

Chapter 4

Community Facilities Element

Goals

- ◆ Provide adequate community facilities, public services, and utilities required to maintain the health, safety and welfare of the residents of North East.
- ◆ Provide adequate parks, open space, and recreational opportunities equitably distributed throughout the Town for existing and future Town residents.

Objectives

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

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

Existing Conditions

Water

The Town of North East presently operates two water treatment plants with a combined capacity of 1.2 million gallons per day maximum flow. The system presently provides water to a population of approximately 8,000 people and to the Maryland Transit Authority rest stop on I-95. Elevated and underground storage tanks provide a reserve of 1.4 million gallons.

Sewer

The Town of North East and the unincorporated areas around it are serviced by two sewage treatment plants operated by Cecil County, one located in Charlestown and a newer facility at Seneca Point near Charlestown. The Seneca Point plant has a capacity of 2.0 million gallons per day serving the Charlestown/North East region. This plant will allow for the area to accommodate the anticipated development.

The County constructed a large interceptor, extending eastward from the Seneca Point plant running along Stoney Run Creek to Bay View. Running approximately one-half mile north of North East, the interceptor provides service to existing developments that tie into the line and is intended to encourage development to the large area west of North East.

Gas

In 1996 the Town granted a non-exclusive franchise to the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company for a period of fifty years. However, the gas lines have not been installed to date.

Educational Facilities

Public educational facilities for North East are operated by the Cecil County Board of Education. In general, schools in Cecil County experienced a decline in enrollment from 1973 to 1984. Since 1985, however, enrollment has increased dramatically. The Board of Education seeks to provide adequate space for students as enrollment increases. Schools in North East are facing these enrollment pressures which should continue as the Town is designated as a growth area in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Bay View Elementary and North East Elementary serve students from pre-K to 5th grade. North East Elementary was built in 1951 and Bay View Elementary was built in 1961. Bay View is operating above capacity while North East is operating at 90 percent capacity. Instructional and support space is limited for both facilities due to the fact that the lunch program and the physical education program must share the same area. North East Elementary and Bay View Elementary have recently been renovated.

North East Middle School, serving grades 6-8, was built in 1932, but only became a middle school after renovations to the former high school in 1970 and 1973. The school is operating at capacity and serves the needs of middle school students currently.

North East High School was built in 1970 and serves 9th-12th grade students from both North East Middle School and a local private school. The school has been operating under capacity, but projections expect student enrollment to surpass capacity within the next decade.

Private education facilities include the Tome School. The Tome School is an independent, coeducational, college preparatory school founded in 1889. The school's curriculum provides a broad liberal arts education for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Tome School has capacity for up to 500 students and has a faculty of 34.

Library Services

The North East Community is served by the North East Branch of the Cecil County Public Library system. The library was built in 1991. The North East Branch is one of the busiest branch libraries in Cecil County and its usage continues to grow. Hours have been expanded to accommodate and maximize use of the present facility. The North East Branch is 2,800 square feet, and includes a public meeting room that seats 30. It houses a small but up-to-date collection of 10,000 books, in addition to videos, books-on-tape, and compact discs. The library also provides children's and adult educational programs. Free internet access and training are also available. Library materials and programs are provided to children and adults without charge.

Fire and Police Protection

The North East Town Police department is located on West Cecil Avenue in a 2,500 square foot building built in 1991. The forces consists of seven full time patrolmen and support staff providing 24 hour police protection within Town boundaries. Additional personnel would be necessary to serve the needs of the Town as population increases.

The North East Volunteer Fire Company provides fire protection, ambulance and rescue services for North East and a wide surrounding area. Consisting of approximately 180 volunteers, the Company expanded its fire house on Mauldin Avenue and has purchased

additional property in Town. Future growth plans for the Volunteer Fire Company include establishing sub-stations north and south of Town.

Refuse Collection

The Town of North East utilizes the services of a private contractor for residential trash collection. The County is required to recycle.

Town Hall

Until February 1988, a single structure served as the Town Hall and housed the police station, library, and municipal government offices. In February 1988 the municipal government offices were relocated to a building on Cherry Street shared by the Parks Administration. The Town recently purchased property on Main Street and relocated the municipal government offices to this new location in the fall of 2000.

Recreation

North East is a recreation and tourism center in Cecil County. Recreational opportunities are found within and adjacent to town with school playgrounds, athletic facilities, and public park areas, like Turner Park, a 3.3 acre facility with a baseball diamond, tennis courts, basketball courts, and roller hockey area, and the North East Community Park, a 10 acre facility on the water with recreation amenities. The Elk Neck State Park and State Forest lie within a ten mile drive of the Town. The headwaters of the North East River and the Chesapeake Bay have allowed for several private marinas and beaches. The area offers an array of active and passive recreational activities attracting visitors from Cecil and Harford counties, Baltimore, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

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

Elk Neck State Park. The State Park is a large State owned recreational facility located along Route 272 approximately ten miles south of Town. The land was first dedicated for the Park in 1937 and has grown to its current size of 1,764 acres and is expected to increase. The Park offers a wide range of activities, both active and passive, and has ample facilities for picnicking, camping, hiking, and outdoor sports. Containing 10 miles of shoreline, the park has portions equipped with boat slips. In addition, the Park provides hiking trails, nature trails, and an open air pavilion, as well as boat launching facilities and boat rentals.

Elk Neck State Forest. The State Forest consists of several large parcels totaling 3,147 acres. The largest portion lies just east of Cemetery Road east of Town with another large section at MD 272 and McKinneytown Road south of Town. It offers a variety of passive recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, and hunting in the appropriate season. The State Forest also contains a rifle firing and archery range which have gained popularity in recent years.

Greenways

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

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

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

Greenways act as a major component of heritage tourism, providing a linkage between the physical and cultural features of a particular area and adjacent heritage areas. They are part of a total marketing plan that connects the places tourists visit, shop, eat, and sleep. North East would be one piece of the Mid-Shore heritage area linked by a greenway. Cecil County, as a whole, can provide linkages with Delaware, Pennsylvania, and other regions in Maryland.

It is recommended that North East work with the County to establish a county-wide greenways development program. The proposed County greenway would run along the east side of Town adjacent to Mechanics Valley Road and would continue to the north along North East Creek. The Town should extend the existing bikeways, paths, and sidewalks to the greenways, increasing the connectivity between activity centers. The greenways should be a place to walk, jog, and bike for residents and visitors. It should provide an alternative means to go between neighborhoods, travel to school, and reach recreation areas, tying in with North East Isles and the North East Community Park.

An important factor will be connecting the Central Business District to the greenways. The sidewalk and path system along Cecil Avenue should be extended east to meet with the County greenways. Similar measures should be taken to connect the Middle School and High School to the greenways.

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

There are currently a number of greenway initiatives and groups in Cecil County with which the Town should coordinate planning for local links. These include the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, the East Coast Greenway and the Elk Neck Trail Association. A multi-faceted greenway system throughout the County presents many opportunities for increased tourism activity as well as protection of natural resources. Linkages with other towns and activity centers, e.g., a water shuttle, excursion cruises, or bikeways, should be explored as a means of increasing overall attractiveness of the area and improved economic activity in the traditional town and village centers.

Social and Health Services

Although there have been in the past, there are no state or county service, health, or other "human resource" agencies that maintain an office in North East. It is unlikely that branch offices will be established in the Town because of its relative closeness to Elkton. The nearest hospital is also in Elkton. Social Services and other agencies provide limited transportation to those unable to drive.

Other Services

The electric power and street lighting for the Town is provided by the Conectiv Power Delivery. Cable television is provided by Comcast. Telephone service is provided by Verizon. Street repairs and cleaning as well as snow removal are completed by a Town work force or contracted out.

Recommendations

Based on the amount and rate of growth envisioned in this Comprehensive Plan, most of the existing Town community facilities and services such as fire, library, and recreation, are capable, with minor adjustments and improvements, of servicing the planned growth areas. Other community facilities and services will need expansion or significant improvement to accommodate anticipated growth.

Future economic development, especially growth in the industrial sector, will become increasingly dependent on high speed communications. Fiber optic cable presents the opportunity to significantly lower telecommunication expenses and help attract new businesses to the area at a time when high-speed, high-bandwidth communication is an important part of the business infrastructure. The Town should work with the County and other communities to encourage installation of advanced communication infrastructure to serve the area.

Water and Sewer Service

Adequate water and sewer service facilities are a necessity to development. Although North East has identified an alternative water supply the Town should remain willing to work with the County and other towns if alternate sources arise that meet the needs of the Town and are economical.

The Town is currently in the process of designing upgrades to the Rolling Mill Water Treatment Plant (WTP) to accommodate growth over the next 20 years within the Town and service area. Improvements to the Rolling Mill WTP include the addition of two 2.0 million gallons per day maximum daily flow modules (1 redundant) with room for a third. In order to meet the maximum flow-by requirements in the North East Creek, the Town will withdraw raw water from the tidal portion of the North East Creek and pump to the raw water reservoir located at the Rolling Mill WTP.

Upgrades to the Leslie WTP include the installation of flocculators and settlers ahead of the existing filters, which will increase the plant maximum daily capacity to 830,000 gallons per day. Construction of these improvements are underway and are scheduled to be completed by September 2004. During the period of low-flow, the Leslie WTP will not operate. Improvements to the Rolling Mill WTP will allow transfer of water to the higher pressure zones served by the Leslie WTP during periods the Leslie plant is temporarily shut down.

The Town is planning to erect two elevated storage tanks, one to replace the aging and undersized Mauldin Avenue tank, and one to serve Zone 2 NE, which is currently served through a pressure reducing valve.

Gas

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

Educational Facilities

The school system in the Town of North East will need to be expanded as growth occurs in the area. Population increase in North East will place continued pressure on the Town's schools. The Town needs to assess the effects of the projected population increases on the schools and plan for such an increase before major problems occur. North East needs to consider the expansion of existing schools and the possibility of building new schools to the west of Town, closer to the areas of potential development.

The Town should participate in the school planning process. North East should be aware of all school planning efforts being conducted by the County and State insuring that local staff, elected officials, and private citizens take an active part in all planning efforts affecting the Town.

Library Services

The North East Branch is one of the busiest branch libraries in the Cecil County Public Library system, and its usage continues to grow as North East grows. The present size of the North East Branch is 2,800 square feet. A 2,800 square foot public library can provide only basic library services. Its collections are of necessity very small and its educational programs and services are very limited. The Cecil County Public Library Board of Library Trustees plans to increase the size of the North East Branch to enable it to provide a full range of library services. A full-service library includes a children's room with a children's collection capable of serving children of all ages, a children's educational programming space, children's computers, and children's seating, as well as a young adult reading area, a quality adult collection with sufficient breadth and depth to be of lasting interest, internet computers, a quiet study room, and a community meeting room capable of seating 70 to 90 people. The size for a library branch capable of providing full-service is 15,000 to 25,000 square feet. The population and projected growth for the North East area justify a library of 20,000 to 25,000 square feet. The library will require 5 acres of land located near and visible from a well traveled road. The present site will not support an adequate expansion. The CCPL Board appreciates the community's strong interest in a library location that is easily accessible to the downtown area. The CCPL Board seeks to locate this new facility within close proximity to the downtown area. The Board of Library Trustees has proposed to the County Commissioners that a new or expanded library be constructed in approximately 2008.

Other Services

The Town should attempt to expand the social services to its residents, concentrating on services catering to the elderly. North East has a significant portion of the population that is above 60 years old and that percentage is expected to continue to rise.

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

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

