



City of Annapolis

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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West Annapolis Sector Study

Background

The City's 2009 Comprehensive Plan identifies a portion of West Annapolis as one of four "Opportunity Areas"—locations where the City intends to direct new growth and development. The Comprehensive Plan also recommends the preparation of a Sector Study to better understand and address the site-specific considerations of growth and development policies. In response to this action item, staff in the Department of Planning and Zoning initiated the West Annapolis Sector Study in May 2013. This sector study looks at the opportunity area within the context of the larger neighborhood area.



As a detailed planning effort, the Sector Study focuses on the topics identified in the Comprehensive Plan, but also expands beyond those topics. As more input was gathered from the community, it became clear that there were several important issues affecting the vitality of this neighborhood.

- **Transportation:** A detailed examination of recurring (i.e., rush hour or "non-event") and non-recurring (i.e., special event or "event") traffic impacts on West Annapolis and the impact of overflow traffic from US 50

Figure 1.1: Study Area with Urban Center Low Opportunity Area

- **Market Analysis:** A comprehensive analysis of the economic and market data relevant to development and retail opportunities in the local and surrounding area
- **Land Use:** A review of existing zoning and how it corresponds to the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan. This section also discusses urban design; pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit modal options; and potential new recreation and open space facilities, in light of limited available land within West Annapolis.

The Sector Study was guided by an 11-member Steering Committee that set the work plan for the scope of the study. The Committee held eight meetings over the course of the yearlong process. Public outreach included interviews with the owners and/or managers of 11 West Annapolis businesses, as well as two public meetings. The two public meetings were held at the Taylor Avenue Fire Station. The first was held June 24, 2013 and the second on December 2, 2013.

If approved, this Sector Study would serve as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with city and state laws for such amendments, the Sector Study was reviewed and discussed at a public hearing

before the City of Annapolis Planning Commission on November 6, 2014. Revisions to the plan were presented on September 3, 2015. The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Sector Study September 3, 2015.

The August 20, 2015 version incorporates certain refinements such as:

- Refocusing of the traffic analysis on discussing the difference between “regular” congestion that occurs in the afternoon, and “event” congestion, that occurs on Friday afternoons in the summer or during scheduled events in town or on the Eastern Shore.
- Tightening the market analysis and removing conjecture while keeping the analysis intact.

Expanding the land use analysis to include a more thorough analysis of the proposed land use in the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, this section was expanded to include two renderings that capture the design aesthetic for the Opportunity Area as described in the Comprehensive Plan.



Figure 1.2: West Annapolis Opportunity Area Map

Traffic Analysis

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that “the regionally significant role of Rowe Blvd. and Taylor Avenue/MD 450 as an overflow route to US 50” be acknowledged and states that there should be a search for a balance between regional transportation needs and local circulation and mobility. The data presented in this report illustrates that there is not an adequate balance at this time, and that local circulation suffers as a result. This study also outlines several local strategies that could improve mobility. However, the State Highway Association must partner with the City for a successful outcome.

Recommendations

The implication of this finding is that the City needs to be a municipal pioneer in the field of traffic monitoring and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). An ITS Plan for roads, parking, and transit, and a regional traffic management system and operations center (with State and County participation) to address traffic in the Annapolis area should be implemented through the Capital Improvement Program.

The City has a limited ability to add capacity in terms of expanding existing roadways and adding new roads. New technologies for traffic management need to be promoted along with the development of alternative modes of transportation such as biking and public transit.

Safety conditions in West Annapolis can be improved through traffic control and traffic calming. This could include studying the feasibility of adding a cycle track along Melvin Avenue or installing intersection chokers along Melvin and other streets as a traffic calming measure.

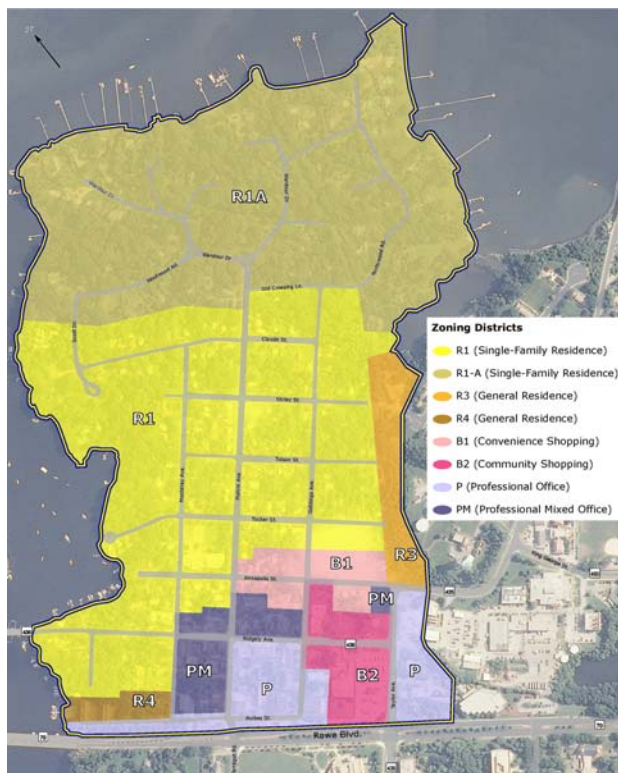
Market Analysis

The purpose of this section is to identify the most likely successful future development types in the study area, including the opportunity area as well as the smaller, retail-oriented businesses along Annapolis Street. Baseline research for the market analysis included examination of existing and projected demographic and economic factors for the study area, lifestyle characteristics, household/retail expenditures, consumer spending patterns, per capita and household income, and retail sales.

Recommendations

The zoning in the opportunity area should facilitate specialty retail and restaurants. In order to help retail establishments succeed, the City should re-assess its policies and ordinances regarding shared parking. It should also look at parking requirements and whether they can be reduced for certain uses in West Annapolis or if it is time to reassess these requirements city-wide.

The economic health of West Annapolis is very much dependent on the neighboring community. Therefore, it is essential that here, as in many established neighborhoods in Annapolis, that density and growth be carefully placed, plotted, and planned for with the support of that community. To keep West Annapolis a vibrant destination, merchants should build on existing strengths and make improvements to marketing and merchandising that increase the capture rate and draw in new customers.



Land Use Analysis

This section looks at existing zoning and analyses what uses are permitted in the existing business districts of the West Annapolis Opportunity Area. Allowing new uses in any district would have effects on zoning districts city-wide. The large number of existing zoning districts is confusing—especially when so many of them are similar. During the next city-wide review of zoning, there should be an analysis of whether the B2, PM, and P zones could be migrated to the MX district. The B1 district should remain to serve as a transitional area between the mixed use centers and the uniformly residential areas.

Figure 4.5: Zoning

Recommendations

The zoning in this area could be simplified, while maintaining the “Urban Center Low” character type. There should be an emphasis on mixed use and the design called for and supported is two-to-four stories and architecture that reflects that the West Annapolis Opportunity Area is a gateway to the City. There has been other work on urban design in West Annapolis, and the findings of these efforts should be furthered.



While there are limited areas for new recreation and open space facilities in West Annapolis, there are a few options such as:

- Install an interpretive station for the wetland area that feeds into Wimsey Cove (where the unimproved Shiley and Tolson Street rights of way converge at Weems Creek).
- Install floating docks adjacent and connected to street ends, including the Tucker Street boat ramp.

Figure 4.7: Rendering of the Urban Low Design Aesthetic

- Create a linear park and pedestrian/bicycle trail along the former B&A Railroad bed. In addition to serving the community, this could also serve as part of the connection of the B&A Trail to central Annapolis. This trail would not extend into the Wardour community (i.e., past Old Crossing Ln.)
- Construct parklets as Opportunity Area Gateway Features: Ridgely and Annapolis Street are designated as primary pedestrian and bicycle areas within the neighborhood. One way to facilitate this emphasis is to construct parklets. Parklets are small, often temporary and movable, public spaces carved out of the general paved area of the right of way. They are commonly not larger than one or two curbside parking spaces and offer seating, greenery, or other active uses.



Figure 4.8: Rendering of an imagined view from the Taylor/Rowe Blvd. intersection looking northeast