

## FOREWORD

In July of 1997, the Easton Town Council adopted a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Easton. This culminated a two and one-half year process of unprecedented community involvement in a Comprehensive Planning process.

In the six years since the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was adopted, much has occurred in Easton. Growth concerns have risen in the community and Town and County Council meetings are now dominated by growth, development and land use issues. This was best exemplified during the last five years when the Town instituted a moratorium on so-called "Big Box" developments, sparking a debate that still lingers in the community.

Over the last six years we also did our best to heed what is perhaps the most clarion call of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan; that the quality of all development should be improved. In order to answer that call we have imposed new standards on many types of development, updated other antiquated standards, and perhaps most importantly instituted a general education process to better explain the superior alternatives that exist in the realm of development and community building.

In 2004 the need for these alternatives are paramount. The Eastern Shore as a whole is being "discovered" and Talbot County with its central location on the Shore, is in many ways ground zero for those folks who are relocating to the Shore. As the county seat and largest municipality, Easton is absorbing the brunt of these development pressures, and these pressures are not likely to decrease. In fact, all indications are that they will increase.

With this context in mind, this Comprehensive Plan was prepared. Once again, as in 1997, an intensive public participation process was utilized to develop the premises upon which this Plan is built. Again, as in 1997, one of the dominant themes was the continuing need to improve the quality of development. What is new this time is the overwhelming sentiment in the community that we need to also take steps to slow the rate of growth of our Town. To that end, this Plan will outline a Comprehensive Growth Management Strategy that attacks the growth "problem" on three levels. First, we will discuss a strategy to contain the outward limits of the Town. Second, we will propose means to increase the density of the built-up areas of the Town so that they once again begin to resemble an actual Town and not a monotonous and anonymous suburb. Finally, we will revisit the issue of improving the quality of development and thus preserve the character of the entire community.

The Foreword of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan stated that the Plan was the "end product of [the Comprehensive Planning] effort." We have learned a great deal since 1997. One of the lessons learned is that this statement was wrong. The Plan is not an end product, but merely a milestone, albeit a major one, in a continuous process of goal and policy setting and evaluation. With that in mind, we present herein our best thinking about the various growth and development issues at this time. We reserve the right, however; to change our mind and revisit the issues at any time and will absolutely do so again in six years.