

Why the Proposed Crooker Relocation is Consistent with the 2019 Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update

SUMMARY PRESENTATION OF
REPORT PROVIDED TO THE TOPSHAM PLANNING BOARD

By Raegan LaRoche and Frank O'Hara, Consultants



Who we are

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Has worked in the past on Topsham housing and economic development studies

** Information sourced from Crooker Construction, LLC leadership, Crooker database, independent research and 2019 Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update.*



Purpose of this meeting

- Introduce Crooker's proposal to relocate within Topsham.
- Prepare for vote on Resolution at future Planning Board meeting
 - Resolution: The Planning Board agrees to work with the developer to create a new zoning district in the Topsham ordinance that would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Update for submission to a future Town Meeting.

Presentation contents

- Crooker's Goal
- Who is Crooker?
- Why Proposal is consistent with the Comp Plan
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Crooker's goal

Move its manufacturing and headquarters from the Topsham Fair Mall site to a 67.6-acre site north along Lewiston Road.



Crooker proposes moving its headquarters to a new location less than a mile from their Topsham quarry. Its current location is outlined on the bottom right of the figure.

Who is Crooker?

- **Local business** - Crooker Construction is one of Maine's most experienced earthwork, utility, paving and aggregate manufacturing contractors. constructing some of the largest and most technical projects throughout the Midcoast region. Crooker also owns Precast Concrete Products of Maine (now Precast of Maine), employing over 30 skilled craftsmen.
- **Employer** - One of the largest private employers in Topsham.
 - Many employees hired from Topsham and surrounding towns.
 - Of its 200-plus employees, 58% live within 15 miles of the headquarters.
 - Crooker offers very competitive wages, with employees earning between \$900 and \$1,400 per week, with a total annual payroll exceeding \$16 million annually.
- **Taxpayer** - Crooker is one of the top 10 taxpayers in Topsham, paying over \$300,000 annually in property taxes. It also has 136 vehicles registered in Topsham, paying over \$66,000 in excise taxes.



Why it is consistent - Overview

Comprehensive Plan anticipates:

1. Support for rural and land-based business growth
2. Freeing up existing site
3. Improved traffic flow and safety
4. Jobs, taxes, reduced emissions, better trail access

Topsham
Comprehensive
Plan Update 2019



1. Support for rural and land-based business growth

From Volume 1 of the Update:

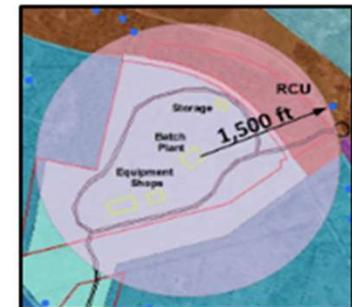
- *“Business and rural landscapes do mix.” (page 27)*
- *“Further, this plan recognizes that rural and land-based businesses may continue to grow, and performance standards may need to be evaluated as part of future zoning amendments to ensure protection of natural resources, and compatibility with working farms and existing residential neighborhoods.” (page 134)*
- *“However, this planning process identified a desire to see additional growth in areas not served today by sewer and water, including business growth at existing industrial sites off Route 196 in the Pejepscot Village area.” (page 130)*
- *Industrial Special District. “This district outlines the existing industrial zone, encompassing clusters of industry and businesses along the Androscoggin River off Route 196. This area should be zoned and regulated as special districts to reflect the uniqueness of the land use activity, and the intent for the future growth or transformation that may be desired for that specific area. Future zoning efforts should assess and, if necessary, amend performance standards to address potential impacts of industry on adjacent land of neighborhoods.” (page 135)*

Crooker grows appropriately

- The Plan supports the ability of rural and land-based businesses, like Crooker, to grow, through the means of zoning amendments with performance standards.
- Built-in buffers, as called for in the Plan.
- Closest residence will be 1,500 feet away from batch plant in new location, as opposed to 500 feet in current location.



The blue dots within the circle represent each home within 1,500 feet of the current plant location. Below, the figure shows the nearest residence being 1,500 feet away from the proposed plant site.



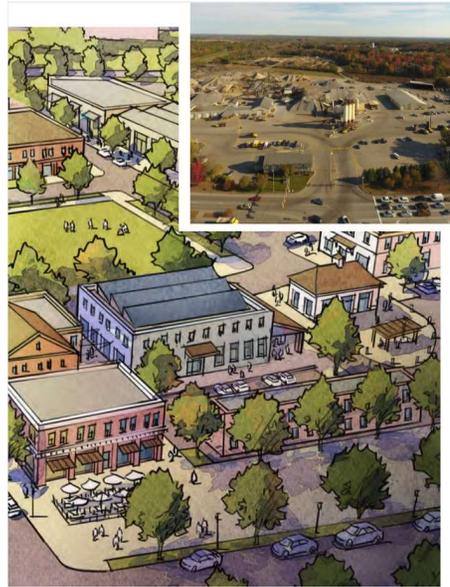
2. Comp Plan promotes freeing up existing site

From Volume 1 of the Update:

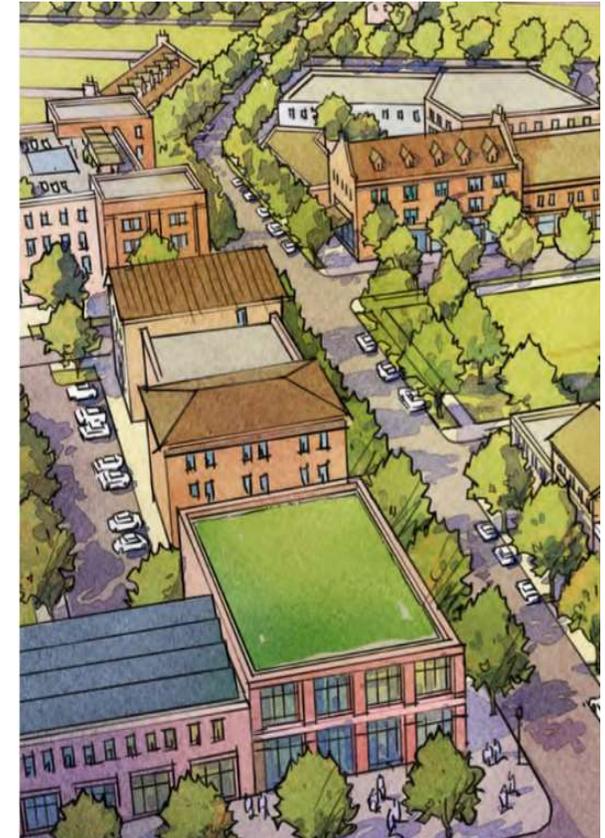
- *“The Town may need to enter into public-private partnerships with developers to realize new mixed-income, multigenerational neighborhoods.” (page 21)*
- *“Based upon preferences expressed during the public engagement process for where to direct new growth, the team identified a number of potential catalyst sites that represent opportunities for future development. Each catalyst site has been drawn with the intent to create vibrant, walkable mixed-use neighborhood centers...” (page 110)*
- *“The Crooker District illustrative plan reimagines how the site could be transformed in the future over many years to accommodate new light industrial, commercial, and residential development.” (pages 122-3)*
- *“Sites around Topsham Fair Mall Road and the Crooker Site were identified as opportunities for long-term transformation, including the establishment of new, walkable streets and blocks with a mix of land uses and businesses.” (page 135)*

Crooker move frees up existing site

- 51-acre Crooker site seen as a “catalyst” site.
- Move to new location frees up current site for envisioned new neighborhood.



Concept drawings for a future “Crooker District” at the current Crooker plant site are included in the Comprehensive Plan Update as ideas for possible redevelopment options were Crooker to relocate.



3. Plan promotes improved traffic flow and safety

From Volume 1 of the Update:

- *“We heard from residents that they are concerned about street safety.” (page 8)*
- *Pejepscot residents want “safer bike routes” and “automobile safety.” (page 38)*
- *“Topsham residents are asking for slower safer streets.” (page 57)*
- *Map identifies that the intersection at Route 196 and Meadow Cross Road is a “dangerous intersection,” and that Route 196 from Meadow Cross Road to River Road is a “dangerous roadway.” The proposed project will improve conditions at both of these dangerous places. (page 67)*

Crooker move results in improved traffic flow and safety

Private road will eliminate quarry haul traffic on public roads.

- At least 170 industrial truck trips will be eliminated on public roads daily.
- Almost 50 residences will see reduced truck traffic traveling by their homes.
- Dangerous intersections mitigated, and traffic on dangerous roadway reduced.



4. Plan promotes jobs, taxes, reduced emissions, better trail access

Promotes Jobs from Volume 2 of the Update:

- *Work with MCEDD to “expand economic opportunity, competitiveness, and strategic advantages.” (page 7)*

Expands Tax Base from Volume 1 of the Update:

- *“... the need to expand its property tax base so that people can continue to live here..” (page 8)*
- *“... adding additional infill and development to places already served by infrastructure will yield increased taxable value for the Town.” (page 24)*
- *Encourage a “pattern of development that delivers a higher municipal return on investment.” (page 154)*

Reduced Vehicle Emissions from Volume 1 of the Update:

- *“Since the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, the Town has taken the initiative to complete a Climate Action Plan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below the Town’s 2008 baseline and mitigate the impacts of climate change at the local level. The Climate Action Plan develops specific strategies in the sectors of energy use, transportation, land use, green purchasing, waste and water use that will be necessary to minimize Topsham’s impacts on climate change and meet the established 20% greenhouse gas emission reduction target set by the plan. Work should continue to lessen the Town’s impacts on the environment by improving energy efficiency, promoting recycling, and conserving resources when cost effective.” (page 105)*

Better Trail Access from Volume 1 of the Update:

- *“Provide more access to the three rivers... People would like to see boat access on the Topsham side of the Androscoggin River for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards, both above and below the dam.” (page 76)*
- *“Work regionally to explore opportunities to build segments of footpaths in the Androscoggin Railroad Corridor.” (page 76)*
- *Map showing a “New Ft Path (Riverwalk) next to Crooker quarry and “New Rail with Trail” along edge of new Crooker site on Route 196. (page 77)*

Crooker move preserves jobs, expands tax base, reduces emissions, gives better trail access

- **Jobs** - Diversifies Topsham's job offerings with quality employment.
- **Taxpayer** - Currently a top 10 taxpayer paying over \$366,000 annually in property and excise taxes, new development will equal more valuable buildings and equipment, equaling more taxable value. Also opening up current location for new development.
- **Emission reduction** - Vehicle-miles will be reduced by over 150,000 miles/year.
- **Access** - Working to connect trails and provide greater access to the Androscoggin River.



Why it is consistent - Summary

- Crooker's project is consistent with the following points in Topsham's Comprehensive Plan Update:
 1. Support for rural and land-based business growth
 2. Freeing up existing site
 3. Improved traffic flow and safety
 4. Jobs, taxes, reduced emissions, better trail access

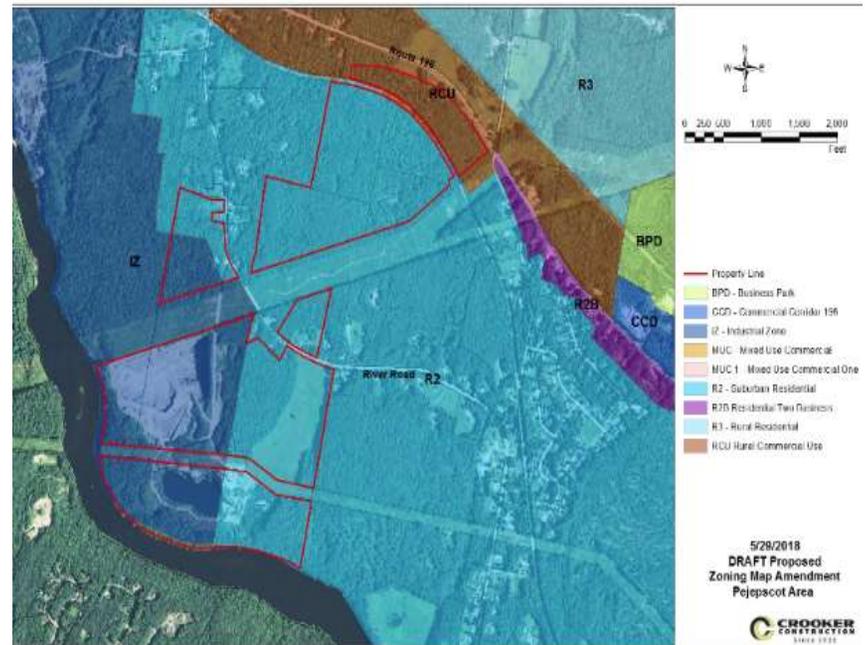
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Rezoning Alternatives

1. Expand existing
 - Not an appropriate fit.
2. Create contract zone
 - Long, drawn out process with excessive oversight.
3. New type of zone

Current Zoning in the Pejepscot Area



Rezoning recommendation

- ***Create a new “Resource Industry District”***
 - Either an overlay or fixed zoning district.
 - Apply to resource-based industry developments in Topsham, including mineral extraction and processing, food processing, aquaculture, etc.
 - The district would be approached in the same way as the Mixed-Use-Commercial-1 zone. The developer would be required to submit a master plan for all proposed activities on the site, and to show how the completed project would meet the environmental and traffic and buffering standards called for in the Update. Those standards, however, would be designed in this ordinance to specifically address large resource-based manufacturing operations.
- This approach ensures that the performance standards applied to the project are appropriate for resource-based industrial developments; that the Planning Board and neighbors would be able to see and review the project as a whole before individual pieces are developed; and that the integrity of the area is preserved.

Benefits of a new district

- Provides predictability for future uses of the site to neighbors.
- Provides standards for the Planning Board to use to meet Comprehensive Plan goals.
- Provides Crooker with appropriate standards to meet.

Proposed schedule

Summer

- Receive public comment
- Planning Board votes on resolution

Fall

- Zoning change proposed to Planning Board for vote
- Board of Selectmen vote
- Town Meeting vote

Recommended next steps

- Step 1** Planning Board determines that the proposed zoning change is with proper performance standards, consistent with the 2019 Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Step 2** If the Planning Board makes that determination, Crooker Construction will propose a zoning change to the Planning Board for its acceptance or revision.
- Step 3** If the Planning Board accepts or revises the change, it will send that proposal to the Board of Selectmen.
- Step 4** The Board of Selectmen can put it on the ballot for Town Meeting.
- Step 5** If the Town Meeting approves the zoning change, then Crooker Construction can proceed to assemble an application to the Planning Board that begins the process to receive project approval.

Questions?

