

Chapter 1

Community Profile

Location and Historical Background

The Town of North East is nestled at the head of the Chesapeake Bay on the North East River in Cecil County, less than an hour's drive from Philadelphia and Baltimore. Settled by the English in 1658, the town was incorporated in 1850. The southern part of town covers a site once occupied by Shawnee Indians. North East was the first permanent settlement in Cecil County. The cemetery at Saint Mary Anne's Episcopal Church, located on Main Street, is one of the oldest in the State of Maryland, and it has graves of Susquehannock Indians dating back to the 1600s.

Two major roads north of town, Route 40 and I-95, have and will continue to profoundly impact growth in the North East area. Route 40 has seen increased residential and commercial development, including multi-family housing, restaurants, service stations, grocery stores, and similar auto-oriented uses. MD 272 serves as the main North-South Connection for Central Cecil County, linking North East with Elk Neck State Park and providing connections to the North through US-40 and I-95 to the Pennsylvania State line. Commercial growth has occurred along MD 272, just north of Route 40, with the construction of North East Plaza in the early 1970s, the North East Commerce Center, North East Gateway, and North East Station shopping center just south of Route 40, all of which are within the town's corporate limits except for North East Plaza. Within North East, MD 272 serves as the town's main artery, as it is Main Street (South Bound) and Maudlin Avenue (North Bound).

On Main Street, visitors will find several restaurants and shops selling artisanal goods and antiques. The Upper Bay Museum, located at the end of Walnut Street in the North East Community Park, offers one of the area's most extensive collections of hunting and fishing memorabilia. The Office of Cecil County Tourism is also located in North East Community Park. Tourism continues to evolve into an economic force for the town, attracting many visitors to the North East River with water-oriented recreational opportunities and the nearby Elk Neck State Park. Located a short distance from town are the Elk Neck State Park, Turkey Point Light House, and Elk Neck State Forest, all offering visitors hiking and recreational activities. According to park staff, in 2023, Elk Neck State Park attracted 486,975 day visitors, 72,095 visitors for camping purposes, and 4,116 visitors for cabin rental purposes annually.

The town currently consists of approximately 1,280 acres, an increase of roughly 15 acres since 2012. North East's population is estimated to have grown from 3,556 in 2012 to 3,609 in 2020 (Population Estimates of Incorporated Places, April 1, 2020 – July 1, 2020, released May 2021).

Socioeconomic Background

Population Growth

Until 1970, North East witnessed a steady increase in growth over each decade. However, from 1970 to 1980, the town’s population dropped by 349 (a decrease of 19 percent). This trend was reversed in subsequent decades when the population reached 1,913 by 1990, 2,733 in 2000, 3,535 in 2010, and 3,609 in 2020.

Table 1: Population Growth

Locality	2000	2010	2020	Percent increase 2000-2020
Cecil County*	85,951	101,108	103,725	20.68%
North East**	2,733***	3,535	3,609	32%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Preliminary Historical and Projected Total Population for Maryland’s Jurisdictions, Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center Unit, December 2022 Release,*

***Total Resident Population for Maryland’s Jurisdictions, April 1, 2010, through July 1, 2020, Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center Unit, May 2021*

****2000 U.S. Census – Table D.P. 1 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics Geographic Area: North East Maryland*

Between 1970 and 1990, North East’s population declined as a percentage of Cecil County’s total population (from 3.4 percent to 2.7 percent). Between 1980 and 2000, however, it climbed back to 3.2 percent of the County’s population. This trend continued through 2020, when the town reached approximately 3.49 percent of Cecil County’s total population, providing the growth rate basis for the following projections.

Table 2: Population Projections

	2020	2030	2040
Cecil County *	103,725	112,730	126,210
North East **	3,620	3,934	4,405

* Source: Maryland Office of Planning - Preliminary Historical and Projected Total Population for Maryland's Jurisdictions, December 2022 Release

** Based on a 3.94 percent growth rate

Age and Sex

The town's age structure changed little from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, over 70 percent of the town's population was below 45, decreasing to approximately 66 percent by 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates). Thirty-two percent of the town's population was below 18, and slightly less than 11 percent were 65 or older (2000). By 2023, 25.9 percent of the town's population was below age 18, and 9.4 percent were 65 or older (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

In 2000, the median age of the town's population was 31.3, slightly over a year older than the median age in 1990. By 2020, the median age had increased to 33.8. By comparison, Cecil County's median age was 40.8, and the State of Maryland's median age was 39.3 as of 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

The town's distribution of males and females has remained stable in recent decades. In 2000, 47.8 percent of the population was male, compared to 47.7 percent in 2020. 52.2 percent of the population was female in 2020, compared to 52.3 percent in 2000. However, by 2023, the male-female ratio was slightly higher in the age group 18 years and over, with 51.1 percent males and 48.9 percent females (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates). For the 65 and older age group, 55.3 percent were female, and 44.7 percent were males by 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

Race

The town's population has seen increased racial diversity in recent decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 93.8 percent of the town's population identified as white in 2000, compared to 73.9 percent in 2020. Those who identified as Black or African American comprised 3.2 percent of the town's population in 2000, increasing to 11.1 percent in 2020. People who indicated they were of Hispanic or Latino origin constituted 1.5 percent of the town's population in 2000, rising to 7.4 percent in 2020. In 2020, approximately 10.2 percent of the town's population identified as two or more races.

By comparison, Cecil County and the State of Maryland have also seen increased racial diversity in recent decades, albeit at a slower rate than the Town of North East. In Cecil County, those

identifying as Black or African American constituted 3.8 percent of the total population in 2000, increasing to 9.7 percent by 2023. In Maryland, 27.9 percent of the population identified as Black or African American in 2000, rising to 29.2 percent by 2023. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 1.5 percent of the county’s population in 2000, increasing to 5.4 percent by 2023. In Maryland, 4.3 percent of the population identified as being of Hispanic or Latino origin in 2000, rising to 12.1 percent by 2023. In 2020, approximately 10.2 percent of the county’s population and 6.3 percent of the state’s population identified as two or more races.

Educational Attainment

Generally, educational attainment rates in the Town of North East are higher than those of Cecil County and the State of Maryland. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 74 percent of persons over 25 had a high school degree or higher in the Town of North East. By 2023, 92 percent of persons 25 and older had a high school degree or higher (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates). By comparison, 91.5 percent of persons 25 and older in Cecil County and 91 percent of persons 25 and older in Maryland held a high school diploma or higher by 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

Approximately 12.8 percent of the town’s population had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher in 1990, rising to 38 percent by 2023. By comparison, in Cecil County, 12.1 percent of the population held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2000, rising to 26.9 percent by 2023. However, Maryland’s higher education attainment rates outpace those of the Town of North East and Cecil County: 26.5 percent of the state’s population held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2000, increasing to 42.7 percent by 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

Employment

Since 1990, the town has experienced higher unemployment than Cecil County and the State of Maryland. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the town’s unemployment rate was 5.5 percent in 1990, decreasing to 5 percent by 2023 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates).

Table 3: 2022 Labor Force

	Population	Percent in labor force	Percent unemployed
Maryland	6,170,738	67.2%	3.3%
Cecil County	104,366	61.9%	2.8%
North East	4,095	64%	5%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates

Table 4: 2023 Income and Poverty Status

	Median				Percent of Persons living in poverty
	Per capita income	Household Income	Family Income	Nonfamily Household Income	
Maryland	51,689	101,652	124,487	61,575	9.3%
Cecil County	42,560	91,146	107,719	49,521	10.9%
North East	47,862	87,510	81,906	87,982	15.9%

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates

Although the town had a slightly higher per capita income than Cecil County in 2023, its incidence of poverty among persons, families, and female householders was higher. It should be noted that there are significant percentage standards of error regarding the items reported in the 2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates, based on sample size, so all estimates and comparisons are for generalized purposes and not directly comparable between the Town of North East, Cecil County, and the State of Maryland. Poverty thresholds, as determined through surveys by the U.S. Census Bureau, are based on the family size and number of related children under age 18. For example, 2023 poverty thresholds included \$14,614 for individuals 65 and older, \$15,852 for individuals under 65, and \$30,900 for four-person households with two related children under age 18.

Persons Per Household and Average Household Size

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the town's average household size increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, from 2.36 to 2.52 persons per household. In 2022, the average household size in the Town of North East had decreased to 2.33 (2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates). By comparison, the average household size in Cecil County decreased from 2.81 to 2.71 persons per household between 1990 and 2000. As of 2019, the average number of persons per household in Cecil County had further lowered to 2.64. Likewise, the average number of persons per household in Maryland decreased from 2.68 in 2017 to 2.58 in 2023, according to American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

Housing Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census, the town's total number of housing units increased from 847 in 1990 to 1,215 units in 2020, an increase of over 43 percent. Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of housing units increased from 1,651 to 1,856. Of the 1,856 occupied units, 80 percent were owner-occupied. By 2020, North East's vacancy rates decreased to a 2.7 percent vacancy rate for homeowner units and a 4.7 percent vacancy rate for rental units. Seventy-seven units, or slightly more than 4 percent, were classified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional-use housing.

Table 5: Industry/Occupation of Employees

Sector	Number of Persons	Percentage
Professional, Scientific & Management, and Administrative & Waste Management	168	8.7%
Information	142	7.3%
Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance	512	26.5%
Retail Trade	284	14.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services	36	1.9%
Wholesale Trade	45	2.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing	136	7%
Public Administration	276	14.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining Operations	0	0%
Other services, except Public Administration	44	2.3%
Manufacturing	93	4.8%
Transportation and Warehousing and Utilities	26	1.3%
Construction	173	8.9%
Total civilian employed population, 16+	1,935	100.0%
Private wage and salary workers 16+	1,107	57.2%
Government workers 16+	666	34.4%
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business workers	162	8.4%
Unpaid family workers	0	0

Source: 2019-2023 ACS 5-year Estimates