

LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

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

One of the new requirements for Comprehensive Plans resulting from the enactment of HB 1141, is for a Municipal Growth Element. It obviously must be closely coordinated and work in harmony with the Land Use Element. In fact, most of what was in the Land Use and Growth Element of the 2004 Plan, will be moved to the Municipal Growth Element of this Plan. This Land Use Element will now focus more narrowly on future land uses and less on growth projections, demand, and development capacity.

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

The use of land within the Town is the result of many physical, economic and social forces. The Land Use Element reflects an attempt by the Town to equitably balance the attainment of Town goals and objectives for development with private property rights and interests. The Land Use Element addresses

issues and identifies Town policies relative to residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as the provision of lands for parks and open spaces. It analyzes the appropriate mix of uses in the short and long term given our projected growth. It will also address the monumental task of reversing and rectifying what are now viewed as poor land use decisions (made not just in Easton but throughout the nation) that were made in the past, primarily since the late 1940's. In short, it lays the groundwork that will be repeated throughout the Plan for ensuring that future growth is not in the form of auto-centric, isolated, suburban style subdivisions but rather takes the form of multi-use, integrated, and connected neighborhoods.

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

BACKGROUND

Like nearly every community, Easton's land use pattern is primarily a reflection of the influences of the dominant mode of transportation over time. At its founding in 1710, Easton was located at the headwaters of the Tred Avon

River. Current visitors to Easton may well be confused by that statement and wonder why the Town moved from that location. Actually the Town did not move. Rather, the river changed. It does still exist in this area, but has been reduced to a stream that has been enclosed in culverts in the vicinity of Talbottown Shopping Center and the Easton Utilities Electric Generating Plant.

The following table lists every annexation of the Town, beginning with the initial survey in 1786. At that time Easton was a mere 94.5 acres. Not only was the overall size of the Town small, but also the pattern of development was dense, reflecting that the primary means of travel at that time was walking. Today, Easton consists of almost 6,600 acres and within the most recently developed parts of the Town the development pattern is relatively sparse. This reflects the mode of travel of today, the private automobile, which has had the effect of spreading out development and greatly separating the places where people live, from the places where they shop and work.

TABLE 6					
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
24	8/02/1968	Trippe Avenue	12.528	2479.262	3.87385
25	10/30/1969	Maryland State Police	8.630	2487.892	3.88733
26	10/01/1970	Airport Industrial Park	241.786	2729.678	4.26512
27	12/03/1970	Idlewild Lots	4.049	2733.727	4.27145
28	4/30/1970	North Clifton	5.549	2739.276	4.28012
29	11/04/1971	Carroll's Addition	24.547	2763.823	4.31847
30	6/01/1972	Golt Farm	129.354	2893.177	4.52059
31	4/05/1973	Idlewild Lots	5.740	2898.917	4.52956
32	4/19/1973	South Beechwood	36.546	2935.463	4.58666
33	11/01/1974	West Galloway	15.529	2950.992	4.61093
34	1/02/1975	Poplar Hill	174.358	3125.350	4.88336
35	6/05/1975	Central Clifton	24.189	3149.539	4.92115
36	7/02/1976	North Clifton	30.703	3180.242	4.96913
37	7/23/1976	Stoney Ridge Farm	222.976	3403.218	5.31753
38	10/01/1976	Reward Farm	110.705	3513.923	5.49050
39	11/05/1976	Ashby Woodland	43.338	3557.261	5.55822
40	2/03/1978	Elliott Road	5.993	3563.254	5.56758
41	3/02/1978	Idlewild Farm	128.626	3691.880	5.76856
42	1/18/1979	Easton Airport	595.809	4287.689	6.69951
43	4/02/1981	Woodland Farm	309.686	4597.375	7.18340
44	3/03/1983	Lutheran Church – Rte 50	6.006	4603.381	7.19278
45	9/18/1986	Craft Farm	102.670	4706.051	7.35320
46	12/05/1986	Mulberry Hill/W. Galloway	233.844	4939.895	7.71859
47	7/02/1987	William Favinger	10.260	4950.155	7.73462
48	3/03/1988	John O. Brooks	31.551	4981.706	7.78392
49	5/23/1989	County Roads Facility	6.080	4987.786	7.79342
50	4/06/1990	Londonderry	25.430	5013.216	7.83315
51	1/13/1991	Ewing – Dover Rd.	2.130	5015.346	7.83648

52	2/17/1991	RGA/Davis – Denton Rd.	27.900	5043.246	7.88007
53	5/03/1991	Dudrow (N. Glenwood)	187.850	5231.096	8.17359
54	6/18/1992	Ward/Benhoff – Dover Rd.	13.595	5244.691	8.19483
55	8/16/1993	Lyon’s Farm	217.100	5461.791	8.53405
56	3/18/1995	Cooke’s Hope	162.365	5624.156	8.78774
57	10/23/1995	Public Works Facility	15.451	5639.607	8.81189
58	2/03/1996	Swann Farm	80.540	5720.147	8.93773
59	7/24/1996	Celeste Industries (Jettison)	-16.322	5703.825	8.91223
60	11/24/1996	Swann Haven L.P.	30.442	5734.267	8.95979
61	11/24/1996	Wickersham Farm	162.570	5896.837	9.21381
62	5/30/1997	Talbot Bible Church	10.361	5907.198	9.23000
63	12/07/1998	Trippe’s Creek/Cheston L.P.	217.851	6125.049	9.57039
64	1/18/1999	Charles O. Parks	7.598	6132.647	9.58226
65	4/17/1999	Swann Haven L.P.	75.743	6208.390	9.70061
66	6/25/1999	Ratcliffe Manor	386.440	6594.830	10.30442
67	4/30/2000	Ratcliffe Manor Lane	3.176	6598.006	10.30939
68	8/26/2001	Town Properties (4)	7.926	6605.932	10.32177
69	10/15/2001	Swann Farm	79.014	6684.946	10.44523
70	7/26/2002	Hoffman	52.291	6737.237	10.52693
71	7/26/2002	UP Associates	23.084	6760.321	10.56300
72	7/3/2003	Kennedy Street	26.866	6787.187	10.60498
73	6/11/2005	West Glenwood	30.192	6817.379	10.65216
74	5/15/2006	Londonderry	13.492	6830.871	10.67324
75	8/03/2007	Clifton Industrial Park	35.41	6866.281	10.72856

Map 2 is an insert which depicts this information as a map, showing graphically the growth of the Town over time. Both the Table and the Map were first included in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. Thus in many ways the most interesting aspect of this information may be what has occurred since 2004. In short, we followed our Plan. There were only three annexations approved during the Planning period. Two of these were shown as Priority 1 Growth Areas in the 2004 Plan. The third was not, but we went through a

INSERT MAP 2 HERE – HISTORIC ANNEXATION MAP

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process to make it a Priority 1 Area. One other annexation was reviewed, 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.

EXISTING LAND USE

The first step necessary in making decisions relative to how to best use land in the future is to determine just how land is being used today. One indicator of this is given in the table below which shows the acreages of the various zoning districts as established in the 2006 Zoning Ordinance, as well as an estimate of the amount of unimproved land in each district.

Table 7 AVAILABLE LAND BY ZONING CLASSIFICATION				
Zoning	Total Acreage	Estimated Acreage **	Unimproved	Percentage of Total Town Area
A-1	190	125		
R-10A	2,570	550		
R-10M	0	0		
R-7A	475	10		
Total Residential	3,235	685		47%
CR	125	10		
CG	580	55		
CL	126	108		
HC	190	100		
Total Commercial	1,021	273		15%
I-1	1,340	370		
I-2	0	0		
Total Industrial	1,340	370		20%
PUD	1,270	215		18%
Total all Districts	6,866	1,543		

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

Source: Estimates 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.

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

The 2004 Plan talks at some length about the most appropriate mix of land uses (or what the most ideal ratio of residential to commercial to industrial uses

should be). We have dropped that discussion from this Plan because it represented a limited number of sources and there are doubtless unlimited points of view on this issue. The purpose of including that the last time around was never to stop, say all commercial development until it dropped to the identified appropriate rate. Rather it was to point out where perhaps Easton might be markedly “out-of-balance” from a land use perspective. It seemed clear from the analysis of the 2004 Plan and from public comment, that Easton has significantly more commercial development than a community of our population would normally dictate.

This is further complicated by the finer breakdown of commercial uses into four major categories which are all present to varying degrees in Easton. These are Neighborhood Retail, Regional Retail, Transient-Oriented Retail, and the Downtown (or Town Center or Central Business District). We do not seem to universally share the same degree of oversaturation of each of these subcategories of retail development. This has implications when considering future commercial land use needs.

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

- **Neighborhood retail** – Is virtually non-existent beyond the Town Center. Older developed areas of Town should be encouraged to add this type of retail use to retroactively create more legitimate neighborhoods. New residential development should be discouraged if it does not contain neighborhood commercial centers. The future Easton this Plan envisions is not a continuation of uniform, single-use subdivisions, but rather a series of connected, well-defined neighborhoods, one of the most important components of which is retail uses limited to a truly neighborhood scale.
- **Regional Retail** – This is the subcategory of retail that is largely responsible for Easton’s per capita retail ratio of 80

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

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

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

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

Table 9
Commercial Standards

	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

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

Residential Land Uses are generally not described in terms of a ratio. In fact, to the contrary, the other land use ratios are based on the number of residential units (or population) in the community. The discussion about residential land uses tends to focus more on the arrangement, appearance, and density of this land use. That is discussed thoroughly in the Neighborhood Character Element. Suffice it to say that we see things changing for this land use. We do not envision the future of Easton as a series of disconnected, isolated, monotonous

subdivisions. Rather we want to see a seamless, attractive, interesting, Smart Growth inspired Easton; one Easton, not a collection of suburban residential enclaves.

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

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

Simple ratios suggest that there is little need to propose new areas for industrial development beyond those already planned as such in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. However as we have recently seen by the fact that the 2004 Plan has been amended three times to accommodate industrial growth since it

was adopted, a close examination of the appropriate use of our industrially zoned lands is in order. It is clear that there has been a gradual erosion of the availability of this land for classic industrial uses by allowing more and more commercial and service uses. Furthermore, the fact that so many people commute to Easton for work suggests that we need to look at the workforce characteristics of adjacent counties and look at the transportation implications of this phenomenon.

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 while there is little need to add jobs from an overall jobs to housing ratio perspective, jobs which better meet the needs of Easton residents would be of great benefit in reducing traffic and all the associated environmental impacts. For this reason specifically there are industrial areas proposed on the eastern side of Town for development in the long-range planning period.

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

- Increase housing options for more diverse household types.
- Provide more transportation options.
- Reduce automobile dependence.
- Create a truer sense of place than single-use suburban style development.
- Activates urban areas throughout more times of the day.
- Provide greater opportunity for social interaction.
- Reduce a community's carbon footprint by encouraging walking and biking as an alternative to automobile use.

- Increase the safety of the neighborhood by putting more eyes on the street.

LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Reaffirm the Urban Growth Boundary around the Town defining the ultimate geographic size of Easton.
- ✓ Work in association with Talbot County and various land preservation 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.
- ✓ Limit annexation in the six-year planning period to only those areas that will “clean-up” the existing Town boundary.
- ✓ Explore incentive annexation to gain control of land on the town’s border and to implement a strict pattern which will guide growth in the future.
- ✓ Slow the demand for more land by increasing the density of future residential areas. At a minimum, the “Smart Growth” Priority Funding Area net density of 3.5 units per acre should be achieved in these developments.
- ✓ Consider implementation of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) to assure the availability of public services is sufficient to meet the resulting needs of growth.
- ✓ Follow a Capital Improvement Program which will allow the Town to provide a rational basis for implementing improvements and increase funding opportunities.

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

Objectives:

- ✓ Develop future areas of the Town in a series of well-defined connected neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods should contain an integrated mix of residential, neighborhood-scale commercial, civic, and open space uses.
- ✓ Begin to “retro-fit” developed subdivisions within the Town by adding much greater flexibility to add neighborhood-scale retail, civic and open space elements to existing residential subdivisions.
- ✓ Amend the Town’s Zoning Ordinance to change the focus from regulation by building use, to building type and site impact.

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

Objectives:

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