fee to cover the tipping charges associated with solid waste disposal at the landfill.

Facilities, in the form of "igloos", for recycling are located at the former landfill and at several sites in and around Easton. In addition, Easton provides curbside recycling service to its residents.

## **SETTING THE STANDARD WITH PUBLIC BUILDINGS**

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

***People have long understood that public buildings can help nurture feelings of heritage and community that enrich a nation and its people. Public buildings and spaces create identity and sense of place. They give communities something to remember and admire. The challenge facing public***



***architecture is to provide every generation with structures that link them with their past, fill them with pride, and reinforce their sense of belonging.***

***Public buildings should set the standard in a community. Public buildings with civic stature, quality materials, and prominent settings project a sense of permanence and human scale that expresses the dignity and importance of public institutions.***

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

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

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

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

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



*The Easton Utilities Commission's Customer Service Center*

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

### **OBJECTIVES:**

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

- ✓ Expand opportunities for Town residents to participate in recycling programs.
- ✓ Encourage a college to locate a general purpose or specialized satellite campus in Easton.

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Construct public facilities with materials and in a style such that they are generally among the finest buildings in Easton.
- ✓ Build public facilities that are large enough and have ample opportunities for expansion, in order to ensure that they will remain for a very long time.
- ✓ Locate public buildings in, or in close proximity to, the historic Town Center of Easton (one exception may be for smaller "sub-stations" which should be located in outlying neighborhoods, nearer the population they are intended to serve).

- ✓ Encourage Talbot County to locate their public buildings in or near the Town Center as well.
- ✓ Investigate the need for a new Town Office Building or the feasibility of an expansion of the existing building.

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## 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

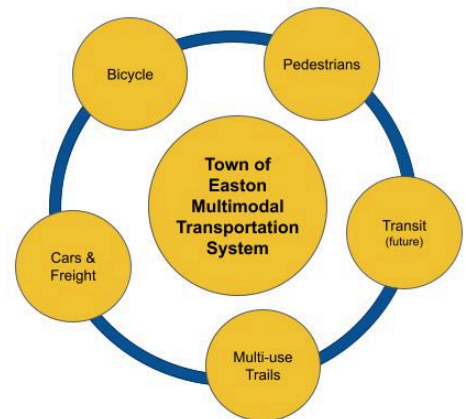


Town's 12,232 workers at that time, 9,190 lived outside of Town and commuted into Town for work. 2,322 commuted from Easton for work.

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.

### **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.

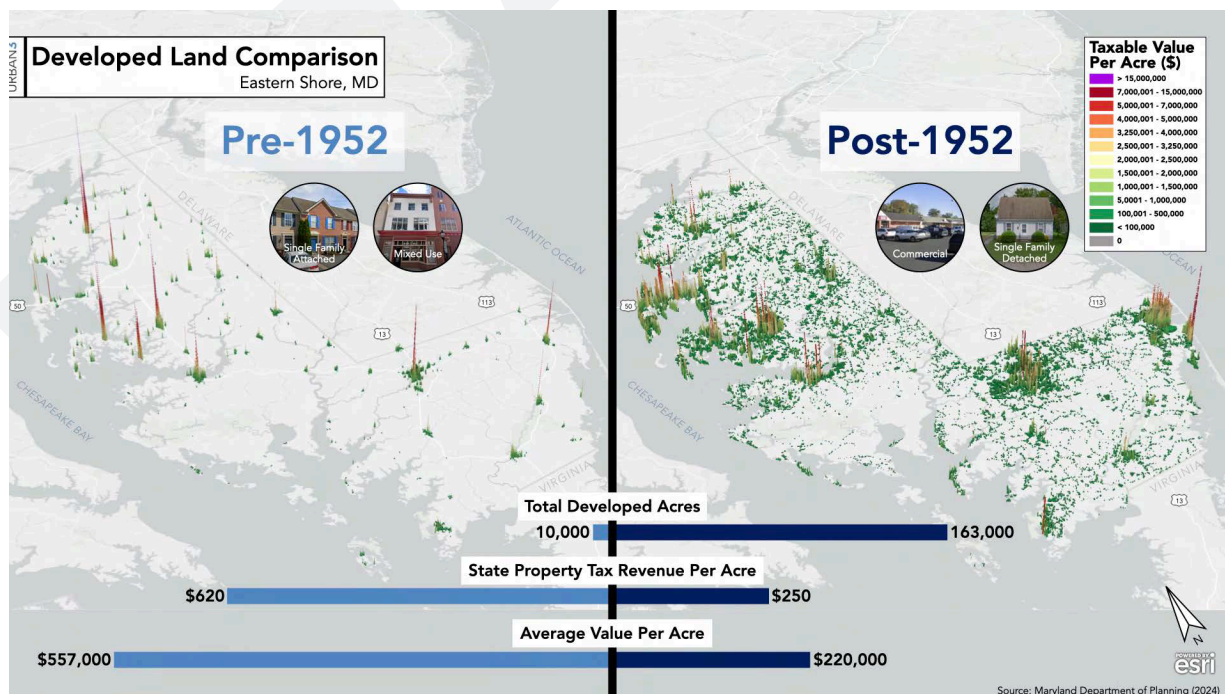
### **Road System**

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.

The Bay Bridge and dualization of Route 50 not only connected the Eastern Shore to the Western Shore in a significantly more convenient manner, it clearly facilitated a change in development patterns. While originally generally located outside the built-up portion of incorporated communities, growth, especially commercial growth, migrated to the corridor. Residential development “backfilled” the land located between Route 50 and the historic development located in a tighter circle around Downtown. This development tended to be more automobile-centric and strictly residential in nature, a trend that has proliferated throughout much of the development that has occurred since.

Figure \_\_\_\_ below is from the Urban3 Study described earlier in this Plan. This particular illustration depicts the fiscal characteristics of land on the Eastern Shore with improvements made before and after the Bay Bridge opened in 1952.



The statistics are notable in several ways. One is the relative paucity of developed land prior to 1952. The other is the degree to which the Value per

acre of such lands exceeds that of lands developed after 1952. Considered together these two statistics suggest the strong correlation between transportation/access and development and the greater value of more traditional forms of development as opposed to more recent suburban development.

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 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.

Planning for potential road improvements, not to mention new roads, is a challenge. Not only are such projects inherently expensive, but they may involve

multiple jurisdictions. Within the corporate limits there are not only Town of Easton roads, but also those of Talbot County and the State of Maryland. Each of these jurisdictions may have a somewhat different perspective and objective regarding their road(s) within Easton. Route 50 is the obvious example of this, whereby the State's objective for this segment of highway is largely to maximize efficiency of travel from the Western Shore to Ocean City. On the other hand, Easton and Talbot County view Route 50 as the major arterial of our road network and recognize the local priority of minimizing the disruption of east-west crossing of Route 50, and all three jurisdictions are interested in enhancing safety along the corridor. Because of this challenge, coordination, sharing of information, and advance planning are of utmost importance.

When planning for our road system, it is also important to remember that US Route 50 is not just a significant thoroughfare for personal travel, but it is also increasingly a major freight route. The State of Maryland has documented this aspect of travel in the corridor in a 2022 Report ("Rural Opportunities to Use Traffic Technology Enhancements (ROUTE) on US 50"). This report describes the issue as follows:

*ROUTE 50 averages 10,000 trucks per day, which significantly increases during vacation travel months. According to Maryland Roadway Performance Tool (MRPT) 2019 data, the ROUTE 50 corridor supports over \$14 billion in commodity flow per year. Annual delays cost truckers over 107,000 hours which translates to \$51 million in wasted fuel and time. This impacts productivity, jobs, and economic growth. Freight movement and freight-related-industry-jobs support farm-to-market agricultural goods movement to supply the nation's food sources, and tourism on the Eastern Shore. Freight industries on the Eastern Shore supported by US 50 are extractive and important for the nation's food sources.*

*The ROUTE 50 corridor is the most direct route to major freight generating sources such as the Port of Baltimore, warehouse and distribution hubs in Laurel, Maryland, and other critical markets, particularly for the type of freight both needed on the eastern*

*shore, the Delmarva peninsula and that which is exported to other markets. The beach areas are significant tourist draws requiring goods to support tourism, and the Delmarva peninsula is a top supplier of poultry and food processing products that typically ship by truck to major markets on the western shore. Another important need for ROUTE 50 is to support homeland security and advancing technology deployments related to Wallops Island in Virginia. This is a location important to space and technology. ROUTE 50 is the link between these facilities and military and technology industries on Maryland's western shore.*

## **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. Complete Streets are roadways designed and operated to safely accommodate all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities. They prioritize accessibility and safety for everyone, not just those in vehicles. This approach moves away from a car-centric design to one that balances the needs of all users. Elements of a Complete Streets system may include (as applicable) sidewalks, bike lanes, special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, and traffic calming measures, such as curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, and roundabouts.

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:

**\*\*\*NOTE: ADD GANTT CHART\*\*\***

*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 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

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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 former Town Public Works Facility (now a Waterfront Park), the County Public Works/Emergency Management Offices, 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 relocating. 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

DRAFT

## 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. Essentially, this has been the case to date as improvements have been made to the segment of Marlboro Avenue located between the Parkway and Glebe Road. Initially, a traffic signal was installed at the Parkway/Marlboro intersection and more recently sidewalks have been added and improved. It may also be possible and logical to take actions to advance this project, but initially at a pedestrian/bicycle scale. For example, this might involve east-west Trail extensions at strategic locations, rather than building new complete streets. This approach would be less expensive and, since it would require less right-of-way, would likely have greater flexibility with regards to potential routes.

#### **(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.

## 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 link planning with 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

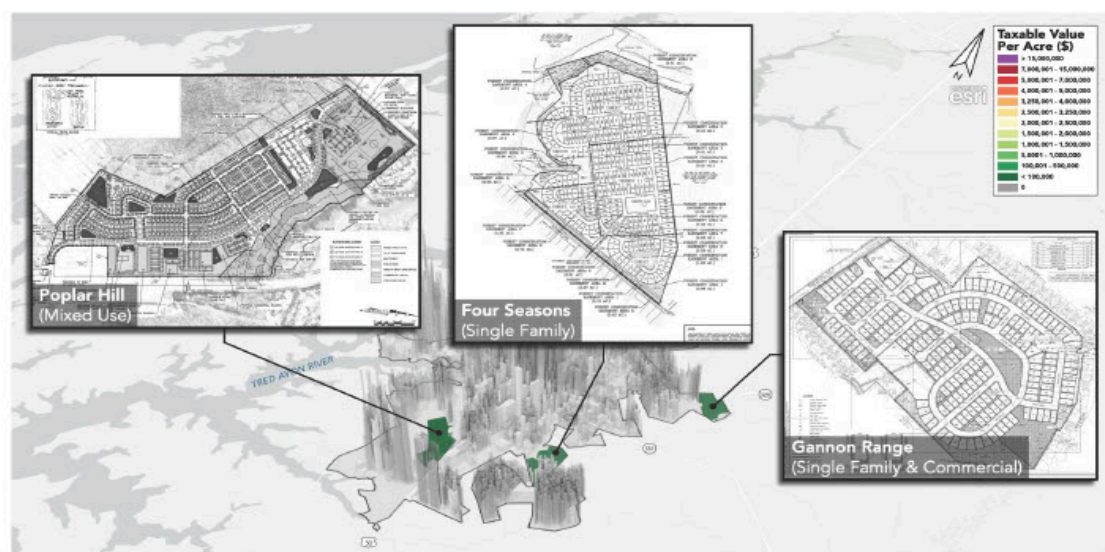


Figure 15. Example site plans used for projections scenarios for the Town of Easton  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

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.



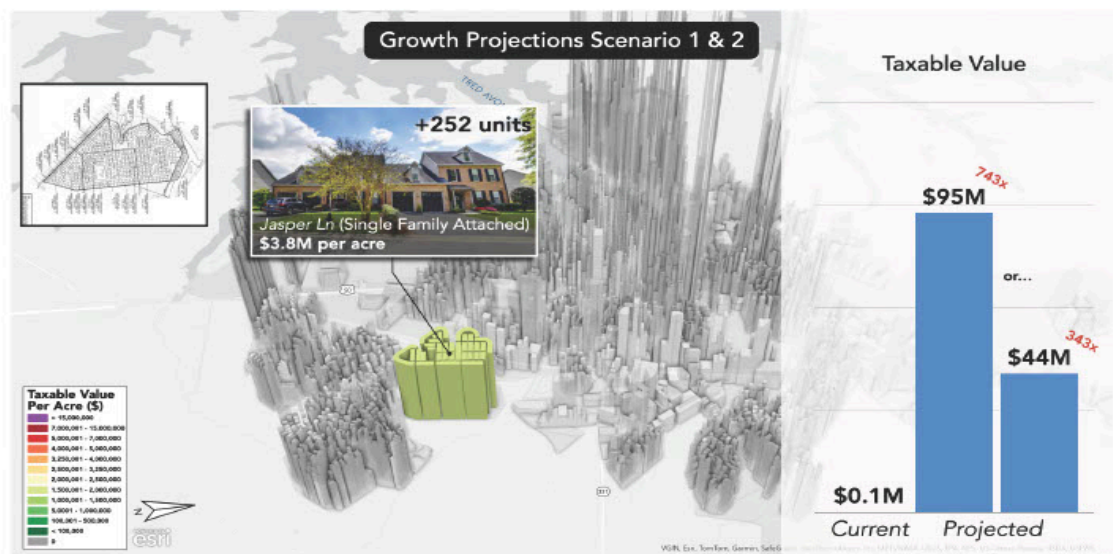


Figure 16. Two growth projections scenarios for the Four Seasons site  
Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps

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

## APPENDICES

DRAFT



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS**

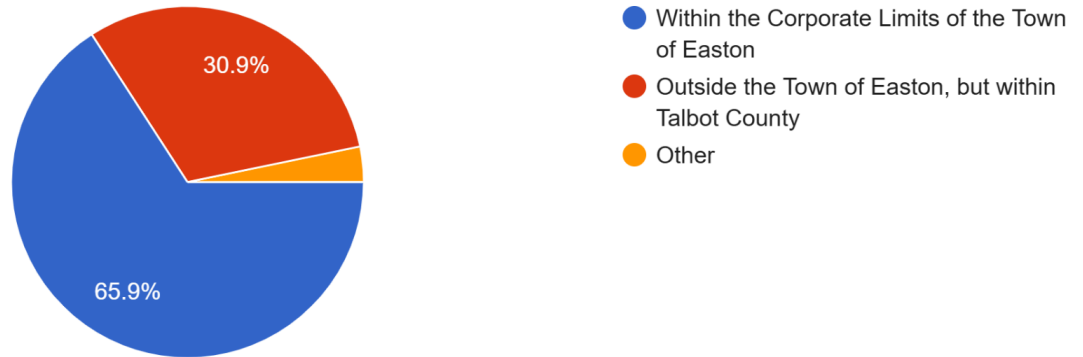
DRAFT

## Survey #1 - Big Picture Issues

### 1 Where do you live?

Please select one\*

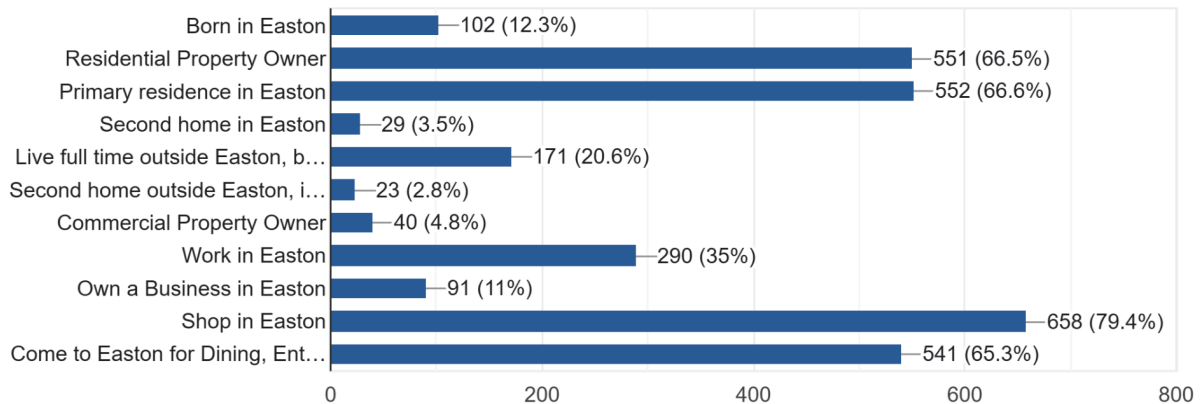
829 responses



### 2. Interest in Easton?

Please select all that apply

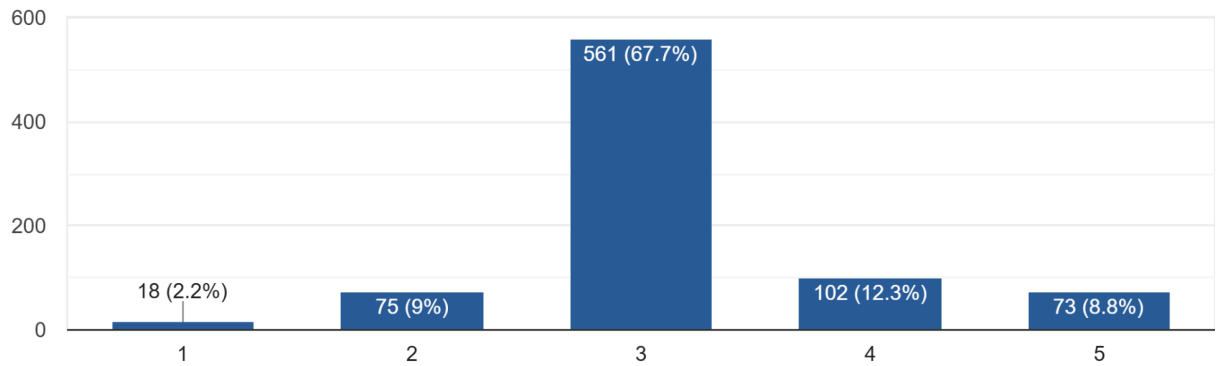
829 responses



### 3. Easton's population is (From 1 = Too Small to 5 = Too Large)

Please select a number

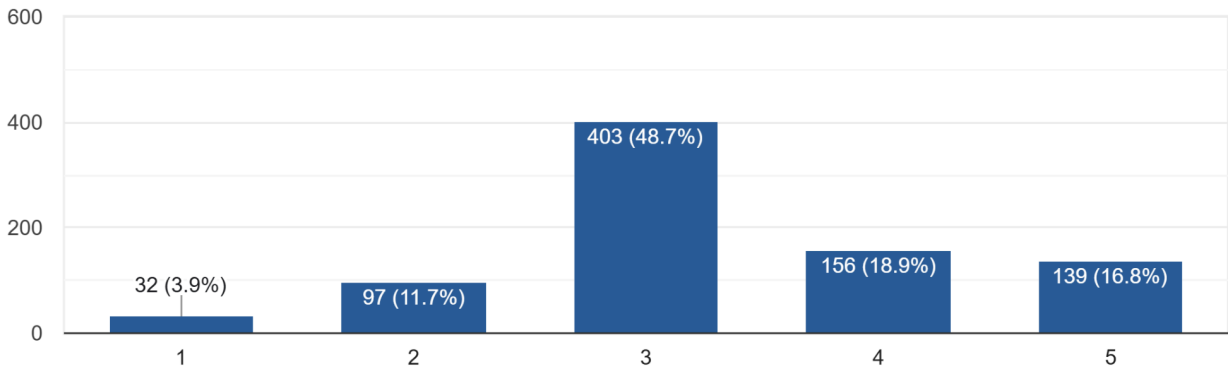
829 responses



### 4. Easton's Rate of Growth is (From 1 = Too slowly to 5 = Too Rapidly)

Please select a number

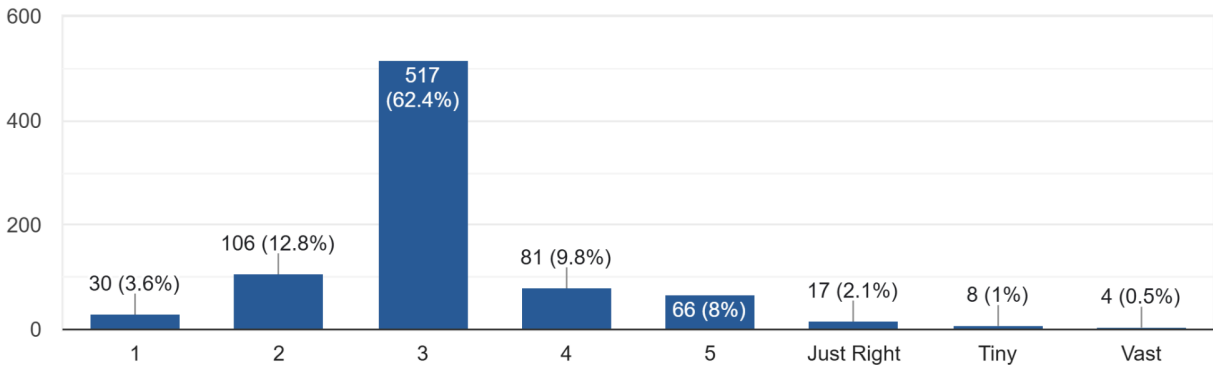
827 responses



5. The geographic size of the Town is (1 = Too small to 5 = Too Large)

Please select one

829 responses



## 6. Percentage of Future Growth that should be Infill/redevelopment vs. new Greenfield Development

### Top 5 Responses:

**80/20 Infill (119)**

**50/50 (83)**

**100% Infill (67)**

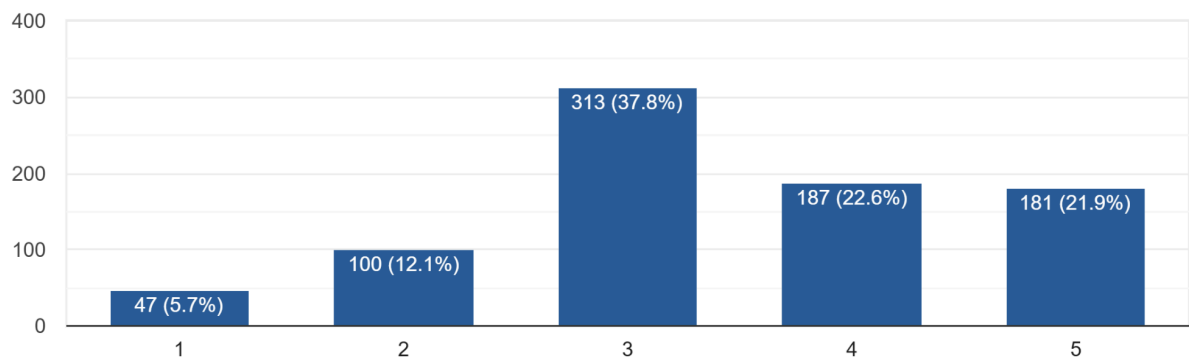
**75/25 (52)**

**90/10 and 70/30 (42 each)**

**7. Amount of Regional-Scale Retail Shopping in Easton (\* - In Easton, this has generally come to refer to shopping centers and/or single retail stores in excess of 65,000 square feet of floor space (roughly the size of our Giant or BJ's, for example) is (1 = Too little to 5 = Too Much):**

Please select one

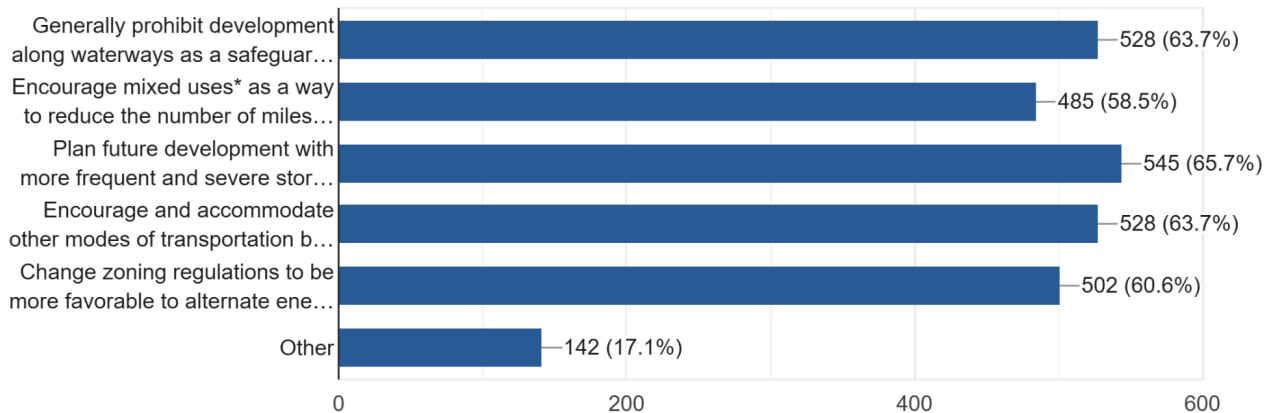
828 responses



**8. Which of the following should be policies of the Town in light of Climate Change Impacts:**

Please select all that apply

829 responses



## 9. Your one “audacious” idea to improve Easton:

Some of the most commonly recurring responses included:

- Boathouse
- Public Waterfront
- Affordable Housing
- Develop Port Street/Waterfront
- Keep Easton small/unique/historic
- More Downtown parking/parking garage
- Control/Limit Growth
- Redevelop/Reuse old/vacant buildings

## 10. One Thing missing in Easton that you would like to see added in next 10 years:

Most frequently noted suggestions were:

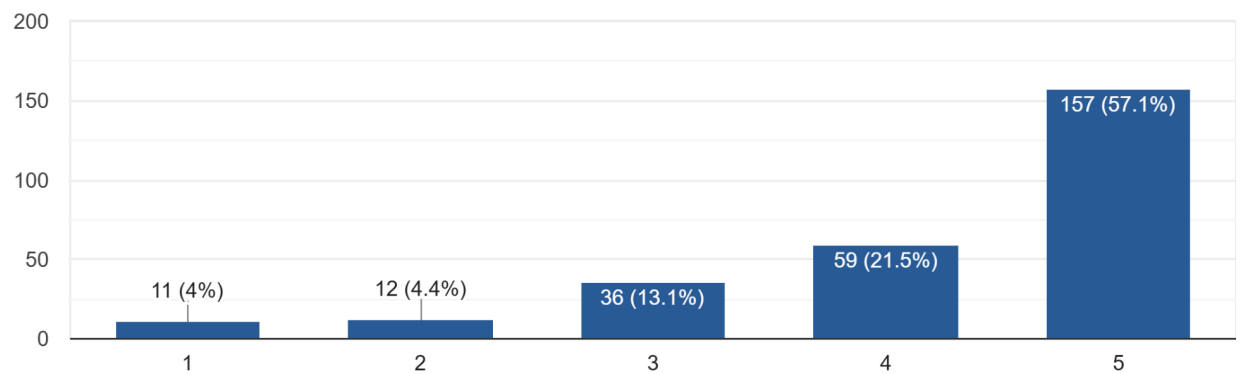
- Trader Joe’s (Far and away the most common response)
- Public Waterfront
- Home Depot
- Steakhouse
- Costco
- Brewery
- Downtown Grocery Store

## Survey # 2 - Quality of Life Issues

- 1. How important is it to maintain each of the components of the overall Town Growth Strategy as stated in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan (1 = strongly disagree with the component to 5= strongly agree with the component):**

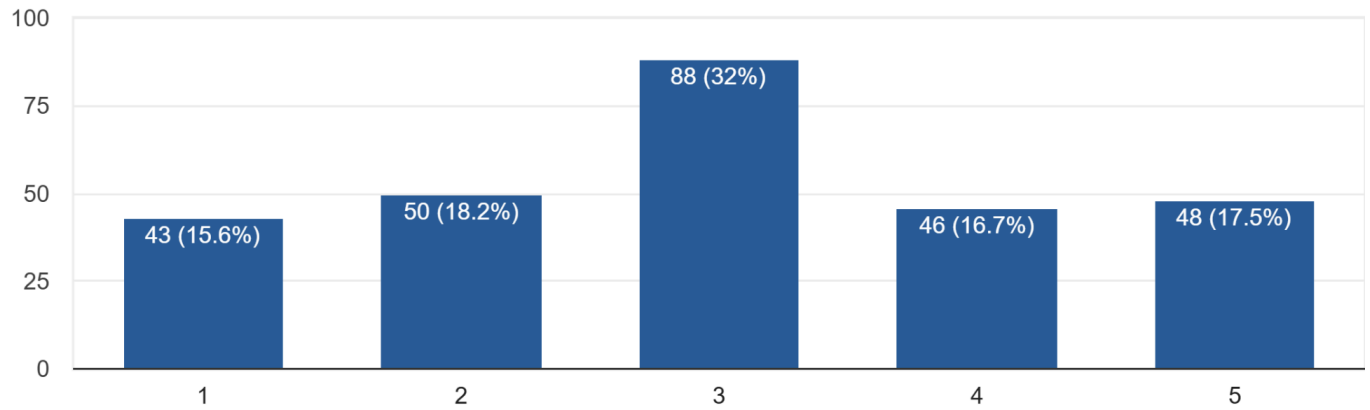
### Contain Sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary

275 responses



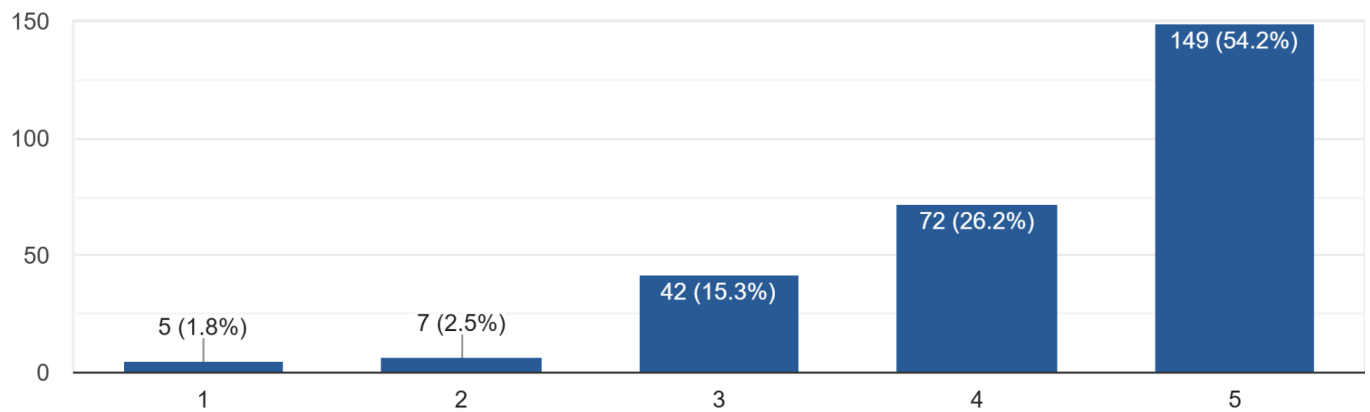
### Increase Density

275 responses



### Build Neighborhoods (as opposed to Subdivisions)

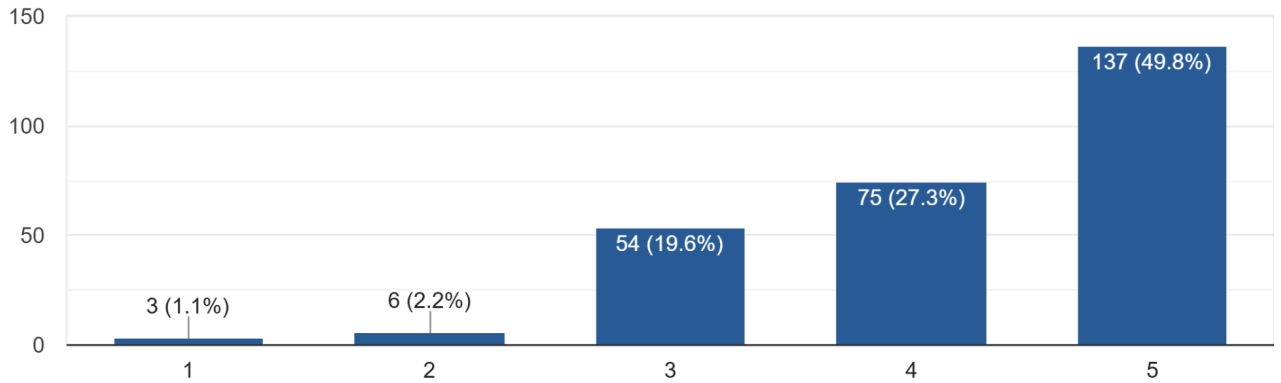
275 responses





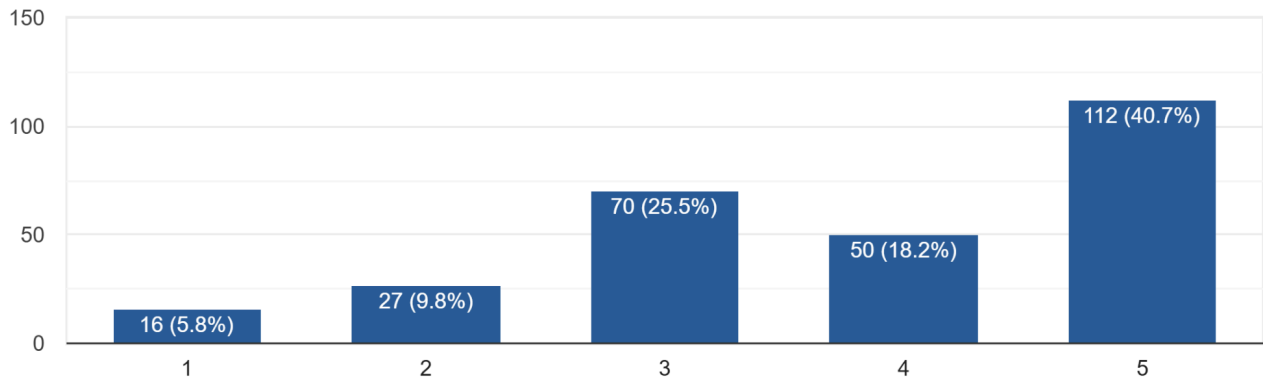
## Improve Design

275 responses



## Restrict Rate of Growth

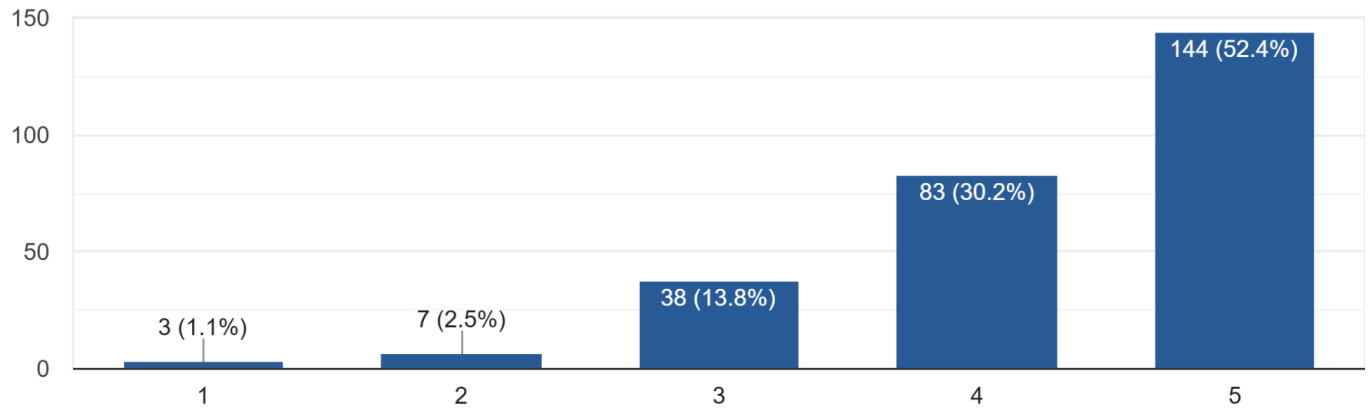
275 responses



**2. Please consider each of the following factors often associated with a community's quality of life and indicate the degree to which you think each factor affects current residents in terms of a decision to potentially locate here:**

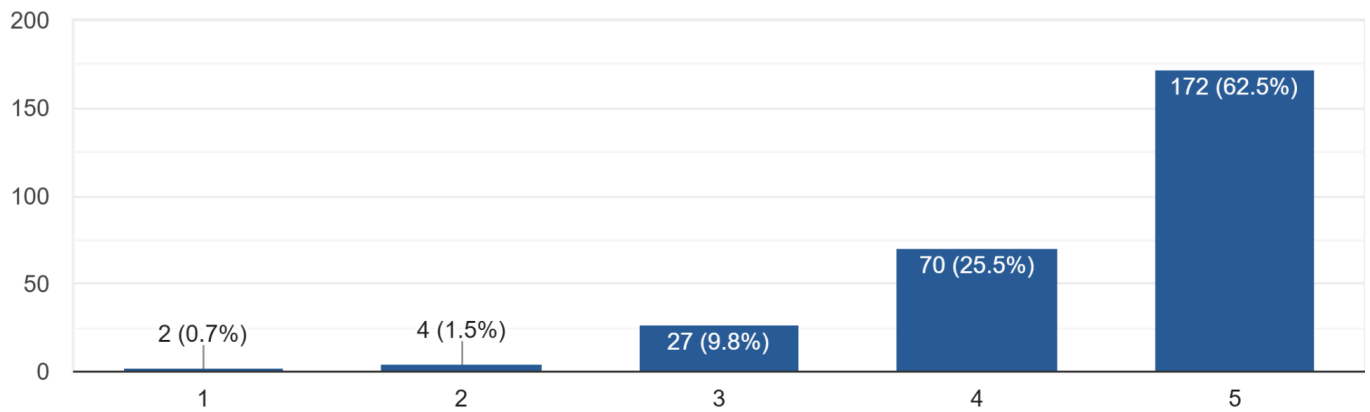
## Parks

275 responses



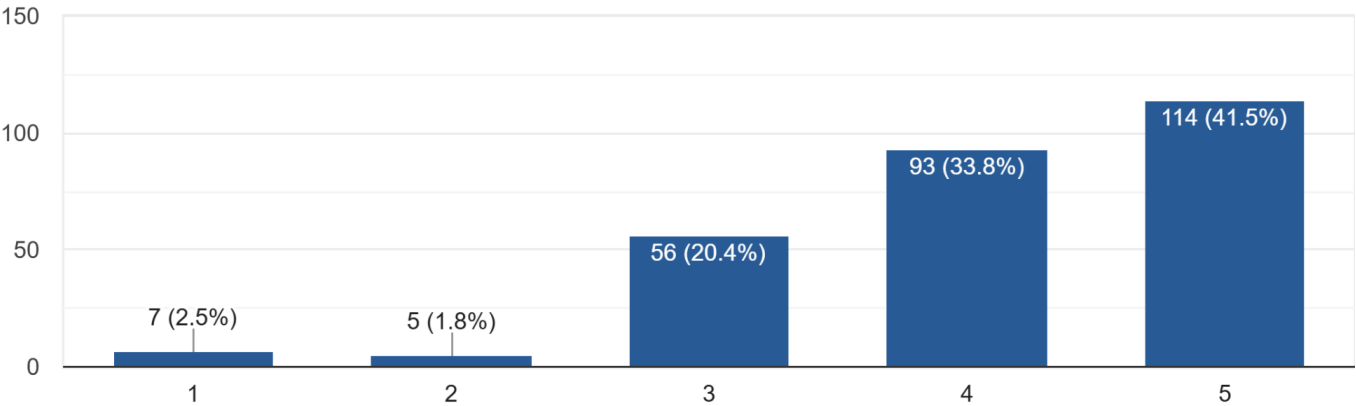
## Walkability

275 responses



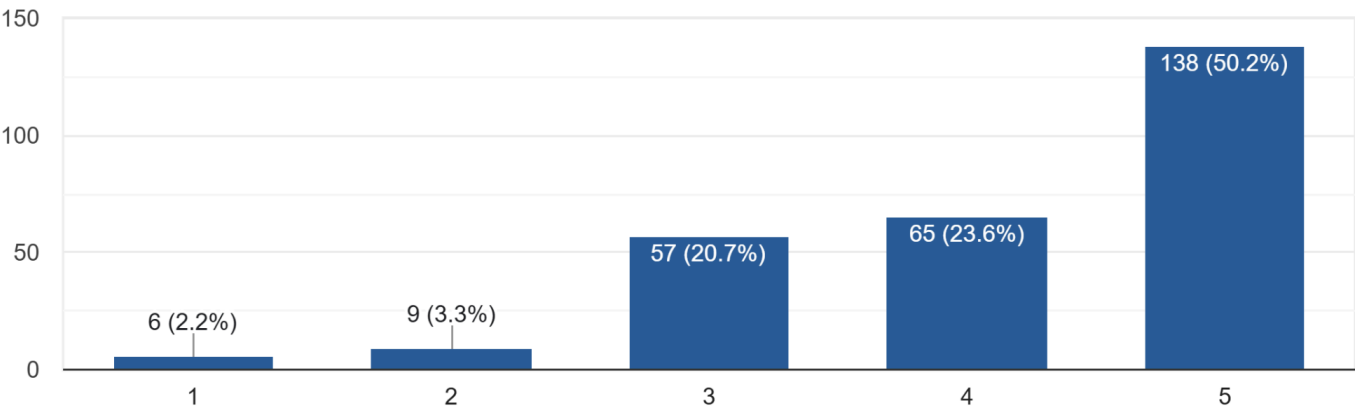
Housing Variety

275 responses



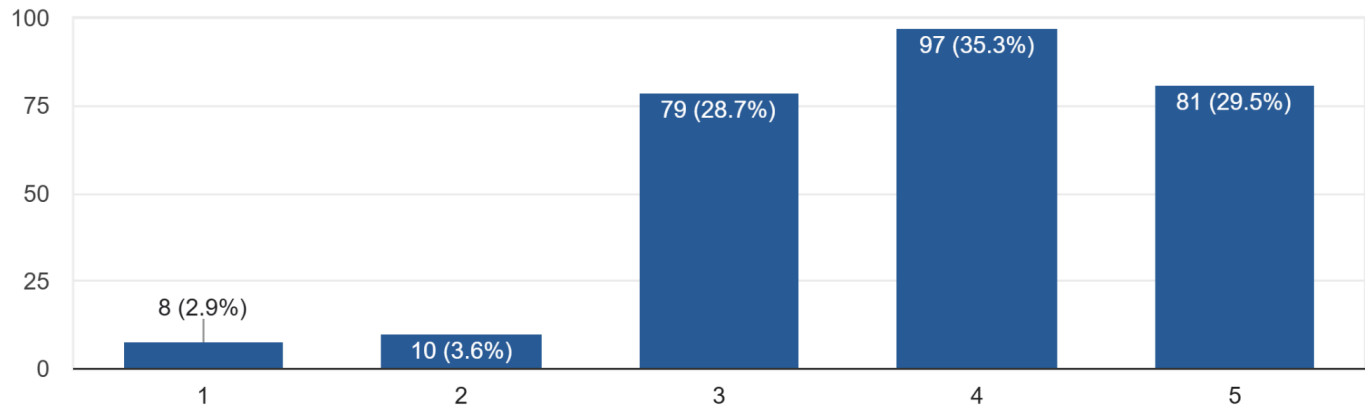
Housing Affordability

275 responses



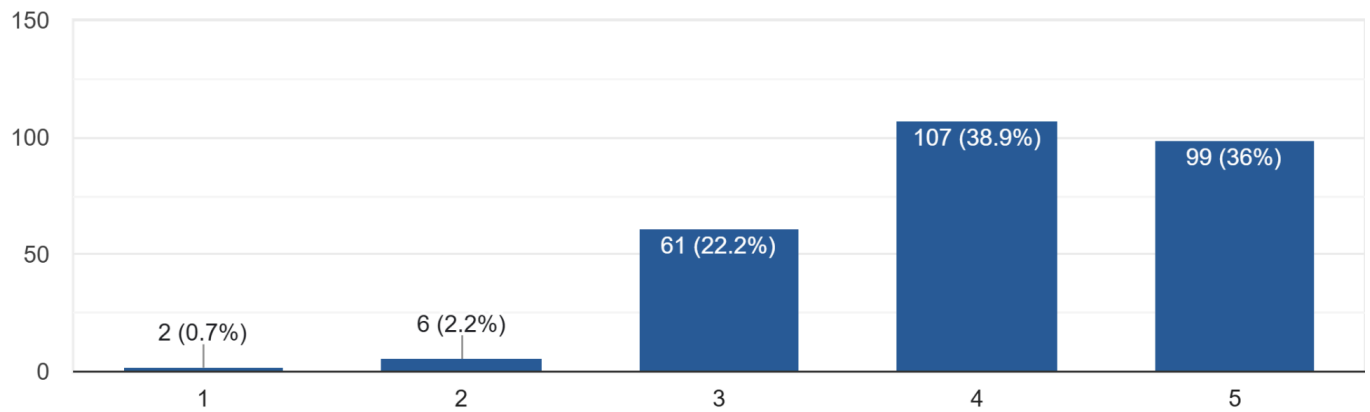
## Shopping Options

275 responses



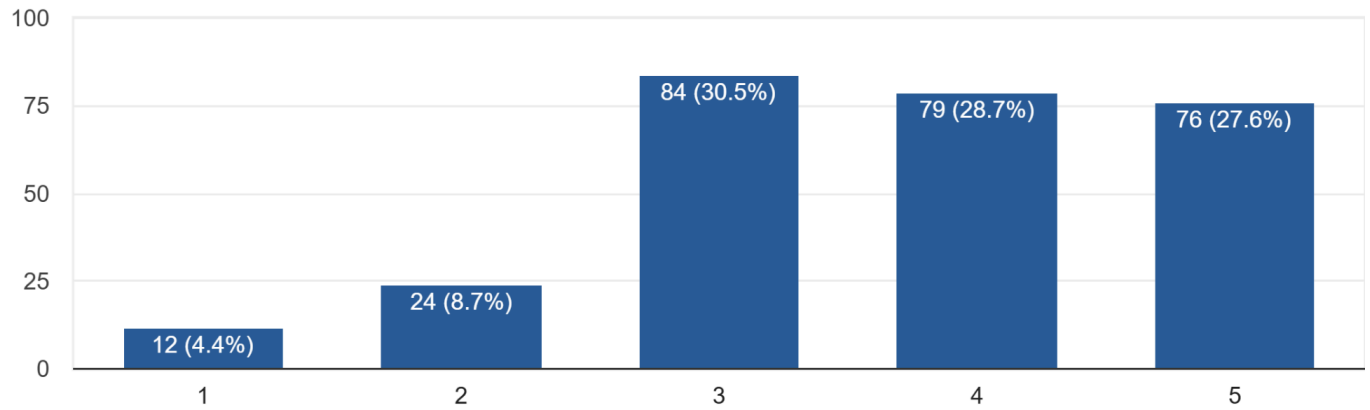
## Dining Options

275 responses



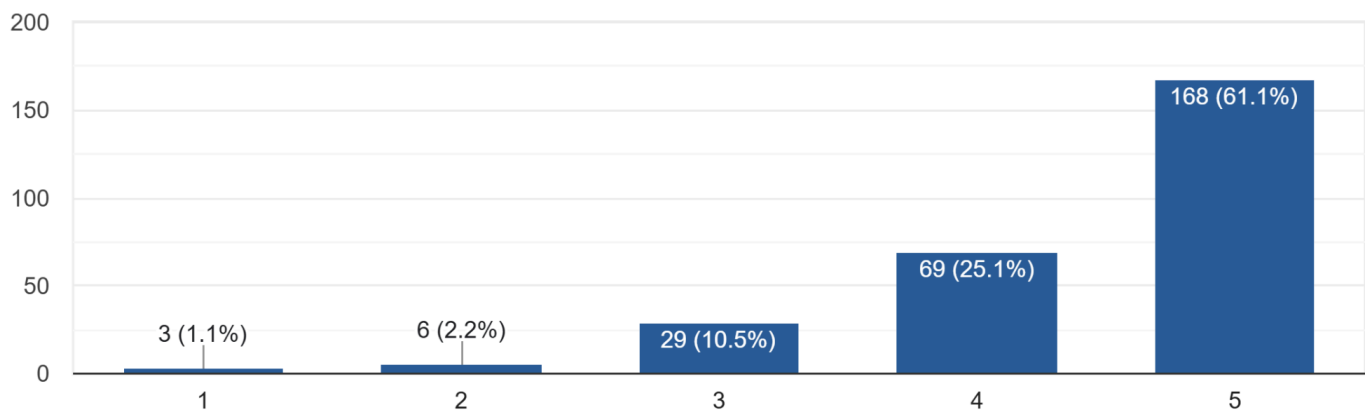
## Transportation Option

275 responses



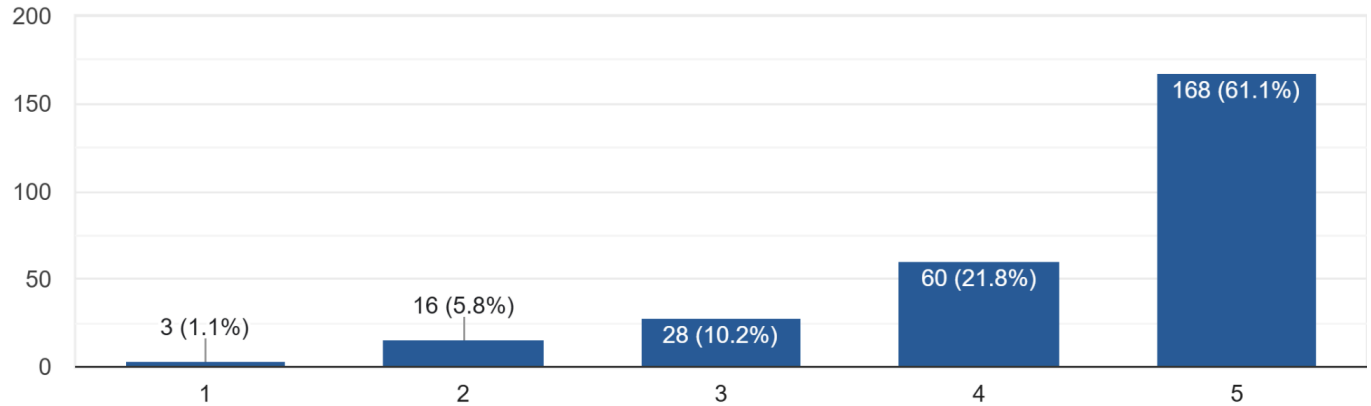
## Downtown

275 responses



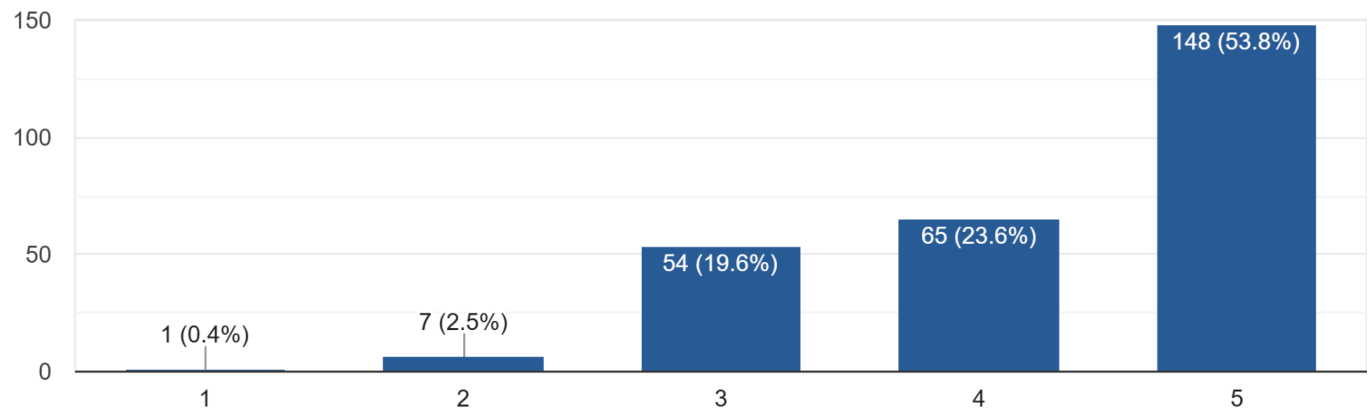
## Historic Character

275 responses



## Job Opportunities

275 responses



**3. Please name one thing that the Town should strive to add or improve in order to enhance the quality of life of our existing residents:**

**The five responses most frequently mentioned were:**

- Affordable Housing
- Grocery Store Downtown
- Public Waterfront
- Parking (Downtown)
- Walkability

**4. What is the most important asset/resource/amenity for the Town to protect or enhance as we contemplate the future of our community?**

The top three responses were:

- Downtown Charm/Vibrancy/Character
- Green Spaces/Parks
- Historic Character

**5. Places most likely to show someone who has never been to Easton before:**

Virtually every response included Downtown in general and/or a specific business or institution Downtown.

**6. Where would you avoid showing these visitors?:**

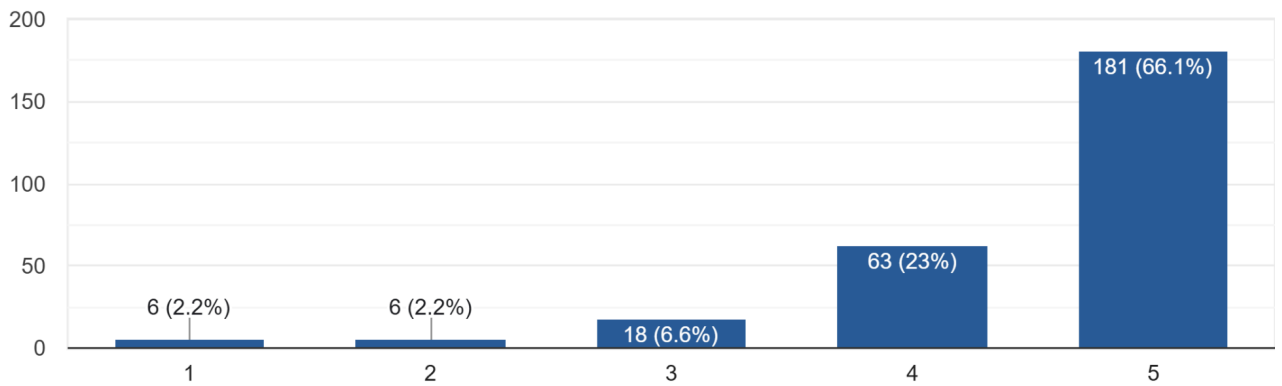
Frequently recurring responses included:

- Nothing/Nowhere
- Big Boxes
- Route 50
- Port Street

**7. The current Comprehensive Plan talks a lot about the desire for Easton to avoid monotonous, cookie-cutter, "Anyplace USA" (Suburban-Style) housing developments. Please indicate how important you think this Vision is for the future of Easton and then the importance of each of the following policies in achieving this goal:**

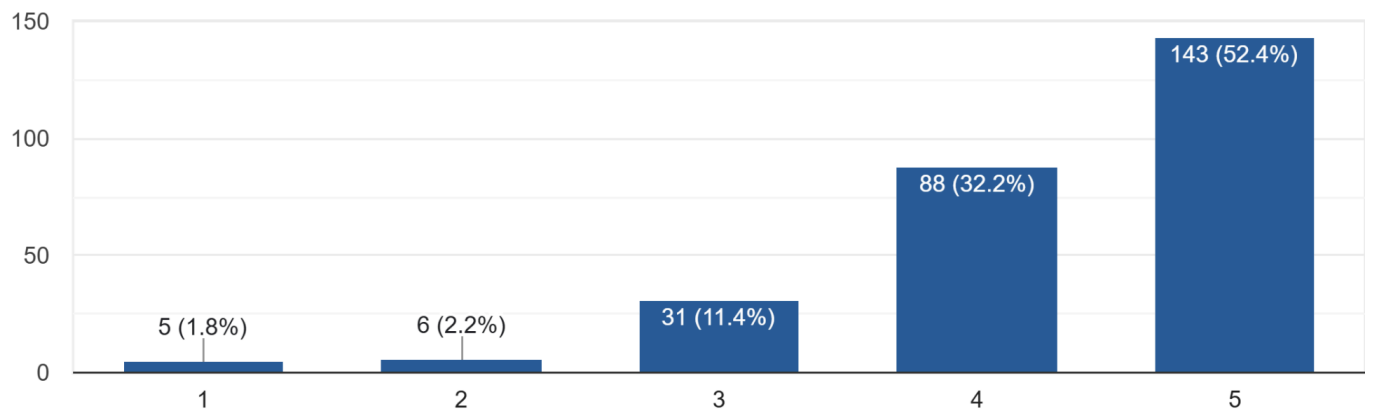
### How Important is the Vision described above to the future of Easton?

274 responses



### Residential Design Requirements

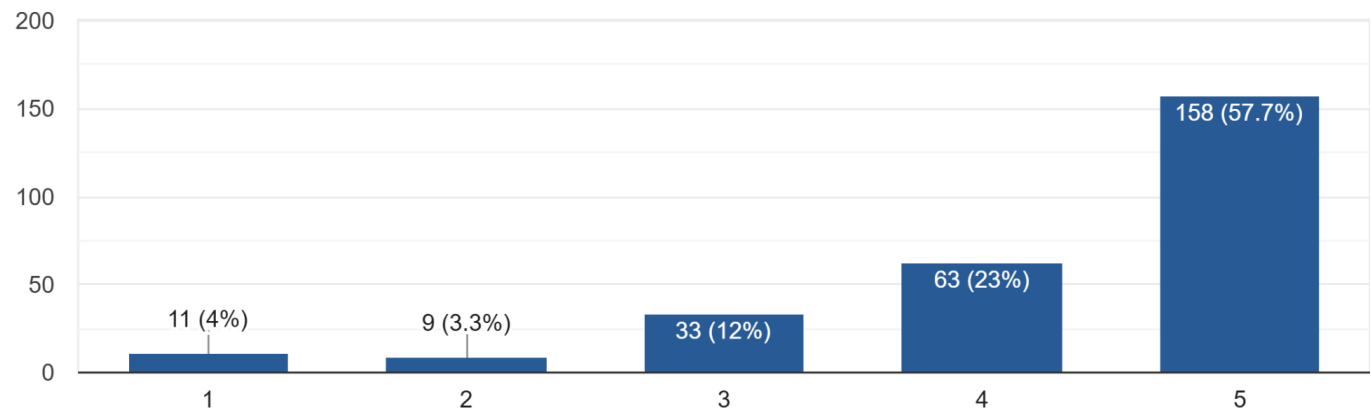
273 responses





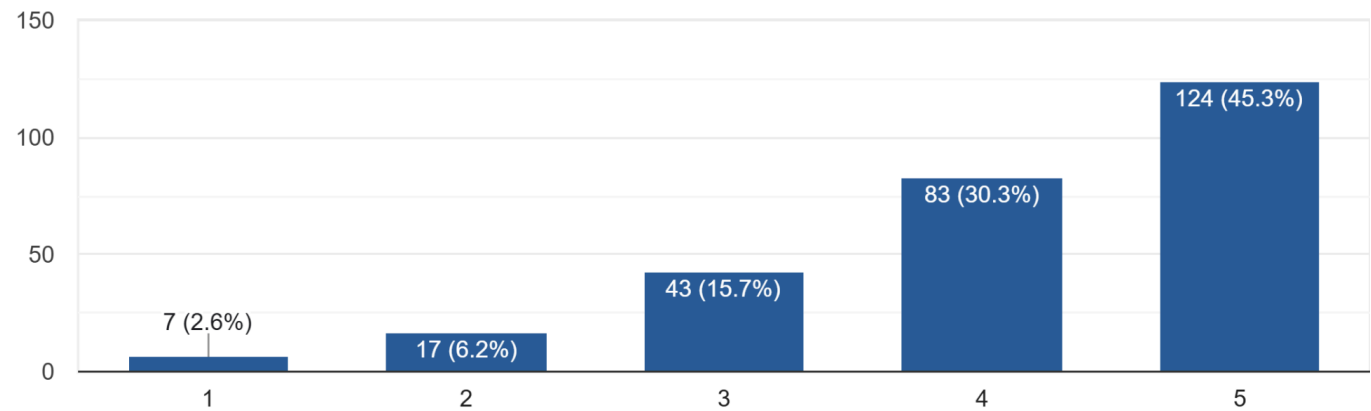
Standards to prohibit the construction of identical, or practically identical, homes within close proximity of one another

274 responses



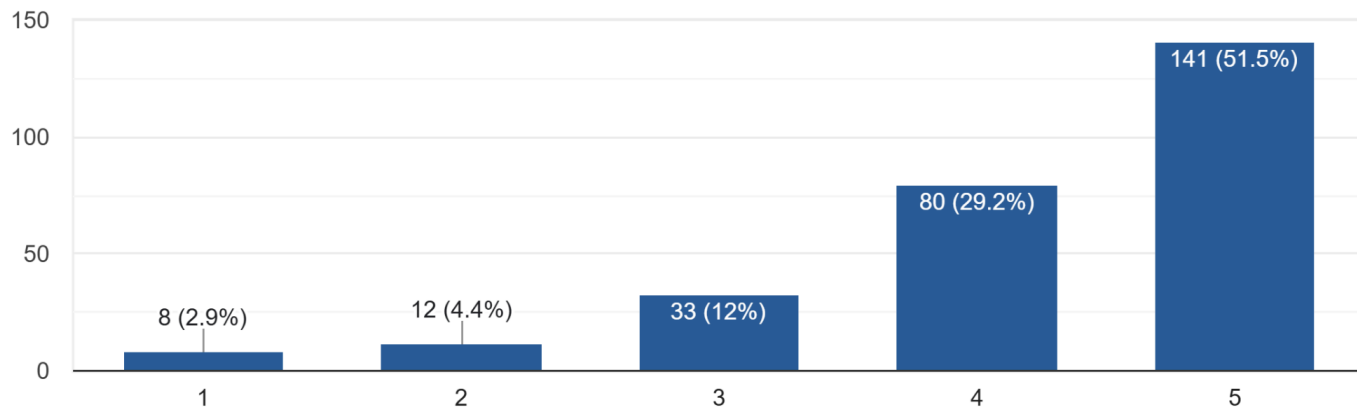
A variety of lot sizes in new subdivisions

274 responses



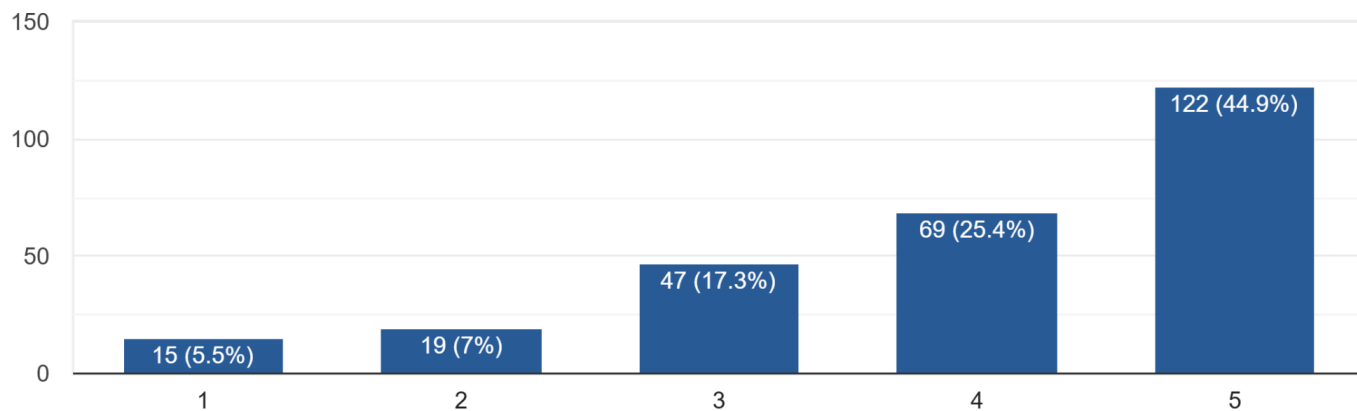
### A variety of housing type in new subdivisions

274 responses



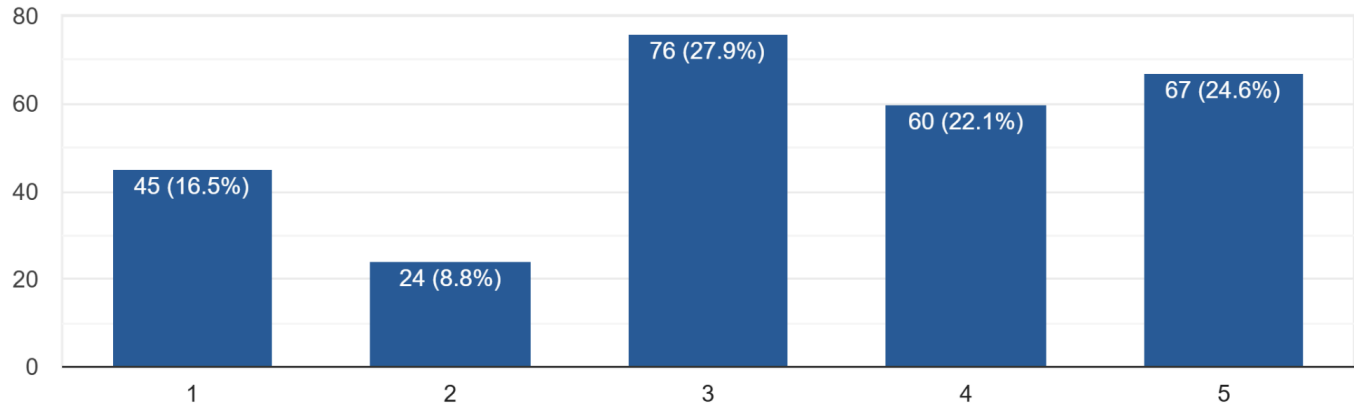
### Mixed uses to allow cultural/institutional uses and neighborhood-scale commercial uses in addition to housing

272 responses



### A requirement for the majority of new houses to be accessed via an alley

272 responses



### 8. How should the current hospital site be redeveloped/reused?

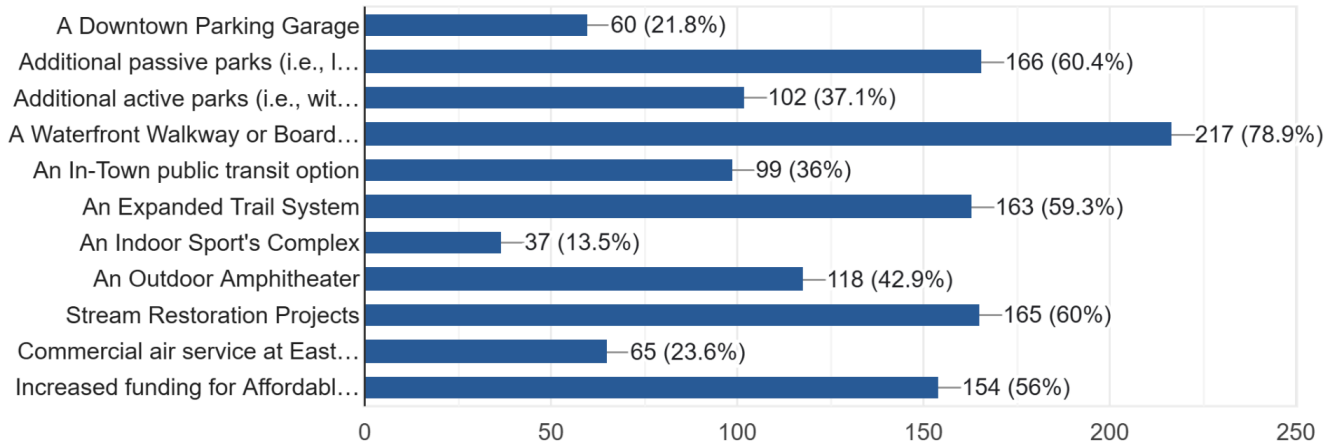
Top Responses were:

- Affordable Housing
- Housing (in general)
- College
- Medical Use
- Mixed-use
- Park/Open Space

### 9. Which of the following would you support even if it meant a tax increase?:

Please select all that apply

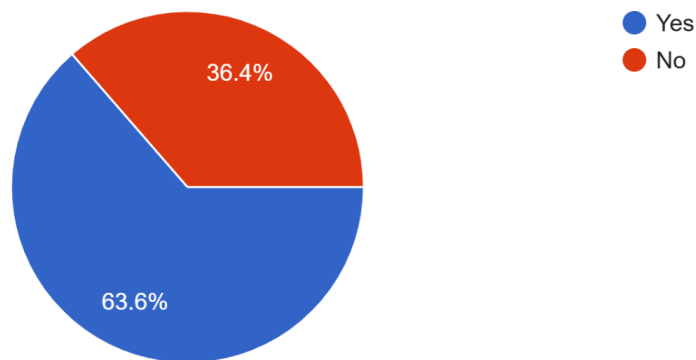
275 responses



### Survey #3 - Quality of Life (More Questions)

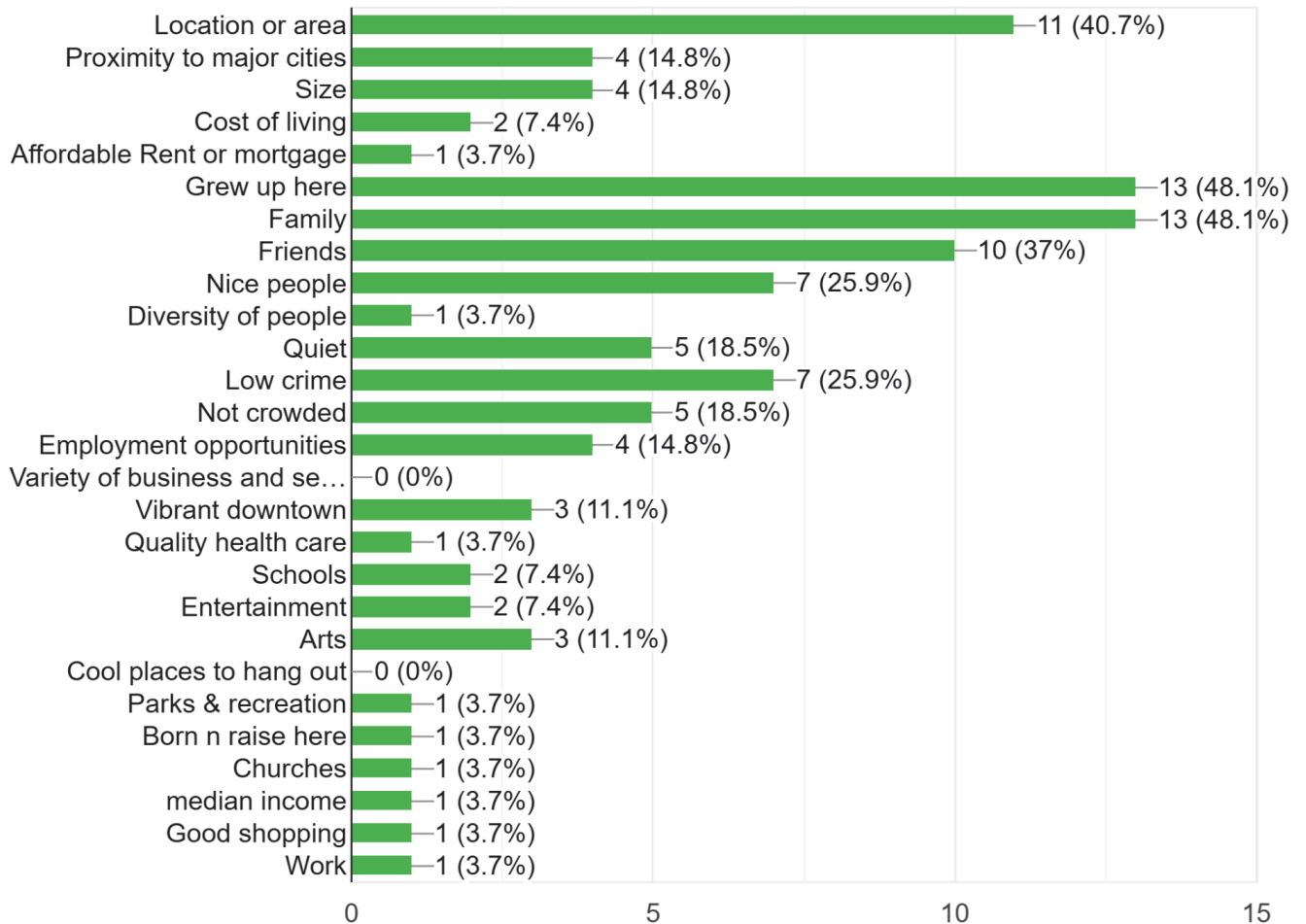
Do you live within the Town of Easton?

44 responses



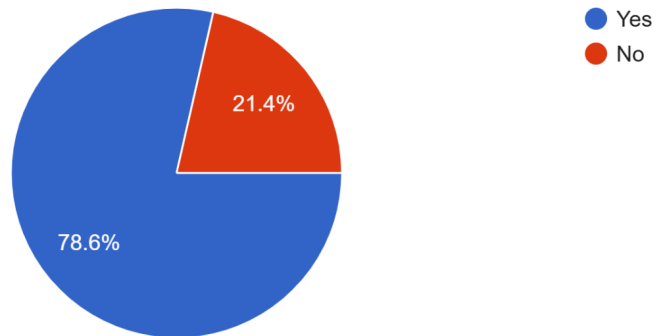
## Why did you choose to live here?

27 responses



### Do you work in Easton?

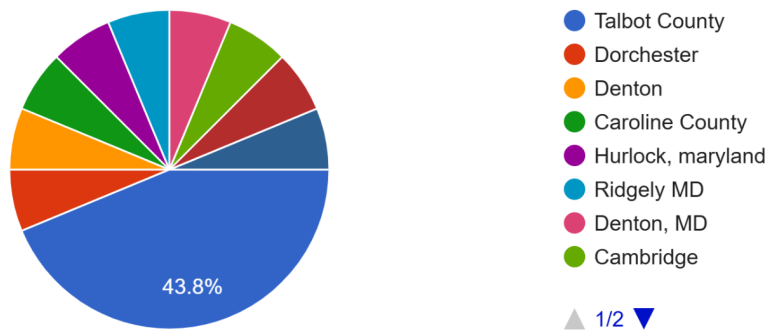
28 responses



**For non-Easton residents:**

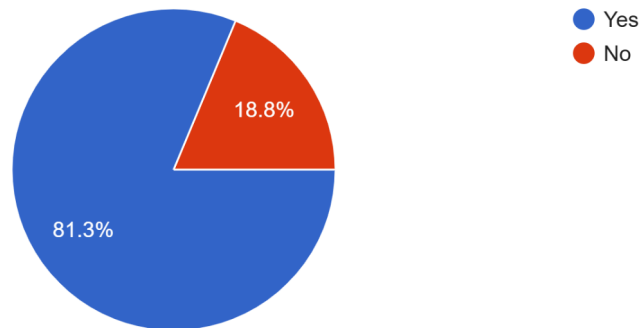
### Where do you live? (If other please include Town and State)

16 responses



Do you work in Easton?

16 responses



Would you consider living in Easton? Why or why not?

Yes

Wish I could afford it. Lived here my whole life and was pushed out due to rent.

Yes. If there wasn't a housing challenge.

yes if i could find something comparable to my house and affordable

Yes, only if there was affordable housing.

Couldn't afford to

Yes.

I would love to but I cannot afford to live in Easton

Ehhh most likely not. Strict ordinances, expensive housing.

Yes, because Easton has more entertainment and a community more involved than surrounding counties.

No, too much crime and too expensive

Yes. Lived in town limits for 25 years and would move back.

No, it's very stuffy. I used to live in Easton but moved to Cambridge because there are more young people and town activities, as well as better access to the water for people who don't own waterfront estates.

No, because I have retired.

Yes because of the vibe of the town, especially downtown

What type of business or entertainment option would you like to see that isn't here right now?

### AI summarized responses:

- **Entertainment:** Many responses requested more entertainment options such as arcades, mini-golf, larger music/theater venues, comedy clubs, and indoor sports facilities, including an ice rink. There was also interest in adult-focused entertainment like adult arcades and safer bars/nightlife.
- **Restaurants & Food Options:** Respondents expressed a desire for a wider variety of restaurants, including specific chains like Shake Shack, Five Guys, Mod Pizza, Texas Roadhouse, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Trader Joe's. They also requested more diverse dining options (e.g., Greek, Mediterranean, African, Dominican/Puerto Rican, Thai, gastropub, lobster house), a bakery, and more affordable local restaurants.
- **Retail & Services:** Suggestions included a bigger Walmart, Costco, Home Depot, chocolate shop, beauty and wellness spas, tattoo shops, and a cat petting business.
- **Community Amenities & Infrastructure:** Several responses highlighted the need for more activities for youth and teens, a splash pad park, bike lanes, a bus system, and public transportation to locations like DC. There was also a request for a place of worship not Christian related.
- **Other:** A few respondents mentioned a gun range, a brewery, or indicated that they already have what they need in Easton.

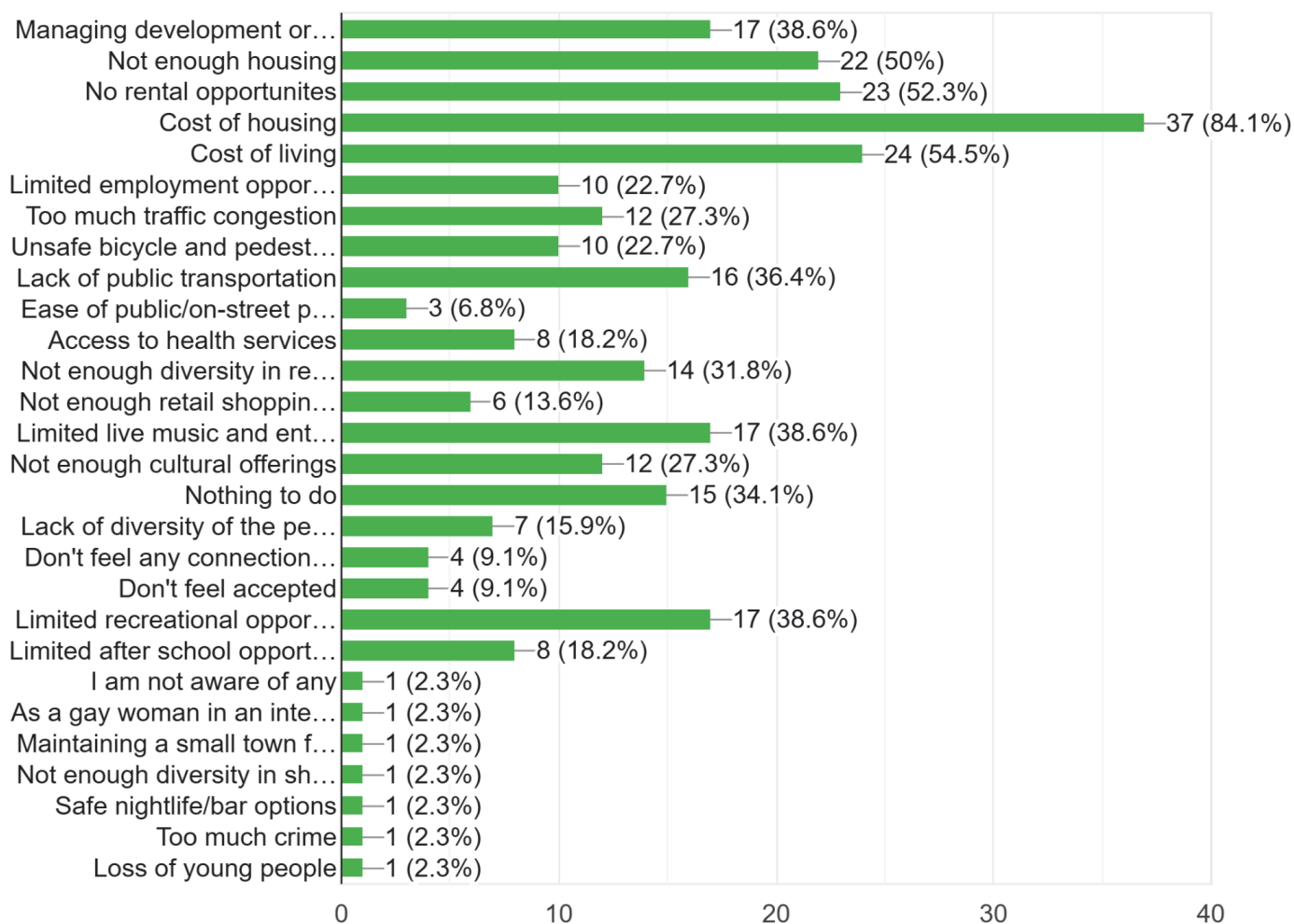
### What words describe your impression of Easton?

- **Town Atmosphere:** Many described Easton as charming, quaint, small, and quiet, with a peaceful, friendly, and laid-back vibe.
- **Demographics & Lifestyle:** Several responses noted Easton as a retirement community geared towards retirees and wealthy members, with a "rich white people" or "preppy" impression.
- **Amenities & Walkability:** Some respondents highlighted cosmopolitan amenities, walkability, and a sense of safety.
- **Perceived Issues:** A few responses mentioned high prices, a perception of being crime-ridden and run down, or being "unduly self satisfied."
- **Overall Impression:** Easton was broadly seen as a nice, beautiful, and enjoyable town, with some calling it "perfect" or stating "everything works."



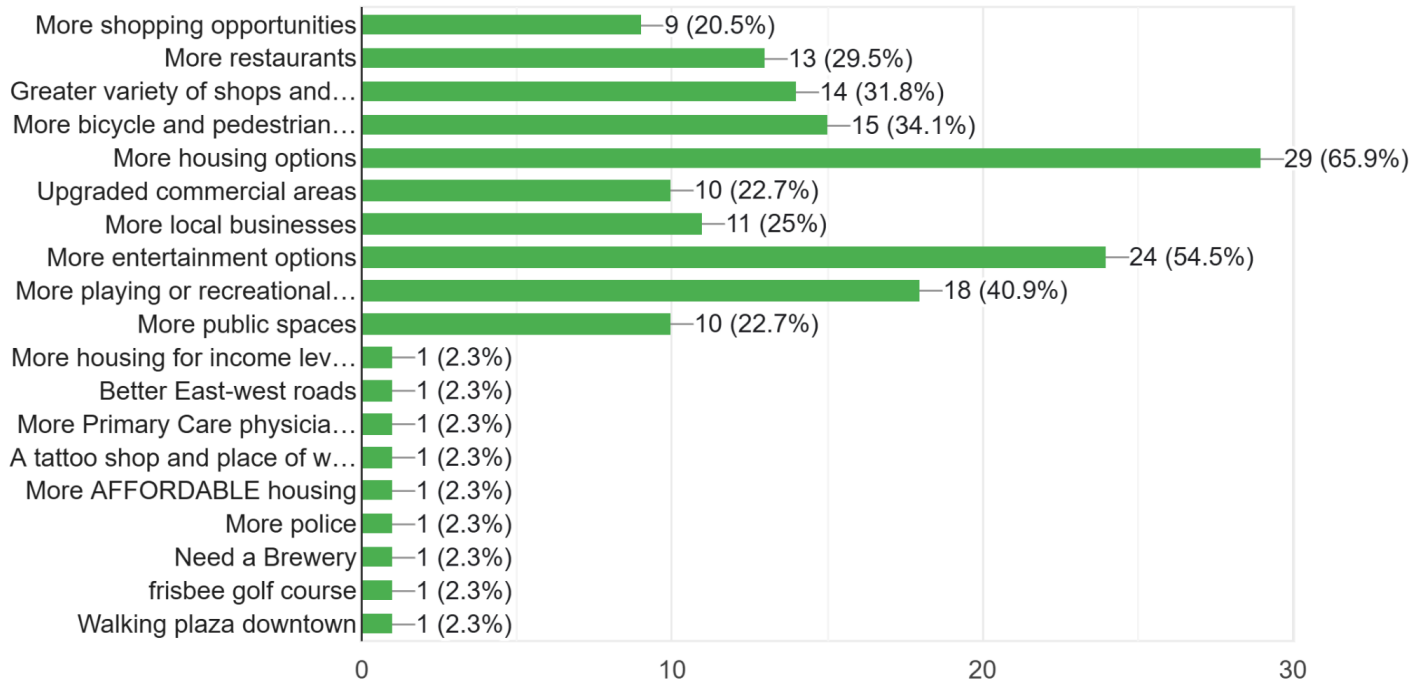
# Do you know of any issues that Easton is facing? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



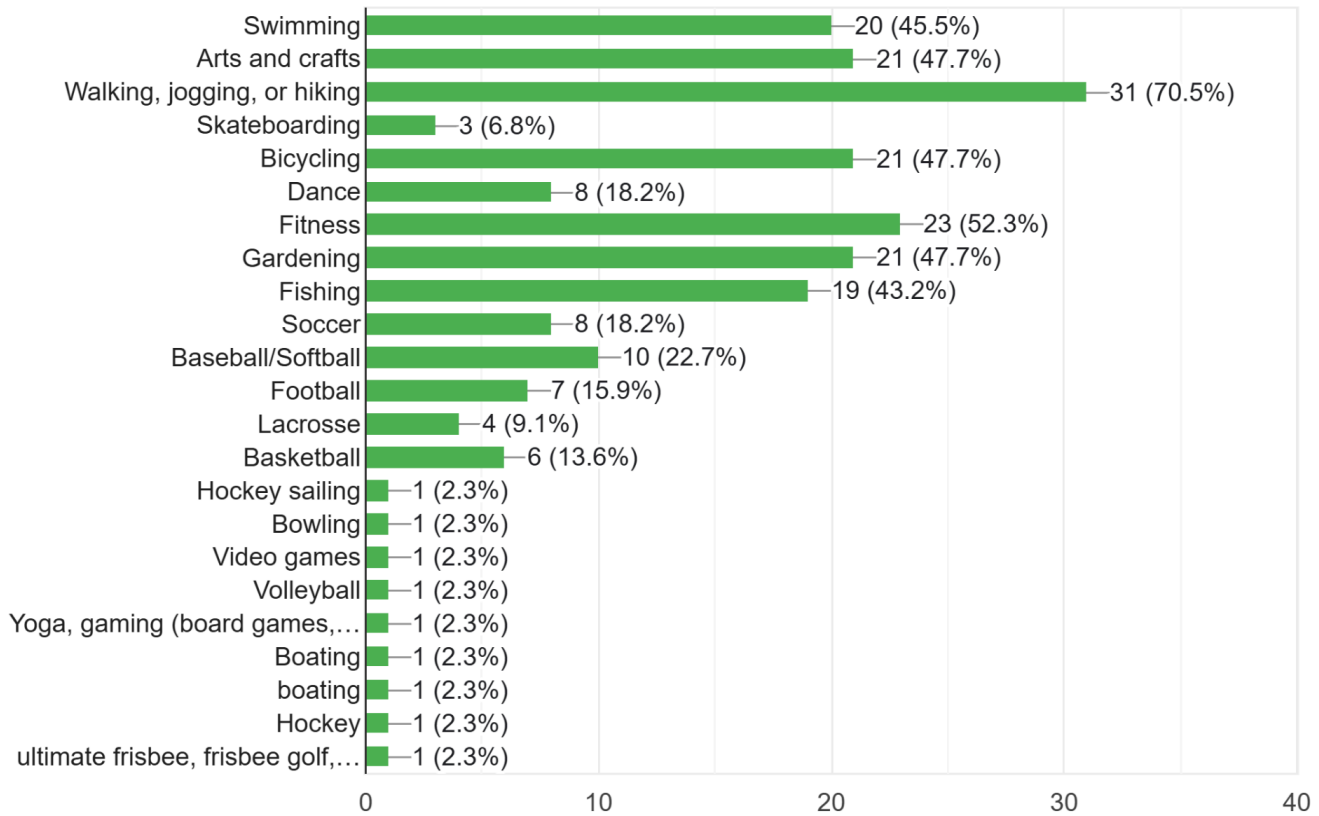
## What would you change about Easton? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



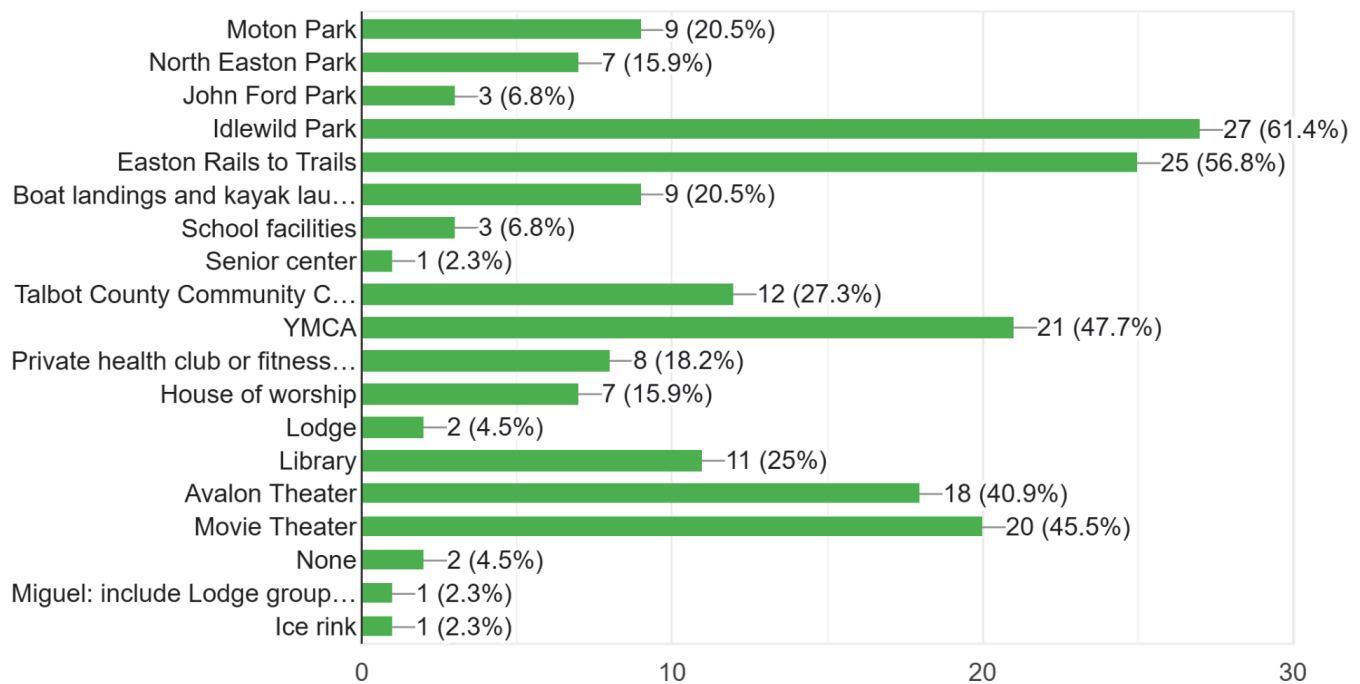
# What type of leisure activities do members of your household participate in? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



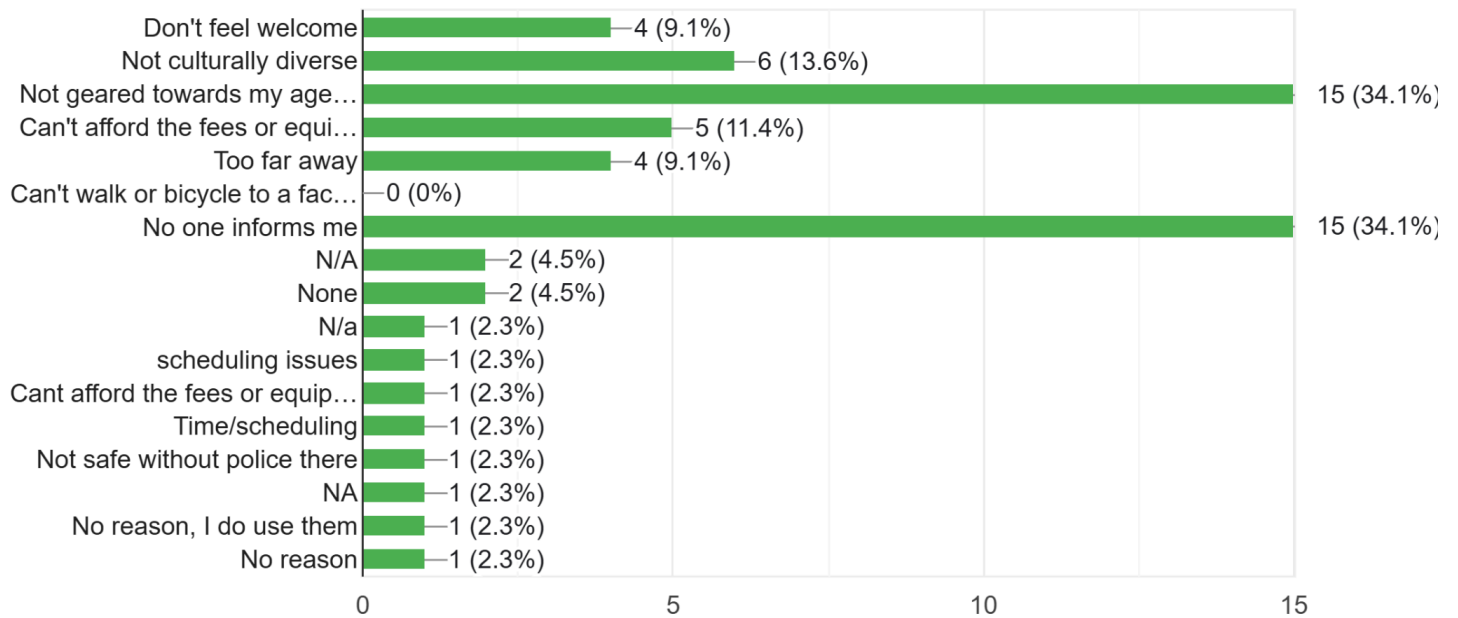
What Parks, Recreation and Cultural Facilities does your household primary use in Easton or Talbot County? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



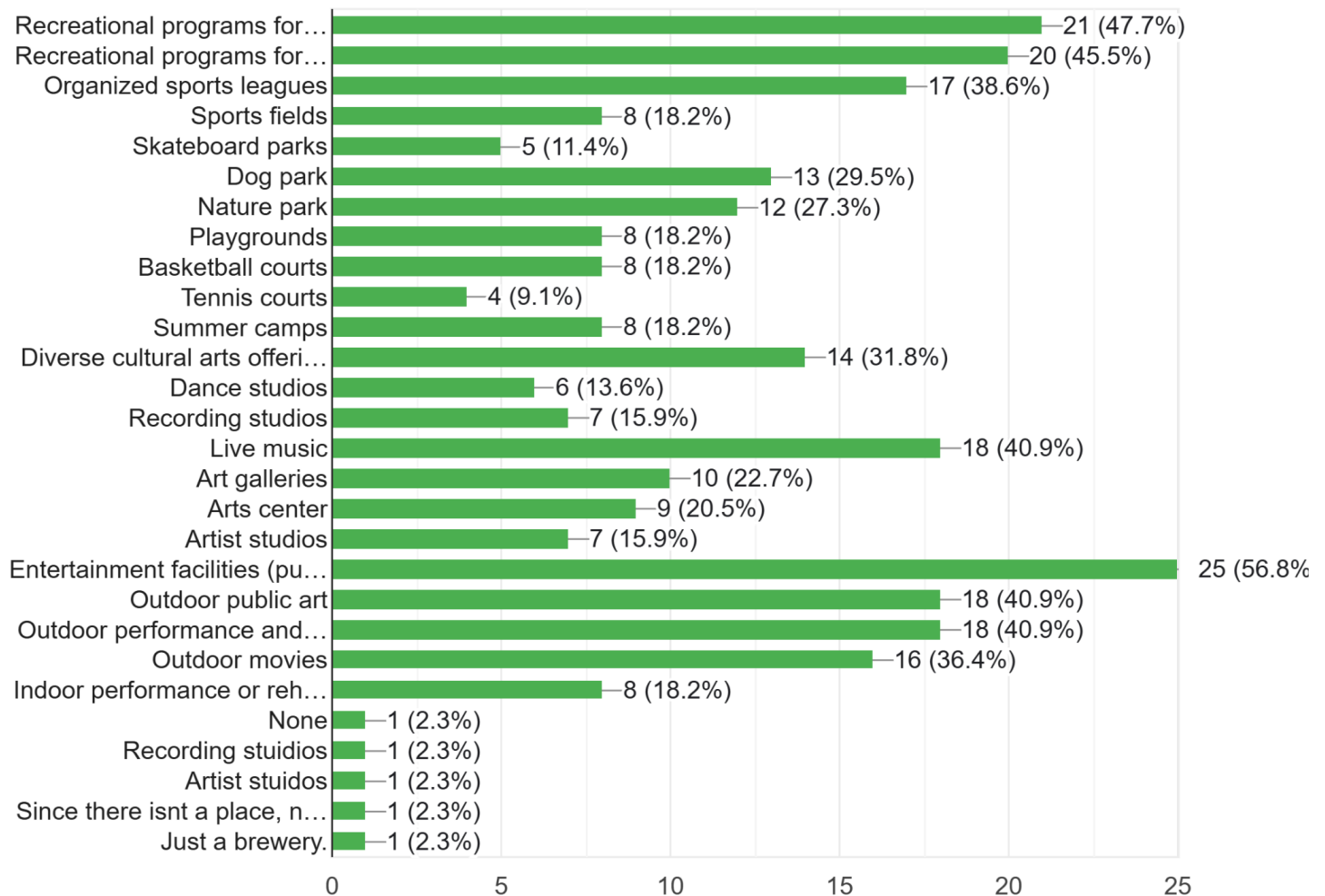
Is there any reason that keeps you from participating in Easton's parks, recreation and cultural facilities? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



What types of facilities or activities would you and your household like to see more of in Easton?  
(Select all that apply)

44 responses



## APPENDIX 2

### PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

DRAFT

The 2025 Easton Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan was prepared by Talbot Thrive, and is based on the 2009 work of BikeWalkTalbot, in cooperation with the Department of Planning and Zoning, Town of Easton, Maryland.

DRAFT



# Chapter 1: Introduction

Greater Easton is a town of quiet but growing neighborhoods, bustling commercial centers, innovative and anchor businesses, and passionate community members and nongovernmental organizations. It prides itself on being a diverse and healthy “smart town” leading innovation where land and water meet. Deemed the ‘big city’ for Talbot County, it has been named one of the Top Ten Best Small Towns in America. The commitment to community is perhaps one of the driving characteristics of the Town. Part of that commitment means supporting a diverse mix of transportation choices that considers the needs of all residents when making policy and planning decisions. The result will be a community that is abundantly livable with a non-motorized transportation mode-share rivaling all other cities and towns on the Eastern Shore.

As Easton continues to grow, the planning and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be a critical element for ensuring the Town continues to be a livable and vibrant community. The incorporation of quality on-street bicycle facilities and pedestrian friendly routes will connect neighborhoods, and link the Town's economic, cultural, and natural resources. Development of the bicycle facilities and pedestrian infrastructure recommended in the Easton Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (the Plan) will give community members and visitors alike a viable alternative to motor vehicle travel. Improvements such as these will help meet the Town of Easton's goals of reduced congestion, improved air and water quality, enhanced public health and safety, and increased livability.

Easton aims to provide its residents and visitors with: 1) Safe and well-connected bicycle facilities that enable bicycling by both experienced and less experienced bicyclists, and 2) Safe and well-connected pedestrian routes that create a more walkable and healthy Town.

Note: The Plan focuses primarily on the on-street bicycling network, while identifying off-street connections that provide key linkages in the overall system. The primary discussion of off-street facilities may be found in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Chapter of the Easton Comprehensive Plan.

Ultimately, the implementation of the Plan will provide community members of all ages and abilities the means to safely access the entire Town on foot or by bicycle. The recommendations in the Plan build on previous bicycle and pedestrian planning processes including the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Calling for over x# miles of on-street facilities over the next x# years, the Plan recommends over x# miles of new bike boulevards and X# miles of new bike lanes.

**Do we want some stats here?** According to the National Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC), trail use in 2022 was 45% higher than in 2019, demonstrating enduring demand for trails across the country.

<https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/new-rails-to-trails-conservancy-data-shows-strong-demand-for-places-to-walk-bike-and-be-active-outside/#::~text=Nationwide%2C%20RTC%E2%80%99s%20trail%20counters%20showed%20an%20average%20increase,demonstrating%20enduring%20demand%20for%20trails%20across%20the%20country.>

According to Torsha Bhattacharya, Ph.D., research director at RTC. “Now, after several years of sustained

demand for trails, it's clear that this is a trend and that this infrastructure is essential to people across the U.S. These consistently high levels of trail use reinforce how critical this infrastructure is to our physical and mental health—as well as the well-being of our communities.”

## Plan Vision and Goals

The Plan vision and goals reflect input received from the public, focus groups, and the project Steering Committee. They also build upon the Transportation element of the Easton Comprehensive Plan. Each of the goals supports the vision.

### Plan Vision

*Pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities have access to a safe, well-connected network linking all areas of Easton.*

### Plan Goals

**Safety:** Improve safety of people on foot and on bicycles by promoting safe bicycling, driving, and walking behaviors and building appropriate, well-designed facilities.

**Connectivity:** Provide a connected network of bikeways and accessible, efficient pedestrian infrastructure linking and providing access to all neighborhoods and key destinations.

**Equity:** Provide walking and bicycling access for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery and capital investment.

**Livability:** Build a vibrant and healthy community by creating a welcoming environment for people to move around on foot or on bicycles.

**Public and Environmental Health:** Develop bicycle and pedestrian networks that enable active, healthy lifestyles and sustains a healthy environment.

**Choice:** Develop infrastructure that creates viable transportation choices, and accommodates multimodal trips.

**Education:** Provide education on the rights and responsibilities of the users of all transportation modes.

**Economy:** Enhance economic vibrancy by creating a bicycle and walking friendly community that is an attractive place to live and work with easy connections to commercial centers and inviting public spaces

**Land Use and Site Design:** Employ land use planning and site design requirements such as Complete Streets, which are conducive to bicycle and pedestrian travel and result in a mode shift away from automobile trips to walking trips

## Public Benefits of Bicycling

The Town of Easton, like many U.S. cities and towns, is faced with challenges related to economic development, repair and maintenance of infrastructure, local environmental issues, and equitable

distribution of basic services. In addition, individuals and families are feeling the pressure of rising transportation costs.

Walking and bicycling are increasingly seen as key components of a multimodal transportation system and a means to achieving multiple objectives, including maximizing transportation investments, reducing maintenance costs, improving public health, promoting economic development, addressing transportation equity, and reducing environmental impacts. These trends, as well as growing public demand for more transportation choices, underscore the paramount importance for implementing this Plan.

### **Maximizing Transportation Investments**

Dollar for dollar, bicycling is one of the most cost-effective transportation modes to support. On-street bicycle facilities can maximize the use of existing roadway space, and typically require relatively low-cost pavement markings or signage once installed. A well-connected bicycle network provides opportunities for individuals to bicycle rather than drive, thereby optimizing roadway capacity and deferring or eliminating the need for costly new road construction projects. For every 1 mile of driveable roadway constructed, *X* amount of paved bikeways can be constructed.

### **Economic Development**

In many industries, the competition for workers is on a national or global scale, and people are choosing employers not just based on salary and traditional benefits, but also on external criteria such as lifestyle and quality of life. Many employers realize that their ability to recruit top employees depends significantly on local culture and amenities. Cities that are making investments to become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly are seeing dividends in the form of attracting new residents and employers. Mid-sized eastern cities such as Chattanooga, TN and Roanoke, VA have recently increased their investments in providing and upgrading non-motorized transportation within their comprehensive plans in an effort to attract and retain employees.

### **Health**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week—which is equivalent to ten minutes of brisk walking, three times a day, five days a week. Providing opportunities for people to integrate biking into their daily routines can help them meet these guidelines and stay healthy. Community design that incorporates safe and convenient bicycle infrastructure makes it easy for people to make healthy transportation choices and develop positive lifelong habits.

### **Equity**

Providing the community with viable and affordable transportation choices that include transit, bicycling and walking is a key component of an equitable transportation system. Bicycling is a low-cost transportation mode that can broaden opportunities for employment and education, increase access to services, and reduce household spending on transportation.

### **Environmental**

It is estimated that less than *x*% of Easton residents bicycle or walk to work. Many more residents bicycle for utilitarian and recreational purposes. Each trip made by bicycle that would otherwise be made using a car has a positive environmental benefit.

One of the defining features of greater Easton and Talbot County is the region's close connection to rivers, creeks and the Chesapeake Bay. Considering that non-motorized transportation modes

essentially have zero impact on air and water quality, promoting their use is an effective strategy for improving air and water quality. Furthermore, providing transportation choices that are safe and convenient, help to protect our natural resources, and encourage people to enjoy the natural resources augments the Town's values that are woven throughout The Plan.

## Plan Components

This Plan includes the following components:

**Chapter 1 Introduction:** Presents the vision and goals for the plan and the benefits of walking and bicycling. It also summarizes the planning process undertaken in the development of the Plan including a review of policies and programs, public input, and existing conditions.

**Chapter 2 Policy Recommendations:** Provides specific policy guidance for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and priorities.

**Chapter 3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Recommendations:** Provides an analysis of network connectivity and needs. In addition, the chapter outlines the process of developing the recommended network and presents the network. Lastly, it breaks down the recommended network into projects that are prioritized based on a data-driven methodology.

**Chapter 4 Design Guidelines/Toolbox:** Reviews best practices for bicycle facility and pedestrian infrastructure design and identifies resources to support the development of the recommended bicycle network.

**Chapter 5 Program Recommendations:** Provides recommended education, encouragement, and enforcement programs to support bicycling and walking within Easton.

**Chapter 6 Implementation:** Includes performance measures, funding and resource opportunities, and a cost estimation tool to project the cost of implementing bicycle facilities and pedestrian infrastructure improvements in the recommended network.

## The Planning Process

The Easton Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan was developed over a x year period in 2022-2023. Initial steps included developing an understanding of the current state of bicycling in Easton, ascertaining safety and access concerns, and identifying ideas for creating a more bicycle friendly town. This understanding was established through focus groups, a public open house, interactive online tools, and a review of pertinent background documents and existing data sources such as the Level of Traffic stress provided by the Maryland Department of Transportation. Information gathered was used to create a draft bicycle network using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. The resulting network was analyzed to assess connectivity and address any missing links. The project team conducted extensive field work to assess existing conditions, identify improvement needs and refine the network. Facility recommendations were developed for each street segment, and projects were prioritized using a GIS-based, data-driven methodology. Feedback from stakeholders and the community was solicited throughout the development of the Plan, and was used to guide the planning process.

## Project Team

Town of Easton staff worked to ensure the Plan is coordinated with existing transportation policies and reflects the infrastructure needs of the town. The project team ensured that all

relevant Town departments were kept abreast as the Plan developed and that their feedback was integrated.

## Public Engagement

### Public Meetings [insert photo of public meeting]

Two open house public meetings were held during the project. The first open house provided an opportunity to present the draft vision and goals to the public, solicit comments, receive input on barriers and opportunities for bicycling in Easton, and garner broad public support for the project. Over x# people attended the first open house and x# comments were collected.

Information was presented on a series of maps and boards, as well as in a brief presentation. Data from the public meeting was used to develop the bicycle network, identify problem intersections, and to develop Plan goals, policies and actions. The second open house was used to present the draft plan and solicit feedback, prioritize recommended actions, and confirm a roadmap for implementation. Information was presented on a series of maps and boards, as well as in a brief presentation.

### Online Survey

An online survey was employed to solicit further information from the public regarding bicycling in Easton. The survey was comprised of x# questions and solicited x# responses over a x# month period (date range). All respondents were asked to provide demographic information.

For complete survey results, see Appendix A.

### Key Survey Findings

### Focus Groups

Have there been any? Here are ideas for groups that would be great to have input from....

- *Easton Parks and Recreation Department*
- *Easton and Talbot County Police Departments*
- *Easton Volunteer Fire Department*
- *Nonprofits serving low income community*
- *Affordable Housing Complexes*
- *MDOT*
- *Local businesses supporting non-motorized transit*
- *Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Classroom Surveys*

## Review of Background Documents

Easton is a community with a rich history of planning and significant public involvement. This history has established a vital starting point for the Plan. The Town has adopted several planning documents that address multimodal transportation, infrastructure, and land use. Following is a brief summary of each of these relevant documents that highlights the goals, objectives, policies, development regulations and guidelines that inform this Plan.

While each document reviewed provides a different focus, all cite bicycling as an integral part of the future of the Town. These planning documents emphasize the importance of increased bicycle use for improving the health, economic vitality, sustainability, and quality of life in Easton.

## **Easton Comprehensive Plan**

The 2023 Town of Easton Comprehensive Plan is a **X-year** guide for how the Town will accommodate projected population growth and development. The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995. The current version was adopted in 2009. While the Comprehensive Plan contains a number of elements, three are particularly relevant to this Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan:

### **Chapter X - Land Use**

The Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes land use goals and policies, many of which relate to transportation. Included are the following strategies to help achieve the Town's objective of connecting land uses with an efficient bicycle network:

- Encourage "infill" land use inside the Town limits to prevent outward sprawl.
- Promote higher density, mixed-use areas where transportation and environmental infrastructure such as sewer service is already in place.
- Encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.
- Maintain and extend a coordinated and connected system of open space, parks and trails, and neighborhood parks within a short walk or bicycle ride.
- Create more complete street design standards that promote narrow, tree-lined streets with sidewalks and bike infrastructure to make walking, bicycling, and transit use appealing and safe.
- Increase mobility by providing convenient bicycle routes to and from the town center.
- Where possible, establish bikeways and appropriate buffers between commercial centers and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Encourage town center employees to walk, use bicycles and other forms of alternative transportation that free-up parking spaces for customer parking.

### **Chapter X - Transportation**

The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is the guiding transportation policy document for the Town's transportation priorities, projects, and multimodal improvement requirements. It incorporates goals and policies that support the creation of a safe, well-connected, and convenient walking and bicycle network throughout Easton. Included are the following strategies to help achieve the Town's objective of developing non-motorized infrastructure, facilities, and programs that will reduce automobile dependence while also accommodating future growth:

- Set target goals to increase the mode share of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips.
- Encourage public education and funding for bicycle safety enforcement.
- Encourage employers to provide incentives for their employees to use non motorized transportation.
- All new, reconstructed, or retrofitted arterial streets should provide walking and bicycling facilities.



- Develop bicycle and pedestrian facilities within growth areas.
- Provide safe, convenient, and protected bicycle parking at activity centers.
- Provide development incentives when amenities for transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists are included and being implemented.
- Integrate transit with other modes of transportation including auto, bicycle, and pedestrian travel.
- Eliminate off-street parking minimum requirements for individual businesses and instead rely on managed street parking and shared off-street community lots.

## **Chapter X - Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces**

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Chapter includes goals, policies, and strategies that support the Town's intent of providing a connected multimodal network of trails, paths, and other recreation facilities.

- Develop bicycle trails and paths. While not always appropriate, multiuse trails are preferred.
- Develop and improve trails that minimize conflicts between the various activities.
- Connect community members to greenways and trails: link residential neighborhoods to community facilities, expand trail systems into growing neighborhoods, and promote links to neighboring communities.
- Expand multimodal transportation options: connect trails with transit stops, bike routes, and sidewalks to create a comprehensive network of non-motorized transportation.
- Provide trail amenities (e.g., bike racks, benches, and signage).
- Install raised and marked crosswalks where possible and especially where bicycle and pedestrian trails/paths cross roadways
- Eliminate the horizontal metal barriers at the roadway intersections of the Easton Rail Trail that discourages bicycle use

## **Town Council Legacies and Strategic Commitments**

### **Town of Easton Bicycle and Pedestrian Project List**

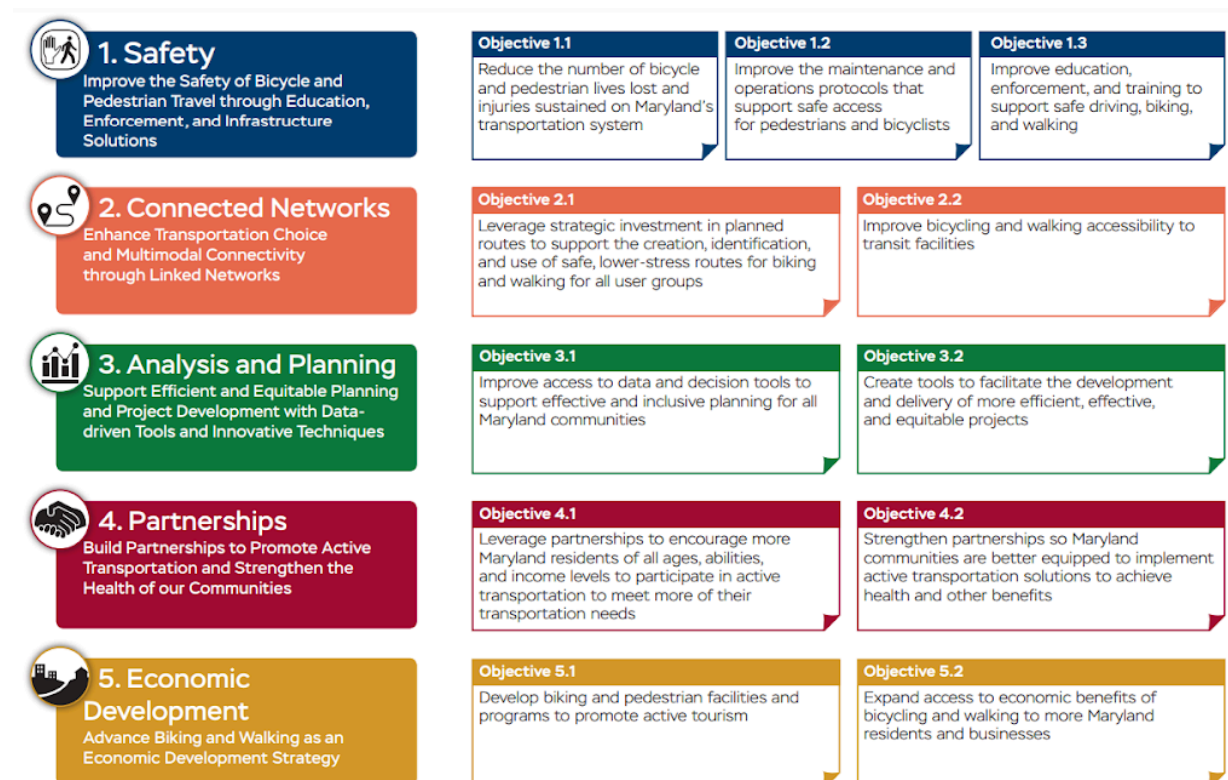
#### **Easton Municipal Code**

Chapter 5 of the Town of Easton Municipal Code contains traffic regulations related to bicyclists. Policy #x below and action X# recommend that this section of the Town code be reviewed and revised to include guidance on best practices for cyclists and to better reflect the increasing number of cyclists using roadways.

#### **Maryland Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan**

[The 2040 Maryland Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan Update \(updated in 2019\)](#) outlines goals, policy recommendations and project implementation strategies to improve conditions for bicycling and walking statewide. The Plan identifies and prioritizes facility needs with a goal to increase bicycling and walking while reducing injuries and deaths. Funding opportunities for bicycle and

pedestrian projects are also presented.



## MDOT Safe and Complete Streets Policy

The State of Maryland's PlanMD legislation encourages MDOT and SHA to enhance access to transportation alternatives. The policy **[statement of what it is and does]**. The following are key goals of the policy:

• **[list goals]**

## Easton's Policy Approach to "Complete Streets"

Easton's multimodal transportation approach for the future and policies related thereto follow a "complete streets" approach to transportation planning, as reflected in Chapter xx of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

## MDOT SHA: Guidelines for Town Streets as Part of State Highways

This document allocates maintenance responsibilities between the Maryland SHA and DOT and Maryland cities and towns for streets that are located on state highways. Bicycle lane marking is the responsibility of the Town of Easton, as are crosswalks, roadway striping, regulatory signs and signals, street sweeping, and sidewalks. The State is responsible for curb and gutter maintenance as well as bridges.

For interchanges such as arterials over and under Route 50, the Town and State will need to develop agreements for the maintenance of pedestrian and bicycle facilities that may be included in the crossing.



## **MDOT: Guidelines for Town Streets as Part of State Highways**

In 2022, [the Maryland Department of Transportation \(MDOT\) released a statewide bicycle level of traffic stress \(LTS\) analysis along with a statewide rating of all roadways in Maryland](#). A goal of the 2040 Maryland Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (updated in 2019), [the LTS analysis](#) scores how bikeable a roadway is based on the type of bicycle facility, traffic volumes, and speed. The LTS results help provide a basis for understanding how accessible Maryland's road and trail network are for various cycling audiences. The [full methodology for the dataset](#) is based on metrics established by the Mineta Transportation Institute. This statewide dataset helps inform existing bikeability of roadways (and road-separated routes) in Easton.

## **MD SHA Bike Policy and Design Manual**

The MD SHA's Bike Policy and Design Manual outlines design guidance for bicycle facilities on state highways. For local roadways, jurisdictions may use the latest edition of the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities.

## **General Observations Regarding Background Documents**

The Transportation Element of the Town of Easton Comprehensive Plan includes a list of future transportation projects that are incorporated into the recommended bicycle network. The goals, objectives, and policies in the plans described above inform Plan recommendations. Notable considerations in adopted plans, and incorporated into this Plan, include: bicycle level of traffic stress (LTS), bicycle comfort and safety, increased connectivity, recommendations for on and off-road facilities, acknowledgment of the importance of education and encouragement programs, promotion of bicycling downtown and in urban villages, and a commitment to multimodal transportation.

As evidenced by public input and participation, the survey, and map exercises, there is significant community support for action to increase the comfort, convenience, and safety of bicycling and walking in Easton.

Plans call for, but do not define, a uniform guide for a wayfinding or signage route system.

The Town's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan proposes new multiuse trails, adding to the already robust townwide trail network that provides off-street options for bicyclists.

Missing is a carefully considered strategy for prioritizing improvements to the bicycle network.

There is a need to develop new lane width guidelines to provide more flexibility in accommodating bicycle facilities on arterial streets.

Current plans call for on-street bicycle facilities but often stop short of specific treatment recommendations.

## **Existing Facilities**

There is strong support for bicycling within the Town and a variety of programs have been developed to encourage further use (see Chapter 5 for descriptions of existing and recommended programs). The Town has an established off street East-West Trail and some new bicycle facilities in recent years.

## **Trail System**

Easton has made strides in recent years to create a trail system that lays a solid foundation for increased access and connectivity to various parts of the Town. While off-street facilities are

generally not covered in this Plan (they are part of Chapter xx, Parks, Recreation and Open Space in the main Comprehensive Plan), a few of essential in-town trails are included in this Plan where they provide important connections around barriers and between on-street facilities. Longer trail segments such as the Rails-to-Trails running north-south through town have been incorporated as an alternative to on-street facilities, or where there is a lack of on-street bicycle facilities.

It is also important to note that, since Easton is a commercial hub for many people outside the Town limits, close cooperation with Talbot County agencies is essential for ensuring that any trail development within Town limits aligns with trails being created in the county at large.

Expanding the vision even further, the recently formed Eastern Shore Regional Trails Committee is working to create a system of bicycling trails that connects municipalities and areas on the Shore. As the larger, most centrally located municipalities in the region, Easton and Talbot County could have a critical position in a future regional trail network.

## Conclusion

Easton is in an excellent position to significantly improve the quality of bicycling and walking for its residents and visitors. Past planning efforts have laid a solid foundation of support for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, as well as a policy framework from which to build. Through this Plan, the Town has established a vision and goals for bicycling and walking that will guide implementation of a wide variety of projects and programs that will support and encourage future cyclists, walkers and Town residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

## Chapter 2: Policies and Actions

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan provides a road map for making bicycling and walking in Easton a viable transportation option by providing specific guidance on institutionalizing bicycling and walking in Town plans, policies and programs. The following policies and actions are intended to support the Plan goals, which in turn, support the Plan vision.

The Plan will be incorporated into the revised Comprehensive Plan as a mode-specific plan and will be the primary basis for town wide bicycle facility and pedestrian infrastructure planning and implementation. Plan policies and actions were developed through a review of existing Town policies, an assessment of what steps are needed to develop a bicycle network for all ages and abilities, and public input.

- ❖ **Vision Statement:** Bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities have access to a safe, well-connected network linking all areas of Easton.
- ❖ **Goals:** These are targets the community wants to work toward over time to support the vision. Each goal has specific policies and actions that are necessary for achieving the goal.
- ❖ **Policies:** These are initiatives that when accomplished will lead to the realization of the goals and vision statement.
- ❖ **Actions:** These are specific activities to implement Plan policies.

### Policies and Actions

#### Goal 1: Safety

*Improve safety of bicyclists by promoting safe bicycling, driving, and walking behaviors and building appropriate, well-designed facilities.*

**Policy 1.1:** Incorporate design best practices when designing bicycle facilities and improving pedestrian crossings

- Action 1.1.1: Revise motor vehicle lane width guidelines to allow more flexibility in roadway design to accommodate bicycle facilities.
- Action 1.1.2: Update the Public Works Development Guidelines and Improvement Standards to reflect guidance from the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, interim guidance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, and the design recommendations in Chapter xx of this Plan.

**Policy 1.2:** Raise awareness on the part of all road users about pedestrian rights and laws and encourage motorists and bicyclists to follow traffic laws that promote safety

- Action 1.2.1: Coordinate efforts between Town agencies, County agencies and Police Departments to ensure consistent messaging and education for bicyclists and motorists when implementing new facilities.
- Action 1.2.2: Work with the Easton Police Department to fund and conduct emphasis patrols that target specific unsafe bicycling and driving behaviors such as riding without lights and parking in bike lanes.
- Action 1.2.3: Increase helmet use by promoting low cost bicycle helmet distribution and bicycle safety messaging.
- Action 1.2.4: Enforce traffic laws equally, targeting behaviors of both cyclists and motorists that are

known to cause crashes and pedestrian injuries.

- Action 1.2.5: Update the Town of Easton code, Chapter 5, to reflect current standards and expectations and regulations related to bicycling on Town streets and corridors. Remove any sections of the Town code that are counter to bicycle or pedestrian safety.

**Policy 1.3:** Improve the environment for walking and bicycling through high-quality design, engineering and maintenance of facilities.

- Action 1.3.1: Evaluate roadway surface and make maintenance improvements to ensure potential hazards are addressed before bicycle and pedestrian facilities are installed.
- Action 1.3.2: Install high-quality bicycle facilities that provide greater separation from motor vehicle traffic whenever feasible (e.g. 6 foot bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, cycle tracks).
- Action 1.3.3: Maintain the Town's street sweeping program to ensure that all shoulders, bicycle routes, and designated bike lanes are cleared of sand, glass, and debris at least once a month.
- Action 1.3.4: Continue to monitor and address citizen maintenance requests (e.g. pothole repairs, debris clean-up, signal detection adjustments) to identify recurring problems and set maintenance priorities.
- Action 1.3.5: Accommodate bicyclists through construction zones by providing appropriate warning and detour signage, and temporary facilities where needed for improved safety.

## **Goal 2: Connectivity**

Complete a connected network of bikeways and walking routes linking and providing access to all neighborhoods and key destinations.

**Policy 2.1:** Connect the town's neighborhoods and activity centers with high-quality bicycle facilities

- Action 2.1.1: All new, reconstructed, or retrofitted arterial streets should provide walking and bicycling facilities.
- Action 2.1.2: Plan and prioritize bicycle and pedestrian facilities within growth areas so that when annexation occurs, the Town can address non-motorized transportation deficiencies.
- Action 2.1.3: Develop a wayfinding system to reinforce routes between key destinations.

**Policy 2.2: Promote bicycle and pedestrian access to all schools**

- Action 2.2.1: Seek Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure around all schools; and to develop school safety and encouragement programs.
- Action 2.2.2: Ensure that all schools within the town have complete infrastructure for safe walking routes.

**Policy 2.3:** Improve routes across major barriers

- Action 2.3.1 Work with MDOT to fund, implement and maintain short- and long-term recommendations for creating safe crossings for all primary and secondary arterials, and crossings of waterways.

**Policy 2.4:** Provide route options that are both low stress and direct for bicyclists

- Action 2.4.1: Enhance bicyclist comfort and safety at intersections where low-stress bicycle routes cross arterial streets.

**Policy 2.5:** Facilitate bicycling and walking throughout Easton

- Action 2.5.1: Improve bicycle routes into and throughout downtown.
- Action 2.5.2: Provide a continuous sidewalk network along all town streets

**Policy 2.6:** Connect the Town's trail network with on-street routes

- Action 2.6.1: Improve key on-street bike facility connections that improve access to the trail network.

### **Goal 3: Equity**

*Provide bicycling access for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery and capital investment.*

**Policy 3.1** Provide diverse opportunities for all residents to participate in making Easton a walkable and bikeable community.

**Policy 3.2:** Ensure that walking facilities and bicycling infrastructure are provided for all town residents, including people of different ages, races, ethnicities, incomes and those with variable or restricted mobility.

- Action 3.2.1: Through a balanced prioritization process, invest in bicycle infrastructure and updated pedestrian safety measures in all Town neighborhoods.

**Policy 3.2:** Provide opportunities for Town residents regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or income to engage in bicycle related activities

- Action 3.2.1: When communicating about bicycle related programs or projects, develop outreach materials that are accessible through various media to a wide range of constituents in multiple languages.

### **Goal 4: Livability**

*Build a vibrant and healthy community by creating a welcoming environment for bicycle riding.*

**Policy 4.1:** Foster a community culture supportive of walking and biking as important modes of transportation and recreation and encourage programs for bicyclists of all abilities

- Action 4.1.1 Partner with local bicycle shops and bicycle-related organizations to disseminate education and encouragement information, and sponsor education and encouragement events.
- Action 4.1.2: Partner with local organizations to facilitate access to free or low-cost bicycle repair equipment.
- Action 4.1.3: Promote mentor program to help interested walking and bicycle commuters.
- Action 4.1.4: Support bike repair, education, and "earn-a-bike" programs for youth.
- Action 4.1.7: Encourage more Easton businesses to become "Bicycle Friendly Businesses" through the League of American Bicyclists' program.

**Policy 4.2:** Increase participation in bicycling events

- Action 4.2.1: Lend Town support to community organizations involved in promoting bicycling. Support may include providing a venue for events, recruiting volunteers and posting events on the Town's Public Meetings and Key Events calendar.

### **Goal 5: Public and Environmental Health**

*Develop a bicycle and walking network that enables active, healthy lifestyles and sustains a healthy environment.*

**Policy 5.1:** Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to schools, healthy food choices, healthcare facilities, support services, employment destinations and active transportation opportunities.

- Action 5.1.1: Continue to include bicycle and pedestrian improvement recommendations when developing capital improvement program project lists.

**Policy 5.2:** Improve air and water quality and reduce energy consumption by encouraging walking and other non-motorized trips.

**Policy 5.3:** Increase the availability and use of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to improve the health of Easton residents

## **Goal 6: Choice**

*Develop infrastructure that creates viable transportation choices, and accommodates multimodal trips.*

**Policy 6.1:** Make combined bicycle and transit trips an easy option

- Action 6.1.1: Provide convenient auto and bicycle access to park-and-ride facilities on regional routes.
- Action 6.1.2 Continue to provide development incentives when amenities for transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists are included in projects.

**Policy 6.2:** Invest in high-quality bicycle parking

- Action 6.2.1: Using the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) Bicycle Parking Guide as a model, develop and adopt protocols and best practices for prioritizing and installing bicycle parking throughout the Town, including transit stops and stations.
- Action 6.2.2: Provide safe, convenient and protected bicycle parking at activity centers such as commercial areas, institutions, parking garages, park-and-ride facilities and transit terminals.
- Action 6.2.3 Develop a funding mechanism for the purchase and installation of bicycle parking. Solicit requests from local businesses and organizations for the installation of bicycle parking.

**Policy 6.3:** Provide bicycle access to transit stations

- Action 6.3.1: Work with local public transportation businesses to identify barriers to bicycling around transit stations and apply for joint funding to improve bicycle access to and at stations.

## **Goal 7: Education**

*Provide education for Town staff on best practices in .... And public education on the rights and responsibilities of the users of all transportation modes.*

**Policy 7.1:** Expand education campaigns to promote safe bicycling and driving, and respect for all roadway users

- Action 7.1.1: Expand education campaigns through local access television, nonprofits and the Town channels including website and Facebook to promote safe bicycling and driving and respect for all roadway users.
- Action 7.1.2: Promote and support bicycle education programs. Encourage class offerings for vulnerable riders and those new to bicycling (e.g. classes for different age groups).
- Action 7.1.3: Work with Talbot County to provide bike maps at bus stops and transit stations.
- Action 7.1.4: Work with local driver education programs to encourage awareness of bicyclists' and pedestrians' rights to use the roadway, and laws pertaining to people biking and walking on the roadway.
- Action 7.1.5: Address bicycle and pedestrian conflicts and promote mutual respect among users through signage (i.e. "Use bell or voice when passing", "share the trail").

**Policy 7.2:** Support efforts to obtain funding for bicycle education and enforcement programs



- Action 7.2.1: Seek funding to continue develop a "See and Be Seen" safety campaign in partnership with local organizations.
- Action 7.2.2: Apply for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants from the State of Maryland.
- Action 7.2.3: Support local nonprofits in gaining funding for education programs.

**Policy 7.3:** Encourage the Talbot County School District to incorporate bicycle and walking safety training into the physical education curriculum

- Action 7.3.1: Continue and expand SRTS programming, such as assemblies, bicycle rodeos and in-classroom safety education, to all schools in and around Easton.
- Action 7.3.2: Encourage the Talbot County School District to partner with the Town in funding SRTS sidewalk and bicycle facility improvements.

**Policy 7.4:** Provide town staff and other stakeholders with professionally-led training on current national bicycle guides and other best practices.

- Action 7.4.1: Facilitate hands-on training sessions on bicycle facility design for engineers, operations staff and planners as a follow up to best practices

## **Goal 8: Land Use and Mode Shift**

*Increase the number and percent of bicycle trips townwide.*

**Policy 8.1:** Address safety issues associated with vehicle speeds and volumes; provide appropriate separation from motor vehicle traffic and design elements that reduce the speed differential between modes.

**Policy 8.2:** Encourage biking and walking for short trips and provide end-of-trip facilities for bicyclists

- Action 8.2.1 Require short- and long-term bicycle parking for new and significantly renovated office or commercial development.
- Action 8.2.2 Encourage and incentivize provision of end-of-trip facilities such as showers, changing room and storage locker facilities for new and significantly renovated office or commercial development.

**Policy 8.3:** Ensure connection and completion of pedestrian facilities for new and redevelopment. Require the construction of sidewalks or walkways with multiple residential, commercial or industrial development, where pedestrian facilities are appropriate

**Policy 8.4:** Pedestrian circulation plans shall be required for commercial and large multi-family projects. Pedestrian facilities shall connect commercial and multi-family buildings with the abutting street(s) to encourage pedestrian/transit use.

**Policy 8.5:** Create a set of benchmarks and a process to collect data and monitor changes in bicycle and pedestrian data over time.

## **Goal 9: Economy**

*Enhance economic vibrancy by creating a bicycle-friendly community that is an attractive place to live and work.*

**Policy 9.1:** Support walking and biking access to community destinations for residents and visitors.

**Policy 9.2:** Increase the provision of pedestrian amenities, including street trees, furniture, and

pedestrian-scale lighting within the sidewalk where appropriate.

**Policy 9.2:** Engage local businesses and organizations in promoting bicycling in advertising and promotions

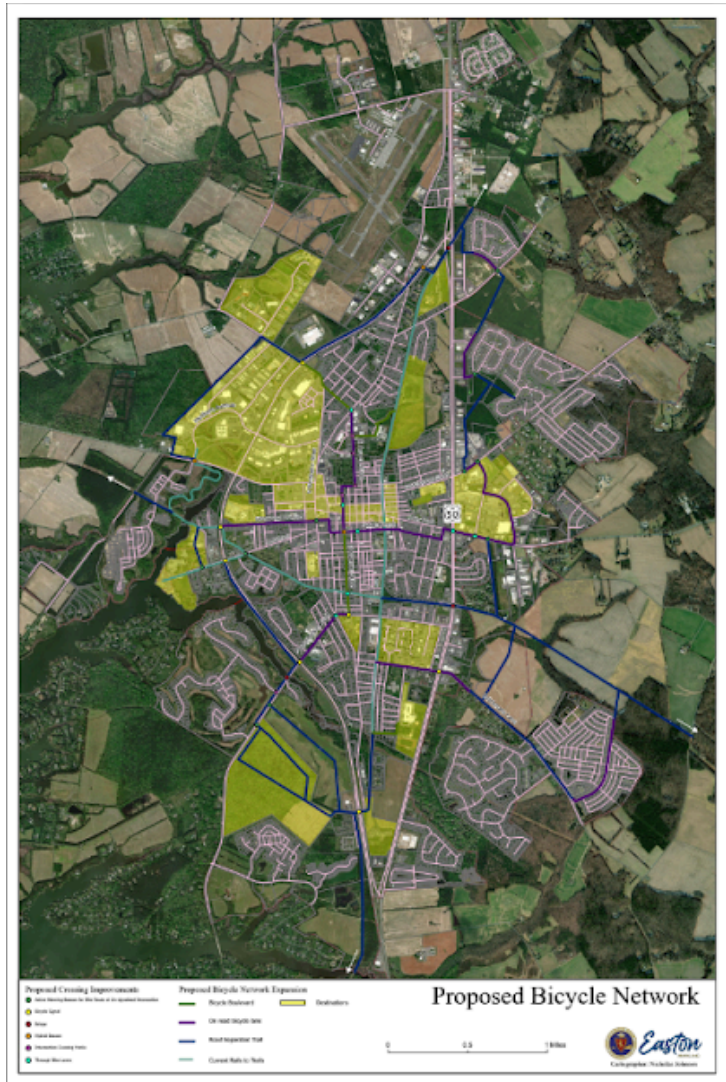
- Action 9.1.1: Work with area businesses to engage them in the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community programs.

**Policy 9.2:** Encourage employers to provide incentives for their employees to use nonmotorized transportation

- Action 9.2.1 Encourage employers to provide shower and locker facilities, indoor bicycle parking, and bicycles for employees to use for work trips and errands.



# Chapter 3: Network Recommendations



This chapter presents the recommended network of **on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities** that will help Easton meet the goals of this Plan. This chapter also provides a prioritized list of recommendations to facilitate strategic and timely implementation of the Plan.

## Bicycling: Network Opportunities and Constraints

The Town of Easton street system presents both opportunities and constraints for developing an on-street, town-wide bicycle network that safely connects all major destinations for bicyclists of all skill levels. In areas of the Town that have a traditional street grid pattern, streets are somewhat narrow with parking on one or both sides. In newer sections of the Town, particularly to the east, there are more dead-end streets that make it harder to develop an extensive network of bicycle facilities in these areas. Many of these areas with limited connectivity were built under the current land use and local, State, and federal environmental regulations, which are much more restrictive than in the past and can make street and trail construction - and associated environmental impact mitigation - very expensive.

One of the most significant challenges for creating a connected bicycle network is US

Route 50 on the east side of town, and the Easton Parkway on the west. There are currently [X#] of arterial streets that cross US Route 50 over a three-mile stretch and many of these are intimidating to novice and intermediate bicyclists. Addressing major barriers such as these through improved connectivity is central to the goals and objectives of this Plan.

Another challenge is determining how to proceed with planning for bicycle facilities and walking paths within the growth areas. In more developed areas on-street bicycle facilities that tie into the larger network can be identified and recommended. However, in less developed areas, planning for bicycle facilities and sidewalks and other pedestrian features will need to be incorporated into the platting and design of new streets and developments. Under modern land use and environmental regulations and mitigation requirements, street connectivity will be very challenging to accomplish due to the presence of significant

environmental features, including streams, wetlands, slopes, and wildlife habitat. Off-street facilities such as trails, side paths, and widened sidewalks, while not evaluated in this Plan, help to complete the on-street bicycle and pedestrian network by providing parallel routes or short, critical connections where there is not an on-street option. For example, Easton Rail Trail serves as an off-street alternative to help address the lack of on-street bicycle facilities through Town. In cases where off-street facilities cross major arterials, additional improvements may be needed to help trail-users safely cross the street.

There is a need in Easton and Talbot County for a network that would accommodate both experienced and less experienced bicyclists. The 2012 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (AASHTO Bike Guide) discusses the different ways in which bicyclists can be classified, according to skill level, comfort level, physical ability, and trip purpose. It recommends skill level as one of the most important factors to consider when developing a bicycle network. The AASHTO Bike Guide categorizes bicyclists by skill level as “experienced and confident” and “casual and less confident.” The majority of the population will fall into the latter category, including children, recreational riders and individuals who prefer off-street facilities or those on low-traffic streets. Table 3.1, taken from the AASHTO Bike Guide, summarizes the common characteristics of experienced versus casual bicyclists. The 2012 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (AASHTO Bike Guide).

**Table x#:** *Bicyclists of Different Skill Levels Use of On and Off Street Bicycle Facilities*

| <b>Experienced/Confident Riders</b>                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Casual/Less Confident Riders</b>                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Most are comfortable riding with vehicles on streets, and are able to negotiate streets like a motor vehicle, including using the full width of a narrow travel lane when appropriate and using left turn lanes. | Prefer shared use paths, bike boulevards, or bike lanes along low-volume, low-speed streets and roads.                                              |
| While comfortable on streets, some prefer on-street bike lanes, paved shoulders or shared use paths when available.                                                                                              | May have difficulty gauging traffic and may be unfamiliar with rules of the road as they pertain to bicyclists; may walk bike across intersections. |
| Prefer a more direct route                                                                                                                                                                                       | May use less direct route to avoid arterials with heavy traffic volume                                                                              |
| Avoid riding on sidewalks. Ride with flow of traffic on streets                                                                                                                                                  | In no on-street facility is available, may ride on sidewalks                                                                                        |
| May ride at speeds up to 20 mph on flat ground, up to 45 mph on steep descents                                                                                                                                   | May ride at speeds around 8 to 12 mph                                                                                                               |
| May cycle longer distances                                                                                                                                                                                       | Cycle shorter distances: 2 to 5 miles is a typical trip distance                                                                                    |

**\*\*\*\*\*Remainder below is FROM TOE 2009 BIKE/PED PLAN - how do we address and develop Ped/Bike networks w/o data to go on**

- Goals/Objectives to be re-written to align w/ overall goals on p 3 above**

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## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES: BICYCLING

The following goals and objectives should be followed by the Town and any other responsible agency, subject to fiscal budgetary limitations. Projects beyond the fiscal ability of the Town to reasonably fund through general revenues should be pursued through grant opportunities, developer contributions, or a combination thereof.

Mission: To promote and facilitate bicycling as a safe, convenient and comfortable form of transportation and recreation in Easton.

Goal 1 — ENGINEERING: Develop a connected system of primary and secondary bikeways with ample bicycle parking to serve all types of bicyclists' needs.

Objective 1: Make bicycling safe and inviting on the streets of Easton.

Initiatives:

- o Add bicycle lanes, signed bicycle routes and shared lane markings to develop the on-street bikeway network (see page 13).
- o Use innovative designs and bicycle-specific treatments at intersections and small connector paths to improve safety.
- o Consider the adopted bicycle route network in prioritizing street resurfacing, reconstruction, and streetscape projects.
- o Coordinate planning, design, and implementation of bicycle facilities with other city plans.
- o Create a checklist-style system that encourages connectivity and universal access in all new developments and for use in all development site review plans.
- o Coordinate planning, design, and implementation of bicycle improvements near the town line with adjacent communities.

Objective 2: Identify and sign select Bicycle Routes to improve way-finding among popular destinations in the Town of Easton.

Initiatives:

- o Provide a set of spine routes that will be easy-to-follow for novice bicyclists, new bicycle commuters, residents and tourists.
- o Provide a set of spine routes that touch every Ward and serve the most important destinations needing bicycle access and way-finding guidance.
- o Contribute to the physical and visual presence of bicycle facilities on the Town street and roadway system, which alerts motorists and all other users of the transportation system

that bicyclists have "a right to the road," and are to be expected along these and other routes throughout Easton.

Objective 3: Increase the availability of bicycle parking and support facilities at destinations throughout Easton.

Initiatives:

- o Launch a bicycle parking initiative.
- o Require new housing, retail and office development to provide bicycle parking.
- o Work with Delmarva Community Transit to accommodate bicycles in support of a multi-modal transit system, and improve bicycle parking at transit stops.

Objective 4: Continue to develop off-road paths to create a connected trail system.

Initiatives:

- o Improve access to Rails-to-Trails pathways via on-street network.
- o Support ongoing Rails-to-Trails pathways development through Easton via Town of Easton Parks and Recreation in cooperation with Talbot County Parks and Recreation.

Goal 2 - EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT: Implement safety, education and encouragement programs to increase bicycle usage.

Objective 1: Educate the public (motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians) about bicycle and vehicle operation in traffic conditions.

Initiatives:

- o Educate motorists and bicyclists about mutual rights and responsibilities (see Program Ideas on page 28).
- o Educate future motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists about safe travel behavior and vehicle operation (see Program Ideas on page 28).
- o Create and implement a Safe Routes to School Program in public and private schools (see Resources and References on page 26).

Objective 2: Encourage increased bicycling by promoting health, recreation, transportation, and tourist opportunities.

Initiatives:

- o Establish partnerships with health organizations such as the Talbot
- o County Health Department, Shore Health System and the YMCA of Talbot County to promote bicycling as healthy transportation.
- o Promote bicycling for commuting, errands, socializing, and exercising (see specific Program Ideas on page 28).
- o Partner with local businesses and agencies to promote bicycle touring opportunities — Easton Economic Development, Town of Easton Parks and Recreation, Talbot County Office of Tourism, Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Talbot County Parks and Recreation and Maryland Office of Tourism.

Goal 3 - ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY: Institute policies that support implementation of Bicycle Plan goals and objectives with community support and input.

Objective 1: Improve enforcement of traffic laws related to bicycling.

Initiatives:

- o Develop partnership with the Easton Police Department to identify and address bicycle-vehicle safety measures through enforcement and new or amended laws.
- o Expand training for Town of Easton police officers regarding bicycle safety laws and issues faced by on-street bicyclists.
- o Identify the most common conflicting movements between bicycle and motor vehicle users and determine enforcement mechanisms to mitigate these conflicts.

Objective 2: Create structure to implement the Bicycle Plan goals and objectives.

Initiatives:

- o Fund a full part-time Bicycle & Pedestrian Professional Coordinator (or possibly use interns) who will work with residents, community groups, businesses, civic associations, property owners and Town of Easton departments to implement this plan.
- o Reduce the incidence of bicycle theft through a supportive Town of Easton
- o Bicycle Registration Program.
- o Produce and distribute bicycle education materials through Town of Easton and Talbot County business and tourism agencies and organizations. This may include an Easton Bicycling Map, a semi-annual newsletter for program and route updates, and a Bike Easton section to the Town of Easton's Website
- o Use targeted outreach programs and collateral items to communicate issues related to "Share the Road" etiquette for bicyclists and motorists, and to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on shared-use Rail-to-Trails paths.
- o Review and update the Easton Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in conjunction with updates to the Easton Comprehensive Plan.



Objective 3: Institute new policies and procedures to support Bicycle Plan goals.

**Initiatives:**

- o Utilize national and state resources to guide bicycle facility design and application in the Town of Easton's Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Public Works, the Building Department and other agencies .(see Resources and References on page 26).
- o Build internal capacity to design and implement bicycle facilities by providing ongoing training for Town of Easton staff.
- o Improve the reporting and analysis of bicycle crashes to suggest appropriate engineering, encouragement and enforcement countermeasures.
- o Adopt policy requiring new development to mitigate traffic impact by providing bicycle facilities or contributing to a fund which is dedicated for bicycle facilities and improvements.

Objective 4: Update street repair and maintenance practices to ensure bicyclists safety and comfort.

**Initiatives:**

- o Develop procedures for maintaining public bicycle facilities.
- o Establish bicycle-related improvement request system through the Town of Easton Web site.
- o Update specifications for routine and emergency street resurfacing and repair to ensure safe traveling routes and surfaces for bicyclists.

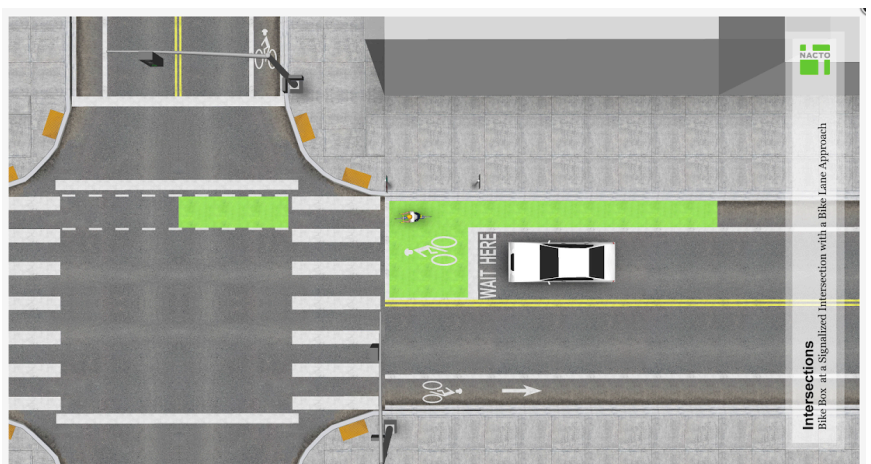
## **Bicycling Access: Levels of Quality**

### **On-Street Bicycle Lanes**

Bicycle lanes provide a dedicated space on the roadway for one-way bicycle travel and encourage predictable movement. Widths of 5 to 6 feet are most comfortable. Narrow bike lanes next to parking are not preferred. Bicycle lanes are best on streets with heavy traffic, arterials and boulevards.

### **Crossings and Intersections**

Bicycle markings are generally not carried through intersections or across pedestrian crosswalks. However, "bicycle boxes" help protect bicycles at intersections by cueing them to the front of traffic. These boxes also provide an added buffer for pedestrians.



Short traffic signal cycles benefit both pedestrians and bicyclists. Bicycle lanes may be colorized for safety in conflict areas around intersections. Where key bicycle connections exist in parking lots, lanes may be designated but must be maintained often.

**Shared Lane Markings, Signage and Bicycle Routes**

Shared lane markings ("sharrows") are placed in bicycles to ride outside the door zone of parked cars. Bicycle routes are designated on streets too narrow for bicycle lanes but good for bicycling. New bicycle route signs show directions and distance. They are placed only at decision points. Bicycle routes should not lead bicyclists onsidewalks, particularly against the flow of traffic.



*Bay Street— heavily traveled for access to town center and Route 33 - offers roadway space for bicycle travel that comes & goes creating a dangerous situation for motorists & cyclists.*

**Shared Use Paths**

Shared use paths often parallel high-speed roads in access controlled environments. Paths can provide scenic and direct routes of travel. Widths can vary but must accommodate many users and modes. Where paths intersect with roadways, ramps and signage should be provided. Grade separated crossings are often huge obstacles — bridges may be too narrow and tunnels can be intimidating if poorly designed and/or maintained improperly.

**Parking**

Bicycle racks should support a bicycle in at least two places, allowing the frame and wheels to be locked using a U-lock or cable lock. An "inverted U" is the preferred rack. Racks should prevent the wheel of a bicycle from tipping and be durable and securely anchored. Racks should be placed in visible locations (covered if possible) and should not impede pedestrian traffic. Racks should be located 36" away from either parallel or perpendicular walls.

**PROPOSED BIKEWAYS**

A system of bicycle lanes and off-road paths that connect to existing Talbot County bikeways, improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians, and serve multiple Easton destinations.

Phase One

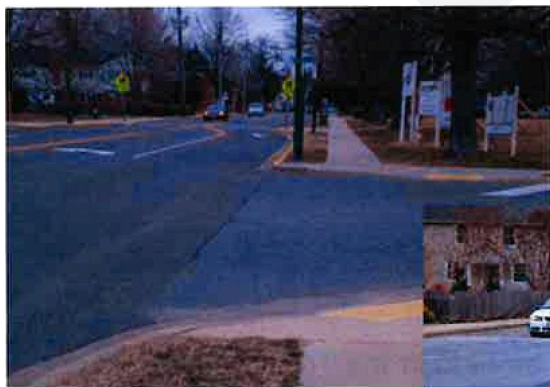
| Location   | Intersects/Connects                                                                          | Destinations                                             |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Glebe Road | State Road 33 via 370<br>Goldsborough Neck Road<br>North Washington Street<br>Easton Parkway | Lowe's Plaza<br>Target Plaza<br>Commerce Parks           |
| Bay Street | North Washington Street<br>State Road 33<br>Easton Parkway                                   | Target Plaza<br>Easton Village<br>Safeway<br>TCF Library |

|                         |                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aurora Street           | Rails-to-Trails<br>North Washington Street<br>Dover Street<br>Goldsborough Street<br>Idlewild Avenue<br>Brookletts Avenue<br>Dutchman's Lane | Town Center<br>Thompson Park<br>Memorial Hospital<br>Idlewild Park                                 |
| North Washington Street | Rails-to-Trails Start/End Point<br>Glebe Road                                                                                                | North Easton Park<br>Community Center<br>Adkins's Children's Center<br>Airport Industrial Park     |
|                         |                                                                                                                                              | Town Center<br>TalbotTown                                                                          |
| Peach Blossom Road      | State Road 333<br>Easton Parkway Idlewild Avenue                                                                                             | Easton Middle School YMCA of<br>Talbot County<br>Easton Club (West)<br>Cooke's Hope                |
| Dutchman's Lane         | South Washington Street<br>Rails-to-Trails Start/End Point<br>Dover Road (East)<br>Dover Neck/Manadier                                       | Easton High School<br>Medical Facilities<br>William Hill Manor<br>Easton Club East<br>Stoney Ridge |
| Chapel Road             | North Washington Street<br>Rails-to-Trails<br>Black Dog Alley                                                                                | Town Center<br>Chapel District Elementary<br>Easton Commons                                        |



## Phase Two

| Location            | Intersects/Connects                                                  | Destinations                                                                                              |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goldsborough Street | South Washington Street<br>Matthewstown Road<br>Black Dog Alley      | Giant/Walmart Plaza<br>Matthewstown Run<br>Bretridge<br>Miller's Run                                      |
| Brookletts Avenue   | Aurora Street<br>South Washington Street<br>Rails-to-Trails          | SS Peter & Paul School<br>Senior Center Memorial Hospital<br>Town Center                                  |
| Marlboro Avenue     | North Washington Street<br>Easton Parkway<br>Route 33 and Glebe Road | Multiple shopping plazas<br>Easton Village<br>Talbot Town<br>Town Center                                  |
| Glenwood Avenue     | North Washington Street                                              | Easton Elementary School<br>Adkins's Children's Center<br>Moton Park<br>Town Center                       |
| Black Dog Alley     | Cordova Road<br>Chapel Road<br>Matthewstown Road<br>Dover Road       | Easton Common<br>Giant/Walmart Plaza<br>Matthewstown Run<br>Bretridge<br>Miller's Run<br>Easton Club East |



One of the most heavily used intersections in the town of Easton is where Peachblossom Road, Idlewild Avenue, South Washington and Harrison Streets meet. Access to the YMCA, Memorial Hospital, Easton Middle School, the Easton Parkway, Route 333 and town center creates auto, pedestrian and bicyclist traffic in an area where roadway size varies and bicycle and pedestrian facilities are virtually non-existent.



### EVALUATION AND BENCHMARKS: Bicycling

## EVALUATION

Quantitative benchmarks make it possible to carry out a continuous assessment and annual evaluation. It should be noted though that many of these benchmarks are beyond the Town of Easton's ability to influence and others may become difficult to achieve during slow economic times. They are intended to represent milestones against which to measure success. Therefore, the following benchmarks for bicycling are intended as targets that the Town will strive to achieve subject to fiscal constraints and grant availability:

- o The Town of Easton will establish a system for counting the average number of people bicycling for transportation and recreation in Easton in 2010 and the number shall increase 5 percent annually through 2015 and 10 percent annually through 2020.
- o More than 50 percent of elementary and middle school aged children will receive bicycle safety education by 2015 and more than 75 percent by 2020.
- o Working with the Easton Public Schools, Easton will establish a system for counting the number of children who bicycle to school in 2010 and the number of children bicycling to school shall increase 5 percent annually through 2015 and 10 percent annually through 2020.
- o The number of bicycle-motor vehicle crashes and bicycle-pedestrian crashes will decrease annually in proportion to an increase in bicycling activity.
- o The proposed bikeway network will be 50 percent complete by 2015 and 100 percent complete by 2020.
- o The Town of Easton will begin a log of maintenance requests related to its bikeways network, post the log online for public viewing and seek to reduce its maintenance backlog by a number to be determined.
- o The City will add at least 10 new bicycle parking racks by 2015 and have a total of at least 25 new bicycle parking racks by 2020. In all new development, bicycle parking will be introduced at a rate of 1 :10 (at least one bicycle parking space will exist for every 10 vehicular spaces).
- o Bi-annual special events in spring and fall will be held in the Town of Easton to encourage bicycle use.
- o All town-sponsored special events and public recreational facilities will supply plentiful, safe bicycle parking.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES: PEDESTRIANS

As was stated in the bicycling goals, objectives, and initiatives, the following list of goals and objectives should be pursued by the Town subject to funding availability:

**Mission:** To improve the quality of the walking environment in the Town of Easton so that any trip can be taken on foot safely and comfortably, and where roadways equally serve pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

**Goal 1 - ENGINEERING:** Provide guidelines and standards for physical improvements that will make walking safer, easier, and more attractive to residents and visitors in Easton.

Objective 1: Develop and maintain a pedestrian circulation system.

Initiatives:

- o Coordinate planning, design, and implementation of a pedestrian system with other city plans.
- o Include sidewalks and trails that provide direct, continuous, and safe movement within and between neighborhoods in all street resurfacing, reconstruction, and streetscape projects, including infrastructure accessibility improvements for those with mobility impairments.
- o Link neighborhoods to the center of Easton, major activity centers, transit stops, schools, parks, and other neighborhoods through a connected network that enables children and adults to walk comfortably between destinations.
- o Give priority to maintenance and filling gaps in the sidewalk network that currently exists on arterial and collector roadways.
- o Work with residents, community groups, businesses, civic associations and all property owners to expand the network of walkways on existing public rights-of-way and in new acquisitions of open space.
- o Create a checklist-style system that encourages connectivity and universal access in all new developments and for use in all development site review plans.
- o Coordinate planning, design, and implementation of pedestrian system improvements near the town line with adjacent communities.

Objective 2: Improve pedestrian safety and provide better service at street crossings.

Initiatives:

- o Ensure that the minimum unobstructed clear width of new sidewalks is context-sensitive but never less than five feet in width even in the most restrictive environments.
- o Provide accessible curb ramps, pedestrian signals, countdown timers, and reduce vehicular phases to provide pedestrian intervals long enough for children, older adults and persons with disabilities.
- o Ensure that street furniture, dining areas, landscaping and utilities are compatible and complementary to adjacent sidewalks.
- o Actively work with property and business owners to maintain accessible, unobstructed sidewalks.

Objective 3: Continue to develop off-road multi-use paths to create a connected trail system.

Initiatives:

- o Improve access to Rails-to-Trails pathways via sidewalk system.

- o Support ongoing Rails-to-Trails pathways development through Easton via Town of Easton Parks and Recreation and work to connect to a County wide system in cooperation with Talbot County Parks and Recreation.

**Goal 2 - EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT:** Support walking as an alternative to motor vehicles as beneficial exercise, an economical form of transportation, and as a benefit to the community.

Objective 1: Promote walking as a means of improving health and active lifestyles.

Initiatives:

- o Coordinate across Town of Easton departments and with partners such as the YMCA, Talbot County Health Department and Shore Health System to educate the public regarding the health benefits of walking and how people can better integrate walking into their lives.
- o Support new community events and activities that promote walking and multimodal transportation initiatives.
- o Provide formal and informal activity-oriented programs such as community workshops and educational programs to specifically encourage the relationship between walking and public health.

Objective 2: Develop programs and awareness initiatives that address pedestrian access, safety, rights and responsibilities.

Initiatives:

- o Utilize "Street Smart" resources to develop a pedestrian education program.
- o Use the "Safe Routes to School" program in public and private schools to educate school children about safe walking practices.
- o Publicize the pedestrian network via the Town of Easton and County Tourism Web sites, on MCTV and through distribution of maps and booklets.
- o Work with the Talbot County Health Department to monitor current health trends and identify sources of private funding that may be directed to local initiatives.  
(See Awareness and Education Program Ideas on page x for additional initiatives.)

**Goal 3- ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY:** Create a safe pedestrian environment through effective law enforcement, detailed incident analysis and implementation of safety countermeasures.

Objective 1: Improve enforcement of traffic laws related to pedestrian access.

Initiatives:

- o Partner with the Easton Police Department to monitor areas of pedestrian concern and ensure that officers understand pedestrian issues as well as pedestrian rights and responsibilities.
- o Identify the most common conflicting movements between pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicle users and determine enforcement mechanisms to mitigate these conflicts.

- o Focus law enforcement efforts on safety violations by pedestrians, including jaywalking and proceeding against DON'T WALK signals.

Objective 2: Create structure to implement the Pedestrian Access Plan goals and objectives.

Initiatives:

- o Fund a part-time Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator (or possibly use interns) who will work with residents, community groups, businesses, civic associations, property owners and Town of Easton departments to implement this plan.
- o Solicit input on pedestrian problems via annual reports from the Easton Police Department to the Easton Town Council, continuously through the Town of Easton's Web site, and quarterly through a community forum.
- o Use targeted outreach programs and collateral items to communicate issues to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motorists, and pedestrians and bicyclists on roadways and shared-use paths
- o Review and update the Easton Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in conjunction with updates to the Easton Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 3: Institute new policies and procedures to support Pedestrian Access Plan goals and objectives.

Initiatives:

- o Utilize national and state resources to guide pedestrian access facilities design and application in the Town of Easton's Department of Planning and Zoning, Department of Public Works, the Building Department and other agencies (see Resources and References on page 26).
- o Build internal capacity to design and implement pedestrian access facilities by providing ongoing training for Town of Easton staff.
- o Improve the reporting and analysis of pedestrian issues and fatalities to suggest appropriate engineering, encouragement and enforcement countermeasures.
- o Adopt policy requiring new development to mitigate traffic impact by providing pedestrian facilities or contributing to a fund which is dedicated for pedestrian facilities and improvements.

Objective 4: Update sidewalk and trail repair and maintenance practices to ensure pedestrians safety and comfort.

Initiatives:

- o Develop procedures for maintaining public pedestrian access facilities.
- o Establish pedestrian-related improvement request system on the Town of Easton Web site.
- o Update specifications for routine and emergency street resurfacing and repair to ensure safe traveling routes and surfaces for pedestrians.

## **Pedestrian Access: Levels of Quality**

## **Sidewalks**

Walkability increases with added width (five feet is a minimum). Greater width is needed when street furniture, utilities, dining areas or signs intrude on the "clear" space. Sidewalks should have clean edges and buffers to the street — either vegetation or parked cars. They should not pass long, blank walls without breaks or details. Sidewalk material should be firm, stable and slip resistant with no grade interruptions. Conditions improve as the number of driveways is reduced. Curbs should be nonmountable or separated from the sidewalk by a wide planting strip.

## **Crossings**

Crossings should occur at well-marked crosswalks, with pedestrian signals if appropriate. Short signal cycles provide clear pedestrian priority. ADA accessible curb ramps are essential — preferably two per corner and oriented at perpendicular crosswalks. Tight curb radii (15 to 20') forces traffic to slow. Curb extensions may be appropriate, particularly mid-block. Stop bars can be set back and enhanced signing or lighting can be used selectively for added attention. On multi-lane roads, refuge islands are essential.

## **Main Streets**

Walkways along "main" streets should be wide and clear, particularly in shopping areas. Front doors should open to the street, not parking lots. Blocks should be short — typically 300 feet with a 1,200 foot perimeter — so that people may cross frequently. Most people will walk 150 feet to get to locations rewarding their travel. Contextsensitive lighting and street furniture are essential. Street trees provide shade and street character.

## **Local Streets**

Local streets should be narrow and well-landscaped with on-street parking to act as additional sidewalk buffer. Driving speeds of 15-20 mph are best and 20-25 mph is acceptable\*. Lanes should be narrow and designed to encourage slow vehicular movement. Traffic calming may slow traffic and encourage pedestrian activity.

## **Avenue/Boulevard**

Sidewalks along arterials should be wide and well buffered since these streets provide key transit access. Planter strips and bicycle lanes create essential separation from vehicles. Street trees, other landscaping and medians help slow motorists. Longer pedestrian crossings should be broken into separate threats. Median crossings or refuges (4' minimum, 8-10' preferred) can be angled forcing people to look at motorists before stepping into their path.





The intersection of North Washington Street and Aurora offers a challenging situation for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists alike due to road width, no crosswalks, bicycle lane markings or signage.

## PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

### Phase One

| Location                  | Improvements                                                                                                                                                                                        | Destinations                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| North Washington Street   | <p>Sidewalk continuity to the Easton Parkway</p> <p>Crosswalks at North Washington and Aurora Streets</p>                                                                                           | <p>North Easton Park</p> <p>Community Center</p> <p>Rails-to-Trails</p> <p>Adkins's Children's Center</p> <p>Airport Industrial Park</p> <p>Town Center</p> |
| Marlboro Avenue           | <p>Sidewalk continuity on both sides</p> <p>Crosswalks at East and West ends; crosswalks with pedestrian signals at Easton Parkway</p>                                                              | <p>Multiple shopping plazas</p> <p>Town Center</p>                                                                                                          |
| Aurora Street             | <p>Sidewalk continuity from Dutchman's Lane to North Washington Street</p> <p>Crosswalks at all major intersections (Dutchman's Idlewild, Dover, Goldsborough, Creamery Lane, North Washington)</p> | <p>Town Center</p> <p>Thompson Park</p> <p>Memorial Hospital</p> <p>Idlewild Park</p> <p>William Hill Manor</p> <p>Medical Facilities</p>                   |
| Idlewild Park "5 corners" | <p>Sidewalk continuity from Peachblossom - East onto Idlewild Avenue</p> <p>Crosswalks with pedestrian signals at 5-way intersection</p>                                                            | <p>Easton Middle School</p> <p>YMCA of Talbot County</p> <p>Idlewild Park</p> <p>Rails-to-Trails</p> <p>Town Center</p> <p>Easton Club (West</p>            |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brookletts Avenue | Sidewalk continuity from North Washington Street to Tred Avon Avenue<br>Crosswalks at major intersections (South Washington, Aurora, Tred Avon) | SS Peter & Paul School<br>Senior Center<br>Rails-to-Trails<br>Memorial Hospital<br>Town Center |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



Brookletts Avenue has sidewalks that vary in size and levels of quality. The walkways alternate from one side of the street to the other forcing pedestrians to cross for access or to use the roadway. The final block of Brookletts Avenue (at the East end) has no sidewalk at all forcing pedestrians into the street as the road curves.



## Phase Two

|                    |                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Port Street        | Sidewalk continuity from South Washington West to end<br><br>Crosswalks at all major intersections (near South Washington, West Street, Easton Parkwav) | Town Center<br>Talbot County Library<br>Residential Communities Community Services Center<br>Waterfront |
| Chapel Road        | Sidewalk continuity from North Washington Street to Route 50                                                                                            | Town Center<br>Rail-to-Trails                                                                           |
| Mecklenburg Avenue | Sidewalk continuity on the East side                                                                                                                    | Easton High School<br>William Hill Manor<br>Parkside<br>Medical Facilities                              |



|              |                                                                  |                      |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Stoney Ridge | Sidewalks in early phase of this subdivision (none at this time) | Community Facilities |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|

#### EVALUATION AND BENCHMARKS: Pedestrian Access

Quantitative benchmarks make it possible to carry out a continuous assessment and annual evaluation. Within reasonable fiscal limitations, the Town should strive to achieve the following benchmarks:

- o The Town of Easton will establish a system for counting the average number of people walking for transportation and recreation in Easton in 2010, and the number shall increase 5 percent annually through 2015 and 10 percent annually through 2020.
- o More than 50 percent of elementary and middle school aged children will receive pedestrian safety education by 2015 and more than 75 percent by 2020.
- o Working with the Easton Public Schools, Easton will establish a system for counting the number of children who walk to school and the number of children walking to school shall increase 5 percent annually by 2015 and 10 percent annually through 2020.
- o The number of pedestrian-motor vehicle crashes (10 in 2006, 8 in 2007, 8 in 2008; see Appendix II) and pedestrian-bicycle crashes will decrease annually through 2015.
- o The proposed pedestrian access network will be 50 percent complete by 2015 and 100 percent complete by 2020.
- o The Town of Easton will begin a log of maintenance requests related to its pedestrian access network, post the log online for public viewing and seek to reduce its maintenance backlog by a number to be determined.
- o Bi-annual special events in spring and fall will be held in the Town of Easton to encourage walking for transportation and recreation.

## LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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

### Objectives:

- ✓ Reaffirm the Urban Growth Boundary around the Town defining the ultimate geographic size of Easton.
- ✓ Work in association with Talbot County and various land preservation and environmentally-aligned organizations to secure easements and other long-term protection devices on properties along and in close proximity to the Urban Growth Boundary on the County side of the line.
- ✓ Establish an Annexation policy to establish criteria prioritizing the most appropriate areas for annexation, in an orderly fashion and at a rate that the Town has the administrative and infrastructural capacity to serve.
- ✓ Explore incentive annexation to gain control of land on the town's border that might have previously been developed under Talbot County rules and regulations to facilitate more appropriate redevelopment or expansion on such parcels.
- ✓ Slow the demand for more land by increasing the density of future residential areas. At a minimum, the State of Maryland's minimum acceptable density for qualification as a Priority Funding Area of 3.5 units (net) per acre should be achieved in these developments.
- ✓ Consider adoption of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) if the rate of growth is exceeding the current or planned capacity for specific types of infrastructure.
- ✓ Follow a Capital Improvement Program which will allow the Town to provide a rational basis for implementing improvements and increase funding opportunities, in a planned manner to locations where growth may be prioritized.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Develop future areas of the Town in a series of well-defined connected neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods should contain an integrated mix of residential, neighborhood-scale commercial, civic, and open space uses. Projects that achieve this balance should be possible through the simplest process available while those that do not should be subject to greater scrutiny and have to provide adequate justification for not satisfying this objective.
- ✓ Begin to “retro-fit” developed subdivisions within the Town by adding much greater flexibility to add neighborhood-scale retail, civic and open space elements to existing residential subdivisions.
- ✓ Continue to examine and appropriately amend the Town’s Zoning Ordinance to change the focus from regulation by building use, to building type and site impact.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to refine and work with Design Standards that ensure that Easton stands out as a unique place rather than looking like “Anyplace USA.”
- ✓ Utilize the Town’s Forest Conservation Account and other sources to add landscaping along heavily traveled corridors.
- ✓ Explore options to expedite permit approvals for permitted uses if extraordinary design improvements are included.
- ✓ Develop an Urban Forestry Plan to expand the Town’s tree canopy.
- ✓ Update the Town’s Design Guidelines applicable to properties/projects located outside of the Historic District.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Revisit the proposed TND Zoning District as the primary zoning district on undeveloped parcels in Easton (and for those that are annexed in the future).
- ✓ Continue to evaluate the design and anti-monotony standards first added to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations in 2006.
- ✓ In conjunction with the first objective above, revise review processes so that traditional neighborhood developments are streamlined and suburban-style subdivisions are difficult to get approved.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Work cooperatively with the State Highway Administration to secure landscaping along the State Highways within the Town, with special attention to the highly visible Route 50 corridor.
- ✓ Use the Forest Conservation Account to retroactively landscape streetscapes in areas where it is lacking or deficient.
- ✓ Require renovations to existing buildings and/or changes of use that require Site plans, PUD Amendments, Special Exceptions or Variances, to

meet all current design standards as a condition of approval (i.e. no grandfathering on design issues).

- ✓ Encourage additional landscaping for new development and redevelopment of sites adjacent to U.S. Route 50.

Goal: To improve the appearance of all new development.

Objectives:

- ✓ Vigorously apply the recommended Design Principles for Easton as outlined in the Community Character Chapter.
- ✓ Prohibit the construction of new buildings that are designed with corporate-style franchise architecture.
- ✓ Adopt Design Standards for all new development, including residential and infill/redevelopment, in Easton.
- ✓ Review, update and revise the Design Guidelines for New Development applicable to all projects located outside of the Historic District.
- ✓ Apply Landscaping Standards that use native species to enhance the overall site appearance and more effectively screen objectionable site elements.

Goal: To encourage more redevelopment and infill development.

Objectives:

- ✓ Evaluate the boundaries, standards, and process associated with the Zoning Code's Planned Redevelopment Overlay District to determine if sufficient and appropriate incentives exist to encourage its use.

- ✓ Investigate, in conjunction with the appropriate individuals, any non-Zoning incentives that would potentially encourage more infill and redevelopment.
- ✓ Develop Small Area Plans for more of Easton's neighborhoods to determine the scope, scale, and characteristics of future redevelopment as may be unique to those neighborhoods.

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Educate residents/realtors and property owners about the benefits, boundaries and requirements of the Historic District review process and design standards and about the availability of state and federal tax credits for historic preservation projects.
- ✓ Establish a Local Tax Incentive program in Easton that encourages historic property owners to rehabilitate their property. This local tax incentive will complement existing state and federal tax incentives that encourage historic rehabilitation/restoration. Some 19 counties and municipalities in Maryland already have some form of local tax incentive.

- ✓ Encourage a “Rebuilding Together” chapter in Easton or Talbot County. This is a national organization whose objective is no cost repairs to homes of low income, over 60 home owners.
- ✓ Modify the Historic Commission’s Guidelines by adding specific guidance and criteria for adaptive reuse projects.

Goal: To continue to support the Easton Historic District.

Objectives:

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

later. Such a project could be supported by grant funding and could potentially be done under the auspices of a partner organization.

Goal: To balance the importance of historic preservation with other legitimate neighborhood improvement goals.

Objectives:

- ✓ Examine the boundaries of the Historic Overlay District for potential adjustment (by either expansion or contraction).
- ✓ Consider modest compatibility standards for properties outside of, but adjacent to, the Historic District Overlay Boundary.
- ✓ Expand the scope of the types of projects that can be approved by methods that do not require a full HDC review and approval.

Goal: Safeguard against gentrification of neighborhoods resulting from otherwise successful development projects.

Objectives:

- ✓ Pursue incentives to facilitate tenants to become homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods.
- ✓ Expand the Affordable Housing Board's loan programs to cover more emergency and energy efficiency projects to allow homeowners in gentrifying neighborhoods to remain in their home.
- ✓ Ease the housing pressure in gentrifying neighborhoods by allowing for more housing throughout Town generally.
- ✓ Encourage the creation of a Community Land Trust and other forms of shared equity homeownership to empower communities and promote long-term affordability.



## **SENSITIVE AREAS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Identify, through an environmental impact analysis, and protect environmentally sensitive areas during the initial stages of the development review process.
- ✓ Direct development, whenever possible, away from environmentally sensitive areas so that impacts are avoided to the greatest extent possible.
- ✓ Coordinate, and where necessary enhance, sensitive areas protection with other Town environmental programs such as the Critical Area Program, the Forest Conservation Ordinance, the Floodplain Ordinance, and the Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✓ Encourage the use of innovative and flexible development techniques as a means to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- ✓ Monitor runoff from construction projects for compliance with existing stormwater requirements and action taken to correct any deficiencies.
- ✓ Ensure in large scale developments, that only the phase(s) currently under construction are cleared of ground cover so unnecessary runoff from these sites will be prevented.
- ✓ Consider, where practical and feasible, the purchase of alternative fuel fleet vehicles.

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

GOAL: To protect the 100 year floodplain throughout the Town.

OBJECTIVE:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Work with appropriate State and Federal agencies to identify Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species in the Town.

- ✓ Protect Habitat areas by preserving, enhancing, and connecting identified areas via the development review process.

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

GOAL: To minimize bird/building collisions.

OBJECTIVE:

- ✓ Add standards to the site plan review process that require applicants to take actions to minimize bird/building collisions.

## **WATER RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Continue to coordinate Sewer planning with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

- ✓ Monitor growth rates and be prepared to expand the capacity of the Wastewater Treatment Facility well in advance of the need to do so.

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Continue to administer and enforce the Town's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- ✓ Review the effectiveness of the existing practice of installing silt fences at construction sites. Adopt policies that establish more effective run-off protection and/or ensure more careful monitoring by responsible inspection agencies.
- ✓ Incorporate the latest guidance and requirements as found in the State Stormwater Design Manual following its approval.
- ✓ Continue to work cooperatively with Talbot County to obtain grant funding for projects that clean up Tanyard Branch.
- ✓ Work independently and with Talbot County to develop comprehensive projects and strategies to improve the water quality of stormwater runoff.

**PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Continue to study and monitor the demand for various park and recreation uses (above and beyond National Standards, which the Town largely meets).
- ✓ Coordinate the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Park and Recreation Advisory Board, and Town Council in acquiring and planning parks.
- ✓ Coordinate park planning, programs, and activities with Talbot County Parks and Recreation and other local organizations (i.e., schools and YMCA) to prevent

duplication of amenities/services, pool resources and to ensure that between the various entities, all of Easton's recreational needs are being satisfied.

- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to finish the design and build-out of an eastward expansion of the Rail-Trail in the right-of-way for Chesapeake Avenue, including a grade-separated bicycle/pedestrian crossing of Route 50, and require future developers of land bordering Chesapeake Avenue to build (or fund the building of) a Rail-Trail within this right-of-way.
- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to continually build-out and upgrade various Town parks, particularly Easton Woodland Park and Easton Point Park.
- ✓ Seek funding opportunities to locate and build an indoor sports facility.
- ✓ Revise the Town's Subdivision Regulations to better define what does and does not count as meeting parks and/or open space requirements associated with conventional subdivisions.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Identify appropriate open space areas to serve as green centers or anchors and connect them through a series of pathways and green corridors.
- ✓ Plan future parks, open spaces and corridors in a manner that compliments and helps to build a green infrastructure system.
- ✓ Encourage green space connectivity and access.

## **SUSTAINABILITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**GOAL:** To create a more livable, sustainable, and equitable built environment.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Enact Land Use Laws which prioritize or incentivize compact, mixed-use development accessible to a wide range of household incomes..

- ✓ Establish a robust active transportation system by requiring it to be built in new developments and retrofitting existing streets to include facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ✓ Work with public transportation agencies to support and augment appropriate forms of public transit into/out of and within Easton.
- ✓ Explore options to expand the electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Easton, including requiring new development to provide such infrastructure.
- ✓ Ensure that new growth is coordinated and balanced with the provision of the infrastructure required to support it and that the cost to do so is borne by the development necessitating such infrastructure.

**GOAL:** To reduce the vulnerability of current and future Eastonians to the impacts of climate change.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ✓ Restrict development in areas most susceptible to the effects of climate change..
- ✓ Continue to pursue watershed restoration projects.
- ✓ Promote the further establishment of a vibrant green infrastructure system.
- ✓ Evaluate the Open Space/Park requirements of the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations to determine whether they are at the appropriate levels to achieve Sustainability goals and objectives.
- ✓ Plan for the indirect impacts of climate change on Easton's residents, such as the influx of residents of parts of Talbot County who are more vulnerable to the consequences of sea-level rise and may travel to, or through, Easton in extreme weather events.
- ✓ Increase Easton's tree canopy coverage to mitigate the effects of increased heat.

**GOAL:** To reduce the vulnerability of existing buildings and their occupants to the effects of climate change.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Identify the buildings and structures most at risk to climate change impacts and offer assistance to install retrofit measures to reduce the vulnerability of these structures (through, for example, grants or low-interest loans funded by a future grant).

✓ Relocate, where feasible, infrastructure located within areas likely to be impacted by climate change.

✓ Explore the feasibility and implications of requiring that new construction meet LEED certification (or the equivalent) standards.

**GOAL:** To establish and maintain a sustainable food system for Easton's residents.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Support the agricultural use of vacant land within the Town's boundaries as well as our Future Growth Area.

✓ Support Talbot County's Agricultural Preservation efforts in general, and specifically to preserve farmland adjacent to the outside (i.e., County side) of our Growth Boundary.

✓ Explore options to expand the capacity of the Easton Farmers Market as well as opportunities to make it more accessible and open more hours per week and weeks per year.

✓ Look for opportunities to establish more community gardens.

**GOAL:** To increase renewable energy supply in Easton.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Support efforts of Easton Utilities to build upon the success of their Sustainability Campus.

✓ Explore options for contextually-appropriate solar arrays to be established in Easton.

**GOAL:** To accommodate emerging technology that might improve the sustainability of Easton.

**OBJECTIVES:**

✓ Develop plans to accommodate the needs of growing numbers of electric vehicles (EV) and autonomous vehicles (AV).

✓ Evaluate Town development regulations to ensure that provision of EV-charging infrastructure is adequately accommodated.

✓ Evaluate the appropriateness of how renewable energy options (e.g., solar, wind) are addressed in Easton's Zoning Code.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (\*\*\*)PENDING AMENDMENT WITH EDC UPDATE\*\*\*)**

**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.

**MINERAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

GOAL: To enable the use of identified mineral resources in appropriate locations as a prerequisite to the eventual development of those sites.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify mineral resources on a given site as early as possible in the development review process.
- Examine Town regulations to ensure that mineral extraction is permitted in limited circumstances with appropriate safeguards against undue neighborhood impacts.

GOAL: To ensure that home sites contain topsoil of a quantity and quality necessary to support lawns, gardens, and/or landscaping.

OBJECTIVE:

- Review the Town's adopted Standard Details to ensure that the standard for topsoil on newly developed lots is appropriate and adequate to support the growth of healthy plant life.

**HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

Objectives:

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

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

Objectives:

- ☞ Support the efforts of the Talbot Housing Authority and the Easton Affordable Housing Board to provide both home-ownership and rental opportunities for individuals/families of low income.
- ☞ Consider amendments to the Easton Zoning Ordinance to make the development of apartments more attractive to private sector developers and to allow flexibility in rehabilitating existing and/or historic buildings for an alternative use.
- ☞ Work in partnership with Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc (or any similar organization) to find sites for new homes.
- ☞ Establish a Town-initiated self-help housing program.
- ☞ Insure the development of Smart Neighborhoods by encouraging and

facilitating new infill development, including manufactured homes, on vacant or underutilized land within areas currently served by adequate infrastructure and public facilities.

- ☞ Institute some form of Inclusionary Zoning.

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

Objectives:

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

Goal: To partner in a countywide affordable housing effort.

Objectives:

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

POSSIBLE OTHER GOALS:

- Increasing overall supply of housing.

- Removing regulatory barriers to home construction.
- Providing financial relief (i.e., reduced or waived permit fees, impact fees, capital charges, etc.) pursuant to provision of certain types and amounts of housing.
- Incentivizing increased variety of housing types.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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

### **OBJECTIVES:**

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

areas with the provision for recapture of the cost thereof from future development.

- ✓ Expand opportunities for Town residents to participate in recycling programs.
- ✓ Encourage a college to locate a general purpose or specialized satellite campus in Easton.

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

OBJECTIVES:

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

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

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Construct public facilities with materials and in a style such that they are generally among the finest buildings in Easton.
- ✓ Build public facilities that are large enough and have ample opportunities for expansion, in order to ensure that they will remain for a very long time.
- ✓ Locate public buildings in, or in close proximity to, the historic Town Center of Easton (one exception may be for smaller "sub-stations" which should be located in outlying neighborhoods, nearer the population they are intended to serve).
- ✓ Encourage Talbot County to locate their public buildings in or near the Town Center as well.

- ✓ Investigate the need for a new Town Office Building or the feasibility of an expansion of the existing building.

## **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.

## **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:

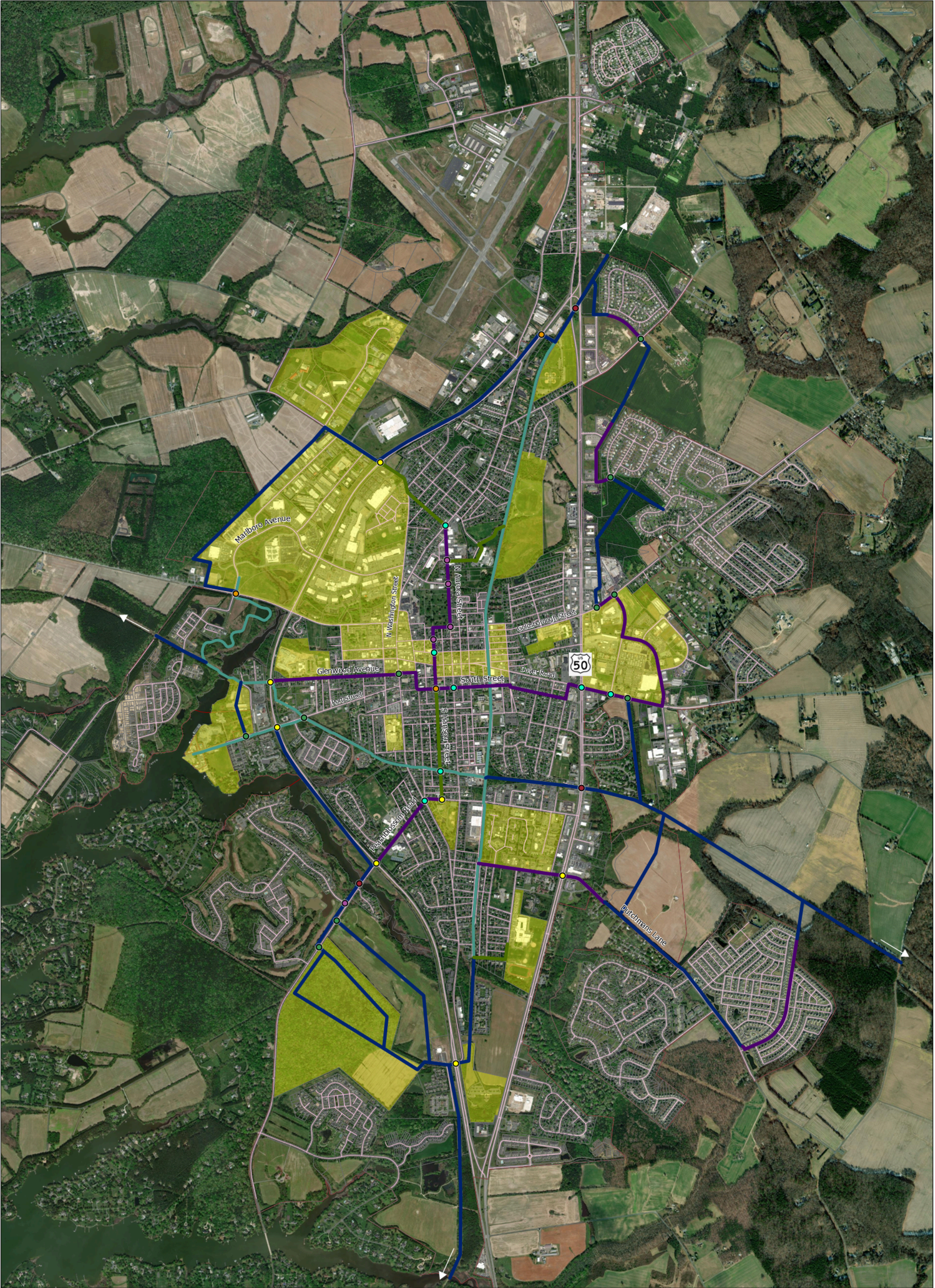
- ✓ Work with County Planning officials to ensure that areas designated for future growth of the Town are treated similarly by the Plans of both jurisdictions.
- ✓ Continue to work cooperatively with Talbot County to determine the feasibility and practicality of an Inter-jurisdictional Transfer of Development 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.





Proposed Crossing Improvements

● Active Warning Beacon for Bike Route at Un-signalized Intersection

● Bicycle Signal

● Bridge

● Hybrid Beacon

● Intersection Crossing Marks

● Through Bike Lanes

Proposed Bicycle Network Expansion

— Bicycle Boulevard

— On road bicycle lane

— Road Separated Trail

— Current Rails to Trails

■ Destinations

# Proposed Bicycle Network



**Easton**  
MARYLAND

Cartographer: Nicholas Johnson

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All future development should incorporate a traditional grid of local streets (not depicted on this map) with block lengths between 200 and 400 feet.

