



**RIVERS &
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CHARLESTOWN, MARYLAND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS

SUMMER 2024



Funded by the Upper Shore Regional Council

MESSAGE FROM

THE UPPER SHORE REGIONAL COUNCIL



The Upper Shore Regional Council is proud to have funded this comprehensive study, reflecting our commitment to sustainable development across our communities. As we embrace the significant regional developments ahead, the importance of long-term strategic planning cannot be overstated.

This study represents a pivotal step for Charlestown as it navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by significant regional developments. It is our hope that this work will serve as a blueprint for thoughtful growth and innovation, ensuring Charlestown remains a vibrant and thriving community. We are committed to supporting Charlestown's journey, believing that strategic foresight paired with community-focused planning is essential to our collective prosperity.

– Susan O'Neill
Executive Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

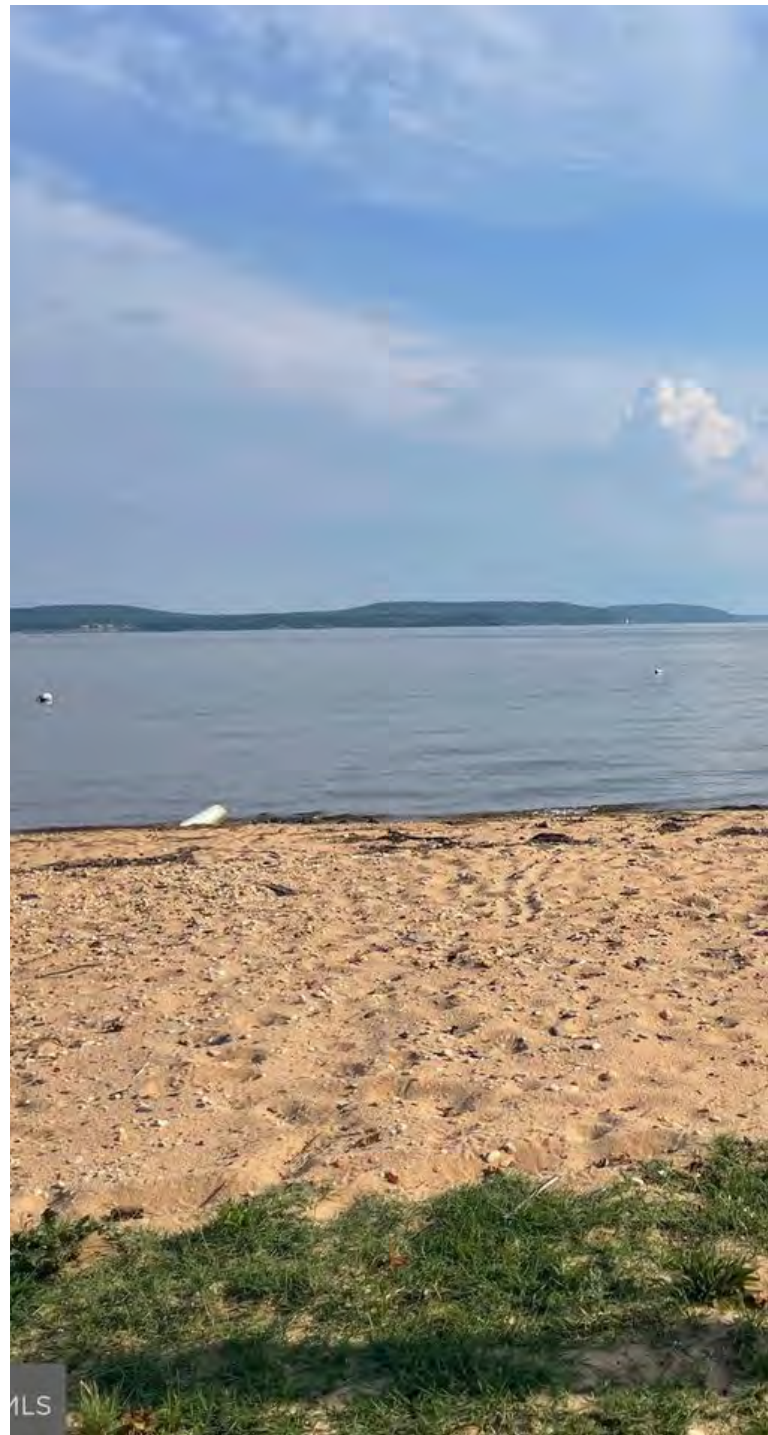
Rivers & Roads, funded by the Upper Shore Regional Council through their Municipal Development Consulting Program, is honored to present this impact analysis on major economic development initiatives planned or underway near Charlestown, Maryland. This comprehensive study aims to guide the Town of Charlestown in leveraging upcoming economic development opportunities while preserving its historic charm and small village feel. Additionally, this analysis seeks to complement the updates being made to Charlestown's Comprehensive Plan (last updated in 2008). We extend our gratitude to the Upper Shore Regional Council for funding this work and to the Town of Charlestown for entrusting us with this significant task.

The likely redevelopment of the mining site, led by Stewart Companies—the same developer behind the Principio Business Park—envisions a vibrant, mixed-use community featuring residential units, commercial spaces, and public amenities. This project, alongside other major initiatives like the new I-95 interchange at Belvidere Road, the expansion of Principio Business Park, the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement, and MARC's proposed extension to Newark, DE, presents Charlestown with substantial growth opportunities.

To maximize these opportunities, we recommend several strategic actions for Charlestown's leadership. It is crucial to facilitate pedestrian movement from the new development through Charlestown to the waterfront, enhancing connectivity and access. Upgrading infrastructure along the designated commercial corridor, specifically Market Street and Water Street, to accommodate vehicular traffic and sidewalks on both sides is essential. Additionally, creating an overlay zoning district along this corridor to allow for small-scale mixed-use development will attract businesses and support community growth.

Furthermore, implementing programs like Main Street and Arts & Entertainment District designations will incentivize small business development along the future commercial corridor, fostering a vibrant and economically diverse town center. By positioning itself to leverage these developments, Charlestown can ensure sustainable growth while maintaining its unique identity and charm.

Ensuring accessible and engaging waterfront areas will attract both residents and visitors, fostering a sense of community and supporting local businesses. By prioritizing waterfront activation, Charlestown can leverage its unique geographical advantage to drive long-term economic growth and community development.



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report, commissioned by the Town of Charlestown, Maryland, and funded by the Upper Shore Regional Council through their Municipal Development Consulting Program, aims to provide Charlestown's leadership with the necessary insights and recommendations to navigate and leverage impending economic and community developments effectively. Charlestown stands at a critical juncture, with significant regional growth on the horizon driven by the likely redevelopment of a 500-acre sand and gravel mining site by Stewart Companies, the new I-95 interchange at Belvidere Road, the expansion of Principio Business Park, the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement, and the proposed MARC extension to Newark, DE.

As the town embarks on updating its 2008 Comprehensive Plan, this report serves as an intensive summary of these developments and their potential impacts on Charlestown. It emphasizes the importance of proactive planning to capitalize on these opportunities, positioning the town for smart, sustainable growth while preserving its historic charm and small village feel.

Charlestown can choose to either resist the impending growth or embrace it by laying the groundwork to leverage the surrounding developments, ensuring that the town benefits economically and socially while maintaining its unique identity. The recommendations provided in this report are geared towards achieving the latter, ensuring that Charlestown emerges as a vibrant, economically robust community.





BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHARLESTOWN AND ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Charlestown, Maryland, founded in 1742, is steeped in rich history. It was once a bustling port town, pivotal during the colonial era. One of the town's most notable historical attractions was Holloway Beach, which, in the mid-20th century, was a popular tourist destination drawing visitors from across the region. Holloway Beach featured amusement rides, a dance pavilion, and various recreational activities, making it a beloved spot for family outings and summer vacations.

Although Holloway Beach no longer exists in its original form, its legacy lives on in Charlestown's continued appeal as a recreational destination. The area where Holloway Beach once stood is now home to marinas and RV campgrounds, which attract visitors seeking waterfront leisure and outdoor activities. These recreational facilities contribute significantly to Charlestown's charm and economic vitality, reinforcing its historical role as a community centered around its waterfront.

DEMOGRAPHIC EVOLUTION

Charlestown's population has seen modest growth over the years, reflecting its small-town character and appeal. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Charlestown had a population of approximately 1,300 residents in 2020. The town has a diverse demographic composition, with a median age of 45.2 years, suggesting a balanced mix of young families, working professionals, and retirees. The town's demographic profile also indicates a relatively high level of educational attainment, with many residents holding bachelor's degrees or higher.

In broader terms, Cecil County, where Charlestown is located, has experienced more significant population growth. The county's population was estimated at around 103,000 in 2020, up from 72,000 in 2000. This growth is driven by the county's strategic location along the I-95 corridor, offering convenient access to major metropolitan areas like Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia. Cecil County's demographic trends show a younger median age compared to Charlestown, highlighting the county's appeal to younger families and professionals seeking affordable living and employment opportunities.

CURRENT DAY CHARLESTOWN

Today, Charlestown retains its historic charm while embracing its role as a modern recreational destination. The town's waterfront is dotted with several marinas, including Charlestown Marina, North East Marina, Lee's Marina, and Wellwood Marina. These facilities provide ample opportunities for boating, fishing, and water sports, attracting both residents and visitors. The marinas are complemented by RV campgrounds, which offer a scenic and convenient stay for tourists exploring the region.

Charlestown's strategic location on the North East River enhances its appeal, providing easy access to the Chesapeake Bay and its rich marine resources. The town's picturesque setting, combined with its recreational amenities, makes it a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and those seeking a tranquil retreat. The town's leadership is committed to preserving this unique character while positioning Charlestown for future growth and development.

By leveraging its historical heritage, strategic location, and recreational assets, Charlestown is well-placed to benefit from the anticipated economic development projects in the region. The town's ability to balance growth with the preservation of its small-town charm will be crucial in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development.

IMPORTANCE OF THE IMPACT ANALYSIS

The significance of this impact analysis extends beyond immediate economic considerations; it is a critical supplement to Charlestown's ongoing comprehensive planning process. As the town updates its comprehensive plan, this analysis will provide essential insights and recommendations that align with Charlestown's long-term vision. This alignment is especially important given the town's strategic location and the substantial regional developments on the horizon.

Charlestown's 2008 comprehensive plan articulated a vision for the town as a small, family-friendly community where residents of all ages could enjoy a high quality of life.

According to the 2008 plan,

“Charlestown will be a small town where families will want to live and raise their children; where senior citizens will want to enjoy their retirement. Streets will be safe, and youth will be challenged with an effective recreational program reflecting their interests and abilities. As an inclusive community, residents in all parts of the Town will experience a sense of community and will participate in all aspects of Town-sponsored activities. Historic architectural treasures will be preserved and enhanced by compatible new construction in the Historic District and well-maintained residential properties overall. Existing commercial enterprises will be encouraged to enhance their facilities, and any new businesses will be compatible with the nature of the Town.”

The recommendations outlined in this document are crafted to echo and expand upon this vision. For instance, the recommended infrastructure improvements are aimed at ensuring that "streets will be safe" by facilitating pedestrian movement and upgrading roadways. This focus on safety and accessibility is also highlighted in the "Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop" report, which outlines necessary infrastructure enhancements to ensure safe access for pedestrians to the waterfront.

Additionally, the recommendation to facilitate residents' access to the water emphasizes inclusivity, serving not just the residents of the new development but all of Charlestown's

population. This access will allow residents to enjoy the town's marinas, beaches, Avalon Park, and a future commercial corridor. The establishment of a commercial corridor with small-scale mixed-use buildings speaks directly to the original vision by supporting local businesses and fostering community cohesion.

In summary, this impact analysis is crucial for guiding Charlestown's leadership in making informed, strategic decisions that align with both immediate and long-term goals. By leveraging upcoming economic development opportunities in a way that maintains the town's character, Charlestown can achieve sustainable growth that benefits all residents.



Source: Marinas.com



REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

I-95 INTERCHANGE AT BELVIDERE ROAD

The I-95 interchange at Belvidere Road is a significant infrastructure project aimed at improving access to the Cecil County Enterprise Zone and supporting economic growth in the region. This \$60 million project, announced by the Maryland Transportation Authority, is in the final design phase with construction expected to begin in 2025. The new interchange will provide more direct access for trucks, reducing traffic on US 40, MD 222, and MD 272, and is supported by both state and local administrations.

The proposed interchange at I-95 and Belvidere Road in Cecil County, Maryland, is a significant infrastructure project aimed at supporting the region's economic growth. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) is spearheading this project to provide more direct access to and from I-95, particularly for trucks accessing the nearby Cecil County Enterprise Zone (principally comprised of Principio Business Park). This project aims to reduce truck volumes on local roads such as US 40, MD 222, and MD 272, thereby enhancing safety and improving traffic flow in the area.

PROJECT SCOPE AND NECESSITY

The scope of the project includes the construction of a new interchange at I-95 and Belvidere Road, along with associated road improvements to facilitate efficient traffic movement. This interchange is deemed necessary due to the projected increase in commercial and industrial activities within the Cecil County Enterprise Zone. The existing road infrastructure is insufficient to handle the anticipated rise in truck and vehicular traffic, leading to congestion and safety concerns. By providing a direct route to I-95, the new interchange will alleviate these issues, promoting smoother transportation and logistics operations.



Source: Maryland Transit Authority

PROJECT PHASES AND TIMELINE

The project is currently in the design phase, with environmental assessments and preliminary engineering studies underway. These studies are crucial for identifying potential impacts on the surrounding environment and communities, and ensuring that mitigation measures are in place. Construction is expected to begin once the design phase is completed and all necessary approvals are secured. The exact timeline for the start of construction has not been finalized, but it is anticipated to commence within the next few years.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

The estimated cost of the I-95/Belvidere Road interchange project is approximately \$65 million. This budget covers all aspects of the project, including design, construction, and ancillary road improvements. Funding for the project comes from a combination of federal, state, and local sources. The initiative was initially kicked off under the administration of Governor Larry Hogan, with support from federal infrastructure programs aimed at enhancing transportation networks and economic development in strategically important areas.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The construction of the new interchange is expected to have substantial economic development implications for Cecil County. By improving access to the Cecil County Enterprise Zone, the project could attract more businesses and industries to the area, driving job

creation and economic growth. The enhanced transportation infrastructure will make the region more competitive, encouraging investments in logistics, manufacturing, and other sectors. Additionally, the project could lead to reduced transportation costs for businesses operating in the area, further boosting economic activities.

PUBLIC REACTION

Public reaction to the I-95/Belvidere Road interchange project has been mixed. While many stakeholders, including business owners and local officials, support the project for its potential to drive economic growth and improve traffic conditions, some residents have expressed concerns. These concerns primarily revolve around the potential environmental impact and disruption during construction. To address these issues, MDTA has engaged in extensive public consultations, seeking feedback and providing information to ensure that the community's concerns are considered and mitigated where possible.

In summary, the I-95/Belvidere Road interchange project is a critical infrastructure initiative designed to support the economic growth of Cecil County. With its strategic location and significant investment, the project is poised to enhance transportation efficiency, attract businesses, and create jobs. The project's successful implementation will depend on careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and effective mitigation of any potential adverse impacts. As the project progresses, continued collaboration between MDTA, local authorities, and the community will be essential to realizing its full benefits.

PRINCIPIO BUSINESS PARK

Principio Business Park, developed by Stewart Properties, is a rapidly expanding industrial and commercial hub in Cecil County, Maryland. Originally breaking ground in the early 2000s, the park spans over 1,600 acres and offers prime real estate for industrial and warehouse development. Home to major companies like Amazon, Lidl, and Smithfield Foods, it has attracted significant investment due to its strategic location near I-95 and the Port of Baltimore. The business park continues to grow, with several developable lots remaining, bolstered by supportive infrastructure and economic incentives from county and state authorities.

Principio Business Park, strategically located along US-40 near I-95, is a premier industrial and commercial development that has significantly contributed to the region's economic growth. Developed by Stewart Companies, the business park spans more than 1,600 acres and offers a mix of industrial, warehouse, and office spaces designed to attract a variety of businesses.



DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The development of Principio Business Park began in the early 2000s, with the first phase of construction breaking ground in 2004. The park has since grown to include multiple phases, each planned to accommodate the needs of modern businesses. As of the latest updates, several developable lots remain, providing ample opportunities for future expansion.

Principio Business Park is designed to support large-scale industrial operations, featuring robust infrastructure that includes high-capacity utilities, extensive road networks, and proximity to major transportation routes. The park is located near I-95, providing easy access to major metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Wilmington and their various maritime and aero ports. This strategic location makes it an ideal hub for distribution, manufacturing, and logistics companies and operations.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

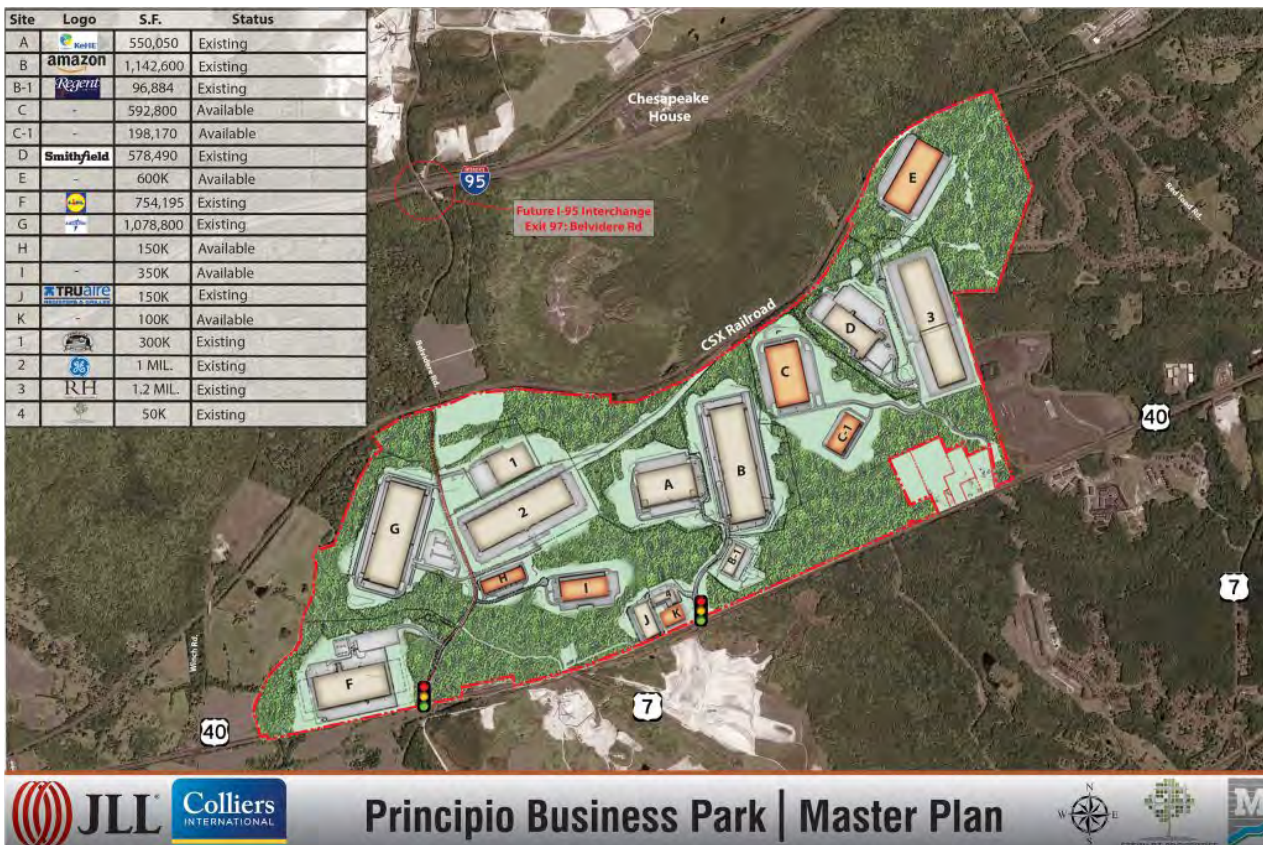
The business park has been a catalyst for economic development in Cecil County, attracting numerous national and international companies.

Notable tenants include Amazon, Lidl, and Medline, which have established large distribution centers within the park. These companies have created thousands of jobs, contributing to the local economy and enhancing the region's economic profile.

The park's development aligns with Cecil County's broader economic strategy, which focuses on leveraging the area's strategic location and supportive infrastructure to attract investment. The presence of economic incentives such as Enterprise Zone tax credits and workforce development programs makes Principio Business Park an attractive destination for businesses.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Looking ahead, Principio Business Park is poised for continued growth. With several lots—totaling nearly 2 million square feet—still available for development, the park offers significant potential for attracting new businesses and further diversifying the local economy. The ongoing improvements to transportation infrastructure, such as the new I-95 interchange at Belvidere Road, will enhance access to the park and support its expansion.



Source: Stewart Properties

SAND AND GRAVEL MINE MIXED-USE REDEVELOPMENT

The sand and gravel mine operated by Stewart Companies is located just north of Charlestown, Maryland, and spans approximately 500 acres. Known for its high silica content, the sand from this mine is particularly valuable for industrial applications such as glass manufacturing and construction. While no plan has been released, the current mining operation is expected to eventually transition into a vibrant mixed-use development. This redevelopment may include a combination of residential, commercial, and public spaces, and aims to leverage the site's strategic location to further economic and community growth in the region. The project is still in the planning stages, with detailed plans for the site's future use expected to emerge as mining operations wind down.

The sand and gravel mining site in Charlestown, Maryland, operated by Stewart Companies, is likely set for significant redevelopment. Stewart Companies, known for its diverse portfolio of businesses and investments—including the Principio Business Park—will oversee this transition. The mining operation spans several hundred acres and has been a key supplier of construction materials, producing sand, gravel, and other building materials used in various projects across the region.



Source: *Google Maps*



Of note regarding this particular sand and gravel operation is the mined material's high silica composition. High-silica sand, which contains at least 95% silica (SiO₂), is highly valuable due to its purity, consistency, and broad range of industrial applications. It is essential in the manufacturing of glass, providing the chemical purity and physical properties needed for window glass, bottles, and specialty glass products. Additionally, its high melting point and durability make it ideal for metal castings, refractory materials, and construction components like concrete and mortar. High-silica sand is also a crucial proppant in hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas extraction, owing to its strength and resistance to crushing. Furthermore, its chemical stability makes it suitable for use in paints, coatings, plastics, ceramics, filtration systems, and the production of silicon for semiconductors and solar panels. These diverse uses highlight the significant economic value of high-silica sand, particularly as demand in various industries continues to grow.

The proposed redevelopment initiative aims to transform the mining site into a vibrant, mixed-use community. This project aligns with Stewart Companies' expertise in real estate and construction, promising a thoughtful integration of residential, commercial, and public spaces. While specific timelines and detailed plans for the redevelopment are not yet publicly available, the initiative reflects a broader trend of repurposing industrial sites to meet modern economic and community needs.

This redevelopment project is crucial for Charlestown as it prepares for the anticipated growth resulting from several key infrastructure projects in the region. The transformation of the mining site will be a cornerstone in creating a sustainable, economically vibrant future for the Charlestown region, providing new opportunities for residents and businesses alike. The project's success will depend on careful planning and community engagement.

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER RAIL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project aims to replace the aging bridge that currently carries Amtrak and MARC trains between Havre de Grace and Perryville, Maryland. The new bridge will enhance rail capacity, reliability, and safety while accommodating increased passenger and freight traffic. The project is being executed in multiple phases, including preliminary engineering, environmental review, and final design, with construction anticipated to begin in the coming years. The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$1.5 billion, and it is expected to have significant economic benefits by improving regional connectivity and supporting local job creation. This project is a collaborative effort among federal, state, and local agencies, reflecting a broad commitment to enhancing transportation infrastructure in the region.

The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project is a critical infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing rail transportation along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between Havre de Grace and Perryville, Maryland. The existing bridge, constructed in 1906, is a vital link for both passenger and freight rail services. However, due to its age and limitations, the bridge requires replacement to meet modern transportation demands and ensure long-term operational reliability.

PROJECT SCOPE AND NECESSITY

The existing Susquehanna River Rail Bridge is a two-track, moveable bridge that serves as a bottleneck on the NEC, restricting the speed

and capacity of rail traffic. The replacement project aims to construct two new high-level, fixed bridges, each with two tracks—effectively quadrupling the track capacity. This enhancement will alleviate congestion, improve service reliability, and support future growth in rail traffic.

The new bridges will be designed to accommodate higher train speeds, increasing the current limit of 90 mph to 160 mph, significantly reducing travel times along the corridor. Additionally, the new bridges will be built with improved clearance for river traffic, eliminating the need for a moveable span and reducing maintenance requirements.



Source: Amtrak

PROJECT PHASES AND TIMELINE

The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project has undergone several phases, including planning, environmental review, and preliminary engineering. The project is currently in the final design phase, with construction expected to commence once design work is completed and funding is fully secured.

Key milestones in the project timeline include:

01

Planning and Environmental Review:

Initiated in 2010, this phase involved extensive studies and public consultations to assess the environmental impacts and feasibility of the project. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) led this effort, culminating in a Record of Decision (ROD) issued in 2017, which formally approved the project.

02

Preliminary Engineering:

Completed in 2020, this phase developed the initial design concepts and detailed engineering plans for the new bridges.

03

Final Design:

Currently underway, this phase focuses on refining the design details, securing necessary permits, and preparing for construction. Final design completion is anticipated by 2024.

04

Construction:

Scheduled to begin in 2025, with an estimated completion timeline of five to seven years for the first span and a 2036 completion of the second span, depending on funding and construction progress. The current bridge will remain operational during construction.



COST AND FUNDING

The total estimated cost of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project is approximately \$1.5 billion. Funding for the project is expected to come from a combination of federal and state sources and contributions from Amtrak, which operates the majority of passenger rail services on the NEC.

The project has received significant support from various stakeholders, including federal and state agencies, as it aligns with broader goals of enhancing transportation infrastructure and promoting economic growth. Federal funding has been secured through grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Rail Administration, with additional funding commitments from MDOT and Amtrak.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The replacement of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge is expected to have substantial economic benefits for the region. Improved rail connectivity and capacity will enhance the efficiency of passenger and freight transportation, supporting regional economic development and competitiveness. The project will also create

construction jobs and stimulate economic activity during the construction phase.

In the long term, the upgraded bridge will facilitate increased rail traffic, supporting economic growth by enabling more efficient movement of goods and people.

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER REACTIONS

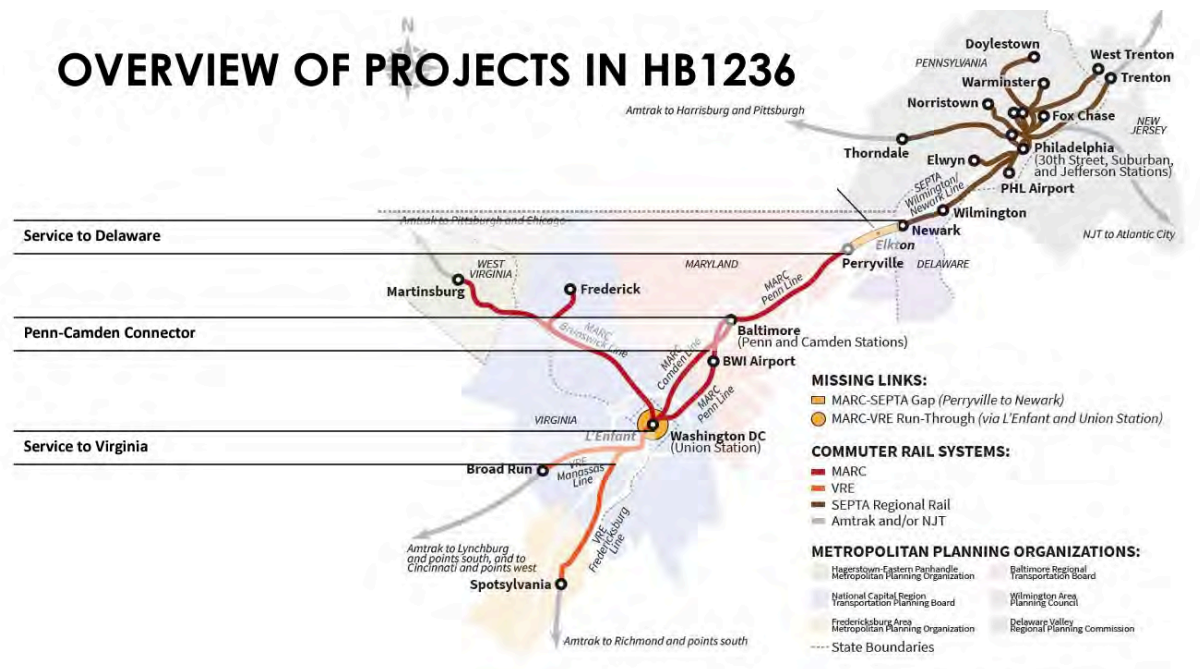
The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project has generally been met with positive reactions from the public and stakeholders. The project addresses longstanding concerns about the aging infrastructure and its impact on rail service reliability. Public consultations and engagement efforts have been conducted throughout the project's planning and environmental review phases, allowing residents and stakeholders to provide input and feedback.

In conclusion, the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge replacement project is a transformative initiative that will significantly enhance rail transportation along the NEC. By replacing the aging bridge with modern, high-capacity structures, the project will improve service reliability, support economic growth, and address critical infrastructure needs for the future.

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF MARC SERVICE TO NEWARK, DE

The proposed expansion of MARC train service aims to extend routes to Newark, Delaware, and Alexandria, Virginia, transforming MARC from a commuter rail to a regional rail provider. Framework agreements have been signed with Delaware Transit Corp. and Virginia Passenger Rail Authority to explore pilot service opportunities and determine operational and infrastructure needs. This expansion will bridge the commuter rail gap in Cecil County and connect MARC with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority system. The initiative is part of the MARC Cornerstone Plan and the Maryland State Rail Plan, with future service contingent on infrastructure projects like the Long Bridge project in Virginia. The expansion promises to enhance regional connectivity and economic opportunities, facilitating seamless transit across state lines.

The proposed expansion of the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) train service to Newark, Delaware, represents a significant effort to extend commuter rail services and enhance regional connectivity along the Northeast Corridor (NEC). This initiative, spearheaded by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), involves collaborative agreements with the Delaware Transit Corporation and other stakeholders. The project aims to facilitate better access to employment centers, educational institutions, and key destinations while promoting economic growth and environmental sustainability.



Source: Maryland Department of Transportation

PROJECT SCOPE AND NECESSITY

The scope of the project involves extending the current MARC Penn Line service, which terminates at Perryville, Maryland, to Newark, Delaware. This extension will create a seamless commuter rail link between Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Newark, thereby improving mobility for residents in the region.

The necessity of this expansion is underscored by several critical factors:

- **Commuter Demand:** The growing population in the region and increasing traffic congestion on major highways necessitate more efficient and reliable commuter rail services.
- **Economic Integration:** The project will support economic integration by providing improved access to major employment centers, resulting in regional economic growth.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Expanding public transportation options will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, decrease reliance on personal vehicles, and alleviate traffic congestion.



PROJECT PHASES AND TIMELINE

The MARC service expansion to Newark, DE, is in the early stages of planning and development. The recent framework agreements signed between MDOT/MTA and the Delaware Transit Corporation mark a significant step forward in advancing the project.

COST AND FUNDING

The estimated cost for extending MARC service to Newark, DE, is projected to be substantial, involving significant infrastructure investments. Funding for the project will likely come from a combination of federal grants, state contributions, and bonds. The project aligns with the goals outlined in the MARC Cornerstone Plan and the Maryland State Rail Plan, both of which emphasize expanding regional transportation networks.

FEDERAL AND STATE ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

The project has received support from both federal and state administrations. Maryland

Governor Wes Moore and Lt. Governor Aruna Miller have emphasized the importance of regional collaboration to create a fully connected transportation network. The framework agreements signed with Delaware Transit Corporation and Virginia Passenger Rail Authority highlight a commitment to expanding transit options and improving regional connectivity.

In conclusion, the proposed expansion of MARC service to Newark, DE, represents a transformative transportation initiative that aims to enhance regional connectivity, support economic growth, and provide environmental benefits. By extending commuter rail services across state lines, the project will significantly improve mobility for residents and contribute to the overall development of the Northeast Corridor. The signing of framework agreements marks a crucial first step in this ambitious project, setting the stage for future planning, design, and implementation efforts.



REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR CHARLESTOWN

As Charlestown stands on the brink of significant regional developments, it is poised to leverage these opportunities for substantial growth and transformation. The impending projects promise to reshape the economic landscape, offering new avenues for business and community development. This section will explore the direct impacts of these initiatives on Charlestown and discuss how they can be harnessed to benefit the town and its residents. Rivers & Roads Consulting recommends that Charlestown use the current comprehensive plan update as a strategic framework to align its future growth with these developments. By embracing these changes with an open mind, rather than resisting them, Charlestown can ensure it remains a vibrant, attractive community well into the future.

IMPACT OF THE I-95 INTERCHANGE AND PRINCIPIO BUSINESS PARK EXPANSION

The proposed I-95 interchange at Belvidere Road and the expansion of Principio Business Park will bring transformative changes to Charlestown, Maryland. This section will explore the comprehensive impacts of these projects on the town, considering the economic, infrastructural, and community development ramifications.

DIRECT ACCESS TO A MAJOR THOROUGHFARE

The I-95 interchange is significant because it creates direct access to Charlestown from a major US thoroughfare via Belvidere Road, which connects to MD-7 and MD-267. Historically, small towns that gain direct access to federal highways often experience significant growth. Additionally, suburban jurisdictions within one hour of a major metropolitan area are the few places around the U.S. experiencing growing populations. While parts of Cecil County and Charlestown miss the suburban classification by a handful of minutes by falling outside of the 1-hour commute threshold, an I-95 interchange directly north of Charlestown will shave a few minutes off a commute.

VISIBILITY BENEFITS OF HIGHWAY SIGNAGE

Having Charlestown's name prominently displayed on a large highway sign could bring significant benefits. Visibility of such signage not only boosts local pride but also significantly increases awareness and foot traffic from travelers. This kind of exposure can be a major economic boon, as it tends to attract visitors who might stop, explore, and spend in local businesses. Additionally, being recognized on a major thoroughfare can enhance the town's image as a key destination within the region, potentially drawing more residential and commercial interest to the area.

STRATEGIC LOCATION OF PRINCIPIO BUSINESS PARK

Principio Business Park's strategic location cannot be understated. With direct access to I-95, businesses in Principio will enjoy seamless connectivity to major metro areas such as Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia, as well as convenient access to regional air and maritime ports. This accessibility is critical for logistics and distribution centers that rely on efficient transportation networks.

The fact that Principio Business Park is situated within an Enterprise Zone further enhances its appeal, providing tax incentives and other benefits to businesses. This combination of direct highway access and economic incentives makes the complete buildout of Principio Business Park inevitable.

Currently, Principio Business Park hosts numerous businesses, employing thousands of workers. Based on data, there are approximately 1,300 new jobs expected with the development of the remaining 2 million square feet of pad sites, assuming a median of 1,500 square feet per worker as indicated by the Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.



Company	Announced Jobs
Amazon	700
Smithfield Foods	240
Medline	200
Restoration Hardware	150
Lidl	100
GE	100

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

- **Temporary Jobs:** The construction of the interchange and additional warehouses in Principio Business Park will create numerous temporary jobs. These construction jobs will not only provide immediate employment opportunities but also stimulate the local economy through increased demand for goods and services. Temporary construction jobs often have a ripple effect, boosting local businesses such as restaurants, retail stores, service providers, and hotels.
- **Permanent Jobs:** While often modest, warehouse and industrial employees can generally earn average wages that support a middle-class lifestyle. These workers have needs that include dining, entertainment, housing, and retail, which can spur the development of local amenities and services. For instance, the average wage for warehouse workers is around \$35,000 to \$45,000 annually, while more specialized roles in logistics and management can earn significantly more.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Residential Appeal:** The improved accessibility and economic opportunities will make Charlestown and Greater Charlestown more attractive for residential development. The town can expect an increase in demand for residential development and potentially an influx of new residents.
- **Public Services:** Increased tax revenue from new businesses and residents can be reinvested into public services, such as schools, parks, and infrastructure improvements. Whereas increased property tax revenue may not necessarily reach Charlestown's coffers immediately due to the unlikely scenario of areas of Greater Charlestown being annexed, other tax revenues such as income and sales tax may see an uptick from an increase in visitor spending. This reinvestment can enhance the quality of life for all residents.
- **Safety and Connectivity:** The new interchange will also improve safety by diverting heavy truck traffic away from local roads like US 40, MD 222, and MD 272. This reduction in local congestion will theoretically make streets safer for pedestrians and local traffic. Moreover, the interchange will facilitate better connectivity, allowing residents to travel more efficiently to and from Charlestown.

IMPACT OF SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND PROPOSED MARC EXPANSION TO NEWARK ON CHARLESTOWN AND CECIL COUNTY

The replacement of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge and the proposed extension of MARC service to Newark, Delaware, are set to substantially impact the Greater Charlestown area and Cecil County. These projects will enhance the connectivity of the region to major metropolitan areas, providing residents with easier access to high-paying jobs while enjoying the benefits of living in a less urbanized area.

ENHANCED RAIL CONNECTIVITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The bridge replacement project is crucial not only for safety and capacity improvements but also for supporting the continued growth of rail traffic, which is essential for both commuter and freight services. With better infrastructure, the NEC could see increased ridership and more efficient service. Currently, the NEC supports over 820,000 daily trips, and any improvements could further boost these numbers, facilitating greater commuter and business access across the region.

The expansion of MARC service to Newark will further leverage this improved infrastructure by providing direct commuter rail access from Cecil County to larger cities such as Baltimore and Philadelphia. This accessibility could transform local communities, making them attractive to those who seek suburban or rural living but work in urban centers. The potential for increased property values and local business growth due to higher resident and visitor numbers could significantly benefit the local economy.

ENHANCED PROPERTY VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT FROM COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE

Reliable commuter rail service has profound impacts on residential development, especially in the context of transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD integrates high-density residential, commercial, and leisure spaces within walking distance of public transportation services, which can significantly enhance the attractiveness and utility of the surrounding areas.

The presence of a commuter rail station typically increases residential property values due to improved accessibility to major urban centers. This effect is often most pronounced in the immediate vicinity of the station, where the convenience of transit access is highest. Studies across various cities have consistently demonstrated that properties near commuter rail

stations command a premium over those further away, making these areas particularly attractive for new residential developments.

COMMUTER RAIL AS A CATALYST FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Commuter rail expansions encourage the development of TODs, which are designed to maximize access to public transportation. An excellent example of this is the expansion of the DC Metro's Silver Line in Northern Virginia. This project significantly impacted communities around new stations, stimulating residential and commercial development. New stations became hubs for growth, drawing both public and private investments that led to the creation of vibrant, mixed-use communities centered around transit access.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

Commuter rail services and the subsequent TODs contribute to a reduction in traffic congestion and lower car dependency, promoting more sustainable urban growth patterns. They also offer social benefits by providing increased accessibility to jobs, healthcare, and education, particularly for lower-income households that might rely more heavily on public transport.

SPECULATIVE IMPACTS ON CHARLESTOWN

For Charlestown and Cecil County, the proposed expansion of the MARC service to Newark could similarly transform local communities. Particularly, the potential redevelopment of the sand and gravel mine into a mixed-use community might strategically align with such an expansion. Although there are no current plans, the possibility of a new MARC station in this redevelopment could significantly enhance the site's value and utility, echoing trends seen in other regions where new rail stations have catalyzed substantial economic and residential growth.



Considering major projects and the involvement of significant private funding, it is plausible to envision substantial changes in how communities are structured around these new transit hubs.

The successful implementation of TOD in response to expanded rail services could provide Charlestown with a model for sustainable growth, leveraging its historical charm and waterfront location to attract a diverse new wave of residents and businesses.



This image was generated with the assistance of DALL-E.

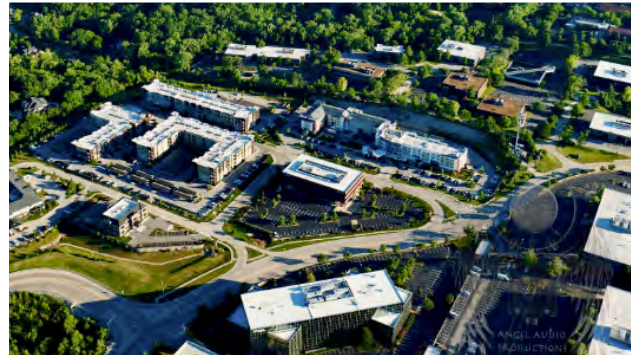
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAND AND GRAVEL MINE REDEVELOPMENT IN CHARLESTOWN

The conceptual redevelopment of the sand and gravel mining operation in Charlestown into a mixed-use community represents a major transformation that could redefine Cecil County. This project, along with the construction of the I-95 interchange and the expansion of Principio Business Park, sets the stage for the largest development initiative in the county's history.

REDEVELOPMENT OF MINING OPERATIONS

Nationally, there is a growing trend of converting exhausted mining sites into valuable mixed-use developments, rejuvenating these areas and turning them into economic assets. A notable example is the Commercial Development Company's Des Peres Quarry Redevelopment,

which transformed a 27-acre orphaned quarry in St. Louis into a vibrant mixed-use site featuring corporate headquarters, luxury apartments, a Marriott hotel, and an assisted living center. This project showcases the potential for comprehensive site redevelopment that integrates commercial and residential spaces while enhancing the local community.



Source: Commercial Development Company, Inc.

The 3Roots project in San Diego, California, exemplifies the successful redevelopment of a former sand and gravel mining operation into a mixed-use community. Situated on a 413-acre site, 3Roots includes 1,800 residential units with 180 designated as affordable housing, a 40-acre mixed-use urban area, and a 23-acre community park. The project also features a 1.5-acre “mobility hub” to enhance transit connections, including spaces for ride-sharing and bike repairs, aligned with a broader plan to integrate bus rapid transit services.



Source: Geocon



Source: 3Roots

INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC LOCATION

The existing infrastructure at the Charlestown mining site, including several pump stations, wells, and pipes, provides a solid foundation for redevelopment. Additionally, the proximity of a county wastewater treatment plant on Carpenters Point Road, which can support the addition of EDUs, further supports the feasibility of this redevelopment—likely without the need for annexation into Charlestown for public infrastructure access. These elements ensure that the basic utilities are in place for large-scale development.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY IMPACT



Job Creation: The redevelopment is expected to create a significant number of jobs, both temporary positions in construction and permanent roles in the new commercial businesses established in a mixed-use concept.



Enhanced Property Values: Similar to other areas that have integrated new transportation options, such as the DC Metro’s Silver Line expansion in Northern Virginia, the Charlestown project is likely to increase local property values substantially. This increase will benefit homeowners and stimulate further economic activity.



Community Vibrancy: The introduction of mixed-use spaces, combined with improved accessibility due to the nearby I-95 interchange and potential future MARC station expansions, will attract a diverse range of residents and businesses. This diversity will enrich the community’s cultural fabric and provide more amenities and services to residents.



RECOMMENDATIONS: CHARLESTOWN'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Charlestown, Maryland, stands at a pivotal juncture in its development trajectory. Positioned uniquely with an active waterfront, the town holds a significant advantage that the future redevelopment of the nearby sand and gravel mine lacks. By leveraging this asset along with its historic charm, Charlestown is poised to play a critical role in regional economic development. The recommendations outlined in this section aim to ensure that Charlestown not only preserves its unique character but also capitalizes on emerging opportunities to control its destiny and remain a vibrant, relevant community.

What Charlestown Should NOT Do:

Charlestown should avoid the temptation to close off from these regional developments by overly restricting zoning laws to preserve the status quo. Adopting such a conservative approach could inadvertently stagnate growth, limit the town's economic potential, and deter new residents and businesses from settling in the town. This strategy might lead to a decline in competitiveness, reduced tax revenues, and a missed opportunity to enhance the town's infrastructure and services in alignment with broader regional growth.

COLLABORATE WITH MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (SHA) TO STRENGTHEN CHARLESTOWN'S GATEWAY

The first step in reinforcing Charlestown's regional significance involves working closely with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to establish MD-267 (Baltimore Street) as the

primary gateway into the town. MD-267 connects directly to MD-7 (W Old Philadelphia Road), which links up with I-95 via US-40 and Belvidere Road. A Wayfinding Study could serve as the catalyst for this initiative, providing clear, strategic signage that guides visitors and residents along this route into the heart of Charlestown. This approach not only enhances navigability but also sets the stage for further economic and infrastructural developments along this critical corridor.



These images were generated with the assistance of DALL-E

ESTABLISH A COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR IN CHARLESTOWN

As Charlestown updates its comprehensive plan, it presents an opportune moment to strategically establish MD-267 to Market Street, and then Market Street to Water Street, as the town's designated commercial corridor. This corridor would serve as the economic backbone of Charlestown, channeling both local and regional traffic through its vibrant business district.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Infrastructure Improvements:

- **Road Enhancements:** Widening Market Street and Water Street is crucial. This would accommodate increased traffic and improve safety, making the corridor more accessible and business-friendly.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Developments:** Adding sidewalks on both sides of MD-267 and along Market and Water Streets, will prioritize walkability. This encourages a pedestrian-friendly environment that attracts more visitors and supports local businesses.

Zoning Adjustments:

- **Mixed-Use Overlay Zoning:** Introducing a small-scale mixed-use overlay zoning

district along parcels directly adjacent to the commercial corridor can drive the development of new businesses. Envisioning small shops and cafes on the ground floor with apartments above will help maintain the town's charm while accommodating growth.

Leveraging Current Planning Efforts:

- The update of the comprehensive plan is the perfect framework within which to integrate these changes, ensuring they are aligned with Charlestown's overall development goals and community values.

By redefining this corridor, Charlestown can create a dynamic business environment that catalyzes economic growth while preserving its historic identity. This strategic development will not only enhance the town's appeal as a destination but also solidify its role in the regional economic landscape.





IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE ALONG THE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Investing in infrastructure improvements along the designated commercial corridor is essential for supporting Charlestown's growth and enhancing its appeal as a community-focused, walkable town. Drawing insights from the Charlestown Walkable Community Workshop Report, several key improvements can be strategically implemented to transform the corridor into a dynamic and accessible space for both residents and visitors.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS:

- **Street Widening and Traffic Flow Optimization:** Widening Market Street and Water Street will accommodate increased traffic, particularly around key commercial areas, improving safety and accessibility. Integrating traffic flow enhancements will reduce congestion associated with a popular commercial district and improve the overall visitor experience.
- **Enhanced Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Building on the Walkable Community Workshop's recommendations, adding comprehensive sidewalk coverage along MD-267, Market Street, and Water Street is crucial. These improvements should focus on safety, comfort, and connectivity, encouraging walking and cycling as primary modes of transportation within the corridor.
- **Public Amenities:** Incorporating green spaces, street furniture, and pedestrian

plazas will enhance the aesthetic appeal and functionality of the commercial corridor. These features not only make the area more inviting but also support longer visits, which is beneficial for local businesses.

- **Utility Upgrades:** Modernizing the underlying utility infrastructure, including water, sewer, and telecommunications, will ensure that the area can support increased commercial and residential density. This is particularly important as the corridor develops and the demand for services grows.

These enhancements will support a more vibrant and functional commercial corridor, driving economic activity and improving the quality of life for Charlestown residents. By aligning these infrastructure improvements with current urban planning and community feedback, Charlestown can ensure that future mixed-use redevelopment is reflective of its residents' needs and preferences.

ESTABLISH A MIXED-USE OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT IN CHARLESTOWN

The introduction of a mixed-use overlay zoning district along Charlestown's designated commercial corridor is central to fostering small-scale, mixed-use development that complements the existing community fabric. This zoning initiative is designed to integrate commercial and residential spaces in a manner that enhances the town's charm without overwhelming it with large-scale structures.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE MIXED-USE OVERLAY ZONING:

- **Controlled Development Scale:** The zoning guidelines will prioritize maintaining building sizes that are harmonious with Charlestown's existing architectural styles and scales. This is crucial to ensure that new developments do not overpower the town's historical and quaint character.

- **Varied Land Use:** Encouraging a diverse mix of accessible commercial spaces on the ground floors with residential units above will create a dynamic community hub. This arrangement encourages active street life and supports local businesses by increasing foot traffic.

- **Developer Incentives:** Offering incentives such as streamlined permitting processes or flexibility in design requirements to encourage investment that aligns with the town’s vision. These incentives will be carefully crafted to attract developments that enhance, rather than detract from, the town’s appeal.
- **Community-Centric Public Spaces:** Requiring developments within the district to include accessible public spaces such as courtyards, sidewalk cafes, and small parks.

These areas will provide gathering places that enhance community interactions and overall quality of life.

Through this strategic zoning approach, Charlestown can guide its growth in a way that attracts beneficial development while preserving its unique small-town atmosphere. The mixed-use overlay district will not only boost economic activity but also ensure that any new construction contributes positively to the town’s character and livability.

EXAMPLE ZONING OVERLAY GUIDELINES

- **Building Height Restrictions:** Limit buildings in the mixed-use overlay district to a maximum of two or three stories to maintain the small-town aesthetic and scale.
- **Footprint Limitations:** Set limits on the total footprint of new buildings to prevent oversized developments that could dominate the landscape. This could include maximum square footage limits based on lot size.
- **Facade and Design Standards:** Introduce architectural guidelines that require new constructions to adhere to design aesthetics that blend with historic and existing community structures. This can include specifications on materials, colors, and facade treatments.
- **Diversity in Usage:** Mandate a specific percentage of ground-floor space to be dedicated to commercial use, with residential units above, to ensure a lively street environment and practical utilization of space.
- **Setback and Green Space Requirements:** Enforce setback rules and green space requirements to ensure that developments provide adequate room for landscaping and public spaces, enhancing walkability and community interaction.

These guidelines can help Charlestown manage development effectively, ensuring that it enhances the community while preserving its charm.
See regional exemplars below.



Ogunquit, Maine
(Travel + Leisure)



Newport, Rhode Island
(Travel + Leisure)



Cape Charles, Virginia
(Travel + Leisure)



Cape May, New Jersey
(Travel + Leisure)

ATTRACT BUSINESSES THROUGH INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

To attract and support new businesses in Charlestown, especially within the newly designated commercial corridor and mixed-use districts, the town can strategically apply for various incentive programs. These programs often provide financial benefits such as tax credits, grants, or subsidized training that can lower the entry barriers for new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand.

PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER:

- **Main Street Program:** By gaining designation as a Main Street community, Charlestown could access support for revitalizing its commercial district through preservation-based economic development and community revitalization.
- **Arts & Entertainment District:** Applying for this designation could provide tax incentives to artists, creative enterprises, and developers who invest in designated areas, fostering a vibrant cultural hub that attracts visitors and residents alike.

- **Enterprise Zone Incentives:** Charlestown could leverage additional state and local tax credits available through Maryland's Enterprise Zone program, aimed at stimulating business growth and job creation in designated areas.

By securing these designations and participating in such programs, Charlestown can enhance its attractiveness to businesses, leading to increased economic activity and job creation. These efforts can significantly contribute to the town's strategic vision of becoming a thriving and vibrant community while preserving its unique historical character.

CREATE A WATERFRONT ACTIVATION PLAN

Charlestown's waterfront is a cherished asset that can be strategically activated to enhance community engagement, economic vitality, and recreational opportunities. The town's plan should focus on leveraging existing marinas and enhancing connectivity along Water Street to maximize public access to the waterfront amenities, including Avalon Park, Veteran's Park, and Charlestown Wharf.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE WATERFRONT ACTIVATION PLAN:

- **Enhancing Infrastructure:** Improve sidewalks, lighting, and signage along Water Street to create a safe and inviting pedestrian route that links Avalon Park, Veteran's Park, and Charlestown Wharf. These improvements will ensure equitable access for residents and visitors to enjoy the waterfront amenities seamlessly.
- **Marina Enhancement:** Collaborate with marina operators to upgrade facilities and amenities, ensuring they meet modern standards and cater to both local boaters and transient visitors. Enhancements could include improved docking facilities, restrooms, and recreational services.
- **Public Programming:** Develop a calendar of events and activities that utilize the waterfront spaces throughout the year. This could include seasonal festivals, waterfront concerts, farmers' markets, and recreational programs to attract both residents and tourists.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** Encourage mixed-use development along the waterfront that includes retail, dining, and entertainment options. This can create a lively waterfront district that supports local businesses and enhances the visitor experience.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Implement sustainable practices in waterfront management, such as shoreline restoration, stormwater management, and wildlife habitat preservation. These efforts not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the waterfront but also promote ecological health.
- **Promotion and Branding:** Develop a cohesive branding strategy for "Historic Charlestown Waterfront" to highlight its unique charm, historical significance, and recreational offerings. This branding should be integrated into promotional materials, signage, and digital platforms to attract visitors and residents alike.

By implementing these strategies, Charlestown can capitalize on its waterfront as a central hub for community life, economic development, and tourism. The activation plan will not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also position Charlestown as a premier destination along Maryland's waterfront.



PROMOTE CHARLESTOWN AS A RECREATIONAL DESTINATION

Charlestown can capitalize on its rich historical and recreational assets to position itself as a prime destination for leisure and tourism. Emphasizing its waterfront activities and the nostalgic allure of Holloway Beach's past as a popular tourist spot, the town can attract visitors seeking both historical depth and modern recreational offerings.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTION:

- **Historical Connection:** Highlight the history of Holloway Beach, once a bustling tourist destination, to evoke nostalgia and interest. Promote the transformation of the area into a modern recreational hub while retaining its historical charm.
- **Enhanced Recreational Facilities:** Invest in upgrading the marinas, parks, and beaches to offer high-quality amenities such as water sports, fishing spots, walking trails, and picnic areas.
- **Event Hosting:** Organize and host events that draw on the town's maritime and recreational heritage, such as regattas, fishing tournaments, and waterfront festivals. These events can attract visitors from across the region and encourage local community participation.
- **Marketing Campaigns:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns that showcase Charlestown as a recreational destination. Utilize social media, travel blogs, and tourism partnerships to reach a broader audience.
- **Linkage to Local Businesses:** Encourage local businesses to align with the recreational theme by offering services, products, and experiences that cater to visitors' interests, such as seafood restaurants, maritime art galleries, and boat tours.

By implementing these strategies, Charlestown can enhance its reputation as a recreational destination, drawing visitors and residents to its picturesque waterfront and rich historical sites, thereby boosting the local economy and enhancing community pride.

BRAND CHARLESTOWN AS "HISTORIC CHARLESTOWN"

The branding of Charlestown as "Historic Charlestown" is a strategic move to distinguish the town's unique heritage and charm from the anticipated growth and modernization in the Greater Charlestown area, particularly the redeveloped sand and gravel mine. This differentiation is crucial for maintaining the town's identity and leveraging its historical assets to attract tourists, residents, and businesses who value cultural richness and historical significance.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BRANDING STRATEGY:

- **Promotion of Historical Assets:** Utilize Charlestown’s rich history, including its maritime heritage and the legacy of Holloway Beach, as central themes in all promotional materials. This will include storytelling in marketing campaigns, historical tours, and educational programs that highlight the town’s past.
- **Visual Identity:** Develop a consistent visual identity that reflects the historical and cultural elements of Charlestown. This could include logo designs, signage, and promotional materials that use historical motifs and imagery.
- **Collaborations with Local Historians and Organizations:** Partner with local historians,

schools, and cultural organizations to ensure that the branding is authentic and deeply rooted in the community’s history.

- **Integration with Economic Development:** Align the historic branding with economic development initiatives, ensuring that new businesses and developments in the area complement and enhance the historical character of Charlestown.

By branding Charlestown as “Historic Charlestown,” the town can effectively position itself as a distinct and attractive destination, preserving its heritage while continuing to thrive amidst regional development and changes. This approach not only honors the town’s past but also sets a clear vision for its future growth and development.

DEVELOP AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS STRATEGY

To strategically manage and maximize the opportunities from the ongoing regional developments, Charlestown should consider hiring a dedicated intergovernmental affairs staff member. This role would be pivotal in implementing and executing an intergovernmental affairs strategy focused on enhancing Charlestown’s engagement with local, state, and federal governments. The rapid population growth in Cecil County, which has outpaced the average growth rate in Maryland over the past three decades, underscores the necessity of this position. As the county evolves, there is a critical need to ensure that large-scale “up-county” projects do not inadvertently sideline Charlestown’s interests or overwhelm its infrastructure.

*Average Population Growth, Cecil County vs Maryland
1990 - 2020 (US Census Bureau)*

Cecil County	Maryland
14.7%	10.1%

The intergovernmental affairs staff member would be responsible for:

- **Navigating complex regulatory environments:** Ensuring that all development complies with favorable zoning and planning regulations.
- **Securing infrastructure investments:** Collaborating with public works to plan and advocate for infrastructure that supports sustainable growth and enhances community resilience.
- **Representing Charlestown’s interests:** Acting as a liaison with the County Council and other governmental bodies to voice Charlestown’s perspectives and safeguard its interests in broader regional decisions.

This strategic addition to Charlestown’s administrative team would ensure that the town remains a key player in regional development discussions, protecting its charm and livability while fostering economic growth.



CONCLUSION

The economic development projects surrounding Charlestown—such as the I-95 interchange, the expansion of Principio Business Park, and enhancements to commuter rail services—are already in motion or significantly progressed in their planning stages. These initiatives, marked by significant public and private investment, are set to reshape the regional landscape. Given their advanced stages of development, these changes are not just possibilities but impending realities that will influence Charlestown’s future.

Rather than resisting the inevitable developments unfolding around it, Charlestown should actively harness these changes. By integrating strategic responses into the comprehensive plan update, the town can leverage these regional economic development projects to its advantage. This approach ensures that Charlestown not only adapts to but thrives amidst these transformations, using planned growth to enhance its economic base while maintaining control over its community development trajectory.

With a proactive and strategic plan, Charlestown can secure a future that honors its rich history while embracing economic progress. By aligning its comprehensive plan with the incoming developments, Charlestown can ensure that growth enhances its charm and community spirit, rather than overshadowing it. This balanced approach will allow Charlestown to thrive as a vibrant, historic community, poised for success in a rapidly evolving regional landscape.

