



# **A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN WEST POINT, VIRGINIA**

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Spring Semester 2007

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am very grateful to Dr. Michela Zonta, Dr. Morton Gulak, Neal Barber and Stephen Versen for their assistance, guidance and expertise. I would like to thank the business owners and community members who gave me important feedback and insight into their beloved town that I have grown to love. I also thank my family for all their support throughout the process. And lastly, a special thanks to Amanda Christen, Aimee Berndt, Deepa Vedavyas, Nick Rogers, Michael Hartsough, Ronnie Clements, David Stinson, and Tom Phan who have helped me throughout my graduate school experience and all aspects of life and I would not have been able to complete this project without them.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of West Point is ideally situated at the intersection of the Pamunkey, York, and Mattoponi Rivers on the Middle Peninsula in central Virginia. West Point is 45 miles southeast of Richmond, 20 miles from Colonial Williamsburg and 60 miles from the Hampton Roads region. Its location on a peninsula allowed it to be a popular tourist destination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century complete with a downtown hotel. Unfortunately, a fire in 1903 destroyed most of the buildings downtown and the tourism industry never recovered. The town reestablished itself as an industrial center with the construction of a paper mill in 1914.

Currently, professional offices and service shops dominate the downtown central business district. The biggest problem facing downtown West Point is its lack of retail businesses to draw people into the area. To determine the potential of West Point's commercial district, previous studies and planning efforts were reviewed, existing conditions pertaining to traffic counts, population, housing type and household size, urban design and the physical conditions of buildings were collected and analyzed. The plan's study area consists of the four blocks on Main Street, from Tenth to Sixth Street, which is considered to be the Central Business District. After analysis of existing conditions an action plan is detailed and followed by implementation strategies and a timeline.

The downtown revitalization plan for West Point was completed over a four month period in attempt to reinvent the downtown as a prosperous business district. Downtown West Point is envisioned as an attractive and vibrant historic commercial center of business and retail shopping activity where residents and tourist are able to convene in a pedestrian safe environment.

This plan addresses:

### Commercial Development

- Retail recruitment & development

### Tourism and Attractions

- Enhancing downtown marketing efforts
- Visitor services
- Special events development and entertainment options for teenagers and young adults

### Organization

- Organizing community members and all downtown stakeholders

### Urban Design

- Streetscape and architectural design enforcement
- Public and open space
- Historic preservation

## **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

In the spring of 2007, under the guidance of Dr. Zonta, Dr. Gulak, Neal Barber and Stephen Versen, this study of Downtown West Point was completed as a partial requirement for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. The intent of this plan is to help stimulate and guide future growth of downtown West Point in a way that maintains the historic character and is sensitive to the present and future needs of the Town residents. This plan is intended to ensure that growth occurs in a healthy and positive manner over the next five years.

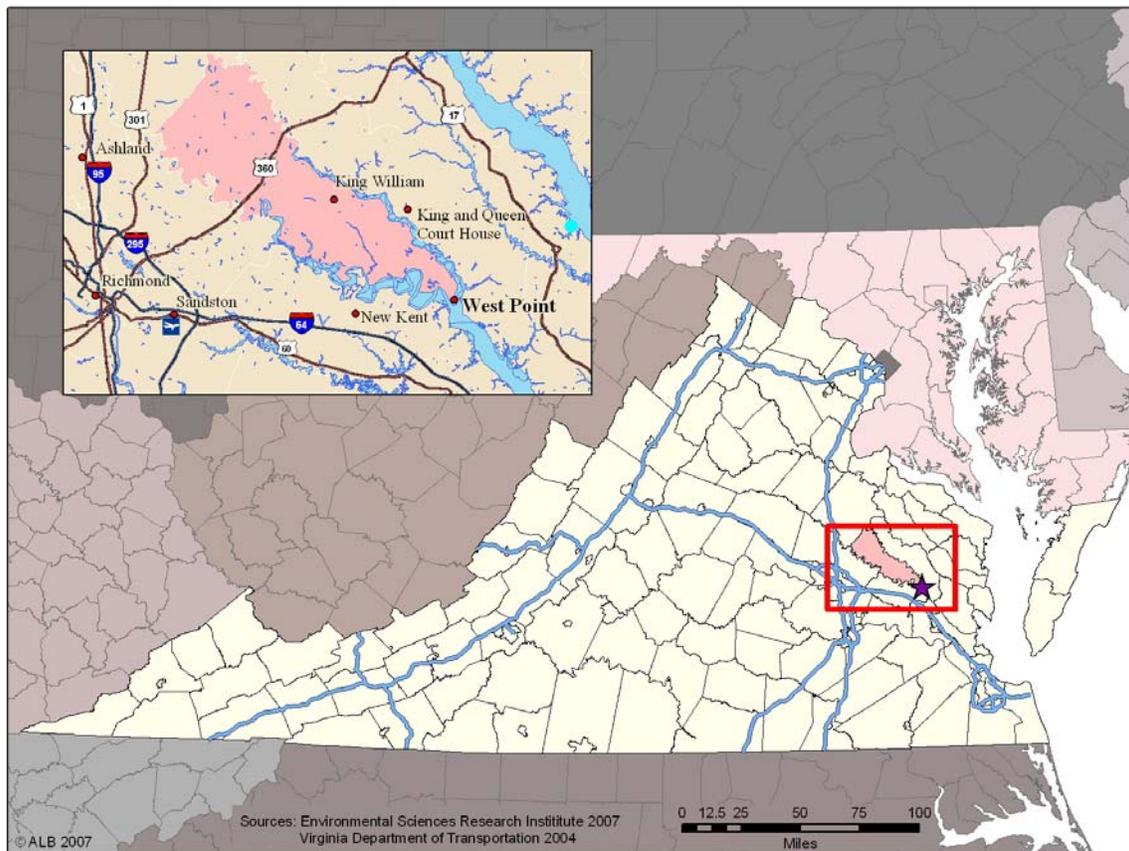
## **PART I. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

# Introduction

## Location

West Point is an incorporated town located at the southern tip of King William County and is bordered by New Kent and King and Queen Counties. The town of West Point is situated on the Middle Peninsula in central Virginia at the intersection of the Pamunkey, the Mattaponi, and the York Rivers. The town is strategically positioned five miles from Interstate 64 via Route 33 and is approximately 45 miles southeast of Richmond, 20 miles from Colonial Williamsburg and 60 miles from the Hampton Roads region, which includes the cities of Newport News, Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

Map 1: Location Map



## Regional Context

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has identified and designated metropolitan areas across the country, referred to as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). According to the 2005 estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, West Point is now considered to be part of the Richmond-Petersburg

Metropolitan Statistical Area, but in 2000 it was not part of the MSA. The new MSA designation shows how the area has grown and people are continuing to move further from Richmond. West Point is also part of the Middle Peninsula Planning District. The Middle Peninsula Planning District consists of six counties, which include Essex, King and Queen, King William, Gloucester, Middlesex and Mathews Counties as well as the towns of Tappahannock, Urbanna, and West Point. The Middle Peninsula PDC is responsible for coordinating and promoting efficient and orderly development in the district.<sup>1</sup>

## History

West Point has a long and unique history. The town originated from the Indian village of Chinquoteck.<sup>2</sup> When settled in the 1600's by colonists it was first named Delaware Town, but was renamed West Point in the 1800s after Captain John West received a large land grant.<sup>3</sup> The town and its railroad were captured during the Civil War and only four of the original homes survive today. After the War, West Point rebuilt the railroad and several hotels, making it a popular tourist attraction during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to its location on the peninsula. Richmond commonly used West Point for a shipping port for schooners, steam boats and barges. The extension of railways in the 1850s allowed for increased growth and in 1870 West Point was officially incorporated. The Richmond York River Railroad also contributed to West Point's growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century allowing it to be an important commercial port. During the second



*Figure 1: View facing west over the Mattaponi Bridge*

half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, West Point continued to be a popular tourist destination, but a fire in 1903 destroyed many of the buildings downtown and devastated the tourism industry. In response to declining tourism, West Point reinvented itself when a shipyard was constructed in 1917 and the Chesapeake Corporation built a pulp and paper mill in 1914, establishing West Point as a mill town.<sup>4</sup> West Point's population continued to grow in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1960, the town's population was 1,678, reaching 2,600 in 1970, largely due to an annexation in 1963.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission website, retrieved February 3, 2007 from <http://www.mppdc.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Arnett Muldrow & Associates. Community Market Assessment and Marketing Plan for West Point, Virginia. September 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Arnett Muldrow & Associates. Community Market Assessment and Marketing Plan for West Point, Virginia. September 2006.

<sup>4</sup> West Point Comprehensive Plan. 2000. West Point Planning Commission.

<sup>5</sup> West Point Comprehensive Plan, 2000. West Point Planning Commission. Pp. 14.

The pulp and paper mill industry still exists today and it is the largest employer in the town. The mill's success can be attributed to its central location. The mill is surrounded by water and has easy access to the rail lines to ensure long lasting growth. After 83 years, in 1997, the Chesapeake Corporation sold the mill to St. Laurent Paper Products Corporation and is today owned by Smurfit-Stone. The mill continues to be a dominant part of West Point's industrial base and economy.

## **Chesty Puller**

Lewis Burwell Puller is the most famous United States Marine. The nickname "Chesty" was given to him because of his barreled chest and his courage and devotion to duty.<sup>6</sup> Puller enlisted in 1917 and soon became a Lieutenant General and was the first Marine to receive the Navy Cross, the second highest decoration after the Medal of Honor. Puller received the Navy Cross five times and is the most decorated Marine in history. Puller is estimated to have received a total of 52 separate awards. He fought in World War II and the Korean War and grew up in West Point Virginia. His legacy is carried out today and a typical Marine Corp day traditionally ends with "Good night Chesty, where ever you are!" The chant, "It is good enough for Chesty Puller then it is good enough for me" is commonly recited in boot camps around the country.<sup>7</sup> Puller was also featured on a U.S. postal stamp in 2005. Puller has become an American hero and legend and currently West Point does not provide any recognition in his honor. Puller is not currently represented in West Point and the Town should take advantage of this important piece of history to show support for the Marines and reinforce community pride in its unique heritage.



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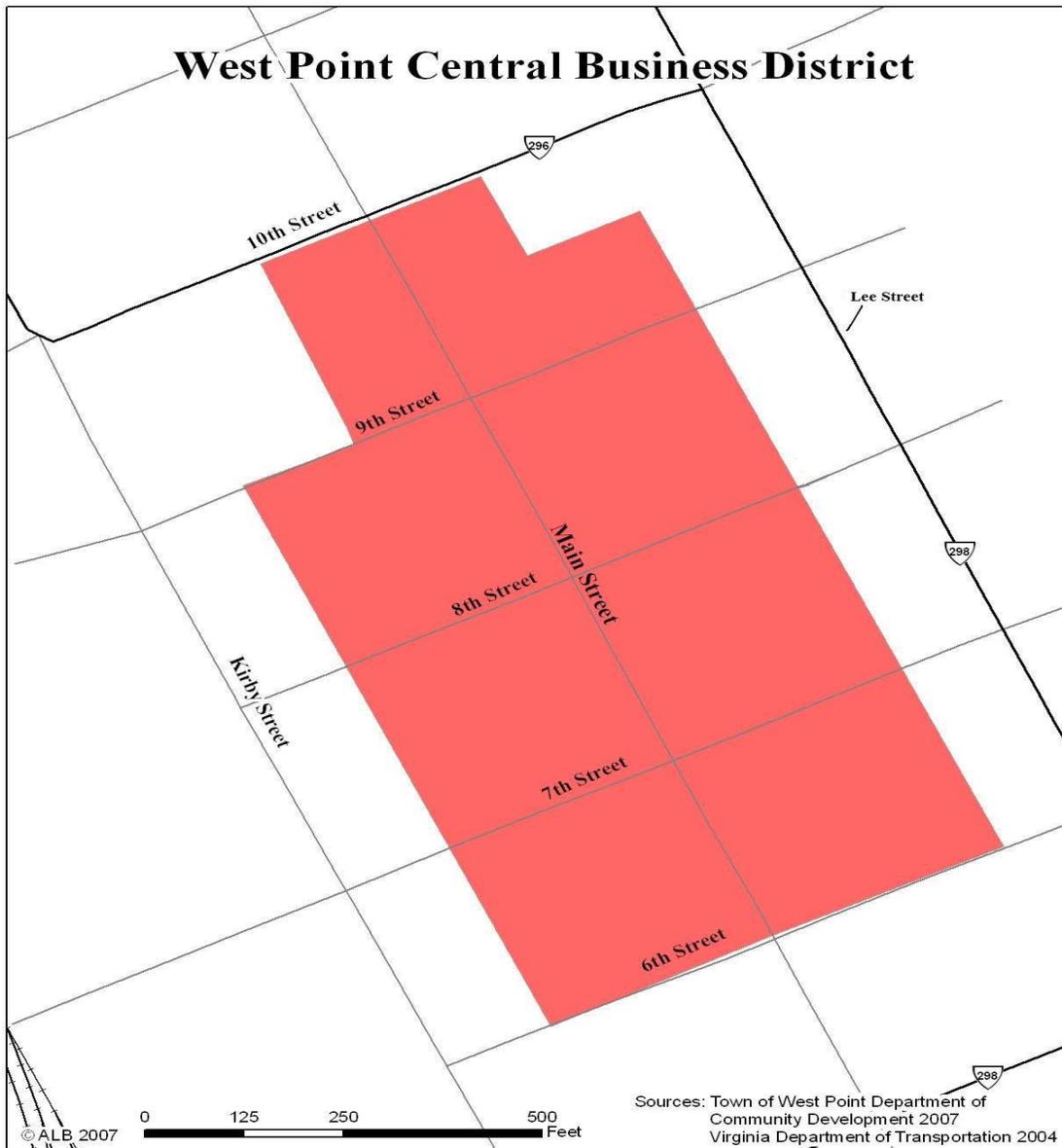
<sup>6</sup> Lt. Chesty Puller website, retrieved April 8, 2007 from <http://www.nettally.com/~jrube/chestpul.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Lt. Chesty Puller website, retrieved April 8, 2007 from <http://www.nettally.com/~jrube/chestpul.htm>

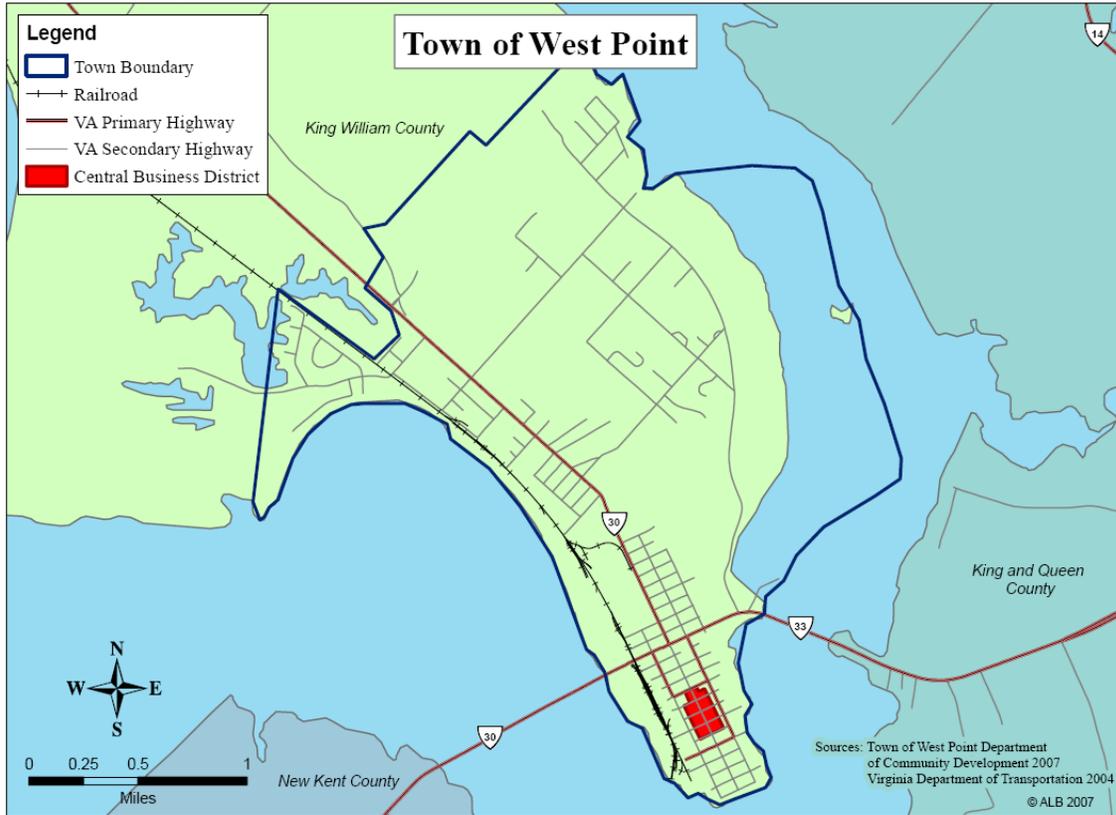
## Description of Downtown Study Area

This plan focuses on the Downtown area of West Point. The Downtown consists of the Main Street commercial area. The four blocks along Main Street between Sixth and Tenth Streets are considered the Commercial Business District (Map 2). The plan's study area is bounded to the west by Kirby Street and Lee Street to the east. The Downtown is in the southern portion of town, south of Route 30 and Route 33 (Map 3).

Map 2: Downtown Study Area



Map 3: Study Area Location



## Demographics

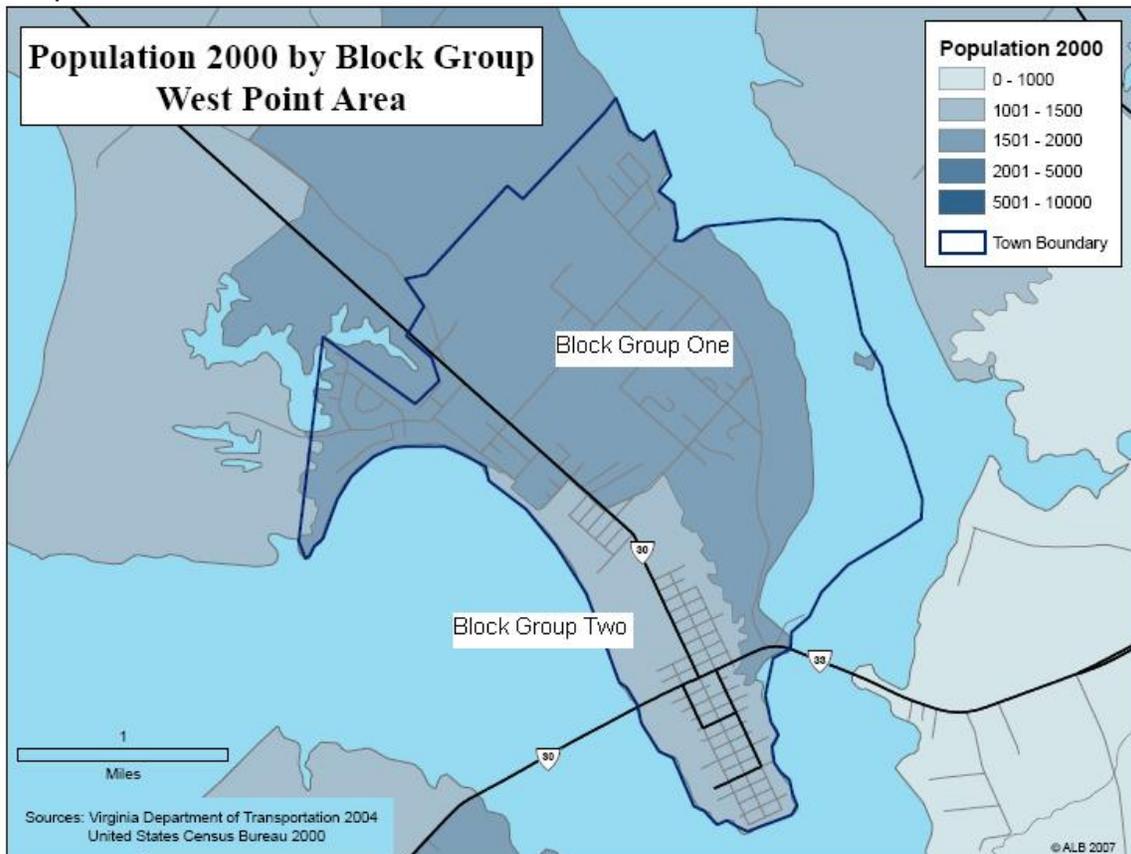
Table 1 illustrates the total population of the town of West Point and the surrounding counties in 1990 and 2000. Comparison to neighboring counties is important because it reflects regional trends. From 1990 to 2000 there was a slight decrease in West Point's total population with a percent change of 2.45 percent. West Point experienced a decline in population from 1990 to 2000, while King William and New Kent Counties experienced a significant increase in total population, 20.46 percent and 28.88 percent respectively. King and Queen County also saw an increase in population, but it was not as extreme with only a 5.42 percent increase. In 1990, the male population was 1,379 and the female population was 1,559 for a total population of 2,938. In 2000, the male and female populations consisted of 1,351 and 1,515 individuals, respectively. The male-female population did not experience significant change from 1990 to 2000.

Table 1:

Total Population			
	1990	2000	%Change
<b>West Point</b>	2,938	2,866	-2.45
<b>King William County</b>	10,913	13,146	20.46
<b>New Kent County</b>	10,445	13,462	28.88
<b>King &amp; Queen County</b>	6,289	6,630	5.42

Population and other demographic data were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and were gathered at varying geographic levels. The largest Census area studied is covered by Census Tract 9503, representing King William County. Since West Point is a township, the Census Bureau has designated it as a Place containing data for the Town of West Point. There are two Block Groups within West Point and the downtown study area is located in Block Group 2. Examining the population at the block group level will give a closer look at where West Point residents are residing. Map 4 shows the total population for Block Group 1 is 1,758 in 2000 which is north of Route 33 and there are 1,175 people in Block Group 2 which is the area south of Route 33 and contains the downtown.

Map 4:



## Age

The age breakdown in Table 2 shows that West Point has experienced a significant decline in its young adult and elderly populations from 1990 to 2000. The smallest age group, those between 18 and 24, experienced a decrease of 35 percent from 1990 to 2000 and may be because people are leaving West Point after completing high school or going else where for work opportunities. The 25-44 age group also declined in 2000 by 11 percent and may be an indicator of the lack of job and entertainment activities in the Town. The 65 years and older group is the second smallest segment of the population and had a decrease of 56 percent over the ten year period. The age breakdown in Table 2 shows the dominance of children and working age adults. Working age adults, between 25 and 44, account for 16 percent of the population in 2000 and 17 percent in 1990. The other large age group is the middle aged population, 45 to 64 years old, which increased by eight percent from 1990 to 2000. The high percentage of children and middle-aged adults is evidence that families are living in West Point.

Table 2:

Total Population by Age Group, West Point					
Age Cohorts	1990	%	2000	%	% Change
0-17	726	15	767	17	6
18-24	237	5	153	3	-35
25-44	823	17	731	16	-11
45-64	676	14	728	16	8
65+	481	10	213	5	-56
<b>Total</b>	4933		4592		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, STF 3

## Racial Composition

West Point's residents are predominately white. In 2000, 79 percent of the town's total population was white.<sup>8</sup> The racial composition has remained relatively constant since the previous decade. In both 1980 and 2000, the white population accounted for 79 percent. The black population made up 19 percent of the population in 1990 and 17 percent in 2000. The remaining three percent of the 2000 population is comprised of Asian, American Indian, and those of Two or More Races.

## Educational Attainment

Analysis of educational attainment in West Point and Virginia, depicted in Table 3, shows that West Point's figures are similar to that of Virginia's with over 50 percent of the population having completed some education after high school.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 & 2000. STF1. P3. RACE[71]. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2000. SF 3 PCT25. <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

The More than High School category includes; some college, but no degree, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and a graduate or other professional degree. In West Point, 32 percent of the population has at least a high school education, compared to 19 percent for Virginia (Table 3). This means that a greater percent of students in West Point are graduating from high school than the rest of the state. The statistics in Table 3 describe a population that compares favorably with state averages.

Table 3:

<b>Educational Attainment Levels</b>				
	<b>West Point 2000</b>	<b>West Point Percentage</b>	<b>Virginia 2000</b>	<b>Virginia Percentage</b>
<b>Less than High School</b>	347	16%	1,415,766	27%
<b>High School Diploma</b>	691	32%	1,004,117	19%
<b>More than High School</b>	1101	52%	2,822,808	54%
<b>Total</b>	2,139	100%	5,242,691	100%

Source: U.S. 2000 Census; STF3

## Employment

The employment chart below (Table 4) shows the major industries of the jobs of the employed residents of West Point. Manufacturing and Wholesale Retail Trade are the leading employment sectors for the population, but they have experienced a decline of 33 and 43 percent respectively from 1990 to 2000.<sup>10</sup> In 1990, Manufacturing accounted for 34 percent of the town's total employed population compared to 25 percent by 2000. Wholesale and Retail Trade made up 24 percent of the employed population in 1990 versus 15 percent in 2000.

Table 4:

<b>Persons Employed by Industry in West Point</b>			
<b>Industry</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries	0	19	
Mining	0	0	
Construction	72	122	69
Manufacturing	492	332	-33
Transportation, Warehousing, & Other Public Utilities	10	28	180
Wholesale & Retail Trade	347	197	-43
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	47	87	85
Professional & Related Services	294	74	-75
Public Administration	78	58	-26
Personal, Entertainment, Arts, Recreation	88	91	3
<b>Total Number Employed</b>	<b>1,457</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>-9</b>

Source: Census 1990; STF3, Census 2000 STF3

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 1990 & 2000. SF3.

In 2000, Managerial and Professional Specialty occupations and Sales and Office occupations had the most employees (Chart 2). These two occupations were also dominant in 1990. Managerial and Professional Specialty occupations experienced the largest change from 1990 to 2000 with a 66 percent increase. Managerial and Professional occupations are also usually linked to higher wages than lower skilled jobs. Analysis of West Point resident’s occupations illustrates the dominance of Managerial and Professional and Sales and Office occupations from 1990 to 2000, while also exemplifying the trend towards a more professional and skilled workforce. Although Sales and Office jobs is the second largest occupation in 2000, it experienced a decrease of 43 percent from 1990.

Chart 2:



Source: U.S. Census 1990 & 2000; SF 3.

The place of employment is another important element to consider because it is an indicator of whether or not people are working in or outside of West Point. Table 5 shows the travel time to work for those working out of the home by block group. The downtown and central business district are located in block group two. Table 5 demonstrates that most of West Point’s residents are working in the town or close by because they have a short commute to work. Forty-one percent of people residing in block group one has less than a 15 minute commute to work. Although block group two has the majority of its workers traveling 30 to 39 minutes to work, there are 106 people, or 20 percent, who have less than a ten minute commute to work. Forty three percent of residents in block groups one and two have less than a ten minute commute, which means people are living close to their place of employment.

Table 5:

Travel Time to Work		
Time	Block Group 1	Block Group 2
Less than 5 min.	63	63
5-9 minutes	<b>197</b>	<b>106</b>
10-14 minutes	<b>108</b>	14
15-19 minutes	21	18
20-24 minutes	60	37
25-29 minutes	31	18
30-39 minutes	88	<b>129</b>
40-44 minutes	17	26
45-59 minutes	79	86
60 + minutes	82	26

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000; SF 3; P31.

The seven biggest employers in West Point are displayed in Table 6. The Smurfit-Stone paper mill is the largest employer with a total of 600 employees in 1999. Smurfit-Stone is also the oldest firm of the top seven employers, which has helped establish West Point as a Mill town. Smurfit-Stone is the only employer with more than 200 employees, thus, most of West Point's employment centers are medium to small in terms of employment size. The second biggest employer in West Point is the Citizen's and Farmer's Bank, which is located downtown on Main Street. This means that the Bank is the largest contributor to people downtown during businesses hours.

Table 6:

Major Employers in West Point, 1999			
Firm	Product/Service	Employees	Year Established
<b>Smurfit-Stone</b>	Paper	600	1914-Mill 1994-Corp.
<b>Citizens &amp; Farmers Bank</b>	Banking	127	1933
<b>West Point Public Schools</b>	Education	136	
<b>West Point Veneer</b>	Veneer	70	1996
<b>J. Sanders Construction Company</b>	Construction	80	1986
<b>Public Services</b>	Government	75	
<b>Food Lion</b>	Grocery	60	1988

Source: Information was compiled by the town of West Point, 1999

## Income

An area's income levels are a strong indicator of its economic health. West Point residents' incomes are slightly above the state average. In 1990, West Point's median family income was \$40,506 compared to \$38,213 for the state average (Table 7). This trend continued in 2000 as West Point's Median Family Income was \$56,932 while Virginia's median income was \$54,169. Table 7 distinguishes the *Median Family Income* from the *Median Household Income* because not all households are families. The Median Household Income for West Point residents was slightly lower than the state's average in 1990, but it increased by 2000 and was greater than the state's average. Table 7 also compares the median family and household incomes for the surrounding counties of King and Queen, King William and New Kent. West Point's median household and family incomes compare favorably to the surrounding counties. Both the Median Family Income and the Median Household Income in West Point is slightly greater than King and Queen and King William Counties. Essentially, incomes in West Point can support new businesses.

Table 7:

<b>Median Family Income</b>		
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>West Point</b>	\$40,506	\$56,932
<b>Virginia</b>	\$38,213	\$54,169
<b>King &amp; Queen</b>	\$29,712	\$40,563
<b>King William</b>	\$38,635	\$54,037
<b>New Kent</b>	\$41,437	\$60,678
<b>Median Household Income</b>		
	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>West Point</b>	\$31,369	\$49,655
<b>Virginia</b>	\$33,328	46,677
<b>King &amp; Queen</b>	\$25,755	\$35,941
<b>King William</b>	\$33,676	\$49,876
<b>New Kent</b>	\$38,403	\$53,595

## Housing Characteristics

Data was collected on the housing characteristics within the study area and throughout the town. A windshield survey of the housing surrounding the Downtown was used to determine the physical condition of the housing and data pertaining to tenure and housing type was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. A windshield survey is the initial assessment viewed from the sidewalk or street. The windshield study found the physical condition of West Point's housing stock to be strong and in good condition. The majority of the houses are well maintained and do not have visible signs that major repair needs to be preformed.

## Tenure & Vacancy Status

The Census Bureau defines housing units as any residential space that is used as a separate living quarter, such as a house, apartment, mobile home, or even a single room. There are a total of 1,067 housing units in the town and 78 percent of them are owner-occupied while only 22 percent are renter-occupied

Table 8:

<b>Housing Tenure</b>		
	<b>West Point</b>	<b>%age</b>
Total:	1,067	
Owner occupied	831	78
Renter occupied	236	22

(Table 8).<sup>11</sup> Most residents own their home rather than rent. Residents that own their homes usually take good care of their homes and are more involved in the community than renters. Vacancy data found only eight percent of all housing units were vacant. The good physical condition of the housing could be a result of the high occupancy rates.

## Housing Type

Most of the housing structures in West Point consist of suburban-style single family detached units as it accounts for 90 percent of the housing stock in block group 1 and 88 percent in block group 2. Table 9 describes the different types of housing found in West Point by block group. Surprisingly, block group 2 has 37 buildings with two or more units, “multi-family” housing. Another noteworthy finding is that block group 1 (north of Route 33) contains 40 structures with five to nine individual housing units. Although single family detached housing is the primary housing type in West Point, there are also multi-family housing options.

Table 9:

West Point Housing Types				
Type	Block Group 1	%	Block Group 2	%
1, Detached	606	90	447	88
1, Attached	13	2	4	1
2 units	3	0	37	7
3 or 4 units	14	2	9	2
5 to 9 units	40	6	0	0
10 to 19 units	0	0	9	2
Total	676		506	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 STF3

## Downtown Conditions

### Land Use

Within the Central Business District there are 54 parcels on four acres of land. Land in the downtown is intensely used (Map 5). Almost all of the property parcels have buildings, leaving only three vacant lots that are currently being used for parking. Citizen’s and Farmer’s Bank is one of the largest structures in the Downtown.

### Residential

The land use surrounding the downtown is residential, mostly with single-family detached dwellings (Map 6). Scattered amongst the single-family houses are multi-family dwellings, largely with two housing units in each structure, nine structures with three or four units and nine with ten to nineteen apartment

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2000, SF 3: H7 Tenure.

buildings in the downtown block group two. Table 9 on the previous page shows the housing types of the downtown residential area (Block group 2).

### **Commercial**

The commercial buildings are located along Main Street from Sixth Street to Tenth Street. Most of the commercial space is occupied with only a four vacancies (Map 5). Table 10 on page 26 lists the use and business name for each of the commercial structures located within the Central Business District.

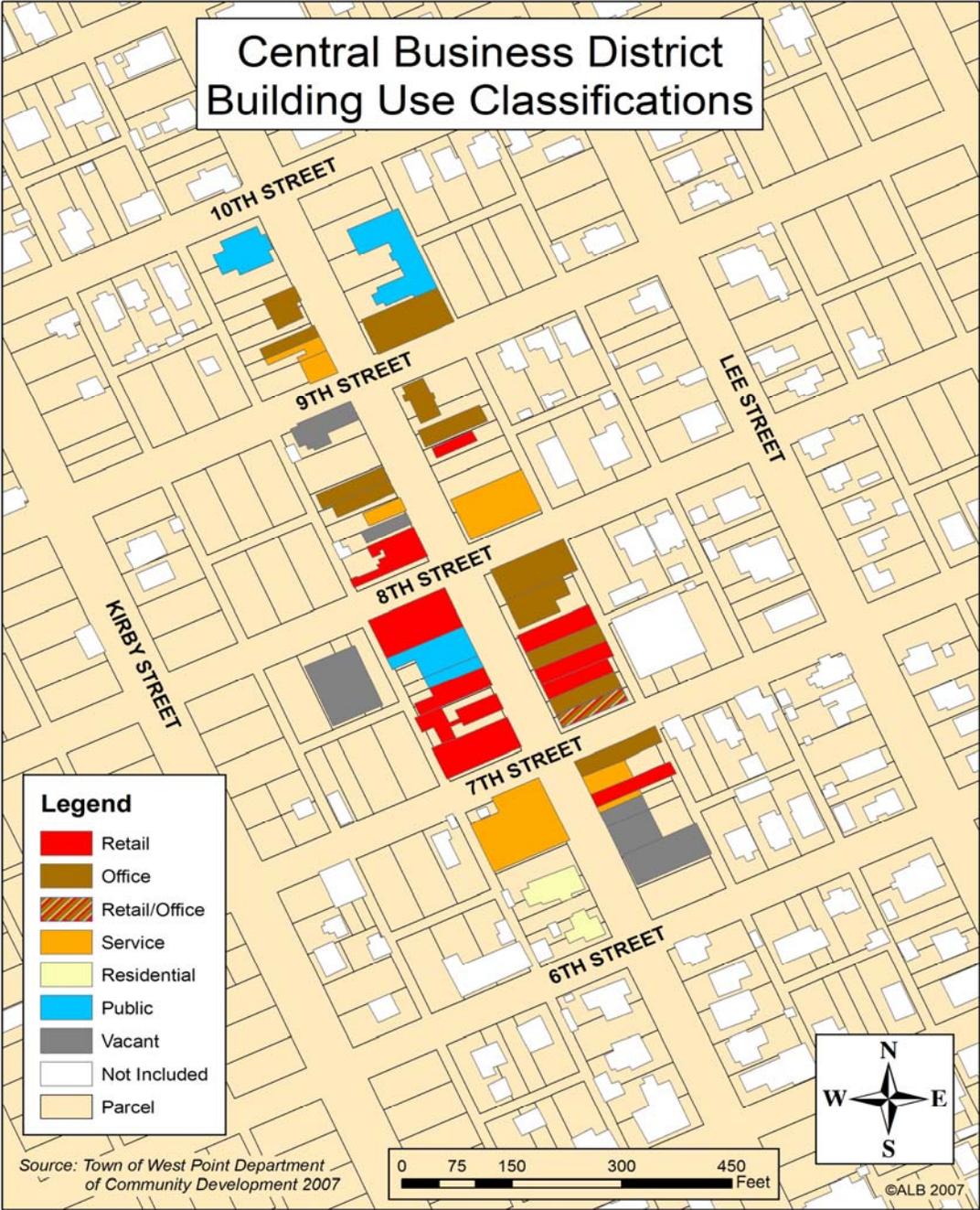
### **Other**

There is one church located in the Central Business District. St. John's Episcopal Church is located on Main Street between Tenth and Ninth Streets. The Chamber of Commerce is also in the CBD. The Chamber of Commerce serves the local business owners as well as the residents. The Chamber acts as the local Merchant's Association for the area, serving West Point and the surrounding counties.<sup>12</sup>

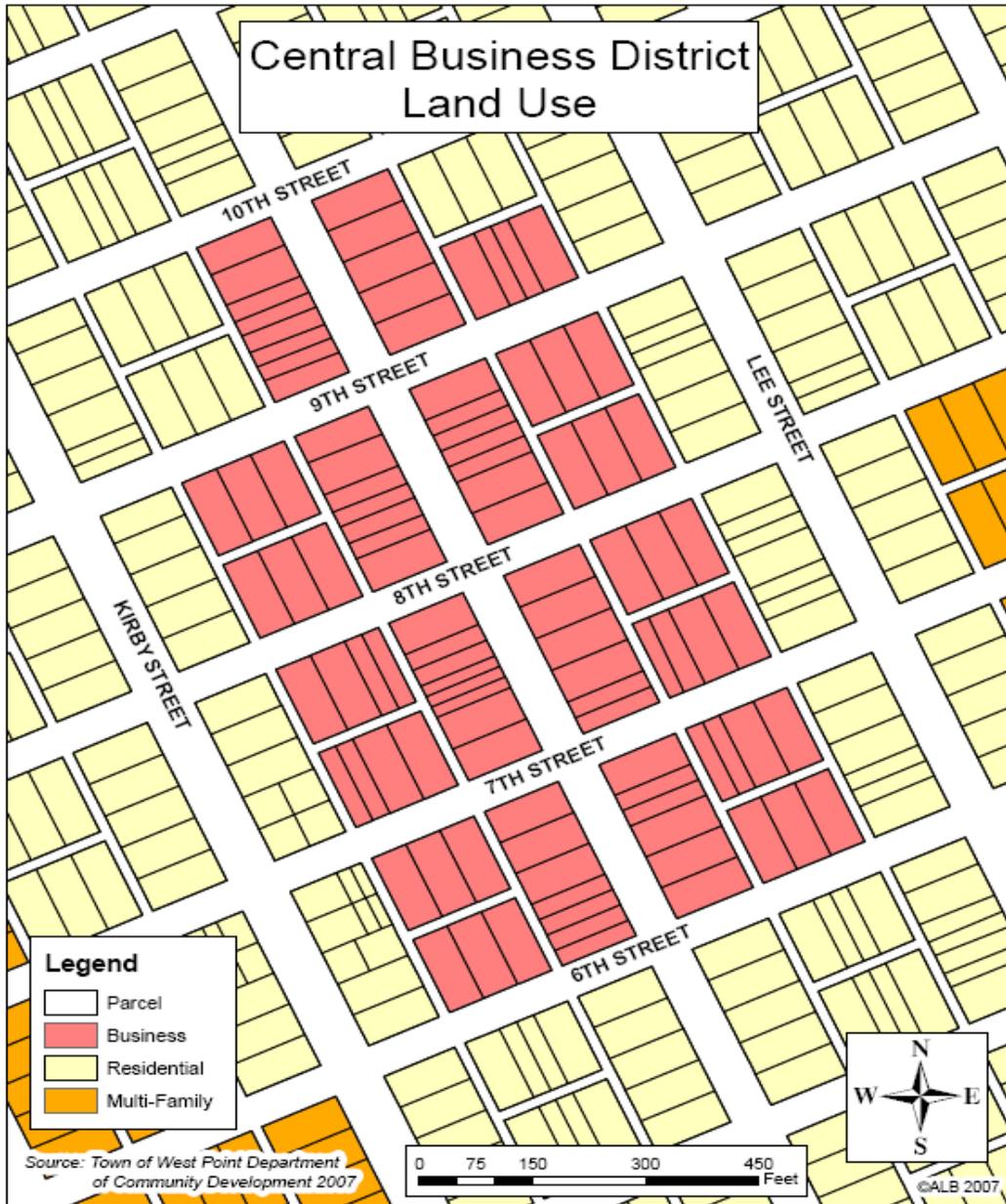
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<sup>12</sup> West Point/Tri-Rivers Chamber of Commerce website. Retrieved February 2007 from <http://www.westpointvachamber.com/>

Map 5: CBD Building Use



Map 6: Land Use

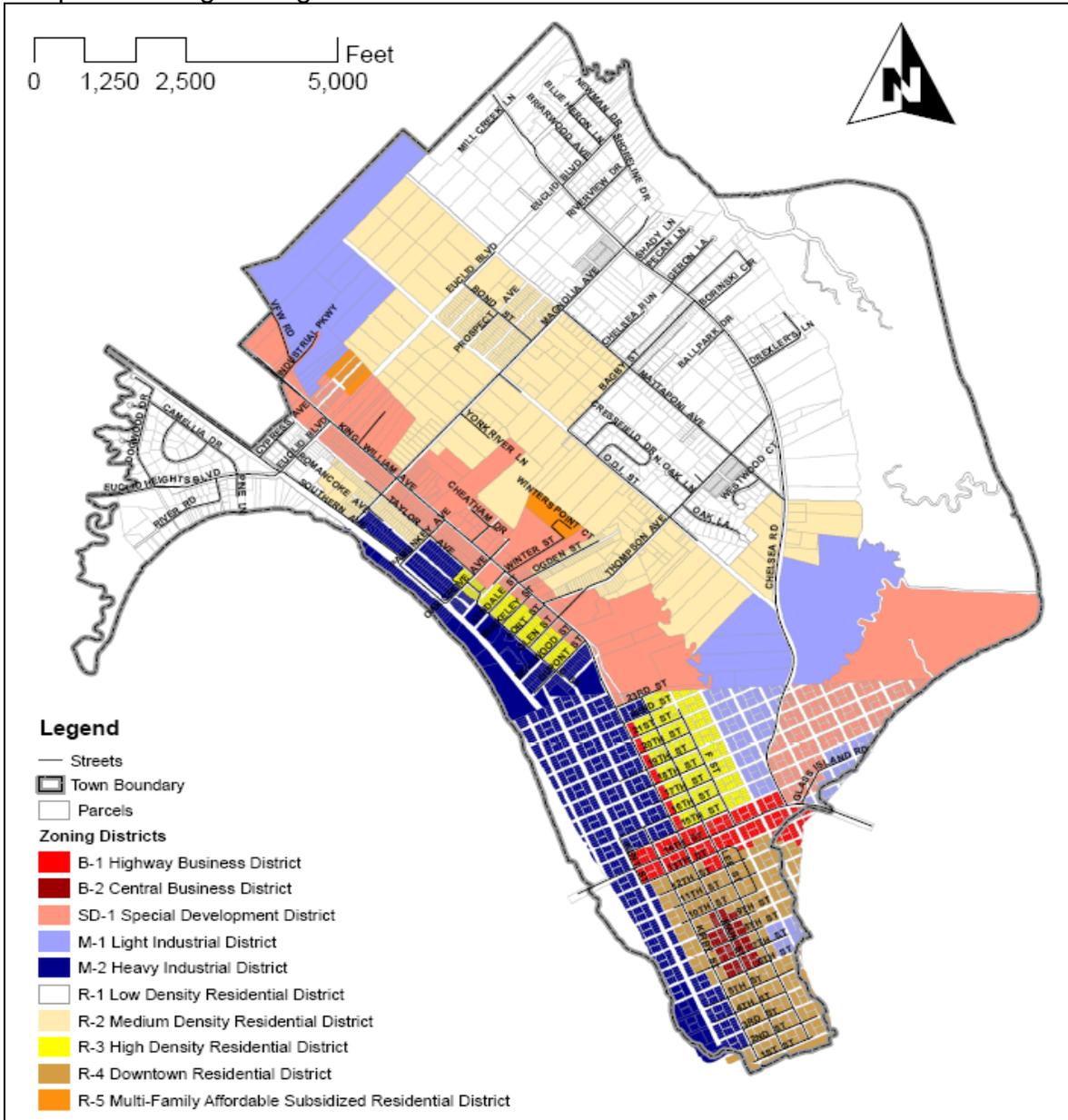


## Current Zoning

Zoning for West Point is set forth in the Town Zoning Code and Ordinance. Approximately 20 percent of the land south of Route 33 is zoned for B-2, or “Central Business District” (Map 7). Another 70 percent of the land south of Route 33 is zoned R-4 (Downtown Residential). This plan focuses on the Central Business District, but the surrounding R-4 Downtown Residential is important because it provides the customer base of the downtown. The two zoning classifications are described below. The zoning definitions were extracted from

West Point's Zoning Ordinance. Zoning is the primary tool to guide development and is important to review in order to develop plan recommendations. Developers examine zoning when considering developing a property. This zoning is consistent with the existing land uses.

Map 7: Existing Zoning



Source: West Point Town Code & Zoning Ordinance

**B-2 Central Business District:** The B-2 zoning allows for a variety of uses so that it is a convenient and pedestrian-oriented environment to serve the community. The primary purpose of the Central Business District is to provide for

the day to day shopping and personal service needs of the community.<sup>13</sup> However, a building use analysis discussed later in this plan shows that there is a lack of shopping opportunities in the CBD. The district is also intended to include downtown residential to support use of the upper floors of commercial buildings in effort to maintain a compatible relationship with the surrounding residential areas. The following uses are allowed in the B-2 Central Business District and can be found within the study area.

- Banks
- Churches
- Libraries
- Office
- Jewelry stores
- Office Supply
- Personal service businesses such as
- Barber shops and beauty salons
- Post Office
- Travel agencies

There are no minimum lot area or width requirements in the B-2 District. No front, side, or rear yards are required in the B-2 District.

**R-4 Downtown Residential District:** The purpose of the R-4 zoning classification is to preserve the residential character, which is predominantly, single family homes on small lots, protecting it from incompatible commercial and higher density land uses.<sup>14</sup> The Downtown Residential District designation also allows for nonresidential uses that are compatible with a residential environment. The following uses are permitted and exist in the R-4 District:

- Single-family detached
- Libraries
- Parks
- Multi-family dwellings
- Churches

The lot area requirements for this district have a minimum square footage of 5,750 square feet for lots served by public sewer and water. Lots with on-site sewage or water supply must be a minimum of 15,000 square feet in area. Lot widths are required to be a minimum of 50 feet. The actual living area for each housing unit must be at least 1,200 square feet. This district also specifies yard requirements, which maintains that front yards must be at least 15 feet, rear yard of not less than 25 feet, and at minimum seven and half feet for residential side yards and 25 feet for the nonresidential permitted uses.

## Building Inventory

Building size, use and physical conditions are important elements to consider during revitalization efforts because they greatly



Figure 2: View facing North down Main Street

<sup>13</sup> West Point Town Code & Zoning Ordinance

<sup>14</sup> West Point Town Code & Ordinance

influence how the Downtown is experienced and perceived. One of the critical factors in revitalizing the downtown of a small town is the condition of the existing buildings. A survey of building conditions indicate the level of work required to make the structures more desirable for a new business and make the town a more attractive.

### **Building Size & Density**

The buildings in the downtown are attached structures, typically one to two stories in height. The buildings are uniform in size and on average are 6,000 square feet, with each business averaging 3,000 square feet. The B-2 zoning does not allow for buildings to exceed 35 feet in height.<sup>15</sup> The parcels in the CBD are relatively consistent in size and are approximately 5,750 square feet.

### **Building Use**

The primary building use for the downtown is retail service shops and professional offices. Table 10 lists the businesses, property owners and business types. West Point's Central Business District consists of a total of 36 businesses. The type of business is organized into one of the following: Service, Restaurant, Retail, and Office/Professional Service. There are five buildings that are either vacant or available for rent within the CBD and are highlighted in Map 5. Service includes general consumer services such as banks, hair salons and beauty shops, post office, cleaners, and convenient stores. Retail includes the antique store, the furniture store, jewelry stores, and the Price TV and Appliance store. The Tidewater Physicians, dentists, law offices, insurance and real estate agencies are considered to be Professional Services because they are providing a service of which only a professional could accomplish. Professional offices and services are the most common type of building use in the Central Business District.

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<sup>15</sup> West Point Town Code and Ordinance

Table 10:

<b>Business</b>	<b>Property Owners</b>	<b>Type</b>
Citizen & Farmer's Bank	C & F Bank	Service
Vacant	Sam English	Restaurant
Insurance Office/Heath Jewelers	Tyler Bland, Bland Family	Office/Retail
Pullen Computing Services	Mike Pullen	Service
Village Cleaners	Sam English	Service
Sam English Family Dentist	Sam English	Medical/Professional Service
Bowen & Johnson Law Office	Sam English	Office/Professional Service
The Yellow Door/Office	Stephen Palmer	Mixed Use-Retail/Office
Law Office	Joseph Caprio	Office/Service
Richardson's Antiques	Bill Cawley	Retail
West Point Barber Shop	Bill Cawley	Service
Chiropractor		
Price TV & Appliance	Joan Shmidt	Retail
River City Realty	George Guy	Office/Professional Services
Thrift Insurance & Real Estate	Jack & Josh Lawson	Office
Citizen & Farmer's Bank	C & F Bank	Bank-Service
Country Store	Charlie Barber	Service
Law Office	George Guy	Office/Professional Service
Hudson & Bondurant Attorney's of Law	Jim Hudson	Office/Professional Service
Tidewater Physicians	York River Medical	Medical/Professional Service
St. John's Episcopal Church	Episcopal Church	Community Service
Wyatt-Ogg RadioShack	Steve Ogg	Retail
The Watering Can	John Waldrup	Retail-Florists, gifts
Wyatt-Ogg Outlet	Steve Ogg	Retail-Furniture Outlet
West Point Public Library	Town owned	Community Service
Wyatt-Ogg Furniture	Steve Ogg	Retail-Durable Goods
Heath's Jewelry	John Kenny	Retail-Jewelry Store
Reflections Photography	John Kenny	Retail/Service-Photography
Vacant Lot	John Kenny	
Cut 'n Up	Steve Palmer	Service
	Charles Carlton	
Vacant Lot	John Kenny	empty lot
H & B	Bristo Family	Office/Professional Service
W.E. Wills Insurance/Chamber of Commerce	Billy Wills	Office/Professional Service
West Point Florist	Norman jacks	Retail/Service
John Mitchell Law Office	John Mitchell	Office/Professional Service
Brokerage/Realty	Olsen Foundation	Office/Professional Service
Post Office	Federal Government	Service

The current building uses do not provide many opportunities for downtown shopping. The lack of retail does not give incentive for residents or visitors to stay in the area for long periods of time. Las Tunas was the only eatery located downtown, but it has not reopened since it was damaged in a fire in the winter of 2005.

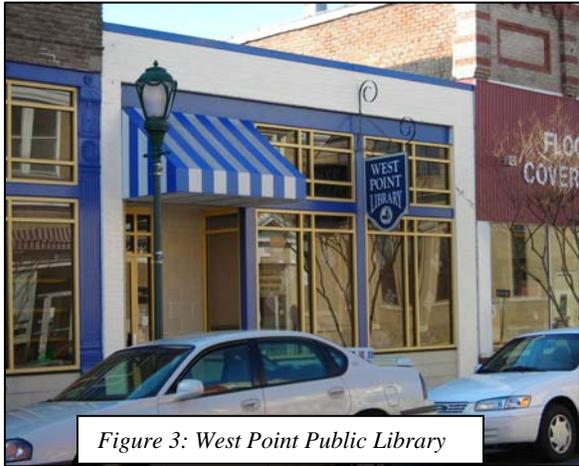


Figure 3: West Point Public Library

The West Point Library is located downtown on Main Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. The library's location Downtown offers a place for residents to study as well attracting residents to the downtown. The library's downtown location is complimentary because it provides an outlet for readers and researchers desiring a break. The library is open every day of the week except for Sundays. The library offers a children's section as well as a computer lab with 10 computers and a

printer. The library also holds several events such as children's story time and book clubs.

The Yellow Door is a multiple-use building located on the corner of Seventh and Main Streets across from the Radio Shack. The Yellow Door includes a coffee shop, an office space rented out by Sheeran & Associates Realty, some studio space, a place for local artists to display and sell their artwork, and a large back room available for workshops and classes. The owner, Sarah Dana, states that the purpose of The Yellow Door is to provide a place where people can "come together and interact to lessen feelings of isolation."<sup>16</sup>

### **Building Ownership**

If the Downtown area is to be revitalized through adaptive reuse of existing structures and new land development, current land and building owners will have to either participate in the revitalization effort or sell their property. Thus an analysis of ownership patterns and owner intentions is essential. The town owns several parcels in the CBD and two are the site of the public library. Several of the property owners own more than one lot (Table 10). Almost all of the property owners are local residents or residents of a neighboring county and should therefore be involved with revitalization efforts.

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<sup>16</sup> Montogue Sikes, Mary. Developer Hopes Patrons Come Through the Yellow Door. Interview with Sarah Dana. August 31, 2006.

## Building Conditions

With the exception of Las Tunas, a visual survey evaluating the physical condition of the commercial buildings finds that the buildings downtown are in good condition. A building is in good condition if there are no obvious signs of structural damage, such as cracking or sinking foundation, and these features were not visible in the downtown commercial district.

## Accessibility

Downtown is accessible by vehicles and pedestrians. Large sidewalks, approximately 13 feet in width, allow for comfortable travel. Sidewalks are sloped at street corners to provide handicap access. On street parallel parking is available and there is an adequate amount of parking. On street parking spaces are estimated at 15 to 18 per block on each side of the street in the downtown district according to the visual survey.



Figure 4: A pedestrian-friendly downtown

## Circulation

### Vehicular Circulation

A number of important state routes and the Interstate pass through or near West Point. Virginia's major west-east route, Interstate 64, is five miles from town. State Routes 30 and 33 traverse West Point. According to the Virginia Department of Transportation, the average daily traffic count for Route 33 through West Point averaged 16,800 per day in 2004.<sup>17</sup> The projected traffic count for the same area for the year 2026 is 20,700 vehicles per day. The new bridges are expected to increase the traffic count by 23 percent. This means that a significant amount of vehicles travel through West Point already and the amount of vehicles is expected to increase after completion. The bridge reconstruction project provides an opportunity to capture drivers and encourage them to visit Downtown. The street patterns south of Route 33 are the traditional grid street pattern, making the downtown easy to navigate and accessible. Several parking lots are also provided in the CBD for downtown visitors, shoppers and employees.

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<sup>17</sup> Jamie Brower, VDOT Project Manager

## **Pedestrian Circulation**

In the downtown study area, sidewalks, curb cuts, and brick pedestrian crosswalks are plentiful and well defined. These elements help to maintain the small town charm of the area. The sidewalks are well kept and approximately 13 feet in width, allowing room for at least two people to pass each other. The wide sidewalks provide a comfortable environment for pedestrians and groups of people walking along side each other.

## **Market Analysis**

In September 2006, Arnett Muldrow & Associates conducted a market assessment and developed a marketing plan for West Point (See Appendix). Muldrow & Associates conducted a zip code survey of customers, participated in interviews with stakeholders, property owners, and citizens to complete a retail leakage analysis, a retail shares study, and a market segmentation study. From the market analysis Muldrow & Associates determined that in order to keep residents shopping in the town, the community must promote local shopping to residents.

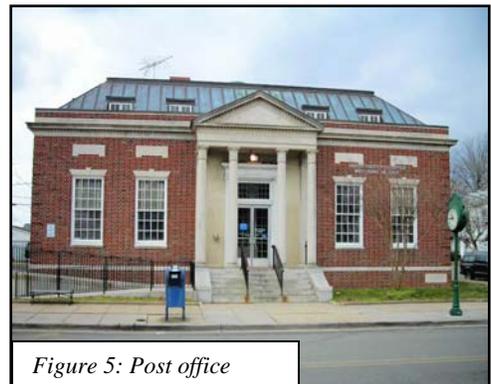
The zip code survey found that West Point's customers are loyal to the local businesses and prefer to shop within the town limits. However, the market analysis also found few people are visiting West Point from elsewhere and thus has little tourism. Most importantly, the study determined that specialty retail categories were well suited for downtown because the town is currently losing this consumer market to other areas. Muldrow & Associates came up with a branding logo to give the town character and make it memorable as part of the marketing plan. The logo is *West Point: 3 Rivers, 2 Bridges, 1 Special Place*. This logo should be incorporated into the downtown to make it a distinct district and create a sense of place.

## **Downtown Urban Design and Architecture**

West Point currently has design guidelines in place that were adopted in 2006 (See Appendix). The guidelines address façade improvements, colors and materials, signage, and awnings. However, there is no existing design review board to enforce the guidelines.

### **Building Characteristics**

The commercial buildings are a combination of Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival and neoclassical style. The houses in the downtown residential district are spaced relatively close together but



*Figure 5: Post office*

maintain the suburban style front yard. The buildings along Main Street display elements representing 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture. The two houses in the Central Business District are Victorian style, with wrap around porches and have a high level of architectural detail. All of the homes and buildings were constructed in the first couple decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the 1903 fire. The Gothic Revival style Saint John's Episcopal Church was built in 1882 and is the oldest church in the downtown.<sup>18</sup>

The post office located at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Main Street was built in 1931 and displays elements of a Colonial Revival architectural style. The post office has a mansard roof, stone detailing on trim, and portico columns accenting the main entrance. The Citizen and Farmer's Bank on Main Street has become a town landmark because of its size and architecture. The bank is a prime example of the Neo-classical style from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bank is a large two-story brick building with an elaborate entrance with ionic stone columns.

All structures are setback approximately 13 to 15 feet from the street. The zoning for the Commercial Business District does not require front, rear, or side yards.

### Facades



Figure 6: Citizens & Farmer's Bank

Nearly all the commercial buildings are brick with flat roofs and have parapet wall barriers on the roofs. Colors are used to separate businesses and building uses (Figure 4). Window fronts are decorated and door mats are a common feature. Several of the stores have awnings and flags adding vibrancy and character to the area.

### Street Trees

Vegetation is spread throughout the downtown. Plantings are placed in large ceramic pots in front of most of the stores (Figure 4). Street trees are positioned five or six per block in sidewalk tree wells. Street trees and vegetation help beautify the streetscape, provide shade and also act as a buffer between pedestrians and automobiles (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Tree lined streets

<sup>18</sup> United States Department of the Interior National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. NPS Form 10-900

## Public Space

Public space consists of streets, sidewalks, and parks. The streets in West Point are in the traditional grid pattern. Sidewalks in the study area are approximately 13 feet in width, which includes seven feet of red brick and five feet of cement. Sidewalks are in good condition and are not cracked or disturbed by tree roots. Sidewalks are sloped for handicap access and brick cross walks ensure pedestrian safety because they are easily distinguished from the road (Figure 8). A small green space at the corner of Seventh and Main provides four benches for people to sit and converse (Figure 9). Although there is limited green or open space in the downtown area, Beach park is five blocks south at First Street facing the York River (Figure 10).



Figure 8: Brick cross walks



Figure 9: Public space acting as an important node



Figure 10: Beach Park at First & Main Street

## Lighting

Public lighting along Main Street is provided by pedestrian scale historic looking lamp posts. This type of lighting projects light directly below onto the sidewalks, hence the term pedestrian lighting. The lamp posts are placed every two or three per block. One side of the street has two lamp posts and the opposite side of the block has three. The lighting is sufficient at all times of the day. Electric service is provided from the allies behind Main Street so there are no overhead wires present in the downtown.



Figure 11: Pedestrian scale lamp post

## Street Furniture

Trash receptacles and benches are provided throughout downtown. Benches provide a resting place and allow a space for people to sit and converse. Adequate trash receptacles are also present downtown, making the experience more convenient and enjoyable.

## Views & Nodes

Beach Park is five blocks away at the end of Main Street offering a beautiful view looking out to the York River (Figure 10). The downtown has a lack of places for people to get together and interact. The buildings are close together and close to the street which does not leave room for patios, outdoor seating or options for socializing. A node is a gathering place for the community, residents or visitors and the Downtown has three major activity nodes; the Post Office, the Yellow Door coffee shop, and the pergola. The Post Office is a major gathering place because there is no mail delivery service in town and all residents must go directly to the post office to retrieve mail. A second node is a green space at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets. Four benches are situated under a pergola, to create a memorable and relaxing place (Figure 9). The Yellow Door is another node because people are able to sit and converse.

## Gateways

West Point does not have well defined entranceways into the town. When entering West Point from the New Kent County from the west, one must drive over the Eltham Bridge. There is only one small green sign announcing to travelers that they have just entered the town. Crossing the bridge from King and Queen County from the east over the Lord Delaware Bridge there is only a small green sign in the middle of the bridge.



*Figure 12: Gateway sign on Eltham Bridge*

## Signage

Street signage along Main Street is small in size and is compatible with the environment. A No Biking sign is neatly fixed on a metal post on the corners. Many of the stores and offices have projecting signage that hangs over the sidewalk. Signs placed this way makes it easy for pedestrians and vehicles to read the signs and capture their attention. Although there is good signage downtown, the signs on Route 33 are hard to see.



*Figure 13: Typical signage found Downtown*

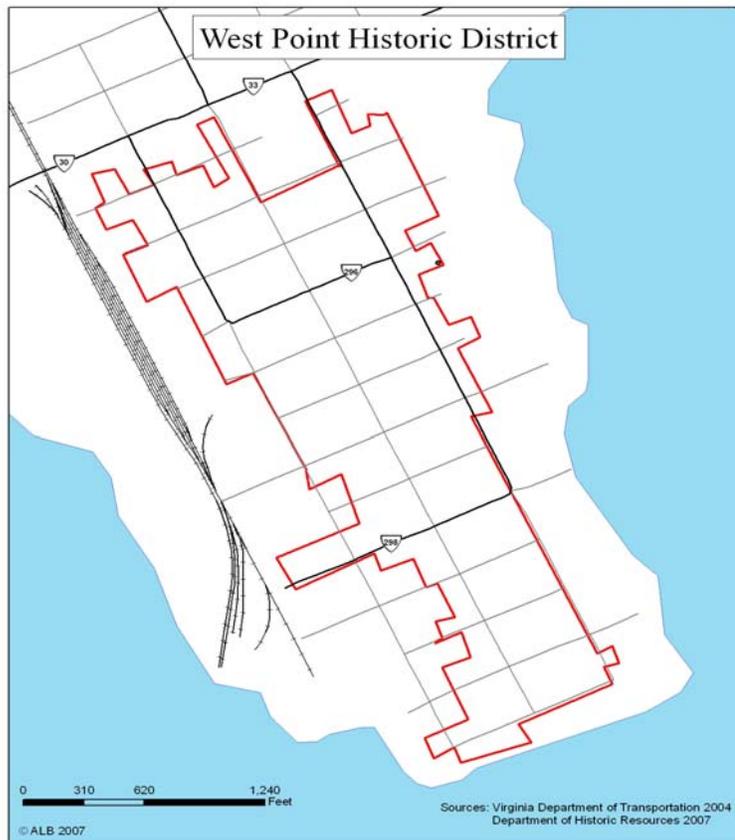
## Ambiance

The downtown is quaint and maintains a small town atmosphere. The colors and building materials create a separate identity for each building and also compliment each other. Downtown West Point provides a favorable location for businesses and homes due to its impressive architecture and charming storefronts; however, this area has not generated a great deal of foot traffic. The lack of shopping and dining areas do not give people a reason to visit and stay downtown.

## Historic District

Map 8:

West Point's historic district includes everything south of Route 33 all the way to the waterfront on First Street. All of the downtown study area is located within the historic district. Map 8 shows the area designated as a historic place on the national register of historic places. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources administers the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmark program aims to preserve Virginia's cultural and architectural heritage. The National Register of Historic Places was created in 1966 by the National Park Service. The National Register keeps an official list of all the structures, sites,



objects, contributing buildings, and districts that represent historical foundations in the country.<sup>19</sup> The Virginia Landmark program is administered by the Department of Historic Resources and was also established in 1966. This register includes all properties and buildings important to Virginia's history. West Point's downtown area is listed on both the state and national register of historic places. Designation on the state or federal register is an important honor because it recognizes historical significance and encourages owners to continue

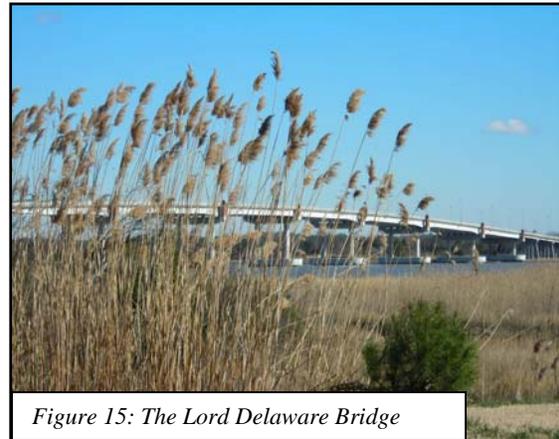
<sup>19</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources. <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/register.htm>

good property stewardship. Owners of registered properties are eligible to receive rehabilitation tax credits, technical assistance from department staff, can donate easements that lower real estate taxes, and purchase plaques to mark the property's historic significance.

## Surrounding Area Influences

### Bridge Reconstruction

There are several projects underway in the area that may have an impact on Downtown and should therefore be further evaluated. The Eltham and the Lord Delaware Bridges are two current projects that will undoubtedly have a significant influence on West Point (Map 9). The Eltham Bridge is undergoing construction and is expected to be completed and open to traffic in the fall of 2007. The Lord Delaware Bridge has recently been completed and all four lanes are now open.

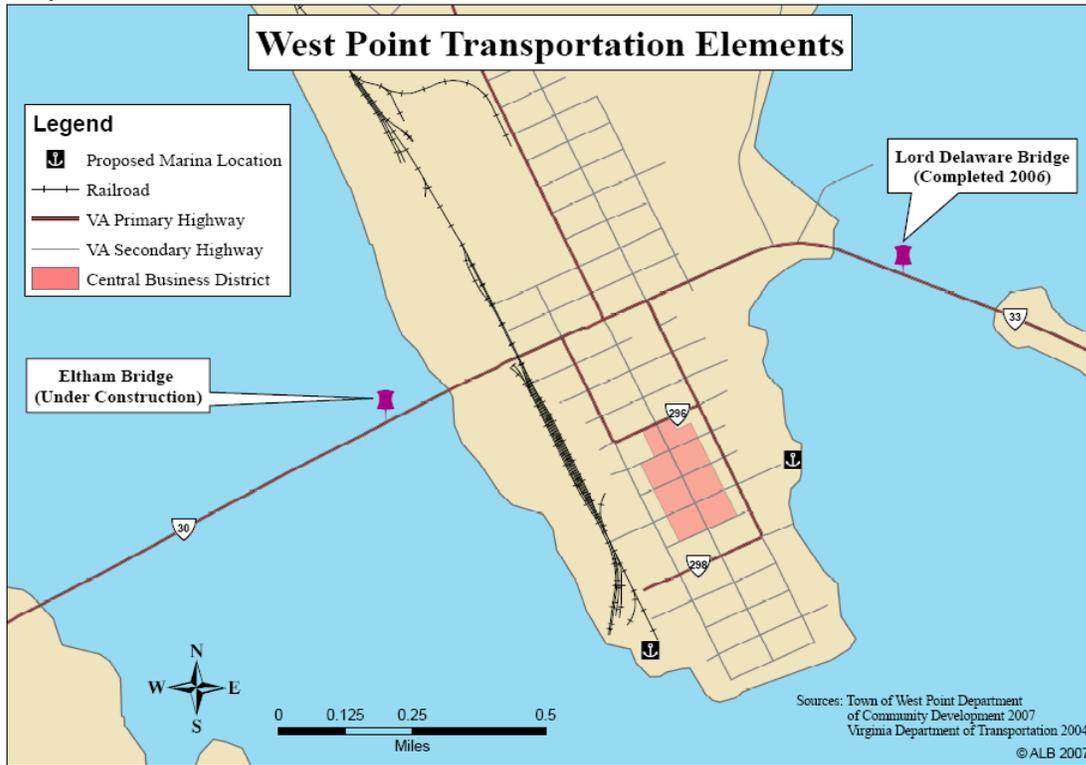


According to the Virginia Department of Transportation, the average daily traffic count for Route 33 through West Point averaged 16,800 per day in 2004.<sup>20</sup> The projected traffic count for the same area for the year 2026 is 20,700 vehicles per day. The new bridges are expected to increase the traffic count by 23 percent. This means that a significant amount of vehicles travel through West Point already and the amount of vehicles is expected to increase. This is an opportunity to capture drivers and encourage them to visit Downtown.

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<sup>20</sup> Jamie Brower, VDOT Project Manager

Map 9:



Eltham is an unincorporated community in New Kent County. Eltham is located just west of West Point on Route 33 just before you cross the Eltham Bridge into West Point. Along Route 33 in Eltham there is a motel, car dealerships, gas stations, and a Mexican restaurant. This large growth in nearby housing will increase the population of the surrounding area and may create a new market for local residents.

### Commercial Competitors

Although West Point offers convenience shopping such as hardware and small grocery stores, it does not provide many retail shopping options for its residents. Williamsburg and Gloucester are the closest places with major shopping centers and they are 20 to 30 miles away. Williamsburg has a multitude of specialty shops, a Wal-Mart, discounted outlets and a wide variety of restaurants. Gloucester also has specialty stores, a variety of eateries and entertainment.

Downtown West Point is also forced to compete with 14<sup>th</sup> Street (also known as Route 33). The 14<sup>th</sup> Street commercial corridor has the most traffic and contains chain stores such as McDonald's, a Right Aid, and a retail plaza which includes an ABC store, a Pizza Hut and a hardware store. Chain and big box franchises should remain on the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor while the downtown is reserved for specialty eating and dining.

## Future Projects and Influences

### Marinas

West Point has adopted a Waterfront Master Plan and zoning district for all of West Point's water front. The town's water front extends nine miles and currently includes residential, wetlands, industrial, and some open space. Several development proposals have been put forth. West Point plans to create a river walking trail from West Point Station to Kiwanis Park on the other side of Route 33/14<sup>th</sup> Street. The town is in the process of developing a marina at Third Street on the Pamunkey River as well as one on the Mattaponi at Seventh Street (Map 10). The Seventh Street proposed marina site is currently owned and occupied by Masse Oil and the adjacent site is a small machine shop (Figure 16). Masse Oil has agreed to relocate to the industrial area and has filed a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for redevelopment.



Figure 16: Site of Seventh Street Proposed Marina

The proposed marina would use the Masse Oil land as well as the vacant site and the machine shop's land to form one development. A rendering of the proposed marina is in Figure 17. The Third Street Marina received a Boating Infrastructure Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for boats passing through the area. The proposed Marina will include waterfront lodging, condominiums, retail shops, and boat storage. A proposed drawing of the Third Street marina is in Figure 18.



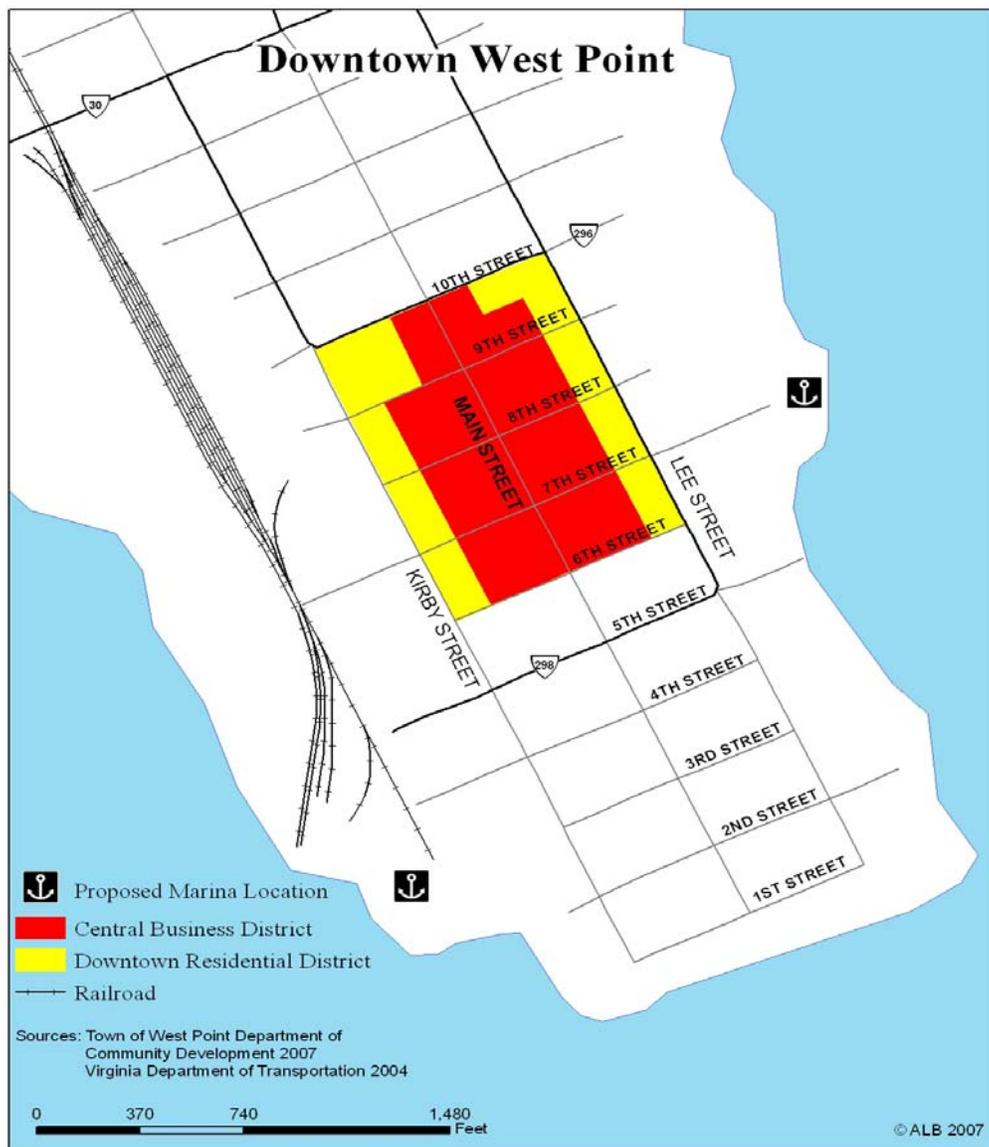
Figure 17: Proposed Seventh Street marina

The river walk project received funding from a Transportation Enhancement Grant. The river walk stretches from the West Point Station and continues under the Route 33/Mattaponi River Bridge. There is currently one point of public access to the water. Map 9 shows the proposed Third and Seventh Street Marinas and their location to downtown.



Map 10 illustrates the proximity of the proposed marinas to the Central Business District. A pedestrian walkway will link the marinas on opposite sides of the peninsula and this plan encourages people to walk downtown to increase foot traffic. The marinas are a great way to get people to visit downtown since they are situated on either side.

Map 10: Proposed Marinas



## Promotion, Tourism and Special Events

West Point holds two special events each year the Crab Carnival and Christmas on the Town. The annual Crab Carnival is a popular town event that occurs every fall and has been a tradition for the past 24 years. The Carnival is sponsored by The West Point Chamber of Commerce. Thousands of people from across the region gather in West Point's downtown during the first weekend in October for this annual event. The Crab Carnival is a weekend long outdoor event that centers on the blue crab, but has a variety of activities enjoyable to people of all ages. Festivities include a parade, bike race, live music, a wide variety of food, fireworks, pony rides, Sunday breakfast, antiques, arts and crafts, and assorted competitions such as ax throwing, bow sawing, log rolling, and professional wrestling.

Christmas on the Town is also sponsored by the West Point Chamber of Commerce and takes place downtown Main Street on the first Sunday in December. Christmas on the Town is a good way for people in the community to get together and have some fun. The day features a parade, an appearance by Santa Clause, holiday food, an Elf Workshop, a bake sale, raffle, carriage rides, home tours and the illumination of the Christmas lights in the evening.

A historic walking tour of West Point was designed by Neal Barber and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. in November 2006. The tour begins at West Point Station at the corner of Seventh and Main Street and parking is available in the library parking lot. Visitors are provided a brochure which includes the historic route and timeline of significant events. The tour begins on 13<sup>th</sup> Street and travels down Main Street to Beach Park at the end of Main Street and the intersection of First Street and returns back to 13<sup>th</sup> on Lee Street. The tour stops at 11 different locations and includes sites such as churches, historic houses, Main Street commercial district, Beach Park, old school sites, and other notable places of historic events. One side of the tour guide pamphlet is a map, description, and pictures of the tour and a timeline of major events from the 1600s to the 1940s is on the opposite side. This colorful and compact brochure gives visitors and residents something to do on a nice afternoon and can easily be taken home at the end of the tour as a souvenir and reminder of West Point's history.

Beginning in the summer of 2007, West Point will hold its first summer concert series, which will feature live music, food and drinks. The concert will take place on the three vacant town-owned lots on Eighth street between Main and Kirby Streets. Parking will be available in the lots across the street on the block between Seventh and Eighth Streets. The concerts will be held once a month starting in May and concluding in August. The bands and other details are in the process of being finalized now in the spring of 2007.

West Point has a town website and a state run online web page. West Point has one weekly newspaper and two daily newspapers that serve the town; the Tidewater Review, the Daily Press and Richmond Times Dispatch.

## **Community Thoughts and Attitudes**

General thoughts and attitudes of West Point residents were compiled to give further insight into the town's vision for the future. Interviews were conducted in person. Members of the planning commission, local business owners, members of the Economic Development Authority, and downtown shoppers and residents describe the downtown as a quaint and quiet town and would like to see it grow. The majority of residents expressed feelings of frustration towards not having enough restaurants and things to do downtown. One resident states that her vision for the future would be for the downtown to become a neighborhood resource center with specialty stores to attract outsiders as well as a business niche for the neighborhood. A common theme discovered in the market analysis compiled by Muldrow & Associates was that many residents did not realize that there even was a designated downtown district because it is not clearly defined.

## Evaluation and Summary of Existing Conditions

The existing conditions of West Point reveal many signs of prosperity as well of some areas and issues that are considered to be weaknesses and may be become a threat in the future. The following are assets and liabilities derived from the existing conditions.

### Assets:

- An educated population
- Families with young children residing in town
- Commercial buildings are in sound physical condition
- Dense population within walking distance
- Unique history—historic walking tour in and around the Downtown
- The majority of town residents work in or close to town
- A skilled and professional workforce
- Healthy median household and family incomes that can support new businesses
- High percentage of owner occupied housing that is well maintained and in good condition
- Good urban design elements and plenty of street furniture providing a comfortable and pedestrian friendly environment
- Historic district designation on the National and State register
- Conveniently located between Richmond and Williamsburg off of I-64
- New bridge replacement projects to draw a regional market
- Current land use and zoning are consistent
- An abundance and clustering of professional offices, such as dentist, lawyers, and insurance companies
- Property owners are local residents who are likely to participate in revitalization efforts
- A lot of people passing through West Point on Route 33 on their way to work, the river and coast
- The Downtown is within walking distance to the proposed marinas
- Chamber of Commerce is involved in the community and sponsors two special events each year (Christmas on the Town and the Crab Carnival)
- The Post Office is a central gathering place and is located downtown
- The library's location in the center of CBD
- The Episcopal Church's courtyard and central location

**Liabilities:**

- Difficult to distinguish Downtown district
- Absence of gateways and proper signage directly traffic downtown
- Young adult population, those between the ages of 18 and 24, is declining and moving out of the area
- The town has captured a “mill-town” image and perception is hard to change
- Lack of retail and restaurants establishments
- Limited number of vacant buildings or properties available for development—only four properties/buildings for redevelopment opportunity
- No local Merchant’s Association—Chamber of Commerce also serves surrounding counties
- Lack of community/public space for people to interact
- No Architectural Design Review Board in place to enforce Design Guidelines

A SWOT analysis draws on the assets and liabilities collected from the existing conditions and points out some of the major strengths and weakness determined from the assets and liabilities. Downtown West Point has many strengths on which to build and are the foundation of this plan. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are listed below.

**Strengths**

- West Point’s central location between Richmond and Hampton Roads
- Pedestrian-friendly downtown, adequate street furniture and lighting
- Strong median family & household incomes to support new businesses
- Small town with historic atmosphere and neighborhood setting
- The Downtown’s location close to the water
- Several town owned properties
- Large amounts of traffic on Route 30 and Route 33 passing through West Point to get to work or for recreational purposes
- Local property owners who will be involved in redevelopment efforts
- Registered as a National and State Historic District
- The active involvement of the members of the Chamber of Commerce

## **Weaknesses**

- Downtown is not easily identified because of the lack of clearly defined boundaries. Many residents and visitors don't realize there is a downtown
- No clear entrance or gateways into the downtown
- No reason for people to visit downtown for periods of time—only go there to get what you need then leave
- Absence of shopping and dining options
- Competition with Williamsburg and Gloucester in terms of capturing consumers to the retail businesses
- Inactive landowners—Las Tunas has been closed for over a year and half after it was damaged in the fire
- Limited number of vacant buildings and properties that can be developed
- No Architectural Design Review Board to enforce Design Guidelines which may lead to non-contributing development

## **Opportunities**

- Continuous suburban expansion, Richmond MSA is growing
- The new bridges will give drivers another travel option & will pass through West Point presenting an opportunity to capture Route 33 and Route 30 traffic
- Improved access to the water; two proposed Marina's and river trail, will attract visitors and residents of the local community—West Point needs to capitalize on this
- Historic adaptive reuse, developers should be made aware of the rehabilitation opportunities and incentives
- The Post Office is a central gathering place for town residents

## **Threats**

- New bridges may spur development catered to the “drive-through” market along Route 33 instead of downtown and will allow people to continue to pass through West Point
- Gloucester and Williamsburg will pull visitors away and cause West Point to be a “pass-through” convenience town
- West Point is in competition with Richmond, Gloucester, and Williamsburg in terms of shopping
- The Paper Mill has given the town an industrial reputation, which may deter businesses from locating there
- No Architectural Design Review Board to enforce Design Guidelines which may lead to non-contributing development

## **PART II. THE PLAN**

## The Main Street Model

The recommendations proposed in this plan follow the National Main Street approach.<sup>21</sup> The Main Street program has successfully revitalized thousands of communities throughout the country and is guided by four major points; economic restructuring, organization, promotion and design. Most states have their own Main Street program to work with localities and the Virginia Main Street program has been helping localities revitalize their downtown commercial district since 1985. This plan organizes its revitalization recommendations around these four guiding principles.

Economic restructuring focuses on the economic assets of the downtown allowing it to capture a wider market.<sup>22</sup> Organization attempts to gain consensus and cooperation by building effective partnerships with all stakeholders. Promotion creates through aggressive marketing a positive image of the downtown. Design focuses on the physical design elements of downtown improving the visual quality and atmosphere of the downtown.

The biggest problem facing downtown West Point is the lack of people caused by the absence of restaurants and other retail businesses. On the other hand, businesses do not wish to locate due to the lack of downtown consumers. Thus, the purpose of the downtown revitalization plan is to break this cycle with recommendations and implementation strategies that will produce a thriving downtown that will attract businesses, residents and visitors from across the region and state.

**Vision:** Downtown West Point is an attractive and vibrant commercial district full of pedestrian activity with a variety of retail businesses that reflect the historic character of the surrounding residential community and attracting thousands of tourists annually.

To achieve this vision, the following goals should be pursued:

1. Downtown West Point is an attractive and prosperous business district with a variety of retail and restaurant establishments
2. Downtown is a welcoming and enjoyable place for teenagers and young adults
3. Downtown West Point has a unique, positive and well-defined image
4. The Downtown is well connected with the rest of the town and surrounding areas
5. Downtown has an outdoor public space where residents can congregate and interact
6. All of the businesses are visually cohesive and reflect the historic character of

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<sup>21</sup> Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Main Street Program. Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>22</sup> Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Main Street Program. Richmond, Virginia.

- the downtown
7. West Point is an active Virginia Main Street Affiliate with active participation from the state and community
  8. Downtown West Point is a popular tourist destination that attracts people from surrounding counties, metro-areas, and surrounding states

The following section outlines each of the goals and is clarified by a list of objectives that are intended to achieve the stated goal.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Economic Restructuring:**

#### **Goal 1: Downtown West Point is an attractive and prosperous business district with a variety of retail and restaurant establishments**

Objective 1.1: Establish ten new retail businesses serving residents and tourists within three years

Objective 1.2: Recruit three new full service restaurants to the downtown within the next two years

Objective 1.3: Construct an office building to house offices located on Main Street and new offices desiring a downtown location. This relocation will allow for additional retail space on Main Street.

#### **Goal 2: Downtown is a welcoming and enjoyable place for teenagers and young adults**

Objective 2.1: A teen center will sponsor events and provide entertainment opportunities for teenagers

Objective 2.2: Restaurants should include a bar to attract young adults downtown

**Design:**

**Goal 3: Downtown West Point has a unique, positive and well-defined image that is attractive and inviting to all residents and visitors**

Objective 3.1: Design elements and enhancements (signage, streetscape plantings, banners, etc.) visually define the downtown

Objective 3.2: Signage directs people to downtown from Route 30 and Route 33

**Goal 4: The Downtown is well connected with the rest of the town and the surrounding areas**

Objective 4.1: The historic walking tour is clearly marked in the downtown

Objective 4.2: The Third and Seventh Street Marinas are connected to the downtown with design elements and way-finding signage (marsh walk and river walk)

Objective 4.3: A bike lane exists downtown to allow for more travel options

**Goal 5: Downtown has an outdoor public space where residents can congregate and interact**

Objective 5.1: The parking lane on the west side of Main Street will be converted into a pedestrian only zone providing a public space and to allow businesses to expand out front

**Goal 6: All of the businesses are visually cohesive and reflect the historic character of the downtown**

Objective 6.1: Architectural design guidelines are enforced by an Architectural Review Board

Objective 6.2: A historic district architectural review process incorporates written architectural design standards

Objective 6.3: Incentives for investment in historically significant commercial buildings are provided

Objective 6.4: A statue or a mural honoring Chesty Puller is present in the downtown

**Organization:**

**Goal 7: West Point is an active Virginia Main Street Affiliate with active participation from the state and community**

Objective 7.1: West Point Downtown Association to seek full Virginia Main Street designation and help achieve West Point's vision for the downtown

**Promotion:**

**Goal 8: Downtown West Point is a popular tourist destination that attracts people from surrounding counties, metro-areas, and surrounding states**

Objective 8.1: Hire a part-time Main Street coordinator to market and raise public awareness of downtown West Point and help guide an effective organization

Objective 8.2: Implement a strategic marketing plan for downtown that includes the specific tasks and the responsible parties

Objective 8.3: Create a visitor center located along 14<sup>th</sup> Street to welcome Guests and inform them about the activities and events in the Town

# Plan Recommendations

## Economic Restructuring

### **Goal 1: Downtown West Point is an attractive and prosperous business district with a variety of retail and restaurant establishments**

Objective 1.1: Establish ten new retail businesses serving residents and tourists within three years

New businesses should be recruited to attract residents and tourists. A variety of stores are necessary to attract visitors and provide a wide range of shopping opportunities for residents. Filling in the gaps with retail and restaurant businesses will create a sustainable retail corridor that offers shopping opportunities to a broader base of consumers, rather than those solely interested in convenience stores and professional services.

*Shops:* Boutiques, gift shops and other specialty stores should be targeted to locate downtown. Specialty retail may include a clothing store, a local book store, and a shoe store.

Objective 1.2: Recruit three new full service restaurants to the downtown within the next two years

*Restaurants:* A variety of restaurants is essential to draw new people Downtown to dine and stay in the area to shop. A sandwich shop or deli, a bakery, pizza place, candy shop, ice cream parlor, a breakfast place and a couple sit-down restaurants will fulfill the unmet demand for downtown eating and dining. Sit-down restaurants will provide an opportunity for travelers passing through West Point to stop and take a break. If there are a variety of restaurants people will be more likely to come back again for future visits. The three new full service restaurants should act as an anchor to draw people into the area to generate more pedestrian traffic. The restaurants should be sensitive to small town culture and should not be chain restaurants. A full service upscale restaurant with a bar should be targeted to locate in the old Las Tunas building. Areas with several dining spots and entertainment options provide variety and have a clear advantage over isolated establishments. People may decide to go out for the evening without knowing exactly what kind of food or entertainment they want but will be sure to find something when there are several options. Downtown West Point can become a stronger player in the local food-entertainment marketplace by providing exactly this kind of choice and variety. When there are a lot of different things to do and see, visitors are likely to stay longer and spend more money.

Property owners that currently have vacant buildings and are using the building for storage should be encouraged to reoccupy or sell their property. Inactive property owners should be made aware of renovation options so they will have a more competitive business.

The Town should investigate the development and use of certain economic incentives to attract and maintain desired business investment within the downtown. This might involve tax incentives or perhaps limited special assistance to food and entertainment uses which remain in operation for a given number of years. Special tax incentives for new business development should be available. Establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) should also be considered as an option for financing miscellaneous improvements. A BID is a special district defined by the Town, where additional taxes are levied on property owners and the additional revenue goes directly towards improvements to the district.<sup>23</sup> A BID essentially ensures a steady stream of financing because the beneficiaries pay directly for the improvements. A tax abatement could be offered for new downtown commercial structures for a set number of months or years. This will help revitalize the downtown because it gives business owners and developers an incentive to locate in West Point.

Objective 1.3: Construct an office building to house offices located on Main Street and new offices desiring a downtown location. This relocation will allow for additional retail space on Main Street

### **The Office Building**

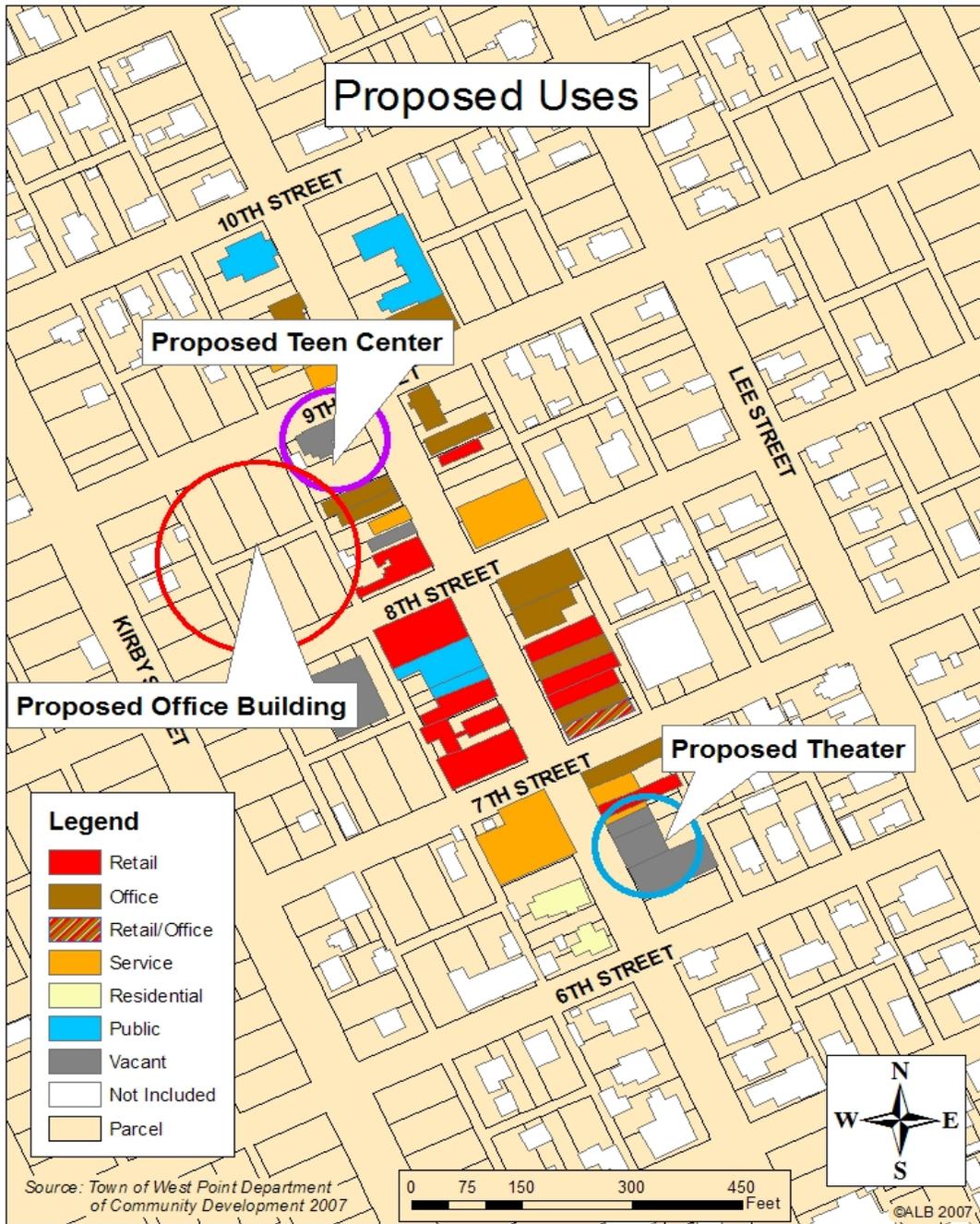
An office building should be constructed on the six vacant lots between Main and Kirby Streets and between Eight and Ninth Streets (Map 11). The office building should house professional offices currently located along Main Street. This would allow retail shops to move into the vacated buildings along the Main Street corridor. The Main Street corridor provides a pleasant environment for pedestrians and West Point should take advantage of this asset. A special parking study should be conducted to ensure adequate parking is available where it is needed.

Three of the lots are owned by Gerry Liggins and the other three are owned by the Town. The Town should persuade Mr. Liggins to sell his lots so they can construct they office building. The three lots owned by a single owner makes it easier for the Town to purchase than if it were owned by three separate owners.

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<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, Jerry. Business Improvement Districts and Innovative Service Delivery. The Pricehouse Coopers Endowment for The Business of Government. Grant Report. 1999.

Map 11:



## Business Relocation Incentives

Incentives will need to be provided to relocate the professional businesses from Main Street into the new office building. Incentives to lure businesses from Main Street into the office building may include reduced rent or even rent free for the first year. Another option would be to offer the relocating businesses

membership or discount cards to the new businesses could be given as an incentive to relocate.

## **Consumer Loyalty and Promotions**

Residents will be encouraged to shop downtown by receiving regular promotions including discounts, and rebates for shopping locally. The Economic Development Authority, West Point Downtown Association, and the Chamber of Commerce will work with downtown business owners to organize these promotional activities. New businesses should have a Grand Opening once they are established and should be coordinated with other businesses so that they do not all occur on the same day, but on separate days to draw people in on several occasions.

## **Goal 2: Downtown is a welcoming and enjoyable place for teenagers and young adults**

Objective 2.1: A teen center will sponsor events and provide entertainment opportunities for teenagers

### **A Teen Center**

In order to make the downtown a more inviting place for teenagers there needs to be a reason for them to visit and stay for periods of time in the downtown. A teen center should be developed to act as a social activity site for the young people of West Point. The Teen Center is recommended for the vacant building on the corner of Ninth and Main Street (Map 11 & Figure 19). A regular activity such as a Friday “Night Spot” should be organized for West Point’s teenagers. The Friday Night Spot could include dance, music and food to give the teenage population a place to socialize. The teen center should also host other events specifically for the teenagers. An annual prom parade for the senior high school class could take place downtown. The pergola on the corner of Main and Seventh Street would provide a nice place for pictures before going to the prom. Another way to get the young population downtown would be to have holiday window painting competitions. Window fronts could be painted by students at different holidays throughout the year with the winner receiving a gift certificate or coupon to one of the downtown businesses.



Figure 19:

Other town events can also be held in the teen center, but it should remain a teen venue so they feel they are part of the community.

Objective 2.2: Restaurants should include a bar to attract young adults' downtown

## **Young Adults**

The Commercial Market Analysis shows demand for restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages. A small bar in the three proposed restaurants would attract the young drinking-age adults and the older population in the evenings and weekends. A restaurant with a martini bar is one alternative to successfully capture a wider customer base in a small town. Night life is critical to a successful downtown. Restaurants and bars will give young adults a place to network and interact when most other businesses are closed.

## **Historic Theater**

An old fashioned movie theater to go along with the historic theme should locate in the old Pullen Computing building (Map 11). This building is a prime site for a theater because it is 7500 square feet. The theater should show old films and also have a stage for plays to attract people of all ages. The theater could be used to hold special events such as student plays and black and white film nights and other classic films targeted to the older populations. The historic theater should be the major traffic generator in the downtown, attracting residents and people for neighboring counties. The Pullen Computing building is strategically located in the center of the downtown across from the proposed pedestrian area. A variety of films for a variety of audiences is important because it will contribute to the cultural diversity of the downtown. One option would be to have the high school and teenagers work at the theater and also survey what movies are would be supported.

## **Design**

**Goal 3: Downtown West Point has a unique, positive and well-defined image that is attractive and inviting to all residents and visitors**

Objective 3.1: Design elements and enhancements (signage, streetscapes, plantings, banners, etc.) visually define the downtown

## **Define and Identify the Downtown**

A successful downtown must be legible, that is well-defined. A sense of place can be achieved by installing identification signage to announce when you have entered the Downtown. Signs on the corners at 10th and Main Street should be installed to acknowledge entrance into the Downtown. Colorful banners should also be placed on the streetlights along Main Street to create a strong sense of

place and ensure community pride. The new logo developed by Muldrow and Associates should be incorporated into the banners design (Figure 20). This creative and captivating logo slogan, “Three Rivers, Two Bridges, One Special Place” should be used in all marketing materials. Painted curbs or a cobble stone street in the downtown would also clearly define the area as a distinct location.

Figure 20:



Source: Muldrow and Associates

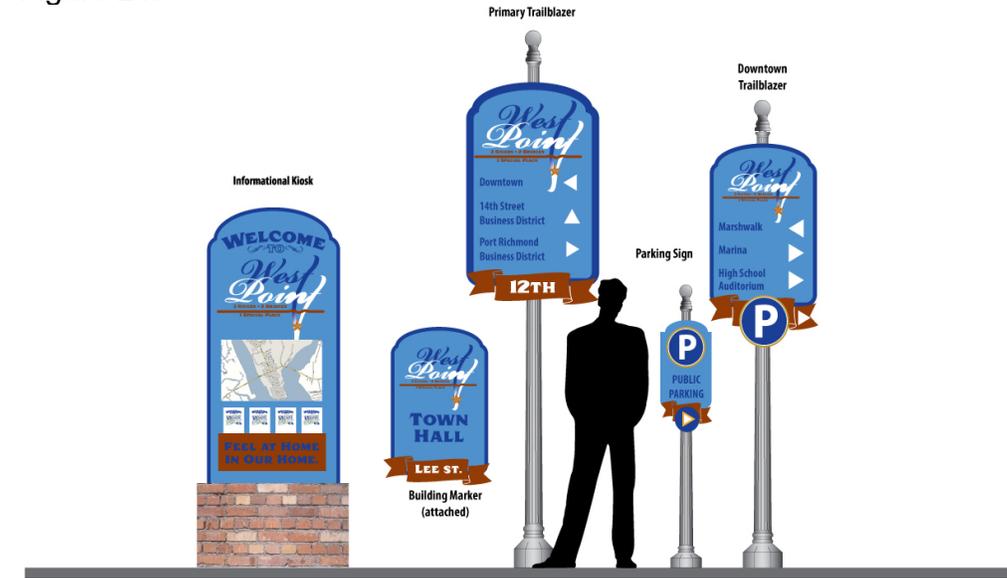
**Objective 3.2:** Signage directs people to downtown from Route 30 and Route 33

### **Way-Finding Signage**

Visible and attractive gateways to downtown must be established at locations where motorists can recognize downtown. The signs should be subject to particular design treatment, which brings the downtown’s historic character and pedestrian image into the view of the motorists. The directional signage should be installed at the corners of Main Street and Route 33 and Lee Street and Route 33 (Figure 21) directing people downtown. The signs should retain the historical old-fashioned format along the corridor and downtown.

Signs featuring the downtown restaurants and shops should be placed on I-64, Route 30 and Route 33. This will attract motorist traveling on the major roadways who seek food or shopping. People visiting the river or coast often like dining options different from the fast food establishments commonly found on the interstate. Way-finding signage should also be placed on Seventh and Third Streets to direct people downtown from the marinas.

Figure 21:



Source: Muldrow and Associates

**Goal 4: The Downtown is well connected with the rest of the town and the surrounding areas**

*Objective 4.1:* The historic walking tour is clearly marked in the downtown

**Downtown Connections**

The Downtown must be better connected to the rest of the town and its activities—both physically and perceptually. The plan recommends connecting the Downtown with the historic walking tour, the proposed Marinas and river walk, and route 33.

**Historic Walking Tour**

The historic walking tour should start at the proposed Visitor Center where brochures will be available for tourist to the area. Historic makers should be used throughout the tour to direct and guide residents and visitors to the sites of interest. Depending on the site, the marker can be a platform or a granite stone on or in the ground with a brief description and date to supplement the brochure. An example of a historic maker is shown in Figure 22.

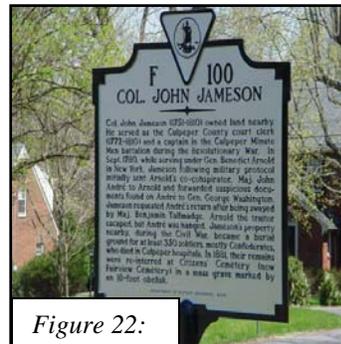


Figure 22:

Objective 4.2: The Third and Seventh Street Marinas are connected to the downtown with design elements and way-finding signage (marsh walk and river walk)

### Marina Connections

The Third and Seventh Street Marinas should be visually and physically connected to the downtown. More way-finding signage should direct people through the downtown. Attractive streetscapes and plantings such as shrubs and flowers along Seventh and Third Street can also guide people to and through downtown (Map 12). Another way to create a clear pedestrian promenade is to convert Seventh Street's parking lane into a pedestrian only walkway to encourage people from the marina into the downtown.



Figure 23: Sidewalk mosaic



Figure 24:

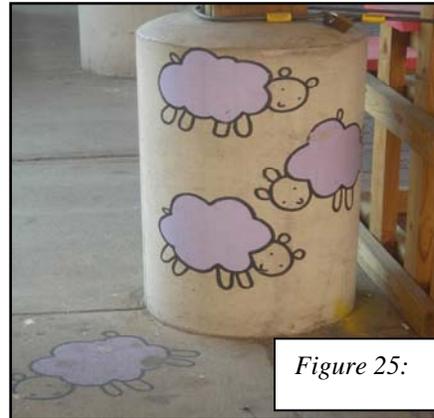


Figure 25:

Objective 4.3: A bike path or trail connects areas north of Route 33 to downtown

Bicycle access needs to be improved for downtown. Downtown should be “bike friendly” if teenagers and other populations who do not drive. A bike lane should be painted on the west side of Main Street to link the downtown with the northern portion of West Point and allow for easy access for pedestrians crossing Route 33. No Biking signs should be removed to bring more people into the downtown. Bike racks should be installed downtown to provide suitable and safe parking options. This will allow the downtown to be accessible for those who can not drive and are not within walking distance.



Figure 26:

## **Goal 5: Downtown has an outdoor public space where residents can congregate and interact**

Objective 5.1: The parking lane on the west side of Main Street will be converted into a pedestrian only zone providing a public space and activity node

### **Public and Pedestrian Space**

Public and open space should be provided in the downtown to reinforce the pedestrian orientation. The parking lanes on the four blocks of Main Street between Tenth and Sixth Streets should be converted into a pedestrian only zone, allowing room for the bike lane, bicycle racks, restaurants and vendors to stretch out into the street Map 12 on page 58. This pedestrian area will act as the outdoor public gathering space and provide a place for a variety of events and activities. This space should be the symbol for the downtown. There needs to be a clustering of businesses for this to be possible. A parking study should be conducted and evaluated to ensure adequate parking is available on surrounding streets. Cobblestone paving is one way to define the pedestrian area and emphasize the historic theme. An image of what the proposed pedestrian area will look like can be seen in Figure 27.

The proposed pedestrian plaza should accommodate a variety of functions, such as outdoor dining, musical performances, art shows and other activities. Businesses should be allowed to use the public space in front of their establishments for seating, displaying signs, art work, etc. Vendors should also be permitted to sell goods at certain times such as one Saturday each month, or during special events, or every Saturday during the summer months. Street vendors would have to purchase a permit before opening shop. It is recommended that the restaurants and food establishments be located on the west side of Main Street so that outdoor seating is possible. There needs to be a clustering of businesses in order for the pedestrian area to be successful.

Figure 27:



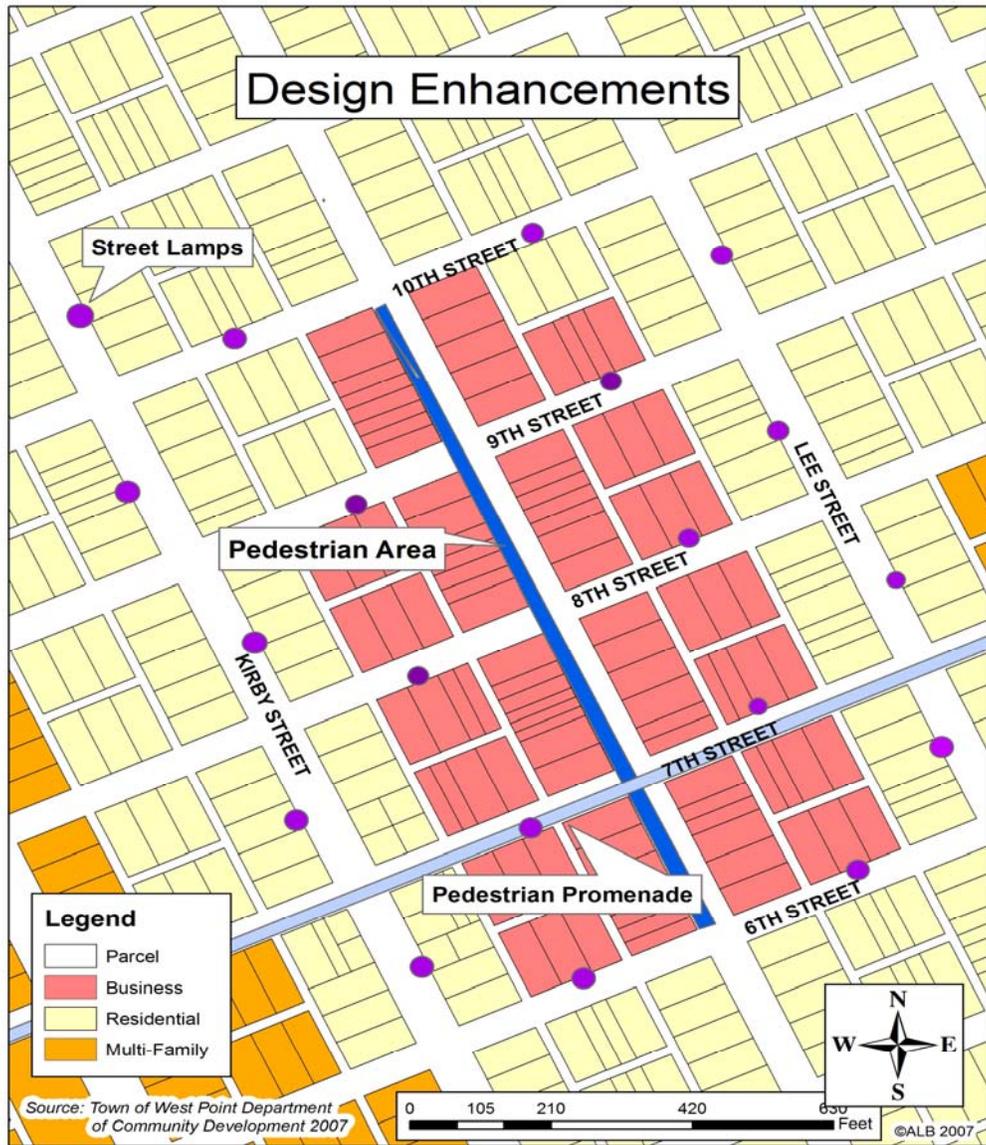
A kiosk should also be installed in front of the Post Office. The kiosk should contain a bulletin board to post announcements and events. This location is ideal because all residents go to the post office to pick up the mail since there is no home delivery service in town.

### Design Enhancements

Pedestrian lighting should be installed on Lee and Kirby Streets. This will attract people downtown after dark and create a sense of safety and security. Map 12 shows the placement of the proposed lighting improvements. The lamp post should maintain the historic character as the existing ones on Main Street. Pedestrian-oriented streets place emphasis on areas where buildings abut the streets and feature streetscape elements that include landscape plantings, street lighting and street furniture. The streetscapes on Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Street should be improved to lead people from the surrounding neighborhood into the downtown. The sides of buildings should be painted and decorated to capture people's attention. Side entrances with awnings on corner buildings would also help catch people's attention. The presence of public art helps creates a niche for downtown and can beautify the area and attract new visitors.



Map12: Design Improvements



**Goal 6: All of the businesses are visually cohesive and reflect the historic character of the downtown**

Objective 6.1: Architectural design guidelines are enforced by an Architectural Review Board

**Architectural Review Board**

As described in the existing conditions, the Town has adopted Architectural Design Guidelines, but there is no authority in place to enforce them. An Architectural Review Board should be established to enforce the existing design guidelines. The Architectural Review Board should consist of one town staff member, one architect, two elected business owners, the Main Street Coordinator, and two members of the West Point Downtown Association (WPDA). The Architectural Review Board should pay especially close attention to historic rehabilitation and signage. Signage is important because if signs are not consistent and compatible to surrounding businesses the area will look cluttered and could detract from the overall appearance.

Objective 6.3: Incentives for investment in historically significant commercial buildings are provided

**Historic Rehabilitation Incentives**

**Tax Credits-Federal and State**

Tax credits are a dollar for dollar credit against income tax liability available when a historic building is renovated. Historic commercial buildings should be encouraged to take advantage of Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Historic property owners should be encouraged to restore storefronts and enhance exterior architectural features. Since these Central Business District properties are included in the State and National Historic District designation, many programs are available to assist owners with renovations.

When historic structures meet specific requirements, investors and business owners can claim 20 percent of rehabilitation expenses as a credit on federal income taxes and 25 percent on state income taxes.<sup>24</sup> Buildings eligible for rehabilitation tax credits must be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register, or certified as a contributing structure to the historic district. The buildings must also be used for income-producing properties.

Objective 6.4: Install a statue or paint a mural honoring Chesty Puller

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<sup>24</sup> National Historic Register

## **Chesty Puller**

Since Chesty Puller was born and raised in West Point, he should be recognized with a memorial or mural. A monument with a plaque could be erected in the proposed Main Street pedestrian space. Another idea would be to create a mural with various pictures and quotes of him during the various stages of his life. This site should also be incorporated into the historic walking tour. The mural should be painted on the side of the building on Main and Seventh Street to keep people intrigued on the pedestrian walkway between the two marinas (Figure 23). Public art is a good way to make an area attractive and bring people together in its creation. The teen center should be responsible for the murals and artwork.



## **Organization:**

### **Goal 7: West Point is an active Virginia Main Street Affiliate with active participation from the state and community**

Objective 7.1: Establish a West Point Downtown Association to seek full Virginia Main Street designation

### **West Point Downtown Association (WPDA)**

Establishing strong downtown leadership is essential to the success of this plan and the future of downtown. Local government should play a key role in encouraging downtown investment by entering into public-private partnerships to enable redevelopment to move ahead but it should not be the sole leader. Downtown leadership should be the role and responsibility of all of those who are invested in the area—property owners, community residents and government. A separate organization with a mission to act as the advocate for the downtown commercial district is the best way to achieve revitalization. A West Point Downtown Association should be organized including a variety of public and private stakeholders. Local support is essential, and for this reason the WPDA will partner with the Virginia Main Street (VMS) office of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) to produce effective results. The WPDA should assume the lead role of the downtown redevelopment efforts. The WPDA should meet regularly and will be responsible for activities and policies impacting the downtown commercial district. The WPDA will work together to brainstorm new ideas/concepts, and facilitate communication between the representative groups. The WPDA should also serve as a welcoming committee to new businesses to the downtown.

The WPDA will motivate and encourage civic groups to assist in the revitalization process by offering incentives, recognition, and education. WPDA should create a volunteer program that will include a variety of residents. WPDA will work with the volunteers to develop a work plan and delegate tasks to each volunteer. Volunteers will be recognized through newsletters, certificates, and appreciation luncheons. The WPDA should give bi-annual awards to a business that has contributed to the revitalization efforts and or made significant improvements to the business and has been involved in the community.

### **Virginia Main Street Affiliate Designation**

The WPDA will work with the Virginia Main Street office at VDHCD to become a designated Main Street Affiliate Community when it reaches the business and building thresholds. This designation requires a high level of commitment, participation and readiness from the town. Main Street Communities are selected every three to four years after application submission and designation. WPDA will gather and organize volunteers to assist in the revitalization efforts. WPDA will offer training sessions, networking opportunities, technical assistance, access to state and national experts, and assist with public relations and marketing.

### **Promotion:**

#### **Goal 8: Downtown West Point is a popular tourist destination that attracts people from surrounding counties, metro-areas, and surrounding states**

Objective 8.1: Hire a part-time Main Street coordinator to market and raise public awareness of downtown West Point and help guide an effective organization

#### **Main Street Coordinator**

A new part-time position will be created for a Main Street Coordinator to work with the WPDA to identify media options, build media relationships generating positive press for downtown West Point. This person will work with VMS, West Point's Office of Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce and the proposed WPDA. The Coordinator will target local newspapers, television, radio, churches, and magazines. A public relations campaign will develop a creative message to capture new audiences.

Objective 8.2: Implement a strategic marketing plan for downtown that includes the specific tasks and the responsible parties

## **Marketing Plan**

The WPDA will play a major role in initiating efforts to promote the market goods and services available in the downtown. Promotional efforts will focus on the specific businesses and restaurants to attract tourist.

### **The “Locate Downtown” Program**

The implementation of a proactive “locate downtown” policy should be part of all downtown marketing efforts. The Downtown is host to most of the key public services – Town Hall, the library, postal service, and numerous professional services. It is also host to a number of community events – the Crab Festival, Summer Concerts, and Christmas on the Town. It is important that these services and festivals continue downtown and be marketed to attract more customers.

### **Marketing and Promotion Subcommittee**

The primary purpose of the marketing and promotion subcommittee is to develop a downtown marketing program focusing on business recruitment, customer attraction and image creation. Its purpose would also be to coordinate additional community events to lure people downtown. The subcommittee should also be a key player with the town in marketing downtown as a unique entertainment district especially for teenagers.

The following will be used to market the downtown:

- Proximity to I-64, Route 30 & 33
- A nice place to stop and visit on way to river
- Historical significance—walking tour and visitor/history center
- Specialty shops and restaurants
- Marinas
- Special events

### **Marketing and Promotion Subcommittee Tasks:**

Organize an aggressive advertising campaign among businesses by using direct mailings, car flyers, and door hangings. Use the logo—2 Bridges, 3 Rivers, One Special Place should be displayed on all advertisements. Brochures should be placed at the Richmond and Williamsburg visitor centers and rest stops on Interstate 64 within a 100 mile of West Point.



A website dedicated specifically to the Downtown should be created. The site should include: reasons for opening a business downtown, present businesses with hours and special promotions, events, and contacts for the Coordinator. A section of the town website dedicated to tourist attractions and things to do in West Point should be created. A link on the Richmond and Virginia's visitor home page website should also be provided to reach a large number of viewers. The website should also include a shopping, dining and entertainment directory.

Promote the benefits of shopping locally to residents by news paper announcements, posting flyers and bulletins of meetings and events should be in the post office and the Yellow Door because they are commonly visited by many residents providing good places to advertise. Notify the town residents about the new activities, businesses, menus, and hours of operation.

There should be more regular events such as art shows and window display competitions because regular downtown visits can have just as much an impact as the larger annual special events. Events should be located in the recommended pedestrian area or at a place where participants can easily visit the retail shops.

Objective 8.3: Create a visitor center located at the corner of Main and 14<sup>th</sup> Street to welcome guests and inform them about the activities and events in the area

### **West Point/Middle Peninsula Visitor Center**

The building for sale at the corner of 14th and Main Street should be purchased by the town and transformed into a visitor center. This is a prime location because it has the ability to reach a wide range of travelers at the major intersection. The Middle Peninsula currently does not have an existing visitor

center to welcome people to the area. A brochure of shopping, dining, attractions, and water access and recreational activities in West Point and the Peninsula should be available at the center. The visitor center should also include a small conference room, and a community room that is available to rent for certain activities and occasions. This will provide a space for businesses, associations, and other organizations to get together in a professional atmosphere.

## **Implementation**

### **Recruit New Retail Businesses**

A business recruitment committee should be organized to develop a strategy to recruit new retail shops and restaurants. The committee should include members from the WPDA, Chamber of Commerce, Town of West Point staff, and experts in the real estate field.

Realtors should offer flexible lease options with a lower lease rate for the first year and increase rent incrementally based on profits and the real estate market. New businesses may be discouraged to locate in downtown West Point if rents are too high and with long lease commitments.

The Main Street Coordinator and members of the Chamber of Commerce should visit businesses within 100 miles in effort to convince them to expand into West Point. Chamber members should provide them with this plan information along with the Market Analysis by Arnett Muldrow and Associates. Interested developers should be familiarized with the town.

The WPDA, Chamber of Commerce, the Main Street Coordinator, and the Town are responsible for recruiting new businesses and encouraging them to locate in West Point. The WPDA should identify local residents interested in starting a new business and assist them with any possible needs.

### **Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Town should establish a Business Improvement District to help providing funding for incentives for new businesses and help pay for the recommended Main Street Coordinator and their duties.

### **Office Building**

The Town should hire a developer for the office building and should put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) so there will be a selection process for the best design proposal. The town should provide the developer with tax breaks as an incentive to construct the office building. Businesses relocating to the proposed office building should receive incentives from the town and should include: technical assistance, tax abatements for a set time, and assistance with advertising. The Town should buy the three lots currently owned by Mr. Liggins

so that it can be combined with the three adjacent lots owned by the town, to allow a total of six lots for the office building.

### **Teen Center**

Funding for the teen center should come from private donations, the town government, student fundraising, and the Chamber of Commerce.

The town, the Chamber of Commerce and the WPDA should encourage property owners to reoccupy or sell vacant properties. Property owners need to realize that they have the most to gain from downtown revitalization.

### **Signage**

The WPDA will work with the Town of West Point to approve and assist with the banners and signage installation. West Point Department of Public Works will be responsible for installing signage.

Virginia Department of Transportation should place the West Point Downtown interstate sign between exit 219 and 220 and also at exist 220 on I-64. VDOT is also responsible for installing the sings on Route 30 and Route 33.

### **Historic Markers**

Virginia Department of Historic Resources has a Local Marker Program and the WPDA and the Architectural Design Review Board should be responsible for acquiring the Markers.

### **Historic Tax Credits**

To apply for historic rehabilitation tax credits, there is an application process. All rehabilitation work must follow the guidelines stated with The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The improvements must also be made within a twenty-four month period or a six month period for phased improvement programs. The WPDA and the Architectural Design Review Board is responsible for investment of historically significant buildings.

### **Marketing Plan**

The website should be developed the WPDA marketing committee and the Main Street Coordinator should employe student's interns to help create and update the website.

### **Design Guidelines**

The Architectural Review Board is responsible for enforcing the design guidelines. The Architectural Review Board, the WPDA, and the town will educate developers on acceptable designs and encourage property owners to confirm to the design standards.

### **Main Street Coordinator**

The part time Main Street Coordinator should be paid through the BID's (Business Improvement District) financing. The money collected from the property taxes will go directly into the salary for the Coordinator who will be working towards improving businesses in the downtown.

### **Pedestrian Space and Physical Improvements**

The Town Council and the Department of Public Works should be responsible for the physical improvements, which include the street lighting, bike rack installments and bike lane addition.

The following outlines the priorities of this plan in order to achieve the desired vision.

#### Implementation Priorities:

- Office Building is essential to provide retail space for new businesses
- Clustering of retail and restaurants is necessary to attract residents and visitors routinely
- Public Space is critical to accommodate foot traffic
- Enforce Design Guidelines to ensure quality development
- Signage is crucial to capture the "Pass-Through" market
- Marina connections need to be established to tap into the regional market

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