

INTRODUCTION

The *Town of Willards 2007 Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) includes revisions to the 1997 *Town of Willards Comprehensive Plan* as well as additions to meet applicable State laws. The Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2009 to include a Municipal Growth Element and Water Resources Element, as new Plan chapters. This is required under the 2006 Maryland House Bill 1141.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The “Purpose” of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a series of goals, objectives, and practical implementation recommendations to manage and direct growth and development in Willards.

While this Plan is intended to describe growth policies for The Town of Willards (Willards), there are aspects of growth that relate to neighboring areas outside municipal boundaries. Therefore, abstracts from the *Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan* and *Wicomico County Water & Sewerage Plan* also are included. The Comprehensive Plan is the effort of The Willards Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council to ensure that positive traits are preserved and enhanced for residents and visitors alike. As “Willards” and surrounding areas grow, changes will be experienced over the next twenty years. This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for making decisions regarding growth and development in relation to those changes.

DEVELOPING THE TOWN OF WILLARDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a series of goals, objectives, and recommendations to manage and direct growth and development in The Town of Willards. The Comprehensive Plan is the result of The Willards Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council’s efforts to understand the current condition of the municipality, its historical growth patterns, and recent developments. These have all combined to create its present appearance and condition.

Once adopted, it becomes the basis for the preparation of specific policies, programs and legislation, such as zoning and subdivision regulations, to implement the growth policies set forth in the Plan. Developing a Comprehensive Plan is the first step in a process that defines Town policies for future legislative action, including and most importantly, the development of laws.

As a policy document, it is general, comprehensive, and long range in nature “a big picture process:” It is comprehensive because it encompasses the entire geographic area of the Town, including all functional elements that bear upon its physical development, such as transportation, land use, and community facilities. It is general because it summarizes policies but does not establish detailed regulations. It is long range because it looks beyond current issues to problems and opportunities related to future growth over the next twenty years and beyond.

As a policy manual, the Comprehensive Plan reflects the laws and regulations of the State of Maryland and its various regulatory agencies. In addition, growth in or near Willards is heavily influenced by decisions made by Wicomico County, Maryland and the general and specific topography and geography of the region.

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland: *Planning & Zoning Enabling Act* is the State's preeminent planning law, providing jurisdictions power over local land use and growth management decisions.

COMPONENTS OF A GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Comprehensive Plan provides the basic framework and direction for all components of what may be considered the Town's broad comprehensive planning program. The Comprehensive Plan is not a "stand-alone" document but is supported and, in turn, supports related planning and zoning program documents such as the following:

- The Town of Willards Zoning Code;
- The Town of Willards Subdivision Regulations;
- The Town of Willards Capital Improvement Plan & Budget-CIP; and
- The Town of Willards Water & Sewer Facilities Plans.

ARTICLE 66B – PLANNING AND ZONING ENABLING ACT

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland is the Planning and Zoning enabling legislation from which The Town of Willards derives its powers to regulate land use. Section 3.05 of the Article sets forth the minimum requirements for a comprehensive plan which shall include, among other things:

- A statement of goals and objectives, principles, policies, and standards;
- A land use plan element;
- A transportation plan element;
- A community facilities plan element;
- A mineral resources plan element, if current geological information is available;
- An element which shall contain the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the plan; and
- Other elements, such as a community renewal section, housing, conservation, natural resources, etc. at the discretion of the commission

The context for planning in The Town of Willards must also account for implementing the overall growth management policies established by the State of Maryland in the Planning and Zoning Act. These policies, stated as "visions" for the future, are:

1. Development is concentrated in suitable areas;
2. Sensitive areas are protected;
3. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resources are protected;
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic;

5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption;
6. Economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined;
7. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur; and
8. Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these “Visions.

The *Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992* also added the requirement that a comprehensive plan contain a Sensitive Areas Element, which describes how the jurisdiction will protect the following sensitive areas:

- Streams and stream buffers;
- 100-year floodplains;
- Endangered species habitats;
- Nontidal wetland;
- Steep slopes;
- Other sensitive areas a jurisdiction wants to protect from the adverse impacts of development; and
- Agriculture and forest lands intended for resource protection or conservation (new requirement of Maryland House Bill 1141).

Maryland has procedures to insure that public infrastructure improvements are consistent with growth policies, as defined in the law. The Planning and Zoning Enabling Act stipulates that a local government “may not approve a local construction project involving the use of State funds, grants, loans, loan guaranties, or insurance, unless the project is consistent with the State’s Visions.” This plan has been prepared to meet the State’s eight visions.

As the State’s pre-eminent growth management law, Article 66B requires that county and municipal plans be coordinated. Each county and municipality within Maryland is required to review, and if necessary, update their comprehensive land use plans and implementing provisions every six years.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AND SMART GROWTH AREAS ACT 1997



In 1997, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the *Neighborhood Conservation and Smart Growth Areas Act* (Smart Growth). The intent of the legislation is to marshal the State’s financial resources to support growth in Maryland’s communities and limit development in agricultural and other resource conservation areas.

At the heart of the Smart Growth concept are the “Priority Funding Areas” (PFA’s), which represent local growth areas for targeted State funding. PFA’s include municipalities, such as Willards, rural villages, communities, industrial areas, and planned growth areas to be served by public water and sewerage.

The 8th “Vision” of Article 66B creates consistency between the Planning and Zoning Enabling Act and Smart Growth by requiring adequate public infrastructure for State funding. Plans must show designated growth areas including areas planned for annexation by municipalities. Lands within local growth boundaries may be designated as a Priority Funding Area (PFA,) provided sewer service is planned in a 10-Year Water and Sewerage Plan and provided such designation is a long-term and planned development policy that promotes efficient land use and public infrastructure.

PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS

Lands within Town “Growth Areas” may be designated as a State “Priority Funding Area” or PFA provided sewer service is planned in a 10 year period and included in the *Wicomico County Water & Sewerage Plan*, provided such designation is a long-term and planned development policy reflected in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan that promotes efficient land use and public infrastructure

Plans must include areas considered as PFA’s, such as planned water and sewerage service areas, residential development areas, industrial development areas, economic development areas, and neighborhood parks.

MARYLAND HOUSE BILL 1141

In 2006, the Maryland State Legislature passed House Bill 1141 (HB 1141), which provides for Amendments to Article 66B: “Planning & Zoning Enabling Act” and Article 23A: “Municipal Annexation Act” of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Amendments include provisions for the inclusion of a “Water Resources Element” and “Municipal Growth Element” in local comprehensive plans.

Municipal and County coordination was a much debated topic in the 2006 Maryland General Assembly session. HB 1141 establishes additional substantive and procedural requirements for municipalities preparing comprehensive plans. This includes municipal and county coordination for land use and growth management planning

Information developed under the provisions of HB 1141 will be reviewed and evaluated by State agencies including the Maryland Departments of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Planning. Some provisions of the Bill are not effective until October 2009. Substantive procedural requirements include the following:

- The Town must include in its Comprehensive Plan a “Municipal Growth Element” that specifies where Willards intends to grow outside its existing corporate limits. It also must discuss how the Town intends to address services, infrastructure, and environmental protection needs for the Growth Area and its surrounding environs.
- The Town and County must include in their respective comprehensive plans a “Water Resource Plan Element” that identifies drinking water and other water resources to meet current and future demands. It also must identify suitable water and land areas to receive stormwater and wastewater derived from development.
- The Town must consult with Wicomico County when developing a “Municipal Growth

Element.” Prior to approving a Growth Element, the Town must provide a copy to the County, accept comments from the County, meet and confer with the County, and, on request from either entity, engage in mediation.

- In order for land annexed after September 2006 to qualify for State assistance as a Priority Funding Area-PFA, the Town must complete an analysis of land capacity available for development. This includes infill and redevelopment. It also includes an analysis of land area needed to satisfy demand for development at densities consistent with its master plan.
- House Bill 1141 gives affected local governments until October 1, 2009 to update their comprehensive plans to include these and other elements, such as the Water Resources Element, required by the existing law. There is the possibility of one to two six month extensions for good cause. Local governments that have not updated their plans by that time may not change the zoning classification of a property until their updates are complete.
- The Town must develop and share with other planning agencies an “Annexation Plan” that is consistent with its Growth Element in the Comprehensive Plan.

HB 1141 requires the Maryland Department of the Environment-MDE to provide technical assistance to local governments regarding the development of a Water Resources Element for the comprehensive plan. The Maryland Department of Planning-MDP is also required to provide technical assistance to a municipality regarding the development of a “Municipal Growth Element” for the comprehensive plan. MDP encourages municipalities and counties to participate in joint planning processes and agreements.

MARYLAND HOUSE BILL 1141
Requires a “Municipal Growth Element” (Build-Out Analysis) and a “Water Resources Element” for comprehensive plans. HB 1141 strongly encourages inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation with the County and State for effective growth management.

HB1141 changes the current “5-Year Rule.” In the past, the “5-Year Rule” would allow Wicomico County to delay municipal zoning on a newly annexed area for up to 5 years. The new standard under HB 1141 will be to determine whether a substantial difference exists between the land uses and densities permitted under proposed Town zoning and the land uses for an annexed area, including densities, permitted under the current County zoning. The mandates of HB 1141 indicate a strong need for Willards to plan for annexation and development. It also indicates a strong need to coordinate growth closely with the County and State.

SMART AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH ACT OF 2009

During the 2009 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly, major amendments were enacted to Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland as well as the State Finance and Procurement Article. These combined amendments, known as the *Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009*, represent substantive changes to the State’s planning and zoning enabling laws:

Updates to the State’s Eight Visions: In 2009, the Eight Visions espoused in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland have been expanded to include the following additional visions

listed below. These visions also are included in the State Finance and Procurement Article (State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy).

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability: A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.
2. Public Participation: Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.
3. Growth Areas: Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas are adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.
4. Community Design: Compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.
5. Infrastructure: Growth Areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.
6. Transportation: A well-maintained, multi-modal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers.
7. Housing: A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
8. Economic Development: Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged.
9. Environmental Protection: Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources.
10. Resource Conservation: Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
11. Stewardship: Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
12. Implementation: Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.

Priority Funding Areas: The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 affects Priority Funding Areas (PFA's) in regards to public land, adequate public facilities, and transfer of development rights. Changes to State laws discuss restrictions, moratoriums, or other capacity limitations imposed on development as a result of a local ordinance or law. These restrictions must be reported to the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) every 2 years by the local jurisdiction, based on specific criteria. In turn, MDP must prepare a report regarding the statewide impacts of adequate public facilities every 2 years. Transfer of development rights language has been expanded to include transfers in PFA's. The purpose is to assist local

governments in the purchase of land for a public facility. Public facilities include recreational, transportation, and educational. Proceeds from any sale must be used to assist in purchasing a public site or constructing a public facility.

Reporting Requirements: The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 establishes annual reporting criteria for local governments so the State Department of Planning in coordination with the national Center for Smart Growth can build the necessary data to analyze growth trends and impacts statewide over time. Measures and indicators for reporting include the following textual and mapped information, which will be determined by MDP:

- The amount and share of growth being located inside and outside PFA's;
- The net density of growth in these areas;
- The creation of new lots and the issuance of residential and commercial building permits in these areas;
- The development capacity analysis (updated every 3 years or when significant change occurs in land use/zoning);
- The number of acre preserved with local agricultural land preservation funding (if applicable); and
- Other information on achieving statewide goals under revised state laws.

County and municipal corporations that issue less than 50 building permits per year for new residential units are exempt from the stipulated measures and indicators. However, annual reporting is still expected by a local jurisdiction, whereby the jurisdiction must prove that less than 50 building permits were issued on any given year. Jurisdictions are required to submit their respective reports by July 1, 2010.

Comprehensive Plan Clarification: The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 seeks to clarify the role of the comprehensive plan and the adoption of ordinances and regulations in relation to said comprehensive planning. Declaring the intent of the Maryland General Assembly, the purpose is to create consistency with comprehensive plans, which "...should be followed as closely as possible while not being elevated to the status of an ordinance and that deviations from the plan should be rare." Legislative intent also seeks to encourage the development of ordinances and regulations that apply to locally designated PFA's, promoting mixed uses, sustainable design and development, and incentive based processes consistent with the new visions of the Act enumerated above.

The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 requires all local jurisdictions to enact a land use plan and educate planning commission and board of zoning appeals members regarding the planning process. The education course is to be developed by MDP. It also highlights the important role played by citizens that assist in the comprehensive planning process for their respective communities. According to the amendment, "citizens invest countless hours in determining the future direction of their jurisdiction through local comprehensive plans...and...the people of Maryland are best served if land use decisions are consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans."

WHAT WILL WILLARDS LOOK LIKE IN 2030?

The Town of Willards is located in Wicomico County just off Route 50, about 15 miles east of the City of Salisbury. Willards began as a Baltimore and Eastern Shore Railroad stop in the 1890s called “Hancock’s Siding.” A man named Ebenezer Davis is credited with christening the village “Willards” in 1895 to honor the general manager of the railroad, Captain Willard Thomson.¹ Mr. Davis built a store, a steam saw mill, and a basket factory in Willards. He donated money to build the Eden Methodist Church². In 1900, the Baltimore, Chesapeake & Atlantic Railroad constructed a ticket office in Willards and added the Town as a stop along the line.³ The Town of Willards was incorporated in 1906. Eventually a school, fire station, and bank were erected to serve its citizens.

Willards’ identity as an agricultural hub began in 1930 and grew for the next three decades. Served by the railroad and the old Ocean City Road (now MD 346), the Town was an important center for agricultural product processing and marketing. Between 1940 and 1950, Willards experienced its largest decade of growth with a population increase of 63 percent. After the discontinuation of the railroad line in 1955 and the construction of U.S. Route 50, also during the 1950s, Willards’ growth began to slow. Between 1950 and 1960, the population increased by only 14 percent.

In the following decade, 1960 to 1970, Willards population decreased by 7 percent. The pace of growth then increased in 1976, when new water and sewer systems were completed. As the 1990s drew to a close, Willards modestly upgraded these systems to accommodate a growing population, which by then numbered about 700.

Willards is located in what is still a predominantly rural area, surrounded by farmland and forests. Its economy continues to be centered on agriculture and the poultry industry. Today a lumber factory, two banks, a post office, an elementary school, an insurance office complex, and a community center are all located in the Town

The Comprehensive Plan is the future “vision” of Willards in the context of its past. The Plan contains practical and realistic recommendations for bringing the Town’s vision into reality. The ideas behind the Plan are a distillation of the community’s desires and what seems reasonable. The Plan seeks to create a better fit with development codes and the realities of “what’s on the ground” to create more flexible codes and sympathetic processes with an emphasis on context sensitive design. The effect is to produce a simple plan, simple regulations, and simple processes.

What Willards will look like in 2030 depends on the community’s vision as expressed in the Plan. It also depends on how effective that vision is translated into the regulatory process (implementation). It is the goal of this planning process to provide recommendations that begin to address structural inefficiencies within the Town’s implementation program. This includes the sufficiency of existing regulations, processes, and procedures. It also includes staffing and funding limitations, administration, and resource management.

¹ Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture, Salisbury University

² George H. Forddry, *Wicomico County History* (Peninsula Press, 1981)

³ Maryland Historical Trust Historic Site Survey, Inventory No. WI 505

The Plan will assist to prioritize strategies and actions to capitalize on structural strengths, mitigate conflicts, and develop effective regulations and procedures. A comprehensive plan is only as good as the ability to implement its goals and objectives.

VISION STATEMENT

The residents of Willards see themselves as a rural town, a small community on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Willards has served the surrounding agricultural area and Wicomico County as a local service area. For much of its history, the residents worked locally and were served by local institutions.

Many residents were born in the community. As a result, they have developed relationships with their neighbors and friends. As the Town grows, the current community wants to maintain its identity, history, and local traditions, sharing those values with new residents and businesses. The vision and goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to encourage the community to promote growth consistent with the traditions and history of Willards but also its position as a County Growth Area:

In order to fulfill the vision statement, the citizens of Willards have developed a set of goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide and manage the Town in a manner appropriate with their vision for the community. These goals are based on the desire to maintain the community and promote orderly growth.

They also are based on the visions for growth management as developed by the State of Maryland, which encourages the revitalization of traditional communities such as Willards, while encouraging appropriate new development.

The Comprehensive Plan is not intended to be a static document. It should be reviewed and updated periodically, every five or six years, to reflect new development trends, shifts in the economy, or changes in the community's goals and objectives.

VISION STATEMENT

“To preserve The Town of Willards as an attractive rural community within the broader setting of managed growth in Wicomico County, while at the same time, encourage appropriate growth and development to fulfill the Town’s role as County Growth Area.”

BACKGROUND



The State of Maryland is located on the East Coast of the United States in the Mid-Atlantic region, which also includes Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. As a regional corridor within the United States, the Mid-

Atlantic region is one of the most densely populated areas in the nation.



Maryland has approximately 5.3 million people with the 5th highest population density in the nation (people per square mile).

Major regional cities include New York City, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Baltimore, MD and Washington D.C. These cities serve as major social, economic, and political metropolitan areas for the United States. Regional satellite cities linked to these larger cities include:

- ❖ Annapolis, MD;
- ❖ Richmond, VA;
- ❖ Trenton, NJ;
- ❖ Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, PA; and
- ❖ Wilmington/Newark and Dover, DE.

Maryland has six regional areas that include the Baltimore Region, Washington Region, Southern Maryland, Western Maryland, Upper Eastern Shore, and the Lower Eastern Shore. Wicomico County is located on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore.

Table I-1: Projected Population Growth by Region for Maryland

Maryland	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010 Est.	2020 Est.	Percent Change +/-
Baltimore	2,173,989	2,348,219	2,512,431	2,611,550	2,720,550	2,826,150	+30%
Washington	1,358,916	1,635,788	1,870,133	2,002,850	2,115,800	2,280,500	+68%
Southern MD	167,284	228,500	281,320	324,000	357,350	417,200	+149%
Western MD	220,124	224,477	236,699	245,000	255,950	278,150	+26%
Upper E. Shore	151,380	180,726	209,295	229,450	250,100	294,250	+94%
Lower E. Shore	145,240	163,043	186,608	196,250	207,825	230,725	+59%
TOTAL	4,216,933	4,780,753	5,296,486	5,609,200	5,907,575	6,326,975	+50%

Source: US Census 2000

According to 2000 U.S. Census statistics (Census 2000), the State is ranked 19th in the nation for population size with approximately 5.3 million people. In addition, Maryland maintains one of the smallest land masses to support a large and growing population base.

Maryland ranks 19th in the nation for population size and the 5th highest for population density or people per square mile. At present, every region in the State is experiencing growth with the most substantial rates cited for the Washington Region, Southern Maryland, and the Upper Eastern Shore.

Eastern Shore Region	1980	1990	2000	2005	Percent Change +/-
Dorchester County	30,623	30,236	30,674	31,300	+2%
Somerset County	19,188	23,440	24,747	26,000	+36%
Wicomico County	64,540	74,339	84,644	89,550	+39%
Worcester County	30,889	35,028	46,543	49,400	+60%
TOTAL: Lower Eastern Shore	145,240	163,043	186,608	196,250	+35%

Source: US Census 2000 – Eastern Shore Statistics– Projections prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning

Wicomico County and The Town of Willards are located on the Lower Eastern Shore. Projections for the Lower Eastern Shore indicate a 59% increase in population from 1980 to 2020. Projections for Wicomico County indicate a 39% increase in population from 1985 to 2005.

POPULATION GROWTH AND CHARACTERISTICS

The latest U.S. Census data indicates that in 2000 The Town of Willards had 938 residents, an increase of 32 percent since 1990. Willards has been experiencing a second significant period of growth since the 1980s, when more than thirty years of slow growth came to an end. As shown in Figure I, between 1980 and 2000, the Town’s population increased by 73 percent. This is in part attributed to the Town’s annexation of residential land in the mid 1980s, and to the modest improvements made in the late 1990s to the municipal water and sewer systems.

The significant increase in population growth in The Town of Willards between 1990 and 2000 could, in part, be attributed to the development of the “Old Mill Subdivision,” which added about 50 new homes within the Town’s corporate limits. As shown in Figure I, Willards has maintained a steady increase in population since 1930 with a slight decrease from 1970 to 1980. Population growth from 1990 to 2000 indicates the highest increase or population “spike.”

Distribution by age of the population for The Town of Willards is very similar to Wicomico County. Younger population groups made up greater segments of the population total than older groups. The largest segment is between the ages of 20 and 44 years, known as the “prime working age range.” The next largest is aged 5 to 19 years old, followed by those aged 45 to 54 years old (see Table I-4).

Table I-3: Population Age Characteristics					
Category-Age	Willards			Wicomico County	
	% of Total 1990	% of Total 2000	1990-2000 % Change	% of Total 2000	1990-2000 % Change
Under 5	7.8%	8.6%	0.8%	6.3%	-0.7%
5 to 19	20.9%	21.6%	0.7%	22.3%	1.2%
20 to 44	39.7%	40.1%	0.4%	36%	-4.0%
45 to 54	7.9%	11.7%	3.8%	13.7%	3.5%
55 to 64	8.6%	5.8%	-2.8%	8.9%	.1%
65 to 74 years	8.9%	7.1%	-1.8%	7.0%	-.6%
75 to 84 years	4.5%	4.3%	-0.2%	4.4%	.4%
85 years and over	1.7%	0.7%	-1.0%	1.4%	.1%
Median Age	32.4 Years			35.8 Years	

Source: US Census

A comparison with the 1990 age distribution shows that younger age groups gained in numbers between 1990 and 2000 and the older population, specifically those older than 55 years, decreased in number during the same period. This is the reverse of an aging population trend being experienced for the Eastern Shore region and the State.

Sex: As shown in Table I-5, in 2000, the U.S. Census reported that there were 2.4 percent more females than males in Willards. Willards' population is more evenly divided by sex than Wicomico County's, where there are 4.6 percent more females than males.

Table I-4: Sex Characteristics			
Category - Sex	Number	Percent %	Wicomico County
Male	458	48.8%	47.7%
Female	480	51.2%	52.3%

Source: US Census

Race: As shown in Table I-6, the Town's population base is not as racially diverse as the County's population base. The 2000 U.S. Census listed 88.9 percent of the population in Willards as White, and slightly more than 6 percent as Black or African American. Wicomico County's 2000 population was slightly more than 23 percent Black or African American, and 72.6 percent White.

Both Willards and Wicomico County had small percentages of non-Black or African American minorities, less than 5 percent, with Hispanic (or Latinos) and Asians making up the largest percentages of these groups. Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population of the Town tripled, growing from 9 to 26 persons. Apart from a growing Hispanic population, there was little change between 1990 and 2000 in the distribution of the population by race for the Town and the County.

Category - Race	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
White	88.9%	72.6%
Black or African American	6.3%	23.3%
American Indian	0.0%	0.2%
Hispanic or Latino	2.8%	2.2%
Asian	3.0%	1.7%
Asian Indian	1.1%	0.5%
Chinese	0.1%	0.2%
Filipino	0.0%	0.1%
Japanese	0.0%	0.0%
Korean	0.0%	0.6%
Vietnamese	0.0%	0.1%
Other Asian	1.8%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other race	1.0%	0.8%
One Race	99.1%	98.7%
Two or More Races	0.9%	1.3%

Source: US Census

Education: As shown in Table I-7, educational attainment improved between 1990 and 2000. The 1990 U.S. Census reported that 43.7 percent of the population aged 25 years and older did not have a high school diploma. In 2000, that number decreased to 27 percent. While this is a significant improvement it's still about 7 percent higher than Wicomico County. The percentage of people over 25 who earned a high school diploma and/or college degree increased more than 16 percent between 1990 and 2000. This could, in part, be attributed to the proximity of Salisbury University's Fulton School of Liberal Arts. This is the largest school within the University.

Category - Educational Characteristics	Willards		Wicomico County
	2000 % of Total	% Change 1990-2000	2000 % of Total
Less than 9 th Grade	7.0%	-12.5%	6.0%
9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma	20.0%	-4.2%	13.4%
High School Graduate	48.0%	13.2%	34.4%
Some College, No Degree	17.7%	5.3%	19.4%
Associate Degree	3.1%	1.0%	5.0%
Bachelor's Degree	3.1%	1.2%	13.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1.1%	1.6%	8.2%
% High School Graduate or Higher	72.9%	16.6%	80.7%

% Bachelor's Degree or Higher	4.2%	-2.6%	21.9%
Population 25 & Over	100.0%		100.0%
Source: US Census			

Households: According to the 2000 U.S. Census, family households make up the highest percentage of the 364 households in The Town of Willards. This is also the case in Wicomico County however the Town's family households make up a slightly larger percentage of the total households (see Table I-8). Non-family households comprise just under 29 percent.

About half of all family households in Willards are headed by married couples and a little over 23 percent of those have children under 18 years old living with them. Females (with no husband present) head a little less than 16 percent of all family households, and 11 percent of those families have children under 18 living with them. The average household size in Willards is 2.58 persons, compared to 2.53 persons per household in Wicomico County. The average family size in Willards is 2.94 persons, compared to 3 persons in Wicomico County.

Category – Household Characteristics	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Family Households	71.4%	67.6%
With Own Children Under 18 Years	39.0%	32.3%
Family - Married Couple	48.9%	49.2%
With Own Children Under 18 Years	23.1%	21.1%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	15.9%	14.1%
With Own Children Under 18 Years	11.0%	8.8%
Non-Family Households	28.6%	32.4%
Householder Living Alone	22.5%	24.8%
Householder 65 Years and Over	11.5%	9.8%
Households With Individuals Under 18 Years	42.6%	36.1%
Households With Individuals 65 Years and Over	24.5%	24.0%
Average Household Size (Number of Persons)	2.58	2.53
Average Family Size (Number of Persons)	2.94	3.00
Source: 2000 Census		

Of total households, both Willards and Wicomico County have more households with children under 18 years old than households with individuals aged 65 and older. Willards has nearly twice as many. About ten percent of all non-family households in both the Town and the County are occupied by householders who are aged 65 and older.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

Economic indicators are important for gauging the commercial and industrial capacity of the region. Economic indicators include: labor force, occupation, industry types, and income and poverty levels.

Labor Force: As shown in Table I-9, the 2000 U.S. Census reported that 449 people, 66.9 percent of the population aged 16 years and older, make up the Town’s labor force. Of that total, 63.5 percent are employed. The Town’s unemployment rate of 5.1 percent is 0.4 percent lower than Wicomico County’s. The labor force is employed in the civilian sector, while 0.2 percent of the County’s is employed in the Armed Forces.

In 2000, the mean travel time to work for the Town’s work force was 25 minutes, five minutes longer commute than for the County. As was the case in 1990, most workers used a car, truck or van as their means of transportation. In 1990, 2 percent of commuters used public transportation compared to 1.5 percent of Wicomico County workers.

However, in 2000, the reverse was true, with a greater percentage of workers in Wicomico County utilizing public transportation to commute to work, and no workers using it in Willards. It is possible that public transportation that served the area went out of service between 1990 and 2000.

Occupation: The largest percentage of Willards’ labor force (31%) is employed in sales and office occupations. The next largest percentage is production, transportation and material moving positions, which comprise 19 percent of the Town’s work force. Table I-10 illustrates levels of employment by designated occupation, along with a comparison of occupations held in Wicomico County.

A little over 87 percent of the Town’s labor force is classified as private wage and salary workers; 7.3 percent are self-employed in their own businesses, and 6.3 percent are government workers. The County’s workforce has fewer workers classified as private wage and salary, only 75.7 percent, but almost three times the number of government workers, 18.1 percent.

Category – Labor Force	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Employment Status		
In Labor Force	66.9%	67.7%
Civilian Labor Force	66.9%	67.5%
Employed	63.5%	63.8%
Unemployed	3.4%	3.7%
% of Civilian Labor Force	5.1%	5.5%
Armed Forces	0.0%	0.2%
Not in Labor Force	33.1%	32.3%

Population 16 Years & Over	100.0%	100.0%
Source: 2000 Census		
Commuting to Work		
Car, Truck, or Van – Drove Alone	77.6%	78.8%
Car, Truck, or Van – Carpooled	17.9%	12.4%
Public Transportation	0.0%	1.6%
Walked	2.1%	2.5%
Other Means	0.2%	1.2%
Worked at Home	2.1%	3.5%
Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes)	24.9%	20.9%
Workers 16 Years & Over	100.0%	100.0%
Source: 2000 Census		

Table I-9: Occupation Characteristics		
Category - Occupation	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Management, Professional, and Related	15.0%	30.8%
Service	14.6%	17.2%
Sales & Office	31.5%	26.7%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	1.4%	0.9%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	18.5%	10.0%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	19.0%	14.3%
Source: 2000 Census		

Industry: As shown in Table I-11, the 2000 U.S. Census reported that manufacturing was the largest industry in Willards, followed by the education, health and social services industries. Together they accounted for nearly 40 percent of employment. These two categories displaced the retail trade and construction industries, which were the dominant industrial classifications in Willards in 1990. In 2000, the retail and construction industries ranked third and fourth, respectively, in employment totals.

By comparison, education, health and social services industries dominated the employment landscape in Wicomico County in 2000, employing nearly a quarter of the County's labor force.

Manufacturing ranked second, employing 14.5 percent of the labor force, followed by the retail trade, at 12.3 percent, and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services industries, which accounted for 8.6 percent in employment totals. This latter category ranked relatively high in the list for Willards as well, employing 12.2 percent of the labor force.

Income and Poverty: The U.S. Census’s most recent data on household income is from 1999 (see Table I-12). The average household income in Willards that year was \$32,059, about 22 percent lower than Wicomico County and about 31 percent lower than the national average household income of \$41,994.

Almost 28 percent of all households had annual earnings between \$35,999 and \$49,999. More than half of Willards’ households, 53.7 percent, earned less than \$35,000 in 1999, compared to 45 percent of the households in Wicomico County. About 19 percent of the households in Willards earned between \$50,000 and \$199,999, compared to 37 percent of the households in Wicomico County. No households in Willards earned \$200,000 or more. A little more than 7 percent of Willards’ households earn less than \$10,000 per year.

Table I-10: Industry Characteristics

Category – Industry Characteristics	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining	2.1%	2.2%
Construction	14.1%	7.2%
Manufacturing	20.2%	14.5%
Wholesale Trade	1.6%	3.8%
Retail Trade	13.6%	12.3
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	2.8%	4.3%
Information	0.9%	2.6%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental & Leasing	6.3%	4.5%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	4.2%	5.8%
Educational, Health, and Social Services	17.1%	24.1%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	12.2%	8.6%
Other Services	3.3%	4.4%
Public Administration	1.4%	5.6%
Source: 2000 Census		

Income in 1999	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Less than \$10,000	7.1%	9.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	16.3%	7.4%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	15.4%	14.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14.9%	13.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	27.7%	17.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	13.7%	19.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3.7%	9.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0.6%	5.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.6%	1.4%
\$200,000 or more	0.0%	1.3%
Total Households	100.0%	100.0%
Median Household Income (Dollars)	\$32,059	\$39,035

Source: 2000 Census

The U.S. Census measures poverty levels of people whose annual family income is less than a "[poverty](#) line" or threshold, which is set by the U.S. government. The poverty line is set at approximately three times the annual cost of a nutritionally adequate diet for an individual, and varies by family size. The threshold is updated yearly to reflect changes in the "[consumer price index](#)." In 1999, the income of a family of four at the poverty line was \$17,020.

As shown in Table I-13, according to the U.S. Census, in 2000, 9.2 percent of the families in Willards were living at or below the poverty level. This is a 61 percent increase since 1990, when 5.7 percent of Willards' families were ranked at or below the poverty level. The percentage of individuals living in poverty increased during the last decade also, from 9.3 percent to 9.9 percent. The percentages of people living in poverty in Willards were lower overall than in Wicomico County.

Poverty Status in 1999 (Below Poverty Level)	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
% of Individuals Below Poverty Level	9.9%	12.8%
% of Families Below Poverty level	9.2%	8.7%
% with Related Children Under 18 Years	11.8%	13.3%
% with Related Children Under 5 Years	7.9%	18.3%

Source: 2000 Census

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

In 1990, there were a total of 315 housing units in Willards. The majority (75%) of occupied housing was detached single family units. Approximately, 60 percent were occupied by homeowners. About half of the Town's housing stock was 20 years old or less, and about 15 percent of it was mobile homes.

Current Statistics: In 2000, the Census reported 385 housing units in Willards, 70 more than existed in 1990. About 94 percent of the Town's housing units were occupied. More than three-quarters or 76.4 percent were owner-occupied. This is a 10 percent higher owner occupancy rate than Wicomico County but 1.5 percent less than the owner occupancy rate reported for Willards in the 1990 U.S. Census (77.9 percent). About 6 percent of Town housing stock is vacant. Of these 23 vacant units, less than 1 percent (0.3 percent) was vacant due to seasonal or recreational use. The vacancy rate of rental housing, at 10.4 percent, was almost eight times higher than homeowner housing, and about 20 percent higher than it was in 1990.

Homeowner vacancy rates decreased by more than half between 1990 and 2000, dropping from 3.5 percent in 1990 to 1.4 percent in 2000.

Table I-13: Occupancy and Tenure		
Category – Occupancy and Tenure	Willards % of Total	Wicomico County % of Total
Housing Occupancy		
Occupied Housing Units	94.3%	93.7%
Vacant Housing Units	5.7%	6.3%
For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	0.3%	0.8%
% Homeowner Vacancy Rate	1.4%	1.5%
% Rental Vacancy Rate	10.4%	4.6%
Total Housing Units	385	34,401
Housing Tenure		
Owner Occupied Housing Units (OOH)	76.4%	66.5%
Renter Occupied Housing Units (ROH)	23.6%	33.5%
Occupied Housing Units	364	32,218
Household Size		
Average Household Size of Owner-Occupied Housing	2.54	2.55
Average Household Size of Renter-Occupied Housing	2.71	2.49
Source: 2000 Census		

As shown in Table I-14, the average household size of renter-occupied units in Willards in 2000 was slightly larger than that of owner-occupied units. Households were slightly larger in 2000 than in 1990, when the average size of owner-occupied units was 2.46 persons and the average size of renter-occupied units was 2.48 persons.

It should be noted that renter households in Willards are growing faster in size than owner-occupied households. This is not the case in Wicomico County, where owner-occupied households were larger than renter households in both 2000 and 1990.

Table I-14: Housing Units in Structure		
Units in Structure	Willards % of Total	Wicomico % of Total
1 Unit Detached	80.8%	72.9%
1 Unit Detached	2.1%	3.1%
2 Units	0.5%	2.9%
3 or 4 Units	0.0%	2.5%
5 to 9 Units	5.7%	4.1%
10 to 19 Units	0.0%	4.5%
20 or More Units	1.6%	2.3%
Mobile Home	9.4%	7.7%
Boat, RV, Van, Etc.	0.0%	0.0%
Source: 2000 Census		

More than 80 percent of housing stock in Willards is single-family detached homes, a higher percentage of its total housing than the County (see Table I-15). Wicomico County has significantly higher percentages of multi-unit structures, particularly of larger structures with more than 10 units. Willards, however, has a higher number of mobile homes as a percentage of total housing. This could be an indication that people in Willards with lower housing budgets are using manufactured housing as an alternative to multi-family housing. It should be noted that half (18) of the 36 mobile homes located in Willards were constructed before 1987.

While mobile homes are located throughout the Town, a number of them are clustered along Lewis Lane, near the Town’s southern boundary. This area was designated as a Mobile Home Residential District (R-3) in the Town’s 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The R-3 District is primarily for mobile homes or double wide dwellings and supporting uses such as mobile home parks. Within the District, a variety of housing types including mobile homes and double-wides, mobile home parks, and single family detached residences are encouraged.

As shown in Table I-16, a large percentage of housing stock in Willards is relatively new, with 10 percent being built since 1997 and nearly one third being built since 1990. More than half (52.7%) of the Town’s housing was built during or after 1980, compared to 38.5 percent of Wicomico County’s housing stock. Maryland PropertyView’s (MPV) 2004 data for Wicomico

County indicates that a significant percentage, about half, of Willards' housing stock is less than 1,200 square feet in size.

Table I-15: Year Structure Built		
Year Structure Built	Willards % of Total	Wicomico % of Total
1999 to March 2000	3.6%	2.1%
1990 to 1998	26.2%	18.6%
1980 to 1989	22.9%	17.8%
1970 to 1979	10.9%	18.5%
1960 to 1969	5.7%	12.3%
1940 to 1959	14.5%	17.7%
1939 or Earlier	16.1%	13.0%
Source: 2000 Census		

More than half (53.6%) of the homes in Willards are occupied by residents who have lived in them for ten years or less. About 20 percent of the Town's population has occupied their current homes since 1970 or earlier. In 2000, two houses lacked complete plumbing facilities, but all housing units had complete kitchen facilities.

Table I-16: Householder Characteristics	
Year Householder Moved into Unit	% of Total Occupied Housing Units
1999 to March 2000	19.6%
1995 to 1998	34%
1990 to 1994	16%
1980 to 1989	12.7%
1970 to 1979	9.7%
1969 or Earlier	8.0%
Source: 2000 Census	

More than 80 percent of the owner-occupied homes in Willards are valued at less than \$100,000. This is attributable in part to the large percentage (15 percent) of mobile homes in the Town's housing stock. About 30 percent less of the houses in Wicomico County are valued at under \$100,000. The median value of owner-occupied housing in Willards is \$83,700, about 13 percent less than the median home value in Wicomico County (see Table I-18).

Table I-17 2000 Housing – Housing Values Owner-Occupied Units

Value (Owner Occupied Units)	Willards % of Total	Wicomico % of Total
Less than \$50,000	5.9%	7.3%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	74.7%	48.3%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17.3%	23.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.4%	12.4%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	0%	6.1%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0.8%	1.4%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0%	0.6%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.8%	0.1%
Median (dollars)	83,700	94,500
Source: 2000 U.S. Census		