



# Downtown Master Plan

## *Elkton, Maryland*

F R A M I N G   T H E   F U T U R E

*April 2003*

*Prepared for  
The Town of Elkton, Maryland  
and  
The Elkton Alliance*



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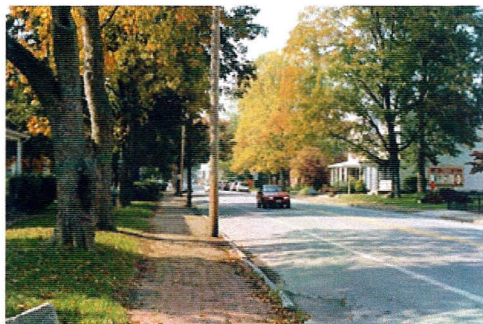


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*Main Street - Elkton, Maryland.*

## ***Preface***

This "Downtown Master Plan" is the result of a six-month effort on behalf of the Town of Elkton and the Elkton Alliance. It is a 'master plan' and road map to guide the community with a vision of Downtown's future focusing on revitalization and continued economic development. Our sincere appreciation extends to individuals and organizational leaders whose determination and perseverance has been steadfast and optimistic about the future of Downtown and its continued role as the centerpiece of Cecil County and the immediate region.

Acknowledgements and gratitude are extended to Ms. Jeanne Minner for orchestrating and obtaining a State of Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development Grant for the greater portion of the project and to Michael Sack and James Crouse from the Elkton Alliance for their efforts and contributions. Additional thanks are given to the other Downtown Task Force members, Dwight Hair and Commissioner John Burkley, for their support and participation.

Additional thanks to Mary Jo Jablonski for her dedication and hard work supporting the Task Force over the past six months – September 2002 to April 2003



## ***Downtown Master Plan Executive Summary***

### **Summary of the Master Planning Process Elkton, Maryland**



***New pedestrian improvements at  
Main Street.***

In the early spring of 2002, Michael Sack invited LDR International, an HNTB Company, to make a presentation on "Downtown Revitalization" to the Elkton Alliance Board at Union Hospital. This presentation led the Alliance and the Town into discussions regarding the need to undertake a downtown master planning process.

The Alliance is also recognized for producing the Downtown Elkton Revitalization Plan in 1995/1996. This document sets forth a short-term vision of goals and objectives for Downtown's immediate future of which one was the retention of a planning consultant to prepare a more definitive master plan for Downtown. These goals and objectives are still valid today and are the cornerstone behind this current effort.

Additionally, the Town also completed a multi-million dollar reconstruction of Main Street in the fall of 2002. This project, carried out through TEA-21 funding, will also act as a catalyst and synergy for revitalization into the near future.

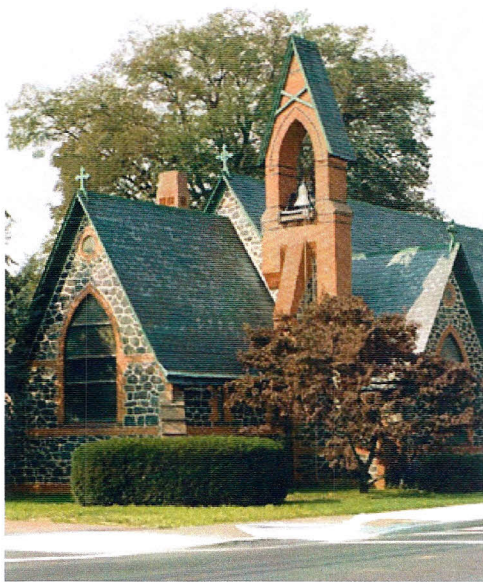
This master plan focuses on creating an implementation strategy and action plan for the next 15-20 years. Nine specific focus areas are identified:

- Maintenance of community image
- Economic development
- Wayfinding and signage
- Public realm improvements
- Access and circulation
- New development
- Open space and linkages
- Parking
- Organizing for the future



Priorities have also been identified to build on current projects, successes and proposed plans. Attention has specifically been given to short-term, three to five year initiatives.

The Downtown Master Plan will be the catalyst for many public and private partnerings, which will result in economic development initiatives and investments in downtown revitalization. Partnering is critical, as no one entity can be solely responsible. The Town of Elkton, State of Maryland, Cecil County, Union Hospital, Cecil County Community College, both Elkton and Cecil County Chambers of Commerce and the Elkton Alliance must work together to bring these targeted catalytic initiatives to fruition.



*Trinity Episcopal Church.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

In September 2002, the Town of Elkton and the Elkton Alliance retained LDR/HNTB to help the community prepare a revitalization study for the future – a longer term plan with an ultimate horizon of 15 – 20 years. The Town and community leadership, represented by the Alliance, recognized that a re-examination of the Downtown was necessary in the light of economic and physical changes taking place– continued growth of Union Hospital, reconstruction of Main Street, continued growth of businesses and offices within the core area. These changes would certainly influence the future of downtown and hopefully be channeled into continued economic development and physical improvements resulting in increased property values, a higher quality of life for area residents, business owners visitors, and new uses for underutilized parcels throughout the area.

LDR/HNTB was hired not only to develop a plan for the future of Downtown, but to craft a vision through a consensus building process that involved the community, key stakeholders in the Downtown, and the Town leadership.

LDR/HNTB also reviewed existing documents, past studies, the Town's Comprehensive plan, current development proposals and other materials to immerse themselves with all the current influences and recommendations.

LDR/HNTB was also asked to coordinate with the Chesapeake Group, the market consultant retained by the Town to prepare a market analysis and marketing plan.

### **1.1 Background**

When LDR/HNTB was retained to conduct this master plan, the downtown area was undergoing considerable redevelopment with the reconstruction of Main Street, new office development along North Street and continued expansion and growth around Union Hospital. Proposals were also on the table for a new Cecil County Community



College facility, a new multi-level parking structure and the redevelopment of an older property on Main Street.

The Elkton Alliance also had undertaken an effort to prepare a revitalization plan in 1995-1996 led by the previous Mayor, James Crouse, and supported by the Town Commissioners. The focus of the study was the Central Business District. The vision put forth in this plan was: *"We need a holistic approach, where we think about both the character of the downtown and the details to be developed on the street. We have a vision for the future of Elkton," "Downtown Elkton is everyone's neighborhood. It is visually distinct and should provide a healthy balance among a diversity of activities. It should continue as a safe, clean and interesting place in which people can live and gather in the years to come."* It then summarized a series of goals and objectives, a process, recommendations and initial steps towards implementation.

The Elkton Alliance should be commended for setting the Vision for a revitalization strategy. However, the focus was on broader issues and objectives, not physical planning objectives that illustrate the potential of capital improvements and future economic development. The implementation steps were more policy and initiative oriented. Many successes can be recognized – the continued leadership of the Alliance, the entire Main Street reconstruction, capital improvements around Union Hospital, obtaining numerous grants for planning and implementation to name a few.

The main focus of this Downtown Master Plan is to define the strategies for capital improvements and public/private economic developments over a fifteen to twenty year period. The previous plan should continue to be embraced and followed as the guiding principals for revitalization.

## **1.2 Study Area Boundary and Context**

The Town of Elkton has recently updated its Comprehensive Plan for the town municipal boundary. This Master Plan will be a companion component of that document. The physical boundaries for this study are the Central Business District or 'downtown' area only. The study area was given to the consultant team at the onset of the study and is best summarized as the 'Mainline'- rail line to the north, Big Elk Creek to the south, Blue Ball Street to the west and Delaware Avenue to the east.

While the focus of the study is on the downtown area, the context of the rest of the town is important. Understanding regional gateways and entry points, arterial entrance corridors, open space and linkages, adjacent neighborhoods and commercial centers and how they interrelate is equally important. Although focused on the downtown, this plan should help guide future capital improvements and development initiatives within these adjacent areas and entrance corridors.

The vicinity map (Exhibit 1) on the following page was copied from the 2002 Community Information Guide for Elkton. It shows the surrounding road network, areas within the municipality, parks, and some selected businesses in the town of Elkton.





## **2.0 *Downtown Elkton Master Planning Process***

### **2.1 The Downtown Planning Team**

The Downtown Planning Team was led by LDR/HNTB and the Downtown Steering Committee, represented by the Elkton Alliance Executive Board. The Executive Board consists of the following members and representatives:

- Jeanne Minner, Director of Planning, Town of Elkton
- James Crouse, Executive Director of Elkton Alliance
- Commissioner John K. Burkley, Town Commissioner
- Dwight Hair, Elkton Florist
- Michael Sack, Past President and CEO, Union Hospital

This was extremely pivotal as the committee was duly represented by the Town, Board of Commissioners, Hospital, private business community, and ex-Mayor and Executive Director of the Elkton Alliance.

The Alliance also met regularly throughout the six-month process to provide input and to discuss the development of the plan. The Alliance also served as the Steering Committee for the market analysis and marketing study conducted by the Chesapeake Group. This provided a level of cohesion for both processes, culminating in a public Town Hall event on April 15, 2003.

### **2.2 Input Process**

With this team in mind, the work plan focused on a six-phase process from “Research and Observation” to “Crafting the Vision” and “Sharing the Plan.” LDR/HNTB embarked on a thorough process to garner stakeholder input to the plan. The team conducted one-on-one interviews with residents and business owners, Town Commissioners, representatives from the County, Mayor and City Manager. LDR/HNTB also conducted two briefings with Mayor Fisona and the Board of Commissioners to keep them apprised of the process and progress. The objective of these efforts was

to listen to what Elkton stakeholders had to say about the future of the downtown and to guide the plan's development.

## **2.3 Area Analysis**

In addition to the listening process, LDR/HNTB conducted a thorough site analysis and photographic reconnaissance to categorize opportunities and challenges within the study area, establish a contextual relationship of land use and ownership patterns and identify key development and redevelopment sites. LDR/HNTB reviewed existing documentation provided by the Town which included:

- Town Comprehensive Plan
- Town Zoning Ordinance
- The Elkton Downtown Revitalization Plan
- Elkton Vitalization 1999-2004
- Current redevelopment/development proposals, historic literature, parking deck proposal, and other Town/County demographic data

The LDR/HNTB team also compiled a base map as a 'baseline' from which to develop the overall master plan. Out-dated Cecil County quadrangles (circa 1980's) were combined with a 2002 aerial photographic to create a current base map for the downtown area. These maps can be used by the Town in future redevelopment documentation.

## **2.4 Strategy Development**

Each of the steps of the process outlined above was synthesized into key issues that faced the community and illustrated into an overall plan for the downtown. This master plan is a long-term vision for the future that will be implemented a horizon of 15-20 years. As with any master plan, it is intended to be a dynamic document that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. A strategy for implementation is included in this report and identifies initial projects and first steps. Finally, as a result of the consensus-building process, the plan acknowledges that

compromises will need to be made in order for successful implementation to occur.

## **2.5 Organization and Context**

The Elkton Downtown Master Plan summary report is organized into key points, including the following topics:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Elkton Downtown Design and Planning Process
- 3.0 Listening and Learning
- 4.0 Research and Observation
- 5.0 Downtown Summary Analysis
- 6.0 Implementing the Master Plan
  - Maintaining a Community Image
  - Stimulating Continued Economic Development
  - Wayfinding and Signage
  - Public Realm Improvements
  - Access and Circulation
  - New Development
  - Open Space and Linkages
  - Parking
  - Organization for the Future
- 7.0 Project Priorities

## **2.6 Acknowledgements**

LDR/HNTB wishes to thank the many people involved in the planning process for developing the Elkton Downtown Master Plan. The process has been one that has relied on the participation and support of the Elkton Alliance, the Town/Mayor and Commissioners, the interviewees and the citizens of Elkton. They showed favorable support and consensus to the development of a longer term road map for the downtown. Everyone's input contributed greatly to this process.

We thank all the stakeholders who participated over the two-day period for their time and effort. We also extend special thanks to the Town for coordinating Commission meetings and our final presentation at the City's offices.



## **2.7 Stakeholder Interviewees**

The following interviewees were identified by the Alliance as key stakeholders in the future of Downtown Elkton.

Commissioner Jean Broomell, Town of Elkton  
Commissioner John K. Burkley, John K. Burkley Company  
Mr. Dennis Clower, Attorney  
Mr. John Denver, Conectiv  
Mayor Joseph Fisona, Town of Elkton  
Mr. Lewis George, Town Administrator  
Commissioner Charles Givens, Town of Elkton  
Mr. Raymond Hamm, County Bank  
Mr. Harry Hammond, American Home and Hardware  
Dr. Steven Pannill, Cecil Community College  
Ms. Millie Riddle, Cecil Cnty. Chamber of Commerce  
Dr. Carl Roberts, Superintendent Cecil Cnty. Schools  
Mr. Rex Sizemore, Peoples Bank of Elkton  
Commissioner Gary Storke, Town of Elkton  
Ms. Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism  
Mr. Charles Walters, Property Owner - High Street  
Mr. Al Wein, Cecil County Administrator

### ***3.0 Listening and Learning – What Elkton Residents are Saying about Elkton***

Understanding the issues facing Elkton was an important first step in strategizing for the future. The following paragraphs categorize what we heard during the worksessions, stakeholder input interviews and Steering Committee input sessions. To stimulate input, we asked the participants the following three questions:

1. What are the assets and opportunities within Downtown Elkton?
2. What liabilities and challenges do you foresee that may hinder the Town in achieving the vision or downtown?
3. What ideas and needs should the Town pursue in achieving the vision for the future of Downtown Elkton?

The responses to these questions have been categorized into nine topical areas listed as follows:

- Identity
- Train Station
- Parking
- Partnering
- Area Resources
- Code Issues
- Additional Land Uses
- Promotions/Events
- Downtown Residential

*Identity.* How should Elkton identify themselves as in the future: “Gateway to the Bay,” “Wedding Chapel Capitol,” “Center of Commerce/County Seat?”

“Gateway to the Bay” has always been an important theme that aligns Elkton to this incredible natural resource. Although there is no direct bay frontage, it is important to ‘stay attached’ to this ‘national’ environmental amenity.

As the Chesapeake Group summarized in their work, there is continued market potential for weddings in Elkton and the support spin-off of businesses they create – florists, jewelers, tailors/dressmakers, lodging, restaurants, etc.

*Center of Commerce and the County Seat* are both equally important. Municipal, County and State offices, County School Board, Union Hospital and support professional medical/law offices compose a large downtown workforce population. These employment generators will continue to drive the downtown identity as an employment center and county seat town.

Other common themes that emanated from interviews included:

*Train Station/Main Line Rail Potential.* Capitalize on rail to attract either a MARC or SEPTA station in Elkton. “If Perryville can do it, so can we.”

*Parking, Parking, Parking.*

- Amount of surface parking that dominates the downtown landscape.
- Condition of surface parking lots, poor pavements, inadequate lighting, little or no landscaping, poor signage, distant separation from core uses.
- Structured parking would allow for surface parking to be redeveloped and would create infill and economic development opportunities for the future.
- Surface parking lots should be improved to a much higher standard

*Partnerships.* The need for multiple organizations to partner and implement the plan. State of Maryland, Cecil County, Town of Elkton, Union Hospital, Elkton Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, and the private sector must partner to be successful in implementing the plan.

*Capitalize on other Chesapeake Bay/Cecil County natural resources,* cultural attractions, and visitor and tourist attractions, such as Elk Landing and Fair Hill.



*Provide additional neighborhood and commercial offerings:*

- Restaurants
- Newsstands/bookstores
- Niche retail/antiques
- Extended store hours (i.e., Tuesday/Thursday evenings until 7:00PM)

*Increase downtown residential opportunities.*

- Single-family detached, attached, multi-family, affordable units, etc.

*Support and expand local events and downtown activities.*

*Assist Cecil County Community College in their bid for State funding for the proposed Elkton Center.*

*Lack of sidewalks, pathways, and amenities in the downtown*

## **4.0 Research and Observation**

### **4.1 Base Map**

For many towns, maintaining an up-to-date base map of the municipality is a constant challenge. Keeping track of changes throughout the town and recording this on paper or in digital form require time and financial resources which are not always available. The Town of Elkton's current base map has not been updated in quite some time. The map depicts some buildings which no longer exist and omits newer construction. Other omissions are changes to roads, the most recent of which would be the streetscape improvement to Main Street. Because an accurate base map for Elkton was not available, one of the first steps for creating the master plan was to update the existing information into a workable base for planning purposes.

### **4.2 Reconnaissance**

Improving Elkton's base map consisted of three components: an aerial photograph overlay, on-site reconnaissance, and identifying proposed projects. These elements were used in updating the base map in the following way.

#### **4.2.1 Aerial Photography**

The first step in updating the base map was to scan the existing map and a recent aerial photograph into digital format. The base map was then overlaid on the photograph. New buildings were traced using those shown on the photograph as a guide. Buildings that had been torn down were deleted. Major parking lots were also drawn according to the aerial photograph. The aerial photograph was also used at various times to add additional information to drawings, such as the location of the baseball fields in Eder Park. Any changes that occurred after the aerial photograph was taken were not included in the revised base map. The aerial photograph (Exhibit 2) on the following page shows downtown Elkton. The study area boundary is depicted as a red line.







#### **4.2.2 Site Reconnaissance**

Site reconnaissance consisted of visiting the Town of Elkton and performing a walkthrough of the entire study area. During the walkthrough, notes were written on the base map indicating major institutions, businesses, and other characteristics of the town. At the same time photographs were taken of the various areas within the study boundary with particular attention given to areas where improvements or redevelopment was needed. Any discrepancies between the updated base map and what was observed were marked down as well.

#### **4.2.3 Proposed Projects**

Information on major proposed projects was obtained for the downtown area of Elkton. Proposed developments, including a parking garage for government offices and the new Cecil Community College building, were added to the base map. Various parking amenities were later incorporated into the master plan, but not included in the base map because the future of the parking structures was viewed as being more flexible than the construction of buildings.

The three sources of information were consolidated into one current map. This new base map includes the changes that have occurred since the last base map was compiled and labels for major businesses and institutions. It is an accurate assessment of the downtown for planning, but should not be used for site specific design. The base map was used for all subsequent exhibits.

### **4.3 Assets and Opportunities**

Elkton has many assets from which it can draw and create opportunities for strengthening and enriching the town. These can be divided into several broad categories: Circulation, Economy, History, and Environment.

#### **4.3.1 Circulation**

- Downtown Elkton is located close to major routes of transportation. Route 40 passes immediately adjacent to the downtown and I-95 is a short drive away. This



**AMTRAK Mainline**

proximity to transportation is important for bringing people into the town and also for providing residents with quick access to other areas.

- Elkton's location between I-95 and the head of the Chesapeake Bay has given the town the moniker "Gateway to the Bay." This is something that can be built upon.
- Despite its proximity to major routes, Elkton is still a relatively small town and does not have the major traffic problems associated with larger towns and cities. Maintaining an efficient road network is important to continuing this attribute as an asset.
- The AMTRAK Mainline rail line runs through Elkton. A rail station could connect to MARC and/or SEPTA rail. An upgraded station linking to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and beyond, would create opportunities for bringing in rail-commuting workers and visitors, and for providing residents with more options for traveling out of Elkton. The rail line can support Transit-Oriented Development and Smart Growth initiatives.
- Because of its small size, Elkton has potential to be very pedestrian friendly. Most of the study area is within a 5 minute walk of the center of Elkton (Main and North Streets). Pedestrian traffic should be considered in future planning.
- In the past, Big Elk Creek was Elkton's strongest asset. Elkton is now known as the "Gateway to the Bay", but ironically it was once the gateway from the Bay to the north and inland areas via the Big Elk Creek. The water connection to the Bay is no longer as important as it once was, but it could still be significant from a recreational and environmental perspective.

#### **4.3.2 Economy**

- As the county seat of Cecil County, Elkton has a stable employment base. The offices and courts also create opportunities for employment associated with government and legal issues.
- After the government offices, Union Hospital is Elkton's largest employer and is a major anchor of the downtown. Offices and businesses connected with or supporting the hospital are further assets for the town.





*Main Street refurbishment*



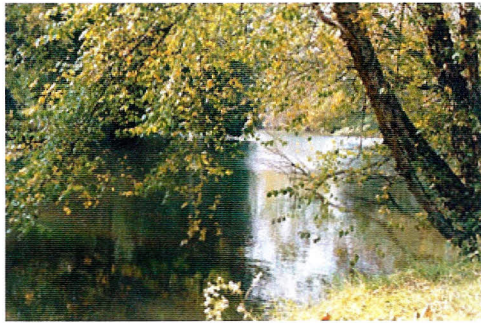
*Mitchell House*

- A large number of stable financial institutions are located in downtown Elkton. These contribute to the town's economy.
- Several redevelopment initiatives have recently been undertaken or are planned for the near future. These include the refurbishment of Main Street, expansion of Cecil Community College, and changes for the State District Court facilities. Redevelopment is important for building confidence in the town of Elkton and for spurring additional redevelopment.
- Elkton's employment base creates opportunities for retail uses that provide services for these employees. Retail uses that support employees would probably be the most stable and appropriate for Elkton.
- Elkton is a minor tourist destination primarily because of its colonial history and its past association with quick and easy weddings. These connections are elements which can be strengthened. However, retail that relies on tourism first requires an adequate tourist base.
- Because of its proximity to major routes of transportation, Elkton could draw in more people to businesses within the downtown.
- The Fair Hill Racetrack is a destination in the region from which Elkton could bring in visitors.
- The County School Board land presents an opportunity as a large parcel of land that can be developed for compatible uses.

#### **4.3.3 History**

- Elkton was incorporated in 1787. Many of the most historic buildings however were built before this. Partridge Hill and the Mitchell House are two important historic buildings located in downtown Elkton. Elkton has a long history of architecture, which should be emphasized and preserved.
- Elk Landing, located at the confluence of Big Elk Creek and Little Elk Creek, is a nearby historic site being refurbished by the Historic Elk Landing Foundation. This is a resource with which the town of Elkton should form stronger connections. These connections can be physical, such as trail connections, and cultural as well.





*Big Elk Creek*

- Elkton is known for being a “marriage town”. In a recent article, National Geographic featured Elkton - weddings were the zip code’s claim to fame. Although vast numbers of weddings are a more historical phenomenon, there are still a fair number and this is something which can be marketed in the future.

#### **4.3.4 Environment**

- Big Elk Creek and its immediate environs serve as a greenway connecting various open spaces in the region. It offers opportunities for increased environmental benefits and for recreation.
- The most significant piece of open space in downtown Elkton is Eder Park. It is also the town’s interface with Big Elk Creek. Eder Park is the key for Elkton’s reconnection with its waterfront.
- The waterways, wetlands, forests, and other open spaces surrounding the town of Elkton can serve as cultural, environmental, and recreational resources for the town.
- The nearby Chesapeake Bay helps form Elkton’s identity. Associations between Elkton and the Bay should be bolstered for increased benefit to the downtown.
- Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area is also an important feature in the region from which Elkton could draw in visitors.

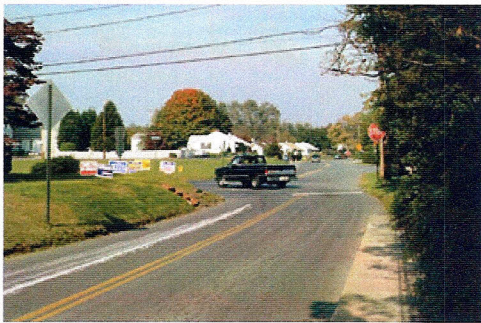
In summary, Elkton’s greatest strengths and the aspects which should be the foundations for decision making are: Cecil county seat, significant history, proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, Union Hospital, and Big Elk Creek.

### **4.4 Issues and Constraints**

The same categories that are assets and that create opportunities for the town can also form constraints and can be areas of concern.

#### **4.4.1 Circulation**

- Elkton’s proximity to Route 40 has facilitated the movement of some businesses that would have been in downtown Elkton to Route 40. The challenge for the



*Locust Street and High Street*

downtown is to recapture some of the market as well as attract new businesses.

- Downtown Elkton lacks a sense of entry or arrival. Gateways into the downtown should let people know that they have arrived.
- Elkton is close to I-95, however many passersby do not realize the history, culture, and recreation they are missing when they drive by the exit. Wayfinding and signage should begin at I-95 and also be located at other strategic points in the vicinity. White on brown colored signs could read "Historic Downtown Elkton."
- Elkton has limited public transportation. A public circulator bus sponsored by the Department of Aging serves areas within Elkton, and recently bus service between Elkton and Newark has been in operation. However, the town could use additional public transportation options.
- Some of the roads in downtown Elkton do not efficiently direct traffic and sometimes create pedestrian hazards. Examples of this are the High Street/Locust Street intersection and the access road running behind the Board of Education building. These problems need to be addressed.
- Many of the major downtown streets are not very pedestrian friendly and need to be improved; this is especially the case with major "gateway" streets such as Bridge Street and North Street. The new refurbishment of Main Street sets a great example for street improvements.
- Downtown Elkton is sandwiched between the rail line, Big Elk Creek, and Route 40 – all of which create barriers for pedestrian-friendly connections from the adjacent areas into the downtown. The borders of the downtown need to be made more permeable.
- Large expanses of parking cover a significant portion of the downtown. This uses up land, which could have higher and better uses and is also a visual blight for the town. Parking needs to be better organized to meet the needs of Elkton.
- Elkton is not serviced by any nearby airports. The railway should have greater prominence to fill the void.
- Big Elk Creek has very limited access and can only be used by very small boats. Pedestrian access needs to be



increased to the waterfront, and the possibility of opening the creek to larger boats might be considered.

#### **4.4.2 Economy**

- Downtown Elkton has many vacancies that need to be filled. This is a question of matching the right business with the right location. Additionally, some level of redevelopment of existing structures may be necessary.
- Delaware's lack of sales tax may lure some shoppers away who would ordinarily shop in Elkton. The downtown must identify what it can offer that Delaware does not.
- There is a perceived lack of retail in downtown Elkton. Filling vacancies may solve part of this, adding additional stores may also help.
- There are few entertainment venues in downtown Elkton. There are no movie theaters, few museums, and few restaurants. Residents must go elsewhere for these things.
- Downtown Elkton is oriented to employment uses with a lack of in-town residential areas. In order to make the town more vibrant at all hours, residential areas offering housing, for a wide range of incomes and populations, would be necessary.



***Vacant parking lot in industrial area***

#### **4.4.3 History**

In general, Elkton's history is only an asset. However, following some historic patterns can be detrimental to the downtown. The movement of people out of the downtown into surrounding areas should be curtailed. This needs to be turned around to bring people into the downtown.

#### **4.4.4 Environment**

- Big Elk Creek is an asset, but can also be a hazard. The creek has flooded frequently in the past. The Army Corps of Engineers has proposed some potential solutions and is working with the town to derive an acceptable solution.
- Some brownfield sites in Elkton may contain toxic waste and may currently be unfit for development. Current



***Brownfield site off of Bridge Street***





*Residences in the northeast*

'brownfield' legislation is making funding available for brownfield clean-up. Strategic sites along Bridge Street should be prioritized for clean-up and redevelopment even if parking is an acceptable redevelopment scenario.

- Downtown Elkton lacks formalized open spaces. Provisions for new and modified open spaces should be made.
- The quality of the greenways surrounding Elkton could use improvement. Streamsides should be planted with trees and other underutilized open areas should be reforested as well. Examples of these areas are the streamsides adjacent to the bridge crossings over Big Elk Creek, the area along Big Elk Creek between Bridge Street and Bow Street, and much of the streamside adjacent to Meadow Park.
- Some parts of the downtown need visual improvement. Main Street can be a standard for improving some of these areas.
- Parts of the town, such as areas of the northeast neighborhood, appear unsafe and/or rundown. Improvements should be addressed.

In summary, the most challenging issues facing Elkton are: lack of elements that draw people into the downtown, consumer competition from other areas, the lack of various downtown retail uses or amenities, and the flooding of Big Elk Creek.

## **5.0 *Downtown Summary Analysis***

Through a combination of site visits, photography, interviews, and other research, physical analysis was performed for the downtown Elkton study area. The analysis looks at the network of transportation and at specific areas in the downtown that are amenities, possible sites for redevelopment, or areas in need of improvement. The Downtown Summary Analysis exhibit (Exhibit 4) is included at the end of section 5. It graphically depicts various elements of the summary analysis.

### **5.1 *Transportation Network***

I-95 is the major route of access for people coming into Elkton. Therefore, almost all people coming to Elkton for the first time and many arriving on subsequent visits will be arriving from the north. Those arriving from the south are often people returning from visits to other areas or people who are already more familiar with Elkton. The following are several topics related to the transportation network.

#### **5.1.1 *Vicinity Wayfinding Points***

The progression of entry into downtown Elkton begins at major highways and thoroughfares. It is important that Elkton is not separated from the local region, but that it brings automobiles and people from the collector roads into the downtown.

- The first and foremost wayfinding point is the route 279 interchange with I-95. This is where Elkton begins its connection with the driver and attracts them to the downtown.
- Including a wayfinding point at the intersection of route 279 and North Street could be an advantage and a disadvantage for the same reason – North Street dead ends in the very heart of Elkton. This makes an excellent presentation to those who are visitors to Elkton, but could create crippling congestion in the downtown's highlight area.

- The intersection of Route 301 and Route 40 is an important point at which traffic should be directed to Elkton.
- The intersection of Route 40 and Bridge Street should be the only wayfinding point to direct traffic from Route 40 into the downtown. This location also acts as a prelude to the downtown for traffic traveling on Route 213.
- There should not be wayfinding points for Landing Lane, Delaware Avenue, or Red Hill Road. All of these streets are more residential in character where increased traffic should not be encouraged. Additionally, Delaware Avenue and Redhill Road provide access to the downtown where they dead-end at the one-way portion of Main Street.

### **5.1.2 Arrival Thresholds**

Arrival thresholds can be defined as points where the traveler has entered the downtown vicinity, but is not yet at a formal gateway. These points are important in the progression to the downtown and act as cues to slow down and be alert, not only for safety reasons, but also to enjoy the experience of visiting the downtown.



**Bridge Street arrival threshold**



**North Street arrival threshold**

- The highpoint of the bridge crossing the railroad tracks on Bridge Street offers views looking into downtown Elkton. This is located on what is currently the most traveled access point into the downtown and is the point at which most travelers will think “now I’m in Elkton.” This threshold is shown as a vista point on Exhibit 4.
- The highpoint of the North Street Bridge crossing the railroad tracks also has views into the downtown, but is not as highly traveled as Bridge Street. This is a vista point shown on Exhibit 4.
- The Bridge Street crossing of Big Elk Creek is the most significant threshold into the town from the south. It signifies entry into the town, but also an exit into the big box retail south of the downtown.
- The Delaware Avenue Bridge over Big Elk Creek is a “softer” entry point and is not as abrupt of a change as the Bridge Street crossing.
- Both ends of Main Street, the Main Street Bridge over Big Elk Creek to the east and the Main Street access off Route 40 via Landing Lane to the west, are the least



traveled access points to the downtown and should probably not be greatly emphasized.

### 5.1.3 Gateways

Gateways are ceremonial entry points into the downtown. These are areas that should be intensively designed and given top priority. They present the first real impression of Elkton, which should be positive. The major gateways are discussed below and graphically depicted on Exhibit 4.



*Bridge Street Gateway*



*North Street Gateway*

- The intersection of Bridge Street and Railroad Avenue is the most important gateway for the downtown. It presents chain-link fence, rip-rap, barren parking lots, and dead-end sidewalks as the first impression of downtown Elkton. The intersection of Bridge Street and High Street may be more visually appealing, but it is too close to the heart of the downtown to be an effective gateway.
- The intersection of Bridge Street and Howard Street should form the gateway into Elkton from the south. This location is not quite as visually deficient as the Bridge Street/Railroad Avenue intersection, but still has a large amount of room for improvement. The Main Street intersection is more beautiful, but Main Street is the heart of Elkton – not the entry point. Furthermore the Main Street intersection already has excellent architectural elements which should not be cluttered by gateway features.
- The intersection of North Street and Railroad Avenue is the third location for a gateway into the downtown. It is not as significant as the other two because it has less traffic, however it may be important for people who are coming specifically to Elkton. The intersection of Stockton Street is still part of the residential corridor and would not be appropriate for a gateway. The municipal building presents a very appropriate face for entry; however its parking lot, the gas station, and the other side of North Street at this intersection could be made more ceremonial and more visually appealing.

#### 5.1.4 Corridors

Elkton's corridors are the streets that link it together. Some corridors are primarily vehicular while others are important for both vehicles and pedestrians. Whether or not a street has a large number of pedestrians – all streets in the downtown should provide for pedestrian access. Some, of course, will have more pedestrian amenities than others. The most significant corridors are shown outlined in green on Exhibit 4.



*Main Street at Bow Street*



*Bridge Street*



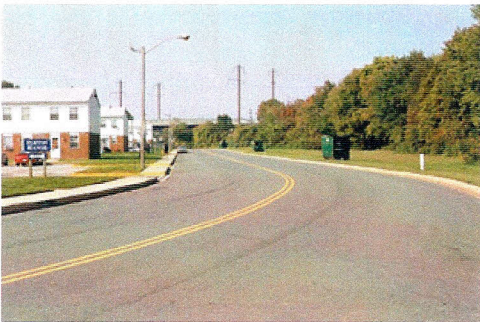
*North Street*

- Main Street is Elkton's heart. It is the historic, cultural, civic, and retail center of the town. The recent improvements to the street have raised the caliber of this corridor. High-quality paving, traffic calming, street tree plantings, and underground utilities are all factors which contribute to the excellent streetscape. Main Street can serve as a good example for other corridors in the downtown. Main Street, beyond Bridge Street and South Street, could be improved. It also is important that retail vacancies along this corridor be filled.
- Bridge Street is the main corridor into and through downtown Elkton. For some people it is their only view of Elkton while they pass through to other destinations. Based on this it would not be surprising if many people did not have a great impression of Elkton after passing through. The street presents a stark, barren landscape of pavement, parking lots, and power lines. Its saving graces are the architecture of Trinity Episcopal Church and the First Union Bank and the small portion of open space the cemetery presents. The auto-dominated streetscape is very unfriendly to pedestrians and splits the residential areas to its west from the downtown to its east. There are opportunities for infill development along Bridge Street. This corridor should be Elkton's top priority for improvement.
- North Street is in better condition than Bridge Street. It has a greater number of architecturally interesting structures, has less traffic, fewer barren parking expanses, and is more pedestrian friendly. It forms an axis with Main Street as the heart of Elkton. Although the street is in relatively good condition it could use some visual improvements.





***Bow Street***



***Booth Street***

- High Street is an important corridor that services the center of Elkton - primarily Union Hospital and various offices. The part of High Street running through the Union Hospital grounds has received a significant level of improvement, which would be appropriate to extend to Bridge Street and to North Street. The portion of the corridor between North Street and South Street could also use improvements and infill development.
- Bow Street acts similarly to North Street from a transportation standpoint, but is visually more of a back alley for the buildings on North Street. Union Hospital helps to strengthen this corridor; however more could be done to give it a front face. This corridor also forms a strong connection between the rail station to the north and Union Hospital and Main Street to the south. This connection could be more important in the future.
- Railroad Avenue presents opportunities for a significant amount of new development. It provides access to Cecil Community College, offices, and parking for Union Hospital. With more development its importance would be increased. Extending Railroad Avenue to connect with South Street could foster more development and help to integrate the northeast segment of Elkton into the rest of the downtown.
- Booth Street is a barren back street that needs to better serve its pedestrians and residents.
- The Locust Street and Delaware Avenue corridor acts as an entry and exit connecting to Main and High Streets. These connections form awkward intersections unfit for the volume of traffic going through them. Either these intersections should be improved or traffic from the downtown should be directed onto South Street and out along Main or Howard Streets.
- Howard Street is the backdoor to Main Street. It is lined with parking on one side and open space on the other. The parking should be better organized and visually improved. Howard Street should act as a connection between the retail of Main Street and the open space along Big Elk Creek instead of a stark barrier.



### 5.1.5 Important Intersections

The intersections between major corridors should receive special attention for streetscape enhancement and visual improvement. They are major directional decision making points and should have clear signage. Important intersections are shown on Exhibit 4 with a red circle. Various elements could be a part of these important intersections.

- Monuments
- At grade roadway improvements
- Special paving in the roadway
- Crosswalks
- Sidewalk and landscape improvements

## 5.2 Redevelopment Opportunity Sites

Various sites throughout downtown Elkton are underutilized or used in ways that are incompatible with the overall vision for the town. Exhibit 4 depicts sites for redevelopment in the downtown with zones of orange hatching.



*Underutilized area around train station.*

- The area near the train station, the old bowling alley in particular, is not being used to its fullest potential. The parking lot around the bowling alley is derelict and the train station lacks importance. The entire area around the train station could be redeveloped as a Transit Oriented Development.
- The block between Bridge Street, Railroad Avenue, and Bow Street contains a large amount of surface parking, vacant land, and vacant buildings. Cecil Community College has plans for a new building and new parking facility (see the following Exhibits 3B and 3C). Union Hospital also has plans for a parking facility off site. This block of land presents an opportunity for the town, college, and hospital to cooperate through long-range planning to develop this area to its best potential. Cecil Community College could set a theme for this area as a "Center of Learning"
- The parcels along Bridge Street, especially the west side of the street should be strengthened and redeveloped with office and commercial uses. This area includes some brownfield sites north of High Street and West of Bridge Street. This may present challenges for



***Vacant area behind the Board of Education building.***



***Union Hospital parking***

redevelopment, however the long term future of Elkton should be taken into consideration to promote the best possible uses of this area.

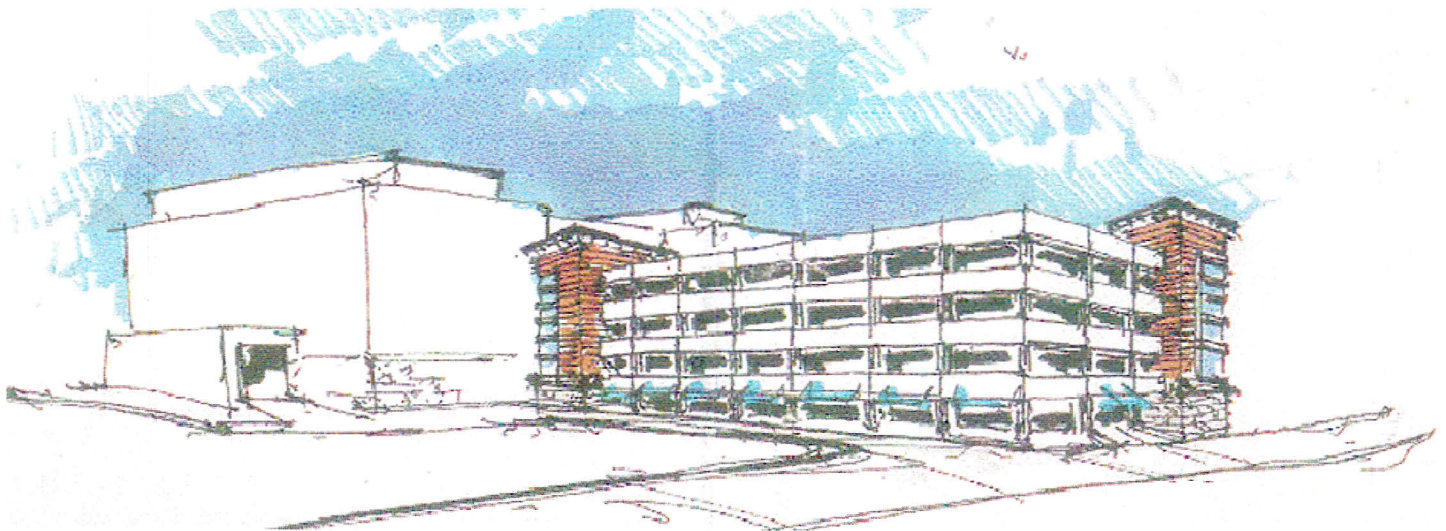
- The brownfield sites further west of Bridge Street and north of High Street provide additional opportunities for development – possibly research and development uses. This area could be serviced by extending Railroad Avenue.
- The wedge of open land between High Street, Main Street, Blueball and Maffitt Streets that backs to the houses could be developed as a park or open space.
- The large open area of land located behind the Cecil County Board of Education building is an ideal area to introduce new residential development into downtown Elkton, while at the same time preserving open space for the new development and the existing residential uses surrounding the site.
- The area immediately around the Board of Education building could also be redesigned to better compliment any new development behind the building, to better organize entry and parking, and to relate the structure more appropriately to its site.
- Much of the area between North Street and Collins Avenue has been haphazardly developed and is not being used efficiently. Railroad Avenue could be extended into this area and connected with South Street. The area would then be open to new office development on the south side of the Railroad Avenue extension and new residential development on the north side. This would help strengthen the residential area in the northeast part of Elkton and form stronger connections within the downtown.
- Union Hospital is planning to build a parking garage at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Bow Street (see the following Exhibit 3A). This is much needed and well-placed. The parking garage would also serve further expansion of the hospital. Additional expansion could be located on the site between the hospital and the Verizon building. Some of the other parking lots used by the hospital need to be better organized and visually improved. The entire area between Railroad Avenue, Main Street, Bridge Street, and Bow Street has, and can





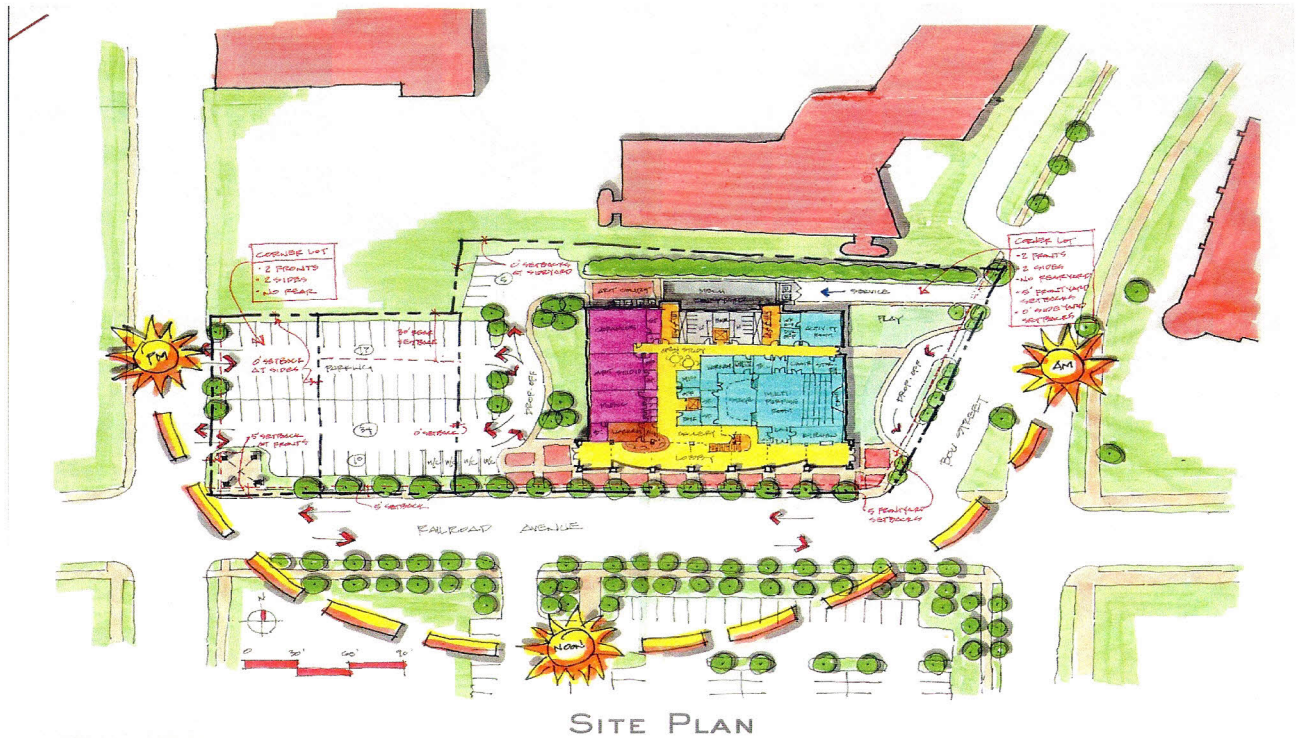
*Cecil County Courthouse.*

- continue to strengthen, an identity as a "Health Service Area."
- Vacant or underutilized parcels along North Street should be redeveloped for office and retail uses. This area is ideally suited for services that could support both Union Hospital and the government offices.
  - The Cecil County Courthouse is the anchor for the block between Main, High, North, and South Streets. This area could be further developed as expansion for government or other office uses. There is currently a plan for a parking garage behind the courthouse. This is a timely venture. However, consideration should be given to placing the garage on the interior of the block, leaving the street frontages for future development.
  - Main Street is the retail core of Elkton and is also fronted by most of the city's government offices. The retail uses should be strengthened by filling vacancies along the street, in particular the old Newbury's site at the end of North Street. The area behind the stores, between Main Street and Howard Street is mostly blank parking area. This area should be reorganized to more efficiently handle parking, to be more visually attractive, and to better connect with Main Street.
  - Eder Park currently provides important recreational and entertainment opportunities for the town of Elkton. However, the baseball fields also block access to the waterfront. Access areas should be provided to the waterfront and into the park. Additionally, an area of the park should be set aside for passive uses which are not compatible with the baseball fields.



*Exhibit 3A Municipal Parking Garage.*





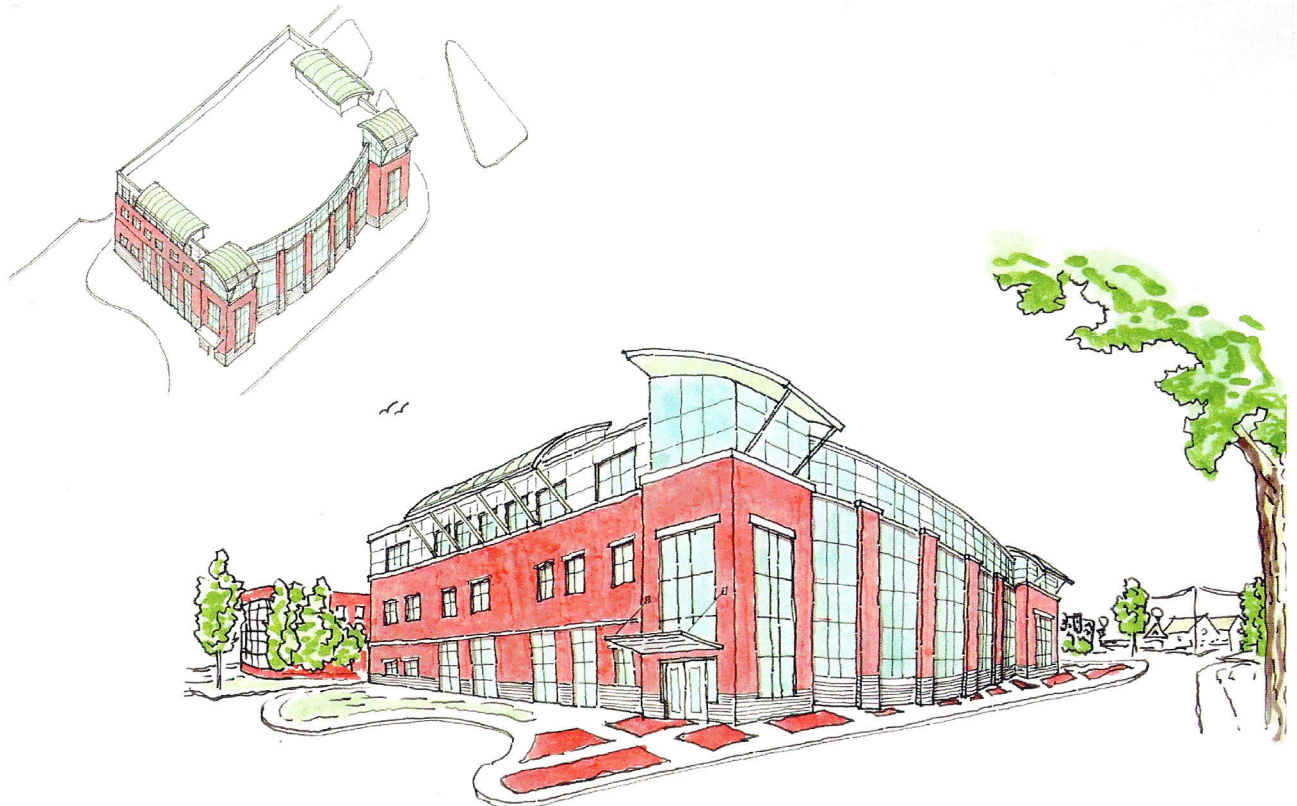
GRIMM+  
PARKER  
ARCHITECTS

## ELKTON CENTER

CECIL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Cecil County, MD  
May 15, 2002

**Exhibit 3B** Cecil Community College Plan



GRIMM+  
PARKER  
ARCHITECTS

## ELKTON CENTER

CECIL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Cecil County, MD  
May 15, 2002

**Exhibit 3C** Cecil Community College Perspective





**Eder Park**



**Open area between Blueball Road, and High, Main, and Maffitt Streets.**

## 5.3 Open Space

Downtown Elkton has very few formalized open spaces. Besides Eder Park, almost all open spaces in downtown are either vacant lots or cemeteries – neither of which is technically open space, but both do provide relief from the built environment of the downtown. Eder Park itself is so heavily weighted to one use that it does not provide many opportunities for other active or passive recreational uses. Other nearby parks are Marina Park and Meadow Park, but these are located on the other side of Big Elk Creek, and outside of downtown Elkton. Existing areas of open space, including cemeteries and large vacant areas, are shown on Exhibit three in green. Eder Park is shown hatched in green because of its greater significance. There are several areas within the downtown that could be formalized as parks.

- A portion of Eder Park, buffered from the ball fields and providing a connection to the Big Elk Creek waterfront.
- The vacant lot at the corner of High Street and Booth Street.
- A portion of the vacant lot located behind the Cecil County Board of Education Building.
- The vacant area between Blueball Road, and High, Main, and Maffitt Streets.
- Other small spaces within the town that provide opportunities for pocket parks.

### 5.3.1 Pedestrian Linkages

Street sidewalks provide the primary pedestrian links for the town of Elkton. This should continue to be the case; however there are streets that lack sidewalks, streets which could use sidewalk improvements or expansions, and areas where new dedicated pedestrian ways or trails could be located.

- Bridge Street needs sidewalk improvements. Some areas don't have any sidewalks at all.
- North Street and Bow Street are important north/south connectors for pedestrian traffic. They link the retail and offices, the hospital, the college, and the rail station. They could be even more significant as pedestrian corridors if rail use increases.



***Pedestrian link between Main Street and Howard Street***



***No-access pedestrian link off of Booth Street***

- Main Street, High Street, and Railroad Avenue are east/west connectors within the town – each could use varying amounts of improvements.
- The dedicated pedestrian link between Main Street and Howard Street could be formalized and extended to the waterfront. In addition, another formalized pedestrian link could be created between Main Street and Eder Park between the Elkton Housing Authority and the State of Maryland District Court.
- Bridge crossings into town should be made more pedestrian friendly. Currently they are designed almost exclusively for automobiles and are uncomfortable for pedestrians to use.
- Pedestrian links into downtown should be encouraged rather than discouraged. Across Booth Street from the Board of Education building, the old railroad line is posted with a “No Trespassing” sign although it is clearly being used by pedestrians. The necessary steps should be taken to formalize this and other similar connections as pedestrian links that the public would be comfortable using.
- Downtown Elkton should be connected through a series of trails to other greenways, parks, and cultural facilities in the surrounding area. Primary among these is Elkn Landing. A direct pedestrian link between Eder Park and Elk Landing along Big Elk Creek would be a significant amenity for the town.

The Summary Analysis (Exhibit 4), on the following page, graphically depicts an analysis of the downtown for uses envisioned in the Downtown Master Plan.





# Summary Analysis Downtown Elkton, Maryland





*Parking used by hospital*



*Parking adjacent to High Street*




## 5.4 Parking Analysis

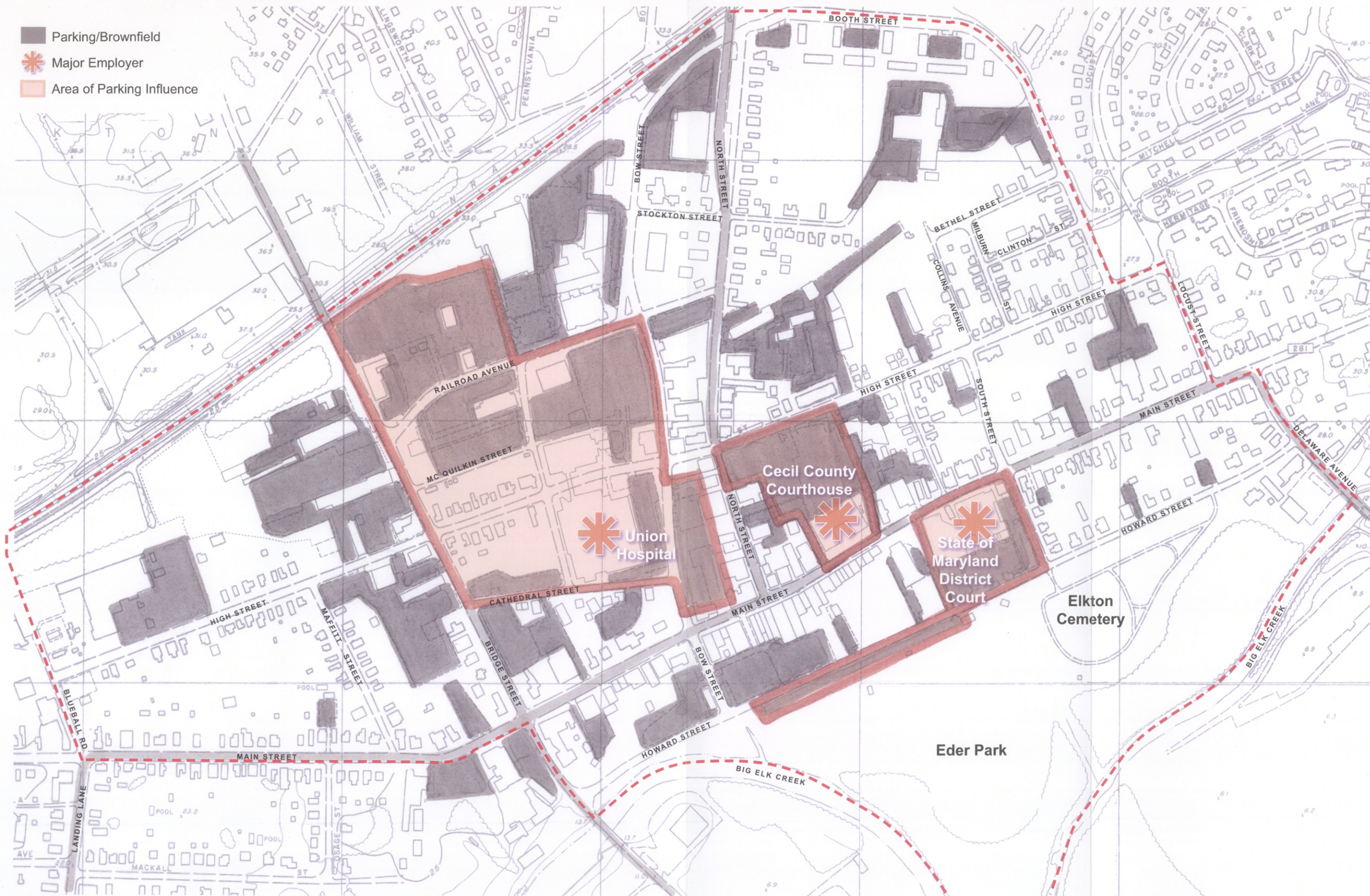
There are three major facilities located in downtown Elkton that require large amounts of parking. These are Union Hospital, the Cecil County Courthouse, and the State of Maryland District Court. In addition, there are many other large and small uses that together require a large amount of parking.

- Union Hospital and its associated offices use a large area of downtown Elkton for parking. Parking is currently insufficient to meet demand, and in response, a parking garage is planned. The garage is an important element in improving the downtown. Additionally, other existing parking should be improved for efficiency and visual appearance. New parking lots could also be created in outlying areas.
- Cecil County Courthouse is another major parking demand generation. The courthouse also has a parking garage planned to ease parking problems. This should be planned to integrate smoothly into the downtown. Other parking should also be improved.
- The State of Maryland District Court and the Elkton Housing Authority generate parking in the lot behind the court and along Howard Street. The lot behind the District Court needs little improvement besides some possible planting. However, the parking behind the Housing Authority and along Howard Street should be improved. Additionally, the surface lots behind the Main Street Businesses need significant improvement.
- The many smaller parking lots located throughout the city should be consolidated where possible. Better organization, landscaping, and expansion where necessary should be options figured into the planning process.

The Parking Analysis exhibit (Exhibit 5) shown on the following page indicates parking areas in gray. Major employers that require large amounts of parking are shown with an asterisk. The general areas that they influence, through their need for parking, are indicated by the orange zones.



-  Parking/Brownfield
-  Major Employer
-  Area of Parking Influence



# Parking Analysis Downtown Elkton, Maryland