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# 2013 MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The 2013 update to the Mount Airy Comprehensive Master Plan is critical for many reasons. The economic, geographic, and community conditions surrounding the Town have vastly changed since the last plan was adopted. This current plan will frame those important changes and suggest a direction for the Town potentially capable of maximizing the opportunities, minimize the cyclical effects of the regional economy and provide long-term protection for the community as a whole.

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## OVERALL TOWN VISION

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Although the Town has seen a large amount of growth over the last twenty years, it still retains much of its small town charm, and the intent of this Master Plan is to perpetuate and enhance those attributes. The Town of Mount Airy, with its large historic homes along its Main Street corridor and bucolic landscape surrounding more recent subdivisions, is a highly desirable location to live and raise a family. During the next twenty years, the Town will strive to retain its feel as a small and close-knit community. In terms of its development agenda, the Town will pursue a continued revitalization of the Downtown Historic District, as well as quality in-fill and redevelopment of office and retail space along corridors leading to the Downtown. In addition, as part of that same agenda, the Town will retain a buffer of agricultural land uses directly surrounding its boundaries on all sides to clearly delineate the Town and provide an entryway into the municipality. Aesthetics and building design will continue to be highly valued and will provide guidance for new projects making their way into the Mount Airy community. And finally, the community will be enhanced with essential and desired facilities and will preserve its limited water resources for the highest priority improvements.

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## REGIONAL SETTING

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Mount Airy is a suburban town approximately 1 hour outside of the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas and job market. This job market influence will continue to affect us in the future, as many Mount Airy residents will continue commuting to these job markets. Mount Airy is also located in the center of a four-county area, making it accessible to several local job markets. This plan will look at Mount Airy as both a unique community and a vital member of multiple counties. In that regard, the Plan seeks to help the Town excel at both its own development and as a contributor to the immediate region. In particular, the Town will strive to coordinate with Frederick and Carroll counties fully on proposed land uses directly adjacent to the Town.

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## LAND USE AND ZONING

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The Town of Mount Airy grew tremendously in the previous two decades with a large concentration of residential growth. The Census statistics define the growth of the Town between 2000 and 2010 at 31%, among the fastest of any municipality in the State. With such an increase in population, the services required to meet employment, shopping, and entertainment needs have become the development priority rather than additional residential capacity. This will take place in our most critical corridors, including those leading into our historic downtown. New zoning classifications will also be introduced to provide for business park development commingled with small retail components mixed in. All of the vacant corridors and properties in the Town now surround major transportation routes and it is vitally important that the zoning and land-use allow for careful development with a strong component of architectural integrity and good environmental design.

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## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

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The transportation network within Town includes two major State roads: MD 27 and MD 808. The first road functions as an eastern bypass to the downtown and points north. MD 808 is our Main Street and on the north side of Town, intersects with MD 27. There is significant traffic on both of these roads and therefore the Master Plan will include recommendations to limit access points on these roads in order to keep the speed and volume of traffic reasonable. Additionally, the plan will evaluate other local roads, especially those leading into the downtown area and points east and west, for potential streetscape enhancements, including upgrades that promote aesthetics and speed control, such as boulevards, decorative crosswalks and traffic circles. The Town will further improve the interconnections between neighborhoods, our parks system and our historic downtown shopping area. In addition to road connections, the Town will strongly consider and evaluate pedestrian and bicycle way alternatives. Accordingly, the ongoing Rails to Trails project in the downtown area to points east and directly west of the downtown will be given high priority for planning, engineering, and funding.

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## WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

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Water availability and sewer capacity will be the single-most limiting factor for any new growth in the Town of Mount Airy. The Town operates off of a group of ground water wells whose water appropriation is mandated by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The method of evaluating ground water recharge areas has been changed at the State level and is much more restrictive than it was ten years ago. The availability of water and the Town's ability to process waste water will be the driving force behind what type of development is permitted and where it can be located. When water becomes available, the Town will prioritize commercial development corridors and areas of infill, most importantly the downtown historic district. Any water and sewer expansion for new development will be borne by the property owner, as the Town will concentrate on the five-year Capital Improvements planning for maintenance of the system and any physical upgrades deemed necessary. The final water capacity issued to the

Town will drive the capacity of our existing waste water treatment plant. Currently permitted for 1.2 million gallons per day processing, any water usage beyond that will require an additional treatment plant. There are no plans for adding a second treatment plant at this time.

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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The Town will continue to pursue goals towards improving and expanding its existing community facilities such as parks, schools, and libraries. Although the Town depends on Frederick and Carroll Counties for the larger facilities such as schools, it has a strong influence on how our schools are improved, renovated or rebuilt. With the completion of Mount Airy Middle School, the Town's public schools will be under capacity and will remain so for the foreseeable future. The demand for more athletic facilities is very high as they have not kept pace with the growing population in the past. The Town will continue to plan for additional park projects through the five-year capital improvements budgeting process and state and regional grant opportunities. One important feature the Town is looking to add to their inventory of facilities is a community center. Many residents have expressed a desire to have a community center where a variety of Town events, celebrations, recreational, cultural and entertainment activities can take place. One focus of the community facilities portion of the Master Plan will be evaluating possible locations for a town community center that can serve the resident population for many years to come. In response, a task force has been formed for the purpose of identifying unmet community needs in this regard, options to meet those needs, and the practical considerations involved, such as projected costs and operational considerations.

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## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

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The amount of citizen participation from Town residents is remarkable. The Town has over 12 commissions, committees, and task forces run by volunteers. These committees and commissions contribute largely to the planning and development direction the Town will take. Town residents have participated in two surveys, the first in 2008 and the second in 2011. Both surveys were completed with significant participation and feedback. The survey results provided very clear direction as to the resident's desires and how they feel the Town government should proceed. The Town has utilized the surveys to improve on government processes, planning various types of future growth and has also prioritized recommendations for facilities and services that Town residents desire. The Town has every intention of continuing the current high level of community participation and feedback to guide the Master Plan's development, recommendations and goals.

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## DESIRED OUTCOMES

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Many decisions will be made during the development of the 2013 Comprehensive Master Plan Update that will shape the Town's future. The intent of that development process will be to benefit the Town in several ways. First, the process that will be used to educate the community on all of the Plan's elements, including an increased understanding and appreciation of the

complex water capacity issues that impact the Town. This understanding is crucial to the necessary prioritization of existing development projects. Second, the process will provide the opportunity to increase the existing productive coordination between the Planning Commission and the Town Council. Third, the process will also benefit from collaboration and relationship building between each of the Town Commissions as their input is requested for appropriate sections of the Plan. And finally, feedback gathered during the Public Forums will indicate the extent to which residents agree and support the vision and direction proposed by the Plan Update. The opportunity for all of the Town's stakeholders to collaborate on a unified vision for the future of the Town is as important and valuable as the changes prescribed by the Comprehensive Master Plan itself. Both will benefit this community.