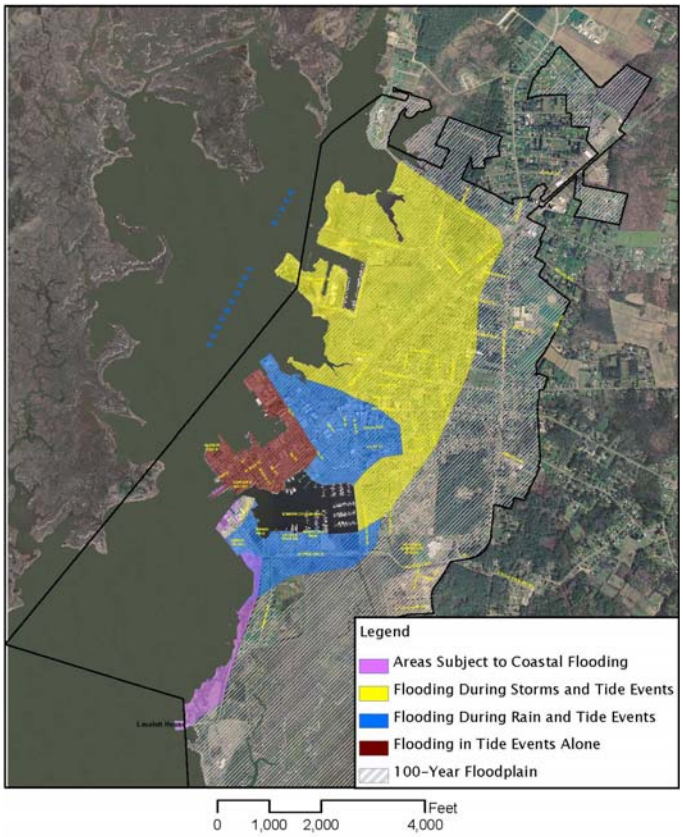
Chapter 3 Urban Design

Crisfield's architectural character remained relatively untouched and intact until the 1990s. With the exception of the Crisfield Housing Authority properties, the City added buildings much the way it has done from its beginning. New buildings took design cues from older buildings, incorporating scale and architectural details consistent with the City's character. These historic building patterns define the City's physical character.

BACKGROUND

The form and function of Crisfield's buildings are heavily influenced by the local environment, where one is never far from water. The City is located on the Chesapeake Bay, a few feet above sea level. Basic features of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem – wetlands, shallow water aquatic life, and islands that have marked the evolution of the Bay and the City, are visible from Main Street. As shown in Figure 1, parts of the City occasionally flood, but this is the nature of low-lying waterfront communities.

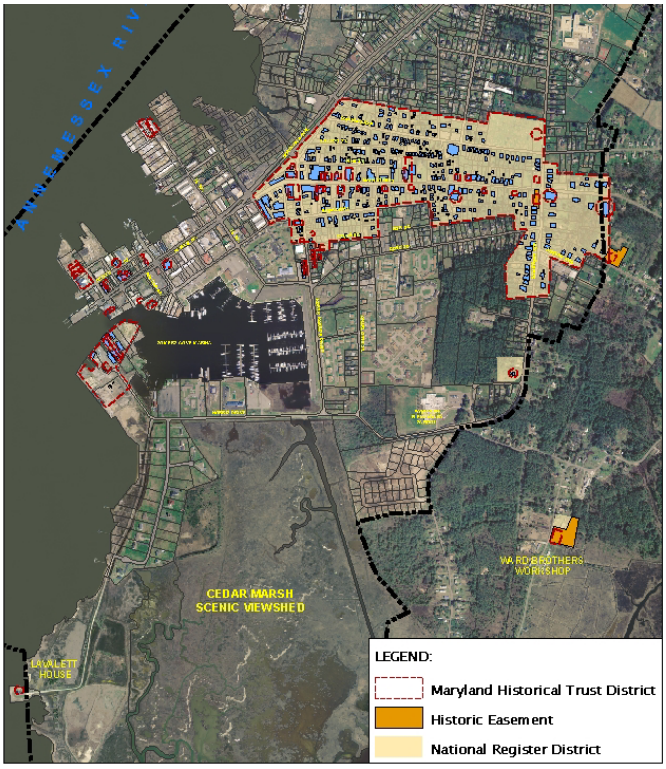
FIGURE 1: AREAS PRONE TO FLOODING



Crisfield's residents and the marks they have left on the land give the City its special character. "Crisfielders" celebrate their unique heritage with annual events such as fishing tournaments, the Clam Bake, and the National Hard Crab Derby. These are famous throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

The City's historic significance is recognized by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). As shown in Figure 2, the MHT has designated the City's core as a Historic District. The District encompasses residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings and structures dating from the late 1800s. These areas are commonly referred to as the "Uptown" and "Downtown" areas.

FIGURE 2: CRISFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT



The "Downtown" area is located on the Annemessex River and Tangier Sound, primarily comprised of scattered waterfront commercial and industrial uses that total approximately 11 acres. The largest Historic District in Crisfield is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This district is located in the Uptown area and includes a collection of churches and residential, commercial, and industrial buildings that date from circa 1870 to 1930 (See Appendix A for details).

The Chesapeake Bay's bounty, including finfish and shellfish, define Crisfield's historic and cultural identity.

Several street grids make up the City, each rotated slightly from each other. Streets and blocks are rectangular and long (600 to 800 feet) and usually run parallel to primary thoroughfares such as Main Street, Somerset Avenue, or Maryland Route 413. The waterfront is dominated by marine-related uses and bisected by the four-lane MD 413, some of which is built on the site of the old railroad bed that extended to the foot of the City on a terminating pier known as the Depot. A compact Uptown commercial area is surrounded by diverse residential neighborhoods containing a variety of homes that are reflective of the City's socio-economic diversity.

Crisfield has many good examples of buildings that contribute positively to the street experience, mark history graciously, and dignify the City. These buildings are two to four stories tall, at times close together, almost always close to the street, and detailed according to individual building style. Crisfield has several building styles

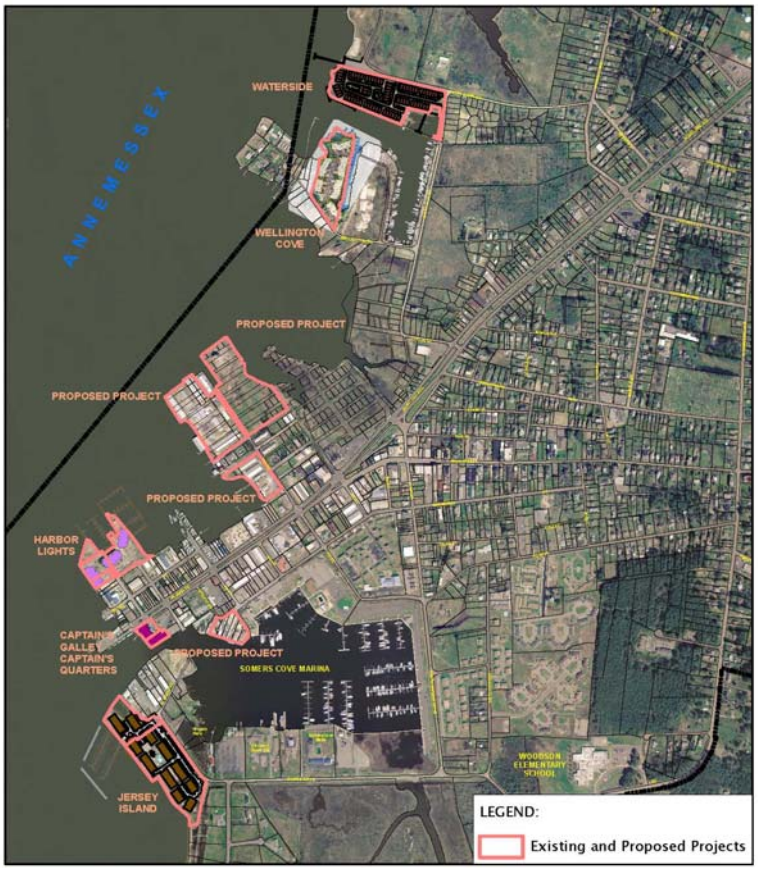
commonly found on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, including Georgian, Federal, Victorian and Greek Revival. Examples of Italianate, Adam, Gothic, and other revival styles also are seen in Crisfield:

The Crisfield Post Office, constructed in the 1930's, is located in the heart of the Uptown Commercial Core and provides an attractive setting for commerce.

- Customs House/Post Office: an example of the Adam style built in the early to mid-1800s and identifiable by its use of fanlights over doors and windows, as well as a slight eave overhang with tooth-like dentil decorative molding (pictured at right).
- St. Paul's AME Church and Shiloh United Methodist Church: two examples of Gothic Revival style, identified by pointed arch windows and doors, and steeply pitched gable roofs (pictured at right, below).
- Proxy House: a Victorian house in the Queen Anne style with asymmetrical façade, dominant front-facing gable, and few smooth walls (usually broken-up with siding changes and bay windows) (pictured at left, below).

The evolution of building styles underscores the fact that Crisfield has not been exempt from the desirable and changing forms of development, and still is not today. Since the early 1990s, the City has approved several major residential developments, the designs of which are significant departures from historic building patterns. As a result, much of Downtown Crisfield has lost its original character. The area's historic integrity is weak, having been diminished over the years by economic changes, new development, redevelopment, fires, and natural disasters. Presently, the area contains modern residential buildings mixed in among older-style commercial and industrial structures and uses. A few scattered historic buildings and sites remain.

FIGURE 3: EXISTING & PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



The area's primary architectural style and character are being overtaken by the new forms of redevelopment that have occurred. New buildings are residential, primarily condominium mid-rise structures, which dominate specific areas of the waterfront in key locations as shown in Figure 3. The architectural styles and scale found in these large buildings are not compatible with existing traditional building patterns.

Features here that are deemed important to sustainable economic progress include the remains of the working waterfront and the Depot facilities. These are irreplaceable landmarks, where traditional seafood industry activities, the City's trademark, have been conducted since the mid 19th century. The Depot at the end of Main Street/Rt. 414 also provides a critical link to Smith and Tangier Islands. As one of Maryland's most isolated and unique communities, relatively unchanged from its initial settlement in the 17th century, Smith Island is particularly valuable as a tourist attraction.

Important urban design considerations, such as the best locations for tall buildings, have been largely ignored along the waterfront. These decisions have become a simple matter of a willing seller and a willing buyer, abetted by the willingness of City officials to equate such development with economic benefit. In most cases, this is a failing of local land development regulations, especially their application in the TM Tourist-Maritime Zoning District. Part of the problem can be attributed to the current zoning code, which is too vague and blunt a tool for dealing with current development in Crisfield. Now, after the fact, there is strong concern about additional tall buildings and extensive walling-off of the waterfront.

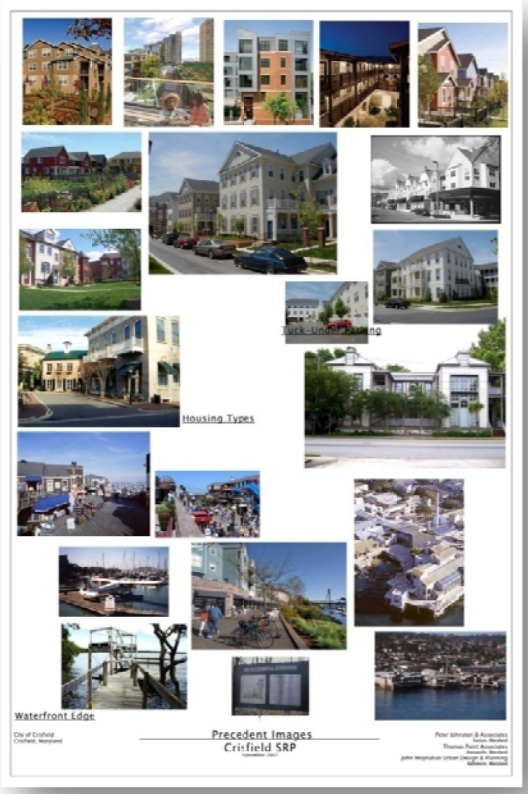
This concern likely will lead to one of two scenarios often repeated in communities with similar situations. In one scenario, public outcry leads to regulating building height so that only low-rise three and four story buildings can be built. In another scenario, overly concerned for private property rights and precedents, City officials permit seven and eight story multi-family buildings on the remaining prime waterfront properties. One questions how a place as special as Crisfield

with its unique maritime environmental and cultural conditions can sustain its unique visual character by using controls that are non-specific, general, and broad-based, as opposed to being in accordance with a well-conceived and comprehensive urban design plan.

Development in Crisfield should be based on the principles of urban design, inherent in all great places. Urban design is directly related to the community character concerns that echo throughout the recently adopted 2006 *Crisfield Comprehensive Plan* and the tasks addressed in this SRP (see Appendix A).

Urban design is the attempt to give form, in terms of function and beauty, to entire areas or whole cities. The focus is on the massing and organization of buildings and on the spaces between them, rather than on the design of individual structures. Its principle features are as follows:

1. Defining neighborhoods with a center and edge.
2. Designing a walkable community – five-minutes from center to edge.
3. Containing a mix of uses and building types.
4. Having an integrated street network.
5. Reserving special sites for special buildings.



Examples of each of these principles can be found in Crisfield's existing pattern of development.

"Urban design is the art of making places for people. It concerns the way places look and feel as well as the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns, and cities."[1] The recommendations in this SRP are based on the belief that to sustain positive economic growth the City of Crisfield must build on its existing assets and features to become a memorable and desirable year-round place that serves its residents and visitors well, while respecting nature, history, and market forces. This will be achieved by employing the principles of urban design, which are part of the strategies for revitalizing Crisfield. The following amenities, most apparently lacking in the City today, are:

[1] *Urban Design in Planning*. By Design.

- Open space variety including trail connections, waterfront access, and small and large parks;
- Pedestrian facilities such as consistent sidewalks, signage, and shade;
- Greater variety of housing and employment choices;
- A plan for the local seafood industry's future, that is how Crisfield can possibly capitalize on its most prominent historic industry; and
- Objective methods of evaluating development proposals that respect the environment and the City's physical and cultural history.

THE CONCEPT MASTER PLAN

Principles

As shown in Figure 4 below, the "Concept Master Plan" embodies the principles of urban design applied to the existing conditions in Crisfield. Along with the design recommendations derived from the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP, the Concept Master Plan can provide the basis for judging new projects. It is not intended to be the only way sites can be developed, but it does address the following in ways that suggest appropriate considerations when reviewing development projects, establishing capital improvements priorities, or preparing facility plans, such as the Somers Cove Marina Master Facilities Plan:

- Uses for the Somers Cove Motel site;
- Utilization of the Somers Cove Marina to enhance urban use and enjoyment;
- Redevelopment of the Public Housing Authority land and surrounding area;
- Conservation of natural, cultural and historical resources;
- Improved parks and public spaces with emphasis on physical and visual access to the shoreline;
- Improved utilization of existing streets, parking and improved circulation including improved pedestrian and bicycle access;
- Increased marina and maritime support capacity on the Annemessex River (7th Street Cove); and
- Strengthened connections to Smith and Tangier Islands as well as Jane's Island Park.

FIGURE 4: CONCEPT MASTER PLAN

For the purposes of regulating development projects, the Concept Master Plan provides guidance on the following:

- Realistic building footprints that address the streets they face;
- The relative distribution of land use intensity;
- The mixing of uses;
- Efficient use of limited land resources for strengthening the city economy;
- Improved circulation; and
- General architectural design guidance, including building height and site disposition.

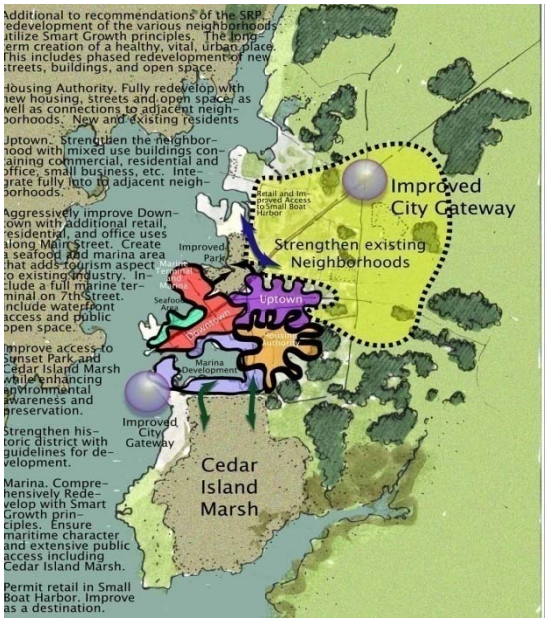
Take, for example, standards for building height. Rather than strictly prohibit tall buildings or allow them anywhere, the Concept Master Plan acknowledges existing tall condos as part of Crisfield's urban fabric and attempts to help them fit into the physical and visual landscape. As shown in Figure 5, this is done by strategically placing a few new and select tall buildings to smooth the transition to the rest of the City, thus reducing the visual impact of isolated tall buildings.

FIGURE 5: PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHTS

Many more tall buildings would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the SRP, but a limited number of tall buildings that are properly-placed and designed will benefit the City's urban form, given what has already transpired.
Buildings as tall as two or three stories above flood elevation could be permitted. Properly placed and designed taller buildings could be approved, if determined to be consistent with the recommendations of the SRP.

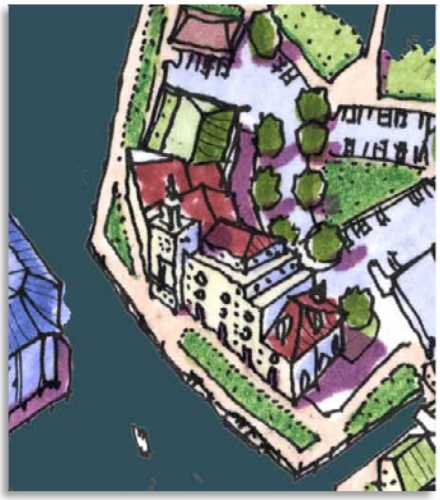
Gateways

Gateways serve as both land and sea entrances to the City. They are the City's front doors and should impart a positive image of what lies beyond. Crisfield's gateways occur at the major intersection of Somerset Avenue and Route 413 and at the entrance to Somers Cove Marina.



City Gateways are the primary entrances and exits for Crisfield and provide visual first impressions to visitors.

Function: City gateways announce and demarcate a place, and express edges of neighborhoods and important points along thoroughfares. As well as serving as a transition building, the waterfront gateway building recommended at the entrance to Somers Cove Marina serves not only as a day mark along the City skyline but also as an unofficial night navigation point. In the evening, the building itself would be illuminated from lights both on the building and from nearby buildings. The lighting of nearby buildings and the marina entrance can be done from the gateway building as well.

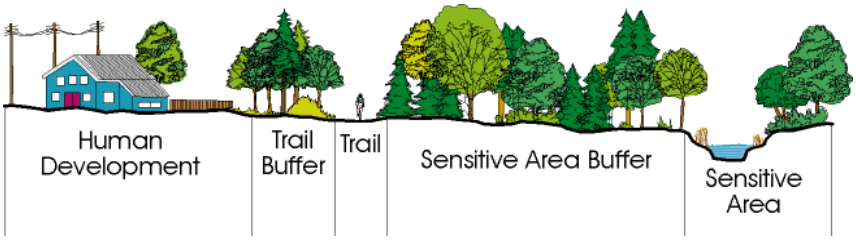


Form: As these are special buildings, form should be different from other edge condition buildings, such as this detailed illustration from the Marina/Harbor Gateway. It is recommended that gateway buildings be noticeably taller, expressed with detail, linked to the place (via words, color and symbol), and serve as a pleasant and inviting introduction to the City. As befits a maritime area, the form of a marina gateway building would emulate other maritime buildings and similar related uses. The building should not appear as a heavy wall, but rather should be light and slender in form and serve as a visual transition to the scale of nearby Jersey Island.

Uses: Multiple uses in a single building are good. Single uses occurring individually in their own buildings, located haphazardly around the City, might not be the most efficient and sustainable use of land. Tall buildings save land and preserve open space. These buildings should still occur in Crisfield. However, they require control and restraint. Since their typical waterfront location

is so desirable for living, working, and recreating, these buildings are where several uses must occur. For example, the landward gateway building located at Somerset Avenue would serve visitors well by having on its ground floor a welcome center, support services (office) perhaps on the floor above, and residential units on its uppermost floors. Furthermore, the marina gateway building potentially can contain many uses and activities under one roof, such as a Maryland Department of Natural Resources environmental education center, restaurant, office, banquet hall, recreation/gym, and residential units.

Sustainability



In development terms, sustainability is characterized by the fulfillment of human needs, while indefinitely maintaining the quality of the natural environment. The most-often quoted definition of sustainable development is development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The Concept Master Plan supports and enhances Crisfield's sustainability:

- Land is conserved. Existing land within the City is used for development. No remaining forest, wetland or open space is developed because compact development reduces stress on watersheds.
- Crisfield's heritage is enhanced by open access to various waterfront locations. This physical link to Crisfield's maritime past sustains the City's history.
- Open space is created. Various types of open space, from parks (large) to plazas (small) are strategically located throughout the City.
- Existing open space is preserved and enhanced. The City/Dock and Depot, for example, is vastly improved for use, function, and performance.
- The quality and scale of development is for people, based on the principles that make pleasant and livable communities.
- The recommended change of code strives for ideal practices in environmental stewardship and architectural design, including green building practices.
- A walkable and integrated street network is employed, which promotes walking, social interaction, and exercise, mitigates traffic congestion, and reinforces community connections. Dead ends and cul-de-sacs are not recommended.
- Circulation, particularly access to the water and new open spaces via a reinforced city-wide trail network, connects neighborhoods as well as parks and special sites. These

connections—both internal and external to Crisfield—permit the use and enjoyment of the City's open space and nearby environmental assets, by bike or boat, or on foot.

- Stormwater is managed through natural drainage. Existing stormwater systems are strengthened and enhanced or created, as is the case just south of Carter Woodson Elementary School.
- Stormwater runoff is reduced by narrowing wide roads, encouraging the use of crushed stone in alleys and parking areas, removing curbs strategically in some areas, and employing rain gardens and similar aesthetically pleasing devices, where practical.

To the fullest extent possible, Crisfield should strive for the highest quality environmental practices in use today. These include Green Building, "Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design" (LEED) certification for buildings, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater treatment, Green Urbanism, and Low Impact Development.

Public Housing Authority

FIGURE 6: PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY LANDS

Shown in its present form in Figure 6, the Concept Master Plan shows the Crisfield Housing Authority (CHA) site redeveloped (see illustration below). Redevelopment takes a form resembling the rest of the City. This includes the extension of the City's grid, connection to adjacent neighborhoods, regular block dimension and orientation, narrow tree lined streets, and homes of a type and mix that are consistent with those found throughout the city.

As a result of studying the entire City, this area, including the Somers Cove Marina's eastern edge, should offer varied housing options in buildings of varying height. This includes some that take advantage of distant views, while others are consistent with the scale of Crisfield's single-family homes.

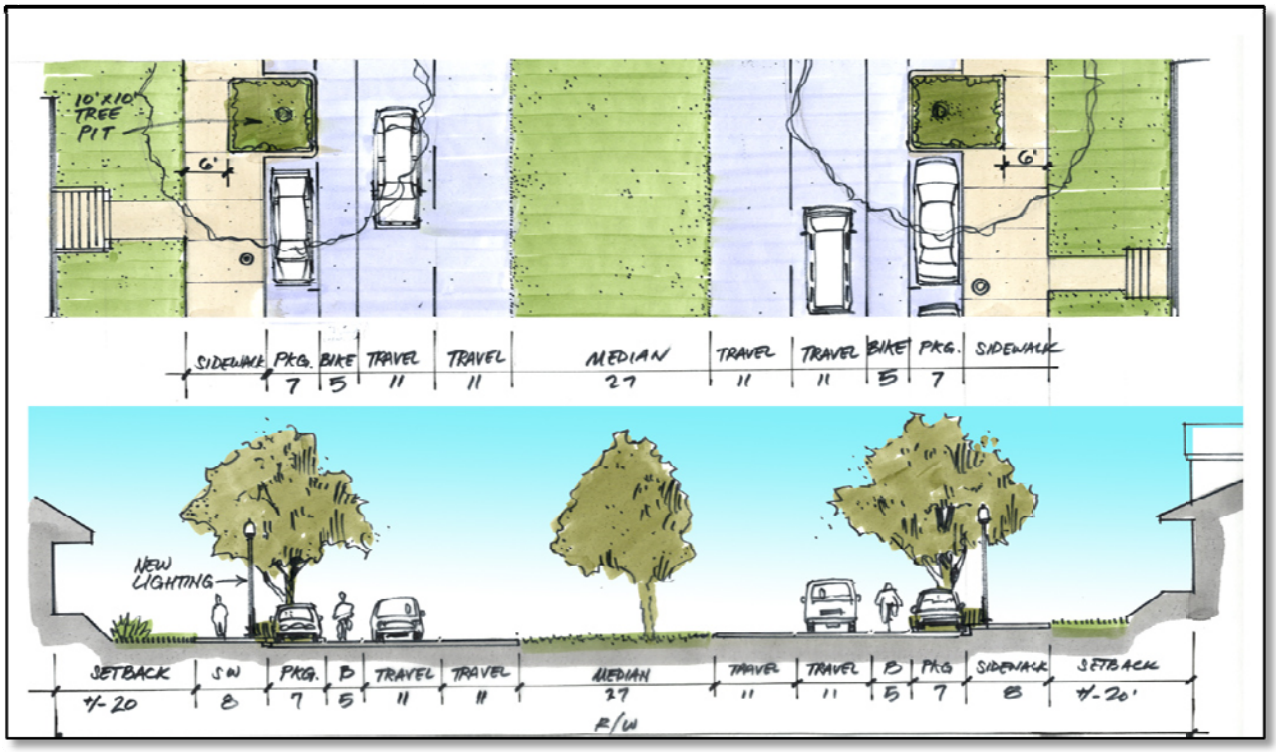
Building types include multi-family apartments, town homes, small and large-lot single family homes, and accessory dwelling units (Granny Flats). Throughout the area, a diverse variety of open space types are located, ensuring access to open access for all residents. Small attached greens with excellent supervision are excellent for children due to the houses' close proximity. A large, modern waterfront park, suitable in size for outdoor concerts and containing shaded walking and bicycle paths, structured play areas, small boat rental, picnicking, community garden, and constructed wetland, would anchor the City's south end and provide a much-needed major open space. This park should be developed concurrently with the housing authority property in accordance with regulations set forth in a form-based code, and like a portion of the housing authority property, be returned to City ownership where necessary.

Housing Authority Lands Concept

Streets

Many existing streets will remain "as is." Some may need lighting fixed or added, trees planted, treatment to repair drainage, sewer, or sidewalk systems, and a few select new streets should be constructed to improve access and circulation. Whether the change is functional or aesthetic, the goal is to achieve comfortable and safe streets. Sidewalks are recommended on both sides of the streets throughout the City. It is recommended that a comprehensive stormwater plan for Crisfield be completed based on a build-out scenario similar to the Concept Master Plan. Infill development projects should be required to repair streets in accordance with stormwater and environmental standards set forth in new City codes, and contribute funds toward the enhancement of other City streets.

The width of Maryland Route 413 presents opportunities to enhance the pedestrian realm while continuing to accommodate automobile traffic, as shown in the MD 413 concept illustration below. Improving MD Route 413 with lighting, trees, wide sidewalks, bike lanes, and signage will announce to visitors and residents “this is an important road for pedestrians and cyclists”.



New streets are created within neighborhoods and adjacent to existing neighborhoods to extend the existing street network and provide stronger connections (see Figure 7: Circulation). New streets that follow standards set forth in revised codes are expected to outperform existing streets in their environmental engineering and stormwater handling capability (see Figure 8: Street Improvements).

Building Renovation

In the illustration of the revitalized City Dock (next page), a poorly contributing building located at the foot of the dock is shown as rebuilt. The structure contains ground floor uses such as restaurant and retail that activate the street. Office and residential areas are indicated on the upper floors, which would contain balconies. This renovated building and pier welcome visitors that land at Crisfield’s City Dock, providing a dignified and safe experience. Additionally, the SRP recommends that all new and renovated buildings incorporate Green Building practices

and include alternate energy production devises such as rooftop wind turbines, solar panels, and reserve rain water in cisterns where possible.

Main Street at 6th Street – Before

Main Street at 6th Street – After

Rt 413 at Collins Street – Before

Rt 413 at Collins Street – After

Before

After

As shown in the illustrations on page 24, other City buildings can be renovated or remodeled to fit into the existing built environment. Historic sites provide for an attractive streetscape for both commercial and residential uses.

Marinas

"Old Harbor" Redevelopment Concept

Several marinas of varying age and operation exist in Crisfield. The SRP views marinas—existing and proposed—as integral to the city's character and not separate. To this end, the Concept Master Plan strengthens and activates the waterfront. It illustrates how a broad range of uses and building sizes can engage the waterfront and provides public access to the water via improved views, new streets, open space, and a promenade, while never forgetting the natural systems and un-built areas. The illustration at right shows the concept for a new marina at 7th Avenue on the "Old Harbor," which is supported by the SRP. Dredge spoils from the Old Harbor can be used to buttress the City's barrier islands and a new multi-use marina, including marina office uses, will assist with economic development objectives of the City.

Somers Cove Marina is the premier marina due to shelter and enclosure. Waterfront condominium development in the late 1990s included marinas, which resulted in two additional small facilities. Since Crisfield continues capitalizing on its waterfront potential, this SRP recommends the creation of additional marina space located between the City Pier/Depot and 7th Street. With the amount and intensity of development anticipated in this desirable and picturesque waterfront location, marina and promenade activate and enhance the city's waterfront attractiveness. Design recommendations made by local operator Mark Goode take into consideration seasonal wind and wave direction, shelter, and existing pier locations. The marina design includes a breakwater, access to existing marina service and launch ramps, and connections to the waterfront promenade that incorporates several seafood processing facilities.

Trails and Links

Crisfield is an urban environment blessed with some wonderfully preserved natural places. The relationship between the City and nature is critical, and it strengthens not only Crisfield's understanding of nature, but its disposition toward the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, as well. Greenways, bikeways, and trails also constitute important ways in which residents will see and use open space, as shown in the "Greater Access Plan" illustration to the right and Figure 7: Circulation.

Flooding

Ground floor uses in new and renovated buildings must respond to flooding and sea-level rise. Simply put, floors must be six feet above sea level for retail, and seven feet for residential. In the Building Sea-Level Diagram, the City Dock building's ground floor is six feet above sea-level and is achieved without sacrificing façade and streetscape. The SRP strongly suggests that this be achieved by a means that does not diminish street-level activity and streetscape. In other words, buildings must contain a base that fully contacts the ground where the building faces primary or secondary thoroughfares. Conversely, buildings on stilts and piles do not provide street-level interest. Furthermore, accessibility for disabled users (ADA) of renovated buildings will be made at street-level building entrances containing lobbies with elevators or lifts.

Parking

Crisfield's development pattern contains walkable, continuous streetscapes that do not comfortably accommodate vacant lots used for parking. Large lots in the City represent underutilized land and are perceived by visitors as uninviting and unsafe. Vacant lots covered with a few cars, such as the parking areas for visitors to Smith and Tangier islands, add little vitality to the City (see Figure 9: Parking). The location, distribution, and type of parking in a revitalized Crisfield is unseen and yet nearby. This feature is typical in vital and inviting places.

Viewsheds & Wayfinding

As shown in Figure 10, maintaining scenic viewsheds in the City is important, both for tourists and visitors alike. The most critical viewsheds for Crisfield are views to and from the water. The City's attractive shorelines are a major tourism draw and assist economic development and revitalization efforts. As shown in Figure 11, creating a wayfinding system will assist visitors to navigate the City and find key attractions. As shown in Figure 12, creating a system of public parks and open spaces that connect to shoreline pathways will provide needed access to the waterfront, where one can gaze out on the Chesapeake Bay.

FIGURE 7: CIRCULATION

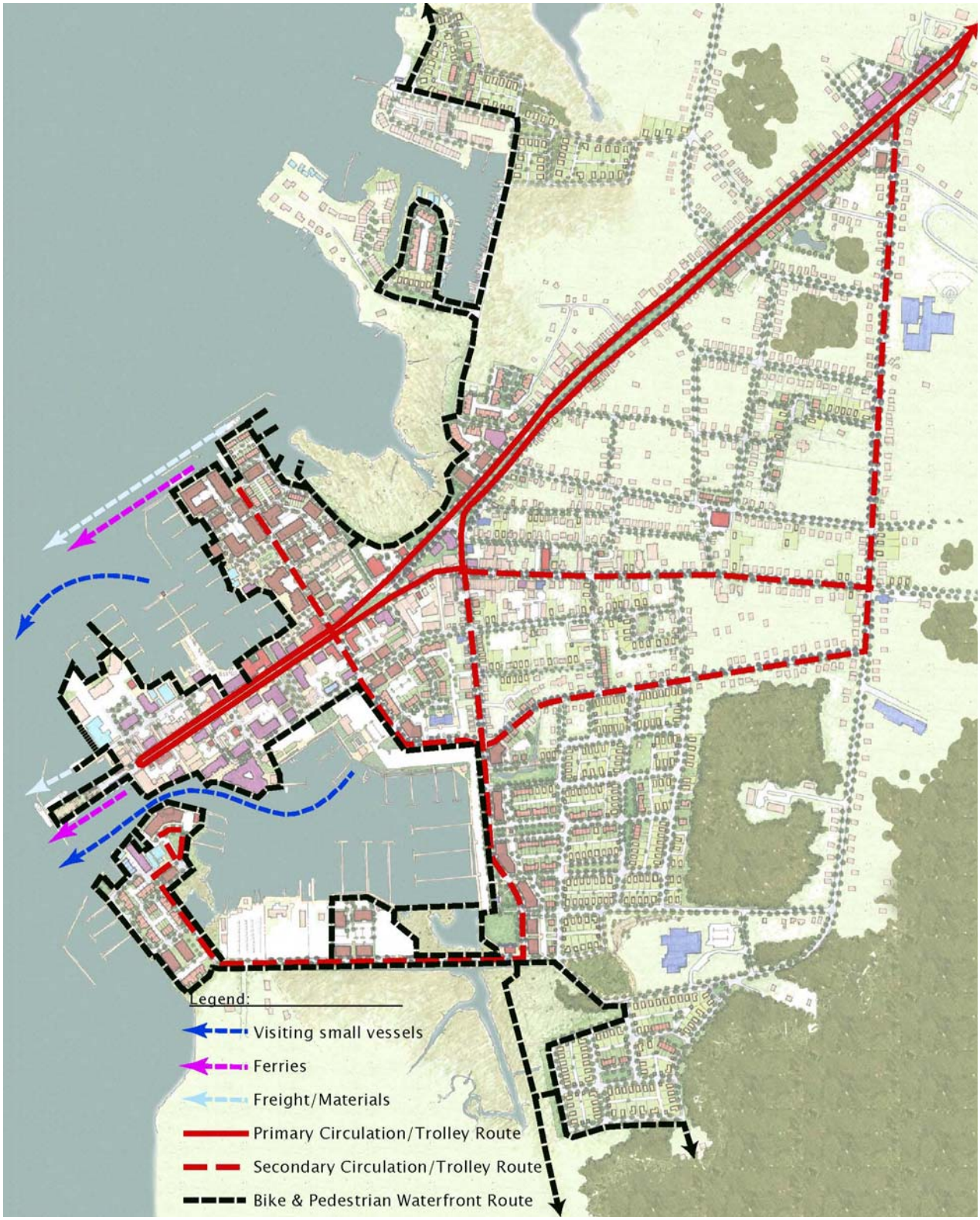


FIGURE 8: STREET IMPROVEMENTS

FIGURE 9: PARKING

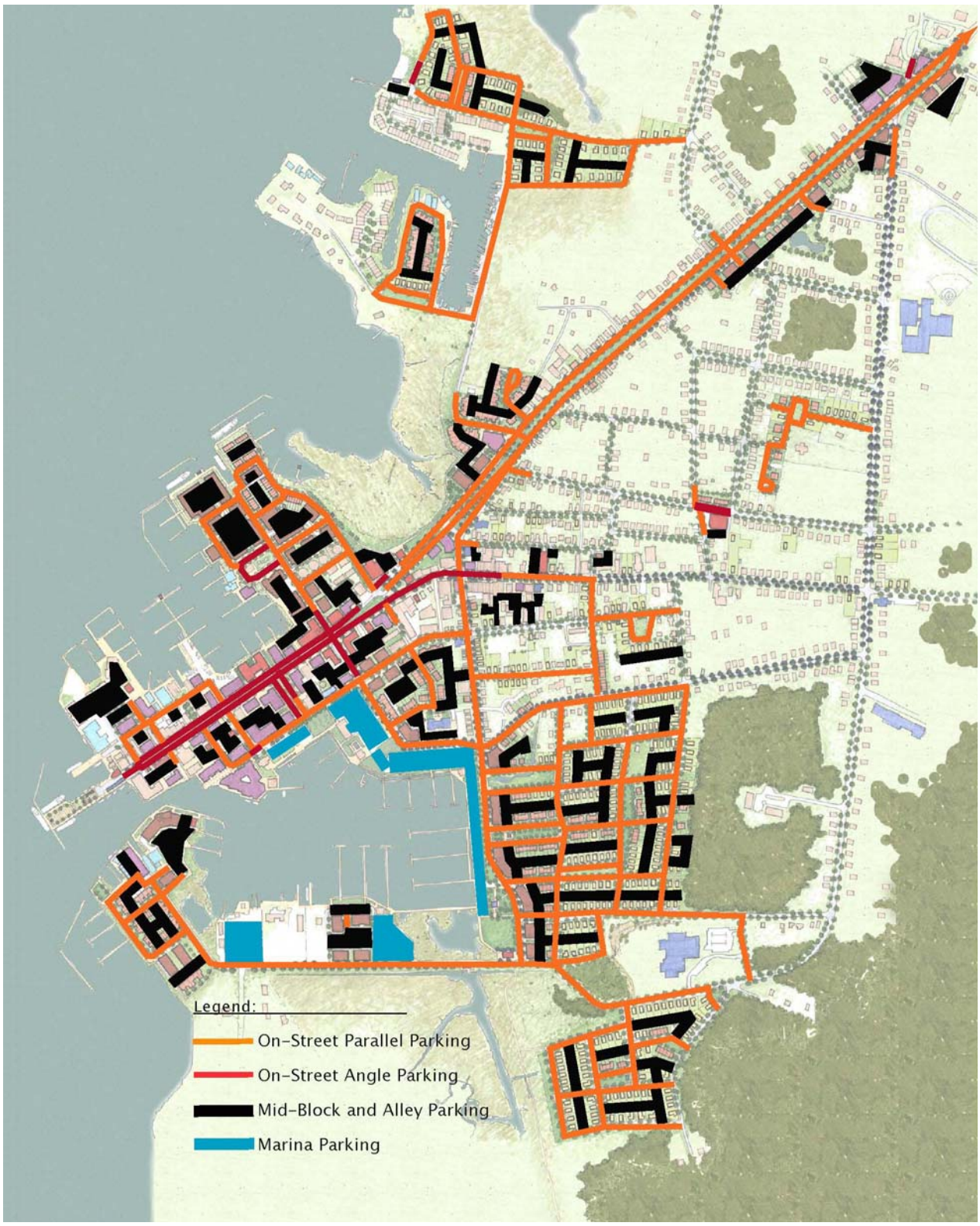


FIGURE 10: VIEWSHEDS

FIGURE 11: WAYFINDING

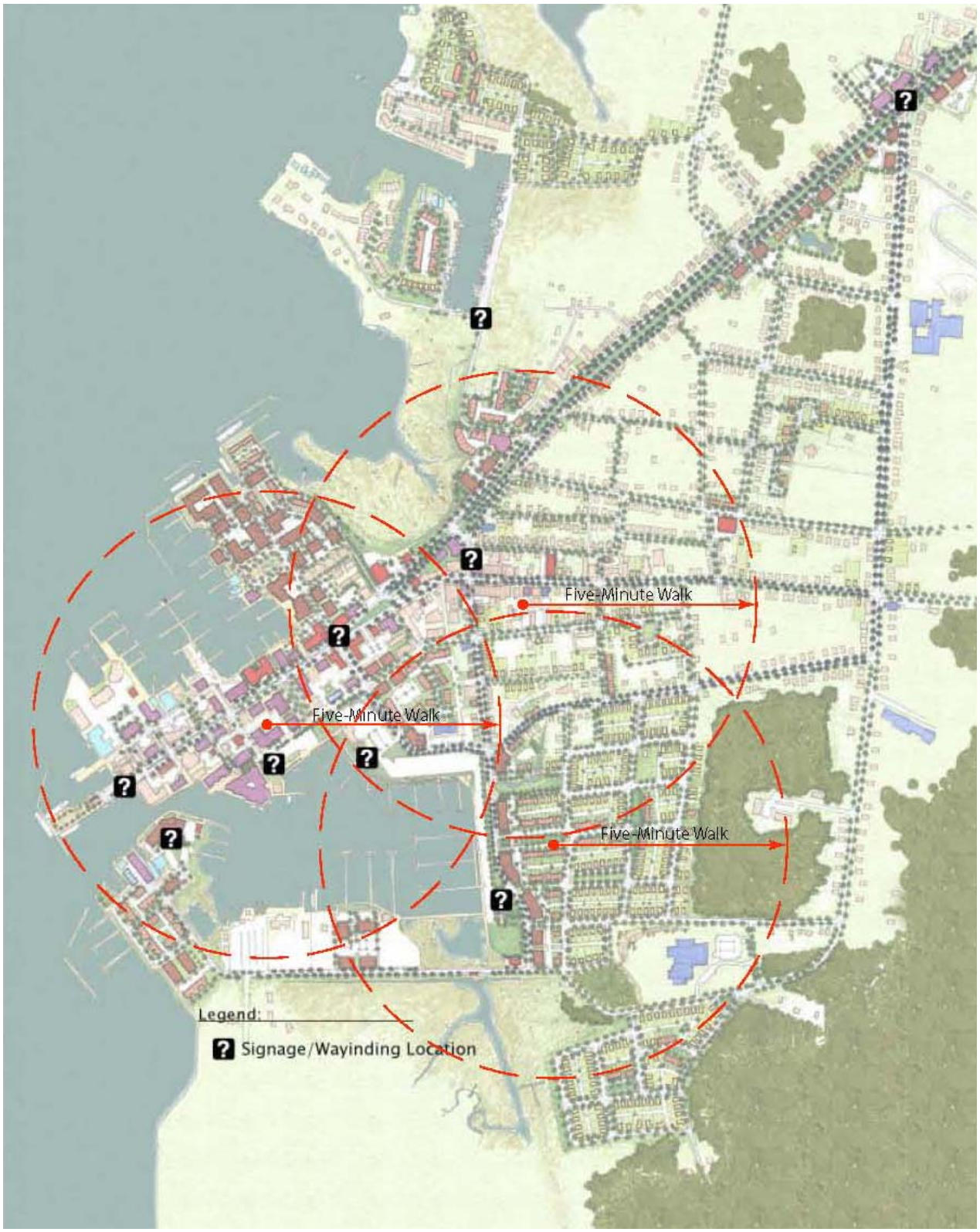
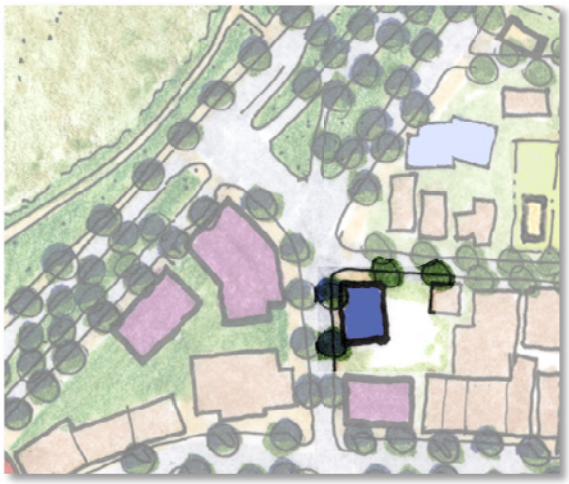


FIGURE 12: PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE

Special Sites

There are specific sites in cities where special buildings exist. These locations serve many functions—they may be places of worship, town halls, courthouses, pavilions, or post offices. Crisfield has several such points and following is a discussion of them:

The Post Office: In the middle of Crisfield, at 4th and Main Street, is the great Post Office building. It anchors the East Main/Uptown neighborhood and contributes to a noticeable, but somewhat weak civic area—a place of social interaction. Opportunity exists here to strengthen this area as a place of civic importance by inserting additional civic contributors such as a public library and theater.



New Library: The Somerset County Public Library is planning to locate a new branch in the heart of Crisfield. It should be located near the Post Office, as shown in the illustration to the right, where it can contribute to the existing civic area and urban environment. That environment is characterized by wide sidewalks, street lighting, trees, buildings situated close to the street with interesting ground-floor uses, and shared curb-side parking.

While preference for library design among many professionals is a single floor operation, County Library officials have indicated a preference for a location in an active urban area, like the Uptown, but also in a 15,000-square-foot building that has a minimum of 75 parking spaces. Such a facility may be located in a multi-story, multi-use building with the first floor dedicated to the library. Parking demand may be addressed through nearby on-street parking and mid-block parking, as shown on the Concept Master Plan. The City and County library staff should explore all possibilities to locate a library in Uptown near the Post Office.

The City Dock/Depot: Located at the "head" of Main Street, the City Dock/Depot is the Crisfield's primary docking facility and one of its most valuable assets. The pier is utilized for passenger ferry service to the outer islands, such as Janes, Smith, and Tangier Islands. The Depot is used for docking cruise ships and large vessels carrying freight as well as strolling and sightseeing. It is heavily used and overdue for rehabilitation and other infrastructure improvements.

The function, durability, and appearance of the facility must be enhanced. Recommended improvements include the following:

- Installation of a protective breakwater;
- Construction of an extended and widened pier head that includes varied paved and natural surfaces;
- Installation of new shelters with seating, wind protection and updated real-time electronic information;
- Construction of a lighted, sound-equipped plaza to be used for public performances; and
- Addition of vertical aesthetic elements such as trees, towers, and masts.

Marina Gateway Building Site: Across the marina entrance is a site for a potentially magnificent building near State owned property (Maryland Department of Natural Resources) on Jersey Island. With the right structure, the site can balance the seven-story mass of nearby Captain's Galley, function as a transition piece to Jersey Island, and serve as a 'day mark' for the City. This potential should be tapped.

American Legion Beach: American Legion Beach, illustrated to the left, is home to the new Crisfield sailing school. It is one of the few public beaches located in the City. The beach also is significant for its location away from tourist areas, thus it offers residents a getaway place for fun and recreation. This asset should be strengthened with continued funding of recreational activities and infrastructure improvements such as a pier, parking area, and connecting street. The area can further benefit if residential homes are built nearby.

Small Boat Harbor: Many tourists come to Crisfield to see a small, informal, and hidden marina that moors the City's working fleet. Somers Cove Marina is home to recreational boaters and fishing boats, but the Small Boat Harbor is an authentic working waterfront. Its appeal lies in its low-key appearance and this should not change. Minor street and dock improvements are

recommended. However a small maritime-related retail establishment could be located here. No chain stores or "Bubba Gump's" just a crab shack or small seasonal restaurant that serves Crisfield cuisine and would appeal to locals and tourists alike.

Janes Island State Park: Jane's Island State Park complements Crisfield's urban and open character. The Park offers forested park land for camping and small boat launching. A popular place, the Park must continue to strengthen its relationship with Crisfield as well as mutual marketing opportunities with the City.

Smith and Tangier Islands: The link to these outer islands is through Crisfield. Smith and Tangier Islands' culture and lifestyle should be experienced and their authenticity not diminished. The improved City Dock/Depot, with its shelters and updated wayfinding information, will strengthen and improve the link to Crisfield.

MAIN STREET BUILDING INVENTORY

Two characteristics contribute to the City's richness: history and diverse architecture. By enhancing the significant historic structures that are a source of community identity and pride, Crisfield will help reinforce the authentic character that makes it a destination attraction.

The need to provide a consistent Main Street character is essential to reinforcing the specific reasons why patrons, businesses, residents, and visitors select Crisfield over Somerset County and other regional towns. The "Main Street Building Inventory," shown on the right, strives to strengthen the pedestrian realm, street-level activity, and interest.

The inventory's intent is to identify buildings needing facade improvements. Cities undergoing revitalization often conceive façade improvement programs, which help owners improve their storefronts and buildings. The area's consistency has been summarized and the Plan's intentions include encouraging the City to initiate such a grant program.

Buildings in the inventory are identified by the degree to which they contribute to the pedestrian experience. For example, it is an unpleasant experience to walk past the old hotel building, located at 7th Avenue and MD 413. Conversely, the entire streetscape of downtown Main Street is comfortable and rewarding for pedestrians—decently detailed buildings feature shop windows for browsing and offer excellent street enclosure.

The four categories used to characterize the buildings along Main Street are as follows:

1. Strong Contributor—No Improvement Recommended.
2. Significant Contributor—Slight Facade Improvement Recommended.
3. Weak Contributor—Major Renovation Needed.
4. No Contribution—Reconstruction or New Construction Needed.

In regards to these buildings, the following strategies are recommended:

- Reinforce Main Street—both uptown and downtown—through rehabilitation of contributing, historically significant structures and redevelopment of vacant lots.

- Encourage the City to pursue the formation of a building façade improvement grant program that incorporates basic design guidelines for commercial and residential buildings.

In general, Downtown Main Street buildings require the least amount of intervention. Those buildings identified as renovation opportunities are primarily select opportunities, such as the Dollar General and Town Hall. These are areas where façade improvements are recommended to create ground floors that reflect nearby buildings of greater character.

Uptown Main Street has had more work performed to more of its buildings in past decades—some with little regard for the character of Crisfield. For example, the south/east side of MD 413 between 6th and 10th Streets contains several vacant lots and approximately 20 structures, only two of which are significant contributors to the streetscape and pedestrian realm. This means visitors to the City are not likely to want to park the car and walk Crisfield's main street. A building façade improvement grant program applied in this area would assist building owners in funding appropriately designed improvements that are consistent with the architecture of Crisfield's best buildings.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Concept Master Plan, along with other detailed illustrations and recommendations in this SRP, are intended to provide guidance to City officials in the review of proposed development. The degree that development projects are consistent with these recommendations should be a determining factor in decisions concerning height and density concessions and infrastructure considerations (e.g., sewer capacity allocation). In order to be effective, these design guidelines should be formalized and made a part of the City's development codes.

Establishing a design-based approach to development review will take time to accomplish. Ultimately, the City should adopt a "form based code" applicable to the entire City (see an example in Appendix D). In the short term, the City will need to put into place development code standards, review processes, and design guidelines that achieve the principles, policies, and objectives of the Crisfield Comprehensive Plan and the recommendations of the SRP. These interim provisions should include the recommended design guidelines contained herein. In addition, the SRP and the Comprehensive Plan recommend strengthening the City's ability to conduct design reviews by including appropriate design professionals in the review of projects (e.g., architects, landscape architects, and urban planners). Code provisions and design guidelines should:

Ensure strict enforcement of appearance and building codes to uphold and improve, as needed, the appearance and quality of existing development and buildings.

Protect the remaining public vistas of the water. The Town should protect public vistas through the zoning and development plan review process. In cases where waterfront development or redevelopment is planned, the project should provide for public vistas from points outside the project.

- Treat landscaping as an integral part of site planning and design to accentuate public and private spaces, contribute to community identity, prevent visual blight, buffer incompatible land uses, and improve the function of the natural environment.

- Ensure that measures are taken to protect adjacent or nearby waterfront industries.

- Create a downtown historic/entertainment district that accomplishes the following:

- Allows commercial, office/employment, live/work, civic, and residential uses in close horizontal proximity to each other and is vertically-integrated within the same building; and
- Permits mixed-uses (residential/commercial) redevelopment to encourage a downtown residential population, while maintaining ground floor space exclusively for commercial use.

❖ Promote compatible and historically sensitive commercial buildings and residential units. Design Guidelines should include illustrations that show and set standards for the following:

- Minimum percentage of glass frontage of commercial buildings;
- Size and placement of storefront awnings over sidewalks;
- Building configuration, building placement on the lot and building function;
- Concealment of flat roofs and rooftop mechanical equipment;
- Minimum and maximum build-to-lines;
- Allowable public frontages;
- Minimum lot frontage build out;
- Vertical orientation of windows and their placement on all exterior walls of buildings;
- Minimum and maximum lot widths;
- Minimum and maximum pitch of roofs, and, where applicable, the minimum and maximum base densities of residential units;
- General handicap accessibility standards for selected housing types;
- Landscaping and screening;
- Encroachment of stoops and porches into the depth of setbacks; and
- Exterior building materials.