

The Future: Keeping Easton Green and Viable

One thing that hasn't changed in the 300 years since Easton was founded: residents love to gather outside, whether it is having a cup of coffee downtown with a friend or throwing a ball or flying a kite in the park. Three Easton projects are in the works to create unique new outdoor gathering places for local residents to enjoy for the next three centuries.

Easton Market Square

At the north end of Washington Street, across from Talbottown in Easton, there is a bustling new market, called Easton Market Square. Alive with painted murals, flowering plants, and café tables, residents might think for a moment they are on the back streets of a European city. Patterned after the central market concept of such highly visible

re-establish that tradition, the effects are pervasive. As the hub of any community, markets provide the arena for people's lives to come together in a lively setting for shopping, browsing and social events." The aim of the project is to provide a new shopping scene and to build on the already successful weekend farmers' market by expanding the offerings and operating continually - throughout the year and during the week. Both enterprises are carrying on in the tradition of Easton's original market that burned in 1878 and they harken back to a time in America when food shopping was integrated into village commerce.

Lehr is no stranger to small towns or to introducing new development concepts. He grew up in Annapolis and later

can shop and socialize. Among the vendors at the market are Arbec Orchids, Chez G. Crepes and Confections, Davon Crest Produce, Harrison's Liquor Store, Joshua Tree, Just Plain Joe, Native Scapes Landscaping, Neopol Smoked Savories, Nuts to You, Praline Patisserie, Seaberry Farms, Shore Gourmet and Jean McHale.

Lehr comments, "Our criteria for the merchants are that they are local, unique and fill a vacant niche in the community's offerings." The Market is soon to open Brasserie Brightwell, a new indoor and outdoor restaurant owned and operated by 208 Talbot, a popular St. Michaels restaurant. The restaurant will be located on the Washington Street side of the building also occupied by Harrison's Liquors, a building that in the past once housed a buggy factory, automotive works and a car dealership.

"Easton Market Square is going to make the Town of Easton an even better place to live," adds Kathleen Witte of Easton, Lehr's partner in the project. Kathleen worked with Lehr previously as project manager for Williams Jackson Ewing on Union Station in Washington, D.C.

She adds, "While the economy has slowed us down a bit, we are seeing this as a great opportunity to get local and regional vendors involved in the project. We are continually upgrading the site. Residents will have to stop by often to see our many new offerings."

For further information, visit www.lehrjacksonassociates.com/easton/market-square.

Easton Point

While Talbot County boasts more than 500 miles of shoreline, the Town of Easton currently has no public access to the waterfront. This may soon change as community members explore uses for 11 acres owned by the Town of Easton at the end of Glenwood Avenue. This waterfront parcel previously housed the town's Public Works Department before the department moved to its current location off Glebe Road.

According to Megan Cook, Council Member for Ward 4 in Easton, "This property has tremendous potential. It would be a welcoming community space offering waterfront access to all of our citizens."

Megan has helped to organize the citizen group evaluating the property for public use. The Easton Point Group is comprised of about 15 members representing a wide range of interests - education, the watershed, and private landowners.

been allocated by Elm Street Development, the developer of Easton Village, for the footbridge, as it is part of the development plan. Easton Village has also created a public waterfront park that is slated to be deeded to the Town of Easton in the near future. Other considerations would be how to incorporate the plan with the entire acreage at Easton Point.

Megan adds, "It is important to keep this area a green zone." Lorraine Gould, Director for



Plein Air artists found Easton Market Square the perfect backdrop during this past year's Plein Air Festival in Easton.

Photograph courtesy of Lehr Jackson Associates.

American urban markets as Faneuil Hall in Boston, Grand Central Market in New York City, Union Station in Washington, D.C., Suburban Square in Philadelphia and Belvedere Square in Baltimore, Easton Market Square is a new year-round market featuring local and regional purveyors offering organic produce, fresh flowers and gourmet food items.

Lehr Jackson, the principal and founder of Lehr Jackson Associates, the project's developer said, "Historically, markets have been at the heart of the retail experience in every culture. When towns

worked with Jim Rouse of The Rouse Company, the developer of Easton's Talbottown Shopping Center. After leaving the Rouse Company, Lehr was the co-founder and principal in Williams Jackson Ewing, a leader in urban planning and revitalization in such cities as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. In these projects, historic landmarks were resurrected and their neighborhoods were revitalized.

Easton Market Square includes numerous stores and sidewalk cafes with a small-town feel where local residents



The property outlined in red is the 11-acre Easton Point Park, located at the end of Glenwood Avenue on the Tred Avon River outside of Easton. Photograph courtesy of The Town of Easton.

Because the site was previously a landfill, its wells and soil are currently being monitored by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The group hopes to get results back from the monitoring in late March to determine the level of cleanup that will need to be done on the site.

Among the considerations for the site is to build a pedestrian footbridge across the Tred Avon River, which would connect the Easton Point site to Easton Village. Funds have

Parks and Recreation for the Town of Easton, agrees, stating, "Land is a precious commodity in Easton, so it is important to continue to study the demand for various park and recreation uses. This property would allow residents to experience the waterfront right at their back door."

For further information about the Easton Point project, contact Lorraine Gould, at 410-822-2525 or visit www.town-eastonmd.com.

Keeping Easton Green... continued

Resolution Trust Property

Easton's RTC Property, known to some as "Easton's Central Park," is another hidden gem on the outskirts of town. This 58-acre parcel of land was acquired by the Town of Easton in 1996 after the developer of Chapel Farms, near Route 50 and Chapel Road, went under and the bank that acquired the property failed. Terms of the sale of the property required that the land must be used primarily for recreational or open space purposes.

Since 1996, the property has been studied and a variety of recommendations have been

received, including creating a regional or central park to serve the town as a whole or to have the land integrated into the surrounding developments with a small portion set aside for traditional park purposes. Because of these conflicting recommendations, an advisory board was formed in 2003 that solicited community input on uses for the site. Recommendations from a survey conducted by the board offered a wide array of uses for the site, including an amphitheater, a pavilion, recreation areas, a dog park, playgrounds, and nature trails connecting to a living

classroom and arboretum.

Most recently, in January 2010, the Town of Easton decided to re-establish a task force to re-examine the issue and recommendations to date since no consensus had occurred on the site's future use.

Kelley Malone, Council Member for Ward One, ran her campaign on resurrecting this park issue. She comments, "Many people don't even know this parcel of lands exists. With childhood obesity on the rise, national park attendance declining, and the stressors of modern life, it becomes increasingly important to have public



Neopol Smoked Savories inside Easton Market Square offers flavorful gourmet seafood entrees and appetizers for every occasion. Photograph courtesy of Lehr Jackson Associates.

gathering places for play, relaxation, and opportunities to explore our natural environment."

Kelley encourages local residents to come to a public planning session on April 17 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Easton High School Cafeteria to share their ideas about uses they would like to see for the RTC property. The project will be phased in with Phase One being implemented over the next two years, with Phases Five and Six being implemented over the next five to seven years. Progress in each phase depends on identifying funding sources.

Lorraine Gould, comments, "The RTC property is a gem, the Tanyard Branch Stream on the property is beautiful. We need to keep it pristine for residents to enjoy for many years to come."

She adds, "With both of these properties, we need to come together and carefully

weigh the needs brought forth."

According to the current draft of the Town of Easton's Comprehensive Plan, a green infrastructure refers to the system of parks and open spaces in a community, as well as linkages or connections between these areas. The Plan goes on to say that a community's green infrastructure supports its ecological functions and is important for making communities more viable.

According to Maureen Scott-Taylor, Director of Economic Development for the Town of Easton, "We want to maintain good paying jobs, a healthy retail environment and a place for people to enjoy leisure activities. These projects have all three."

For further information about the RTF project, contact Lorraine Gould, at 410-822-2525 or visit www.town-eastonmd.com.



Seaberry Farms offers an array of fresh, affordable bouquets daily. Photograph courtesy of Lehr Jackson Associates.

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