

Strasburg Downtown Plan

2013

Prepared for: Town of Strasburg

Prepared by: Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission



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Strasburg Downtown Plan

Prepared for: Town of Strasburg

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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2012, community stakeholders, Town officials and staff worked to gather and analyze trends and data, and to draft general planning concepts for Downtown Strasburg and had the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) facilitated the planning sessions. This new Downtown Plan (or small area plan) seeks to enhance the Town's Community Plan, adopted in September 2012, and to provide additional recommendations and key strategies on future development in the downtown core.

To develop the Strasburg Downtown Plan, a steering committee of key stakeholders was formed to guide the process. Members of the group included local officials, property owners, businesses owners, Town staff, Main Street organization staff, students and citizens. The key was to have a broad range of expertise and opinions on the downtown district. The steering committee was tasked with evaluating previous planning efforts, analyzing existing conditions, developing a vision for the future of Downtown, and outlining specific goals and strategies to implement the vision.

As decided on by the Steering Committee the, guiding principle of the Strasburg Downtown Plan is the National Main Street Trust Four-Point Approach. The Four-Point Approach serves as a foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets such as local, cultural or architectural heritage to develop new enterprises and community pride. The Four-Point Approach includes organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring.

The Town of Strasburg has previously undertaken several planning efforts to address community needs; and these plans have specifically addressed goals and strategies for the downtown core. These planning documents include:

- ❖ Strasburg Community Plan (or *Comprehensive Plan*, 2012)
- ❖ Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) Mixed Use/Mixed Income Planning Grant Study (2010)
- ❖ Market Analysis (2012) developed by James Madison University (JMU)

The Strasburg Downtown Plan is a comprehensive guide to the future development and revitalization of the district. Part I of this plan assesses the existing conditions in Downtown Strasburg including: Land Use & Zoning, Building Conditions, Market Analysis, Transportation, Urban Design and Streetscaping.

Part II of this plan outlines a vision for the future including a list of goals, strategies and resources to realize this vision. The goals and strategies follow the Main Street Four-Point Approach foundation of this plan: Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Structure.

- ❖ Goal 1: Establish the framework for an appropriate new or existing organization to take responsibility for revitalization goals, both short and long term.

Strasburg Downtown Plan

- ❖ Goal 2: Strengthen the bond between youth and the community.
- ❖ Goal 3: Establish a unified campaign to promote Downtown Strasburg to potential customers and businesses.
- ❖ Goal 4: Establish a safe, welcoming and connected environment
- ❖ Goal 5: Strengthen Existing Businesses
- ❖ Goal 6: Recruit new businesses to fill unmet market demand.

Downtown Strasburg has small town charm, a vibrant history and a bright future. New challenges, as well as opportunities for cultural, recreational and economic development, will continue to shape this unique main street in the near future. This Downtown Plan draws upon the corridor's potential to promote a balance of businesses and uses, livability and community, and reflects the distinct culture heritage of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Strasburg's Downtown Plan can serve as a guide for development and redevelopment of downtown, and complement and expand upon the principles outlined in the Community Plan. In order to achieve the vision laid out in this Plan, stakeholders old and young must cooperate to cultivate growth and opportunity in the downtown district. Through cooperation among residents, business owners and the Town, the strengths and opportunities of Downtown Strasburg can be nurtured to develop a prosperous mix of uses and a pedestrian/shopper friendly environment.

Introduction

In the fall of 2012, community stakeholders, Town officials and staff, and the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) worked to gather and analyze trends and data, and to draft general planning concepts for Downtown Strasburg. This new Downtown Plan (or small area plan) seeks to enhance the Town's Community Plan, adopted in September 2012, and provide additional recommendations and key strategies on the future development in the downtown core.

Enabling Legislation for Comprehensive Planning

All states have enabling legislation addressing comprehensive plans, but in Virginia, state law actually requires comprehensive plans with prescribed content. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that every local planning commission shall prepare a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.¹ The Planning Commission shall review the plan at least once every five years to determine if amendments are advisable.

What is a Downtown Plan?

In accordance with State of Virginia Code, comprehensive plans, including downtown plans (or small area plans) shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Town which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, and the general welfare of the Town residents.² The Downtown Plan provides a short and long-term perspective of community change. Implementation of the plan occurs through Town ordinances, including zoning ordinances, which contain regulations for the use and development of both public and private property within the downtown.

Downtown planning should be a continuum of activity that does not end after the plan is drafted. The planning process begins with preparation of the physical document and adoption of the plan by the Town Council. The next steps include the implementation of the plan's elements and review of and amendments to the plan to ensure that it remains a current, "living," document. Preparation of this plan involved the collection and analysis of current data about the downtown core. These existing conditions were utilized to identify a vision for the Town in the future. The plan includes goals

¹ Code of Virginia, *Section 15.2-2223*, 2012

² Kelly & Becker, *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan*, 2009

and strategies for implementation that are designed to help the Town achieve its collective vision for downtown. Once the Downtown Plan is adopted, it will serve as the framework for decision-making to ensure the plan is implemented. The Downtown Plan is implemented through the policy decisions of the Town Council and Planning Commission, including the adoption and enforcement of regulations.

The final phase of the planning process is the periodic review and updates to the plan. This should be an on-going activity that regularly evaluates the data in the plan, identifies current items that need to be addressed, and examines the plan's objectives and implementation strategies to determine if they are adequately addressing Town issues. Accurate and on-going plan review is critical to ensure that the plan continues to provide appropriate guidance in Town decision making. This should be conducted at least annually.

The Steering Committee

To develop the Strasburg Downtown Plan, a steering committee of key stakeholders was formed to guide the process (see photos below). Members of the group included local officials, property owners, businesses owners, Town staff, Regional Commission staff, Main Street organization staff, students and citizens. The key was to assure participation representing broad range of expertise and perspectives on the downtown district. The Steering Committee was tasked with evaluating previous planning efforts, analyzing existing conditions, developing a vision for the future of Downtown and outlining specific goals and strategies to implement the vision. The Steering Committee met each month during this process and the results of those meetings are incorporated into this planning document.



Image 1, 2 & 3: October 2012 Steering Committee meeting on visioning and goal setting. (Photo credit: NSVRC, 2012)

The Main Street Four Points Approach

As decided on by the Steering Committee, the guiding principle of the Strasburg Downtown Plan is the National Main Street Trust Four-Point Approach. The Four-Point Approach serves as a foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets such as local, cultural or architectural heritage to develop new enterprises and community pride. The Four-Point Approach includes organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring.³

1. Organization

Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district. By getting everyone to work toward the same goal, the Main Street program can provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for the downtown or neighborhood business district.

2. Promotion

Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in your commercial district. Advertising, retail promotions, special events, and marketing campaigns help sell the image and promise of Main Street to the community and surrounding region.

3. Design

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers, and visitors. It takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials. An appealing atmosphere created through attention to all of these visual elements conveys a positive message about the commercial district and what it has to offer.

4. Economic Restructuring

Economic restructuring strengthens your community's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of

³ National Main Street Trust, *Four Point Approach*, 2012

business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district. The goal is to build a commercial district that responds to the needs of today's consumers.

The “Eight Guiding Principles” of the Main Street Four Point Approach are included in the appendix section of this plan.⁴

Best Practices in the Main Street Four-Point Approach

The National Main Street Trust identifies characteristics of exemplary projects:

- ❖ Active involvement of the public and private sectors
- ❖ Broad-based community support for the revitalization effort
- ❖ Quality of achievements over time
- ❖ Innovative solutions to significant problems
- ❖ Commitment to historic preservation
- ❖ Evolving track record of successful commercial district revitalization
- ❖ Comprehensive revitalization effort: activity in all four points of the Main Street Four Point Approach to commercial district revitalization
- ❖ Economic impact of the revitalization program
- ❖ Successful small business development

The Main Street Four-Point Approach, along with the above list of best practices, provides an avenue for downtowns to take advantage of the resources they already have to achieve a successful transformation with a positive economic impact on the area. In Virginia, several communities have employed the Main Street Four-Point Approach in their downtown revitalization efforts. The cities of Harrisonburg and Waynesboro have branded their downtown area with a recreational focus by using their proximity to the Appalachian Trail. Both cities incorporate this recreational aspect of their area into their cultural persona. Waynesboro and Harrisonburg are officially designated as Appalachian Trail Communities by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Harrisonburg partners with their tourism department and downtown businesses to offer special packages for Appalachian Trail hikers. Waynesboro offers transportation shuttle services to and from the mountain trail and the downtown area. Interest in

⁴ National Main Street Trust, *Eight Guiding Principles*, 2012

creating recreational space or facilities in downtown Strasburg could benefit from the model of these two cities' programs. Additionally, the town of Luray is also officially designated as a Main Street Community and their greenway is a beautiful addition that provides recreational usage.

The Town of Culpeper also follows the Main Street Four-Point Approach and their downtown revitalization efforts exemplify how organization, promotions, design and economic restructuring are tools for success. Culpeper aims to improve the economic and social vibrancy in their downtown area by establishing itself as an arts and cultural district. Like Strasburg, Culpeper has a theater in their downtown area which can attract both locals and visitors to take part in the local cultural heritage.

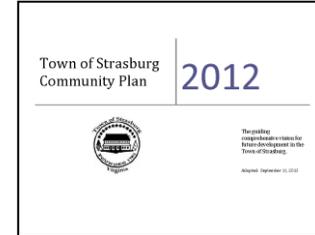
The successes of these communities' downtown revitalization efforts all share common characteristics stemming from the Main Street Four-Point Approach.

Part I: Assessment of Downtown Strasburg

Comparative Analysis of Previous Plans

The Town of Strasburg has previously undertaken several planning efforts to address community needs; and these plans have specifically addressed goals and strategies for the downtown core. These planning documents include:

- ❖ Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) Mixed Use/Mixed Income Planning Grant Study (2010)
- ❖ Market Analysis (2012) developed by James Madison University (JMU)
- ❖ Strasburg Community Plan (or *Comprehensive Plan*, 2012)



Plan Similarities

All three (3) documents highlight the potential of revitalizing the abandoned movie theater. The two (2) SWOT analyses from the Community Plan and the Market Analysis identify overlapping weaknesses: the condition of the sidewalks, the lack of business base and mix, inconvenient business hours, and lack of night life. The VHDA Mixed-Use/Mixed-Income Study and the Community Plan are consistent regarding continued allowance of mixed uses, investing in aging infrastructure, and regulating property maintenance standards to avoid the threat of "demolition by neglect", which is identified as a threat. Generally speaking, all three documents try to incorporate investing in infrastructure improvements while fostering and preserving the historic culture of downtown.

Conflicting Ideas

The two (2) SWOT analyses differ on the meaning and impact of the Town's proximity to Interstates. The Community Plan identifies this as a threat, while the Market Analysis identifies this as a strength. The Community Plan also categorizes the traffic caused by Route 11 as a weakness. Similarly, the Market Analysis lists competition from Winchester and Front Royal as a threat.

The Strasburg Community Plan, adopted in 2012, specifically outlines downtown revitalization in the "*Keys to the Future*" section. These keys for the future will serve as the foundation for further analysis for this Downtown Plan. The previous Strasburg Community Plan (adopted in 2003) specifically addresses downtown revitalization through downtown preservation, rehabilitation, and revitalization. These key strategies include:

- ❖ Embark upon a program that provides for and encourages the preservation, rehabilitation, and revitalization of Strasburg's Historic Downtown Business District, thereby creating a backdrop for renewed investment and positive economic development.
- ❖ To the extent that public/private funds are available and with the advice and counsel of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, bolster the Historic Downtown Business District, which was included in 1984 in both the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Strasburg historic places in order to:
 - Create a permanent record of the Town's historic resources

- Create an inventory of properties documented by the Department of Historic Resources (DHR)
 - Strengthen community support and awareness
 - Increase name recognition and tourism
 - Pursue state and federal funding and incentives
 - Perform an intensive study/assessment of the Historic Downtown Business District and with input from public officials and interested citizens to produce a document that will guide short, intermediate and long-term preservation/revitalization efforts.
 - Guide short, intermediate and long-term preservation/revitalization efforts.
 - Illustrate the positive impact and importance of preservation planning in Strasburg.
-
- ❖ Implement the techniques and philosophies of the Virginia Main Street Program to improve both the aesthetic appearance and economic potential of the Historic Downtown Business District.

 - ❖ Apply for the designation as an officially recognized Main Street Community. Hire a professional staff person or professional consultant and elect an advisory board to carry out the Main Street program.

Analysis of Existing Conditions

Study Area Defined

The Strasburg Downtown Plan study boundary (see map on next page) was defined by the Steering Committee to encompass the core area around downtown where development and redevelopment should be directed. The study area is included within Strasburg's Historic District and is the primary location for the annual Mayfest celebration (held each spring). The area encompasses roughly eleven (11) blocks along Washington, King (Main Route 11) Street) and Queen Streets.

Zoning & Land-Use

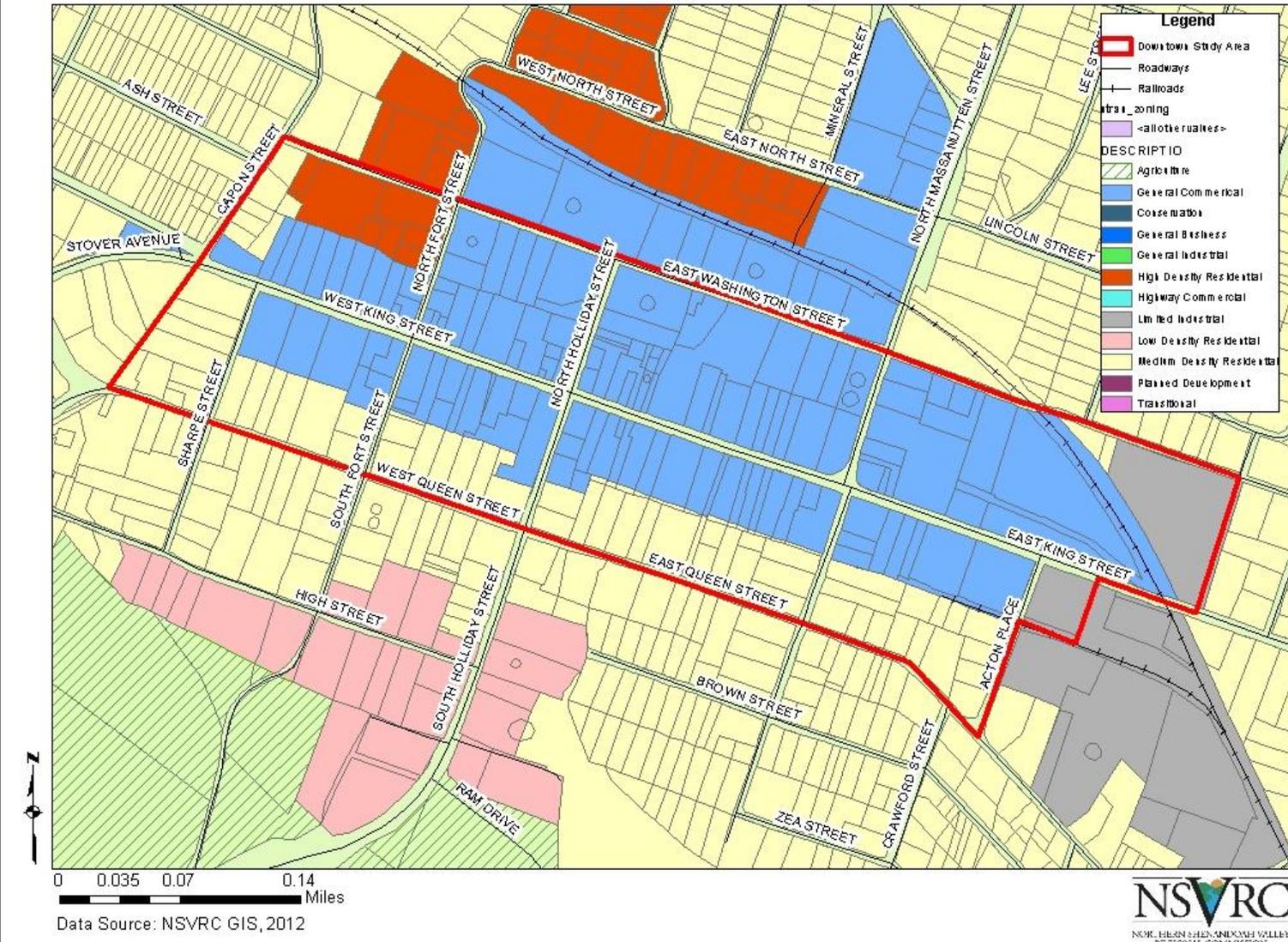
Zoning and land use play a pivotal role in the vitality and development potential of Downtown Strasburg. Currently, the Downtown district includes a mix of zoning and land-use classifications as identified in the *Community Plan* including: medium density residential, high density residential, mixed-use, general commercial, office, industrial, and institutional. The *Community Plan* defines these classifications as follows:

- ❖ *Medium Density Residential*: Primarily single family homes on small lots (comprised the majority of the parcels in the Downtown district).
- ❖ *High Density Residential*: Parcels that can be found in either the older residential areas of Downtown or where more recent developments of townhomes or multi-family dwellings are located.
- ❖ *Mixed-Use*: Parcels used for both residential and commercial purposes.
- ❖ *General Commercial*: Areas dedicated to personal and business services and general retail businesses.
- ❖ *Office*: Parcels designated to be used for professional and general office space
- ❖ *Industrial*: Parcels designated for manufacturing, storage and light industrial uses.
- ❖ *Institutional*: Parcel with uses dedicated to public or private non-business related activities such as churches, schools, and municipal facilities⁵

There are no vacant undeveloped parcels in the study area, and only two (2) pocket parks nestled on an already developed parcel. A map depicting the zoning classifications in the downtown study area is on the following page.

⁵ Town of Strasburg, *Community Plan*, 2012

Downtown Land-Use



Building Conditions

A critical factor in revitalizing any commercial district is the existing condition of its buildings. The condition of buildings is significant in determining how much work an owner may have to do to make a building desirable to tenants in order to decrease the vacancy rate. The use and size will give an understanding of the amount of space devoted to different types of activities. A visual assessment of the structures Downtown was performed. Most buildings have minor or no deficiencies. There are buildings on every block that are in good condition. Several, however, have major deficiencies and no buildings are seriously deteriorated or may pose a threat to the general safety of the district. The majority of the structures that were visually assessed were found to be in good condition.



Image 4, 5 & 6: Existing building Downtown are generally in good condition; architectural style varies but is unique to Strasburg; depicted above: Hotel Strasburg, First Bank, Strasburg Post Office. (Photo credit: NSVRC, 2012)

Market Analysis

Currently, Strasburg has a variety of thriving local businesses in the Downtown district. These includes professional services such as lawyers and banks; niche businesses such as antique shops, a barber and tattoo parlor, restaurants, cafés and a historic hotel, the Hotel Strasburg. The general lack of retail choices was the number one concern among the Steering Committee. Two additional areas of concern noted by the stakeholder group were the lack of diversity among the commercial choices and a lack of consistent and convenient open hours of the local businesses. Many are open only 9am to 5pm during the week and are not open late on weekdays or at all on the weekends. This detracts from Downtown Strasburg serving as a primary commercial destination. The general lack of retail choices was the number one concern among the Steering Committee.

In 2012, students from James Madison University (JMU) in Harrisonburg, VA undertook a detailed market analysis to assess the unmet market demand for goods and services in Downtown Strasburg. Examining like-sized and demographically-similar communities in the Shenandoah Valley and assessing sale prices, rental prices and cost per square foot in Strasburg, the *Market Analysis* prepared recommendations were developed for the types of retail and other commercial uses that would be most appropriate. The study also documented established businesses, and noted those

that were absent but ancillary to existing ones. The *Market Analysis* also conducted thorough surveying of customers and residents to better understand retail demand. The following commercial uses were ranked in order of most unmet demand for the Downtown district:

1. Frozen Treats
2. Grocery
3. Healthy Dining Option
4. Sports Bar/Brewery
5. Other Specialty Retail (Wine Bar, Bookstore, Clothing Retail)

The Steering Committee revisited this *Market Analysis* and confirmed that these were potential uses that would fit in Downtown. The Steering Committee also evaluated the unmet demand for other niche sectors including an outdoor outfitter or bicycle shop. A full copy of the *Market Analysis* is available at the Town’s website and should be consulted when business recruitment is undertaken for economic development.

Transportation, Urban Design and Streetscaping

The Strasburg Community Plan (2012) defines the Town’s transportation network as “streets in public rights-of-way are the primary infrastructure for transportation. It is important to note that the function and purpose of streets extends beyond their use as conduits for vehicles and pedestrians. Streets are also public spaces that define the character and livability of a community. A well developed and planned streetscape – the combination of physical features and amenities within the public space of a street – can contribute significantly to the viability and success of a community.” This vision for the transportation network throughout Strasburg cannot be undervalued, as the flow of traffic and people through the corridor plays a key role in the economic vitality and visibility of the Downtown district.



Image 7: Existing planters in Downtown Strasburg add a touch of green. (Photo credit: NSVRC, 2012)

Circulation consists of traffic, parking and pedestrian activities. A healthy neighborhood commercial district should offer both cars and pedestrians easy access into the district and a comfortable, hassle-free experience once they arrive there. The Downtown Strasburg commercial district is centrally located between major arterial roads (US Highway 55, US Highway 11), near major interstates (Interstate 81 & 66) and within a grid of neighborhood streets offering convenient vehicular access. In addition, the streets are easy to walk and provide many routes to and from neighborhoods/residences, churches and the high school. Connectivity beyond King Street to adjacent amenities including the River Walk and Town Park are critical to creating a Downtown “destination.”

Perceptions of accessibility and safety determine whether one will choose to open a business or shop in a commercial district. Physical appearance of the district often shapes these perceptions. Urban design elements such as narrow setbacks and windows facing the street provide a sense of enclosure and comfort. Large windows encourage window-shopping which, in turn, encourages business. Well-lit streets promote a sense of safety

during the evening and at night. Other elements such as wide and well-manicured sidewalks with distinct crosswalks, benches and water fountains invite pedestrian traffic and encourage people to visit the area.



The design of the downtown commercial corridor is functional and potentially quite attractive. The intersection of Holliday Street and King Street acts as a focal point that orients visitors to the corridor and provides a sense of place. Setbacks are generally narrow and many of the shops have windows facing the street. This increased visibility puts more eyes on the street and can deter crime.

There is a sense of enclosure throughout much of the corridor. A sense of enclosure makes businesses appear more accessible than businesses separated from the street by parking lots. Setbacks are uniform, though they become wider traveling south along King Street away from the Holliday Street intersection. The gradual feeling of exposure as one heads away from the intersection indicates that one is leaving the Strasburg downtown commercial district. Most of the businesses are visible and easily accessible. Many storefronts require minor upkeep such as new paint, signage and other improvements.



Streetlights throughout the downtown corridor along Washington, King and Queen Streets include both tall cobra head-lights designed to illuminate the road and pedestrian scale lighting designed to illuminate the sidewalk. Both types of lighting use high-pressure sodium lights that emit amber light. Generally, the corridor is well-lit at night and most of the lights are in working order. The pedestrian scale lighting is somewhat inconsistent, with some blocks having fewer lights than others. There are some other areas such as vacant lots, parking lots and alleys that are not well lit. It is important that these areas, whether public or private, be illuminated at all times to promote a feeling of safety.

Image 8 & 9: The streetscape of Downtown is pedestrian friendly and accessible to visitors. (Photo credit: NSVRC, 2012)

In general, the streets appear to be in good condition. There are no major potholes or other hazards that would make the roads exceedingly dangerous for drivers or cyclists. The traffic signals accommodate pedestrians with buttons they can use to halt traffic when crossing. There are curb ramps blocks at most crosswalks, although some are not compliant with Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility guidelines, as they lack appropriate access for persons in wheelchairs or with other mobility-assistance devices. Crosswalks are also marked clearly. Crosswalks should be clearly delineated at all intersections and include the appropriate accommodations for persons of all abilities. Curb ramps should be cleaned and maintained regularly as there are weeds starting to grow on some of them.

The concrete sidewalks in this neighborhood are in generally good condition, and only in need of minor repairs. In some places, the sidewalks are not level or they are cracked and weeds protrude through the cracks. These deficiencies make walking or maneuvering a stroller or wheelchair

through the corridor difficult. Curb cuts leading to alleys or parking lots can also hinder pedestrians; however, access to alleys and businesses with private parking is essential. The street trees along the sidewalks incorporate nature in a man-made environment. Some trees have been lost over time and should be replaced. Furthermore, the sidewalks are especially narrow where the street trees are planted or should be planted. In addition, many of the trees are in poor condition, thereby detracting from the corridor instead of adding to it. Drainage is adequate though a heavy rain could leave standing water on the sidewalks because of low curbs in some places. There are mailboxes and newspaper stands at some of the intersections. Signage in the neighborhood is generally clear though there are some damaged signs. Business signage is not always obvious and Downtown Strasburg has relatively little street furniture.

Despite minor flaws in the streetscape and infrastructure, Downtown Strasburg has much strength on which to build. The overall streetscape promotes pedestrian access as well as access for those traveling by automobile. Shops are close together and generally oriented for pedestrian access. Changes such as increased storefront maintenance, addition and maintenance of more lighting, sidewalk and crosswalk maintenance and the addition of street furniture such as benches, matching trashcans and clear signage can occur without drastically changing the character of the neighborhood. Encouraging new businesses to follow standards and observing storefront maintenance can extend the length of what one perceives to be the district. Promoting safety, accessibility and attractiveness through more attention to physical details would benefit the corridor immensely.

Streetscape Enhancement Project

The total project cost is estimated at \$2.3 million dollars, and is funded through the Federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) program administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The project was originated by Hometown Strasburg, and will focus primarily along the King Street corridor (Capon Street to the Strasburg Museum) through the following improvements:

- ❖ Concrete and brick paver sidewalks;
- ❖ ADA (American's with Disabilities Act)-compliant crosswalks and pedestrian safety features;
- ❖ Street trees suited for a downtown urban environment;
- ❖ Curb and gutter improvements; and,
- ❖ Historic-style street lamps and signs.



Image 10: Proposed Streetscape Enhancement Project artist renderings. (Photo Credit: Town of Strasburg, 2013).

Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning tool to evaluate current and future factors, both real and perceived, that will shape the development of Downtown Strasburg. This SWOT analysis was developed by the Strasburg Downtown Plan Steering Committee on October 16, 2012. The SWOT analysis will inform the vision, goals and strategies in subsequent sections of the Downtown Plan.

Strengths

Strengths are characteristics of Downtown Strasburg that gives it an advantage over mixed-use areas.

- ❖ The Annual Mayfest Festival
- ❖ The walkability and compact (“clustered”) nature of the downtown core, access to Town River Walk and Park
- ❖ The Strasburg Museum
- ❖ The diverse architectural style of the buildings, including the second floor porches, window displays
- ❖ Quality of the building stock
- ❖ The old theater as a downtown anchor
- ❖ The enthusiasm of the people/business owners for their downtown and making it a better place
- ❖ Christina’s Café
- ❖ Antique stores draw people from around the Valley and Northern Virginia
- ❖ Forthcoming Streetscape Enhancement Program
- ❖ Identity of Strasburg as a great place to live and raise a family
- ❖ Proximity to Strasburg High School
- ❖ Designated “Arts and Tourism District”
- ❖ Discount on water/sewer rates to Downtown businesses

Weaknesses

Weaknesses are characteristics that place Downtown Strasburg at a disadvantage relative to other mixed-use areas.

- ❖ Not enough foot traffic to local business from Mayfest and other downtown events downtown through local businesses
- ❖ Traffic at peak hours and on weekends on King Street
- ❖ Narrow sidewalks
- ❖ Business hours and not being open late or on weekends to attract potential customers
- ❖ Lack of accessible on-street parking
- ❖ Lack of retail businesses/prevalence of professional services

- ❖ Neglected or rundown building stock and store fronts
- ❖ Building vacancies

Opportunities

Opportunities are external factors to improve the economic viability of Downtown Strasburg.

- ❖ Proximity to rich cultural and agricultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley including but not limited to the Artisan Trail, Fields of Gold, local wineries
- ❖ Potential for farmers' market, microbrewery in vacant buildings and lots
- ❖ Steady flow of vehicle traffic through town on King Street/Route 11 equals potential customers
- ❖ Possibility of becoming a niche destination for recreation enthusiasts in the Valley including potential visitors from the Appalachian Trail, Shenandoah National Park, Skyline Drive and the Shenandoah River
- ❖ Capitalize on residential nature of Strasburg by offering activities for young people and night life for adults
- ❖ Theater space as a future hub for activity
- ❖ Soon-to-be vacant space south of Town at waste water treatment facility
- ❖ Ease of parking at surface lots
- ❖ "Green" elements to enhance downtown viability
- ❖ Proximity of railroad lines for potential tourist-based railroad trips

Threats

Threats are external factors in the environment that could affect the economic viability of Downtown Strasburg.

- ❖ Spending at businesses outside of downtown core/Town of Strasburg
- ❖ Outward movement of residents to suburbs/other communities with more amenities
- ❖ Development along Interstate 81/Route 11
- ❖ Building stock not attractive to potential businesses/entrepreneurs

Part II: A Plan for Downtown Strasburg

Vision Statement

The first step for Strasburg when developing downtown planning goals and strategies is to establish the collective “vision,” or overarching theme that will guide the process. The Strasburg Downtown Plan Steering Committee has articulated the following vision for its future:

Downtown Strasburg had long been the choice for the convenience needs of nearby residents and others. However, recent changes to the commercial marketplace in Strasburg and pressure from commercial development outside of the Downtown core have forced many shops to close their front doors.

Envision a downtown that appeals to a variety of people, from the hungry student at Strasburg High School, to the busy commuter heading home from work, to the out-of-town visitor to Shenandoah National Park, to the energetic senior seeking a night on the town. From participating in an outdoor adventure, to a scoop of frozen yogurt, to an antique you cannot find anywhere else, Downtown Strasburg provides an array of businesses that cater to a wide variety of needs, from specialty to necessity. This convenient and accessible commercial node also encompasses a livable, mixed-use area in and around the corridor.

Shoppers who come to Downtown Strasburg choose to experience the historic and small-town charm of the locally owned businesses at their own pace. Unparalleled service and friendly and knowledgeable merchants make a trip to downtown Strasburg a step back into the past, reminiscent of a time when shopping involved walking sidewalks and store fronts, not wading through parking lots and strip malls. The unique shopping experience is further complemented by Downtown Strasburg’s “green” elements. The lush landscaping is not only attractive, but also it serves to remind visitors that Downtown Strasburg has made it a priority to promote environmentally conscious design and business practices.

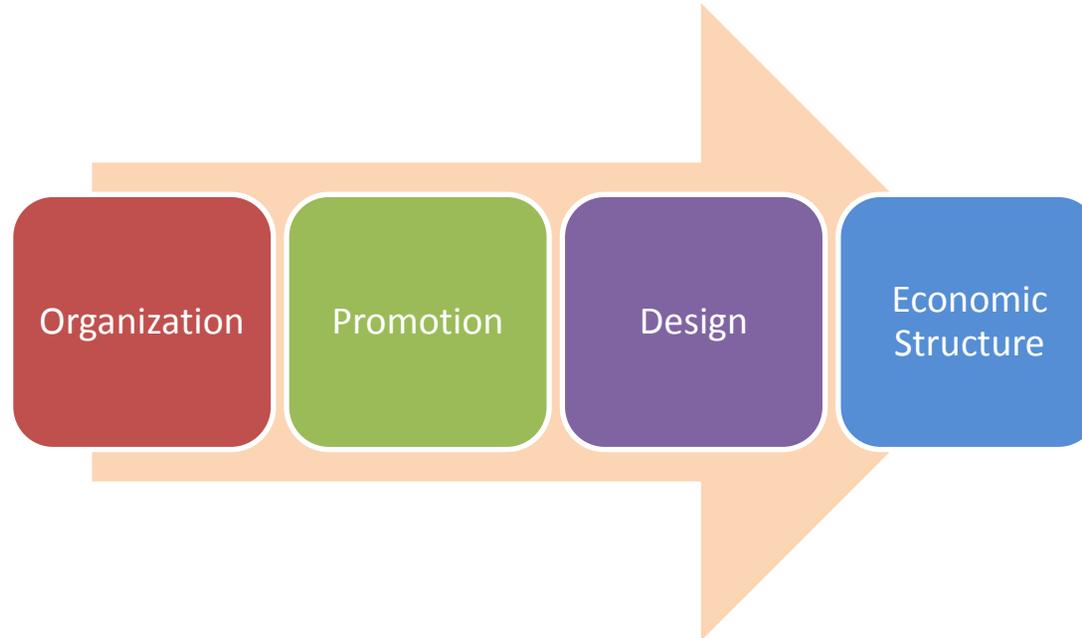
Visualize a downtown that is unlike any main street in the Northern Shenandoah Valley, attracting visitors and shoppers with its variety, environmental integrity and historic beauty.

Finally, envision a downtown Strasburg shopper who, upon arrival, suddenly relaxes and smiles, knowing that it is here that he or she can experience the natural heritage, eat delicious food, buy unique gifts, and visit with friendly merchants in a rural and environmentally sustainable place. This is Downtown Strasburg, Virginia.

The goals and strategies to achieve this vision are outlined in subsequent sections of the plan.

Goals & Strategies

This section will outline a series of goals and strategies required to achieve the realization of the vision outlined in the previous section. The goals and strategies follow the Main Street Four-Point Approach: Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Structure.



Organization

Goal 1: Establish the framework for an appropriate or existing organization or individual to take responsibility for revitalization goals, both short and long term.

Strategy A: Transition responsibility of revitalization and planning from the Downtown Plan Steering Committee to another community-based organization or to-be-appointed staff position within the Town for economic development.

The Steering Committee provides a much needed forum for Downtown planning, but it will be important to transition and expand the role of Downtown planning to an organization equipped with resources and the able to facilitate long-term activities in the district. Regular meetings of this

group should be held to continually assess the effectiveness of implementation of the Downtown Plan's goals and strategies. This group should also coordinate and pool resources with Shenandoah County's Economic Development and Planning Department and other regional economic development groups including the Strasburg Chamber of Commerce.

Strategy B: Organize a task force(s) to address specific areas of implementation such as business recruitment and sustainability, community event planning, and beautification.

For a revitalization effort to be successful it must be led from within the community. This means current merchants and stakeholders not only must be part of the effort, but must also lead it. Hometown Strasburg is the most-active and broad-based organization within the Downtown community and is the ideal organization to lead this charge, or this could be carried out under the leadership of a Town staff position. However, a to-be-appointed Town staff person may also be appropriate. An annual report on the progress of the plan should be shared with all stakeholders (such as Council, volunteer organizations, business owners, etc.).

Goal 2: Strengthen the bond between youth and the community.

Strategy A: Engage youth in productive activities in and around the Downtown.

Strasburg is a community of families and encouraging youth to shop locally will create a Downtown "culture," and encourage return trips. Youth and young adults were cited by the Steering Committee as having a substantial influence on the vitality and long-term success of Downtown. Partnering with Strasburg schools, especially Strasburg High School or Middle School which is directly adjacent to Downtown, will allow youths to interact productively with their environment and reduce the negative perception of teens loitering. Identifying a school Downtown leader such as a service-based club or civics class is essential to ensure a continued dialogue. Students could lead special projects such as creating a Downtown business, marketing and outreach, or other Downtown oriented efforts.

Promotion

Goal 3: Establish a unified campaign to promote Downtown Strasburg to potential customers and businesses.

Strategy A: Enhance and re-energize the community identity, or brand, to marketing Downtown.

A coherent and identifiable brand helps to communicate quality of service, variety, and a sense of community. This could be accomplished through a community developed design, but should distinguish the Downtown district from the larger Town. Signage should be located at either end of the

district at major intersections/roadways and throughout on hanging banners. Hometown Strasburg has already undertaken steps to achieve this strategy.

Strategy B: Promote and organize special and unique events that extend to market niches such as recreation (biking, hiking, or rafting), furthering community awareness and encouraging cross-shopping opportunities.

Connecting Downtown Strasburg with broader regional marketing including Shenandoah County's Fields of Gold program and Artisan Trail should also be considered as this will attract more long-term visitors to check out what Strasburg has to offer. New customers can be attracted to special events and deals and can become regular customers. Community events help to create good will and offer a chance to get feedback from residents and shoppers about their likes and dislikes for Downtown. This could include bingo, art auctions, culinary events, or live music/performances. Examples of recreational events could include bike rodeos, 5K's or other outdoor oriented events in and around Downtown. These could also coincide with other Town events like Mayfest (spring) and Oktoberfest (fall). Discounts could be offered to persons who bike to these events to increase participation.

Strategy C: Actively market Downtown Strasburg to potential investors and businesses looking to locate or expand in the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Increasing the prominence and reputation of Downtown Strasburg as a regional area of economic opportunity is essential to attracting desired goods and services. Providing relevant information about current market conditions and the availability of properties for lease or sale and working with the Shenandoah County Economic Development Authority are critical to making investments in Downtown Strasburg attractive and simpler. In the fall of 2012, Hometown Strasburg held an Open House of available commercial property Downtown; these types of events should continue to be held to market Downtown.

Design

Goal 4: Establish a safe, welcoming and connected environment

Strategy A: Utilize cohesive strategies to create a unified Downtown district.

Strasburg is well underway to realizing this strategy through its Streetscape Enhancement Program (Spring 2013). This strategy goes beyond simply improving the pedestrian environment

Image 10: Proposed crosswalk design for Streetscape Enhancement Program; artist rendering. (Photo credit: Town of Strasburg, 2013)





Image 11: Example of potential gateway signage. (Photo credit: Google Images, 2012)

but encouraging attractive maintenance of business and /shop facades, allowing for alternative modes of transportation to access Downtown such as bicycle and transit and developing bicycle infrastructure (bike racks), appropriate scaled signage and wayfinding. People should feel a sense of place and atmosphere of activity when entering the district. This could be accomplished through new signage, light-pole banners, street trees, and street furniture such as benches. Installing new pedestrian crossings can improve both safety and design. Including the public in the selection process can serve to create a sense of ownership in the Downtown enhancement throughout the community. Development of a Downtown Strasburg Design Guidebook for rehabilitation and new construction should also be encouraged to ensure historic preservation and harmonious and compatible design within the Downtown district. This Guidebook would enhance or serve as an addendum to the Historic District Design Guidelines but would be more specific to the Downtown planning area.

Strategy B: Develop new “green” and open space features for Downtown.

One desire of the Steering Committee from the beginning of the planning process was to encourage green features Downtown. This can include but is not limited to expanding open and /park spaces (such as pocket parks, a dog park or skate park), developing a community garden and/or farmers market program. Utilization of local nursery’s to create planters and other natural enhancements will further increase community involvement and active participation. Designations for green or bike friendly businesses could be awarded by the merchant or Downtown organizations as a way to encourage a sustainable economy.

Strategy C: Strengthen the physical and psychological connectedness within and outside of Downtown.

Downtown Strasburg has two (2) distinct districts as divided by US Highway 11 (North Massanutten Street) and US Highway 55 (East/West King Street). East of the intersection is more industrial and ideal for a farmers’ market or community garden, west of the intersection is the traditional shopping core. Distinguishing these two districts but keeping them connected is vital to the flow of shoppers and vehicles Downtown. Clearly identifying gateways (or entrances and exits to the district), extending and expanding current sidewalks and pedestrian crossings (for example “bump outs”) to reduce the distance across intersections (for example “bump outs”) and installing pedestrian signals should be utilized to harmonize the pedestrian environment.



Image 12: A proposed artist rendering of streetscape enhancements at the intersection of King and Holliday Streets creating a unified and “green” design that is scaled to the pedestrian. (Photo credit: Town of Strasburg, 2013)

Establishing a “hub” can create physical space that encourages gatherings and is a symbol of the Downtown environment. The Steering Committee identified the old theater (currently under new management who are renovating the property) and the adjacent vacant parcel as an ideal place for public gatherings. Strasburg should pursue the development of the area into a Downtown Park and /outdoor venue for shows, music and people watching. This will help to create a sense of place and encourage pedestrian traffic.

Finally, linking Downtown to the greater Town community is essential so that residents outside of the Downtown core are aware of events, shopping and access to Downtown. This could include linking new residential developments near Interstate 81 with sidewalks and trails, improved pedestrian crossings that are clearly marked, or wayfinding signs.

Strategy D: Connect the Downtown with the Town Park and River Walk south of the study area.

Downtown Strasburg already utilizes wayfinding to direct residents and businesses to these recreational amenities. However, a long-term physical connection would create a trail thoroughfare through Town linking recreation, shopping, dining and residences. Utilizing the space along the Town creek would be an ideal natural fit for a trail and would connect newer residences through the Downtown district to the Town Park and Shenandoah River. This should also include clear wayfinding signage. Future planning efforts for this strategy should also include a comprehensive review of Larry Hall’s Greenway/Town Walk efforts and the Town Run proposal in the Strasburg Community Plan (2012).



Image 13: Existing Strasburg River Walk (Photo credit: Google Images, 2012)

Economic Structure

Goal 5: Strengthen Existing Businesses

Strategy A: Utilize available financial incentives and organization resources to enhance the effectiveness of businesses.

These funding incentives can greatly reduce the cost of physical improvements, including façade appearance, security and fire suppression. Rebates and low-interest loans can help create thriving new businesses, boosting the local economy and vitality of the Downtown. Publicity through a Downtown organization (such as Hometown Strasburg) and meetings with prospective and current business owners can help share these resources. Establishing a business incubation program should also be explored. This could also include funding through the Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) Local Innovative Funding, Virginia Main Street Trust or the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) Micro-Loan Program.

Goal 6: Recruit new businesses to fill unmet market demand.

Strategy A: Recruit an outdoor outfitter or bicycle shop to capitalize on cultural and natural heritage of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

The market analysis and stakeholder groups revealed that there is significant unmet demand within the community for an outdoor outfitter or bicycle shop (or combination of the two). This represents an economic opportunity for prospective investors, and would also provide residents with a needed service. Appropriate properties are currently available within the commercial corridor that would be ideal for such a business. Partnering with local outdoor tour and /adventure operators should also be encouraged. Developing a marketing packet including properties and financial/ and development incentives should also be undertaken.

Strategy B: Recruit a specialty food and drink establishment such as frozen yogurt vendor or microbrewery.



Image 14: A frozen yogurt vendor was identified as the top retail desired for Downtown. (Photo credit: Google Images,

The Market Analysis and stakeholder groups revealed there is significant unmet demand within the community for a frozen yogurt or special food establishment (including a brewery, wine bar or sports bar). There are very few dining options Downtown so this use would not detract from other established businesses but would reduce the “leakage” of demand to areas outside of the Downtown district and outside of the Town boundaries. Vacant properties are available to host these types of uses. Emphasizing the competitive advantage to potential business/franchise operators is key to attracting these types of businesses. Developing a marketing packet including properties and financial/ and development incentives should also be undertaken. A downtown planning group or the Chamber of Commerce should actively pursue these types of businesses.

Implementation Timetable

The implementation timetable below is a generalization of how the above goals and strategies could be implemented over the next 6 months to 3 years. It should serve as a resource for future planning efforts carried out by the Town of Strasburg or a community-based organization relating to the Downtown district.

Strasburg Downtown Plan

Strategy	Immediate (0-6 months)	Short (6 months-1 years)	Intermediate (1 -3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)	Partners	Funding Opportunities
Goal 1: Establish the framework for an appropriate or existing organization to take responsibility for revitalization goals, both short and long term.						
Strategy A: Transition responsibility of revitalization and planning from the Downtown Plan Steering Committee to another community-based organization or to-be-appointed staff position within the Town.					Shenandoah County Economic Development and Planning Department, Chamber of Commerce.	
Strategy B: Organize a task force(s) to address specific areas of implementation such as business recruitment and sustainability, community event planning, and beautification.					Hometown Strasburg.	

Strasburg Downtown Plan

Strategy	Immediate (0-6 months)	Short (6 months-1 year)	Intermediate (1 -3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)	Partners	Funding Opportunities
Goal 2: Strengthen the bond between youth and the community.						
Strategy A: Engage youth in productive activities in and around the Downtown.					Strasburg High School students (service based clubs, civics classes).	Virginia Recreational Trails Program, Tony Hawk Foundation, Land and Water Conservation Fund.
Goal 3: Establish a unified campaign to promote Downtown Strasburg to potential customers and businesses.						
Strategy A: Enhance and re-energize the community identity, or brand, marketing Downtown.					Hometown Strasburg, Town Staff, Strasburg High School students and staff.	CDBG, BID, LIHTC, Enterprise Zone Funding, BEZL.
Strategy B: Promote and organize special events that extend to market niches such as recreation furthering community awareness and encouraging cross-shopping.					Shenandoah County's Fields of Gold program and Artisan Trail, Shenandoah County Parks and Recreation, Hometown Strasburg.	Virginia Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Tony Hawk Foundation, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Bikes Belong Coalition.

Strasburg Downtown Plan

Strategy	Immediate (0-6 months)	Short 6 months-1 year)	Intermediate (1-3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)	Partners	Funding Opportunities
Strategy C: Actively market Downtown Strasburg to potential investors and businesses looking to locate or expand in the Northern Shenandoah Valley.					Hometown Strasburg, Town of Strasburg, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, Strasburg Chamber of Commerce, Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce.	CDBG, BID, LIHTC, Enterprise Zone Funding, BEZL.
Goal 4: Establish a safe, welcoming, and connected environment						
Strategy A: Utilize cohesive strategies to create a unified Downtown district.					Town of Strasburg via Streetscape Enhancement Program.	CDBG, BID, LIHTC, Enterprise Zone Funding, BEZL.
Strategy B: Develop new “green” and open space features for Downtown.					Downtown organizations & merchants, farmer’s market program.	RTP, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Petco Foundation 4Rs Project Support.

Strasburg Downtown Plan

Strategy	Immediate (0-6 months)	Short (6 months-1 year)	Intermediate (1-3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)	Partners	Funding Opportunities
Strategy C: Strengthen the physical and psychological connectedness within and outside of Downtown.					Town of Strasburg, Hometown Strasburg, Merchant's Association.	
Strategy D: Connect the Downtown with the Town Park and River Walk.					Town of Strasburg.	Virginia Recreational Trails Program (RTP).
Goal 5: Strengthen Existing Businesses						
Strategy A: Utilize available financial incentives and organization resources to enhance the effectiveness of businesses.					Hometown Strasburg, State Administered Programs.	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) Local Innovative Funding, Virginia Main Street Trust or the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) Micro-Loan Program.

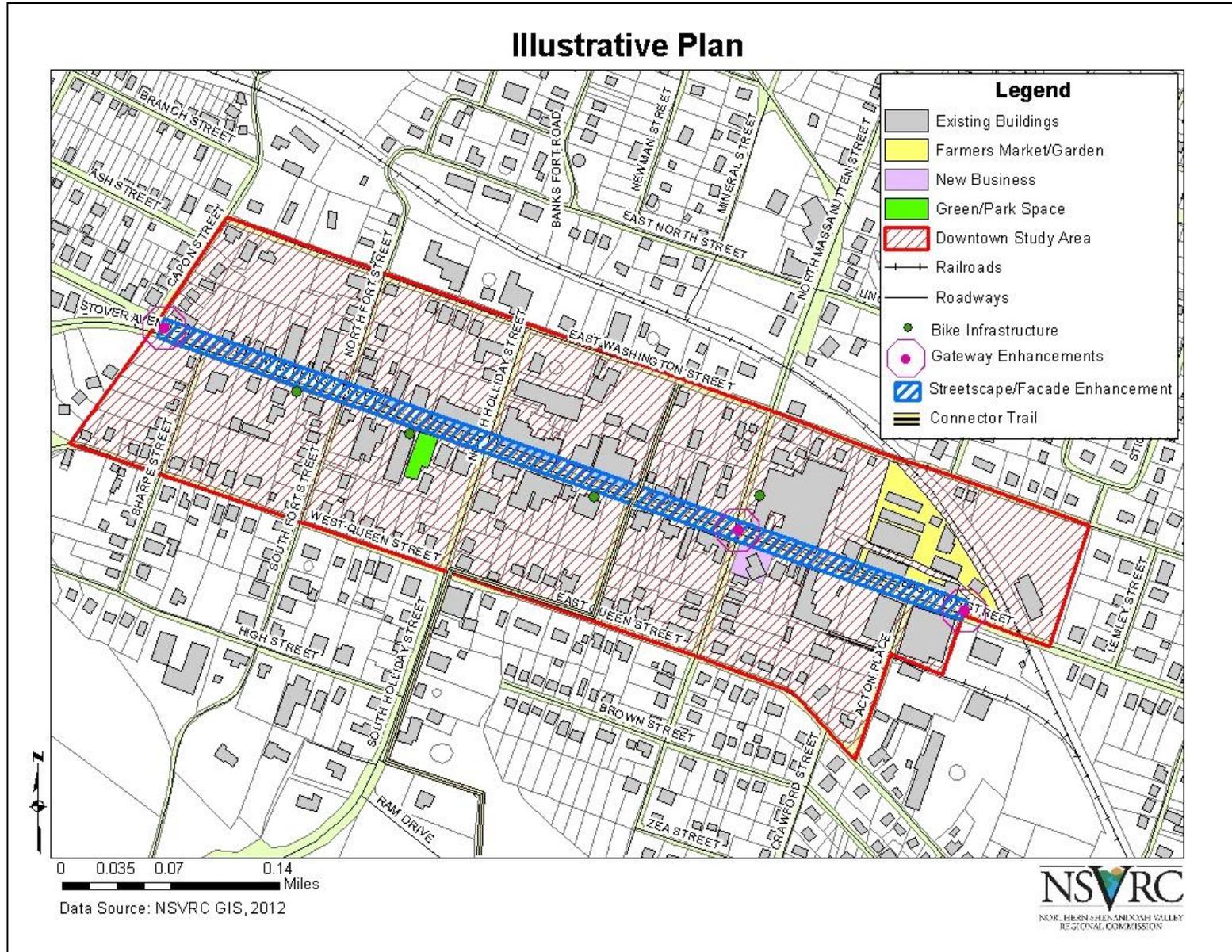
Strasburg Downtown Plan

Strategy	Immediate (0-6 months)	Short 6 months-1 year)	Intermediate (1-3 years)	Long-Term (3+ years)	Partners	Funding Opportunities
Goal 6: Recruit new businesses to meet unmet market demand.						
Strategy A: Recruit an outdoor outfitter or bicycle shop to capitalize on cultural and natural heritage of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.					Local outdoor tour/adventure operators.	Developing a marketing packet including properties and financial and/or development incentives should also be undertaken.
Strategy B: Recruit a specialty foods establishment.					Downtown planning group, Chamber of Commerce.	Developing a marketing packet including properties and financial and/or development incentives should also be undertaken.

Illustrative Plan

The map on the following page is intended to be a visual depiction of the goals and strategies identified in this Plan. Like goals and strategies, the illustrative plan serves the elements of the Main Street Four-Point Approach. In addition to describing Plan components such as gateway, and pedestrian enhancements, the plan also showcases the vision for future development of open space and business conversion. This map is not intended to provide specific parameters, but instead convey more generally how development could occur according to this plan.

Illustrative Plan



Potential Funding Resources

Because Downtown Strasburg is in need of both public and private investment, a mix of funding strategies will be necessary. The phasing established in the plan calls for immediate and ongoing action to revitalize the area. Because minimal funds will be available from the Town, a significant funding source will be necessary to implement the strategies outlined in the plan. Brief descriptions of available programs are given below.

Community Development Block Grants

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) help communities develop plans that will address their needs. Downtown Strasburg could benefit from the following CDBG programs:

The Department of Housing and Community Development offers tiered grants for construction projects. Projects must improve the economic vitality of the community. The Community Needs/Economic Assessment Planning Grant is a potential funding source for projects in this plan. Localities can be awarded up to \$10,000 through Community Organizing Planning Grants. In addition, community residents can use the grant to develop strategies for future improvements.

Business District Revitalization Grants require complicated preparation and can take years to carry out. Therefore, the following grants are precursors to the BDRG: the Community Needs Assessment/Economic Assessment Grants of up to \$10,000 are used to perform a general needs analysis and determine the community's needs. A focus is placed on social and physical improvements with resident input.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits

LIHTC can be awarded to developers of qualified projects. Developers can then sell credits to investors to raise funds for their projects, reducing the amount developers have to borrow. Because the developer's debt is lower, the tax credit property can charge affordable rent to low-income residents. Projects eligible for LIHTC must meet the low-income occupancy threshold requirements. A minimum of 20% of the units are required to be rent restricted and occupied by households with incomes at or below 50-60% of the HUD-determined area median income. These rent and income restrictions must be in place for 30 years or longer. LIHTC requirements also include rehab costs if a developer is acquiring an existing building.

Business Improvement District

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a special district defined by the Town, where additional taxes are levied on property owners and the additional revenue goes directly to improve or promote the district. A BID ensures a steady stream of financing. This method of financing reduces

political opposition because the beneficiaries will pay directly for improvements. The creation of distinct geographical boundaries can limit who benefits from improvements. A major disadvantage is the lack of a large pool from which to finance improvements. The pace of fundraising may not match the phasing of the Plan.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing is a system whereby additional tax revenue collected from rising assessments is earmarked to repay bonds issued to make improvements to a district. A baseline tax base is established and any taxes that are collected in excess of this baseline figure are used to repay the debt. This option can accelerate infrastructure and organizational investment needed to encourage private development. There are issues with this process, mainly related to the ability to repay the bonds that finance improvements. Since the real estate market is unreliable, it is difficult to predict increased tax revenues and thus the amount financed may not be very high.

New Market Tax Credits

The allocation process for these funds is very competitive. A community development entity (CDE) must be formed and certified by the Community Development Financial Institution Fund to compete for the credits. This program mainly finances private developments on a large scale, but smaller projects have been funded using these credits. The credit granted to the investor totals 39% of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year credit allowance period. During the first three years, the investor receives a credit equal to 5% of the total amount paid for the stock or capital interest at the time of purchase. For the remaining four years, the value of the credit is 6% annually. Investors cannot redeem their investments in CDEs prior to the conclusion of the seven year period.

Historic Tax Credits

This program provides tax credits that can encourage the rehabilitation of historic structures. To qualify for the credits the building must be an income-producing structure that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places or is listed as a contributing structure in a qualified historic district. The property is certified to receive the credits through an application process to the National Park Service and must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The cost of the rehabilitation must exceed the pre-rehabilitation cost of the building and twenty percent of approved rehabilitation costs can be used as a tax credit for the developer. The program can be very effective in the revitalization of older commercial districts because the historic character of buildings must be retained to qualify. The continued use of the property as a functional structure is ensured because of the extensive repairs that can qualify.

Enterprise Zone Funding

The Town and State offer many incentives to businesses located in Enterprise Zones (*although Strasburg is not currently designated and Enterprise Zone*). An Enterprise Zone is a specific geographic area targeted for economic revitalizing. Enterprise Zones encourage economic growth and investment in distressed areas by offering tax advantages and incentives to businesses locating within the zone boundaries. Funds from this program could be used for existing and new businesses alike.

Types of incentives that would be appropriate for businesses located in Downtown Strasburg are:

- Employment Assistance Grant: A one-time grant equivalent to \$250 per eligible permanent full-time position provided to new or expanding businesses.
- Business Relocation Grant: Relocation grants assistance to eligible new Town businesses. Award amount would be scaled to square footage of businesses space.
- Development fee rebate: Scaled fee rebate for permits associated with the renovation or construction of commercial facilities.

Existing State Incentives for Enterprise Zones:

- Real Property Improvement Tax Credit: Building rehabilitation projects of at least \$50,000, which exceeds the current assessed value of the property, and new construction projects of at least \$250,000, are eligible for a refundable state tax credit of 30% of qualified improvements. The maximum credit cannot exceed \$125,000, in any five-year period.
- Job Grants: Under certain conditions, companies may receive a grant of \$1,000 for each job filled by an Enterprise Zone resident, or \$500 for the hiring of any other employee, per year, for a three-year period. The maximum job grant per firm in any year is \$100,000.

Business Enterprise Zone Loan Program (BEZL)

The BEZL program is designed to promote community and economic development within a jurisdiction's Enterprise Zones by fostering the formation and expansion of small businesses, the creation of jobs, and removal of blight in these areas. BEZL loans are available for up to \$100,000 and can be used for seasonal or permanent working capital, equipment purchase or rehab financing of "owner-occupied" commercial properties. These are common in many existing Enterprise Zones around the Commonwealth.

Virginia Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a matching reimbursement grant program that provides for the creation and maintenance of trails and trail facilities. The program is funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Tony Hawk Foundation

The Tony Hawk Foundation seeks to foster lasting improvements in society, with an emphasis on supporting and empowering youth. The principal focus of foundation grants are to encourage and facilitate the design, development, construction, and operation of new quality skateboard parks and facilities that are located in low-income communities in the United States.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 established a federal reimbursement program for the acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is administered in Virginia by the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) for the National Park Service. The program represents a federal, state and local partnership. A key feature of the program is that all LWCF assisted areas must be maintained and opened, in perpetuity, as public outdoor recreation areas. This requirement ensures their use for future generations.

Petco Foundation 4Rs Project Support

This opportunity provides funding for projects that support the Petco Foundation 4Rs: Reduce (spay/neuter); Rescue (adoptions); Rehabilitate (training); Rejoice (promotes and assists with the human/animal bond). This grant provides financial support for the creation of facilities such as dog parks.

Bikes Belong Foundation

This organization is funded by the bicycle industry, whose mission is, "Putting more people on bikes more often." "Bikes Belong" awards grants of up to \$10,000 each to project that seeks federal funding for bicycle facilities. Because each State differs in what it allows qualifying for local match of a

project, one must check with the state TEA Transportation Enhancements (TE) coordinator before applying. Bikes Belong grants have been used for concept plans, cartography, design, outreach, and preliminary engineering, as well as contributions to the local match.

BikeWalk Virginia: Safe Routes to School Mini-Grants

BikeWalk Virginia is making available \$1,500 for Walk to School programs. Any school, school district, public agency, or non-profit is eligible to apply. These grants are intended to supplement primary funding from your local community for new or existing Safe Routes to School programs. The funds may be used for local programs as a part of International Walk to School Day. Applicants can request any amount up to \$1,500.

Kodak American Greenways Grant

The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program, a partnership project of the Eastman Kodak Company, The Conservation Fund, and the National Geographic Society, provides small grants to stimulate the planning and design of greenways in communities throughout America.

Conclusion

Downtown Strasburg has small town charm, a vibrant history and a bright future. New challenges, as well as opportunities for cultural, recreational and economic development, will continue to shape this unique main street in the near future. This Downtown Plan draws upon the corridor's potential to promote a balance of businesses and uses, livability and community, and reflects the distinct cultural heritage of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Strasburg's Downtown Plan can serve as a guide for development and redevelopment of downtown, and complement and expand upon the principles outlined in the Community Plan. In order to achieve the vision laid out in this Plan, stakeholders old and young must cooperate to cultivate growth and opportunity in the downtown district. Through cooperation among residents, business owners and the Town, the strengths and opportunities of Downtown Strasburg can be nurtured to develop a prosperous mix of uses and a pedestrian/shopper-friendly environment.

This is a downtown that is ready for business.



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Appendix

Appendix A: Main Street Four-Point Approach: Eight (8) Guiding Principles (www.preservation.org)

The National Trust Main Street Center's experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach succeeds. That success is guided by the following eight principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles.

- **Comprehensive:** No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is essential.
- **Incremental:** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that "new things are happening" in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants' understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.
- **Self-help:** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street — the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.
- **Partnerships:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality:** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process — from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.

- **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

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