



# Town of Charlestown, Maryland

# 2025 Comprehensive Plan

Adopted September 9, 2025  
Resolution 2025-03



**Board of Commissioners**

Renee Capano, President

Robert Rinehart, Vice President

Richard Mahan, Treasurer

Jackie Akers, Commissioner

Thomas Costanzi, Commissioner

**Planning Commission**

Kenneth Confalone, Chairman

Renee Capano, Commissioner Liaison

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**Town Staff**

Kenneth Hamilton, Town Administrator

Bryan Lightner, Town Administrator (2024-2025)

Dr. Chris Williamson, ACIP Circuit Rider/Grants Manager

**Project Grant Sponsor**

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Grants Gateway program.



**Consultant Team**

The initial draft prepared with Mead & Hunt, Woodvalley Community Strategies, and the Center for Watershed Protection. Contributors included: Jamie Kendrick (Project Manager), Hailey Vaughan (Land Use C Housing), Savannah Terrell (GIS Support), Amanda Pollack (Water Resources/Resiliency), Chris Swann (Water Resources/Resiliency).



## RESOLUTION 2025-03

### A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN, MARYLAND

**WHEREAS**, Comprehensive Planning is governed by the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland which provides legislative authority for the Town of Charlestown's (Town) planning and zoning powers; and

**WHEREAS**, Article 3-102 sets forth the minimum requirements for a municipal comprehensive plan to include Land Use, Municipal Growth, Areas of Critical State Concern, Development Regulations, Mineral Resources, Sensitive Areas and Conservation, Community Facilities, Water Resources, Transportation, and Housing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources awarded the Town a planning grant that provided funding to retain consultants in 2024 who engaged Town residents, prepared a draft plan, and provided the draft plan in early 2025 to the Maryland Department of Planning and Cecil County for review as required by State law; and

**WHEREAS**, the draft plan was posted for public review between April 1 and April 30, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, the Maryland Departments of Planning, Environment, Housing and Community Development, Natural Resources, and Transportation and the Critical Area Commission and Cecil County provided comments and corrections; and

**WHEREAS**, the June, 2025 Water System Capacity Evaluation and Audit, 2024 Watershed Master Plan, and other Town plans were incorporated into the Final 2025 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Planning Commission and Town Commission reviewed public, State agencies, and Cecil County comments and corrections and directed changes that were incorporated into the Final 2025 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan; and

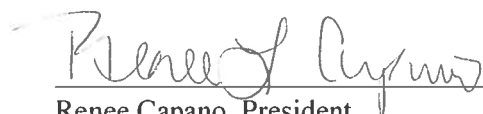
**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Plan includes an implementation chapter that identifies key actions, responsible entities, funding mechanisms, and timelines to implement the Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan provides the basis for making changes to zoning, subdivision, and other regulations that govern land use and infrastructure development in Charlestown and the Town Commission may amend this plan at its discretion.

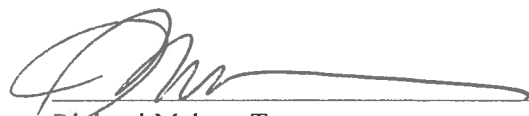
***NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED*** that the governing body for the Town of Charlestown hereby adopts the 2025 Charlestown Comprehensive Plan dated September 9, 2025 and officials and agencies identified in the implementation strategies are hereby directed to implement the recommended activities assigned to them.

***ADOPTED***, this 9th day of September, 2025

**Offered by the Commissioners of Charlestown, MD:**


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Renee Capano, President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Rinehart, Vice-President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Mahan, Treasurer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline Akers, Commissioner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Costanzi, Commissioner

**ATTEST:**   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth Hamilton, Town Administrator

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# Part 1: Planning Context

A comprehensive plan is an official statement of a local government, setting forth policies concerning future growth, development, resiliency, land conservation, and public investments in facilities and infrastructure. As a policy document, it is general, comprehensive, and long-range in nature. It is general in that it summarizes policies and proposals but does not establish detailed regulations or direct actions on specific properties. It is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geography of the jurisdiction (and potential growth areas, if applicable). It is long-range in that it looks beyond current day-to-day municipal issues and focuses on managing growth and addressing problems over the next twenty years and beyond.

## 1.1 Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive planning is governed by the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland which provides the legislative authority for the Town of Charlestown's (Town) planning and zoning powers. Article 3-102 sets forth the minimum requirements for a municipal comprehensive plan to include the following elements:

- Goals and Objectives
- Land Use
- Municipal Growth
- Areas of Critical State Concern
- Development Regulations
- Mineral Resources
- Sensitive Areas and Conservation
- Community Facilities
- Water Resources
- Transportation
- Housing

The comprehensive plan is developed through a specific process that includes technical analysis, community participation, consultation with county and state government agencies, and adoption by the Town Commissioners. Given the size and scale of Charlestown, some elements are combined. Although there are two small parcels within town boundaries that are owned by extraction companies, the Town does not permit mining in any zone. Therefore, a Mineral Resources element is not included.

After Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) review, subsequent changes necessary to comply with MDP comments, and the Town Commission's adoption the comprehensive plan becomes the basis for Charlestown's specific actions, programs, and legislation. It is a guide to make development and investment decisions based on reasoned and adopted policies rather than on the merits of individual proposals. This document provides the basis for making changes to zoning, subdivision, and other regulations that govern land use and infrastructure development in Charlestown. The Town Commission may amend this plan at its discretion.

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## 1.2 Our Shared Planning Values

Maryland's 2009 Planning Vision Law identifies 12 Planning Visions, all of which are supported by Charlestown's comprehensive plan:

1. **Quality of Life and Sustainability:** A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.
2. **Public Participation:** Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. **Potential Growth Areas:** Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.
4. **Community Design:** Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreation areas, and historic, cultural, and archeological resources.
5. **Infrastructure:** Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.
6. **Transportation:** A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. **Housing:** A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. **Economic Development:** Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged.
9. **Environmental Protection:** Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. **Resource Conservation:** Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
11. **Stewardship:** Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. **Implementation:** Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.

In 2025 the Maryland General Assembly adopted SB 266 which replaced the 12 Planning Visions with eight Sustainable Growth Planning Principles effective October 1, 2025. Charlestown will work with MDP to implement the Principles in coming years.

## 1.3 Charlestown Today

Charlestown, Maryland is a charming waterfront community of about 1,500 population nestled along the north bank of the North East River in Cecil County. Founded in 1742, it is one of Maryland's oldest towns and boasts a rich colonial history. Once a bustling colonial port, Charlestown today is known for its scenic views, historic homes, and a relaxed, small-town atmosphere. Charlestown is regarded by its residents as having a high quality of life, secluded from the fast pace of suburbanization, and excellent natural resources to be preserved and protected. The Town faces the pressure of aging infrastructure, is concerned about the future capacity of its water system, rising North East River tides, and the Town's ability to prevent nuisance flooding from becoming damaging flooding.

### Governance

Charlestown is governed by an elected, five-member Board of Town Commissioners. By its Municipal Charter, the Town Commissioners have the power to pass all such ordinances not contrary to the Constitution and laws of the State of Maryland government of the Town "... for the protection and preservation of the town's property, rights, and privileges; for the preservation of peace and good order; for securing persons and property from violence, danger, or destruction; and for the protection and promotion of the health, safety, comfort, convenience, welfare, and happiness of the residents of the town and visitors thereto and sojourners therein." In 2025, the Town staff were the Town Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Town Clerk, Accountant, and the Director of Public Works and two operations staff. Park Rangers are hired for the summer tourist season.

### Municipal Finance

As shown in Figure 1, the FY 2025 Town general fund operating budget was \$1.833 million of which property and income taxes made up approximately 52% of general fund revenues; and intergovernmental transfers (highway user revenues, water/sewer enterprise, and county tax differential, etc.) accounted for approximately 25% of general fund revenue.

Town salaries, benefits, and taxes expenditures are combined as "general government" expenditures rather than associated with a specific service. The Town's primary direct service expenditures are for parks and piers; street maintenance; and solid waste and recycling. The Town-owned water system (wells, storage tank, mains and distribution lines) has an enterprise fund. The wastewater collection system is owned by the Town. A large portion of the wastewater revenue is a pass through to Cecil County that provides treatment.

The Town's current revenue sources do not allow much capacity to deliver new services or capital projects without grants or loans from state and federal agencies. Even with grants, identifying the matching funds is challenging. The Town will need to address its revenue outlook if action is desired on many items in this plan.

Figure 1. Charlestown FY 2025 Budget

General Fund Revenue		General Fund Expenses	
Property Taxes	\$ 718,000	Streets	\$ 355,371
Income Taxes	\$ 169,125	Piers & Parks	\$ 234,568
Overhead Allocations	\$ 507,932	Trash & Recycling	\$ 264,000
Highway User Revenues	\$ 120,999	General Government	\$ 821,123
Piers & Parks	\$ 157,304	All Other	\$ 158,131
All Other Sources	\$ 159,833	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,833,193</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 1,833,193</b>		

Utility Fund Revenue		Utility Fund Expenses	
User Fees	\$ 540,000	General	\$ 615,300
Tower Rental	\$ 90,000	Sewer	\$ 1,350
Interest Income	\$ 80,000	Water	\$ 72,300
All Other Sources	\$ 33,450	Debt Service	\$ 54,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 743,450</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 743,450</b>

## Demographics

The U.S. Bureau of the Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates Charlestown population at 1,530. When the last Comprehensive Plan was prepared in 2008, Charlestown's population was 1,089. The 2020 Census population was recorded at 1,496. The population is 94 % White/Non-Hispanic and the median age in Charlestown is 35.3 years which is lower than the State of Maryland's median age of 39 years and Cecil County's median age of 41 years. The median household income is approximately \$103,000, approximately 39% of residents have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, and the labor force participation rate is nearly 60%. A significant challenge in reviewing demographic information for small communities is the relatively large Margin of Error.

## Housing

Charlestown has 866 housing units, of which the 2018 – 2022 ACS indicates that 85% are occupied. More than 90% of units are single-family homes and the home ownership rate is approaching 80%. Of the 866 total housing units, approximately half were built between 1990 and 2019. Most of these units are in Cool Springs and other subdivisions west of MD 7 and sit on one-quarter acre lots in traditional suburban design. East of MD 7, suburban ranchers and split-level houses are the norm away from the North East River. There are twenty historic residences within the National Register Charlestown Historic District. Approximately 25 residences have direct access to the North East River. The average household size is 2.8 persons. There are no multi-family buildings of more than four units and the median gross rent/mortgage is \$1,390.

## Economy & Industry

Charlestown is a small waterfront town with four marinas, a general store, two restaurants, an elementary school, several churches, and a rural Post Office. There are no major employers located other than these marina, retail and food service businesses. Charlestown's historic charm and waterfront draws tourists and water enthusiasts, however accommodations are limited to private rentals, such as AirBNB (18 listings) and VRBO (14 listings) rentals. Although "work from home" has increased since the pandemic, the average commute to work for a Charlestown resident is 33 minutes. Of Charlestown's working age residents, 24% work in public administration followed by 18% in educational, health, and social services.

## Environmental Resources

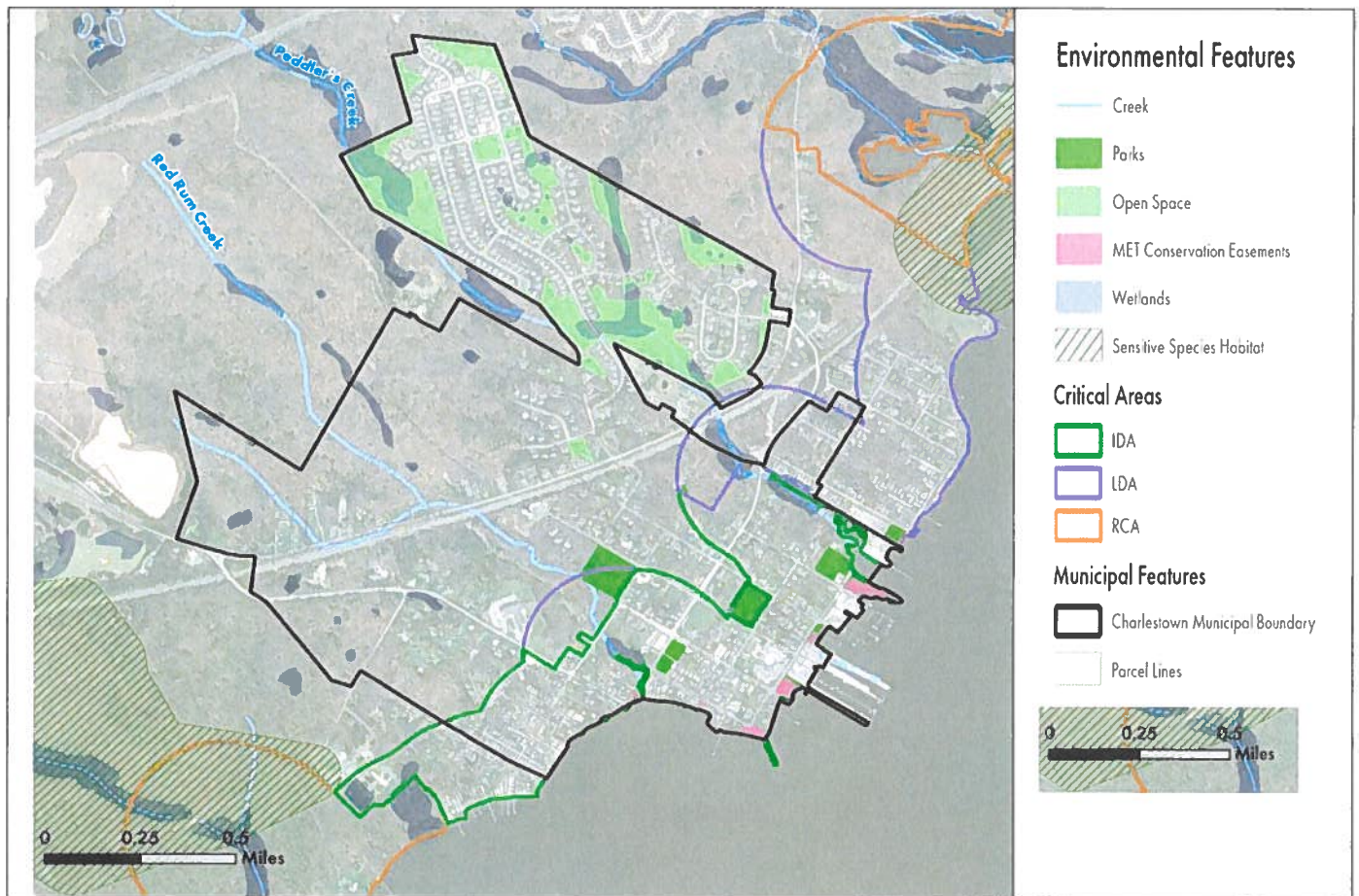
Charlestown is situated on the banks of the North East River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. Charlestown's historic identity and present-day charm are intertwined with its natural setting and its roots as a rural, waterfront community. The conservation and protection of key natural resources and sensitive areas is crucial to preserving the character of Charlestown. Source data is primarily from Department of Natural Resources' MERLIN (Maryland's Environmental Resource Land Information Network) system. Among the most critical and relevant environmental resources to this plan are:

- **Two of the six major creeks flowing into the North East River: Red Rum Creek** located in the south part of town from within the quarry property to MD 7 and Amtrak, then crossing under Cecil Street before it flows into the river; and **Peddler's Run Creek Run**, which runs from west of US 40 in the Principio Business Park along a path just south of the Cool Springs subdivision then under MD 7 and Amtrak before flowing to the river south of Louisa Lane and Edgewater Avenue. Residents report significant rainfalls causes these creeks to periodically flood, which results in erosion and sediment deposition where they empty into the North East River, at Town parks and public swimming beaches.
- **Palustrine and Estuarine system wetlands** surrounding creeks in certain areas and along the North East River. Estuarine system wetlands are tidal wetlands and include deep water tidal habitats and adjacent tidal wetlands and are often partially surrounded by land. Palustrine system wetlands are non-tidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, plants and undergrowth with low salinity and shallow depths (less than 6 feet). Estuarine wetlands can be found along the southern end of the Charlestown Manor subdivision along Red Rum Creek. Palustrine wetlands are widely scattered in areas within the Town and along its edges, however a number are concentrated in the Trinity Woods subdivision. Palustrine wetlands that border tidal wetlands (as they do at the southern end of the Charlestown Manor subdivision) are of moderate to high significance for serving to temporarily hold coastal surge flood waters and to temporarily store water during storm events.

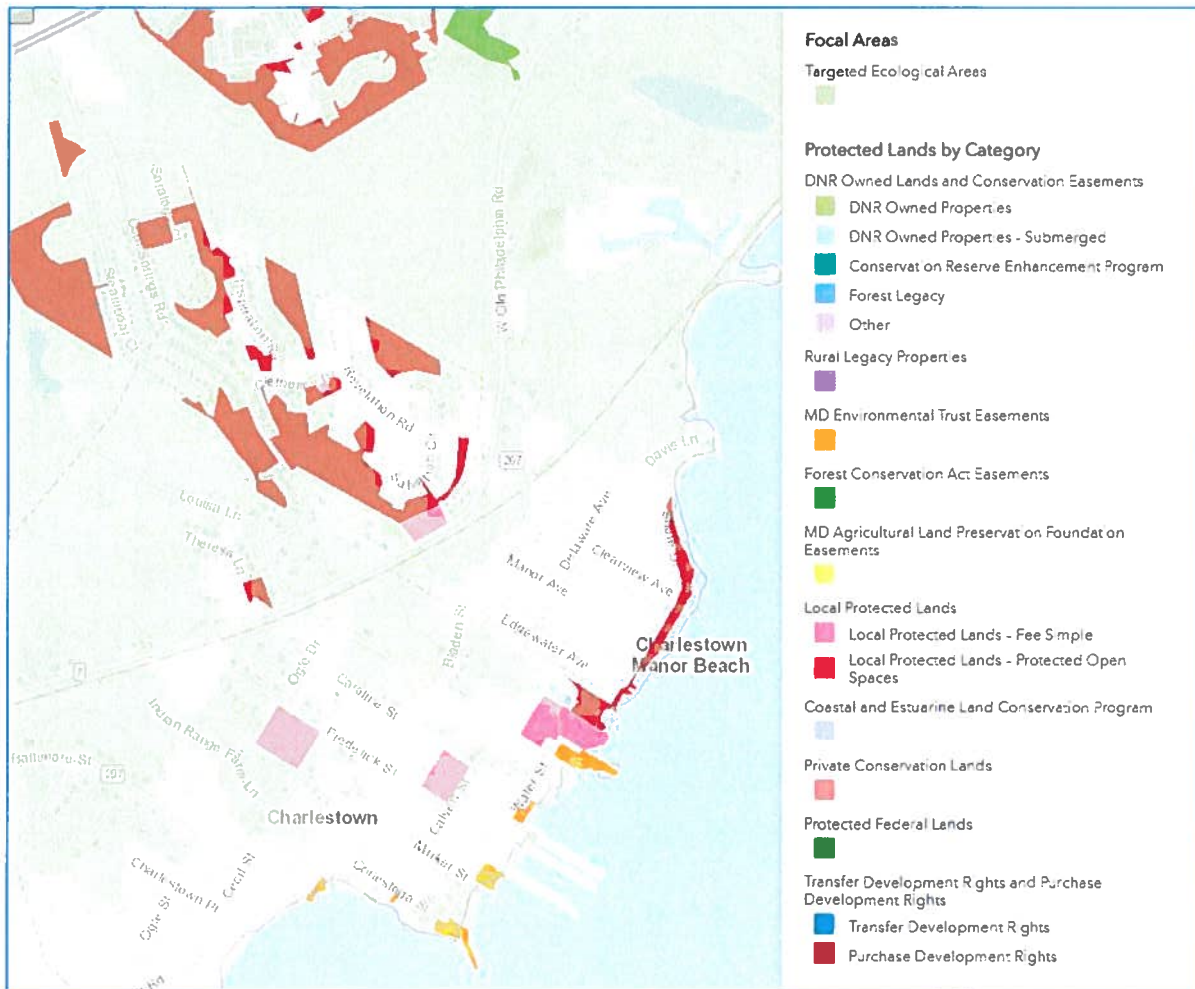
- Large areas of forested land** can be found throughout Charlestown, particularly in the areas located in the western and northern sections of the Town forming a “greenbelt”. Large, forested tracts continue out past the perimeters of these areas. Smaller pockets of wooded areas lie adjacent to and between residential neighborhoods, and street trees can be found in the more densely populated areas of the Town and along the waterfront.

Taken together the above environmental resources form the Town’s and County’s Green Infrastructure Network (<https://geodata.md.gov/greenprint/>) – interconnected lands that provide the bulk of the State’s ecosystem services, such as cleaning the air, filtering water, storing and cycling nutrients, conserving soils, regulating climate, and maintaining hydrologic function. These lands also provide habitat for native plants and animals, some of which are considered rare, threatened, or endangered, and they can be found in parks, conservation easements, other protected lands, and private properties. The green infrastructure network serves a purpose of critical importance for community resilience, including protection of the Town’s potable well-water supply, stormwater management, flood control, public recreation, and protection of the Town’s identity and quality of life (see Maps 1 and 2).

Map 1 Environmental Features



Map 2 Green Infrastructure Network

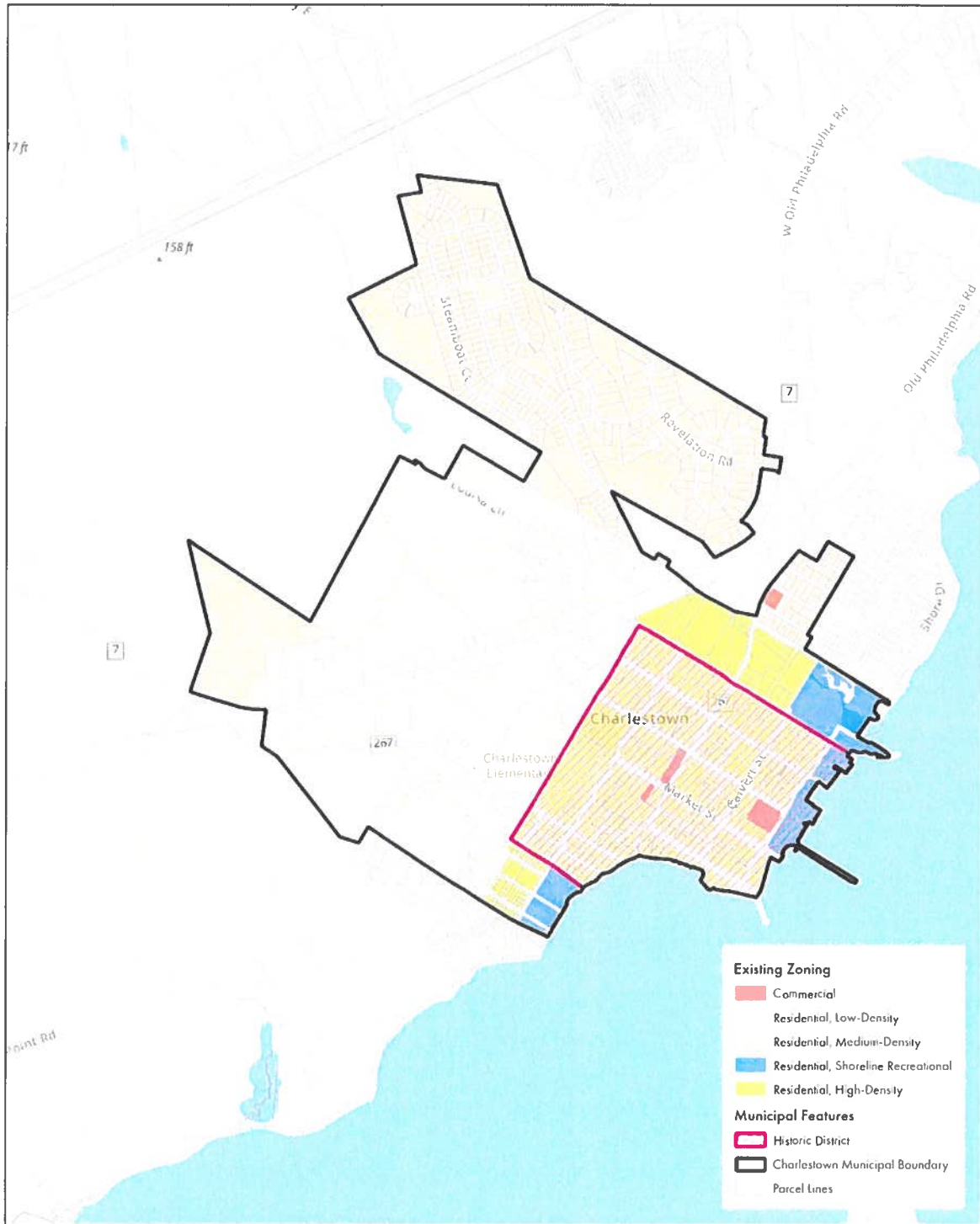


## Land Use & Zoning

Charlestown’s land use is characterized by its historic town center, waterfront, and residential development. The largest land use category, single family residential, totals over 260 acres and accounts for slightly more than a third of the existing land use (35%). Other prominent land uses include vacant land and open space. Commercial land use comprises less than one per cent of the town’s total land and is located within the historic town center.

The land use plan is put into effect through the zoning code that details what can be built on a piece of land and where it can be built. The zoning code specifies regulations including, but not limited to the minimum size of lots, the size of buildings on those lots, building styles or materials that may or may not be used, and how access and parking is available for each property. Further, the zoning code is supported by a subdivision ordinance which provides additional standards when smaller lots are created within a large parcel such as the amount of open space required (which may include or be in addition to areas regulated by natural resource conservation laws), street patterns and classifications. The town’s current zoning is depicted in Map 3.

Map 3. Existing Zoning



## Transportation

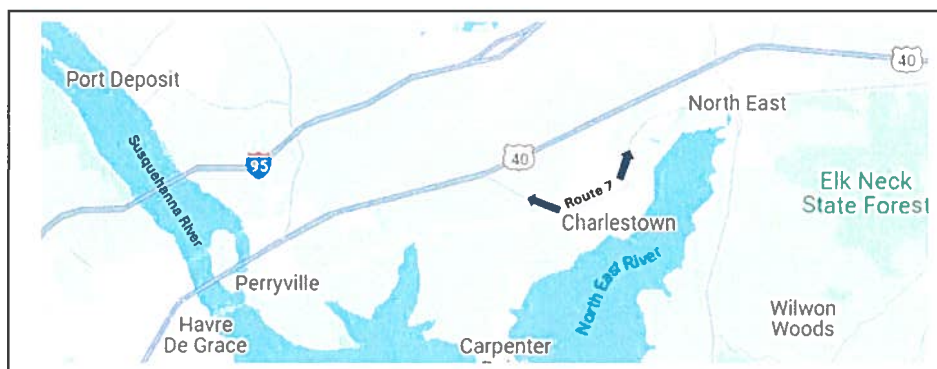
Primary highway access to Charlestown is via MD Route 7, which connects to Route 40 to the east and west of the Town. Access to Interstate 95 requires travel on US 40 to either Perryville (MD 222) or North East (MD 272). A new interchange to I-95 is under construction at Belvidere Road approximately one-half mile from the southern leg of MD 7 at US 40. The need for this interchange is driven by significant growth in the warehouse and logistics sector on the west side of US 40 and sand and gravel production on the east side of US 40.

Charlestown is bifurcated by MD Route 7 which is posted for 40 mph through town limits. According to the State Highway Administration, average daily traffic along MD 7 through Charlestown is approximately 2,500 vehicles per day with trips roughly evenly distributed northbound and southbound (Internet Traffic Monitoring System (I-TMS) (maryland.gov)). Review of safety data indicates that there has been one fatality along MD 7 since 2018 in the vicinity of Charlestown, near Wells Camp Road. Maryland State Police data indicates that several single-vehicle crashes have occurred in this vicinity resulting in driver or passenger injury based on Maryland Crash Data 2024-Present.

Within the core of Charlestown, roads are very low volume with less than 1,000 vehicles per day except Baltimore Street (MD 267) which exceeds 1,000 vehicles on days when school is in session. East of MD 7, Charlestown's streets form a grid network; west of MD 7 streets are curvilinear in a suburban fashion. Sidewalks are present in Cool Springs and Trinity Woods subdivisions west of MD 7, and along Baltimore and Bladen Streets (MD 267) but absent elsewhere throughout the "old town" other than some limited asphalt pathways. The Town owns five parking lots: two at Avalon Park, Veteran's Park, the Wharf, and Athletic Complex. The parking lots are used by residents, during the summer by visitors and boaters, and during special events.

As of 2025, there was no regular transit service, only Dial-a-Ride run by Cecil County. The nearest rail transit is at the Perryville MARC station or the Newark Delaware AMTRAK and SEPTA station. Map 4 indicates the Town's major streets and State highways.

Map 4 Regional Highways



## Community Services & Facilities

In Maryland, most core governmental services are provided at the county level including schools and libraries; police, fire, and emergency services; licensing, building permits and inspections. In Charlestown,

- law enforcement services are provided by the Cecil County Sheriff's Office and the Maryland State Police.
- fire and emergency services are provided by the Charlestown Volunteer Fire Company.
- students attend Charlestown Elementary School, Perryville Middle School, and Perryville High School
- Cecil County Department of Land Use and Development Services reviews building plans, issues building permits, and conducts building inspections on behalf of the town.
- Health and human services are provided by the Cecil County Health Department and the Cecil County Department of Community Services

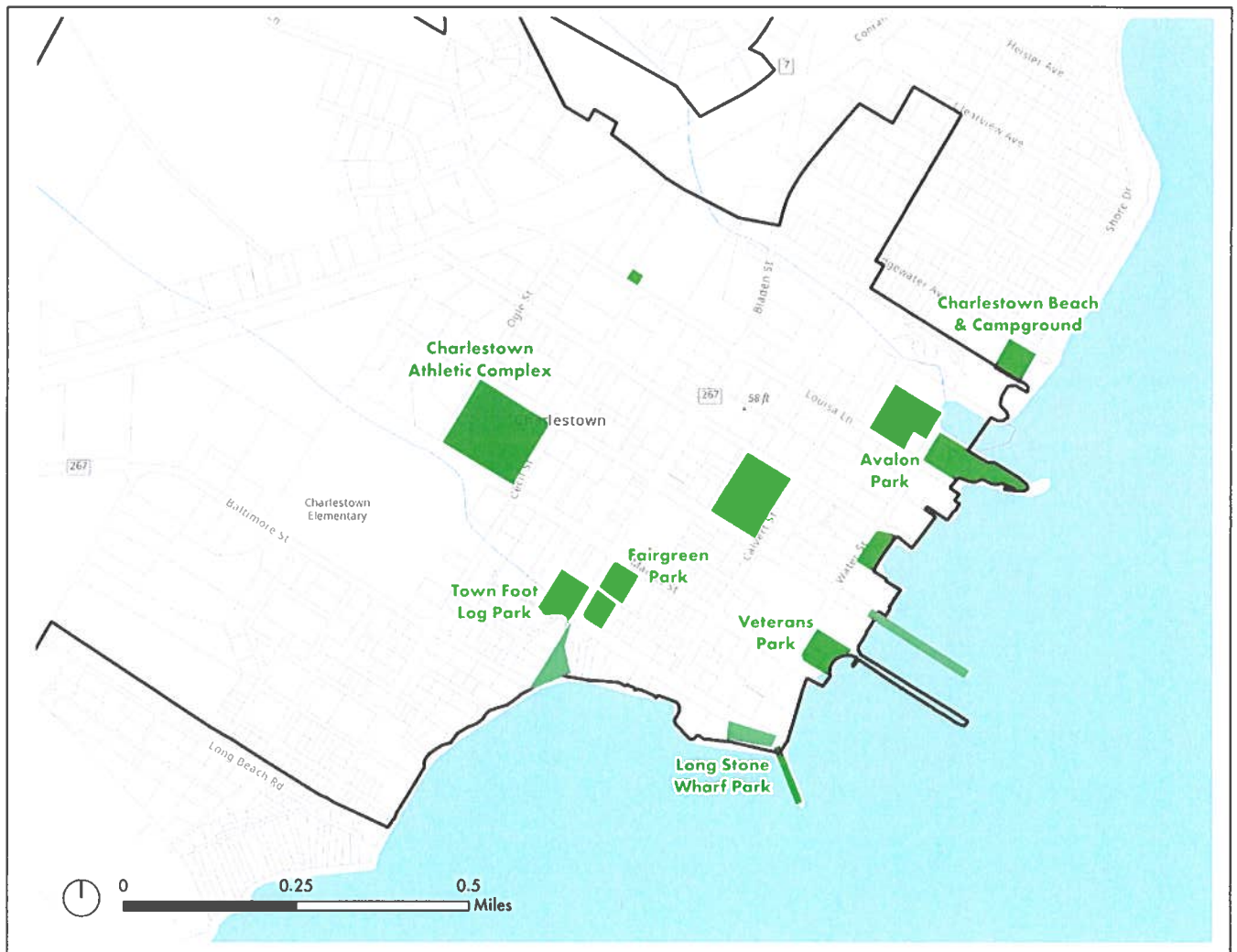
Charlestown provides services such as parks and recreation; civic and tourism promotion; solid waste removal and recycling; public drinking water, stormwater management, and, planning, zoning, and economic development.

The Town has invested significantly in its parks, beaches, and piers which are a significant amenity for the community:

- **Athletic Complex:** Located on Frederick Street, this complex contains a ball field, basketball and pickleball/tennis courts, skate park, and walking trail. Parking is available adjacent to the skate park. The use of this park is on a first- come- first served basis and there is no reservation policy.
- **Avalon Park:** This park is located at the intersection of Water Street and Louisa Lane. With a newly built stage, this park is available for rent for concerts, weddings and other community events.
- **'C' Dock:** At the end of Frederick Street, 51 seasonal slips of up to 35 feet.
- **Fair Green Park G Playground:** This park, located behind Town Hall, is geared toward the young children of the Town. It offers a large swing set, many slides, monkey bars, and a ship-themed play area. Also offered are picnic tables and a covered pavilion.
- **Foot Log Park:** This park is at the corner of Bladen and Conestoga Streets and provides access to the beach area by footbridge.
- **Long Point Park** is at the corner of Water and Conestoga streets. The flag pole located on this site is a reproduction of a ship's mast, complete with crow's nest.
- **Stone Wharf** is a reproduction built on the cribbing of the original wharf which was established to provide a port at the head of the Chesapeake Bay.

- **Veteran's Park** is located at the corner of Market Street and Water Street and includes a beach, pavilion, and public restroom.
- The **municipal boat pier** has approximately 40 slips available for rent. The pier is open from mid-March to mid-November.
- The **public boat ramp**, located at the intersection of Water and Market Streets, is open year-round.
- **Sandy Beach** is located at the intersection of Calvert and Conestoga Streets and offers views of the Elk Neck Peninsula and North East River.

Map 5 Charlestown Parks



## Part 2: The Plan for Charlestown

The next 15 – 20 years, to 2040, present both opportunities and challenges for Charlestown; both rare environmental events and routine matters common to many municipalities in the region. However, underlying the opportunities and challenges is a general sense that Charlestown is a great place to live, raise a family, and welcome visitors.

There are two primary challenges in Charlestown:

- First, is the impact of increasingly frequent and intense storms and higher North East River tides which exceed the natural and manmade drainage systems causing localized flooding threatening life and property in Charlestown.
- Second, is the capacity of the Town to address those conditions which may exist at a scale beyond the Town's present resources.

At a more routine level, residents identify a lack of parking at times of high visitation; sufficiency and functionality concerns about town infrastructure, including the marinas and piers; and the upkeep of some private properties.

To the positive, residents see opportunities to build on the Town's strengths: access to the North East River; the history and charm of the community; and local parks, campgrounds, and recreational resources. Residents believe that there may be some opportunities for community-oriented commercial development (ice cream shops, small restaurant/coffee house, antiques stores, etc.) if the town can attract more visitors and residents. There is a willingness to consider new approaches to land use policy that would result in a more diverse array of housing options. If successful, taking advantage of these opportunities will grow the town's tax base and allow for additional investments to address concerns such as the drainage system.

### *About the Charlestown Plan*

Members of the Town Commission, Planning Commission, town staff, and residents at-large participated in crafting this plan in 2024 and 2025. This plan is reflective of townspeople themselves and their views – modest, easygoing, and generally satisfied with the quality of life in Charlestown. The last comprehensive plan adopted by the Town Council (circa 2008) was 195 pages long with considerable detail about aquifers and air quality; grand concepts linked to "civic architecture," "placemaking" and "heritage preservation"; and 29 objectives with few specifics on how to achieve them.

In developing this comprehensive plan, the town sought a document that is appropriately scaled to Charlestown's resources and capacity to deliver, including with specific "to do" projects and actions, even if all the details were not provided,

## 2.1 Land Use & Development Regulations

The core function of a comprehensive plan in Maryland is to guide land use and development and to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure to support present needs, and future growth should it arise. The regulation of land use is:

- critical to achieving or maintaining the community attributes that make a town a healthy and desirable place to live, work, and play.
- a tool to advance policy goals such as housing diversity, environmental protection and resilience, and walkability.
- foundational to a town's fiscal outlook as a diverse and growing tax base can more readily withstand adverse economic forces and can support the types of services desired by residents from its municipal government.

This plan maintains the “bones” of Charlestown’s land uses which result in primarily one- and two-story single-family detached residential dwellings and ample open space, while allowing for some greater density with different dwelling types, and more opportunities for community-scale commercial development. Greater detail on the proposed land use changes will be enacted through amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. The proposed changes will strengthen the Town’s tax base, allow population growth to increase the market for potential commercial development, and can be implemented in ways that protect natural resources.

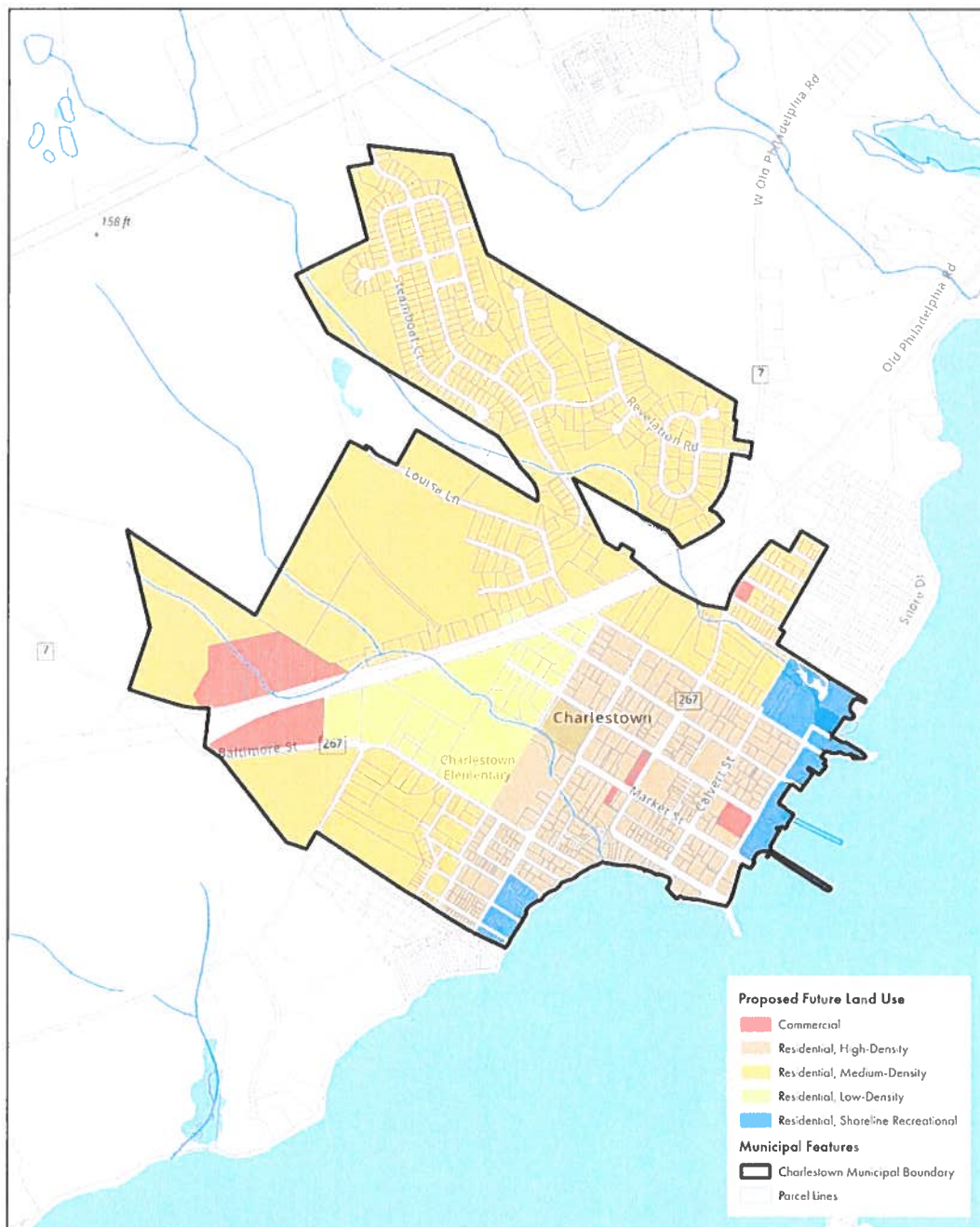
***Goal #1: Promote compatible and efficient land use that preserves the historic qualities of “old town” Charlestown while encouraging infill and redevelopment to position Charlestown as a place for commerce, recreation, and tourism.***

- Review the boundaries of the Charlestown Historic District, define what are the most significant remaining structures, properties, and areas, and update the zoning code to help preserve them.
- Expand allowable housing types permitted (with conditions) within the Historic District and other zones so that residential and mixed-use redevelopment and infill opportunities are viable in the Town center.
- Expand allowable housing types in lower-density residential areas, specifically for those parcels south/east of MD 7 that are adjacent / walkable to the town center.
- Review State Law and update Town codes to remain consistent.

- Refine development standards to allow for moderate density residential development. This may include adjustments such as smaller lot sizes, higher coverage rates, and smaller setbacks, etc.
- Establish appropriate design standards that will facilitate housing and commercial development.

Map 6, below, illustrates proposed future land uses. The only large difference compared to Map 3, Zoning, is the Commercial area at the west end of Town.

Map 6. Proposed Future Land Use



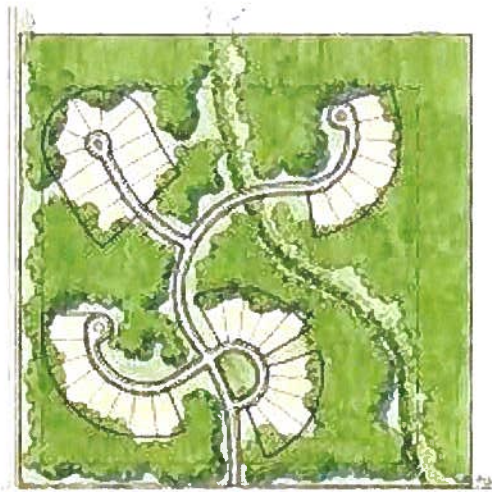
**Goal #2: Increase allowable density west of MD 7 with natural resource protection condition to foster environmental resiliency.**

- Encourage cluster development to minimize environmental impacts.
- Explore an Over-55 Retirement element within a larger project or as a stand-alone development.

*Figure 2. Duplex units such as those shown above fit the style and aesthetic pattern of single family homes in Charlestown.*



*Figure 3. Cluster development encourages developers to maintain environmental features rather than clearcutting the forest.*



***Goal #3: Promote development that diversifies the tax base and provides economic opportunity.***

- Allow for limited community-scale commercial and mixed-use development along MD 7.
- Encourage development of a small commercial main street along lower Market Street and portions of Water Street. Frontage standards should be used to encourage lively street activity and height limitations enacted to preserve the viewshed to the North East River.

***Goal #4: Update the zoning code to reflect modern and flexible code drafting practices.***

- Implement a table of permitted uses to simplify the zoning code and provide convenience for the public and prospective developers as to permissible uses in each zone.
- Establish authority for planned unit development overlays on parcels (or groups of parcels to be subdivided) which are greater than 10 acres. This flexible zoning tool allows developers of large parcels to provide a mix of housing types and greater densities in exchange for specific benefits to the town such as environmental conservation or recreational facilities.

***Goal #5: Preserve open space, protect environmental resources, and foster natural resiliency***

- Establish authority, regulations, or an alternative effective method of requiring natural resource protection to ensure the Town's goals of flood management, resiliency, and public safety are being met.
- Update the zoning code to prohibit mining, quarrying, and mineral resource extraction in Charlestown.
- Ensure compatibility between river-oriented campgrounds and periodic flood events and sensitive habitats.

## 2.2 Municipal Growth

In Maryland, the term “Municipal Growth Area” (MGA) relates to areas outside of the Town’s boundaries which may be annexed into the Town.<sup>6</sup> However, a municipal growth map and associated policies are not intended as an affirmative statement that the town intends to grow; rather they are intended to shape where and how the Town may grow and under what conditions. Additionally, some state investments (for example, loans or grants for water or sewer facilities, new roads, and new schools) are tied to the formal designation of MGAs in the comprehensive plan. Growth areas are then designated “priority funding areas” for the purpose of accessing such funds.

The 2008 MGA included more than 1,300 acres – ten times the size of the historic core of Charlestown and nearly twice the size of the total Town land area. Much of the then-proposed MGA was from the active quarries to the south and west of Charlestown which are part of the Cecil County mineral extraction district. In 2008, the rationale for including quarries was to accommodate post-mining development. The plan did not describe a vision for the properties nor anticipated land uses or development parameters. The Town should continue to monitor the potential for development of the quarries and establish a designation of “Potential Growth Area” (PGA) requiring future change to MGA, if warranted.

***GOAL #1: Consider extending the Municipal Growth Area to include the existing unincorporated communities of Holloway Beach and Charlestown Manor.***

Holloway Beach is an existing 25-acre/108-lot Cecil County subdivision located southwest of Town. As of 2023, it appears that approximately 20 lots were vacant. Charlestown Manor is an existing 45-acre/182-lot Cecil County subdivision located northeast of Town. As of 2023, it appears that there are approximately 40 undeveloped lots. The purpose of this action would be to upgrade the areas in terms of infrastructure and community maintenance. In 2024, the County included the extension of sewer service to Holloway Beach in its capital budget which will replace marginal septic systems, some with no records and undocumented repairs. The same improvements would benefit Charlestown Manor.

***GOAL #2: Consider extending the municipal boundary north from Cool Springs Road to US 40 for limited purposes.***

The purpose of this action is to give the town a “seat at the table” for development that may occur along US 40, as well as to facilitate the eventual connection of Cool Springs Road to US 40. This may also open limited opportunities for commercial development to strengthen the Town’s tax base, as well as improve emergency response times for the Cool Spring community.

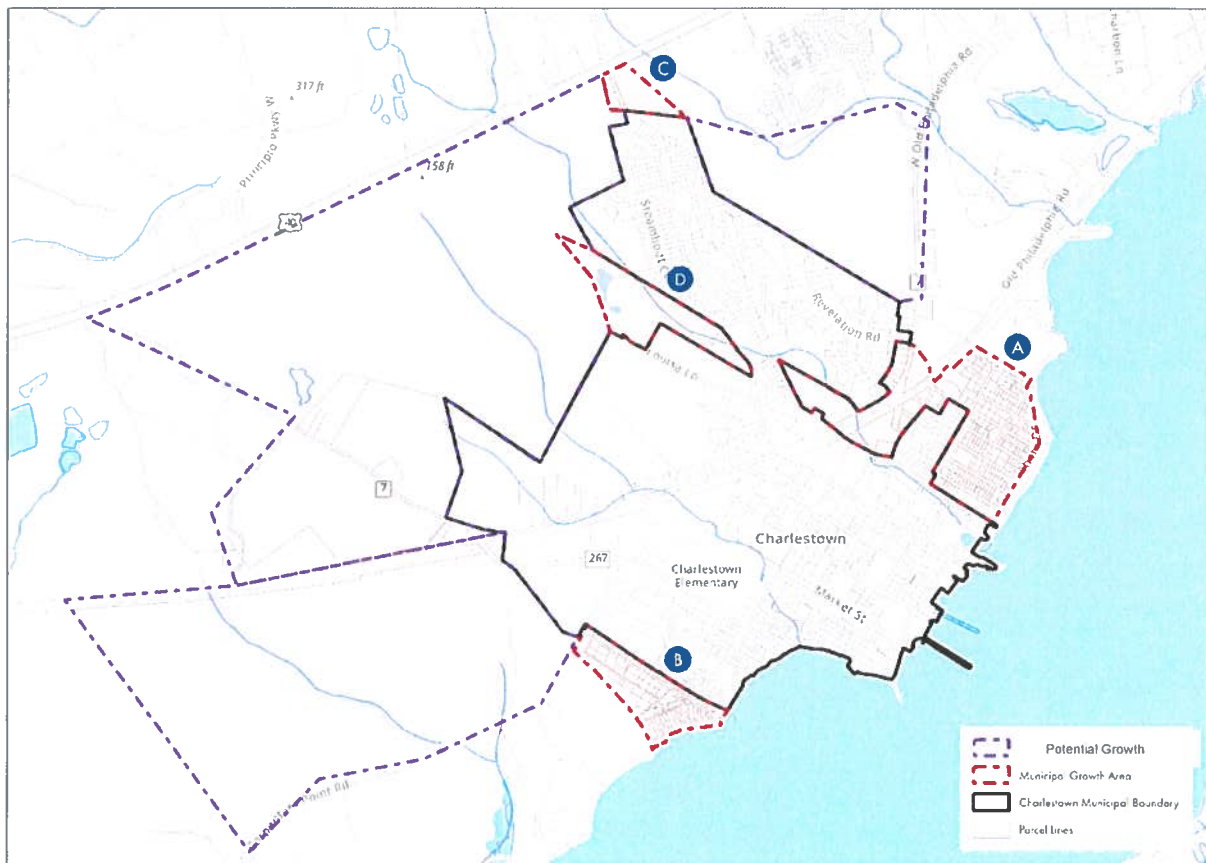
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<sup>6</sup> The term “annexation” has a specific legal meaning and process defined in state law and is not further used in this comprehensive plan. Rather, the term “potential growth areas” is used to describe areas outside of municipal limits.

### **GOAL #3 Establish a resilient Greenbelt around Charlestown.**

Working with Cecil County, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and other experts, the Town should explore opportunities to participate and/or control existing and future uses in the Potential Growth Areas shown in Map 7. For example, establishing conservation easements around stream buffers can foster resiliency, helping to protect the Town's drinking water supply, and reduce flooding downstream in Red Rum and Peddler's Run Creeks. The 2024 Watershed Master Plan recommendations and projects should be incorporated into both MGA and PGA planning.

Map 7. Municipal Growth and Potential Growth Areas



### **Fiscal and Service Impacts of Expanding the Municipal Growth Boundary**

Because Holloway Beach and Charlestown Manor are already developed communities, the external impacts (schools, libraries, police/fire/emergency services, etc.) of annexation are unlikely to change unless there is redevelopment of the properties. As to internal effects on Town expenses, the impact would be minimal and likely proportional to the property tax and utility service revenue generated by the annexed parcels. Most of Charlestown Manor is subject to Limited Development Area regulations. Forested areas between MD 7 and US 40 should have adequate riparian buffers to protect North East River water quality.

If the residents of Holloway Beach and/or Charlestown Manor determine it is in their interest to come within the municipal boundaries of Charlestown, the town will need to develop a plan for bringing infrastructure to a state of good repair within a reasonable period. The costs of such a plan should not be borne by existing residents.

## 2.3 Housing

While Charlestown has a very stable housing market defined by high rates of home ownership, the Town still faces housing challenges. With over 90 % of Charlestown's housing stock comprised of single-family homes, there is a lack of housing diversity for people with different needs and at different income levels, whether they are families, singles, couples, seniors, or people with disabilities. The number of available rental units is small and the estimated Charlestown 2018 – 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) median rent of \$1,390 is higher than that of other municipalities in Cecil County: Cecilton (\$810), Chesapeake City (\$929), Elkton (\$1,287), North East (\$1,158), Perryville (\$1,056), Port Deposit (\$1,067), and Rising Sun (\$1,133). Further, Charlestown lacks dedicated housing for seniors, such as a senior community or assisted living facility.

ACS designates 15% of Charlestown homes as "Vacant-Usual Residence Elsewhere" (URE) indicating they are vacation homes or short-term rentals. There are very few non-URE vacant homes which may be a blight, nuisance, and/or contribute to declining property values and neighborhood disinvestment. Lastly, over 20 percent of Charlestown's housing stock was built before 1939. Housing stock that is old presents health and safety concerns and has a higher likelihood of systems and weatherization failure.

There is seldom visual evidence of persons experiencing homelessness in Town limits. Cecil County belongs to a "Balance of State" continuum of care region which had a homeless rate of 10.58 per 10,000 people. Additionally, the search results mention a 2017 count of 193 homeless individuals in all of Cecil County.

Maryland HB 90 (2021) requires the housing element of a comprehensive plan enacted or amended on or after January 1, 2023 to include an assessment of fair housing to ensure that the local jurisdiction is affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH), a Federal requirement. Through this plan and its goals and actions, the Town acknowledges its responsibility to affirmatively further fair housing through meaningful actions to overcome patterns of segregation, promote fair housing choice, eliminate disparities in opportunities, and foster inclusive communities free from discrimination. There is no residential pattern of racial segregation evident from Census 2020 block level population data. Town staff have received no complaints regarding discriminatory leasing or sales practices. All other suggested AFFH criteria involve socio-economic analysis that is either not available or credible given the large ACS margins of error due to the small ACS sample size in cross tabulations.

***Goal #1. Allow for a range of housing densities, types, and sizes to provide residential options for residents of all ages and incomes.***

- Expand housing types permitted in low-density residential and refine development standards to allow smaller lot sizes, higher coverage, smaller setbacks, etc. to promote a diversity of housing options.
- Update the zoning code to allow for modular and manufactured housing per State Law and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Proactively seek out partnerships with non-profit housing developers to evaluate opportunities for new senior and workforce-accessible housing.
- Incorporate AFFH topics and remain aware of fair housing in Town housing related decisions.

***Goal #2. Balance historic preservation while encouraging compatible residential and mixed-use development in old town.***

- Review the boundaries of the Charlestown Historic District, define what are the significant structures, properties, and areas and update the zoning code accordingly.
- Expand housing types permitted within the historic district so that residential and mixed-use redevelopment and infill opportunities are viable in the town center.
- Enact reasonable standards related to design, density, and historic preservation to ensure compatibility among existing historic properties and new development.

***Goal #3. Promote revitalization of vacant, underutilized and abandoned properties in Charlestown and immediately adjacent communities.***

- Encourage community outreach and partnerships for housing preservation such as Habitat for Humanity and Volunteers for America.
- Seek state funding for grants to support weatherization and other “healthy homes” initiatives for lower-income property owners.
- Seek state funding with a focus on the Department of Housing and Community Development’s programs and grants that include façade improvement, community services, energy efficiency, business development, home repairs, financing, and adaptive reuse.

## 2.4 Transportation

The historic core of Charlestown was developed on a grid system with narrow streets; they tend to be low volume and low speed. Walking tends to be comfortable in most locations. Parking is an issue during the warm weather months, but more of a nuisance than a pressing concern. It is MD 7, a state highway, that divides historic Charlestown from its newer subdivisions that is both an area of concern and an opportunity for improvement. The Town must also be mindful of maintaining its existing transportation assets in the face of water-related challenges.

Roadway improvements require coordination with Cecil County and the Maryland Department of Transportation and should address ADA, pedestrian, safe-routes-to-school, and bicycle safety. Banner, wayfinding signage, and Town-entry signage are useful in fostering community identity.

The Northeast Corridor Amtrak double-tracked rail-line bisects the Town along the south side of MD 7. While no issues are identified, the high speeds and noise are a safety and nuisance concern to keep in mind.

### ***Goal #1: Maintain roads and other assets in a state of good repair.***

- The town should conduct an asset condition inventory for its roads, bridges, culverts, parking lots, and pathways. Understanding the present condition of assets is important to proper budgeting for proactive maintenance and repair, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, when necessary.
- The town should establish a routine cycle of maintenance based on the inventory outcomes and future risks related to storm surge and poor drainage.
- Ensure all roads are constructed according to Town standards.

### ***Goal #2: Improve non-vehicular mobility.***

Residents have expressed both a need for and concern regarding additional parking to serve residents and visitors. The town should resist efforts to construct new parking lots as adding new impervious surfaces increases flood potential and harms water quality. Instead, the Town should pursue alternative solutions that reduce driving from one location to another within town and mitigate peak parking demand such as:

- **Selectively add and improve sidewalks.** Most streets in Charlestown's core lack sidewalks: they are also narrow which limits traffic speed and volume. It is not uncomfortable to walk alongside traffic on most of the local/neighborhood streets. Adding or even widening sidewalks is a costly endeavor and would require additional right of way to be acquired from property owners; increase pervious areas and stormwater runoff. Sidewalks should be selectively added in Charlestown where they will be actively used and provide access to important destinations. There are also several prominent gaps in the existing sidewalk network which should be filled. The Town should request a sidewalk along MD 7 from Louisa Lane to Bladen Street and

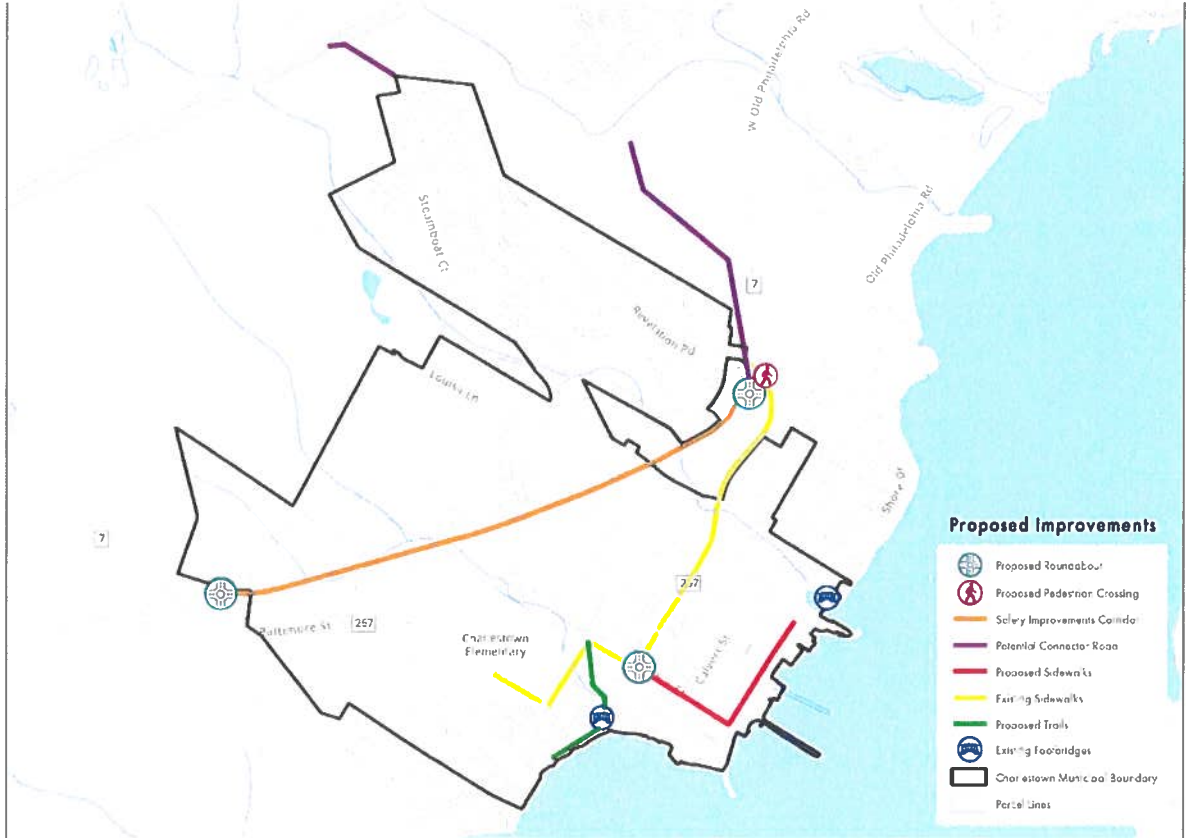
a cross walk between Bladen Street and Revelation Road as priority locations for construction. This request should be made to the State Highway Administration as part of the annual consultation process for the Consolidated Transportation Program.

- **Add natural surface trails and footbridges to improve waterfront connectivity.** Several locations along the waterfront are not connected and require pedestrians to either travel across private property or take a circuitous route to their destination. A more connected waterfront would include a pathway from Baltimore Street to the footbridge over Red Rum Creek and Conestoga Street.

### ***Goal #3: Manage access and improve safety along MD 7***

- Advocate for low-cost safety measures such as edge and centerline rumble strips, guardrails, and raised pavement markings along MD7 between Wells Camp Road and Baltimore Street.
- At either end of MD 267, the town should advocate for study of roundabouts, signalized crosswalks, or other street feature to slow traffic as it comes through town. This would also provide a gateway feature marking arrival in Charlestown.
- Limit the number of access points to new development via MD 7 by requiring connections between subdivisions.
- If Cool Springs or an adjacent property is further developed, the town should advocate the connection to US 40 be completed as a condition of such development. At present there is a gap of approximately 400 feet between the northern end of Cool Spring Road and US 40; this gap is a function of property that could not be purchased by the developer of Cool Springs when the subdivision was first constructed.
- The Town should monitor further development of the Charlestown Crossing subdivision. At present, the only access to Charlestown Crossing is via US 40. Even though Charlestown Crossing is not within the municipal limits of Charlestown, the Town should consider whether, and if so under what conditions, it would support extension of Charlestown Crossing Boulevard to MD 7. Such conditions may include the MD 7 safety improvements described above.

Map 7. Proposed Transportation-Related Improvements



## 2.5 Community Facilities and Services

Residents perceive that the town is managed efficiently and provides appropriate services for the taxes paid. Many of the goals contained in this comprehensive plan would be implemented through potentially expensive projects that exceed the Town's current resources. While there is some appetite for measures to increase town revenues, the approach should be measured and tied to specific projects and outcomes. Cost containment and efficiency strategies must be prioritized and demonstrated such that the operating budget rises at or below the rate of inflation. This will allow revenues from new development to be used to finance capital spending priorities.

Additional community services and facilities priorities relate to emergency operations; the physical condition and constraints of Town Hall; parks and open spaces, beaches, marina and piers; and the need for improved internet services in the community.

### ***Goal #1 – Establish a Capital Improvement Program and Identify Revenues to Support its Implementation***

Priority projects for the capital improvement program would include upgrade and expansion of town hall; stormwater management facilities including upgrades to the existing collection system; water and wastewater infrastructure, and additional facilities for parks and recreation.

### ***Goal #2 – Improve energy resilience of the power supply and distribution network.***

The Town is concerned that powerful weather events have a disproportionate impact on its residents because there is little redundancy in the power system. The Town should work with Delmarva Power to identify actions that can be taken by each party to improve resilience of the power system.

### ***Goal #3 – Actively pursue broadband internet access for Charlestown.***

There is currently no fiber optic service available in Charlestown except in the Cool Springs subdivision. The lack of high-speed internet limits the ability of residents to work from home, access telemedicine, and enjoy social activities which are now commonly available online. Extending broadband service to rural areas and small towns like Charlestown and most other municipalities in Cecil County is costly and requires investment through public programs.

### ***Goal #4 -Coordinate emergency response plans and preparedness efforts for a unified approach with the Cecil County Department of Emergency Services.***

The Charlestown Fire Company is located at Bladen and Market Streets. The Town has and should continue to provide financial support to the company and work with the company and Cecil County to evaluate emergency preparedness and conduct emergency response training on a regular basis.

## 2.6 Water Resources

Dewberry Engineers Inc (Dewberry) evaluated the existing water system audit (Audit) in early 2025 to evaluate its performance and estimate additional capacity for Equivalent Domestic Units (EDUs) without improvements.<sup>1</sup> The Audit was completed using Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) Guidance for Preparing Water Audits and Water Loss Reduction Plans (revised May 2013) and MDE's Guidance for Preparing Water Supply Capacity Management Plans (revised June 2013).

### 2.6.1 Existing Facilities

The Town owns and operates three groundwater wells: No. 1 (Cecil Street), No. 2 (Athletic Complex), and No. 3 (Public Works yard) which currently has no pump. Well Nos. 1 and 2 are both rated for 100 gallons per minute (gpm). The Town's MDE Water Appropriation and Use Permit (No. CE1988G087(05) effective September 1, 2017 expires August 31, 2029) permits a daily average of 207,000 gallons and 300,000 gallons for the maximum use month.

The Town's 500,000-gallon elevated water storage tank provides storage volume and pressurizes the distribution system to 780 EDU connections shown in Table 2. When the tank is full to the lead off elevation of 194.0 feet, there is approximately 55 hours of emergency storage at the 2025 average daily demand. Using MDE's best-well out-of-service scenario with one well out for 24 hours, the average day capacity is 144,000 gpd which exceeds the average daily withdrawal of 107,810 gallons. The water tank also provides fire flow storage for a fire event requiring 1,200 gallons per minute (gpm) and lasting two hours, which equates to 144,000 gallons. The emergency storage volume in the water tank helps to maintain the necessary supply and pressure in the distribution system in the event of well failure or a distribution line break. Both wells and the tank have emergency generator backups.

Table 2. Charlestown Water Tank Elevations

PARAMETER	ELEVATION (FT)	TANK LEVEL (FT)	GAUGE PRESSURE (PSI)	NET VOLUME (GAL)
Top of Foundation	42.0	-	-	-
Low Alarm	178.0	16.0	58	185,828
Lag On	182.0	20.0	60	243,034
Lag Off	186.0	24.0	62	300,241
Lead On	190.0	28.0	64	357,447
Lead Off	194.0	32.0	66	414,654
High Alarm	199.0	37.0	67	486,162
Overflow	200.0	38.0	68	500,464

Source: Dewberry (2025)

<sup>1</sup> One (1) EDU is defined as 250 gpd per dwelling unit (max day) for residential connections. A peaking factor of 2.0 is used to convert max day into average day (Max Day divided by 2.0 = Avg Day). Each commercial connection is two (2) EDUs, and each church connection is one EDU.

The Town produces approximately 38 million gallons per year and regularly completes water main and hydrant flushing: water usage that is not metered and not accounted for in the audit. Based on the Town's quarterly billing data compared to supply, water loss was 16.4% of supply, about the same as the national rate of 16% for municipal water systems listed by various studies.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.6.2 Projected Capacity

Table 3 presents the EDU calculation for residential, church, and commercial connections. The Town currently serves 785 EDUs including residential, commercial, and church connections. Using average day demands, this leaves the Town with approximately 367 available EDUs with the existing facilities.

Table 3. Available EDU Capacity Calculation

PARAMETER	QUANTITY	NOTE
Maximum Water Withdrawal	144,000 gpd	One well in-service per MDE's Best Out Scenario
EDU (max day)	250 gpd	
Max Day Peaking Factor	2.0	
EDU (avg day)*	125 gpd	(250 gpd/2.0)
Number of EDUs the Town Can Serve	1,152	(144,000 gpd/125 gpd)
Number of EDUs the Town Currently Serves	785	2025 connections
<b>Number of Available EDUs</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>(1,152-785)</b>

The Audit found that the current Town water supply under the Best Out Scenario has capacity for additional water demand for foreseeable known development interests, vacant lot infill development, and private development to higher density within the current Town limits, and possible annexation and infill development within the adjacent unincorporated Holloway Beach and Charlestown Manor.

If the estimated capacity of 367 EDUs were developed entirely as residential and occupied at the current rate of 2.8 persons per household, the Town's population would increase by about 1,000 to a total of 2,500 persons. Growth would vary by the location and type of housing, if and how the Town's water supply would increase, if commercial development occurs, and assumes the County treatment facilities allow for growth.

Dewberry also described two options that would increase the Town's water supply capacity at a relatively low cost.

1. Raise the tank's capacity from 415,000 to 500,00 gallons for which the tank was designed.

<sup>2</sup> [<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-efficiency-water-suppliers>]

2. Reopen Well No. 3 and install a pump, raising the Town's emergency one-well-out capacity.
3. A third but expensive option is to construct a second water storage tank.

***GOAL #1: Preserve and protect existing water supply to meet future demand.***

- Identify water source options to maintain sustainable pressure and supply for users and adequate for fire flow emergencies under recommended scenarios.
- Complete water system master plan to identify improvements needed to support potential growth. A review of existing facilities and infrastructure can help to determine if the system is capable of handling increased flows.
- Coordinate with Maryland's Intended Use Plan and investigate capital improvement funding from various sources.
- Initiate MDE Water Appropriation and Use Permit renewal process.

### **2.6.3 Wastewater Treatment and Conveyance**

Charlestown owns the wastewater/sewer collection system, force main, and three pumping stations, while Cecil County operates sewer service on Charlestown's behalf. The County owns and operates the Seneca Point Wastewater Treatment Plant (SPWWTP) that serves Charlestown and surrounding areas.

The SPWWTP plant was upgraded to Enhanced Nutrient Removal in 2016 and has a design capacity of 2.0 mgd, an annual average daily flow of about 1.27 mgd, and Maryland Department of the Environment conditional authorization for a three-step increase in the plant's design flow to 3.7 mgd. Given these data, there is adequate treatment capacity to accommodate Charlestown growth assuming coordination with Cecil County to allocate capacity to Charlestown. Charlestown owns and maintains the wastewater/sewer collection system that was installed in the early 1990's.

***GOAL #2: Maintain the wastewater collection system in good repair.***

- Perform inflow and infiltration analysis to identify sewer system maintenance needs.
- Assess and upgrade wastewater facilities for climate change resilience.
- Implement flood protection measures for wastewater infrastructure.

### **2.6.4 Stormwater Management and Resiliency**

Charlestown's location along the north bank of the North East River means that the effect of changes to water levels and tidal influences need to be considered in all aspects of Town

managements and operations. The FEMA-designated flood zones; private and public property and structures; and shorelines, wetlands, estuaries within and adjacent to the Town are key resiliency factors in protecting the citizens of Charlestown from rising river levels and extreme weather events. Those impacts may include shoreline erosion, deterioration of tidal wetlands, rising groundwater, nuisance flooding, and flooding from storm surge. Climactic changes are already impacting surface waters and groundwater through alterations in precipitation patterns, increased and more frequent severe storm events and tidal events, and sea level rise and associated flooding. These changes can increase nutrient and sediment levels in runoff, creeks, the North East River leading to the Chesapeake Bay and reduce the effectiveness of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP), retention and infiltration, dams, and conveyance systems.

The State of Maryland recently issued guidance on incorporating climate change considerations to water quantity and quality into the Water Resource Elements (WRE) and related local planning and zoning decisions to ensure consistency with Maryland's water resources program to enable greater resiliency. Resilience in the case of the WRE means providing local plans with an ability to adapt to changing conditions and mitigate or rapidly recover from unanticipated disruptions from climate change, sea level rise, erosion, and subsidence.

The Elk and Northeast Rivers Watershed Association (ENERWA) samples water quality at three locations in Charlestown, following the sampling and analysis protocols developed by the Mid-Atlantic Tributary Assessment Coalition. The tidal water location at Long Point Park has documented a lower grade for water clarity, but higher grade for nitrogen and phosphorus levels. Similarly, the upstream locations at MD 267 at Red Rum and Peddler's Run Creeks, has documented a lower grade for water conductivity, but higher grade for nitrogen and phosphorus levels.

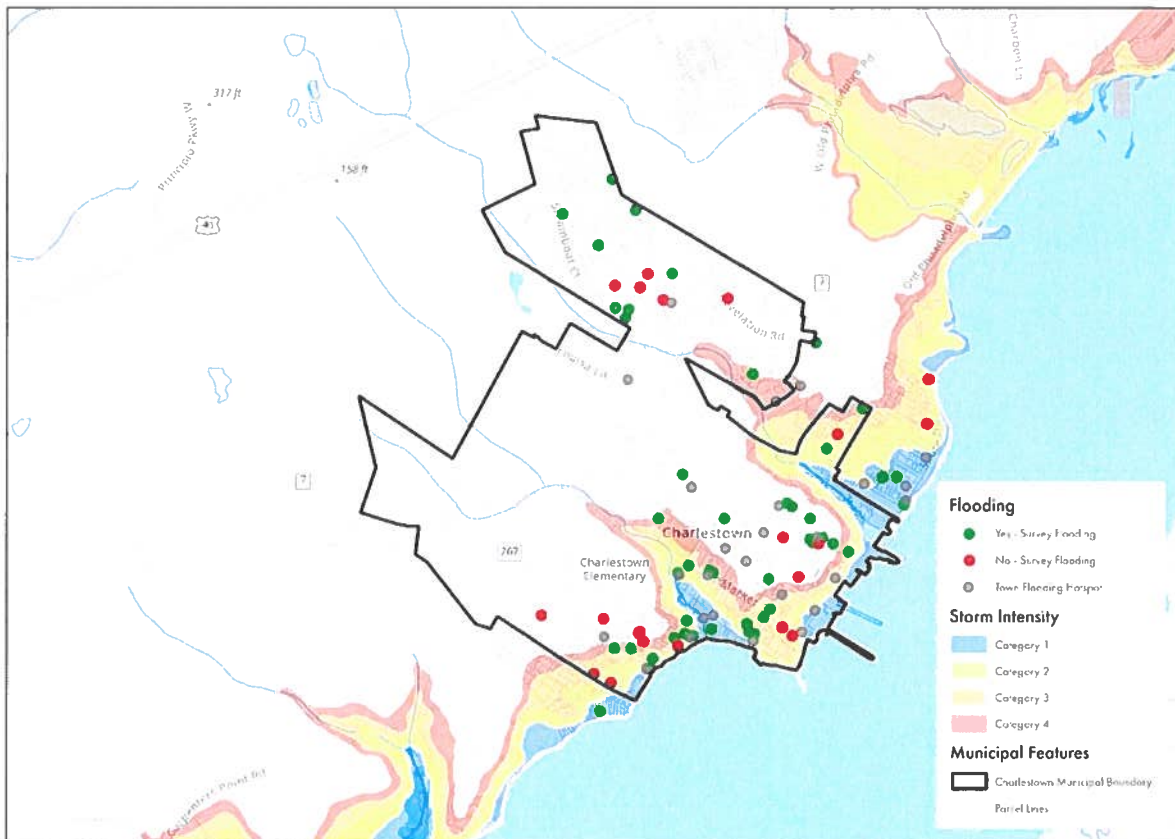
Charlestown completed and adopted a Watershed Master Plan (WMP) in 2024 to respond to current and future threats of recurring stormwater-related flooding along streams and rivers. The plan uses local geography and current and future anticipated development to identify locations most in danger of excessive flooding and threats to human health and safety. The plan is designed to "look ahead" to anticipate the effects of climate change and its impact on the community's sustainability and desired growth.

The Charlestown WMP includes a hydrologic and hydraulic (HCH) analysis that provides the Town of Charlestown with a better understanding of the flood hazards within the identified study area boundary, as well as the Town itself. A combination of stakeholder input and flood simulation modeling was used to develop mitigation strategies using a variety of metrics including but not limited to the degree of flood threat, critical infrastructure impacts, town access, project co-benefits, design/construction requirements, public acceptance, and permitting requirements.

FEMA Flood Insurance Risk Mapping and watershed modeling were used to evaluate storm surge combined with rain events vulnerability. As shown in Map 8, the Red Rum and Peddlers Run creeks are low-lying channels that would flood significantly inland with the

highest intensity storms. The simulations, along with Maryland's 2018 Sea Level Projections Guide, were used to identify specific locations for stormwater BMP's that can reduce recurring and future flooding. Analysis using a variety of models and rainfall/flooding simulations indicates the stormwater and coastal flood risks within the Town and where mitigation strategies may be deployed to reduce risk to human safety and infrastructure. The WPM identified locations and recommended BMPs to minimize stormwater impacts throughout the town, with a focus on the areas where the two creeks meet the North East River.

Map 8. Storm Surge Vulnerability and Community Flooding Concerns



(Source: Dewberry Engineers, Inc)

The Watershed Master Plan includes action items to help protect, restore, and manage Charlestown's watershed and its associated natural resources. The strategies are organized around five areas (regulatory changes, restoration efforts, maintenance needs, education efforts, and planning and programmatic changes). The mitigation strategies are designed to help alleviate flooding concerns in the town by providing additional storage capacity for rainfall and helping with incidents of storm surge. In addition, Charlestown utilizes Cecil County's Stormwater Management Ordinance as the basis for their stormwater management requirements, albeit with more stringent requirements on quantity control of runoff.

***Goal #3: Improve maintenance and operational capacity to support the stormwater system.***

- Conduct regular maintenance of existing drainage and stormwater control systems, and ensure the town has an ongoing operational system in place to provide necessary maintenance for any structural stormwater management practices, including the projects noted in the Watershed Master Plan.
- Prioritize capital improvements for inadequate stormwater drainage systems along Town roads in traditionally underserved neighborhoods, such as Holloway Beach.
- Document nuisance flooding locations capturing depth, extent, and duration, and track damages and repair costs.

***Goal #4: Use existing facilities and material to mitigate flooding.***

- Design ways for existing open space areas to better address flood hazards, such as holding water and collecting sediment and debris, and in the process, create local demonstration projects.
- Retrofit existing stormwater treatment facilities to capture more runoff and provide additional water retention to reduce flooding.
- Reuse dredge material from the marina for living shoreline projects and determine candidate sites. Since the marina and channel are dredged every 3 to 5 years, it is beneficial to use that material (as allowed by the State) to develop or enhance areas subject to shoreline erosion. The state has several programs (Living Shorelines program, the Waterways Improvement Fund, and the Community Resilience Grant Program) that can be used to fund these efforts.

***Goal #5: Update stormwater-related regulations***

- Develop regulations for FEMA's 500-year floodplain, MDE's Climate Ready Action Boundaries, or WMP flooding scenarios, and determine the base flood elevations.
- Create incentives for private property owners to install BMP's.

**Goal #6: Develop a Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund**

- Develop a stormwater utility enterprise fund and fee to help pay for the ongoing improvement and maintenance of the Town's stormwater management and drainage system. In doing so, the Town should consider the following:
  - Locally the Town of North East approved a stormwater utility in 2019 to help cover costs for stormwater management. Throughout Maryland, other towns such as Rockville, Gaithersburg and Salisbury also have stormwater utilities. The town should consult with these entities for lessons learned on implementation.
  - Many utility programs charge a per parcel fee to cover administrative costs plus a flat fee for single family residential properties and a per equivalent residential unit (ERU) for non-single family residential properties.
  - The fees from the utility could be used to fund watershed and stormwater management efforts including land acquisition, implementation of practices (design and construction), maintenance of the storm drainage system, and educational efforts.
  - An increase in other utility fees may be an option for funding for the stormwater system if a utility is not selected as an option. A rise in water and sewer rates could provide additional revenue that could be directed to projects to address stormwater and flooding concerns.
  - Offer credits that reduce stormwater fees for landowners who voluntarily install runoff control practices. The Town can determine a list of approved practices and the level of credit, as well as ongoing maintenance/inspection requirements to maintain the credit. Examples may include installing a rain barrel, installing pervious pavement, removing impervious surfaces, or planting trees.

## Part 3. Implementation Plan

The successful realization of this comprehensive town plan relies on a strategic and coordinated approach to implementation. Part 3 outlines the key actions, responsible entities, funding mechanisms, and timelines necessary to bring the plan's vision to life. By integrating policies, infrastructure projects, and community initiatives, the town can ensure sustainable growth, economic vitality, and an enhanced quality of life for residents. Clear benchmarks and periodic reviews will help track progress and adapt to evolving needs, ensuring that development aligns with long-term goals.

Given the limited scope of Charlestown's sources of regular revenue, the most difficult implementation aspect may well be funding the projects. Any town has ten options to secure funds for major capital projects:

1. Increase property tax rate and/or assessments increase,
2. Grow the tax base with new development and growing valuations,
3. Secure grants with low local match requirements,
4. Borrow at nominal interest rate with possible loan forgiveness,
5. Enact, increase, and improve collection of service and user fees,
6. Enact new taxes, preferably avoiding impacting current residents,
7. Reduce current services, staffing, contractors, and other recurring expenses,
8. Pay off existing debt which frees up the previous debt payment,
9. Sell unused assets such as vacant land, and/or
10. Sell and lease back public facilities.

Choosing which implementation actions and its funding option is the role of the Town's elected officials, staff, and consultants and should be reflected in a capital improvement program (CIP).

The Implementation Plan is shown as Table 5 on the following pages. Table 5 serves as a checklist for the first five-year review in 2030.

In 2024, Maryland passed a package of four housing bills aimed at increasing affordability and access to housing. These bills include the Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act, the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, and two others focused on setting housing targets and incentivizing affordable housing development. These bills pursuant to State guidelines may suggest an amendment.

TABLE 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Opera- tional	Capital Project	Lead Official
<b>Section 2.1 Land Use &amp; Development Regulations</b>	<b>GOAL #1</b> Promote compatible and efficient land use that preserves the historic qualities of "old town" Charlestown while encouraging infill and redevelopment to position Charlestown as a place for commerce, recreation, and tourism.	Review the boundaries of the Charlestown Historic District, define what are the most significant structures, properties, and areas and update the zoning to help preserve them.	x			Planning Commission
		Expand allowable housing types (with conditions) with the Historic District and other zones so that residential and mixed-use redevelopment and infill opportunities are viable in the Town center.	x			
		Expand allowable housing types in lower-density residential areas, specifically for those parcels south/east of MD 7 that are adjacent/walkable to the Town center.	x			
		Review State Law and update Town codes to remain consistent.	x			
		Refine development standards to allow for moderate density residential development. This may include adjustments such as smaller lot sizes, higher coverage rates, and smaller setbacks, etc.	x			
		Establish appropriate design standards that will facilitate housing and commercial development.	x			
		Encourage cluster development to minimize environmental impacts.	x			
	<b>GOAL #2</b> Increase allowable density west of MD 7 with natural resource protection conditions.	Explore an Over-55 Retirement element within a larger project or as a stand-alone development	x	x		

TABLE 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Opera- tional	Capital Project	Lead Official
<b>Section 2.1 Land Use &amp; Development Regulations</b>	<b>GOAL #3</b> Promote development that diversifies the tax base and provides economic opportunity.	Allow for limited community-scale commercial development along MD 7	x			Planning Commission
		Encourage development of a small commercial main street along lower Market Street and portions of Water Street. Frontage standards should be used to encourage lively street activity and height limitations enacted to preserve the viewshed to the North East River.	x			Planning Commission
		Implement a table of permitted uses to simplify the zoning code and provide convenience for the public and prospective developers as to permissible uses in each zone.	x			Planning Commission
	<b>GOAL # 4</b> Update the zoning code to reflect modern and flexible code drafting practices.	Establish authority for planned unit development overlays on parcels (or groups of parcels to be subdivided) which are greater than 10 acres. This flexible zoning tool allows developers of large parcels to provide a mix of housing types and greater densities in exchange for specific benefits to the town such as environmental conservation or recreational facilities.	x			Planning Commission
	<b>GOAL # 5</b> Preserve open space and protect environmental resources	Establish authority requiring natural resource protection to ensure the town's goals of flood management, resiliency, and public safety are being met.	x			Planning Commission

TABLE 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Opera- tional	Capital Project	Lead Official
		Update the zoning code to prohibit mining, quarrying, and mineral resource extraction in Charlestown.	x		x	Planning Commission
		Ensure compatibility between river-oriented campgrounds and periodic flood events and sensitive habitats.	x		x	Planning Commission

Element	Goal	Action	Priority Code	Operational	Capital Project	Lead Official
<b>Section 2.2 Municipal Growth</b>	Goal #1 Consider extending the municipal growth area to include the existing unincorporated communities of Holloway Beach and Charlestown Manor.		x			Town Commission
	Goal #2 Consider extending the municipal boundary north from Cool Springs Road to US 40 for limited purposes.		x			Town Commission
	Goal #3 Establish a resilient greenbelt around Charlestown.				x	Town Administrator
<b>Section 2.3 Housing</b>	GOAL #1 Allow for a range of housing densities, types, and sizes to provide residential options for residents of all ages and incomes.	Expand housing types permitted in low-density residential and refine development standards to allow smaller lot sizes, higher coverage, smaller setbacks, etc. to promote a diversity of housing options.	x			Planning Commission
		Update the zoning code to allow for modular and manufactured housing per State Law and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).	x			Planning Commission
		Proactively seek out partnerships with non-profit housing developers to evaluate opportunities for new senior and workforce-accessible housing. Incorporate AFFH topics and remain aware of fair housing in Town housing related decisions.			x	Town Administrator
	Review the boundaries of the Charlestown Historic District, define what are the significant structures, properties, and areas and update the zoning code accordingly.		x		Historic District Commission/ Planning Commission	

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Operati onal	Capital Project	Lead Official
	<p>GOAL #2 Balance historic preservation while encouraging compatible residential and mixed-use development in old town.</p>	<p>Expand housing types permitted within the historic district so that residential and mixed-use redevelopment and infill opportunities are viable in the Town center.</p> <p>Enact reasonable standards related to design, density, and historic preservation to ensure compatibility among existing historic properties and new development.</p>	<p>x</p> <p>x</p>			<p>Planning Commission</p> <p>Planning Commission</p>
	<p>GOAL #3 Promote revitalization of vacant, underutilized and abandoned properties in Charlestown and immediately adjacent communities.</p>	<p>Encourage community outreach and partnerships for housing preservation such as Habitat for Humanity and Volunteers for America.</p> <p>Seek state funding for grants to support weatherization and other "healthy homes" initiatives for lower-income property owners.</p> <p>Seek state funding through the façade improvement program.</p>		<p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p>		<p>Town Administrator</p> <p>Town Administrator</p> <p>Town Administrator</p>

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Operati onal	Capital Project	Lead Official
<p><b>Section 2.4 Transportation</b></p>	<p>GOAL #1 Maintain roads and other assets in a state of good repair.</p>	<p>The Town should conduct an asset condition inventory for its roads, bridges, culverts, parking lots, and pathways. Understanding the present condition of assets is important to proper budgeting for proactive maintenance and repair, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, when necessary.</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>Public Works Director</p>
		<p>The Town should establish a routine cycle of maintenance based on the inventory outcomes and future risks related to storm surge and poor drainage.</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>Public Works Director</p>
		<p>Ensure all roads are constructed according to Town standards.</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Public Works Director</p>
	<p>GOAL #2 Improve non-vehicular mobility</p>	<p>Selectively add and improve sidewalks and crosswalks.</p>		<p>x</p>		<p>Public Works Director</p>
		<p>Add natural surface trails and footbridges to improve waterfront connectivity.</p>			<p>x</p>	<p>Public Works Director</p>
		<p>Advocate for low-cost safety measures such as edge and centerline rumble strips, guardrails, and raised pavement markings along MD7 between Wells Camp Road and Baltimore Street.</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Town Commission</p>
	<p>GOAL #3 Manage access and improve safety along MD 7</p>	<p>At either end of MD 267, the town should advocate for study of roundabouts, signalized crosswalks, or other street feature to slow traffic as it comes through town. This would also provide a gateway feature marking arrival in Charlestown.</p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Town Commission</p>

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Operati onal	Capital Project	Lead Official
	<p>GOAL #3 Manage access and improve safety along MD 7 (continued)</p>	<p>Limit the number of access points to new development via MD 7 by requiring connections between subdivisions. If Cool Springs or an adjacent property is further developed, the town should advocate the connection to US 40 be completed as a condition of such development. At present there is a gap of approximately 400' between the northern end of Cool Spring Road and US 40; this gap is a function of property that could not be purchased by the developer of Cool Springs when the subdivision was first constructed.</p> <p>The Town should monitor further development of the Charlestown Crossing subdivision. At present, the only access to Charlestown Crossing is via US 40. Even though Charlestown Crossing is not within the municipal limits of Charlestown, the Town should consider whether, and if so under what conditions, it would support extension of Charlestown Crossing Boulevard to MD 7. Such conditions may include the MD 7 safety improvements described above.</p>	<p>x</p> <p>x</p> <p>x</p>			<p>Planning Commission</p> <p>Planning Commission</p> <p>Planning Commission</p>

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/ Code	Operati onal	Capital Project	Lead Official
<b>Section 2.5 Community &amp; Services &amp; Facilities</b>	<b>GOAL #1</b> Establish a Capital Improvement Program and Identify Revenues to Support its Implementation				x	Town Commission
	<b>GOAL #2</b> Improve energy resilience of the power supply and distribution network.			x		Town Administrator
	<b>GOAL #3</b> Actively pursue broadband internet access for Charlestown.			x		Town Administrator
	<b>GOAL #4</b> Coordinate emergency response plans and preparedness efforts for a unified approach with the County Emergency Services.			x		Town Administrator

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/C ode	Operat ional	Capital Project	Lead Official	
<b>Section 2.6 Water Resources</b>	GOAL #1 Preserve and protect existing water supply to meet infill development demand	Identify water source options to maintain sustainable supply to the Town.		x		Public Works Director	
		Complete water system master plan to identify improvements needed to support potential growth. A review of existing facilities and infrastructure can help to determine if the system is capable of handling increased flows.		x		Planning Commission	
		Coordinate with Maryland's Intended Use Plan, and investigate capital improvement funding from various sources.		x		Public Works Director	
	GOAL #2 Maintain the sewerage system in good repair.	Initiate MDE Water Appropriation and Use Permit renewal process			x		Public Works Director
		Perform inflow and infiltration analysis to identify maintenance needs of the sewer system.			x		Public Works Director
		Assess and upgrade wastewater facilities for climate resilience.				x	Public Works Director
	GOAL #3 Improve maintenance and operational capacity to support the stormwater system.	Implement flood protection measures for wastewater infrastructure.				x	Public Works Director
		Conduct regular maintenance of existing drainage and stormwater control systems, and ensure the town has an ongoing operational system in place to provide necessary maintenance for any structural stormwater management practices, including the projects noted in the Watershed Master Plan.					Public Works Director
		Prioritize capital improvements for inadequate stormwater drainage systems along Town roads in traditionally underserved neighborhoods, such as			x		Public Works Director
							Public Works Director

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/C Code	Operat ional	Capital Project	Lead Official					
<b>Section 2.6</b> <b>Water</b> <b>Resources</b>		Holloway Beach.									
		Document nuisance flooding locations capturing depth, extent, and duration, and track damages and repair costs.		x		Public Works Director					
		Design ways for existing open space areas to better address flood hazards, such as holding water and collecting sediment and debris, and in the process, create local demonstration projects.			x	Public Works Director					
		Retrofit existing stormwater treatment facilities to capture more runoff and provide additional water retention to reduce flooding.			x	Public Works Director					
	<b>GOAL #4</b> Use existing facilities and material to mitigate flooding	Reuse dredge material from the marina for living shoreline projects and determine candidate sites. Since the marina and channel are dredged every 3 to 5 years, it is beneficial to use that material (as allowed by the State) to develop or enhance areas subject to shoreline erosion. The state has several programs (Living Shorelines program, the Waterways Improvement Fund, and the Community Resilience Grant Program) that can be used to fund these efforts.				x	Public Works Director				
<b>GOAL #5</b> Update stormwater-related regulations	Develop regulations for FEMA's 500-year floodplain, MDE's Climate Ready Action Boundaries, or WMP flooding scenarios, and determine the base flood elevations  Create incentives for private property owners to install BMP's		x			Planning Commission					
							x				Planning Commission

Element	Goal	Action	Policy/C ode	Operat ional	Capital Project	Lead Official
	GOAL #6 Develop a Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund	Develop a stormwater utility enterprise fund and fee to help pay for the ongoing improvement and maintenance of the Town's stormwater management and drainage system.	x			Town Commission