6.0 Implementing the Masterplan

The master plan for downtown Elkton is a visionary, creative, and longer term plan for the future. It is not a binding document, but a flexible working document subject to modification and the changing needs of the town and the town's residents. Some elements of the plan may initially appear to be grand and beyond the town's ability to implement. However, the master plan should be viewed as a long-term guide for the future. The plan depicts ideas that will strengthen the town and provide for its expansion. Its various elements are proposed to be completed in phases as the town deems best.

The plan needs to be implemented in cooperation with the various property owners throughout the town. Without the cooperation of property owners, much of the plan will not be possible. However, taking into consideration that this is a long-term plan, property owners and relationships change over time; portions of the plan not immediately possible may very well be in the future. One of the purposes of the master plan is to help Elkton develop a strategy to take advantage of the right opportunities when they present themselves. This way, the town will know where to focus its efforts and prioritize its actions.

The master plan should be used in conjunction with the Downtown Elkton Revitalization Plan. This plan is only ±5 years old and stated succinct goals and objectives. A report card assessment of this plan should be conducted that identifies the achievements and shortfalls of the plan. Plan priorities that are still important today should be retained or readopted.

The conceptual framework for redeveloping downtown Elkton is depicted on the Downtown Framework Concept (Exhibit 6) on the following page. Major districts in the downtown are shown on the District Framework Plan (Exhibit 7). The Downtown Master Plan itself (Exhibit 8) is shown at the end of Section 6. The Downtown Master Plan shows detailed layouts and ideas for the downtown.

Legend

- Residential Revitalization
- Residential
- Commercial
- Office
- Civic/Institutional
- Open Space
- Gateway
- Parking Garage

Map Labels

MARC/SEPTA Station

Transit Oriented Development

Residential and Open Space

Center of Learning

Office Development/Redevelopment

Residential Revitalization

Health Services

Office Development/Redevelopment

Government Offices

Residential/Commercial Redevelpment

Office and Commercial Development/Redevelopment

Residential and Open Space

Office, Commercial and Residential Revitalization

Elkton Cemetery

Eder Park

Street Names

PENNSYLVANIA, WILLIAM STREET, BOOTH STREET, NORTH STREET, STOCKTON STREET, BETHEL STREET, MILBURN ST, CLINTON ST, COLLINS AVENUE, HIGH STREET, LOCUST STREET, RAILROAD AVENUE, BOW STREET, SOUTH STREET, MAIN STREET, MC QUILKIN STREET, HIGH STREET, NORTH STREET, HOWARD STREET, BRIDGE STREET, CATHEDRAL STREET, MAFFITT STREET, HIGH STREET, HOWARD STREET, BLUEBALL RD, MAIN STREET, BIG ELK CREEK, LANDING LANE, MACKALL ST

Downtown Framework Concept
Downtown Elkton, Maryland

6.1   Maintaining a Community Image

Many unsuccessful towns are undistinguishable from thousands of others and have nothing that makes them stand out. Fortunately for Elkton, the town has quite a lot that gives it character and makes it a unique town with its own image. The key to enhancing the town's image is to embrace the positive themes which give the town its identity, and to develop these themes even further. The following paragraphs describe how Elkton should develop its identity and maintain its image.

6.1.1   Gain 'Community Image' Consensus

Elkton has a triple identity. Its three sides are: Wedding Town, Center of Commerce - County Seat, and 'Gateway to the Bay.' Each of these contributes to Elkton's character and creates an identity for the town. Each of them brings people into the town and help support it. However, one identity should be chosen as the dominant theme.

Elkton originally became known as a Wedding Town because of its laws concerning weddings. Because a blood test was not required and there was only a 48 hour waiting period, many people came to Elkton to get married quickly. Although people continue to come to Elkton specifically for marriage, it is not as popular as it once was. This identity is an important historic facet of the town and continues to draw in people, even if they are fewer numbers than in previous years. For these reasons, measures should be taken to maintain the tradition of weddings. Such measures might include: ensuring that current marriage laws are not altered, capitalizing on town facilities that cater to prospective and recent newlyweds, and managing the wedding theme to create a tourist attraction for those who do not come to the town to get married. Despite the strengths of the 'Wedding Town' image, this would not be recommended as the town's main identity. This image acts as more of a "niche theme" and lacks the broad scope that would be desirable for the town's primary identity.

Elkton as the 'Center of Commerce – County Seat 'is also very important to the town. Because it is the county seat the

town supports many activities that relate to the county government. Union Hospital, the numerous financial institutions, and various businesses throughout the town support Elkton's role as a center of commerce. These aspects have a strong footing in the town. However, Elkton's designation as the county seat precludes any need to create or strengthen this identity. It is very doubtful that any other town in Cecil County will challenge Elkton for this position; furthermore this designation is mostly locally significant. Continuing Elkton's role as a center of commerce is undoubtedly crucial to its vitality, is more of a circumstantial trait that should be reinforced rather than an 'identity.' For these reasons Elkton as a 'Center of Commerce – County Seat' should not be the town's most sought-after image.

The remaining choice, the recommended choice for Elkton's defining identity is 'Gateway to the Bay.' Elkton has a long history as a link to the Chesapeake Bay and as a minor port on the Bay. The town is fortunate enough to also be located close to the major transportation routes of I-95 and Route 301. Elkton is the first bay-town and the first major town in Maryland to be encountered by travelers coming from the north. Visitors to much of the Chesapeake Bay's Eastern Shore passes near Elkton. Because of its location and its history the town is ideally situated to substantiate the title 'Gateway to the Bay.'

There are some important factors to address in order to support the identity 'Gateway to the Bay.' Realistically, Elkton is only the gateway to the Bay for people north of Elkton – for others there are too many other bay-towns that would be encountered first. Elkton should be more than just a physical gateway to the Bay; otherwise it will only be a gateway that is passed through on the way to other destinations. To strengthen Elkton's association with the Chesapeake Bay it is imperative that the town's maritime history and connections become more visible and more apparent. Big Elk Creek was Elkton's connection to the bay – this needs to be reestablished even if it is only symbolic. Other elements that might contribute to the identity are museums, design elements, and activities in the town that relate to the Bay. By establishing a strong identity, the town

Town Square

An ornamental clock is a possibility for the 'town square.'

can grow with greater purpose and have a guide that helps with decision making.

6.1.2 Formal Town Square

Most towns have a single spot or area that forms the town core. When a visitor is in that spot, they know they are at the town center and can orient themselves to the rest of the town. Giving a heart to a town strengthens the town as a whole and creates a sense of place within the town. For Elkton this spot would be the intersection of Main Street and North Street. This is the location that forms the town heart – moving in any direction away from this point means moving away from the downtown. This space should be strengthened as the core of the town by formalizing it as a town square. The space should be very people-friendly and have a signature element such as a town clock. The space would be am area for people to gather and for events to take place.

6.1.3 Clean and Safe

Elkton should continue to support a 'clean and safe' program for the downtown. Maintenance and safety are relatively inexpensive investments but yield high returns for a town's image. Residents, employees, and visitors all appreciate a clean and safe city. These two factors are extremely important in determining where people want to be.

6.1.4 Architectural Amenities

The town of Elkton is blessed with a rich history and much of the historic architecture that goes along with it. There is little incentive to visit an historic town that no longer values and highlight its historic fabric. Among others, some of the significant architecture that exists in the downtown is the Mitchell House, the Wedding Chapel, Partridge Hill, and Trinity Episcopal Church. The town should ensure that there are safeguards in place to protect and preserve its architectural amenities. In addition, incentives should be created to restore architecturally significant buildings that are not at their best appearance. The town should also consider the design of future buildings and how they mesh with the town's existing architectural fabric. Attractive and high

quality architecture is much of what makes a town an attractive and a desirable place to be.

6.1.5 Tourism Base Camp

As previously stated, Elkton should be more than just a gateway through which people pass, but a destination. It can provide tourist attractions within the town and act as a 'base camp' for attractions within the vicinity. In order to accomplish this, Elkton needs to develop its attractions and supporting infrastructure, and market them. Questions that would need to be answered are: Where will tourists stay? Where will they eat? And what will they see?

There are various attractions located around Elkton that offer a wide variety of recreation, relaxation, and learning opportunities. Among these are the nearby historic Elk Landing, Fair Hill racetracks, Fair Hill nature center, Chesapeake City, the town of Northeast, and the Chesapeake Bay itself.

Attractions within Elkton itself, which could be emphasized or developed, are the Big Elk Creek and its waterfront, the Eder Park ballfields, the farmers market, existing shops and restaurants, and the Town's historic resources. Possible new amenities could include a theater, new shops and restaurants, new museums, and a visitor center for the town of Elkton and the Chesapeake Bay.

6.1.6 Elkton Events

A good way to provide increased attractions for tourists as well as residents of Elkton and the surrounding area is to enhance events held in the downtown. Below are some strategies for initiating growth in special events:

- The town could find non-profit organizations to sponsor various events in the town.
- A town organization could be created with the sole purpose of overseeing special events and seeking sponsors for events to be held in the downtown.
- Partnerships with downtown merchants could be made to create events beneficial to the merchants and to the town.

Historic Elk Landing

- Events should be geared to Elkton and the Chesapeake Bay to strengthen the town identity and Bay connection. Elkton is also the ideal location for hosting county events.
- Elkton could explore the idea of creating a town/county history experience in the form of a guided or self-guided tour which would be based in Elkton.

6.2 Economic Development

Elkton needs a healthy economy to thrive as a vibrant town. A town's master plan cannot be implemented if the town's economy won't support it. Fortunately the town of Elkton has a lot going for it. The government offices and Union Hospital form a stable base for the economy and act as a significant buffer against decline. Further growth in these areas will be determined by the county government and Union Hospital. There are many smaller businesses and offices located in the downtown that also support Elkton's economy. The town easily has room for additional businesses and offices, and the facilities to support them. Various actions can be taken to improve what already exists in Elkton and to bring in more business and development – this master plan itself is one such action.

6.2.1 Approve/Support the Retail Development Strategy

The Chesapeake Group Inc. performed a recent study for economic development in downtown Elkton. The results of this study should be observed and the recommendations followed. There are various elements in a strategy for supporting development in the downtown.

- Elkton has a perceived void in retail services in the downtown. Main Street as well as other streets have a number of vacancies which need to be filled. There are also various sites throughout the downtown that could be developed as new retail. For vacant spaces to be utilized and potential sites to be developed, the town of Elkton needs to make a concentrated recruitment effort through marketing, incentives, and town improvements to bring new retail into the downtown. The vacant Newberry's location is marked as #26 on Exhibit 8 as the prime example of vacant businesses in the downtown.

- One way to make the downtown more attractive to potential incoming businesses and to the public in general is for existing buildings to be upgraded and improved. Elkton needs to offer incentives for building owners to improve their properties. These might include façade grant programs, code assistance, commercial code enforcement, loan programs, and other catalysts for rehabilitation.
- Bringing new retail into Elkton should be based on a campaign that gives priority to specific sites for redevelopment. The Chesapeake Group projected the amount and type of short-term redevelopment for downtown Elkton. 15,000 – 20,000 square feet were identified for the "Downtown Market", 15,000 – 20,000 square feet for "Restaurant(s)", and 30,000 – 60,000 square feet for "Office." The total was 60,000 – 100,000 square feet. Elkton needs to identify where the best places for these uses are located in the downtown. Identifying ideal sites for long-term development will ensure that that development for short-term gains does not impede the overall vision for Elkton's downtown.

6.2.2 Stimulating Continued Economic Development

Bringing new businesses into the downtown in conjunction with developing those that are already located there will ensure the continued economic development of the downtown. A major component in the strategy for locating businesses and in guiding development would be to identify districts for focused economic development and capital improvements. By creating districts for particular uses, Elkton can create a more unified public realm and a cohesive environment for areas that have a higher concentration of 'like' uses. This concept goes beyond zoning and creates a sense of community. Through a combination of strengthening existing uses and introducing compatible development into the most appropriate areas, the town as a whole becomes more cohesive, efficient, and navigable. The districts recommended for downtown Elkton consist primarily of new development, but are also incorporated into or derived from existing development. The major districts for downtown Elkton are graphically depicted on the District Framework Plan (Exhibit 7) on the following page.

COMMERCIAL/EMPLOYMENT
- Commercial Development
- New Road Infrastructure
- Surface Parking

EDUCATION & CULTURE
- TOD Opportunity
- Professional and/or Educational Campus
- New MARC/SEPTA Station
- Retail/Commercial associated with Station
- Surface Parking for Campus

HEALTH & WELLNESS
- Union Hospital Facilities and Offices
- Consolidated Parking Area
- Links to Professional and Municipal Campuses

GOVERNMENTAL/INSTITUTIONAL
- Unified Office Campus
- Consolidated Parking Area
- Enhanced Public Spaces

RESIDENTIAL
- New and Infill Housing Development
- Recreation and Open Space
- Expanded Road Network

LEGEND

Surface Parking
Pedestrian Linkages
Priority Streets
Focal Areas
Gateways

MARC Station

RESIDENTIAL

STOCKTON STREET

EDUCATION & CULTURE

John M. Byers Health Center

Cecil Community College

RAILROAD AVENUE (EXTENSION)

HIGH STREET

NORTH STREET

Elkton Municipal Building

RAILROAD AVENUE

BOW STREET

HIGH STREET

LOCUST STREET

MAIN STREET

HEALTH & WELLNESS

MC QUILKIN STREET

SINGERLY AVENUE

Union Hospital

GOVERNMENTAL/INSTITUTIONAL

NORTH STREET

Cecil County Courthouse

State of Maryland District Court

Elkton Alliance, Inc.

Elkton Housing Authority

DELAWARE AVENUE

HOWARD STREET

COMMERCIAL/EMPLOYMENT

BRIDGE STREET

HIGH STREET

BLUEBALL RD

MAIN STREET

MAIN STREET

BOW STREET

HOWARD STREET

BRIDGE STREET

1/4 Mile Radius

BIG ELK CREEK

District Framework Plan
Downtown Elkton, Maryland

HNTB
April 2003

- **Commercial/Employment**: The area to the west of Bridge Street and north of High Street could be further developed for research and development uses as well as other commercial and office uses. This brownfield area could thus be better utilized while at the same time strengthening the Bridge Street Corridor. Extending Railroad Avenue into this area would provide access and integrate it into the rest of the downtown.

- **Governmental/Institutional**: Main Street east of North Street is dominated by the courts and government offices, and their supporting uses. This area provides many of the functions that are required in Elkton's designation as the county seat. Keeping these uses together creates greater efficiency and identifies this area as the government center. The existing parking lots in the area can act as sites for expansion of compatible uses when the parking garage for the courthouse is completed. Reorganizing the remaining parking would also be beneficial for the area.

- **Health and Wellness**: Union Hospital is an integral part of Elkton and dominates the area between Railroad Avenue and Main Street. A new parking garage for the hospital will be a significant benefit for the area – freeing up some of the surrounding parking areas for further hospital expansion. The "Health and Wellness" district should follow the theme of a medical campus.

- **Residential**: The northeast part of downtown Elkton behind the Board of Education building and the surrounding area is a good location for expanding the existing residential uses in the area and creating supporting amenities like open space and play areas for children.   This area currently has a "soft" residential component. New residential development would bolster the neighborhood and make this area a residential stronghold of the downtown.

- **Education and Culture**: Cecil Community College, located to the north of Railroad Avenue can form the focus of a "Center of Learning" part of town. This area can serve as a campus for the expansion of the

community college that could also integrate expansion of research and office uses for Union Hospital. Other educational uses could also be included in this area. All of these could mesh together in such a way that they form one cohesive campus conducive to an environment of learning and cooperation.

6.2.3 Partnerships

Economic development for Elkton will be most successful if it is pursued through partnerships between various organizations, rather than any one organization. Catalytic district initiatives could be achieved through partnerships between, among others, some of the following organizations:

- The Elkton Alliance, Inc.
- The Town of Elkton
- Maryland State Government
- Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
- Federal Initiatives
- Private Sector

Partners should identify common goals for the downtown and determine what the best ways of achieving these goals together are. Joint projects should be simple at first, becoming more complex, but always achieving shared goals.

6.3 Wayfinding and Signage

Keeping a visitor well oriented is important for making them comfortable in any town that they are visiting. If someone is disoriented, they will waste their time looking for amenities in the town rather than enjoying them. Keeping people oriented and providing information for visitors can be accomplished through wayfinding and signage. In addition, these features can also notify travelers of the existence of the town and features in the town of which they are not aware.

6.3.1 Regional Wayfinding

Communicating Elkton's location and identity should begin as far out from Elkton as is feasible. This can help to attract the attention of a larger number of people and create a

greater presence for Elkton in the region. The best locations for these signs or elements are on major thoroughfares.

- **I-95** is the most traveled corridor on the East Coast. A sign indicating the exit for Elkton is meaningless to thousands of drivers. However, signs which indicate "Historic Elkton", "Gateway to the Bay", or area amenities will attract more peoples attention, whether they are just passing through on their way to Florida, or going to Elkton itself. This is important for increasing awareness of the town and confirming that the driver is using the correct exit.

- **Route 301** is a more regional highway, but is nevertheless important. Travelers on Route 301 are more likely to be familiar with Elkton, but signs indicating amenities could be important at such a juncture. In addition, limitations placed on the types of signs that can be used would likely be less stringent on Route 301 than on I-95.

6.3.2   Town Entry Points

Gateways and/or signs should be located at strategic locations on local roads in order to guide traffic to Elkton. Listed below are the three strategic points at which these should be located:

- **Route 279 and Bridge Street**: This intersection is currently the primary entrance into Elkton and should continue to be so. This is a direct connection between I-95 and Elkton via Route 279. It also connects with Route 40 to the south. This area could have a more significant sign element giving a stronger introduction to Elkton, but not any formal gateway elements.

- **Route 40 and Bridge Street**: This intersection should be treated much the same as the Route 279/Bridge Street intersection. However, the options at this point may be more limited because of the size of Route 40. Fortunately this is an entrance that is more likely to be used by people more familiar with Elkton, or people returning from the areas south of the town.

- **Route 279 and North Street**: Although this is a more direct link to downtown Elkton from Route 279 than Bridge Street is, this should not be emphasized as a major entrance. North Street passes through stable residential areas and furthermore dead-ends at Main Street, which would become a choke point because of the one-way and smaller scale streets. However, there could be some kind of sign or marker at this location such as a sign indicating an historic feature in Elkton. This would guide those who are more interested in historic downtown Elkton directly to the heart of the town and provide them with what would probably be a more pleasant drive through a more historic atmosphere.

There should not be any entrance signs or features at the intersections of Route 40 and Blue Ball Road, Route 40 and Whitehall Road, and Route 40 and Delaware Avenue. These roads are, or provide access to, primarily residential areas. Although some of these roads are used as major entry or exit points for downtown Elkton, increased traffic should not be encouraged on them. Some points may even warrant efforts to reduce traffic.

6.3.3 Ceremonial Gateways

Ceremonial gateways are entry points into the town that indicate "Now you are entering Elkton." These gateways should present a very good face to incoming traffic and create a good first impression. They are Elkton's handshake to the outside world. Some elements that might be incorporated into the gateways are walls, signs, open space, and ornamental plantings. The most important consideration is that they present Elkton's character. Very often, town gateways present very little individuality and could represent anywhere in the country. Material selections should be carefully made and designs should be appropriate to Elkton's history and the image it wishes to project. The gateways need to be meaningful and attractive.

- **Intersection of Bridge Street and Railroad Avenue**: This is the major gateway into Elkton. This gateway should be given priority in time, size, design, and money. Some amount of open space could be created at the corners of Railroad Avenue. This location would

Gateway feature

be appropriate for enforcing Elkton's "Gateway to the Bay" image. A sign structure would be appropriate for this location. Ornamental plantings indicative of the region's heritage should be used. This is #2 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- **Intersection of North Street and Railroad Avenue**: This intersection presents a gateway to more local traffic and to some traffic that might be visiting the downtown. The theme of the gateway could be historic as opposed to the Bridge Street "Gateway to the Bay" theme. For this gateway it would also be more appropriate for open space to be the primary element of the gateway. The municipal building's front parking area could be improved. The area around the gas station could also be visually improved or the gas station could eventually move to a more appropriate location. The area in front of the office building across from the municipal building could be buffered with landscaping and possibly include some kind of structure. This is #10 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- **Intersection of Bridge Street and Howard Street**: This gateway could be treated very much the same as the northern gateway on Bridge Street, but at a reduced size and with reduced importance. This is #22 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

In addition to these gateways, some of the major intersections in the downtown should be given higher priority for improvements and wayfinding features. These intersections include Bridge Street/Main Street, North Street/High Street, South Street/High Street, and South Street/Main Street, and South Street/Howard Street. The intersection of North Street and Main Street is a priority for improvements, but also is recommended to be designed with a "town square" theme.

6.3.4 Signage

The existing network of directional signs in Elkton should be expanded or enhanced to better serve the public. This should be done at a vehicular scale and a pedestrian scale. The Elkton sign ordinance should be evaluated and

An example of signage for wayfinding

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modified, if needed, to allow for desired changes. For vehicles, directional signs should be located at key intersections. These signs can be ornamental and reflective of Elkton's character. They should follow a consistent design throughout the town so that they are easy to pick out. They could guide drivers to destinations such as parking, the courthouse, the waterfront, and the "town square."

Signs for pedestrians should be located at various strategic locations such as destination venues, municipal/non-municipal off street parking lots, and specific pedestrian 'trail embarkation points. These can direct pedestrians to some of the same places as the vehicular signs, but should include a wider variety and larger number of destinations. These signs could include maps, diagrams, and interesting facts. They might be presented on kiosks or other sign options.

6.4   Public Realm Improvements

Public realm improvements are opportunities where the municipality, county, or state can enhance public rights of way or other public property. These projects can often be easier to accomplish than persuading the private realm to develop sites that are not publicly owned.

Improved Streetscape.

Because rights of way make up the majority of Elkton's public property, most public realm enhancements will be streetscape improvements. The recent Main Street improvement project is an excellent streetscape initiative that can be used as an example for other streets in downtown Elkton. However, considering that Main Street is the premier street for Elkton, other streetscape improvements need not be developed to quite the same level as Main Street. However, they should be carried out in a well-organized, unified, and high-quality manner.
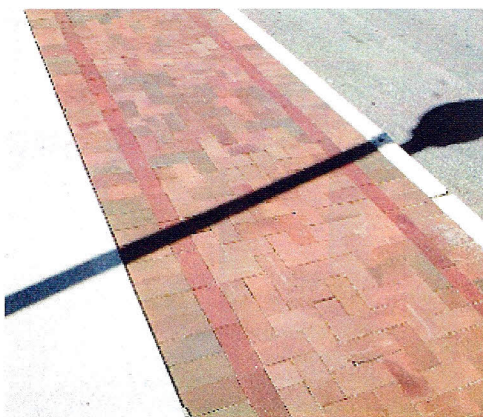
6.4.1 Improvement Elements

There are various elements that can be used in the public realm to provide amenities, greater safety, and enhanced visual appeal for the public.

Sidewalk pavement enhancement

- **Sidewalk Improvements**: Sidewalk improvements can include widening, replacement, and creating new

A crosswalk at Union Hospital using various pavements to define the crossing

Site Furniture should be located in areas with high volumes of pedestrians

sidewalks. Concrete might be converted to brick paving, tree lawns or tree pits can be introduced, and curb ramps could be converted or added.

- **Bumpouts/Neckdowns**: These are features usually located at intersections where the road narrows and the pedestrian realm is enlarged. Some of these exist on Main Street. They can be used to provide greater safety at pedestrian crossings, to calm traffic, and to increase the plantable and pedestrian area along a street.

- **Crosswalks**: Pedestrian crosswalks should be located at all intersections that are significantly used by both pedestrians and vehicles. Crosswalks can be painted, but in higher priority areas and areas where enhanced aesthetics are desired, concrete, brick, or stone pavers could be used. The crosswalks on High Street at Union Hospital are good examples of using different paving types to identify crosswalks.

- **Utility Relocation**: Utility relocation, usually the burial of utilities, is often the most costly streetscape improvement, but it is also the improvement that perhaps makes the greatest visual improvement for a street. When planning a long-term improvement for a street, utility relocation should be a component of the improvements. Utility relocation should be made on priority streets first, with relocation eventually coming to all the other minor streets.

- **Lighting**: Streetlights and pedestrian lights are important for safety, but they can also be visual enhancements for the street. Choosing lights that are attractive can turn what could be a negative feature of a street into a positive feature. Elkton should either choose one light style for the entire downtown, or designate light styles by streets or districts. This will enhance unity within the town and help strengthen a sense of identity for the downtown.

- **Furniture**: Public furniture can include benches, trash receptacles, planters, and in some locations tables and chairs. They can be important amenities in areas where

Trees and shrubs screening parking area

a large volume of pedestrians pass by or congregate. As with lighting, there should be some consistency with the styles and types of furniture that are used throughout the downtown.

- **Street Trees**: An element which often goes unnoticed, but is almost always a component of the nicest urban neighborhoods, is large mature trees. Large trees provide shade, cool their environment through evapo-transpiration, help reduce runoff and thus flooding, provide increased visual aesthetics, and help to humanize a streetscape. Street trees should be used along all streets where it is possible to plant them, and efforts should be made to make planting possible where it currently is not. One benefit of burying utilities is that it allows for the planting of large trees which offer greater benefits than small ornamental trees.

- **Other Plantings**: Shrubs and low trees can be planted to screen various elements such as parked cars. Ornamental trees and shrubs can be used to enhance the visual appearance of focus points such as gateways. Hanging planters and ground planters can be used for seasonal plantings to provide color and interest to streetscapes.

6.4.2   Streetscape Initiatives

Most streets in Elkton could use some kind of streetscape improvements. The limitations of funding require that certain streets are given higher priority for improvements than other streets. It is much more important to enhance one street to high quality standards than to perform a poor to mediocre job on many streets. If one street is done right to begin with, it should not require significant improvements in the future and funding can be used for the next street. This is the best way to ensure that downtown Elkton attains the highest standards possible. Listed below are the priority streets for improvement in the order of their priority.

- **Bridge Street**: As the most significant gateway into Elkton, and the downtown's most traveled street this corridor has the highest priority. Overhead utilities are a major detriment to this street, along with poor condition

or lack of sidewalks. Recommendations for this street are burying utilities, adding new brick sidewalks and new lighting, narrowing the road at some locations, adding crosswalks, planting street trees, and adding shrub hedges to screen parking areas. This correlates to #3 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- **North Street**: North Street forms an important axis and a minor gateway into the downtown. As part of the heart of the downtown this street should be given priority. Recommendations for North Street are burying utilities, adding new brick sidewalks, creating bumpouts at intersections, adding crosswalks, new lights and new furniture, and planting street trees.

- **Howard Street**: Initially it would not seem that Howard Street should be a high priority for street improvements because it is currently more of a back street. However, if downtown Elkton wishes to foster greater awareness for its waterfront and reconnect with its most significant open space, then Howard Street will need to be a key link between Main Street and Eder Park. Recommended improvements for Howard Street are street narrowing, new sidewalks, crosswalks, new lights, new street furniture, altered parking arrangement, street tree plantings, and hedges for screening parking areas.

- **High Street and Bow Street**: These streets are less visually important, but still important pedestrian and vehicular links within the downtown. Improvements for these streets could be bumpouts at some locations, some improvements to sidewalks, new lights, street tree planting, and hedges for screening cars.

- **Railroad Avenue**: This street will become more important as development increases along it. Some street improvements could be incorporated into major redevelopment initiatives. Recommended improvements for Railroad Avenue would be improved sidewalks, new lights, street tree planting, and hedges for screening cars.

- **Other Roads**: Other minor roads throughout the town could be improved as funding and needs dictate.

It will be important for all streets to maintain some kind of unity in paving, lights, and furniture. In areas where land is available in the public realm adjacent to streets, streetscape enhancements can be extended and plazas or pocket parks could be created.

6.5 Access and Circulation

Elkton's road network connects the town together and provides access for vehicles and pedestrians to various parts of the town. Areas that are not easily accessible do not integrate easily into the rest of the downtown. This is the case for much of the northern portion of the downtown. Other areas in Elkton's downtown have access and circulation issues related to safety and efficiency of traffic movement.

6.5.1 Safety

Safety is the number one concern for access and circulation related issues. If a street is not safe, it does not function properly. Many of the streetscape recommendations address safety issues" lights for increased safety at night, bump-outs for traffic calming and pedestrian safety, and crosswalks to aid pedestrians. Other attributes that could be introduced to contribute to safety are signalizing intersections to allow for pedestrian crossing and redesigning some intersection or alignments. Below are recommendations for specific areas that are unsafe and need improvement.

- **Bridge Street and Railroad Avenue**: This intersection is very unfriendly for pedestrians. The intersection is very wide, requiring pedestrians to traverse a wasteland of asphalt. Traffic is also relatively fast moving in this location. Possibilities for this intersection may be realignment and narrowing in conjunction with gateway enhancements and a possible extension of Railroad Avenue.

- **High Street and Locust Street**: This intersection is highly traveled and works inefficiently because of the required stop signs. There are no sidewalks at this location and very little room for pedestrians on the road. One option for improving this intersection would be to widen the curve, eliminating the need for the stop signs and require only one for traffic going south on Locust Street. Whether or not this is done, a sidewalk must be constructed in this location on the inside of the turn.

- **Main Street, Locust Street, and Delaware Avenue**: This intersection is quite awkward considering the amount of traffic traveling through it. The best way for improving this would be to decrease traffic traveling on Locust Street. This would mean discouraging traffic from traveling on High Street east of South Street, and diverting this traffic to Main Street and Howard Street instead.

6.5.2 New Road Networks

To foster future development, better connect the downtown, and provide better access to different portions of the town, Elkton may want to extend and connect existing roads.

- **Railroad Avenue**: Railroad Avenue could be extended west of Bridge Street into the commercial development existing at that location. The road could extend beyond that and connect to High Street near the Plasticoid building. Maffit Street could be extended to connect with Railroad Avenue. This extension would open up the underutilized brownfields in this area to commercial development. Railroad Avenue could also be extended to the east of North Street, connecting with South Street at High Street. This would open up the area to commercial and residential development, and help tie the northeast part of Elkton to the rest of the town. It would also complete a loop around Elkton's downtown core consisting of Railroad Avenue, South Street, Main Street, and Bridge Street. This falls under #15 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- **Booth Street and Singerly Avenue**: These two streets could both be extended to connect with each other providing access into the north portion of downtown Elkton in the area of the proposed "Center of Learning" This would also create a better connection for a new MARC\SEPTA station along the railroad tracks.

- **Bow Street**: Bow Street could be realigned at its northern end to make a more ceremonial connection with a new train station and to provide a more direct connection into the downtown.

- **Stockton Street**: This street could be extended to connect with Bethel Street. Church Street could also be extended into this area to create a network of residential roads allowing for new and infill residential development.

6.5.3 *"Town Square"*

The intersection of Main Street and North Street provides an ideal location for a formalized town square, plaza, or gathering space. It currently fulfills this function to some extent. This could be built on – expanding the space and adding amenities that will strengthen it for its use as the heart of the downtown's people place.

6.6 New Development

The master plan identifies various areas for new development in the downtown. Some of these are infill development on parking lots or brownfields. Other new development is shown on areas that would be opened up by extending and connecting roads to form a more complete road network.

- The area west of Bridge Street and north of High Street is currently being lightly used. Most of this area is storage or brownfields with some commercial uses. If Railroad Avenue is extended into this area, opportunities would be created for developing additional commercial areas with possible research and development uses. This could strengthen the Railroad

Avenue extension as a commercial Street. This area is labeled as #1 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- Whether or not Railroad Avenue is extended, the corner of Railroad Avenue and Bridge Street and the area along Bridge Street immediately south of this intersection should be redeveloped to more appropriate uses. Office uses on upper levels and commercial or retail uses on lower levels would be appropriate for this area. The development at this location should also incorporate plans for a major gateway element for the downtown. This correlates to #3 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- A new commercial or office building should be constructed a short distance west of Bridge Street on Railroad Avenue to help connect Bridge Street to Union Hospital and Cecil Community College. This is located at #4 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The area to the north of Railroad Avenue, between Bridge Street and Bow Street, is currently occupied mostly by Cecil Community College, offices supporting Union Hospital, and parking. This location could serve the needs of the college and the hospital. A campus type development could be located here acting as a "Center of Learning." The design could incorporate open space, pedestrian areas, and exciting architecture. This could be associated either with Cecil Community College, Union Hospital, or both institutions working in partnership to develop this area. This area is #5 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The rail connection through Elkton can be important for the downtown's future. This link should be capitalized on to provide opportunities for growth and enhancement of the downtown. A new larger rail station could be developed in conjunction with Transit Oriented Development in the immediate vicinity. Development could include office, retail, and residential uses. This location could act as a ceremonial gateway/boulevard connecting the rail station to the

downtown. This is #8 and #9 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The areas immediately to the north of Union Hospital provide opportunities for the hospital to expand. Construction of the new parking garage could incorporate offices on two sides of the garage which would help maintain the integrity of Bow Street and contribute to a more pleasant environment for the hospital. The locations for these opportunities are #6 and #7 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The large open area behind the Board of Education building provides an excellent opportunity for residential development. Such development should maintain a good portion of open space to be used by new and existing residences and could include elements such as a playground or other amenities. Alleys could provide access to garages in the backs of the houses, providing a buffer from existing residents and allowing for a more human-scaled frontage the open space. Additional residential development could be included along a Stockton Street extension, as well as infill housing on lots in the vicinity. These are #11, #12, and #16 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- Extending Railroad Avenue east of North Street could open up a large area to new commercial and residential development. New retail, office, and commercial development could be located on the south side of the road extension with new townhome development on the north side of the road, including parking behind the housing. These are #13 and #14 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- High Street has a large amount of parking abutting the road. Some locations have no buffer between the road and the parking. With the addition of a parking garage for the courthouse and the reorganization of other parking, some of these parking lots could be redeveloped into office and commercial uses. This strengthens what is currently a barren environment along High Street, would open the street up to being

more of a people place, and bring more business into the downtown. This is #19 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

6.7   Open Space and Linkages

Elkton does not have many formalized open spaces in the downtown area. Most of the open space consists of vacant lots and Eder Park. There are some locations throughout the town where formalized open space should be introduced. Open space can provide recreation areas, gathering spaces, and areas for relaxation. Various components that can be included in new open spaces are lawn, shade trees, ornamental plantings, benches, fountains, walkways, and monuments. Another feature which can be included in some open space initiatives is to identify opportunities for stormwater control retrofits, such as stormwater management ponds, bio-retention areas, and underground storage facilities. There are three areas that provide good opportunities for major open space.

Open Space with housing around it

- The area behind the Board of Education Building is a vacant lot. It may currently be used as open space, but such a use should become more formalized so that at least some of it stays as open space and people feel more comfortable using it. Establishing part of this area as open space will provide a major benefit for this residential portion of the town. A park at this location will make the neighborhood more attractive to current and prospective residents, as well as visitors who come through the neighborhood. It could also act as an anchor and buffer for new residential development located around it. The park should be open and simple, with large areas of lawn for play and recreation and shade trees at the periphery. This is indicated by #11 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- At the corner of High Street and Locust Street there is another vacant area which is not currently being utilized. This could be turned into a formal park with some paved areas, benches, a feature such as a fountain or statue at the center of the park, and trees for shade included in the design. This park would provide an amenity to the

Formal park area

Pedestrian link entryway

residential neighborhoods around it. This location is #17 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- Eder Park currently only provides active recreation opportunities. There should be a portion of the park that allows connection to the waterfront and provides for passive recreation and gathering space for people in the town. Downtown Elkton currently has no outdoor area where large numbers of people can meet. The area along Big Elk Creek at the end of Bow Street is an excellent spot for a park that could fulfill these needed functions. The park would be connected to Main Street by a pedestrian link. The location is immediately across from the existing farmer market. The Big Elk Creek waterfront is immediately adjacent to the park site, and the downtown core is also nearby. This piece of land could become one of the most popular spots for Elkton residents. Design elements could include a formal promenade, many benches and seating areas, an open lawn, a waterfront overlook, a waterfront walk, and access to the water. This park is #25 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

Additional minor open spaces should be located in the following areas:

- Health/Wellness –drop-off at main entrance porte-cochere.
- Governmental/Institutional – County Offices entrance.
- Railroad Redevelopment Area – terminus of Bow Street at new train station.
- Cultural/Educational – intersection of central open space and Singerly Avenue.

In addition a small amount of open space should be provided at the gateways into town and as focal amenities in specific redevelopment districts.
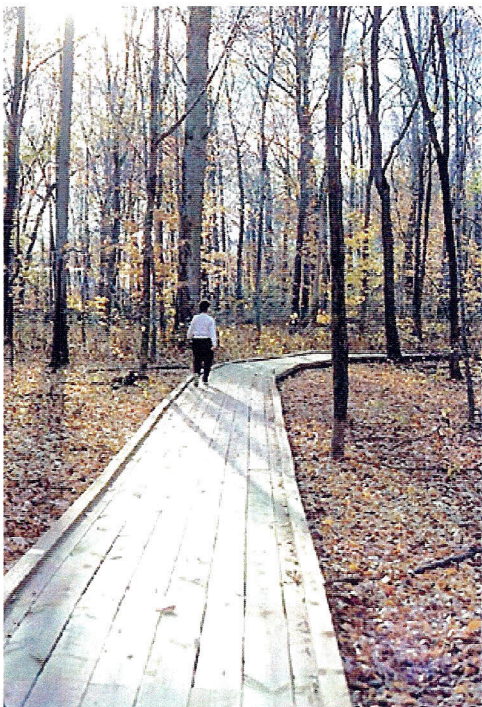
Pedestrian links are important for providing connections into and within the town. All streets should be accessible to pedestrians, but there should also be links, walks, or trails that are accessible to pedestrians only. These dedicated

pedestrian links can be more comfortable and inviting ties for the town than vehicular routes.

- Perhaps the most important link within the town is one that was already started. That is the pedestrian link between Main Street at the parking area behind Main Street. This link should be extended as a dedicated pedestrian walk all the way to the Big Elk Creek waterfront. This is the best location for bringing Elkton to its waterfront. This should be a formal pedestrian allee, which is a pleasant and attractive walk and can accommodate large numbers of people. Another smaller link to Eder Park could be located between the State of Maryland District Court and the Elkton Housing Authority. This link is indicated by #24 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- Another important link for taking advantage of Elkton's waterfront and its history is a pedestrian trail between Eder Park and Elk Landing. This can provide direct access to the historic landing which is being restored and is on its way to becoming a major historical amenity and attraction for the town. This link provides the double benefit of creating a recreational trail and linking the downtown and its most important historic feature together. This trail is labeled as #21 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The trail to Elk Landing could be extended to include connections to other open spaces in the area, including across Big Elk Creek to the parkland. Additional connections could provide access to the Big Elk Shopping Mall and residential neighborhoods.

- There are places within the town itself that could have formal pedestrian walkways and paths. One example of such a location is connecting North Street and Bow Street midway between High Street and Main Street. Other similar locations may be identified within the town where dedicated pedestrian rights of way are desired.

Pedestrian trail

6.8   Parking

Parking is a problem for many downtowns. In an automobile dependant society, cars require a lot of room. Because of all the parking that is needed for the various employment centers in Elkton, vast areas of the downtown have become vast parking lots. The need for parking will not go away, however there are ways to reduce the impact of parking and to open up some of the parking areas to development.

Many of downtown Elkton's parking lots lack organization, buffering, landscape amenities, and efficiency. Listed below are some steps which can be made to improve the parking situation.

- Consolidate: Through cooperation, various property owners can combine their parking areas into connected, more efficient lots. When each business has its own entrance and exit and follows its own designs, there can be a great loss in efficiency of space.

- Buffer: Parking lots should be buffered from sidewalks and streets. In some parts of Elkton's downtown, cars are practically hanging over the sidewalk. This is unacceptable. There should be a minimum buffer space between parked cars and sidewalks or streets. In addition buffer areas could include shrub and hedge plantings to screen views of cars.

- Redesign: In conjunction with consolidation, parking lots should be redesigned to meet code requirements, to be most efficient, and to reduce the impact of the parking lot – making it more attractive and breaking up parking into smaller units.

- Trees: Parking lots should include trees along the edges and planted in islands within the lot. Trees provide shade, reduce heat in the downtown, mitigate the visual impact of parking lots, and uptake stormwater.

- Lights: Lighting should be provided for parking areas that do not have any. Lighting will improve safety

Parking screened with shrubs and trees

A parking garage built to address aesthetic as well as functional issues

A parking garage built to fit into the urban fabric

making these areas more comfortable at night, and will help to give lots a more human scale.

- Bio-retention Areas: Whenever possible, bio-retention areas, where rainwater can infiltrate into the ground, should be incorporated into parking lots. These can improve water quality and reduce the water quantity running directly into streams.

The demand for parking in the downtown has necessitated the construction of parking garages. Parking garages can be very useful for the downtown because they provide a large amount of parking with a minimal footprint and thus allow for more of the downtown to be developed in better uses than parking. There are two garages planned for the downtown. Possibly more could be built in the future.

- The parking garage for Cecil County Courthouse should be constructed on the interior of the block so that it allows for future development along High Street. Constructing the garage on the interior of the block will also allow High Street and North Street to have a more attractive face. Entrances to the garage should be located off of High Street and Main Street. This garage is #20 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- The parking garage for the hospital could include office buildings on its sides facing Bow Street and High Street. This would create greater opportunities for the hospital and it would present a more appropriate building front to Bow Street and the hospital campus. This parking facility is #7 on the Master Plan (Exhibit 8).

- There may be additional need for downtown parking garages in the future. In general, these should be built on existing parking lots that are depicted in the downtown master plan. Two possible future sites for parking garages are the parking lot between Main Street and Howard Street and the parking lot between the railroad and Railroad Avenue.

DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Expand and strengthen existing commercial area including option for office space. Create new road and parking infrastructure.
2. Create significant gateway feature at intersection of Bridge Street and Railroad Avenue.
3. Strengthen Bridge Street Corridor through street improvements and infill commercial and office development.
4. Establish new commercial or office building to help link Bridge Street to Cecil Community College and Hospital campuses.
5. Expand Cecil Community College or create new high quality professional office campus.
6. Preferred site for Hospital expansion.
7. Consolidate Hospital parking into parking garage. Allow for additional office space adjacent to garage.
8. Provide new train station capable of accomodating increased SEPTA/MARC ridership.
9. Create formal entryway to Elkton from train station. Include retail, office, and greenspace.
10. Major gateway feature at intersection of North Street and Railroad Avenue.
11. Establish park space for new residential development and existing public housing.
12. Develop new single family detached housing.
13. Create an urban townhome development along Railroad Avenue extension.
14. Infill area between High Street and Railroad Avenue extension with office, commercial, and/or residential uses.
15. Extend Railroad Avenue to connect with South Street.
16. Infill single family housing in vacant areas of existing residential neighborhood.
17. Create formal park out of existing vacant area.
18. Improve intersection of High Street and Locust Street.
19. Strengthen North and High Streets intersection while allowing for municipal expansion.
20. Construct municipal parking garage and consolidate parking.
21. Establish Big Elk Trail, connect waterfront to Elkton Landing and area greenways.
22. Major gateway feature and town, transportation and greenway interface.
23. Enhance existing Farmer's Market.
24. Continue pedestrian link from Main Street to Big Elk Creek.
25. Create formal park space and provide access to water.
26. Redevelop or fill vacancies along Main Street.
27. Introduce gateway features.

LEGEND

- Existing Building
- Proposed Building
- Existing Building, Part of Complex
- Priority Open Space
- Other Open Space

Downtown Master Plan
Downtown Elkton, Maryland

7.0   Project Priorities

7.1   Immediate, Short-term Projects and Initiatives (3-5 years)

- Adopt the recommendations of the Chesapeake Group's Retail Market Assessment and Marketing Plan. (2003)

- Adopt the Downtown Master Plan and incorporate it and its recommendations into the City Comprehensive Plan and future Capital Improvements Plan. (2003)

- Develop a marketing campaign and materials and partner with both Chambers of Commerce, area businesses, county attractions, and other communities to continue to promote Elkton. (2003)

- "Share the Plan" – Elkton Alliance to communicate the vision, meet with Town, County, State, Hospital, Community College and other partners and constituencies in the town and county.

- Secure the Elkton Center/Cecil County Community College Bid for Downtown.

- Secure Maryland Main Street status as an 'avenue' to the existing Elkton Alliance as an organization to promote and implement the plan.

- Begin to identify joint venture parking improvement and consolidation opportunities.

- Identify and budget capital funds annually over the next decade to create/improve these facilities (listed in order of priority):
    - Howard Street (north and south)
    - Bow Street (east)
    - Bridge Street (west)
    - High Street to Railroad Avenue Extended
    - Railroad Avenue (north)

- Identify wayfinding and directional sign enhancements to existing program
    - Develop themes

- Prioritize sites for architectural monuments/ features – Bridge Street/Railroad Avenue, North Street/ Railroad Avenue

- Evaluate potential/review Parking Study recommendations on feasibility of an initial parking structure for the County/State office area.

- Promote and guide continued economic development, redevelopment, and adaptive re-use as generally illustrated on the plan.

- Continue discussions with transit entities about MARC/SEPTA rail opportunities.

- Discuss redevelopment/development potential of County School Board land.

- Plan for and budget other capital infrastructure projects:
  - Railroad Avenue Extended (east)
  - Railroad Avenue Extended (west)
  - Other interconnecting streets around redevelopment/development of the County School Board site.
  - Traffic calming improvements along High Street
  - Intersection improvements to the High Street/Locust Street intersection
  - Streetscape enhancements to North Street

7.2 Medium to Long Term Projects (5 Years and Beyond)

- Continue parking improvements/consolidation where feasible and as joint venture incentives to attract reinvestment

- Continue to support Union Hospital's growth and create the medical campus/neighborhood emulated in the master plan.
  - Parking consolidation
  - Surface parking improvements

- Continued economic development – professional medical office, research, outpatient care, etc.

- Evaluate structured parking as a viable solution to the surface parking dilemma.

- Work with downtown businesses to grow/expand following the master plan. 'Re-knit' the urban fabric along North Street, High Street, Bridge Street. Buildings and development to reinforce the street/parking in the rear.

- Continue implementing other capital infrastructure projects.

  - Streetscape enhancements/improvements: Bridge Street, Bow Street, Railroad Avenue, Howard Street

- Implement other open space/pedestrian linkage opportunities. Partner with County, State, etc. on Big Elk Creek corridor and Elk Landing.

- Complete residential neighborhood plan around Railroad Avenue East/County School Board site.

- Guide continued redevelopment north of Railroad Avenue

  - Expansion of Community College campus

  - Union Hospital or other office mixed-use development adjacent to the Hospital campus/Railroad Avenue

  - Train Station Transit-oriented Development (TOD)

  - Extension of Bow Street

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