

Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 13: Housing & Community Design Goal

Goals

- To encourage residential growth that meets the needs of those in all income levels
- To promote new development design that conveys a sense of place
- To provide connected paths/trails/greenways throughout the community which offer recreational opportunities

Current Conditions

1 Housing

A ⇨ Acreage of Land in Each Residential Zoning District

The total land area of the Mount Airy Environs study area is approximately 8,469 acres, or 13.2 square miles. Roughly 71.7 percent of that total, or 6,071 acres, currently has some type of residential designation (Conservation, R-40,000, or R-20,000).

Carroll County currently has five categories of residential zoning. Conservation requires a maximum lot yield of 1 buildable lot per 3 acres, generally clustered into 2-3 acre lots. Urban Residential, or R-7,500, requires a minimum lot size roughly equal to one-sixth of an acre. Suburban Residential, or R-10,000, requires an approximate minimum lot size of one-quarter acre. Medium-Density Residential, or R-20,000, requires a minimum lot size roughly equal to one-half acre. Low-Density Residential, or R-40,000, requires a minimum lot size of 1 acre. The following table presents a breakdown of the amount of land within each residential zoning category for the entire study area.

Residential Zoning Acreage Mount Airy Environs Study Area 2003		
Zoning Category	Acreage Within Study Area	Percentage of Study Area
Conservation	5,340	63.1
R-7,500	0	0.0
R-10,000	0	0.0
R-20,000	46	0.5
R-40,000	685	8.1
Total	6,071	71.7

Source: Carroll County Planning Department 2003

B ⇨ Percentage of Different Housing Types

Almost 91 percent of all units in the study area in 2000 were single-family detached and

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attached (townhouse) units with multi-family, mobile-home/trailer, and other types making up the remaining 9 percent. During the period of 1990-2000, the total number of units in the study area increased by 627 (or 33.5%) with single-family detached and attached being the only housing type to see a proportional increase during that time. The following table shows the percentage of housing types within the study area for 1990 and 2000.

Housing Type Mount Airy Environs Study Area 1990 and 2000					
Housing Type	1990		2000		Proportional Change (%)
	Units	%	Units*	%	
Single-Family Detached/Attached	1,600	85.5	2,266	90.7	+5.2
Multi-Family	128	6.8	117	4.7	-2.1
Mobile Home/Trailer	127	6.8	116	4.6	-2.2
Other	17	0.9	0	0.0	-0.9
Total Units	1,872	100.0	2,499	100.0	

*Figures include Carroll portion of the town only
Source: U.S. Census

C ⇔ Renters vs. Owners

Of the residential structures within the Mount Airy Environs study area, approximately 84.2 percent were owner-occupied. Just over 12.6 percent were renter-occupied while roughly 3.2 percent were vacant. The following table exhibits the occupancy status by type of dwelling within the study area in 2000.

Occupancy by Type of Dwelling Mount Airy Environs Study Area 2000				
Structure	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Total*
SF (Detached)	1,743	128	65	1,936
SF (Attached)	254	76	0	330
2 Units	8	40	0	48
3-4 Units	0	40	9	49
5-9 Units	0	10	0	10
10+ Units	0	10	0	10
Mobile Home	99	12	5	116
Total	2,104	316	79	2,499

*Figures include Carroll portion of the town only
Source: U.S. Census

Census data from 1990 and 2000 show that the number of owner-occupied and vacant dwellings had increased within the study area over that time period while the number of rented dwellings had decreased. Yet as a portion of the total dwellings available, owner-occupied

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dwellings had remained relatively the same between 1990 and 2000, even though the number of units had increased substantially. The following table shows the shift in these increases.

Occupancy by Type of Tenant Mount Airy Environs Study Area 1990 & 2000					
Occupant	1990		2000		Proportional Change (%)
	Units	%	Units*	%	
Owner	1,510	80.7	2,104	84.2	+3.5
Renter	325	17.4	316	12.6	-4.8
Vacant	37	1.9	79	3.2	+1.3
Total	1,872	100.0	2,499	100.0	

*Figures include Carroll portion of the town only
Source: U.S. Census

Since 1990, the study area realized a substantial increase in the number of owner-occupied units. As of 2000, the largest percentage of owner-occupied residential units (25.7%) fell within the \$150,000 - \$199,999 range with an overall median housing value of \$188,100. The following table presents specified owner-occupied residence values in 2000.

Specified Owner-Occupied Value Mount Airy Environs Study Area 2000		
Value	# of Units*	% of Units
Less than \$50,000	74	3.5
\$50,000 - \$99,999	54	2.6
\$100,000 - \$149,999	499	23.7
\$150,000 - \$199,999	540	25.7
\$200,000 - \$299,999	524	24.9
\$300,000 or more	413	19.6
Total	2,104	100.0
Median Housing Value		\$188,100

*Figures include Carroll portion of the town only
Source: U.S. Census

Cash rent values were also tabulated for renter-occupied residences in the Mount Airy Environs Study Area based on 2000 Census returns. The majority of the units (45.9%) fell into the \$500 - 749 range with a median contract rent of \$664. The following table exhibits the monthly cash rent values for specified renter-occupied units in 2000.

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Specific Renter-Occupied Residential (Cash Rent) Mount Airy Environs Study Area 2000		
Rent	# of Units*	% of Units
Less than \$300	0	0.0
\$300 - \$499	56	18.4
\$500 - \$749	140	45.9
\$750 - \$999	77	25.2
\$1,000 or more	32	10.5
Total	305	100.0
Median Rent		\$664

*Figures include Carroll portion of the town only
Source: U.S. Census

D ⇨ Current Affordable Housing Programs

There are currently several housing assistance programs available within the Study Area. They are as follows: Section 8 Rental Assistance, Rental Assistance Program, Rural Development, and the Interfaith Self Help Program. Carroll County Section 8 Program exists to assure decent, safe, and sanitary housing communities of their choice, to eligible families, based on the family's income, assets and deductions.

Six households, making up 1.13 percent of Carroll County's total Section 8 participants, are currently receiving assistance within the Mount Airy Environs Study Area. The Rental Assistance Program offers temporary rental assistance for low-income households. Rural Development assistance can be used by low-income families to purchase, refinance, and rehabilitate a dwelling with no down payment. Interfaith Housing helps working families build their own affordable homes, working with their neighbors and with the assistance of a construction supervisor.

E ⇨ General Assessment of Condition of Current Housing

Age of Housing Mount Airy Environs Study Area 2000		
Year Built	# of Units	% of Units
1990-March 2000	783	31.3
1980-1989	554	22.2
1970-1979	417	16.7
1960-1969	185	7.4
1950-1959	125	5.0
1940-1949	53	2.1
1939 or earlier	382	15.3
Total	2,499	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, Carroll County Department of Permits, Inspection, and Review

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Most of the existing structures in the Mount Airy Environs study area are of a relatively young age. Roughly 29.8 percent of the housing stock existed before 1960 with 38.9 percent of the housing stock being built between 1970 and 1989. The most rapid period of growth occurred between 1990 and 2000 with 31.3 percent of the housing stock being constructed within that time period. The following table indicates the age of the Study Area's housing stock in 2000.

2 Description of Rural Villages in the Study Area

To date, eight towns in Carroll County have incorporated under the provisions of state law. Since the adoption of the first Carroll County Master Plan in 1964, these eight towns have been recognized as being the heart of existing and planned growth. However, numerous unincorporated villages have also formed over the years to serve the agricultural community on a smaller scale. Some villages flourished in the past, while others continued relatively unchanged.

The 1997 General Assembly adopted several specific programs, which together formed the Smart Growth initiatives. The Act designated specific Priority Funding and Growth Areas throughout Maryland based on an area's existing characteristics and infrastructure thresholds. These regulations called for the designation of Rural Villages, which coincides with the County's existing vision "to preserve the County's historic, cultural, scenic, and architectural heritage".

When designating Rural Villages throughout the County, several qualifying criteria were factored into each designation. Those factors required that the designated Village be: unincorporated, primarily residential in character, may include historic structures, an older community with a high potential for water/sewer problems, in a rural or agricultural area, not within a designated growth area, and that the boundary only recognizes new growth that would come primarily from in-fill development or limited peripheral expansion.

The final list of 35 Rural Villages was compiled and presented to the County Commissioners, who in April of 1998 adopted The Rural Villages Element as part of the Carroll County Master Plan. The Mount Airy Environs Study Area has only one such Rural Village that meets these criteria.

F → Watersville

The Rural Village of Watersville is located at the Carroll County/Howard County line in southern Carroll County. The South Branch of the Patapsco River delineates the County line and the southern boundary of the Village. The Village is located on Watersville Road and is approximately 21-acres in size and 0.6 miles long. The Village has been designated as a water/sewer problem area by the Carroll County Health Department. Several historic buildings are located within the Village boundary. The land surrounding Watersville is diverse with rolling hills, cornfields, and wooded areas. An Agricultural Preservation district is located northwest of the Village.

Analysis of Community Needs

The median owner-occupied housing value for the study area has risen from \$145,600 in

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1990 to \$188,100 in 2000. The median cost per month for renter-occupied housing has risen from \$629 in 1990 to \$664 in 2000. During that same time period, median household income has risen from \$47,134 in 1990 to \$67,250 in 2000. So the general cost of housing and rental units relative to the average annual income in the study area has remained fairly stable.

However, the overall availability of rental housing has declined as a part of the total housing stock from 17.4 percent to 12.6 percent during that same time period. When coupled with the rapid increase in the price of new single-family housing units throughout the region, low-income families and young families are finding it inherently more difficult to find affordable housing in the immediate area.

Affordable housing opportunities are increasingly limited in the study area. Other than using a single family detached home as two units, the agriculture, conservation, and low-density residential zoning that exists in the study area is not permissive to multi-family housing and townhome style development. Higher-density housing, other than assisted living or continuing care facilities, is generally limited to municipalities and CPA's that provide the applicable zoning and are served by public water and sewerage facilities.

Overall, the community lacks accessible park areas and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access as a part of community design. Sidewalks are not available outside of town to connect residential neighborhoods to available goods and services and no bicycle or pedestrian pathways exist to connect open space and parks in the outlying areas to the downtown. These amenities may be unattainable if current large lot, spread out, disconnected, cul-de-sac style development patterns persist in the future. Automobile oriented developments without these basic amenities tend to promote isolation and/or often fail to provide a sense of place or community feel.

Recommended Actions

Based on Town Plan recommendations with additional County recommendations in bold.

- Reinforce the primary importance of Main Street to the Town by creating “gateways” to Main Street, encouraging streetscape improvements, and researching downtown preservation and revitalization opportunities.
- Develop a linear park along an east-west route to interconnect new development, existing Town parks, the historic B&O Railroad right-of-way, and the South Branch of the Patapsco River.
- Pattern new development after desirable qualities of established subdivisions.
- Look for opportunities to enhance significant Town features during the site and design and development process.
- Improve the quality of new development through greater attention to site development, enhanced streetscapes, and lot designs.
- Develop specific criteria for individual lighting standards for residential, commercial, and industrial zones in town.

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- Require developers to design open space areas that connect greenways, trails, and other passive amenities.
- Incorporate landscaping and buffering requirements into future industrial and commercial areas to protect surrounding areas and community character.

Fiscal Implications

The recommendations contained in this plan may be policy-oriented or action-oriented, and their implications may be the responsibility of the County, other public agencies, private landowners and developers, or a combination of these. This section is designed to identify the potential fiscal impacts to the County of each of the recommendations. There could be “No Fiscal Impact” meaning the County would not incur direct or predictable expenses as a result of implementing the recommendation, an “Undetermined Impact”. Meaning there likely would be a cost associated with implementing the recommendations, but that cost can not be determined at this time for various reasons, or a “Fiscal Impact,” which likely would be incurred by the County if the recommendation were implemented. For recommendations that have an identified fiscal impact, the cost of implementing that recommendation is estimated to the best degree possible.

- Reinforce the primary importance of Main Street to the Town by creating “gateways” to Main Street, encouraging streetscape improvements, and researching downtown preservation and revitalization opportunities.

Undetermined Impact: While there likely would be a cost associated with the implementation of this recommendation, the project needs more development before a reasonable cost estimate can be determined.

- Develop a linear park along an east-west route to interconnect new development, existing Town parks, the historic B&O Railroad right-of-way, and the South Branch of the Patapsco River.

Undetermined Impact: While there likely would be a cost associated with the implementation of this recommendation, the project needs more development before a reasonable cost estimate can be determined.

- Pattern new development after desirable qualities of established subdivisions.

No Fiscal Impact

- Look for opportunities to enhance significant Town features during the site and design and development process.

No Fiscal Impact

- Improve the quality of new development through greater attention to site development, enhanced streetscapes, and lot designs.

No Fiscal Impact

- Develop specific criteria for individual lighting standards for residential, commercial, and industrial zones in town.

No Fiscal Impact

- Require developers to design open space areas that connect greenways, trails, and other passive amenities.

No Fiscal Impact.

- Incorporate landscaping and buffering requirements into future industrial and commercial areas to protect surrounding areas and community character.

No Fiscal Impact

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Anticipated CIP Projects

No CIP projects are anticipated.