

## Fairbank

### Introduction

Fairbank Village is a former maritime settlement bounded on the north by farmland on the south by private and State woodlands, and on all other sides by water.

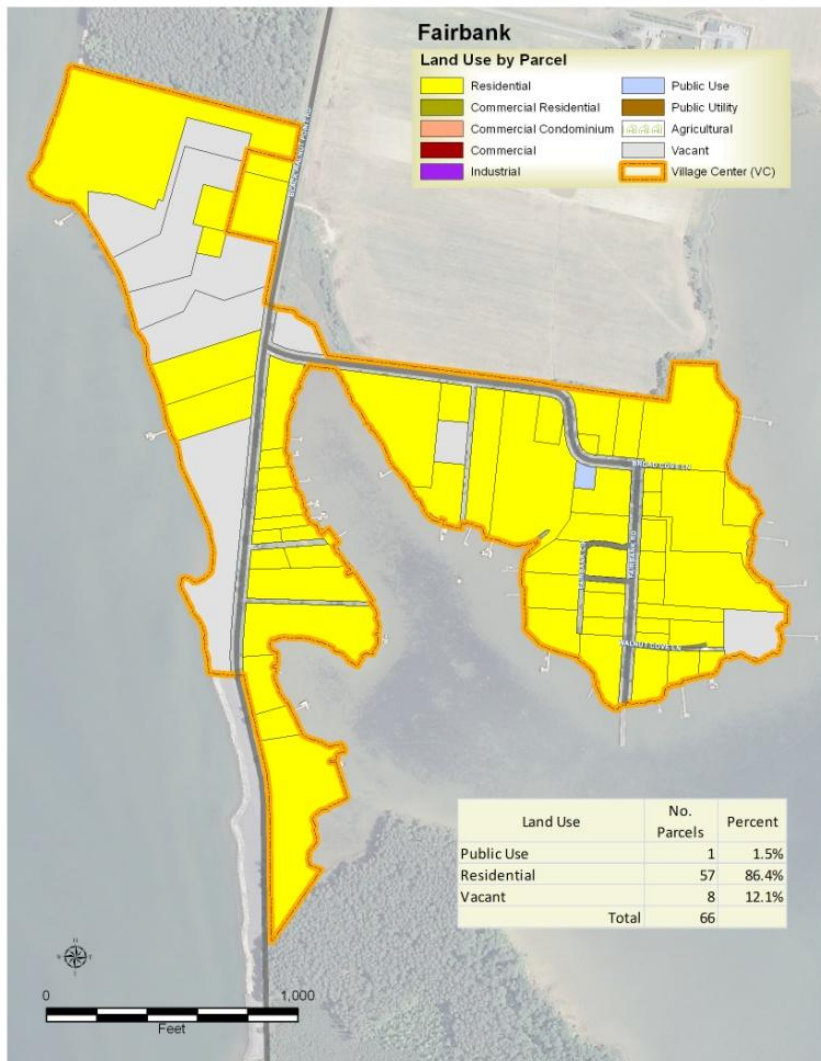
Tilghman Island Road runs south to Fairbank Village. At the intersection with Fairbank Road, it becomes Black Walnut Point Road and continues to the south, ending at the entrance to the Black Walnut Point Natural Resources Management Area.

Fairbank Road runs to the east, turns south, then east, then south again until it comes to what is known locally as Fairbank Wharf.

Mature trees line Fairbank Road and the oldest homes are nestled closely together. Many date from the 1910s, in an age when motor vehicles were few and watermen walked from their homes to their boats. A neighborhood burial ground near the road serves as a reminder of generations past.

### Land Uses

There are 55 homes in Fairbank Village, 33 of which are in the historic central region. At present, only about 40% of these homes serve as the owners' principal



residences. The others are weekend or vacation homes; two are rental properties.

In the past, Fairbank boasted several stores, a marine railway, two canneries, and a post office. No businesses have been located in Fairbank since 1980, however. The only commercial activities are a few modest home-businesses that are not open to the public. Several properties remain undeveloped.

Fairbank consists of two distinct parts. The older historic central region lies on a peninsula jutting into Black Walnut Cove.

The other part lies along Black Walnut Point Road.

#### Historic Central Region

The historic region of Fairbank is surrounded by water on three sides. The street is narrow with three 90-degree bends and no sidewalks. The road ends at the Fairbank Wharf.

One house, with each part numbered, came up the Bay on a scow when Hollands Island began to wash away around 1900. Another, the Walter Weber House, was built in 1885 by the local boat-builder and blacksmith as a wedding present to his wife.

#### Black Walnut Point

The Black Walnut Point Road Region evolved along different lines from the central region, but is considered part of the Fairbank community. This region itself is in two parts: the older Cove-side homes on the east side of the road and the more recent Bay-side homes on the west side.

Two Cove-side structures are of considerable historical significance:

The Lewis Cummings House is the oldest in the village and may be the oldest surviving



structure on Tilghman's Island. It appears on the Bache map of 1848. The Craig House is one of seven surviving "Tilghman" or "W" houses. Both properties are on the Maryland inventory of historic buildings.

In recent times, shorelines have been protected and homes have been built all along the Bay side. Two homes have been built and several undeveloped lots remain.

#### Planning Objectives

*Don't fix what isn't broken.*

Fairbank Village is pretty nice the way it is. The present mix of house styles and sizes, from various periods, is generally pleasing; none is overwhelming. Residents do not wish to see it prettified or manicured or redesigned.

*Preserve what is worth preserving.*

The homes along Fairbank Road present a "streetscape" with a special charm that gives visitors the impression of having

stepped back in time. Despite the many additions and improvements, this street remains reminiscent of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and as such is worth preserving. No one wants a



neighborhood “planning committee” to oversee house designs, colors, and other features. Any preservation implies some degree of restraint, of course.

**Action**

Adopt the following design guidelines for property owners along Fairbank Road:

- Existing homes should be retained and preserved as long as possible.
- When re-development or in-fill does occur, new structures should be comparable in size with the existing homes.
- No house should dwarf its neighbors.
- New construction and remodeling should make use of the architectural styles, setbacks, materials, and colors currently found in the village.
- No strict prescriptive standards or local review boards should be established. It is hoped buildings will be preserved by current and future owners.



*Maintain the village as residential-only*

Fairbank has no significant commercial activity and none is desired. The narrow streets are unsuitable for traffic or for large numbers of customers or delivery vehicles. Certain home businesses that

create no traffic or noise would fit in with the residential nature, however.

**Action**

Since land use is permitted by zoning, petition the County Council to switch Fairbank zoning from VC to an alternative permitting fewer commercial activities.

*Address the septic-sewer problem*

Fairbank village needs to be connected to the nearby Tilghman wastewater treatment plant, so that homes can remain side-by-side on narrow lots, or even be

expanded, without contaminating the Bay as a result of overloaded or inadequate septic systems. We are told that a connection is possible with a low-pressure pipeline and one booster pumping station.

**Action**

Request that Public Works include the Fairbank sewer project in all future budget requests until it is approved by the County Council and built.

*Restore access to the Cove*

Black Walnut Cove is now so silted in that only the shallowest-draft commercial and recreational vessels can make use of it. The federal channel and the county wharf no longer provide a safe haven or landing place in the event of marine emergencies

in the extensive open waters at the mouth of the Choptank River.

Action

Request help from Public Works to identify funding sources to share the costs of a dredging program, whose primary objective would be to clear the channel from marker “1” to the end of the county wharf.

*Make qualitative improvements in the vicinity*

Residents made a number of suggestions for future consideration. These included:

- Improve traffic control on Black Walnut Point Road especially on weekend evenings;

- Create safe exercise pathways for joggers, walkers, and bikers;
- Reduce the asphalt expanse at the Black Walnut Point Fishing Area;
- Encourage the planting of native shrubs and trees throughout the village;
- Make better use of the Black Walnut Point Natural Resources Management Area.

Although these improvements cannot be mandated by a village plan they are recorded here for future reference. Many would require the approval and assistance of one or more government agencies, as well as dedicated work and cooperation by Fairbank Village residents.

