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A PLAN FOR GROWTH

REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES FOR DOWNTOWN ELKTON, VIRGINIA

PREPARED BY GABRIELLE DEAN FOR THE TOWN OF ELKTON, VA



Revitalization Strategies for Downtown Elkton, Virginia

Prepared by Gabrielle Dean for the Town of Elkton, VA
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Urban and
Regional Planning in the VCU Wilder School of Government and
Public Affairs

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Photo Courtesy of Josh Gooden Photography

PURPOSE

This plan aims to identify the goals and desires of residents and merchants to develop a downtown revitalization plan with implementable action items that will help create a flourishing downtown business district. Downtown Elkton has a rich history, and the research this plan pulls together hopes to assist in achieving a dream of downtown revival.

OBJECTIVE

This plan carries out the purpose of this plan in several steps. It begins with an introduction and overview of existing conditions, then moves into a methodology to address three research questions. These questions are then addressed through surveys and market analysis, and subsequent research findings are used to inform a recommendations section and implementation guide.

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Introduction

The Town of Elkton is ready for revitalization and a new town era. In the last few years, there has been increased interest in downtown revitalization, solidified through new leadership, new businesses, improved infrastructure, and growing community interest in the downtown area as a social space. This plan targets the downtown area around the “Triangle” and identifies strategies that will help create an inclusive and thriving downtown business district that meets the vision and needs of existing residents while also attracting local tourists by utilizing the small-town charm of the area.

This plan assesses the background of the town and documents events leading to its current state. Community engagement unveils the perspectives of residents and local businesses regarding the current state of the downtown and their vision for its future. The Main Street Approach served as an outline to help match the goals of the residents and merchants to its capacity for growth. Finally, the end of the plan provides recommendations and an implementation plan to identify strategies that will help guide future development.

This work is essential for the future of the town. Downtowns exist in the hearts of communities. They are traditionally known for their unique buildings and public spaces.¹ It is unique from the rest of a town; it is a place where people in a community have an opportunity to cross paths. Although downtown spaces are generally associated with urban areas, rural areas have them and serve as distinctive cultural centers for the community. As with any other town or city, rural towns deserve thoughtful planning to help their downtowns flourish. The plan as follows aims to address strategies to spur on this flourishing in Elkton.

¹Rypkema, Donovan D. “The Importance of Downtown in the 21st Century.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69, no. 1 (2003): 9–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360308976290>.

Background

Existing Literature

Revitalization is the work that nurtures the best elements of a town as articulated by its residents by creating a plan for future development. Revitalization generally refers to leveraging existing assets of an area using economic development strategies coupled with facade improvements to improve blighted buildings.² The goal is to foster development that will lead to community flourishing.

One of the most popular tools for downtown revitalization is the Main Street America program. Localities must apply to the program and go through a competitive application process.³ The Main Street program uses a four-point approach of economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization to enhance downtowns through historic preservation and economic development strategies to attract private investors while also building a sense of community.⁴ This literature loosely follows those four Main Street categories. It breaks them down into historic preservation, placemaking, community participation, and partnership into communities to help foster community development that leads to lasting economic benefits.

Historic Preservation

It is necessary to preserve buildings with meaning central to the town's character to create a unique place that builds upon existing assets. This often includes historic private homes, businesses that have existed for generations, and even barns in the rural context.⁵ These historic buildings and their preservation are critical to the success of any revitalization programs. Revitalization programs help create original spaces by providing unique shopping and entertainment experiences that are not available in commercial centers, and a crucial aspect of those unique experiences relies upon the unique identity of a town's downtown.⁶

² Burayidi, *Downtown Revitalization in Small and Midsized Cities*.

³ "The Programs - Main Street America." Accessed October 12, 2021.
<https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/theprograms>.

⁴ Smith, Christa A. "Predicting Success or Failure on Main Street: Urban Revitalization and the Kentucky Main Street Program, 1979-1999." *Southeastern Geographer* 42, no. 2 (2002): 248-61.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2002.0022>.

⁵ Mishkovsky, Nadeja, Matthew Dalbey, Stephanie Bertaina, Anna Read, and Tad McGalliard. "Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities." International City County Management Association, 2010.

⁶ Setoguchi, Tsuyoshi, and Hidetsugu Kobayashi. "A Study on the Design Guidelines for Downtown Revitalization in Local Communities: Case Studies on the Main Street Program in United States." *AIJ Journal of Technology and Design* 7, no. 14 (2001): 265-70. <https://doi.org/10.3130/aijt.7.265>.

Placemaking

Preservation and a sense of place go hand-in-hand. One generally does not exist without the other; successful placemaking relies on preserving meaningful historical buildings and landmarks and envisioning their uses. Downtowns are unique because they are visually distinct from intentionally developed parts of town, such as shopping centers or planned neighborhoods. They are often the oldest areas of the town and have a myriad of styles and characteristics that set them apart from the rest of the area.⁷

Physical spaces are vital to the community, and they can build a sense of place and unique identity when used thoughtfully. Rojak and Cole (2016) studied place attachment in redeveloped brewpubs and found that the physical structure was a better indicator of creating a sense of place than the social factors (such as the people in the brewpub) alone.⁸ Fainstein (2010), when discussing the work of Jane Jacobs, describes a similar sentiment when she analyzed the aspects people love about cities: people often admire the physical space of a place and the way the space itself is conducive to unplanned and brief social interaction, and that such use is not only socially productive but economically productive.⁹

Neolocalism bridges the link between preservation and placemaking. Essentially, neolocalism describes the activities undertaken by community members and businesses alike to celebrate and maintain the town's unique sense of place.¹⁰ A sense of place is important to revitalization because the preservation must reach the extent of building a unique sense of place, and there must be strong community connections to the process.

Community Engagement

Central to all downtown revitalization programs is strong community participation. Development cannot, and should not, move forward without being built around the goals and wishes of existing residents. Participation today is generally required by legislation, but the terms are generally broad, and the way it plays out is determined by professional norms and strategies.¹¹ Grodach and Ehrenfreucht (2016) explain that community knowledge enables the practitioner

⁷ Rypkema, *Downtown Revitalization in Small and Midsized Cities*, 2003.

⁸ Rojak, Dana, and Laura B. Cole. "Place Attachment and the Historic Brewpub: A Case Study in Greensboro, North Carolina: Place Attachment and the Historic Brewpub." *Journal of Interior Design* 41, no. 1 (2016): 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joid.12066>.

⁹ Fainstein, Susan S. *The Just City*, (2010): 69. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801460487>.

¹⁰ Honkaniemi, Tuomas, Henna Syrjälä, Niklas Lundström, and Arto Rajala. "Neolocalism and Beyond—Sexing Up Rural Places*." *Rural Sociology* 86, no. 2 (2021): 326–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12368>, Citing (e.g., Argent 2018; Holtkamp et al. 2016).

¹¹ Silverman, Robert Mark, Henry L. Taylor, and Christopher Crawford. "The Role of Citizen Participation and Action Research Principles in Main Street Revitalization: An Analysis of a Local Planning Project." *Action Research* 6, no. 1 (2008): 69–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750307083725>.

to understand growth and opportunity areas and tailor revitalization to those needs. It is critical for practitioners to understand and implement fair and effective engagement strategies.¹²

Ellery and Ellery (2019) build upon the importance of community power by using the community participation process to create a sense of place. This participation process may mean connecting to a community's unique culture with citizen empowerment to build a strong local identity.¹³ In the case of Clarksdale, Mississippi, this meant building upon its blues culture to create a unique sense of place which in turn created sustainable downtown business development.¹⁴ The town of Greenville, Kentucky built upon its assets and engaged the community to transform its downtown business district from an empty main street to a busy hub for weekend activity.¹⁵ Both of these success stories emerged from building upon existing strengths coupled with strong engagement from the community.

Arnstein (1969) defines levels of participation with the development of her Ladder of Citizen Participation, which begins with the broadest and least engaging strategy of manipulation and works its way up towards the most engaged and effective strategy of citizen control over the process.¹⁶ Although Arnstein's ladder generally relates to policy development it has important implications for citizen participation in the downtown revitalization process.¹⁷

Fainstein (2010) criticizes modern community participation techniques by explaining that it is generally democratic, but not equitable, and continues to say that, "[Participation] is rarely transformative, but it does, like the old-fashioned political machine, provide a training ground for developing leadership skills and a path of upward political mobility."¹⁸ This is the type of community participation that local governments must avoid. Participation is not merely decorative; it is central to the entire process.

¹² Grodach, Carl, and Renia Ehrenfeucht. *Urban Revitalization*. Routledge, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315850214>.

¹³ Ellery, Peter J., and Jane Ellery. "Strengthening Community Sense of Place through Placemaking." *Urban Planning* 4, no. 2 (2019): 237–48. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v4i2.2004>.

¹⁴ Henshall, John C. "Delta Blues at the Crossroads: Cultural Tourism and the Economic Revitalization of Downtown Clarksdale, Mississippi." Thesis Eleven 109, no. 1 (2012): 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513612444559>.

¹⁵ Schwartz, Brett. "Façades, Festivals, and Footpaths: Greenville, Kentucky's Downtown Redevelopment." *Vibrant Rural Communities Case Studies*. National Association of Development Organizations, (2012). <https://www.nado.org/facades-festivals-and-footpaths-greenville-kentuckys-downtown-redevelopment/>

¹⁶ Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 85, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2018.1559388>.

¹⁷ Silverman, et al., *The Role of Citizen Participation*, 2008.

¹⁸ Fainstein, *The Just City*, 2010.

A critical way to avoid ineffective participation is through building trust. Practitioners and government officials must remember that they work with residents and must be willing to share power.¹⁹ Virginia Community Voice (2020) further pushes against traditional and ineffective norms in the citizen participation process. Their blueprint for community engagement first suggests understanding the historical context of the area undergoing engagement. It then outlines the need to conduct informal relationship building, formal interviews, and surveys co-designed and conducted by neighborhood leaders.²⁰ Other forms of participation include standard public hearings, advisory committees, and even online participation strategies if necessary.²¹ After the data is gathered, it must be analyzed to create a holistic picture of the goals of the community.²²

Partnership

Even though participation is critical to identifying the goals of the community, there is a final piece that needs to be addressed for truly effective revitalization: partnership. In a study of 37 revitalized Main Street communities in Kentucky, Smith (2002) found that the most successful projects were those communities that had the most to lose, meaning consumers and residents were more likely to do their shopping and search for services in other communities.²³ The lack of centralization in the downtown community meant people were taking their business - and social capital - elsewhere. The communities Smith studied recognized the value of downtown revitalization and put the pieces in place necessary to create change.

A similar situation occurred in Charleston with the redevelopment of the King Street area. The businesses that felt they would benefit the most from a revitalization project were the most eager to participate.²⁴ These scenarios advance the notion that although a downtown area may be in need of structured redevelopment, there must be buy-in from the community and business entities alike.

Conclusion

Richard Florida (2003) points out that although small communities have strong social networks, they may often be isolated or exclusive and push out newcomers

¹⁹ Grodach and Ehrenfreucht, *Urban Revitalization*.

²⁰ Virginia Community Voice. "Virginia Community Voice Blueprint: A Four Stage Process Toward Thriving Communities," (2020). <https://vacommunityvoice.org/blueprint-pdf>.

²¹ Grodach and Ehrenfreucht, *Urban Revitalization*.

²² Virginia Community Voice, *Blueprint*, 2020.

²³ Smith, *Predicting Success or Failure on Main Street*, 2002.

²⁴ Litvin, Stephen W. "Streetscape Improvements in an Historic Tourist City a Second Visit to King Street, Charleston, South Carolina." *Tourism Management* 26, no. 3 (2005): 421–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.01.001>.

and new ideas.²⁵ This mentality impedes necessary growth and development. Effective rural community development must leverage the strengths of small communities, such as their strong sense of place, while also working to expand openness to new ideas and people. At the same time, expanding mindsets must be balanced with the notion of citizen control. Government and planning officials can introduce new ideas, but it is ultimately up to the citizens to decide their vision and goals. As stated by Eversole (2012):

“Future community development practice is not, in the end, about meeting the challenge of how to convince others to participate in our worldviews and institutions. Rather, the challenge of participation is about how to become participants in our own right: choosing to move across institutional and knowledge terrains to create new spaces for communities and organizations to ‘participate’ together.”²⁶

Learning to participate together as town officials and citizens will be critical to the growth and development of the Town of Elkton. If successful, there is a great opportunity for a thriving downtown that builds upon its unique sense of place. Despite the possible challenges of community development, it is well worth it to help the community flourish.

Revitalization, at its core, seeks to create a community centered on the goals and desires of the existing residents. It does this by combining preservation and place-making concepts with detailed citizen goals to help create a flourishing community. It may take more work than a project without participation, but the results for the physical space and people that live there are worth the effort.

²⁵ Florida, Richard. “Cities and the Creative Class.” *City & Community* 2, no. 1 (2003): 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6040.00034>.

²⁶ Eversole, Robyn. “Remaking Participation: Challenges for Community Development Practice.” *Community Development Journal* 47, no. 1 (2012): 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsq033>.

Existing Conditions

History of Downtown

Nestled at the edge of Shenandoah National Park, the Elkton downtown area has been a commercial and cultural center in the Shenandoah Valley for hundreds of years. The area now known as Elkton quickly became a hub for river transportation along the Shenandoah River through to Harpers Ferry. The town became a boomtown in the late 1800s due to the development of a railroad, which sparked the initial development of the town.²⁷ The Elkton Improvement Company began the development of the town and hired A.C. Walker to write the plan, which included a densely developed grid with bridges, schools, and parks, all structured around the Shenandoah River.²⁸ The Town of Elkton was officially incorporated in 1908.²⁹

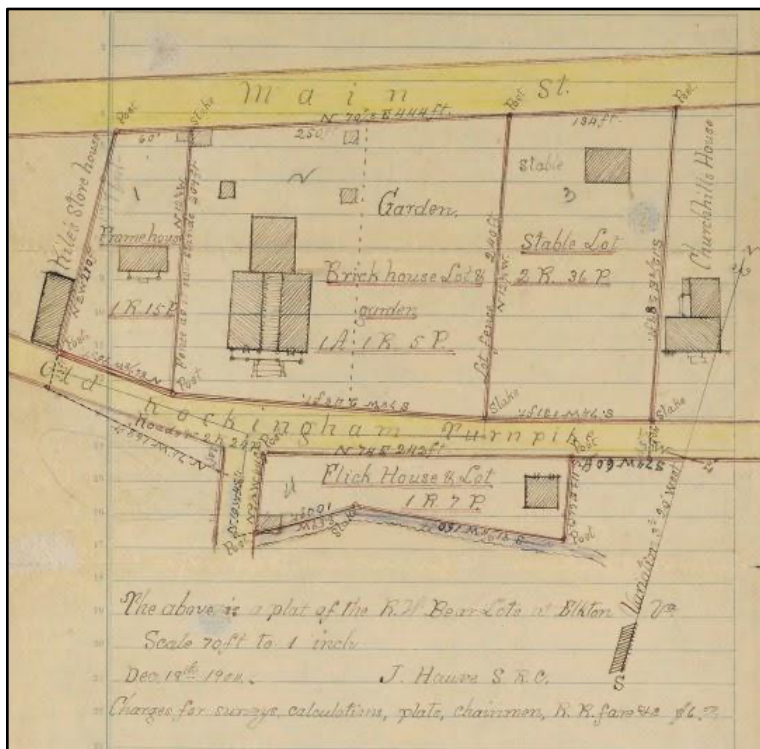


Image A. Downtown Plat, circa 1900. The image above shows a plat of downtown Elkton near the current “Triangle” area.

²⁷ *Town of Elkton Comprehensive Plan*, 2018.

²⁸ Stanford University, Stanford, and California 94305. “Map of Elkton Rockingham County Virginia. 1890.” Barry Lawrence Ruderman Map Collection - Spotlight at Stanford. Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/ruderman/catalog/zv339hn5028>.

²⁹ *Town of Elkton Comprehensive Plan*, 2018.

Description of the Study Area

The area studied is known as the “Triangle”. This area is divided by West Spotswood Avenue and West Spotswood Trail. In the middle lies a railroad that runs parallel between North 5th Street and North Terrace Avenue. The downtown area extends west and ends on South Stuart Avenue (US 340) and filters out through the east end of the town to Spotswood Trail (US Highway 33). Much of the development existing downtown today follows historical patterns of development created by the railroad and the original plan. The map below shows the designated study area, most of which is zoned as B-1 for the downtown business district.



Map 1. Map of the study area in Downtown Elkton, VA. Data courtesy of Rockingham County, VA, 2021.

Since its beginning, Elkton has experienced varied periods of growth and decline. Despite these ebbs and flows, the downtown has largely maintained the same form and use. The images below show this clearly. Image B was taken in 1901, and dirt roads and horses are used as the main methods of transportation. Those roads are centered around the “Triangle” area and have what appear to be businesses and other commercial uses along the corridor. Image C, taken in 1958, shows a view of the same corridor centered around the “Triangle,” but facing west instead of east. The same roads exist, and the area appears to be very busy. There are many cars

parked with people walking around, cars using the roads to travel, and many businesses along the corridor.



Image B. Downtown Elkton, circa 1909. Image courtesy of Cherie Chris Breeden.

Image C. Downtown Elkton, view of West Spotswood Trail, circa 1958. Image courtesy of Jessy Dean Hughes.

Image D shows the downtown “Triangle” area as it stands today. The form is the same, with West Spotswood Avenue and West Spotswood Trail flanking either side of the street along with several businesses. These images, which detail the historical patterns of development, are critical in preserving the history and capturing the historic sense of place that is present in the downtown area.



Image D. Downtown Elkton, circa 2021. Image courtesy of Joshua Gooden.

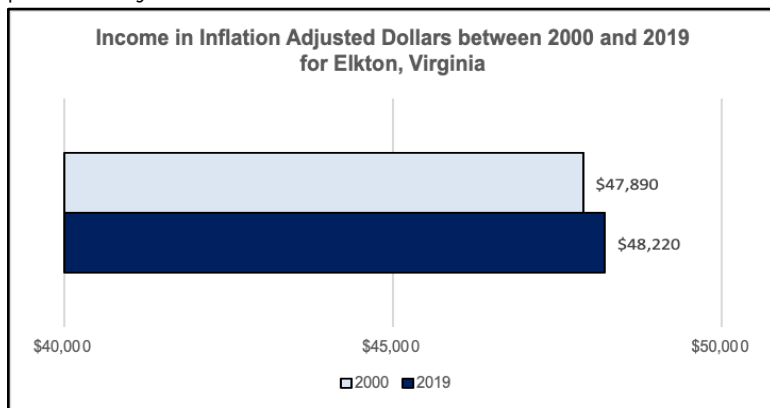
Demographic Data

Elkton is a small rural community. Within the town boundaries, there are approximately 2,800 residents. In the surrounding Elkton area in the 22827 zip code there are approximately 11,200 residents. According to 2000 US Census Data, approximately 65% of residents over age 25 had a high school diploma or higher, and

out of those, only 6% had a bachelor's degree or higher. The number of residents aged 25 and over with a high school diploma or higher increased to 85% in 2019, and those who held bachelor's degrees or higher rose to 13%.

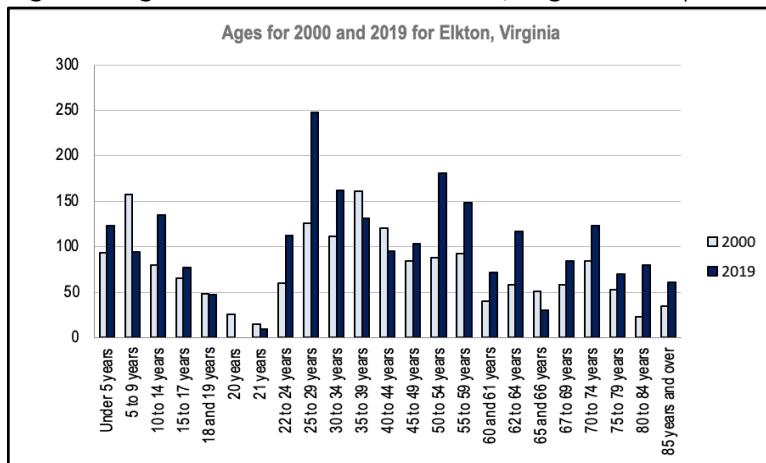
Income is helpful to understand the purchasing power of residents to help target future business development that will benefit the people who live and work in the area. According to 2000 Census data, the median household income was \$31,364, which comes out to \$47,890 when adjusted for inflation in 2019 dollars. Median household income in 2019 came out only slightly higher at \$48,220, which indicates that there may be wage stagnation. This creates a prime opportunity for new development to come to the town to stimulate local job growth.

Figure A. Income in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars between 2000 and 2019 for Elkton, Virginia. Data provided by the US Census.



Age and sex can help inform business and community development decisions by developing the downtown with consideration for those whom it would best serve. Population growth overall has been increasing, despite some dips in certain age groups. Notably, there are no people aged 20 in the town compared to 26 people aged 20 in the year 2000, and the number of 25-29-year-olds nearly doubled between 2000 and 2019. The most heavily populated age groups range from ages 25 to 59 years, and a significant population between 70 and 74 years of age. The chart below illustrates these findings.

Figure B. Ages in 2000 and 2019 in Elkton, Virginia. Data provided by the US Census.



Zoning Analysis

Most of the area in question is designated by the town as B-1, which is titled Downtown Business District. The chart below summarizes the zoning use. The definition for B-1, which covers the entire study area, is relatively broad, along with its permitted uses. This is helpful when considering the types of future developments that can occur. Several special-use exceptions are also made for a variety of uses, most relevantly including athletic fields, beverage, and food manufacturing, and drive-in theaters.

The downtown area is generally opposed to very dense housing development. Apartments are only permitted to exist at the time the code was adopted, indicating there may not be any more apartments built, except for ground floor rear apartments. Homes within the B-1 category can be permitted under the R-5 Residential District designation. Single-family homes, along with duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family dwellings with no more than 8 units are permitted. Details of permitted uses are provided in the chart below.

Other permitted residential uses downtown are single-family homes that fit within the R-3 category with 2 parking spaces provided and must be in accordance with existing businesses. As detailed in the chart below, this style of development is meant to prevent noise, crowds, traffic, and light among other urban aspects. This type of development is conflicting with the description of the downtown business area, which indicates several uses which may bring in traffic and noise and which are generally associated with downtown business districts. This could also conflict with future development and the ability to bring in more businesses and public spaces. Important to note is the addition of short-term rentals under the special use category, which opens the opportunity for tourism, especially connected to the nearby Appalachian Trail.

Generally, there are no setback or frontage requirements for main buildings. Side yard requirements are set at zero feet unless it is adjoined or separated by a residential district and is then permitted to have side yards of 10 feet on either side. The maximum height is relatively low, at around 35 feet except for public or semi-public buildings which can extend to 60 feet, and height can be extended in some situations to 45 feet if each side yard is increased to 20 feet. This creates a very low-density downtown business district, which may impede walkability and the feeling of an enclosed atmosphere. According to Arendt (2017), conventional suburban style land use regulations, which focus mostly on regulating growth versus planning future patterns of development, erode the community’s sense of unique identity.³⁰ This may be problematic from a downtown development perspective and could affect the sense of place generally desired by downtown districts.

Understanding adjacent uses to the area in question can help inform future development decisions to ensure development is cohesive. Adjacent uses to the downtown district include residential development, titled Residential District (R-7) and General Business District (B-2). The R-7 use is primarily targeted toward affordable housing development in the form of manufactured homes. The General Business District generally follows similar development to the Downtown Business District, save for a few minor differences. These uses are generally conducive to what has already been outlined in the above zoning categories in the study area (primarily B-1) but provide an appropriate context for moving forward in planned community development.

Table 1. Zoning Uses in the Town of Elkton, VA. Information pulled from Article VI of the town’s code.

Zoning	Intent	Permitted Uses	Maximum Height	Setbacks	Side yards
B-1	Directed towards the portion of the town that requires frequent and direct access from the public	Commercial stores, recreation, restaurants, offices, greenhouses, bus stations, public utilities and services, schools, parking garages and lots, off-street parking, signs, museums, single-family detached dwellings consistent with R-3 District standards	35 feet, with special exceptions up to 60 feet	N/A	Zero feet, except those next to residential uses must have 10-foot side yards
R-3	To stabilize and protect the character of residential neighborhoods by preventing	Single-family detached dwellings, public utilities, public water and sewage, public service or storage buildings, modular homes, accessory apartments	35 feet, with special exceptions up to 45 feet	25 feet	5 feet for one side, 15 feet for two sides, and an extra 15 feet for

³⁰ Arendt, 2015.

	noise, light, and other noxious uses				corner lots
R-5	Directed towards protecting residential character	Single-family detached dwellings, duplexes, two-family dwellings, multiple family and single-family dwellings with no more than 8 units, public utilities, public water and sewage, public service or storage buildings, apartments located in a private garage, and modular homes	35 feet	25 feet	5 feet for one side, 15 feet for two sides, and an extra 15 feet for corner lots
R-7	Low-cost residential development	Manufactured home parks and subdivisions, buildings for housing management offices, child-care centers, laundry facilities, or indoor recreational facilities, public utilities, public water and sewage, public service or storage facilities	Not discussed	Not discussed	Not discussed
B-2	General business such as light retail and light traffic	Retail stores, banks, theaters, business offices, newspaper offices, printing presses, restaurants and taverns, garages, and service stations	35 feet, with special exceptions up to 60 feet	25 feet	Zero feet, except those next to residential uses must have 10-foot side yards

Existing Uses and Business Inventory

Existing uses, as allowed by the zoning ordinance for the Downtown Business District, are quite varied. This is a unique trait of small towns, in that a variety of uses of space can be incorporated into one place. This can prove to be a benefit if the current and future development is planned in a way that capitalizes on the strengths of mixed-use development and historic preservation.

Currently, there are 96 businesses in the downtown area. Of these existing businesses, eleven are food and beverage businesses, seven retail stores, 5 automotive stores, two related to manufacturing and production, five automotive-related businesses, ten service-related businesses, and two agricultural businesses. Table 2 below details the existing storefronts downtown grouped into similar clusters. A full list of businesses and their owners can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2. Business Categories in the Study Area.

Category	Amount	Included Businesses
Food and Beverage	11	Blue Elk Coffee Shop and Roastery, Elkton Brewing Co., Elkton Creamy and Tea Room, C&S Diner, Elkton's Grub and Gab Diner, El Paso, Goodfellas, Old 33 Beer and Burger Grill, McDonald's, Subway, and a Pizza Hut
Retail	7	Appalachian Outfitters, Blue Ridge Outdoor Supply, HenHouse Shoppe, The Hidden Violet, McGuire's Country Store, Shenandoah Garden Spot
Automotive Stores	5	Big L Tire Pros, Chris's Automotive, Knight's Towing and Recovery, Lawson's Auto Repair, Superior Tire and Auto
Manufacturing and Production	2	Blue Oval Industries, Inc., Union Paper Corporation
Services	10	Elkton Area United Services, Elkton Eyecare, Elkton Family Pharmacy, Elkton Laundromat, Farmers and Merchants Bank, The Hair Gallery, The Loading Dock Salon, United Bank, Zopp Family Dental Center, First Bank
Agricultural Businesses	2	Rockingham Cooperative, Pure Shenandoah

There has been significant growth within the last five years that indicate interest in business coming to downtown Elkton. They are described in more detail below.

Blue Elk Coffee Shop and Roastery

Opened in 2017, this coffee shop and roastery boasts freshly roasted coffee from El Salvador and Colombia. The shop provides coffee to local churches and businesses as well as shares profits with its growers. The shop is located at 315 West Spotswood Trail, and it is open Monday through Saturday from 7:30am to 2pm.

Elkton Brewing Co.

Opened in March 2020, this nanobrewery is family-owned and operated, and it employs four people. Despite opening during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the brewery has won several awards, including Best New Brewery in Virginia and Washington, DC by porchdrinking.com and attracts hundreds of visitors every weekend, from Elkton, the surrounding counties, hikers coming off the Appalachian Trail, and visitors from the local Massanutten Resort. The building itself is in the historic Elkton Milling Company, which was built in 1890, which adds to its charm, as well as its emphasis on using local water from Bear Lithia Springs to brew its beers, local flavors, local musicians, and beers named after legendary local tales. Even more recently, they

brought forward a request to the town council to expand their business to include outdoor space. The taproom is located at 100 5th Street and is open Tuesday through Sunday afternoons.

HenHouse Shoppe

Located at 212 West Spotswood Avenue, this clothing retail store focuses on women's apparel. Beginning first as an online store, the boutique opened its first brick-and-mortar store in downtown Elkton in 2018. In addition to selling apparel, HenHouse Shoppe has an initiative to give back to single mothers and nonprofit organizations in the community. Due to its success in the last three years, the shop opened a second location in Luray, Virginia in 2021. The Elkton store hours are Wednesday through Friday from 11am to 6pm and Saturdays from 10am to 5pm.

Appalachian Outfitters

Originally located in Luray, Virginia, this business opened a second location at 311 West Spotswood Trail in 2020. This retail store focuses on selling outdoor supplies for hiking and other outdoor activities, as well as gift items. This store is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm and Sundays from 1pm to 5pm.

Elkton Creamery and Tea Room

Filling the gap of a local ice cream shop, this business opened in 2020. The store serves 24 flavors of hand-dipped ice cream and is located at 302 West Spotswood Trail. They are open Wednesday through Saturday from 11am to 6pm during the summer and with limited hours during the rest of the year.

Pure Shenandoah

This industrial hemp facility is located at 154 West Spotswood Avenue. Identified as a seed-to-sale company, this facility focuses on sourcing all of its hemp from local Virginia farmers. Its impact will directly benefit the local community and is slated to create 24 jobs.³¹

Impressively, many of these businesses opened during or just before the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted most of the economy on a national scale. Not only have these businesses opened, but they have experienced success with many of them expanding within the last year. Part of this could be due to the fact that many of them focus on utilizing local assets and giving back to the community, as well as

³¹ Examiner, Royal. "Pure Shenandoah to Create 24 New Jobs in Rockingham County, Source All Hemp from Virginia." Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://royalexaminer.com/pure-shenandoah-to-create-24-new-jobs-in-rockingham-county-source-all-hemp-from-virginia/>.

excitement over activity after many years of stagnation downtown. This indicates momentum within the town; based on the success of these new businesses, locals are engaged and eager to spend time downtown.

In addition to these businesses, there are several other incoming developments. A new inn just outside the downtown area opened for operation in 2021, as well, which could indicate new opportunities for hospitality and tourism in the neighboring downtown district.³² In 2021 plans were formalized for a greenway that would impact downtown. The Elk Run Greenway is proposed to run off the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, which flows just past the downtown area and eventually connects to future trails.³³

Vacancies

There are 96 commercial buildings within the downtown area. Despite this relatively large amount of commercial buildings within the roughly half-mile area, there are issues that contribute to a possible feeling of vacancy. First, there may also be some design aspects, such as setbacks and inefficient use of space, that contribute to an appearance of vacancy. Many commercially zoned buildings in the area have businesses that do not have storefronts or public entrances which also contributes to a feeling of emptiness. Some businesses have parking in front which may add to a feeling of emptiness as the storefronts are further off the street and the cars become the focal point instead of the business. Buildings in disrepair add to the appearance of vacancy even if the building is occupied. Further, there are several vacant buildings along the main commercial corridors. Image E shows a building in need of cosmetic improvement and Image F shows vacant buildings adjacent to active businesses.



Images E (left) Downtown Building in Need of Repair. Image F (right) Downtown Storefronts and Vacancies.

³² Wetzler, Jessica. "Elkton Council Approves New Inn." Daily News-Record, May 20, 2021. https://www.dnronline.com/news/rockingham_county/elkton-council-approves-new-inn/article_92e44f45-4bf5-5ed6-b97d-03aab99fdd82.html.

³³ Wetzler, "Elkton Council Approves New Inn," 2021.

Finally, there is an owner who purchased a significant number of properties in the study area. In 2017, an outside developer made plans to start a wellness park and purchased several buildings in Elkton’s downtown. This park would serve as a rehabilitation center and utilize open space on the east side of town, and the several auxiliary facilities were intended to operate in existing buildings owned by the town, many of which were historic buildings, including the historic Elkton Theatre.³⁴ The development passed through the town council with a 4 to 1 vote in favor of the project.³⁵

Since the development passed, nearly all the buildings and plots of land remain vacant or as they were at the sale. This owner owns a total of 17 buildings within the study area, all of which are vacant. This comes out to nearly 18% of the total commercial buildings in the area. This is a large factor to overcome in development moving forward. The buildings are shown in Map 3 below.



Map 3. Vacant Buildings in the study area owned by a single owner. Data courtesy of Rockingham County, VA, 2021.

Although some work began to renovate unused buildings like the Elkton Theatre, not much more has been completed beyond exterior improvements.³⁶ This presents a significant challenge for future development within the town. If a property owner

³⁴ Stout, Nolan. “Elkton Council Supports Wellness Park.” *Daily News-Record*, February 20, 2017. https://www.dnronline.com/news/local/elkton-council-supports-wellness-park/article_51dad866-f7f0-11e6-a8f0-3bfd7c6c535a.html.

³⁵ Stout, “Elkton Council Supports Wellness Park,” 2017.

³⁶ Bradshaw, Vic. “Design Plans Advancing for Shuttered Elkton Theatre.” *Daily News-Record*, June 26, 2018. https://www.dnronline.com/news/local/design-plans-advancing-for-shuttered-elkton-theatre/article_1d1dad6c-78f8-11e8-bf32-9713d46beb16.html.

holds many properties in prime downtown real estate and the cultural center of the community but has no proposed development, then development may remain stagnant.



Image H (left) shows Elkton Theatre around the time it opened in the late 1940s. Image courtesy of Mike Powell. Image I (right) shows the Elkton Theatre as it stands vacant today. Image courtesy of Vic Bradshaw of the Daily News-Record, 2018.

Surrounding Influences

There are specific influences surrounding the Town of Elkton that add value and visibility. These include the proximity of Massanutten Resort and Shenandoah National Park. Massanutten Resort is located about seven miles away from downtown Elkton. The resort describes itself as a four-season resort, offering ski slopes, hiking trails, golf courses, a water park, and other outdoor recreational activities. According to the company, the resort attracts an estimated one million visitors annually.³⁷ To drive from Massanutten Resort to Shenandoah National Park, a major attraction for the resort, visitors must pass through Elkton via US Highway 33. It is currently unknown how many visitors detour from their trip to visit downtown Elkton but capturing this group of consumers would prove to be extremely beneficial to the town.

Shenandoah National Park is another important influence on the town. Swift Run Gap, which is a major entrance into the park, is located within the boundaries of Elkton just off US Highway 33 East. Located just off this entrance is Skyline Drive, the park's notorious 105-mile scenic drive that offers several overlooks, and the Appalachian Trail. Skyline Drive attracts visitors from all over the country and even the world. According to local news reports, nearly 1.7 million people visited the park

³⁷ "Massanutten Resort: About Us," n.d. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/massanutten-resort>

in 2020, and 365,000 people visited in October 2020 alone.³⁸ Recently, Elkton was designated officially as the 50th Appalachian Trail community by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.³⁹ This designation is an exciting opportunity for the town to connect to its proximity to the Appalachian Trail to pull hikers off the trail to the downtown area.

Harrisonburg is also an influence on the downtown area of Elkton, which is located approximately 15 miles to the west. Harrisonburg is a small city home to about 50,000 people but is rapidly growing. It houses two universities, James Madison University and Eastern Mennonite University, as well as major box stores such as Target and Walmart which attract people from the region. The city is also a Main Street America city as well as home to the first Culinary and Arts and Culture Districts in Virginia.⁴⁰

Design and Aesthetics

In the last few years, several steps have been taken to improve the aesthetics and overall appeal of the downtown area. In 2020, the renovation of the historic Jennings House, which houses the town government, was completed. The building has important cultural and historical significance to the town and further develops the sense of place while also providing a central meeting place for community events.⁴¹



Image J. Jennings House, courtesy of Lantz Construction.

³⁸ News-Record, JESSICA WETZLER Daily. "2020 Record-Breaking Year For Shenandoah National Park." Daily News-Record. Accessed October 26, 2021. https://www.dnronline.com/news/coronavirus/2020-record-breaking-year-for-shenandoah-national-park/article_3ec279b2-a838-59b6-8189-578472a38712.html.

³⁹ Appalachian Trail Conservancy. "Town of Elkton 50th A.T. Designation Ceremony." Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://appalachiantrail.org/event/town-of-elkton-50th-a-t-designation-ceremony/>.

⁴⁰ "Historic Downtown Harrisonburg." Accessed December 14, 2021. <https://www.virginia.org/listing/historic-downtown-harrisonburg/4547/>.

⁴¹ Hood, John. "Elkton's Jennings House Wraps up Construction with Opening Friday." <https://www.whsv.com>. Accessed October 26, 2021. <https://www.whsv.com/2020/12/10/elktons-jennings-house-wraps-up-construction-with-opening-friday/>.

Other aesthetic improvements that have occurred downtown include repairing sidewalks, adding crosswalks, painting murals, and renovating the basketball and tennis courts. Sidewalks improve connectivity and crosswalks improve safety. Murals and renovated spaces help the area feel active and inviting to visitors. These subtle facelifts and improvements add to developing a sense of place downtown to attract customers and create a welcoming environment for existing residents.



Image K (left) shows sidewalk improvements along West Rockingham Street. Image courtesy of Joshua Gooden. Image L (right) shows one of the murals recently added downtown. Image courtesy of the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Methodology

Research Questions

Stakeholder opinions were considered to truly understand the goals of the existing community and its needs moving forward. Stakeholders, in this case, include residents who may shop downtown and local business owners who operate storefronts downtown. To complete this, community engagement was completed to determine the goals of the community and its capacity for development.

The community at large was first targeted to gauge their shopping preferences and their overall view of the downtown area, including aesthetics, store offerings, opportunities for improvement, and desired business development. Targeted groups in this category are individuals who do not live in the Elkton area, but frequent the town, such as tourists and visitors from surrounding towns were also included since they contribute to the downtown economy.

The next targeted group was local business owners. A merchant survey was used to gauge how these downtown business owners felt about the current physical state of the downtown, how it could be improved, and what resources they may need

moving forward. Example businesses in this category include retail, dining, and professional and personal services that exist in the downtown area.

Once the resident and merchant data were collected, the results were used to inform a market analysis. The goal of the market analysis is to determine the market demand for certain businesses and whether there was enough demand to support those goals as identified by the community. After the market was defined, similarly-sized towns that have revitalized their downtowns were analyzed. These other towns were then used to understand what strategies were successful for them, and how they could be incorporated into Elkton in the future. The Four Points of the Main Street America program (Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization) were used to guide recommendations. Table 3 below shows the targeted information and how the information was gathered. Full survey questions are included in Appendices A and C.

Table 3. Research Questions

Target Question	Source of Information	Tools
What does the community think about downtown Elkton?	Locals who spend time downtown, locals who do not spend time downtown, visitors who frequent the area, and downtown business owners	Surveys using intercept surveys, online Google Form survey, attendance at local community meetings, and a focus group if enough interest
What are the market conditions and ability for Elkton to support community goals?	Market data via ESRI and the US Census, input from the local business owners	Market analysis
How can Elkton maintain its small-town character while also supporting new development?	Similar sized towns that have completed successful downtown revitalizations and Main Street America, input from locals	Comparable towns, Main Street America guidelines

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for these questions was completed by using the tools mentioned in the engagement methods table. The survey for the locals was conducted in person through intercept surveys at Autumn Days, an annual fall festival. Participants were asked to complete a short survey with answers entered into a corresponding Google Form survey. The survey questions available in Appendix A were used at each event. This type of engagement occurred during a three-month period ranging from October through December 2021.

The same survey was also linked to the town’s biweekly newsletter. A flier with a QR code linked to the Google Forms survey, available in Appendix B, was posted at the

Elkton Area Community Center. This survey was available for a three-month time through January. Comments were written down and later codified to quantify repeated terms and themes and used to inform the subsequent market analysis and recommendations.

The merchant survey was conducted with local businesses who voluntarily chose to participate. The goal of this survey was to gain perspective on the benefits and challenges of operating in downtown Elkton and the ways in which they would like to see the area improved. To do this, eleven local business owners were surveyed, some through in-person interactions and some online. The survey, available in Appendix C, includes questions related to how long they have been in operation, their motivation for opening a business in downtown Elkton, and their perceived opportunities and areas of improvement for the business climate in downtown Elkton. Results were entered into a Google Form survey to hold all the data in one location. This process occurred simultaneously with the community survey during the months of November through February.

The data collected were analyzed to determine if the goals of the community and local businesses are feasible through market analysis. Responses from the community and merchants were translated into specific goals. The goal of the market analysis was to determine what factors drive the local economy, how the community envisions its future, and what is feasible.⁴² This was completed by determining a trade area from which downtown attracts customers, a sales gap to determine the amount of customer spending within the trade area, a traffic analysis to determine car traffic in the area and identifying market segments of consumers. This was completed during the month of December once the community data was collected.

Once the community was surveyed and the market was analyzed, a contact from the Virginia Main Street program was identified to serve as a source of information for suggestions moving forward. This contact provided a revitalization plan from Buena Vista, a similar-sized town, to understand their challenges and successes regarding downtown revitalization, and to identify possible action items to recommend. A prominent land use attorney who specializes in vacancy property abatement was also contacted to address vacant property concerns. These were used as guidelines for recommendations made to the town of Elkton.

⁴² Main Street America. "Market Analysis for Community Transformation: A Practitioner's Guide," 2018.

Research Findings

Community Survey Responses

The following findings are based on a community survey conducted between October 2021 and January 2022. The survey received 99 responses, with approximately 60% of those through intercept surveys with in-person conversations at the local Elkton Autumn Days festival on October 16 and 17, 2021. The remaining responses were collected through a link attached to the biweekly community newsletter sent out by the town manager each week and through posters located at the Elkton Area Community Center with a QR code.

Respondent Characteristics

Most respondents surveyed live in Elkton (75.3%), either in town or in the nearby surrounding area. The remaining respondents come from Harrisonburg (6.2%), McGaheysville (4.1%), Stanardsville (2.1%), and Massanutten (2.1%), all of which are towns adjacent to Elkton. The remaining 8% of respondents were visitors from other states passing through the local festival in October. Figure C below shows the data in more visual detail.

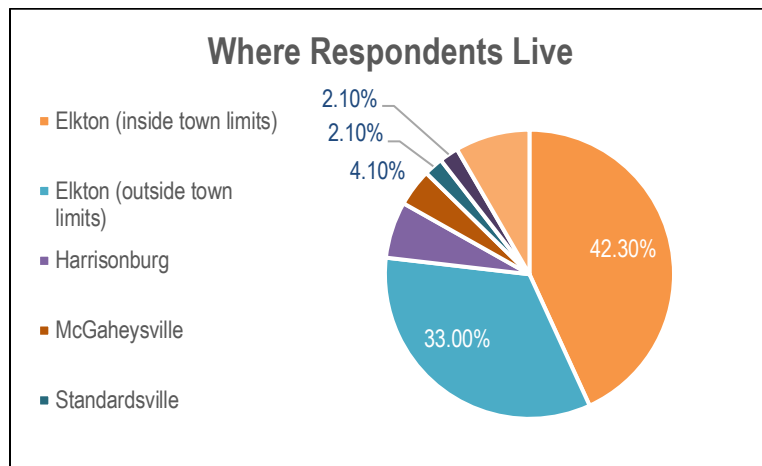


Figure C. Where Respondents Live

Respondents were of a wide variety of ages, mostly ranging from 18 to 75 years old, with ages dispersed relatively evenly. A breakdown is available in Figure D. This wide age range of respondents is beneficial as it shows that responses for other survey questions are distributed by a variety of age groups and not only one age group. This helps ensure no one group is catered to over another.

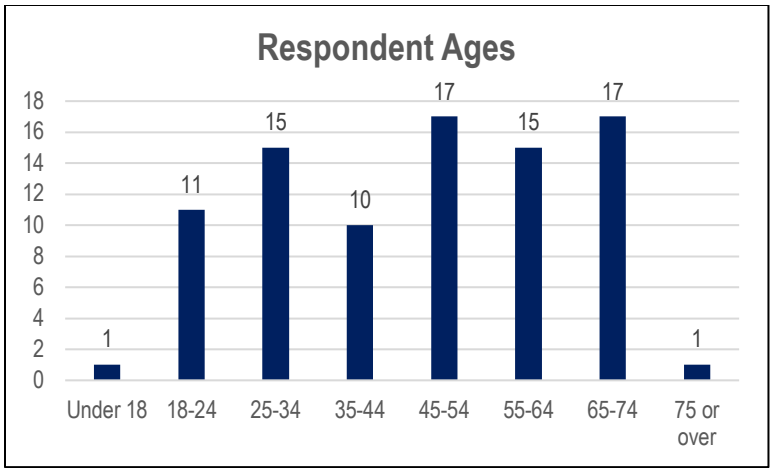


Figure D. Respondent Ages

Frequency of Visit

Respondents visit the study area quite frequently. Out of 96 respondents who answered this question, 41 of them visit Elkton weekly, which comes out to 43% of the total respondents. Another 29, or 30% total, visit daily. Approximately 8% of respondents indicated they only visit once or twice a year, or almost never. This directly correlates with the 8.2% of respondents who indicated they live out of state or in cities further away from the study area. This means that nearly all respondents surveyed who live in the Elkton area visit the downtown area on a daily, weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly basis.

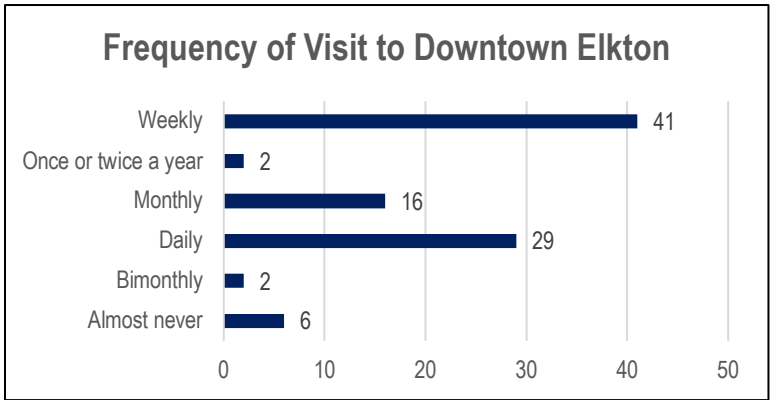


Figure E. Frequency of Visit to Downtown Elkton

Consumer Preferences

Within the same survey, respondents were asked their preferences about downtown Elkton and were allowed to offer suggestions for future development. When asked about their favorite part of downtown Elkton, respondents answered in a myriad of ways. The most common responses are visualized below in a word cloud. The more common the response, the larger the size of the word. Figure F below shows the most common responses,

which include the shops, brewery, businesses, buildings, architecture, and people.



Figure F. Common Responses about Respondent’s Favorite Aspects of Downtown Elkton

Respondents were then asked about their top three issues or problem areas downtown. Figure G shows that nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that buildings in need of repair and store vacancies are the town’s top issues, with 64 and 63 responses respectively. These were trailed by aesthetics (which refers to the overall curb appeal of the area) and store variety with 41 and 37 responses each.

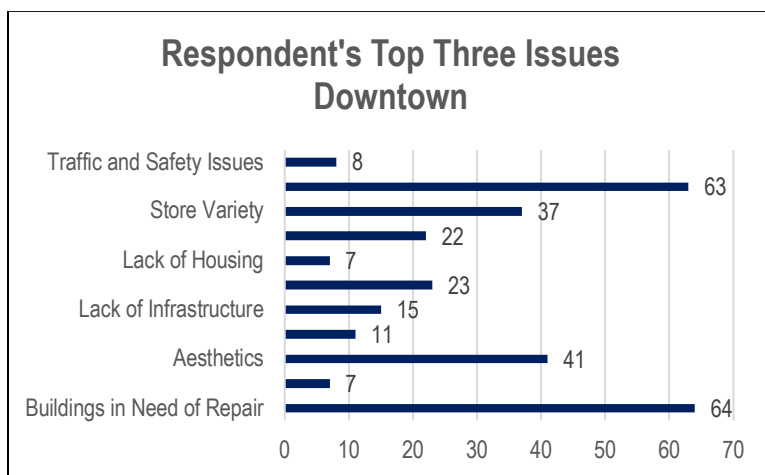


Figure G. Respondent’s Top Three Issues Downtown

To gauge consumer preferences for new businesses downtown, respondents were asked about their desired businesses downtown. This question aims to understand what is missing in Elkton and what respondents would like to see come to town. Figure H shows that nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they would like to see more restaurants (63 respondents) and entertainment options such as a theater or music venue (62 responses). The rest of the responses vary, with requests for small-scale retail stores, cafes and coffee shops, breweries or bars, and potential housing options. Child and family-friendly stores were also mentioned by several respondents.

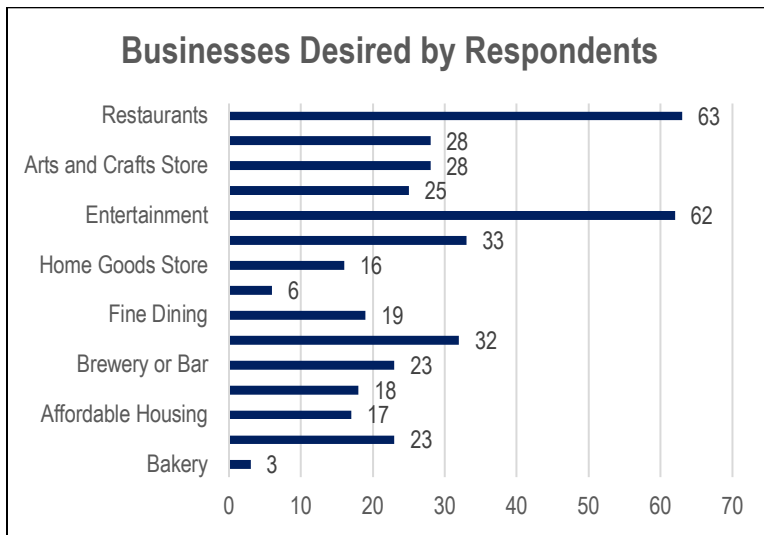


Figure H. Businesses Desired by Respondents

Qualitative Responses

In addition to the above questions, respondents were also asked to provide comments and opinions on downtown that were not able to be accurately captured by the survey. Respondents appear to be generally pleased with new developments in the town and the direction in which growth has been heading recently. General comments related to improvements include aesthetics and appearance of the town, attracting tourists from local attractions like Massanutten and Shenandoah National Park, and more activities around town.

Popular comments generally fell into the categories listed below. Table 4 outlines the number of comments received per category. A full table of comments is available in Appendix G.

Table 4. Comments from Community Survey Respondents

Topic	Number of Comments
Desire for Improved Aesthetics	2
Support for Recent Local Government Actions	3
Approval of New Businesses	4
Desire for More Community Activities	3
Desire to Cater to the Local Attractions (like Massanutten and Shenandoah National Park)	4
More Parking	1

Merchant Survey Responses

In addition to local citizens, several local business owners were contacted to better understand their experience operating in downtown Elkton. They were asked basic questions about their business operations. Results from this survey will be helpful in identifying ways the town can assist local business owners in the future along with encouraging new business development. The full survey is available in Appendix C. In all, twelve businesses were contacted and nine provided responses. While these responses clarify the experience of operating a business in Elkton, it is important to note that these businesses are varied in their goods and services and cannot always be compared with other businesses in town. The businesses in Table 5 below provided responses via face-to-face conversation, phone, or online response.

Table 5. Business Surveyed

Category	Business Name
Automotive	Lawson's Auto Repair Big L Tire Pros
Retail	Appalachian Trail Outfitters Henhouse Shoppe Kimbo Designs Nothing 2 Something
Social Services	Elkton Area United Services
Health and Wellness	Elkton Family Pharmacy Pure Shenandoah
Food and Beverage	Blue Elk Coffee Co. Elkton Brewing Company

Years in Operation

Respondents were first asked how long their business had been in operation. As available in Figure J, only one business reported they had been in operation for more than ten years, and one other reported being in business for five to ten years. This indicates that there are many new businesses opening in the study area and that several opened during or just before the pandemic, which caused many storefronts across the country to close.



Figure J. Years in Operation

Number of Employees

All respondents surveyed are small businesses owners, and the majority employ three to ten staff members. This indicates that these are small business owners who likely participate heavily in the day-to-day operation of their businesses. Figure K shows this in visual detail.

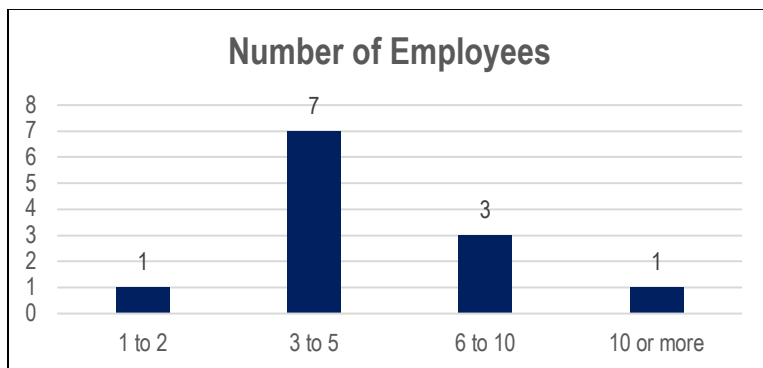


Figure K. Number of Employees

Busiest Day

Respondents were asked about their busiest days of operation. It is important to note that some businesses indicated more than one busy day of the week. In Figure L, most respondents noted that Fridays and Saturdays are their busiest days of the week. This aligns well with the general knowledge that

most customers work during weekdays and look to spend leisure time downtown on the weekends. Mondays were also a busy day for several business owners, with some mentioning they are busy administrative days within the business or just for general retail.

No businesses indicated that Tuesday through Thursday were busy days for their businesses, which coincides with the general trends of the workweek. These days present an opportunity for the town or for local business owners to host special events or marketing campaigns to attract customers during less conventional shopping hours to capture potential sales during the week.

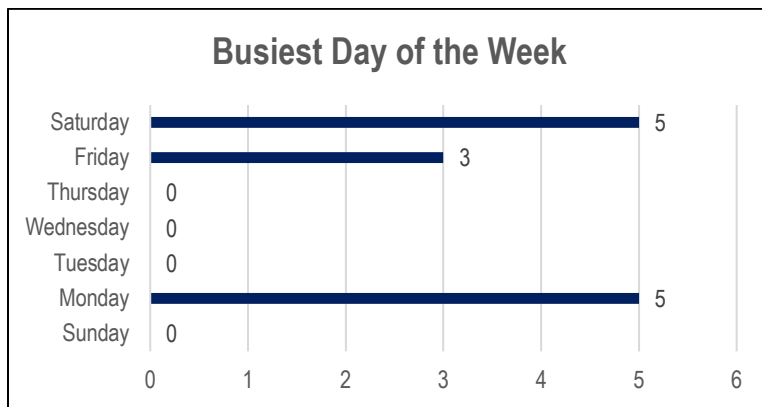


Figure L. Busiest Day of the Week

Challenges to Operation in Downtown Elkton

Nearly every respondent, and every respondent that operates a retail or service-oriented business mentioned a lack of customer foot traffic and lack of marketing to local tourists as a challenge to operating in downtown Elkton. One respondent mentioned a lack of foot traffic and irregular hours of nearby stores. Another respondent, whose business is separated from the main downtown business area by the railroad tracks feels like her business is separated from the rest of the market. These issues hint at connectivity issues within the local town businesses. Summaries of comments are available in Table 6 below. Full comments are available in Appendix G.

Table 6. Challenges to Operation in Downtown Elkton

Topic	Number of Comments
Lack of Foot Traffic and/or Tourist Traffic	5
Too Many Similar Businesses in the Surrounding Area	1
Lack of Parking	1

Benefits of Operation in Downtown Elkton

Respondents had many positive comments about the benefits of operating in the study area. Many include the small-town nature of the town with its close-knit community. Proximity to attractions also serves as a benefit to several business owners. This presents an opportunity for the town to continue marketing towards those potential customers. Table 7 provides comment summaries. Appendix G shows the comments in full detail.

Table 7. Benefits of Operation in Downtown Elkton

Topic	Number of Comments
The Community and Small Town Atmosphere	8
Positive Changes Happening Downtown	1
Fulfilling a Need for the Community	1

Plans to Expand or Reduce

Figure M shows respondent's plans to expand or reduce their businesses operations in the next year. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused small business owners across the country to struggle, many businesses in Elkton are looking to expand. This is especially impressive given that many of them have opened within the last one to three years. This indicates that local consumers are eager to spend money in downtown Elkton and support new local businesses. This also indicates that many of these businesses are targeting markets that were potentially void in previous years.

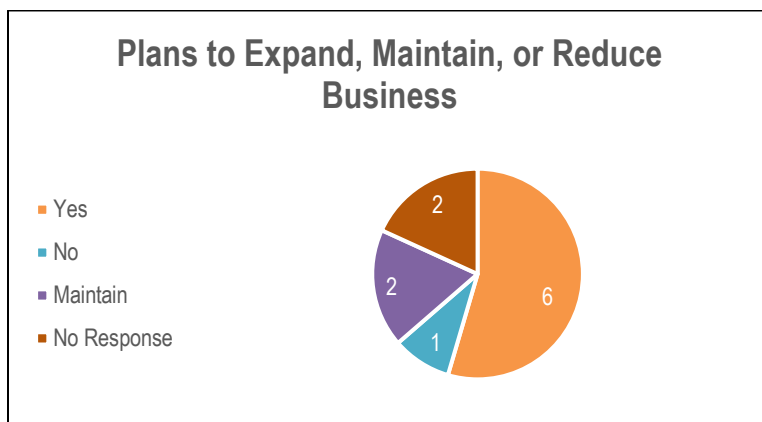


Figure M. Plans to Expand or Reduce Business

Where Customers Park

As available in Figure N, respondents were asked to provide information on where their customers generally park. This is helpful to know how much public parking the stores utilize and what potential maintenance and upkeep

the town can provide. Most businesses surveyed rely mostly, if not completely, on public street parking and public parking lots. Most did not indicate that this was a problem and felt parking was sufficient for their business.



Figure N. Where Customers Park

Town Assistance for Business Owners

Finally, respondents were asked ways the town could further assist their business. Most respondents appreciated the efforts the town has made recently to support their opening, expansion, or continued operation. Many mentioned they would like to see more marketing of the town to tourists and surrounding communities to draw in new customers. Some mentioned that it would be beneficial to their business to have a Chamber of Commerce or some sort of group to connect local business owners. Some respondents did not provide answers. Full comments are available in Appendix G.

Market Analysis

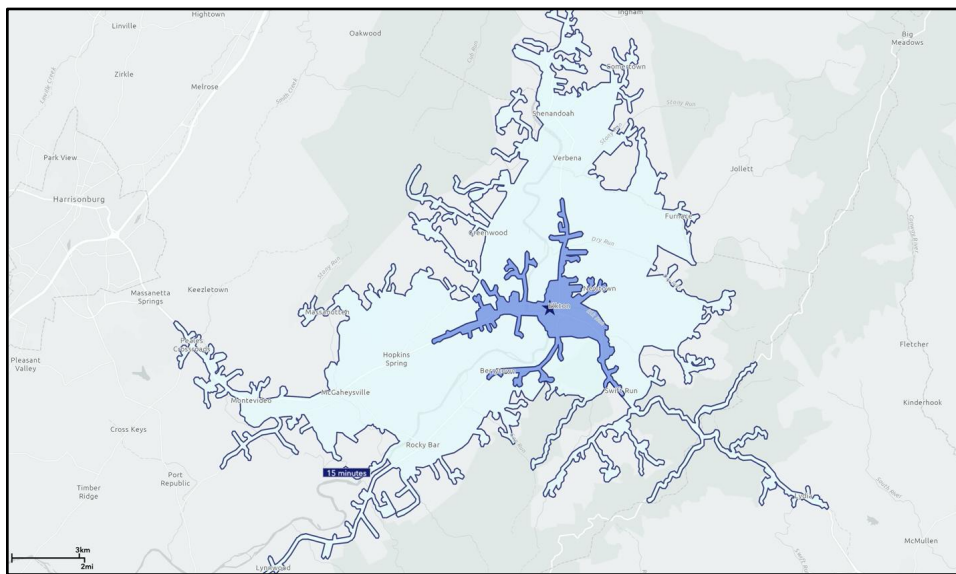
Trade Area

The trade area defines where a market draws most of its customers, which is typically where 75% of customers for local businesses reside. For the purposes of this study, the trade area will be determined by driving times from the study area in 5-minute and 15-minute areas. This means a zone will be determined by all the areas inside a zone that takes 5-minutes or 15-minutes to drive.

The area within the 5-minute drive time will be referred to as the Convenience Trade Area since it offers convenience goods that residents use daily, such as gasoline stations and grocery stores. Within this area in 2021, there were 3,173 people and 1,333 households. In 2021, the median disposable income came out to \$43,02, which is below the Virginia average of \$58,329, and per capita income was \$30,722 compared to \$41,359 for the state overall. Per capita income, which is the total average income

per person in the area, helps understand the potential spending patterns of individuals in the area.

The area within the 15-minute drive time will be referred to as the Community Shopping Trade Area, which pulls in shoppers from a wider area within a 15-minute drive from the center of the study area. The population for this area in 2021 stood at 16,209 and includes the towns of Shenandoah and McGaheysville, as well as the Massanutten community. There were 6,377 households with a median disposable income of \$47,877, which is slightly above that of the Convenience Trade Area but \$10,000 below the state average. Per capita income is slightly lower than that of the Convenience Trade Area at \$29,868. This could be due to the wider variety of communities within the trade area.



Map 4. Map of the Convenience Trade Area and Community Shopping Trade Area

Retail Data

Convenience Trade Area Retail Data

Table 8 below summarizes retail spending by households on respective goods and services and aggregate sales by businesses within five minutes of the study area. The table utilizes North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, which is the formal system used by North American governments to categorize business types. Negative numbers indicate a sales surplus, while positive numbers indicate a sales gap to show the opportunity to recapture lost sales within the market. It is important to note that this data is from 2017 and does not include businesses that have opened or closed in the last five years.

Notable industries with surplus factors over 50 are Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores, home furnishings stores, gasoline stations, and florists. These high surpluses

indicate that the market is already saturated with these industries and efforts for future development may be best focused elsewhere.

There are several industries with surplus factors of 100 that show there are no businesses in those categories and may prove to be potential areas for growth. These include specialty food stores, shoe stores, jewelry, luggage and leather goods stores, book, periodical and music stores, department stores (excluding leased departments), miscellaneous store retailers, electronic shopping and mail-order houses, vending machine operators, direct selling establishments, and drinking places for alcoholic beverages. The limitations of this data do not account for new businesses that have opened in the past five years such as a local brewery and small-scale retailers. A full table is available in Appendix E.

Table 8. Retail Supply and Demand in the Convenience Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI.

Retail Supply and Demand in the Convenience Trade Area (2017)							
	NAICS Code	Description	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Surplus	4413	Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	\$552,308	\$5,235,067	-\$4,682,759	-80.9	5
	4422	Home Furnishings Stores	\$497,814	\$11,380,909	-\$10,883,095	-91.6	1
	447,4471	Gasoline Stations	\$3,445,530	\$11,227,575	-\$7,782,045	-53.0	6
	4531	Florists	\$58,009	\$559,274	-\$501,265	-81.2	2
Gap	4452	Specialty Food Stores	\$169,964	\$0	\$169,964	100.0	0
	4482	Shoe Stores	\$201,807	\$0	\$201,807	100.0	0
	4483	Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$227,100	\$0	\$227,100	100.0	0
	4512	Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$121,442	\$0	\$121,442	100.0	0
	4521	Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$3,795,142	\$0	\$3,795,142	100.0	0
	4539	Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$844,230	\$0	\$844,230	100.0	0
	4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$369,767	\$0	\$369,767	100.0	0
	4542	Vending Machine Operators	\$29,051	\$0	\$29,051	100.0	0
	4543	Direct Selling Establishments	\$257,039	\$0	\$257,039	100.0	0

Community Shopping Trade Area Retail Data

Understanding retail trends in the Community Shopping Trade Area illuminates where consumer spending comes from a wider area. These consumers may be from other communities yet still utilize Elkton for specific goods or services. This can also highlight areas in which there may be gaps in the surrounding area that the study area specializes in, thus indicating a market unique to the neighborhood trade area. This area is slightly larger in size and has higher levels of spending.

This area still ranks high in the Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores and Gas Stations like the Convenience Trade Area, although it is more balanced. Home Furnishings stores have a large surplus, as do Florists and Special Food Services. Many of the same industries still have gaps, including specialty food stores, shoe stores, book, periodical and music stores, department stores, electronic shopping and mail-order houses, vending machine operators, direct selling establishments, and drinking places for alcoholic beverages. As with the data in Table 11, some of these numbers do not reflect new establishments that have moved to the area in the last five years, and some reflect businesses that would not be feasible in the area due to its population size. A full table is available in Appendix F.

Table 9. Retail Supply and Demand in the Community Shopping Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI.

Retail Supply and Demand for the Community Shopping Trade Area (2017)							
	NAICS Code	Description	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Surplus	4413	Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	\$2,977,996	\$7,307,059	-\$4,329,063.00	-42.1	10
	4422	Home Furnishings Stores	\$2,799,171	\$21,406,930	-\$18,607,759.00	-76.9	1
	4531	Florists	\$321,711	\$790,097	-\$468,386.00	-42.1	5
Gap	4452	Specialty Food Stores	\$908,736	\$0	\$908,736.00	100.0	0
	4482	Shoe Stores	\$1,136,598	\$0	\$1,136,598.00	100.0	0
	4512	Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$667,631	\$0	\$667,631.00	100.0	0
	4521	Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$20,886,381	\$0	\$20,886,381.00	100.0	0
	4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$2,024,107	\$0	\$2,024,107.00	100.0	0
	4542	Vending Machine Operators	\$155,275	\$0	\$155,275.00	100.0	0
	4543	Direct Selling Establishments	\$1,289,638	\$0	\$1,289,638.00	100.0	0
	7224	Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$218,528	\$0	\$218,528.00	100.0	0

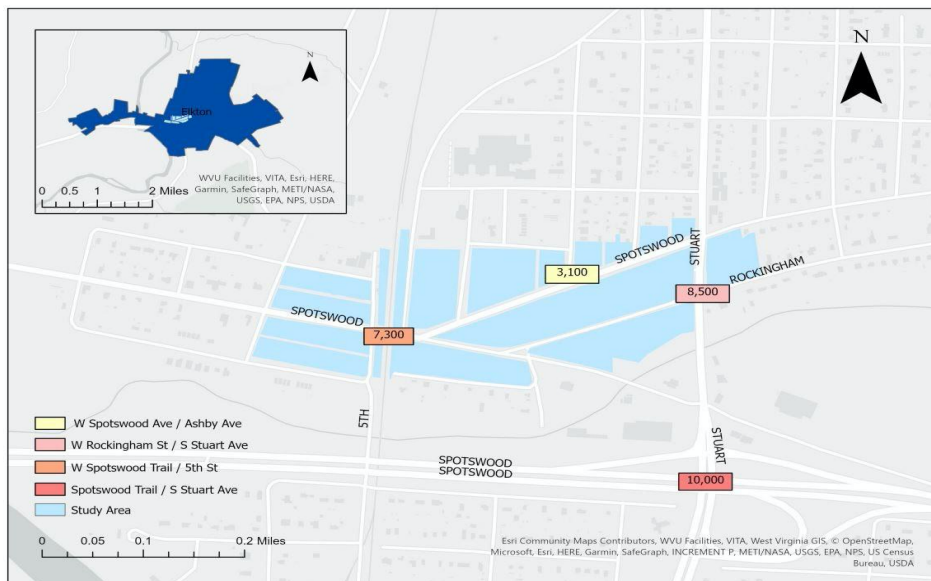
Convenience Trade Area Traffic Counts

Understanding traffic counts in an area is beneficial to understand the types of businesses that may be interested in operating in the study area. Certain businesses or retailers may have traffic count requirements to place a business in an area; having this data readily available helps support appropriate-sized development. Traffic counts are based on daily averages. The average daily number of vehicles that pass through the Convenience Trade Area is provided in the table below.

Table 10. Daily Traffic Counts in the Convenience Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI.

Daily Traffic Counts in the Convenience Trade Area			
Street Name	Closest Cross Street	Year	Traffic Count
West Spotswood Trail	5th Street (0.02 miles W)	2016	7,300
West Spotswood Avenue	Ashby Avenue (0.01 miles NE)	2018	3,100
West Rockingham Street	South Stuart Avenue (0.02 miles W)	2002	8,500
Spotswood Trail	South Stuart Avenue (0.01 miles W)	2018	10,000

According to the table, approximately 7,300 cars pass through the intersection between West Spotswood Trail and 5th Street every day. Another 10,000 cars pass through the nearest highway, Spotswood Trail, daily using the bypass. Recapturing some of the highway traffic, which connects Harrisonburg to the Shenandoah National Park, may be an effective strategy for increasing traffic counts in the study area and therefore increasing potential customers.



Map 5. Traffic Counts in the Convenience Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI.

Supportable Retail

Using community responses from surveys, select industries have been analyzed to determine what new stores could be supported within the Convenience Trade Area. Negative numbers indicate there may not be a large enough market to support a new unit in the designated industry. It is important to note that these estimates are used to gauge potential capacity and that stores can enter the market and unexpectedly fail or succeed due to various external factors such as state and national market trends or any other unexpected discrepancies in the market.

The table below details the amount of potential new stores that the market could support. These numbers were generated by determining the total market demand and supply using data estimates from 2017 ESRI data, then by determining the average sales per square foot in each store category and the amount of new square footage the town could support, to create the potential demand for stores within each category. In instances where there were no existing stores in the Convenience Trade Area, similar towns were used as comparisons. These towns included Bridgewater, Buena Vista, Gordonsville, and Luray, all located in Virginia. These were chosen due to their similar size and proximity to a larger town. They were used to determine the potential units for the Bakery, Miscellaneous Retail, and Drinking Place store types.

Table 11. Potential New Units in the Convenience Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI (2017).

Potential New Stores in the Convenience Trade Area		
Store Type	Potential Units	Real Numbers
Restaurant (Locally Owned)	-0.26	Less than 1
Drinking Place (Alcoholic Beverages)	0.11	Less than 1
Bakery	1.26	1 to 2
Miscellaneous Retail	3.63	3 to 4

The Convenience Trade Area is already slightly over capacity for new restaurants or eating places. Less than one new store would be supported by the estimated market demand of residents. While the data reflects market saturation for restaurants, the community survey data says otherwise. The highest-ranking category was restaurants when survey participants were asked their most desired business downtown.

The Drinking Place (Alcoholic Beverages) type is also relatively balanced. There is a marginal capacity for a new business in this category. It is important to note that this data used 2017 data, before the establishment of the Elkton Brewery, which has succeeded in its first year of operation despite the relative

Concerning bakeries, the study area would be able to support over one new store assuming one store would be about 1,900 square feet in size. This information was calculated using data from Bridgewater and Gordonsville due to their existing bakeries. Average sales per square foot in these establishments sit around \$87.50 with an average square footage of 1,624.5 feet.

The study area has a largely untapped market in the Miscellaneous Retail type, with a total unmet demand of \$844,230. This broad category includes specialized retail stores, such as gift stores, art stores, health, and personal care stores, pet shops, art dealers, and food and beverage stores. Using data from Luray and Bridgewater, which both had available data, it was determined the study area could support 3.6 new stores, assuming each store would be around 3,812 square feet. Average sales per square foot in this category would be around \$61.00, assuming that some sales per square foot would be higher or lower depending on the specialty of the store.

Although not enumerated in the market data, it is worth mentioning that many respondents indicated they would like more entertainment options in town. By entertainment, residents referred to weekend entertainment options such as live music, a movie theater, or other leisure activities. This data was left out because there was not enough data to provide a conclusive answer, and the surrounding areas with theaters did not have clear publicly available data. Despite this, approximately 62% of respondents indicated that they would like more entertainment options, which indicates there may very well be a market for this type of development in town.

Market Segments

While the market information listed above provides important quantitative data, it is also important to understand more qualitative data such as the existing cultural characteristics of the study area. Using ESRI's tapestry segments, the following chart outlines the largest existing groups within the Convenience Trade Area. These segments are useful in determining what types of businesses may best thrive in the area. While this data provides insight into consumer habits of existing residents, it is important to note that these segment descriptions are not limitations but rather guidelines to better understand shopping preferences, lifestyles, and how residents choose to spend free time and that any generalized data such as this is best coupled with face-to-face community conversations.

Table 12. Convenience Trade Area Market Segments. Data courtesy of Esri.

Convenience Trade Area Market Segments (2017)			
Rank	Market Segment	Percent of Neighborhood Trade Area Households	Percent of Total U.S. Households
1	Heartland Communities	68.5%	2.3%
2	Salt of the Earth	30.6%	2.9%

Heartland Community segments are generally semi-rural communities with a median age of 42.3 years and median household income of \$42,400 which is just below the US average of \$56,100. Most own their homes, enjoy a slower pace of life, and actively participate in community events and outdoor activities. Employment for this group is more white-collar than blue-collar, and popular sectors are manufacturing, construction, healthcare, utilities, and agriculture. Buying American-made products is important to this group.

Salt of the Earth segments encompasses rural communities with a preference for traditional rural lifestyles including outdoor activities. The median age is 44.1 years and the median household income is slightly higher than the previous group and slightly higher than the US average at \$56,300. The median net worth for this group is higher than the US average of \$93,300, with the average at \$167,700. Most members of this group own their own homes, are employed in construction or manufacturing, and prefer buying American-made products. Residents here prefer outdoor activities, DIY projects, home, and garden maintenance, and prefer face-to-face shopping rather than online.

Participation in the local community is important to consumers across the board in Elkton. Members are generally middle-income Americans who value outdoor activities and a slower pace of life. Successful businesses that would cater to this group would likely be family-oriented restaurants and activities, retail related to the outdoors, and American-made products.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities (SWO)

Given the above conditions of the area, a few conclusions can be drawn regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of downtown Elkton. It is important to note that the conclusions detailed below are from an analytical viewpoint. What is identified as a weakness by a researcher may be viewed as a strength from a resident perspective. The following strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities will include both data from third-party sources as well as the community and merchant data.

Strengths

Among the strengths are the mix of uses downtown, the proximity of significant surrounding influences, aesthetic improvements, and expansion of downtown businesses. These are strong attributes that indicate the town is growing, and that there is vested interest from town officials to support development, from the community to engage in the town, and for business owners to sense that they can operate in Elkton. The physical improvements, coupled with influences, add to the sense of place and create a great foundation for attracting people to the area.

Community members approve of recent improvements in the town including street improvements, public art displays, and incoming businesses. Many also expressed approval of actions taken by the local administration, signaling that the work completed so far is conducive to community goals. Local merchants expressed approval of the new business development occurring downtown along with the support of local town administrators in their endeavors. Both community members and merchants alike expressed the small town community feel as a strength. The town has a tight knit community that appears to welcome new development. Community events, such as Autumn Days, build upon the strong sense of community and serve as a definite strength. The Elkton Progressive Improvement Committee (EPIC) is responsible for many of the fairs and events that happen in the community and serve as a great coordinating group in the town.

Weaknesses

Despite the strengths, there are still some challenges to overcome. The broad zoning code can be a strength in the way that it opens opportunities for creativity for development but is a challenge in the sense that it allows a lack of consistency. A broad zoning code opens the option for uses that may halt downtown development.

Vacancy, and perceived vacancy, is a weakness. There is a high level of vacant buildings in the core downtown area. Vacant storefronts mean there is lost revenue and can also add to a negative feeling for consumers and the community, meaning they may believe the town to be empty. The current zoning code also allows for relatively large lots downtown, with parking in front in some cases, which presents a design issue that takes storefronts off the street and furthers a feeling of emptiness. This deters shoppers from spending time downtown.

Community survey responses reflected this sentiment; many expressed vacant and deteriorating buildings as a sore spot downtown. Community members also noted that store variety is lacking. This is confirmed by the market data which shows the market is saturated with auto-related businesses, home furnishings stores, gas stations, and florists.

Local merchants tended to agree with community members' responses. Many agreed that vacant and deteriorating buildings, creating a lack of a connected business system downtown, are harmful to their businesses. Local merchants also mentioned that a lack of consistent foot traffic downtown is a weakness. This is attributed to connectivity issues between businesses, such as safe and obvious walking paths, and zoning that centers around automobile usage rather than pedestrian traffic.

Opportunities

Regardless of challenges, downtown Elkton has great potential. There is a rich history that creates a strong sense of place upon which the town can build. Expanding business growth downtown signals recent improvements have worked, and now is a critical time to capitalize on such growth to keep transformation happening. There is a great opportunity for the town to capture visitors from Massanutten and Shenandoah National Park to increase downtown revenue. And, while such outside consumers are important, it is also necessary to plan for development for existing residents. Capitalizing on such influences while also building upon the town's history and unique sense of place creates an opportunity for the downtown to be a welcoming environment for locals and visitors alike.

There is an opportunity to create a walkable downtown business district. Currently, most people drive cars downtown or park directly in front of the business they choose to visit. This halts foot traffic circulation amongst local downtown businesses. This shows that connectivity appears to be the true problem rather than a lack of parking. Although parking was a concern for some community survey participants, it was not generally seen as a barrier to most community members or local merchants. There are parking lots along the railroad tracks that are permanently vacant because the railroad company owns them, and there are many street parking spaces along with stores that have their own private parking. This presents the opportunity for the local zoning code to be amended to favor walkable development.

Additionally, many respondents in the community survey expressed interest in family-friendly businesses. Fortunately, there are business opportunities for

this. This highlights a greater issue that shows the downtown needs a coordinated promotion strategy. There is an excellent opportunity for the town to organize a local business owners association to help coordinate and market existing businesses downtown and bring locals and visitors to the area.

Despite limited market data available, a majority of respondents surveyed indicated they would like more entertainment options in the form of movie theaters, music venues, or other leisure activities. Fortunately, the town already has businesses that offer entertainment options (such as live music on the weekends and painting and craft workshops among a few). While there is an opportunity for more entertainment options to come to the town, there is also an opportunity to advertise the ones that already exist and perhaps encourage them to work together.

Recommendations

Given the results from the research completed with the community outreach and market data, several recommendations for improvement have been made below. These recommendations are organized in the format of a transformation strategy using the Main Street principles of economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. Image M below provides a visual representation of these principles.



Image M. Community Transformation Strategy. Image via Main Street America, 2022.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Goal 1: Encourage new businesses downtown

Given the survey responses, many respondents indicated that they would like to see new businesses come to the downtown area. The market data shows that the town can support about three new miscellaneous retailers. This opens the opportunity for the town to attract new businesses to join the downtown community.

Objective A: Add in mixed-use business spaces

Action 1: Many community survey respondents requested a bookstore. The market may not be able to support a bookstore on its own, but the market data shows there is a strong demand for a bakery and for miscellaneous retailers. These businesses can work together to open a joint space.

Objective B: Consider supporting reuse of the Elkton Theatre

Action 1: Identify a person with a strong interest in the local community theater to focus on its revitalization. Examples of theaters in similarly sized towns are the Ashland Theatre, which is a historic theater and performing arts

venue that has been renovated to show movies, concerts, and host performing arts events.

Action 2: Use the theater for multiple uses to make it a multi-functional event space and cultural anchor for the town. For example, hosting live bluegrass music on the weekends may be an effective way to bring in locals but also attract tourism for a unique experience.

Goal 2: Create a cohesive and connected downtown business community

Creating opportunities for local businesses to connect and work together is vital for a healthy business atmosphere. Local businesses will be able to work together to share problems and solutions they have faced. This will also be beneficial for the town as there will be a centralized location where the town can keep up to date with the needs and goals of local business owners and be more supportive of their future endeavors.

Objective A: Encourage coordination between existing businesses

Action 1: Create a local business coupon system to encourage consumers to stop at neighborhood businesses. This could include incentives such as making a purchase at the local outfitter and receiving a coupon for 25% off a beer at the Elkton Brewery.

Action 2: Create a downtown business association to connect local business owners in a more structured way to coordinate such exchanges.

DESIGN

Goal 3: Mitigate vacancies

This is the most serious issue the town currently faces. Vacant and abandoned property stifles future development. Remedying this issue will serve as a catalyst for future development.⁴³ If the town is able to overcome this hurdle, revitalization is well within the town's grasp. Recommendations for this section were based on suggestions from a conversation with Lane Pearson, Esquire, who specializes in vacant property abatement in Virginia. These recommendations directly follow what is allowed in the Virginia Code.

Addressing this issue will require strict regulatory enforcement along with incentives. It is important to note that the Code of Virginia allows for the following enforcement strategies. Incentives will help move along the process in a more productive and amicable manner. Combining the strategies below creates an

⁴³ Accordino, John, and Gary Johnson. "Addressing the Vacant and Abandoned Property Problem." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 22, no. 3, (2000): 301-315.

effective mitigation strategy that will catapult the town's vacant downtown core into a flourishing community place. Several strategies are discussed in the objectives below, but a more detailed chart of the code provisions is provided in Appendix J.

Objective A: Use aggressive code enforcement to address perpetually vacant properties in the downtown area

Action 1: Have local town code enforcement personnel fine perpetually vacant properties that may pose a threat to public health and safety.

Action 2: Hire a Vacant and Abandoned Property Coordinator to consistently address this issue until a stable amount of vacant properties are filled. This may be a part-time position at 10 hours per week for three years or whatever the budget allows.

Action 3: Establish a vacant building registry to require vacant properties to be registered. Charge a \$100 registration fee per building and a \$200 penalty fee for failing to register the property.

Objective B: Utilize receivership as a way to acquire possession of vacant property downtown

Action 1: Adopt an ordinance that creates a definition of blighted property in accordance with the Code of Virginia to allow the town to take possession of vacant blighted property.

Action 2: Consider hiring a land-use attorney to educate town staff on the receivership process. Once a building is blighted and considered derelict, the town can petition the court to gain possession of the property. Then the town can assess the property to get a lien and use the tax foreclosure process to get a sale of the property. This is a long process but is allowed under Virginia law.

Objective C: Use incentives to encourage owners of vacant property to develop or sell their property

Action 1: If the town decides to use fines as a way to combat vacant property, allow for special provisions to lower those thresholds even more if the property was transferred to a nonprofit to be used for affordable housing or land banks.

Action 2: Establish relationships with owners of vacant property. Explain the benefits of developing or selling the property versus allowing it to deteriorate and incur fines.

Action 3: Make the selling process easier for the property owner. Use the Vacant and Abandoned Property Coordinator to provide the owners of vacant property with financing options for rehabilitation or connect them with interested buyers.

Objective D: Use vacant and empty storefronts as spaces for public art until vacancies are filled

Action 1: Call owners of vacant storefronts and ask to put seasonal art in storefronts.

Action 2: Create a program with the local public schools to create art to be placed in vacant storefronts.

Goal 4: Consider adjusting the current zoning code to be friendlier to walkability and local business development

Zoning impacts every land-use decision in a locality. According to Arendt (2015), few residents may make the mental connection between a diminishing sense of place and the local zoning code, but there is indeed a connection.⁴⁴ Many traditional zoning codes favor large setbacks and side yards as a way to protect property values and ensure development is orderly and with large parking lots either in front of businesses or on the side to accommodate automobile traffic.

Unfortunately, this type of zoning often has the opposite effect. This type of zoning favors automobile-centered traffic rather than pedestrian-centered traffic, and it eliminates the amount of physical connection of users with their space. This type of zoning may be appropriate for certain spaces, but it is not conducive to thriving downtown districts. The following suggestions are made to promote pedestrian-centered traffic to encourage more safe and accessible use of the downtown area.

Objective A: Create a specified downtown business district

Action 1: Go through a formal process to establish the downtown area as a specified district.

Objective B: Consider amending the current zoning ordinance to be friendlier to pedestrians

Action 1: Consider changing the zoning ordinance to identify which zoning codes no longer serve the vision and goals of the downtown area

⁴⁴ Arendt, 2015.

Action 1: Consider eliminating front yards in the downtown business district larger than 10 feet in commercial buildings and 20 feet in residential buildings.

Action 2: Encourage the development of semi public spaces in front of commercial and residential buildings downtown to create a vibrant mixed-use community. Semi-public spaces serve as buffers between public and private spaces and create a more welcoming environment for pedestrians.

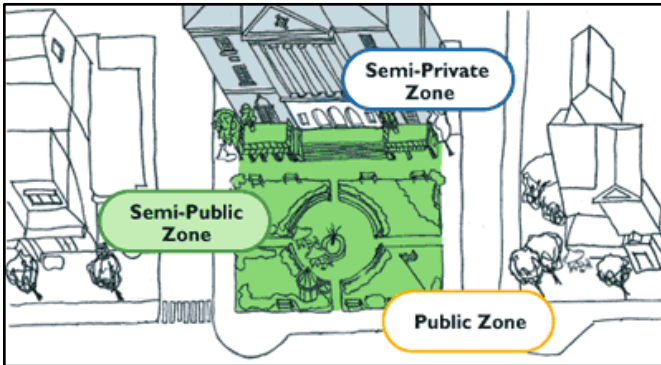


Image N. Example of a Semi-Public Zone. Image courtesy of the Project for Public Spaces.

Action 3: Consider creating a form-based code for the downtown area. Form-based codes focus on building form and design rather than large use zones. The result usually provides a stronger sense of place downtown through connected streets and pedestrian-scale blocks (Arendt, 2015).⁴⁵

Action 4: Consider requiring all future parking to be moved to the back of buildings or encourage consumers to utilize street and public parking.

Goal 5: Improve connectivity.

Improving connectivity will help create a sense of cohesion in the downtown district by physically connecting the space. Many respondents in the survey indicated that the downtown area appears vacant. While there are a large number of vacancies, there are still many thriving businesses in the area. Part of the feeling of vacancy may be due to a feeling of disconnection between the physical space.

Connecting the downtown area through physical infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, and through more conceptual improvements like design standards and facade improvements, can help create a more integrated district. Many of the following suggestions are supported by the work of Arendt (2015) who encourages

⁴⁵ Arendt, 2015.

the use of sidewalks and shade trees to create an enclosed district that promotes walking.⁴⁶

Several survey respondents also indicated that parking was an issue for the downtown. Although this is a valid point, there are actually many parking spaces downtown through street parking along all major streets and along the railroad tracks, in addition to the private parking lots many businesses own. Rather than an actual lack of parking availability, there appears to be a perception of a lack of parking, which is likely connected to connectivity issues. This may be remedied by providing improved sidewalks and wayfinding signage to make available parking obvious and by providing obvious routes from parking spaces to downtown businesses.



Image O (left). Sidewalk in Downtown Ashland, VA. Photo Courtesy of the Downtown Ashland Association. Image P (right). Bird's Eye View of Downtown Ashland, VA. Photo courtesy of the Downtown Ashland Association.

Objective A: Connect “both sides of the tracks”

Action 1: Add in more walkways and connect sidewalks. Incorporate the railroad tracks into the downtown design to make it more of a focal point rather than a nuisance. Ashland, Virginia serves as an excellent example.

Action 2: Slow down the speed limit to 15 miles per hour along West Spotswood Avenue and West Rockingham Street from Shenandoah Avenue to Stuart Avenue.

Objective B: Create opportunities for people to get out and walk around downtown to encourage connection amongst local businesses.

Action 1: Plant trees along West Spotswood Avenue and West Rockingham Street from Shenandoah Avenue to Stuart Avenue to create a sense of

⁴⁶ Arendt, 2015.

enclosure and establish a traffic calming effect and enable pedestrians to feel safer.



Image Q (left). Street Trees in Gordonsville, VA. Photo courtesy of LPDA Charlottesville. Image R (right). Downtown Salem, VA. Photo courtesy of Virginia's Blue Ridge.

Action 2: Connect the proposed local greenway to downtown.

Action 3: Add sidewalks to connect to local Stonewall Park and Riverside Park.

Objective C: Add more crosswalks

Action 1: Add a crosswalk on West Spotswood Avenue to connect the vacant lot for the proposed community event space to the Jennings House and tennis courts.

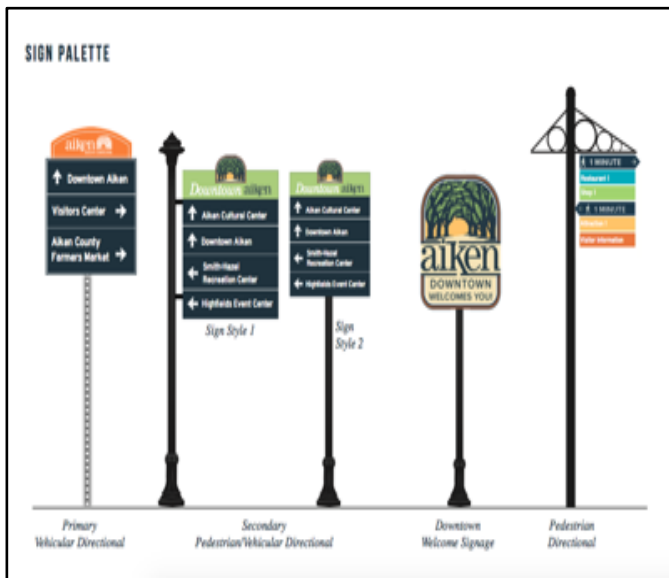
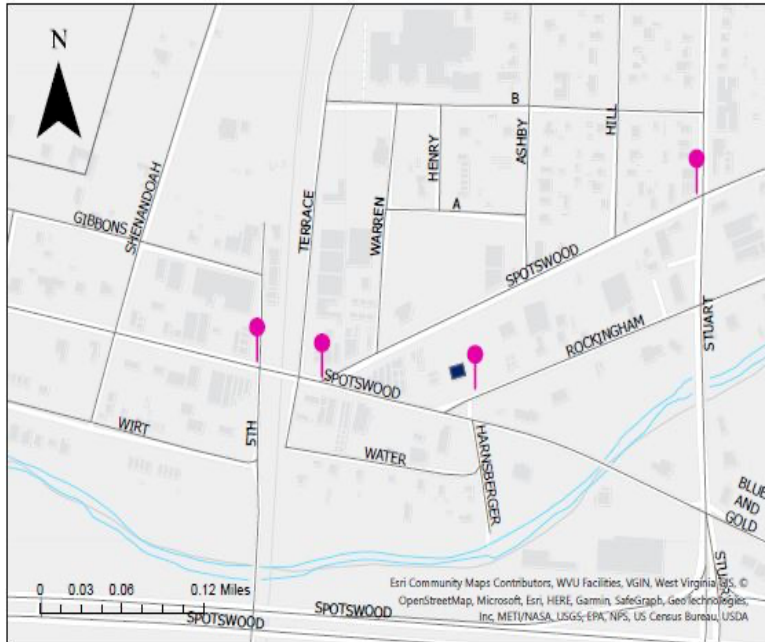
Action 2: Add a crosswalk on West Rockingham Street between the Jennings House and McDonald's to connect the street.



Map 6. Proposed Crosswalks in Downtown Elktion.

Objective D: Improve wayfinding

Action 1: Add new signage at the intersection of West Spotswood Trail and 5th Street, at the intersection of West Spotswood Avenue and West Spotswood Trail, in front of the Jennings House on West Spotswood Avenue, and another near the intersection of West Spotswood Avenue and Stuart Avenue to direct people to downtown.



Map 7. Potential Wayfinding Signage Placement.

Image S. Wayfinding Signage in Aiken, South Carolina. Photo courtesy of the City of Aiken.

Action 2: Add a welcome sign at the entrance to the “Triangle” between West Spotswood Trail and West Spotswood Avenue to mark the area as a downtown district and create a gateway to the space.

Goal 6: Use placemaking strategies to create a unique sense of place.

Placemaking is a term used to describe distinct spaces where people are able to have brief social interactions that do not occur in other spaces. Creating a sense of place is critical in developing a downtown district that will last for many years to come. Many of the suggestions below focus on physical improvements that create spaces for locals to be outside and active in the area. One of the suggestions, creating a Complete Street, is a proven and effective way to power placemaking on Main Streets. According to Smart Growth America, Complete Streets encourage pedestrian traffic which creates accessible and attractive streets to lure people into downtown businesses.⁴⁷ The focus is to create functional and attractive spaces to stimulate growth and provide a place where locals want to spend time.

Objective A: Create an attractive and accessible streetscape

Action 1: Utilize the Complete Streets method as a way to create a sense of place. A Complete Street is different in every community, but the end goal is to focus on improved pedestrian use to improve safety and accessibility. According to Smart Growth America, core facets often include narrow streets, clear crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes, and accessible sidewalks.



Image T (left). Example of a Complete Street via Alta Planning + Design. Image U (right). Complete Street in Erwin, TN. Photo courtesy of Smart Growth America.

⁴⁷ Smart Growth America. “Complete Streets Work in Rural Communities.” Accessed April 6, 2022. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/cs-rural.pdf>

Objective B: Create opportunities for shoppers and residents to engage downtown to encourage more interaction with the space

Action 1: Create a parklet at the vacant lots at 305 and 307 West Spotswood Trail.



Map 8. Vacant Lots at 305 and 307 West Spotswood Trail

Action 2: Add more seating along the street in the form of street benches or other tables.

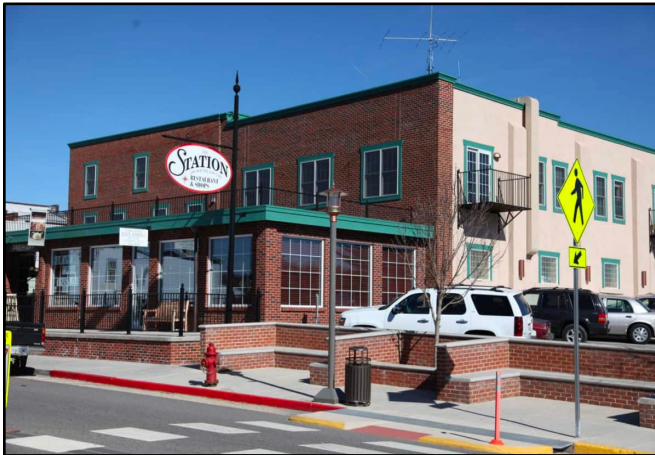


Image V. Street Seating in Floyd, VA. Photo courtesy of SustainFloyd.

Action 3: Encourage local businesses, especially local cafes or restaurants, to utilize street seating.



Image W (left). Street seating at Iron Horse Restaurant in Ashland, VA. Photo courtesy of Richmond Regional Tourism. Image X (right). Outdoor seating at Elkton Brewing Company. Photo courtesy of Elkton Brewing Company.

Action 4: Add updated street lamps along downtown sidewalks to improve a feeling of safety.



Image Y. Street lamps in Gordonsville, VA. Photo courtesy of Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission, VA.

Objective C: Create a community gathering space downtown

Action 1: Following the purchase of the vacant lot on West Spotswood Avenue, follow through with proposed plans to use it as an event space that can double as a park or open space when events are not occurring.



Image Z. Warren G. Lineberry Park in Floyd, VA. Photo courtesy of Partnership for Floyd.

Action 2: Add a community garden at the proposed community event space or at the parklet proposed at 305 and 307 West Spotswood Trail

Action 3: Promote a local farmer's market. Designate an organizer who can run this event consistently. Coordinate with EPIC and the Virginia Farmers Market Association to promote the market and identify potential vendors. Encourage local Elkton farmers and artists to participate.

Objective D: Improve the aesthetics of downtown spaces

Action 1: Add landscaping elements along downtown sidewalks and public spaces. Consider creating a local gardening club to participate and encourage active participation downtown.

Action 2: Underground the utility lines.

Action 3: Continue to encourage public art displays through painting buildings and installing art created by local artists.

PROMOTION

Goal 7: Create a unified downtown district.

Creating a flourishing downtown district does not just begin with attracting businesses. It relies on the support of community members first and foremost by creating a space they are proud of and wish to use. As discussed in the literature at the beginning of this plan, the community needs to ground the work of future development. When a community is unified, it will naturally attract tourists. Healthy downtowns come about through community-centered design and business development.

Objective A: Continue to engage with the community about their goals for the downtown area

Action 1: Create a downtown advisory board to manage resident opinions

Goal 8: Promote the town to nearby tourists and to locals as a cohesive downtown space where people can gather, shop, and connect.

To attract outsiders to the town, as well as encourage locals to use the downtown area, the space must be properly advertised. Fortunately, the Shenandoah Valley and areas surrounding Elkton are rich with many tourism opportunities to draw in visitors. Hosting community events are also important for local residents to signal that this is first and foremost a space for them to enjoy and utilize. The following suggestions touch on options for encouraging use of the space, but this is a great

opportunity for creativity amongst town officials, community groups, and residents to get involved in their community.

Objective A: Coordinate with existing marketing and tourism programs

Action 1: Capitalize on the ATC designation by partnering with the Appalachian Trail Committee to host downtown events to encourage hikers and Shenandoah National Park visitors to stop downtown

Action 2: Identify local businesses that can also serve as attractions. Determine Elkton's niche. For example, consider marketing Pure Shenandoah as a unique asset to the town through promoting product-based businesses and agritourism. Preuss (2021) found that there is a strong correlation between small towns that bridge small-scale manufacturing into their downtowns.⁴⁸

Objective B: Continue street fairs in the downtown area like Autumn Days and the Beer and Wine Festival. Consider adding more regular monthly events to encourage downtown activity.

Action 1: Coordinate with EPIC to identify opportunities for events downtown

Objective C: Host outdoor music events. Utilize the proposed event/open space as an outdoor concert venue for small and local artists to perform in the summer months.

Action 1: Appeal to EPIC to coordinate these or utilize the proposed downtown economic development committee.

ORGANIZATION

Goal 9: Find personnel to focus exclusively on downtown development

Identifying personnel who can dedicate their time exclusively to downtown development will be critical to ensuring future development occurs in a consistent and coherent manner. The town staff works in many areas of town development and daily function, which is critical and important work. Creating a committee or hiring a staff person to focus on downtown work exclusively will ensure that this truly is a priority area for the town.

Objective A: Create a Downtown Business committee or restructure an existing group to connect and support downtown business and development

Action 1: Encourage coordination between EPIC and the Economic Development Committee

⁴⁸ Preuss, Illana. "Recast Your City: How to Save Your Downtown with Small-Scale Manufacturing." Island Press, 2021.

Action 2: Coordinate with downtown business owners to create a downtown business owners association. It would help to appoint a chairperson to lead this group.

Action 1: Consider hiring a planner or economic development coordinator in a full-time or part-time to focus on downtown development specifically

Goal 10: Improve regional connections

Towns do not exist in isolation. Although revitalization strategies are often focused exclusively on local areas, considering the development in the context within the greater region in which it exists is necessary for growth. Locals often utilize goods and services across a region; having a pulse on this is important for the town to consider when assessing what its niche is, what goods and services to attract, and areas in which the town can partner with other localities. Other towns in the region, such as Luray, Bridgewater, and Stanardsville, are facing similar challenges, and Elkton can work together with these towns to share successes and failures and learn from one another.

Objective A: Partner with surrounding downtowns to establish relationships and share revitalization resources

Action 1: Establish a relationship with Harrisonburg's Downtown Revitalization group

Objective B: Partner with regional organizations

Action 1: Establish a stronger relationship with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission

Implementation Guide

The following section provides an implementation guide for each of the ten goals. Each action is matched with an estimated timetable of when each action should be completed. The items identified as “Short” are most critical to the future development of the downtown area and should begin implementation in the next year to two years. The action items listed as “Medium” should begin in the next three to five years, and those listed as “Long” are long-term aspirational goals for the next five to ten years.

Goals	Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Goal 1: Encourage new businesses downtown	Objective A: Add in mixed-use business spaces	Action 1: Encourage mixed-use miscellaneous retail.	Medium
	Objective B: Consider supporting reuse of the Elkton Theater	Action 1: Identify a person with a strong interest in the local community theater to focus on its revitalization.	Medium
		Action 2: Use the theater for multiple uses to make it a multi-functional event space and cultural anchor for the town.	Long
Goal 2: Create a cohesive and connected downtown business community	Objective A: Encourage coordination between existing businesses	Action 1: create a local business “coupon system” to encourage consumers to stop at neighborhood businesses.	Short
		Action 2: Create a downtown business association.	Short
Goal 3: Mitigate vacancies	Objective A: Use aggressive code enforcement to address perpetually vacant properties in the downtown area	Action 1: Have local town code enforcement personnel fine perpetually vacant properties that may pose a threat to public health and safety.	Short
		Action 2: Hire a Vacant and Abandoned Property Coordinator.	Medium

		Action 3: Establish a vacant building registry to require vacant properties to be registered.	Long
	Objective B: Utilize receivership as a way to acquire possession of vacant property downtown	Action 1: Adopt an ordinance that creates a definition of blighted property.	Long
		Action 2: Consider hiring a land-use attorney to educate town staff on the receivership process.	Long
	Objective C: Use incentives to encourage owners of vacant property to develop or sell their property	Action 1: If the town decides to use fines as a way to combat vacant property, allow for special provisions to lower those thresholds even more if the property was transferred to a nonprofit to be used for affordable housing or land banks.	Medium
		Action 2: Establish relationships with owners of vacant property.	Short
		Action 3: Use the Vacant and Abandoned Property Coordinator to provide the owners of vacant property with financing options.	Medium
	Objective D: Use vacant and empty storefronts as spaces for public art until vacancies are filled	Action 1: Call owners of vacant storefronts and ask to put seasonal art in storefronts.	Short
		Action 2: Create a program with the local public schools to create art to be placed in vacant storefronts.	Short
Goal 4: Consider adjusting the current zoning code to be	Objective A: Create a specified downtown business district	Action 1: Go through a formal process to establish the downtown area as a specified district.	Medium

friendlier to walkability and local business development.	Objective B: Consider amending the current zoning ordinance to be friendlier to pedestrians	Action 1: Consider changing the zoning ordinance to identify which zoning codes no longer serve the vision and goals of the downtown area.	Long
	Objective C: Utilize zoning as a tool to create a sense of place	Action 1: Consider eliminating front yards in the downtown business district larger than 10 feet in commercial buildings and 20 feet in residential buildings.	Long
		Action 2: Encourage the development of semipublic spaces in front of commercial and residential buildings downtown to create a vibrant mixed-use community.	Long
		Action 3: Consider creating a form-based code for the downtown area.	Long
		Action 4: Consider requiring all future parking to be moved to the back of buildings or encourage consumers to utilize street and public parking.	Short
Goal 5: Improve connectivity.	Objective A: Connect “both sides of the tracks”	Action 1: Add in more walkways and connect sidewalks. Incorporate the railroad tracks into the downtown design.	Short
		Action 2: Slow down the speed limit to 15 miles per hour along West Spotswood Avenue and West Rockingham Street from Shenandoah Avenue to Stuart Avenue.	Short
	Objective B: Create opportunities for people to get out and walk around downtown	Action 1: Plant trees along West Spotswood Avenue and West Rockingham Street from Shenandoah Avenue to Stuart Avenue.	Medium
		Action 2: Connect the proposed local greenway to downtown.	Short

		Action 3: Add sidewalks to connect to local Stonewall Park and Riverside Park.	Short
	Objective C: Add more crosswalks	Action 1: Add a crosswalk on West Spotswood Avenue to connect the vacant lot for the proposed community event space to the Jennings House and tennis courts.	Short
		Action 2: Add a crosswalk on West Rockingham Street between the Jennings House and McDonald's to connect the street.	Short
	Objective D: Improve wayfinding	Action 1: Add new signage to direct people downtown.	Short
		Action 2: Add a welcome sign at the entrance to the "Triangle" between West Spotswood Trail and West Spotswood Avenue.	Long
Goal 6: Use placemaking strategies to create a unique sense of place	Objective A: Create an attractive and accessible streetscape	Action 1: Utilize the Complete Streets method to create a sense of place.	Long
	Objective B: Create opportunities for shoppers and residents to engage downtown to encourage more interaction with the space	Action 1: Create a parklet at the vacant lots at 305 and 307 West Spotswood Trail.	Medium
		Action 2: Add more seating along the street in the form of street benches or other tables.	Long
		Action 3: Encourage local businesses, especially local cafes or restaurants, to utilize street seating.	Short
		Action 4: Add updated street lamps along downtown sidewalks to improve a feeling of safety.	Long

	Objective C: Create a community gathering space downtown	Action 1: Following the purchase of the vacant lot on West Spotswood Avenue, follow through with proposed plans to use it as an event space that can double as a park or open space when events are not occurring.	Short
		Action 2: Add a community garden at the proposed community event space or at the parklet proposed at 305 and 307 West Spotswood Trail.	Medium
		Action 3: Promote a local farmer's market.	Medium
Goal 7: Create a unified downtown district	Objective A: Continue to engage with the community about their goals for the downtown area	Action 1: Create a downtown advisory board to manage resident opinions.	Short
Goal 8: Promote the town to nearby tourists and to locals as a cohesive downtown space where people can gather, shop, and connect.	Objective A: Coordinate with existing marketing and tourism programs	Action 1: Capitalize on the ATC designation by partnering with the Appalachian Trail Committee to host downtown events.	Short
		Action 2: Identify local businesses that can also serve as attractions.	Short
	Objective B: Continue street fairs in the downtown area like Autumn Days and the Beer and Wine Festival. Consider adding more regular monthly events to encourage downtown activity.	Action 1: Coordinate with EPIC to identify opportunities for events downtown.	Short
	Objective C: Host outdoor music events. Utilize the	Action 1: Appeal to EPIC to coordinate these or utilize the proposed downtown economic development	Short

	proposed event/open space as an outdoor concert venue for small and local artists to perform in the summer months.	committee.	
Goal 9: Find personnel to focus exclusively on downtown development	Objective A: Create a Downtown Business committee or restructure an existing group to connect and support downtown business and development	Action 1: Encourage coordination between EPIC and the Economic Development Committee.	Short
		Action 2: Coordinate with downtown business owners to create a downtown business owners association.	Short
	Objective B: Have town staff exclusively focused on downtown	Action 1: Consider hiring a planner or economic development coordinator full-time or part-time to focus on downtown development specifically.	Medium
Goal 10: Improve regional connections	Objective A: Partner with surrounding downtowns to establish relationships and share revitalization resources	Action 1: Establish a relationship with Harrisonburg's Downtown Revitalization group.	Medium
	Objective B: Partner with regional organizations	Action 1: Establish a stronger relationship with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission.	Medium

Conclusion

The Town of Elkton has many attributes that make it a unique place. There is a wealth of resources for the town to pull from as it moves forward, from the establishment of the town as a railroad center to its location next to so many outdoor amenities, and the many new businesses relocating to downtown.

This plan focused on understanding the existing conditions of the town in its current state to serve as a foundation for recommendations. It then moved into research methods that analyzed market conditions, as well as surveyed residents and downtown business owners to understand their viewpoints of the town. This was done to establish an understanding of the needs and goals of current residents and businesses to better inform the recommendations. The recommendations are based on the market and survey results, along with analyzing similarly sized towns and best practices for Main Street development. These recommendations provide a great launchpad for the town to focus its future efforts.

The largest issue the town faces at present is its vacancy rate. A high number of buildings are vacant, in disrepair, or there are empty lots altogether. Although many businesses have opened downtown, the existence of the vacant buildings creates a perception that the area is empty despite its recent growth. If the town can mitigate this issue, the possibilities for future growth are endless.

Perhaps most importantly, the townspeople themselves have a strong sense of pride and appreciation for their town; there is a spirit of community that is difficult to conjure. Many of the recommendations provided capitalize on this fact; not every place has a strong sense of community. Building on the willingness of the locals to participate in their town's development will prove to be Elkton's strongest point that will keep people spending time downtown and attract visitors from miles around.

Although there are hurdles the town must overcome to move forward, it is primed for a great future. There is momentum surrounding new businesses opening downtown and with the aesthetic and structural changes happening in the town. Residents are eager to be involved downtown and curious about what the future may bring. Building these aspects together will truly make Elkton a flourishing small town.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Community Survey

- 1) What is your favorite part of downtown Elkton?
- 2) When you think about downtown Elkton, what are two words that come to mind?
- 3) When thinking about downtown Elkton, what are challenges that come to mind? What is present that needs improvement, or what is absent that needs to be there?
- 4) Top three issues downtown (please select three):
 - Buildings in need of repair
 - Cleanliness
 - Curb appeal and aesthetics (such as more trees and plants, art installations, etc.)
 - Inconsistent store hours
 - Lack of infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.)
 - Kid and family-friendly stores and spaces
 - Lack of housing
 - Parking
 - Store variety
 - Store vacancies
 - Traffic and safety issues
 - Other
- 5) What types of businesses would you like to see more of downtown?
 - Restaurant
 - Bookstores
 - Arts and crafts stores
 - Kid and family-friendly businesses
 - Entertainment (such as theatre or arcade)
 - Small grocery market with everyday supplies
 - Home goods stores
 - Clothing stores
 - Outdoor supplies stores or outfitters
 - Fine dining
 - Coffee shops and cafes
 - Breweries or bars
 - Housing (like condos, townhomes, etc.)
 - Affordable housing (apartments, multi-family housing, more dense housing options)
 - Specialty foods store
 - Other: please describe.

- 6) What days of the week do you shop or spend time in downtown Elkton?
(Select all that apply).
- Monday
 - Tuesday
 - Wednesday
 - Thursday
 - Friday
 - Saturday
 - Sunday
- 7) How often do you visit downtown Elkton?
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Bimonthly
 - Once or twice a year
 - Almost never
- 8) Where else do you go shopping or spend leisure time other than downtown Elkton? (Select all that apply).
- Harrisonburg
 - Luray
 - Staunton
 - Charlottesville
 - Shenandoah
 - Other
- 9) What is your age?
- Under 18
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65-74
 - 75 or over
 - Prefer not to say
- 10) Where do you live?
- Elkton, inside town limits
 - Elkton, outside town limits
 - McGaheysville
 - Massanutten
 - Harrisonburg
 - Rockingham County

- Page County
- Other

11) If you live in Elkton, on what street do you live?

12) Are there any other comments you would like to leave?

DOWNTOWN ELKTON REVITALIZATION STUDY



Submit your thoughts about Downtown Elkton. Survey results will be incorporated into a plan for future development in conjunction with Virginia Commonwealth University.



For comments and concerns, please email
ElktonRevitalizationStudy@gmail.com

Appendix C: Merchant Survey

- 1) Business name:
- 2) Owner name:
- 3) How long have you been in business?
 - o Less than 1 year
 - o 1-3 years
 - o 3-5 years
 - o 5-10 years
 - o Longer than 10 years
- 4) What goods or services do you offer?
- 5) Why did you choose to operate in downtown Elkton?
- 6) What are some challenges associated with operating in downtown Elkton?
- 7) How many people do you employ?
- 8) What is your busiest day and time of the week?
- 9) Who is your target market?
- 10) Is there any way the Town of Elkton could help your business?
- 11) How has your business changed over the last year?
- 12) Do you have plans to expand or reduce your business? If yes, explain.
- 13) Where do your customers typically park?
- 14) What would you like to see happen in downtown Elkton?
- 15) Any other comments or concerns?

Appendix D: Downtown Businesses Inventory

Code	Business	Employees	Sales (\$000)
154213	GRACE CUSTOM BUILDINGS LLC	3	\$867.00
811103	COX FED LAW	1	\$154.00
872101	BERRY DOUGLAS L ACCTG & TAX	2	\$193.00
723106	HAIR GALLERY	1	\$25.00
539901	MAY'S ATTIC	3	\$445.00
594151	APPALACHIAN OUTFITTERS	3	\$415.00
602101	FIRST BANK	3	\$672.00
581208	HOWE'S HEAVENLY HAVEN RSTRNT	10	\$393.00
753801	ELKTON SERVICE CTR	1	\$79.00
734201	COVENANT PEST CONTROL	3	\$222.00
593202	MCGUIRES COUNTRY STORE	2	\$748.00
999977	BLUE ELK COFFEE	6	\$0.00
641112	INSURANCE ALL LLC	2	\$224.00
832218	ELKTON AREA UNITED SVC	5	\$183.00
738992	WPL INC	2	\$125.00
872101	MASSANUTTEN FINANCIAL SVC INC	4	\$385.00

804201	ELKTON EYECARE	5	\$419.00
729101	H&R BLOCK	5	\$102.00
802101	ELKTON FAMILY DENTISTRY	14	\$1,589.00
573407	STATUS ONE DESIGNS INC	6	\$1,132.00
999977	VALLEY TRAIL	0	\$0.00
179938	UNICORN TRADING CO INC	5	\$636.00
723106	LOADING DOCK SALON	0	\$0.00
553123	BIG L TIRE CO INC	5	\$858.00
602101	UNITED BANK	5	\$1,119.00
799935	GREINER HALL LTD	6	\$411.00
502309	VIRGINIA INSTALLATIONS INC	3	\$2,823.00
571211	VIRGINIA CABINETWORKS INC	3	\$374.00
753801	LAWSON'S AUTO REPAIR	4	\$313.00
553111	BLUE OVAL INDUSTRIES INC	6	\$1,030.00
753801	HOMETOWN GARAGE	3	\$235.00
899999	ELKTON AREA UNITED SVC	2	\$202.00
271101	VALLEY BANNER	2	\$176.00
594924	SHENANDOAH VALLEY HEMP	2	\$125.00

581208	MC DONALD'S	32	\$1,256.00
552198	SUPERIOR TIRE & AUTO	1	\$408.00
802101	DAVIS DENTAL SVC	7	\$795.00
802101	ZOPP FAMILY DENTAL	6	\$681.00
511101	UNION PAPER	3	\$5,223.00
594151	BLUE RIDGE OUTDOOR SUPPLIES	3	\$415.00
592104	OLD 33 BEER & BURGER GRILL INC	6	\$1,287.00
999977	KIMBO DESIGNS	0	\$0.00
581208	C & S DINER	6	\$236.00
075204	A CUT ABOVE PET GROOMING	3	\$87.00
872106	DEAVER'S TAX SVC	2	\$193.00
861102	SUN VALLEY PROPERTY OWNERS ASSN	3	\$0.00
999977	A & W DISTRIBUTORS	0	\$0.00
239905	TATTERED OLD FLAG	2	\$230.00
525104	ROCKINGHAM CO-OP	6	\$756.00
598406	AMERIGAS PROPANE EXCHANGE	0	\$0.00
552198	KNIGHT'S AUTO SALES	1	\$408.00

602101	F & M BANK	8	\$1,790.00
523107	DEAN HOME CTR INC	6	\$0.00
733101	UPS AUTHORIZED SHIPPING PRVDR	6	\$708.00
602101	BB & T NOW TRUIST	6	\$1,343.00
554101	MEADOWS SERVICE CTR	2	\$1,207.00
431101	USPS	14	\$0.00
599201	SHENANDOAH GARDEN SPOT	8	\$423.00
541103	7-ELEVEN	10	\$1,671.00
609902	WESTERN UNION AGENT LOCATION	2	\$922.00
598406	AMERIGAS PROPANE EXCHANGE	0	\$0.00
581208	EL PASO MEXICAN GRILL	10	\$393.00
581222	PIZZA HUT	15	\$589.00
581208	SUBWAY	10	\$393.00
533101	FAMILY DOLLAR STORE	6	\$889.00
591205	ELKTON FAMILY PHARMACY	6	\$1,605.00
541103	FAMILY CONVENIENCE STORE	2	\$335.00
554101	MOBIL	5	\$3,017.00

799934	COUNTRYSIDE SPORTING GOODS	4	\$274.00
	ELKTON BREWING CO.*	4	
	HENHOUSE SHOPPE*		
	GOODFELLAS*		
	ELKTON'S GRUB & GAB DINER*		

*Indicates information that was unavailable for these businesses, either due to their recent opening or lack of data.

Appendix E: Retail Supply and Demand in the Convenience Trade Area. Data courtesy of ESRI.

Retail Supply and Demand in the Convenience Trade Area (2017)						
NAICS Code	Description	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
441	Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$7,549,613	\$16,088,810	-\$8,539,197	-36.1	10
4411	Automobile Dealers	\$6,185,371	\$9,341,486	-\$3,156,115	-20.3	3
4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$811,934	\$1,512,257	-\$700,323	-30.1	1
4413	Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	\$552,308	\$5,235,067	-\$4,682,759	-80.9	5
442	Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$1,115,516	\$11,757,943	-\$10,642,427	-82.7	1
4421	Furniture Stores	\$617,702	\$377,035	\$240,667	24.2	1
4422	Home Furnishings Stores	\$497,814	\$11,380,909	-\$10,883,095	-91.6	1
443	Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$945,259	\$1,099,580	-\$154,321	-7.5	1
444	Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$2,391,717	\$1,902,189	\$489,528	11.4	5
4441	Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	\$2,195,684	\$1,805,125	\$390,559	9.8	4
4442	Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	\$196,033	\$97,065	\$98,968	33.8	1
445	Food & Beverage Stores	\$5,805,194	\$8,562,562	-\$2,757,368	-19.2	4
4451	Grocery Stores	\$5,415,658	\$7,966,060	-\$2,550,402	-19.1	3
4452	Specialty Food Stores	\$169,964	\$0	\$169,964	100.0	0
4453	Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$219,572	\$596,503	-\$376,931	-46.2	1
446,4461	Health & Personal Care Stores	\$2,076,160	\$1,373,253	\$702,907	20.4	1
447,4471	Gasoline Stations	\$3,445,530	\$11,227,575	-\$7,782,045	-53.0	6
448	Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$1,388,825	\$517,756	\$871,069	45.7	2
4481	Clothing Stores	\$959,918	\$477,184	\$482,734	33.6	2
4482	Shoe Stores	\$201,807	\$0	\$201,807	100.0	0
4483	Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$227,100	\$0	\$227,100	100.0	0

451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$821,966	\$970,772	-\$148,806	-8.3	2
4511	Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	\$700,524	\$970,772	-\$270,248	-16.2	2
4512	Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$121,442	\$0	\$121,442	100.0	0
452	General Merchandise Stores	\$5,634,471	\$1,614,248	\$4,020,223	55.5	1
4521	Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$3,795,142	\$0	\$3,795,142	100.0	0
4529	Other General Merchandise Stores	\$1,839,329	\$1,614,248	\$225,081	6.5	1
453	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$1,309,594	\$984,540	\$325,054	14.2	5
4531	Florists	\$58,009	\$559,274	-\$501,265	-81.2	2
4532	Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$277,772	\$141,209	\$136,563	32.6	1
4533	Used Merchandise Stores	\$129,582	\$284,056	-\$154,474	-37.3	2
4539	Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$844,230	\$0	\$844,230	100.0	0
454	Nonstore Retailers	\$655,856	\$0	\$655,856	100.0	0
4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$369,767	\$0	\$369,767	100.0	0
4542	Vending Machine Operators	\$29,051	\$0	\$29,051	100.0	0
4543	Direct Selling Establishments	\$257,039	\$0	\$257,039	100.0	0
722	Food Services & Drinking Places	\$3,120,104	\$5,656,270	-\$2,536,166	-28.9	13
7223	Special Food Services	\$48,996	\$0	\$48,996	100.0	0
7224	Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$38,984	\$0	\$38,984	100.0	0
7225	Restaurants/Other Eating Places	\$3,032,124	\$5,656,270	-\$2,624,146	-30.2	13

Appendix F: Retail Supply and Demand in the Community Shopping Trade Area.
Data courtesy of ESRI.

Retail Supply and Demand for the Community Shopping Trade Area (2017)						
NAICS Code	Description	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/ Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
441	Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$39,852,496	\$38,483,067	\$1,369,429	1.7	23
4411	Automobile Dealers	\$32,621,846	\$23,630,819	\$8,991,027	16.0	9
4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$4,252,655	\$7,545,189	-\$3,292,534	-27.9	4
4413	Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	\$2,977,996	\$7,307,059	-\$4,329,063.00	-42.1	10
442	Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$6,231,070	\$21,800,009	\$15,568,939.00	-55.5	2
4421	Furniture Stores	\$3,431,899	\$393,079	\$3,038,820.00	79.4	1
4422	Home Furnishings Stores	\$2,799,171	\$21,406,930	\$18,607,759.00	-76.9	1
443	Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$5,235,417	\$1,305,870	\$3,929,547.00	60.1	1
444	Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$12,877,357	\$2,928,621	\$9,948,736.00	62.9	8
4441	Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	\$11,854,842	\$2,641,292	\$9,213,550.00	63.6	6
4442	Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	\$1,022,515	\$287,329	\$735,186.00	56.1	2
445	Food & Beverage Stores	\$31,125,440	\$25,665,708	\$5,459,732.00	9.6	10
4451	Grocery Stores	\$28,975,276	\$24,543,716	\$4,431,560.00	8.3	9
4452	Specialty Food Stores	\$908,736	\$0	\$908,736.00	100.0	0
4453	Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$1,241,428	\$1,121,992	\$119,436.00	5.1	1
446,4461	Health & Personal Care Stores	\$11,070,914	\$2,583,022	\$8,487,892.00	62.2	2
447,4471	Gasoline Stations	\$18,178,888	\$30,495,982	-\$12,317,094.00	-25.3	11
448	Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$7,864,147	\$1,227,794	\$6,636,353.00	73.0	3
4481	Clothing Stores	\$5,397,600	\$497,490	\$4,900,110.00	83.1	2
4482	Shoe Stores	\$1,136,598	\$0	\$1,136,598.00	100.0	0
4483	Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$1,329,950	\$730,304	\$599,646.00	29.1	1
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$4,537,977	\$2,285,334	\$2,252,643.00	33.0	6

4511	Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	\$3,870,346	\$2,285,334	\$1,585,012.00	25.7	6
4512	Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$667,631	\$0	\$667,631.00	100.0	0
452	General Merchandise Stores	\$30,718,155	\$3,581,972	\$27,136,183.00	79.1	4
4521	Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$20,886,381	\$0	\$20,886,381.00	100.0	0
4529	Other General Merchandise Stores	\$9,831,773	\$3,581,972	\$6,249,801.00	46.6	4
453	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$6,903,968	\$4,157,233	\$2,746,735.00	24.8	15
4531	Florists	\$321,711	\$790,097	-\$468,386.00	-42.1	5
4532	Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$1,535,014	\$889,662	\$645,352.00	26.6	5
4533	Used Merchandise Stores	\$722,156	\$1,216,202	-\$494,046.00	-25.5	4
4539	Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$4,325,087	\$1,261,273	\$3,063,814.00	54.8	1
454	Nonstore Retailers	\$3,469,021	\$0	\$3,469,021.00	100.0	0
4541	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$2,024,107	\$0	\$2,024,107.00	100.0	0
4542	Vending Machine Operators	\$155,275	\$0	\$155,275.00	100.0	0
4543	Direct Selling Establishments	\$1,289,638	\$0	\$1,289,638.00	100.0	0
722	Food Services & Drinking Places	\$17,416,909	\$15,780,660	\$1,636,249.00	4.9	28
7223	Special Food Services	\$268,220	\$879,096	-\$610,876.00	-53.2	1
7224	Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$218,528	\$0	\$218,528.00	100.0	0
7225	Restaurants/Other Eating Places	\$16,930,161	\$14,901,564	\$2,028,597.00	6.4	27

Appendix G: Community Comments

Category	Comment
Aesthetics	<p>"I think it is good for Elkton to incorporate its history visually, like with the 7up murals. That should continue!"</p> <p>"I would love to see the beautiful land by the dumpster area made into a beautiful, riverside park."</p>
Local Government	<p>"Our elected officials are doing a good job!"</p> <p>"I think the mayor and all of staff have done an amazing job with the upgrading and beautification of Elkton."</p> <p>"Keep up the improvements and moving the town forward."</p>
Businesses	<p>"We love the vibe Elkton Brewery and Blue Elk Coffee have brought. They both have quality products that bring business. It would be nice to build on that and see other buildings renovated and the downtown area become a place people want to come walk around and spend time."</p> <p>"[I] would love the theater to come back."</p> <p>"If businesses stayed open a little later, I'd be able to visit more often!"</p> <p>"Perhaps target a type of business (such as restaurants) to attract and hope it will pull companion businesses in as well. Harrisonburg downtown revitalization is a great example of this."</p>
Community Activities	<p>"Outdoor weekly entertainment."</p> <p>"More activities."</p> <p>"My wife and I really like the annual Autumn Days in October and the flea markets at the baseball field on Shenandoah Avenue."</p>
Cater to the Local Attractions	<p>"With Massanutten Resort and SNP nearby, Downtown Elkton is in a great position to be a popular break from skiing, golfing, and hiking. A can of paint donated to all the property owners so they can refresh their buildings would be a great first step."</p> <p>"Perhaps encourage businesses that cater to hikers from the Appalachian Trail & other campers."</p> <p>"[I] would love to see Elkton become a quaint town that is a destination for those that don't live in Elkton."</p> <p>"Elkton is a beautiful town in a perfect location to not only provide those who live in town an opportunity for shopping and leisure, but also in the perfect location to attract tourists from Massanutten and skyline drive to enjoy!"</p>
Parking and Accessibility	<p>"[The] brewery is great; patrons need to be made aware of additional parking across the tracks."</p>

Appendix H: Challenges to Operation in Downtown Elkton

Comments (Best Part of Operation in Downtown Elkton)
Seeing the positive changes that are taking place to our downtown
We fulfill a need for the community.
Hometown feel and community
People know where they are. The store was put downtown 3 years ago and it's their main source of income. All the money they raise stays local to help people here.
Meeting many different people and businesses as well as learning the history of the town.
The community of women that have supported us and friendships we've built.
The people. Everyone has been welcoming.
Close to home and its proximity to attractions.
Proximity to Massanutten and the close-knit community.
Mostly that it's downtown, small town.
It is a small town with friendly people who you learn by name.

Comments (Challenges Associated with Operation in Downtown Elkton)
Lack of foot traffic and other businesses not being open enough
None
Exposure to travelers
Largest challenge: they are in 4 different buildings. They are building a new facility at the edge of town near 33.
Low foot traffic.
"[Lack of] foot traffic and lack of other attractions."
She wishes she had more tourist traffic from Massanutten. She thinks there's missing market there. She feels like she is on the "other side of the tracks" from where the typical advertising happens at the Triangle. Connect the tracks.
Parking is a little bit of a challenge sometimes, but not too bad.

Working with Elkton electric providers.

Lots of people going somewhere else. Elkton isn't really a destination; more a place to stop on the way to somewhere else which mostly works for coffee but foot traffic is really low. The seasonal litter trucks and constant dump/truck traffic is a big deterrent for visitors and locals trying to enjoy downtown. Seems like a truck route is something to consider. Keeping the sidewalks swept is impossible when silage trucks are running; and while we know we are a rural downtown, industrial poop splatter is not a good thing for people eating, drinking, walking downtown.

There are a lot of similar businesses offering the same services within the immediate area.

Comments (Town Assistance for Business Owners)

Encourage more businesses to operate downtown & host more festivals

I'd love to see a chamber of commerce started and more town business promotions. I'd be willing to serve/help with a chamber startup.

The town has been generous with grants, and she thinks the town needs to start marketing itself more, even if it's just to Harrisonburg or Massanutten.

The Town of Elkton has already been of supreme help, as has our mayor. When COVID shut things down indoors, [the town] offered us outdoor space to use where the beer garden has been since – a very real lifesaver for our business when indoor attendance was not allowed. More recently the town allowed us to purchase the property where the beer garden sits to make the area more attractive and permanent.

Marketing [our business] as an attraction

As small as we are, the timeframe for late fees for utilities could be lengthened.

Town employees are always very helpful with anything we need.

Appendix J: Code of Virginia Vacant Property Mitigation Strategies

Code	Explanation	Ordinance Required?
§ 15.2-901. General Nuisance Provision	<p>Locality may provide for removal or disposal of trash and clutter, cutting of grass, weeds, and running bamboo; penalty in certain counties; penalty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows the town to require property owners to maintain their property (in the form of litter, garbage removal, weed removal, etc.). • The town can perform these tasks if the owner does not after reasonable notice. • The town can charge the owner for the cost of abatement, place a lien against the property for unpaid costs, waive the lien to effectuate a sale of the property, and impose a civil penalty instead of criminal action. 	Yes
§ 15.2-906. General Blight Provision	<p>Authority to require removal, repair, etc., of buildings and other structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows the town to require a property owner to repair or secure any building that might affect public welfare and safety. • The town can undertake abatement after thirty days notice (must be sent via certified mail as well as published in the newspaper). The town can also charge costs for abatement. • The town can charge the owner for the cost of abatement, place a lien against the property for unpaid costs, waive the lien to effectuate a sale of the property, and impose a civil penalty instead of criminal action. 	Yes
§ 15.2-907.1. Derelict Building Provision	<p>Authority to require removal, repair, etc., of buildings that are declared to be derelict; civil penalty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town can submit its own plan to revitalize a building that could be considered a danger to public health (derelict building). This can include a building that is not connected to utilities or has been boarded for six or more months. • This measure also provides incentives for the owner to comply in the form of permit fees, reduced permit fees, tax reassessments, etc.) • This requires the town to have a real estate tax abatement program. 	Yes

<p>§ 15.2-1115. General Nuisance Provision</p>	<p>Abatement or removal of nuisances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This allows abatement of nuisances in the form of dangerous or unsanitary buildings. ● The town can regulate snow or weed removal, along with other upkeep of the building. The town must give reasonable notice to the owner. ● This allows for abatement by a municipal corporation and to collect fees through a tax sale, as well as allows for placement of liens for amounts over \$200. 	<p>Yes</p>
<p>§ 15.2-1127. Vacant Building Registration Provision</p>	<p>Vacant building registration; civil penalty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allows the town to create a tracking system for vacant properties in the town. ● The town can require registration fees of up to \$100 and establish penalty fees for failure to register 	<p>Yes</p>
<p>§ 36-49.1:1. Spot Blight Provision</p>	<p>Spot blight abatement authorized; procedure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the town to acquire or repair blighted property, which can be defined as a building that endangers public welfare and safety ● Blight can be declared by an ordinance. It allows for liens and acquisition of the property by the town in certain scenarios, as well as the ability of the town to declare the property a public nuisance. ● This essentially enables the town to use eminent domain. 	<p>No</p>

*This table heavily relies on the Code of Virginia Cynthia B. Hall of Norfolk, VA, as well as information provided by Lane Pearson, Esq., who kindly provided guidance.