

# Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan

## Chapter 9: Economic Development & Activity Goal

### Goals

- To explore opportunities that are available with the close proximity of the I-70 corridor
- To attract industrial and/or business development that enhances the character of the community and provides living wage local employment opportunities
- To create a better balance between the residential, commercial, and industrial tax base

Mount Airy's close proximity to Carroll County's only stretch of interstate highway places that town and environs in a unique situation compared to other areas within the County. Successful efforts to attract and retain businesses to the Mount Airy community depend largely upon the County's ability to compete for commerce and industry at the regional level. A skilled labor force and the availability of suitable land that is easily accessible are primary factors. Communities are recognizing the importance of economic development for a vital economy. In addition to providing jobs for the community's resident workforce, industry and community businesses contribute to the jurisdiction's tax base. The tax base includes the gross revenues generated by property taxes, which serve as a base for setting the County budget and providing public services.

Business and industry typically cost the County less in public services than do residential uses. Increasing the percentage of the County's tax base contributed by commercial and industrial uses increases the amount of tax revenue available to pay for services for all segments of the community. Sustained job growth is essential for the fiscal health of the County.

By creating opportunities for local residents to work in the community where they live, business and industry help reduce lengthy commutes and traffic congestion. Along with the benefits of new industrial and commercial development, however, is the potential for higher traffic volumes on the local state highway, county road, and town street network.

### Current Conditions

#### *1 Inventory of Industrial Areas*

Three adjoining parcels make up the only industrially-zoned site within the Mount Airy environs. All three parcels are occupied by the same business operation.

---

**Industrially Zoned Properties  
Mount Airy Environs Study Area  
2003**

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Type of Operation</b>
Auto Parts Exchange (Super Big J's)	Auto storage and salvage yard

Source: Carroll County Department of Planning, July 2003

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

## *2 Description of Industrial Areas*

The only existing industrial zone within the study area is approximately 12 acres in size. The land is privately owned and contains a commercial auto salvage establishment.

The site is primarily bounded by the B&O Railroad tracks to the south, the Mount Airy corporate boundary to the west, and privately-owned residential land to the north and east. The site has no road frontage, and the only current access point is by way of dirt road to nearby Twin Arch Road.

The topography of the industrial area is flat in some areas, but generally slopes toward the railroad tracks. The site is not encumbered by any additional environmental constraints, such as streams or floodplains.

Surrounding zoning consists of low-density residential to the north and east and undeveloped industrially-zoned land within the corporate limits of Mount Airy to the west. No vacant industrially-zoned land exists within the study area.

## *3 Inventory of Commercial Areas*

A total of eleven parcels make up the two commercially-zoned areas within the Mount Airy environs. Only a few of the parcels are currently vacant.

### *4 Description of Commercial Areas*

The existing commercial zoning in the study area is concentrated in two small areas in the southern portion of the election district near the I-70 corridor. The land in both areas is privately owned.

<b>Commercially-Zoned Properties Mount Airy Environs 2003</b>	
<b>Company Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
Ted's Auto Body	Twin Arch Road
Harmony Dental Lab	MD 144 & Bennett Branch Road
Mount Airy Bike & Fitness	
Four Seasons Restaurant	
Jerry's Trophy	
Budget Inn	
Stablemaster Saddle Apparel & Repair	

Source: Carroll County Department of Planning, July 2003

The first site is comprised of five parcels and is primarily bounded by I-70 to the south, the county line to the east, the B&O Railroad tracks to the north, and the Mount Airy corporate boundary to the west. The site is bisected by and fronts along a spur of Twin Arch Road. Only two adjoining parcels currently have a business use on them, one parcel is vacant, and the remaining two contain a small farm with pasture and woodland.

The topography of this commercial area generally slopes away from I-70 to low lying areas near the railroad tracks. The site is also limited by the presence of streams and floodplains in certain areas.

Surrounding zoning consists of a small pocket of private conservation to the east and undeveloped industrially-zoned land within the corporate limits of Mount Airy to the west.

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

The second site is comprised of six parcels and is primarily bounded by I-70 to the north, MD 144 to the south, vacant residential land to the east, and state-owned property to the west. The site is bisected by and fronts along a spur of Twin Arch Road. Only one parcel currently has a business use, another is vacant, and the remaining two contain a small farm with pasture and woodland.

The topography of this commercial area generally slopes toward I-70. The site is not encumbered by any additional environmental constraints, such as streams or floodplains.

To the north is I-70; to the south is developed residentially-zoned land; to the west property utilized by the Maryland State Highway Administration as storage; and to the east is partially-developed Conservation-zoned land. No vacant commercial sites exist within this area.

## *5 Labor Force and Employment*

A strong economy and ample employment opportunities are essential to maintaining a high quality of life in the community. A healthy economy and solid labor force not only promote the retention and expansion of existing business, they also encourage new businesses to locate in the County. This in turn provides residents with increased job opportunities and more buying power to support local businesses. Of equal importance is the salutary effect a robust economy has on the provision of public services to local residents and businesses.

According to the 2000 Census, the civilian labor force for the Mount Airy Election District (including the Carroll portion of the town) consisted of 3,770 persons aged 16 years and older. The following table shows area employment broken down by industry. Between 1990 and 2000, the actual number of employees working in retail trade declined. The largest increases, on a percentage basis, were in entertainment and recreational service and professional and related service, although professional and related services continued to comprise the largest segment of employed persons among the categories.

<b>Employed Persons by Industry (16 Years and Older)</b>					
<b>Mount Airy Election District</b>					
<b>1990 and 2000</b>					
<b>Industry</b>	<b>1990</b>		<b>2000</b>		<b>% Change</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Ag/Forestry/Fishing/Hunting/Mining	64	2.1	19	0.5	-1.6
Construction	384	12.9	382	10.1	-2.8
Manufacturing	229	7.7	293	7.8	+0.1
Transportation	112	3.8	170	4.5	+0.7
Communications	88	2.9	175	4.7	+1.8
Wholesale Trade	125	4.2	155	4.1	-0.1
Retail Trade	539	18.0	435	11.5	-6.5
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	246	8.2	216	5.7	-2.5
Entertainment/Recreational Services	37	1.2	206	5.5	+4.3
Professional/Related Services	933	31.2	1,398	37.1	+5.9
Public Administration	232	7.8	321	8.5	+0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,989</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,770</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

(employment figures include Carroll portion of the town only)  
Source: US Census

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

The following table provides area employment based on occupation. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of technical sales and administrative support saw the sharpest decline. Jobs relating to management and professional specialties experienced the largest growth and overtook technical sales and administrative support as the largest segment among the categories.

<b>Employed Persons by Occupation 16 Years and Older Mount Airy Election District 1990 and 2000</b>					
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>1990</b>		<b>2000</b>		<b>% Change</b>
	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	
Managerial & Professional Specialty Occupations	752	25.2	1,294	34.3	+9.1
Technical, Sales, & Administrative Support Occupations	1,060	35.4	973	25.8	-9.6
Service Occupations	289	9.7	580	15.4	+5.7
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing Occupations	64	2.1	10	0.3	-1.8
Precision Production, Craft, & Repair Occupations	529	17.7	456	12.1	-5.6
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	295	9.9	457	12.1	+2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,989</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,770</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
(employment figures include Carroll portion of the town only)					
Source: US Census					

## *6 Acreage of Industrial and Commercial Uses and Zoning*

Based on the Carroll County zoning maps (2003), approximately 11 acres of land are zoned industrial (Restricted Industrial or General Industrial), and 25 acres are zoned business (Local Business or General Business) within the Mount Airy environs study area.

Information derived from an inventory of existing use of land conducted in 2002 for the study area indicates that there was no undeveloped industrially-zoned land available for development. Approximately 16.32 acres of land zoned business are available for commercial development. These estimates include land currently occupied by residential uses, since industrial and commercial development has a higher value than residential development and over time it is assumed that the land use will change to industrial or commercial uses as allowed by zoning.

It is interesting to note that 100 percent of land zoned industrial is developed with commercial uses. Industrially-zoned land that is used for commercial purposes generally relates to the fact that the County zoning ordinance permits business uses in the industrial zoning districts. Undeveloped land (agricultural/resource or vacant) and residential uses located within industrial (or business) zoning districts are regarded as temporary land uses until industrial (or commercial) development eventually takes place. These properties are therefore deemed to be available for industrial (or commercial) development.

An additional 63.95 acres of land are estimated to be occupied by commercial uses that are not zoned business (or industrial) within the study area. There are no industrial uses occupying non-industrially-zoned land within the study area.

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

Based on information contained in the *2004 Town of Mount Airy Comprehensive Plan*, it is estimated that within the town approximately 116 acres are zoned business or designated business or commercial in the comprehensive plan (Carroll portion only). An estimated 233 acres are zoned industrial or designated industrial in the comprehensive plan (Carroll portion only). Of these totals, an estimated 12 acres of business-zoned land and 129 acres of industrially-zoned land are available for commercial and industrial development, respectively.

## 7 *Industrial and Commercial Tax Base*

Residential development contributes the largest dollar amount to the County's revenues compared to other types of development. It is followed by commercial and industrial development, which is then followed by agriculture. However, as of 2003, for every dollar of revenue received from residential development, roughly \$1.09 is expended by the County for services. Conversely, commercial and industrial uses average only \$0.52 worth of services for each dollar in revenue contributed. Similarly, agricultural uses require only \$0.43 of services for every dollar collected.

The following table provides assessable tax base information for the Mount Airy environs study area. Assessable tax base is now calculated at 100 percent of total market value for all residential, commercial, and industrial uses in the area (as opposed to the previous 40 percent multiplier); for agricultural uses, it is also now calculated at 100 percent of the value of the land for agricultural purposes (as opposed to the previous 50 percent multiplier). For Fiscal Year 2003, commercial and industrial development accounted for only 2.88 percent of the total assessable tax base, while residential development made up 93.64 percent of the total base. Agricultural development accounted for the remainder (3.48 percent) of the total real property assessment base.

<b>Assessable Tax Base by Land Use</b>							
<b>Fiscal Years 1993 to 2003</b>							
<b>Mount Airy Environs</b>							
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Industrial/ Commercial (Dollars)</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Agricultural (Dollars)</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Residential (Dollars)</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total (Dollars)</b>
1993	\$2,126,140	3.22	\$3,259,620	4.93	\$60,717,440	91.85	<b>\$66,103,200</b>
1994	\$2,269,070	2.88	\$3,084,330	3.92	\$73,337,600	93.20	<b>\$78,691,000</b>
1995	\$2,422,180	2.71	\$3,204,750	3.58	\$83,878,090	93.71	<b>\$89,505,020</b>
1996	\$2,392,770	2.64	\$4,145,050	4.57	\$84,169,120	92.79	<b>\$90,706,940</b>
1997	\$2,395,820	2.43	\$4,231,310	4.29	\$91,913,280	93.27	<b>\$98,540,410</b>
1998	\$2,398,900	2.28	\$4,498,790	4.27	\$98,520,210	93.46	<b>\$105,417,900</b>
1999	\$4,144,850	3.65	\$4,736,740	4.17	\$104,735,560	92.18	<b>\$113,617,150</b>
2000	\$3,487,890	2.94	\$4,808,940	4.05	\$110,419,250	93.01	<b>\$118,716,080</b>
2001	\$3,509,390	2.79	\$5,343,940	4.25	\$116,970,510	92.96	<b>\$125,823,840</b>
2002	\$9,240,274	2.74	\$12,446,338	3.69	\$315,769,558	93.57	<b>\$337,456,170</b>
2003	\$10,322,010	2.88	\$12,453,772	3.48	\$335,435,416	93.64	<b>\$358,211,198</b>

\* Figures do not include Town of Mount Airy.

Source: Carroll County Department of Management and Budget, 2003 (Includes Residential, Apartment, Residential/Agricultural, and Other)

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

## **Analysis of Community Needs**

### *1 Tax Base is Primarily Residential*

The tax base in the Mt. Airy environs is unbalanced towards residential land use. Over the past ten years, less than 4 percent of the assessable tax base has been generated from industrial/commercial uses. By way of comparison, the *2000 Carroll County Master Plan* sets 12 percent industrial/commercial as the threshold to strive to maintain across the County. This shortage of industrial and commercial uses is noteworthy because it hurts the County fiscally. Industrial and commercial taxable properties demand relatively little in community services such as police protection, roads and schools, yet pay a lot in property taxes, thereby netting the County revenues that help pay for community services elsewhere. Residential areas generally need more community services than can be paid for by their property tax revenues. In 2003, for the residential uses in the Mt. Airy environs, the cost to provide community services exceeded property tax revenues collected by an estimated \$30 million. For industrial and commercial uses, the revenues exceeded the costs, but not by enough to offset the net loss incurred serving residential areas. The lack of industrial and commercial uses results in pressure to raise property tax rates or limit services.

### *2 Too Little Land is Zoned Business*

There is not enough commercially-zoned land in the Mt. Airy environs to achieve the balance called for in the goals of this chapter. The *2000 Carroll County Master Plan* calls for at least 5 percent of the land in each of the Community Planning Areas to be zoned Business. As of 2003, 0.1 percent of the land in the environs was zoned commercial (BG or BL) and roughly 6-7 percent of land within the town limits had some type of commercial designation. It is important to note, however, that compared with what is zoned commercial, somewhat more of the existing use of land is commercial. The lack of commercially-zoned land forces many businesses to locate in otherwise zoned areas, and likely deters others from locating in the area at all.

### *3 Commercially Zoned Parcels are Not Suitable for Some Development*

Only one of the environs' two clusters of commercially zoned property is large enough to accommodate a commercial use of much size. The cluster on Twin Arch Road consists of five parcels totaling almost twenty acres, and could accommodate mid-sized office or retail uses. On the other hand, the cluster south of I-70 consists of six parcels totaling less than five acres. A fast food restaurant typically occupies about one acre; a medical/dental office building with two or three offices typically occupies one-half to one acre. Such uses might use the site but grocery stores, 'big box' retail stores such as Lowes, or corporate office buildings typically require ten to twenty acres at minimum. Moreover, neither cluster is included in the Mount Airy Water and Sewer service areas. Without water or sewer service, the properties will not accommodate most office, restaurant, or retail uses.

### *4 Commercial Uses in the Industrial Zone*

The lack of designated commercial land is having a spillover effect in designated

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

industrial areas. Currently, 100 percent of the land zoned industrial in the environs is developed with commercial uses. There are four designated industrial parks within the town limits, which provide ample opportunity for suitable development. However, commercial uses are also prevalent in these areas.

Commercial developments generally pay more per square foot of land than industrial developments and will therefore drive prices out of the range of potential industrial buyers when allowed to compete for the same land. Current zoning allows many non-industrial uses in the Industrial General (IG) and Industrial Restricted (IR) districts. Nevertheless, industrial uses are desirable because of the ripple benefits they generate for the local economy. Industrial businesses tend to provide a range of jobs requiring a variety of skill and education levels. As a result, employees have greater opportunity for advancement through training than they would in jobs in other sectors of the economy. Low and moderately skilled workers tend to earn better wages and benefits in industry than in service sector jobs.

Furthermore, although all businesses buy goods and services from other local businesses, industrial businesses tend to do so more than others and thereby grow the local economy. In the Mt. Airy environs, the lack of suitable large parcels for industrial development and the encroachment of commercial uses in industrially zoned areas represent disadvantages to attracting industrial businesses.

## *5 Industrially Zoned Parcels are Not Suitable for Some Development*

Within the Mt. Airy environs, the 12 acres zoned industrial comprise one site east of the town. The site is suitably sized for a small manufacturing facility; by way of comparison, Knorr Brake sits on approximately 10 acres near Westminster. However, many manufacturing operations and distribution facilities require a larger site; near Hampstead, the Joseph A. Banks headquarters and the Sweetheart Cup distribution facility occupy 38 acres and 54 acres respectively. Yet even a small manufacturer would find it difficult to locate on this site. The only access is a dirt road and the site is currently occupied by a commercial use. It is a goal of this chapter to attract industrial and/or business development, but that is hard to do with one mid-sized parcel that is not vacant and has dirt road access.

## *6 Lack of businesses with regional, national, or international markets*

Despite location advantages such as access to interstate highway and proximity to the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan areas, Mt. Airy has not attracted major employers. While many small local businesses have grown and currently thrive in the area, the Mt. Airy environs lacks companies that export their products or services beyond the local area; attracting such companies is central to most economic development strategies, because of their potential to stimulate local economic growth. The goals of this chapter call for efforts to bring employers to the area with particular emphasis on the opportunities that are available along the I-70 corridor. Not enough is known about what barriers have thus far prevented employers from locating in the Mt. Airy environs. One barrier has likely been the lack of suitable sites for industry. Another barrier may be lack of awareness in the marketplace about available properties in the area.

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

## *7 A growing professional labor force commutes elsewhere for work*

Among residents in the Mt. Airy environs, the number of people employed in “Managerial and Professional Specialty Occupations” grew by over 70 percent between 1990 and 2000. Now, due to that growth, more residents of the area hold managerial and professional specialty jobs than any other category of job. This represents a large and growing professional labor force. However, few professional jobs are based in Mt. Airy or the environs. As a result, the area’s largest and fastest growing segment of workers must commute elsewhere. Continuing this trend will require further investments in commuter roadway capacity or transit service. Commute times will increase as congestion increases. Commuters are more likely to spend money outside of the Mt. Airy community, thereby supporting the tax bases and local economies of other communities.

### **Recommended Actions**

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

- Continue to attract commercial and industrial development to provide a tax base necessary for balanced growth as a regional center.
- **Prioritize extension of water and sewer to industrial or commercial areas and/or investigate the possibility of on-site well and septic systems in developable areas that the Town doesn’t intend to serve.**

The availability of water will not only limit future residential development, but commercial and industrial development as well. The Town and County should continually seek ways to maximize economic development potential (while keeping the Town’s desire to retain its rural atmosphere) given the areas proximity to the I-70 corridor.

### **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.*

- Continue to attract commercial and industrial development to provide a tax base necessary for balanced growth as a regional center.

*No Fiscal Impact*

# *Mount Airy Environs Community Comprehensive Plan*

- **Prioritize extension of water and sewer to industrial or commercial areas and/or investigate the possibility of on-site well and septic systems in developable areas that the Town doesn't intend to serve.**

*No Fiscal Impact*

## **Anticipated CIP Projects**

No CIP projects are anticipated.