

Chapter 4

Community Facilities Element

Goals and Objectives

- ◆ Goal: Provide adequate community facilities, public services, and utilities required to maintain the health, safety and welfare of the residents of North East.
 - ❖ Objective: Assure the continued expansion of public facilities and services commensurate with the local financial capabilities and the capacity of each system.
 - ❖ Objective: Assure that the limitations imposed by the environmentally sensitive areas are considered when planning extensions of community facilities.
 - ❖ Objective: Continue to require developers to pay for all road, water, and other community facilities and services extensions and additions needed as a result of new development.
 - ❖ Objective: Certify that all existing, newly developed, and annexed areas of the Town are afforded adequate public services necessary to promote public health, safety, and welfare.
 - ❖ Objective: Examine the pattern and direction of future growth and possible annexation and impacts on community facilities systems.
 - ❖ Objective: Encourage use of public lands and buildings for a variety of public purposes.
- ◆ Goal: Provide adequate parks, open space, and recreational opportunities equitably distributed throughout the Town for existing and future Town residents.
 - ❖ Objective: Encourage the development of a Community Center and/or more recreational and ~~for~~ entertainment opportunities for North East's residents and visitors, with special consideration for youth and seniors.
 - ❖ Objective: Identify a site or sites for regional parks in future annexation areas.
 - ❖ Objective: Examine and refine, if necessary, the policy of requiring usable park/open space during development review and approval.
 - ❖ Objective: Provide for the contribution of fees in lieu of parks in subdivisions where appropriate.

The adequacy and capacity of public services and facilities are important to the improvement of the quality of life for the citizens of North East. Services, schools, recreation, and other amenities such as those identified on Map 6 are vital to a residential community. It is the purpose of this Element to evaluate the capacity of existing public facilities ~~in order~~ to determine if current needs are being met and if future growth can be properly served.

Existing Conditions

Water

The Town of North East presently operates two water treatment plants with a combined capacity of 2.82 million gallons per day (MGD) maximum daily flow (MDF). The Rolling Mill Water Treatment Plant is designed to produce an average daily flow (ADF) of 1.15 MGD and a MDF of 2.0 MGD. The Leslie Water Treatment Plant is designed to produce an ADF of 547,000 gallons per day and a MDF of 820,000 gallons per day. The system presently provides water to a population of approximately 9,000 people and to the Maryland Transit Authority rest stop on I-95. In 2018, the average day system production was 643,163 gallons per day. Elevated and underground storage tanks provide a reserve of 2.28 million gallons.

In 2018 and 2019, the Town signed agreements with Artesian Water (AW) to provide bulk water sales of up to 350,000 gallons per day to AW to serve customers to the west and east of the Town's water system. This agreement allows the Town to financially benefit from some of its current excess water production capacity.

Sewer

The Cecil County Department of Public Works provides sanitary sewer service to the Town of North East and certain portions of the unincorporated areas around it. The wastewater from within this sewer service area is conveyed to the County's Northeast River Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant (NERAWWTP) located on Carpenters Point Road near Charlestown. NERAWWTP treats wastewater to the Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) level of treatment prior to discharge to the Northeast River. NERAWWTP currently has a permitted capacity of 2.0 MGD but can be expanded in phases over time to up to 10 MGD if necessary to support development within its sewer service area.

Gas

In 1996 the Town granted a non-exclusive franchise to the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company for a period of fifty years.

Since that time, Chesapeake Utilities has also extended a natural gas line from the Elkton area west along Route 40 to the industrial and warehouse facilities in the Belvidere Road area west of the Town of North East. Chesapeake Utilities has expressed interest in

extending service to businesses and commercial centers in North East itself, but these extensions have not been completed to date.

Educational Facilities

Public educational facilities for North East are operated by the Cecil County Public Schools (CCPS), under the leadership of the Cecil County Board of Education. Rapid population growth in the County over recent decades has resulted in significant increases in school enrollment. This growth has required CCPS to make major investments in facility upgrades and new schools. The Town of North East's designation as a growth area in the Cecil County Comprehensive Plan means that its schools are likely to continue to face these types of enrollment pressures in the future.

Bay View Elementary and North East Elementary serve students from pre-K to 5th grade. North East Elementary was built in 1951 and Bay View Elementary was built in 1961. North East Elementary has an enrollment of 601 in 2024, which is higher than its intended school capacity of 542. Bay View Elementary has an enrollment of 504 in 2024. Both North East Elementary and Bay View Elementary are Title I Schools, which allows them to receive additional funding for student support.

North East Middle School, serving grades 6-8, was built in 1932, but only became a middle school after renovations to the former high school in 1970 and 1973. In 2024, it has an enrollment of 766 students.

North East High School was built in 1970 and serves 9th-12th grade students from both North East Middle School and a local private school. In 2024, it has an enrollment of 1,080 students.

In 2021, the Cecil County Board of Education approved plans to construct a new joint campus for North East Middle School and North East High School near the site of the existing high school on Irishtown Rd. Construction began in 2023 and is projected to be completed by 2027.

Private education facilities include the Tome School. The Tome School is an independent, coeducational, college preparatory school founded in 1889. The school's curriculum provides a broad liberal arts education for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Tome School has capacity for up to 500 students and has a faculty of 44.

Library Services

The North East Community is served by the North East Branch of the Cecil County Public Library system. In 2021, a new 43,000 square foot facility was completed on Mauldin Ave near Route 40 and serves as the library hub for Cecil County. The building includes 33,000 square feet of library space and 10,000 square feet of office and administrative space for the Cecil County Public Library system. The library offers a collection of over 70,000 items, as well as numerous learning spaces, recreation areas, conference rooms, and a

digital media lab. Library materials and programs are provided to children and adults without charge.

Fire and Police Protection

The North East Town Police department is located on West Cecil Avenue in two 2,500 square foot buildings built in the 1990s. The police department has 14 sworn officers, one administrative assistant to the Chief and two crossing guards. The police department provides 24-hour police protection within the town boundaries.

The North East Fire Company, Inc. has approximately 180 members on the books with 60 Active members between Fire and EMS. The members engage in all phases of emergency services as a combination of volunteer and career personnel. North East's main station, Station 4, is located at 210 S. Mauldin Ave. North East has one substation, Station 44, located 6 miles south of Town at 2997 Turkey Point Road, which has been functional for several years. The Fire Company is currently exploring building another substation (Station 24) 4 miles north of Town, at Rt. 274 and Theodore Road, to house an Engine and 1 EMS unit to decrease response times to the northern most part of North East's response area.

Refuse Collection

The Town of North East utilizes the services of a private contractor for curbside municipal solid waste and single stream recycling collection.

Town Hall

Until February 1988, a single structure served as the Town Hall and housed the police station, library, and municipal government offices. This historic building was known as the "Old Lock Up." In February 1988 the municipal government offices were relocated to a building within the North East Community Park. In 2000, the North East Town Hall again relocated their municipal government offices to South Main Street, located within the General Commercial/Central Business District. The North East Town Hall has undergone several modifications throughout the past 25 years to accommodate additional staff as the corporate limit has expanded.

Recreation

North East is a recreation and tourism center in Cecil County. Of the estimated 590,000 people who traveled to Cecil County in 2021, approximately 410,000 visited the Town of North East (Maryland Office of Tourism). Recreational opportunities are found within and adjacent to town ~~with~~ **including** school playgrounds, athletic facilities, and public park areas, as well as restaurants, retail specialty stores, and fishing access. Additionally, the Town's residents and visitors enjoy easy access to Elk Neck State Park and State Forest, as well as several private marinas and beaches along the headwaters of the North East River and the Chesapeake Bay. The Town envisions future off-road connections to the Elk Neck

State Forest. The area offers an array of active and passive recreational activities attracting visitors from Cecil and Harford counties, Baltimore, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

The following describes in greater detail some of these recreational facilities:

North East Community Park: A 10-acre park located at the end of Walnut Street on the Northeast River. It includes four pavilions, restrooms, a handicap accessible playground and exercise equipment, two sand volleyball courts, horse shoe pits, a walking trail, a kayak ramp, and ample space for fishing and day docking at the pier. Additionally, the recently installed Veteran's Reflection Memorial which provides a place for reflection, honoring our beloved veterans. The North East Community Park is home to the Chesapeake Wooden Boat Builders School and the Upper Bay Museum, which participate in several community events throughout the year.

Herring Snatchers Park: Located on North Main Street (MD-272) on the north side of the North East River. The space offers picnic tables and fishing access.

Turner Park: Located off West Street, Turner Park has a sports field available for public use. The park is currently underutilized and the Town has been seeking grant funds for improvements including a sports field, a dog park, a walking trail, and pickleball courts.

The North East Preserve: The North East Preserve is an undeveloped 59.36 acre parkland which was donated to the Town in 2020. The site is located west of the Town Center, abutting North East Isles Drive and Maryland Route 7. The property is framed by Stoney Run and North East Creek, near the confluence of North East Creek and North East River, a tributary to the Chesapeake Bay. In 2021, the Town adopted the following Mission Statement for the Preserve: "To create and maintain a renowned nature preserve focused on protecting habitats and native wildlife of the North East Creek watershed while providing waterfront access, passive recreation, and educational opportunities within easy walking distance, accessible to residents and the visitors of North East". In addition, North East adopted The North East Preserve Master Site Plan in 2023 which serves as a tool for the Planning Process of the Preserve. This Master Site Plan is proposing a parking area, bike racks, pedestrian walkways and bridges. This land is to serve as a greenspace available for all visitors.

Elk Neck State Park. The State Park is a large State owned recreational facility located along Route 272 approximately ten miles south of Town. The park was established in 1937 and has grown to its current size of 2,370 acres of land with varied landscapes that include marshlands, heavily wooded areas, white clay cliffs, and sandy shorelines. The Park offers a wide range of activities including picnicking, camping, hiking, and outdoor sports. In addition, the Park provides hiking trails, nature trails, swimming areas, and an open air pavilion, as well as boat launching facilities and boat rentals.

Elk Neck State Forest. The State Forest consists of several large parcels totaling 3,571 acres. The largest portion lies just east of Cemetery Road east of Town with another large section at MD 272 and McKinneytown Road south of Town. It offers a variety of passive recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, and hunting in the appropriate season. The State Forest also contains a popular rifle firing and archery range. In 2024, however, the range was closed due to a structural failure of the backstop. The Forest Service intends to reopen the range once necessary repairs have been completed.

Greenways

Greenways are protected corridors of open space, maintained in a largely natural state for a variety of purposes, including water protection, wildlife habitat enhancement, aesthetic relief, recreation, non-motorized transportation, and environmental education. All greenways serve at least one of these primary functions, and most offer some combination. Greenways are often associated with a linear natural feature like a stream, a coast or the ridge of a mountain. Ideally, they incorporate or link larger open spaces. (Maryland Greenway Atlas, Introduction)

Greenway development offers the opportunity to achieve multiple plan objectives that include providing:

- alternative means of travel (walking or bicycle);
- open space;
- recreation;
- environmental protection; and
- tourism/ economic development.

A multi-faceted greenway system throughout the County presents many opportunities for increased tourism activity as well as the protection of natural resources. Greenways, for example, act as a major component of heritage tourism by providing a linkage between the physical and cultural features of a particular area. They are part of a total marketing plan that connects the places tourists visit, shop, eat, and sleep.

There are currently several greenway initiatives and groups in Cecil County that are working to create greenway connections within Cecil County, as well as to surrounding regions and states. These include the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, the East Coast Greenway and the Elk Neck Trail Association. The Cecil County Green Infrastructure Plan also identifies greenways as one of several important tools for protecting natural resources, mitigating flooding, and providing linkages between forests, wetlands, and waterways. It recommends that the County pursue opportunities to complete connections between its towns and major greenway trails.

Social and Health Services

The residents of the Town of North East are served by Cecil County's social and health service programs through the Department of Community Services and the Health Department. The offices for these programs are located in the Town of Elkton approximately 6 miles east of North East. Elkton is also the location of the nearest hospital.

Social Services and other agencies provide limited transportation to those unable to drive. As of 2024, Cecil Transit operates one fixed bus route with service to North East that offers connections to Perryville and Elkton. Cecil Transit also offers a countywide, origin-to-destination demand response service, which must be scheduled in advance. Finally, the Cecil County Health Department is responsible for administering the Medical Assistance Ambulance Transportation Program for Cecil County residents, which requires pre-authorization from the Health Department.

Other Services

The electric power and street lighting for the Town is provided by Delmarva Power. Cable television is provided by Comcast. Street repairs, cleaning, and snow removal are completed on Town owned streets by a Town work force or contracted out. Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) is responsible for repairs, maintenance, cleaning and snow removal on State roads Route 272, Mauldin Avenue and Cecil Avenue/Route 7.

Recommendations

Based on the amount and rate of growth envisioned in this Comprehensive Plan, most of the existing Town community facilities and services such as fire, library, and recreation, are capable, with minor adjustments and improvements, of servicing the planned growth areas.

Broadband

Future economic development, especially growth in the industrial sector, is highly dependent on high-speed communications. Although all of the properties in the Town of North East have access to broadband, numerous properties in the area immediately surrounding the Town still lack broadband service. The Town should work with the County and other communities to encourage installation of advanced communication infrastructure to serve the area.

Water and Sewer Service

The Town of North East's 20 Year Water System Master Plan (WMP) was completed in early 2020. This study determined that the water infrastructure that had been put into place

over the preceding two decades should be sufficient to continue to serve the Town's water needs for the next 20 years and beyond. As noted in Chapter 2, the Water WMP projects an estimated 68% growth in demand, which will need to be accommodated as the Town plans for future growth

The Water System Master Plan also offers 39 recommendations for improvements to or regular maintenance of the existing infrastructure to ensure its continued effective operation. One overarching recommendation made by the plan is for the Town to establish a routine inspection schedule of all its water storage tanks to identify emerging problems before they grow into larger issues.

For sewer service, the Cecil County Department of Public Works is currently assessing the physical condition and capacity of the Washington Street Force Main which conveys wastewater from the Town of North East and the surrounding area to the County's NERAWWTP. The goal of the effort is to ensure that sufficient capacity is available to support future flows. Depending on the results of the assessment, the County may be required to undertake a project or series of projects to repair or, perhaps, replace the Washington Street Force Main to ensure a continued high level of service. The Town of North East should remain informed about these findings and support these projects as appropriate.

Gas

It is recommended that North East should pursue the extension of the proposed gas line to the Highway Commercial area and north to the North East Commerce Center.

Educational Facilities

The school system in the Town of North East may need to be expanded as growth occurs in the area. The Board of Education continues to monitor the enrollment levels of North East Elementary School, but does not currently have plans to expand or add new facilities. On the middle and high school grade levels, the construction of the new joint campus on Irishtown Road should serve the needs of the Town for the foreseeable future.

The Town is carefully monitoring traffic conditions on Irishtown Road and Rt 272 in continued partnership with MDOT SHA, Cecil County, Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) and other partners. Traffic generated by the new developments such as the larger joint campus may create safety and congestion issues that will be addressed with improved roadway infrastructure or traffic control measures.

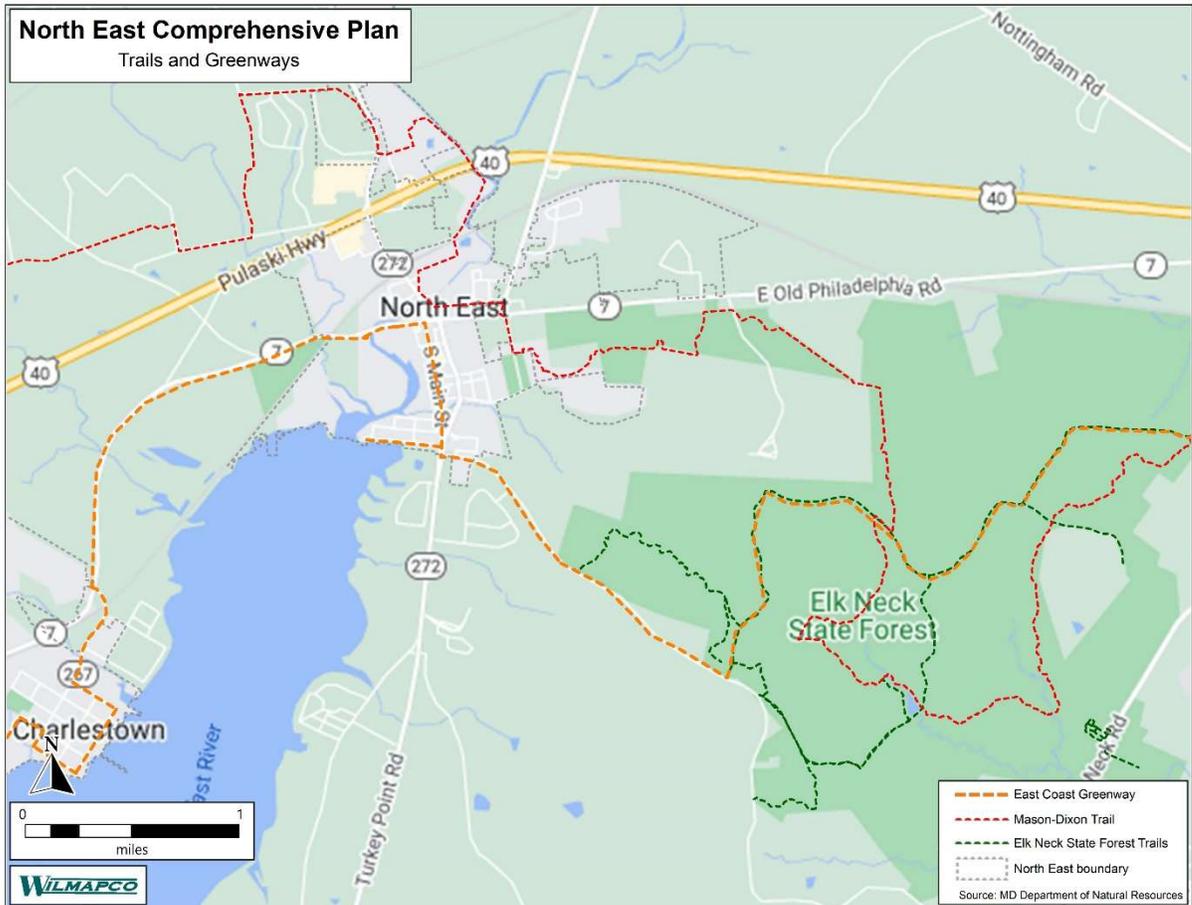
More generally, the Town should continue participating ~~participate~~ in the school planning process. North East should be kept informed by the Board of Education of all school planning efforts being conducted by the County and State insuring that local staff, elected officials, and private citizens take an active part in all planning efforts affecting the Town.

Greenways

It is recommended that North East work with the WILMAPCO and Cecil County Department of Land Use and Development Services to continue promoting the expansion of greenways as part of the County's Green Infrastructure Plan and the East Coast Greenway Plan. Once completed, the Town should extend the existing bikeways, paths, and sidewalks to the greenways, increasing the connectivity between activity centers as well as the unique connection to the Town's water resources. The greenways should be a place to walk, jog, and bike for residents and visitors. It should provide an alternative means to go between neighborhoods, travel to school, and reach recreation areas, tying in with North East Isles and the North East Community Park. The North East Preserve will help implement the East Coast Greenway Plan. The Preserve can act as a spine that connects with other greenway areas in the region such as Charlestown and Elkton via Route 7 (see map East Coast Greenway Plan Map 6). The Preserve will protect our natural resources; link land use and alternative transportation avenues; improves mobility and manages our transportation system by providing trails and bridges which is an alternate to building new roads. These trails should also connect to the main street businesses which will improve commerce. The Town should try to involve the community through partnerships, civic associations and clubs to help maintain trail management and maintenance as needed.

An important factor will be connecting the Central Business/General Commercial District and other commercial centers to the greenways. The sidewalk and path system along Cecil Avenue should be extended east to meet with the County greenways. Additionally, to take advantage of natural features throughout Town, off road placement of the sidewalk and paths should be considered. Similar measures should be taken to connect the Middle School and High School to the greenways.

The Town and County zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations should provide that the Planning Commission may require that development of properties which include portions of a designated greenway provide a public easement, dedication to public use, or a cross-use easement along the greenway or along any 100-foot perennial stream buffers that feed into designated greenways. Figure X illustrates Trails and Greenways in the Town of North East



Other Services

The Town should attempt to expand the social services to its residents, concentrating on services catering to the aging population. North East's portion of the population that is above 65 years old was 9 percent (2018-2022) and its median age has risen slightly to 33.8 (2020) and is expected to continue to rise.

Construction of a community center is being considered by North East. It would provide a meeting place for senior citizens, civic organizations, and children's group's while also providing programs for all residents and visitors.

The Town intends to manage the cost of future development and annexation so as not to adversely impact the economy and finances of the Town and existing residents. New development will be required to pay for extensions of community facilities and a fair share of capital investments in community facilities systems.

Map 6: Community Facilities

