

Public Facilities Element





Introduction

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland requires that Comprehensive Plans include an element on public facilities. The purpose of this element is to propose the most appropriate and desirable patterns for the general location, character and extent of public and semipublic buildings, land and facilities on a schedule that extends as far into the future as is reasonable.

The Town of Chestertown should develop an ongoing program to insure a progressive, forward looking approach to providing high quality public services and encouraging similarly high quality services and facilities from its private and other public agency partners.

The Planning Commission should establish benchmarks for specific public facilities and should require as part of the development-approval process an evaluation of impact on public facilities.

At the end of this element is a map that shows the location of the public and semi-public facilities that provide services. These services (and facilities) are organized under the following categories: Chestertown, Kent County, State, Federal and Private.

Chestertown

Water and Sewerage Systems

The Town owns and operates a water supply system serving 4,005 town residents and an area outside of the town limits on MD 291, or approximately 5,000 persons. The water supply is obtained from 9 wells, 8 in the Aquia-Monmouth Formation and one in the Magothy Formation. Water storage is provided by a 450,000-gallon underground reservoir and one 100,000-gallon elevated storage tank and one 1,000,000-gallon standpipe.

Treatment consists of aeration, fluoride treatment, iron removal and sand filtration. The distribution system consists of 12-, 8- and 6-inch mains with two 600-gpm pumps and one 1,200-gpm variable flow pump.

The Town is currently planning to upgrade its water supply system with a second deep-water well in the Magothy formation, a second treatment facility with green sand filters, a cover for the existing reservoir and an additional covered reservoir. The Town replaced the water system aerators in 1999. In 1997, the Town also revised the Town Charter to its original language prohibiting out of town water extensions without annexation.

Chestertown owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility which serves the town and areas outside town limits along MD routes 291 and 289. The system serves approximately 5,000 people. The portion of the collection system serving the area along MD 289, outside of the town limits, is owned and maintained by the Kent County Department of Water and Wastewater Services through an intermunicipal agreement, which is included in the Kent County Water and Sewerage Plan.

Treatment includes chlorination, dechlorination and gravity aeration. The facility was upgraded in 1990 with an outfall line discharging into the Chester River and construction of a new aeration system. Currently, a new project involves planning, design and construction of a biological nutrient removal facility at the existing 0.9-mgd wastewater treatment plant to achieve total nitrogen removal to a yearly average of 8 mg/l.

The system has an average daily flow of 750,000 gpd and a design capacity of 1,500,000 gpd. In 1997, just as it did with water hookups, the Town revised the Town Charter to prohibit out-of-town sewer extensions without annexation.

Planning for the Future of Water and Sewerage Systems

The Town should develop a plan for accommodating future development while maintaining the highest quality of water and sewerage service. In the past, this service relied heavily on state and federal grants, but diminishing state and federal funds in the recent years mean the Town must plan to take financial responsibility for its own systems. Chestertown should establish a capital fund to build and maintain improvement to these systems. This fund should be created by hookup fees for new service; those fees must be high enough to cover the cost of per unit replacement at the central treatment facility, and the fund should not be used for operational expenses.

Recreation

The Town's recreation areas include Wilmer Park (6.5 acres), Fountain Park (0.9 acres), Court Street Park (0.3 acres) and the recently acquired MD 291 Park (18 acres). Development plans include softball fields, a multipurpose field, an exercise trail and parking. Other recreational programs are available through the use of school playground facilities. The Town's other parks are primarily for passive recreation and include walks and benches. Some plans are under consideration for facilities additions to Wilmer Park, including an entertainment "stage" and a dinghy dock for visiting boaters. Some slumping and subsidence has created low spots that are subject to tidal flooding behind the existing bulkhead. This is a problem that requires correction.

Town plans also call for conversion of the old rail road line that ends across MD 289 from Wilmer Park to be linked to the park and converted into a hiker-biker trail. This proposal is discussed in greater detail in the Land Use Element and in the Transportation Element. Similarly, designation of Radcliffe Creek as a canoe trail may subsequently reveal places where debris clearing or other improvements will be needed in addition to construction of access landings.

Planning for Future Recreation

The Town needs to develop a recreation plan that reflects the needs and character of its citizens, including its older citizens. It should aggressively pursue development of public recreational facilities using capital resources available through grants, taxes and fees. The Town should require major new residential/commercial developments to set aside specific lands for both passive and active recreational purposes. If this proves difficult or impossible to achieve, developers should be assessed a fee with proceeds going to the general capital fund for recreational purposes. In addition, the Town should join with other interested parties to create an environmentally sensitive stream valley park along Radcliffe Creek, purchasing lots and easements and sponsoring stream cleanup. It should create a memo of understanding with Board of Education to maximize recreational use of open space at Board of Education buildings.

Public Safety

Chestertown has a police force that is headquartered in a small historic structure on Cross street. The force has a chief, 10 officers, a civilian and a parking enforcement officer. Equipment needs, including vehicles, are addressed annually through the operating budget. Cooperative assistance is also available through the County sheriff's patrol and the Maryland State Police.

Planning for Public Safety in the Future

The police headquarters building is too small and inappropriately located to serve the entire community. A study should be completed within the next 18 months to examine the facility as it relates to statewide standards, and to examine the possibility of a new, larger headquarters located elsewhere.

Streets

The Town is responsible for maintaining its own streets, including curbs, gutters and other amenities such as sidewalks and plantings. (See Transportation for further details.)

Kent County***Educational Facilities***

Kent County owns and maintains Garnett Elementary School, located on Calvert Street. In addition to a "Robert Leathers" playground, the school provides classroom space for about 220 pre-K through fourth grade students. Enrollment projections suggest that enrollment will decline slightly to around 190 over the next ten years. Accordingly, this school is adequately sized but may need capital funds for major renovations or repairs. Kent County also owns and maintains Chestertown Middle School, located on Campus Avenue. In addition to ball fields and hard surface courts, the Middle School provides space for about 410 students. Middle School enrollments are projected to decline to just under 300 over the next ten years. The old Chestertown High School on Washington Avenue has been converted into office space for the County Board of Education, but the multipurpose play field is still used occasionally for sports events.

Planning for the Future of Educational Facilities

The Town should work with the Board of Education to better use playgrounds, to improve landscaping on Board properties and to improve links to the community. In addition, the Town needs to be aware of the impact of growth on school facilities within the Town, including impact on staffing levels in the schools.

County Structures in General

The Town should work with Kent County to make sure County buildings support the historic character of the community and its quality of life. Such structures include, but are not limited to:

- The Department of Public Works offices and Roads Department vehicle storage yard located on MD 291, within the Town's Planning Area.
- The Detention Center on Flatland Road which also contains the emergency management center, 911 dispatch and Sheriff's office.
- The Visitors Center next to the Town Office.
- The Court House on Cross Street
- County offices of Upper Shore Aging on MD 291.
- The County Library on High Street.
- The County Commissioners and Government Center on High Street.

Public Landing

Kent County owns and maintains a public landing at the foot of High Street which provides access to the Chester River and offers benches for passive enjoyment. A short brick walk and bridge owned by the Town connects the landing to the foot of Cannon Street and the Town's system of sidewalks. This landing is critical to the Town's presence on the river, both past and future, and needs to be maintained at the highest standards. The landing is a favorite of tourists visiting the Town and should become part of a continuous waterfront promenade.

State of Maryland and Federal Government

Chestertown is the county seat of Kent County and should work closely with the State of Maryland and the U.S. to maintain appropriate design and landscaping standards at state and federal structures, including:

- The State Highway Administration District Office on MD 291.
- The Newman Armory on MD 289.
- The Department of Juvenile Services office on Court Street.
- The State's Attorney office on Church Alley.
- Upper Shore Community Mental Health Center on Scheeler Road.
- U.S. Postal Service on Spring Street.

Private

The following institutions, for a variety of reasons, are critical to the character and well-being of the Town and thus need discussion.

- Chester River Hospital Center. It is a large and growing operation, serving health-care needs throughout the county and beyond. Its need to grow and maintain high quality of services has already led to some conflict with nearby residential neighbors and town planners. Solutions must be found.
- Washington College. It is a highly respected educational institution that — like the hospital center — is a large and growing presence, which has led to some conflict with neighbors and town planners. Here too solutions must be found.
- Chester River Yacht and Country Club, occupying approximately 62 acres on MD 289 within the Town Planning Area. The club, in addition to providing social and recreational opportunities, occupies important open space, which needs to be preserved.
- Chestertown Volunteer Fire Department, at Philosopher's Terrace and Maple Avenue. The department says it needs to grow. Some way to accommodate that growth must be found if the department is to maintain an adequate level of service for an aging population.
- Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad on Morgnec Road between MD 20 and MD 213.

Public Facilities Action Plan

- The Town, with the Planning Commission's assistance, should demand public-facilities impact studies as part of the approval process for development.
- The Town should continue to require annexation as a condition for the extension of public water and/or

sewer service, and should establish hookup fees commensurate with actual cost.

- The Town, with the Planning Commission's assistance, should require preservation/creation of open space as parkland as part of the approval process for development.



● Chestertown tax exempt “commercial” parcels

There are eighty-seven parcels in Chestertown coded: “exempt commercial.” They consume 87 acres worth about \$13 million improved by structures worth about \$87 million

● Chestertown tax exempt parcels

There are sixty parcels in Chestertown coded: “exempt (from taxes) with a combined land value of about \$2 million. They are improved by structures worth another \$2 million

Recommendation: Reevaluate the tax status of currently “tax exempt” coded parcels to determine whether that status is consistent with actual ownership and usage.

