

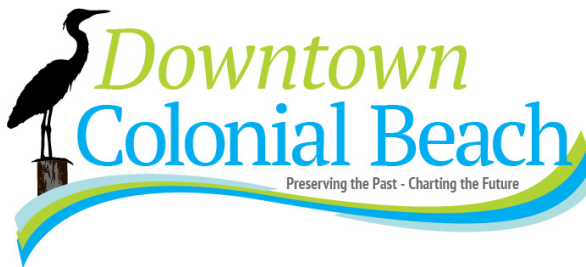
# Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan



December 2025

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Previous Efforts.....	5
Public Engagement.....	6
<b>Plan Recommendations</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Key Multimodal Routes: Requirements.....	11
Category 1: Connectivity .....	12
Category 2: Placemaking & Wayfinding .....	18
Category 3: Economic Development & Tourism.....	25
Category 4: Implementation Ideas .....	29
<b>Existing Conditions Analysis</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Market Assessment</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Development Opportunities Assessment</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix A: Glossary of Terms</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix B: Public Engagement</b> .....	<b>52</b>
Summer 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Summary .....	52
Fall 2025 Public Meeting Summary.....	55
Fall 2025 Survey Results .....	57
<b>Appendix C: Funding Mechanisms</b> .....	<b>62</b>



# Executive Summary

The Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming Downtown Colonial Beach into a safer, more walkable, and economically vibrant destination. Developed through extensive public engagement and informed by previous planning efforts, the plan outlines strategies across four key areas: **Connectivity, Placemaking & Wayfinding, Economic Development & Tourism, and Implementation**. Connectivity strategies include improving sidewalks and ADA accessibility, expanding bike and golf cart infrastructure, calming traffic, and enhancing trolley service. Placemaking & wayfinding strategies focus on streetscape upgrades, public art, and standardized wayfinding signage to create a cohesive identity. Economic development & tourism strategies aim to support locally owned businesses, incentivize redevelopment, and promote year-round tourism through branding and events. The plan also identifies funding mechanisms and implementation steps to maximize grant competitiveness and community involvement. Together, these actions position Colonial Beach to strengthen multimodal connections, attract visitors, and foster a resilient, people-focused economy while preserving its unique waterfront character.

Reconfigure the Colonial Ave/McKinney Blvd intersection with a roundabout.

Fill “curb cuts” along sidewalks where curb cuts are no longer needed.

## Connectivity

Add pedestrian-scale lighting along Washington Ave and throughout Downtown.

Standardize existing wayfinding signage.

## Placemaking & Wayfinding

Strengthen and expand year-round attractions.

## Economic Development & Tourism

Pilot a façade improvement grant program for business owners in Downtown.

## Implementation Ideas

Establish a volunteer “community service” team.

Select a pilot location to test “tactical urbanism” concepts and evaluate their potential for permanent improvements.

# Introduction

Colonial Beach is a historic waterfront town with a compact downtown that serves as the heart of its community and tourism economy. While recent improvements have laid a foundation, challenges remain, including narrow or missing sidewalks, inconsistent signage, and underutilized parcels. This Downtown Connectivity Plan builds on prior initiatives and community input to create a vision for a vibrant, accessible, and welcoming downtown. By integrating transportation, placemaking, and economic development strategies, the plan seeks to enhance the daily experience for residents, attract visitors year-round, and support local businesses. It provides a framework for physical improvements, policy actions, and funding opportunities that will help Colonial Beach celebrate its unique character while preparing for sustainable growth.



Figure 1. Project schedule

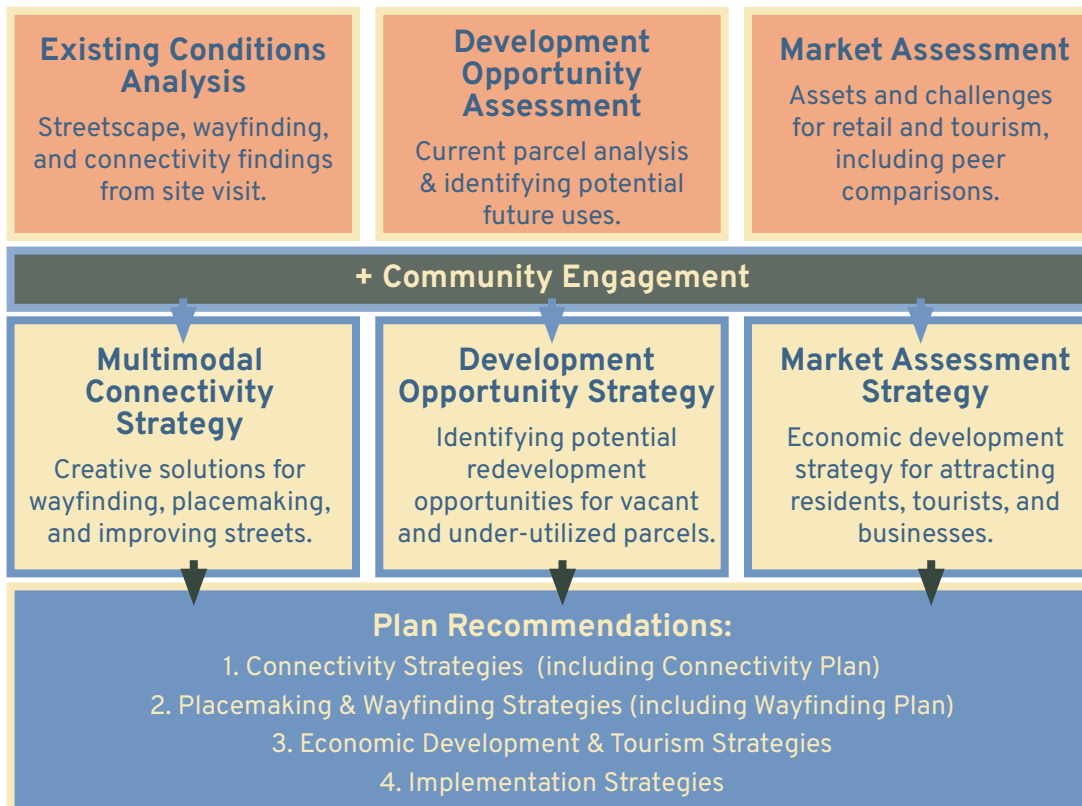


Figure 2. Plan configuration

# Previous Efforts

This plan draws from and adds onto previous plans and efforts that Colonial Beach has been involved in.

## **Business District Revitalization Plan (2013)**

Through the town's comprehensive plan update in 2009, the need for economic development was identified as the key issue facing the community. The plan highlighted a number of strategies to encourage economic development, one of which was to seek assistance from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through their Community Development Block Grant - Business District Revitalization Planning Grant. Colonial Beach was awarded the planning grant in 2010. Grant funds in the amount of \$35,000 were awarded to the town to conduct a market analysis, engage the community in a visioning process and from those develop a comprehensive economic restructuring plan for the town's historic business district.

## **VCU Market Study (2021)**

The town of Colonial Beach invited graduate students from Virginia Commonwealth University's Urban and Regional Planning Program to conduct an economic survey to serve as an insight for the town's economic future and to inform its downtown Transformation planning efforts with the DHCD. The students conducted extensive community engagement reaching approximately 300 people and conducted in-depth quantitative competitive market analyses of goods and services identified in the engagement process.

## **Comprehensive Plan 2020-2030 (2021)**

The Comprehensive Plan is mandated by State Law. It is a summary of ideas, needs, and priorities directly from the citizenry of the Town collected through surveys, neighborhood, and organizational membership meetings. It includes a careful analysis of existing and future conditions and lays out an action plan for improvements and developments that will affect local land use.

## **Downtown Parking Report (2022)**

This report presents recommendations for revised parking regulations and infrastructure that balance the needs of existing residents and new commercial and residential growth, encourage multimodal transportation, and are easy to understand, implement and enforce.

## **Parks Master Plan (2023)**

The Parks, Recreation and Leisure Service Master Plan provides an assessment of the Town of Colonial Beach's parks and recreation system through an evaluation of its parks, recreation programs, open space, trails, beaches, facilities, and amenities. The Master Plan provides a road map for ensuring an appropriate balance of facilities and amenities throughout the community for the next 10 years.

## **Tourism Action Plan (2024)**

This tourism action plan provides measurable goals that take both tourism growth and local quality of life in mind. The goals of this plan are framed to coincide with the objectives of Virginia's State Tourism Development Plan. In 2019, VTC completed a long-term strategic plan to help increase tourism visitation and spending across the Commonwealth. This plan is titled "Drive 2.0," and builds on the existing findings and conclusions from the 2013 Statewide Tourism Plan.

# Public Engagement

## Summer 2025

On June 26, 2025, Downtown Colonial Beach (DCB) invited a number of key stakeholders to attend an afternoon engagement session with a presentation and small group discussion led by Timmons Group and their subconsultant 3TP. The presentation covered topics related to the existing conditions analysis of the transportation and parking network, a market assessment of the current Colonial Beach area, and a review of development opportunities at properties along Washington Avenue and Colonial Avenue.

See Appendix A for a report from this meeting.



Figure 3. Breakout session during the stakeholder meeting

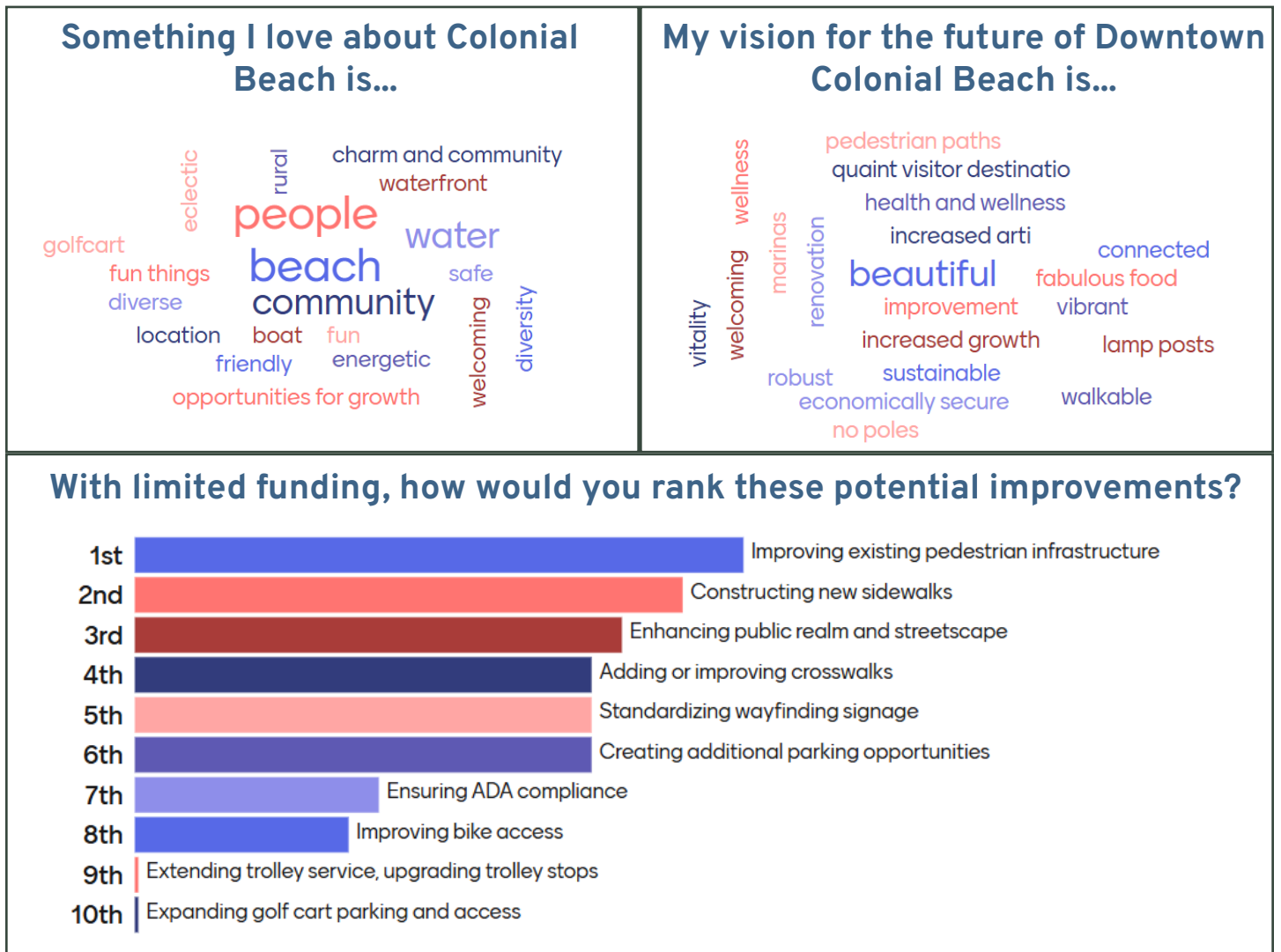


Figure 4. Questions answered by stakeholder meeting participants during the meeting via Mentimeter.

## Fall 2025

Following the completion of the Draft Plan, the project team hosted a public engagement event on October 6, 2025 at Colonial Beach Elementary School to kick off the second phase of engagement. Timmons Group led a presentation with Q&A and interactive boards for the attendees that were present. Participants used dot stickers to vote for their favorite draft recommendations and sticky notes to leave additional comments. A survey was open to members of the public from October 6 to October 31, 2025 that asked for community preferences on connectivity goals, visions for the future of Colonial Beach, and additional open-ended questions relating to the plan. In addition to a paper version of the survey provided at the engagement event, participants were also able to access the survey digitally. The results from the engagement event and the survey helped to prioritize goals and recommendations in the Final Plan document. This phase of engagement engaged more than 1% of the Colonial Beach population.

See Appendix B for a report from this meeting and for detailed results from the survey.

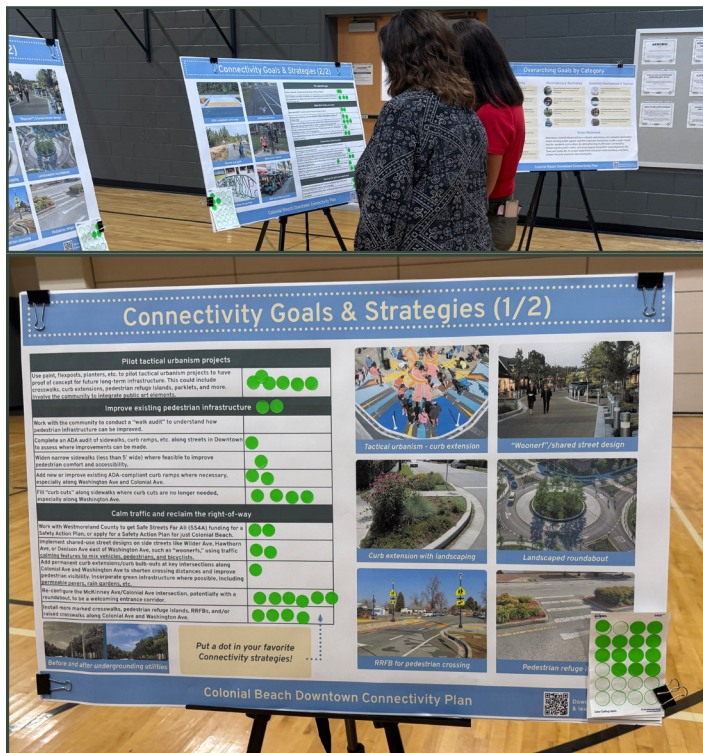


Figure 5. Participants at the public engagement event put dot stickers on their favorite recommendations from the Draft Plan



Figure 6. Presentation given to stakeholders

## Select Survey Comments

“Making sure residents and visitors have signage to help them know where to go and easy transition & low-impact transportation options to get there! Supporting local businesses could be a priority.”

“Adding random spots to sit and rest, more trees along main roads. Make it a pleasure to walk from downtown to the Ice Cream Hut.”

“This is a big ask, but I strongly believe that we need to bury the power lines and remove the utility poles to achieve the charming downtown that we need. This should happen before any major sidewalk renovations for obvious reasons. Start on Washington.”

# Plan Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to create a safer, more accessible, and more vibrant Downtown Colonial Beach. They focus on strengthening multimodal connections, enhancing the public realm, and positioning the Town for long-term economic development and tourism growth. The strategies aim to improve the daily experience of residents, support local businesses, and attract new visitors by making Downtown easier to navigate, more inviting, and more reflective of the community's unique character. Each recommendation is paired with potential funding sources, implementation steps, and key partners to enable the Town in translating vision into action. The goals within each category, along with their associated recommendations, were prioritized according to feedback received through the public engagement process.

Although this is a Connectivity Plan, the strategies extend beyond transportation alone. Connectivity, placemaking, wayfinding, economic development, and tourism are all interdependent—each one strengthens and relies on the others. Safe, multimodal connections make it easier for people to reach destinations; attractive streetscapes and signage invite them to stay longer; and a strong local economy gives those spaces purpose and vitality. Together, these elements form a cohesive framework for Downtown Colonial Beach's continued growth as a connected, livable, and prosperous waterfront community.

## How to Read the Strategy Tables

Each strategy in the table includes information to help the Town and partners understand how and when the recommendation could be implemented.

**Strategy:** Describes the specific action or improvement being recommended. Each strategy supports a broader goal.

**Potential Financing Mechanisms:** Lists possible funding sources or grant programs that could be used to pay for the project. Examples

include state or federal grants or public-private partnerships. See Appendix C for more information on the funding sources.

**Key Stakeholders:** Identifies the agencies, organizations, or groups that would be responsible for leading or supporting implementation—such as the Town, Downtown Colonial Beach (DCB), VDOT, property owners, or local businesses.

**Cost:** Provides an estimate of the general order of magnitude cost to implement the recommendation, based on planning-level assumptions. (\$ = less than \$250K, \$\$ = \$250K–\$500K, \$\$\$ = \$500K–\$2M, \$\$\$\$ = \$2M+)

**Time:** Indicates the expected timeframe for implementation—from quick, near-term projects (< 2 years) to more complex, long-term ones (5–10 years).

**Difficulty:** Reflects the relative level of effort or complexity needed to implement each action, considering factors such as coordination, permitting, and construction challenges.

## Vision Statement

The **Vision Statement** for this plan was developed with input from Downtown Colonial Beach stakeholders and community members through surveys and public engagement activities. The recommendations translate that community-driven vision into specific strategies for physical improvements, policy actions, and implementation steps.

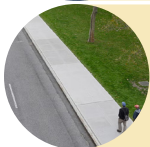
*“Downtown Colonial Beach will be a vibrant, welcoming, and walkable destination where inviting public spaces and thriving local businesses create a year-round hub for residents and visitors. By strengthening multimodal connections, enhancing the public realm, and encouraging thoughtful redevelopment, the Town will celebrate its unique waterfront character while building a resilient, people-focused economy and community.”*

## Connectivity

**Connectivity Strategies** lay the groundwork by improving multimodal access for all users. The accompanying **Connectivity Map** identifies a network of **Key Multimodal Routes**: a tiered system of corridors that helps the Town prioritize where and how to invest in improvements. These routes serve as an aspirational guide for which amenities should be included on each type of corridor—such as sidewalks, curb ramps, landscaping, lighting, and golf cart parking—and in what order they should be implemented. Tier 1 corridors represent the highest activity areas that warrant the most comprehensive pedestrian and streetscape features, while lower tiers indicate supporting connections that can be improved over time as funding allows. Together, these guidelines provide a clear roadmap for building a complete and accessible network that links Downtown Colonial Beach’s neighborhoods, waterfront, and other key destinations.



**Improve existing pedestrian infrastructure**  
Upgrade sidewalks and crossings for safer walking.



**Fill sidewalk gaps**  
Connect missing links in the pedestrian network.



**Make the trolley an asset**  
Improve trolley service and stops for locals and visitors.



**Calm traffic and reclaim the right-of-way**  
Use design to slow cars and prioritize people.



**Improve the golf cart experience**  
Create better paths and parking for golf carts.



**Pilot tactical urbanism projects**  
Test quick, low-cost street improvements to show impact.



**Extend bicycle infrastructure**  
Add bike lanes and trails to add another non-car mode of transportation.

## Placemaking & Wayfinding

**Placemaking and Wayfinding Strategies** build on this foundation by enhancing how people experience and navigate downtown. Streetscape improvements, landscaping, and public art foster a distinct sense of place, while the Wayfinding Plan outlines a consistent signage system that helps residents and visitors easily find key destinations. Together, these efforts make Downtown Colonial Beach more cohesive, welcoming, and memorable, which promotes tourism and economic development.



**Improve the parking experience**  
Make parking easier, clearer, and more welcoming.



**Increase coordinated wayfinding signage**  
Standardize signs and add maps to guide visitors.



**Improve the public realm & streetscape**  
Beautify streets with art, lighting, and landscaping.



**Add & improve public spaces**  
Activate parks and plazas with seating and events.

*See Appendix A for a glossary of terms used in this Plan.*

## Economic Development & Tourism

**Economic Development & Tourism Strategies** complement these physical improvements by supporting small businesses, encouraging mixed-use redevelopment, and promoting year-round events that draw residents and visitors alike. A thriving downtown economy depends on strong connections and a welcoming public realm, and in turn, these businesses and attractions bring energy and investment back into the community.



**Grow locally-owned businesses**  
Support small businesses with incentives and space.



**Improve marketing & visibility of CB**  
Promote the town as a year-round destination.



**Redevelop publicly-owned properties**  
Transform vacant public parcels into active uses.



**Encourage redevelopment of private property**  
Incentivize infill and façade improvements.

## Implementation

Finally, the **Implementation Ideas** section outlines practical steps for advancing these goals. It identifies opportunities to bundle projects for funding, engage volunteers and partners, and participate in technical assistance programs. By combining near-term pilot projects with long-term strategic investments, the Town can build momentum, attract new resources, and turn the community's vision for Downtown Colonial Beach into reality.



**Create a community volunteer team**  
Mobilize residents to support projects.



**Pursue technical assistance programs**  
Apply for expert support programs.



**Launch a “tactical urbanism” pilot**  
Try a tactical urbanism demo.



**Bundle projects for major grants**  
Combine improvements for major funding.



**Use pre-application readiness programs**  
Prep projects through state/federal programs.



**Explore public financing & loan programs**  
Use loan and financing programs for big projects.

*See Appendix A for a glossary of terms used in this Plan.*

# Connectivity Plan Map

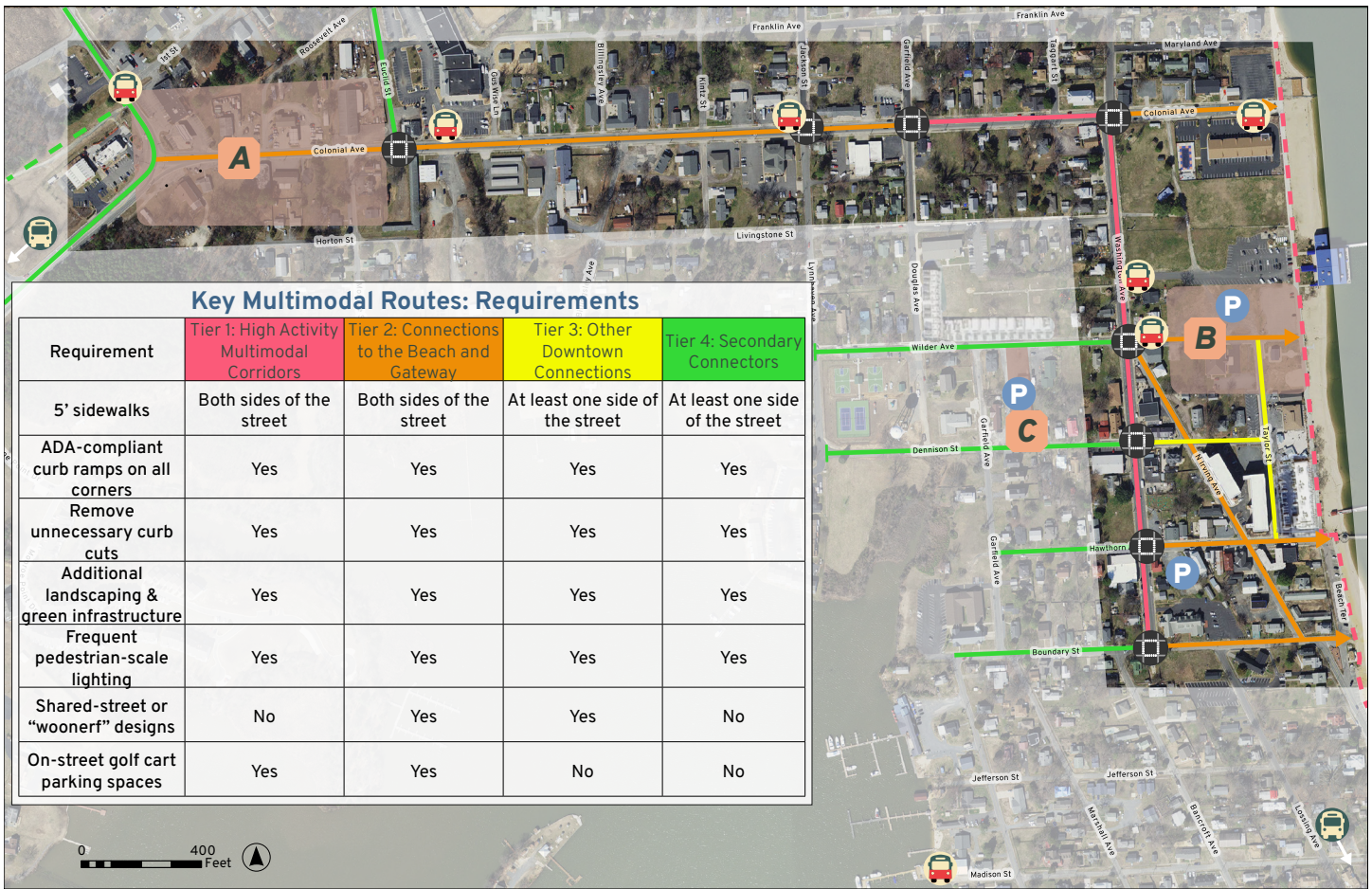




Figure 7. Mapped connectivity plan

## Trolley Infrastructure

### Add essential infrastructure to Downtown Trolley stops


 Ensure the most used stops have seating, shelter, lighting, and trash cans.

### Trolley Park-and-Rides

 Create shared parking agreements with Shops at Beach Gate and Dockside Restaurant parking lots for Trolley riders.

## Golf Cart Infrastructure

### Golf Cart Parking in Public Lots


 Add designated golf cart parking in all public parking lots, and encourage private parking lots to also designate golf cart spaces.

## Key Transformation Areas


### Wilder Avenue

 Redevelop Town-owned properties along Wilder Ave for walkable, dense, mixed-uses, with opportunities for structured parking.

### Colonial Avenue Gateway

 Reconfigure the McKinney Blvd/Colonial Ave intersection with a roundabout, crosswalks, and pedestrian refuge islands. Incentivize more pedestrian-oriented development with active street frontages.

### Rescue Squad Parcel on Denison

 Convert to public surface parking lot, with entrances and exits on Denison St and Wilder Ave.


## Pedestrian Infrastructure

### Add & Maintain Crosswalks

 Add new marked crosswalks at key intersections.

## Key Multimodal Routes


### Tier 1: High Activity Multimodal Corridors

 The streets that pedestrians are most likely to walk on.


### Tier 2: Connections to Beach & Gateway

 The streets that connect multiple Tier 1 routes.


### Tier 3: Other Downtown Connections

 Other streets in the downtown core that are not as built out as the Tier 2 routes.

### Tier 4: Secondary Connectors

 Lower priority streets where pedestrians may not travel as often as other tiers.

### Off-Road Route

 Routes where pedestrians don't have to interact with cars.

# Category 1: Connectivity

Build a safer, more accessible, and better connected multimodal network—including sidewalks, bike facilities, golf cart routes, and trolley service—to strengthen Downtown Colonial Beach as a walkable and vibrant destination. *See Appendix A for a glossary of terms used in this Plan.*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 1.a: Improve existing pedestrian infrastructure</b>					
<b>1.a.1:</b> Fill “ <i>curb cuts</i> ” along sidewalks where curb cuts are no longer needed, especially along Tier 1 corridors.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS; could be bundled into a USDOT BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE application	Town, VDOT, business owners, property owners	\$\$- \$\$\$\$	2-5 years	High
<b>1.a.2:</b> Add new or improve existing <b>ADA-compliant curb ramps</b> where necessary, especially along Tier 1 corridors.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS; could be bundled into a USDOT BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE application	Town, VDOT	\$\$- \$\$\$	2-5 years	High
<b>1.a.3:</b> Complete an ADA audit of sidewalks, curb ramps, etc. along streets in downtown to assess where improvements can be made. <a href="#">See “ADA and City Governments: Common Problems”</a> article to get started.	VWAI, DHCD CDBG; AARP Community Challenge Microgrant funds walk and bike audits	Town, VDOT	\$	<2 years	Low
<b>1.a.4:</b> Widen narrow sidewalks (less than 5’ wide) where feasible to improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility, especially along Tier 1 corridors.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS; could be bundled into a USDOT BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE application	Town, VDOT	\$\$\$- \$\$\$\$	2-5 years	High-Very High
<b>1.a.5:</b> Work with the community to conduct a “walk audit” to understand how pedestrian infrastructure can be improved. See <a href="#">AARP’s Walk Audit Tool Kit</a> document to get started.	VWAI, DHCD CDBG; AARP Community Challenge Microgrant funds walk and bike audits	Town	\$	<2 years	Low



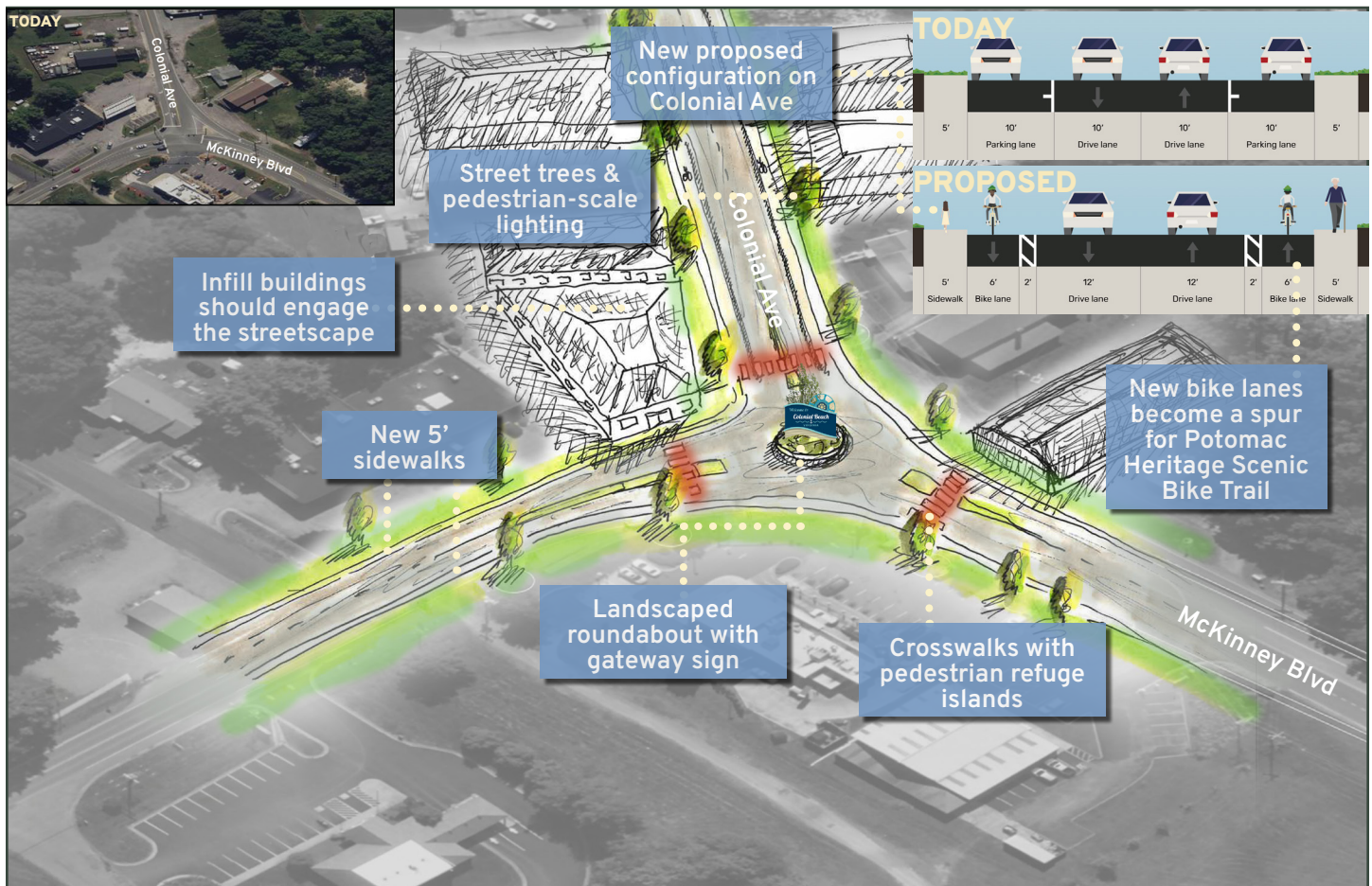
*ADA-compliant curb ramp*



*Curb cut not used as a driveway*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 1.b: Fill sidewalk gaps</b>					
<b>1.b.1:</b> Add sidewalks and ADA-compliant curb ramps on Tier 2 (both sides of the street) and Tier 3, and Tier 4 streets (at least one side of the street).	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS; could be bundled into a USDOT BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE application	Town, VDOT	\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$	2-5 years	High
<b>1.b.2:</b> Extend the sidewalk along Colonial Ave west of Monroe Street on both sides of the street.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS; could be bundled into a USDOT BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE application	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High
<b>Goal 1.c: Make the Trolley an asset</b>					
<b>1.c.1:</b> Make formal Trolley “park and ride” stops at the Shops at Beach Gate parking lot, at Dockside Restaurant, or at the marinas. Work with property owners to create a shared parking agreement.	Administrative only	Town, property owners	\$	<2 years	Medium
<b>1.c.2:</b> Work with DRPT to learn how to improve Trolley service.	DRPT Rural Transit Assistance Program, AARP Community Challenge Flagship Grant, SMART SCALE	Town, DRPT	\$	<2 Years	Low
<b>1.c.3:</b> Add benches, lighting, and more detailed Trolley informational signage at Trolley stops.	VWAI, AARP Community Challenge Flagship Grant	Town	\$	<2 years	Low
<b>1.c.4:</b> Find opportunities to make real-time Trolley tracking so riders know when the Trolley is coming, which will encourage more ridership.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, USDOT SMART Grant	Town	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 1.d: Calm traffic and reclaim the right-of-way</b>					
<b>1.d.1:</b> Re-configure the McKinney Blvd/Colonial Ave intersection, potentially with a <i>roundabout</i> , to be a welcoming entrance corridor.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS, USDOT SS4A. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, VDOT, business owners	\$\$\$\$	5-10 years	Very High
<b>1.d.2:</b> Install more marked crosswalks, <i>pedestrian refuge islands</i> , <i>rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs)</i> , and/or raised crosswalks on Tier 1 streets.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS, USDOT SS4A. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>1.d.3:</b> Work with Westmoreland County to get Safe Streets For All (SS4A) funding for a Safety Action Plan, or apply for a Safety Action Plan for just Colonial Beach. See <a href="#">Town of Vinton, VA's Safety Action Plan</a> as an example.	USDOT - SS4A	Town, VDOT, Westmoreland County	\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium



*Reimagining the Colonial Avenue Gateway*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>1.d.4:</b> Implement <i>shared street designs</i> on Tier 2 and Tier 3 streets such as “ <i>woonerfs</i> ,” using traffic calming features to mix vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists (See Appendix A for glossary of terms). See a case study on <a href="#">Seattle’s Bell Street Park</a> .	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS, USDOT SS4A. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, VDOT	\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High
<b>1.d.5:</b> Add permanent <i>curb extensions</i> at key intersections along Tier 1 streets to shorten crossing distances and improve pedestrian visibility. Incorporate green infrastructure where possible, including permeable pavers, rain gardens, etc.	Chesapeake Bay Trust - G3 (if green infrastructure involved). VDOT TAP, RS, USDOT SS4A. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High



*Pedestrian refuge island*



*Rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB)*



*“Woonerf”/shared street design*



*Landscaped curb extension*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 1.e: Improve the golf cart experience</b>					
<b>1.e.1:</b> Create golf cart parking areas within existing parking lots and along Tier 1 and Tier 2 streets.	VDOT TAP	Town, property owners	\$-\$\$	2-5 years	Low-Medium
<b>1.e.2:</b> Pave the informal “golf cart path” behind the Shops at Beach Gate off of McKinney Blvd.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, property owners	\$\$-\$\$\$	<2 years	Low-Medium
<b>Goal 1.f: Pilot “tactical urbanism” projects</b>					
<b>1.f.1:</b> Use paint, flexposts, planters, etc. to pilot tactical urbanism projects to have proof of concept for future long-term infrastructure. This could include crosswalks, <i>curb extensions</i> , pedestrian refuge islands, parklets, and more. Involve the community to integrate public art elements. The <a href="#">City of Richmond’s “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”</a> program has been successful in piloting tactical urbanism projects.	VWAI, AARP Community Challenge Demonstration Grant	Town, DCB, VDOT	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low-Medium
<b>Goal 1.g: Extend bike infrastructure</b>					
<b>1.g.1:</b> Study the possibility of creating a comprehensive “Point Loop” <i>shared-use path</i> to connect to the Boardwalk along Irving Ave and Monroe Bay Ave, which would include making those streets one-way.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application; AARP Community Challenge Flagship Grant; T-Mobile Hometown Grants.	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High



*Tactical urbanism curb extension with art*



*Shared-use path*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>1.g.2:</b> Restripe or reconfigure Colonial Ave to remove parking and add <b>buffered bike lanes</b> in either direction from McKinney Blvd to Washington Ave, or create a shared-use path on one side of Colonial Ave.	PeopleForBikes - Bike Industry Community Grant Program, VDOT TAP, VDOT RS, SMART SCALE bundle	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$\$	2-5 years	High
<b>1.g.3:</b> Develop a shared-use path and/or bike boulevard along Wakefield Ave/Euclid Ave to connect to Colonial Ave.	VDOT TAP, VDOT RS. Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application; AARP Community Challenge Flagship Grant; T-Mobile Hometown Grants	Town, VDOT	\$\$-\$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>1.g.4:</b> Develop a local Potomac Heritage Bicycle Trail spur that continues east on Colonial Ave to Washington Ave to connect bicycle trail visitors to Downtown Colonial Beach.	PeopleForBikes - Bike Industry Community Grant Program, VDOT TAP, VDOT RS	Town, VDOT	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low
<b>1.g.5:</b> Add more rental bikes, bike racks, and <b>bike repair stations</b> in downtown. Racks could be crafted by local artists to reflect a Colonial Beach theme. See examples of competition specifications from <a href="#">Ithaca, NY</a> and <a href="#">Beaumont, SC</a> .	VTC - DRIVE Outdoor (bike repair stations, bike rentals). This could be a contest hosted by DCB or sponsored by local businesses.	Town, DCB, local businesses	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low
<b>1.g.6:</b> Work with the community to conduct a “bike audit” to understand how bike infrastructure can be improved. See <a href="#">AARP’s Bike Audit Tool Kit</a> document to get started.	VWAI, AARP Community Challenge Microgrant funds walk and bike audits, CDBG	Town	\$	<2 years	Low



*Buffered bike lane*



*Bike repair station*

# Category 2: Placemaking & Wayfinding

Enhance Downtown Colonial Beach’s identity and sense of place through public art, streetscape improvements, coordinated signage, and new public spaces that create a welcoming, attractive, and easy-to-navigate environment for both residents and visitors. **See Appendix A for a glossary of terms.**

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 2.a: Improve the public realm &amp; streetscape</b>					
<b>2.a.1:</b> Add <i>pedestrian-scale lighting</i> along all Key Multimodal Routes. See Wayfinding Plan for more information.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, Dominion, other utility, VDOT	\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$	2-5 years	High
<b>2.a.2:</b> Relocate, consolidate, or underground utility poles to reduce obstructions in the public realm and promote more resilient infrastructure, especially along Colonial Ave. Review Town Franchise Agreement with utilities to determine best next steps.	Department of Energy - Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas. Could potentially be bundled into a BUILD application.	Town, Dominion, other utility, VDOT	\$\$\$\$	5-10 years	Very High
<b>2.a.3:</b> Partner with local businesses to form an “adopt a block” program. Adopters could be tasked with keeping sidewalks clean, maintaining planters, sponsoring benches, and more. See guidelines from <a href="#">Charleston’s Adopt-A-Block program</a> .	Administrative only	Town, DCB, business owners	\$	<2 years	Low
<b>2.a.4:</b> Add more outdoor seating along Tier 1 routes. Work with business owners to create outdoor seating opportunities in front of restaurants, including <i>parklets</i> .	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application.	Town, DCB, business owners	\$	<2 years	Low



*Pedestrian-scale lighting*



*Parklet with outdoor seating*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>2.a.5:</b> Find more opportunities for murals by finding willing business/property owners with blank facades. Bring in local artists to make murals related to Colonial Beach. See <a href="#">Fairfax, VA’s “Paint it, Fairfax!”</a> program guidelines.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town	Town, DCB, property owners, CB Artists Alliance, CB Artists Guild	\$	2-5 years	Low
<b>2.a.6:</b> Pilot a <b>public art</b> program that identifies one or more locations for public art, identifies local artists, and works with local artists to design and install public art in downtown. See Jackson Hole Public Arts’ document, <a href="#">Public ART &amp; Placemaking Toolkit for Rural Communities.</a>	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, National Endowment of the Arts - Our Town	Town, DCB, property owners, CB Artists Alliance, CB Artists Guild	\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>2.a.7:</b> Find more opportunities for <b>landscaping</b> along all Key Multimodal Routes including planters, tree wells/ street trees, and more.	Could be bundled into a BUILD or SMART SCALE application. Chesapeake Bay Trust - G3 (if green infrastructure involved), VA Department of Forestry - VA Trees for Clean Water Grant	Town, DCB, business owners	\$-\$\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>2.a.8:</b> Evaluate the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) to fund improvements for downtown areas. See Virginia Code section § 15.2-2413.12 for enabling legislation. See information from <a href="#">Ballston, VA’s BID.</a>	Administrative only	Town, business owners	\$-\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High



*Public art installation*



*Placemaking with landscaping*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 2.b: Add &amp; improve public spaces</b>					
<b>2.b.1:</b> Increase programming for Town Hill to activate the space more frequently, potentially including a farmers’ market, concert series, and other recurring events.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, National Association of Realtors - Placemaking Grants (would have to go through Northern Neck Association of Realtors as the applicant), T-Mobile Hometown Grants, Levitt Foundation AMP Grant (for concert series)	Town, DCB, CB Performing Arts Association	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low-Medium
<b>2.b.2:</b> Identify opportunities for temporary “pedestrian plazas” and street closures such as the terminus of Colonial Ave that could act as temporary restaurant seating or other pop-up activations during weekends. If successful, options for creating more permanent or seasonal pedestrian plazas should be explored.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, National Association of Realtors - Placemaking Grants (would have to go through Northern Neck Association of Realtors as the applicant), T-Mobile Hometown Grants, Levitt Foundation AMP Grant (for concert series), VTC - DRIVE Outdoor can provide picnic tables, benches, portable grills, etc.	Town, DCB	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low-Medium

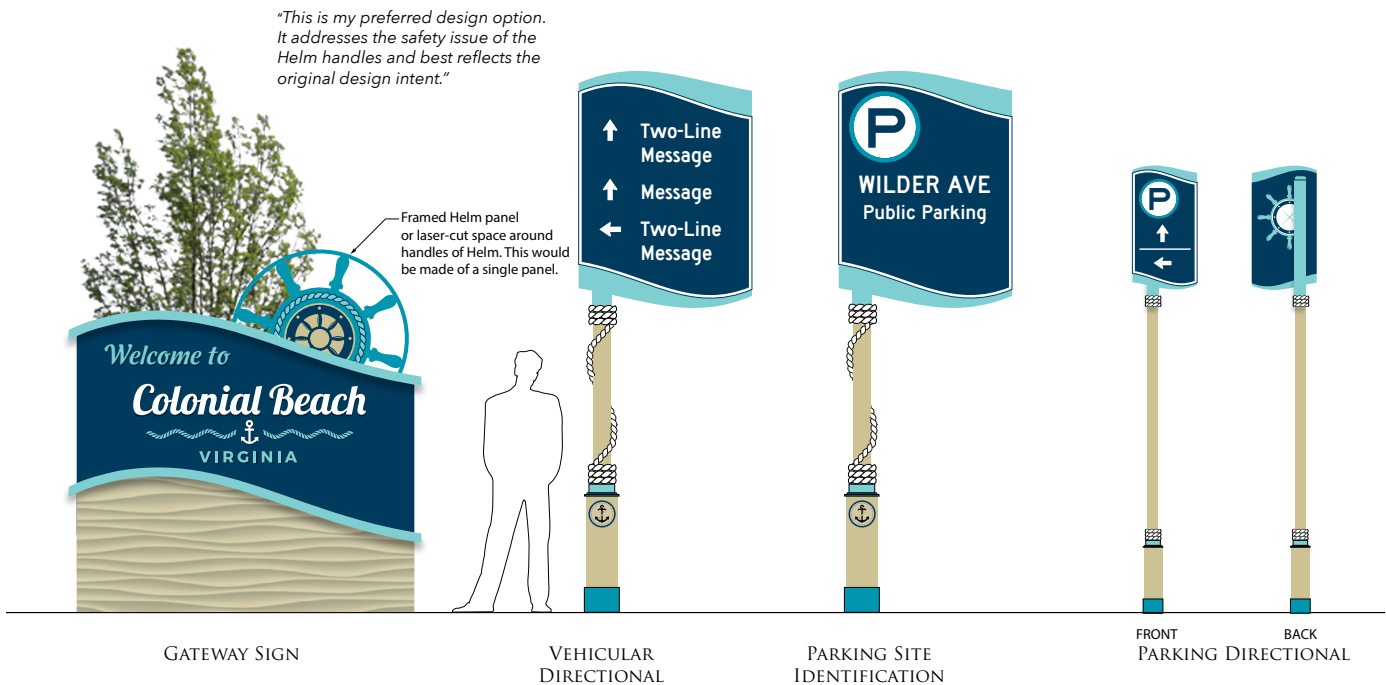


*Pedestrian plaza at Colonial Avenue terminus (Business District Revitalization Plan)*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 2.c: Improve the parking experience</b>					
<b>2.c.1:</b> Transform public parking lots into more visible, welcoming, and well-connected facilities. This could include adding clear entry signage that encourages visitors to park there, redesigning lot layouts for safety and aesthetics (including landscaping), and constructing sidewalks and pedestrian connections that link lots comfortably to Washington Avenue and other downtown destinations.	VDOT TAP, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants	Town, VDOT	\$\$- \$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High
<b>2.c.2:</b> Provide clear, consistent signage for parking payment options that accommodate a range of users, including people who are not comfortable with smartphone-based systems.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants	Town	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low
<b>2.c.3:</b> Upgrade and standardize signage identifying public parking at all public parking lots and spaces in downtown. Post clear information on parking hours and restrictions (if any). See Wayfinding Plan for more information.	Cabell Foundation - Semi-Annual Competitive Grants, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Town, DCB	\$-\$\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>2.c.4:</b> Investigate the potential for a surface parking lot at the Rescue Squad parcel on Denison St.	VDOT TAP, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants	Town, DCB	\$\$- \$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 2.d: Increase the amount of coordinated wayfinding signage</b>					
<b>2.d.1:</b> Install new and replace existing wayfinding signage throughout Colonial Ave and downtown, consistent with Frazier Associates designs from 2023. <b>See Wayfinding Plan for specific details.</b>	Virginia Main Street - Community Vitality Grants, Cabell Foundation - Semi-Annual Competitive Grants	Town, DCB, CB Historical Society	\$-\$\$	<2 years	Low

WAYFINDING DESIGN CONCEPT: REVISION 2  
March 15, 2023



## Wayfinding Plan

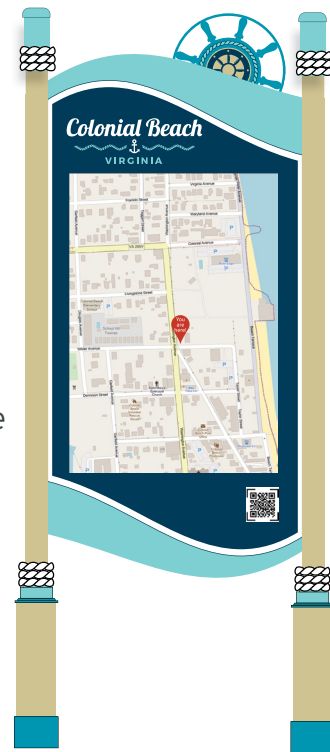
Wayfinding plays an important role in creating a welcoming and intuitive experience for visitors. Clear, attractive signage guides people to local businesses and attractions, encourages exploration, and increases time spent in town—all of which support tourism and the local economy. Consistent, well-designed signage also strengthens Colonial Beach’s sense of place, helping the town feel cohesive, memorable, and uniquely its own.

This Wayfinding Plan recommends strategic updates and new sign types to fill gaps in the existing system and create a more connected experience. The recommendations build on the original sign designs by Frazier Associates that have been implemented in recent years. *The ideas represent preliminary concepts and are not final designs or drawn to scale.*

**Replace all Trolley stop signage to match new branding.** New Trolley signage is recommended to be installed, which can be standalone signs with custom poles or co-located on utility poles or other existing poles where appropriate. The updated signage should have larger font to improve legibility, use the updated branding for consistency, and include supplemental information, like maps and seasonal travel time tables, that can be easily updated. All signs should include QR codes linking to real-time information and additional details if needed.



**Create a comprehensive destination map and install at least two pedestrian-scale wayfinding maps in the Downtown core.** The most needed new sign type that does not already exist in Colonial Beach is a large, comprehensive map of all destinations, including Trolley stops/routes, restaurants, retail, parks, and cultural sites. The map should highlight key destinations to support navigation and encourage exploration.

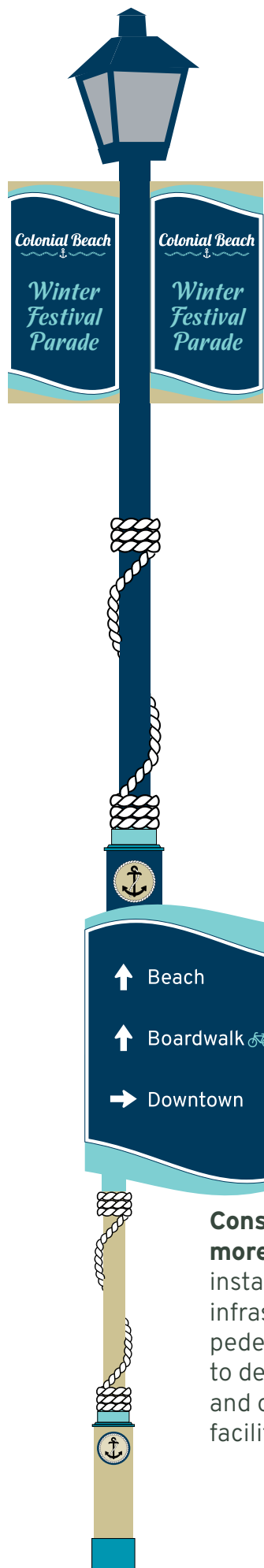


**Highlight historic and cultural sites through targeted signage throughout Downtown.** Select the most significant sites and install five to ten pedestrian-scale signs throughout Downtown that provide context about Colonial Beach’s history and culture. These signs could include brief narratives, images, and interpretive content to engage visitors and enhance their experience. Together, they could form a “Colonial Beach History Trail,” creating a self-guided route that encourages exploration and deeper connection to the town’s heritage.

### Standardize parking signage and continue adding new parking signs for public parking.

Wayfinding should clearly guide visitors to public parking lots along roadways in the town and include signs that call out specific parking lot names. There is an opportunity in the town to supplement public off-street parking signage with MUTCD-compliant signage for on-street parking, including demarcating between paid and free parking, golf cart parking, 15-minute parking, accessible parking, etc.





**Prioritize installing new pedestrian-scale lighting, like the ones on the Boardwalk, that can include signage.** New custom lighting can match the profile of the new signage, including the colors and rope motif, and have banners. New lighting should match the profile of the lighting on the Boardwalk. To unify the downtown aesthetic, consider adding rope details to existing Boardwalk lighting and gradually remove banners from utility poles as the new fixtures are installed.



**Incrementally replace existing signage to achieve consistent branding.** It might be cost prohibitive to replace all the signage at once, so a step-by-step approach should be taken to remove all non-consistent signage and replace it with consistent signage over time.

**Include wayfinding signage when redevelopment occurs.** For instance, if the Rescue Squad parcel on Dennison St gets redeveloped into a surface parking lot, add more signage directing cars to the new lot, and add pedestrian-scale signage at the new lot that directs them to the beach and other downtown destinations.

**Consider designs that add more context to signage.** For instance, as pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is added, add pedestrian and bicycle symbols to destinations like the Boardwalk and other future shared-use facilities.

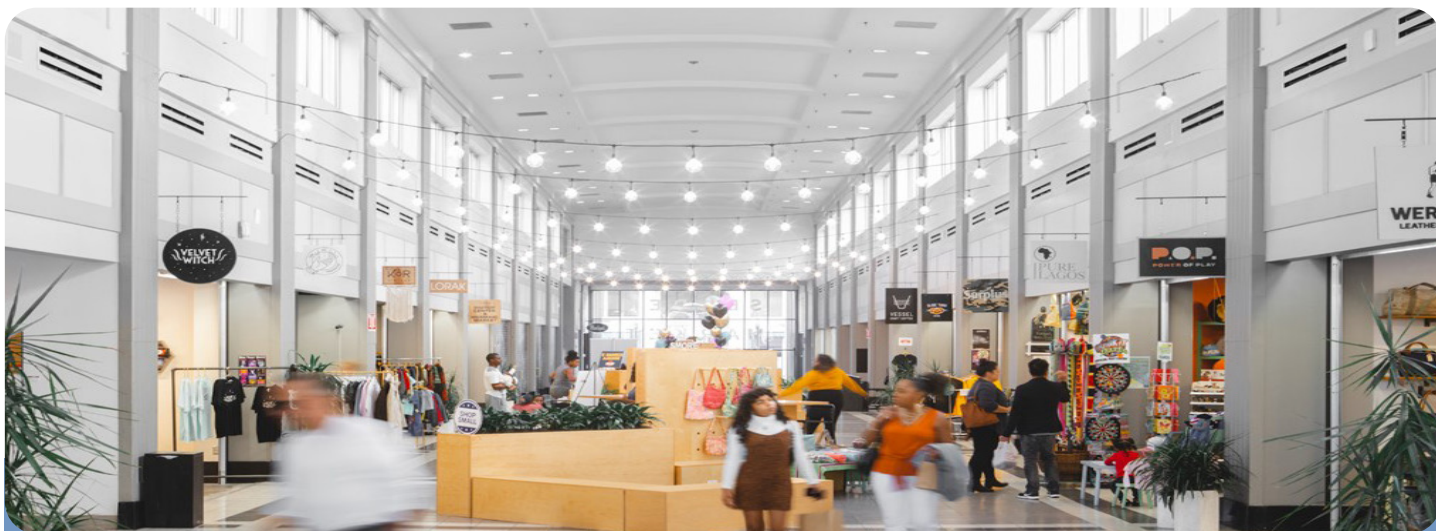


**Install large gateway signage to welcome visitors to Downtown Colonial Beach.** At the corner of Colonial Ave and Washington Ave, replace the existing signage on the SE corner with one of the new gateway signs to let visitors know they've arrived in Downtown. If the Colonial Ave/McKinney Blvd intersection is converted to a roundabout, install a multi-sided sign in the middle of the roundabout welcoming people coming from McKinney Ave and saying "thanks for visiting" to cars on Colonial Ave.

## Category 3: Economic Development & Tourism

Strengthen Colonial Beach’s local economy and year-round tourism by supporting small businesses, redeveloping key parcels, and promoting branding, cultural programming, and incentives that encourage investment and sustainable growth. See strategies in Connectivity and Placemaking & Wayfinding sections. *See Appendix A for a glossary of terms used in this Plan.*

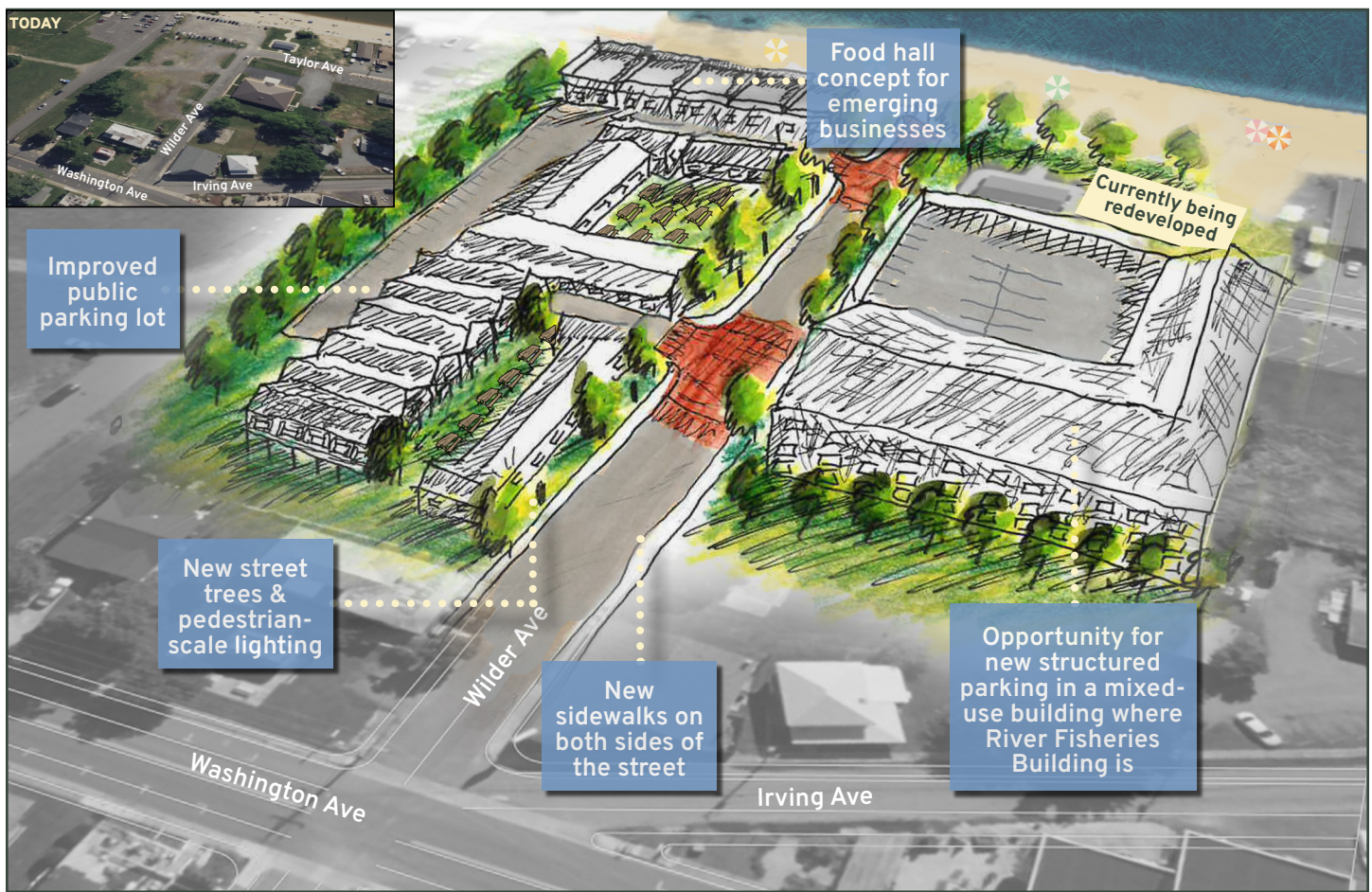
Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 3.a: Grow locally-owned businesses</b>					
<b>3.a.1:</b> Establish a program to encourage <i>business incubators</i> and pop-up programming like food trucks to allow small businesses to test concepts with low overhead costs. See <a href="#">Norfolk’s Selden Market</a> as an example.	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants	Town, DCB	\$\$- \$\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High
<b>3.a.2:</b> Create a public-facing, cohesive guide of economic development incentives and business support services for locally-owned businesses to market to local entrepreneurs interested in starting or growing a small business. See <a href="#">Arlington, VA’s Economic Incentives Summary</a> document as an example.	Administrative only	Town, DCB	\$	<2 years	Low
<b>3.a.3:</b> Explore the possibility for incentives for new small businesses, such as a flat \$50 business license fee for the first two years of operation, See Code of Virginia section § 58.1-3700 for enabling legislation, with examples from <a href="#">Virginia Beach</a> and <a href="#">Norfolk</a> .	Administrative only	Town, DCB, Nonprofits, Small businesses	N/A	N/A	Medium-High



*Small business incubator space at Selden Market in Norfolk*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 3.b: Improve marketing &amp; increase visibility of Colonial Beach</b>					
<p><b>3.b.1:</b> Strengthen and expand year-round attractions such as festivals, museums, seafood and fishing experiences, and arts and culture programming. Increase coordination of events and incorporate more offerings like concerts, food trucks, and outdoor markets to sustain visitor activity throughout the year.</p>	<p>Virginia Main Street - Community Vitality Grants, Virginia Tourism Corporation - Marketing Program Grant, VTC - DRIVE Outdoor can provide items. Community Development Block Grants (public infrastructure planning), Bass Pro Shops &amp; Cabela's Outdoor Fund Local Impact Grants</p>	<p>Town, DCB</p>	<p>\$-\$\$</p>	<p>&lt;2 years</p>	<p>Low</p>
<p><b>3.b.2:</b> Research and develop a plan for off-season events that could attract visitors during slower months. Explore opportunities such as winter festivals, holiday markets, craft fairs, wellness retreats, or indoor cultural programming that draw both locals and regional tourists.</p>	<p>Virginia Main Street - Community Vitality Grants, Virginia Tourism Corporation (Vacation Starts with VA DMO MMLP Co-Op Program, Tourism Development Finance Program). VTC - DRIVE Outdoor can provide site prep + items for events, including temporary restrooms, portable heaters for winter events.</p>	<p>Town, DCB</p>	<p>\$</p>	<p>&lt;2 years</p>	<p>Low-Medium</p>
<p><b>3.b.3:</b> Develop two complementary branding strategies: 1) "Move to Colonial Beach" - position Colonial Beach as a great place to live for a broader range of demographics beyond retirees, emphasizing affordability, quality of life, and community character; 2) "Visit Colonial Beach" - highlight Colonial Beach as a unique destination for vacations and day trips, leaning into its waterfront setting, culture &amp; history, and small-town charm.</p>	<p>Virginia Main Street - Community Vitality Grants (could include website refresh for DCB), Virginia Tourism Corporation grants</p>	<p>Town, DCB</p>	<p>\$</p>	<p>&lt;2 years</p>	<p>Low-Medium</p>

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 3.c: Redevelop publicly-owned properties for walkable, mixed-use, active spaces</b>					
<b>3.c.1:</b> Put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) with incentives for developers for the Wilder Ave vacant parcels, 215 Taylor Street/public bathhouse, and Potomac River Fisheries parcels.	Virginia Main Street - Financial Feasibility Grants	Town	\$	<2 years	Medium
<b>3.c.2:</b> Encourage development agreements that tie approvals to provision for parking, sidewalk improvements, bike parking, public realm enhancements, and more.	Administrative only	Town	\$	<2 years	Medium



*Reimagining the Wilder Avenue area east of Washington Avenue*

Strategy	Potential Financing Mechanisms	Key Stakeholders	Cost	Time	Difficulty
<b>Goal 3.d: Encourage redevelopment of privately-owned properties in key areas (See Development Opportunity Assessment for more information)</b>					
<b>3.d.1:</b> Pilot a façade improvement grant program for business owners in downtown. See guideline examples from <a href="#">Vinton</a> and <a href="#">Christiansburg</a> .	Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Downtown Revitalization (could be used to fund design work for façade improvements)	Town, DCB	\$-\$\$	2-5 years	Medium
<b>3.d.2:</b> Update zoning and land use regulations to encourage infill development that supports continuous, vibrant corridors along Washington Ave and Colonial Ave. Consider creating special districts to promote cohesive development and a strong sense of place.	Administrative only	Town	\$\$	2-5 years	Medium-High
<b>3.d.3:</b> Create a public-facing, cohesive guide of economic development incentives for infill development to market to private property owners and developers. Include information about Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits.	Administrative only	Town, DCB	\$	<2 years	Low



*Small, mixed-use, walkable infill development complementing existing buildings*

## Category 4: Implementation Ideas

Establish a clear, phased implementation process that leverages community volunteers, technical assistance programs, and bundled funding applications to maximize grant competitiveness and ensure successful delivery of projects. Effective implementation is critical to turning vision into reality. By combining small “early action” projects with strategic grant applications, the Town can build momentum, demonstrate community support, and strengthen competitiveness for larger federal and state programs. Partnering with volunteers, nonprofits, and technical assistance providers helps stretch limited local capacity, while bundling related projects into cohesive funding applications makes the case stronger for outside investment. See Appendix C for more information on funding mechanisms.

Phase	Strategy
<b>Phase 1:</b> Build Local Capacity	<b>4.1.a:</b> Establish a volunteer “community service” team, made up of resident and business volunteers, to support implementation of priority projects, leveraging the skills and availability of local residents and businesses.
	<b>4.1.b:</b> Engage the community in selecting a pilot location to test tactical urbanism concepts and evaluate their potential for permanent improvements.
<b>Phase 2:</b> Strengthen Readiness & Support	<b>4.2.a:</b> Apply for capacity-building and technical assistance cohorts/programs such as National Endowment for the Arts Citizen Institute on Rural Design, EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities, Richmond Fed Rural Investment Collaborative, or Virginia Walkability Action Institute.
	<b>4.2.b:</b> Utilize application readiness programs like VDOT Ready Set Go, Virginia DHCD CDBG Planning, or USDOT Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program, before applying for larger grants.
<b>Phase 3:</b> Secure Funding & Deliver Big Projects	<b>4.3.a:</b> Decide which strategies could potentially be bundled for larger grant applications. For instance, wayfinding and parking projects could be bundled for Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants, or streetscape/traffic calming/pedestrian projects could be bundled for USDOT - BUILD or VDOT SMART SCALE.
	<b>4.3.b:</b> If large capital projects are identified, utilize loan programs such as USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program, Virginia Resources Authority Local Government Direct Loan Program, or Virginia Resources Authority Virginia Pooled Financing Program.

# Existing Conditions Analysis

This report provides an assessment of the current state of Downtown Colonial Beach, focusing on key elements that influence accessibility, mobility, and the overall user experience. This also includes the town's parking infrastructure, wayfinding systems, pedestrian connectivity, and broader walkability conditions based on available data and as seen during a site visit conducted in January 2025. The findings presented here served as a foundation for developing the recommendations in this plan.



Figure 8. Study Area Map

# Land Use & Zoning

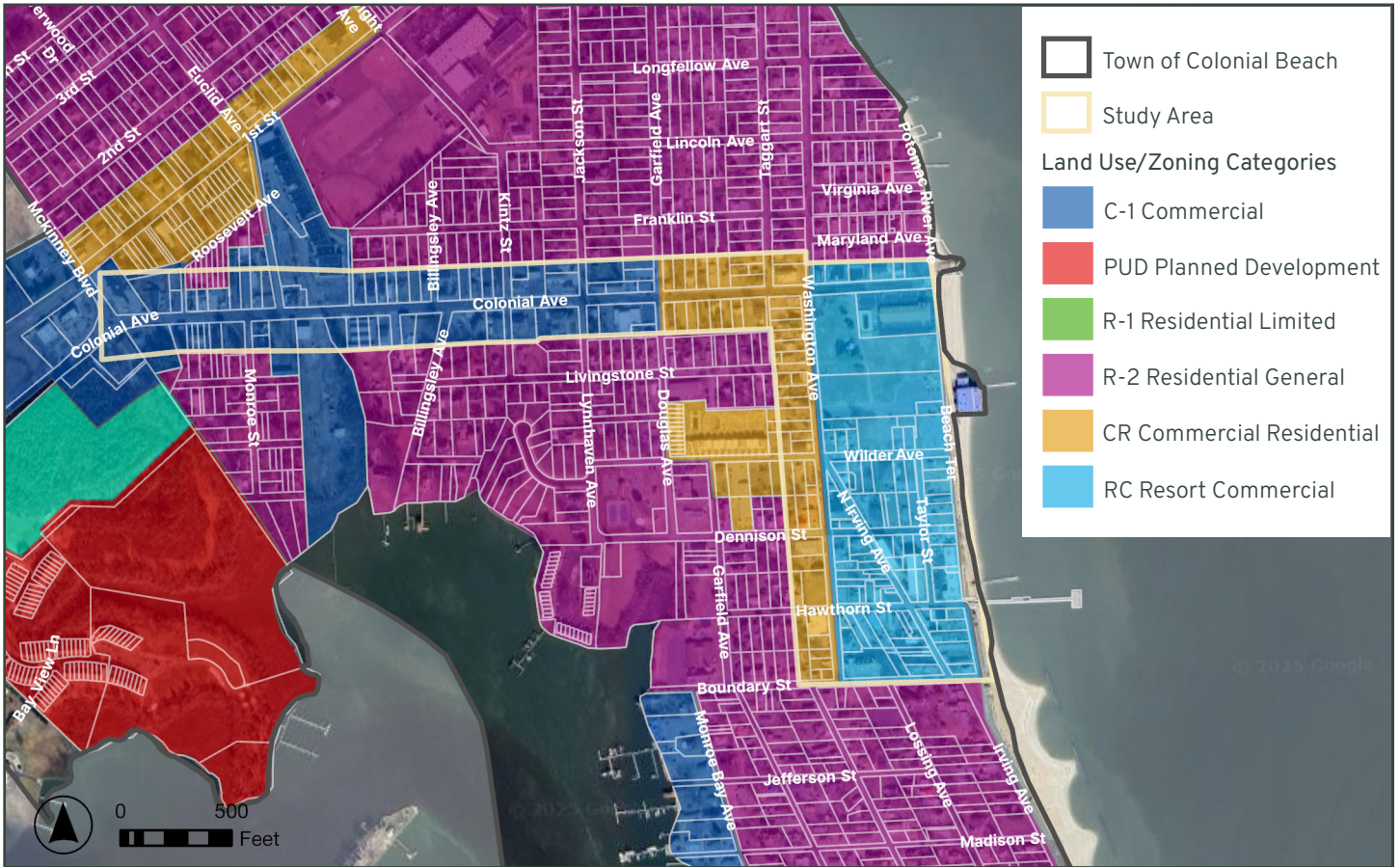


Figure 9. Existing Land Use/Zoning (last updated November 2012)

Colonial Beach’s downtown area includes C-1 Commercial uses along Colonial Ave, west of Garfield Ave; CR Commercial Residential on Colonial Ave east of Garfield Ave and on the west side of Washington Ave from Maryland Ave to Boundary St; and RC Resort Commercial east of Washington Ave. Generally, the Washington Ave section, from Wilder Ave to Boundary St, makes up the densest core of downtown, following patterns of historic development. As one travels west along Colonial Ave, land uses become less dense and pedestrian-oriented, with such uses as gas stations and auto parts stores.

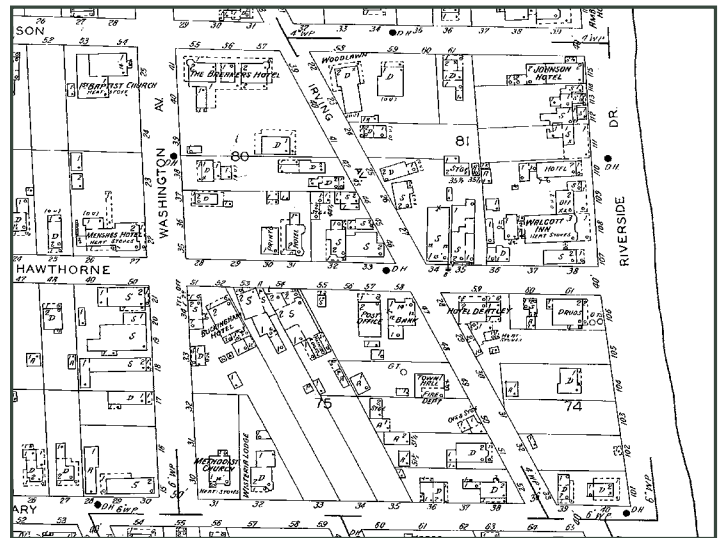


Figure 10. 1934 Sanborn Insurance Map (Library of Virginia)

# Pedestrian Network

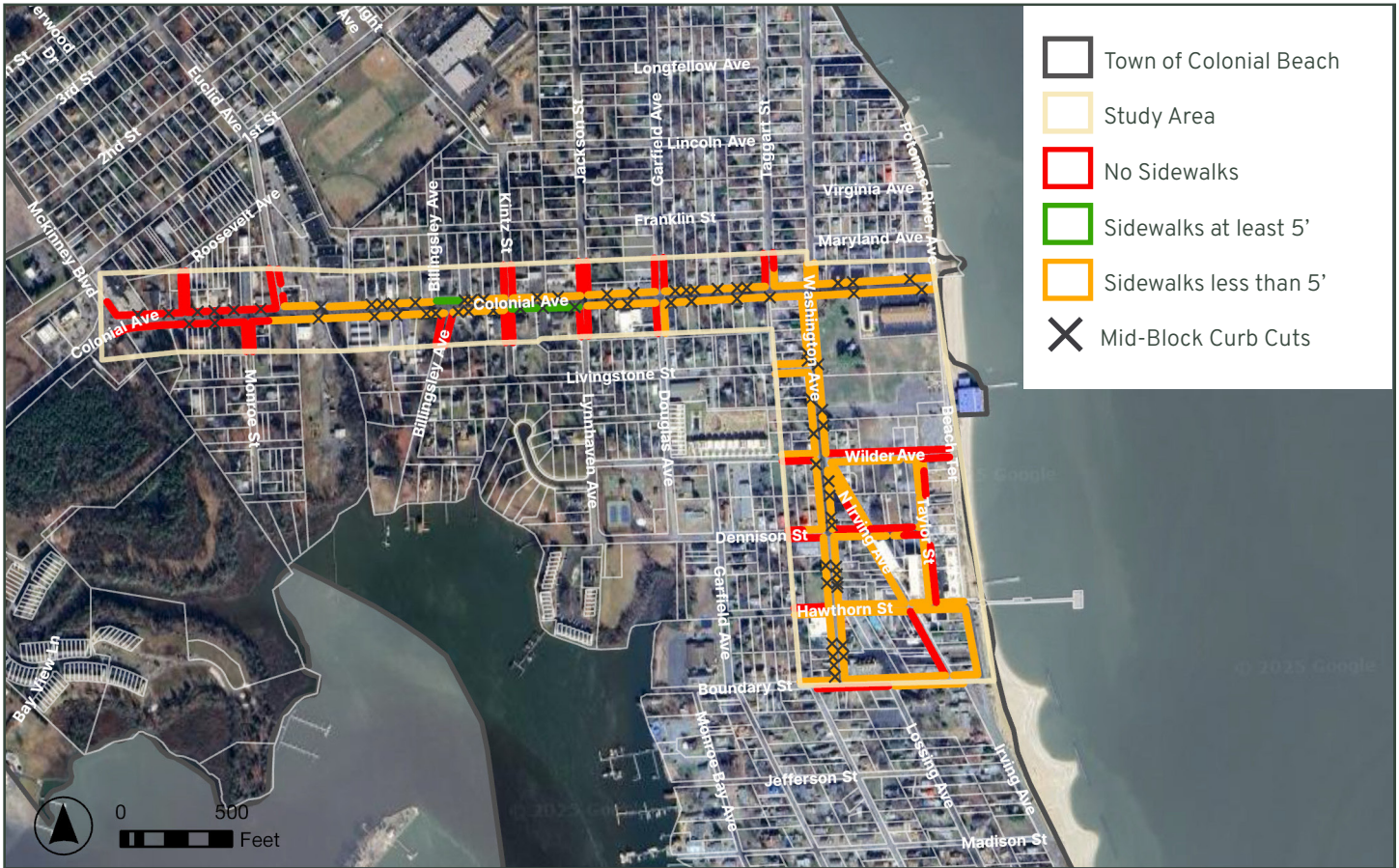


Figure 11. Sidewalks and Curb Cuts

The vast majority of the main corridors, Colonial Ave and Washington Ave, have sidewalks between 3.5' and 5' in width. West of Monroe St, there are no sidewalks on either side of Colonial Ave. Few of the side streets that intersect Colonial Ave have sidewalks. All side streets that intersect Washington Ave have sidewalks on at least one side of the street.

There are also many curb cuts along Colonial Ave and Washington Ave that can decrease accessibility and make it difficult to navigate as a pedestrian. Most curb cuts lead to existing driveways; however, there are a number of curb cuts that do not lead to anything and only serve as obstructions to the pedestrian network.

Few intersections have marked crosswalks and ADA compliant curb ramps. There are marked crosswalks along Colonial Ave at Jackson St/ Lynnhaven Ave, Garland Ave/Douglas Ave, and at Washington Ave. Two new marked crosswalks are being implemented across Washington Ave at

Wilder St and Denison St. At Washington Ave and Hawthorn Ave, there is a stamped brick crosswalk on all legs of the intersection; however, a snow plow damaged the stamped brick on the west leg of the intersection.



Figure 12. Curb cut leading to a non-existent driveway at Town Hill.

# On-Street Parking

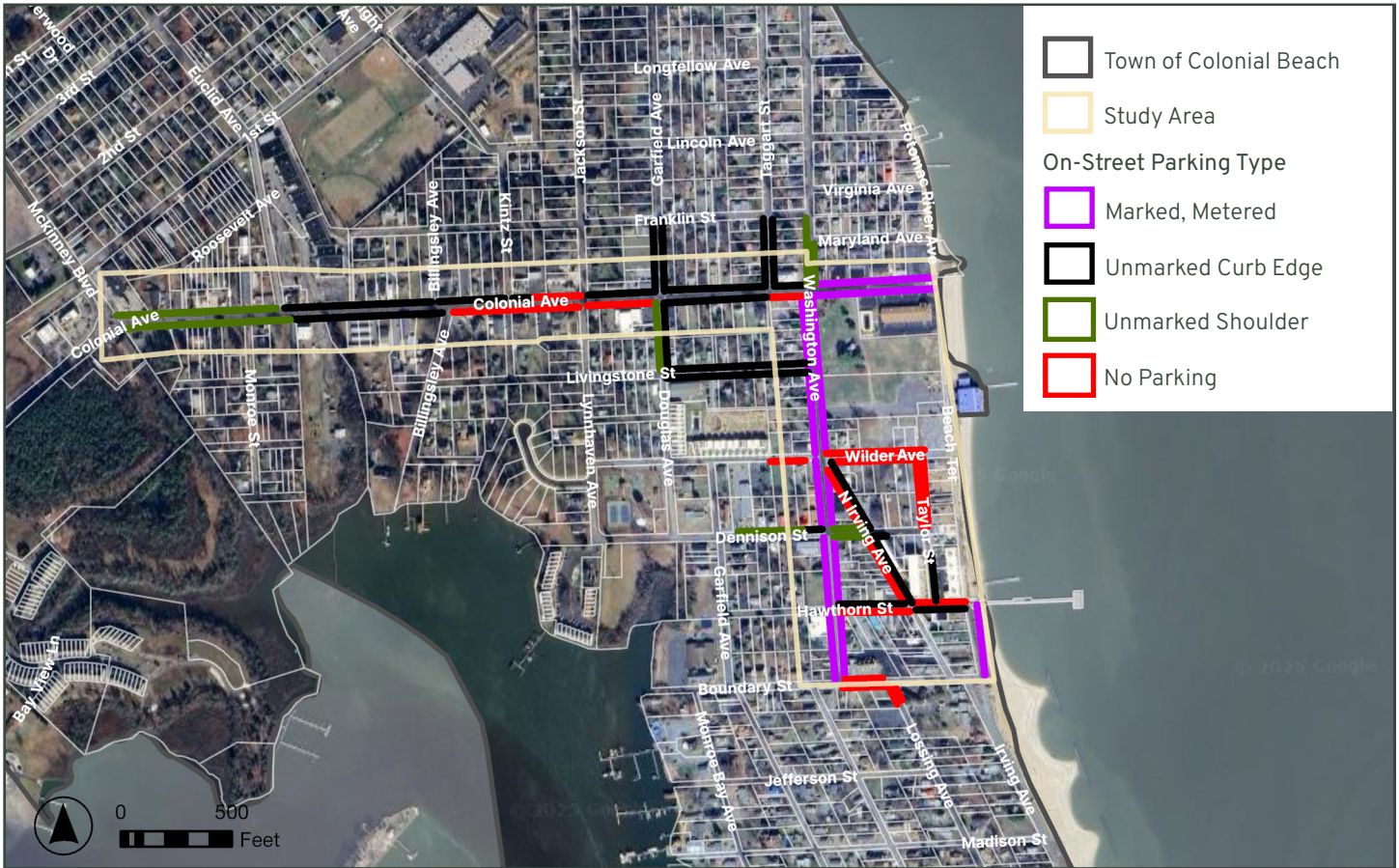


Figure 13. On-Street Parking (2022 Mead & Hunt Parking Study Data)

The Washington Ave corridor is the main area for marked, metered parking, with some along Washington Ave and Beach Terrace. Most of the side streets have either unmarked curb edge or shoulder parking. Some side streets, including Wilder Ave, Hawthorn St, Boundary St, and Taylor St have parking restrictions. Along Colonial Ave, there are unmarked spots with some yellow curb paint to indicate no parking areas.

There is a lot of inconsistency in parking signage and pavement markings throughout downtown. There are certain spaces marked on the pavement with “15 Minute Parking” near some of the downtown businesses and other spaces are signed as “Two Hour Parking.”



Figure 14. Various Parking Signage/Markings

# Wayfinding

The wayfinding signage in Downtown Colonial Beach is varied and could be standardized to enhance the visitor experience. There are several iterations of wayfinding signage in various places around the downtown area. The newer parking signs with rope detail, as well as the colorful beach signage, were part of a 2022 rebranding and are the preferred signage. There is no map-based wayfinding signage that includes points of interest, including businesses, hotels, or other tourism-driven locations. The wayfinding signage is mostly located on Washington Ave, but there is an opportunity to add more signage along Colonial Ave, especially towards the east.



Figure 15. “Welcome to Colonial Beach” sign at Town Hill, at the corner of Washington Ave and Colonial Ave.

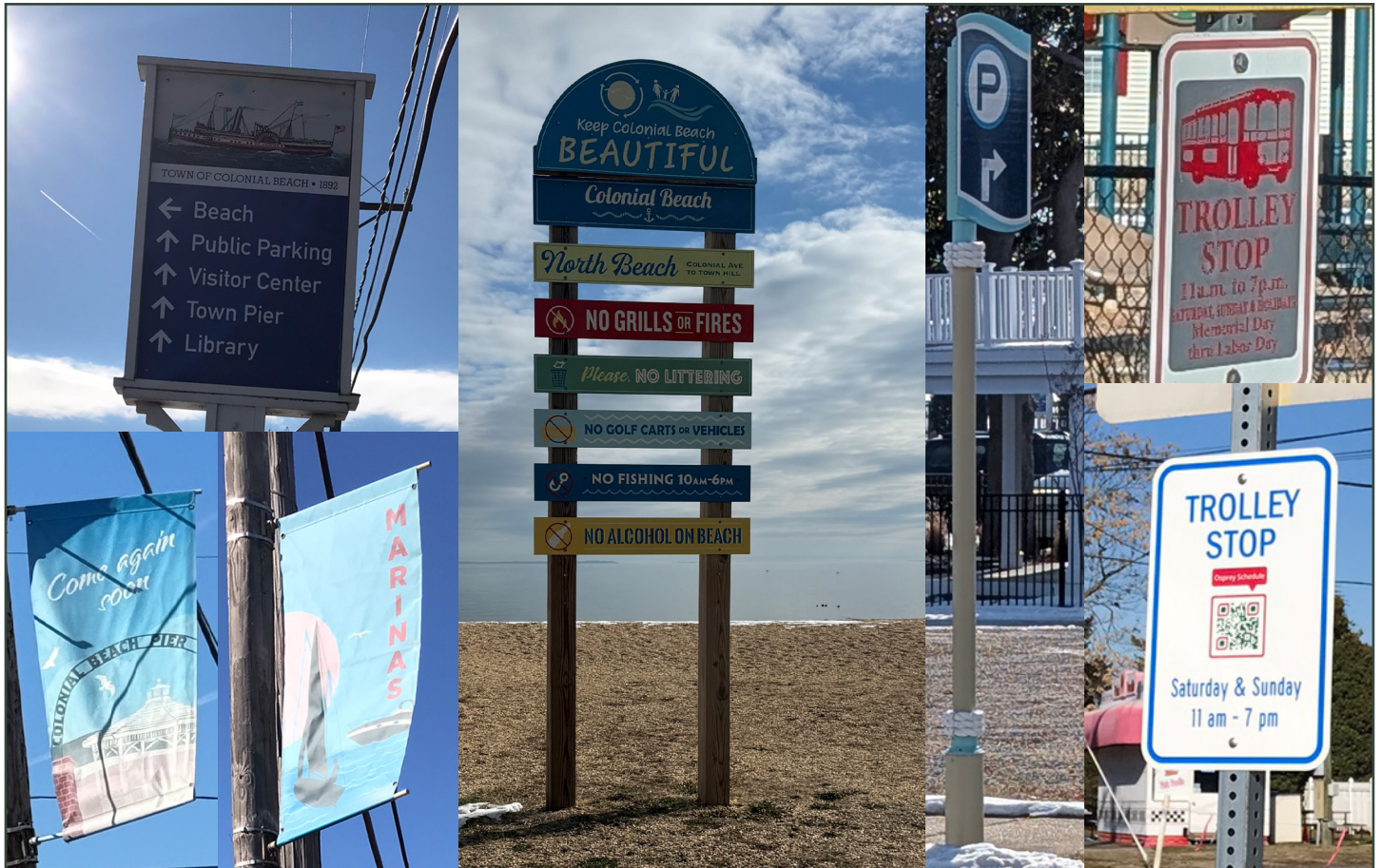


Figure 16. Variety of wayfinding signage throughout downtown.

# Pedestrian Experience

In addition to elements such as sidewalks and signage, there are other elements in the public realm that can enhance or detract from the pedestrian experience.

There are a few murals scattered around building facades in downtown. There might be an opportunity to capitalize on the existing murals and make a concerted effort to add more murals throughout the Washington Ave and Colonial Ave corridors to add more intrigue for pedestrians. Additionally, there are several spots where outdoor dining could be added or enhanced.

Especially along Colonial Ave, utility poles detract from the pedestrian experience. If there were an opportunity to underground the utilities, especially in the densest parts of downtown, that could enhance the public realm.



Figure 17. Outdoor dining on Washington Ave



Figure 18. Mural on the corner of Colonial Ave and Washington Ave



Figure 19. Utility poles detract from the pedestrian experience on Colonial Ave.

# Conclusion

Colonial Beach has a strong foundation for walkability and tourism, with sidewalks along most major corridors, a compact downtown, mixed commercial uses, and recent enhancements like crosswalks and wayfinding signage. However, challenges remain, including narrow or missing sidewalks, inconsistent signage and pavement markings, and visual clutter from utility poles. These weaknesses present opportunities, as state and federal grants, along with low-cost pilot projects, can help fund pedestrian-friendly improvements that enhance safety, branding, and economic development. At the same time, financial constraints, limited maintenance capacity, and potential stakeholder resistance pose threats that must be carefully managed to ensure the long-term success of public realm investments.

Table 1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of sidewalks along most of the main corridors</li> <li>• Mixed commercial uses and walkable core</li> <li>• Ongoing improvements, such as new marked crosswalks on Washington Ave</li> <li>• New wayfinding signage and brand identity</li> <li>• Some pedestrian realm elements, such as murals, public art, and outdoor dining, already present</li> <li>• Consolidated downtown area and proximity to the beach makes it more walkable for tourists</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks often narrow (less than 5') and many side streets lack sidewalks</li> <li>• Lack of sidewalks west of Monroe St on Colonial Ave</li> <li>• Inconsistent parking signage and pavement markings</li> <li>• Inconsistent wayfinding signage; lack of wayfinding map with points of interest</li> <li>• Curb cuts that serve no driveway</li> <li>• Utility poles detract from pedestrian experience</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some federal and state grant programs prioritize pedestrian safety and connectivity, creating many opportunities for funding</li> <li>• Pedestrian-friendly upgrades (safety, wayfinding, murals, outdoor dining) can support tourism and economic development</li> <li>• Potential for low-cost, temporary “tactical urbanism” pilot projects can bring improvements in the short term</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Threats</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial constraints and dependence on grant funding make it more difficult to fund public infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Limited maintenance funding and staff could lead to deterioration of public infrastructure over time</li> <li>• Potential stakeholder resistance to changes to public realm</li> </ul>

# Market Assessment

Colonial Beach is a middle-income, rural coastal community with a high proportion of retirees. The market in Colonial Beach is limited by its small population, its geographic separation, and the seasonal nature of its visitation economy. However, Colonial Beach has natural assets that give it the potential to grow and strengthen its economy by enhancing off-season visitation, giving visitors more to do when they visit, and promoting downtown as a destination for locals and visitors alike.

The key for Colonial Beach is to develop as a unique place where visitors and residents want to spend time, even in the off-season. Investing in transportation infrastructure that connects people to downtown and encourages walking around will support that strategy.

## Income

Census household income data (Figure 20) shows that there has been a significant amount of growth in households making less than \$20,000 per year between 2018 and 2023. There is also notable growth in the middle range of incomes, between \$40,000 and \$100,000 per year. Households earning over \$150,000 per year have declined.

The high growth in the lowest-income category likely reflects a growing number of retirees in Colonial Beach. The Colonial Beach Comprehensive Plan notes that “the growth of 65+ households has been rising in Colonial Beach since 1980,” attributing that growth in part from “a growing influx of retirees from outside the immediate area.”

### Household Income in Colonial Beach, 2013-2023

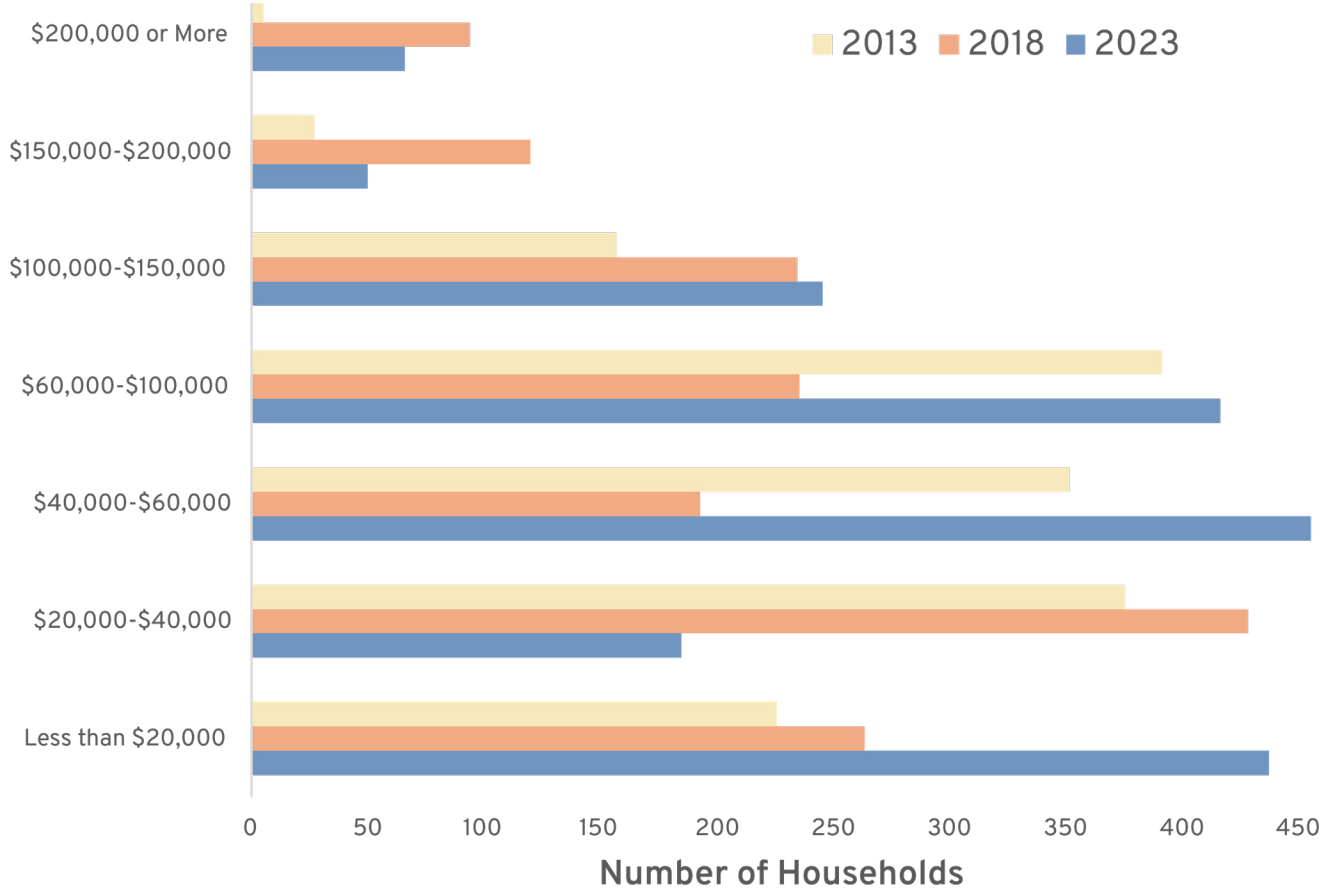


Figure 20. Household Income in Colonial Beach, 2013, 2018, and 2023.<sup>1</sup>

1. US Census Bureau. Table B19001 Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars).

Per capita income (Figure 21) in Colonial Beach is low relative to communities of a similar size (see Peer Communities section) and Virginia as a whole, and is relatively stagnant, growing only 31% in the past 10 years. This is also likely reflective of a growing retired population.

The appearance of low and stagnant incomes may pose a challenge for recruiting national retailers, who may look at the data and conclude that there is insufficient spending power to support new businesses. In reality, retirees can support a strong downtown economy, bolstered by an existing middle-aged, middle-income community, and the potential for growth.

In the absence of interest from major retailers, Colonial Beach can focus on growing locally owned businesses by providing incentives to resident entrepreneurs. Locally owned business keeps money in the local economy, supports year-round residents, and contributes to the uniqueness of Downtown Colonial Beach.

### Per Capita Income Change, Colonial Beach & Peer Communities

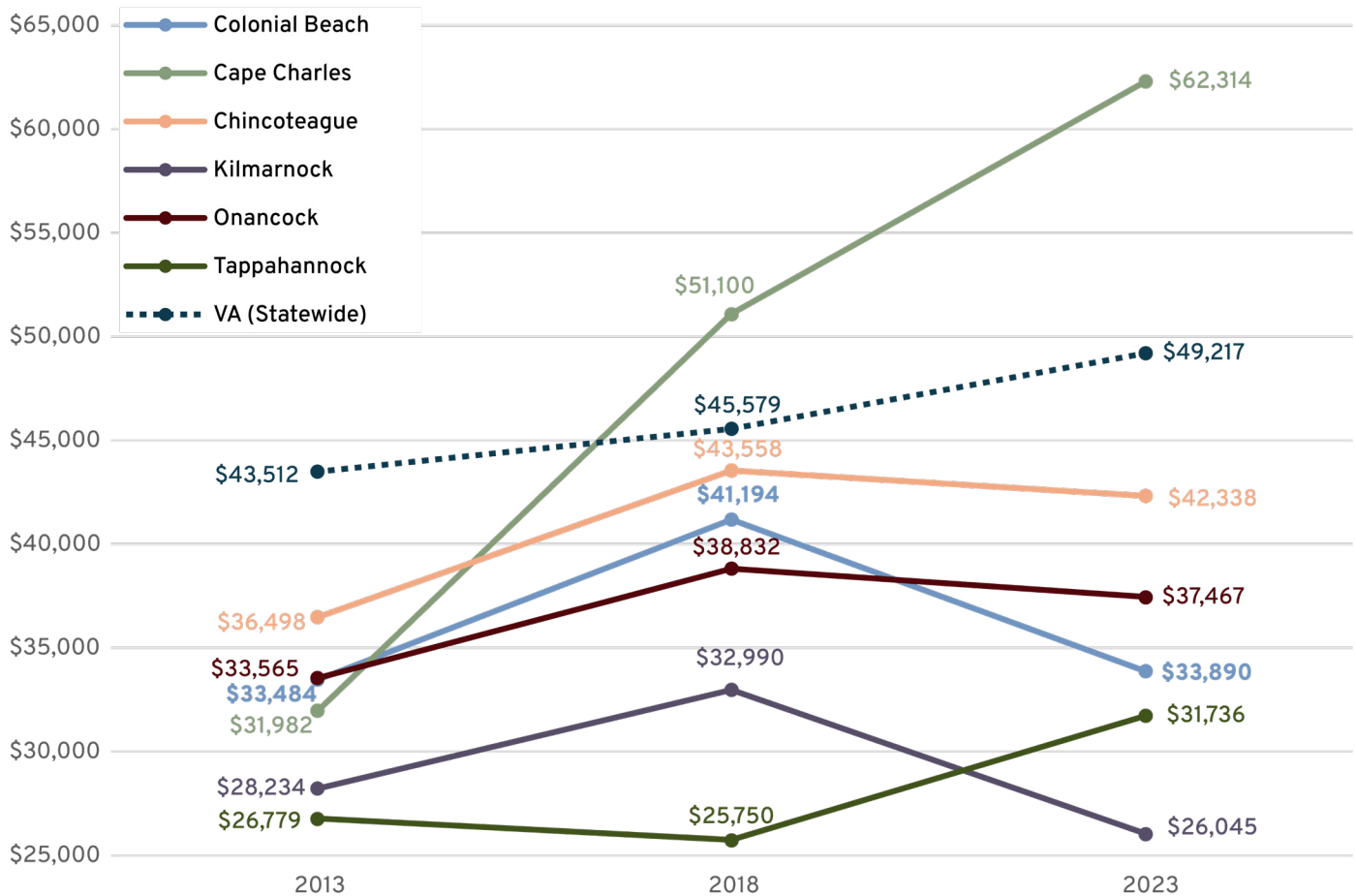


Figure 21. Per Capita Income Change in Colonial Beach versus peer communities<sup>2</sup>  
 2. US Census Bureau. Table 19301 Per Capita Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)

# Retirees & Wealth

Income data is often what national retailers and investors use to gauge spending power, but wealth data provides a fuller picture. Retirees may show modest fixed incomes while holding substantial assets that translate into local spending. In Colonial Beach, average household net worth surpasses \$1 million for residents over 55, demonstrating financial capacity that isn't obvious from income data alone.

Compared to its peer communities, Colonial Beach households hold less wealth overall, with

both average and median net worth falling below most other coastal towns. Within that group, Colonial Beach has a younger median age (46.7) and a smaller share of households reporting retirement income (30%), but it also trails wealthier retirement destinations such as Cape Charles and Chincoteague. This suggests that while retirees are a stable and important part of the Colonial Beach economy, the town does not yet capture the same scale of retirement wealth seen in more established peer communities.

## Median Age & Percent of Residents with Retirement Income (2023)

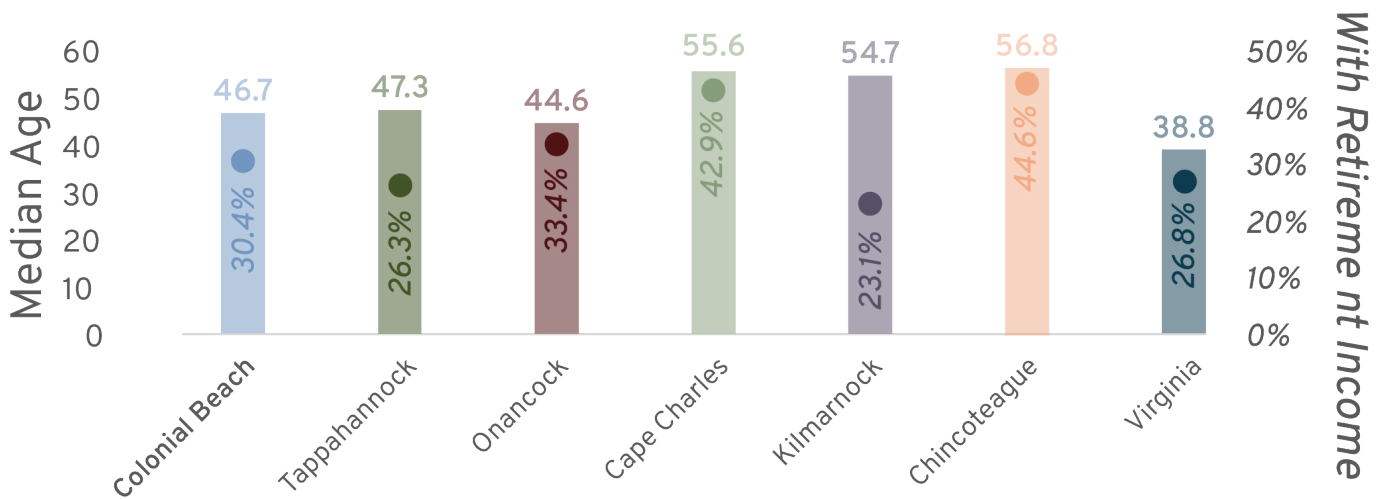


Figure 24. Median age & percent of residents with retirement income (ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023)

## Median and Average Wealth for Retirement-Age Residents (2024)

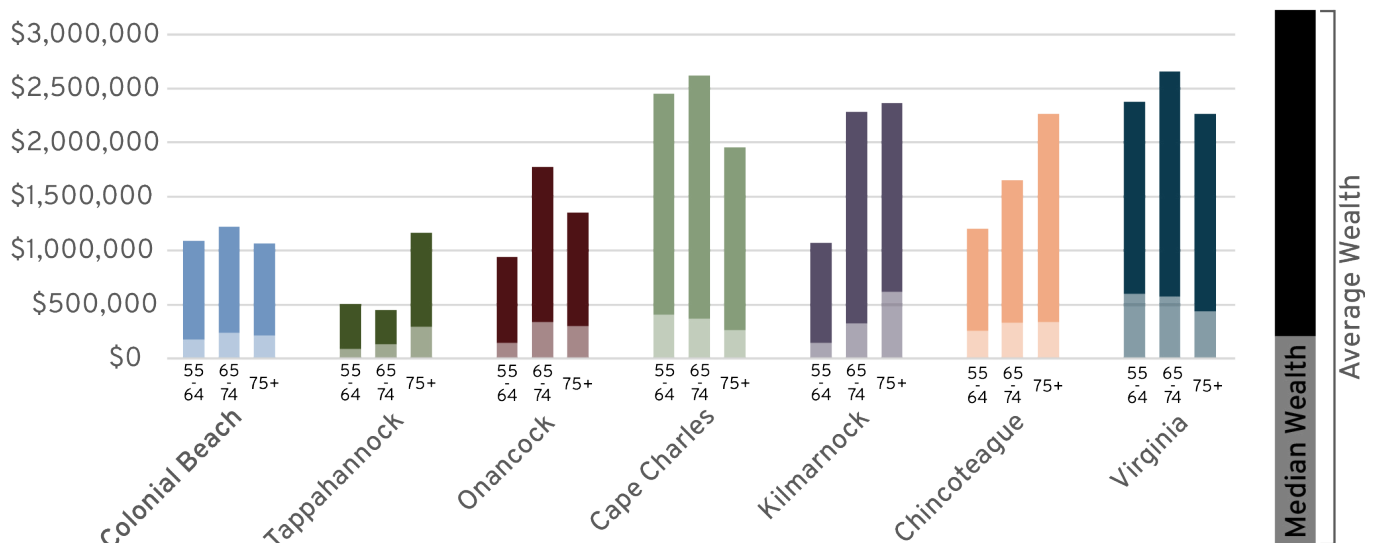


Figure 25. Median & average wealth for retirement-age residents (ESRI Business Analyst)

# Peer Communities Analysis

Colonial Beach is a unique community, and there is no other place with exactly the same issues and attributes. However, there are a number of communities in Virginia that share one or more key characteristics with Colonial Beach, and provide a useful point of economic comparison.

The peer communities in Table 2 were chosen for sharing one or more of the following attributes with Colonial Beach: 1) similar population size; 2) economy focused on visitation; 3) coastal or located on a lake or estuary; or 4) focal points of areas surrounded by rural land.

Table 2. Population growth & jobs, peer comparison <sup>3,4,5</sup>

Town	2020 Population	2010-20 Growth	Median Household Income	Pct Local Jobs in Visitation Industries	Jobs/Pop Ratio
Colonial Beach, VA	3,908	10%	\$52,119	23%	16%
Cape Charles, VA	1,178	17%	\$51,250	46%	52%
Chincoteague, VA	3,344	14%	\$62,292	64%	29%
Kilmarnock, VA	1,445	-3%	\$31,696	28%	148%
Onancock, VA	1,169	-7%	\$53,750	50%	26%
Tappahanock, VA	2,193	-8%	\$44,896	40%	99%

Compared to peer communities, Colonial Beach has average population growth. Median household income is on the lower end; however, as noted previously, this is likely in part a result of a high proportion of retirees.

The last two columns in the table relate to jobs. First is the percentage of local jobs that are in industries that support visitation and downtown vibrancy (retail, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service). Colonial Beach is on the low end of this metric as well, even compared to places with smaller populations, such as Onancock and Cape Charles.

The jobs-to-population ratio is also low in Colonial Beach, at 16%. This supports the Comprehensive Plan’s statement that future growth in Colonial Beach is dependent on expanding the employment base.

The top job sector in Colonial Beach is Educational Services, which is not a sector that generates economic activity (Figure 26). Many of its peer communities have Accommodation and Food Services as their top job sector, indicating a high proportion of jobs in a sector that brings money into downtown from tourists and locals.



Figure 26. Top employment sectors in Colonial Beach by number of employees <sup>5</sup>

3. US Census Bureau. 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census. Total Population  
 4. US Census Bureau. Table B19001 Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars).  
 5. US Census Bureau. Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) 2022.

# Geographic Independence

As noted in the previous section, Colonial Beach currently has fewer local jobs relative to its population, as well as fewer visitation-based economy jobs compared to peer communities. Several communities of similar size with seasonal attractors have successfully expanded their visitation economies, which raises an important question: what factors may be inhibiting job growth in Colonial Beach? One factor might be its geographic independence.

Colonial Beach has approximately 15,000 residents within a 20-minute drive, and the Town’s unique location naturally inhibits the local demand for jobs and services. Figure 22 shows the surrounding 5-, 10-, and 20-minute drive areas, and aerial imagery shows that the travel areas consist largely of rural and low-density development. While the geographic setting supports the town’s unique character and identity, it also contributes to the demand gap in services and employment.

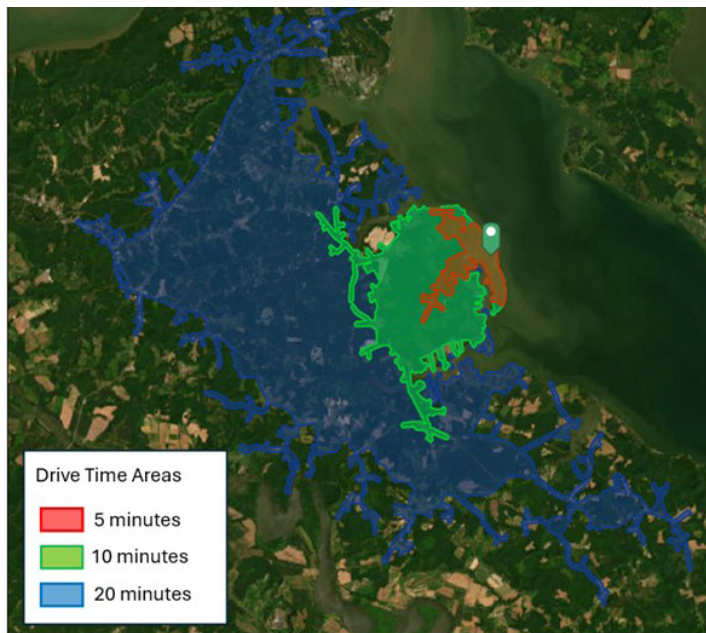


Figure 22. Drive time areas from Downtown Colonial Beach (ESRI Business Analyst)

Data from Placer.ai (Table 3) showed the top 10 places that visitors to Downtown Colonial Beach also visited within a one-year timeframe. Of the top 10, four of the places were shopping centers 30 miles from Colonial Beach (highlighted in yellow.)

Table 3. Most common places visited by Downtown Colonial Beach visitors (Placer.ai)

Rank	Name	Dist.	Visitors
1	Central Park Plaza (1340 Central Park Blvd, Fredericksburg)	29.9 mi	72k
2	Spotsylvania Towne Center (137 Spotsylvania Mall, Fredericksburg)	30 mi	62.6k
3	King George Gateway (16412 Consumer Row, King George)	8.5 mi	56.8k
4	High Tides on the Potomac (205 Taylor St, Colonial Beach)	0 mi	48.2k
5	Walmart (16375 Merchants Ln, King George)	8.6 mi	45k
6	The Shops at Beach Gate (680 McKinney Blvd, Colonial Beach)	0.8 mi	44.2k
7	Colonial Beach Shopping Center (535 Euclid Ave, Colonial Beach)	0.6 mi	40k
8	Potomac Mills (2700 Potomac Mills Cir, Woodbridge)	61.2 mi	39.4k
9	Riverboat on the Potomac (301 Beach Ter, Colonial Beach)	0.1 mi	39.3k
10	Cosner’s Corner (2215 Patriot Hwy, Fredericksburg)	29.4 mi	37.8k

## Downtown Attractors

To have a thriving downtown, a good starting point is the rule of 10:

- 10 places to eat
- 10 places to shop
- 10 places open after 6pm
- 10 free or low-cost things to do

Colonial Beach falls short in a few of these categories. During public engagement for the Comprehensive Plan, residents indicated that Colonial Beach does not have enough restaurants downtown. At the time of this analysis, Colonial Beach has 11 restaurants that are located downtown, are open year-round, and are open for dinner on at least two days per week, just barely reaching the “rule of 10” threshold:

1. Sunflower Cuisine
2. Riverboat on the Potomac
3. Willey’s
4. Hunan Diner
5. Drift Seafood Bar
6. Muse Pizzeria and Arcade
7. Circa 1892
8. Colonial Beach Brewing
9. Margaritas Restaurant
10. Pier 909
11. Orchid Thai

These are also the locations in the downtown study area that are open after 6 pm. This is relatively few compared to peer communities with similar population to Colonial Beach. Colonial Beach has one additional restaurant / nightlife spot that is very popular with visitors: High Tides on the Potomac. However, it is only open in-season. There are also only 8 downtown shopping spots:

1. Peddlers Market
2. Artists’ Alliance at Jarrett Thor Fine Arts
3. Hawthorn Mercantile
4. Everything’s Beachy
5. Beach Paws Boutique
6. Magnolia Hall
7. CB Creative
8. Mindful Mermaid

## Economic Development

Colonial Beach has a number of recent and current initiatives to promote increased tourism and economic growth.

About ten years ago, Colonial Beach made public improvements to the Historic Resort Commercial / Boardwalk area between Washington Avenue and the beachfront. These improvements included the development of wayfinding signage, murals, and streetscaping, and spurred some resort and commercial development near the Boardwalk.

Colonial Beach is an Affiliate Member of the Virginia Main Street Program, which provides technical assistance to support community revitalization efforts.

Colonial Beach contains an Enterprise Zone that covers the historic downtown, Colonial Avenue, the Shops at Beach Gate shopping center, and an area north of downtown on McKinney Boulevard. Enterprise Zones provide state and local incentives for new and expanding businesses that create jobs and invest in the local economy.

Colonial Beach also adopted Technology Zones and Tourism Zones (Figure 23), where the Town offers incentives for businesses that create jobs and encourage a longer tourism season.



Figure 23. Technology and Tourism Revitalization Zones (Colonial Beach Comprehensive Plan, 2020-2030)

# Housing

The Housing section of the Colonial Beach Comprehensive Plan characterizes the housing market as slow-growth, with a need for more housing diversity and more housing affordable to the workforce (households making between 60% and 120% of the area median income). These needs are common to many places in the United States.

Comparing Colonial Beach to peer communities, its housing prices are slightly lower than average, according to data from Zillow. The growth in home prices between 2020 and 2025 has been slower than most peer communities, as shown in Table 4 with only Chesapeake Beach and North Beach having slower growth. As discussed earlier, those are also the only peer communities with lower jobs to population ratios than Colonial Beach, and are also relatively geographically independent. There was insufficient data to conduct a similar analysis on rental prices.

Colonial Beach has a significant amount of space for new housing development. This includes the undeveloped Potomac Crossing site and a large number of vacant lots in the neighborhoods north and west of downtown. However, without growth in employment, there is not likely to be enough demand for much residential growth.

Table 4. Median home price, peer comparison (Zillow, Median home price, 2015-2025. Accessed 2/24/2025.)

Town	Median Home Price			2025 Rank	2020-2025 Change Rank
	2015	2020	2025		
Colonial Beach, VA	\$231,529	\$214,624	\$312,604	12	15
Beaufort, NC	\$202,266	\$243,218	\$391,434	6	6
Cambridge, MD	\$138,066	\$171,040	\$252,297	16	13
Cape Charles, VA	\$170,033	\$192,901	\$353,192	9	1
Chesapeake Beach, MD	\$295,541	\$330,702	\$439,922	3	17
Chincoteague, VA	\$178,730	\$209,911	\$364,790	8	2
Clarksville, VA	\$151,943	\$178,246	\$292,654	14	4
Edenton, NC	\$-	\$142,591	\$228,278	17	8
Kilmarnock, VA	\$213,526	\$238,315	\$349,882	10	14
Manteo, NC	\$258,893	\$308,803	\$503,794	2	5
North Beach, MD	\$230,236	\$285,636	\$394,368	5	16
Onancock, VA	\$144,718	\$172,322	\$277,245	15	7
Oriental, NC	\$211,556	\$242,363	\$386,869	7	9
Saint Michaels, MD	\$194,596	\$253,207	\$399,466	4	11
Southport, NC	\$381,938	\$428,496	\$682,572	1	10
Swansboro, NC	\$174,755	\$207,792	\$342,452	11	3
Tappahanock, VA	\$168,341	\$203,201	\$309,535	13	12
West Point, VA	\$168,341	\$203,201	\$309,535	13	12

# Market Assessment Conclusion

- Colonial Beach is an economically slow-growth place that may have hurdles to overcome to attract new businesses, such as geographic separation and the appearance of low spending power.
- Because of its relative geographic separation and the seasonal nature of its main attraction (the beach), Colonial Beach is in need of strong year-round attractions that can draw visitors from farther away.
- To draw visitors and outside investment, Colonial Beach would benefit from creating a visually distinct place through promotion of local businesses and public improvements in infrastructure, among other strategies.
- A focus on growing locally-owned businesses would have multiple benefits for Colonial Beach, including keeping money in the local economy, supporting year-round residents, and contributing to the uniqueness of downtown.
- The connectivity strategy should support downtown as the economic and visitation center of Colonial Beach:
  - Aesthetic and experiential improvements like streetscaping and wayfinding
  - Providing centralized parking and encouraging visitors to walk through downtown and visit multiple destinations
  - Creating safe and attractive bike and golf cart connections to downtown from the neighborhoods to the north and from Potomac Crossing when it is developed
  - Selection of one to two blocks downtown as a pilot location for pedestrian improvements and implement low-cost changes to improve pedestrian experience



# Development Opportunities Assessment

The purpose of the development opportunity assessment is to use parcel data in combination with stakeholder insights and findings from the market assessment to identify opportunities for future development in Downtown Colonial Beach. These opportunity locations can then inform the connectivity plan by identifying future destinations.



*Figure 27. Recent development along the Boardwalk (Drift Seafood & Bar)*

# Parcel Status

The development opportunities assessment began with a parcel-level analysis to identify the current status of about 200 parcels downtown and along Colonial Avenue. The parcel status was determined by a combination of three methods:

- Comparing the assessed value of the land with the assessed value of the improvements on the land (i.e. buildings);
- Visual inspection;
- Information from the Colonial Beach Building Inventory conducted in 2024 along Colonial Avenue.

Parcels were assigned the status of “active use,” “underdeveloped,” or “vacant.” In general, parcels in active use had improvement values greater than the value of the land. They usually

had occupied homes or businesses on them, and some had been recently renovated.

Underdeveloped parcels generally had improvement values that were lower than the value of the land. Some were large parcels of land with only a small amount of built area. Others had buildings that were vacant or outdated.

Vacant parcels generally had an improvement value of \$0. Many were parking lots, but some were truly vacant, with no current use.

The map in Figure 28, which shows parcel status, also identifies parcels that are publicly owned (red outline) and parcels that are in use as parking lots (hatched).

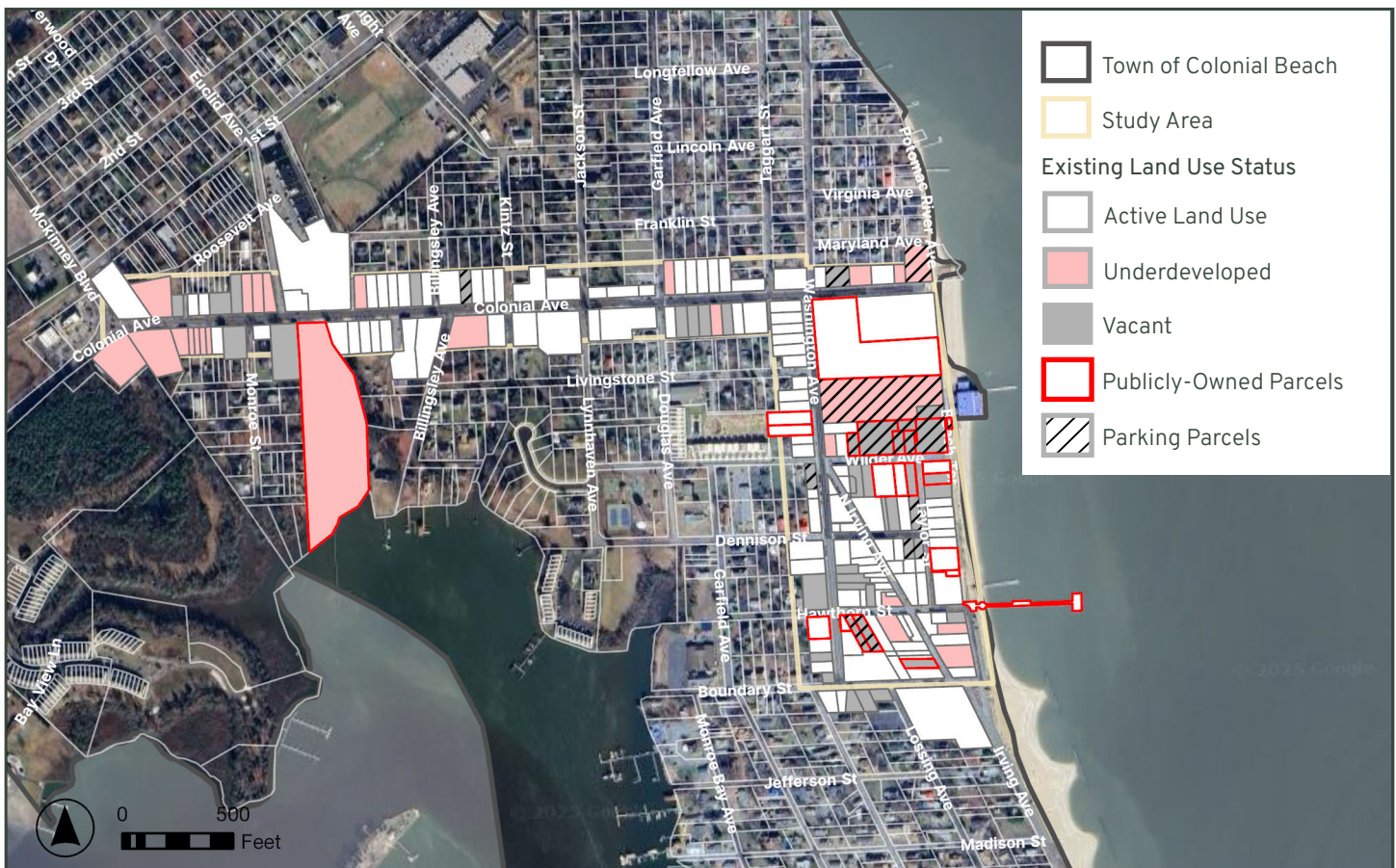


Figure 28. Parcel status

# Parcel Classification

The next step in identifying opportunities was to classify the parcels based on status, use, and size (see Figure 29).

Development opportunity parcels were identified from those with a status of “vacant” or “underdeveloped.” If parcels were greater than ¼ acre in area, either on their own or in combination with adjacent opportunity parcels, they were classified as a “high” opportunity site. Smaller opportunity parcels were designated as “medium” opportunity sites.

Some parcels, including some of the “underdeveloped” or “vacant” parcels, were classified as “public use / land preservation.” This category includes public parks. It also includes the future home of the Rescue Squad, the large publicly-owned parcel on the south side of Colonial Avenue.

Parcels in active use are classified as “stability,” meaning they are not considered candidates for redevelopment or transformation for the purposes of the Connectivity Plan.

For the purposes of analysis, the parcels were divided into three subareas: Colonial Avenue, Downtown, and Town Hill, as shown in Figure 29.

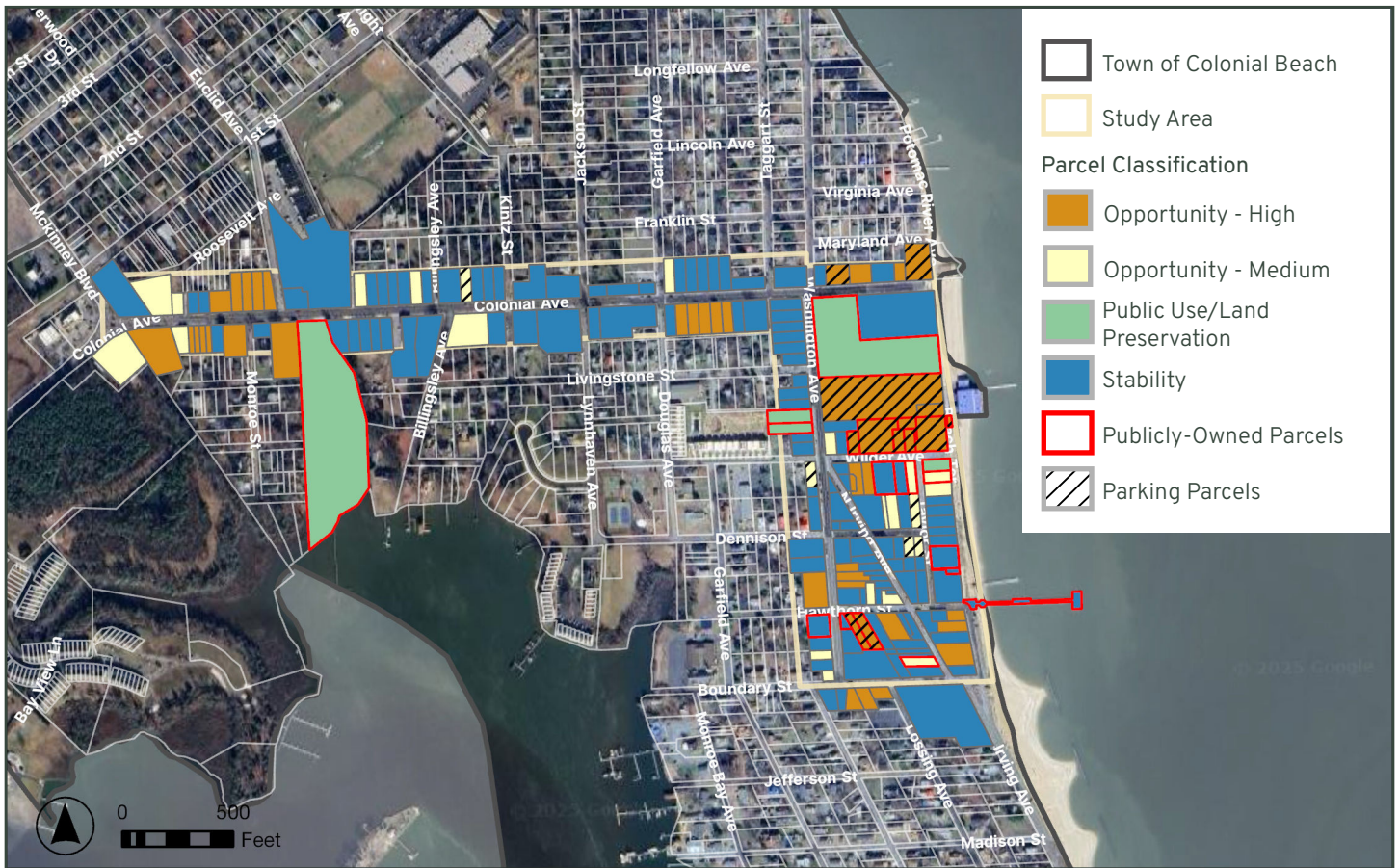


Figure 29. Parcel classification

The following tables show different breakdowns of the land area of study parcels within the three subareas. Table 5 shows the total area of parcels with the status of “vacant” or “underdeveloped,” as well as the area of town-owned land (which may overlap with the first two statuses). Table 6 shows the total area of land classified as “Opportunity – High,” “Opportunity – Medium,” and “Public Use / Land Preservation.”

Table 5. Subarea parcel acreage by status

Subarea	Acres		
	Vacant	Underdeveloped	Town-Owned
Colonial Ave	2.0	8.4	5.2
Downtown	3.5	0.9	2.0
Town Hill	2.6	3.5	5.0

Table 6. Subarea parcel acreage by classification

Subarea	Acres		
	High Opp.	Medium Opp.	Public Use & Land Preservation
Colonial Ave	3.1	2.0	5.2
Downtown	2.7	1.7	0.2
Town Hill	5.8	0.3	3.4

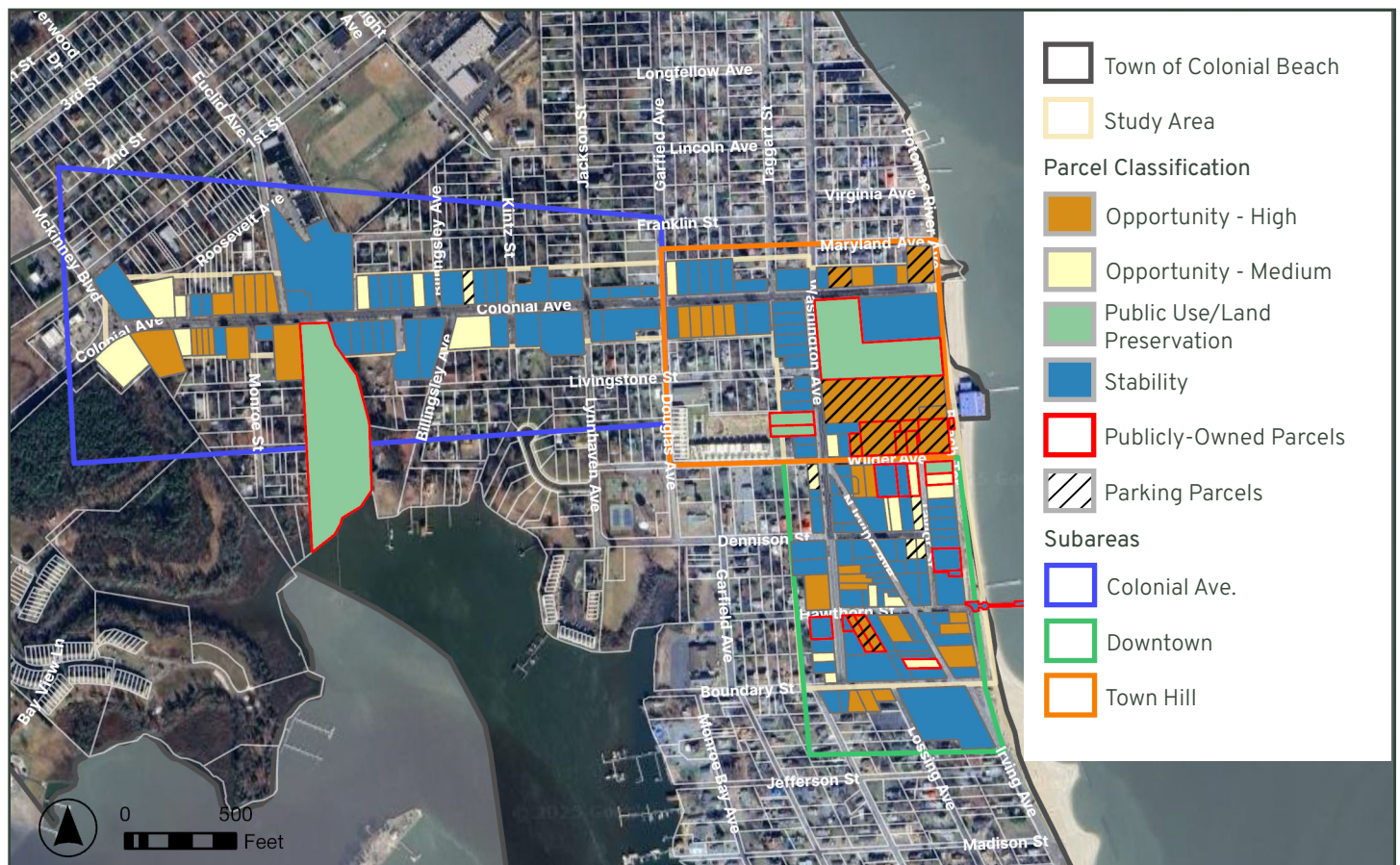


Figure 30. Parcel classification with subareas

# Block Level Classification

To complete the opportunity identification, a block level classification was developed to highlight blocks within the study area with a high proportion of parcels that are classified as development opportunities, as shown in Figure 31. These have been classified as “Transformation Areas,” which means that a significant amount of change is possible in these areas, and that there is an opportunity to create a new place with a different look and feel than what is there currently. This could be done through new buildings, renovations of existing buildings, creation of public open space, streetscape changes, and other significant projects. Small area plans are recommended to guide investment and create a cohesive design for these places, emphasizing unique, local businesses and commercial establishments with a variety of uses that activate the area throughout different times of the day and days of the week, and with human-scaled building and urban space design that emphasizes pedestrian and non-motorized

modes. Development projects in these areas represent big opportunities for substantial change. As such, redevelopment in these areas should be supported and encouraged, and also carefully reviewed within the broader context and goals of this connectivity plan.

Blocks where opportunity sites are mixed with stable, active properties have been classified as “Infill Areas.” This classification applies where the majority of properties in the area are active and unlikely to change, but there are opportunities to increase the activation of the area by filling in gaps left by vacant and underdeveloped sites scattered throughout the area. These opportunities may include new buildings or renovations of existing buildings. Design guidelines should be considered to ensure new buildings provide the desired character, whether that matches the existing buildings or takes the area in a new direction, again emphasizing Colonial Beach’s unique, local themes.



Figure 31. Block-level classification

Blocks with few development opportunities have been classified as “Stability Areas.” Areas with this classification have few, if any, properties that are vacant or underdeveloped. Nearly all properties have active uses that are unlikely to change significantly in the near future. However, these areas can still have streetscape upgrades, connectivity projects, and other improvements in the public realm. The block level classification is shown in Figure 31. Individual opportunity sites are circled.



Figure 32. Examples of Transformation Areas (A - along Colonial Ave near McKinney Blvd intersection and I - Town-owned parcels along Wilder Ave) and Infill Areas (E - on Colonial Ave between Lynnhaven Ave and Douglas Ave and O - along Boundary St between Bancroft Ave and Lossing Ave)

# Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

**ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):** A federal law that makes sure public spaces—like sidewalks, crosswalks, and buildings—are usable by people with disabilities (for example, adding ramps or wider paths).

**Bike Boulevard:** A low-speed street designed to make biking safer and more comfortable. Bike boulevards use treatments like sharrows, wayfinding signs, traffic-calming measures, and reduced vehicle speeds to prioritize people biking while still allowing cars.

**Business Improvement District (BID):** An area where businesses agree to pay a small extra fee to fund improvements like flowers, benches, or events that make their district area nicer.

**Comprehensive Plan:** A long-term plan that guides how land in a place should grow and change in the future.

**Connectivity:** How easily people can move around—from one place to another—using streets, sidewalks, and other infrastructure.

**Curb Cut:** A driveway opening that cuts through the curb or sidewalk so cars can enter or leave.

**Curb Ramp:** A sloped part of a sidewalk that helps people in wheelchairs, with strollers, or on bikes get on and off the street safely.

**Enterprise/Technology/Tourism Zone:** Special parts of town where the local government gives tax breaks or other support to help businesses open or grow.

**Facade Improvement:** Fixing or upgrading the front of a building to make it more attractive.

**Green Infrastructure:** Using plants and natural systems—like rain gardens or trees—to manage rainwater and make streets greener.

**Infill Development:** Building new structures on empty lots or underused land in areas that already have buildings, instead of expanding outward.

**Multimodal Transportation:** A system that makes it easy to travel in more than one way—such as walking, biking, driving, using a trolley, or riding a golf cart.

**Pedestrian Refuge Island:** A small, safe area in the middle of the street where people can wait while crossing.

**Placemaking:** Designing public spaces to be welcoming, creative, and reflect the community's identity—often through art, landscaping, and seating.

**Pop-Up Business / Business Incubator:** A short-term or starter space where small businesses can test an idea before opening permanently.

**Public Realm:** All outdoor areas everyone can use—such as sidewalks, streets, and parks.

**Right-of-Way:** Land set aside for public uses like streets, sidewalks, and utilities.

**Shared Parking / Park-and-Ride:** Parking areas used by different groups at different times—for example, where visitors can park and take the trolley.

**Shared-Use Path:** A wide (usually 10'), paved path where people walking, biking, or using golf carts can travel safely together.

**Streetscape:** The design and appearance of a street, including trees, benches, lighting, and sidewalks.

**Tactical Urbanism:** Small, low-cost, temporary projects—like painting crosswalks or adding planters—that test ideas for improving streets before making them permanent.

**Traffic Calming:** Street design changes that make drivers slow down and create safer places for people walking and biking.

**Walk Audit / Bike Audit:** A community activity where people walk or bike around to note what feels safe or unsafe and suggest improvements.

**Wayfinding:** Signs, maps, and other tools that help people find their way around town.

**Woonerf ("voo-nerf"):** A "living street" design from the Netherlands where cars move slowly and share the space safely with people walking and biking.

# Appendix B: Public Engagement

## Summer 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Summary

On June 26, 2025, DCB invited a number of key stakeholders to attend an afternoon engagement session with a presentation and small group discussion led by Timmons Group and their subconsultant 3TP. The presentation covered topics related to the existing conditions analysis of the transportation and parking network, a market assessment of the current Colonial Beach area, and a review of development opportunities at properties along Washington Avenue and Colonial Avenue. Attendees included the following:

- Tom Larson, Council Member, Town of Colonial Beach
- Kyler Brower, Assistant Town Manager, Town of Colonial Beach
- Eric Nelson, President, DCB Main Street program; realtor
- Susan Mack, VP, DCB Main Street program; resident
- Cathy Cavender, Treasurer, DCB Main Street program; owner of Monrovia Farm
- Kelly Woods Vaughn, Co-chair of the Economic Development Committee (now part of DCB Main Street program); owner of Riverview Inn
- Duke Dodson, Principal of Dodson Development
- Kathleen Moran, CB Creative (and representing our arts community)
- Georgiana Granilia, Owner of Raven's Point and serial entrepreneur
- Maryann Day, Owner of The Beach Shop and representing the Chamber of Commerce
- Phil Bolin, Liaison between the marinas, DCB, the Town, and other local entities
- Mario Haggerty, Owner of Rio's Custom Creations (marketing/promotional items)
- Charlotte Cole, Executive Director for DCB and Economic Development Director for the Town

## Breakout Session #1 – Existing Conditions Discussion

Timmons Group presented the Existing Conditions Analysis providing documentation of current infrastructure, traffic patterns, sidewalks, signage, parking supply, and land-use opportunities based on field walkability and GIS data. Participants built upon the SWOT analysis to pinpoint critical infrastructure needs and quick-win opportunities for improving DCB study area functionality and appearance. The group noted both the progress made such as new wayfinding signage and marked crosswalks at specific areas, as well as persistent gaps that undermine the pedestrian experience.

### Signage & Wayfinding:

- Recent installation of branded wayfinding signs and murals adds character and aids navigation.
- Signage remains inconsistent – many areas lack directional maps or thematic markers, and pavement markings vary by block.
- Implement a cohesive, phased signage framework: audit and remove outdated signs; install a large, static gateway map with QR codes; roll out standardized directional panels along key corridors.
- Delay mounting new signs until a consistent navigation framework is established.
- Limited maintenance budgets could lead to rapid sign deterioration without a clear care plan.
- Consider a large, static map of key points of interest at the gateway, supplemented by QR codes for digital updates

### Sidewalks & Pedestrian Safety:

- Sidewalks along main streets exist but are often under 5 ft wide; many side streets west of Monroe Street lack any pedestrian path.
- Safer, clearer crossings on Washington Avenue – Make pedestrians visible to oncoming traffic. Specifically at the intersection of Washington/Colonial.
- Hazardous curb cuts and utility poles

encroach on walkways, creating trip hazards and sight-line issues.

- Recommended actions include targeted sidewalk widening, vegetation trimming, and redesigning crossings on Washington Avenue with raised markings or bulb-outs for visibility.

### **Transportation & Multimodal Connectivity:**

- Participants endorsed enhanced trolley service, upgrading stop signage and exploring GPS-tracked headways of 10–15 minutes to connect the marinas, boardwalk, Town Hill, and neighborhoods north of downtown.
- Taxi and rideshare are recognized supplements; dedicated pick up/drop off zones could streamline flow during peak events.
- Tactical urbanism pilots (e.g., temporary curb extensions or painted traffic calming) can demonstrate benefits ahead of permanent infrastructure.
- Marinas are a key POI with connectivity challenges.
- Connect Colonial to Washington via sidewalks, disconnected on Boundary between Washington and Garfield

### **Roadways & Traffic Calming:**

- A new 4 way stop at Boundary/Washington was proposed to slow speeds and improve pedestrian crossings.
- Consider narrowing select one way streets (Hawthorn St, N. Irving Ave) to foster traffic calming, making space for bike lanes or pedestrian buffers.
- Raised crosswalks or colored pavement at key intersections can reinforce right of way.
- Hawthorn St: speeding, wrong-way travel, not stopping.
- One-way streets could be narrowed to provide more room for walking/biking without impacting vehicle travel.

### **Parking & Wayfinding:**

- Based on discussions, it was agreed that a net surplus of parking under current conditions is present, the issue is directing visitors to the appropriate locations rather than just driving around aimlessly.
- General agreement that lack of parking is not a problem, instead it's about identifying and steering people to the parking.

- Golf carts do not take up full space.
- Inconsistent striping and unclear curb-color coding confuse visitors; underutilized lots (e.g., North Irving) need clearer identification.
- There is parking on North Irving that no one knows about.
- Minimal-to-no lines marking parking spaces; people do not always park properly.
- This was a topic of conversation at the recent Town Council meetings. Look for this online in the meeting records. “Article 13” discussion that parking is unclear – signage, lines, payment all unclear.
- Actions recommended by participants include standardizing signage/striping, clarifying pay station operations, and designating golf cart bays to diversify mobility options.
- Standardize parking regulations (30 min, 2 hr, day rate) and clarify pay station operations; designate golf cart bays where appropriate.

## **Breakout Session #2 – Market Assessment Discussion**

Building on the primary findings, stakeholders discussed how to leverage Colonial Beach's unique assets while addressing the unique demographic and economic conditions. Emphasis was placed on moving beyond a seasonal, day trip economy toward a more resilient, year-round visitor base.

### **Assets & Cultural Identity:**

- The beach and boardwalk remain core draws; framing Colonial Beach as “a world away, yet close to DC/Richmond” resonates with regional audiences.
- Beach is great but more things need to draw people in and stay longer.
- Historic designations, local festivals (Bike Fest, Holidays), and existing murals/public art bolster the town's distinctiveness.
- Economic initiatives Virginia Main Street and the Enterprise, Technology, and Tourism Zones offer incentives that can be promoted to attract small businesses.
- Build on the Town Hill venue to support local organizations and create more community opportunities. Town Hill needs improvements to continue attracting people and events.

- Celebrate residents’ personal narratives to deepen visitor engagement.
- Highlight Colonial Beach’s role in regional history through interpretive signage and storytelling.

### Challenges & Demographics:

- A growing retiree population skews per capita income low (despite rising median home prices), complicating efforts to court outside investors.
- Discussion included the recommendation to find an economic indication factor that would capture the retiree monetization properly. Identify a metric that hypes up Colonial Beach and how it stands out from the area.
- Limited year-round jobs in visitation industries highlight a need to nurture local entrepreneurship.
- Geography limits pass through traffic, making downtown itself the destination.

### Marketing & Outreach Needs:

- The “Rule of Ten” checklist reveals gaps: 9 eateries open for dinner, 7 shops, 9 evening options, and 10 attractions met by the beach itself. Need to work to identify number of options that will reach 10 for all categories.
- Increasing off season stays and multi-night visits are key performance metrics to track.
- Target metropolitan areas via social media, billboards, and partnerships to attract younger demographics.
- Develop metrics (e.g., event attendance, off season bookings) to measure marketing effectiveness.
- Distinguish between day trip beachgoers and multi night visitors; consider tailored packages or incentives for longer stays.
- Leverage Colonial Beach’s status as the last deep water port before D.C. and ease AirBnB regulations to boost overnight stays.

### Housing & Development:

- With land available for new housing (Potomac Crossing and north downtown lots), the Comprehensive Plan’s call for diverse, workforce affordable units (60–120% AMI) can be realized.
- Rising home prices (from \$214 K in 2020 to \$313 K in 2025) and peer comparisons suggest

an opportunity to market more attainable options for families and young professionals.

## Breakout Session #3 – Parcel Development Assessment Discussion

Stakeholders reviewed a detailed parcel-level evaluation to identify high impact redevelopment sites and strengthen public private collaboration. Attendees reviewed maps of existing parcels in the study area on Washington and Colonial Avenues, discussing opportunities for activation and better land use alignment. The focus was on clarifying parking, engaging private stakeholders, and exploring pedestrian friendly routes to link waterfront and commercial zones.

### Parcel Status & Classification:

- Active Use: Improvement value > land value
- Underdeveloped: Improvement < land
- Vacant: No improvements
- High opportunity sites (>0.25 acre vacant/ underdeveloped) include large town owned parcels on Colonial Avenue and near Town Hill; medium sites pepper downtown’s core.
- Mapping revealed 3.1 acres of high opportunity land on Colonial Avenue and 5.8 acres around Town Hill.
- Identified sites like the American Legion (G), Private Riverboat Lot (H), Town owned lot near the Rescue Squad (D), and recently remodeled Trivets (C) that could be focus areas if public-private agreement was reached.
- Recommend activation strategies for under utilized parcels, positioning them for future public-private partnerships.

### Block Level Strategy:

- Transformation Areas: Key parking lots and underused properties (Riverboat on the Potomac, public bathhouse, Rescue Squad lot) flagged for mixed use/structured parking development.
- Infill Areas: Smaller parcels suited for starter retail, housing, or incubator spaces to activate the pedestrian corridor.
- Stakeholders stressed engaging private owners early and piloting on one or two downtown blocks to illustrate potential before scaling.

- Formalize the informal pedestrian link between Washington Avenue and the riverfront, potentially as a pedestrian/bike only corridor.
- Addressing sea level rise and erosion – how is this project opening potential to funding for these environmental projects and protections, how does it play into the long-term future of Colonial Beach.
- Establish a phased plan that incorporates multiple elements in a designated area.
- Provide recommendations for DCB to discuss with private property owners (such as Riverboat), mainly to start looking to the future and vision of what the Downtown area should look like.
- Connectivity to the marinas area to bring along with Downtown area.

## Fall 2025 Public Meeting Summary







On October 6, 2025, DCB invited the public to a presentation of the Draft Connectivity Plan at Colonial Beach Elementary School. Consultant lead, Timmons Group, presented slides to the 36 attendees about the Plan, with a Q&A session at the end. After the formal presentation, attendees were invited to look at several boards prepared by Timmons Group. The boards showed the goals and strategies in the Draft Plan as well as conceptual renderings for 1) the Colonial Avenue gateway and 2) the Wilder Avenue area. Participants were asked to place sticky dots on their favorite strategies and leave comments on sticky notes with any feedback.

Questions asked during the Q & A portion included:

- What is meant by the term “tactical urbanism”?
- How does this plan fit into the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, which is scheduled to begin next year? Will it be incorporated into that effort or remain a separate plan?
- Could additional opportunities be explored through the Comprehensive Plan?
- Will the plan include recommendations related to zoning or land use regulations?
- How can the Town incentivize redevelopment

- of underutilized or long-vacant properties?
- The plan will link action items to funding sources and identify how to prioritize them.
- In the tiered implementation framework, does Tier 1 represent lower-cost, short-term actions that increase in cost and complexity in later tiers?
- Concern that the plan missed some broader analytical components—it would be helpful to understand what past plans were reviewed and how they informed the analysis.
- The Mayor expressed excitement for the project and appreciation to the project team.
- Request for a reference list of previous studies reviewed for this project, ideally with links or citations.
- Will this plan change the character of the Town, or is the intent to maintain its existing integrity while identifying improvement opportunities?
- Will the plan consider temporary traffic control measures or design interventions, such as bollards, similar to those previously implemented downtown?
- What is meant by “wayfinding” and “placemaking”?
- Has Dodson Development been informed about this plan and its focus on wayfinding and placemaking?
- How does the plan address population growth—is it focused on optimizing conditions today or accommodating future growth?
- Is the Main Street Program being coordinated with the Town and included in this effort?
- With Bike Fest approaching, how can the plan make the downtown and other areas more attractive to visitors beyond the main event location?
- There is a need for wayfinding improvements along the Point.
- How can the plan emphasize what makes Colonial Beach unique, particularly by highlighting the waterfront and downtown as part of a larger tourism destination?
- The River to Bay Trail presents an opportunity to enhance connectivity along the waterfront and serve as an early step toward sidewalk improvements.

### Connectivity Goals & Strategies (1/2)

<b>Pilot tactical urbanism projects</b> Use paint, pavers, planters, etc. to pilot tactical urbanism projects to help build support for longer term permanent changes. This could include crosswalk, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, parklets, and more.		
<b>Improve existing pedestrian infrastructure</b> Work with the community to conduct a "walk audit" to understand how pedestrian infrastructure can be improved. Evaluate an ADA audit of sidewalks, curb ramps, etc. along streets in Downtown to assess where improvements can be made. Mark narrow sidewalks (less than 7' wide) where feasible to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. Add new or improve existing ADA-compliant curb ramps where necessary, especially along Washington Ave and Colonial Ave. Fit "touch curb" along sidewalks where curb cuts are no longer needed, especially along Washington Ave. Calm traffic and reclaim the right-of-way. Work with Westminster County to get Safe Streets for All (SS4A) funding for a limited action plan, or apply for a similar action plan for just Colonial Beach. Program shared-use street designs on side streets like Miller Ave. Invest in a "Shared Use" program for streets like Washington Ave, Miller Ave, Hawthorn St, Irving Ave, and Washington St.		
<b>Put a dot in your favorite Connectivity strategies!</b>		




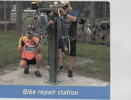




Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan

### Placemaking / Wayfinding Goals & Strategies (2/2)

<b>Improve the parking experience</b> Provide clear, consistent signage for parking payment options that accommodate a range of users, including people who are not comfortable with smartphone-based systems. Investigate the potential for a surface parking lot at the Rescue Square parcel on Duane St. Transition public parking lots into more visible, welcoming, and well-connected facilities. This could include adding clear only signage that encourages visitors to park there, redesigning lot layout for safety and aesthetics (including landscaping), and connecting the network and pedestrian connections that link the community to Washington Avenue and other downtown destinations.		
<b>Increase the amount of coordinated wayfinding signage</b> Demonstrate existing wayfinding signage, including banners on utility poles, to create consistency for visitors. Create informational signage with wayfinding maps in key areas. Add historical signage with historical/cultural information to encourage "travel time" "Welcome to Colonial Beach" signs near Colonial Ave/McKinley Ave intersection and Colonial Ave/Washington Ave intersection.		
<b>Put a dot in your favorite Placemaking &amp; Wayfinding strategies!</b>		

Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan

### Connectivity Goals & Strategies (2/2)

<b>Fill sidewalk gaps</b> Conduct a sidewalk audit along Colonial Ave west of Monroe Street. Add crosswalks and ADA-compliant curb ramps along side streets connecting to the boulevard (e.g. Miller Ave, Dickinson St, Taylor St, Hawthorn St, Irving Ave, and Washington St).		
<b>Make the Trolley an asset</b> Work with ODOT to learn how to improve Trolley service. Add benches, lighting, and more detailed Trolley informational signage at Trolley stops. Make a formal Trolley "park and ride" at the Shops at Beach Gate parking lot. Work with Shop at Beach Gate to create a shared parking agreement. Create a shared parking agreement for a Trolley "park and ride" at Decade Restaurant across from the marina. Find opportunities to make real-time Trolley tracking for riders to know when the Trolley is coming.		
<b>Extend bike infrastructure</b> Develop a small "Welcome Heritage Bicycle" Trail route that continues east on Colonial Ave to Washington Ave and connect to Downtown Colonial Beach. Develop a central trail to connect parking and buffered bike lanes to downtown streets from McKinley Ave to Washington Ave or create a shared-use path on east side of Colonial Ave. Add more marked bike, bike rack, and bike repair stations in Downtown. Bikes should be parked in local areas to reflect a Colonial Beach theme. Develop a shared-use path/bike boulevard along Wakefield Ave/East Ave to connect to Colonial Ave.		
<b>Improve the golf cart experience</b> Place the informal "golf cart path" between the Shops at Beach Gate off of McKinley Ave and Beach Gate into a shared-use path. Create golf cart parking areas within existing parking lots and on vacant blocks in downtown.		







Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan

### Economic Development / Tourism Goals & Strategies

<b>Grow locally-owned businesses</b> Develop a program to encourage business residents to set up and operate the businesses in downtown to create small businesses. Develop a public space, online guide of economic development incentives and business support services for locally-owned businesses to be shared to local professionals, investors, and other stakeholders. Develop a program to encourage more travel and local professional services.	
<b>Improve marketing &amp; increase visibility of Colonial Beach</b> Develop the contemporary branding strategy "To Have Colonial Beach" (include Colonial Beach in a great place to live for a longer range of economic activities, including affordable, quality of life, and to other industries for visitors and the city, leading into waterfront development and more professional services. Develop and enhance signage, and arts and culture programming. Increase the amount of walk and bike infrastructure along the waterfront. Promote and market the historic district and other historic buildings, historic landmarks, and other cultural programming that are both historic and contemporary.	
<b>Put a dot in your favorite Economic Development &amp; Tourism strategies!</b>	

Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan

### Placemaking / Wayfinding Goals & Strategies (1/2)

<b>Improve the public realm &amp; streetscape</b> Evaluate the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) to fund improvements to downtown streets. Partner with local businesses to form an "adopt a block" program. Adopters could be tasked with keeping streets clean, maintaining gardens, landscaping, public art, etc. Review, commission, or outsource utility poles to reduce obstructions in the public realm and provide more vibrant infrastructure, especially along Colonial Ave. Add pedestrian-scale lighting along Washington Ave and throughout Downtown. Set new outdoor seating through the streets. The streetscape, where businesses want to create outdoor seating opportunities in front of restaurants, bars, and shops. Add more opportunities for events by finding where businesses already own blocks and have been looking for ways to make them more vibrant. Place additional art projects that identify, use or reuse locations for public art, benefit local artists, and provide visual ways to design and install public art in Downtown. Find more opportunities to enhance existing public art, including the Colonial Ave and Washington Ave, including planters, tree walls, visual trees, and more.		
<b>Add &amp; improve public spaces</b> Identify opportunities to improve "transition spaces" and street corners both in the historic of Colonial Ave. Consider options for creating more public space and outdoor seating opportunities. Identify opportunities to create more public space and outdoor seating opportunities in the historic of Colonial Ave. Consider options for creating more public space and outdoor seating opportunities. Identify opportunities to create more public space and outdoor seating opportunities in the historic of Colonial Ave. Consider options for creating more public space and outdoor seating opportunities.		
<b>Put a dot in your favorite Placemaking &amp; Wayfinding strategies!</b>		

Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan

### Placemaking / Wayfinding Goals & Strategies (1/2)

More flower boxes in pots & along borders in art GreenSpace  
 Wayfinding @ boundary of DCB to shopping center marina way

ADA Sidewalks or Moofers for Walkers, Cyclers, +++

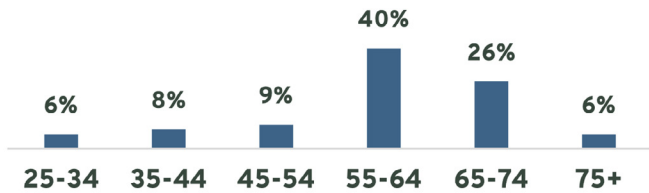
Dedicated Marking of C.B.

Figure 33. Interactive boards at the October engagement event.

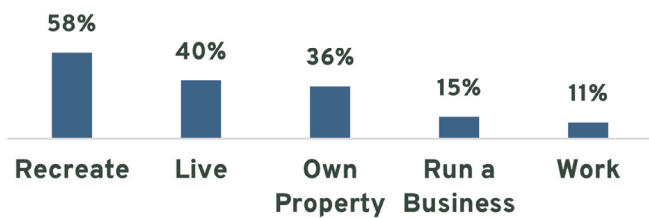
# Fall 2025 Survey Results

An online survey (with paper versions distributed at the October public meeting) was open from October 6th to October 31st, 2025. There were 53 responses.

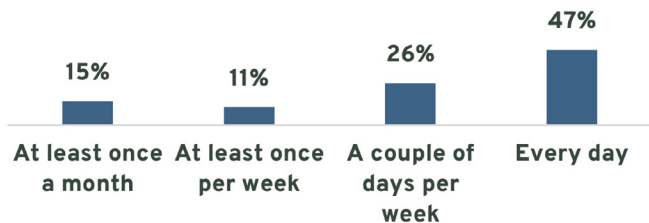
## What's your age range?



## What's your relationship to Downtown Colonial Beach?



## How often do you visit Downtown Colonial Beach?



## Something I love about Colonial Beach is...

Respondents consistently expressed affection for Colonial Beach's small-town charm, friendliness, and sense of community. Many highlighted the town's walkability and golf cart accessibility, which allow them to get around easily and enjoy daily life without relying on cars. The waterfront setting—including the Potomac River, Monroe Bay, and public beaches—was one of the most frequently cited reasons people love living or visiting here, often described as peaceful, scenic, and central to recreation. People also praised the welcoming residents, local shops and restaurants, festivals, live music, and art scene, which together create a vibrant yet laid-back environment. Several mentioned the lack of heavy traffic and overall relaxed, safe, and friendly atmosphere as

key parts of the town's identity. In short, residents cherish Colonial Beach for its community spirit, coastal beauty, and small-town lifestyle that balances liveliness with tranquility.

## My vision for the future of Downtown Colonial Beach is...

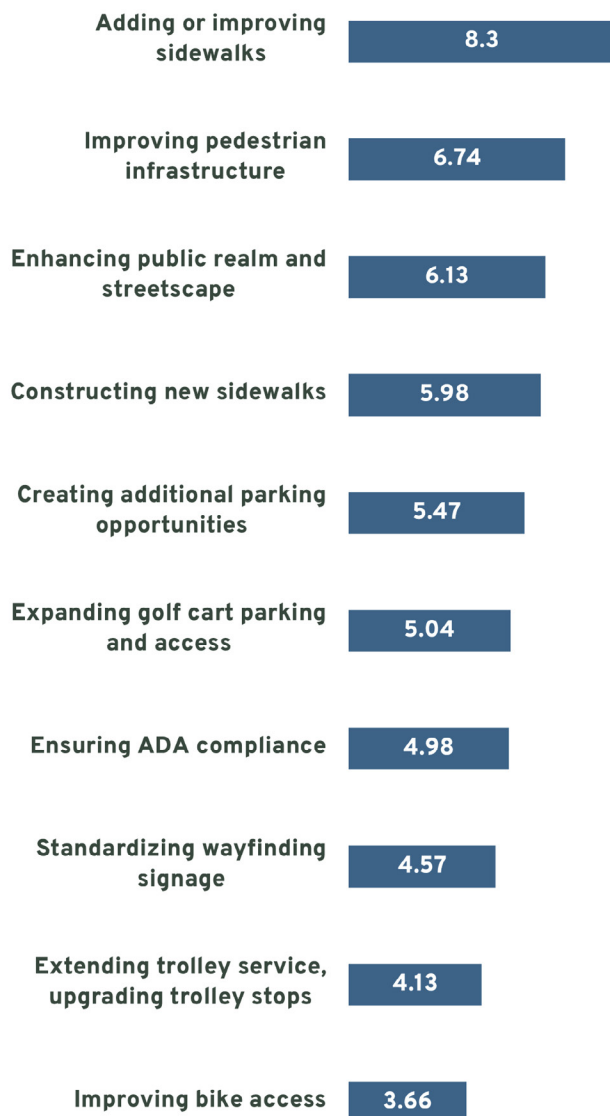
Respondents envisioned a vibrant, walkable, and charming downtown that retains its small-town character while improving infrastructure and expanding amenities. Many emphasized better sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and crosswalks to enhance safety and accessibility—particularly for pedestrians, cyclists, and golf carts. There was strong interest in beautification efforts such as planters, murals, and well-maintained storefronts, along with a desire for more diverse local businesses—especially restaurants, shops, and entertainment options beyond bars, including activities for children and families. Several comments focused on sustainability and inclusivity, calling for environmentally conscious design, accessible public spaces, and health-oriented facilities. Respondents also expressed a need for balanced growth, suggesting that new development should maintain Colonial Beach's coastal charm and community spirit while addressing issues like vacant buildings, infrastructure maintenance, and parking. Overall, residents want downtown to become a clean, cohesive, and lively destination—one that serves both year-round residents and visitors without losing its unique, small-town identity.

## What do you think Colonial Beach needs to attract more off-season visitors?

Respondents emphasized the need for year-round activities and consistent business operations to sustain visitor interest beyond the summer season. The most common suggestion was to host more festivals, events, and cultural activities—such as art walks, craft fairs, music festivals, food competitions, Christmas markets, and family-friendly celebrations like Mardi Gras or movie nights. Many called for better marketing and cohesive branding, including a centralized, easy-to-navigate website highlighting events, businesses, and relocation opportunities. Several participants noted that restaurants and shops need more consistent hours and higher quality offerings, along with additional options like

bakeries, fine dining, antique and thrift trails, and indoor attractions such as a movie theater, bowling alley, or youth center. Beautification efforts, improved sidewalks, and accessible parking were also seen as essential to enhancing the visitor experience. Some respondents highlighted the importance of supporting full-time residents and creating a livelier, more inclusive downtown that serves locals as well as tourists. Overall, residents envision a Colonial Beach that remains vibrant, walkable, and welcoming year-round through creative programming, reliable businesses, and a strong sense of community identity.

**With limited funding, how would you rank these potential improvements in order of importance?**

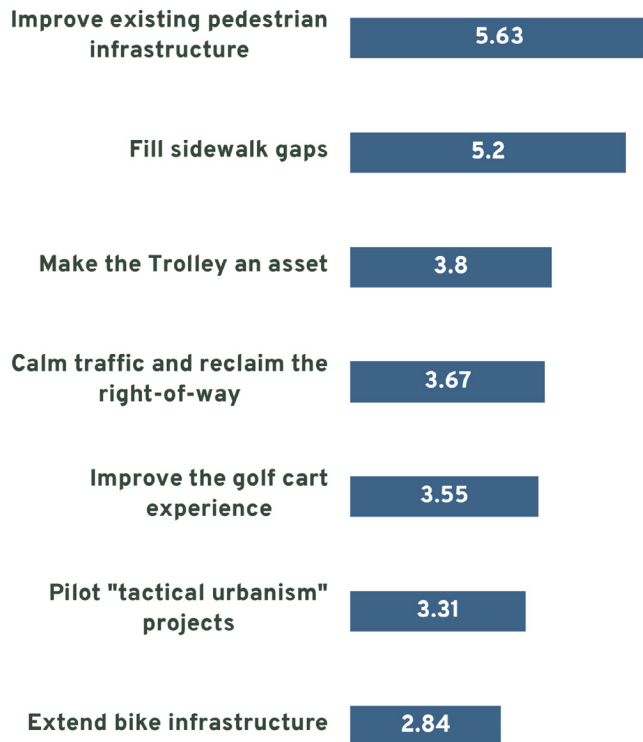


**Are there specific transportation-related projects the community wants to see?**

Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized walkability and pedestrian safety as top priorities, calling for widespread sidewalk repairs and extensions—especially in the downtown and residential areas—and better ADA accessibility. Many urged for crosswalk improvements at key intersections such as Colonial and Washington, Boundary and Washington, and throughout the restaurant and waterfront areas, with some suggesting brick repairs, new paint, and lighting to improve visibility at night. Several participants recommended traffic-calming measures like four-way stops and clearer signage for drivers and trolleys. There was also a strong desire for bike and pedestrian infrastructure, including dedicated lanes or one-way conversions on Irving and Monroe Bay Avenues to create safe shared-use corridors around the Point. Additional suggestions included repaving and re-striping parking lots, developing a more strategic parking management plan, expanding trolley service year-round, and adding welcoming or wayfinding signage to enhance the visitor experience. Overall, the feedback conveys a consistent call for a safer, more accessible, and better-connected downtown.

## Category 1: Connectivity

How would you rank the goals in this category in order of importance?



### Do you have any comments about the goals and recommendations in this category?

Many respondents strongly supported sidewalk repairs, ADA accessibility, and pedestrian safety, noting that these projects benefit both residents—especially older adults—and visitors. Several comments emphasized calming traffic and managing golf cart behavior, expressing concern that carts are increasingly being used like cars and creating safety hazards. Some participants felt the list of goals contained redundancies or misplaced priorities, urging the Town to focus on foundational issues like cleanliness, parking, and safety before investing in less essential projects. Others proposed specific ideas such as burying utility lines, enhancing the pedestrian experience downtown, and ensuring balanced access for cars, carts, and bikes. Overall, responses reflected a desire for practical, safety-driven connectivity improvements grounded in clear communication and visible local benefits.

## Category 2: Placemaking & Wayfinding

How would you rank the goals in this category in order of importance?

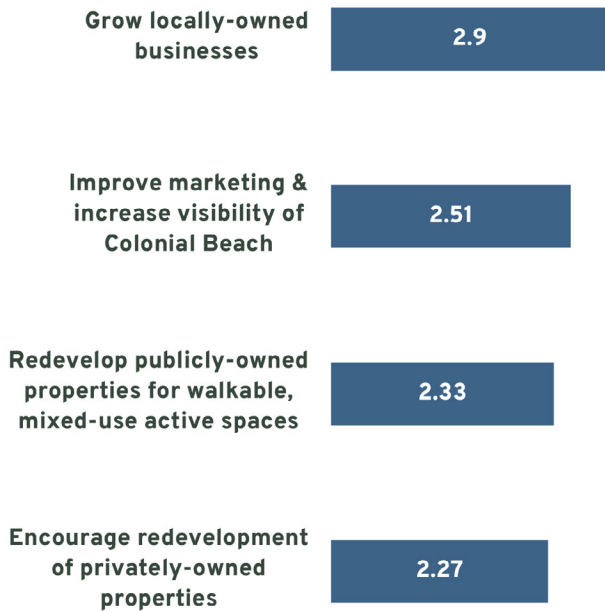


### Do you have any comments about the goals and recommendations in this category?

Responses focused heavily on the need for clearer parking policies, improved first impressions, and better coordination between signage, public spaces, and aesthetics. Many residents expressed frustration with the current parking system, citing confusing rules, limited spaces, and inconsistent enforcement. Several suggested offering discounted or free parking for local 22443 residents and business employees, while others stressed that a comprehensive parking plan is needed before adding more signs or spaces. Participants also criticized the previous wayfinding signage effort as poorly executed and overly expensive, urging the Town to create signage that is cohesive, attractive, and functional, tying into broader placemaking goals. Multiple comments called for beautification and revitalization—including burying power lines, adding trees, benches, and shade, maintaining existing public spaces, and addressing vacant or deteriorated buildings to improve curb appeal, especially along Colonial Avenue.

### Category 3: Economic Development & Tourism

How would you rank the goals in this category in order of importance?



#### Do you have any comments about the goals and recommendations in this category?

Respondents shared a wide range of views, but most emphasized the need for balanced growth that supports both residents and visitors while preserving Colonial Beach’s small-town charm. Several highlighted beautification and blight removal as prerequisites for attracting new businesses and tourists, noting that improving curb appeal and maintaining the town’s historic, “old-timey” character are essential. Many felt that the Town should streamline business regulations and provide support for local entrepreneurs, including clearer permitting processes and incentives for revitalizing vacant or underutilized properties. Improved marketing and advertising—especially to nearby regional markets like Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Northern Virginia—was frequently mentioned, along with better communication about events that already exist but go underpromoted. Others proposed targeted initiatives such as wellness tourism, EV charging stations, and free or rental bike programs to draw diverse visitors. Several

respondents stressed the importance of keeping redevelopment community-driven, ensuring that new development fits the town’s scale and benefits residents first. Overall, feedback called for a strategic, coordinated economic plan that improves aesthetics, simplifies doing business, and strengthens Colonial Beach’s reputation as a distinctive and welcoming waterfront destination.

### Category 4: Implementation Ideas

#### Do you have any comments about the recommendations in this category?

Overall, respondents were supportive of the implementation ideas and emphasized the importance of collaboration, flexibility, and community involvement in carrying them out. Many favored engaging local businesses, civic groups, and volunteers to sponsor beautification projects, events, or block-level improvements, noting that grassroots participation could foster pride and momentum. Several suggested reducing regulatory barriers that make it difficult to implement low-cost or community-driven projects, calling for updates to ordinances that restrict creativity or private property maintenance enforcement. Others proposed financial support and incentives for new small businesses, as well as stronger coordination with the Chamber of Commerce to advance initiatives. A few respondents highlighted practical early actions—such as improving the trolley system or shuttle connections, applying for grant funding, and integrating sustainability goals like recycling and reduced ecological impact. Overall, participants agreed that implementation should focus on doable, high-impact steps first, with clear leadership and community partnerships to maintain momentum over time.

## **Do you have any other comments about the Draft Connectivity Plan?**

Many respondents expressed enthusiasm for community involvement, volunteering, and future implementation—especially through partnerships, beautification efforts, and grant funding. Several comments urged the Town to prioritize basic infrastructure first—repairing sidewalks, streets, and streetlights—before investing in new bike lanes or marketing efforts. Recurring themes included maintaining parking availability, focusing on the beach and boardwalk as core assets, and avoiding over-commercialization. A few participants offered innovative ideas such as parking discount tokens and a “Point Trail” around the peninsula. Overall, respondents expressed hope and cautious optimism, supporting the plan’s intent but urging a focus on visible, achievable improvements that preserve Colonial Beach’s identity and directly benefit its residents.

# Appendix C: Funding Mechanisms

## Grants

### AARP - Community Challenge Demonstration Grant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Demonstration
- **Funding range:** \$10,000-\$20,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Enhancing pedestrian safety through safer streets and sidewalks, with a focus on residents age 50-plus.

### AARP - Community Challenge Flagship Grant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, construction
- **Funding range:** Up to \$25,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Creating vibrant public places and amenities; expanding transportation and mobility options (walkability, bikeability, public/private transit access); strengthening community resilience via disaster preparedness, management, and mitigation.

### AARP - Community Challenge Microgrant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Capacity-building
- **Funding range:** \$2,500 + additional resources
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Conducting walk audits and bike audits.

### Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's - Outdoor Fund: Local Impact Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town, DCB
- **Type:** Capacity-building
- **Funding range:** Up to \$5,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Supporting local projects and events that connect new audiences to the outdoors (e.g., youth fishing clinics, adaptive kayak launches, gear libraries, trail maintenance).

### Cabell Foundation - Semi-Annual Competitive Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** DCB
- **Type:** Various
- **Funding range:** In 2022, projects ranged from \$200,000-\$1m
- **Obligations:** 1:1 match
- **Eligible activities:** Advancing neighborhood development initiatives; supporting civic engagement projects; implementing recreational projects that expand access to public spaces for all.

### Chesapeake Bay Trust - Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns (G3)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, construction
- **Funding range:** \$20,000-\$175,000
- **Obligations:** Encouraged but not required
- **Eligible activities:** Developing conceptual plans, engineered designs, or construction/implementation of green streets and green infrastructure projects.

### US Department of Energy (USDOE) - Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town or DCB
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** \$2m-\$50m
- **Obligations:** 5-50% non-federal
- **Eligible activities:** Improving energy system cost-effectiveness; siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; providing or modernizing electric generation facilities; developing microgrids; increasing energy efficiency.

### Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT) - Human Services Grant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Capital
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** Capital projects - 80% federal, 16% state (from state's paratransit funds for non-vehicle purchase projects), minimum 4% local match
- **Eligible activities:** Mobility management initiatives to improve coordination among public and human service transportation providers.

### Levitt Foundation - AMP Grant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Event
- **Funding range:** Up to \$120,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Hosting 7-10 free concerts annually to activate underused public spaces and create inclusive community destinations.

### National Association of Realtors (NAR) - Placemaking Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Northern Neck Association of Realtors
- **Type:** Demonstration, Construction
- **Funding range:** \$3,000-7,500
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Demonstration or permanent projects to create outdoor public gathering spaces and destinations on underused sites.

### National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, design
- **Funding range:** \$10,000-\$100,000
- **Obligations:** 1:1 cost-share/match required (could include in-kind)
- **Eligible activities:** Artist-led community planning and cultural planning; design of artist spaces, cultural facilities, and public spaces; strengthening the creative economy and supporting artists; producing arts festivals, performances, workshops, and public art.

### National Trust for Historic Preservation: Hart Family Fund for Small Towns

- **Relevant stakeholders:** DCB
- **Type:** Planning, education
- **Funding range:** \$2,500-\$15,000
- **Obligations:** 1:1 match
- **Eligible activities:** Hiring preservation or landscape architects to prepare historic structure reports or historic landscape master plans.

### PeopleforBikes - Bike Industry Community Grant Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town or DCB
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** \$5,000-\$10,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Developing permanent bike infrastructure (trails, paths, bike parks, pump tracks, playgrounds, bike boulevards, protected lanes); implementing demonstration/quick-build projects linked to permanent infrastructure; acquiring land or easements; supporting events and programs tied to permanent bike infrastructure.

### T-Mobile - Hometown Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town or DCB
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** Up to \$50,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Shovel-ready construction projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces (e.g., adaptive reuse of historic buildings, park or trail improvements, library technology projects).

### US Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Loans, grants
- **Funding range:** Any amount
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Constructing or improving healthcare, public, community, safety, educational, food system, and e-connectivity facilities and services.

### US Department of Transportation (USDOT) - Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** Up to \$25m
- **Obligations:** 20%
- **Eligible activities:** Constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects with significant local or regional impact.

### USDOT - Rural Surface Transportation Grant

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Development, construction
- **Funding range:** \$25m range
- **Obligations:** 20%
- **Eligible activities:** Developing or constructing highways or bridges that improve access to agricultural, commercial, energy, or intermodal facilities supporting rural economies.

### USDOT - Safe Streets for All (SS4A)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning/Demonstration
- **Funding range:** \$40,000-\$200m
- **Obligations:** 20%
- **Eligible activities:** Developing safety Action Plans, followed by planning, demonstration, and implementation projects.

### Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) - Revenue Sharing (RS)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** Up to \$5m per FY
- **Obligations:** VDOT will only match up to \$5m
- **Eligible activities:** Constructing or maintaining bike/ped facilities, sidewalks, trails, and other roadway improvements.

### VDOT - SMART SCALE

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, construction
- **Funding range:** \$1,000,000-\$50,000,000
- **Obligations:** N/A
- **Eligible activities:** Highway improvements (widening, operational upgrades, access management, intelligent transportation systems, technology-related operational improvements); expansion of transit and rail capacity; bicycle and pedestrian improvements; and transportation demand management projects such as Park-and-Ride facilities.

### VDOT - Transportation Alternatives (TAP)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, construction
- **Funding range:** Up to \$2.5m
- **Obligations:** 20%
- **Eligible activities:** Constructing or planning bike/ped infrastructure, Safe Routes to School projects, and systems that provide safe access for non-drivers to daily needs.

### Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOT) - Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town, DCB
- **Type:** Construction
- **Funding range:** \$1,000-\$50,000
- **Obligations:** Some expected, but not required; in-kind and volunteer can count
- **Eligible activities:** Establishing riparian buffers and related tree-planting initiatives for water quality.

### Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) - Community Development Block Grant (Planning)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning
- **Funding range:** Up to \$40,000-\$75,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Conducting community assessments; attending training; organizing residents and stakeholders; surveying community needs; developing work plans and implementation strategies.

### Virginia Main Street - Community Vitality Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Various
- **Funding range:** \$15,000
- **Obligations:** 3:1
- **Eligible activities:** Design projects; wayfinding development; organizational development; strategic planning; market studies; website development; entrepreneur support; economic vitality initiatives; consultant services for downtown/commercial districts.

### Virginia Main Street - Downtown Investment Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Various
- **Funding range:** \$75,000
- **Obligations:** 1:1 for requests of \$50,001+; 2:1 for requests of \$25,001 to \$50,000; and 3:1 for requests up to \$25,000
- **Eligible activities:** Projects that advance Main Street Transformation Strategies, encourage private investment, and align with downtown revitalization plans and organizational goals.

### Virginia Main Street - Financial Feasibility Grants

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Various
- **Funding range:** \$25,000
- **Obligations:** N/A
- **Eligible activities:** Preparing feasibility and planning studies for property reuse or redevelopment (design reports, renderings, zoning/building code assessments, pro formas, cost estimates, environmental reports, market demand studies, gap-financing research).

### Virginia Tourism Corporation - DRIVE Outdoor

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Colonial Beach DMO
- **Type:** Development
- **Funding range:** \$20,000
- **Obligations:** 50%
- **Eligible activities:** Developing outdoor recreation products, including feasibility studies; non-permanent site improvements (restrooms, picnic areas, trail connections, floating kayak launches, rental lockers); equipment purchases/rentals (kayaks, bikes, repair stations, accessibility gear); non-permanent event infrastructure (staging, seating, lighting, signage); community entrepreneurial workshops; and rental equipment for site preparation.

### Virginia Tourism Corporation - Vacation Starts with VA DMO MMLP Co-Op Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Colonial Beach DMO
- **Type:** Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** \$1,250-\$30,000
- **Obligations:** N/A
- **Eligible activities:** Implementing targeted, research-based tourism marketing campaigns through the statewide co-op toolkit.

## Loan Programs

### Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) - Local Government Direct Loan Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Loan
- **Funding range:** \$250,000-\$750,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Financing infrastructure and facilities for water, wastewater, solid waste, transportation, public safety, land conservation, parks/recreation, energy, and local government buildings.

### VRA - Virginia Pooled Financing Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Loan
- **Funding range:** At least \$750,000
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Financing infrastructure and facilities for water, wastewater, solid waste, transportation, public safety, land conservation, parks/recreation, energy, and local government buildings.

## Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building Programs

### Virginia DRPT - Rural Transit Assistance Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Providing training, technical assistance, research, scholarships, and related services for rural and specialized transportation staff.

### US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Recreation Economy for Rural Communities

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Supporting local planning to boost outdoor recreation, revitalize main streets, and promote equitable outdoor access, culminating in a Community Action Plan.

### National Endowment for the Arts - Citizens Institute on Rural Design

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Community workshop
- **Funding range:** \$6,000 stipend
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Hosting multi-day community design workshops or design-driven peer learning events focused on physical projects (streets, buildings, art, plazas, community design).

### Richmond Federal Reserve - Rural Investment Collaborative

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Participating in a 16-week project development curriculum and receiving mini-grants to activate inclusive community projects.

### USDOT - Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Financial, technical, legal services
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Accessing financial, technical, and legal services for projects eligible for BUILD grants.

### VDOT - Ready Set Go

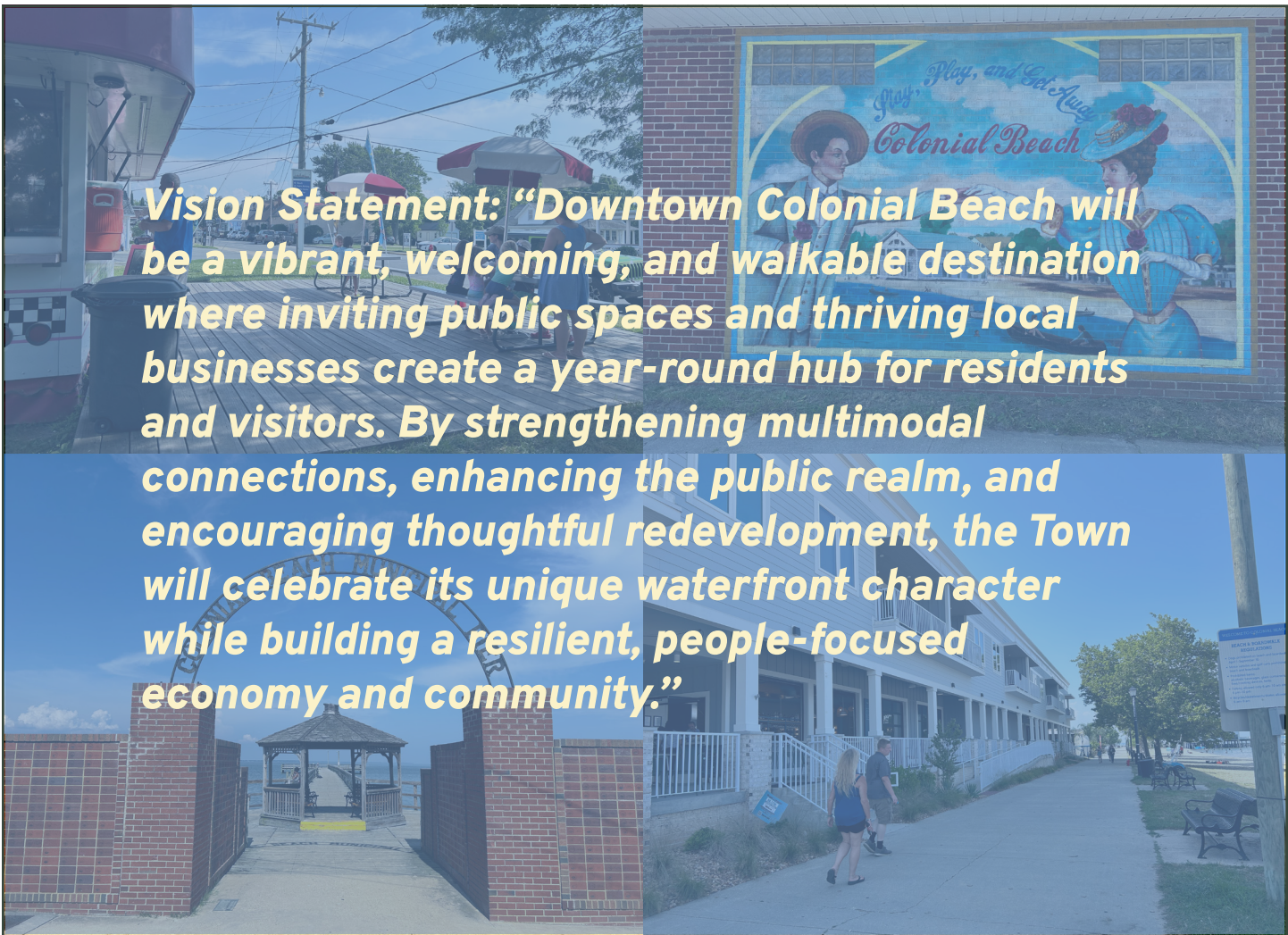
- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Receiving technical assistance to prepare Transportation Alternatives applications, including sketches, cost estimates, and supporting information.

### Virginia Walkability Action Institute (VWAI)

- **Relevant stakeholders:** Town
- **Type:** Planning, Technical assistance
- **Funding range:** N/A
- **Obligations:** None
- **Eligible activities:** Participating in a 9-month program to plan policy, system, and environmental changes that improve walkability, biking, transit use, and micromobility access, with mini-grants available.

# Executive Summary

The Colonial Beach Downtown Connectivity Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for transforming Downtown Colonial Beach into a safer, more walkable, and economically vibrant destination. Developed through extensive public engagement and informed by previous planning efforts, the plan outlines strategies across four key areas: **Connectivity, Placemaking & Wayfinding, Economic Development & Tourism, and Implementation.** Recommendations include improving sidewalks and ADA accessibility, expanding bike and golf cart infrastructure, calming traffic, and enhancing trolley service. Placemaking initiatives focus on streetscape upgrades, public art, and standardized wayfinding signage to create a cohesive identity. Economic development strategies aim to support locally owned businesses, incentivize redevelopment, and promote year-round tourism through branding and events. The plan also identifies funding mechanisms and phased implementation steps to maximize grant competitiveness and community involvement. Together, these actions position Colonial Beach to strengthen multimodal connections, attract visitors, and foster a resilient, people-focused economy while preserving its unique waterfront character.



***Vision Statement: “Downtown Colonial Beach will be a vibrant, welcoming, and walkable destination where inviting public spaces and thriving local businesses create a year-round hub for residents and visitors. By strengthening multimodal connections, enhancing the public realm, and encouraging thoughtful redevelopment, the Town will celebrate its unique waterfront character while building a resilient, people-focused economy and community.”***