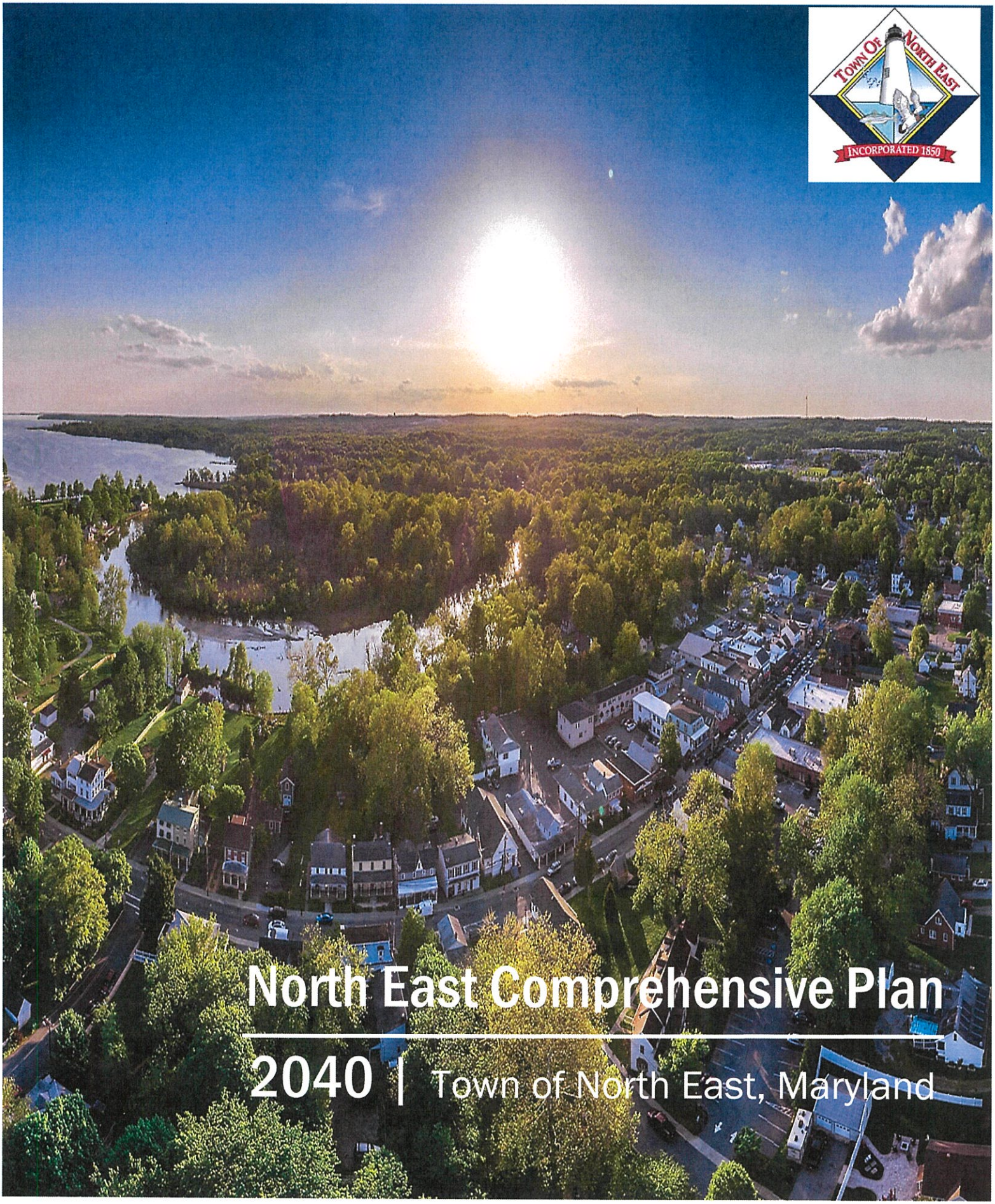

North East Comprehensive Plan

2040 | Town of North East, Maryland

DRAFT

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Introduction

The Town of North East Comprehensive Plan officially establishes policies concerning desirable future growth and serves as a general guide to public and private development actions and decisions. Once adopted, it becomes the basis for preparing specific policies, programs, and legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations and other actions, which implement the growth policies outlined in the plan.

The plan comprises several major elements that form an integrated, unified document for 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 it 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 and provides a basis for the Town to 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 significant component of the comprehensive planning process. To ensure this vision, goals and objectives were 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 local tourism, industry, planned employment growth, and area commerce.*

The Framework for Planning

As North East and the surrounding area grow and change, this Comprehensive Plan will guide public and private decisions regarding the town's growth and development. This plan provides an implementation framework for the town's future vision based on North East's priorities and needs. The plan's ideas were developed by listening to and understanding the community's values and desires, balanced by feasible and reasonable goals, objectives, and recommendations for implementation.

This plan is not intended to be a static document. It should be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect new development trends, economic shifts, or changes in the community's goals and objectives.

Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

The Land Use Article 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 § 3.102 sets forth the minimum requirements for a comprehensive plan, which shall include, among other things:

- A goals and objectives element;
- A land use plan element;
- A housing element;
- A sensitive areas element;
- A transportation element;
- A community facilities element;
- A water resources element;
- A municipal growth element;
- A development regulations element (the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the Plan); and
- Other elements, such as community renewal, conservation, natural resources, flood control, pollution control, public utilities, and priority preservation (§2-518 of the Agricultural Article), at the planning commission's discretion.

The context for planning in the Town of North East must also consider the Town's role in implementing the overall sustainable growth planning principles established by the State of Maryland in § 1-201 of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The implementation of these principles is intended to create sustainable communities and to protect the environment in order to foster a high quality of life for all residents of the State. The Land Use Article requires the planning commission to implement the following planning principles through the comprehensive plan:

(1) land: optimize productivity of working landscapes, including farms and forests, and fisheries, and prioritize development within population centers that are in proximity to existing infrastructure and facilities;

(2) transportation: prioritize transportation networks that create energy efficient, affordable, and reliable access to jobs, housing, and services;

(3) housing: enable a mix of quality housing types and affordability options to accommodate all who want to live in the State;

(4) economy: allow for adaptive reuse, mixed–use, and context appropriate new development that responds to changing markets and innovations;

(5) equity: engage all sectors of the community in plan development to ensure diverse voices are heard and the needs of underserved populations are prioritized;

(6) resilience: integrate resiliency measures that will minimize the impacts of rapid and unexpected natural– and human–caused threats on communities;

(7) place: provide for public spaces that encourage social interaction and value cultural, historical, and natural resources; and

(8) ecology: protect and restore sensitive ecological systems and conserve natural resources, including forests, agricultural areas, and waterways.

When this update was initiated, (2022 - 2024) there were twelve State Planning Principles in Land Use Article §1–201, those principles have been replaced with Planning Visions (effective October 2025). An overview of how this plan addresses each of the Planning Principles is provided in the Implementation Element.

Components of a Growth Management Program

This Comprehensive Plan provides the basic framework and direction for all components of the Town's overall Comprehensive Planning Program. It is not a stand-alone document; rather, it is supported by (and supports) related planning program documents such as the ones listed below:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Subdivision Regulations
- Capital Improvements Budget

When used concurrently, these and other documents form the basis for directing and managing growth in North East.