



Economic Development Plan

Town of Elkton, Virginia

February 2010

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Master's of Public Administration Program

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Town of Elkton, VA

Economic Development Plan



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Introduction and Outline

It is my pleasure to submit this Economic Development Plan to the Town of Elkton's Economic Development Committee, Town Council, and Town Manger. I was contacted by Reid Wodicka, Town Manager, on July 23, 2009 to begin building a plan for the coordination between the Town of Elkton and James Madison University's Department of Political Science and Master's Degree in Public Administration Program to help develop, in partnership with the Town's Economic Development Committee, the Town's Economic Development Plan. This partnership was the first of a much larger partnership between James Madison University and the Town of Elkton through the Partners in Community Leadership Program.

A town's engagement in economic development is important as it should guide local policymakers and inform the public about issues relating to their local economy. Economists distinguish between the concepts of economic growth and economic development. Economic growth is simply an increase in the size of a local economy. Economic development requires that qualitative improvements occur. These improvements are oftentimes measured through quality of life studies. **Economic development in Elkton is defined as: *Elkton's policies and services for growing the local economy in order to enhance the quality of life of its citizens.***

Communities across the country engage in economic development. Many past economic development efforts have focused on either providing major tax breaks to entice businesses or on government provision of significant infrastructure projects towards targeting specific industries. The general outlook on economic development today focuses on a more balanced approach with an emphasis on long-term planning for a vital, sustainable community.

This report outlines research conducted from August 2009 to February 2010 for the creation of Elkton's Economic Development Plan. During the fall 2009 semester undergraduate and graduate students in PPA 483/PUAD 583 Urban Policy and Regionalism conducted field research which laid the foundation for this Development Plan. During the same time, Mr. Benjamin Craig was hired as an unpaid intern to serve as a liaison between James Madison University and the Town of Elkton.

The Economic Development Plan is outlined as follows:

- Section 1: *Present State, Recent History and Future Direction*
- Section 2: *Local and Regional Economy*
- Section 3: *Citizen Input: The Mailed Survey*
- Section 4: *SWOT Analysis and Focus Groups*
- Section 5: *Grant Opportunities*
- Section 6: *Downtown Vacant Property Identification and Recommendations*
- Section 7: *Recommendations*

Present State, Recent History and Future Direction

Elkton is a small town of approximately 2,626¹ residents located in west central Virginia. Nestled in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley and surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west, Elkton is proximal to numerous academic, commercial, and recreational gateways. Elkton's closest neighbor includes Harrisonburg, which is home to James Madison University, only 20 minutes to the west. Elkton is adjacent to a major highway thoroughfare, Interstate 81 by approximately 30 minutes. Other nearby hotspots include: Shenandoah National Park and the infamous Skyline Drive, Charlottesville (home to the University of Virginia, 1 hour east), Richmond (approximately 2 hours east) and Washington, DC (2 hours north). Elkton prides itself on being the first settlement in the Shenandoah Valley which stretches from Roanoke, Virginia to Martinsburg, West Virginia.

PRESENT STATE – Elkton's downtown is in dire need of a total revitalization as seen through the dilapidated buildings and empty store fronts.

RECENT HISTORY – As recent as the late 1990's and early 2000's Elkton's downtown area thrived thanks in large part to the Elkton Downtown Revitalization Corporation (EDRC) efforts. The Elkton Downtown Revitalization Corporation is a civic organization that offers relevant information to current and prospective business owners, organizes retail and special events, focuses media attention on the business district and promotes a positive image for the town of Elkton. The EDRC's main objectives are:

- Enhancing the visual quality of downtown by addressing all elements of the downtown environment - not just buildings and storefronts but also signs, public improvements, landscaping, merchandise displays and promotional materials.

- Creating and marketing a positive image of downtown to attract customers and investors by developing special events, festivals, retail sales promotions, a public relations strategy, and attractive graphic and media presentations.

¹ According to the US Census (2008).

-Strengthening downtown's existing economic assets and fulfills its broadest market potential by improving the competitiveness of downtown merchants, recruiting new businesses, identifying new anchors and converting unused space into housing, offices, or cultural facilities.

-Establishing consensus and cooperation by building long-term partnerships among all those who must work together to improve downtown - merchants, property owners, bankers, local officials, organizations and individuals.

The EDRC put on events such as the Chili Cook-off, St. Patty's Day window sales, concert series on the Town Hall lawn, landscaping projects, walking tours, and much more.²

In 2000 the Elkton Town Council budgeted \$25,000 to economic development efforts. Since that time, economic development efforts have taken a back seat to other projects. If the Town of Elkton is serious about economic development it will need to allocate funding in order to gain long-term value in its endeavors.

FUTURE DIRECTION – In order to revitalize Elkton's downtown district the town needs government support in efforts to attract new businesses to locate to the area. According to the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission's Demographic Forecasts for the Central Shenandoah Valley Region of Virginia produced in 2006, the region should anticipate a 31.4% increase in overall population by 2030 and a 38.9% increase in the number of households. Additionally, the region's fastest growing age cohort is forecast to be Age 65 and Over, with a projected increase of over 32,000, and growing to over 20 percent of the population by 2030³. Another important figure to consider is an increase of over 43,000, or 73.7%, in employment in both the Service and Wholesale / Retail Trade sectors. Attention to trends should be examined closely in order to develop the future and make economic development a long-term priority.

² http://rockingham.va.golookon.com/listings/elkton_downtown_revitalization.

³ Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission: <http://www.cspdc.org/>.

The Local and Regional Economy

Elkton's economy is comprised of a mixture of manufacturing, education, health and social services, construction, and retail trade industries. Manufacturing accounts for a third of the town's economy, while education, health and social services rank second at 15% and construction and retail trade each comprise 10% of the economy⁴. There are approximately 160 businesses currently operating in Elkton.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the median household income in Elkton in 2000 was \$35,556. It took those of working age, 16 or older, a mean travel time of 26 minutes to commute to work, with over 80% driving only themselves, while approximately 16% carpoled and the remaining used public transportation, walking, or worked from home. In 2000 Elkton had 1,082 people in the labor force. Based on the total 2000 population figure of 2,042 living in town, 1,592 residents were above the age of 16 which puts the percentage of Elktonians in the labor force at 68%. Thirty percent of Elkton residents in 2000 worked in the production, transportation, and material moving occupation industry, while 23% were involved in sales and office occupations, followed closely by management, professional, and related occupations, service, and construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, respectively.

Almost half of the town's population is comprised of residents between the ages of 25 and 54 years old. Approximately a third of the residents are under 24 and a fourth are over the age of 55. The gender is closely split evenly for both male and female residents, 47% male and 53% female. Almost 97% of residents are white, while African Americans come in at 3% of the total population, with a few residents of American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, or other race. Of all Elktonians in households 42% are single household owners, one-fifth have a spouse, and one quarter have children. The average household size is 2.34 and average family size is 2.86. Almost a third of households live with individuals under the age of 18, while one fifth of households live with individuals over 65.

Over 41% of Elkton residents graduated from high school, while over 28% did not receive a high school diploma. Only 13% earned an associate's, bachelors, or graduate or professional degree and 17% attended college but did not earn a degree.

⁴ www.census.gov.

Rockingham County's economy is quite diverse with agriculture playing a major role. Rockingham County is the leading agricultural county in Virginia by a wide margin and ranks in the top twenty in the nation in total livestock and poultry production. In addition, a thriving industrial and commercial base bolsters the county's economy⁵. Other major economic contributors in the county are Rockingham Memorial Hospital and James Madison University.

Similar to Elkton, almost half of the county's total population of 73,562 (2008) is comprised of those between the ages of 25 and 54.

Very similar to Elkton, the main occupations for those eligible to work include: management, professional, and related occupations at 29%; sales and office occupations at 22%; and production, transportation, and material moving occupations at 20% respectively. Other important industries to the county that are similar in importance to Elkton are: service and construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations. These industries represent 13% of the total workforce.

Prominent industries in the area include educational services, and health care and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, and construction. The following serve as a vital source of revenue for the regional economy: arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining; professional, scientific, and management; and administrative and waste management services.

According to the U.S. Census, Harrisonburg, Elkton's closest neighbor to the west as well as Rockingham County's largest city, consisted of 43,738 persons, or almost 60% of the entire county's population of 73,562 in 2008. Harrisonburg is the County seat and serves as an important education, industry, commercial, technology and government center⁶. The largest occupation sectors consist of management, professional, and related at 29%, sales and office at 23%, and service occupations at 20%. Relevant industries include: educational services, and health care and social assistance (28%), manufacturing (14%), retail trade (13%).

⁵ www.rockinghamcountyva.gov.

⁶ Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission: <http://www.cspdc.org/>.

Location Quotients

Policy analysts may want to know the “degree to which certain economic activities are concentrated in a certain region or, conversely, the degree to which a certain region is specialized in particular economic activities.”⁷ Location quotients are “used to measure the extent to which the contribution of one subgroup of economic actors (ie: an industry, occupational group) to a regional economy is greater or lesser than the contribution of that subgroup to a larger, reference economy (usually, the U.S).⁸ The reference area is usually the United States, but it “can also be a state or metropolitan area.”⁹ Location quotients are “among the simpler constructs used by regional scientists” in order to determine concentration or specialization of a particular industry in a region.¹⁰ Data on regional employment (at high levels of aggregation which points to a weakness in this approach) is readily available through the Bureau of Economic Analysis and was used for the current analysis.

Assumptions of Location Quotients¹¹:

1. Every region is self sufficient.
2. Every region has the same economic structure of the nation.
3. Demand or consumption patterns are constant across regions.
4. Income levels are constant across regions.
5. Labor productivity does not vary from region to region.
6. Each firm in an industry produces an identical product.¹²

Location quotients for a region are calculated for each industry (*i*) and for each year (*t*) as follows:

$$LQ_{it} = (RE_{it} / \sum RE_{it}) / (NE_{it}) / \sum NE_{it}$$

Where:

LQ_{it} = Location Quotient for region’s industry *i* in year *t*.

RE_{it} = Region’s Employment in industry *i* in year *t*.

$\sum RE_{it}$ = Region’s Employment in all industries in year *t*.

NE_{it} = National Employment in industry *i* in year *t*.

$\sum NE_{it}$ = National Employment in all industries in year *t*.

⁷ Higgins, B. and D. Savoie (1995). *Regional Development Theories and Their Application*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, pg.156.

⁸ Cortright, Joseph and Andrew Reamer. Socioeconomic Data for Understanding Your Economy: A User’s Guide. Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. #99-07-13791. 1998, pg. 8.

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, www.data.bls.gov/help/def/lq.htm.

¹⁰ Higgins and Savoie, pg. 156.

¹¹ Nourse, Hugh O. *Regional Economics: Economics Handbook Series*. McGraw Hill. 1968, pg. 151.

¹² McLean and Voytek, pg. 63.

The following steps are used to calculate location quotients for a specific industry in a specific region or location:

- 1) Calculate national employment in each industry;
- 2) Divide that number by total employment in the United States (This number yields the percentage of national employment devoted to each industry);
- 3) The ratio of employment in each industry is divided by total regional employment; and
- 4) The regional ratio is divided by the national ratio for each industry.

Location quotients greater than 1 indicates industries export from a region because the percentage of employment in the industry is greater in the region than for the nation. Any regional industry for which the location quotient is equal to or less than 1.0 is assumed to be a “local industry, producing the same as or less than what is required locally.”¹³ This is because the percentage of employment in the regional industry is less than in the nation. Location quotients falling between 0.75 and 1.25 “are probably producing amounts sufficient to meet local demand.”¹⁴

Location Quotients for the state of Virginia, Rockingham County, the City of Harrisonburg, and the Town of Elkton are displayed in Table 1 below. As revealed, Elkton’s highest concentration of employment (Location Quotient: 2.73) is in the manufacturing section. Other location quotients within Elkton greater than 1 are:

- a) Natural Resources and Mining,
- b) Construction, and
- c) Education and Health Services.

Location quotients within Elkton that are less than one, implying goods are imported rather than exported, are:

- a) Trade, Transportation and Utilities,
- b) Information,
- c) Financial Activities,
- d) Professional Business Services, and
- e) Leisure and Hospitality.

¹³ Drennan, Matthew. *Modeling Metropolitan Economics for Forecasting and Policy Analysis*. New York University Press: New York and London. 1985.

¹⁴ McLean, May and Kenneth Voytek. *Understanding Your Economy: Using Analysis to Guide Local Strategic Planning*. American Planning Association: Chicago. 1992, pg. 62.

Sectors with location quotients less than one could be targeted for future expansion. Another way of interpreting location quotients is that a community could in fact target industry expansion for an already established (exporting) industry. One recommendation could be that the town target businesses to compliment the already existing large manufacturing sector in the town as represented by the town's 2.73 Location Quotient for manufacturing. Further discussion will be presented in the recommendation section of this report.

	Virginia	Rockingham County	Harrisonburg	Elkton
BASE INDUSTRY: Total, All Industries	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Natural Resources and Mining	0.53	2.52	0.27	1.83
Construction	1.24	1.65	0.63	1.47
Manufacturing	0.81	2.76	1.34	2.73
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	0.96	0.78	1.15	0.55
Information	1.29	0.19	0.99	0.13
Financial Activities	0.90	0.46	0.62	0.34
Professional Business Services	1.33	0.30	0.68	0.57
Education and Health Services	0.83	0.59	1.16	1.34
Leisure and Hospitality	0.98	0.71	1.13	0.76
Other Services	1.11	0.58	0.70	0.59
Unclassified	0.66	n/a	n/a	n/a
	>1			
	<1			

Table 1: Location Quotients for Virginia, Rockingham County, Harrisonburg, and Elkton

Citizen Input: The Mailed Survey

Data Collection and Methods

An economic development survey was mailed to all residents within town limits in October 2009. The survey was enclosed within the *Elkton Essentials* monthly newsletter. Only one mailing was sent and residents had three weeks to return the survey. Approximately 1,201 surveys were mailed and 106 were returned for an 8.8% response rate. The low response rate can more than likely be attributed to 1) no prior advertising of the survey and 2) only one mailing with no follow-up or reminder via mail or telephone. The survey asked questions pertaining to government investment and funding, job creation strategies, changes needed to attract customers and visitors, just to name a few. Please refer to the appendix for survey instrument.

For most survey questions, respondents were asked to select their top three choices. In the case where only one or two selections were made for those questions, the remaining selection(s) went into the “missing” column.

Also included in the survey was a qualitative section aimed to gauge citizen input regarding their likes and dislikes of Elkton.

Demographic Information

Demographic information from respondents is revealed in Figures 1 through 5 below.

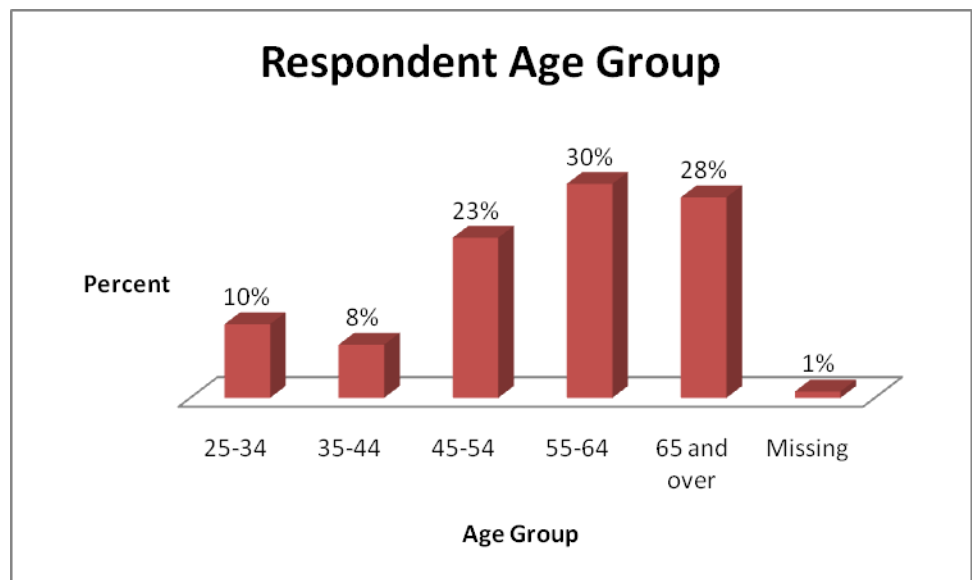


Figure 1: Respondent Age Group

The majority of respondents (30%) identified themselves as being in the 55-64 age group. 81% of respondents were greater than 45 years of age. This may introduce bias in the results as this is not reflective of the breakdown of Elkton's population.

56% of respondents identified themselves as female while 43% identified themselves as male (Figure 2).

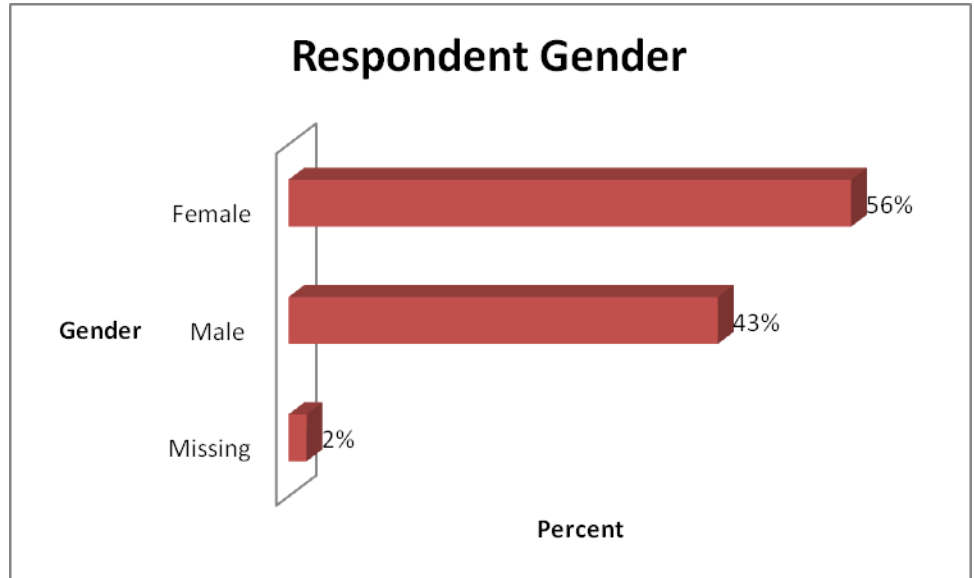


Figure 2: Respondent Gender

Figure 3 reveals that the largest majority of respondents (50%) reported having a two person household. The second largest response (28%) reported living alone. 20% of respondents identified their household containing 3 or more persons.

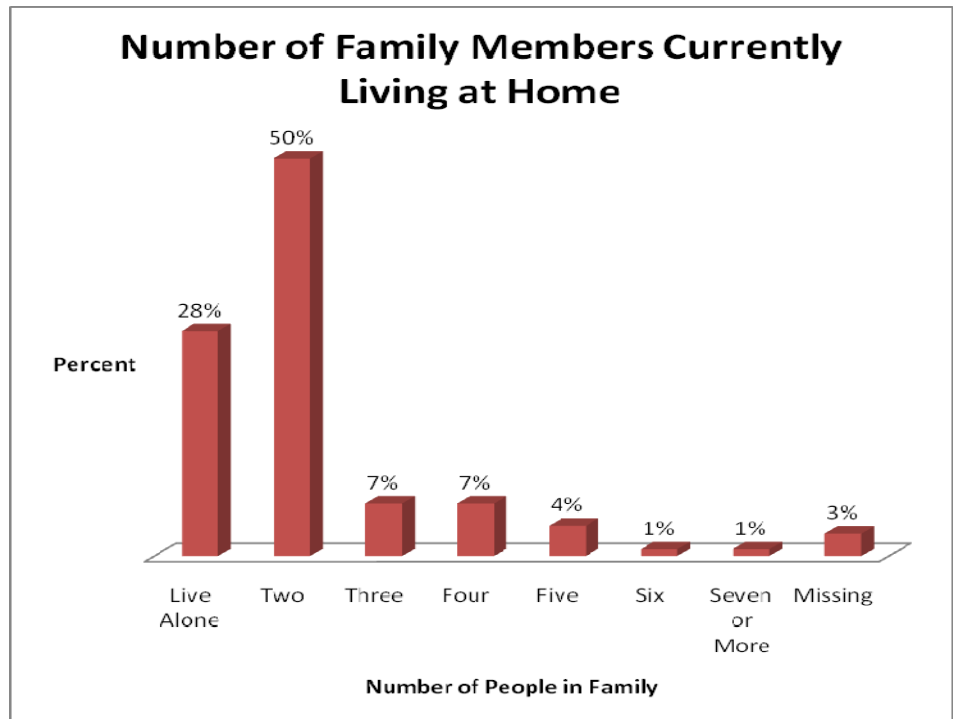


Figure 3: Number of Family Members Currently Living at Home

89% of respondents (Figure 4) own property in Elkton while 10% of respondents were renters.

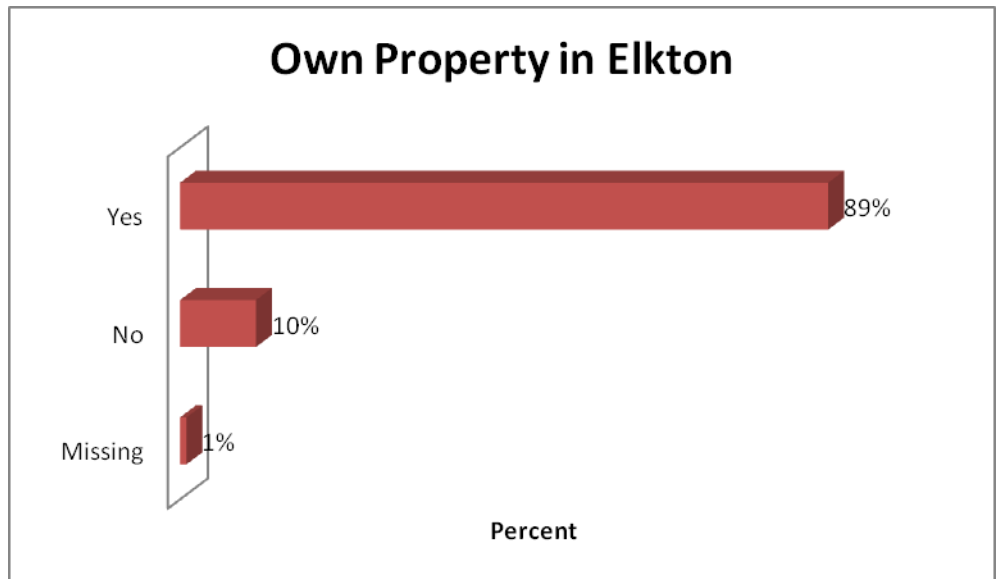


Figure 4: Own Property in Elkton

24% of respondents identified having lived in Elkton between 21-40 years while 23% identified 41 or more years. A very small percentage of respondents were new residents to the area.

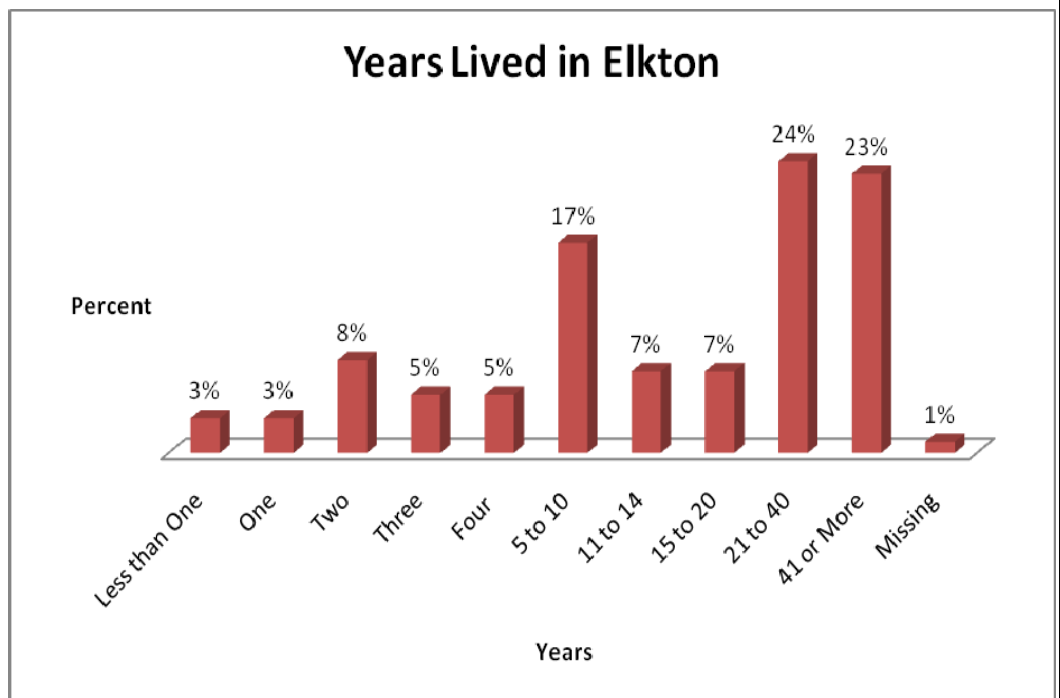


Figure 5: Years Lived in Elkton

Data Analysis

Redeveloping abandoned areas or areas in poor shape was most important to respondents when asked what types of investment by the state or local government would have the greatest impact in Elkton (Figure 6). Cleanup and beautifying streets and neighborhoods came in second, while an improvement of Elkton’s infrastructure was the third highest priority. Job training, loans, transportation alternatives, affordable

housing, and safety and security were secondary objectives for the townspeople. Other suggestions included: Hire locals to help renovate properties in town, no raise in taxes, bus connection

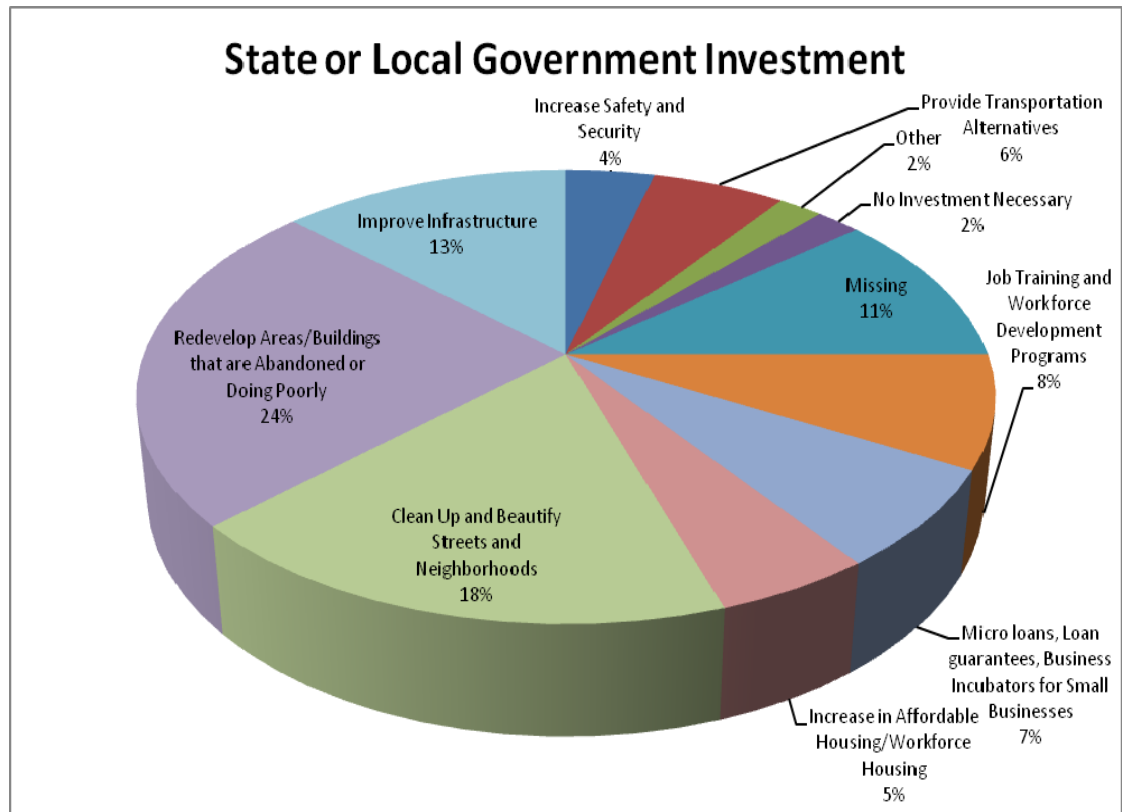


Figure 6: State or Local Government Investment

with Harrisonburg, and establish an identity of Elkton.

According to the survey, the majority of respondents prefer some type of financial incentive provided to businesses in order to create new jobs and foster economic development (Figure 7). Approximately one quarter of respondents would like to see state and local government financial incentives offered to businesses for the purpose of creating jobs. These incentives could entail helping business owners to rent or buy renovated properties with attractive rental rates or property prices. Fourteen percent of respondents want the state and local government to provide financial incentives to develop new businesses and industries. Thirteen percent of survey respondents would like to see economic

development fostered by promoting tourism, utilizing trade shows and advertisements. Eight percent of respondents want job training to improve worker skills in order to help create new jobs and spur economic development. Another 8% would like grants and loans provided to businesses for the purpose of advancing economic development. Cleaning up contaminated industrial sites and streamlining the permitting process were minor concerns. “Other” actions consisted of hosting athletic, cultural, and entertainment events, as well as building modern hotel facilities to take advantage of the surrounding natural resources and local industries. Two percent determined no action was necessary.

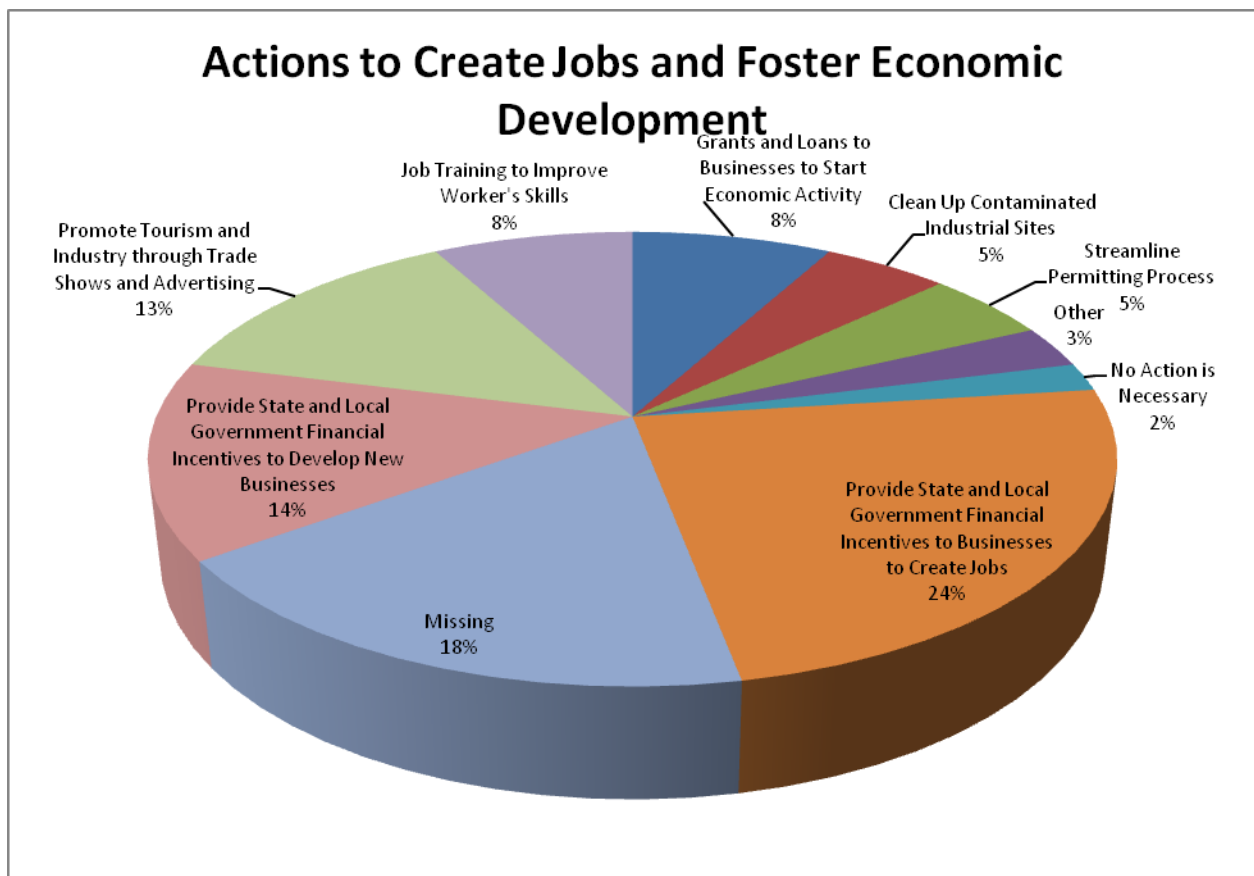


Figure 7: Actions to Create Jobs and Foster Economic Development

A majority of respondents indicated accommodations and food services would be beneficial forms of commercial development in Elkton (Figure 8). Arts, entertainment, and recreation as well as health care and social assistance were also among the top choices. Manufacturing was included among the most highly rated forms of development. Finance and insurance, and utilities received the least attention

from respondents as well as wholesale trade and information. The “Other” category highlighted the respondent’s urgency for retail trade and accommodations.

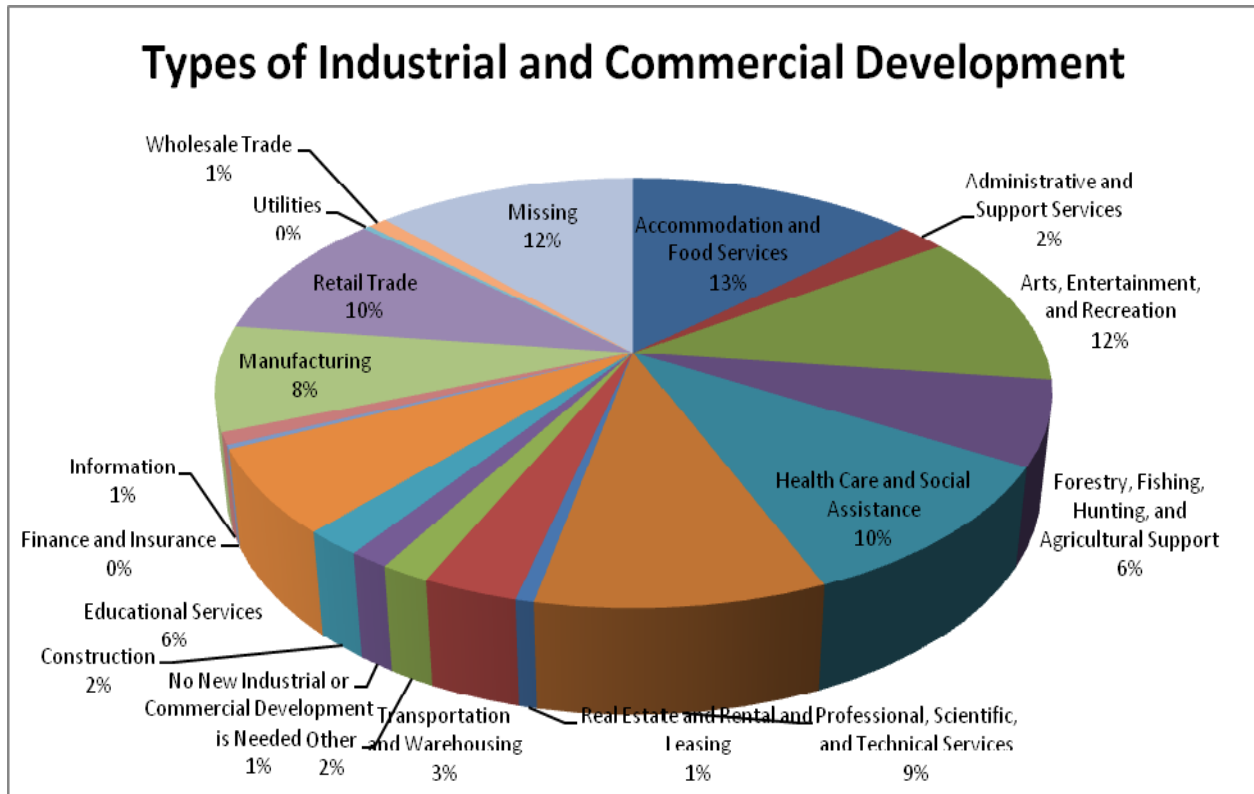


Figure 8: Types of Industrial and Commercial Development

Figure 9 below provides a breakdown of respondent preferences on the types of businesses Elkton should attract for economic development. Respondents were asked to choose up to three responses out of a selection of twenty-nine options. Response percentages were tallied based on the number of responses given for each of the twenty-nine options. From there, these options were consolidated into four major categories. Food and Food Service incorporated the response options: specialty foods, cafes/bistros/coffee shops, farmers’ market, grocery store/deli, and restaurants. Shopping included: bookstore/magazine shops, florist, appliances, jewelry, clothing/shoe stores, hardware, movie/video game rental, arts/crafts, electronics store, antiques/furniture, sporting goods, and office supplies. Service contains: banks/financial services, daycare services, personal services, professional offices, drug store/pharmacy, gym, photo developing and printing, and coin operated laundry. Tourism and lodging consists of: lodging/hotel/motel/bed & breakfast and museum/movie theater. Other and None were

separate options given for respondents. The remaining percentage was coded as missing values because respondents selected fewer than three choices.

Based on the categorical breakdown, Food and Food Services was the most popular category of business Elkton should attract specifically focusing on a farmers' market, grocery store or deli, and specialty foods. The shopping category ranked second with clothing and shoe stores, sporting goods, arts and crafts, appliances, and electronics garnering the most responses. Based on individual responses the singular most popular business choice was Lodging/Hotel/Motel/Bed & Breakfast, gaining 11.6% of responses, while Museum and Movie Theater gained 9.7% of responses, the second most. This suggests that Tourism and Lodging may be the preferred choice of Elkton citizens for the types of business and services that Elkton needs. The service category

acquired the least amount of
Town of Elkton Economic Development Plan

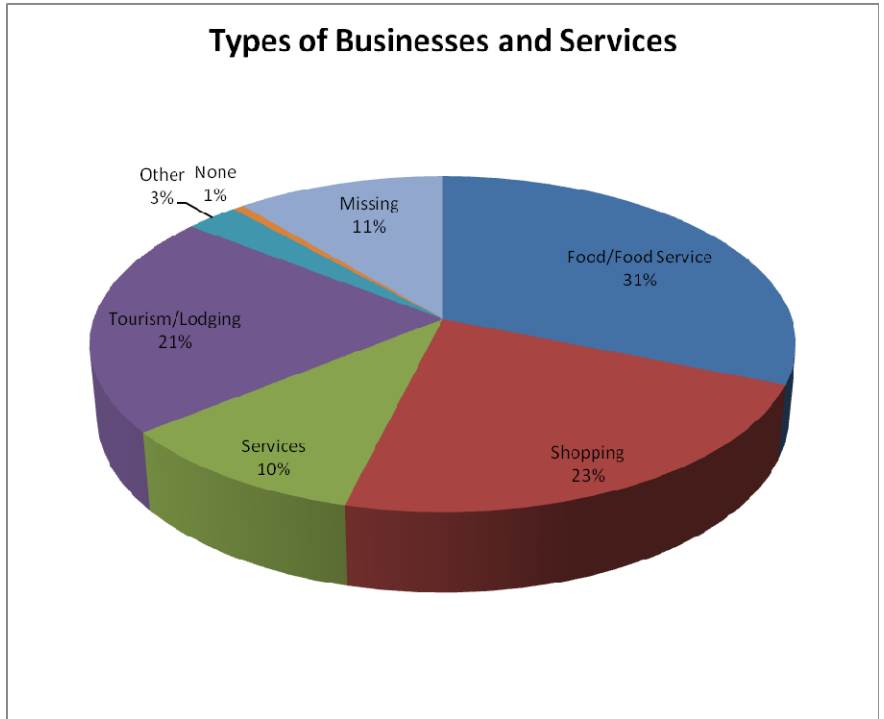


Figure 9: Types of Businesses and Services

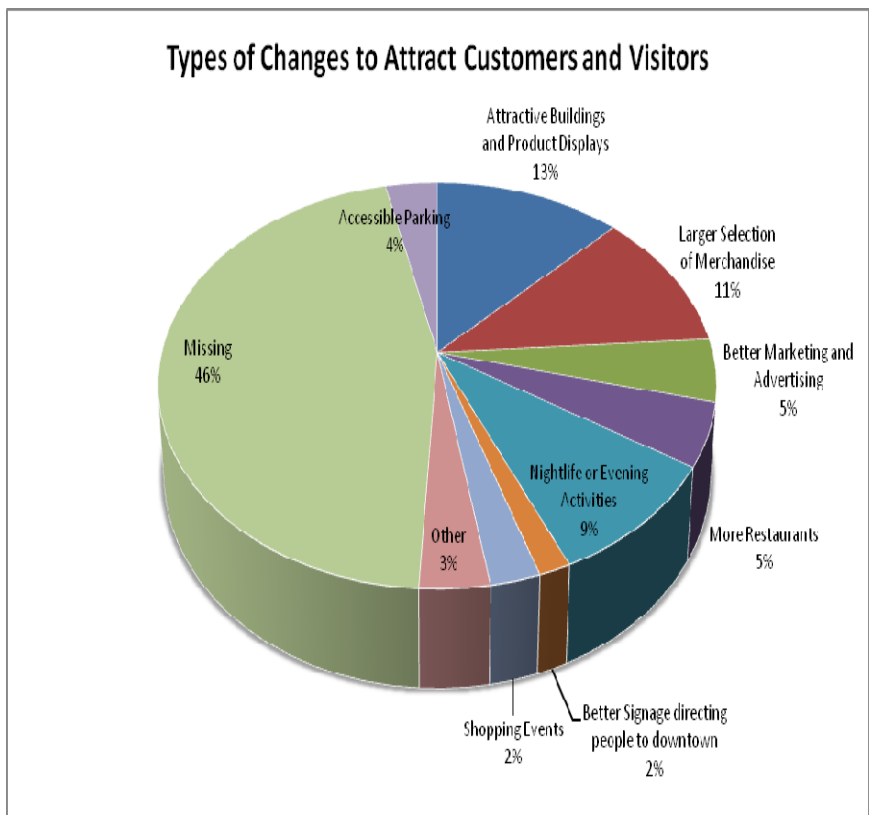


Figure 10: Types of Changes to Attract Customers and Visitors

attention; however, it is clear there is a desire for personal services, daycare services, and professional offices.

The citizens of Elkton have been looking for new ways of attracting visitors and customers to their town. Our survey gave them basic categories in which they could try to make this goal attainable. The number one response was for more attractive buildings and product displays (Figure 10). Elkton's lack of new and aesthetically pleasing buildings/attractions could have caused 13% of respondents to choose this category as a top priority. The second most popular selection was a larger selection of merchandise. Approximately 11% of respondents believe more recognizable stores with a wide variety of products will help bring shoppers to Elkton, while 9% would like to see more nightlife and evening activities in the area to attract customers and visitors. Better lighting and crosswalks for a more pedestrian-friendly downtown were additional responses.

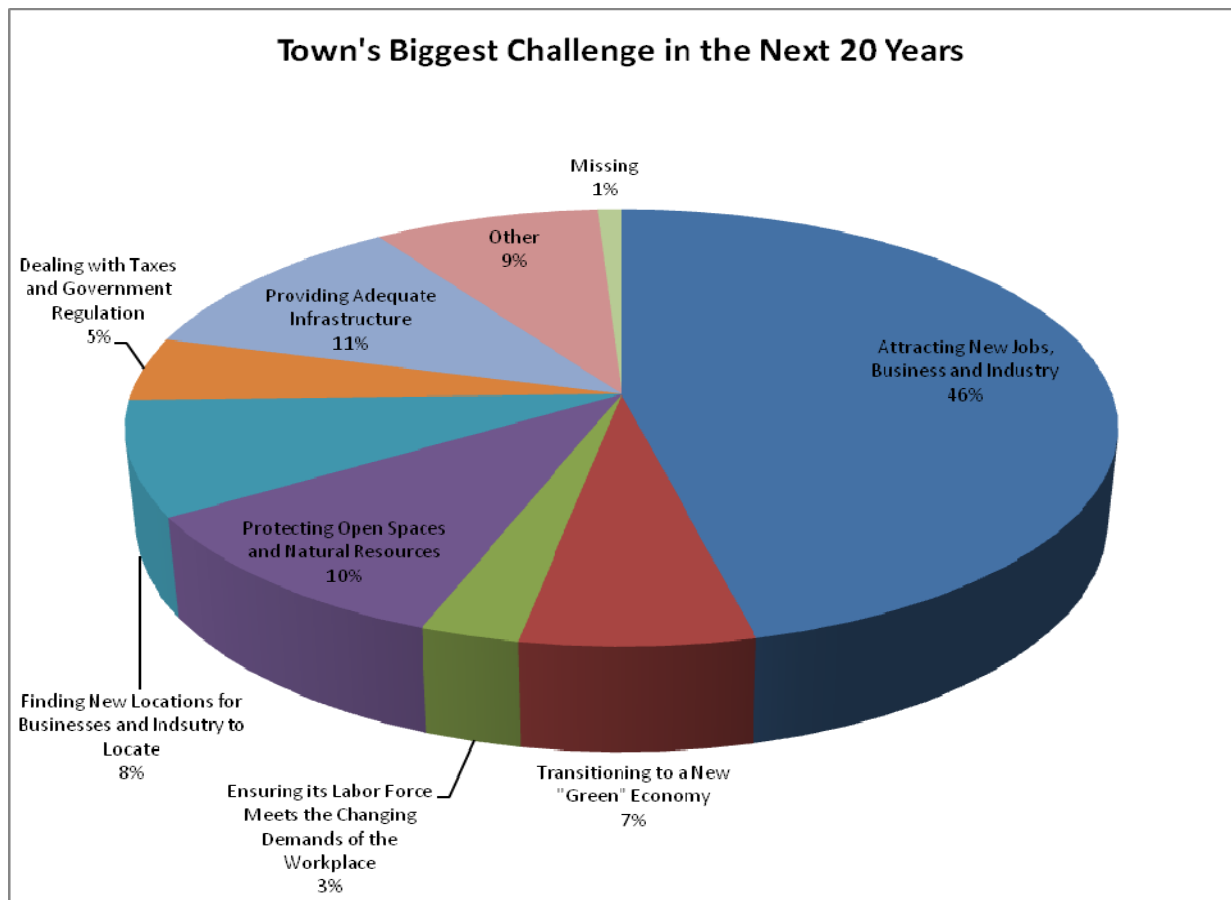


Figure 11: Town's Biggest Challenge in the Next 20 Years

According to almost half of the respondents (46%), over the next 20 years Elkton’s biggest challenge in regards to economic growth is attracting new jobs, businesses and industries (Figure 11). Providing adequate infrastructure was the next area of concern for 11% of respondents, followed closely by the need to preserve natural assets, 10%. Secondary potential challenges in the next 20 years were locating areas for new businesses, and transitioning to a new “green” economy. Changing Elkton’s overall image was a common theme in the “other” category.

The first open-ended question on the survey asked respondents to name what makes the Town of Elkton unique. The results revealed five major themes (Figure 12): Small Town Atmosphere, the

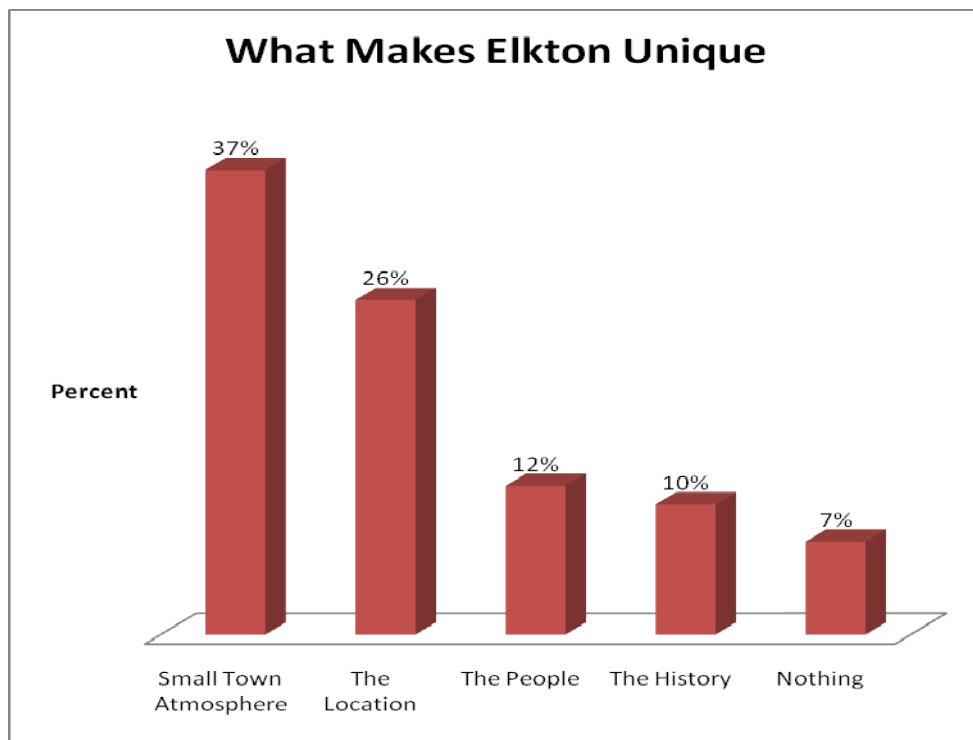


Figure 12: What Makes Elkton Unique

Location, the People, the History, or Nothing.

A total of 68 responses were recorded, and of that 63 of the responses fell into the above five categories. According to the results, the majority of respondents believe that the small town atmosphere makes Elkton unique.

This suggests that any economic

development in the area should build on the small town character of Elkton. The small town convenience, trust among neighbors and friends, proximity to cities, resorts, and natural resources , as well as the Appalachian cultural heritage that helps give character to the “oldest community in the valley” makes Elkton a unique place to live.

The second open-ended question on the survey asked respondents to name something they like about Elkton (Figure 13). Seventy-four respondents answered the question and sixty-three responses fell into the following categories: Small

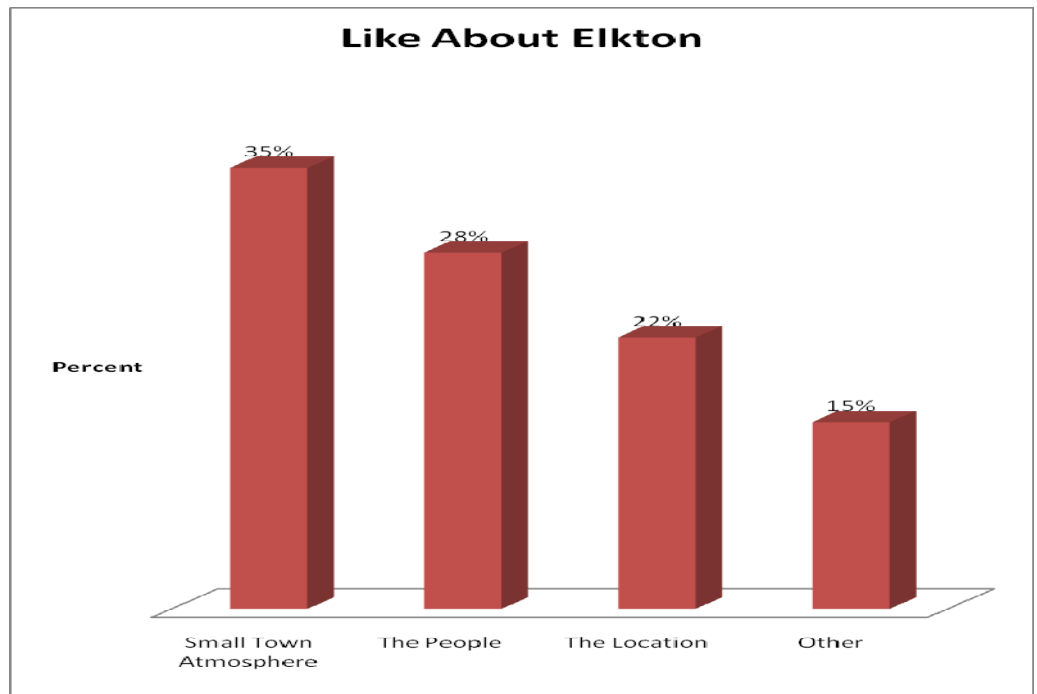


Figure 13: Like About Elkton

town atmosphere, the Location, the People and Other. The majority of respondents enjoy the quiet community and small town congeniality of Elkton and believe that the sense of community spirit among its people make Elkton a likeable town. The surrounding landscape, geographical location, and proximity to recreational areas, medical care, and universities are certainly likeable features of Elkton. The potential for growth and a new atmosphere of cooperation and civility that Mayor Bompiani and Town Manager Reid Wodicka proclaim was a common theme amongst the “Other” reason respondents like living in Elkton. Residents were also asked to list items they disliked about Elkton (Figure 14). To maintain enthusiasm and interest among the public, Elkton officials should consider these areas that are crippling the current state of the town. The dilapidated look of the town is an area that the majority of residents dislike about Elkton, closely followed by stagnation and political unrest. Residents believe that infrastructure problems and public friction tarnish the reputation of Elkton. Lack of entertainment, restaurants, and shops were also disliked by Elkton residents. The negative image and past reputation of the town portrayed via media outlets, high taxes and costs of living, and relinquishment of long-term businesses were “other” dislikes among respondents.

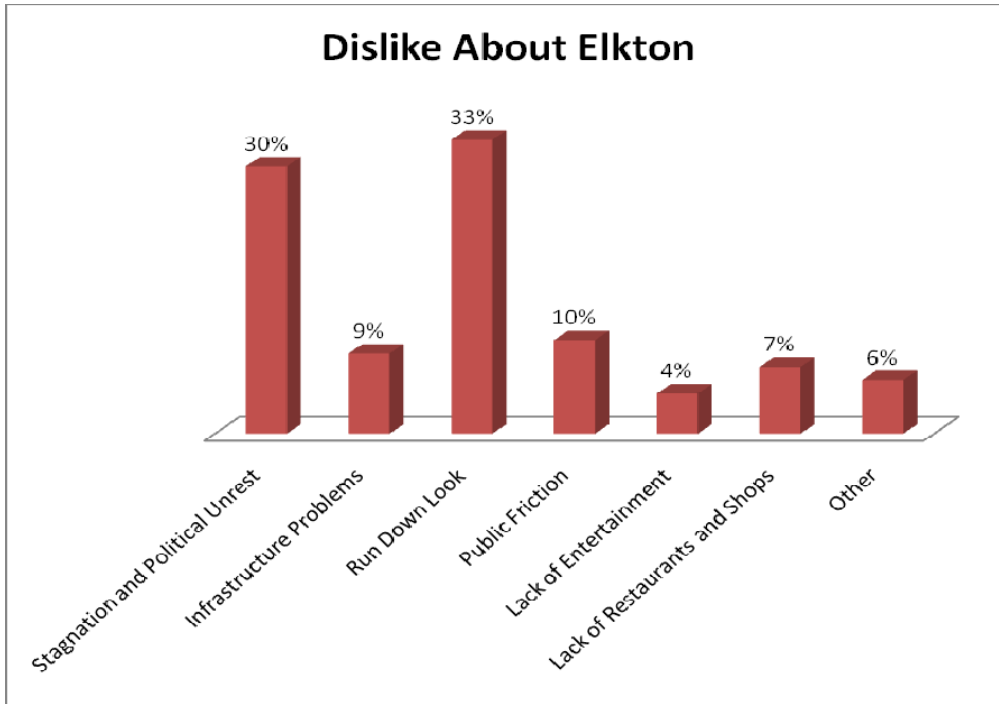


Figure 14: Dislike About Elkton

SWOT Analysis & Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held in Elkton, VA at the Elkton Area Community Center. The first session was held on November 7, 2009 from 9-10:30am while the second session was held on November 9th, 2009 from 6-8:30pm. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis¹⁵ was completed during each of these meetings to determine the residents' views of the internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/threats within and outside the Town. In addition, focus group meetings were held after the conclusion of the SWOT analysis.

A total of 14 area residents participated in the group sessions. All attendees were Caucasian and the estimated average age of the group was mid-to-upper 50's. The focus group sessions were primarily attended by local business owners, retirees, and residents that had moved or re-located to the Elkton community within the last 10 years. Questionnaires were sent to all community residents via the town's monthly newsletter. Residents were asked to complete the survey and confirm via e-mail their willingness to participate in a focus group session. Those willing to participate were contacted and scheduled to a group session.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis examines an entity's (ie: organization, town, etc) internal **S**trengths, internal **W**eaknesses, external **O**pportunities and external **T**hreats. Internal strengths and weaknesses can entail the following characteristics: marketing, finance and accounting, production and operations, research and development, computer information systems, etc. External opportunities and threats can include, economic, social, cultural, demographic and environmental, political, legal, governmental, technological, competitors, etc.

Prior to speaking with residents of Elkton, students from PPA 483/PUAD 583 conducted a SWOT analysis of the town which is provided in Table 2 below.

¹⁵ See Appendix for complete focus group meeting notes.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small town feel • Sense of community • Setting • Community Center • Proximity to I-81 and railroads • Historic character (“First settlement in the Valley”) • Civil War ties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to change • Crime rates • Physically run-down • Lack of Public Relations resources • Lack of economic base • Weak local economy • Location has a history of failure • Infrastructure problems (ie: water) • Image • Communication barriers • Lack of management decisions in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massanutten • Harrisonburg and JMU • Historical character • Proximity to Skyline Drive and Massanutten • Affordable housing • Shenandoah River • ID builders (festivals, farmers’ markets) • Civil War ties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massanutten and Harrisonburg growth (general expansion around Elkton) • Outsiders’ views of town • Realtors giving the town a bad image

Table 2: PPA 483/PUAD 583 SWOT Analysis

During the two Focus Groups, residents were asked various questions¹⁶ about the direction of the town, its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Through the two groups, many ideas arose, particularly in the "Strengths" section. It is clear that many residents think highly of Elkton and have a desire to work to improve the town. A number of points in each section overlapped with our group's SWOT Analysis, but many new ideas came up as well. Participant responses are summarized in Table 3 on the following page.

¹⁶ Refer to the Appendix for a list of general questions used throughout the focus group sessions.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting/ Aesthetics • Blue Oval Industries • Cheap offices and rental space • Work ethic of residents • Friendliness • Civic spirit • Residents active on town committees • Recreation, Parks, Rivers • Media presence • Diverse age groups • Job opportunities (Merck and Coors) • Easy to see tax dollars at work • Low tax rates • Local political improvements • Strong youthful base; educated young residents • Low crime • New Elementary and High Schools • History of town • Community Center • Wide variety of churches • Residents know each other; look out for each other • Shenandoah National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant stores downtown • Resistance to change • Lack of scenic bike trails, etc. • Lack of pedestrian access and bike lanes • Media presence • Odell Crawford Properties being held by U.S. Marshall's Office • Lack of apartments and housing complexes • Lack of retail variety • Prior Town Council • No activity or entertainment for youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massanutten • Skyline Drive • Outside use of town's resources • Apartment and housing construction • Mom and Pop shops • Kite House • Clean Coal Technology • Industries • Merck and Coors • JMU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massanutten • Outside use of resources (people come to use them, but don't spend money in town) • Outsider image of town • Outside competitors (Harrisonburg, big name retail and restaurant chains) • Unemployment

Table 3: Participant Responses from SWOT Analysis

Focus Groups¹⁷

Below is a recap of the common themes expressed in both focus group sessions:

- ❖ Town beautification and landscaping needs to be enhanced at the major town entry points. i.e.: Rt. 33/ Rt. 340.
 - Currently the entrance ways are not inviting to those outside of the area. Some basic landscaping attention could enhance initial appearances to outside tourists.
- ❖ Town Manager, Reid Wodicka is moving the town in the right direction. Frustration expressed at previous administrations and how the town is now perceived because of the previous administration's lack of unity and bickering.
- ❖ Some feel the image that the town currently portrays has been tarnished by local media attention and certain town residents.
 - Consensus was that the town could benefit by participating in or hosting community events to promote better community engagement and outreach to other nearby areas such as communities like Massanutten.
- ❖ Downtown redevelopment needs to be further explored to enhance the overall appearance of the community, in particular the Central Business District (i.e. Main Street USA Program).
- ❖ Participants felt that grant incentives should be explored as an enticement to new businesses locating to the area and to make improvements to existing businesses in the Central Business District.
- ❖ Dissatisfaction was shown towards businesses in the downtown area that do not keep posted store hours or that close earlier than others.
- ❖ The Kite House was mentioned several times as an opportunity for the town to capitalize on. It is a historic home with a rich history that is now owned by the town, yet has been abandoned and left to decay. There may be an opportunity to fix up the house for other uses.
- ❖ Code enforcement was mentioned as an issue. Either nothing is done or officials do not have the authority to do something (ie: fine delinquent property owners who are non-compliant or even go so far as condemn property, if necessary).
- ❖ Look to other communities with similar amenities as Elkton to see what they are doing to improve.

¹⁷ Please refer to the Appendix for listing of focus group rules and general questions.

- ❖ Better emphasis on the natural beauty of the area and positive attributes like the Civil War history of the area. Also, better capitalize upon natural resources like the Shenandoah River and Shenandoah National Park.

In conclusion, the Town of Elkton has numerous opportunities for economic development and growth. The focus group members felt that with the right guidance and positive reinforcement from the Town Manager and Town Council Members, business and tourism can be improved for the area.

Grant Opportunities

Grant opportunities to help Elkton's economic development initiatives were selected from a comprehensive review of several different internet search engines. Please refer to the CD with additional grant information including specific grant requirements, deadlines, applications, etc. You will notice the deadline for several of these grants has passed. However, most grants occur on an annualized basis.

GRANT: *Saving America's Treasures Grant*

- National Park Service Grant
 - Total Funding in 2009 was \$10 million
 - Application Deadline: May 22, 2009 (Occur on annualized basis)
 - Varying Matching Requirements
 - Grant may be used for rehabilitation or preservation projects for items of historical significance
-

GRANT: *11.300 Series Grants*

- Economic Development Authority
 - Economic Development Assistance Programs (EDAP)
 - Five Parts:
 1. Public Works Assistance
 2. Planning Support
 3. Economic Development Technical Assistance
 4. Adjustment Assistance
 5. Trade Assistance
-

GRANT: *Investments for Public Works and Economic Assistance*

- Economic Development Administration
- Total Funding: \$129.2 million
- Average Award: \$1.32 million
- Next Application Deadline: September 30, 2010
- Cost Sharing
 - Generally may not exceed 50 percent of total project cost
 - Economic hardship may allow for additional 30 percent
- Involves construction and rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and generation of private sector jobs

GRANT: *Economic Development Support for Planning Organizations*

- Economic Development Administration
- Total Amount Available: \$31 million
- No cap or minimum on investment
- Application process closes on September 30, 2010
- Cities, Counties, Townships, Non-Profits with 501 (c)(3) IRS status
- Funds are targeted towards development of Comprehensive Economic Strategies (CEDS)
- Grant awards are expected to be used for short term projects, or may be used for longer term projects for regional organizations (may be up to three year funding)

GRANT: *Economic Development Technical Assistance (11.303)*

- Economic Development Administration
- Total Amount Available: \$9.4 million, \$1.36 million available for local entities
- Average award amount in 2008: \$60,941

- Grant is intended to allow economically distressed regions to make optimal decisions regarding the local economy
-

GRANT: *Economic Development Adjustment Assistance (11.307)*

- \$35.3 million total available
 - Average Award in FY 2008: \$468,150
 - Provides assistance to areas experiencing economic hardships. Once special category under the 11.307 series is the base realignment and closure grant, which provides relief to areas experiencing economic hardships because of a base closure.
-

GRANT: *Economic Development Assistance Trade Grant*

- Total amount \$15.45 million
 - Funds may be used to create or reinforce existing cooperative agreements for investment activities
-

GRANT: *Hope VI Main Street Grant*

- Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Development Housing
 - Total Amount Available: \$4 million, award of \$1 million each
 - Application Deadline: January 20, 2010
 - Cost sharing of up to 5 percent
 - Purpose is to redevelop and preserve “Main Streets”
 - Allow for affordable housing in Main Street “central business” areas
 - Preservation of historical significance
-

GRANT: Assistance to Firefighter's Grant (AFG)

- Department of Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - Total Funding: \$507.4 million, \$2.75 million award ceiling
 - Estimated number of awards: 5,000
 - Designed to bring Fire Departments up to NFPA standards
 - Smallest areas only have to match 5 percent of total cost
-

GRANT: Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant

- Department of Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Total funding \$210 million, no award ceiling
- 200 estimated awards out of 4,000 to 5,000 applications
- Application period closes on December 18, 2009
- May be used for hiring firefighters or recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters

Downtown Vacant Property Identification and Recommendations

A comprehensive examination of businesses and business properties was conducted in order to gauge what services and industries the town currently has and to probe what services and industries the town needs. There are approximately 33 vacant properties and 156 current operating businesses in Elkton town limits. A breakdown of businesses by industrial category is provided in Table 4 below.¹⁸

Industry/ Business Category	Number of Elkton Businesses
Accommodation and Food Services	34
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8
Healthcare and Social Services	7
Professional, Scientific, and Technological Services	9
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3
Transportation and Warehousing	2
Construction	11
Finance and Insurance	12
Information	1
Manufacturing	1
Retail Trade	64
Utilities	4

Table 4: Industry/Business Category Breakdown

Pictures of all businesses and vacant properties were taken in order to create a database.

Below are 18 selected vacant properties along with potential business ideas based on the survey results and focus group discussions. Suggested businesses for particular properties were chosen based on neighboring businesses in an attempt to cluster like businesses in close proximity to each other, which is a method to increase sales and foot traffic.

¹⁸ Businesses were categorized by the North American Classification System

Property Location:

North Fifth Street

Property Characteristics:

- 6,900 square feet on two levels
- Prime downtown location along West Spotswood Trail and along train tracks
- “Pieces of the Valley” also located inside building
- Zoned for: Restaurant, Retail, or Warehouse



Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Arts/Crafts
- Coffee/Pasty shop
- Offices for personal services
- Specialty/Gift shop
- Restaurant

Property Location:

Abandoned House on West Spotswood Trail
(Formerly Conrad’s Store)

Property Characteristics:

- Spacious lawn

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Historic Landmark (requires renovation)
- Specialty/Gift shop and Welcome Center
- Farmers’ market
- Hotel (renovate existing structure as hotel lobby/offices and build rooms from there).



Property Location:

16562 East Washington Street

Property Characteristics:

- Prime location at the intersection of US-340 and US-33 at the entrance to Elkton

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Hotel
- Outdoor/Recreational sporting goods store
- Restaurant



Property Location:

212 West Spotswood Trail

Property Characteristics:

- Prime Downtown and Main Street location
- Spacious building with great potential

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Professional Offices
- Clothing store
- Bakery/Pastry Shop



Property Location:

415 West Spotswood Trail

Property Characteristics:

- Great location in the heart of downtown
- Excellent potential

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Movie Theater
- Performing Arts Center (possible JMU partnership)



Property Location:

191 West Spotswood Avenue

Property Characteristics:

- Wonderful downtown property
- Features updated siding, roof, and windows
- 1,725 square feet for retail use and an additional 2,000 square feet for residential use
- Space for a small outdoor patio

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Coffee shop/Internet cafe
- Deli/Restaurant
- Clothing/Shoe Store
- Arts/Crafts
- Personal Services



Property Location:

West Spotswood Avenue

Property Characteristics:

- Formerly Odell's Grocery Store
- Large facility
- Good location and ample parking

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Grocery store
- Youth Center
- Appliance store



Property Location:

106 West Spotswood Avenue

Property Characteristics:

- Prime Downtown Location
- Currently for sale by owner
- Adjacent to another antique shop
- Lawn area on side of building

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Café/Bistro
- Arts/Crafts
- Electronics



Property Location:

220 West Spotswood Trail

Property Characteristics:

- Formerly McGuire’s Groceries and Meats
- Currently for sale by owner
- Prime location: adjacent to Solace Studios and Elkton Area United States and adjoined by 191 West Spotswood Avenue



Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Specialty foods (bakery, butcher, fish market, etc)
- Arts/Crafts
- Clothing store

Property Location:

185 West Spotswood Avenue

Property Characteristics:

- Downtown location with front and side parking
- 1,200 square feet

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Office Supplies Store
- Coffee shop
- Bar/Pub
- Deli



Property Location:

14823 and 14825 Spotswood Trail
Elkton Food Lion Plaza, along US-33

Property Characteristics:

- Large, newer building
- 7,665 square feet of retail space
- Ample parking
- Located along US-33

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Appliance Store
 - Bowling Alley
 - Youth Center
 - Office Supply and Electronics Store
-



Property Location:

14807 Spotswood Trail,
Elkton Food Lion Plaza, along US-33

Property Characteristics:

- Newer building with expansive parking
- Formerly Farmers and Merchants Bank

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Lodging/Hotel
- Professional office using existing structure
- Personal Services using existing structure



Property Location:

The Kite House, along US-33

Property Characteristics:

- Stunning historical mansion
- Located on hundreds of undeveloped acres
- Currently owned by the Town of Elkton

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Reception hall/ Conference Center
 - Bed and Breakfast
 - Museum
 - Restaurant
-



Property Location:

304 West Spotswood Trail

Property Characteristics:

- Former Downey and Veith Optometrists
- Adjacent to professional office building

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Professional Offices
- Personal Services



Property Location:

406 West Spotswood Trail, Suites B and C

Property Characteristics:

- Two suites within the same building

Potential Opportunities for this

Property:

- Daycare
- Youth Center
- Professional Offices
- Personal Services



Property Location:

Shen Elk Plaza, Suites 110-170

Property Characteristics:

- Newer building
- Ample parking
- Just past downtown on US-340

Potential Opportunities for this Property

- Offices
- Retail: Clothing, Shoe store, Office Supplies
- Daycare
- Grocery Store/Deli



Property Location:

150 South Eastside Highway

Property Characteristics:

- Newer building
- Attached to Liberty Gas Station
- Former Furniture and Gifts store

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Outdoor Recreational Sporting Goods Store
- Grocery Store/Pharmacy



Property Location:

411 West Spotswood Trail

Property Characteristics:

- Connected to Theater

Potential Opportunities for this Property:

- Ice Cream Parlor
- Coffee Shop
- Arcade



Recommendations

Goal 1: HIRE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR to carry out the following:

- **Proper code enforcement:** Code enforcement should be handled by someone impartial and unbiased. Code enforcement should not be handled by someone with strong ties to the interests of community residents. An economic development director can either handle code enforcement him/her self or ensure proper regulation of the town's codes. Management and council should not interfere in the regulation of enacted codes.
- **Develop/Implement marketing plan:** This plan would focus on the town's Strengths and Opportunities. Elkton could be advertised via social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook.
- **Business Recruiting:** The Economic Development staff would have the responsibility of targeting specific business sectors to locate/relocate within the Town of Elkton. Site trips to business headquarters, participation in trade shows, etc. Business enticements, such as reduced rental rates, property tax abatements, etc. would have to be considered. The town may also consider decreasing user fees/startup costs for new businesses.
- **Grant Writing:** The Economic Development staff would have the responsibility of reviewing grants available and applying for those grants on an annualized basis. Implementation and oversight of grant awards would be run through the newly created Office of Economic Development.
- **Business Clustering:** Bunch similar stores together. Method worked in town before and vendors showed an increase in sales. Similar stores should range from high to low end in product quality and provide a wide variety of merchandise
- **Create a Business Directory and List of Available Properties (maintain on Town website) :** Provide location, zoning information, pictures, financial costs, etc. of each property online.

Goal 2: REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN to include the following:

- **Beautification:**
 - **Grants:** Apply for federal/state level grants to help revitalize downtown Elkton. See grant CD.
 - **Community Day:** Have 2-3 days per year devoted to cleaning up Elkton (downtown, parks, etc). The town could have local businesses sponsor the event. Encourage businesses or civic groups to Adopt a Highway.
 - **More crosswalks:** Make the downtown area more pedestrian-friendly. More foot-traffic should increase sales.

- **Better Lighting:** Make the downtown area safer and pedestrian-friendly.
- **Underground utilities:** Utility lines detract from the beautiful scenery and back drop. Town could pay for reconnect fees.
- **Infrastructure improvements:** Continue to apply for state/federal grants to improve current water/sewer infrastructure.
- **Passenger Rail/Freight Station:** Rebuild a freight station in downtown. Elkton could be a stop for visitors along a passenger rail route. Get businesses involved. See Shenandoah train excursion article from the November 12, 2009 issue of the *Valley Banner*.
- **Museums:** Focus attention and build upon the town's heritage and history. Potential focal points are:
 - Civil War (Conrad's Store/the Municipal Building, etc)
 - Patsy Cline
 - Appalachia
 - Moonshine
- **Businesses/Shopping:**
 - **Lodging :** Provide lodging in Elkton which could attract visitors from Skyline Drive and Massanutten, visiting workers associated with Merck and Coors, and those attending events at East Rockingham High School and Elementary Schools.
 - **Clothing/Shoe Stores:** Allow local residents to shop within the town. Also could be attraction for Massanutten visitors.
 - **Movie Theater:** Revitalize former movie theater. Potential attraction for youth, current residents, and Massanutten visitors.
 - **Performing Arts Theater:** Convert former movie theater into a performing arts center/auditorium that could be used for plays, events, etc. Could form a partnership with James Madison University and/or Eastern Mennonite University.
 - **Farmers' Market:** Build near downtown district, or possibly on open land behind Conrad's Store. By supporting locally grown produce and meats, you are making an investment in your community and increasing economic opportunities. Farmers' market

should be developed by the local government with cooperation from county extension leaders and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.¹⁹

- **Grocery Store/Deli:** Many residents complained of the monopoly Food Lion holds and the long lines at checkout. Provide locally grown produce and meats. Possibly a Co-op.
- **Specialty Foods** (Bakery, butcher, fish market, etc): There is a need for diversity among food opportunities within the town. Specialty foods will attract visitors and local residents.
- **Drive-In Movie Theater:** Take a step back in time and enjoy a movie under the stars from the privacy and comfort of your own vehicle. A drive-in movie theater is a great way to attract tourists visiting Massanutten and Skyline Drive, local and regional residents, as well as college students. See Hull's Drive-In located in Lexington, VA²⁰ or Goochland Drive-In in Sandy Hook, VA.²¹

Goal 3: EXPAND CURRENT PARTNERSHIP IN COMMUNITY LEADER'S PROGRAM WITH JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

- Offer one or two year fellowships to James Madison University graduate students. This offers students an opportunity to participate in a long-term project while providing the town with labor at a reduced rate by not having to pay benefits associated with full-time employment.

Goal 4: PARTNER WITH MASSANUTTEN

- **Focus on what you can/could offer Massanutten tourists and residents such as:**
 - **Wine Tastings:** Vineyards are allowed five off-site (off-farm) vending permits. Partner with a local vineyard and hold wine tastings downtown. Would be an added asset to have it in a newly renovated Conrad's Store which depicts the Appalachian culture and Civil War history in Elkton. Offer incentives to businesses to stay open during wine tasting events, which typically occur after working hours.
 - **Concerts:** Provide local and folk musical entertainment (on Town Hall lawn, on open space of Conrad's Store, alongside the river, the Community Center, etc.) during the summer months every Friday or weekend night. Focus on music unique to the area and family oriented.
 - **Shopping**
 - **Movie Theater**

¹⁹ For guidance on how to establish and build a farmer's market, see: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/aac/pubs/aec/aec77/aec77.pdf>¹⁹

²⁰ <http://www.hulldrivein.com/>.

²¹ <http://www.goochlanddriveintheater.com/>.

- **Museum**
- **Coffee Shops (Internet café):** Massanutten and Shenandoah National Park visitors, as well as local residents, would enjoy free internet access while enjoying a cup of coffee or pastry.
- **Ice Skating:** Offer an outdoor ice skating rink downtown. Offer free lessons. Charge a small admission fee which includes skate rentals. Show receipt from local restaurant to receive a discount on a special night. Make available for private parties.²²
- **River Walk:** Expand on the natural beauty and resources in your backyard and build an eco-friendly walking path alongside the Shenandoah River.
- **Bike Paths:** Build bike paths around Elkton, specifically near the Shenandoah River and countryside, in an attempt to sell the natural beauty of the area to visitors. Make sure bike paths connect with downtown or trails begin at a downtown site with ample parking.
- **Advertise** opportunities and events in Elkton with *The Villager*.

Goal 5: DEVELOP A POSITIVE IMAGE/MEDIA CAMPAIGN:

- Hold **community forums** to determine needs/complaints of citizens
- Have various **town committees/civic organizations work together**
- Try to **put politics and one's own agenda(s) aside:** Work together for the betterment of the town.
- **Better signage:** Direct visitors from US-33 via accommodation/recreation/entertainment signage, as well as Civil War and other historical markers.
- **Hold community events** such as:
 - **Athletic events:** Partner with new high school to host regional/statewide traveling athletic tournament teams
 - **Concerts**
 - **Downtown business sales**
- Help shape Elkton's image and **keep media informed of:**
 - **Economic development efforts**

²² For information on Raleigh, North Carolina's outdoor ice skating facility, see: http://www.godowntownraleigh.com/raleighwinterfest/general_info.htm.

- **Community events**
- Projects associated with **JMU partnership**

Goal 6: FOCUS ON STRENGTHS and OPPORTUNITIES OF TOWN

- **The Kite House:** Focus on historical and aesthetic value of the Kite House. Potential uses: reception hall/conference center; Bed and Breakfast; Museum; and restaurant.
- **Partner with local schools:** Incentivize youth to spend time and money in town (ie: youth night at various businesses and restaurants). Partner with Elementary School to have “traveling shop” where students can purchase goods for their friends and family members during the holiday season. Goods would be provided by local merchants.
- **Community Center:** Expand current services. Offer more youth programs.
- **Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park:** Advertise Elkton as a place for tourists to come spend the day/afternoon/evening. Develop advertising brochure/offer coupons to bring people into area businesses.
- **Shenandoah River:** Hold community events. Build picnic areas to include BBQ area, volleyball, boating, fishing, horse shoe pits, etc.

Goal 7: TRACK QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS (could be partnership between JMU, but expense would be involved)

- Survey residents on yearly basis to measure their satisfaction with town;
- Track certain variables (crime, infant mortality, traffic congestion, commute time, annual household income, education level, etc) over time;
- Tie progress to budget;
- Incentivize progress/efficiencies; and
- Hold annual Quality of Life Conference. Could be conducted by JMU faculty, but sponsored by Town and local businesses.

Appendix

1. Press Release
2. Survey Instrument
3. Economic Development Survey Results
4. Focus Group/SWOT Meeting Notes (Saturday, November 7th, 2009)
5. Focus Group/SWOT Meeting Notes (Monday, November 9th, 2009)
6. Focus Group Ground Rules and General Questions

Inaugural Partnership

Partners in Community Leadership

Town of Elkton and James Madison University's Master of Public Administration Program

for

The Town of Elkton's Economic and Community Development Plan

Plan Description

This inaugural agreement of Elkton's Partners in Community Leadership program is designed to provide a mutual benefit both to the Town of Elkton and to the students of James Madison University's Master of Public Administration program. This partnership will provide the students in the program an opportunity to work in a practical environment developing an economic development plan for a small municipality, providing a positive outside-the-classroom experience for students and professional expertise to members of the Elkton community. *Major Objectives*



- To provide students a practical experience working with elected and appointed local government leaders
- To provide the Town of Elkton the exposure to the professional expertise housed in the students and faculty at JMU
- To help build and encourage future innovative partnerships between JMU and the Town of Elkton

Major Activities

Students in the Urban Policy and Regionalism course will work with elected and appointed official and volunteers working with the Economic and Community Development Committee to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the local economy.

Members of the Elkton community will provide information to the students regarding the business needs of the community and will provide a positive and supportive working environment.

Responsible Members

Rick Workman

Elkton Town Council Member
Chair of Economic and Community Development

Reid A. Wodicka

Town Manager
Elkton, Virginia

Dr. Gary Kirk

Program Coordinator
JMU Master of Public Administration program

Dr. Nicholas Swartz

Assistant Professor
JMU Master of Public Administration program

The Town of Elkton, VA
Economic Development Survey

The Town of Elkton’s Economic Development Committee would like to ask you, a property owner and/or resident of the Town of Elkton, to complete the survey below in relation to your opinion regarding the Town’s future as it relates to Economic Development. Please follow the specific directions in each item below. Should you have specific questions please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Nicholas Swartz at Intern@townofelkton.com. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire.

1. What types of investment by the state or local government do you feel would have the greatest impact in Elkton? (Choose up to 3 answers)

- Job training and workforce development programs
- Micro loans, loan guarantees, business incubators for small businesses
- Increase in affordable housing/workforce housing
- Clean up and beautify streets and neighborhoods
- Redevelop areas/buildings that are abandoned or doing poorly
- Improve infrastructure
- Increase safety and security
- Provide transportation alternatives (ie: mass transit, bicycles, walking paths)
- Other (please specify) _____
- No investment by State or local government is necessary

2. Which of the following actions do you think are most important to create jobs and foster economic development? (Choose up to 3 answers)

- Grants and loans to businesses to start economic activity
- Job training to improve worker's skills
- Provide state and local government financial incentives to existing businesses/industries to create new jobs (i.e. tax breaks, rebates, abatements)
- Promote tourism through trade shows and advertising
- Financial incentives for businesses to create jobs
- Promote industry through trade shows
- Clean up contaminated industrial sites
- Streamline permitting process and cut government “Red Tape”
- Provide state and local government financial incentives to develop new businesses/industries (i.e. tax breaks, rebates, abatements)
- Other (please specify) _____
- No further action is necessary

3. What type(s) of industrial/commercial development would you like to see in Elkton? (Choose up to 3 answers)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation and Food Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative and Support Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance and Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Agriculture Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care and Social Assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation and Warehousing | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale Trade |

- Other (please specify) _____
- No new industrial or commercial development is needed

4. In your opinion, what kind of businesses and services does Elkton need? (Choose up to 3 answers)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookstore/magazine shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers' market |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty Foods (bakery, butcher, fish market, pastry shop, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Florist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cafes, bistros, coffee shops | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics store |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances (refrigerator, stove/oven, air conditioner, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Grocery store/deli |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lodging/Hotel/Motel/Bed & Breakfast | <input type="checkbox"/> Antiques and Furniture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Store/Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing/Shoe stores | <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting Goods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banks, credit unions, mortgage brokers, other financial services | <input type="checkbox"/> Gym |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hardware (painting, floor covering, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movie/video game store or rental | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo developing and printing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts/Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare services | <input type="checkbox"/> Coin Operated Laundry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museum, Movie Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal services (ie: tailor, hair salon, barber shop, nail salon, tanning salon, dry cleaning, shoe repair) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional offices (doctors, lawyers, dentists, insurance, real estate, etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | |

5. What changes could be made to attract customers and visitors to Elkton? (Choose one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible parking | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractive buildings and product displays |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nightlife or evening activities | <input type="checkbox"/> More restaurants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Larger selection of merchandise | <input type="checkbox"/> Better marketing and advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better signage directing people to downtown | <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping events (ie: sidewalk sales) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | |

6. As you think about the future of Elkton and its economic growth, what is the town's biggest challenge in the next 20 years? (Choose one)

- Attracting new jobs, business and industry
- Transitioning to a New "Green" Economy
- Ensuring its labor force meets the changing demands of the work place
- Protecting open spaces and natural resources
- Finding new locations for businesses and industry to locate
- Dealing with taxes and government regulation
- Providing adequate Infrastructure
- Other (please specify) _____

7. What do you feel makes Elkton unique?

8. What is one thing you like about Elkton?

9. What is one thing you dislike about Elkton?

10. How long have you lived in Elkton? *(Choose one)*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 11-14 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-40 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 or more years |

11. What is your age group? *(Choose one)*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and over |

12. Are you Male or Female? *(Choose one)*

- Male Female

13. How many people who are in your family currently live with you at your home? *(Choose one answer)*

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Five |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Six |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four | |

14. Do you own property in Elkton? *(Choose one)*

- Yes No

15. The researchers would like to conduct focus group interviews with residents of The Town of Elkton to further discuss the issue of Elkton's Economic Development. Are you interested in participating in one of our focus groups in the very near future? *(Choose one)*

- Yes

(If yes, please e-mail Dr. Nicholas Swartz at Intern@townofelkton.com with your name and phone number)

- No
-

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!
PLEASE PLACE IT IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND MAIL IT WITHIN ONE WEEK.**

Economic Development Survey Results

State or Local Government Investment	Percent
Job Training and workforce development programs	8.5
Micro loans, loan guarantees, business incubators for small businesses	7.2
Increase in affordable housing/workforce housing	4.7
Clean up and beautify streets and neighborhoods	18.2
Redevelop areas/buildings that are abandoned or doing poorly	23.9
Improve infrastructure	13.2
Increase safety and security	3.8
Provide transportation alternatives (ie: mass transit, bicycles, walking paths)	6
Other	1.9
No investment by State or local government necessary	1.6
*Missing	11

Actions to Create Jobs and Foster Economic Development	Percent
Grants and Loans to businesses to start economic activity	8.2
Job training to improve worker's skills	8.5
Provide state and local gvt financial incentives to existing businesses to create jobs	13.8
Promote tourisms through trade shows and advertising	11.6
Financial incentives for businesses to create jobs	10.4
Promote industry through trade shows	1.3
Clean up contaminated industrial sites	5
Streamline permitting process and cut government "Red Tape"	5
Provide state and local gvt financial incentives to develop new businesses/industries	14.2
Other	2.5
No further action is necessary	1.6
* Missing	17.9

Types of Industrial or Commercial Development	Percent
Accommodation and Food Services	13.2
Administrative and Support Services	2.2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	11.6
Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Agriculture Support	6.3
Health Care and Social Assistance	10.4
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9.4
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.6
Transportation and Warehousing	3.1
Other	1.6

No new industrial or commercial development is needed	1.3
Construction	1.9
Educational Services	6.3
Finance and Insurance	0.3
Information	0.9
Manufacturing	7.9
Retail Trade	9.7
Utilities	0.3
Wholesale Trade	0.9
* Missing	12

Types of Businesses and Services Elkton Needs	Percent
Bookstore/magazine shop	0.6
Specialty Foods (bakery, butcher, fish market, pastry shop, etc.)	7.2
Cafes, bistros, coffee shops	1.6
Appliances (refrigerator, stove/oven, air conditioner, etc.)	1.6
Lodging/Hotel/Motel/Bed & Breakfast	11.6
Jewelry	0.6
Clothing/Shoe stores	10.1
Banks, credit unions, mortgage brokers, other financial services	0.6
Hardware (painting, floor covering, etc.)	0
Movie/video game store or rental	0.9
Arts/Crafts	2.2
Daycare services	2.2
Museum, Movie Theater	9.7
Personal services (ie: tailor, hair salon, barber shop, nail salon, training salon, etc.)	3.5
Professional offices (doctors, lawyers dentists, insurance, real estate, etc.)	1.9
Other	2.8
None	0.6
Farmers' market	8.8
Florist	0
Electronics store	1.6
Grocery store/deli	8.5
Antiques and Furniture	0.3
Drug Store/ Pharmacy	0.6
Sporting Goods	2.8
Gym	0.6
Office Supplies	1.9
Photo developing and printing	0.6
Restaurants	5

Coin Operated Laundry	0.3
* Missing	11

Types of Changes to Attract Customers and Visitors	Percent
Accessible parking	3.5
Nightlife or evening activities	9.4
Larger selection of merchandise	11.3
Better signage directing people to downtown	1.6
Other	3.5
Attractive buildings and product displays	12.6
More restaurants	5
Better marketing and advertising	5
Shopping events (ie: sidewalk sales)	2.5
* Missing	45.6

Town's Biggest Challenge in next 20 years	Percent
Attracting new jobs, business and industry	46.2
Transitioning to a New "Green" Economy	6.6
Ensuring its labor force meets the changing demands of the work place	2.8
Protecting open spaces and natural resources	10.4
Finding new locations for businesses and industry to locate	8.5
Dealing with taxes and government regulation	4.7
Providing adequate Infrastructure	11.3
Other	8.5
* Missing	0.9

* Missing: Residents were asked to select their top 3 choices. The missing category reflects the number of responses where either only one or two selections were made.

Focus Group Meeting Notes
Saturday, November 7th 2009
9 – 10:30am
Elkton Area Community Center; Council Chambers

Attendees:

Paul Simmons
Jeanne Ford
Jim Berg

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Beauty of town surroundings
- Great Elementary School (well run, dedicated teachers)
- New Elementary School
- Wide variety of churches
- Residents know each other and feel comfortable calling each other for help; connections.
- Places along the river
- Community feel
- History
- Shenandoah National Park
- Community Center

Weaknesses:

- Prior town council
- Lack of leadership
- Resistance to change
- No activity, entertainment for youth

Opportunities:

- Tap into Skyline Drive and Massanutten
- Private businesses
- JMU

Threats:

- Outside competitors such as Harrisonburg and big-name retail and restaurant chains
- Unemployment

Discussion Questions

How does the town attract visitors based on the surrounding natural beauty?

Too many restaurants; they come and go too often.

Need more small businesses to locate in the vacant downtown buildings: Clothing, Appliances, Furniture.

Train station was a popular passenger stop, however the railroad declined to maintain the station and thus was torn down.

Need new focused vision for the town.

New leadership.

Most residents do not want change.

Community Center now stands on what once was a Levi manufacturing building. Elkton McDonald's had one of the largest grand openings in Virginia.

Look at Golden, Colorado (located near Coors plant) for example of how to work with major manufacturers. Elkton has two established major manufacturers: Coors and Merck.

Elkton Pharmacy is not well stocked and prescriptions take too long to fill; have to make two trips.

Residents do not know what businesses are here. Ex: attendee did not know Elkton has a Dry Cleaners (Bear Home Style Laundry).

Previous Mayor is giving bad rap to current Mayor and Town Council.

Current Town Manager is doing a good job, yet is still being attacked.

Reid and Town Council are friendly and receptive to the residents.

Reid's door should be open at all times.

Town should focus on beautifying the area, such as investing in the Mainstreet Program. Utility poles should be moved underground. Rebuild/restore/condemn run-down buildings. Conrad's store is crumbling. Develop Odell Crawford's properties. Emphasize the town's history via shops, restaurants, etc.

No police presence and no common sense. Ex: Odells Grocery was a major drug outfit which was operating next to the Police Station. Police looked the other way.

Would it be possible for investors to buy a block in downtown and revitalize? How does the town attract investors? – Auction; Property tax abatement.

Focus Group Meeting Notes
Monday, November 9th 2009
6 – 7:30pm
Elkton Area Community Center; Council Chambers

Attendees:

Rick Workman
Nancy Coffman
Jon Duman
Rena Nadeau
Dianne Johnson
Barbara Polin
Bill & Joan Judd
Bobbie Ann Davis
Ted Hayes
Charlotte Shifflett
Alex Wiatt

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Setting
- Blue Oval Industries
- Cheap office and retail space prices
- Work ethic of residents
- Friendliness of community
- Civic spirit; many residents are on town committees
- Recreation, Parks, and River
- Media presence
- Diverse age groups
- Aesthetic appeal of Town
- Job opportunities; especially at Merck and Coors
- Can see your tax dollars at work (versus a large city)
- Low tax rates
- Improvement in local politics
- Strong youthful base; educated young residents
- Low crime
- New High School and Elementary School
- History
- Community Center

Weaknesses:

- Vacant store fronts in downtown
- Unwillingness to change
- Lack of scenic bike trails, etc.
- Lack of pedestrian access and bike lanes; no shoulders on road
- Media presence
- Odell Crawford properties being held by US Marshalls Office
- Lack of apartments and other housing complexes
- Lack of retail variety

Opportunities:

- Massanutten
- Outside use of town's resources
- Apartment and housing construction
- Mom & Pop shops
- Kite House
- Clean Coal Technology
- Industries
- Merck & Coors

Threats:

- Massanutten
- Outside use of resources (people come to use them, but don't spend money in town)
- Outsiders image of the town

Discussion Questions

Town Manager is moving town in the right direction.

Bad image of town due to media.

Buildings should be modernized while focusing first on "usability". Simply beautify existing properties, do not tear down.

Provide incentives for businesses to open.

Solace Studios is doing very well. Recently held an open house and advertised even in the Daily News Record, public radio, and Massanutten. Has a tack map indicating visitor's hometowns in shop. The tack map shows that 75% of her visitors are tourists.

Town needs to help promote businesses, such as the Bed & Breakfast.

Stores need to remain open during store hours. Having stores remain open helps other stores.

Nancy's Party & Things: 80% of customers are within a 40 mile radius. Ceased advertising in Massanutten due to low turnout from that area.

Appearance brings people into a town.

Kite House for weddings and receptions was a big draw.

Town has a very successful recycling center. It is amazing that the center takes a wide variety of materials.

Problems enticing businesses to locate to Elkton: Inability of current owners to sell (only want to rent); Lowering the pro-rate was not a problem; Odell properties are in the hands of the US Marshall's Office; Town has difficulty with code enforcement.

Elkton Downtown Revitalization Committee (EDRC) was subsidized with Town and Merck.

T21 Grant: Electric lines underground, trees along roadside, sidewalks. Plans were drawn and made, funding was turned down.

Clean up the streets: weeds, invest in street sweeper, paint curbs yellow. Town needs to do its part in this effort.

Ordinances have no teeth, no consequences.

Tax rate is very low which is a draw for young families.

Town received \$55,000 in food taxes from Ciro's Pizza.

Businesses the Attendees want to see in town (either to draw tourists or for 'selfish' reasons)

- Antique Shops (ie: a cluster of them in a row)
- Clothing
- Office Supplies
- Kite House (restaurant, host events)
- Café Bistro / Outdoor eatery
- Hotel (x 3)
- Steak & Ale
- Upscale Restaurant
- Bakery

Focus Group Ground Rules and General Questions:

Meet & Greet Intro:

Ground Rules:

Speak one at a time.

Speak for yourself, not what others believe or might think.

Differing opinions are to be expected and that is OK!

How long have you lived in Elkton?

1. What do you feel are the essential building blocks for a successful economy?
i.e. Jobs, Industry, Quality of Life, Natural Environment, Infrastructure-streets, water, sewer, Education
2. What building blocks are present in Elkton?
3. What building blocks are missing in Elkton?
4. What types of business or industries are needed or desired in Elkton?
5. How can Elkton better use its assets to stimulate economic growth?
6. What remedies would you suggest to minimize or eliminate Elkton's economic weaknesses?
7. What strategies would you suggest for Elkton to use in attracting or obtaining the businesses you describe earlier?
8. What do you see as road blocks for the Town of Elkton?