



Economic Development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. Improve the town core business mix to better serve the needs of Upper Marlboro residents, workers, and visitors.
2. Promote attractive, context-sensitive redevelopment and infill in the town core.
3. Expand housing options through residential infill.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO BUSINESSES

The Town of Upper Marlboro is primarily composed of single-family residences, with commercial uses concentrated in the town core. These town core businesses are small in nature due to limited lot sizes and building footprints. Many of the retail, restaurant, service, and office uses are targeted at Upper Marlboro's daytime population of office workers and court/government facility users. Since 1993, a number of county courts offices have been relocated back into the county courthouse from temporary Main Street space while the courthouse renovations were being completed. This transition left a sudden, large inventory of retail/office space available for lease that has been gradually filled by bail bonds offices.

Larger commercial areas with typical strip commercial development are located near the town boundaries at the intersection of Marlboro Pike (MD 725) and US 301, the intersection of MD 4 and US 301, and the intersection of Old Marlboro Pike and Brown Station Road. Businesses outside the town boundary compete with businesses within the town core.

Town core businesses include:

- Retail: The Country Miss Bridal Shop, 7-Eleven, C.F. Brandt Jewelers, Marlboro Country Liquors, and restaurants such as

the Marlboro Grill, Ledo Pizza, Al's Country Kitchen, Marcello's Grill, Domino's Pizza, China Taste, and Subway.

- Commercial Services: Print shop, State Farm Insurance, The Computer Gallery, income tax services, Maryon's Locksmiths, Prince George's Federal Savings Bank, the M&T Bank, Bank of America, and several hair salons.
- Office Commercial: The Marlboro Lakeside Office Park, Pitrof & Starkey Attorneys, Realty Executives' offices, RDA Engineers/Surveyors, Beltway Title, title research offices, law offices, Maryland Home Title Insurance Building, The Enquirer Gazette, and People's Mortgage Corporation.

TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO TAX BASE

As discussed in the Population, Land Use, and Zoning and the Public Finance and Intergovernmental Coordination sections, the large number of tax-exempt government uses in the town limits the amount of tax-generating properties in the town core. In addition, few commercial and industrial properties lie within the town boundary.

Upper Marlboro's predominantly residential character and its nearly built-out state constrain opportunities for development that would enhance the nonresidential tax base. Established residential neighborhoods preclude the construction of large commercial centers such as those located on US 301, and the town



Ledo's Pizza



Lakeside Office Park

core has no sites for large office or commercial uses. Economic development initiatives will have to focus on redevelopment of sites in or near existing commercial areas.

REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS

The consultant team analyzed the forces that shape Upper Marlboro's market for residential and commercial properties. Detailed results of this market analysis can be found in Appendix 3. Major findings are as follows:

RESIDENTIAL MARKET

- **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN UPPER MARLBORO HAS BEEN VERY SLOW IN RECENT YEARS.** Only four parcels have been developed for residential uses since 1997.
- **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SURROUNDING REGION HAS BEEN MORE ACTIVE THAN IN UPPER MARLBORO.** Over the past ten years, 835 single-family residential parcels were developed, which is equivalent to 35.8 percent of the total developed parcels in the area.
- According to interviews with area real estate professionals, **THE HOUSING MARKET IN UPPER MARLBORO HAS MIRRORED THE RECENT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DOWNTURN.** In particular, demand for single-family homes has slowed. More people currently are interested in renting a home than in homeownership; many of these individuals do not have the finances to purchase a home. The types of people interested in renting include families, young workers, municipal employees, and some blue-collar workers.
- **UPPER MARLBORO'S HOUSING STOCK IS PRIMARILY OLDER HOMES, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT SALES OF HOMES**

BUILT WITHIN THE LAST FIVE YEARS. According to real estate professionals, newer homes sell faster and for higher values than older homes. Upper Marlboro's older housing stock may be a contributing factor to the comparatively long time local homes spend on the market.

- **A DEMAND FOR HIGHER-DENSITY HOUSING EXISTS IN UPPER MARLBORO.** Older, single-family homes for sale in Upper Marlboro spent an average of 118 days on the market before selling. However, newer townhouses spent an average of only 18 days on the market.

COMMERCIAL MARKET

- **COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN UPPER MARLBORO HAS BEEN NONEXISTENT IN THE PAST DECADE.** No commercial or office development has occurred in town since 1997.
- **COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN MORE ACTIVE IN THE SURROUNDING AREA THAN IN UPPER MARLBORO.** Eight commercial parcels have been developed close to the town boundary since 1997, including a cluster along US 301 near the MD 4 intersection.
- **COMMERCIAL SALES ACTIVITY IN UPPER MARLBORO HAS BEEN SLOW.** Only four arms-length commercial sales have occurred in Upper Marlboro since 2002. The sales (two retail and two office uses) all have been located on Elm Street or Main Street in the town core.

RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

The consultant team also conducted a detailed analysis of Upper Marlboro's retail market

to determine whether the town can support additional retail uses in the short and long term. Detailed results of this analysis can be found in Appendix 4. Major findings of the retail market analysis include:

- **THE TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO HAS A LIMITED RETAIL BASE.** The town core contains approximately 76,000 square feet of private commercial space along Main and Water Streets. Only 7.1 percent of this space (5,400 square feet), however, is occupied by retail businesses. The majority of town core private commercial space is devoted to office uses.
- **THE LACK OF RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE TOWN CORE IS PARTIALLY DUE TO DETERIORATING BUILDING CONDITIONS.** Current building conditions also have resulted in lower rents, which have encouraged the proliferation of bail bondsmen looking for inexpensive rental space. Many bail bondsmen and private offices occupy prime commercial space that could be used for retail. Some area real estate professionals indicated that new construction/infill development needs to occur in the town core before a greater mix of retail establishments will be attracted to Upper Marlboro.
- **THE TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO IS NOT CAPTURING ALL AREA RETAIL DEMAND; MANY RETAIL SALES ARE "LEAKING" TO LARGER COMMERCIAL AREAS IN BOWIE AND LARGO.** The Town of Upper Marlboro's limited retail offerings lead many area consumers to shop at large commercial centers such as those found in nearby Bowie and Largo. Approximately \$8.3 million in retail sales is being lost from a 0- to 1-mile trade area around Upper Marlboro to these

other commercial areas. All retail categories are “leaking” sales to other areas except for beer, wine, and liquor stores; pharmacies; cosmetics/beauty supply stores; and full-service restaurants.

- **THE TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT RETAILERS PROVIDING UNIQUE GOODS AND SERVICES NOT READILY AVAILABLE IN THE LARGER AREA.** Upper Marlboro could develop unique niche retail that would prove attractive to out-of-town residents. In this event, it is estimated that Upper Marlboro could capture between \$5.4 million and \$11.1 million in sales from the larger area.
- **THE TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO CAN SUPPORT ADDITIONAL RETAIL SPACE.** It is estimated that Upper Marlboro’s current retail market can support approximately 20,000 square feet to 41,000 square feet of new retail space. This figure could grow in the next decade to as much as 89,000 square feet. The amount of new supportable retail, however, will depend upon future public and private investment in the town core and focused business recruitment efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Outlined below is a series of eleven economic development initiatives that were crafted to strengthen the town’s tax base and capitalize on its existing assets. Two main policies underlie these recommendations:

- **PROMOTE RETENTION AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES.** Short- and long-term economic development efforts in

Upper Marlboro are not intended to replace or displace any existing businesses; instead, these efforts should augment the offerings of existing businesses in the town of Upper Marlboro. While some recommendations include attracting additional businesses in certain market sectors, the recommendations aim to strengthen the market position of existing businesses by creating a critical mass of activity (clusters).

- **ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE AND MANAGED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT ALLOWS UPPER MARLBORO TO GROW IN A SUSTAINABLE AND FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER.** While halting all growth is not a realistic or achievable objective, it is possible to better manage growth so that it enhances the community’s appearance and complements its small-town character. The following economic development strategies seek a balance between desirable and necessary change and the preservation of Upper Marlboro’s quality of life.

Many of the initiatives included in this section will require a public-private partnership to occur in order to be carried forward.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE TOWN CORE BUSINESS MIX TO BETTER SERVE THE NEEDS OF UPPER MARLBORO RESIDENTS, WORKERS, AND VISITORS.

Action 1: Retain existing community-serving businesses and recruit new businesses to fill town core building vacancies.

Commercial, service, and office uses line the primary retail frontages of Elm, Water and Main Streets, with relatively few vacancies. When there is a vacancy, however, the trend has been

that it is quickly filled by a bail bond office or court-oriented use, causing the gradual erosion of the town’s traditional commercial base. Law offices and bail bondsmen occupy a large percentage of ground-floor space, with 9 law offices and 18 bail bondsmen in the town core in 2008. These uses generally are found in high-visibility sites that would be optimal for walk-in retail uses.

Many dine-in restaurants, coffee houses, carry-out restaurants, banks, and boutique shops serve the residential and employment base throughout the week. These businesses should be retained and strengthened to draw a critical mass of retail to Upper Marlboro. The town commissioners and county should be involved in business retention efforts. This could include hiring a part-time Main Street business marketing manager whose primary role would be to help market current town core businesses and recruit new businesses to fill vacancies. In a parallel effort, the town commissioners and county must encourage Upper Marlboro’s business community to organize an Upper Marlboro merchants association to better coordinate and communicate the needs of local businesses to the town commission and potential business marketing manager.

GOAL 2: PROMOTE ATTRACTIVE, CONTEXT-SENSITIVE REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL IN THE TOWN CORE.

Action 1: Encourage mixed-use infill development on vacant sites along Main Street (two-story maximum).

Main Street already possesses some of the qualities of a walkable environment. However, limited ground-floor retail, unscreened parking lots, and vacant sites interrupt the rhythm of the

street and diminish street life. The construction of new buildings in currently vacant sites along Main Street, offering a variety of new office space and unique commercial or retail stores, will create a cohesive and animated corridor that encourages pedestrian activity. This in turn will catalyze a more active and alive town core environment. Four key sites are identified as critical areas for new infill development along Main Street: (1) the existing surface lot on the corner of Water and Main Streets, which will help frame the intersection and will create a southern town gateway; (2) the surface parking lot adjacent to China Taste; (3) the street side of the surface parking lot adjacent to the volunteer fire department; and (4) the corner of the County Administration Building parking deck at the intersection of Main Street (MD 725) and Governor Oden Bowie Drive.

Action 2: Encourage a mixed-use infill building (three-story maximum) on Water Street.

A new three-story maximum office building with ground-floor retail would be appropriate for the front side of the surface parking lot on Water Street. The new development would help complete Water Street’s visual sequence and order. The new mixed-use development would link the courthouse site with Main Street.

Action 3: Promote adaptive use of the Old Marlboro Academy building.

The Old Marlboro Academy, a valued historic resource, is a good candidate for adaptive use. However, rehabilitating both of its buildings will not be cost effective due to the presence of asbestos in the addition. The older portion of the academy, which is listed on the Prince George’s County Inventory of Historic Resources, should



Potential Water Street Lot Development



Example of Comparable Infill Building Along the Mall Area



Existing Conditions of Old Academy Building

be rehabilitated, as well as the Principal’s House and the adjacent Dr. William Beanes’ gravesite. The demolition of the addition, which currently hides the historic structure, will allow for the creation of a new cultural campus that provides space for community events. The façade of the historic structure should be fully rehabilitated and the interior refurbished and enhanced to as historically authentic a level as findings permit. The proposed new building will provide a larger space for gatherings and additional activities, and the architecture of the new building should complement the older structure.

Action 4: Seek hotel development adjacent to the Show Place Arena and current park-and-ride facility.

The Show Place Arena is a year-round venue for major events, such as equestrian shows, sporting events, and concerts. Although the entertainment complex attracts a large number of people from outside the Upper Marlboro/ Prince George’s County area, no hotel exists in close proximity to capture the out-of-town visitors who attend the events. The northeastern side of the Show Place Arena site provides an ideal location for a hotel development as it has easy access to and high visibility from MD 4. The potential hotel development should not impact the existing park-and-ride facility, as its probable location would be to the eastern side of the lot.

Action 5: Redevelop the county day care building site.

The county day care facilities currently are housed in the old jail building, where only the first of three floors are used and the rest of the building remains vacant. The county day care should be moved to another more desirable and



Mixed-use infill development on vacant sites along Water and Main Street