

BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

Introduction

In order to prepare an effective comprehensive plan, it is first necessary to fully understand the nature of the community, its people, and its problems. Through careful and thorough analysis of existing conditions, it is possible to identify development issues confronting the community and to suggest alternative courses of action to address any concerns.

The Background for Planning section of the Plan presents an overview of the Town's physical, demographic, and economic conditions as well as a brief history of the Town. This background section provides the foundation for the Plan by:

- Identifying the Town's regional setting;
- Describing the natural features in and around the Town;
- Summarizing demographic data; and,
- Summarizing housing and economic conditions.

Descriptive information about present conditions and expected trends provides a context for planning. It not only describes present issues, opportunities, and problems, but it suggests a likely future should current planning practices prevail.

Location

Mardela Springs is located in the northwestern portion of Wicomico County. More specifically, it is located approximately 12 miles northwest of the City of Salisbury and approximately 4 miles northwest of the neighboring Town of Hebron. The Town boundary abuts U.S. Route 50 and most all of the Town is located on the south side of this major highway. (See Map #1)

From Mardela Springs, trips are easily made to Salisbury, Cambridge, Easton, or Seaford, Delaware. Employment and retail commercial centers are nearby and traversed via major highways, such as U.S. Routes 50 and 13.

Historical Context

English settlers first moved to what would become Mardela Springs in 1664, drawn by good farmland, natural springs, and Barren Creek, a tidal waterway draining into the Nanticoke River. Tobacco farmers brought their crops, bound for export, to a tobacco inspection warehouse as early as 1704, and several grist and saw mills were built along Barren Creek. By the late 1700s, a hotel had been built near the natural springs, thereby supplying a convenient stopover for travelers.

The springs became a great tourist attraction in the 1840-1890 period and visitors from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond came to "take the waters." In the latter part of the 19th century, enterprising townsmen began bottling the water and shipping it to points up and down the mid-Atlantic coast. The Town had gone through several names by then, but in 1893 it finally settled on Mardela (Maryland/Delaware) Springs.

Farms in the area were mostly small and family-run. Aside from farming, other area businesses included shipbuilding, fruit and vegetable canning, and, in 1890, the railroad. In 1906, the Town was incorporated. However, by the mid 1900s, the tourism and commercial bustle had essentially begun to die off. The hotel had burned down and was not rebuilt; the bottled-water company closed, the trains had stopped operating, and most residents found jobs in nearby Salisbury or in Seaford, Delaware. As a result of these changes, Mardela Springs turned into the pleasant bedroom community it is today.

Present-day Mardela Springs is a special place with a unique character, culture, and history that distinguishes this community from other municipalities in the region and throughout the State. Local inhabitants constitute a well-knit community where most residents know one another by name. The Town's special qualities and distinctive personality are what residents find so appealing and therefore merits special attention for the future. This sense of uniqueness and pride of place are the guiding forces and strongest motivation for the goals, objectives, and recommendations specified in this Plan.

Population

Population Growth Trends

In 1903, the population of Mardela Springs was 370 people. The Town grew to a high level of 428 in 1950. Thereafter, the population remained less than 400. Mardela Springs experienced very low population growth between 1970 and 2000. In this thirty-year period, the Town's population grew from 356 to 364 persons, an increase of only 2.2 percent. (See Table #1)

Projections by the State of Maryland indicate that the population growth of Wicomico County will continue at a moderate pace. In 2000, the County population was 84,644 persons, an increase of 10,305 persons or 13.9 percent from 1990. By the year 2030, the population of Wicomico County is projected to be 117,550 persons for an overall increase of 39 percent from the 2000 population. The County is continuing to plan for an average population growth rate of about 1.0 to 1.2 percent per year.

Mardela Springs is the least populated of the eight municipalities in Wicomico County. The most likely reason is that the Town does not have a municipal sewerage system. Since public sewer is a major impetus in municipal growth and annexation requests, it is highly unlikely that Mardela Springs will experience any significant future population growth absent a centralized public sewerage system.

Table #1
Percent Share of Wicomico County's Population
Town of Mardela Springs
1970 - 2000

Mardela Springs Percent Share of Wicomico County's Population				
1970	1980	1990	2000	2008*
356	320	360	364	357
0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%

(*Estimate)
 Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population Distribution by Age

In 2000, the Town of Mardela Springs population distribution by age was fairly comparable to that of both Wicomico County and the State of Maryland. The median age of all residents within the Town was 34.3 years of age compared to 35.8 years for Wicomico County and 36.0 years for the State. The Town did have a slightly larger population share in the 5-17 age category of 22.8% compared to the County's 18.5% and the State's 18.9%. The largest percentage of the Town's population was found in the 25-44 age bracket, which accounted for 30.2% of the Town's residents. By comparison, 28.0% of Wicomico County's and 31.4% of Maryland's population fell into this category. (See Table #2)

**Table #2
Population Distribution by Age
Town of Mardela Springs
2000**

Age	<u>Mardela Springs</u>		<u>Wicomico</u>	<u>State of</u>
	Number	Percent	<u>County</u>	<u>Maryland</u>
			Percent	Percent
Under 5	23	6.3	6.3	6.7
5-17	83	22.8	18.5	18.9
18-24	30	8.2	11.8	8.5
25-44	110	30.2	28.0	31.4
45-64	75	20.6	22.6	23.1
65 and over	43	11.8	12.8	11.3
Total persons	364	100.0	100.0	100.0
Median age		34.3	35.8	36.0

Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census

Education

According to the 2000 Census, the percentage of high school graduates in Mardela Springs (33.6%) was only slightly lower than that of the County (34.4%), but significantly higher than that of the State (26.7%). In 2000, approximately 76% of Mardela Springs' residents over the age of 25 were high school graduates or higher. This percentage is lower than both the County and State percentages of approximately 81% and 84% respectively. Additionally, in terms of

post-high school education, 12% of the Town's population attained their bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to about 22% of the County's population and 31% of the State's. (See Table #3)

**Table #3
Educational Attainment
Town of Mardela Springs
2000**

	<u>Mardela Springs</u>		<u>Wicomico</u>	<u>State of</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>County</u> <u>Percent</u>	<u>Maryland</u> <u>Percent</u>
Persons 25 Years and Over	238	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 9 th Grade	9	3.8	6.0	5.1
9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma	48	20.2	13.4	11.1
High School Graduate (incl. GED)	80	33.6	34.4	26.7
Some College, No Degree	70	29.4	19.4	20.3
Associate Degree	2	0.8	5.0	5.3
Bachelor's Degree	24	10.1	13.7	18.0
Graduate or Professional Degree	5	2.1	8.2	13.4
High School Grad. Or Higher	181	76.1	80.7	83.8
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	29	12.2	21.9	31.4

Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census

Income

Income levels in Mardela Springs are slightly lower than those in the County, but are significantly lower than the income levels in the State as a whole. (See Table #4) According to the U.S. Census, the median income for all households in Mardela in 2000 was \$37,500. This figure is approximately 4% less than the County's median income of \$39,035 and about 29% less than the State's median income of \$52,868.

The largest percentage of the Town's population earned between \$35,000 and \$49,999; which accounted for about 28% of all households. By comparison, approximately, 18% of all County households and 15% of all State households fell into this same income category.

**Table #4
Household Income Characteristics
Town of Mardela Springs
1999**

Income	<u>Mardela Springs</u>		<u>Wicomico County</u>	<u>State of Maryland</u>
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total Households	142	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than \$10,000	6	4.2	9.0	6.9
\$10,000-\$14,999	11	7.7	7.4	4.2
\$15,000-\$24,999	23	16.2	14.8	9.5
\$25,000-\$34,999	25	17.6	13.8	10.7
\$35,000-\$49,999	39	27.5	17.9	15.4
\$50,000-\$74,999	22	15.5	19.7	21.6
\$75,000-\$99,999	10	7.0	9.0	13.6
\$100,000-\$149,999	6	4.2	5.6	11.6
\$150,000-\$199,999	0	0.0	1.4	3.5
\$200,000 or more	0	0.0	1.3	3.0
Median income	\$37,500		\$39,035	\$52,868
Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning				
Source: U.S. Census Bureau				

Employment - Labor Force

According to the 2000 Census, a total of 162 persons or approximately 56.8% of all persons over the age of sixteen in Mardela Springs were in the labor force. This percentage was somewhat lower than that of both the County (67.7%) and the State (67.8%).

The Town's labor force statistics also reveal that about 75% of the males and 41% of the females were in the labor force. Again these figures are lower than the corresponding percentages for females in the County and State labor force, but Mardela Springs' percentages for males in the workforce are slightly higher than that of the County or State; 75.4% compared to 73.6% and 73.3% respectively.

Only about 4% of Mardela Springs' labor force was unemployed in 2000 compared to 5.5% for the County and 4.7% for the State. (See Table #5)

**Table #5
Labor Force Characteristics
Town of Mardela Springs
2000**

	<u>Mardela Springs</u>	<u>Wicomico County</u>	<u>State of Maryland</u>
Persons 16 Years and Over	285	66,207	4,085,942
Male	130	30,749	1,935,129
Female	155	35,458	2,150,813
In Labor Force	162	44,815	2,769,525
Male	98	22,633	1,418,491
Female	64	22,182	1,351,034
Percent in Labor Force	56.8%	67.7%	67.8%
Male	75.4%	73.6%	73.3%
Female	41.3%	62.6%	62.8%
Percent Unemployed	4.3%	5.5%	4.7%
Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning			
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census			

Employment - Industry Distribution

Table #6 provides an overview of employment by industry for Mardela Springs based upon the 2000 Census.

The educational, health, and social services industry was the largest employment category for Town residents with 26 residents or 16.88% of the Town’s labor force employed in this field. The second highest category was the retail trade industry with 20 residents or 12.99% followed by a close third of the manufacturing industry employing 19 residents or 12.34% of the Town’s 2000 population.

The top three industries combined for 65 residents or approximately 42% of the Town’s labor force in 2000. (See Table #6)

**Table #6
Distribution of Employment by Industry
Town of Mardela Springs
2000**

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, and Mining	0	0.00
Construction	15	9.74
Manufacturing	19	12.34
Wholesale Trade	7	4.55
Retail Trade	20	12.99
Transportation & Warehousing, and Utilities	9	5.84
Information	0	0.00
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing	13	8.44
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administration, and Waste Management Services	12	7.79
Educational, Health and Social Services	26	16.88
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services	15	9.74
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	7	4.55
Public Administration	11	7.14
Total Employed Civilian Population	154	100.00
Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning		
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census		

Housing Characteristics

There were a total of 159 housing units in Mardela Springs according to the 2000 Census. Of this total, 135 or approximately 85% were occupied; of which 98 or 73% were owner occupied and 37 or 27% were rented. (See Table #7) The vast majority (94%) of the occupied units were detached single-family units.

Vacancy rates have risen substantially over the past decade from 1% in 1990 to 15% in 2000. This compares to a 6% vacancy rate for the County and an 8% vacancy rate for the State.

In 2000, median housing unit value in Mardela Springs was \$74,800 compared to \$94,500 for the County and \$146,000 for the State. Median gross rent for the Town was \$525 as compared to \$567 and \$689 for the County and State respectively.

Table #7
Selected Housing Characteristics
Town of Mardela Springs
2000

	<u>Mardela Springs</u>		<u>Wicomico County</u>	<u>State of Maryland</u>
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total Housing Units	159	100.0	100.0	100.0
Occupied Housing Units	135	84.9	93.7	92.3
Owner Occupied Units	98	72.6	66.5	67.7
Renter Occupied Units	37	27.4	33.5	32.3
Vacant Housing Units	24	15.1	6.3	7.7
Units in Structure				
Total Housing Units	164	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 Unit Detached	154	93.9	72.9	51.2
1 Unit Attached	4	2.4	3.1	21.0
2 Units	1	0.6	2.9	2.1
3 or 4 Units	2	1.2	2.5	2.9
5 to 9 Units	0	0.0	4.1	5.6
10 to 19 Units	0	0.0	4.5	7.9
20 or More Units	0	0.0	2.3	7.2
Mobile Home, Boat, RV, Van, etc	3	1.8	7.7	2.0
Value				
Specified Owner Occupied Units	96	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than \$50,000	16	16.7	7.3	3.8
\$50,000-\$99,999	70	72.9	48.3	19.3
\$100,000-\$149,999	10	10.4	23.8	29.4
\$150,000-\$199,999	0	0.0	12.4	20.9
\$200,000-\$299,999	0	0.0	6.1	16.1
\$300,000-\$499,999	0	0.0	1.4	7.8
\$500,000-\$999,999	0	0.0	0.6	2.4
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0	0.1	0.4
Median (\$)	\$74,800		\$94,500	\$146,000

Gross Rent Specified Renter Occupied				
Units				
Units	43	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than \$200	0	0.0	4.4	5.1
\$200 to \$299	4	9.3	5.7	3.6
\$300 to \$499	9	20.9	26.0	14.2
\$500 to \$699	17	39.5	41.1	33.6
\$700 to \$999	2	4.7	14.2	24.3
\$1,000 to \$1,499	0	0.0	3.1	11.9
\$1,500 or more	0	0.0	0.7	3.1
No Cash Rent	11	25.6	4.9	4.2
Median Rent (\$)	\$525		\$567	\$689

Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census

The housing stock in Mardela Springs is considerably older than that of both the County and State, with about 84% of the Town's housing units built at least 49 years ago. (See Table #8) No new housing units have been built since at least 1994, making all existing units in the Town at least 16 years old.

**Table #8
Age of Housing
Town of Mardela Springs
2000**

	<u>Mardela Springs</u>		<u>Wicomico County</u>	<u>State of Maryland</u>
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total Housing Units	164	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year Structure was Built:				
1999 to March 2000	0	0	2.1	2.0
1995 to 1998	0	0	8.0	6.4
1990 to 1994	4	2.4	10.6	8.4
1980 to 1989	6	3.7	17.8	17.2
1970 to 1979	2	1.2	18.5	17.2
1960 to 1969	14	8.5	12.3	15.1
1940 to 1959	22	13.4	17.7	21.3
1939 or earlier	116	70.7	13.0	12.5

Prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census