2035
Vision Plan
Town of Upper Marlboro

Overview

The Town of Upper Marlboro has been the County Seat of Prince George's County since 1721. The Town was established as a port town in 1706. The town is now one square mile and home to 652 residents and 308 housing units. In 2023 the Board of Commissioners established this vision plan with the input of residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders. The goals and actions in this plan are meant to guide staff in achieving the vision of its residents and businesses by 2033.

Values

The Town of Upper Marlboro community values a thriving and vibrant downtown, safety in our homes and on our streets, fiscal responsibility, and recreational opportunities that allow us to connect to one another as a community.

To maintain consistency with these values this plan will focus on:

- Community-building events to maintain its small-town feel,
- Connections throughout Town to all activity centers and residential areas through safe roads, sidewalks, trails, and safe bike routes.
- Infill development downtown to revive a thriving town center and support local businesses, our artist community, and community connections.
- Tourism that celebrates and preserves our honest past and celebrated a connection between history and the physical environment,
- Fiscal Responsibility through planning and budgeting for these community goals.

In keeping with these values 2021 the Town Commission Developed the following goals

to guide its budgeting process. These priorities were led by the overarching goal of ensuring the sustainability of the Town into the future.

Priorities:

1. <u>A Sustainable Government.</u> The Commission wishes to have policies and procedures in place to ensure the Town is following best practices. A sustainable government includes a budget in which recurring expenses are relatively equal to recurring revenues and capital improvements are planned for and budgeted.

2. <u>Expanded Town Boundaries.</u> The Commission wishes to expand the Town's boundaries to improve public participation and ensure its long-term sustainability.

3. <u>Flooding mitigation and safety.</u> The Commission wishes to ensure safe travel during storm events.

4. <u>Safe and modern roadways.</u> The Commission wishes to see the Town's roadways paved, modernized, and connected for multiple modes of transit. The commission seeks to improve safety for all, but particularly our youngest residents.

5. <u>Increased recreation opportunities.</u> The Commission wishes to strengthen the Upper Marlboro Community with more recreation opportunities for residents creating spaces and events that serve as gathering places.

History

The Town of Upper Marlboro was founded on Piscataway lands. The Piscataway peoples continue to live in and around the land we now call Upper Marlboro. Around 1695, the Town was settled by colonial peoples and named after the first Duke of Marlborough. With the Western Branch still being navigable by boat, the Town was established as a port Town for the import and export of tobacco and enslaved labor among other commodities of the time. Prior to 1706 the area was known as "Colonel Belt's Landing". It was renamed to Marlborough in 1706, when the Maryland General Assembly officially chose it as a site for a new Town in the County. In 1721, Upper Marlboro became the seat of Prince George's County government when the courthouse was moved to the Town. Throughout the eighteenth century, Marlboro was the geographic and population center of the County. After the Town was seized by the

British during the War of 1812, British Officers used the Dr. Beans home on Elm Street as their headquarters on the way to attack Washington D.C.

The Town became known as "Upper" Marlborough to distinguish it from the Calvert County "Lower" Marlborough. The name changed over time, possibly due to a postal clerk removing the "ugh" to fit the name on rubber stamp. Whatever the source, the Town began to be known as Upper Marlboro in 1893.

In 1927 Crain Highway officially opened. This road, which is now known as Old Crain Highway (and has been replaced by Rte. 301) created the first connection between Southern Maryland and Baltimore. In 1922, one hundred years ago this year, a monument was built to celebrate this connection.

During the Jim Crow era the Town was known as a "sundown town," a predominately white area that discriminated and inflicted violence against Black residents and visitors. Despite being home to the first school for African Americans in the County, Frederick Douglass Junior/Senior High School, the Town remained highly segregated. When the Civil Rights act of 1964 ended and the Town had to eliminate these laws, the community pool was filled in rather than de-segregated.

During this time and beyond the Town was also home to St. Mary's Beneficial Society. The Hall, located on Pratt Street and still standing today served as a meeting place, social and political center, and house of worship for the African American community of Upper Marlboro. This was surrounded by a thriving hub of economic and social life for African Americans in Upper Marlboro.

During the 19th and 20th centuries Greater Upper Marlboro played host to horse racing Showplace Arena and Equestrian Center and later car racing at the old race track just outside of town.

Upper Marlboro has been home to several prominent and influential sports stars, Maryland politicians, and clergy members. In 2018 the Town swore in first Black Elected Officials, Tonga Turner, and Wanda Leonard. Commissioner Turner was selected by the Board to serve as the Board's President and Town's first Black President/Mayor. This new board oversaw the Town's first expansion of its boundaries in 2020 to include the Annexation of the Show Place Arena.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following pages outline the existing conditions of the Town of Upper Marlboro. This section allows the Town to identify its starting point, strengths and weaknesses, stakeholders, and programs. The starting point informs THE PLAN found in the next section of this document.

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Overview

According to the 2020 American Community Survey[1] the Town of Upper Marlboro is home to 652 residents who live in a total of 305 households. The median age for residents is just below 39 years old. There are approximately 60 residents over the age of 65.

The Town's racial makeup is predominately Black or African American, making up 60% of the Town's population. The table below shows a more detailed breakdown by race. Of all races 8% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino.

Asian	1%
Black or African American	60%
Some other race	7%
Two or more races	6%
White	27%

The Town's median household income is $92,500 and an employment rate of 77.8%. The Town has a low poverty rate (3.6%) compared to the state as a whole (9%). Most residents commute outside of Town, driving alone or in a carpool (78.3%). The most common industries that residents work in are Educational services, and health care and social assistance (25.1%) and Public Administration (21.7%). Approximately 45 Town residents are veterans.

Most homes (45%) in Upper Marlboro have a value between $200,000-$300,000. Of the 308 housing units existing in Town, 285 are occupied. This leaves the Town with 92% of its housing occupied. The housing market has been tight of late and houses are sold in Town almost as quickly as they go on the market. While a portion of the houses that are unoccupied may be in transition, some of these 23 homes are simply not put on the market and are left vacant by absent property owners.

The Town notices a similar trend in commercial property. While there is demand for office and retail space downtown it is not always rented. These trends indicate a lack of investment in the community by absentee landlords. The Board of Commissioners to this end has determined to pursue a vacant property tax rate for commercial properties in Town.

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[1] The American Community Survey uses statistical data to provide communities with a wide range of data about how a community lives. This helps identify social and economic needs more accurately.

Structure of Government

The Town of Upper Marlboro has a three-person council, with a President and Treasurer nominated and voted on by the Board of Commissioners. The government of Upper Marlboro takes the structure of a Strong Mayor form of government.
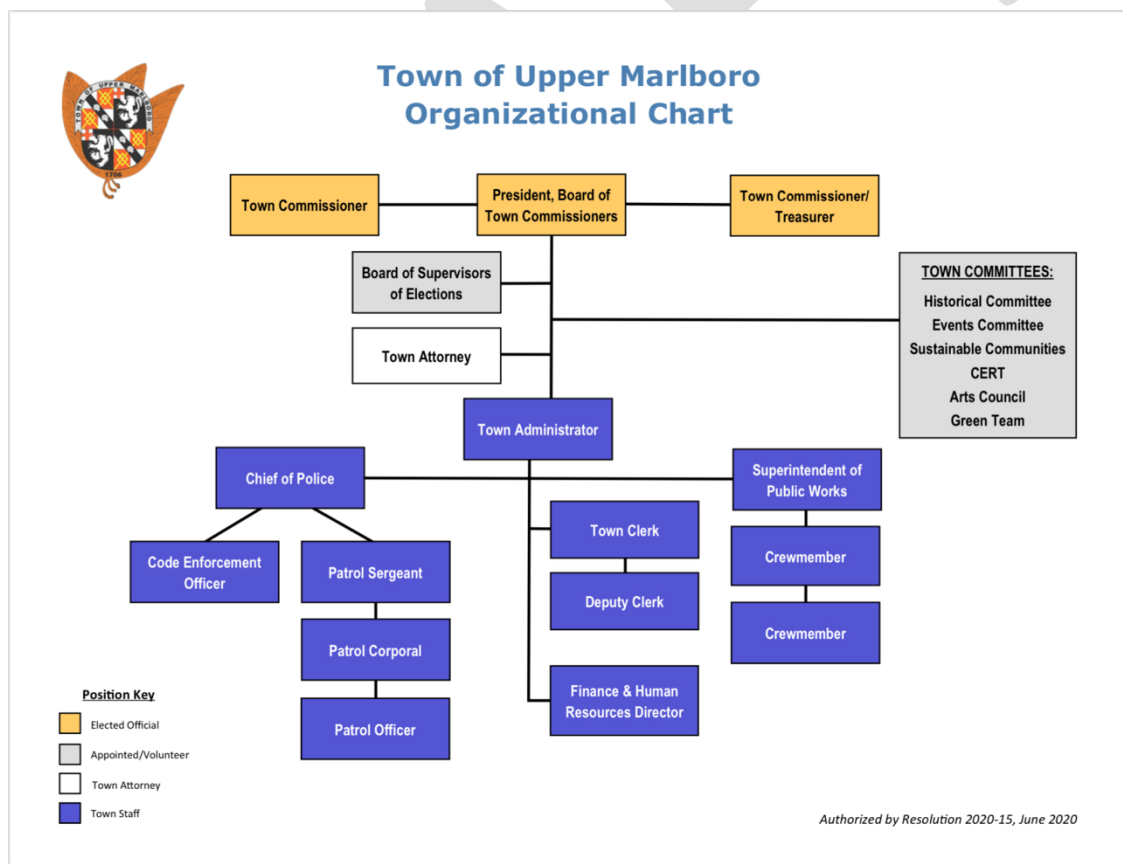
Roles:

Commissioners are responsible for adopting legislation for the running of the Town.

The *President* is the day-to-day administrator for the Town. And has power over the running of the Town and the budget.

The *Treasurer* maintains the budget and works with the President and Town Staff to establish a Town Budget that the full board must vote on for approval. The budget, however, is a set of the mayors priorities.

The Town's organizational chart shows this structure and the structure of Town Staff:

Town Charter

The Town has contracted with Municode to do a review of its charter, Resolutions, and Ordinances. The results of this review are included in the appendix. The recommended charter and code changes should be taken as recommended by Municode.

The Town of Upper Marlboro's Charter has not been comprehensively updated since it's adoption. The charter establishes the government and its structure, powers, and elections process. Finance, Town Personnel, Public Works and services and assessment procedures for the maintenance of these services and structures are established.

In 2020 the Town experienced a loss of two out of its three commissioners. The Town's process for replacing Commissioners and elections has been held up as a model of good process. However, the Town experienced several weeks during which there was no functioning government due to a lack of a quorum.

Due to this situation, the Town elected to expand the Board of Commissioners to five people in the fall of 2021. The date of the election was also changed from January to November to align with election day. The elections are held in off-years, so they do not conflict with County, State, and Federal elections. The Election board's appointing year was also updated so that the Board of Supervisors of Elections will have a full year for training before they oversee the Town's election.

Town Services

Public Works Department

The Town's Public Works department keeps the Town beautiful and safe. When you drive on Town Roads you are benefiting from the invisible work the Public Works crews do. In-Town roads are cleared of trash and debris regularly, sinkhole maintenance is done by either the Town's crew or, by the Director of Public Works coordinating with County and State Crews to affect repairs. When there is a snow or flood event, or even a traffic accident, public works responds with the Towns Public Safety team to ensure Upper Marlboro is both beautiful and safe. Public Works main services include:

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Snow Removal:

The Town has three plow capable vehicles and maintains a contract with the State Highway Administration for sand and salt. This allows public works staff to ensure that Town roads and sidewalks are pre-treated and cleared during snow events.

Trash & Bulk Trash service:

The Town contracts with Burch Trash, a refuse service to provide resident with regular once-a-week trash service. Public Works staff also picks up trash along the roadways to maintain cleanliness in the Town.

The Town maintains a contract for once-a-week recycling pick up and provides residents with bins for recycling waste.

Public Works employees pick up bulk trash for residents twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) with no need to make appointments.

Landscaping:

The public works department works to maintain mowing and planting throughout the Town. They keep the Town looking attractive and tidy.

Road Maintenance:

The Public Works Director coordinates with County and State Agencies to maintain roads throughout the Town. The Town has some roads that are maintained by the Town, some by the County and others by the State.

Natural Disaster Response:

Public Works is involved in keeping residents and visitors to the Tow safe during weather events. The Town frequently has flooding along Water Street, Old Marlboro Pike, and Main Street/Route 725. Public Works Crews monitor these sights when

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flooding may be possible to ensure that they are closed in a timely manor to keep the roads safe.

Public Works also is on call when limbs or trees fall on the roadways and quickly respond to either cut up a limb and remove it themselves or to contact Greentree if the limbs are in need of larger equipment of professional arborist services. Public Works also coordinates with PEPCO and other agencies to safely remove debris from the roadways and ensure repair of damaged public property occurs.

Public Safety

The Department of Public Safety comprises the Police Department, Parking Authority, and Code Compliance. This department keeps us safe, ensures compliance with Town codes, and ensures our laws are followed. Our public safety department has been re-built from the ground up over the last few years and we are pleased that this coming fiscal year will include the re-introduction of evening and weekend patrols.

Police department:

The Town has been rebuilding its Police Department since 2019. This department consists of the Chief of Police, a Police Sergeant and two corporals.. The Town is in the process of hiring four additional officers to bring the department up to six people. The department has an agreement with Prince George's County to ensure continuity of service for residents. All public safety response dispatches through 911 or calling the County non-emergency line. The County has recently added an on-line form for submitting non-emergency Public Safety concerns. This is accessed at https://princegeorges-cwiprod.motorolasolutions.com/cwi/select.

The Upper Marlboro Police Department patrols during daytime hours as well as staggered evenings and weekends. During all other hours police service is provided by Prince George's County. The Town is working to increase police staff in order to provide a faster response time and more hours of patrolling for town business and residents.

Code & Parking Compliance:

The Town has one code enforcement officer. This officer monitors code violations throughout the Town, issuing citations for properties that are in violation of the Town's property maintenance code.

The officer additionally monitors parking meters and the Town Parking lots, issues citations, and collects parking fees with other Public Safety department employees.

Fire & EMS

Fire and Emergency Medical Services are provided through Prince George's County's Marlboro Fire Station 20. This is a volunteer fire department with a minimum of six fire fighters on duty at all times with the addition of 20 volunteers throughout the week. The department has The department has three command vehicles, an ambulance, one heavy rescue squad, one fire engine, and one paramedic ambulance.

The fire department also has a four-bay hall that can be rented out for events and can accommodate ___ people.

General Government/Administration

The Town government provides additional services to residents. Residents can bring concerns to the Town and staff will address concerns to the Commission, or if it is a different government or agency staff will work with these agencies to address resident issues.

The Town maintains a Notary Public on staff.

Town Committees

Arts Council

The Town's Arts Council was established in 2020. The council plans to seek out grants for the installation of public art as well as work with the Town's events committee on artistic and cultural events.

Events Committee

The Town's Events Committee was established in March of 2019 for the purpose of building community and relationships. This committee has a three member board, who works with volunteers to host events throughout the year. The Events Committee hosts small events in the winter, Marlboro Day (a large community day and festival) in the spring, Movie nights in the summer, a community trick-or-treating event in the fall, and a Holiday party to wrap up the year together.

Green Team

The Town's Green team has been recently established in November of 2020. This new committee has been established to build community in a sustainable way. The Green team plans to create community gardens (including gardening plots and a pollinator garden), increase community composting, water harvesting, and recycling awareness and access, increase tree canopy, green spaces, and walking/biking connections, reduce energy use and incorporate solar panels into town projects, and investigate flooding and stream bank stabilization projects.

Historic Committee

The Town of Upper Marlboro Historic Committee (TUMHC) was established in 2012. The purpose of the historic committee to collect and celebrate history of the Town of Upper Marlboro. The historic committee has collected extensive information on the colonial period of the Town's history.

Sustainable Communities

The Town's Sustainable Communities Committee (SCWG) was established in 2014. This committee is intended to work with Town staff and businesses to administer grants to create a more sustainable town in the areas of economic development, interconnected transportation networks, and community support and sustainability.

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Geography

Maps & Boundaries

Today Upper Marlboro is comprised of one square mile between Route 4 and Route 202, between John Rodgers Boulevard and the Show Place Arena. The following map shows the current Town boundaries. The Town receives calls daily form residents outside the Town limits requesting assistance with community issues and concerns. Each time there is an election the Town receives phone calls from potential candidates just outside the boundaries of Town and has to turn away voters because they do not live in the Town limits. All of these indicators have caused the Town to look at annexation in order to provide much desired services to more people in Greater Upper Marlboro, and to expand it community and welcome in more neighbors.

<insert map>

Roads

Roads in Upper Marlboro are maintained by a variety of agencies. The table below lists the roads. In Town and indicated what agency. Is responsible for each Road's Maintenance.

Road	Road Maintenance Agency
Old Crain Highway	PGDPW&T
School Lane	UMDPW
Wilson Lane	UMDPW
Rectory Lane	UMDPW
Old Marlboro Pike (route 725)	MDOT - SHA
Main Street (Route 725)	MDOT - SHA
Water Street	MDOT -SHA
Church Street	UMDPW
Judges Drive	PGDPW&T
Marlboro Race Track Road	PGDPW&T
Pratt Street	UMDPW
Governor Oden Bowie Drive	UMDPW
Elm Street	UMDPW
Old Mill Road	UMDPW
Marlboro Drive	UMDPW
Marlboro Lane	MT
Marlboro Grove	MT
Marlboro Circle	MT

Spring Branch Drive	UMDPW
Valley Lane	PGDPW&T
Old Largo Road (Rte 202)	MDOT - SHA
Buck Lane	Private?
Peerless Avenue	PGDPW&T

Water Resources

The Town of Upper Marlboro exists because of its proximity to water resources. The Western Branch of Patuxent River and its tributaries flow throughout and around Town and connects to Schoolhouse Pond. Schoolhouse Pond is a major recreational and storm water management feature in Town. Paths around the Pond also connect residential and commercial areas for pedestrians. These resources have the potential to provide recreational and economic benefits to the Town.

The Town suffers from the impacts of severe flooding in all areas of Town. Flooding occurs regularly, impacting mobility around Town as well as flooding residences, businesses, and government offices. If there is a large storm event upriver from Upper Marlboro it is possible for two to three of the four main entrances and exits to Town to be flooded and impassable for a time. There are areas of Town where residents can be stuck in their neighborhoods because the roads are impassable. Further, homes frequently flood throughout town in large storm events. As climate conditions worsen the need for adequate stormwater management systems will only increase.

Sinkholes

The Town of Upper Marlboro has been struggling with the impacts of sinkhole over the last decade. The Department of Public Works has coordinate with Washington Sanitary Sewer Commission (WSSC), Prince George's County Department of Public Works, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), to study these sinkholes and determine their cause. This is important in an effort to address an appropriate solution to the problem. The major sinkholes in Town as of the writing of this Plan are described in the following table:

Location	Description	Agencies
Water Street Crosswalk	This site has been worked on several times in 2020 & 2021 and continues to sink.	WSSC,
Intersection of Water Street	The center of this intersection has a recurring sinkhole. There are additional smaller	WSSC,

and Main Street	sinkhole concerns along the outer edges of this intersection.	
Judges Drive	This is a new sinkhole that was dealt with for the first time in 2021.	PGDPW,
John Rodgers Boulevard & Old Marlboro Pike	This sinkhole was reinforced by County Public Works but the area should be monitored.	PGDPW,
14173 Spring Branch Dr	Roadway in front of storm drain box sinking.	PGDPW,
14518 Church St	Sinkhole at the end of driveway directly in line with storm drain piping. Camera scope shows evidence of gravel filler applied by UMDPW inside drain pipe.	PGDPW - addressed
14513 Main St (rear of building)	Drain Box collapse. Inspected by DPW&T last year, still no word on a possible fix. Parking lot around drain box also starting to collapse.	PGDPW

Sources:

Upper Marlboro Town Action Plan; Upper Marlboro, MD: September 2009. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

    a. Town of Upper Marlboro; *2018 Door-knocking and Resident Survey Feedback Overview*. December 2018. (include as appendix)
    b. Town of Upper Marlboro Historical Committee: *Walking/Driving Tour of the Historic Town of Upper Marlboro*, MD. 2020