



CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

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The Grasonville Planning and Study Areas Defined

The Grasonville Study Area is the area generally surrounding the Grasonville Planning Area. The Study Area extends west towards the Kent Narrows, abutting the Lippincott Marina on the south side of US 50/301, and is generally bound by the Chester River to the north, Marshy Creek and Cabin Creek to the southwest, Perry's Corner Road to the south, Walsey Creek to the northeast of US 50/301 and Bennett Point Road to the east, including parcels north of Main Street, east and west of Nesbit Road (see Figure 1).



Marshy Creek/Lippincott Marina



Grasonville Cemetery Road



Bennett Point Road



Perry's Corner Road

The Planning Area's current appearance is greatly influenced by the presence of US 50/301. This heavily traveled, controlled-access highway bisects Grasonville, with a smaller, less populated area to the north cut off from the main part of town to the south. Residents must utilize one of two overpasses to travel from one side to the other, either at Chester River Beach Road or Nesbit Road.



US 50/301



Nesbit Road Exit



Nesbit Road Overpass

A primary focus of the Planning Area is Main Street, which in the past defined Grasonville (see Figures 2 and 3). At the present time, however, a solid village core really does not exist. Main Street consists of mixed residential, commercial and public uses, with the emphasis on residential. The few businesses that are scattered along Main Street seem somewhat disjointed, as there is no cohesive commercial center. A good deal of the commercial development that exists in Grasonville is geared toward US 50/301, not the town. Traveling along the highway, one is not really aware that a town exists behind the various businesses fronting the road.



Grasonville Main Street

The commercial development along US 50/301 through the Grasonville area is mostly clustered around the major side streets that intersect it; Jackson Creek Road, VFW Avenue, Winchester Avenue, Station Lane, Evans Avenue, Hess Road and at the western end of Main Street where it connects to the highway. The businesses on Main Street are generally small operations which focus on local traffic. Grasonville's future character will ultimately be shaped by decisions made concerning Main Street. A detailed examination of Main Street follows in Chapters 3 and 4.

Grasonville is currently served by public water and sewer, though only the most recent developments in Grasonville are served with public water, with a large majority of existing homes and businesses using individual wells. Access to public sewer service is a significant determinant in growth and development decisions, because one of the ways that "sprawl" is encouraged is by the lack of public sewer. In this situation, development can occur basically anywhere, as long as the land will support a private sewage disposal system. In the overall growth management picture, public sewer helps accomplish the goal of targeting specific areas to absorb growth. Sewage from Grasonville is pumped to the Kent Narrows/Stevensville/Grasonville (KN/S/G) sewage treatment plant, where the County recently completed expansions to handle 3 million gallons per day. However, improvements are needed to Grasonville's collection system as growth to the area continues.

Drainage is a major issue in Grasonville. So much of the area is low lying and wet that many neighborhoods and roadways experience flooding from just an average rain. Recommendations for addressing this problem are presented in later chapters. Areas experiencing repeated flooding occurrences include Main Street from Chester River Beach Road to Collier Road, the County Park at Perryø Corner Road and Gravel Run Road.

Population

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population within the Grasonville Planning Area was approximately 2,689 persons (see Table 2-1). This is about 35 percent of the total 2000 population of 7,688 in the 5th Election District, and about 6.6 percent of the 2000 County population of 40,563. The County has an estimated 2010 population of 48,650.

With respect to future growth, it is projected that the County will see an increase of approximately 7,000 people by the year 2020, bringing the total County population to almost 55,650. However, the County has experienced at least a 50% reduction in the average amount of residential permits for 2008 and 2009 which may significantly impact the County's rate of growth during this current economic downturn.

There continues to be a trend that newcomers to the County, still work on the Western Shore. Continued improvements to US 50/301 have made commuting over the Bay Bridge from places like Grasonville quite easy. In fact, 58% of the work force of Queen Anne's County was commuting over the Bridge in 2000. Another factor contributing to Grasonville's potential for future growth is the construction and visibility of the new Emergency Center at Nesbit Road.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

A land use inventory conducted in 2010 by the Department of Land Use, Growth Management and Environment indicates that the Grasonville Study Area is comprised of 4,166 acres of land, while the Planning Area is comprised of about 3,449 acres of land. Of this amount, approximately 1,230 acres in the Study Area is undeveloped, 1,285 acres is residential and 96 acres is commercial. The remaining acres are comprised of public property, including parks, public/institutional, and conservation easements. See Table 2-3 and Figures 4 and 5 for a breakdown of existing uses.

It may seem surprising that such a large portion of the Planning Area is forested or in agriculture. The view from US 50/301, or even Rt.18, would suggest that the area is more developed and commercialized than it actually is. A ride down Perry's Corner Road or Bennett Point Road rounds out the picture by showing the large tracts of forested, agricultural and otherwise undeveloped land. The residential development that exists is very centralized. Besides the Rt.18 corridor and its immediate offshoots, the only other area that is fairly built up is the Chester River Beach community on the north side of US 50/301.

An examination of the existing zoning districts reveals that more than half (54 percent) of the Study Area is presently designated Countryside (CS), a zoning designation which is intended to preserve rural and agricultural areas within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area by permitting only low density housing. Another third is medium density residential. See Table 2-4 and Figures 6 and 7 for further clarification.

Table 2-4 can be summarized as follows:

Low density residential (Countryside, Suburban Estate and Estate)

Total acres ó 2,445

Percentage of total ó 58%

Medium density residential (Suburban Residential, Neighborhood Conservation, and Grasonville Planned Residential Development)

Total acres ó 1,317

Percentage of total ó 31%

Mixed Use (Village Center, Grasonville Village Center and Grasonville Neighborhood Conservation)

Total acres - 151

Percentage of total ó 3%

Non-Residential (Urban Commercial and Suburban Industrial)

Total acres - 250

Percentage of total ó 6%

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and Natural Resources

Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

Approximately 1,977 acres of the Grasonville Study Area is within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. See Table 2-5 for a breakdown of Critical Area acreage, and Figure 8 for a visual representation.

Land within the Critical Area is divided into one of three classifications of development areas:

Resource Conservation Areas are characterized by nature dominated environments such as forests, wetlands or agriculture. New residential development is limited to a density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres.

Limited Development Areas are currently developed at low or moderate intensity. Additional development must not change the prevailing established land use, and must improve water quality and conserve areas of natural habitat.

Intensely Developed Areas consist of 20 or more contiguous acres where development predominates and where there is relatively little natural habitat.

State law and the County's Critical Area Program expressly provide for the Critical Area classification of properties to be changed in order to accommodate state and local growth management objectives which encourage environmentally sensitive new development to locate within and near areas of existing development such as Grasonville. The process of revising a property's Critical Area classification is called "growth allocation."

The Queen Anne's County Critical Area Program has specifically targeted 75 percent of its approximately 1,500 acres of available growth allocation for use in designated growth areas. In 2009, a portion of this available growth allocation was used for the Emergency Center site.

Within the Critical Area there is a 100-foot wide minimum protected area, the "buffer," from tidal waters, streams and tidal wetlands, wherein no new development activities are allowed. Queen Anne's County has established a deeper 300-foot shore buffer from tidal wetlands for new non-residential and moderate/high residential development. Within this shore buffer, special afforestation and reforestation standards apply. In LDA and RCA areas, the amount of impervious surface (buildings, pavement, etc.) is generally limited to 15% of total site area.

Forest Protection

Although Grasonville already has an existing concentration of development and is zoned to accommodate more, there are environmental constraints which will limit the amount of overall growth the area can achieve (see Figure 9). Unlike some of the other growth areas, there is substantial forest cover within the Grasonville Study Area. As a matter of fact, nearly 1,945 acres or 46% of the total land area is forested. State and local laws governing clearing for development purposes will affect the town's future growth potential. The regulations vary depending on whether the site is within or outside of the Critical Area.

Inside the Critical Area, a Timber Harvest Plan is required for timber harvesting affecting one acre or more of forest or developed woodland. Clearing and cutting of trees is generally prohibited within the 100-foot buffer. In IDA areas, development can result in removal of no more than 20% of forest/woodland. In LDA and RCA areas the following standards apply:

- 1) If less than 15% of a site is wooded, additional forest must be established to achieve at least 15% cover.
- 2) Development may result in removal of no more than 20% of forest/woodland without a variance or additional forest being provided.
- 3) Clearing of forest/developed woodland up to 20% must be replaced on a one-to-one basis.

Outside of the Critical Area, development proposals (major subdivision, grading or sediment control permit) on tracts of land over 40,000 square feet must include a forest stand delineation and forest conservation plan pursuant to the County Forest Conservation Manual and the Maryland Forest Conservation Act. Key components of forest conservation plans are:

- 1) Retention of forest in priority protection areas such as stream buffers and habitat protection areas.
- 2) Afforestation. (planting trees where forest cover has been absent) up to at least 15% or 20% of the area that will be developed.
- 3) Reforestation (replacing existing trees) at rates between 1/4 acre to 2 acres for each acre of forest removed.

Wetlands

Grasonville has extensive wetland areas, which are highly regulated at all levels of government. According to US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory maps, the Planning Area consists of wetlands, especially the areas along Prospect Bay and south of Rt 18. Soil maps of Grasonville suggest that an even larger amount of acreage may be comprised of wetlands. Development potential is severely limited in wetland areas. Restrictions on dredging and filling activities are specified by law, as is the requirement for protective buffers.

Endangered Species

Bald Eagle nesting sites exist by Marshy Creek southwest of Kent Narrows, and mapped data from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicates Delmarva Fox Squirrel habitat around Walsey Creek. Disturbance of habitats of threatened or endangered species is only permitted by Queen Anne's County after consideration of recommendations from the DNR. In the case of State listed species, a development project applicant works with the DNR Heritage Program to minimize any project impacts on species habitat. Federally listed species, like the Delmarva Fox Squirrel, may receive greater protection based on State/Federal management plans for each specific species. On June 28, 2007 the Interior Department took the Bald Eagle off the endangered species list. The Bald Eagle is still protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Habitat Protection

Within the Critical Area specific habitat areas receive special protection. Mapped data from the Maryland DNR indicates colonial waterbird nesting sites, waterfowl staging areas and oyster bars in Grasonville. Three streams in the Study Area are designated anadromous fish spawning waters. Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is considered critical to the Chesapeake Bay as it provides important nursery areas, food and habitat for a wide range of Bay species. Periodic surveys of SAVs are conducted in the Bay, and indicate SAVs along the Chester River in Grasonville.

In light of these resources, development is not prohibited but is regulated to minimize impacts on these habitats through the design of the development (location of lots and structures) and construction practices (timing of clearing and grading, location of stormwater management outfalls, etc.).

Overall, environmental considerations are very significant when planning for growth in Grasonville. Extensive acreage within the Critical Area and large areas of forest cover and wetlands combine to curtail the degree of growth that Grasonville can ultimately experience.

Table 2-1

2000 POPULATION			
	2000	Grasonville As a % of Total	5 th Election Dis- trict As a % of Total
Grasonville Planning Area	2,689	100%	
North of 50/301	670	25%	
South of 50/301	2,019	75%	
5 th Election District	7,688	35%	100%
Queen Anne's County	40,563	6.6%	19%

Table 2-2

2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POPULATION PROJECTIONS						
	1990	2000	2010	2020	Change #	Change %
Grasonville Planning Area	2,511	2,689	3,740	4,290	550*	14.7
North of 50/301	645	670	950	985	35*	3.6
South of 50/301	1,866	2,019	2,690	3,205	515*	19.1
5 th Election District	6,602	7,688	9,000	NA		
Queen Anne's County	33,953	40,563	48,560	55,650	7,090	14.6

*Queen Anne's County Department of Land Use, Growth Management and Environment estimate.

Table 2-3

EXISTING LAND USE		
Classification	Acres	% of Total
Agriculture	224	5.4
Commercial	96	2.3
Conservation Easement	1,285	30.8
Multi-Family Residential	17	0.4
Park	71	1.7
Public/Institutional	396	9.6
Residential Commercial	38	0.9
Single Family Residential	797	19.1
Vacant	1,242	29.8
TOTAL	4,166	100%

Table 2-4

ZONING DISTRICTS		
Zoning Districts	Acres	% of Total
CS	2,290	55
E	58	1.4
GNC	67	1.6
GPRN	594	14.2
GVC	58	1.4
NC-1	34	0.8
NC-2	2	0.04
NC-8	84	2.0
NC-8T	51	1.2
NC-15	52	1.2
NC-20	93	2.2
NC-20T	242	5.8
SE	97	2.3
SI	22	0.5
SR	166	4.0
UC	228	5.4
VC	27	0.6
TOTAL	4,166	100%

Table 2-5

2010 CHESAPEAKE BAY CRITICAL AREA		
Designation	Acres	% of Total
Resource Conservation Area (RCA)	1,256	63.5%
Limited Development Area (LDA)	527	26.7%
Intensely Developed Area (IDA)	193	9.8%
TOTAL	1,977	100%

History of Grasonville

The early history of Grasonville has always been written as the connection between Kent Island and the county seats of Queen Anne's County, first Queenstown and then Centreville. However in August of 1813 Grasonville became the county's stage for its contribution to the new American nation's fight for freedom from Great Britain. On the 5th of August of 1813 the British took over Kent Island, both for the Chesapeake Campaign's command headquarters and for the bivouacking of some 2000 plus British troops. While the local expectation was that Kent Island would be the staging lands for an attack on St. Michael's in Talbot County, the locals knew there would be major forays onto the mainland of Queen Anne's County, always on the only existing connecting road from the Narrows through the area now known as Grasonville.



Battle of Slippery Hill Marker on Route 18

During the night of August 13th the British marched from the Narrows up the causeway road through the little village (now Grasonville), heading for Queenstown. This march was part of a pincer movement by land and by water to take on the American militia made up entirely of QAC men. At the point in the road that is now in the vicinity of the new medical facilities, and then known as the farm at Slippery Hill, the British met with unexpected fire from the small band of men placed there as a defensive warning of any British approach. The British fired first, but the return volleys were to the advantage of the Americans as they well knew their way amongst the cornstalks of the farm. The attacks came twice from the British against the small band of local farmers, lawyers and businessmen who stood their ground until they could reach their main troops on the Centreville road from Queenstown. Their actions were significant in saving the main body of Queen Anne's County militia from capture or worse, and were documented as such by their commanding officer, Major W. H. Nicholson.

