

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

The History of the Town is chronicled in the Background Chapter of this Plan. An important part of what makes Easton so unique and so special is the number and quality of historic buildings and settings. This chapter of the Plan talks about the importance of these historic and cultural resources and makes recommendations for how they can further be protected.

BACKGROUND

The history of Easton can be seen in its historic buildings and neighborhoods which date back over several centuries. Physical reminders of early history give depth and richness to the Town, to past events and to people's lives.

The preservation of historic buildings and structures includes consideration of the integrity of the location, neighborhood, design, setting, materials and workmanship. Historic preservation allows the legacy of the past to be protected and remembered. It allows for the past to be integrated with the present and reminds us that the old has a useful place alongside the new.

Easton has a substantial and well-documented stock of historic structures, streetscapes, sites, and settings. Some 944 parcels in the Historic District have been surveyed and documented.

Preservation and rehabilitation of these structures and streetscapes enhances the historic character of the town, stabilizes neighborhoods, protects property values, and attracts visitors to Easton.

Easton recognizes the importance of its historic resources and supports and encourages preservation and rehabilitation efforts by private owners, non-profits and local governments. Private houses and public buildings are often carefully restored.

New uses are found for historic buildings which no longer serve their original functions.

Continued historic preservation will provide Easton with a number of aesthetic and economic benefits, including:

- Promotion of a strong sense of community pride and tradition;
- Community revitalization through the restoration and adaptive reuse of older structures;
- Increased property values and tax revenues as a result of renovation and restoration; and
- Increased revenues from tourism activities generated by an interest in historic buildings and sites.

The “Stories of the Chesapeake” Certified Heritage Area encompasses heritage sites and places in Talbot and adjacent Counties which were designated a certified heritage area by the Maryland Heritage Area Authority on April 20, 2005. This program recognizes Easton as offering a number of heritage resources of import to the region.

Easton is also a “Targeted Investment Zone”, a state designation that permits the town to get state financial support for a certified heritage area.

New commercial and residential development and rehabilitation projects in the Historic District have been designed to complement historic buildings, rather than compete with them. The Town, business community, and residents have invested in preservation and restoration.

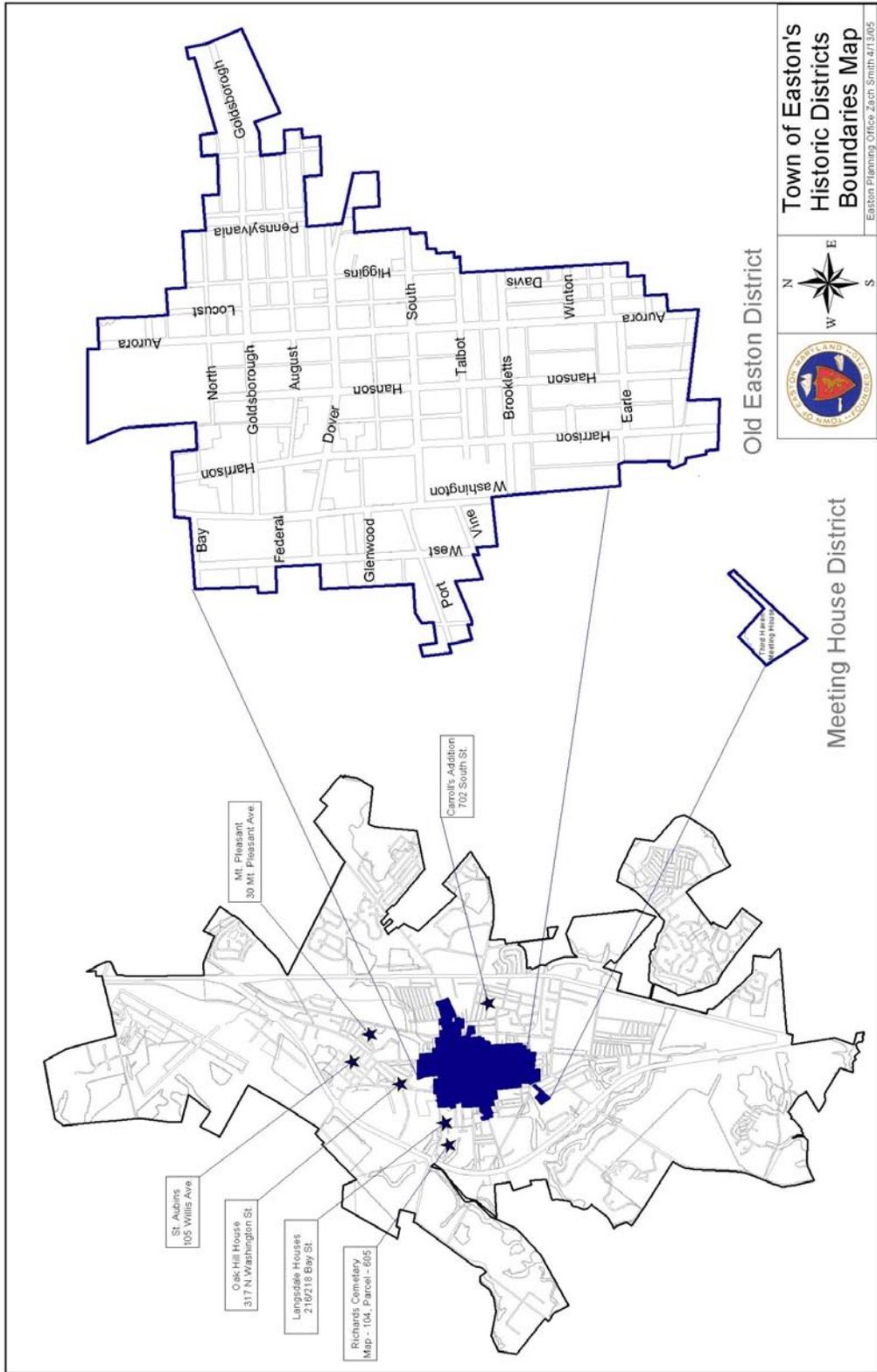
National Register Historic District

The National Register of Historic Places, an inventory of historic resources, is maintained by the National Park Service. Listing in the National Register provides recognition to sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts that are significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. An Easton National Register Historic District was surveyed, nominated, and approved in 1980. In addition to providing recognition of significance, listing in the National Register mandates consideration in the planning of any federal or federally-assisted project and provides eligibility for federal and state tax credits for historic preservation projects.

Easton Historic District

The Town has a Historic District Commission and has two museums, (the Art Academy Museum and the Historical Society of Talbot County Museum). It also has the historic Avalon Theatre where many cultural and community events take place. The Easton Historic District was created in the late 70s and expanded in 2005. The seven-member Historic District Commission is composed of volunteer citizens with interest or specific expertise in historic preservation and appointed to three-year terms by the Mayor. The Commission reviews proposed exterior changes to any structure or appurtenance in the defined district, according to an approved and published set of guidelines. In addition to the review of proposed projects, inclusion in the Historic District also provides eligibility for a state historic preservation tax credit to property owners who undertake historic preservation projects, whether or not the property produces income.

A map of the Easton Historic District reflecting its boundaries as of 2009 is included on the following page. This is followed by representative photographs of some of the structures and the setting of the Easton Historic District.





Easton's Historic District includes buildings encompassing a wide spectrum of type and use, including commercial (Washington Street, upper left), institutional (Christ Church, upper right and Talbot County Court House, middle right), and residential structures (middle left and bottom right and left).

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: To encourage continued restoration, adaptive rehabilitation and preservation of historic structures, sites, streetscapes, and settings. Encourage compatible infill in the Historic District.

Objectives:

- ✓ Increase the size of the Historic District in only one area. This is the “notch” in the district bounded by Spring Hill Cemetery, Brewers Lane and the alley running south from Talbottown shopping center. The purpose of this increase is to ensure that any new construction on this currently vacant lot meets the standards for compatibility with the encompassing Historic District.
- ✓ Educate residents/realtors and property owners about the benefits, boundaries and requirements of the Historic District review process and design standards and about the availability of state and federal tax credits for historic preservation projects.
- ✓ Establish a Local Tax Incentive program in Easton that encourages historic property owners to rehabilitate their property. This local tax incentive will compliment existing state and federal tax incentives that encourage historic rehabilitation/restoration. Some 19 counties and municipalities in Maryland already have some form of local tax incentive.
- ✓ Encourage a “Rebuilding Together” chapter in Easton or Talbot County. This is a national organization whose objective is no cost repairs to homes of low income, over 60 home owners.

Goal: To continue to support the Easton Historic District.

Objectives:

- ✓ A consistently enforced historic district is the most effective historic district for fostering investment and economic development. Ensure consistent enforcement of Easton's Historic District by utilizing the services of various staffs within the town administration.
- ✓ Any new development which may impact historic resources is to be referred to the Historic District Commission for comment.
- ✓ Provide in-service training for the staff and Historic District Commission members.
- ✓ Investigate Certified Local Government status with the Maryland Historical Trust to provide eligibility for grants for continuing education for staff and members of the Historic District Commission, as well as other projects.
- ✓ Investigate a project to resurvey the Historic District. A new survey will update information contained in the original National Register nomination and facilitate enhanced processing of applications. Such a survey could also lead to a new nomination to expand the National Register District, including neighborhoods that did not meet the criteria for listing in 1980, but now may nearly three decades later. Such a project could be supported by grant funding and could potentially be done under the auspices of a partner organization.