


# America250 – #8 – Havre de Grace in the 21st Century

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 bahoukas.net/america250-havre-de-grace-in-the-21st-century

admin

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We frequently look back and comment that ‘earlier times were better.’ But quite often that’s selective memory and seldom accurate. As we’ve shared in the previous America250 / HavredeGrace250 posts, every century had its good points and its bad – and there was always change!

Today we’re a quarter of the way through the 21st century! Again, we have good points and bad – and *plenty* of change!

## Let us consider some of the changes:

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- During the war of 1812, the British destroyed 2/3s of the town. Population was about 400 people. Our city's population from the 2020 data is 14,806. [from the Havre de Grace Comprehensive Plan \(2025\)](#). In 2026 we are probably in the 16,000 range.
- A flourish of museums – both non-profit and private including:

### NON-PROFIT MUSEUMS

- 1979 [Steppingstone Museum](#)
- 1980s [Concord Point Lighthouse](#)
- 1982 [Susquehanna Museum at the Lockhouse](#)
- 1986 [HdG Decoy Museum](#)
- 1990s [HdG Maritime Museum](#)
- 1994 [Skipjack Martha Lewis](#) – hopefully returning soon
- 2000 [Restoration of Concord Point Lightkeeper's House](#)
- 2018 [Havre de Grace Colored School Museum and Cultural Center](#)

### PRIVATE MUSEUMS:

- [Bahoukas Beer MuZeum](#)
- [Bahoukas History MuZeum](#)
- [Washington Street Books Entertainment Museum](#)

### – **Coming soon:**

- \* Museum at Currier House
- \* Museum at [Harmer's Town](#) \* Oddities Museum

In addition to the museums listed above, we salute the decade of effort **MARITA O'CONNELL** put into her site, [Historic Havre de Grace](#). She lists over 450 buildings throughout Havre de Grace with photos, history of ownership, and many architectural and historic details of interest. It was a labor of love. When she retired and moved to Philly, near her children, George took it over to manage it.

## DOWNTOWN

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As interstates crossed the country, many small towns and cities were bypassed. Communities had to adapt once again. It was no different for Havre de Grace. Following the interstates, malls were built. Often the malls led people away from small towns and cities. The weekly visits to stop at the local shops and pay your grocery, drycleaning, and other bills became a

thing of the past. Movie theaters placed in the malls caused people to use their local theaters less.

But fear not! Small town America thrived, in many instances, due to the creative business owners (and dreamers). Although there are more 'new' businesses than the decades old department stores, grocers, etc. that once filled our communities, downtown is far from dead. Yes, businesses come and go more frequently. But, it's the essence of our country – the belief that one can start a business and thrive. It's not easy, but it can be very rewarding. The energy of the new business is felt by other businesses in the community, rekindling their original dream. And the community benefits from the new offerings.

With these new changes, Havre de Grace welcomed several new organizations:

**2002 [Havre de Grace Tourism](#)** was established at the Visitors Center, then located on Pennington Avenue, with Wini Roche as manager



- **2005 – [Havre de Grace designated as a Maryland Main Street community](#)**
- **2008 – [Havre de Grace becomes an Arts and Entertainment District](#)**

The [HdG Opera House](#) was renovated offering a great venue for smaller performances (200+) that include speakers, musicians, and theater. The [Star Centre](#) offers a larger venue (700+) for the arts plus 2 gyms and a dozen multi-purpose rooms. Both are state-of-the-art facilities.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT 21st CENTURY HAVRE de GRACE?

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Visit our posts and interviews related to the *Lighthouse to Lockhouse* publication, *Havre de Grace ~ the meeting place* magazine, and [interviews](#) of various citizens. The tourism publications shared information about our businesses, great stories about our local citizens, and showcase the many services offered in our community. They also highlighted a calendar of events.

<https://bahoukas.net/ltl-and-hdg-the-meeting-place/>

<https://bahoukas.net/category/categories/interviews>

We even found snapshots of the website Ellie did for her publications in the [WAYBACK machine](#). Many of the links still work! Even the 'site links' work on many of the pages. It was a free site that kept folks up-to-date between issues of the *Havre de Grace Magazine*. As many business as possible were listed on the site, whether they advertised in the magazine or not. She wanted folks to come to Havre de Grace to visit!

The beautiful part of the 21st century in Havre de Grace is how many local businesses were entertaining the arts and tourism before we had official city departments for them. Groups such as the *Havre de Grace Arts Commission* were offering Concerts in the Park (Tydings) on Friday evenings throughout the summer – free to the public. The Commission also was the first to offer the [MUSICAL MILE](#) (on page 19) – with bands throughout the downtown area.



John Klisavage rearranged a section of his store by creating book shelves on wheels that could be moved to the sides of the room. He then created a stage and seating for speakers, authors, artists, musicians, and poets. Below is [Sherri-Robbins-Keene](#) back in 1999 'before she was famous.'

Various festivals, such as the **Octoberfest**, were created by local businesses to encourage tourism. Many local shops offered artist receptions and there were several art galleries in town throughout the years including Goldfish Gallery, Pencilworks, River View Gallery, Rampant Lion, Gallery Roca, The Picture Show, Artists' Emporium, [Arts by the Bay](#), and many more. Today we add [The Luckiest Light Gallery](#), a vibrant, inclusive creative space where artists of all abilities are celebrated side by side

Street. The soft spoken Sherri Lyn sings with a feisty voice that surprises the listener. A mix of blues and folk with a style definitely her own, she shares the celebrations and trials of life with humor, sensitivity and strength. Drummer Kevin Gummer and hew husband – guitarist, Bill Claytor completed the trio. This particular afternoon, Sherri Lyn's cousin, Vicki Campbell, played viola to add a bit more spice to an already exciting trio.



George from [Bahoukas Antique Mall](#) took over the Car Show on First Fridays, when they didn't want it on Pennington Ave. Here's a 'birds-eye view' from June 2011:



The ART SCENE has been alive and well in Havre de Grace for decades with the Havre de Grace Art Show being the main 'art festival!'

Another exciting event took place in 2003 when the March of Dimes Ride ended in Havre de Grace. Thousands of bikes throughout the city, what an amazing day!



## INDUSTRY

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As we moved from lumber, fishing, and farming through the canal days – to be replaced by the railroads, through the canning industry and race track, distilleries, and more, we come to the 21st century. Throughout the area are large warehouses, especially along the Route 40 corridor in Harford and Cecil County.

The Chesapeake Industrial Park has grown from a few businesses in the late 1990s to an active industrial park that also brings in jobs in 2026. A 170,000 sq ft [Industrial distribution Center \(Chesapeake Real Estate Group\)](#) can be seen from Revolution Street as you pass by Stancil Field. Just recently the [Maryland National Guard](#) celebrated the opening of new buildings in May 2026.



## **CHESAPEAKE INDUSTRIAL PARK**

The Chesapeake Industrial Park is a major employment center and tax contributor to the City of Havre de Grace. With its location just off of US 40, and outside of the residential areas of Havre de Grace, it provides an employment center in a great location. While there are some vacancy fluctuations in the industrial park, many businesses are long-term occupants. The industrial park has seen growth in the development of a 157,000 SF warehouse for Plastipak's expansion completed in 2024. In addition, subdivision of 1601 Clark Road to develop a 160,000 square foot industrial space is working through environmental review with the state and Elite Comfort added 75 full-time jobs in a newer mattress facility at 1900 Clark Road. Although the park is limited in size compared to regional competitors, the Chesapeake Industrial Park serves a very important purpose and provides mid-sized industrial users the opportunity to operate at a reasonable cost.

Additional growth can occur by seeking out new or small/growing businesses to utilize the space similarly to incubator space, with smaller processing facilities utilizing the functionality of the industrial park at their start-up stage.

*[from the Havre de Grace Comprehensive Plan \(2025\) section 7-11](#)*

## **OLD PABST BUILDING**

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There's a lot of history in this building. Check out our post.





The old Pabst Building on St. John Street was demolished in April/May 2026. Several homes will be built on this property. Before it was demolished, it was the location for VonMercier Hovercraft.

## HARFORD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL \_\_\_\_\_

There's a lot that could be said about the closing of Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace, But it's done. And years have been spent trying to find the right fit for any new development. We hope that the new [Trademark Custom Homes by Bob Ward](#) project presented by Clark Turner is a welcome addition to our community, offering residential homes so more seniors can stay in place and continue living in Havre de Grace.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

Following are 2 videos related to the Senior Living homes to be built where Harford Memorial Hospital once stood. It's being demolished as we write this post. The first is a presentation to the City Council from Nov. 2005. The presentation ends at about the 42 minute mark.



www.explorehavredegrace.com



[Watch on YouTube](#)

The second video is from a presentation at the Vandiver Inn. on May 14th.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

You might enjoy this interview with Leon Grimes, who tells his story of working at Harford Memorial in the '60s.



# SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT \_\_\_\_\_

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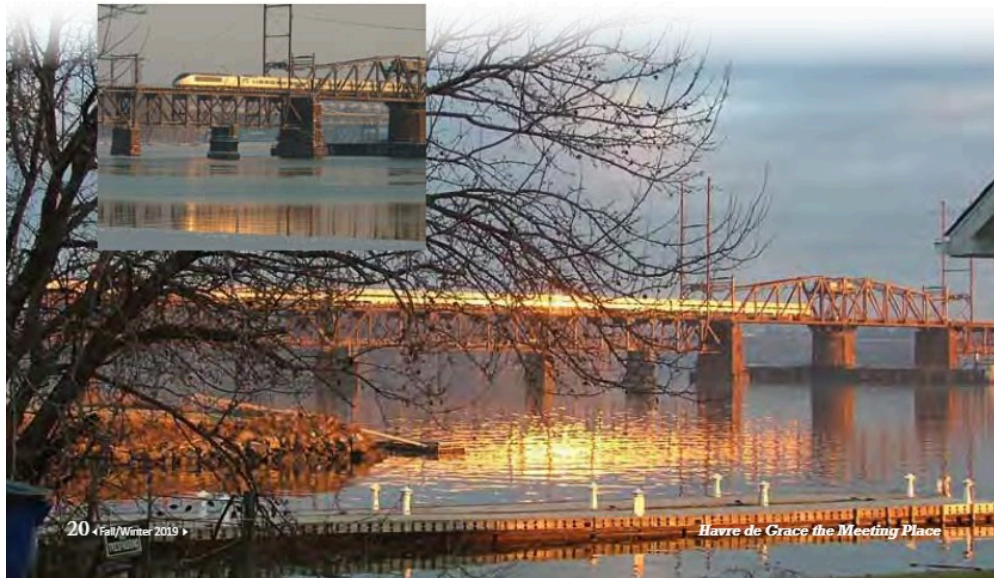


Construction of the Susquehanna River Bridge 1906

Are you aware that you just might be witness to historic changes in Havre de Grace?  
Over the next decade, it's likely that the present Susquehanna River Bridge will be replaced.

# Bridges

*A Community's Story of Change, Growth, & Vision*

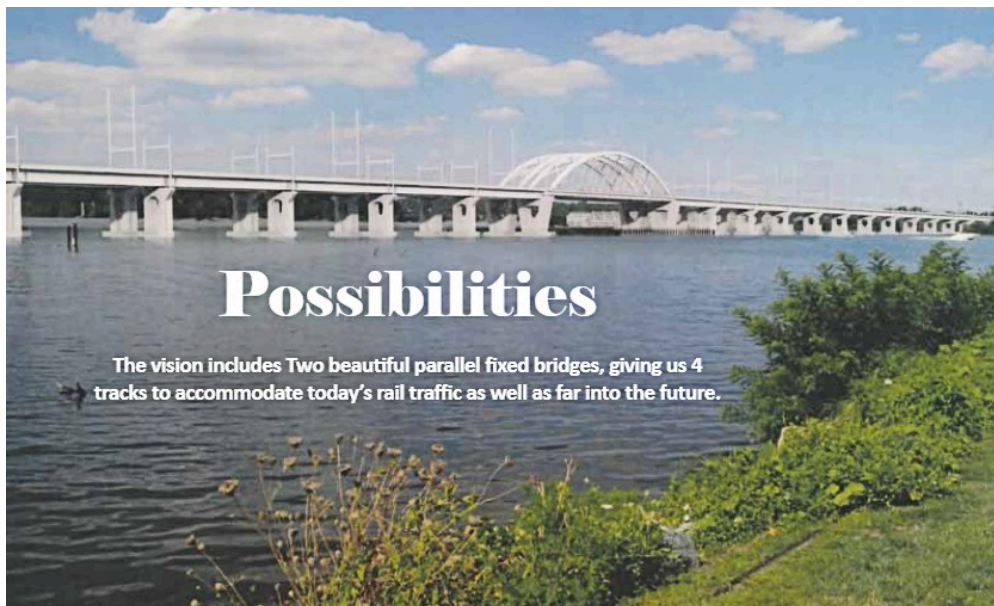


The next big project which will take years to complete, is replacing the present AMTRAK Bridge over the Susquehanna River from Perryville to Havre de Grace. We did a story on it in one of our last [\*\*\*Havre de Grace Magazines\*\*\*](#), page 18. Some of the opportunities may not happen. But we do know that the real concern is that one day they ‘open’ the bridge and can’t get it closed again! There are many similar bridges along the North East Corridor that have been, or will be, replaced. We also recommend following the Amtrak [\*\*\*website\*\*\*](#).

For more details to understand the need to replace the present bridge, this video may help.



[Watch on YouTube](#)



## IN SUMMARY \_\_\_\_\_

In spite of the business turnover in downtown Havre de Grace, it is a testament to the belief that there's opportunity here. That belief, tied to hardworking, creative individuals, continues to grow our city while maintaining an active, connected community. Volunteers from all walks of life keep our museums and organizations moving forward.

Havre de Grace has always been adapting to change. We do it well. Locals (residents and businesses alike) have been creating unique experiences through events, festivals, art, and downtown shopping for decades. Add our local eateries that often offer music, trivia night, and more and you'll enjoy a wonderful time. You might want to experience a local wine or beer tasting. But it doesn't stop there.

During the 21st century the [Joe K Trail](#) was completed (on the north end of town at the Susquehanna Lockhouse). We have the [Lafayette Trail](#) (download the brochure or visit the app) where you can walk or bike through town and learn about the history and architecture of many of our older buildings. The area by the **Promenade** that includes **Concord Point Park** and **Tydings Park** offers museums, sculptures, and many festivals. [CLICK HERE FOR OURDOOR RECREATION INFO](#)

While often seen as a retirement community, since Covid we've seen many young families moving here and actively participating in our community. This spirit – this **America250 / HavredeGrace250 spirit**, thrives. We are excited to see where the rest of this century takes us. Like those citizens who stayed after the burning of Havre de Grace in 1813, thousands of citizens take the time to build our community today. We hope each and every one of you are taking part in some small way! Here's to our belief in our community!!! And join us for a great time when we celebrate [AMERICA250 in Havre de Grace.](#)