

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan is the official statement of the Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of North East setting forth policies concerning desirable future growth, which serves as a general guide to public and private development decisions. Once adopted, it becomes the basis for the preparation of specific policies, programs and legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, and other actions, which implement the growth policies set forth in the Plan.

The Plan is comprised of several major elements that are prepared in such a manner that they form an integrated, unified document for guiding future growth and development. As a policy document it is general, comprehensive, and long range in nature. It is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geographic area of the Town and includes all functional elements that bear upon its physical development, such as transportation, land use, and community facilities. It is general in that it summarizes policies and proposals but does not establish detailed regulations. It is long range in that it looks beyond current issues to problems and opportunities related to future growth over the next twenty years.

The Vision for North East

Identifying a broad-based and widely supported community vision for the Town of North East is a major component of the comprehensive planning process. To ensure this vision, goals and objectives are established to build a framework for how the Town desires to grow and develop. Goals and objectives serve as the basis for formulating all Town policies, which will affect public and private decisions relative to the preservation and growth of North East.

The overall vision for the Town of North East is:

To preserve North East's rural community character while expanding the economic base of the Town by capitalizing on the local tourism, industry, planned employment growth and area commerce.

The Framework for Planning

As North East and the surrounding environs grow and change over the next few years, this Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide for making public and private decisions regarding the Town's growth and development. This Plan presents the future vision of North East in the years to come along with recommendations for bringing that vision into fruition. The ideas of the Plan are a distillation of the community's many desires, tempered by what seems feasible and reasonable. This plan is not intended to be a static document, but should be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect new development trends, shifts in economy, or changes in the community's goals and objectives.

Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland is the Zoning and Planning enabling legislation from which the Town of North East derives its powers to regulate land use. Section 3.05 sets forth the minimum requirements for a comprehensive plan, which shall include, among other things:

- A statement of goals and objectives, principles, policies, and standards;
- A land use plan element;
- A Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas Element;
- A transportation plan element;
- A community facilities plan element;
- An element which shall contain the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the plan; and
- Other elements, such as a community renewal and housing, conservation at the discretion of the commission.

The context for planning in the Town of North East must also take into consideration the role that the Town will play in implementing the overall growth management strategies established by the State of Maryland in the Planning Act of 1992 and reflected in the Cecil County Comprehensive Plan. The growth management policies established in the Planning Act and stated as "visions" for the future were the guiding principles for preparation of this Plan. These "visions" are:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas;
2. Sensitive areas are protected;
3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas that are protected;
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced;
6. To assure the achievement of 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined;
7. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the Town are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur; and
8. Funding mechanisms are in place to achieve all other visions.

Components of a Growth Management Program

This Comprehensive Plan provides the basic framework and direction for all components of what may be considered the Town's overall Comprehensive Planning Program. It is not a stand-alone document but is supported and, in turn, supports related Planning Program documents such as the ones listed below.

- Zoning Ordinance
- Subdivision Regulations
- Capital Improvements Budget

These documents and others, when used concurrently, are the basis for directing and managing growth in North East.