

Economic Development

Existing Conditions

The Greater Crofton area is home to a population of nearly 28,000 and provides employment for about 3,500 workers. Currently, there are over 10,000 housing units, with a projected buildout of some 13,500 units in the next 10 to 20 years, mostly concentrated in a central area where public utilities are available. About 3,500 acres, less than a third of the overall area, has been developed at suburban densities, ranging from half acre lots to apartments at 15 units per acre. Townhouses account for about 40% of the housing stock. Although Crofton is primarily a bedroom community, the balance between jobs and housing is quite favorable compared to other suburban areas of the county. There are also substantial retail and service uses, providing for the needs of the local population.

The area contains two major industrial parks, with a mix of warehouse uses, manufacturing and offices. Total office and industrial space exceeds 800,000 square feet. There is a variety of smaller businesses, employing about 2/3 of the local workforce. A recent business inventory indicated the breakdown of businesses in the area: occupations such as home furnishings (15), auto service (10), construction related (35), banking/insurance/real estate (35) and personal services (25). There are 25 medical and dental offices serving the community and about 30 restaurants, mostly “fast foods” and carryouts. An increasing demand for quality sit-down restaurants is apparent.

Retail space of nearly 600,000 sq.ft. exists in the area, with fairly high occupancy rates. Major shopping centers are listed below, with the larger ones flanking MD Route 3, a major transportation corridor serving a subregional market.

Table 1. Major Shopping Centers in the Crofton Small Area

<u>Category</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Anchors</u>	<u>Building Area</u>
Subregional	Crofton Centre	Kmart/ Metro	330,000 sq.ft.
Local/Community	Crofton Station	Giant Foods	73,000 sq.ft.
	Priest Bridge	Crofton Pediatrics	56,000 sq.ft.
Neighborhood	Hopkins Place		16,000 sq.ft.
	Staples Corner		20,000 sq.ft.
	Crofton Depot		35,500 sq.ft.
	Crofton Plaza		12,700 sq.ft.
	Route 3 Center		26,300 sq.ft.

Assets and Issues

Although most of the retail space is currently occupied, there is concern that the older shopping centers may gradually lose tenants, in competition with the new Village of Waugh Chapel which is less than two miles north of the Crofton Triangle and will serve both a community and subregional market. Although technically outside the jurisdiction of the Crofton Small Area Plan, that project is expected to be completed within a few years, with a total of nearly half a million square feet, two thirds of which would be retail and service uses. Other uses, including offices, would comprise about 30%. This would increase by 85%, the total supply of commercial and office space available along the Route 3 corridor, however the Waugh Chapel complex will draw customers from Crofton, Gambrills, Millersville, and Odenton. Adaptive reuse or renovation of some existing retail space in Crofton may need to be considered within the next several years. The Small Area Plan recognizes this issue. There is special concern for the Route 3 Corridor, where the older Crofton Center is already experiencing some vacancies.

Goals and Recommendations

The key goals of the Plan are as follows:

- Guide the commercial retail development within the Crofton area to be consistent with the State of Maryland's Smart Growth Policy.
- Utilize employment centers to minimize commuting distances, located within existing commercially or industrially zoned areas.

The Plan acknowledges the need for some industrial and commercial expansion, but feels that this can be mostly accommodated in existing industrial parks through redevelopment or infill. Some additional mixed-use development is envisioned along the west side of Route 3 in areas zoned for commercial to the south of Cronson Boulevard. The ultimate reuse of the existing cement plant as an industrial park with office and R&D firms is anticipated in the Concept Plan, along with completion of the Crofton Commerce Center at Conway Road and Route 3.

Limited expansion of commercial use at Staples Corner is recommended. Zoning for the existing business area would be extended to include the southeast quadrant and encompass several existing non-conforming uses. The rationale for this is to enhance the value of the land by formally designating it for commercial use, thereby increasing the potential for higher quality commercial development.” Key Economic Development recommendations are summarized below.

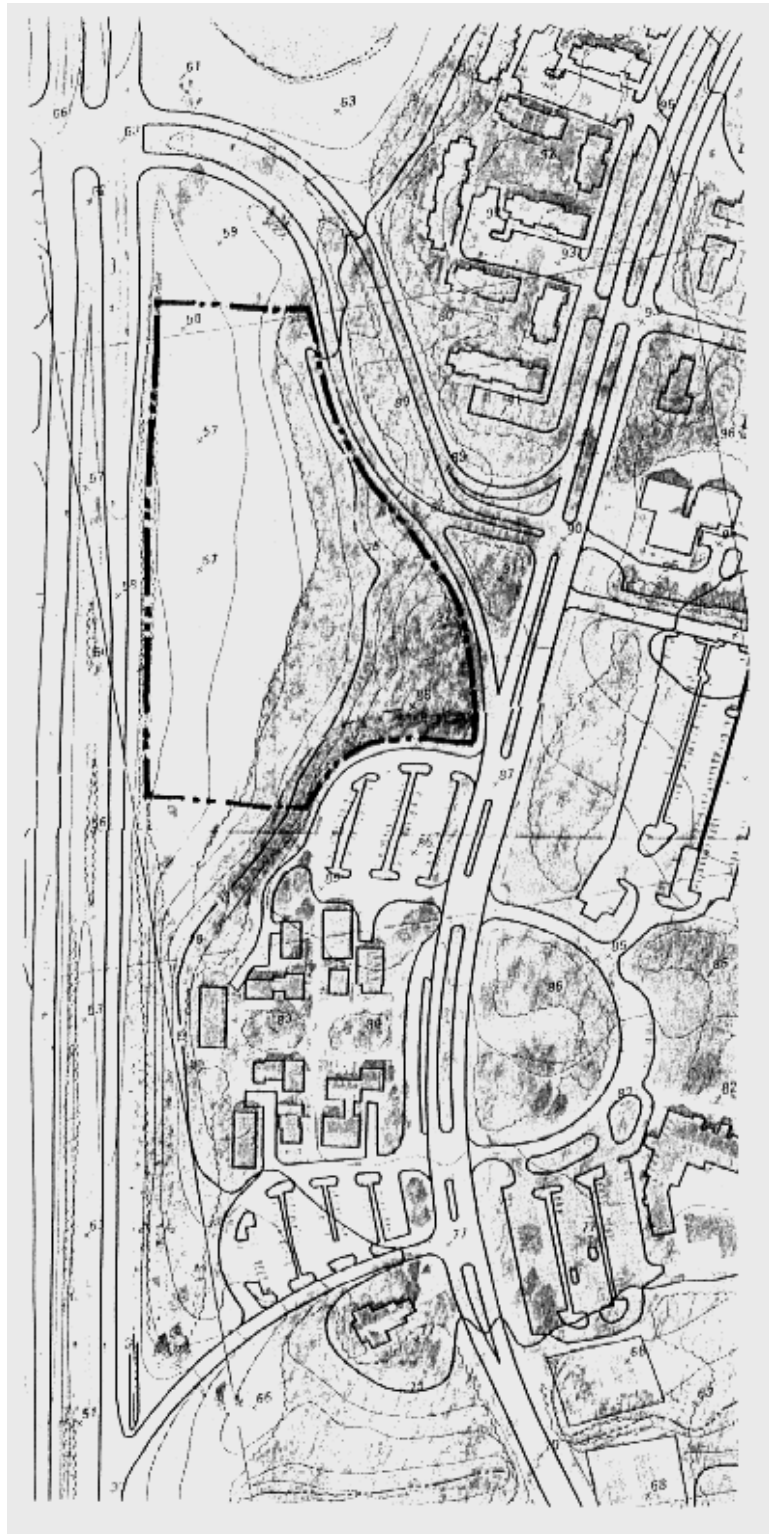
- Integrate community design elements into commercial zones. Introduce attractive gateways such as traffic circles to also improve traffic flows. Encourage coordinated upgrade/enhancements to older properties to create a more appealing streetscape - such as coordinated signage, lighting, or park benches. Improve pedestrian access to commercial areas. Encourage property owners who are redeveloping properties to do so in a manner

that will fit in with the community around it.

- Enhance and upgrade the existing commercial areas.
- Expand commercial area at Staples Corner area (Intersection of Routes 450 and 424) to create a commercial gateway to Crofton. Encourage small scale commercial development at this intersection which is pedestrian friendly and serves local residents. Proceed with replacing the current signalized intersection with a traffic circle.
- Encourage quality commercial development of the remaining parcels located on the west side of MD Route 3. Possibly expand C3 zoning on the west side of MD Route 3 in conjunction with “passive” park land to allow for mixed use development. Encourage development in conjunction with dedicating acreage to the County/Community for a “passive” park to take advantage of preserving the unique and sensitive environmental features of the remaining acreage. Encourage the construction of an overpass connecting the park area with the Crofton community on the east side of MD Route 3. Encourage cooperation between the developer and the Crofton community to work together to ensure that the commercial/park development is done in a manner that provides for the service and business needs of the community, creates a financially viable development for the owner(s), and creates a master-planned business environment with design criteria for buildings and streetscapes.

In considering the full potential for economic development in Crofton , the Plan addresses the issue of a hotel/conference center, proposed in relation to the Crofton Country Club. Alternative sites within the community were discussed, based on analysis by the community design consultant. Relevant issues and opportunities were traffic impact and parking in the vicinity, architectural scale and quality of design, possible benefits to revitalization of the Village Green, and provision of adjunct facilities to be shared with the community. A hotel and conference center located near the existing golf course could provide mutual benefits if operated in conjunction with the Crofton Country Club. A seven acre site, adjacent to the Village Green, was commercially zoned for such a facility in 1988, as designated by agreement with the Civic Association. This property could be developed as envisioned at that time, however, alternative sites are now under consideration.

The Plan supports the concept of a quality hotel/conference center in the greater Crofton area in the next 10-20 years. The actual choice of site for such a facility will require further dialogue between the public and the appropriate property owner, based on detailed information regarding the impacts it will have on the larger community.



Main entrance to Crofton
(Crawford Boulevard)

7-acre site previously rezoned for
future hotel/conference center

Village Green shops & parking

Crofton Country Club

South entrance from MD Route 3