

## CHAPTER 2 - COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATION

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Denton, the seat of Caroline County, is located on the eastern bank 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).

Figure: 2-1



Photo: 2-1 Caroline County Court House



In 1796, seven commissioners were appointed to survey Denton. The Act appointing the commissioners empowered them to:

"....survey and lay out any quantity of land, not exceeding fifty acres, including the public square called Denton, and the lands thereto contiguous and the same, when surveyed, to be erected into a village and to be called and known by the same of Denton; and such village when surveyed and laid out, to divide into lots. and (to) lay out a sufficient number of streets, not exceeding fifty feet wide, and also a sufficient number of alleys not exceeding twenty feet wide, through the said village, for the public convenience."

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.

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. Photo 2-2 shows the "Joppa", a Bay steamer on the Choptank River.

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

**Photo: 2-2**

*Choptank River, Denton, Md.*



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.

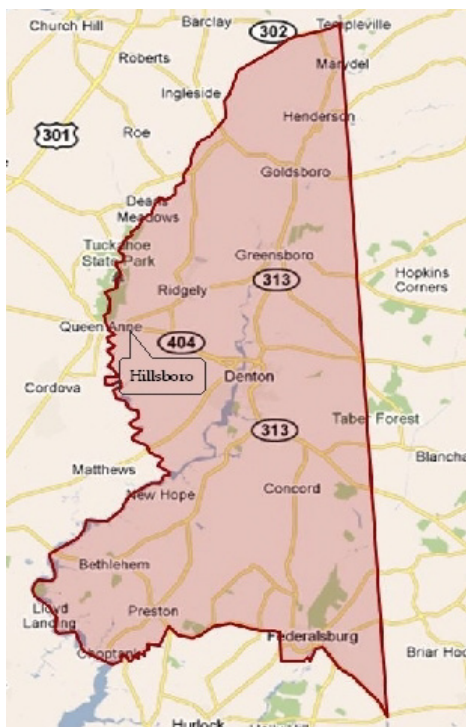


The Brick Hotel, built in 1775, was first a tavern and inn. In the early 1900s, (as seen in Photo 2-3), it was a place for local men to gather and discuss issues of the day. The Brick Hotel was also the summer home for writer Sophie Kerr Underwood, and may have based her book “One Thing is Certain” on people in Denton. <http://www.mdhs.org/library/fotofind/PP0120lnk.html>

**Photo 2-3**



**Map: 2-1: Caroline County**

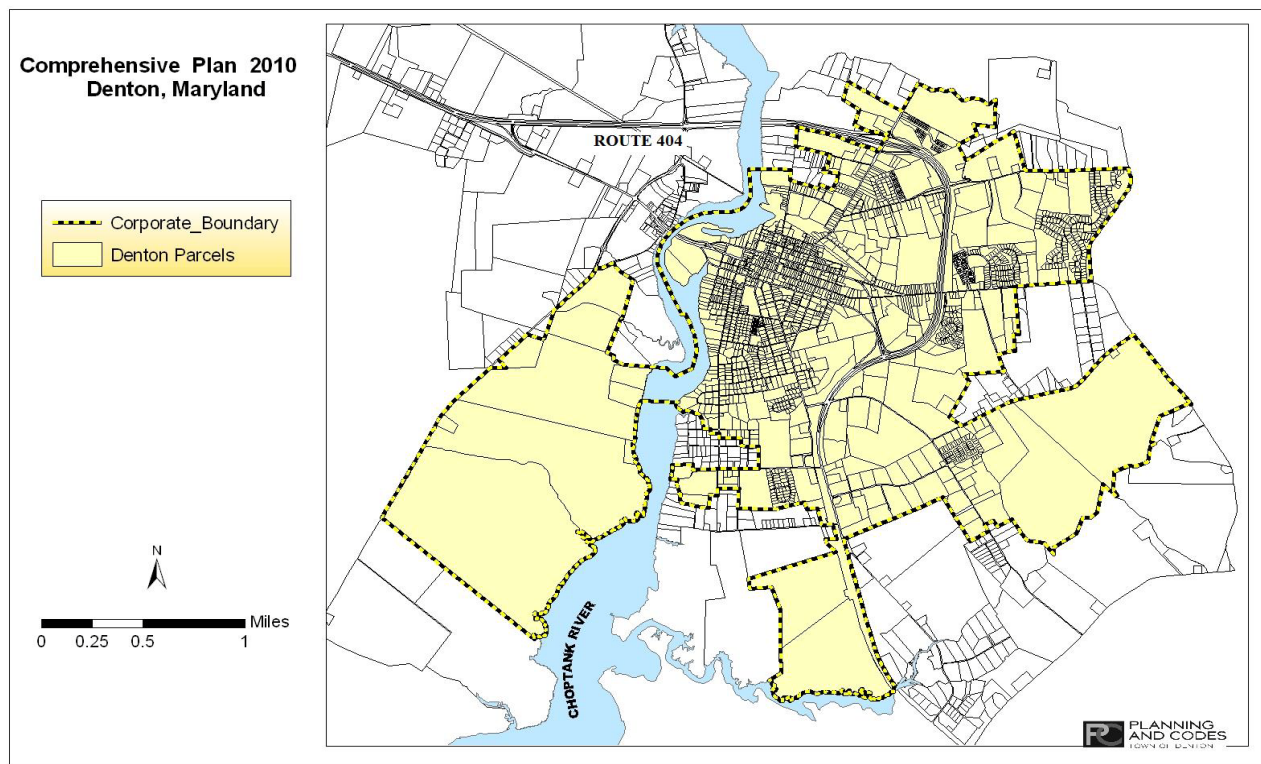


2010 Comprehensive Plan  
Town of Denton, Maryland

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.

The downtown area of Denton has been designated as a revitalization area. Currently, the Town functions as the governmental and commercial center for Caroline County. Industrial activity has also been increasing in recent years along with commercial, residential growth and development. Although the Choptank River no longer plays an important role in the Town in terms of water-based transportation needs, the presence of Maryland Route 404, a primary east/west arterial, as shown in Map 2-1, continues to provide Denton with excellent land transportation access. Map 2-2, shows the current Town boundary, displaying the path Route 404 takes throughout the Town.

**Map 2-2: Denton, Maryland**



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

### Population Trends

Denton was the largest municipality in Caroline County in 2000 with a total population of 2,960 and accounted for 9.9% of the total population of Caroline County. The largest population increase occurred between 1980 and 1990, when the Town's population increased by 54.5% with an additional 1,050 residents. The population remained stable over the next ten year period from 1990 to 2000. Table 2-1 indicates population changes from 1940 through 2000.

**Table 2-1: Population Comparison**

YEAR	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Denton	1,572	1,806	1,938	1,561	1,927	2,977	2,960
Caroline County	17,549	18,234	19,462	19,781	23,143	27,035	29,772
Maryland	1,821,244	2,343,001	3,100,689	3,923,897	4,216,975	4,781,468	5,296,486

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

## Age and Education

Table 2-2 outlines the changes in age distribution for Denton, Caroline County, and the State for 2000. The 25 to 44 age group is the largest segment of the population in Denton, as it is in both the County and the State. The median age in Denton is higher than that of the County and the State, and the Town's over-65 population is, proportionally, significantly larger than the County's or the State's. Denton has two retirement/nursing home facilities that contribute to the over-65 population age.

**Table 2-2: 2000 Population by Age: Denton, Caroline County and Maryland**

AGE RANGE	DENTON		CAROLINE COUNTY		MARYLAND	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Under 5	174	5.9%	1,843	6.2%	353,393	6.7%
5 to 14	390	13.1%	4,723	15.8%	783,453	14.8%
15 to 24	370	12.5%	3,691	12.3%	670,248	12.6%
25 to 44	794	26.8%	8,592	28.9%	1,664,677	31.4%
45 to 54	349	11.8%	4,058	13.6%	755,032	14.3%
55 to 59	120	4.1%	1,601	5.4%	268,647	5.1%
60 to 64	111	3.8%	1,233	4.1%	201,729	3.8%
65 plus	652	22.0%	4,031	13.5%	599,307	11.3%
TOTAL	2960	100.0%	29,772	100.0%	5,296,486	100.0%
MEDIAN AGE	38.9		37		36	

*Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-1 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, Denton town, Maryland; Caroline County, Maryland*

A higher percentage of the population 25 years and over in Denton graduated high school than was the case statewide (Table 2-3). A significantly lower percentage of Caroline County and Denton students went on to get a higher degree than was the norm in the State.

**Table 2-3: Educational Attainment – 2000: Denton, Caroline County, and State of Maryland**

<i>EDUCATION ATTAINMENT CATEGORY</i>	<i>DENTON</i>	<i>CAROLINE COUNTY</i>	<i>MARYLAND</i>
<i>Population 25 years and over</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Less than 9th grade</i>	<i>8.9%</i>	<i>7.2%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>
<i>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</i>	<i>20.2%</i>	<i>17.8%</i>	<i>11.1%</i>
<i>High school graduate (incl. equivalency)</i>	<i>33.8%</i>	<i>42.0%</i>	<i>26.7%</i>
<i>Some college credit, less than 1 year</i>	<i>16.2%</i>	<i>16.8%</i>	<i>20.3%</i>
<i>Associate degree</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>4.1%</i>	<i>5.3%</i>
<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	<i>8.1%</i>	<i>7.3%</i>	<i>18.0%</i>
<i>Graduate or Professional degree</i>	<i>9.3%</i>	<i>4.8%</i>	<i>13.4%</i>

*Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-2 Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000, Denton town, Maryland; Caroline County, Maryland*

## **Employment and Income**

The Eastern Shore and Caroline County are gradually shifting away from the resource-based, agricultural economy of the past. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, while still very important, are no longer the dominant employment sectors. Overall a more diversified economy based on management and professional careers and sales and office occupations is emerging, with over 35 percent of the labor force engaged in the former and nearly a quarter of the labor force employed in the latter. The services industry, the leading employer in 1990, ranked third in employment totals for 2000.

Denton's labor force (those residents who are either employed or unemployed but seeking work) is lower as a percentage of the population over 16 years old than the County and the State (see Table 2-4). This could be attributed to the fact that there is a larger percentage of persons over the age of 65 living in Denton than in the County or the State. The percentage of unemployed was also lower in Denton than in the County and State, a notable improvement since 1990 when unemployment was significantly higher in Denton than in the County or State.

**Table 2-4: Labor Force – 2000: Denton, Caroline County, and Maryland**

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	DENTON	CAROLINE COUNTY	MARYLAND
Population 16 years and over	2,189	22,743	4,085,942
In labor force	1,168	15,045	2,769,525
Civilian labor force	1,162	15,016	2,737,359
Employed	1,112	14,297	2,608,457
Unemployed	50	719	128,902
<i>% of civilian labor force</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>4.7</i>
Armed Forces	6	29	32,166
Not in labor force	1,021	7,698	1,316,417

*Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000 Denton town, Maryland; Caroline County, Maryland*

The leading occupations held by Denton residents were management, professional, and related occupations; followed by sales and office occupations; and then service occupations. The leading industries employing Denton residents were educational, health and social services; followed by manufacturing' and then retail trade plus professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services. Table 2-5 provides details.



**Table 2-5: Occupation and Industry – 2000: Denton**

OCCUPATION OR INDUSTRY	PERCENT
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	
Management, professional, and related occupations	35.5%
Service occupations	18.6%
Sales and office occupations	24.4%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.5%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	9.4%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	11.5%
<b>INDUSTRY</b>	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.5%
Construction	7.4%
Manufacturing	12.1%
Wholesale trade	4.9%
Retail trade	8.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2.7%
Information	5.6%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	2.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	8.1%
Educational, health and social services	34.3%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	5.4%
Other services (except public administration)	2.4%
Public administration	5.5%

*Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000, Denton town, Maryland.*

In 2000, median incomes in Denton for all categories, i.e., households, families, and non-family households, were less than those of the County and State (see Table 2-6). The number of persons living in poverty was lower in Denton than in the County and the State, as were the number of households with income of \$100,000 or more. Detailed household and family income figures for Denton appear in Table 2-7.



**Table 2-6: Income and Poverty Status – 1999: Denton, Caroline County, and Maryland**

JURISDICTION	PER CAPITA INCOME	MEDIAN INCOME			PERSONS LIVING IN POVERTY	HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME OF \$100,000 OR MORE
		HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILIES	NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENT	PERCENT
Denton	\$18,631	\$34,936	\$42,583	\$20,896	8.1%	3.2%
Caroline County	\$17,275	\$38,832	\$44,825	\$21,935	11.7%	5.8%
Maryland	\$25,614	\$52,868	\$61,876	\$32,654	8.5%	18.1%

Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000, Denton town, Maryland; Caroline County, Maryland

**Table 2-7: Detailed Household and Family Income – 1999: Denton**

INCOME IN 1999	PERCENT	INCOME IN 1999	PERCENT
Households	100.0	Families	100.0
Less than \$10,000	7.9	Less than \$10,000	5.7
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.9	\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.9
\$15,000 to \$24,999	17.6	\$15,000 to \$24,999	13.7
\$25,000 to \$34,999	17.7	\$25,000 to \$34,999	19.5
\$35,000 to \$49,999	20.8	\$35,000 to \$49,999	19.8
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.1	\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.1
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.8	\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.1
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2.0	\$100,000 to \$149,999	3.2
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.5	\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.8
\$200,000 or more	0.7	\$200,000 or more	1.2

Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-3 Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000, Denton town, Maryland.

## Persons Per Household

In 2000, the State of Maryland calculated that the average number of persons per household in Denton was 2.29, down from 2.38 in 1990. It is expected that average household size will remain constant over the next several decades.

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Between 1990 and 2000, a total of 172 housing units were added to Denton's housing inventory. Of the total inventory (1,260 units), the majority, 66 percent, are single family detached homes. There are 369 multi-family housing units; approximately 29 percent of the Town's housing

stock. Nearly a third of the entire inventory, 29.5 percent, was built before 1939. Ninety percent of the Town's housing units are occupied and of those, about 57 percent are owner-occupied. All housing units are equipped with complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. Detailed housing characteristics appear in Tables 2-8 and 2-9.

**Table 2-8: Housing Characteristics; Occupied Housing Units and Tenure - 2000**

OCCUPANCY STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Total housing units	1,264	100
Occupied housing units	1,140	90.2
Vacant housing units	124	9.8
TENURE		
Occupied housing units	1,140	100
Owner-occupied housing units	645	56.6
Renter-occupied housing units	495	43.4

Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-1 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000, Denton town, Maryland.

**Table 2-9: Housing Characteristics: Units in Structure and Year Built - 2000**

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	1,260
UNITS IN STRUCTURE	PERCENT
1-unit, detached	66.1%
1-unit, attached	4.1%
2 units	9.0%
3 or 4 units	6.3%
5 to 9 units	7.0%
10 to 19 units	6.0%
20 or more units	1.0%
Mobile home	0.5%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.0%
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT	PERCENT
1999 to March 2000	2.4%
1995 to 1998	2.6%
1990 to 1994	8.7%
1980 to 1989	16.4%
1970 to 1979	9.9%
1960 to 1969	5.8%
1940 to 1959	24.7%
1939 or earlier	29.5%

Source: 2000 US Census Bureau Table DP-4 Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics 2000, Denton town, Maryland.

## **TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE**

The area around Denton drains into the Choptank River. Elevation ranges from 20 feet above sea level along the river's edge to 40 feet along a ridge line generally following Fourth Street. Increased elevation further inland is only nominal, as the dominant feature of the land is flatness. The relative flatness tends to impede drainage, with some areas being poorly suited for urban development.

Directly west of Market Street, a large land mass, or promontory, extends into the Choptank River. This tidal marsh and wooded land is unsuitable for building and has remained vacant. The Town's local Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program protects environmentally sensitive areas within the Town's borders adjacent to the Choptank River.

### **Ground Water**

Abundant ground water resources exist in Caroline County. Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties lie in the North Atlantic Coastal Plain which is underlain by a mass of sediments resting upon a sloping surface of hard crystalline rock. It has been estimated that not less than 100 million gallons of water a day are available, or about nine times the current use.

The water bearing Coastal Plain sediments are composed of sands, greensands, gravels, silts, clay, shales, and shell beds. The sands and gravels are generally porous and permeable, yielding water freely, while the finer-grained beds contain water but yield it more slowly or not at all. Water is pumped from ten aquifers or bodies of sediments capable of yielding water that range in depth from the surface to more than 1,400 feet. Three of these aquifers are used extensively down to depths of 600 feet. In Caroline County, the more shallow sands ranging in depths from 50 to 100 feet provide water.

### **Natural Features Significance for Community Development**

Level topography and abundant water supplies are features that are favorable to Town growth and continued urban development. Poorly drained soils represent an obstacle to easy development primarily because of waste disposal problems. Most of the Town's recent development expansion has been taking place in southerly and easterly directions where soil conditions permit the interim use of household septic tank filter fields. Experience has generally shown this to be a temporary means of waste disposal with an irregular level of acceptable performance, especially during wet seasons. Extensive growth to the east has been restricted because of poor drainage. These obstacles to easterly development can be overcome through provision of municipal sewerage service which can be readily extended into new growth areas as they become annexed. Development west of the Choptank River, also constrained due to poor drainage, must wait upon provisioning of public wastewater facilities.

Although most undeveloped land outside of Denton is actively used for farming, the soil types in question are in extensive supply elsewhere in the County. The loss of inlaying agricultural land to possible future development should not, therefore, pose any problem in scarcity or reduction of prime agricultural land. The Town's Critical Area Program will pose restrictions and constraints on development within the 1,000 foot wide designated Critical Area adjacent to the Choptank River in order to 1) minimize adverse impacts on water quality that result from pollutants that are discharged from structures or conveyances or that have runoff from surrounding lands; 2) conserve fish, wildlife and plant habitat; and 3) establish land use policies governing development in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area that accommodate growth, but also address the fact that, even if pollution is controlled, the number, movement and activity of persons in that area can create adverse environmental impacts.