

PART B

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Introduction

The Land Use Element of this Plan described policies to accommodate an appropriate rate of growth, and also to contain this growth within a clearly defined boundary. Thus, the Plan has so far talked about how fast the Town wants to grow and where the Town wants to grow. The task is incomplete, however, unless the Town also talks about what that future growth looks like. This refers to how new buildings are arranged on the land, as well as what the Town wants those new buildings to look like. Issues such as these are the subject of the Community Character Element of the Plan.

It is the Town's over-riding desire to develop strategies to ensure that the Town does not sprawl indiscriminately until it ultimately blends in with the same kind of rural sprawl which the Town sees beginning to form near the Town boundaries. It is very important to maintain the Town's "sense of place." The Town also does not wish to see the Town surrounded by tract housing with large lots and cul-de-sacs, with no planned connections to the rest of Town. This would be the quickest way to destroy the Town's "sense of place." Methods for avoiding such destructive development and maintaining Chestertown's quality of life are discussed below.

Vision for Growth

Sometimes what the Town wants to **avoid** is easier to describe than what the Town wants to achieve. The American author and urban design/planning critic James Howard Kuntsler has put it rather succinctly when he says:

Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading: the jive plastic commuter tract wastelands, the Potemkin village shopping plazas with their vast parking lagoons, the Lego-block hotel complexes, the "gourmet mansardic" junk food joints, the Orwellian office "parks" featuring buildings sheathed in the same reflective glass as the sunglasses worn by chain gang guards, the particle board garden apartments rising up in every meadow and cornfield, the freeway loops around every big and little city with their clusters of discount merchandise marts, the whole destructive, wasteful, toxic, agoraphobia inducing spectacle that politicians proudly call "growth".

James Howard Kuntsler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscape*

That is precisely what the Town wants to avoid happening to Chestertown. The Town sees it happening in other parts of Kent County as well as in surrounding counties, and the Town says: "It will not happen to us in our Town!" Chestertown refuses to become the latest community that is just another "Anyplace USA." Instead, the Town wishes to maintain its small-town, rural identity. It wishes to grow slowly and not add significantly to population and the need for infrastructure. What the Town sees in its crystal ball for Chestertown's future is basically just a larger version of what the Town already has. The Town wants to expand along a gridded street system, with sidewalks and with houses that are built to roughly the same setbacks and scale as the existing houses in Chestertown. The Town wants ample parks and open spaces to

be provided in future annexed areas and ideally, these open areas will be connected to those that currently exist in the Town. In short, the residents want a community that they will still be proud to call home.

Toward that end, this Plan incorporates the following *principles* that help describe what Chestertown means in this Plan by expecting “quality” in the kinds of development projects that will receive favorable consideration during the design review and approval process.

“Quality Places” Principles

- “Quality neighborhoods offer a choice of well designed and maintained housing types and sizes.”
- “Quality neighborhoods are linked to surrounding areas, and...share commercial spaces and open space.”
- “Quality neighborhoods encourage actions to preserve, restore and reuse historic sites or structures...and to foster appropriate infill development.”
- “Quality neighborhoods have a distinct identity that helps define their boundaries.”
- “The distinct features of a neighborhood include public spaces such as a square, a green or an important street intersection.”
- “The streets of a quality neighborhood give residents, particularly youth and the elderly, choice and control in their mobility.”
- “A variety of quality public green spaces are within easy access of residents in a quality neighborhood.”
- “Quality neighborhoods offer the opportunity for residents to work and live within the neighborhood.”
- “Quality places include a variety of uses (e.g. retail stores, residences, civic buildings and offices) that create multipurpose activity centers.”
- “The scale, character and function of a quality development are compatible and integrated with that of its surroundings.”
- “Quality places are built to last with quality materials and designed to allow for changing uses over time, and provide for shifting markets and consumer needs.”
- “Quality shopping areas, small or large, are designed to make the pedestrian feel comfortable and safe, providing wide sidewalks, storefronts that open to the street, shade and shelter, and a sense of spatial enclosure.”
- “Quality shopping areas provide a variety of convenient parking choices consistent with the scale of the development, the location and type of stores.”
- “Parking is divided into smaller components to the rear or side of the buildings.”

- “A quality transportation system accommodates automobiles, public transit, public safety vehicles, freight, pedestrians and bicycles in a balanced way to maximize access and mobility throughout the community.”
- “Quality local streets provide access to homes, shops and businesses.”
- “The design of a quality local street encourages pedestrian and bicycle use through such features as continuous sidewalks, curbside tree planting, narrow street width and small turning radii at corners to slow down cars, landscaped medians and street parking that protects pedestrians from moving traffic.”
- “A system of quality local streets complements the planning and development of a regional public transit network.”
- “Easy pedestrian access and a mix of uses are encouraged at existing and proposed transit stops to allow transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.”
- “Quality public spaces encourage social interaction and foster a distinct sense of place.”
- “The design of quality places incorporates features and amenities that minimize environmental impacts on water quality caused by storm water runoff and erosion.”
- “The design of buildings and properties maximizes the efficient use of environmental and economic resources.”
- “A quality place preserves major natural features in a neighborhood or a community (streams, slopes and natural habitats) as open space, and links those resources to public places.”

General agreement over what constitutes “quality” led to the drafting of a set of *design principles* that are expected to be used by applicants when they design new developments and renovate or propose infill projects in existing neighborhoods.

Design Principles for Chestertown

Design Principle # 1 – Mixed Uses are Desirable

One of the biggest failures of Planning over the last 50 years or so has been the emphasis, primarily through zoning, on separating uses. Thus, whole communities have been created where the houses are in one place, the jobs are in another, generally isolated, place, and amenities like shopping, services, institutional or cultural uses, are likewise segregated in separate districts. The end result is that towns no longer consist of a series of interconnected neighborhoods. Instead, they are made up of a series of disconnected, single-use “developments”.

Future development in Chestertown should include a mixture of uses. It should do so, however, in a manner that does not tip the balance too far towards any particular use. As was stated earlier in this Plan, the Town does not desire to have major regional-scale retail shopping. That kind of shopping is relatively easily available to our residents in places like Annapolis, Easton and Dover. The Town does, however, want to see neighborhood-convenience level goods and services available to our citizens. Depending on the size and scale of a given development, this may mean different things. At first it will probably mean simply expanding

the range of goods and services available in Town. Eventually, particularly with potentially larger-scale developments, it may mean duplicating some of what is already in Town so as to keep the most basic of convenience items within easy walking distance of every resident of Chestertown. Ideally, every resident should be able to walk to a convenience or small grocery store (or, given Chestertown's unique nature, an old-fashioned Country Store) in no more than 15 minutes. This corresponds to about a quarter-mile.

At the present time, commercial uses are concentrated at the heart of Town along High Street and on upper Washington Avenue and MD 213 extended. The emphasis should be on augmenting the variety of goods and services the Town already has in these areas by providing suitable locations for building while also concentrating commercial development in attractive new and reconstructed facilities.

Providing an overall mix of uses in a community is important not only from a community character point-of-view, but also for fiscal reasons. Subdivisions of simply single-family housing generate a large number of school children, as well as a large number of automobile trips unless the subdivision is exclusively expensive housing. Such developments create a negative budgetary impact. That is, they cost more for the Town to serve than they create in tax revenue. Commercial and industrial development, on the other hand, usually has a net positive fiscal impact. The goal is to have the two impacts balanced within the same neighborhood (thereby reducing traffic and further reducing costs for the Town) rather than having pockets of positive and negative fiscal impacts spread around Town.

Design Principle #2 – Natural Features Should Determine Design

The Maryland Smart Growth Initiative that presently shapes so much of what happens relative to growth and development in Maryland is both a pro-growth and a pro-environment program. The issue is not growth or no-growth. Rather, the issue is one of location. Smart Growth dictates that growth should occur in places with the infrastructure in place to handle it, and should not occur in rural, undeveloped areas. Occasionally, these goals come into conflict when, for example, a site is proposed for development within a Town, but that site also contains environmentally sensitive areas. This is most often the case when development is proposed on the undeveloped periphery of the Town.

This Design Principle is about finding the right balance between these two competing goals. It does not mean that all sites within a municipality should be leveled, filled and developed with no regard for the environment. Nor does it mean that sites with special environmental features should be totally precluded from development. Instead, the Design Principle "Natural Features Should Determine Design" means simply that sites should be planned based on the environmental resources present. For example, it means that a site with trees should not be clear-cut and then built-upon, with the final step ironically being the developer or new home-owner planting new landscaping trees when, with a little forethought they could have kept many of the existing trees and had a new home with mature landscaping from the day they move in.

Similarly, wetlands should be protected, but that does not necessarily mean that they are left on the developed periphery or designated as part of the required open space. They also can be a site amenity as well as an environmental resource. Under the general theme of this Design Principle, there are several objectives that should be followed in order to achieve environmentally responsible and sensitive design. These include:

- Neighborhoods should only be located on land suitable for development.
- Development should avoid impacts to air, land, water and vegetation. Any negative impacts on these resources should be mitigated.
- Site landscaping should utilize existing vegetation complemented with native species.
- Important visual features should be preserved and made an integral part of the design of the site.
- Site design and development should consider noise and light impacts on adjacent properties.

Above all, neighborhood development can be environmentally responsible by providing adequate opportunities for walking to jobs, convenience retail and community facilities, thereby reducing automobile usage. Pedestrian usage should be encouraged by incorporating pedestrian needs at the very beginning of the design process.

Design Principle # 3 – Automobiles Should Not Determine Design

This Design Principle would, at first glance, seem to go without saying. However, so much of what is wrong with contemporary development is directly related to the automobile. It begins with the very location of uses that have been separated and isolated, in part because of the general availability of automobiles. With the explosion of automobile ownership after World War II it became less important, from an availability perspective, to locate jobs and commercial shops and services within walking distance of residences. Now of course this is viewed as a root cause of the demise of the true neighborhood, and thus the Town is trying to get back to the way development used to occur.

The separation of uses only describes the problem that the influence of the automobile has from the macro perspective. There are even more problems on the micro scale. These include:

- In many cases garages have become the most prominent feature of single-family homes. They are often quite large, set closer to the street than the house and have door openings facing the street.
- Many streets are much too wide. This is not only unattractive, but is also unnecessarily expensive, invites speeding and negatively impacts water quality.
- Parking lots are generally the least attractive site feature in commercial developments and yet they are usually located so that they are the most prominent site feature. Too frequently parking lots are inadequately screened and are placed between the street and the front of the building.

This design principle reverses that trend. The desire to return to growing by mixed-use neighborhoods was described previously. That will require the acceptance and implementation by the Town of a broad policy concerning how the Town will grow in the future. The three bulleted points above, however, refer to very specific issues that can be addressed with a few amendments to various Town Ordinances and Regulations.

- Garages. This issue can be addressed simply by adding standards to the Town's Zoning Ordinance specifying a maximum size and the preferred (or required) orientation of the structure. The encouragement of the use of alleys in new development can also go a long way towards alleviating the problem described above.

- Street widths. This is slightly more difficult to address because the Town's main thoroughfares are owned and maintained by the State Highway Administration. Moreover, given their function, they are probably appropriately sized. The Town can control, however, the width of streets that are internal to subdivisions by being sure that Town Specifications and Standards do not require roads that are overly wide. Roads should be of a width sufficient to accommodate rescue equipment in the event of an emergency, but no wider. Narrower streets also have a side benefit in that they encourage social interaction. In many communities, the zoning and design standards are such that houses on opposite sides of a street are so far apart that in order for the neighbors to speak to one another from their front porches, they need to do so via cordless or cellular telephone. That was not the case in old-fashioned neighborhoods. Perhaps it is no coincidence that such places were viewed as more tight-knit communities.
- Parking lots. De-emphasizing parking lots is fairly easy to accomplish through zoning standards. Landscaping both around and within parking lots should be required. Also, requiring that none, or no more than a certain percent, of the spaces are located between the front facade of a building and the street can diminish the visual impact of parking lots. Another technique is to reduce the number of contiguous parking stalls that are not separated by landscaping and by linking islands of parking with appropriately lit pedestrian walks.

Design Principle # 4 – Ample Open Spaces Must Be Provided.

Open Spaces are a valuable element of design for numerous reasons. They provide recreational opportunities, preserve environmentally sensitive areas, act as a sort of terminal for pedestrian circulation systems, serve as community gathering places and provide buffers between incompatible land uses.

In obtaining and enhancing Chestertown's open space, there are several points that need to be emphasized to ensure that the Town gets the kind of open space that the Town wants. First, developers need to provide significant, usable open space as part of their projects. In many communities, the open space often appears to have been an afterthought. Even more often the open spaces that are included as the developers attempt to satisfy a Town's open space requirements are the lands that are otherwise not developable. Second, Town officials need to look at ways to make municipal open spaces more valuable. In some cases this might mean enhancing existing open space areas. In others it might mean planning open space or wildlife corridors so that larger protected areas are actually connected via the "green infrastructure" described in Part A of the Land Use Element of this Plan. Finally, the Town should examine its Subdivision Regulations to insure that the Town is getting the right amount and right kind of open space as part of the required improvements for subdivisions.

Design Principle # 5 – Substantial Landscaping Should Be Incorporated In The Design.

Landscaping is crucial to enhancing the appearance of development, particularly in areas of little or no natural vegetation. Landscaping also provides shade, serves as a windbreak, creates benefits for wildlife, screens or buffers unsightly elements (i.e. dumpsters, loading areas, parking lots, etc...) and helps to separate incompatible land uses.

There are specific steps that communities can take to make sure landscaping is effective. These include:

- Requiring developers to leave as much existing forest and trees as possible rather than clearing and leveling sites prior to development.
- Requiring large, healthy (i.e. nursery stock) landscaping.
- Requiring replacement and maintenance bonds to insure the survival of the desired landscaping.
- Using native species as much as possible. Native species are adapted to the area's environment and thus more likely to survive, even through climatic extremes.
- Requiring integral irrigation as part of the landscaping plan.
- Treating signage and lighting as landscaping elements that should receive careful consideration and demand a high level of design and execution.
- Requiring maintenance agreements that clearly spell out authorities and responsibilities for the ongoing maintenance requirements of common areas.

The Town government can also do its part by installing and maintaining street trees along existing public rights of way. The Town should also set the example for the community by extensively landscaping its Town-owned facilities and properties.

Design Principle # 6 – Architecture Should Reflect Chestertown's Traditional Development.

This is perhaps the most important Design Principle in the struggle to make Chestertown a unique place, rather than the latest version of "Anywhere USA." The mix and layout of development was discussed earlier and it emphasized that the Town desires to look to the past as a blueprint for the future. Much is the same relative to architecture. New development in Chestertown should look to the historic core of the Town for an example of what to emulate.

One thing that is clearly not welcome in Chestertown is generic, corporate franchise architecture. This is especially true for commercial development, but also is a concern for new housing as well. The Town wishes all new development to reflect the unique quality of the Town.

On the issue of residential architecture, one of the Town's fears is that the next wave of development will surround our unique and historic town center with generic tract housing. The Town sees such housing popping up all around the Eastern Shore, and the Town does not want it here. Such development features houses that are out of character and scale with the rest of the community.

Architectural diversity within the typical new subdivision is minimal, often consisting of a small handful of house styles all constructed by a single builder. The end result is a subdivision that not only wastes land because the streets are too wide, the lots are too big, and the houses sit too far from the street, but it is also just a plain, generic, visually boring, "sterile" kind of place.

Following completion of this Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations will be revised to avoid these problems. The Town will establish standards that help to ensure that the future of the

Town incorporates the best of the past to create a larger, more extensive, version of what already exists, with the improvements already noted.

Developers who read and follow the design principles and standards when creating their site plans should have a relatively easy path to project approval, provided the infrastructure to handle each project is available or in place when capacity is needed. Those who ignore these principles and standards should realize that to the extent they are trying to make Chestertown like "Anyplace USA," or into something that the Town does not desire, their plans will not be welcome. Simply stated, the Town does want growth and economic development within Town, but it must be on the Town's terms.

Community character is also shaped by existing neighborhoods. Following are four neighborhoods and visions for their future.


Upper Washington Avenue

Upper Washington Avenue is roughly defined as the area between Washington College and Morgnec Road. The existing character of upper Washington Avenue varies significantly in the land uses present as well as the styles, ages and placement of buildings and parking areas. The lack of consistent landscaping, signage, lighting, colors, materials and styles has resulted in a "hodge podge." There are multiple entrances to single properties, creating confusion and hazards to motorists and pedestrians. The Town's intent is that redevelopment, renovation, rehabilitation, reuse and infill combine to create and reinforce a consistent strategic vision for the Upper Washington Avenue corridor.

That vision centers on extending the character of the older central portions of town and adapting it to the needs and realities of today. That means recognizing the demands presented by the automobile without placing the needs of cars ahead of the needs of people. The needs of residents and visitors include physical safety, convenience and perhaps most importantly, a visual and psychological experience that is pleasurable and satisfying. The Town wants its visitors to return again and again because of the wonderful ambiance and character of community they experience while here. This character and ambiance is best experienced on foot.

The Town envisions a streetscape that is pedestrian-friendly and pedestrian oriented. Wide shaded sidewalks line both sides of the street. Sight lines are short, typically less than one block, interrupted by islands of landscaping, benches and pedestrian scale lighting. On-street parking helps buffer pedestrians from the flow of traffic. Parking lanes end in landscaped islands at street corners effectively narrowing the roadway for pedestrians crossing Washington Avenue. Midblock crosswalks, where present, similarly incorporate landscaped islands that incorporate nightlighting for safety and aesthetics. Where flowers or other intensive plantings occur, appropriate watering schemes are included. All landscaped areas will include hardwood mulch as a water saving technique and means for minimizing maintenance.

On-site parking will be broken into clusters separated by groups of shade trees and shrubs. Parking clusters will be located in side yards or to the rear of buildings or where facilitated by a site plan for multiple buildings or shared parking in interior courts (as may be approved by the Planning Commission). Buildings will be located in conformance to a "build to" line rather than a minimum "set back" line. This will further help create the cohesive pedestrian-scale streetscape common to the older downtown areas. Rooftop signs will be prohibited as will large modern looking signs that have a high-tech look common to today's strip malls and highway commercial developments. Signs should be small and reflect high quality design effort in their own right. They should contribute to a pleasing environmental experience, expressing a bit of whimsy in



addition to artfully conveying information. They are to be considered an integral part of the overall landscape/streetscape concept. Numerous examples can be found in many highly desirable communities well known to architects, planners and designers. They are also frequently communities that are built at a pedestrian scale and emphasize quality in every detail. "Raising the bar" on design, at every level, is important to achieving the Town's vision for the future.

Cannon Street

Cannon Street is varied in character. A detailed examination reveals character changes that are unique to each block starting at the waterfront all the way up to Lynchburg Street where the Chestertown Business Park begins. The waterfront near the foot of Cannon Street has been the focus of revitalization in recent years with the addition of a pedestrian bridge and walkway linkage to the foot of High Street. This project was a direct result of a study done by a committee of Chestertown citizens who expanded the recommendations of the Chestertown Charrette waterfront focus group. This work was performed to provide Mayor and Council with a specific list of achievable prioritized projects.

On Cannon Street, an additional project included the creation of a new brick paved sidewalk along the north side of the street westward to Water Street and then northward to High Street, completing a pedestrian loop. Future phases include a new sidewalk from Cannon Street south along Water Street to a new redesigned entrance into Wilmer Park. This new walk, including curbs and storm gutters, will provide a new defined edge to Water Street along the east side of Scott's Point, a designated redevelopment area.

The north side of Scott's Point fronts on the 100 block of Cannon Street and has many restored or appropriately renovated single family residences. A few opportunity sites still exist in this block, and the existing character of the street provides guidance to the Historic District Commission and to property owners concerning the styles, quality and detail needed to secure the Town's approval for additional restoration and rehabilitation.

The 200 block of Cannon Street is a mixture of commercial parking lots, small businesses, and medium density residential. Much of the block is open space, and the Town desires to improve connectivity between Cross Street extended and Cannon Street. Corners and intersections should be located in logical places that result in minimum disruption to existing structures while facilitating the extension of the Town's grid into adjacent areas. Future land use in this area should be of a scale and type that fits with and complements the character of adjoining properties and nearby streets. This suggests a mixture of residential and downtown commercial. The design of street and pedestrian access, internal parking areas, open space and landscaping should tie in future development south of the railroad tracks with redevelopment anticipated along Cannon Street.

The 300 block of Cannon Street is a mixture of renovation, new construction, relocated buildings and some buildings that could benefit from rehabilitation or removal. Commercial and commercial/residential mixed uses predominate in the block.

Goals for the 300 block include expanding mixed use revitalization to additional parcels, improving the block to stimulate private investments, providing pedestrian access through the block to potential green space beyond (including access to regional trails, Radcliffe Creek and the Hubbard Farms) and locations for attractive parking for other downtown locations in addition to the area's own requirements.

New roads that may be proposed to connect into Cannon Street should extend the existing grid system of downtown and form new blocks of similar size to enhance the compatible character of new land uses and

new buildings. Mill Street and Cross Street are logical roads to extend the Town grid. Front, side and rear yards of infill, redevelopment and new construction projects should be consistent with existing nearby examples.

If necessary, the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations will be amended to ensure that potential conflicts with these policies are eliminated or minimized. When faced with a questionable circumstance regarding a proposed development project, the Planning Commission or other responsible Town authority shall consider compatibility with existing neighborhood character to be of paramount importance in determining whether site design and appearance of proposed structures and uses are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. "Build to" lines rather than "minimum set backs" will be evaluated for infill and new development on Cannon Street and for any new development contemplated to connect to Cannon Street.

The 400 block of Cannon Street has changed in character over the last few years. In earlier times, it had a mixture of small residences, a machine shop and a lumber yard. With the commercial uses now gone, several revitalization opportunities exist on this block. The south side of the block includes the Adkins lumber yard site, which has been addressed by specific graphics that illustrate its potential for relatively dense modestly sized residential buildings. Radcliffe Drive should be realigned through to Cannon Street to improve access and promote creation of better lot lines. A mixture of residential densities and building types, including variety of building unit sizes, is appropriate here. Cottage development would also be appropriate

Pedestrian access to the proposed rails-to-trails project is important in this area, and the existing track crossing provides opportunities for creating a pocket park that could include a range of amenities, including bicycle racks, benches, trash receptacles, pedestrian scale lighting and attractive landscaping. Such a pocket park would provide needed facilities for the existing neighborhood, for residents of new homes, and also serve larger community-wide needs.

The 500 block of Cannon street, all residential, has recently attracted buyers interested in renovation, and the block is improving rapidly. The 600 block, also residential, is more modest, but it too is beginning to attract attention. In both these blocks, pedestrian access to the rails-to-trails project is important.



Poarches, rearyard additions, fences, and proportional building mass and style is encouraged as a guide to "compatibility."



Old Adkins Lumber Yard site



Redevelopment site. Plenty of room for innovative medium density "cottage" style condominium designed as a master planned project utilizing new "grid" streets and pedestrian links to Wilmer Park.



High Street (extended)

High Street is the historical main street of Chestertown. High Street is oriented toward the waterfront, and was the principal route into downtown. It continued through the downtown and led west then south to Rock Hall. High Street (extended) refers to the portion of High Street from about College Avenue to Flatland Road. The character of the street is difficult to describe. It includes a mix of small homes and some businesses that marked the old residential limits of town, industrial uses like Dixon Valve Company, the Chestertown Cemetery, taverns, repair shops, service stations and two car washes. By no means an inclusive list, these uses reflect a broad range of activities that line the old “back door” route into Chestertown. The street is wide, open, lacks trees or any significant landscaping and includes many unattractive structures and signs. Setbacks vary widely, and sidewalks are uninviting. Much conversation over the years has focused on the need to come up with a redevelopment concept and plan for the corridor. A gateway or corridor plan for High Street (extended) will be pursued by the Chestertown Planning Commission following adoption of this Comprehensive Plan. One idea that will be evaluated is to narrow the street and add shade trees and new lighted pedestrian walks to extend the “sense of arrival” out toward Morgnec Road. The intersection of High Street and Morgnec Road will become a new gateway for people arriving from the direction of Rock Hall.

The Town will explore the possibility of an attractive landscaped traffic circle with the State Highway Administration (which holds ownership to Morgnec Road and MD 20). This new gateway will also include pedestrian linkages to a landing or park to be created on Radcliffe Creek. The Town intends to provide access to both Radcliffe Creek south of MD 20 and to a nature area north of MD 20 accessible from Talbot Blvd. in the Radcliffe Creek Industrial Park.

Kent Plaza to Washington Square

Although this area is not described in terms of a street segment, circulation is a significant issue in this part of Town. Kent Plaza was developed at the intersection of MD 213 and MD 291 (Morgnec Road). It is a typical strip mall with an oversized “sea of asphalt” parking lot that separates the stores from the road. Washington Square is a newer strip mall constructed further out MD 213 at the edge of Town. It has some architectural improvements but still suffers from the familiar uninspired “sea of asphalt” out front. Neither parking lot has ever been full, even on peak shopping days, nor is either well defined or attractively landscaped. Both provide opportunities for significant landscape and design improvements. Kent Plaza is especially important because it occupies the key crossroads location, is older and is not optimally arranged for current business conditions. The Town has considered the need for access to nearby vacant parcels and the mix of appropriate land uses for the area. Commercial use should expand eastward along Scheeler Road to Haacke Drive and along Haacke Drive toward Washington Square.

Conclusion

Population projections for the County and for Chestertown are relatively modest, especially compared to counties to the north and to the south. This Plan’s growth management vision is clearly in support of economic development and a strong, stable local business climate. The Town is not “antigrowth.” However, the Town is just as clearly in favor of slow, sustainable growth that keeps pace with its public facility capacities, financial capabilities, and perhaps most importantly, is compatible with and supportive of maintaining the existing community character and quality of life. If life is just a little bit “slower” in Kent County and in Chestertown than surrounding regions, then that is exactly what the Town wants to maintain and protect. That ambiance is what visitors find so attractive as they wander our peaceful tree-lined downtown. Rather



than promote rapid expansion and radical change, the Town wants to significantly improve those newer commercial areas that were not well planned or well designed originally and incorporate infill on parcels that will maintain a relatively compact mass of buildings while improving both the appearance and quality of the built environment.

It is Chestertown's intention that this Plan will be used to review potential development proposals to ascertain their consistency with the adopted goals and vision for the future. In every instance, the Town will demand the best possible quality. By "raising the bar" and setting high standards the Town rejects the idea of cheap disposable buildings in favor of lasting long-term additions that add to, improve and extend the best examples of the visual character of Chestertown. A guiding principle places people before cars. Projects must be designed for the convenience, safety and enjoyment of the pedestrian rather than the car. The Town will require extensive graphics and visualization studies as part of preliminary site plan review to ensure a clear and complete understanding of what a proposed commercial or high density residential project will look like. This information is needed by Town officials and residents to ensure that what is approved is what the Town wants and what the Town gets.