

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan sets forth policies governing growth, development, and conservation in Emmitsburg. It is long-range, general, and comprehensive.

Long range: The plan is forward-looking. It addresses Emmitsburg’s future needs, through the year 2030.

General: The plan does not focus on matters of detail, which can distract from important policies and proposals. To the extent possible, it focuses on the broad arrangements of land use, transportation, sensitive environmental areas, community facilities, water resources, and municipal growth.

Comprehensive: The plan uncovers relationships between local and regional factors that impact development and conservation. It addresses major elements of the natural and built environments.

This Comprehensive Plan expresses basic goals. It does not predict future events nor list activities or projects. As a guide, this Comprehensive Plan allows Emmitsburg to make day-to-day development decisions on the basis of reasoned and adopted policies, rather than on the individual merits of proposals. This document, its text, maps, and illustrations, provide the basis for making changes to zoning, subdivision, and other regulations that govern land use and infrastructure development.

1.2 STATE OF MARYLAND LAWS RELATIVE TO COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland. In order to exercise zoning and development review authority, municipalities must have a comprehensive plan.

State of Maryland, Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, which sets forth the following eight visions for comprehensive plans to incorporate:

- ❖ Development is concentrated in suitable areas.
- ❖ Sensitive areas are protected.
- ❖ In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers, and resource areas are protected.
- ❖ Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.
- ❖ Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.
- ❖ Economic growth is encouraged, and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.

- ❖ Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.
- ❖ Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.

1.3 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Frederick County Plans

Thurmont Region Plan - Emmitsburg lies within an area which Frederick County has designated as the Thurmont Region, for planning purposes. Each of eight planning regions within the county contains a Regional Community - expected to be the primary growth area, one or more District communities – expected to experience medium level growth, and Rural Communities – anticipated to experience a modest level of growth. Emmitsburg is considered a District community within the Thurmont Region. A land use plan for this region was adopted by Frederick County in July 2008.

Frederick County Comprehensive Plan – The Frederick County Comprehensive Plan process is underway with a targeted completion date of December 2009.

Other Plans and Designations

Emmitsburg lies within a number of designated areas and routes that reflect its importance as a historic and scenic community. Inclusion in these designations can enhance opportunities for heritage tourism and eco-tourism, as well as grants to help develop these basic strengths.

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA). The HCWHA Management Plan recognizes the potential for conservation and preservation, plus economic vitality through heritage tourism. The hope is to expand the appeal of the heritage area beyond a core Civil War audience, to involve a broad spectrum of interests. The HCWHA recognizes the importance of sacred historic places, scenic landscapes, and historic town centers.

Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JTHG). A 175-mile route along US 15 from Gettysburg, PA to Monticello, VA, encompassing several centuries of history, 49 National Historic Districts, and more than 1 million acres of National Register of Historic Places lands, the focus is to conserve and enhance the historic, scenic, and natural assets of the corridor.

US 15 Catoctin Mountain Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. Federal, state, and county involvement in maintaining the scenic character of the US 15 corridor.

Catoctin Mountain Scenic Byway Plan – Adopted by Frederick County on May 18, 2004 to promote US 15 Corridor tourism.

1.4 TOWN OF EMMITSBURG COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING HISTORY

Emmitsburg has had a Comprehensive Plan in place for over 30 years. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan updates Emmitsburg's 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The 1998 plan in turn updated the 1974 Comprehensive Plan, which sought to preserve the unique character of Emmitsburg. The 1974 plan goals focused on the appearance of the Town, creating balance in land use, and improving community facilities and accessibility for all residents. As required by Article 66B, the 2009 Plan shall be reviewed by the Town, and if found necessary, updated in six years.

1.5 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

The Emmitsburg Planning Commission began working on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan update in 2004. Public participation efforts were an important part of the process, and occurred as described below.

Public Participation Process

Workshops

The Planning Commission held a series of workshops during the Comprehensive Plan update process that took place between 2004 and 2008. Planning Commission members and the public discussed the information gathered for this update at these workshops.

In October 2006, a workshop was held in which the public was invited to participate in selecting and prioritizing the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. During this workshop, the statements that came forward as the most important to the participants were:

- ❖ The conservation / preservation of a “green belt” around the Town should be pursued.
- ❖ The Town should invest in making downtown a vibrant center for economic activity.
- ❖ Future development should provide for a mix of uses (housing and shopping, for example) to reduce the amount and distance new residents will have to travel to do everyday errands.
- ❖ Environmental protection is an essential aspect of planning. Future development, including neighborhoods and shopping centers, should meet higher standards.

Survey Results

In October of 2006, the Town sent out a mail survey that asked residents to rank their support for 20 possible objectives. About 12.5 percent of the households in the town responded to the survey. A detailed presentation of the results is located in the appendix to this report. The objectives that received the strongest support are listed below:

- ❖ The conservation / preservation of a “green belt” around the Town should be pursued.
- ❖ Efforts should be devoted to encourage small and home-based businesses to locate and remain in Town.

- ❖ A bypass route around downtown is created to reduce congestion due to commuters from Pennsylvania.
- ❖ Overpasses are planned along US 15 so that motorists can get from one side of US 15 to the other.
- ❖ Libraries, schools, community centers, and downtown should always be accessible from any part of Town by walking or biking.
- ❖ The churches and institutions (civic, business, religious, educational, social, recreational, and governmental) of Emmitsburg continue to contribute to human development and understanding.

Public Hearing

The Emmitsburg Planning Commission held a public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan on September 22, 2008.

1.6 MAJOR LAND USE GOALS FOR EMMITSBURG

This 2009 Comprehensive Plan is meant to drive a civic agenda around the following goals for Emmitsburg, which are supported by accepted planning principles.

Conserve and protect Emmitsburg’s unique natural setting and cultural heritage for future generations.

Emmitsburg is located in an area of unique natural beauty and rich environmental resources, which enriches the lifestyle of the town residents. Views of the natural and cultural environments (mountains and steeples, for example) are defining characteristics of the Town. Area institutions such as Mount St. Mary’s University, The Daughters of Charity, FEMA National Emergency Training Center, churches, etc., play an important role in shaping the cultural environment of Emmitsburg and in attracting visitors and tourists. The natural and cultural are interconnected in Emmitsburg and the conservation and protection of this relationship is of great importance.

Natural areas are useful elements in town planning. They can connect various parts of the town as it grows, as well as connect the town and its residents to the open spaces which surround it. They can form environmental corridors where benefits such as flood control, water quality, wildlife conservation, scenic beauty, and recreation are protected. Encouragement of environmentally sound practices such as Low Impact Development (LID) standards and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) in local ordinances and policies can provide protection for these important elements.

Maintain and protect the historic character and architectural integrity of Main Street, which is vital to the future of the downtown and the community.

Emmitsburg's historic village center defines the character of the Town. The architectural style, period street lamps, and absence of utility lines provide an excellent foundation on which to base efforts to create a more vital downtown in the future.

In the past, Main Street in Emmitsburg functioned as a gathering place for the community to live, shop, and work. Economic factors led to the decline of Main Street businesses. Regional transportation opportunities and shifts have decreased Emmitsburg's role as an economic hub, and increased the amount of through traffic stemming from commuting and trucking. Regional commuting patterns reflect traffic from the growing suburbs in nearby Pennsylvania to the job centers of lower Frederick County and beyond. Truck traffic uses State Route 140 to access points east, such as Westminster and Baltimore, as well as US Route 15 for north and south destinations. The resulting congestion on Main Street in Emmitsburg detracts from the quality of life in this historic downtown.

As the central hub of in-town activities, downtowns provide residents and visitors opportunities to interact. A vibrant downtown provides economic and civic opportunities. Through recognition of existing assets and potential, plus coordinated efforts with all stakeholders, small downtowns can be revitalized. Allowance for a balance of commercial, residential, and community uses is essential to a successful downtown environment.

Recognize the importance of accessibility and mobility to transportation and land use planning in Emmitsburg.

Quick and safe access to all areas of town as well as out-of-town destinations is essential and local commuters and businesses depend on the efficiency of highway travel. The mobility afforded to residents by the close proximity to U.S. Route 15 comes at the cost of the regional use of town streets for commuting and interstate truck traffic, since North and South Seton Avenues, and Main Street (MD140) are all State roads with regionally-generated traffic volumes.

Emmitsburg is home to a large population of seniors, children, and teenagers. One measure of accessibility is the extent to which community facilities such as parks, libraries, schools, and community centers are within a quarter mile of each other and the places people live. Emmitsburg's traditional village core is highly accessible. Centrally located and well-connected activity centers provide needed goods and services for residents with limited mobility and provide all residents of Emmitsburg with recreation opportunities and mobility choices.

Good mobility means that the actual role and function of streets and highways are compatible with their design. Historic downtown streets are not intended to carry heavy regional commuter and truck traffic. One key method for resolving congestion while still protecting the quality of life in a small town is to provide options and alternative travel routes through an area.

Good accessibility means that residents are able to access all areas of town (as well as out-of-town jobs and other activity centers) safely and readily. Providing accessibility requires a well-connected local street network with efficient and safe access to collector and arterial roads. Also, small towns can capitalize on their compact nature by building pathways along and between existing roads and through natural resource areas. Sidewalks and bike paths provide an alternative to vehicles for many of the trips made within a town that is interconnected.

Provide environmental stewardship within the Town, as well as the surrounding area.

Emmitsburg is located at the base of the Catoctin Mountain Range and within the upper reaches of the Monocacy River watershed, which is a subwatershed of the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay Watersheds. This location comes with the responsibility to conserve and restore the abundant environmental resources and the key functions they provide. Thoughtful planning is especially required to preserve and protect these resources in areas beyond the current town limits, where the Town is faced with guiding the long-term conversion of agricultural areas into appropriate, balanced land-use arrangements.

Sensitive natural areas play significant roles in the quality and health of human settlements and indeed in the happiness and well-being of individuals. Floodplains and wetlands in their natural state help control flooding, improve water quality, and provide protective habitat for native plants and wildlife. Well-connected forested corridors provide habitat and necessary means of migration for wildlife. The underlying resource base is key when considering appropriate locations and intensity for potential development areas. Development standards should also recognize the importance of protecting natural areas.

Ensure that public facilities are adequate to accommodate growth.

Emmitsburg's water, sewer, schools, parks and athletic ball fields, community center, police, fire and emergency services ensure a high quality of life in the Town. Planning for the future within the limits of existing and planned services can ensure that the same high quality of education, safety, and other public services are maintained as the Town grows.

Community facilities and services sustain and strengthen towns as population grows provided their capacity, quality, and accessibility are taken into account. A Town provides its residents with essential public services and community facilities. Proper stewardship over these resources and the Town's investments require that a Town grows within the confines of its infrastructure and services while expanding these services as necessary. Existing Town residents should not suffer a reduction in the quality of services or bear the financial burden of new development.

Foster the economic growth of Emmitsburg

Emmitsburg has land available for economic development opportunities, as well as existing commercial entities that are underutilized and/or could grow. It has a Civil War legacy, as well as institutions of major religious significance. The town needs to take a proactive approach by working with available economic development assistance resources, plus recognizing the potential for low-impact tourism, such as heritage, environmental, and religious oriented interests.

Proximity to Pennsylvania, specifically Gettysburg and the fruit belt of Adams County, the South Mountain area, and the Monterey Pass Battlefield presents opportunities to tie in to existing regional tourism efforts on both sides of the Maryland/Pennsylvania border.

Recognize and participate in regional/interstate opportunities

Being situated on the border with Pennsylvania, Emmitsburg has a unique opportunity to interact with any joint planning, environmental, recreational, tourism, and economic development efforts undertaken by Frederick County, MD and Adams County, PA entities, as well as the National Park Service activities. There have been some efforts in the past, and Emmitsburg should participate in and encourage these regional and interstate opportunities, as they would be of benefit to the local community as well as the region.

1.7 LOCATION

The location of Emmitsburg provides local quality of life, plus a regional context spanning two states. See Emmitsburg Regional Overview Map in map section.

- Nearby Major Population Centers relative to Emmitsburg: Baltimore, MD 57 miles southeast; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 49 miles northeast; Washington, D.C. 78 miles southeast.
- Proximity to Regional Population Centers: Frederick (the Frederick County Seat) 24 miles south; Hagerstown MD, 27 miles west (in Washington County); Thurmont MD, 7 miles south; and Gettysburg, PA, 12 miles north.
- Proximity to Pennsylvania: Emmitsburg has both challenges and opportunities related to its location on the Maryland – Pennsylvania border.
- Regional Geography: Emmitsburg is situated at the eastern edge of the Catoctin Mountain Range, which provides recreational and scenic opportunities. The Town has acquired much of the land on College Mountain to the west of town, for protection of the water supply and to preserve the views that it provides for the town.
- Monocacy River Watershed: Emmitsburg is located in the upper portion of the Monocacy River Watershed, which is a subwatershed of the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

- Regional historical sites: Emmitsburg lies in the midst of a Maryland-designated Civil War Heritage Area, and is on the Journey through Hallowed Ground route, Maryland Scenic Byways route, and it is within 10 miles of the Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.
- Emmitsburg is home to, and in close proximity to, several major religious, cultural, educational, and national security entities, which are described elsewhere in this plan.

1.8 REPORT ORGANIZATION

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan is organized into four main sections. Each section is a vital part of the overall Comprehensive Plan. Maps are located in a separate section following the text.

Section 2 presents important background information on recent development activity, the Town's population, and the various interrelated physical elements of Emmitsburg: sensitive natural areas, land use, transportation, community facilities, community design, and historic resources. It provides the baseline for a shared understanding of the opportunities and constraints facing the Town as it looks to the future. Section 3 provides a projection of future growth through 2030. Section 4 presents the long-range vision and recommended policies of the Comprehensive Plan.