

MD. Dept. of Natural Resources  
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QUESTIONS  
INFORMATION CENTER

# Snow Hill Waterfront Redevelopment

MD. Dept.

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1982  
pt.1



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# Snow Hill Waterfront Redevelopment Study

June 1982

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INDEX

	page
Introduction	1
Reconnaissance	3
Goals and Objectives	5
Ideas Workshop	6
Development Concepts	8
Implementation Program	12
Key Development Projects	16

Appendix (separate volume)

- A - Questionnaire and Results
- B - Market Analysis
- C - Development Costs and Funding
- D - Draft Waterfront Ordinance

## INTRODUCTION

Snow Hill, the Worcester County Seat, has a population of 2200, with little change over the past 2 decades. Founded in 1642, the town was originally an important port for the Eastern Shore, trading tobacco, cypress and agricultural products in return for rum, sugar and manufactured goods from the Northeastern colonies. During the nineteenth century rail transport replaced shipping as the primary means of transportation, followed in the twentieth century by road haulage. As a result, the importance of Snow Hill's waterfront declined until the 1970's, when it consisted of many dilapidated warehouses, blighted residences and an atmosphere of decay which began to affect the adjacent downtown. At this point, a group of interested citizens formed the Snow Hill Economic Development Corporation (SHEDCO) and together with the town, purchased the majority of waterfront land from Washington Street to Water. In addition, the city had earlier created Byrd Park on the waterfront to the west, from an old landfill area. Thus approximately 2200 feet of waterfront from Washington to the western town limits is under public or quasi-public control. SHEDCO and the town have cleared waterfront property adjacent to downtown, except for some old grain silos. They have also moved one building, now housing the U.S. Agricultural Extension Office, and constructed another small office terrace on Bank Street.

During the 1970's, revitalization efforts concentrated on the downtown with proposals for new housing and major streetscape improvements. Stores continued to close, however, until at present approximately 30 stores remain. There appears to have been a halt to this decline, partly as a result of SHEDCO's efforts, and partly as a result of more aggressive promotion and marketing. Other individuals are also involved in promotion of Snow Hill, primarily as a tourist center, using the Julia Purnell museum, the nearby historic Nassawango Iron Furnace, and the Pocomoke River itself as major attractions. The river is navigable from the Chesapeake to a point 6 miles upstream from Snow Hill, and in the vicinity of the town boast some magnificent cypress stands, mostly on the north bank. The preservation of these is assured by Maryland wetlands legislation and forms an important element in promoting the visual and environmental attraction of the town waterfront.

The purpose of this study is to examine opportunities for development of the waterfront, in order to take advantage of some of the most valuable real estate in the area, and also to support the downtown. The elements of the study have included interviews with key citizens, the distribution of an attitude survey, field surveys of existing constraints and opportunities, a series of public meetings, the coordination of goals and objectives statements, a brief market analysis, and the preparation of alternative design concepts.

The study area extends from Washington Street to the West side of Byrd Park, and from the river to Market Street with the exception of the downtown commercial area.

A preferred development strategy has evolved, although it is only fair to say that the limited market for any development at this time has constrained the range of possible options. Part I of this report deals with the Development Plan, while Part II includes Implementation steps, costs and funding mechanisms.

### RECONNAISSANCE

Background analysis for the study was conducted through examination of existing official documents, field surveys, discussion with several key citizens and merchants, and questionnaires. The following observations appear to be pertinent:

- The waterfront comprises approximately 40 acres from Washington Street to Byrd Park. It is broken down as follows:
  - Downtown Waterfront (Washington to Water Street) 13.9 acres. Of this, some 8.5 acres lies between Willow Street and the river and is largely vacant, save for 2 small office buildings and the library. Approximately 4.5 acres of this is owned by SHEDCO. 2 acres are owned by the town and the remaining 5.4 acres is occupied by housing.
  - Private Waterfront (Water St. to Byrd Park) 7.4 acres. This land lies between Market St. and the river, and is occupied by substantial houses on Market St., including the Purnell Museum.
  - Byrd Park Area comprises some 18.7 acres, including approximately 16.6 acres in the park itself. The remainder of land on Dighton Street is occupied by housing.

- Much of the property lies within the 100-year flood plain, and drainage of the site is poor, particularly behind concrete bulkheads in the downtown area.
- Old wooden bulkheads mark the edge of the downtown waterfront. These are gradually to be replaced under a bulkhead grant from DNR. 94 feet will be constructed this year.
- The area between Market and Willow Streets/Water and Church Streets is primarily residential, much of it in poor condition, reportedly due to disinterest by landlords. Buildings are typically one and two story frame construction with wood or tarpaper siding. There are several larger lots fronting on Green Street with more substantial houses, and some vacant land. The area appears ripe for rehabilitation.
- Streets serving both the downtown area and Byrd Park area are in poor repair. Access to the waterfront is currently from River, Bank, Commerce and Church Streets. The River Street intersection with Washington poses a potential traffic hazard to traffic coming off the river bridge.
- The area has adequate water supply. Some combined storm/sanitary sewers appear to discharge overflows into the river. Present sewage treatment capacity is at a maximum until new equipment comes on line later in 1982. There should be no constraint on development in the 1980's. Sewage mains link the downtown to the Cypress Avenue plant.
- From a marketing standpoint, the waterfront is highly visible from the Route 12 approach from Salisbury, as well as from the river bridge. The old grain silos which have been retained at the foot of Church Street are a landmark.
- Views from the site are spectacular looking down the river from the silos and from Byrd Park.
- There are a number of historic buildings adjacent to the site, and three within the site itself. These stand on the southwest corners of Green/Commerce, Market/Church, and Market/Water, respectively. The last is the Julia Purnell Museum. A historic district has been proposed for the downtown which includes most of the developed blocks in and adjacent to the site, but no vacant land.
- Byrd Park appears to be well utilized by citizens. It has a ball-diamond, tennis courts, picnic areas and a boat launch.

#### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

During the course of the study, we interviewed a number of citizens, merchants, property owners and city officials to determine at first hand some of the problems and issues with respect to the waterfront.

As a result of these interviews, a series of Goals and Objectives were identified for both downtown and the waterfront. These were presented to the steering committee and citizens and formed the basis for subsequent planning efforts.

The following list of Goals/Objectives were adopted, having been identified through discussion with a broad cross-section of citizens, merchants and city officials:

1. Support CBD revitalization by attracting new businesses.
2. Increase tourism.
3. Encourage more active use of the river for recreational purposes (fishing, boating) of Snow Hill in conjunction with regional tourism/recreational attractions.
4. Promote Snow Hill's CBD and waterfront better, especially outside the town.
5. Encourage a greater variety of house-types, including apartments and townhouses in Snow Hill.
6. Respect natural environment of the Pocomoke and historic character of Snow Hill.
7. Improve visual impression of the waterfront and town approaches.
8. Concentrate development in areas where water and sewer are available.
9. Encourage Snow Hill's role as the County seat and with a full complement of community services.
10. Encourage local arts and crafts production and sales.
11. Foster pedestrian linkages between key downtown facilities including library, museum, Sturgis and Byrd Park.



### IDEAS WORKSHOP

As a result of both the key-person interviews and the questionnaire responses,\* a checklist of development and revitalization ideas was circulated among participants at a community meeting held in early April, 1982. The ideas were divided into two broad groups:

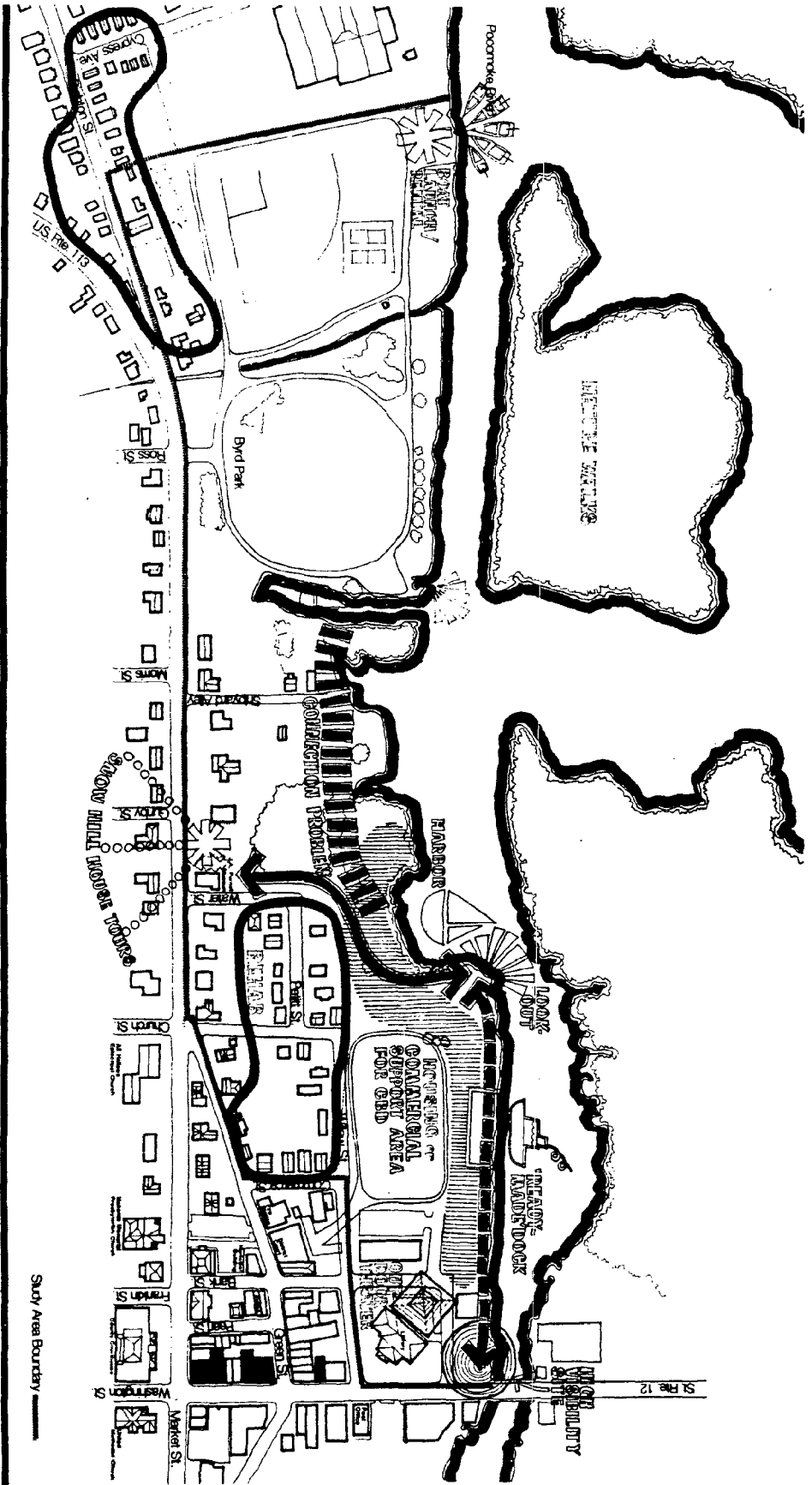
- A. Investment/High Cost Improvements
- B. Temporary/Low Cost Opportunities

The workshop discussed each of the ideas and suggested others, and the complete list is contained in Appendix B to this report. The group was then asked to vote and comment on its preferences. Among the "Investment"-type improvements, those which received a high rating included:

- Waterfront townhouses surrounding a harbor at the foot of Water Street
- A new Antique business
- A mini-mall in the former Dollar-General Store
- A new restaurant catering to tourists (in an existing house)
- A waterfront inn, (converted from an older house)
- A new county liquor store

There appeared to be little support for more professional office space, and mixed reactions to the closure of Bank Street, and creation of a plaza near the library.

\* See Appendix B



**Snow Hill**  
Waterfall Development Plan  
**OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

- Correction needed
- Work not completed
- System Correction
- Waterfront Land
- Potential Parks
- Key Attraction
- Key Development Site
- Vacant Sites
- View

WRPA  
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Among the "Low Cost" ideas the following were favored:

- An information kiosk for tourists
- Direction signs to Snow Hill from regional highways
- A regular series of open air fairs or markets
- A waterfront bandstand and flags on the Promenade
- An artists' workshop
- Bed and Board houses in the town
- Tree planting sponsored by citizens and merchants
- Boating and fishing rentals
- A general Snow Hill promotional brochure

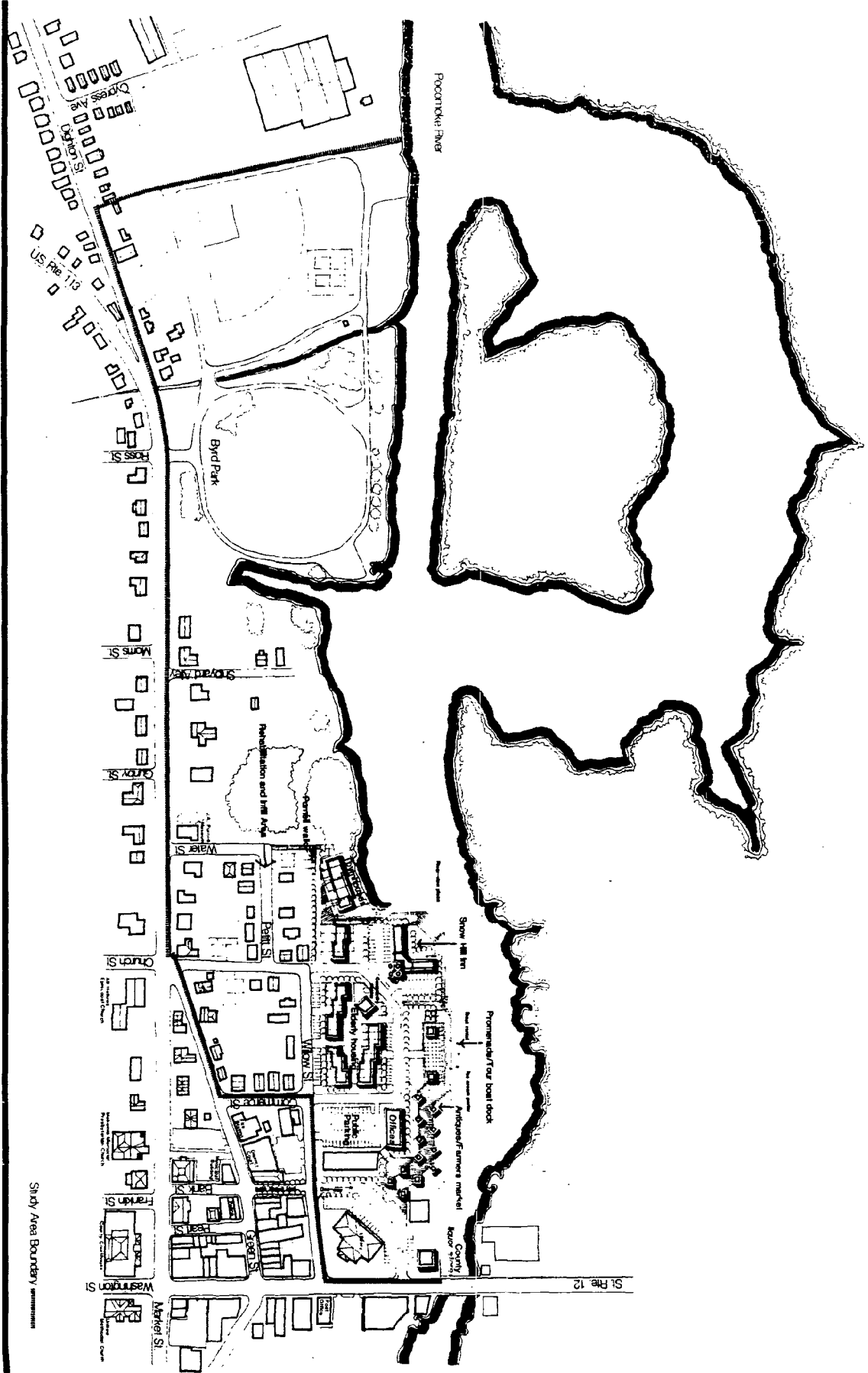
There was no concensus, or little support, for ideas such as a storefront repainting program or an ice-cream stand.

#### DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

Our analysis of the waterfront properties and their current and potential activities led to the preliminary conclusion that there are three distinct sectors to be considered:

1. The downtown waterfront (from Washington to Water Street)
2. The private waterfront (from Water Street to Byrd Park)
3. Byrd Park itself.

These three areas are distinguished as much by their unique problems as by the fact that the private waterfront which separates Byrd Park from Downtown is unlikely to be opened for public access in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the functional character of each area is different. Byrd Park serves the community in its active recreational pursuits. The Downtown waterfront has broader tourist implications serving the region, and there are few reasons, if any, to connect it to Byrd Park. For this reason we have treated the Downtown area and Byrd Park separately and we have dealt with the future of the private waterfront in a more general, long-term fashion. The importance of the Downtown waterfront is reflected in the greater level of detail in which it is treated.

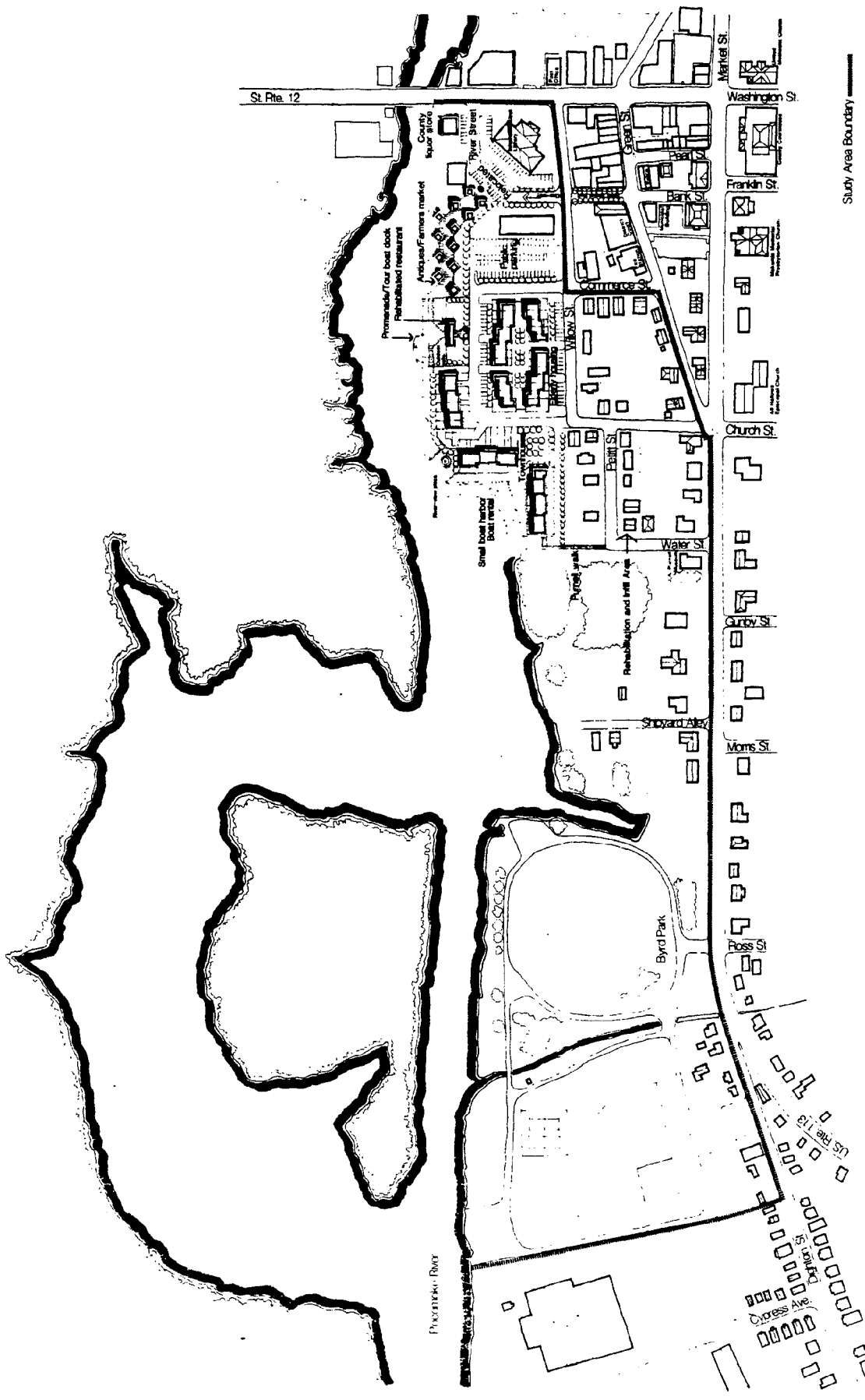


**Snow Hill**  
 Waterfront Development Plan  
**CONCEPT 1**  
 "Tourism" Plan



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Study Area Boundary



**Snow Hill**  
Waterfront Development Plan

**CONCEPT 2**  
"Housing" Plan

Study Area Boundary

### Downtown Area Concepts

In view of the limitations of the community and the market, there appear to be relatively few possible activities which can be justified. Rather than study alternative concepts in order to "select" the best course of action, we believe that the Town should concentrate on a single development concept, recognizing that there may be two key variable activities. These variables involve the most important site on the waterfront, at the foot of Church Street, facing down the river. The first developer to successfully tie up this site will effectively control the future of the entire waterfront.

The following development program has been generated for the Downtown waterfront:

- A1\* Country Inn/Restaurant
- A2\* Townhouses (15-25 units)/Small boat harbor
- B Sturgis Park - riverview landscaping/bulkheading
- C Sturgis Park - promenade/boat dock
- D Sturgis Park - antique/farmers market
- E Elderly Housing (20-25 units)
- F Multi-purpose parking - Commerce Street
- G Canoe rental/ice cream/refreshment stand
- H Infill Housing/Rehabilitation
- I Information Kiosk/Plaza
- J Bank Street Improvements
- K River Street Improvements

In addition, the following "support systems" are recommended:

- L Bed and breakfast lodging system

We suggest the following general planning principles which should guide the design and implementation of the program:

- The prime waterfront site overlooking the river at the foot of Church Street should be reserved for either a country inn/restaurant, or quality townhouses. The actual use will determine much of the character of the area. A small boat harbor may be linked to these major uses.
- The riverfront walk should link the library to the Purnell Museum as the two principle points of historical information about Snow Hill. A number of "stepping stones" along the way should make the walk interesting:
  - a) Antique/farmers market
  - b) Promenade/boat dock/boat rental
  - c) Look-out point
  - d) Small boat harbor

\*These are probably alternative uses for the same site.

- There should be an outdoor all-weather information kiosk with self-service leaflets and maps about Snow Hill, as well as lodging information for tourists. This should be at a prominent site near the library and a starting point for tours.
- The Elderly Housing should be located as a link between the Willow Street Rehabilitation area and the recreational waterfront.
- The small boat harbor should be located in the protected cove, off the navigable river channel at the foot of Water Street.
- The rehabilitation program should be oriented to bringing housing in the Willow Street area up to code and improving its visual appearance with an exterior painting program, sidewalks and street trees. A certain amount of infill housing should be permitted on large lots.
- Traffic patterns in the area should allow easy circulation around each block. A one-way system on Bank and River Street is proposed around the library so that River Street only exits onto Washington.
- In general, public improvements should be designed to leverage private investment. Projects in this category include landscaping, construction of streets and parking, public assistance with rehabilitation programs and bulk-heading.

#### Private Waterfront Area Concepts

This area has been treated in a very general fashion. We have spoken to some residents of the area, and our understanding is that these residents would strongly resist any public intervention in their property. The Purnell Museum has been trying for some time to expand into the property at the rear with no success. They should continue to seek ways to expand, since the museum is already overcrowded and has a pressing need for display space, storage space and office area. A waterfront site would also give more impact to the water-oriented exhibits which the museum has.

It is possible that large homes such as those fronting on Market Street will be prohibitively costly to maintain in the future, and that there will be increasing pressure to subdivide these large lots. One means of doing this would be to provide a small access street at the rear of the main houses, possibly as an extension of Pettit Street.



One of the five large homes here may be suited for conversion to a country inn, or may at least provide the core unit for one. This would give the inn the riverfront exposure which it needs, although the view is not as spectacular as the proposed site at the foot of Church Street.

We did not detect a strong desire for waterfront access between Sturgis Park and Byrd Park. Indeed we suggest that there are no functional reasons to connect the two. However, a pedestrian right-of-way may be desirable in the future, possibly by obtaining an easement across the rear of each property and constructing a simple trail through the woods.

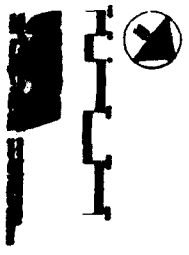
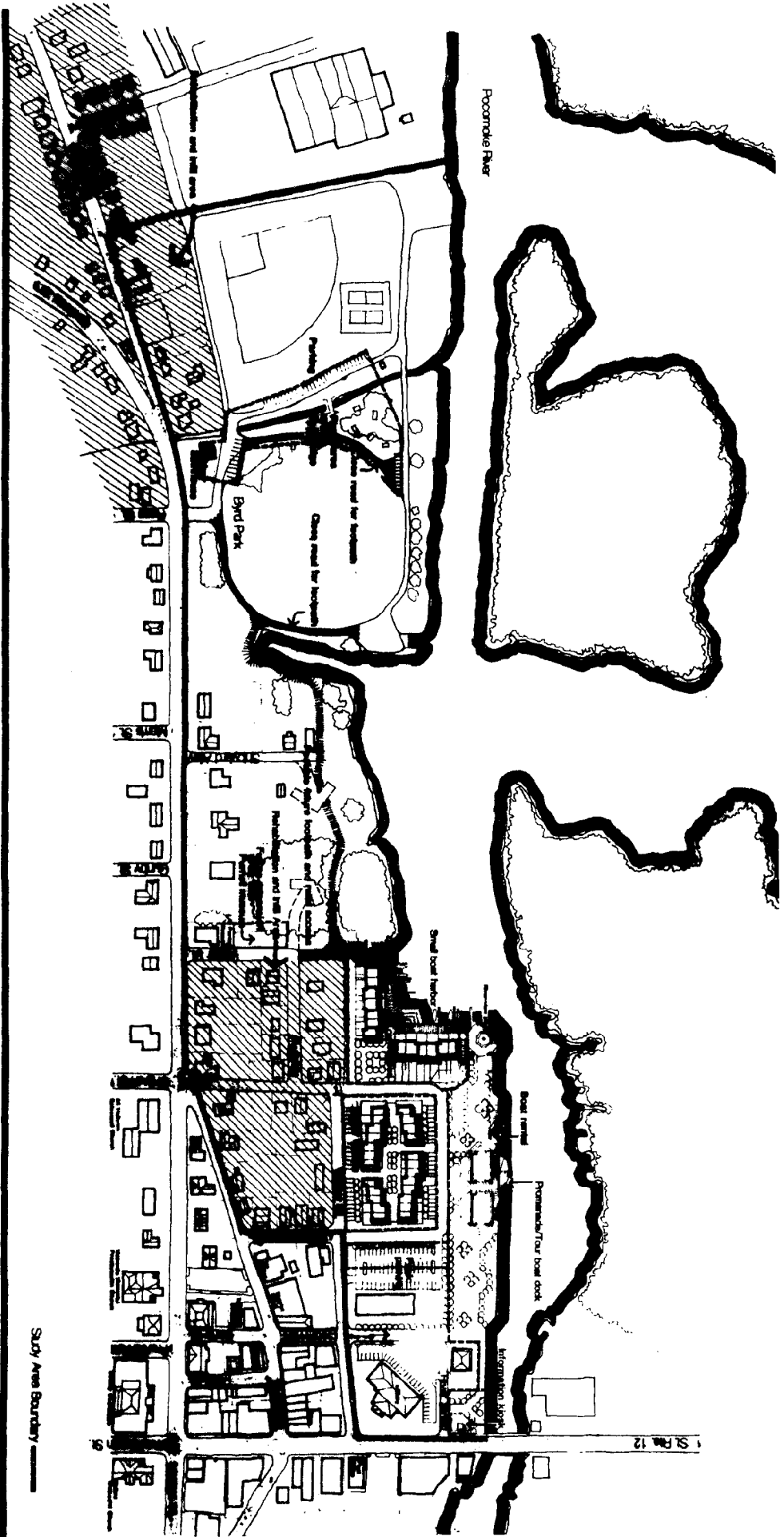
We believe that there is no immediate need for bulkheading in this area. However, it may become necessary to protect either the Downtown or Byrd Park waterfronts from flooding which originates here.

The Purnell Museum lies within this area, but is an integral part of the Downtown/Tourism Concept. It would be desirable to link the museum to the waterfront, possibly via an easement or purchase of a strip of land immediately behind the museum as an extension of the Water Street sidewalk. This footpath could then link the River Plaza/Lookout to the Museum. However, one of the problems with this concept is the fact that the footpath would separate the proposed Townhouses (on the SHEDCO property) from the waterfront, making them less desirable. We have illustrated this pedestrian link on the "Private Waterfront Plan," but suggest that it be dropped if the developer is not amenable to the idea.

#### Environment

One of the issues confronting Concept 2 with its walk from Water Street to Byrd Park would be the environmental sensitivity of the area, as regards the bird and animal life both on the mainland and the island. The island is likely to remain a wildlife habitat and we propose no plans to affect this.

**SNOW HILL**  
 Watershed Development Plan  
**PREFERRED CONCEPT**



#### IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The keys to successful redevelopment of Snow Hill's waterfront will be an aggressive marketing strategy, coupled with the willingness of the Town itself to make development proposals attractive by its participation in the public improvements associated with each project. The leveraging effect of public dollars on private investment may be between 1:30 and 1:50, depending on the level of the town's contribution. A number of public improvements will be necessary, not only to service private developments, but also to create the right environment. The best strategy for the Town will be one of balancing some public investment "up-front" (to attract developers to the Snow Hill market), with the retention of sufficient funds to make the actual private investment financially attractive once the developer is interested enough to start serious negotiations.

In the following pages, we have set out

- The estimated cost of the entire development program, both public and private. (see APPENDIX C)
- The steps necessary for implementation by both SHEDCO and the Town.
- Possible funding sources from State and Federal programs.

The first prerequisite for the downtown implementation program to be effective is that the Town and SHEDCO should co-operate closely in developing a marketing strategy, as well as the general criteria which both parties could support when evaluating proposals for the sale and development of the land. One of the purposes of this report is to recommend such criteria.

Originally conceived as a Public Non-Profit Corporation under SBA 502 guidelines, SHEDCO currently has a board of six directors and a membership of about twenty-eight. The Town of Snow Hill has no formal presentation either on the board or the membership, and its interest in the future of the waterfront property is restricted to the channel of the zoning approval process. In 1980, SHEDCO prepared a "Declaration of Restrictions" governing uses, architectural controls, setbacks, easements, variances and other covenants which would be applicable to the development of any land sold by SHEDCO. The "Declaration" does not supersede any of the Town's zoning responsibilities under the Maryland Zoning and Police Powers Act. The Town is not a party to this "Declaration": however, the joint resolve of both the Town and SHEDCO is to move the waterfront land into productive and beneficial use.

It appears to be in the best interests of SHEDCO to dispose of the land to an appropriate buyer, rather than to be a developer or development partner itself. In our experience, few professional developers wish to have their hands tied by a relatively cumbersome corporate partner, particularly in a difficult market, where profits may depend on experienced decision-making.

The foresight shown by SHEDCO in acquiring and clearing the downtown waterfront to this stage should be fully recognized by any prospective developer, who will be relieved of the need for demolition relocation and legal proceedings.

#### Developer Interest

It is more than likely that those developers who are interested in the potential of Snow Hill will already be operating on the Eastern Shore. Since SHEDCO itself has no development expertise, it should not be seeking a financial partner. Contact with banks, insurance companies, etc., will probably yield little response. Rather, it should be left to the developer to seek out any financing using his own contacts in the financing business.

A number of developers are currently active in Ocean City, Salisbury, and Pocomoke City who are equipped to handle a \$2m project. They should be the prime target of the marketing strategy.

### Coordination

There are clearly overlapping interests among the residents of the area, downtown businesses, SHEDCO and the Town as a whole. In addition, the Town is an essential partner in the process of obtaining state and federal assistance. There is a clear need to coordinate all of these various functions. As part of the coordination process, a key person within the Town Administration should be appointed to the SHEDCO Board, and should coordinate the Town's implementation actions. At present, the Town's responsibilities in the area are divided between several individual officers. Ideally, the coordinator should be the Town Administrator.

### Phase I Actions (1982)

The following first steps should be completed within a few months:

#### 1. Downtown Waterfront

- Adopt Concept Plan
- Finalize acquisition by Town of waterfront parcels using Program Open Space funding
- Complete report and documentation of the architecture and historical significance of the proposed downtown Historic District
- Prepare detailed plans for Phase I development (Promenade Deck and Information Kiosk)
- Contact potential developers with interests in Elderly Housing, Townhouse Apartments, Restaurants/ Country Inns

#### 2. Byrd Park

- Close east loop to vehicles
- Add picnic tables in the central grove
- Clean out the central stream and construct a simple footbridge to connect picnic areas on either side
- Renovate toilet facilities

### Phase II Actions (1982-83)

The following activities are recommended to be undertaken over the next year. They are not tied to any specific development project, but are intended to create the necessary environment for the private sector projects which can then be pursued in Phase III.

## 1. Downtown Waterfront

- Acquire the Onley Property for "Visitor Center".
- Construct River Street to Bank Street.
- Continue bulkheading from bridge to Promenade Park.
  - with possible advance of funding allotment
- Construct Phase I projects:
  - Visitor Center/Information Kiosk
  - Sturgis Park East
  - Extend Public Parking
- Initiate Downtown Rehabilitation Program - "Project Paintbrush" - for commercial properties and residential rehabilitation for Willow Street area.
- Enter negotiations with potential developers. Enter-  
tain planning permit requests.
- Adopt a new Waterfront Development Zone.

## Phase III Actions (1983-85)

If the following private developments (or similar projects) are to be achieved in this time frame, then the marketing which should be stated in Phase I will have been followed by detailed planning, design and approvals in Phase II. Public waterfront projects in this phase should be contingent upon specific private actions.

### 1. Downtown Waterfront

- Private development of key SHEDCO site.
- Private development of Elderly Housing with Town assistance in parking, and raising ground level.\*
- Construct River Street, Commerce Street and Church Street to coincide with developers' timetable on the above projects.\*
- Complete Sturgis Park West (contingent upon Townhouse development) including bulkheading.
- Prepare Neighborhood Improvement Program to include more major rehab (contingent upon Historic District Approval).
- Modify River Street/Church Street/Willow Street to incorporate curb-cuts for Elderly Housing parking, in conjunction with sewer construction (already planned).
- Repave sidewalks and plant trees on Bank Street.

### 2. Private Waterfront

- Continue contact with property owners with a view to acquisition of easement or right-of-way in the future.
- Acquire a strip of land from the end of Water Street to the river for possible waterfront access from River-view Plaza to Purnell Museum.

\*Contingent upon availability of CDBG funds.

### Key Development Projects

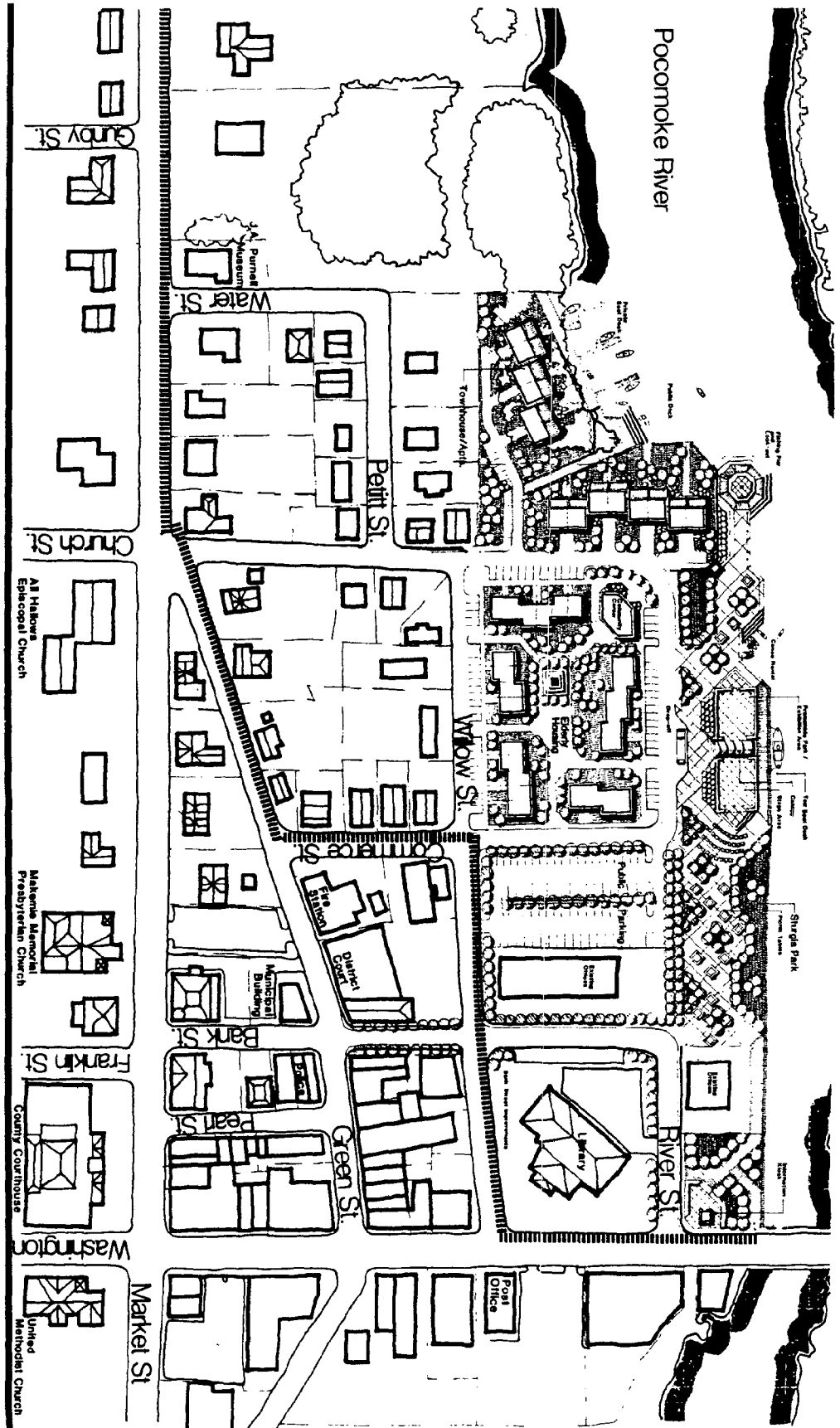
Six key developments are proposed for the downtown waterfront area. They have been generated through the market analysis, through the community attitude surveys and in meetings of the Mayor's Waterfront Task Force, and have been detailed in order to examine the possible levels of public support which may be required. It is conceivable that other ideas may emerge which have not been detailed here. This should neither preclude their investigation, nor invalidate this study. In particular, the country inn/restaurant which was examined in concept form should be seriously entertained if proposed by an interested developer. We have not pursued it here because it seems to be inherently more risky and less immediately achievable than the housing alternative. However, the same supporting street pattern, bulkheading and park completion would be required; and the site would be essentially that of the townhouses which face south-west down the river.

The six key developments are presented below.

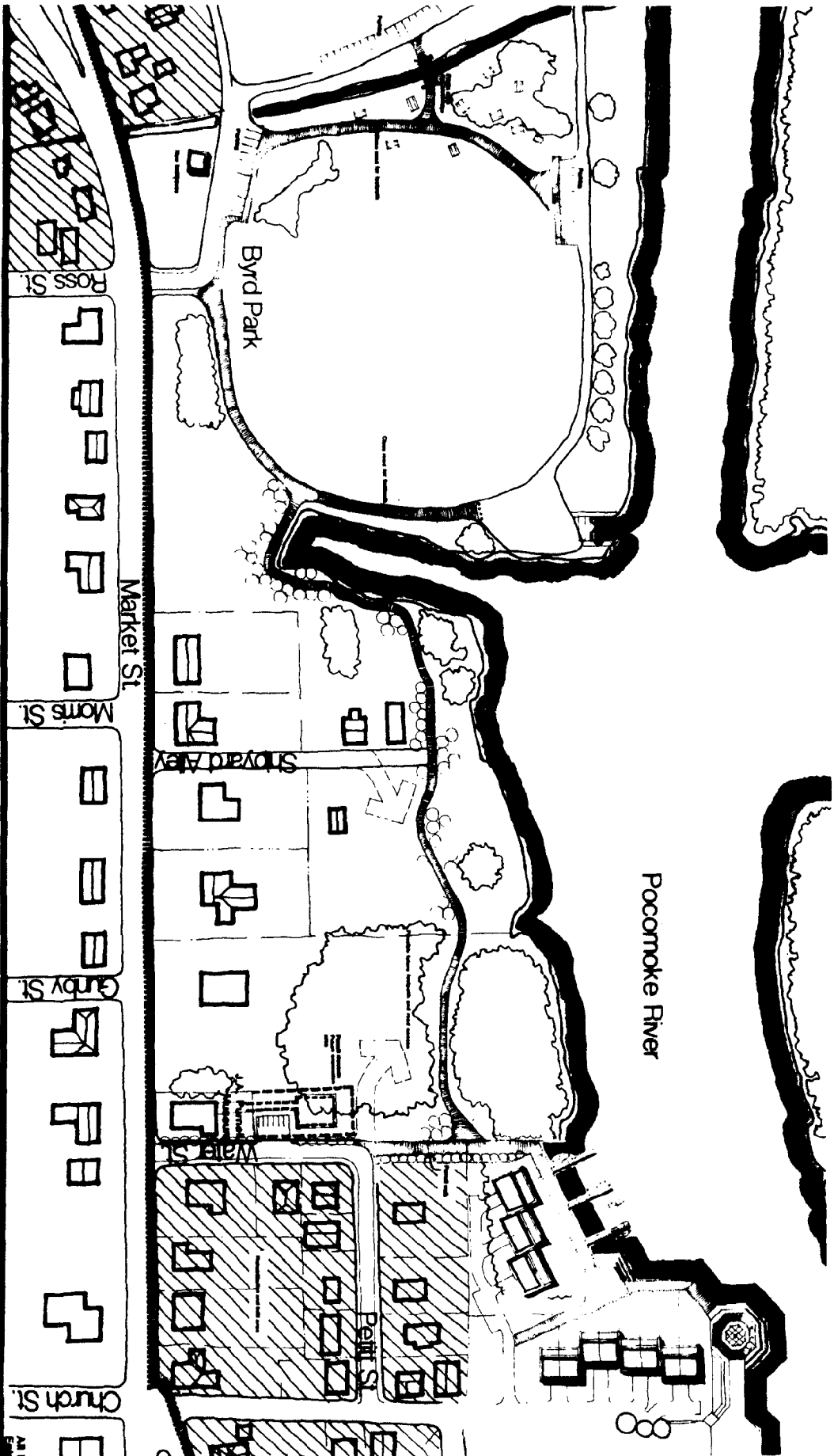
#### 1. Townhouse Apartments

A site of slightly less than 2 acres is proposed extending from the rear property line of houses on Pettitt Street, and from a line along the extension of Church Street, generally north-west and west to the river. The northern boundary would be the edge of the Town-owned Sturgis Park. The property is primarily owned by SHEDCO. We have illustrated a development of 14 townhouses, each containing 2 apartments, with common access to a boat dock and served by an extension of Church Street, as well as an alley at the rear of Pettitt Street. All parking for the development would be off-street with ground floor garages. The apartments would each contain 1000-1200 sq.ft. of space, in one and two-bedroom units, with roof balconies on the top floor. Adequate buffer space will be required between the apartments and adjacent property (both private and public). The units may rent for \$400-\$500 per month, or sell as condominiums for from \$65,000-\$75,000 per unit.

**Snow Hill**  
 Waterfront Development Plan  
**ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN -  
 DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT**







**SNOW HILL**  
 Waterfront Development Plan  
 ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN -  
 BYRD PARK AND PRIVATE WATERFRONT



If developed as apartments, this project could be undertaken within the current R-3 zoning regulations. If developed as townhouses for sale, some of the individual lots may be smaller than the minimum lot size of 5000 sq.ft. required by R-3, although the average lot size would comply.

## 2. Elderly Housing

This development was conceived as an appropriate use for the key interior block bounded by Willow, River, Commerce and Church Street. It is an extension of the Willow Street residential area, but also forms a buffer between that area's older housing and the recreation/tourism activities of the waterfront. The site is just less than 2 acres and is entirely owned by SHEDCO. There is a demonstrable need for new elderly housing in the community, and the economies of scale for many developers dictate a scheme of at least 50 units.

We have illustrated a layout of two-story apartments in 5 blocks surrounding a common pedestrian court with parking limited to the exterior of the lot. In order to keep costs down, we have illustrated a number of features which would make the project more attractive to a developer, and a new waterfront zone would need to be enacted as part of this incentive. Densities shown are approximately 25 dwelling units per acre, as illustrated, higher than the R-3 zone allows. The parking requirement would be waived in lieu of providing head-in parking off the surrounding streets. The low volumes of traffic in this area are not likely to make this a problem.

A small Community/Recreation Center, possibly equipped with lunch facilities, is shown. However, this might be replaced by a further 6-8 apartments. An alternative idea for a community center might be to convert an existing house adjacent to the site.

The apartments would contain 700-800 sq.ft. of space as efficiencies or 1-bedroom units, renting for \$250-\$300 per month. Rent subsidies may be possible through HUD Assistance Programs. One possible caveat here is the restriction on the use of federal funds for projects in a flood plain. The site lies within the 100-year flood area established by HUD. However, it is our understanding that this condition has been subject to favorable interpretation in the past. Calculations may be needed to demonstrate the minimal impact of construction units within the considerable flood plain of the Pocomoke area. We have allowed in the cost calculations for fill to raise the house pads 12"-18" above the flood area, which ends at Willow Street.

Effective leveraging for this project may be achieved through the Community Development Block Grant program, assisting with fill, or parking provisions. A further technique may involve the Town's purchase of the site for resale to a developer at a favorable price.

### 3. Sturgis Park

Sturgis Park is considered in 3 sections:

- Visitor Center/Pocket Park at Washington Street Bridge
- U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Worcester County, Extension Service building, to Promenade Park (deck)
- Promenade Park west to the River Overlook

The Visitor Center consists of an information kiosk (probably unmanned) with maps, leaflets and descriptions of where to go, what to do in Snow Hill and vicinity. It would be highly visible to traffic on Route 12 and could also refer visitors to the library across the street for further information of architectural, historic and cultural significance.

The site is approximately 1/3 acre, and would also contain seating and shade trees, with a connection along the waterfront at the rear of the USDA building to Promenade Park.

The second section of Sturgis Park would be a combination of soft and hard materials, grass along the river-front with paving towards the southern edge and trees planted in groups. The general directional flow of the park should be from the library toward Promenade Park. On this deck we envisage a number of "events" including a dock for river tour boats, with a canopy, a stage for impromptu local events at one end, and a generally open plaza for exhibitions (perhaps as an introduction to the Purnell Museum). Permanent picnic tables should be scattered throughout the park and a bus drop-off should be constructed adjacent to the Promenade deck. This section of the park should generally evolve as funds are available.

The third section of Sturgis Park should be left until a developer has committed to the river-front site described earlier as Key Project #1. The construction of the river-walk, to the overlook, with places for canoe rental, fishing and public docking should be a part of the leverage for private investment on the waterfront.

#### 4. Public Parking

In order to get maximum use out of Sturgis Park, as well as to encourage tourists to stay and shop or walk around, a centrally located parking lot is proposed adjacent to Commerce Street. This would not primarily serve the waterfront and tourists. It is shown as an extension of a small existing lot on the SHEDCO property, serving the U.S. Soils Conservation and Stabilization Office. The extension would provide for a further 44 cars.

#### 5. Street Construction

Several new streets and other improvements are needed to serve the waterfront. These are:

- River Street (Washington to Bank)
- Commerce Street (Willow to River)
- Church Street (Willow to River)
- River Street (Church St. extension to Commerce St extension)
- Bank Street (Green to River)

The first four sections are new streets, the first of which is already programmed in the 1981-1982 budget using CDBG funds. We recommend that River Street not be extended into the waterfront for its entire length from Washington to Church. We believe that the discontinuity of River Street is important to prevent through traffic from penetrating the area. The block of River Street from Bank to Washington should also be one-way east-bound.

Bank Street is not new construction but rather beautification, including trees, sidewalk paving and possibly sidewalk widening by eliminating parking. It is the only street which leads from the waterfront to the heart of the downtown.

#### 6. Byrd Park Improvements

Modest improvements are proposed for Byrd Park. They include a number of maintenance items which will be the Town's sole responsibility such as renovation of the bathhouse and clean-up of the stream. Other items may be assisted by Program Open Space funds such as provision of picnic tables and a new footbridge over the stream. Other items have no cost, such as closing the east loop road to traffic.

Byrd Park does not need major improvements. Its two boat-launch areas have been recently renovated with bulkheading. Between these, the rip-rap is in good repair and no other structural or cosmetic improvements are indicated either by our own observation or by the results of questionnaires.

Costs and possible funding sources for the foregoing projects are contained in Appendix C.

In addition we make three further proposals in the areas of Rehabilitation, Waterfront Zoning and Tax Abatement, as follows.

#### 7. Rehabilitation Program

We recommend a rehabilitation program to improve housing in the Willow/Petitt and Dighton Street areas. These are adjacent to the waterfront study site, and may be supplemented by other sections of Town with poor quality housing.

In the Willow/Petitt/Church/Water Street area there are approximately 25 houses in need of improvements. Approximately 15 of these need structural repairs; the remainder more cosmetic maintenance. Assuming that rehabilitation grants of up to \$10,000 per dwelling are available, we project an investment of \$200,000 in improvements, as follows:

15 units major repairs x \$10,000 =	150,000
<u>10 units cosmetic repairs x \$5,000 =</u>	<u>50,000</u>
	200,000

We assume that the majority of the occupants and/or owners will qualify for housing rehabilitation grants. Those whose income is too high for grants will be eligible for loans at an effective rate of 9%. We have not undertaken an income survey to ascertain the breakdown between potential grantees and loan recipients.

Further investigation may indicate that up to 5 units in this area are beyond rehabilitation, and will have to be demolished. Relocation into the elderly housing development (Key Project #2) may be appropriate.

### Waterfront Development Zone

We propose that the downtown waterfront area be placed in a new waterfront development zone. The benefits from this would be as follows:

- Incentive to developers
- Definition in the ordinance of the Town's general criteria for the waterfront
- Avoidance of variance procedures

The zone boundaries would be: Washington Street, Willow Street to Church Street, Church Street to Pettitt Street, Pettitt Street to Water Street, Water Street to the River. It would include all the present B-1 land on the waterfront, a portion of the M-1 land west of Washington Street, a portion of the B-2 land north of Willow Street, and a portion of the R-3 land north-west of the corner of Pettitt and Water Street.

### Principal Uses

These should include all uses permitted in the R-3 zone, and B-1 zone with the exception of auto service stations, garages, commercial parking lots, and any other noisy or polluting uses. Specific land-based uses which should be permitted are townhouses, apartments, restaurants, hotel/motel, community service uses such as clinics, community center. Specific water-oriented uses which should be permitted are boat rental, bait/tackle/marine equipment store and rental, docking facilities, fuel services for boats.

Accessory uses to be permitted should include parking, recreation activities and information signs within controlled areas, (this should be specifically oriented to the information kiosk as an accessory use to the park). Off-street parking for residential uses should be provided at the following rates:

- Single family, multi-family housing: 1.5 spaces per D.U.
- Elderly Housing: 1.0 spaces per D.U.

Commercial parking should be as required by the present ordinance for the B-1 zone.

We suggest that a waiver for off-street residential parking be permitted in the Waterfront Zone, provided that adequate public parking is available within 250 feet of each residence. This would enable maximum use to be made of public parking. The waiver should not be automatic but should be subject to site plan review, the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the final decision of the Mayor and Council. In our view, head-in parking as shown on the illustrative site plan is appropriate parking for a street with very little traffic, and as a means of getting maximum use out of a roadway, it can also effectively reduce the construction costs to a developer.

Building heights in the Waterfront Zone should not exceed 3 stories or 40 feet in order to be compatible with B-1 and B-2 conditions obtaining in the downtown area.

Conditions pertaining to density, setbacks, lot area, etc., should be arranged so as to permit greater density and greater flexibility in the development of waterfront land.

Present densities permitted under R-3 are approximately 21 DU/acre. We suggest a maximum permitted density of 25 DU/acre with a discretionary bonus of up to 5 additional DU/acre in return for public benefits such as easements for access, preservation of existing trees, commendable site design, compatible building materials, etc. The bonus should be awarded subject to site-plan review by the Planning and Zoning Commission, who should be required to submit their recommendations to the Mayor and Council for final approval.

We suggest that the minimum lot area be reduced to 2,000 sq.ft. provided that the average lot size in a subdivision be not less than 3,000 sq.ft. This would permit "for-sale" townhouses on average sites of 25 x 120 ft., at an average "net density" of 14.5 DU/acre, while at the same time permitting higher densities for apartments on the same (unsubdivided) site.

Side yards requirements should be eliminated except at the end of a row of units. The maximum number of contiguous houses in a row should be 8. Otherwise, side, rear and front yard requirements should be the same as R-3.

#### Tax Abatement

Tax abatement has also been discussed as an incentive to investment in the downtown area. On a residential project of \$2.0m, the Assessed Value is likely to be approximately \$1.0m. Annual taxes charged at \$1.93 per \$100 of Assessed Value would amount to \$19,300. Assuming this project were located on a 2-acre parcel of land, the taxes would be collected at approximately \$9850 per acre. If the town were to forego 50% of taxes on new development for the first 10 years, it would collect almost \$5000 per acre of developed land. This compares with approximately \$300 per acre collected at present on the SHEDCO property which is vacant.

Offset against a theoretical "loss" of revenue (if only 50% of taxes are collected) are the costs of providing water, sewer, police and fire services, etc. The town must review each case on its merits in order to decide whether capital assistance in the form of construction of parking, streets, bulkheading, etc. is more attractive than tax abatement to both a developer and the town itself.

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