



SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL AREA PLAN: A VISION & TOOLKIT FOR BRIDGE STREET



FINAL - JANUARY 3RD, 2019



HILL
STUDIO



ARNETT MULDROW



Cardno
Shaping the Future



TOWN OF
BEDFORD
VIRGINIA



SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL AREA PLAN

DEVELOPED BY HILL STUDIO FOR THE
TOWN OF BEDFORD, VA



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special “thank you” to all who participated in the School-to-School planning process. We appreciate your input and support.

TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor Robert Wandrei
Vice-Mayor Tim Black
Councilman Robert Carson
Councilman Stacey Hailey
Councilman Bruce Johannessen
Councilman Steve Rush
Councilman Bryan Schley
Town Manager Bart Warner

PLANNING COMMISSION

Lonne Bailey
Larry Brookshier
Frances Coles
Jason Horne
Councilman Steve Rush
Darren Shoen, Chairman
James Towner

STEERING COMMITTEE & ACTION TEAM MEMBERS

Fred Duis
Jenny Novalis
Kathy Graham
Denny Huff
Robert Carson
Libby Berry
Betty Gereau

STAKEHOLDERS & TOPIC CHAMPIONS

Andy Dooley
Kevin Willis
Jim Messier
John Messier
Bill Mosley
Len Gereau
Wyatt Woody
Ivan Greene
Kim Halterman
Thomas Messier
Laura Carey
Lennie Hutton
Mac Duis
Reid Wodicka
Gregg Zody
Andy Crawford
Mitchell Bond
Patrick Ellis
Rusty Mansel

ALL WHO ATTENDED “THE BIG MEETING”

PROJECT TEAM

Mary Zirkle
Economic Development Coordinator

CONSULTANTS

Cardno
Hill Studio
Arnett Muldrow

PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7	HISTORIC RESOURCES.....	35	CATALYST PROJECTS	65
A. Background		A. Historic Preservation Efforts		Depot Street Park	
B. Boundaries		B. Challenges		Downtown Square	
C. Existing Characteristics		C. Historic Preservation Strategies		Edmund Street Park & Recreation Area	
D. Redevelopment Potential		D. Goals			
E. Summary of Existing Goals and Policies		E. General Recommendations		GETTING STARTED.....	69
MARKET ASSESSMENT: SUMMARY.....	15	PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE.....	41	A. Implementation Strategies	
A. Downtown Strengths		A. Gathering Spaces		B. Implementation Matrix	
B. Downtown Challenges		B. Pocket Parks		C. Incentives & Financing	
C. Trade Area Definition		C. Trails and Pedestrian Connections		APPENDIX.....	73
D. Demographics Findings		D. Goals		A. Brownfields Inventory	
E. Residential Opportunity		E. General Recommendations		B. Market Analysis	
F. Retail Opportunity		A. Streetscape Plan		C. Community Event Summary	
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	21	TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION	49	D. Virginia Arts & Cultural Districts and Tourism Zones	
A. Kick-off Meeting		A. Streetscape Plan			
B. The Big Meeting		B. Transit			
C. Pop-Up Public Input Sessions		C. Parking			
D. Online Engagement		D. Goals			
VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES	27	E. General Recommendations			
Vision		ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	55		
Path To Success		A. Local Artisan Economy			
A. Guiding Planning Principles		B. Upper Story Housing and Storefronts			
Guiding Planning Principles		C. Marketing and Tourism			
URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK.....	29	D. Goals			
A. Aesthetics		E. General Recommendations			
B. Building & Site Design					
C. Outdoor Dining and Retail					
D. Goals					
E. General Recommendations					

PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION

The School-to-School Area Plan is a guide for future development along the Bridge Street corridor. The plan encompasses three downtown areas, each with its unique characteristics: North Bridge Street, Central Business District, and South Bridge Street.

This plan is [to be] adopted as a supplement to the Bedford Comprehensive Plan and as such reinforces and extends the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Future development initiatives and improvements to the public realm within the boundaries defined in this plan must be consistent with both the Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan and this School-to-School Area Plan.



Character Areas of Downtown Bedford along Bridge Street Corridor

A. BACKGROUND

The Bridge Street Area Plan began with a conversation among members of the Wharton Memorial Foundation, which was in the process of re-envisioning the purpose and plan of the historic Wharton Memorial Garden property on North Bridge Street. One of the goals of their expanded purpose in planning was to facilitate cooperation among the surrounding businesses, non-profits and other stakeholders of the North Bridge Street area in order to ensure the vitality of the area for years to come. These members organized a meeting to introduce the various stakeholders to each other and start the visioning process for the future of the historic corridor. The rallying sentiment was: “Together we can accomplish great things, support one another, and come up with ways to work cooperatively toward a shared vision for this vital part of our community.”

As the stakeholders talked, they recognized the scope and importance of Bridge Street in the community was larger than just the north end. They discussed the significance of the historic Susie G. Gibson High School as the other anchor of the corridor. This led to an expansion of the conversation to include South Bridge Street between the two anchor school areas.

The Town of Bedford supported this grass-roots effort through a Brownfields Assessment Grant by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which provides communities with funding to identify, assess, clean up, and redevelop underutilized properties. The grant provided resources needed for planning and design services, as well as public outreach efforts by the community in planning with Hill Studio. Funds for Bridge Street were expected to focus on identifying sites that have a negative perception and can limit their potential to be productive again.

“ Together we can accomplish great things, support one another, and come up with ways to work cooperatively toward a shared vision for this vital part of our community.



The “Old Yellow” building anchors Bridge Street on the north end



The Susie G. Gibson School anchors Bridge Street on the south end

B. BOUNDARIES

The School-to-School Area Plan applies to sections of downtown shown in the map. The project boundary includes blocks east and west of the entire Bridge Street corridor -from the Susie G. Gibson School (Bedford Science and Technology Center) on the south end, to the former Middle School and Old Yellow (redevelopment site) to the north.

Bridge Street is the commercial, civic, and cultural center of the town and bisects a residential neighborhood on the south end. Historically, the project area was also home to important educational institutions for the whole County such as the Bedford Training School, Susie G. Gibson School, and the former Public (Old Yellow) and Bedford Middle Schools. Within its boundaries are classic historic buildings, arts and culture institutions, dining and shopping destinations, artisan businesses, a variety of residential properties, and municipal facilities, including the Bedford Courthouse.

The Bridge Street corridor and downtown Bedford stand among Virginia's best small towns as a historic and culturally distinct place.



Map School-to-School Study Area

C. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

NORTH BRIDGE STREET

The north end of Bridge Street lies within the Downtown National Historic Register District and extends from the intersection of Longwood Avenue and Peaks Street to the railroad tracks. This area of downtown is characterized by wide streets with commercial and low density residential land uses. In addition to several artisan businesses, prominent cultural and historic resources include: the Bedford Central Library, Avenel House, Wharton Garden, Wharton House, and the Bower Center for the Arts.

The upcoming redevelopment of the former Bedford Middle School and Old Yellow buildings will have a significant impact on North Bridge Street. Increased traffic patterns and business activity resulting from new residential units and a boutique hotel create opportunities for future improvements that promote walkability and connectivity to the Central Business District.



North Bridge Street

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Central Business District is the heart of the town, extending from the Bridge Street bridge down to the Vista Foods site at the corner of Washington Street and South Bridge Street. The district includes civic and cultural facilities such as the Bedford Courthouse, Social Services building, and the Bedford Museum and Genealogical Library, as well as numerous restaurants and artisan businesses.

Sections of the corridor, between Washington and Depot Streets, are characterized by narrow sidewalks and off-street parking on one side of the road. Two and three-story buildings line the corridor, housing commercial uses on the ground level and units on the second floor. However, many of these upper units remain vacant.

Several storefronts along Bridge Street and adjacent streets would benefit from façade improvements and business attraction strategies to increase pedestrian activity. For others, investment and revitalization efforts should focus on facilitating the development of upper-story housing. A holistic approach will increase the economic vitality of downtown and make the Bridge Street corridor a regional destination.



Central Business District

SOUTH BRIDGE STREET

South Bridge Street is a low-density neighborhood characterized primarily by workforce single family units and manufacturing land uses remnant from Bedford's industrial times. While this section of the corridor lays outside the boundary of the National Historic District, the neighborhood is home to architecturally significant structures relevant to Bedford's education history and the town's African American heritage. Three important resources are discussed in this plan: the Bedford Training School, the Susie G. Gibson School, and Pogue Park.

Historically, residents living in this area have felt socially and physically disconnected from the downtown area. Feedback from public meetings outlined the need for a community anchor in the neighborhood, as well as improvements that promote inclusivity and connectivity to the Central Business District and North Bridge Street area.

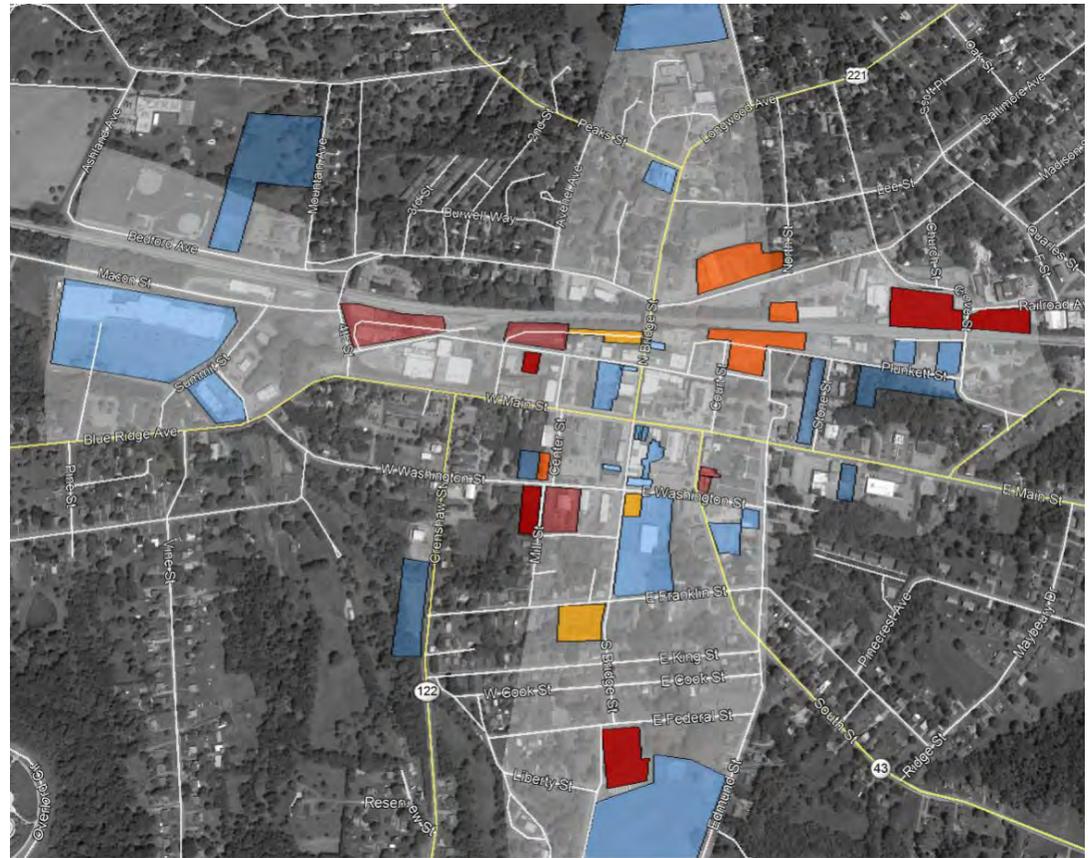


South Bridge Street

D. REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

A key component of the School-to-School Area plan was the identification of brownfields. Brownfields are vacant or underutilized sites with a perceived presence of pollutants or hazardous materials that prevent them from being developed to their full potential. These properties also contribute to urban blight and often become an obstacle to revitalization efforts.

As part of the project’s planning process, members of the steering committee put together a map identifying the location of potential brownfields, vacant lots, and underutilized properties. These sites were later ranked as having high or low redevelopment opportunity based on perceived levels of contamination, ownership status, possible acquisition, and proximity to key destinations. The map below illustrates the ranking of “opportunity sites” which provided a guide for future location of catalyst projects and planning initiatives. More information regarding these sites is included in the Appendix section of this report.



Map -Priority Ranking of Opportunity Sites

- 1 Highest
- 2 High
- 3 Low
- 4 Lowest
- Not Ranked

WHAT IS A BROWNFIELD SITE?

Refers to “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties protects the environment, reduces blight, and takes development pressures off greenspaces and working lands.”

<https://www.epa.gov>

E. SUMMARY OF EXISTING GOALS AND POLICIES

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land use policies of the Planning Commission and Town Council are outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, with the most recent update adopted in 2017. Overarching themes include connecting citizens in their community, and providing responsive and responsible government to its residents.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies the need for the development of focused planning initiatives, two of which lay within the boundary of the Bridge Street Area Plan:

- **West Main Street / Blue Ridge Avenue** focuses on the area bordered by the railroad, Fourth Street and the 460 Business Route. Prominent buildings include the Westgate and 6 C's shopping centers which are going through a transition in land use. The expectation for this section of downtown is to function as an employment center and hub for retail activity.
- **South Bridge Street Corridor** focuses on sections between Main Street and the Bedford Science and Technology Center (also known as the Susie G. Gibson School). South Bridge Street features a number of public properties currently owned and operated by Bedford County and Bedford County Public Schools. The driver behind this plan is the need for a long-term vision for County-owned properties, as well as the aesthetic improvement of the corridor which connects downtown to a residential neighborhood.

In addition to land use, the Comprehensive Plan provides recommendations for street design, including:

- Streets should be safe and economical for motorists and non-motorists alike, and be designed to reduce conflict between different types of users. Sidewalks should generally be wider to accommodate safe passage, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and promote complementary uses of public space (such as seating and tables within commercial areas).
- Retrofitting of North Bridge Street between Main Street and the railroad could serve as a pilot project for this kind of design philosophy. If current on street parking were eliminated, sidewalks in this area could be expanded to allow for safer passage of pedestrians as well as potential use of public space for outdoor seating. The relative loss of parking spaces in this corridor could be effectively abated by implementing Objective 15-CF-6 identified below.

Specific Land Use (LU), Transportation (T), and Community Facilities (CF) objectives within the Comprehensive Plan related to this effort include:

- 6-LU-4: Undertake development of a small area plan focusing on the South Bridge Street corridor from the intersection with Main Street southward to the Bedford Science and Technology Center.
- 15-T-5: Develop and implement redesign of North Bridge Street between Main Street and the railroad.

- 15-CF-6: Construct a three-story parking deck on the Town-owned property at Market Square. This structure should be designed to include an exterior building façade that matches current Centertown architecture, an open top (creating a fourth level of parking), and a physical connection to provide joint access to the upper floors of the buildings on adjacent lots.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The *Bedford Connections* study completed in 2014 by Aaron Bond and Zach Klaas provided a good reference to initiate the visioning process for the Bridge Street Area Plan. The study proposes a number of design interventions that allow areas in downtown to be developed gradually as part of a highly engaging community process. These interventions are presented as mid to low-cost projects and include:

- Vista Park at the corner of Bridge Street and Franklin Street
- Park furniture
- Urban farming furniture
- Recycled tire playground
- Pathway with markers across the proposed Vista Park
- Flexible space and community mural behind the existing buildings on the park site

CURRENT PLANNING INITIATIVES

A number of current initiatives are underway that meet the vision of the Comprehensive Plan and align with the objectives of the Bridge Street Plan.

- The Town is working with Region 2000 to develop a **Bike and Pedestrian Plan** that will create a system of multi-use paths as part of a greenway program. This plan is expected to be complete by spring 2019.
- Town Council has undertaken a phased **Streetscape and Connectivity Plan** to connect the Bedford Welcome Center and D-Day Memorial (at the west end of U.S Route 460) with the Central Business District along Burks Hill Road / Crenshaw Street. The intent is to create a visual link between the Welcome Center and downtown, as well as a physical link through sidewalk improvements. The visual connection is expected to integrate public art.
- The Town has identified a site on Plunkett Street for the construction of the **Passenger Rail Stop** project. The completed feasibility study proposes a platform on the same location as the historical depot. A citizen-led group called Bedford-Franklin Regional Rail Initiative has undertaken the study and is working to meet requirements defined by the Virginia Department of Rail and Transportation.

2

MARKET ASSESSMENT: SUMMARY

This section presents brief findings of a multifaceted market analysis for Bedford. The assessment is part of the larger School to School plan, and defines economic opportunity that is relevant to the project area as well as the greater Bedford region. The study includes:

- A demographic profile of Bedford and surrounding area.
- A commercial market assessment that examines retail demand with Bedford's local trade areas.
- A residential market assessment that looks at current housing trends to determine opportunities for residential growth in Bedford and downtown.
- A market segmentation study that analyzes the makeup of Bedford's local trade areas in order to determine consumer needs and target markets.

The findings of the market analysis were used as a basis for economic development and recruitment strategies found in the implementation section of this report. A summary of the market analysis is provided on the following pages. Additional detail can be found in the market analysis report located in the appendix.



A. DOWNTOWN STRENGTHS

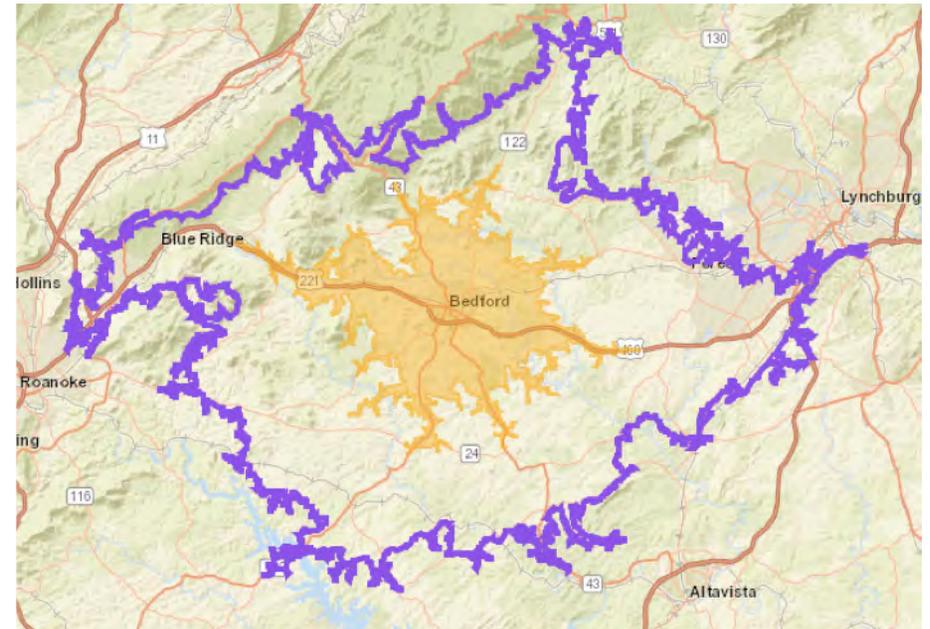
- Bedford has a historic downtown with a community focus on retaining and preserving its historic character.
- There has been significant new investment with projects like Beale’s Brewery and Bedford Lofts.
- This interest in downtown Bedford continues with the Bedford Middle School mixed-use project that can be a catalyst for the north end of Bridge Street.
- In addition, downtown Bedford has unique destination businesses such as Blue Ridge Overland Gear, SmallTown Stitchin’, and a variety of quality restaurants.
- With the National D-Day Memorial, Smith Mountain Lake, Artisan and Wine Trails, and others, Bedford has a strong visitor market.

B. DOWNTOWN CHALLENGES

- Bedford is the seat of a rural county but sees significant competition with nearby urban markets of Roanoke and Lynchburg, both of which are just a short drive away.
- Like other small towns, there is an inconsistent market that is hard to predict. Rental rates can vary widely and upfit challenges and property ownership often complicate new investment.
- Communities nationwide are seeing retail struggle with the growth of online retailing and Bedford is no different. By the same token, services and restaurants, as well as experiential retail are doing well.
- Bedford and its businesses currently have limited resources with grants, start-up financing, etc.
- Several key stakeholders mentioned that building inspections and codes create a challenge in downtown, particularly when reinvesting in historic properties.

C. TRADE AREA DEFINITION

Bedford lies halfway between two metro areas, just under 30 miles from both Roanoke and Lynchburg. With this in mind, trade areas for this analysis were based upon input from local developers and businesses. For the purposes of this analysis, Bedford’s primary trade area (PTA) is defined as a 15-minute drive time (shown in orange) and the secondary trade area (STA) is defined as a 30-minute drive time (shown in purple). In addition to the trade areas, data was also collected for the Town of Bedford, Bedford County, Lynchburg MSA, and Roanoke MSA.



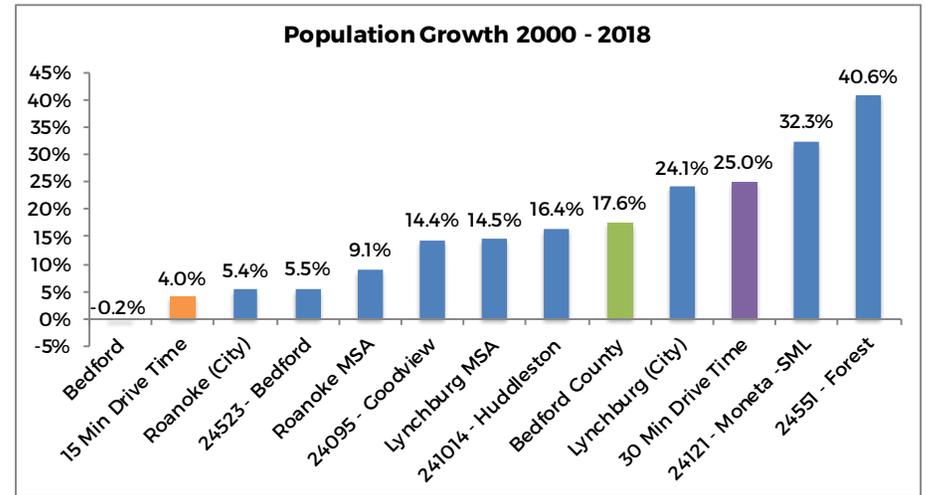
Primary Trade Area (orange) and Secondary Trade Area (purple)

D. DEMOGRAPHICS FINDINGS

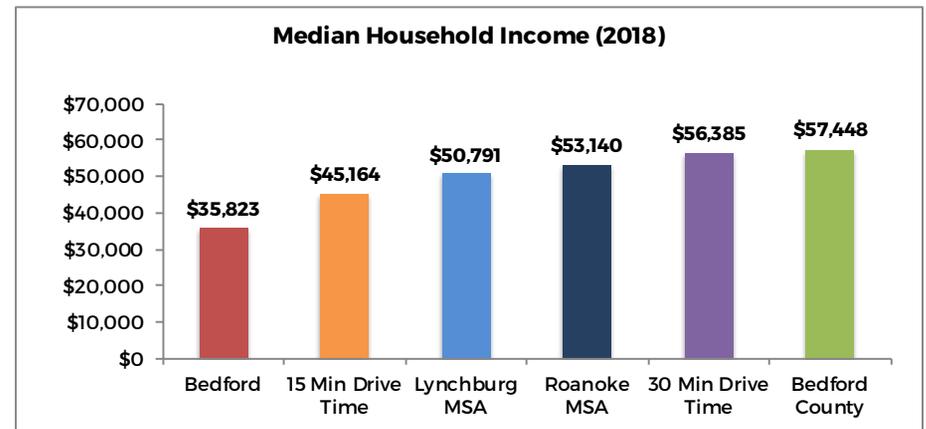
At 6,284 people in 2018, Bedford has seen a marginal population growth of 1% since 2010. The PTA has grown by 4% and the STA by 25% in the same time period. Five-year projections show continued modest growth in the Town and its trade areas.

The median household income in Bedford (\$35,823) in 2018 is on the lower end of the region, while the secondary trade area (\$56,385) and Bedford County (\$57,448) are in the upper ranges. Forest (\$69,594) and Moneta (\$58,533) zip codes have the highest incomes.

Overall, Bedford serves a regional market of about 14,538 (PTA population) and 97,185 (STA population). Key geographic markets for Bedford include the Forest area portion of the county, as well as the Lake zip codes. These areas are growing more rapidly and have higher overall incomes.



Regional population growth 2000-2010 (Source: Claritas)

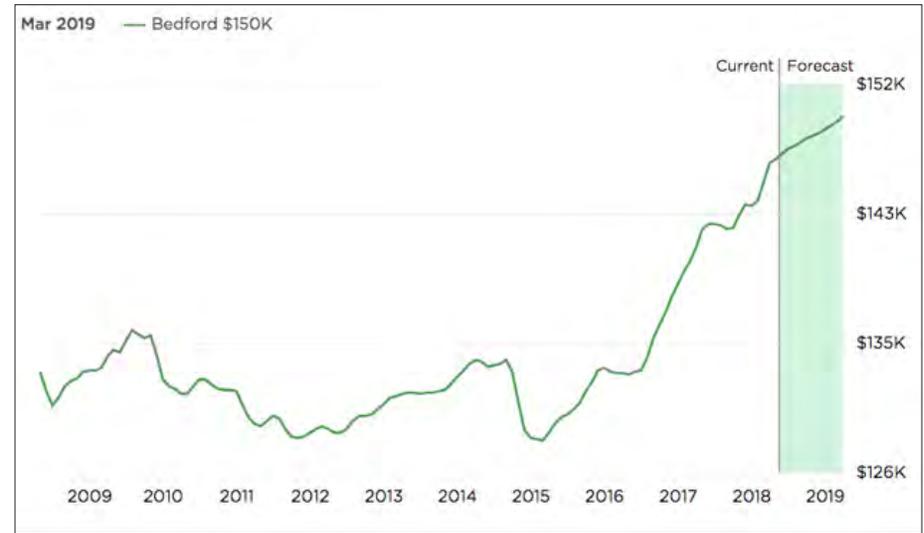


Regional Incomes 2018 (Source: Claritas)

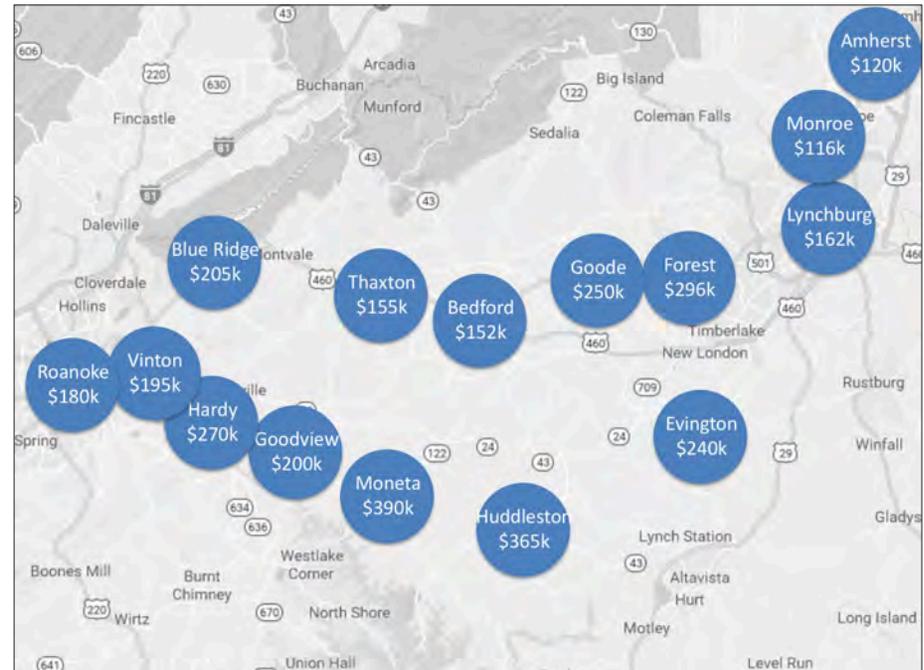
E. RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY

Bedford exists in a stable residential market both with sales activity and new investment. The town is lagging the region in owner-occupied housing value at \$160,201, yet the STA is seeing more growth and higher values (\$191,700). Overall, Bedford’s housing market is improving, with higher market values, increasing sales prices, and decreasing days on market.

There is an opportunity for Bedford to continue investment in adaptive reuse, following local examples of Bedford Lofts and Bedford Middle School. Residential market indicators show potential for for-sale housing in the area in the range of \$175,000 to \$300,000 and for-rent in the range of \$750-\$1,200/month. In order to accommodate some of this demand in downtown, Bedford can target the market segments choosing to live in the secondary trade area (Forest, Huddleston, Moneta zips) by growing businesses, active uses, and housing options to meet that market.



Median Home Values in Bedford (Source: Zillow)



Median Listing Price in Region (Source: Realtor.com)

F. RETAIL OPPORTUNITY

A retail leakage analysis was performed on the town of Bedford, as well as the 15-minute primary trade area and 30-minute secondary trade area. This study will examine retail trade patterns and identify potential opportunities for retail growth based on demand in the market.

“Retail Leakage” refers to the difference between the retail expenditures by residents living in an area and the retail sales produced by the stores located in the same area. If consumer expenditures in an area are higher than retail sales in the same area, then the area is said to be “leaking.” Conversely, if retail sales in an area are higher than consumer expenditures, the area is said to be “gaining.” The retail leakage analysis revealed:

- Stores in Bedford’s primary trade area sold \$287 million in merchandise in the previous year. Consumers living in Bedford’s primary trade area spent \$230 million in merchandise during the same time period. Therefore, Bedford’s primary trade area gained \$57 million in sales last year.
- Bedford’s secondary trade area (less the PTA) had \$1.8 billion in sales and \$1.4 billion in consumer expenditures, resulting in a \$395 million gain.
- The combined trade area gained \$452 million.
- The Town of Bedford also gained by about \$60 million during this same time period.

The retail leakage analysis indicates that Bedford is a retail magnet pulling sales from outside of the town limits and local trade areas. This is due to a number of reasons, most importantly that it is a retail center that serves a larger rural market. Other reasons for gain include the fact that Bedford has a healthy visitor market that drives sales in destination businesses such as restaurants and specialty retailers. While the trade areas are experiencing gain overall, there are a number of categories that show opportunity for growth based on demand.



Retail Leakage in Select Categories in the 15-minute Trade Area
(Source: Arnett Muldrow, Claritas)

Similarly, a retail shares study was conducted to determine categories in which the Bedford market was performing well as benchmarked by the larger metropolitan region. These sectors which show opportunity to grow clusters include categories such as boat dealers, home centers, and lawn/garden supplies. Each of these categories indicate Bedford may be serving a Smith Mountain Lake recreational market, as well as the household markets and perhaps even home building in the growing secondary trade area. While these categories are not likely to locate downtown, full-service restaurants also showed potential to grow the dining cluster.

Retail leakage translates to an immediate opportunity to target new business. For this analysis, a capture scenario was used whereby a reasonable portion of the primary and secondary trade area leakage could be accommodated downtown. The conservative scenario estimates a capture of 20% of primary trade area leakage, and 10% of secondary trade area leakage. This analysis suggests a potential capture in Bedford of approximately 73,000 square feet of new retail. Key opportunities in select retail categories are shown in the chart below, many of which could be accommodated in downtown.

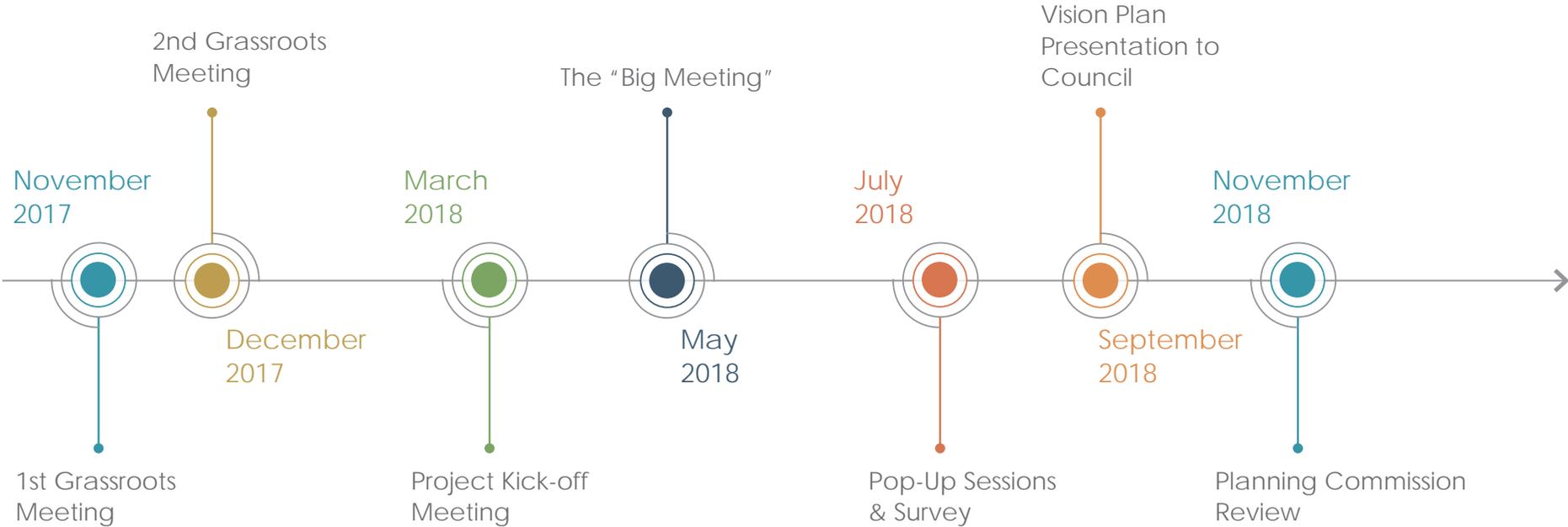
	20% of PTA Outflow	10% of STA Outflow	Potential Capture	Calculated Capture
Selected Retail Categories Below				73,180
Furniture Stores	372,754	601,995	974,749	6,872
Home Furnishing Stores	353,652	(7,587)	346,065	2,063
Household Appliances Stores	122,440	381,682	504,121	2,054
Electronics Stores	467,082	675,863	1,142,945	5,517
Grocery Stores	1,295,435	1,282,470	2,577,905	6,934
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	950,610	2,157,251	3,107,861	18,881
Shoe Stores	245,389	548,842	794,231	5,001
Jewelry Stores	(107,469)	210,540	103,071	391
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	14,548	43,468	58,015	292
Sporting Goods Stores	296,664	460,826	757,489	4,936
Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores	26,574	2,991	29,565	395
Florists	47,815	114,276	162,091	1,082
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	110,171	280,330	390,502	2,317
Foodservice and Drinking Places	(555,324)	2,194,460	1,639,136	8,129
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages	201,560	530,904	732,464	8,317

Potential Capture Scenario for Bedford
(Source: Arnett Muldrow, Claritas)

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From the onset of the School-to-School project, the Town and steering committee set a framework for a participatory and fully transparent community engagement process. In addition to project management meetings and presentations to local officials, unique events such as the “Big Meeting” community workshop and pop-up sessions were held so that a diverse cross-section of the public could participate in the planning process. For those who were not able to participate in person, online engagement tools allowed residents to weigh in on a preliminary development concept plan and draft planning principles.

The project officially kicked-off with a meeting in March 2018 led by the consultant team from Hill Studio. However, the visioning process started months prior through a grass-root effort by businesses, non-profits, and residents that saw the upcoming Bedford Middle School Campus project as a catalyst for revitalization and future development.



Planning Process Timeline

A. KICK-OFF MEETING

Motivated citizens met for the first time on November 3, 2017. The gathering included a total of twelve stakeholders from the Bedford Public Library, the Friends of the Library, the Bedford Community Health Foundation, the Bower Center, the Historical Society, the Town of Bedford, Bedford County Administration, and the Wharton Garden Foundation. Discussions focused on ways to keep the Bridge Street corridor prosperous, and how businesses could work together via shared programs.

The initial group expanded as interest in the project grew among agencies, government officials, business owners, and others with experience or interest in neighborhood planning. The second community meeting was held December 8, 2017 with a total of 25 attendees. David Hill, from Hill Studio, was invited to give stakeholders insight into how the planning process works and discussed examples of projects that centered on the concept of “revitalization through the arts”.

As Town officials continued efforts on the Bedford Middle School Campus project, they discovered that funding from an existing EPA Brownfields grant (secured to clean the school site) could be used for community planning initiatives. The available funds led to the inclusion of other areas along Bridge Street into the initial scope of the project; including the BSTC or Susie G. Gibson School, and Edmund Street Park. As the administrators of the grant, it was also decided that the Town would facilitate the remaining phases of the planning process.

March 20, 2018 marked the official launch of the School-to-School planning process. The kick-off event took place at the Bedford Public Library with the consultant team and project steering committee. Conversations during this meeting led to the expansion of the initial project boundary to include underutilized properties along the railroad tracks.

An action team structure was also established at the kick-off meeting. Action teams grouped members based on specific themes; including: public spaces and recreation / health / transportation, business / economic development / commerce, historic / arts and cultural resources / tourism, education, and housing / community.

Each team was tasked with identifying goals within their topic group related to the revitalization and/or re-visioning of the Bridge Street corridor. Team members also became responsible for reaching out to key stakeholder groups and individuals with experience or interest in their topic group.

Action teams met individually over a period of two months to lay out goals for what input they wanted to foster and what outcomes they hoped to see. Outcomes of these conversations became the framework for the idea generation exercise at the community workshop on May 30th, 2018.

B. THE BIG MEETING

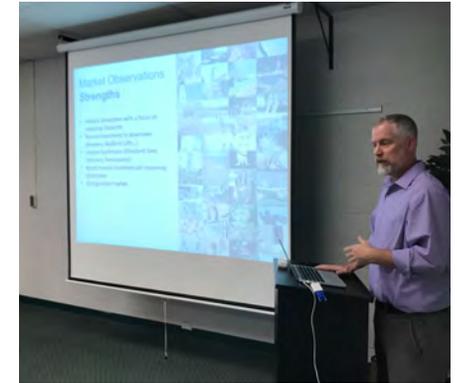
On Wednesday May 30th, the consultant team hosted a day-long workshop at the Susie G. Gibson School (BSTC). The workshop activities for that day included a market analysis presentation by the consultant team, a goal prioritization session with action teams, and an idea generation exercise with the entire community.

MARKET ANALYSIS PRESENTATION

On Wednesday afternoon, subconsultant Arnett Muldrow gave a presentation to the steering committee on a market analysis performed for Bedford and the study area. The presentation provided an overview of the town's demographic composition and market segmentation; as well as key findings and opportunities from a commercial and residential assessment.

GOAL PRIORITIZATION

Following the presentation, action teams participated in a group exercise to help recognize what matters most to them. Using a target diagram, participants ranked their team's goals in order of importance. The population segmentation identified in the market analysis, along with results from the target diagram exercise, established the framework for a hands-on idea generation activity with the entire community that evening.



Market Analysis Presentation by Sub-Consultant Arnett Muldrow



Goal Prioritization exercise with Steering Committee & Hill Studio Team

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP: IDEA GENERATION

As participants of the community workshop signed-in, they were assigned to one of four tables. Each table was provided with a matrix board that listed Bedford's population groups on the first column. Each table was then provided with a sequence of questions related to quality of life topics; such as mobility, connectivity, entertainment, health, design, economic development, and education. Participants were asked to respond to these questions for each of the population groups in their matrix. The goal of the exercise was for community members to get a sense of how other people experience their town and empathize with their neighbors and visitors.

Once this exercise was complete, each table was asked to use ideas from their matrix to describe or illustrate the ideal downtown Bedford; one that met the needs of all population groups in their community. At the end of the workshop, a representative from each table presented their ideas and concepts.

Interaction among participants generated a constructive conversation regarding the future of Bridge Street and downtown Bedford. Shared community wants and needs were later translated into a set of draft principles that guided the planning process and served as the foundation for proposed initiatives and recommendation of the plan. See the Appendix section for an outline summary of identified wants and needs.

Project ideas crafted by the community during the workshop also informed the design of a preliminary vision future development within the project area. The concept plan illustrated potential uses for vacant / underutilized sites, circulation alternatives, and proposed locations of catalyst projects.



Close to 100 residents attended the Idea Generation Session



DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The Bridge Street corridor has a distinct man-made and natural environment that presents the Bedford community with both challenges and opportunities for future growth. With the goal of establishing a framework for initiatives in the study area, this concept evaluates circulation to and within the downtown area, as well as potential uses for vacant and underutilized sites near the Bridge Street corridor.

In response to ideas generated at the community meeting held on May 30th, this concept also studies locations for catalyst projects with the potential to spark revitalization and encourage private development. Some of the potential projects illustrated in this concept include:

- Redesign of the Farmers Market into an active and engaging public space.
- A multi-purpose park / square at the Vista Foods parking lot.
- Two multi-use trail loops for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel safely around Downtown.
- Brownfield-to-greenspace project near the train tracks.
- Transit loops that connect residents and visitors to important destinations.
- Streetscape improvements to enhance appeal and connectivity on Bridge St. and Depot St.
- Improvements to the Edmund St. Park Recreation Area
- Small scale retail opportunity near the proposed Greenway
- Mixed-use development and streetscape improvements along Washington St.

Legend

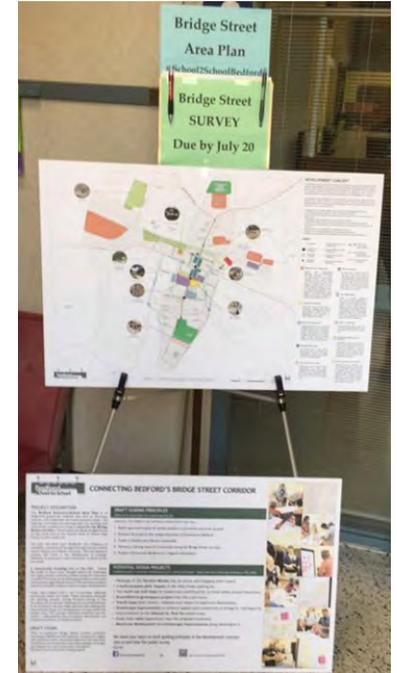
- Study Area
 - Proposed Multi-Use Path (West Loop)
 - Proposed Multi-Use Path (East Loop)
 - Proposed Transit Route (Weekdays)
 - Proposed Transit Route (Weekend)
 - Streetscape Improvement (Urban Center)
 - Streetscape Improvement (Residential Area)
 - Proposed Road Extension
 - Redevelopment Opportunity
 - Infill Development
 - Active Recreation
 - Community Gathering
 - Mid-Density Residential
 - Housing (Upper Story)
 - Small Commercial / Retail
 - Public / Institutional
 - Greenway, Playground, and Dog Park
 - Urban Greening Improvements
- Vacant and underutilized buildings can be transformed into new commercial / mixed-use development of various sizes. Potential projects might include a Conference Center with retail shops at Woolen Mills site, a satellite campus location for YCCC at the Westgate Shopping Center, or a small hotel with shops at the intersection of Washington St. and Bridge St. This type of effort might require more action on behalf of the town to incentivize projects.
- As these sites become available, the town might focus efforts in promoting long-term development of comprehensive, based-on-current and future demand, redevelopment projects could include mixed-use residential buildings with ground-floor retail and a parking garage with shops at street level.
- Areas for active recreational uses are already established or proposed as part of future projects (fields north of the Bedford Middle School). Efforts should focus on improving what's already available. An example project might include reprogramming and redesigning Edmund St. Park to better utilize the school bus garage and provide needed amenities / programs.
- Underutilized sites near residential neighborhoods can be designated as higher-density areas to facilitate future construction of affordable housing while providing a better transition into Downtown. Examples might include townhouses and detached 1-story and 2-story homes.
- On central blocks, Town efforts should prioritize on assisting and encouraging owners to develop residential units on second and third floors of existing buildings.
- Vacant sites near amenities create opportunities for small retail development projects. An example includes a cafe / bicycle rental shop and other greenway-related retail uses close to one of the proposed loops.
- Improving on-site conditions can have significant impact on the look / feel of Bridge St. Enhancements on parking lots should include perimeter landscaping, vegetated parking islands, sidewalks, on-site crosswalks, and consistent lanes. Additional improvements on vacant sites might also include pocket parks and green alleysways.

School-to-School Concept Development Plan

C. POP-UP PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS

A series of pop-up events were hosted from July 7-16. The purpose of these sessions was to unveil the concept development plan, and get feedback from the community regarding the plan and draft guiding principles. A total of eight sessions took place at locations and events around downtown; including Bedford Farmers Market, Vista Foods, former Bedford Middle School, Bedford Public Library, Bower Center for the Arts, Second Fridays, Bedford Welcome Center, and the Municipal Building.

Public input was collected through an online survey that was also available in a printed version at pop-up site locations. The survey asked participants to rank proposed planning principles by how relevant they were to them; identify the strengths and weaknesses of the concept plan; and select the top-three projects to be explored further. A total of 64 community members participated in the survey; providing important qualitative data for the development of the final plan. Results from the survey are summarized in the Appendix section of this report.



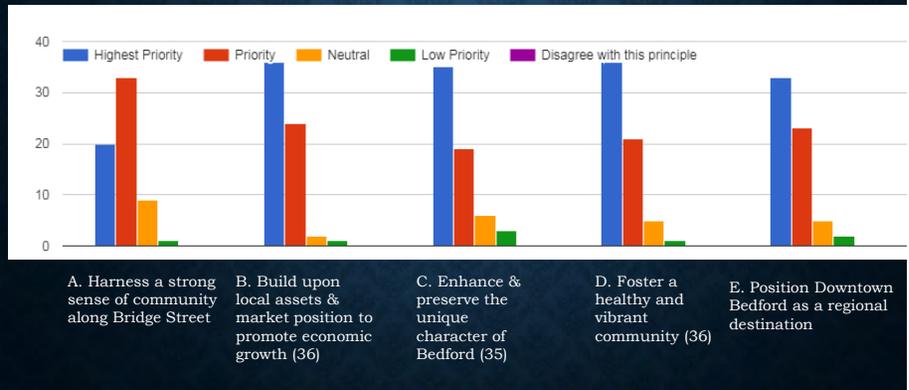
Pop-Up Public Input Session Throughout Town

D. ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

A project Facebook page was set in place to supplement public outreach efforts. Steering committee members used this platform to provide the community with updates on the School-to-School effort, advertise events related to the project, and keep the conversation going.

BEDFORD SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL: 63 RESPONDANTS

There are five principles that came out of the work. Please review each one below and consider how the principle relates to your vision for the project area. You can mark if it rates as a priority or mark that you disagree with it: "I envision a successful School-to-School Area Plan that will..."



Community Survey Allowed Participants to Prioritize Guiding Principles

4.

VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PATH TO SUCCESS

The Bedford School-to-School Area Plan is an integrated grassroots initiative that aims to showcase, enhance, and rediscover the town's greatest assets. The plan builds upon Bedford's rich traditions of education, architectural heritage, thriving arts and culture, natural beauty, and a vibrant economy. Key strategies and catalyst projects are proposed along the Bridge Street corridor – from the historic Bedford High School, on the north end, to the historic Susie G. Gibson High School on the south end - to promote a bustling Downtown community.



VISION

“ THE NEW BRIDGE STREET POSITIONS DOWNTOWN BEDFORD AS THE KEYSTONE NUCLEUS OF A REGION WITH SIGNIFICANT VISITOR ATTRACTIONS BALANCED WITH ATTRACTIVE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL AREAS WHERE PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES LIVE, WORK, SHOP, LEARN, AND GATHER ”



GUIDING PLANNING PRINCIPLES

1. Foster a healthy and vibrant community
2. Build upon local assets and market position to promote economic growth
3. Enhance and preserve the unique character of downtown
4. Position Bridge Street and downtown Bedford as a regional destination
5. Harness a strong sense of community

5. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

A well-designed public realm attracts people and makes them want to spend more time in a place. Enhancing the public realm with public art, attractive trees, bike infrastructure, street furniture, and gathering places will create an inviting environment for residents and visitors seeking a more urban and walkable experience.

The strategies described in this section provide a framework to enhance the public realm along Bridge Street, increase pedestrian traffic, create a sense of community, and foster a safer environment in downtown

A. AESTHETICS

STREET FURNITURE

While some tables, chairs, and waste bins can be found at designated public areas; such as Centertown Plaza and the Farmers Market, there is a noticeable lack of street furniture along Bridge Street and the downtown area. Coordinated efforts should add and improve upon current furniture, based on a design palette.



Existing Street Furniture at Centertown Plaza

STREET ART

Public art complements a place, making it more lively and interesting. Current public art pieces along Bridge Street include murals and sculptures. More attention should be paid to existing and future public art.



Branded City Bench in Baltimore, MD

One innovative way to make downtown Bedford more appealing is to incorporate art into its infrastructure. Examples of this approach include: artistic bike racks, bus stop shelters, and street furniture, as well as custom design street patterns. Bedford artisans could collaborate with the Town on a “public art in infrastructure” program that will connect artists, material suppliers, BSTC students, and other businesses for specific projects.



Bike Rack as Public Art in Danville, VA

TREES AND URBAN GREENING

Public input revealed the need and desire from the community to increase the number of trees on Bridge Street. Expanding the tree canopy and landscaped areas in downtown can render significant economic, social, and environmental benefits. Such benefits include: increased property values, improved water and air quality, and reduced crime, to name a few.

Bedford should adopt specific landscape standards for the commercial district, with emphasis on Bridge Street as an important arterial street. Once in place, all new developments and redevelopment projects should be encouraged to adhere to these new standards. Existing owners should also be encouraged to upgrade landscaping and tree planting through a program of full or partial cost subsidization. Examples could include a Green and Screen Parking Lots program and a Street Tree Planting program.

LIGHTING

A well-lit Bridge Street will invite people and provide a sense of security for a growing nightlife in Downtown Bedford. Focusing attention on efficiency of light, while still respecting the unique character of the corridor is a priority. A holistic lighting strategy will need to include pedestrian-scale fixtures that are compatible with existing fixtures of the Bridge Street corridor.



Increased Tree Canopy and Streetscape Improvements on South Bridge Street



Street Light Style along Main Street

B. BUILDING & SITE DESIGN

Design assistance was previously available through a Main Street architect that advised on and encouraged quality improvements to properties and public spaces. In light of the change in Main Street designation, Bedford should explore other alternatives to enhance and preserve the unique character of Centertown and the Central Business District.

DESIGN STANDARDS

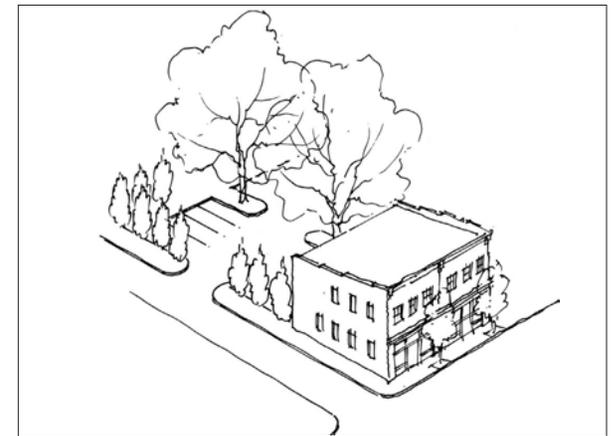
Design standards are policies, details, and concepts used to guide development and improvement projects in a locality. They create the basis for visual character within neighborhoods and districts with an emphasis on preserving and exhibiting the historic and cultural heritage of the area.

Guidelines are not regulatory tools but voluntary standards intended to promote well-designed projects and to improve people's attitudes toward the aesthetics of a place, as well as to set a framework for building design.

Depending on the purpose and type of the design standards, criteria might be set in place to guide the appropriate use, size, and design of the following components:

- Building Entry
- Clear Glass
- Façade Coverage
- Balconies
- Materials
- Windows
- Roofs
- Mechanical Equipment
- Building Height
- Parking Areas
- Signage

A potential approach for the implementation of design standards in downtown Bedford is discussed in the Historic Resources chapter.



Design standards can help guide appropriate additions to existing buildings as well as the location and screening of parking lots

C. OUTDOOR DINING AND RETAIL

Increased outdoor dining along Bridge Street will create a more social atmosphere where people congregate, bringing more visitors to Centertown to eat and shop at nearby businesses. Allowing for businesses to provide outdoor dining and retail will result in economic growth through increased pedestrian activity.

Current street and sidewalk widths along Bridge Street restrict opportunities for outdoor dining and retail, as well as the installation of street furniture, trees, and plantings. Below are some changes that could take place along Bridge Street between Depot and Washington Street to provide more opportunities for gathering spaces.



PARKLETS

Parklets are parking spaces that have been transformed into public areas. They can incorporate a variety of urban design elements to create temporary or permanent community space. Some of these elements include street furniture, plantings, and bike racks.

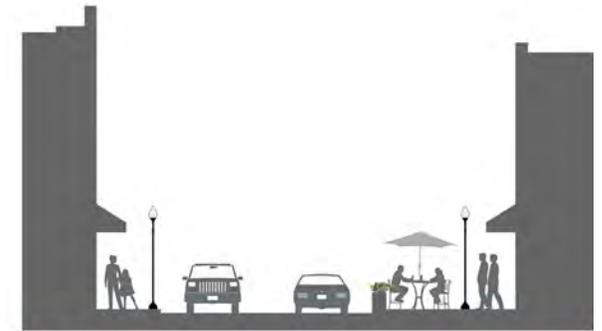
Parklets are relatively low-cost urban interventions that can help accommodate unmet demand of public spaces along Bridge Street. A pilot project at a strategic location can be successfully achieved through partnerships between the Town, businesses in downtown, and the arts community.

A parklet along Bridge Street can help extend the sidewalk for outdoor dining or retail.

CURB EXTENSIONS

Curb extensions increase public space along sidewalks while visually and physically narrowing the roadway. Depending on their location and design, curb extensions can serve as strategies to reduce vehicular traffic speeds, increase pedestrian safety, define neighborhood gateways, and accommodate urban design elements.

On-street parking spaces at strategic mid-block locations of the Bridge Street corridor can be transformed into curb extensions to allow for the installation of trees, street furniture, and bike racks. Curb extensions at street corners can reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians and create room for bus stop shelters.



Curb extensions create areas for plantings, bike racks, and street furniture.

D. GOALS

- Increase green infrastructure along Bridge Street
- Improve aesthetics and add streetscape amenities in downtown
- Make downtown more appealing and accessible to all population groups

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a Bridge Street Tree program
- Green and screen parking lots
- Promote outdoor retail and dining in downtown
- Integrate more art into the public realm of Bridge Street and downtown

6. HISTORIC RESOURCES

As the courthouse seat and economic hub of Bedford County since 1782, the town of Bedford boasts a rich collection of historic resources dating to the 19th and 20th centuries. The study area for this project encompasses many of the most historically significant commercial, industrial, civic, ecclesiastical, and residential buildings in town.

Late Victorian era commercial buildings line Main and North Bridge streets in downtown, including the Italianate-style Harrison Building. Monumental civic buildings, such as the Colonial Revival-style Bedford County Courthouse and Burks-Scott County Office Building, are prominently situated within the downtown area.

North of the railroad tracks, northeast of the commercial district, is a cluster of historic industrial buildings. Historic homes are found in residential neighborhoods on the north and south end of the Bridge Street corridor. Residential architecture ranges from simple vernacular worker houses to stylish, upper middle-class houses; the latter concentrated north of the railroad tracks.

The historic Bedford Training School, the former Public (Old Yellow) and Bedford Middle Schools, and Susie G. Gibson High School (BSTC) anchor these residential areas. Collectively, these historic resources serve as a tangible reminder of the town's rich history, reflecting the people, places, and events that give the town its unique identity and architectural character.



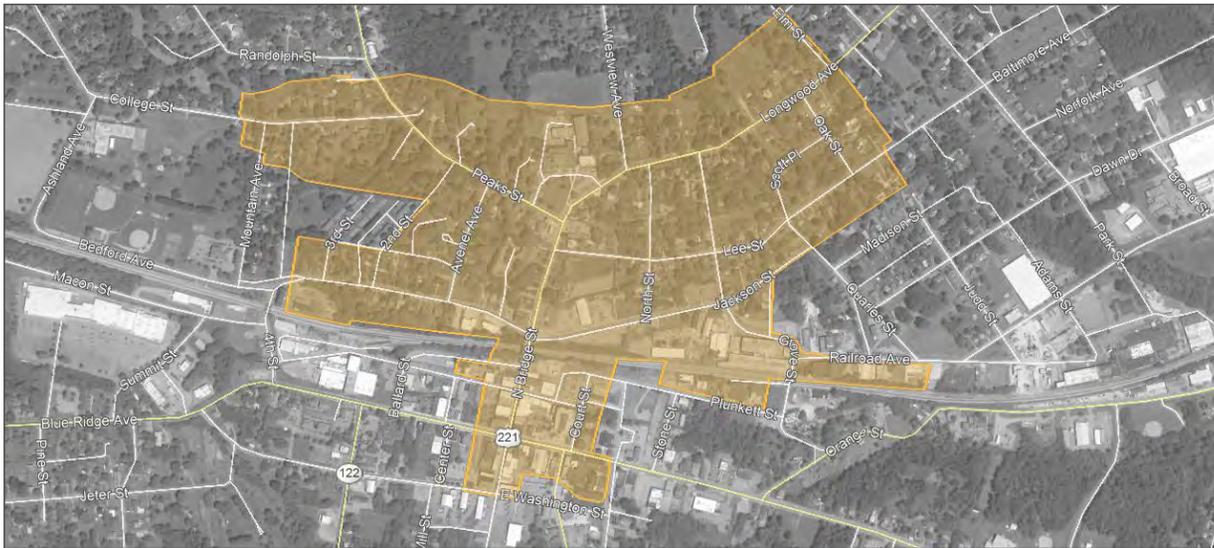
Examples of Historic Architecture in Bedford

A. HISTORIC PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The town of Bedford has long demonstrated high regard for its historic resources. Many achievements in local preservation can be attributed to the efforts of the Bedford Historical Society. For over 40 years, this non-profit has provided leadership and resources for various preservation, educational, and heritage tourism projects. The historical society formed in 1969 to save the Bedford Historic Meeting House from demolition.

In 1977, the Meeting House was the first building in the town of Bedford to be listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A preservation easement now protects the building. The Bedford Historical Society was also instrumental in listing the Bedford Historic District on the VLR and NRHP in 1984. The town of Bedford boasts two individually listed residences on the national and state registers – Avenel and the Ballard-Worsham House. Both houses are adjacent to the School-to-School Area Plan boundary.

Bedford was designated a Virginia Main Street community in 1985, the year after the Bedford Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With this designation, Bedford Main Street Inc. formed to promote and beautify the central business district by cultivating vibrant economic and cultural activities through community partnerships while preserving its historic character. The organization served as a resource for property owners interested in renovating buildings or constructing compatible new buildings in Centertown until 2018.



Map illustrating National Register Historic District Boundary



Historic Meeting House

Prior to the Main Street Program in Virginia, the Bedford Historical Society assisted with early downtown revitalization projects. The Historical Society continued its mission by supporting the Bedford Main Street Program with funding and resources for facade rehabilitations, a walking tour brochure, and other projects to promote awareness of historic resources and support preservation efforts in Bedford.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

Contributing properties in the National Register-listed Bedford Historic District or individually listed properties may be eligible to participate in the state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit programs. The federal tax credit is equal to 20 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures and is limited to income-producing properties. The state historic tax credit is equal to 25 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures for both income-producing properties and owner-occupied residential uses.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the National Park Service (NPS) administer both programs. In order to be eligible, a property must be either individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or contribute to a historic district listed on the National Register. Projects must meet a “substantial rehabilitation” test to qualify for each of the programs. All work on both the interior and exterior of the property must meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and be reviewed and approved by VDHR and NPS for compliance.



Historic Avenel House



Street view of Bedford Lofts

BEDFORD LOFTS

The Bedford Lofts is an example of a successful historic rehabilitation that participated in the tax credit program. The project converted a four-story structure, originally built as a tobacco warehouse, into a residential building. The facility houses 32 market-rate apartments near the heart of downtown Bedford. The original estimated cost for the project was \$3 million dollars.

<https://bedfordlofts.com/>

B. CHALLENGES

Past efforts have done a great deal to document and raise awareness about historic resources in the town of Bedford, but more can be done to ensure their continued preservation and stewardship. At present, there is a lack of awareness of incentives, such as historic rehabilitation tax credits, for owners of historic properties. Not only do the tax credits incentivize the rehabilitation of historic properties, stimulating investment in historic areas, they also ensure that work meets certain historic preservation standards. Projects participating in the program require review by VDHR and NPS for adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Because the program is voluntary, however, adherence to Standards is not required if a property owner is not pursuing credits. In addition, once a tax credit project is complete and the five-year IRS recapture period has expired, there is no long-term protection for the building as no further review of subsequent work is required.

Furthermore, several important historic properties, such as the Historic Bedford Training School and the Susie G. Gibson School, are not individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places nor are they included in the town's historic district and are therefore unrecognized for their historic value. Without a National Register listing these buildings do not have access to valuable rehabilitation incentives, such as historic rehabilitation tax credits. Even those properties that are on the National Register—individually or as part of a district—are not protected against demolition or inappropriate alterations since listing is an honorary designation that does not place restrictions on private property owners.

Finally, the organizations that once spearheaded preservation efforts in Bedford have either dissolved or become dormant. The Bedford Historical Society has been less active in recent years, with a decline in its membership and programs. In addition, the Virginia Main Street Program is no longer available as a resource for Bedford, since the town is no longer designated as a Main Street community. With reduced organizational support for preservation efforts in Bedford, fewer resources are available for property owners and little guidance exists to encourage compatible design, particularly in the downtown commercial area.



The Bedford Training School and Susie G. Gibson School are currently unprotected historic resources because they are located outside the National Historic District

C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Historic preservation is a powerful tool used by municipalities nationwide to maintain their unique character and identity. Bedford's historic buildings represent the cumulative efforts and achievements over time of people forming a community; therefore, their preservation can help to strengthen that sense of community and inherent quality of life today. Historic preservation strategies range from simply educating the public about the value of historic resources and raising awareness to protecting historic resources through design review standards.

NATIONAL REGISTER LISTING

A National Register listing is an honor bestowed on historic properties to recognize their historic value and to encourage continued stewardship. It does not restrict property owners in any way, but does offer the benefits of several federal and state programs, including tax credits for rehabilitation. While a property or district may be listed on the National Register, only a local overlay district designation allows for design review restrictions on private owners.

Several historic properties in the study area could benefit from a National Register designation, namely the Historic Bedford Training School and the Susie G. Gibson School. A National Register listing would underscore the significance of these historically segregated schools, as well as provide financial incentives for future renovations. Further evaluation of these resources can help determine if they are individually eligible or eligible as part of a larger historic district. Both properties are held by Bedford County.



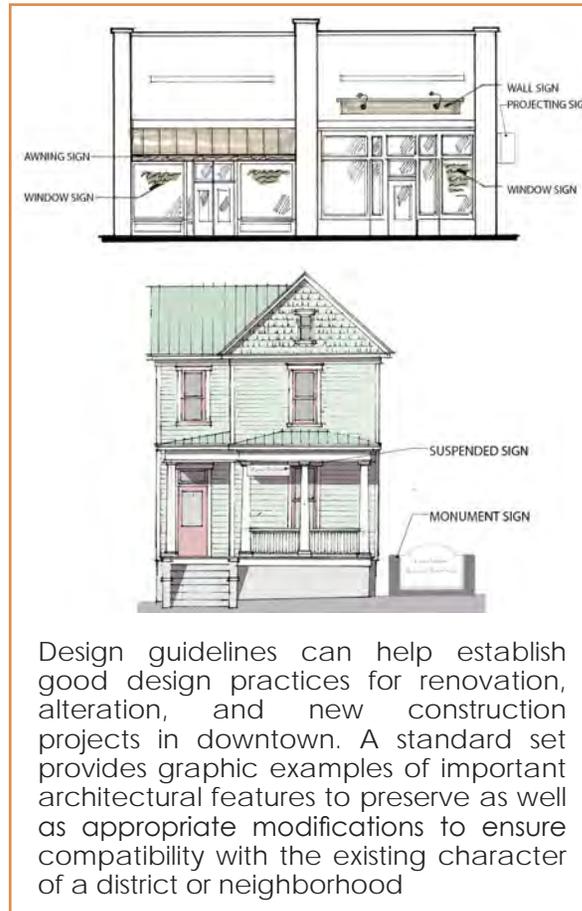
A new National Register designation could help protect important resources outside the existing National Historic District in Centertown

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

A historic overlay district, often called a local historic district, is an additional layer of design standards for a defined area applied over underlying zoning ordinance with the main goal of preserving the historic character of an area. The intent of this local planning tool is to protect historic properties from demolition and incompatible exterior treatments, while encouraging new design that is compatible with the historic character of the district. Local historic districts provide a mechanism for identifying, recognizing, preserving, maintaining, and enhancing historic buildings, properties, and neighborhoods. A local district can protect and increase property values and strengthen a community's identity.

A design review board is typically established for the historic overlay district to review and approve all applications for major exterior alterations, signage, additions, demolitions or relocations, as well as designs for new construction. The purpose of the design review is to preserve the overall architectural character and visual qualities of a historic district. The ultimate goal of the process is to allow active use and adaptation to properties within historic districts while maintaining the architectural integrity that reflects the district's history and significance.

Design guidelines provide the board with an established set of standards with which to review projects with consistency. The guidelines also provide useful rehabilitation and construction information for property owners to assist them in understanding the architectural character and appropriate treatment of their historic building



D. GOALS

- Maximize the retention, adaptive reuse, and preservation of Bedford's historic resources
- Use historic properties as development catalysts and focal points for revitalization along Bridge Street
- Celebrate local history

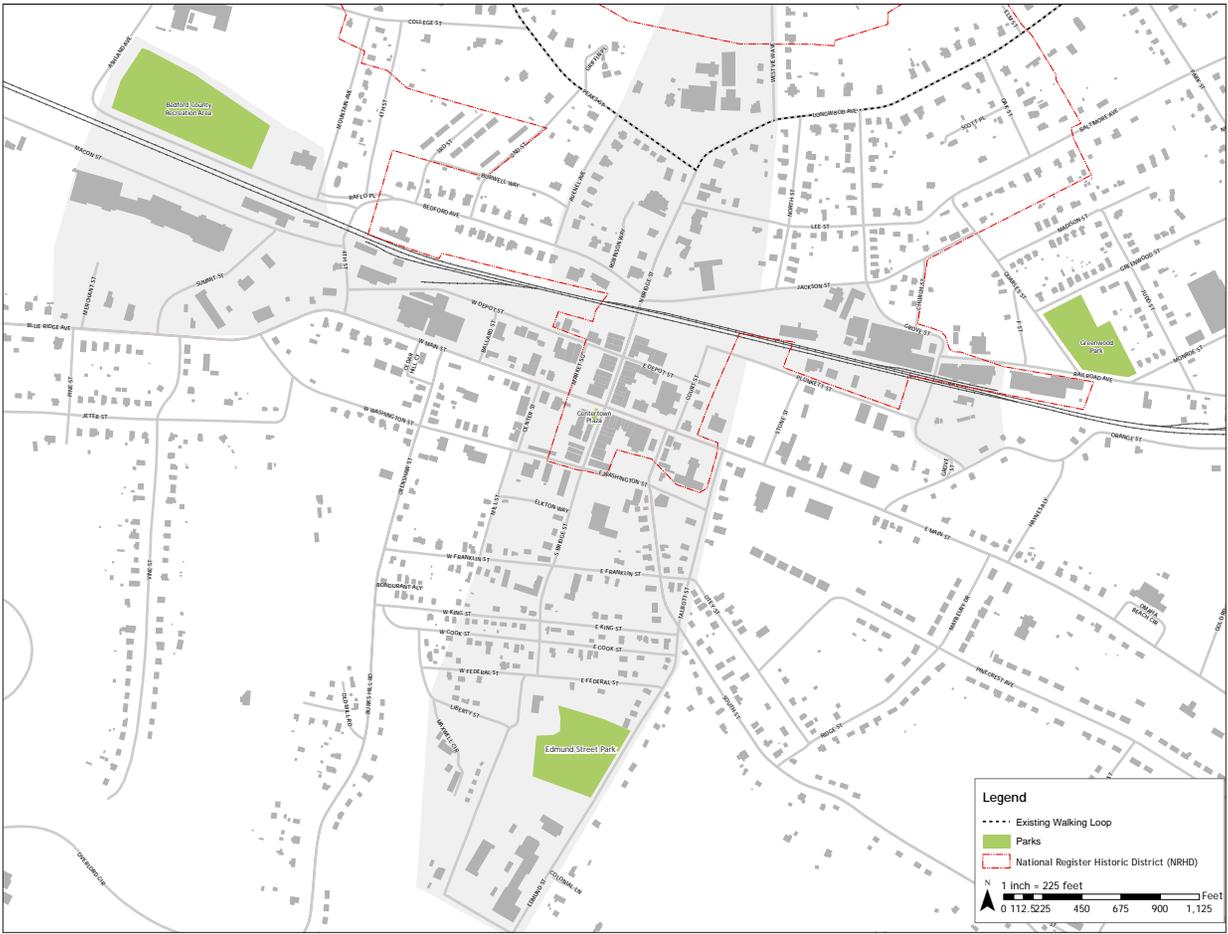
E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Revive the Bedford Historical Society to again be a driver and leader in revitalization efforts and awareness initiatives
- Pursue a National Register listing for the Susie G. Gibson School and the Historic Bedford Training School
- Establish a local historic district overlay for the downtown commercial area along with design guidelines and a design review process

7. PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE

Parks and public spaces add to the beauty of communities by providing open spaces, gathering areas, and recreational opportunities for everyone to enjoy. Open spaces also play a key role in helping neighborhoods thrive and maintain a strong social fabric.

Increasing the number of quality parks and public spaces can define and strengthen a true sense of place along Bridge Street. Furthermore, a connected network of open space, parks, and public areas distributed along the corridor will enhance and beautify Bedford as a whole while supporting the health and wellness of its residents.



Parks near and within the School-to-School Project Area

A. GATHERING SPACES

Bridge Street and its surrounding blocks need more places where people can and want to gather. Existing gathering places, such as Centertown Park and the Bedford Farmers Market, should be better identified and enhanced. Landscape improvements can transform them into key destinations and help expand the town's green infrastructure.

“*Downtown Bedford has few trees, no water feature, and a less than satisfactory location to stage live music.*”

- Bedford resident



Centertown Park

CENTERTOWN PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Also known as Centertown Plaza, this gathering space is home to the iconic Bedford clock, a newly-installed D-Day plaque, and venue to a variety of events. A renovation project in 2016 added flowers, picnic tables, and benches to the park. Additional enhancements are needed to make Centertown Park a more inviting public place. Potential improvements include planting canopy trees along the edges of the plaza and installing a water feature. In coordination with the visitor center, the current kiosk can also be modernized with a digital board featuring tourist destinations and information about upcoming events.



BEDFORD FARMERS MARKET

Farmers markets are important gathering spaces where customers connect with vendors and with each other. These connections are key in promoting a sense of place and belonging in a community and are an indicator of community vibrancy reflecting local support. Farmers markets also serve as meeting places that encourage distinct interactions among diverse groups of people.

“*Enhance the Farmers Market where that can double as a community gathering area.*”

- Bedford resident



Bedford Farmers Market

In communities where food is harvested locally, farmers markets can bring positive impacts to the environment. Less miles traveled to bring produce results in reduced transportation costs and vehicle emissions. Lastly, a successful farmers market can become an economic engine for municipalities. Along with direct sales, farmers markets generate economic spillover effects because spending circulates within the region.

The Bedford Farmers Market provides residents with fresh, locally grown and produced goods, connecting Bedford residents directly to local farmers. Over the years, as a venue, the market has hosted a number of special events including wine tasting sessions, food truck Fridays, live music, and cooking demos. The Town rents the market to the public as one of many facilities.

A survey performed as part of the School-to-School project suggests that previous market hours were not convenient for many residents working outside Bedford. Interviews with community members also revealed the need for a strategy to improve marketing efforts and to expand programmed events.

Currently, the market is experiencing a shift in management. While this shift has posed some operational challenges, it also creates an opportunity for this important asset to redefine its role in the local economy. A strategic plan and organizational structure are recommended that will focus on identifying physical and operational changes needed for the market to become sustainable while meeting the needs of the Bedford community.



Blacksburg Farmers Market

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Blacksburg Farmers Market

Improvements: new structure for vendors and Market Square park

Year : 2010

Partners: Virginia Tech School of Architecture, Friends of the Farmers Market, Blue Ridge

Funding Sources: CDBG, Town's general fund, funds raised by Friends of the Market

Total Cost: \$782,000

More information: <https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2010/04/2010-271.html>

Covington Farmers Market

Improvements: new structure for vendors,

Year : 2011

Partners: Virginia Tech School of Architecture, Draper Aden & Associates

Funding Sources: grant from Alleghany Foundation

Total Cost: \$150,000

More information: <https://www.archdaily.com/166527/covington-farmers-market-designbuildlab>

DOWNTOWN SQUARE PROJECT

Outdoor spaces that provide a sense of enclosure with surrounding buildings form a gathering place where people tend to congregate and linger. The underutilized portion of the Vista Foods parking lot, at the corner of Bridge and Washington streets, presents a great opportunity for a public square. Squares and plazas are not only gathering places, but focal points for neighborhoods. Transforming this site into a square will invite more pedestrians to spend time in Centertown and fuel local businesses located on South Bridge Street. A conceptual study for the Town Square is presented in this plan under the Catalyst Projects chapter.



Concept developed by a group of students for a park at the Vista Foods site
Source: *Bedford Connections*

B. POCKET PARKS

Bedford should host a healthy variety of parks and outdoor recreational areas. Pocket parks are open spaces that fit well in the built environment. Several vacant and underutilized lots are located within the boundary of the School-to-School project. Redevelopment of these lots as parks will add value to adjacent properties, fill voids in the urban fabric, and give the community an area to play, relax, and enjoy.

PASSIVE POCKET PARKS

Passive pocket parks are common in small downtowns. These parks can serve as picnic areas, social squares, or nature and art exhibits with options to be open all hours or closed at night. Passive parks can also be established in alleyways and spaces between buildings to serve as sitting areas or connectors within street blocks.

An example of a Bedford pocket park is the Wharton Memorial Garden. Nestled between the Bedford Public Library and three historic structures, the park features a gazebo, a brick path, a sculpture, and a storybook garden. The garden exemplifies a successful greening project that weaves the urban fabric along Bridge Street, celebrates local history, promotes the arts, and provides an interactive public space where the community can connect.



Wharton Gardens on North Bridge St



Pogue Park on South Street can be re-imagined to function as a public space and connector along the multi-use trail proposed in this section of the plan

There are other opportunities to establish and improve pocket parks within the project boundary. Building upon the success of the Wharton Garden, Pogue Park can be restored to better recognize Dr. Pogue’s legacy in Bedford history. Working with the Town and local artists, the green sliver on South Street can also be redesigned to incorporate public art and street furniture making it an attractive dedicated public space and stopping point along the proposed multi-use trail recommended in this plan.

ACTIVE POCKET PARKS

Active pocket parks provide outdoor spaces for recreational activities near a downtown. Types of active parks might include a playground, sports court, and recreation complex. Three active parks are located within or near the project area. Edmund Street Park, located on the south end of Bridge Street, is owned by Bedford County School but maintained by the Town of Bedford. Greenwood Park is a Town-maintained open space east of the project boundary. The recreation field by the Bedford Elementary School on Bedford Avenue is owned by the County School Board.

The proximity of these parks to Bedford’s commercial district and residential neighborhoods along with the range of activities available on site, make them important anchors for town residents. A concerted effort between the County, the Town, and the County School Board is imperative to ensure the proper maintenance and improvement of these spaces.

Brownfields-to-Open Space Projects

Vacant and underutilized lots near the downtown area present opportunities to establish new or expand active parks. The transformation of brownfields into playgrounds, trails, community gardens, and natural habitats can provide aesthetic, recreational, and quality of life benefits that can complement or exceed economic benefits. There are a number of brownfields and vacant properties within walking distance of the Bridge Street corridor. Their clean-up and conversion as greenspaces will not only benefit the human health of town residents but also Bedford’s natural resources.

Two examples of brownfields-to-greenspace projects are presented in the Bridge Street Area Plan under the Catalyst Projects chapter. Proposed concepts provide alternative uses for underperforming properties along Depot Street and the County bus garage near Edmund Street Park.

BENEFITS OF BROWNFIELDS-TO-OPEN SPACE REDEVELOPMENT

- Removal or reductions of exposure to contamination
- Habitat and ecosystem restoration
- Improved land and water quality
- Reduced heat island effects
- Improved aesthetics
- Creation of public space, trails, art and amenities
- Environmental education
- Improved neighborhoods
- Enhanced quality of life
- Vibrant, livable communities
- Job creation
- Increased transportation options
- Improved property values
- Spurred economic development

C. TRAILS AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

Establishing an interconnected system of multi-use trails within the project area addresses the goals identified in the Bedford Comprehensive Plan to have complete streets and ensure pedestrian friendly options. The proposed system in this plan also responds to a desire by the community to make downtown Bedford a more vibrant and walkable place.

Two multi-use trails are proposed to create a connected network of parks and open space destinations. Both trails connect to different points of the informal walking “Loop” and use Bridge Street as a central corridor to link to all three trails. The west trail begins at the intersection of Peaks Street and College Street, traveling west and south to connect to South Bridge Street at Franklin Street. This route is approximately 1.6 miles long. The east trail begins at the intersection of North Bridge Street and Jackson Street, traveling east and south to the Susie G. Gibson School (BSTC) and circulating back north on Edmund Street back to Bridge Street. The east trail route is approximately 2.4 miles long.

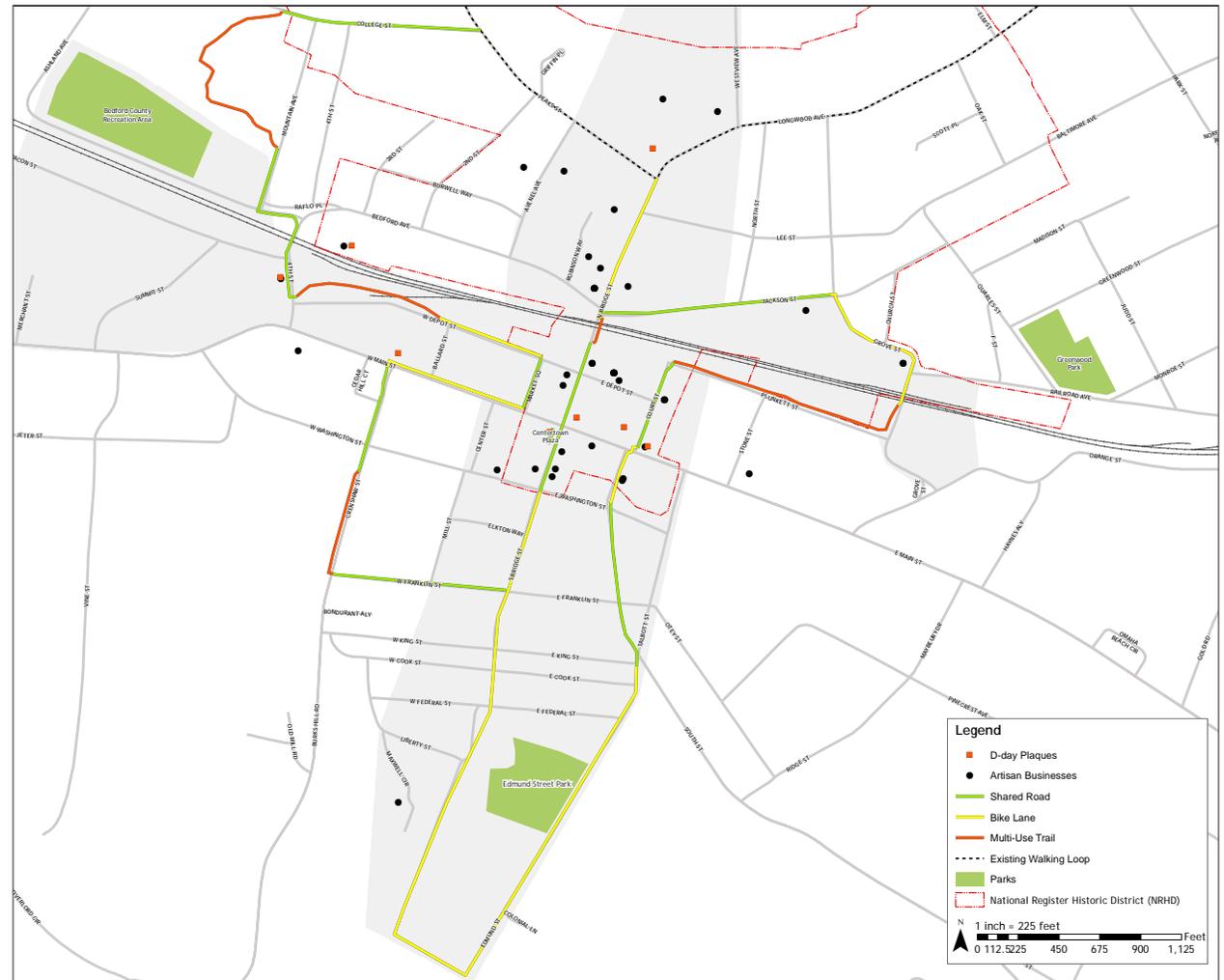


Multi-use Trails Illustrative Map

For purposes of this planning study, these multi-use trails suggest the use of dedicated trails or greenways, designated on-street bike lanes and sidewalks, and shared roads. An in-depth assessment of street conditions and community input is needed as part of the upcoming Bike and Pedestrian Plan for the development of a full design.

“ I like how [the proposed multi-use trail] encourages people to get out and walk/bike and enjoy the beautiful features and natural landscape of Bedford. The more this happens, a healthier and happier community will evolve. And it will boost the local shops and economy.

- Bedford resident



Proposed Trail Types

D. GOALS

- Ensure pedestrian safety and promote walkability
- Encourage a connected network of quality open spaces, gathering places, parks, and a strong social fabric.
- Celebrate local history

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Re-design and expand amenities at Edmund Street Park Recreation Area
- Repurpose brownfield site on Depot Street into a greenspace
- Improve upon existing gathering spaces and parks
- Repurpose a portion of the Vista Food parking lot into a public place
- Connect destinations with pedestrian corridors and streets

8.

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

The market analysis performed as part of this plan projects modest population growth within town limits and Bedford's primary trade area (PTA) over the next 5 years. The predicted growth in the town's secondary trade area and in the County is more significant suggesting a potential impact on travel demand in Bedford.



5-Year Projected Population Growth

A potential rise in urban housing density from recent and upcoming downtown revitalization also suggests that various non-vehicular modes of transportation like transit, walking, and bicycling could be supported. Given current and predicted transportation needs in Bedford, this plan promotes opportunities for complete streets and multiple modes of transportation; including future transit, pedestrian ways, and bicycle lanes as part of a transportation network.

A. STREETScape PLAN

Increased demand on the transportation system due to population growth and downtown revitalization create opportunities to improve Bedford's streetscape. Establishing new parks and gathering areas within and around the Central Business District and connecting those spaces through good street design will enhance travel in downtown.

While some streets in town accommodate pedestrian use fairly well, there is room for improvement; particularly along the Bridge Street corridor. Focusing efforts on pedestrian, cyclists, and transit use will create streets that are more functional and vibrant. Key sections of Bridge Street, Washington Street, Depot Street, and South Street should be re-designed as places where people will feel more comfortable and safer. Promoting walkability can reduce vehicle trips and parking demand, and provide healthier alternatives for residents and visitors to move around downtown.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the transformation of sidewalks into public amenities can be as simple as increasing landscaping and trees, providing street furniture, incorporating public art, or promoting outdoor dining options.

This plan prioritizes improvements along key corridors to be considered as part of a complete streets plan.

KEY CORRIDORS IN DOWNTOWN

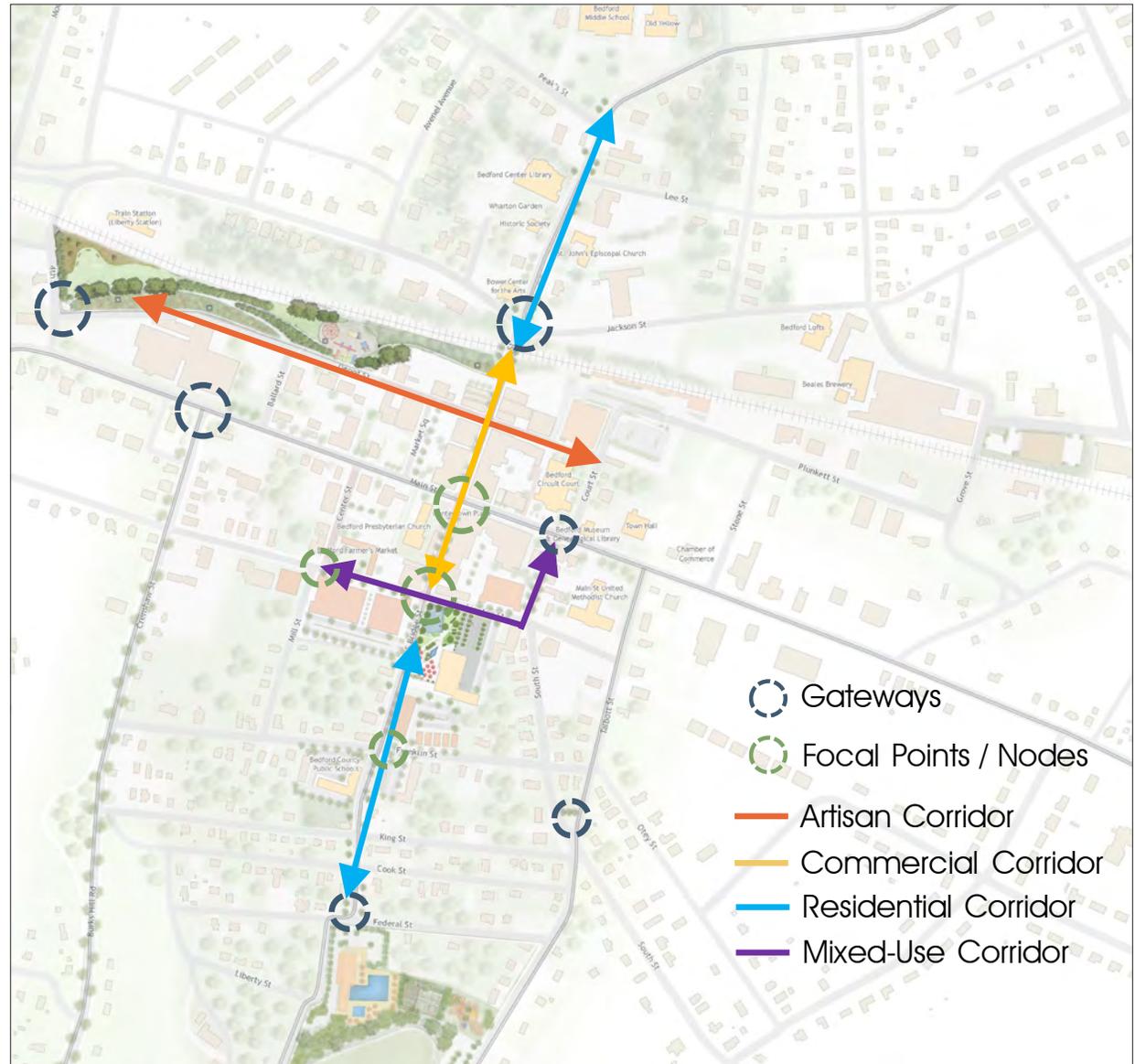
Four types of corridors were identified as part of the School-to-School Area Plan based on existing and future land uses, as well as urban design character.

Artisan Corridor

The concentration of artisan businesses on and near Depot Street, as well as a proposed park and Amtrak station project at each end, make this corridor an important connector within downtown. A sculpture and mural at the intersection of Depot Street with Court Street and Bridge Street also highlight Bedford's arts and cultural heritage. Improvements on this arterial should focus on infusing Bedford's growing artisan culture into the streetscape and prioritizing pedestrian activity over vehicle traffic.

Commercial Corridor

Bedford's center of commercial activity takes place along Bridge Street between Jackson Street and Washington Street. Retrofitting these sections of the corridor to better accommodate motorized and non-motorized users is a goal outlined in the Bedford Comprehensive Plan.



Key Corridors and Gateways

A complete street strategy will emphasize the role of the street; not only as a channel of movement but also as a public space and economic asset. Improvements should focus on creating opportunities for vibrant gathering spaces and improving safety.



Urban design character along Depot Street and the Commercial Business District

COMMERCIAL SHARED STREETS

“Commercial shared streets differ from the earlier generation of pedestrian malls in both their regulation and implementation. Shared streets maintain access for vehicles operating at low speeds and are designed to permit easy loading and unloading for trucks at designated hours.”

- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)



A section of Bridge Street re-imagined as a shared commercial street that encourages a more pedestrian friendly environment without restricting vehicle circulation

Mixed-Use Corridors

Areas with future development potential have been identified as mixed-use corridors. These include sections of Washington Street and South Street where surplus of surface parking and incompatible land uses create opportunities for mid-density transitions between the Commercial Business District and residential areas. The plan presents a few examples of infill and public space projects to spark revitalization along mixed-use corridors. Streetscape improvements should focus on promoting a vibrant pedestrian environment, defining gateways to adjacent neighborhoods, and creating focal points within downtown.

Residential Corridor

Two residential corridors surround the Central Business District on the north and south end of Bridge Street. These arterials are wider than most streets in downtown and are surrounded by low density development. Improvements along these sections of Bridge Street should focus on minimizing the impact of thru-traffic and reinforcing the sense of place of the neighborhood.



Section of South St (between Main St and Washington St) to be converted to a two-way mixed-use corridor



Transitional block between Commercial Business District and residential neighborhood along South Bridge St



Residential street character of South Bridge St

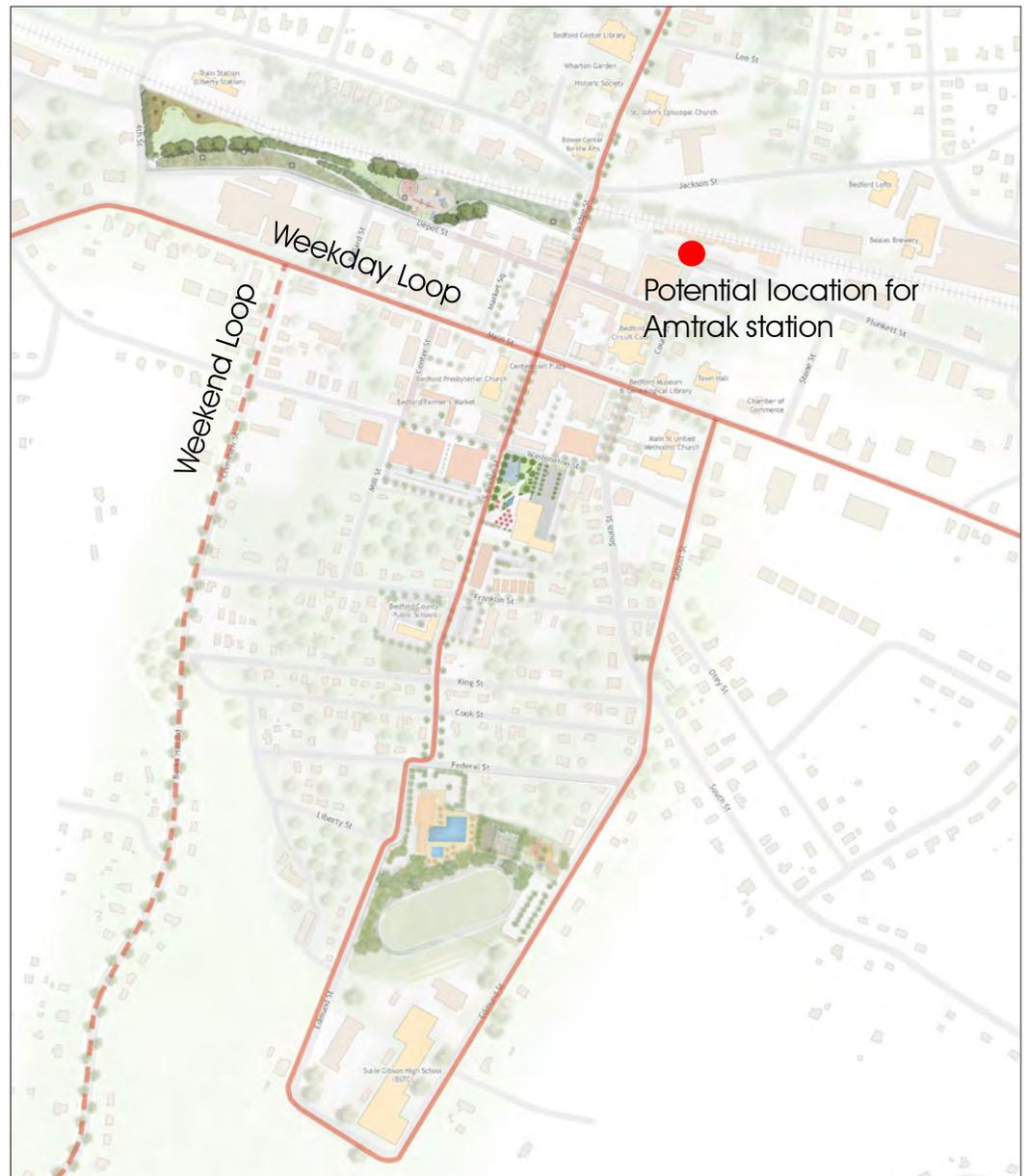
B. TRANSIT

Preliminary findings from a Community Health Needs Assessment by Centra, reveal that transportation is already an issue for many Bedford citizens who don't have access to basic needs and services. This means that better systems will need to be set in place to improve the health status of the community. Future efforts to increase residential units in the downtown area will also increase the need to move people and goods more efficiently, along with opportunities for improving the quality of life.

Discussions are already underway for a potential transit connector. A weekday route is being proposed that will connect residents to basic services near or within downtown. The weekend route will focus primarily on transporting visitors from the D-Day National Memorial and Visitor Center to key destinations in downtown. See map next page.

From a regional transportation standpoint, a feasibility study for the potential location of an Amtrak station is generating a lot of interest. The Bedford-Franklin Regional Rail Initiative is composed of local elected officials and staff, as well as the Chambers of Commerce from Bedford and Smith Mountain Lake areas. The group is working to meet the requirements laid out in the “Intercity Passenger Rail Station Policy Guide” in order to formally request that Bedford be considered for a stop by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

As conversations regarding local transit and Amtrak station continue, Town officials should find ways to align these initiatives as part of a comprehensive transportation network.



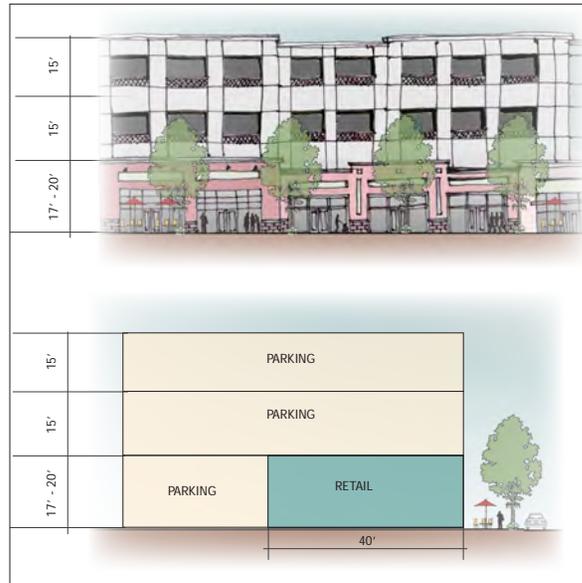
Proposed local transit routes (weekend and weekday) and potential location of Amtrak station

C. PARKING

The Bedford Comprehensive Plan recommends eliminating on-street parking on a section of Bridge Street (between Main Street and the railroad tracks) to allow for wider sidewalks. The Comprehensive Plan also recommends the construction of a parking deck to offset the reduction of on-street spaces.

The Bridge Street Area Plan proposes the construction of the parking deck at the South Street parking lot. The new mixed-use facility could provide parking for County employees, downtown residents, and visitors, and include retail storefronts at street level. Providing commercial spaces along Washington Street and South Street would help generate economic activity in a dormant area of downtown and create a focal point for visitors approaching the Central Business District. The new garage could also provide centralized parking near existing and proposed destinations on weekends and during special events.

During public engagement sessions, the community identified parking as one of the most pressing issues to address in downtown. Perceptions of parking issues are often related to management, rather than supply. Therefore, this plan recommends undertaking a parking study to assess current and future parking needs in downtown.



Parking areas in mixed-use parking decks are often located on the interior of the block; allowing for retail space facing the street. Storefronts should incorporate clear glass to provide visual interaction with pedestrians and vehicular traffic

D. GOALS

- Increase transportation options to and within downtown
- Ensure pedestrian safety and promote walkability
- Improve aesthetics and add streetscape amenities in downtown

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement a weekend / weekday transit circulator
- Perform a parking study and assess current and future parking needs and strategies
- Develop a Complete Streets plan that gives priority to walking, bicycling, and transit in future street design
- Transform the section of Bridge Street between Main and Washington streets into a shared commercial street

9.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. LOCAL ARTISAN ECONOMY

The “artisan economy” in Bedford today includes anything that is handmade, homemade, homegrown, or locally authentic, and provides a unique local cultural experience. The vibrancy of Bedford’s local artisan economy includes factors from a wide range of community members like art galleries and artist studios, local restaurants, breweries, and music venues. The artisan economy also includes programming and events sponsored by a variety of local non-profit organizations such as the Bower Center for the Arts, the Bedford Museum and Genealogical Library, Little Town Players, the Bedford Community Orchestra, and the Friends of the Bedford Library.

Additionally, there are a variety of events, happenings, and festivals that don’t easily fit on a map but are just as important in helping understand the Town of Bedford as an artisan destination. Events like Bedford’s Finest Fare, the Bedford’s Farmers and Community Markets, 2nd Fridays in Bedford, Holiday Studio Tour, Woman’s Club Craft Show, Peaks and Pieces Quilt Show, Bedford Urban Garden, Festival of the Trees, Old Liberty Fiber Fair, the Elk’s Home Christmas Lights, Town Tree lighting and Christmas Parade, and Centerfest not only add to the artisan economy but also foster tourism and a sense of community pride. Overall, organizations in the Town of Bedford host over a 100 arts and cultural events each year.

AN ENGINE FOR REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Bedford’s local artisan culture has become the heartbeat and energy of downtown revitalization efforts. The vibrant artisan scene is the natural outgrowth of a core part of the area’s historical identity and is built on a foundation that was literally generations in the making. Hosts of local craftsmen from woodworkers to blacksmiths to quilters to gardeners to musicians and cooks have set an aesthetic tone to the area for generations. Local clubs for knitters, photographers, writers, needle workers and gardeners dot the landscape and provide proof that these age-old aesthetic traditions not only live on, but thrive in this town.



5-

This expanding artisan culture can become an engine for revitalization and economic growth. Building upon success stories from other communities similar to Bedford; as well as the potential of the former Middle School campus project to become a venue for the arts community, this section of the School-to-School Plan identifies model programs and tools the Town can adopt to strengthen existing and promote future artisan businesses.

Community Business Launch (CBL)

CBL is an initiative sponsored by DHCD to assist communities in developing asset-based small business development. The program includes a systematic process to define a community's vision, then implement a local business competition to develop entrepreneurs that meet that vision. Communities receive up to \$45,000 from DHCD to conduct the business planning competition, and the funds can be used for training, mentoring, and grant awards given to winning entrepreneurs. Nearby Lynchburg has used its CBL grant to help facilitate its business planning competition, Launched in Lynchburg web portal, and its Co.Starters business training curriculum. Smaller communities like South Boston and AltaVista have also received CBL grants, as well as Vinton and Lexington.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Pop Up Marion

Marion, VA has used the CBL program to establish an entrepreneurial program geared towards developing new and existing businesses. It sponsors a five-week training class including business planning, networking, and other topics, but also lets businesses share business ideas and startup knowledge with each other. The class culminates with a grant awards of up to \$5,000 and low-interest loans of up to \$15,000. Winners must be placed in vacant storefronts in downtown Marion. The program started with a CBL grant but has since used private sector funding to sustain the program.

Streetworks

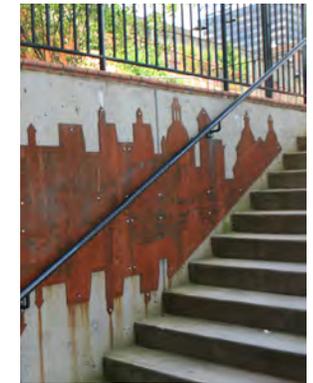
East End Main Street in Charleston, WV created a public art initiative that integrates works of art from local artists and artisans in the streetscape, on buildings and inside of private businesses. The program is centered around an annual event whereby local artists compete to determine a new work for a downtown mural. All art is sold during an auction during the event, and most are used for banners that line the Washington Street corridor, East End's "Main Street".

Signature Arts Event

Lake City, SC has created a signature event called ArtFields. While this program is extremely robust and has a significant benefactor, it is proof that a successful, juried arts event can be nationally recognized, and be an anchor to the revitalization of a small downtown in a rural region. The annual event brings in artists from all over the Southeast to a town of just 6,000 people. Each year over 400 works of art are on display in public places and private business throughout the weekend, and the town becomes a living art gallery. Numerous other communities have created smaller events that have similar impacts in introducing the arts to the public realm, while raising the awareness of local artisans and creative businesses.

Public Art Plan

Numerous communities with a focus on the arts have created a public art plan to highlight local artists, promote their community as an arts destination, and create great public spaces in downtown. Clemson, SC recently completed such a plan that begin with the establishment of a public arts commission whose primary goal was to create a public art vision and plan for incorporating the arts into the public realm. The plan outlines the overall vision, goals for the program, management practices such as selection and placement, and funding mechanisms. Nearby Anderson, SC has been facilitating its public arts program for years and has successfully sponsored a program that has seen sculpture, murals, interpretive plazas, and painting placed in public parks, along downtown streets, and in public buildings.



Examples of Public Art

Arts & Cultural District

Arts & Cultural districts are an economic development tool used by many communities to generate businesses, attract tourists, and foster civic pride. When theaters, performing arts centers, museums, art galleries, and artist studios are encouraged to locate in the same neighborhood, the neighborhood becomes a magnet for the general public and increased investment. When localities can achieve a critical mass of arts-related activities in a single area, they become appealing to what is often referred to as the creative class; many of whom prefer to live and work in close proximity to the arts and cultural districts. Benefits of establishing an Arts and Cultural district may include increased and diversified employment opportunities, greater tourist and resident attraction, enhanced property values, an increased tax base, and an improved creative and innovative environment.

Under §15.2-1129.1 of the Code of Virginia, localities may establish arts and cultural districts for the purpose of increasing awareness and support for the arts and culture in the locality.

Localities with an Arts & Cultural district have the authority to administer incentives and provide certain regulatory flexibility to qualifying businesses or entities within the boundaries of the district. The criteria to qualify as an “arts” business is at the discretion of the locality but typically the incentives should be provided to businesses that positively contribute to the spectrum of arts and cultural activities and venues within the targeted area. The incentives can include, but are not limited to:

- Reduction of permit fees
- Reduction of user fees
- Reduction of any type of gross receipts tax
- Regulatory flexibility such as special zoning, permit process reform, and exemption from local ordinances.

Given the concentration of artisan businesses along Depot Street and North Bridge Street. This plan recommends that the Town establishes an Arts and Cultural District in the downtown area as part of an overarching strategy to increase awareness and support for Bedford’s growing artisan economy. Examples of established Arts & Cultural Districts in Virginia is provided in the Appendix section of this report.



Some of the Artisans in Downtown Bedford



Map of Artisan Businesses in Downtown Bedford

B. UPPER STORY HOUSING AND STOREFRONTS

CHALLENGES

As in many towns with historic downtowns, there is an ebb and flow to building occupancy and subsequent vacancy. Downtown Bedford is home to a number of offices, specifically law offices as a “courthouse town”. As the retail and commercial climate has changed over time, several storefronts are vacant due to various reasons related to condition, ownership issues, rental agreements, and general entrepreneurship deficiencies.

Secondarily, many buildings are vacant of a use on the upper levels. Historically, use of upper stories in downtown was ancillary to the business on the ground level and many were not finished. Challenges to the reuse and development of upper stories include building code requirements for fire and life safety issues, including the ability to physically provide adequate exits from the upper levels safely within the existing historic footprint. The Town recently assumed building code review and inspections in order to facilitate reuse of buildings with the existing building code provisions.



Known Vacancies in Study Area

OPPORTUNITIES

One of downtown Bedford's distinguishing factors is its historic architecture characterized by the two- and three-story buildings that line Main and Bridge Streets. There are a number of vacant buildings and spaces as identified above, as well as mixed-use infill development potential envisioned in the School-to-School Area Plan.

Opportunities for new residential and retail are identified in the market analysis, summarized by the following key findings:

Bedford lies in a growing residential market. The region has seen healthy population growth over the past two decades, which is projected to continue over the next five years. The Town will grow by just under 2% over this time frame while its 30-minute trade area will see 3.62% growth. A growing market will equate to demand for new residential.

These opportunities for new residential have already begun to be realized in downtown Bedford with a number of investments that illustrate the feasibility of residential and mixed use in downtown:

- Bedford Lofts – 32 apartment units with market rate rents ranging from \$750 to \$950 per month.
- Proposed reuse of the former Bedford Middle School – 76 multifamily market rate units with mixed-use potentially including a gym, business incubator, and boutique hotel.
- Short Term Rental – Two downtown loft apartments are currently being leased out through short term rental services such as AirBNB. These units are being marketed to both visitors and business travelers.

The market analysis conducted as part of this School to School plan describes market potential for Bedford and its downtown. This includes up to 73,000 square feet of retail space, some of which could be located in downtown mixed-use projects. Key opportunities for unmet demand of available square footage include:

Restaurants - 8,129 square feet of restaurant space. Given that a typical independent restaurant can range from 2,000 to 5,000 square feet, downtown Bedford could accommodate up to two to three new restaurants. Downtown has already established itself as a culinary destination. Opportunities include full-service restaurants, bakery, or coffee shops.

Drinking Places – 8,317 square feet. Similar to restaurants, this category includes drinking establishments but also places that serve food and beverage, much like Beale's Brewery.

Specialty Grocery – 6,934 square feet. As residential continues to grow in downtown with new developments such as Bedford Lofts and Bedford Middle School, there could be an increasing demand for specialty grocery to serve these markets. This could include fresh foods, butchers, produce, and wine shops. It would serve residential in downtown and beyond, but also complement the Farmers Market as well as local restaurants.

Specialty Retail – A number of specialty retail business types show opportunity in Bedford; including sporting goods, shoes, gifts, jewelry, florists, etc. This could be expansion of existing businesses, or new businesses recruited to vacant storefronts.

Residential opportunity will depend greatly on the ability to recruit investors to adaptively reuse, create units over storefronts, or build new infill development. Based on current market indicators, residential that could potentially be developed include:

- For-rent market rate apartments at \$700 - \$1500 per month.
- For-rent units in downtown likely would be smaller units less than 1000 square feet, and target single professionals, younger couples, or retirees.
- Single family for-sale residential from \$175,000 - \$300,000 based on regional market trends.
- For-sale units in downtown could be condominium or townhome type developments. Development at the upper range would depend on the developer's ability to target homeowners from the larger 30-minute trade area. This could be retirees and empty nesters that may live in areas like Forest and Smith Mountain Lake, but prefer lower maintenance, urban living.

As detailed in the market analysis, there are a number of adaptive reuse or new infill development projects within the Lynchburg and Roanoke MSAs, including Bedford Lofts in downtown Bedford. These developments are proof of concept that downtown residential can work in Bedford.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Real Estate Roundtables

The City of Greenville, SC has found most success in recruiting downtown development through simply staging regular and ongoing engagement with the real estate community. It conducts quarterly meetings with regional real estate brokers, and has found that the brokerage community is the key to creating contacts with prospective investors. The city hosts a regularly breakfast meeting to share new planning efforts and programs, learn about new projects, and bring in guest speakers to discuss economic development.

C. MARKETING AND TOURISM

The market analysis in the School to School plan did not include a tourism study. However, much of the existing retail demand would complement the visitor offerings currently in downtown, including destinations like the Bower Center, the variety of independent restaurants, and shops and galleries that highlight local artisans.

Moreover, Bedford *does* have a strong visitor market and is a base camp for a wealth of visitor experiences in the greater Bedford area. This begins with the singular destination of the National D-Day Memorial, and continues with the Peaks of Otter, Blue Ridge Parkway, Smith Mountain Lake, and Poplar Forest, among others. In downtown Bedford, several restaurants, independent brewery, galleries, the farmers market, and multiple events also draw locals and visitors into the core of the community.

A separate but concurrent project has been conducted focused on creating new gateway entries into Bedford that announce arrival into the community. A key component of this gateway project was to establish a unified identity for Bedford and its downtown. Marketing recommendations include:

Creating a unified market position and graphic identity for the Town of Bedford that focuses on patriotism, as well as Bedford's unique connection to the United States and its founding fathers. More importantly, this identity would present Bedford's unique quality of life and community values, all of which will be relevant to the visitor, future downtown shop owner, or new resident wanting to live in downtown.

Expanding this graphic identity to a distinct logo and market position for Centertown Bedford, a unique name that locals and visitors already associate with downtown.

Extending the brand to unique events in downtown including Center Fest, Bedford Farmers Market, Bedford Christmas Parade, and Bedford Finest Fare. Each graphic identity would be unique, while connecting to the unified brand through a common color palette and typeface.

Establishing downtown-focused marketing tools that include:

- **Shopping and Dining Guide** – This would highlight local businesses, restaurants, and artisan destinations and should be accompanied with a map.
- **Downtown Kiosk** – The map could be placed at a downtown kiosk centrally located in downtown near the primary parking resource. There is currently a kiosk at Centertown Plaza.
- **Better in Bedford Brochure** – This is currently being developed by the town's economic development department. The brochure will highlight investment opportunities in downtown and throughout the town, as well as quality of life reasons to locate in Bedford.
- **Centertown Website** – This would be a "destination" website focused on downtown as a place of activity, as opposed to the existing Centertown website that focuses on the defunct downtown organization.
- **Customized Banners** – These banners would complement the existing "Bedford Remembers" banners in downtown, with colorful destination and event banners that highlight downtown offerings.
- **Marketing Collateral** – Branded marketing items such as t-shirts, hats, water bottles and other products that would display the Bedford and downtown brands, and be sold to visitors and locals.
- **Gateway and Wayfinding Signage** – Branded wayfinding directing locals and visitors to the various civic and visitor destinations throughout the community.

D. GOALS

- Promote Bedford's growing local artisan economy
- Expand awareness and support for the local artisan culture
- Expand restaurant, retail, and entertainment choices
- Increase economic activity and business attraction
- Grow residential opportunities in Downtown Bedford
- Better promote downtown Bedford

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop new and support existing entrepreneurial programs integral to Bedford's artisan economy
- Create market position to establish Bedford as a destination for creators and artisans (local artisan brand)
- Assess what's needed to promote a balanced mix of commercial and retail businesses in downtown Bedford
- Address barriers preventing redevelopment of upper story housing
- Recruit developers for upper floor residential conversion and infill development
- Create a unified identity for downtown Bedford
- Create dedicated marketing tools to promote downtown Bedford

10. CATALYST PROJECTS

The planning team, working with the project’s steering committee along with input from the public workshop, identified potential development scenarios within the School-to-School project boundary.

A total of three properties were selected from the “opportunity brownfields sites” map compiled by the steering committee. These sites emerged as best locations for catalyst projects based on the following criteria:

- Eligibility to receive funding for further environmental assessment and/or remediation
- Availability for the site to be developed and/or acquired.
- Potential for the project to improve connectivity or become a community anchor within the downtown area.

Programming and conceptual plans for catalyst sites were developed based on results from a community survey. This survey asked participants to prioritize guiding principles for future development along the Bridge Street, and to select the top project ideas presented in the concept development plan.



DEPOT STREET PARK



Conceptual Plan for Depot Street Park

The concept for Depot Street Park transforms a brownfield property into an active open space nestled between Depot Street and the train tracks. It is a unique destination for residents and visitors of all ages featuring a dog park, sculpture walk, and a playground.

Dog Park - provides the only dedicated area for pets in the downtown area. Special plantings incorporated in the design can also help remove previous contaminants through a phytoremediation process.

Sculpture Walk - Engages pedestrians in an artistic and stimulating environment while creating a focal point as visitors approach downtown from the west side.

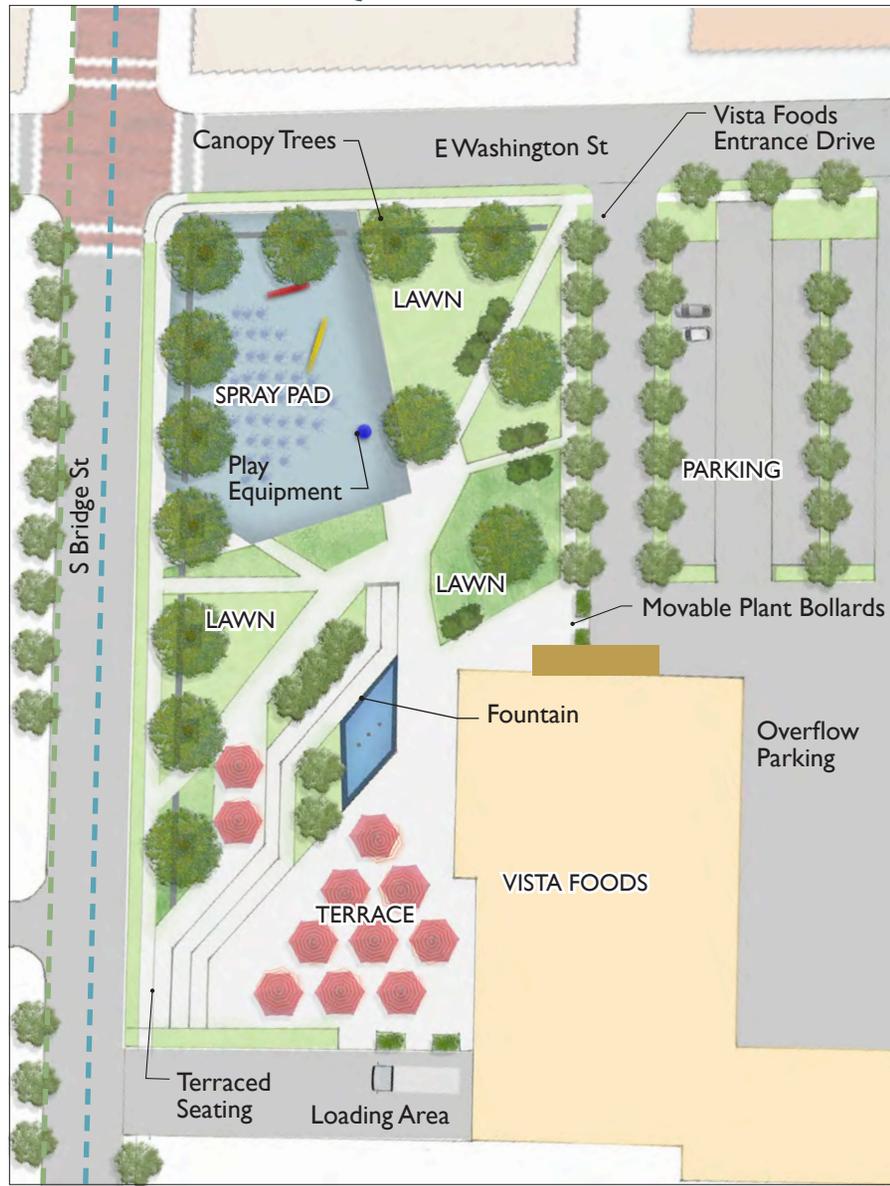
Playground - Located a few feet below street level, provides climbing equipment for small children. A set of slides along the sidewalk creates a playful connection down to the park.

Multi-Use Trail - Links pedestrians and bicyclists to the proposed West Loop on W Depot Street.



Conceptual Rendering of Playground

DOWNTOWN SQUARE



Conceptual Plan for Downtown Square



Conceptual Rendering of the Terrace Area

The new Downtown Square creates an active public space at the heart of downtown. The square also serves as a focal point for travelers approaching the Central Business District.

The proposed concept illustrates a terrace, spray pad, and lawn spaces connected by a series of paths.

Terrace - Movable furniture and terraced steps allow people to gather around a water feature. The terrace area can also be used to host small events; such as a movie night or live music.

Spray Pad - Provides an interactive play area for kids on the northwest corner the square. Canopy trees frame the splash pad and lawn area; providing shade for pedestrians.

Parking - Trees and islands help screen and improve the aesthetics of the Vista Foods parking lot. By formalizing the parking area, this concept improves traffic flow and access to the store while clearly defining its entrance.

EDMUND STREET PARK & RECREATION AREA



Conceptual Plan for Park Improvements and Recreation Area

During the public outreach process, residents expressed the need for more recreational amenities for all population groups; particularly the youth.

The concept for Edmund Street park illustrates a recreational complex that would offer a variety of outdoor activities to a wide range of users.

In addition to improving existing amenities, the concept proposes the construction of a new community facility on the existing County bus garage. This new facility features a covered pavilion, outdoor seating areas, and two pools.

Trees and plantings on the north and west side of the park create a gateway to the Bedford Science and Technology Center (BSTC). In addition, terraced seating by the running track allows the central green area of the park to be used as an amphitheater or outdoor classroom.

The goal is for the new park to function as a community anchor on the south end of Bridge Street and provide a destination for users of the proposed multi-use trail.



Conceptual Rendering of Gateway Entrance & Pool Center



GETTING STARTED

The School-to-School Area Plan serves as a vision and toolkit to guide future development along Bridge Street. It should be added to regulatory checklists to ensure plans incorporate the recommendations in this document and help achieve the goals laid out within its chapters.

A. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

POLICY

Existing regulations in the Town Zoning Ordinance could support or adversely impact future implementation of the School-to-School Area Plan. Further evaluation of existing regulations will be needed to identify conflicts with the goals outlined in this plan. A recent amendment of Section 702.02 of the Land Development Regulations is an example of a recent change in policy that better aligns with the community's vision for Bridge Street. The amendment adjusts off-street parking minimum level requirements for residential uses - from 2.0 spaces per unit to 1.5 spaces per unit. The change was proposed in an effort to match current regulations with the town's scale and pace of development; as well as to promote catalyst projects such as the adaptive reuse of the former Bedford Middle School.

RESOURCES

The successful implementation of proposed School-to-School initiatives will also depend on the Town's ability to leverage existing resources effectively. A strategic planning approach would focus on maximizing funding from a variety of sources:

Capital Improvement Plan and Annual Budget

It is intended that a series of proposed improvements be included in the town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) during future budget meetings in order to allocate funding for specific projects along Bridge Street. This chapter provides an Implementation Matrix Tool to help the Town identify and prioritize potential capital improvement projects to carry through implementation.

A new classification could be also added to the annual budget, designating Bridge Street as its own project. Having a separate budget item and discussion each year will help this important corridor see continued improvement throughout forthcoming administration terms. The yearly budget discussion will help keep Bridge Street a priority in regards to funding allocation.

Current and Future Planning Efforts

The Town should also seek for ways to align proposed School-to-School Area Plan recommendations with ongoing and upcoming planning efforts. A number of current initiatives are identified in the Introduction chapter of this report.

In coordination with Region 2000, the Bike and Pedestrian plan will focus on developing a system of multi-use paths as part of a town-wide greenway program. The multi-use trail concepts (east and west loops) proposed in the School-to-School Plan, can be incorporated and improved upon in the Bike and Pedestrian Plan as part of a larger network.

The upcoming Streetscape and Connectivity Plan will physical and visually connect the Bedford Visitor Center and National D-Day Memorial to downtown. The plan could be expanded to a Downtown Streetscape and Connectivity Plan for the design and implementation of complete streets as proposed in the Transportation and Circulation chapter.

Grant Opportunities

A number of State and Federal programs provide funding to support planning and implementation projects that promote the development of sustainable communities. Funding is available for a variety of uses, including community planning, affordable housing finance, technical assistance, research, and capital infrastructure investments. A strategic approach allows communities to leverage funds from multiple programs in an effective way; maximizing local resources and securing higher return on investment.

Navigating through the complex maze of opportunities can be daunting. The last section of this chapter provides a list of potential funding sources for the School-to-School Area Plan. The matrix provides general information regarding financing tools, tax credits, loans and grants, and other incentives that foster economic development.



Bike and Pedestrian Planning Process with Region 2000



Streetscape improvements Concepts by Hurt & Proffitt

PARTNERSHIPS & ORGANIZATION

Building Partnerships

This School to School master plan is broad in vision and scope, and its implementation will be dependent on the collective efforts not only of the Town of Bedford, but also its partner organizations as well the private sector. For the purposes of this plan, it is recommended that the School-to-School management team transition to an advisory committee to assist the Town in guiding implementation of the plan. The first task of this committee would be to share the plan vision, goals and recommendations to partner agencies such as Bedford County, Visit Bedford, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. This would include sharing the implementation matrix detailed below, designating a lead agency for each task, and soliciting participation from the necessary partners.

Creating a Grass-Roots Downtown Organization

The Town of Bedford has had an organization dedicated to downtown revitalization for over thirty years, beginning with its designation as one of the original Virginia Main Street communities in 1985. That organization has recently dissolved, but an energy and desire to continue a focus on downtown has been evident throughout the School to School planning process. Bedford is a strong community with a unique downtown, and it *deserves* to have a focused downtown effort.

While the Town of Bedford can be a partner, it is important that this effort be grass-roots in nature, led by members of the private sector including business and property owners, investors, and private citizens. There are a number of successful models throughout Virginia and beyond, but ultimately the structure needs to be what is “right” for Bedford. Therefore, a deliberate strategy is recommended to determine desired outcomes, and assess the potential for such an organization in Bedford. This would include:

- Assembling an informal group of business and property owners to assist the Town with the implementation of this plan. This could begin with representatives of the management team, as well as other key downtown stakeholders.
- Targeting additional volunteers with a desire to continue the revitalization of downtown, expanding the group of stakeholders and building its human capital.
- Creating strategic goals of the volunteer stakeholder committee. This should be narrow in scope, focusing on business development and downtown promotion.
- From these initial goals, identify and implement a “demonstration” project such as a business planning competition, entrepreneurial development activity, etc.

Once this grass-roots group has created strategic goals and implemented a successful project, it should consider formalizing its structure as an independent downtown development organization. This does not have to follow the previous model, but could certainly benefit from Virginia's great downtown support resources. This *could potentially* include:

- Participating in the Virginia Downtowns program offered by DHCD
- Formalizing as a 501(c)(3) non-profit with board and committees
- Creating a strategic work plan to further downtown revitalization
- Creating a funding strategy targeting the financial support of local government partners (Town, County, Tourism, Chamber, etc)
- Hiring an executive director to assist the board and lead the development of downtown
- Considering applying for and becoming re-designated as a Virginia Main Street community.

B. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The purpose of the matrix below is to serve as a tool for the Town of Bedford to prioritize the implementation of future projects and capital improvements. It provides a summary of recommendations and initiatives designed to achieve the goals and planning principles identified in the plan. Both, goals and planning principles, were developed based on public input.

C. INCENTIVES & FINANCING

The table following the Implementation Matrix provides general information on potential incentives and financing tools for the Town of Bedford to consider as part of their implementation efforts for the School-to-School Area Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Foster a Healthy and Vibrant Community

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
Goal: Encourage a Connected Network of Quality Open Spaces, Gathering Places, Parks, and a Strong Social Fabric			P+PS		
Re-design and expand amenities at Edmund Street Park Recreation Area (Catalyst Project)	County School Board County Parks & Rec	> Develop a master plan and feasibility study		Medium	
Repurpose brownfield site on Depot Street into a greenspace (Depot Street Park & Playground) (Catalyst Project)	Norfolk Southern Southern States County Parks & Rec	> Develop a master plan and feasibility study		Low	
Repurpose a portion of the Vista Food parking lot into a public place - downtown Square project (Catalyst Project)	Town of Bedford County EDA	> Develop a feasibility and site development study		High	
Centertown Park - physical improvements	Town of Bedford	> Seek funding for recommended improvements		High	
Existing public spaces	Town of Bedford County Parks & Rec County School Board	> Repair, maintain and improve existing public spaces to provide quality outdoor spaces for all. This includes tennis courts, restoring the track at Edmund Street park, playgrounds and passive green spaces. > Improve spaces and public accessibility with an emphasis on youth programming.		High	
Bedford Farmers Market - physical and programming improvements	YMCA or other recognized, established entity	> Seek funding for development of a strategic plan > Establish a "fresh chef" program that connects restaurants with farmers		High	
Goal: Increase Transportation Options To And Within Downtown			T+C		
Prioritize bringing Amtrak station to Bedford	Town of Bedford Region 2000 Amtrak DRPT Norfolk Southern	> Develop a feasibility and site development study > Explore funding options		High	2019
Provide a weekend transit circulator that connects visitors to destinations in downtown	Town of Bedford Visitor Center D-Day Memorial	> Develop feasibility study > Explore funding options		High	
Provide a weekly transit circulator that connects the community to basic services in downtown	Department of Social Services Bedford Community Health Foundation Town of Bedford Bedford County DRPT Large Employers	> Develop feasibility study > Explore funding options		High	
Consolidate public parking as needed	Town of Bedford Town Police Department County of Bedford	> Develop a parking study to better understand need vs. perceived need		Medium	
Goal: Ensure Pedestrian Safety and Promote Walkability			T+C / P+PS		
Formulate a complete streets plan that gives priority to walking, bicycling, and transit in future street design	Town of Bedford Region 2000 VDOT	> Look at model streetscape plans that include standards and guidelines for good design > Coordinate this effort with upcoming Bike and Pedestrian plan > Convert South Street (between Main St. and Washington St.) to a two-way street > Ensure future improvements follow guidelines for good street design		High	
Emphasize pedestrian improvements along Bridge Street sidewalks and crossings	Town of Bedford	> Create an inventory of sidewalks and prioritize projects		High	
Connect destinations with pedestrian corridors and streets	Town of Bedford Region 2000	> Initiate Bike and Ped planning process > Coordinate Bike and Ped plan with proposed east and west loop of this plan > Seek implementation grant (SAFETY-LU)		High	
Goal: Grow Residential Opportunities in Downtown Bedford			ED		

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
Use market analysis data as basis for targeted recruitment of residential developers	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Share Market Analysis findings (appendix of this report) with property owners of potential residential sites/developers, realtors, economic development partners > Create one-page economic development "cut-sheet" that summarizes residential potential.		High	2019
Identify other data sources to describe market opportunity.	Town of Bedford Redevelopment and Housing Authority Economic Development Authority Bedford County Economic Development	> Conduct dedicated mixed-use, mixed-income housing study through VHDA. > Engage local employers' and their workforce recruitment representatives to determine housing needs for their industries.		Low	
Organize an urban housing tour to promote downtown living opportunities	Town of Bedford Property Owners Bedford Historic Society	> Organize downtown living open house modeled after Roanoke's event > Organize lecture series by professionals with experience in housing redevelopment (architects, developers, code officials, etc.)		Low	
Encourage market-rate, for-sale and for-rent residential.	Town of Bedford Economic Development Authority	> Target development of residential based on market opportunity - \$750-\$1000/mo. rent - \$175k+ for sale (condominiums/townhomes in adaptive reuse or infill) > Visit regional developers (Roanoke, Lynchburg, Charlottesville, etc.) to present plan vision & opportunity.		Low	
Identify potential sites in downtown for residential units	Town of Bedford	> Create an inventory of infill sites and vacant upper floors of downtown commercial buildings that are suitable for residential. > Identify existing buildings suitable for adaptive reuse, or with potential for have mixed use that would include residential.		High	2019
Address barriers preventing redevelopment of upper story housing	Town of Bedford Property Owners	> Perform a code assessment of vacant upper floors in inventory > Engage an architect (or other specialized professional in building code for existing buildings) on an on-call basis to provide technical advice		High	
Recruit developers for upper floor residential conversion and infill development	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Hold periodic residential roundtable with development community > Consider creating economic development incentive program targeting residential - Economic development fund annual appropriation - Real Estate Rehab & Renovation program similar to Lynchburg - Other incentives > Identify site-specific opportunities for public-private partnerships (when development opportunities emerge) that could include parking provisions, site assembly, land swaps, etc.		Medium	
Encourage development of short term housing such as corporate apartments, short-term rental	Town of Bedford			Medium	

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
Goal: Expand Restaurant, Retail, and Entertainment Choices			ED		
Assess what's needed to promote a balanced mix of commercial and retail businesses in downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Inventory current businesses along Bridge Street and adjacent blocks > Compile a business wish list > Share market research with existing business owners > Use market analysis data as basis for targeted recruitment of retail uses		High	2019
Target recruitment of new restaurant or brewery in downtown	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Use market assessment findings from School-to-School plan for recruitment efforts		High	On-going
Establish business development programming	Town of Bedford DHCD	> Organize a Community Business Launch competition > Consider similar projects like Pop-Up Marion entrepreneurial training programs and competitions		High	2019-2020
Encourage promotions that help businesses be more successful	Town of Bedford Tourism Department Private Businesses Downtown Bedford Organization	> Create small regular events geared towards locals/visitors, but with strategic goals: movie nights- family focused, weekly music - promote restaurants, art/wine walks - promote artisans > Create informal group of restauranteurs to consider event planning, cross promotion, etc.		High	
Promote mixed-use development	Town of Bedford	> As large opportunities for redevelopment come up, encourage project to include a mix of uses (civic, public, private)		High	On-going
Goal: Increase Economic Activity and Business Attraction			ED		
Promote vacant storefronts and underutilized properties as opportunities for redevelopment	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Inventory current vacant spaces in downtown including street level and upper floor space. > Determine potential uses based on demand for retail & housing, but also location, parking/loading needs, upfit, accessibility, etc. > Assess the potential of a Vacancy Tax (legal counsel)		High	2019
Work with owners of vacant properties in the study area to explore potential redevelopment ventures	Town of Bedford Private Sector	> Share market findings, inventory, and potential uses with owners of vacant properties.		High	2019
Goal: Promote Bedford's Growing Local Artisan Economy			ED		
Develop new and support existing entrepreneurial programs integral to Bedford's artisan economy	Town of Bedford DHCD	> Coordinate with DHCD on Community Business Launch (CBL) programming targeting creative businesses/artisans		High	2019-2020
Cooperatively market Bedford's artisan economy	Private Businesses & Artisans Bower Center for the Arts Bedford Community Orchestra Bedford Library Event Planners	> Create formal group of artisans/creative individuals to consider event planning, cross promotion, etc. > Expand 2nd Fridays to engage/cooperate with local restauranteurs and businesses.		Medium	
Create market position to establish Bedford as a destination for creators and artisans	Private Businesses & Artisans Bower Center for the Arts Bedford Community Orchestra Bedford Library Event Planners	> As part of community image development in gateway project, establish distinct identity of "Bedford Made" or similar to promote the wealth of artisan resources > Consider signature annual event focusing on the Arts bringing in local and national artists in competitive, juried event. > Create annual local artist competition tailored to Bedford. Other communities have done simple "works of art" competitions where winners are used on banners, painted bricks, murals, etc.		Medium	
Launch Bedford Local Artisan brand	Private Businesses & Artisans Bower Center for the Arts Bedford Community Orchestra Bedford Library Event Planners	> Establish a branding team to identify a local artisan identity and initiate a branding campaign > Infuse local artisan brand into the public realm of downtown Bedford > Encourage businesses and property owners to embrace new identity		Medium	

Enhance & Preserve the Unique Character of Downtown Bedford

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
Goal: Increase Green Infrastructure along Bridge Street			UD		
Require new development projects to incorporate green stormwater strategies	Town of Bedford Developers			High	
Establish a Bridge Street Tree program	Town of Bedford	> Define and publicize a part-time position for an arborist that will advise on a street tree plan and maintain street trees		High	
Green and screen parking lots				Medium	
Goal: Maximize the Retention, Adaptive Reuse, and Preservation of Bedford's Historic Resources			HS		
Revise the National Register of Historic Places Historic District nomination and update / expand as needed to include sections of South Bridge Street.	Town of Bedford Historic Society DHR	> Continue conversations with DHR to identify needed steps for the nomination of another National Historic District Nomination in South Bridge Street		Medium	
Identify contributing historic resources and pursue nomination	Town of Bedford Bedford Historic Society DHR	> Collect needed information for Susie G. Gibson School and the Bedford Training School (School Board Administration Building) to pursue Register nomination		High	2019
Adopt a local Commercial Historic District Overlay and establish a design review process	Town of Bedford	> Review the sufficiency of the current National Historic District boundary to protect significant properties and to provide appropriate design regulation for contiguous properties		Low	
Increase awareness and education programs on local architecture	Bedford Historic Society Bower Center for the Arts	> Organize lecture series on Bedford's architectural history > Organize oral history projects		Low	
Goal: Use Historic Properties as Development Catalysts and Focal Points for Revitalization			HS		
Showcase recent and upcoming redevelopment projects as catalysts for future revitalization and economic growth	Town of Bedford Developers	> As soon as legally possible, unveil plans for the redevelopment of the former Middle School and recognize the impact of this type of project on downtown revitalization		High	
Coordinate with businesses and landowners to publicize the existing façade improvement program.	Town of Bedford DHCD	> Organize educational workshops and training		High	On-going
Goal: Improve Aesthetics and Add Streetscape Amenities in Downtown			UD / T+C		
Obtain urban design expertise on a regular basis for the Town	Town of Bedford	> Engage an architect / landscape architect / urban designer on an on-call bases to provide urban design expertise to the area		High	
Promote outdoor dining and retail in downtown	Bower Center for the Arts Local Artists Schools (BSTC, CVCC)	> Take on Parklet pilot projects on Bridge Street > Participate in Park(ing) Day - every September near Centerfest		Medium	
Transform the section of Bridge St. between Main and Washington St. into a shared commercial street that can be used as a pedestrian mall certain days of the week or during events	Town of Bedford Downtown Bedford Organization Business Owners	> Research case studies of successful shared commercial streets conversions > Engage business and property owners on that section of Bridge Street in conversations about the potential change > Test community attitude towards concept with pilot parklet projects > Assess the potential impact and feasibility and shared with the downtown business community		High	
Integrate more art into the public realm of Bridge Street and downtown	Bower Center for the Arts Local Artists Business Owners	> Research model public art programs > Establish a Public Art Program for downtown > Integrate art into street furniture (benches, trash cans, etc.) and bike racks		Low	

Position Downtown Bedford as a regional destination	PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
	Goal: Better Promote Downtown Bedford			ED		
	Create a unified identity for downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > As part of community image development in gateway project, establish distinct but connected name, brand identity, and market district for downtown. > Similarly, create connected graphic identity for any other character district (local historic district) or existing events (Centerfest) 		High	
	Create dedicated marketing tools to promote downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford Tourism Department Private Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Shopping & Dining guide (map) > Centrally located kiosk in downtown (near parking resource) > Destination website branded for downtown > Destination & event banners. 		Medium	
	Goal: Make Downtown more Appealing and Accessible to all Population Groups			UD		
	Actively promote family-friendly entertainment businesses to relocate to downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Conduct a survey to identify the types of entertainment businesses wanted by the community. > Compare results with market assessment performed as part of this plan > Develop a recruitment plan 		Medium	
Enhance gateways to be more inviting	Town of Bedford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Continue efforts on gateway improvement projects 		High	2019	

Harness a strong sense of community along Bridge Street

PROJECT/INITIATIVES	KEY PARTNERS	ACTION STEPS	PLAN COMPONENT	PRIORITY	TIMELINE
Goal: Expand Awareness and Support for the Local Artisan Culture			ED		
Establish an Arts & Culture District	Town of Bedford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Create map and brochure to highlight artisan destinations within Bedford. > Create Public Art Plan with long term goal of placemaking projects via the arts. 		Medium	
Implement a coordinated calendar to promote art & cultural events in downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford Private Businesses & Artisans Bower Center for the Arts Bedford Community Orchestra Bedford Library Event Planners Tourism Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Promote use of the existing calendar through the DestinationBedfordVA.com site 		Medium	
Goal: Celebrate Local History			HS / P+PS		
Organize tours, plays, and storytelling events that highlight education history in downtown Bedford	Town of Bedford Bedford Historic Society Bedford Museum BSTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Convene a meeting of interested parties to outline a community program > Develop a digital self-guided historic tour to build on the D-Day Homefront Tour 		Low	
Improvement project to Pogue Park	Town of Bedford Bedford Historic Society Bedford Get Together Wharton Memorial Foundation Local Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Work with partners to develop a design > Explore funding options for improvements 		High	2019

INCENTIVES & FINANCING TOOLS

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
GRANTS AND LOANS						
Visual Arts & Design Arts	National Endowment for the Arts	\$5,000 - \$100,000	Visual Art programs provides matching grants for art-in-public places. The Design Arts program provides architecture, planning, preservation, urban design, etc.	1:1 match	Arts & Urban Design	www.arts.gov
Community Development Block Grant	Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	Planning grant: up to \$25,000 Improvement grant: up to \$2 million	For projects that benefit low-and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate of slums or blight, and address an urgent community need	Units of local government in non-entitlement localities. Localities may partner with planning district commissions, nonprofit organizations and other entities.	Planning Grants: project development Community Improvement Grants: project implementation	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/downtown-revitalization/cdbg/10-community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html
Virginia Outdoors Fund	VA Department of Conservation & Recreation	Varies	Provides matching grants for acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities	Varies	Design and construction or trails	http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants
Kodak American Greenways	Eastman Kodak Company The Conservation Fund National Geographic Society	\$500 - \$2,500	Provides small grants to stimulate the planning and design of greenways in communities throughout America	Non-profits (preferred) Public Agencies	Greenway planning and design	http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants
Rural Development	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Varies	Provides loans, loans guarantees, grants, and technical assistance	Municipalities and nonprofits (population <50,000)	Small business creation, job retention / expansion, community facilities, housing	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (STBG)	Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)	Up to 80% of project cost (Reimbursement)	Provides funds for projects meeting one or more of ten criteria	20% of project cost from local sources	Transportation alternatives, safe routes to school, recreational trails, and boulevards from divided highways.	http://www.virginiadot.org/business/prenhancegrants.asp
Urban & Community Forestry Assistance	Virginia Department of Forestry	\$1,000 - \$20,000 (matching)	Provides options for various grant programs and technical assistance / guidance to implement a tree ordinance	Non-profits, civic and community groups, local governments	Establishing a tree ordinance Perform a street tree assessment	http://www.dof.virginia.gov/forestry/community/index.htm
Federal Brownfields	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Up to \$500,000	Provides direct funding for assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, environmental job training, technical assistance, training, and research. The program collaborates with other EPA programs, federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfield activities.	Local government or non-profit organizations 20% match required	Site assessment, clean-up, and revitalization efforts	https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding
Virginia Brownfields Restoration and Economic Redevelopment Assistance Fund (VBAF)	Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)	Up to \$500,000	Provides grants or loans to local governments to promote restoration and redevelopment of brownfield sites and to address environmental problems or obstacles to reuse so these sites can be effectively marketed to new economic development prospects	Local government 1:1 match required	Planning, assessment & remediation	https://www.vedp.org/brownfields
Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF)	Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	Determined at the time of allocation	Leverages local and private resources to achieve market-driven redevelopment of vacant and deteriorated industrial and commercial properties.	Eligible properties: Formerly used for manufacturing, warehousing, mining, transportation and power production. Large-scale white elephant structures (department stores, theaters, hotels and shopping centers) Structures whose original intended use was solely residential are not eligible 1:1 match required	Revitalization of vacant non-residential structures whose poor condition creates physical and economic blight to the surrounding area in which the structure is located	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/blighted-structures/industrial-revitalization-fund-irf.html

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
Community Business Launch (CBL)	VA Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD)	Varies	Provide the tools to effectively prepare multiple entrepreneurs to operate successful businesses in a downtown or neighborhood commercial district and allow them to compete for funding to start up their new endeavor.	Local government and non-profits	Help communities begin to develop a coordinated, comprehensive sustainable environment that identifies, launches and supports community-based entrepreneurs and small business at all levels of development.	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/community-business-launch-cbl.html
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund	Weyerhaeuser	Min. \$1,000	Supports communities where they have a significant presence or business interest. Communities range from rural to metropolitan, each with unique priorities and needs. Employees serve on local advisory committees for the Giving Fund and develop funding priorities within four focus areas to support their particular communities.	Local government, non-profit located within their "giving footprint"	Funding in four focus areas: Affordable Housing and Shelter Education and Youth Development Environmental Stewardship Human Services, Civic and Cultural Growth	https://www.weyerhaeuser.com/sustainability/communities/community-investment/giving-fund/
TAX CREDITS						
Federal Investment Tax Credit for Certified Historic Rehabilitation	National Park Service	20% of rehabilitation cost (certified historic structure)	Federal income tax credits are available for the costs of rehabilitation projects	Income-producing properties Individually listed on the National Register or contributing to a National Register Historic District. Credits. Can be carried forward 20 years.	Historic preservation and revitalization	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax-credits/
State Tax Credit for Historic Rehabilitation	Virginia Department of Historic Resources	25% eligible renovation costs	State income tax credit is available for rehabilitating a historic structure listed (or eligible for listing) on the Virginia Landmarks Register (individually or as a contributing structure in a historic district)	Credits may be used by individuals, partnerships, and corporations. Can be carried forward for up to 10 years	Historic preservation and revitalization	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax-credits/
Enterprise Zone	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	Designates local districts within which businesses creating jobs and improving facilities can receive: > State tax credits on income and sales taxes for real property improvements > Grants for creating jobs > State and local incentives for job creation	Available to businesses and zone investors who create jobs and invest in real property within the boundaries of enterprise zones.	Varies	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/startingexpanding-a-business/virginia-enterprise-zone-vez-business.html
New Markets Tax Credits	Community Development Financial Institutions Fund	39% of original investment amount claimed over seven years	Incentivizes community development and economic growth through the use of tax credits that attract private investment to distressed communities.	NMTC Program applicants must be certified as CDEs by the CDFI Fund	Job creation, business development, revitalization	https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx
Arts & Cultural Districts*	Municipality	Varies	Under §15.2-1129.1 of the Code of Virginia, localities may establish arts and cultural districts for the purpose of increasing awareness and support for the arts and culture in the locality.	Criteria for what qualifies as an "arts" business is at the discretion of the locality. Incentives should be provided to businesses that positively contribute to the spectrum of arts and cultural activities and venues within the targeted area	Administer incentives and provide certain regulatory flexibility to qualifying businesses or entities within the boundaries of the district	https://vacode.org/15.2-1129.1/
Tourism Zones*	Municipality	Varies	Under § 58.1-3851 of the Code of Virginia, any city, county, or town may establish, by ordinance, one or more Tourism Zones to provide tax incentives and regulatory flexibility to encourage tourism related business development. They serve both new and existing businesses whose primary purpose is to establish desirable destinations to attract tourists from outside of the community.	Targeted businesses include attractions & entertainment, lodging, restaurants, and specialty retail	Create an environment for visitors that will deliver a memorable experience or promote educational opportunities while increasing travel-related revenue	https://www.vatc.org/tdfp/applicationprocess/tourismzone/

PROGRAM / TOOL	AGENCY	FUNDING AVAILABLE	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY / REQUIREMENTS	USES	RESOURCE
Opportunity Zones	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)	Varies	Allow investors to receive tax benefits on currently unrealized capital gains by investing those gains in qualified census tracts (Opportunity Zones).	Qualification of Opportunity Investment Funds and Qualified Opportunity Investments must be written at the federal level and are expected to be formalized later this calendar year	Promote revitalization through private sector investment	http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/opp-zones.html
TAXATION & FINANCING						
Community Development Authorities	Municipality	Varies	Can be created to issue tax exempt revenue bonds to develop and manage facilities and services including roads, parking, utilities, streetlights, landscaping, security, maintenance, recreation, schools, etc. A separate and additional tax on real estate may be assessed to pay the debt service on the bonds	Local government	Improvement projects for revitalization, community and economic development	https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter51/section15.2-5158/
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	Municipality	Varies	Can be created to stimulate private investment in development project areas. District boundaries are set and the current or "base assessed value" of tax revenue is determined. In the ensuing years, the base values continues to go to the locality's general fund, but any increase in revenue due to redevelopment (the increment) is placed in a separate TIF fund.	Local government	Pay off debt incurred to provide redevelopment incentives such as land assembly and site preparation, infrastructure improvements, etc.	https://vacode.org/2016/58.1/III/32/4.1/
Real Estate Tax Abatement	Municipality	Up to 90% of the structure's value after renovation	"Partial exemption from taxation of real estate on which a structure no less than 20 years of age has been substantially rehabilitated"	Local government	Taxes are paid on the pre-rehab value of the building for up to 15 years on residential, commercial or industrial properties. Abatement up to 25 years is allowed for hotel/motel properties at least 35 years of age rehabilitated for residential use.	https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title58.1/chapter32/section58.1-3220.01/
SUPPLEMENTAL POLICY TOOLS						
Vacant Property Registration Ordinances (VPROs)	Municipality	N/A	The purpose of the ordinance is to: > Ensure that owners of vacant properties are known to the city and other interested parties and can be reached if necessary > Ensure that owners of vacant properties are aware of the obligations of ownership under relevant codes and regulations > Ensure that owners meet minimum standards of maintenance of vacant properties.	Local government	The fee structure established in the ordinance may serve additional purposes, including covering costs incurred by the municipality to deal with vacant properties, and under some circumstances, motivating owners to restore and reuse vacant properties.	https://www.communityprogress.net/tool-1--vacant-property-registration-ordinances--pages-257.php
Tree Ordinance	Municipality	N/A	Any locality with a population density of at least 75 persons per square mile or any locality within the Chesapeake Bay watershed may adopt an ordinance providing for the planting and replacement of trees during the development process	Local government	Preserve existing trees and increase tree canopy	https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter9/section15.2-961/
Local Historic District	Municipality	N/A	Preservation ordinance is a local statute that provisions for designating historic resources, establishes a design review board (also called a preservation or historic district commission), and creates a design review process and guidelines.	Local government	Protect and increase property values, promote tourism and economic development	https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-steps-to-establish-a-local-historic-district#.W83uU1VkhEZ

*Examples of Art & Cultural Districts and Tourism Zones in Virginia is available in the Appendix