

# Sustainable Community Action Plan Renewal

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Town of Charlestown, Cecil County

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# Environment

(Environmental strengths and weaknesses can include quality of land, water, air, watersheds, tree canopies, climate change mitigation, habitat improvement, nuisance flooding, energy conservation, green infrastructure, storm water infrastructure/management, and parks, trails and recreation improvements.)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.25 acres of parks and more than 109 acres of open space. Our parks conserve natural ecosystems and provides benefits to our residents &amp; wildlife and give our residents opportunity for outdoor activity &amp; social interaction</li> <li>School &amp; town water conservation education efforts, including rain gardens and native plantings along with Long Point shore stabilization area</li> <li>Town Administrator is a Master Watershed Steward and Certified Floodplain Manager.</li> <li>Community has its own water from municipal wells, ability for growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Much of parkland is undeveloped and has limited revenue producing programs to offset the cost of maintaining the land</li> <li>Town's public launch is no cost and has minimal parking 3 blocks from launch and disrupts traffic flow on weekends in season.</li> <li>Erosion, storm water, and sediment contribute to nonpoint source pollution in the North East River as street ditches or storm drains pour into the river</li> <li>Portions of Town are subject to nuisance flooding and need stormwater management infrastructure and improvements.</li> <li>Town owned pier, boat launch, and fire boat pier need dredging</li> <li>No recycling cans at parks</li> </ul>

<u>Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures</u> Based on the strengths and weaknesses identify the strengths on which you would like to build and the challenges you would like to address. What outcomes are you trying to achieve? Where/ in what area do you want those changes to happen? → Progress Measure: Identify how you will know that you have achieved your outcome.	<u>Strategies and Action Items</u> Identify strategies that will help your community to achieve each identified outcome to the left. If applicable, break down each strategy into specific action items that outline different steps of the strategy. Specify how you are planning to achieve the desired outcomes. →	<u>Implementation Partners</u> Which community stakeholders need to be involved to realize each action step and strategy? Name specific public and/or private sector partners.
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Develop town parks on the waterfront and at the athletic complex to generate income to off-set maintenance of parks. Utilize parks for environmental education and to conserve and protect shorelines and wildlife. Develop town land with permeable parking areas for visitors.	<b>Strategy A:</b> Use multipurpose structure on Avalon Lot A to generate revenue and host community events.  <b>Strategy B:</b> Utilize Town's athletic complex for tennis/pickle ball/softball/little league. Host community events and educational events promoting green infrastructure.	Cecil County Tourism Office, Cecil County Parks & Recreation, Colonial Charlestown, Town Engineer, Maintenance Staff, Charlestown Elementary School

<p><b>Progress measure:</b> Environmentally friendly parks, community events, and park rentals.</p>	<p><b>Strategy C:</b> Implement green infrastructure projects to create demonstration projects at our parks, schools, and churches, and reuse dredge spoils to establish living shorelines along the waterfront.</p> <p><b>Strategy D:</b> Improve management of Town parks to increase habitat protection and use open spaces to help reduce nuisance flooding.</p> <p><b>Strategy E:</b> Examine the potential of adding another public boat launch and/or pier at Avalon Park.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Improve the quality and reduce the quantity of storm water runoff</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> Slow down storm water runoff and reduce damage to built infrastructure. Improved quality of river and reduced volume of storm water, number of properties acquired and/or retrofitted for stormwater management.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Develop a Watershed Master Plan to help prioritize stormwater management improvements that can help reduce flooding, both throughout Town and outside of Town limits.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Acquire vacant lots with flood risk and incorporate as part of public open space systems.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Incentivize the use of green stormwater infrastructure on private properties.</p> <p><b>Strategy D:</b> Update the Town's stormwater ordinance to include an element for erosion and sediment control, and require mitigation standards for development activities under 5,000 square feet.</p>	<p>MDE, DNR, Planning &amp; Zoning Commission, Cecil County DPW, Town Engineer, property owners</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Direct development away from sensitive areas and subject it to performance standards for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> number of ordinances updated</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Protect core areas of the Green Infrastructure Network with clearing limits and mitigation requirements and consider creating as a new land use designation in the next update of the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Develop regulations for FEMA's 500-year floodplain and/or MDE's Climate Ready Action Boundary.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Develop regulations for the Town's wellhead protection zones.</p>	<p>MDE, DNR, MDP, Planning &amp; Zoning Commission</p>

## Economy

(Economic strengths and weaknesses can include regional accessibility, business attraction/retention, health of the business district; commercial vacancy reduction, employment/job training, marketing, branding, and tourism, improving economic impact of cultural and historic assets; providing financial assistance to businesses; and creating a sense of place and vibrancy through streetscaping.)

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The few businesses are quite successful, including the Wellwood Club and the Market Street Café and marinas</li> <li>• As the Town grows through annexation, the population could support more small businesses.</li> <li>• Historic significance (1<sup>st</sup> major 18<sup>th</sup> century sea port on Upper Bay) can serve as a tourism draw, including many 18<sup>th</sup> century houses, two historic taverns and a home George Washington stayed in.</li> <li>• The waterfront with a rich history and recreational resources</li> <li>• Rare historic Ice house on Chesapeake Bay with artifacts that could become museum and gift shop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untapped commercial potential – a small business district is needed for residents and visitors interested in water recreation or history.</li> <li>• More than half of the Charlestown workforce is employed outside of Cecil County and has a commute of 30 minutes or more.</li> <li>• No commercial development to serve new residential areas along Rt. 7</li> <li>• Zoning code does not always fit with future goals, enforcement can be problematic, and updates are needed.</li> <li>• More capacity is needed to preserve historic resources and to promote tourism and education.</li> </ul>

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	 Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Attract businesses compatible with the Town's historic makeup <b>Progress Measures:</b> Number of new businesses.	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Support new businesses, such as coffee shops, bed and breakfasts, museums, farmers markets, and studio spaces for artisans, through ongoing implementation of a façade improvement grant program, and including better promotion of what existing businesses have to offer.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Increase wayfinding signage around Town to include historic markers for significant sites and develop an accompanying walking tour, using both print and online media.</p>	Maryland DHCD, Cecil County Office of Economic Development, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce, MD and Cecil County

		Historic Society, MDP, Local restaurants and marinas
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Expand commercial activity through diverse activities and events for different audiences (kids, seniors, bicyclists, fisherman, history buffs, etc.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> Number of new town events</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Evaluate the use of an Enterprise Fund through public/private partnerships and rehabilitation tax incentives.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Partner with the Town of North East to amend the boundary of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway to include our Towns with Perryville and Port Deposit, and establish a “Target Investment zone” where Scenic Byways could connect our region.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Revive and develop new town events such as the Colonial Charlestown Fair, historic walking tours, promotional packages for wedding guests, and fishing tournaments.</p> <p><b>Strategy D:</b> Explore potential grant funding for a Volunteer Coordinator/Events Planner position.</p>	Colonial Charlestown, Historic District Commission, DNR, Cecil County Tourism Office, Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, Inc., Maryland DHCD, Fire Company

## Transportation

(Transportation strengths and weaknesses can include access to transit corridors, pedestrian safety and accessibility/sidewalks, alternative modes of transportation, such as bikeways and trails, public transit, such as bus and rail, carpooling, proximity to transportation centers, parking, and road conditions)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to I-95 and US 40, while Routes 7 and 267 run through the town</li> <li>Water taxis managed by the Wellwood Club</li> <li>Bicycle signage is posted in some areas of Town connected to the East Coast Greenway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sidewalks are not present in many “old Town” areas but some residents are also not supportive of their installation.</li> <li>Streets are narrow, 50’ or less in old town area and 25’ in new developments.</li> <li>Very limited parking in historic downtown, and town will have cars ticketed or towed if parked on streets or restricted areas.</li> <li>Cecil County residents do not have many transportation options.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cecil Transit provides fixed route service to Perryville and North East and connections beyond via the Mid County Connection, as well as on-demand response service for all ages weekdays 8-4</li> <li>• Sidewalks parallel Route 267 through most of town and are prevalent in the new subdivisions north of route 7</li> <li>• Nearby MARC service to Baltimore/Washington and Wilmington/Philadelphia from Perryville (6.3 miles/11 minutes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cecil County has recognized bicycle improvement needs from Charlestown Corporate Limits to North East Corporate Limits along Rt. 7</li> </ul>
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Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures →	Strategies and Action Items →	Implementation Partners
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> Enhance the safety of the road network, parking for cars and boat trailers, bicycles, golf carts; Improve flow of traffic, especially during seasonal events.</p> <p><b>Progress Measure:</b> slower, more efficient traffic patterns and increased parking areas.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Create a traffic circle at Bladen and Market Streets, including green stormwater infrastructure, and relate to the colonial streetscaping project proposed along MD 267 in this area.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Incorporate traffic calming measures in select locations, including bump outs with green stormwater infrastructure, and provide safer walking and driving routes to the elementary school.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Add crosswalks with signage in the appropriate locations, and consider safer passage across MD 7.</p> <p><b>Strategy D:</b> Use town land to develop overflow parking areas and partner with shuttle service companies for events.</p>	<p>MDOT, SHA, Town Engineer, Maintenance Staff, WILMAPCO, Shuttle service companies, Charlestown Elementary School</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to the center of Town, and enhance its colonial appeal.</p> <p><b>Progress Measure:</b> Number of walking trails and bikeways connecting bicyclists and pedestrians to the center of Town and open spaces.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Conduct a walkability study to consider adding period street lighting, street trees, and sidewalks along MD 267 in the Historic District.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Use greenways and trails to connect open space and parks, such as a trail along Peddlers Creek, from Foot Log Park to the Athletic Complex, and provide bike racks as appropriate.</p>	<p>MDOT, SHA, DNR, Colonial Charlestown, Maryland DHCD, WILMAPCO</p>

# Housing

(Housing strengths and weaknesses can include affordability, homeownership vs rental, housing stock diversity, housing condition and value, housing programs, preventing foreclosures, and reducing residential vacancies.)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High owner-occupancy (77% as of 2000)</li> <li>Large percentage of family households</li> <li>Many historic properties</li> <li>Relatively few renter households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some aging housing stock in need of upgrades and maintenance, especially older 1920s-era cottages outside of the historic area (median year built is 1956)</li> <li>Bank-owned vacant properties may be suitable for demolition, but take a long time to turn over and the Town has not been involved with purchasing them</li> <li>Vacant properties and/or dilapidated structures tend to decrease neighborhood stability.</li> <li>Limited housing options available for aging population, who want to stay in Town.</li> </ul>

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Improve housing stock in the sustainable community designated area, and expand the boundary to increase opportunities. <b>Progress Measures:</b> number of dwelling units rehabilitated, constructed, and/or reconstructed; number of demolitions.	<b>Strategy A:</b> Replace substandard dwelling units and trailers with units meeting current building code standards.  <b>Strategy B:</b> Update and enforce zoning and building codes.  <b>Strategy C:</b> Explore and implement programs, such as façade improvement and strategic demolition, to help improve neighborhoods.	Maryland DHCD, Cecil County Permits and Inspections Division, Planning and Zoning Commission, Town Attorney
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Increase housing opportunities for the senior/aging community.	<b>Strategy A:</b> Identify potential development partners to achieve housing developments for seniors, and consider including a community center.  <b>Strategy B:</b> Expand the Sustainable Community Designated Area to include the Town-owned property along Carpenter's Point Road, to provide another opportunity to consider for a senior housing development.	Maryland DHCD, Planning and Zoning Commission, Home Partnerships, Inc.

	<b>Strategy C:</b> Update the zoning ordinance to permit accessory dwellings in residential zones, to help provide more affordable housing options.	
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## Community Health & Quality of Life

(Projects should focus on improving community design to promote healthy behaviors such as walking and strengthening community support and connectedness through health and wellness programs and facilities that create inclusive communities.)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive waterfront properties and amenities, including several active marinas, boat slips, fishing pier, and town dock</li> <li>• Significant heritage resources inventory (68 acres Historic District with approximately 150 buildings) and a notable colonial past; Town volunteers and the Historic District Commission are active in preserving and promoting the history of the Town (Cecil County's oldest) and have experience hosting events for attracting visitors, such as ghost tours and historic house tours.</li> <li>• Well-maintained and plentiful park space, including 4.8 acres Athletic Complex</li> <li>• Free events and amenities provided by the Town</li> <li>• New fire station, fire equipment and fire boat</li> <li>• Award-winning elementary school near the center of town center, operating under-capacity (67% utilized)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of community is lacking beyond small core groups.</li> <li>• Newer residents north of Route 7 with North East mailing addresses could be more engaged in town affairs.</li> <li>• Town has not been capitalizing on its historic culture, partially due to a lack of interest from younger generations.</li> <li>• Maintenance and cleanup after town events are burdensome for the small Town staff -- especially during the busier summer season.</li> <li>• Litter and debris on poorly maintained private properties creates a reputation of untidiness, especially on popular streets.</li> </ul>

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items	Implementation Partners
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Improved utilization of existing amenities.  <b>Progress Measures:</b> Number of new events and programs, event attendance.	<b>Strategy A:</b> Create programming for tennis courts, ballfields, and other athletic facilities.  <b>Strategy B:</b> Create beautification projects with historical ambience in select areas.	Cecil County Tourism Office, Cecil County Parks and Recreation, Cecil County Office of Economic Development, Colonial Charlestown



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<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Leverage Town-owned land for development of additional or expanded community uses.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> Number of new or expanded public facilities</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Provide for expanded municipal facilities, including an addition and renovation of the current Town Hall.</p>	<p>Maryland DHCD, Colonial Charlestown</p>
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<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Preserve historic resources and develop regional strategies that enhance compatible cultural and economic initiatives.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> number of new or expanded public facilities, number of plans.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Partner with neighboring municipalities, Cecil County, and the State, to fund a full-time Heritage Planner to support with grants and tax credit initiatives.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Develop a Heritage Area Management Plan for Charlestown, North East and Elkton</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Develop a Historic Preservation Plan</p>	<p>Preservation Maryland, Cecil County Economic Development, DHCD, MHT, NRHP, MHAA, neighboring municipalities, Cecil County Tourism Office, Colonial Charlestown, and the Maryland Tourism Office.</p>
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<p><b>Outcome 4:</b> Engage residents outside of the Historic District in activities</p> <p><b>Progress measures:</b> Increased participation in town meetings and events from residents of newer developments</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Use social media to advertise events at the 107 House and the Harry Barnes Ice House.</p>	<p>Colonial Charlestown</p>
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## Local Planning & Staffing Capacity

(Strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes might focus on the following: updating zoning ordinances or land use; updating municipal/local policies, taxes, fees, etc; increasing local government staff capacity; and updating planning documents like sector plans or comprehensive plans.)

Strengths	Weaknesses
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Charlestown is a small-lot, high density grid system with mixed use development.</li> <li>• Town provides water service -- residents appreciate the well water, especially those with health concerns (sewer service is provided by Cecil County) and there is additional water service capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Comprehensive plan, and some Town code and ordinances need updating.</li> <li>• The Town is lacking sources of revenue.</li> <li>• There is a limited amount of commercial land use.</li> </ul>
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Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures	Strategies and Action Items →	Implementation Partners
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> Create new sources of revenue other than taxes.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> Number of new sources of revenue.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Develop a senior housing complex with commercial retail uses.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Attract new small businesses to the Town.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Continue participating in the Circuit Rider Town Manager program with the Town of North East, to ensure we have the capacity to identify supplemental funding sources, complete applications, and manage reporting requirements.</p>	<p>Maryland DHCD, Cecil County Economic Development, Home Partnership, Inc.</p>

<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Revise Town codes, zoning regulations, and update Comprehensive Plan, in order to promote revitalization and channel growth into appropriate areas.</p> <p><b>Progress Measures:</b> updated codes, ordinances, and plans.</p>	<p><b>Strategy A:</b> Create flexible zoning provisions for the Town Center that expressly recognize the existing mix of residential and non-residential uses.</p> <p><b>Strategy B:</b> Consider adopting a building code that would enable the condemnation of unsafe structures and equipment.</p> <p><b>Strategy C:</b> Update the Comprehensive Plan and incorporate elements from Cecil County's Green Infrastructure Plan, Nuisance Flooding Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan.</p> <p><b>Strategy D:</b> Create a five-year Capital Improvement Plan for improving aging infrastructure.</p>	<p>Planning &amp; Zoning Commission, MDP, Maryland DHCD, Cecil County Division of Permits and Inspections</p>
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