



MARITIME TASK FORCE
JUNE 25, 2021

MARITIME TASK FORCE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND





CONTENTS

- 4 Maritime Task Force: Executive Summary
- 8 Maritime Task Force: Purpose & Process
- 9 Action Strategy: Areas of Agreement
 - 10 Sustainable Future
 - 12 Strengthening the Maritime Industry
 - 15 Greater Access to the Waterfront
- 16 Measuring & Monitoring Success
- 19 Moving Forward!
- 20 Image Credits

Maritime Task Force Executive Summary

In 1987, a coalition of residents, maritime businesses, and property owners came together to craft the Maritime Economic and Land Use Strategy, a forward-thinking plan to preserve the City's working waterfront by creating four very intentional maritime zoning districts. As a result, the maritime industry in Annapolis remains a strong presence today. The importance of this industry cannot be overstated as the boating industry links Annapolis to its past and preserves this its heritage into the future. The industry is both an immense cultural asset and an economic asset to the City and larger region.

Over the last thirty years, the maritime industry has evolved, and with those changes the need for the City to recalibrate its maritime districts to ensure that Annapolis continues to thrive as a boating center for the Mid-Atlantic. The Maritime Task Force reviewed the challenges and opportunities now facing both the maritime districts and the maritime industry, and how the districts function within the larger city, with an eye toward ensuring their continued success. The thirty-four active members of the Task Force reflect the districts, industry, and city with a wealth of knowledge and experience from both Annapolis and other world-class boating centers. The Task Force came to consensus on a range of policy proposals aimed at protecting the districts while allowing them to evolve, strengthening the maritime industry in Annapolis, and providing new opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the waterfront.

At the core of the Task Force's recommendations are strategic provisions for flexibility and adaptation that take stock of the current and projected maritime landscape of the city, and which acknowledge a continuing evolution:

- **The districts gain additional allowances for compatible non-maritime uses in exchange for preserving the core maritime uses which anchor the districts;**
- **Modest new restaurant allowances are granted to properties in the Waterfront Maritime Industrial district that are tied to preservation of their working boat yards;**
- **A dedicated maritime fund is created to help retain, attract, and grow maritime businesses; and,**
- **A framework for creating new and enhanced public water access is provided that will incentivize public private investments in the waterfront.**

While the recommendations are highly specific and targeted, they are designed to have a broad net positive impact. The recommendations will further protect those existing elements of the districts which are most vulnerable, and activate those complementary elements currently missing from the districts. Indeed, only by addressing both of these needs will the districts truly evolve with the changing industry and city around them.





How Did We Get Here?



Issues Facing Maritime Industry 1987

In 1985 the maritime industry in Annapolis was under siege, facing numerous challenges to replace working yards with more profitable development. Land intensive, the industry requires sufficient open spaces to operate working yards with its many vessels, employees, buildings, and heavy machinery. In 1985, two working yards were replaced by office buildings, placing pressure on the industry, especially working yards, with rising land values. The working maritime industry could not generate revenues sufficient to offset the tax burden of rising assessments based on potential residential or hotel development. The maritime industry was concerned that these increased land values, coupled with the commercial and residential uses, would be in direct conflict with working yards and their heavy equipment, pushing the industry and the working yards out of the Maritime Districts.

A proposed maritime hotel, which replaced another working yard near the Eastport Bridge, brought these pressures to a head. By 1987 Annapolis had forged a consensus plan to protect the industry as an important component of our economy and civic life. Elected officials, professional planners, the maritime industry, and residents recognized the value the maritime industry brought to Annapolis with its distinct waterfront characteristics and supported four maritime districts structured upon these differences. Those districts continue to exist today and have worked well for all members of the community for three decades.

Today's Challenges

Thirty plus years have passed, the maritime industry has evolved, and the City is revisiting its Comprehensive Plan including the future of the maritime districts. Gradual changes to the industry have resulted in challenges to both the industry and the property owners including:

1. **Competition:** A greater demand from clients of maritime businesses to have more services and amenities at a working yard to provision their boats, to dine or engage in recreational activities while their boats are in port for work have increased.

2. **Recruitment:** Maritime sites with soft maritime office uses are finding it harder to recruit a shrinking number of maritime office tenants;
3. **Costs:** Expenses have increased significantly with new and costly environmental regulations, rising taxes, and maintenance requirements; and,
4. **Relocation:** Areas with lower land cost, such as the Eastern Shore or South County, are attracting boat owners and the supporting industries to relocate to these locales.



222 Severn Ave. Annapolis, MD

Property owners find themselves facing increased vacancies with fewer available maritime tenants to recruit. They are concerned that they will not be able to secure the tenant base necessary to maintain and continue to invest in their properties. The maritime tenants are fearful that they will no longer be able to afford the rising rents needed to compensate for these trends as maritime service and repair uses require significantly lower rents. The industry requires large site areas for functioning working yards and boat repair activities as well as requiring a critical mass of service uses, a hub within Annapolis' Maritime Districts.

Many residents are unsettled by the prospect of having the working yards replaced by large buildings or residential uses which will wall-off the waterfront, while residents on Edgewood Road would like to have accessible restaurants and activities they can enjoy at the water's edge. All residents want to secure the future of the maritime districts with confidence that any changes to the districts will be monitored and measured to ensure their continued success.



Maritime Task Force **Purpose & Process**

Given these changes and the need to secure a viable future for the maritime industry, the City has formed a Maritime Task Force including residents living near the maritime zones, industry and trade group representatives, and landowners in the district. Working in conjunction with City Planning staff and other interested citizens, this group, appointed by the Mayor and City Council, have worked for several months to address the current state of our maritime zoning.

The purpose of the Maritime Task Force is to identify and understand the changes in the maritime industry that affect its future and ongoing success. From that basic knowledge, the goal is to create an environment in which the maritime industry can continue to prosper as a Mid-Atlantic Hub for boating services. A part of that equation is to provide a sustainable approach for property owners to invest in and maintain their maritime properties.

The task force met repeatedly for many months engaging all the effected constituencies to create a workable plan to sustain the maritime uses and keep them viable in our community. To this end, members of the task force have concentrated on three crucial issues:

- **Creating some limited flexibility, in conjunction with essential maritime services, in the zoning code that will create a sustainable future**

for the maritime properties and industry to continue to prosper in Annapolis.

- **Finding ways to strengthen the industry by keeping existing business, recruiting new business, and training a diverse workforce as needed by a more technological and environmentally sensitive industry; and,**
- **Most importantly to the residential community, developing a strategy and tools to maintain the openness of the existing working yards and increase public access to the water.**

It is of paramount importance for all involved in reviewing the recommendations of the Task Force to recognize the consensus-building process that was undertaken. The Task Force met repeatedly as a whole and within their separate working teams, balanced between residents, property owners and the maritime industry. Extensive outreach was made to civic associations, property and maritime business owners, non-profit and public-interest organizations, as well as interested stakeholders. This approach reflects the same extensive outreach process utilized to craft the existing zones: it has provided ample opportunity for extensive discussion of various strategies, teamwork to find solutions that benefit everyone, and agreement on a wide range of initiatives and recommendations.

Action Strategy

Areas of Agreement

To set a clear direction for the future success of Annapolis' maritime industry and its districts, the MTF developed a Maritime Action Strategy, weaving together the interests of all stakeholders. This strategy focuses on four interconnected areas:

1. **Creating a sustainable future for maritime properties:**

Offering limited flexibility to retain these properties, while tying that flexibility to activities that are essential to the maritime industry, known as "triggers";

2. **Strengthening the existing working maritime industry:**

Recognizing uses that contribute directly to the health of the working yards and marinas; and,

Retaining a critical mass of maritime activities while directly supporting the maritime industry through recruitment, promotion, relocation and diversifying workforce training;

3. **Enhancing greater access to the waterfront and on-water activities:**

Incentivizing water access while developing a Comprehensive Water Access Plan for Annapolis; and,

4. **Building confidence in the future success of the districts:**

Delivering annual "Measuring and Monitoring" updates to the Planning Commission.



Sustainable Future

Triggers Requiring Essential Maritime Activities

Early in the deliberation process, the Maritime Task Force agreed that, while modifying the existing districts to reflect current trends, they wanted to build upon the long-standing success of the existing maritime districts, including the structure and unique characteristics of each district. The Task Force recognizes the value of the maritime industry to Annapolis' identity, both economic and cultural. For the industry to continue to prosper in Annapolis, it is essential that these districts, located immediately adjacent to the water, remain intact and available to support the City's working waterfront. The maritime districts face many of the same challenges today that they faced in 1987

- Waterfront demand for residential, hotel and other competing uses that, if permitted, would significantly increase the value of maritime land;
- Inability of the working maritime uses to afford the increasing land values brought by competing uses which jeopardize the future for waterfront maritime activities; and,
- Need for the existing maritime properties to remain viable to invest in and maintain today's vibrant maritime industry.

To meet this challenge, the Task Force determined that any additional flexibility offered to maritime properties would be tied directly to supporting those activities essential to the continued survival of the maritime industry. Given this commitment, the Task Force built their Maritime Strategy upon the concept of "triggers" in the current maritime districts.

The current maritime districts subsidize properties within the WMM District up to 30% non-maritime uses in exchange for retaining any of the following hard maritime triggers:

- 20,000 sf working Yard with a 30-ton lift
- 25,000 sf on-land boat storage
- Seafood processing
- Boat/sailing clubs



Bert Jabin Yacht Yard, looking South

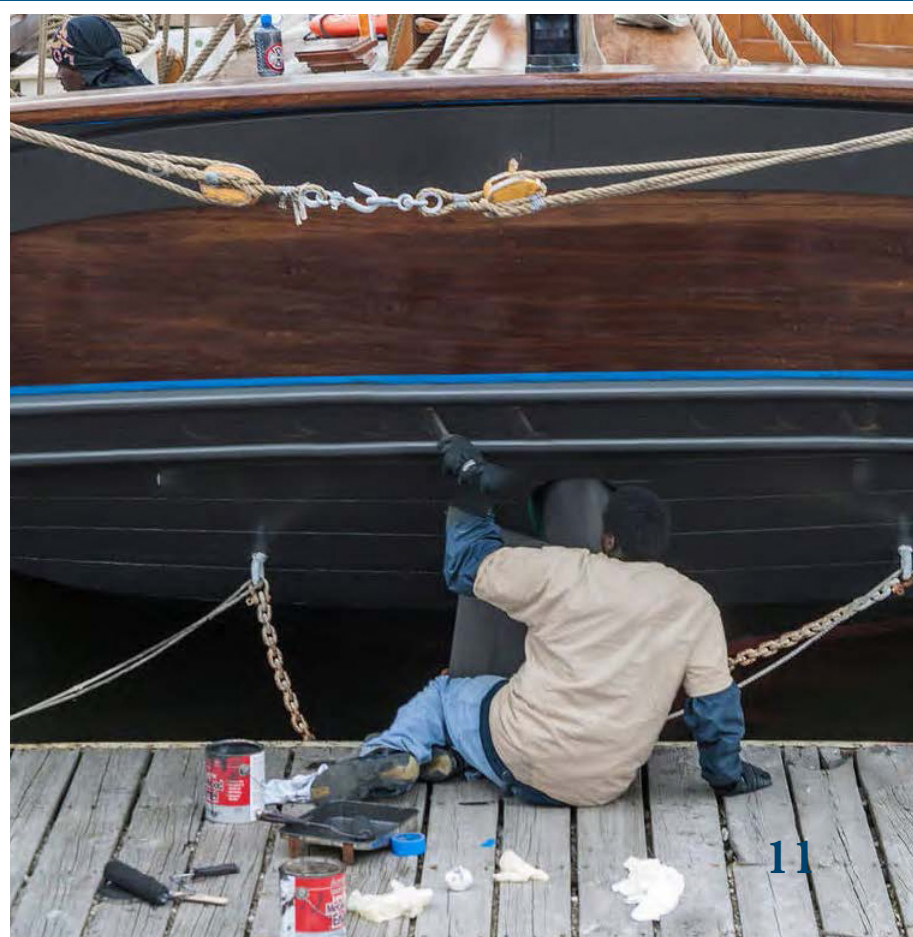
The MTF is recommending that these triggers be retained with the addition of in-water fuel docks to provide fuel to boats on the Chesapeake Bay.

In exchange for maintaining and improving these triggers, which are essential to the viability of the maritime industry, the Task Force agreed to allow properties with these triggers 15% non-maritime use. This decision was the result of extensive debate as property owners initially sought greater relief without requiring the triggers.

Recommendation: It was the consensus of the MTF that 15% was the least amount of non-maritime that would provide any relief for the property owners to invest in their properties.



McNasby Oyster Company - Annapolis Maritime Museum



Strengthening the Maritime Industry

The maritime industry needs first and foremost customers! Annapolis' maritime districts have succeeded because they have clustered in-water locations for boaters and offer one-stop shopping for boaters with repair, hauling and maintenance services readily available. These sites are land intensive and water accessible, offering the maritime industry an ideal location for reaching their customer base. For the industry to continue to thrive, it must attract new maritime businesses to the districts while promoting the wide range of existing maritime industries. The Task Force has identified a strategic approach to augment the long-term viability of Annapolis' maritime businesses. This strategy emphasizes:

1. Strengthening the Existing Maritime Districts:

For Annapolis' maritime industry to remain viable, the four maritime districts, WMC, WMM, WME and WMI must continue to function as working maritime districts excluding both residential and hotel uses which compete directly with the maritime activities by driving up the land values;

Recommendation: Continue to not allow either residential or hotel uses in any of the maritime districts.

2. Contributing Uses

The maritime industry needs to be competitive with the surrounding working yards and marinas in the county, all of which can have restaurant facilities. In today's market, yacht yards need to have amenities that are expected by patrons. Restaurants are the prime example of an ancillary use that many boaters expect at a modern marina. Employees of the yard businesses also benefit by not having to leave the site to obtain food and beverages, as do community members who can enjoy the waterfront area and the scenic value of vessels on the water.

Recommendation: Restaurants have been recommended for inclusion in the WMI districts on the large working sites with triggers. There was not agreement to increase the size of restaurants currently permitted in WME due to the proximity to residential neighborhoods and concerns raised by the residents.

3. Complimentary Uses:

Temporary events, particularly those for sailing competitions, contribute income supporting the working maritime businesses as do uses that offer services to boaters at marinas including laundromats, dry goods and outdoor exercise facilities.

Recommendation: Include these uses as accessory uses to the marinas and boat yards.

4. Parking Equity:

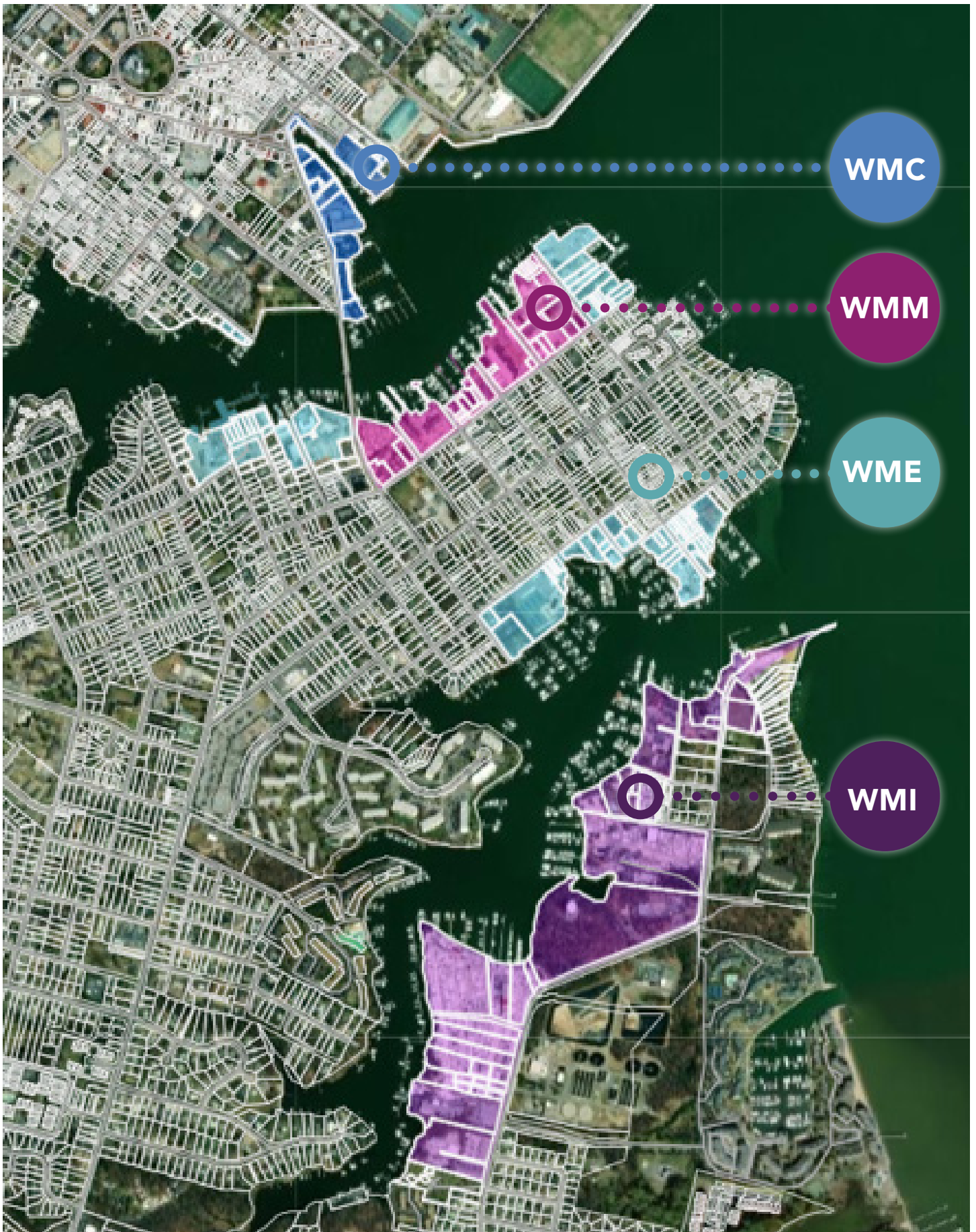
Currently the maritime districts penalize maritime uses by requiring higher parking ratios than are required for office parking in the same districts.

Recommendation: The parking ratio for maritime uses will be the same as the parking ration for office use, 1 space per 300 sq. ft.

5. Eliminate impediments to winter maritime services:

Currently the code requires permits every time a boat yard needs to work on a boat in the winter under a tent causing unnecessary delays and additional costs.

Recommendation: Streamline the permitting processes by offering an annual approval for all work to be performed under a winter tent.



6. Maritime Industry Support-Programs and Fund:

For the maritime industry to retain its standing as a major Mid-Atlantic Hub for boating activities, services and repair, the task force has recommended that the City's Office of Economic Development and the Maritime Industry form a partnership to create an Annapolis Maritime Industry Fund (AMIF) which can deploy its resources to:

Promote the maritime districts while recruiting new businesses;

Retain and support expansion of existing maritime services; and,

Diversify and expand workforce training to offer all Annapolitans an opportunity to enter the marine trades.

The recommendations to offer 15% flexibility to underwrite the rising costs associated with the maritime properties creates greater affordability and predictability for the maritime properties allowing them to invest in their properties and businesses within the maritime districts.

Recommendation: Establish the Annapolis Maritime Industry Fund (AMIF) by Targeting the increased tax revenues tied to the 15% non-maritime uses. Under the direction of the Economic Development Manager, this fund, in conjunction with other grants and funding, will develop and implement programs to provide direct support to the maritime industry and its businesses.

Greater Access to the Waterfront

Unlike the other foundational concerns of the Task Force, the issue of public water access was decidedly shaped by the resident perspective, which had the most potential to offer tangible public benefit. From a local perspective, Task Force members sought to leverage underutilized public access opportunities as way for the maritime districts to better complement neighboring communities. These same water access opportunities were seen as a way of offsetting lingering inequities across the city. Both perspectives highlight the vexing issue of determining what adequate public water access should look like in a city whose cultural identity has long been defined by its waterfront. At the heart of the solution developed by the Task Force is the notion that public water access is not monolithic, it comes in many forms which offer differing benefits.

Hierarchy of Water Access Activities

The Task Force identified a hierarchy of water access activities to set priorities for public water access and clarify those few types of amenities that would truly be game changers for both adjacent residents and the broader city. Consensus was reached on three types of water access that would become game changers for the community:

- A substantial investment in a street-end park to amplify its use;

- A community paddle facility that could be operated as either a nonprofit or for-profit venture; and,

- The dedication of a substantial block of parking (50 spaces minimum) to be utilized by area patrons, general visitors, and employees from nearby businesses.

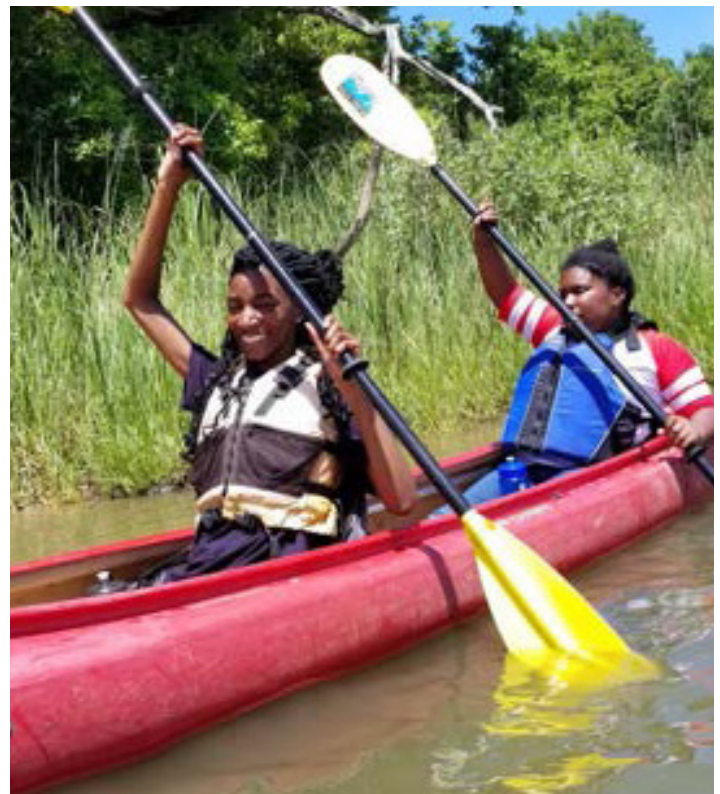
Consensus was also reached on a lower tier of water access amenities that were seen as having value but easier to achieve ranging from a public promenade to improvements for paddle access such as a floating dock.

Water Access Incentives

The concept of offering additional incentives for flexibility on non-maritime development was widely seen as the most likely avenue for property owners to partner on new public water access projects. Some Task Force members felt that the incentive would need to be 10% to elicit any water access improvements, while others were concerned about allowing properties in the WMM district to exceed a maximum of 50% non-maritime activity through the triggers and incentives. The Task Force concluded that a 5% incentive would be offered in all the maritime districts in exchange for public water access.

Ultimately, there was consensus that an expansion of public water access will be integral to the sustainability of the maritime districts, and with equitable access at the forefront on citywide concerns, this is any issue that the districts are well suited to help solve.

Recommendation: Offer an incentive for 5% flexibility to maritime properties providing the identified water access opportunities to the community.





Measuring & Monitoring Success

To ensure that these recommendations complement each other in a way that creates a more viable future for Annapolis' maritime industry, the Task Force recommend an annual assessment of the progress taking place. The public and the maritime community will be able to assess both recruitment and retention efforts because property owners must submit a report to the Planning Director identifying the uses and any changes that have occurred in the prior year.

Recommendation: Maritime properties with non-maritime uses shall present an annual update at the Planning Commission to monitor and measure the health of the Maritime Districts.





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Moving Forward!

The City has a unique opportunity to move forward with the Maritime Task Force's strategic approach to reinvigorate Annapolis' maritime districts based upon the coalition developed by the Task Force. The success of this maritime strategy is built upon the agreement of all the involved stakeholders: residents adjacent to the maritime districts, property owners in the maritime districts, maritime business operators, environmentalists, public interest advocates, interested City residents with land use and financial expertise as well as industry trade groups and Civic association representatives. All of these interests and their perspectives were carefully balanced in the deliberations and formation of the Task Force's recommendations.

The Maritime Task Force has worked tirelessly to forge a consensus with a clear path forward to reposition our maritime districts for future success by attracting new maritime businesses to Annapolis, while offering sufficient flexibility to ensure that the large maritime sites will continue to remain open. Recognizing how valuable water access is to everyone in the community, the Task Force has

committed to incentivizing public access and to developing a Water Access Plan to improve access on all the City's creeks.

This consensus has been built upon a collaborative process similar to the process used to create the 1987 Maritime Strategy and Maritime Zones, which has clearly met the test of time. In updating the Comprehensive Plan and the existing Maritime Strategy, the Task Force has endeavored to build upon that same history of community consensus. The Task Force urges that this strategic approach be adopted as a cohesive document, respecting the compromises made and understanding that these recommendations depend on one another for their success. Now is the time to move forward, protecting those existing elements of the districts which are most vulnerable, and activating those complementary elements currently needed in the districts. By addressing both of these needs, the districts can truly evolve in step with the changing industry and with the community around them!

IMAGE CREDITS

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- p. 6 Cassandra Ortiz, Unsplash.com
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- P. 8 Navy Women's Crew team during a practice. Maryland, Peter Pryharski, Unsplash.com
- p. 9 Man working on boat. Courtesy of The Maritime Task Force
- p. 10 Bert Jabin Yacht Yard, looking South. Courtesy of Bert Jabin Yacht Yard
- p. 10 McNasby Oyster Company Courtesy of Annapolis Maritime Museum
- p. 11 Bert Jabin Yacht Yard photos
Courtesy of Bert Jabin Yacht Yard
- p. 13 Maritime District Maps. Courtesy of the Maritime Task Force
- p. 14 Markus Spiske, Unsplash.com
- p. 15 Paddle Boards in the Bay, Tower Paddle Boards, Unsplash.com
- p. 16 Annapolis musician Sean Hetrick performs at a Capital SUP paddle boarding class. Courtesy of Capital SUP
- p. 16 Annapolis City Marina, Courtesy of The Maritime Task Force
- p. 18 Sailboat horizon , Jonathan Smith, Unsplash.com
- p. 20 Sailboat Sail, Amdrew Neel, Unsplash.com







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