

2017 AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO TOWN OF EASTON, MD  
2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION SECTION-  
EASTON POINT WATERFRONT AREA CONCEPT AND IMPLEMENTATION

**REVISION TO FUTURE LAND USE MAP CATEGORY, ADDITION OF AREA  
8, AND ASSOCIATED EXPLANATORY TEXT, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The dream of many in the Easton area for a waterfront presence is finally being realized, albeit in small, halting steps as nine parcels are being annexed into the Town. Thus, the potential exists for an exciting waterfront, infill and redevelopment project of a mixed use nature, with long-desired public waterfront access a keystone of this project. The July 3, 2017 Annexation of the nine parcels has heightened public interest and excitement in its own right, and as part of the general redevelopment of Easton Point and the Port Street Corridor, as defined below.

Preceding even the inception of the initial Easton Comprehensive Plan, and, with accelerating intensity during the several year period preceding this amendment to the present Comprehensive Plan, the Town and County citizenry, governments and property owners, both within the present confines of the Town and without it, have been concerned and excited by the prospects for redevelopment of Easton Point. The Town over the years has recognized the need for more detailed Comprehensive Planning for Easton Point and in 2014 initiated the process that has evolved into the development of the Port Street Small Area Plan, which in part this Comprehensive Plan Amendment is a product of.

This Comprehensive Plan Amendment creates a new Future Land Use Map, Priority Growth Area 8, See the Amended Land Use Map attached hereto. This Amendment pertains to part of a greater area addressed by the Port Street Small Area Plan, more particularly described below, some of which is presently within the Town of

Easton and as may be annexed into the Town in the future. Area 8 should also be considered as the sum of four related but distinctly different sub-areas; (a) the Waterfront; (b) Non-Waterfront Easton Point; (c) the Port Street Corridor between Washington Street and the Easton Parkway; and (d) the Intersection of Port and the Parkway, envisioned as a new “Gateway” to both Downtown and the Waterfront.

The Easton Economic Development Corporation (“EEDC”) has been the catalyst for advancing comprehensive planning for Easton Point and indeed, the whole of the Port Street Corridor. EEDC has taken the “laboring oar” and devoted substantial time, money and attention, including multiple meetings to secure public input, to developing the “Port Street Small Area Plan.” That Plan embraces all of Easton Point and the Port Street Corridor from the Parkway to Washington Street and sets forth development goals and implementation plans for what it calls the “Port Street Study Area” (the “Study Area”). This Comprehensive Amendment No. 1 is informed by and closely connected to the outstanding effort of EEDC as it pertains to Area 8 through their recommendations as to both the immediate waterfront (referred to as “At The Water’s Edge in the Small Area Plan), and the non-waterfront areas (referred to as a “New Gateway for Easton” and “The Link to Downtown and The Hill”). It is the first “down payment” on comprehensive planning and zoning amendments that may be necessary for the entirety of the Study Area.<sup>1</sup> The Port Street Small Area Plan should be considered an extension of this Comprehensive Plan, providing a more focused study of this particular area. As such, for this smaller study area, it should be treated with the same legal weight as this overall Town Comprehensive Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> The exigency of the recent annexation of nine Easton Point parcels, several of which are on the immediate waterfront, necessitate moving ahead with an Easton Point waterfront Comprehensive Plan amendment in advance of a more global examination of the Study Area, in its entirety.

The nine parcels annexed into the Town in 2017 contain some waterfront parcels, triggering the need for critical thinking and planning for creation of a waterfront and appurtenant area of such beauty and utility as to place the Town and County in the forefront of planned waterfront development. Achievement of an integrated planned waterfront development for all of Easton Point, however, is not without complications that must be addressed. Much of Easton Point west of Flood Avenue remains outside the Corporate Limits of the Town and consists of multiple parcels, the owners of which may have no present plans to seek annexation. Perhaps foremost among these owners is Talbot County itself, which owns a boat ramp and parking lot comprising a significant part of the waterfront. Clearly having a boat ramp and ancillary parking for the boat ramp are integral to the development of Easton Point. However, the Town and County should study whether the boat ramp can and should be relocated to another location at Easton Point. Any alternative location would need to have adequate water depth and sufficient land for parking. Moving the boat ramp would allow for the end of Port Street, possibly the most prominent location in Easton Point, to be reused in another manner, potentially as a public waterfront park.

Several of the properties annexed in 2017 are on the waterfront and will, at the inception, come under the Town's General Commercial zoning classification. Accordingly, planning for the waterfront at this time is visionary and goal oriented with substantial real world reality to be addressed in implementation of the goals and visions set forth in this Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Moving further inland, but still on Easton Point, the opportunity exists for relatively more intense development than what is envisioned along the Waterfront.

Parcels that front on Port Street should treat said frontage with primary importance. That is, buildings should be sited and designed with Port Street as a primary entrance.

Architecture on this elevation should likewise reflect Port Street as a frontage, as one would find along older, traditional Downtown Streets, such as Washington, Dover, Goldsborough or Harrison in Easton. The appearance of off-street parking should be minimized through siting (behind the building), screening, and shared-parking arrangements.

Moving east across the Parkway is another portion of the area subject to the Port Street Small Area Master Concept Plan. It corresponds to the corridor of Port Street located between Washington Street and the Easton Parkway. Much of this corridor, particularly to the east, is already developed. In such areas the vision would be for redevelopment that is sympathetic with the historic fabric of this neighborhood. Housing should generally be replaced with housing and close scrutiny should be given to avoid issues of gentrification. The existing Planned Redevelopment Overlay District should be all that is necessary to achieve the Vision suggested for this part of the corridor.

The portion closer to Easton Parkway, in particular three relatively large, undeveloped parcels on the south side of Port Street, have a different kind of potential. For one thing, given their location at or near the intersection of Port and the Parkway, the opportunity exists to provide a dramatic Gateway entrance statement via the design, siting and architecture of whatever gets built on these parcels. As such, they would seem to be more suitable for some combination of office, institutional or mixed uses than might be expected from the Future Land Use Map of 2010 and the current zoning of these properties. The Future Land Use Map is thus proposed to be amended accordingly.

Other factors which might ultimately influence the development of these parcels include the extension of Easton's Rail-Trail between two of the parcels as well as the close proximity to two significant parks (Moton and the to-be-built park at the Town's former Public Works property on Easton Point). There is also the potential for a major redevelopment project just beyond this corridor should the current hospital relocate as planned in the near future. Finally, the appearance of properties from Port Street (as well as their presence on Port Street) becomes critical should Easton Point develop in the manner envisioned in the Small Area Plan. If and when that occurs, this portion of Port Street becomes the link between two major activity centers; the Waterfront and Downtown and the Hill.

### **IMPLEMENTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES- EASTON POINT WATERFRONT**

**GOAL:**<sup>2</sup> To ensure that public access to the immediate Easton Point Waterfront, as defined, is the central principle of its planning.

**OBJECTIVE:** Focus the design of the immediate waterfront upon public uses that are inviting in terms of size and location. Structures should be set back to avoid any sense of intrusion. Places to sit, rest, eat, and drink should be provided adjacent to and inland of the immediate waterfront area and should not unreasonably interfere with public enjoyment of that area or with neighboring waterfront property owners.

**GOAL:** To encourage the appropriate transformation of Easton Point into a sustainable and vibrant mixed use neighborhood, with a working waterfront, beneficial public spaces, interesting streetscapes and a well-built environment.

**OBJECTIVE:** Enact zoning and design rules regulating the form and function of all new development and redevelopment at Easton Point that are sufficient to bring about

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<sup>2</sup> This and the following goals and objectives borrows liberally from "Urban Edginess: Urban Design Principles," an Internet article written by Joseph E. Petrillo, writing as trenzpruca, accessed on July 3, 2017, at <https://planningimplementation.wordpress.com/.../urban-waterfront-design-principles/>.

the Town's vision for this area, as that vision is established in the Port Street Small Area Plan.

GOAL: To emphasize design standards that are centered upon and protect major views of the Tred Avon River.

OBJECTIVE: Minimize obstruction of the public use area on the immediate waterfront. Wherever possible and practicable, private development should allow inland buildings a view of the waterfront.

GOAL: To provide for recreational and commercial uses that require a waterfront location that are not inconsistent with other goals and objectives should have space allocated for development.

OBJECTIVE: Retain the historic flavor of the Easton Point waterfront as a working waterfront including both commercial, e.g., crabbing, and recreational, e.g., boating. The retention of the flavor of these historical uses, consistent with other goals and objectives, particularly for maximizing public access to the waterfront, is to be encouraged.

OBJECTIVE: Study and consider relocating the County boat ramp and its parking to a different Easton Point location to maximize public access to the waterfront area provided an alternative location can be identified that has adequate water depth and sufficient land for parking.

GOAL: To emphasize radial planning and avoidance of traditional "checkerboard" zoning

OBJECTIVE: Plan for the Easton Point waterfront in a manner that is radial in nature, from the specific to the general with the immediate waterfront serving as a focal point. It should be specific as to uses along the immediate waterfront and become more generalized as it moves inland.

GOAL: To make the planning process both dynamic and organic– avoiding over planning!

OBJECTIVE: Target the Easton Point waterfront as the beginning of a long-term development of the Easton Point-Port Street Corridor, as envisioned by EEDC, and not its end point. Design should be driven by the dynamism of people who will use the waterfront in different ways and not be unduly prescriptive. Planning must be animated by the truism that successful Port Street Study Area development depends on implementation and design plans responsive to the needs and desires of both the public and potential investors in development.

The foregoing goals and objectives are but the starting point for redevelopment of the parts of Easton Point now within the Town and as may come in by future annexations. As for the areas already within the corporate limits of Easton (“The Link to Downtown and The Hill” and a “New Gateway”), the following new Implementation Goals and Objectives are proposed:

**Upper Port Street (or The Link To Downtown and The Hill):**

GOAL: To link Easton’s downtown to Easton Point through sound re-development strategies.

OBJECTIVE: Expand the extent of the western Planned Redevelopment Overlay District to afford maximum development flexibility along the Port Street Corridor.

GOAL: To enhance the streetscape along Port Street.

OBJECTIVE: Develop a standard for a Green and Complete Street for Easton, with the first application of said new standard to Port Street.

OBJECTIVE: Work with the Maryland State Highway Administration to take over maintenance responsibilities of the State-controlled portion of Port Street in exchange for the State rebuilding as much of Port Street as possible in accordance with the aforementioned new Complete and Green Street Detail.

GOAL: To promote mixed-income housing and affordable housing along Port Street.

OBJECTIVE: Continue to work with Professional Land Use Organizations (and similar organizations) to explore potential projects in which they might serve as

developers for housing or mixed-use development which could be catalysts for further development of the Port Street Small Area.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage and support developers of affordable housing to consider projects in the Plan Area.

**OBJECTIVE:** Explore ways in which the development of affordable housing can be incentivized (e.g., perhaps through density bonuses).

**GOAL:** To strengthen the existing community by retaining the social networks and maintaining the cultural history.

**OBJECTIVE:** Identify all interested parties, particularly neighborhood associations or groups, with an interest in the Port Street Corridor and keep them informed throughout the process of adopting, and even more importantly, implementing the Small Area Plan.

### **A NEW GATEWAY**

**GOAL:** To incorporate a hub to serve as a University/Innovation Center assisting in anchoring Easton's gateway.

**OBJECTIVE:** Reach out to colleges and universities throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed to gauge interest in establishing a presence in Easton for Chesapeake Bay studies.

**GOAL:** To create a striking, attractive Gateway at the intersection of Port Street and the Easton Parkway.

**OBJECTIVE:** Consider adopting design regulations that would be applicable to properties in close proximity to the Port Street/Parkway intersection, for the purpose of assuring high quality design that establishes the location as a special

point, one which links Easton's new waterfront to the west and Downtown and The Hill to the east.

**OBJECTIVE:** Work with the Maryland State Highway Administration to develop and implement a design for the Parkway and Port Street intersection, and the approaches thereto, that alerts travelers that they are entering a truly unique and special place. Such a solution must accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in the safest possible manner given that the Rail-Trail Spur Line is to be established there.