

Eagle Harbor 2025: Planning for a Sustainable Community

THIS IS EAGLE HARBOR

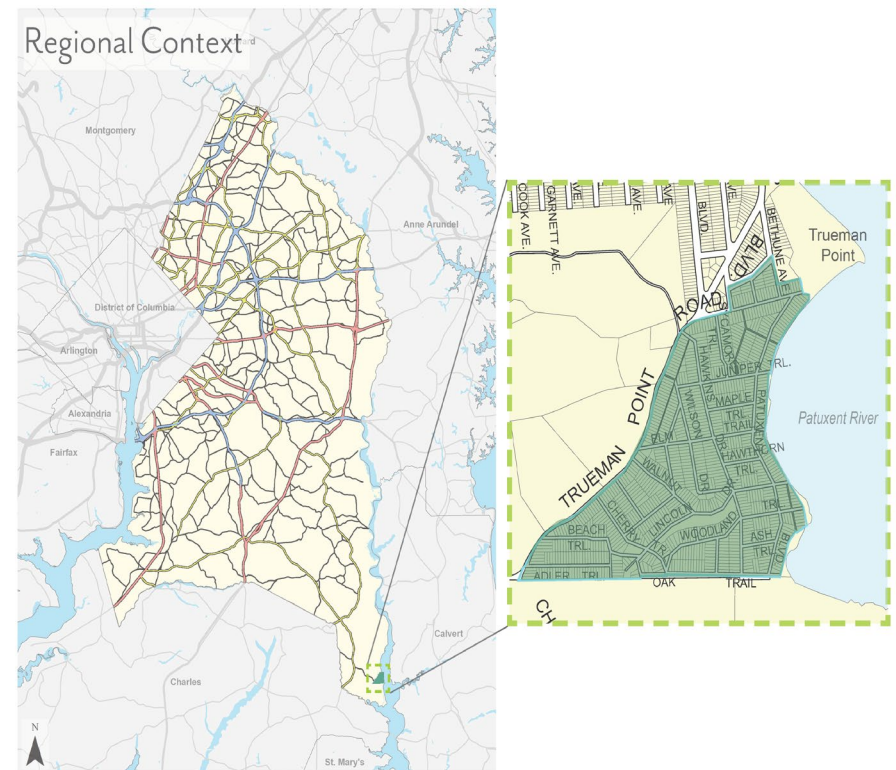
Location and History

The Town of Eagle Harbor is in the southeasternmost section of Prince George's County, Maryland, on the bank of the Patuxent River. It is immediately south of the historic Trueman Point, a river port for farmers in the 18th and 19th centuries and owned by the Town. Eagle Harbor sits on approximately 77 acres (or .12 square miles) in the county's designated Rural and Agricultural Area. It is about 30 miles from Washington DC, but its closest neighbors are the unincorporated community of Cedar Haven, to the north, another waterfront community on the Patuxent River; the Chalk Point Power Plant to the south; and Calvert County across the Patuxent River to the east. Aquasco, an unincorporated area and census-designated place surrounds the Town and is the "City" in Town addresses. Eagle Harbor Road brings traffic to the Town, while Trueman Point Road is the access road into the Town. (Map 1.)

Eagle Harbor was founded as a resort community for African Americans from the Washington Metropolitan Area in May 1925 and incorporated in March 1929. Walter L. Bean purchased and subdivided the land that is Eagle Harbor with a vision of creating a "high class summer colony for better people" on the Patuxent River. Small cottages and bungalows were built on narrow parcels for summertime use, primarily. At one time, amenities included

piers, bathhouses, hotels for seasonal guests, a merry-go-round and park, shops, food and beverage businesses and a tearoom.

Map 1: Eagle Harbor and Vicinity



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For decades residents and guests enjoyed swimming along 4,000 feet of sandy beaches and crabbing, fishing and boating on the river.

The Eagle Harbor Citizens Association was organized in 1927 and served as the Town's first governance structure. It was the Association that explored incorporation of the Town which happened a couple of years later. And it was the Association that purchased the property that eventually became the Town Hall, and now the Community Center, and it was instrumental in the construction of roads and piers. The association is still very active today and plays a prominent role in the affairs of the Town.

With incorporation came the creation of a Board of Commissioners, governed by a charter and ordinances that were unchanged for decades. Over time the Board carried out additional improvements and provided services to residents in Town. The Board of Commissioners today includes a Mayor and four Commissioners who have responsibility for roads, licenses and permits, sanitation, and public safety, respectively.

Eagle Harbor Profile

As a resort community, providing a leisure destination for African Americans during segregation, the year-round population fluctuated from 30 to 360 according to some sources. Yet Eagle Harbor has remained a small, rural community with an estimated year-round population of 70 residents in 2017. As such, it is the smallest municipality in Prince George's County. Between 1930

and 2017, the population grew from 3 to 70, with increases and decreases, likely due to the end of segregation and later rediscovery of the Town as a great place to live and recreate.

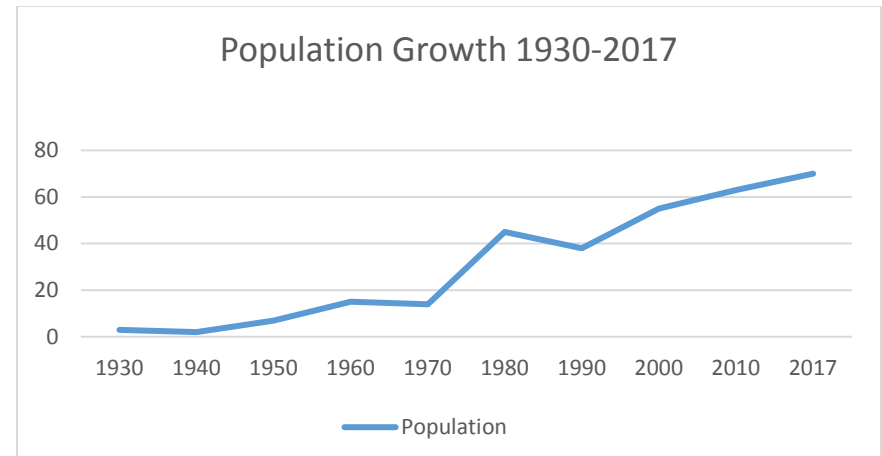


Table 1: Census (1930-2010) and American Community Survey (2017 Estimate)

According to the American Community Survey 2017 estimate, the population of Eagle Harbor experienced a slight increase between 2010 and 2017, bringing the total of year-round residents to 70, up from 63. Meanwhile, total estimated housing units in 2017 decreased by 13 units, from 56 to 43 units. In 2010, 29 of the 56 units were identified as seasonal and only 7 as other vacant – this information is not available for 2017.

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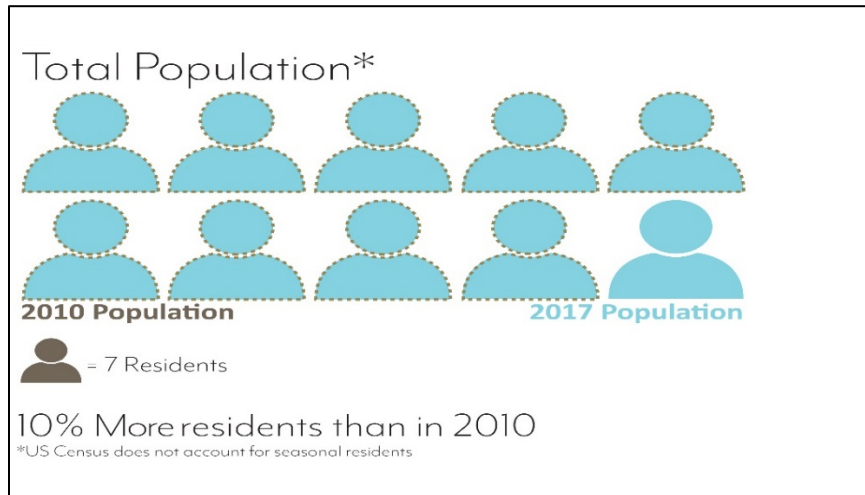


Figure 3: Census Population 2010 and 2017

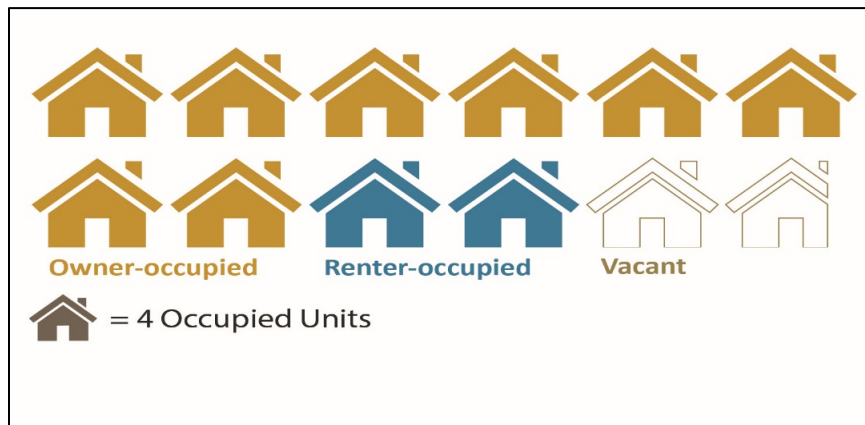


Figure 4: Census 2010 - Total Housing Units and Ownership Pattern

Community Character

Eagle Harbor is a quiet, residential community of older single-family homes, that are typically one story, though a few are a story and a half, and two stories situated on lots that are 25 feet wide and 100 feet deep, or a total of 2,500 square feet. Except for several municipal government buildings, all other development is residential. The bathhouses, hotels, merry-go-round, shops, food and beverage businesses and tearoom have all disappeared without a trace except for an older commercial building that housed a small store but stands vacant today. The piers and community center are all that remain of earlier non-residential structures.



Undeveloped Land

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Typical Older Home in Eagle Harbor



Style of Newer Home in Eagle Harbor

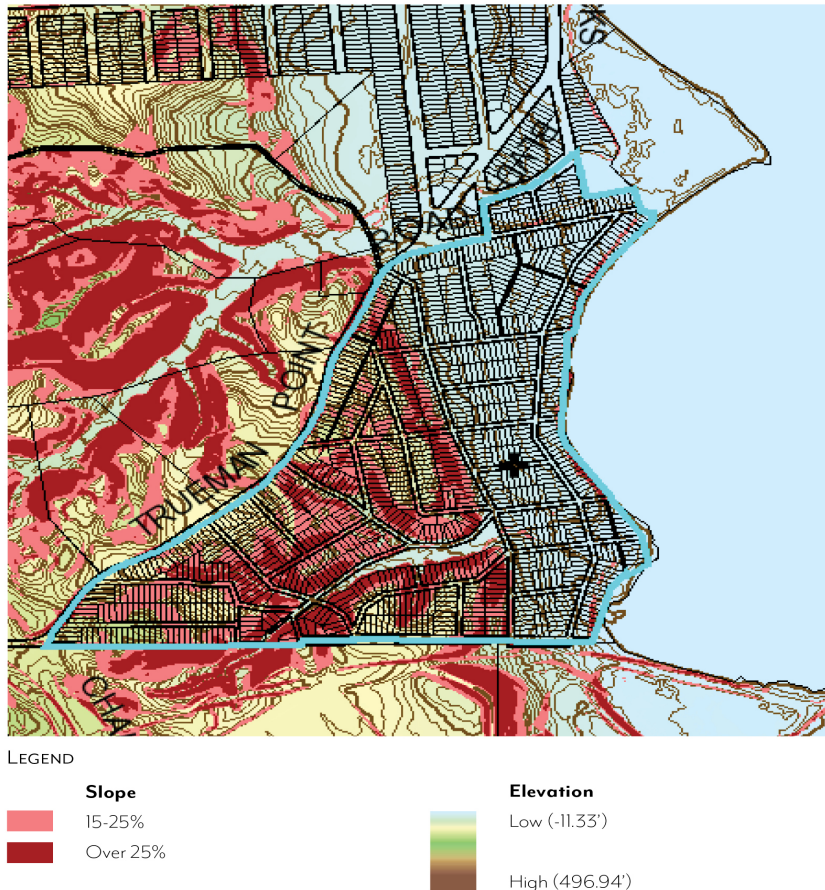
Newer homes are located on the river's edge south of Maple Trail and Hawkins Drive. In general, developed properties are largely concentrated along the river, Trueman Point Road, and Patuxent Blvd; the area referred to as "Downtown Eagle Harbor" by area residents. "Uptown Eagle Harbor" is mainly forested with slopes ranging from 15% to over 25%. The Town consists of 14 narrow single-lane streets that lack curbs and gutters, sidewalks or off-street parking. While the entire area is subdivided into platted lots and streets, streets in the southwest corner of Town, mainly Upper Eagle Harbor, only exist on paper; they have not been built. (Maps 2 and 3 below.)

Map 2: Development Pattern in Eagle Harbor



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Map 3: Eagle Harbor Elevations



Most homes are surrounded by vacant lots under single ownership, giving the appearance of small homes situated on large lots. The Town's six-lot minimum might account for this or this was a trend from the beginning to accommodate well and septic systems. Or, more recently owners took advantage of opportunities to purchase adjoining lots to provide greater open around their properties. The number of vacant, undeveloped lots gives the impression that most of the Town is undeveloped.

Amenities and Landmarks

The Patuxent River is by far the Town's greatest asset - the very basis for its existence. The Town was established to give African-Americans access to the river and beach and provide a safe haven for time with family and friends while temporarily escaping the realities of segregation and Jim Crow. The river remains a major source of pride and recreation for residents and visitors today. The area's small-town character is another important community asset, a feature that property owners and residents want to protect into the future. Another source of pride and history is Artesian Well, an historic site. According to the Town website, it has been in existence since 1925 and "served as the only water source for property owners during that time". Until just recently, it was a continuous source of fresh water. (See Map 4.)

In 2013, the Town acquired Trueman Point Landing, a designated historic site on the river and began the annexation process. Historically, the roughly nine-acre site served as a river port for farmers, connecting them to Baltimore and other ports. Today, except for the pier, the property

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lacks any vestige of its former functions and instead is essentially open space and sandy beaches.

Map 4: Town Landmarks and Assets



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Town buildings are also important community assets particularly the Eagle Harbor Community Center that serves as ground zero for all annual community events, official Town meetings and emergency sheltering. The Town seeks to purchase a residential property currently rented and used as the Town office. Map 4 shows the location of major community assets and landmarks.

A windshield survey of Eagle Harbor in July 2008 by the local planning department determined that there are no historic resources in Town, except the Savoy Family Cemetery near Trueman Point Road (identified as HS 87B-40). However, a determination was ultimately made that given the Town's history in Prince George's County it qualifies for historic district designation. It was also noted that the Town meets criteria for designation on the National Register of Historic Places as "an African-American community that developed a resort destination".

Coleman Creek, named in honor of deceased past mayor, Mary E. Coleman, is also a community amenity. However, its performance as a stormwater management facility is of concern due to its eroding banks and frequent flooding onto nearby properties.

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Land Use

How land is used is divided into categories for purposes of land use planning. In Eagle Harbor, the use of land is predominately low density residential with public uses (mainly Town buildings); there are many vacant, undeveloped lots scattered throughout the community. The Future Land Use Plan in the county's Subregion 6 Approved Master Plan classifies land in Eagle Harbor as Residential Low (Map 5), which is defined as residential areas of up to 3.5 units per acre with primarily single-family detached dwellings. Plan 2035, the county's, General Plan, puts Eagle Harbor in the Rural and Agricultural Areas category on the Growth Policy Map. The Rural Areas classification captures and plans for "low-density residential communities served by well and septic, with significant natural resources and historic scenic roads and watershed". The Agriculture Areas designation recognizes and seeks to protect agriculture activities and forested areas.

Zoning

Zoning implements land use policy and in Eagle Harbor the base zones mirror the land use designation with one exception (Map 5). As important are overlay zones in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area established to protect the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

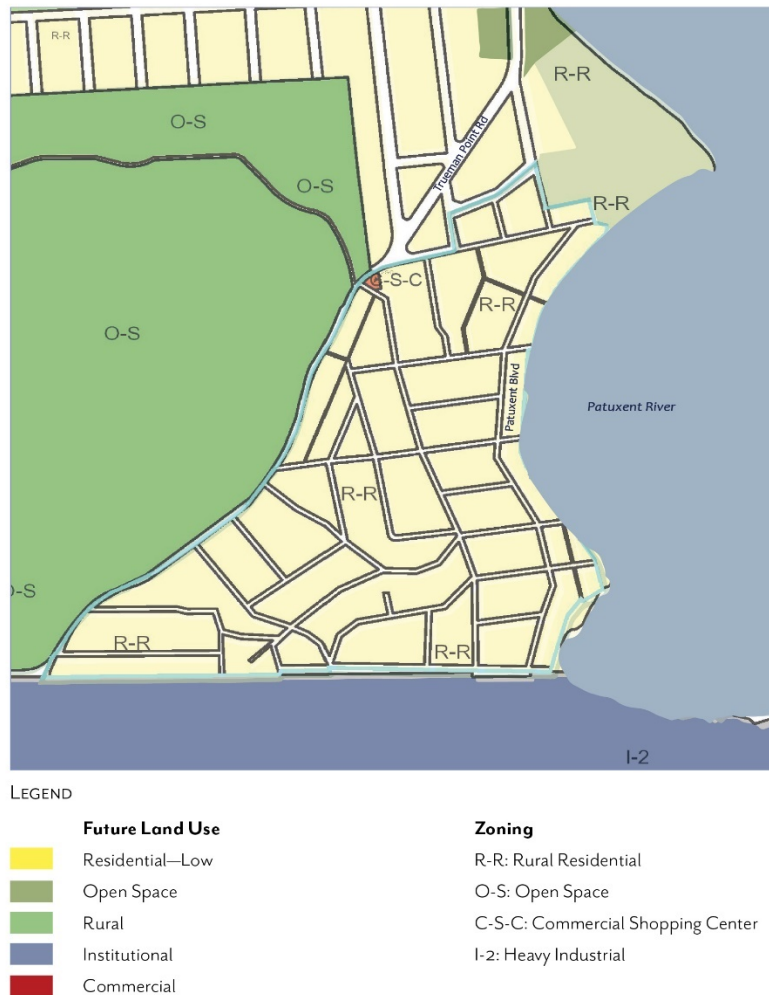
Zoning throughout Town is Rural Residential (County Code Sec. 27-428). The zone allows one-family, detached dwellings and a wide range of uses considered compatible with low density residential areas. The purposes of the zone are important to note because of the emphasis on environmental protection. They are:

1. To provide for and encourage variation in the size, shape, and width of one-family detached residential subdivision lots, in order to better utilize the natural terrain;
2. To facilitate the planning of one-family residential developments with moderately large lots and dwellings of various sizes and styles;
3. To encourage the preservation of trees and open spaces; and
4. To prevent soil erosion and stream valley flooding.

One lot in Town, formally a small convenience store, is zoned Commercial Shopping Center (C-S-C) which permits a wide range of commercial, office and retail uses, governed by lot and other site requirements. However, the purpose of this zoning is to provide locations for predominately retail commercial shopping facilities. The opportunity to use the property for a new commercial use could be limited by current zoning requirements. However, through the rezoning process to apply zones established in the new Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, a more appropriate, neighborhood based commercial zoning classification should be used at the site.

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Map 5: Future Land Use and Current Zoning



Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and Buffer Zones

The Patuxent River is a tidal river and tributary of the Chesapeake Bay and as a result affects the overall health of the Bay. The health of the Bay has been an issue of concern for some time. In June 1984 the Maryland General Assembly enacted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Program to foster sensitive development along the shoreline of the Bay and its tributaries. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (CBCA) was defined and established as the land within 1,000 feet of tidal waters.

Additionally, the first 100 feet of the CBCA is defined as the Critical Area Buffer, a zone encompassing land immediately adjacent to the river intended to protect aquatic resources, shoreline habitat and water quality. This area is subject to strict requirements including a Buffer Management Plan and other compliance requirements depending upon the level of potential disturbance that may be caused by the proposed development. Roads, structures, septic systems, sheds, and utilities are discouraged though water-dependent structures (boat ramps for example) may be permitted. Preferably, the Buffer is composed of “trees and shrubs and other plants that catch sediments and other pollutants coming from buildings, lawns and paved areas”.

The benefits of the Buffer Zone are noted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as: 1) Reducing the amount of sediment, excess nutrients, and potentially harmful

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substances in stormwater runoff; 2) Preventing or reducing erosion by stabilizing slopes and the shoreline; and
3) Maintaining an area of habitat along shorelines and streams.

Properties along the entire length of the Patuxent River shoreline in Eagle Harbor are within the CBCA as are properties in the rest of Downtown Eagle Harbor. Map 6 shows both the CBCA (outlined in blue) and the 100-foot Critical Area Buffer (extending to Patuxent Blvd and outlined in green). (Also see Map 7).

Land in Eagle Harbor has been placed in two of the three CBCA overlay zones. The R-C-O (Resource Conservation Overlay) Zone covers Trueman Point and the vacant track of property between Lincoln Drive and Woodland Drive. The L-D-O (Limited Development Overlay) Zone covers most of “Downtown Eagle Harbor”. The third zone, I-D-A (Intense Development Overlay), is reserved for more urban areas and is not present in the Town. The overlay zones in Eagle Harbor seek to achieve the following objectives:

In the R-C-O Zone: 1) Provide for wildlife populations that require natural coastal environments; 2) Conserve, protect, and enhance ecological resources along the coast; 3) Protect the land and water resources; and, 4) Conserve [any] existing woodlands and forests for the water quality benefits they provide.

In the L-D-O Zone: 1) Maintain and improve the quality of runoff and groundwater entering Patuxent River; 2) Maintain existing areas of natural habitat; and,

3) Accommodate additional low- or moderate-intensity development.

Map 6: Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and Buffer Zone



Permitted land uses in the R-C-O and L-D-O Zones are the same as those allowed in the underlying R-R and CSC Zones with specific exceptions or conditions: limited expansion of

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existing marinas; exclusion of community piers and non-commercial boat docking and storage in R-C-O although permitted in L-D-O with conditions (private piers are allowed in both overlay zones); and, adequate sanitary facility, use of permeable surfaces to the extent possible, no degradation of groundwater and minimal disturbance of natural vegetation.

Growth Management

Growth in Eagle Harbor through new development has been extremely slow and, in most years, non-existent. Residents and Town leadership are supported of slow growth in order to maintain the small-town scale and character of the community. Yet, development potential as represented by the vast amounts of vacant and undeveloped land is significant.

The land that is now Eagle Harbor was platted decades ago, into about 1,035 lots, each 2,500 square feet in size. At some point these lots were grouped under a single tax account number that include a minimum of two lots, up to a maximum of seven lots in one instance. There is a total of 423 such groupings. These 423 tax accounts (properties) are owned by 187 individuals or families. (See Map 8.) Uptown Eagle Harbor (the area south of Walnut Drive and East of Lincoln Drive) has 92 properties in the hands of about six property owners.

Map 7: Chesapeake Critical Area Overlay Zones



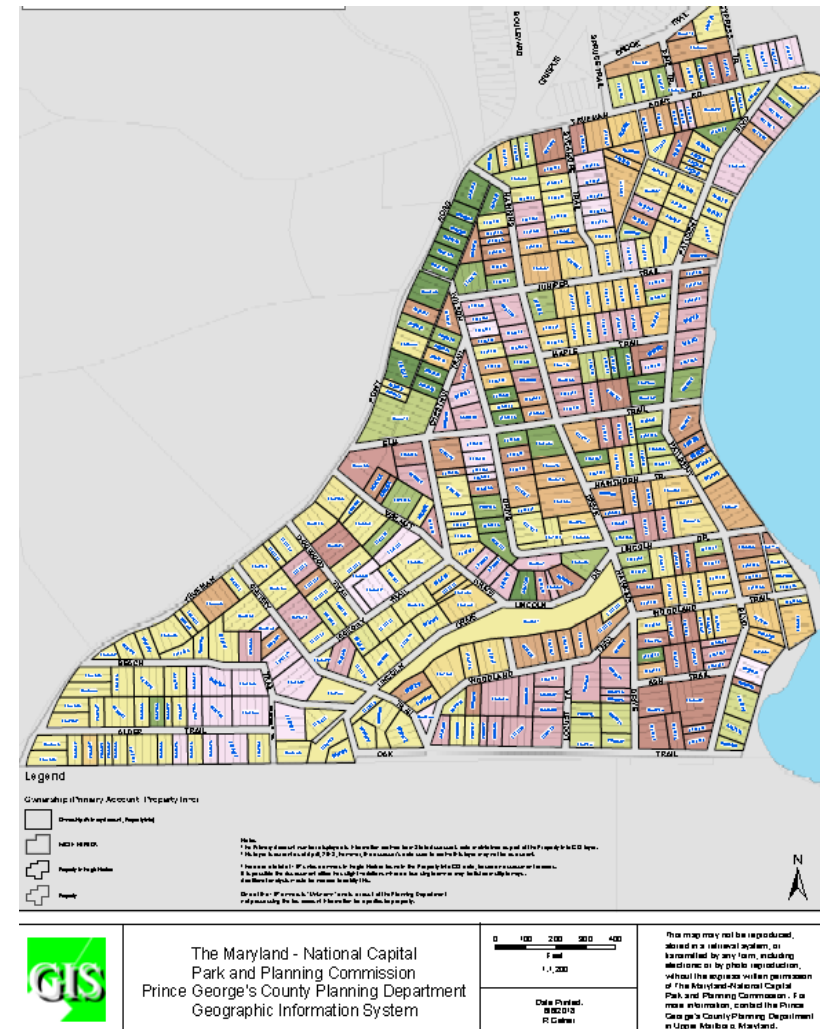
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The Town has established a six-lot minimum for development. At 2,500 square feet for each platted lot, development requires a minimum of 15,000 square feet for a single-family, detached home. This is equivalent to the minimum lot size requirement in the Rural Residential Zone for properties recorded prior to 1970; however, it is more than the 10,000 square feet applicable to Eagle Harbor priorities platted before 1967. (These lot size requirements exist within the old Zoning Ordinance; until properties are rezoned to new zoning categories minimum lot sizes cannot be determined.)

Referring to the 1,035 platted lots, development potential can be determined by excluding the 250 platted lots in Uptown Eagle Harbor given the challenge of development because of tree conservation requirements, grading requirements and costs, stormwater management requirements. The cost of providing required infrastructure is another potential deterrent. Excluding developed property including lots containing Town-own buildings and associated open space and parking, estimated at 100 platted lots, there are a total of 114 properties potentially available for development.

An adequate amount of vacant land exists (Map 9) for future planned development as mentioned in the Town's strategic plan. This possibility is contingent upon many regulatory factors. This analysis provides one scenario of the number of properties that could be developed at full build out in Eagle Harbor. A timeline based on absorption rates would have to be established to learn when this buildout scenario might be achieved.

Map 8: Property by Unique Owner



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Map 9: Vacant Property



LEGEND

- Vacant Land**
- Vacant
- 6 Contiguous Lots with One Owner
- Public Property

Town leadership has expressed the goal of limiting development to only five units per year. As the Town seeks to sell surplus property - a total of 31 properties are owned by the Town (Map 10), it is with the goal of encouraging single-family development at this modest rate on an annual basis.

Map 10: Town-Owned Property

