

CHAPTER 11 - HISTORIC FEATURES

BACKGROUND

A community that perpetuates the use of its original or historic features to serve the needs of current and future generations maintains a physical and emotional link with its past, and ensures that the town's unique identity will not be lost. The past is a building block for the future, and if a plan is to be comprehensive, it must incorporate its past as a key element of planning for its future.

Brief Historical Perspective

Denton, the seat of Caroline County, is located on the banks of the Choptank River and near the geographic center of the County and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Today, Denton is the governmental, commercial, and employment center for a large rural area. The town began as a small settlement on Pig Point, which projects into the Choptank River. About 1773, the settlement was named Edentown in honor of Sir Robert Eden, a contemporary English statesman. Soon after the American Revolution, the village's name was contracted to Edenton, and in 1790, when the Assembly Act provided for the relocation of the County Seat from Melvill's Warehouse, it was shortened once more, to Denton. By this time, the town was a trade center of some importance. A wharf was constructed in the Town on the Choptank River in 1792. In 1793, four acres were secured for the construction of a Court House. The original Court House was replaced by a larger one in 1895, which remains in use today (a major addition was completed in 1967).

In 1827, a market place was opened where the Masonic Hall now stands, facing the public square. Farm produce was sold here as were slaves. In 1835, the first factory was built in Denton to manufacture plows.

During the early 1800's, the Courthouse Square was the site of a slave market and a jail that held fugitive slaves and Underground Railroad operators. Slavery was a major part of the nation's economy until the Civil War and by 1804 slavery was abolished in all the states north of Maryland. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway traces the likely movements of freedom seekers across the landscape connecting a number of historic towns, including Cambridge, East New Market, Preston, Denton, Hillsboro, and Greensboro. It also provides access to key historic landscapes with connections to slavery, the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and numerous others who risked everything to secure freedom for themselves and/or others.

Early travel to Denton was by water. The first steamboat came up the Choptank River to Denton from Baltimore before 1850. It made only one trip, but later the "Dupont" made weekly trips between Denton and Baltimore with freight and passengers. About 1792, probably to shorten the distance of the ferry across the Choptank, a causeway was built across the marsh on the east side of the river. In 1811, the Denton Bridge Company was formed and a toll bridge was constructed. This bridge remained a toll bridge until shortly before the Civil War, when it was sold to the County. In 1875, it was replaced by the iron bridge which remained standing until 1913, when another iron bridge was constructed. This bridge lasted until March of 1976. At that time, extensive reinforcement was done on the bridge until a new concrete bridge could be built. Construction of the new bridge was begun in early 1980 and the present bridge was dedicated on Memorial Day weekend, 1981.

Sometime before 1860, there was a stage line started between Easton and Felton, Delaware via Denton. After 1860, the stage met the Chester Riverboat at Queenstown. Improved transportation routes enhanced Denton's position as a trade center and by the time of the Civil War, new stores, shops, schools, and churches were constructed. Most of the business district was wiped out by a fire in 1863, when a company of Union soldiers stationed as guards in the Town, celebrating the Fourth of July with fireworks, accidentally set fire to a shop building. The ensuing fire burned almost all of the business part of town, which consisted of several stores, a hotel, and a rum shop.

Historic Preservation

A number of historic preservation programs exist to help individuals and groups temporarily or permanently protect sites and structures considered significant. Historic preservation involves the inventory, research, restoration, and ongoing protection of sites and structures having a significant local or national historic interest. The protection of these resources will safeguard the heritage of Denton by preserving areas and structures which reflect elements of that heritage. Continued historic and cultural resource preservation and enhancement through sensitive land use planning and other administrative means will provide Denton with a number of benefits including:

- Promotion of a strong sense of community pride for Town residents,
- Community revitalization through the renovation or adaptive reuse of older structures,
- Increased property values and tax revenues as a result of renovation and restoration, and
- Increased revenues generated from tourism.

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Places, in recognizing the importance of Denton in the history of Maryland and the Eastern Shore, wrote:

“The Denton Historic District is significant historically for its role as the seat of Caroline County and as a regional market center on Maryland’s Eastern Shore from the early nineteenth century through the mid 1930s. Represented by a wealth of commercial, residential, public, and religious architecture in a variety of periods, styles, and forms, the district is also architecturally significant. Apart from a few clusters of modern development near Market Street at Second and Fifth Streets, the district exhibits a strong sense of historic integrity and continuity.”

Each generation of Denton serves as a temporary steward of the Town’s historic integrity and continuity, with each generation learning from the successes and failures of the one before it. This generation’s goals and objectives for Denton’s historic resources, as outlined in this Chapter, will be the standards against which its stewardship is measured.

Goal:

- Preserve structures of historical significance.

Objectives:

- Preserve historical structures regardless of zoning district designation,
- Encourage the preservation, renovation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of buildings with historical and architectural significance,
- Support the promotion of historic sites through tourism efforts and business services that are complementary to historic areas,
- Support the efforts of preservation and cultural organizations in the Town,
- Encourage school and community participation in historical resource management programs through education and public awareness, and
- Consider the use of Federal and State funding programs which might be used to assist restoration and upkeep of the buildings.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Denton’s historic area is comprised of just over 400 properties as identified by the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) in its Maryland Inventory of Historic Places (MIHP) (Map 11-1 & Appendix 2). The MHT inventory contains examples of a wide variety of styles of nineteenth and early twentieth century residential and commercial architecture, including Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Federal, Victorian, Victorian Gothic, Gothic Revival, and Romanesque. Many of

the buildings found in the MHT inventory are true examples of a particular architectural style, however there are also a number of buildings that are vernacular interpretations of popular styles, and their decorative detailing reflects the influences of these styles. The overwhelming majority of buildings and structures within the Denton MHT inventory are considered to be contributing to the District's significance by virtue of their age and architectural character.

The MHT inventory area begins at First Street and extends east along the length of Market Street to Ninth Street, incorporating many of the original streets of the Town. It continues north of Market Street and includes the blocks between First and Second Streets and all properties extending to the river, including the courthouse and the courthouse square. A number of structures dating from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries surround the square. The simple architecture of these flat-fronted, symmetrical buildings reflects strong influences from the Federal period of architecture. Popular on the East Coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, houses built in the Federal style were commonly made of brick, however the frame buildings surrounding the courthouse square exhibit the hallmarks of this style: low-pitched roofs, flat facades, doors with sidelights and fanlights, and restrained classical ornamentation on cornices around doors and windows.

East of the square, along Market Street, is a mixture of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century frame residences, two-story brick storefront buildings, and one-story concrete block commercial structures. Typical residential architecture forms of this period included the two or three bay wide, two-story, gable-front house, sometimes with a one-story front porch, as well as bungalows, and hip-roofed houses showing a Colonial Revival influence. South of Market Street, the MHT inventory area encompasses the blocks located between Market and Franklin Streets. The Denton Schoolhouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, sits at the corner of Franklin and Second Streets. The schoolhouse was built during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with a Latin Cross plan, and incorporates several features of the Gothic Revival style. The use of a style that is most often found in ecclesiastical architecture gives the schoolhouse an unusual character.

The MHT inventory area continues south of Franklin Street down both sides of Fifth and Sixth Streets, ending on Sixth Street at Fountain Avenue and continuing down the west side of Fifth Street to Sunnyside Avenue. The houses along Fifth Street sit well back from the street on expansive lots, and are larger and more elaborate than those in the rest of the District. Domestic architectural styles found along Fifth Street include Colonial Revival and Shingle Style, both fashionable in the early twentieth century. Colonial design was revived as a popular style in the 1870s, when the United States celebrated its first centennial. The style is reminiscent of early American architecture, and is typically seen in the design of residences, but is also apparent in

many bank buildings and churches of the period. Common characteristics of Colonial Revival include symmetrical facades, side porches, and architectural embellishments such as cupolas, classical cornices, fanlights and sidelights at entryways, and classical window detailing including swags, garlands, and urns.

The influence of Victorian architecture is also visible in the MHT inventory area. Popular at the end of the nineteenth century, Victorian architecture was more elaborate than the classical, stately styles of the Federal and Colonial Revival periods. Victorian architecture, including its Queen Anne and Gothic Revival forms, was decoratively rich. Typical details included irregular rooflines, cross gables, gingerbread, eaves on several levels, and asymmetrical window and door openings.

In the downtown business district of Denton, the historic commercial buildings are the defining feature of the landscape. Historic storefronts along Market Street share many common characteristics, including height and width, setbacks from the street, proportions of window and door openings, and roof profiles. A typical nineteenth century storefront consisted of a centrally located door, recessed for protection from inclement weather and flanked on either side by commercial buildings with large display windows. Many storefronts featured glass transoms above doors and windows. Canvas awnings were often installed to shade the storefront, and a signboard placed above the storefront was a prominent part of the facade. The commercial buildings along Market Street exhibit many of these features and invoke a strong sense of Denton's historic identity as a regional market center during the nineteenth century.

The MHT inventory area also includes some good examples of ecclesiastical architecture. The Town's first substantial church building, constructed on Market Street in 1867, was a brick Romanesque style structure built for the local Methodist Episcopal congregation. The Romanesque style of this church was reflected in the design of two buildings that appeared later as fixtures in the landscape of downtown Denton: the first National Bank building, constructed circa 1885 at the corner of Market Street and Fourth Street, and the Caroline County courthouse, which was built in 1895. A second, smaller church, built in the Victorian Gothic style, was erected circa 1873 by the Town's Protestant Episcopal congregation. The town's third church, the Methodist Protestant Church, was erected on Market Street in 1897.

Historic District Overlay Zone

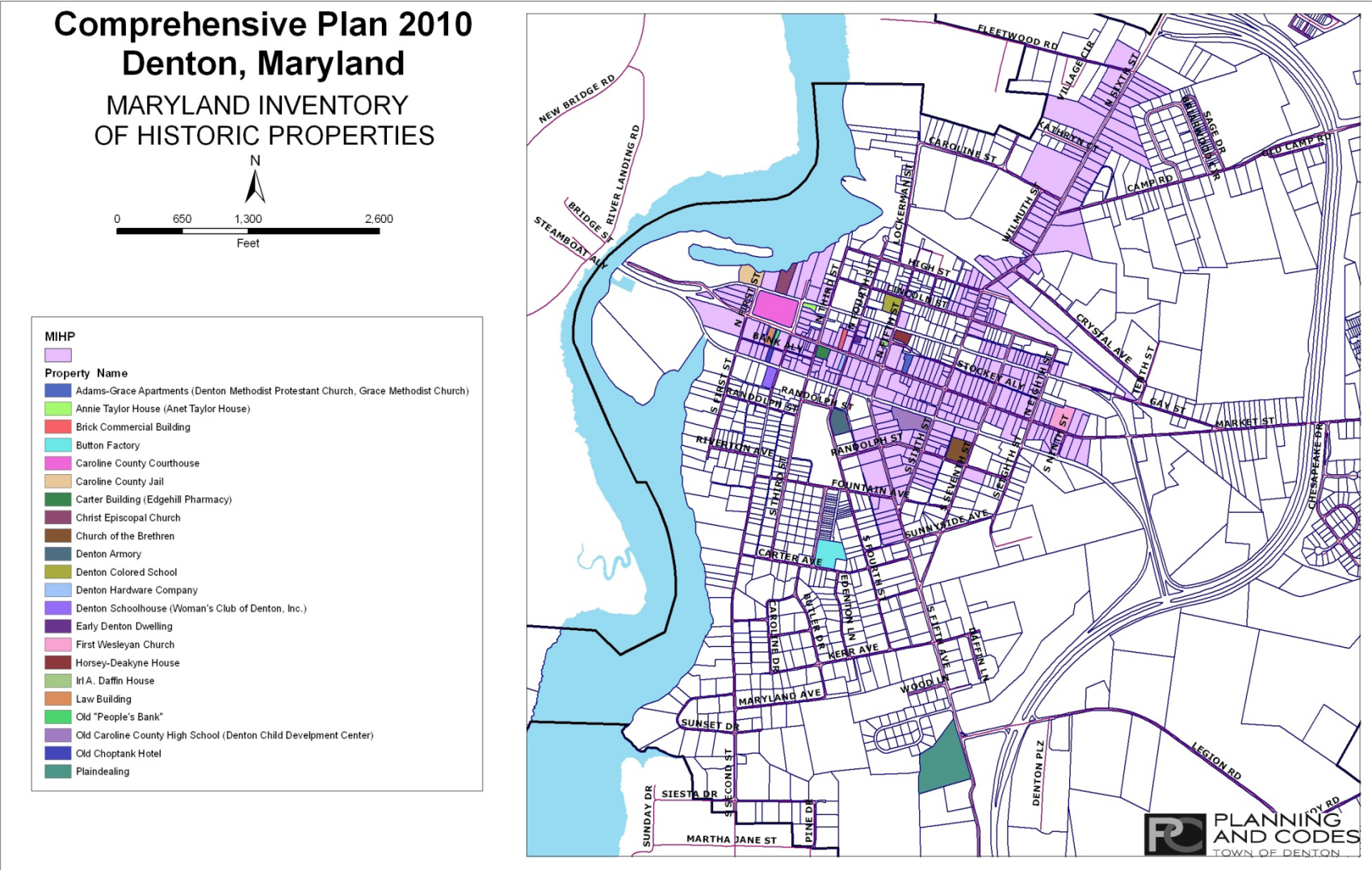
The Denton Historic Overlay Zone (Article IX, "Special District: Historic Overlay Zone," Denton Town Code § 128-43) was adopted in 1997 and is defined as an area designated by the Denton Town Council that contains significant features, woodlands, vegetation, structures, sites, monuments, landmarks, farmland, and/or archaeological sites (Map 11-2).

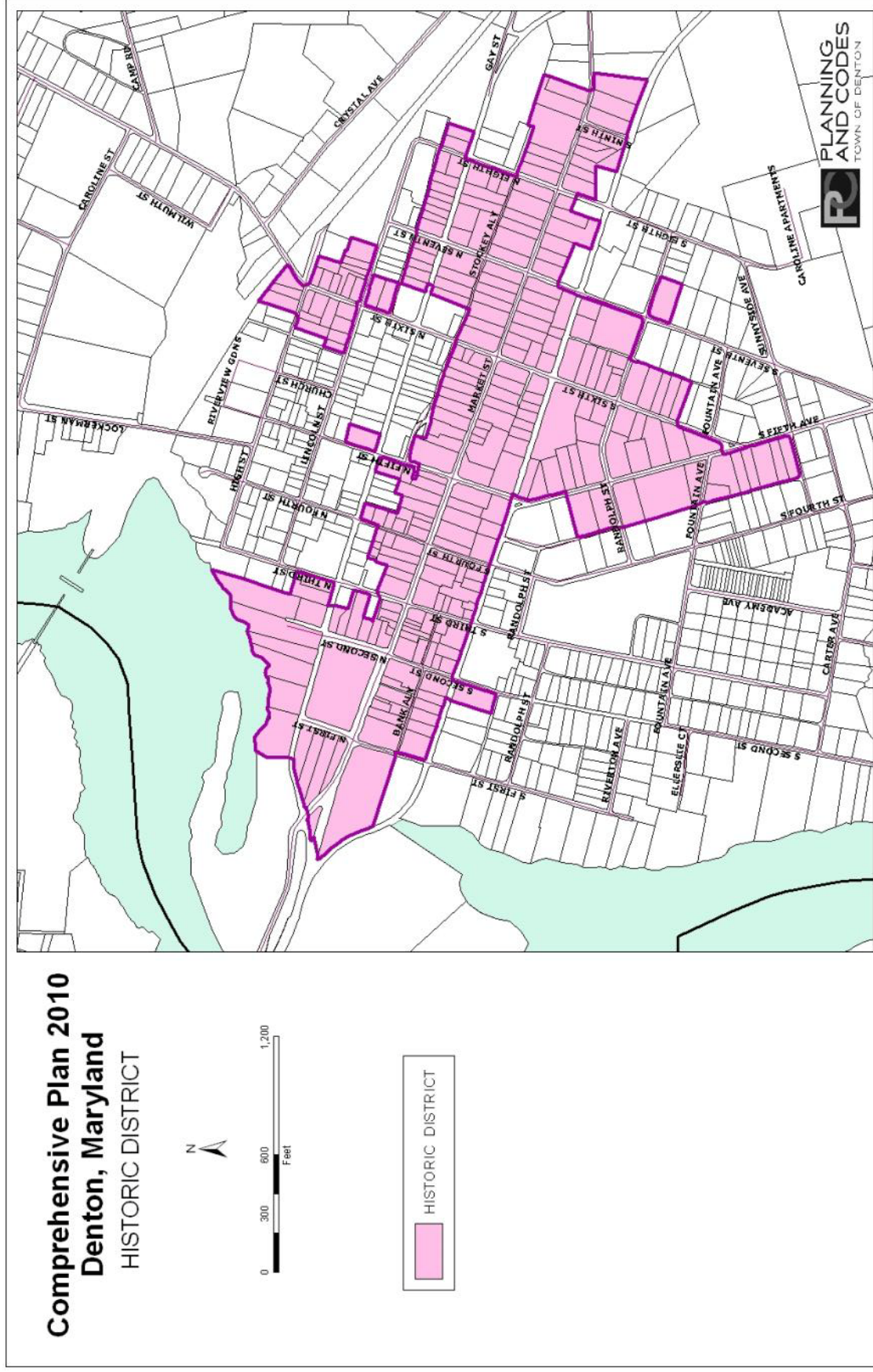
In 2002, a Historic and Architectural Review Commission was created with appointments to be responsible for overseeing the Town's Historic District as defined by the Historic Overlay Zone. The Commission is comprised of five members, all of whom must be qualified by special interest, knowledge, or training in such fields as history, architecture, archaeology, preservation, or urban design. Four of the five members are required to be residents of the Town, and two of the five members are required to have professional qualifications in one or more of the above-mentioned or related fields. Members serve three-year terms and appoint a new Chairman annually.

The Commission holds regular meetings no less than every three months and accepts submissions of applications for rehabilitation or construction involving the exterior of structures located in the Historic District, and designation or removal of structures located in the Historic Overlay Zone. Meetings are open to the public. All decisions are made in public form and applicants receive written notification of the decision.

In 2005, the Town adopted Historic and Architectural Review Commission Guidelines to provide a common basis to discuss the appropriateness of proposed changes to historic structures as well as proposed construction of new structures in the Historic District. The procedures in the guidelines are designed to ensure compliance with existing Town codes, and to afford every applicant the same consideration of fairness and due process. The guidelines are also meant to assist owners of historic properties, architects, builders, members of the Historic and Architectural Review Commission, and others to understand appropriate treatment of historic sites, structures, and districts in Denton. The Commission, in turn, may use these guidelines as they apply to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to evaluate the appropriateness of changes to buildings or properties located in the Historic District.

Map 11-1





Significant Historical Features

The Maryland Historical Trust has compiled an Inventory of Historic Sites in Denton. The complete list appears in Appendix 2 of this Comprehensive Plan; some of the most significant properties are listed below;

- Plaindealing, early 19th century
- Christ Episcopal Church, 1874
- Caroline County Courthouse, 1791, 1895, 1966
- 328 Market Street, Denton Hardware, late 19th century
- 12 Fifth Avenue, Horsey Deakyne House, circa 1883
- Colored School, early 20th century
- Annie Taylor House, circa 1800
- 7 N. Fourth Street, Early Denton Dwelling, circa 1810 with additions
- Denton Schoolhouse/Woman's Club of Denton, 1883
- Peoples Bank; Kent, Orgltree, and Thornton Law Offices, circa 1900
- Emerson-Fisher-Horsey House, circa 1879
- Law Building, circa 1905
- Denton Armory, circa 1938

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following programs and strategies are designed to facilitate achieving this Plan's goal of preserving and enhancing the Town's rich cultural and historic heritage.

Adaptive Re-Use

The Town should adopt zoning provisions that promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures for public and private uses including, but not limited to, bed and breakfast establishments, restaurants, craft/gift shops, museums, and studio space for artisans, when such uses minimize exterior structural alteration.

Development Policies

The "Denton Pattern Book" establishes comprehensive architectural guidelines for the construction and renovation of houses in Denton, based on the Town's historic architectural character and patterns of development. The Town should continue these efforts to incorporate measures that protect historic integrity into development standards to preserve the traditional identity of Denton's buildings and neighborhoods.

The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations for the Town should require developers to identify cemeteries/burial grounds/archaeological sites/historical structures on a property prior to any disturbance of the site, and support archaeological and historical research through preservation of significant sites.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism is an economic development strategy that attempts to increase visits by persons from outside the area who are interested in the historical or lifestyle offerings of the community. Heritage Tourism emphasizes the linkages and interconnections between the area's physical features (rivers, streams, forests, wildlife) and its cultural features such as roads, buildings, towns, history, art, etc. Nationwide studies have determined that cultural landscapes and regions with special natural and historic qualities are among the most important attractions to tourists (Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway Resource Report, 1994).

Recognizing the potential benefits of eco-tourism, the Maryland Legislature passed House Bill 1, entitled "Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas," in April 1996. Among other things this legislation authorizes grant and loan funds for planning, design, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing, and programming of certified heritage areas. In addition, the legislation expands the local jurisdiction's authorized income tax credits for qualified rehabilitation of properties included in the boundaries of a certified Heritage Area. These heritage areas are identifiable and significant landscapes that are the focus of cooperative public and private efforts to recognize, organize, and communicate a community's natural, cultural, recreational, and economic attributes to stimulate the local economy and improve the quality of life.

Denton is located in the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area which was certified in 2004. This Heritage Area encompasses Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties. The Heritage Area's Management Plan designates a number of potential Target Investment Zones (TIZ's), which are sites and areas where significant private investment in support of heritage tourism is to be encouraged. The program requires that TIZ's must be able to "encourage demonstrable results and return on public investment within a relatively short period of time" – generally five years – and are to be defined using local heritage-area criteria based on state criteria. Certain financial benefits available from the State of Maryland in support of heritage areas are available only to projects within Target Investment Zones.

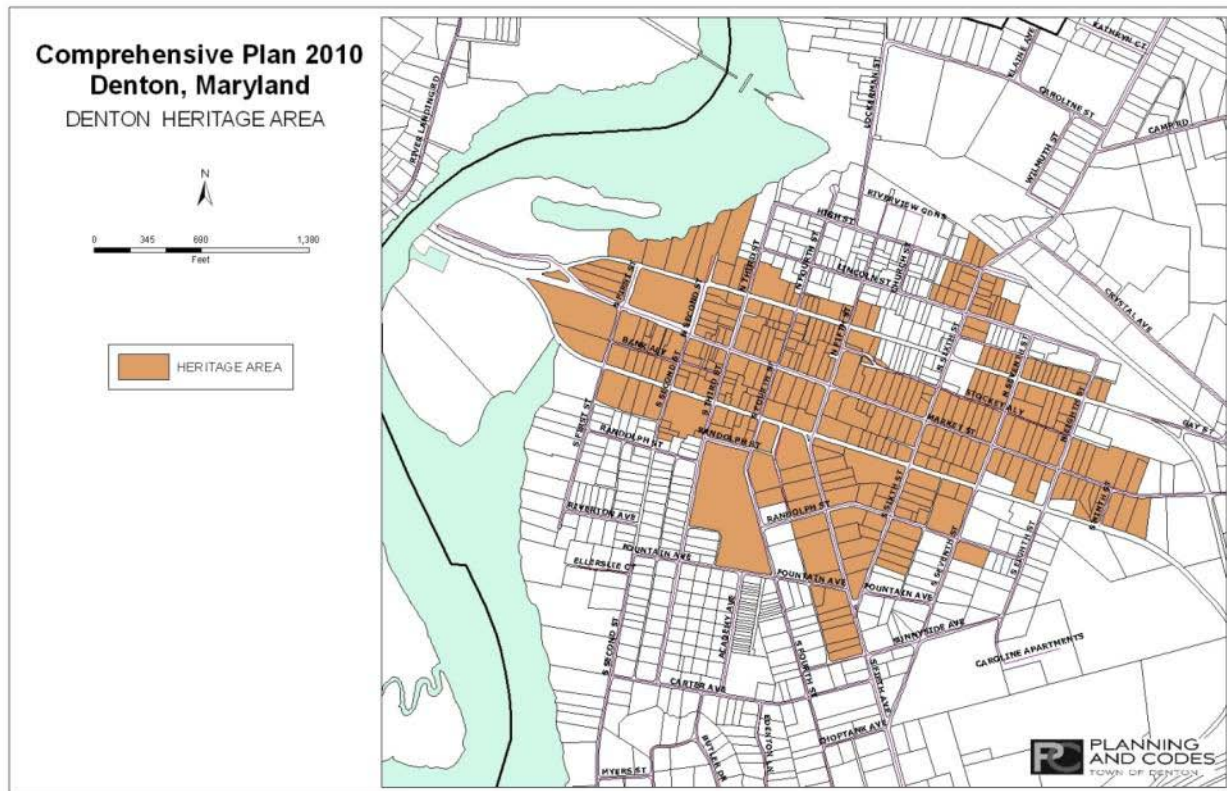
The Chesapeake Heritage Area Plan was adopted by the Town of Denton through Ordinance No. 514 on June 5, 2006, amending the Denton Comprehensive Plan. This Management Plan includes the creation of Denton's Heritage Area (Ordinance No. 555 on April 7, 2008) to include

the central business district and the historic district as a designated TIZ which was, (Map 11-3). The Management Plan recommends a number of projects that would benefit from receiving TIZ status, including projects relating to the Wharves at Choptank Crossing, Fourth Street economic development projects, the Caroline High School, the Rural Life Museum, and other projects that could be identified in the process of planning the final TIZ designation.

It is recommended that the Town work closely with the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, not only to have the downtown designated as a Target Investment Area, but to help strengthen the initiatives of the Heritage Area Management Plan and insure that the towns and counties located within it receive its many tangible benefits, some of which include:

- Increased visitor spending. Heritage tourism projects attract more visitors, with higher incomes, for longer trips, making more repeat visits.
- Shared resources. Heritage tourism projects increase the amount of funds available to accomplish projects. They increase a community's ability to compete more effectively for outside money.
- Alternatives to homogenizing tourism. Heritage tourism offers alternatives to sprawl-types of tourism, instead focusing on a "sense of place" allowing Denton to preserve its social character and environmental resources.

Map 11-3



PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Local

The Town of Denton recognizes the importance of preserving the buildings and properties that are the vestiges of its past. The Town's Historic District and Historic District Overlay Zone have established measures to ensure that significant properties and structures are not only recognized and appreciated, but are also protected from demolition, neglect, or alterations that damage or destroy historic integrity. These efforts are overseen by the Town Council and the Town's Historic and Architectural Review Commission.

It is recommended that properties located within Denton's proposed Growth Areas and Greenbelt that are eligible for designation within the Historic District Overlay Zone or Historic District be considered for nomination to the Historic District or inclusion in the Historic Overlay Zone.

Federal and State

A number of existing federal and State programs provide assistance in protection or preservation of significant properties and also offer tax benefits, provide professional historical/architectural consulting, and other resources to assist homeowners and property owners. More detailed information on programs including the National Historic Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, Conservation and Preservation Easements, and Historic Overlay Districts can be found from various historic preservation organizations such as the Maryland Historical Trust.

National Register of Historic Places

In 1966, Congress established the National Register of Historic Places as the Federal Government's official list of properties, including districts, significant in American history and culture. In Maryland, the Register is administered by the Maryland Historical Trust. Some benefits resulting from a listing in the National Register include the following:

- National recognition of the value of historic properties individually and collectively to the Nation.
- Eligibility for Federal tax incentives and other preservation assistance.
- Eligibility for a Maryland income tax benefit for the approved rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential buildings.
- Consideration in the planning for federally and state assisted projects.
- Listing does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage or dispose of property.

Maryland Historical Trust

The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) surveys historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites to determine eligibility of being listed on the state register. As with being on the National Register of Historic Places, listing does not limit or regulate the property owner in what can or cannot be done with the property. In order to be considered for listing on the National Register or having an easement on the property to be accepted by the MHT, the site usually must first be listed on the Maryland Historical Trust Register.

Maryland Historic Preservation Easement

A state-held historic preservation easement monitored by the MHT is an excellent means of perpetually preserving a historical structure and property for future generations. Regulations state that easements may be assignable to other parties or run with the land. The benefits for a property owner to donate his land to the MHT include income, estate, inheritance, gift, and property tax benefits. In exchange, the owner gives the MHT the final word regarding proposed alterations. However, for properties whose fair market value is largely based on the value of

development rights, this method of preservation may not be the most financially expedient for the property owner or for the MHT.

Preservation Incentives

The Maryland Historical Trust also provides financial assistance programs to encourage heritage preservation projects through several grant, loan, and tax credit programs. These include Capital and Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grants, the Museum Advancement Program, the Certified Local Government Subgrant Program, Historic Preservation Loan Program, State Tax Credit Program, and Federal Tax Credit Program.

Historic Preservation Grant Fund

The Historic Preservation Grant Fund was created to encourage the preservation of historic properties statewide. Capital grant monies are available to nonprofit organizations, local government, business entities, and individual citizens committed to preserving their historic resources. The funds can be used for development activities including acquisition, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties that offer some form of public benefit. The maximum grant award is \$50,000 for capital and non-capital grant funds. Matching requirements apply to local governments, individuals, and business entities. Non-capital grant monies are available to nonprofit organizations and local governments. Funds can be used for research, survey, planning, and educational activities involving architectural, archeological, or cultural resources. Special priority will be given to projects located within state certified Priority Funding Areas (PFA's). A perpetual preservation easement between the property owner and the Trust may be required to be executed prior to the release of funds from the Maryland Historical Trust. The easement coverage will be on the land or such portion of the land acceptable to the Trust which protects the historic buildings, structures, and associated archeological resources.

Museum Advancement Program

This program offers Museum Education and Planning Grants that support long range planning activities, Museum Project Challenge Grants that support museum projects, and Museum Enhancement Challenge Grants that support the state's flagship museums with program enhancements based on a percentage of operating budgets.

Certified Local Government (CLG) Subgrant Program

This federal pass-through matching grant is available only to local jurisdictions that achieved CLG status. This program supports a wide variety of projects such as historic site research and survey work, National Register nomination development, community planning, and public education.

Historic Preservation Loan Program

The Historic Preservation Loan Program provides loans to non-profit organizations, local jurisdictions, business entities and individual citizens to assist in the protection of historic property. Loan funds can be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or restore historic property. They may also be used for short-term financing of studies, survey, plans, and specifications, and architectural, engineering, or other special services directly related to pre-construction work. The low interest loans are available on a first-come, first-serve basis throughout the year. Successful applicants must convey a perpetual historic preservation easement to the Trust.

Rehabilitation Tax Incentive Programs

Historic structure rehabilitation tax incentives are available at the federal and state level. The federal tax program allows owners or long-term lease holders of income-producing certified historic structures to receive a federal tax credit of up to 20 percent of the cost of the rehabilitation that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The state program allows owner-occupants and owners of income-producing property to receive a state income tax credit equal to 20 percent of the qualified capital cost of rehabilitation.

SUMMARY

Preserving Denton's historical heritage is vitally important and recognized as necessary by the community.

The overall goal is to preserve structures of historical significance. It is understood that this is best accomplished by various methods, including 1) encouraging the preservation, renovation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of buildings with historical and architectural significance; 2) supporting the promotion of historic sites through tourism efforts and business services that are complementary to historic areas; 3) supporting the efforts of preservation and cultural organizations in the Town; 4) encouraging school and community participation in historical resource management programs through education and public awareness, and 5) utilizing Federal and State funding programs which might be used to assist restoration and upkeep of the buildings.