

Appendix 4

Recommendations Parsed by Action Organization

This appendix allocates the Task Force recommendations to the organization(s) that would have the primary responsibility for executing them. Many of the recommendations involve the cooperation of several organizations, so a number of recommendations are listed several times.

The primary recipients are:

- The Government of Chestertown - Appendix 4.1
- Washington College - Appendix 4.2
- The Regional Arts Community & Downtown Chestertown Association - Appendix 4.3
- The Government of Kent County - Appendix 4.4

Appendix 4.1

Recommendations for Chestertown's Government

The following section lists the specific Task Force recommendations for actions that involve the Town, either solely or jointly.

Recommendation #1: To help our local schools we urge all Kent County employers, citizens, associations, non-profits and Town and County officials to embrace and support the Kent Forward initiative.

Recommendation #2: The Task Force, recognizing that perception is reality, believes the Town needs to embrace the business community more effectively. Inviting the business community to meet with the Council once a year would be a good idea. The next Mayor should be a champion for soliciting business to come to Chestertown and checking in often with the local businesses. We urge immediate consideration of a new streamlined process for planning, zoning, and historic review. Finally, we believe citizens appointed to these three boards should receive training.

Recommendation #3: It is imperative that both governments cooperate and collaborate with each other. Therefore, the Task Force also recommends that the relevant officials from the County and Town sit down to resolve whatever differences exist between them.

Recommendation #4: The Task Force recommends that the Town Council amend Section 6(h) of the Public Ethics Law.

Recommendation #5: The Town, with help from the DBA and the arts community, should develop a plan to place directional signage and historical markers in the Town and report back to the Council within 6 months on its proposed plan.

Recommendation #6: The Town and the Hospital should set up a mechanism to communicate frequently and systematically.

Recommendation #7: The Sultana Education Foundation should keep up the good work and collaborate with the Town's businesses and other non-profit organizations to promote and enhance the annual Downrigging Weekend event and its contribution to the Town's economy.

Recommendation #12: We recommend the Town, working with the DCA, consider closing High Street between Water St. and Lawyers Row (and possibly Cross St. between High and Cannon as well) on First Fridays to allow more of a "street party" atmosphere with entertainment. We recommend liberally allowing—even encouraging—al fresco dining outside restaurants and cafes.

Recommendations #13: Enforce building codes on dilapidated structures and reexamine ordinances that deal with property neglect.

Recommendations #14: The Mayor should appoint a small task force with representatives of the College, the Arts Council, the business community and others to brain-storm other festivals or “destination-type” events for the Town with a focus on winter events to fill existing calendar gaps.

Recommendation #16 for the County and Town: Examine potential sources of funding for extending the rail-trail. And, back to signage, letting visitors know we have a trail would be helpful.

Recommendation #18: We recommend that the Town in conjunction with the management of the Farmers Market consider moving the market to a permanent sheltered location closer to the River near Wilmer Park and Stepne Station, increasing its frequency of operation and improving its access to parking.

Recommendation #19: The Task Force recommends that the Town, on a 6-month experimental basis beginning this Spring (before the College lets out) and through Downrigging Weekend in 2014, run a free shuttle that it can lease on a short term basis before deciding whether to continue the program. A driver could be paid minimum wage (plus tips) so that the experiment would not be that expensive.

Recommendation #20: We also recommend that the Town purchase and install bike racks in logical places to encourage more bicycle use as well as consider implementing a bike sharing program. There should also be designated bike lanes.

Recommendation #21: In order to prevent run-off, we believe the Town and/or County should remove some parking spaces at the foot of High Street as well as at the foot of Cannon Street, and replace them with green space that can absorb water. We also believe that the marina area needs to be raised and sealed from the frequently invading river.

Recommendation #23: The Town, the County, and Washington College should jointly study and then institute new regional economic incentives and small business assistance programs. The possibilities include tax and fee relief; regulatory and zoning relief; financing assistance; assistance in structuring private/public partnerships, enterprise zones, and business incubators; improvements to high speed internet service; and small business development, planning, and training programs.

Recommendation #24: Revamp the Kent County and Chestertown websites. Engage a professional webmaster for help in revamping the sites. Consider target marketing instead of participating in mass advertising where we can get lost. For example, partner with those in the hunting and fishing business and target sporting clubs and websites. Or, partner with the hotels and inns and target bicycle clubs. Target the LGBT community as potential tourists and residents.

Our wedding trade continues to grow and, again, in partnership with hotels, inns, planners, restaurants, caterers, tent suppliers, etc., we should target that audience.

Establish a separate website for businesses, possibly entitled:
www.chestertownisopenforbusiness.com

This site would be dedicated to FAQs for existing businesses, a help desk, and more importantly, to soliciting and enticing new businesses.

Marketing should focus on 2-3 day visits with specific ideas offered on how a visitor can spend a morning, an afternoon, and an evening each day.

Recommendation #25: The Mayor must be creative and dogged in recruiting business to town. Something as simple as a business card that reads, “Chestertown--Open for Business! Feel free to call me directly on my cell.” can be a very effective tool. The Town’s leadership needs a clearly defined and streamlined process for how to do business in Chestertown. They should embrace controlled and architecturally consistent growth and must have the tough skin that is sometimes required when living in a small town. Those who lead may not always be respected or supported. The leaders should draw on the intellectual resources of the community as much as possible.

Recommendation #30: We recommend that the Town work cooperatively with the College on all zoning issues to enable such a project, and, eventually, work cooperatively with a developer on all infrastructure, licensing, architectural, and permitting issues.

Recommendation #31: We will have several changes that focus on enhancements to tourism that are physical in nature later in this report. We believe these changes will be transformational. But, fundamental structural changes need to be made in the way we entice and manage tourists. We recommend the Mayor appoint a Tourism Task Force, with County representation, to study and recommend specific changes, some of which we outline above. This task force should report back to the Town Council and County Commissioners with their report in 60 days to be implemented for the Spring and Summer seasons in 2014

Recommendation #32: The Town should immediately begin applying for grants under the federal government’s Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program and other programs, and develop an implementation schedule to dredge the harbor basin, rebuild most of the bulkheads, elevate the site, and replace and increase the number of fixed docks with floating docks to accommodate about 90 slips.

Recommendation #33: The Chestertown Marina should be closed to vehicular traffic and turned largely into a green space. The Town should consider working with the private land-owner on relocating or rebuilding the Fish Whistle further back on the site to allow broad open views.

Recommendation #34: The Town should reroute traffic and access by connecting Front Street and Queen Street at Wilmer Park, and route parking to a new parking lot to be discussed later in the report.

Recommendation #35: The marina needs a kayak or paddleboat rental station, new public restrooms and showers for boaters and visitors, a supply and convenience store, a harbor master’s office and other commercial buildings, and amenities for the public’s use.. These too should be placed toward the rear of the site.

Recommendation #36: After a new marina is constructed the Town should develop an RFP to contract-out marina operations. A newly constructed marina could very well result in bids from marina operators that would cover the town's bond payments.

Recommendation #37: The Task Force recommends that the Town contract with an engineer/architect to design the marina space, based on the above guidelines.

Recommendation #38: The Town should proceed on a pending grant that would provide funds for studying the potential for using sculpture for fun. The Town should also reduce the current parking lot at Wilmer and expand the park, and consider restricting the reduced parking lot for use by marina patrons.

Recommendation #42: The Town and College immediately begin discussions on the rezoning of Stepne which we believe should be mixed use.

Recommendation #46: Concurrent with discussions with the State on a new road, the Town and County should take steps to identify funding for transforming the existing S curve into a walking promenade.

Recommendation #47: The Town should investigate funding mechanisms for a new parking lot and subsequently enter discussions with the property landowner on leasing or purchasing the property.

Recommendation #48: We recommend that the Town initiate an effort to design and obtain appropriate government approvals and easements across those parts of the Chester River and Radcliffe Creek shoreline not currently owned by the Town, including the privately-owned land at the junction of the Chester River and Radcliffe Creek. The Town should seek public and institutional funding sources for this project.

Recommendation #50: We recommend that the College and Town consider a Conference Center Inn and revise the zoning for Stepne as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). We urge the College to then immediately issue an RFP for the said development of a Conference Center Inn.

Appendix 4.2

Recommendations for Washington College

The following section lists the specific Task Force recommendations for actions that involve Washington College, either solely or jointly.

Recommendation #1: To help our local schools we urge all Kent County employers, citizens, associations, non-profits and Town and County officials to embrace and support the Kent Forward initiative.

Recommendation #8: We urge that the Kent County Arts Council and the County's Tourism Office work together to pinpoint marketing efforts that can draw more art-driven tourism and encourage more artists to locate to Chestertown. We also believe that the Arts Council, River Arts, and Washington College should consider ways that they can co-market content. Finally, we urge more careful scheduling of events (e.g., Weekend Open Studios conflicting with Downrigging Weekend.) We will also have specific thoughts later in this report on the public display of art.

Recommendation #10: We would urge the College to study the feasibility of systems that would allow students to "swipe" their College card at downtown establishments. We note that Chesapeake Bank and Trust offered a variation of this concept, but many students did not know of its existence. We also urge the College to consider, when leasing additional office space that is not campus-critical, to assess the alternatives for using downtown space.

Recommendations #14: The Mayor should appoint a small task force with representatives of the College, the Arts Council, the business community and others to brain-storm other festivals or "destination-type" events for the Town with a focus on winter events to fill existing calendar gaps.

Recommendation #23: The Town, Kent County, and Washington College should jointly study and then institute new regional economic incentives and small business assistance programs. The possibilities include tax and fee relief; regulatory and zoning relief; financing assistance; assistance in structuring private/public partnerships, enterprise zones, and business incubators; improvements to high speed internet service; and small business development, planning, and training programs.

Recommendation #27: We recommend that Washington College dedicate that portion of Stepne closest to Cross Street for a residential community. Since the College holds this land in its endowment, we recommend the College consider participating in part or in whole as an equity participant in the project which, we believe, would make the project more viable in a near-term time frame.

Recommendation #28: We recommend that the College immediately begin soliciting developers.

Recommendation #29: We recommend that layout for the development be on a grid system and consistent with the existing layout and architecture of the town to ensure seamless incorporation of the development into the existing town.

Recommendation #30: We recommend that the Town work cooperatively with the College on all zoning issues to enable such a project, and, eventually, work cooperatively with a developer on all infrastructure, licensing, architectural, and permitting issues.

Recommendation #39: We recommend the College raze the current boathouse and build an iconic structure in its place.

Recommendation #40: Until such time as the College is able to afford building a new CES complex on the waterfront or at Stepne, we encourage the College to leave the land between the boat house and the armory as open and partially-publicly accessible land for Washington College students and the public. We view the land to be a connection of the waterfront starting at the foot of High Street and ending at the bridge over Radcliffe Creek. This new “park” could be the depository of art from the Sandbox project, the location of fairs and festivals, and the home for an amphitheater for concerts with the river as a backdrop, or the locational coda for the National Music Festival at Washington College. Fire pits and volleyball courts could entice more students into the downtown and more interaction with residents.

Recommendation #41: The tree line bordering Stepne that acts as wall that hides the river and physically signals the end of town, should be removed immediately.

Recommendation #42: The Town and College should immediately begin discussions on the rezoning of Stepne which we believe should be mixed use.

Recommendation #43: The College should issue an RFP for residential development on that part of Stepne closest to downtown and rails to trails specifically focused on a 55 and older community, but that other parts of the property be set aside for more moderately priced housing.

Recommendation #44: The College should consider donating a piece of property along the new extended Cross Street for a new police station if the Town finds such a location to be advantageous.

Recommendation #45: The College should donate an easement across Stepne for a new state road to tie into Quaker Neck beyond the armory and additional easements for the condominiums next to Wilmer Park and other access.

Recommendation #49: We recommend that the College reconsider the location and architecture of the proposed academic building on the waterfront to house the Center for Environment and Society, with consideration of some permanent open space for protected vistas as well as outdoor programmatic opportunities associated with the CES and other college programs.

Recommendation #50: We recommend that the College and Town consider a Conference Center Inn and revise the zoning for Stepne as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). We urge the College to then immediately issue an RFP for said development of a Conference Center Inn.

Recommendation #51: We recommend that the College seek counsel to determine if the armory can legally be replaced by another more suitable and efficient structure. If that is not possible, we recommend that the College consider either using the Armory for a future educational program initiative, or working with a developer to incorporate the Armory as part of a commercial development plan.

Recommendation #52: We recommend that the College entertain the possibility of taking an equity interest in an inn project to help improve the likelihood of its development. We also believe that a minor special fee dedicated to the Chestertown Foundation should be levied on inn guests.

Appendix 4.3

Recommendations for the Regional Arts Community and the Downtown Chestertown Association (DCA)

The following section lists the specific Task Force recommendations for actions that involve the regional arts community and the DCA, either solely or jointly.

Recommendation #1: To help our local schools we urge all Kent County employers, citizens, associations, non-profits and Town and County officials to embrace and support the Kent Forward initiative.

Recommendation #2: The Task Force, recognizing that perception is reality, believes the Town needs to embrace the business community more effectively. Inviting the business community to meet with the Council once a year would be a good idea. The next Mayor should be a champion for soliciting business to come to Chestertown and checking in often with the local businesses. We urge immediate consideration of a new streamlined process for planning, zoning, and historic review. Finally, we believe citizens appointed to these three boards should receive training.

Recommendation #5: The Town, with help from the DCA and the arts community, should develop a plan to place directional signage and historical markers in the Town and report back to the Council within 6 months on its proposed plan.

Recommendation #7: The Sultana Education Foundation should keep up the good work and continue to collaborate with the Town's businesses and other non-profit organizations to promote and enhance the annual Downrigging Weekend event and its contribution to the Town's economy.

Recommendation #8: We urge that the Kent County Arts Council and the County's Tourism Office work together to pinpoint marketing efforts that can draw more art-driven tourism and encourage more artists to locate to Chestertown. We also believe that the Arts Council, River Arts, and Washington College should consider ways that they can co-market content. Finally, we urge more careful scheduling of events (e.g., Weekend Open Studios conflicting with Downrigging Weekend.) We will also have specific thoughts later in this report on the public display of art.

Recommendation #9: The Task Force believes that integrating the College more into your businesses and offering appropriate student special pricing can increase traffic downtown from students and their parents. We also suggest giving new birth to the old tradition of having a welcome party for students in Fountain Park each year.

Recommendation #11: The Task Force believes the Association, as a group, should begin examining some evening hours as well as remaining open on Sunday. We recommend working with the Chestertown Arts Council on ways to have musicians, mimes, etc. on the streets during First Fridays (or every Friday!). We also recommend

the DCA reach out to the many landscapers and growers in the County and ask for donations for trees and plants to further beautify downtown. Flags, pennants, and color liven up any central district, and we encourage you not to be shy in showing your colors and flying your flags. Finally, we ask merchants to participate in recruiting others to expand their current businesses elsewhere into Chestertown. (i.e., The next time you are in Easton, Annapolis, Baltimore or wherever and you visit an establishment that might fit in Chestertown, seek out the owner and encourage them to consider Chestertown.)

Recommendation #12 for the Town and DCA: We recommend the Town, working with the DCA, consider closing High Street between Water St. and Lawyers Row (and possibly Cross St. between High and Cannon as well) on First Fridays to allow more of a “street party” atmosphere with entertainment. We recommend liberally allowing—even encouraging—al fresco dining outside restaurants and cafes.

Recommendations #14: The Mayor should appoint a small task force with representatives of the College, the Arts Council, the business community and others to brain-storm other festivals or “destination-type” events for the town with a focus on winter events to fill existing calendar gaps.

Recommendations #15 for the National Music Festival at Washington College: We feel it would be exciting to see more musicians on the streets playing their music.

Appendix 4.4

Recommendations for the Kent County Government

The following section lists the specific Task Force recommendations for actions that involve the Kent County Government, either solely or jointly.

Recommendation #1: To help our local schools we urge all Kent County employers, citizens, associations, non-profits and Town and County officials to embrace and support the Kent Forward initiative.

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Recommendation #16 for the County and Town: Examine potential sources of funding for extending the rail-trail. And, back to signage, letting visitors know we have a trail would be helpful.

Recommendation #17 for the County Office of Economic Development and Tourism: We recommend that the County consider assembling a group of entrepreneurial farmers to discuss the possibility of a marketing campaign that would target Kent County food products as well as agri-tourism, and "farm days".

Recommendation #21: In order to prevent run-off, we believe the Town and/or County should remove some parking spaces at the foot of High Street as well as at the foot of Cannon Street, and replace them with green space that can absorb water. We also believe that the marina area needs to be raised and sealed from the frequently invading river.

Recommendation #22 for the County: Provide increased resources for Economic Development and improve coordination between the County and Town. Adequately fund the tourism effort. Ensure that the occupancy tax is indeed going to economic development and tourism. Consider raising the occupancy tax from 5% to 7% (the State average) and dedicate the additional funds to development and tourism.

Recommendation #23: The Town, Kent County, and Washington College should jointly study and then institute new regional economic incentives and small business assistance programs. The possibilities include tax and fee relief; regulatory and zoning relief; financing assistance; assistance in structuring private/public partnerships, enterprise zones, and business incubators; improvements to high speed internet service; and small business development, planning, and training programs.

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Recommendation #46: Concurrent with discussions with the State on a new road, the Town and County should take steps to identify funding for transforming the existing S curve on Cross Street into a walking promenade.