

Community History and Character

This section presents a brief history and general description of the Annapolis Neck area. The boundary of the area commonly referred to as the Annapolis Neck follows the Chesapeake Bay and the South River to the south and west, then to the north follows U.S. Route 50, then the Parole Growth Management Area boundary (Defense Highway, Housley Road, and Generals Highway), and then Saltworks Creek and its headwaters, and finally is bounded by the Severn River to the east (see Map 1). This entire area comprises approximately 14,600 acres of land. Within this area lies the incorporated City of Annapolis, which contains approximately 4,600 acres of land. The City of Annapolis adopts and administers its own Comprehensive Plan governing all property within the City limits. Therefore, the Annapolis Neck Small Planning Area consists of the remaining 10,000 acres, approximately, of the Annapolis Neck which fall under the jurisdiction of Anne Arundel County. This area includes approximately 1,500 acres of land that lie within the County's designated Parole Growth Management Area (PGMA).

Community History

Bounded by the Severn and South Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, the Annapolis Neck peninsula is located in the center of Anne Arundel County. The City of Annapolis figures prominently in this area as the county seat, the state capital of Maryland, and home of the U. S. Naval Academy. Like much of Anne Arundel County, the Annapolis Neck once supported an agricultural economy, primarily tobacco plantations. Later in the 19th century, water-related resort communities developed along the Bay and its tributaries.

The history of the Annapolis Neck peninsula is part of the broad pattern of human development of the Chesapeake Bay region. For thousands of years prior to European settlement of the county, Native Americans hunted, fished and lived along the Bay, enjoying its rich bounty. However, at the time of English settlement, present-day Anne Arundel County was virtually uninhabited by Native Americans due to an ongoing dispute of this territory between the Susquehannocks to the north and the Algonquins to the south.

In 1649, several hundred European settlers arrived at the mouth of the Severn River and established a settlement they called "Providence" or "Severn." Their dispersed hamlet was centered on the north shore of the Severn River, but by the 1660s it had shifted to Acton's Cove across the river at the present site of Annapolis. The first settlers were non-conformist Puritans from Virginia who were invited to settle on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay by Maryland's proprietary ruler, Cecil Calvert, second Lord Baltimore. Calvert's invitation, issued during the turmoil of the English Civil Wars, was an attempt to stabilize his struggling colony. The Puritan-based Providence quickly became the population center of the colony, shifting power away from the Catholic-controlled St. Mary's City. This was fully realized in 1695 when Governor Nicholson moved the capital from St. Mary's to Ann Arundell Town, or Annapolis.

Map 1

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Annapolis Neck remained an agricultural area, producing tobacco and diversified crops. Annapolis served as the market center for outlying plantations. An intricate transportation system by land and water developed, connecting Annapolis with other colonial ports and towns. Roadways crisscrossed the Neck, leading in all directions. Ferry crossings were established, spanning the South and Severn Rivers. Today's Ferry Point Road on the south shore of the Severn led to London Town on the South River, and served as part of one of the most important north-south routes in colonial America. A second, or "upper" crossing of the South River was established in the mid-18th century at the present location of Riva Road.

Rail transportation came to Annapolis Neck in 1840 with the construction of the Annapolis and Elkrige Railroad, one of the oldest railroads in the United States. It ran in an east-west direction, connecting Annapolis with the Washington extension of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The Baltimore and Annapolis Shortline Railroad was completed in 1887, connecting Annapolis with Baltimore. Today, this abandoned right-of-way serves as a highly popular hiking-biking trail.

The Civil War had a major impact on the lives of Anne Arundel County citizens. As a border state, Maryland was home to both Confederate and Union sympathizers. Like Baltimore, Annapolis was occupied by Union troops during the war to secure Maryland for the Union cause and protect Washington, D. C. Today, the physical manifestation of the war is found in the place-name "Parole." Camp Parole was established as one of several prisoner exchange camps where Union troops on parole were held until exchanged for Confederate parolees. The parolees were detained in the camps by their own troops for an agreed amount of time and then returned to their regiments. Many soldiers died at Camp Parole from injuries or disease. They are buried at the Federal Cemetery on West Street at Taylor Avenue. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, worked at Camp Parole and at a hospital set up at St. John's College. She maintained lists of prisoners and informed family members of their whereabouts and health condition.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, steamboat and rail transportation facilitated the development of resort and planned recreational communities along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In the Annapolis Neck peninsula alone, communities such as Bay Ridge, Highland Beach, Arundel-on-the-Bay, Carr's Beach, Bembe Beach, Annapolis Roads and Severn Grove were established for recreational pleasure. In 1886, the B&O Railroad ran a spur line to the Chesapeake Bay and financed the development of Bay Ridge, a highly successful and popular Victorian resort. Known as "The Queen Resort of the Chesapeake," it was also accessible by the many steamboat lines that plied the Bay. In 1893, Maj. Charles R. Douglass, son of Frederick Douglass, the noted abolitionist, established Highland Beach as an exclusive resort for African Americans. Nationally known figures such as Langston Hughes, Booker T. Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Mary Church Terrell owned cottages and/or visited Highland Beach frequently. The cottage built in 1894 for Frederick Douglass has been

preserved and serves as a museum. Highland Beach is the only incorporated town in the County, outside of Annapolis.

Community Character

The Annapolis Neck is the site of the Maryland State Capital, the U.S. Naval Academy, St. Johns College, and the seat of government for Anne Arundel County. The City of Annapolis has numerous businesses that maintain and support the boating industry, and in addition has a high concentration of major state offices and is the seat of several court systems. The City is known worldwide as a sailing and boating venue, and yearly hosts two of the most prestigious boat shows in the U.S. The Naval Academy is a world-renowned institution that educates and trains future naval officers for the U.S. and some foreign countries. St. Johns College is one of the oldest colleges in the U.S. and teaches the Great Books, one of the most difficult and demanding liberal education curricula. The State Capital is one of the oldest in the U.S. The boundaries and street plan of the original State Capital, laid out by Sir Francis Nicholson in 1695, are still largely intact and encompass the Historic Annapolis area. Maryland Hall for the Performing Arts provides a place for the Annapolis Symphony and Chorale, opera, and other arts. The Naval Academy and St. Johns College also provide many cultural opportunities for residents and visitors, and the Naval Academy provides sports contests that frequently draw large numbers of spectators.

The Parole Growth Management Area (PGMA) is the site of the Parole Urban Center, the Anne Arundel Medical Center, the Anne Arundel Detention Center, the Westfield Shopping Town (Annapolis Mall), the Three Mile Oak Corner area which contains several large retail stores, as well as a number of other industries and businesses. Here also is located a government park with County and State offices, including the headquarters of a number of departments. On either side of the PGMA lie residential growth areas in which about 3,000 attached and multi-family dwelling units have been built. The PGMA itself contains approximately 1,100 motel and hotel rooms and approximately 600 dwelling units. West of the PGMA, the Heritage Harbor community contains nearly 1,700 attached, multi-family, and single family detached age-restricted units. Additional growth in the number of dwelling units is anticipated over the next ten years. Shopping centers and stores within and nearby the PGMA not only serve residents of the Annapolis Neck, but also draw customers from the surrounding suburban and rural areas.

The character of the Annapolis Neck is also influenced in part by its location with relation to the greater Baltimore-Washington, DC metropolitan area. The Annapolis Neck lies within reasonable commuting distance from Baltimore, Washington, DC, the Eastern shore, and Southern Maryland (see Map 2), and highway access is relatively good, making the Annapolis Neck a desirable place to live for many commuters.

Located within the boundaries of the Small Planning Area are many varied communities. These communities comprise larger areas that can be viewed as subareas of the Annapolis Neck. They are described in the following sections.

Map 2

South Haven Peninsula

The westernmost subarea is the South Haven Peninsula. This subarea is formed by US Route 50 to the north, the South River to the west and south and Broad Creek to the east.

The largest community on the South Haven Peninsula is Heritage Harbour, an age restricted development of approximately 1650 homes, mostly single family dwellings, with some ancillary commercial services. Other communities on the South Haven Peninsula are the single family communities of Southaven, Bon Haven, South River Manor, and Windfern Forest.

South Haven Road is the main artery through this area and provides access to Harry S. Truman Parkway, Maryland Route 450, and Crownsville Road.

Riva Corridor

To the east of the South Haven Peninsula, across Broad Creek, is the Riva Corridor. This subarea is formed by Broad Creek to the west, the boundary of the Parole Growth Management Area to the north and the South River and Gingerville Creek and its headwaters to the south and east.

The largest community in this subarea is Riva Trace, a planned community of about 500 single family homes, attached patio homes and apartments. Major nonresidential uses in this area are Camp Woodlands, a 32 acre Girl Scout camp on Broad Creek, the Annapolis Senior High School, the Arundel Olympic Swim Center, and the Constantine and St. Helens Greek Orthodox Church. Other communities located within this subarea are Broadview Estates, Whiskey Bottom, the Preserve at Broad Creek, Cape St. John, Ginger Cove, Riva Woods and Gingerville Woods. All, except the retirement/care community of Ginger Cove, are single family housing developments.

Riva Road is the main street through this subarea, providing access to points south of the South River, and north towards Parole to Aris T. Allen Boulevard, MD Routes 2 and 450 and US Route 50.

Gingerville/Wilelinor

East of the Riva residential area is the Gingerville/Wilelinor area. This subarea is bounded to the east by Gingerville Creek, to the north by the Parole Growth Management Area, to the west by Church Creek and to the south by the South River.

Major land uses in this area include the residential communities of Gingerville, Manor Estates, Wallace Manor, Wilelinor, and Poplar Point. Nonresidential uses in this area include various churches, the Elks Lodge on Solomons Island Road, and various commercial and maritime uses on the South River.

Solomons Island Road (MD Route 2) is the primary arterial road serving this area, with various minor collector roads within the residential communities.

Forest Drive/Bywater/Harness Creek

South and east of the Gingerville/Wilelinor area is the Forest Drive/Bywater/Harness Creek area. This subarea is bounded by Church Creek to the west, the City of Annapolis to the north, Quiet Waters Park to the east and the South River to the south.

Major land uses within the County in this area are the residential communities of Bywater Estates, Eatons Landing, Wild Rose Shores, Bitter Sweet, Rundelac Farms, Harness Creek Park, and Wimbledon Farms. Adjacent City of Annapolis communities include Oxford Gardens, Greenbriar Gardens, the Fountains, Annapolis Overlook, Robinwood and Hunt Meadows. This area also contains the Masque Farm and Crystal Spring Farm properties, which are large wooded and undeveloped areas near Spa Road.

Commercial uses within the City of Annapolis that are adjacent to this area include businesses at the Forest Drive/Chinquapin Round Road intersection, the Safeway shopping center near Bywater Road and other scattered commercial and retail businesses on Forest Drive. Annapolis Middle School is also located within this area.

Forest Drive is the major transportation artery serving this area, with Chinquapin Round Road, Bywater Road, Spa Road, and Ferry Point Road serving as collector roads.

Outer Neck

The Outer Neck lies directly east of the Forest Drive/Bywater/Harness Creek area. It is bounded by Quiet Waters Park to the west, the City of Annapolis and Severn River to the north, and the South River to the south.

There are four major concentrations of residential communities within this area. The first is the Hillsmere Shores area, with over 1000 single family homes. This community is served by Hillsmere Drive, a collector road that provides access to Forest Drive. The Hillsmere area also contains the Key School, a private educational institution that enrolls about 600 students, and St. Anne's Day School.

The next area is served by Arundel on the Bay Road and contains the subdivisions of Kitty Creek, Quay Harbor, Indian Echo, Fishing Creek Farms, Watergate, Oakwood, Venice Beach, South River Manor, Blackwalnut Cove, Walnut Lake, Highland Beach, Oyster Harbor and Arundel on the Bay. Together, these residential communities comprise about 1100 single family homes. Other features located in this area are the Hillsmere Elementary School, Thomas Point Park, and historic Highland Beach, the only other incorporated area, besides the City of Annapolis, in Anne Arundel County.

A third concentration is located on the Bay Ridge peninsula, served by Bay Ridge Road. This area contains the communities of Keyes Farm, Chrisland at Annapolis Cove, Anchorage, Annapolis Cove, and Bay Ridge, and accounts for about 700 single family homes. This area also contains the Peninsula Park, a popular recreation area which provides much used ballfields for local residents.

The fourth major concentration in the Outer Neck area is the Annapolis Roads and Bembe Beach area served by Carrollton Road and Edgewood Road. Annapolis Roads contains almost 300 single family homes. The Bembe Beach area contains the subdivisions of Bembe Beach, Elktonia, Towne Home and the Villages of Chesapeake Harbor, a total of about 500 apartments and single family homes.

Commercial uses located at the edge of the Outer Neck area include the Bay Forest Shopping Center, situated at the intersection of Forest Drive and Bay Ridge Road.

Parole Growth Management Area (PGMA)

The Parole Growth Management Area or PGMA was created by legislation by the County Council in 1990 to focus commercial, employment and higher density residential development in a defined growth area. The PGMA is generally bounded by Bestgate Road to the north, but extending to include the Annapolis Commerce Park, by MD 2 to the east, the Gingerville community to the south, and Broad Creek to the west.

The PGMA comprises 1500 acres and contains major retail centers including the Annapolis Mall, Annapolis Harbor Center, Festival at Riva, and Gateway Center. The old Parole Plaza Shopping Center is identified as part of the core of the PGMA and is one of the most significant redevelopment sites in the County. Major employment areas located within the PGMA are along Riva Road, Admiral Cochrane Drive and Defense Highway. There are also about 600 residential units in the PGMA consisting mostly of apartments, but including some single family homes. Major roads in the PGMA include Forest Drive, Riva Road, Jennifer Road, MD 2, MD 450, MD 665, Bestgate Road, Housley Road, and US 50/301.

Northern Neck

The area bounded by Weems Creek to the south, the Severn River to the east, Saltworks Creek to the north and the PGMA to the west is known as the Northern Neck. This area is composed mostly of single family homes north of Bestgate Road and multifamily housing south of Bestgate Road, with a total of about 2900 housing units. The Northern Neck is generally divided into three neighborhoods: Weems Creek, Severn Grove and Bestgate South. Bestgate Road, Rowe Boulevard and Ridgely Avenue are the major roads serving this area.

The Weems Creek neighborhood has about 450 apartments, townhomes and single family homes. There are two major office complexes and two commercial complexes in the area. Nonresidential uses in this area include the Weems Creek Medical Center and the Ridgely Oaks

Professional Office Building. Route 50 and Rowe Boulevard divide this neighborhood. Ridgely Avenue and Riverview Avenue are collector roadways providing neighborhood access. Major communities include Garden Farms, Lindamoor, Weems Creek Waterfront, Dreams Landing and Riverview Manor.

The Severn Grove neighborhood has about 300 apartments and single family homes. Major communities include Severn Grove, Lincoln Heights, Kingswood, and Severn Forest. Severn Grove Road serves this neighborhood. Nonresidential development includes the Annapolis Area Christian School and the Annapolis Veterinary Clinic.

South of Bestgate Road and north of US Route 50 are located approximately 2000 apartments in various developments, including Tidewater Colony, Windgate, Rivergate, Harborgate, and Scott's Crossing, and about 60 single family homes. Nonresidential development in this area includes a small community shopping center at the intersection of Bestgate Road and Admiral Drive, several office buildings, the County Jail, and the West Annapolis Fire Station.