



DRAFT REPORT  
**CRANBURY BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY**

January 19, 1999

Prepared by

CLARKE ♦ CATON ♦ HINTZ

And  
URBAN PARTNERS

## **Introduction**

The Cranbury Township Committee commissioned Clarke Caton Hintz, with Urban Partners, to analyze Cranbury's downtown. The area of study focused around Main Street from the firehouse and lake to the south, to Westminster and Bunker Hill Roads on the north. The firms were authorized to undertake the following tasks:

- Analyze parking demand and availability in the downtown area;
- Review existing available information about the Village District, including land use, demographics, taxes and ownership;
- Prepare a market analysis reviewing the range and opportunities for retail services, lodging, and office uses;
- Convene several meetings with the community to elicit the concerns of the village constituencies;
- Review community input and research information, and present a list of the potential actions for the community.

## **Parking Analysis**

There has been a perception that the amount of parking available in the downtown is insufficient. This opinion is shared by most if not all members of the business community, as well as by some of the residents. The concern also is a long term one, that is, the issues relating to the inadequacy of parking, its location, and availability have been raised for a number of years. On the other hand, there have been no studies to attempt to document the problem, nor have potential solutions been identified, assuming there is a parking deficit.

We began our analysis by preparing a base map of the downtown. This included assembling property lines from tax maps, and using fairly recent aerial photographs (1995) and field verification to confirm land use patterns. The base map was then used to plot the types of land use (see Existing Land Use Map), the location of buildings and structures, parking areas, driveways, etc. After this work was completed, we learned that the Township engineer's office had obtained additional mapping showing the structures, landscaping, sidewalks, and topography. A final base map has been created which gives a fairly accurate picture of these features in the downtown.

A count of the number of parking spaces, including both on-street and off-street parking is provided in the attached Parking Usage Map and described further below. Off-street parking represents a mix of paved and gravel sites, and includes both public and private spaces. Parking usage was surveyed at various times to try to determine the availability of spaces.

Additionally, to determine parking demand, the amount of square footage of non-residential space (retail, offices, institutional) was collected, as well as the number of residential uses. These figures were verified with the aid of the Township tax assessor. The number and location of uses by square footage was then compared with the location and amount of parking, both on-street and off-street. Sources of data for parking demand in relation to land use include statistical information from the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the Urban Land Institute, Rutgers Center for Urban Policy Research and the American Planning Association publications.

Retail services, which include various types of retail sales and restaurants, have the highest turnover of customers, and also have the highest demand for parking spaces on a square footage basis. In the Cranbury downtown, these are clustered around the intersection of Park Place and Main Street, and located primarily on the west side of Main Street. Additionally, there is the Cranbury post office, which while a governmental entity, functions as a medium turnover retail use. Parking available in this area is less than is needed, particularly since the post office requires van (small truck) storage for postal vehicles. There are about 140 parking spaces available in this five hundred foot stretch of Main Street, which includes parking behind businesses and on-street spaces. There is approximately 23,000 square feet of retail uses\* (not counting the post office), about 10,000 square feet of office and about 13 residential units (includes apartments). Combined, these generate the need for 206+ spaces, not counting the post office.

The post office has 50 employees according to the postmaster. The number is split between two shifts, 4 a.m. to noon and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., so that for some period of time, there is the problem of the returning shift, which are largely drivers of the delivery vans. Then there are the customers, which tend to be short term (less than one hour) different from an office use, and more like a restaurant or even a convenience store. One should not infer that the post office is poor use for the downtown, in fact, it helps to serve as a symbiotic relationship with other uses. A post office customer may also stop to pick up a newspaper, buy a cup of coffee or visit one of the nearby banks. The trip generation rates for a post office are similar to those of a bank, although the statistical samples are not conclusive. The future plans for the post office are to eliminate Monroe post boxes in the early part of the year 2000, which will alleviate some of the parking demand from customers or patrons who must drive and park to pick up their mail. The vans will remain, however, along with the Cranbury rural delivery. While the amount of parking needed to serve a post office cannot be verified from any sources, it is clear that the parking situation needs to be improved in this area, since there is an inadequate number of spaces with a shortfall of at least 66 spaces in this particular area.

\* Vacant and occupied space

Overall, the parking in the downtown amounts to 181± off-street spaces and 99 on-street spaces, for a total of 280. This does not include some off-street residential spaces. Retail uses need about 5/1000, office and business services about 4.5/1000, while residential uses vary with the number of bedrooms, although 2/unit is a comfortable standard. Since the amount of retail uses total 32,000 square feet (sf), offices total 25,000 sf and there are about 64 residential units (apartments and single family), the total needed is in the neighborhood of 338 spaces, not counting the post office need. Therefore, the shortfall is 58+ spaces if all space were fully occupied.

This number must be considered in light of offsetting factors. The downtown is a mix of uses, where, for example, some of the parking need for the residents isn't required until after closing hours for the stores. The parking statistics are based on state or nationwide sampling of uses, and the downtown is relatively small, with various nuances that make comparisons difficult. The bank parking lots, particularly the PNC lot, has never been found to be full, and bank patrons may park there and then use other services in town, or non-bank customers may also use the lot. The school lot is used by people in the downtown, whether residents or business customers.

However, the problem exists. While shoppers in a shopping mall may walk some distances between their vehicle and the store, one of the features of a downtown is the potential to park closer to a particular destination. Additionally, the numbers noted above support the notion that more parking should be provided.

## **Potential Parking Solutions**

There are several ways the parking situation can be improved. These will have to be weighed in terms of their cost, timing, as well as the potential for cooperation between landowners and government, including the Township and the postal service.

The largest available land area to add new spaces is on the school property, on a portion of the Wright property or on Township right-of-way (the "paper" street located between the school and Bunker Hill Road, behind the senior housing.)

### **School Site**

Evidently discussion has occurred between the Board of Education and the Township regarding use of some Board of Education land for parking. The existing lot is currently used by both visitors to the Township offices as well as the library, which are not school related. Concerns may be the increased usage of the lot's access drive from Main Street during school opening and closing hours. But the business uses generally have their "peaks" for parking need at times that do not overlap with school opening and closing, including, the late morning to noon hours, late afternoon, some use in the evening, and heavy use on weekends. Additionally, signing can be used to caution motorists to

be aware of pedestrians and children. The arrangement for parking should interconnect to the existing private lots that adjoin the school as shown in the attached concept plan. This will optimize parking on those lots as well as add new parking, for a total of about 30 spaces. Cross access and parking easements would be required, similar to those now in place on Lots 50.01 and 51.01. These spaces would avoid the detention pond and the large tree, and improve overall circulation between the individual private lots. Consideration should also be given to interconnecting the various private lots to this proposed new lot, which would ease pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

### **Township Right-of-Way**

The Township owns a right-of-way which runs from Bunker Hill Road to the school in a north-south direction paralleling Main Street. Parking could be developed on this land totaling about 83 spaces. It is not recommended that the parking area connect to Bunker Hill Road or to the school property. Instead, access could be provided via Park Place West. The disadvantage of this location is that the parking would be about 400 feet from the stores in need of more parking, however, this distance is the same as the walk from Westminster to Park Place. The parking area would have to be identified with signs and strong pedestrian links would need to be created to connect this site to Main Street.

### **Park Place West Extension**

The Wright property which lies to the west of Park Place West could be partially utilized for future parking. Along with land adjacent to the Nursing Home, the street and a portion of the Wright site could be developed for future parking. This proposal needs more study and as outlined by Committeeman Gambino, the site is also being considered as a possible location for a future police building, town square, and some additional business uses.

### **Short Term Solutions**

Currently, there are mailboxes with vehicular pull up in front of the post office. Three spaces could be gained by relocating the mailboxes to the sidewalk leading to the post office, and returning the spaces to 15 minute parking zone.

Consideration should be given to changing the ordinance requirements for parking for off-street spaces. If reasonable parking solutions can be found in the area, such as cross-access parking, new on-street parking on Park Place West, etc, then a new business may find it easier to meet the standard. However, additional spaces will need to be planned and eventually built to complement this approach.

The PNC Bank parking is always underutilized. It is recommended that the Township negotiate a lease for some of the spaces with addition of "public parking" signs. Spaces designated for public parking could use the back half of the lot.

## **Economic Market Assessment**

### **Introduction**

Urban Partners was asked to assist Clarke Caton Hintz in examining the market conditions affecting development in the Cranbury Business District, in obtaining input from area constituencies about the district's needs and opportunities and in recommending a range of activities that will help to address identified needs.

Cranbury Township is an historically agrarian community which today is composed of primarily warehousing, industrial and office uses in its eastern half and residential and agricultural uses in its western half. The Township's traditional commercial corridor – N. Main Street – bisects Cranbury's residential zone. In addition to being registered as a state and local historic district, the Cranbury Business District has received "Center" designation from the NJ Office of State Planning, which gives it priority status for available state funding programs.

Local residents remember a time when the Cranbury Business District was a thriving retail zone, providing the community with a broad and competitive base of convenience and shopping retail goods. However, the introduction of large scale retail development on Route 130, Route 1 and other regional thoroughfares has provided area residents with expanded retailing options. These "big box" chain retailers offer a fairly comprehensive array of goods, convenient parking and competitive pricing – factors that have significantly altered the face of village-oriented commercial districts in the area.

As with similar districts in other communities, the Cranbury Business District has experienced change as a result of this outside retailing pressure. Initially, the number of businesses within the district able to survive the mounting external competition declined. Subsequently, the types of businesses within the Cranbury Business District able to compete with the nearby strip retailing centers have changed.

Historically, the Cranbury Business District has included residential, office, government and religious uses in addition to retail uses, which has contributed to its unique character. As market forces have changed, so has this mix. Retail uses in the Cranbury Business District today include a mix of convenience-oriented retailers whose primary clientele is the immediate residential community and a mix of more specialized retailers who attract their clientele from a much broader geographic area. Several of these specialty retail establishments, such as the interior design firms, have located in what were formerly residential properties. Additionally, a growing number of

professional offices have more recently located in the area, some of which are also inhabiting what were historically residential dwellings. The result has been a gradual decline in both the number of purely residential properties and a gradual decline in the number of retail spaces occupied by convenience retailers serving the needs of the immediate Cranbury population.

## **Input from Village Constituencies**

During the course of this study, the consultant team has had the opportunity to elicit the concerns of the Cranbury community about the business district through a series of public meetings, meeting with village center stakeholders and interviews. We have also been able to review the Objectives and Observations Statement of the Cranbury "Ad Hoc Committee" that was convened in 1997 to begin to discuss the viability of the Cranbury Business District.

Overall, the concerns about the Cranbury business district expressed by the community in the 1997 "Ad Hoc" sessions and in the meetings held as part of our study can be categorized as follows:

### ***Community Characteristics***

- The unique, 19<sup>th</sup> Century village character of the business district is valued as an attribute that should be preserved.
- The business district is perceived to serve an important role as an informal community gathering place.
- The community appreciates the low-key nature and pedestrian scale of the business district.
- There is general sentiment that the primary purpose of the business district should be to serve the needs of the immediate Cranbury community rather than to be a destination retailing district serving a larger geographic area.
- The existing variety of gardens and small open spaces are valued and considered to be appropriate to the character of the district and the community's needs.
- While there is disagreement about whether any new development should occur, there is consensus that should it be considered, such development must be carefully planned in accordance with the scale and historic/architectural character of the existing district.

### ***Business Vitality Issues***

- Community members are concerned that Cranbury business district lacks a "critical mass" of retailers, which is making it difficult to attract and maintain customers to the area.
- The recent replacement of more conventional retail businesses with professional office spaces and very specialized destination retail businesses is of concern since it is perceived to reduce the amount of shopping that average Cranbury residents can do in town.
- Some participants pointed to the lack of investment by businesses and property owners in

- their buildings as a contributing cause to the reduced appeal of the Cranbury business district.
- The goods and services provided by certain Cranbury business district retailers are thought to be mediocre, making it difficult for even those who want to shop locally to patronize these establishments.
- The hours of operation of Cranbury business district retail establishments do not meet the needs of many community members, especially those who work outside of the Township

### ***Parking and Other Circulation Issues***

- A conflict exists between the parking needs of Cranbury business district residents, retail establishments, government services and professional offices.
- Retailers fault declining business on the lack of accessible parking.
- Cranbury's lack of a centrally-located, well-marked municipal parking lot was noted as being unusual.
- The perceived lack of adequate parking is thought to be a deterrent to potential incoming businesses.
- Parking by Post Office employees and van-pooling commuters is blamed for clogging valuable business district parking during active retailing hours.
- Maintaining and improving the safety of pedestrian travel within the business district -- particularly by school children -- is of great importance to the community.
- There is disagreement among the community about whether additional land resources should be used to increase the availability of parking for the business district.

### ***Regulatory Issues***

- There is general agreement that Cranbury Township's regulatory process should be made more user-friendly and predictable. The community feels that there are too many involved agencies (Historical Preservation Advisory Committee, Development Review Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board, etc.) and too little coordination among them.
- Some participants feel that the Cranbury business district would benefit from stronger property maintenance and code enforcement and from the introduction of common signage requirements.
- There seems to be little communication between regulatory bodies and the general public and many rumors circulating about actions/decisions that have never actually occurred.
- The suggestion has been made that each business be required or encouraged to have at least one residence on site to assist in bringing activity to the business district.
- The boundary between the business district and adjacent residential areas is quite firm, which has prevented the establishment of professional offices in residential areas. Overall, the community participants seemed to favor the mix of uses within the commercial district but a distinct separation of the strictly residential areas.



### ***Public Facility Issues***

- The community expressed interest in relocating the Cranbury Police Department back to the business district.
- The municipal offices, library and school are appreciated as public services which attract community members to the Cranbury business district.
- There is some interest in relocating the library outside of the school to provide more space for public library programs and allow expansion of the school's library and computer programs.
- There is a desire to keep the Post Office within the business district, but a concern about how its parking needs impact the rest of the district.
- Whatever other actions occur, the community is concerned that the school be protected from additional traffic or activity.

### ***Actions Proposed by Members of the Community***

- Most participants desire a greater selection of restaurants and/or prepared food within the Cranbury business district.
- Many community members desire the addition of retail space that can serve as a gathering spot, such as a bakery, coffee shop or soda fountain/ice cream parlor.
- There is interest in undertaking a coordinated effort to promote the Cranbury business district to prospective new customers and to recruit desired new businesses into the area.
- There is interest in providing some tax incentive to prospective new businesses to attract them to the area.
- There is interest in adding additional office space and residential dwellings at the periphery of the Cranbury business district to provide a larger customer base for the area's retail and service providers.

## **Retail Market Assessment**

In order to determine a range of potential retail uses for the Cranbury business district, Urban Partners conducted a retail market assessment of the area. This analysis determined what retail services the area's supply and demand characteristics can support and which of these retail services may be appropriate for various locations in the Cranbury business district.

### **Background**

Retail shopping patterns in Middlesex County, as in much of the more metropolitan areas of the

state, are quite complex. The adjacency of neighboring towns – as well as the fact that many residents work outside the area in New York City, northern New Jersey, Princeton and elsewhere, provides Cranbury residents with a broad range of competitive retailing opportunities. Our retail market assessment is intended to describe the structure of retailing within the Cranbury business district and to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the retail mix currently provided there.

### **Definition of Retail Stores**

For the purpose of this assessment, retail stores include all establishments engaged in selling merchandise for personal and/or household consumption and establishments that render services incidental to the sale of these goods. Selected service establishments are also included, especially those businesses primarily providing personal services to individuals and households such as laundromats, dry cleaners, hair salons, barber shops, etc.

All retail establishments are classified by kind of business according to the principal lines of merchandise sold using the Standard Industrial Classification of Establishments (SIC). Banks and other financial establishments are excluded from the assessment since banking activities – such as deposits, loans, etc. – cannot be added to sales volume data for other types of retail establishments.

The term “retail store sales” is defined in our analysis to include the sales of establishments which are normally found in pedestrian-oriented shopping districts and centers. This definition excludes the sales of automobile dealerships and repair facilities, service stations, fuel oil dealers and non-store retailing. This definition of retail store sales differs from that of conventional secondary data sources, such as the Bureau of the Census, which includes in its data the sales of automobile dealerships and non-store operations and does not include the sales of service establishments such as laundromats and hair salons.

### **Cranbury Business District Retail Supply**

To identify and characterize the currently available shopping opportunities in the Cranbury business district, Urban Partners completed an inventory of all retail business establishments located within the district. The results of this inventory are shown on **Table 1**.

As Table 1 indicates, there are 16 retail stores located in the Cranbury business district. These include 3 convenience goods retailers (Teddy’s, Uto’s and the Cranbury Market); 8 shopping goods retailers (Dandelion, The Cranbury Book Worm and the assorted antique stores and interior design stores); 2 other retailers (Cranbury Paint and Hardware and the consignment shop on Park Place East); and 3 personal service establishments (Village Hair Cutters, Cranbury Cobbler and the alterations store on Park Place East). These stores do not currently function as a coherent shopping district. Instead, their offerings are generally concentrated in two specific categories:

- 1.) 9 businesses providing food, convenience, basic shopping and retail goods and personal services to area residents, and
- 2.) 7 specialty retailers -- largely antique and home decorating-oriented retailers -- attracting clientele from a broader geographic area.

Within the last two years, there has been a change in several of the retail and personal service establishments. New to the area are the Great Scot Consignment Shop and the alterations business (both on Park Place East), Main Street Interiors and Dandelion (which has subsequently moved from its initial location at the site of the former Cranberry's Florist to a new space within the district). Uto's has replaced the Cranbury Food Sampler at 39 N. Main Street and David Wells Antiques has relocated from within the area to the site of the former Cranbury Pharmacy. These recent changes mark a district that has lost several convenience retailers -- a pharmacy and a florist -- replaced one convenience retailer with a like use and attracted several specialty retailing businesses.

### **Retail Demand by Cranbury Residents**

Consumer shopping patterns vary by the type of goods and services being purchased. For convenience goods purchased frequently -- such as groceries, drugs and prepared foods -- shoppers typically make purchases at stores close to their homes. For larger ticket, rarely-purchased items -- such as automobiles, furniture and major electronics and appliances -- shoppers may travel anywhere within their metropolitan area to locate the right item at the right price. For apparel, household furnishings and other shopping goods, consumers generally establish shopping patterns between these two extremes, trading at a number of commercial centers within approximately 30 minutes of their home.

In analyzing the retail market demand within a portion of a large populated area such as Middlesex County, these behavioral observations translate into a series of analytical rules-of-thumb:

- Convenience goods shopping is generally confined to nearby stores.
- Personal services and routine amusement activities will generally also be confined to this nearby area.
- Expenditures at restaurants and other prepared food outlets will occur chiefly near home, but some restaurant expenditures made by the local population will be lost to established restaurants outside the area. Similarly, some restaurants will attract residents who live outside the area.
- Expenditures made by area residents for shopping good items will be more likely to occur within the immediate area -- if an adequate selection of such retailers exist in the area -- but

a substantial portion of these sales will occur outside the area. Significant sales will be attracted from residents who live outside the area if well-known stores are located within the shopping district. Similarly, existing retail developments within and immediately adjacent to the area – especially retail malls and power centers – greatly influence the shopping patterns of area residents and will impact the demand for such stores in the Cranbury business district.

- Specific, high-quality stores within the district may attract significant clientele from well beyond the area for highly-targeted single destination trips for specialized purchases.

As noted above, certain retail categories are already drawing customers from throughout Middlesex County and beyond; others serve purely local markets.

The 1990 census describes a Cranbury population of 2,500 with a 1990 per capita income of \$31,466. Adjusting income data to account for inflation, we estimate that the 1998 per capita income of Cranbury Township is 40,840, bringing total 1998 income for the community to an estimated \$102 million. Retail store purchases by Cranbury residents are estimated to total \$30.5 million annually. These retail purchase estimates were developed by applying an income/expenditure model to 1998 income estimates for the area. It should be noted that, because the per capita income level of Cranbury residents is quite high, we have adjusted retail purchase estimates somewhat downward to create a more conservative estimate of retail spending.

### **Retail Development Opportunities**

On **Table 2**, we have translated the demand for specific retail goods and services generated by Cranbury residents into the number of stores that this market is currently supporting, based on a typical store size for each retail category. Using this data, it is possible to examine potential development opportunities that may be appropriate for the Cranbury business district.

For example, Cranbury residents generate approximately \$368,000 in demand for convenience store items, which is a sales volume sufficient to support approximately one store. The business district currently contains one store in this category – the Cranbury Market – which is largely capturing this demand. Residents of the Township spend approximately \$3.8 million each year on supermarket/grocery purchases, a demand that supports approximately 8,500 SF in retail space. Since a comprehensive supermarket requires 50,000-100,000+ SF of sales space, Cranbury residents alone cannot support one such operation. However, demand estimates show that Cranbury residents spend over \$3.5 million in restaurant purchases each year, which is enough to support 5-8 eating establishments. Currently, much of these restaurant expenditures are being made out of the immediate area since only 3 restaurants (Teddy's, Uto's and the Cranbury Inn) are located in or near the Cranbury business district. This demand, which is currently unmet by local establishments, represents an opportunity for business expansion within the Cranbury business district.

Based on this level of analysis, the following observations can be made about development and retail attraction opportunities for the Cranbury business district.

- There are several convenience and basic shopping and retail store categories lacking from the Cranbury business district that carry goods which most consumers prefer to purchase in a location close to their homes. Existing demand by Cranbury residents indicates that there is sufficient market to support the following new types of convenience-oriented establishments:
  - one to three eating and drinking establishments
  - a specialty food store carrying a range of produce, meats, cheeses, bakery products, coffees, etc.
  - a gift/card shop
  - a florist (possibly a relocation of the existing florist into the business district) or garden supply store
  - an optical store (possibly in connection with an ophthalmologist/optician office)
  - a dry cleaner
  - one or two more hair salons (possibly with day salon features)
- Cranbury residents generate sufficient demand to support 13,000 SF in drug store/pharmacy space, which could be a significant anchor to the Cranbury business district. However, major drug store chain operations – such as the one that bought out the Cranbury Pharmacy – are currently developing stores that exceed 10,000 SF in size and are not interested in pursuing smaller stores. Despite the community's effective economic demand, a single store of this size is probably physically inappropriate for the Cranbury business district.
- The demand by Cranbury residents for apparel and related goods is sufficient to support several retail establishments. Apparel retailers traditionally locate in clusters, which allows customers to comparison shop among a variety of stores. While an independent apparel retailer may be interested in the Cranbury business district, the district's lack of identity as an apparel destination makes this an unlikely area of retailing to pursue, especially given the significant competition of preexisting retail centers in the surrounding area.
- The area has developed a niche as a small antique/interior design center. The existing retailers in this category are exceeding the demand for their goods and services generated by Cranbury residents, indicating that they are already drawing clientele from beyond the immediate area. When retail supply exceeds local demand within such specialty areas, opportunities exist to capitalize on the character of this retailing to attract additional businesses to the area. Therefore, if space were available, it is reasonable to expect additional antique and home furnishings establishments to be interested in the Cranbury business district.

- Cranbury residents exhibit demand for several categories of more specialized goods that might be appropriate for the district if such retailers could also attract the sales of some destination shoppers. The Cranbury business district's growing niche as an antique and home furnishings district might provide the additional sales potential necessary to provide the following types of retailing for Cranbury's residents:
  - one or more jewelry or craft stores
  - a small hobby shop or unique toy store
  - a camera shop
  - one or more art galleries

### **Ability of Cranbury Business District to Accommodate Potential Retail Opportunities and Implications for Future**

The Cranbury business district, while historically serving as a convenience shopping center, lacks the two key anchors – a supermarket and a drug store – that typically distinguish such areas. Lacking these anchors, the district is at a competitive disadvantage in generating pedestrian traffic for other convenience-oriented retailers in the area and will continue to be a secondary convenience shopping destination for many area residents. Given the historic value of the district's character and the community's desire to preserve this village asset, it would be unwise to pursue the traditional anchor-based approach to convenience retailing as it would demand the intrusion of inappropriately sized businesses into the village. Strengthening the business district as a convenience location will rely, thus, on expanding the array of retailing choices so that, even without the basic supermarket or drug store anchor, the district is perceived to provide its customers with a broad range of retailing opportunities.

Currently, there are two vacant retail spaces available within the Cranbury business district – the former Rudy's Garage property and 63 N. Main Street, the former home of Dandelion and Cranberry's Florist. The garage property is quite large and its owners are currently in discussions with several potential restaurant/food service operators. The 63 N. Main Street store is much smaller and capable of accommodating only one of the convenience, specialty or personal service opportunities identified above. (Alternatively, it could be made available as a professional office space if market demands.) While occupancy of these two available retail spaces will generate additional activity within the business district, collectively, they do not provide enough space to significantly alter the array of goods and services provided within the district or to change the community perception of the district as a secondary convenience retailing location.

Given the very limited nature of Cranbury's retail district – and the community's strong desire to maintain the existing mix of residential and commercial uses – it may be necessary to consider expanding the district slightly to construct new store space. Expansion of the Cranbury business district to provide appropriately-sized sales spaces for incoming retailers would attract new shoppers to the district who, in turn, could help generate business for the area's existing convenience retailing

establishments. It is likely that the retailing in any new space would include a mix of stores aimed primarily at the immediate Cranbury market and those that seek a broader customer base. New development of this type will require a significant and proactive business attraction effort to identify an appropriate and desirable mix of new users.

Additionally, any new development must be very carefully planned to complement the historic character of the business district in size, scale, design and materials. Visual, pedestrian and vehicular access must exist between the new area of development and existing retail businesses to integrate the new development into the existing village and to most effectively reinforce the core retail district.

### **Retail Conclusions**

During the course of our work, many community members have asked what will happen to the existing base of resident-serving retailers if no changes are made to the size or scale of the Cranbury business district. This is a difficult question to answer because it relies on the skills and financial positions of individual merchants, the willingness of local residents to patronize local businesses, the impact of individual businesses' vitality on the health of other retailers in the area and numerous other factors.

Any comments made here about the future of the Cranbury business district are made based on the very limited number of business changes that have occurred in the district in recent years. Cranbury has lost several longstanding retailers – some due to market forces beyond their control, others for reasons much more specific to the individual business. While it is impossible to state with certainty what will happen to Cranbury's business district if left alone, it is likely that this deterioration of basic, community-serving retailing will continue as a result of decreased overall patronage to the area, the availability of more profitable opportunities for these retailers at other locations and natural occurrences such as the retirement of longstanding and well-loved proprietors. As these businesses eventually close, there is no evidence to suggest that, without aggressive recruitment efforts, they will be replaced by similar convenience-oriented retailers. Instead, it is likely that these retail spaces will be converted to other, less community-serving uses as they become available. As these businesses leave the district, Cranbury's business district of tomorrow will likely be one that is much less an amenity to local residents than it is today.

### **Commercial Assessment**

The Cranbury business district currently has nine buildings containing professional office space. While the space is not completely occupied, demand for commercial space within the district is quite high. Cranbury residents who have recently tried to establish small commercial businesses within strictly residential zones have been prohibited from doing so, which has increased pressure for office

space within the commercial zone.

The population of office users in the Cranbury business district is not large, but it does contribute to the mixed character of the district and provide a daytime clientele for many of the business district's retail establishments. The community has expressed concern that demand for professional office space competes with, and diminishes, the availability of convenience-oriented retailers in the area. A recent example is the interest in the former Rudy's Garage site by a large regional company seeking space for 25 employees. There is general consensus that such a large site should be made available for retail uses that serve the community. However, the community does seem interested in accommodating office users at the periphery of the village center if such uses could be integrated into the fabric of the community and would help support the core retail businesses of the area.

Should Cranbury pursue development of additional retailing space as discussed above, a mixed development that also provided appropriate office space for small-and mid-sized users should be considered. Additionally, the nursing home facility on Park Place East will soon become available and would be appropriate for conversion to office space for one fairly large or multiple office users. This site could become potentially more attractive as an office location should new mixed use development occur in the immediate vicinity.

## **Public Facility Analysis**

Public facilities in the Cranbury business district play a critical role in the district's serving as a village center. The municipal offices, school, library and post office all bring residents to the business district and serve as the true anchors to Cranbury's retail core. There has been considerable discussion about how such public facilities can help to better support existing and new businesses in the Cranbury business district.

There is considerable interest in relocating the Township's police headquarters back into the business district. There is also interest in improving the availability and quality of community meeting space within the Township, to provide greater opportunities for musical and theatrical performances and other public events. Currently, such space is provided in the New School and in the Public Library, which is located within the school. A new municipal facility, which housed the police offices, community meeting space and possibly the Public Library (should future space demands by the library or the school deem the existing situation undesirable) could serve as a significant anchor for any expansion to the Cranbury business district.

## **Other Considerations**



Regardless of whether Cranbury Township elects to maintain the existing business district or consider expanding the district to allow for a broader array of retailing, commercial and residential uses, certain issues will need to be addressed. The most sensitive issue in the district today is the perceived lack of parking and the conflicts that occur between various users of parking in the area. Clark Caton Hintz has proposed several parking alternatives to alleviate existing needs and to make the area more attractive to potential incoming customers, proprietors, residents and employees. Implementation of these parking plans will require the participation of the Township as well as businesses and property owners in the area.

A second issue that has arisen during the course of our work has involved the perceived difficulty in negotiating the regulatory process by existing property and business owners wanting to make modifications to their properties and by prospective newcomers to the district. The Historical Preservation Advisory Committee will shortly develop a guidebook about its approval process, which should assist in clarifying the objectives and requirements of the Township in regard to preserving and maintaining its historic resources, which are now viewed by many to be both onerous and arbitrary. Similar actions should be taken by the Township's other regulatory agencies and an overview document should be developed which explains the roles of each agency and when each needs to be involved.

Finally, in addition to improving parking opportunities and clarifying the Township's regulatory procedures, it seems appropriate to consider retaining, on perhaps a part-time basis, a business district coordinator. This individual would be responsible for educating the existing and incoming property owners and businesses about the Township's regulatory procedures, would provide up-to-date information about the availability of specific properties, would lead the Township's efforts in recruiting desirable businesses into the business district and would develop promotion and marketing efforts and coordinate special events in the district.

**Table 1****Inventory of Cranbury Business District Retailers**

| #  | Street       | Name                        | SIC  |
|----|--------------|-----------------------------|------|
| 26 | N. Main      | Adams Brown Books and Cloc  | 5719 |
| 50 | N. Main      | Pat's Decor                 | 5719 |
| 60 | N. Main      | Anthony's Cranbury Antiques | 5713 |
| 54 | N. Main      | Cranbury Book Worm          | 5942 |
| 43 | N. Main      | Village Hair Cutters        | 7231 |
| 61 | N. Main      | MRZ Interior Design         | 5719 |
| 73 | N. Main      | Main Street Interiors       | 5719 |
| 65 | N. Main      | Cranbury Cobbler            | 7241 |
| 63 | N. Main      | Vacant Retail               |      |
| 57 | N. Main      | Cranbury Deli               | 5411 |
| 33 | N. Main      | Cranbury Paint and Hardware | 5251 |
| 49 | N. Main      | Teddy's Restaurant          | 5812 |
| 55 | N. Main      | David Wells Antiques        | 5713 |
| 29 | N. Main      | Vacant Retail               |      |
| 39 | N. Main      | Uto's Gourmet Shop          | 5812 |
| 77 | N. Main      | Dandelion                   | 5699 |
| 1  | Park Place E | Great Scot Consignment Shop | 5931 |
| 3  | Park Place E | Alterations                 | 7221 |

**Table 2**  
**Potential Retail Opportunities**  
**Cranbury Business District**

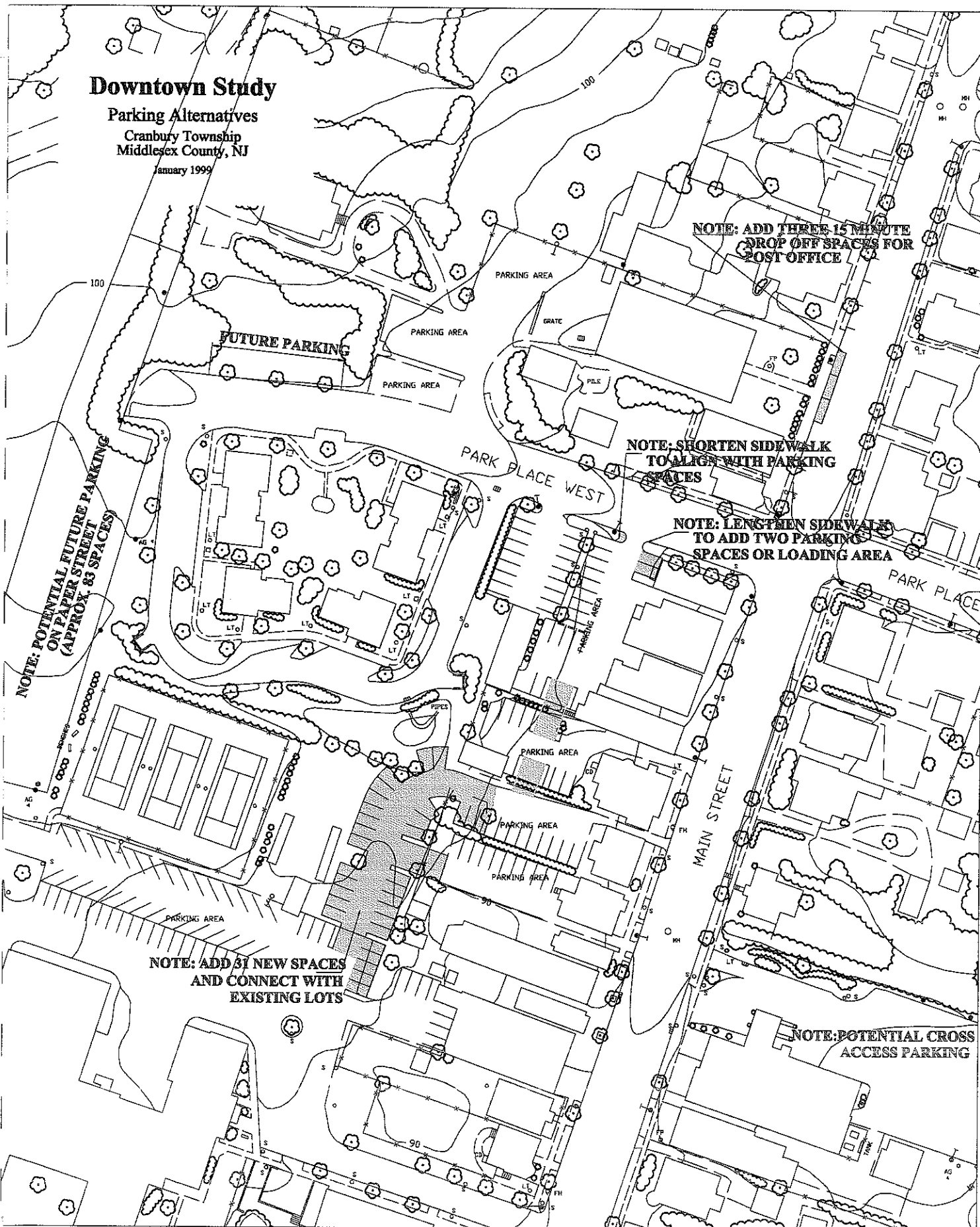
|  |          | Space Being Supported by<br>Cranbury Residents (SF) | # Stores Supported<br>by Cranbury Residents | Stores in<br>District | Opportunities |
|--|----------|---|---|-----------------------|---------------|
| <b>TOTAL SALES POTENTIAL (\$000)</b>     | \$30,538 |   |   |                       |               |
| <b>CONVENIENCE GOODS--TOTAL</b>          | \$11,491 | 44,850  |   |                       |               |
| 5411--Convenience Stores                 | \$368    | 1,000   | 1   | 1                     |               |
| 5412--Supermarkets, Grocery Stores       | \$3,840  | 8,500   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5423--Meat/Fish Stores                   | \$61     | 200   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5431--Fruit & Vegetables                 | \$22     | 100   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5441--Candy & Nuts                       | \$15     | 100   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5462--Bakeries                           | \$65     | 300   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5499--Other Speciality Foods             | \$39     | 150   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5921--Liquor & Beer Distributors         | \$700    | 2,000   | 2   |                       |               |
| 5812--Restaurants and Fast Food          | \$3,502  | 17,500  | 5-8   | 2                     | *             |
| 5813--Bars and Lounges                   | \$211    | 2,000   | 2-3   |                       |               |
| 5913--Drug Stores/Pharmacies             | \$2,668  | 13,000  | 1   |                       |               |
| <b>SHOPPING GOODS--TOTAL</b>             | \$13,107 | 80,750  |   |                       |               |
| 5311--Department Stores                  | \$3,802  | 25,000  | <1  |                       |               |
| 5332--Other General Merchandise Stores   | \$446    | 3,500   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5391--Warehouse Clubs                    | \$626    | 1,500   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5392--Catalog Showrooms                  | \$129    | 700   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5611--Men's Apparel                      | \$345    | 1,700   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5621--Women's Apparel                    | \$1,078  | 6,000   | 4   |                       |               |
| 5631--Women's Accessories & Specialiti   | \$123    | 700   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5641--Children's Apparel                 | \$102    | 600   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5651--Family Apparel                     | \$1,129  | 7,500   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5661--Shoe Stores                        | \$616    | 4,000   | 1-2   |                       |               |
| 5699--Miscellaneous Apparel & Access     | \$109    | 600   | 1   | 1                     |               |
| 5712--Furniture                          | \$758    | 6,300   | 2-3   | 2                     | *             |
| 5713--Floor Coverings                    | \$240    | 2,000   | 1-2   |                       |               |
| 5714--Draperies, Curtains, and Upholster | \$21     | 150   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5719--Miscellaneous Household Furnish    | \$231    | 1,500   | 1-2   | 4                     | *             |
| 5722--Household Appliances               | \$203    | 1,000   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5731--Radio/TV/Electronics               | \$493    | 2,500   | 1-2   |                       |               |
| 5734--Computer & Software Stores         | \$163    | 800   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5735--Record/Tape/Video Stores           | \$146    | 700   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5736--Music Stores                       | \$67     | 500   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5941--Sporting Goods                     | \$498    | 3,000   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5942--Book Stores                        | \$276    | 2,000   | 1   | 1                     |               |
| 5943--Stationers/Office Supply           | \$59     | 500   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5944--Jewelry Stores                     | \$482    | 2,000   | 2-3   |                       | *             |
| 5945--Toys & Hobbies                     | \$366    | 2,000   | 2-3   |                       | *             |
| 5946--Camera, Photo Supply               | \$76     | 500   | 1   |                       | *             |
| 5947--Gift, Novelty, Souvenir Stores     | \$363    | 2,500   | 3-5   |                       | *             |
| 5948--Luggage & Leatherwork              | \$35     | 200   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5949--Sewing, Needlework                 | \$123    | 800   | 1   |                       |               |
| <b>OTHER RETAIL STORES</b>               | \$4,937  | 34,300  |   |                       |               |
| 5211--Lumber/Building Supplies           | \$2,351  | 17,000  | 1   |                       |               |
| 5231--Paint/Glass/Wallpaper Stores       | \$213    | 1,300   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5251--Hardware Stores                    | \$423    | 2,700   | 1   | 1                     |               |
| 5261--Garden Supply Stores               | \$218    | 1,300   | 1   |                       | *             |
| 5532--Auto Supplies & Parts Stores       | \$983    | 5,500   | 1   |                       |               |
| 5931--Used Merchandise                   | \$195    | 3,200   | 3-4   | 1                     |               |
| 5992--Florists                           | \$197    | 1,300   | 1-2   |                       | *             |
| 5993--Tobacco Stores                     | \$27     | 100   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5995--Optical Stores                     | \$165    | 800   | 1   |                       | *             |
| 5999--Pet Stores                         | \$92     | 600   | <1  |                       |               |
| 5999--Art Dealers                        | \$72     | 500   | 1   |                       | *             |
| <b>SERVICES</b>                          | \$1,004  | 7,500   |   |                       |               |
| 7211--Laundries; Dry Cleaning            | \$544    | 4,000   | 2-3   |                       | *             |
| 7231--Hair Salons                        | \$460    | 3,500   | 4-5   | 1                     | *             |

# Downtown Study

## Parking Alternatives

Cranbury Township  
Middlesex County, NJ

January 1999



0 100' 200'



North

**CLARKE CATON HINTZ**  
A Professional Corporation

# Downtown Study

## Parking Usage

Cranbury Township  
Middlesex County, NJ  
October 1998



100 Approximate Number of On-Site Spaces

100 Approximate Number of On-Street Spaces

0 100 200 400 600  
Graphic Scale

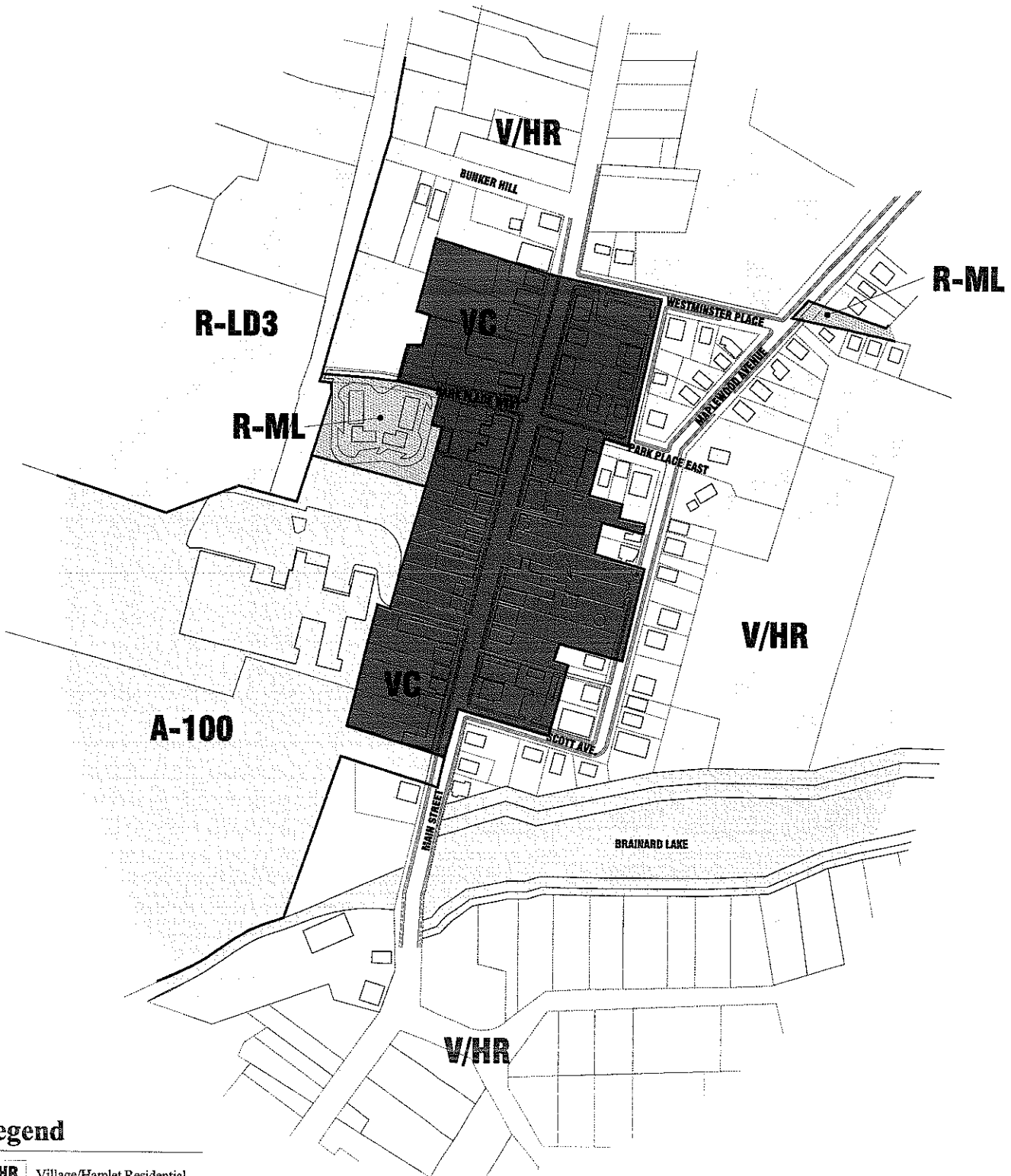


CLARKE • CATON • HINTZ  
A Professional Corporation

# Downtown Study

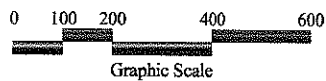
## Existing Zoning

Cranbury Township  
Middlesex County, NJ  
October 1998



## Legend

|              |                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>V/HR</b>  | Village/Hamlet Residential  |
| <b>R-LD3</b> | Residential-Low Density (3) |
| <b>R-ML</b>  | Residential-MT Laurel       |
| <b>VC</b>    | Village Commercial          |
| <b>A-100</b> | Agricultural Preservation   |
|              | Water                       |



CLARKE • CATON • HINTZ  
A Professional Corporation

# Downtown Study

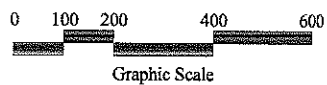
## Existing Land Use

Cranbury Township  
Middlesex County, NJ  
October 1998



### Legend

- Water
- Single Family
- 2-3 Family
- Multi-family
- Retail
- Office/bank
- Open Space
- Public
- Quasi-Public
- Vacant



CLARKE • CATON • HINTZ  
A Professional Corporation