
CHAPTER TWO: TOWN HISTORY AND CURRENT REGIONAL SETTING

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TOWN OF MOUNT AIRY

The western movement of the B & O Railroad and proximity to the National Pike gave identity and significance to the Town of Mount Airy. The hilly topography of the area is responsible for the name of the Town. A railroad foreman who commented, “this is an airish mountain” christened it with its name. The name of the Town became Mount Airy and remained so from that point forward. When Carroll County defined its permanent boundaries in 1837, Mount Airy was divided between two counties, Carroll and Frederick; the Town has remained in two counties since that time. About one mile south of the Town is the junction of Carroll, Frederick, Howard and Montgomery Counties located at the headwaters of the South Branch of the Patapsco River.



The Town was originally settled in the early 1830s by a core group of six families. Dorsey, Davis and Bussard were the most prominent names in that first settlement, which was followed closely by the construction of the B & O railroad line in 1831. Because Mount Airy sits at an elevation of 830 feet, a series of four inclined planes were constructed in order for the trains to climb the steep hills. Locomotives and cars were lifted with the assistance of horses and steam wenchers. Passengers had to disembark during this process. Plane #4, located west of the Town at the intersection of Woodville Road and MD Route 144 is still a recognized location today.



HISTORIC TWIN ARCH BRIDGE JUST SOUTH OF THE TOWN LIMITS LOOKING TOWARD TOWN

In 1839 the planes were abandoned and the new line was constructed north of where Mount Airy is today. This was a result of more powerful locomotives that had been constructed and heavier loads were being hauled. In 1901, the tunnel was constructed on the south side of town and the existing line into town became a spur line through what is now the Town of Mount Airy.

The Town named the first resident, Henry Bussard, the station agent for the new train station. Mr. Bussard was also the first major landowner in Mount Airy. By 1846, the Town was sparsely settled with several houses, a Town store, barber shop and shoemaker shop. Pine Grove Chapel, circa 1846, now a historic monument, was constructed to fill the need for a community church. From the time it was constructed, the chapel basement functioned as a private school. The chapel remained open during the early part of the Civil War despite soldier encampments in close proximity. The school and church were closed later because of distracting soldier activity around the vicinity of the school. After the war ended, the church reopened in 1867 after undergoing a renovation. In 1893, the Carroll County Board of Education funded the construction of a three-room schoolhouse which was completed in September 1894. The building, approximately 1,700 sq. ft. in size, was located on the east side of Main Street, 1/4 of mile south of the railroad tracks. It is now part of the Calvary United Methodist Church property.



MAIN STREET IN 1902

The school operated from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m., much like today's schools.



AERIAL VIEW OF MOUNT AIRY, EARLY 1970'S

With the incorporation of the Town in 1894, came the establishment of the Town government structure, including a Mayor and Council. The first Mount Airy Mayor was Byron S. Dorsey who served ten years in that office between 1894 and 1904.

In 1900, the Town population had grown to 332 residents. By 1910, the Town population was 428 and it was determined that the Town had enough student population to

justify a State accredited high school. A high school with classes was organized but an official high school "building" to house all eleven grades was not built at that time.

The Town of Mount Airy endured three disastrous fires during the first quarter of the 20th century. The first fire occurred in 1902 and destroyed the business section of the southern side of the downtown area. The second fire was in 1914 and consumed the north side of the downtown business section. The third fire took place about ten years later, in 1925, and again, the northern side of the downtown business district was destroyed. As a result of the 1925 fire, the Mount Airy Volunteer Fire Company was organized in 1926.

During the late 1920's and early 1930's the Town continued to flourish despite the onset of the Great Depression. The 1930 U.S. Census tallied the Town population at 845 persons, an increase of 91 people since 1920. The railroad company largely contributed to the growth of not only the population, but the Town's economy as well. As a result, expanded Town services included necessary public utilities such as electric service when Potomac Edison was established in Mount Airy. The thriving economy supported the initiation of several large businesses in the 1930's, such as a poultry operation, two automobile garages, an ice factory, and the creation of the Mount Airy Canning Company, which provided about 250 jobs for Town residents. In 1932, the first motion picture theater opened in Mount Airy, establishing a core business district. During that time, the Town also saw the purchase of land for a Town park, the opening of a grocery store and a lumberyard and the dedication of Pine Grove Chapel for use as a nonsectarian chapel.

REGIONAL SETTING AND GROWTH PATTERNS

The Washington-Baltimore job market has had a profound influence on Mount Airy as well as a far reaching impact on its surrounding areas. The outer suburban development area of the Washington-Baltimore Region now extends well into central/western Maryland, Northern Virginia, the southeastern portion of Pennsylvania and even the eastern region of West Virginia.

Mount Airy is 13 miles from the junction of MD 27 and I-270, and is affected by the pattern and strength of development along this growth corridor. Many families have relocated to Mount Airy seeking a high quality of life and convenient commuting distance to Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The Town continues to function as a "bedroom community" while providing a respectable amount of services and commercial enterprises for its residents.



SATELLITE VIEW OF THE ROADS SURROUNDING THE TOWN



MOUNT AIRY'S NEWEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT BEGAN CONSTRUCTION 2004

The regional and Town population growth during the last three decades has been significant. Mount Airy grew 33% each decade from 1940 to 1970. From 1970 to 1980, the growth rate increased to 34% and from 1980 to 1990 surpassed 59%. According to the State of Maryland, Mount Airy was the fastest growing municipality in the State from 1990 to 1997.

Mount Airy's location at a meeting point of the boundaries of four counties and its convenient commuting distance to the major regional employment centers of Baltimore and Washington DC set the stage for tremendous growth pressure from 1980 to 2000. That trend continued into the next decade and slowed in 2005 due to water capacity constraints and the overall downturn in the economic climate, along with community desire to slow the pace of growth. At the conclusion of this plan update, the housing market and economy are recovering, however limited water capacity continues to be a factor that limits growth. The Transportation Chapter of this plan proposes the evaluation of the community need for a transit node in the Mount Airy area in response to the commuter population that has increased since the 1980's.



DOWNTOWN MOUNT AIRY –
SUMMER 2013

The majority of future growth is slated to take place in the commercially zoned corridors that frame and define the downtown and core areas of Mount Airy, thus encouraging downtown development and revitalization. This plan facilitates an overall reduction of residential development capacity for future annexation areas. For the 2013 Master Plan cycle, this reduction is predicated upon severe limitations on water supply and wastewater capacity along with the premise that these limitations will be difficult to overcome. Additionally, the limitation of future residential capacity is in response to surveys that indicate that many residents do not desire further residential growth.

In contrast to the tremendous residential growth the Town experienced during the last two decades, the population and growth scenarios projected for the Town going forward are expected to take a much slower pace than in previous years. The population projections that were presented in the 2003 Master Plan have been revised significantly downward in this plan to reflect serious downturns in the housing market.



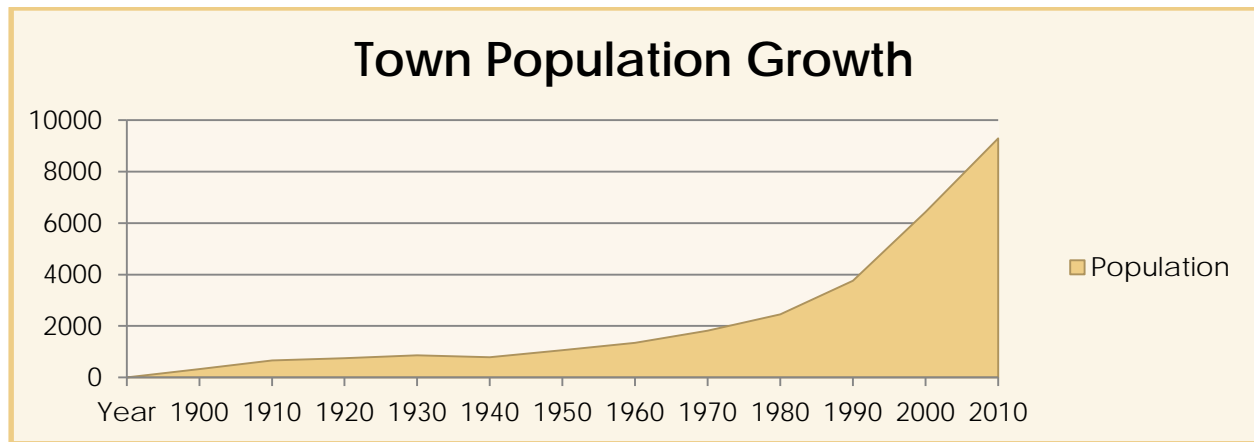
TWIN ARCH BUSINESS PARK

The increase in population in recent decades has contributed to a rise in the general business activity of the Town for service and retail such as grocery store chains, restaurants, convenience stores, daycare facilities and medical services. In addition, business transaction volume is boosted by special craft stores and gift shops. The steady increase in population growth and regional population has aided local and new businesses to locate here or expand within the designated commercially zoned areas of Town.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE TOWN POPULATION

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town population is 9,288 persons. Between 2000 and 2010, the Town grew at a tremendous 44%. Thirty-two percent of the Town population is under the age of 18, and 51.5% are female.

A snapshot of the 2010 U.S. Census estimate is provided in the chart on the next page. Please note the following statistics: There is a high homeownership percentage of 84.3%. The housing inventory includes 9.4% of the structures classified as multi-unit. The person per household rate is 2.95, very similar to 2000 which was about 3.0 persons per household. The per-capita income in 2010 dollars was \$35,776, with a median household income level of \$99,160, and only 4.6% of the Town households below the poverty level.



Year	Mount Airy	Average % Growth Rate per Year	Frederick County	Average % Growth Rate per Year	Carroll County	Average % Growth Rate per Year
1970	1,825		84,927		69,006	
1980	2,450	+3.4%	114,792	+3.5%	96,356	+3.9%
1990	3,892	+5.9%	150,208	+3.1%	123,372	+2.8%
2000	6,425	+6.5%	195,277	+3.0%	150,897	+2.2%
2010	9,288	+4.5%	233,385	+1.9%	167,134	+1.1%

<i>Town of Mount Airy 2010 U.S. Census Demographics</i>	
High School graduates 25 & older	93.30%
Bachelors' degree or Higher	38.90%
Mean Travel Time to Work	38.1 Minutes
Per Capita income in the past 12 Months	\$35,776
Median Household Income	\$99,160
Persons below the Poverty Level	4.60%
Housing Units	3,225
Homeownership Rate	84.30%
Housing in Multi-Unit Structures	9.40%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$408,500
Households	3,019
Persons per Household	2.95

Before the Town may predict the future of the resident population growth, it is important to take into account the historic population growth of the municipality and the historic growth of the counties that make up the Town.

The Town devised a low, middle, and high scenario of population growth as shown below. These population projections were done based on the average number of building permits issued by the Town over the last 10 years. In the previous decade, the Town's rate of issuing new residential building permits was much higher and reflected between 30 and 100 building permits per year. Due to the economic downturn and severe restrictions on groundwater appropriations, the projections from the 2003 Master Plan have been revised downward and the low scenario of fifteen residential units is most likely to occur over the next ten years.

<i>Growth Projection Scenarios (Population)</i>						
		Low		Medium		High
Year		(15 units/yr)		(20 units/yr)		(25 units/yr)
2010		9,288		9,288		9,288
2011		9,333		9,348		9,363
2012		9,378		9,408		9,438
2013		9,423		9,468		9,513
2014		9,468		9,528		9,588
2015		9,513		9,588		9,663
2020		9,738		9,888		10,038
2025		9,963		10,188		10,413
2030		10,188		10,488		10,788

These low case projections for housing unit growth would yield less than 1 percent growth per year, adding approximately 45 persons annually to the Town population assuming a household size of 3.0 persons. The low growth scenario is the most likely pace of residential growth that will yield Mount Airy's projected population. The projected build out capacity of residential units is 410 total units. Using the low scenario of residential growth at fifteen units per year, it would take approximately 30 years to reach the build out capacity. The projected population for the Town at build out would be a total of 10,518 persons.

In summary, the recent multi-year economic downturn, coupled with community preference, suggest that housing and population estimates for Mount Airy for the next 20 years will most likely follow the Low scenario. Availability of water and sewer infrastructure, economic conditions and changes in regulatory conditions all affect home building levels and the associated population. Population projections should be periodically checked against semi-annual estimates to see if the forecasts are providing an accurate guideline for planning and general land-use policies.



MOUNT AIRY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

TOWN EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The Town will continue to create opportunities for service-related businesses, but does not have the size or economic base to become a “regional employment center,” providing a range of professional and technical job opportunities for the resident population.

The Maryland Data Center prepared the below referenced chart which projects employment trends for the surrounding counties:

Jurisdiction	2010	2020	2030	2040
Frederick Co.	129,184	148,600	160,300	170,400
Carroll Co.	82,229	93,400	99,900	105,300
Howard Co.	190,553	237,770	259,400	281,100
Montgomery Co.	647,652	729,700	761,900	791,300
Washington Co.	77,738	88,800	93,600	95,700

United States. Maryland Department of Planning. State Data Center: Historical and Projected Total Jobs by Place of Work for Maryland's Jurisdictions. Web. Mar 2014. http://www.mdp.state.md.us/msdc/projection/Jobs/ProjJobTotals_March2014Revisions.pdf

The majority of the workforce living in the Town of Mount Airy is employed outside of Carroll and Frederick Counties. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Town commuting population was 4,361 persons. This is 46% of the total Town population of 9,288 people and 91% of the total working population of 4,769 people 16 and over. Local work opportunities are limited especially for higher skilled residents. Many residents have lengthy commutes to the southern and eastern job markets. The Town and Carroll County are looking at the possibility of establishing a local business park to attract additional jobs to the community. If this effort succeeds, some residents may reduce their commute time and distance.

Town residents have educational levels equivalent to or slightly above Maryland statewide levels. Ninety percent of the population 25 years and older have obtained a high school diploma or higher level of education.

Overall, the number and type of jobs being created in the community, mostly service and trade oriented, do not serve the resident or surrounding population with employment opportunities commensurate with the education level of the population. Consequently, the majority of the workforce in Mount Airy will continue to commute out of the immediate area for work.

The resident workforce of Mount Airy is employed in a wide variety of job classifications, but the majority of the Town residents' fall into two general categories. The first are those persons who are employed in professional, technical, and administrative jobs and the second category is

production, craft, and manufacturing jobs. The first classification of management, business, and science and arts occupations is 47% of the total employment categories for Town residents. The next highest job classification is sales and office occupations at 30%, service occupations at 11%, natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations at 9%, and production, transportation, and material moving occupations at 3%.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The local economy is primarily service-oriented, with a steady influx of entrepreneurs locating or expanding small businesses within the Town’s boundaries. Yet, a rise in general business activity also encompasses commercial industries such as grocery stores, restaurants, convenience stores, medical and hospital related services and daycare facilities. Based upon data from the North American Industry Classification System, the 2010 Census reflects a total of 741 business establishments are for the Mount Airy zip code. Although the proximity to the Baltimore-Washington D.C. job market remains an anchor and draw for various types of businesses, the economic downturn in the national and regional economy has contributed to a loss of some of the Town’s existing businesses.

LIMITATIONS OF TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE ON LOCAL BUSINESS GROWTH

The State of Maryland has mandated strict controls on water appropriations requiring the Town to restrict and prioritize development. Accordingly, the Town repealed and reenacted Town Code provisions that govern the allocation of available water and sewer capacity in 2013. The Town will continue its downtown revitalization as well as development of the major corridors leading into the downtown, thus maximizing the water allocation and sewer treatment capacity to have the most positive economic impact on the Town’s job base. Mixed-use developments may have merit, as they combine a smaller amount of living units in with commercial and retail uses, providing local employment.

SUMMARY

The Town of Mount Airy and the surrounding region will grow at a slower pace than in the previous twenty years. The close proximity of the Town to major highways will make it desirable as a locale for businesses, although water and sewer infrastructure will drive the pace of that development, as it will be dependent on the Town to provide essential but ultimately costly water and waste water improvements to keep the growth active.

