

# TOWN OF PORT DEPOSIT 2023 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



*Adopted by Port Deposit Town Council on  
November 7, 2023*

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# 1. Maryland's Planning Framework

The Comprehensive Plan is the official statement of the Town Council of Port Deposit setting forth policies concerning desirable future growth which serves as a guide to public and private development decisions. It provides the basis for the preparation of specific goals, policies, programs, priority projects, and legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, and other actions which implement the policies set forth in the Plan.

The Plan is comprised of several major elements that are prepared in such a manner that they form an integrated, unified document for guiding future growth and development. As a policy document it is comprehensive and long range in nature. It is comprehensive in that it encompasses the entire geographic area of the Town, and areas that may be annexed into the Town, and includes all functional elements that bear upon its physical development, such as transportation, land use, water resources, and community facilities. It is long range in that it looks beyond current issues to problems and opportunities related to future growth through 2040.

## 1.1 Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

The Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland is the legislative authority for the Town's planning and zoning powers. Article 3-102 sets forth the minimum requirements for a municipal comprehensive plan which shall include the following elements:

- Goals and objectives
- Community facilities
- Areas of critical state concern
- Housing
- Mineral resources
- Land use
- Development regulation
- Sensitive areas
- Municipal growth
- Water resources
- Transportation

At the Town's discretion, the plan may also include:

- Community renewal elements
- Flood control elements
- Pollution control elements
- Conservation elements

## 2. Planning for Port Deposit in 2040

After more than 20 years of planning, permitting, and environmental mitigation, conversion of the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center to the Bainbridge Logistics Center has been realized and Port Deposit is ready to chart a new course for other parts of the historic community. The completion of the first two warehouse buildings in the Summer 2023 will unleash not only new jobs at the former military site, but also new tax revenue that can be used to support the initiatives outlined in this comprehensive plan. Opening of the Great Wolf Lodge next to Hollywood Casino in Perryville provides a natural spark for commercial and tourism activity in downtown Port Deposit. Renewed interest in downtown redevelopment by committed long-time residents and savvy entrepreneurs shows promise to fill gaps in the historic streetscape with shops and restaurants to meet increased demand. Opportunities for recreational and cultural tourism abound at the waterfront marina park, Hopkins Quarry, and former Tome School campus if public and private investments can be harnessed and steered to completion. Even small-scale events in vacant downtown spaces can be better used to activate the area and bring more residents and tourists to the area.

The green shoots of economic expansion in Port Deposit, however, are potentially impacted by environmental factors that are beyond the Town's control. Flooding in all forms – from the river, from stormwater down the bluffs, and from storm surge up the Chesapeake Bay – is threat that has been present over the past two decades and now affecting Port Deposit every few years. To strengthen confidence in the real estate market, the Town is committed to proactively addressing flooding challenges through its own actions and the investments by other local, state, and federal agencies. A renewed partnership with Cecil County not only on flood control but on a variety of land use and economic development matters will also strengthen the Town's ability to harness growth opportunities in an environmentally responsible manner.

The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to establish a policy framework for land use plans and public capital projects to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Because the Town of Port Deposit does not provide most governmental services, it can focus its collective efforts on a relatively few areas to make great impact on the future. This plan includes four areas of emphasis carried which crossover the required state planning elements:

**RESILIENCY.** The Town will establish policies and invest in scalable projects that protect against flooding, and actively seek state and federal support for larger flood control mitigation projects.

**DOWNTOWN COHESION.** The Town will develop and support policies and projects that make it easier to walk from north to south Main Street, to preserve scenic views of the Susquehanna River, and to protect historic assets that define the Port Deposit streetscape.

**WELL-DEFINED GROWTH.** The Town will define limited growth areas and coordinate land use patterns with those envisioned in the Cecil County comprehensive plan.

**ACTIVE, CULTURAL, AND HERITAGE TOURISM.** The Town will continue to develop its park system for active uses, support the work of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, and encourage motorized and non-motorized water activities. The Town will focus its historic preservation efforts and look for partnerships to restore and honor the legacy of the Italian Gardens, Tome School, and Snow Hill.

This comprehensive plan draws on tremendous efforts of county and state planners and agencies who have assisted the Town of Port Deposit in the past and charts a more specific and direct course to achieving the vision laid out below. It is much more narrowly tailored to specific goals and objectives that can be advocated and advanced by the Town Council, Planning Commission, and Town staff. rather listing dozens of ideas for which the Town has little capacity or need to implement or are otherwise codified in state law.



**FIGURE 1. SMALL SCALE COMMUNITY EVENTS, SUCH AS MOVIE NIGHTS AND FOOD TRUCKS, WOULD BRING NEIGHBORS AND VISITORS TO MAIN STREET DURING OFF-PEAK TIMES.**

# Corporate Limits for the Town of Port Deposit

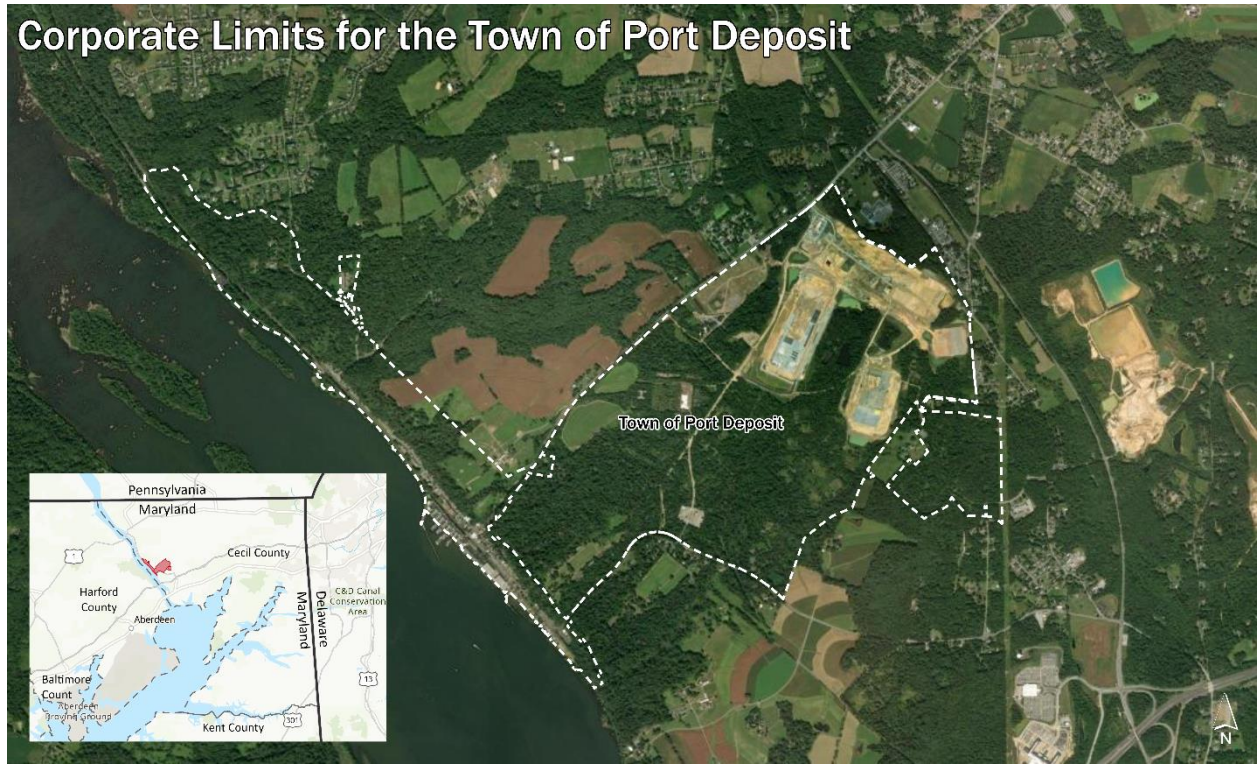


FIGURE 2. CORPORATE LIMITS OF PORT DEPOSIT.

## **A Vision for Port Deposit**

The Town of Port Deposit is a place with a unique identity. A waterfront community located on the Susquehanna River, Port Deposit is an attractive, predominately residential community that is visible from Interstate 95. It has a distinct character, unique among most areas in the region. The Town of Port Deposit maintains significant resources composed of historic achievements and personages, historic structures, the natural scenic aspects of granite cliffs and terraces, as well as the grandeur of the 444-mile-long Susquehanna River.

Although there are goals and objectives in each of the Comprehensive Plan elements, the overall vision for the Town is critical to directing community decisions. The vision ensures that the goals of the Town are reflected clearly in the Comprehensive Plan and furthermore, can be used as a benchmark on which to base future Town decisions. The Town has developed the following vision statement to guide growth and development in a manner that supports the values of the community and the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

*The Town of Port Deposit is a vital, resilient, and forward-looking community that draws strength from its inherent nineteenth century character; protects its unique natural resources while making them available for scenic and recreational purposes; and promotes new growth that strengthens economic opportunity and diversifies the local economy.*

## **Port Deposit and the State's 12 Planning Visions**

Through this plan, the Town of Port Deposit seeks to align with the twelve state planning visions. A summary of this alignment follows below.



State Planning Vision	Port Deposit Comprehensive Plan
<b>Quality of Life and Sustainability:</b> A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.	The plan focuses on four emphasis areas: resiliency; downtown cohesion; well-defined growth; and, active, cultural, and heritage tourism.
<b>Public Participation:</b> Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are Sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.	Public participation has been encouraged through the comprehensive planning process.
<b>Growth Areas:</b> Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.	The plan defines limited growth areas and coordinates land use patterns with those envisioned in the Cecil County comprehensive plan.
<b>Community Design:</b> Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.	The plan sets forth land use classifications that will be further detailed in the zoning code to meet the community design vision.
<b>Infrastructure:</b> Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.	The plan encourages a cooperative and communicative relationship with Cecil County government and Artesian Water to ensure that the water and sewer needs of Port Deposit and its municipal growth areas can be met.
<b>Transportation:</b> A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.	The plan includes goals to maintain transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair and to expand the sidewalk network.
<b>Housing:</b> A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.	The plan supports suitable living environments for residents of Port Deposit and encourages diverse housing choices for all.
<b>Economic Development:</b> Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged.	The plan calls for a renewed partnership with Cecil County on flood control, land use and economic development matters that strengthen the Town's ability to harness growth opportunities in an environmentally responsible manner.
<b>Environmental Protection:</b> Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.	The plan maintains current critical area designations and stream buffers, and encourages natural stream restoration efforts to protect structures, reduce erosion, and downstream sedimentation.
<b>Resource Conservation:</b> Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.	
<b>Stewardship:</b> Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.	Because the Town of Port Deposit does not provide most governmental services, it can focus its collective efforts on a relatively few areas to make great impact on the future. The plan focuses on four emphasis areas: resiliency; downtown cohesion; well-defined growth; and, active, cultural, and heritage tourism.
<b>Implementation:</b> Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these Visions.	

### 3. Goals & Objectives

In support of the vision and four themes described above, the Town establishes the following goals and objectives which are further discussed in the associated chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

#### 3.1 Land Use and Development Regulations

**GOAL:** Promote a pattern of compatible and efficient land utilization by preserving the historic qualities downtown Port Deposit, encourage new development that furthers diversity of the tax base, redevelops vacant and blighted properties, provides economic opportunity, preserves open space, and protects the environment through a streamlined development review process.

##### OBJECTIVES

- Simplify the Town’s land use and zoning category definitions and align with County designations to the extent possible for all upland areas of Port Deposit.
- Replace the “marine commercial” land use category and replace with a “waterfront mixed use” category that emphasizes limited residential and small-scale commercial uses and preservation of the scenic Susquehanna viewshed.
- Create a parks and open space land use category that focuses on soft shoreline accessibility, parks and recreational areas and forested areas.,
- Encourage redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties.
- Strengthen the market for downtown commerce, active recreation and heritage tourism and encourage continued redevelopment of the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center.
- Incorporate requirements of the Scenic Byways designation into the zoning code.
- Encourage sustainable building design practices and allow for sustainable energy projects within the zoning code where appropriate.

## 3.2 Municipal Growth

**GOAL:** Accommodate new growth in the upland areas of Port Deposit that is compatible with planned county land use patterns and provides resiliency against flooding in Oldtown.

### OBJECTIVES

- Adopt a municipal growth area that is smaller than the 2019 plan and generally aligns with county land use categories.
- Require that the developer of an annexation area file an advisory letter with the Town Planning Commission and the Cecil County Land Use and Development Services Department as to the adequacy of public facilities prior to the approval of subdivision; review and consider the County's comments on the advisory letter prior to approval of the subdivision or phase thereof within the annexation area.
- Adopt enhanced stormwater management requirements for development projects in annexation areas, including support for off-site improvements as part of annexation agreements.

## 3.3 Water Resources, Stormwater Management, and Flood Control

**GOAL:** Support countywide efforts to maintain balanced use of water resources and sewerage facilities; protect Port Deposit from riverine and flash flooding.

### OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain a cooperative and communicative relationship with Cecil County government and Artesian Water to ensure that the water and sewer needs of Port Deposit and its municipal growth areas can be met.
- Undertake, support, and/or advocate stormwater management and flood control projects and policies.

### **3.4 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

**GOAL:** Encourage the preservation and development of open space and recreational resources that meet the needs of Port Deposit and reflects the Town's natural and historic qualities, including waterfront connections.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Create short- term active uses (outdoor movies, festivals, food trucks, etc.) in parks and open spaces to introduce Port Deposit to a regional audience.
- Construct marina waterfront park with a living shoreline, fishing pier, and boat ramp to the Susquehanna River.
- Develop Hopkins Quarry for active recreational purposes considering both public and private sponsors.
- Work with and through the Bainbridge Development Corporation to develop and advocate for a plan that supports preservation and restoration of the Italian Gardens & Tome School and greenway connectivity to downtown. BDC should determine disposition of property in consultation with stakeholders.
- Create a greenway trail along the bluffs from Donaldson Brown Center through the Tome School to Hopkins Quarry that creates a loop with Main Street.
- Explore opportunities for property acquisition along the waterfront, particularly properties owned by Exelon.

### **3.5 Natural Resources, Sensitive Areas & Areas of State Concern**

**GOAL:** Ensure the protection of important natural resources and strive to improve the quality of the environment.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Maintain current critical area designations and stream buffers, and undertake natural stream restoration efforts to protect structures, reduce erosion, and downstream sedimentation.
- Create a living shoreline rather than bulkheads at Marina Park and support the creation of nesting areas on the public shoreline for the Northern Map Turtle, a state-listed endangered species.

### **3.6 Historic and Cultural Resources**

**GOAL:** Draw upon Port Deposit's history and culture to instill civic pride, strengthen the economy, and support a high quality of life.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Update the National Register district's "period of significance" to focus on most historically significant properties of the 19th Century thereby simplifying public infrastructure and private construction permitting, tax credits, etc.
- Update the zoning code to align historic district boundaries and design standards with federal practices, including appropriate federal standards for flood adaptation.
- Become a National Park Service Certified Local Government which would allow the Town to access certain technical and financial assistance programs.
- Integrate functions of HAC into the Planning Commission to simplify planning and permitting processes.

### **3.7 Transportation**

**GOAL:** Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods that promotes connectivity, walkability, and use of non-motorized forms of transportation.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Maintain the Town's roads and other transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair.
- Consider legislation permitting automated enforcement of truck route restrictions.
- Create sidewalks along MD 222 connecting the south side of downtown to Marina Park and from Marina Park to the Tome School property.
- Create a direct, scenic connection from Old Town to the Tome School property.
- Establish additional visitor parking.

### **3.8 Housing**

**GOAL:** Support suitable living environments for residents of Port Deposit and encourage diverse housing choices for all.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Promote fair housing choice in accordance with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule.
- Encourage the creation of diverse housing types in all new subdivisions, including workforce housing and partnerships with non-profit housing developers.

### **3.9 Community Facilities**

**GOAL:** Work with Cecil County government to ensure that Port Deposit has adequate school capacity, health and social services, and other community facilities that result in a high quality of life for residents of the town, while also directly providing Town-owned facilities that meet resident needs.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Support continued police and fire protection in the Town.
- Restore the interior of Town Hall and provide quality workspaces and equipment for staff.
- Consider relocation of the public works facility from Main Street to the Business and Industrial District.

### **3.10 Mineral Resources**

**GOAL:** Maintain the Town's policy of prohibiting mineral extraction within corporate limits.

## 4. Land Use & Development Regulations

### 4.1 Background and Existing Land Use/Zoning Categories

The Land Use Plan characterizes the desired future land use pattern in the Town, dividing the Town into several distinct planning areas described below and reflecting these points of emphasis (See Figure 3). Due to the small size of Port Deposit, the Town's land use plan and zoning districts are generally the same; the details of what is permitted in each zone and the form of development is covered in the zoning code.

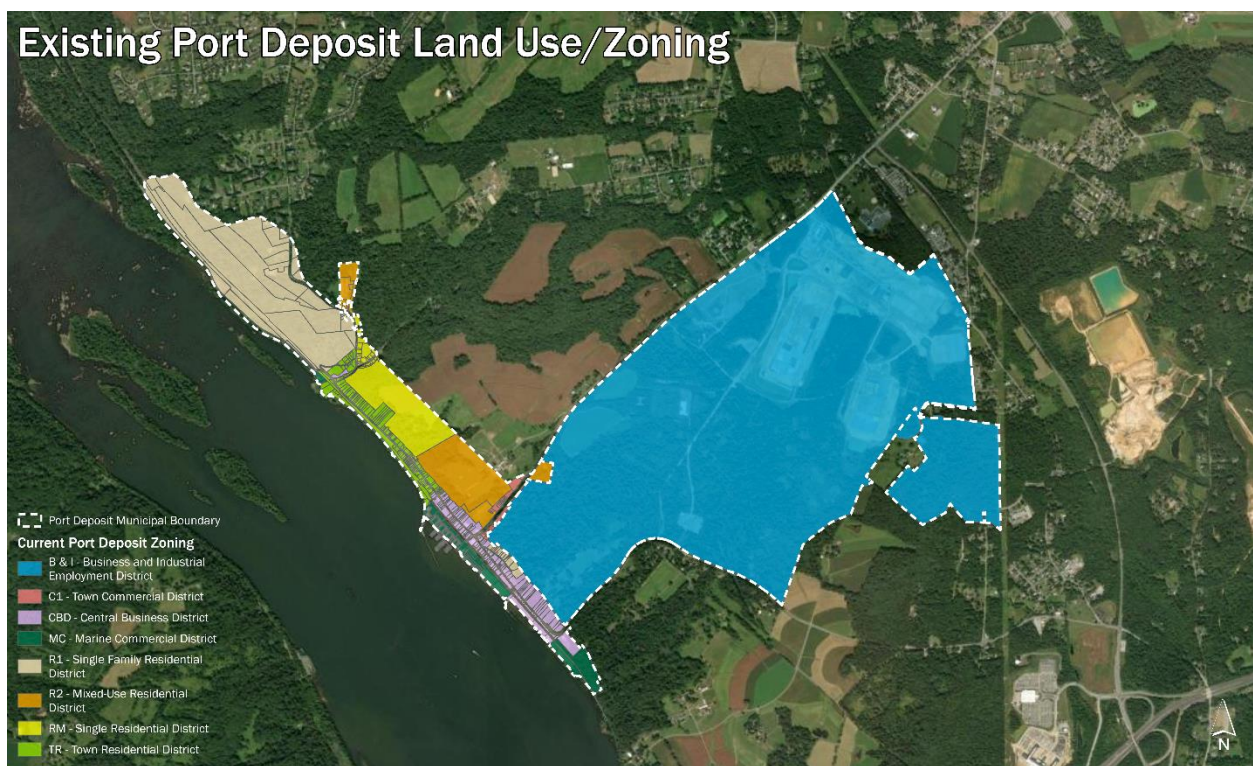


FIGURE 3. EXISTING PORT DEPOSIT LAND USE/ZONING.

The primary land use/zoning categories are as follows:

#### **4.1.1 Single-Family Residential**

The Single-Family Residential planning area is wholly located in the “Old Town” and includes areas of the town where town-scale, detached single-family residential development is the predominant land use. The district is roughly 52 acres, but development is severely limited by a significant portion of the land that is in steep slopes greater than 25 degrees. Existing lot sizes in this planning area range from as low as 0.03 acres to over 4 acres. Improved properties range in size from 0.06 acres to over 0.70 acres. The average density for improved lots is over five dwelling units per acre. The primary planning objective for these areas is to protect existing single-family residential neighborhoods from incompatible uses and to encourage appropriate infill and redevelopment that is compatible with and reflects the positive visual and functional characteristics of these areas.

#### **4.1.2 Town Residential**

The Town Residential planning area is characterized by medium density residential uses, including detached single-family dwellings and townhouses. In addition, the planning area includes some existing commercial properties. The primary planning objectives for these areas are to maintain the existing historic character while accommodating appropriate infill and redevelopment.

#### **4.1.3 Business & Industrial**

This area encompasses the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center and covers 1,185 acres – or approximately 80% of the Town’s total land area; the business and industrial district is now under development as the Bainbridge Logistics Center which is designated as a state Enterprise Zone. This designation real property and state income tax credits for businesses in return for quantifiable job creation.

#### **4.1.4 Central Business District**

Along with the waterfront, the CBD is a key community feature attracting tourists and investment to the community. The CBD includes a mix of existing land uses including residential, public, and commercial. A critical objective for the CBD is to ensure that new development does not adversely impact its essential historic character while at the same time encouraging appropriate infill and redevelopment to enhance the mix of goods and services located within easy walking distance of the residents of the “Old Town”. Development related issues, such as adequate off-street parking, pedestrian circulation and public access to the waterfront will require Town officials work with private property owners through the planning and zoning processes.

#### **4.1.5 Town Commercial**

The Town Commercial planning area encompasses a mixture of commercial and residential uses located along both sides of MD 275. This area presents somewhat different land use issues due to location adjacent to MD 275 and the existing mix of commercial and multi-family use. This area



is planned as the location for additional moderately intense commercial uses serving the surrounding community and additional medium density multi-family residential uses. The primary land use objective for this planning area is to ensure quality new development that will not adversely impact the visual character of the highway corridor. Among other things, this means discouraging commercial strip development along the highway and controlling access to ensure the safety of vehicles and pedestrian alike.

#### **4.1.6 Marine Commercial**

The marine commercial district is eliminated by this comprehensive plan and replaced with a “waterfront mixed use” (WMU) designation described below.

## **4.2 New and Revised Land Use Categories**

A concern raised during the comprehensive planning process is that there are too many zoning categories which have too few distinctions among them for a town that is so small and physically constrained. Rather than having so many zones, the distinctions among them can be addressed in the use table of the zoning code. The comprehensive plan (and zoning code revisions which will follow adoption of the comprehensive plan) are depicted in figure 4 and are revised as follows:

### **4.2.1 Residential**

#### **4.2.1.1 Suburban Transition**

The Single Family Residential, Single Residential, and Town Residential designations have been collapsed into one land use designation named Suburban Transition (ST). The purpose of the Suburban Transition Residential District is to provide opportunities for medium density growth and acts as a transitional zone between higher density zones and lower density zones. Schools, churches, and public facilities are permitted, as may be necessary of compatibility with residential surroundings.

#### **4.2.1.2 R-M High Density Residential**

The Mixed-Use Residential designation has been eliminated and replaced with the RM High Density Residential designation. The purpose of the High Density Residential zone is to provide opportunities for high density development with a mix of housing types including single family, duplex and semi-detached, townhouse and apartments. Residential developments should provide pedestrian and bicycle linkages between one another and provide a well-designed, compact, pedestrian oriented community with usable open space and convenient travel connections between adjacent and nearby developments.

#### **4.2.2 Community Core District**

The Central Business District (CBD) and Town Commercial designations have been collapsed into one commercial district named the Community Core District (CCD).

The CCD includes a mix of existing land uses including residential, public, and commercial. A critical objective for the CCD is to ensure that new development in this district shall be compatible with existing historic character while at the same time encouraging appropriate infill and redevelopment to enhance the mix of goods and services located within easy walking distance of the residents of the “Old Town”.

#### **4.2.3 Waterfront Mixed Use.**

The marine commercial (MC) district is eliminated by this comprehensive plan and replaced with the “waterfront mixed use” (WMU) designation. The WMU designation is intended to emphasize limited and small-scale residential commercial uses, preservation of the scenic Susquehanna viewshed, and access thereto.

#### **4.2.4 Business & Industrial**

The current Business & Industrial zoning district permits light industrial, warehousing, logistics facilities and related uses. It is intended that future phases of redevelopment at Bainbridge be more permissive in the types of business uses that are allowable in the zoning district. It is also intended that the Town continue to evaluate appropriate uses for the former Tome School, Italian Gardens, and Snow Hill archaeological area and to amend the zoning code at an appropriate time to reflect the evaluation and future master planning efforts.

#### **4.2.5 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

This designation will be applied to portions of the downtown area at both ends of Main Street, including where a redeveloped marina waterfront park is planned and public access to the waterfront is critical to the Town’s economic wellbeing. and to Hopkins Quarry where rock climbing, ropes courses, and other “adventure tourism” are envisioned.

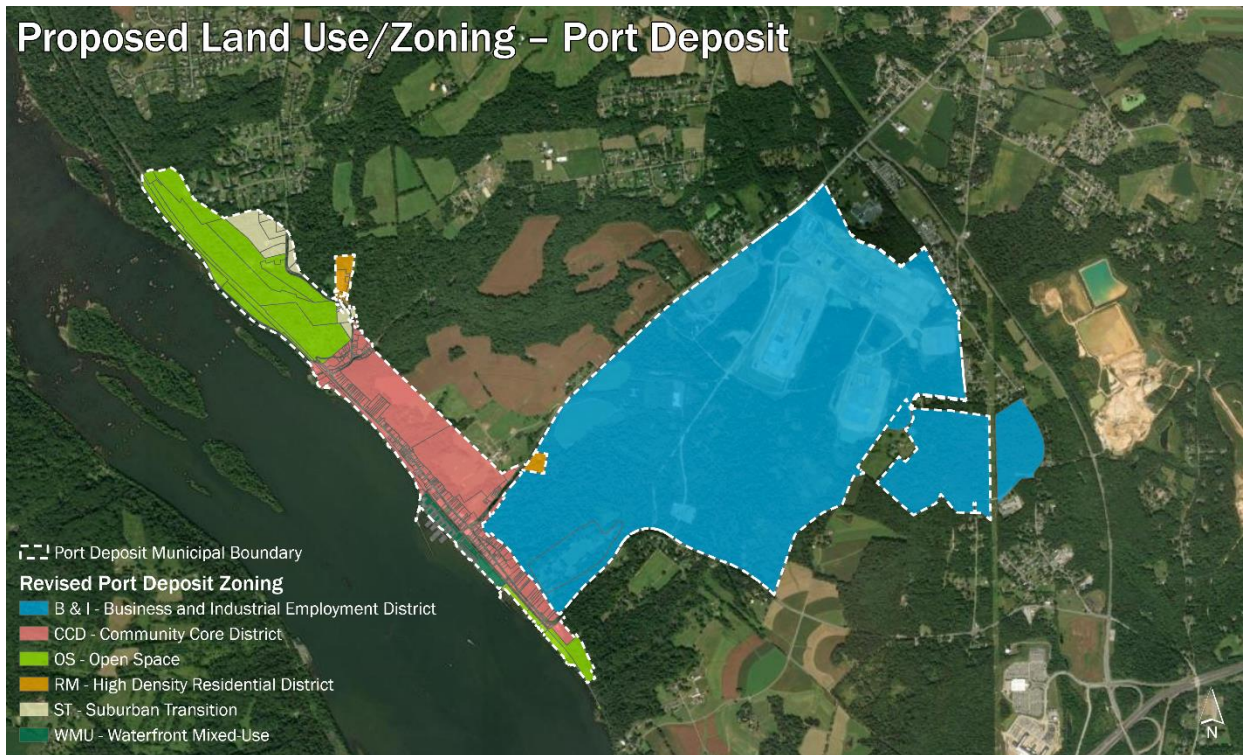


FIGURE 4: PROPOSED LAND USE/ZONING

### 4.3 Overlay Zones

Also affecting the Town’s land use map are the State’s designated “critical areas” and historic district designations; these overlay zones affect how a property can be developed, used, or improved but do not affect the underlying use.

#### 4.3.1 Critical Areas

State designated Critical Areas that run through the Town in the area within 1,000 feet of the Susquehanna River significantly affect future land use (See Figure 4). There are three designations in the Critical Area that provide increasing restrictive regulations for Intensely Developed Areas (IDA), Limited Development Areas (LDA), and Resource Conservation Areas (RCA). The IDA, which includes the Old Town, provides very few restrictions, but the LDA and RCA place limits that must be addressed if growth is proposed within them. No changes are proposed to the critical area designations through this comprehensive plan.

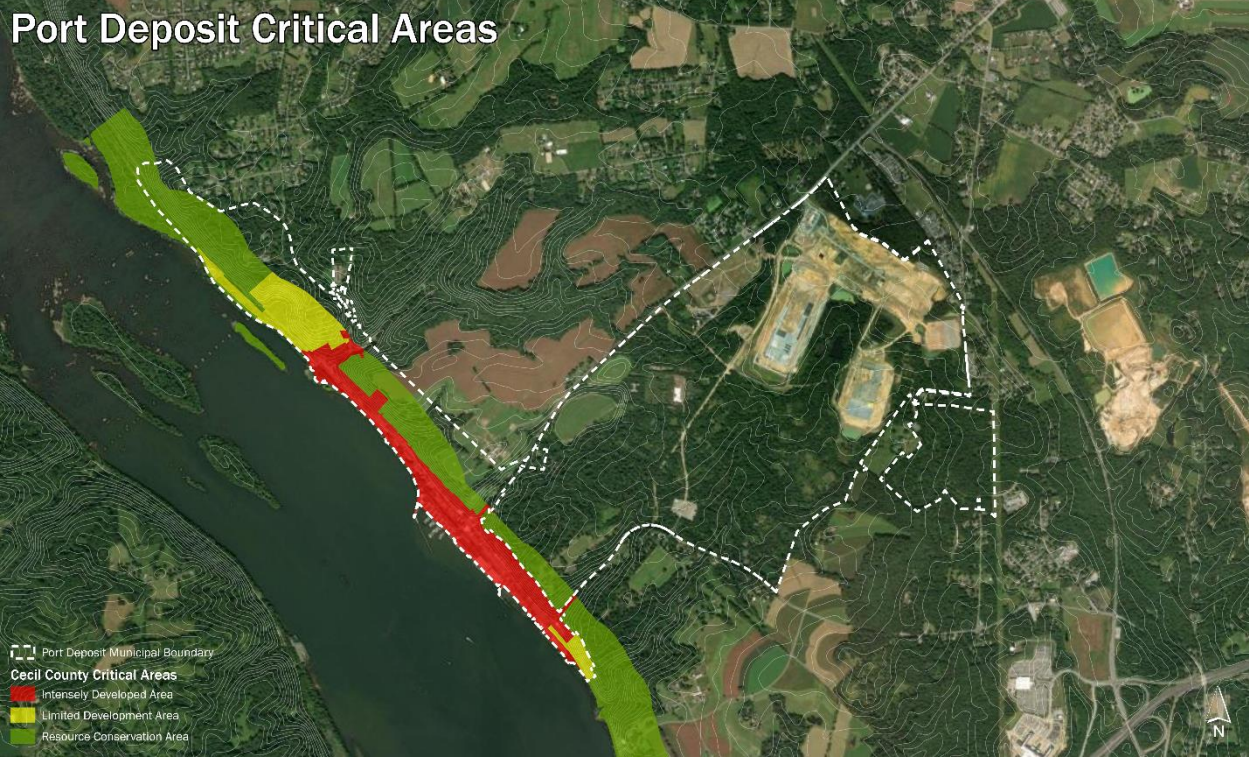


FIGURE 5. PORT DEPOSIT CRITICAL AREAS.

**4.3.2 Historic District**

The Maryland Enabling Act of Historic Area Zoning (Title 8, Land Use Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, as amended) authorizes Port Deposit Historic Area Overlay Districts. The Town of Port Deposit has adopted the boundaries of the Nation Register-listed Port Deposit Historic District and the National Register-listed Tome School for Boys Historic District, plus an area not included in either National Register district, as the single locally designated Port Deposit Historic Area Overlay District. An updated approach to the historic area zoning overlay and map is further described in Section 9 -- Historic and Cultural Resources.

**4.3.3 Floodplain**

Part 5, Section 158, *et seq.* of the Zoning Code establishes a flood plain overlay zone. The purpose of the overlay zone is to achieve compliance with protective regulations of the National Flood Insurance Program to which the Town was accepted in 1976. Part 5 applies to all special flood hazard areas within the jurisdiction of the Town of Port Deposit.

## 4.4 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Promote a pattern of compatible and efficient land utilization by preserving the historic qualities downtown Port Deposit, encourage new development that furthers diversity of the tax base, redevelops vacant and blighted properties, provides economic opportunity, preserves open space, and protects the environment through a streamlined development review process.

### OBJECTIVES

- **Simplify the Town’s land use and zoning category definitions and align with County designations to the extent possible for all upland areas of Port Deposit.**

At present, the Town’s zoning code and subdivision regulations exceed 300 pages or viewed differently approximately two pages per resident. Inasmuch as there has been no new residential development within Town limits since at least 2016 and only small efforts at redevelopment other than at Bainbridge, it is time to revisit the extent and complexity of the Town’s zoning code. At Bainbridge, the Town desires to continue to business and industrial growth that was permitted by 2019 amendments to the comprehensive plan.

For upland areas within the municipal growth boundary (see Chapter 5), the Town desires to achieve land use patterns that are consistent with the County’s land use plans which allow for development of up to 4 per acre with strong environmental protections and opportunities for supportive community facilities to increase density. In the downtown and adjacent residential areas, the Town wishes to retain its historic character while encouraging redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties. The simplicity of the above land use approach should yield an equally simple and easy to use zoning code and associated development process.

- **Replace the “marine commercial” land use category and replace with a “waterfront mixed use” category that emphasizes limited residential and small-scale commercial uses and preservation of the scenic Susquehanna viewshed.**

The marine commercial district has yielded a land use pattern that is undesirable relative to the Town’s goal of downtown cohesion. This primarily relates to the gigantic boat warehouses at Tome’s Landing Marina which by law could remain in their present form until and unless the property is redeveloped. The marine commercial land use also extends into what is currently the waterfront marina park. If Tome’s Landing Marina is redeveloped, then small scale residential and commercial development is encouraged as the apparent highest and best use of the land, provided that broad viewsheds Of the Susquehanna River can be achieved. In the interim to support visual and physical cohesiveness of the downtown area, the marina is strongly encouraged to dedicate right-of-way for a sidewalk along MD 222, to allow a mural to be placed on one or both marina buildings, and to improve landscaping along the roadway frontage.

- **Create a parks and open space land use category that focuses on soft shoreline accessibility, parks and recreational areas and forested areas.,**

There is presently no land use category that protects forested areas, recreational sites, and undeveloped waterfront property in Port Deposit. The Town should create a parks and open space land use category to do so. This designation could be applied to portions of the downtown area at both ends of Main Street, including where a redeveloped marina waterfront park is planned and public access to the waterfront is critical to the Town's economic wellbeing and to Hopkins Quarry where rock climbing, ropes courses, and other "adventure tourism" are envisioned.

- **Encourage redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties.**

Properties that have fallen into disrepair or are vacant hold back the potential of Port Deposit to achieve its vision. The Town is very interested in seeing properties along North Main Street be rehabilitated or redeveloped. Resiliency efforts are critical to successful redevelopment activity on North Main Street due to it being flood prone. In addition, simplifying the land development process and updating historic preservation requirements are important activities needed to encourage the redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties.

- **Encourage sustainable building design practices and allow for sustainable energy projects within the zoning code where appropriate.**

Opportunities for solar, geothermal, and wind energy generation are increasingly available on a small scale and may be appropriate to parts of Port Deposit. The Town zoning code should be updated to make clear that certain sustainable energy projects are acceptable within town limits and that sustainable building design practices are encouraged for new construction and rehabilitation projects.

#### 4.5 Future Land Use Map

Due to the small size of Port Deposit, the Town's land use categories and zoning districts are essentially the same, although the zoning code contains far greater detail on acceptable uses and design standards. The proposed land use plan incorporates the objectives described above to eliminate the Marine Commercial (MC) zoning district, establish new districts Waterfront Mixed Use (WMU) and Parks and Open Space (POS), and generally align upland municipal growth areas with the County's Suburban Transition and Employment Mixed Use zoning categories as shown in Figure 6.

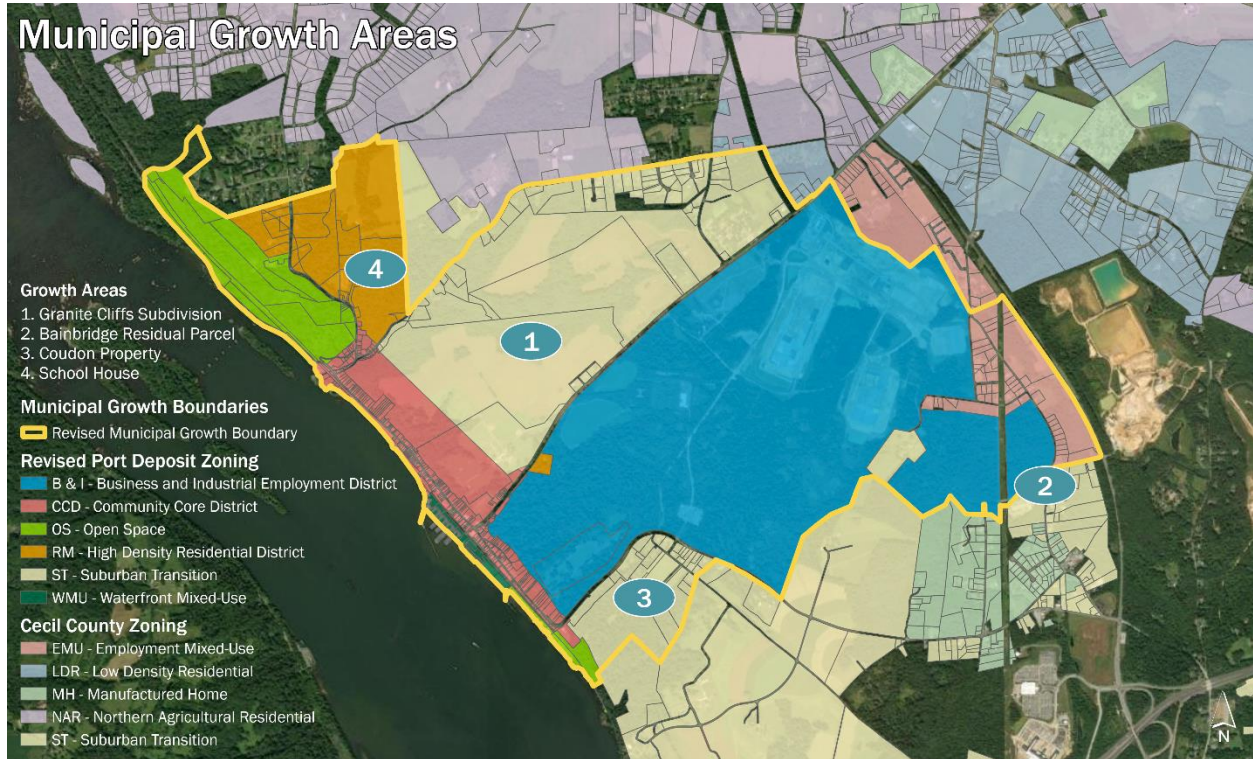


FIGURE 6. PROPOSED PORT DEPOSIT LAND USE/ZONING AND MUNICIPAL GROWTH BOUNDARY.

## 5. Municipal Growth

### 5.1 Background

Port Deposit's historic charm, relative quiet, and low taxes make it an attractive place to live, especially for so-called "empty nesters" who have come to populate the waterfront condominiums or rehabilitate older houses in the community. That organic growth will keep the population stable but will not appreciably grow the Town's population. The purpose of the Municipal Growth Element is to layout where the Town believes it is reasonable and prudent to grow in the context of potential impacts on public facilities and services, and water resource issues associated with projected growth. As the Town presently provides few governmental services, the direct impact of growth on the Town's resources is limited. New residents and tax revenues will accrue significant benefit to the Town that can be used in furtherance of other town goals related to resilience, promoting active and cultural tourism, and improving downtown cohesion.

The Town recognizes that its growth management decisions do have impacts upon natural resources and governmental services provided by others. Fortunately, even growth that would double or triple the Town's size or population over the next twenty years would have a very small net impact on the County in particular, relative to current land use designations for the properties that would qualify for annexation. More impactful to the governmental services provided by others is the Bainbridge redevelopment which has been fostered through previous comprehensive plans and in partnership with Cecil County, the State of Maryland, federal agencies, and private developers. The impacts of commercial growth have thus been accounted for in transportation, water resource, and infrastructure planning of those comprehensive plans.

Through 2045, the Town anticipates that growth opportunities will shift to the four potential development areas shown in Figure 6. These are areas where the Town has been approached about potential annexation primarily for housing development or where the Town believes there is an opportunity to grow responsibly on land presently owned by the Bainbridge Development Corporation not subject to environmental restrictions.<sup>1</sup> The Town intends that any growth in these areas be consistent with the County's land use designations in the area albeit with some flexibility for slightly higher density if community and environmental benefits are provided.

According to the US Census, over the past three decades Port Deposit has lost approximately 5% of its population (from 651 residents to 614 residents), although the Census Bureau's margin of error for Port Deposit indicates that the population could be 5% higher or lower given the small number of residents. Cecil County by comparison has grown by approximately 20% over the past two decades and is forecast to grow by another 21% over through 2040. If the Town were to gain a share of growth proportionate to its population of the County, then population would increase to approximately 750 residents. At an

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<sup>1</sup> The Bainbridge parcel was intended to be annexed with the rest of the former Naval Training Center but was mistakenly not recorded as such. Efforts are underway at the time of this writing to annex the area into the Port of Deposit.



average of 2.3 residents per household, this is equivalent to approximately 60 new houses or one phase of the Granite Cliffs development which has been proposed just north of the current Town boundary above the downtown area.

The Town desires to grow its population further and diversify its tax base with net revenues directed to investments that support the resiliency, downtown cohesion, and active and cultural tourism themes of this comprehensive plan. The proposed municipal growth boundary, however, is smaller than in past comprehensive plans out of respect to the County's overall land use plan to maintain agricultural and forested lands on the east bank of the Susquehanna River while permitting some growth between Port Deposit and Perryville.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that despite a property's inclusion within the municipal growth boundary, this does not indicate that the Town will make a proactive effort to incorporate private lands into Town. This is a decision that must be made by the property owner(s).

Through this plan, the Town establishes a goal of 1,000 residents by 2030. A cursory analysis of the net buildable acreage in each annexation area indicates that between 830 and 900 units could be built on the properties within the municipal growth area which would generate an additional ~2190 residents – triple the Town's existing population. Not considered in the analysis are market considerations or absorption rates; it is assumed that buildout of 830 to 930 homes would occur over at least 20 years.

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<sup>2</sup> County Comprehensive Plan, Page 3-21

<b>Area</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Potential Use(s)</b>	<b>Estimated Pop. Yield</b>
1	Granite Cliffs	This property is located northwest of MD 276 (Jacob Tome Highway) and has been the subject to a development proposal named Granite Cliffs. Sitting on more than 160 acres, this development could accommodate approximately 535 dwelling units based on the most recent plans submitted to the Town. Protecting the areas southeastern portions of the property which are wooded and located in the Critical Area are of utmost importance to the town. Although the area would be designated as “suburban transition” zone, the Town has and will continue to entertain a Planned Unit Development for the property.	~1230
2	Bainbridge	This property is a part of the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center and not covered by any environmental restrictions. The Town believes that this area is well-suited for workforce housing and would retain the County’s zoning designation as “employment mixed use” subject to minor modification. Under this scenario, 100 to 120 units could potentially be constructed.	~210
3	Coudon Properties	Properties owned by the Coudon family are located southeast of MD 222 (Bainbridge Road) comprising 40 to 60 acres depending on the specific boundaries identified for annexation and development. The Town believes that this land would be well-suited for moderate density development and would retain the County’s “suburban transition” zone designation subject to minor modification. It is anticipated that 80 to 100 units could be built on the property.	~250
4	Old Schoolhouse	The potential “Old Schoolhouse” subdivision is located on approximately 47 acres between Race Street and Granite Run. If physiographic challenges can be overcome for access to the site, the Town believes that this land would be well-suited for moderate density development and would retain the County’s “suburban transition” zone designation subject to minor modification. It is anticipated that 100 to 120 units could be built on the property.	~500
<b>Total</b>		<b>770 – 830 dwelling units</b>	<b>~2190 Population</b>

## 5.2 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Accommodate new growth in the upland areas of Port Deposit that is compatible with planned county land use patterns and provides resiliency against flooding in Oldtown.

### OBJECTIVES:

- Require the that the developer of an annexation area file of an advisory letter with the Town Planning Commission and the Cecil County Land Use and Development Services Department as to the adequacy of public facilities prior to the approval of subdivision; review and consider the County's comments on the advisory letter prior to approval of the subdivision or phase thereof within the annexation area.

The impacts of 770 to 830 new dwelling units in Port Deposit would not be small but they also would not likely overwhelm the public infrastructure or public facilities. Consider as follows:

- **Schools.** According to the July 2022 Cecil County Education Facilities Master Plan, the schools serving Port Deposit are presently under capacity with Bainbridge Elementary School having 135 seats open; Perryville Middle School having 182 seats open; and Perryville High School having 111 seats open. The student yield of 0.2 elementary school students, 0.1 middle school students, and 0.11 high school students per dwelling unit would bring the elementary slightly over capacity only at full buildout of all ~800 dwelling units. The middle and high schools would remain well under capacity.
- **Water/Sewer.** As water and sewer services are provided by Artesian Water and Cecil County, respectively, any future allocation of water or sewer service would not be subject to the Town's jurisdiction and would be negotiated directly with the controlling authority.
- **Roads.** All roads leading to/from Port Deposit presently operate at an acceptable level of service for a rural area. Recent improvements at MD 276 and Perrylawn Drive (MD 275) and at MD 222 (Perrylawn Drive) at I-95 should be sufficient to handle additional traffic from residential development within the municipal growth area; however, it is advisable that any development greater than 100 units should provide a traffic impact study to determine roadway adequacy at the time of the development.
- **Police/Fire/Emergency Medical Services.** The County Sheriff's Office provides police services in the town. Fire/EMS services are provided by the Water Witch Volunteer Fire Department. No data is available on current response times in the area; however, it is noted that rural volunteer fire companies are increasingly strained for members across the country. Significant growth in the Port Deposit area may require a rethinking of the volunteer-only model of fire and emergency medical services; however, this would most likely be done as part of a countywide transition.

- **Require enhanced stormwater management efforts in annexation areas, including support for off-site improvements as part of annexation agreements.**

Port Deposit is potentially facing numerous annexation requests and therefore needs to establish policies that make this process orderly and that provide assurances that the Town is not burdened by new capital or operating expenses by the annexed property. Annexation agreements ensure that land is developed in a manner that is consistent with the vision and goals of this plan and to ensure that the capital and maintenance costs of new or improved community infrastructure is not disproportionately borne by existing town residents. Because the Town provides few governmental services, new residential development will be a net positive to the town's tax base; however, given the challenges faced by the town in dealing with flooding, developments in annexed areas should be asked to do more than their "fair share" of stormwater management as part of any agreement to enter the town. Flash flooding from overwhelmed storm drains and unstable stream beds requires attention greater than the Town can currently provide. "Fee in lieu" payments as a condition of annexation could be used to create stormwater management facilities that serve the community at-large rather than singular development projects; remove unused impervious surfaces especially in low-lying areas, and restore streams to their natural state, as examples of how fee in lieu payments could be used.

## 6. Water Resources, Stormwater Management, and Flood Control

### 6.1 Background

Water resources governed by the state planning code are outside the authority of the Town of Port Deposit. That is, the town controls neither the water nor sewer system in Town limits. Water is provided by Artesian Water, a private concern; sewer service is provided by Cecil County which has a recently built wastewater treatment plant located at the base of MD 222 near Marina Park. As such, the Water Resources Element is largely confined to discussion of the Town's major concern regarding stormwater management and flood control.



FIGURE 7. REGIONAL STORMWATER FLOW SURROUNDING THE TOWN OF PORT DEPOSIT.

## 6.2 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Support countywide efforts to maintain balanced use of water resources and sewerage facilities; protect Port Deposit from riverine and flash flooding.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Maintain a cooperative and communicative relationship with Cecil County government and Artesian Water to ensure that the water and sewer needs of Port Deposit and its municipal growth areas can be met.**

The Town of Port Deposit controls neither the water nor sewer system in Town limits. Water is provided by Artesian Water, a private concern; sewer service is provided by Cecil County which has a recently built wastewater treatment plant located at the base of MD 222 near Marina Park. As such, the Town defers all comprehensive planning decisions related to water and sewer allocations to Artesian and Cecil County government, respectively. Both controlling authorities provide services that meet the needs of the Town at current usage levels and have capacity to serve some additional growth in the area.

- **Undertake, support, and/or advocate stormwater and flood control management projects and policies.**

Many of the historic structures in Port Deposit are at risk of flooding from both coastal storm systems causing storm surge and high tides and riverine flooding. The history of flooding in Port Deposit has been well documented and dates back to the Town's establishment. Most of the riverine flooding enters the Town of Port Deposit through two existing openings on the Norfolk Southern railroad embankment that runs parallel to the Susquehanna River. These openings are at Vannort Drive and Netters Alley. Additional flooding enters the Town through the existing stormwater system. Riverine flooding from the Susquehanna River in Port Deposit can be predicted days ahead of time due to a river gage system operated by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the presence of the Conowingo Dam; and although the operation of the Conowingo Dam has little impact on downstream flooding, the amount of gates open at the dam correlates to a specific flooding condition that can be expected within the Town.

The Town of Port Deposit should continue its path to undertake or support flood control strategies such as:

- Temporary and/or permanent closure of penetrations through or below the Norfolk Southern railroad embankment.
- Rightsizing of the SHA drainage system and the creation of outfalls necessary to direct stormwater away from structures, including the installation of backflow prevention devices.
- Enhanced stormwater management requirements for development projects in annexation areas, including support for off-site improvements as part of annexation agreements.

- Natural stream restoration efforts to protect structures, reduce erosion, and downstream sedimentation.
- Living shoreline projects to increase absorption area where appropriate.

- **Adopt a Septic Tier map that complies with State law.**

The Maryland General Assembly approved the Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, also known as the septic law, during the 2012 General Assembly session. In general, until a local jurisdiction adopts Growth Tiers, the local jurisdiction cannot approve the creation of residential major subdivisions which are not served by public sewer. For most municipalities in Maryland, including Port Deposit, the only necessary and appropriate designations are Tier I and Tier II. By adoption of this comprehensive plan, the Town designates all areas within its existing corporate limits as “Tier I” and all areas within the municipal growth boundary as Tier II as shown in the map below.

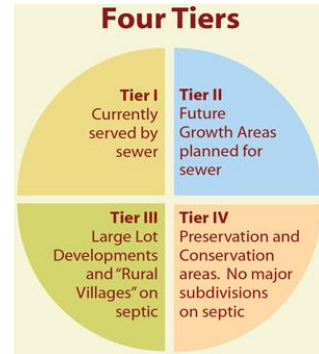


FIGURE 3. SOURCE: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

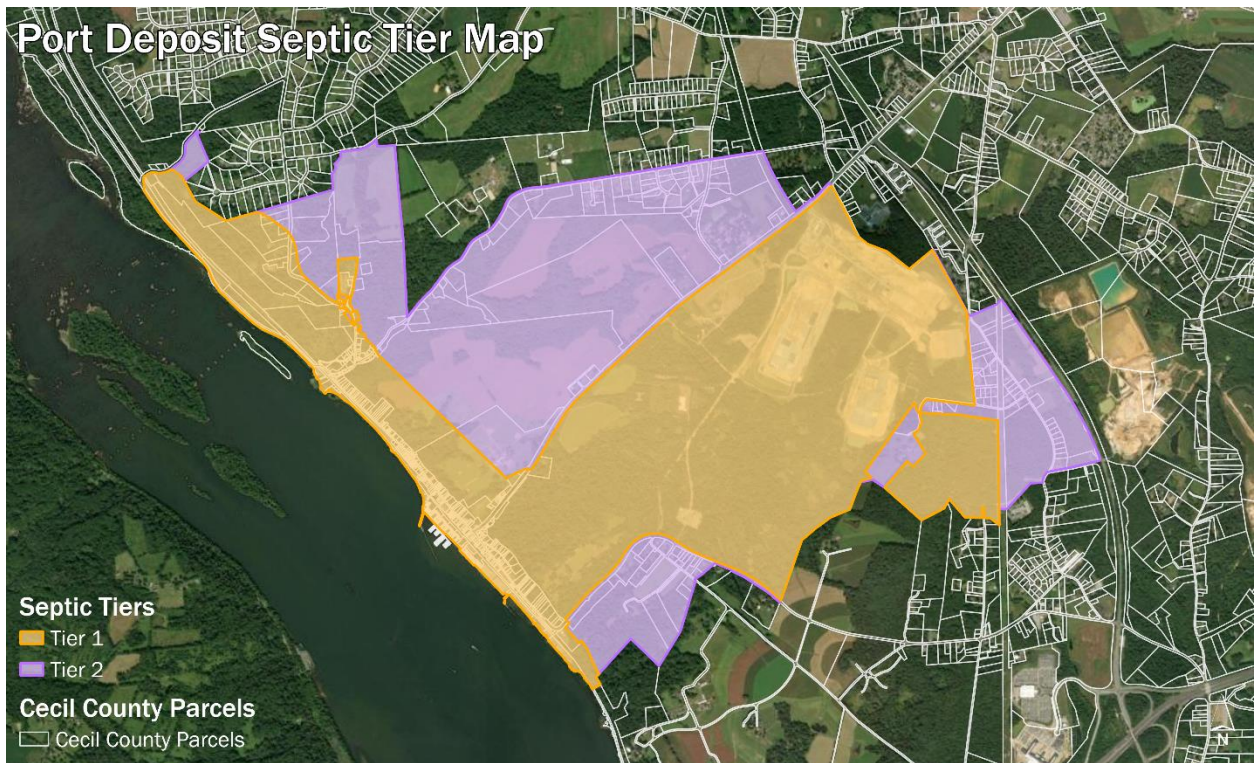


FIGURE 8: SEPTIC TIER MAP

## 7. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

**GOAL:** Encourage the preservation and development of open space and recreational resources that meet the needs of Port Deposit and reflects the Town's natural and historic qualities, including waterfront connections.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- **Create short- term active uses in parks and open spaces to introduce Port Deposit to a regional audience.**

Spring and summer weekends along Main Street bring many visitors to Port Deposit, but most weeknights have very little activity. There is potential to bring more visitors to Port Deposit from within the region by hosting off-peak events such as movie nights, food truck rallies, and cultural festivals. This will help local businesses maintain a customer base throughout the year.

- **Construct marina waterfront park with a living shoreline, fishing pier, and boat ramp to the Susquehanna River.**

Marina Park is the highlight of Port Deposit's 2018 Working Waterfront Plan and has the potential to become a focal point of heritage and cultural tourism and waterborne recreation along the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway Trail and Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. At present, the area known as Marina Park has many challenges to achieving its potential: There are many conflicts between boaters and park users. Boats with trailers do not have enough space to maneuver without affecting the existing parking spaces for park users, including accessible spaces. The recent relocation of the Cecil County sewage facility presents an opportunity to reconfigure the boat ramp and trailer and vehicular parking areas to reduce conflicts. The existing shoreline south of the existing boat ramp is heavily used for fishing but is in poor condition with extensive sections of the concrete bulkhead now broken and in disrepair. Opportunities exist at the far southern end to introduce additional living shoreline areas that can also mitigate the related shoreline work for boat and fishing access.

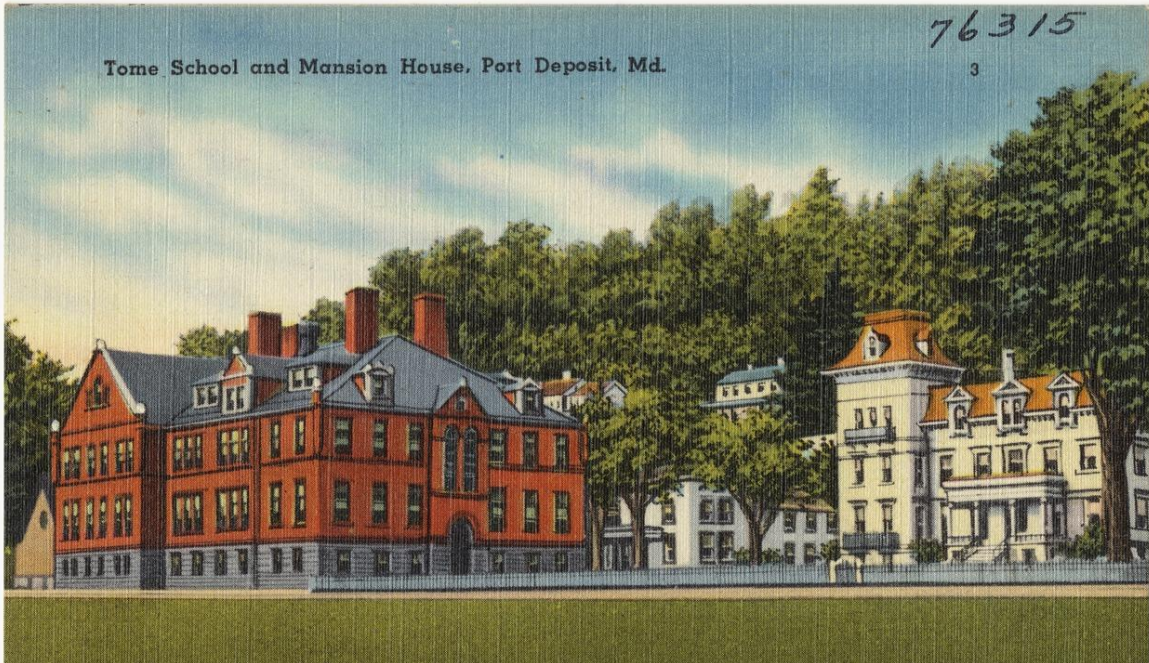
- **Develop Hopkins Quarry for active recreational purposes (rock climbing, ropes course, etc.) through use of a private operator.**

The Town has recently annexed 30-acres of the former Hopkins Quarry into corporate limits. After a year-long community-based planning process, it appears that the most favorable use of the site is for a rock-climbing venue, ropes course and other "adventure tourism" activities. The Town will work to implement the plan developed for Hopkins Quarry Park.

- **Work with and through the Bainbridge Development Corporation to develop and advocate for a plan that supports preservation and restoration of the Italian Gardens & Tome School and greenway connectivity to downtown. BDC should determine disposition of property in consultation with stakeholders.**



The 2023 General Assembly passed a law requiring the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to study the suitability of 120 acres currently owned by the Bainbridge Development Corporation for transfer to the Department of Natural Resources for use as the Port of Deposit State Historical Park. The Town is interested in seeing preservation and restoration of Tome School and Italian Gardens, and archaeological exploration at Snow Hill; however, the Town believes that a successful outcome must be developed through a process that is inclusive of all stakeholders. Final determination of the site should be made by Bainbridge Development Corporation.



- **Create a greenway trail along the bluffs from Donaldson Brown Center through the Tome School to Hopkins Quarry that creates a loop with Main Street.**

The Port Deposit segment of the proposed Lower Susquehanna Greenway Trail follows the above alignment and would ultimately connect with trails leading to and across the Susquehanna River at Conowingo Dam and along Susquehanna State Park. This long-term project should be included in plans for the Tome School property as well as easements secured in the annexation process as shown in the municipal growth map.

- **Explore opportunities for property acquisition along the waterfront, particularly properties owned by Exelon.**

Exelon Generation Company LLC and Constellation Energy LLC owns approximately 95% of the acreage fronting the Susquehanna River from north of Rock Run Landing to Conowingo Dam as well as several narrow parcels between Rock Run and 450' north of Vannort Drive. The Town is interested in preserving access to the Susquehanna for recreation and land preservation purposes and will consider transfer of these properties from Exelon if the utility is amenable.

## 8. Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas

### 8.1 Background

Environmental assets are important to the health and well-being of the Port Deposit. In particular, the health of the streams, rivers, and bay is critical to the comprehensive plan's themes of resiliency, and active, cultural and heritage tourism. The Town's location makes it particularly susceptible to damage from poorly managed stormwater runoff, sea level rise, tidal surges, and riverine flooding; damage caused by flooding and the degradation of streams and forested areas cuts into heart of the Town's economic base which relies in part on its tourist assets in the downtown area.

Key environmental assets which are critical to the themes of resiliency and promoting active and cultural tourism include:

- the Susquehanna River which is the largest freshwater stream on the eastern seaboard. It drains from upstate New York, through Pennsylvania, and meets the Chesapeake Bay near Port Deposit. Five stream valleys run through the Town and converge into the Susquehanna River before emptying into the Chesapeake Bay.
- ecosystems within the Chesapeake Bay Critical area, stream buffers, and forested areas.
- the northern Map Turtle, a state-listed endangered species, being protected through habitat restoration efforts in partnership with Towson University.
- granite rock formations which separate Old Town Port Deposit from upland areas more prone to development.

The Town desires that future development, public improvements, and environmental restoration projects be implemented to support all the natural systems including wetlands, woodlands and native vegetation; rare, threatened and endangered species and wildlife habitats; surface and ground water systems; floodplains; open space; highly erodible and developmentally constrained soils; and steep slopes.

## 8.2 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Ensure the protection of important natural resources and strive to improve the quality of the environment.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- **Maintain current Chesapeake Bay Critical Area designations and continue existing development controls.**

The Town is committed to meeting its obligations under the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area program and to protecting the natural stream buffers and critical ecosystems that are foundational to the health and economy of Port Deposit. Projects requiring site plan review are required to submit an environmental assessment that includes a detailed site analysis and inventory of habitat protection areas. To protect sensitive areas, the Town requires that development proposals incorporate design measures, which will support natural environmental assets and minimize impacts on sensitive natural features. For example, the clustering of development serves to reduce the amount of infrastructure and its associated impacts and allows sensitive natural areas to be maintained. Current development controls allow lands set aside for buffering and natural resources protection can be deducted from the open space requirements up to a maximum of 70 percent of the open space requirement. For smaller projects that do not include significant opportunities for open space enhancement, off-site enhancements could be required, or fees paid in-lieu-of open space account could help build an acquisition fund source to match potential State and Federal grants.

- **Protect stream buffers and undertake natural stream restoration efforts to protect structures, reduce erosion, and downstream sedimentation.**

Streams and their buffers are important resources that support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock. Development near stream areas subject to flooding can result in the loss of life and property. Streams and their adjacent buffers are home to countless species of animals and plants and transport valuable nutrients, minerals and vitamins to rivers and creeks and, in turn, the Chesapeake Bay. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are important parts of the stream ecosystem. There are areas within the town boundary that require special protections for water of higher quality (Tier II waters) pursuant to Maryland's anti-degradation policy. As development activity consumes large amounts of land, forest cover and natural vegetation along streams are diminished. The cumulative loss of open space and natural growth reduces the ability of remaining land along streams to buffer the effects of greater stormwater runoff.

In addition to development controls to protect streams and stream buffers, the Town is and will continue to take proactive measures in support of stream health. At present, the Town is

undertaking a project to restore Rock Run. In addition, the US Army Corps of Engineers is currently identifying specific projects such as regional stormwater management facilities, culvert adjustments, or flow diversions, may be considered to reduce the flash flood risk. These projects tend to be low-cost flood reduction strategies that provide sediment retention benefitting downstream water quality. Specific projects will be advanced based on USACE recommendations.

- **Create a living shoreline at Marina Park and support the creation of nesting areas on the public shoreline for the Northern Map Turtle, a state-listed endangered species.**

While public access is a key goal of the larger Marina Park project, that access can only be successful and sustainable if a combination of nature-based and structural components is implemented to support water quality, ecosystem goals, and flood control goals. The living shoreline will include breakwaters or in-channel structures to protect the shoreline from active erosion and promote shellfish habitat; create and enhancing tidal marsh habitat and re-establish areas for nesting by the Northern Map Turtle; and, introduce contoured seat walls to provide an opportunity to address nuisance flooding at the lower elevations and protect the upper elevations and railroad embankment from nuisance floods.

## 9. Historic and Cultural Resources

### 9.1 Background

The Town of Port Deposit has a fascinating history, much of which is centered on: the efforts Jacob Tome, a banker, philanthropist, and politician who died one of the richest men in the United States at the time and who bequeathed a large endowment for creation of system of schools in the Town; the granite cliffs and deposits which were quarried not only for many of the distinctive buildings in Port Deposit today, but also for institutions such as the United States Naval Academy, Boston Public Library, the U.S. Treasury Building and for public works such as the Lincoln Tunnel in New York; and, the Susquehanna River which was formerly a canal for commercial activity between Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Port Deposit was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. More than 20 contributing structures such as the Paw-Paw House, Rock Run Mill, Tome Memorial Methodist Church built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century form the historic core of downtown and along with other structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the basis for

establishing the National Register district and subsequently the Historic Area Overlay Zone in the Town zoning code. Changes to national historic preservation standards have since required more stringent analysis to define the period and areas of significance and specific properties located within a National



Register district. Notwithstanding the grandeur of many buildings in Port Deposit and the sense of place that they create, the effect of an imprecise National Register nomination could make grants for preservation activities, financial incentives for redevelopment, and infrastructure rehabilitation more difficult.

Tome School for Boys Historic District was listed in 1984. While there is a robust body of research, ongoing preservation activity, and cultural tourism related to the Port Deposit National Register District, such planning and preservation activity for the Tome School district has not yet been realized. Since the 2010s, several of its buildings have been damaged or destroyed by vandals although the potential for revitalization through historic preservation, adaptive re-use, or cultural tourism promotion is evident to many.

Effective historic and cultural preservation typically involves the inventorying, researching, and ongoing protection/restoration of sites and structures of significant local or national historic interest.

Continued historic and cultural resource preservation and enhancement through sensitive land use



planning and other administrative means, as well as promotional activities, and redevelopment incentives is important to the comprehensive planning theme of encouraging cultural tourism and would provide Port Deposit with a number of benefits including: promotion of a strong sense of community pride; community revitalization through the renovation or adaptive reuse of older structures; increased property values and tax revenues as a result of renovation and restoration; and increased tourism activity that benefits the local economy.

## 9.2 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Draw upon Port Deposit's history and culture to instill civic pride, strengthen the economy, and support a high quality of life.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Update the National Register district's "period of significance" to focus on most historically significant properties of the 19th Century thereby simplifying public infrastructure and private construction permitting, tax credits, etc.**

The "period of significance" in both the 1978 National Register nomination and the pending update now at the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) is overly broadly to include the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. As a foundational improvement to the Town's historic district nomination, updating the "period of significance" will ensure a clear list of contributing and noncontributing properties, as well as establish the areas of significance. Such improvements in historic status data are essential in future zoning, development, and infrastructure permitting activities. Likewise, accurate data will be important for use in grant applications, both at the property owner level and at the municipal level. Also, this information will facilitate approval of tax credit projects by the MHT and the National Park Service.

- **Update the zoning code to align historic district boundaries and historic area overlay zone; make design standards consistent with federal practices; and incorporate appropriate federal standards for flood adaptation.**

The Town of Port Deposit has adopted the boundaries of the National Register-listed Port Deposit Historic District and the National Register-listed Tome School for Boys Historic District, plus an area not included in either National Register district, as the single locally designated Port Deposit Historic Area Overlay District. The purpose of the overlay district "s "the preservation of sites, structures, and districts of historical, archeological, or architectural significance together with their appurtenances and environmental settings is a public purpose in the Town of Port Deposit" through defining zoning areas that require review by the Port Deposit HAC and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).<sup>3</sup> While there is no requirement that the National Register district and the Historic Area Overlay Zone be consistent, there is no rationale offered as to why

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<sup>3</sup> Town of Port Deposit, *Town of Port Deposit Zoning Code*, Article IX, Section 115.

they are not consistent. This can confuse the submittal and review of development applications and COAs and should be reconciled when the zoning code is updated.

The Town underutilizes the available design guidelines and standards. The zoning code allows for the town “to adopt rehabilitation and new construction design guidelines and criteria for construction, alteration, reconstruction, moving, and demolition of designated landmarks, sites, structures, and districts which are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.”<sup>4</sup> However, the zoning code does not recognize that the Secretary’s Standards (36 CFR Part 68, 1995) consist of four (4) treatment standards: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. Beyond reference to the overall Secretary’s Standards, the zoning code and other administrative and planning materials do not outline any specific standards or treatments.

The Town has not yet adopted any specific design guidelines. References to the Secretary’s Standards appear to only be found within the zoning code and not on more public facing resources such as the Town website under its “Historic Area” tab. Although relying on the Secretary’s Standards is appropriate for design review guidelines, especially in a small town, the standards are written broadly and generally require qualified professionals to facilitate their use. Additionally, the Town’s planning documents and zoning code do not utilize the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, issued in 2019 and revised in 2021. These guidelines provide information on adapting historic buildings to withstand and recover from flood events in an appropriate manner that meets the overall Secretary’s Standards and are consistent with FEMA requirements.

- **Consider becoming a National Park Service Certified Local Government (CLG) which would allow the Town to access technical and financial assistance programs.**

The CLG program is authorized by National Historic Preservation Act and is administered by the National Park Service (NPS). Through the certification process, local communities make a commitment to national historic preservation standards. CLGs are eligible for grants from the state of Maryland via the annual appropriations from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund and for competitive grants administered directly by NPS. CLGs also benefit from Maryland Historic Trust providing technical assistance in preservation planning efforts such as with the HAC, building assessments, surveys, and nominations.

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<sup>4</sup> Town of Port Deposit, *Town of Port Deposit Zoning Code*, Article IX, Section 118.

- **Integrate of the Historic Area Commission (HAC) into the Planning Commission to simplify planning and permitting processes.**

There are two bodies which make decisions related to land development in the historic overlay zone. The Historic Area Commission is an appointed body of the Town responsible for making decisions on Certificates of Appropriateness for redevelopment projects as well as with adopting design guidelines (Section 118) that govern what is and is not an appropriate form of preservation. Such guidelines should be coordinated and integrated with the zoning code for which the Planning Commission is generally responsible. The Planning Commission also decides on issues of reuse and adaptive conversion of structures (Zoning Code Section 22(1)(d)).

Planning decisions related to subdivisions and other development and redevelopment projects are best made when the public and private costs and benefits of a project are fully considered across all disciplines. Issues related to historic preservation are but one consideration along with other planning and zoning requirements related to environmental protection, economic development, transportation, etc. The Town will consider integrating HAC's functions into the duties of the Planning Commission to achieve consistency of land development decisions.

- **Work with and through the Bainbridge Development Corporation to develop and advocate for a plan that supports preservation and restoration of the Italian Gardens, Tome School, Snow Hill and greenway connectivity to downtown.**

Port Deposit was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978; the Tome School for Boys Historic District was listed in 1984. There is a robust body of research, preservation activities, and cultural tourism related to the Port Deposit National Register District; however, such planning and preservation activity for the Tome School district has not yet been realized. The lack of a preservation plan became evident by a 2022 legislative proposal to designate a portion of the Bainbridge site (including a portion of the Tome property) as a state park. Had such a plan been in place, the 2022 proposal could have either been defeated or reshaped to match the goals of the preservation plan.



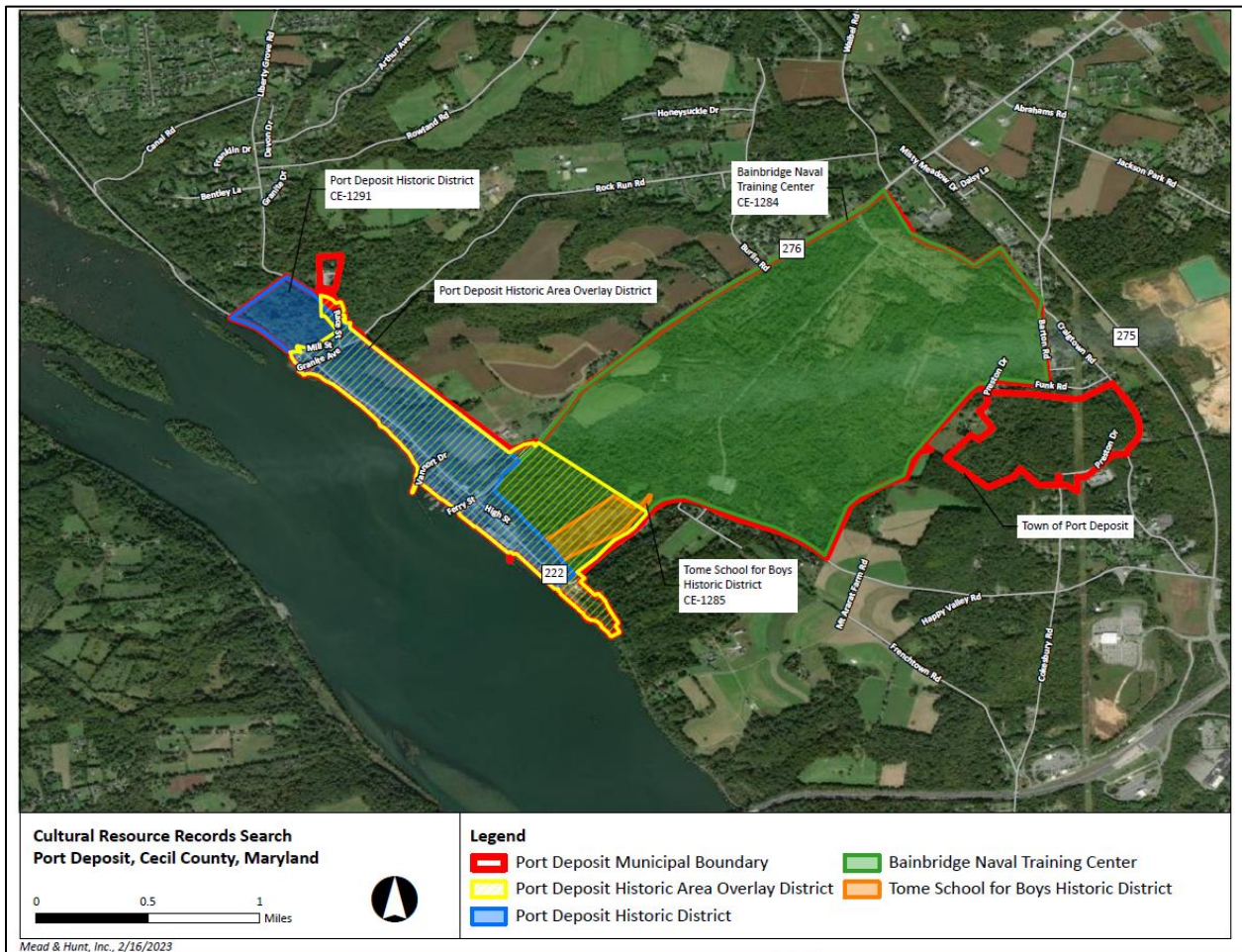


FIGURE 8. HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND DESIGNATIONS IN PORT DEPOSIT.

# 10. Transportation

## 10.1 Background

Port Deposit is located on MD Route 222 (Main Street) which runs north and south through the town. MD Route 222 intersects Maryland Route 276 in the center of Town and Route 269 at the north end of Town. MD Route 222 should be utilized for movement of residents to work and shopping. Port Deposit is unique because it has only one main traffic corridor (MD Route 222) that must be utilized for all types and forms of transportation – from commercial truck traffic to daily residential use to pedestrian and bicycle uses. Truck traffic and speeding are a major concern for the public safety of Town residents. The County and State provide minimal traffic enforcement and issue few citations.

SHA has programmed funds to improve the MD 222 streetscape concurrent with reconstruction and enlargement of the storm drain system. This work is programmed for completion by 2027.

Port Deposit does not have a mass transit service nor is their apparent ridership demand to do so on a regularly scheduled basis. There may be value or opportunity in creating an on-demand micro transit zone that connects Port Deposit to employment opportunities at Bainbridge Logistics Center, Hollywood Casino, and Great Wolfe Lodge which would then connect with a newly expanded Harford Transit Teal Line for access to MARC and employment opportunities along US 40; however, this is not a high priority investment for the Town.

## 10.2 Goal and Objectives

**GOAL:** Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods that promotes connectivity, walkability, and use of non-motorized forms of transportation.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- **Maintain the Town’s roads and other transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair.**

Among the first responsibilities of any government is to maintain its existing assets. The Town is currently undertaking a repair of the stream, culvert and retaining wall along Race Street; similar projects are likely needed at other locations owned by the Town. Records are not kept on the local streets, culverts, and bridges of Port Deposit; however, a brief visual inspection indicates that substantial attention is needed. The Town should undertake a comprehensive review of the condition of its roads and other infrastructure and allocate or seek funding for remedial action.

- **Consider legislation permitting automated enforcement of truck route restrictions.**

Commercial trucks are said to use MD 222 frequently to avoid tolls on I-95; this may get worse once Bainbridge Logistics Center is operational. Patrols by the Maryland State Police or Maryland Transportation Authority police are ineffective because truck drivers will radio to others

that enforcement is in place and the activity dissipates until the police move along. In port-adjacent communities in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, the state legislature has permitted the use of automated enforcement to detect and fine commercial vehicles on truck routes. The Town should consider this approach if it believes that the volume of trucks *not destined* for locations in downtown Port Deposit. Authorization from the General Assembly would be required.

- **Create wide sidewalks along MD 222 connecting the historic district to Marina Park.**

The ability of pedestrians to walk from north Main Street to waterfront marina park through the commercial district is critical to achieving the overall goal of improved downtown cohesion. The Old Town has adequate sidewalks in some areas, while some are very narrow; in some areas the sidewalks are missing altogether. Correcting this problem is a difficult endeavor because of little or no frontage between building faces and the roadway. It would be inadvisable to narrow the roadway for widening sidewalks. SHA's planned reconstruction of Main Street should correct many of the problems; however, doing so may require SHA to be more aggressive in right-of-way acquisition than it would normally be in a streetscape project. For example, the sidewalk in front of Tome's Landing Marina is very narrow but borders a gravel-surface parking lot. SHA is encouraged to work with the property owner to create a full sidewalk section in this area as depicted in Figure 9.



*FIGURE 9. IMPROVED SIDEWALK CONNECTIVITY ALONG MD 222 WOULD ENCOURAGE WALKABILITY ALONG MAIN STREET*

- **Create a direct, scenic connection from Old Town to the Tome School property as part of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway.**

The Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) consists of a network of 38 miles of trails, including a core greenway trail that would circle the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Area and connect across the Susquehanna River. It also includes a series of bike loops linked to the core

greenway trail and envisioned water shuttle services connecting to Port Deposit, Perryville, Havre de Grace, and the Susquehanna State Park. Several key segments of the proposed trail system are envisioned in or near Port Deposit, including a riverfront trail segment, links to and through the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center site to connect with a rail trail in the northwest, and a trail connection to the Tome School.

- **Establish additional visitor parking.**

As the town becomes more successful in property redevelopment and attracting more visitors, the current shortage of parking will be exacerbated. Several properties proximate to Main Street should be considered for expansion of public parking; however, great care should be taken to minimize the environmental and visual impact to the town's historic resources.

# 11. Housing

## 11.1 Background

The Town desires to see both organic redevelopment efforts in the downtown area and new development “up the hill” to create a mix of quality, affordable housing types throughout Port Deposit. Although several property owners have made efforts to rehabilitate housing units for sale or rent particularly along Main Street, residential growth and redevelopment in Port Deposit has been practically non-existent over the past decade. The reasons for the lack of growth are myriad. Among other reasons, the economics of housing redevelopment in the downtown area are difficult in the context of potential flood losses, very small lot sizes, uncertainty of historic district requirements, and the cost of housing systems (HVAC, electrical) which have been underinvested for many years. According to the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, nearly 36% of Port Deposit’s structures need some form of minor, medium or major repairs. Building permit data does not indicate that there has been any surge that would have reduced this number; flooding since 2010 may have increased it.



Spurring housing redevelopment in the downtown area will largely depend on two things: The Town’s ability to build confidence among property owners and potential buyers and developers that an investment in Port Deposit is a solid one; and the ability to secure grant funds that can support projects which are economically marginal.

In all of the above and through the objectives below, the Town acknowledges its responsibility to affirmatively further fair housing through meaningful actions to overcome patterns of segregation, promote fair housing choice, eliminate disparities in opportunities, and foster inclusive communities free from discrimination.

## 11.2 Goals and Objectives

**GOAL:** Support suitable living environments for residents of Port Deposit and encourage diverse housing choices for all.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Encourage the creation of diverse housing types in all new subdivisions, including workforce housing and partnerships with non-profit housing developers.**

Habitat for Humanity and other non-profit housing developers have at times expressed interest in working with the Town to create housing that is affordable to working families and seniors. After considerable discussion, it was determined that demolition of the building and new construction would not be a feasible project for the Habitat for Humanity program on Main Street due to the cost of flood insurance that must be held on the property. The Town would consider working with Habitat or other non-profit housing developers if an opportunity for a project would occur on Granite Avenue or Race Street, which are not in a flood zone. The Town should also encourage that new development in the municipal growth areas include a mix of housing types and styles to create opportunities for families in a wide range of incomes.

- **Continue to seek grant funding for and encourage property owner investment in façade improvements and other rehabilitation work on residential properties.**

The Town has received approximately \$200,000 from the state Department of Housing and Community Development for façade improvements over the past several years which has supported five to six projects per year. The Town should continue to seek this support for which there are many viable exterior projects that have not yet been funded. In addition, the Town should seek state funding for grants to support weatherization and other “healthy homes” initiatives for lower-income property owners. North Main Street should be given priority in this work.

## 12. Community Facilities

### 12.1 Background

As a government providing limited public services, the Town of Port Deposit owns few community facilities. The promenade and boardwalk along the Susquehanna Park, public works building along Main Street, Town Hall, Visitor Center, and public parking lots are the most significant assets owned by the Town. The Town endeavors to maintain these facilities in good condition, but repair or replacement of some facilities is becoming necessary or desirable.

### 12.2 Goals and Objectives

**GOAL:** Work with Cecil County government to ensure that Port Deposit has adequate school capacity, health and social services, and other community facilities that result in a high quality of life for residents of the town, while also directly providing Town-owned facilities that reflect the values and services of the Town.

- **Support continued police and fire protection in the Town.**  
Fire/EMS services are provided by the Water Witch Volunteer Fire Department. No data is available on current response times in the area; however, it is noted that rural volunteer fire companies are increasingly strained for members across the country. Significant growth in the Port Deposit area may require a rethinking of the volunteer-only model of fire and emergency medical services; however, this would most likely be done as part of a countywide transition. At a minimum, the Town should work with Water Witch to ensure that it has the equipment and facilities necessary to support a larger and more heavily developed community.
- **Restore the interior of Town Hall and provide quality workspaces and equipment for staff.**  
The Town's professional staff works hard to secure grants, advance capital projects, administer the land use and zoning code, and conduct town business in accordance with the direction of the Town Council. Town Hall's interior should reflect its commitment to the employees and to the historical standards espoused in this plan. Building systems must also be updated to meet modern codes and standards and provide a quality environment for staff and visitors.
- **Relocate the public works facility from Main Street to the Business and Industrial Employment District.**  
The Town's public works facility lies within the floodplain and does not provide sufficient space for storage of material and equipment. The Town should consider the developer's plan to provide the Town with land for a new public works facility.