



# Message from the Executive Director



## Essex Revitalization Fact Sheet

### What is the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce?

The Essex-Middle River Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1948 by 16 merchants from the Essex business district. This nonprofit organization later changed its name to Essex-Middle River-White Marsh Chamber of Commerce and, today, it has over 170 members and trades as the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce. Seventy years since its founding, the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber continues in its mission to promote an economic environment which attracts new businesses while allowing established business to prosper. The Chamber is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in eastern Baltimore County by reinvesting its resources in all phases of community life.

As a long-time advocate for responsible development in eastern Baltimore County, the Chamber has lent its support for many projects, including the new developments of Crossroads and Tradeport Atlantic and the revitalization of areas like Essex. In May of 2003, approximately 100 members of the Chamber and the Essex-Middle River community met and worked with an Urban Design Assistance Team (UDAT) to create a grand vision for Essex. Much was accomplished, but there's much more that still needs to be done.

### What is the Eastern Baltimore County Task Force?

Two years ago, a Core Group of Community Leaders began meeting at the Chamber office to address issues in Essex, including vacant homes and businesses, rat infestation, drug use, crime, graffiti, trash, tree and shrub overgrowth, and other problems. From these initial meetings, a new committee was created in 2017 by the Chamber called the Eastern Baltimore County Task Force. The idea behind this small group of volunteers was to combine efforts and build on the success of local groups like Back River Restoration Committee and the Core Group of Community Leaders to help revitalize Essex.

Task Force leadership includes co-chairmen Cliff O'Connell from Cliff's Hi-Tech Auto Body Shop and Sam Weaver from Weaver's Marine Service, Andy Wasmer of J&H Tires, Jillian O'Connell from Cliff's Hi-Tech Auto Body Shop, Sharon Kihn from the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce, Bob Romadka, Earl Oxley from The AIMS Group, and John Gontrum from Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP. Laurie Hay and Krystle Patchak from Baltimore County's Department of Planning have been of tremendous assistance and are regular participants in Task Force meetings.

### What is being done by these groups to help revitalize Essex?

Over the last year, the Eastern Baltimore County Task Force

has worked with leaders and elected officials from local and state government to improve conditions in downtown Essex for local businesses and residents. Baltimore County placed new liners in the downtown trash receptacles and began a rat attack program, which includes a treatment program, an additional trash pick-up, public education and enforcement of County regulations. Overgrown and dead trees and shrubs were removed, creating a pathway for emergency vehicles to drive down the alleys and enabling the County to fix trip-and-fall hazards due to uprooted sidewalks and hazardous grated areas. Businesses and homeowners are painting over graffiti and ensuring that their properties stay free of trash and garbage, which can find its way into public areas and waterways. The Task Force believes it is critical to continue to actively pursue results in this first phase of issue identification and resolution. However, they also believe it's time to begin phase two—to identify and highlight the opportunities in downtown Essex by improving the streetscape. "Streetscape" is a term used to describe the natural and built quality of a street, including the roadway, sidewalks, and adjoining building fronts.

Earlier this year, Baltimore County's Office of Planning awarded the Chamber a \$10,000 Commercial Revitalization Action Grant to fix brickwork and benches on the cement planters and bus stop in the business district and place planters with evergreens and flowers along the sidewalk. This work will be completed this fall. In addition, the Task Force assisted Baltimore County's Planning Department in applying for a Sustainable Community designation through the State of Maryland. It was announced in August that downtown Essex and the surrounding area were awarded that designation. This designation provides access to a comprehensive package of financial and other resources that support strategies for community development, revitalization and sustainability. The Chamber has applied for a 2019 Community Legacy Grant and a 2019 Operating Assistance Grant through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to expand the streetscape project. Grant awards will be announced later this fall.

### What is the Neighborhood Design Center?

Founded in 1968, the Neighborhood Design Center is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of healthy, equitable neighborhoods through community-engaged design and planning services. By providing the tools, expertise, and partnerships necessary to realize neighborhood visions, they support broad participation in the evolution of the built environment.

NDC Projects are collaborations between residents, community stakeholders, design professionals, local government agencies, fellow nonprofits, and their staff. Together they lay the

groundwork for improving blocks, renovating parks and school grounds, reclaiming abandoned structures for community use, and revitalizing commercial districts. They believe that these unlikely partnerships provide mutual benefit, offering invaluable on-the-job training and exposure to members of the design community and positioning historically disinvested neighborhoods to attract future investment.

NDC received a 2019 grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to work with the Chamber and the Task Force to engage Essex stakeholders in discussions about the Eastern Blvd. main street area and identify and prioritize potential streetscape improvement projects. This process kicked off on Essex Day 2018. There will be workshops and meetings through the fall and winter, with a report on prioritized project ideas expected in spring 2019.

### How can you help?

Years ago, the residents and business owners of Essex were proud of their beautiful waterfront community and were eager to tell visitors that their town was the "Gateway to the Chesapeake." Many of these individuals still live and work in this community and want it to be a place where future generations choose to raise their families. There is still much work to be done, yet there is hope, as the number of involved citizens and businesses continues to increase. Individuals who see something or someone suspicious are saying something. Homeowners and businesses are beautifying their properties and picking up trash that pollutes our neighborhoods and draws rats. Community associations have offered to help the Task Force in implementing streetscape projects.

What ideas do you have? What projects are you and your neighbors willing to complete? The Task Force wants to hear your stories and can use your help. Please join them for one of their free upcoming Community Workshops and tell them your vision for Essex. The dates and locations are as follows:

<b>Tuesday, October 16, 2018</b> <b>7:00-9:00 p.m.</b> <b>Hawks Pleasure Club</b> <b>430 Riverside Drive</b> <b>Baltimore, MD 21221</b>	<b>Wednesday, October 24, 2018</b> <b>6:30-8:30 p.m.</b> <b>Baltimore County Public Library</b> <b>Essex Branch</b> <b>1110 Eastern Boulevard</b> <b>Essex, MD 21221</b>
---	---

Questions? Contact the Eastern Baltimore County Task Force at [ebctf@chesapeakechamber.org](mailto:ebctf@chesapeakechamber.org).

Sharon Kihn  
Executive Director

## UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Please join us for the following upcoming Chamber events. Additional details and registration information can be found on our website – [www.chesapeakechamber.org](http://www.chesapeakechamber.org).

### Baltimore County Executive Candidate Forum

with John Olszewski, Jr. and Al Redmer, Jr.  
Tuesday, October 2, 8:00-9:30 a.m.  
Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel  
\$25 for Chamber Members, \$35 at door; \$40 for Non-Members, \$50 at door  
Breakfast included

### Martin State Airport Meet & Greet Networking Event

with Chesapeake Gateway, Baltimore County and Harford County Chambers of Commerce  
Thursday, October 4, 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
Martin State Airport  
\$15 for Chamber Members, \$20 for Non-Members

### Preparing for Jobs of the Future: A Shared Task

Tuesday, October 16, 7:30-9:00 a.m.  
Kenwood High School  
\$15 for Chamber Members, \$20 for Non-Members  
Breakfast included

The Chamber currently has openings for sponsors for our 2018-2019 events. Sponsor packages offer many benefits and range in price from \$125 for a literature table to \$5,000 for Titanium sponsors. If you are interested in sponsoring a Chamber event, please contact Sharon Kihn at the Chamber for details.

THANK YOU FOUNDATION SPONSOR



**CHESAPEAKE GATEWAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**405 Williams Court, Suite 108, Middle River, MD 21220**  
**443-317-8763 • Fax: 443-317-8772**  
**[info@chesapeakechamber.org](mailto:info@chesapeakechamber.org) [www.chesapeakechamber.org](http://www.chesapeakechamber.org)**

September, 2018