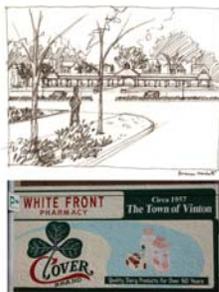


Downtown Vinton Revitalization Plan



Vinton, Virginia



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Executive Summary

In mid-2009, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) awarded a Business District Revitalization Project Planning Grant to the Town of Vinton, with the aim of carrying out a participatory process to identify community assets and opportunities to improve the downtown's most pressing economic and physical needs. The planning process included gathering and analyzing a range of economic and market data on Vinton and the surrounding area, as well as preliminary planning, design and engineering work to examine the feasibility of targeted physical improvements to promote economic revitalization. Key outcomes of the process include an Economic Restructuring Plan to steer the community's economic revitalization and spur business development, as well as a Physical Improvement Master Plan that elaborates several capstone projects that advance the recommendations of the Economic Restructuring Plan. Taken together, the Downtown Vinton Revitalization Plan provides a roadmap for Town leaders to begin transforming Vinton's physical and economic character and strengthening its regional position. The Plan also provides the Town with the core elements needed for a Community Improvement Grant (CIG) application to help address the highest needs identified in the planning process.

The need for economic revitalization in Vinton is evident in the number of underutilized and vacant buildings in the downtown area. Economic statistics for the area indicate that the median household income for Vinton is in the lowest third of regional income distribution, but the regional perception of Vinton is often worse because it includes the more impoverished and much more visibly blighted areas of east Roanoke. As a result, a key part of this revitalization effort has been recognizing the assets of downtown Vinton and developing strategies that are specifically based in these local assets.

Citizens and residents of Vinton identified their vision for the community as one that uses its endemic assets of being a close-knit, family-oriented community within the larger metropolitan setting to build a vibrant and sustainable economy. In particular, the community seeks to leverage its position as the Roanoke Valley's town, located on regional commuter routes between Roanoke and the growing eastern suburbs by improving the mix of businesses and services available in the downtown and enhancing the corridor gateways to draw passersby into downtown.

The community is enthusiastic about the prospects of revitalization and is committed to the success of the revitalization effort. A Project Management Team comprised of local residents, Town officials, and businesspeople was formed early in the process and has guided the development of the revitalization plan. This team will continue to play an instrumental role in Vinton's revitalization as it transitions to an implementation team to guide carrying out the plan. Additionally, Vinton is already an affiliate member of Virginia Main Street, which gives access to a range of self-help resources for Virginia communities.

The Downtown Vinton Revitalization Plan identifies ways to leverage community assets for sustained economic growth and move the town toward its desired vision. While the overall revitalization master plan includes more ideas and initiatives than can be undertaken at once, several priority opportunities are recommended for immediate implementation to begin the broader revitalization effort and bring the greatest return on initial investment. Many of these initial projects fit within the objectives of a CIG. The recommended first steps in revitalization include the following:

- Transformation of the Dunman Floral Property into a space for several retail businesses, with the potential to accommodate the Vinton Town Library in the future;
- Improvement of the streetscape at the Washington Avenue / Pollard Street intersection;
- Minor gateway improvements at the Virginia Avenue and Pollard Street intersection;
- Revitalization of the existing farmers market and development of a space for a Winter Market; and
- Establishment of a new matching grant façade program for a broader area of Vinton's downtown.



Though CIG funding will help initiate these projects, additional funding from other sources will also be sought. In particular, funding from the federal Transportation Enhancement program, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the US Department of Agriculture may assist with getting these projects underway. Other funding sources, such as packages from Virginia Community Capital and New Market Tax Credits, may be appropriate for some community development and affordable housing activities, and private banks also have a number of funding programs available. Private investment in property and improvements will also be critical to Vinton's revitalization. Various economic benefits can be expected from these investments, including:

- **Business Development:** Increased business performance with higher numbers of customers attracted to the downtown area; increased entrepreneurial activity with access to business loan pool funds; and establishment of new businesses catering to local and regional markets, particularly in association with a Winter Market at the Pollard Street / Washington Avenue intersection and with the redevelopment of the Vinton Motors Property and the Dunman Floral property.
- **Tourism:** Increased tourism traffic in Vinton, particularly leveraging the Town's position along the Blue Ridge Parkway (with around 200,000 visitors annually in the Vinton area);
- **Housing:** Upper-floor housing units for LMI households will help activate the downtown area and augment a readily-available customer base for downtown businesses.
- **Downtown Streetscape:** Improved appearance of downtown area with improved façades in the downtown core and improved appearance of the Washington Avenue gateway corridor.



I. Community and Project Overview

Located in Roanoke County and adjacent to the City of Roanoke, Downtown Vinton hosts numerous assets that are valued by the community and give the town a distinctive identity. Noted by both locals and outsiders, these include a vibrant farmers market, a historic town clock that is a symbol for several town organizations, the renovated War Memorial community center, several well-attended downtown festivals throughout the year, and several established churches that have anchored the downtown for a century or more. The downtown also enjoys views of the mountains surrounding the Roanoke Valley, proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway and nearby greenway connections, and a reputation for being safe and friendly, and several established churches that have anchored the downtown for much of its history.

But the downtown also faces a number of challenges in the unique forms of blight that limit Vinton's potential as a Blue Ridge town. Vehicular traffic patterns create significant congestion through the downtown area (though this also presents an opportunity to capture potential shoppers as they pass through). A lot of traffic completely bypasses downtown on the Washington Avenue and Virginia Avenue corridors leading to and from Roanoke. Additionally, the built character of the traditional downtown has been diluted, and there are zoning challenges to addressing these issues. There has been some difficulty with areas transitioning from residential structures to commercial or office structures, and some structures have been left vacant in these areas.

Over time, much of downtown has been devoted to hardscape, as illustrated on the following page. In addition to the pavement of the road grid, Washington Avenue was widened in the late 1960s and 1980s from two to four lanes, and many downtown businesses and institutions have developed vast parking areas, stretching from building to curb, with little landscaping or canopy tree cover to mitigate the harsh visual appearance or reduce the absorption of solar heat. Despite this, there is the perception of a lack of convenient parking in downtown, and some residents criticize the removal of several on-street parking spaces along Pollard Street to alleviate traffic congestion in front of the post office.

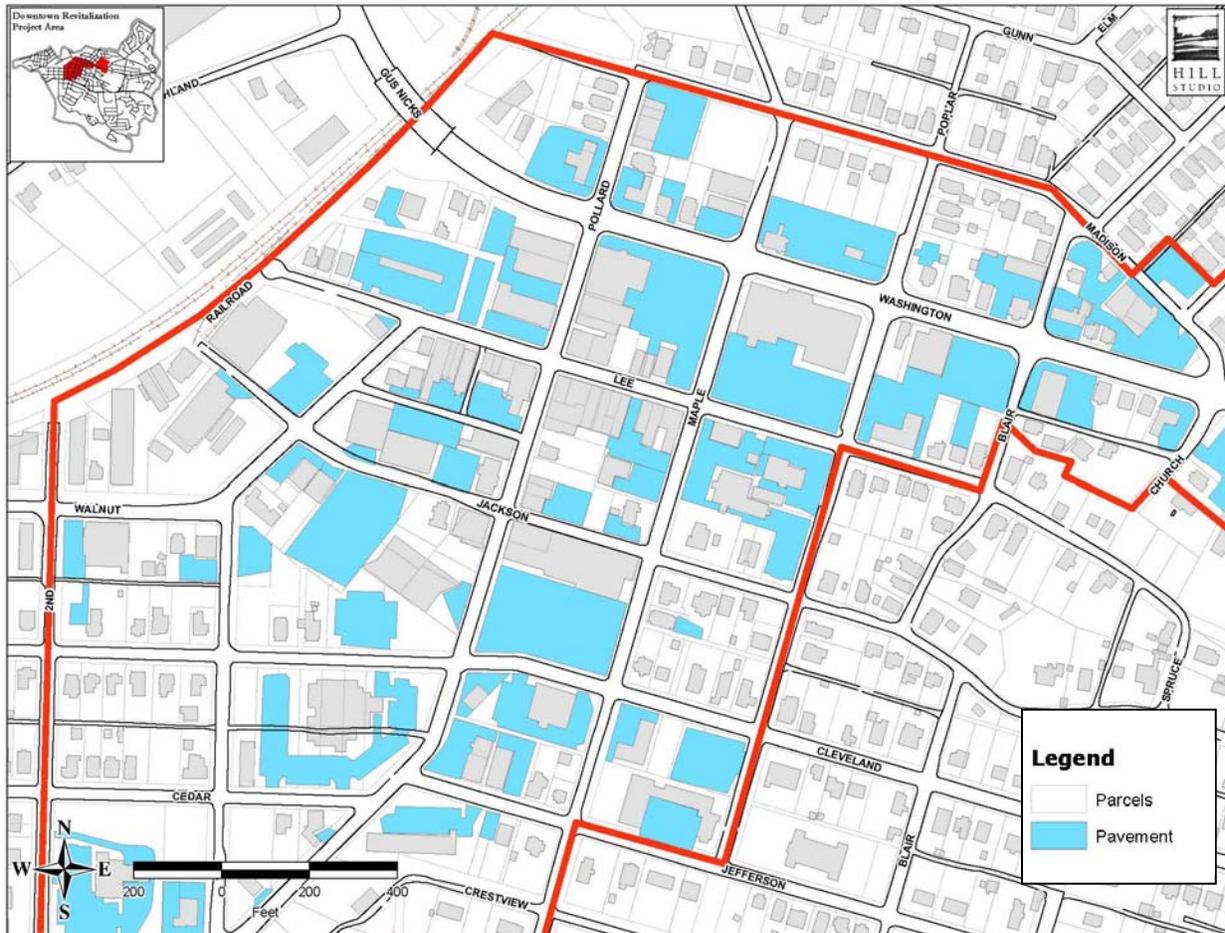
Other blighting influences detract from a traditional downtown character. Several large parcels immediately adjacent to downtown are warehouse and light manufacturing areas, with little screening or buffer between them and the downtown, including the farmers market. There are also a number of vacant and underutilized buildings in the downtown core, as well as newer buildings that are much larger than the traditional scale of the historic downtown. Few trees, shrubs or green areas exist for visitors and locals to enjoy, and downtown streets feature none of the street trees that enhance other small towns and downtown business districts. These combine to reduce downtown Vinton's vibrancy and potential as a desirable destination for shoppers, businesspeople, and festival attendees.

In May of 2009, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development awarded the Town of Vinton a Business District Revitalization Planning grant, which enabled the Town to begin preliminary planning, design and engineering work to map a process for leveraging Vinton's unique assets to revitalize the town's economy. The process began in May of 2009 with a Visioning workshop, where members of the public elaborated their vision for the future of the town. In 2010, a series of studies and surveys were carried out to understand the existing Vinton market and help develop recommendations that would guide economic revitalization. In April of 2010, a three-day Public Design Charrette used preliminary recommendations from the Economic Restructuring Report to develop concepts for the physical improvement of downtown. During the charrette, the public reviewed and guided the development of design concepts, and an architect met with various downtown property owners to discuss potential building and façade improvements.

This Physical Improvement Master Plan details a number of physical improvements that build upon and respond to the Market Analysis and Economic Restructuring Plan prepared for downtown Vinton. The



recommended improvements leverage Vinton’s assets to remedy issues that reduce downtown’s viability. Section II summarizes the Market Analysis conducted for the downtown and the recommendations of the Economic Restructuring Plan that is based on this Market Analysis (see the full Analysis and Plan in the Appendix). Section III details the recommendations of the Physical Improvement Master Plan. Finally, Section IV discusses implementation of the plan, with recommendations and cost estimates for the proposed CIG initiatives that will spark revitalization, and provides strategies for partnerships and funding.



Areas of Pavement (Excluding Streets) – Downtown Core



II. Market Analysis and Economic Restructuring Plan

A key part of the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan is the Market Analysis and subsequent Economic Restructuring Plan for Vinton. Information gathered and recommendations made in this plan provide the underpinnings for the Physical Improvement Master Plan presented in the section that follows.

The Market Analysis began with surveys, data collection, and market research to help establish the existing customer base and geographic reach of downtown Vinton's businesses, as well as to identify the specific economic challenges and opportunities facing Vinton. Based on zip code surveys of downtown customers, the primary trade area for downtown appears to be the full Vinton zip code area, plus the suburban communities of Goodview and Blue Ridge. The secondary trade area includes areas south and northeast of the primary trade area (Hardy, Moneta and Montvale) as well as portions of Roanoke City. Demographic information on these trade areas shows strong regional population growth and a relatively high median household income.

An analysis of retail leakage within the primary and secondary trade area indicates some opportunities and challenges for Vinton's downtown. Currently, downtown does not attract the broad customer base of the full trade area, though the report notes that these data include retail numbers from the Valley View Mall area, which skews retail data for the secondary trade area. While Vinton is a localized market with few outside visitors to its shops and restaurants, there are opportunities to capture a greater number of consumers from the outlying areas with some of the region's most affluent consumers. Downtown Vinton's retail and restaurant offerings will need to be specialized to compete in the metropolitan market, and prime opportunities exist in the following retail categories: lawn and garden supplies, specialty food, and independent clothing retailers. Combining these retail offerings with events such as outdoor festivals, culinary events and youth or family activities also shows promise for Vinton.

Data about Vinton's housing market and its potential revealed several key points. While housing unit values in the primary trade area are lower than in the region, there will be demand for approximately 92 housing units annually in the primary trade area over the next 10 years, with 78% of these being owner-occupied. Vinton can expect to capture around 30 units annually for the next decade, ranging between \$150,000 and \$199,000 in value. While most of these will be single family detached units, there is some demand for other housing types as well.

The Economic Restructuring Plan uses the observations of the Market Analysis to develop recommendations for capitalizing on Vinton's opportunities to diversify and improve its economy. Strategies are presented for four key areas: *marketing*, *recruitment* of people and businesses, *housing* and *organization*.

Marketing strategies to "tell Vinton's story" focus on adopting and establishing a popular brand image that communicates the town's vision to locals, regional consumers and visitors. The image would be applied to local events and official bodies, new shopping/dining guides, a new resident welcome package for real estate professionals, and a redesigned website. Marketing strategies also include new wayfinding and gateway signage, downtown banners, and other items, all with the adopted brand.

Recruitment strategies focus on establishing downtown as a specialty shopping and dining district, particularly bringing lawn/garden, food/restaurant, and clothing retailers, as well as professional services and a key "centerpiece" project to help draw people to downtown. Recommendations include a grant or cooperative program to help businesses deploy the brand, development of a "Vinton Dines" campaign, establishment of a cooperative garden supply center at the Farmers Market, and revising land use regulations in downtown and along Washington Avenue to encourage compatible mixed-use development



in and near downtown. Longer term recommendations include establishing a “change of use” grant to help property owners transition residential properties on Washington Avenue to mixed use or commercial uses, and promoting “catalyst” projects, like at the Vinton Motors site, the Dunman Floral property, or at the Farmers Market, to bring more people into downtown.

Housing strategies for Vinton emphasize increasing offerings of market rate apartments and senior living units in downtown. In particular, recommendations include redeveloping old school buildings for senior living and promoting mixed-use projects that include residential units.

The report’s *organizational strategies* aim to improve the business-friendliness of the Town, promote quality investment, and create an effective organizational structure to implement revitalization. The strategy includes continued Main Street affiliation; establishing a volunteer group for the Town to partner with on events, downtown promotion, and revitalization; and establishing an Economic Development Coordinator for the Town.

The next page summarizes these recommendations into a “Strategy Board,” or one-page table of strategies and phasing to guide implementation. The full Market Analysis and Economic Restructuring Plan can be found in the Appendix.



Strategy Board for the Vinton, VA Economic Restructuring Plan

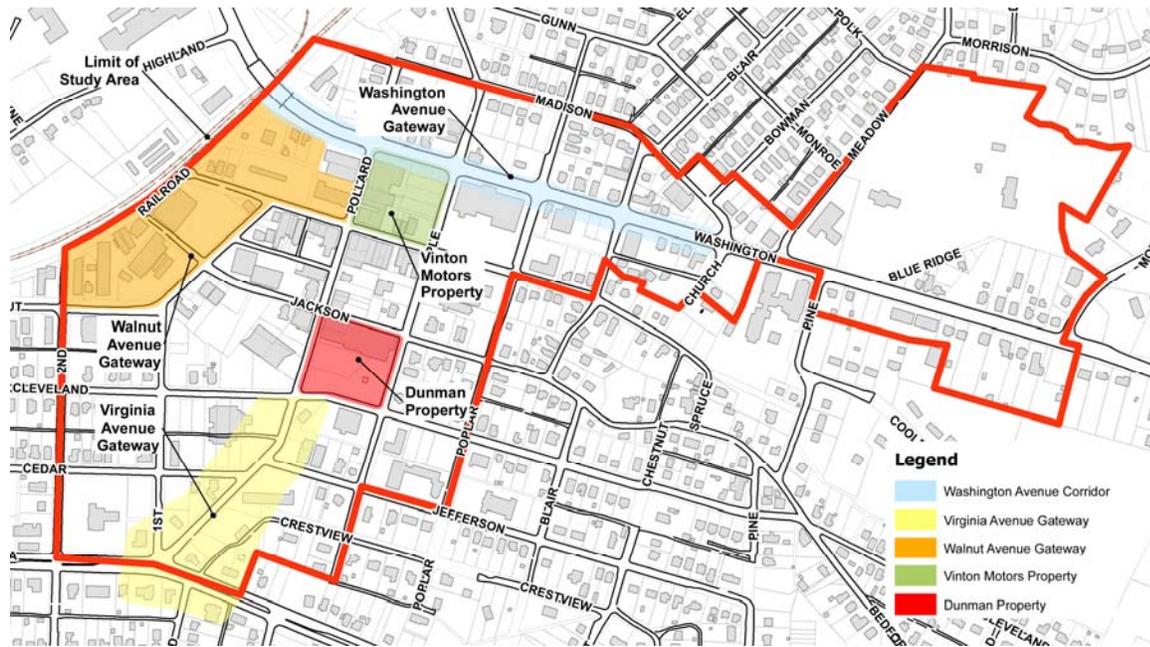
Strategies	Priority One 2010-2011	Priority Two 2012-2013	Objectives
<p>Telling Vinton's Story: Marketing Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch a new Vinton brand. ▪ Implement standards townwide for logo system. ▪ Implement new letterhead. ▪ Launch logo system for events in Vinton. ▪ Create downtown shopping and dining guide. ▪ Create a new residents welcome package ▪ Redesign and refocus the Town of Vinton website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement wayfinding program for entire town. ▪ Implement new gateway signs. ▪ Purchase and install new banners. ▪ Continue to roll out collateral material with the Vinton brand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Establish a clear brand image for Vinton.</i> ▪ <i>Use this image to convey what Vinton is to residents and the local market.</i> ▪ <i>Use this image as a toolbox for reinforcing pride, existing business marketing, new business recruitment, and eventual visitor marketing.</i>
<p>Bringing Investment, Bringing People: Recruitment Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider marketing matching grant or coop program for existing businesses to deploy Vinton brand. ▪ Explore co-op garden center at Farmers Market. ▪ Deploy a Vinton Dines campaign to promote restaurants in the community. ▪ Revise land use regulations to foster mixed-use development downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider expanding façade program to include “change of use” grant. ▪ Pursue additional catalyst developments downtown to encourage regular foot traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Continue to recruit additional retail and dining to downtown Vinton.</i> ▪ <i>Complement retail with additional professional services/offices.</i> ▪ <i>Consider catalyst projects to entice visitors and develop a “centerpiece” to Vinton’s offerings.</i>
<p>Downtown Living: Housing Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a new residents welcome package. ▪ Explore tax credit renovation of Old High School. ▪ Pursue mixed-use projects on selected sites that incorporate residential uses as well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement successful residential projects downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Encourage additional residential development as part of mixed-use projects in downtown Vinton.</i> ▪ <i>Recruit a senior living development to Vinton.</i>
<p>Getting the Job Done: Organizational Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue affiliation with Virginia Main Street program. ▪ Create a volunteer organization for events, downtown promotion, and revitalization. ▪ Create a dedicated Economic Development Coordinator position to oversee and manage ongoing development efforts. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Foster a business friendly reputation in Vinton while encouraging quality investment that will reap long-term rewards for the community.</i> ▪ <i>Create an organizational framework to channel initiatives and promote downtown as a destination.</i>



III. Physical Improvement Master Plan

In April of 2010, a three-day design charrette was held at the Vinton War Memorial to gather ideas and information about the town from local residents and members of the Downtown Revitalization Management Team. These groups worked with town staff and designers to jointly develop concepts for revitalizing the downtown area. The Downtown Physical Improvement Master Plan is based on this design effort and showcases a number of physical and economic improvements that address priority issues identified by the management team and respond to observations and recommendations in the Market Analysis and Economic Restructuring Report.

While the master plan effort looked at a large portion of the center of Vinton (shown in red in the graphic below), detailed efforts were ultimately concentrated on Vinton’s Downtown core, including Lee Avenue from Walnut Avenue east to S. Maple Street, and Pollard Street from Virginia Avenue to Washington Avenue. Based on initial meetings with the Management Team and findings of the downtown market analysis, five priority areas were identified: the Washington Avenue Corridor, the Walnut Avenue Corridor and Farmers Market area, the Vinton Motors property, the Dunman Floral warehouse property and the Virginia Avenue/Pollard Street downtown gateway. These Priority Areas received a focused design effort for their potential to return the greatest impact for initial investment, launching Vinton’s downtown revitalization by spurring other further physical improvements by property owners and meeting downtown Vinton’s specified economic needs. While much of the Physical Improvement Master Plan focuses on details in these areas, other potential initiatives are also discussed.



The sections below discuss the overall Physical Improvement Master Plan’s recommendations, breaking the plan into its main parts for detailed description. These recommendations directly respond to and build upon the town’s economic needs and opportunities discussed in Section II. In particular, the proposed physical improvements help downtown take advantage of the town’s regional commuter traffic and proximity to growing suburban areas, as well as position Vinton for capturing regional growth while bolstering its identity as the region’s vibrant small town.



Washington Avenue Gateway

As a wide four-lane road, Washington Avenue currently forms the northern boundary of Vinton's perceived downtown core. The road is heavily travelled in the town, carrying upwards of 22,000 vehicles daily in this area. Much of the traffic is comprised of commuters travelling between Roanoke and the suburbs of eastern Roanoke County and Bedford County. Currently, much of this traffic uses Washington Avenue as a throughway, passing through Vinton well above posted speed limits. There are few visual clues along the corridor to alert drivers that they are passing by a downtown area, and there is little to entice drivers to turn southward into downtown. The current land use of the area is highly varied, having transitioned over time from a largely single-family residential area to a mix of commercial uses, and the visual character of the corridor in downtown is a mix of older modest residential structures, commercial structures with varying setbacks, churches and parking lots.

The character of Washington Avenue and its surrounding land uses, as well as the fast-moving traffic, make the place an uninviting barrier for pedestrians. Many members of the public commented on the difficulty of crossing Washington Avenue, and business owners on the northern side of the street noted feeling disconnected from "downtown." Indeed residents of the neighborhood to the north of Washington Avenue cannot safely walk into downtown, despite the neighborhood's proximity to downtown and the presence of sidewalks.

The number of commuters bypassing Vinton provides an opportunity for downtown businesses to attract some of these people and expand the visitor market that is currently weak in the community. The graphic below provides a concept for addressing the Washington Avenue streetscape in a manner that calms traffic along the corridor, improves pedestrian safety, and restores a more intimate downtown character to the area.





Starting at the bridge over the railroad, narrow landscaped medians inserted into the roadway provide an announcement of “entry” to Vinton’s downtown. Four lanes are maintained within the existing curb width, but each lane is narrowed to discourage excessive speed through downtown. Together with colored, textured crosswalks at each intersection, the medians improve pedestrian safety by providing a half-way “refuge” for pedestrians crossing the wide road and help calm traffic speeds along the road. Trees line both sides of the road to unify the streetfront and make this key corridor a more attractive entry into town. Because of overhead utilities, mainly on the south side of the street, these trees should be a lower-growing species, such as the cherry, crepe myrtle or dogwood, rather than the tall canopy trees that would interfere with overhead lines.

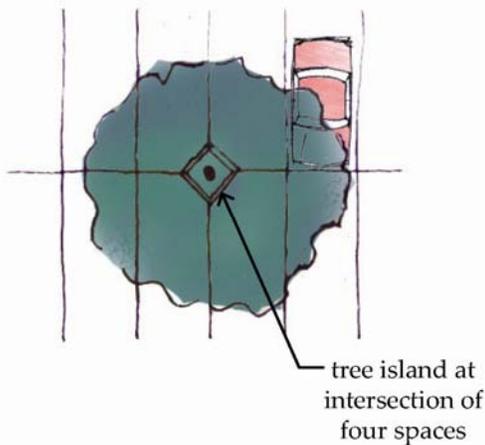
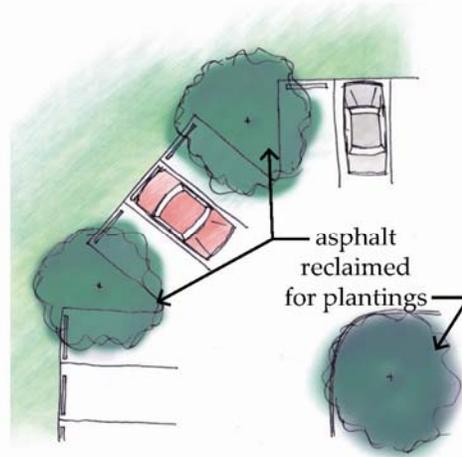
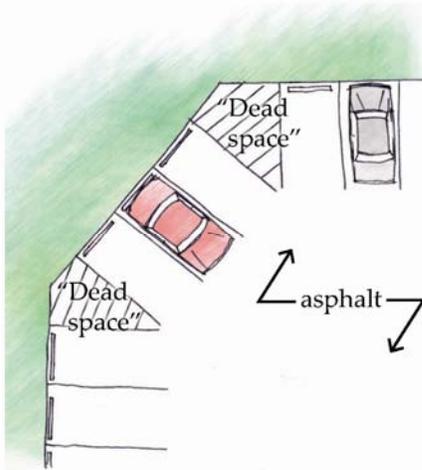


One of the key drawbacks to downtown’s visual quality is the predominance of pavement and the lack of green space or plantings in the downtown area. Adding low, tolerant landscaping to medians along Washington Street and locating trees every forty to fifty feet along both sides of the roadway will help mitigate the visual dominance of hardscape and provide some visual unity to the corridor. A program could be established to facilitate corporate sponsorship of each median’s upkeep, in return for a small, attractive sign within the median displaying the corporate brand. Similar models exist in other communities, notably in Lynchburg along the Lynchburg Expressway.

There are existing concerns about needed waterline improvements to improve fire flow capacity in downtown. Improvements to the waterlines, as well as any upgrades to stormwater and telecommunications infrastructure, should be coordinated with Washington Avenue improvements for cost and time efficiency in implementation.

A tree planting campaign should also be initiated for the town’s parking lots to encourage planting canopy trees in both public and private parking areas. The expanses of asphalt not only detract from downtown’s visual quality and make the downtown area a less inviting space to be in, but they also create a “heat island” over downtown as the asphalt absorbs and retains solar energy in the summer. Planting canopy trees to shade both streets and parking areas will provide huge benefits by reducing the absorption of solar heat, reducing the energy needed to cool area buildings in the summer, and improving air quality in general. Often, trees can be added to parking areas without losing any parking spaces by carefully locating trees in the “dead spaces” where striping forms odd angles that do not allow circulation or parking, or by inserting trees into a space at the intersection of four parking spaces, as shown in the graphic on the following page. One canopy tree for every 10 or 12 spaces will achieve significant coverage for Vinton’s large parking lots. Trees should be carefully selected for each area and coordinated to avoid any above- or below-ground utilities. Trees should also be selected from varieties that are tolerant of urban conditions and will not drop litter on cars and walkways below.

Many tree species are appropriate for parking lots and paved areas. Virginia Cooperative Extension provides guidance on selection considerations and species for Virginia. See *Trees for Parking Lots and Paved Areas*, Publication No. 430-028.



Above and left: trees can be placed in parking lots, often without losing parking spaces.

Below: a low hedge helps screen parked cars and large parking lots.

Low hedges of 2-1/2' to 3' tall should also be considered for the edges of parking lots, between parking spaces and the public sidewalks. Low hedges will help screen cars parked in the lot and mitigate the visual impact of parking lots and parked cars when seen from the roadway.

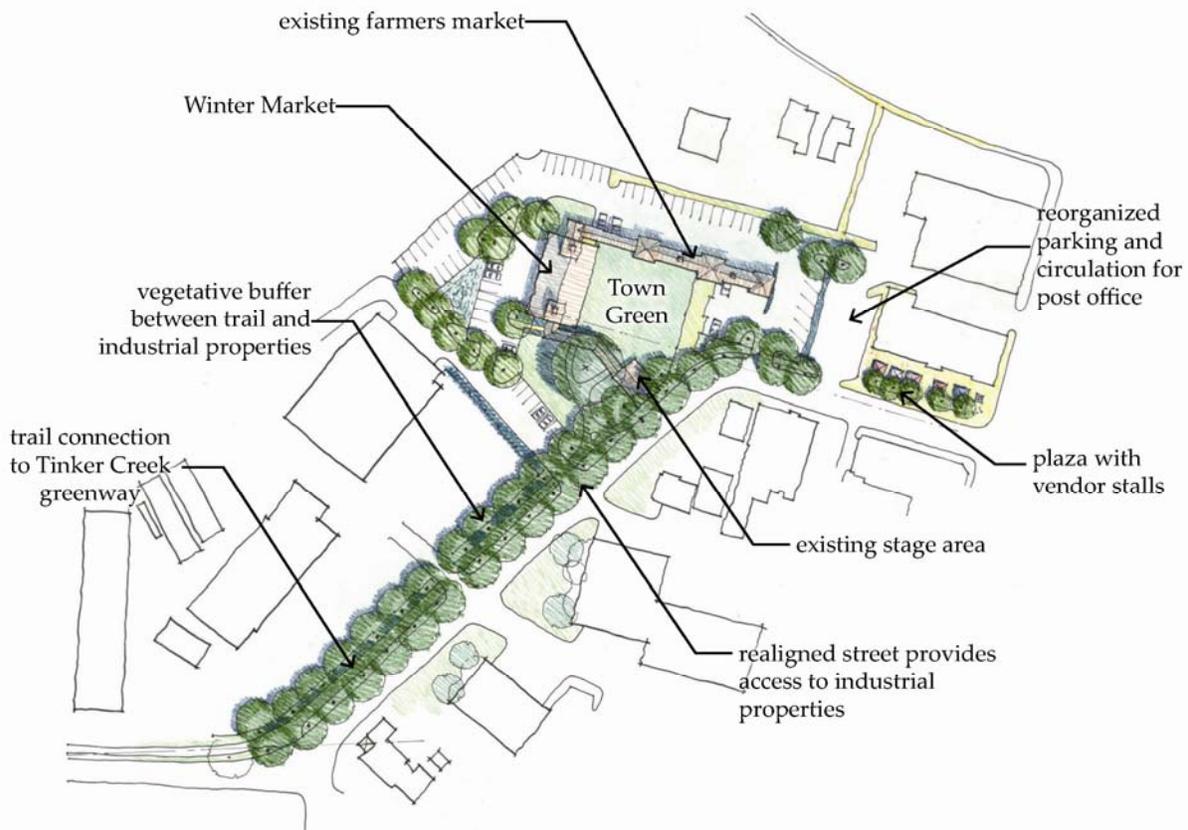
The Town government should serve as a model for parking lot plantings by adding canopy trees and surrounding shrubs to public lots at the Town Hall, Farmers Market, and other public parking areas. Parking lots on private property, including those owned by churches, could consider metering their spaces to help offset the cost of installing the trees, though these institutions may choose to only lightly police the meters for payment.



Walnut Avenue Gateway and Farmers Market Expansion

Walnut Avenue leads into downtown Vinton from the west, entering from Roanoke’s eastern residential neighborhoods through a number of industrial and manufacturing properties beside the railroad. Within the downtown study area, much of Walnut Avenue is an extremely wide two-lane road, lined on both sides by viable but aging industrial and auto-related businesses which reduce the visual quality of this approach to downtown. Walnut Avenue abruptly ends at Lee Street, where the Vinton Farmers Market is located at the street’s terminus. At the corner of Lee and Walnut, the Town’s performance stage faces the Farmers Market. The existing farmers market is busy with produce and plant vendors, and during warm weather there are special weekend events with arts and crafts, music, and food tastings that bring crowds to the market.

Adjacent to the Farmers Market, at the corner of Lee Avenue and S. Pollard Street, is the Vinton Post Office. The post office is ideally located to attract large numbers of people into downtown daily, but the current relation of parking to the Lee/Pollard intersection creates severe congestion problems, particularly on S. Pollard Street where cars block traffic as they wait for an opening to enter the post office lot. Moreover, the building is set behind the parking lot from Lee Avenue, leaving a void in the urban streetfront in the heart of the historic downtown.



The workshop designers explored an option that addressed several of these issues at once. In the concept above, three small houses (vacant except for one small business) on Lee Avenue are removed to allow for expansion of the Farmers Market and creation of a town green, which was identified as a key need for



downtown Vinton in both the comprehensive plan and in comments from management team members. West of Walnut Avenue, Lee Avenue is removed, allowing Lee to transition seamlessly to Walnut Avenue at this curve, as occurs already. The farmers market's existing open air shelter is expanded west toward the railroad tracks, terminating at the Winter Market building. The Winter Market is an attractive, multi-functional shell building, built with large openings on the sides that can be opened to the weather in spring, summer and fall, but closed with large glass roll-up doors in the winter months to allow activities to continue inside. With the new space, the farmers market can expand its offerings year-round to include winter produce, as well as other products such as lawn and garden supplies, crafts, and other items. The large green in front of the Winter Market provides space for outdoor performances during town festivals and park space for downtown visitors on other days. Added parking at the rear of the Winter Market and north of the existing farmers market gracefully accommodates parking needs.

This concept also provides for the removal of the existing parking at the post office, creating a plaza and vendor space at the main intersection of Lee and Pollard. This change removes the Pollard St. parking entrance, which will help alleviate many of the traffic congestion issues at this busy intersection. An even greater number of parking spaces is provided between the post office and the farmers market.

Much of the Walnut Avenue entry corridor is currently lined by green space between the railroad and the street, and this space should host a trail connection to link the farmers market and green with the Tinker Creek greenway trail to the west. Easements along the front portions of the industrial parcels between Walnut Avenue and the railroad allow extension of the trail to the farmers market and also offer a place to establish a thick buffer of trees and shrubs to screen industrial areas from downtown. Planned improvements to the intersection of Walnut Avenue and 8th Street, as well as improvements to the low bridge over Glade Creek, should consider the potential for accommodating this link to the greenway.

This concept creates an important civic node and farm food “campus” in the heart of downtown. Incorporating other public or civic uses such as a visitor's center or offices for the arts council or Chamber of Commerce into the Winter Market or into existing nearby buildings will add more dynamic activity to this area, possibly expanding opportunities for funding.

Virginia Avenue Gateway

Virginia Avenue is another four-lane road that carries commuters out of Roanoke to the suburbs of eastern Roanoke County and Bedford County. With between 24,000 and 27,000 vehicles per day travelling along this road, it is the most heavily travelled of Vinton's main corridors. Virginia Avenue forms the southern boundary of downtown and, together with Washington Avenue to the north, the two corridors bookend Vinton's historic downtown and whisk nearly 50,000 regional commuters through. At the Virginia Avenue/S. Pollard Street gateway, there are few visual clues to indicate that the intersection is an entrance to downtown, distinguished from the other side street along the Virginia Avenue corridor.

Other issues at this gateway to downtown include the non-standard alignment of streets. S. Pollard Street approaches Virginia Avenue from the north at a severe diagonal, intersecting with both 1st Street and Virginia Avenue simultaneously. Across Virginia Avenue to the south, S. Pollard Street is not aligned with the intersection, making negotiating the intersection complicated and confusing for drivers. With the high traffic count along Virginia Avenue and a fair number of cars moving through downtown along S. Pollard Street, the intersection is often congested. Though not as unpleasant as at the Washington Avenue/Pollard Street gateway, the Virginia Avenue/Pollard Street gateway does not have the formal appearance of a downtown gateway and lacks wayfinding signage.

Several recommendations are made for this southern downtown gateway. In the short term, the Town should install a downtown Vinton gateway sign using the Town’s new brand at this intersection. The existing grassy median in Virginia Avenue should be used for attractive landscaping, shrubs and, perhaps, the gateway sign itself, with corporate sponsorship for maintenance as described for Washington Avenue medians above. This low-cost idea would have an immediate, visible impact at this key gateway intersection and help drive customer traffic into downtown.



The 2004 Economic and Community Development Plan described a more ambitious recommendation (shown at right) to realign S. Pollard Street on both sides of Virginia Avenue and create a more formal gateway entrance at the intersection, with canopy trees over Pollard Street and signage leading into downtown. A large redevelopment parcel was indicated for the northwest corner of the intersection.

Another alternative (below) developed out of the design workshop that achieved a similar realignment of S. Pollard Street while also retaining the original alignment of S. Pollard at the intersection. A wider median is established at the intersection to feature attractive landscaping and a large gateway sign. 1st Street is realigned to intersect only with S. Pollard Street, and canopy trees again unify the street along both sides. In both alternatives, the vacant residence at the northeast corner of S. Pollard and Virginia is removed to achieve alignment with S. Pollard across Virginia Avenue, and both alternatives would require some re-grading of the hillside to implement.



Dunman Floral Property

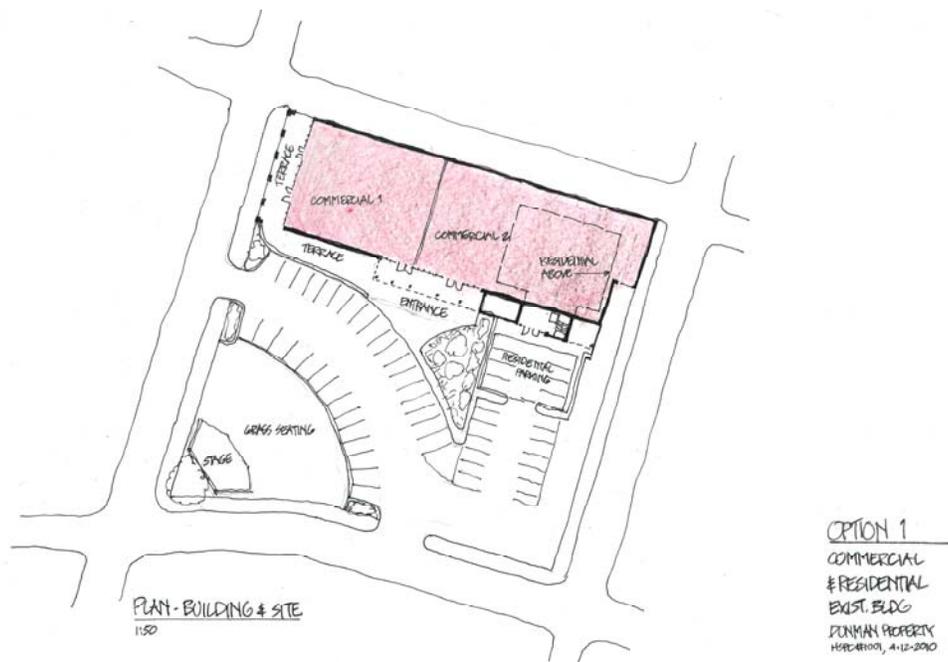
Another prime property in Vinton’s downtown area is the block occupied by the Dunman Floral warehouse. Located in the center of the historic downtown area and directly across Pollard Street from Town Hall, the property occupies a full block of downtown. The northern one-third of the block holds a



large 1960s brick building that was formerly a grocery, while the rest of the block is paved in asphalt for parking and truck circulation.

Currently, the building and surrounding property are underutilized. The building houses some of the wholesale operations of a floral business, but much of the large building remains unused. The visual quality of the property is a stark contrast to the traditional downtown buildings to the north. Its main entrance faces the parking lot; no entrances, windows or architectural articulation exist on the three façades facing the downtown streets. Additionally, the rear façade of the building, closest to downtown, is built nearly to the street right-of-way, leaving no space for a sidewalk. The large parking lot to the south of the building, enclosed by a chain link fence, has no landscaping or tree cover to mitigate the harsh asphalt. Still, the property has great potential to anchor Vinton's downtown revitalization. The large building is well-constructed and would be easy to renovate for a number of uses. The central location of the property means that its revitalization would help energize the adjacent downtown area and visually draw visitors from the Pollard Street / Virginia Avenue gateway area into downtown.

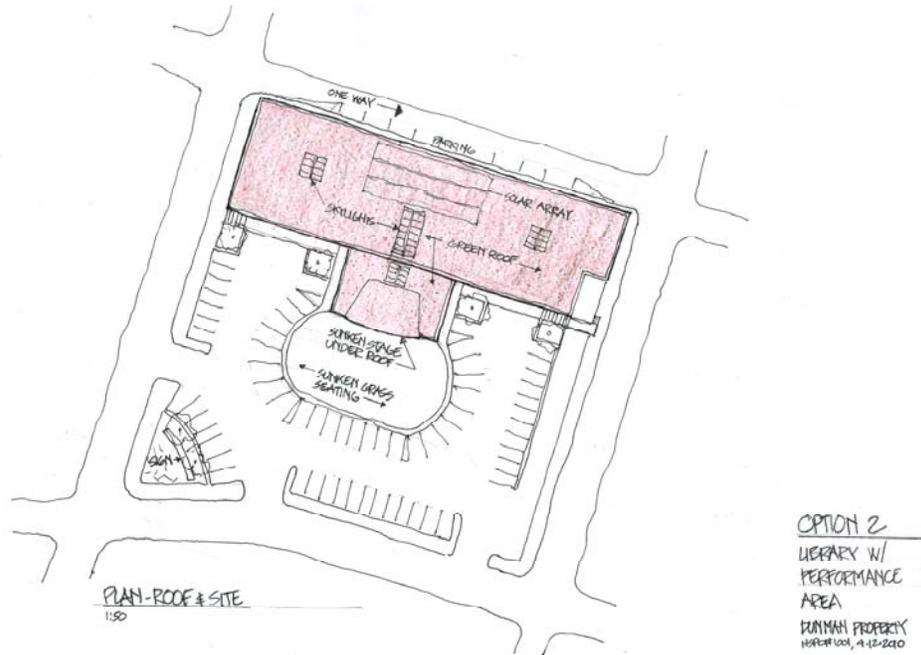
The project design team developed three general concepts for redeveloping the property during the design workshop. The first alternative (below) reconfigures the existing building to accommodate two new commercial uses while adding residential units to an upper floor on the eastern side of the building. Parking is reorganized to allow for more greenspace, and a small stage/performance area is located on the southwest corner, greeting visitors as they enter downtown from the south. The building's relationship to Pollard Avenue is improved by creating an elevated terrace at the west end of the building, offering potential for outdoor seating for a café or restaurant in the building.



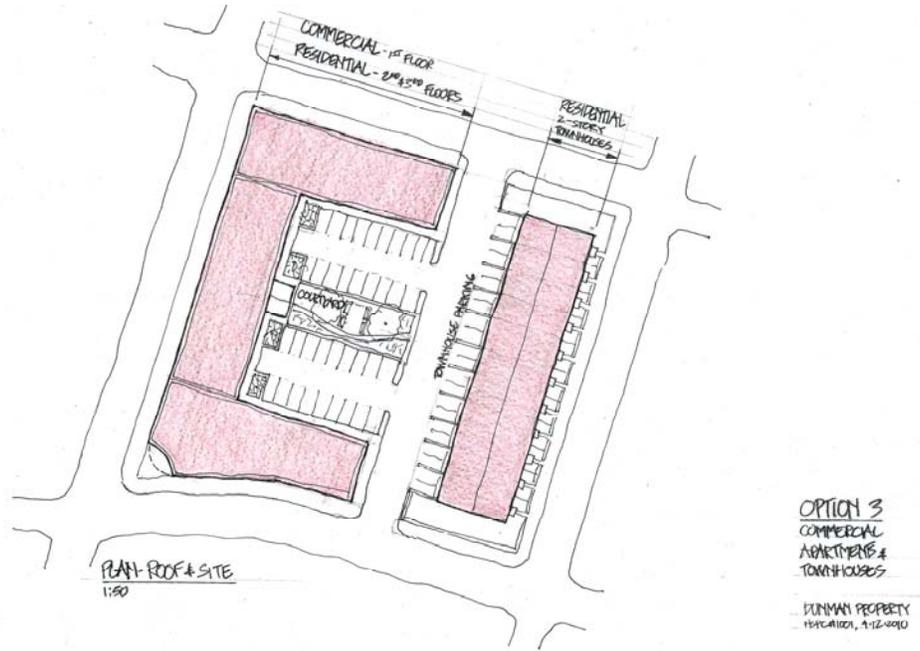
A second alternative, shown below, would also maintain the existing building and renovate it to serve as the home of the Vinton Library. The Roanoke County library system has targeted the Vinton Branch Library for expansion of its existing facilities beside the War Memorial or relocation to new facilities in the next few years. Providing a home for the library at the Dunman property would keep the library in downtown, providing an anchor for downtown and drawing visitors to the area. The concept shows a sunken performance area on the south façade of the building, with a grass area for outdoor seating. The southwest corner is used as a landscaped island hosting an attractive sign for the new library. This concept also explores the potential for improving the building's relationship to East Jackson Avenue to the north



by considering one-way circulation on this block, with the south side of the street dedicated to on-street parking and landscaped islands. The building's large flat roof could lend itself to green architectural amenities, such as a green roof, solar panels and skylights for passive daylighting within the building.



The third alternative on the next page is the most far-reaching solution to the property's redevelopment and includes demolishing the existing structure and rebuilding the property to create a more urban block. Two large new buildings occupy the site. On the west side of the lot, facing downtown and the Town Hall, is a three-story building built at the scale of traditional downtown buildings, with storefronts on the first floor and residential spaces on the second and third floors. Townhouses occupy the eastern edge of the site, facing the residential area to the east and improving the way the block relates to the surrounding area. Parking is accommodated in the interior of the site and beneath the townhouses, reducing the appearance of large surface lots to passersby.



These three alternative concepts provide very different ideas for the site, but they are not mutually exclusive. The first option is a very low-impact concept that easily transforms the existing building to another retail use; this could be implemented immediately use the building productively until the County is ready for a library facility (Option 2) or until a developer is ready to implement the third option.

Vinton Motors Property

Occupying most of the block at the southeastern corner of the Washington Avenue/Pollard Street intersection, the former Vinton Motors Property is such a prominent piece of real estate in downtown Vinton that it sets the image of the downtown for the thousands of commuters who drive by daily. Currently, however, the property is vacant and has been for several years, leaving an uninviting appearance that lacks vitality. As with other parts of downtown, much of the property is paved in asphalt with no landscaping, adding to the barren appearance.

As a prelude to the larger downtown revitalization effort, a feasibility study was completed in October 2009 to analyze the potential for the Vinton Motors property to be transformed to a mixed-use two-story facility. A favored alternative for re-use of the building maintains the existing buildings on the site for renovation as retail or office space, while a smaller 2-story mixed use building is constructed on the east side of the site, fronting Washington Avenue. An interior courtyard is developed to draw pedestrians into the space and to solidify the block as an anchor for this downtown gateway. The former dealership would be converted to a classic car rental establishment, promoting rentals to enjoy drives on the nearby Blue Ridge Parkway. The study also mentions the possibility of using the renovated space to house Roanoke County’s Vinton Branch Library.

In discussions during the workshop, several other possibilities emerged for this property. Vinton Baptist Church, located across Maple Street to the east, is seeking to expand its facilities soon, particularly space for education classes. A building on the corner of Maple and Washington Avenue could be constructed and leased to the church to meet these needs. There was also a brief mention of relocating the Post Office to this space, though it appears that the post office’s current location is better to serve its needs and attract people to the heart of downtown.



Management team members stressed the importance of this property as a cornerstone for downtown revitalization due to its highly visible location along the Washington Avenue corridor. There is clear consensus that how this property is redeveloped will set the tone for redevelopment of the rest of downtown Vinton. An attractive, mixed use function on this property will help set a positive standard for downtown revitalization, but there is some concern that a large national chain retailer or gas station could redevelop the site in a manner inconsistent with a historic downtown character. The Town should continue to work with the property owner to achieve a redevelopment of the site that will initiate the revival of Vinton's historic downtown.

Zoning / Building Code recommendations

During public meetings and sessions with downtown business stakeholders, several interests noted that to encourage business investment in the project area, there was a need to:

- Update the business district regulations of the zoning code to encourage development that would achieve the vision for Vinton; and
- Provide changes and/or additional education regarding building code requirements as they pertained to building conversions from residential to commercial.

Consequently, Hill Studio briefly investigated these issues in order to promote downtown revitalization recommendations and ensure successful implementation of development strategies.

Building Codes / Conversion of Residential Structures to Commercial Business Uses

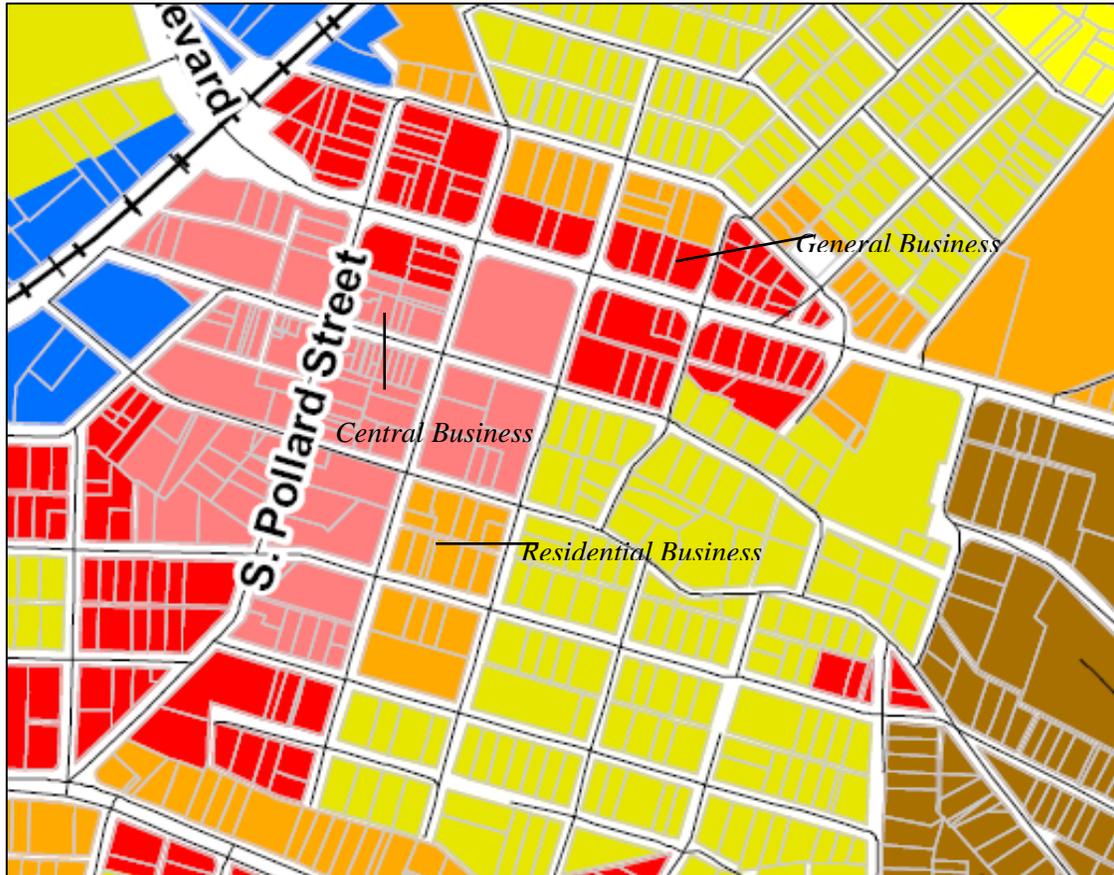
While it may be the perception that the Town and Roanoke County are not business friendly when it comes to conversion of a residential structure to business use, the issue is solely a matter of public safety. The adopted building code, Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, is based on model International Building Codes (IBC) for buildings, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and fire prevention. This code has been adopted throughout Virginia and is similar to other adopted codes for communities throughout the United States. The code contains regulations for converting a structure from one “use group” to another, and provides a process for considering alternatives to meet code requirements.

When a structure is built, it is constructed to meet the safety requirements established for that specific use. Residential buildings do not face the same safety requirements as commercial buildings in terms of access, occupancy, floor loading, and utility/mechanical/electrical systems, etc. When a building is converted from a residence to a business use, this is considered a “change in use” and requires an inspection of the building official to ensure public safety. Generally certain upgrades are required to meet minimum public needs and to ensure that the structural integrity of the building is sufficient for its use. It is also worth noting is that in downtown Vinton, fire prevention requirements may be complicated because of the available fire flow capacity (see the Preliminary Engineering Report).

Roanoke County has taken steps to be proactive with potential investors. A brochure, “*Requirements for Change of Use of an Existing Building*” provides important information on the regulations and process. In July 2010, the County instituted a small business incentive program that provides a reimbursement grant of up to \$5,000 to new investors to assist with the required zoning and building upgrades for conversions. The program is coordinated through the Roanoke County Department of Economic Development and requires a minimum investment of \$10,000.

Zoning Districts and Code

The existing zoning pattern in the project area exhibits three districts that allow commercial development – Residential Business District (RB), General Business District (GB), and Central Business District (CB). A map of the zoning in the downtown project area is shown below.



Zoning Map of Project Area

The following paragraphs provide a general discussion of these zoning districts as well as recommendations with respect to their influence on downtown revitalization.

Residential Business District

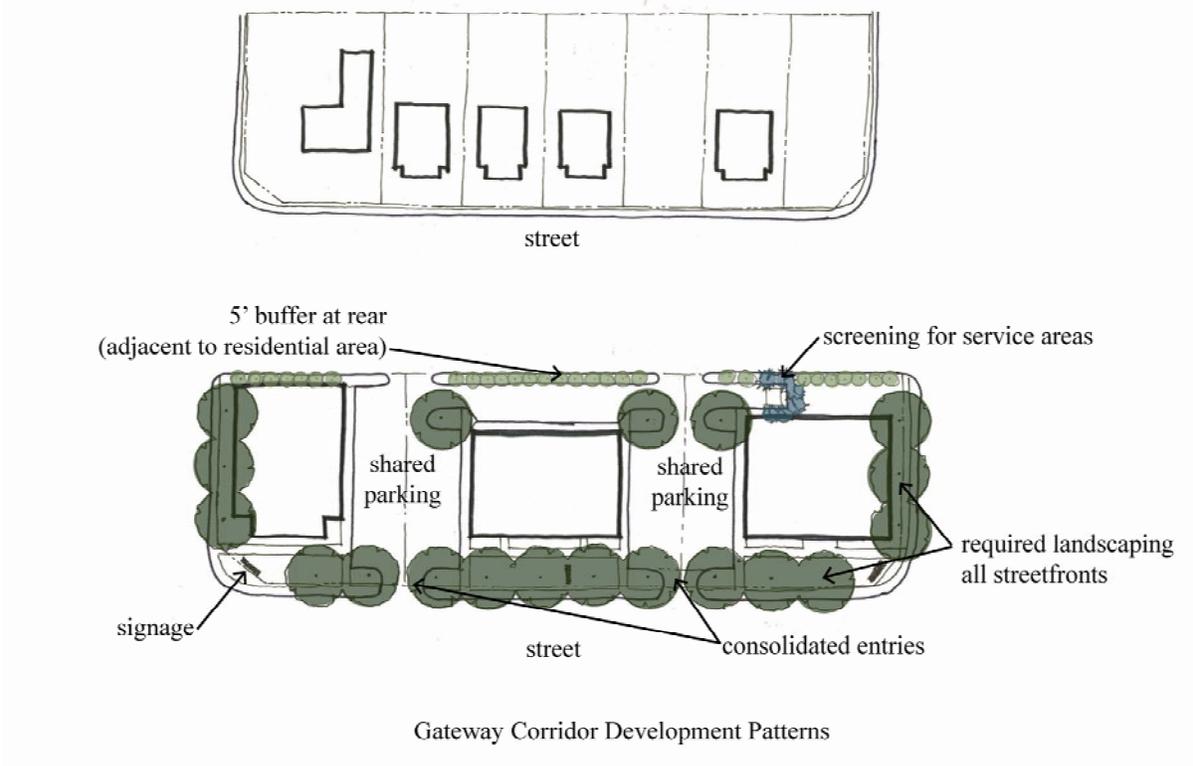
- The intent of this district is to provide for mixed-use development in the form of limited office and compatible business uses, as well as moderate density residential uses, in areas designated for change.
- Commercial uses permitted in the district are very diverse, ranging from beauty shops to banks to medical clinics. The latter uses are very intensive commercial uses. For a district that wants to encourage compatibility, this range of uses is too broad and extends beyond the original intent of the district. Ultimately, the wide range could result in conflicts of land use compatibility. Land uses should be narrowed to encourage primarily residential development and allow minor commercial uses (i.e. small office or home-based business).



- Development requirements for commercial uses restrict parking to the rear yard. Yard setbacks are 25 feet at front, 5 feet at side, and 25 feet at the rear. Height limit is 35 feet. These restrictions are generally acceptable for this type of district; however, the same parking requirement does not apply to residential developments, which can have parking in front or side yards. Parking standards should be consistent for all uses in the district and required off-street parking spaces should be restricted to the rear yard.
- Within the project area, the RB District applies to the east side of Maple Street, south of Jackson Avenue and to the south side of Madison Avenue, north of Washington Avenue. These areas are primarily residential in character. In particular, the Maple Street properties offer historic and architectural qualities that may have cultural value, and ultimately economic potential with respect to historic tax credits for revitalization. According to the Future Land Use Map from Vinton Corridors Plan, this area is recommended as Medium Density Residential, which is consistent with this downtown revitalization plan.
- Madison Avenue is a viable residential area to the north and southeast that should be retained. The current zoning is Residential Business and the Future Land Use Map in the Vinton Corridors Plan recommends this area be continued for Residential Business. While the Washington Avenue Corridor is evolving as an expansion of downtown and a primary commercial corridor, changing the land use for this portion of Madison Avenue could result in greater residential encroachment and conflict north of Washington Avenue. Our recommendation is to encourage retention of the residential development patterns on Madison Avenue. Although this limits the depth of parcels on Washington Avenue, it is our belief that this approach will help stabilize the surrounding residential neighborhood to the north.

General Business District

- The intent of this district is to provide a wide range of retail and service uses along primary transportation routes.
- Permitted uses include most retail and service businesses, including medical clinics, funeral homes, restaurants, shopping centers, and auto/truck sales.
- Development standards are limited. There are no minimum lot areas; only a front yard setback is required (20 feet for a building and 10 feet for parking areas). Building height can be up to 60 feet. Signage allocations are sufficient and can be large for the gateway entrance corridor.
- Within the project area, the General Business District extends along Virginia and Washington Avenues. The district applies to those gateway areas into downtown as well as the strip commercial areas further east. For the purposes of downtown revitalization, these two gateway commercial areas (Washington and Virginia Avenue) should be handled differently than the greater commercial corridor because of their gateway location and relationship to downtown (pedestrian scale, small business).
- In the project area, development standards should be revised in the gateway corridor areas to encourage well-designed, landscaped business development with managed signage. A *Corridor Design Overlay District* could be considered to better manage site development in the gateway corridors. See illustrations below for recommended development patterns in the gateway corridor.



Top: the character of the formerly residential street is degraded as single-family houses are removed and commercial buildings constructed.
 Bottom: the same area following improved development controls and landscape guidelines.

Central Business District

- The intent of this district is to provide specialty shopping and service needs of the community in a compact, dense development pattern that has a strong pedestrian orientation.
- Permitted uses include a diversity of retail and service businesses, including medical clinics and parking lots. In addition, special permitted uses include gas stations and drive-up facilities. Some outright permitted uses should be considered as special uses because of the careful development pattern that must be considered. Parking lots should be carefully placed in the CBD in order to preserve building patterns for business.
- There are no development standards. Height is limited to 35 feet, which is typical for downtown areas. The height limit could be expanded to increase density in the downtown.



IV. Plan Implementation

The Vinton Downtown Revitalization Master Plan provides a roadmap for building on the community's existing assets to improve the downtown's physical appearance and boost the area's economic potential. Implementation of the plan will take the coordination of numerous public and private partners and the sustained involvement and support of local residents and officials, as well as funding from a range of public and private sources, to come to fruition. The Plan will need to adapt over time to take advantage of new opportunities and conditions as they arise, but the broad direction outlined in this plan offers guidance for the first steps toward realizing this vision. While the Revitalization Master Plan provides a roadmap for addressing the town's physical and economic blight, the final sequencing of the plan's various elements will depend on a number of factors including available funding, completion of other public initiatives, and projects carried out by private property owners.

Generally, the first physical improvements in downtown should be concentrated in one area for maximum visual impact. The projects discussed below are prime for a CDBG application and will likely offer the biggest return on immediate investment. These include:

- transformation of the Dunman Floral Property into a space for several retail businesses, with potential future accommodation of the Vinton Town Library;
- streetscape treatment of the Washington Avenue / Pollard Street intersection;
- revitalization of the existing farmers market and development of space for a Winter Market; and
- establishment of a new matching grant façade program for downtown buildings.

Taken together, the visible impact of downtown improvements will stir excitement and pride in Vinton's revitalization as locals and visitors take notice of enhancements, even motivating some to pursue their own property improvements.

In addition to public and private commitments to the downtown revitalization project, funding from a variety of sources will be required to successfully implement business development and improvement initiatives. Much of the initial planning for downtown revitalization has been carried out with funding from a DHCD Planning Grant, to be followed by a CIG grant application in early 2011. Other potential sources for funding may include the Virginia Department of Transportation (Transportation Enhancement funds), the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (trails funding), the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the US Department of Agriculture (rural development grants). Some of these funding sources, however, may require creative partnering between organizations and localities to boost eligibility and competitiveness.

The implementation plan described below is oriented toward CIG funding as a central, but not sole, component of initial funding. The projects recommended here are those that will effect the most immediate and dramatic economic impact for the dollars invested, and are linked to the recommendations of the Economic Restructuring Plan. As these projects transform Vinton's economy, additional spillover effects will further boost downtown's vitality and encourage further private investment. Recommended priority initiatives are detailed below, followed by a map and cost estimate of recommended immediate initiatives.

Washington Avenue / Pollard Street Intersection

Owing to its location along key commuter routes between Roanoke and the growing areas of western Bedford County, downtown Vinton has great potential to capture many potential shoppers on their way through the town. Improvements proposed along the Washington Avenue corridor will help draw many of these commuters into the downtown area and help re-establish the character of a walkable, intimate downtown space. Installing street trees and planted medians along the full length of Washington Avenue may not be possible immediately, but the Town should implement, at a minimum, improvements to the Washington Avenue / Pollard Street intersection, as this is the key entry into downtown from the north. Placing a planted median on either side of the intersection, as well as a colored crosswalk connecting all corners of the intersection, will temper traffic in this area and signal to drivers that they have reached a key gateway to town. Wayfinding signage coordinated with the Town’s revised brand can also indicate downtown’s location to the south and the various destinations there, including the farmers market. The graphic in the following section illustrates how streetscape improvements at this key intersection, combined with farmers market and Winter Market improvements, will bolster downtown’s appeal from Washington Avenue.

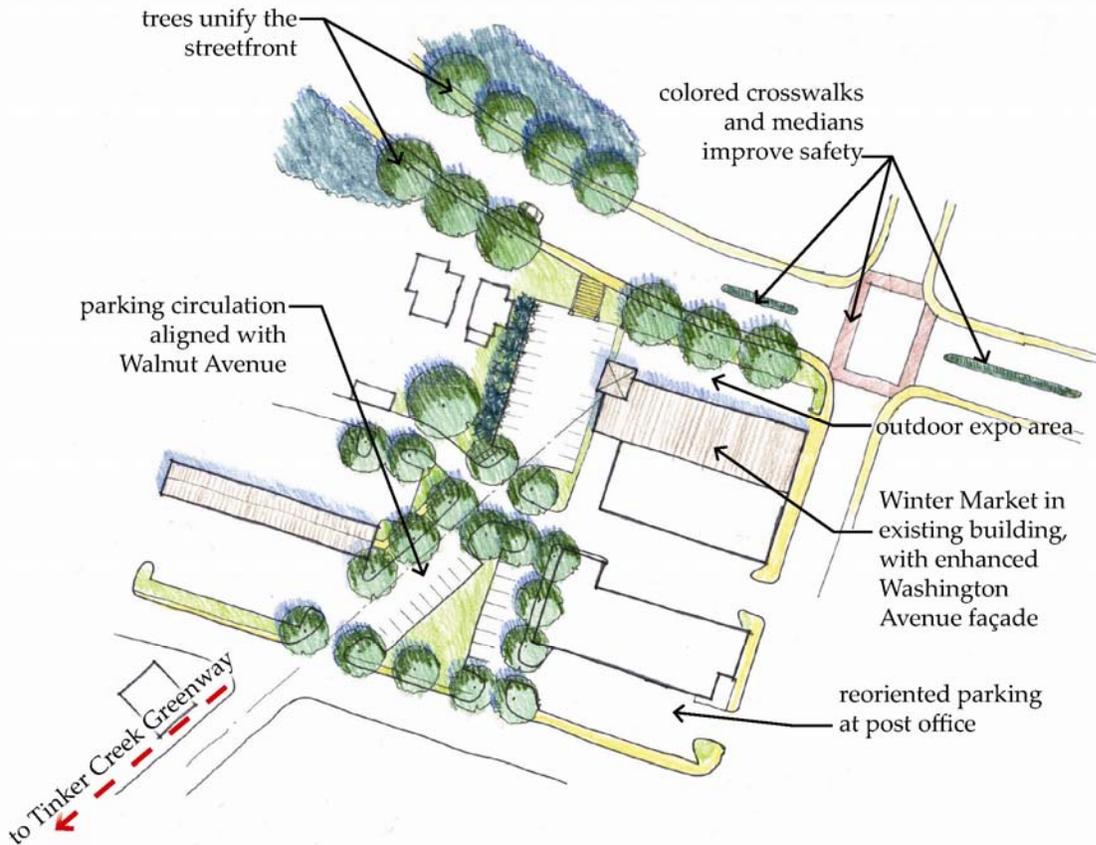
The Farmers Market / Winter Market

The scheme that came out of the three-day design charrette indicates a grand expansion of the farmers market to enclose a beautiful green space that fronts a new Winter Market building and terminates a new trail that connects to the Tinker Creek Greenway. The scheme offers a beautiful design solution, but would require a lot of funding to implement. Redesigning the street circulation between the farmers market and the warehouse building to the southwest would require extensive coordination, and acquiring properties between the farmers market and the railroad would require relocation of any existing businesses or residents. While this concept offers an attractive design, a lower-cost solution may be less disruptive and more feasible.

The graphics below show a smaller-scale scheme that would renovate the existing building on the southwest corner of Washington Avenue and Pollard Street, transforming it to use as a Winter Market. Because the building is a relatively simple shell structure, it may be easily modified to accommodate the needs of the Winter Market and improve the façades facing both Washington Avenue and Pollard Street. Large glass roll-up doors on Washington Avenue can be opened during fair weather, transforming the small space between the building and Washington Avenue into an exposition area for products, and tall architectural elements can be added to the ends of the building to draw attention to commuters passing by on Washington Avenue.



View of proposed Winter Market from Washington Avenue bridge



As with the concept described in Section III, this scheme extends a trail along Walnut Avenue to connect downtown to the Tinker Creek greenway. The scheme below shows how the traffic pattern in the farmers market parking lot may be arranged to terminate at the entrance to the Winter Market. Realigning the parking configuration will also allow traffic circulation behind the farmers market during town festivals, when Lee Avenue is closed for performances at the existing band shell. Critical parking at the farmers market and the post office is maintained, though reversing the flow of traffic into the post office parking lot should be considered to alleviate some of the congestion along Pollard Street.

This proposed design places the Winter Market near the farmers market in a more highly visible location along main commuter routes that, together with intersection improvements, will improve the face of downtown Vinton along the busy Washington Avenue corridor and draw more visitors to downtown businesses.

The Dunman Floral Property

Renovation of the Dunman Floral building and site will be a large step toward revitalizing and improving the character of downtown. While the site is a prime location for the proposed relocation of the town's branch library because of its size and central downtown location, it may be six or seven years before the library system is ready to move forward with plans for a new or expanded Vinton library facility. Furthermore, there are opportunities to immediately use the building to house several commercial retail businesses.

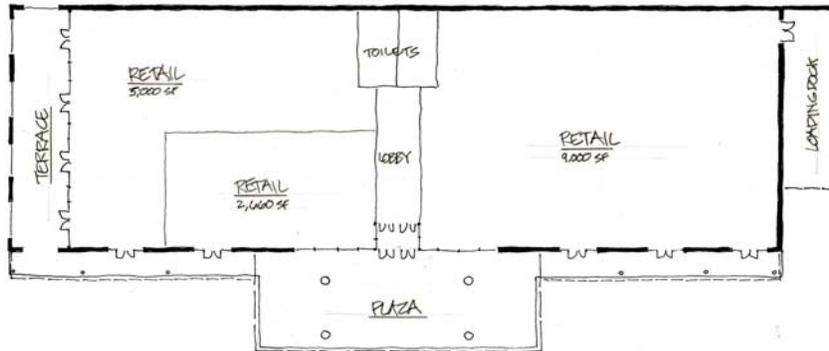
The concept outlined below modifies the existing building to create three spaces for retail businesses. The spaces vary in size to accommodate different types of businesses. The front of the building facing the



parking lot is transformed to improve the appearance of this façade. A large curved canopy is added at the center of the building over a central plaza that gathers people from the parking lot. Central windows and a central door bring people into a lobby that serves the three retail spaces inside. A narrow canopy extends along the front of the building over a pedestrian sidewalk to offer some protection against the weather, but also to help add interest to the large boxy building. Five large doors and windows are punched into the front wall at regular intervals, bringing light into the building and also improving the building's currently stark appearance. Several openings are punched into the western face of the wall to create a roofed open air terrace that is accessible from one of the interior retail spaces, making this retail space a prime location for a restaurant or café.

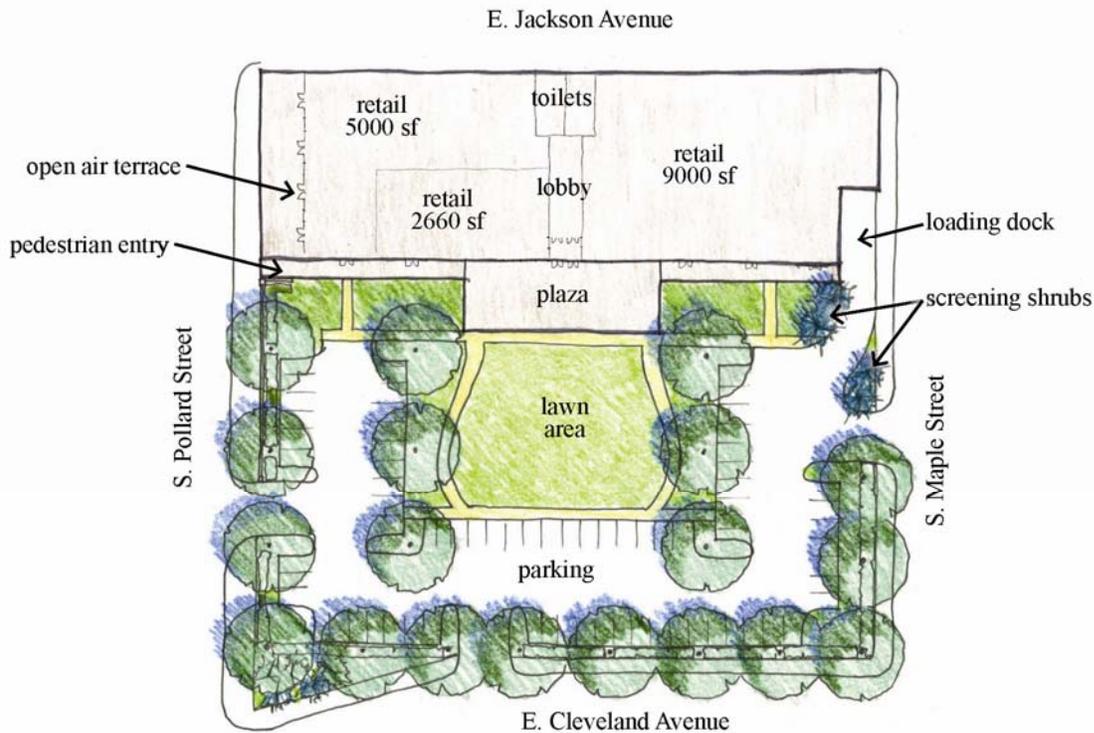


ELEVATION



PLAN

The site plan below maintains much of the existing parking lot, but adds canopy trees and low shrubs at the edges to mitigate the visual impact of asphalt and reduce the absorption of solar heat during the summer months. The northwest portion of the parking lot is raised to the level of the building, creating a flat level for the full site. Wide stairs lead pedestrians from Pollard Street to the front entrance beneath the canopy at the building. A lawn space is carved out of the center of the parking lot, making the large canopied plaza at the front of the building a potential stage for spectators sitting on the lawn, and making the Dunman property a potential activity space during town festivals. The existing loading dock at the east end of the building is maintained, screened from view by evergreen shrubs.



This concept allows for a simple transformation of the Dunman Floral building to meet immediate needs for retail space, but it does not preclude a later transformation of the space to accommodate the Vinton library, if this opportunity arises. Many of the elements in place for retail spaces would be amenities for a public library, included an improved parking area, outdoor green space and stage area, a reading terrace on Pollard Street, and a loading dock for deliveries.

Other Initiatives

Virginia Avenue Median Improvements

The existing median at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and South Pollard Street is currently vacant, but offers an opportunity to provide a simple gateway for the downtown area. This median should be planted with low, attractive landscaping and should have a wayfinding sign with the new town brand installed to direct passersby to the historic downtown, farmers market, and Town Hall. This improvement is an inexpensive opportunity to capture some of the heavy commuter traffic along this route and redirect some of it toward downtown businesses.

Façade Improvements

There are a number of buildings in the downtown area that are in varying states of disrepair. Several of these buildings are vacant, but many are occupied by owners or tenants who lack the resources to address some of the key blighting elements of their buildings.

The Town currently has a 50% matching façade improvement grant program in place as a cooperative effort with Roanoke County, but the project area encompasses only four blocks and has a maximum grant amount of only \$5,000.

A broader façade improvement program should be established to include the full downtown study area identified by the management team, with emphasis given to properties in the core of downtown. A project



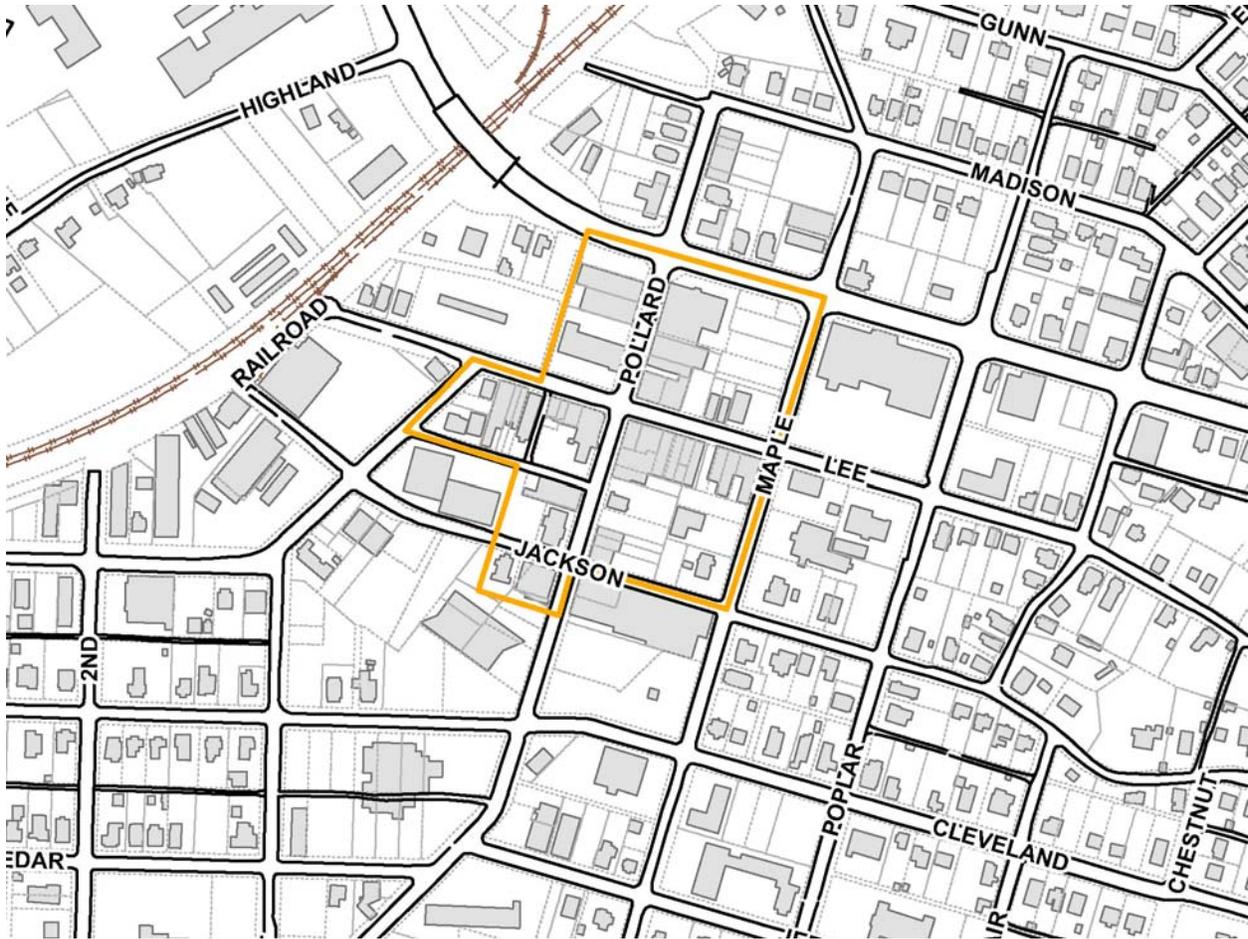
architect has met with several property owners in the area who have expressed interest in participating in a new façade program. This program may be designed as a matching grant program where property owners receive a grant to pay for half of the cost of recommended façade improvements to improve their properties, with emphasis on eliminating blighting influences on their façades. In meeting with property owners, the architect also discussed a recommended palette of materials that are appropriate to complement the age and style of the individual building and, more importantly, to establish a deliberate and unified design style along Vinton’s downtown streetfronts. The Town is fortunate to have business owners who are active in promoting façade improvement and will be key resources in an expanded program.

Historic District

Vinton developed in the late 19th century to mid-20th century as the commercial, social and industrial center to the surrounding agricultural region, as well as home to many of the workers associated with the railroad and related industries. The downtown section of Vinton, centered on the intersection of South Pollard Street and Lee Avenue, consists of several intact blocks of early to mid-20th century commercial and institutional buildings that reflect the prosperity of the town during the first half of the century and the continuing sense of community that characterizes Vinton. Based on preliminary research and field investigation, it appears that the Vinton Downtown Historic District is potentially eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Listing the Vinton Downtown Historic District on the state and national registers could provide a powerful tool for the revitalization of the downtown area. This designation serves to recognize and honor the town for its architectural and historic significance and thereby strengthen its identity as a unique place to both residents and visitors. In addition, the designation will make state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits available to contributing properties within the district. The credits provide a 25% federal tax credit (for income-producing properties only) combined with a 20% state tax credit for rehabilitation projects that follow *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*. These credits, especially when combined, can make the rehabilitation of historic buildings financially feasible and increase their value as renovated properties.

Other benefits associated with state and federal listing include the Section 106 Review process, the Historic Easement Programs, recognized significance of the town in future grant applications and the potential to implement a local historic overlay zone with design guidelines. The Section 106 Review process requires that any federally or state funded, licensed or permitted project, such as state or federal road improvements and cell towers, take into consideration its impact on a listed property or one that is eligible for listing. While this does not keep a project from happening, it provides a process for consideration of the historic resource and the mitigation of any impact on it. The easement programs provide for the preservation and protection of an historic property into perpetuity by identifying the features that make it significant and donating their value to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. An historic district also provides the base for a local historic overlay zone, if desired by the locality. Such a zone would require that alterations, demolitions and new construction within a local district follow local design guidelines.



Area of potential historic district in Vinton

Downtown Housing Creation

Housing has been identified as a key opportunity for Vinton, and promoting housing in downtowns is a proven way to enliven downtown spaces and extend activity levels well beyond the traditional work day. Several public comments have lamented the absence of downtown housing and expressed desire for expanded housing opportunities in downtown.

The Economic Restructuring Report mentions pent-up demand for market rate, apartment-style housing, as well as a need for senior living opportunities. Mixed use housing opportunities exist in the upper floors of several existing downtown buildings, particularly those where the upper floors are underutilized or vacant. The Preliminary Architectural Report notes several properties where owners have expressed interest in providing this type of housing. Additionally, the old William Byrd High School and the old Roland E. Cook school are two underutilized buildings adjacent to downtown that should be considered for conversion to apartments, perhaps for seniors. Revitalization of the Dunman Floral property may also include upper level housing apartments, which would bring market rate tenants directly into the heart of Vinton's downtown.



Areas of Potential Upper Floor Housing – Downtown Core

Business Development

Several measures should be taken to improve the business climate in Vinton and promote the expansion of existing businesses and attract new businesses to the area.

The Economic Restructuring Report recommends a marketing microgrant to help businesses deploy the new Vinton Brand, set up as a 50% matching grant to individual businesses.

Also mentioned in the report is the development of several marketing materials promoting downtown, including a Vinton shopping and dining guide, business recruitment materials, digital versions of these guides, and a new resident welcome packet for regional realtors.

A business loan pool should be established for downtown Vinton to help existing businesses expand and/or improve their services and help attract entrepreneurs to establish new businesses in downtown.

Finally, the Town should establish a change-of-use grant targeting properties that are being converted from residential to commercial use, to help property owners implement the stricter structural requirements associated with an office or mixed-use designation.



Anticipated Costs

The cost estimate below details anticipated cost of implementing the first set of initiatives to kickstart Downtown Vinton's revitalization. This estimate focuses on CDBG funding as a central component of project financing, but also lists other potential sources of funding.

Downtown Revitalization Physical Improvements

Vinton, Virginia

August 2010



Scope of Work and Cost Estimate

				TOTAL COST	CDBG	Other Funding	Notes
Washington Avenue / Pollard Street Intersection Improvements							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Install 2 4' wide medians at intersection - (includes median plantings)	1	block	\$ 20,600	\$ 20,600	\$ 20,600		Potential funding: Transportation Enhancement - \$200K. Match: Town/volunteer labor (planting)
Street trees - Gus Nicks bridge to intersection	10	tree	\$ 300	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000		Match: Town/volunteer labor
Stamped asphalt crosswalks	1	inter-section	\$ 10,500	\$ 10,500	\$ 10,500		
Pavement painting (restriping lanes, etc)	1	I.s.	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		Match: public works labor
Handicap ramps and sidewalk improvements	1	I.s.	\$ 5,189	\$ 5,189	\$ 5,189		
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 41,789	\$ 41,789		
					\$ -		
Temporary Construction Facilities and Mobilization	1	allow		\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		
Design Survey	1	I.s.	\$ 5,500	\$ 5,500	\$ 5,500		
Arch/Eng Design Services (10%)	1	I.s.		\$ 4,179	\$ 4,179		
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 12,179	\$ 12,179		
TOTAL				\$ 53,968	\$ 53,968	\$ -	
Dunman Floral Property Redevelopment (building & site redevelopment for retail / potential for future library)							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Parking lot property purchase	1	I.s.	\$ 232,700	\$ 232,700		\$ 232,700	from County assessment
Renovation of building space for retail (includes front canopies)	4,000	sf	\$ 75	\$ 300,000		\$ 300,000	Ph 2 library conversion: +/- \$5 million
Reorganization of parking (including fill of northwest corner of lot)	63	space	\$ 1,500	\$ 94,500		\$ 94,500	
Retaining wall at northwest edge	130	lf	\$ 100	\$ 13,000		\$ 13,000	
Outdoor plaza, sidewalks, and lawn area	1	I.s.	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000		\$ 100,000	
Landscaping (trees, shrubs, etc)	1	I.s.	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000		\$ 25,000	
Erosion and Sediment Control measures	1	allow	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000		\$ 5,000	
Waterline improvements	1	I.s.	\$ 86,400	\$ 86,400		\$ 86,400	Potential funding: Clean Water Revolving Load Funds and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 856,600			
Temporary Construction Facilities and Mobilization	1	allow	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500		\$ 7,500	
Design Survey	1	I.s.	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,200		\$ 7,200	
Arch/Eng Design Services	1	I.s.	\$ 85,660	\$ 85,660		\$ 85,660	
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 100,360			
TOTAL				\$ 956,960	\$ -	\$ 956,960	

Virginia Avenue / Pollard Street Gateway Improvements							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Landscaping / gateway signage for existing median in Virginia Avenue	1	I.s.	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000		Match: Town/volunteer labor (plantings)
TOTAL				\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ -	
Walnut Avenue / Farmers Market / Winter Market in existing downtown building							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Redevelopment of 107 S. Pollard for Winter Market	6550	sf	\$ 60	\$ 393,000	\$ 318,000	\$ 75,000	Equipment/green technology/ electronic purchasing technology eligible for USDA Farmers Mkt Promotion Program
Sidewalks / landscaping	1	I.s.	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000		
Parking areas	43	space	\$ 1,100	\$ 47,300	\$ 47,300		
Post Office parking reorientation and resurfacing	1	I.s.	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000		
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 528,300			
Arch/Eng Design Services - Winter Mkt/Frms Mkt area	1	I.s.		\$ 52,830		\$ 52,830	eligible for USDA Farmers Mkt Promotion Program
<i>Subtotal Frms Mkt/Winter Mkt:</i>				\$ 581,130	\$ 453,300	\$ 127,830	
Trail connection to Tinker Creek Greenway (crushed stone)	4500	I.f.	\$ 25	\$ 112,500		\$ 112,500	Potential Funding: Transportation Enhancement (\$200K), DCR Trails Grant (\$100K)
Pedestrian bridge over Glade Creek	1	I.s.	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000	
Acquisition of trail easements - industrial property frontage	1	I.s.	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000		\$ 100,000	
Landscaping along Trail	1	allow	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000		\$ 50,000	
Erosion and Sediment Control measures	1	allow	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	
Gateway signage	1	I.s.	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500		\$ 2,500	
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 295,000	\$ -	\$ 295,000	
Temporary Construction Facilities and Mobilization	1	allow		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000		
Design Survey	1	I.s.		\$ 10,320	\$ 10,320		
Arch/Eng Design Services - Trail	1	I.s.		\$ 29,500	\$ 29,500		
<i>Subtotal:</i>				\$ 49,820	\$ 49,820		
<i>Subtotal Trail Work:</i>				\$ 344,820			
TOTAL				\$ 925,950	\$ 503,120	\$ 422,830	

Miscellaneous Improvements							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Canopy trees for parking lots	1	allow	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	
Directional wayfinding signage	1	ls	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000		
TOTAL				\$ 25,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,000	
Façade Improvements							
Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
103 East Lee Avenue - Edward Jones Investments	1	allow	\$ 21,775	\$ 21,775	\$ 10,888	\$ 10,888	owner match
105 East Lee Avenue - vacant	1	allow	\$ 16,225	\$ 16,225	\$ 8,113	\$ 8,113	owner match
116 East Lee Avenue - Cyndi's Fashion	1	allow	\$ 5,550	\$ 5,550	\$ 2,775	\$ 2,775	owner match
109 South Pollard - OMA Training	1	allow	\$ 5,850	\$ 5,850	\$ 2,925	\$ 2,925	owner match
111 South Pollard - United Pentecostal Church	1	allow	\$ 7,950	\$ 7,950	\$ 3,975	\$ 3,975	owner match
119 South Pollard - US Post Office	1	allow	\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	owner match
201 South Pollard - Bank of America	1	allow	\$ 78,500	\$ 78,500	\$ 39,250	\$ 39,250	owner match
206/208 South Pollard - Faith's Hair Studio / Anita's Alterations	1	allow	\$ 12,800	\$ 12,800	\$ 6,400	\$ 6,400	owner match
217 South Pollard - Azteca de Oro Tienda Y Taqueria	1	allow	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 6,500	\$ 6,500	owner match
301 South Pollard - American Discount Furniture and Carpet	1	allow	\$ 21,775	\$ 21,775	\$ 10,888	\$ 10,888	owner match
303 South Pollard - Angelo's	1	allow	\$ 18,600	\$ 18,600	\$ 9,300	\$ 9,300	owner match
410 South Pollard - Baker's Bazaar	1	allow	\$ 16,200	\$ 16,200	\$ 8,100	\$ 8,100	owner match
TOTAL				\$ 227,825	\$ 113,913	\$ 113,913	
Downtown Upper Level Housing Opportunities							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
103 East Lee Avenue	2	ea	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000		
303 S. Pollard Street	1	ea	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000		
206/208 S. Pollard Street	2	ea	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000		
Rehab Specialist Services - LMI Housing	5	ea	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000		
TOTAL				\$ 130,000	\$ 130,000	\$ -	
Business Development							
Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost		Estimated Cost		
Business Revolving Loan Pool	1		\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000		
Marketing Microgrant	1		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	match from businesses
Change of Use grant	1		\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000	\$ 65,000		
Residential Welcome Packet	1		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000		\$ 15,000	
				\$ 190,000	\$ 170,000	\$ 20,000	
CDBG Grant Administration							
Grant and Program Administration	1	allow	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000		
TOTAL PHASE 1 COSTS:				\$ 2,508,703	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,508,703	



Appendices

Market Analysis and Economic Restructuring/Marketing Plan

Preliminary Architectural Report

Preliminary Engineering Report

Vinton Motors Feasibility Study