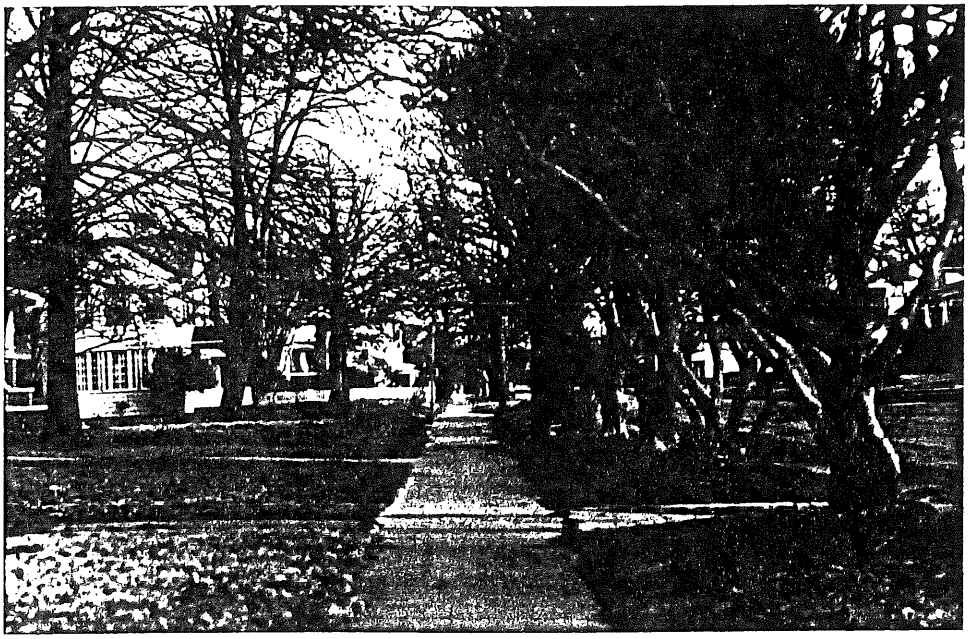
PRESERVATION PLAN
for the

TOWN OF CAPE CHARLES

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA



Prepared for the

Planning Commission of the
Municipal Corporation of Cape Charles

Cape Charles, Virginia

by

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Prepared for the

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Cape Charles, Virginia, is a small town located on the Chesapeake Bay at the southern end of the Eastern Shore in Northampton County. In December of 1994, John Milner Associates, Inc. (JMA) was retained by the Municipal Corporation of Cape Charles and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to prepare a preservation plan for the town. Cape Charles is a railroad town, created in 1884 as the southern terminus of a north/south railroad line constructed along the Eastern Shore. At Cape Charles, railroad cars traveling south were loaded onto barges for the trip across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. At the town's peak period of development in the early twentieth century, as many as three hundred cars per day were transported through the town's harbor. With the decline of the railroad industry following World War II, however, the town began to experience difficult times. Over the past fifty years, the Cape Charles economy has steadily declined, with no new economic activity available to substitute for the former volume of railroad business upon which the town's well-being was based.

In part because of the low level of economic activity in Cape Charles in the mid- to late-twentieth century, the town has experienced little physical change since the 1920s. As a result, the town retains a high degree of historical integrity from its forty-year period of growth and development. In 1989, Cape Charles was surveyed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

In recent years, several initiatives have been underway with the goal of revitalizing the economy in Cape Charles. First, local business and community leaders have been working to enhance the town as a tourist destination, taking advantage of the appeal of the Eastern Shore's natural resources and the region's proximity to population centers along the east coast. The late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century character of the town is a key element in the town's interest to tourists. Second, a large retirement community, called the Accawmacke Plantation, is proposed by Brown and Root I, Inc. that would completely surround the existing historic town and increase its size fivefold. The proposed Accawmacke Plantation project is currently seeking to overcome a final layer of environmental hurdles related to its planned marina.

Finally, Cape Charles has been selected as the site of a proposed Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park which has been the focus of the efforts of Northampton County's Sustainable Development Initiative and a variety of state and federal agencies, including the President's Council on Sustainable Development, the US Department of

Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Virginia Coastal Resources Management Program.

In large part because of these initiatives—i.e., the importance of the town's historic character to the success of the initiatives and the potential effect of the initiatives upon the town's historic character—Cape Charles was selected by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to receive a grant for the preparation of this preservation plan.

As a part of the proposed work in the preparation of this preservation plan, JMA undertook an informal survey of preservation plans that have been prepared for towns in the Mid-Atlantic region. Individuals in the preservation community were contacted by JMA and examples of preservation plans were collected from representative towns in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina. Through this informal survey, JMA found that the term "preservation plan" may take on many different meanings. Technically, the preparation of a preservation plan most frequently involves the survey and analysis of a town's historic resources, the creation of a historic district, and the adoption of a historic district ordinance with design review powers. During JMA's informal survey, the request for a town's preservation plan usually resulted in the receipt of a set of design guidelines for a local historic district.

In Cape Charles, the town's historic resources have already been surveyed and a National Register Historic District has been created. The town has no local historic district and, consequently, no historic district ordinance. There are mixed feelings among town residents with regard to historic preservation. While there is a general appreciation of the town's historic character in some sectors, there is a segment of the population that is strongly opposed to government interference in private affairs. This opposition accepts the need for zoning controls as part of the town's responsibilities but is suspicious of a town ordinance with a design review process as a way of preserving the town's historic character. While such suspicions are reasonable, understandable, and can be addressed, a general resignation among some of the town's residents that things in Cape Charles will never improve is disturbing.

In working on the preservation plan, JMA spent several months meeting with various groups and individuals, participating in the Sustainable Development Initiative, becoming familiar with the town's historic resources, and reviewing a wealth of town and county planning and development background information. JMA then met periodically with the Cape Charles Planning Commission to review planning issues and drafts of chapters of the preservation plan. The overall approach of this preservation plan is outlined in Chapter Three, *Preservation Approach*. In short, JMA has attempted to take a very comprehensive view of planning and development issues in Cape Charles and the

role that preservation and enhancement of community character can play in addressing and resolving those issues. The fundamental premise of the plan is that economic development is the most critical need of the town, that the improvement of the town's physical character is important to any economic development scenario, and that historic preservation is the central element in enhancing the town's physical character.

In many respects, this document is more of a generalized master plan for the future development of the town, building on the town's historic character, than it is a preservation plan. It views preservation as a means of inducing, or at least supporting, economic development. It does not advocate preservation for preservation's sake, as much as the quality of the town's historic resources may warrant it. This document reviews the existing physical condition of the town, outlines an approach to the revitalization of community character, and makes area-by-area recommendations for implementing such an approach. The potential for adaptive reuse of the town's commercial buildings is discussed. The roadways into Cape Charles are reviewed with an eye to preserving and enhancing their physical character, as are the community park, beach, open space, downtown commercial district, and residential neighborhoods. The relationship between the town and the county and the town's need to be actively engaged with the county's planning approach is discussed. JMA appreciates having had the opportunity to work on this preservation plan with the residents of Cape Charles and sincerely hopes that it makes some contribution to the long-term goals of the town.

CHAPTER ONE
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The town of Cape Charles was created in 1884 as the southern terminus of the first railroad to be constructed on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad (the NYP&N) was established in 1882 through the consolidation of several previously-chartered, but unconstructed, railroads. Construction work began on the NYP&N in April, 1884, extending southward from Pocomoke at the Maryland/Virginia border. On October 25, 1884, the track was completed to the location of Cape Charles, and in November, 1884, the first train service began on the line. At Cape Charles, railroad cars traveling south were loaded onto barges for the trip across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. At the town's peak period of development, as many as three hundred cars per day were transported through the town's harbor.

The NYP&N was formed principally through the efforts of two established railroad men, William Lawrence Scott (1828-1891) and Alexander Johnson Cassatt (1839-1906). William Scott was born in Washington, DC, and raised, following the death of his father around 1835, in Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Between the ages of fourteen and twenty, Scott served as a page in the House of Representatives. In 1846 he moved to Erie, Pennsylvania, were he was engaged in the coal-forwarding business. Scott formed a profitable partnership in the coal and iron mining business in 1850. In 1853, he married into a successful Erie family whose wealth was derived from railroads. Through his position and the railroad connections of his in-laws, Scott eventually became president of the Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad. He also had significant financial interests in the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific; Canade Soutern; Union Pacific; and Canadian Pacific Railroads.

Alexander Cassatt was trained at Darmstadt University, Germany, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. In 1861, Cassatt joined the Pennsylvania Railroad, with which he was affiliated for twenty-one years. He left the company in 1882, by which time he had worked his way to the position of first vice president. Cassatt became wealthy through his work with the Pennsylvania Railroad and through his other personal investments. He unsuccessfully promoted the possibilities of an Eastern Shore railroad to the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and may have left his position as vice president in part to pursue this financial venture with Scott.

In May, 1883, Scott purchased three plantations comprising approximately 2,509 acres from the heirs of former Virginia Governor Littleton Waller Tazewell (1774-1860). Of this land, 40 acres were ceded to the NYP&N and 136 acres went to create the town of Cape Charles.

Cape Charles was laid out with 644 lots measuring 40 feet by 140 feet. The first lot, number 615, at the corner of Mason Avenue and Strawberry Street (currently Savage's Drugstore) was purchased in August, 1884. Most of the lots sold over the first two years of the town's establishment were located along Mason and Randolph Avenues. The number of lots sold varied from year to year. A peak of 46 lots were sold in the year 1886 compared to 7 and 6 lots sold in the years 1889 and 1895 respectfully.

A map of Cape Charles was prepared in 1887 by William Bauman, a civil engineer and a director of the NYP&N. The map shows the entire area of the present town, including the historic town, harbor, and surrounding farm land. The map is an important document for understanding how the town's "urban" and agricultural landscapes were configured and used in 1887. Within the street grid of Cape Charles, the map shows construction on at least 57 lots by that date (see Figure 3). 26 of these lots were located along Mason Avenue, 18 of which were between Plum Street and Pine Street at what was at that time the west end of town. These 26 lots represented 46% of the lots then available along Mason Avenue. The Bauman map shows 12 lots constructed along Washington Avenue on the north side of town. 17 lots are shown constructed along Tazewell Avenue, 10 of these between Nectarine and Plum. The map also shows railroad buildings and other facilities in the vicinity of the harbor.

In 1897, after the death of William Scott, lots were laid out along the south side of the harbor where Scott's private railroad siding had been located. Called the Hollywood Development, this subdivision was unsuccessful, with only three lots being sold through 1910.

In 1911, the Scott Trustees began selling lots in the Sea Cottage Addition on the west side of town. The Sea Cottage Addition was created by filling tidal wetlands between Pine Street and the bay and resulted in the creation of 145 new lots. Two additional blocks were created along each east/west streets with the exception of the block between Jefferson Avenue and Washington Avenue. The width of the new blocks varied, as the north/south streets, Beach Avenue and Harbor Avenue, were not parallel to the original grid of the town. By 1955, one hundred twenty-eight of the lots in the Sea Cottage Addition had been sold.

Cape Charles owes its existence to the railroad. Because of the unique role the town played as the Eastern Shore terminus of the NYP&N, Cape Charles prospered and developed into the largest town on the Shore—a rank it still holds. The town saw a peak of development and prosperity during the early twentieth century. This development essentially ended with the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the town's prosperity slowly ebbed away with the decline of the railroad industry following World War II.

Ironically, Cape Charles is now a railroad town almost without a railroad. Although the railroad and barges continue limited freight service through the town, the low level of service is no longer capable of supporting Cape Charles economically. Passenger service to Cape Charles was discontinued in the 1950s.[1]

[1] This brief historical overview was extracted in its entirety from Pat Spriggs, *Cape Charles, Virginia, and the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad (Old Dominion University, December 7, 1988)* and the *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, DHR File No. 65-166, prepared by David Edwards and John Salmon in 1989. While Ms. Spriggs' paper is a good start, as mentioned in Chapter Four of this document, a more detailed history of Cape Charles is waiting to be written.

Chapter Two
Summary of Existing Conditions

SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Over the past thirty years, the Town of Cape Charles has been in a state of relative somnolence during which the town's economy has declined and very little physical change has occurred. Additive changes made to Cape Charles have been largely government-sponsored and financed, including construction of two assisted-housing complexes and a residential neighborhood for Coast Guard personnel. Exceptions to this generalization include the construction of a limited number of single-family residences and several small- and medium-sized commercial buildings. In general, these additions to the town have not been visually sympathetic with its historic character. Because of their limited extent, however, the additions have not adversely affected the overall integrity of the town. No major alterations or additions have been made to Cape Charles' overall organization, street patterns, boundaries, or lot configurations, all of which date from the town's period of historical significance and have a high degree of integrity.

Since mid-century, change in Cape Charles has been primarily subtractive. The most meaningful change to the town has been the disappearance of the railroad- and ferry-related structures that were once the town's core and its reason for existence. The Town of Cape Charles was laid out with a focus upon the railroad yard and harbor. The numerous structures that once filled this area are evident today only through historic photographs and post cards; most of the structures have been demolished. At present the area is largely vacant, with remaining commercial activity tremendously reduced. Like many late-nineteenth century industrial towns from which the symbols of former industrial activity have been erased, the residential and commercial areas of the town that remain are silent remnants of a past era, awaiting new purpose.

From the standpoint of preservation, and potential revitalization and reuse, Cape Charles has been fortunate. The town's physical isolation and limited size have resulted in a high degree of preservation and integrity with respect to its historic character. Unlike many similar nineteenth century industrial communities, Cape Charles has not suffered waves of influences from conflicting and sporadic economic tendencies, such as significant strip development and suburbanization, compounding and confusing its state of decline. The town's problems have a simple clarity and are of a limited and manageable physical extent.

With the exception of the loss of railroad- and ferry-related resources, subtractive change in Cape Charles, like additive change, has been limited considering the level and extended period of economic decline. Some residential and commercial buildings have been lost to fire or neglect. Vacancy and neglect in non-owner-occupied buildings have

been an increasing problem. Several modest but historically significant residences are badly deteriorated and currently scheduled for demolition. Other vacant residential and commercial buildings are threatened.

In general, however, the character of negative physical change in Cape Charles has been small in scale. It is evident in an apparent lack of appreciation of existing buildings and in a resulting lack of appropriate maintenance. To some extent, the overall lack of maintenance can be attributed to difficult economic circumstances. However, *inappropriate* maintenance must be attributed to either a lack of interest and appreciation for existing buildings or to a lack of knowledge of appropriate maintenance techniques.

In a number of instances, historically significant building details have been modified or removed in favor of more contemporary, frequently inappropriate, substitutions. Obvious examples include the replacement of wood porch posts in residential structures with decorative metal posts or the covering of original wood siding with asbestos, asphalt, and, more recently, aluminum and vinyl siding. In commercial structures, negative small-scale changes are evident in the replacement of original street-level storefronts with contemporary storefront materials. Comparison of historic photographs of Cape Charles with matching contemporary views illustrate how these changes adversely affect the character of both individual buildings and the town as a whole. However, because of their limited extent, most of these small-scale changes are easily reversible. Cape Charles' historically significant buildings retain a high degree of historical integrity.

Cape Charles' most important asset in terms of its potential revitalization is its wide range of building types. The town's residential buildings range from small bungalows and tightly-spaced single-family houses, suitable for starter, retirement, and modest-income housing, to more substantial middle-income homes, to large showplace residences. These residential buildings are grouped into neighborhoods that blend one to the next, yet maintain a distinctive character.

The town's commercial buildings are located primarily along Mason Avenue. They include small, converted frame residences, one- and two-story retail structures, multi-story masonry buildings, and monumental buildings. These commercial buildings have a variety of different-sized spaces and are suitable for a variety of different commercial and business uses. The buildings present economic opportunities that should be specifically analyzed and marketed.

Like the town's buildings, the landscapes in Cape Charles suffer from a lack of general maintenance and a loss of historic fabric. Also like the buildings, however, the overall integrity of the landscapes remains intact. There is a wide discrepancy in the town in the level of care and maintenance of individual properties and neighborhoods.

Many individual properties and neighborhoods are fully vegetated, with lawn, groundcover, shrubs, understory, and canopy trees. A number of properties have retained significant site features such as wood picket fences, which are particularly appropriate to the town's historical period of significance. Many other properties, however, are barren of vegetation and poorly maintained. The majority of these properties appear to be rental properties, as opposed to owner-occupied. A number of properties have had chain-link fencing installed, which is institutional in appearance and inappropriate to the character of the town. The most significant of these is the school property, the town's central park, the effect of which is to make it unappealing, uninviting, and forbidding.

Vacant lots have been a problem in Cape Charles. A number of lots in the town have never been developed. Some vacant lots have been recently created through fire or the demolition of existing buildings. Cape Charles was originally laid out in a grid of lots forty feet wide. As a result, much of the earlier single-family detached housing is very close together. Larger properties were created by combining two or three of the smaller lots. Many of these larger properties are still considered subdivided. While the forty-foot-wide lots exist as legal entities, the town's zoning does not currently permit building on the small lots because the extremely small side yards that result are a hazard to health in terms of light and air, and in fighting potential fires. (An exception exists for rebuilding residences lost to fire.) Many existing vacant lots are therefore potentially unusable and are not well maintained.

Most important and visually dramatic in terms of the visual character of the town's landscapes, whether private yard, public park, or streetscape, is the presence of deciduous canopy trees. Canopy trees give life to a streetscape, providing shade, color, and, most importantly, spatial variety with reference to buildings, streets, and people. Yards and streetscapes in Cape Charles that have mature, deciduous canopy trees have strong, appealing character even when adjacent buildings lack integrity, are poorly maintained, or are in poor condition. Unfortunately, large areas of the town are barren of canopy trees. Where trees exist, many have been poorly pruned by the local utility company, resulting in a grotesque, stunted, amputated appearance.

Also important to the town's landscapes are the mature plantings of crepe myrtle. Crepe myrtle is a signature plant in Cape Charles, striking to visitors from other regions and memorable to tourists. The town's crepe myrtle is generally well maintained. Introduction of new canopy trees and proper care and pruning of existing trees are the single most effective way to build a strong visual character in Cape Charles.

CHAPTER THREE
PRESERVATION APPROACH

PRESERVATION APPROACH

The preservation plan for the Town of Cape Charles seeks to identify features that contribute to the physical character of the town and to develop a design approach toward those features that will enhance community character as future change occurs. The plan seeks to go beyond the narrower goal of addressing only historic buildings. It views the Town of Cape Charles as a landscape, including both natural and cultural resources, of which the historic buildings are an important part. By addressing town character, as opposed to simply preservation, the plan seeks to broaden public recognition of the issues and public support of the plan's recommendations. It seeks also to underscore the importance of preservation to the enhancement of the town as a whole. By addressing the town as a landscape, the interrelated nature of planning and growth management issues can be recognized and, hopefully, a more coordinated and complete result can be achieved. The intent of the plan is to manage change by preserving character-defining features while adding new elements that build upon and reinforce the existing character of the town in a positive way.

Cape Charles' landscape divides into two general parts: the historic town, comprising the existing developed area, and the surrounding agricultural landscape. This preservation plan is concerned primarily with the historic town but considers the effect on the town of proposed development of the surrounding agricultural landscape, including design principles for that development. In subsequent chapters of the plan, the town's landscape is further divided into characteristic component parts. Significant design elements are identified for those parts, and guidelines are outlined for their future treatment.

Community Consensus

In order for the plan to be successfully implemented, it is essential that its recommendations represent the will of the community. As a first step, a common understanding of what Cape Charles is and could become should be established through consensus. It is hoped that the process of preparing this preservation plan, in combination with other concurrent town and county initiatives, has achieved such consensus and that the plan represents that understanding.

The means of implementing the plan should be in accord with the community's basic philosophical convictions. In Cape Charles there is a strong interest in preserving individual rights and freedom of action. In addition, there are individuals from a variety of income ranges within the community. Implementation of the preservation plan should not burden individuals with limited economic means. A flexible approach to

implementation of the preservation plan is therefore recommended, permitting the widest possible latitude for individual expression and response within the overall framework described in the plan.

Implementation of the plan is in the best interest of both individuals and the community as a whole. If successful, implementation will occur through both public and private actions, incrementally, over time. Progress may be slow and steady, taking advantage of opportunities as they arise or are created, or may be dramatic, as major projects such as the Accawmacke Plantation are undertaken. Revisions to the plan should be anticipated as new circumstances arise. Whether slow or dramatic, whether small or large, each step, each change, each revision should be consistent with the principles outlined in the preservation plan and should contribute positively to the character of the community.

Economic Development

The preservation of natural and cultural resources and the strengthening of community character is the foundation of sustainable, long-term economic development. Economic development should be the engine that drives the town's physical revitalization. It should recognize the inherent qualities of existing resources and reinforce them, taking full advantage of those qualities from a business and marketing standpoint. There is no reason that economic development and the preservation of community character should be in conflict. In choosing how to develop, though, the long-term goals of the community should take precedence over the allure of short-term gain. The town should use economic development to leverage the long-term improvement of community character.

Economic development is a critical need in both Cape Charles and Northampton County. At present, there are several significant economic development initiatives being undertaken. These initiatives involve both the public and private sectors and have broad community participation and support. The goal of the initiatives, from the community's standpoint, is real, sustainable, long-term economic growth and well being.

A downward economic spiral can undermine the character of a community by lowering land values, reducing the number of owner-occupied properties, increasing vacancy, and increasing the abuse of buildings and landscape resources. Needed maintenance of building and landscape features is frequently deferred, or inappropriate quick fixes are used that can destroy character and adversely affect the long-term building and landscape condition. Buildings are underappreciated and undervalued and can be lost through neglect.

Unmanaged economic growth, however, can be equally destructive. While a stagnant economy can actually preserve resources as a result of the slow pace of change, a vibrant economy can destroy resources through rapid growth that ignores and supplants them for expediency and short-term gain. The lesson of the decline of Cape Charles' railroad industry is that no economic strategy is permanent. Future improvements to the town that are the result of increased economic activity should therefore contribute to a long-term growth management plan, or else be non-destructive and fully reversible. Induced change should not preclude future options.

In this regard, it is important that the goals and design principles of the preservation plan be clearly stated so that potential developers understand and incorporate them as their development projects are conceived. Clear understanding from the start will also facilitate implementation and community review processes.

Alternative Economic Futures

At present, it appears that four potential economic futures face Cape Charles. These alternative futures could occur in combination, and all four support the need for, and usefulness of, a preservation plan for the town. First, there is the no-change future; Cape Charles would continue as at present, with a depressed economy and little increase in economic activity. Under this scenario, potential neglect of natural and cultural resources would continue. The number of owner-occupied residences would continue to decrease, vacancy would increase, and building maintenance would be deferred or expedient, resulting in a loss of historic buildings, a loss of significant building fabric, a degrading of the streetscape, and a diminishing of community character. A preservation plan is needed to help prevent such loss under this scenario.

Under the second potential economic future, a concerted promotion of tourism in Cape Charles would lead to a gradual improvement in the town's economic climate. Under this scenario, positive change would be slow and incremental. There would be an increased interest in town properties as a second residence and a gradual increase of tourism-based commercial activity along Mason Avenue. A preservation plan has the potential to significantly enhance tourism development in Cape Charles. A strong, attractive community character based upon the town's heritage would help increase tourism and outside investment by potential homebuyers. The town's interesting building stock would be available for appropriate adaptive reuse, particularly along Mason Avenue, assisted by the significant incentive of investment tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. A preservation plan would be necessary to guide change under this scenario so that proposed public and private improvements would be supportive of the economic development plan.

The third scenario assumes the implementation of the Accawmacke Plantation proposal by Brown and Root under the recently adopted Planned Unit Development portion of the zoning code. Though the proposed project would be phased, the impact upon the town would be dramatic. Tourism, commercial activity, and land values would increase. Compared to the first two alternatives, change would be rapid. Under this scenario, a preservation plan is important to prevent potentially rapid change from unknowingly destroying significant resources within the town and to assure that the historic town participates in, and benefits from, development. Managed change to preserve and enhance community character, as proposed in the preservation plan, would be in the interest of both existing residents and the developers.

The fourth alternative future is related to the sustainable development industrial park initiative being jointly pursued by the town and county with assistance from state and federal governments. A fundamental tenet of this initiative is the preservation, enhancement, and compatible use of the town's natural and cultural resources. The appropriate reuse of existing resources, including buildings for new industry, would be considered preferable to the construction of new facilities. A preservation plan for Cape Charles outlining principles and guidelines for compatible development and reuse would be an important part of the sustainable development initiative.

Natural Resources

A basic goal of the preservation plan is the preservation of natural resources such that a long-term, healthy ecosystem is created. Wherever possible, natural systems and processes should be enhanced and used to solve community design problems, such as groundwater recharge to fully replenish the water supply and create a water balance or stormwater retention and the purification of stormwater and wastewater through treatment in existing wetlands. If Cape Charles' natural resources are not enhanced, the goals of the preservation plan will be difficult to achieve because, first, a strong community character is based upon the character of the surrounding landscape and, second, because the tourism potential of the Eastern Shore is based upon the qualities of its natural resources.

As a primary principle, existing fragile ecosystems, wetlands, barrier dunes, stream corridors, etc., should be preserved and buffered from development. Less fragile existing ecosystems, such as woodlands, should be preserved to a significant extent as open space and should be incorporated into, and become the thematic basis for, the landscape design of proposed new development.

New development outside of the historic town should use the existing native plant communities as the design palette for proposed landscape improvements. Landscaping for as-yet undeveloped areas should appear to be a continuation and extension of the native landscape. Native canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, and groundcover should be used in the appropriate ecological conditions and combinations in which they appear in the native landscape. Horticultural species which are not part of the native landscape should be avoided. This approach will promote the health of both new landscape plantings and preserved natural landscapes. It will help in establishing a common design theme for new development and in making new development appear as though it belongs in the landscape. The approach will both physically and visually support the concept of sustainable development.

Native plant species are also highly appropriate within the limits of the historic town. In addition, though, a certain number of horticultural species are also appropriate. Cape Charles was developed in the late nineteenth century, a time when Victorian horticultural explorations and practices were at their peak. Botanists from American and European arboretums and universities were traveling the far reaches of the world, collecting rare species, and creating horticultural "museums" at home. It was a time when a great number of horticultural species were introduced into American residential landscapes. This is almost certainly true of Cape Charles as well. As a result, a variety of horticultural species should be considered appropriate to the residential landscapes within the historic town. Crepe myrtle is certainly one of these. Other appropriate horticultural species should be identified for use in design guidelines for Cape Charles.

Cultural Resources

The significant cultural resources in Cape Charles include a wide variety of man-made features. Boundary lines, streets, alleys, curbs, sidewalks, fences, buildings, utilities, and vegetation all contribute to Cape Charles' distinctive character. The historic town in its entirety is a cultural landscape.

In preserving and enhancing Cape Charles' community character, the goal is not to recreate a lost historical period. Rather, the goal is to respect what remains of the town's historic character and to build upon it in a sympathetic manner. The plan proposes to understand existing character and work with it, drawing out the best of its qualities and adding new elements to complement those qualities. The preservation plan seeks to build *real* character based on *real* natural and historic characteristics, not historical imagery. The plan supports substance over style and authenticity over appearance. It respectfully recognizes Cape Charles' past while expressing its present and future.

Cape Charles also has potentially significant archeological resources, the investigation of which can contribute important information to an understanding of the history of the town and the region. Within the limits of the historic town, archeology can provide information on the material culture of the town's early inhabitants. This information will help in understanding who these people were, where they came from, and how they lived. Aside from the value of this information from a purely historical viewpoint, this understanding is important for interpretation of the town's story to visitors. Beyond the historic town, initial archeological investigations relative to the Accawmacke Plantation indicate that significant information can be obtained on the prehistoric and early settlement periods of the region's history. Archeological resources should be considered important to a full understanding of the town's past. Requirements for new development should include the investigation of archeological resources that will be disturbed.

Preservation of Historic Fabric

Most important to the preservation of the town's existing character is the preservation of original historic fabric. Wherever possible, the preservation plan should strive to preserve original historic fabric, even if that fabric is not in good condition. At the scale of the town, the preservation of historic fabric involves preserving the overall organization and layout of the community. This means preserving the street system, boundaries, lot configurations, and areas of usage in the town (Mason Avenue for commercial usage, the park and beach for recreation, and the basic character of the various residential areas).

At the scale of the neighborhood, the preservation of historic fabric means preserving historic buildings and streetscapes. Preventing the loss of historic buildings through vacancy, neglect, and decay is an important issue in Cape Charles. Preventing building loss as a result of proposed new development could become an issue as the town's economy is revitalized. Preserving the streetscape means preserving the character and relationship of site features, such as streets, curbs, sidewalks, fences, and vegetation.

At the scale of individual buildings, the preservation of historic fabric means preserving original materials and detailing. The terms "historical integrity" and "building condition" are often used with respect to historic buildings. "Historical integrity" refers to the amount of original historic fabric that a building has, irrespective of the condition of that fabric. A building can have a high degree of historical integrity but be in very poor condition. Conversely, a building can be in very good condition, but have very little significant historic fabric remaining.

The preservation plan places a great deal of value upon retaining a building's or landscape's historical integrity. In rehabilitating a historic building it is always preferable to retain and repair existing historic building elements rather than to replace them. This is true even if the repaired element will have visible flaws. The same is true at the scale of the neighborhood and the scale of the town.

When repair is not possible, in-kind replacement is recommended. In-kind replacement refers not only to appearance, but to materials and construction techniques as well. Replacements should attempt to use materials and craftsmanship that match as closely as possible that of the existing historic fabric being removed. At the scale of a building, replacing a severely deteriorated, unrepairable wood doublehung window with a metal window, for example, significantly reduces the building's level of integrity. Like that of a fine antique, a loss of integrity results in a loss of real value.

The term "restoration" refers to returning a building or landscape to a specific, previous condition or appearance at a particular period of its history. Restoration of a historic building or landscape is frequently neither necessary nor recommended. Alterations, additions, and changes to a historic resource are considered part of the resource's historical development or evolution. Such alterations and changes can be of historical significance. Because history accrues to a resource over time, it is usually recommended that later historic fabric should not be removed in order to restore a resource to an earlier appearance. "Restoration" of a historic building, landscape, or site feature should be undertaken only when there is good reason and only when there is sufficient documentation or evidence existing to determine what the actual appearance and conditions were at the period to which the resource is being restored.

When a resource has lost its historical integrity because of changes and alterations that are not significant to its historical development and are not sympathetic to its character, both contemporary alteration and restoration are options to be considered. When adequate documentation is not available to restore a resource accurately to a previous appearance, speculative restoration should not be attempted. In such a circumstance, which is the case more often than not, it is recommended that a contemporary design be developed that is sympathetic and complementary to the character of the resource.

In addition to above-ground historic resources, as previously noted, archeological resources are significant to the history of Cape Charles. Archeological resources include potential resources both within the historic portion of the town as well as potential resources in the undeveloped landscapes north and south of the town. As these areas are developed, the ground will be disturbed and the information available through the archeological record will be lost. Preliminary archeological investigations have been

undertaken on the land associated with the proposed development of the Accawmacke Plantation. The town should be aware of archeologically sensitive areas in Cape Charles and should plan for appropriate treatment of significant sites as part of the planning and development process.

In Cape Charles, the town, the neighborhoods, the streetscape, and the buildings have a very high degree of historical integrity. On the whole, these resources have had very few adverse changes or alterations. In adapting these resources to new uses, or in rehabilitating them to be attractive to new markets, it is recommended that existing historic fabric be retained wherever possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY

HISTORICAL RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY

Cape Charles has a small group of private citizens who are active in local public affairs. Like most municipalities, these individuals are volunteers. They frequently serve on more than one board or commission and wear more than one hat. When something needs to be done, it is more than likely that a person from this group will be found doing it, or it won't get done. Though there may be philosophical and/or personality differences among individuals within the group, there is a shared sense of responsibility, and both the capabilities and limits of what the group can achieve are commonly known.

The Cape Charles Historical Society is a private, independent organization, not affiliated with municipal government. A number of individuals who are active in the Historical Society, however, are also active in local government. The Historical Society has approximately eighty-five to ninety members, most of whom are local residents. A small proportion of these members are active in Historical Society affairs on a regular basis.

The purpose of the Historical Society is the collection of information and artifacts relevant to the history of Cape Charles. Much of the existing artifact collection is maintained by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Carlson, local antique dealers. Historical information is kept in the files of individual members. A major project of the Historical Society is the adaptive reuse of the former railroad power plant located on the south side of Route 184 on the east edge of the town. The power plant is to serve as a local museum, with rotating exhibits on the history of Cape Charles for residents, school children, and visitors to the region. The building was donated to the Historical Society by Delmarva Power Company. At present, the project is in the formative stages.

Historical Society activity has extended to limited advocacy with respect to preservation of the town's historic buildings. This activity has caused some friction within the town both because of concern that the rights of individual building owners might be infringed upon and because of the organization's independent status and lack of authority from the town to advocate public policy.

Despite the deep interest in Cape Charles' heritage by the Historical Society, there is at present no detailed written history of the town. The most complete document on the history of Cape Charles is *Cape Charles, Virginia and the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad*. This document is a twenty-three-page college thesis written in 1988 by Paula Spriggs. *Cape Charles* includes a bibliography that would be an excellent starting point for more detailed research.

It is recommended that the Historical Society undertake a systematic collection of materials on the history of Cape Charles. This collection should include both primary- and secondary-source materials. Of special interest, however, are primary-source materials. Primary-source materials that are readily available include census records, deed records, tax records, wills, and articles from period newspapers. Of additional interest would be business records of the various railroads and key individuals associated with Cape Charles. Because of the late date of the town's establishment, these sources would provide a detailed picture of Cape Charles' establishment and development.

From this information, a detailed history of the town could be written or, alternatively, an accurate overview of the town's history written with detailed papers on aspects of the town's history added over time. It is strongly recommended that a detailed, scholarly history of Cape Charles be prepared. The history should include information on the land prior to the establishment of the town. Also of particular interest would be additional historical information on William Scott and a study of his use of lands surrounding the town as depicted in the 1887 Bauman map.

The Historical Society should undertake the task of documenting ongoing change in Cape Charles. The purpose of this documentation is to provide for future generations the information about the present that we wish we had of the past. A first step in this process is to document existing conditions in the town. Cape Charles could be on the verge of tremendous change if either the Accawmacke Plantation or Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park become reality. It is recommended that photographic documentation of the areas of Cape Charles that will be affected by this proposed development be undertaken. For the most part, these areas are limited to the open land both north and south of the town. Topographic drawings and other documents should also be preserved. As new development occurs in Cape Charles, the Historical Society should photograph the sites before, during, and after the work is undertaken. These photographs and any additional relevant information on the project should be stored in the Historical Society's archives.

It is recommended that the Historical Society focus on research and education, including projects such as the collection, organization, and analysis of primary-source materials, and the museum project. In order to undertake this work, a Historical Society archive and research office should be established. It is recommended that the town assist the Historical Society by providing such space, either in the new municipal facility at the former school building in the town's central square, or in the existing municipal building when its upper-floor offices are vacated. Alternatively, there is ample vacant office space in existing buildings along Mason Avenue. Using existing vacant office space for the archive, however, may involve costs for rent and renovation that the Historical

Society could not bear. It would also result in a potentially impermanent facility that would be of lesser benefit to the town and its residents.

With the focus of the Historical Society on research and education, it is recommended that the organization cease its activities with regard to public advocacy. The Historical Society should carefully maintain its status as a neutral, non-political, educational organization.

It is recommended that the town create a local Historical Commission to serve as an officially-designated body with respect to historic preservation issues. The Historical Commission would serve in an advisory role to the Planning Commission and Town Council. When issues before the Planning Commission and/or Town Council relate to historically-significant resources, the Historical Commission would research and provide background information on the significance of those resources as well as recommendations on appropriate actions based upon that significance. The Historical Commission would maintain official files on the town's historic resources as well as a preservation technical library, both of which could be referenced by local residents and those active in town government. It would develop a specialized knowledge and expertise on preservation issues, but would be directly responsible to the town's decision-making bodies.

Though there would probably be an overlap between the members of the Historical Commission and the members of the Historical Society, as well as other town organizations, a clear line of action and responsibility would be drawn between the private, public-service research and educational activities of the Historical Society and the officially-designated public information and advocacy activities of the Historical Commission. Incorporation of the Historical Commission within the town government would provide a means of incorporating historic preservation issues into the official, consensus-building processes of the town and would help the Commission to be responsive to the broader issues of the town.

Summary of Recommendations for Historical Research, Education, and Advocacy:

1. The Historical Society should focus on research and education relative to the history of Cape Charles. It should not be engaged in public advocacy, but should carefully maintain its status as a neutral, non-political, educational organization.

2. The Historical Society should undertake a systematic collection of materials on the history of Cape Charles. The collection should concentrate upon primary-source materials such as census records, deed records, tax records, wills, and period newspapers.

3. The Historical Society should document ongoing change in Cape Charles as it occurs. The sites of proposed new development should be photographed before, during, and after work is undertaken. These photographs and additional relevant information should be stored in the Society's archives for the benefit of future generations.

4. The Town of Cape Charles should support the educational mission of the Historical Society by providing office space for the establishment of an archive and research space. This space could be located within the new municipal facility at the former school or in the existing municipal building when it is vacated.

5. The town should create a Historical Commission to serve in an advisory role to the Planning Commission and Town Council. The Historical Commission would maintain official files on the town's historic resources, provide background information on the significance of historic resources, and recommend appropriate actions with respect to historic resources.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMMUNITY APPROACHES, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

COMMUNITY APPROACHES, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

Town Approach, Entrance, and Identity - Route 13

The approach to Cape Charles begins at Route 13. The appearance of Route 13 is therefore important to the town, both in terms of wayfinding and establishing an impression that is inviting to tourists and visitors, beckoning them toward Cape Charles and welcoming them. The predominant character of Route 13, the character visitors come to the Eastern Shore to experience, is one of a rural agricultural landscape. From an economic standpoint as well as a quality-of-life standpoint, it is in the best interest of Northampton County, the Town of Cape Charles, and other towns within the county to preserve the rural agricultural landscape as new development occurs.

The threat to the rural agricultural landscape along Route 13 is uncontrolled roadside development. If permitted to occur in a piecemeal, haphazard manner, such roadside development will destroy the visual character of the landscape, and the appeal of Northampton County to the prospective tourist trade will dramatically diminish. Equally, if not more important, uncontrolled development along Route 13 will continue to draw businesses, jobs, and investment from the towns and villages of Northampton County, where it is desperately needed.

Fortunately, the extent of existing roadside development along Route 13 has not yet reached a point of no return. Northampton County is in a position to set in motion planning policies that could preserve the rural landscape while reinforcing existing towns and villages with new development. As one of the county's largest towns, Cape Charles should play a strong leadership role in advocating appropriate planning policy changes within the county. Cape Charles should not only work with county supervisors and staff on this matter, but should also meet with, coordinate, and organize other towns within the county to effect positive, constructive, economically-sound change.

The Town of Cape Charles has already begun this effort. Proposed revisions to the county's comprehensive plan have been reviewed and discussed by the Planning Commission and Town Council. The proposed revisions feature regional commercial centers along Route 13 and neighborhood commercial uses within existing towns and villages. Route 13 would be designated as a Highway Protection Area, with the regional commercial centers positioned at specific locations. The comprehensive plan states, "Because much of the retail commerce in the County is directed at tourists, the commercial category includes development along highways. It is the principal policy of the County to encourage commercial development to be concentrated in areas where it

can best be served by transportation routes and presents the least interference with residential and other land uses."

The problem with this policy statement is that the commercial uses that are aggregating along the highway are *not* uses related solely, or even primarily, to tourists. They are uses that are targeted toward the local, regional, resident population. To this end, businesses are being drawn away from the traditional downtowns to regional shopping centers located along the highway. The result is the continued deterioration of the county's towns. The recent shopping center constructed adjacent to Exmore is a case in point.

Furthermore, the county should be seeking to attract tourists *into* towns, not to segregate tourists out at the highway. A foundation of the county's economic development policy should be the revitalization of existing towns and villages. To accomplish this goal, the economic development and planning objective should be to attract tourists and tourist dollars into the heart of existing communities. In this way, commercial investment will be concentrated where it is needed—not in developing valuable agricultural land, but in revitalizing the county's deteriorating towns.

It is recommended, therefore, that the county's comprehensive plan be revised to state that local, regional, and tourism-based commercial uses be concentrated within and adjacent to existing towns and villages in order to revitalize local economies and downtown areas. To the maximum extent possible, these commercial uses should be accommodated within existing buildings, which should be appropriately rehabilitated to preserve and enhance the character of existing towns. Master planning and appropriate design guidelines will be necessary for each town to ensure that new commercial development is handled in a manner that enhances the town specifically to increase its tourist appeal. New development along Route 13 should be limited solely to commercial services for through-travelers. Such new development should be limited in extent, strategically located, and subject to design guidelines that ensure that it does not detract from the character of the rural agricultural landscape.

Because of the importance of these county-wide issues to the economic future of the town, Cape Charles needs to be active in planning policy formulation and implementation at the county level. At present, the proposed County Comprehensive Plan calls for significant new commercial and industrial development clustered around the intersection of Route 13 and Route 184 with space remaining for the eventual construction of a grade-separated interchange. It is recommended that this proposal be radically altered to preserve open, agricultural land in the vicinity of the interchange and to concentrate new commercial activity in and adjacent to existing towns throughout the county.

Summary of Recommendations, Route 13:

1. Cape Charles should be an active participant and a leader in county affairs because county planning policies will have a significant effect upon the town's long-term economic prosperity.

2. The town should work with the county to revise the County Comprehensive Plan such that local, regional, and tourism-based commercial uses are concentrated within and adjacent to existing towns and villages in order to revitalize local economies and downtown areas.

3. To the maximum extent possible, these commercial uses should be accommodated in appropriately rehabilitated, existing buildings.

4. Master planning and design guidelines are necessary for each town to ensure that new development enhances downtown areas both for local residents and for tourist appeal.

5. New development along Route 13 should be limited to commercial services for through-travelers. Such development should be limited in extent, strategically located, and subject to design guidelines that will help preserve the character of the rural agricultural landscape.

Town Approach, Entrance, and Identity - Route 184

The proposed County Comprehensive Plan designates Route 184 as a Highway Protection Area. The Highway Protection Area is related to roads "worthy of protection from over commercialization and strip residential development." The features that contribute to the character of Route 184 that make it "worthy of protection" include the open fields of the surrounding rural agricultural landscape, the narrow paving width, the allee of mature crepe myrtle, and the occasional, adjacent woodlands. Route 184 is protected from development on its south side by the close proximity of the railroad, which parallels the road. Along the north side of Route 184, there are a limited number of single-family residences.

Route 184 is important in establishing an initial identity for the town in the minds of visitors. Because most of Route 184 is located beyond the boundary of the town, close cooperation is required between Cape Charles and the county with respect to the evolution of the roadway. Cape Charles has proposed an overlay zoning district along Route 184, but the county has thus far not agreed to this proposal. It should, however, be

possible to protect Route 184 through its designation as a Highway Protection Area, whatever the specific mechanisms that are utilized.

It is recommended that no new commercial development be permitted along Route 184 and that no new development at all be permitted between Route 184 and the railroad. No new strip residential development should be permitted. Any new residential development should connect to Route 184 through the construction of new roadways. Any new roads for residential development north of Route 184 should be planned to interconnect with those of existing or future adjacent developments to create a road network parallel to Route 184 over the long term, should significant residential development occur.

Every attempt should be made to preserve the existing character of Route 184. The existing cartway should not be widened except as a last resort for safety considerations. The existing crepe myrtle allee should be preserved. New crepe myrtle should be planted in existing or future gaps. A significant landscape buffer should be established between Route 184 and any new development north of the road. Such a landscape buffer should be a minimum of 150 feet wide as measured from the cartway. The landscape buffer should be permitted to naturally succeed to woodland over time. Neither new plantings nor extensive management should be required.

Two key features along Route 184 are the water tower and the power plant. They are both examples of creative actions that the town is taking as part of its revitalization effort. The water tower, located on the south side of Route 184 approximately one-quarter mile east of the town line, is a prominent landmark that serves as a beacon for travelers approaching Cape Charles. Through a grant from Brown and Root, the water tower has been appropriately painted in the image of a lighthouse and has thus become a memorable conversation piece.

Similarly, the power plant is a utilitarian building that is being transformed into an attraction that will benefit the town. As mentioned in Chapter Four, *Historical Research, Education, and Advocacy*, the power plant is being adapted into a museum by the Historical Society. It is recommended that the town actively support and assist the Historical Society in this effort. It is further recommended that the power plant become more than a museum, and become a visitors' center for the town. The two uses go hand-in-hand, and there is ample space in the building to accommodate both. The requirements of a state-certified visitors' center should be investigated by the town, with the goal of eventually becoming part of the state system. In the meantime, the power plant could serve both an educational mission and an orientation/economic development mission, to the substantial benefit of the town.

The proposed development of the Accawmacke Plantation and the development of the Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park both call for a new road connection with Route 184 to be located just east of the existing spoils pile, approximately one mile west of the Route 13 intersection. The character of this intersection is important, requiring careful consideration. Because of the proposed size of the combined Accawmacke and Sustainable Technologies developments, the amount of traffic on Route 184 could dramatically increase. Because Route 184 is the only road access to Cape Charles, traffic congestion could result, and there will be pressure to widen Route 184 and thereby significantly alter its existing character. There is even some thought of making the proposed new road the primary entrance into Cape Charles, relegating the remaining portion of Route 184 to secondary-road status.

The planning and design alternatives for this new road and its connection with existing Route 184 need to be carefully considered. At present, it is recommended that the new connection be a "T" intersection, carefully designed to have minimal impact on the overall character of Route 184. The road must be clearly signed, giving the visitor the option to proceed straight along Route 184 or to turn and enter the new development and then approach the town center from the south over "the hump."

Summary of Recommendations, Route 184:

1. No new commercial development should be permitted along Route 184. No new development should be permitted between Route 184 and the railroad.

2. Any new residential development located north of Route 184 should be connected to Route 184 and should be separated from Route 184 by a significant landscape buffer. The landscape buffer should be permitted to naturally succeed to woodland over time.

3. Every attempt should be made to preserve the existing character of Route 184. The cartway should not be widened unless absolutely necessary for safety concerns. The crepe myrtle allee should be preserved, maintained, and expanded.

4. The water tower and the power plant are strong, positive features that represent the spirit and character of the town to visitors in a creative way. The town should actively assist the Historical Commission in the adaptive reuse of the power plant into a museum/visitors' center.

5. The effect of the substantial proposed new development in Cape Charles on Route 184 needs to be carefully considered. In particular, alternatives for the proposed intersection

of the roadway to the Accawmacke Plantation and Sustainable Development Industrial Park should be fully explored.

Town Approach, Entrance, and Identity - Route 184 and Fig Street

There has been great consternation over the seemingly awkward entrance into Cape Charles caused by the disjointed connection between Route 184 and Mason Avenue, the town's primary commercial street. Route 184 meets the historic street grid of Cape Charles at Fig Street. Straight across the intersection from Route 184 is Randolph Avenue, an early residential portion of the town. In order to reach the commercial center of Cape Charles, it is necessary to turn left on Fig Street for one block, turn right onto Mason Avenue, and travel several blocks along Mason to the town's commercial storefronts.

The existing Comprehensive Plan for Cape Charles calls for the realignment of Route 184 as it approaches the historic street grid so that it connects directly into Mason Avenue. This proposal continues to be discussed within the town. A disadvantage of this arrangement would be both the cost and the necessity of demolishing or moving the power plant.

It is recommended, however, that the existing street configuration be accepted as an idiosyncrasy of Cape Charles and that it be turned into a positive design feature. The existing arrangement causes visitors to stop, think, and choose. There is no question but that one has "arrived." As long as the choices are made clear, there is no disadvantage to the arrangement. It is an opportunity for the visitor to pause and for the town to welcome them.

Traffic flow at the intersection of Route 184 and Fig Street can be appropriately coordinated through a prioritized arrangement of stop signs and yield signs. To prevent traffic from inadvertently continuing down Randolph Avenue, a landscape/signage barrier could be created that would prevent vehicles from entering Randolph Avenue, while allowing vehicles to exit it. Such a barrier would protect the residential character of the street by protecting it from unwanted and unnecessary traffic. Making Randolph a one-way street would not be necessary.

The key design features of the entrance to Cape Charles include the historically significant shops on the south side of Route 184, the supermarket on the north side of Route 184, the intersection, the Kellogg Building, and the Ice Plant.

The existing shops along the south side of Route 184 have the potential to be a strong positive visual element. Appropriate rehabilitation of the street facade, however, is recommended. The rehabilitation need not be either extensive or expensive. It should seek to bring out the existing, simple, historic character of the buildings, not to cover it over with a modern commercial treatment. Asphalt paving in front of the buildings should for the most part be removed and replaced with grass or groundcover. A sidewalk should be installed. The edge of the roadway should be clearly defined, though curbs are not necessary. Parking for the retail uses of the buildings needs to be established, either beside, behind, or shared with the market across the street.

The parking lot of the existing food market (Meatland) on the north side of Route 184 should be significantly upgraded visually. This could be achieved by redesigning the parking layout, clearly defining aisles and parking spaces with painted lines, creating a significantly wider landscaped area along Route 184 with numerous deciduous canopy trees, and creating landscaped islands within the parking lot, also with canopy trees.

Beyond the historic shops and the market are existing open lots on both sides of Route 184 at the intersection with Fig Street. The north lot is owned by Brown and Root and a "Welcome to Cape Charles" sign has been constructed on it. The south lot is owned by the town. Both of these lots should remain open space. Dirt shoulders adjacent to the roadway should be planted with grass and protected from vehicles. The park-like appearance of the two lots should be enhanced over time with new plantings, especially canopy trees. The welcome signage could be redesigned in a format that would be continued throughout the town and would be the town's signature. Directions to downtown and to the marina should be clearly presented.

The Kellogg Building is a colorful and lively structure in a Spanish Colonial style, constructed in the 1920s. As Cape Charles develops economically, it should be an attractive commercial property. The unique character of the Kellogg Building significantly enhances the entrance into Cape Charles and should be preserved.

The Ice Plant is also significant, but is in deteriorating condition. If at all feasible, it should be saved. The Ice House is not only historically significant to the town, it is the visual terminus of Mason Street. If the building is lost, it is recommended that that site remain undeveloped as open space.

Summary of Recommendations, Route 184 and Fig Street:

1. It is not necessary to reconfigure the connection between Route 184 and Mason Avenue. However, design improvements should be undertaken to improve the visual character of the entrance into Cape Charles.

2. The existing shops along the south side of Route 184 should be retained and their facades rehabilitated in keeping with the historic character of the buildings. Asphalt paving in front of the buildings should be removed and the areas landscaped. A sidewalk should be installed. Parking for the buildings needs to be created.

3. The parking lot of the existing food market on the north side of Route 184 should be significantly improved through design and landscaping. Numerous canopy trees should be planted.

4. At the existing intersection of Route 184 and Fig Street, the existing open lots should remain open space. Existing planting should be enhanced, again through the addition of canopy trees. New welcome signage and directional signage should be installed using a common theme that will be carried throughout the town. Traffic should be prevented from continuing west on Randolph Avenue to preserve the residential character of the neighborhood.

5. The Kellogg Building should be preserved. If possible, the Ice House should be preserved. If not, the site should become open space.

Central Park

The core of the Town of Cape Charles is its central park. The park not only lies at the center of the historic street grid, but principal avenues were created to lead to it from each of the cardinal points. Unfortunately, however, the park does not play a central role, either visually or functionally, in the life of the town. It is a forgotten space. Over the years, with the construction of a school on the northeast corner of the site, the park has been devoted to use as athletic fields and had been fenced off from adjacent neighborhoods. Recently, the school has been abandoned and turned over to the town. In another of the strong positive actions taken by the town in recent years, the school is to be rehabilitated as the new municipal center.

Adjacent to the existing school building are two temporary buildings which are in poor condition. A new, high-quality tennis court has been constructed by Brown and Root for the town. The tennis court has been a subject of controversy within the town because of

the limited interest in tennis by town residents. The location of the tennis courts is unfortunate because they block access to the park from the northern portion of Peach Street, one of the primary streets created to center on the park. The existing tennis courts should remain but should, if possible, be made more accessible to residents. Tennis clinics and programs could help achieve this. It is recommended that the two temporary buildings be removed. The space they occupy should be used to reestablish a strong pedestrian connection between the park and the north portion of town. Parking for the existing school building could also be provided there.

The adaptive reuse of the school building as a municipal center is strongly supported by this preservation plan. Additional parking that may be required for this use must be minimized and carefully designed not to adversely impact the use of the park as a park. To the extent possible, the renovation of the school should seek to restore the original appearance of the building.

It is recommended that the central park be reestablished as a park and that its physical connection with adjacent neighborhoods be recreated. The chain link fencing surrounding the park should be removed at the earliest opportunity. The temporary buildings between the school and the tennis courts should be demolished and removed. The space in which the temporary buildings are located could be used for parking, but should remain open as the new physical link to the neighborhoods north of the park.

A conceptual plan for the long-term development of the park should be created. Uses that will be appropriate to the park should be planned and implemented in a phased manner. It is recommended that the central park be a park for passive recreation. Informal landscaped pedestrian entrances should be created from east and west Mason Avenue and north and south Peach Street. Like many areas of Cape Charles, the planting of numerous deciduous canopy trees would make the strongest visual improvement to the appearance and character of the park. The landscaping of the park should serve as a central, green core of open space from which the streetscapes radiate.

Some open grass areas should be retained for informal play such as catch, Frisbee, neighborhood soccer, touch football, and softball. A play area for small children should be created. An outdoor basketball court should be constructed to provide an appealing alternative for teenagers and young adults who currently play on the streets. Suggestions for improvements should be solicited from residents. The goal is to create a park that will be used by residents and will epitomize the charm and character of Cape Charles for visitors.

It is strongly recommended that organized, active recreation such as Little League fields not be constructed in the central park. Such uses should be confined to specially-designated areas beyond the town's historic grid. A site north of, and adjacent to, Washington Avenue would be appropriate for active recreation.

Summary of Recommendations, Central Park:

1. The rehabilitation of the school building as a municipal center should be undertaken. To the extent possible, the original appearance of the building should be reestablished.

2. Parking for the municipal center should be carefully designed to be visually appealing and not to adversely affect the park.

3. The two temporary buildings should be removed. The space they occupy could be used for parking but should reestablish a connection from the park to the neighborhoods on the north side of town.

4. The chain link fences surrounding the park should be removed as soon as possible.

5. A long-term plan for the park should be created and implemented over time. Many new deciduous canopy trees should be planted. Informal landscaped entrances should be created to extend Mason Avenue and Peach Street into the park. The central park should have open grass areas for informal games, an area for small children, and a basketball court for young adults. Ideas for desired improvements should be solicited from residents. The goal is to create a park that will be used by residents and will epitomize the charm and character of Cape Charles for visitors.

6. Playfields for organized, active recreation should not be constructed in the park and would be better located adjacent to the historic town grid, north of Washington Street.

The Beach

Cape Charles' beach is one of the strong positive assets that should contribute significantly to the town's appeal as a tourist destination. The beach extends along the entire length of the town's historic grid adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay. A paved "boardwalk" borders the length of the beachfront, adjacent to Bay Avenue. The bandstand, constructed on the boardwalk opposite the end of Tazewell Avenue, has become a visual symbol of the town and is featured on the town's seal. Recently, a new wooden boardwalk has been extended out along the jetty at the south end of the beach. The boardwalk gives an excellent view up and down the shoreline and features

interpretive signage on the ecology of the shore. With sand dredged from the bay by the Corps of Engineers, the beach is an excellent location for swimming and sunbathing by residents and visitors alike. Its convenience to the town's residential neighborhoods, commercial district, and places of accommodation make it a strong, positive, unique element in the mix of attractions for prospective tourists.

The beach needs to continue to receive the attention of the town in maintaining it as a desirable summer recreational site. The erosion of sand from the beach is a serious long-term problem that must be continuously monitored and addressed with state and federal agencies. Alternatives for addressing beach erosion should be assessed in terms of minimal adverse visual impact. Massive, engineered break-walls could be visually obtrusive and counterproductive in terms of the sustainable design concepts the town and the county are promoting and using as a marketing theme. Rules for appropriate beach behavior should be strictly enforced to maintain an appealing family-oriented atmosphere. Parking for visitors using the beach could be better organized and defined along Bay Avenue. It is recommended that appropriate shore-tolerant tree species be planted in the landscape divider along Bay Avenue to both soften the street's appearance and to serve as an initial windbreak for adjacent residences. Shore-tolerant, dune-related species are usually low and hardy. Views of the bay should not be obstructed.

Summary of Recommendations for the Beach:

1. The condition of the beach and quality of the experience it offers should continue to be a primary concern of the town as Cape Charles' tourism potential is enhanced.

2. The erosion of sand from the beach is a long-term problem that must be monitored in association with state and federal agencies.

3. Rules for appropriate beach behavior should be enforced to maintain a family-oriented atmosphere.

4. Parking along Bay Avenue could be better organized and defined.

5. Appropriate shore-tolerant tree species should be planted in the landscape divider along Bay Avenue to both soften the street's appearance and to provide an initial windbreak for adjacent residences.

The Shoreline, Creeks, Wetlands, and Open Space System

The Town of Cape Charles has significant natural areas beyond its historic core that are ecologically sensitive and are primarily water-related. These natural areas include an extensive shoreline, both along the Chesapeake Bay and along the town's two major creeks: King's Creek on the north and Plantation Creek on the south. Tongues of smaller creeks, wetlands, and drainageways extend inland from the shorelines. As part of the sustainable development concept, these shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and drainageways should be preserved in a natural vegetative state, both for ecological and aesthetic reasons. These areas also have a high probability of having significant prehistoric archeological sites. Anchored to the historic town grid, it is recommended that the natural areas become the backbone of a comprehensive open space system interwoven throughout the town as new development occurs. The landscape of the existing streets and of proposed new development should build off of and further extend this open space system.

The North Shorelines, Creeks, and Drainageways: North of the beach is the natural shoreline of the bay that extends three-quarters of a mile to the mouth of King's Creek. This shoreline is presently composed of areas of young woodland, woodland edge, narrow stretch of beach, and mud flats that are exposed at low tide. At the mouth of King's Creek, the shoreline extends inland past the existing marina and includes a small creek that borders the existing golf course. The shoreline and alignment of this creek are a portion of the eastern boundary of the town. The small creek reaches southward across Route 184 toward the railroad and terminates in an area of native woodland through which Route 184 passes. Additional drainageways extend inland from the shoreline. The largest of these drainageways trends southeastward from the bay and touches Washington Avenue at Nectarine Street. This drainageway has been mechanically excavated and its alignment straightened. It is surrounded by a large area of emerging successional woodland.

The land north of the town's historic grid is planned for extensive new development as the northern tract of the proposed Accawmacke Plantation being undertaken by Brown and Root. A large marina is proposed for King's Creek that will involve significant expansion of the watered area and will largely alter the existing landscape. As the land is developed in future years, it is recommended that the existing shoreline along the bay, the shoreline along King's Creek not associated with the proposed new marina, and the small creek and drainageways be preserved in their natural state. As a general planning principle, a landscape buffer should be established along the shorelines, creeks, and drainageways that should become part of an interconnected, comprehensive open-space system for the town.

Such an open space system would be a significant part of the sustainable development approach being adopted by the town and the county. It should extend from the shores, creeks, drainageways, and wetlands through the new development to connect to the streetscape of the historic town core. The vegetation of both the streetscape and new development should then build off of and further extend the landscape of this open space system. While primarily a network of natural surface-drainageways, the open space system will also serve as a network of pedestrian linkages and a buffer between adjacently developed areas. The landscape of the open space system should be permitted to succeed naturally over time. The natural landscape buffer along the shore is necessary to protect the existing shoreline.

The South Shorelines, Creeks, Wetlands, and Drainageways: South of the harbor of the Town of Cape Charles is a two-mile-long shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay. The beach and dunes associated with this shoreline have been identified as ecologically sensitive and unique. This shoreline should be preserved in its natural state. The existence of black gum trees over two hundred years old have been noted in this area. An additional landscape buffer area should be established between the dunes and proposed new development.

From the mouth of Plantation Creek, the shoreline extends inland with numerous marshy areas, wetlands, small creeks, and drainageways. This land comprises the large south tract of the proposed Accawmacke Plantation. Like the northern tract noted above, the south tract is planned for extensive residential, commercial, and recreational development. As recommended for the northern tract, an open space system is recommended for the southern tract of the Accawmacke Plantation that will preserve the shorelines, marshes, wetlands, creeks, and drainageways in a landscape of native successional vegetation. Like the northern tract, this open space system should be extended into and throughout the new development as landscape buffers, streetscapes, and fringes of the proposed golf course to create a comprehensive network. A significant, natural open space system should be the organizing principle around which new development is planned.

Summary of Recommendations for Shorelines, Creeks, Wetlands, and Open Space:

1. The existing shorelines, creeks, wetlands, and drainageways should be preserved in their natural state as a landscape buffer of native successional vegetation.

2. This network of landscape buffers organized around ecologically-sensitive features and drainageways should become the backbone of a comprehensive open space system as part of the town's sustainable development concept. The natural open space system

should extend through new development to connect to the streetscape of the historic core of Cape Charles. The vegetation of both the streetscape and proposed new development should build off of and extend the landscape of the open space system.

3. The unique and ecologically-sensitive landscape associated with the beach and dunes along the bay south of the harbor should be preserved and buffered from adjacent new development.

CHAPTER SIX

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

The downtown business district in Cape Charles is centered in a row of commercial buildings located in the four-block stretch of Mason Avenue between Plum and Harbor streets. Cape Charles' downtown district is unusual because it is not situated on a major through-road, like the downtown districts of most towns, and because it is one-sided—commercial buildings are located only on the north side of Mason Street, facing the largely undeveloped railroad property and adjacent harbor to the south. Approximately twenty-eight businesses are located within the downtown business district, most of which are oriented toward the local residential population. They include small retail stores, personal services, a food market, and restaurants/cafes. Approximately seven of the existing businesses are small retailers oriented toward the tourist trade.

Cape Charles' downtown district has struggled for many years. Most recently the downtown suffered a blow when McCrory's, a retail fixture on Mason Avenue occupying several adjacent buildings, closed its doors. Like the rest of Cape Charles, however, the downtown district has strong potential in terms of character, appeal, and available building stock.

Business Development Organization and Marketing Plan

Cape Charles has two local business organizations: the Cape Charles Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants' Association. The Chamber of Commerce has been responsible for organizing two town events: the 4th of July Festival in the early summer and the Crab Festival in the late summer or early fall. Beyond the organization of these events, neither organization has been particularly active in recent years.

It is recommended that the two organizations be merged and revitalized into a new Cape Charles business development organization with the goal of developing markets, promoting existing businesses, and attracting compatible new businesses to the town. A clear marketing strategy and marketing plan should be outlined that can be implemented and expanded in stages. The marketing plan should be based on attracting the three identifiable markets of interest to Cape Charles. The plan should define the kind of downtown business center that Cape Charles has the potential to be, identify the steps needed to create it, and take action.

The first market of importance to Cape Charles is the local market, comprised of existing and future residents of the town. This is the neighborhood market mentioned in the county comprehensive plan. Because it is already in place, this is the easiest market to

attract and the market that should receive the business development organization's immediate attention. Many of the existing downtown businesses are primarily serving this local market at present. The range of services provided to the local market should be complementary and well-rounded in order to make Cape Charles a strong downtown center. The existing range of businesses should be compared to the range of businesses available in established towns elsewhere on the Eastern Shore. The size, range, and quality of businesses in specific categories should be compared to those of their competitors as well as to those of other established towns. Where specific businesses in Cape Charles fall short in the quality or range of services offered, they should be encouraged to make changes and should be supported in their efforts. Where types of businesses that do well elsewhere are found not to exist in Cape Charles, a concerted effort should be made to attract such businesses to the downtown area.

The second market of interest to Cape Charles is the regional market encompassing the residents of Northampton and Accomack counties. As with the local market, specific comparisons can be made with competitors in the region both in terms of the range of total businesses and services offered and in the range and quality of services in specific business categories. Cape Charles should assess its standing in relation to regional competitors, identify its strengths, and devise specific actions to increase its potential as a regional center. Key to the goal of becoming a regional commercial center is the current county planning policy of encouraging regional commercial development in locations along Route 13 versus a proposed policy of concentrating new commercial development in existing towns. This policy difference has been discussed previously in Chapter Five, dealing with the character of development along Route 13. The local business organization should be a clear voice and active participant in this debate.

The third market that should be focused upon in a marketing plan for Cape Charles is tourism. The potential for tourism in Cape Charles has been well-recognized. Though tourism has increased incrementally in recent years, the critical mass that must be reached for tourism to thrive has not yet been achieved. As mentioned above, downtown Cape Charles currently features approximately seven businesses oriented toward the tourist trade. There are currently four full-time bed and breakfasts, with the potential for more. An organized and concentrated effort is necessary to bring the town's tourism potential to fruition. Cape Charles' primary assets relative to tourism are location and character. Location is important in terms of the natural beauty of the Eastern Shore, the available access to the ocean and the bay, and the quiet "hide-away" sense of the town. Though recognized, the natural appeal of the town's character has yet to be acted upon. The purpose of this preservation plan is to help coordinate such action. The general lack of appreciation of the town's unique character by many local residents and the lack of willingness of residents to take the necessary actions to strengthen that character are the

two largest obstacles standing in the way of a successful tourism-based economy in Cape Charles.

There are several concrete steps that a Cape Charles business development organization can take in promoting business activity downtown. Cape Charles should develop an advertising theme and look that is readily identifiable and builds off of the character of the town that businesses are attempting to promote. Cape Charles' businesses should advertise together in a limited, targeted, regular manner. Costs should be shared. The advertising message should be consistent, promoting the town as a whole, though its emphasis may change and different businesses may be featured on a rotating basis.

Town events should be revitalized. The 4th of July Festival and the Crab Festival should be coordinated to attract people to Cape Charles and to encourage them to return throughout the year. Additional events, such as the recent June Jubilee, may be added, though care must be taken not to overburden volunteer event organizers. Additional events could play off of successful existing regional events such as the Harvest Festival and Birding Festival by offering supplementary attractions. Attendance at events should be monitored in terms of the degree to which the local, regional, or tourism markets are participating. Successful events held in other Virginia and Maryland communities should be studied as models for Cape Charles.

The Cape Charles business organization should become a partner with the Cape Charles Historical Society in the adaptive reuse of the power plant as a museum and visitors' center. The visitors' center's function of the program should orient visitors to the businesses and services available in Cape Charles.

A stated goal of the joint Cape Charles/Northampton County Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park is the revitalization of the town and the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of its existing buildings. To this end, as businesses are sought to become part of the Industrial Park, the distinct effort should be made to fill the buildings along Mason Avenue first, before new facilities are constructed elsewhere. For some uses, this will not be feasible, but for many it will. The Sustainable Technologies concept will have strong marketing and tourism potential. The Cape Charles business organization should be active in the development of the park as it pertains to downtown development. The park concept should be used by the organization as a marketing theme.

The development of the Accawmacke Plantation will have a profound effect upon Cape Charles. The proposed downtown business organization should support the development effort but should assure that new commercial development associated with the

Accawmacke Plantation complements, but does not compete with, commercial interests along Mason Avenue.

Finally, the business organization should be a leader in the revitalization of the town's historic character. The economic revitalization of Cape Charles depends in a large measure upon the perception visitors have of the town, whether the visitors are part of the local, regional, or tourism markets. The town's unique late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century character is its most attractive feature. To the extent that the town's character can be used to make Cape Charles stand apart as a marketing attraction—make it a special place to visit, spend time, and shop—it should be taken advantage of. Developing the buildings and streetscape along Mason Avenue in a manner that reinforces the existing character of the buildings should be a primary concern of the Cape Charles business organization. Just as important is the character of the town as a whole. Cape Charles should be a beautiful and interesting destination for its own sake—the approach down Route 184, the central park, the beach, the historic neighborhoods. Cape Charles has a quality and ambiance that are rarely found elsewhere. With a minimum of coordination and effort, the town's character can be put to work in a real and economically tangible way to the benefit of businesses and residents alike.

Summary of Recommendations for Business Development Organization and Marketing Plan:

1. The existing Cape Charles Chamber of Commerce and Merchants' Association should be merged and revitalized into a proactive business development organization.

2. A marketing plan should be developed for Cape Charles which can be implemented in stages. Study should be undertaken of the local, regional, and tourism markets. Efforts should be made to offer new services through existing businesses and to attract compatible new businesses.

3. The business organization should be active in changing county planning policy from encouraging regional commercial development along Route 13 to encouraging regional commercial development in and adjacent to existing towns.

4. A common advertising effort should be undertaken by downtown businesses. The advertising should promote the town and feature specific businesses on a rotating basis. The advertising should have an identifiable look and theme.

5. Town events should be revitalized and used to encourage visitors to return.

6. The business organization should become a partner with the Historical Society in the adaptive reuse of the power station as a museum and visitors' center.

7. The business organization should be active in the Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park, encouraging the appropriate rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of downtown buildings.

8. The organization should work to assure that new commercial areas associated with the proposed Accawmacke Plantation are complementary to and not in competition with the downtown area.

9. The business development organization should be a leader in the revitalization of the town's historic character.

Mason Avenue - Fig Street to Plum Street

The entrance to Cape Charles from Route 13 to Mason Avenue has been discussed in the previous chapter. Upon turning from Fig Street onto Mason Avenue, travelers are presented with the long vista of the avenue. This vista is powerful primarily because of the open expanse of the railroad yard and harbor to the south. Other than the sudden sense of openness, Mason Avenue, at this location, does not have a well-defined visual character. The town's commercial core, located between Peach Street and Harbor Street, is not clearly visible and recognizable. Because there are no other clear options, first-time travelers continue down Mason Avenue seeking visual clues as to where they are and where they should go. The two blocks of Mason Avenue between Fig Street and Plum Street must be traveled before the four-block commercial core is reached.

The character of the portion of Mason Avenue between Fig Street and Plum Street is important because it is the gateway to the commercial core. Its design function should be to guide visitors as smoothly as possible to the commercial core as they take in the visual scene before them. It is the first experience visitors have of the relationship between the town, the harbor, and the bay.

On the north side of Mason Avenue, the two blocks between Fig and Plum streets include some of Cape Charles' earliest, simplest, and most historically significant residential structures. It is here that the first residences were constructed in Cape Charles soon after the town was created. This row of residential structures was once continuous. Today, however, it is framed and punctuated by larger, nonresidential structures. At the northwest corner of Fig and Mason is the Kellogg Building, a colorful, 1920's commercial structure in a Spanish Colonial style. At the corner of Nectarine Street and

Mason Avenue is an automobile dealership, occupying both the northeast and northwest corners. On the northeast corner of Plum and Mason is the Municipal Building, including the large Fire Department annex.

The nonresidential structures are thus located at each intersection with Mason Avenue in these first two blocks. The Kellogg Building was briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Because of its unusual character, it visually enhances the entrance into Cape Charles, and its long-term preservation and use should be of strong interest to the town. The automobile dealership and Municipal Building/Fire Department are both important uses along Mason Avenue which should be supported and sustained.

Between these structures are the historically significant residential buildings. Six residential buildings are located between Fig and Nectarine streets. An additional two buildings in this row have been demolished in recent years, creating a vacant lot that is currently used for parking. Ten residential buildings are located between Nectarine and Plum streets. Most of these buildings are currently used as residences. Two, however, are used for small commercial businesses.

Demolition Ordinance: These residential buildings, though modest, are significant to the historical development of the town and should be preserved. The enhancement of the buildings and their landscapes is also important to the entrance experience onto Mason Avenue. Most important is to prevent future building loss through demolition. This portion of Mason Avenue is currently zoned B-1, Business District. Because of their modest character, pressure may develop over time for the demolition of these residential structures to make way for new commercial construction. There is currently a large variety of vacant commercial space available in the town's commercial core. In addition, there is ample existing open space for new commercial construction in Cape Charles on the south side of Mason Avenue. The demolition of these residential buildings is not necessary to accommodate new commercial uses that cannot be accommodated within the existing buildings. Demolition should not be permitted if at all possible.

It is recommended that demolition of these structures be discouraged through the adoption of a demolition ordinance by the town. A demolition ordinance, common in historically significant towns throughout Virginia, has four important functions. First, it informs owners and developers that it is the policy of the town to discourage demolition of historically significant buildings, and it explains why. Second, it has a provision to prevent demolition by neglect. Third, it can create a period of time during which developers, the town, and other interested parties can seek alternatives to demolition. Finally, the Code of Virginia (Section 15.1-503.2) gives the town or associated persons

or organizations the option of purchasing the property in question at fair market value as a last resort.

Techniques to Promote Rehabilitation: The appropriate maintenance, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of the residential buildings should be encouraged. There are three ways in which this could be achieved. First, the permitted uses included in the zoning code for the first two blocks of Mason Avenue should be restricted to uses that can be accommodated by the existing buildings. The existing zoning code includes a wide range of permitted uses in the B-1 district, such as schools, service stations, and lumber supply, which clearly could not be accommodated within the existing residential structures. The zoning code should be revised to eliminate potentially destructive uses in this area, customizing permitted uses within the B-1 district to the available resources. The zoning ordinance should list the general categories of desired commercial uses for this two-block area and then require developers to demonstrate that the uses as they propose them can be accommodated within the existing residential buildings.

Second, the zoning code should limit the size, volume, and location of proposed additions to the existing buildings. It should: 1) state the town's policy that the existing residential buildings should be retained and appropriately reused, 2) limit the size of additions to the existing residential buildings to one-half the size of the existing buildings, 3) limit the location of new additions to the side and rear of the existing buildings, and 4) establish side and rear yard requirements similar to those of existing residential districts (at present the B-1 district has no yard requirements except adjacent to residential districts).

Third, a minimum level of design review should be included within the zoning code. Design guidelines should be created for the use of owners and developers and to serve as a touchstone to inform the review process. The goal of the design guidelines should be to preserve the character of the buildings by preserving original historic building fabric and features. Most important is that large-scale building features, such as porches, should not be removed. Next is that original building fabric and detailing, such as original windows, siding, and trim, should not be removed. Some features, such as original windows, can be economically rehabilitated. Storm windows and doors can enhance thermal performance. New building materials such as siding should be similar to existing building materials. It is possible, however, though not recommended, that some building features could be covered, such as covering original wood siding with new vinyl siding. However, in such cases, it should be required that the installation be accomplished in a way that retains the original building fabric and detailing beneath. Finally, the massing and volume of proposed additions should be generally in scale with the massing and volume of the existing buildings.

Such a level of design review would be both minimal and flexible. More detailed and demanding guidelines are possible should the town desire to implement them. The basic goal of preserving historic buildings and fabric, however, does not require that buildings be fully restored. There need be no requirements relative to paint colors or the detailed design of new elements.

Streetscape: Improvements to the streetscape in the two-block area between Fig and Plum streets would improve the visual character of the approach to the commercial core. Mason Avenue is a wide street, with two full lanes of traffic and room for parallel parking along the curb. The street has concrete curbs with a grass strip separating the curb from the concrete sidewalk. Curbcuts for driveways exist at the location of each residential building. Overhead electrical wires are located above the grass strip. Opposite the block between Fig and Nectarine streets is the steep embankment of "the hump," the overpass providing access over the railroad from the town to the harbor.

Expensive public improvements are not necessary to improve the visual character of the streetscape. As noted throughout this report, the most important measure that can be taken to improve the visual character of the streetscape is the planting of deciduous street trees. In the case of the two-block area between Fig and Plum streets, there are few existing street trees. Most of those that exist are evergreens, which block the view and do not create space beneath as do deciduous trees. The planting of numerous deciduous street trees is recommended. In the grass strip beneath the overhead wires, low-growing crepe myrtle are recommended. In private yards, beyond the wires, canopy trees should be planted. The embankment of the hump should be densely planted with appropriate native shrubs to create a strong visual presentation. Parking in the existing vacant lots should be permitted, though at a minimum the parking areas should be paved with gravel. Requirements for additional parking, as it becomes needed, can be accommodated by new parking lots located on the south side of Mason Avenue. Parking lots should be landscaped with canopy trees.

Summary of Recommendations, Mason Avenue - Fig Street to Plum Street:

1. The existing residential buildings on Mason Avenue between Fig Street and Plum Street are among the earliest structures in the town and should be preserved.

2. A demolition ordinance should be created to discourage the demolition of these existing buildings. The ordinance will inform owners and developers of the town's interest in preserving existing buildings. It can create a period of time to allow owners, developers, and the town to consider alternatives to demolition. The ordinance should include a provision prohibiting demolition-by-neglect.

3. The zoning code should be modified to restrict permitted uses in this two-block area to uses that can be accommodated in the existing buildings.

4. The zoning code should limit the size, volume, and location of proposed additions. Side yard requirements should be similar to those in residential districts.

5. A minimum level of design review should be created through the zoning code, the goal of which is to encourage the maintenance and rehabilitation of historic building fabric.

6. Design guidelines should be created for the use of building owners and developers and to serve as a touchstone to inform the review process.

7. The existing streetscape should be enhanced through the planting of deciduous street trees in yard areas, crepe myrtle in the grass strip adjacent to the street and beneath the overhead wires, and shrubs on the embankment of the "hump."

8. Parking areas should be paved with gravel.

Mason Street - Plum Street to Harbor Street

Cape Charles' commercial district is concentrated within the four-block stretch of Mason Avenue between Plum Street and Harbor Street. Of these four blocks, the two central blocks contain most of the town's existing commercial buildings as well as the core of its current commercial activity. A few additional commercial buildings are located in the first block of Peach and Strawberry streets. These structures are included in the discussion outlined below. It is the two blocks of Mason Avenue between Peach and Pine streets, including the commercial buildings along Peach and Strawberry streets, that should be the focus of the town's attention in the revitalization of the downtown area.

Cape Charles has a variety of commercial building types typical of an early-twentieth century town. Buildings in the downtown area are mostly small in scale, with small commercial storefronts at street level and limited space at the second-floor level. Approximately 31% of the existing commercial buildings along Mason Avenue, Peach Street, and Strawberry Street are one story in height. Approximately 53% are two stories in height. The few three-story structures are notable exceptions and contribute to the interesting variety of rentable spaces available downtown. Most of the area's existing commercial buildings have brick exterior walls and wood-framed interior construction. The buildings are generally of party wall construction with no setback from the sidewalk.

The few vacant lots along the north side of Mason Avenue between Peach and Harbor streets appear to have been the result of building loss, whether by fire or other causes.

Downtown Cape Charles has a high degree of historical integrity, and the assemblage of existing buildings is representative of the town's historical development. The period of significance of downtown Cape Charles stretches from the 1890s to 1940, with a significant concentration and peak in building activity dating from the 1920s. This range and concentration appears to correlate perfectly with the historical development and peak economic activity of the town. Sixteen (43%) of the town's thirty-seven commercial buildings in the downtown area date from the 1920s. These include many of the area's most significant buildings, such as the 1921 former Northampton County Trust Building, now Nations Bank, and the three-story Parson's Building, now Hubbard's Home Center. By comparison, four buildings (9%) date from the 1940s, five (14%) date from the 1930s, six (16%) date from approximately 1910, three (8%) date from approximately 1900, and three (8%) date from approximately 1890.

Other particularly significant buildings in the commercial area include the 1907 L. E. Mumford Bank at 121 Mason Avenue (corner of Pine and Mason), the 1940's Palace Theater at 303 Mason Avenue, the c.1910 three-story commercial building at 273 Mason Avenue (corner of Strawberry and Mason), the 1920's Pure Oil station at 401 Mason Avenue (now BP at Peach and Mason), and the area's earliest commercial structure, the two-story 1886 wood-frame building at 335 Mason Avenue (Peach and Mason).

Building Usage: A casual survey of Mason Avenue indicates that approximately twenty-eight businesses are located in approximately forty-six available street-level commercial spaces in Cape Charles' downtown core. This figure indicates a street-level occupancy rate on the order of 60%. The largest percentage of businesses in the downtown area, 32%, are retail stores oriented to the local market. These include the existing food store, drug store, bakery, hardware store, household goods, appliance store, video store, and liquor store. Approximately 25% of the businesses downtown are specialty shops oriented largely toward tourists and out-of-town shoppers. Existing specialty shops include a boutique, art gallery, antique dealer, quilt store, gift store, jewelry store, and a bait and tackle store.

Approximately 18% of the downtown businesses are service-related, also oriented to the local market. Services-related businesses include a bank, cleaners, self-service laundromat, hair salon, and senior center. There are three (11%) entertainment-oriented businesses along Mason Avenue. This figure does not include the Palace Theater, a significant future resource which is currently open on a part-time basis. Included in the entertainment category are video/pinball machine facilities and a karate school. Three

(11%) existing businesses are food-related, including one family restaurant, one cafe, and one bar and grill. There are only two (7%) professional offices that have been identified in the downtown area in the course of this study.

Most of the existing businesses in downtown Cape Charles are good, desirable businesses appropriate to the character of the town, as well as to the existing historically significant building stock. Though a few of the businesses are marginal, both economically and in terms of their contribution to the business climate, these businesses may tend to disappear as vacant space is filled, the business identity of downtown becomes defined, and the competition for space increases.

The mix of businesses downtown is good, balanced between local goods and services (40%) and tourist- or visitor-based goods and services (25%). The problem is the comparatively low number of businesses compared to the number of available spaces—the approximately 60% level of vacancy—and the volume of business they do. The proposed marketing plan for Cape Charles, discussed in an earlier portion of this chapter, should assess the level of business currently conducted—is it sufficient to sustain existing businesses? "Anchor" businesses should be identified and recruited to lead the marketing effort. At present anchor businesses appear to include Nation's Bank, Savage's Drug Store, Watson's Hardware, Hubbard's Home Center, Bayshore Market, the ABC Store, and Dollar General. Every effort should be made by the recommended business development organization to retain and involve existing anchor businesses, to assist more-fragile businesses, and to recruit new businesses.

The very low number of professional offices—doctors, realtors, lawyers, financial consultants, etc.—in downtown Cape Charles is surprising and may be indicative of the nature of professional services on the Eastern Shore. Are most professional offices in homes? The recommended business development organization for downtown Cape Charles should investigate the professional services market in the region and make a concerted effort to attract this market to Mason Avenue. Professional services are ideal for the vacant second-floor spaces in the town's commercial buildings.

Building Condition: The general condition of most buildings along Mason Avenue appears to be good. This assessment is based upon the lack of visible evidence indicating that buildings or building fabric is deteriorating and threatening the buildings' structural integrity. It is not based upon the degree to which buildings have been appropriately rehabilitated or restored, but only upon the level of basic maintenance. Though there is a relatively high vacancy rate downtown, most of the existing vacant buildings are interspersed between occupied buildings. In a number of circumstances, vacant commercial spaces are located in buildings that are otherwise partially occupied. While

downtown Cape Charles has the appearance of an area that is struggling economically, it does not appear to be abandoned or neglected. Only the row of buildings on Mason Avenue between Pine and Harbor streets have the outward appearance of neglect and mistreatment that raises concerns about building conditions that may threaten their long-term viability.

Most of the downtown area's commercial buildings are of good quality construction. The 1920s, when many of the downtown buildings were constructed, was a period when good quality materials were generally available and good construction techniques were generally used. Investment during this period was more long-term and less expedient in intent than it was in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. One needs only to compare the wood-framed commercial building at 335 Mason Avenue, constructed in 1886 and the earliest commercial building in the downtown area, with 203, 207, or 209 Mason Avenue (Parsons Building) or 10 Strawberry Street (Mack Building) to clearly see this difference. In part because of the decline in economic activity in Cape Charles, there has been relatively little change to the existing commercial buildings since they were constructed as compared to the amount of change in other similar towns. Less change has meant that the buildings not only have a higher degree of historical integrity, and are thus excellent candidates for rehabilitation and reuse, but also that the buildings have not been compromised as frequently with expedient, short-term alterations to accommodate changes in use or the desire to keep up with changes in fashion and appearance.

The danger in many neglected downtown areas is that the level of business activity drops so low, and the buildings are so large in comparison to that level of business activity, that owners are financially overwhelmed and are not able to afford and keep up with basic building maintenance needs. Expedient maintenance measures that can actually increase deterioration are undertaken to stretch the life of failed roofing, flashing, or other building elements, or required maintenance is neglected altogether. This scenario does not appear to have occurred to any significant degree to the commercial buildings in Cape Charles. While the level of business activity in downtown Cape Charles may be slow, it has never threatened to disappear. The low level of business activity in Cape Charles appears to be more a function (so far, at least) of a long-struggling regional economy than it has been of a wholesale abandonment of the town. Cape Charles' commercial buildings for the most part are of a manageable size and type that makes basic maintenance possible despite low rents or modest profit levels. While maintenance may not have been entirely appropriate or of the highest quality, the reasonable size and simple character of the buildings, their good overall construction, and the lack of previous compromising alterations have rendered these measures sufficient to preserve the basic integrity of the structures.

The kinds of changes that have occurred to commercial buildings in Cape Charles have been largely superficial. They have included signage alterations, painting of brickwork, and the covering of original storefronts with modern facing materials, be they the metal cladding of the 1960s or the more contemporary wood-shingled pent roofs. For the most part, these changes have been modest in scope and have not affected the overall historical integrity of the buildings. Where original storefronts have been covered over, in most cases the original building features appear to have been retained beneath the cladding. Most changes have involved only inappropriate signage and paint colors. With minimal investment, these storefronts can be rehabilitated to be more in character with the character of the buildings and the town.

The most serious modification of the commercial buildings along Mason Avenue has been the covering of the historic brick facades with "Permastone." Permastone is a stucco treatment that is intended to look like cut stone. It is highly inappropriate to the character of the town. (Where on the Eastern Shore is stone available or has it ever been used as a local building material?) Furthermore, in applying the stucco, it is possible that the original brick was damaged. Investigations should be undertaken by building owners and the town to determine whether the original brick was damaged on buildings to which a Permastone treatment has been applied. Buildings with Permastone should be targeted for rehabilitation. If the brick has not been damaged, the stucco should be removed and the brick restored. If the brick has been damaged, removal of the Permastone treatment and the installation of a more appropriate smooth stucco is a recommended alternative.

It is recommended that the historical commission discussed in Chapter Four create a library of documents outlining appropriate preservation materials, methods, and techniques for use by building owners and contractors. This library should include design guidelines from other communities as well as preservation briefs, bulletins, and technical publications available from the National Trust, the National Park Service, and others. Owners of historic buildings and local carpenters should be made aware of its availability. Workshops could be held reviewing and demonstrating appropriate rehabilitation and maintenance issues and techniques. A list of contractors with experience in appropriately maintaining historic buildings should be circulated by the commission. A task force of these individuals should be made available to consult with building owners. The business development organization and historical commission should generally monitor building conditions and notify owners of apparent problems that could seriously affect building fabric.

Adaptive Reuse Potential: Because of the quality of the construction of the town's existing commercial buildings, their simple configuration and limited height, and the variety of available spaces, the buildings in downtown Cape Charles have strong

potential for adaptive reuse. The variety of available spaces is an important consideration in developing a marketing plan and in attracting new businesses. As noted above, Cape Charles has one-, two-, and three-story buildings. Building types range from small shops with limited space on the street level, such as at 311 and 323 Mason Avenue, to large retail/office structures with ample open space at street level and ample additional space on upper floors, such as at the three-story structure at 273 Mason Avenue or the Parsons Building at 209 Mason Avenue (Hubbard's Home Center). There are high-quality specialty buildings like the Palace Theater and the former Northampton County Trust Bank (Nations Bank) and general purpose retail/office buildings like 219-221 and 225 Mason Avenue (Watson's Hardware), 263 Mason Avenue (McCrory's), and 10 Strawberry Street (Mack Building). Downtown Cape Charles is not overwhelmed with any one type of space, but has a good quantity of a variety of different types of spaces. This variety of available spaces creates the potential for a variety of businesses, with a potentially healthy mix of size and spatial requirements.

The problem along Mason Street is not with the quality or condition of the building stock, but with the low level of business activity. If the level of business activity could be raised, the resources are available for a healthy revitalization. As has been discussed previously, the level of business activity could be raised by the implementation of the proposed Accawmacke Plantation or by the proposed Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park. If these initiatives are not successful, and possibly even if they are, revitalization of downtown Cape Charles will be slow. But nonetheless, the town and the local businesses must be united and aggressive in their planning and marketing efforts. The resources are available if the activity can be generated.

While improvement in the appearance of downtown buildings alone will not make revitalization happen, it will help substantially by demonstrating the town's and local business' ability to plan and implement thoughtful and constructive change. It will establish a climate that is business-friendly. Improvement in the appearance of downtown buildings need not be costly or restrictive. There are two key elements: first, and most importantly, buildings should be properly maintained, especially roofs, parapets, flashings, windows, and exterior walls. Second, from an aesthetic standpoint, improvements should work *with* the existing character of a building rather than impose a superficial, contemporary treatment upon it. As has been discussed in Chapter Three of this document, *Preservation Approach*, rehabilitation of the existing historic building fabric is the easiest, most cost-effective, and most important way of working with the character of an existing building. Heavy-handed bureaucratic deliberations are not necessary in downtown Cape Charles. Elaborate restoration treatments are not required. Simple guidelines that will enable owners and contractors to recognize, understand, and work with the character of their buildings could transform Mason Street and demonstrate

to the outside business community that Cape Charles is serious about, and capable of, a concerted revitalization of business activity.

The only way to successfully implement appropriate change to the appearance of downtown buildings is through some level of design review. Design review is the self-imposition of simple design principles and guidelines by business and building owners in their own self-interest to achieve a unified, prosperous appearance for the town's business district. It is a process based upon consensus. Design review is used to achieve a mutually-desirable community goal that could not be achieved by individual business and building owners on their own. The design principles and guidelines are based upon the concept of using the inherent character of the town and its buildings to attract tourists, shoppers, and outside businesses. Design review can be open, easy, simple, and flexible. It should be an essential revitalization tool of the town and the recommended downtown business organization.

Building Codes: The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Cape Charles' commercial buildings will require upgrading the buildings with respect to local building codes. This becomes an issue primarily for buildings with second- and third-floor levels. It is not, however, a difficult issue to resolve. Building codes have a provision for accommodating existing conditions in historically significant structures. All of the buildings in downtown Cape Charles that contribute to the National Register historic district—certainly all of the two- and three-story buildings—are historically significant and thus can benefit from this code provision. In general, what is achieved with historically significant buildings with respect to code compliance is a mitigation package that substantially improves public safety while preserving historic character, features, and significant building fabric.

The key issues with respect to code compliance are fire detection, fire and smoke spread, and egress. Rehabilitation of three-story buildings and larger two-story buildings will require two means of egress, or stairways by which upper-level occupants can safely exit the building in case of a fire. Mitigation generally starts with the installation of a fire detection system throughout the building comprised of centrally controlled smoke detectors, alarms, pull stations, and a monitoring service. Such systems are routinely required and are not expensive. Sprinkler systems should not be required.

One of the two required means of egress, or stairways, from upper levels in a mitigation package for a historically significant building is usually the existing historic stairway, which probably does not fully comply with current code requirements. This stairway may usually remain so long as it can be separated from occupied spaces with rated doors and, in most cases, partitions. Existing plaster partitions are usually adequate to provide

the required fire separation. The second required means of egress is usually a fully-complying exit stair accessible from all spaces and located within the building. This stairway will be enclosed by a two-hour rated partition and will exit directly to the outside. Fire escapes are no longer permitted.

Finally, a one-hour fire separation is required between floors. Existing wood and plaster construction is usually an acceptable level of separation, though sometimes an additional layer of rated gypsum board is installed over the existing plaster ceiling. What is most important is that smoke is not able to travel between floors, making escape difficult or impossible.

New Construction: An interesting feature of Cape Charles' downtown commercial district is the ample amount of open space available in addition to the excellent supply of existing building stock. Mason Avenue was laid out with buildings only on the north side of the street. The south side of Mason Avenue has been historically used primarily by the railroad, the life-blood of the town. Today, since the decline in the railroad industry and the reduction in the volume of railroad traffic, the railroad requires less space than it has historically occupied. Consequently, much of the vacant land along the south side of Mason Avenue is available for new development.

In addition to this vacant land on the south side of Mason Avenue, there are a limited number of vacant lots available for development on the north side of Mason Avenue. Two small vacant lots are located near the corner of Mason Avenue and Peach Street. Additional lots are located in the block between Pine and Harbor streets. It is also possible that development pressure could be felt in the residentially-scaled blocks between Fig Street and Peach Street.

The area included in the blocks between Fig Street and Plum Street has been discussed in a previous portion of this chapter. It is recommended that new commercial development in this area be limited to the appropriate adaptive reuse of existing buildings. The demolition of existing buildings should be prohibited to the extent permitted by state law. The adoption of a demolition ordinance by the town has been recommended. New construction in the blocks on the north side of Mason Avenue between Fig and Plum streets is not recommended.

New construction is also not recommended in the vacant lots on the north side of Mason Avenue in the block between Pine and Harbor streets. While new construction cannot be stopped on these lots, it should not be encouraged by the town or the recommended business development organization.

The town or recommended business development organization should concentrate its efforts on filling available vacant space rather than promoting new construction. Rehabilitation and adaptive reuse should be the first priority. New construction should be encouraged only when adaptive reuse is not feasible. Such conditions will occur when the program requirements of a new business cannot be met by the existing available building stock. Because of the variety of spaces currently available, however, it should be possible to avoid new construction for the foreseeable future.

There are two businesses currently located on the south side of Mason Avenue. These businesses are the Bayshore Market and the Dollar General store. While both businesses are important to Cape Charles, the structures they occupy do not contribute positively to the character of the streetscape. Both structures are typical, one-story retail boxes. Their long, low facades are not sympathetic to the character of the existing buildings along Mason Avenue. Both buildings have been sited adjacent to the sidewalk, which is appropriate. (All new buildings along Mason Avenue should be sited adjacent to the sidewalk to maintain or create a street presence.) Bayshore Market is sited at the end of Strawberry Street, which is unfortunate, as it prohibits the future pedestrian extension of Strawberry Street beyond Mason Avenue.

It is recommended that a master plan be undertaken for the future development of the vacant land on the south side of Mason Avenue. No new construction should be allowed on this land that does not conform to the goals of the master plan. It is also recommended that design guidelines be prepared for buildings and site development of the land. The master plan and the design guidelines should promote new construction that is consistent with the long-term interests of the town and the downtown area.

As noted above, new buildings should be located adjacent to the existing sidewalk to create a streetscape similar to that existing on the north side of Mason Avenue. Buildings should be of contemporary, not historical, design, but should to the extent possible have a similar massing and be of similar or sympathetic materials to those of existing buildings along the street. Because of the large variety of existing buildings along Mason Avenue, a large variety of massing configurations are appropriate. It is recommended that new buildings have storefronts and expanses of glass at street level, similar to existing buildings, to create a lively sidewalk experience. To the extent possible, two-story buildings should be strongly encouraged to promote a mixed-use environment.

The design of buildings consistent with the concepts of sustainable design should be strongly encouraged by the town since the Sustainable Development Industrial Park is a key marketing initiative. New buildings and site development should serve as demonstration projects for testing and monitoring sustainable design concepts. To this

end, design guidelines for new construction should outline, highlight, and promote sustainable building design concepts and technology. Grants should be sought by the town for the development of ecologically appropriate solutions to public infrastructure problems, such as stormwater management, water supply, electrical service, and sewage disposal, to serve as standards. The design standards should be based upon the use of appropriate natural systems to solve design and infrastructure problems.

The amount of land available for future development should be reviewed and negotiated with the railroad. Enough land should be preserved for the railroad to allow for an efficient and profitable future operation. The master plan should identify areas that should be set aside to meet the long-term parking needs of a healthy downtown commercial district. The availability of land for parking is a unique circumstance that is not common in older downtown neighborhoods. Potential future parking needs should be calculated. The vehicular and pedestrian circulation for the proposed parking should be worked out in the master plan. It is recommended that the existing street pattern north of Mason Avenue be extended south into the railroad property—existing streets should extended, whether for vehicle or exclusively pedestrian circulation. Streets, pedestrian walkways, and parking areas should be heavily planted with native deciduous canopy trees. The potential for future access to the harbor along the alignment of each existing north-south street should be preserved. Land for other potential public improvements, such as a future ferry wharf or harbor overlook, should also be reserved. Programming for such potential future uses should be the first step in undertaking the master plan.

Streetscape: Mason Avenue is very wide, providing ample space for two travel lanes and two lanes of parallel parking. Historic photographs show that the north side of the street once had perpendicular parking bays. The width of Mason Avenue and the vacant land on the railroad property create an openness which is the predominant, if not overwhelming, characteristic of the streetscape. This openness has been a key element of the streetscape since the town was created. A great deal of change can be accommodated along Mason Avenue before this openness will be lost. The generally open character and the sense of exposure to the harbor and the bay should be preserved in the future development of the town.

Streetscape improvements have been undertaken along the north side of Mason Avenue in relatively recent years. The improvements feature a wide, concrete sidewalk with street trees and overhead street lamps. The street trees are widely spaced and have not yet grown to the extent that they make a significant impression on the spatial character of the streetscape. Some of the street trees are located in planting beds. Some local store owners have planted several of the beds with flowers. Such treatment has, however, been spotty at best and maintenance of the planting beds has been a persistent problem. Most

street trees are located in very small, square beds. The small beds and excessive exposure appear to have affected the health and growth rate of the trees.

The existing streetscape along the commercial portion of Mason Avenue is tolerable, if not appealing, exciting, or entirely appropriate. It is not recommended that the town seek to undertake expensive streetscape improvements at this time. The town's efforts should be focused instead upon business development, marketing, and the occupancy and rehabilitation of the existing building stock.

Improvements to the streetscape, when implemented, should consist of the removal of excessive concrete paving, the enlarging of planting beds to provide air and water to the roots of street trees, and the planting of numerous additional deciduous street trees. The sidewalk along Mason Avenue is comprised of concrete that is divided by construction joints into three rows parallel to the street. It is recommended that the concrete in much of the row adjacent to the curb be removed and replaced with brick pavers set in sand. Such a treatment would improve the visual appearance of the sidewalk, provide the air and water for street trees, and serve as a walking surface. A less costly solution for the short term would be to remove smaller portions of the concrete in the row, install topsoil, and plant a low-maintenance groundcover such as periwinkle (Vinca minor).

The town may wish to consider recreating the perpendicular parking arrangement previously existing along Mason Avenue. Either a parallel or perpendicular parking arrangement would permit the removal of street paving at key locations to reduce the paved street width and create additional planted islands, principally at intersections, to reduce the width of street that pedestrians must cross. While sidewalks must be provided for pedestrian crossing, most of the area of the islands could be planted in groundcover and street trees.

The improvement of existing storefronts has been briefly outlined above in the discussion of building condition and rehabilitation. In general, existing storefronts have a high degree of historical integrity and are in good condition. In some cases, inappropriate cladding and pent roofs have been installed at street level obscuring the character of the existing buildings. Signage along Mason Avenue varies in size, type, and quality, creating a disjointed appearance that is bad for business. In rehabilitating existing buildings and storefronts, owners should work with the existing character of their buildings' storefronts. False fronts and modern cladding should not be permitted. Signage should be restrained and appropriate to the period of the existing building, in most cases the early-twentieth century. Design guidelines should be created for the storefronts along Mason Avenue to assist owners in understanding and correctly applying design principles. Until customized design guidelines can be created, guidelines from

other similar downtown districts should be used. As recommended above, a flexible design review process should be implemented.

Summary of Recommendations, Mason Avenue - Plum Street to Harbor Street:

1. The problem along Mason Avenue is not with the quality or condition of the existing building stock, but with the low level of business activity. The recommended business development organization should work to retain and involve existing anchor businesses, to assist more-fragile businesses, and to recruit new businesses to the downtown area.

2. The professional services market should be investigated to determine how it can be attracted to Mason Avenue.

3. The improvement in the appearance of downtown buildings alone will not make revitalization happen, but it will help substantially by demonstrating the town's and local business' ability to plan and implement thoughtful and constructive change. Two key design principles should be pursued: the proper maintenance of buildings, and improvements that work *with* the existing character of a building.

4. A library of reference materials should be maintained by the recommended historical commission, outlining appropriate preservation materials, methods, and techniques for use by building owners and contractors.

5. Workshops should be held to review and demonstrate appropriate rehabilitation and maintenance issues and techniques.

6. A list of contractors with experience in appropriately maintaining buildings should be available from the historical commission.

7. A task force should be created to be available to consult with building owners.

8. The business development organization and local historical commission should generally monitor building conditions and notify owners of apparent problems that could seriously affect building fabric.

9. A design review process should be implemented to create a unified, prosperous appearance for the business district. Design review should encourage improvements that are sympathetic to the character of the existing buildings.

10. Building code issues should be addressed through mitigation packages that improve the safety of existing buildings being rehabilitated but that do not comply with requirements that would diminish a building's historic character.

11. The town or business development organization should concentrate upon filling available vacant space rather than upon new construction.

12. A master plan and design guidelines should be created for the open area south of Mason Avenue to promote future new development that is consistent with the long-term interests of the town.

13. The design guidelines should encourage use of sustainable design concepts for private improvements and require them for public improvements to enhance the sustainable development marketing theme. New development should serve as demonstration projects for testing and monitoring sustainable design concepts.

14. Long-term parking needs for downtown should be calculated and designed and the land set aside in the master plan for the area south of Mason Avenue.

15. The existing street pattern north of Mason Avenue should be extended south into the vacant railroad property in the master plan for the area. The potential for future access to the harbor should be maintained as should land for other potential future public improvements.

16. The open character of Mason Avenue's streetscape should be maintained.

17. The town should not undertake expensive streetscape improvements at this time but should concentrate on marketing, increasing business activity, and the reuse and rehabilitation of existing vacant buildings.

18. Improvements to the streetscape, when they are undertaken, should consist of the removal of excessive areas of concrete sidewalk, the enlarging of tree planting beds to provide air and water to root systems, the creation of planted islands reducing the street width at key locations, and the planting of numerous additional street trees.

Mason Avenue - Harbor Street to Bay Avenue

The block along the north side of Mason Avenue from Harbor Street to Bay Avenue is a residentially-scaled block with four existing buildings. Three of the existing buildings are residences constructed c.1900. The fourth building is a boarding house or inn

constructed c.1910. The buildings are located in a row beginning at the east end of the block, at Harbor Street. All four of the buildings are historically significant and have a high degree of historical integrity. At the west end of the block is a vacant lot that extends the full width of the block facing Bay Avenue. This vacant lot comprises approximately 40% of the area of the block.

The existing lots fronting on Mason Avenue between Harbor Street and Bay Avenue, including the entire vacant lot, are currently within the B-1 Business District of the zoning ordinance. Discussions have been ongoing in the Planning Commission and the Town Council regarding the inappropriateness of this zoning classification. Not only could the existing residences be lost to development, but the vacant lot at the end of the block could be commercially developed to the detriment of the residential and recreational character of Bay Avenue and the beach.

It is strongly recommended that the lots along the north side of Mason Avenue be rezoned to R-1 Residential, including the vacant lot. The adaptive reuse of the existing residences as bed and breakfasts or inns should be permitted. Adaptive reuse of the residences as specialty shops is also possible, though it is recommended that specialty shops be concentrated in the central commercial district to the extent possible. The bottom line should be that the existing residential structures remain, that the residential character of the block be maintained, and that any new development along Mason Avenue (both sides) or Bay Avenue be sympathetic with the existing structures and the residential character and use. Design guidelines and a design review process are recommended to help achieve this goal. Purchase of the vacant lot for a community park would be highly desirable if it could be arranged.

Summary of Recommendations, Mason Avenue - Harbor Street to Bay Avenue:

1. The existing lots along the north side of Mason Avenue, including the vacant lot, should be rezoned R-1 Residential. Adaptive reuse of the existing residences as a bed and breakfast or inn would be appropriate.

2. New development along Mason Avenue (both sides) or Bay Avenue should be sympathetic with the existing structures and residential character and use. Design guidelines and a design review process are recommended to help achieve this goal.

Townwide Recommendations and Sample Ordinance

In this and the following chapters, existing conditions in different areas of Cape Charles have been reviewed and recommendations have been made for revitalization. While the

intent has been to customize the recommendations as much as possible to the specific conditions of each area addressed, a number of common recommendations have emerged and should be applied to the historic portion of the town as a whole. These common recommendations include recommendations for a historical commission, design guidelines, demolition ordinance, demolition-by-neglect ordinance, and some level of design review when building permits are required for exterior alterations, new construction, and signage.

At the request of the Planning Commission, a sample ordinance for these recommendations has been prepared and is included in this document as Appendix A. It is entitled "Community Revitalization Ordinance." In creating the ordinance, models currently in use in other Virginia communities have been reviewed and adapted. The ordinance has been written to be simple, direct, and as unintrusive and flexible as possible.

The emphasis in creating the proposed ordinance has been upon strengthening community character of Cape Charles' commercial and residential neighborhoods, not strictly upon historic preservation. The flexibility of the ordinance will be derived from the manner in which it is interpreted by the town. The town could chose to interpret it in a very strict manner, as some other Virginia communities have chosen to do, or the town could interpret the ordinance in a very loose and flexible manner.

A design review process will require some level of design guidelines, as has been discussed in portions of both Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. The design guidelines will outline the principles of appropriate design and rehabilitation work, but will not mandate solutions. Design solutions will be determined through discussions and negotiations between owners and the review committee (the proposed Historical Commission), with the oversight and decision by the Town Council. The level of flexibility of the review process will therefore ultimately be determined by the community through consensus decisions reached by the town's elected representatives. In order to facilitate revitalization, it is strongly recommended that the town adopt such an ordinance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESIDENTIAL REVITALIZATION

RESIDENTIAL REVITALIZATION

Cape Charles' Historic Street Grid

Cape Charles is laid out on a rectangular grid which is the single-most defining feature of the town. The grid is oriented facing south toward the railroad and harbor, formerly the basis of the town's economy. The southern edge of the grid, Mason Avenue, features the town's commercial center, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Behind Mason Avenue, filling out the grid to the north, is the town's residential district.

Cape Charles' grid is seven blocks wide (east/west) and five blocks deep (north/south). The original portion of the town was laid out in 1883/84 and was comprised of the five-block by five-block section to the east. In 1909, an additional two blocks, called the Sea Cottage Addition, was laid out on fill adjacent to the bay. At the center of the grid is the central park, originally four square blocks in area. Over time, buildings have been constructed along the north and south edges of the square. Two wide boulevards center on the square, dividing the town's grid into quadrants. Peach Street is the north/south boulevard. Mason Avenue is the east/west boulevard. The boulevards were designed with sufficient width to accommodate a center island/divider. The remainder of the grid is comprised of residential streets.

The original portion of the town is made up of two sizes of blocks. The typical block is a rectangle with its long dimension oriented east/west. An east/west alleyway divides most of the blocks in half. In each of the two halves, fourteen lots, 40 feet wide (east/west) by 140 feet deep (north/south), were arranged in a row facing the avenues to the north and south. The center two rows of blocks in the town's grid, between Plum and Strawberry streets, are squares. On these square blocks, lots are arranged facing east and west as well as north and south. The blocks in the Sea Cottage Addition extend the town's east/west avenues, but the north/south streets, Harbor Street and Bay Avenue, are slanted to align with the bay rather than the town's rectangular grid.

Cape Charles' rectangular grid of streets is a predetermined pattern superimposed upon the landscape at the town's creation. Because of the variations in the rectangular pattern—the central park, the boulevards, the alleys, the Sea Cottage Addition—there is a richness to the grid that contributes significantly to the town's character. Over the past one hundred twelve years, Cape Charles has been engaged in filling out this grid with homes, churches, and other residentially-related structures. Construction began in the southeast corner in 1883 and progressed to the north and west. The homes that were constructed range in size, type, and style. Considerable variation in the homes occurred

over time with changes in stylistic development of the architecture of the times. Additional variations in the pattern of the grid occurred as original 40-foot-wide lots were combined to create larger lots for larger homes and as new lots were created facing east/west at some locations, breaking the generally prevailing north/south orientation of lots.

The filling out of the grid over time has created a series of neighborhoods that blend one into another almost imperceptibly. During the peak period of the town's development, these neighborhoods included people of all types and income levels—railroad workers, railroad managers, and support personnel. It is recommended that the Cape Charles Historical Society undertake a study of the development of neighborhoods in the town through the detailed review of Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, census reports, and deed records. Through these documents, it should be possible to create a detailed picture of the physical and social evolution of Cape Charles in the years between 1883 and the 1920s. Despite the changing mosaic of building types, architectural styles, lot sizes, income levels, and other differences evident in Cape Charles' development, the rectangular grid dominates the pattern, leveling the differences and creating a community.

The filling of the town's grid has never been completed. A considerable amount of open space remains in the blocks along the north edge of the town. A number of contemporary buildings have been constructed here. In creating the National Register Historic District in Cape Charles, a line was drawn around contributing properties which excludes portions of the street grid at the north end of town. Because of the overriding significance of the street grid, it is recommended the this Historic District boundary be redrawn to include the portions of the grid previously omitted. The creation of a local historic district for Cape Charles should include the entire town grid. Future development within the grid should be sympathetic with the existing town character.

Summary of Recommendations, Historic Street Grid:

1. The Cape Charles Historical Society should undertake a study of the development of Cape Charles' neighborhoods through the detailed review of Sanborn Insurance Company maps, census reports, and deed records.

2. The National Register Historic District for Cape Charles should be expanded to include the entire street grid. A local historic district for the town should also include the entire grid. Future development within the grid should be sympathetic with the existing town character.

Building Condition and Integrity

Like the downtown business district, the residential district of Cape Charles has a high degree of historical integrity. This integrity exists both at the scale of the neighborhood and at the scale of individual buildings. Since experiencing its high-point of development in the 1920s, there has been very little change in the town in terms of pressure for new housing development or pressure for building removal. The town's high level of integrity can be attributed to the long-term decline in the town's economic activity. As a result, Cape Charles is like a time capsule, a complete community, with all of the mythical attributes of the classic American town, bypassed by the mid- and late-twentieth century, and waiting to be reawakened.

As outlined in Chapter Two, *Summary of Existing Conditions*, change to Cape Charles' residential buildings has occurred in small-scale increments. Most of this change has been related to maintenance of the exterior fabric of the existing buildings, and much of the change has been inappropriate to the building fabric, resulting in the degradation of the buildings' original character. The covering of exterior siding, removal of historic detailing, replacement of original windows, and removal or insensitive enclosure of porches have all been characteristic of the kind of negative changes that have occurred to residential buildings.

Because of the depressed economic conditions in the county over the years, many homeowners in Cape Charles have not been able to afford the cost of renovating or making additions to their homes. Many have also not been able to afford to properly maintain their buildings. The problem of proper maintenance has been made more difficult in Cape Charles by a general lack of appreciation for the character of existing buildings. It has been compounded by the lack of maintenance engendered by a high rate of building vacancy, absentee ownership, and conversion of owner-occupied housing to rental housing. As a result, many buildings have not been properly maintained in Cape Charles. Historic building fabric is slowly and steadily degrading, vacant buildings are left to deteriorate, and the character of the town is left to drift.

Building Rehabilitation

There are three good reasons why the residential buildings and neighborhoods in Cape Charles should be properly rehabilitated. The first reason is simply because the buildings and the neighborhoods are interesting, of high quality, and valuable in and of themselves. Rehabilitation is worth undertaking for its own sake. The second reason is to improve the quality of life of the existing residents of Cape Charles. The elements necessary for a high quality residential community are present in Cape Charles but need appreciation,

development, and care. The third and most compelling reason is to lay the foundation for the long-term economic revitalization of the town by creating a community that people want to come to—to visit, to vacation, to live, to move their businesses, to move their families, to spend their dollars, to invest in their futures. There appears to be a consensus in the town of Cape Charles that revitalization and rehabilitation are desirable goals. The difficulty is in how to achieve it.

Community revitalization cannot be achieved without community consensus. Consensus involves agreement upon a goal and upon a means of achieving that goal. Some actions can be community-wide actions, undertaken by the town as a whole—the planting of street trees, the improvement of streets and sidewalks, etc. These town actions will help create and preserve neighborhood character, but will not be decisive. Neighborhood revitalization is dependent upon the understanding, involvement, participation, and individual actions of many private property owners.

Revitalization starts with education, which has been touched upon in Chapter Four of this document, *Historical Research, Education, and Advocacy*. Beyond educating property owners as to the character, value, and proper care of what they have, there must be a process to guide change in the general direction mutually agreed upon. Zoning and subdivision review are such processes. There are three tools which are essential if change in the town's neighborhoods is to be guided in a positive direction and if neighborhood revitalization is to be achieved. They are a demolition ordinance, design guidelines, and a design review process. These tools have been used in many communities all across the state and the nation. Without these tools, the character of the town will continue to drift and ebb away. What is worse, if strong economic pressure suddenly comes to bear, for instance through development of the Accawmacke Plantation proposal, the town's neighborhoods are completely vulnerable to dramatic and catastrophic change in terms of community character. It is strongly recommended that a demolition ordinance be adopted, that design guidelines be created, and that the town adopt and experiment with a simple, flexible form of design review.

Demolition Ordinance: The creation of a demolition ordinance has been discussed in Chapter Six, *Downtown Revitalization*, with respect to preserving potentially vulnerable buildings along Mason Avenue. The existing residential buildings in Cape Charles' residential neighborhoods are vulnerable as well. At present, there is nothing to prevent an outside developer from acquiring an existing residence, series of residences, or entire block, demolishing all of the existing buildings, and constructing a row of townhouses, an apartment building, or a mobile home park. It is only the lack of economic pressure that is currently preventing such a threat.

The first goal of neighborhood revitalization must be to preserve buildings that contribute to the character of the neighborhood. As noted in Chapter Six, a demolition ordinance, common in historically significant towns throughout Virginia, has four important functions. First, it informs owners and developers that it is the policy of the town to discourage demolition of significant buildings, and it explains why. Second, it has a provision to prevent demolition-by-neglect. Third, it can create a period of time during which developers, the town, and other interested parties can seek alternatives to demolition. Finally, the Code of Virginia (Section 15.1-503.2) gives the town or associated persons or organizations the option of purchasing the property in question at fair market value as a last resort.

Issues involving the demolition of buildings are usually more complicated than the proposed demolition itself. Demolition is usually proposed in conjunction with other development proposals that may or may not be advantageous to the town and thus becomes part of a package that must be considered. Building loss is incremental and if allowed to proceed unabated can destroy the town's character. In general, therefore, the demolition of buildings that contribute to the town's character, including outbuildings, should be discouraged. In practice, the issues can become complex and politically-charged. Applications for demolition must be weighed by the town on a case-by-case basis. Without being unreasonable, the town should discourage demolition and seek accommodating alternatives with owners and developers. Crisis situations should be anticipated as best as possible before they occur and should be avoided if possible.

Perhaps the most important part of a demolition ordinance is the portion related to demolition-by-neglect. Demolition-by-neglect is usually addressed in an ordinance through a notification process. When an instance of demolition-by-neglect is identified, the town undertakes a process of notification. An owner has ninety days from the time that notification of a violation is received from the town to commence corrective actions. Beyond that period, financial and other forms of penalties may be applied.

There are instances of demolition-by-neglect that are occurring now in Cape Charles. Several buildings in the town's northeast quadrant are currently proposed to be demolished using Community Development Block Grant moneys. These buildings are vacant residences that have been left to decay by their owners. Though modest, these buildings are historically significant with respect to the town's National Register Historic District, and they contribute significantly to the character of the neighborhood in which they are located. Several of the buildings are unique building types in Cape Charles, and their loss will be irreplaceable. At a minimum, they should be documented before they are destroyed. As a result of the neglect of these buildings, public money that could have been used to make positive improvements to the neighborhood is being used to demolish

buildings that private owners have allowed to become unsafe and a public hazard. Other vacant buildings in the town, larger and less isolated, are approaching the stage where they too will be beyond saving. Such occurrences should be aggressively prevented by the town. Aggressive action is required immediately.

Demolition-by-neglect is often difficult to enforce. By the time a problem is outwardly identifiable, it is frequently too late to save a structure without costly intervention. The buildings being neglected are often marginal in quality, character, or function, and the town can appear to some to be unreasonable in requiring improvement for buildings that are perceived by owners and the public as of little value. Once a problem has been identified, it is frequently difficult to enforce compliance. Not only are there legal costs for the town, which may not be supported by the public for buildings of marginal value, but the penalties are often less costly than corrective action. Demolition-by-neglect citations frequently lead to applications for the demolition of the structure by the owner. Unless the town is willing to purchase the structure, it can be a no-win situation.

Yet demolition-by-neglect is a serious problem in Cape Charles. The way to avoid the problems noted above is to be alert to potential problems and to act early and decisively, before the problems become irreversible. The historical commission, recommended in Chapter Four, should survey the town and identify buildings that are, or are likely to become, vulnerable to demolition-by-neglect. Vacant buildings, poorly-maintained rental buildings, and buildings in marginal locations will be at the top of the list. It is critical to act early, before deterioration of a structure has progressed too far.

Of most importance to a structure is the integrity of the roof. Next is the condition of windows. Cape Charles has several buildings in which windows are missing and there is no covering over window openings to protect against the weather. Penetration of water into a structure will cause rapid deterioration, whether the building is constructed of wood or masonry. Deterioration will often not be evident from the exterior until it is too late to correct inexpensively.

The first step in the process of dealing with threatened buildings should be an informal discussion with the building owners. This discussion will inform the owners of the town's concern, and will alert the town to the attitude and expected degree of cooperation of the owners. Once it is clear that water penetration is occurring, and building fabric may be deteriorating, the contacts with the owner should be progressively increased. The town should be firm yet fair in its actions—the goal is to get results. Legal action should be used only as a last resort. In some cases, it may be necessary for the town to help the owner obtain financial assistance for the work necessary. The use of CDBG moneys for stabilization of buildings is far more desirable than its use for the demolition of buildings.

The goal of a demolition-by-neglect ordinance is to save endangered buildings. The goal is stabilization and protection, not improving appearance. Stabilization and protection may be achieved in the most cost-effective manner and may result in a less than desirable exterior appearance—for instance, the use of asphalt roll roofing on a roof or exterior, plywood closure of door and window openings, or guy wires to stabilize deteriorated structural members. Retention of original historic fabric, even when deteriorated, should be a primary objective. Building fabric that is loose or has fallen from the building should be salvaged, tagged, and stored in the building.

Design Guidelines: Design guidelines have two purposes. The first is educational. Design guidelines educate property owners in the appreciation of their buildings, in appropriate maintenance techniques, and in making decisions regarding potential changes. The second purpose of design guidelines is for use in a design review process. Design guidelines represent the level of consensus that the community has reached with regard to physical change in the community. It outlines the framework and informs the judgments around which design decisions are made. It is not a set of rules. Rules are an easy way to gain compliance but are authoritarian, lack flexibility, and are counterproductive. In order to allow the maximum flexibility in accommodating change, design goals and principles should be established, not rules. Design guidelines outline and illustrate the desired goals and principles that will contribute toward, reinforce, and work with the character of a building or a neighborhood. The owner or designer are encouraged to exercise their creativity or personal preferences in determining how to achieve those goals and principles. Brief examples of kinds of issues which should be included in design guidelines for Cape Charles' residential neighborhoods are outlined below.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Preservation Approach, appropriate maintenance is the most important part of preserving significant buildings. The most important aspect of appropriate maintenance is preserving and rehabilitating original, historic building fabric. Doors and windows are particularly important to the architectural character of individual buildings. As moving parts, they are subject to hard and frequent use. When deterioration occurs, the first impulse of many homeowners is replacement. Replacement windows and doors are seldom of the long-term quality of the originals. They adversely affect the historical integrity of a building by destroying original, antique fabric. Furthermore, replacements usually change the visual character of a building. The rehabilitation of existing doors and windows is critical to the preservation of the character of individual buildings. In rehabilitating and maintaining existing buildings, it is recommended that original doors and windows be retained and repaired wherever possible. Where not repairable, replacement in-kind in size, profile, and configuration should be the goal. The installation of weatherstripping around existing wood sash is the

first step to be undertaken in making original windows weathertight. For thermal insulation, the installation of storm windows is preferable to the replacement of windows even though storm windows are visible on the exterior and are not "in character." The use of storm windows preserves original historic fabric which would be lost if windows were replaced.

Porches are critical architectural elements along the residential streets of Cape Charles. The porch is a unique outdoor living area that belongs to the house but partakes in the life of the street. The full extent of its lightweight structure and fine detailing is fully exposed to the weather, requiring the maintenance and repair of porches to be a constant process. Steps nearly always extend beyond the roof line of porches and are thus exposed to the weather even more than the porches themselves. Because of their exposure, porches and porch steps are frequently the first elements of an older building to deteriorate and the first elements to disappear.

As with doors and windows, it is important to retain as much historic porch fabric as possible. Repairs should be with in-kind materials, almost always wood, with profiles to match existing as nearly as possible. All visible porch components should be painted wood, unless there is historic precedent for the use of weathering wood such as cedar. The removal of porches and the replacement of porch features with inappropriate substitutes, such as decorative metal posts or concrete floors, should be avoided. The enclosure of porches should also be avoided, particularly when the porch is on the front of a house. When undertaken, for instance on a side porch, new construction should be placed behind the existing post and railing, so as to preserve the key visual elements of the porch. The walls of the enclosure should reflect the massing relationship of solid-to-void of the porch itself, resulting in a large amount of glass.

Wood siding and trim are also key visual elements in the residential buildings of Cape Charles. Many of the town's residential buildings, having been constructed in the late-Victorian period, have several contrasting types of siding and elaborate wood trim. As the skin of a building, the purpose of siding is to shed water quickly and prevent the decay of the underlying structure. Siding also plays an important visual role in establishing the scale of a building. Each clapboard or shingle casts a shadow line, adding visual depth to the wall surface, while the size of the clapboard or shingle visually affects the mass and proportions of each building. Wood trim serves an important visual purpose by providing architectural ornament and an important functional purpose by sealing the structure at vulnerable locations. Corner boards, fascia boards, window caps and trim, architraves, and cornices are examples of trim elements that protect joints of a building from exposure while adding visual character. Like other significant building elements, wood siding and trim should be retained and repaired. Aluminum and vinyl

siding are not recommended because they trap moisture against the original wood siding of a house and hide deterioration that may be occurring. When aluminum or vinyl siding is installed, however, the width of the new siding should match that of the original wood siding and original wood trim and detailing should be retained. These and other design principles are the kinds of maintenance and rehabilitation issues that are outlined in design guidelines.

With regard to new structures, it is not the purpose of design guidelines to require "historical" designs or the adherence to a particular style, formula, or set of architectural elements. "Period architecture" and the strict quotation of architectural elements and details is distinctly not their intent. There is a wide range of building periods, styles, and types that contribute to the character of Cape Charles' residential neighborhoods. This diversity itself is a key element of the town's character. To walk in Cape Charles is to see virtually every architectural style from the town's founding in 1883 through the 1940s. There is no strictly "correct" style in Cape Charles. The slavish and literal copying of architectural styles and elements would trivialize and confuse the genuine historic architecture of the town. What is fascinating about the buildings in Cape Charles is that they are real, the genuine article, not copies. In order to contribute to the clarity of the town's history and development, new construction should appear to be at the end of the architectural continuum, and not mistaken to be somewhere in the middle. Contemporary architecture should be representative of the time in which it is created and should thus contribute to Cape Charles' architectural diversity for the appreciation of future generations.

New buildings, however, can be contemporary while at the same time being sympathetic and compatible with existing buildings and an existing historic context or character. This is achieved through compatible scale, massing, siting, orientation, materials, and forms. Because there are a variety of ways in which a new building can be compatible with existing buildings, there are no simple rules that can be written. This is why design guidelines and an informed design review process are the most flexible and fair way to achieve the intended goal of preserving neighborhood character.

Scale involves the size of a building. Cape Charles is comprised primarily of two- and three-story residential buildings. Low, horizontal ranch houses, long rows of townhouses, or large apartment buildings are out of scale with the residences in Cape Charles. Not only do they look out of place, but they destroy the character of the neighborhood. All are currently allowed by-right in the town. Massing of a building reflects the sense of lightness or weight, whether by the proportions of wings or projections of a building, or by solids and voids created by windows and porches. A

contemporary building can have similar scale and massing to those of existing buildings without being of a particular historical style.

Similarly, new buildings can be sited and oriented on a lot in a similar manner to existing buildings. They can also be of similar materials. None of these issues speak directly of historical style, and none can be proscribed simply by rules. The principles outlined in design guidelines are general and generic. They allow a great deal of design flexibility and personal preference while imposing an overall discipline. The need for the overall discipline is established by the community by consensus in its own self interest. The wide range of specific design solutions available within that discipline are up to the individual.

Because design guidelines are usually general and generic, and because of the desire for maximum flexibility in Cape Charles, the town can use design guidelines from other towns for the indefinite future. It is recommended that a wide variety of design guidelines be obtained from other communities for reference. From these, Cape Charles could create its own set of design guidelines. Grants are also available from a variety of sources for the preparation of design guidelines. The more flexible the approach, however, the less the need for tailored design guidelines.

Design Review: Cape Charles will not be able to revitalize its residential neighborhoods without some level of design review. Most importantly, the town will not be able to protect itself from inappropriate new development without design review. Design review will have a minimal effect upon existing residents. It is only triggered by the requirement to obtain a building permit. It therefore has nothing to do with painting a house, changing a door, applying storm windows, hanging a gutter, or other aspects of routine home maintenance.

Design review will come into play when buildings are renovated, additions are added, and new buildings are constructed. It will provide a process whereby these changes to the neighborhood can be accomplished in a manner that works with the character of the existing buildings, rather than against it. Because design review is based upon design principles outlined in the guidelines and not upon rules, it has the ability to be very flexible. Because owners and builders will have the design guidelines before they plan their projects, they will be aware of the design principles the community is attempting to achieve and will be able to design their project to their individual needs within the framework of those principles.

Most importantly, design review is the only way that a community can protect itself from outside developers that may wish to impose their will and force an unwanted and

unsympathetic project upon the town. A block of townhouses or a series of garden apartment buildings are two examples of inappropriate building types that would destroy the character of Cape Charles but to which the town is currently vulnerable. Projects of this type cannot be banned. If, however, they must conform to a set of design guidelines, the town is in control—unwanted, large-scale developments are either impossible, or they must be designed to reinforce the character of the community. There is no other zoning procedure under the law that has the large-scale protective capability for small communities.

It is strongly recommended that Cape Charles adopt a simple design review process as part of its zoning ordinance. It is recommended that the design review process be the responsibility of the historical commission recommended in Chapter Four, but that for the near future the historical commission be the present Planning Commission. As time goes on, additional members with special expertise could be added to the historical commission and Planning Commission members could leave. The historical commission would review building permit applications affecting the exterior fabric of a building. Where the work to be performed under a permit application is the rehabilitation of existing building fabric, such projects would be quickly approved. Where new work is proposed, that work would be expected to conform to the broad principles outlined in the design guidelines. Where there was a conflict between the principles in the design guidelines and the proposed work, the historical commission would work with the owner to negotiate a mutually-acceptable solution. If no compromise is possible, the owner would appeal to the Town Council. If satisfaction was not received before Town Council, additional legal remedies would be available.

It is not recommended that the Town Manager, Zoning Officer, or Planner be placed in a position of undertaking design review. Because of the desire to have maximum flexibility, no simple rules can apply to design review as can be applied to zoning setbacks. As in a subdivision and land development review, flexibility is achieved by having a group of individuals who have gained experience in the field, where a majority vote overrules a perhaps unreasonable or overzealous colleague. It is recommended that the town retain a design professional to advise the historical commission, at least in the beginning, with recommendations on specific applications. Such advice would speed reviews along until the commission gained the necessary experience. Qualified design professionals are available on the Eastern Shore.

Summary of Recommendations, Building Rehabilitation:

1. Neighborhood revitalization is dependent upon the understanding, involvement, participation, and individual actions of many private property owners. The goals of

neighborhood revitalization and the means of attaining those goals should be built around community consensus.

2. A demolition ordinance should be adopted that discourages the demolition of existing buildings that contribute to the town's character.

3. The demolition ordinance should also address demolition-by-neglect. A notification process should be created through the ordinance by which owners are required to correct conditions stemming from demolition-by-neglect. Aggressive action is required by the town to address current demolition-by-neglect problems.

4. The historical commission should survey the town and identify buildings that are, or are likely to become, vulnerable to demolition-by-neglect. The town should act early to address these problems before legal action is required and before deterioration has progressed so far that the buildings will be lost.

5. The town should obtain design guidelines from a variety of towns and cities across the Commonwealth for reference and review. From these samples, a simple set of written design guidelines for Cape Charles can be created. Alternatively, should more detailed design guidelines be desired, a grant could be obtained for the preparation of customized guidelines specifically for Cape Charles.

6. The town should implement and experiment with a simple design review process. Only applications for a building permit involving exterior building modifications would be subject to the design review process, which would be similar to a subdivision and land development review process. The design goals of the review should be based upon a set of clearly-written design guidelines that would be adopted by the town and available to owners and developers. The design review should be the responsibility of a historical commission. In the beginning, the historical commission should be the present Planning Commission. Over time, additional members could be added to the historical commission and members of the Planning Commission could retire.

7. The town should retain a local architect to assist the historical commission in the design review process during the early stages.

Affordable Housing

The issue of affordable housing has been an important one in Cape Charles. This issue has primarily been the concern of the town's minority community, which is concentrated in the northeast portion of the town. The town is currently undertaking the rehabilitation

of several existing residential buildings in the northeast portion of the town using Community Development Block Grant moneys. This project has been referenced previously in this chapter with respect to the demolition of several existing structures. With respect to structures that are to be rehabilitated, it is recommended that the proposed rehabilitation work fully comply with the recommended design guideline standards that should apply to the town's entire historic district. Such compliance will be required by HUD with respect to federal standards. The CDBG projects can be used as models for private owners undertaking the rehabilitation of their own residences. The projects will demonstrate that proper maintenance of a significant building is not an economic issue. Appropriate maintenance of a building costs the same or less than inappropriate maintenance.

The affordable housing issue has been raised with respect to the town's existing 40-foot-wide lots. The existing zoning code does not permit building upon 40-foot-wide lots, primarily for fire safety reasons, despite the fact that many of the town's existing historically significant buildings are located on 40-foot lots. The minimum lot width for new construction is currently 80 feet. From a design standpoint, this zoning requirement is appropriate and similar requirements have been used in many other communities with similar problems. Forty-foot-wide lots are simply not appropriate to modern standards of light, air, and safety.

In the northeast portion of the town, however, many individuals cannot afford the cost of purchasing two 40-foot lots, and the town has expressed the desire to permit construction of affordable housing on 40-foot lots with certain restrictions. The purpose of the restrictions is first to enhance the safety of the housing by mandating the maximum spacing between buildings possible. The second purpose of the restrictions is to obtain affordable housing that is compatible with the character of the existing neighborhoods.

In order to provide more affordable housing opportunities in Cape Charles, it is recommended that construction on 40-foot-wide lots be permitted as a conditional use on selected blocks where the existing historical pattern of housing has been on 40-foot lots. These blocks would primarily be located in the northeast portion of the town. Construction of new housing on 40-foot lots would not be permitted in areas where larger lot sizes currently exist.

The maximum footprint of permitted construction on 40-foot lots would be 24 feet by 40 feet (960 sf), with a minimum required building floor area of 1200 sf. This requirement would result in the construction of a two-story building. In addition, it is recommended that the proposed housing be subject to the design review process recommended previously in this chapter. Design review would address the roof form which the

proposed building would have as well as window types and sizes, and exterior cladding materials. New affordable housing should be similar in character to existing housing. There are several good examples of simple, affordable building types that could serve as models for the new housing. In general, roofs should be gable roofs, windows should be doublehung windows of a size similar to existing windows in the neighborhood, siding should be similar to the existing horizontal wood siding used throughout the town, and small porches should be constructed at entrance doors. It is recommended that the construction of new affordable housing be undertaken on existing blocks within the town and not on undeveloped land beyond the town's historic grid.

Summary of Recommendations, Affordable Housing:

1. The current rehabilitation of existing buildings being undertaken using CDBG funding should comply with appropriate design guidelines applicable to the town. The rehabilitation projects should serve as models for home owners.

2. To increase the availability of affordable housing, construction of new houses on 40-foot-wide lots should be permitted as a conditional use on selected blocks. Construction on 40-foot-wide lots should not be permitted on blocks where larger lot sizes currently exist.

3. The maximum footprint of permitted construction on 40-foot lots should be 24 feet by 40 feet (960 sf), with a minimum required building floor area of 1200 sf, resulting in a two-story building.

4. The proposed housing should be subject to a design review process. New buildings should be similar in character to existing building types in the neighborhood. In general, roofs should be gable roofs, windows should be doublehung windows of a size similar to existing windows in the neighborhood, siding should be similar to the existing horizontal wood siding used throughout the neighborhood, and small porches should be constructed at entrance doors.

Streetscape

As has been discussed throughout this report, the character of the streetscape is very important in defining the character of Cape Charles. In many ways, the livability and apparent prosperity of the town is more dependent upon the visual quality of the streetscapes than it is upon the actual condition or appropriate rehabilitation of the town's historic buildings.

In Cape Charles, the streetscapes are comprised of the classic elements of the small-town, American neighborhood—the street, the sidewalk, and the front yard. Neighborhood streets in Cape Charles come in two types. The standard streets have asphalt paving and concrete curbs. Small grass strips divide the sidewalk from the curb. Front yards are generous and lead to open front porches. Street trees, understory trees, occasional wooden or decorative metal fences, and outbuildings are important elements in the landscape.

In addition to the standard neighborhood street, Cape Charles has the central boulevards—Peach Street and Mason Avenue. These streets were originally paved with concrete and had central landscaped island dividers. Along Peach Street, only one and one-half blocks of concrete paving and islands remain, the blocks immediately south of the central park. Along other portions of Peach Street the islands have been removed and the entire street has been paved with asphalt paving. The original concrete paving and landscaped islands remain along Mason Avenue. East Mason Avenue has a wide landscaped island. West Mason Avenue has a narrow landscape island, with wider grass strips between the curb and sidewalk.

In addition to the streets and boulevards, approximately 30% of the blocks in Cape Charles have east/west oriented alleyways running between the north- and south-facing lots. These alleys are unpaved and are dotted with outbuildings, which should be considered historically significant elements in the landscape.

The critical elements of the streetscape are already in place in Cape Charles. Expensive public improvements are not necessary. In many places, the concrete sidewalks have heaved slightly with age, and replacement of portions of the sidewalks will be an ongoing small-scale concern over time. The heaving sidewalks do not detract from the character of the neighborhood, but can be a potential safety concern. At the corner of Tazewell and Plum, the existing concrete steps are spalling and eventually need replacement. Replacement of existing concrete sidewalks should match existing details. The color of the concrete should match the color of the existing sidewalks through the use of appropriate sands in the mix. Recent improvements to concrete sidewalks in the town have not been appropriately colored.

The most significant problem with the streetscapes in Cape Charles is the lack of street trees in many areas. Where street trees do not exist, the streetscape appears barren and uninviting. *The single most dramatic action that the town or individual property owners can take to significantly improve the character of Cape Charles is the planting of many new deciduous canopy trees in yards and along streets.* Significant canopy tree planting throughout the town should be an early action in the town's revitalization program.

Where overhead wires are existing, rows of crepe myrtle should be planted. Existing trees should be pruned to grow around overhead wires and should never be topped.

In addition to the planting of street trees, the town should encourage home owners to remove inappropriate fencing. Chain link fencing is found at a number of locations in Cape Charles and is highly inappropriate to the character of the town. Appropriate fencing should be of wood pickets or decorative ironwork, examples of which can be found at several locations. The retention and rehabilitation of original porches is also an important issue related to the streetscape. The appropriate treatment of porches has been outlined in a previous portion of this chapter. It includes retaining historic building fabric and detailing and avoiding porch enclosure.

The town should encourage the proper maintenance of existing outbuildings. Outbuildings are significant elements in the streetscape. Should the town adopt a demolition-by-neglect ordinance as recommended in this chapter, many of the buildings that will receive the attention of the town with respect to demolition-by-neglect will be outbuildings. Existing alleyways should also be retained. Alleys should remain unpaved, though a gravel surface may be desirable in the ruts where tires run.

Summary of Recommendations, Streetscape:

1. The critical elements of the streetscape are already in place in Cape Charles. Expensive public improvements are not required.

2. As concrete sidewalks require replacement over time, new sidewalks should match existing sidewalks in detail and in color. Appropriate coloring of new sidewalks can be achieved through the use of appropriate sands in the mix.

3. The single most dramatic action that the town or individual property owners can take to significantly improve the character of Cape Charles is the planting of many new deciduous canopy trees in yards and along streets. Significant canopy tree planting should be an early action in the town's revitalization program.

4. Home owners should be encouraged to remove inappropriate fencing, particularly chain link fencing. Appropriate fencing in Cape Charles should be of wood pickets or decorative ironwork.

5. Outbuildings are an important element of the landscape in the town's neighborhoods. Appropriate maintenance of existing outbuildings should be encouraged.

6. Existing alleyways should remain unpaved. If paving is necessary, it should be limited to gravel placed in the tire ruts.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES INDUSTRIAL PARK

SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES INDUSTRIAL PARK

The County of Northampton, in which Cape Charles is located, is in the process of implementing a Sustainable Development Action Strategy to facilitate and promote sustainable economic development on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Sustainable economic development, as outlined by the county, is development that is economically viable, environmentally responsible, and socially equitable. The county's sustainable development initiative was begun in September, 1993, with the designation of a Sustainable Development Task Force and the creation of a full-time county staff position, the Director of Sustainable Development. Through the activities of the task force and the director, the Sustainable Development Action Strategy was created and was adopted by the county in June, 1994. Northampton County's sustainable development initiative is funded through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's Coastal Resources Management Program with a grant provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The purpose of the sustainable development initiative is to promote immediate and lasting economic development that capitalizes on the county's natural and cultural resources while preserving and enhancing these resources for the benefit of future generations. The Sustainable Development Action Strategy was the first step in implementing the initiative by providing an organized framework for action, targeting appropriate industries with economic potential for the county, identifying natural and cultural resources vital to these industries and to the county, identifying actions necessary to build these industries while protecting and enhancing resources, and encouraging community participation in the development process.

The strategy targeted five existing industries with economic potential for the county within the sustainable development concept: agriculture; seafood and aquaculture; heritage tourism; arts, crafts, and local products; and research and education. In addition, the opportunity for attracting new industries compatible with, and exemplary of, the sustainable development concept to Northampton County was recognized.

A major initiative with respect to attracting new industries is the creation of a Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park in Cape Charles. The proposed industrial park, to be called the Port of Cape Charles, was chosen by the President's Council on Sustainable Development in October, 1994, to be one of four prototype sustainable industrial facilities to be created across the country. In April, 1995, a design charrette was held in Cape Charles with the participation of local residents, business people, design professionals, and representatives of local, state, and federal government. The charrette

resulted in the creation of a conceptual plan for the proposed industrial park. Aspects of the conceptual plan are entering the next phase of implementation while the county and state are actively recruiting appropriate industries.

Sustainable Development and Historic Preservation

The concept of sustainable development is fully compatible with the principles and objectives of historic preservation, adaptive reuse, economic development, and the enhancement of community character as outlined in this preservation plan. Sustainable development recognizes the interdependence of natural and manmade environments and seeks ways that the two can thrive as one. Sustainable development is energy efficient, ecologically responsible, culturally expressive, and community based. It eliminates waste, promotes diversity in plant and animal life, and makes creative use of natural systems to transform design problems into environment-enhancing opportunities.

The Small-Scale Community: The concept of sustainable development supports the creation of pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and communities. In this respect, Cape Charles is an ideal location for the sustainable technologies industrial park. Cape Charles is a complete community, with business and industrial infrastructure, a downtown commercial district within walking distance of neighborhoods, a variety of appealing residential neighborhoods and housing types, the potential for appropriate infill development, town parks, and natural open space. Even with this range and completeness of available amenities, Cape Charles remains small in size and intimate in character. Cape Charles is manageable in size; its problems are confined to its own boundaries and can be addressed through small-scale, ecologically-enhancing solutions. As a self-contained community located within a sensitive and spectacular landscape, Cape Charles is ideal as a stage for a model program of sustainable economic development.

Adaptive Reuse: Adaptive reuse of existing buildings and landscapes in accordance with the principles of historic preservation is a central theme of sustainable development with respect to the recycling of existing resources, the appropriate use of cultural resources, and the support of community values. The principles of historic preservation as they relate to historic Cape Charles are discussed in some detail in Chapter Three, *Preservation Approach*, and subsequent chapters of this document.

It should be noted that the principles of historic preservation may at times appear to be in conflict with other goals of sustainable design and development. For instance, a goal of sustainable design is energy conservation. Energy conservation may suggest that the most efficient way to reduce energy consumption is to fill cavity walls with loose

insulation, resheathe the exterior of a building with rigid insulation and new siding, or to replace original windows with contemporary thermally-glazed units. While these may be cost-efficient ways of achieving energy conservation, they can actually cause long-term damage to older buildings and are usually not recommended. Filling cavity walls with loose insulation without installation of a vapor retarder at the interior wall causes condensation to form within the wall, dampening and ruining the insulation, encouraging mildew, and causing wood structural members to deteriorate. The installation of exterior insulation and siding and the replacement of original windows violates the preservation goal of retaining and rehabilitating original historic fabric.

Issues such as these have been addressed many times in the past, and there is a wealth of experience and literature available to assist in their resolution. Design guidelines and a design review process, as discussed in previous chapters, would be important tools in assisting building owners in resolving these apparent conflicts. The bottom line is that a balance that addresses both goals and creates a win-win situation is available and must be sought through patient research and investigation of the issues.

Heritage Tourism: Among the existing industries identified by the county's Sustainable Development Action Strategy is heritage tourism. As has been discussed previously, heritage tourism has an important economic development potential for Cape Charles. More than any other community in Northampton County, Cape Charles has the potential to be both an attraction to visitors to the Eastern Shore and a host providing services and amenities for visitors attracted to other Eastern Shore resources and events. As has been noted, the present indifferent appearance of the town with respect to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century community character that is so attractive to visitors is the largest obstacle frustrating the goal of becoming a tourist center. As has also been noted, improvements in building and streetscape appearance and a concerted marketing plan are necessary to direct the town's efforts toward this goal.

As a part of the plan, sustainable development itself should be a major marketing theme with the town as a living example of its implementation. The town should study what it means to be a self-reliant, sustainable community. In planning and in the enhancement of its community character, including historic preservation, Cape Charles should become a model. Town services and utilities should be developed along experimental lines, using natural systems to generate electricity, recycle waste, and exemplify sustainable processes, techniques, and applications. The town's generating network, waste water system, and other infrastructure services should become tourist attractions.

The Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park Conceptual Plan

A conceptual plan for the Port of Cape Charles Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park was created in the spring of 1995 through a community workshop process. The plan shows the new industrial park located to the south of the historic town and including the Eastern Shore Railroad, the existing harbor, and the site of Bayshore Concrete. New construction within the park is to be organized along the periphery of existing natural wetlands, which are to be expanded and used to purify wastewater. A new entrance road is to be constructed south of the existing railway to connect to Route 184 east of the town's boundary. The primary north/south connection between the industrial park and the historic town will be via the existing bridge over the railroad, known locally as "the hump."

A primary goal of the Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park is the revitalization of the historic town of Cape Charles. To this end, to the extent possible, new industries are to be located in existing historic commercial buildings along Mason Avenue. The revitalization of Mason Avenue through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and through compatible new construction on the south side of Mason Avenue will take precedent over the construction of new facilities elsewhere in the proposed industrial park. In undertaking new development and adaptive reuse, the recommendations and guidelines outlined in Chapter Six, *Downtown Revitalization*, should be applied.

With respect to the conceptual plan of the proposed industrial park as illustrated, it is recommended that two issues be reconsidered and revised. The first issue is the proposed new entrance road. The conceptual plan shows a new four-lane divided entrance road connecting to existing Route 184 east of the existing dredge spoil site adjacent to the Eastern Shore Railroad. The connection to Route 184 implies that the new entrance road will become the primary entrance into Cape Charles, with the existing Route 184 becoming, essentially, a back entrance. Visitors to Cape Charles would use the new entrance road, arrive at an intersection east of the harbor, and turn north, approaching the historic town by way of the hump.

While this proposed entrance scenario has its appeal, it places the industrial park before the town and creates an awkward and unnecessary diversion for residents and visitors whose destination is the historic town and not the industrial park. It is recommended that the primary entrance to Cape Charles remain existing Route 184 and that the character of the roadway be managed and preserved as outlined in Chapter Five, *Community Approaches, Parks, and Open Space*. The new entrance through the industrial park should be an option, not the primary entrance, and should connect to existing Route 184 as an intersection. The design of the new entrance through the industrial park should be

in accordance with sustainable principles, minimizing paving and disturbance of the existing woodlands and wetlands. The new entrance should not have the appearance of the typical suburban corporate campus.

The second issue with respect to the conceptual plan is the extension of the town's existing street grid into areas of proposed new development on the north and west sides of the town. The orthogonal grid is a seventeenth and eighteenth century planning innovation that was widely used throughout the nineteenth century. It is not a principle of sustainable design. While the grid is appropriate to historic Cape Charles, it is not necessarily appropriate to the undeveloped land adjacent to the town. From a historic preservation standpoint, the proposed extension of the grid confuses an understanding of the town's historical development in much the same way that copying historic styles for contemporary buildings would confuse and trivialize the genuine historic architecture of Cape Charles.

Site planning beyond the historic grid in Cape Charles should be responsive primarily to ecological considerations—topography, woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors, storm drainage, etc. The most important goal of the new development should be the creation an appealing and "sustainable" contemporary community. A component of this goal should be the creation of a significant open space system to preserve the relationship of the town to the rural landscape with which it has been associated since its establishment. New site developments, like new buildings, should be expressive of the time in which they are constructed. They should be compatible with historic resources, but not imitative.

CHAPTER NINE

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

A large area of land approximately nine times the size of the existing historic town of Cape Charles has been designated as a proposed planned unit development. This land is 1,900 acres in area and divided into two parcels. The northern parcel includes most of the open land between the historic town and Kings Creek to the north and west. The southern parcel includes all of the land between the Chesapeake Bay and Plantation Creek south of the railroad, harbor area, and Bayshore Concrete. The proposed planned unit development is to be called the Accawmacke Plantation and is being planned by the land's owner, Brown and Root I, Inc. Brown and Root is anticipated to sell the approved development package and is therefore not expected to be the final developer.

The land surrounding the historic town grid is currently primarily in agricultural use. The land has historical significance related to William Scott, Cape Charles' founder, who purchased the land and developed it for his own use. Scott's use of the land is depicted in the 1887 Bauman map. A number of historically significant ruins, including the house which Scott enlarged and lived in, remain and should be documented, if not stabilized and preserved. The history of the land is also significant for its use prior to the establishment of Cape Charles, including its association with the Tazewell family and a significant prehistoric archeological potential as outlined in a Phase I study of the site. The history of this land should be studied and documented before the land is lost. If possible, remaining historic resources should be preserved and landscape resources should be incorporated into the design of the development.

The Accawmacke Plantation is intended to be a retirement community centered around a golf course and a four-hundred-slip marina. The marina will be located on the northern parcel while the golf course will be located on the southern parcel. The development is to be constructed in phases and will have a maximum of 3,000 dwelling units when completed, over five times the number of structures currently located within the historic town. The proposed development has been in the planning stages for approximately eight years. It is currently in the process of addressing final environmental and planning hurdles, related primarily to the size of the proposed marina.

The Accawmacke Plantation is strongly supported by the town of Cape Charles as a key to economic revitalization. Certainly the development will have a tremendous impact upon the town. First, all of the existing remaining open land within the town will be developed. Second, considerable development pressure will be experienced within the historic town, both in the commercial downtown district and in the residential

neighborhoods. Finally, additional development pressure will be experienced adjacent to Cape Charles, along both Route 184 and Route 13.

The proposed planned unit development is important to Cape Charles because of its economic potential. The Accawmacke Plantation could replace the railroad as the economic foundation of the town. However, there is also the danger that the development could overwhelm the town, altering its character, causing the loss of existing buildings, and driving out existing residents as land values increase. It is critical to the long-term interests of Cape Charles that the economic benefits of the Accawmacke Plantation be channeled in ways that reinforce and enhance the character of the historic town and its residents.

A principal goal of the project should be to reinforce Cape Charles' downtown commercial district, not to compete with it. Three types of commercial areas are proposed for the Accawmacke Plantation. A Specialty Commercial District (SC District) would be located on the northern tract in the vicinity of the marina and on the southern tract in the vicinity of the golf course club house. The purpose of the district is to accommodate an integrated mixture of specialty retail and land uses associated with hotels, inns, bed and breakfasts, conference centers, health and tennis clubs, or marina uses. The permitted uses within the SC District are wide ranging and include many tourist-oriented uses that are expected to provide the basis for the revitalization of Cape Charles' existing downtown commercial district. It is recommended that commercial development in the proposed SC District be limited to uses directly supporting hotels, inns, conference centers, health and tennis clubs, and the marina, and not include the wide ranging tourist-oriented retail uses until such time that the revitalization of downtown Cape Charles is firmly established.

A similar problem occurs in the proposed Commercial District (C District) and General Business/Industrial District (GBI District) included in the planned unit development. These districts are to be located to the south of the railroad and east of the harbor. Like the SC District, the C District includes many retail commercial uses that are to provide the basis for downtown revitalization. Development of the C District would be similar to developing a commercial mall along Route 184 or at the intersection of Routes 184 and 13—it may tend to weaken the downtown commercial district rather than reinforce it. It is recommended that the C District be eliminated and that the GBI district be amended to include the area of the proposed Sustainable Development Industrial Park. The permitted uses within the GBI District should be tailored to the sustainable development theme. Retail commercial uses should not be permitted.

As has been discussed in Chapter Seven, *Residential Revitalization*, Cape Charles' residential neighborhoods are currently vulnerable to inappropriate new development, including townhouses, multiple-family dwellings, apartment houses, and mobile home parks as conditional uses. It should be noted that under existing law, conditional uses are extremely difficult to deny. The conditional use designation really only permits the town to add reasonable conditions to an otherwise acceptable use. Because Cape Charles has never been subject to development pressure, the full implications of this portion of the zoning code and the town's vulnerability because of it may not be apparent to most residents. There is presently nothing in the code that would deter a developer from purchasing a block, demolishing existing housing, and constructing apartments, condominiums, or townhouses. Such development pressure could occur as the Accawmacke Plantation is constructed.

In order to avoid such a scenario, the town should adopt a number of the recommendations outlined in Chapter Seven of this document. The zoning code should be amended to prohibit undesirable and inappropriate housing and development types. A delay-of-demolition and demolition-by-neglect ordinance should be enacted. The most important recommendation, however, is the creation of a design review process based upon preserving and enhancing the town's historic character. *Only design review can ensure that new construction is compatible with the existing character of the town and the interests of its residents.* It is the most powerful tool available to local residents in protecting their communities from outside developers whose only interest may be to maximize profits.

Finally, it is recommended that the development of the Accawmacke Plantation become a means of creating a significant open space system in Cape Charles. At present, the open space which surrounds the historic town is taken for granted. With the construction of the Accawmacke Plantation, the open space in its present form of agricultural fields and woodlands will be lost forever. The construction of the Accawmacke Plantation should be viewed as an opportunity to achieve both development and a permanent open space system. While the existing conceptual land use plan for the Plantation includes a considerable amount of active open space in the form of a golf course, passive (i.e., natural) open space is not addressed except in specific ecologically sensitive areas.

It is recommended that the proposed development include creation of a significant *passive* open space system. The passive open space system should be a manifestation of the sustainable development concept and should be the design theme of the land development plan. The system should include ecologically sensitive areas and seek to preserve existing woodlands, wetlands, and stream corridors. Preserved open space areas should be linked with connectors of native vegetation. The requirements for

"bufferyards" as outlined in the planned unit development document should be revised to include only native species and plant communities. The bufferyards should have a diversity of species—including ground, shrub, understory, and canopy layers—and should be permitted to succeed and become threads of native woodlands. They should not be treated as "screens" or suburban lawns. Site drainage in the development should use swales in lieu of pipes to the maximum extent possible. Swales and stormwater retention areas should be planted with native species and should be permitted to succeed to native woodlands, becoming part of the open space system.

In undertaking a general review of the planned unit development document with respect to this preservation plan, a number of points have been noted that should be considered by the town. These points include the following:

- The document notes that the developer reserves the right to preserve trees within road rights-of-way and parking lots. The preservation of existing trees should be a goal of the project and should be actively encouraged and required by the town, not be simply at the option of the developer. (Page 4-2)

- Designation of streets as public or private is noted as being at the discretion of the developer. Such decisions should be at the discretion of the town. (Page 4-2)

- There is no definition of "building coverage." The term "building coverage" should be changed to "lot coverage" and should clearly include all impervious surfaces associated with development. (Page 4-2)

- The Conservation-Open Space District (CO District) should concentrate upon the preservation of natural, passive open space. A percentage requirement for passive open space should be established. (Page 6-20)

- In the SC, C, and GBI Districts, the document gives the Administrator the power to determine that "any other commercial or professional use which is comparable in nature with the foregoing uses" is a permitted use. Such decisions should only be made by Town Council and such uses should be as conditional, not permitted, uses. (Pages 6-23, 6-26, 6-29)

- The definition of "lots" in Section 9-7 includes public and private utility easements up to 20 feet in width, easements for ingress and egress, natural flood fringes, drainage areas, and retention basins. Such infringements restrict the free use and purpose of the already minimal individual lots and should be netted out. (Page 6-34)

- Sign regulations in Section 9-13.1 should be carefully reviewed. It is recommended that signage in the new development have a distinctive design theme and character that is compatible with signage in the town's historic district. Internally lit signage should be severely limited, if not prohibited. (Pages 6-38 through 6-41)

- Construction standards should be established for private streets similar to those for public streets. (Page 7-6)

- Sidewalks and trails are to be installed at the discretion of the developer. This should be revised to be at the discretion of the Town Council. Trails will be an important component of the open space system, encouraging pedestrian and bicycle circulation links throughout the town. (Page 7-6)

- The document requires cul-de-sacs 100 feet in diameter. This should be dramatically reduced to the minimum necessary to accommodate fire trucks in order to reduce paving area. Circles with islands could be required in lieu of cul-de-sacs to reduce paving even further. (Page 7-6)

- Street lights are to be installed at the discretion of the developer. This should be revised to be at the discretion of Town Council. Lighting levels should be minimized to reduce light pollution. (Page 7-8)

- Required road widths are listed in Table IV on page 9-4. These road widths appear to excessive. As a general design goal, road widths should be minimized. As an example, a minor road is listed as having a lane width of 10 feet and a shoulder of 6 feet. Assuming two lanes and two shoulders, this implies a road width of 32 feet. Minor roads should be no wider than 18 to 20 feet. Reinforced grass shoulders (grass over a gravel base course) are preferable to paved shoulders and curbs. (Page 9-4)

- Bufferyards should be landscaped only with native species so that buffers appear to be an extension of the natural landscape. Bufferyards should have a diversity of species—including ground, shrub, understory, and canopy layers—and should be permitted to succeed and become threads of native woodlands. Existing native vegetation should be preserved as buffers wherever possible. Bufferyards should not be treated as either solid "screens" or suburban lawns. Site drainage in the development should use swales in lieu of pipes to the maximum extent possible. Swales and stormwater retention areas should be planted in native species and should be permitted to succeed to native woodlands, becoming part of the open space system. (Appendix A)