

Education and Community Facilities

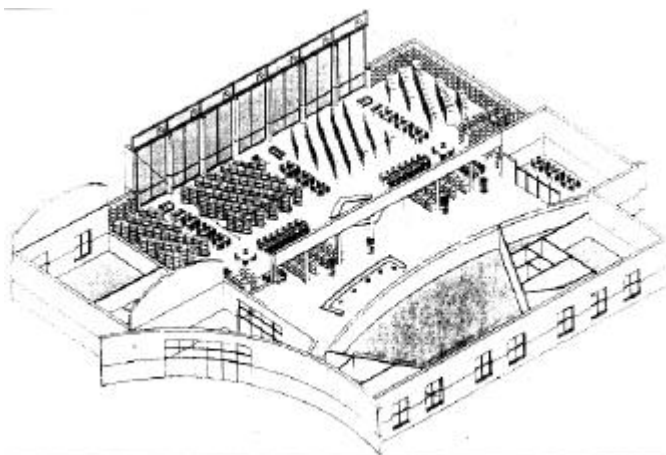
Existing Conditions

Crofton is served by three elementary schools on sites of 15-20 acres with a fourth site reserved in northern Crofton. There is also a middle school located on a property of over 90 acres which currently includes Cardinal Field, a major recreation complex. This site and adjacent Crofton Park is proposed to accommodate a second middle school and future West County High School. Another Board of Education property, the old Carver School, has been converted to a vocational training facility (Refer to Map11).

There are two fire stations in Crofton, located to the north on Route 3 and south along Davidsonville Road, providing good response time throughout the community. Local police service is provided by the Crofton Civic Association, based at the Town Hall in the Triangle. County Police coverage is provided by the Western District Station in Odenton.

Postal service is somewhat confusing, with three zip codes serving the area. However most of the population lies within zip code 21114, served by a new Post Office centrally located along Route 3 and especially convenient to residents of the Triangle. Areas to the south and east rely on Gambrills Post Office, several miles to the north, while subdivisions along Bell Branch and Rutland Road share a Davidsonville zip code.

A branch library is currently located in rental space of 15,000 sq.ft. at the Crofton Shopping Center which is convenient to both the Triangle and North Crofton. A larger facility is being planned for a site on Riedel Road at MD 424. It is envisioned that the new 25,000 sq.ft. library will be part of a community center complex, with other public services and recreational use. There is currently no senior center within the Crofton area; however, with an aging population such services may be needed in the near future.



Schematic Design for Crofton Branch Library (Nov.1998)

There are two large public parks serving the area: Crofton Park, adjacent to the Middle School, and Bell Branch Athletic Complex. Along with Cardinal Field, about 25 ballfields are provided, nearly a third of them lighted. About 15 additional fields are available on school grounds which are convenient to various neighborhoods. Of the total, almost 60% are exclusively for baseball with the rest configured as multi-purpose fields for lacrosse, football or soccer.

Two major golf courses comprising over 400 acres are integral to the community, and provide a system of quasi-public open space benefitting the surrounding neighborhoods. Recorded open space and recreation area is also available to residents of most subdivisions, particularly in the larger Planned Unit Developments of North Crofton.

Along the western edge of Crofton, publicly owned land in the Patuxent river valley provides some opportunity for passive recreation, although accessibility is limited.

Assets and Issues

Public Schools

Residential growth has outpaced expansion and improvement of schools making it increasingly important that future residential development occur concurrently with school expansion, renovation and/or construction. This growth has created overcrowding in several of the schools, at all levels, which serve the Crofton Small Area. To relieve the immediate overcrowding problem, Crofton students are divided between two feeder systems. The Crofton Small Area Plan Committee sees this division as contrary to the intent and concepts presented in the 1997 General Development Plan.

One of the first actions of the Crofton Small Area Plan Committee in April of 1998, was a unanimous vote in support of the “West County High School Resolution” (Refer to Appendix C). This resolution points to the overcrowding in the Arundel Feeder System as the worst in the County, along with the division of Crofton students between the South River and the Arundel feeder systems as justification for the long promised thirteenth high school to be located in the Crofton Small Area. In addition, this resolution states that the location of the current Crofton Middle School can accommodate a High School as well as an additional Middle School, which was the site’s original purpose (Refer to Map 13).

The following feeder system should be considered for the Crofton area.

Elementary School:

The North Crofton Area (and a part of the Crownsville Small Area) is still experiencing residential growth. The Board of Education has a site in the Crofton Farms subdivision that is dedicated for an additional elementary school. Currently the northern Crofton elementary students attend Four Seasons Elementary (in the Odenton Small Area) and feed into Arundel Middle School, rather than Crofton Middle. The overcrowding in the Odenton Small Area elementary schools will be somewhat alleviated when the Piney Orchard Elementary School is

built. Until boundaries are set for the Piney Orchard School, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the existing schools will be relieved.

Small class size in the elementary grades is recognized as being directly related to student achievement. However, reducing the number of students per classroom thereby lowers the number of elementary students a school can accommodate. An additional elementary school in the Crofton Small Area may be needed within a 6-8 year period or in conjunction with new subdivision development, whichever comes first. A possibility to absorb any overcrowding that may occur before a new north Crofton Elementary School is to hold classes in the Carver Center. In the past, this facility was an elementary school for the Gambrills and Crofton area. It is currently used as a training facility. While the condition of the facility has not been evaluated, its existence should be considered as an option for maintaining small student to teacher ratios.

Middle School:

The original design for the Crofton Middle School Campus shows a high school and two middle schools located on the Board of Education property on Route 424 in Crofton (Refer to Map 13). A six classroom addition was completed in 1999 at the Crofton Middle School which increased capacity by 135 students. This addition did not expand the space for the core facilities (cafeteria, gymnasium, etc.) Considering new residential construction, maximized use of the existing core facilities, and projected severe overcrowding for Arundel Middle School, a new Middle School may be needed to accommodate local students.

Planning money should be included in the future budgets in order to avoid disruption of Anne Arundel County's Team Teaching at the middle school level. (An additional benefit to the planned Crofton Public School Campus approach is to allow the middle school students to participate in advanced courses in the high school. This is an opportunity currently denied to Crofton Middle School students since they are housed so far from their feeder high schools.) Since a realignment of Anne Arundel County Schools is being considered, this would be an excellent opportunity to provide a new facility where it is most needed. It has been recognized that maintenance and modernization of older school buildings would be less cost effective than new construction. Older buildings are not designed to accommodate the current Team Teaching technique being used in our Middle Schools. While new construction is costly, maintenance and modernization of older facilities demand a comparable cost.

High School:

Projections indicate that there is a need for a new high school in West County. There are over 1200 students feeding into area high schools just from Crofton Middle School. Including the students in Arundel Middle School district, due to their being in Four Seasons Elementary, the number of high school students from Crofton increases to 1400. As residential growth continues in the Crofton Small Area, this number will increase. A new West County high school, with a capacity of 2000 students, could accommodate Crofton students and alleviate overcrowding in the Arundel/Old Mill areas.

Crofton residents have been anticipating a high school for 30 years. The Board of Education has known of this project for at least 12 years. There have been three different county wide studies that have supported this need. The best solution to severe overcrowding in the Arundel Feeder System is to build the West County High School as soon as possible.

Current and Future Projections

The population of the Crofton Small Area is estimated to increase by more than 20% by the year 2020. By comparison, the County population is estimated to increase by only 15% during the same time period. There is also a projected household growth rate of 30% for the Crofton Small Area, whereas the County's household growth rate by 2020 is estimated at less than 25% (Refer to Appendix A).

The current and planned infrastructure, student population projections and growth in the Crofton Small Area all indicate that a new high school, and an additional middle school and elementary school are necessary to accommodate local students (Refer to Table 5).

Children receive significant benefit from attending high school in their own communities. Intangibles such as personal safety, pride of ownership, and maintaining relationships with friends enhance the educational experience. The Committee agrees with the Anne Arundel County Public Schools in supporting community based, family oriented educational opportunities for all students.

Table 5. Student Capacity for the Arundel/South River Feeder Systems

<u>School</u>	<u>SRC*</u>	<u>1999 Enrollment</u>	<u>1999 Utilization</u>	<u>2007 Enrollment</u>	<u>2007 Utilization</u>
<u>High Schools:</u>					
Arundel Senior	1905	1960	103%	2688	141%
South River Senior	2030	1571	77%	2258	111%
Total	3935	3531	90%	4946	126%
<u>Middle Schools:</u>					
Arundel Middle	1097	1019	93%	1566	143%
Central Middle	1245	1001	80%	995	80%
Crofton Middle	1055**	945	90%	1110	105%
Total	3397	2965	87%	3671	108%
<u>Elementary Schools:</u>					
Central Elementary	544	499	92%	575	106%
Crofton Elementary	604**	612	101%	600	99%
Crofton Meadows	514	542	105%	550	107%
Crofton Woods	636	608	96%	570	90%
Davidsonville	394	555	140%	600	152%
Edgewater	476	424	89%	390	82%
Four Seasons	651	632	97%	540	83%
Mayo Elementary	267	316	118%	310	116%
Odenton Elementary	482	705	146%	690	143%
Waugh Chapel	499	697	139%	850	170%
Total	5067	5590	110%	5675	112%

* SRC - State Rated Capacity, the method by which the State, County, and Board of Education calculate school student capacity.

** SRC adjusted with the 6 classroom additions planned for these schools.

Numbers in Table 5 are taken from the 1998 Anne Arundel County Public Schools Master Plan, except for 2007 projected enrollment numbers for the Senior High Schools, Arundel Middle and Crofton Middle which are taken from the AACPS Secondary Schools Feasibility Study, 1999.

Goals and Recommendations

Goal 1. To provide adequate school facilities at all levels.

Recommendations:

- Construct a 13th County High School, giving consideration to the property adjacent to the Crofton Middle School which is currently owned by the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.
- Construct a new middle school if there is a demonstrated need as determined by the County.

- Build a new elementary school concurrently with the construction of any North Crofton subdivisions if there is a demonstrated need as determined by the County.
- Foster a united community by returning Crofton students at all grade levels to Crofton Schools.
- Provide facilities for post-graduate, technical, and enrichment educational opportunities in the Greater Crofton Area.

Goal 2. Upgrade infrastructure, including recreation facilities, libraries, community centers, police and fire protection, etc. to maintain or improve current levels of service. These upgrades, as well as the schools and roads noted above, should be in place concurrent with development.

Recommendations:

- Include several uses on the 17 acre site off of Riedel Road, currently owned by the County and planned for a new library. The recommended uses are: community center - including Senior services, and indoor recreational use.
- Expand recreational/athletic fields concurrently with residential construction to accommodate the needs of a growing community and the increased demand for such programs.
- Include a community oriented commercial center to be developed on the Library residue land - community center with Mom and Pop shops for hiker/biker trail and neighboring communities, as well as library customers. Possible partnership between County (landowner) and a private developer.