



ELKINS STREETScape VISION

Elkins Main Street, Inc.

DECEMBER, 2016



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PREFACE:**HELPING TO GROW A VIBRANT, LIVABLE DOWNTOWN**

Elkins Main Street brings renewed energy and vitality to downtown Elkins by focusing on its vision for “a vibrant, livable Downtown”. Our mission is to grow a vibrant downtown experience and environment. We strive to achieve these goals by leveraging available community assets, promoting public and private partnerships, supporting historic preservation, enhancing our cultural environment and embracing our heritage with a focus on investment in our future.

Based on the earlier ON TRAC efforts, Main Street West Virginia designated Elkins as a “Main Street Community” in 2015. **Elkins Main Street, Inc.**, a 501 (C) (3) corporation, is advancing and building upon the ON TRAC initiatives by utilizing the national Main Street Four-Point Approach[®] to accomplish its goals. Our volunteers work together on committees dedicated to each of the four areas in this comprehensive approach: Design, Economic Vitality, Promotion, and Organization. Each committee has a specific focus and works under the direction of a chairperson and the Board of Directors.

This document, *Elkins Streetscape Vision*, was prepared by volunteers of the Design Committee. It has been reviewed

and approved by the Board of Directors of Elkins Main Street, Inc.

As will be outlined in the following sections, this *Elkins Streetscape Vision* will serve as a framework to begin affordable short-term streetscape improvements, while guiding the City and the downtown stakeholders in the preparation of a plan for a comprehensive downtown streetscape reconstruction.

SECTION ONE:**INTRODUCTION**

The Design Committee of Elkins Main Street, Inc. has prepared this document to provide a framework to advance streetscape improvements in downtown Elkins. It is not intended to serve as a “Final Engineering Plan”, but rather as a dynamic working document that outlines the processes and elements to be considered when undertaking the development of a comprehensive streetscape plan. Our target audience is the City of Elkins and the downtown stakeholders – with Elkins Main Street serving as the project’s advocate and clearinghouse during the multi-year development and implementation phases.

The ideas presented herein reflect our vision of the scope of improvements appropriate for our city. But this presented vision is intended only as a “starting point” for discussions between all concerned stakeholders – elected officials, property owners, business owners, and other representative focus groups. Any final plan for improvements must reflect the consensus of these stakeholders and not just current vision and opinions of Elkins Main Street.

Therefore, as the reader reviews and considers the ideas put forth in this document, please make note of those items with which you concur and those that you would add or change. Also, give thought to the required time and monetary

budget commitments that such an endeavor would require. As is outlined in this document, the completion of a comprehensive streetscape improvements project can be expensive, impose short-term inconveniences, and require several years to complete. It should, therefore, be considered an investment in our city intended to benefit every resident through the enhanced safety and appearance of the downtown business district and the encouragement of renewed and expanded vitality within the city of Elkins.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

A community’s “streetscape” is an important element in the vitality and sustainability of its various neighborhoods, whether it is the downtown business district, residential neighborhoods, or institutional or commercial areas.

This document will focus on the downtown Elkins streetscape. This streetscape generally consists of the commercial building front facades, the sidewalks adjoining the buildings, and the street. In combination, these elements help to define the community character and often provide the first impression for new visitors. Today’s citizens and visitors alike seek an environment that is visually pleasing, safe feeling, and easily navigated. The streetscape should provide a welcoming atmosphere that is uncluttered but not sterile. In addition to providing a corridor for safe pedestrian and vehicular traffic, the streetscape should also provide suitable spaces for visitors to pause and meet with others, sit and take in the scene,

or to host special events and activities by the community. Finally, while the downtown streetscape should be “pedestrian scaled”, it should also be suitable for other transportation modes, including vehicular and bicycle. These streetscape attributes are consistent with the Elkins Main Street vision for – **“A vibrant, livable Downtown”**

The City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan of January 2015 recognized the need for a streetscape plan for the downtown business district. Stated in Chapter 5: Land Use is the following -

Objective 1: Encourage the beautification of the City to entice visitors

Action Step 1: Complete a streetscape project to improve the aesthetics of the downtown business district

“There has never been a comprehensive streetscape plan completed for the downtown business district. The City of Elkins and ON TRAC (*now Main Street*) should partner together to complete a plan so improvements can be made to the downtown. The plan will establish a vision and include recommendations that will be the basis for phased streetscape improvements. The plan should include recommendations concerning pedestrian facilities, parking, trail facilities, utilities, signage, site furnishings, landscaping, and cost estimates. The development of a streetscape plan should also help the City apply for grants to complete the specified projects in the plan.”

In support of this City Action Step, Elkins Main Street’s “Strategic Priorities for 2016-2019” includes:

“Implement short-term and long-term streetscape plans with \$3M in leveraged investment over a 3-year period.”

To begin to fulfill this Priority, the Elkins Main Street Design Committee has prepared this presentation to outline its thoughts on an appropriate streetscape plan that would be consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and address Action Step 1 shown above. This document will include both

- short-term (3 to 24 months), cost effective streetscape improvements that can be readily implemented along Davis Avenue from the river to Fifth Street, along Third Street from the Depot Welcome Center to Randolph Avenue, and along Railroad Avenue from First Street to Fourth Street
- long-term (greater than 24 months) suggestions for streetscape improvements that are more comprehensive in scope

SECTION TWO:**AN OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

This document goes into some detail to discuss current trends in streetscape design, existing conditions in Elkins, recommended improvements, challenges facing Elkins in advancing such improvements, and other considerations. We trust that the reader will find these details of interest and better understand the rationale behind the recommendations forwarded herein. However, to provide a brief overview of the scope of the recommendations, **this section will provide a summary of the proposed key improvements.**

Our “Short-Term” plan includes improvements that are simple, cost-effective initial efforts that can be completed in the short term **with minimal expenditure of monies, but can still have a significant impact** on enhancing the overall appearance and sense of welcome in our downtown.

Our **“Long-Term”** plan provides direction for the development of a **comprehensive streetscape make-over that entails significant investment in monies, time and effort.** The magnitude of the long-term comprehensive streetscape planning and construction will, therefore, require multiple phases performed over several years, all planned by professional services consultants with skills and abilities beyond those currently available within Elkins Main Street or the City of Elkins.

Study Area Limits

By its charter, Elkins Main Street efforts are to be focused on an area bounded by the river on the south, Porter Avenue on the west, and Gorman Avenue/Sixth Street on the north. The eastern boundary jogs from Sixth down Davis, then east on Fifth, then south on Kerens, then east on Fourth, then south on Henry to Third including the block of Third to Randolph, then on south on Henry to close again with the river.

As shown in the figure on the next page, the proposed streetscape study area will consist of Davis Avenue from the river to Fifth Street (five blocks in length), Third Street from Railroad Avenue to Randolph Avenue (four blocks in length), and Railroad Avenue from First Street to Fourth Street (three blocks in length) for a total of 12 blocks.

Based on the property plat mapping on the Randolph County Assessor’s Office website, the curb-to-curb length of these blocks ranges from about 325-feet to 375-feet in overall length. For preliminary estimating purposes later in this proposal, an average block length of 350-feet will be used.

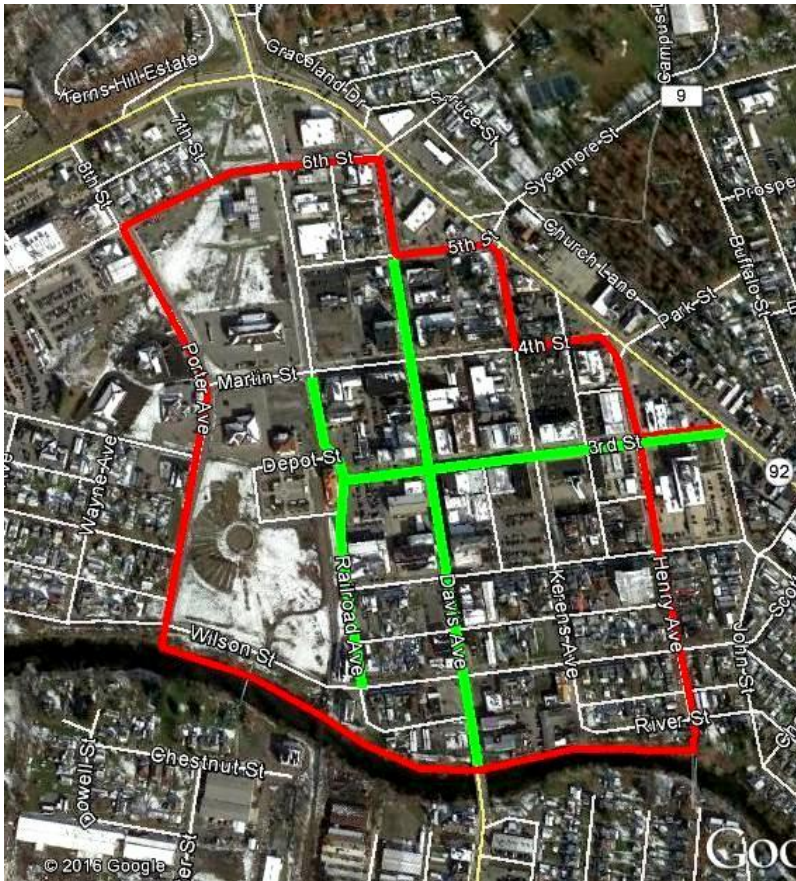


Figure 1. Elkins Main Street “Jurisdictional” area is shown in red. The Proposed Streetscape Study Area appears in green.

Recommended Short-Term (3 to 24 Months) Improvements

Elkins Main Street recommends that in the short term:

- the City should revisit *Action Step 2: Develop a sidewalk program to prioritize sidewalk improvements as outlined in Chapter 3 of the City’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan*
- implement a program to place numerous large pots/planters of colorful annual flowers and vines to add immediate color and interest to the existing streetscape in a manner similar to that utilized by the neighboring City of Buckhannon
- for the existing tree boxes –
 - healthy trees should be properly pruned
 - trees that have outgrown the boxes and create visual hazards should be removed, along with the boxes and replanted “at-grade” (no box or raised planter) with an appropriate tree species in a properly prepared planting bed
 - a maintenance program, including periodic watering, should be developed and implemented
 - empty boxes or those in poor condition should be removed and replanted as described above for trees that have outgrown their planting boxes
 - a long-term plan for downtown landscaping and decorating should be developed in conjunction with the City’s Tree Board
- an inventory and planned removal program should be implemented for many of the parking meter posts and any

furnishings in poor condition along Davis Avenue and Third Street

- selected meter posts, including those currently having a flag pole bracket for holiday flag displays, should be retained, capped, and painted for the attachment of flags, appropriate signage or re-use to support bicycle lock bollards, trash receptacles, or other street furnishings
- redundant, unnecessary, or deteriorated signs should be removed and new signs should be placed in appropriate locations and heights to provide both way-finding and regulatory information
- on-street parking spaces should be delineated by striping and signs providing “free parking” information as well as off-street parking lot locations be posted in prominent locations
- Elkins Main Street in conjunction with the Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission should collaborate with the City’s Planning Commission to develop guidelines for the renovation and rehabilitation of building facades in the downtown business area

Completion of these efforts could utilize a volunteer workforce of community members under the direction of the City or an agent such as Elkins Main Street. Cost for proposed improvements – flowers in large pots, paint, bicycle bollards, trash receptacles, signs, and assistance with pruning - could likely be accomplished at a total cost of less than \$10,000 per block (\$100,000 to \$120,000 total for the 12-block area); with some of the cost offset by the recycling value of the meter posts and obsolete signs.

Recommended Long-Term (Greater than 24 Months) Improvements

The Long-Term recommendations include:

- demolish existing sidewalks to facilitate installation of underground street lighting circuits, light post foundations, any other needed utility relocations/repair, excavation for any other needed foundations and landscaping bed improvements, and preparation of a sidewalk sub-grade
- construct replacement concrete sidewalks with a brick paver insert strip and contemporary ADA-compliant crossing ramps with tactile surfaces
- add sidewalk curb extensions or “bulb-outs” along Third Street at the intersections with Railroad, Davis and Kerens Avenues to enhance pedestrian safety by improving visibility, shortening crosswalk lengths, and naturally reducing traffic speeds (traffic calming) through the downtown
- install decorative, period-style street lighting with brackets for street banners, flags, and power connections for seasonal decorations
- plant sidewalk trees and landscaping in properly constructed and grated at-grade openings within the sidewalk
- as recommended in Chapter 3 of the City’s Comprehensive Plan – Action Step 1, make improvements to Railroad Avenue at the Depot Welcome Center/Third Street intersection to improve pedestrian safety by incorporating traffic islands, curb extensions, or other means to naturally

slow and direct vehicular traffic while shortening the crosswalk distance and providing enhanced crosswalk delineation and signalization as well as a “gateway” into the greater downtown area

- **improve the City’s off-street parking lots, including the addition of lighting to enhance safety, landscaping to enhance the visual appearance of the lots, improved signage to direct visitors to local attractions and services, and the incorporation of “green” engineering concepts such as permeable paving and bioswales/rain gardens to reduce storm water run-off**
- **provide additional downtown green spaces by adding small “pocket parks” within the downtown area on any under-utilized lots or with access improvements to an improved riverfront parkway along the southern boundary of the downtown**
- **add of uniform street furnishings at appropriately spaced intervals**
- **improve “way-finding” signage, including additional kiosks at key locations to direct visitors and residents alike to important venues**
- **codify standards for building façade rehabilitation or renovation to maintain the integrity of the downtown historic district’s appearance while encouraging appropriate redevelopment and complimentary multiple uses**

these outlined improvements will cost in the range of **\$200,000 to \$300,000 per block (or \$2.5 to \$3.6 million for the twelve block downtown study area).**

As will be outlined, such an undertaking would obviously be costly and would require multiple phases and several years to both fund and to construct. At this time, Elkins Main Street estimates that

SECTION 3:**CURRENT TRENDS IN MUNICIPAL STREETSCAPING**

Trends in streetscaping have evolved as our urban environments have evolved. Beginning as a purely utilitarian need to separate pedestrian traffic from animal-drawn and later vehicular traffic and to provide safe and all-weather transit, over time communities realized that the appearance and feel of its streetscape helped to define the community's identity and became a matter of pride. During the past two decades, an increased emphasis has been placed on the downtown streetscape as communities sought to revitalize their downtown central business districts which had often been neglected after the emigration of businesses to suburban areas that rapidly developed to meet post-World War II development patterns. In recent years, many citizens have begun immigration back into urban areas and seek to reside within safe downtown neighborhoods that provide access to retail, entertainment, housing, and other amenities, all within an easy walking distance. Professional services still tend to concentrate in the downtown areas, especially in those communities that host local and regional governmental or medical services.

Federal funding, through congressional transportation acts, further encouraged the reconstruction of downtown business districts and connecting transit routes to promote multiple modes of transportation including pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation systems through "Complete Streets" and "Safe-Routes-To-School" programs. These funds were often merged with other public development monies to further spur streetscape

improvements in the hope to attract potential redevelopment through public-private partnerships.

In recent years, planners and landscape architects have defined the expectations for a contemporary streetscape plan. Often their key elements include:

- Visual or physical barriers that clearly define the zones intended for the pedestrian, any bicycle, and the vehicular corridors
- The sidewalk is generally sub-divided into a zone that provides 1) an easy and unencumbered entrance into business/building entrances, 2) a clear and uniform pedestrian access zone of at least 4-feet in width, and 3) a fixtures/utility zone generally near the curb side of the walkway
- Sidewalk pavements that provide reasonable all-weather traction and are easily cleared of snow, ice, and debris – ranging from simple flat concrete to stamped, colorized concrete or brick pavers
- Properly designed (ADA compliant) curb ramps at street intersections with tactile surfaces that provide safe and convenient access for mobility and visually impaired persons
- Clear zones at street corner intersections that provide clear visual site lines that do not impede safe pedestrian crossings with prominently marked crosswalks and crosswalk signals

(walk/don't walk) lights. The sidewalk is often widened as it approaches the intersection to create a "curb extension" or "bulb-out/bump-out" that shortens the crosswalk length, improves visibility, and slows or "calms" vehicular traffic along the street

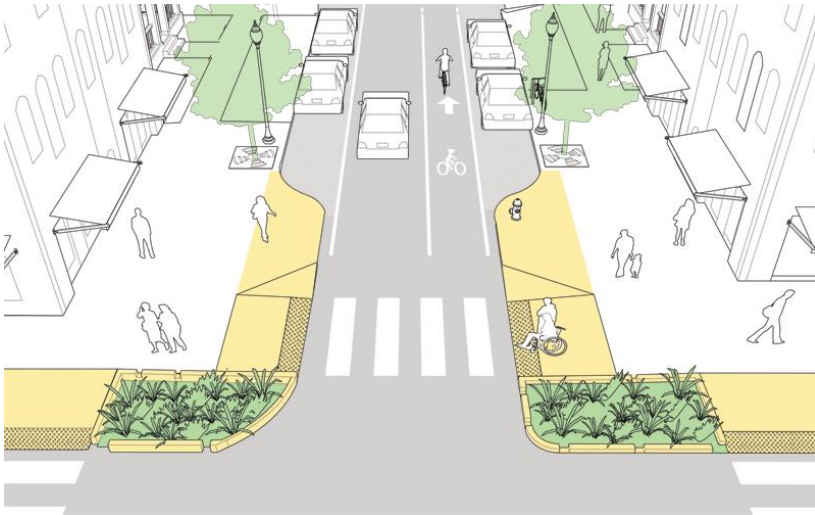


Figure 2. Curb Extension rendering courtesy of National Association of City Transportation Officials – NACTO

- Lighting systems that provide sufficient ambient light levels for safety while highlighting the first-floor level of the adjoining building fronts to create a sense of ceiling
- Street furnishings, including benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, and signage, placed at appropriate spacing to be inviting without creating clutter or impeding pedestrian traffic flow

- Uniform plantings of appropriate urban trees (vertical and compact in their growth form and tolerant of the urban environmental conditions) or other vegetation in properly designed and conditioned planting beds or movable planters compatible with the planned plantings
- Uniform signage for regulatory and informational (way-finding) purposes as well as codified signage rules for the businesses lining the streetscape
- Clearly defined on-street parking and non-parking zones
- "Complete Streets" concepts that embrace multiple transportation modes
- Traffic calming improvements to naturally slow vehicular traffic through areas where pedestrian and bicycle traffic is encouraged
- Recommendations or standards for exterior building improvements or restoration that are appropriate to the history and evolution of the specific community

From this menu of elements, a streetscape comprehensive or master plan is generally prepared that will guide the phased implementation and construction of the proposed plan. **A key to a successful streetscape is including only those elements for which the community has:**

- **Sufficient current or identified funds to construct the proposed improvements with quality materials and professional workmanship in accordance with properly**

developed engineering plans and specifications, including supervision and inspection/materials testing during construction before acceptance by the community, and

- **Sufficient future funds to maintain the improvements throughout their functional life-cycle**

Quality streetscape improvements, like any other public works improvement, can be costly. Therefore, a comprehensive plan is a must to outline a prioritized phased approach that allows elements to be added over several years and in a sequence that ensures that completed work is not disturbed by ongoing efforts that should have been performed first. The plan also ensures that the continuity and uniformity of the project's multiple phases is maintained. Finally, an appropriate comprehensive or master plan for a streetscape increases the likelihood of success in the pursuit of limited grant funding from federal and state agencies to help offset the costs or to encourage public/private partnerships by presenting a vision of the intended community appearance.

SECTION 4:**EXISTING ELKINS STREETScape CONDITIONS**

As shown in the included photos, the current downtown streetscape is the synthesis of many years of budget-minded civic improvements and constrained maintenance efforts. While it provides a functional pedestrian corridor that is generally safe from the adjacent vehicular traffic; it lacks a cohesive updated feeling and is somewhat cluttered and in various states of repair. Nothing is noted that would be considered extremely hazardous or in such a state of repair that failure was eminent. However, it does lack a planned appearance and several of its elements have a tired look.



The locations of many of the existing streetscape elements are extremely irregular and lack any uniformity in placement. Some areas appear cluttered and are obtrusive to both visual sight lines and pedestrian traffic flow, particularly in the vicinity of the street intersections where the combination of lighting/traffic poles, fire hydrants, trash receptacles, and signage limits the “clear zones” preferred in contemporary streetscape design.

Pedestrian Facilities – Sidewalks and Crosswalks

The existing concrete sidewalk itself is generally in a reasonably safe condition for pedestrian traffic. The sidewalk in the downtown area is approximately 12-feet in width and terminates at the street with a cast concrete curb. The sidewalks are primarily standard concrete flatwork with no enhancements such as coloring, stamping, or brick

pavers. The sidewalk clearly exhibits evidence of various previous repair and replacement efforts. In a few areas, significant cracking is apparent that will necessitate repair/replacement at some future time. Curbing consists of a combination of separate cast concrete curbs or integral curbing cast into the sidewalk. In many locations, the curbing is deteriorated and spalling. Curb heights vary significantly depending on the curb type, age, and adjacent pavement thickness build-up resulting from re-paving efforts.

ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps at intersections for mobility impaired persons are generally present and provide minimal accommodation. However, they do not meet contemporary streetscape design standards for construction, width, or the presence of tactile surface to aid visually impaired pedestrians. Crosswalks are delineated with painted street striping. Crosswalk signals are installed at several of the Davis Avenue intersections.

The sidewalk area contains numerous fixtures and features. These include street lighting/traffic signal poles, fire hydrants, raised planters, trash receptacles, benches, bicycle racks, postal service boxes, parking meters/posts, and signage.



Lighting/Traffic Signal Equipment

Street lighting in the downtown area is generally provided by WVDOH standard lighting fixtures. Lighting along Davis Avenue and Third Street consists of break-away aluminum light posts (about 25-foot in height) with upsweep mast arms and high pressure sodium cobra head lights. The foundations for these fixtures are located in the sidewalk near the curb. Electric service to these lights appears to be mostly from aerial lines, although a few apparently have an underground service. Some of the posts also have additional attached aerial cables. Street lighting along other streets in the downtown area (First, Second, Fourth, Railroad and Kerens) consists of older “yard lighting” style fixtures with mast arms attached to wooden electric utility poles. The spacing of the lighting is generally uniform along Davis and Third (usually 6 lights per block; three on

each side of the street in a staggered configuration). Light presence and spacing is more erratic on the other streets. They provide a non-uniform level of ambient lighting for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. They, also, do not provide “pedestrian level” lighting at the first-floor height that is now preferred in contemporary streetscape design.



An exception to the downtown lighting scheme is the more recent traffic signal and lighting improvements completed at the intersections of Davis Avenue with First, Second, Third, and Fourth Streets. This equipment consists of architectural period-style poles, bases, mast arms, and Gothic-style light fixtures with pedestrian crosswalk signals – all in a satin black finish. This newer equipment is somewhat “heavy” in its proportions and the signal control boxes mounted to the poles are obtrusive and interrupt the view, particularly at the intersection of Third and Davis.

The Davis Avenue/Third Street downtown corridor is relatively free of utility poles, other than the previously described lighting posts. The other streets in the downtown area have numerous wooden utility poles in the public right-of-way and would impact the appearance of any future streetscape improvements as the relocation or burial of the utility services is probably cost prohibitive.

It should be noted that the improvements in the Railyard Redevelopment area include period-style post mounted street lighting that is more pleasing in architectural style and proportion, although the height is somewhat higher than would be preferred for in the downtown area.



Fire Hydrants

Necessary fire hydrants are also located in the sidewalk near each street intersection as well as mid-block. They are maintained in good condition and are clearly visible. The hydrants have recently been repainted to reflect the capacity of each for fire-fighting purposes.

Landscaping - “Tree Box” Planters

The wooden planter boxes are from a 1993 streetscape improvement effort to re-introduce street trees into the downtown area. It is reported that 60 planters were constructed and initially planted with 21 Yoshino cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis*), 19 Kwanzan cherry (*Prunus serrulata*), and the remaining 20 with eastern redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*) and Bradford pears (*Pyrus serrulata*). A few additional planter boxes were later constructed as a 2014 inventory indicated the presence of 67 planters, of which one-third was in the need of some maintenance. Many of the original tree plantings have been replaced, mostly with Bradford pears.

The planters are constructed from treated timbers and are approximately 4-foot square and 8-inches in height. It is understood that a portion of the concrete below the planter boxes was removed, but the size of the opening, the rooting volume” below the planter, and the nature of soil improvements beneath the

planter are unknown. They are located at somewhat random intervals near the curb-edge of the walkway; resulting in an irregular and haphazard appearance.

The boxes are now in various states of repair and the tree plantings vary significantly in the size and species. Maintenance and planting replacement is performed by the Elkins Tree Board with assistance from adjacent business/property owners and volunteer organizations. Currently the Elkins Tree Board has responsibility for the decisions regarding long-term maintenance of these boxes and their contents.



A 2014 report by West Virginia Division of Forestry urban foresters states *“the existing boxes are far too small in terms of depth, width, and overall rooting volume to accommodate healthy urban trees. Although some have been able to survive and appear healthy, most of the containerized trees will not survive beyond 10 years. This means that they will not reach an appropriate size to provide downtown Elkins with adequate ecosystems benefits to balance out the costs of their care and replacement.”*

In addition to the existing tree plantings in varying states of health and size, a variety of annual and perennial flowering plants have been attempted in the boxes, along with a 2016 planting of a Vinca minor ground cover.

The plantings have generally been inhibited by a combination of the inconsistent watering regime, poor soils, compacted roots, and compacted soils – mostly resulting from the small size of the planters as well as some vandalism or abuse by citizens.

Street Furnishings

Wood-clad trash receptacles are located on the sidewalk near each intersection on all four corners. They are uniform in design and have sufficient volume to reduce the frequency of emptying. They are, however, beginning to show the effects of deterioration due to weathering and probable vandalism/abuse. While their location near the intersection corners aids in their convenience, they contribute significantly to the clutter and impaired visual sight lines in the vicinity of the crosswalks. They are also somewhat “heavy” in their design and proportions.

Other street furnishings located on the sidewalk include random benches of varying styles, designs, and condition; occasional bicycle racks; and US Postal Service mail drop boxes. Additional items noted in the pedestrian corridor are a few galvanized stock tanks, freestanding sandwich-style business signs, and other temporary items placed for business promotion purposes.



Signage (Non-Business Related)

The curb edge of the sidewalk area is regularly interrupted with numerous steel posts from abandoned parking meters, the previously described street lighting and traffic signal masts, and a variety of regulatory sign posts. Several signs are in poor condition or are no longer warranted and should be removed. Most regulatory and street signs are, however, in good condition. The “Free Parking” signs on the former parking meter posts are redundant and contribute to the visual clutter along the existing streetscape.



Building Facades

The sidewalk portion of the streetscape is flanked by the front façade of the buildings on one side of the walk and parallel vehicular parking (except near the fire hydrants or other designated areas) on the other edge of the walk. Generally, the building façade alignment is intact and is horizontally continuous with few openings except where buildings have been removed to provide access for contemporary banking drive-through service portals.

The buildings in the downtown area are of varying ages – generally ranging from the early 1900’s through the 1970’s. Because there is

a predominance of adjoining buildings from the earlier period, the downtown generally has a “historic” feel. Most of the older buildings have many of their original architectural features – recessed store entries, lower “kick panels”, upper transoms, and a cornice detail. But many of these features have been covered and hidden with later renovations, including the cladding of entire building facades with metal or new brick work. Several examples of recent efforts by the building owners to restore and highlight the traditional storefront details are noted on both Davis Avenue and Third Street.

Parking

As outlined in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the City has sufficient parking to accommodate the usual demand. As discussed in the Plan, localized concerns about the lack of sufficient parking are largely due to on-street parking by downtown employees for the duration of their workday or by downtown residents.

Parking consists of both on-street and off-street parking lots. Parking within the downtown is now free and the City is currently removing remaining parking meters throughout the downtown area.

SECTION 5:

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

Several studies and conceptual plans have been prepared over the years, including a variety of renderings and concepts developed by the ON TRAC program. Conceptual plans to address pedestrian and traffic concerns at the Railroad Avenue/Third Street intersection and to create a “gateway” from the Railyard to downtown along Third Street have been presented.



Figure 3. Conceptual Design for Railroad Ave. Improvements between First and Third Streets from Michael Baker, Jr. Inc.

Conceptual plans were also developed for comprehensive streetscape improvements featuring “complete streets” elements including improved sidewalks and street lighting, enhanced on-street parking, dedicated bicycle lanes, and sidewalk curb extensions for improved pedestrian safety and traffic calming.

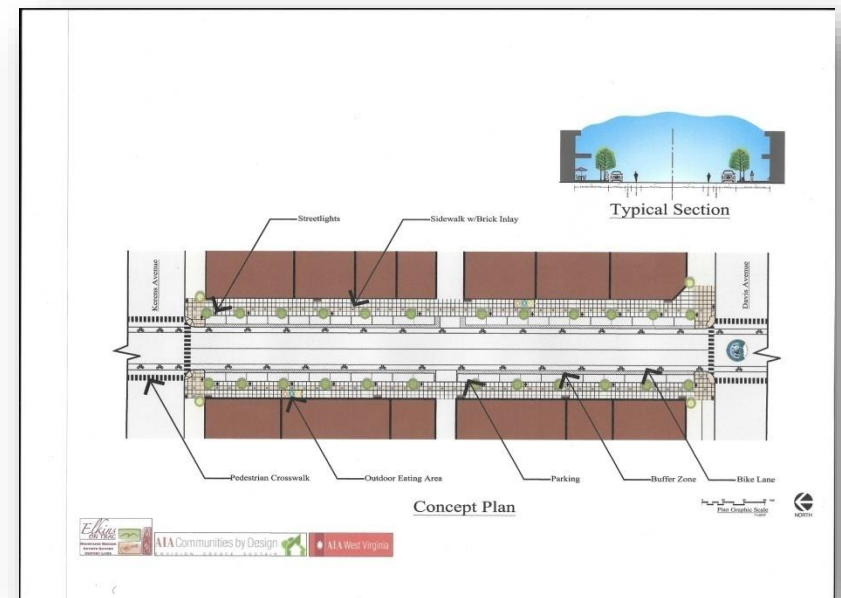
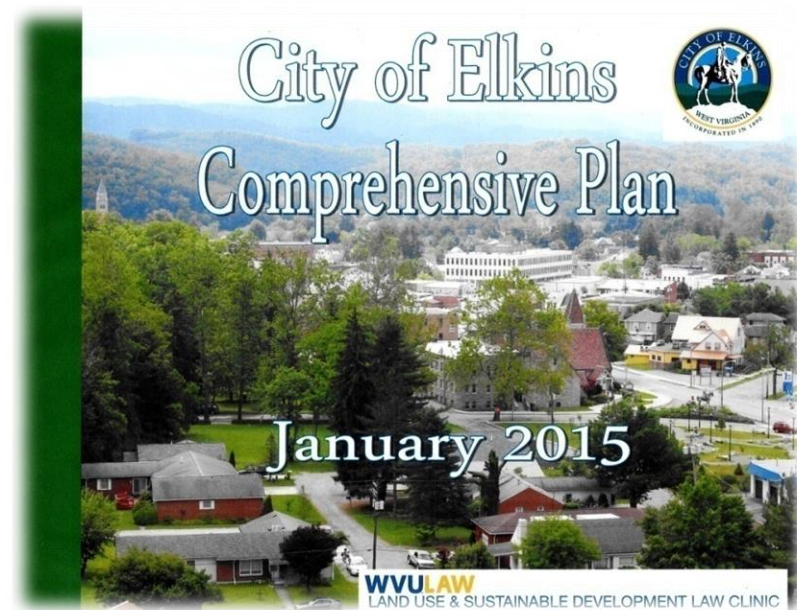


Figure 4. AIA Communities by Design - WV Conceptual “Complete Streets” Plan for Third St. from Davis Ave. to Kerens Ave.

However, none of these studies were advanced nor was any funding identified to further develop these conceptual designs.

Planning activities for the adjacent Railyard Redevelopment area and the Elkins Rail Trail Connector project appear to be more comprehensive and contemporary than anything readily available for the downtown Main Street study area.

As previously mentioned, the City adopted a Comprehensive Plan in January 2015. The Plan was developed with assistance from the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic. The plan evaluates Public Safety, Transportation, Economic Development, Land Use, and Implementation Strategies. The plan provides data useful to the development of the streetscape plan as well as affirming many of the observations made by the Elkins Main Street team.



The City is currently in the process of evaluating an update to its zoning ordinance as well as a continual process of revising the City Code sections that guide repair, replacement, and development standards for public infrastructure, including the downtown business district.

SECTION 6:**CONSTRAINTS IMPACTING ELKINS' OPPORTUNITIES**

Like many municipalities, the City of Elkins faces a number of constraints in implementing contemporary streetscape improvements in the downtown area. In no particular order, some of the obvious constraints include:

- Lack of a current comprehensive streetscape plan – As already described, a plan is needed to guide the successful implementation of a uniform plan in a phased and manageable approach
- Lack of identified monies earmarked for the streetscape – This is a time of limited budgets for all, whether a private individual, a small city, a state, or the national government. A comprehensive streetscape plan provides the starting point for development of cost estimates and future budgets for implementation
- Privately owned and maintained pedestrian zone areas – Streetscape planning in many communities is simplified because the private/public ownership property boundary is at the building face. The sidewalk and street are deemed public right-of-way and streetscape improvements and maintenance are largely a municipal function with input from the adjacent private owners. Ultimately, all costs for construction and future repair/rehabilitation are the responsibility of the municipality. However, in Elkins, the repair and maintenance of the sidewalk is the responsibility of the adjacent building owner; and in some instances, their ownership extends into the area occupied by the sidewalk
- A comparatively large study area – Many communities similar to Elkins in population and economy need to only address one street of two or three blocks in length. The nature of the Elkins downtown business district requires addressing portions of three (3) streets entailing a total of 12 blocks to connect the district and develop its full potential (with the possibility of addressing other downtown streets at some future point).
- No singular voice or advocate for streetscape improvements – Coupled with the private ownership/responsibility issue is the lack of one singular advocate for planning and implementing streetscape improvements. Seemingly there are a number of groups, committees, and individuals willing to support improvements; but there is no clearly identified or recognized authority to work with the City and the private stakeholders to advance the process. Furthermore, there seems to be no private-sector voice(s) calling on the City and Elkins Main Street to embark on the process or willing to provide financial backing or consensus building with their business colleagues to aid in the process.

Therefore, a key role of Elkins Main Street is to act as this advocate and to assist the City with developing the downtown streetscape plan; to assist with finding support in the form of funding and consensus; and to facilitate the public information processes as a plan is vetted with its many stakeholders.

SECTION 7:**PROPOSED SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM PLANS**

In light of the constraints outlined above, it is clear that the ability to move forward in a major and comprehensive fashion is limited. However, the intent is not to suggest that incremental, cost-effective improvements cannot be made that will contribute to an improved downtown streetscape in the short term. More costly and comprehensive improvements can follow as planning advances and monies are earmarked. This proposal by Elkins Main Street includes both short term and longer term recommendations for consideration by the City and the private stakeholders.

The intent of the initial short term improvements is to correct/rehabilitate existing streetscape elements to extend their functionality or eliminate abandoned elements that are beyond reasonable repair. These improvements could be implemented without extensive engineering or landscape architectural efforts and require minimal detailing, specification, and costs. The improvement efforts can be completed by City staff and/or volunteer organizations under the guidance of the City or its designated agent.

More comprehensive and costly long term improvements can follow in a phased manner after the development of appropriate bid documents (usually construction plans, specifications, and cost estimates) prepared with the assistance of professional third-party services.

For each of the streetscape elements outlined in the “Existing Conditions” section, we will provide near term and long term correction recommendations, associated cost estimates, and expected life-cycles.

Pedestrian Facilities – Sidewalks and Crosswalks**Short-Term:**Recommendations:

As described earlier, the existing concrete sidewalks are generally in a reasonable condition, excepting a few areas that show evidence of cracking and deterioration. In the initial phase, no repairs are recommended beyond the potential replacement of any sections deemed unsafe.

However, during this phase, **Elkins Main Street recommends that the City revisit *Action Step 2: Develop a sidewalk program to prioritize sidewalk improvements in Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan.*** This step recommends developing a “points system” to determine the priority areas for sidewalk replacement. It also suggests considering revisions to the current City Code (Chapter 18 – Section 18.13) relative to the maintenance of the walks to provide for cost sharing between the City and the property owner adjacent to the needed sidewalk replacement sections, rather than placing the complete burden on the

private property owner. Another option would be to deem all “downtown” sidewalks as “municipal properties” with the City taking full responsibility for their construction and maintenance. Other revisions may include provisions for assessment of the private property owner unable to pay for the improvements at the time of the construction.

Elkins Main Street would willingly assist the City in the development and evaluation of such revisions and programs.

Associated Costs:

Since the recommendations are “policy and program” oriented, rather than physical construction, no immediate costs are associated with these efforts. Assistance with the policy and programs efforts would be provided by Elkins Main Street or Main Street West Virginia program personnel.

Life-cycle Expectations:

Because this recommendation does not include any “physical” infrastructure, no life-cycle estimates are provided. Obviously, City policy and program details need to be reviewed and updated periodically to address external changes that impact internal City codes and policies.

Long-Term:

Recommendations:

In the longer term, replacement of significant portions of the downtown sidewalks will be required to address:

- failing sidewalk sections that create a pedestrian tripping or slipping hazard
- sections that have been broken or have been significantly damaged by repairs to infrastructure within the sidewalk area (such as lighting replacements, removal of tree boxes, etc.) or by the repair of underground utilities service to adjacent private property
- as part of a more comprehensive phased streetscape program

As mentioned previously, many contemporary streetscape programs replace conventional concrete flatwork with enhanced paving that may also include concrete colorants, stamping to create stone or brick-like patterns, or brick pavers. While these features create an attractive appearance, the efforts are also:

- more expensive – brick or concrete pavers (placed over a proper concrete sub-base and installed with industry recommended adhesives and sealants) generally cost 2 ½ to 3 times as much as conventional concrete placement; stamped colored concrete costs range somewhat in the middle of the two. For example, for installations of sidewalks in business districts with quantities over 100 square feet, conventional concrete will be on the order of

\$10-12 per sq. ft.; brick/concrete pavers will cost approximately \$28-30 per sq. ft.; and stamped colored concrete will average about \$20 per sq. ft.

- require additional skills to properly install; therefore, reducing the pool of qualified local contractors to compete for the work if it is bid as a public project – which also drives up costs
- pavers prone to premature failure if improperly designed and installed, resulting in freeze –thaw heaving, uneven surfaces, puddling of water/icing, growth of unwanted vegetation in developing cracks, and the collection of dirt and debris
- concrete colorants frequently fade or discolor if not properly mixed by the concrete plant
- appearance of stamp concrete can be impaired by uncontrolled cracking
- much more difficult to repair sections when necessary because of unavailability of replacement pavers or difficulty in color or stamping pattern matching

Therefore, **Elkins Main Street recommends that future sidewalk replacement in the downtown area specify a more conventional concrete flatwork, with the inclusion of brick paver “feature strips”.**

Based on the history of the City’s development and age of the adjoining buildings, conventional concrete feels appropriate and authentic. But a wide expanse of new concrete can also be somewhat glaring. By including a

feature strip of brick pavers, the expanse is broken with an attractive element that compliments the many brick buildings in the downtown. Elkins Main Street suggests a brick paver strip two feet in width, with its street-side edge located approximately two -feet from the concrete curb. This plan for the typical 12-foot downtown sidewalk would result in a section beginning at the curb that would include a 2-foot wide concrete curb and streetlight /fire hydrant/sign post strip, a 2-foot strip of brick pavers, and an 8-foot concrete strip that accommodates the pedestrian access zone and the business/building entrance zone. The paver strip would terminate at the edge of the ADA-compliant pedestrian crossing ramps at each street intersection corner. This paver strip could be widened in select zones for the placement of street furnishings if desired.

As the replacement sidewalk approaches selected intersections, it could be widened to create a curb extension or bulb-out. The curb extension would be approximately 6-feet in width and would extend approximately 15-feet from each corner and then taper back into the current 12-foot width. The curb extension could be either finished concrete or could also be clad with brick pavers for a more pronounced appearance.

If entire blocks are being reconstructed in one project phase and there is sufficient positive grade from the building face to the street elevation; sidewalk grades may be adjusted to create a greater curb height to compensate for the street

paving buildup over the years. The selected final plan needs to ensure uniformity in the sidewalks installed under phased projects or replaced at some future time.

The sidewalks for the downtown business district should be guided by properly prepared City of Elkins Standard Drawings and Specifications and performed by Permit with inspection by the City before acceptance. The Standard Drawings/Specifications can draw on WVDOT/FHWA, ADA.gov, US Access Board, and other model guidelines. These documents should address:

- appropriate subgrade and forming requirements
- concrete mix design and strength parameters
- grade requirements
- street curbing requirements
- brick paver specifications
- ADA-compliant ramps, grades, and intersection improvements, including the inclusion of tactile surfaces
- accommodation of sidewalk penetrations (light/signal pole bases, hydrants, street furnishings, etc.)
- proper construction and expansion jointing; edge and joint tooling, and fine broom surface finishing and final tooling
- approved methods for future cutting or coring to accommodate repairs/additions; including minimum repair section sizes (at existing joints) to prevent a “patched” appearance

Associated Costs:

As outlined above, the cost for conventional concrete flatwork sidewalks is significantly less expensive than more elaborate alternatives. Based on published WVDOT bid unit rates and costs from other communities in the mid-Atlantic region, an estimated square footage cost for the labor and materials for the placement and finishing of concrete in accordance with the suggested guidelines is \$10-12 per square foot. This may appear significantly higher than past City experience, especially when compared to the cost of sidewalk replacement within residential neighborhoods (often only \$3-5 per sq. ft.). Further, many communities expect a “volume” discount based on the larger quantities utilized for downtown sidewalks. These volume advantages are offset, however, by the constraints placed by the downtown business district. The contractor must factor in:

- traffic control and limited materials staging areas if street closure are not part of the project plan
- need to maintain access to all businesses and residences during the construction period which often requires:
 - staggered sequencing of concrete pours
 - placement of concrete at business entrances during non-business hours, including night-time efforts requiring additional lighting and special arrangements with concrete plant operators

- addressing concerns by individual business owners, private property owners, or citizens during the construction phase

For estimating purposes in this proposal, Elkins Main Street suggests that an appropriate lineal foot (ln. ft.) cost for the typical downtown 12-foot wide walks would be \$156 to \$180 per ln. ft. (10 sq. ft. of concrete at \$10-12/ sq. ft. plus 2 sq. ft. of brick pavers at \$28-30 per sq. ft.). Curb extensions will cost approximately an additional \$12,750 per block (four extensions per block totaling 425 sq. ft. of brick pavers at \$28-30 per sq. ft.).

Life-cycle Expectations:

Properly installed sidewalks should have a minimum functional life expectancy of at least 40 years; although experience shows that much longer life-cycles are achieved if utility repairs or changes resulting from the needs of the adjacent private properties are not required.

Properly installed paver or stamped colored concrete are projected to provide similar life-cycles, although recent experience has shown that shorter cycles are often experienced due to citizen concerns about paver movement/failure or the degradation of the concrete color or stamping details.

Lighting/Traffic Signal Equipment

Short-Term:

Recommendations:

As described in the Existing Conditions section, the current downtown lighting and traffic signal equipment is functional and consists of a combination of earlier cobra-head lighting, simpler pole-mounted lighting, and more recent “period-style” traffic signal equipment at the intersection of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Streets with Davis Avenue. **Due to the costs associated with changing the lighting to a more appropriate street-level style of equipment, Elkins Main Street recommends no changes in the near term.**

Associated Costs:

No costs, above the usual maintenance costs, are required for this recommendation.

Life-cycle Expectations:

Equipment of this nature generally has life-cycles of at least 25 years, although many installations have performed for much longer durations. Other than periodic replacement of bulbs, globes, or entire units if damaged by a vehicular accident, the equipment is usually trouble free. The newer traffic signal equipment is projected to last for at least another 20 years. The downtown lighting may be nearing the end of its efficient and functional life-cycle.

Long-Term:

Recommendations:

Because of the mixed nature of the existing equipment and lighting that may be nearing the end of its useful life, **Elkins Main Street recommends that new lighting be considered as a key element of a more comprehensive streetscape program.** Advantages of new lighting would include:

- a unified appearance of the equipment across the downtown, particularly if lighting equipment similar to the Railyard development equipment is selected
- a “first floor” level of ambient lighting that creates a brighter and safer feeling downtown
- a “high impact” aesthetic streetscape enhancement during both day-time and night-time
- energy savings by taking advantage of modern LED luminaires that also allow better “light color” control (converting existing cobra head lights with LED luminaires is possible and would also result in energy savings; but the conversion is also costly and does not result in the enhanced visual appearance and lighting levels that would come from total equipment replacement).
- replacement of wiring and circuits that may be overloaded or degrading and could result in potential electrocution injuries to City workers or citizens who may come in contact with a faulty energized light pole

- ability to include additional conduits for future needs and improvements



The disadvantages of a lighting replacement should be weighed against the advantages outlined above. These could include:

- existing wiring and post bases not likely to be re-useable for the new equipment, so significant concrete disturbance, removal of existing tree boxes, excavation for conduit banks, and negotiation of interferences with other

underground utilities to be expected during construction

- cannot generally be performed as a “stand alone” project element – must be incorporated into a more comprehensive streetscape project due to the magnitude of disruption required (significant sidewalk replacement)
- potentially the single most expensive element of a comprehensive streetscape renovation
- requires engineering expertise (electrical and highway lighting skills) to ensure that the proposed system provides adequate lighting levels and is serviceable

Currently there are about six lights per block along Davis Avenue and Third Street. Because of the lower post height and fixture style for decorative period-style lighting, additional lights (probably ten) will be required in each block. Therefore, before advancing this recommendation, careful examination must be given by the City and Elkins Main Street in conjunction with qualified engineering consultants

Associated Costs:

Cost data from other communities is difficult to obtain, but in reviewing available cost information, including discussions with lighting equipment vendors, it would appear that a good “ball park” estimate would be on the order of \$7,500 to \$10,000 per light post. This includes the

cost for the light post, luminare, globe, and fittings for banners or flags plus the installation costs for foundation preparation/construction, conduit banks, wiring, and service upgrades to power the equipment.

Life-cycle Expectations:

The minimum life-cycle would be approximately 25 years, although with proper maintenance much longer cycles (nearing 50 years) could be expected. The LED luminaires should have a life expectancy of approximately 10 years.

Landscaping and “Tree Box” Planters

Short-Term:

Recommendations:

Landscaping

A cost-effective effort with a significant aesthetic impact would be the inclusion of numerous large free-standing pots/planters of brightly colored annual flowers and vines similar to the displays utilized by our neighboring city of Buckhannon. Both the containers and plantings are reasonable inexpensive, easy to maintain if frequent watering is provided, and easily replaced if damaged. As demonstrated elsewhere, plantings of annuals provide color and interest that will mask a variety of other deficiencies or lack of streetscape elements. **The Elkins Main Street**

Design Committee is currently developing a seasonal decorating plan that will address the Spring/Summer plantings and provide supporting cost estimates and recommendations.

“Tree Box” Planters

Through numerous discussions, it has become apparent to Elkins Main Street that the existing “tree boxes” are an emotionally charged issue that has been the source of dispute and angst between various boards, committees, and community members for some time. The ultimate authority over these boxes seems to be the Elkins Tree Board and the City of Elkins. Therefore, their input will be required for any short term and long term improvements or removals.

However, after careful consideration of several factors, including the 2014 proposal from the WV Division of Forestry and evaluations of other community’s streetscape programs, **Elkins Main Street would recommend that in the near term:**

- **healthy trees** within the boxes that are of reasonable size as to not impede pedestrian traffic or impact vehicular visual sight lines, **should be pruned** to ensure that all lower limbs are at least 7-feet above the sidewalk surface, do not overhang the pedestrian walking zone or the on-street parking area, and do not encroach on any existing lighting or traffic signal equipment (no topping please)
- **trees that have become obviously too large for the box and create a visual hazard should be removed along with the box and replanted with an appropriate tree “at-grade” (with no raised planter or box) in an appropriately prepared planting bed**
- **a maintenance (including watering) program should be developed and implemented**
- **empty boxes or those in extremely poor condition should be removed** and the, the opening in the sidewalk beneath the box should be
 - patched appropriately if the box location interferes with other sidewalk mounted equipment/furnishings or impacts lines of sight near an intersection,
 - if the location is deemed appropriate for replacement, carefully cut the existing sidewalk to increase the opening to a 5-foot by 5-foot square, the soil below the walk should be loosened and amended to a depth of 3-feet (or 18-inches below the expect root-ball size, and an appropriate urban tree species of sufficient caliper should be planted

Associated Costs:

Cost associated with these near-term efforts should be minimal, particularly if volunteer assistance can be utilized. Pruning and removal of larger trees may require the assistance of an arborist and tree trimming professional with a bucket truck to reach higher limbs. Initial pruning could require more than one day and may be on the order of \$2000 to complete; subsequent annual pruning should be less than \$1500. Larger tree removal and disposal may be on the order of \$250 - \$500 each.

Watering may require weekly efforts of 5 to 8 hours during the four “summer” months and may cost approximately \$150 to \$400 depending on the personnel and equipment utilized.

Tree box removal and concrete repair may cost \$500 (\$250 for proper concrete repairs and \$250 for box and soil removal and disposal). Box removal and at-grade tree replacement cost will likely be \$750 to cover costs for box removal, concrete sawing, sub-grade soil improvement/amendment, the replacement tree, and final site clean-up and disposal.

Life-cycle Expectation:

Based on observation and the 2014 WV Division of Forestry proposal, the existing tree box contained trees will generally have a healthy life duration of approximately 10 years. Based on the nature of the box construction and the type of

materials utilized, the boxes have an expected functional life-cycle of 20-25 years and each is nearing the end of that cycle.

Long-Term:Recommendation:

Elkins Main Street recommends that in the longer term, the existing boxes be removed. Under a comprehensive streetscape plan, consideration should be given to including appropriate trees and other landscaping elements in at-grade plantings in the sidewalk (no boxes or raised planters). The replacement tree placement should be more uniform in spacing, reduced in number, and shifted away from street intersections and placed midblock and at the quarter-block locations. Dedicated funding within the City budget should be developed for the maintenance of such trees.

Associated Costs:

Properly selected trees in appropriate at-grade sidewalk planting openings that have been prepared of the development of healthy root systems will likely be on the order of \$2500 per tree if trees of sufficient caliper, proper soil improvements, and tree grates and truck guards are provided to better ensure the success of the tree planting.

Periodic pruning, watering, and care will be required and will generate costs similar to those outlined under the Near-Term scenario.

Life-cycle Expectations:

Even with the extra effort taken to promote healthy street trees under the conditions outlined above, the life expectancy of these trees is likely to be no longer than 15 years before their canopy is such that it has outgrown the available air space within the streetscape and must be removed and replaced to prevent the loss of vehicular sight lines or encroachment on the pedestrian zone.

Furthermore, the environmental conditions (temperatures, moisture regime, and presence of de-icing materials and vehicular exhaust fumes) often reduce the life-span of urban trees.

Street Furnishings and Signage (Non –Business Related)**Short-Term:**Recommendations:

Elkins Main Street recommends that these two items be coupled for consideration of appropriate improvements, as much of the clutter in the existing streetscape is the result of the aggregation of these elements over time. A cost-effective, high impact improvement would be the reduction in the total number of posts remaining from the parking meter program, removal of the numerous and redundant “free parking” signs and regulatory signs that are faded or no longer appropriate, and replacement of the oversized trash receptacles. By undertaking this effort, it is believed that a significant positive visual impact to the existing

streetscape can be realized in a reasonably cost-effective manner. The improvements will especially serve first-time or infrequent visitors to Elkins; but may also encourage longtime citizens to pause and look around their own city.

Currently, many of the downtown parking meter posts are topped with a sign allowing two-hour courtesy parking or with non-functioning meters. Broken meters are non-revenue generating and can confuse users wishing to park in the vicinity. The presence of the abandoned meter posts impedes the ability to clear sidewalks after winter storms and pose a hazard to pedestrians, particularly during icing events. The posts topped with the many repeated “Free 2-hour Parking” courtesy of the City of Elkins or others are redundant and contribute to the visual clutter along the streetscape. The primary function they now serve is to delineate parallel parking spaces along the curb; a function that can be accomplished in a less obtrusive manner.

Elkins Main Street recommends a near term program to remove a number of these elements in a cost-effective manner, including:

- **create a simple inventory** to identify the damaged and unused meter posts, damaged or unnecessary signs, and existing trash receptacle and other street furnishing locations.
- **create renderings or images that depicted the “before” and “after” appearance** of the streetscape

with the posts, unneeded signs, and clutter removed

- **develop appropriate methodologies** to remove the meter posts at grade by sawing and/or grinding and filling the remaining opening with expansive-cement concrete or non-shrink grout
- **develop alternatives for delineating parking spaces** formerly denoted by the posts, including striping, reflectors, or other alternatives;
- **consider leaving selected posts** in place for bearing signs to indicate parking spaces reserved for handicapped placarded vehicles or loading zones
- **develop recommendations for properly capping and painting those posts left in place** to provide a more finished appearance and reduce the hazards of cuts or punctures to individuals making contact with the top edge of the post
- **evaluate options for the selective utilization of other existing posts as bicycle lock bollards, mounting posts for trash receptacles, and, as many are currently used, for flag standards for national holiday flag installations**
- **determine the potential for recycling the posts and capturing some revenue to offset other related costs**



- **perform a pilot project** along a selected block to demonstrate and perfect the methodology and finished appearance. If the pilot project is deemed acceptable by all interested stake holders, **develop a budget and schedule for removal all designated**

posts and identify potential volunteer groups or organizations that can conduct the efforts under guidance of the Main Street organization or the City of Elkins.

The effort to complete the inventory of meter posts provides an excellent opportunity to develop a concurrent inventory of the existing signs in the study area and to prepare a plan for appropriate signage throughout the area. Improved signing schemes are often one of the earliest and most cost-effective methods to have an impact on the visual quality of a streetscape.

Signs generally fall into two categories – regulatory and informational.

Regulatory signing – SPEED LIMIT, STOP, YIELD, etc. – are generally controlled by the FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and are extremely specific in the required size, shape, color, posting heights and distances, and reflectivity requirements. Any suggested changes to any such signs in the study area would require input and approval from the City of Elkins and/or the WVDOT.

Informational signage requirements are less strenuous and can be also be utilized as an important element in the streetscape. Such signs are often referred to as “way-finding” signs as their primary purpose is to provide directional information to visitors seeking to find specific facilities or opportunities to try new venues.



By carefully choosing colors, logos, fonts, and shapes; these signs help to establish a theme for the downtown district and can direct visitors to other areas or facilities outside of the immediate area. Sign companies, familiar with the design and manufacturing of such signs, can provide assistance in selecting appropriate sign sizes and fonts to ensure legibility and recognition. Local artists, graphic designers, and/or Davis and Elkins staff/students could be called upon to assist in the development of a theme if a current theme or color scheme is not available.

For example, a way-finding sign design could be collaboratively developed between Elkins Main Street, the City, RCDA, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and other stakeholders to provide appropriate signing to direct visitors to downtown and surrounding facilities including (in no particular order):

- Darden House
- The Depot Welcome Center
- Dining
- Shopping
- Public Restrooms
- Library
- City Hall
- Off-Street Parking Areas
- Darden Mill and Museum
- “Quilt Trail” Locations

- YMCA

Similar styled signage could further direct visitors to other locations such as:

- Hospital
- Davis and Elkins College
- City Park
- Wees Historic District
- Randolph County Arts Center
- Federal and County Courthouses

Courtesy signs promoting “Free On-Street Parking” areas could be strategically placed in lieu of the multiple “Free Parking” signs proposed to be removed during the meter post removal. Similarly, designated “No Parking – Loading Zones” could be placed at appropriate locations based on discussion/agreement with adjacent business owners.

Associated Costs:

Development of the inventory and plan for selective removal of meter posts, signs, and extraneous clutter could be developed by Main Street volunteers in conjunction with the City at no cost. The recommended one-block pilot project could likewise be performed at little or no cost other than any rental costs associated with appropriate tools to remove any posts (saw and grind the post flush with the sidewalk) and materials to properly backfill the opening in the walks. From these

efforts, detailed estimates can be developed for completing similar efforts in the great downtown area.

Minor costs would result from the selective reuse of some of the posts for handicapped parking signs, no-parking zone delineation, flag standards, bicycle bollards, and trash receptacles. These cost items include black satin paint to paint the posts to match the newer downtown traffic signal equipment, post caps, bike bollards, and trash receptacles. The costs for paint and caps are minimal and this work could also be performed by volunteers under the direction of the City or Main Street acting as its agent. It is anticipated that bicycle bollards and trash receptacles will cost between \$100 - \$200 each (with approximately six of each required per block or \$1200-\$2400 total per block).

The development of the plan for informational signs could also be completed at minimal costs and be led by Main Street personnel. The cost for the actual signs will be dependent on the complexity of the design (customized for Elkins or “off-the-shelf styles), the size of the signs, and the number of each version. These costs and supporting funding would be determined and presented before any orders were placed.

Life-cycle Expectations:

Improvements under this recommendation should have an extended life-cycle and require minimal maintenance following installation or completion. Many of the

elements acquired and installed under this recommendation can be salvaged and re-utilized should a more comprehensive streetscape program be undertaken in the future.

Long-Term

Recommendations:

As mentioned above, **many of the short-term improvements outlined above could be reused under a more comprehensive streetscape program.** Except for the meter posts, most of the items could be removed, stored, and reinstalled under a comprehensive program.

Future additions could include informational kiosks at an appropriate downtown location or multiple locations to provide a schematic map and directions to specific business locations and public services. Signs/placards could also be developed for key features highlighted in a downtown walking tour guide.

Standardized street furnishings (benches and related hardscaping) that compliments the selected streetscape design and materials can be selected at this time and their appropriate placement included in the plans and specifications for the project or could be installed as a stand-alone addition to the improved existing streetscape.

Associated Costs:

Material and labor costs for kiosks and related improvements can vary depending on the size, primary materials, and complexity of the design, including electrical power requirements. For estimating purposes, assume each kiosk at \$2,500 - \$5,000. To be of value, the information displayed in the kiosk must be monitored regularly and updated as needed. Assistance from the RCCVB or the Chamber of Commerce should be available.

Similarly, street furnishings, depending on the materials and manufacturing details will range in costs from \$500 to \$1,500 each.

Life-cycle Expectations:

Life cycles for elements such as these should be on the order of 10-15 years.

Building Facades

Short-Term/Long-Term

Recommendations:

The recommendations from Elkins Main Street relative to Building Façade improvements are similar in both the short and longer term. Because these recommendations impact private property, they can only be considered recommendations or suggestions. Elkins Main Street has a vested interest in maintaining the appearance and repair of

the buildings in the downtown business area as a part of our goal to encourage redevelopment and sustainability of the downtown. Through the Main Street program, design assistance can be provided to the private property owners at no charge to encourage appropriate rehabilitation of these structures while encouraging multiple uses for retail, commercial, professional, dining/entertainment and residential purposes.

Elkins Main Street recommends that it and the Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission work together with the Elkins City Planning Commission to initially develop recommended design guidelines for appropriate exterior façade improvements in the downtown area. These guidelines could be codified as standards at a later time after they have been successfully utilized and accepted by the downtown property owners.

Likewise, future revisions to the City’s sign codes may be in order to ensure that future business signs, exterior lighting, canopies, or other façade improvements are complimentary with the redeveloped downtown streetscape.

Parking

Short-Term

Recommendations:

Elkins Main Street recommends that during the short term, the following improvements be implemented in conjunction with the other near term recommendations

- **on-street parking spaces be delineated with painted stripes** in conjunction with the existing meter posts removals
- **“Free Parking” informational signs be placed in prominent locations** to inform visitors of both on-street and off-street parking options
- **Efforts be made to encourage downtown employees to utilize the off-street parking lots**

Life-cycle Expectations:

Striping to delineate parking spaces will require periodic maintenance similar to crosswalk and roadway striping. Parking information signs will also have a life-cycle like other municipal signage.

Long-Term

Recommendations:

Elkins Main Street recommends that over the longer term, the City plan a comprehensive improvement to the parking lot located between Railroad Avenue and City Hall to provide a more inviting parking environment for visitors, downtown employees, and citizens. In addition to the paving and lighting improvements discussed in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, stormwater controls employing “green engineering” concepts such as bio-swales, rain gardens, and permeable pavement could be incorporated. The existing garden could be removed and replaced with properly constructed and graded gardens and landscaping

improvements that will address both the quantity and quality of stormwater discharge from the lot. The improved lot could serve as a location for one of the informational kiosks discussed previously. By incorporating contemporary “green engineering” concepts, it can also serve as a demonstration site to show developers what the City of Elkins will expect as good development in the future. It could also serve as a model for the future improvements to the City’s “Seneca Mall” lot and the RCDA’s Railyard parking lot.

Associated Costs:

While the costs associated with this improvement will significantly exceed a simple “chip and seal” treatment, the long-term durability of the lot and the overall aesthetic and safety improvements from the project will balance out some of the cost differential. In addition to the material costs associated with the actual construction efforts, engineering expertise from civil engineers and landscape architects will be required to properly size and specified the suggested improvements. Costs for such a project need to be determined and will require input from a professional engineering consultant or knowledgeable agency or organization.

Life-cycle Expectations;

The improved parking lot should have a useful life of at least 40 years. Depending on the selected paving materials, repaving may be required at some earlier point – 10-15

years if conventional asphalt paving is selected to reduce upfront project costs; up to 40 years for properly installed porous concrete or pavers over a stable and suitable sub-grade and base.

Rendering of the Conceptual Comprehensive Streetscape

If the comprehensive streetscape improvements outlined above were adopted and constructed, the final appearance would be similar to that developed during the earlier “AIA Communities by Design” project. The plan and profile renderings on the next page provide a conceptual view of a typical downtown block and the elements that would comprise the new “streetscape” in its entirety. The block selected for this rendering is along Third Street between Davis and Kerens Avenues. This rendering also included “Complete Street” concepts including dedicated bicycle lanes between the on-street parking and the traffic lanes.

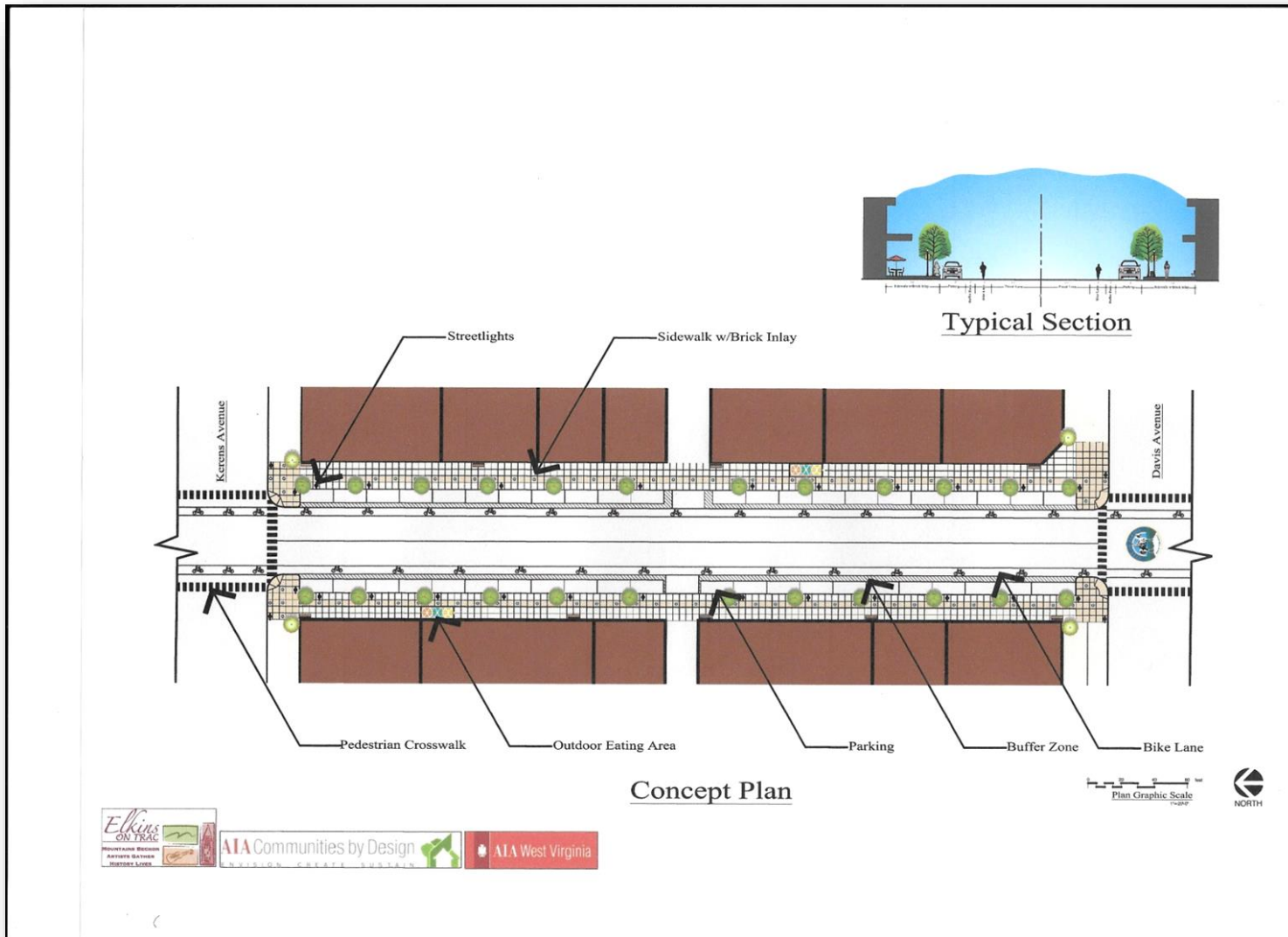


Figure 5. Conceptual rendering of a comprehensive streetscape for Third Street between Davis and Kerens Ave. from AIA WV.

SECTION 8:**SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM COST ESTIMATES**

In the preceding discussion, considerable information has been given relative to short term and long term options and associated costs. This section will provide a summary of the estimated overall costs for advancing these options.

SHORT-TERM – 3 TO 24 MONTHS

Improvements recommended by Elkins Main Street for the short-term generally are low in cost, entail simple efforts, and require limited planning and minimal or no professional or technical guidance. The most significant costs associated with the short-term efforts will be for the acquisition of appropriate planting containers (freestanding pots or planters) and suitable planting soil. These items can be used for several seasons. Elkins Main Street is currently seeking funding options for these items. Other costs would include the annual plants to be placed within the pots/planters, any professional arborist costs for street tree pruning/removal, paint and post caps, and selected street furnishings. Some of these costs could be covered by donations from participating local businesses or civic groups. Most of the labor to perform the suggested improvements would be donated volunteer efforts under the direction of the City or Elkins Main Street.

It is currently estimated that these costs would be **less than \$10,000 per block (or \$100,000 to \$120,000 for the 12-block area)**. These costs could be phased over two years by focusing on Third Street

between Railroad and Kerens Avenues and Davis Avenue between Second and Fourth Streets in the first year (4 blocks or \$40,000) and the remainder of the area in year two. Such phasing would address the “central business district” first while refining the materials list, methodologies and desired appearance that then could be scaled to the remaining areas.

LONG-TERM – GREATER THAN 24 MONTHS

Improvements recommended by Elkins Main Street for the long-term are obviously greater in scope and resulting costs. The magnitude of these comprehensive streetscape improvements exceeds the in-house capabilities of Elkins Main Street and the City of Elkins to fully plan and complete. Therefore, a Request For Proposal (RFP) process will be necessary and it must be developed, solicited, and awarded in compliance with the State of West Virginia 5-G guidelines. Elkins Main Street, in conjunction with others, can assist the City with the RFP development should the City desire.

Elkins Main Street would recommend that the initial comprehensive streetscape plan be limited to the primary downtown business corridor along Davis Avenue extending from the river to the intersection with Fifth Street (5 blocks), along Third Street from Railroad Avenue to Randolph Avenue (4 blocks), and along Railroad Avenue from First to Fourth Streets (3 blocks). Once a comprehensive plan for this area is completed, it could then be broken into multiple phases based on the overall costs, available

monies, and priorities set by the City, Main Street, and the downtown business community to get the greatest initial impact.

For example:

- Third from Railroad to Kerens (including pedestrian improvements to Railroad at the Depot Welcome Center and the creation of a link between the Railyard and the Downtown) as Phases IA and IB
- Davis between Second and Fourth as Phases 2A and 2B
- Davis between the river and Second as Phase 3
- Davis between Fourth and Fifth as Phase 4
- Third between Kerens and Randolph as Phase 5
- Railroad between First and Fourth as Phase 6

For estimating purposes, Elkins Main Street considers a “comprehensive streetscape improvement” for each block to include:

- Reconstruction of approximately 700 In. ft. of sidewalk - \$110,000 to \$125,000
- Curb extensions along Third at Railroad, Davis, and Kerens at an additional cost of \$12,750 for these three blocks
- Installation of ten (10) decorative period-style lights with required conduit and electrical service equipment - \$75,000 - \$100,000
- Planting of six (6) “at-grade tree and landscaping beds - \$15,000

- Street Furnishings including trash receptacles, bicycle bollards/racks, benches, and other appropriate elements plus “way-finding” signs and pro-rated kiosks - \$7,500

Therefore, an estimated cost per block of comprehensive improvements would be \$207,500 to \$260,250, less any contingency and engineering costs.

The entire seven (12) block study would cost, therefore, between \$2,490,000 and \$3,123,000. A contingency of 10% to cover unanticipated costs plus an additional 5% for professional service fees should also be included, bringing the revised totals to \$2,863,500 to \$3,591,450.

For planning purposes at this stage, Elkins Main Street suggests that it would be prudent to round-up the cost to \$2,500,000 and \$3,600,000 (approximately \$200,000 to \$300,000 per block or \$425,000 to \$600,000 for each of the six suggested phases) to complete the outlined comprehensive streetscape recommendations.

SECTION 9:**SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

The scope and costs for a comprehensive downtown streetscape improvements project may initially seem daunting. But several things should be considered before discounting the goal.

First Steps

First and foremost, Elkins Main Street believes that a number of cost-effective efforts causing a noticeable impact can be accomplished in the short term. The results of these efforts can then be leveraged to develop consensus toward the larger more comprehensive project.

Planning

The comprehensive streetscape plan could draw significantly from the development plan guiding the Railyard redevelopment area. Much work already appears to have been completed to achieve the current look and feel of this area. Building on this existing plan would provide continuity and uniformity in drawing visitors into the greater downtown area to explore its historic, retail, and entertainment opportunities. If the Railyard plan was chosen as the basis for an expanded plan, it should significantly reduce professional service fees related to the plan development; but still allow the additions desired to differentiate the downtown business district from the adjoining Railyard. Selection of a qualified professional services consultant with streetscaping experience (civil

engineering, landscape architecture, and graphics expertise) comparable to the needs of Elkins is critical.

Funding

As the more comprehensive plan is developed, efforts can begin to identify sources, including public/private partnerships, to fund the project in a multiple phase manner. Elkins Main Street and/or the City of Elkins should explore potential funding opportunities that may be available through the most recent Federal transportation funding act - Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The program is currently in the development phase and is yet to be implemented, but allowable projects will include improvements of pedestrian, bicyclist, and non-motorized transportation improvements and Safe-Routes-To-School efforts. With the seating of a new administration in Washington, D.C. in 2017 and their promises of a robust “infrastructure improvements program”, additional federal monies may become available that could be applied to the development and construction of these improvements. Early and continued contact with WVDOT District 8 and the Charleston headquarters, along with support/prompting from state and US delegates, congressmen, and senators should be initiated promptly to learn the details and get into the funding queue if appropriate to these efforts.

Investigating assistance from the WV AIA Liveable Communities program; appropriate WVU architectural/landscape architectural/planning departments; and the WV Municipal League may provide access to limited funding and/or technical assistance. Similarly, the WV Main Street Program office and the WV Department Office should continue to be considered for additional support and resources, if available.

Grant funding is limited and competitive, but should be pursued. Local Benedum and Tucker Community funding should be investigated. Contact with the National Main Street and West Virginia Main Street programs may yield leads for new sources. Finally, the growing importance of Public/Private Partnerships must be given consideration. Early in the process, Elkins Main Street and the City of Elkins must identify potential partners and work diligently to garner their support.

Stakeholder Involvement

For a comprehensive streetscape improvement project to succeed, the City with support from Elkins Main Street must engage all stakeholders – downtown businesses, downtown property owners, concerned citizens, downtown organizations, and the larger taxpaying community – to educate them on the benefits and costs likely to result from such major efforts. Successful communities have utilized a variety of public relations/consensus building efforts including:

- Multiple public information meetings
- Surveys of public/business/property owners to determine opinions and perceptions

- Branding the efforts with a slogan, logo, or icon to promote the project
- Positive media coverage
- One-on-one meetings with key individuals or groups
- A dedicated website/Facebook campaign that is frequently updated and provides a broad scope of factual information to counter rumors and opponent messages as well as schedules for upcoming meetings and the phased construction program
- A willingness to consider reasonable changes suggested by the stakeholders

Public Information Efforts During the Construction Phase

The involvement and public relations activities do not end once the construction contracts are awarded. Downtown public works projects of this magnitude inevitably result in unanticipated issues, change orders, cost increases, and schedule delays. Many of these sorts of issues can be handled by assistance from the design professional who should be retained through the construction process to provide construction contract administration; testing and inspection services; contractor pay requests review and approvals; and oversight of the “As-Built Records” creation. They will also often be the first line of defense when citizen complaints arise.

Senior City personnel also need to be assigned and must be familiar with the project details and progress. Amicable negotiation of citizen complaints to maintain a positive perception of the project by the greater community is critical, particularly for phased, multi-

year projects that can begin to “wear” on citizens after a couple of years of temporary street closures, sometimes inconvenient or limited access to downtown businesses and services, and their failure to see the importance to the overall community that will result from downtown revitalization.

Finally, there will need to be the understanding by both the City of Elkins and Elkins Main Street that their efforts will be the brunt of dispute and complaint for an extended period as the project is shaped, constructed, and unveiled. Patience, tolerance, and the pride in public service will be a must.

SECTION 10:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE PAGE

The undersigned members of Elkins Main Street, Inc. hereby represent that its Board of Directors has reviewed this document and concur with its contents and recommendations. Furthermore, by a vote of the Board at its December 6, 2016 Board meeting, it was agreed that this document can be released to the appropriate stakeholders on a schedule yet to be determined to begin public presentation and discussion of the vision proposed herein.

Michael Bell, President Date

Maryann Durland, Chair-Design Committee Date

Karen Carper, Executive Director Date