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# Batteries retailer charged for local growth

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A chain that specializes in hard-to-find batteries is planning to open a dozen stores in the Baltimore suburbs, expecting to find demand for juice to power anything from old digital cameras to home security systems to farm equipment.

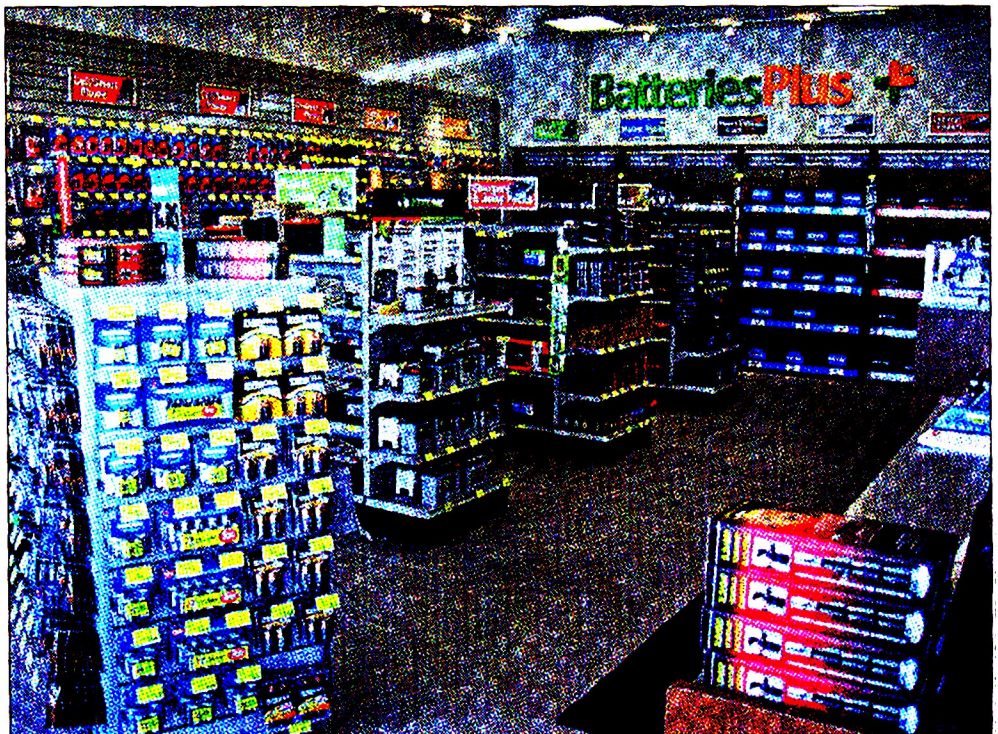
Batteries Plus is looking particularly in popular shopping centers in affluent Baltimore County areas like Timonium, Cockeysville, Towson and Parkville. The Wisconsin-based chain has more than 400 locations nationwide and is looking for some Maryland franchisees who want to bet on batteries.

While some may wonder how much untapped demand there is for batteries, the chain has been growing at a fast clip and has reported double-digit same-store sales growth. Its arrival could mean new opportunities for investors and for shopping centers looking to fill space.

The chain has already met with about a dozen interested investors on a visit to Baltimore, said John Twist, vice president of franchise and business development. A few are moving forward in the franchising process, but the company is looking for more.

Twist said he thinks there is enough demand for 12 to 15 stores in the Baltimore area and another 15 or so in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. The store already has three Maryland locations — in Columbia, Rockville and Upper Marlboro.

While the stores do carry the typical



**This is the inside of another Batteries Plus store in the U.S. The company hopes to open as many as 15 more locations in Greater Baltimore.**

AA variety or car batteries, its focus is on hard-to-find replacement batteries, say, for a Roomba robotic vacuum cleaner or a digital camera model that has since been updated to use a different type of battery. Prices range from 60 cents to \$600, Twist said.

Franchisees are expected to invest between \$200,000 and \$225,000, which includes a \$37,500 franchise fee. The chain assists in all stages of setup and launch and screens possible locations.

The company prefers spaces of 1,500

square feet to 2,000 square feet, free-standing or in shopping strips in areas with high foot traffic and other stores people travel to, rather than just stumble across.

Baltimore County Economic Development spokeswoman Fronda Cohen said her office has not been in contact with any Batteries Plus franchisees but often helps franchisors scout the appropriate locations and markets.

"It sounds as if they've done a little of their homework," Cohen said.