Appendix A: Strategic Revitalization Tasks

Appendix A of the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) is a technical document of sixteen (16) tasks compiled during the course of the SRP's preparation. The tasks were outlined by Crisfield officials and the SRP Steering Committee, as defined in the request for consultant proposals. Tasks include the following:

1) <u>Somers Cove Motel & City Infrastructure</u>

The City's objective for the Somers Cove Motel site should be to promote the highest and best use of the property, consistent with the other recommendations of the SRP. In this case, multi-family residential (condominiums) are considered the highest and best use.

Key strategies concerning City infrastructure focus primarily on water and sewer facilities. The SRP recommends that the City establish appropriate policies concerning water and sewer usage and allocation priorities, upgrade **t**he "1936 sewer collector line" to increase sewer capacity, and investigate the feasibility of a new wastewater treatment plant at an inland location.

2) <u>Somers Cove Marina & Adjoining Lands</u>

The SRP demonstrates how the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) can become a contributing partner in the revitalization of the City. Recommendations include reviewing ways to improve this relationship during the update of the *Somers Cove Marina Master Facilities Plan*.

3) <u>Waterfront Areas & Viewshed Protection</u>

Historically, public access and interaction with the waterfront has been a basic component of everyday life for Crisfield residents. Recent development projects on the City's waterfront have dramatically changed its character and raised concerns for future public access and enjoyment of the waterfront. The SRP identifies important view corridors and recommends the City adopt an "official" public space and pedestrian system map and require developers to provide public space and pedestrian systems in accordance with the official map. In addition, the SRP recommends the City limit building heights in certain locations and create incentives for developers to provide public waterfront spaces (e.g., parks, plazas, waterfront trails, promenades).

4) Uptown & Downtown

Redeveloping Crisfield's Uptown and Downtown areas presents opportunities to influence the City's urban form in an appropriate and sustainable manner. The SRP recommends reinforcing the urban form in the Uptown by adopting appropriate design guidelines for infill and redevelopment and encouraging retention of the existing building character along the street. Redevelopment and infill in the Downtown district should be required to adhere to design guidelines that reflect the urban design principles recommended in the SRP.

5) Economic Development

The SRP envisions a four-part solution for economic development, which is complex and will take 20 years or more to implement. SRP recommendations address strategies for expanding job opportunities, making Crisfield a "place" to live thus ensuring more full-time residents, redeveloping buildings and neighborhoods (the physical redevelopment of the City), and enhancing tourism, including a marketing program.

6) Environmental Protection

Protecting sensitive environmental features in and around the City is critical to sustaining the existing quality of life for residents and visitors. Protecting these attributes is a key to the long term health of the City and its economy. The SRP recommends that in areas where infill and redevelopment are to be encouraged, the City employ flexible development requirements consistent with the recommendations of the SRP. In environmentally sensitive areas, such as those noted in the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan*, the City should establish flexible requirements that allow some use of property, while minimizing loss of natural resources and adverse impacts to the environment.

7) Zoning

The SRP recommends a number of important revisions to the existing *Crisfield Zoning Code*. These code revisions and other recommended actions are intended to ensure that whatever is built or redeveloped in designated areas, is consistent with the land use and urban design recommendations of the SRP. Many of the zoning code revisions recommended are incentive based standards that allow for more intense development, where proposed projects closely follow the recommendations of the SRP.

8) Heritage Resources

Crisfield's remaining historic buildings and structures, along with its cultural trappings and folk practices, are character defining elements of the City as well as its residents. The SRP outlines strategies for the Crisfield to ensure that these critical resources are recognized as community assets and used as models for the design of new buildings and spaces, where appropriate.

9) Lands Adjoining the Public Housing Authority

Crisfield officials and City residents believe that land on and near the waterfront, as well as the Public Housing Authority properties, are potential underutilized assets. Forest and wetland areas located east of the Housing Authority property have significant environmental constraints. The challenge will be to find an appropriate balance between reasonable use of the property and protection of sensitive environmental features.

10) Utilization of Housing Authority Lands

The Crisfield Housing Authority public housing project, built between the 1960s and the 1980s, provides needed subsidized housing for the local population. However, the CHA facilities are old and in need of maintenance and modernization. The SRP recommends that the CHA undertake strategies to improve living conditions for existing residents, while at the same time capitalizing on the redevelopment value of the CHA property.

11) Vacant Lots in the Municipal Boundary

A consistent theme throughout the SRP is that Crisfield should encourage context sensitive infill and redevelopment on vacant and underutilized properties as a way of, among other things, increasing the inventory of affordable and workforce housing. New units located on vacant lots also can be used for units relocated as part of the redevelopment of the Crisfield Public Housing Authority property.

12) Affordable Housing

Addressing the affordable housing needs in the community will require rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, infill and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties, and taking full advantage of State and Federal assistance programs.

13) Outlet Port

The SRP recommends strategies designed to maintain and strengthen Crisfield's role as the outlet port to Smith, Janes, and Tangier Islands. In addition, the SRP recommends the City support the concept of ferry services in Maryland and Virginia, if economically feasible.

14) Parks, Recreation, & Open Space

The SRP recommends a green space concept that utilizes a system of parks, trails, open spaces, and public plazas etc., to enhance the appeal of the City for tourists and residents alike and provide enhanced access to the waterfront.

15) Streets, Parking, & Other Infrastructure

The SRP recommends that the Crisfield's focus be on the development of safe and efficient transportation systems that equally serve motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Problems regarding the periodic flooding of streets need to be addressed. Local transit services should be considered. Pedestrian and bike trails should augment existing sidewalks and provide access throughout the City. Existing on-street parking is adequate and only needs to be reconfigured to improve streetscape appearance. Large open parking lots, especially those facing streets, should be dissolved and dispersed via mid-block locations.

16) Mapping Resources

The SRP recommends that the City of Crisfield improve its mapping capabilities. This includes developing a Geographic System Information (GIS) for the City, updating old hard-copy maps for inclusion in the GIS, and creating official City maps based on the recommendations of the SRP and Comprehensive Plan. Digital maps and mapping capabilities will improve Crisfield's coordination with public and private entities, enhance economic development, and assist with revitalization efforts.

Task 1: Somers Cove Motel Site; Existing Issue Identification and Resolution - City Infrastructure

The City has a lease agreement with a private entity to operate the Somers Cove Motel. As shown in Figure 1 below, the Motel occupies a prime waterfront site adjacent to Somers Cove Marina. The current arrangement does not provide an acceptable financial return to the City nor does it deliver the type of accommodations needed to support tourism.

GOAL: SOMERS COVE MOTEL SITE & CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Update Crisfield plans, policies, processes, and regulations to achieve consistency with the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* and *Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) to address major issues such as Somers Cove Motel, development, and redevelopment.

OBJECTIVE: SOMERS COVE MOTEL

- Promote the highest and best use for City-owned Somers Cove Motel property consistent with the other recommendations of the SRP and the Concept Master Plan.

OBJECTIVES: CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Provide adequate public facilities to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of City residents.
- Ensure cost effective maintenance and upgrade of existing infrastructure.

The City should renegotiate the lease agreement with the current lessee and work with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allocate slips in the Somers Cove Marina for use by tenants. Residential units (e.g., condominiums) are the highest and best use, even without slips. The loss of the motel and growth of tourism will create a need for better accommodations elsewhere, ideally located in the Downtown. The City and developer will have primary responsibility for implementation. DNR will have responsibility for allocating slips.

The City will lose the income stream from the motel operation. However, assuming a sale of the land for development of low-rise condos or townhomes, it will derive a one-time income. In

addition the City's share of the property tax with a residential development will be significant. The renegotiation of the lease agreement should take place as soon as possible after approval of the SRP. Most important, the City should establish priorities for remaining sewer capacity at the existing sewer treatment plant. The City should reserve adequate sewer capacity to support development of the Somers Cove Motel site at its highest and best use.

WATER & SEWER

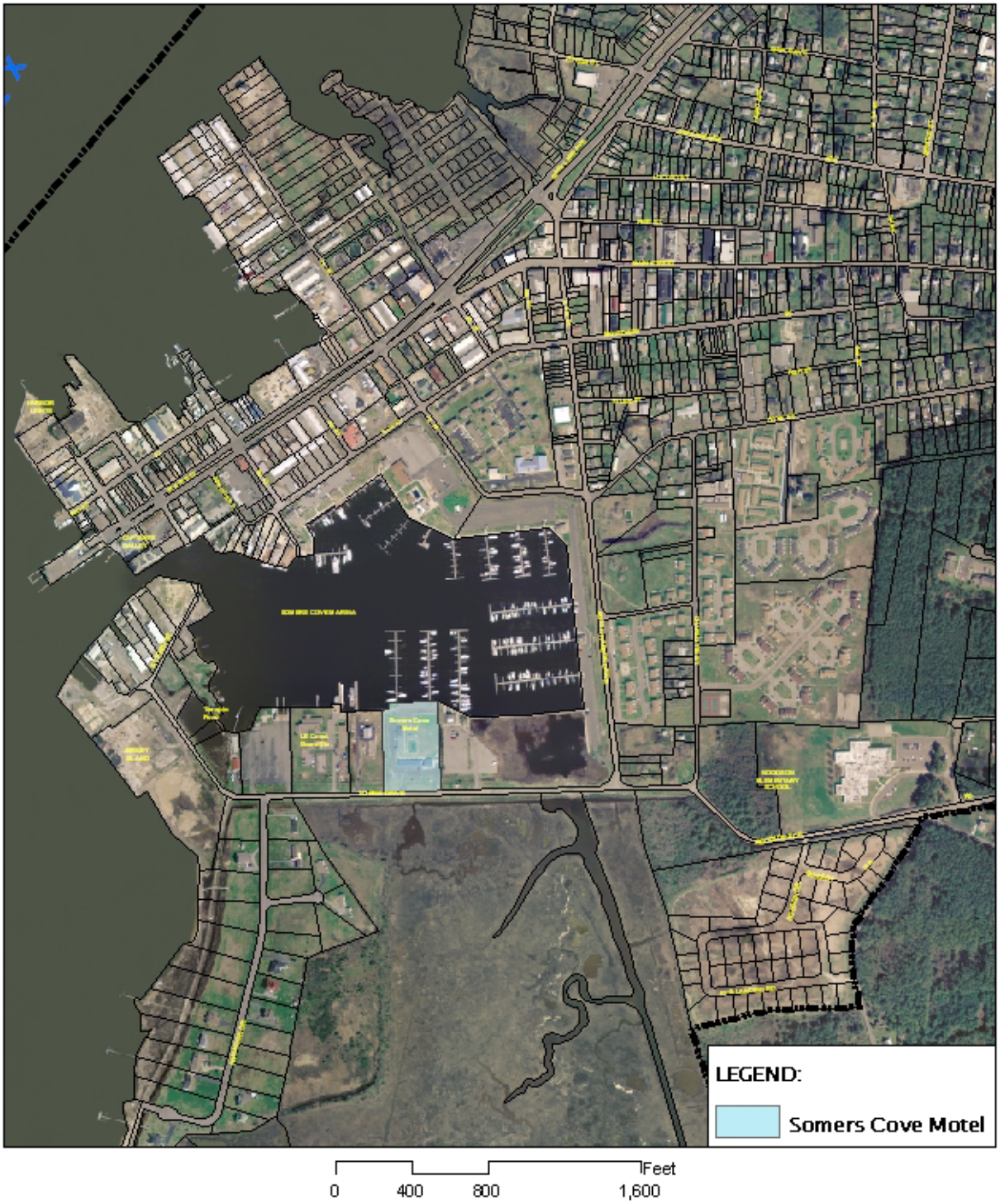
According to the recently adopted 2006 *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan), "expanding the wastewater treatment plant capacity is needed. With it in place, development beyond that expected by 2010 may be served with public sewer service. Public water supply facilities appear to be a similarly constraining factor on development beyond 2010."[1]

The City's wastewater treatment system is in need of an estimated $1.5 million replacement. This replacement includes a segment of the sewer collection system running from the 7th Street treatment facility to the City dock, referred to as the "1936 Sewer." The City's engineer estimates that the repair of this segment of the sewer system would result in additional capacity sufficient to provide wastewater treatment to 500 equivalent dwelling units (EDUs). Other quoted estimates place the upper limit of capacity at 650 EDUs. Sewer capacity could range from 120,000 gallons per day (gpd) to 160,000 (gpd) but is unknown at this time without further study.

There are several important issues related to sewer collection and treatment capacity. First, a majority of the infill and re-development critical to the revitalization of the City and recommended in the SRP is located in the area served by the "1936 Sewer" (see the Master Concept Plan – Chapter 2: Urban Design of the SRP). It is estimated that the build-out of the Master Concept Plan shown in the SRP will require additional sewer treatment capacity of approximately 0.5 million gpd or 2,000 EDUs. Sewer demand estimates include discounting for 330 Housing Authority replacement units.

[1] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 23.

FIGURE 1: SOMERS COVE MOTEL SITE



Obviously, the remaining capacity in the wastewater treatment plant is well below the estimated level of demand if the SRP Master Concept Plan, or development similar to it, occurs. Finally, projects in the redevelopment areas, shown on the Master Concept Plan, will be competing for sewer capacity with other revitalization projects. The City is committed to increasing employment opportunities and is in the process of developing an industrial park. The City's industrial park will likely be an important component of employment development and business retention efforts. City officials must decide how much sewer capacity should be set aside for the industrial park and other employment uses, besides the uses accounted for in the SRP Master Concept Plan.

The City of Crisfield's public water is provided by five wells with a combined capacity of about 1,200,000 gallons per day (gpd). The City recently constructed a 500,000-gallon water tower as an improvement to the system. The system now has two water towers. Average daily demand from 2004 to 2005 was approximately 750,000 gpd with a peak of about 800,000 gpd in February 2005. Estimated water demand associated with the SRP Master Concept Plan is for an additional 500,000 gpd, which will take demand to the City's permitted upper limits. Although, projected water demand is not as critical a problem as sewer capacity in the short term, it will need to be addressed.

Recent amendments to the Planning and Zoning Enabling Act (*Article 66B, Annotated Code of Maryland*) by "Maryland House Bill 1141" (HB 1141) require the City prepare a Water Resources Element (WRE) by October 2009. The City's WRE must address capacity issues associated with municipal growth and projected water demand as well issues related to wastewater treatment and non-point source pollution to adjacent waters. In addition, the City is required by HB 1141 to prepare a Municipal Growth Element (MGE) to outline Crisfield's short and long-term growth and development plans. These growth plans are directly related to the availability of infrastructure including water and sewer.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is an issue for many City residents, not just because of their income level, but also because of the rural nature of Somerset County, Maryland. This includes the need to "drive out of the City" for work, higher education opportunities, shopping, entertainment, etc. Additionally there are island residents and boaters arriving to Crisfield by water, who do not have private ground transportation. Crisfield's transportation system includes highway, transit, water, and air modes:

Highways/Streets: Capacity of the City's street system appears to be more than adequate to handle existing traffic and projected traffic volumes. If anything, MD 413 appears overbuilt, especially considering current traffic demand (e.g., decreasing truck traffic).

Transit Services: Goods and people are shuttled from the City Docks and Depot areas to Smith Island. Shore Transit provides scheduled bus service between Crisfield and Salisbury with stops *en route* to Princess Anne and Westover. In Princess Anne, a transfer station connects with many other Somerset County destinations. A heritage trolley/commuter route runs between Jane's Island State Park and the Somerset County Municipal Airport (See Figure 2 Circulation).

Ferry Services: Discussions and speculation concerning the feasibility and viability of car and/or passenger ferry service from Virginia, and Western Shore of Maryland areas to Crisfield continues. Some preliminary feasibility studies have taken place. The potential for passenger ferry service is a particularly "inviting" possibility, considering the role that tourism can play in the City's economic revitalization. The SRP Master Concept Plan takes into consideration ferry facilities, both at the City Dock and at the end of 7th street.

Airport: The Crisfield-Somerset County Municipal Airport is available for private air transportation. The Airport (approximately 2 miles from Crisfield city limits) has no regular airline service but is suitable for small privately chartered aircraft.

More pressing issues for City infrastructure are flooding. According to the Comprehensive Plan, major portions of the collector street network are within one to two feet above sea level and flood in moderate storm conditions. During serious storms and flooding events, the network can be impassable (see Figure 3 Flooding). Network areas include:

- Somerset Avenue from Cove Street to Norris Harbor Drive;
- Cove Street from Somerset Avenue to Fourth Street;
- Fourth Street from Cove Street to about Main Street; and
- Chesapeake Avenue from MD Route 413 to N. Third Street.

Although, attempts have been made to provide adequate and appropriate signage and other way finding devices, the location of key destinations is not always apparent to Crisfield visitors (see Figure 4 Wayfinding).

FIGURE 2: CIRCULATION PLAN

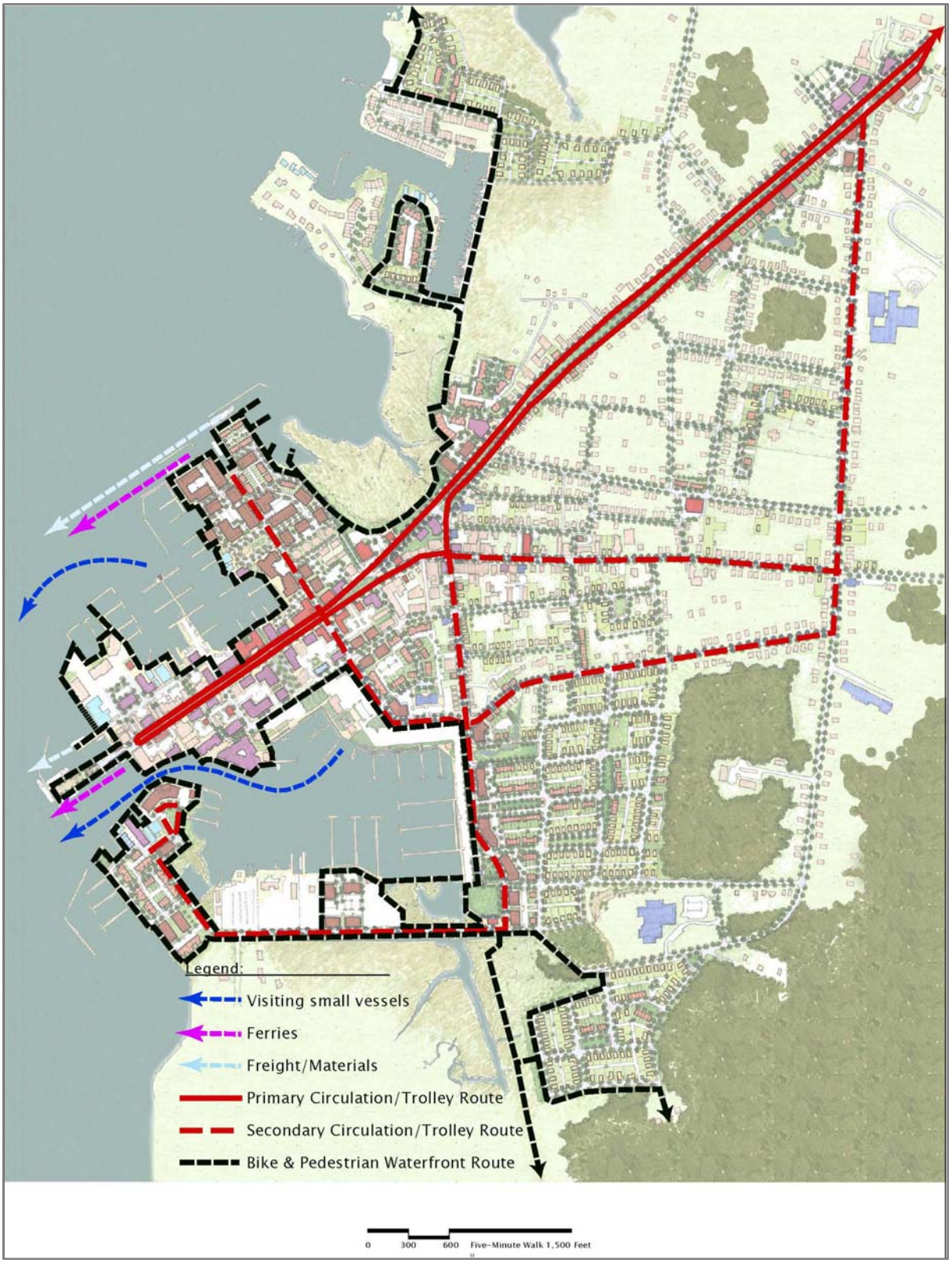


FIGURE 3: FLOODING

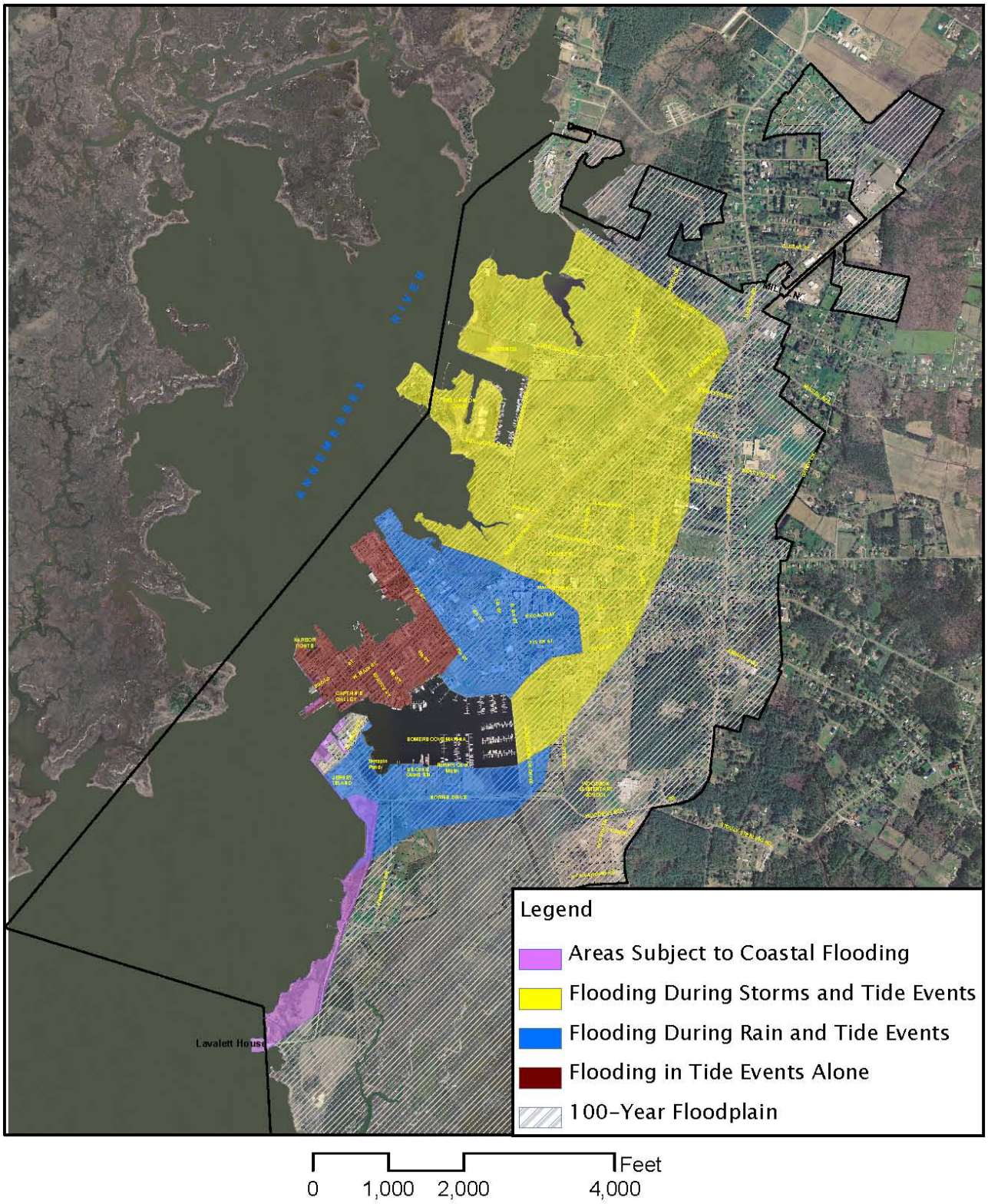
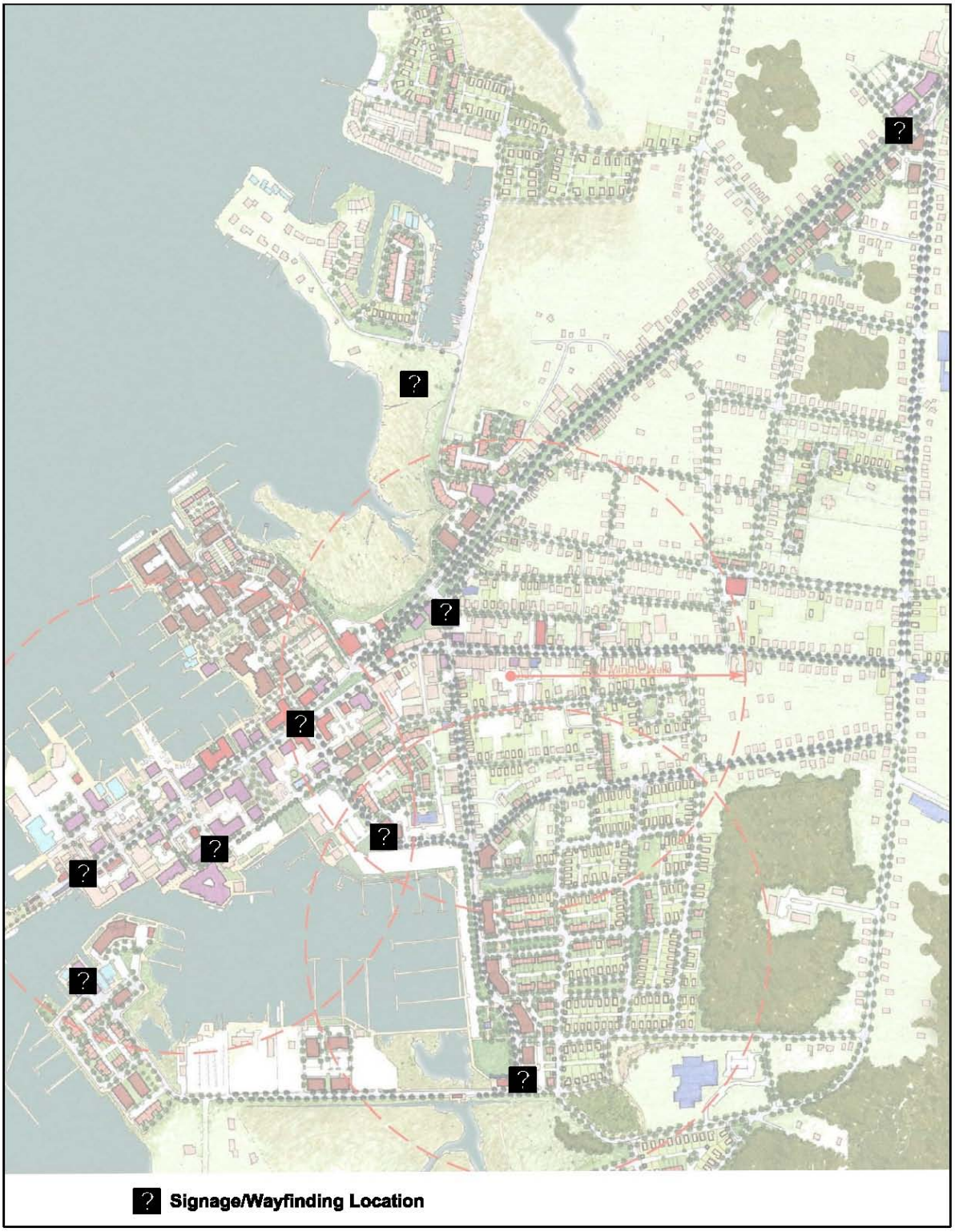


FIGURE 4: WAYFINDING



STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

Somers Cove Motel

1) Adopt a redevelopment floating zone that includes the Somers Cover Motel Site.
2) Renegotiate the lease arrangement with Somers Cove Motel and work with DNR to acquire slips for the site's redevelopment.
3) Promote the redevelopment of the Somers Cove Motel site to its highest and best use, i.e. multi-family condominiums.

Water and Sewer

1) Add a Water Resources Element (WRE) and Municipal Growth Element (MGE) to the Crisfield Comprehensive Plan and determine at what point planning must begin for a new waste water treatment plant and assess the long term viability of ground water resources.
2) Adopt official water and sewer allocation policies.
3) Adopt policy and utility code amendments that require water and sewer allocations are in use within two years or they are rescinded.
4) Prepare and adopt a capital improvement program and capital budget.
5) Seek appropriate State, Federal and/or private sector funding for capital project improvements.
6) Prioritize capital improvements based on health and water quality protection criteria and resulting capacity increases (e.g., correcting infiltration and inflow).
7) Construct sewer line upgrades at critical locations, including the "1936 sewer collector line," which is a priority capital project that addresses environmental protection issues and potentially increases sewer capacity.

Transportation

1) Work with the State to improve drainage and flood mitigation measures along MD Route 413.
2) Adopt official maps for street improvements and pedestrian improvements, including projects to reduce street flooding.
3) Require a Developers Rights and Responsibility Agreement (DRRA) that addresses developer responsibility for off-site and official improvements.

4) Develop a comprehensive and coordinated signage and way finding program that includes unified design features, e.g., the City's logo.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

Water and Sewer

1) Prepare a feasibility study that addresses the next increments of added capacity. Address the feasibility of moving the wastewater treatment plant to a different location away from the waterfront.

Transportation

1) Explore a City trolley service, when ridership and trip demand warrant. Plan for new trolley stops at key activity nodes (e.g., City Docks, Tawes Museum).
2) Accessible transit service is vital to economic development. Cooperate with Shore Transit to ensure that public transit services are expanded as needed to serve City residents.

Task 2: Somers Cove Marina and Adjoining Lands

The Somers Cove Marina is one of Crisfield's most valuable assets. The full integration of the marina into the "everyday" life of the City is critical to achieve the revitalization and economic development objectives expressed in the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP).

GOAL:

- Address issues and opportunities related to Somers Cove Marina and adjoining lands, which are key economic development aspects for the City.

OBJECTIVES:

- Integrate Somers Cove Marina with Crisfield, including the City's streets and pedestrian ways.
- Make more efficient use of vacant and underutilized State land adjacent to Somers Cove Marina.
- Reduce, if and when appropriate, the impact of physical and visual barriers between the City and Somers Cove Marina.

Somers Cove Marina was established in 1958 and was deeded to Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 1980 by the City of Crisfield. The State-operated facility encompasses approximately 50 acres of land within the City and is one of its most valuable assets. From 1980 to 2006, the marina was managed by the Maryland Park Service within DNR. In 2007, Marina operations were reassigned to the DNR's Boating Services Division.

In April 2008, the Maryland Legislature passed "Maryland House Bill 1463" (HB 1463) authorizing the establishment of the Somers Cove Marina Commission. The Commission will consist of two members from Somerset County, appointed by the Somerset County Commissioners (at least one of whom must be a member of the Somerset County business community); two members from the City Of Crisfield, appointed by the Mayor of Crisfield (at least one of whom must be a member of the Somerset County business community); and three members appointed by the DNR Secretary, at least one of whom must be a current slip holder at Somers Cove Marina.

The Commission, with the assistance of an Executive Director to be appointed by the DNR Secretary, will maintain the existing Somers Cove Marina Improvement Fund, adopt operating and capital budgets, assess slip and other fees and charges at the marina, implement a specified

master plan, set policy, and provide general oversight of marina operations. A marina manager will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the marina. HB 1463 goes into effect November 1, 2008.

Based on an analysis of income and expense figures for Somers Cove Marina from 2002-2006 (fiscal years), it is possible to make some preliminary observations:

- Net revenue at the Marina was down by 137% when one compares 2002 and 2006 (constant dollars). It may not be fair to compare those years---either year might have been unusual---but all four years after 2002 produced less net revenue than 2002, and net revenue in 2006 represented a significant loss.

- Revenues were up in the two most recent years and are 4.9% higher in 2006 (again, constant dollars) compared to 2002. The general trend of increased slip rental appears to be a good thing (nearly a 24% increase). However, fuel sales were down by 10%---this seems serious given that fuel prices have increased substantially over this period and fuel sales at Somers Cove declined as a percent of income from 36% in 2002 to 31% in 2006. The trend should be just the opposite. Also, concession sales are down by 50%, somewhat surprising since slip income increased.

- Dockage was down by 6% when comparing the beginning and end years. There is no clear trend over the period---it was higher in 2005---but it is surprising to see it reduced in 2006.

- On the expenditures side, total expenditures were 25% higher in 2006 than 2002. Employment costs were higher every year and increased by 40% over the five years, much more than normal wage inflation. This is particularly important because employment represents 40% of the budget. Communications and vehicle costs are way up. And the contract services figure grew. Supplies and materials (almost a third of the budget) were up just 6%.

In spite of its declining economic condition, Somers Cove Marina and the lands adjoining it are an important component of Crisfield's economic development strategies. This area of the City is an amenity like Great Hope Golf Course and the Municipal Airport that is attractive to new residents and new employers alike. While taking over management of the Marina would not benefit the City, the revitalization of the Marina and the lands surrounding it would.

Ongoing partnering with DNR in order to capitalize on the opportunities presented by Somers Cove Marina is a key undertaking. The City should work with marina management to ensure

that a revitalized facility contributes to the City's urban qualities and the visitor experience. The City-appointed members of the Somers Cove Marina Commission should encourage a more proactive and substantive State role, including DNR, in implementing the SRP.

The City has been assured that under the new management and with improvements, Marina operations will improve and DNR will work with Crisfield on promoting the Marina and the City. DNR will soon undertake a Facilities Master Plan for the Marina that will likely address operations and facility improvements. In addition, DNR staff indicated that improvements to the docks at the City Depot and at the end of Broad Street are being planned.

STRATEGIES

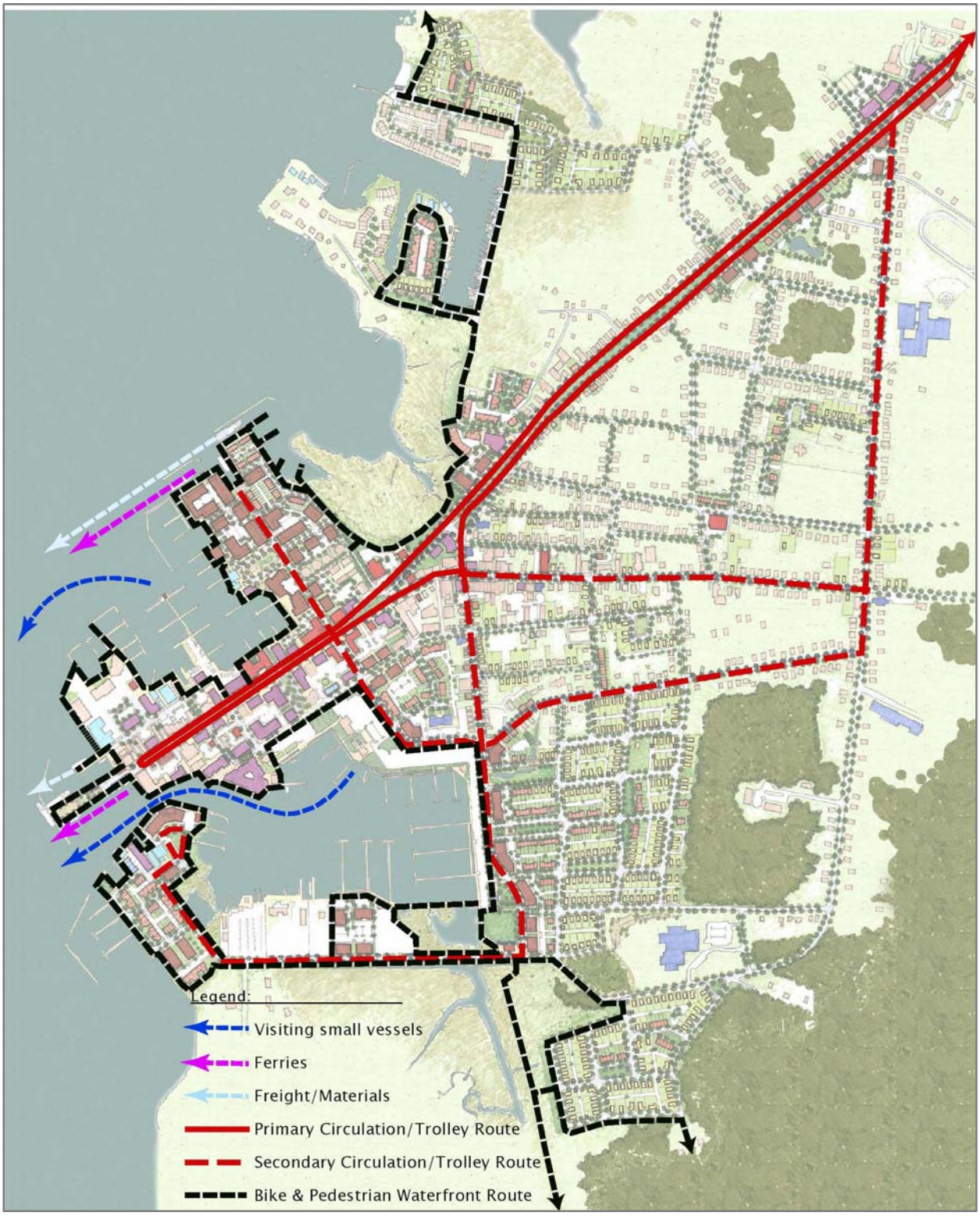
Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Negotiate the reservation or lease of slips for residential units developed on the Somers Cove Motel site.
2) Work with DNR in the preparation of a Somers Cove Marina Facilities Plan to evaluate alternative security measures to improve public access to the Marina, which can coincide with the redevelopment of the Housing Authority Lands.
3) Create new pedestrian links to the Marina (see Figure 1 Pedestrian Links to Marina), including a proposed waterfront promenade that continues alongside the Marina extending to Cedar Island Marsh and Jersey Island.
4) Ensure that the Somers Cove Marina Advisory Committee (when it comes on board in November 2008) is fully vested in the recommendations of this SRP.
5) Meet with DNR to review recommendations of this SRP in detail.
6) Work with DNR on development plans for the State property adjacent to Evans seafood. These plans should implement the gateway building recommendations discussed in the Urban Design chapter. This is a potential location for a Chesapeake Bay Discovery Center.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Implement the redevelopment concepts shown on the Concept Master Plan to better integrate the Marina and City.
2) Work with DNR on development plans for the State property adjacent to Evans seafood. These plans should implement improvements that create a distinct waterfront gateway to the City.

FIGURE 1: PEDESTRIAN LINKS TO MARINA



Task 3: Waterfront Areas Bordering the City – Viewshed Protection

According to public comments, gathered during the planning process for the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP), there is a perception that new development is "walling-off" the waterfront. The walling-off effect is limiting the public's visual and physical access to Crisfield's shoreline.

GOAL:

- Arrest recent development trends that are "walling-off" the waterfront and seek to maximize public views of the waterfront and preserve positive viewsheds.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maximize public enjoyment of the City's waterfront.
- Maintain views of the water from public areas.
- Create positive views of the City approaching from the Bay, Tangier Sound, and the Annemessex River.

Recent waterfront developments (mid-rise condo buildings) are walling off the waterfront, limiting the public's visual and physical access to the shoreline. This trend has raised concern for future public access and enjoyment of the waterfront. Issues of public concern for Crisfield's waterfront include:

- Public access to the water;
- Water related recreation facilities (public beaches and waterfront parks);
- Preservation of scenic vistas such as views of the City approaching from the waterside;
- The impact of new buildings on the City skyline and view corridors;
- Public access to Somers Cove Marina; and
- Linkages between Somers Cove Marina and Uptown and Downtown.

Historically, public access and interaction with the waterfront has been a basic component of everyday life for Crisfield residents. Public concerns are partly the result of recent waterfront redevelopment that has displaced traditional one and two story buildings and replaced them with mid-rise condominiums. Condominiums buildings range in height from four to six stories with parking located underneath. Displaced buildings include historic seafood processing businesses and a local restaurant.

EXHIBIT 1: Hypothetical Bay viewshed of Jersey Island approaching Crisfield, at full condo "build-out."

Existing developments including Jersey Island, Captain's Quarters, Captain's Galley, and Harbor Lights have dramatically changed the character of the City's traditional waterfront (see Figure 1 Proposed Development Projects). As shown in the "hypothetical" illustration above of Jersey Island, if condo development trends continue, the shoreline could be severely impacted. Together, these projects total approximately 468 units, Their visual impacts are especially noticeable in the Uptown area.

With completion of the Jersey Island condominium project, views from the waterside, as craft approach the City from Tangier Sound, will be dramatically altered from the historic perspective (See Figure 2 Views). Additional development projects have been proposed for properties on 7th Street (at the Small Boat Harbor) and adjacent to Somers Cove Marina. These projects provide waterfront access wherever possible.

Citizens are understandably concerned about the cumulative effect of development on similarly situated properties. According to the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan*, "the City lacks public open space. Public water access is limited to a privately held beach, which is leased to the City. No citywide parks and open space vision exists, though parks and open space are essential elements of good city form and function. The shoreline is a public resource and it should be managed to benefit the greatest number of people in the best way possible. Extensive and coordinated physical and visual access to the water's edge for the public should be attained."[2]

EXHIBIT 2: Revised viewshed of Jersey Island approaching Crisfield, at moderate scale.

[2] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 33.

The City has responded with plans for a public park (Sunset Park). However, park development will have to compete for attention with the City's limited financial resources. Increasing tourism is a key economic strategy. Attracting and entertaining tourists in the City will require abundant access to the waterfront, a primary attraction for visitors. Exhibits 1 and 2 illustrate the potential difference between full condominium "build-out" and a mixture of condos and more moderate townhomes with landscaping.

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

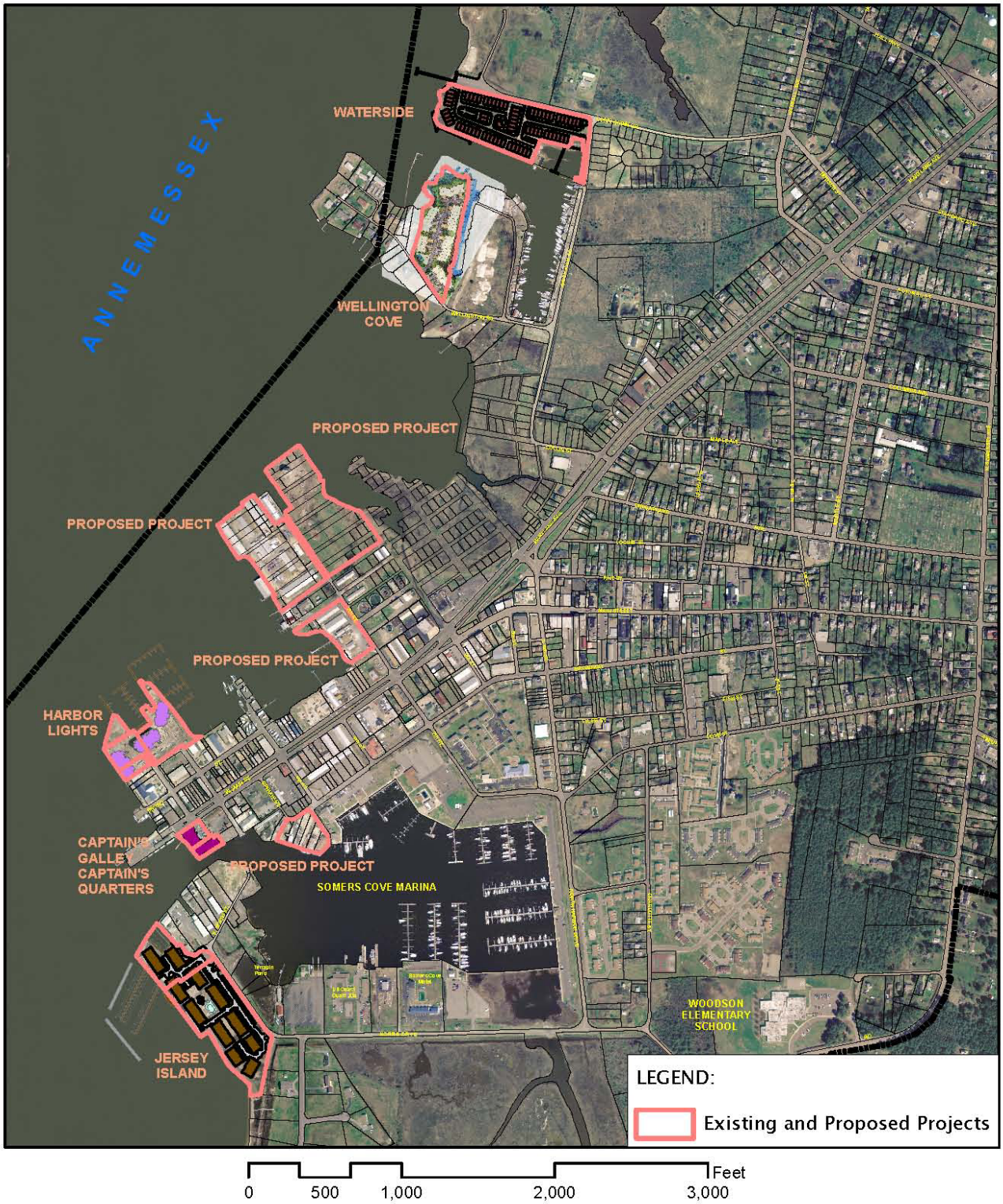


FIGURE 2: PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHTS

FIGURE 3: VIEWS & VIEW CORRIDORS

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Revise existing zoning for the waterfront to limit the height of buildings as shown on the "Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan - Master Concept Plan."
2) Do not permit building height variances.
3) Create incentives for developers to provide public waterfront spaces (e.g., parks, plazas, waterfront trails, promenades), where people can access the water's edge.
4) Adopt an "official" public space and pedestrian system map based on the "Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan - Master Concept Plan" and require developments to provide public space and pedestrian systems in accordance with the official map.
5) Evaluate a unified and coordinated lighting and signage scheme for waterfront buildings to create a distinct image of the City's waterfront as viewed from the waterside.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 years)

1) Incorporate the view corridors and terminal views into a form-based code.

Task 4: Uptown and Downtown Commercial Districts, Including Storefronts, Land Utilization, and Streetscape

Crisfield's character and heritage should influence new and remodeled storefronts, land utilization, and general streetscapes, where appropriate. The Uptown and Downtown areas of Crisfield are important for economic development and revitalization efforts in the City. Redevelopment efforts should focus on these areas.

Crisfield's maritime and seafood heritage is important for the City's cultural identity.
Image Provided by Peter Johnston & Associates, LLC

GOAL:

- Revitalize the Uptown and Downtown areas of Crisfield to promote economic development, investment, and reinvestment.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reinvestment in existing buildings.
- Ensure appropriate infill and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties
- Invest in public improvements coordinated with building façade improvements that together strengthen the appeal of commercial areas and improve the public realm.
- Restore key character defining buildings.
- Create new context sensitive buildings that contribute to a consistent and unifying visual character for districts.

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

Crisfield's heritage and existing architecture should influence new and remodeled store fronts, land utilization, and streetscape. This will provide an authentic and "integrated" whole, which may be achieved to revitalize the Uptown and Downtown commercial districts. This also suggests that building and site development, significantly diverging from established urban patterns, will adversely affect the long-term potential to achieve the results expressed in the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP).

Providing a consistent and appealing Main Street character reinforces the appeal of the Uptown and Downtown commercial areas for patrons, businesses, residents, and visitors. The setting, along with the mix of goods and services offered, will influence selection of Crisfield as a shopping destination over Somerset County and other municipalities. SRP establishes a land use concept designed to strengthen the pedestrian realm and generate positive street level activity and interest. The "Building Inventory" discussed in the Physical Section of the SRP identifies the degree to which specific buildings contribute to the pedestrian experience and suggests appropriate façade treatments.

Large gaps between buildings create disruptions in the streetscape and dilapidated and abandoned buildings give the appearance of neglect.

The *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) recommends the City promote a "Main Street" commercial and entertainment area for the central business district. "Standards for parking, signage, and streetscape should promote theater, music, lodging, restaurant, and shopping opportunities."[3]

The "Downtown" (Route 413 corridor from the City Dock to 7th Street) and "Uptown" (Main Street corridor from 7th Street to 3rd Street) are commercial districts. These districts are a mixture of commercial land and retail establishments including restaurants, residential, mini-storage, manufacturing, marina and marine services, and other commercial uses. These two distinct commercial areas are sized to support a larger population and a higher level of tourism than now present.

Chain-link fencing detracts from quality of life and gives an unattractive appearance.

Visitors to the City are likely to not want to park the car and walk Crisfield's Main Street. There are many vacant commercial structures and properties that create the appearance of decline and disinvestment. A majority of City residents commute to Salisbury (35 miles) and Pocomoke City (20 miles) for their shopping needs, as they are generally unavailable in the City. Infill and redevelopment should respect the existing building and site development patterns in the

[3] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 38.

commercial districts. “As redevelopment occurs, Crisfield will benefit from pursuing thoughtful infill and revitalization strategies that respect community character: the traditional layout of neighborhoods and streets, scenic vistas, local building styles, and regional vernacular architecture.”[4]

ENHANCING THE PUBLIC REALM

SRP recommendations are designed to reinforce Main Street, both Uptown and Downtown, through rehabilitation of contributing historically significant structures and redevelopment of vacant lots (see 5th Street Building Example and Depot Renovation sketches below). Cities undergoing revitalization often conceive façade improvement programs, which help owners improve storefronts and buildings. The City is encouraged to establish a façade grant program to encourage revitalization design consistency along Main Street. Such a program may include tax incentives for participants.

Uptown Main Street

Uptown Main Street is the commercial center of Crisfield for most residents. The Post Office and the inconspicuous City Hall are the focal points for the community and convey a sense of the diversity of the City. The nearby neighborhoods and the historic “small town look” enhance the sense of place. The theme for this area should be that the City offers retail goods and services for its residents in an historic setting. Public uses act as anchors, convenient parking and excellent accessibility.

The Crisfield Post Office, constructed in the 1930’s, is located in the heart of the Uptown Commercial Core and provides an attractive setting for commerce.

There should be a clear statement (sculpture, kiosk, etc.) that welcomes visitors to the City, presents the City’s identity in a graphic way and further identifies the retail orientation of the area. This is an area of opportunity for small stores and offices, including antiques and vintage clothing, home décor, hardware, professional and government offices, health and medical uses (health clubs, clinics and medical service centers). It is also an ideal location for the sale of local products such as baked goods (the “Smith Island Cake”), specialty products (home decor, etc.) and restaurants, sandwich shops, and cafes.

[4] Ibid, 36.

Significant and current opportunities for enhancing the public realm include the potential for a new library facility and development of Sunset Park. The City should work closely with the Somerset County Library Board to locate a new library facility in the Uptown area. Meeting the floor area needs of the library, while remaining committed to the design principles of the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP, may require locating the library on the first floor in a multi-story mixed-use building. This could include an upper story conference area. Parking needs can be addressed through on-street and nearby public parking lots. It is important that the City and library representatives "think" of the library as an urban institution, located in a walkable city center, as opposed to thinking of it as a suburban shopping facility.

Period lighting, brick sidewalks, and streetscaping (street trees and furniture) can provide for an attractive historic setting.

Uptown can be improved by enhancing the street and the main corner at the Post Office, with the goal being to strengthen the civic presence by the addition of like buildings, such as a library. Actions could include better lighting and signage, a crosswalk with brick pavers, canopy street trees, and other special features that convey the sense of importance in the area. There should be signage at the MD Route 413/Main Street intersection, which communicates the message that turning onto Main Street will bring travelers into the historic commercial area. Signs should convey the main theme of maritime heritage. There is a need for a place where teenagers can congregate and socialize safely in a comfortable environment that supports other uses (coffee shop, library, bookstore, etc.).

In general, buildings in this part of the City require the least amount of intervention. Those buildings identified as renovation opportunities are primarily select opportunities, such as recommended façade improvements to the Dollar General and Town Hall to provide better ground floor building treatments reflecting nearby buildings of greater character. In particular, the City should set a positive example of redevelopment in the Uptown, when a new or expanded Town Hall is planned.

Downtown Main Street

Downtown has had more renovation and redevelopment work performed to its buildings in the past decades. Some of this work has had little regard for the character and heritage of Crisfield. In addition, the south/east side of MD 413 between 6th and 10th Streets contains several vacant

lots and approximately 20 structures of which two are significant contributors to the streetscape and pedestrian system.

The portion of Main Street between 7th and 10th Streets is Crisfield's commercial center where some of its leading businesses are located. However, the closed restaurant, vacant hotel, underutilized and vacant lots, derelict buildings, and vacant storefronts are discouraging signs to travelers. This area is an important location and its redevelopment as the marine business district should be a high priority.

The Downtown area should be the site of a new hotel and conference center that attracts business visitors and expands tourism opportunities. A written comment from an early SRP workshop stated "eventually bringing in both private and public sector executive teams for retreats to Crisfield." The theme should be that Crisfield offers maritime business opportunities in an urban waterfront setting that is efficient and provides a full range of maritime services along with accommodations, conferencing facilities, good dining opportunities and shopping, within easy walking distance. Additional amenities include improved and additional access to the waterfront from Main Street, and a near-continuous waterfront promenade.

In addition to the hotel other opportunities for new businesses in this location could include business and professional services including telecommuting secure offices, marine sales and repair, real estate, insurance, accounting, and financial services. Building and site opportunities include a place for a new hotel and major redevelopment at the corner of Main and 7th Streets that increases the attractiveness of the area, and enlivens the streetscape for pedestrians.
All new and redeveloped buildings should include ground floor uses that activate the streetscape. Public improvements, such as sidewalks and sidewalk repairs, handicap features, benches, signage, streetlights, street trees, and trash containers should cater to the needs of pedestrians and anticipate flooding and salt spray intrusion. As shown in Figures 1 through 6, the vision for the Uptown and Downtown districts is reinforced by the recommendations of the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan*, specifically:

<u>Infill/Redevelopment</u>: Infill development and/or redevelopment should occur in a manner that respects the size, scale, and use of existing and historic development patterns. Successful infill maintains and/or restores spatial continuity to streetscapes; strengthens neighborhoods; respects historic preservation, existing vistas, and natural resources. This introduces compatible uses that complement existing community attributes and needs.

<u>Site Design</u>: Excellence in site design and architecture should minimize automobile oriented site planning including expansive parking lots, drive-through service windows, and large setbacks.

Architecture: The architecture of new buildings and redevelopment of existing buildings should be accomplished in a manner generally consistent in style, materials, size, and scale with neighboring properties. The City should depart from this policy only when guided by an adopted plan that sets forth new architectural design standards.

Historic Sensitivity: The City should promote compatible and historically sensitive building units. New development along streets should enclose the public realm and create a continuous street wall consistent with historical patterns.

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Work closely with the Somerset County Library Board to locate a new library facility in the Uptown area.
2) Include the land uses recommended for the Uptown and Downtown areas recommended in the *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* in the City's zoning code.
3) Adopt design guidelines that are specific to the Uptown district that conform to the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Revitalization Plan.
4) Consider developing a voluntary historic district for the Uptown area.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Enhance Main Street at the Post Office intersection with better lighting and signage, crosswalks with brick pavers, canopy street trees, and other special features that convey the sense of the importance of the area. Similar improvements should be made in the Town Hall area streetscape.
2) Install signage at the Route 410/Main Street intersection, communicating the message that turning onto Main Street will bring travelers into the historic commercial area.
3) Establish a façade grant program (which may include tax incentives for participants) to encourage revitalization design consistency along Main Street.
4) Identify appropriate locations for information kiosks that identify shopping, cultural and historic attractions. One suggested location for such info is in the gateway building located on Route 413 at the intersection with Somerset Avenue.
5) Encourage and facilitate development of a high quality hotel and conference center for Downtown Main Street that attracts business visitors and expands tourism opportunities.

FIGURE 1: FIFTH STREET RENOVATION

Before

After

FIGURE 2: REDEVLOPMENT CONCEPT 1

Main Street at 6th Street – Before

Main Street at 6th Street – After

FIGURE 3: REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 2

Rt 413 at Collins Street – Before

Rt 413 at Collins Street – After

FIGURE 4: REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT 3

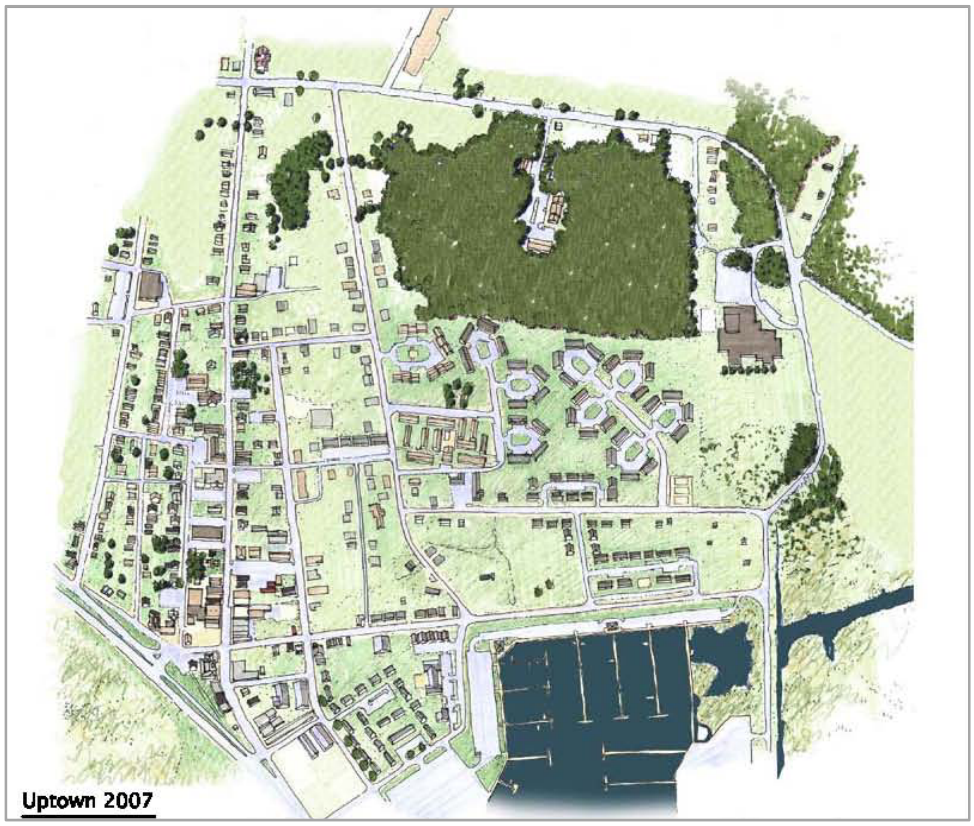


FIGURE 5: SIGN EXAMPLES

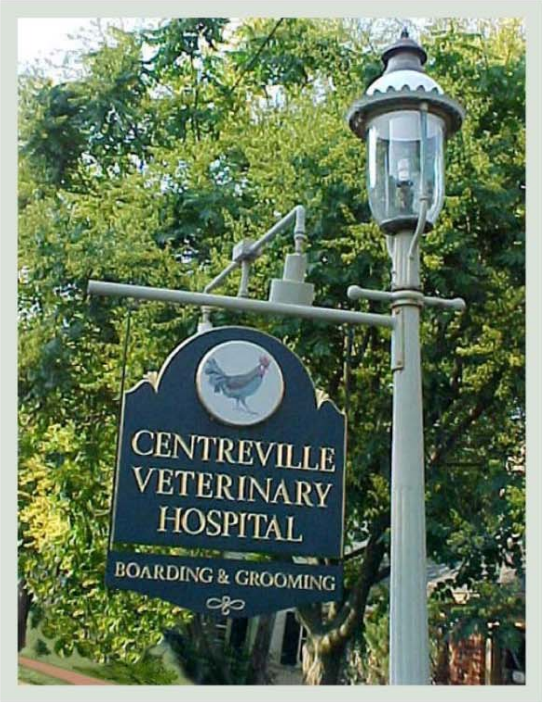


FIGURE 6: CITY DOCK/DEPOT RENOVATION

BEFORE

AFTER

Task 5: Economic Development

Economic development is critical to revitalize the City of Crisfield. Task 5 provides an overview of the City's economy, highlighting issues and opportunities that must be addressed in order to achieve revitalization objectives. It represents a significant and long-term investment by Crisfield. These include four broad strategies:

Jobs: Expanding businesses and industrial park opportunities to attract new jobs including retail; creating a high-tech waterfront business center; expanding maritime industries; and modernizing the digital and physical infrastructure of the City.

Full-Time Residents: Tapping incoming retirees ("Grayshore Phenomenon"), who are relevant to the challenge Crisfield is facing. The City should engage these new home owners in community initiatives and also seek to achieve a stable and growing residential population base.

Tourism: Expanding tourism linkages and opportunities, which are key issues in Crisfield. This includes marketing the City as a gateway to Smith, Janes, and Tangier Islands; expanding recreational boating and fishing; developing a Hotel/Conference Center; and supporting the concept of a Maryland Bay Discovery Center.

Physical Redevelopment: Acquiring public and private assistance in addressing the Crisfield housing crisis. This includes redevelopment in targeted areas such as the Public Housing Authority Lands, as well as utilizing marinas in the City to enhance economic development.

These are significant trends that will drive the redevelopment of Crisfield and fuel the implementation of plans to redevelop the City. Although some short term gains are likely (3 to 5 years), the full implementation will take approximately 20 years or longer.

GOALS:

- Sustain and diversify the economy.
- Improve work force training and skills.
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure.
- Maintain and improve quality of life in the region.

OBJECTIVES:

- Support resident businesses and industries by helping them in their competitiveness.
- Promote entrepreneurship.
- Attract new industry sectors to the region that are compatible with the City's socio-economic environment.
- Ensure that workers of all ages have access to the education and training needed to succeed in both existing industries and potential new industries the City is seeking to attract.
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure to accomplish the City's goals, objectives, and strategic actions.
- Manage economic development to ensure the protection of our natural environment and the prevention of sprawl and congestion.
- Support and recruit diverse cultural and recreational opportunities to ensure a high quality of life for citizens and visitors in the region.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The current economic situation in Crisfield offers little promise without growth in residential population. A need to change the underlying dynamics of the market is indicated in order to create commercial opportunities that will attract small businesses and investors (jobs). The City needs more retail to attract tourists and support its residential population. The obvious question is "what comes first," the shop, the tourist, or the resident population. How does a strategy attract more restaurants, when some existing ones are already in difficult economic circumstances?

There are great challenges and also opportunities associated with the subjects discussed in the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP). Crisfield has historic strengths that the SRP can affirm. For example, over the long term, there are opportunities to reuse older properties and build infill stores in the two commercial areas, based on the growth of the population and increased tourism.

While more residents will support more shops, and more shops will attract larger numbers of tourists, there must be progress in all areas at the same time if this plan is to bring significant change. The economic development program for Crisfield will have a significant impact in 3-5 years. Implementation of the full vision will take a generation, 30 years or longer. Over the longer term, the changes will reinforce each other. Table 1 summarizes key actions below.

Table 1: Project Implementation Schedule

	Timeframe				
		By Year			
Project	Immediate	2-3	4-5	5-10	10-20
Targeted marketing business attraction		X			
Expansion of industrial park property			X		
Redevelopment of City Dock and attractions		X			
Construction of breakwater.			X		
Development of North Harbor Marina			X		
Maritime office business center				X	
Hotel development				X	
Redevelopment: Main and 7th St.			X		
City Library	X				
Sunset Park		X			
Skateboard park		X			
Retail marketing and recruitment	X				
Exchange of property with DNR		X			
Bayfront Discovery Center			X		
Housing redevelopment	X				
Somers Cove redevelopment		X			

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

While this is a very long-term economic plan, there will be immediate benefits as City residents and investors see a framework in which to make decisions. It is clear that the plan is far beyond the current capabilities of the City in terms of staffing and management. The only course is to take single projects and programs as resources allow, find new resources as momentum grows, and utilize partnerships to advance strategies.

General Economic Development Strategies for Crisfield

Crisfield's economic development efforts have lacked a "core" message as well as a fully funded effort. The City has to take the lead. This will require public, public/semi-public, and public/private partnerships. Notable public partnerships include the Somerset County Economic Development Office, Maryland Department of Economic and Business Development, and other State departments such as the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Housing and Community Development. It also will include federal organizations and departments such as the Economic Development Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Partnerships also include educational institutions such as the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Salisbury University.

Once the SRP has been approved, it is recommended that the City convene an "economic development summit" that brings these entities together in Crisfield. The purpose will be to provide an opportunity to understand the connections between programs. The SRP envisions a "four-part solution," which is complex and will take a generation to implement:

Expand job opportunities: This includes industries related to maritime use such as fishing, boating and shipping, which are the history and culture of Crisfield. Projects to accomplish this will include:

- Industrial park: another phase
- High tech waterfront business center
- Additional dry boat storage
- High-speed internet communications

Make fuller use of marina capacity: Crisfield has one of the best ports on the Chesapeake Bay and one of the least used for its class. There is a need for a strategic plan regarding use of the Marina in order to make it an economic resource. Successful marinas can be economic development tools for revitalization of surrounding areas.

Market Crisfield as a place to live: Crisfield has a high quality of life. This is a key element in the attraction of a retirement transitional workforce, targeting the people living in waterfront condos. These people can work another 5 to 10 years and longer, while living in Crisfield. With the right marketing program Crisfield can become a Mecca for these people and their extended families. This means creating a new identity for the place.

Enhance tourism: The leading elements to fuel enhanced tourism are the redevelopment of the Downtown and Uptown and improved use of marinas. This includes more recreational boating and fishing. There are many under-recognized attractions, notably Jane's Island State Park. There also is a need for a hotel/conference center.

The City has a lease agreement with a private entity to operate the Somers Cove Motel. The Motel occupies a prime waterfront site adjacent to the Marina. The current arrangement does not provide an acceptable financial return to the City nor does it deliver the type of accommodations that are needed in Crisfield to support tourism.

Targeting Crisfield

National economic trends indicate a decline in non-technology manufacturing sectors. Therefore, the focus of future economic targeting should be the enrichment of the Crisfield's strengths coupled with "high-tech" industries that have growth prospects. This is the vision of more pro-active economic organizations and institutions in the region including Somerset County's Economic Development Department, the Tri-County Council (a regional economic entity), and the University of Maryland.

Core industries are Crisfield's traditional strengths. These sectors should be cultivated by retaining and growing businesses already present as well as attracting others. Core Crisfield industries include:

1. Seafood.
2. Food processing.
3. Maritime businesses and services.
4. Tourism-related businesses and services.

Other industry prospects have the potential for recruitment in the current environment. These include the following:

- Recirculation aquaculture to provide higher quality/value seafood.
- Environmental sciences for research and commercialization.
- Sustainable energy and bio fuels including research and development.
- Marine industry trade activities around "U.S. Marine" in Salisbury.
- Information Technologies (IT) including communication and Internet-related cluster development.

- Aerospace and satellite technology, space and satellite businesses cluster building around the Mid-Atlantic Regional Space Port (MARS) and the Mid-Atlantic Institute for Space Technology (MIST).
- Health care services focused on mobility and aging.
- Executive wellness centers and spas.

The proposed targeting effort is not a "static" agenda. It will require adjustment by the economic development professionals to relate regional targets to specific features of the jurisdiction. The targeting effort itself must be opportunistic and practical placing greater resources in targets that offer the best prospects as well as leveraging limited resources with those of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) for marketing efforts.

Marketing Crisfield

Thus far, marketing efforts for the City have lacked a core message and fully funded backing. While there is currently too much commercial space in the commercial areas there is nevertheless an opportunity to market the City more effectively. This will require new thinking about uses that are not present in the area and aggressive public/private partnerships for implementation.

Crisfield has excellent historic, environmental, and commercial attractions. The City must re-focus existing resources by bringing people from the Marina, the State Park, the highway, and Ocean City. Attracting shoppers and visitors from outer edges of the defined market area is critical. Themes based on local assets, including boating, fishing, and dining, together with implementation of projects from the SRP, will galvanize the City's identity and generate increasing attention from a wide market area.

Economic development marketing typically focuses on attracting new companies from outside a region based on identified "targets." However, most employment growth comes from industries already present. While the City can make many important points in marketing itself, it will be essential to select a relatively small number of factors that are critically important to consistently feature the City in marketing materials.

Crisfield's strengths make up a unique cluster and should be used in marketing the City:

- Great maritime history.
- Waterfront resources and a Chesapeake Bay-oriented lifestyle.

- Workforce.
- Hospital.
- Airport.
- Recreational resources including marinas, golf course, and State Parks.

The City's weaknesses that must be addressed also are apparent:

- Infrastructure problems and limitations (water capacity/sewerage treatment capacity, flooding.).
- Lower level of educational attainment in the workforce.
- Decline in core seafood industry.
- Remoteness from major population centers and highways.
- Lack of rounded attraction packages with family activities.

The City should develop marketing materials that:

- Feature the region's educational system and resources.
- Describe the business community in the City, including leading businesses, institutions and resources, and provide quotes from business leaders.
- Identify the leading technology resources in the region that have strong connections with economic development activities and businesses.
- Highlight recreation areas such as Somers Cove Marina, State Parks and Great Hope Golf Course.
- Promote easy commuting patterns in and around the region (includes the airport).
- Highlight existing space and existing workforce numbers.
- List available sites and buildings in the City, notably the property designated for industrial development.
- Note an available workforce (unemployment rates well above the State average).
- Provide a WEB site with an economic development section

The Crisfield Marketing Effort

Promulgating selected facts about the City is important. Crisfield is strategically located on Chesapeake Bay between the Washington D.C. and Hampton Roads regions (about 100 miles to each area). In addition, the City has a good workforce and access to worker training programs. These messages should form the basis of the City's primary marketing effort. They should feature the region's educational system and resources and state that the private sector drives key decisions regarding technical training:

- University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES).
- Salisbury University.
- Wor-Wic Community College.
- Workforce Development Programs.

Describe the business community in the City, including leading businesses, institutions and resources, and provide quotes from business leaders. The material should identify the leading technology resources in the region that have strong connections with economic development activities and businesses:

- Wor-Wic Community College.
- Hawk Center at UMES.
- Small Business Development Center Offices (the SBDC Office serving the City is in Salisbury). Programs offer assistance to small businesses throughout all phases of growth and development using one-on-one counseling and education.

Show that the region can support high technology, while maintaining its comfortably-paced lifestyle:

- Highlight recreation areas such as Somers Cove Marina, State Parks and Great Hope Golf Course.
- Promote easy commuting patterns in and around the region (includes the airport).

Highlight existing space and existing workforce numbers. This will be particularly important in marketing to manufacturing as well as packaging and distribution industries. These industries generally need both a large workforce and large amount of space for operations.

- List available sites and buildings in the City, notably the property designated for industrial development.
- Note an available workforce (unemployment rates well above the State average).

The most important marketing tool that the City could have is a web site with an economic development section that provides the following:

- Data on local demographics, work force, major employers wage rates, education, and other statistics that assist in guiding business decisions.

- Reciprocal links to State of Maryland and Somerset County sites so that prospects can have information on state and local programs and opportunities.
- Links to the International Economic Development Network (IEDN) web site. This includes site selection consultants, real estate professionals, and business owners, who use IEDN's web site to compare various communities when researching business expansion opportunities.
- A section focusing on business strengths including discussion of industrial targets and advantages for each industry in the region.
- Descriptions of training and educational facilities/opportunities. This includes establishing links with local and regional organizations and institutions, notably the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and Salisbury University.
- A section on current local achievements such as new company production records; awards or grants given to the school system; new businesses and business expansions; and new commercial development underway. This section should change every few months and provide a snapshot of progressive changes in the community.

Traditional Marketing Programs

Other than traditional marketing programs, the City should consider establishing business assistance initiatives that can be touted for their importance in helping companies improve their bottom line. Several initiatives are recommended:

- Work with the local Chamber of Commerce and County Tourism Department to attract meetings in the targeted sectors.
- Encourage development of networks among small companies; a good system is already in place and it should be strengthened.
- Convene groups of companies in the City and County that are in the same industry.
- Assist in identification of resources to provide administrative and marketing support to the network.
- Identify industry leader(s) to help champion efforts.

Attracting a major meeting in a targeted business sector is a logical way to showcase the region as a business site for companies. This will take some research and cooperation among local entities. Presently, meeting space is limited in the Tawes Center. However, a hotel and conference center will greatly expand opportunities in this regard.

In order to increase the capacity of small companies to bid on large orders as well as expand hiring opportunities, the City should encourage small companies and businesses in similar

industries to partner with each other and bid on jobs that are normally outside the scope of their abilities. There is already an excellent small business network in Crisfield. The City can work with this existing network. Networks are particularly effective when they also develop marketing and business development programs to support such companies.

Marketing Materials

The following recommendations focus on cost effective strategies for the development of marketing materials and strategies to reach targeted markets. Marketing materials should be developed to communicate Crisfield's attractions. New and revised materials should include:

- A two page 8 ½ x 11" size brochure that features buildings in the downtown area. The back cover should include a pocket for a series of customized inserts.
- A series of information briefs for each of the targeted stores. They should identify the downtown and uptown's strengths and relative advantages from the viewpoint of each type of store.
- Direct mail to a distinct group of target markets should be considered, in particular to business prospects that are targets for an Eastern Shore location, especially companies in the categories of interest.

Expanding Tourism in Crisfield

Tourism has become a growing industry throughout the United States. It represents an important economic force in Maryland and on the Eastern Shore. As an indication, tourism accounted for 100 jobs and $11 million in spending in Somerset County in 2004. Tourism should factor more prominently in Crisfield, given the quality of attractions that the City and the surrounding areas have to offer. For example, by comparison tourism in Worcester County generated 14,700 jobs and $1.2 billion in spending in 2004.

Table 2: Visitation At The Tourism Office Crisfield 2000 - 2006

Year	Visitors
2001	14,217
2002	13,779
2003	14,573
2004	16,263
2005	12,449
2006	13,254

Source: Somerset County Tourism Office

As shown in Table 2, the numbers of visitors who come to Crisfield and pass through the City have leveled off. Visitation has been stagnant in recent years in spite of the great potential of the area. Tourism can be a much greater force in the future of Crisfield relating to the following:

- Retail development, especially in downtown Crisfield.
- Greater exploitation of access to Smith and Tangier Islands.
- More intensive marketing of the Somers Cove and other marinas.
- More active use of waterfront for fishing and boating.

Creating an Identity, Attractions, and Accommodations

While tourism seems to be in decline, Crisfield has an important identity as the former seafood capitol of Maryland. This title still resonates in the market area in the "50 and over" set. The younger population also looks for insight into the City's past. Moreover, Crisfield continues to serve as the major gateway to Smith and Tangier Islands, two portals to unique culture with important historical attributes for the State and nation.

There are significant destinations and attractions in and around the City. The Crisfield Heritage Foundation manages four notable places:

1. J. Millard Tawes History Museum;
2. The Ward Brothers Work Shop;
3. J. Millard Tawes Library; and
4. Cedar Island Marsh Sanctuary.

In addition, there are six major events from late May through October that draw large crowds to the City. One such event is the "Crisfield Clam Bake." The State Park also is a major attraction. Given national trends and the nature of its attractions, Crisfield is well positioned to benefit from expanded tourism. However, visitors need more activities. Tourists want to experience a place, not just view static displays. The key recommendation is that Crisfield brings crabs, fish, and fishing into the center of the City for cleaning, weighing, and sale.

More than anything else, Crisfield could benefit from an excellent web site that features its places and businesses. The web site should include the following:

- An interactive map of the commercial areas that highlights the places, things to do and places to see and shop in each area.
- A section on the SRP and progress on its implementation, identifying new businesses, business expansions and new commercial development underway. This section should change every few months and provide a snapshot of progressive changes in the community.
- An e-mail program to communicate with potential prospects and media in target areas. This will require identifying the e-mail addresses of prospects, media contacts, and key state

and regional contacts. At regular intervals, the region can send information to groups (e.g., prospect companies in the telecommunications industry) or to all contacts.

- Reciprocal links to the Somerset County and State of Maryland sites so that prospects can have information on state and local programs and opportunities regardless of where they enter the system.
- Links with professional organizations and associations as frequently as possible, including organizations like the International Economic Development Council, Urban Land Institute, and professional associations in targeted business sectors, as described in other sections of this Plan.

The SRP envisions tourism as a much greater force in the future of Crisfield and one of the prime engines that will drive its renaissance. The most important action proposed in the SRP is to promote tourism through the redevelopment of the City's commercial areas. Shopping and dining are the most popular tourist activities in the United States and when visitors complain that there is "nothing to do in Crisfield" they are generally referring to the lack of shopping opportunities. The commercial revitalization effort will take many years but by creating places of interest with interesting shops, the City can produce satisfying tourism experiences.

A second very important recommendation is that the City create a hotel opportunity. This will only happen after significant progress in the revitalization of the commercial areas and the redevelopment of neighborhoods around the Marina. However, when Crisfield becomes a stronger destination it will need better accommodations than now offered. The City must have better accommodations in order to strengthen its position as the gateway port for visits to Smith and Tangier Islands. The State should be a partner in creating a successful hotel project, as it has been in other locations.

A third recommendation is that the City bring seafood (fish, crabs, oysters) more prominently into the center of City. This includes more outdoor dining, including kiosks and vendors, cafes, and outdoor restaurants. The City also should include spaces for cleaning, weighing, and selling seafood in order to activate the waterfront and provide a vivid experience of Crisfield's culture and economy. There should be a headquarters location for fishing tournaments in or very near waters edged in Somers Cove where anglers weigh fish and tell stories about the adventure. Ultimately, it may mean relocating the fish cleaning station from one side of the marina to the other. This is a project that may seem costly and unnecessary but it will bring an important tourist experience into the center of Crisfield.

Finally, there needs to be more for families to do. The SRP recommends the development of an interactive bay-front environmental center. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) terms this as a "Discovery Center," such as the one at Deep Creek Lake. However, the

Crisfield Discover Center should be keyed to Chesapeake Bay. There should be opportunities to get wet at this place and have a hands-on experience with every contemporary issue having a marine dimension. These include the following:

- Global warming and sea rise.
- Aquaculture.
- Bay grass reclamation.
- Impacts of industrial fishing.

THE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The "Retail Strategy" evaluates current and potential locations of businesses and related uses. This information is useful in determining how to enhance sales through the clustering of complementary or compatible businesses to take advantage of similar and overlapping markets. Why is this important?

It is important because of the challenges facing the commercial districts including too much space, missing pieces, discordant architecture, sagging infrastructure, and weaknesses in the existing tenant mix. The commercial areas should be viewed as cohesive districts with blocks of store types and services that are complementary to one another. The main objective of a strategy is to place businesses in locations that take advantage of each other's customers.

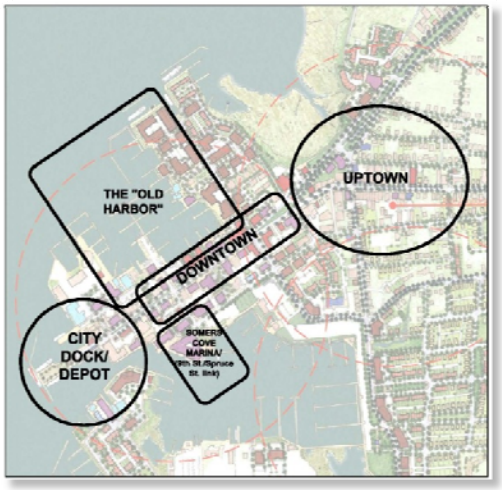
Retail Analysis

For the purpose of analysis and reference, the Downtown and Uptown areas have been divided into several focus areas with distinct themes and types of stores (Table 3):

Table 3: Retail Strategy - Focus Area, Themes And Stores

Focus Area	Theme	Stores
1) City Dock And Depot	Waterfront Plaza For Residents And Tourists	Antiques, Arts/Crafts, Food, Shops
2) Somers Cove	Boater Support	Food, Convenience
3) North Harbor	Mixed-Use Marina	Entertainment, Food, Shops
4) Downtown	Maritime Business District	Hotel, Restaurants, Services
5) Uptown	Neighborhood Commercial Center	Retail And Health/Medical, Offices

In each focus area, there are designated properties and buildings that represent opportunities for infill development in support of revitalization. These sites have been evaluated as development opportunities, including both adaptive reuse and new development on infill parcels. These recommendations for prospective uses consider the market-driven need for additional space as well as perceived "missing pieces." The community's vision is expressed as well as the potential for synergy with existing businesses.



The Retail Plan

In general, there is a greater potential for businesses that reflect a waterfront character and feature the unique products and experiences that are present in Crisfield and the surrounding area. This strategy reflects the same principles that mall developers use in specialty centers, including the placement of magnet stores, clustering, and competitive and complimentary stores.

1) City Dock and Depot

Traditionally, the "City Dock/Depot" area has served as an attraction for both residents and tourists. It is the point of departure for boats to Smith and Tangier Islands. Hardware stores are located in the vicinity, catering to businesses on those islands. Historically, the dock is the place where fishermen loaded seafood onto trains for northern urban markets.

In the future, the dock itself will become the central plaza or town square. The buildings in this area could provide a good location for the mix of arts, crafts, hardware, fishing equipment and food geared toward local heritage, constituting a first-class regional attraction. The site is so central that it is easy to move to any other part of the Downtown by walking no more than 5 to 10 minutes.

Tourists and shoppers from outside the area will seek authentic local experiences. Families are eager to find places that hold the interest of both children and adults. Stores that get customers involved in putting the product in final form or tailoring it to a specific need or taste can add

great value ("interactive retailing"). There could also be a retail outlet accessible via the Internet to extend these types of customized experiences to a global market.

Redevelopment Theme: The overall theme should reflect Crisfield's historic role as a seafood center. This includes offering food, entertainment, arts and crafts, and other items that connect with the City's heritage. The buildings lend themselves to this message since they convey a sense of history and tradition.

Target Uses: There are many opportunities for specialty stores and other uses in this type of location, including:

- Antiques, of both the "standard" household type and the maritime theme;
- High quality arts and crafts, as well as an Arts Center and gallery;
- Restaurants that offer good quality food and atmosphere;
- Specialty shops; and
- Interactive displays and activities or performances such as oyster shucking or fish cleaning (a place where visitors may take part in the action).

Building and Site Opportunities: Opportunities include the vacant building on the north side of dock. The City is already taking action to acquire this structure. It could be used for the sale and display of local arts and crafts. Oyster houses in the vicinity could be used for the development of an interactive museum attraction showing preparation of crabs and oysters.

Related Actions: The City should seek funding assistance to purchase one of the vacant crab/oyster house properties. Related actions would include the following:

- Work with the arts community to establish an entity that could operate a portion of the property as a gallery.
- Seek a developer who can redevelop properties and package the space for appropriate retail uses.
- Consider the development of a shed or similar structure that could serve as a seasonal outdoor market specializing in fresh fish, crabs local produce, plants, and seasonal items. An outdoor dining area, if only composed of a few vendors, would provide festive ambiance.
- New breakwater to protect pier and docking operations.

2) Somers Cove Marina

This is the traditional center of boating for Crisfield visitors and residents. While the use of the waterfront will evolve as the SRP takes effect, the vision for its current use is minimal development that expands services and convenient retail support for the boating community.

Redevelopment Theme: The theme of redevelopment in this area should be the enhancement of an already excellent marina, with a few changes that make other attractions in the community more accessible for visitors.

Target Uses: Potential uses include:

- Convenience store that can satisfy boater needs.
- Restaurant that offers dining and drinking geared to marina users.
- Outdoor displays, classes and other activities associated with the Tawes Center that combine entertainment and education

Building and Site Opportunities: The west end of this area can be privately developed for mixed uses that connect the marina and the downtown. There are also opportunities for use of land near the Tawes Center for interactive displays and educational features.

Related Actions: There should be a place where fishermen can unload and sell fish and crabs as well as a place where fishing tournaments can stage events. Shifting these activities to a location closer to Main Street will take time but this will energize public interest and use. In the meantime, the City should:

- Work with nearby property owners to achieve coordinated area development.
- Work with the Tawes Center to strengthen the attractiveness of the City as a destination, enhancing outdoor and interactive exhibits with a waterman/seafood theme.
- Work with DNR to expand marketing and use of the marina.

3) North Harbor

The new marina and its waterfront should be developed as the center of activity for visitors coming to Crisfield. It is already the general location of some of the most important attractions in the City including the Tawes Museum, the dock for the Smith/Tangier Island cruise boats, several restaurants, and an outdoor bar. The Visitors' Center is just a block away.

Redevelopment Theme: The theme should be the fun of being directly on the waterfront in a lively open marina environment. This includes shopping, dining, and entertainment settings. This should be the location for a densely developed area of shops, restaurants, and kiosks that every tourist who visits Crisfield will want to see and experience. It is possible to achieve a commercial environment that has the "look and feel" of an authentic oyster and crab fishing community.

Target Uses: There are many opportunities for specialty stores in this type of location including:

- Entertainment possibly including a two-story bar/restaurant with outdoor space that overlooks the marina.
- Specialty shops that feature maritime goods and services.
- Restaurants and cafés with outdoor seating.
- Jewelry, sunglasses, gifts, books, and other goods that create a "browsing opportunity."
- Interactive displays, activities, or performances.
- A "virtual store" that sells "Crisfield brand" products and manages a web site where the same products are available.

Building and Site Opportunities: Building and site opportunities include:

- New mixed-use development along the waterfront, including vertically mixed uses.
- New maritime office business center.
- New housing above retail waterfront with some slips allocated to residents.

Related Actions: There should be an overall plan to facilitate maximum access to the waterfront. This will require that the City work with property owners to coordinate plans and create points of interest for boaters and other visitors

- Work with property owners to achieve coordinated access to the waterfront.
- Retain boat yard and maritime services.
- Create a design theme with specific elements such as lights, sculptures, etc. (to reflect the overall theme).
- Identify and recruit specified types of stores.
- Install signage to link this area with nearby parking.

4) Downtown Main Street

Downtown Main Street is the portion of Main Street between 7th and 10th Streets. It is Crisfield's commercial center where some of its leading businesses are located. However, the closed restaurant, derelict building, and vacant storefronts are discouraging signs to travelers/tourists. This area is an important location and its redevelopment as the marine business district is a high priority.

Redevelopment Theme: This area should be the site of a new hotel and conference center that attracts business visitors and expands tourism opportunities. The theme should be that Crisfield offers a maritime business district and provides the full range of maritime services. This includes accommodations and good dining opportunities as well as shopping within easy walking distance. If gambling is approved by the State legislature, the City may want to consider the development of a casino to enhance its appeal to tourists. While this has no connection with the history and culture of the City and may have adverse social impacts, gambling could expand economic activity/opportunities.

Target Uses: In addition to the hotel other opportunities for new businesses in this location include

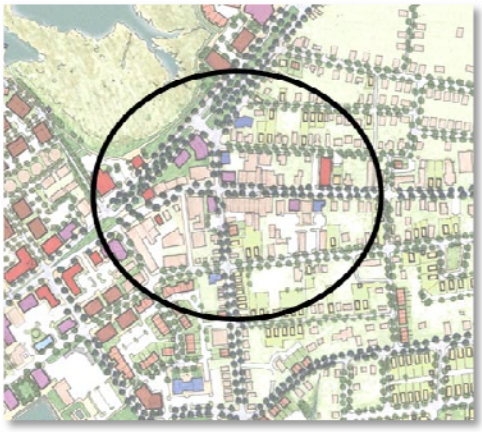
- Business and professional services.
- Marine sales and repair.
- Real estate, insurance, accounting, and financial services.

Building and Site Opportunities: Building and site opportunities include:

- Hotel site.
- Major redevelopment at corner of Main and 7th Street.

Related Actions: Construction of the new marina with a walkable waterfront will require extensive coordination with property owners and regulatory agencies. The new hotel will require public-private partnerships including State and federal participation.

5) Uptown Main Street



Uptown Main Street is the commercial center of Crisfield for most residents. The Post Office and the City Hall are the focal points for the community and convey a sense of the diversity in the City. The nearby neighborhoods and the historic small town look enhance the "sense of place."

Redevelopment Theme: The theme should be that the City offers retail goods and services for its residents in an historic setting. Public uses are anchors in this area, providing convenient parking and excellent accessibility. There should be a clear statement (sculpture, kiosk, etc.) that welcomes visitors to the City, presents the City's identity in a graphic way, and further identifies the retail orientation of the area.

Target Uses: This is an area of opportunity for small stores and offices, including:

- Antiques and vintage clothing.
- Home décor and hardware.
- Professional and government offices and services.
- Health and medical uses including health clubs, clinics, and medical service centers.
- Local products such as baked goods and specialty products.
- Restaurants, sandwich shops, etc.

Building and Site Opportunities: Building and site opportunities include:

- Potential site for a new City library;
- Sunset Park; and
- Skateboard park opportunity.

Related Actions: The City should enhance the street and the main corner at the Post Office. Actions include better lighting and signage, a crosswalk with brick pavers, canopy street trees, and other special touches that convey the sense of importance of the area. Local police patrol is critical in the Uptown area. Street patrols in particular will enhance safety and comfort. The redevelopment of adjacent neighborhoods will affect business opportunities in this area.

There should also be signage at the Route 410/Main Street intersection communicating the message that turning on to Main Street will bring travelers into the historic commercial area. In general, signs should convey the main theme of maritime heritage. In addition, there is a need

for a place where teenagers can congregate and socialize safely in a comfortable environment that supports other uses (coffee shop, bookstores, etc.).

Recruitment Strategy

Based on the anticipated future demand for retail space and leasing, Table 4 identifies specific types of new business that should be recruited to Crisfield. There are some business opportunities that get scant attention and could have a powerful impact on retail activity in the Downtown as well as other parts of the City. Key opportunities exist in the areas of arts, antiques, local products, and food, particularly the restaurant business. These businesses have to be recruited in the context of a broader effort to revitalize the Downtown with public investment and an active marketing effort.

The recruitment program should effectively communicate Crisfield's market position, retail potential, and business opportunities. Some of the important points to convey in the recruitment effort are:

- The overall vision for the downtown.
- Population and income trends.
- Proximity to US Route 13.
- Traffic counts on U.S. Route 13, MD Route 410, and other roads.
- Statistics on tourism.
- Amount of new investment planned for the area.
- Specific opportunities relative to store types and locations.

The recruitment effort will require professional communications materials. These materials can be mailed or left with prospects. In the final analysis, staff should simply try to bring the real estate community of the lower Eastern Shore into the leasing process, providing any information and assistance it can to facilitate the work of commercial realtors.

Table 4: Retail Strategy, By Location, Crisfield

	Crisfield Commercial Areas				
Type of Establishment:	*Dock/ Depot*	*Somers Cove*	*North Harbor*	*Downtown*	*Uptown*
Restaurants:					
Specialty/Ethnic Restaurant					
Seafood/Other			x	x	x
Entertainment	x		x		
Quick Service Restaurants (QSR)					
Café, indoor/outdoor	x	x	x		
Coffee Shop				x	x
Deli				x	x
Pizza				x	x
Kiosks/Carts	x		x		
Retail Stores					
Antiques	x		x		
Art Gallery	x		x		
Apparel			x		x
Boats and Bikes, incl. rental	x			x	
Books, Papers			x		
Convenience Store		x			
Cosmetics, Specialty Beauty Products					x
Crafts			x		x
Electronics				x	
Gifts, Cards	x		x		x
Sporting Equipment and Clothing	x		x		x
Toys			x		
Vintage Clothing					x
Retail Services					
Banking				x	x
Daycare					x
Dry cleaning					x
Financial Services				x	x
Health Club					x
Salon					x

Source: Thomas Point Associates, Inc.

STRATEGIES

The City of Crisfield should be promoting four specific programs as identified in this task:

1) Expanding tourism linkages and opportunities, which are key issues in Crisfield.
2) Tapping incoming retirees ("Grayshore"), who are relevant to the challenge Crisfield's facing (engaging these second home owners in community initiatives).
3) Expanding business/industrial park opportunities.
4) Acquiring regional, State, and federal assistance in addressing the City's housing crisis and its physical redevelopment.

As part of its participation in economic planning for the Lower Eastern Shore, Somerset County endorsed a framework of four goals, each with its own short-term and long-term action strategies. While very broad, these goals provide a reference system for determining the importance of specific projects as well as a framework for measuring progress. Crisfield can use these goals in order to promote its agenda forcefully with State and federal officials as well as its own public and business community. By promoting the City's interests with reference to the regional agenda the City's requests will rate much higher attention among State and federal funding sources, a critical factor for the success of economic efforts. These implementation items provide a broad view of the future for the Lower Eastern Shore with specific applicability to Crisfield. Regional goals that address the City's situation include:

<u>Goal: Sustain and diversify the economy</u>

- Support resident businesses and industries by helping them in their competitiveness;
- Promote entrepreneurship; and
- Attract new industry sectors to the region that are compatible with the City's socio-economic environment.

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Engage universities and colleges in regional economic development, e.g., through current activities at Wallops Island.
2) Expand tourism linkages and regional tourism, arts and entertainment, and cultural opportunities including: 1) welcome centers; 2) interpretive centers; 3) Downtown revitalization; 4) linkage and marketing of Ocean City attractions with other attractions throughout the region; 5) eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, and heritage tourism; and 6) sport and commercial fishing.

Long Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Pursue a targeted marketing effort to determine how best to "brand" and "sell" the region to potential new businesses and entrepreneurs.

<u>Goal: Improve work force training and skills</u>

- Ensure that workers of all ages have access to the education and training needed to succeed in both existing industries and potential new industries the City is seeking to attract.

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Investigate a web-based feedback loop whereby: 1) employers can be surveyed on workforce needs; and 2) specific skills, needs, and available jobs can be communicated to potential employees throughout the State as well as regional education/training institutions including K-12 and higher education institutions.
2) Focus particularly on the impact of "GRAYSHORE," e.g., tapping skills of incoming retirees and ensuring a trained workforce to serve needs of the elderly population.
3) Pursue a health care training initiative.

<u>Goal: Ensure appropriate infrastructure</u>

- Ensure appropriate infrastructure to accomplish the City's goals, objectives, and strategic actions.

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Work with MPO and Delmarva Water Transport Committee to protect transportation infrastructure and support transportation improvements, including potential ferry service ot the City, Salisbury/Ocean City/Wicomico Airport expansion and increase in commercial services, Port of Salisbury and West Ocean City Harbor, Shore Transit, U.S. 113 dualization and U.S. 50 service road, rail infrastructure for freight.
2) Expand information infrastructure, including linking the region's universities by advanced telecommunications systems.
3) Support and expand business (and industrial) parks, including the Salisbury/Ocean City/ Wicomico Airport Business Center.

4) Create more integrated processes for designating industrial and commercial space (e.g., involving Comprehensive Planning Departments, making infrastructure investments, etc.).

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Increase availability of energy including natural gas, electricity through exploration of alternative energy sources (energy generation).

<u>Goal: Maintain and improve quality of life in the region</u>

- Manage economic development to ensure the protection of our natural environment and the prevention of sprawl and congestion.
- Support and recruit diverse cultural and recreational opportunities to ensure a high quality of life for citizens and visitors in the region.

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Carry out a Quality of Life Assessment and take the necessary steps to address issues based on the results.
2) Ensure adequate land use planning and implementation.
3) Develop a housing affordability index.

Task 6: Environmental Protection

The City of Crisfield is a sensitive environment, particularly prone to flooding. Defining natural features include the Chesapeake Bay, the Little Annemessex River, and surrounding tidal marshes define the basic character of Crisfield. These characteristics are what historically attracted people to the areas and will continue to do so in the future. Crisfield's economy and livelihood depends on the protection of its environmental resources and natural features. Almost every aspect of the City's environment presents challenges for the future.

GOAL:

- Protect Crisfield's environment and natural resources.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect remaining natural environmental features and sensitive areas from development and its impacts.
- Accommodate infill and redevelopment in a manner that addresses flooding conditions and the environmental protection objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Establish standards that secure capital facilities and development from flooding decades into the future.

CRISFIELD'S ENVIRONMENT

Crisfield's environment is defined by its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. The City's natural and man-made landforms present both opportunities and challenges. Major natural features such as the Chesapeake Bay, the Little Annemessex River, and tidal marshes are as basic to the character of the City as any built component. In addition the City of Crisfield has depended on the local environment for the basic livelihood of many of its residents, including those employed in the seafood, commercial marine, transportation, and recreation industries. Revitalization strategies that build on these employment sectors, as well as the City attractive qualities for tourists and new residents are dependent on maintaining a high quality natural environment in and around the City.

Almost every aspect of the City's natural environment presents challenges (see Figure 1 Sensitive Environmental Areas). With the exception of several relatively high points of elevation, the City lies within the 100-year floodplain and is highly susceptible to coastal hazards, predominantly coastal flooding and storm surge. Coastal flooding is caused by intense

winds and heavy rains and is often induced by Nor'easters, tropical storms, and hurricanes, as well as steady on-shore wind events and elevated tidal levels. Flooding is a regular occurrence in the City.

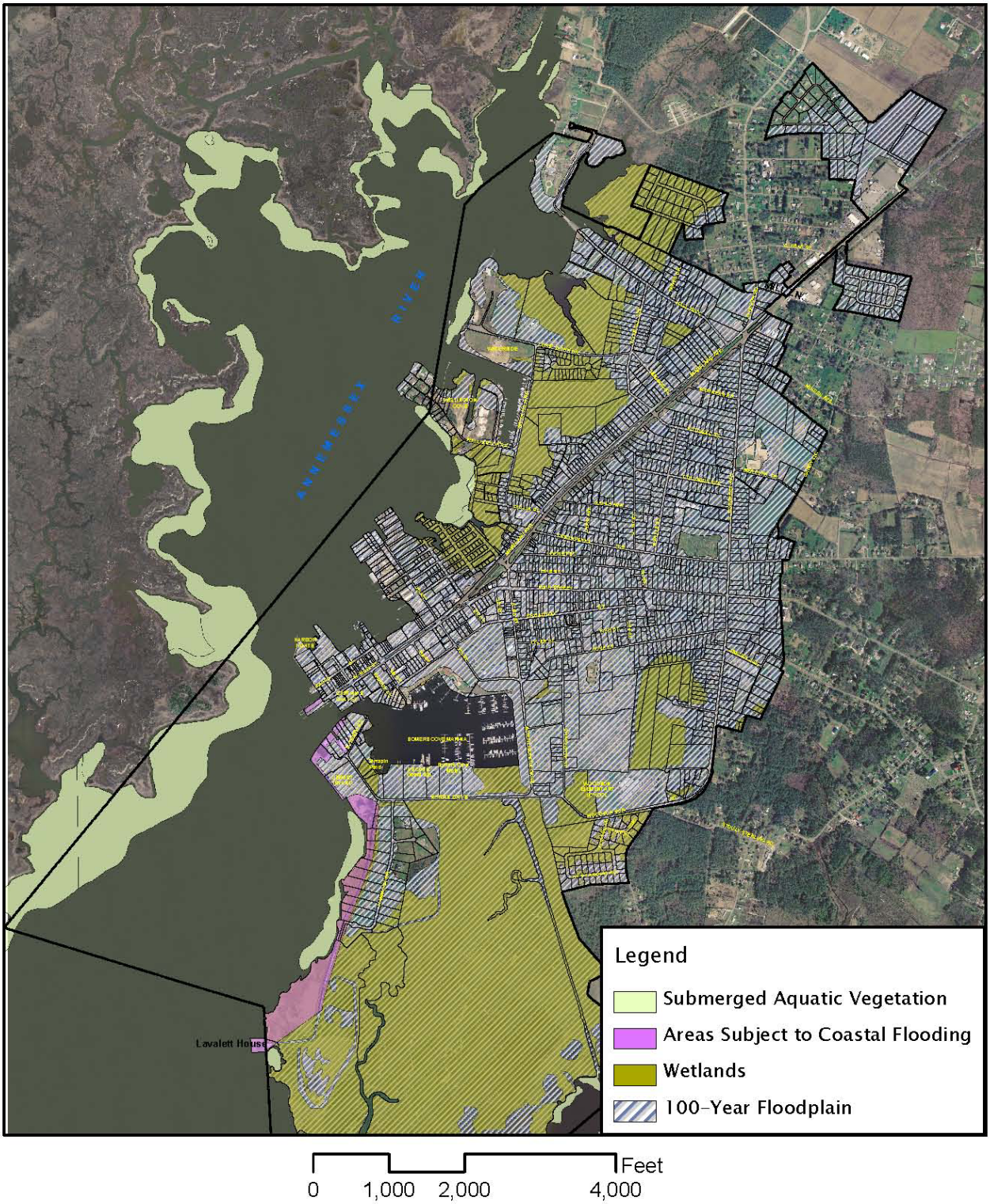
SEA LEVEL RISE

Sea level rise is a significant vulnerability issue. According to the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan), current scientific research indicates that sea level rise rates are accelerating and may result in as much as two to three feet of rise along Maryland's shores by the year 2100. In low-lying coastal areas, like Crisfield, a one-foot rise in sea level could translate into a one foot rise in flood level, intensifying the impact of flooding and storm surge to homes, businesses, institutions, and roadways. Some reaches of the City's shoreline are armored, others are in natural vegetation. Bulkheading is the most common structural type of protection along the waterfront in Crisfield, particularly in commercial and industrial land use areas.

As was learned from the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, protecting wetlands that buffer shoreline areas is important to safeguarding life and property. Tidal wetlands that lie on the north and south ends of the City are natural resources that help protect the City against the effects of storm surge and excessive flooding. These lands are very close to the City center and their preservation helps protect the City's water quality, wildlife habitat, and overall environmental health. The potential for increased flood events, along with the loss of natural off-shore barrier islands and wetlands, underscores the critical need to establish long-term flood control and wetland protection strategies.

Marshlands, floodplains, and poor soils limit the location of future development. Most developable lands within the City are in some form of developed use already. The lack of developable lands makes thoughtful and well-designed infill on vacant and underutilized land a significant opportunity for sustaining Crisfield's economy and quality of life.

FIGURE 1: SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS



Capitalizing on opportunities for preserving and protecting natural resource lands and sensitive sites benefits future generations. Natural resource lands provide opportunities for recreation and help protect life and property. This is especially the case with respect to large tidal and non-tidal wetlands, which help attenuate flooding, purify water, and support wildlife. From an urban design perspective natural areas add to scenic beauty, define the edges and provide open spaces and view corridors. From a practical perspective environmental corridors can function as areas for wildlife habitat, stormwater management, flood control, and recreation.

EROSION OF BARRIER ISLANDS

Crisfield's coastline is one of its most valuable resource lands and its protection depends largely on the protection of the offshore barrier islands that lie between Crisfield and Tangier Sound. These islands protect the City's shoreline boundaries from erosion caused by waves and storm events. The prevailing winds from storms and severe weather patterns are usually from the southwest or the northwest. Janes Island, a State Park which lies to the west of Crisfield is the City's first line of defense against the damaging tides of Tangier Sound. There are presently several sites along the shoreline where breaching occurs during storms and high tides. Once this breaching becomes permanent the island will be cut into sections and the rate of erosion will increase at a much faster rate.

Another cause for concern is the disappearance of Great Point, which extends into Tangier Sound off of Great Fox Island, southwest of the City. Erosion caused a breach behind Great Point about five years ago and since then approximately 90 percent of Great Point has been lost to erosion from wave action and storms. Great Point provides protection for the mouth of Crisfield's harbor by blocking the winds and waves that are produced when the winds blow from the southeast and southwest. The size of waves is determined by three factors; how fast the wind is blowing, how deep the water is, and the size of the fetch (area of the body of water over which the wind blows). With Great Point gone there is nothing to protect the harbor from storms, and it will be vulnerable to direct impacts from waves and wind.

It is imperative that these barrier islands be reestablished and reinforced. If they are not, Crisfield and the surrounding areas will receive the full force and impacts of Tangier Sound during storms and hurricanes. This will compound the threat already facing Crisfield from sea level rise.

In recent years State and private funds have been used to support shoreline stabilization projects in an effort to protect and restore the Bay's barrier islands. Poplar Island, a barrier island located in Talbot County, was the site of a successful environmental wetland restoration

demonstration project begun in the late 1990s that utilized dredged material from the Chesapeake Bay to replenish land lost as the result of erosion. In 2007, the Maryland legislature approved funding for a similar shoreline erosion protection project for Smith Island, another of Crisfield's barrier islands. The project will include the construction of offshore breakwaters to protect or recreate areas along the island's coastline. Materials dredged from Bay waters west of the island will be used to backfill the breakwaters to restore coastal areas and create additional wetland habitat. A similar project would benefit Janes Island and Great Point, and if it was coordinated with a dredging project to improve water access to Crisfield, a dedicated source of dredge spoils would be available for shoreline stabilization.

The only water access to the City presently available to larger vessels and sail boats that draft over four feet is directly in from Tangier Sound. Broad Creek, which bisects Cedar Island, southwest of the City and the Hospital Canal by the Park are no long navigable to larger or deep draft vessels. Dredging these waterways would improve Crisfield's accessibility to boaters and shorten travel distances, a significant benefit for boaters pushed in these times of rising fuel prices to find the shortest routes possible to reach their destinations. Dredge spoils from these projects could be used to stabilize the shoreline of Janes Island and restore Great Point and thus prevent further erosion of these important barrier islands.

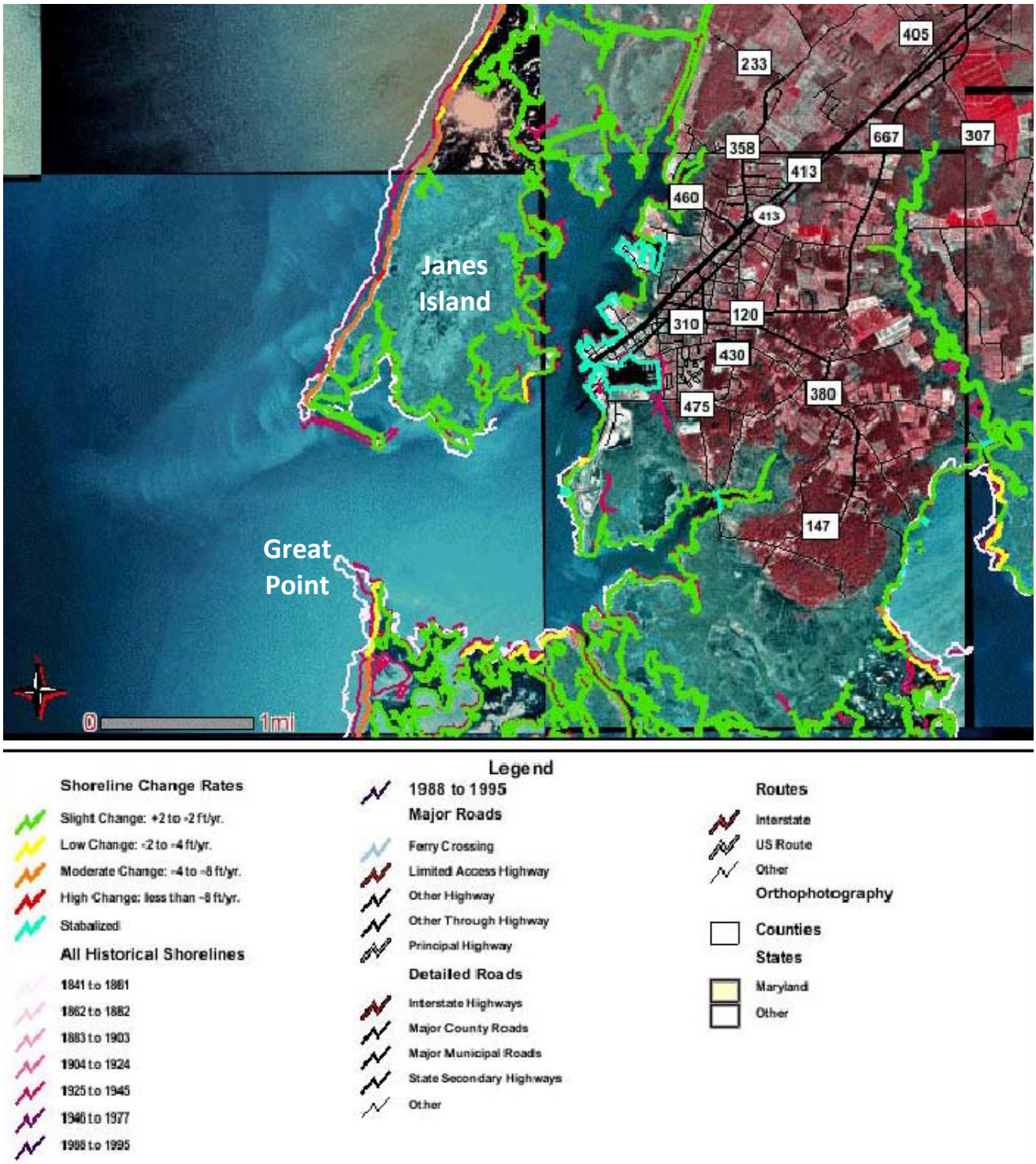
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

One of the major themes of the Comprehensive Plan includes the following statement, "...as development or redevelopment occurs, the people of Crisfield will benefit from acknowledging the presence of natural resources and systematically promoting their re-emergence."[5] Implementing the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) will require the City to find an appropriate balance between rigorously applying environmental protection standards and infill and redevelopment that strengthen the local economy and benefit all residents of the City.

In areas where infill and redevelopment are to be encouraged, flexible development requirements consistent with the recommendations of the SRP should apply. In environmentally sensitive areas such as are noted in the Comprehensive Plan, flexible requirements that allow some use of property while minimizing loss of natural resources and adverse impacts to the environment should apply.

[5] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 28.

FIGURE 2: HISTORICAL EROSION TRENDS – JANES ISLAND/GREAT POINT



All new development, to the fullest extent possible, should strive for the highest quality environmental practices in use today. These include Green Building, LEED certification of buildings, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater treatment, Green Urbanism, and Low Impact Development. Offsets, in-lieu fees and other techniques will need to be used where appropriate to achieve the balance between economic development and environmental protection. Off-site environmental enhancements may also be appropriate for consideration under the provisions of a redevelopment floating zone.

Environmental Planning

The Comprehensive Plan identifies land use districts and recommends varying levels of regulation based on natural environmental limitations present in each area (see Figure 3 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan). The primary land use objectives for each planning area are summarized as follows:

Resource Conservation Planning Area - should be off-limits to development and protected from development impacts. The City should adopt a new zoning district with standards that implement this recommendation. The SRP identifies portions of this area as potential TDR sending areas (see discussion under Task 7 Zoning).

Eco Residential-1 Planning Area- Residential use is acceptable but only if it restores natural functions and open spaces, links isolated wetlands and natural areas together to provide flood protection and aesthetic benefits, improves infrastructure to benefit living conditions; and provides a broad mix of housing across the affordability range. Redevelopment should not increase overall development density or the footprint of development. Standards for infill and redevelopment should be flexible, allowing reasonable use of existing properties while addressing environmental protection objectives. Incentives for sensitive environmental design should also be considered.

Eco Residential-2 - Planning Area- Infill, increased housing/zoning code enforcement, and rehabilitation of houses are preferred means of redevelopment. A similar focus on environmental management is warranted and both natural and structural improvements to mitigate flooding should be identified and implemented. Because the area is vulnerable to flooding, no net increase in development density should occur, except through infill on vacant single-family residential parcels.

Residential Conservation Planning Area - The area is developed largely in a low-density pattern with ample open space and institutional uses. This description suggests zoning to conserve

neighborhoods, allow appropriate infill and redevelopment and protect sensitive environmental areas.

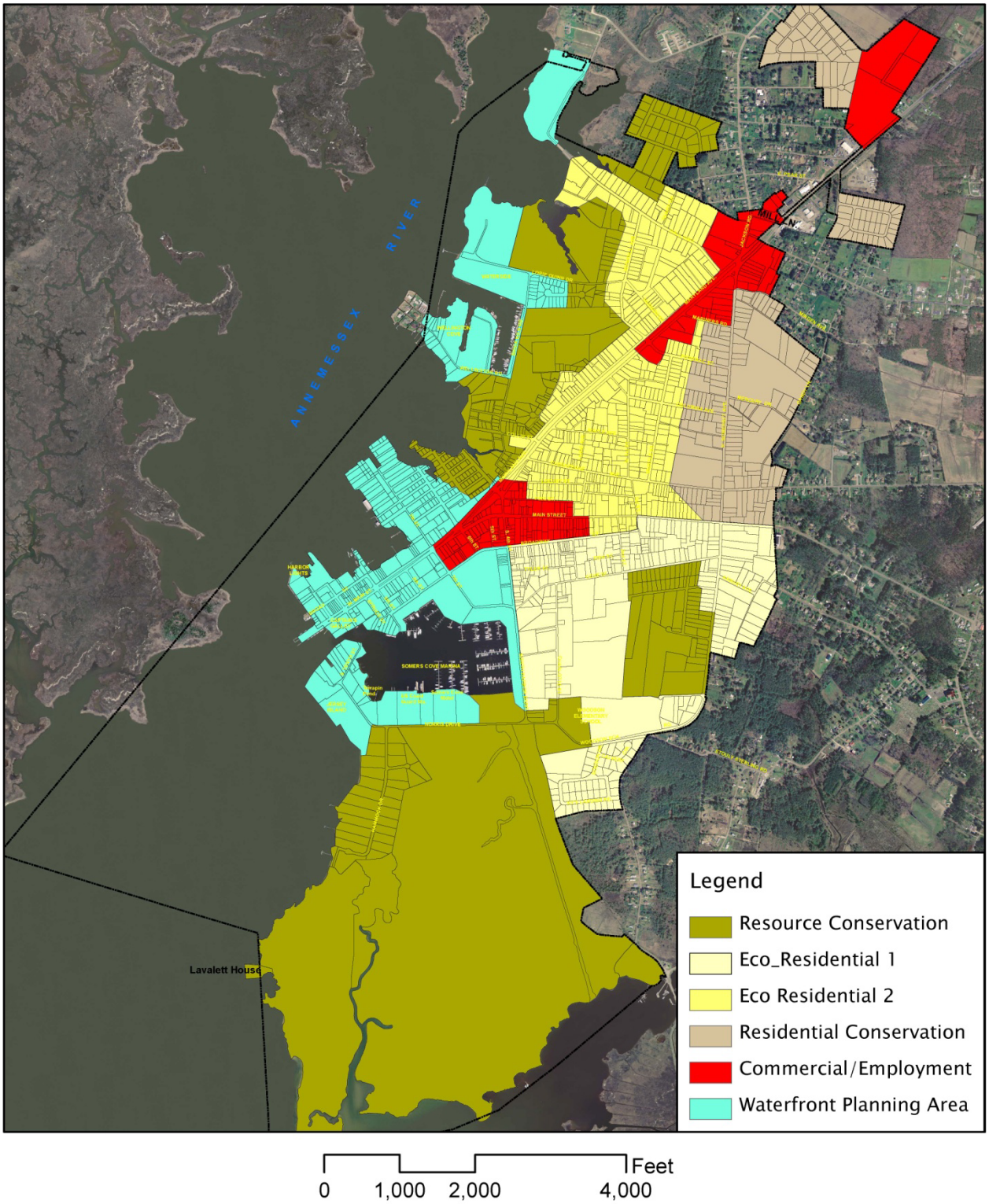
Commercial/Employment Planning Area – This planning area includes the central business district and the commercial area located near the intersection of Somerset Avenue and MD Route 413. Modest expansion of land devoted to commercial use near the intersection of MD Route 413 and Somerset Avenue is acceptable. Both areas should allow for a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Waterfront Planning Area - This designation recognizes that this area is a unique resource to Crisfield, that the land use changes that have occurred and are occurring present challenges to compatibility in land use, architectural design and resource conservation. The SRP provides detailed planning and urban and environmental design recommendations for this area.

Flood Mitigation & Water Quality Protection

Both the EPA and MDE recognize that impervious areas directly connected to storm drain systems are the greatest contributor to non-point source pollution. Urban and suburban landscapes are covered by paved surfaces like sidewalks, parking lots, roads, and driveways. They prevent water from infiltrating the ground, cause runoff to accumulate, and increase the rate and flow of runoff into storm drains and receiving waters. Paved surfaces also transfer heat to runoff, increasing the temperature of receiving waters and potentially altering the habitats of native species of fish and other aquatic life.

FIGURE 3: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – LAND USE PLAN



STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 10 Years)

1) The City should undertake a comprehensive rezoning to implement the land use and other recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP including the sensitive area recommendations and the requirements of Article 66B, Annotated Code of Maryland. Submerged aquatic vegetation should be included as a sensitive environmental area of concern to the City. Environmental protection standards should be similar to those required in the City's Critical Area Ordinance that are applicable to excluded areas, e.g., shore buffer requirements, 10 percent pollution reduction, etc.
2) Naturally vegetated buffers play an important role in environmental protection. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that in redeveloping waterfront areas, to the extent possible, the City require buffer areas between the water's edge and buildings or parking areas. The Crisfield Zoning Code should establish comprehensive sensitive area buffer requirements throughout all zoning districts in the City. In addition the City should establish minimum landscape standards for all development and require native species be used to the maximum extent practical.
3) Development regulations in all zoning districts should incorporate appropriate provisions for design flexibility. The objective should be reasonable use of property in the least environmentally sensitive areas - preserving woodland areas, flood prone areas, drainage ways, scenic vistas, etc.
4) Work with Maryland DNR and Army Corps of Engineers to develop a comprehensive plan for shoreline stabilization of Janes Island and Great Point. Evaluate the feasibility of coordinating this project with waterway dredging projects for Broad Creek and Hospital Canal to provide dredging materials for shoreline stabilization efforts.
5) Require vegetative buffers where feasible and reduce impervious cover through such techniques as clustering of development (on the land and vertically), narrow streets, reduced parking, shared driveways, and other techniques. Require new development and infill and redevelopment projects to treat stormwater using nonstructural and micro-scale practices to the maximum extent feasible. Stormwater should be filtered using such techniques as rain gardens, landscaping and tree planters (e.g., linear tree pits, sidewalk planters), grass swales and bio-swales, tree-swales, grass filter strips and vegetated buffers.
6) New developments should attempt to maintain the volume of runoff at predevelopment levels by using structural controls and pollution prevention strategies, including strategies for minimizing land disturbances and retaining natural drainage and vegetation wherever possible. Runoff management plans for existing developed areas also should be developed that identify priority pollutant reduction opportunities, protect natural areas to help control

runoff, and develop ecological restoration and retrofit activities to clean up degraded water bodies. As development occurs, these and other stormwater management techniques should be required to mitigate the impacts of impervious areas on water quality. By requiring the most effective stormwater BMPs the City will help preserve the "assimilative capacity" of local waters for future growth. New techniques should be integrated in municipal stormwater policies, regulations, and processes.

7) The City should work with the DNR and other State and Federal agencies to determine appropriate strategies to address flooding and sea level rise issues. As part of this effort the City should determine where shoreline reaches will be armored and where they will be left in a natural state to permit migration of wetlands. These discussions should include State strategies for barrier islands that protect Crisfield.
8) Developer contribution to offset impact and protect the community from flooding is a consistent theme in the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP. Specific projects including marshland and wetland restoration, improved floodgates, shoreline repair, and the design, construction and planting of wetland mitigation and flood conveyance corridors should be identified and prioritized, much like a capital improvements program. The estimated cost of a project should be one of the determinants for the value of development proffers, in lieu and offset fees.
9) As appropriate the City should create special taxing districts (e.g., shoreline protection districts) wherein those benefitting from shoreline stabilization and flood improvements contribute to the cost. The DNR Facilities Master Plan for Somers Cove Marina should address the DNR's role in flood control and shore stabilization projects that benefit the marina facilities.
10) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) currently is assisting Somerset County government officials with an effort to produce a local sea level rise technical assistance guidance document for communities in Somerset County. The City should participate with the County in the preparation of this report and incorporate appropriate recommendations into City plans, policies and/or codes that address sea level rise as it pertains to future development, transportation corridors, building codes and emergency planning.

Task 7: Identify Zoning Regulation changes necessary to implement the SRP

The implementation of the *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) will require community support. Successful implementation also will require patience, determination, and support on the part of elected and appointed officials and City staff. This includes adopting the SRP as an official City document to ensure its continuance.

GOAL:

- Update Crisfield regulations consistent with the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) and the SRP.

OBJECTIVES:

- Implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and SRP.
- Where possible, require approved development projects not yet constructed are revised to comply with the recommendations of the SRP.

Existing development regulations, including zoning regulations and official maps, are not consistent with the guidance established in the Comprehensive Plan and the strategies outlined elsewhere in the SRP. Mid-rise condos everywhere is not the type of redevelopment implied in the principles, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan nor is it the intent of the "TM" Tourist-Marine Zoning District, which includes most of the important shoreline reaches of the Waterfront Planning Area identified in the Comprehensive Plan. As stated, the purpose of the TM zoning district is as follows: "…to promote the development of tourist-serving businesses and activities and water-oriented commercial enterprises. Uses that are compatible with and benefit the city's waterfront location are encouraged. Certain retail and residential uses which are complimentary to the water-oriented uses are permitted" (§112-56, Chapter 112, City of Crisfield Code).

The statement of purpose implies that residential units are a secondary use. The TM district was included with the commercial and industrial districts in the zoning code indicating the City's policy emphasis on the non-residential aspects of the district. In addition, the fact that condos and multi-family residential uses were amended into this zoning district as a special exception also implies that the City expected care would be taken to ensure that this type of development

is not contrary to the primary purpose of the TM district – development of tourist-serving businesses and activities and water-oriented commercial enterprises. It is obvious from existing and proposed developments that mid-rise condominium development has become the dominant form of redevelopment and threatens the City's primary economic and community design objectives for this area.

The conclusion that tall condominium buildings strewn along the waterfront is inconsistent with the City redevelopment objectives is reinforced in the guiding principles espoused in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Infill development and/or redevelopment can occur in a manner that respects the size, scale, and use of existing and historic development patterns. Successful infill maintains and/or restores spatial continuity to streetscapes; strengthens neighborhoods; respects historic preservation, existing vistas, and natural resources; and introduces compatible uses that complement existing community attributes and needs.

- Growing in balance with community character for Crisfield means accommodating new development opportunities in a way that reinforces the small town maritime character.

A second and equally troublesome aspect of the existing zoning code is that the Schedule of District Regulations for the TM district permits a maximum building height of 75 feet in the TM district and the Board of Appeals is authorized to grant a height variance in the Central Business District (CBD) zoning district. Again these zoning code provisions are inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies on the subject of buildings and building height, which states: "Keep the architecture of new buildings generally consistent in style, materials, size, and scale with neighboring properties; departing from this policy only when guided by an adopted plan that sets forth new architectural design standards. The height of new buildings in the Waterfront Planning Area should be determined in a coordinated way as part of the waterfront plan. For instance, the permissible height of new buildings might vary depending on location on the waterfront and the presence of the most vital view sheds."[6]

A third inconsistency in the current zoning code is the lack of appropriate regulations for environmentally sensitive areas and important natural features. The portion of the City included in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area is subject to special Critical Area Zoning standards (see Article XX, Chapter 112, City of Crisfield Code). The purpose of the Critical Area Zoning is to minimize, "the impacts of development on water quality" and to "conserve fish, wildlife and

[6] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 36.

plant habitats." Similar provisions should apply throughout the City. The Comprehensive Plan recommends a number of actions in this respect, including:

1) Updating the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to ensure that, where possible, development and its impacts avoid sensitive areas, including the submerged aquatic vegetation.
2) Reviewing site plans for proposed development projects to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to protect sensitive areas both during and after development.
3) In redeveloping waterfront areas, to the extent possible, establishing buffer areas between the water's edge and buildings or parking. Plant the buffer areas in native vegetation to improve water quality and scenic beauty.
4) Seeking land conservation and protection easements over tidal marshes and natural areas located roughly between Seventh Street and Lori Quinn Drive.
5) On lands planned for residential development, clustering new home sites on the least environmentally sensitive areas. When clustering, rely on the overall dwelling unit density rather than rigid minimum lot sizes to determine the number of homes that may be built. It is possible under this approach to reduce individual lots sizes and thereby avoid unnecessary impacts to natural resource areas. This flexibility should be used in preserving woodland areas, flood prone areas, drainage ways, scenic vistas, etc.\
6) Instituting a native species-planting program aimed at substantially increasing land area with vegetative cover. Use the State's forest conservation fee-in-lieu funds to meet planting goals.
7) Establishing a per-capita public green open space goal and seek to achieve the goal though land acquisition, developer contributions, and cooperation with state agencies of government.
8) Considering creating a shoreline protection district wherein those properties that would directly benefit from creating and maintaining shoreline erosion and flood control improvements would contribute to the cost of those improvements.

Finally, encouraging appropriate infill and redevelopment as is envisioned in this SRP will require a great deal of flexibility in order to adhere to the principles and policies espoused in the Comprehensive Plan and meet the City's redevelopment and environmental protection objectives. Traditional zoning codes, such as the City of Crisfield employs, are better suited for new development in previously undeveloped areas ("green field development") than they are for the types of mixed-use infill and redevelopment as is suggested in this SRP (redevelopment in accordance with a Master Plan). New development regulations will need to include flexible provisions for offsetting environmental impacts and addressing park, open space and viewshed protection objectives. "Flexibility" is interpreted as meaning working with applicants to achieve

reasonable use of property while achieving development design and environmental protection objectives.

The recent downturn in the real estate market comes at a time when the City needs an opportunity to rethink how best to manage land use and infrastructure capacity for existing and future generations. City officials must also be mindful of the capacity of the local environment to accommodate growth without significant degradation. Adopting appropriate development regulations that implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP are among the most critical undertakings for the City at this time. Work on these important strategies should take advantage of the recent lull in development activity and begin immediately following adoption of the SRP.

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Impose a moratorium on new development in the redevelopment districts that is effective until new zoning code provisions implementing the recommendations of the SRP are adopted.
2) Undertake comprehensive development code revisions. Revise development codes to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and SRP.
3) Adopt zoning provisions for redevelopment areas that address the actions recommended in the Comprehensive Plan and implement the recommendations of the SRP. Define official redevelopment districts based on the recommendations of the SRP. Revise existing zoning provisions within the designated redevelopment areas and establish minimal base zoning uses and standards. Permit additional uses and more flexible development standards (e.g., height above 3 stories) through a floating zone process and based on development criteria derived from the Comprehensive Plan and SRP.
4) Adopt infill and redevelopment provisions in the City Zoning Code that give the Planning Commission the ability to waive certain development standards when a proposed infill or redevelopment project meets design criteria to ensure context sensitive site and building design.
5) Amend the Zoning Code to permit accessory dwelling units in appropriate locations and in conformance with development design standards.
6) Adopt a special redevelopment floating zone applicable to the Housing Authority property. When and if possible, include incentives to encourage a public-private partnership for redevelopment of the Housing Authority property, e.g., discounted utility re-connection fees.

7) Require all development comply with official maps.
8) Include a Developer's Rights and Responsibility Agreement (DRRA) in the floating zone process which is a contract between elected officials and a developer that outlines public improvements, expenses and other negotiated items of public benefit the developer will provide in exchange for the elected officials guarantee that certain approvals, e.g., zoning, density, etc., will remain unchanged for a specified period of time.
9) Limit uses in conservation areas identified in the SRP to low intensity uses, e.g., one dwelling unit per 10 acres.
10) Investigate the feasibility of a Transferable Development Rights program that allows for the transfer of height and density rights from waterfront and conservation properties with restricted development rights to designated receiving properties. Consider committing some sewer capacity as an added incentive for TDR transactions.
11) Ensure that water-dependent and water related uses in the waterfront development areas (e.g., marine repair) are accommodated in the revised code.
12) Enact a cost recovery ordinance to required applicant's for major development projects are held responsible for all review costs, including the fees of consulting specialists.
13) Adopt policy and code amendments to address project vesting. Define vesting as being substantial investment in construction.
14) Amend the City's floodplain ordinance to add at least one foot to the base flood elevation.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Prepare a form based code that implements the recommendations of the SRP.
2) Consider acquiring key conservation properties that may be used for environmental offsets and/or flood control projects.
3) Establish a in-lieu fee program for environmental offsets.

Task 8 Heritage Resources

Heritage resources in the City of Crisfield represent links to the past and provide an identity for the City and its residents. These resources are worthy of preservation, particularly landmark sites and structures. In regards to urban design, Crisfield's character and heritage should influence new and remodeled storefronts, land utilization, and streetscapes.

GOAL:

- Preserve and protect Crisfield's heritage resources.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect and/or enhance key heritage resources in Crisfield including natural, historic, cultural, and scenic resources that may be located within and beyond the City Historic District that contribute to unique identity and character.
- Provide special attention to buildings and structures whose unique architectural features relate to the City's seafood industry.

HERITAGE RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Traditional agriculture and the Chesapeake Bay are the dominant historical and cultural themes in the region (Somerset County and the City of Crisfield). This includes more modern agricultural practices such as poultry and crop farming. It also includes historic agricultural practices such as the growing of fruits and vegetables for canning. Chesapeake Bay resources, including shellfish, finfish, wildlife, and terrapin, have supported watermen and other Bay workers from the very beginning of settlement in the 1660's.

The historic Crisfield Lighthouse, where the iron pilings are still located just several miles off-shore from the City, is a vivid reminder of the Crisfield's important maritime past.

During the 19th century, agricultural and Bay resources were connected to urban cities and markets in the north by the railroad, which contributed to the "oyster boom" in the City of Crisfield. Railroad connections also contributed the canning boom that occurred during the

same period in other Eastern Shore areas. Today, Crisfield is a principle supplier of hard and soft shell crabs, maintaining a heritage related to seafood.

Other critical and related regional heritage destinations include Deale Island Wildlife Management Area, Smith Island, Janes Island, Tangier Island, and Martin's National Wildlife Refuge. Smith Island, Jane's Island, and Tangier Island are directly connected to mainland Crisfield in a triangle of unique heritage sites that are only accessed by water.

Crisfield is a point of departure for these sites. Smith Island is particularly important as a heritage attraction. It is one of Maryland's most isolated and unique communities, relatively unchanged from its initial settlement in the 17th century. It is Maryland's only inhabited off-shore islands. According to the 2000 Census 364 people resided on Smith Island. The most notable feature of Smith Island is the local dialect, which is said to be similar to early Elizabethan English.

THE CRISFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT

The City is historically, culturally and architecturally important as the primary center for the seafood trade in Maryland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Crisfield is divided into two primary historic areas, the Downtown and Uptown. Presently, the Crisfield Historic District exhibits a low to moderate degree of integrity.

Working waterfront seafood industries are primary tourist attractions for Crisfield.

The largest Historic District in Crisfield is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This district is located in the "Uptown" area. The area includes a collection of residential houses, churches, and commercial and industrial buildings that date from circa 1870 to 1930.

The Uptown historic encompasses approximately 120 acres. It is bounded by the following primary streets: Main Street, Chesapeake Avenue, Broadway Avenue, and Somerset Avenue. Secondary streets include Pine Street, Locust Street, Tyler Street and First, Second, Third, and Fourth Streets. The street system in the Historic District comprises a semi-grid pattern of interconnected streets and extensions (see Figure 1 Historic Features, the Crisfield Historic District).

Downtown

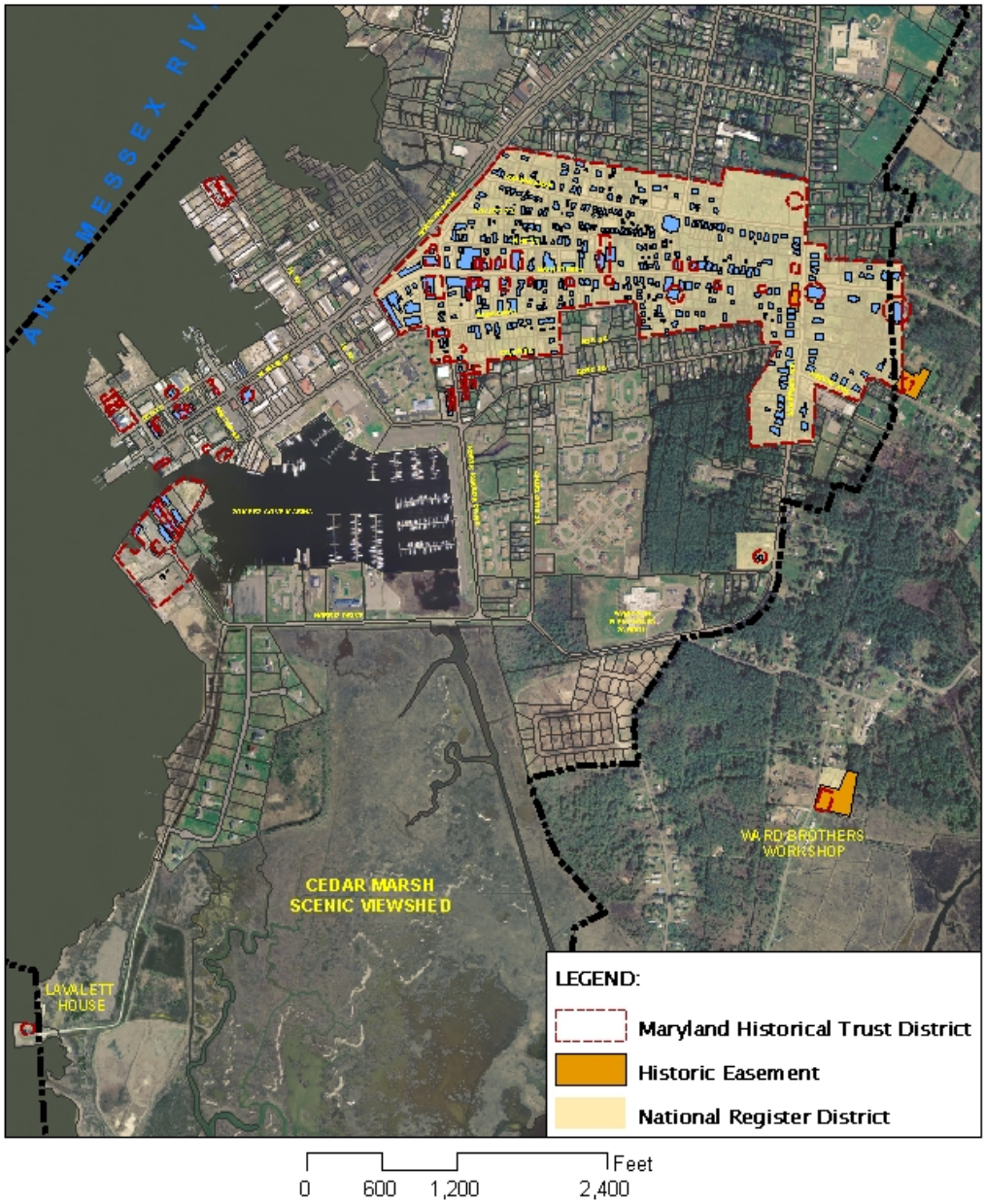
The Downtown area of the City of Crisfield is particularly situated to capitalize on heritage tourism related to maritime and seafood activities. However, the Downtown has lost much of its historic importance. The integrity of the area is low, having been diminished over the years by economic changes, new development, redevelopment, fires, and natural disasters. Presently, the area contains an eclectic mix of modern residential, commercial, and industrial structures and uses and a few scattered historic buildings and sites.

The historic character of the Downtown area has been altered. This area has lost much of its historic integrity.

The primary architectural style and character has been significantly altered as a result of new development. New residential units, primarily condominium mid-rise, dominate the waterfront in key locations. The architectural styles are not compatible with existing historic resources. Heritage strategies should seek to preserve remaining critical historical resources but provide enough flexibility to allow new development and expanded growth. Preservation of historic resources should support, but be secondary to the primary objective of economic revitalization of the Downtown area.

The primary attraction for the City is the seafood industry. Traditional seafood industries or the "working waterfront" are the most important heritage assets to preserve. Seafood industries and warehouses portray Crisfield's history and culture. Preservation in this case bolsters and enhances tourism initiatives.

FIGURE 1: HISTORIC FEATURES



Historic Features

Crisfield SRP

January 2008

City of Crisfield
Crisfield, Maryland

Peter Johnston & Associates
Easton, Maryland
Thomas Point Associates
Annapolis, Maryland
John Moynahan Urban Design & Planning
Baltimore, Maryland

Uptown

Much of the original history, culture, and architecture of Crisfield, surviving from the oyster boom period, are located in the Uptown area. This area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Heritage resources include a mix of residential, institutional, and commercial structures and uses, which are dispersed throughout the District. The "Heritage Resource Analysis" notes the average date for period architecture is 1904. Presently, the Crisfield Historic District maintains a moderate degree of integrity.

Crisfield's Uptown retains a significant collection of late 19th century Victorian and early 20th century structures. Many Victorian dwellings, circa 1860 to 1900, are located along Main Street and its connectors. Some early 20th century structures in the Historic District are constructed of brick, stone, or concrete block, reflecting an eclectic mix of revival architecture. Primary architectural trends include Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and bungalow styles. Side streets off Main Street, including Locust and Pine Streets, include many two-story buildings of vernacular architecture from the Victorian period.

This beautiful Victorian stick-built, located along Main Street, has been restored and period painted.

Churches and other institutional uses, such as the Masonic Lodge and Baptist Temple, are important heritage assets.

A small group of Queen Anne buildings are the most elaborate. Each of these structures is marked by a steeply pitched roof, a dominant front-facing gable, and partial or full-width porches. Other notable structures reflect traditional stick built Victorian architecture (mass produced) and are marked by gabled roofs, steeply pitched with cross gables. Some of these homes include decorative trusses and overhanging eaves. Vernacular Victorian structures reflect a simple style and were likely workers housing during the oyster boom period. Many of these dwellings are located on side-streets and are modest frame structures with some Victorian embellishments.

Some recent infill and urban renewal projects have diminished the character of the Uptown Historic District. In addition, a lack of design principles and/or guidelines has led to "ad-hoc" architectural improvements that are not always consistent with the area's historic character.

Aesthetic detractions such as a preponderance of chain-link fences, modern style housing along Main Street intermixed with historic homes, underutilized and dilapidated buildings, non-context sensitive signage, and vacant tracts have greatly impacted the historic character of the neighborhood.

The Uptown area contains approximately 21 acres of vacant land dispersed throughout the Historic District. These vacant areas create gaps within the streetscape that fragment aesthetic qualities. However, vacant lands also present a unique opportunity for the City to assist in the revitalization of the Historic District. Vacant land can serve several purposes for the City including:

- Establishing a hierarchy of parks and open space within the Uptown Historic District;
- Providing opportunities to create appropriate new development on vacant land (infill) through design guidelines and integration with the Historic District; and
- Providing opportunities to capacity-build context sensitive infrastructure.

Initial investment for improvements should focus on the Commercial Core in the Uptown Historic District first and include the following:

Streetscaping - planters, street trees, street furniture, banners, civic art, etc.;

Landscaping – promote general landscaping improvements along Main Street in the Historic District;

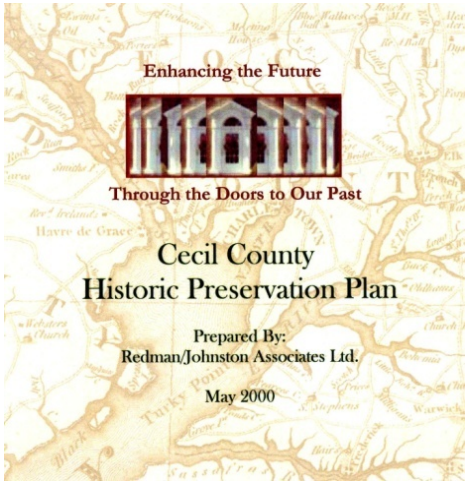
Lighting – replacement of lighting along Main Street with period-style lighting fixtures; and

Infrastructure Enhancements - designation of key structures and gaps between structures for infill, landscaping of vacant land, key sidewalk replacement areas, creation of parking, etc.

The Crisfield Historic District has many resources worth preserving. “Out of character” buildings can be improved with civic art (murals), painting, period lighting and signage, and awnings. The most important aspect to the revitalization of the Uptown Historic District is to ensure the integrity and continuity of the streetscape and promote consistent aesthetic design, which is compatible with historic character.

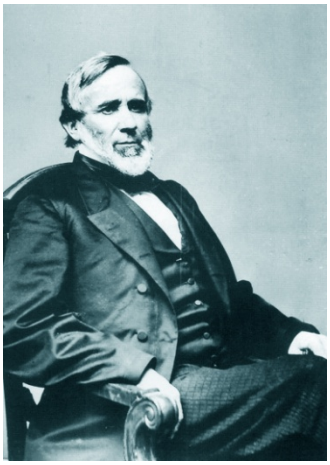
ESTABLISHING A HISTORIC DISTRICT

Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland: "Section 8" defines provisions for the establishment of Historic Area Zoning. Each local jurisdiction may designate boundaries for sites, structures, or districts deemed to be of historic, archeological, or architectural significance. In accordance with the provisions of Section 8, local jurisdictions may form a Historic District Commission or Historic Preservation Commission to oversee development within the historic district to ensure compatibility.



The *Cecil County, Maryland: Historic Preservation Plan of 2000* established voluntary historic district guidelines.

The role of historic districts in local development and planning matters is often misunderstood. The ultimate purpose of any "Historic District Ordinance" is to preserve the historic character of a community, promoting compatible development and redevelopment as well as the restoration and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures.



The powers of any historic district and hence any historic district commission are established through a public process and the development of a local Historic Preservation Plan. Therefore the degree of flexibility is established in the initial policies and regulations developed under the Plan. Regulations need not be mandatory and can provide a mix of voluntary regulations or more stringent mandatory regulations. In the case of Crisfield, mandatory regulations could apply to the Uptown Commercial Core only and voluntary regulations could apply to residential areas or both uses could be governed by voluntary regulations only.

ESTABLISHING A HERITAGE AREA

The City of Crisfield should consider the advantages and disadvantages of seeking Heritage Area status under the Maryland Heritage Areas Program. The Heritage Area process is outlined in Maryland House Bill 1 and includes the preparation of a Heritage Area Recognition Application (Plan) and a Heritage Area Management Plan for certification by the State as an official Maryland Heritage Area. The program is administered by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). Benefits include funding for heritage management, programs, projects, and tourism.

Any Heritage Area proposal should be specific to Crisfield and defined areas of Uptown and Downtown. It also should include City and nearby regional heritage attractions as linkages for the promotion of heritage tourism. Attractions include the J. Millard Tawes Museum, J. Millard Tawes House, Cedar Island Marsh Sanctuary, and the Ward Brothers Workshop.

Lem and Steve Ward – the Ward Brothers were famous wildfowl carvers from the Crisfield area and are recognized nationally as pioneers in this important American art-form.

Images of America: Crisfield The First Century

A Heritage Area (possible themes could be "the Old Bay Heritage Area") could promote a triangle of primary tourist areas in relation to the Tangier Sound and the little Annemessex River including Crisfield (as the point of departure), Smith Island, Janes Island, Martin's National Wildlife Refuge, and Tangier Island in Virginia. Efforts should be closely coordinated with the National Park Service, National Historic Trust, Maryland Historic Trust, and the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to promote the concept of a Heritage Area in association with Chesapeake Bay water trails. The Crisfield Heritage Foundation could be a primary entity for planning and managing the Heritage Area.

PRESERVING HERITAGEWITH DESIGN

Crisfield has many wonderful historic and cultural sites as well as abundant natural features that provide the City's identity. The primary purpose of this task is to provide recommended strategies to protect and/or enhance key natural, historic, cultural, and scenic resources. These include resources that may be located within and beyond the City's Historic District and that contribute to the Crisfield's unique identity and character.

The building in the center was constructed in 2003 as an infill project in the Town of Centreville's Downtown Core. Although, the building is concrete block, the façade treatment replicates the historic street design.

Crisfield's heritage and existing architecture should influence new and remodeled store fronts, land utilization, and streetscape. Special attention should be given to buildings and structures that provide unique architectural features as well as resources that serve to identify the City's seafood industry. Infill and redevelopment in historic areas should be influenced by appropriate design guidelines.

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Inventory Crisfield's heritage resources through subsequent planning and identify critical resources for advanced preservation measures as "Target Priority Preservation Areas" (i.e., those resources that directly contribute to economic revitalization/tourism).
2) Establish an "Uptown Historic District" and allow for the voluntary inclusion of property owners to facilitate access to tax credits, low interest loans, and grants for historic preservation.
3) Consider design guidelines that exhibit historic development principles for appropriate areas, such as the Uptown Historic District.
4) Preserve key areas of the "historic" working waterfront in the Downtown area.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 years)

1) Improve gateway and tourism signage. This includes directional signage and "context sensitive" sign regulations. Context
2) Develop a Heritage Area specifically for Crisfield, Smith Island, and Janes Island in coordination with the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA).

Task 9 Lands Adjoining the Public Housing Authority

The successful implementation of the *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) includes better utilization of Public Housing Authority lands, including lands that adjoin the Housing Authority. Housing Authority lands and surrounding areas are critical assets for the economic revitalization of the City.

GOAL:

- Encourage the redevelopment of lands adjoining the Public Housing Authority.

OBJECTIVES:

- Implement the recommendations of the SRP in relation to the Public Housing Authority lands.
- Encourage appropriate infill and redevelopment.

The City believes that lands adjoining the Public Housing Authority may be an asset that is currently untapped. The lands on and near the waterfront and the Housing Authority property are valuable. With the implementation of the SRP the privately owned land adjacent to Housing Authority properties will increase in value, yielding greater values to the City and private developers. The development potential of this land is significant.

The Comprehensive Plan notes that the forest and wetland areas located on lands adjacent to the east side of the Housing Authority property have significant environmental constraints. The challenge will be to find an appropriate balance between redevelopment that benefits the City and protecting sensitive environmental features.

LAND USE

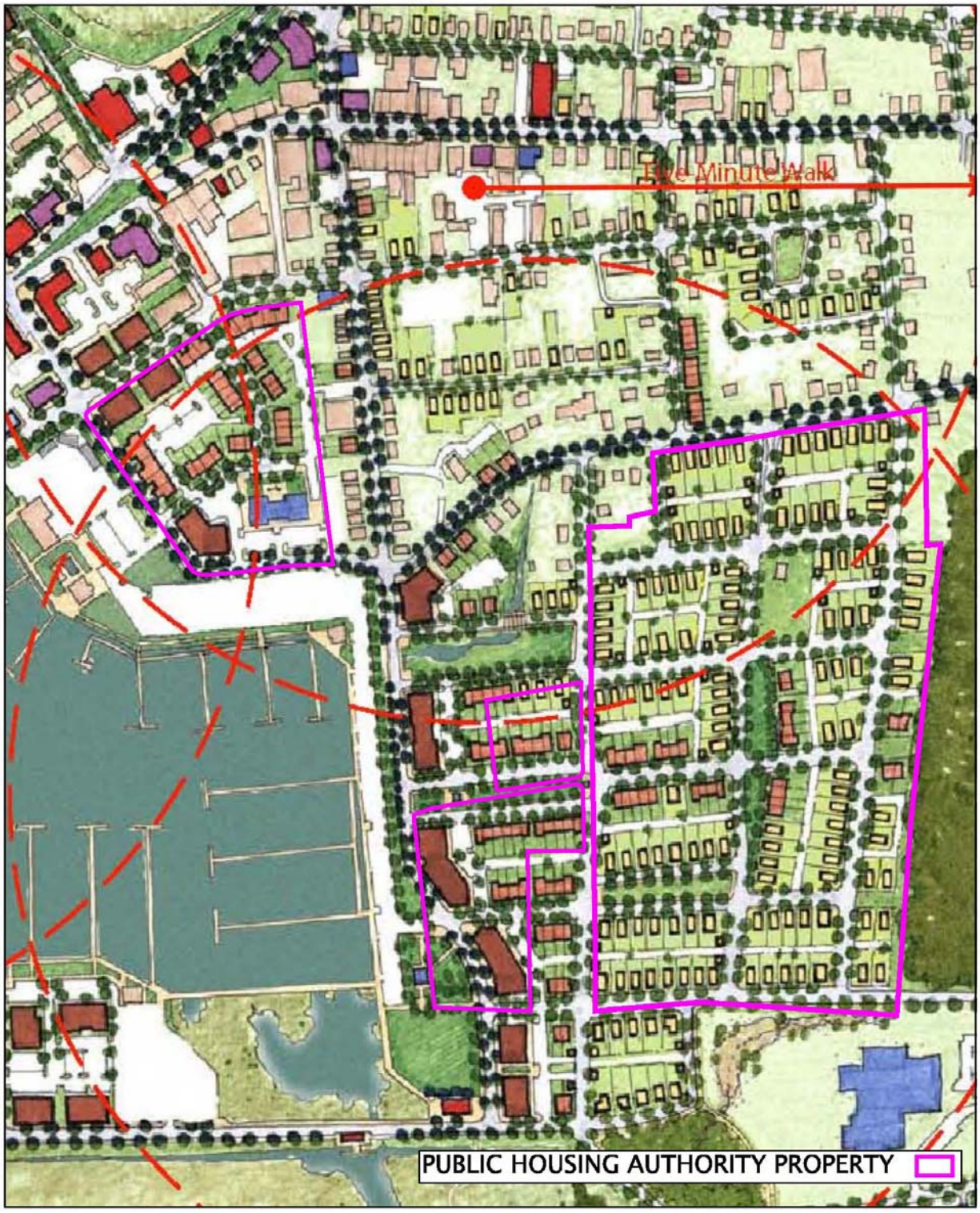
Lands adjoining the Public Housing Authority should be handled in different ways (See Figure 1 Lands Adjoining Public Housing). Lots to the north of the Housing Authority property (along the north side of Cove Street) should remain basically as is, with residential infill on vacant or underutilized properties. Larger properties to the east side of the Housing Authority property should be placed in a “conservation zone” that limits development to very low intensity residential uses where natural constraints permit. Properties to the south should be incorporated into a master plan for the redevelopment of the Housing Authority properties, with higher density residential mixed use development located adjacent to Somers Cove

Marina and detached single family units adjacent to the school property. Properties west of 4th Street should be appropriately incorporated into the redevelopment of the Uptown area.

ECONOMICS

Relocation of some or all of the existing public housing units will improve the development potential of these properties. Properties should be redeveloped for residential use with public access to the waterfront and public spaces integrated into site plans. The City, with the assistance of appropriate planners, should set guidelines for redevelopment of the area. Private property owners and developers should bear the costs. This can be done in phases extending out 5-10 years after the relocation of public housing units.

FIGURE 1: HOUSING AUTHORITY & ADJOINING LANDS



STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Place larger properties located on the east side of the Housing Authority property in a "conservation zone" that limits development to very low intensity residential uses where natural constraints permit.
2) Develop a master redevelopment plan for properties located to the south of the Housing Authority property, with higher density residential mixed use development located adjacent to Somers Cove Marina and detached single family units located adjacent to the school property.
3) Incorporate properties west of 4th Street into the redevelopment of the Uptown area.

Long-Term Actions (1 - 20 Years)

1) Redevelop some or all of public housing for residential use with public access to the waterfront and public spaces integrated into site plans.
2) Develop guidelines for redevelopment of the Housing Authority property. This should be a City-managed process, phased out 5-10 years after relocation of public housing, with the City taking the lead and private property owners and developers bearing the cost

Task 10 Utilization of the Lands of the Crisfield Housing Authority

Opportunities exist in the City of Crisfield to improve living conditions for residents of the Housing Authority and increase its contribution to the City. This includes the following:

1. Upgrading the quality of housing units and living conditions for existing residents;
2. Promoting diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs; and
3. Integrating affordable housing into neighborhoods through infill/redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties.

GOAL:

- Encourage the redevelopment of portions of Public Housing Authority lands.

OBJECTIVES:

- Promote the infill and redevelopment of the Housing Authority property.
- Relocate of Housing Authority residences into the neighborhood units consistent with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines.
- Make more efficient and effective utilization of waterfront property to improve the City's economic conditions.
- Restore natural functions on Housing Authority lands, where possible.

The Crisfield Housing Authority (CHA) operates a large public housing project that was built between the 1960s and the 1980s to provide housing for the seafood industry work force. The project's residential units and administrative facilities occupy 55 acres of land within the City (see Figure 1).

The housing project provides much-needed subsidized housing for the local population, however the facilities are old and in need of maintenance and modernization. The outmoded design and dense concentration of these housing units are problems for the City, because they require extensive maintenance and public services from an already overloaded municipal system, yet provide minimal property tax return. The large number of public housing units is far higher than a city of Crisfield's size can support. The Crisfield Housing Authority manages 330 units, which represents 24 percent of all housing units and 28 percent of all occupied housing units in the City.

The current conditions in the Housing Authority project do not adequately serve the needs of the residents and the City. All of the following conditions in public housing do not necessarily describe the Crisfield Housing Authority situation, but many do and the danger that more will apply in time is a real concern for City officials.

> "Public housing was originally intended to provide decent and affordable accommodations for low-wage workers and other families for whom market rents were out of reach. But by the end of the 1980s, public housing was widely viewed as a failure. Although, many local housing agencies maintained and operated high-quality programs, living conditions in the nation's most dilapidated public housing developments were deplorable, and a complex layering of problems left these developments mired in the most destructive kind of poverty (Blank 1997). These problems included extreme racial and economic segregation and inadequate public services, particularly police, schools, and sanitation. Most residents were unemployed, depending on public assistance or the underground. Ineffective housing authority management and inadequate federal funding had left these developments with huge backlogs of repairs, creating hazardous conditions that placed residents at risk for injury or disease. Exacerbating these problems, violent criminals and drug dealers dominated many distressed developments, and resident communities in which to live, undermining the welfare of families and children. Moreover, their profound poverty, distress, and disorder blighted surrounding neighborhoods, which though typically less poor than the public housing, still had very high rates of poverty, unemployment, high school dropouts, crime, and other social ills, few services or stores, and even fewer jobs."[7]

[7] *A Decade of Hope VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges*. Susan J. Popkin; Bruce Katz; Mary Cunningham; Karen D. Brown. Jeremy Gustafson; and Margery A. Turner. The Urban Land Institute; The Brookings Institution. May 2004.

FIGURE 1: CRISFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

FIGURE 2: CRISFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY REDEVELOPMENT

The Housing Authority units form an isolated enclave within the City. According to the *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan*, "A grid system is largely in place except for the Crisfield Housing Authority property. The public housing community appears to be physically detached from the City at large."[8] Public comments from the SRP planning process largely focused on how these public housing developments have become dangerous and destructive to surrounding areas. In addition, several Public Housing Authority residents expressed a desire, on the part of their families and other working class households, to find affordable housing elsewhere in the City. This includes positive reinforcement for the concept of developing a subsidized affordable housing program that will assist them in the purchase of new homes in Crisfield.

[8] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006, pg. 24.

Considering the size and location of the Housing Authority properties relative to Uptown, Downtown and Somers Cove Marina, the Housing Authority land presents opportunities for redevelopment that could benefit both the Authority's clients and the City's economy. Capitalizing on these opportunities will require changes in the way the City addresses affordable housing issues.

THE CONCEPT MASTER PLAN

In future housing planning, the Comprehensive Plan and the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) recommend that the CHA, the City, and developers avoid creating concentrations of poverty by mixing housing units together across the spectrum of affordability. This recommendation follows on the U.S. Congress's model for public housing projects. In 1992, Congress authorized a new program called Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere, or HOPE VI. Through HOPE VI, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) called for the rebuilding of severely distressed public housing with some specific goals:

- Lessen isolation and reduce the concentration of very low-income families.
- Build mixed-income communities.
- Revitalize the sites of severely distressed public housing and, as a result, improve the surrounding neighborhood.
- Provide coordinated, comprehensive community and supportive services that help residents to achieve self-sufficiency, young people to attain educational excellence, and the community to secure a desirable quality of life.

The SRP recommendations reflect the design principles for accomplishing these community-building goals from the HOPE VI program. Principles for inner-city design in HOPE VI projects that are illustrated in the SRP include:

<u>Diversity</u>: A broad range of housing types and prices will bring people of diverse ages, races and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

<u>Safety and civic engagement</u>: The relationship of buildings and streets should enable neighbors to create a safe neighborhood by providing "eyes on the street" and should encourage interaction and community identity.

<u>Neighborhoods</u>: Neighborhoods should be compact, with shops, schools, parks and other activities of daily life available within walking distance.

Local architectural character: The image and character of new development should respond to the best architectural traditions in the area.

Streets and public open space: Neighborhoods should have an interconnected network of streets and public open spaces to provide opportunities for recreation and appropriate settings for civic activities.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY LANDS

The situation regarding the Housing Authority lands is complicated and the solution, redevelopment and dispersal, will probably involve some combination of several different financial tools. Although, a developer would pay market price for the site, some of the sales proceeds would probably need to be put into the replacement housing to cover any gap between what is covered by tax credits and replacement housing factor funds.

Since replacement housing factor funds are paid in over 10 years, the CHA would need to borrow against them through a Capital Fund Financing Program, also through HUD, or CHA could bridge them with sales proceeds. The developer could then develop market rate housing on the site and some of the new units could be sold or rented to qualified public housing residents. Their mortgages would be based on their incomes (not more than 35% generally), and sales proceeds would be used to write down the market price, with the authority taking back a "silent second mortgage."

HUD has some funds to replace public housing units but they would probably represent just a fraction (20-30%) of the replacement cost. When a Housing Authority takes units "out of service", (i.e., out from under an Annual Contributions Contract ("ACC"), HUD will make payments called replacement housing factor funds, annually for five years, roughly equivalent to capital funds (even though the units are no longer there). The authority may request an additional five years of funding, and would have to meet certain tests, such as having already spent the first funds, and meeting a match (approximately 20%). If the CHA were to seek these funds for all 330 units, and with a maximum RFF payment of $1,500 per unit per year for 10 years, this would yield about $5 million. Assuming a per unit construction cost of $140,000 for each new unit, the $5 million would support construction of roughly 36 units.

Under HUD Section 8 "vouchers," housing owners sign a Housing Payment Assistance contract with the local Housing Authority. The CHA would pay the difference between market rent and 30% of tenant income. There are two ways to use the Section 8 program:

- HUD will provide vouchers for disposed units that are occupied, on a one-for-one basis. However, there must be acceptable rental units available in the area. The process can be "voluntary" or "mandatory."
- Project-based Section 8 vouchers is where a Housing Authority can take up to 25% of its housing vouchers (of its 23 it could use 5 or 6) and attach that value to the cost of a new development; for elderly housing, the percentage can go up to 100%.

Tax credits are a United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) program, which operates through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). It is complicated but generous and can be combined with other programs and subsidies. There are two levels of credit:

- The 4% program is available by right, provided that the applicant meets threshold point requirements.
- The 9% program is very competitive.

STRATEGIES

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Expand the role of the CHA as the lead agency for affordable housing programs such as those described in Task 12 Affordable Housing.
2) Develop and issue an RFQ/RFP to redevelop the CHA property with a combination of market rate and subsidized housing units before demolition occurs.
3) Approximately, 50-70 percent of existing public housing units should be replaced with new units and renovated housing in the community. This will improve the quality and condition of subsidized units and at the same time prevent clustering and isolation of public housing.
4) Form a partnership with a developer and redevelop the CHA property to generate funds for the replacement units. The Crisfield Housing Authority will have primary responsibility to reduce total number of units through attrition, shift some tenants to Section 8 program in "voluntary conversion" from public housing to tenant-based vouchers, and create an RFP and find a developer to build new replacement units.
5) Redevelop some or all of public housing for residential use, particularly areas with public access to the waterfront; public spaces should be integrated into site plans.
6) Develop guidelines for redevelopment of the Public Housing Authority property. This should be a City-managed process, phased out 5-10 years after relocation of public housing, with the City taking the lead and private property owners and developers bearing the costs.

Task 11 Use of Vacant Lots within Municipal Boundary

The integration of housing into neighborhoods, through infill/redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties, is important to providing affordable quality housing for residents. This is particularly true of residents in the Public Housing Authority.

GOAL:

- Encourage appropriate infill and redevelopment consistent with the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP).

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage infill and redevelopment on vacant and underutilized properties.

VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED LAND

It is estimated that the City of Crisfield has 328 vacant and underutilized land properties designated totaling approximately 101 acres. A majority of these properties are ½ acres or larger (312 properties). In some cases, vacant land leaves gaps in the streetscape, fragmenting aesthetic qualities and underscoring a sense of disinvestment. Vacant lands also present a opportunity for Crisfield to assist in the revitalization of the City.

The City can benefit from development on vacant and underutilized properties. For this reason, the City should encourage infill development in areas with existing infrastructure investments as a means of achieving balanced growth with efficient land use and cost-effective delivery of City services. There are design challenges inherent in developing successful infill properties, and ensuring that new development is consistent in character and scale with established neighborhoods and business districts. In order to succeed, City policies will need to:

- Allow flexibility in housing location, type and density within the densities allowed by the Comprehensive Plan;
- Provide flexibility in lot size, configuration, and vehicle access to facilitate infill development;
- Provide clear development standards that promote compatibility between new and existing development and promote certainty in the marketplace;
- Encourage development of needed housing in close proximity to employment and services;

- Promote neighborhood preservation and enhancement through redevelopment of blighted distressed, and underutilized properties;
- Provide standards of 'historic appropriateness' for redevelopment and alteration of historic buildings;
- Encourage mixed use development to complete neighborhoods; and
- Encourage development and preservation of affordable housing through infill development.

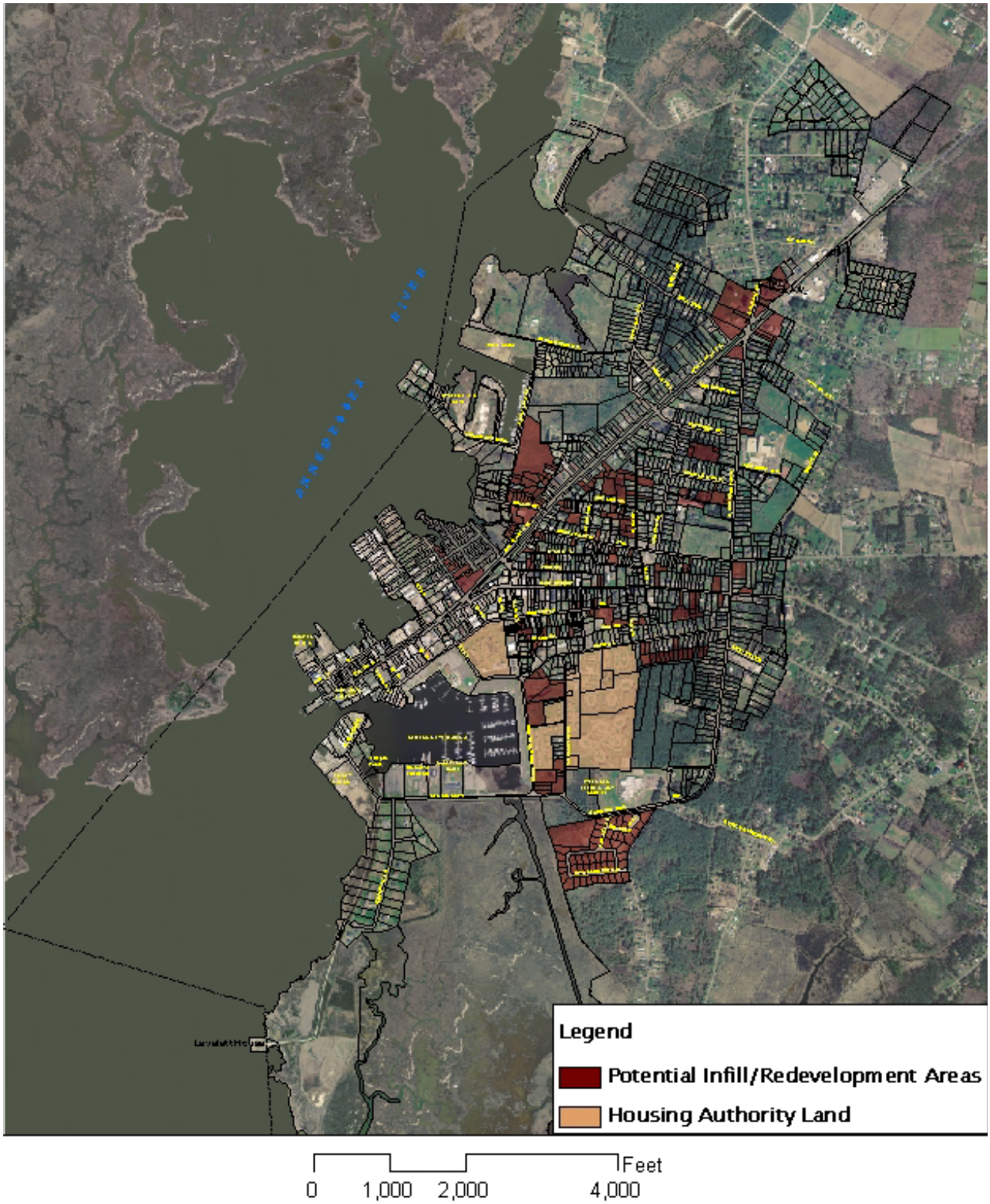
INCLUSIONARY ZONING

A recent zoning technique being used to address affordable housing is "inclusionary zoning." Inclusionary zoning can be used to increase the number of affordable unit for both ownership and rental. Inclusionary zoning can be either mandatory or voluntary. In either case, developers are required to "set aside" a certain percentage of units in new residential developments for low and moderate income households.

Inclusionary zoning usually provides some form of developer "incentive" such as "density bonuses" and/or reduced fees. The theory is that these incentives reduce or offset some of the cost of producing the affordable units. Some communities accept an in lieu fee or allow a developer to provide affordable units offsite. Fees in lieu are allocated to an affordable housing fund. A local housing authority and/or nonprofit organization can use these funds to purchase land and construct affordable units and operate them as a sort of scattered-site public housing program. Vacant and underutilized properties in Crisfield provide ample opportunities for location such housing units. In regards to vacant lots within the City, Crisfield should do the following:

- Encourage general infill and redevelopment on vacant and underutilized properties in the City.
- Use vacant lots for infill housing and dispersion of housing units from Public Housing Authority lands;
- Write an infill redevelopment provision into the zoning code to facilitate infill/redevelopment.

FIGURE 1: POTENTIAL INFILL AREAS & PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY LANDS



STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Identify appropriate areas of the City for infill and redevelopment and adopt flexible infill and redevelopment zoning provisions.
2) Consider waiving demolition fees and utilities reconnection fees for redevelopment projects.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Consider establishing inclusionary zoning provisions that require developers to provide a percentage of proposed units as affordable housing. Permit developers to meet their inclusionary zoning by establishing options that allow developers to pay a “fee-in-lieu” or develop affordable units off-site.

Task 12: Affordable Housing

Providing affordable quality housing and safe conditions for City residents is a core component of the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP). Provisions for affordable housing that allow lower income residents to own homes and become part of the community in Crisfield will assist with City economic and revitalization efforts.

GOAL:

- Encourage public and private affordable housing programs and strategies.

OBJECTIVE:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing in the City.

The availability of affordable housing is essential for people who live and work in Crisfield. Low income levels in all population groups – among the lowest in the State – make the challenge of finding a home, or maintaining one in good condition, even more difficult for individuals and families who live in Crisfield. Because 34% of the City's population is living on incomes that fall below the poverty level, it is likely that any real effort to increase opportunities for homeownership and improve the condition of the existing declining housing stock will need assistance from the City.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determines income levels according to an area's median family income. Somerset County's 2000 median family income was $37,643. Based on this figure, family income levels in Crisfield are as follows:

1. Very Low Income: $11,964.50 (50% of regional median family income).

2. Low Income: $19,143.20 (80% of regional median family income).

3. Moderate Income: $19,382.49 - $27,518.35 (81% to 115% of regional median family income).

Table 1: Crisfield Income

Households	Percent of Total	Families	Percent of Total
Less than $10,000	28%	Less than $10,000	21%
$10,000 to $14,999	15%	$10,000 to $14,999	14%
$15,000 to $24,999	18%	$15,000 to $24,999	16%
$25,000 to $34,999	15%	$25,000 to $34,999	14%
$35,000 to $49,999	9%	$35,000 to $49,999	14%
$50,000 to $74,999	9%	$50,000 to $74,999	11%
$75,000 to $99,999	3%	$75,000 to $99,999	4%
$100,000 to $149,999	3%	$100,000 to $149,999	5%
$150,000 to $199,999	0.8%	$150,000 to $199,999	1%
$200,000 or more	0.8%	$200,000 or more	0.3%
Median Income	$17,979	Median Income	$23,929

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

As Table 1 illustrates, over 50% of Crisfield's families are living on moderate or lower incomes. Bear in mind that family incomes include incomes from multiple wage earners, people working two jobs, income subsidies, etc. The problem of housing affordability in Crisfield is not just a problem affecting individuals living in poverty; it also impacts working families with secure jobs and multiple incomes.

While income levels throughout Somerset County historically have been low, a comparison of income and poverty around the County illustrates that Crisfield residents have a distinct disadvantage in the competition to find affordable housing in the local market.

Relative to other areas of the Eastern Shore, the prices in Somerset County's housing market (which includes homes in Crisfield) have remained low over the past few decades. Local housing prices began to inflate in 2004, reflecting a regional and national trend. In 2006, median home sale prices peaked in Somerset County. In 2007, Somerset County real estate data reflects a downward trend in prices since 2004, an indication that the local market is returning to more normal levels. However, because median incomes in Crisfield are well below those in other communities and in the County, ensuring that Crisfielders do not get edged out of the housing market remains a challenging prospect.

Table 2: 2000 U.S. Census Income and Poverty in Somerset County

Geographic area	Median income in 1999 (dollars)		Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	1999 median earnings of full-time, yr-round workers ($)		Income in 1999 below poverty level			
	House-holds	Families		Male	Female	All ages	Related children under 18 yrs	65 yrs and over	Percent of families
Somerset County	29,903	37,643	15,965	27,496	23,035	20%	28%	19%	15%
Chance	34,531	37,969	15,706	25,469	21,875	23%	51.9	14.3	17%
Crisfield	**17,979**	**23,929**	**12,387**	**30,078**	**20,670**	**34%**	**47%**	**30%**	**31%**
Dames Quarter	41,458	44,464	19,448	50,000	36,875	11%	0%	35.1	10.4
Deal Island	33,490	38,571	13,936	30,592	24,219	8%	8%	9%	4%
Eden	34,408	34,844	13,716	21,875	17,700	8%	3%	33%	6%
Fairmount	24,185	38,542	18,494	26,146	21,786	23%	33%	24%	21%
Mount Vernon	43,750	48,289	19,919	34,271	34,432	17%	31%	16%	10%
Princess Anne	20,066	26,351	10,944	19,492	22,857	40%	54%	21%	30%
Smith Island	26,324	29,375	23,996	26,250	28,750	22%	27%	68%	14%
West Pocomoke	21,635	29,792	26,318	25,865	16,058	21%	50%	25%	17%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

The Maryland Housing Affordability Index (HAI) measures the ability of a median income family to purchase a median priced existing single-family home. A rating below 100 indicates that a median-income family is only able to afford houses priced below the median home price in the area. Likewise, a rating above 100 indicates that a buyer can afford a home priced above the area's median home cost. For instance, an HAI of 89 means a homebuyer can afford a home that is 89% of the median home price for the area. Likewise, an HAI of 110% indicates that a homebuyer can afford a home priced 10% above the median home price for the area. The HAI reports indices for first-time and repeat homebuyers. Municipal HAI data is not available. However, since Somerset County data includes Crisfield home prices and incomes, the County's HAI is relevant to this discussion.

Somerset County home prices have long been among the lowest in Maryland. Consequently, the County traditionally has had one of the highest HAIs in the State. This began to change in 2004, when the national trend of rising housing prices reached Somerset County. Table 3 illustrates the increase in housing prices and decrease in affordability in the Somerset housing market (which includes Crisfield) between 2002 and 2006. Last year, 2007, the housing bubble burst and lower home prices reflected the change. As a result, the HAI in Somerset County is on the rise.

In 2007, the median price of a home purchased in Somerset County by a repeat buyer was $139,999; the median price of first-time buyers was $118,999 (prices of homes bought by first-time buyers are typically lower than those bought by repeat buyers). Repeat homebuyers are still experiencing a positive HAI, however the average first-time homebuyer is only able to afford a home priced at 26 percent (or more) below market value. This equates to $88,000 or less.

Table 3: Home Sale Prices and Affordability Indices – 2002 – 2007

	Median Home Sale Prices				Housing Affordability Indices			
	Current Month		% Change From		Current Month		% Change From	
Jurisdiction	**Repeat Buyers**	**First Time Buyers**	**Last Year**	**Last Month**	**Repeat Buyers**	**1st Time Buyers**	**Last Year**	**Last Month**
2007 Somerset	$139,999	$118,999	0.0%	-12.5%	115	74	5.5%	12.5%
2006 Somerset	$199,999	$169,999	66.7%	8.1%	79	51	-38.9%	-4.5%
2005 Somerset	$119,999	$101,999	0.0%	-13.0%	129	83	-0.2%	15.8%
2004 Somerset	$119,999	$101,999	60.0%	-13.0%	130	89	-33.3%	16.7%
2003 Somerset	$62,000	$52,700	3.3%	-29.5%	232	158	0.0%	33.2%
2002 Somerset	$62,000	$52,700	n/a	n/a	232	158	n/a	n/a
	2000 U.S. Census Median Home Price Asked							
2000 Somerset	**$52,100**				**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**

Source: Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

While the past year saw some improvement in the number of households able to afford housing, the region still has a large percentage of households that are struggling to meet housing costs, and the average first-time homebuyer in Crisfield – including those employed in the local workforce – is still not able to afford a median-priced home in the County.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

The workforce is typified by such workers as nurses, teachers, municipal employees, emergency responders, law enforcement staff, and other workers who provide essential services in a community. The availability of workforce housing is an issue that increasingly affects those people with full-time jobs whose work is vital to any community's day-to-day functioning. Workforce housing includes single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums, starter homes, and apartments that are affordable to area workers.

The Maryland Governor's Taskforce on Workforce Housing's *Image of the Possible Report*, issued in July 2006, defines workforce housing generally as housing that is affordable to households earning incomes within the range 60 to 120 percent of area median income. As shown in Table 1, 2000 median household income in Crisfield was $17,979.00 (median family income was $23,929). Thus, workforce housing in Crisfield is homes that are affordable for working families with incomes ranging from $10,787.00 to $21,574.00 (using median family income, the range is $14,357.00 to $28,714.00). Table 4 illustrates the range of affordable housing prices based on gross income in 2007.

Table 4: 2007 Affordable Home Price by Income

Gross Income	Loan Amount	Affordable Price
$20,000	$63,080	$66,400
$30,000	$94,715	$99,700
$40,000	$126,255	$132,900
$50,000	$157,795	$166,100
$60,000	$189,335	$199,300
$70,000	$220,970	$232,600
$80,000	$252,510	$265,800
	First-time Homebuyer	**Repeat Homebuyer**
Somerset County 2007 Median Home Price	$118,999	$139,999

Note: This table shows the approximate home price and loan amount. A household earning the specified income could afford making a 5% down-payment with no more than 25% of gross income for principal and interest payments, at the current interest rate plus PMI premium.

Source: Maryland Association of Realtors, March 2007

As shown in Table 4, based on median incomes in Crisfield, the median price of a home in the local housing market is well above what the average working family or household in Crisfield can afford.

While housing data indicates that home values in Crisfield are lower than most of those in the region (see Table 5), the challenge is in finding *decent*, affordable housing in Crisfield. As indicated in the Economic Development section of this Plan, a large percentage of the City's housing stock is older and in declining condition because many residents lack the financial resources to keep structures in good condition. The result is a growing supply of cheap houses that are not or soon will not be decently livable (see Table 6).

Table 5: Median House Value

	Median value
Somerset County	$81,100
Chance	$96,600
Crisfield	**$68,900**
Deal Island	$82,900
Eden	$71,700
Fairmount	$61,500
Mount Vernon	$96,000
Princess Anne	$76,800
Smith Island	$55,000
West Pocomoke	$87,500

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Table 6: Crisfield Housing Stock Characteristics	
Subject	**Percent**
Total housing units	
Houses built before 1960	49%
Houses built before 1939	28%
Houses lacking complete plumbing facilities	2%
House lacking complete kitchen facilities	.5%
Houses lacking telephone service	5.2%
Houses heated with wood	1.6%
Houses with no heat	.8%
Specified owner-occupied units	
Houses valued at less than $50,000	18%
Houses valued at $50,000 to $99,999	66%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Potential homebuyers are forced to look outside of Crisfield for decent homes, in Somerset County, where home prices are higher, homebuyer incomes are higher, and affordability is limited for low to moderate income families.

Nevertheless, opportunity exists in the City's existing housing stock to provide affordable housing for low to moderate income earners, including those in the local workforce. There are many Federal and State programs that provide support for rehabilitation of older houses as a means of increasing affordable housing stock for low to moderate income families. Communities undergoing revitalization have opportunities to expand program benefits to insure that increased affordable housing is part of the overall revitalization effort. In addition, profit and non-profit organization may be underutilized resources in the community and/or offer opportunities for partnerships.

PROGRAMS TO ASSIST AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES

203k Rehab Program (HUD)

The Section 203(k) program is the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) primary program for the rehabilitation and repair of single family properties. As such, it is an important tool for community and neighborhood revitalization and for expanding homeownership opportunities. HUD strongly supports the program and the lenders that participate in it. Lenders support the program as a means to demonstrate their commitment to lending in lower income communities and to help meet their responsibilities under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

The 203(k) Rehab program can be used in combination with HOME, HOPE, and Community Development Block Grant programs to rehabilitate properties. The program accomplishes rehabilitation and/or improvement of an existing one-to-four unit dwelling in one of three ways to:

- Purchase a dwelling and the land on which the dwelling is located and rehabilitate it.
- Purchase a dwelling on another site, move it onto a new foundation on the mortgaged property and rehabilitate it.
- Refinance existing indebtedness and rehabilitate a dwelling.

203(k) program funds may be used to finance such items as painting, room additions, decks and other items even if the home does not need major structural improvements.

<u>203(k) - How It Is Different</u>

Most mortgage financing plans provide only permanent financing. That is, the lender will not usually close the loan and release the mortgage proceeds unless the condition and value of the property provide adequate loan security.

When rehabilitation is involved, this means that a lender typically requires the improvements to be finished before a long-term mortgage is made. When a homebuyer wants to purchase a house in need of repair or modernization, the homebuyer usually has to obtain financing first to purchase the dwelling; additional financing to do the rehabilitation construction; and a permanent mortgage when the work is completed to pay off the interim loans with a permanent mortgage. Often the interim financing (the acquisition and construction loans) involves relatively high interest rates and short amortization periods.

The Section 203(k) program was designed to address this situation. The borrower can get just one mortgage loan, at a long-term fixed (or adjustable) rate, to finance both the acquisition and the rehabilitation of the property. To provide funds for the rehabilitation, the mortgage amount is based on the projected value of the property with the work completed, taking into account the cost of the work. To minimize the risk to the mortgage lender, the mortgage loan (the maximum allowable amount) is eligible for endorsement by HUD as soon as the mortgage proceeds are disbursed and a rehabilitation escrow account is established. At this point the lender has a fully-insured mortgage loan.

To be eligible, the property must be a one- to four-family dwelling that has been completed for at least one year. The number of units on the site must be acceptable according to the provisions of local zoning requirements. All newly constructed units must be attached to the existing dwelling. Cooperative units are not eligible.

Homes that have been demolished, or will be razed as part of the rehabilitation work, are eligible provided some of the existing foundation system remains in place. In addition to typical home rehabilitation projects, the 203(k) program can be used to convert a one-family dwelling to a two-, three-, or four-family dwelling or to convert an existing multi-unit dwelling to a one- to four-family unit.

An existing house (or modular unit) on another site can be moved onto the mortgaged property; however, release of loan proceeds for the existing structure on the non-mortgaged property is not allowed until the new foundation has been properly inspected and the dwelling has been properly placed and secured to the new foundation.
A 203(k) mortgage may be originated on a "mixed use" residential property provided: (1) The property has no greater than 25 percent (for a one story building); 33 percent (for a three story building); and 49 percent (for a two story building) of its floor area used for commercial (storefront) purposes; (2) the commercial use will not affect the health and safety of the occupants of the residential property; and (3) the rehabilitation funds will only be used for the residential functions of the dwelling and areas used to access the residential part of the property.

More Houses 4 Less (DHCD)

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Administration (CDA) sponsors programs that increase home ownership, improve rental housing, build group homes, and assist owners with rehabilitated housing. Programs are

funded by the sale of tax-exempt revenue bonds; taxable bonds; State general obligation bonds; general funds; special funds generated through loan repayments, fees, and charges; and federal housing subsidies.

The types of homes eligible for purchase through More House 4 Less include:

- Existing homes; new construction (if in a Priority Funding Area)
- Townhouses; detached or semi-detached homes; condominium units; modular or manufactured homes with the State seal of approval for code compliance
- Investment property not eligible
- Home must be occupied as principal residence

The Home Program – Home Investment Partnerships (HUD)

HUD grants to states and units of general local government to implement local housing strategies designed to increase homeownership and affordable housing opportunities for low- and very low-income Americans.

Participating jurisdictions may use HOME funds for a variety of housing activities, according to local housing needs. Eligible uses of funds include homeownership down payment (American Dream Downpayment Initiative); tenant-based assistance; housing rehabilitation; assistance to homebuyers; and new construction of housing. HOME funding may also be used for site acquisition, site improvements, demolition, relocation, and other necessary and reasonable activities related to the development of non-luxury housing.

Officer Next Door/Firefighter and Emergency Management Technician Next Door (HUD)

The Officer Next Door and Firefighter Next Door programs provide law enforcement officers and emergency responders with the opportunity to purchase homes in revitalization areas at significant discounts. Statistics have shown that public safety improves when police officers, firefighters or EMTs live in a neighborhood.

This program makes homes in revitalization areas available to law enforcement and emergency services employees who are employed full-time by federal, state, county, or municipal government; or a public or private college or university. Homes are available at a 50 percent discount from the list price. To make these homes even more affordable for law enforcement officers, the officers may apply for an FHA-insured mortgage with a down payment of only $100, and all closing costs may be financed. Because homes sold through this program are located in revitalization areas there may be additional assistance from state or local

government sources. If the home needs repairs, the purchasing officer may also use FHA's 203(k) mortgage program. The Section 203(k) program provides financing for both the purchase of the home and cost of needed repairs.

Teacher Next Door (HUD)

The Teacher Next Door program, like the Officer Next Door program, is designed to help make American communities stronger by encouraging teachers to purchase homes in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Homes are available at a 50 percent discount from the list price. To make these homes even more affordable for teachers, the teachers may apply for an FHA-insured mortgage with a down payment of only $100, and all closing costs may be financed. Because homes sold through this program are located in revitalization areas there may be additional assistance from state or local government sources. If the home needs repairs, the teacher may also use FHA's 203(k) mortgage program. The Section 203(k) program provides financing for both the purchase of the home and cost of needed repairs.

Purchasers must be employed full-time by a public school, private school, or federal, state, county, or municipal educational agency as a state-certified classroom teacher or administrator in grades K-12. Participants must certify that they are employed by an educational agency that serves the school district/jurisdiction in which the home they are purchasing is located. Teachers also must be in good standing with their employer. An eligible teacher does not have to be a first-time homebuyer to participate, but the teacher may not own any other home at the time of the closing of the HUD home. The teacher must agree to live in the HUD home as the principal residence for three years after move-in.

STRATEGIES

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Form a Crisfield Housing Roundtable, a coalition of members of the Crisfield Housing Authority Commission, community organizations, local lending institutions, local government representatives, private business owners (including builders and developers), and individuals who assess and recommend affordable housing policies for the City.
2) Establish a Crisfield Housing Trust as an affiliate of the Crisfield Housing Authority to secure funding solely for the purpose of increasing affordable housing units through rehabilitation of existing structures or building new structures. Maintain and increase funding through a dedicated revenue stream (Federal, State, local, private, foundations – see below for Federal program and partnership opportunities).

3) Establish partnerships with nonprofit, semi-public developers and other financers of affordable housing.
4) Develop initiatives that require developers to address low to moderate income and affordable homeownership opportunities as part of any new housing development strategy, and mandate that low to moderately priced dwellings comprise a percentage of all new developments.
5) Enact specific regulations to significantly address better housing options, including developing zoning and design standards that increase the mix of uses and housing types.
6) Investigate opportunities for the Crisfield Housing Authority to participate in low income housing program partnerships with HUD and the State with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).
7) Link workforce housing needs and initiatives with local job creation/economic development strategies and projects.
8) Establish a pilot program of funding for housing units targeted to moderate income households.
9) Partner with local lending institutions and HUD to develop a series of free community programs that educate the public about financial literacy, credit counseling and homeownership counseling.
10) Partner with local lending institutions and HUD to use federal programs and financial resources to rehabilitate existing properties to increase the supply of decent, affordable housing. The City should explore the number of programs available to municipalities, housing authorities and non-profit organizations and partnerships that encourage purchase, redevelopment and rehabilitation of existing housing stock, including:

Task 13: Port to Tangier and Smith Islands, i.e. considerations for the City of Crisfield as the "Outlet Port" to the Islands

Crisfield has many wonderful historic sites but it is also the departure point for the unique histories of Smith and Tangier Islands. Improving linkages to these Islands will assist Crisfield's tourism efforts.

GOAL:

- Develop Crisfield as an outlet port to enhance economic development.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain and strengthen Crisfield's role as the outlet port to Smith and Tangier Islands.
- Support Maryland and Virginia initiatives to develop a ferry service.
- Ensure that City docking facilities are in good repair and operating order to ensure the safe transport of goods and people.
- Ensure that City docking facilities are passenger-friendly and add to the aesthetic quality of the waterfront.

CRISFIELD AS AN OUTLET PORT

Crisfield is the gateway to Smith and Tangier Islands, the barrier islands located several miles offshore in the Chesapeake Bay. The communities living on the islands rely on boats coming from Crisfield for the delivery of goods, mail, and visitors. School children and commuters travel back and forth from the islands to the mainland through Crisfield every weekday. Tourists travelling to both islands depart from Crisfield on passenger ferries regularly throughout the warm weather seasons. These tourists spend money and time in Crisfield during their visits (see Economic Development section).

The islands and the City have maintained this special connection for generations and every effort should be made to continue and strengthen this mutually beneficial relationship. At a minimum, the City dock facilities at the head of Main Street should be maintained to the highest standards to ensure the safety of all goods and passengers passing through. To the

maximum extent, docking facilities should be weatherproof, modern, attractive and useful to local residents and tourists.

The County dock on Broad Street is not maintained by Crisfield however the City should regularly inspect the County dock facilities to ensure that all public dock facilities located within the City are up to standard. Consistently high standards in all public docking facilities in the City will improve Crisfield's image as a safe, welcoming place for boaters.

Crisfield, Maryland to Reedsville, Virginia Ferry

While a ferry transports people and goods from Crisfield to Smith and Tangier Islands on a daily basis, there is no regular passenger boat service to Crisfield from other points across the Bay. In a recent study, the Maryland Department of Tourism reported that over 10,000 calls are received annually regarding a possible Chesapeake Bay ferry service.

The study, *Economic Impact Assessment of the Proposed Reedsville/Crisfield Ferry* by Martin Associates, Somerset County, 2006, estimates that a ferry service would be more successful carrying passengers than commercial vehicles and trucks. Nevertheless, both the tourism and commercial transport markets would likely benefit from such a service. The study indicates the ferry would present a significant opportunity to grow heritage tourism and the hospitality sector on both sides of the ferry route and in the region in general.
Members of the Maryland-Virginia Ferry Committee members also view the proposed ferry as another viable transportation option for crossing the Chesapeake Bay. Given rising costs of fuel and increasing traffic volume on Route 50, the ferry presents a real opportunity for an alternative route to cross the Bay.

A ferry service also can be promoted as experiential tourism as well, making the journey as rewarding as the destination. Revenues from dockage fees along with direct and indirect ferry passenger expenditures in the City, are a virtual certainty should the ferry come to Crisfield. According to the 2006 Economic Impact Assessment, "it is assumed that 75% of ferry passengers will eat in Reedsville or Crisfield at an average of $8 per person…and 30% will spend an additional night in either town."

The Maryland-Virginia Ferry Committee is overseeing the preparation of a "Pre-Operational Development Plan" in conjunction with a nationwide ferry operator. A National Environmental Policy Act study also must be performed to determine any potential environmental impacts that might occur at the respective ferry terminal sites and along the route of the proposed Chesapeake Bay crossing. Further discussions on the proposed service are planned following

the preparation of these reports. In the meantime, the City should support the development and opening of a passenger ferry service that utilizes Crisfield as a ferry terminal site.

SMITH ISLAND ECO-SYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

With the passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in November 2007, Congress authorized federal funding of $9.4 million to begin the Smith Island Ecosystem Restoration Project. The project is being undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers to stop or reverse the tremendous loss of underwater bay grasses around parts of Smith Island, one of the Chesapeake Bay barrier islands that protects Crisfield from direct exposure to erosion and sea level rise. A similar project is underway for Poplar Island, an uninhabited barrier island located offshore of Talbot County, Maryland. Since it began in 1998, the Poplar Island project has employed the local workforce in a variety of positions ranging from unskilled labor to technical jobs.

Once started, the Smith Island project will include the construction of off-shore segmented breakwaters and back-filling to create additional wetlands along the coastline of Martin National Wildlife Refuge to alleviate environmental concerns around parts of Smith Island. The Corps estimates that completion of all phases of the Smith Island project will take 50 years, and eventually cost over $40,000,000 (see Table 1). The initial phases of the project will cost $10,000,000, a portion of which will be funded by the State.

Table 1: Smith Island Ecosystem Restoration Project

Phase	Total Output (acres)	Project Cost	Annual Cost	Average Cost
Fog Point	32	$384,000	$30,000	$938
Tylerton Shoreline	288	$36,403,000	$2,431,000	$8,441
Back Cove	123	$2,110,000	$140,000	$1,138
Back Cove	263	$2,811,000	$187,000	$711
Western Shoreline	986	$4,658,000	$224,000	$227
Totals with TS5	**1,692**	**$46,366,000**	**$3,012,000**	**$1,780**
Totals without TS5	**1,404**	**$9,963,000**	**$581,000**	**$414**

Source: Smith Island Environmental Restoration and Protection Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, May 2001 U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

Part of these costs will be for labor, goods and services contracted to support the project. Like the Popular Island project, the restoration of Smith Island will draw on local resources to fulfill a variety of needs.

The projected life of the Poplar Island project is 20 years, with an estimated cost of over $300 million. In its report on the impact of the Poplar Island Restoration Project on the local workforce and economy, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers correctly projected that:

> "The potential for employment of area residents is expected during dike construction, habitat development, and monitoring activities. Dike construction is projected to occur over a 2-year period. To meet such a deadline, support will be needed from the local workforce. Because some of the construction contractors may not be local residents, the potential for year-round utilization of local motels and restaurants also exists. Habitat development and monitoring will occur intermittently throughout the life of the project but will involve periods of intensive activity (ex. marsh planting) that may require support from the local workforce and area businesses."[9]

The Smith Island Restoration Project can bring long-term economic benefit to Crisfield if the City is prepared for it. Docking facilities, overnight accommodations (both short and long-term), eating establishments and general retail goods and services should be sufficient in number and quality to support the personnel who will carry out the project over the next several years. In addition, the local workforce stands to benefit from a broad range of employment opportunities (from unskilled labor to technical and professional jobs) that will arise during the course or the project.

[9] Poplar Island Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

STRATEGIES

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Conduct annual safety inspections and a regular schedule of maintenance of the City dock and Depot facilities to ensure that they are maintained to the highest standards.
2) Implement the improvements to the City dock and Depot recommended in the Urban Design section of the 2008 *Crisfield Revitalization Plan* (SRP) such as installation of a protective breakwater; construction of an extended and widened pier head that includes varied paved and natural surfaces; installation of new shelters with seating, wind protection and updated real-time electronic information; construction of a lighted, sound-equipped plaza to be used for public performances; and addition of vertical aesthetic elements like trees, towers, and masts.
3) Coordinate regular inspections of the dock facilities located on Broad Street with the County to ensure that all public dock facilities located within the City are up to standard.
4) Continue to develop ferry routes in Maryland and Virginia that include Crisfield as a ferry terminal site.
5) Gather information from and provide assistance to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and relevant State agencies on the planning and preparation for the Smith Island Restoration Project. Provide regular updates for City officials, civic organizations, businesses and the local workforce on pertinent information about the Project, including employment opportunities.

Task 14: Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas

GOAL:

Improving public spaces is critical for the revitalization of the City of Crisfield, as expressed in the 2006 *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) and the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP). Support the active development of parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and natural areas in Crisfield for public enjoyment.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide enhanced access to the waterfront.
- Utilize a system of parks, trails, open space, and public plazas etc. to enhance the appeal of the City for tourists and residents alike.
- Implement the park and open space recommendations of the SRP.
- Locate park and open space facilities so as to preserve and/or enhance views to and from water.

THE CRISFIELD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

According to the Comprehensive Plan, Crisfield lacks adequate parks and open space. "With the exception of parkland, the main public facilities are adequately sized for Crisfield's current situation…there are currently no public parks or recreation areas in the City."[10]

Public Parks/Open Space: Crisfield lacks public open space. Public water access is limited. No citywide parks and open space vision areas exist.

Natural Areas: Natural areas provide form to urban development by defining the edges of intensely developed areas with open spaces. Together these resources add to scenic beauty and important City scenic viewsheds. Natural areas can connect various parts of the City. These areas also are environmental corridors, natural areas for stormwater management, flood control, and recreation.

The City has many areas rich in natural and sensitive environmental resources. These areas provide opportunities for recreation and help protect life and property during storm surges. Natural features also sustain the Crisfield ecology, as it continues to grow and develop. This is

[10] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006.

especially true of the large tidal and non-tidal wetlands, which help attenuate flooding, purify water, and support wildlife.

As density increases, the importance of natural features will be critical for a healthy ecological functioning. Where wetland and open areas in the City have been compromised by poor development planning in the past, natural areas will need to be restored to the extent practicable. In the future, the City should create opportunities to help restore the important functions of natural resources.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, parks and open space are essential elements of good city form and function. Recommendations include the following:

- Create a community of landscaped and natural spaces, which are developed over time to link Crisfield as it grows.
- Redevelop key natural functions of the floodplain to assist with ecological functioning and quality of life for City residents.
- Reduce the total amount of impervious surface area within the existing borders of Crisfield.
- Provide a City recreational element for broad public access parklands, particularly along the waterfront (public walkway plan).
- Support parks, open space, biking, and walking trials, which are vital elements of a healthy city.
- Develop a citywide park and open space network that serves the recreational needs of residents and tourists.

One important advantage of Crisfield in relation to parks and open space is the City's access to waterfront, being surrounded by water. However, current public water access is limited to several boat ramps and a beach area, which the City leases from the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Some recreational needs may be met through the canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, and camping facilities at the nearby 2,900-acre Jane's Island State Park.

2005 SOMERSET COUNTY LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS, & RECREATION PLAN

The 2005 *Somerset County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* (LPRP) is the County's master plan for the acquisition and continued management of public recreation resources and land preservation initiatives. The County's "Parks and Recreation Program" is the most relevant aspect for the City of the Crisfield in the LPPRP. County goals include:

- Maximizing existing recreation facilities;
- Coordinating parks and recreation activities with school sites;
- Concentrating facilities in growth areas, such as Crisfield and Princess Anne, that are accessible to the majority of residents;
- Coordinating and maximizing use of programs between the County, municipalities, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES);
- Enhancing public access to the Bay and elsewhere through more tails and bike paths;
- Promoting the County's park and recreation program as a draw for attracting new residents and businesses;
- Establishing a Joint Consultative Committee between the County, municipalities, and UMES to enhance opportunities; and
- Improving communication between the County and municipalities, including maintenance of recreation facilities.

Funding for the Somerset County Parks and Recreation is limited. Total departmental expenditures from the Funding Year (FY) 2005 Budget was $284,500. This budget includes salaries, benefits, facilities, maintenance, programming etc. The FY 05 Capital Budget was $422,500. In addition, Parks & Recreation relies heavily on the Maryland Department's of Natural Resources (DNR) Program Open Space (POS). Since 1970, POS allocations to Somerset County have totaled approximately $2.12 million. Of this total, approximately, $395,000 has been allocated for projects located in the vicinity of either Crisfield or Princess Anne.

According to the LPRP, "Crisfield and Housing Authority have 13 acres between the City Dock area, the Head-Start and Salvation Army site, and the Housing Authority's recreation center and tennis court sites."[11] In 2004, 3 acres of the Head-Start and Salvation Army Youth Club were sold to a private user for a food store, leaving the City a meager 10 acres of parks and recreation sites.

Major recommendations of the LPRP that affect Crisfield include the following:

<u>Land Acquisition</u>: Acquire land along the old Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way currently owned by the State located along the west-side of MD Route 413 from Westover to Somers Cove Marina in Crisfield.

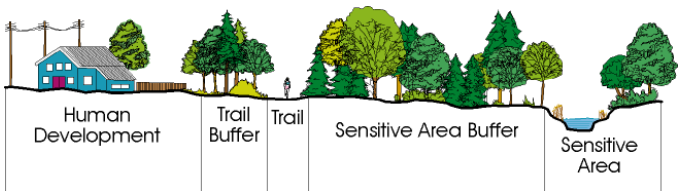
[11] Somerset County Land Preservation, Parks, & Recreation Plan; Prepared by Environmental Resources management – ERM in coordination with the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners, Planning & Zoning Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission, and Agricultural land Preservation Board, 2005.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitate the Army Guard Armory in Crisfield to meet new resident needs in the City; rehabilitate the H. DE Wayne Whittington Elementary School as a new home for Crisfield Head-Start and the Salvation Army Youth Club; replenish and rehabilitate the beach and bath house at Wellington Beach in Crisfield (leased by the City) and add playground equipment.

Other Projects: Support the Cedar Island Marsh Sanctuary in coordination with the Crisfield Heritage Foundation and support the Tangier Sound Natural History initiative to provide linkages to regional natural areas for enhancing ecological themes.

The key issue with the County's Parks and Recreation Program is lack of adequate funding. The total program for County and municipal land acquisition, facility development, and redevelopment costs is $2.8 million. Somerset County is contributing $123,000 towards capital project funding however there is a $70,000 gap over the next 20 years, requiring additional funding. Funding for specific Crisfield initiatives will be limited and constrained.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & NATURAL AREAS



This visual illustration shows how buffering works to mitigate harmful pollutants before they reach a tributary and how trails can integrate into this ecological network.

The City should develop a parks and open space program and a key network of sites based on the SRP Master Plan and its recommendations. This is particularly important for sensitive natural areas. Sensitive natural areas play significant roles in the quality and health of Crisfield's eco-system. Marshlands and wetlands help attenuate flooding, dissipate the energy of storm surges, prevent shoreline erosion, improve water quality, and provide protective habitat for native plants and wildlife. Wetlands help convey and store floodwaters and provide habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife.

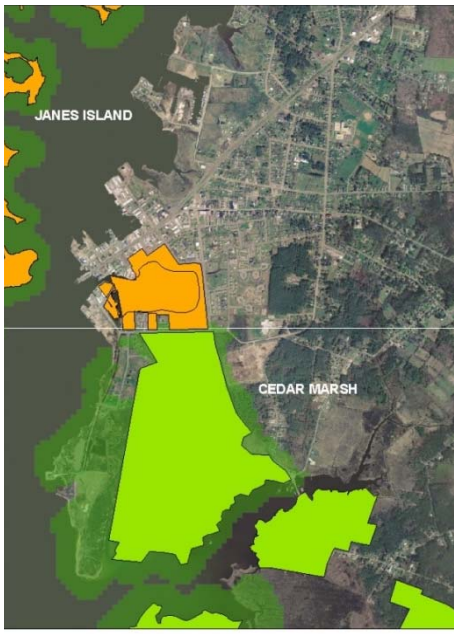
Crisfield is an urban environment blessed with some wonderfully preserved natural places. The relationship between the City and nature is critical. It strengthens not only Crisfield's understanding of nature, but its disposition toward the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Greenways, bikeways, and trails constitute important ways that residents will see and use open space. They contribute to the network of non-vehicular paths linking Crisfield's neighborhoods, public parks, natural areas and waterfront

TRAILS & GREENWAYS

Trails and greenways are another layer in Crisfield's integrated circulation network. For example, it is conceivable that residents and tourists alike will want to walk or bike the entire waterfront of Crisfield. This will be accomplished by utilizing signs and/or maps leading to various points along the continuous waterfront path. One might start in the north at the American Legion Beach, head south through the Small Boat Harbor and past Sunset Park. Upon reaching 7th Street, one can access the new marina promenade via passages or the small park network. The walk continues southward, where it may divert to a passage along Broad Street. The Broad Street path avoids dangerous marine repair facilities and/or similar industrial environments.

LINKING ATTRACTIONS

The visitor path resumes along the water's edge, where it connects with Harbor Lights, a small ice cream shop, the City piers, Captain's Galley, and beyond to the Tawes Center. The waterfront promenade continues alongside Somers Cove Marina, where it reaches Cedar Island Marsh and Jersey Island's Terrapin Pond. Water trails, traversable by kayak or canoe, are used to access far-reaching locations like Jane's Island State Park or extreme points in Cedar Island Marsh.



PROTECTED LANDS: STATE LANDS (DNR) & MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST (MET) EASEMENTS

<u>Sunset Park</u>

Located adjacent to uptown Main Street and alongside MD 413, Sunset Park is a park site that acts as an edge to a salt marsh. The Park is an open space located in the City. It receives some visitors and notice and is included in the resident "list of special sites."

Crisfield does not have any formative open space or open space program. The Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan (SRP) recommends the park be preserved, and enhanced with a continuous trail/boardwalk along its perimeter, as well as an occasional small pier and seat for "marsh viewing." This park may be used for educational and way-finding purposes. Sunset Park is an important site for ecological functioning because of its location, potentially indicating high value in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Program Open Space ranking system.

Cedar Island Marsh

Cedar Island Marsh is similar to Sunset Park in that it is a nearby open space of high natural and ecological value. Cedar Island Marsh represents a boundary ecosystem. Essentially, it protects the City by buffering damage caused by storms, flooding, etc. It is an ideal spot for contemplation and worthy of exploration, either by foot or kayak. The vastness and beauty of Cedar Island Marsh is breathtaking, and like Sunset Park, the marsh be preserved and enhanced with a continuous educational and wayfinding trail/boardwalk, an occasional small pier and seat for marsh viewing, and a small kayak rental facility.

ESTABLISHING A PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM

According to the Comprehensive Plan, "development in sensitive areas can cause harm for future generations."[12] The historic pattern of filling and building on tidal marshes has "worsened the effects of flooding" in the City. Development on very low-lying lands has exposed residents to both regular flooding and severe storm surge events. "The natural capability and characteristics of the land in Crisfield should guide land use development decisions."[13] Establishing a program for the protection/preservation of parks, open spaces, and important natural areas can assist Crisfield to achieve these objectives. Local governments, such as Crisfield, can enhance efforts to provide open space, recreation lands, and natural areas by developing an effective program and parks/open space network. Open spaces can assist in retaining the unique character of the City and areas such as Cedar Marsh are important "Green Infrastructure" hubs.

The first step is to develop a "Crisfield Parks, Open Space, and Natural Areas Program," which defines a network of key sites for future preservation. This program should be coordinate with the State and the Somerset County Department of Parks and Recreation. An officially adopted SRP Master Plan Map, in conjunction with policies and development codes, will assist to initialize this program. Typically, parks and open space provisions in development codes require a mandatory dedication of 10% to 15% of the development site. This does not include land "set-aside" for stormwater management or other environmental concerns. Given the fact that development space is limited in the City by parcel size and site restrictions, a "fee in lieu" provision in development codes can provide a mechanism for developers to pay into a City fund for parks and open space (for properties that are not defined in the program as key parks and open space areas).

[12] *Comprehensive Plan: City of Crisfield, Maryland*; Jukubiak & Associates in coordination with the Crisfield Planning Commission and Crisfield Mayor and City Council; 2006.
[13] Ibid.

FIGURE 1: PARKS & RECREATION AREAS

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 - 5 Years)

1) Develop a "Crisfield Parks, Open Space, and Natural Areas Program" including a list of priority projects and key sites.
2) Establish in City development codes minimum parks and open space requirements for development projects.
3) Establish in City development codes a parks and open space fee-in-lieu provision.
4) Work with Somerset County to incorporate the Crisfield Parks, Open Space, and Natural Areas Program into the Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Land Preservation Master Plan.
5) Work with private entities and non-profit organizations to develop additional recreation offerings, especially for young people.
6) Investigate the development of a "Skateboard Park" convenient to the Uptown and Downtown areas of the City.
7) Work with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to increase the planning for and promotion of linkages with Janes Island State Park.
8) Work with the Maryland Department of Natural resources (DNR) Program Open Space (POS) to implement a development program for Sunset Park and the community pier as well as the VFW beach.
9) Ensure appropriate wayfinding signage to point people to parks and recreation facilities in the City.

Long-Term Actions (1 - 20 Years)

1) Investigate the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program to protect sensitive areas consistent with the recommendations of the 2006 *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* and the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP).
2) Ensure appropriate planning for parks and open space facilities in the redevelopment of Housing Authority land.
3) Work with Somerset County to plan and conduct high profile recreation events (an example includes bike races, marathons, etc. - a large event attraction for Crisfield).

Task 15 Streets, Parking, and Other Critical Infrastructure

Just like the human body, good access and circulation are important for maintaining City health and vitality. Transportation networks and systems should meet the needs of the automobile, the pedestrian, and the bicyclist, providing multi-model outlets.

GOAL:

- Provide a balance of transportation facilities meeting the needs of the City of Crisfield, consistent with the recommendations of the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP).

OBJECTIVES:

- Coordinate various modes of transportation so that they complement each other.
- Establish a transportation network that moves people and goods rapidly, yet safely.
- Provide an adequate transportation network with minimal Town expense.
- Coordinate Town, County, State, and Federal transportation planning.
- Maximize the desired use of transportation systems, while minimizing possible effects upon neighborhoods, the environment, and the general public.

STREETS

Few major street improvements are recommended in the SRP. Some streets may need lighting fixed or added, trees planted, or treatment to repair drainage, sewer, or sidewalk systems. Whether the change is functional or aesthetic, the goal is to achieve comfortable and safe streets (See Figure 1 Parking). Sidewalks are recommended on both sides of the streets in Crisfield.

It is recommended that a comprehensive stormwater plan for the City be completed based on a build-out scenario similar to the Concept Master Plan. Infill development projects should be required to repair streets in accordance with stormwater and environmental standards set forth in new City codes, and contribute funds toward the enhancement of other City streets. The width of Maryland Route 413 presents opportunities to enhance the pedestrian realm, while continuing to accommodate traffic. Improving the Route 413 with lighting, trees, wide sidewalk, bike lanes and signage announces to visitors and residents “this is an important road for pedestrians and cyclists.”

New streets are created within neighborhoods and adjacent to existing neighborhoods to extend the existing street network and provide stronger connections. New streets that follow standards set forth in revised codes are expected to outperform existing streets in their environmental engineering and stormwater handling capability.

PARKING

A finer-grained distribution of parking should be continued throughout the City, and large lot parking areas should be discouraged (see Figure 1 Parking). Streets should promote walking, have appropriately-detailed buildings with interesting facades and ground floor uses, and provide parking at the curb as well as in the middle of blocks behind buildings. Again, the goal is a vital Crisfield, and streets where parking is readily available contribute to this vitality. Parking should be treated in a manner that continues the existing pattern of walkable, continuous streetscapes.

To achieve this, the City should avoid large street-fronting parking lots that are perceived by visitors as uninviting and unsafe. Vacant lots covered with a few cars, such as the parking areas for visitors to Smith and Tangier islands, add little vitality to the City.
The Concept Master Plan reduces the size of the Somers Cove Marina parking area but not to a degree that will diminish marina operations.

TRAILS & LINKS

Trails and greenways are another layer—or choice—in Crisfield's integrated circulation network (see Figure 2 Trails and Greenways). For example, it is conceivable that someone will want to walk or bike the entire waterfront of Crisfield. This will be done by utilizing signs and/or maps that lead to various points along the continuous waterfront path.

Greenways, bikeways, and trails contribute to the network of non-vehicular paths linking Crisfield's neighborhoods, public parks, natural areas and waterfront (see Figure 3 Circulation and Figure 4 Greater Access Plan).

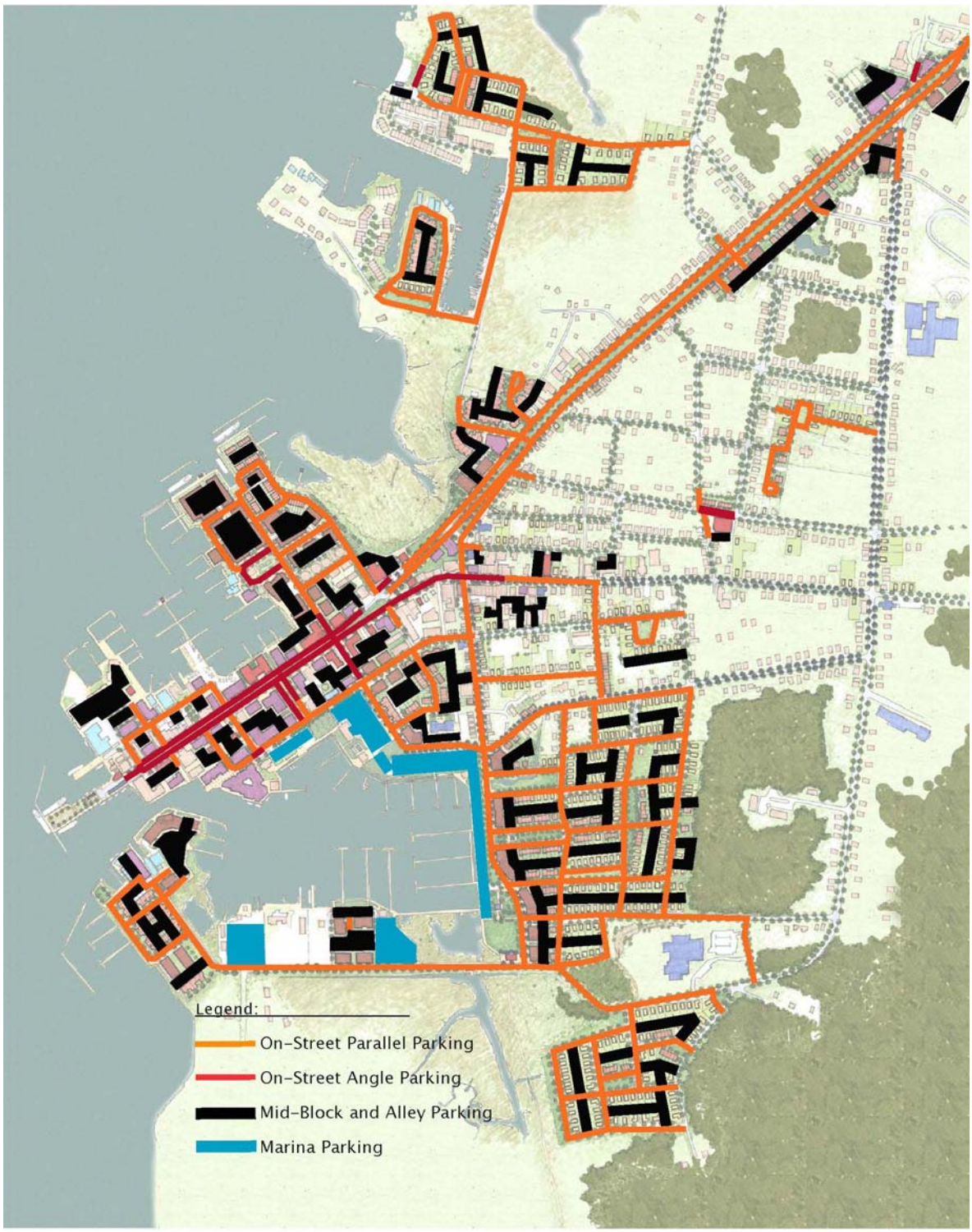
MARINAS

Somers Cove Marina

Small Boat Harbor

The City's boat dock capacity does not appear to be a major problem in the City. According to advertised information Somers Cove Marina has 450 slips, 100 of which are listed as transient berths. The small boat harbor provides approximately 70 berths that have been set aside for work boats. New dock facilities have been added at the Harbor Lights, Water Edge and Jersey Island residential developments. The SRP includes the concept of additional boat docking facilities in the cove between the Harbor Lights property and 7th Street.

FIGURE 1: PARKING



0 300 600 Five-Minute Walk 1,500 Feet

FIGURE 2: TRAILS & GREENWAYS

FIGURE 3: CIRCULATION

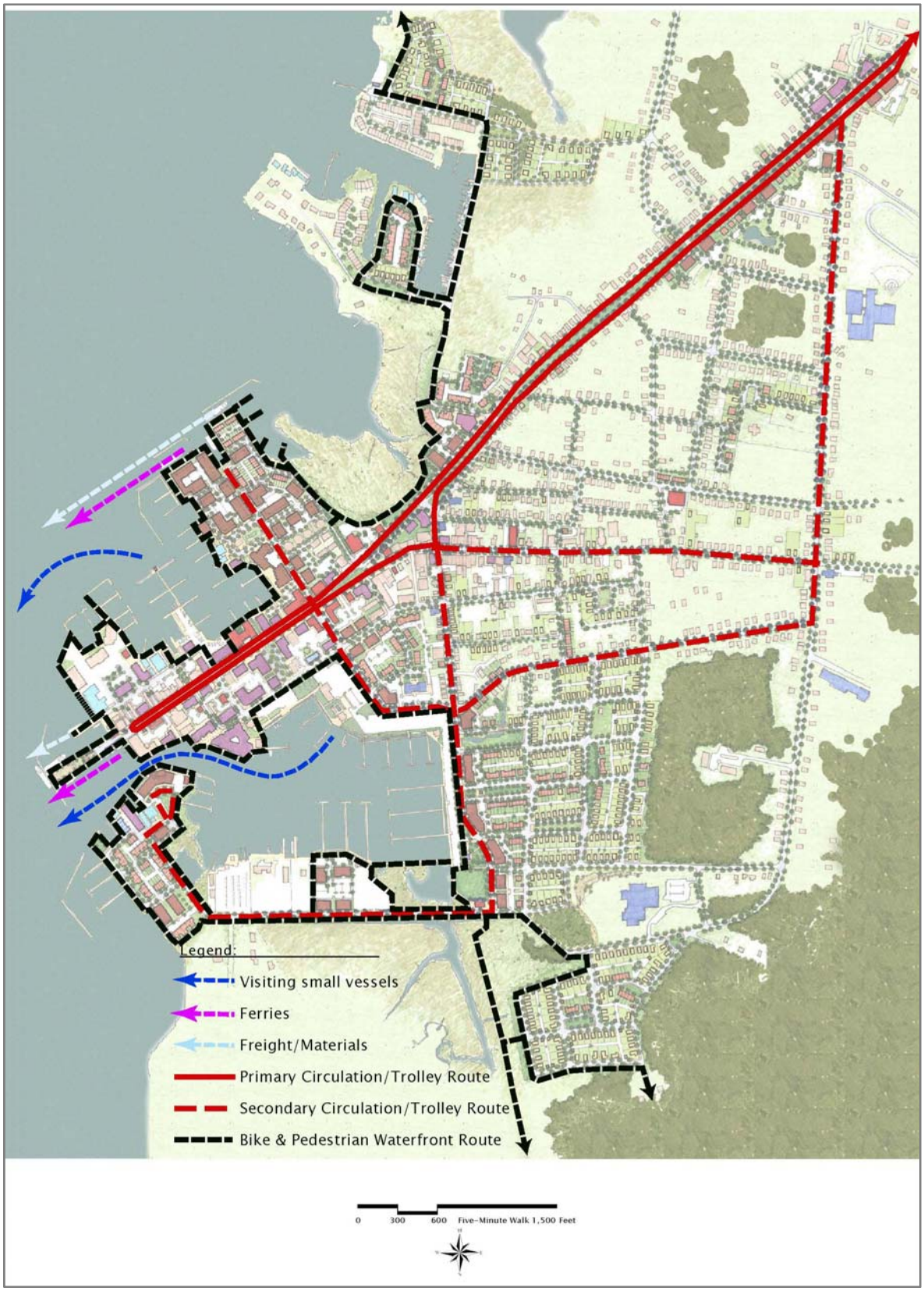


FIGURE 4: GREATER ACCESS PLAN

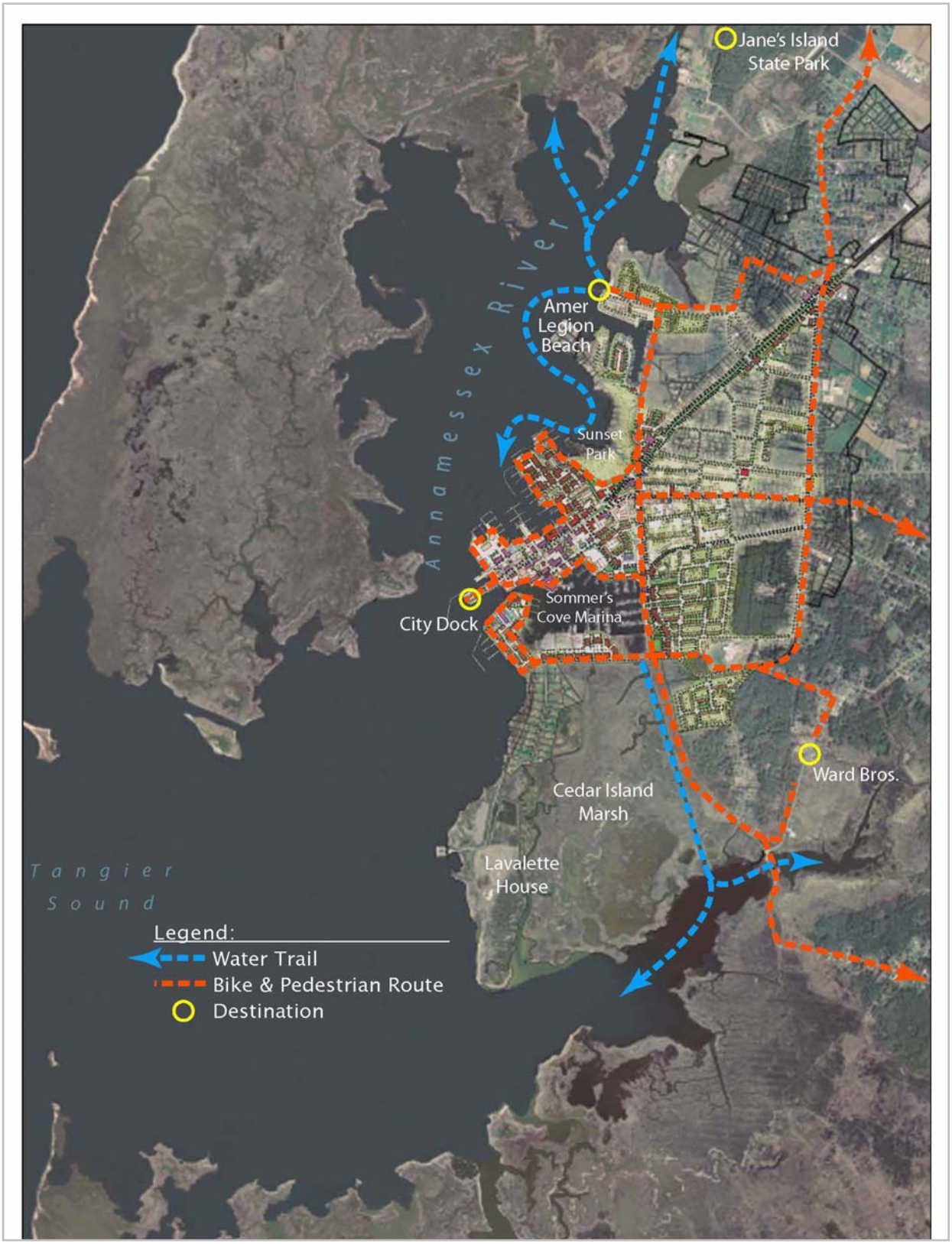


FIGURE 5: STREET IMPROVEMENTS

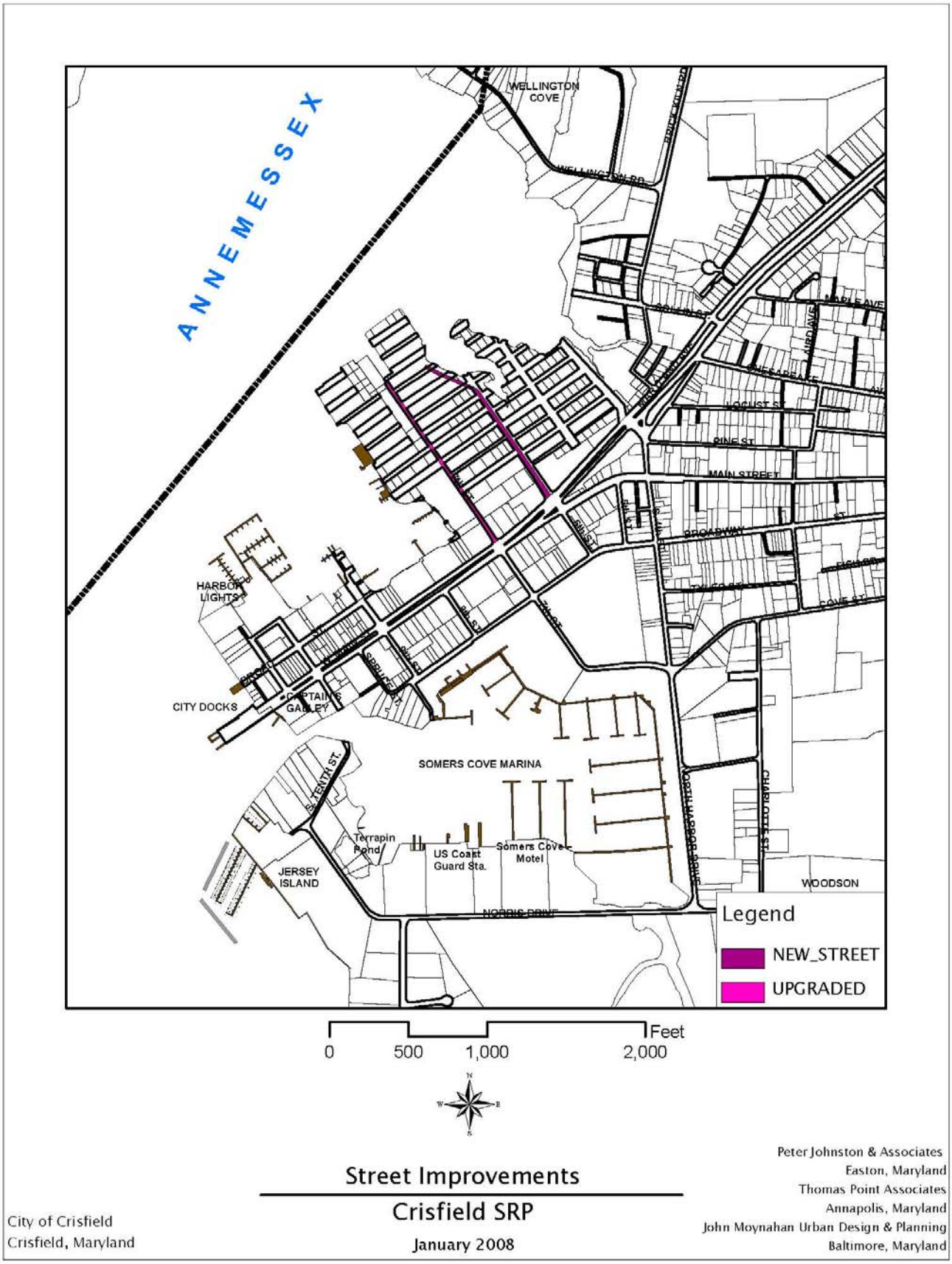


FIGURE 6: PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM ADDITIONS

Street Improvements

Crisfield SRP

January 2008

City of Crisfield
Crisfield, Maryland

Peter Johnston & Associates
Easton, Maryland
Thomas Point Associates
Annapolis, Maryland
John Moynahan Urban Design & Planning
Baltimore, Maryland

FIGURE 7: POTENTIAL DREDGE SPOILS AREAS

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 – 5 Years)

1) Adopt an official Transportation Plan map.
2) Adopt policies and regulations that require applicants for development approval dedicate and improve trail and pedestrian segments shown on official maps.
3) Adopt policies and regulations that require applicants for development approval dedicate and construct new streets or upgrade existing streets as shown on official maps and as recommended in the SRP.
4) Work with the DNR to make improvements to the City Dock and Depot and the dock at the end of Broad Street. Improvement to the City Dock should take into consideration a breakwater and other improvements as recommended in the SRP.
5) Work with the DNR and private groups and organizations to strengthen pedestrian and non-motorize boat connections to activity sites located outside of the City. Promote Crisfield's hiking, biking and boating amenities in marketing materials.
6) Adopt a City policy that states the City will not give up any existing public right-of-way, e.g., street end.
7) Accept unexpired dedication of existing rights-of-way.
8) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) currently is assisting Somerset County government officials with an effort to produce a local sea level rise technical assistance guidance document for communities in Somerset County. The City should participate with the County in the preparation of this report and incorporate appropriate recommendations into City plans, policies and/or codes that address sea level rise as it pertains to streets and other critical infrastructure.

Long-Term Actions (1 – 20 Years)

1) Work with the Maryland Department of Transportation and others to advance the concept of a passenger ferry from metropolitan areas to Crisfield. A ferry service fits well with the economic development recommendations of the SRP. Terminal facilities should be located at the City Dock or the end of 7th Street.
2) Work with the DNR and Army Corps of Engineers to develop a dredge spoils site(s). Include consideration of land reclamation projects at Great Point and Long Point (see Figure 5 Potential Dredge Spoils Sites). Allow private concerns to deposit clean spoils material at these sites.

3) When demand for boat slips warrants, work with riparian property owners on the development of additional marina facilities in the cove between 7th Street and the Harbor Lights property.

Task 16 Mapping, Land Use, Transportation, Facilities

A comprehensive mapping system, such as a Crisfield Geographic Information System (GIS), is important for City-wide economic development and revitalization efforts, particularly in regards to infrastructure. In addition, digitally mapped data can assist the City with public and private coordination, funding agencies, and general administrative tasks and initiatives. Key mapped information for the 2008 *Crisfield Strategic Revitalization Plan* (SRP) has been prepared as digital layers for the City GIS to facilitate its use for Plan implementation tasks.

GOAL:

- Improve mapping and other digital infrastructure systems in Crisfield to promote capital improvements and economic development.

OBJECTIVES:

- Update and/or create official maps as needed to implement the recommendations of the 2006 *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) and the SRP.
- Create reproducible and easily amended map products.
- Maintain the City's GIS map files and systems.

STRATEGIES

Short-Term Actions (1 - 10 Years)

1) Update plan and official zoning maps as needed to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP.
2) Create an official transportation map.
3) Add park, open space and pedestrian system maps to Comprehensive Plan (will require a Comprehensive Plan amendment).
4) Revise official zoning maps to incorporate the boundaries of planned development floating zones and target redevelopment districts. Create and map conservation zoning districts.
5) Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) for Crisfield to assess all critical City infrastructure related to the SRP and revitalization tasks as well as assist with grant funding.
6) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) currently is assisting Somerset County government officials with an effort to produce a local sea level rise technical assistance guidance document for communities in Somerset County. The City

should participate with the County in the preparation of this report and incorporate appropriate recommendations into City plans, policies and/or codes.