

Land Use and Zoning

Background

The Crownsville area is characterized by steep slopes, extensive forest cover, and prime frontage on the Severn River, extending onto several peninsulas. It also contains a major State Hospital complex, now under partial conversion for office use, and the abutting County golf course and fairgrounds. Relatively flat land is located to the northeast near Route 3 where farming and newer large lot subdivisions occur.

Overall density of development is rather low, with older detached homes on small lots built mostly before the 1970s, and mostly large lot subdivisions built since then. More recent development of exclusive waterfront subdivisions include Bayberry Hills, Maynadier, Belvoir Farms, and Downs on the Severn. Among the older communities are the unique enclaves of Sherwood Forest and Epping Forest. Along Round Bay and the upper Severn River are Herald Harbor, dating from the 1920s, and the postwar developments of Arden, Sunrise Beach and Indian Landing.

The major roadways through the area run along the ridge line between the Severn River watershed and Bacon Ridge Branch of the South River with no exposure to the water. A major amenity is the Severn River, about two miles to the east where most of the older communities have developed over the years. More recent subdivisions such as Rolling Hills, Rolling Knolls, Cranberry Woods and Carriage Hills are related to Generals Highway.

Original zoning (1952) for the Crownsville area provided for “cottage” and “manor” type residential, mostly in the waterfront communities along the Severn. Small residential zones also appeared inland: at Dorr’s Corner along Crain Highway; Iglehart and Rolling Knolls along Generals Highway; and Lusby Crossroads on Defense Highway at Crownsville Road. Several small “light” and “heavy” commercial districts were shown at various intersections along State roads, and also at central locations within the older communities of Sherwood Forest, Herald Harbor and Arden on the Severn. In the 1950s the rest of the land was zoned for “agricultural,” however, very little had been cleared for farming or timber production.

Historically, the population of the Crownsville area has been rather sparse, with a number of second home communities related to the Severn and small settlements along Old Generals Highway and Defense Highway. Given the rugged terrain and extensive woodland, farming has been limited to what little flat land could be cleared. Based on inventory and analysis for the current GDP, agricultural use in this area amounted to only 1700 acres or about 10% of the total land. Predominantly wooded land still comprises over 75% of the area much of which is on steep slopes, stream valleys and floodplains. About 25% has been cleared for farm fields, subdivisions, recreation and institutional use.

Existing Land Use

As described above, open space and single family housing are the predominant uses in the 19,700 acres which comprise the Crownsville area. In 1995 nearly 1/3 of land was developed as residential, and about 1/5 was committed to public parks, golf course and natural areas, or in floodplains, stream valleys and recorded subdivision open space and recreation area. This area has just over 22 miles of shoreline. Farmland comprised only 12% of the overall area in 1995, however this is currently estimated at less than 10 %.

Table 2. Existing Land Use - 1995 Land Use Category	Acreeage	Percentage
Agricultural	2382 acres	12.1%
Open Space	2640 acres	13.4%
Single Family Residential	6408 acres	32.5%
Commercial	135 acres	0.6%
Industrial	43 acres	0.2%
Utility	924 acres	4.7%
Government	1348 acres	6.8%
Recreation	688 acres	3.5%
Vacant	5132 acres	26.1%

Government and institutional uses, along with major road right-of-way (ROW) and the Annapolis landfill site account for about 10%. This includes Board of Education properties, the Veterans Cemetery and the Crownsville State Hospital grounds. Commercial and industrial uses are least significant, with less than 1% of overall land area, reflecting the dearth of employment and limited retail services in Crownsville.

Over 1/4 of the land was considered vacant in 1995, although only a portion of this would be buildable, due to extensive forest cover, steep slopes and wetlands, which are largely protected from disturbance.

Proposed Land Use

In preparing the Land Use Map, the Small Area Plan Committee first reviewed the County’s General Development Plan (GDP), adopted in 1997, showing projected land use patterns and densities for the Crownsville area. The Small Area Plan is intended to adjust and refine the GDP, reflecting existing uses and illustrating in greater detail the proposed development of the area over the next 10-20 years. Based on the Committee’s Vision statement and recommendations, various land use changes were proposed. These included adjustments to the designated Natural Features area to expand the buffer along the Severn Run near Veterans Highway and to provide maximum protection for the recharge area around Arden Bog, as well as an additional 300 acres of the

Severn Run Natural Environmental Area.

In the vicinity of the “Green Cathedral” on the Severn River, the Natural Features area was extended to include more contiguous forest on the Sahlin Farm and undeveloped portions of Sherwood Forest. This was done to create an extensive greenbelt and protect habitat areas between Brewers Creek and Hopkins Creek. This designation was also adjusted along major stream valleys to include abutting steep slopes (greater than 25%), adjacent platted open space, zoned open space and dedicated or platted floodplain. Also, to protect the sensitive headwaters of Saltworks Creek, the Natural Features area was further expanded along the edge of Parole and Annapolis Neck Planning Area.

The Low Density residential area was reduced to the west of Herald Harbor and replaced by a Rural designation to conform with RLD zoning in the area.

Due to the extension of public utilities along Crownsville Road in the vicinity of Lusby Crossroads, the Low Density residential category was proposed for the communities of North River Forest and Sylmac, as well as adjacent properties near I-97. This recognizes current subdivision development potential with water and sewer service available and also responds to the noise setback requirements along the freeway.

In the proposed Land Use Plan, all school sites, the Crownsville State Hospital site and the Veterans Cemetery are shown as Government/Institutional use, and areas zoned and currently developed for business use are shown as Commercial.

Also envisioned in the Proposed Land Use Plan is the South Shore Trail, which would generally use the ROW of the old WB&A Railroad between Annapolis and Odenton. This special feature is described in the Community Facilities chapter. The Plan designates the Generals Highway corridor, St. Stephens Church and Severn Chapel Roads as special zones for preservation of scenic and historic qualities. The intent is to establish design criteria and implement guidelines which would help protect the character of these road corridors from development pressures that could alter or destroy their unique features.

Criteria for Residential Density

In designating residential land use densities on the Proposed Land Use Map, the Plan recommends two categories: Rural/Agricultural and Residential Low Density. The following criteria were applied in the recommended Land Use Plan:

- **Rural/Agricultural** areas are designated where agricultural and forest use are predominant, or for sparsely developed areas with average parcel size greater than two acres, and having no public utilities existing or planned. This generally applies in RA or RLD zoning districts.
- **Residential Low Density** areas generally include communities zoned R1, R2 or R5 such as

Herald Harbor and Rolling Knolls which have lots of one quarter to half an acre and are served by at least public water, as well as existing subdivisions with average lot size up to 2 acres, with or without public utilities. In the vicinity of Lusby Crossroads where public sewer and water have been extended, a Residential Low Density category has been assigned to the communities of North River Forest, Greenwood Acres, Sylmac and undeveloped land abutting I-97, where there is no agricultural use.

Where higher density development occurs as a non-conforming use in an RA district, such as the Summer Hill mobile home park (served by package sewer treatment facilities), it is assigned Rural/Agricultural land use. Otherwise, this relatively small site would appear as inconsistent with the prevailing rural character of the surrounding area.

Existing Zoning

The residential zoning categories account for nearly half of Crownsville’s land (Refer to Table 3). These include the low density zoning categories of RLD, R1, R2. The R5 zoning category is considered to be of low to medium density, and is found in less than 2% of Crownsville’s land area.

Table 3. Existing Zoning

Rural Agricultural zoning (RA) accounts for the single largest zoning category found in the area. Just over 37% of Crownsville’s land is zoned RA. The most restrictive zoning category, Open Space (OS), is found on about 12 % of Crownsville’s land. These two categories, together account for almost the other half of the Crownsville area.

The remaining 1%, is accounted for by very small pockets of maritime, commercial and industrial zoning. There are three commercial nodes in the area, Lusby’s Corner, Dorr’s Corner, and a stretch of frontage along MD 3. The industrial zoned areas lie adjacent to the Parole Growth Management Area in the Annapolis Neck Small Area bordered by U.S. 50 and I-97.

Zoning Category	Acreage	Percentage
RA - Rural Agricultural	7300 acres	37.1%
RLD - Residential Low Density	5213 acres	26.5%
R1 & R2 - Low Density Residential	4196 acres	21.3%
R5 - Low-Medium Density Residential	327 acres	1.7%
C1A & C1B - Neighborhood/Community Commercial	18 acres	.09%
C2 - Commercial Office	11 acres	.06%
C3 & C4 - General Commercial	83 acres	0.4%
W1 - Industrial Park	76 acres	0.4%
W2 - Light Industrial	2 acres	.01%

Proposed Zoning

Given the recommendations of the

Crownsville Small Area Plan Committee, reflected in the Proposed Land Use Plan, and in response to other requests received during a 60 day

application period, several zoning changes are proposed to facilitate implementation of the Plan. These also relate to the availability of public utilities and community design concepts for the area.

Changes in residential zoning are proposed in the vicinity of Lusbys Corner, along Crownsville Road between MD 450 and I-97. About 38 acres would change from RA to R2, due to extension of water and sewer to the Sylmac community in recent years. Abutting properties are required to connect to these public utilities, which support low- medium density development on lots of half acre or smaller. Therefore R2 zoning is suggested for this area, which is also subject to noise impacts and required setbacks from I-97.

In Herald Harbor, R5 residential zoning has been designated for the former Harbor Club property, which has ceased operation as a marina. The previous MA2 use is no longer considered viable for that site, and residential development would be more compatible with the surrounding community.

The commercial district at Lusbys Corner would remain unchanged. Along MD Route 3 at the self storage complex just north of St. Stephens Church Road, an adjustment from RLD zoning to C4 is proposed for about .7 acres to include an existing building, thereby conforming with the actual property line.

Other changes in commercial zoning are proposed along Veterans Highway in the vicinity of Dorr's Corner. It is recommended that the existing C4 district be reconfigured to reduce the potential for strip development closest to the Severn Run, and to consolidate highway commercial use to the rear of existing businesses fronting on Veterans Highway. This would change over 1000 feet of frontage with a depth of about 300 feet, comprising over seven acres, from C4 to Residential Low Density (RLD). Most of the remaining commercial frontage is already developed, however with space for some infill uses. The C4 district would be expanded to the rear providing additional depth of about 100 feet, with access from the south end. Along with reduced commercial zoning to the north of the motel site, this results in an overall net decrease of about five acres of commercial use in the area. Consolidated C4 zoning in the Dorrs Corner area is intended to accommodate business development in this major highway corridor, however, in a location rather isolated from any nearby residential areas. Flanked on three sides by over 150 acres of heavily wooded land, zoned RLD, this site is well buffered from existing subdivisions, the nearest of which is Cedarcroft, some 1600 feet to the southeast along Old Generals Highway. The only other major subdivision, Indian Landing Estates, lies approximately ½ mile to the east.

Environmental protection of the Severn Run watershed must be assured, with ample setback of about 1800 feet from the proposed commercial use to the river itself and 1000 feet to the nearest tributary stream. In conjunction with future development, it is anticipated that public access may be extended to the Severn Run Natural Environmental Area. Also Open Space (OS)

zoning for the State parkland would be expanded to conform with the property line.

As business expansion occurs, the road pattern in the vicinity of Dorr's Corner could be modified to eliminate the hazardous merge between Generals Highway and Veterans Highway, redirecting traffic to the new T-intersection.

Current Subdivision Activity

Development activity in the Crownsville area is somewhat limited, given the predominant low density zoning and limited availability of public utilities. There are only a few new subdivisions with more than 10 lots under construction or pending approval. These are listed below:

Annapolis Preserve, Sections 1 & 3	15 lots
Stafford Hall	13 lots
Church View Farms	11 lots
Dorr's Property	11 lots
Manganello property	24 lots
Palisades on the Severn, Section H	14 lots
Penderbrooke	35 lots
St. Stephens Estates, Section 2	33 lots
St. Stephens Farm (submitted 1989)	16 lots
Stoneridge (Norwoods Fancy Farm)	40 lots
Vineyards at Iglehart	24 lots

There are also a few minor subdivisions and family conveyances which involve 3 or 4 new lots, including the Polyansky and Floyd properties. Some infill housing is being built in existing major subdivisions, such as Belvoir Farms, Penderbrooke, Fairfield Estates (Section 2), and Herald Harbor.

Development Potential

Based on Land Use and Zoning data from the County geographic information system (GIS), updated to 1995, the Crownsville area had approximately 6500 acres of land which could potentially accommodate future housing. There were only 45 acres of vacant industrial and commercially zoned property. Of the total area suitable for residential use, over 90%, or some 5800 acres is zoned RA or RLD, which would accommodate new housing at very low densities. About 565 acres is available in R1 and R2 districts, while only 5 acres remains with R5 zoning, in Herald Harbor. Given the severe environmental constraints to development in many of these areas, the prospective yield is estimated at less than 1500 dwelling units overall, which averages nearly 5 acres per unit. Table 4 (Refer to page 28) summarizes the potential build-out of housing in the Crownsville area under current zoning densities and development regulations.

Table 4. Development Potential for the Crownsville Planning Area

Subarea	Vacant Area	Density	Number of Units
<u>Northeast:</u> Herald Harbor Road to I-97 to MD 3	R5 - 5 acres R2 - 34 acres R1 - 35 acres RLD - 1317 acres	3 units/acre 2 units/acre *.6 units/acre 5 acre average	15 70 20 263
Subtotal	1391 acres		368 dwelling units
<u>Southeast:</u> Herald Harbor Road to Generals Highway to the Severn River	**R1 - 140 acres RLD - 973 acres RA - 195 acres	1 unit/acre 5 acre average 10 acre average	140 195 20
Subtotal	1308 acres		355 dwelling units
<u>Central:</u> Generals Highway to I-97 (including Crownsville Road) to MD 450	R1 - 190 acres RA - 677 acres	1 unit/ acre 10 acre average	190 68
Subtotal	867 acres		258 dwelling units
<u>West:</u> I-97 to the power line ROW	R2 - 38 acres R1 - 130 acres RLD - 215 acres RA - 2490 acres	2 units/acre 1 units/acre 5 acre average 10 acre average	75 130 43 250
Subtotal	2873 acres		500 dwelling units
TOTAL	6439 acres		1481 dwelling units

* Part of this property is in the Critical Area, the reason for such low density.

** Excludes 115 acres of Sherwood Forest land.

Goals and Recommendations

Septic System Failures

Substandard and/or failing septic systems have a substantial impact on the health and viability of the Severn River. Citizen responses at public forums uniformly expressed concerns regarding septic system failures and health hazards associated with periodically unsafe fecal coliform levels reported off beaches and boat ramps in the upper Severn River. The Severn River is a state designated Scenic River and an environmental and recreational centerpiece of the Crownsville area. The repeatedly periodic unsafe fecal coliform levels are a continuing threat to the river and to the inhabitants who use it. The County should allocate sufficient funding to implement the monitoring and enforcement recommendations.

Goal 1. Within the "Critical Area" (as defined in §1-101 of the County Code) of the Severn River and any perennial streams connecting to the Severn River, improve monitoring and enforcement related to septic system failures:

Recommendations:

- Institute year around monitoring of the Severn River for pollution from aging and failing septic systems.
- Develop and implement higher levels of design criteria for septic systems and alternative technologies.
- Assign a higher priority in funding and staff assignment for enforcement efforts and resources.
- Request the County Department of Health to issue an annual public report due on March 15 of each year on fecal coliform contamination of the Severn River, including water testing results, enforcement efforts, reported outbreaks of illnesses which may be attributable to high fecal coliform and formal complaints of poor water quality filed by residents and communities.
- Create a septic system testing program available to citizens at no or nominal cost.

Scenic and Historic Roads

The County should incorporate into its proposed revisions to the zoning laws, the subdivision laws, the transportation master plan, the road design manual, the landscape manual, the forest conservation ordinance and other land use laws, the regulatory tools necessary to fully implement the scenic and historic roads program as set forth in Resolution No.45-97 adopted by the County Council on November 3, 1997. (Also addressed in Transportation chapter.)

Goal 2. Create standards for developments abutting scenic and historic roads that minimize, if not eliminate, alterations to the roads, as well as preserve the scenic view and character of the roadway.

Recommendations:

- Establish a specific design review and approval process for development adjacent to or impacting scenic and historic roads similar to the current forest delineation, protection and mitigation process.
- Establish design guidelines and protective buffers.
- Create new low-impact (including rural cluster or open space cluster) zoning tools and apply them in overlay zones along the corridors.
- Establish new County road standards in the road design manual for scenic and historic roads for both construction and maintenance.
- Work with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to establish state road standards for scenic and historic roads. Designate selected areas along scenic and historic roads as potential sending areas for TDRs.
- Require design diversity in housing type and size along scenic and historic roads.

Generals Highway

Goal 3. Improve the appearance and function of the Generals Highway corridor between the northern boundary of Parole Town Center through the intersection at Veterans Highway.

Recommendations:

- Designate a corridor along Generals Highway in which special design criteria shall apply to any construction or renovation within the corridor.
- Analyze existing land use, existing zoning, historical character, and other factors in order to develop appropriate design criteria.
- Explore the possibility of pedestrian linkage and connector paths to serve commercial and public facilities and residential communities, in addition to the hiker- biker trail, in the vicinity of: (1) Crownsville Road and Fairfield Loop and (2) Sunrise Beach Road.
- Place appropriate gateway signage at the southern border of the highway with the Parole Town Center, at the northern border of the highway at the intersection of Veterans Highway and at the ramp leading to Interstate 97.
- Remove the designation of “Commercial Revitalization Area” from Veterans Highway, just north of Generals Highway.
- Except for minor changes such as the addition of short turning lanes, Generals Highway should remain a two lane road at its present width.

St. Stephen’s Church Road and Severn Chapel Road Corridor

Goal 4. Establish St. Stephen’s Church Road and Severn Chapel Road as special scenic road design corridors.

Recommendations:

- Provide gateway signs located at key entry points along the corridors.
- Discourage change in road alignment or road widening along the corridors and limit intersection improvements.

- Encourage the use of wood guard rails.

Route 450 Corridor

Goal 5. Preserve the character of MD 450 between Crownsville Road and MD424.

Recommendations:

- Preserve and maintain the natural parkway-like setting of the road
- Maintain the existing roadway section wherever possible. Changes should be limited to short acceleration or deceleration lanes.

Greenbelt

Goal 6. Maintain the Crownsville planning area as a greenbelt, reflecting its mostly natural and rural character and its function as a buffer between more intensely developed areas to the south and north.

Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Goal 7. If a TDR program is established in Anne Arundel County, consider areas in Crownsville as potential sending areas, including:

- The property adjacent to Sherwood Forest Road that is presently zoned R-1 and RLD.
- The property presently zoned RLD on either side of Old Generals Highway on either side of River Road from Old Generals Highway to Maynadier Creek, and on the north side of Sherwood Forest Road from the road to the river.
- The property presently zoned R-1 which is to the west of Generals Highway and bounded to the north and west by open space zones and to the south by the subdivision containing Corbin Parkway.
- The land that is presently zoned RLD adjacent to Severn Run.
- The land presently zoned RLD north of St. Stephen's Church Road near the intersection of Route 3.
- The forested area adjacent to both sides of Johns Hopkins Road and to the west of St. Stephen's Church Road in the vicinity of Johns Hopkins Road that is presently forested and presently zoned R-1.
- Existing substandard platted lots in Herald Harbor and Epping Forest.

Parole Growth Management Area

In order to: (1) concentrate density and commercial uses in areas with existing infrastructure, (2) to avoid the costly extension of infrastructure into areas not designated for infrastructure construction, and (3) to preserve the existing character of the Generals Highway corridor and the rural and residential character of the surrounding areas, it is wise to concentrate commercial growth within the existing boundaries of the Parole Town Center. In this manner, urban sprawl is discouraged and redevelopment and revitalization of the existing business and commercial areas within Parole is encouraged. Revitalization of the older commercial areas must be a major cornerstone of the Parole Town Center. If the option is available to expand business and

commercial development outside the boundaries of the Town Center, the revitalization of the blighted areas within the older commercial sections of Parole will never be achieved.

Goal 8. The boundaries of Parole Town Center should not be extended into the Crownsville Small Planning Area.

Other Issues

- Limit additional commercial zoning on the eastern side of MD Route 3 in the vicinity of Dorr's Corner. Allow for a reconfiguration of the existing commercial area to reduce strip commercial development and encourage more efficient use of the property.
- Maintain all higher standards for conservation protection within Article 26 (Subdivision) and Article 28 (Zoning) even if it is not consistent with lower State standards.
- Ensure the uniform standard for steep slopes in the Critical Area is the 15% standard.
- Wildlife corridors shall be created, preserved and protected wherever possible. Wildlife corridors shall be vegetated strips of land, at least 300 feet in width and contiguous wherever possible, to provide habitat and safe passageway for wildlife.
- Discourage growth that is not in accordance with this Plan.
- Capital projects proposed within the Crownsville Small Planning Area are to be consistent with and not violate the greenbelt vision for the area.
- Restrict the use of single lot sheets, in lieu of grading permits, to only the most minimal level so that infill development will not be promoted within the Critical Area Buffer or result in the conversion of nontidal wetlands.
- Maintain and/or raise to a higher protective standard vibration, noise, glare, heat and illumination standards throughout all county codes for new construction.
- Write subdivision and zoning codes that are reader friendly. At a minimum these codes should be written as "stand alone documents" meaning that: all terms are defined the first time they are used within the document; words not in the glossary are to be understood in their plain text meaning; no references to other documents shall be made with regard to definitions; no equivocation of terms shall be used that may serve to mislead a lay reader.
- Maintain the one dwelling unit per 20 acre density on land zoned RA, as provided under current zoning and subdivision regulations.

