

# SNOW HILL 2025

A STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN



TOWN OF SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

# Town of Snow Hill

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The participation of citizens and business owners of Snow Hill who offered recommendations that ultimately led to the creation of this document.

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## I. Introduction

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### A. The Possibility for Snow Hill

By 2025, Snow Hill will be a destination for young families and business start-ups that seek great schools, healthy lifestyles, improved access to capital, and a part in the life of an open and friendly community. Our town will be linked together with parkways and green spaces and centers of new investment will grow to meet local shopping needs. Downtown's traditional role as a cultural and business center will be enriched with new development and activities on the Riverfront, more people will live and work in Town, and more activities to celebrate our heritage and beautify the Town will take hold. The possibility for Snow Hill is economic growth, broad based and sustainable.

### B. The Role of the Strategic Revitalization Plan

This Strategic Revitalization Plan blends imagination and possibility with benchmarks, action lists, and schedules. It looks to the future, offering a framework for addressing long-term issues and suggesting some changes, large and small, to promote economic growth. It also sets more immediate tasks before us. In fact, it includes a checklist of action steps.

The Plan clarifies and refines the Town's development goals drawn from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the Town's current Strategic Revitalization Plan (adopted in 2003), and the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan.

It helps clarify the roles of the various members of the community that focus on development and revitalization. It also defines key priorities and offers an organized framework so that we stay focused on the goals for development and revitalization over time.

This is a ten-year plan. As the year 2025 approaches, the Town should revisit this Plan and in light of the lessons learned and the progress made, renew and advance it another 10 years. The strategic work of revitalization, focused on the wellbeing of the community, is ongoing.



## II. A Snap-Shot of Snow Hill

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### A. The Setting

Snow Hill received its first charter in 1686 and was established as a Royal Port of Entry in 1694. This seventeenth century town fabric is evident in the placement of historic buildings, the arrangement of downtown streets and the Town's connections to the Pocomoke River. Snow Hill is a historic Maryland Tidewater town and its tree lined streets and preserved 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture create a unique charm and sense of place.

Snow Hill is also a cultural, civic, and economic center on the lower Eastern Shore. It is the County Seat of Worcester County, the home of governmental offices, facilities and courts. A community proud of its heritage, Snow Hill has designated 80 percent of the properties in Town as the Snow Hill Historic District.

Downtown Snow Hill is the center of many activities and seasonable events that celebrate the area's heritage and culture. The Town is also located amid natural, scenic, and recreational resources with statewide significance including the 15,000-acre Pocomoke State Forest, the Pocomoke River State Park, and the beaches and natural areas along the coastline of the Atlantic Ocean. A map of the Town is shown on page 6.

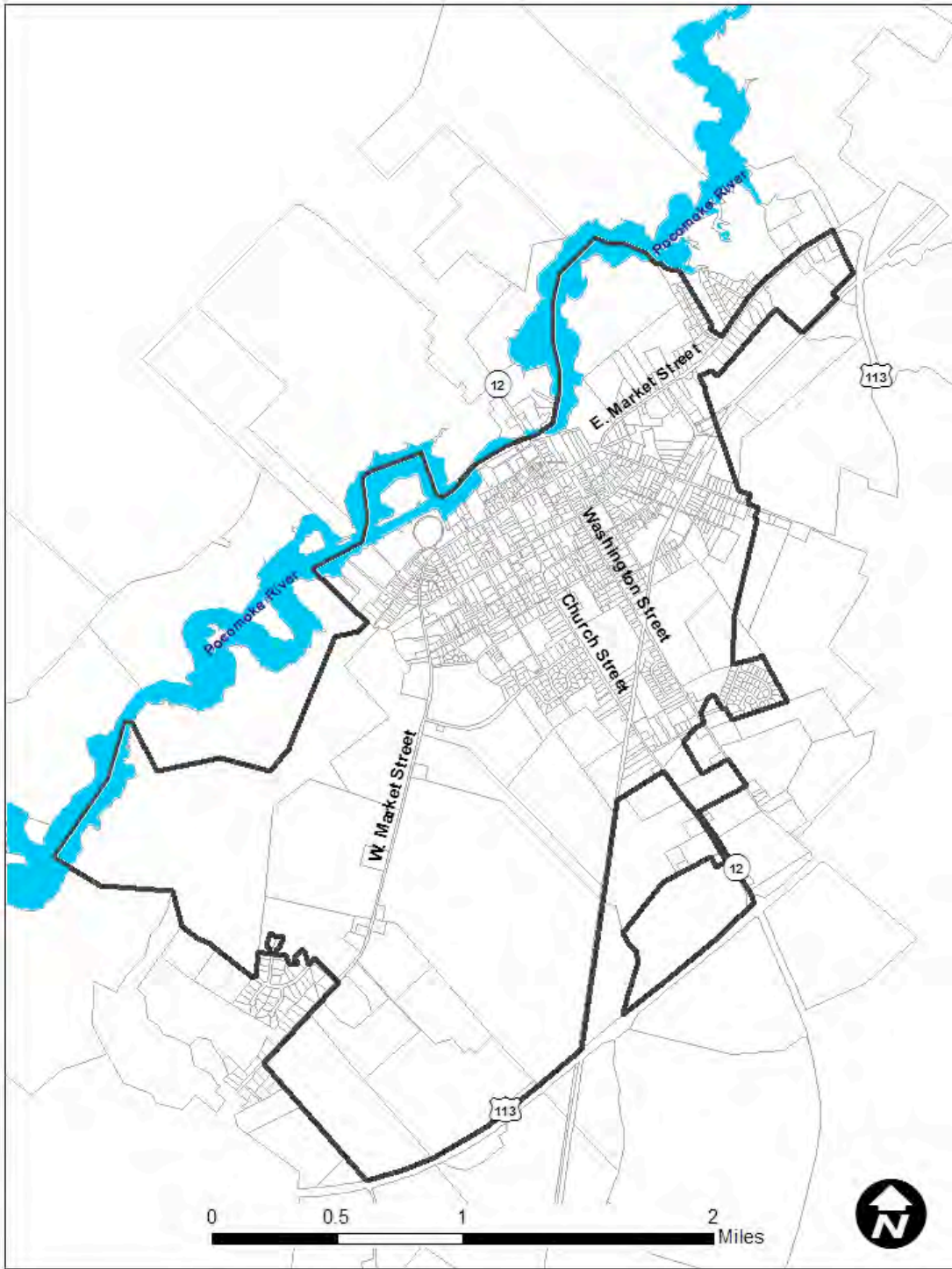
### B. Population and Growth<sup>1</sup>

The Town is the County seat of Worcester County and is home to about 2,100 people. Demographic data since 2000 show that, even during the recent severe national and regional economic recession, the Town's ongoing efforts at long-term revitalization and community development have taken hold. Family incomes are rising at a faster rate in Snow Hill than the County as a whole, the number of private sector firms in the Snow Hill Zip Code Area (21863) has remained stable at 100, and per-employee wages have increased<sup>2</sup>. The number of residents employed in the arts and entertainment sector continues to rise and a core of Downtown merchants is meeting local and regional demand for retail products and services.

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of demographic and economic trends is available upon request of the Town.

<sup>2</sup> The US Census, County Business Patterns provides a reliable data source for tracking over time the number of business enterprises by business sector and by number of employees. Snow Hill is the only town or urban center in the zip code area. It comprises the vast majority of employment and about 42 percent of the zip code's population.



Map 1: The Town of Snow Hill

The acceleration of economic development is of central importance to the Town. The County's projected population and job growth is strong and with continued investments in the community, Snow Hill should be able to count on at least maintaining its current four percent share of County population through 2025. Achieving higher rates of population growth, perhaps five or six percent of County population, will require more strategic investments by both the Town and Worcester County in the county seat. A strong and positive growth trajectory is desirable to both the Town and County because it:

- Helps secure demand for the historic housing stock and that demand is critical to its preservation over the next decade.
- Supports the residential real estate market more generally and shores up areas in need of revitalization.
- Expands market demand for local goods and services and diversifies demand for local merchants.
- Creates the conditions for business start-ups and expansion; putting to economic use vacant buildings and commercial lots.
- Expands the municipal and county tax base, allowing public investment in infrastructure that can spur more private sector initiatives.
- Secures the County's efforts to make its center of governmental and court operations vibrant, beautiful, and operational for the citizens, visitors, and employees of Worcester County.

Achieving a population level of roughly five to six percent of the County by 2025 means that the Town will have added roughly 130 new households (for a total of 1,000 households) or 80 new families for a total of 635 families by 2025. This represents an average growth rate of one percent per year. This is a trajectory that will send important signals in support of further private investment in Snow Hill. Population growth is one of the main targets of this Plan.

### C. Town Assets

Snow Hill's assets include its historic downtown and preserved stock of historic homes, the scenic Pocomoke River including Gateway, Byrd, and Sturgis Memorial Parks, the well regarded, Blue-Ribbon public schools, the presence in Town of fiber optic capability, and the County governmental offices, library, circuit court, and district court. Related to these assets is a core of experienced merchants, the downtown arts and entertainment initiatives, and water and sewer infrastructure that is sized for growth. Snow Hill is a walkable community with open spaces and scenic views.

The Town's location is also an asset. It is situated in a region of unparalleled recreational and scenic amenities and growing economic vitality. It is close to the ocean resorts, barrier islands, and natural seashores along the Atlantic. The Town lies essentially adjacent to the 15,000-acre Pocomoke State Forest and the Pocomoke River State Park.

Snow Hill is also located within 20 miles of the expanding Wallops Island NASA Flight Facility, a facility with space launches, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle development, NOAA Climate Change Research, and the Chincoteague Bay Field Station (formally the Marine Science Consortium). This is a significant and growing national center of scientific endeavor, research, education, and employment within commuting distance of Snow Hill.

With these assets in mind, the Town is focused on revitalization in keeping with the Town's traditional scale and quality of life. The Town has established enduring working relationships with the State of Maryland and capitalized on Maryland's innovative programs supporting local economic revitalization and community and business development. The Town's ongoing projects and programs include:

- Low interest loans for new business start-ups.
- Façade grants for commercial storefronts and residential properties.
- Multiple events and activity programming in Downtown.
- Redevelop the historic Old Opera House.
- Sustainable Communities designation through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development offering the Town a comprehensive set of initiatives and investments in ongoing revitalization.
- Sustainable Communities Certified designation.
- Arts and Entertainment District designation providing incentives for artists and art enterprises to locate in Snow Hill.
- Economic development coordinator was hired and has begun process for Snow Hill to be a "Main Street" Community.

#### **D. Main Issues to be Addressed**

During the early stages of preparing this Plan, Snow Hill residents and business owners participated in workshops that shaped the goals and strategies. The main issues to be addressed over the next decade center on:

- Attracting families and employment and growing businesses in Snow Hill
- Preserving the quality of the housing stock and improving housing overall
- Promoting downtown as a center for culture and commerce
- Revitalizing the smaller neighborhood commercial centers along Market Street and the neighborhoods which adjoin them
- Engaging the citizens of the Town and the County government in development and improvement efforts,
- Promoting riverfront activities, open space, and community beautification.



### III. Goals & Benchmarks

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Broad based engagement in the civic life, a variety of social offerings, a welcoming and open community, an attractive town with great open space and parks, great schools, and vibrant businesses – these are the key ingredients to community wellbeing and happiness in Snow Hill. To get there, this plan sets very specific goals that are tied to economic growth. They are presented below along with benchmarks. The benchmarks help define the goal and allow for measuring attainment over time.

#### A. Economic Growth

The main goal is basic; it is economic growth. The Town will grow and develop economically over the next decade; meaning that by 2025 there will be strong employment and population growth and a marked increase in median family income. In answer to the question: “How does Snow Hill achieve this goal?” the Plan recommends a concerted effort to promote commercial development and new and existing market rate housing, through incentives, infrastructure investments, land use and zoning changes, and by directly engaging in the development of key opportunity sites. Strategies centered on these ideas are described in Section IV of this report.

The three benchmarks for this goal are:

- **Job Growth:** Aim for five percent of the County’s projected job growth through 2025 or 175 new jobs. The number of jobs countywide is projected to grow from about 34,600 in 2015 to 38,100 by 2025 or by 3,500<sup>3</sup>. Today private sector employers in the Snow Hill zip code area employ approximately 615 persons. Agencies and units of government employ more.
- **Income Growth:** Aim for family income parity with the County by 2025; meaning median family income will equal or exceed the County figure in 2025. In 2010, the median family incomes for the Town and County were approximately \$62,000 and \$69,000, respectively. To achieve this goal the Town will encourage housing that meets the needs of teachers, scientists, engineers, government workers, business owners, persons employed in the tourist economy, police and firefighters and the retired persons who choose Snow Hill. This goal cannot be achieved if the Town continues to absorb affordable low to moderate income-supported housing units.
- **Residential Growth:** Aim for 130 new households for a total of 1,000 by 2025 and 80 new families for a total of 635 by 2025. This is a 1 percent per year residential growth goal.

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland Department of Planning, Historical and Projected Number of Jobs by Place of Work for Maryland’s Jurisdictions, Revision March 2014.

## B. Overall Business Vitality

The second goal of this Plan is to improve the overall vitality of business in Snow Hill. This refers to what the Town can do to support and encourage a positive and attractive climate of business growth, investment, employment, and innovation.

In answer to the question “How does Snow Hill achieve this goal?” this Plan recommends physical and aesthetic improvements to the Town’s commercial centers, the marketing of new areas for business development, engagement in public-private partnerships to bring about redevelopment of key opportunity sites, and the creation of a business incubator. These and related strategies are described in Section IV of this report.

There are four benchmarks for this goal:

- **Increase the Number of Business Establishments:** By 2025 the number of businesses in the Snow Hill Zip Code Area, as reported by the U.S. Census County Business Patterns will increase from 100 today to 120.
- **Full Occupancy of Second/Third Floor Space:** By 2025, the second and third floors of all downtown buildings will be put to economic use and ideally occupied by office or residential uses.
- **By 2025, the vacant buildings and sites in the West Market Street Center and the East Market Street Center will be occupied and/or redeveloped.**
- **Residences in Downtown:** By 2025, the number of households in Downtown will increase; either above the ground level of existing commercial buildings or through residential infill development.

## IV. Strategies

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Six core strategies are presented in this section. Recommended actions and projects related to each strategy are prioritized and detailed in the Implementation section, Section V. The strategies are:

1. Promote Town Wide Economic Development with a focus on Business Centers located on West and East Market Street
2. Promote the Vitality of Downtown Snow Hill
3. Encourage Town Beautification and Good Community Design
4. Promote Market Rate Housing Investment
5. Encourage Technology Employment Development in the Planning Area
6. Continue to Improve Marketing and Capacity Building in Support of Revitalization

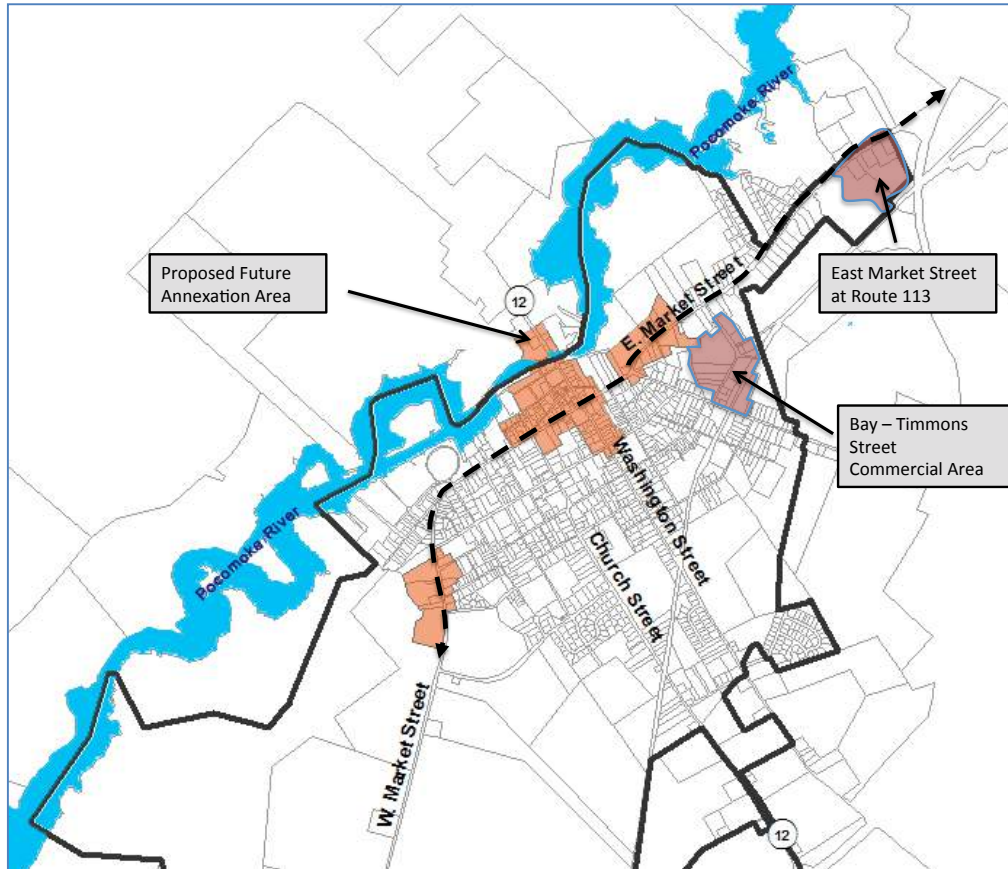
### A. Market Street Development and Improvement

Market Street is the spine of Snow Hill as shown on Map 2. It connects Downtown to U.S. Route 113 and links Downtown and several business centers together. This Plan focuses on the east and west sides of Snow Hill and more particularly on the existing business centers located there—the East Market Street Center, Bay-Timmons Street Commercial Area, and the West Market Street Center. Thus maximizing economic development opportunities located just outside of Downtown while preserving Snow Hill’s historic pattern of development and more specifically to:

- Ensure adequate acreage and properly zoned and marketable land and buildings.
- Attract businesses to underused spaces in highly visible commercial areas.
- Improve the business climate to help attract new and retain current businesses.
- Focus and coordinate investments in streetscapes that improve the business climate and beautify neighborhoods.

The vitality and success of these smaller centers is vital to the community at large. In combination with Downtown, these satellite business centers in East and West Snow Hill can help meet the shopping and service needs of area residents.

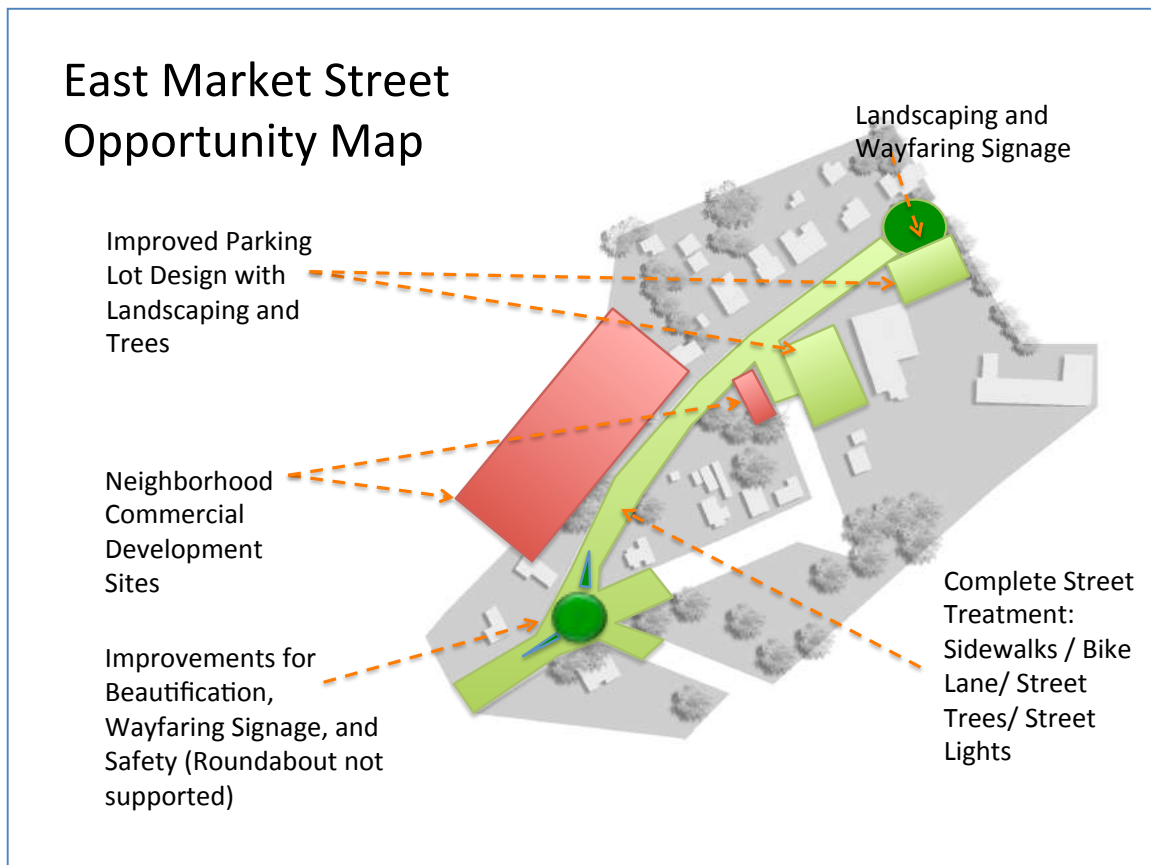
Due to their prominent locations on Market Street, their beautification and vitality is key to community wellbeing and to attracting new residents and investment. In each, attention should be devoted to creating walkable, safe, and enjoyable places to operate a business, work and shop.



Map 2: Market Street in Snow Hill

## 1. The East Side and the East Market Street Center

The East Market Street Center, the location of a grocery store and two neighborhood retail establishments, is just outside of Downtown. There are vacant parcels within this area that have commercial development potential and development should be encouraged. The area's aesthetics should be improved and its role as a neighborhood center, and entryway into Downtown, should be enhanced. In coordination with the State Highway Administration, the Town should implement landscaping and wayfaring signage treatments at the north side of the area and install sidewalks, streetlights, and street trees as indicated on the exhibit below.



The Town should coordinate with property owners to improve the appearance of building facades and parking lots. The Town should encourage the location and development of new neighborhood retail, office, and service uses in a manner that is compatible with nearby residences. Consideration can be given to convenience retail, personal service shops, automobile related uses, child day care, and medical and dental offices.

### Recommended Activities and Projects:

- a. Ensure that any development of the parcels fronting onto East Market Street provides sidewalk and street trees and enhanced landscaping along the street frontage appropriate to the Blue Crab Scenic Byway.
- b. In coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration and neighboring property owners, implement a set of streetscape improvements intended to enhance the marketability of the center for business. These are noted on the exhibit above and listed below:
  - i. Install landscaping improvements at the eastern edge of the center featuring wayfaring signage. Because East Market Street Center is close to Downtown, this treatment should be of significant size and quality as to announce arrival into the commercial heart of Snow Hill.
  - ii. In coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration, beautify the intersection of Park Row, Bay Street, and Market Street. This could have the added benefit of improving turning movements at the intersection. It could also include a set of improvements to green the location by formalizing the point of intersection of the streets and adding crosswalks, four-season landscaping, and a wayfaring sign.
  - iii. Install sidewalks on both sides of the street from the intersection of Market Street, Park Row and Bay Street to the grocery store. This extension is less than 1,000 feet in length and by virtue of this project the East Market Street Center would be connected to Downtown via sidewalks.
  - iv. In coordination with the State Highway Administration, stripe and sign East Market Street from the grocery store to Downtown for use by bicycles.
  - v. Work with private property owners to develop a business plan to market the center, its businesses, and its development opportunity sites including making use of the façade improvement program the Town manages.

The Town should also promote the long-term vitality of the Bay-Timmons Street heavy commercial / industrial area. While there is only limited expansion potential left in this area, several local factors are important to sustaining the area as a heavy commercial zone. They include minimizing land use conflicts between industrial and residential uses, ensuring that heavy trucks can continue to have access and readily circulate through the area, and ensuring that the potential for rail service remains viable as long as there are businesses that require it.

## 2. The West Side and West Market Street Center

The West Market Street Center is located one-half mile from Downtown. It is a collection of institutional uses, commercial buildings and houses fronting Market Street. It presently lacks curbs, sidewalks or street amenities. While there are vacant and underutilized buildings and parcels, there are also active business establishments as well as a nursing home. The Snow Hill Middle School's athletic fields establish the southern edge of the center. Several of the older buildings are worthy of preservation and help define the character of the area. The center is on the route to the Snow Hill Middle School and in close proximity to residential neighborhoods and Byrd Park.

West Market Street has served as a commercial service area historically with convenience food items and automobile related uses. Construction of the U.S. Route 113 Bypass changed the land use scenario for this area. It is now on the U.S. 113 Business Route and somewhat removed from the main flow of regional highway traffic. Future residential development in the area on former Summerfield's sites would contribute market strength but this is not required to bring about the enhancement of the area. Its potential is as a small employment and institutional center with mutually supporting land use types developed in combination with public investments in amenities like street trees and sidewalks as shown on the exhibit below.



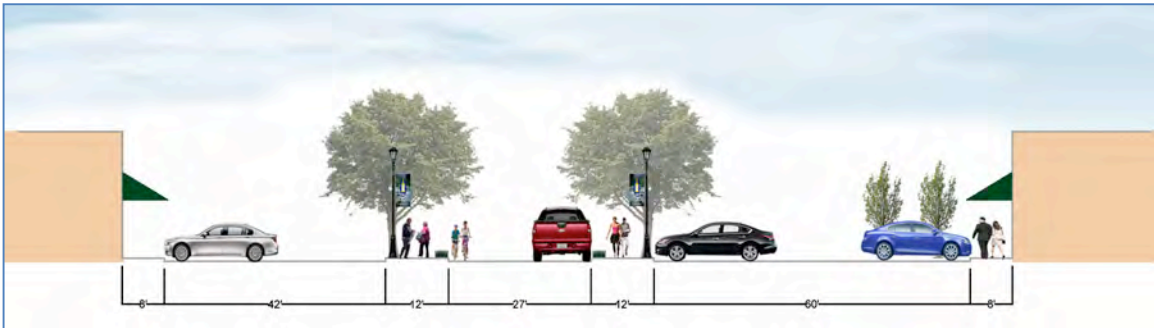
From a land use perspective, the Town should encourage new medical and dental offices, and institutions related to the care of the aged and/or child day care. The Town should encourage the expansion of nursing home and senior living uses in this area. It should also encourage the build out of the properties especially on the large parcels on the south side of the street for employment uses such as automobile repair, contractor offices, and other employment uses. The current building and lot vacancies also provide an opportunity to develop a Snow Hill business incubator as discussed below.

#### **Recommended Activities and Projects:**

- a. Facilitate the extension of fiber optic cable to West Market Street and the development of business incubator space. Coordinate with Worcester County and Maryland Broadband Cooperative, which is a regional non-profit organization that promotes rural economic development through communication infrastructure, to extend fiber optic cable from the County government center to West Market Street.
- b. Develop a business incubator. Acquire a site and/or an existing building to develop business incubator space. The building could be divided into four to six separate units and need not be larger than 5,000 to 6,000 square feet in size. The Town should coordinate with Worcester County and the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development to finance, develop, market, and manage the incubator.
- c. Consider rezoning all residential property fronting West Market Street between Tingle and Covington for general commercial and institutional uses.
- d. In coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration and neighboring property owners, implement a set of streetscape improvements intended to enhance the marketability of the center for business and promote safe and convenient walking and biking, especially to and from the Snow Hill Middle School.
  - i. Install wayfinding sign and landscaping at or near the intersection of West Market Street and W. Federal Street.
  - ii. Install sidewalks on at least one side of the street (both sides if technically and financially feasible) from Maple Street to W. Federal Street with the long-term plan to extend sidewalks to Byrd Park and Downtown (see the proposed cross section below). There should be a focus on ensuring a safe route to school and to Byrd Park through this corridor.
  - iii. Plant street trees in a coordinated way throughout the center along Market Street recognizing that the limited street right-of-way and lot access issues may be an obstacle to the placement of some trees.



- iv. Stripe and sign West Market Street and Maple Street to and from Downtown for use by bicycles.
- v. Work with private property owners to develop a business plan to revitalize and market the center, its businesses, and its development opportunity sites including making use of the façade improvement program the Town manages.



**Proposed Cross Section: West Market Street near Covington Street.** Note: this envisioned cross-section for West Market Street would require cooperation from adjoining property owners in order to be achieved because of the variability in the width of the public right-of-way.

## B. Downtown Snow Hill

The core of the Downtown consists of approximately 12 square blocks from the municipal parking lot to the east, Commerce Street to the west, Market Street, to the south, and the Pocomoke River to the north. Much of the commercial activity in the Snow Hill area is located within these boundaries. Due to the compact area, improvements can be made which will have a significant impact at a moderate cost. The limited area also means that all of the businesses within the area are within an easy walk from one to another and to the County Courthouse complex and adjoining neighborhoods.



Downtown has been and is the historic cultural, recreational, and economic hub of the Town. Over past decades the number of businesses has fluctuated but a core group of established merchants provide stability and continuity. Occupied retail space presently approximates 10,000 square feet, which does not include the restaurants, art galleries, and medical, legal and other professional related offices<sup>4</sup>. The County government center, courts, library and other agencies of local, state and federal government add substantially to the mix of professional office workers. Downtown is also the point of departure for cruises on the Pocomoke River and for other water-related activities.

The purpose of the following recommendations is to maximize economic development opportunities and more specifically to:

- Attract businesses to underused spaces.
- Improve the business climate to attract new and retain current businesses.
- Promote higher sales productivity of Downtown retail and restaurant space by enhancing the quality of the environment.
- Focus and coordinate investments in street infrastructure improvements that improve the business climate and beautify neighborhoods.
- Improve the connection to the Riverfront.

## 1. Downtown Business Attraction

In order to promote the maximum occupancy and economic vibrancy of Downtown the Town can target and seek to attract a specific list of business types that complement the unique downtown business environment and that have the merchandising and sales approaches that can succeed in Snow Hill. The businesses that are successful in Downtown Snow Hill have distinguishing qualities: they have broad outreach to the community extending beyond the Town, provide value added services within their storefronts, have good social networking with their customers and internet presence, and provide a unique product line and experience for the customer. Businesses in the following three business segments should be targeted immediately for placement in Downtown:

- Specialty food and drink retailer(s) such as a deli and other pre-package or made to order units that can provide limited carryout and fast lunch options, and fresh market products that meet limited grocery-related needs.
- Personal care service shops, with product retailing, such as salons.
- Arts, entertainment, educational uses including galleries, music and dance studios.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on telephone surveys of retailers and property owners in the spring of 2013.

These and related types of business complement the existing uses and can serve local and regional market demand over the next decade. Specialty apparel sales and service establishments, such as outdoor recreational apparel and supplies, tied to the Region's outdoor amenities also should be considered. Specialty home décor sales, design, and/or service firms that can appeal to affluent homeowners throughout the broader region should also be considered.

Therefore, one of the first priority actions for Downtown is to solicit interest from retailers throughout the Mid-Atlantic region in the sectors mentioned above. The Town should package the current business incentives it provides to businesses and contact firms with an invitation to tour Snow Hill. Existing business owners can be the best ambassadors in this regard and should be looked to for assistance and leadership.

## **2. Upper Floors in Downtown Buildings**

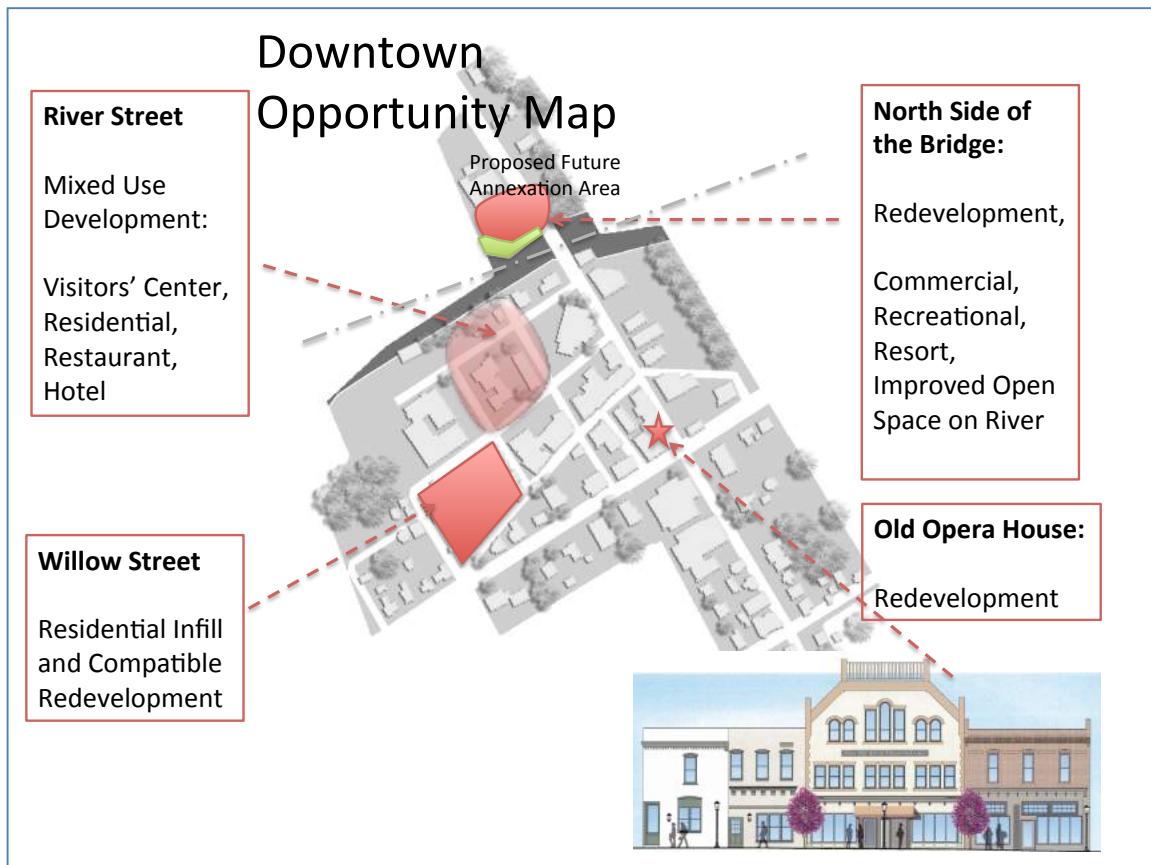
Two and three story historic buildings help define the sense of place and unique quality of experience in Downtown Snow Hill. The second and third floors above business establishments represent economic potential for building owners in particular and the Town in general. Fully occupying a building allows the cost of historic building maintenance to be spread over multiple units and, from the Town's perspective, it increases the assessed value of property without new land development and with minimal impact on public services. Presently there are about ten occupied residential apartments above businesses but potential exists for more apartments and/or more commercial use.

However, the costs of improving the second and third floors can be very expensive and compliance with modern fire and building codes can be difficult. The Town should continue to explore ways of promoting and facilitating the improvement and occupancy of the second and third floors. One way to do this is through tax incentives. A 2014 State law authorizes municipalities to provide tax incentives for up to 50 percent of the cost of qualified investments in commercial buildings such as elevators and fire safety enhancements. A town can allow the tax credit to extend for up to 10 years under the law.

The Town should convene a meeting with downtown building owners, the Fire Marshal, Town building inspection staff, and the Historic District Commission with the goal of creating a cooperative can-do forum for overcoming obstacles that building owners face when seeking to improve, renovate, or occupy upper stories of buildings. A tax credit incentive program can and should be a prominent part of that effort.

### 3. Downtown Development Opportunities

There are several redevelopment opportunities: the adaptive reuse of the Old Opera House and three sites with connection to the Downtown Riverfront. The exhibit below locates these areas.



#### *The Old Opera House*

The historic Mason's Opera House was built in 1908 as a three-story brick structure that could house 500 patrons for movies, shows, plays, high school graduations and other community events. In the 1930's it was remodeled into a movie theater, the Outten Theatre, with a soda fountain restaurant. It is located on Washington and Market Streets.



The Town acquired the building, also known now as the Raley Building, two years ago and with the advice of a local advisory committee, it determined that, while it is in considerable disrepair, the building has potential for adaptive reuse. With \$200,000 from the County and \$44,000 from the Town, work to stabilize and shore up the structure is presently underway.

The Town should work through a public private partnership to fully rehabilitate the building and restore it to its original three-story façade, if practicable. The primary use should be a cultural or entertainment venue that serves the cultural, artistic and education needs of the region. With both public and private sector investment, accessory uses of the building could include a café, restaurant, an art gallery, and dance and music studios. The Town should either reinstate its previous advisory committee or assemble a new regional working group with members possessing specialized knowledge of the market and experience in cultural and artistic endeavors. This committee should be assigned the task of developing a strategy and financial plan to attract developers and facilitate the rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of the building. This is of utmost priority and concern.

### *Riverfront Redevelopment Project Areas*

The Snow Hill Riverfront is a location of community wide significance. It is the location for viewing the Fourth of July fireworks and community wide events. The lands closest to the water are mostly in open space and should remain so forever.

The Town should prepare a master plan for the redevelopment of key parcels with access to or along the River in the Downtown area from Gateway Park to just beyond Byrd Park. The Plan should contain a strong emphasis on connecting and programming the public and green spaces extending throughout the entire Riverfront. Redevelopment of these sites will require partnerships between the public and private sectors. Through 2025, there are three priorities for redevelopment along the Pocomoke River in Downtown.

- The block bordered by River Street, Commerce Street, Bank Street, and Willow Street. Redevelopment could include residential uses, a hotel, restaurant(s), and civic uses<sup>5</sup> such as a visitors' center suggested later in this section. As the Town updates its Zoning Ordinance, it should create the right incentives for redevelopment allowing for flexibility where needed to achieve the best mixed-use development possible while ensuring a commitment to open spaces. A development vision for this site is provided in the following section under the heading "Sturgis Memorial Park at the Riverfront".

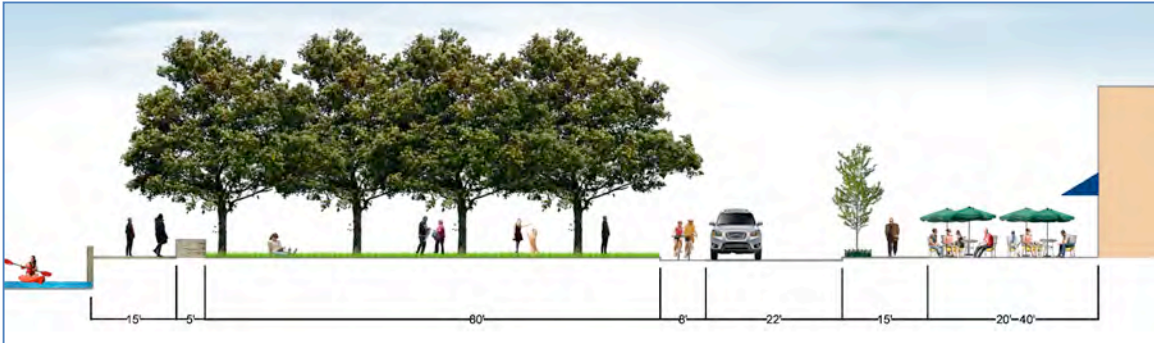
The exhibit on the following page shows a proposed cross-section along the Riverfront that could be part of redevelopment planning. The exhibit shows a 15-foot promenade along the River's edge and an 80-foot wide park. It shows a bike lane that could continue to Byrd Park and points beyond. River Street would remain a slow moving street but with no on-street parking and a wide plaza between the

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<sup>5</sup> The Town working in concert with the State and County should work to secure downtown locations for existing office users that are presently located between Willow and River Street and begin preliminary coordination with property owners in the near term.

street and new buildings. The location of the buildings relative to the street would determine the size of the plaza along the south side of River Street.

This plaza shown may also be green park-like space but it should be activated through use as outdoor restaurant seating, for example. The plaza and building entrances would be elevated to the flood protection elevation and provide a strong visual connection to the water's edge. Parking would be placed behind the building(s) accessed via Willow, Bank, or Commerce Streets.



Proposed Cross Section of River Street for Planning Purposes

- The block bordered by Willow, Market, Church and Green Streets. This area is just on the edge of Downtown. The Town should work to redevelop and/or incentivize infill on the vacant and under-used lots. Single-family residential should be the preferred and principal use with allowance for compatible non-residential uses such as professional home occupations, artisan shops, art studios and galleries, and bed and breakfasts<sup>6</sup>. The Town owns a vacant multifamily property on Willow Street that is in severe disrepair and whose redevelopment is critically important to the success of this Plan. It should move promptly to either rehabilitate this structure, if economically feasible, or to demolish and surplus it and encourage thoughtful redevelopment of the site through a disposition and development agreement. Improving and stabilizing this residential block which lies between the River and Downtown is a priority.
- The properties at the MD Route 12 Bridge on the North Side of the River. The Town should work to redevelop this gateway into Snow Hill, which may include all of the Cannery property. This site is a candidate location for office users, presently on the Riverfront, and others including recreational boating uses and businesses and accommodations that support tourists. A bigger vision, however, is also worth exploring; the area could be developed as a resort, which could pull together the key recreational and scenic amenities of the site and include the open and natural lands

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<sup>6</sup> An artisan shop is a retail store selling art, glass, ceramics, jewelry, paintings, sculpture and other similar handcrafted items that are small run or one-of-a-kind items, where the store includes an area for the crafting of the items sold.

on the north side of the River. Redevelopment as envisioned here would require annexation, which is supported by this Plan, and the extension of municipal water and sewer services.

#### 4. Destination Making Improvements

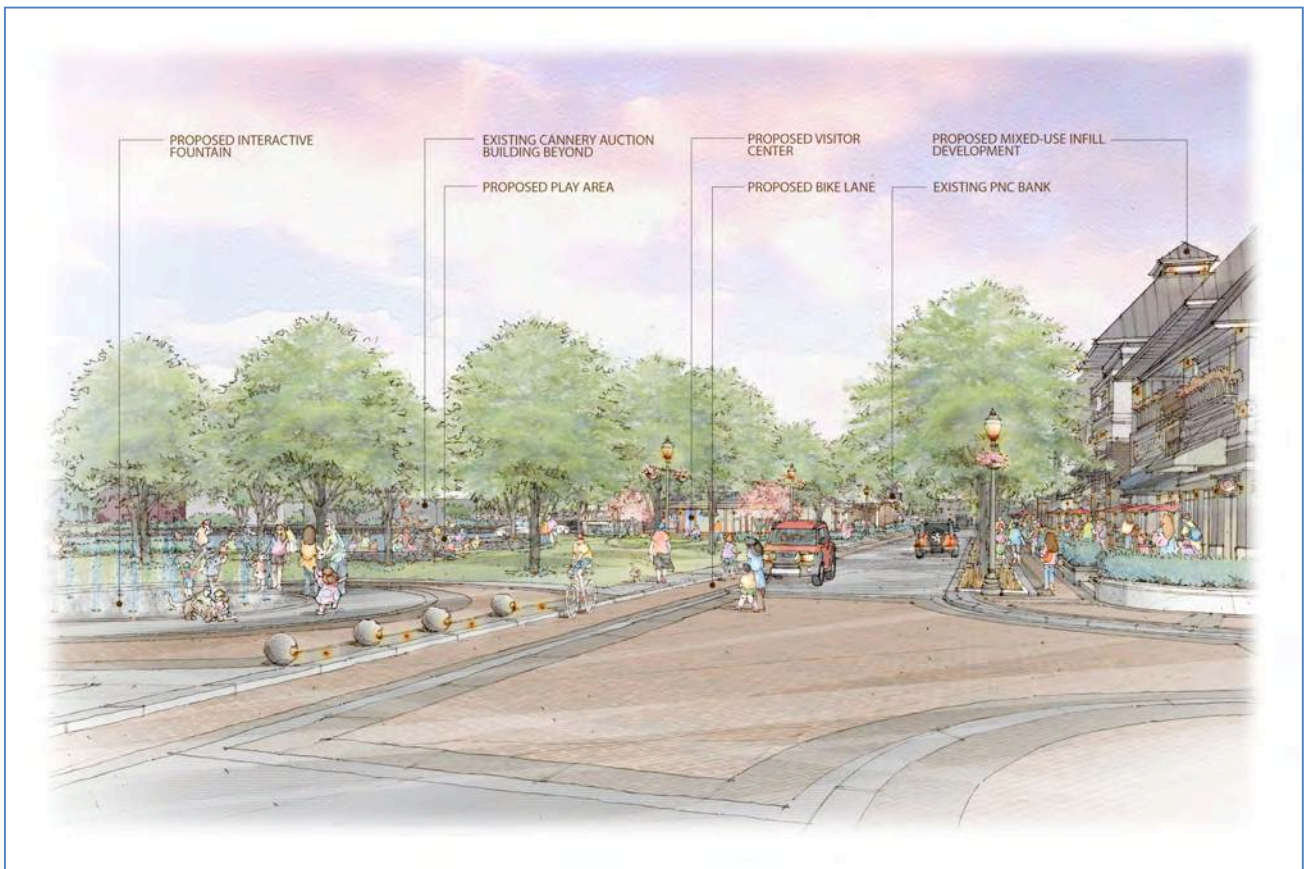
Securing Downtown's ongoing position as a cultural and commerce destination requires both private investment in business enterprises and public investment in renewing the physical space and infrastructure of Downtown. The exhibit below shows a number of improvements to the function of Downtown and the quality of experience. The key opportunity sites for destination making improvements are described below with photos that are examples of the types of improvements that are envisioned.



### *Sturgis Memorial Park at the Riverfront*

The Riverfront at Sturgis Memorial Park should become the focus of the Town’s destination making improvements featuring first-class year-round active recreational opportunities, especially for children.

Sturgis Memorial Park requires upgrades, modernization and a rethinking of its role in the Town and region. It has great potential to drive and sustain downtown vitality but it requires improvements and programming that allows active use of the open space; destination-making improvements that draw area residents, customers, and tourists to the Riverfront. Four season / year-round activities that appeal to children of all ages are especially needed such as outdoor water play fountains, unique playground equipment, ice skating, skateboarding, and access to the water. A safe play area for small children has great potential given the presence of the library.



Proposed Sturgis Memorial Park at the Riverfront. The vantage point for the view shown is River Street at the intersection of Commerce Street, looking toward Washington Street in the distance.



The vision for the Riverfront could include the development of a visitors' center. This could house the County's Office of Tourism, community meeting space, other public or private users such as the performing arts and science museum/educational programming or an expansion of the Library's programming, kayaking and bike rentals, and public bathroom and changing facilities, among others.

This would be combined with the redevelopment of the entire block bordered by River Street, Commerce Street, Bank Street, and Willow Street, which is discussed earlier in this Plan. In the future, the Riverfront would feature a mixed-use development, housing, restaurant(s) with outdoor seating, hotel, and other public and private uses.

Sturgis Memorial Park should be the location for a major public art installation that celebrates the heritage of the community and this could be combined with a recreational amenity for children. Install interpretive signage that explains the historic use of the Riverfront and the people that worked there, as well as the River's environmental characteristics. The intersection of Bank Street and River Street may be the best place to locate such an amenity. Improvements to the Riverfront would extend along the last block of Bank Street which is now framed by the Library on one side and an office building (which is proposed for redevelopment) on the other. Combined these improvements would draw pedestrians to and from Green Street, down Bank Street, to the Riverfront. It would also help incentivize redevelopment of key parcels of land facing Bank Street, such as Bank at River Street, that are so critical to making the connection between Downtown and the Riverfront work.

It is the hope of this plan that Sturgis Park will soon be considered less as passive open space and more as an active Downtown Riverfront destination. The Riverfront is a good location for new restaurants and other land use activities discussed previously in this section.

### *Washington Street*

Washington Street, as the main gateway into Downtown and Snow Hill generally must establish the brand for Snow Hill. The illustration on the following page shows improvements that are key to enhancing the character of the street including crosswalks, streetlights, along with coordination of access into parking lots and limiting the widths of curb cuts along the street. Other improvements include installation of landscaping to define the street edge.

Note in the illustration that the traditional pattern of street trees is not suggested due in part to the narrow sidewalk width and the desire not to block the historic architecture. However, there are locations just "off street" where trees would accentuate the sense of place along Washington Street and provide beautiful seasonal interest. Locations for tree planting include: along the parking lot opposite the Library and adjacent to the library building. This Plan therefore recommends that the street trees that were once planted on Washington Street not be replaced. In addition to the aforementioned plantings, it is recommended that the property owners coordinate with each other in selecting and installing window and foundation boxes. Not shown on the illustration, but recommended, is the return of the mural on the large blank wall of the Dental Associates Building at Willow and Washington Streets.

The library, in the illustration, features an improved plaza and new bike parking positioned close to the street. Moving the bike parking up to the street sends a signal to tourists and residents alike that Snow Hill is bicycle friendly. Overall, Washington Street is envisioned as a slower moving traffic way with parallel parking on one side of the street.



Illustration of Proposed Washington Street looking toward Willow Street

Parking lots on the east side of Washington Street can be improved while retaining their function, such as the parking lot opposite the library between the Post Office Building and the antiques and art store. The placement of planting boxes along property line and formalizing of the driveway entrances will improve the appearance and function of Washington Street.

### *Pearl Street*

Pearl Street is a 235-foot long one-way street connecting Market Street and Green Street. It therefore connects the County Courthouse and the heart of the retail center of Snow Hill. With building heights ranging from one to three stories, the narrow street feels enclosed and comfortable and provides a unique location for restaurants especially those that would feature outdoor seating among the historic buildings, which line the street. With the participation of adjoining building owners the Town should allow flexible use of the parking lanes on the street as outdoor seating and encourage restaurants. Streetlights are also recommended for Pearl Street, which is described later in this section.

### *Enhancing the Municipal Parking Lot, Market Street to Green Street*

The Town owned parking lot between Market Street and Green Street is currently a wide-open space with little definition and parking on both sides of a two-way drive aisle. Its potential as a green in-town park and gathering place should be explored. The view from the lot to the east is of the historic Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church, which fronts Market Street. Even modest improvements such as shade trees, a place for interpretive signage, and benches would improve the appearance and function of this space with little to no impact on the number of parking spaces or the operation of the farmers' market. While not a high priority as compared with many of the other projects, even modest attention to this space could improve Downtown. This is an excellent small project for a garden club or other civic group.

### *Willow Street– Streetscape*

Willow Street is a one-way street from Washington Street. It is not a primary street, mainly just a service street to the back of the commercial buildings that face Green Street. However, because Willow Street is one-way, adequate space allows street trees or flowering plants to be planted along Willow Street at the approach to Washington Street. This in combination with the mural on the Dental Associates Building would improve the appearance of the streetscape opposite the library. The same type of improvement should be considered at the intersection of Willow and Bank Streets, as space exists on the library property to accommodate ample landscaping improvements.

Over the longer term, Willow Street's importance will grow as a service access route in the Riverfront redevelopment sites that are planned and as a route on the Art Walk. Like the project mentioned above, Willow Street is not a high priority but even modest attention to the appearance of Willow Street would improve Downtown. This is an excellent project for a garden club or other civic group.

### *Art Walk and Public Art More Generally*

The art and entertainment segment of the local economy has received a boost from the Snow Hill Art and Entertainment District<sup>7</sup>. This Plan builds on this by recommending an Art Walk –which can be a self-guided tour through Downtown to the Julia A. Purnell Museum. The Walk can feature a series of art and entertainment activities (both indoor and outdoor). The route could extend from Green Street to Willow Street to Pettit Street and back to Market Street or it could incorporate the library and the Riverfront when special events and/or public art is programmed or installed there. The Art Walk could be incorporated into the First Friday's gallery walks sponsored by Arts on the River.

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<sup>7</sup> Within the Snow Hill zip code area, between 2000 and 2012, the number of private sector employees in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector of the local economy doubled, increasing to 169 persons.

The Art Walk can help drive a public art strategy. The job of public art is to provide for the preservation and interpretation of culture and to reveal the great possibilities of a place. Public art is about engaging people at the level where they can experience, participate in, and create in an ongoing way the heritage of their place. So this is an important part of this Plan's aim to engage citizens in town-wide civic efforts. Public art can be a permanent installation or it can be temporary, performance-based and staged, or even be more spontaneous. It can be informative, interpretative, and evocative. The Town should encourage public art as a basic element of ongoing revitalization.

The Snow Hill Arts and Entertainment District should also explore the possibility of creating an artist in residency program in which artists come to reside in Town and participate in public art and other creative and educational endeavors.

### *Streetlights on Downtown Streets*

Streetlights should be added to key locations in and around Downtown. They are a critically important component of the Town's efforts to expand the "hours of operation" in Downtown and promote safety and security for pedestrians and motorists alike. The streetlights, properly chosen, can also reinforce a unique sense of place. The Town should request its Town Engineer to program the installation over a ten-year period prioritized for cost effective implementation and the support of the development proposals recommended in this Plan.

Here are the targeted locations through 2025:

- Pearl Street from the Courthouse to Green Street
- Bank Street from Market Street to River Street
- River Street from Washington Street to Commerce Street
- Washington Street from the Bridge to Market Street. The streetlights should extend eventually beyond the Bridge upon annexation and redevelopment of this area.

## C. Town Beautification and Community Design

The quality of a town's open spaces and aesthetics are essential to community wellbeing and happiness. The degree of attachment people feel to their communities is largely influenced by the quality of its open and recreational spaces and how beautiful the area is judged to be. Snow Hill's historic settlement pattern, its connection to the River, its many tree lined streets, its riverfront parks and views of historic buildings all contribute to the scenic beauty of the area. But much work can still be done especially outside of Downtown.



Improvements at key intersections (gateway improvements), pocket parks, and street trees add value to real estate and are attractive features when people choose a place to live. Such improvements have special value in neighborhoods where blighting influences or disinvestment may have taken hold. There are several types of improvements described below.

### 1. Small Parks and Landscaped Streetscapes

The intersection of Dighton Road and West Market Street is a fine location for a park and/or landscaped open space. A Town investment in beautification at this focal point would serve multiple objectives. It could provide another neighborhood recreational amenity, promote the continuation of the Byrd Park landscape, and stand as a simple but beautiful neighborhood gateway along Market Street. Other possibilities throughout the Town exist and these can be explored at the neighborhood scale through local citizen planning efforts, which are discussed later in this Plan.

## 2. Paths and Trails

A walking and biking path is needed from the East Market Street center to the County's John Walter Smith Memorial Park on Bay Street. Bay Street has sidewalks that extend east from the center but they stop at Timmons Street in the vicinity of the Tysons Food facility. The industrial land use in this area and its heavy truck movements are obstacles to the safe routing of pedestrians and bicyclists, so an alternative routing should be considered. One alternative could include an easement over the edge of the industrial lands along the stream that runs from Bay Street to Purnell Street. From the end of Purnell Street to the park, a walking and biking trail could be made part of the future development of the open space that now separates the two.

Byrd Park and Sturgis Memorial Park, both on the River, are separated by only about 1,000 feet of land. The properties between the parks are privately held. The Town should pursue the acquisition of an easement or right-of-way along the River to connect the parks with a trail and related public open space. The trail can be in the form of a boardwalk partially or fully over the water if necessary, though an over land route is preferable due to costs.

## 3. Byrd and Sturgis Memorial Parks

Of immediate need is the upgrading/rehabilitation of the bathroom facilities at Sturgis Memorial Park though incorporation of these facilities within a proposed visitor center at the Riverfront is preferred. At Byrd Park, the Town should consider investments in additional bathroom facilities, which could be located at the boat ramps.

## 4. Wayfaring Signs

Wayfaring signs should be continued throughout the Town to benefit tourists and encourage others who are passing through to visit the unique offerings in Snow Hill. For example, they could direct motorists to the East and West Market Street commercial areas and the improved Sturgis Park. Wayfaring signs should be provided for both motorists and pedestrians and can be implemented over time as streetscape and other destination-making improvements are implemented.

## 5. The Grid Street System

Snow Hill's traditional grid street system has been a defining element of its character for hundreds of years. It lends character and ease of movement throughout Town and is important to ensuring that no one street or route becomes overloaded with traffic. Maintaining the character of the Town as it grows requires that the street grid be extended as new development takes places. This includes Ross Street, which stops just 430 feet short of Woodland Court. This gap prevents an easy walking and biking route for children to the elementary and middle schools.

## D. Housing Investment

This section specifically addresses two interrelated goals set forth in Section III of this Plan: increasing the population and overall median family income. Snow Hill wants to promote housing strategies that contribute fiscally to the Town's wellbeing and support the local business community with new residents that have disposable incomes to spend locally. Snow Hill encourages home ownership opportunities that will aid in the restoration and preservation of the Town's historic houses. Conversely the Town does not and will not support new non-market rate low-income housing developments at least through the year 2025 because such projects will further raise the Town's costs of public service delivery without meeting the actual housing needs of those persons residing and working in and around Snow Hill.

With higher poverty rates, lower household and family incomes, and higher rates of rental housing than Worcester County, Snow Hill has long met more than its fair share of the regional need for low-income housing. There are seven housing projects in Snow Hill with over 180 apartment units, all of which are rent subsidized. In total, there are 364 rental units comprising roughly 40 percent of the occupied dwelling units in Town<sup>8</sup>.

Over the next decade the Town will focus on attracting market rate housing and encouraging investments that preserve and protect its housing stock and neighborhoods. This plan therefore recommends the following actions to address the Town's housing needs and to preserve the quality of the historic housing stock, promote affordability and supply, and generally to attract families to the Town:

- Extend the commercial façade program to residential properties in designated areas to support efforts to revitalize at the neighborhood level and reinvest in the housing stock.
- In keeping with the zoning changes previously made which created the clustering provisions, amend the Zoning Ordinance to incentivize and permit by right a greater range of housing types that can be more cost-effective to develop throughout town. For example: Allow accessory dwelling units (granny flats) on single-family lots and reduce the minimum lot size of townhouse units from the current 3,500 square feet to a lower level, such as 2,000 or 1,200.
- Use a code enforcement and demolition program to enforce the Town building and livability codes and remove vacant and blighted properties as needed. At the same time, encourage Worcester County to expand its administration of the Community Development Block Grant and state special loans program funding to support rehabilitation of housing owned by low income and elderly homeowners.
- Promote the redevelopment of the key opportunity parcels discussed previously in this Plan.

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<sup>8</sup> The 2010 US Census documented 377 renter occupied units, which comprised 43 percent of the total occupied housing units in Town. There were also 19 vacant rental units recorded at that time.

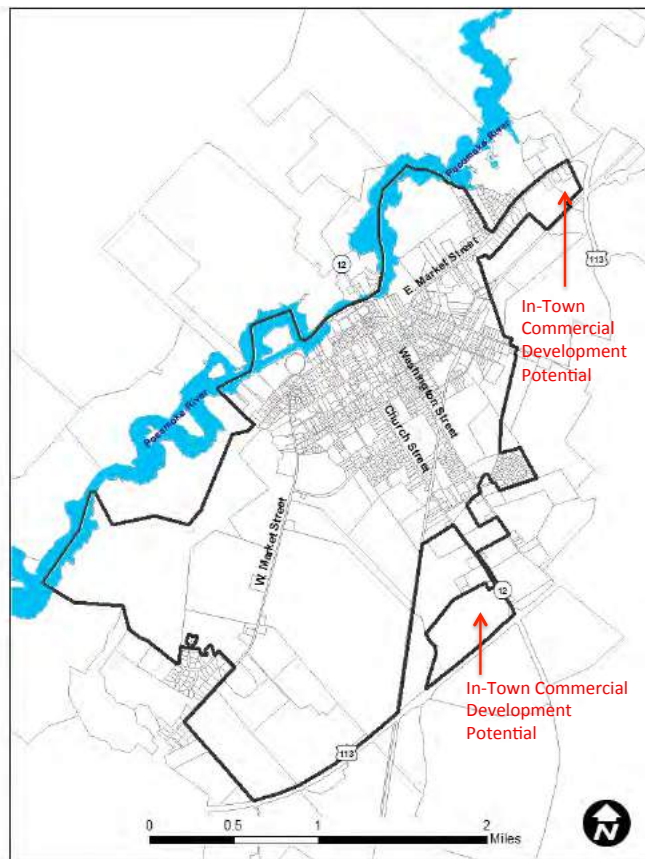
- Reduce the costs of new housing construction by reducing the water and sewer connection charges on new residential construction. Combined the fees are \$10,500 which can represent an obstacle to homeownership. The Town will be flexible as it considers how best to implement this recommendation and it may consider a tier structure where residential development within existing neighborhoods or in new downtown projects is provided the largest discount as a way to incentivize new market rate housing. A policy such as this may not be sustainable over the long run, but can be a temporary strategy to improve the Town’s competitive position for new housing development.

## E. Economic Development Potential

By 2025, the Town should have set in motion critically important long-range policies to sustain economic vitality and employment growth.

### 1. Development at U.S. Route 113

Each of the intersections with U.S. Route 113 should be developed for commercial development. Two areas along the highway are already in municipal limits and zoned for commercial development, as shown on the map. The first adjoins the McDonald’s site on East Market Street and Route 113. The property has access to East Market Street and visibility to and from the highway. This intersection of East Market Street and U.S. Route 113 is a prime location for future highway retail, convenience, and commercial services. McDonald’s, a gasoline and convenience store, the Snow Hill Pharmacy, a pizza restaurant and the Dollar General store are there presently. As a gateway into the Town, the area should be supported by a unified architectural and landscaping approach as additional sites are developed over time. The Town will insist on excellent site planning and design when new development is proposed.



Map 3: Commercial Development Potential Along U.S. Route 113 in Snow Hill



The second area is located at East Church Street and the highway. This site, with just over one-half a mile of highway frontage has potential for a combination of commercial retail or other general business activity. The Town, ideally with the assistance of Worcester County Economic Development, should explore the use and development goals of the present owners and aggressively market this site for development. The Town may explore the feasibility of the site for an industrial or business park in line with the recommendations below.

## 2. Employment Development

To maximize economic development opportunities, adequate acreage of properly zoned land must be provided so businesses in the region have a reasonable selection of sites. Presently there is little vacant or unused land that can be developed for a business park or for industrial or technology users within Town limits – or even within a 12-mile radius of Town--except for two parcels of about 2.5 acres on Church Street between the railway and Stevens Street.

In total, the Town's existing industrial land base approximates 35 acres and is almost entirely developed. While intensification of the existing uses is somewhat possible along Timmons Street, there are constraints to more intensive business or industrial use in this area because of the potential conflict with adjoining residential areas and the lack of direct access to the highway network. Worcester County owns land at the extension of Holly Lane just beyond the Transfer and Receiving Station but access to and from this site to the highway is limited due to a Sensitive Species Protection Area that covers the site<sup>9</sup>. The Paul M. Jones Lumber Company site between Washington Street and Holly Lane, most of which extends beyond the Town limits, is zoned for industrial use by the County, but it is fully developed too.

The Town should consider amending the Comprehensive Plan to designate additional land for future industrial use and development with a focus on technology companies<sup>10</sup>. Such a future business park should be located within or adjacent to the Town's designated Growth Area, including the in-town parcel at U.S. Route 113 and East Church Street mentioned above. The Town and County should explore joint development of a business park within the existing or future boundaries of the Town.

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<sup>9</sup> See 2010 Snow Hill Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>10</sup> In 2012 the US Census County Business Patterns documented that there were four high technology firms located in the Snow Hill zip code area. These firms operate in the following three business sectors with the high tech classification: engineering services, marketing consulting services, and telecommunications. In total there are 46 high technology firms in Worcester County, mostly clustered in the Berlin area and to a lesser extent in Bishopville near the Delaware/Maryland state line.

## **F. Marketing and Capacity Building**

### **1. Marketing**

The Town should develop detailed marketing approaches with a theme and logo to be used consistently on signs, a new website, and marketing materials. Marketing messaging and investments should be aligned with the goals of this plan and the critical items to be addressed as described in the earlier sections of this document. In particular, the following messages need to be communicated:

- Snow Hill is an excellent place to move to and to raise a family with quality schools, historic resources, cultural and recreational amenities, and an enchanting American small town quality of life.
- Snow Hill is open for business and is seeking to develop business and industrial uses through new land development and the re-purposing of old buildings.
- Snow Hill is part of the Tidewater Region endowed with eco-tourism opportunities, including river activities, biking, the Pocomoke State Park, and access to the Bay. The Town is a center for the recreational resources in the region.

All marketing efforts should be a cooperative effort among the key players including business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, the Arts and Entertainment District, County Tourism, County Economic Development, Furnace Town, and the Purnell Museum. The Town should restart the former Marketing Consortium to achieve the goals of this plan.

### **2. Capacity Building**

The Town has initiated steps to become a Maryland Main Street Community. It is important to have a staff person dedicated to economic revitalization activities. The Town recently hired an Economic Development Coordinator who has initiated steps to become a Main Street community. This person should work with business owners and county and state agencies to create revitalization opportunities.

### **3. Community Planning for Revitalization**

With the assistance of the Planning Commission the Town may consider neighborhood level planning where focus can be brought to bear on the housing, recreational, and beautification needs of the Town's neighborhoods. Such planning might initially focus on the East and West Market Street commercial centers and encompass the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

## V. Implementation

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This section provides guidance on implementation. It organizes the main action steps that comprise the six strategies and references where key dependencies between actions are found. The implementation tables in this section should be followed closely over the next five years as municipal budget and other policy decisions are made.

Implementing a town wide revitalization plan is not linear. A town rarely can focus on each and every initiative and see each through from beginning to end in a step-by-step orderly process. Instead, in practice, plan implementation is largely opportunity driven, meaning the main actions the Town will take will vary from year to year as funding is arranged, supporting policies are adopted, and relationships are formed. Because, multiple actions will be undertaken at any given time, the Town will benefit most from connecting projects and actions in order to leverage resources including staff time and funding. This is why, ultimately, an overall plan is important: it sets policy and guides the use of resources allowing focus to remain on the goals of economic growth and long-term business vitality.

The overall sequencing of priorities is very important. Here the main action steps are also organized into two priority groups or phases: Short Range 2015-2020 and Long Range 2015-2025. Obviously those projects, which are likely to require more time to complete, are in the long-range category. Some of the recommendations in the Plan are not called out specifically in this section because their implementation will be dictated largely by events on the ground and regional market forces or they are of much lower priority.

### A. Overall Priority Check List: Short Range 2015 to 2020

Work on the following should get underway upon adoption of the Plan. This is an abbreviated list. The implementation tables that follow provide greater details.

1. Create a town marketing plan and revise the Town website.
2. Reduce the water and sewer tap fees on new residential construction.
3. Initiate discussions with all key property owners to facilitate redevelopment of the Riverfront project areas discussed in the plan.
4. Utilize the residential façade assistance program to assist in the upkeep of the housing stock in residential neighborhoods.
5. Investigate need for zoning amendments to support infill development, Riverfront redevelopment, increased housing densities, and mix-use development near downtown.
6. Work with property owners in East and West Market Street commercial areas to develop area business plans for the revitalization of their districts, which may be done in combination with the neighborhood planning recommendations for community revitalization.
7. Begin negotiations to secure access easements for a path between Sturgis Memorial Park and Byrd Park, and/or a plan for a boardwalk connection out over the water.
8. Redevelop the Willow Street Property or at least demolish the existing blighted structure.

9. Convene a work group to address improvements to the second and third stories above ground floor commercial in Downtown including drafting a Town ordinance authorizing use of property tax incentives<sup>11</sup>.
10. Re-instate or reconstitute the Old Opera House advisory committee.
11. Create and execute programs to attract businesses (retailers) into downtown, which should later be expanded to include the other commercial centers.
12. Develop a business incubator in the West Market Street commercial area and extend fiber optic cable to the area, as feasible.
13. Complete the main elements of the streetscape and wayfaring improvements along East and West Market Street.
14. Begin the installation of the recommended streetlights on Downtown streets.
15. Convene a work group on public art installations and work to accomplish installations.

## **B. Overall Priority Check List: Long Range 2020 to 2025**

1. Complete each of the “destination-making” improvements in Downtown.
2. Install wayfaring signs throughout Town, including those marking the Art Walk.
3. As conditions allow, develop the Riverfront redevelopment project areas recommended in the Plan. (Initial work to begin in the 2015 to 2020 period.)
4. Prepare and adopt the recommended master plan for the Downtown Riverfront, from Gateway Park to Byrd Park and beyond.

## **C. Implementation Guidance**

Implementation tables are presented following the Conclusion section in this report. They provide implementation guidance for the Plan over the next five years—that is, from 2015 to 2020. Some of the projects and actions will require at least a decade to complete. A checklist box is provided on the right-hand side of each table. The Town can provide these tables online for community review and track progress in the checklist box.

### **1. Cost Estimates**

Cost estimates are provided for those projects where costs can reasonably be estimated, such as for streetlights, streetscapes, trails, and building construction. For programs or project recommendations that cannot be sufficiently understood until more detailed programming is done, the cost column is left blank, such as the program for wayfaring and small parks in Town. Each of the major capital projects, however, is shown in the tables along with estimates for some of the smaller projects and programs. The total public cost is estimated to be \$8.5 million excluding those actions where costs cannot be estimated presently.

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<sup>11</sup> Per Senate Bill 605 passed in the 2014 General Assembly and signed into law.

It should also be noted that the cost estimates shown are the total estimated project costs and not the cost to the Town of Snow Hill individually. It is expected that the bulk of project costs noted herein would be covered through grants and other public financing approaches by outside agencies and units of government. Having said that, revitalization will require real monetary contributions from Snow Hill over the next five to ten years in the form of reduced fees and tax credits (foregone revenue) to incentivize development and general fund expenditures and possibly debt to assist with capital projects.

The Town should create a capital improvements program (CIP) dedicated especially to strategic revitalization (useful for general capital projects too). A CIP would guide budget planning by listing both short-term (0-5 year) and long-term (up to 10 year) commitments and the intended sources and uses of funding. The CIP should be reviewed and approved along with the general budget each year so decisions about operating expenditures can be made in light of ongoing capital investments in revitalization. The Town will continue to incur salary and benefit costs to cover grant administration and economic development coordinating services.

It should also be noted that not all of the costs would be expended through 2020 because some of the projects will actually be implemented in later years. Lastly, the Town can expect that there will be considerable public financing and subsidy involved in any sizable redevelopment in and around downtown, such as along River Street and on the north side of the Bridge. These costs are not included.

## **2. Public Private Partnerships**

A Public Private Partnership (P3) approach will be indispensable to implementing the redevelopment projects in the Plan, including the Old Opera House project. Each project while, ultimately developed or owned privately, will require substantial public sector contribution and assistance. The implementation tables provide guidance on the initial steps leading to the creation of P3 agreements.

The Town will ultimately find that it is critically important to cultivate the technical know how in this area through education of key staff and interested citizens and through the ongoing engagement of consultants. Each of the redevelopment projects depends on the Town assembling such expertise to analyze the market and development context and reasonably estimate the costs and benefits of actions and explore strategies for establishing the right sources and uses for both public and private capital.

The redevelopment projects shown in this Plan are not beyond the ability of Snow Hill to achieve over the next decade. Because they complement local and State goals for sustainable communities and economic development, initial technical assistance is generally available upon request from the Worcester County Department of Economic Development, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), among other agencies.

The Salisbury University Business Economic Community Outreach Network (BEACON) is a local source of technical expertise. The Town should call upon BEACON very soon to request economic evaluations of the major development projects recommended in this Plan. This type of analysis will signal to public funding agencies and partners as well as private investors that the Town’s project ideas are credible and backed up with sound financial and market analysis.

### 3. Proposed Town and County Partnerships

Some of the actions in the following tables are noted as being a “ Proposed Snow Hill + Worcester County Partnership”. This means that the project can best be undertaken with the joint leadership of the Town and County. This Plan provides multiple ways for the Town and County to partner and invite the County to participate in the work of joint revitalization.

### 4. Supporting Outside Agencies and Organizations

The implementation tables reference multiple county, state, and federal agencies and units of government that can assist Snow Hill. As the Town has successfully found to date community revitalization is largely about connecting local needs and priorities with outside resources and aligning local interests with broader state or regional interests and policies. Here is a reference to the abbreviations in the tables.

CBT	Chesapeake Bay Trust
LSLT	Lower Shore Land Trust
MDBC	Maryland Broadband Cooperative
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
MEDCO	Maryland Economic Development Corporation
MD DBED	Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development
MD DHCD	Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
MD DNR	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
MD DOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
MHT	Maryland Historic Trust
POS	Program Open Space
SHA	State Highway Administration
WC	Worcester County
WCAC	Worcester County Arts Council
WC DED	Worcester County Department of Economic Development
WCT	Worcester County Tourism
SU-BEACON	Salisbury University, Business Economic and Community Outreach Network
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

## VI. Conclusion

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This Plan establishes goals for economic development and revitalization supported by benchmarks. The Town, in adapting this Plan, commits to working long term toward achieving the 10-year increases in jobs, housing, family income and business vitality.

The implementation tables should be used as a public guide to achieving the Plan. Successes should be celebrated. Along the way, the Town should track building permits, new business start-ups, population and employment statistics, as well as occupancies in Downtown and in the other commercial centers, to measure progress towards the goals of this Plan.

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

### Strategy: Market Street

The SRP calls for the revitalization of the East and West Market Street commercial centers. This list of action steps should be initiated soon after plan adoption and each action should be completed fully by 2020. The exception is Task 5, which would continue on an ongoing basis, as least through 2025.

Description of Action	Outside Agencies and/or Supporting Partners	Estimated Project Costs (if applicable)	Direction on Implementation	Check List Status:
<p><b>1. Business Revitalization Plans</b></p> <p>A. W. Market St. (Federal St. - Maple St.)</p> <p>B. E. Market St (Timmons St.- Bay St.)</p> <p>Includes marketing plan and business attraction strategy.</p>	<p>WC DED MD DHCD MD DOT, SHA</p>	<p>A. \$20,000</p> <p>B. \$20,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town’s Business Development Coordinator to take lead Role.</li> <li>• Prepare plans covering key properties in the Market Street Centers with involvement of nearby residents.</li> <li>• Extend planning areas into adjoining neighborhoods to address residential issues and concerns.</li> <li>• Town to adopt the Plans.</li> <li>• Time frame from start to finish: 6 months.</li> <li>• A potentially important tool to revitalize the East and West Market Street areas is the 2014 state law (SB605) which allows the Town to adopt an ordinance providing tax credits up to 50% of the costs of “qualifying investments” for up to 10 years to promote adaptive reuse of commercial structures.</li> </ul>	



## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the SHA Streetscape Plans.</li> <li>• Use opportunity to negotiate parking, sidewalk, and access easements to aid in future streetscape improvements.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Extend Fiber Optic Service</b>  <i>A Proposed Snow Hill + Worcester County Partnership</i>	MDBC WC DED MD DHCD	\$75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin discussions with Maryland Broadband Cooperative immediately to lay groundwork for project, evaluate project feasibility, route, and timing.</li> <li>• Funding: Community Development Block Grant, MD DHCD, Worcester County</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Develop Business Incubator</b>  <i>A Proposed Snow Hill + Worcester County Partnership</i>	WC DED MD DBED MD DHCD SU-BEACON	\$600,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct financial feasibility study and identify potential properties for use / acquisition.</li> <li>• Request special technical assistance from Salisbury Univ. Business Economic and Community Outreach Network.</li> <li>• Funding: Community Development Block Grant with support by MD DBED, USDA Rural Development Grant (Rural Business Enterprise Grants).</li> <li>• Funding: Should the community form an official “Community Action Agency”, the project may be eligible for Community Service Block Grant Program funding too.</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Market St. Streetscape Improvements</b>  <i>A Snow Hill + Worcester County Partnership</i>  A. W. Market St. (Federal St. - Maple St.)  B. E. Market St. (400’ N. of Burroughs St. - Bay St.)	MD DOT, SHA CBT	A. \$1,740,000  B. \$1,980,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restart previous effort to improve streetscapes; request SHA to undertake preliminary engineering a.s.a.p.</li> <li>• Coordinate streetscape planning/design with Business Revitalization Plans.</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding: MDOT Safe Routes to School Program with 20% local match requirement and CBT, Green Streets Program (for both project design and construction). Also consider other programs administered by SHA, which change from time to time.</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Execute Marketing Plan and Business Attraction Strategy</b>	WC DED		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town’s Business Development Coordinator to take lead role.</li> <li>Undertake in combination with downtown business attraction efforts.</li> <li>To best support effort, engage interested business and property owners.</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

### Strategy: Downtown

The SRP continues the Town’s focus on Downtown Snow Hill. This list of actions should be initiated soon after plan adoption and each should be completed by 2020. The Riverfront and Old Opera House projects may take longer to be realized but the essential tasks listed here need to be undertaken in the short-term. The two highest priority projects, and the projects that will consume the most Town staff time, are the Sturgis Memorial Park Improvement and the Old Opera House. Both should be pursued simultaneously and it is expected that the Town will need to decide, when the time is right, based on reasonable judgments of feasibility, which project to undertake first.

Description of Action	Outside Agencies and/or Supporting Partners	Estimated Project Costs (if applicable)	Direction on Implementation	Check List Status:
<p><b>1. Business Attraction Program</b></p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town to take lead with business community. Includes downtown and the other commercial centers along Market Street (including Timmons St. business area).</li> <li>• Prepare package of current (and possible future) incentives into a welcome kit, form a welcome committee with local business participation, and connect with businesses in targeted sectors presently operating in the Mid-Atlantic region.</li> <li>• Funding: Community Legacy Funding, MDHCD</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Upper Floor Space in Buildings</b></p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form work group to explore options and incentives to increase occupancy (see below).</li> <li>• A 2014 state law (SB605) allows the Town to adopt a tax credit up to 50% of the costs of “qualifying investments” to promote adaptive reuse of commercial structures.</li> <li>• Make such projects eligible for Snow Hill’s current</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

<p><b>3. The Old Opera House @ 205 Washington Street</b></p> <p><i>Restore the historic building with the principal desired end user being an arts and entertainment / community use.</i></p>	<p>MEDCO</p> <p>WC DED</p> <p>MHT</p>	<p>\$2,000,000</p>	<p>low interest business loan program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To date the Town and County combined have allocated \$244,000 to basic stabilization of the structure, which will be completed by the end of 2014. The structure will require further rehabilitation and restoration work.</li> <li>Re-instate and reconstitute an advisory committee (including outside experts) to continue work on a business and financial plan including finding and supporting the end user(s). Town should consider retaining an expert in real estate development to help orchestrate the development work that lies ahead.</li> <li>Prepare refined cost estimates under alternate development scenarios supported by structural engineering analyses, prepare potential sales and operating revenue projections, and then solicit interest from the State in providing funding assistance.</li> <li>Financing is anticipated to proceed through a public-private partnership involving multiple sources of public capital (including direct State grants and low interest loans and historic and other tax incentives such as MD Sustainable Communities Tax Credit Program) along with private equity.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Riverfront Area Redevelopment Projects</b></p> <p>Riverfront Master Plan</p>		<p>\$90,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Riverfront Master Plan should encompass the area from Gateway Park to and beyond Byrd Park and contain mainly recommendations for public infrastructure, open space programming, and private land development including the three-project areas</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

<p>River Street</p> <p><i>To be coordinated with Sturgis Park Improvements</i></p>	<p>MD DBED SU-BEACON</p>		<p>mentioned below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquire with property owners about a public-private partnership agreement to redevelop the site in combination with Sturgis Park Improvement (direct coordination is not necessary, but desirable).</li> <li>• Assemble working team to assemble outside public funding and financing. Consider retaining real estate development expertise.</li> <li>• Request economic analysis of the project from BEACON or other source.</li> <li>• Adopt Memo of Understanding with property owners and prepare and release a RFP soliciting developer interest in the project.</li> </ul>	
<p>Willow Street Infill</p>	<p>MHT</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town should sell the Willow St. property it owns for redevelopment or act to demolish the existing blighted structure and hold property for future use. Complete by 2016.</li> </ul>	
<p>North Side of Bridge</p>	<p>WC DED MD DNR MDE DBED</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquire with property owners to pursue annexation, provided owners have an acceptable concept plan for redevelopment.</li> <li>• Provided concept plan is acceptable to Town, request economic feasibility and market analyses from BEACON or other source.</li> <li>• Structure development agreements (including annexation agreement) with terms on water and sewer infrastructure.</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue public economic development funding to cover costs of infrastructure extension, consider POS funding for acquisition of a riverfront park as part of the project.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>River Street / Sturgis Memorial Park Improvements</b></p> <p><i>A Proposed Town + County Partnership.</i></p> <p><i>Includes: Visitors' Center with restrooms, interactive play fountain, playground structure, public art, sidewalks, streetlights, and full depth/full street section pavement replacement from Washington Street to Commerce and at the intersection of Commerce and Bank Streets.</i></p>	<p>MD DNR WC Tourism WC DED WC – Library Univ. of MD</p> <p>CBT</p>	\$1,330,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene meeting with State funding agencies including DNR to outline eligibility requirements.</li> <li>Connect with University of Maryland Landscape Architecture to create a program for student projects with design plans sufficient for funding agencies.</li> <li>Construct in phases through 2025, or all at once, if funding is available.</li> <li>Funding: MD DNR, POS and CBT, Green Streets Program.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Washington Street Streetscape</b></p> <p><i>Includes: Reducing the width of the parking lot access onto the street requiring limited new curb, gutter, and sidewalk especially opposite Willow Street, tree placement at Willow and Washington Streets and mid block at the approach to East Market Street. (Streetlights are included in the item below.)</i></p>	<p>MD SHA WC- Library</p>	\$66,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope: From foot of Bridge to Market Street.</li> <li>With joint Town Engineer and SHA leadership, coordinate with property owners on streetscape improvements, trees, and street access / driveway changes.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Street Lights in Downtown</b></p> <p><i>Washington Street from Bridge to East Market Street Bank Street from Market Street to River Street Pearl Street from Market Street to Green Street</i></p>		\$171,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With leadership of Town Engineer, the first priority is Market Street.</li> <li>The second priority is Pearl Street and should be synchronized with efforts to promote restaurants and entertainment uses on Pearl Street.</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The third priority is Bank Street, though lower Bank Street (near the Library) could be done simultaneously with the River Street / Sturgis Park Improvement.</li> <li>Use high efficiency lamps and assume purchase of replacements and maintenance.</li> </ul>	
<b>Art Walk and Artists-in-Residence Programs</b>	WCAC MD DBED		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Arts and Entertainment Committee can take the lead in raising and contributing funding to secure signage and other elements of these programs, with assistance of MD DBED and the Worcester County Arts Council.</li> </ul>	

### Strategy: Town Beautification and Community Design

This list of action steps should be initiated soon after plan adoption and each action should be completed by 2020. These steps are of utmost importance in ensuring that Snow Hill meets its goals for attracting regional visitors and new residents.

<b>Description of Action</b>	<b>Outside Agencies and/or Supporting Partners</b>	<b>Estimated Project Costs (if applicable)</b>	<b>Direction on Implementation</b>	<b>Check List Status:</b>
<b>Small Parks and Landscaped Gateways</b> Promoting neighborhood stability and re-investment.	MD DNR MD DOT, SHA MD DHCD  LSLT POS CBT		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Town should help create a town wide citizen group focused on open space such as a town garden club that could take on the responsibility to plant and maintain gateways and open spaces, especially in economically distressed neighborhoods. The Town could provide initial seed money for beautification plantings (about \$5,000) and annual disbursements through the Town</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

			<p>budget and support efforts to obtain grant funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An example priority project site is the intersection of Dighton Road and W. Market Street. The conversion of this site into an attractive neighborhood park / focal point could be added to the W. Market Street streetscape project.</li> <li>• Other projects should be selected and sponsored by local neighborhood or citizen groups.</li> <li>• Project funding sources may include: MD DNR, POS, SHA, Community Development Block Grants, and CBT, Green Streets Program.</li> <li>• The LSLT may be requested to provide technical assistance in acquiring property and related tasks.</li> </ul>	
<b>Wayfaring Signs</b>	WC SHA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of a wayfaring sign program is related to many of the priority actions of this Plan and should serve to link all such projects together: Market Street streetscapes and revitalization plans, Downtown Snow Hill marketing and development efforts, the Art Walk, trails, etc.</li> </ul>	



## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

### Strategy: Housing

This list of action steps should be initiated soon after plan adoption and each action should be completed fully by 2020. The Town's housing priorities are intended to attract market rate housing over the next decade.

Description of Action	Outside Agencies and/or Supporting Partners	Estimated Project Costs (if applicable)	Direction on Implementation	Check List Status:
<b>Zoning Amendments</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review regulations for granny flats and townhouses to encourage development.</li> <li>• Allow greater residential densities and smaller lots sizes by right.</li> </ul>	
<b>Residential Façade Improvement Grant Program</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be administered by Town.</li> <li>• Begin on West side of Town and expand program if successful.</li> </ul>	
<b>Water and Sewer Fee Reduction</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce water and sewer tap fees to incentivize new market rate residential units.</li> <li>• Especially use this incentive in combination with other public sources of financing to promote Riverfront redevelopment opportunities.</li> <li>• Feature this incentive broadly in the Town marketing initiatives.</li> </ul>	
<b>Housing and Property Maintenance Code Enforcement</b>	WC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with Worcester County and request that the County provide more resources to administer its CDBG housing maintenance programs for low income housing occupants/owners.</li> </ul>	

## SRP 2025 - Implementation Tables

### Strategy: Marketing and Capacity Building

This list of action steps should be initiated immediately after plan adoption and each action should be completed in the next year or two.

Description of Action	Outside Agencies and/or Supporting Partners	Estimated Project Costs (if applicable)	Direction on Implementation	Check List
<b>Develop A Town Marketing Plan</b>		\$30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a marketing strategy and messaging with professional help.</li> <li>• Promote goals of the SRP: encourage residential growth and business vitality and promote the redevelopment opportunities featured in the SRP.</li> <li>• Also use the website to better cultivate more community engagement, especially as it relates to Town governance.</li> <li>• Use opportunity to strengthen ties to outside agencies and organizations including County Economic Development and County Tourism.</li> </ul>	
<b>Create New Website</b>		\$20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake immediately.</li> </ul>	