
CHAPTER 1: PLAN PURPOSE, BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

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Purpose of the Plan

The Grasonville Community Plan establishes goals, objectives and recommendations for the long-term growth management of the Grasonville area. The Plan also seeks to direct public and private investment decisions regarding the development of the community. It is the intent of this Plan to put forth a strategy for responsible growth that recognizes the character of the area and the needs of its citizens, now and in the future. The underlying premise is that with forward thinking and community involvement, the quality of life for Grasonville's citizens can be enhanced while accommodating the area's anticipated growth and development.

The loosely knit community of Grasonville was historically known as Piney Creek, then Winchester and later renamed after Maryland's Governor Grason. The community was first established as a village core; a string of homes and small businesses along the County's historic "Main Street" (MD Rt. 18) in a location that had good commercial access to local waterways. When US 50/301 was built to bypass just north of the village, business activity began to focus on the highway instead of Main Street. The majority of modern day residential development has been attracted to the numerous waterfront locations surrounding the village, but not to the village core itself.

The result is that the once vibrant village core has eroded over the years with only modest investments in new development and redevelopment. Today Main Street and the village core are generally characterized by a mix of single-family homes and rental properties (in varying conditions) with scattered small businesses and institutional uses. Main Street itself has inadequate drainage and only a few partially completed sections of sidewalks and only on one side of the street.

There are strong concerns within the community regarding the growing amount of absentee landlord rental housing and proposals for commercial development that could negatively impact residential neighborhoods near Main Street.

The physical terrain of Grasonville is characterized by a predominance of woodlands and wetlands as a result of its low and flat topography. Expansion of the village beyond the boundaries of current development, and lands already zoned for development, should be considered; many of the undeveloped lands surrounding Grasonville are preserved as natural areas with conservation easements. Although there are limitations on outward growth, Grasonville has strong potential to accommodate environmentally sensitive infill development and redevelopment that is compatible with, and complimentary to, the desired village character of the community.

Grasonville has many assets to build upon. There is strong community spirit and a tremendous amount of local interest and involvement in community affairs. There is a significant network of desirable community facilities including an elementary school, several churches, community parks, a nonprofit environmental resource center, an active community center, a heavily used senior center, a volunteer fire station, a post office and a new Emergency Center. Public sewer and water are available in Grasonville, and the community has convenient and quick access to US 50/301 -- making it a desirable location for both residential and commercial development. Most important, there is a willingness by residents to proactively plan for managed growth and development that will improve their community, and attain a desirable village character. Both public and private investment will be needed to accomplish this goal.

Future change and growth is inevitable for Grasonville today as in the past. Places change as a result of economic forces which define the value of land, shape the real estate market and influence the impact of development decisions. These forces can be refined by planning policies and regulations but they cannot be fundamentally redirected or stopped. Good planning can neither completely inhibit compelling market demand, nor can it create markets that would not otherwise exist. The principal question that this plan addresses is not whether Grasonville will or should continue to grow, but rather, how should growth be managed so as to have a positive impact on, and add value to, the existing community.

There already exists a hierarchy of County and State plans and regulations which affect the future of the Grasonville area. Grasonville is designated as a "growth area" by the 2002 Queen Anne's County Comprehensive Plan. The County Comprehensive Plan conforms with the requirements of the Maryland Growth Management regulations.

The Grasonville Community Plan will ultimately serve as the official Comprehensive Plan for the unincorporated town "Planning Area" and the surrounding "Planning Study Area". It will also be the basis for any required amendments to the County's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program and Ordinance, Master Water and Sewer Plan, Capital Improvements Program, and any other County plans or regulations affecting the growth and development of Grasonville.

This Plan establishes a long-term vision for Grasonville and will be phased in over time. Community priorities, funding resources and market conditions will all affect the implementation time line. The Plan is flexible and should be revised as situations warrant and community objectives change.

Grasonville Community Assets



Grasonville Post Office



Ewing Pond Park



Grasonville Community Center



Grasonville Senior Center



Grasonville Emergency Center - Construction



Grasonville Volunteer Fire Station

The Current Planning Process

In an effort to provide appropriate incentives to encourage growth to locate in and around the existing villages and towns, thereby stemming further sprawl development, the County's Comprehensive Plan recommends that detailed growth management plans for designated growth areas be prepared and adopted. These plans are intended to focus on specific issues related to land use, development, environmental protection, community infrastructure and community design. The challenge is to plan for quality, livable communities that will be attractive to existing and future residents and businesses. The 1998 Grasonville Community Plan was updated by the Grasonville Task Group in February 2010. The Task Group included a cross section of thirteen citizens and property owners from the Grasonville Area. The Task Group met six times at the Grasonville Community Center during the month of February, 2010 to provide input for needed Community Plan updates. County staff provided technical support for the group.

Task Group members most enjoy the small town living, community atmosphere and rural open space. The main concerns raised centered around the economic vitality of the area and the encroachment of development. Most Task Group members were comfortable with the idea of future residential growth on properties within the community which are already zoned for this use. The Task Group was comfortable with the new Grasonville Neighborhood Commercial (GNC) and Grasonville Village Center (GVC) zoning classifications which had been previously recommended in the 1998 Plan for Main Street. However, the Task Group was concerned that some of the permitted and conditional uses needed to be updated to include some low and medium commercial uses, such as, coffee shops, country stores, and delis as a permitted use in the GVC. There was also a concern that the required 35 foot front setback did not appropriately reflect the existing average front setback of buildings, nor the desired future character or the area to allow buildings to be placed closer to the street.

Chapter 3 discusses the major growth and development issues facing Grasonville, and Chapter 4 makes recommendations for addressing these issues. The Task Group recommended that the Plan move forward for review and consideration by the County Planning Commission. The revised draft plan was introduced to the County Planning Commission at their April 8, 2010 meeting.

On June 10, 2010, the Planning Commission recommended that this plan be circulated for 60-day review. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Community Plan on November 12, 2010. The County Commissioners adopted the Plan on **XX**, 2010. The Grasonville Community Plan is incorporated into the County's 2010 Comprehensive Plan.