

## MUNICIPAL GROWTH

### INTRODUCTION

One of the consequences of HB 1141 that was passed in the 2007 legislative session is that municipalities have to prepare two new elements as part of the Comprehensive Plan. One of these new elements is Municipal Growth. The law specified that this element shall include consideration of:

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

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

Much of this required information already exists within the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, particularly in the Land Use and Growth and Implementation Elements. Thus this new chapter will have some new information, but will primarily involve a restructuring of the current Plan. What is slightly different is that this new Municipal Growth Element requires a higher degree of quantitative analysis than has previously been conducted in Easton. However, that was something that was planned for this update anyway as we look more closely at the amount of development that might be accommodated by infill, try to get a better handle on how many homes will be coming to Easton in the future (and the impact of those homes on public facilities and services), etc...

So this chapter will be laid-out consistent with the requirements listed above and will contain a lot of the same information from the previous Plan (just in this new location) along with a new level of analysis.

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

The first requirement of this new Element is an identification of future growth areas beyond the existing corporate limits of the Town. This was done in the 2004 Plan when we enacted an Urban Growth Boundary. This established the ultimate geographic limits of Easton's future growth. The land lying between the Town boundary as of April 2004 and the Growth Boundary thus became our future growth area(s). The 2004 Plan further partitions the growth area into future growth areas and assigns a three level sequential priority system concerning when it might be appropriate for the various parts of the growth area to be annexed into Town.

This Plan continues this three-tiered partition system. Priority 1 Areas are classified as Boundary Refinement Areas. In most cases they correspond to areas that are already developed in Talbot County and they are deemed appropriate for consideration for Annexation during the life of this Plan. Priority 2 Areas are referred to as Intermediate Growth Areas and Priority 3 Areas are referred to as Long Range Growth Areas. Neither is envisioned as being necessary to develop in order to accommodate any growth during the upcoming Planning period.

Some of these growth areas, particularly the Immediate Growth Areas, have already been developed under the rules and regulations of Talbot County. Thus, they will generally not represent new growth. There may be some opportunity for redevelopment of these sites or an intensification of

development as a result of moving from the zoning and health department regulations (i.e. septic systems and the limitations thereof) of Talbot County to those of the Town of Easton, but generally little if anything will change when these properties change jurisdictions. Often times the only reason that such properties do come into Town is to take advantage of Town water and/or sewer service. The point is simply that while the Growth Areas Map depicts 1,200 acres of land classified as Boundary Refinement Area, this raw number is misleading as only a relative few acres are largely undeveloped.

Growth over the next planning period (i.e. until 2015) is expected to occur in areas already within the corporate limits of Town, or in Boundary Refinement Areas that are annexed into Town. The Intermediate and Long Range Growth Areas are not envisioned to be needed to accommodate the growth of the next six years.

## **HISTORIC GROWTH PATTERNS OF EASTON**

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

The historic pattern of annexations clearly shows that Easton maintained a small, compact size from its formal incorporation in 1710 until 1917 and beyond. By 1965, while the Town had grown significantly in a north-south direction, it was still completely confined to lands between US Route 50 and what would

become MD Route 322 (Easton Parkway, which wouldn't open for another year). We did not grow beyond these confines until 1966 and growth really took off in these areas in the 1970's through today after the area within the Parkway/Rte. 50 Corridor was totally annexed.

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

#### **CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN EXISTING TOWN LIMITS**

This subsection of the Plan delves into the more technical realm of Planning mentioned in the Introduction to the Element. One of the new requirements for Comprehensive Plans is to estimate the capacity for development within the existing Town boundaries. This requires that we look at undeveloped land, land suitable for infill development, and land with potential for redevelopment. In order to complete this exercise, certain assumptions have to be made concerning each of these types of development. For example, we are assuming that future development will occur at a more urban density than has occurred in recent years. At a minimum we will assume that we can achieve the Maryland Smart Growth minimum density of 3.5 dwelling units per acre (3.5 du/ac), the minimum density required to satisfy the requirements of being designated a Primary Funding Area (PFA). We have also used guidance provided by the MD Department of Planning in their Models and Guidelines

Series publication “Estimating Residential Development Capacity.” Finally, some assumptions are based on our past experience with development review in Easton. The following table walks through the development of our estimate for residential development capacity within the current Town limits:

Estimating Residential Development Potential in Easton

A. Estimate Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (i.e. what we could get with no additional annexations)

Look back at the "Priority Development Areas" from current (2004) Comp Plan

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

**Area 2 – Brooks Farm** (in-Town portion)

**Area 3 – Hospital-owned Oxford Road site** (possible quasi-residential development on a portion of site)

**Area 4 – Ashby Commons** (89 du approved)

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

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

**Area 7 – Alvin Lapidus Property**

Area 2 (100.187 ac x 3.5 du/ac x .75 (underbuild factor recommended by MDP)) = 262 units

Area 3 (using same factor as above for half of site and Londonderry density for half of site (4.0 du/ac)) = 404 units

Area 4 – 89 units already approved

Area 7 – (56 ac x 3.5 du/ac x .75) = 147 units

**Total estimated possible units from Priority Development Areas in 2004 Plan = 902**

B. Other Parcels with Infill Potential

Unimproved parcels  $\geq 5$  acres (using same build-out factors as above) = 455 units

Unimproved parcels  $\geq 1$  acre in the PR District (substituting the PR density of a max. 20 du/ac for 3.5 in the equation above) = 305 units

**Total estimated possible "other" infill units = 760**

C. Completion of Approved or Pending Project

Residential Projects Under Construction = 347 units

Residential Projects Under Review = 355 units (excludes Ashby Commons which is already counted above)

**Total Units in Approved/Pending Projects = 702**

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

**E. Redevelopment Potential (Parcels w/ improvements assessed at  $\leq$  \$50,000;  $\approx$  47 acres x 3.5 du/ac x 0.75) = 123 – 95 existing units = 28 (net new units)**

**Total Infill/Redevelopment/Build-out Potential (A+B+C+D+E) = 2,492 units**

The net result is that our best estimate is that we can accommodate 2,492 more dwelling units within the Town, without the need to add any additional land for residential development. Obviously it is not as simple as saying we do not need to add any land for growth until these units are built. There will be some parcels that have environmental constraints making it difficult to develop. There will also be the landowner who has no interest in developing, at least for the time being. Finally, simple supply and demand economics dictate that at some point some of the growth areas will need to be tapped or housing prices will escalate, thereby exacerbating an already serious problem in Easton. This is a problem we will have to grapple with when we ultimately reach the limits of the urban growth boundary, but while we have growth areas available, it would seem unwise to artificially inflate housing prices by restricting supply.

The point is simply that there should be an adequate supply of potential dwelling units within the existing Town limits to forestall the need to annex additional land for some time. In fact, 2,492 units should last approximately 10 years at the 3% annual growth rate that Easton has experienced in the recent past and approximately 30 years at the target rate of 1%. Furthermore this exceeds the growth in total units we have witnessed in the most recent 10 years (i.e. 1999 – 2008) during which Easton has added about 1,900 dwelling units, thus reinforcing the notion that the existing Town limits can accommodate growth for the next ten years. It should be noted also that the previous ten years would seem to be a very representative time period as there were both very high and very low growth periods throughout these last ten years. Thus it seems that it is not necessary to tap into the identified long range growth areas for the next planning period and possibly also for the one to follow (i.e. 2015 – 2021) for the



purpose of providing land for residential development. Depending on how successful we are in achieving the targeted growth rate of 1%, it may not be necessary to develop beyond the existing Town Boundaries plus Priority 1 growth areas for as much as 30 years.

On the other hand this is tempered by the fact that clearly not all land that is as yet undeveloped is suitable for development, or at least not at the theoretical maximum density. Likewise land identified as potential for redevelopment may be constrained from such activity by any number of economic or environmental factors. On balance though, it appears that there is no need for large-scale annexation of land beyond identified Priority 1 Growth Areas during the current planning period.

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

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

Total acreage of Future Growth Area = 3,880 acres
Less acreage already developed and/or non-residential – 1,300
= 2,580 acres x 3.5 du/ac x 0.75 (underbuild factor) = 6,773 du's

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

- A. Residential Build-out Potential of Existing Town = 2,492 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) = 9,265
- F. Existing Units in Easton = 7,350
- G. Total Residential Build-out (E + F + C) = 17,342
- H. Estimated Population at Build-out (17,342 x 2.22) = 38,499

Without the confinement of the Growth Boundary, assuming that we continue to grow at the 3% average annual compound rate that we have in recent years, then in 2040, Easton would, all other things being equal, have approximately 18,350 dwelling units. This exceeds the 17,342 units estimated as our Built-out capacity. Thus we would anticipate achieving effective build-out before 2040. In fact using these assumptions, we would achieve build-out sometime in the 30<sup>th</sup> year from 2009 (i.e. 2039). However, Easton does have an Urban Growth Boundary and this Plan seeks to achieve an annual future growth rate of no more than 1%. Given these policies, we should be nowhere near effective build-out in 2040. In fact build-out does not occur under this scenario until the decade of the 2090's (80 to 90 years in the future).

## **PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS**

This subsection of the Plan delves into issues that have in the past been addressed in the Community Facilities and Services Element. So, again, this subsection will largely involve moving existing language from one place in the 2004 Plan to this new Element. Additionally, there are some elements that the Town has traditionally not addressed in the past as they are either a County responsibility or are more germane to County interests.

### ***Public Schools***

The first requirement we are required to examine within the general realm of public services and infrastructure is public schools. Public Schools in Talbot County are funded and administered by the County government. The Town has two “roles” in this process. First, as the major population center in Talbot County, we are a significant source of students attending public schools. Second, four 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. According to the 2009 version of this document, the four Easton Schools, Easton Elementary – Dobson Building, Easton Elementary – Moton Building, Easton Middle School, and Easton High School were experiencing utilization rates ranging from 83% (Moton) to 112% (Dobson). Looking ahead, this Plan states:

In summary, the Talbot County public school system has adequate existing capacity on a countywide basis to accommodate

enrollment projected during the next ten years (through the 2018-19 school year). Easton Elementary-Dobson, Easton Elementary-Moton, and Easton Middle are expected to exceed 100% of State-Rated Capacity during the next 10 years with peak utilization rates of 127%, 104%, and 102, respectively. Therefore, these schools have no additional capacity available to absorb any unanticipated enrollment from increased residential growth or from a change in the orientation of new housing to more family occupied units. However, as noted, this overcrowding will be reduced as the 2009 redistricting takes effect.

The redistricting referenced in the passage above refers to increases in the attendance zones for St. Michaels Elementary, White Marsh Elementary, and Chapel District Elementary in order to decrease Easton Elementary enrollment. Thus, looking ahead as far as it does (i.e. ten years), the Educational Facilities Master Plan indicates that the Talbot County Public School system can accommodate expected growth in Easton, albeit barely. It is unanticipated growth that would pose a problem. The 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 often times 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 private schools in Talbot County now totals approximately 1,200 students, which is 28.5% of the

corresponding figure for public schools. This takes substantial pressure off of public school utilization, but may bear watching as the economic situation continues to deteriorate as 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.

### *Libraries*

Library service in Talbot County is provided by the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL), the main branch of which is located in Easton at the corner of Dover and West Streets. According to the Library's website, the TCFL receives 75% of its funding from Talbot County, 18% from the State of Maryland, and the balance from fines and fees.

TCFL recently completed planning for enhancements/expansion of their services and facilities. Some of the key improvements that have been designed, internal to the library are:

- Space for improved ADA accessibility and collection expansion
- Shelving improvements within reach and elimination of current bottom shelves
- Young adults collection with substantial growth in the collection
- Maryland Room improved accessibility and space
- Periodicals located and displayed together
- Network server upgrades
- Personnel and support space improvements
- Conference facility

The study also indicated that future needs of the Library can continue to be met in the existing facility through the year 2012. After that date the facility will need to be expanded or relocated.

The TCFL has developed a Strategic Plan through the year 2014 and as it is rather concise, it is copied below:

## Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2009 - 2014

### Goals

Young children (age five and under) will have materials, programs and services that will prepare them to enter school ready to read, write, and learn.

- By FY14, the circulation of materials for young children will increase by 20%, from 28,158 (FY08) to 33,790
- Annually a minimum of 5,000 young children (age five and under) will attend library programs.
- By FY14, a minimum of 80% of parents and caregivers surveyed will indicate that the library's services for young children are very good or excellent.

Children (ages 6-12) will have materials and programs that satisfy their curiosity, stimulate their imaginations, and encourage them to explore topics of personal interest.

- By FY14, the number of children attending library programs will increase 20% from 3,893 (FY07) to 4,672.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile fiction will increase by 20%, from 12,318 (FY08) to 14,782.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile non-fiction will increase by 20%, from 14,715 (FY08) to 17,658.
- By FY14, the circulation of juvenile media (CDs, videos, DVDs, etc.) will increase from by 20%, from 11,590 (FY08) to 13,908.

Teens (age 13 and older) will have materials and programs that respond to their current interests and provide pleasurable reading, viewing, and listening experiences.

- By FY14, the circulation of young adult materials (fiction and non-fiction) will increase by 20%, from 4,624 (FY08) to 5,549.
- By FY14, a majority of teens surveyed will indicate that they found something good to read, listen to, or view at the library.
- By FY14, attendance at teen programs will increase by 20%, from 500 (FY08) to 600.

Adults will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and

continue to learn throughout their lives.

- By FY14, the circulation of adult fiction books will increase by 20%, from 73,521 (FY08) to 88,225.
- By FY14, the circulation of adult non-fiction will increase by 20%, from 33,076 (FY08) to 39,691.
- By FY14, the circulation of adult media (CDs, DVDs, etc.) will increase by 25%, from 74,441 (FY08) to 93,051.
- By FY14, a minimum of 80% of adults surveyed will indicate they found the material they wanted and needed.
- By FY14, the number of adult informational transactions will increase 20% from 6,784 (FY07) to 8,141.

Residents and visitors will have access to the digital world so they can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

- By FY14, the number of uses of the library's 24/7 research databases will increase by 20%, from 12,209 (FY07) to 14,651.
- By FY14, 80% of web site users surveyed will rate the library's web site as informative and easy to use.
- By FY14, the number of page views on the library's web site will increase 20% from 581,140 (FY07) to 697,368.
- By FY14, the number of user sessions on library-provided Internet access computers will increase by 25%, from 40,080 (FY07) to over 50,100.

Residents and visitors will have attractive, safe, and welcoming places to meet and interact with others or sit quietly and read.

- By FY14, the number of visitors to library facilities will increase 20% from 166,533 (FY07)\* to 199,840.
- By FY14, the number of registered borrowers will increase 10%, from 25,769 (FY07) to 28,346.
- By FY14, 80% of library visitors surveyed will indicate that the library was an attractive, safe, and welcoming place.

Residents and visitors will have access to resources and services about the history and culture of Talbot County and Maryland.

- By FY14, the number of local history and genealogy questions answered



- by staff and volunteers will increase by 25%, from 6,300 (FY08) to 7,560.
- By FY14, 80% of Maryland Room users surveyed will evaluate the collections as very good or excellent.
  - By FY14, the attendance at programs on local history or genealogy will increase 25% from 500 (FY08) to 625.

Residents and visitors will have convenient and timely access to services and programs that help them find, evaluate, and use information effectively.

- Annually a minimum of 300 people will attend programs on library resources.
- By FY14, the number of people receiving instruction on using computers and the library's electronic resources will increase 25% from 1,824 (FY07) to 2,189.

\*Only Easton branch was counted in FY07.

### **Organizational Competencies**

By September 30, 2008, and each year thereafter, print and non-print committees will evaluate the library's collection for needed additions, withdrawals, and replacements.

By January 31, 2009, and each year thereafter, the process by which library activity data is collected, compiled, and distributed will be reviewed and revised as necessary to provide the data needed to monitor progress on the strategic plan.

By June 30, 2009, a plan will be developed by the Library Board, Friends, and Foundation to coordinate efforts that support effective fundraising.

By June 30, 2009, the library staff will have developed a methodology to regularly update the Library Board on progress on all objectives included in the strategic plan.

By June 30, 2010, TCFL will have completed a survey in each of the areas outlined in this plan's goals and objectives.

By January 30, 2014, TCFL staff will have completed the revision or development of public service policies that support this plan's goals and objectives.

The Talbot County Free Library will plan and allocate space in accordance with established service priorities.

Beginning in 2008, planning began on the renovation of the Main Library in Easton.

By July 1, 2009, a Facilities Master Plan will be adopted.

The Talbot County Free Library will use technologies that improve access to information, improve service to library patrons, and maximize efficient service delivery.

By June 30, 2009, TCFL staff will have evaluated the library's web site and determined content and navigation changes that need to be made to support the Library's service priorities.

By in July 1, 2010, TCFL, with the help of Eastern Shore Regional Library, will have completed an authority records clean-up of its online catalog, thus improving its searchability.

By December 30, 2009, TCFL will have formalized its partnership with Carroll County Public Library for a shared integrated library system, thereby providing significant cost savings and ensuring patron access to the library's catalog during the renovation of the main library.

By June 30, 2010, TCFL will have replaced all public access internet computers at all its branches.

The Talbot County Free Library will actively seek and maintain partnerships with organizations and institutions to enable the Library to enhance service to its patrons.

By January 30, 2009, all current partnerships and the library's obligations in support of them will be identified.

By June 30, 2009, criteria for ongoing partnerships will be developed.

By September 30, 2009, staff at all levels will be trained to identify partnership opportunities that help advance the Library's goals and objectives.

The Talbot County Free Library will continue its staff development and volunteer training initiatives to ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills and training they need to respond to current and emerging patron demands.

By December 30, 2009, the library will have a revised Volunteer Manual.

By June 30, 2010, staff will be trained to provide proactive service that meets the needs

of our library patrons.

By June 30, 2010, a plan will be in place to address the training needs of staff and volunteers.

### *Public Safety*

This subsection of the Plan examines the adequacy of police, fire and emergency medical services now and throughout the Planning period. Many issues relative to public safety fall within the realm of a community's overall quality of life that is the subject of the Community Character Chapter. However, as a part of this Element, it is appropriate to address issues such as the adequacy of existing police services, the expected future needs of the police force, and the need for new offices, substations, etc... The 1997 Comprehensive Plan quoted the International City Managers Association's recommended ratio of 1.75 police personnel per 1,000 people served. That standard was the subject of criticism from previous Police Chiefs. Therefore the 2004 Plan utilized a different standard, that of the International Center of Prevention of Crime, which finds that the national average across the U.S. is 3.36 officers per thousand people served.

With 51 sworn officers in a Town of approximately 15,200, Easton exceeds the ICMA recommended ratio, but is exactly on target with the reported national average. There are some factors in Easton that suggest being towards the upper end of the recommended range is appropriate. First, Easton is a regional center for employment, entertainment and commerce. Thus, the population served is much higher than simply the resident population of the Town. Second, Easton's

citizens have repeatedly called for strong and active community policing. Finally, Easton is subject to extremely heavy volumes of seasonal traffic traveling between Ocean City and the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area and Easton itself has a modest tourism industry. Factors such as these, place a stronger demand on police resources than may normally be found in another municipality of a similar size.

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

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

Fire Protection services should be expanded throughout the Plan period as the Town and County's population continues to increase. As a result of recent growth in and around the Town a new fire substation was constructed on

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

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

In assessing the adequacy of fire and emergency management services for Easton's future, it is necessary to look at more than just population projections. Traffic projections, particularly for US Route 50, will have a great influence on both the number of accidents that will likely occur on that highway as it traverses our Town as well as the ease (i.e. speed) with which emergency responders can reach their destinations.

The form of development is also extremely important when it comes to emergency response time. Studies<sup>1</sup> show that emergency responders can cover

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, research by Matt Magnasco of the Charlotte (NC) Department of Transportation.

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 predominately built in this form of development. On a larger scale, it also means that the need for additional substations is lessened when the community is built in the traditional pattern as opposed to a suburban style of development.

### *Water and Sewerage Facilities*

The adequacy of the Town's Water and Sewerage facilities to serve Easton through the Year 2040 is detailed much more in the Community Facilities and Services and Water Resources Elements of this Plan. In fact, one might logically ask, what type of information belongs in which Element? The Maryland Department of Planning has considered this same question and suggests in its *Writing the Municipal Growth Element* from their Models and Guidelines series, that with regards to community facilities, "the Community Facilities Element presents the complete picture for the entire jurisdiction [while] the municipal growth element looks only at those facilities affected or necessitated by future growth."<sup>2</sup> That should make this exercise a fairly straightforward mathematical one for this Municipal Growth Element.

We have already calculated in the Future Land Area Needed to Satisfy Demand subsection of this Element that Easton will likely see approximately 6,800 (6,773 was the figure derived) units in future growth areas outside of the Town and another approximately 2,500 (2,492) units in growth within the existing Town

---

<sup>2</sup> See the aforementioned Model and Guideline, page 3.

limits. There are also 727 units that already exist outside the Town but within the Growth Area.

The June 2002 Town of Easton Wastewater Treatment Facility Capacity Increase and Improvement Plan prepared by Easton Utilities, projected the number of residential customers in Easton to be 10,619 by 2025 (11,257 total, including 908 non-residential customers) based on population growth trends and projections. It should be noted that this was prepared prior to the 2004 Comprehensive Plan which enacted the Growth Boundary for the first time. At any rate, this figure exceeds the projected 6,773 dwelling units by 3,846. As a result of this study, a new wastewater treatment facility was constructed (brought on line in 2007) with a capacity to treat 4 million gallons per day (MGD) or 16,000 EDU's. According to the February 12, 2009 report on Wastewater Flow Allocations prepared by Easton Utilities Commission, there were 5,404 EDU's remaining to be allocated to the existing wastewater treatment facility, which has a design lifespan of 20 years (until capacity is reached). Land is allotted adjacent to the existing facility to build another such facility and increase capacity as necessary at that time.

EDU's equate to dwelling units on a one for one basis, but also to non-commercial uses which vary depending on the nature of the use. These can vary to a large degree and do not necessarily equate simply to size of the building. For example, a large major retail store will likely only contribute to the wastewater system through employee/customer restrooms. On the other hand relatively small industrial uses might have a large demand if, for example, they use large quantities of water for washing, cooling, etc. The point for the purpose of this Element is that at some point, an expansion of wastewater treatment capacity will be necessary to accommodate the development of our ultimate

growth area. The current facility was planned for this expansion to occur in the year 2025. It seems reasonable to assume that the actual need for this expansion will occur within a few years of this date depending on future growth rates and the percentage of future growth that is devoted to residential growth. It would also seem reasonable to expect that this future expansion need only be of relatively modest size (i.e. capacity).

The same logic applies to water usage. Currently the Town of Easton is served by six production wells and has a production capacity of 4.12 MGD.

Easton Utilities has prepared a Water Master Plan that looks at the 2004 Plan and evaluates the ability to supply water to the entire Growth Area. Table 10 below is copied from the Water Master Plan's Executive Summary and looks at future water demand. It assumes that the population of Easton will grow at an average annual rate of 3%. In addition to demand within the existing Town limits, most of the additional demand will come from residential and commercial development within Priority 1, 2, and 3 Growth Areas as defined in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan.



Table 10  
Future Water Demand and Capacity

Year	Population	Growth	Ave Demand (MGD)	Max Day Demand (MGD)
2007	14,889	3%	2.04	3.69
2010	15,799	3%	2.16	3.92
2015	18,316	3%	2.51	4.54
2020	21,233	3%	2.91	5.27
2025	24,615	3%	3.37	6.10
2030	28,535	3%	3.91	7.08
2033	31,181	3%	4.27	7.73

The Plan concludes that additional water supply will be required in 2011/2012. The additional water requirements grow to a total of 7.73 MGD by the year 2033. To meet this demand, 4.6 MGD in additional production is required. Additionally, two new 1,000,000 gallon storage tanks are needed to insure adequate pressure and volumes for firefighting capability.

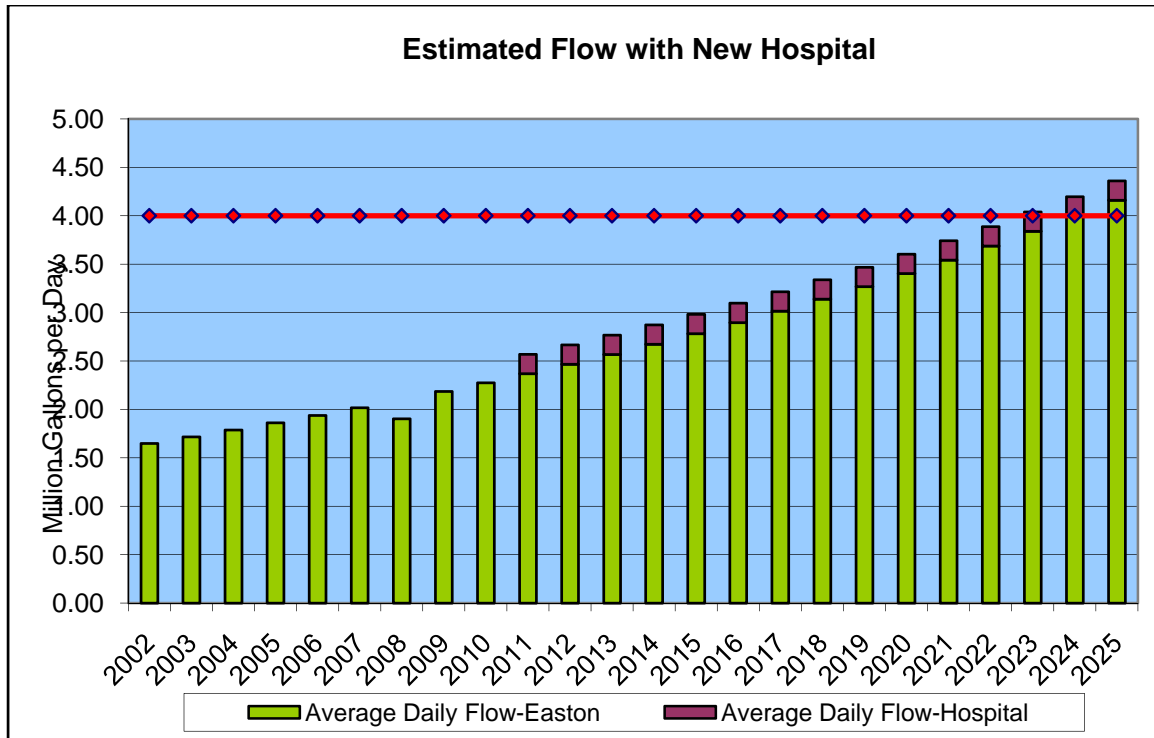
Finally the Plan recommends Capital Improvements designed to satisfy the water demand generated by growth in the future. The following summarizes these demands:

Table 11  
Planned Water System Capital Projects

Component	Year	Capital Cost (2009 \$)
16" Downtown Water Main	FY-10	1,600,000
GWTP 2.5 MGD Expansion	FY-11	500,000
2.0 MGD WTP #2	FY-13	2,000,000
1.0 MGD Well # 13	FY-13	500,000
1.0 MG Elevated Storage Tank #3	FY-16	2,600,000
1.0 MGD Well # 14	FY-20	500,000
WTP #2 Expansion to 4.0 MGD	FY-26	1,000,000
1.0 MGD Well # 15	FY-26	500,000
1.0 MG Elevated Storage Tank # 4	FY-30	2,600,000
1.0 MGD Well # 16	FY-31	500,000

In the matter of wastewater service, Easton Utilities has recently examined the potential impact of the proposed new regional hospital on the Town's wastewater system. The findings are summarized in the following table and graph:

Year	WWTF Design Capacity	Average Daily Flow-Easton	Average Daily Flow-Hospital	With Hospital	Actual Flow	Column2	Actual Peak Load
2002	4.00	1.65		1.65	1.65		1.65
2003	4.00	1.72		1.72	2.487		2.49
2004	4.00	1.79		1.79	1.832		1.83
2005	4.00	1.86		1.86	1.868		1.87
2006	4.00	1.94		1.94	1.787		1.79
2007	4.00	2.02		2.02	2.019		2.02
2008	4.00	1.90		1.90	1.904		1.90
2009	4.00	2.19		2.19			
2010	4.00	2.28		2.28			
2011	4.00	2.37	0.20	2.57			
2012	4.00	2.47	0.20	2.67			
2013	4.00	2.57	0.20	2.77			
2014	4.00	2.67	0.20	2.87			
2015	4.00	2.78	0.20	2.98			
2016	4.00	2.90	0.20	3.10			
2017	4.00	3.02	0.20	3.22			
2018	4.00	3.14	0.20	3.34			
2019	4.00	3.27	0.20	3.47			
2020	4.00	3.40	0.20	3.60			
2021	4.00	3.54	0.20	3.74			
2022	4.00	3.69	0.20	3.89			
2023	4.00	3.84	0.20	4.04			
2024	4.00	4.00	0.20	4.20			
2025	4.00	4.16	0.20	4.36			



Thus it is clear that upgrades will be necessary to the Town’s water and wastewater systems to accommodate planned growth, including that of the Hospital, and that Easton Utilities is planning for such upgrades well in advance of the need for them. The Easton Utilities Tariff requires that each new development project pay a water and wastewater capital charge. The capital charges collected are used to fund construction or to repay loans used to construct the new plants or wells. In addition to the capital charge, developers are required to construct certain sections of distribution and collection systems. If the Town is ultimately successful at establishing a 1% annual rate of growth, the aforementioned projection of future water and wastewater needs will have to be adjusted. Obviously, though the needed improvements will be pushed further out into the future so the projections above might be taken as a “worst-

case” scenario. Talbot County’s (Draft) Water Resource Element assumes 1% growth for Easton and it concludes that by 2030, Easton will still have a net available water system capacity of 1.28 MGD or 5,120 EDU. For wastewater the County’s projections for the Easton municipal system show a net available capacity in 2030 of 1.00 MGD or 3,983 EDU.

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

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

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

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

### ***Recreation***

Easton has an extensive Park system that is examined more closely in the Parks and Recreation Element of this Plan. For the purposes of this Element, the focus is on the needs generated by future growth. The 2004 Plan already identifies the need for a new Community (or Regional) Park on the eastern side of Town. This Park may have been located during the discussion concerning the Transportation Plan Element of this Update. As part of the resolution of the issue of the future

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

Assuming that we have previously determined that the existing park system is adequate to serve the population of Easton, we should focus on what is necessary for the future residents of Easton. It has already been calculated that, under the general assumptions of this Plan with regards to density, household size, etc..., the future growth area can accommodate 6,773 housing units. Additionally, there is the potential for 2,492 new units to be built within the existing Town Boundaries for a total potential of 9,265 new units. At the 2.22 person per household count that Easton had in the most recent Census, this equates to 20,568 more people at total build-out of the Town (not including those already living in the Growth Area).

The State of Maryland recommends a standard ratio of 30 acres of parkland per 1,000 population (one-half of which should be owned by the Town). This equates to 617 acres of new parkland (309 of which would be Town-owned land). Some of this would be required to be provided appurtenant to the subdivision review process. Easton's current standard requires developers to provide a minimum of 35% of their site as common open space, including land to be dedicated for parks or playgrounds (1,200 sq. ft. per dwelling unit). The 9,265 new units that can potentially ultimately be built within the Town and Growth Area equates to 255 acres of parks or playgrounds within subdivisions. This

leaves the need for 362 acres of parks to be provided via other means to meet the State guideline.

## **FINANCING MECHANISMS**

Current analysis of growth shows that the Town of Easton already has (or is already planning to have) sufficient infrastructure to handle the projected Growth of approximately 2,500 homes that could be accommodated within the Town's current boundaries, as well as at least some of the Future Growth Areas that may be considered for annexation.

New development will always require:

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

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

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

State and County financial help should be examined for help updating the existing infrastructure for redevelopment areas. Community Legacy and similar programs can help maintain streets and create streetscapes. Additionally,



Neighborhood Conservation programs can help improve the infrastructure to increase redevelopment potential. Program Open Space (working cooperatively with Talbot County) and a new Municipal Parks Program can help offset the cost of establishing new parks beyond those that are acquired via the development review process. Parkland (and land for any number of other amenities) can also be acquired during the Annexation Process as part of an Annexation agreement. Since Annexations are a completely discretionary power of the legislative body, this is potentially a particularly powerful tool to use to acquire at least the sites for some of these facilities. Finally, both Talbot County and the Town of Easton have passed Impact Fee Ordinances since the 2004 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The Town now collects fees to pay for Parks and Recreation, Municipal Facilities, Transportation, Police, and Fire services necessitated by new growth. Similarly, Talbot County assesses Impact Fees both within and outside of municipalities, which cover the costs associated with new Library, Parks and Recreation, Public School, Community College, General Government and Transportation services/facilities. This funding mechanism should continue to be utilized to insure that the financial burdens resulting from new development is borne by said development and not by the taxpayers of Easton as a whole.

## **RURAL BUFFERS AND TRANSITION AREAS**

In the Town's 2004 Comprehensive Plan and the Talbot County 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Easton is depicted with a Growth Area surrounding the municipal boundaries and a greenbelt located immediately adjacent to the limits of this Growth Area on the County side of the line. The purpose of this greenbelt is primarily to work in conjunction with the Urban Growth Boundary to limit the geographic spread, or sprawl, of Easton out into

rural parts of the County. It also establishes a clear delineation between Town and county such that at build-out, it will be clear whether one is in Town or out in the country, as opposed to some hybridized suburban netherworld.

The Town should work with Talbot County and with Agricultural/Forest Preservation Organizations to preserve or permanently protect these areas. A decent amount of such land is already protected as is depicted on the following Map.

Insert Map of Protected Lands in/around Easton's Greenbelt  
MAP 3

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

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

## **PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE AREAS**

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

The first sensitive area to be protected is Streams and their Buffers. The Town recently took a step towards greater protection of this resource by amending the Zoning Ordinance in 2008 to include a 100 foot buffer from perennial streams (50 foot for intermittent).

The next area that requires special attention and protection is the 100 year flood plain. There are limited such areas in Easton, but where they do exist they are governed by a Floodplain Ordinance which is consistent with the National Model Floodplain Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program. Given the limited areas of floodplain in and around Easton, there is little impact

anticipated on this resource as generally given the size (i.e. width) of the floodplain on a given lot, there is generally ample room to locate any desired improvements elsewhere on the lot.

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

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

The final area of concern is agricultural and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation. This is a newly added Sensitive Area for all jurisdictions to address by October 1, 2009. The more detailed discussion will be found in the Sensitive areas Element. For this Element, it is mentioned to examine the impact of projected growth on agricultural and forest areas.

Clearly there will be a significant impact on agricultural and forest areas as Easton grows since that is predominately what the Growth Area consists of today. Agriculture is not precluded in Easton, but it has long been recognized that as Easton grows, the agricultural fields will yield to development to accommodate that growth. Thus, while we do not take action to prevent agricultural activities from occurring within Easton, neither do we take action to

preserve it. The story is a little different with regards to forests. Easton has long had and administered a Forest Conservation program and the intention is always to identify and protect the most valuable forest land, such as those associated with a non-tidal wetland or located along a stream bank serving as a buffer. Furthermore, it has more recently become our policy (and is now a requirement) to not allow these protected forests (nor for that matter wetlands and/or buffers) to be located on individual, privately-owned lots. Instead such areas must now be set aside as their own separate lots to be owned by the Town, an environmental interest group, a homeowners association, etc... As Easton develops the Future Growth Area, we will continue these policies and protect this important resource. In addition, when possible we will explore opportunities to expand on such areas. One example is the Seth Demonstration Forest, which is actually a portion of our Greenbelt. It abuts the Easton Club East subdivision as well as land to the north of that development. The Forest Conservation Area for Easton Club East is located adjacent to the Seth Forest to provide more forest area. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the land to the north of Easton Club East, where Beechwood Drive would access the property, has been identified as suitable as a location for a large-scale park. It also offers the opportunity to enhance the Seth Forest by such actions as protecting additional forest land, planting more forest, adding a woodlands garden, etc...

## **POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

Population growth dynamics and projections are provided in the Plan Background Chapter of this Plan. Also, it should be reemphasized that with the adoption and adherence to the Growth Boundary, we know, roughly, what

Easton's ultimate population will be (given certain assumptions about density of development, percentage of residential vs. non-residential development, household size, etc...). We just do not necessarily know when that population might be achieved. The number of future dwelling units for the Town as a whole has been calculated to be 17,342. At the household size of the most recent (2000) Census of 2.22 persons per household, these dwelling units equate to a total ultimate Town population of 38,499. When that population is achieved of course depends on how fast we grow. At the 3% figure that we've experienced and used throughout the last 15 to 20 years, we would achieve our "ultimate" population in approximately 31 or 32 years (i.e. by the Year 2041). However in light of community concern over the speed and amount of growth occurring in Easton, the Planning Commission has identified 1% as the maximum annual growth rate they would like to see occur in the future. The most "appropriate" growth rate for Easton is one which insures that infrastructure is able to keep up with the demands generated by that growth and does not create adverse impacts greater than can be ameliorated. What this rate or level might be is unknown, but it is believed that the recent rate of 3% is too high and our target should be closer to the longer-term average of 1% annually.

Table 11 below provides Population Projections on a yearly basis using the 3% and 1% growth factors. Under the 1% scenario, the ultimate population is not achieved until near the end of the current century, over 80 years down the road. The actual built-out population is likely to actually be slightly less as we will have to accommodate the parkland identified above and there will be some future civic space, institutional uses, and neighborhood level commercial uses, although all are likely to be minimal.

Table 11 Population Growth by Year

Year	Population @ 3% Growth	Population @ 1% Growth
2009	15,249	15,249
2010	15,706	15,401
2011	16,178	15,556
2012	16,663	15,712
2013	17,163	15,869
2014	17,678	16,028
2015	18,208	16,188
2016	18,754	16,350
2017	19,317	16,514
2018	19,896	16,679
2019	20,493	16,846
2020	21,108	17,014
2021	21,741	17,184
2022	22,394	17,356
2023	23,065	17,530
2024	23,757	17,705
2025	24,470	17,882
2026	25,204	18,061
2027	25,960	18,242
2028	26,739	18,424
2029	27,541	18,608
2030	28,368	18,794
2031	29,219	18,982
2032	30,095	19,172
2033	30,998	19,364
2034	31,928	19,558
2035	32,886	19,754
2036	33,872	19,952
2037	34,889	20,152
2038	35,935	20,354
2039	37,013	20,558
2040	38,124	20,764



## VISION

The Vision that this Comprehensive Plan aims to achieve for the future of Easton can be summarized as something like “A Return to our Roots.” We envision ourselves 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. And, this subsection is the perfect segue into the next Element, Community Character, where this whole theme is discussed in greater detail.