

## COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

The purpose of this section of the plan is to give significant importance to the physical appearance of the Town of Woodstock. Woodstock has been involved in a Business Enhancement Plan Study since March of 1999 to assist in analyzing the business climate of the community. It is an important aspect of the Town's future to improve and enhance the physical environment of the community.

The responsibility for developing plans rests mainly with the Town, but will also require cooperative joint efforts of the County and the Town. The lawns of the County Courthouses and Lawyer's Row are such County/Town areas in need of physical enhancement. It is beneficial to all to work together in designing and implementing plans for revitalization.

Let's look at the Town in terms of designated areas as defined in preceding chapters. While each area has unique qualities, it is important to formulate a distinctive, unifying theme throughout the Town. Objectives toward positive change for each area are stated. Policies and action steps for strengthening the identity of the townscape are noted in this chapter.

### **DOWNTOWN AREA**

The downtown area is centered on Main Street between Foundry Street and South Street and on Commerce Street between North Street and Spring Street. Almost all properties, both business and residential are located in the Woodstock Downtown Historic District, which has been placed on the State and National Historic Registers. This is an honorary designation, with no Town regulations to protect historic buildings in the district. The State and Federal governments have no authority to control private actions in regard to historic buildings.

We have a valuable asset considering the numbers and value of properties in this designated district. In terms of preservation, identity and heritage within the Downtown area, Woodstock has the potential to flourish.

### **HISTORIC DISTRICT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

- To identify and encourage the preservation of significant historic properties, and consider ways to protect them as a community asset to the extent practical and consistent with the character of a progressive downtown.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Enhance the Town's aesthetic character through preservation of its heritage.
- To maintain and enhance the Town's publicly owned historic buildings and grounds through joint cooperation with the County.
- Educate the public on the economic benefits of preservation and restoration, as well as the aesthetic benefits.

## POLICIES

- Provide tax incentives or other creative incentives for merchants to improve their facades and signage.
- Establish design guidelines for the historic districts part of our zoning ordinance, or adopt a separate set of design guidelines for use in the review of zoning applications, subdivision, and site plans. This would include signage, facades, attractive architecture, landscaping, rehab of existing structures, and commercial and residential infill guidelines.
- Establish demolition permit applications within the historic district. Have a demolition delay period of 3 months at which time the Town could explore other options through civic groups, public agencies and interested citizens. Options could include relocation or recommendations for acquisition by public or private bodies or agencies.
- Consider establishing a review board for construction and design improvements to the historic district.
- Provide mini parks and plazas in the downtown area for public events.
- Eliminate distracting elements from the Main Street essence.

## ACTION PROGRAM

- Set up a program to retain and improve existing businesses with incentives to reinvest, e.g. real estate tax breaks on building rehabilitation and on new construction.
- Hire professional expertise to develop a master plan for the streetscape of the downtown area. Include trees, planters for flowers and shrubs, special sidewalk and crosswalk paving, attractive street lights, benches and banners.
- Work with the County in establishing a "Courthouse Square" event space, and a downtown "Memory Walk" in the Lawyer's Row area.

- As part of a long range effort, embark on a program of systematically placing utility lines and structures underground or behind the buildings. At major intersections, freestanding traffic signals should be installed to reduce the visual clutter.
- Reduce the number of public signs by eliminating those which are not necessary.
- Establish a facade improvement grant program as part of a Main Street program.
- Work with property owners of vacant storefronts and encourage volunteer participation for window displays.
- Encourage public art ; allocate town funds for art, providing financial support for art groups and hosting public art competitions.
- Work with the local banks to set up a no or low-interest loan pool for building improvements.

## **NORTH AREA**

The North area is centered on Main Street and North of the Woodstock shopping center to the corporate limit on Rte 11.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

- Enhance the visual quality of the approach into Woodstock on the North end of town, making it appealing and inviting for the traveler as well as the residents of the Town.

### **POLICIES:**

- Establish incentives for North end businesses to clean up and maintain their properties in good order.
- Establish guidelines for new development to include extension of the sidewalk systems.
- Consider design guidelines for future construction in this area leading into the historic district.

### **ACTION PROGRAM:**

- Design and implement the northern gateway project. Design and implement an attractive welcome sign. Make sure that roadside landscaping is carefully designed to remain attractive year-round. Deciduous and evergreen trees and seasonal shrubbery to provide attractive vistas with minimal maintenance requirements.
- Continue with an established design theme for landscaping into the downtown area, also including lighting and sidewalk improvements.
- Provide good pedestrian crosswalk conditions from new County office building to west side of Main Street and to the shopping center.
- Encourage the participation of the northern businesses to work on the cleanup and maintenance of their properties, and to take ownership of the improvements in the area.
- Design and implement a significant new sign for The Woodstock Tower.

## **SOUTH AREA**

The South area is centered on Main Street extending north to Muhlenburg Ford, and south of the Shenandoah Square shopping center to Hoover Road.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Establish a pleasant gateway from the South entrance into Town. Reduce the visual clutter, yet direct travelers to different parts of town. Provide for safe walking.

### **POLICIES:**

- Establish incentives for businesses to rehab their properties through landscaping and facade improvements.
- Establish design guidelines for future construction development.

### **ACTION PROGRAM**

- Provide street trees that are compatible with the downtown streetscape theme.
- Improve existing and establish new sidewalks where needed.

- Design and implement an attractive sign and landscape improvements at the Rt. 42, Rt. 11 intersection that would direct travelers to different parts of town.
- Improve by new design, the existing Welcome to Woodstock sign at the southern town limits boundary through relocation and landscaping.
- Link to the sidewalk system in town.
- Enforce sign regulations.

## **WEST AREA**

The west area is centered on the I-81 /Rt. 42 interchange, east to Ox Road.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To enhance the west area entry into Woodstock by promoting an attractive and distinctive image, and encourage visitors to visit the rest of town beyond fast-food restaurants and Walmart shopping.

### **ACTION PROGRAM**

- Design and implement an I-81 interchange sign for Woodstock, featuring landscaping and directional signage. This sign could direct people to the historic district through the use of "trail-blazer" signs, to draw visitors through the town.
- Design and implement a distinctive feature sign at the Rt. 42/ Rt. 11 intersection, with special landscape treatment with evergreen trees and seasonal variation in shrubbery and plantings.
- Design and locate a structure to hold event banners across Main street.
- Design and implement a continuous streetscape enhancement stemming from the downtown streetscape design that carries throughout the west area of town with landscaping and lighting.
- Improve sidewalk system connecting hotels and retail outlets, improving pedestrian access. Also, install distinctive crosswalks and pedestrian scaled lighting in the fast-food areas, making it safer for pedestrian accessibility.

## SUMMARY

For community appearance enhancements to be successful, the suggested actions need to be implemented. A recommended action plan for the next 10 years, which includes some of these appearance issues, is outlined in the Town's Business Enhancement Plan Study, available in the Town Office.