Town of Easton 2026 Comprehensive Plan

November 1, 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

"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..."
— Daniel Burnham

Envisioning the future and identifying the steps necessary to achieve it is essential in long range planning, particularly the establishment of a community's Comprehensive Plan. That Plan will have a greater chance of being realized if it is prepared with wide scale and broad-based input from community members. It is our framework for this Comprehensive Plan update.

Those interested in the evolution of the Planning process in Easton, the different techniques used in 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).

A. Purpose and Legal Framework

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

The Easton Comprehensive Plan serves as the Town's foundational document for land use policy, infrastructure planning, and long-range civic investment. This document fulfills the requirements of the Maryland Land Use Article (§3-201 et seq.), which mandates that municipalities prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan to guide the coordinated and efficient development of their jurisdiction.

In April 2025, Maryland enacted new legislation creating 8 Sustainable Growth Planning Principles, modernizing and replacing the former 12 Planning Visions. These new principles reflect the State's shift from Smart Growth to Sustainable Growth to achieve more balanced land use and development. Sustainable Growth focuses on policies addressing economic, social, and environmental factors for both current and future generations. These eight Planning Principles are designed to make

sustainable growth policies simpler, clearer, and easier for everyone involved in planning and development to use effectively.



The new Planning Principles are summarized below:

Maryland's Planning Principles

1. **Land:** Optimize productivity of **working landscapes**, including **farms** and **forests**, and **fisheries**, and prioritize **development within population centers** that are in proximity to existing infrastructure and facilities.

2. **Transportation:** Prioritize transportation networks that create **energy efficient**, **affordable**, and **reliable access** to jobs, housing, and services.

3. **Housing:** Enable a mix of **quality housing types** and **affordability** options to accommodate all who want to live in the state.

4. **Economy:** Allow for **adaptive reuse**, **mixed–use**, and **context appropriate** new development that responds to changing markets and innovations.

5. **Equity:** Engage **all sectors of the community** in plan development to ensure **diverse voices** are heard and the needs of **underserved populations** are prioritized.

6. **Resilience:** Integrate resiliency measures that will **minimize** the **impacts** of rapid and unexpected **natural– and human–caused threats** on communities.

7. **Place:** Provide for **public spaces** that encourage **social interaction** and value **cultural**, **historical**, and **natural resources**.

8. **Ecology:** Protect and restore **sensitive ecological systems** and conserve **natural resources**, including forests, agricultural areas, and waterways.

These Principles ensure that local planning efforts align with State funding, capital improvement programs, and resource conservation policies. The Plan is also designed to coordinate with Talbot County's planning framework.

The 2026 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, including potential growth areas for the Town. It identifies 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. Together these 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 development issues can be evaluated and public policy effectuated consistent with the Town's long-range growth and development goals and objectives.
- An information document for local elected officials, citizens, developers and special interest groups concerning critical development issues and policies.

Easton's Comprehensive Plan is a cornerstone of the complex process of guiding future development in the interest of the public. Adoption of the Plan constitutes an important step in directing development in a manner that maintains and enhances Easton's special and unique sense of place.

B. Planning Background, Scope and Use of this Plan

Easton's modern planning era began with the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, which was developed in response to community concerns about uncoordinated growth, loss of open space, and weakening of traditional neighborhood character. That Plan introduced a new framework based on community identity, compact form, and public participation.

The 2010 Plan built upon that foundation, introducing five core growth strategies: contain sprawl, increase density, build neighborhoods, improve design, and manage growth rate. These strategies guided the Town's zoning reforms and capital improvement priorities for more than a decade.

This 2026 Plan affirms those guiding principles and introduces a sixth strategy: encourage more sustainable development patterns. This addition reflects emerging concerns about climate change, infrastructure efficiency, fiscal resilience, and equitable access to housing and opportunity. Looking back over the past decades of the modern planning process, most of the overarching themes of this 2026 Plan originally appeared in the one that was adopted in 1997.

This Plan provides a policy framework to guide Easton's development through 2035. It is organized into thematic chapters covering land use, community character, infrastructure and services, environmental stewardship, housing, transportation, municipal growth, and implementation. Each chapter includes guiding principles, context, objectives, and recommendations.

The Comprehensive Plan is used by the Planning Commission, Town Council, staff, and the public to guide development review, budget decisions, capital investments, and updates to zoning and subdivision ordinances. It is also used by State and regional agencies in assessing funding eligibility and regulatory compliance. The Plan is intended to be updated as needed to remain current with demographic trends, regulatory changes, and community priorities.

C. Easton's Role and Identity

Easton is the economic, governmental, and cultural center of Talbot County and Maryland's Mid-Shore region. As the County seat, it houses the region's major hospital, courthouse, library, and other key institutions. Easton supports a population of a little over 17,000 residents, with services that extend to tens of thousands more from the surrounding area.

Easton is frequently recognized as one of the best small towns in America. The Town is defined by its walkable historic downtown, traditional neighborhoods, and compact form. Its character is shaped by architectural continuity, preserved open space, and a strong civic tradition. Easton is situated at the crossroads of U.S. Route 50 and Maryland Route 322, giving it strategic access to the Chesapeake

Bay, Annapolis, Washington, and Baltimore. Its rural setting and cultural amenities make it both a desirable place to live and a key regional destination. Easton's growth over the past century reflects its increasing role as a regional center and its attractiveness as a place to live and invest.

For an overview of Easton's historical development and growth dynamics, and that of the region, see Appendix 1.

D. Foundations and Data Sources

This Plan is based on a range of data, analysis tools, and prior studies that provide a foundation for its goals and recommendations. Sources include the U.S. Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning, Talbot County Geographic Information Systems (GIS), local infrastructure capacity studies, and Easton's building permit and land use data. The Plan also incorporates fiscal analysis tools such as Urban3 value-per-acre assessments to evaluate development patterns.

Taken together, these tools provide a comprehensive and evidence-based foundation for land use policy, infrastructure planning, and growth management.

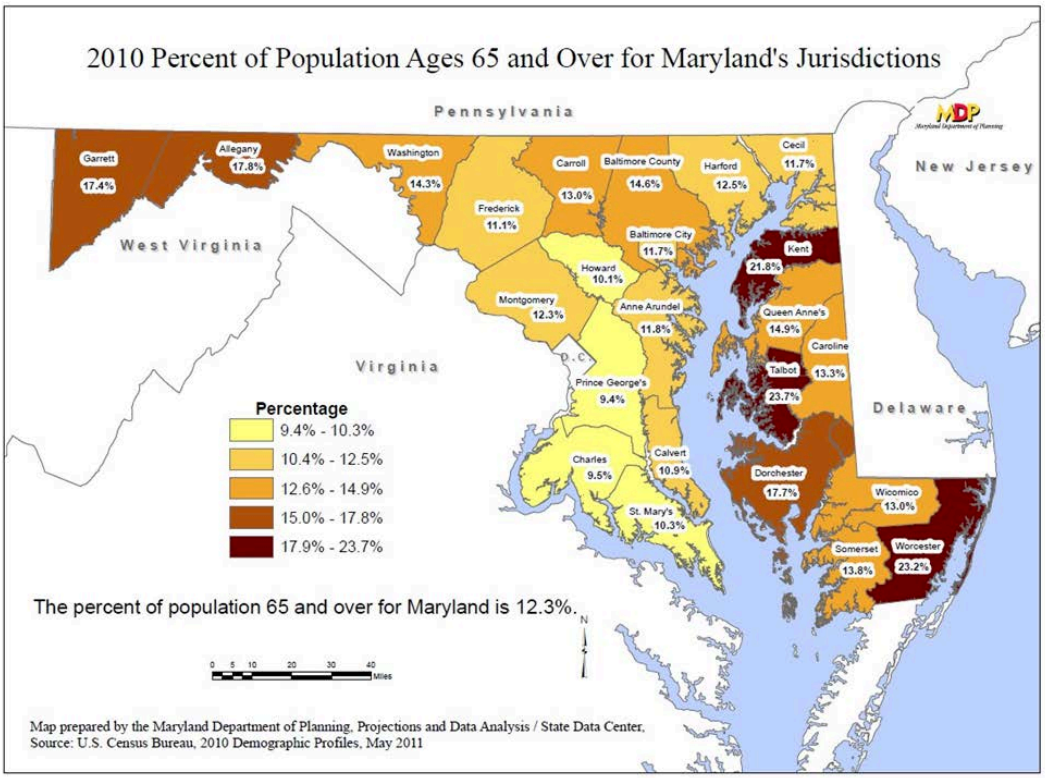
One demographic change evident in (although not unique to) Easton is the growth of the Hispanic population. The chart below shows how these components of Easton's population have changed since 1990 when Hispanics were first reported separately. Particularly noteworthy is the absolute growth in the Hispanic population as evidenced by the fact that while the total African American population has been stable since 1990, the percentage that this number represents of the total Town population has shrunk considerably. Conversely the Hispanic population growth has been dramatic both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the Town's overall population (from 0.4% to 14.4%).

Year	Total Population	African American	African American %	Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino %
1990	9,372	2,521	26.9%	337	0.4%
2000	11,708	2,746	23.5%	404	3.5%
2010	15,9945	2,742	17.2%	1,570	9.8%
2020	17,101	2,467	14.4%	2,454	14.4%

TABLE 1 AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC POPULATION CHANGE, 1990-2020

SOURCE : US Decennial Census for Year identified

Easton and Talbot County have a high concentration of people over age 65. In 2010 Maryland Department of Planning produced the following map illustrating this:



Map 1: Maryland Senior Population by County

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%.

E. Planning Process and Public Engagement

Work on this Comprehensive Plan update began in 2021 with a review of the 2010 Plan's implementation outcomes. Through 2022, 2023 and 2024, Town staff and consultants gathered data, conducted mapping and zoning analysis, and assessed growth capacity. Community engagement began in 2023 and continued into 2025, including public open houses, stakeholder workshops, online surveys, and formal public hearings.

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

- Contain Sprawl within an Urban Growth Boundary
- Increase Density
- Build Neighborhoods
- Improve Design
- Manage the Rate of Growth

The 2026 Plan adds a sixth component to this Growth Management Strategy:

- Encourage More Sustainable Development Patterns

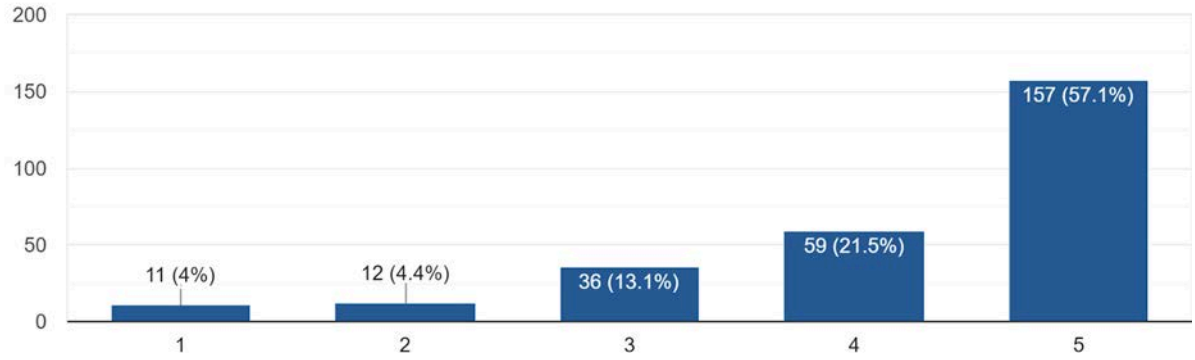
Key themes identified through public input included the need for workforce housing, reinvestment in the downtown core, traffic and multimodal transportation improvements, protection of neighborhood character, and preservation of Easton's agricultural and open space edges. The Planning Commission oversaw the process and incorporated community feedback into all major chapters and policy recommendations.

Community Feedback Process Highlights

The community input phase of this Plan Update asked the public about the continued relevance or appropriateness of each component of the Growth Management strategy. The results were clear: each received something between moderate to very strong support for continuing to be included in the next Planning Period (2026-2036). As a result, 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, this is the context and spirit of this Plan update. The results of the questions about Town's Growth Management strategy are summarized in the following charts (for each response, 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree):

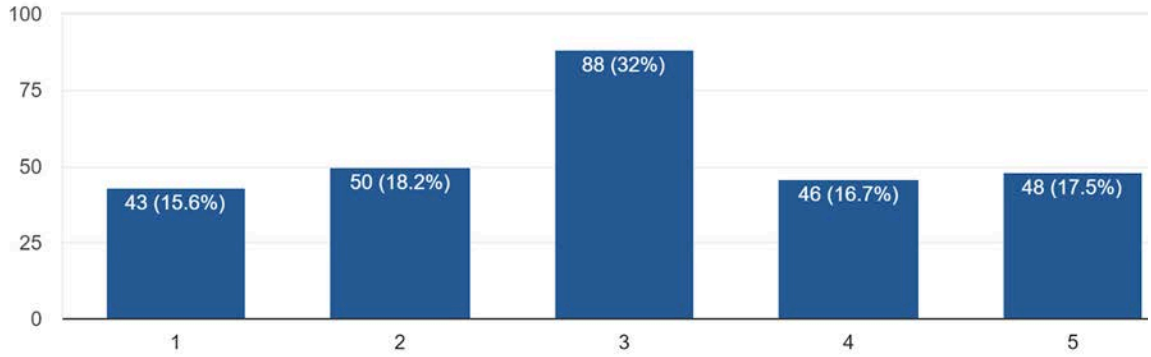
Contain Sprawl with an Urban Growth Boundary

275 responses



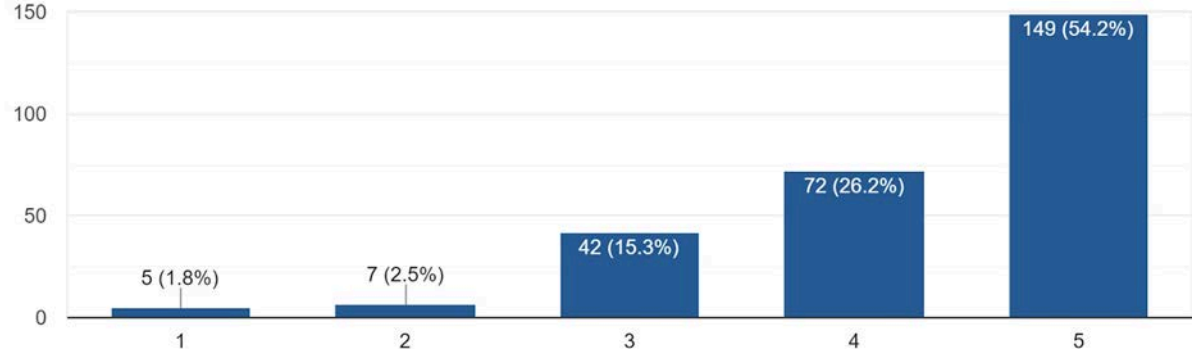
Increase Density

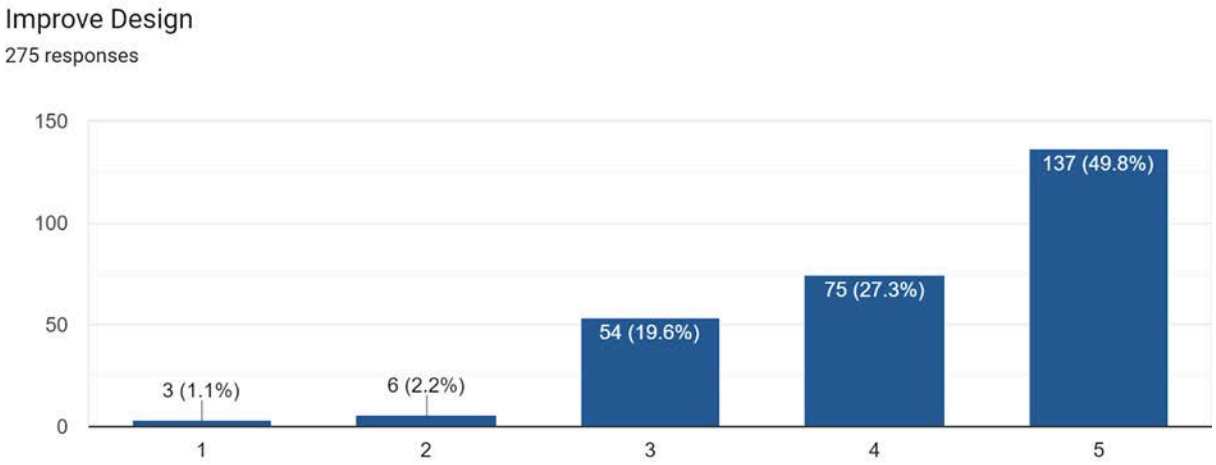
275 responses

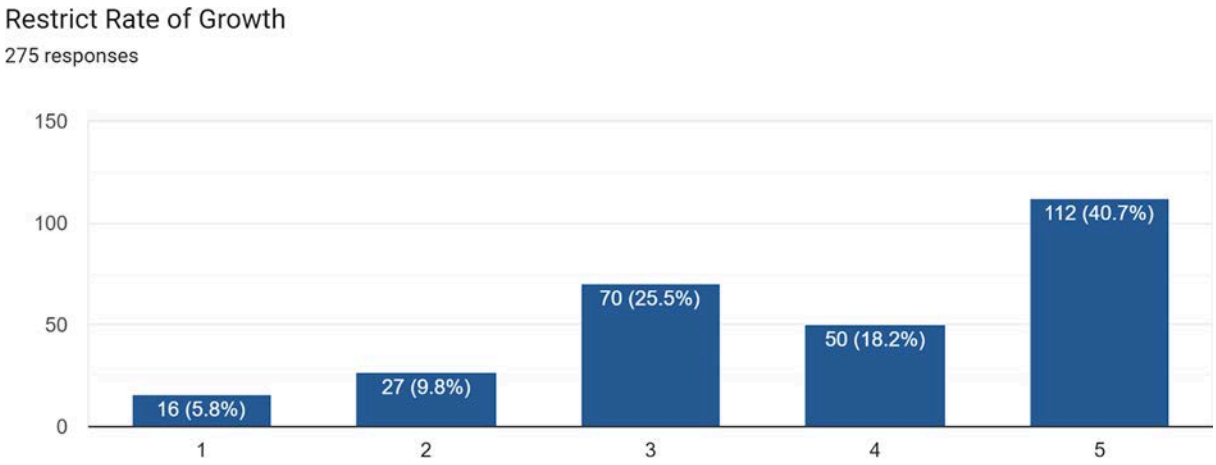


Build Neighborhoods (as opposed to Subdivisions)

275 responses







Detailed survey results from the public outreach program are provided in Appendix 2.

F. VISION

This Plan's Vision for the future of Easton can be summarized as "A Return to our Roots." This suggests that we desire 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 companion to Place Element, 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~~ in 2026 Easton finds itself in a period of ~~slow~~rapid growth, with ~~a housing affordability problem, and with public support for our overall growth strategy. In some ways though~~growth expected to reach 3% annually in 2027 and a large backlog of planned and approved projects, it will be more challenging to implement this strategy~~, given that there are~~. Difficulties are compounded by at least a few factors that are different in 2026 than they were in 2010. These differences include~~,~~ most notably, 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 unknown at this point, but potentially a significant factor in both our growth strategy and housing affordability during this planning period.

LAND USE

> TO HAVE GOOD FARMING OR GOOD LAND USE OF ANY KIND, YOU HAVE GOT TO HAVE LIMITS.
>
> — Wendell Berry

A. PURPOSE

At its heart, 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. 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.

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 projected growth. It will address 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.

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.

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.

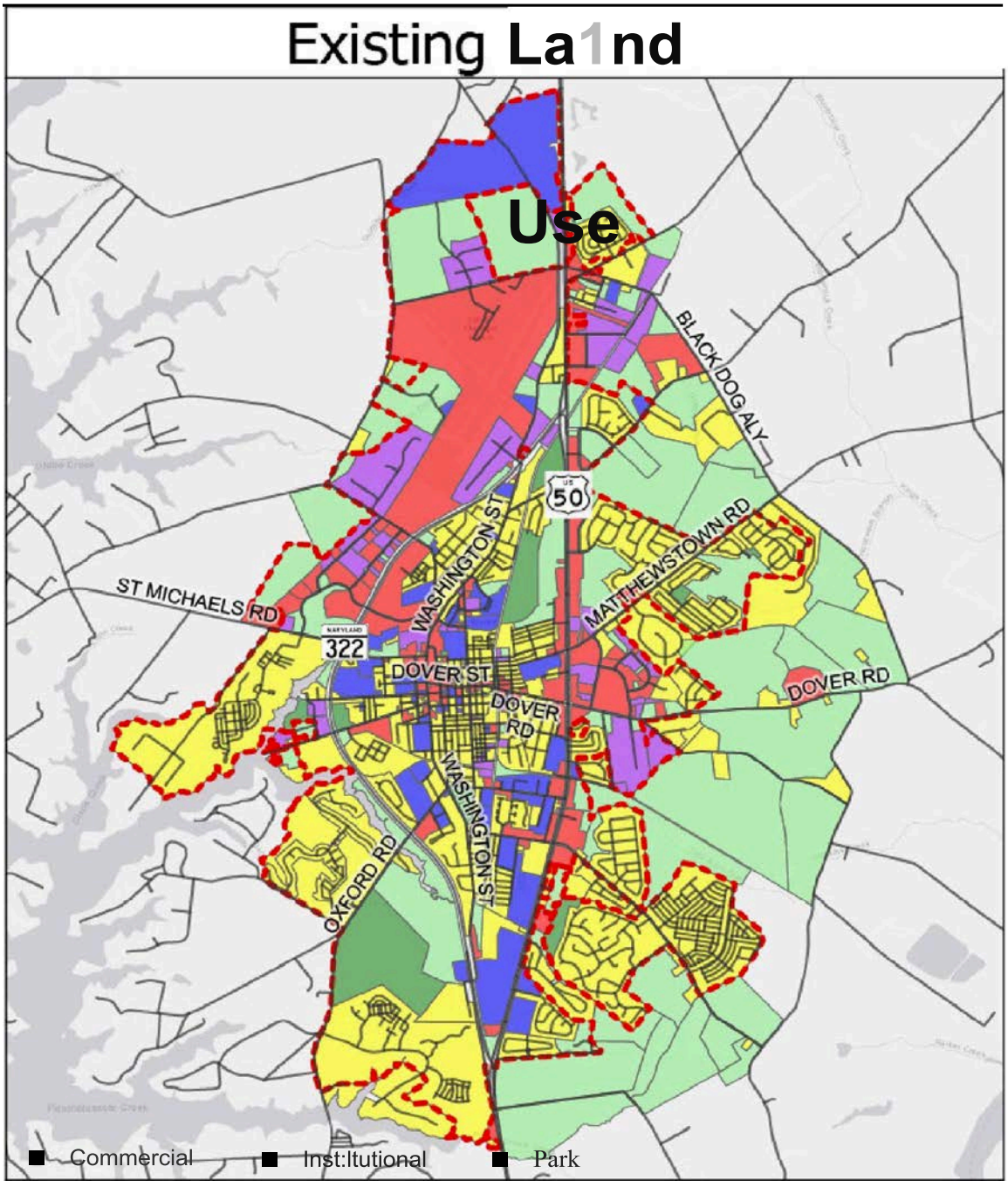
Further, as part of Talbot County, Easton has been designated as a growth area so that the rural nature of the County can be protected and preserved through restrictive zoning.

i. Existing Land Use Patterns

Easton's current land use pattern reflects both its historic compact form and the evolution of development along its edges. The older parts of town feature walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with civic, institutional, and small-scale commercial uses integrated into the residential fabric.
These areas, such as the downtown core and nearby traditional neighborhoods, exemplify the kind of development the Town aims to preserve and replicate.

In contrast, the newer areas along the Town's fringe exhibit more suburban, automobile-oriented patterns. These include large-footprint retail, isolated office or institutional campuses, and conventional subdivisions with limited street connectivity. In some cases, land use and zoning remain mismatched, and legacy industrial or underused commercial areas present opportunities for reinvestment.

Map 2 Existing Land Use Map



Map 3 is an insert showing graphically the growth of the Town over time. This map was first included in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan and has been updated to show changes over time. 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. The same information listing every Annexation throughout the Town's history is included in Appendix 3.

Two of these were shown as Priority 1 Growth Areas in the 2004 Plan. The third was not, but there was a Comprehensive Plan Amendment approved to make it a Priority 1 Area. There have been 11 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.


Historic Annexations
Easton
0 0.5 1 Miles
Cartographer: Nicholas Johnson

B. Land Use Goals, Issues and Policy Considerations

Easton's land use strategy is grounded in a practical understanding of land availability, infrastructure capacity, and fiscal impacts. With limited undeveloped space remaining within Town boundaries, strategic infill and redevelopment are essential to future growth. The Town's land use goals remain consistent with the core principles outlined in the 1997 and 2010 Comprehensive Plans: preserving neighborhood character, maintaining a compact development pattern, and focusing growth within a defined boundary supported by infrastructure and public services.

The foundation for future land use decisions begins with understanding current land use patterns. A key indicator is shown in the table below, which presents the acreage of each zoning district established under the 2021 Zoning Ordinance, along with estimated amounts of unimproved land within each district.

Table 2
AVAILABLE LAND BY ZONING CLASSIFICATION

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	
Total Residential	**2713**	**199**	**41.18%**
CBD	131	3	
CG	391	33	
CL	153	122	
Total Commercial	**675**	**158**	**10.25%**
BC	502	113	
I	815	45	
Total Industrial	**1317**	**158**	**19.99%**
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%
Total all Districts	6588	1,398	

** 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.

Achieving a healthy, vibrant community depends on balance—and the first step is assessing whether Easton's current land use is already out of balance. Table 7 highlights a key issue: the limited supply of unimproved land within Town limits. This constraint means future growth must be met through annexation in designated Future Growth Areas, redevelopment within the existing boundary, or both.

Buildout analysis confirms that ~~under current zoning, Easton can accommodate only modest additional residential and nonresidential development without annexation. As such, policies that promote higher density, infill, and redevelopment are essential~~Easton has ample land within its boundaries for residential and nonresidential development without annexation through (at least) 2036. In areas where infrastructure exists but capacity is limited, targeted investment in water, sewer, and transportation systems will be necessary. Growth must occur where public systems can support it efficiently and where the design enhances walkability, access to services, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

The 2026 Plan emphasizes that sustainable land use planning is not only about where growth happens, but how. The Future Land Use Map and supporting policies direct development to areas already served by public infrastructure while discouraging inefficient sprawl that burdens the community with long-term maintenance costs.

Each land use category in the Plan reflects both function (e.g., residential, commercial, open space) and expectations for form, intensity, and infrastructure compatibility. These categories aim to reinforce planning goals while allowing flexibility for context-sensitive design and public input during development review.

While the 2004 Plan explored the ideal mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, the 2010 Plan omitted that discussion, acknowledging the subjectivity of such targets. The original intent was never to cap any land use type, but rather to flag imbalances. At the time, it was clear—both from data and public input—that Easton had significantly more commercial development than typical for a town its size.

Public input for the 2026 Plan suggests that imbalance persists~~, likely worsened by the national decline of traditional retail and the accelerated shift to online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic~~. Addressing this imbalance will require thoughtful land use strategies that reflect modern economic trends while supporting a more diversified, resilient community fabric.

Retail Uses

Public input for this Plan revealed what seems at first to be a contradiction: while Easton is perceived as over-commercialized, many residents also expressed a desire for more variety in retail and food establishments. This apparent conflict begins to make sense when we examine Easton's commercial

landscape by subcategory. Not all retail is equal, and the perception of over-commercialization is likely tied to certain types of retail, not the concept itself.

Easton's retail environment can be broadly grouped into four categories: Neighborhood Retail, Regional Retail, Transient-Oriented Retail, and Downtown Retail. Each plays a distinct role in the Town's land use future.

Neighborhood Retail

o This type of small-scale, walkable retail is nearly absent outside the Town Center.

o Most older neighborhoods in Easton are exclusively residential in nature and overwhelmingly single family detached in type. Where appropriate, a mechanism should exist to at least allow the consideration of small, limited-scale neighborhood-serving shops to reinforce a sense of place and reduce car dependence in these communities.

o New residential developments should integrate, or at least accommodate, neighborhood-scale commercial uses—small retail nodes at the intersection of well-defined neighborhoods.

o Planning must ensure such retail remains neighborhood-serving in scale and does not evolve into broader commercial centers. Properly located and scaled, neighborhood retail can reduce local traffic rather than increase it.

Regional Retail

o This is the dominant retail form in Easton and the primary contributor to its unusually high per capita retail space—estimated at 80 square feet per person, roughly double the level recommended in the 2004 Plan.

o It is also the most frequently cited concern in public feedback about over-commercialization.

- Future regional retail development will be limited to:¶

  - ~~Undeveloped commercially zoned land;¶~~

- ~~Redevelopment~~

redevelopment of existing shopping centers.

No expansion of regional retail areas is proposed in the Future Land Use Map.

o Any new regional retail must comply with strict design standards. Done well, it can reinforce local character; done poorly, it risks making Easton indistinguishable from "Anywhere, USA."

Transient-Oriented Retail

o This category includes gas stations, fast food, and quick-service retail that serve through-traffic as well as residents.

o While new growth opportunities are limited, redevelopment potential is strong—especially along Route 50.

o This retail type is valued by residents and workers for its convenience (e.g., lunch spots, fuel).

o Like regional retail, it requires careful design regulation to improve Easton's visual character and avoid corridor sprawl.

o Future expansion will focus on:

- Improving undeveloped commercial sites near the Town's northern edge,
- Redevelopment along the Route 50 corridor.

Downtown (Town Center)

o Easton's Downtown is the heart of the community, with its historic buildings, government offices, the courthouse (dating to 1794), the Avalon Theatre, museums, restaurants, inns, and specialty shops.

o While space for new development is limited, there are opportunities for targeted redevelopment and infill.

o A Plan for Downtown Redevelopment and Infill, adopted in 2009, guides this work and is discussed further in the Economic Development chapter.

o Preserving and strengthening existing businesses will be key to keeping Downtown vibrant and maintaining Easton's unique character.

Easton's perceived over-commercialization stems largely from an oversupply of regional-scale retail. At the same time, residents are asking for more neighborhood-serving, diverse, and vibrant commercial experiences, especially in underserved parts of town. Future land use policy should support a balanced commercial mix, regulate scale and design, and encourage development that reinforces neighborhood identity and local character.

Table 2 summarizes these commercial retail types. For purposes of comparison, "Neighborhood" aligns with the category described above, while "Community" and "Regional" fall under the broader discussion of

regional retail. Examining the scope and characteristics of shopping centers classified as "Regional" retail makes it clear that such retail developments are far larger than Easton could tolerate.

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

Table 3: Shopping Center Characteristics by Type

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

Residential Uses

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 Place

and Housing Elements. 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, Sustainable Growth inspired Easton; one Easton, not a collection of suburban residential enclaves.

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 concluded that there were more jobs in Easton than the population would suggest is necessary. However, as the 2010 Plan noted, there were a number of factors that skewed this estimate. These included:

- a large proportion of Easton's population is retired - there are a lot of dwelling units for which no jobs are necessary
- 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 – this results in many 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 is a hub for medical services, entertainment, retail, etc.
- Easton serves as an employment hub for a much larger area than Talbot County

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, impacting 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 Place and Transportation Elements. In short, 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.

The 2026 Plan adds greater emphasis on sustainability, fiscal efficiency, and redevelopment. Land use policy is increasingly tied to infrastructure investment, public space, transportation networks, and economic productivity. New fiscal tools, including value-per-acre modeling, help the Town assess where land use patterns generate long-term public value relative to cost.

C. Zoning And Community Character

Rethinking Zoning and the Built Environment

Much has been written in recent years about the "sins" of modern planning and the failures of the built environment in many American communities. Movements like Smart Growth, New Urbanism, and Neo-Traditional Planning emerged in response to development patterns that sacrificed livability, character, and sustainability in favor of automobile-dependent sprawl.

Sprawl has been characterized by low-density, single-use development; monotonous subdivisions;

congested roads; and the loss of farmland and forests. These patterns stand in stark contrast to the compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods this Plan seeks to promote.

How Did We Get Here?

A major reason for these outcomes lies in the very tools used to regulate growth—most notably, zoning. While zoning was originally intended to protect public health and safety—such as separating housing from noxious uses—it has evolved into a rigid system that often over-segregates land uses and suppresses the integrated, mixed-use development patterns of traditional towns.

The roots of zoning date back to 1867 in San Francisco, with broader adoption following the landmark 1926 Supreme Court decision in Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., which upheld the constitutionality of zoning. Since then, the tool has become ubiquitous~~—but not without consequences.¶~~

~~In Easton, as in many places, zoning has too often discouraged the very types of communities we value. Wide separation of uses, minimum lot sizes, and restrictive codes have made car-dependent subdivisions the default. The time has come to rethink this model..~~

Talbot County was the first county in the Eastern Shore to adopt a zoning ordinance. This action was fought by real estate interests and the Farm Bureau. The United States Supreme Court finally settled the matter, ruling that Talbot County had the right to impose zoning ordinances under its "police powers," with or without State authorization. Were it not for this victory, there would now be a huge oil refinery (1,000 acres) and marine terminal near Wades Point. All the above occurred between fall of 1951 and spring of 1955 (Info. from "Talbot County- A History" by Dickson Preston.

Is It Time to Abandon Zoning?

Not entirely. Zoning still has a role in protecting residents from heavy industry and incompatible land uses. However, Easton should reform its Zoning Ordinance to encourage mixed-use, walkable, and human-scaled neighborhoods~~—especially in~~. This becomes especially important in the longer–range future when/if we resume annexation of undeveloped areas within the Town's Growth Area.

For example, commercial uses and workplaces that are compatible with nearby housing should not be excluded. Residential densities ~~should~~could be increased and minimum lot sizes reduced to support more efficient and livable neighborhoods. At a minimum, new development should meet the State's Smart Growth Priority Funding Area threshold of 3.5 units per acre (net)—with higher densities encouraged in appropriate areas.

~~1. *Value-per-acre modeling*¶~~

~~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 findings of this effort are summarized more thoroughly in the Sustainability Chapter of this Plan. A full copy of the report can also be found on the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy's website, at: https://www.eslc.org/urban3/. From a Land Use perspective, suffice it to say that the Urban3 study suggests that the fiscal sustainability of development patterns is yet another reason to support future development of a Traditional Neighborhood form as opposed to the suburban archetype that has become more prevalent over the course of the past five or six decades.¶~~

D. Future Land Use Framework

This Plan organizes Easton's future growth into a series of land use categories that describe the general pattern, scale, and intent for development. These categories guide zoning decisions and help ensure that growth occurs in appropriate locations and forms. While this Plan is not a zoning map, it provides the foundation for future amendments to the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations.

Future land use designations are not intended to be parcel-specific or regulatory. Rather, they provide a generalized vision for how areas of the Town should evolve over time. Zoning changes and site plan approvals will be guided by these designations but must also consider compatibility, capacity, and design quality.

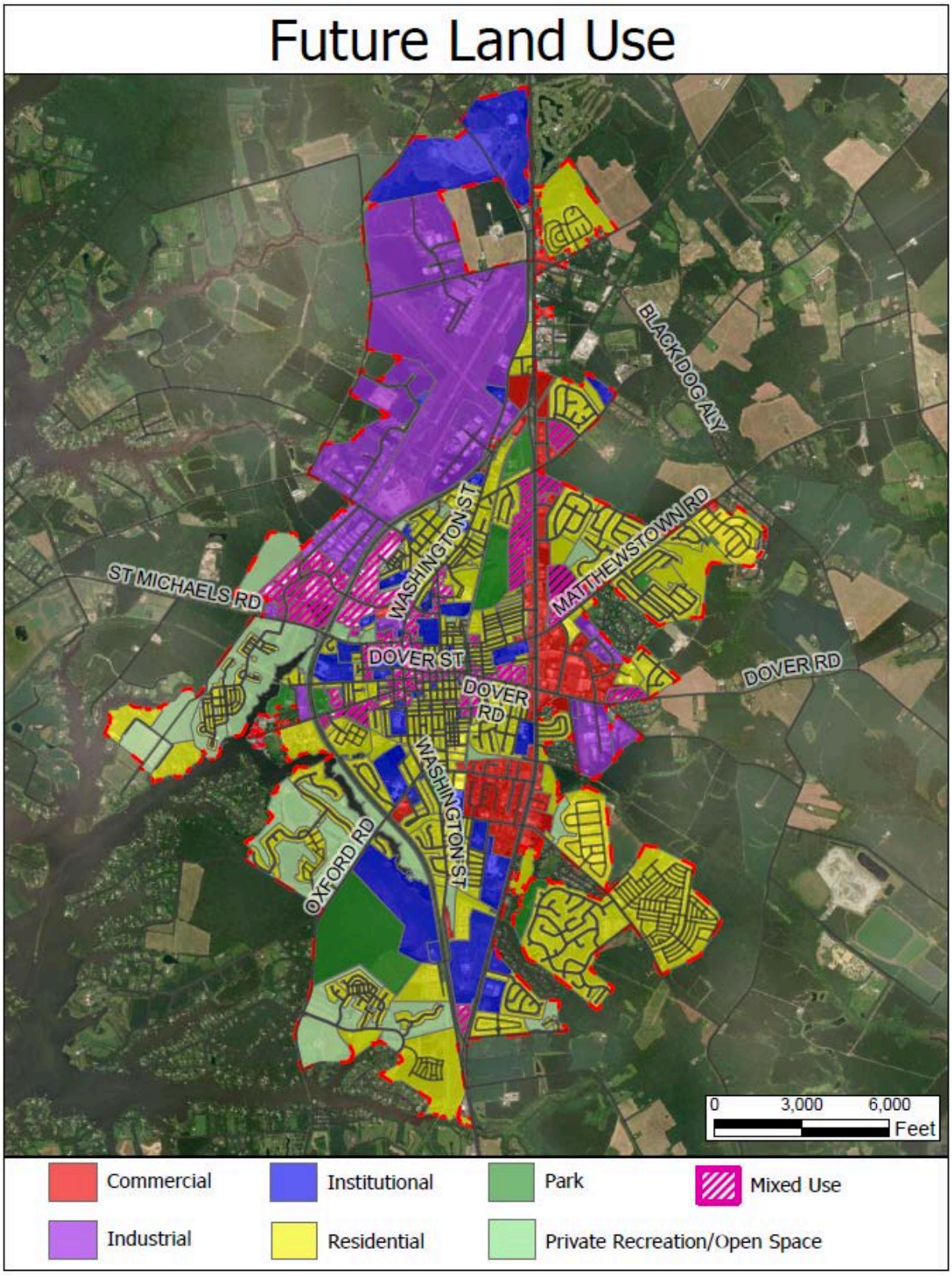
The Future Land Use Map ~~contained and described more thoroughly in the Implementation Element,~~ provides a graphic representation of the desired pattern of land uses within the Town.¶

~~The Future Land Use Map~~ It identifies where residential, commercial, mixed-use, open space, and institutional development is anticipated. These areas are tied to infrastructure readiness, access to services, and their ability to support complete neighborhoods. In the case of one designation, "Private Recreation/Open Space," these result from the development review and approval process and exist as a requirement or condition associated with the approval of a development project. As such, they are generally required to remain as open space or a project amenity and should not be changed without amending this Plan accordingly and following the prescribed development review process (e.g., a material PUD Amendment) for the associated project.

To gain an overall sense of what is anticipated not just within existing Town Boundaries, but ultimately within the Growth Area, the Future Land Use Map should be considered in conjunction with the Growth Area Map (see Municipal Growth Chapter). This map indicates in general terms what the Town envisions from a land use perspective in the growth area and perhaps more importantly, establishes the Urban

Growth Boundary, which is coordinated with Talbot County and denotes the limit of Easton's envisioned ultimate outward expansion.

Map 4 - Future Land Use



There is one proposed addition to the ~~overall limits of the Town's Future Growth Area~~Growth Area that should be considered. During the course of the past planning cycle, it has become increasingly apparent that there would be advantages to having the Town-owned property that is the site of our Wastewater Treatment Facility to be located within Town Boundaries. This would require Annexation and in order for any future Annexation to be consistent with this Plan, the land for said annexation needs to be included in our Future Growth Area. Thus, this Plan proposes to expand the Growth Boundary to the east from its present limit to the WWTP site. The only additional land besides the WWTP that would be brought into the Growth Area as a result of this change would be Seth Forest and the bed of Chesapeake Avenue as it passes along the southern border of the property. Given that these properties are State-owned and Town-owned, and the purpose for which each is used, there is essentially no possibility that such an action would increase the development potential of the Future Growth Area.

See Table 2 on page 18 for detailed definitions and acreage summaries by zoning category.

E. Special Districts and Place Types

The Future Land Use Framework includes several key districts that serve as focal points for the Town's identity and growth strategy. These include:

- Downtown Easton – walkable, civic and cultural hub with mixed-use development.
- East End/Dover Road Corridor – commercial node with opportunities for infill and street-front redesign.
- Port Street Corridor – targeted for redevelopment with housing, employment, and civic amenities.
- Hospital District – medical and institutional anchor, with supportive residential and commercial uses.
- Poplar Hill Farm~~ – 120 acre parcel purchased by Talbot County in 2025. Formerly viewed as a key site for future growth, it is designated for Institutional use, reflecting its ownership by the County. This could mean a host of things, including active or passive parks and/or new County government facilities. It is also large enough that a portion could be subdivided and sold for private development to raise funds for the governmental use of the bulk of the property. If so, the appropriate use in this location would be residential, although a very small scale commercial or mixed use component to serve the numerous strictly residential developments in the area (e.g., Cooke's Hope, Thread Haven, and now, effectively (with the closure of the restaurant and Club House), Easton Club.~~ Recently acquired by Talbot County and designated for institutional use.

These districts will benefit from targeted planning efforts, including small area plans, design guidelines, and infrastructure investments.

Of particular importance this planning cycle is the Hospital District and actually, there are two. One is the location of the current hospital and the second is the location of the new facility now under active construction. The Hospital relocation and expansion to the northern end of the Town's Growth Area requires special consideration of a number of factors or issues, including:

- What is the most appropriate reuse/redevelopment of the current hospital site?
- What is the likely future for the various medical facilities located on Dutchman's Lane and Idelwild Avenue? Do they eventually relocate closer to the new facility? If so, when is this likely to occur? What then is the most appropriate use/reuse of these facilities?
- The new hospital site is remote from the rest of Town and surrounded by undeveloped land, an industrial park, and the Talbot Community Center and associated recreational facilities. Given this, what is the most appropriate land use for the unimproved parcels surrounding and in close proximity to the new hospital? How can the new hospital be better connected and integrated with the bulk of the Town of Easton?

F. Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives guide Easton's future land use policy. These reflect the vision and values adopted in the 2026 Plan and build on the foundations established in 2010 and earlier.

Goal #1: Limit the geographic outward expansion of Easton. Objectives:

- Reaffirm the current Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and use it to guide annexation and utility extensions.
- Coordinate 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 annexation policies that include criteria for development readiness, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and expected phasing or pacing of growth~~farms, woodlands and other undeveloped properties whose preservation would enhance the town.
- Establish limits on annexation to keep growth consistent with the target growth rate of 1% per annum, taking into account that no annexation for residential development, except in extraordinary

circumstances as described in the Implementation Chapter of this Plan, is recommended in this planning period.

- 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 #2: Make Easton more walkable and connected / achieve a more balanced and integrated mix of uses.

Objectives:

- Encourage development patterns that promote walkability, including higher densities, mixed-use areas, and traditional neighborhood form.

- Support neighborhood-scale commercial development and live/work spaces that reduce the need for automobile trips.

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and ensure it is included in all new development and redevelopment projects.

- Encourage connections between neighborhoods and commercial areas through a fine-grained street network and active transportation routes.

- Consider allowing diversification of land uses within older, developed subdivisions through the addition of small, neighborhood-scale retail, civic and open space elements to existing residential subdivisions. In communities developed as Planned Unit Developments, such additions would be major changes and require the full Planning Commission and Council approval required for substantive PUD amendments. No such actions should be taken in any subdivision where they would conflict with HOA rules or provisions of a PUD, without the consent of the affected communities.

- Amend the Town's Zoning Ordinance to change the focus from regulation by building use, to building type and site impact.
- Simplify the process for developers to achieve the Town's objectives.

Goal #3: Use land efficiently and sustainably.

Objectives:

- Prioritize infill and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites within the Town's boundary.
- Balance new development with infrastructure capacity, using water, sewer, transportation, and stormwater data to guide land use decisions.
- Use fiscal modeling tools, such as value-per-acre assessments and estimates of increased cost of providing services, to evaluate the long-term sustainability of proposed land use changes.
- Discourage low-density development at the fringe of Town that generates higher infrastructure costs and undermines compact growth goals.
- Explore options to expedite permit approvals for permitted uses if extraordinary design improvements are included.

3. PLACE (COMMUNITY CHARACTER)

"We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us."

– Winston Churchill

A. Purpose

Improving the quality of Easton's built environment has been a central goal since the Town adopted Vision-based Planning in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. Since then, the Town has taken multiple steps to elevate development standards. It added site planning and architectural requirements for specific uses, upgraded landscaping standards, overhauled sign regulations—cutting freestanding sign height in half—and imposed size and strict design limits on big-box retail and shopping centers. Town officials also began opposing formulaic "corporate-franchise architecture," as recommended in the 1997 Plan.

The 2004 Plan reaffirmed the need for higher design standards and extended the focus from commercial to residential development, culminating in the adoption of Design Guidelines for New Construction. The 2010 Plan updated Easton's design principles, revising several and adding one new principle based on observed development trends. This Plan continues that process, proposing additional refinements based on the past 15 years of experience and public feedback.

This chapter also revisits the topic of big-box retail—a longstanding concern since the 1997 Plan, which was amended in 2000 to address the issue directly. It further explores how zoning shapes Easton's character and proposes ways to modernize outdated zoning and subdivision tools. In particular, it revives the concept of "Traditional Neighborhood Development "—first proposed in 2004 but not pursued in 2010—as a viable framework for future growth areas. Finally, it expands the Town's Growth Management Policy to emphasize the importance of both infill and redevelopment, with new recommendations to ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

B. Historic and Cultural resources

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 subsection talks about the importance of these historic and cultural resources and makes recommendations for how they can further be protected.

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. 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. 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.

In a way that's more difficult to quantify, 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 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. The preservation of historic buildings and structures includes consideration of the integrity of the location, neighborhood, design, setting, materials and workmanship. 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.

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.

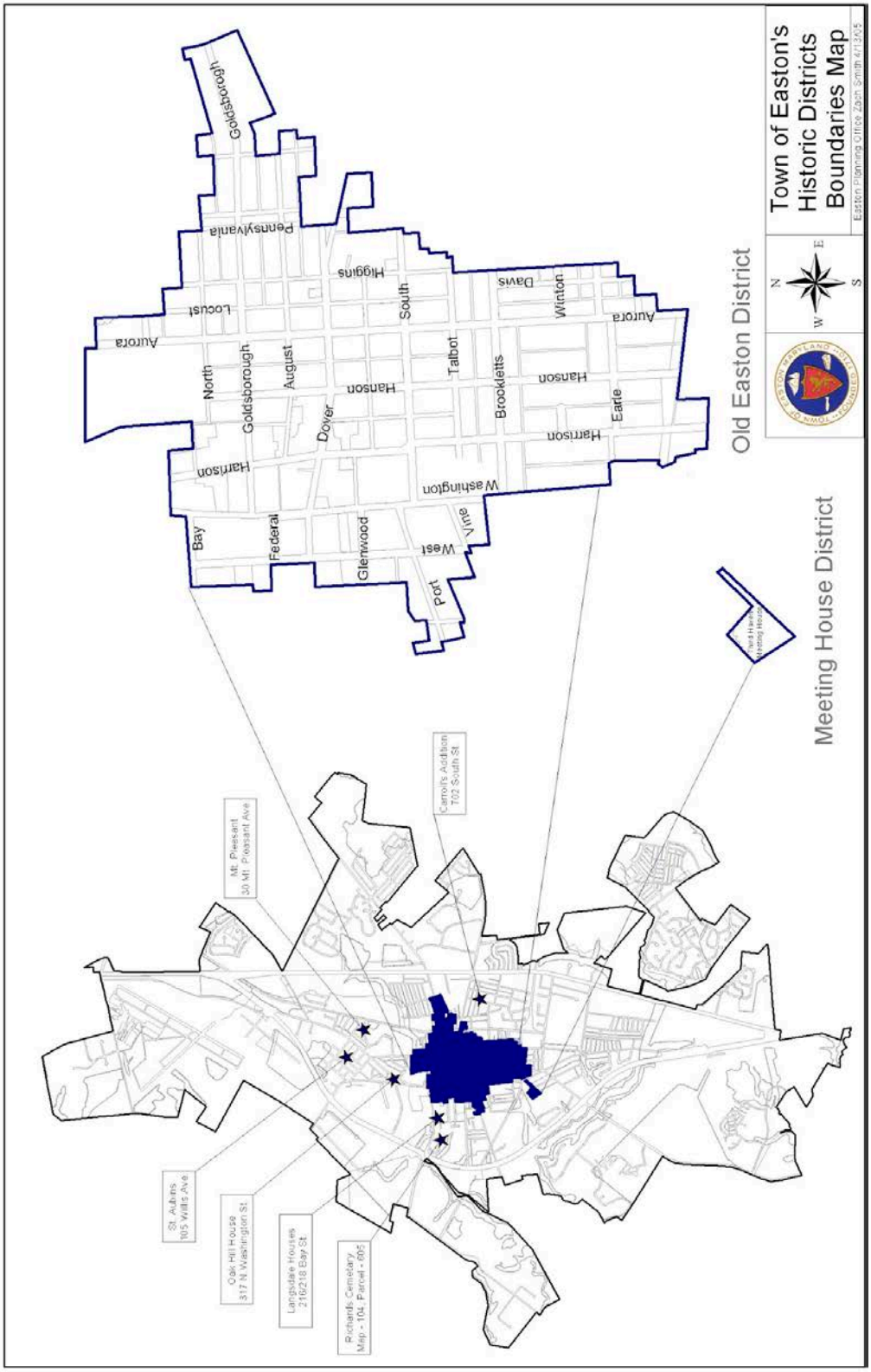
Easton is also a “Targeted Investment Zone”, a state designation that permits the town to get state financial support for a certified heritage area.

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.



Map 5 : Easton Historic District




STOP









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.

Gentrification

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 farm 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. Property values may further be impacted by redevelopment of the adjacent industrial areas along the Rail Trail; though an important strategy for sustainable infill development the magnet effect of new infrastructure, housing, and amenities cannot be ignored. The Town should explore programs and partnerships that promote housing tenure and affordability to protect this significant cultural cornerstone.

C. Contemporary Architectural Standards

Though it is important to show reverence and recognition of Easton's historic development in contemporary projects, it should not be misconstrued as a desire to see historic architecture emulated without intention throughout the town. Rather, today's designs - regardless of location - should contribute to the ongoing history of Easton in recognition that our current time will one day similarly be considered a historic period. Easton's streetscapes should thus feature a variety of

creative designs that, regardless of their time period, are built 'in conversation' with their neighbors. Put simply, contemporary designs should have identity and intention. Designs should:

- Strive to create place-based spaces and interesting, human-focused environments
- Provide physical and social connections to the community, respecting historical context
- Recognize landmarks and natural features as important determinants of design
- Utilize design approaches such as color, texture, massing, richness of materials and finishes, scale, proportion, and rhythm to create unique places
- Illicit curiosity and emotional responses that the community will treasure
- Serve as an investment in the Easton community and its culture

D. Civic Architecture and the Public Realm

As a member of the community itself, the government should embody the same standards of architectural excellence that we expect of the public. Civic buildings—such as schools, libraries, churches, and public offices—anchor neighborhoods and contribute significantly to Easton's visual character. These structures should be architecturally prominent and well-integrated into the street network. Design of new civic buildings must reflect their role as public landmarks.

Similarly, the quality of the public realm—sidewalks, plazas, parks, signage, and street trees—greatly affects how the Town is experienced. These spaces must be maintained, connected, and appropriately designed for their surroundings.

E. The Case for Traditional Neighborhood Zoning

Though the role of architecture cannot be understated in the broad appeal of Easton's downtown, it is equally important to recognize how the structure of the town core promotes its charm and value. Easton's older neighborhoods, especially those surrounding Downtown, are defined by connected streets, narrow lots, modest setbacks, front porches, and architectural variety. These walkable patterns support interaction and resilience. New development should extend this structure through compatible lot dimensions, public space orientation, and housing diversity.

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan outlined a model for a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) District, designed to encourage the kinds of mixed-use, compact neighborhoods Easton values. That proposal was ultimately rejected—not due to disagreement with its content, but because it removed the Town Council and public hearing from the review process. This created opposition, despite the fact that the standards themselves reflected the community's vision. At present, creating these types of neighborhoods requires use of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, which developers tend to avoid due to its complexity, cost, and unpredictability. Instead, the easier path—conventional subdivision and site plan review—too often yields suburban-style sprawl. This mismatch has led to a system where the easiest projects to ~~approve~~propose are those the community least desires, while more thoughtful, desirable development faces ~~the highest barriers~~higher cost and a more lengthy process. However, the PUD process guarantees that affected communities will have a voice through their elected representatives.

In the wake of the TND District's defeat, some elements were integrated into Easton's base zoning and subdivision regulations—such as anti-monotony standards and greater lot design flexibility. Still, nearly two decades later, the limitations of the current approach remain apparent.

The Planning Commission now recommends revisiting this issue and reintroducing a TND District ~~or alternative "by-right" option with clear design standards.~~ with clear design standards. In addition, stricter design standards for by-right development should be implemented. The goal is to reverse the regulatory imbalance, making it easier—not harder—for developers to build the types of neighborhoods Easton wants.

3.E.1 Model Code for Traditional Neighborhood Development

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:	
Land Use	**Ratio**
Residential - Middle Housing	A minimum of 10% of the units proposed
Common Open Space	35% including a minimum of 1200 sq. ft. per dwelling unit for parks
Neighborhood Commercial	Minimum: 26 square feet gfa per dwelling unit (See Table 9 in Land Use Chapter for characteristics of Neighborhood Commercial)
	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

Traditional Neighborhood Development Zone
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.

Table 4: Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Zoning District Parameters

The potential new TND Zoning District described above is primarily envisioned as applicable for the build-out of our Future Growth Area. However, a significant focus of this Plan is on directing growth for the next ten years to existing neighborhoods in the form of Infill Development, Redevelopment, and Adaptive Reuse. Development of this nature will likely require an approach other than TND.

One possible alternate regulatory approach that received public support during the public review and comment process was the use of Form-Based Codes (FBCs). FBCs-stand in contrast to traditional or Euclidean Zoning in that they emphasize the design/form of buildings and their relationship to the public realm much more so than the use of the property. The book **Form-Based Codes** describes them as "A method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-Based Codes create a predictable public realm primarily by controlling physical form, with a lesser focus on land use, through city or county regulation."

Whatever option the Town ultimately pursues to implement in this Plan following its adoption, one thing is clear: a new approach to land development regulation will be necessary to create the future Easton that this Plan envisions. Such a new Code(s) should address the following objectives:

- Permitting a variety of housing types and appropriate densities to improve missing middle options and housing affordability.
- Harmoniously blend multi-family and middle housing within residential and commercial blocks.

- Soften the impact of large-scale retail in commercial corridors through better design and pedestrian-oriented placement.
- Ensure building scale, massing, and placement create a walkable, inviting streetscape
- Design streets and sidewalks as safe, functional spaces for all users - bicyclists, pedestrians, vehicles, and transit.
- Promote development patterns that are environmentally resilient and fiscally sustainable.

In order to best facilitate the future Easton that this Plan describes, the Town commits to initiating the study of FBCs and other alternative regulatory frameworks within two years of the adoption of this Plan by the Town Council.

F. The Role of Major Retail in Easton in 2025

Easton has a long and complex history with major retail development. In 2000, the Town imposed a temporary moratorium after receiving applications for over 766,000 square feet of proposed major retail space. This pause led to amendments to the 1997 Comprehensive Plan and significant changes to the Zoning Ordinance. The Ordinance defined "Major Retail" as any single-use retail establishment with 25,000 square feet or more of gross floor area, and created a new Planned Major Retail floating zone to regulate such uses. Projects over 65,000 square feet were prohibited. Stringent design standards were also added for major retail and shopping centers.

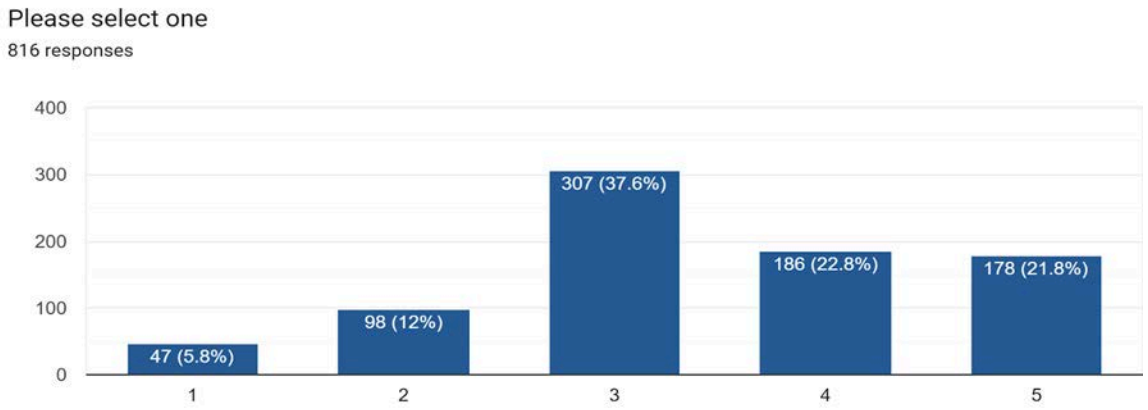
The 65,000-square-foot cap was a compromise. Some residents and stakeholders argued it was too restrictive, while others believed it was too permissive. At the time, the Giant grocery store and the original Lowe's (now Kohl's) were roughly this size, helping to define the threshold.

The role of large-scale retail continued to generate debate through the 2004 and 2010 Comprehensive Plans. Public input collected during these updates revealed a consistent preference for limiting major retail in Easton. In a 2000–2001 survey, nearly half of respondents said such uses should "never" be added. In 2010, more than a third felt the Town already had too many shopping centers, and over 65% supported holding firm on design standards, even if it meant losing a preferred retailer.

Based on this sustained feedback, the 2004 Plan removed the hard cap on square footage but maintained a regulatory threshold at 25,000 square feet, requiring all larger projects to undergo case-by-case review through the Planned Major Retail process. The intent was to retain flexibility while emphasizing design, compatibility, and the broader land use context.

The 2026 Plan again solicited public input, and responses were largely consistent with previous surveys. A strong majority said Easton has "about the right amount" of regional-scale retail, with

twice as many respondents saying there is too much rather than too little. Support remains high for prioritizing Downtown Easton over other commercial areas, and for maintaining high design standards.



Given these findings, the Town recommends no major changes to the Town's retail policies. Major retail uses will continue to play a limited role, and new or expanded projects will only be encouraged under specific conditions:

- All new or relocated projects will be subject to the same maximum size cap as described in the 2004 Plan and contained in the current Zoning Code.
- Priority should be given to redevelopment or redesign of existing shopping centers, especially where projects result in improved site design, circulation, or conversion to mixed-use.
- Regional retail should serve primarily Talbot County, and secondarily nearby areas in Caroline, Dorchester, and Queen Anne's Counties. Easton does not aim to become a regional shopping hub for a wider area.
- Applicants proposing relocation or replacement of an existing major retail store must submit a detailed reuse plan for the vacated site.

Easton's approach to major retail has consistently reflected community values: a desire for design quality, modest scale, and economic alignment with the Town's role as a local, not regional, retail center.

G. Town Gateways and Corridors

Visitors arriving in Easton form impressions of the Town based on its major corridors. These include U.S. Route 50, MD 322, Washington Street, and Port Street. The design and appearance of these areas—buildings, signage, landscaping, and public infrastructure—play a central role in shaping Easton's identity.

Significant improvements have been made to some corridors through site plan negotiation and design review. revised layouts, upgraded materials, and improved orientation. However, many areas still require reinvestment. The new ARC of the Chesapeake and Doverbrook Apartments, for example, exhibit exemplary additions to two major town corridors. Going forward, the Town will adopt corridor-specific standards and explore overlay zones to guide incremental upgrades. Figure 1 below is copied from the Draft East End Small Area Plan and depicts how a portion of Dover Road could be redeveloped in a way that is generally more consistent with the principles of this Plan, and which could visually (and, presumably, economically) enhance this major corridor.



Figure 1: Potential Dover Road and Rail Trail Redevelopment

H. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Encourage mixed-use, traditional neighborhoods over single-use subdivisions

Objectives:

- Reintroduce the proposed Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Zoning District as the default zoning for undeveloped and annexed land in Easton.
- Continue reviewing and updating the design and anti-monotony standards first adopted in 2006.

- Restructure the development review process to streamline approvals for traditional neighborhood developments while increasing scrutiny and difficulty for conventional suburban subdivisions.
- Explore the potential regulatory reforms necessary to produce the type of development envisioned by this Plan in conjunction with the next comprehensive review of the Town's Zoning Code.

Goal #2: Improve the appearance of existing development

Objectives:

- Partner with the State Highway Administration to enhance landscaping along state highways, especially the Route 50 corridor.
- Use the Forest Conservation Account to retrofit landscaping in older streetscapes where plantings are sparse or missing.
- Require any renovation or change-of-use project needing site plan approval, a PUD amendment, special exception, or variance to fully comply with current design standards—no grandfathering of outdated designs.
- Require new landscaping or improvements along U.S. Route 50 for all adjacent new development or redevelopment.
- Enforce requirements for landscaping and maintenance associated with approved development projects.
- Refine and work with Design Standards that ensure that Easton stands out as a unique place rather than looking like "Anyplace USA."

Goal #3: Raise the design quality of all new development

Objectives:

- Fully apply Easton's recommended Design Principles to all new development.
- Prohibit new construction that relies on corporate franchise architecture.
- Adopt comprehensive design standards for all new development, including residential projects and infill/redevelopment.
- Review and update the Design Guidelines for New Construction outside the Historic District.

- Strengthen landscape standards, emphasizing native species and improved screening of unattractive site features.

Goal #4: Promote infill and redevelopment

Objectives:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Zoning Code's Planned Redevelopment Overlay District—including its boundaries, standards, and process—to determine whether it offers sufficient incentives.

- Identify and pursue non-zoning-based incentives, in partnership with relevant agencies, to support infill and redevelopment.

- Prepare Small Area Plans for Easton neighborhoods to tailor redevelopment strategies to local needs and conditions.

Goal #5: Encourage continued restoration, adaptive rehabilitation and preservation of historic structures, sites, streetscapes, and settings and 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 #6: 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.

- Provide in-service training for the staff and Historic District Commission members.

- Investigate Certified Local Government status with the Maryland Historical Trust to provide eligibility for grants for continuing education for staff and members of the Historic District Commission, as well as other projects.

- Investigate a project to resurvey the Historic District. A new survey will update information contained in the original National Register nomination and facilitate enhanced processing of applications. Such a survey could also lead to a new nomination to expand the National Register District, including neighborhoods that did not meet the criteria for listing in 1980, but now may nearly three decades later. Such a project could be supported by grant funding and could potentially be done under the auspices of a partner organization.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS PEOPLE. IT IS PEOPLE, NOT CAPITAL OR RAW MATERIALS THAT DEVELOP AN ECONOMY.

PETER DRUCKER

A. PURPOSE

Economic and community development are vital to the health of a town because they foster sustainable growth, improve quality of life, and strengthen its position as a desirable place to live and visit.

The nonprofit Easton Economic Development Corporation (Easton EDC) provides economic and community development services to the Town of Easton. The Easton EDC also manages the Main Street District and Arts & Entertainment Districts, as well as the Easton Visitor Center. A Board of Directors has been established, with representatives from the community, the Mayor of the Town of Easton and one designated Councilmember.

In 2025, the Easton EDC adopted a forward-looking Strategic Plan that identifies four key Strategic Priorities aimed at fostering sustainable growth, improving quality of life, and strengthening Easton's position as a premier destination on Maryland's Eastern Shore. This Comprehensive Plan is aligned with those priorities and incorporates them into Easton's long-term development framework.

In addition, this Plan recognizes that Easton's economic development strategy must reflect regional collaboration. Therefore, it integrates the priorities and initiatives of both the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism and the Mid-Shore Regional Council. This collaborative approach ensures that local efforts are supported by broader regional initiatives and that resources are coordinated for maximum impact.

As in many Comprehensive Plans, economic development analysis often depends heavily on quantitative data such as tables and charts. While this Plan minimizes the overuse of such tools, essential insights are drawn from Census data (see Tables 5 and 6). Key findings include:

- Income levels in Easton are below those of Talbot County and the State of Maryland, with a corresponding higher rate of poverty.
- Educational attainment in Easton lags behind both the county and state, especially in the percentage of residents with bachelor's degrees or higher.
- Easton has an aging population, with a significantly higher percentage of residents aged 65 and older compared to state averages.
- Commute times in Easton are slightly shorter than regional and state averages, reflecting local employment opportunities.

- The homeownership rate in Easton is lower than Talbot County and the State, which may reflect affordability challenges or housing stock limitations.

Table 5 - Select Economic Characteristics Source: 2020 Census, U.S. Census Bureau	EASTON	TALBOT CO.	MARYLAND
PER CAPITA INCOME (2022 dollars)	$43,844	$52,555	$49,865
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2022 dollars)	$75,198	$81,667	$98,461
PERSONS IN POVERTY, PERCENT	11.5%	10.2%	9.6%
IN CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, TOTAL, PERCENT OF POPULATION AGE 16+, 2018-2022	58.3%	55.7%	66.6%
IN CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, FEMALE, PERCENT OF POPULATION AGE 16+, 2018-2022	51.3%	49.5%	62.7%
TOTAL RETAIL SALES, 2017 ($1,000)	$598,129	$716,678	$84,966,185
TOTAL RETAIL SALES PER CAPITA, 2022	$45,801	$25,278	$18,691
MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK (MINUTES), WORKERS AGE 16+, 2018-2022	24.9	26.4	32.0
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR HIGHER, PERCENT OF PERSONS AGE 25+, 2018-2022	90.1%	92.2%	91.0%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER, PERCENT OF PERSONS AGE 25+, 2018-2022	39.3%	41.5%	42.2%
ALL EMPLOYER FIRMS, REFERENCE YEAR 2022	813	1,403	104,151

Table 6 below provides a broader comparison of Easton, Talbot County, and the State of Maryland in a number of economic and non-economic characteristics.

Table 6 - Comparison of Easton, Talbot County and State of Maryland in Selected Demographic Characteristics from the 2020 Census (and 2023 ACS)			
Subject	Easton	Talbot County	Maryland
Total Population	17,101	37,526	6,177,224
% Female	53.6%	52.2%	51.4%
Median Age			
% < 18	21.8%	18.3%	22.0%
% 65+	26.8%	30.5%	17.3%
% White	69.9%	82.1%	57.2%
% Black or African American	16.1%	12.9%	31.6%
Total Households	7,195	16,270	2,318,124
Average Household Size	2.32	2.29	2.60
Total Housing Units	Not Reported	19,861	2,572,412
% Owner-occupied	58.9%	72.9%	67.5%
Median value of owner-occupied homes	$328,000	$382,000	$380,500
Growth Rate (%) in 90's	24.9%	10.7%	10.8%
Growth Rate (%) in 00's	36.2%	11.7%	9.0%
Growth Rate (%) in 10,s	7.2%	-0.7%	7.0%

B. Business Development

A diverse and resilient business mix is essential to the sustainability of Easton's economy. Overdependence on a single sector can expose the Town to economic fluctuations and job losses. Easton's strategy emphasizes resilience by investing in workforce development, nurturing entrepreneurship, and supporting both legacy businesses and emerging industries.

The Easton EDC Strategic Plan (FY 2026–2028) underscores the importance of business retention, expansion, and recruitment—particularly for high-wage industries.

Initiatives include:

- Facilitating leadership forums and industry roundtables to identify infrastructure needs, workforce trends, and business challenges.
- Developing an Easton Business Recruitment Packet that highlights incentives, infrastructure, real estate opportunities, and the benefits of Easton's location and community character.
- Marketing key sites like Mistletoe Hall and other strategic locations for development, ensuring readiness for new investment.
- Partnering with the Town of Easton, Talbot County, and local institutions to coordinate incentives and implement joint marketing campaigns.
- Promoting infill development and redevelopment—particularly projects that support affordable workforce housing in proximity to job centers.
- Diversifying funding streams by pursuing federal, state, and philanthropic grants as well as private sponsorships and innovative funding models.

c. Tourism and Downtown

Tourism remains a cornerstone of Easton's economy—contributing not only through visitor spending but also by enhancing the Town's visibility and quality of life. As a year-round destination with a thriving cultural and culinary scene, Easton has the opportunity to further develop its tourism sector in strategic and sustainable ways.

The Easton EDC has identified several priorities to strengthen Easton's brand as the Eastern Shore's premier destination:

- Create a data-informed tourism marketing strategy that targets regional and national audiences, tailored to Easton's unique offerings.
- Enhance the visual appeal and accessibility of Downtown Easton with improved signage, plantings, banners, and public art.
- Activate the Easton Visitor Center as an educational and experiential hub for tourists and residents alike.
- Collaborate with surrounding jurisdictions (e.g., St. Michaels, Oxford, Talbot County) to launch joint tourism campaigns and shared event calendars.
- Support authentic local experiences and signature events that highlight Easton's history, arts, food culture, and community spirit.

d. Commercial Redevelopment

Easton is at a point where a number of our shopping centers are for one reason or another, viewed as prime candidates for redevelopment. Such reasons include age of the center, maintenance challenges, tenant mix, or overall utility of the center. Potential redevelopment could be as simple as

facade upgrades, new color schemes, updated signage, etc., to complete demolition and reconstruction. This redevelopment could bring Easton numerous economic benefits including new business establishments, additional jobs, and additional revenue. Furthermore, it could add future opportunities for mixed use residential offerings as well as beautify many older sites around town. Potential candidates for such upgrades include:

- Easton Plaza (site of Bowling Alley and Amish Farmer's Market). With abundant parking located between Marlboro Avenue and the buildings in this shopping center, there are a variety of options to add or relocate buildings closer to Marlboro. This would dramatically improve the streetscape and move from an older suburban shopping center form of development towards a more traditional Town-center pattern, which could also shift the perception of Marlboro from a separate and distinct shopping corridor to more of an extension of Downtown.

- Chesapeake Village (site of Ruby's Cake Shop and Domino's Pizza). This small neighborhood shopping center is located uniquely where Dover Road and Dover Street separate and form the triangular park adjacent to the Rail Trail, where Easton's community Christmas Tree resides. The East End Small Area Plan that is being developed concurrently with this Comprehensive Plan devotes a fair amount of attention to this park and envisions an upgrade and/or expansion of it. A potential redevelopment of the shopping center could enhance the utility of both the center and the park, to the benefit of each as well as to the East End neighborhood and Dover Road corridor.

- Easton Marketplace (site of Kohl's and Lowe's). Although a relatively new shopping center, the recent closing of the Ruby Tuesday's restaurant, the existence of a remaining pad site (to the east of Aspen Dental) and the abundance of parking (particularly between Kohl's and Marlboro) there would seem to be ample opportunities to add new tenants to this center through a combination of adaptive reuse of buildings and new construction.

E. Community Development

A successful economic development strategy must also build community wealth and pride. The Easton EDC Strategic Plan recognizes that broad resident engagement and civic participation are essential to long-term prosperity. Priorities in community development include:

- Expand outreach and transparency through newsletters, public presentations, and direct engagement with neighborhood groups, clubs, and schools.

- Launch a formal volunteer program with training, leadership opportunities, and recognition efforts to build local ownership and capacity.

- Host a calendar of inclusive events that reflect Easton's cultural richness and foster community connectedness.
- Evaluate civic engagement and quality of life through periodic surveys, helping to align future investments with public needs and values.

F. Goals and Objectives

GOAL #1: Nurture a healthy and diverse local economy in Easton.

Objectives:

- Conduct leadership forums and focus groups with local industries to guide economic strategies
- Market and support strategic sites like Mistletoe Hall
- Develop a comprehensive business attraction and retention strategy in coordination with Easton EDC
- Prioritize redevelopment projects that support workforce housing
- Expand grant writing capacity and partnerships to fund economic initiatives

GOAL#2: Maintain and recreate a vital Downtown.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness, usage and value of the Easton Visitor Center
- Improve visitor wayfinding, visual appeal, and access to downtown attractions coordinating with Easton EDC to market downtown events and tourism opportunities

GOAL #3: Engage the community in Easton's economic future.

Objectives:

- Seek community input via community charrettes
- Community outreach and communication via in-person presentations, and print and electronic media
- Launch a town-wide volunteer program
- Use placemaking surveys to assess civic engagement and guide future priorities

5. HOUSING

HOME IS THE NICEST WORD THERE IS – LAURA INGALLS WILDER

A. PURPOSE

Providing safe, decent, and sanitary housing for all residents is essential. When a community neglects this, housing conditions deteriorate, businesses may close, and the overall appearance of communities can fuel a growing sense of despair. Easton offers a wide range of housing types, from colonial era to nineteenth-century homes near Downtown to public housing such as Graham's Place and the recently rebuilt Doverbrook apartments, as well as subdivisions such as Cooke's Hope, Easton Village, Hunters Mill and Mulberry Station. Today, even more than housing quality, the rapidly rising cost of housing has become a hot button issue for both residents, employers and commuters.

Housing first became an element of Easton's Comprehensive Plan in 2004. It is now a mandatory element of Maryland comprehensive plans rather than an optional element. Many of the issues, other than rapidly rising housing costs, associated with this Element remain essentially the same today in 2026 as they were in 2004.

State law now specifies what this element must address:

(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)

B. Housing Issues and Policy Considerations

Easton has many housing issues, 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 interrelated.

Housing affordability has become so significant an issue that the Town formed an ad hoc Attainable Housing Task Force to examine the problem and make recommendations to address it. The Task Force worked on the issues during this Comp Plan update process and produced a draft report in May of 2024. The Final Report was presented to the Town Council at two Workshops in November and December of 2025. The Report's Executive Summary includes the following:

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 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

- *Easton experienced rapid population growth between 1980 and 2010, but growth rates have slowed significantly since 2010.*
- *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%.*
- *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

- *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.*
- *Home prices have risen sharply, with Easton's median home value increasing by 131% since 2000.*
- *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

- *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.*
- *Over 50% of renters in Easton are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing.*
- *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.

Easton risks becoming a place where those who work here can no longer afford to live. This challenge will only grow if the Town's tourism and hospitality sectors expand as expected. A lack of affordable housing already affects essential workers — cashiers, restaurant staff, government employees, teachers, ~~nurses,~~ emergency responders, elder care aides — who increasingly find Easton out of reach.

This has broad implications for Easton's future. Economically ~~segregated~~differentiated communities weaken social and cultural cohesion. They also burden the transportation system. As workers seek housing in neighboring counties like Dorchester and Caroline, they become commuters, adding to traffic congestion. The Town also faces economic and workforce risks if these workers eventually take jobs closer to home.

Easton has long recognized the importance of housing quality. The Town enforces the International Building Code and staffs a Building Department that includes a Building Official (who conducts plan reviews), two field inspectors, a rental housing/property maintenance inspector, and a secretary.

To maintain livability in rental housing—especially older units—Easton launched its Rental Housing Inspection Program in 1995. The program requires landlords to obtain licenses and submit to regular inspections. It was comprehensively reviewed and updated in 2008 to strengthen its effectiveness.

C. Existing Housing Programs

In Easton, housing is primarily provided by the private sector. However, a few public and nonprofit programs offer limited affordable housing, including efforts by the Housing Commission of Talbot

County, subsidized private developments like Chatham Village Apartments, and homes built by Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc.

The Housing Commission of Talbot (Formerly the Easton Housing Authority) recently converted their portfolio from public housing to a voucher based program. As a result, they do not own any more public housing. Instead, they have an inventory of 79 voucher based units in Easton. They administer 159 Housing Choice Vouchers. They also have 9 units of net-zero housing on Port Street (Nicholas Landing), 12 units of affordable housing on Pleasant Alley and 4 duplex units on Port. Street.

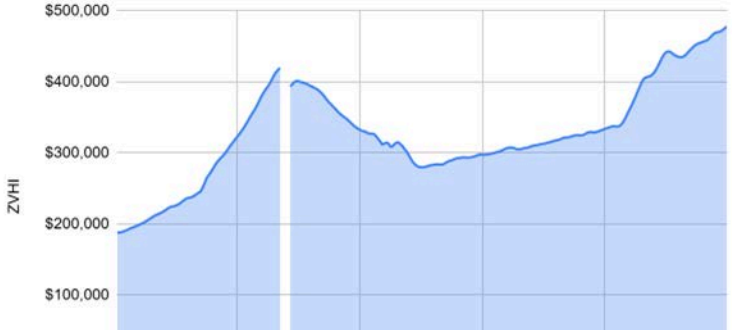
Habitat for Humanity of Choptank, Inc. has built more than 25 homes in Easton using its volunteer-driven model. Future homeowners contribute substantial "sweat equity" during construction and later assist other Habitat families. With donated or discounted land and no labor costs, overall housing costs are kept low. And, the Town Council has expanded affordable housing by requiring developers of discretionary projects—like annexations or PUDs—to include on- or off-site affordable units or contribute to the Town's Affordable Housing fund as a condition of approval.

A key step in addressing housing issues was the creation of the Easton Affordable Housing Board in 2005. Appointed by the Town, the Board develops policies and criteria for affordable housing and oversees units acquired by the Town through development approvals. Early efforts focused on establishing guidelines and a selection process for purchasing these units. A more recent Program that has proven to be successful is the Board's Renovation Program. Through this program, homeowners may apply for a grant, no interest deferred loan or low interest loan depending on their income, for approved renovations to improve the energy efficiency, safety, and livability of their home. This helps homeowners with these costs, which in turn help lower monthly utility bills, and allows them to remain in their homes longer.

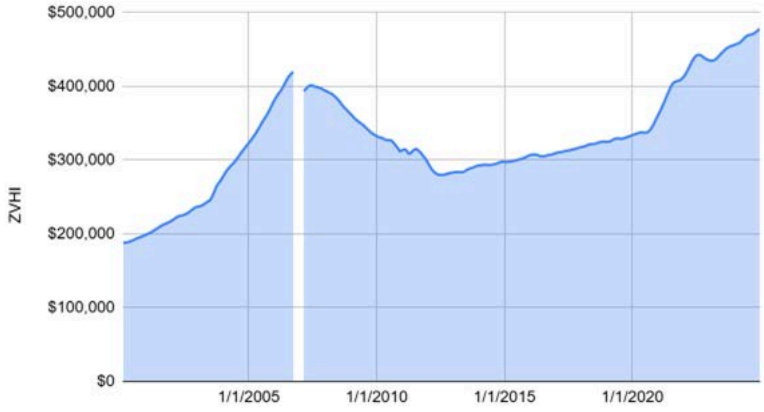
i. Local Housing Costs and Issues

The full Attainable Housing Task Force Report contains detailed information on local and regional housing costs and affordability data. Highlights are presented in sections which follow.

Figure 33: Talbot County ZHVI, 2000 - 2024



The **Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) for Talbot County** reflects the general direction of home values in our community since the year 2000.Nationally, home prices peaked in September 2006, then began to decline later that year and into 2007. By 2008, the housing market had collapsed, triggering a broader financial crisis known as the Great Recession (2007–2009). The market hit bottom in 2012, followed by a slow recovery through 2016.



Talbot County followed a similar trend. As shown above, the Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) peaked at $420,000 in September 2006, then fell 21% by 2009. It bottomed out at $280,000 in September 2012. From there, values steadily rose, reaching $334,000 by the end of 2019—a 19% increase. Between 2015 and 2019, the ZHVI grew at an average annual rate of 2.4%. Beginning in 2020, home values surged 43%, reaching $478,000 by the end of 2024 — an average yearly increase of about 9%. It is important to note that while the ZHVI offers a helpful snapshot of housing trends in Talbot County, it is not a replacement for professional appraisals.

This report analyzed median home sale prices in Talbot County for 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2024 using Bright MLS data from the Mid-Shore Board of Realtors. Figure 34 compares these values with the ZHVI, showing both followed similar trends over time. Percentage differences between the two sources, ranging from 13% in 2000 to just 2% in 2024, with an average gap of 7%. Both ZHVI and MLS offer reliable insights into long-term housing trends.

Figure 34: Talbot County ZVHI versus MLS



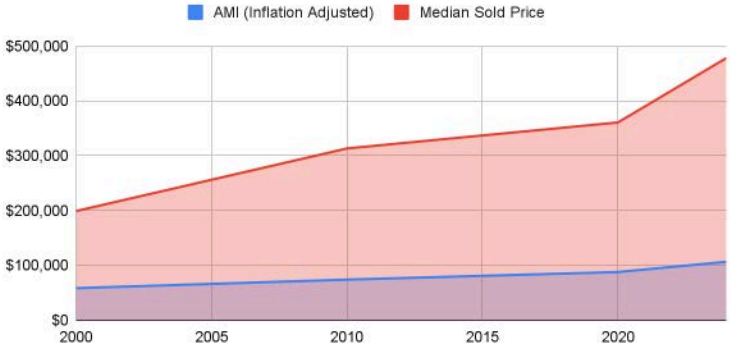
In summary, the high cost of single-family detached homes in Easton poses significant affordability challenges — particularly for first-time buyers and workers in lower-wage professions with limited income growth potential.

ii. Housing Costs and Income

In 2024, Talbot County's Annual Median Income (AMI) was $106,500. The Easton Affordable Housing Board adjusts this figure annually to better reflect local incomes; in 2020, Easton's AMI was $98,065. Given the small gap between the two, Talbot County's home price-to-income ratio serves as a useful affordability metric for Easton. Based on MSBR data, the 2024 ratio was 4.4, meaning it takes 4.4 years of median income to purchase a median-priced home. This marks a sharp decline in affordability from 2000, when the ratio was 3.03. Even after the Great Recession, the ratio climbed to 4.12, showing a continued trend toward less affordable housing.

Another key measure of affordability is how income growth compares to rising home prices over time. In Talbot County between 2000 and 2010, home prices grew much faster than incomes, leading to a sharp decline in affordability, likely driven by the housing boom before the Great Recession. From 2010 to 2020, growth slowed, and income slightly outpaced home prices, reflecting post-recession recovery and a cooler housing market. However, from 2000 to 2024 overall, home prices once again outpaced income growth, signaling a renewed affordability gap similar to the early 2000s.

Figure 38: Talbot County AMI (Inflation Adjusted) and ZHVI

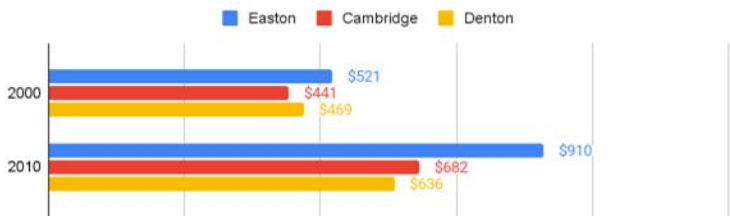


Sources: HUD Income Limits and Zillow Research

iii. Rental Market

In Easton, 40% of households are renters, a five-point drop since 2010. The current rental vacancy rate is 5.3%, significantly higher than the 1.4% homeowner vacancy rate. In 2010, those rates were 4.8% and 5.2%, respectively. The sharp decline in homeowner vacancies reflects a tight housing market, likely driven by strong demand for higher-end homes and a limited supply of

Figure 39: Median Gross Rent, 2000 - 2023



affordable, diverse options. Demographic shifts may also play a role: older adults—more likely to own homes—are staying in place, while younger adults face growing barriers to homeownership, contributing to reduced turnover and tighter supply.

The rental vacancy rate, at 5.3%, falls within the healthy range of 5–7%, suggesting a balanced rental market with more unit availability compared to the much tighter for-sale housing market.

The recent uptick in planned multi-family residential development may help counter rising prices in both the ownership and rental markets. Contributing factors include slower housing absorption since 2010, a tight ownership market, and a shift toward higher-priced inventory. Multi-family units offer more affordable alternatives for households priced out of homeownership and expand the rental supply—helping to stabilize or even reduce rents and improve affordability for renters.

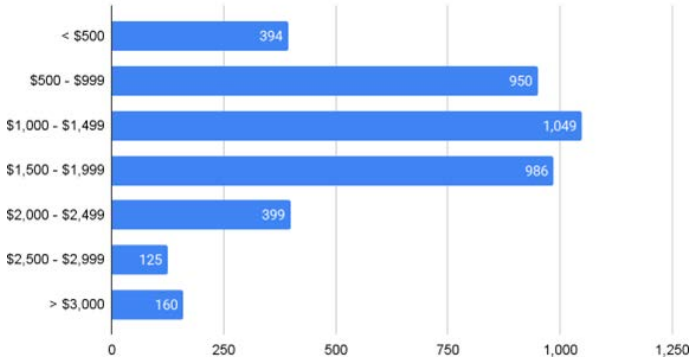
Since 2000, Easton's median gross rent has consistently exceeded those of nearby Denton and Cambridge, reflecting its status as a more premium rental market. The most significant increase occurred between 2000 and 2010, when median rents rose by 74%. During that time, 92% of new housing construction was single-family detached or attached units—limiting rental supply amid growing demand. Although the sharpest rise happened in that decade, rents have continued to climb steadily through 2023.

Figure 40: Median Gross Rent, Easton Versus Counties, 2023



Compared to surrounding counties, Easton's median rent is 94% of Talbot County's but only 73% of Queen Anne's. When rents are broken down by price range, there's a clear shortage of units affordable to extremely low-income households—those earning under $25,000 annually. This gap particularly affects individuals at risk of homelessness or in need of transitional housing. However, there is a relatively strong supply of units in the $500–$999 range, which remain affordable for households earning up to about $45,000 per year.

Figure 41: Easton Gross Rent and Number of Units, 2023

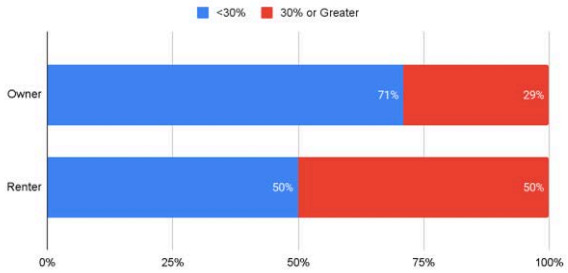


D. Housing Affordability

i. Cost Burdened Households

Cost-burdened households are those spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing. This strain often forces families to choose between housing and essentials like food, healthcare, transportation, or savings—undermining their overall well-being.

Figure 42: Easton Cost Burdened Households by Tenure, 2023, ACS 5-Year Estimates



According to 2023 ACS data, half of Easton homeowners with a mortgage pay $2,000 or more per month in housing costs. Yet only 29% are considered cost-burdened—spending over 30% of their income on housing. This indicates a relatively high income level or greater affordability tolerance among homeowners in Easton.

This also highlights that housing costs in Easton are relatively high, even for middle-income households. At 80% of Easton's 2024 AMI ($98,065), a household should spend no more than $1,961 per month on housing to stay below the cost-burdened threshold. Many homeowners exceed this amount yet still fall just under the 30% limit, indicating that even middle-income families are feeling pressure. In fact, ACS data shows that 62% of owner-occupied households earning under $75,000 are cost-burdened, compared to just 9% of those earning $75,000 or more—underscoring the growing affordability gap.

While middle-income homeowners face growing pressure in Easton's housing market, the situation is even more severe for renters — particularly those with lower incomes. In 2023, 50% of renters were cost-burdened, compared to 29% of homeowners. This sharp disparity underscores the greater affordability challenges renters face by spending a disproportionate share of their income on housing. The result is increased financial instability, housing insecurity, and strain on overall well-being.

ii. Affordable Home Price

According to HUD's FY 2024 Income Limits Summary, Talbot County's Median Family Income (MFI) for a family of four is $106,500—11% above the average for Maryland's Eastern Shore (excluding Cecil County) and the third highest in the region, following Queen Anne's and Kent counties.

Talbot County's MFI has grown steadily since 1990, reflecting long-term economic progress. The sharpest increase occurred between 1990 and 2000, with a 65% gain. Overall, from 1990 to 2024,

the MFI has risen by 203%. The current MFI is based on the 2018–2022 ACS 5-year estimate of $100,321, adjusted for inflation using Congressional Budget Office projections and rounded to the nearest $100.

HUD uses MFI to establish income thresholds by household size, categorizing households as Extremely Low, Very Low, or Low Income. These thresholds determine eligibility for a range of housing assistance programs, including Public Housing, Section 8 vouchers and project-based assistance, Section 202 housing for older adults, and Section 811 housing for people with disabilities.

In Easton, the Affordable Housing Board adjusts the County's MFI to better reflect local economic conditions. For FY 2024, Easton's adjusted MFI is $98,065. This figure is used to set eligibility and affordability standards for Town housing programs.

Based on this adjusted MFI, a four-person household earning \$98,065 per year can afford a home priced at approximately $277,000—assuming 35% of gross income is spent on housing costs. This estimate factors in mortgage principal and interest, property taxes, homeowners insurance, private mortgage insurance (PMI), and HOA dues, based on a 5% down payment and a 6.95% 30-year fixed interest rate. It should be noted that this figure differs from the 30% used by the Town's affordable Housing Board. That is because this calculation is based on the following definition: "Affordable Owner Expense: Housing cost that does not exceed one-twelfth of 35% of 100% of the Easton Area Median Income, adjusted for household size to include Principal and Interest, Taxes, and Property Insurance (PITI); Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI); and Homeowner Association dues." The calculation above assumes $200 monthly for both HOA dues and property insurance, and applies a property tax rate of 1.29% per $100 of assessed value, based on a 3-year trailing average ZHVI of $419,647.

In contrast, the median home price in Easton in 2024 was $450,000, according to MarketStats by Showing Time (Mid-Shore Board of Realtors)—38% above what a median-income household can afford. Even the average price for an attached home, such as a townhome, exceeds affordability by 21%. A household would need to earn approximately $137,000, or 140% of Easton's adjusted AMI, to afford a home priced at $420,000.

These figures highlight the growing gap between incomes and home prices—and the pressing need for more affordable housing options in Easton.

iii. Affordable Rental Price

HUD calculates Fair Market Rents (FMRs) to establish payment standards for rental assistance programs such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program. For FY 2025 in Talbot County, FMRs are based on average gross rents from the 2018–2022 ACS, adjusted for inflation and local market conditions. If the calculated value falls below the Maryland state minimum, HUD raises it accordingly. Bedroom-specific ratios are then applied to the adjusted two-bedroom rent to determine FMRs for other unit sizes. These figures are listed in Table 7 below.

FY 2024 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income Click for More Detail	FY 2024 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Talbot County, MD	$106,500	Very Low (50%) Income Limits ($) Click for More Detail	37,300	42,600	47,950	**53,250**	57,550	61,800	66,050	70,300
		Extremely Low Income Limits ($)* Click for More Detail	22,400	25,600	28,800	**31,950**	36,580	41,960	47,340	52,720
		Low (80%) Income Limits ($) Click for More Detail	59,650	68,200	76,700	**85,200**	92,050	98,850	105,650	112,500

Table 7: HUD FY 2024 Income Limits Summary

A renter household is considered cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of gross income on rent. For a four-person household earning 60% of Easton's adjusted AMI ($58,839), affordable rent—net of a $100 monthly utility allowance—is approximately $1,371 for a three-bedroom unit.

As of March 2025, Zumper reports the average rent for a three-bedroom in Easton is $2,400, a 10% increase over the previous year. About 75% of rents fall between $1,501 and $3,000. The median rent for a two-bedroom is $2,499, and across all unit types, the median monthly rent is $2,549—27% higher than the national average. For apartments specifically, the average rent is $2,699, with two-bedroom apartments averaging $2,044.

As shown in Table 8, a four-person household earning 60% of Easton's AMI cannot afford a one-, two-, or three-bedroom rental in Easton without being cost-burdened. To afford the median rent of $2,525, a household would require a significantly higher income.

	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
FY 2025 FMR	$1,210	$1,257	$1,392	$1,951	$2,338

Table 8: FY 2025 FMRs by Unit Bedrooms

iv. Exclusionary Zoning and Its Impact on Housing Choice and Affordability

Exclusionary zoning refers to land-use regulations that limit the types of housing allowed in certain areas—often under the guise of preserving neighborhood character or managing growth. Common tools include minimum lot sizes, building height limits, and restrictions on multi-family housing. While these regulations may be well-intentioned, their effect is often to increase housing costs and limit access for lower-income individuals and families.

Consider a half-acre lot zoned for single-family homes with minimum lot size requirements. A developer purchasing this lot might theoretically choose among three options:

- A modest 1,200 sq. ft. starter home suited for first-time buyers or downsizing retirees;
- Seven attached townhomes that could offer more affordable ownership options; or
- A large, upscale single-family home marketed to affluent buyers.

However, existing zoning likely prohibits higher-density development—such as townhomes—through restrictions on lot coverage, density, or allowed housing types. As a result, the developer, constrained by regulations and seeking to maximize profit, will almost certainly choose to build a large luxury home. Although each townhome would yield a smaller individual profit, the combined revenue from multiple units would exceed that of a single high-end home. But zoning doesn't allow this option.

This disconnect highlights a broader issue: the housing a community builds isn't always the housing it needs. While there is demand for large homes in Easton and Talbot County, there is also unmet demand from essential workers, young professionals, growing families, and older adults seeking more manageable living spaces. These groups benefit from a mix of housing types—if zoning allows them. The challenge lies in enabling diverse housing choices that still respect the character and scale of existing neighborhoods.

In unincorporated Talbot County, the situation is more restrictive. The County's Comprehensive Plan prioritizes preserving shoreline, waterways, and farmland—important goals—but pursues them in part by limiting the extension of sewer systems outside designated growth areas and by maintaining exclusionary land-use policies.

County zoning regulations prohibit most housing types other than single-family detached homes, often on large lots with low height and coverage limits. These low-density rules restrict supply, inflate land and construction costs, and make development of affordable units unfeasible.

The result is a development pattern that supports only high-end housing, effectively pricing out lower- and middle-income residents. This drives housing ~~segregation~~patterns based on income—and, as shown in Figures 47, 48, and 49, such ~~segregation often correlates~~patterns often correlate with racial, generational, and workforce ~~disparities~~differences.

Figure 47: Talbot County Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units in 2020 by Census Tract

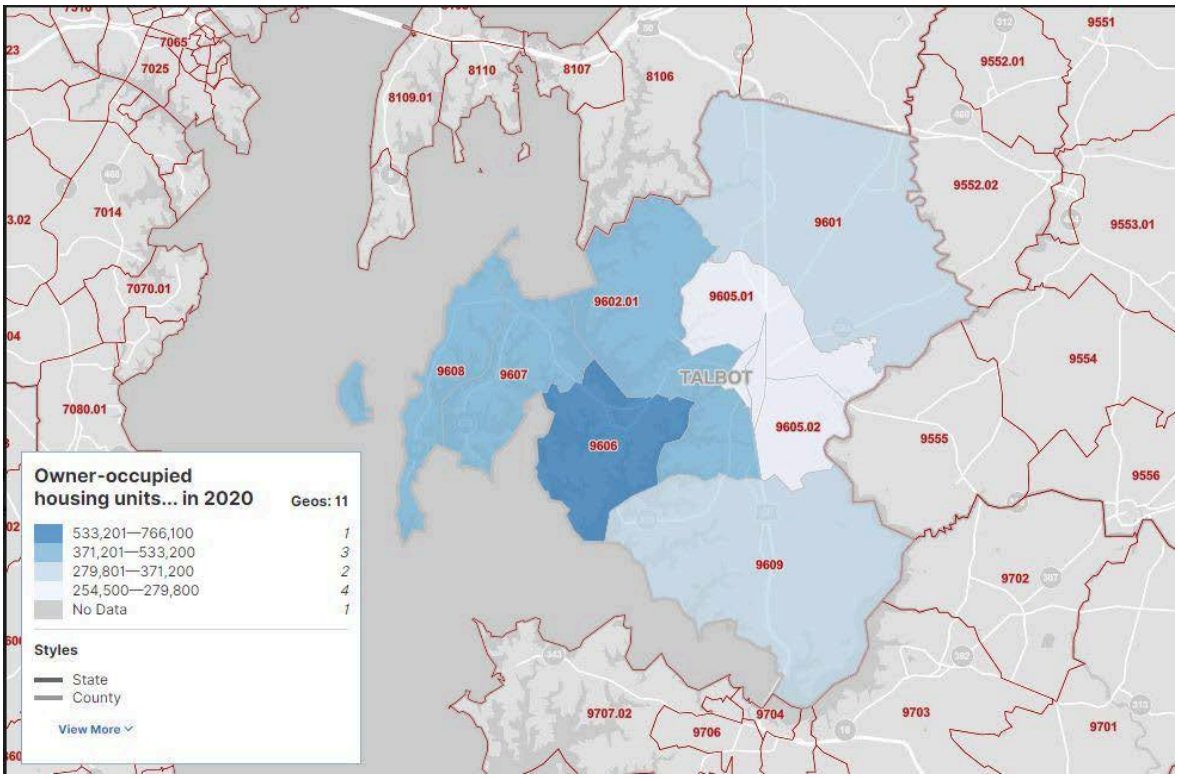


Figure 48: Talbot County Black Population by Census Tract

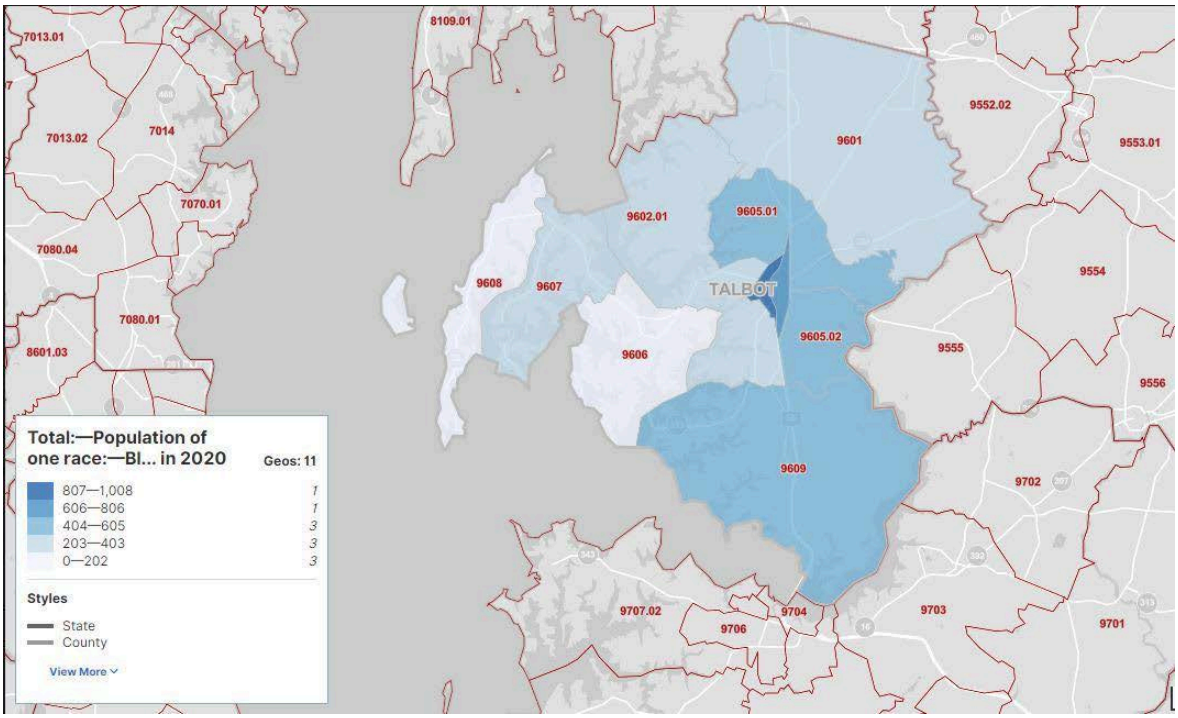
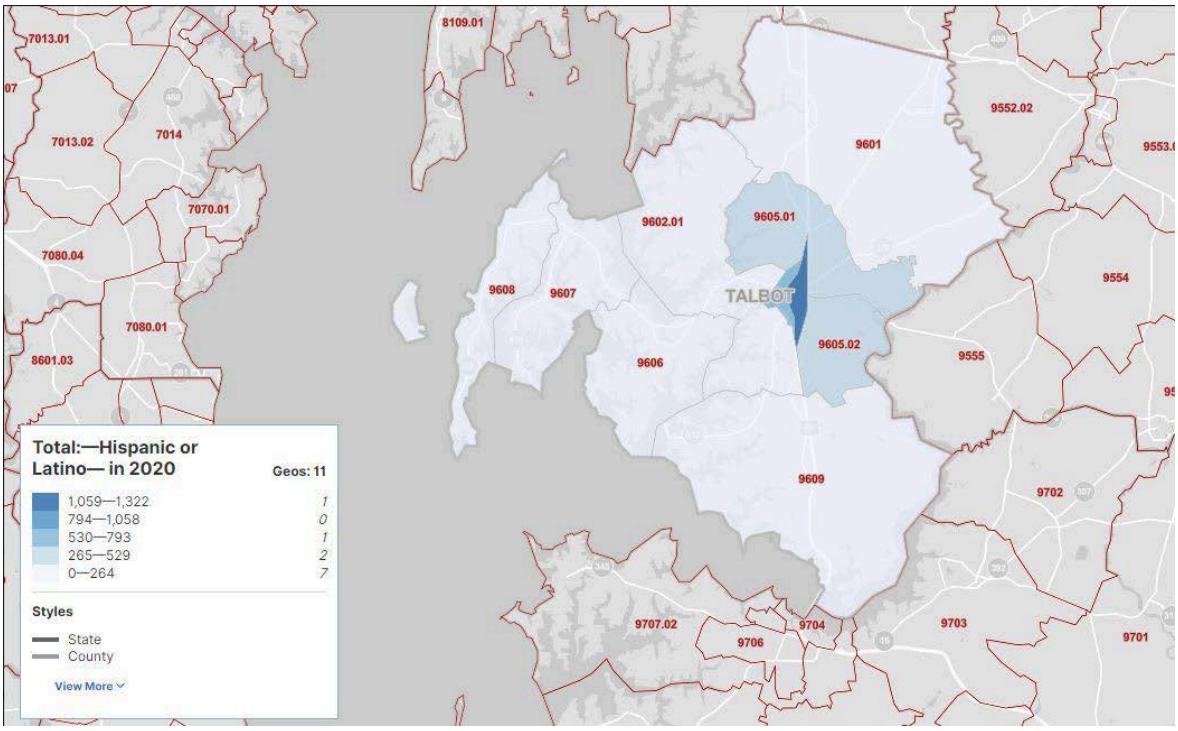


Figure 49: Talbot County Hispanic Population by Census Tract



E. Fair Housing

In 2021, the Maryland Land Use Article was amended to require that all comprehensive plans include a "Fair Housing Assessment" to ensure that they "affirmatively further fair housing." This refers to the obligation to prevent housing discrimination and proactively address segregation and other barriers that limit housing access based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, familial status, or disability. As defined in Section 2-401 of the Housing and Community Development Article, this includes taking active steps to create inclusive communities where housing opportunity is not restricted by these characteristics.

The Housing Goals and Objectives at the end of this chapter include recommended actions to meet this requirement. These focus on preserving Easton's existing affordable housing, increasing the supply of new housing, and preventing the displacement of low- and moderate-income households.

The Town of Easton is committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable community where all residents have fair access to housing opportunities. This commitment is central to our vision of a vibrant, diverse, and thriving town.

In line with the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Maryland Fair Housing Act, and applicable local ordinances, Easton prohibits housing discrimination based on:

- Race (including associated traits like hair texture and protective hairstyles)
- Color
- Religion
- Sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity)
- Familial status (including families with children, pregnant individuals, and legal custodians of children under 18)
- National origin
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Marital status
- Source of income
- Military status

The Town will actively work to eliminate discriminatory practices, support diverse neighborhoods, and ensure that all residents can find housing that meets their needs. Fair and equal treatment will continue to be integrated into our planning, policymaking, and community development efforts.

F. Potential New Housing Programs / Policies

Easton faces two distinct housing challenges. The first is a shortage of housing for low- and extremely low-income individuals and families. These housing needs often intersect with broader social and familial challenges, making them persistent. Despite this, the Town must continue—and expand—efforts to provide housing for this group. The Housing Authority of Talbot County remains the primary provider, but the Town should also support groups like Habitat for Humanity of Choptank and similar organizations that offer safe, decent, affordable homes.

One approach worth revisiting is a local Self-Help Housing Program, modeled after a successful initiative on the lower Eastern Shore led by former Delegate Rudy Cane. Similar to Habitat's model, the USDA-supported program enables very low- and low-income families to build their own homes together under supervision, contributing a set share of labor (typically 65%). This reduces costs and makes homeownership feasible. Easton previously sought funding for this program through the Community Legacy Program, but the request was denied. Renewed efforts could help bring it to fruition.

The second housing issue is the lack of inventory for first-time and move-up homebuyers. Easton's recent residential developments increasingly target high-income buyers, leaving fewer options for moderate-income households. This growing gap in the market reduces opportunities for economic mobility and long-term community diversity.

Worsening this situation is the geographic segregation of housing by income. Easton is evolving into a town of income-stratified neighborhoods—very low-income households in one area, working-class residents in another, and wealthier residents elsewhere. This kind of separation undermines community cohesion, as discussed in the Community Character Element.

One solution is to require all new residential developments to include a set percentage of homes at varied price points. A notable precedent was set in the Easton Village on the Tred Avon project, which originally committed 10% of both attached and detached units as affordable housing. These units were to be integrated into the community, indistinguishable from market-rate homes, and subject to resale restrictions to maintain affordability. However, the financial burden of real estate taxes and HOA fees eventually led the developer to substitute in-lieu contributions to the Town's Affordable Housing Fund.

Developers have also met affordable housing obligations by building units off-site or contributing to the Fund. While this has provided some affordable homes, it has diluted the original goal of integrating housing types within neighborhoods.

To create a more consistent and equitable approach, the Town's Affordable Housing Board proposed an Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, an idea first supported in the 2010 Plan. Since then, the concept has been studied by the Board and the Attainable Housing Task Force, leading to a proposed ordinance presented to the Town Council in early 2025 and currently (October 2025) pending potential action.

Additional housing policy options under consideration include:

- Expanding "Missing Middle" housing types to offer more varied and affordable units.
- Creating Traditional Neighborhood Zoning that allows smaller lots, mixed uses, and compact, walkable development by-right.
- Modifying the development review process to streamline approvals for projects that align with the Town's affordable housing goals.

These initiatives aim to address both affordability and equity while supporting a more integrated, inclusive housing market in Easton.

G. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Ensure that housing in Easton is safe, sanitary, structurally sound, and enhances neighborhood character.

Objectives:

- Maintain strong funding, staffing, and training for the Town's Building Inspection Department, and expand the Rental Housing Inspection Program.
- Collaborate with state, county, and nonprofit partners to direct housing rehabilitation funds to eligible low- and moderate-income households.
- Implement design standards that promote a mix of housing types and visually integrate affordable housing into the community.
- Encourage development patterns that support neighborhood identity, walkability, transit access, and efficient use of infrastructure.
- Preserve natural features and community character through thoughtful open space design, landscaping, and environmental protections.

Goal #2: Expand the supply of low-income housing in Easton.

Objectives:

- Support the Housing Authority of Talbot County and Easton Affordable Housing Board in creating both rental and ownership opportunities for low-income households.
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to encourage private-sector apartment development and allow flexible reuse of existing or historic structures.
- Partner with Habitat for Humanity of Choptank and similar groups to identify and secure sites for new affordable homes.
- Launch a Town-led Self-Help Housing Program to assist low-income families in building their own homes.

6. TRANSPORTATION

"Our decisions about transportation determine much more than where roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives — and thus how hard or easy it will be for people to get where they need and want to go" — Elijah Cummings

A. Purpose

Transportation is a primary driver of land use—and Easton is no exception. The earliest settlements in Talbot County were located near navigable waters out of necessity. Easton's industrial buildings, now seemingly out of place, were originally located along a rail line that served the area starting in the mid-1800s. More recently, the Town's expansion to the east has been shaped by proximity to U.S. Route 50, a major regional highway.

The link between transportation and development is deeply rooted in human history, with communities forming along coasts, rivers, and trade routes. In the modern era, particularly following World War II, American transportation planning has focused overwhelmingly on accommodating private automobiles. This auto-centric approach has brought convenience but also a host of unintended consequences—environmental degradation, social inequities, and inefficient land use patterns.

The Transportation Chapter aims to:

- Reinforce the Town Council's strategic commitments to mobility, access, and connectivity.
- Update goals, policies, and strategies to support multimodal improvements across Easton and its growth area.
- Advance a "Complete Networks" approach—one that tracks and improves transportation options across all modes, with an emphasis on safety, connectivity, and equity.

B. Transportation Issues and Policy Considerations

Easton recognizes the need to rebalance its transportation system by supporting a multimodal network that includes walking, bicycling, transit, air travel, and automobiles. A diverse and well-integrated transportation system allows people of all ages, abilities, and incomes to travel safely

and efficiently. It also supports economic development, environmental sustainability, and a high quality of life.

C. Organizational Framework

The goals and policies in this chapter are organized into five key areas:

1. Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning
2. Complete Networks
3. Non-Motorized Transportation
4. Single-Occupancy Vehicles
5. Transportation Planning Requirements

These areas are guided by six core themes that emphasize the interdependence of transportation, land use, the environment, and social equity. These themes build upon and reinforce the broader goals of this Comprehensive Plan:

1. Limit sprawl by coordinating land use and transportation planning.
2. Provide safe, sustainable, and well-connected mobility options for all users.
3. Expand infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and shared modes of transportation.
4. Reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles (SOV).
5. Maintain and improve roads, trails, and other key infrastructure.
6. Prioritize equity in transportation planning and project implementation.

These themes and their related policy areas will be explored in greater depth in the following sections.

D. Integration of Land Use and Transportation Planning

As the primary population, employment, and service center in Talbot County, Easton serves not only its 18,000 residents but also thousands of county and regional residents who rely on the Town for work, shopping, and daily activities. This results in a transportation network that must accommodate significant regional demand, much of it originating outside the Town's corporate limits.

The affordability of housing in surrounding areas, combined with personal preference and regional employment dynamics, means that many people choose to live outside of Easton but commute in. According to 2020 U.S. Census data, only about 3,200 of the Town's 11,860 workers lived in Easton. More than 8,600 commuted in from elsewhere. At the same time, over 2,400 Easton residents commuted out of town for work. The 2022 update showed that out of 12,232 workers in Easton, 9,190 were inbound commuters and 2,322 were outbound. In total, more than 11,000 people commute into or out of Easton each workday, underscoring the Town's regional significance and the burden on its transportation infrastructure.

This level of regional traffic presents clear challenges. Easton's planning efforts must manage congestion while also promoting land use patterns that support infill development, maintain a compact urban form, and encourage transportation alternatives to the private automobile.

Higher residential densities, such as those already found in parts of Easton, create opportunities for more efficient transportation options—like public transit, walking, and bicycling. These modes become more cost-effective and feasible as density increases. For this reason, Easton must continue to align its land use and transportation policies to:

- Support compact, higher-density development in and near employment and service centers.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment in walkable, connected neighborhoods.
- Incentivize development patterns that reduce reliance on car travel.

A more integrated approach to land use and transportation planning will help Easton accommodate regional demand while preserving the Town's form, character, and quality of life.

E. Complete Networks

Easton's transportation planning strategy prioritizes a Complete Networks approach—addressing the needs of all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and transit riders—rather than focusing solely on automobiles. This approach builds on the principles of the Complete Streets movement but expands them with annual progress tracking, system-wide assessments, and a commitment to equity and accessibility across modes.



While transit options in Talbot County remain limited, Easton must plan for future multimodal infrastructure, including the

potential expansion of transit services as the Town grows. Complete Networks planning also supports Easton's goals for compact, walkable neighborhoods and reduces the demand for continuous road expansion by offering viable alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle (SOV).

The Town aims to produce an annual inventory and performance assessment for each modal system—pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle, and transit—while also reporting on system-wide progress and needs. These assessments help guide investment priorities and align infrastructure improvements with development goals.

i. Non-Motorized Transportation

A key component of Easton's Complete Networks strategy is the continued development of safe, convenient infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists. This includes constructing new sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways, as well as integrating these elements into all new public and private street projects.

The Easton Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (originally included in the 2010 Plan and intended to be updated following this Plan's adoption) serves as the blueprint for this effort. It identifies:

- A Primary Pedestrian Network with recommended sidewalk and intersection projects prioritized by need and feasibility.
- A Primary Bicycle Network and recommended bikeway projects prioritized similarly.

These plans are considered an extension of the Plan. Their implementation is essential to enhancing non-automotive mobility in Town and promoting active transportation options.

ii. Transit and Single-Occupancy Vehicles

The Town continues to improve conditions for walking and biking while encouraging fewer vehicle trips, particularly those made by single occupants. This does not imply eliminating private vehicles—Easton will continue to support a well-functioning road network—but recognizes that auto-centric development is not sustainable for the long term.

Census data shows Easton's transportation network is heavily impacted by regional inflows and outflows of workers, shoppers, and service users. In this context, the construction of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure serves not only Easton residents but the broader regional community by reducing congestion and expanding travel choices.

Although private vehicles will remain the dominant mode for most regional users over the next two decades, technological shifts—such as car- and ride-sharing, remote work, and autonomous vehicles—are reshaping the transportation landscape. Easton will continue to monitor and adapt to these changes while maintaining a strong emphasis on walkable, connected, and multimodal planning.

Recognizing that congestion during peak periods is unavoidable in certain corridors, Easton is no longer planning to "build its way out" through continuous widening of roads and intersections. Instead, the Town prioritizes improvements that enhance transportation options, increase efficiency, and create safe, comfortable streets for all users.

iii. Maintaining and Improving Infrastructure

Easton integrates transportation planning with infrastructure investment to maximize cost-efficiency. When utilities such as water, sewer, or stormwater systems require upgrades, the Town seeks to coordinate these projects with transportation improvements—such as adding bikeways or sidewalks identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

For example:

- Asphalt resurfacing triggers sidewalk and curb ramp upgrades under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Road repaving can be paired with re-striping to add bike lanes.
- Utility corridor improvements may coincide with placemaking initiatives if funding is aligned.

In many cases, improvements can be funded through non-transportation sources (e.g., utility capital budgets), allowing the Town to expand multimodal infrastructure without drawing exclusively on transportation funds.

Private development also plays a role. All new development and redevelopment projects are required to contribute to the cost and construction of infrastructure needed to support growth. These projects are reviewed for compliance with local and state transportation standards and must address connectivity, safety, and overall network performance.

F. Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA)

Under the Town's Development Regulations, a Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) is required for certain development projects expected to generate significant traffic or those located near intersections where safety and congestion are already concerns. The TIA evaluates and identifies deficiencies and recommends mitigation strategies if needed. The TIA process begins with a scoping phase prior to the formal submission of a traffic study where the Town and the applicant agree upon the methodologies based on the intensity of the proposal. The study evaluates the project's impact on the surrounding network, identifies deficiencies, and recommends mitigation strategies. When applicable, additional requirements may be imposed by MDOT.

Just as a comprehensive street network is necessary for efficient and safe vehicular flow at an acceptable standard, it must also serve bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders. To encourage alternative modes of transportation and ensure mobility for all users, the Town envisions expanding the scope of TIAs to include a multi-modal impact analysis where pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders are treated as equal traffic. Future TIAs will be aligned with the Town's anticipated Complete Streets classification system. This ensures that the impact analysis accounts for all modes of travel, not just traffic counts and the infrastructure design identifies the specific types of bicycle and pedestrian facilities appropriate for the street's classification.

To support the Town's goals for a seamless network all new development abutting substandard public streets is required to upgrade adjacent street segments to current multimodal standards where feasible. These standards ensure that as Easton grows, its transportation infrastructure is safe, accessible, and multimodal, and fiscally sustainable by requiring development to contribute its fair share to the public realm.

G. Road System

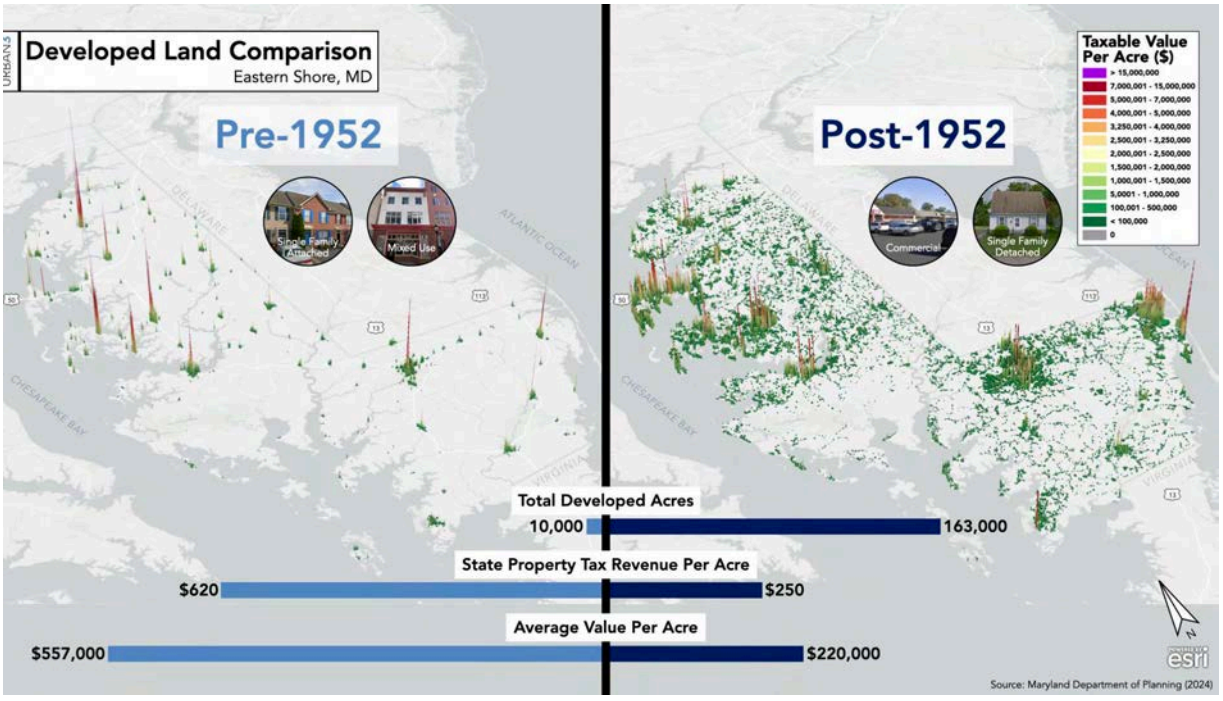
U.S. Route 50 has been the single most influential force shaping Easton's growth and development patterns over the past several decades—particularly commercial growth. The opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952 gave millions of Western Shore residents direct access to the Eastern Shore, driving a surge in beach traffic. Entrepreneurs responded by developing fast-food restaurants, gas stations, and other roadside services along Route 50 to attract these pass-through travelers.

Route 50 also fundamentally altered development patterns in Easton. What began as growth along a bypass corridor eventually drew more commercial uses toward it, with residential development

filling in between the highway and the historic core. Most of this post-1950s growth was auto-oriented and single-use in nature, diverging from traditional neighborhood design.

A fiscal analysis by Urban3 (see Figure 2) highlights key differences between pre- and post-1952 development. First, relatively little land was developed before the Bay Bridge opened. Second, land developed prior to 1952 consistently generates significantly higher fiscal value per acre than post-bridge development. Together, these trends reinforce the link between infrastructure and land use patterns, and the higher fiscal return of compact, traditional development over suburban sprawl.

FIGURE 2 - Taxable Value per Acre on the Eastern Shore pre and post Bay Bridge



While Route 50 has benefited many businesses, its impacts are mixed. Excessive access points and the highway's attempt to function both as a high-speed regional corridor and as a local service road have created serious traffic congestion, safety concerns, and neighborhood disruption.

i. Route 50: Fixes and Futures

Easton's residents overwhelmingly oppose rerouting Route 50 onto the Easton Parkway—a position consistently confirmed in every Comprehensive Plan survey since the 1990s. The Parkway was built in the 1960s to serve west Talbot residents by providing north-south mobility around Easton, not through it. Converting it into a new Route 50 would undermine this function, add signalized intersections, and risk significant environmental impacts—particularly near MD 33 and MD 333. The Parkway cannot and should not serve as a high-capacity bypass.

Instead, the most favored long-term solution remains a new, limited-access bypass located well east of Easton—similar in scope to the Salisbury Bypass. This would alleviate congestion within Town, reduce through-traffic delays, and provide an opportunity to repurpose the existing Route 50 corridor as a local "Business 50." That transformation would allow for street narrowing, improved safety, and redevelopment of the corridor into a more attractive, multi-modal gateway.

Until such a bypass becomes feasible, the Town will continue to work with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to improve the existing Route 50 corridor through landscaping, intersection upgrades, and access management.

ii. East–West Access

A long-standing problem in Easton is the lack of effective east–west connectivity. The Parkway helps bypass downtown for north–south traffic, but offers little help to those moving across Town between neighborhoods on either side of Route 50. As a result, east–west travel often funnels through residential streets, creating congestion, cut-through traffic, and neighborhood complaints.

Some improvements have been made—such as traffic signal synchronization along Route 50—but larger solutions are needed. One promising idea is to relocate MD 309 so it connects with Route 50 at the point where the former railroad crosses. From there, it could run along the rail corridor before rejoining its existing alignment. This would not only improve east–west connectivity but also eliminate the problematic intersection near the airport, where a grade-separated interchange would conflict with flight paths. The concept, originally proposed by SHA, has support from local and regional officials and should be advanced.

iii. Planning and Coordination

Planning for future road improvements is complex and expensive—especially when multiple jurisdictions are involved. Within Easton's limits, roads are managed by the Town, Talbot County, and the State of Maryland, each with different objectives. For example, the State's priority for Route 50 is efficient regional travel, while Easton and the County prioritize local mobility and safety. Effective intergovernmental coordination is essential to reconcile these priorities and deliver meaningful improvements.

It's also important to recognize that Route 50 is now a major freight corridor. A 2022 State of Maryland report on the Rural Opportunities to Use Traffic Technology Enhancements (ROUTE) initiative noted that Route 50 carries over 10,000 trucks per day and supports $14 billion in annual commodity flow. Freight delays exceed 107,000 hours annually, costing roughly $51 million in lost

time and fuel. The corridor is critical for agriculture, tourism, supply chains, and national security assets such as Wallops Island.

Going forward, Easton must continue advocating for road improvements that balance local mobility, regional freight needs, and safety—while staying focused on long-term goals to reduce auto dependency and enhance quality of life through better multimodal transportation options.

H. Complete Streets

Easton is in the process of developing a Complete Streets framework to ensure the design and operation of streets safely accommodates all users—pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, motorists—regardless of age or ability. This approach reflects a shift away from traditional car-centric design toward one that balances the needs of all travel modes and emphasizes safety, accessibility, and community character.

Complete Streets prioritize local needs and neighborhood scale, rather than solely focusing on the rapid movement of through-traffic. Features may include sidewalks, bike lanes, bus stops, safe pedestrian crossings, median islands, curb extensions, traffic calming measures, and green stormwater infrastructure. When designed well, Complete Streets promote safer travel, improved mobility, public health, and placemaking—all critical to Easton's long-term livability.

In January 2025, the Town of Easton initiated its formal Complete Streets planning process by contracting with the transportation engineering firm Wallace Montgomery (WM). This first phase of work lays the foundation for a long-term shift in how Easton designs, prioritizes, and evaluates street infrastructure. The overall Complete Streets planning effort is anticipated to span several years and phases of development and implementation.

I. Airport

Easton is uniquely served by a general aviation airport within its town limits. Easton Airport (Newnam Field – ESN), located just west of MD Route 662 and south of Airport Road, is owned and operated by Talbot County. The facility is managed by an Airport Manager under the direction of the County Council, with input from a five-member Airport Advisory Board.

Designated in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), Easton Airport is eligible for federal funding. As a general aviation facility, it supports a range of private, corporate, and public service aviation needs. It features two intersecting paved runways:

- Runway 04/22: 5,500 feet long
- Runway 15/33: 4,000 feet long

Both have full parallel taxiways and instrument approaches. An FAA contract air traffic control tower operates on-site.

The airport supports approximately 220 based aircraft, including single- and multi-engine planes, jets, helicopters, and gliders. Four Fixed Base Operators (FBOs)—Easton Jet Service, Maryland Air, NexGen Flight Solutions, and Trident Aviation—offer a wide array of services, including:

- Aircraft fueling (100LL and Jet A)
- Aircraft parking (tie-downs, T-hangars)
- Air charter services
- Rental cars, hangar space, and catering
- Flight planning tools, weather centers, and a public café
- Meeting space and fitness amenities

Additional aviation-related businesses offer aircraft repair, sales, and unique experiences such as biplane rides through Aloft Biplane Rides. Flight instruction and rentals are provided by Trident Aviation and Easton Aviation.

The airport also plays a key public safety role. The Maryland State Police base a medevac helicopter at the site for emergency medical transport, search and rescue, and law enforcement missions. Talbot County EMS operates five Advanced Life Support units from the airport, improving response times and access to critical care.

i. Operational Statistics

Easton Airport (ESN) ranks among the top three busiest general aviation airports in Maryland, reflecting its critical role in the region's transportation and economic systems. According to the Maryland Aviation Administration and recent reports, ESN supports a high volume of aircraft activity and contributes significantly to the local economy.

Based Aircraft (2023)

- Single-engine aircraft: 143
- Multi-engine aircraft: 24
- Corporate jets: 20
- Helicopters: 3
- Total: 190 based aircraft

Annual Aircraft Operations (2023)

- Local general aviation: 44%
- Transient general aviation: 31%
- Military: 20%
- Air taxi: 5%
- Total operations: 73,543 annually

ii. Economic Impact

A 2023 statewide study of airport economic impacts found that Easton Airport generated:

- 542 total jobs
- $36.9 million in personal income
- $11.3 million in state and local tax revenue
- $91.4 million in total business revenue

These numbers demonstrate that the airport is not only a transportation asset but a major economic driver for Talbot County and the broader Mid-Shore region.

iii. Land Use Compatibility and Community Impacts

As the airport has grown in operations and prominence, conflicts with adjacent residential neighborhoods have also increased—most notably related to noise, traffic, and the perception of encroachment. In response, Talbot County has enacted zoning measures and acquired avigation easements on surrounding properties to limit incompatible uses and protect aviation operations.

The County plans to continue securing such easements to preserve the airport's long-term functionality.

On the Town side, while the land immediately surrounding the airport is zoned for industrial uses—which is generally compatible with aviation—there are currently no special airport-related zoning protections in place. The Town may consider revising its zoning ordinance in the future to incorporate airport overlay or compatibility districts to better manage potential land use conflicts, particularly in areas close to approach and departure paths.

Within Easton's jurisdiction, the primary concern is not safety but nuisance—especially in the North Easton neighborhoods and adjacent unincorporated County lands. Aircraft noise, fumes, and vibrations are ongoing quality-of-life issues for nearby residents. A balanced approach is needed: residents should acknowledge the presence of a long-standing regional airport, while the airport should seek to channel expansion and high-impact operations toward non-residential, industrial, and undeveloped land to mitigate disturbances.

iv. Mission and Outlook

The airport's mission emphasizes service, safety, and community responsibility:

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 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 education, emergency services, medical evacuation, and law enforcement activities. The airport will prioritize safety and security while aligning with the goals of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The Town of Easton supports the continued operation and thoughtful growth of Easton Airport and recognizes its importance for economic development, public safety, and regional mobility. However, the Town also emphasizes the importance of equitable land use planning to minimize impacts on residential communities and ensure long-term compatibility between aviation operations and surrounding neighborhoods.

J. PORT

Port facilities for the Town of Easton are located at Easton Point, a triangular peninsula bordered on two sides by the Tred Avon River. The area commonly referred to as Easton Point extends inland to the Easton Parkway, although much of the land remains outside the corporate limits of the Town. The only parcels within Town boundaries include the former Public Works yard (now repurposed as a

Waterfront Park), the Talbot County Public Works and Emergency Management offices, the Londonderry Retirement Community, and a few small intervening parcels.

The current mix of land uses at Easton Point is varied. At the tip of the peninsula is a small marina and a heavily used public boat ramp. There are also several industrial users that rely on river access for the delivery of bulk materials. Along the corridor closer to the Parkway are the County's Public Works facility (now in the process of relocating) and the Londonderry senior living complex. Other intervening parcels include low-density residential properties and aging infrastructure, including the old Town Public Works yard.

The long-term future of Easton Point remains uncertain. The area has been widely recognized for its redevelopment potential, given its waterfront access and proximity to downtown. Many stakeholders envision a shift away from heavy industrial use toward a more mixed-use, recreational, and residential vision. This could include expanded marina facilities, improved public waterfront access, parks and open space, and higher-density residential and commercial development.

This vision was further articulated in the Easton Point/Port Street Small Area Plan, referenced in the Implementation Chapter. That plan sets forth a framework for potential annexation, infrastructure improvements, and land use changes, should redevelopment opportunities materialize in the future.

K. Rail

Rail service to Easton and the broader Talbot County area has been discontinued for many years. Most of the former rail rights-of-way have either been retained by the Maryland State Rail Administration or reverted to private ownership. As a result, the restoration of freight or passenger rail service is not anticipated during this planning period; however, old rail beds serve as good bones for the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian network, which is exploited below.

L. Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

Too often, transportation planning focuses narrowly on roadways, with minimal attention to non-automobile modes. Walking—our most basic form of transportation—is frequently overlooked, along with the infrastructure that supports it. Easton is actively working to change that. As part of the Town's broader "Complete Streets initiative" pedestrian and bicycle networks are now a central focus of infrastructure planning and investment.

In Easton's older neighborhoods, sidewalks have long been a defining feature. In recent years, many of these areas have benefited from targeted sidewalk upgrades and streetscape enhancements. Since

the early 1980s, the Planning and Zoning Commission has required sidewalks in all new subdivisions. However, some neighborhoods developed in the 1950s through 1970s lack this infrastructure entirely, forcing pedestrians to share roadways with vehicles—a significant safety concern. These areas are now priorities for retroactive sidewalk installation.

i. Bicycle Infrastructure

Bicycle travel is also receiving greater attention in Easton's transportation framework. Bicycling offers a low-cost, sustainable transportation option and is increasingly eligible for federal and state infrastructure funding. Projects such as bike lanes and multi-use trails are particularly well-suited to Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) grants and Maryland's transportation funding programs, which now require comprehensive plans to address pedestrian and bicycle mobility.



Map 6: Proposed Bicycle Network

M. Public Transportation

The Town of Easton currently does not operate its own public transportation system, and no municipal transit services are expected to be introduced during the current planning horizon. However, residents and workers do have access to Delmarva Community Transit (DCT), a regional transit service operated by Delmarva Community Services, to which the Town contributes annually.

DCT provides two fixed routes through Easton—Route C and Route D—operating from 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. A St. Michaels Shuttle also runs from 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fiscal Year 2023 ridership was:

- Route C: 8,337 riders
- Route D: 5,868 riders
- St. Michaels Shuttle: 6,030 riders

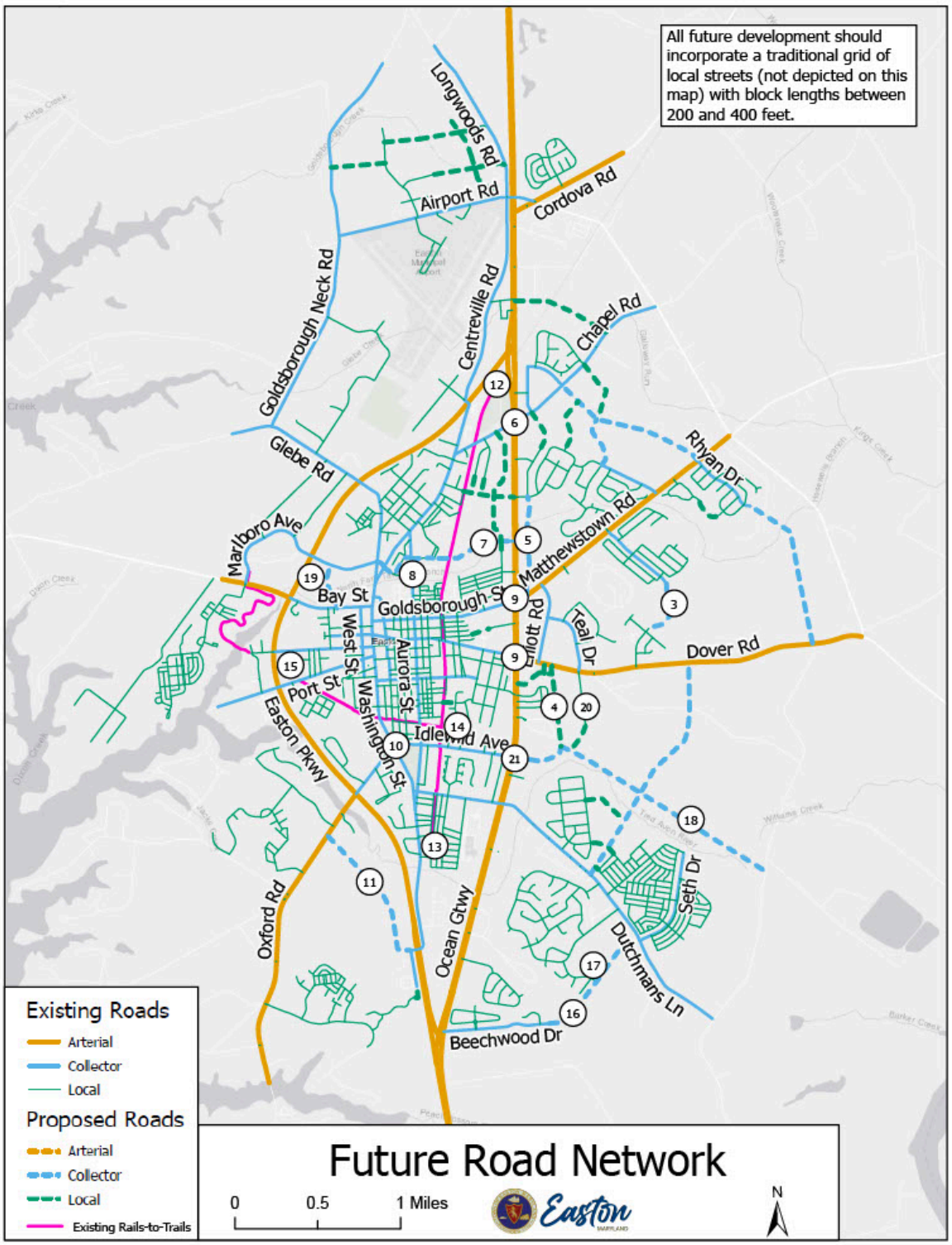
While ridership has declined since 2010 (particularly on Route C), public transit remains a vital service for many residents, including seniors, workers, and individuals without access to a car.

Looking ahead, the Town remains open to exploring expanded transit options, including potential service increases from DCT or other providers. As part of the State Agency review process associated with the Draft of this Plan, Maryland Transportation officials commented that many communities of about the same population as Easton have been able to maintain a circulator bus system. This is something we should explore further during this Planning period as, among other benefits, this is potentially one way in which the disparate parts of Easton can be brought closer together (and, in a relatively sustainable manner).

Easton should also begin discussions with State transportation agencies regarding travel demand management strategies, such as official Park-and-Ride facilities. Currently, some residents are informally using business parking lots for commuter parking—an indicator of unmet demand that may justify the creation of designated facilities. It is also important to remember that while not every project is appropriate for construction of a new road, all are important for consideration of expanded or enhanced connectivity. A prominent example of such projects is the new Hospital. This facility would seem to be a logical candidate for a transit stop given its role as an important community service, as well as major employer. At a minimum, any hospital employees who currently walk to the existing site on South Washington Street will need a new transit option to get to work at the new location.

N. Transportation Map and Proposed Improvements

The Transportation Map illustrates key proposed enhancements to Easton's multimodal transportation network. These improvements, summarized below, are conceptual at this stage—exact designs, funding mechanisms, and construction timelines are largely undefined. Most projects are expected to be completed in conjunction with adjacent property development or funded through the Town's impact fees or a combination of Town, County, or State resources. These proposals are also subject to revision as the Complete Streets Study is finalized.



Future Map 7: Road Network

1. Grade-Separated Crossing of Route 50

One of Easton's highest priorities is addressing local traffic delays caused by congestion on US Route 50. A grade-separated crossing would significantly improve east-west connectivity.

2. East Side Residential Collector Grid

Replacing a single collector route previously proposed in the 2004 Plan, the Town now supports a grid network of local streets on the eastern side of Easton. This approach—mirroring the traditional street grid of the historic town center—supports connectivity and disperses traffic flow. The Complete Streets Study will further evaluate this concept.

3. June Way Extension

This project would extend June Way from Waylands Subdivision south to connect with Fisher Range Road, eventually forming part of the East Side Collector Grid mentioned above.

4. Clifton Road Improvements

Clifton Road would be extended to connect Dover Road and Chesapeake Avenue, offering residents of North, Middle, and South Clifton an alternative route that avoids Route 50.

5. East Side Route 50 Service Road

A new service road behind businesses along the east side of Route 50 (between Matthewstown and Chapel Roads) would allow internal circulation without repeated entries onto Route 50, relieving traffic congestion and improving safety.

6. Chapel Road/Route 50 Intersection Improvements

This busy intersection will require capacity enhancements to accommodate future development, including Easton Commons and surrounding parcels. Recent upgrades have included signal rephasing; further improvements are expected based on evolving traffic conditions.

7. Norris Taylor Drive

This new signalized access road, developed with the Royal Farms and Burger King projects, improves circulation on the west side and enhances access to John F. Ford Park. It may support a future West Side Service Road extending Calvert Street north to Chapel Road through the RTC property.

8. East-West Connector

This long-standing proposal envisions connecting Marlboro Avenue with Creamery Lane, Aurora Park Drive, Magnolia Street, and eventually Route 50 via the RTC property. Portions of the route could continue across Route 50 to Elliott Road and Mulberry Drive. Phased implementation is expected, using impact fees and potentially beginning with pedestrian or bicycle improvements before full street construction.

9. Route 50 Intersection Upgrades (Goldsborough and Dover Streets)

These intersections continue to rank among the worst in Easton in terms of congestion and delay. Improvements are essential even if the East-West Connector is completed. Dedicated turn lanes and expanded capacity should be explored, and additional right-of-way acquisition may be necessary.

10. "Five Corners" Intersection

This unusual convergence of five roads (Washington, Harrison, Idlewild, Peachblossom) near Idlewild Park is a persistent congestion point. A roundabout is under consideration, along with a new smart signal system designed to improve flow and reduce delays in the near term.

11. Tristan Drive to Oxford Road Connector

This proposed route would connect Tristan Drive with MD Route 33 (Oxford Road), creating a new east-west corridor and reducing pressure on the existing Parkway/Oxford Road intersection. Coordination with Talbot County is needed, especially in light of the County's recent acquisition of the adjacent Poplar Hill Farm property. Given current ownership of the property by Talbot County, it is anticipated that this road will primarily serve as access to parking for the Town's Woodland Park located on an adjacent parcel.

12–15. Rails-to-Trails System Extensions

Significant trail system expansions are proposed in all directions:

12. Northward, across Route 50, following the historic railbed.

13. Southward, across Easton Parkway to link with other trail systems.

14. Eastward, along Chesapeake Avenue.

15. Westward utilizing the pedestrian bridge over the Tred Avon River funded by Easton Village developers and potentially on towards St. Michael's.

Segments of these trail extensions have already been completed in recent years, and the Town intends to continue these enhancements as opportunities arise.

(16) Beechwood Drive Extension

This proposed extension involves the segment of Beechwood Drive located adjacent to the Lakelands project. It would connect the current dead end to Dutchman's Lane, just east of Easton Club East. Where feasible, this extension should include a multi-use trail to enhance non-motorized mobility.

(17) Hemlock Lane Extension

Hemlock Lane currently terminates within The Woods at Stoney Ridge subdivision. This proposal would extend the roadway eastward to connect with the proposed Beechwood Drive Extension, forming part of the broader East Side Residential Collector Grid. This grid system, which prioritizes multiple interconnected local streets rather than single large collectors, is intended to improve east side circulation while discouraging excessive cut-through traffic.

(18) Chesapeake Avenue Corridor

A public right-of-way for Chesapeake Avenue already exists and offers a significant opportunity to provide east–west access across a largely undeveloped area between Dutchman's Lane and Chilcutt Road. In the short term, construction of a pedestrian/bike trail along this corridor would benefit nearby neighborhoods. As development occurs, additional right-of-way acquisition should allow for a co-located roadway that could ultimately intersect Route 50 at or north of Idlewild Avenue. This extended Idlewild could then serve as the new vehicular connection, while Chesapeake Avenue would support a grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing.

(19) Bay Street to Marlboro Avenue Connector

This proposal would formalize an existing informal connection currently used by drivers via a network of parking lots and private drives. The connector would provide improved access to Talbot County government offices located in the Bay Street Condominiums. While not a major traffic route, this connector would improve circulation and reduce confusion for local traffic and visitors.

(20) Industrial Park Road Extension

Industrial Park Road currently serves the Clifton Industrial Park, annexed into Easton in 2007. This extension would push the road southward to meet the proposed Chesapeake Avenue alignment.

Once built, it would create a valuable north-south connection for residents of Stoney Ridge, Easton Club East, and future neighborhoods, offering an alternate path to Dover Road via a signalized intersection at Teal Drive.

(21) Idlewild Avenue Extension

Idlewild Avenue currently terminates at US Route 50. This proposed extension would continue Idlewild across Route 50, ideally via a grade-separated crossing, to meet the proposed Chesapeake Avenue corridor. Such a connection would relieve pressure on nearby intersections at Dutchman's Lane and Dover Road, improve east-west connectivity for vehicles, and provide opportunities to separate pedestrian and bicycle movements from highway traffic.

0. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Provide a Functional and Efficient Road Network.

Objectives:.

- 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, focusing on separating through and local traffic.
- Consolidate driveway access points on Route 50 and develop an intersection control plan to reduce left turns.
- Build a connected network of local roadways to support existing communities and planned development, while reducing local reliance on Route 50.
- Develop a Small Area Design/Transportation Plan to evaluate optimal street and trail networks on Easton's east side and Growth Area.
- Discourage strip development and promote clustering of development at designated nodes along Route 50.
- Improve east-west access throughout the Town, including at Goldsborough and Dover intersections.
- Require gridded street systems in new development with provisions for pedestrians and bicycles.

- Where feasible, retrofit existing subdivisions to create new road connections and improve connectivity.
- Work to reduce the growth of commercial access points on Route 50.
- Coordinate closely with SHA on improvements to all streets that intersect Route 50.
- Improve the appearance and function of Route 50 frontage areas; prioritize solutions that enhance the existing corridor rather than shifting traffic to Easton Parkway.
- Support long-term efforts to construct a Route 50 bypass east of Town, paired with converting the existing Route 50 to a multimodal boulevard.
- Enhance public transportation options and services.
- Evaluate feasibility and location of a formal park-and-ride lot in Easton.

Goal #2: Expand the Town's Trail System and Support Active Transportation.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with MDOT to pursue funding and design for a grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing of Route 50 at Chesapeake Avenue.
- Implement the goals and recommendations of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- Coordinate trail improvements and connectivity with Talbot County and regional partners.
- Include safe and effective crosswalks as part of all major intersection improvements on Route 50 and Easton Parkway.

Goal#3: Manage Airport Growth While Minimizing Community Impacts.

Objectives:

- Guide land use near the airport to avoid incompatible development that could restrict future airport operations.
- Coordinate with Easton Airport officials to review and refine policies aimed at mitigating noise and other impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.

Goal #4: Link Land Use and Transportation to Support Smarter Growth.

Objectives:

- Use this Comprehensive Plan, Small Area Plans, and mixed-use districts to incentivize infill and prioritize multimodal transportation.
- Build a Transportation Network Model and develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan as an adjunct to this Comprehensive Plan.
- Promote compact land use patterns and higher-density development near transit corridors.
- Acknowledge that congestion may occur in denser areas, but prioritize safety, connectivity, and multimodal access over capacity expansion.
- Develop a strategic transit plan linking key destinations such as employment centers, schools, parks, and shopping.
- Encourage active transportation over driving to improve health and reduce environmental impacts.
- Support transit-oriented development (TOD) along primary transit routes by:
  - Identifying zoning, densities, and land use patterns;
  - Requiring design review for all new development;
  - Promoting mixed-use development and discouraging auto-oriented uses;
  - Encouraging development patterns which reduce on-site parking requirements and encourage shared parking; and
  - Requiring bicycle parking for new development.
- Coordinate TOD efforts with transit providers to maintain or enhance service levels.
- Collaborate with Talbot County on unified multimodal infrastructure standards for the Easton Growth Area.
- Require Multimodal Traffic Impact Studies to consider nearby transportation corridors and intersections, not just those within and immediately adjacent to proposed projects.

Goal #5: Provide Safe, Well-Connected, and Sustainable Transportation Options.

Objectives:

- Fill missing gaps in the multimodal transportation network for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, freight, and private vehicles.

- Design transportation improvements that prioritize safety for vulnerable users.
- Ensure mobility options for people with special transportation needs, including children, seniors, low-income populations, and persons with disabilities.
- Expand the required scope of Traffic Impact Studies to include an analysis and discussion of the impacts of proposed projects on all modes of transportation so that our transportation network becomes truly multimodal.

Goal #6: Increase Infrastructure for Non-SOV Travel.

Objectives:

- Integrate Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan recommendations into public street improvements where feasible.
- Require all new development to build sidewalks along public streets per Town standards, with separation from traffic where possible.
- Accommodate bicyclists on arterial streets identified in the Master Plan, constructed with permeable materials where feasible.
- Establish an administrative waiver process for cases where required improvements would serve no clear public purpose.
- Prioritize Safe Routes to School through coordination with Talbot County Public Schools.
- Provide incentives for private development to construct sidewalk and bikeway infrastructure.
- Use Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies to improve efficiency and safety.
    - TDM Actions:
        - Educate the public about walking and biking options.
        - Implement compact, transit-supportive development strategies.
        - Track and report progress toward shifting mode share away from SOVs.
        - Require Commute Trip Reduction programs for large developments.
        - Support carpooling and ridesharing initiatives.

- Reform parking standards to improve pedestrian environments.

- TSM Actions:
- Complete bike and pedestrian networks to improve public health and reduce emissions.
- Explore bike share programs and local connectivity improvements.
- Identify and pursue funding sources to implement multimodal improvements.

Goal#7: Reduce Reliance on Single-Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs).

Objectives:

- Decrease SOV trips while encouraging trips made by walking, biking, transit, and ridesharing.
- Track transportation mode share using standardized Census data and report five-year averages annually.
- Work with County and State partners to develop a local Commute Trip Reduction program.
- Advocate for stronger MDOT support of sidewalk, bikeway, and transit investments—particularly along state highways serving Easton.

Goal #8: Maintain and Improve Streets, Trails, and Related Infrastructure.

Objectives:

- Use Complete Street standards to ensure transportation concurrency for new development, avoiding unnecessary road widening for vehicle traffic.
- Allocate sufficient funding for maintenance of sidewalk, bikeway, and roadway systems.
- Design and construct transportation facilities to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts, consistent with Critical Areas Ordinance requirements.
- Develop improved metrics for analyzing new vehicle traffic impacts on pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit service.
- Apply multimodal street design standards to all new development.

- Request County and State highway projects to include pedestrian and bike safety improvements.
- Retrofit existing streets with green infrastructure and traffic calming where appropriate.

Goal #9: Address Transportation Equity in All Projects.

Objectives:

- Provide equitable access to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure through inclusive public engagement and targeted capital investment.
- Invest in underserved neighborhoods to expand pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Ensure all residents—regardless of age, income, race, or ability—have opportunities to participate in and benefit from transportation investments.
- Develop outreach materials in multiple formats and languages to engage all segments of the Easton community.

7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

"INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE IS A LONG TERM REQUIREMENT FOR GROWTH AND A LONG TERM FACTOR THAT WILL MAKE GROWTH SUSTAINABLE."

CHANDA KOCHHAR

A. PURPOSE

Community Facilities and Services form the backbone of Easton's infrastructure and quality of life. This chapter addresses the key public services and utilities that support daily living, guide development, and ensure public health and safety. These include water and sewer services, solid waste management, police, fire and rescue, and other essential facilities.

The chapter provides a concise overview of the facilities currently serving Easton, along with a discussion of future needs based on projected growth. It incorporates community input gathered during the Plan Update process and outlines goals and objectives to ensure that Easton's public services keep pace with development.

While newer elements such as Water Resources and Municipal Growth may overlap with topics in this chapter, the Comprehensive Plan ensures all statutory requirements are addressed—even if they appear in separate chapters. For Community Facilities, the State of Maryland provides the following guidance:

Maryland Statutory Requirements

A Community Facilities Element must:

(a) Project the most appropriate and desirable patterns for the location, character, and extent of public and semi-public buildings, land, and facilities—on a schedule that extends as far into the future as is reasonable.

B. It may also include planning for:

- Places of worship
- Fire stations
- Hospitals

- Institutions
- Jails
- Libraries
- Parks and recreation areas
- Police stations
- Schools and educational facilities
- Cultural facilities
- Social welfare and medical facilities
- Other public offices or administrative buildings

Some of these topics are addressed in this chapter; others appear in separate sections of the Plan. Regardless of where they are discussed, their evaluation is consistent with Easton's population projections, growth policies, and infrastructure strategies.

Easton's public services and utilities play a critical role in the Town's physical, economic, and social development. Continued growth—especially in key economic sectors—depends on the capacity of public and private utility systems to meet the needs of both current and future residents. A core goal of the Town is to maintain and expand community facilities and services that protect public health and safety while enhancing quality of life. This must be done within the Town's fiscal limits and in coordination with its broader growth management goals. As the region's commercial and employment hub, Easton must also account for service demands generated by surrounding communities—not just those of Town residents.

B. Utilities

Easton's utility systems are primarily managed by Easton Utilities, a municipally owned entity responsible for electricity, water, sewer, natural gas, and broadband services. Established in 1923, Easton remains the only municipality in Maryland to own and operate all its utilities—a structure that continues to offer local control, operational efficiency, and responsive service.

Easton Utilities is governed by a three-member Easton Utilities Commission. Two commissioners must be residents of Easton; the third must reside within the electric service area. All are appointed

by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Town Council. A full-time President/CEO manages day-to-day operations and implements Commission policies.

i. Electricity

Electric service in Easton is provided by Easton Utilities to over 11,000 customers within a 54-square-mile service territory. Electricity is sourced both from onsite generation facilities and from the PJM Interconnection, a regional transmission organization. This allows Easton Utilities to choose the most economical and reliable power source on an hourly basis. The Town's installed generation capacity is 66 megawatts—more than sufficient to meet current demand.

Historically, Easton Utilities was the sole electricity provider. However, recent annexations have brought some areas into service territories of Choptank Electric Cooperative and Delmarva Power & Light. As annexation continues, coordination among these providers will become increasingly important. Service area transfers may be necessary to ensure consistent, efficient service and to avoid overlapping service in single developments. These boundary adjustments require mutual agreement among the utilities involved.

ii. Water and Sewer

Easton Utilities also manages the Town's water and wastewater systems. Water is drawn from deep freshwater aquifers via a network of wells, while sewer service is provided through a system first constructed in 1911.

The Town's original wastewater treatment plant was built in 1938 along the Choptank River. A major upgrade occurred in 1988 with the introduction of an Overland Flow Treatment system—then the fifth largest in the country. In 2007, Easton brought online a new enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) facility, with sufficient capacity to meet projected needs through 2051 (as detailed in the Municipal Growth and Water Resources Elements). Additional information regarding water and wastewater system capacity status, as well as projections of the adequacy of these systems, may be found in Sections 9B and 11G and H of this Plan.

All new water and sewer extensions must align with the Talbot County Water and Sewer Plan and are funded entirely by the developer. Service is only extended to properties within Easton's corporate limits. Decisions to annex land should weigh the long-term financial, infrastructure, and planning implications of extending water and sewer services.

iii. Natural Gas

Easton's Gas Department, acquired in 1923, is the only municipally owned gas utility in Maryland. The original coal-based system was replaced in 1966 with a natural gas supply via Eastern Shore Natural Gas Company. Gas is piped in from the Federalsburg area and distributed to over 4,500 customers through 100 miles of steel and plastic mains. The system delivers approximately 525 million cubic feet of gas annually within an 8.5-square-mile service area.

iv. Internet and Broadband

Easton Velocity, a division of Easton Utilities, provides high-speed broadband, cable, and phone service. Its hybrid fiber-coaxial and expanding fiber-to-the-premises network offers advanced connectivity options, including commercial service packages of up to 10 gigabits per second.

Easton Velocity plays a central role in supporting digital equity, remote work, telehealth, education, and economic growth. As a publicly owned service, it offers competitive pricing, reliable local support, and infrastructure investment aligned with Easton's long-term goals for connectivity and community development.

c. Solid Waste

Solid waste collection in Easton is provided by the Town. Since 2011, waste has been hauled to the Mid-Shore Regional Landfill in Caroline County, replacing the former site on Barkers Landing Road. To offset disposal costs, Easton implemented a residential disposal fee in 1993 to cover landfill tipping charges.

Recycling services include both curbside collection for residents and drop-off containers ("igloos") located at the former landfill site and other convenient locations around Town. These services are essential to managing Easton's waste stream and reducing landfill dependency.

d. Medical and Hospital Facilities

Hospital services in Easton are provided by the University of Maryland Shore Medical Center (UMSMC). As one of the Town's most critical institutions, the hospital has a twofold impact: it provides essential healthcare services and serves as a major employer and economic engine. However, its physical presence within a residential neighborhood has also created longstanding land use challenges.

As the hospital has expanded over time, it has outgrown its original site and now occupies multiple properties within the Idlewild Avenue and Dutchman's Lane corridor. This fragmentation has led to

conflicts with nearby residents, including increased traffic, parking demand, and the encroachment of institutional uses into residential areas. While coordination with the Town has mitigated some impacts, the fundamental land constraints remain unresolved.

In response, the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) identified a new site for a regional medical facility near the Talbot County Community Center, just outside the current Town boundary and adjacent to the Easton Airport. Originally proposed in 2008, the project was delayed but has now received local and State approvals to move forward.

This long-anticipated facility represents a major investment in the health and wellbeing of Easton and the broader Mid-Shore region. Beyond patient care, it promises to attract additional medical offices, labs, rehabilitation centers, and support services—strengthening Easton's role as a regional hub for healthcare.

Key planning considerations remain:

- Development in the areas surrounding the new hospital site

o To include an examination of issues such as the appropriateness of the existing zoning for adjacent areas / connectivity to other parts of town / airport issues / traffic, etc.

- Future of the current hospital site:

o The existing facility and surrounding medical corridor are strong candidates for a future Small Area Plan, which should guide redevelopment and potential land use changes.

- Relocation of support services:

o The shift of medical offices and clinics toward the new hospital may leave Idlewild and Dutchman's Lane with underutilized or outdated facilities.

- Housing for healthcare workers:

o As noted in the Housing chapter, access to affordable housing is a pressing issue for Easton's workforce—including those in the healthcare sector. Enabling more workers to live in Town can ease commuting pressures, support recruitment and retention, and improve emergency staffing capacity.

o As the new regional hospital becomes reality, Easton must plan thoughtfully for the transition—not just for the facility itself, but for the neighborhoods, services, and workforce it affects.

E. 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 2025 version of this document,describes the state of, and outlook for, the Easton schools, including the impact of the The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and can be viewed at the Talbot County Public School's website: https://www.talbotschools.org/documents/about/admin-services/plant-operations/779051

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 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.

F. LIBRARIES

Library service in Talbot County is provided by the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL), the main branch of which is 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 is provided and available for review at: https://www.tcfl.org/about/?content=strategicplan. All told, TCFL is a valuable and multifaceted community resource.

G. Community Centers

Public buildings shape a community's sense of identity and permanence. As noted by Ed McMahon of the Conservation Fund—who spoke in Easton during a past Comprehensive Plan Visioning session—governments should set the tone for quality development through their own civic architecture. In "Better Models for Development in Virginia", McMahon wrote:

"Public buildings and spaces create identity and a sense of place. They give communities something to remember and admire... 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."

Historically, town halls, courthouses, libraries, and schools were among a community's most attractive and prominent buildings. Over time, however, this standard has too often eroded, with newer public facilities resembling warehouses or being sited along strip corridors outside town centers.

Easton has largely resisted this trend. Most of its key public buildings remain downtown, including some notable examples of quality civic architecture. That said, the Town has come close to losing this pattern. In recent decades, Talbot County has considered bids for new administrative office sites outside the town center, and the U.S. Postal Service nearly relocated its facility before ultimately opting to renovate in place.

A major success story is the Easton Utilities Commission's Customer Service Center, completed in 2000. This landmark project is a model of context-sensitive, high-quality design that fits seamlessly into the historic fabric of downtown. It exemplifies how civic buildings can reinforce community character and contribute to the vitality of Easton's core.



The Easton Utilities Commission's Customer Service Center

Looking ahead, Easton may soon need to expand or replace its Town Office at 14 South Harrison Street. While the current building—a former firehouse and police station—is a strong example of adaptive reuse, it may no longer provide sufficient space for staff and operations. Should a new Town Office be required, the Town should follow the precedent set by the Easton Utilities building: locate it in the downtown core and ensure it reflects a high standard of civic design that instills community pride.

H. Public Safety

Many issues related to public safety fall within the realm of a community's overall quality of life that is the subject of the Community Character Chapter. 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 48 sworn officers in a Town of approximately 17,100, Easton falls between the two referenced guidelines. 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.

Considering the above, we believe 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.

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 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 location 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 as financial implications, including possible (if not probable) tax increases.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) services have 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, have a great influence on both the number of accidents that 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 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.

I. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Deliver High-Quality Community Facilities and Services. Continue to provide well-maintained, reliable public facilities and services to support health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, work, or visit Easton.

Objectives:

- Ensure that the cost of facilities and services is shared equitably among the Town, developers, and end users.
- Require developers to upgrade any deficient facilities serving annexed areas to Town standards, based on proportional impact.
- Mandate that all users contribute their fair share toward capital improvements through existing and future funding tools.
- Align the provision of services with the Town's adopted growth management policies.
- Deliver services and facilities equitably across all neighborhoods and businesses.
- Require all development to pay for necessary infrastructure extensions, using the Impact Fee Ordinance and any new mechanisms adopted.

- Promote orderly, staged growth by targeting utility extensions to priority areas and enabling cost recapture from future development.
- Encourage the establishment of a general or specialized satellite college campus in Easton.

Goal 2: Coordinate Town Services with Other Agencies. Improve collaboration with county and regional agencies to ensure consistent and efficient delivery of services.

Objectives:

- Work with Talbot County to update the Master Water and Sewer Plan to reflect service-ready projects within Easton's growth areas.
- Support Easton Utilities in coordinating electric service boundaries with Delmarva Power and Choptank Electric to avoid service overlap.
- Continue using a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to align Town projects with those of partner agencies.

Goal 3: Set a High Standard for Public Buildings. Ensure public facilities reflect the civic identity and long-term investment of the community.

Objectives:

- Construct buildings using high-quality materials and timeless architectural design.
- Design public facilities with adequate space and capacity for future expansion.
- Prioritize siting public buildings in or near downtown Easton, except for small neighborhood-specific facilities.
- Advocate for Talbot County to also locate its public facilities near the Town Center.
- Assess the need for a new or expanded Town Office to meet growing operational needs.

8. PARKS

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

- John Muir

A. Purpose

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.

B. Existing Parks

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. 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.

Easton’s park system has grown from 14 to 30 parks since 1997—more than doubling in number and expanding the footprint of public space from 236 to 458 acres. Table 8 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.

Table 8: Easton Park Inventory

TYPES AND AREAS	SIZE (ACRES)	OWNERSHIP	FACILITIES
Passive Parks			
Train Station Park 46 Pennsylvania Avenue	0.540	Town	Drinking fountain Benches
Memorial Walk 100 W. Dover Street	1.07	Town	Memorial Bricks
Thompson Park 30 W. Dover Street	0.316	Town	Benches Fountain
~~Easton Woodland Park~~	~~197~~	~~Town~~	~~Planned trails and conservation area.~~
Neighborhood Parks			
Hunters Mill Park 8633 Camac Street	1.78	Town	Playground/Benches
Ian “Mac” Morrell Park (Chapel East) 29452 Zinnia Court	1.9	Town	Playground/Pavilion
Matthewstown Run Park 29650 Aldan Street	4.11	Town	Playground Picnic Area and Table Baseball/Softball Field Open Space Little Free Library
Stoney Ridge Park 29288 Corbin Parkway	19.8	Town	Playground/Picnic Area Open Space/Benches
Golton Park 29416 Golton Drive	0.791	Town	Playground

Table 8: Easton Park Inventory			
TYPES AND AREAS	**SIZE (ACRES)**	**OWNERSHIP**	**FACILITIES**
Mulberry Station Park 8764 Mulberry Drive	3.169	Town	Playground Open Space Benches
Spur Lane Park 8688 Spur Lane	0.783	Town	Open Space
Waylands Park 29667 Penny Lane	0.859	Town	Playground Picnic Area Benches
Brettridge Park 29593 Country Lane Way	2.76	Town	Open Space
Vickers Park (Easton Village)	8.839	Town	Canoe/Kayak Launch Bocce Ball Area Pavilion
Community Parks			
Idlewild Park 116 Idlewild Avenue	12.0	Town	Restrooms AED station Softball Fields Track Picnic Area, Barbecue Grills & Tables Tennis Courts Basketball Court Football Field Playground Children's Park Area Ornamental Fountain/Garden Areas Gazebo/Pavilion Little Free Library
Moton Park 501 Port Street	12.2	Town	Restrooms Track Picnic Tables, Barbecue Grills & Pavilion Playground Basketball Court Soccer Field Volleyball Area Benches Little Free Library
Easton Point Park 672 W. Glenwood Avenue 801 Port Street	13.021	Town	Kayak launch Boat Ramp and associated parking Drinking Fountains Benches

Table 8: Easton Park Inventory			
TYPES AND AREAS	**SIZE (ACRES)**	**OWNERSHIP**	**FACILITIES**
John F. Ford Park 100 Plum Street	58.0	Town	Restrooms AED station Playground Track Exercise Stations / Equipment Open Space Drinking Fountains
Easton Woodland Park	197	Town	Planned trails and conservation area.
Rails-To-Trails	2.75 miles (north/south) 0.90 miles (east/west)	Town	Drinking fountains Walking/Bicycling Path Benches Frederick Douglass Mural
Special Areas			
A James Clark North Easton Sports Complex 1078 N. Washington Street	26.2	Town	Restrooms AED stations Concession stands (4) Baseball Fields Playgrounds (4) Football/Soccer/Lacrosse/Field Hockey Fields Field Lights Picnic Area Gazebo/Pavilion Batting Cages Bounce Back Wall Skate Park/Pump Track
Easton Dog Park 109 Brewers Lane	0.507	Town	Restrooms Gated Small & Large Areas for off-leash play Drinking Fountains Benches
Others			
YMCA of the Chesapeake (Main Facility)	10.0	Quasi-Public	Indoor Facilities* (9) Tennis Courts (6) Pickleball Courts Deck Tennis
YMCA of the Chesapeake (Lynn Rich Tennis Center)		Quasi-Public	Indoor Facilities* (4) Indoor Tennis/Pickleball Courts (3) Outdoor Tennis Courts
George P. Murphy Swimming Pool	2.8	County	Outdoor Swimming Pool

Table 8: Easton Park Inventory			
TYPES AND AREAS	**SIZE (ACRES)**	**OWNERSHIP**	**FACILITIES**
VFW	5.0	Quasi-Public	Baseball Field* Open Space Fields
The Elks	13.2	Quasi-Public	Athletic Fields*
Talbot County Community Center	51	County	Indoor Facilities: Ice Rink Curling Rink Basketball Courts Pickleball Courts Volleyball Courts Athletic Fields Playgrounds Concession Area Pavillion
Easton Point Landing	0.50	County	Boat Ramp Pier Fishing/Crabbing
Mount Pleasant	6.46	County	Open Space Fields
Easton Village Trail	1.02 miles (including pedestrian bridge to Easton Point)	Town	Walking Trail

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

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, Town of Easton, Talbot County Parks and Recreation, 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 County Parks and Recreation Director. 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.

c. 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 2026 Plan's time span include the following:

- Build-out Easton Woodland Park, including a multi-modal accessway, parking area, conservation area, trails, and restrooms.

- Continue 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 promote and help ensure 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.

D. Connectivity and 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 developers specializing in that niche.

Given these benefits, as well as the existing skeletal system of green infrastructure, it seems like a "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.

E. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: 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 ensure that between the various entities, all of Easton's recreational needs are satisfied.

- Seek funding to finish the design and buildout 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) a Rail-Trail in 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 #2: 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.

9. ECOLOGY

THE MORE CLEARLY WE CAN FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THE WONDERS AND REALITIES OF THE UNIVERSE ABOUT US, THE LESS TASTE WE SHALL HAVE FOR DESTRUCTION.

- RACHEL CARSON

A. PURPOSE

The Ecology Element integrates water resources, mineral resources, and biodiversity considerations into Easton's Comprehensive Plan. This section fulfills state requirements under HB 1141, which added the Municipal Growth and Water Resources Elements to comprehensive plans, ensuring the Town has adequate water supply, wastewater capacity, and stormwater management to meet current and projected needs.

B. WATER RESOURCES

House Bill 1141 (HB 1141), first implemented with Easton's 2010 Comprehensive Plan, introduced two new required plan elements: the Municipal Growth Element and the Water Resources Element. This chapter addresses the latter, which ensures that Easton can meet projected population needs with adequate water supply, wastewater capacity, and stormwater management—while protecting the capacity of local waterways to assimilate stormwater from both point and non-point sources.

As noted in the Municipal Growth Element, three required elements—Municipal Growth, Water Resources, and Community Facilities and Services—address water, sewer, and stormwater issues, with related considerations also appearing in the Land Use Element. While some overlap is inevitable, the Water Resources Element is more narrowly focused on three core questions:

1. Is there sufficient water supply to meet current and future needs?
2. Is there sufficient wastewater and septic capacity to meet current and future needs?
3. What impacts, if any, will meeting these needs have on water resources?

Although this analysis parallels that in the Municipal Growth Element, the Water Resources Element provides more detailed evaluation specific to water, wastewater, and stormwater systems.

Town Service Policy

A longstanding policy governs Easton's approach: municipal water and wastewater services are not extended beyond Town boundaries. Developers seeking these services must annex into the Town,

and all development within Town limits is required to connect to the municipal system. As a result, private wells and septic systems are rare inside Town boundaries.

Two exceptions exist:

1. Ratcliffe Farm Subdivision – A 15-lot, large-lot waterfront subdivision permitted to use private wells and septic systems.

2. Existing Annexed Properties – Fewer than a dozen homes annexed into Town while served by private wells and septic systems; these may remain as such until a connection to municipal service becomes necessary.

Because service areas align almost exactly with Town boundaries, this Plan does not include a separate water and wastewater service area map. The only current exceptions to the policy of not serving properties beyond Town limits are:

- The North and South Clifton subdivision (off Route 50)
- One property on St. Michael's Road that receives municipal water but not wastewater service.

Water Supply and System

As described in the Community Facilities and Services Chapter, Public water service in Easton is provided by the Easton Utilities Commission (EUC), a public utility organized and existing under the Charter of the Town of Easton. Since 1914, EUC has supplied clean, reliable drinking water to residents, operating under rigorous monitoring and quality control by certified staff.

EUC currently serves over 7,000 customers through 122 miles of water mains and 788 fire hydrants. Water is drawn from five deep wells—three tapping the Magothy Aquifer (1,000 feet) and two tapping the Upper Patapsco Aquifer (1,200 feet) that feed a modern treatment facility on Glebe Road. The system's two elevated storage tanks each hold 1 million gallons, providing fire protection, consistent pressure, and sufficient reserve for future needs.

The Municipal Growth Element projects a system expansion—adding a new production well—around 2043 to meet a maximum daily demand exceeding 4.0 MGD. Given the Town's build-out is expected beyond 2040, only modest upgrades should be needed thereafter, with ample time for planning and funding.

Wastewater Service and Capacity

Wastewater treatment for the Town is provided by the Easton Utilities Commission (EUC) at the municipal wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The plant operates under a Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) discharge permit and is designed to meet Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) standards, significantly reducing nitrogen and phosphorus levels before effluent is discharged to local waterways.

The wastewater system includes a 4.0 MGD Enhanced Nutrient Removal facility completed in 2007. Current use is 2.3663 MGD (59% capacity). At projected 1.75% annual growth, capacity will be reached in 2055, or 2051 (four years sooner) with the planned regional hospital fully operational by 2035 (5% of capacity). Capacity expansion planning will begin once flows exceed 3.20 MGD (anticipated in 2031). Since this is modestly higher growth rate than this Plan anticipates, it should be even longer before these various thresholds are realized.

Current Capacity:

- Design Capacity: 4.0 million gallons per day (MGD)
- Current Average Flow: Approximately 2.4 MGD (59% of permitted capacity)

Future Capacity Planning:

The Municipal Growth Element projects that Easton's build-out will occur beyond 2040. Given current flow levels and the planned improvements to plant efficiency, no major capacity expansions are anticipated in the near term. However, long-term planning includes:

- Evaluating potential upgrades to accommodate higher peak flows.
- Exploring advanced treatment technologies to further reduce nutrient discharges.
- Coordinating with MDE to ensure discharge limits remain protective of downstream water quality.

Septic System Policy:

As noted earlier, Easton maintains a strict policy prohibiting private septic systems within the Town except for a small number of grandfathered properties. This policy ensures wastewater is treated at the municipal WWTP, where nutrient removal can be managed and monitored.

C. Water Source Protection

One required component of the Water Resources Element is to assess current and future water sources and outline strategies to prevent pollution or over-allocation. For Easton, this is challenging because:

- Water sources lie outside Town jurisdiction.
- Aquifers are shared regionally with other high-demand users.

Talbot County's Draft Water Resource Element summarizes the issue:

- Aquifer Dependence and Stress: Most public and private systems draw from confined aquifers (notably the Aquia and Piney Point) used widely across the Eastern Shore. USGS reports water-level declines of tens to hundreds of feet, raising concerns about long-term supply.
- Recharge Limitations: Many aquifer recharge zones lie outside the Eastern Shore, limiting local replenishment.
- Surface–Groundwater Connection: Large withdrawals can reduce base flows in streams and rivers, affecting both water quantity and quality.
- Data Gaps: There is no comprehensive regional analysis of cumulative groundwater demand. Project-level studies fail to capture broader impacts.
- Coastal Plain Study: MDE, MGS, and USGS are working on a Coastal Plain Aquifer Study to better assess supply and sustainability. Until completed, accurate yield estimates remain elusive.

Planning Assumptions

In the absence of definitive aquifer capacity studies, this Plan assumes the MDE-issued groundwater permit for EUC represents the maximum safe yield of the system. This approach ensures that permitted withdrawal limits are treated as the threshold for sustainable water use until better regional data is available.

D. Stormwater Management and Point and Nonpoint Source Loading Status and Remediation

The Town's stormwater management program is designed to meet the requirements of Maryland's Stormwater Management Act of 2007 and to comply with the State's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements. These regulations emphasize Environmental Site Design (ESD) practices, which reduce runoff by mimicking natural hydrology.

Key strategies include:

- Installing bioretention cells, rain gardens, and permeable pavement.
- Preserving and restoring natural drainage features and non-tidal wetlands.
- Requiring new developments to meet stricter post-construction stormwater quality and quantity standards.
- Encouraging retrofits in older developed areas to reduce nutrient and sediment loads.

Recent and proposed projects include a regional sediment pond, inlet filter bags, constructed wetlands, and BMP retrofits. Easton applies Chesapeake Bay Critical Area pollutant reduction standards Town-wide, targeting both new development and redevelopment to reduce nutrient loads. Future development in Easton's growth areas will be required to integrate ESD techniques early in site planning, ensuring stormwater is managed at the source.

Easton's Stormwater Management Ordinance regulates runoff to reduce flooding, erosion, and water quality impacts. New development and most redevelopment must implement stormwater controls per the State Design Manual. Special standards apply in the Tanyard Branch watershed, which drains to impaired waters in the Choptank River system. Easton's Stormwater Management Ordinance was created to protect public health, safety, and welfare by establishing requirements and procedures to manage the negative impacts of increased stormwater runoff. The goal is to:

- Minimize damage to public and private property
- Reduce the environmental effects of development
- Control stream channel erosion
- Reduce local flooding
- Maintain pre-development runoff conditions as closely as possible after development

These measures aim to safeguard the community and environment by managing stormwater runoff effectively.

The Stormwater Management Ordinance is summarized below:

Scope

No land development for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional purposes is allowed without implementing stormwater management measures to control runoff. These measures must align

with the Design Manual and be constructed according to an approved plan for new developments or redevelopment policies.

Exemptions

The following activities are exempt from stormwater management requirements:

- *Agricultural land management activities*
- *Additions or modifications to existing single-family homes (under certain conditions)*
- *Developments disturbing less than 5,000 square feet*
- *Land developments regulated by specific state laws*
- *The Town Engineer may require stormwater controls in cases of cumulative effects from previous exemptions.*

Waivers / Watershed Management Plans

Stormwater management waivers may be granted under certain conditions:

- *For projects in areas with developed watershed management plans*
- *For projects with direct discharges to tidal waters that do not increase stormwater discharge by over 10% for 2-year and 10-year storms*
- *If stormwater will be handled by an existing regional facility designed for such loads*

Qualitative control waivers apply to in-fill development or redevelopment where stormwater management is not feasible, or under specific site conditions.

Redevelopment

Redevelopment projects are exempt from certain volume requirements if they do not increase stormwater discharge. However, they must reduce site impervious areas by at least 20%, or implement stormwater practices to manage that area. If reducing impervious areas is not possible, off-site BMPs or other alternatives may be considered.

Variance

A variance from stormwater management requirements may be granted by the Town Engineer in cases of exceptional circumstances, where strict adherence would result in unnecessary hardship.

The full ordinance can be accessed here:

https://eastonmd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/86/Stormwater-Management-Ordinance-PDF

The State's updated Stormwater Management Design Manual will require Easton to amend its Stormwater Management Ordinance, with significant changes likely to focus on the waiver provisions.

Stormwater in Easton contributes both point and non-point source loads to local waterways. The Town's system collects, filters, and conveys runoff to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) on the Choptank River. Runoff that bypasses the system flows into the Choptank or Miles River watersheds—Easton lies within three 8-digit watersheds: Miles, Upper Choptank, and Lower Choptank. All are nutrient-impaired per the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), with the Lower Choptank having an established Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limit.

Although no TMDL implementation plan currently applies directly to Easton, the Town enforces the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area's 10% pollutant reduction standard townwide. This ensures that new development improves water quality relative to pre-existing conditions, though older developed areas remain problem zones. Much of the older development drains into Tanyard Branch, a tributary of the Tred Avon River, via storm drains installed around 1905.

Tanyard Branch Focus Area

A large portion of Easton drains into Tanyard Branch, making it a priority for enhanced stormwater management:

- Development in the basin must limit post-development runoff rates to pre-development rates for both 2-year and 10-year storm events.
- Alternatively, developers may fund or construct equivalent watershed improvements.
- Waivers are granted only if impacts are negligible, as determined by the Town Engineer.

The Town, in partnership with Talbot County, is implementing several grant-funded projects along Tanyard Branch, including:

- A regional sediment pond and inlet filter bags to capture litter.
- A constructed wetland at Easton Utilities' administration site.
- A replacement conveyance system with sediment removal devices and subsurface BMPs, aligned with the Rails-to-Trails network.

Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Capacity

Talbot County's Water Resources Element projects that Easton's WWTP has sufficient nitrogen and phosphorus discharge capacity to support growth through 2030 and beyond. Projections (assuming 1% annual growth) indicate available capacity in 2030 of:

- **Nitrogen (TN)**: 21,314 lbs/year
- **Phosphorus (TP)**: 913 lbs/year

Fertilizer and Nutrient Sources

While agriculture within Town limits is minimal, farmland in the Future Growth Area is a potential nutrient source. Upon annexation and development, nutrient loads from farming are expected to decrease. However, lawn fertilizers in developed areas—both existing neighborhoods and future subdivisions—remain a concern. Maryland now requires retail sale of only non-phosphorus lawn fertilizers, which should help mitigate impacts.

Nutrient Loading Scenarios

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Nutrient Loading Spreadsheet was used to model three future growth scenarios:

Scenario	Growth Rate & Horizon	Development Pattern	Notes
Build-Out / 3% Growth	30 years	High greenfield conversion	Represents maximum foreseeable growth
Scenario 2	1% growth / 30 years	75% infill, 25% greenfield	Planning Commission's preferred pattern
Scenario 3	1% growth / 30 years	50% infill, 50% greenfield	More greenfield development than Scenario 2

Results show that higher infill development reduces nutrient loading, while higher greenfield shares increase agricultural conversion impacts.

Stormwater runoff is a major nonpoint source of nutrient and sediment pollution. In Easton, impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots, and rooftops prevent water from soaking into the ground, increasing runoff volume and pollutant transport to local streams and rivers.

Nutrient Loading Analysis

Nutrient loading analysis evaluates the impact of projected land use changes on nitrogen and phosphorus levels in Easton's waterways. Using land use, septic, and best management practice

(BMP) scenarios, the Town assessed potential nutrient contributions from both nonpoint sources (NPS), such as stormwater runoff and agriculture, and point sources (PS), such as wastewater treatment facilities.

The table below summarizes the modeled nitrogen and phosphorus loads, as well as impervious cover, for each scenario. The baseline (2007 LU, 2007 BMPs) reflects existing conditions at the start of the study period, while the remaining scenarios represent alternative build-out and management strategies.

Scenario	Total Nitrogen Load (lbs/yr)	Total Phosphorus Load (lbs/yr)	Impervious Cover (acres)
2007 LU, 2007 BMPs	102010	9353	0
2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs	102010	9353	1865
Scenario 1 (3% Growth)	109158	10015	3497
Scenario 2 (1% Growth: 75% Infill, 25% Greenfield)	97205	9531	2449
Scenario 3 (1% Growth: 50% Infill, 50% Greenfield)	96852	9521	2485

Key Findings

- **Nitrogen Loads:**

o Scenario 1, with full build-out and targeted BMPs, results in the highest total nitrogen load, exceeding baseline levels. Scenarios 2 and 3, which assume more balanced growth and mitigation, show slightly lower total nitrogen loads.

- **Phosphorus Loads**:

o Variations between scenarios are relatively small, with only modest reductions achieved through BMPs.

- **Impervious Cover:**

o Scenarios with higher-density development produce more impervious cover, influencing stormwater runoff volumes and pollutant transport.

The results emphasize that growth patterns and BMP implementation both directly affect nutrient loads. Compact development combined with effective stormwater management and agricultural BMPs can help limit nutrient increases.

E. Critical Areas

The Town of Easton does not have a significant amount of waterfront within our corporate limits. Furthermore, in recognition of the environmental benefits as well as to comply with regulations, the Town now prohibits the establishment of private lots within the Critical Area Buffer. Such areas must be a separate lot maintained in Town ownership or controlled by a conservation-minded not-for-profit organization.

The State of Maryland and local governments restrict development within the Critical Area, primarily through enhanced stormwater management and nutrient reduction requirements. Development in the Critical Area is not strictly prohibited, but is allowed on a limited basis depending on the development intensity of the site. The vast majority of Critical Area lands are classified as Resource Conservation Areas and are permitted to develop at a residential density of 1 dwelling unit per 20 acres. More intense development is possible in Limited Development Areas or Intensely Developed areas. Additionally, Critical Area regulations provide a mechanism for properties to be reclassified, either from RCA to LDA or IDA or from LDA to IDA, via a process known as Growth Allocation.

When the Critical Area law was enacted, each affected jurisdiction received an amount (or "pot") of Growth Allocation available to them based on the amount of shoreline within the jurisdiction. Since Easton had an even smaller amount of waterfrontage at that time, we received a relatively modest amount of Growth Allocation and it has essentially been used, largely due to having to use much of it to accommodate the Easton Club Development after originally been told that its development was "grandfathered" and thus not cost us acreage from our available growth allocation.

As a result, today Easton must rely on Talbot County granting Growth Allocation to Easton from its overall pot in order to approve a project that is essentially at a density of greater than 1 unit per 20 acres (or is a non-residential or mixed-use project). This presents something of a conundrum whereby on the one hand, Easton has utilized all of its growth allocation and must depend on the largesse of Talbot County in order for development projects to advance. On the other hand, Talbot County has an abundance of Growth Allocation and from a sustainability and environmental perspective, the application of growth allocation ought to occur within municipalities, on state-of-the-art wastewater treatment systems and where the Buffer is protected to a larger degree than regulations require by not being permitted on private property.

F. Mineral Resources

Eastern portions of Easton and future growth areas overlay sand and gravel deposits. Extraction is not appropriate in developed areas but may be considered in undeveloped growth areas as an initial

site preparation step. Continuous operations are discouraged. Developers must maintain adequate topsoil on building lots to support landscaping and avoid post-construction soil degradation.

This element serves three purposes:

- Identify undeveloped land that should remain in reserve for potential mineral extraction.
- Recommend appropriate uses for such land after extraction.
- Establish policies and regulations that balance mineral extraction with other land uses and prevent its preemption where feasible.

Historically, Easton's Comprehensive Plans have given little attention to mineral resources. The 1989 Plan noted that surface mining does not occur in Town and claimed no potential resources exist—a statement now known to be only partially true.

Mapping in the 2005 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan (Map 8-1) identifies sand and gravel–bearing units across much of eastern Talbot County. The western edge of this deposit zone runs through Easton, meaning roughly one-third to one-half of the Town—and all eastern future growth areas—lie over potential sand and gravel reserves.

While extraction will not be allowed in already developed areas, it may be appropriate in undeveloped growth areas within or adjacent to Town. Where feasible, sand and gravel should be removed early in the development process, prior to construction, to make efficient use of resources. However, ongoing extraction operations are incompatible with the Town's land use goals and will not be permitted.

A related concern is the stripping and sale of topsoil prior to development. Without replacement, new property owners inherit compacted, poor-quality soil unsuitable for lawns, gardens, or landscaping. To prevent this, developers must finish lots with sufficient topsoil depth to support healthy vegetation. If replacement proves too costly, the intent is to discourage its removal in the first place.

G. Biodiversity

Easton is located on the Delmarva Peninsula, an expansive coastal plain region situated between two large estuaries and the Atlantic Ocean. Despite its proximity to several large metropolitan areas, this unique geography and a rich tradition of land preservation have made Delmarva's mix of upland and wetland ecosystems a critical stronghold for the Mid-Atlantic's native and migratory species. Though

much of the work to be done in conserving the region's biodiversity lies in protecting and restoring habitats outside of developed areas around regional wildlife hubs and corridors, municipalities also have a role to play in promoting beneficial species and mitigating human impacts to wildlife that do not recognize political boundaries.

Vegetation is a crucial component of habitat viability, with native plants providing both shelter and forage for species in town. Unfortunately, Easton's native species have been underserved by exotic ornamental landscaping typically provided with suburban development, such as the invasive Bradford pear. Modern standards for landscaping have effectively changed this trend with new developments, though ongoing efforts will be needed to replace dying and nuisance street trees with beneficial native varieties.

Quality habitat should be considered not only on a site-by-site basis, but as a holistic network of green infrastructure to allow safe passage of sensitive species throughout the town. Forest conservation regulations protect substantial forest tracts needed by Delmarva Fox Squirrel and Forest Interior Dwelling Species of birds. In conjunction with vegetative buffers along water bodies, they provide the basis for municipal-scale hubs and corridors. By thoughtfully designing our open spaces, buffer yard landscaping, and trail corridors to minimize gaps between habitats similar to pedestrian crossings, Easton can build a robust network of wildlife mobility.

Because wildlife are not confined to the natural areas of the town, though, the built environment should similarly consider its impacts. Both native and migratory birds are particularly sensitive to two mainstays of municipal development: glass and light. Light pollution disorients birds, and their inability to see standard glass windows leads to deadly flight collisions. Frequent testimony from citizens at hearings for site plan and architecture review echo this concern. To this end, we recognize the need for updated architectural and lighting standards to protect birds. Notably, glass should be treated with etchings or glazings that are safely visible mid-flight, and outdoor lighting should be shielded, downward-facing, and low-intensity.

The built environment should also be limited and designed with respect to identified populations of sensitive species in the area. Easton is home to colonies of roof-nesting Least Terns, with zones around identified locations such as Easton High School, the US Post Office Sorting Center, and Giant supermarket subject to development and maintenance restrictions in accordance with state guidelines. Further, two historic waterfowl concentration areas can be found at Papermill Pond and a portion of Peachblossom Creek; developments in proximity to these areas should provide substantial buffers for both resident and migratory species.

H. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Protect and Sustain Easton's Water Resources.

Objectives:

- Maintain a reliable, high-quality public water supply to meet current and future needs.
- Coordinate with Easton Utilities, MDE, and regional partners to safeguard aquifers from contamination and over-allocation.
- Limit water and wastewater service to properties within Town boundaries, requiring annexation for new connections.
- Ensure all development connects to the municipal system; phase out private wells and septic systems as feasible.

Goal #2: Ensure Adequate Wastewater Treatment Capacity.

Objectives:

- Maintain treatment plant performance to meet nutrient discharge limits and accommodate projected growth.
- Implement infrastructure upgrades in line with long-term capacity needs identified in the Water Resources and Municipal Growth Elements.
- Support measures that reduce nutrient loads from septic systems within current and future growth areas.

Goal #3: Manage Stormwater to Protect Water Quality.

Objectives:

- Enforce updated stormwater management standards consistent with the State's Design Manual.
- Apply enhanced stormwater requirements in sensitive basins, especially Tanyard Branch.
- Reduce point and nonpoint source pollutant loads through BMPs, retrofits, and grant-funded improvements.
- Promote natural filtration and green infrastructure in public projects and private development.

Goal #4: Protect and Wisely Use Mineral Resources.

Objectives:

- Identify and safeguard potential sand and gravel deposits in future growth areas for possible extraction prior to development.
- Prohibit ongoing extraction operations in developed areas or where incompatible with surrounding uses.
- Require developers to maintain or restore topsoil depth to support healthy landscaping and prevent long-term soil degradation.

Goal #5: Reduce Nutrient Loading to Local Watersheds.

Objectives:

- Implement land use strategies that reduce nitrogen and phosphorus runoff from development and agriculture.
- Prioritize infill and redevelopment to minimize conversion of farmland and forest.
- Support public education on responsible fertilizer use and promote non-phosphorus lawn products.
- Coordinate with County and State agencies to track and meet TMDL and Chesapeake Bay pollutant reduction goals.

Goal #6: Protect and enhance Easton's biodiversity by conserving habitats, promoting native species, and reducing human impacts on wildlife.

Objectives:

- Preserve and restore key habitats, especially forest tracts, wetlands, and wildlife corridors.
- Prioritize native vegetation in landscaping and replace invasive or nuisance species with beneficial varieties.
- Design open spaces, buffers, and trails to create continuous networks for wildlife movement.
- Implement bird-safe building and lighting standards to reduce collisions and light pollution.

- Limit and carefully design development near sensitive species habitats, including Least Tern colonies and historic waterfowl areas, with appropriate buffers and restrictions.
- Develop an Urban Forestry Plan to expand the Town's tree canopy.

10 SUSTAINABILITY

"Sustainability is a journey, not a destination. We must constantly strive to do better, to be better stewards of the earth and all its inhabitants"

— Unknown

a. Purpose

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 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	# 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	23	

availability		
Food stores that are walkable for in-town residents	40	
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.” 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 lots and big rooftops of commercial and residential buildings	11	Item written in by citizen
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.

B. 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)

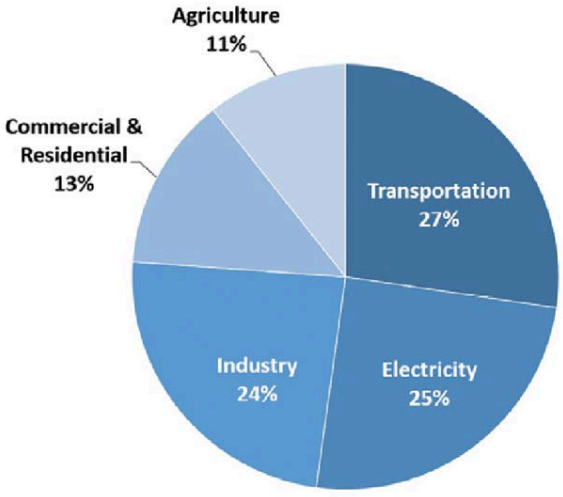
The same PAS Report goes on to state that an effective response to the global challenge that is climate change will require fundamental and systemic changes to the built environment and "inevitably must be addressed policy by policy and project by project in our local communities." Ultimately, local 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: 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.

c. 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.

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:

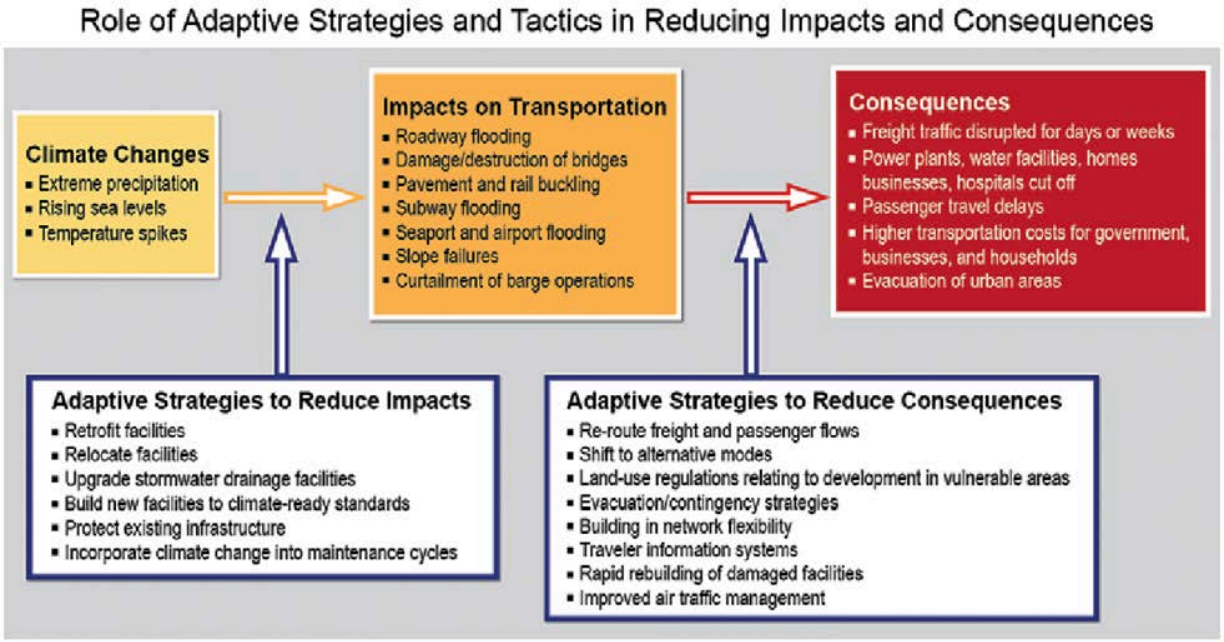
Perhaps the biggest effort to offset greenhouse gas emissions was the installation of the 2MW solar field at Easton's Sustainability Campus located adjacent to the wastewater treatment facility. The array generates more than enough electricity to power the entire treatment plant. On average, 20% of the 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_2e 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.

D. 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 an 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):



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 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).

E. Sustainable Built Environment

The aspect of sustainability that is most directly relevant to a Comprehensive Plan, and which is addressed 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. 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. Improving 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 discusses in detail 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.

F. 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.



G. Financial Sustainability

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.

Value-per-acre modeling

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.

Highlights from the Urban3 study for Talbot County include:

- Mixed use projects provide the highest property value per acre
- Higher density development is significantly more productive than less dense land uses
- 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
- Using 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
- 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.



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

Urban3 modeling has helped the Town evaluate where existing development patterns provide strong return on public investment. Compact, walkable neighborhoods generate more tax revenue per acre and require less infrastructure to support than low-density fringe development. This analysis supports land use decisions that promote long-term sustainability.

As Easton grows, the town can shape its development and financial outcomes. Urban3 created three growth projection scenarios for Poplar Hill, Four Seasons, and Gannon Range, using existing land use values and building types (see Figure 14) applied to site plans from Easton (Figure 15).



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

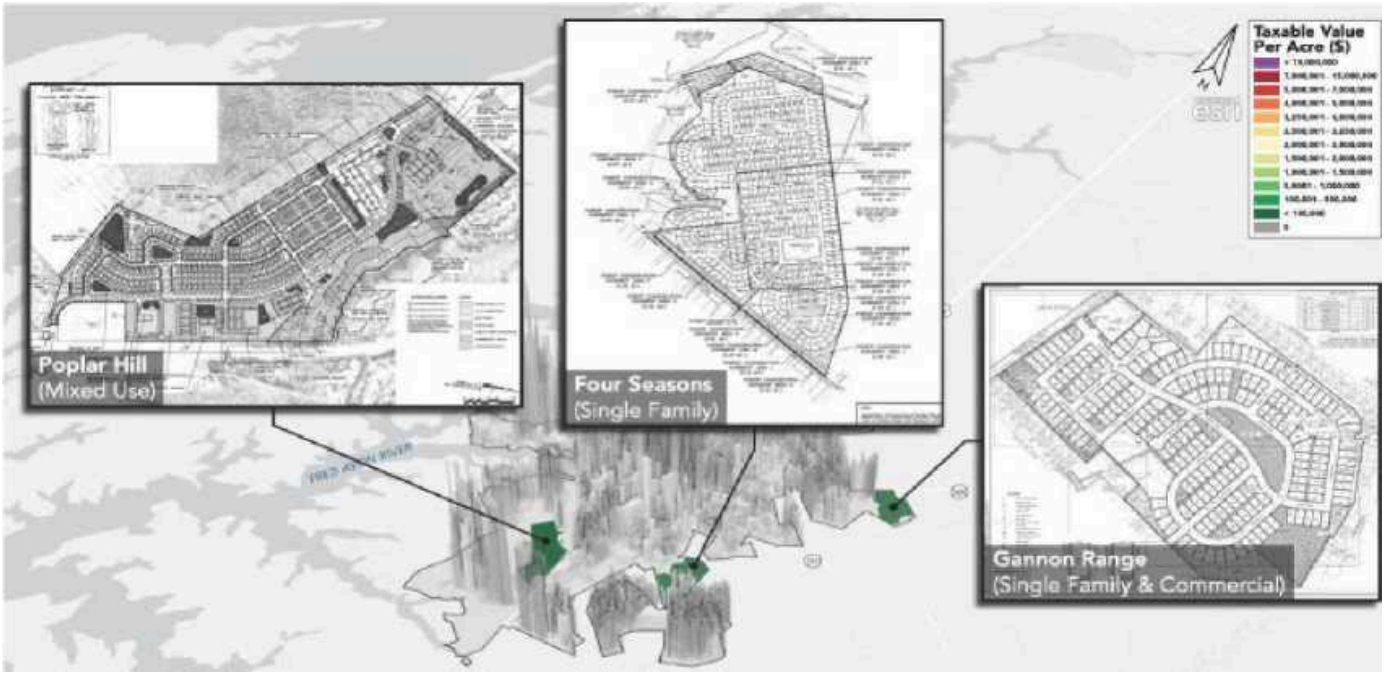


Figure 15. Example site plans used for projections scenarios for the Town of Easton Source: *Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps*

Figure 16 analyzes the Four Seasons site for potential single family residential development, comparing attached and detached building types. If developed as single family attached units like those on Jasper Lane, the site's taxable value could increase by 743 times. In contrast, traditional single family detached homes would yield a smaller increase. Building type and development pattern should be considered to maximize property tax revenue for Easton.

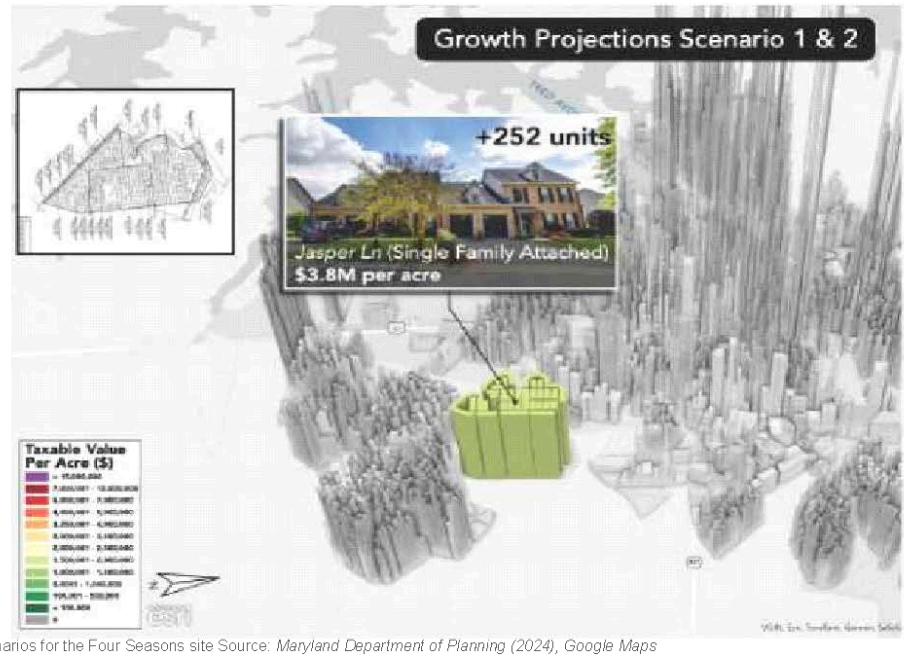


Figure 16. Two growth projections scenarios for the Four Seasons site Source: *Maryland Department of Planning (2024), Google Maps*

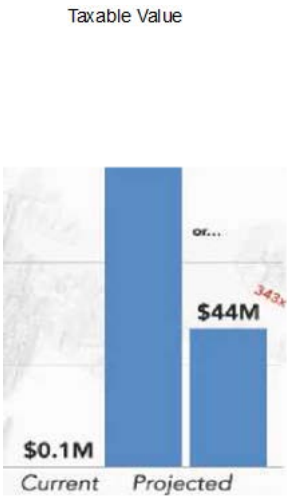


Figure 17 presents a summary of scenario projections for each site, including development type and potential property tax revenue for Easton. Although Poplar Hill (now owned by Talbot County) may not develop as planned, its scenario provides a model for future mixed-use developments in Easton.



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

Key Takeaways

- How can Value Per Acre (VPA) be increased?

o Understand Current Revenue and Spending Patterns

▪ Urban3's analysis examines how land use is related to economic cash flow in the Town of Easton and its operational capacity. Identifying the effects of various land uses on property tax revenue provides information for development decisions aimed at increasing revenue productivity that supports public services such as safety and economic initiatives.

o Repeat What Works

▪ Reviewing the Value Per Acre (VPA) model enables communities to link fiscally productive areas with certain land use types. Using examples from moderately to highly productive developments, such as mixed-use commercial properties or missing middle housing, may serve as reference points for future community planning, discussions, procedures, and regulations.

o Increase Density Incrementally

▪ Permitting higher density offers a straightforward method to increase VPA, as raising the value relative to acreage results in a higher value per acre. Adding one or two stories to structures can significantly affect productivity. Typically, density modifications are implemented through changes in land development regulations, which may prompt differing opinions.

- As Easton develops further, the town will have the opportunity to decide on the direction of growth and its financial outcomes. Utilizing Urban3's analysis, Easton can identify and apply productive land use patterns and building types.

- How can VPA be increased and costs reduced?

o Understand the Cost to Maintain Infrastructure Systems

- Urban3's observations indicate that funding for infrastructure systems (including roads, sewer, water, and stormwater) often does not cover their full lifecycle expenses.

- Some users might not be bearing the entire cost required for their services, resulting in cross-subsidization.

- Adjusting fees geographically may help ensure coverage of operation and maintenance costs or promote infill development over expansion into new areas.

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy maintains a resource page on the work of Urban 3 on the Eastern Shore. For additional information on the Urban3 Analysis, please see ESLC's website at: https://www.eslc.org/urban3/

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.

H. Social Sustainability

Another aspect of sustainability 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.

The Town of Easton is committed to ensuring equitable access to transportation facilities and services for all residents, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, income, or ability. This commitment is formalized through the Title VI Annual Update Accomplishment Report, prepared by the Department of Public Works and submitted to the Mayor each year. The report outlines actions taken to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100.259).

The Town's Title VI policy affirms that no person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The report includes a policy statement reaffirming the Town's dedication to non-discrimination and its responsibility to uphold these standards across all departments, programs, and projects.

Environmental justice principles are embedded into the Town's multimodal transportation planning. In particular:

- The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan weighted social equity factors—including proximity to low-income housing, access to social services, and connectivity to transit—when evaluating and prioritizing projects.
- Transit planning emphasizes improved service for historically underserved and transportation-disadvantaged populations.

Through these practices, Easton ensures that investments in infrastructure contribute to more equitable mobility, safety, and access for all residents.

I. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Address Climate Change through Mitigation and Adaptation.

Objectives:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through compact, walkable, mixed-use development.
- Expand renewable energy production and EV charging infrastructure.
- Improve building energy efficiency and resilient design.
- Protect and restore natural systems that act as carbon sinks.
- Prevent development in vulnerable areas such as floodplains and wetlands.
- Integrate green infrastructure to manage stormwater and heat impacts.
- Retrofit buildings to withstand extreme weather and reduce energy demand.

Goal #2: Promote a Sustainable Built Environment.

Objectives:

- Focus growth in infill and redevelopment areas before greenfields.
- Require mixed-use, higher-density neighborhoods with diverse housing types.
- Ensure new growth is connected to existing development and supports active transportation.
- Maximize street and trail connectivity in all new projects.
- Utilize the Town's Forest Conservation Account and other sources to add landscaping along heavily traveled corridors.

Goal #3: Support Food Security.

Objectives:

- Preserve farmland and forests within the Growth Boundary.
- Allow interim agricultural use on undeveloped annexed land.
- Encourage private and community gardens, especially in denser neighborhoods.

Goal #4: Ensure Financial Sustainability of Development.

Objectives:

- Prioritize projects with a positive net fiscal impact.
- Promote land uses with high value per acre (VPA).
- Encourage mixed-use and higher-density development to reduce service costs.
- Adjust fees to reflect the true cost of infrastructure and services.

Goal #5: Advance Social Sustainability and Equity.

Objectives:

- Ensure equitable access to housing, transportation, and public services.
- Apply Title VI and environmental justice principles to all Town programs.
- Prioritize infrastructure investments in underserved neighborhoods.
- Include equity considerations in project evaluation and planning.

11 MUNICIPAL GROWTH

"If you don't know where you are going, you might end up someplace else."

— Casey Stengel

A. Purpose

The Municipal Growth Element (MGE) outlines how the Town of Easton will manage future physical expansion in a coordinated, efficient, and sustainable manner. It identifies areas for potential annexation and development, explains rationale and reasoning behind future growth, and assesses whether the Town has the necessary infrastructure and services to support that growth.

This chapter fulfills the requirements of Maryland's House Bill 1141 (2006), which amended the Land Use Article to require a comprehensive growth strategy as part of every municipal plan. It integrates Easton's growth management approach with the broader land use policies set forth in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Maryland Land Use Article requires this element to address the following:

1. Areas anticipated for future growth outside the current municipal limits;

2. Historic growth patterns of the Town;

3. Development capacity within current Town boundaries, including infill and redevelopment potential;

4. Additional land needed to accommodate projected demand at densities aligned with long-term policy;

5. Infrastructure and services required to support growth in new areas, including:

a. Public schools (meeting State-rated capacity standards);

b. Libraries;

c. Public safety and emergency medical services;

d. Water and sewer systems;

e. Stormwater management (to protect water quality);

f. Recreational facilities;

6. Anticipated financing strategies for public services and infrastructure;

7. Rural buffers and transition zones;

8. Impacts on services and infrastructure that the Town may need to provide for growth just outside its boundaries;

9. Measures to protect sensitive environmental areas affected by new development;

10. Population growth projections; and

11. A vision for Easton's future character and how long-term growth policy supports it.

This ~~2025~~2026 update builds on the Municipal Growth Element introduced in 2010, incorporating new data, insights from recent growth patterns, and the updated priorities of this Plan.

B. Growth Rate Discussion

The pace of Easton's growth has been a recurring point of debate in the last three Comprehensive Plan updates. Historically, the Town relied on the free market to determine growth. That is, there was no concerted effort to facilitate a given growth rate and nothing other than traditional Zoning to manage growth. However, in the 2010 Plan, the Planning Commission concluded that continued growth at the historic rate of around 3% annually threatened the Town's traditional character and made it harder to address key challenges such as traffic congestion and environmental impacts. That Plan established a preferred target of 1% annual growth, supported by an Annexation Policy designed to limit rapid expansion through controlled Priority Growth Areas.¶

~~This 2026 Plan renews this approach. It is, however, important to clarify what is intended by the establishment of a 1% annual growth rate as our target. This Plan is not concerned with limiting growth solely for the sake of doing so. Rather, we recognize that there is an amount or pace of growth at which the negative characteristics of development become difficult to impossible to keep up with. 1% may not necessarily represent that threshold, but it can serve as a checkpoint such that if/when we exceed such growth, we can and should assess how well we are (or are not) managing those negative characteristics, such as traffic, environmental impacts, infrastructure and service capacities and the like. This calls for active monitoring to ensure growth occurs at a pace that Town~~

infrastructure and services can accommodate without undue strain, and may include recommendations for pursuing what, if any, measures are necessary to slow future growth.¶

¶

Historic Growth Patterns¶

From its incorporation in 1710 through 1917, Easton remained a small, compact town. By 1965, it had grown primarily in a north–south direction but was still bounded by US Route 50 and the future MD Route 322 (Easton Parkway). Expansion beyond these limits began in 1966 and accelerated in the 1970s after full annexation of the Parkway/Route 50 corridor.¶

Maps illustrate this outward spread, but they don't show an equally important change—the shift in development form. Like much of the country, Easton moved away from walkable, compact, traditional patterns toward a more suburban, auto-oriented layout. Reversing this trend has been a consistent focus of recent Comprehensive Plans and remains a central objective of this Plan, as discussed further in the Place Element. A map showing Easton's corporate limits at various points in time was shown in 3.1,XX, Existing Land Use Patterns.¶

While annexations expanded the Town's footprint (see Appendix 3 for a list of annexations), the form of development shifted from walkable, compact patterns to more suburban, auto-oriented layouts. Recent Comprehensive Plans have sought to reverse this trend, emphasizing a return to traditional, connected urban forms. ¶

Population Projections¶

Population growth trends are detailed in the Plan Background Chapter. With the Growth Boundary in place, the Town's ultimate population is largely predictable, assuming current patterns of density, residential/non-residential balance, and household size. Based on the adopted Growth Boundary and current assumptions about density, land use mix, and household size (2.19 persons per household, 2020 Census), Easton's ultimate buildout capacity is estimated at 17,594 dwelling units, or 38,531 residents.¶

The timing of reaching that capacity depends on growth rates:¶

- At 3% annually, (the figure used in the 2004 Plan) buildout would occur in about 27 years (2052).¶
- At 1% annually, (the figure identified as a preferred target in the 2010 Plan) buildout would occur in approximately 80 years (2105)¶

- At a 1.75% rate, buildout would take closer to 45 years (2070).¶

The likely population growth rate depends on a host of factors. However, it can be useful to look back at historic growth in order to look forward to project such growth. The following table and chart were prepared with the assistance of Google Sheets , using growth in the Town from 1960 through 2020 to project the future growth of the Town through 2050, using linear regression analysis provided via the FORECAST function in Sheets. Such growth would correspond to a 1.12% annual growth rate over the 30 year period from 2020-2050, and a 1.5% average annual growth rate for the 90 year period (1960-2050). The Table below presents the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) over various time periods and illuminates the concern over the rate of growth. Taken together, it may also suggest that the relatively slower pace of growth in recent years is due to accelerate if the long-term average growth rate is to "revert to the mean." This acceleration, especially if it is rapid or significant, is what we intend to avoid and which calls for stronger growth management.

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The Forecast function predicts a future value based on existing values using linear regression to project future data points along a line that best fits the historical data. It can be used to forecast sales, plan a budget, or predict future trends or short-term increases or decreases. Linear forecasting is suitable for stable environments where predictable, incremental changes occur, whereas exponential forecasting is better for rapidly expanding or contracting trends driven by compounding factors. Linear regression should be used cautiously when used for population projections because population growth is often more complex. Still, when limited to a short-term projection and with so many unknown variables (e.g., which direction and by how much interest rates will change, the impact of Lakeside at Trappe on the Easton housing market, the impact of the last of the Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age, etc.), looking to the past to make predictions about future growth seems reasonable. ¶

The Sheets GROWTH function is similar to FORECAST with the notable difference that it projects exponential growth. It's used for forecasting data that follows an accelerating pattern, such as sales, population, or investment growth, by calculating y-values for a specified exponential curve. Using this function to project Easton's future growth, yields the following:¶

¶

Beginning Year	Population	Ending Year	Population	CAGR
1960	6,337	2020	17,101	1.67%
1990	9,372	2020	17,101	2.02%
2000	11,708	2010	15,945	3.14%
2010	15,945	2020	17,101	0.70%
2010	15,945	2026 (est.)	18,047	0.78%
2020	17,101	2026 (est.)	18,047	0.90%
Current 3 yr. ave. (1/1/23-1/1/26)	17,674	2026	18,047	0.70%

¶

¶

~~This model predicts a 1.6% average annual growth rate for the future 30 year period (vs. 1.12% via the linear model).¶~~

~~This Plan proposes a revision to the way it uses growth rates. After a decade where the average annual growth rate has dropped to 0.7%, the concept of aiming for a "targeted" or "preferred" growth rate for the Planning period has been dropped. Instead, the directive relative to our Growth Rate is not so much an attempt to limit (or increase) any particular rate, but rather to consistently monitor the rate/amount of growth we are experiencing so that whatever growth that does occur, is at a rate that does not overly tax the Town's infrastructure and services. We believe that, for this Planning period at least, this can best be addressed by adhering to an Annexation Policy that does not allow for an exceedingly high rate of growth, which would be one characterized as significantly at variance with the 1.12% projected growth for several years. This can be monitored through observation of the number of dwelling units approved annually. This monitoring should be a key characteristic of the Planning Commission's Annual Reporting responsibilities. Beyond reporting though, effective growth management requires an assessment of the data. A sustained observed significant deviation from the targeted rate of growth of 1% annually may necessitate actions to either encourage (if a prolonged period of slow or negative growth is observed) or limit (if expected growth is observed to have been exceeded) future growth from that point in time. This becomes especially critical if observations suggest that Easton's population is, in fact, behaving more like the exponential (GROWTH) model as opposed to the linear (FORECAST) model~~

Historic growth rates are important not just for looking back, but also for looking ahead, as they provide the baseline for the preparation of growth projections, a foundational element of long-range planning. As illustrated in the table above though, there are often multiple options available in terms of the timeframe to examine. However, when preparing population projections, it is generally considered a best practice to look back as many years as you wish to project forward. There is no hard and fast rule as to how far a community projects its growth, but it is fairly common practice to do so for a 20–30 year horizon.. That suggests looking back to the 1990 Census population.

As shown above, the Compounded Average Growth Rate (CAGR) for the time period 1990-2020 is 2.02%. Applying that to future years based on Easton's 2020 Census population produces population projections for the next 3 Census years as follows:

2030 - 20,887
2040 - 25,511
2050 - 31,159

This can be thought of as the "business as usual' scenario. That is, if all things stayed the same and the Town took no action to influence the rate of growth (in either direction), these are the approximate populations that would be expected at the given years. In consideration of these projections, the Town has concluded that we are not satisfied with the business as usual scenario. It results in Easton approaching build-out much more quickly than we would prefer and the infrastructure can potentially support. As a result, this Plan adopts the 1% CAGR first identified in the 2010 Plan as our target. If successful in growing consistent with this 1% target, the population projections for future years would then be:

2030 -18,890
2040 - 20,866
2050 - 23,050

This corresponds to a rate of growth that the Town considers more manageable and thus more appropriate for our future. The difference between the two sets of projections suggests the need for concrete growth management measures if/when the three year average CAGR is trending closer to the projections based on historical growth than those reflecting the preferred target. For a number of reasons, the Town believes that we are already at such a point at the adoption of this Plan,

including the number of residential projects in the development pipeline. While there are no guarantees as to when, or even if, the units in the pipeline will actually be built, interviews of developers of these projects suggest the buildout of such projects could outpace the targeted growth rate. Also, while growth so far this decade is below the target, growth in 2025 was estimated to be just under that target (at 0.9%) and growth in 2026 is on track to be approximately 1.67% based on the number of new units permitted through the first half of the year.

Given all the preceding, the Town has determined that we will initiate growth management measures immediately upon the adoption of this Plan. Such measures may include:

- Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulation Reform to include provisions that give the Planning Commission greater latitude to defer or deny otherwise "by-right" applications based on conformance with this Plan and other rules and regulations of the Town and the ability to require impact assessments for projects that exceed objective thresholds to ensure that public infrastructure and services are adequate to support the demands of new developments.
- The creation of a "Developer's Checklist" for potential annexation applications. The role of residential annexations is described elsewhere in this Plan as extremely limited. The purpose of this checklist is to provide prospective applicants with a sense of the types of amenities, features, etc., that the Town will be looking for if such a request is even to be considered during the next ten years.
- Continued work on Planning for Easton's Complete Streets and future Transportation systems and implementation of the resulting data to create transportation standards that assist the Planning Commission's review of subdivisions and site plans to objectively evaluate a development's impact on the transportation network.
- Requiring staff reports for projects coming before the Planning Commission to contain up to date numbers for the current annual growth rate and the 3-year growth rate.
- Perform a comprehensive rezoning of the Town to identify and potentially rezone larger residential parcels to a nonresidential zoning classification
- Consider other zoning text amendments that would require residential projects of a certain size to be processed as a Planned Unit Development or similar process.
- Research and consider annual building permit caps with a system to prioritize desired types of development and timing to ensure adequate public infrastructure is in place to support the development.

- Research and consider whether an adequate public facilities ordinance is appropriate for Easton.
- Instituting semi-annual reports of the Planning Commission to the Town Council related to various metrics of growth.

These growth management measures come at a time when the State of Maryland is acting to encourage more housing production across the State in an effort to address housing affordability concerns. Part of this effort includes the calculation by the MD Department of Housing and Community Development of annual housing production targets for each local jurisdiction in the State. DHCD has identified a target of 56 units annually for the years of 2026 through 2030 (inclusive) for the Town of Easton. This is below our 1% annual growth rate target, at approximately 0.63% if applied to calendar year 2026. Thus the two taken together can be thought of as a window, with the State's target functioning as a floor and our targeted growth rate of 1% functioning as a ceiling. Anywhere between the two would be consistent with the goals of both the State and the Town.

This 2026 Plan renews the approach of the 2010 Plan by adopting a 1% annual growth rate as our target. The "Business as Usual" Growth Projections make it necessary to start immediately to manage any negative characteristics, such as traffic, environmental impacts, infrastructure and service capacities and the like. Measures to mitigate these impacts should be evaluated, including legal mechanisms for reducing the pace of construction if necessary.

Historic Growth Patterns

From its incorporation in 1710 through 1917, Easton remained a small, compact town. By 1965, it had grown primarily in a north–south direction but was still bounded by US Route 50 and the future MD Route 322 (Easton Parkway). Expansion beyond these limits began in 1966 and accelerated in the 1970s after full annexation of the Parkway/Route 50 corridor.

Maps illustrate this outward spread, but they don't show an equally important change—the shift in development form. Like much of the country, Easton moved away from walkable, compact, traditional patterns toward a more suburban, auto-oriented layout. While annexations expanded the Town's footprint (see Appendix 3 for a list of annexations), the form of development shifted from walkable, compact patterns to more suburban, auto-oriented layouts. Recent Comprehensive Plans have sought to reverse this trend, emphasizing a return to traditional, connected urban forms.

An important aspect to consider when contemplating future growth rates is the number of units approved but not yet built, sometimes referred to as the "development pipeline." As of ~~May 12, 2025~~June 9, 2026, that number stood at ~~843~~731. While that basic total number is important to know (and, obviously, readily observed), what is more difficult to predict is when those units will be built, referred to as the "absorption rate." A myriad of factors influence the absorption rate, including: the number of different projects represented by the total number of units, the types of units, the demand for those units, interest rates, price points,~~:~~ competition in the region, and so on.

The pipeline and absorption rate are important because they can further support the policy to strictly limit annexation, particularly annexation for residential purposes~~.~~, and to implement additional growth management measures. That is borne out by the calculation of the number of dwelling units that the ~~historic 1.12%~~ adopted 1% growth rate would yield over the 10 year planning period. This number is approximately ~~875 units.~~ 787 additional units. Thus, with ~~843~~731 units already in the development pipeline, assuming they could be built in this planning period (and not accounting for factors such as the relative demand for certain housing types, locations, etc.), the housing that would be required to correspond to ~~1.12~~the 1% annual growth can be almost completely met by the buildout of existing approved projects. ~~plus a small handful of additional units.~~ Essentially, the pipeline inventory is such that it could supply the housing associated with the projected growth of the next 10 year planning period. ~~This is even more likely given that we are targeting a 1% annual rate of growth.¶~~

c. Existing Growth Capacity (Infill and Redevelopment)

Easton's current boundaries contain enough developable land to meet much of the projected residential and nonresidential growth for the next 20 years. However, demand—especially for mixed-use and employment-related space—may eventually outpace this capacity. ~~Managing growth will require annexations that are carefully aligned with the Plan's land use vision, infrastructure capabilities, and fiscal priorities.~~

A recent requirement for Comprehensive Plans is to estimate the capacity for residential development within existing Town boundaries. This analysis considers three categories: undeveloped land, infill parcels, and sites with potential for redevelopment.

To complete this assessment, several assumptions were applied:

- Urban density baseline: Future development is assumed to occur at higher densities than in recent years, with ~~a minimum of~~future residential development yielding up to 3.5 dwelling units per acre—the ~~threshold for designation as a Priority Funding Area (PFA).~~¶

~~● State guidance: Methodology follows the Maryland Department of Planning's Models and Guidelines publication Estimating Residential Development Capacity.~~maximum allowable single-family detached density under the Town's current residential zoning classifications.

● State guidance: The capacity estimation methodology follows the Maryland Department of Planning's Models and Guidelines publication Estimating Residential Development Capacity.

● Calculations are evaluated on a gross acreage basis. This model does not deduct non-buildable areas (such as rights-of-way, stormwater management facilities, setbacks, etc.) nor does it perform a parcel-specific carrying capacity analysis.

● Local experience: Assumptions are informed by Easton's past development review processes.

The following table details the step-by-step calculation of estimated residential development capacity within current Town limits.

Table 9 Development Capacity within Easton ~~2025~~2026 Town Limits

	Category	Details	Estimated Units
0	Priority Development Areas (per 2010 Plan)	Includes Areas 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 * total estimated units: 644	644
1	)ther Parcels with Infill Potential	Unimproved parcels ≥ 1 acre, PR District parcels, and <1 acre parcels total: 512	512
2	Approved or Pending Projects	Jnder Construction (189) + Under Review (415) = 604	604
3	Downtown Residential Development Potential	Per AKRF study = 100 units	100
4	Redevelopment Potential	Parcels w/ improvements <$50k; net new units (9) + figures from the Redevelopment Target Areas table below (875) = 884	~~884~~633
5	TOTAL Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (as of June 11, 2024)		~~2744~~2493

**** - Area 2 corresponds to the site of the Four Seasons project (252 units).***

Area 3 is the Poplar Hill property (now owned by Talbot County and assumes no future residential units. Area 4 is Ashby Commons (Now essentially built out so assumes no new units). Area 7 is the "Alvin Lapides Property" (Estimated 60 units).

Area 8 is Easton Point (Estimated 332 units per Port Street Small Area Plan).

¶

~~Table 10 Redevelopment Target Areas~~¶		
~~Project/Area~~¶	~~Acres~~¶	~~Potential Residential Units~~¶ ~~(acres x 30 du/ac x 0.75)~~¶
~~Hospital~~¶	~~14.84~~¶	~~334~~¶
~~Easton Plaza (Parking lot)~~¶	~~12.456~~¶	~~280~~¶
~~Perdue – Brooklett's~~¶	~~6.548~~¶	~~147~~¶
~~Brooklett's 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)~~¶

Note: Because these figures represent unadjusted gross theoretical capacity, actual buildable yields on individual parcels may be lower once environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, and site design requirements are factored in during development review.

Table 10 Redevelopment Target Areas		
Project/Area	Acres	Potential Residential Units (acres x 30 du/ac x 0.75)
Hospital	14.84	160
Easton Plaza (Parking lot)	12.456	280
Perdue - Brookletts	6.548	116
Brookletts Building	1.787	40
Perdue - Maryland Ave	2.36	28

NOTE: The units for the Perdue sites and Safeway ~~are based on approved projects.~~¶

~~Our best estimate is that Easton can accommodate approximately 2,744 additional dwelling units within existing Town limits—without annexing new residential land (except for portions of Easton Point noted in Area 8).~~¶

~~This does not mean all 2,744 units will necessarily be built before new land is needed. Several factors will reduce the actual yield:~~¶

- ~~Environmental constraints may limit development on some parcels, even if they appear suitable on paper.~~¶
- ~~Unwilling landowners may choose not to develop in the near term.~~¶
- ~~Market pressures could drive the need to open growth areas earlier, particularly if restricted supply inflates housing prices and worsens Easton's affordability challenges.~~¶

~~While the current Planning period does not require new annexation for residential growth, the Town must remain prepared to expand strategically when capacity within the boundary becomes constrained.~~¶

~~The 2,744-unit estimate represents a modest increase from the 2,492 units projected in the 2010 Plan. The gain is primarily due to:~~¶

- ~~Adding Easton Point (Area 8) as a Priority Development Area.~~¶
- ~~A more refined redevelopment analysis, incorporating specific high-potential properties.~~¶

~~This gain was partially offset by the removal of Area 3 (Hospital-owned Oxford Road site) following its purchase by Talbot County.~~¶

~~At the targeted growth rate of 1.75% annually, the existing capacity could accommodate roughly 18 years of growth—far exceeding the 516 new units added between 2010 and 2020. This suggests that the existing Town limits are sufficient for the next decade.~~¶

~~However, capacity estimates are theoretical. Real-world constraints—such as lower-than-maximum densities, redevelopment challenges, and political or economic barriers—mean the actual buildout may be lower. Housing affordability in Easton is already strained, and increasing supply remains a key strategy for addressing it.~~¶

~~Additionally, this analysis does not include potential policy driven increases in capacity. For example, allowing multifamily development in General Commercial and Limited Commercial zones could yield up to 1,240 additional units on the 155 currently unimproved acres in those districts (at 8 du/ac), excluding further redevelopment potential on improved parcels.~~ *are based on approved projects. The estimate for the Hospital assumes the Planned Healthcare District is removed from the property and represents the mid-point of the range of possible units in the site plans developed pursuant to the South Downtown Charrette conducted in Spring of 2026.*

Our best estimate is that Easton can accommodate approximately 2,493 additional dwelling units within existing Town limits—without annexing new residential land (except for portions of Easton Point noted in Area 8).

For this reason, this Plan does not allow annexation for residential development except for boundary refinement or exceptional cases. Even if growth is confined to the existing Town Limits, adding 2,493 new dwelling units would increase the existing housing stock by about 30%. At this Plan's limit of 1% per annum growth, the potential dwelling units would satisfy housing demands for over 25 years.

Infill and Redevelopment as Growth Strategies

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan estimated that Easton could accommodate roughly 2,500 new housing units through infill development and redevelopment—growth that could occur without annexing additional land. The 2026 estimate is virtually the same (2,493)

Pursuing this strategy offers multiple benefits:

- Preserves open space in and around Easton by reducing pressure to convert greenfields: into lower density, suburban tract developments.
- Improves mobility for residents who do not or cannot drive, by placing more housing near existing services and transit.
- Lowers infrastructure costs since extending services within town is typically less expensive than building new systems for outlying areas.
- Expands housing variety, especially smaller, lower-maintenance units that appeal to smaller households and lower-income residents.
- Enhances neighborhood vitality by encouraging reinvestment and adding new amenities.
- Supports environmental goals through energy conservation and reduced land consumption.
- Aligns with Maryland Smart Growth policies, reinforcing sustainable development within existing town boundaries.

Compatibility Considerations for Infill

While infill and redevelopment bring clear benefits, they must be managed carefully. These projects are typically surrounded by existing neighborhoods and must be designed to complement them.
The following principles should guide infill and redevelopment:

- Ensure compatible housing types with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Incorporate traffic calming measures where appropriate.
- Adopt design guidelines to promote visual and functional compatibility.
- Maintain a continuous pedestrian network for walkability.
- Support neighborhood-scale commercial uses, where appropriate, to provide walkable access to basic services.
- Address parking creatively, considering nearby on-street spaces, public lots, and shared-parking arrangements instead of relying solely on private lots.

Realistic Limits and Strategic Focus

During the public engagement process for this Plan update, many residents expressed strong support for infill and redevelopment as preferred growth strategies. While this is consistent with sustainability goals, the supply of vacant land within the built-up areas of Easton is limited.
Achieving significant new growth solely through infill would require a level of intensity that could fundamentally alter the character of established neighborhoods.

A more realistic approach is to:

- Promote targeted infill and redevelopment in and around Easton's historic core.
- Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings where feasible.
- Encourage denser, walkable development in suitable infill areas outside the historic core but within the ~~2025~~2026 Town Boundary.

This strategy balances growth, preservation, and community character while maximizing Easton's capacity to grow without unnecessary outward expansion.

D. Future Growth Areas and Annexation

As noted previously, Easton's longstanding policy is that municipal services, including water and sewer, are extended only to properties within the corporate limits. This policy encourages annexation prior to

development and reinforces a compact growth pattern. The Town does not support extension of services to development in the County (beyond Town boundaries). Growth is to occur at the edges of Easton in a contiguous fashion, coordinated with infrastructure capacity and consistent with community character

The area between the April 2004 Town boundary and the established Growth Boundary became Easton's designated Future Growth Area. The 2004 Plan divided this area into three sequential priority levels for annexation, ranging from near-term to long-range.

The 2010 Plan retained this three-tiered system:

- Priority 1 – Boundary Refinement Areas: Mostly already developed under Talbot County jurisdiction, suitable for annexation to correct boundary irregularities
- Priority 2 – Intermediate Growth Areas and
- Priority 3 – Long-Range Growth Areas: Not expected to be needed for development during that planning period

Much of the Boundary Refinement Area was already built out under County zoning and septic system regulations. Annexation of these areas has generally been driven by the desire for Town water or sewer service, with limited potential for new development except for redevelopment or moderate intensification. Although the 2010 Plan map showed about 1,200 acres in this category, much of it was not actually available for new growth.

Shift in Approach for 2026

In place of the tiered priority framework, this Plan ~~adopts Annexation Policies that evaluate proposals based on merit rather than preset classifications. This approach allows for more flexible, needs-based decision-making.¶~~

~~While Annexation is not viewed as necessary during the Planning Period, those Annexation proposals that are submitted will be assessed on whether they:¶~~

~~Fill~~limits annexation for residential development during the planning period to only under specific circumstances. These circumstances have been described elsewhere in this Plan and include:

- ~~Fill~~ Fills a geographic or infrastructure gap in the Town boundary.
- Can be efficiently served with water, sewer, and other public services.

~~Address~~

- Addresses identified needs for land use, housing, or public facilities as outlined in this Plan.

~~Align~~

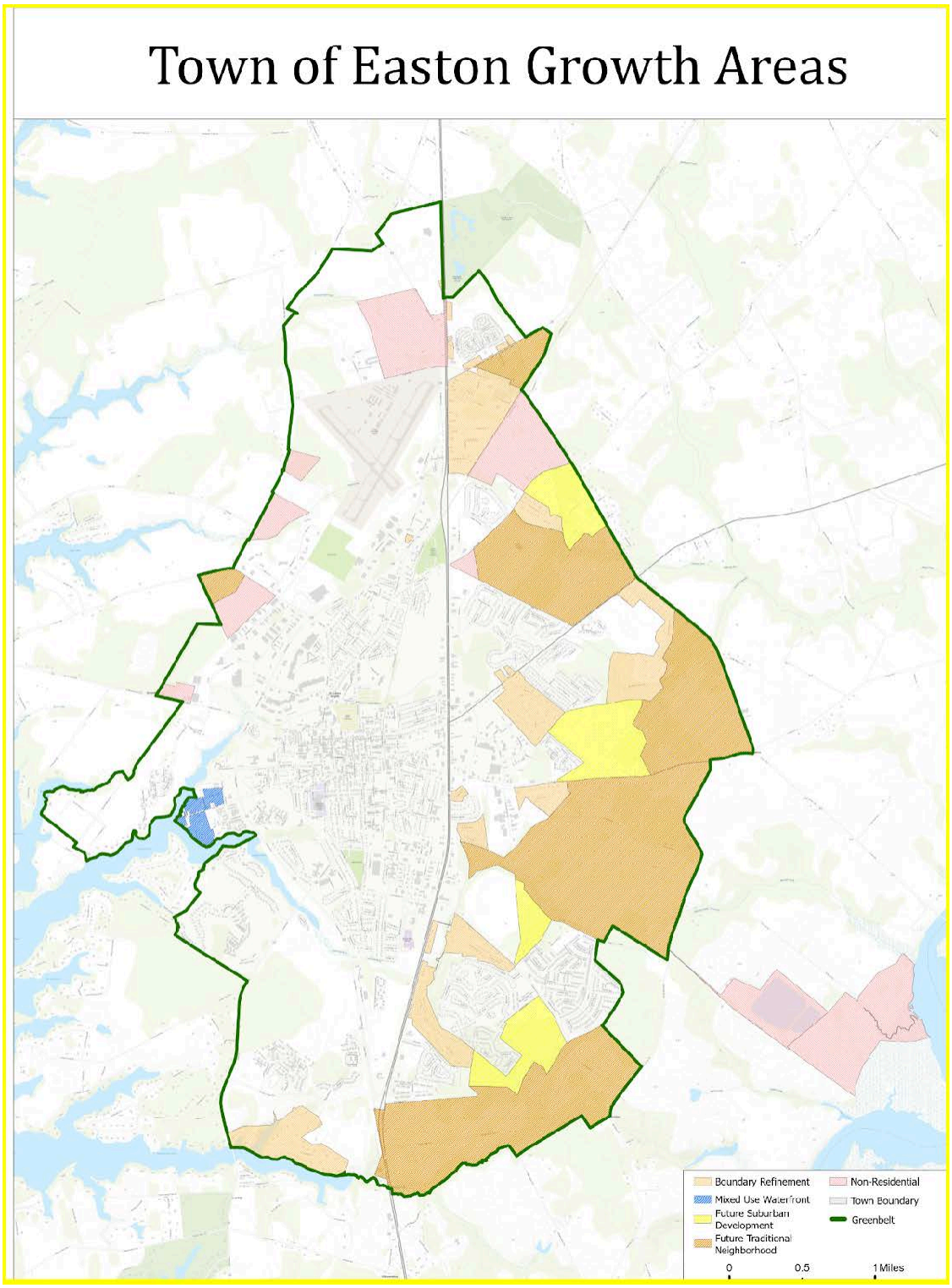
- Aligns with the character, scale, and infrastructure pattern of adjacent neighborhoods.

~~Provide~~

- Provides benefits that outweigh potential negative impacts (e.g., traffic, demand on services, etc.)

This policy-driven approach maintains growth management objectives while allowing the Town to respond to changing conditions and emerging opportunities. It must be recognized that satisfying these minimal requirements does not confer any right to annexation. Only proposals of exceptional merit will be considered.

Map 8: Growth Areas



As mentioned in the Land Use Element, this Plan proposes one adjustment to the Growth Boundary, to bring the Town's Wastewater Treatment ~~Plan~~Plant within the Growth Boundary, rather than in the

Greenbelt (or beyond). Such an action would facilitate an Annexation in the future, bringing a Town-owned facility within Town limits. This has advantages from an administration standpoint. It also potentially opens up additional avenues for State funding in the future, to the extent that such finding is restricted to being spent within Priority Funding Areas.

E. Smart Growth and Land Preservation

Easton's growth policies are designed to complement Talbot County's efforts to preserve agricultural land, protect water resources, and guide growth to appropriate locations. The Town and County will continue to collaborate on shared planning tools, greenbelt preservation strategies, and infrastructure coordination to prevent sprawl and leapfrog development.

Growth must align with infrastructure capacity and public investment planning. The Town will use annexation agreements to secure developer-funded infrastructure where needed, and will coordinate with Easton Utilities, the MDE, and other agencies to ensure adequate facilities for new development. Future annexations must demonstrate readiness and fiscal viability.

With the adoption of the Urban Growth Boundary in the 2004 Plan—reaffirmed in the 2010 Plan—the question of how much land is available for development is no longer open-ended. Regardless of market demand, the Town now has a finite, fixed supply of land for future growth.

However, because this Plan looks forward over a 30-year horizon, it is important to assess whether that supply will be exhausted within the planning period or whether growth areas will remain available at the end of that timeframe. To do so, we apply a process similar to the analysis used to estimate development potential within the current Town boundaries, using the same assumptions and methodology to project build-out conditions in the designated Growth Areas.¶

~~To do so, an exercise similar to that performed to assess 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 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 = 2,493 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) = 9,266 units
F	Existing Units in Easton = 7,350 units
G	Total Residential Build-out (E + F + C) = 17,343 units
H	Estimated Population at Build-out (17,343 x 2.19)= 37,981

Without the confinement of the Growth Boundary, if we grow ~~even at the maximum targeted 1.75% average annual compound rate, in 2070, Easton would, all other things being equal, have reached approximately the 17,594 dwelling units representing our residential build-out capacity. At the 1.12% we have grown at on an annual basis for the past 60 years~~ at the targeted 1.0% average annual compound rate, it will take approximately ~~72~~73 years to reach this built-out state. For the purposes of the statutory requirement of projecting a ten-year build-out capacity, Easton certainly has no issues in this regard.

F. Public Services and Infrastructure Needs

This section was first introduced in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to address the projected impacts of growth on a broad range of public services and infrastructure. In earlier Plans, many of these topics were covered under the Community Facilities and Services element, while others—typically managed at the County level—were not addressed at all. Beginning with the 2010 update, the Town incorporated these areas into its planning framework, evaluating how anticipated growth will affect key services. This Plan continues that approach, updating each subsection with current data, trends, and policy considerations.

Public Schools

Public schools in Talbot County are funded and administered by the County government. The Town of

Easton plays two key roles in this system:

- Population Source – As the County's major population center, Easton generates a substantial share of the student population.
- Facility Host – Three of the County's public schools, plus the Board of Education's main offices, are located within the Town.

As described in Section 7.E of this Plan, although the Town does not operate schools, it works closely with the County to share updated demographic data for use in preparing the ~~Annual~~annual Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP).

Capacity Outlook:

The EFMP projects that the County school system can accommodate anticipated growth in Easton over the next decade, though capacity will be tight at the middle and high school levels. The newly constructed elementary school will also require either a physical addition or redistricting to meet demand. Unexpected surges in population could create additional strain, depending on the nature of residential growth.

Development Mix:

Most residential projects in the development pipeline are either high-end or age-restricted communities:

- Age-restricted housing generates little to no public school enrollment.
- High-end housing may have children, but many attend private schools.

As of 2022, 17.1% of Talbot County's K–12 students (about 932 students) are enrolled in private schools. This significantly reduces public school utilization; however, an economic downturn could shift many of these students into the public system, increasing demand.

Historic Enrollment Trends:

Between 2000 and 2020, Easton's population grew from 11,708 to 17,101—a gain of 5,393 people—while public school enrollment increased by only 180 students (from 2,892 to 3,072). Based on this ratio, the projected population growth from build-out within the 2026 Town boundaries (an additional ~~6,752~~5,077 people) would yield roughly ~~225~~170 new students in public schools.

Demographic Factors:

One factor that could alter this pattern is the changing composition of the Town's population. The EFMP

notes a growing Hispanic student population, paralleling Easton's broader demographic shift—from 3.5% Hispanic in 2000 to 14.4% in 2020—which may influence future enrollment patterns.

Libraries

The state of library service in Talbot County is described in Section 7.F of this Plan. In terms of future needs, the American Planning Association suggests a ratio of 0.6 to 0.65 square feet of library space per capita. According to the MD Department of Assessment and Taxation, the TCFL is 28,174 square feet in size. This would satisfy the needs of a population of approximately 45,000. That is well in excess of even the ultimate build-out population for Easton, and while the library serves residents beyond Easton, they also have branch facilities beyond Easton. There clearly are no growth-related implications for library services during this Planning Period.

Public Safety

As described in Section 7.H, public safety in Easton encompasses police, fire protection, and emergency medical services. This subsection focuses on service adequacy, anticipated needs, and facility requirements.

Police Services

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan referenced the International City Managers Association (ICMA) standard of 1.75 police personnel per 1,000 residents. ~~The~~In the 2004 Plan update the Town used the International Center for Prevention of Crime benchmark—3.36 officers per 1,000 residents—reflecting the U.S. national average.

With 48 sworn officers serving a population of approximately 17,101 (2020), Easton falls between the two referenced guidelines. The ICPC suggests we need 57 officers, while the ICMA pegs the number at 30. Local conditions justify staffing at the higher end of the range:

- Easton functions as a regional hub for employment, commerce, and entertainment, serving a population well beyond Town residents.
- Residents value strong community policing.
- Seasonal traffic between Ocean City and the Baltimore–Washington area, along with modest local tourism, creates higher service demands.

Given current trends, existing staffing levels are considered adequate, and gradual increases proportional to growth should meet future needs.

Fire Protection

The Easton Volunteer Fire Department serves the Town and surrounding areas, funded jointly by the Town and County. In 2002, ambulance service transitioned to Talbot County, which now operates the countywide emergency medical system. Fire Code enforcement is the responsibility of the Maryland State Fire Marshal.

Growth in and around Easton prompted the construction of a new fire substation on Matthewstown Road, providing better access to US Route 50 and proximity to new development. Uncontrolled growth—either in pace or location—could require transitioning from an all-volunteer to a paid department, with both fiscal and community impacts, including likely tax increases.

Emergency Medical Services

Advanced Life Support (ALS) operates countywide with volunteer and paid staff, funded by the County, fundraising, and donations. While 24-hour service is available, ALS faces equipment funding challenges due to increasing call volumes.

G. Service Adequacy Considerations

Evaluating future public safety needs involves more than population forecasts. Key factors include:

- Traffic volumes: Higher traffic on US Route 50 increases accident rates and can slow emergency response.
- Development patterns: Traditional, well-connected street networks reduce response times and the need for additional substations, while suburban patterns with limited access points can strain resources.

Water and Sewerage Facilities

The adequacy of Easton's water and wastewater systems through 2040 is detailed in the Community Facilities and Services and Water Resources elements of this Plan. For the purposes of this Municipal Growth Element, the focus is on capacity and improvements required to serve future growth identified in this Plan.

Growth Projections and Service Demand

The Future Land Area Needed to Satisfy Demand analysis projects approximately:

- 6,800 new dwelling units in growth areas outside the Town limits (6,773 calculated)
~~3,100~~
- 2,500 new units within existing Town limits (~~3,083~~2,493 calculated)
- 727 existing units outside the Town but within the Growth Area

Service capacity planning must account for both residential and non-residential demand, which varies greatly by use type. While residential water and wastewater usage is predictable, non-residential uses—especially industrial operations—can create disproportionate demand.

~~Wastewater~~
Wastewater

The Easton Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), brought online in 2007, has a treatment capacity of 4.0 million gallons per day (MGD). As of December 31, 2023, the average daily flow was 2.463 MGD.

- Projected Capacity Limit: At a 1.75% annual growth rate (considered the target in early drafts of this Plan), the WWTF is projected to exceed capacity in 2054. Growth at a 1.0% annual rate adds approximately ~~20~~18 years until capacity is reached, in 2072.
- Expansion Capability: The WWTF site has sufficient space for capacity expansion, anticipated to be modest in scale.
- Hospital Impact: The planned regional hospital will add 0.101 MGD in Phase 1 and up to 0.2 MGD at full buildout—approximately 5% of current capacity. This could advance the need for expansion by two years ~~(from 2051 to 2049)~~.
- The Easton Utilities Tariff requires that all new connections to the system pay a water and wastewater capital charge. In addition to the capital charge, developers are required to construct certain sections of distribution and collection systems.

~~The~~Easton Utilities' Wastewater Master Plan ~~(update in progress)~~ confirms nutrient removal capacity is adequate to support ~~planned~~ 1.75% growth through ~~2045 and beyond.~~ the next two Planning periods and beyond. This is obviously even more adequate at a 1% annual rate of growth. However, the following components will require upgrades once flows exceed 4.0 MGD:

- Headworks
- Flow Equalization
- Secondary Clarifiers
- UV Disinfection
- Post-Aeration

H. Water Supply

Easton is currently served by five production wells providing a total production capacity of 4.0 MGD

(including redundancy for the largest well out of service). A new well received federal grant funding in 2026 and will be constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and turned over to Easton Utilities, ~~it~~. It is anticipated that the well will be constructed in FY27.

- Current Use: Average daily flow is 1.90 MGD, with a maximum day demand of 3.36 MGD.
- Future Needs: The Water Master Plan projects the need for a new well in 2043 and a new 1.0 million-gallon storage tank in 2051 to serve the Growth Area.
- CIP Coordination: The Capital Improvement Plan is updated annually to prioritize and fund system upgrades.

Planning and Coordination

Both the Water Master Plan and Wastewater Master Plan are being updated to ensure Easton Utilities can meet service needs for the full Growth Area. Strategic capital improvements, coordinated with growth patterns, will ensure the Town can:

- Maintain service reliability
- Meet nutrient reduction requirements
- Serve new residential, commercial, and institutional development efficiently

Charts summarizing planned water and wastewater capital projects are included in Appendix 5.

Stormwater Management Systems

A full discussion of stormwater management policies, regulations, and watershed impacts is provided in the Water Resources Element of this Plan. As in many older communities, Easton's stormwater infrastructure reflects a wide range of standards, depending on the era in which different areas were developed. Earlier development often occurred before modern stormwater standards were in place, resulting in inconsistent performance across the Town.

Today, all development in Easton must comply with the Stormwater Management Ordinance, which regulates both the quantity and quality of runoff.

- Quantity Standard: Post-development runoff may not exceed pre-development levels.
- Quality Standard: Easton applies the 10% pollutant reduction standard from the Chesapeake Bay

Critical Area Program to all land within Town limits, not just Critical Area properties.

The Town also encourages innovative, low-impact development practices. Bio-retention, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure are increasingly required in major projects, such as Lowe's and Waterside Village.

Challenges in Older Developed Areas

The greatest stormwater challenges occur in long-established neighborhoods built before current regulations. In these areas, the Town pursues retrofit projects to improve performance and water quality. These efforts are carried out through:

- Private Development Requirements – Requiring adjacent redevelopment projects to address existing stormwater issues.
- Town-Led Retrofits – Initiating capital projects to upgrade systems in older neighborhoods.
- Partnership Projects – Working with environmental organizations and Talbot County to secure grant funding for targeted improvements.

A recent example is the Tanyard Branch Retrofit Project, which includes construction of a sediment pond on the Town-owned RTC Park parcel. This project will:

- Improve water quality entering the Tred Avon River headwaters
- Reduce localized flooding in historically flood-prone neighborhoods

Future Capacity

Stormwater management is not expected to be a limiting factor for Easton's future growth, provided:

1. New development continues to meet State and local standards
2. Redevelopment incorporates modern stormwater techniques and is coordinated with adjacent new development
3. Strategic retrofits in older areas are implemented as funding becomes available

Through continued regulatory enforcement, proactive retrofitting, and intergovernmental collaboration, Easton can ensure stormwater systems support both water quality and quantity goals and planned growth.

I. RECREATION

A full assessment of Easton's park system is provided in the Parks and Recreation Element of this Plan. In the Municipal Growth Element, the focus is on parkland needs generated by future growth—both within the existing Town boundaries and in the eventual build-out of the Growth Area.

Until 2022, the State of Maryland recommended parkland be provided at a ratio of 30 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, with half under municipal ownership. Based on this standard:

- Current (2020 Census) Population – 17,101 → 513 acres needed (257 acres Town-owned)
- Build-out of Existing Town Limits → 716 acres needed (358 acres Town-owned)
- Full Build-out Including Growth Area → 1,178 acres needed (589 acres Town-owned)

As of February 14, 2024, Easton contains an estimated 910.45 acres of parks and open space (plus Hyde Park, Elliott Road Apartments, and Vickers Park). This meets current needs and will remain sufficient to accommodate the build-out of existing Town boundaries without acquiring additional parkland.

In 2022, local jurisdictions (through the County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plans) were allowed to define their own criteria for determining if they are meeting their acquisition goals. The 2022 Talbot County LPPRP includes the following park equity analysis for the Town of Easton:

Easton is the County's largest municipal area with 44.2% of the population living within its boundaries. Based on the State equity layers of concentrations of children and older adults, and households with income levels below the poverty threshold, there is one area of Easton that is considered Medium High Need. Within this area, there are well distributed park locations which offer a variety of amenities and features. Other areas of Medium to Medium-Low need also have access to parks within a ½ mile radius. Overall, Easton's network of parks provides equitable access to parks and open space for its residents, particularly within the population centers where need is higher, there are few barriers to access. These parks provide access to sports fields, playgrounds,and a public swimming pool. Consideration should be given to other factors which could pose barriers including walkable routes to parks. The town is currently involved in developing a master plan of walking trails that will connect more areas of the town and increase access to parks and open spaces. ~~Easton"s~~ Easton's Rail to Trail also provides access between the population centers and the town's sports field complex ~~located on the western edge of the town~~.

Future Needs for Growth Area Build-Out

The Town's subdivision regulations— requiring developers to provide ~~35% of site area as common open space and~~ 1,200 square feet per dwelling unit for parks/playgrounds—are expected to meet the Town's

Parks and Recreation needs for the Growth Area. -

Considerations Beyond Acreage Standards

While Easton meets—and is projected to continue meeting—State parkland standards, certain factors may require additional planning and land dedication:

- Geographic Distribution: A regional-scale park may be desirable on the east side of Town to create equitable access.
- Specialized Facilities: Demand for organized sports fields exceeds what the per-capita standard assumes, as Easton serves as the County seat and a regional recreation hub.

Adjacent Recreational Assets

Easton also benefits from two large recreational sites just outside the Growth Boundary, which functionally serve Town residents:

- Seth State Demonstration Forest – 124.5 acres
- Hog Neck Golf Course – 275.9 acres

These assets, though not within Town limits, help meet broader recreational needs and relieve some future demand pressures.

J. Financing Mechanisms

Easton's current analysis shows that existing and planned infrastructure can accommodate the projected ~~2,500~~2,493 new homes within current Town boundaries, as well as portions of the Future Growth Areas identified for potential annexation. All new development requires basic infrastructure, including:

- Water and sewer service
- Stormwater management
- Roads and transportation access
- Parks and playgrounds

Consistent with current practice, the Town should require developers to fund the infrastructure necessary to serve their projects. Additional long-term needs to support planned growth include:

- Water system upgrades
- Wastewater treatment capacity expansion
- Police staffing increases
- New or expanded parks and recreation facilities
- Public safety enhancements, including new equipment, personnel, and facilities
-

Leveraging External Funding

State and County financial assistance should be pursued to upgrade infrastructure in redevelopment areas. Programs such as Community Legacy can support street and streetscape improvements, while Neighborhood Conservation programs can help modernize infrastructure to facilitate reinvestment. Cooperative use of Program Open Space and the Maryland Municipal Parks Program can offset park acquisition costs beyond those secured through the development review process.

Annexation as a Tool

The annexation process—being a discretionary legislative action—provides an opportunity to secure land for parks, public facilities, and other community amenities through annexation agreements. This should remain a standard practice for strategically expanding community assets alongside growth.

Impact Fees

Both Talbot County and the Town of Easton have enacted Impact Fee Ordinances since adoption of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. Easton's fees fund parks and recreation, municipal facilities, transportation, police, and fire services needed for new development. Talbot County's fees apply countywide and support library, parks and recreation, public school, community college, general government, and transportation services. Maintaining these mechanisms ensures that the cost of growth is borne by new development rather than existing taxpayers.

K. Rural Buffers and Transition Areas

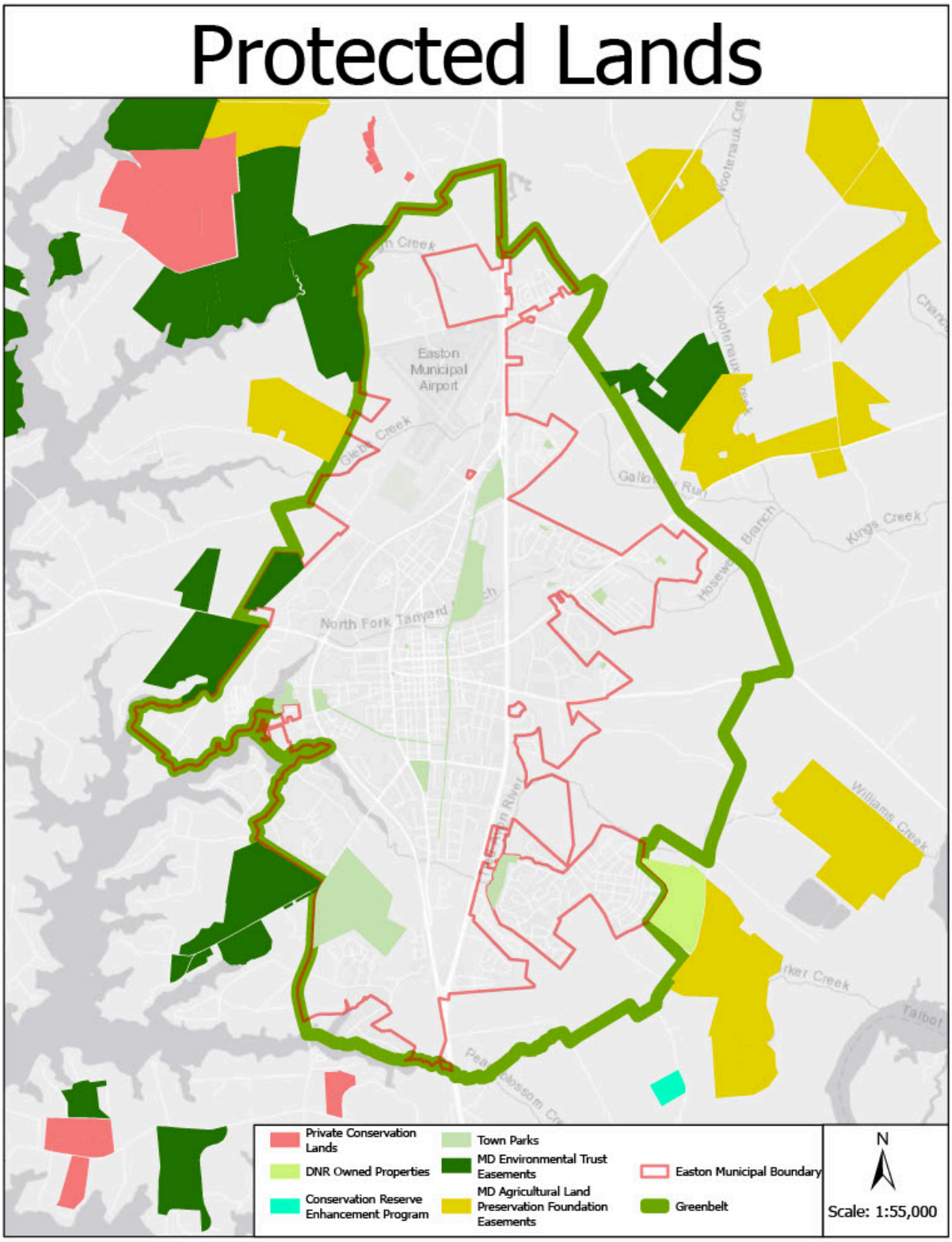
Both the Town of Easton Comprehensive Plan and the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan designate a Growth Area surrounding the Town's municipal boundaries, with a greenbelt located immediately outside this area on the County side. The greenbelt works in concert with the Urban Growth Boundary to prevent outward sprawl into rural parts of the County.

An Urban Growth Boundary functions as the opposite of sprawl—establishing a clear, permanent edge between the built environment and the countryside. At full build-out, this boundary will create a distinct

transition between “in Town” and “in the country,” avoiding a blurred, low-density suburban fringe.

The Town partners with Talbot County and with agricultural and forest preservation organizations to maintain and protect the greenbelt. A significant portion of this land is already preserved, as shown on Map 8: Protected Lands in and Around Easton’s Greenbelt.

Map 9: Protected Lands



L. Burden on Services for Areas Outside of Town but Under Town's Responsibility

Currently, Easton does not provide municipal services or infrastructure outside its corporate boundaries, with the exception of fire and rescue services. These services are delivered by a volunteer organization rather than the Town itself.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the form and pace of development directly influence the demands placed on fire and rescue resources. Uncontrolled, low-density growth greatly increases the likelihood that Easton would need to transition from a volunteer fire department to a paid service—bringing significant financial and staffing implications. In contrast, managed growth in a compact, traditional, urban-scale pattern helps preserve the viability of a volunteer-based system.

M. Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012

In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act, requiring all jurisdictions to map existing and planned sewer service areas and classify them into service tiers.

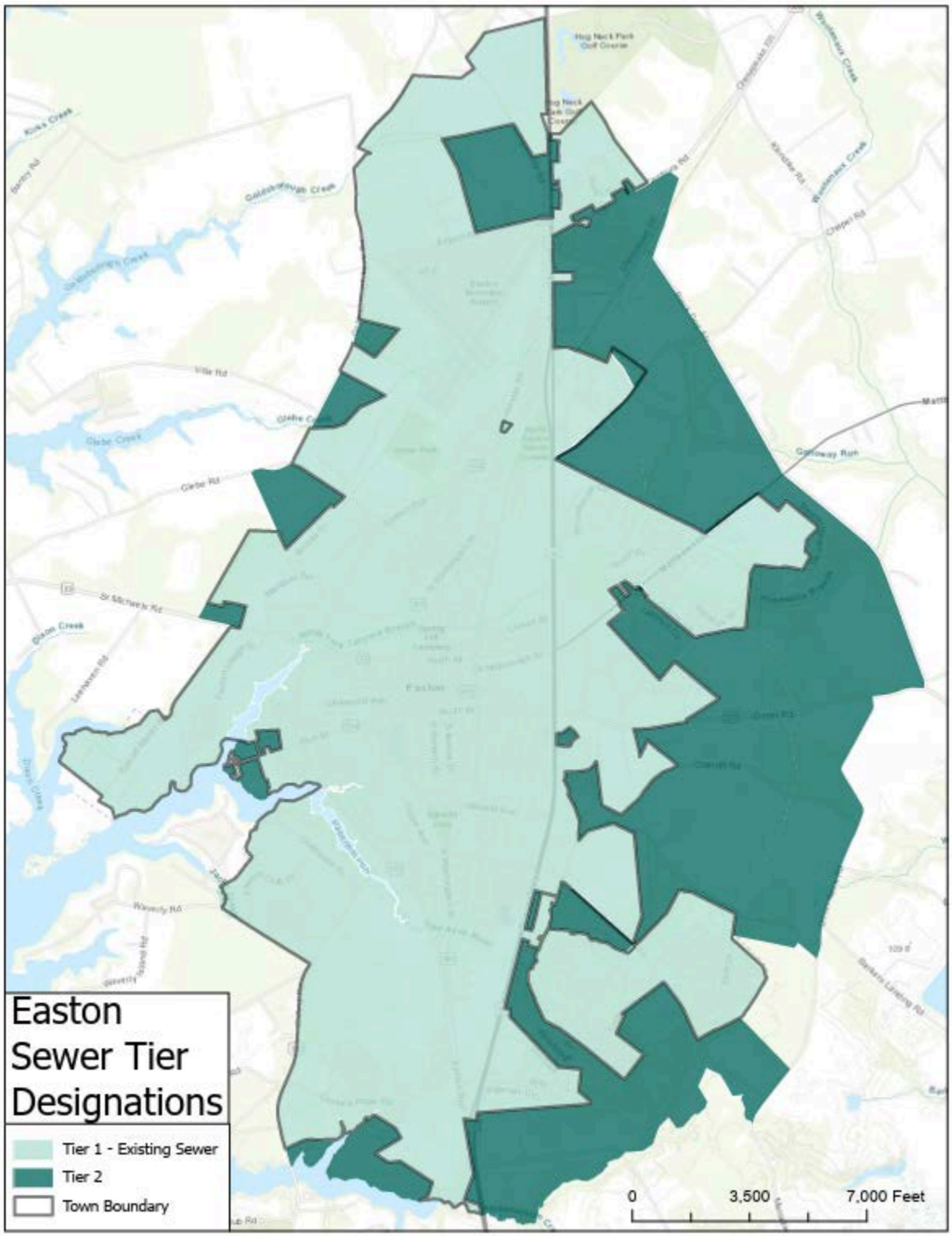
For Easton, this process was straightforward. The Town Council adopted its Tier Map in December 2012, designating three categories:

- Tier I – Existing sewer service.
- Tier II – Planned for sewer service within the Municipal or Growth Area.
- Tier IIA – Municipal or Growth Area, not yet included in the County Water and Sewer Master Plan.

This Tier Map was incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan in 2016 and is shown as Map 10 ~~below:¶~~

below:

Map 10: Easton Sewer Tier Designations


Easton
Sewer Tier
Designations
Tier 1 - Existing Sewer
Tier 2
Town Boundary
0
3,500
7,000 Feet

N. Protection of Sensitive Areas

The Town of Easton prioritizes identifying sensitive environmental areas early in the development review process so they can be avoided, protected, or enhanced. The same standards will apply to any future development within the Growth Area.

- Streams and Buffers – A 100-foot buffer is required from perennial streams (50 feet for intermittent streams) to protect water quality and habitat.

- 100-Year Floodplain – While Easton contains few floodplain areas, they are regulated under the Town's Floodplain Ordinance, which is consistent with both the National Model Floodplain Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program. Given the limited size of these areas, most sites allow development to be located outside the floodplain.

- Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species – These areas are identified as early as possible in the review process. Site plans are adjusted as needed to provide maximum protection. For properties outside the current Town limits, identification should occur during the annexation stage.

- Steep Slopes – Rare in Easton. Most occur within stream buffers or the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and are already protected.

- Agricultural and Forest Lands for Resource Protection or Conservation – While agriculture is not prohibited in Easton, growth will inevitably convert much of the agricultural land in the Growth Area to development. The Town does not actively preserve farmland, but does maintain a strong commitment to forest conservation.

Easton's Forest Conservation Program ensures valuable forest resources are protected, particularly those along streams or associated with non-tidal wetlands. Regulations now require such protected lands—whether forest, wetland, or buffer—not to be located on individual private lots. Instead, they must be placed in separate parcels held by the Town, a homeowners' association, or a conservation entity.

In developing the Growth Area, the Town will maintain these policies and look for opportunities to expand protected forest lands. A notable example is the Seth Demonstration Forest, part of Easton's Greenbelt. It borders Easton Club East and undeveloped land to the north, where a future large-scale park is envisioned. Forest Conservation areas in Easton Club East connect directly to Seth Forest, creating an expanded and more cohesive forest area. Future enhancements could include additional forest preservation, tree planting, and amenities such as a woodland garden.

O. A Growth Management Strategy for Easton

The Implementation Chapter of this Plan summarizes the Growth Strategy for ~~2025-2035~~2026-2036 and

notes that it will largely be accomplished through, generally speaking, six major initiatives that are envisioned to advance the Vision of this Plan. This Municipal Growth Element seems an appropriate place to ~~first~~ summarize the overall factors shaping our evolving growth management strategy.

In contemplating a growth management strategy for Easton, it is necessary to first consider what the community feels is undesirable with the current state of growth and development. 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~~only proposes one modest expansion, which is the inclusion of the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant and Seth Forest (merely to provide the required connection between existing Town boundary and the WWTP). The UGB 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~~new 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.

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~~

In and of themselves, the density of recent development would not qualify 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, a 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 Place Chapter.

Build Neighborhoods

This concept has been a recurring theme throughout this Comprehensive Plan. It was discussed extensively in the Place 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~~accessory dwellings 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.



Corbin Parkway Existing Situation



Corbin Parkway "calmed" with paving

- Permit more neighborhood scale commercial uses by special exception in residential zoning districts. This has recently been accomplished for offices, which are allowed by Special Exception in the R-10A and R-7A ~~Zoning Districts~~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.

None of these measures would be required of existing subdivisions or Planned Unit Developments if they conflicted with HOA rules or provisions of the PUD.

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 Place chapter of this Plan and recommended Design Principles for ~~2025~~2026 found in the Implementation Chapter ~~is~~, which are primarily intended to address this issue, so there is little need to repeat that material here.

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.¶

- ~~Plan in Accordance with~~

Manage 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. The Growth Rate Discussion subsection of this Chapter provides the context with which this issue exists in 2026 as well as the justification for implementing growth management measures.

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 was 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 revisions to this policy. First, after a decade where the average annual growth rate has dropped to 0.7%, the concept of aiming for a "targeted" or "preferred" growth rate for the Planning period has been dropped. Instead, the directive relative to our Growth Rate is not so much an attempt to limit (or increase) any particular rate, but rather to consistently monitor the rate/amount of growth we are~~

~~experiencing so that whatever growth that does occur, is at a rate that does not overly tax the Town's infrastructure and services. Such a rate of growth is believed to be in accordance with the long-term compound rate of 1.12% and therefore an annual rate of 1% is reaffirmed as the appropriate target for establishing the threshold at which the Town would be alerted to take a close look at the impacts of growth at that time and investigate, if deemed necessary, legal policy and regulatory remedies to safeguard against the effects of the externalities of an unsustainable rate of growth .~~

A 1% annual rate of growth is reaffirmed in 2026 as the appropriate target for establishing the threshold at which the Town would explore and implement measures to slow growth. For the reasons stated in the Growth Rate Discussion subsection, we believe immediate steps should be taken to assess the impacts of that growth and develop necessary legal, policy and regulatory remedies to keep growth within the target of 1% per year.

This 1% target directly aligns with the anticipated build-out of approved units currently in the residential development pipeline over the next ten years. Under this baseline strategy, growth will be accommodated primarily through these already-approved units, limiting unmanaged greenfield expansion beyond the pipeline. As such, immediate steps should be taken to assess the impacts of growth and refine legal, policy, and regulatory remedies to maintain this baseline.

Growth management is a land use and planning tool to implement where unrestrained development threatens to outpace public infrastructure or alter community character. In Easton's context, municipal water and sewer currently possesses sufficient capacity for total build-out of the Town. Additionally, the Town is conducting a comprehensive traffic model to provide objective baseline data for inclusion into a Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

As growth rates are expected to test the 1% target, the study and consideration of growth management tools should be pursued immediately. If initial policy tools prove insufficient to maintain the timing and level of growth at acceptable levels, a temporary development moratorium may be evaluated to allow time to investigate and implement more formal growth control measures, such as adequate public facilities ordinances or annual building permit caps. Such growth control measures have been upheld by courts as a valid exercise of a local government's police power. The preservation of small town character and open spaces and growing at an orderly and deliberate pace have been judicially determined as valid justifications for the implementation of growth control measures. Demands on infrastructure can certainly be considered as well. (See: ***Golden v. Town of Ramapo*, 285 N.E.2d 291 (N.Y. 1972) and *Construction Industry Association v. City of Petaluma*, 522 F.2d 897 (9th Cir. 1975)(*cert. denied*, 424 U.S. 934 (1976))**.

However, rigid growth control measures can run counter to Comprehensive Plan goals, specifically housing affordability and housing diversity. Artificially constraining total housing supply without targeted relief mechanisms risks contributing to rising median home prices, furthering housing barriers for essential local workers, and exacerbating regional traffic by forcing workers to commute from outside Talbot County. To balance growth restraint with housing needs, growth management tools should incorporate the following framework:

- **Conditional Annexations:** Maintain a strict baseline pause on new residential annexations, permitting exceptions *only* for proposals that adhere to a select and highly conditional set of policies that provide a clear benefit to the Town .

- **Targeted Ordinance Exemptions:** Structure future growth control mechanisms (such as permit caps or APFO provisions) so they do not inadvertently bottleneck the delivery of "Missing Middle" housing or affordable units on remaining infill sites.

- **Transportation Synchronization:** Tie future development review directly to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, ensuring infrastructure investments align with actual corridor capacity.

By carefully weighing these benefits and burdens, Easton can maintain a measured 1% growth trajectory while actively encouraging housing variety, protecting investments in existing infrastructure, and preserving overall quality of life.

Encourage More Sustainable Development Patterns¶

~~The one~~

An 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?

P. Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Support Compact, Contiguous Growth that Strengthens Easton's Form: Easton will grow in a manner that preserves its cohesive urban structure, avoiding scattered or inefficient development patterns.

Objectives:

- Use annexation to close gaps in the Town boundary and reinforce logical development edges.
- Require new development to extend existing street and utility networks in a coordinated manner.
- Prevent leapfrog development that bypasses undeveloped land adjacent to the Town.

Goal #2: Align Growth with Available and Planned Infrastructure: Growth will occur where infrastructure capacity is sufficient or can be provided efficiently, ensuring fiscal responsibility and service quality.

Objectives:

- Evaluate annexation and development proposals for their impact on water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, and public facilities.
- Coordinate annexations with the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and Easton Utilities' investment schedules.
- Require that necessary infrastructure be in place or fully funded prior to development approval.
- Monitor the rate of growth to minimize the likelihood of developing more rapidly than the Town's infrastructure can accommodate.
- Plan for no annexation, except under extraordinary circumstances as described in this Plan, for new

residential development in the next ten years.

Goal #3: Leverage Annexation to Advance Public Benefit: Annexation will be used as a tool to secure public amenities and community enhancements alongside private development.

Objectives:

- Require annexation agreements to dedicate land for parks, greenways, trails, and public facilities.
- Negotiate for developer contributions toward infrastructure, open space, and civic uses.
- Ensure new development reflects the Town's design standards and community character goals.

Goal #4: Coordinate with Talbot County to Preserve Rural Lands and Guide Growth: Town and County will work together to maintain the Urban Growth Boundary, protect the surrounding greenbelt, and promote efficient land use.

Objectives:

- Continue joint planning efforts to manage the interface between Town and County land uses.
- Support agricultural and forest land preservation tools to maintain a distinct edge between urban and rural areas.
- Align growth management policies to prevent sprawl and ensure coordinated service delivery.

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

~ T. Boone Pickens

A. INTRODUCTION

The quote cited above all speaks 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.

This 200+ page document is the result of years of extensive public input and contains one Town-wide Vision, dozens of goals, hundreds of Objectives, and numerous explicit and implicit additional strategies and policy considerations. The sheer breadth and length of any comprehensive plan can make it difficult to execute; therefore, this Implementation Chapter focuses on six Major Initiatives to focus on over the next ten years that touch on many of the goals of this plan and that, if achieved, will place us firmly on track to realize the vision for Easton in 2035 and beyond.

The Implementation chapter turns the vision of the Comprehensive Plan into action. It identifies tools, responsible parties, and timeframes needed to move from policy to practice. Implementation depends on both long-term commitment and consistent coordination across public and private stakeholders. This chapter offers a framework to guide that work.

B. 2026 - 2036 ~~GROWTH STRATEGY~~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. A 1% rate of growth, however, remains a key component of the Town's growth management strategy as it is suggested that it corresponds to a rate of growth with which~~

~~the possibility of significant negative impacts associated with that growth warrant special observation to safeguard against their coming to fruition.~~A 1% rate of growth has been chosen as that target, because it is a rate of growth that minimizes the likelihood of significant negative impacts associated with growth. The Municipal Growth Chapter describes the reasoning behind this assertion as well as our determination that it is appropriate to explore options for controlling the rate of growth now, given the amount of development currently underway, as well as what is in the development pipeline.

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~~2,493 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~~.~~ (but subject to the overall limit of 1% growth per annum).

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**~~ Easton Town Council has determined that it is both possible and appropriate to ~~**not prioritize**~~plan for no 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~~ Since enough new dwelling units to achieve 1% growth out to 2036 are already in the pipeline, we can be assured that the targeted cumulative growth will be achieved during this Planning cycle if they are built-out within this 10-year window.

This statement does not absolutely preclude all new ~~annexation~~annexations. Boundary refinement annexations should be welcomed at any time, as should property identified in adopted Town Small Area Plans (e.g., Easton Point) and proposed for development consistent with those Plans. Non-residential annexations are also not expected to be necessary during the Planning Period, although Annexations proposed for the purpose of new job creation (i.e., Industrial projects) might reasonably be considered one of the "extraordinary circumstances" warranting an exception to this policy.

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.

c. 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 historically 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.

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.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

In order to realize the Vision of this Plan for Easton in the year 2035 and beyond, a myriad of actions are necessary. However, significant progress towards that future can be made through a combination of actions, policies, etc., that can be combined and categorized into six major initiatives. These initiatives are:

1. **Zoning Reform**
2. **Complete Streets**
3. **Improve Design**
4. **Promote Infill and Redevelopment**
5. **Manage Growth by Annexation**
6. **Small Area Planning**

ZONING REFORM

Every Comprehensive Plan is (or should be) followed up with a comprehensive review and, as necessary, update to the jurisdiction's Zoning laws. Zoning reform takes this exercise to another level, by critically examining the Zoning Code to identify obstacles to the creation of the development patterns and building types that the community desires.

Such an effort is undertaken in recognition that while it is important to describe the type of built-environment the community aspires to, if the zoning laws do not allow for such patterns to actually be built, then it is very unlikely that anything will change before it is time to draft the next Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning Reform in Easton will likely involve looking, at a minimum, at the aspects of our Zoning Code:

- The creation of the Traditional Neighborhood Development zoning district that was described in the Place Chapter.
- The allowance of mixed-use buildings and developments in a wider variety of circumstances and via simpler review processes.

- The inclusion of standards to create a more walkable Easton.

- The refinement of public input opportunities associated with larger-scale development projects so that it occurs earlier in the process, before significant engineering, design, and survey costs are incurred by the developer. Genuine neighborhood participation at this stage of the development process should give neighbors a greater chance to shape their community. For developers who are authentically engaged in such a process, it can also help them identify, early in the process, the scope and character of development that is appropriate for the neighborhood and can increase the level of public support for the project when it is officially submitted for review.

- Providing for a wide-spectrum of housing options, reflecting the variety of housing needs in Easton. In addition, this will also involve examining the development standards associated with each housing type to ensure that they accommodate the housing types with which they are associated.

- Introducing requirements to ensure that development is financially sustainable and will ultimately contribute more in taxes and revenue to the Town than it costs taxpayers to serve the project.

- Strengthening language in the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations to broaden the scope of what it means for a project to be found inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Planning Commission's ability to deny projects based on such a finding and give the Planning Commission the ability to require impact assessments for projects that exceed objective thresholds to ensure that public infrastructure and services are adequate to support the demands of new development.

- No zoning changes that would allow or mandate additional growth or density will apply to developments with existing PUD conditions of approval, without said project going through the applicable review process (PUD Amendment).

- Perform a comprehensive rezoning of the Town to identify and potentially rezone larger residential parcels to a nonresidential zoning classification
- Consider other zoning text amendments that would require residential projects of a certain size to be processed as a Planned Unit Development or similar process.

Complete Streets

Complete streets were defined and described in the Transportation Element. A description of Easton's Complete Street's early efforts was also included. If the effort is continued it will lead to, at least, the following changes:

- A transportation system that better accommodates all modes of transport, not primarily (or solely)

the automobile.

- A better connected community, leading to easier social interaction, more travel options, and better emergency services response times.
- New (and retrofitted) roads that are designed appropriate to their context and purpose.
- Prioritizing safety over speed.
- Enhancing the appearance of neighborhoods thereby leading to increased property values.
- Improved public health as it becomes easier and safer to walk in neighborhoods.

IMPROVE DESIGN

A common and recurring theme throughout this Plan is the desire to improve various aspects of the built environment in Easton. This is so much the case that we created a chapter, Place, that largely addresses this issue. We also place a great deal of emphasis on the Design Principles for Easton section of that chapter. Design issues cover a vast spectrum, from site details such as signage and landscaping to Town-scale issues such as the character of neighborhoods that are allowed to be built in the future. Some of the issues and actions that improving design might involve include:

- Requiring developers to more genuinely address and adhere to the Design Principles for Easton.
- Updating Design Guidelines, especially for properties outside the Historic District.
- Examining design-related supplemental standards of the Zoning Code to ensure that they remain relevant to ~~2025~~2026 development practices and considering appropriate additions to the list of such requirements.
- Evaluating our Landscaping and Signage standards to ensure that they contribute to the design standards envisioned for new development in Easton.

2026 Design Principles for Easton

Development in Easton often exceeds by-right zoning, requiring Town staff, boards, commissions, and the Council to review proposals against the Comprehensive Plan. Though this open-ended approach to development review provides flexibility in evaluating an application, its breadth can obscure expectations for applicants and disempower approving bodies in their decision-making and lead to conflicting

interpretations of the Plan.

To provide clarity, past Plans introduced Design Principles—a framework for applicants and reviewers. Previously located in the Community Character chapter, they now span the entire Plan and are included here in the Implementation chapter, reflecting their importance as an evaluation tool. They are not ranked by priority but organized for coherence.

Principle 1: Neighborhoods Are Places to Live, Not Just Sleep

In keeping with the objectives of the Plan pertaining to community character, fiscal sustainability, and parks, projects in Easton should provide an integrated mix of uses in a return to a pattern of Traditional Neighborhood Development. Characteristics include:

- Neighborhoods should reflect Traditional Neighborhood Development, where homes, destinations, and public spaces are interwoven.
- Provide non-residential uses at or near the neighborhood center.
- Scale these uses to meet community needs, including nearby areas lacking amenities.
- Design shops, ~~cafés~~cafés, or civic spaces as welcoming "third places" for the public, not private perks.
- Open spaces should be accessible, generous, and encourage active living.
- Avoid: highway strip centers, large retail with housing tucked behind, or isolated "leftover" open space without purpose.

Principle 2: Streets are for People, not just Automobiles

Many problems with contemporary development stem from automobile dependence, which produces sprawl, isolation, and fiscal strain. This principle advances the Plan's Transportation, Ecology, and Sustainability goals by emphasizing development patterns that serve people first, not cars. Projects should therefore follow these design standards:

- Streets should function as Complete Streets, safe for walkers and cyclists as well as drivers.
- Traffic calming should be built into design, slowing drivers naturally.
- Arterials should minimize driveways to protect traffic flow and safety.
- Parking should be secondary: placed behind buildings, reduced in scale, and balanced with bicycle parking.
- Subdivisions should include alleys for service access.
- Developments should be walkable and oriented toward existing pedestrian corridors.
- Build at densities that can eventually support transit.

- Avoid: disconnected sidewalks, front-dominant garages, parking lots lining the street, or arterial-width streets in neighborhoods.

Principle 3: Neighborhoods Should Connect

Neighborhoods should be linked to surrounding areas wherever possible and with the consent of affected developments. Strong connections create resilient traffic networks with multiple routes for daily travel and emergency access. They also expand opportunities for residents to reach jobs and retail, supporting Easton's economic development goals and fostering a stronger sense of community across town. New developments should be evaluated with these considerations in mind:

- Provide multiple points of access for all modes.
- Use grid-like street patterns where conditions allow.
- Link to adjacent existing and future developments and continue the grid pattern, with the consent of the existing developments.
- Connect open spaces into the broader green infrastructure system.

Principle 4: Neighborhoods Should Offer Diverse Housing

This principle supports the Plan's Housing objectives. Beyond the socioeconomic benefits of attainable housing, it seeks to create streetscapes that echo Easton's historic pattern of incremental, varied development. Projects should be evaluated on how well they integrate a mix of uses and provide housing in a wide range of forms, types, sizes, and price points within the same neighborhood. Evaluating whether a project meets this principle should consider:

- Affordable units should blend in design with their neighbors.
- Prominent facades should mix housing types, sizes, and styles.
- Provide unit types and prices not already met in nearby areas.
- Adaptive reuse of underused non-residential buildings for housing is encouraged.
- Avoid: monotonous typologies, segregation of unit types, projects offering only single-family and apartments, townhomes without variation, or price ranges excluding households below 100% of Easton's AMI.

Principle 5: Environment Should Shape Design

Consistent with Smart Growth principles, focusing development within Town limits reduces pressure on surrounding farmland, habitats, and sensitive environmental areas. Even so, Easton still has a responsibility to mitigate impacts inside its boundaries. Development should work with—rather than against—the

environmental realities of each site. In line with the Plan's Ecology and Sustainability goals, proposals should be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Greenfield development must justify the conversion of valuable land.
- Prioritize brownfield redevelopment and adaptive reuse.
- Preserve and integrate topography, streams, and natural features into site design.
- Use existing vegetation and supplement with native species.
- Design lighting and multi-story buildings to reduce bird strikes.
- Require energy-efficient, durable building practices consistent with adopted building codes and energy standards.
- Address flooding, heat, and other climate-related risks.
- Improve stormwater runoff quality.

Principle 6: Development Should Be Fiscally Sustainable

Land is a limited resource, and its conversion carries unavoidable environmental costs. Developments should therefore demonstrate long-term value to the community, measured against the expense of maintaining infrastructure and services. This principle reflects a Smart Growth approach to infrastructure planning and supports development patterns identified through Easton's Value Per Acre analysis as fiscally beneficial to the Town. In line with the Land Use, Community Facilities, and Sustainability elements of the Plan, applications should be evaluated using the following considerations:

- Projects must balance the cost of infrastructure and services with long-term community benefit.
- Require fiscal impact studies for major subdivisions and greenfield projects.
- Encourage infill and adaptive reuse.
- Size parking appropriately based on demands and redevelop underused lots.
- Avoid: sprawling low-density projects, leapfrog growth, unfunded infrastructure obligations, or excessive parking.

Principle 7: Easton Is a Unique Place

Easton's rich history and its incremental, individualized development pattern are worth protecting and should guide modern projects. The goal is not to replicate the historic district's aesthetic, but to honor Easton's identity by creating distinctive, memorable places that inspire pride and curiosity.

Applicants should therefore consider:

- New development should honor Easton's legacy while adding something distinct and lasting.

- Create designs that are modern yet harmonious with surrounding character.
- Restore and adaptively reuse historic structures where possible.
- Preserve historic or unique site features.
- Design open spaces to be engaging and interactive.
- Use multiple builders in large projects to encourage variety.
- Employ repetition only when purposeful and expressive.
- Keep signage informative, not overwhelming.
- Avoid: template-based developments, strip retail, brand-driven architecture, cheap historic imitations, or redevelopment that displaces existing communities.

In short, developers should create places that reflect Easton's present moment—unique spaces the community will value and remember, just as we now recognize and treasure our historic downtown and neighborhoods.

Principle 8: Be a Good Neighbor

No property in Easton exists in isolation. Land use and development decisions should be made with respect for the people who live, work, and play nearby. Easton residents value collaborative placemaking, which—when used constructively—can produce stronger designs and more positive outcomes. Beyond the process, sites should be developed with courtesy toward neighbors and awareness of potential impacts. In this spirit of community-oriented development, evaluators should expect:

- Development should contribute positively to its surroundings and foster community.
- Engage neighbors early, especially for large projects.
- Align projects with small area plans and charrette outcomes.
- Include improvements and amenities that benefit both project residents and the broader community.
- Use open space to buffer incompatible uses.
- Minimize noise, light, and other negative impacts.
- This principle is not a tool for blocking density or innovation but a reminder of the value of collaboration and mutual respect.

This principle is not meant to block higher densities or innovative designs. Instead, it should foster frank dialogue among community members about their goals and needs.

PROMOTE INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

The public clearly stated, and the Planning Commission strongly agrees, that the bulk of new growth over the upcoming planning period can and should be accommodated through infill and redevelopment. If annexation is constrained (see below), then allowing reasonable density through Accessory Dwelling Units, missing middle housing, and low to mid-rise multi-family within the existing Town limits is necessary to accommodate demand for population growth and to alleviate rising housing costs without adding to potential outward traffic congestion. Specific actions to advance this initiative may include:

- Reimagining the Planned Redevelopment Overlay District to ensure that it both enables the type of redevelopment desired and does so in a manner that is minimally disruptive to surrounding neighborhoods.

- Encourages Brownfield redevelopment both through the land use/zoning aspect of ensuring that the desirable reuse is permitted (or at least possible) and through the financial feasibility aspect by working with developers to identify potential funding sources.

- Working with owners of outdated strip shopping centers to facilitate their redevelopment consistent with the Vision of this Plan.

- Adopting ~~a Small Area Plan~~design and development objectives for the site of the current hospital and working with the eventual new property-owner to facilitate ~~the ideas/desires expressed in that Plan~~them.

MANAGE GROWTH BY ANNEXATION

The flip side to encouraging the bulk of growth over the next ten years to occur in the form of infill and redevelopment is the discouragement of growth through annexation. As indicated throughout this Plan, we believe that it is entirely possible to accommodate ~~all~~ anticipated residential growth for the next ten years without having to annex new lands into the Town. We further believe that this should be the Town's policy for the next ten years. However, there are a number of mitigating factors that suggest it would be unwise to absolutely preclude the possibility of annexations. Such factors include:

- ~~Owners of logical infill or redevelopment sites may, for whatever reason, not be interested in the development/redevelopment of their properties.¶~~

- It may be desirable to annex land within the growth area in order to also annex a longstanding County subdivision (e.g., Crofton, Old Beechwood, Old Stoney Ridge) and not violate State Annexation law regarding contiguity or the creation of enclaves of non-municipal land surrounded by municipal land.

- Some limited annexation is actually called for in official Town Small Area Plans (portions of Easton

Point in the Port Street Small Area Plan, for example).

Given that Annexation is a legislatively discretionary action of the Town Council, this can be accomplished through the development of, and adherence to, a set of appropriate ~~annexation policies.~~ policies for selective and highly conditional annexations, especially considering that future growth is limited by the urban growth boundary. Future development must use land efficiently and responsibly. To that end, the following ~~policies~~considerations are suggested as appropriate for Easton during this planning period, in the event that the Town Council is of a mind to entertain a potential Annexation request~~:~~.

None of these considerations confer any right to annexation.

- 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.~~ Isolated and remote projects cannot be approved.
- Purely speculative annexations without conceptual plans should not be considered. For major residential annexation petitions of 10 acres or greater, developments should demonstrate avoidance of single-use, suburban tract low-density housing by providing minimum thresholds for middle housing units and a mix of at least three distinct housing types per development. For smaller annexation petitions, developments must demonstrate reasonable compatibility with adjacent densities while incorporating missing-middle housing forms appropriate to the site scale.
- New annexations should contribute directly to transportation network connectivity for various modes of travel as well as adherence to complete street principals, goals, and classifications to prevent or reduce added corridor congestion.

- 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 a long-standing enclave in a Boundary Refinement Area, 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~~a clear 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~~For major petitions, this may take the form of capital Improvements for a multi-modal transportation system, dedicated land for municipal/community facilities, or a regional-scale park. For smaller petitions, this may be satisfied through targeted off-site infrastructure improvements, sidewalk/trail gap closures, or fee-in-lieu contributions.
- Proposed annexations must demonstrate a neutral or net-positive fiscal impact on the Town. For major annexation petitions of 10 or more acres, applicants shall submit a comprehensive Fiscal Impact Analysis prepared by a qualified third party using a Town-approved methodology. For minor annexation petitions under 10 acres, a formal Fiscal Impact Analysis is waived if the applicant demonstrates that the property directly fronts existing municipal water, sewer, and public street infrastructure, and will not require public system extensions through Town-funded capital improvements. In addition, the applicant shall submit a standardized Town Fiscal Worksheet detailing estimated property tax yield, utility connection fees, impact fees, and confirmation of private maintenance responsibilities for internal infrastructure. Annexations must propose to ~~minimize~~prevent harm to sensitive environmental features, which should be protected and enhanced rather than ignored or eliminated.
- Projects ~~which~~should 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.~~ incorporate key TND principles such as walkable block structures and streetscapes). Strictly suburban development will not be approved.
- 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.~~
- Annexation of Town-owned properties, or requests initiated by the Town, should be considered favorably, provided they are consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan.

Annexations ~~should~~will be the exception rather than the rule during the ~~2025-2035~~2026-2036 plan cycle and no exception ~~should~~will be made unless the proposed annexation is consistent with these policies ~~and clearly demonstrates that if approved, the Annexation will have a net positive fiscal impact on the Town.~~. Furthermore, satisfying some or even all of the criteria above does not ~~guarantee~~imply that the request will

be approved, as Annexation remains a discretionary power of the Town Council nor does it ensure a favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission.

SMALL AREA PLANNING

Small Area Plans have been utilized in Easton for decades. These Plans function as an extension of the Comprehensive Plan. Because they focus on a smaller geographic area, more specific recommendations can often be made than in the overall Comprehensive Plan, sometimes right down to the parcel-specific level. Currently we have three active Small Area Plans. The most recent is the Port Street/Easton Point Plan. Although little development activity has occurred since that Plan was adopted, it was not so long ago as to be considered irrelevant. Furthermore, the Vision it advances is still considered appropriate and desirable for the area.

The other two adopted Small Area Plans are those for the Downtown or Town Center and the East End. These are both somewhat more dated. The East End Plan is in the process of being significantly revised. Given the passage of time and the changes that have occurred in Downtown Easton since that Plan was adopted, it seems appropriate to begin planning and budgeting for a replacement of it during this upcoming planning period.

Given the growth dynamics in the Town and our Future Growth Areas, a number of candidates for Small Area Plans come to mind for future planning. These include:

- The site of the current hospital and its immediate surroundings.
- The general area of the new hospital.
- Idlewild and Dutchman's corridors (where so many medical offices are located and which may potentially relocate closer to the new hospital).
- Marlboro Avenue Corridor (potential redevelopment).
- The North Aurora Street Corridor.
- Route 50 Corridor (redevelopment, design and access improvements).
- Future Growth Areas (a closer examination of discrete subsection of the growth area to consider more detailed land use suggestions).

D. Goals and Objectives

GOAL #1: Ensure that future development, proposed development related programs and redevelopment projects are implemented consistent with the spirit of this Comprehensive Plan generally, and are evaluated for consistency with the 2026 Design Principles for Easton specifically.

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 #2: Realize the benefits of revitalization through focusing on Smart Growth 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 #3: Research and, where appropriate, enact policies and measures that enable implementation of the Vision and spirit of this Comprehensive Plan.

OBJECTIVES:

- Research the legality of various methods of limiting growth to achieve ~~an~~a rolling three-year average annual growth rate of no more than 1% ~~per year.~~.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing rules and regulations in achieving the design goals and principles of this Plan.

- Establish criteria for when legal methods of limiting growth will be implemented. One criterion would be when the the three-year average compounded annual growth rate exceeds 1%.

GOAL #4: Coordinate planning efforts for areas and issues of mutual concern to 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#5: Facilitate an informed and involved citizenry. OBJECTIVES:

- Investigate methods to ensure 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 Town Boards and Commissions.

- Monitor the current and projected annual growth rate, publicly reporting it quarterly.

- If the 1% per annum target is exceeded on average for the specified period, take such legally permitted actions to mitigate any adverse effects and bring the growth rate back within the designated target.

13 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH DYNAMICS

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
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%	1.91%
Talbot County: 0.93%	0.52%
Eastern Shore: 1.05%	0.72%

Absolute Growth 1960-2020:	2000-2020
Easton: 10,764 (170%)	5,393 (46.1%)
Talbot County: 15,948 (73.9%)	3,714 (11.0%)
Eastern Shore: 213,245 (87.5%)	60,912 (15.4%)

Population Growth, Easton and Selected Communities (2000-2024)

	2020 Census	2022 ACS	2010 Census	% Change 2010-2020	% Change 2020-2022
EASTON	17,101	17,342	15,945	7.2%	1.4%
Centreville	4,724	4,700	4,285	10.3%	-0.5%
Cambridge	13,096	13,058	12,326	6.2%	-0.3%
Hurlock	2,070	2,284	2,092	-1.1%	10.3%
Denton	4,848	4,836	4,418	9.7%	-0.2%
St. Michaels	1,049	1,523	1,029	1.9%	45.2%

*- 2020 figure is from the Decennial US Census and is as of 8/1/2020

2022 figure is an estimate from the American Communities Survey (a US Census product) and is as of 7/1/22)

2010 figure is from the Decennial Census and is as of 4/1/2010

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

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

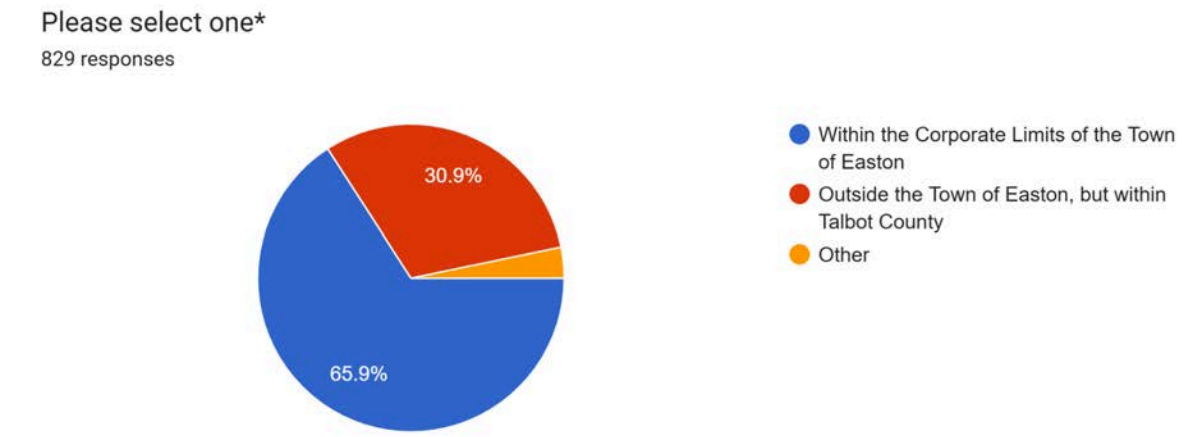
Table 5 Median Household Income			
	Easton	Talbot County	Maryland
1999	$36,464	$43,532	$52,868
2007	$46,378	$56,057	$68,080
2022	$72,771	$79,349	$91,431

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

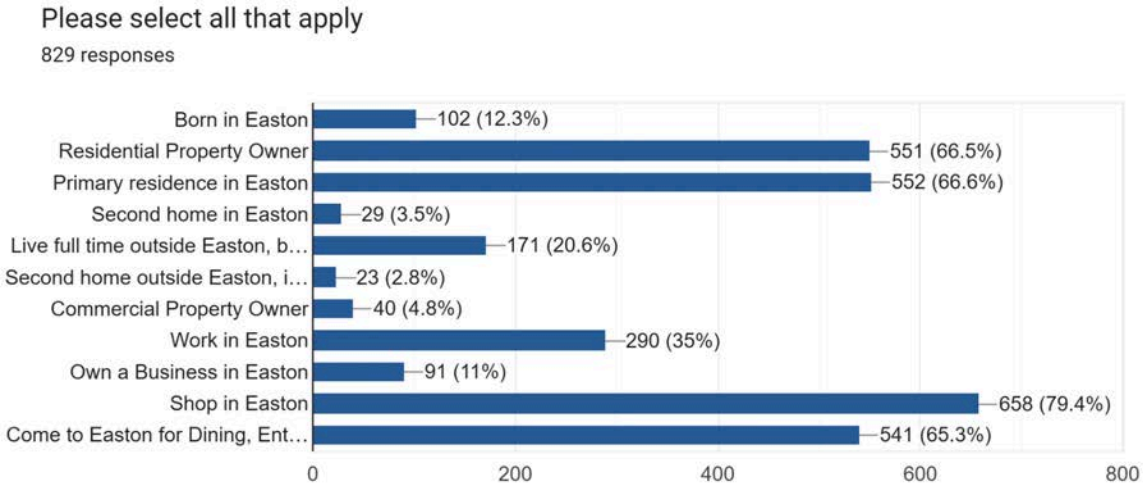
APPENDIX 2 - PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

Survey #1 - Big Picture Issues

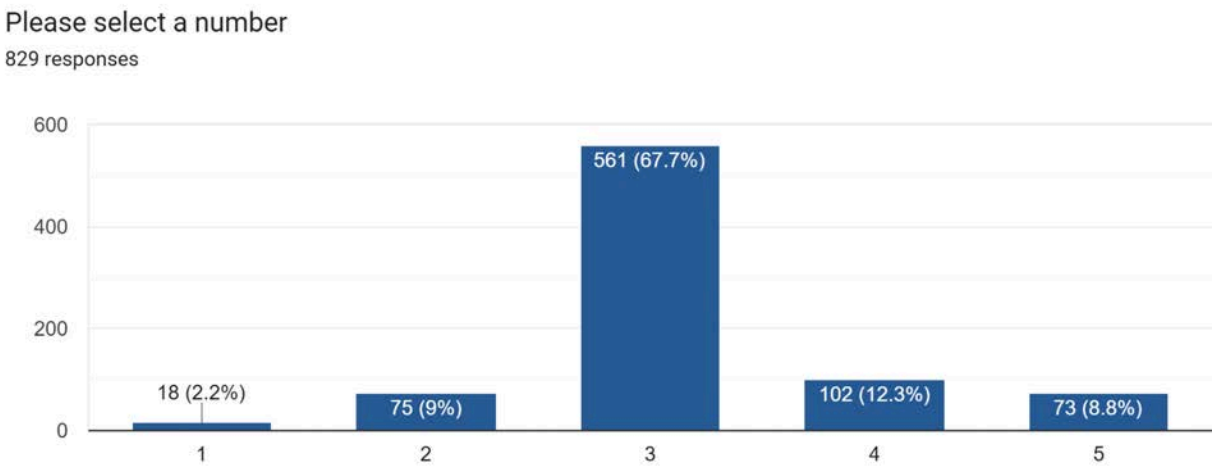
1 Where do you live?



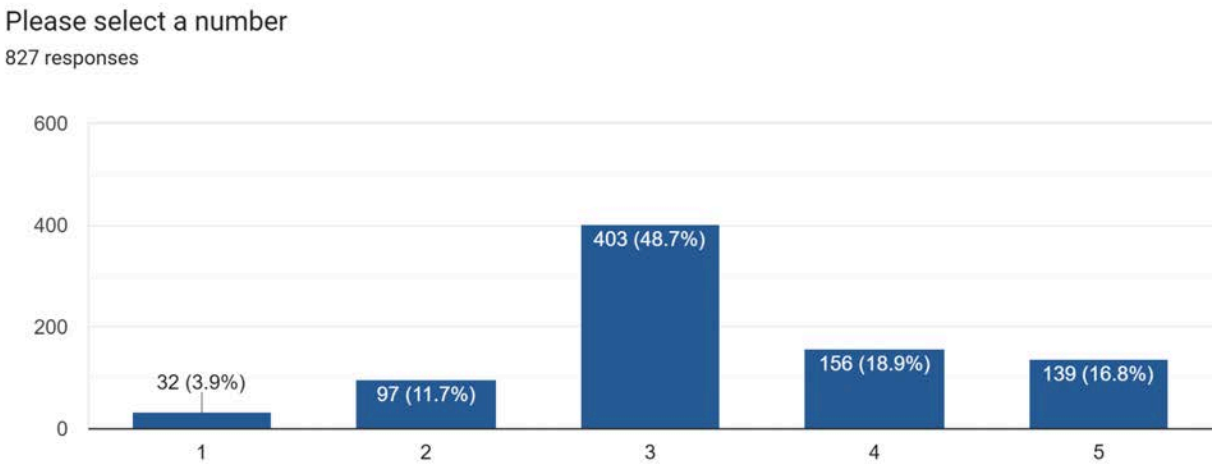
2. Interest in Easton?



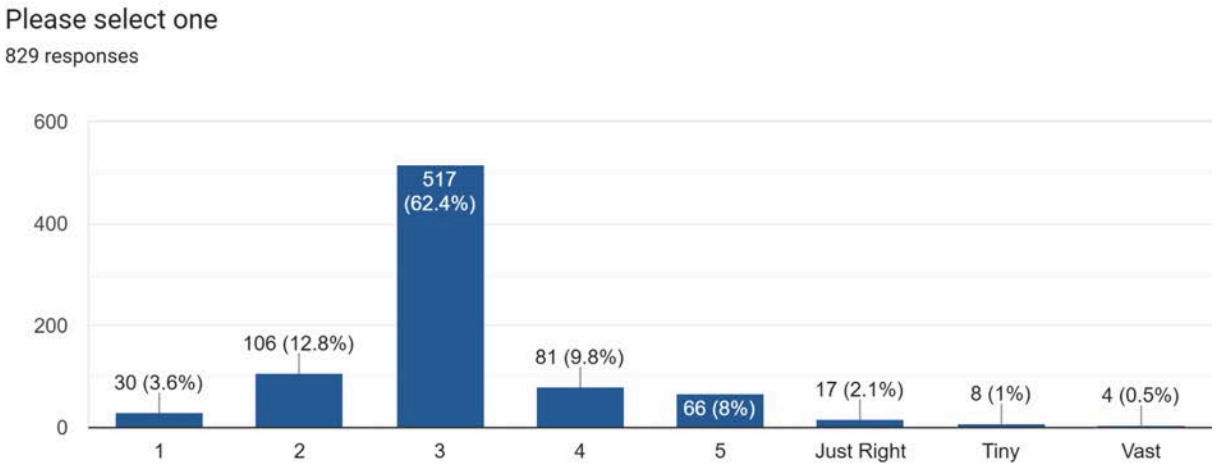
3. Easton's population is (From 1 = Too Small to 5 = Too Large)



4. Easton's Rate of Growth is (From 1 = Too slowly to 5 = Too Rapidly)



5. The geographic size of the Town is (1 = Too small to 5 = Too Large)



6. Percentage of Future Growth that should be Infill/redevelopment vs. new Greenfield Development

Top 5 Responses:

80/20 Infill (119)

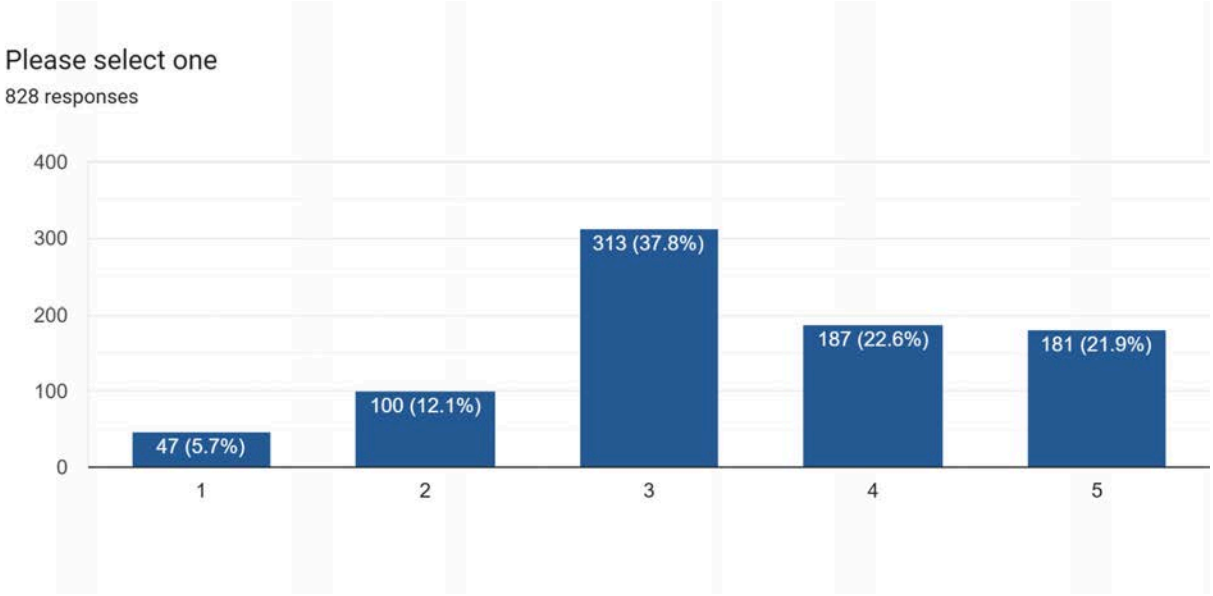
50/50 (83)

100% Infill (67)

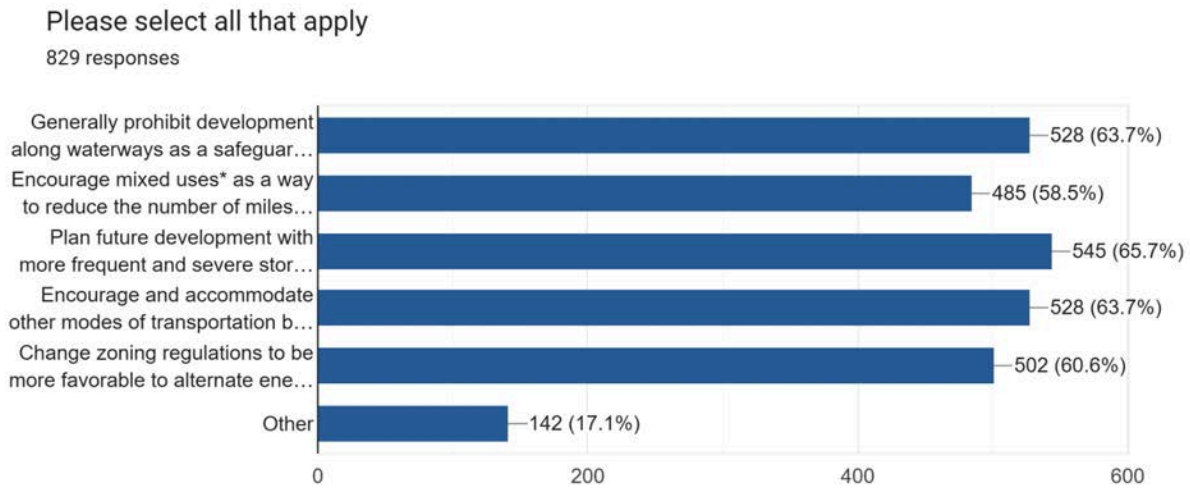
75/25 (52)

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):



8. Which of the following should be policies of the Town in light of Climate Change Impacts:



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:

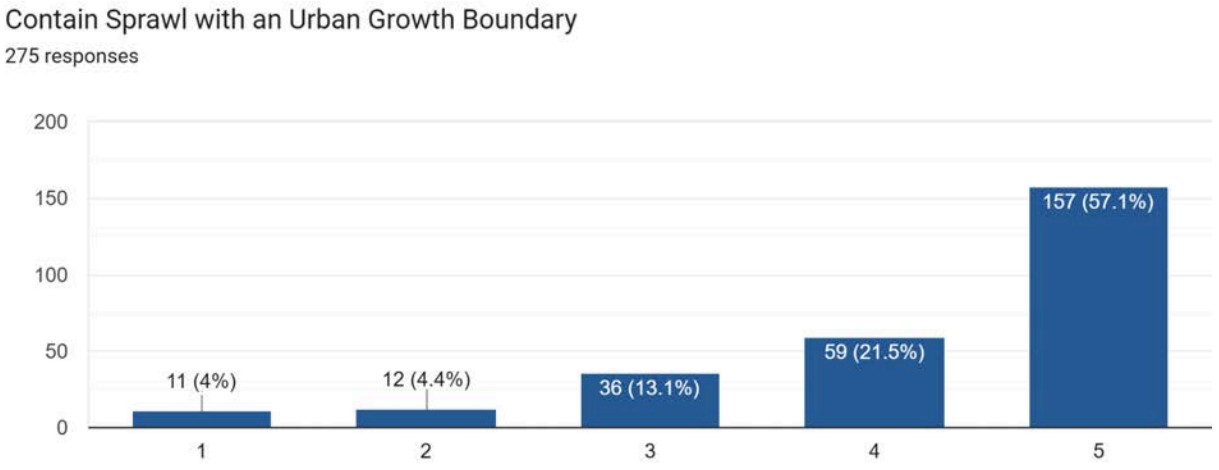
Most frequently noted suggestions were:

- **Trader Joe's (Far and away the most common response)**
- **Public Waterfront**

- **Home Depot**
- **Steakhouse**
- **Costco**
- **Brewery**
- **Downtown Grocery Store**

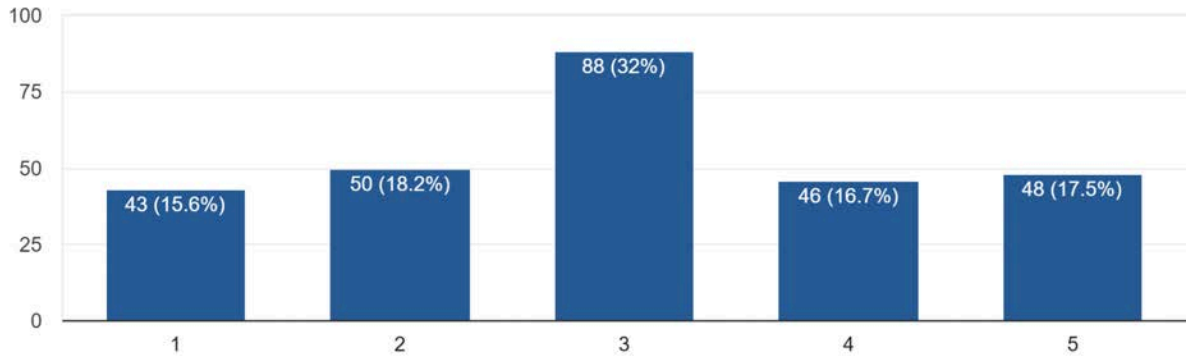
Survey # 2 - Quality of Life Issues

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):



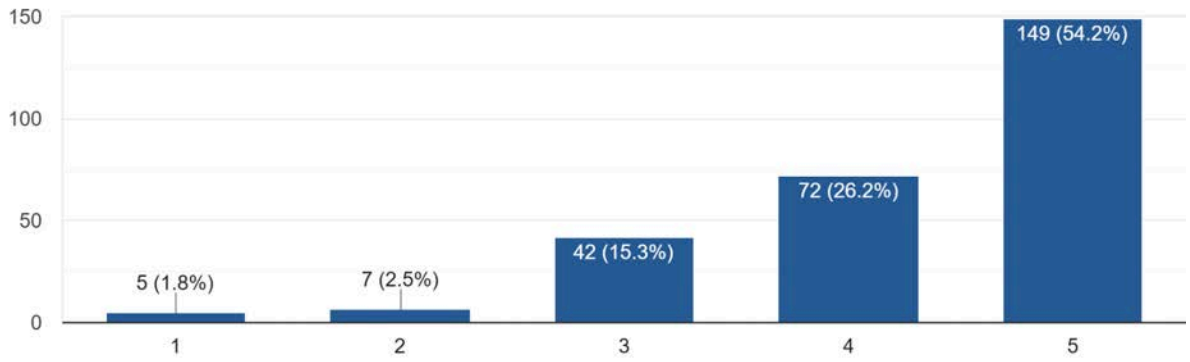
Increase Density

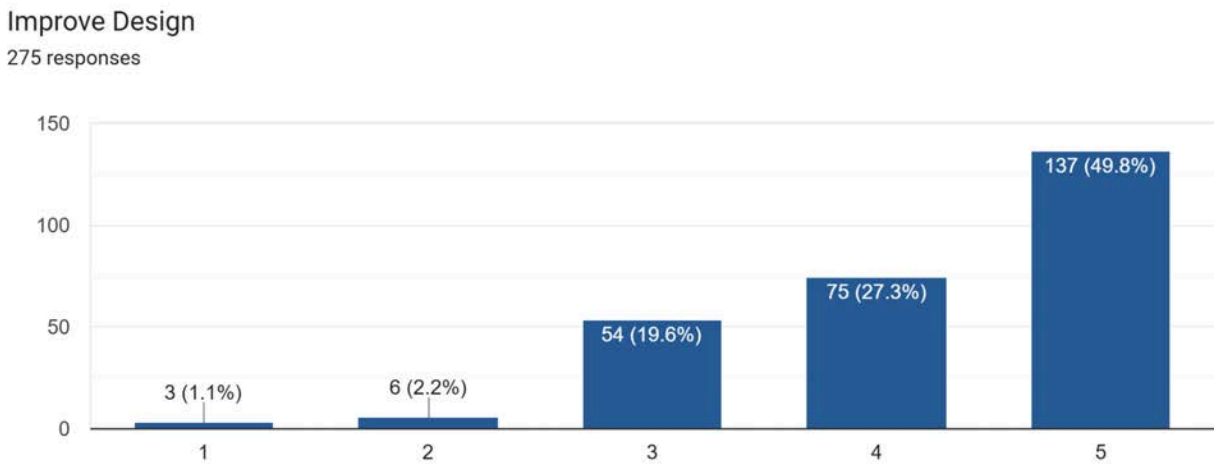
275 responses

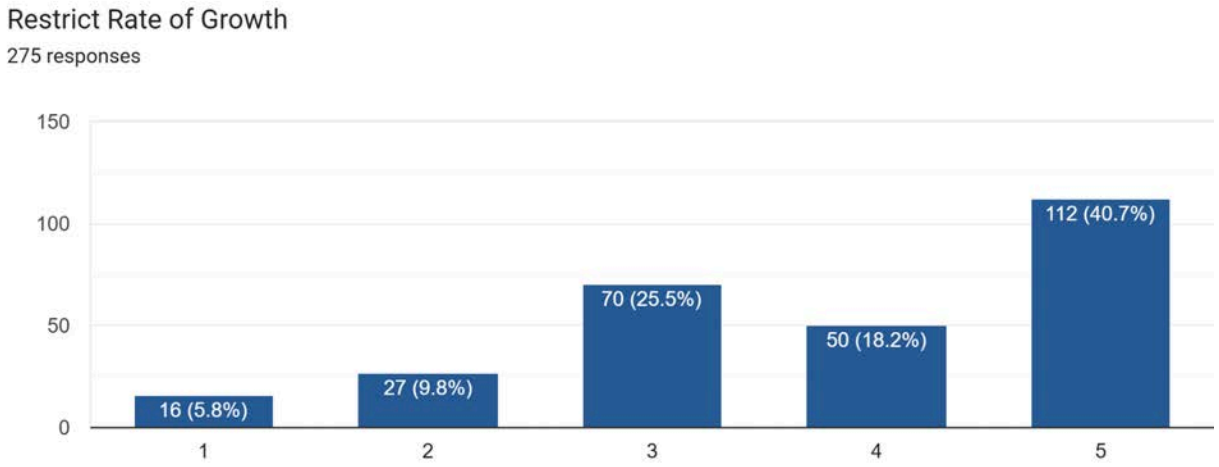


Build Neighborhoods (as opposed to Subdivisions)

275 responses



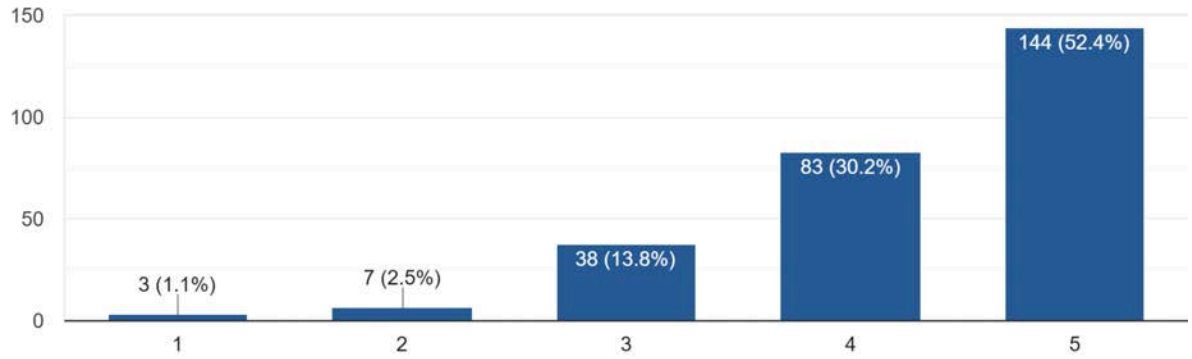




2. Please consider each of the following factors often associated with a community's quality of life and indicate the degree to which you think each factor affects current residents in terms of a decision to potentially locate here:

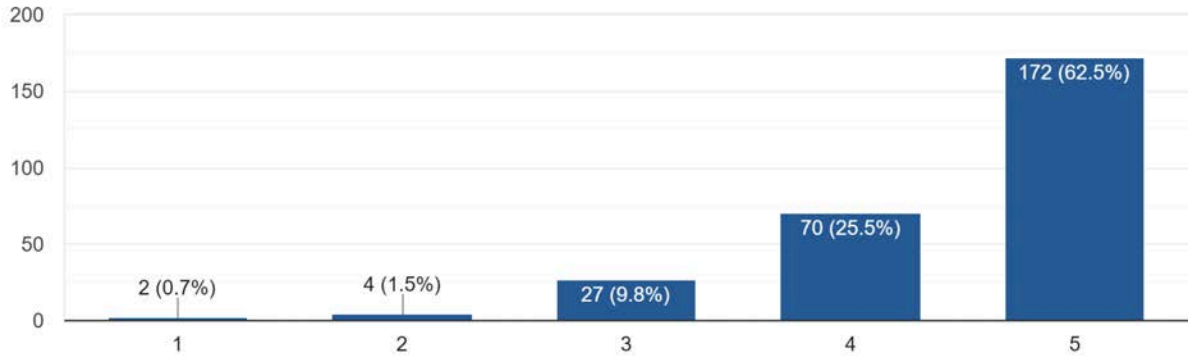
Parks

275 responses



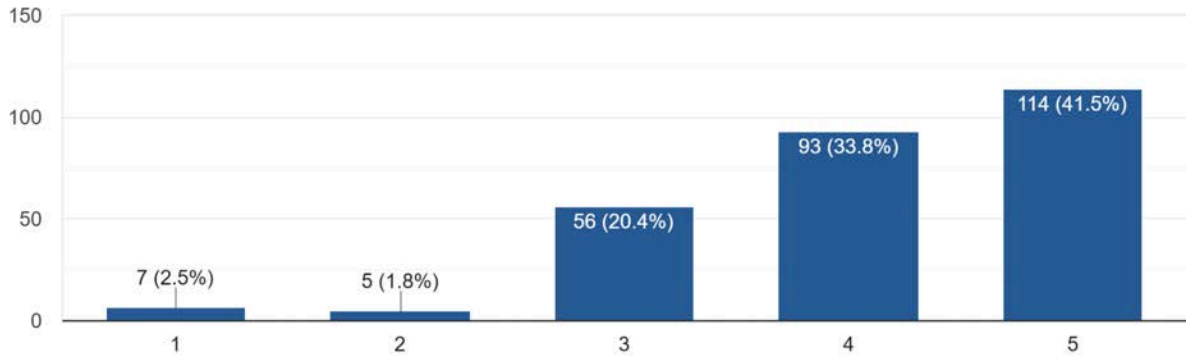
Walkability

275 responses



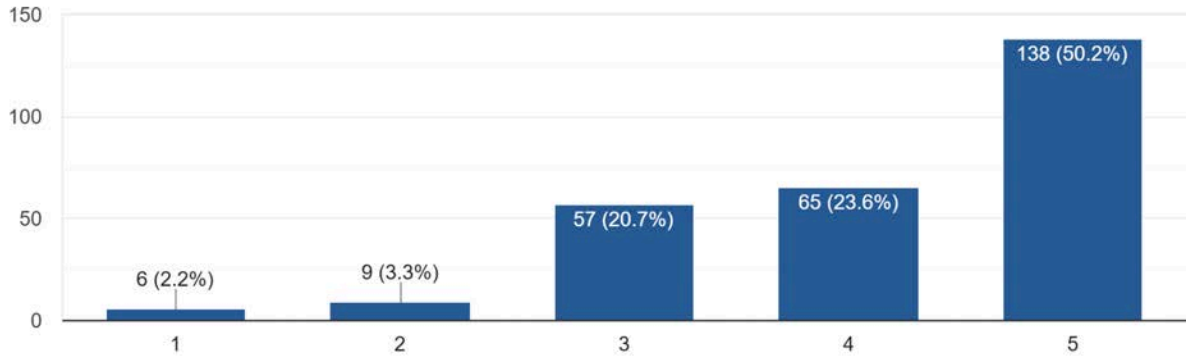
Housing Variety

275 responses



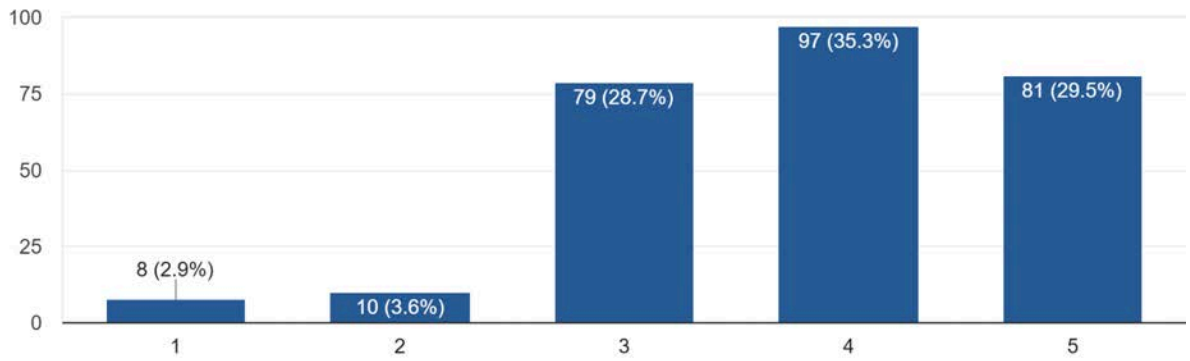
Housing Affordability

275 responses



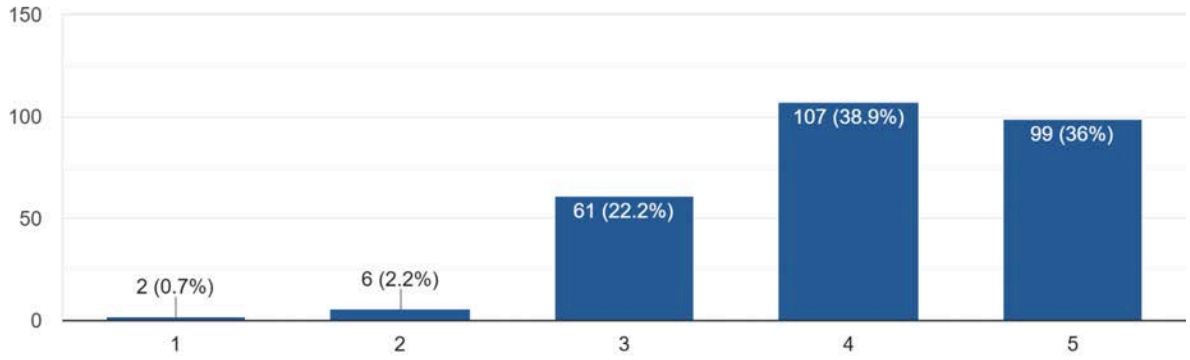
Shopping Options

275 responses



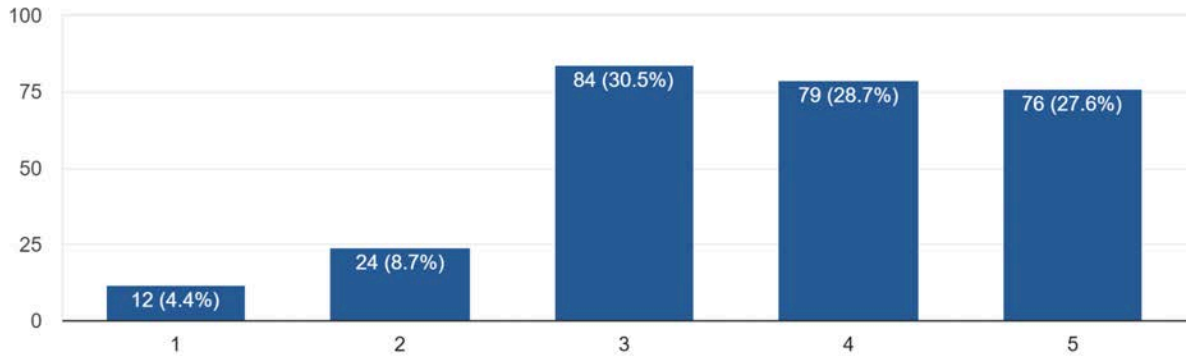
Dining Options

275 responses



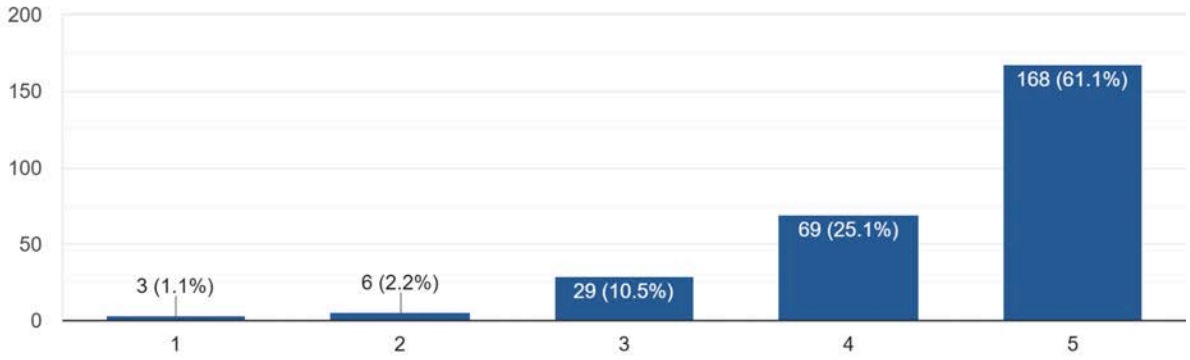
Transportation Option

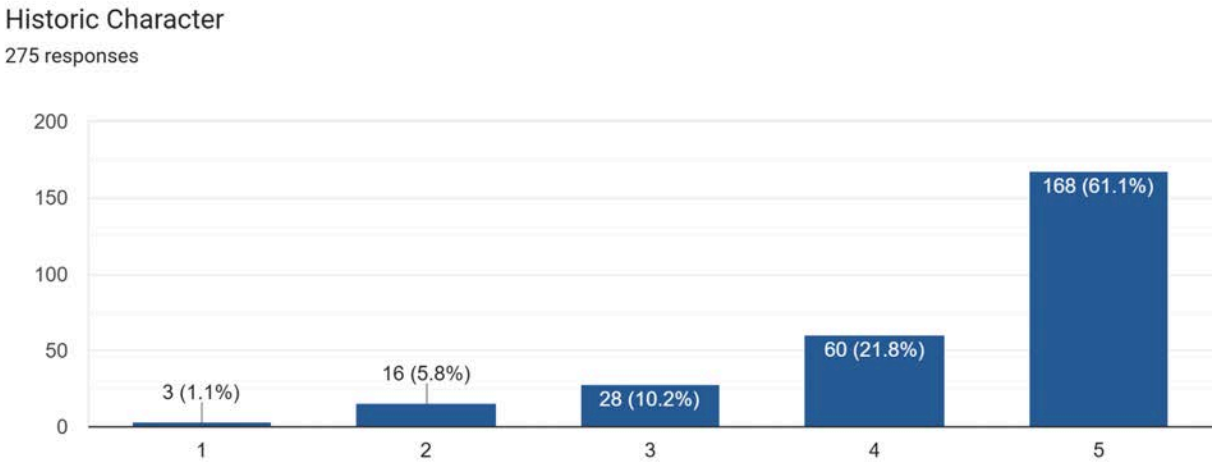
275 responses

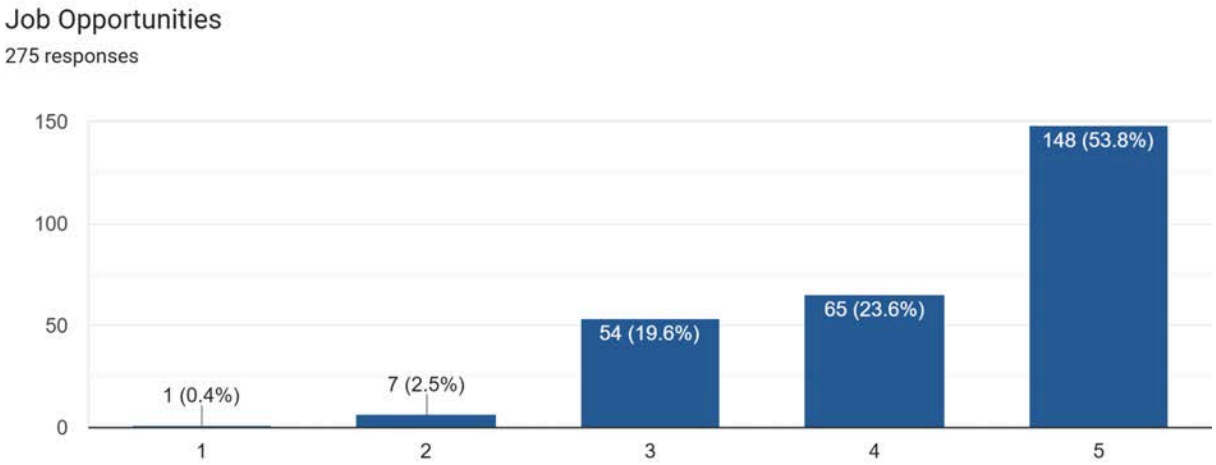


Downtown

275 responses







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?:

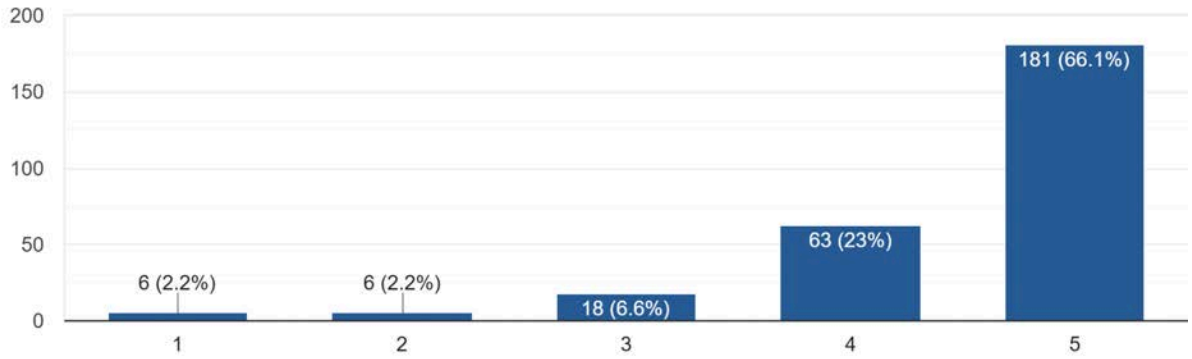
Frequently recurring responses included:

- **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:

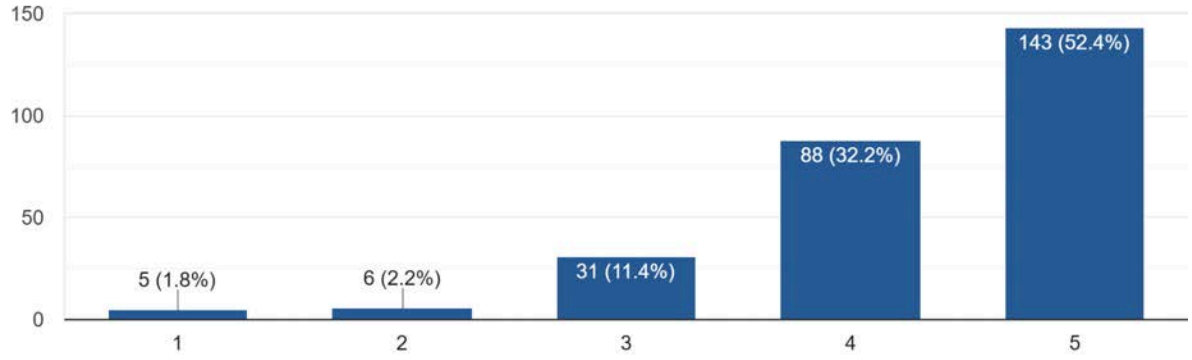
How Important is the Vision described above to the future of Easton?

274 responses



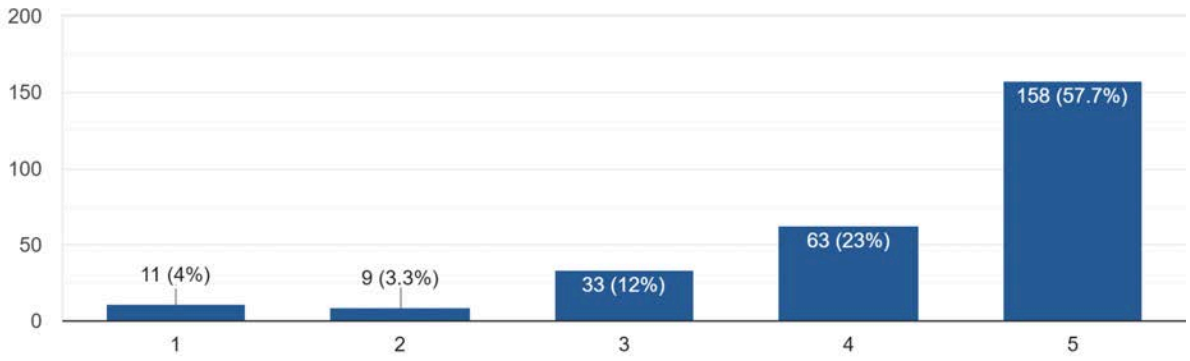
Residential Design Requirements

273 responses



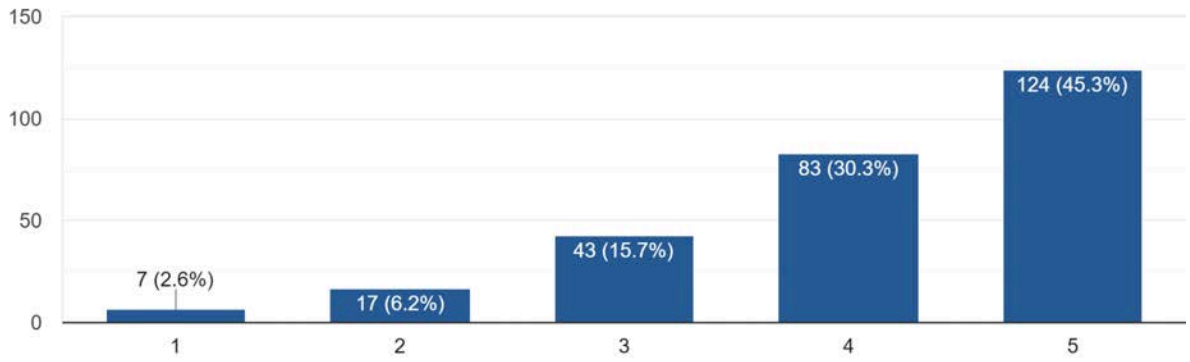
Standards to prohibit the construction of identical, or practically identical, homes within close proximity of one another

274 responses



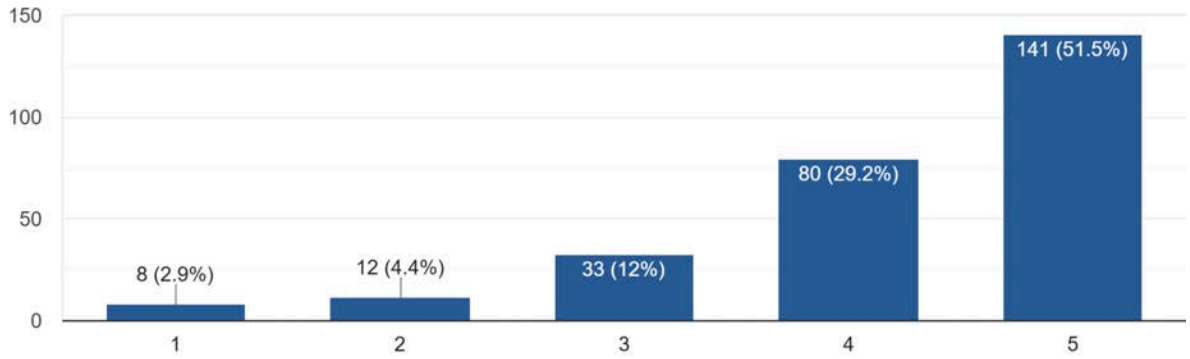
A variety of lot sizes in new subdivisions

274 responses



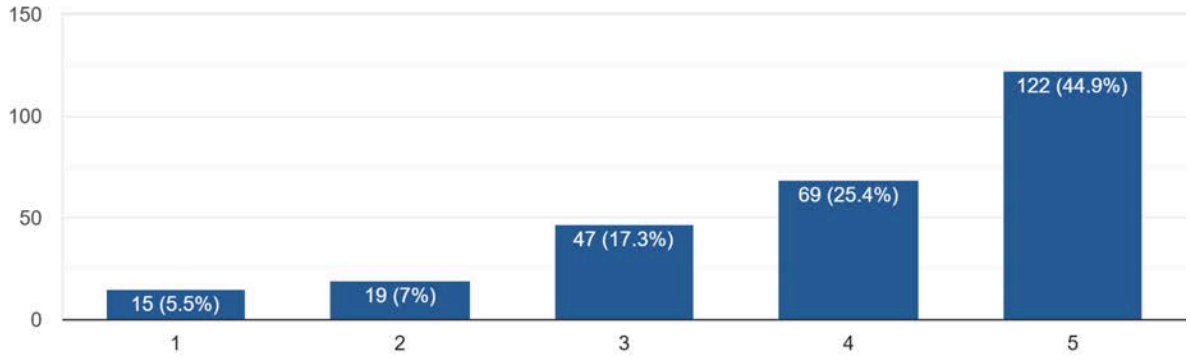
A variety of housing type in new subdivisions

274 responses

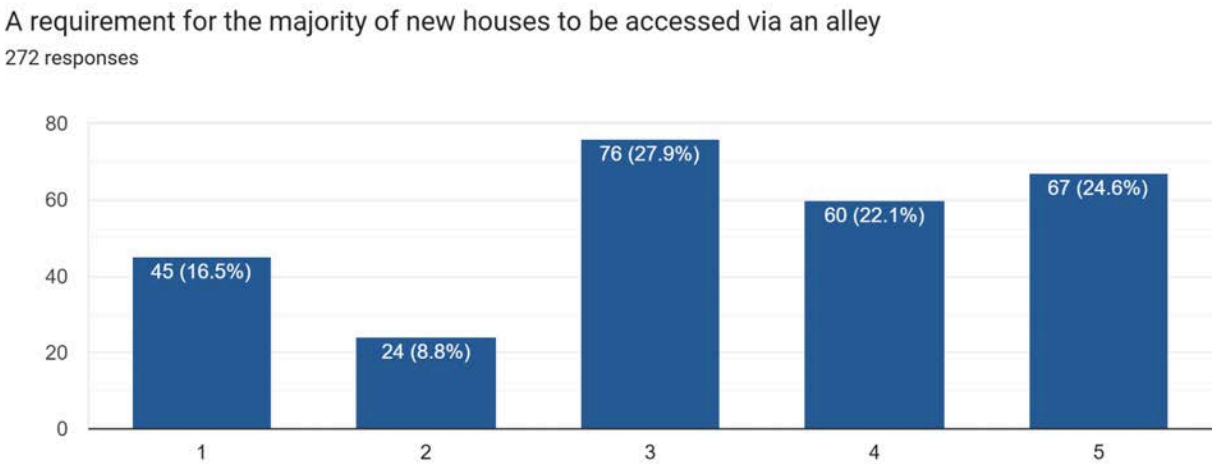


Mixed uses to allow cultural/institutional uses and neighborhood-scale commercial uses in addition to housing

272 responses



8.

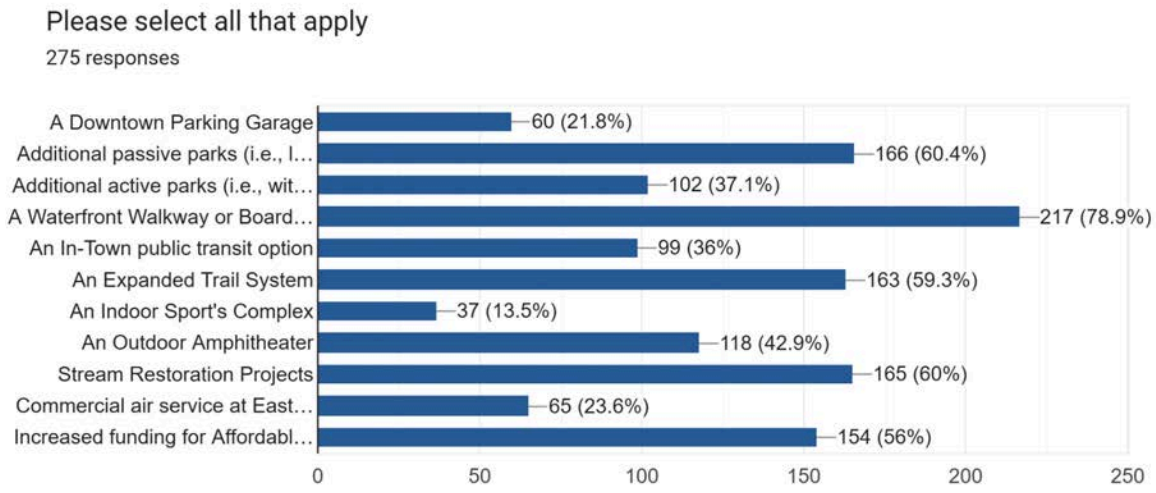


How should the current hospital site be redeveloped/reused?

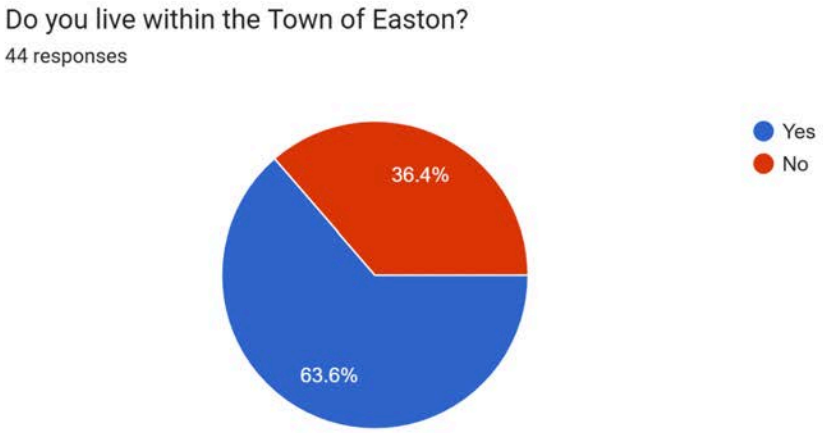
Top Responses were:

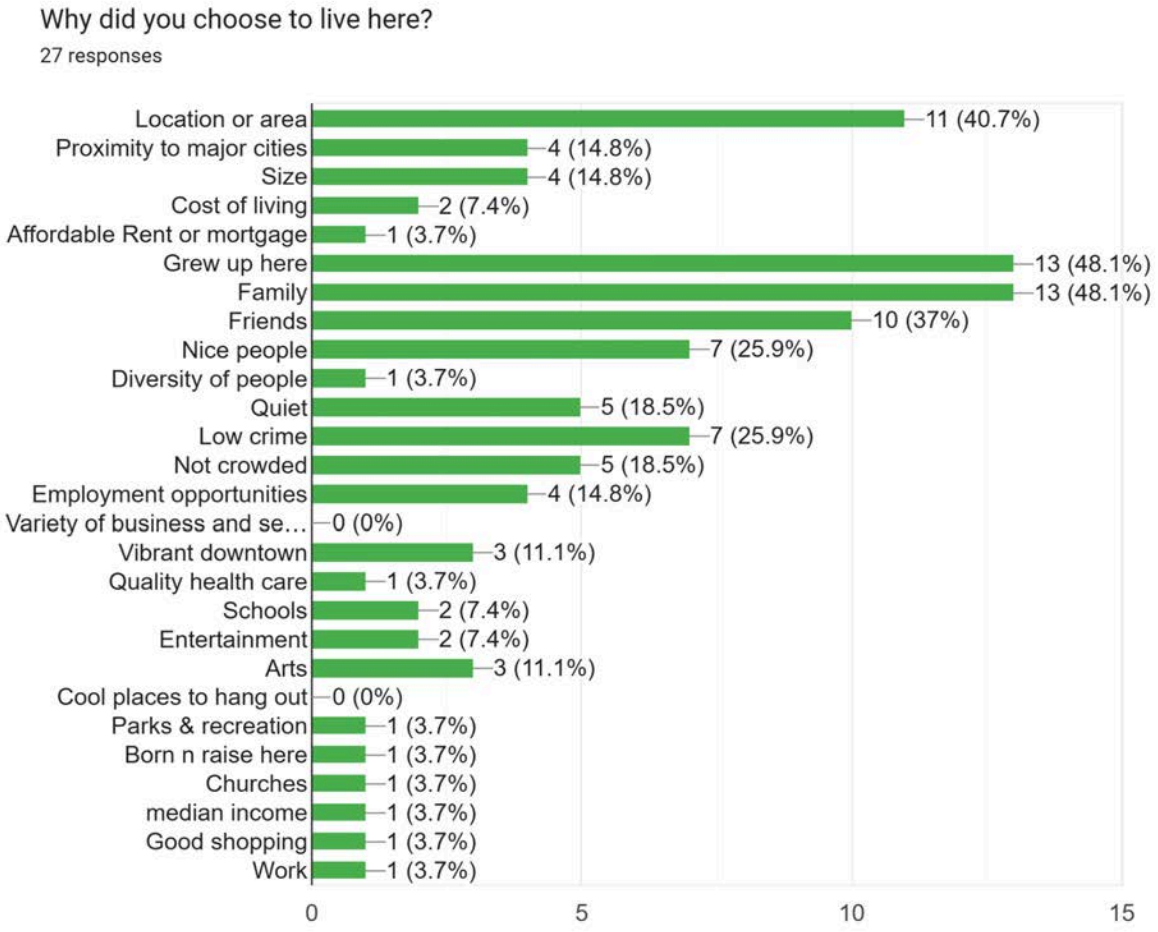
- **Affordable Housing**
- **Housing (in general)**
- **College**
- **Medical Use**
- **Mixed-use**
- **Park/Open Space**

9. Which of the following would you support even if it meant a tax increase?:



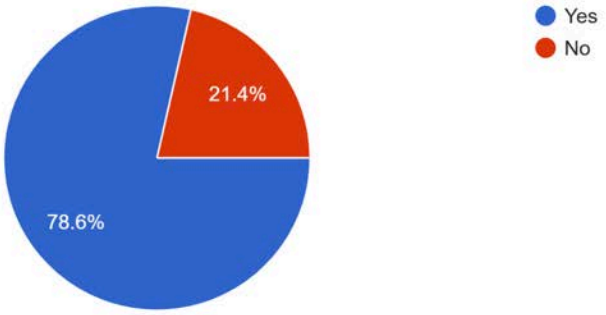
Survey #3 - Quality of Life (More Questions)




Why did you choose to live here?
27 responses
Location or area
11 (40.7%)
Proximity to major cities
4 (14.8%)
Size
4 (14.8%)
Cost of living
2 (7.4%)
Affordable Rent or mortgage
1 (3.7%)
Grew up here
13 (48.1%)
Family
13 (48.1%)
Friends
10 (37%)
Nice people
7 (25.9%)
Diversity of people
1 (3.7%)
Quiet
5 (18.5%)
Low crime
7 (25.9%)
Not crowded
5 (18.5%)
Employment opportunities
4 (14.8%)
Variety of business and se…
0 (0%)
Vibrant downtown
3 (11.1%)
Quality health care
1 (3.7%)
Schools
2 (7.4%)
Entertainment
2 (7.4%)
Arts
3 (11.1%)
Cool places to hang out
0 (0%)
Parks & recreation
1 (3.7%)
Born n raise here
1 (3.7%)
Churches
1 (3.7%)
median income
1 (3.7%)
Good shopping
1 (3.7%)
Work
1 (3.7%)
0
5
10
15

Do you work in Easton?

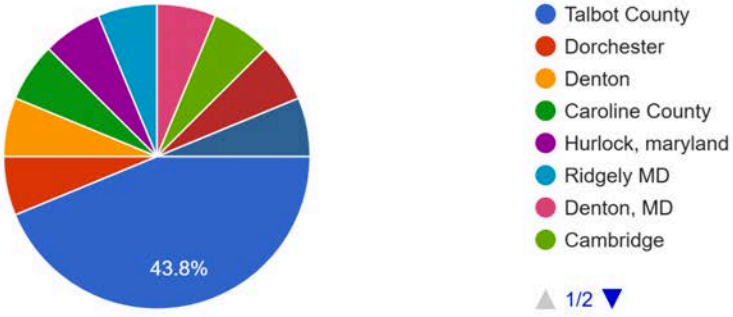
28 responses

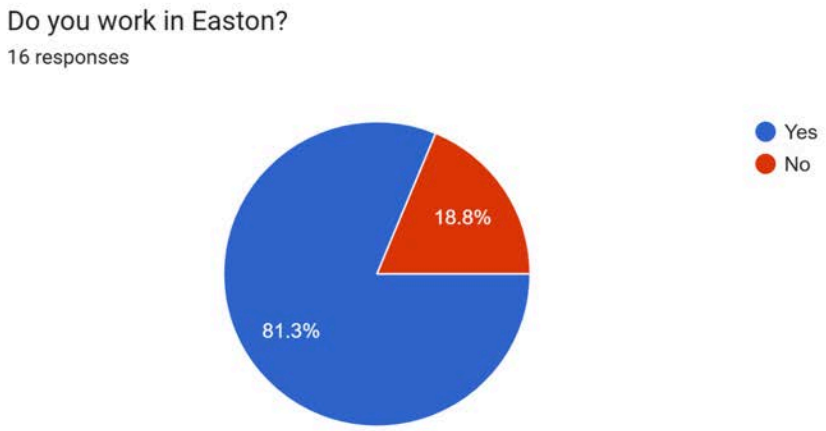


For non-Easton residents:

Where do you live? (If other please include Town and State)

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 our 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. Stict 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 wouid moved 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

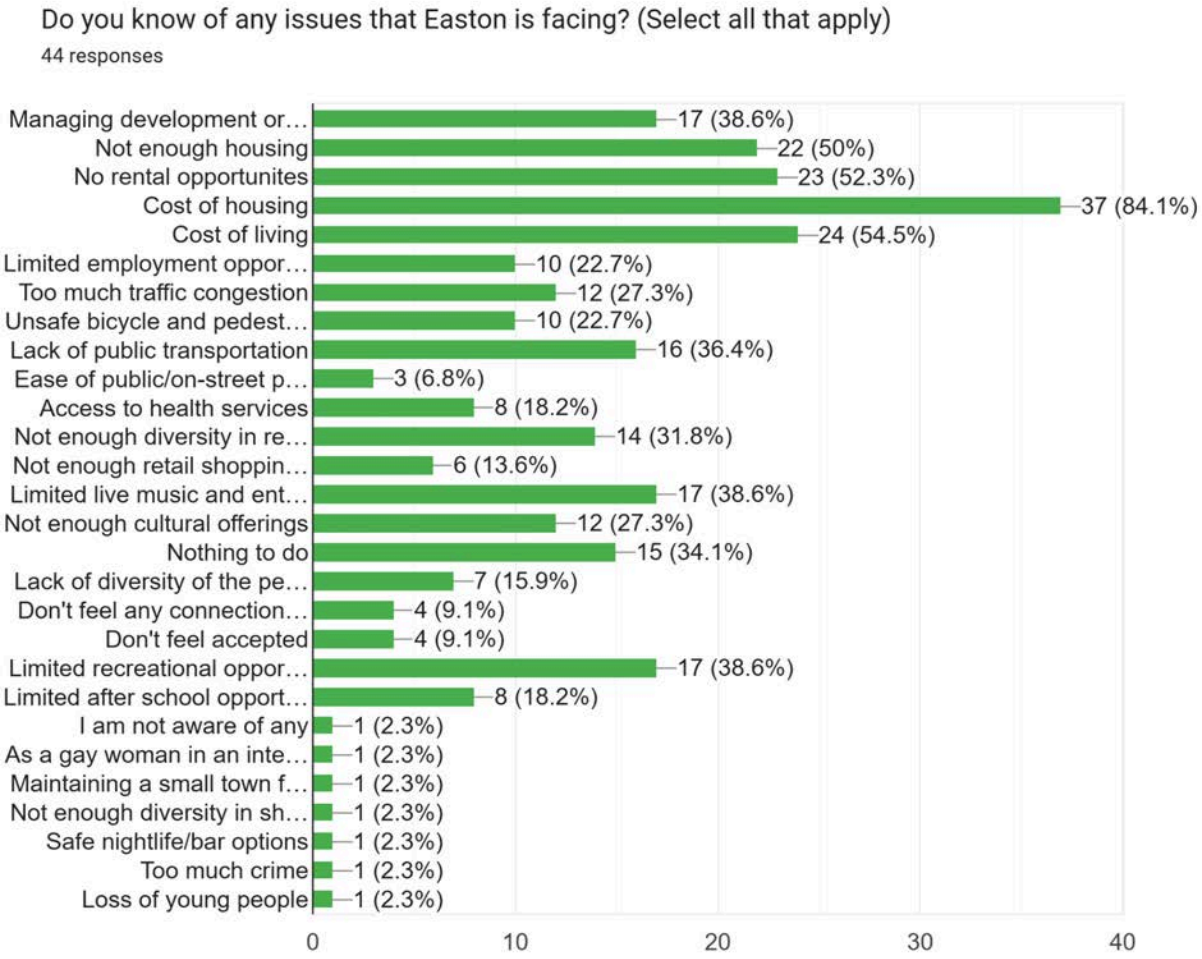
peaceful, friendly, and laid-back vibe.

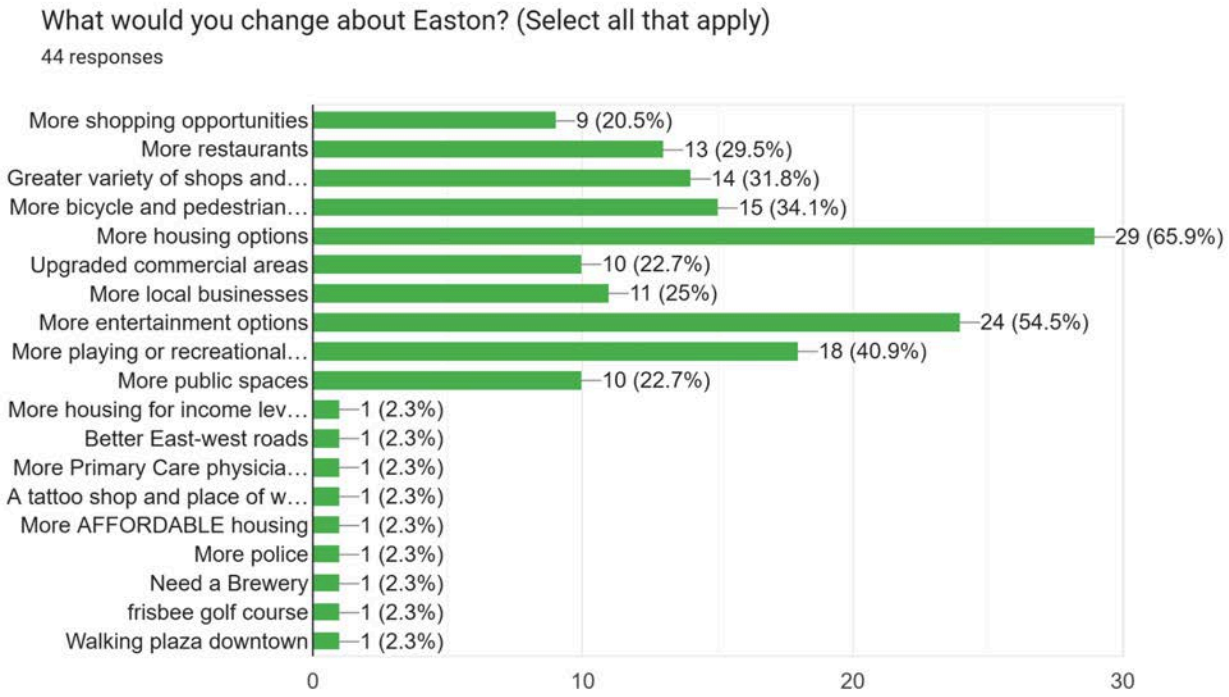
- Demographics & Lifestyle: Several responses noted Easton as a retirement community geared towards retirees and wealthy members, with a "rich white people" or "preppy" impression.

- 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."

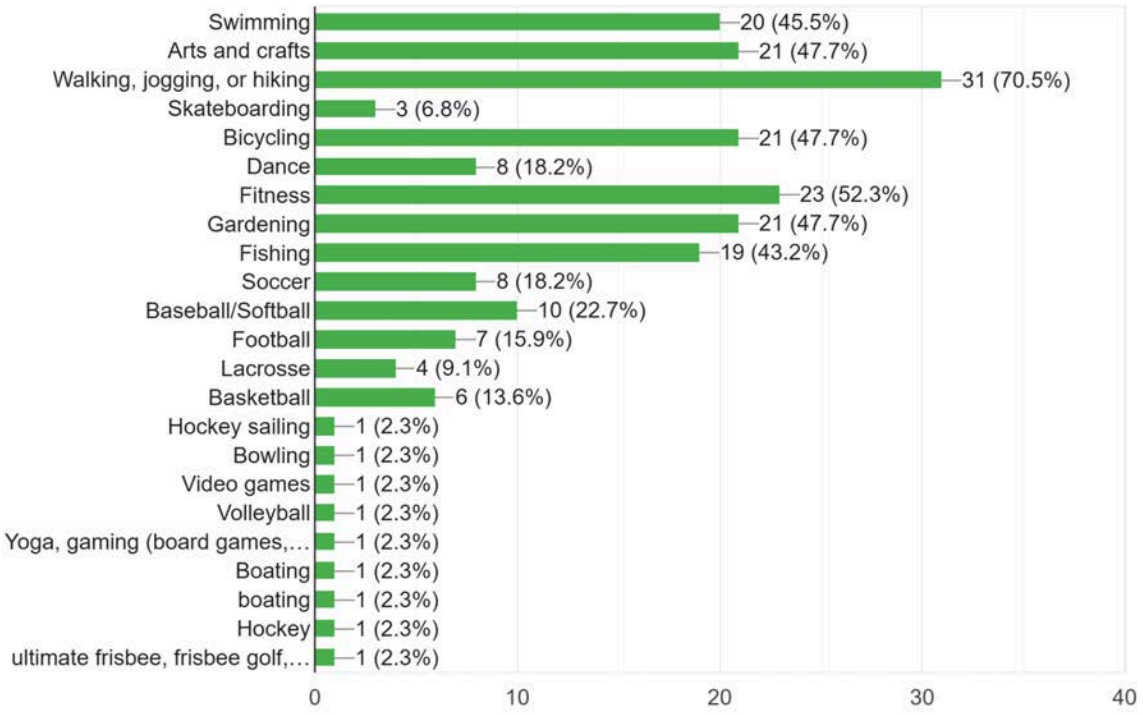
- Overall Impression: Easton was broadly seen as a nice, beautiful, and enjoyable town, with some calling it "perfect" or stating "everything works."


Do you know of any issues that Easton is facing? (Select all that apply)
44 responses
Managing development or… 17 (38.6%)
Not enough housing 22 (50%)
No rental opportunites 23 (52.3%)
Cost of housing 37 (84.1%)
Cost of living 24 (54.5%)
Limited employment oppor… 10 (22.7%)
Too much traffic congestion 12 (27.3%)
Unsafe bicycle and pedest… 10 (22.7%)
Lack of public transportation 16 (36.4%)
Ease of public/on-street p… 3 (6.8%)
Access to health services 8 (18.2%)
Not enough diversity in re… 14 (31.8%)
Not enough retail shoppin… 6 (13.6%)
Limited live music and ent… 17 (38.6%)
Not enough cultural offerings 12 (27.3%)
Nothing to do 15 (34.1%)
Lack of diversity of the pe… 7 (15.9%)
Don't feel any connection… 4 (9.1%)
Don't feel accepted 4 (9.1%)
Limited recreational oppor… 17 (38.6%)
Limited after school opport… 8 (18.2%)
I am not aware of any 1 (2.3%)
As a gay woman in an inte… 1 (2.3%)
Maintaining a small town f… 1 (2.3%)
Not enough diversity in sh… 1 (2.3%)
Safe nightlife/bar options 1 (2.3%)
Too much crime 1 (2.3%)
Loss of young people 1 (2.3%)
0
10
20
30
40


What would you change about Easton? (Select all that apply)
44 responses
More shopping opportunities
9 (20.5%)
More restaurants
13 (29.5%)
Greater variety of shops and…
14 (31.8%)
More bicycle and pedestrian…
15 (34.1%)
More housing options
29 (65.9%)
Upgraded commercial areas
10 (22.7%)
More local businesses
11 (25%)
More entertainment options
24 (54.5%)
More playing or recreational…
18 (40.9%)
More public spaces
10 (22.7%)
More housing for income lev…
1 (2.3%)
Better East-west roads
1 (2.3%)
More Primary Care physicia…
1 (2.3%)
A tattoo shop and place of w…
1 (2.3%)
More AFFORDABLE housing
1 (2.3%)
More police
1 (2.3%)
Need a Brewery
1 (2.3%)
frisbee golf course
1 (2.3%)
Walking plaza downtown
1 (2.3%)
0
10
20
30

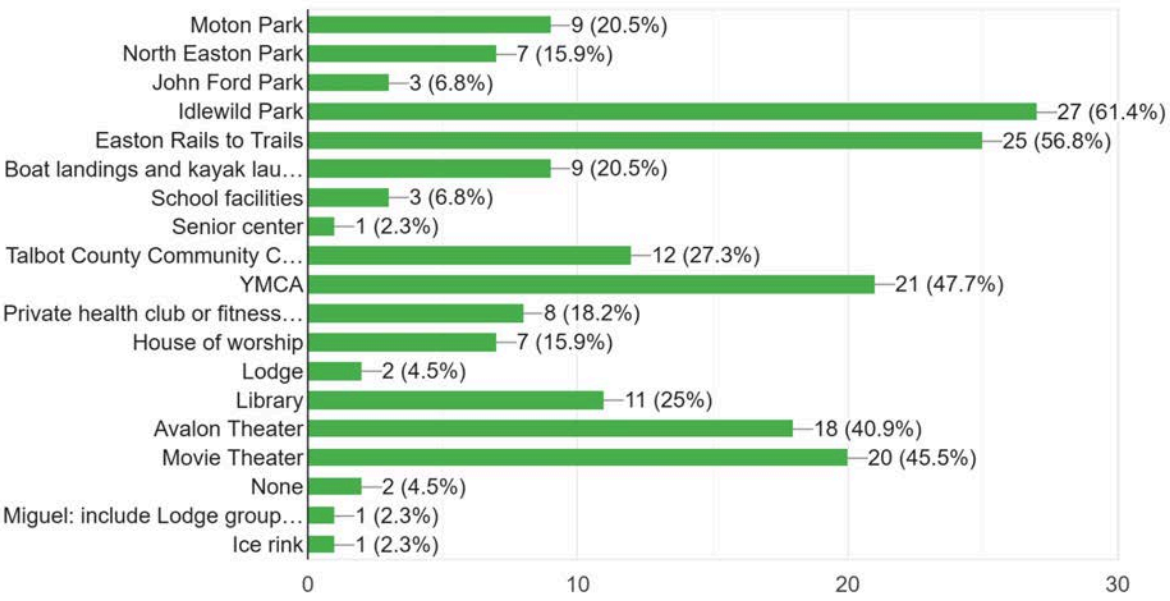
What type of leisure activities do members of your household participate in? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



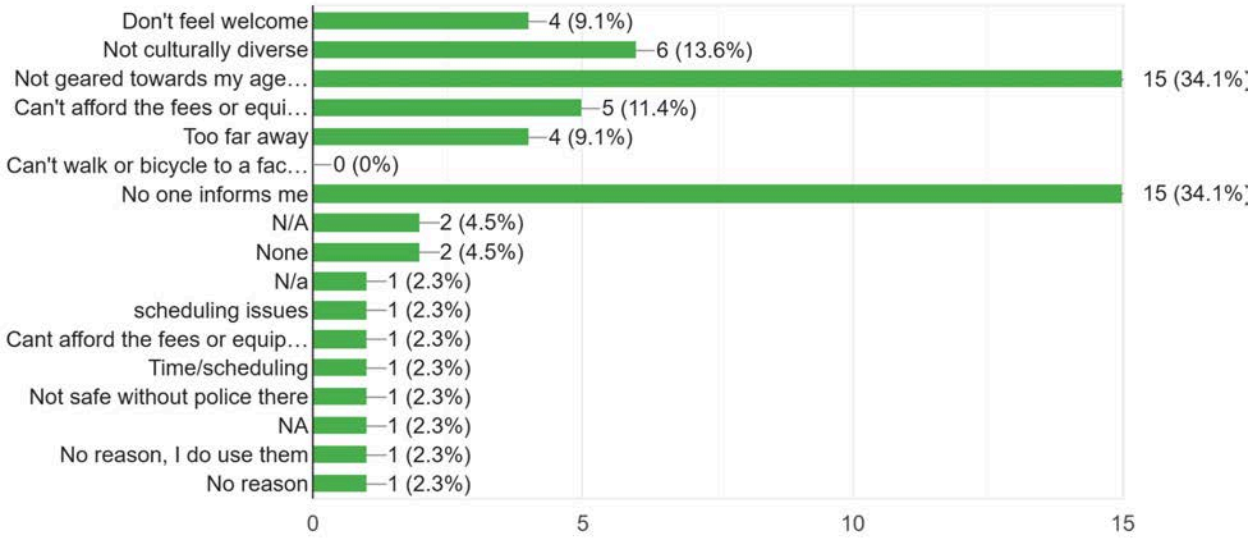
What Parks, Recreation and Cultural Facilities does your household primary use in Easton or Talbot County? (Select all that apply)

44 responses



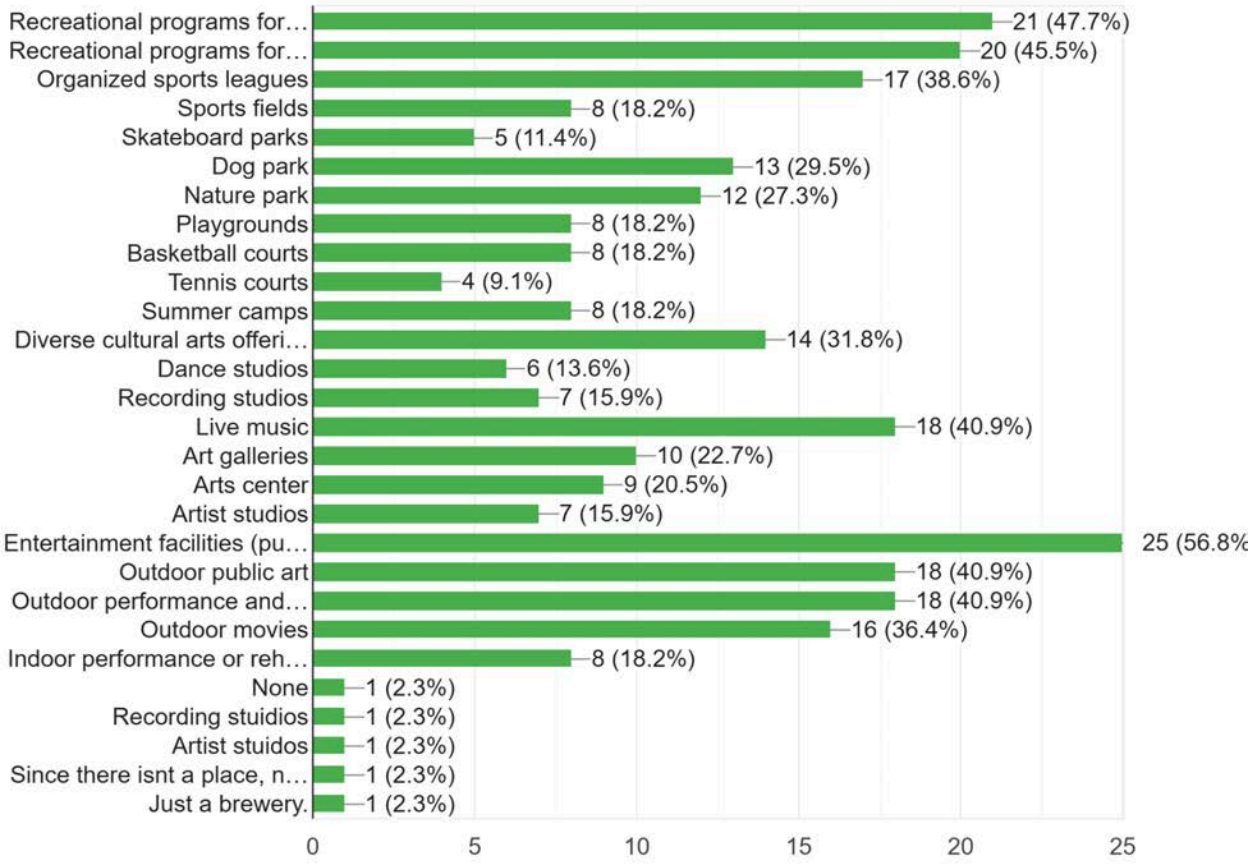
Is there any reason that keeps you from participating in Easton's parks, recreation and cultural facilities? (Select all that apply)

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 3 - HISTORIC ANNEXATION LIST

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

18	6/30/1966	Maryland National Bank	4.673	1354.457	2.11634
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

18	6/30/1966	Maryland National Bank	4.673	1354.457	2.11634
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

APPENDIX 4 - SUMMARY OF NUTRIENT LOADING ANALYSIS

Nutrient Loading Analysis Spreadsheet - Summary Results

Land Use and Septic Systems (See Scenario Descriptions Below)

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

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

Total Nitrogen Loading

		2007 LU, 2007 BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)
Development NPS		0	22,900	49,572	31,535	32,322
Agriculture NPS		0	42,567	2,441	28,178	27,038
Forest NPS		0	2,507	2,507	2,507	2,507
Other Terrestrial NPS		0	4,145	5,473	5,473	5,473
Total Terrestrial Load		**0**	**72,119**	**59,992**	**67,692**	**67,339**
Residential Septic (EDUs)		0	4,912	348	1,677	1,677
Non-Residential Septic (EDUs)		0	1,180	89	421	421
Total Septic Load		**0**	**6,092**	**436**	**2,098**	**2,098**
Total NPS Nitrogen Load		**0**	**78,210**	**60,429**	**69,790**	**69,437**
Total PS Load		**0**	**23,800**	**48,729**	**27,415**	**27,415**
Total Nitrogen Load (NPS+PS)		**0**	**102,010**	**109,158**	**97,205**	**96,852**

Total Phosphorus Loading

		2007 LU, 2007 BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	2007 LU, Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 1 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 2 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)	Scenario 3 Trib Strat BMPs (Lbs/Yr)
Development NPS		0	2,441	5,451	3,414	3,507
Agriculture NPS		0	3,977	224	2,690	2,588
Forest NPS		0	34	34	34	34
Other Terrestrial NPS		0	500	651	651	651
Total Terrestrial Load		**0**	**6,953**	**6,360**	**6,789**	**6,779**
Total PS Load		**0**	**2,400**	**3,655**	**2,742**	**2,742**
Total Phosphorus Load (NPS+PS)		**0**	**9,353**	**10,015**	**9,531**	**9,521**

Impervious Cover and Open Space

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

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

APPENDIX 5 - PLANNED WATER AND WASTEWATER CAPITAL PROJECTS

EASTON WATER SYSTEM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	**PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR**	**COMMENTS**
New Water Services & Meters	FY2026	$304,000
Replace Hydrants	FY2026	$40,000
Replace Valves	FY2026	$90,000
Easton Watermain Replacement Judas St. & Port St.	FY2026	$1,051,000
Looping Water Mains/Blow-offs	FY2026	$32,000
SCADA, PLC & Security Upgrades	FY2026	$60,000
Well No. 12 Security Fence	FY2026	$16,000
Corrosion Inhibitor - Sequestering Agent	FY2026-2027	$88,000
Well No. 12 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe	FY2027	$250,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2027	$1,167,000
New Water Treatment Plant (Commerce Drive)	FY2027-2028	$12,000,000
UMMS Water Main Extension	FY2027-2028	$3,433,000
Hydrant Rehab & Storz Connect.	FY2027-2028	$836,000
New Well No. 14	FY2027-2028	$2,625,000
Looping Water Mains/Blow-offs	FY2027-2031	$173,000
New Water Services	FY2027-2031	$175,000
New Water Meters	FY2027-2031	$1,370,000
Replace Hydrants	FY2027-2031	$215,000
SCADA, PLC & Security Upgrades	FY2027-2031	$132,000
UMMS Water Tank	FY2028	$3,124,000
Well No. 6 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe	FY2028	$130,000
Well No. 8 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe	FY2028	$130,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2028	$1,167,000
Matthewstown Tank Refurbishment or Demo	FY2029	$500,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2029	$1,228,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2030	$1,157,000
Well No. 7 – Replacement of Pump and Column Pipe	FY2031	$140,000
Cast Iron Water Main and Valve Replacements	FY2031	$1,290,000

EASTON SEWER SYSTEM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	**PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR**	**COMMENTS**
Windmill Pump Station and Force Main Replacement	FY2026	$9,809,000
Windmill Interceptor Sewer Refurbishment	FY2026	$1,900,000
Clifton Pump Station – Refurbish Pumps, Grinders, Replace ATS, VFDs, Relocate Bypass Piping	FY2026-2027	$234,500
Calvert Pump Station – Refurbish Pumps, Grinders, Replace ATS, VFDs	FY2026-2027	$200,000
SCADA, PLC & Security Upgrades	FY2026-2031	$191,500
New Wastewater Laterals	FY2026-FY2031	$371,00
WWTF - Bio. Reactor #2 Refurb.	FY2027	$481,000
WWTF - Secondary Clarifiers #1 & #2 Refurbishment	FY2027	$580,000
WWTF - Tertiary Treatment Sand Filter Refurbishment	FY2027	$938,000
WWTF - Primary & Secondary Lagoon Flow Control Refurbishment	FY2027	$614,000
Calvert Pump Station – Replace Pumps, Refurbish Grinders	FY2027	$200.000
WWTF - Influent Box and Headworks – Gates and Actuators	FY2027	$263,000
Wastewater Pumps Station – Generator Replacement	FY2027	$42,000
Sewer Main Replacement – Arcadia St	FY2027	$200,000
UMMS Pump Station & Forcemain	FY2027	$12,100,000
South Pump Station – Refurbish Pumps, Grinders, Replace VFDs, ATS	FY2027-2028	$125,500
WWTF - Influent Box and Headworks – Fine Screens Rehab	FY2028	$110,500
WWTF - Sludge Dryer Design & Replacement	FY2027-2028	$8,900,000
North Pump Station – Refurbish Pumps, Grinders, Replace VFDs,	FY2028-2029	$143,000
WWTF – Lagoon Diversion Structure Corrosion Control	FY2029	$45,000
WWTF - Bio. Reactor #1 Refurb.	FY2031	$500,000
Easton I&I Mitigation Project – Refurbish Manholes & Sewer Mains	FY2027 through FY2034	$11,900,000