

# Town of Bowling Green Research and Marketing Strategies

*by*  
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## **Executive Summary**

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### **Introduction**

In June of 2003, the economic development services firm, CE&O, Inc. was contacted to provide strategic research of the Town of Bowling Green business districts resulting in development of a comprehensive marketing strategy. Recruited by the Citizens Committee and approved by Town Council, Kathy Beard, principal of CE&O, immediately began development of an internal survey tool which would provide data and discussion opportunities with the business community. Personal interviews and responses to the questionnaire would provide the basis for the development of the overall marketing plan.

### **Methodology**

Upon development and review of the survey instrument, canvassing of the three business areas began. CE&O met with business operators in both shopping centers on Broaddus Avenue, as well as independent business owners along Route 301. Initially reluctant, most business operators agreed to participate in the research once confidentially was assured.

The construction project on Main Street necessitated a delay in the interview schedule of the businesses located along this corridor. Disruption of the normal business day caused by the pace of the project began to produce noticeable variations in the research data. Comments and opinions to the survey seemed to reflect of the activity on Main Street, instead of providing insight to the general business climate.

By the completion of the interview segment of the project, forty-nine surveys were distributed, with thirty-eight interviews occurring in person or by telephone.

### **Reconnaissance**

To better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the business community of Bowling Green, CE&O conducted unobserved visits to Bowling Green. These visits included participation in events, shopping trips, meals, attending meetings, observance of hurricane clean-up activity as related to the business areas, observance of traffic patterns, and parking habits of the customer base.

## **Executive Summary**

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Throughout the study period, CE&O has gained a thorough understanding and appreciation of the commitment the business community has to the Town of Bowling Green.

## **Recommendations**

The complexity of conducting business in Bowling Green requires more than just the typical glossy, upbeat, throw money at it, marketing plan. While most local businesses seem to be stable when comparing previous years, the actual support of the business base is eroding, and expansion or recruitment opportunities for the community are nonexistent.

The detailed marketing plan recommendations submitted in this report are segmented into three distinct sections: Business District Aesthetics, Building Business Awareness, and Retention/ Recruitment Tactics. A very preliminary budget estimate is also submitted as an informational tool. However, the primary recommendation of this report requires:

- ❖ The immediate approval of a Task Force comprised of all members of Council and seven selected members of the business community to form a partnership tasked with implementation of the recommendations of this report.

## **Summary**

Reinvigorating the Town of Bowling Green will be the key to business enhancement and new business expansion. Only through the cooperation and commitment of the Town leadership and the business base can revitalization succeed. The Town has a responsibility for improvements to the environs of the community, and the business base must accept responsibility for providing the goods and service the community demands.

CE&O, Inc. appreciates the opportunity to provide this research on behalf of the Town of Bowling Green.

## TOWN OF BOWLING GREEN *FAST FACTS*

### CURRENT POPULATION

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
936	22,121	19,279	16,803	90,395	86,320

### POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2010

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
1,142	25,200	20,400	20,300	125,000	106,000

Additional projections to 2030 are attached.

### MEDIAN AGE

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
48.5	37.7	30.3	35.1	34.3	37.4

In Bowling Green 32.6 % of the community is age 65 or older.

### NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
387	8,021	8,102	6,091	31,308	31,121

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
\$32,250	\$39,845	\$34,585	\$49,882	\$57,525	\$59,223

### TOTAL TAXABLE SALES FOR 2002—reported in millions

B. Green	Caroline	F'Burg	K. George	Spots.	Hanover
NA	\$88	\$783	\$80	\$974	\$1,023

Bowling Green receives a % of the County total sales taxes based on school aged children. Specific reports from the Virginia Department of Taxation on these localities are attached. Annual 2003 taxable sales figures are not available at this time.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1  
Virginia Department of Taxable Sales, Annual 2002 Reports  
Virginia Employment Commission 05/03  
Town of Bowling Green Comprehensive Plan Update-1998

## **Survey Review**

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Throughout the seven month research period, CE&O conducted thirty-eight interviews of business operators, property owners, and community individuals in Bowling Green. The survey instrument was developed to act as a guide during the conversations and not as a statistical resource.

Highlights of the survey results are presented in this section, with a copy of the entire document provided for review.

### **Response to parking questions**

- Most employees find adequate parking in the lots behind the buildings
- Customers traditionally park on the street, or in the larger parking lots at the shopping centers.
- The condition of the parking lots and driveways behind the stores on Main Street was the only negative report regarding parking. Several comments were made regarding aesthetics of the parking areas.
- Business operators confirm the need for parking lot improvements, but concur that parking is adequate.

### **Response to services offered at the stores**

- Credit card, check cards, and personal checks are generally accepted.
- Debit cards are not widely accepted.
- On-Line services are not widely utilized.

### **Customer Base**

- Majority of customer base is defined as local. Local is defined as Bowling Green and Caroline County.

### **Most popular method of advertising**

- Newspaper is the most commonly used form of advertising.
- Direct mail is the second most used form of advertising.

### **Days and Hours of Business Operation**

- Businesses located in the shopping centers are staying open later and report sufficient customers.
- Business operators on Main Street typically are closed by 6:00 p.m.

### **Busiest Business Day**

- Monday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoon were reported to be the busiest business days.

### **Support of additional organized activities in the commercial district**

- The majority of business operators favor community events in the downtown areas of Bowling Green.
- Quarterly events were the most supported.
- The most popular types of events are: music festivals, car & boat shows, sidewalk sales, cultural arts, and antique show.

### **Other types of stores desired in Bowling Green**

- Overwhelming response for a dining style restaurant.
- Top requested store types are: Entertainment/Recreation, Apparel, Grocery, and Book/Music/Electronic.

*For this research study, the opinions of the business operators were of particular interest. Although the business base of the community has remained stable for the last few years, the attitudes of the business community were viewed as the primary element of the research.*

**Following are highlights of the comments made during the research.**

**WHAT INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE WOULD BE OF THE MOST BENEFIT TO YOUR BUSINESS?**

*Prior notice of up coming events*

*Better signage upon approaching Bowling Green*

*An informative guide about the town and nearby places to see*

*More promotion for the Town*

**IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ONE THING COULD BE DONE TO ENHANCE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE OF THE COMMUNITY?**

*More retailers*

*More retailers*

*Evening restaurants*

**.....AND WHO OR WHAT AGENCY SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT?**

*Town of Bowling Green*

*Chamber of Commerce*

*Caroline County Economic Development Office*

**HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT “INCENTIVES” USED TO RECRUIT NEW BUSINESSES TO THE TOWN?**

*Only if my business could receive incentives also  
Yes, whatever it takes to bring new business here.*

**WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO TO HELP INCREASE THE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN BOWLING GREEN?**

*Advertise  
Help beautify Main Street  
Participate in the meetings*

**IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ONE THING COULD THE TOWN GOVERNMENT DO TO ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS?**

*Advertise on our behalf  
Make Town sharp & pristine  
Get rid of the litter tax*

**WHEN YOU THINK OF BOWLING GREEN WHAT IMAGES OR KEY WORDS COME TO MIND?**

*How it used to be—lots of trees  
Quaint  
Small town*

**HOW DO YOU THINK TOURISTS DESCRIBE BOWLING GREEN?**

*What Tourists?  
Too small  
Probably lots of history here...but where is it?*

**DO YOU HAVE ONE SUGGESTION TO ENHANCE THE “CURB APPEAL” OF BOWLING GREEN IN GENERAL?**

*Get rid of the new islands on Main Street  
Must clean it up  
Buildings need to be fixed*

**WHAT IDEA WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR FUNDING A TOWN-WIDE ADVERTISING AND/OR MARKETING PROGRAM?**

*Get a sign on Rte. 301  
Put money towards festivals on Main Street  
Ads in the paper*

**WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF BOWLING GREEN?**

*The people  
Old Mansion*

**BOWLING GREEN BUSINESS SURVEY**

This survey is intended to gather information and opinions from the business community of Bowling Green. The data will be used to develop a marketing and business expansion plan for consideration by the community leaders of Bowling Green. All the survey results will be included in the research. Individual answers to these questions will remain confidential.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**BUSINESS/STORE NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**YEAR ESTABLISHED** \_\_\_\_\_

**GOODS OR SERVICES PROVIDED** \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU OWN YOUR BUSINESS BUILDING?** \_\_\_\_\_

**SQUARE FEET OF SPACE** \_\_\_\_\_

**IF NOT, THE OWNER'S ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES?** \_\_\_\_\_ **FULL TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ **PART TIME**

**WHERE DO EMPLOYEES PARK?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHERE DO CUSTOMERS PARK?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU HAVE A PARKING RECOMMENDATION?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DOES YOUR BUSINESS OFFER:**

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PLANNING TO START/when</b>
<b>STORE CHARGES?</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>CREDIT CARD SERVICE?</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>CHECK/DEBIT CARD ACCESS?</b>	_____	_____	_____



PERSONAL CHECK ACCEPTANCE? \_\_\_\_\_

INTERNET/WEB SITE ACCESS? \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT OTHER CUSTOMER SERVICES DO YOU PROVIDE?  
\_\_\_\_\_

WHERE DO MOST OF YOUR CUSTOMERS LIVE?  
\_\_\_\_\_

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR ADVERTISING BUDGET DO YOU INVEST IN--  
NEWSPAPER \_\_\_\_\_% RADIO \_\_\_\_\_% DIRECT MAIL \_\_\_\_\_% OTHER \_\_\_\_\_%

WHICH DAY IS TYPICALLY YOUR BUSIEST BUSINESS DAY?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DAYS AND HOURS OF BUSINESS OPERATION:**

**DAYS** **HOURS OF OPERATION**

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY ONLY \_\_\_\_\_  
open \_\_\_\_\_ close \_\_\_\_\_

MONDAY THRU 12 NOON ON SATURDAY \_\_\_\_\_  
open \_\_\_\_\_ close \_\_\_\_\_

MONDAY THRU SATURDAY \_\_\_\_\_  
open \_\_\_\_\_ close \_\_\_\_\_

MONDAY THRU SUNDAY \_\_\_\_\_  
open \_\_\_\_\_ close \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN STAYING OPEN LATE ONE EVENING DURING  
THE WEEK FOR A 6 MONTH TRIAL AND EVALUATION? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

IF YES, WHICH NIGHT? \_\_\_\_\_ HOW LATE? \_\_\_\_\_

IN GENERAL, DO YOU SUPPORT ADDITIONAL ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES IN THE  
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN  
\_\_\_\_\_

IF YES, PLEASE INDICATE YOUR TOP ONE OR TWO PRIORITIES IN EACH  
SEGMENT.

FREQUENCY: \_\_\_\_\_ MONTHLY \_\_\_\_\_ QUARTERLY \_\_\_\_\_ ANNUALLY

TYPE: \_\_\_\_\_ SIDEWALK SALE \_\_\_\_\_ ANTIQUE SHOW \_\_\_\_\_ CULTURAL ARTS

\_\_\_\_\_ CAR/BOAT SHOW \_\_\_\_\_ MUSIC FESTIVALS \_\_\_\_\_ OPEN HOUSE

\_\_\_\_\_ OTHER, PLEASE EXPLAIN \_\_\_\_\_

BEST LOCATION FOR THE ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY:

\_\_\_\_\_ MAIN STREET \_\_\_\_\_ PARKING LOTS OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

ARE OTHER TYPES OF STORES NEEDED IN BOWLING GREEN?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If yes, select your top three recommendations --

\_\_\_\_\_ Apparel \_\_\_\_\_ Restaurants \_\_\_\_\_ Furniture/Appliances

\_\_\_\_\_ Groceries \_\_\_\_\_ Hardware \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Services

\_\_\_\_\_ Jewelry/Gifts \_\_\_\_\_ Medical \_\_\_\_\_ Books/Music/Electronics

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal Care \_\_\_\_\_ Automotive \_\_\_\_\_ Entertainment/Recreation

\_\_\_\_\_ Lodging

Other \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE WOULD BE OF THE MOST BENEFIT TO YOUR BUSINESS?

\_\_\_\_\_

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ONE THING COULD BE DONE TO ENHANCE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE OF THE COMMUNITY?

\_\_\_\_\_

.....AND WHO OR WHAT AGENCY SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT?

\_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT "INCENTIVES" USED TO RECRUIT NEW BUSINESSES TO THE TOWN?

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO TO HELP INCREASE THE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN BOWLING GREEN?**

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**IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ONE THING COULD THE TOWN GOVERNMENT DO TO ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS?**

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**WHEN YOU THINK OF BOWLING GREEN WHAT IMAGES OR KEY WORDS COME TO MIND?**

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**HOW DO YOU THINK TOURISTS DESCRIBE BOWLING GREEN?**

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**DO YOU HAVE ONE SUGGESTION TO ENHANCE THE “CURB APPEAL” OF BOWLING GREEN IN GENERAL?**

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**WHAT IDEA WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR FUNDING A TOWN-WIDE ADVERTISING AND/OR MARKETING PROGRAM?**

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**WHAT IS THE GREATEST ASSET OF BOWLING GREEN?**

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**.....IS IT BEING FULLY UTILIZED?**

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**Is there additional information you would like to include in this survey that will enhance the business opportunities in Bowling Green?**

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**Thank you for participating in this survey. The results of this survey will be presented to the Town Council and made available in a written report upon completion. For questions regarding this survey document or the Business Enhancement Project for Bowling Green, please contact:**

**Kathy Beard  
Project Coordinator  
804.448.8729**

## **Marketing Recommendations for the Town of Bowling Green**

The future success of the Town of Bowling Green will depend on a focused, comprehensive plan that has the commitment of the residents, the business community, and the political leadership of the town. The current situation of territorial mind-sets and lack of unified direction is detrimental to progress. Bowling Green does not have the luxury of fostering a “business as usual” approach to the specific problems which are facing the community.

The Town Council of Bowling Green must act as the catalyst to continue improvements to the business district so as to enhance the shopping experience for the community. It is up to the business operators to provide the merchandise and service required by the customer. Without participation and responsibility by both parties, the opportunity for enhancement of the current business base or recruitment for additional businesses is improbable, at best. Given the current condition of the primary business district, the Town of Bowling Green will be most fortunate to retain the businesses currently operating on Main Street.

To reiterate: The Town Council of Bowling Green and the business operators of Bowling Green must participate and share the responsibility for enhancing the business district of the Town. One entity can not do it alone. Furthermore it is *both* parties that stand to win...or to lose.

This section of the report is designed to identify specific areas of concern and to detail recommended action steps to move the business community forward without wasting energy of placing blame on any factions currently at work in Bowling Green. However, it must be noted that the contentious atmosphere revolving around volunteer organizations within the community is not having a positive effect on Bowling Green. Measures must be taken immediately to provide a mechanism for the business community to discuss issues among themselves and the Town leadership.

As the first element of this report, CE&O advises the organization of a Task Force designated to work in partnership with Town Council to discuss issues impacting the business community and to implement the recommendations of this report. Due to the significance of the issues, the Task Force must be comprised of all members of council and seven members representing the business community.

The marketing plan presented in this section is the result of extensive research that began in June of 2003. This analysis, from an economic development perspective, resulted in a comprehensive marketing plan providing a realistic approach to business enhancement. This plan is formulated to address three major segments impacting the business health and well-being of Bowling Green. The three core segments are: Business District Aesthetics, Business Awareness and Support, and Business Expansion and Recruitment Tactics. CE&O has developed the following recommendations with specific detail, action steps, and budget estimates where applicable.

## **Business District Aesthetics**

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Overwhelmingly, the business district aesthetics is the most controversial, unappealing, and thwarting segment of the Town of Bowling Green. Throughout the Town, the single most repeated concern expressed by business operators is the condition of the Main Street business district. The breathtaking homes and well manicured lawns along Main Street definitely create an expectation of “southern charm” carried into the business district. Work must continue in the downtown area in order to meet that expectation.

CE&O has identified the following as first steps in addressing the business district aesthetics:

- Director of Public Works will escort members of the Town Council’s Streets & Sidewalks Committee down both sides of the Main Street business district to determine specific improvements that can be made by Town staff. A work plan with timeline and cost estimates will be developed by staff for approval. This street level review of the area will occur twice a year.
- Continue Banner Program. Council is to be commended for initiating the seasonal banners displayed throughout the business district. These banners should remain only in the business district as indicators of the primary commerce area.
- Contract with local florists to provide four hanging floral baskets. These baskets are to be hung two per side of Main Street from Courthouse Lane to Milford Street.
- Four flowering landscape planters and four waste receptacles to be placed strategically to enhance the hanging planters and to provide easy access for trash collection. *Note:* Decisions for these items

- should be made by the Streets & Sidewalks Committee and the Task Force, with input by staff responsible for maintenance of these items. Bowling Green hardware stores and florists will be contacted regarding their abilities to acquire the desired style of these sidewalk furniture items and plants. As an example of these accessories, CE&O has provided information from the web sites of Fairweather Site Furnishings & Accessories, [www.fairweathersf.com](http://www.fairweathersf.com), and from Weston Associates, [www.ckweston.com](http://www.ckweston.com). Pictures of the recommended styles and colors are located in the index of this report.
- Sidewalk enhancements are also recommended by CE&O. Again, Town Council is to be commended for their efforts, to date, in the sidewalks and gutter improvements to Main Street. Additional brick edging modifications to the newly completed aggregate sidewalks would provide a finished look to the sidewalks. Brick pavers at the cross-walk corners of Main Street and Milford streets would also enhance the area. Pictures of similar brick edging combined with aggregate sidewalks are located in the index of this report.
  - Rear parking areas behind the buildings on Main Street are in need of improvement. What once was the “backyard” of the east side businesses has now become a major pathway for additional foot traffic generated by the newly constructed Caroline County Courthouse. Screening of equipment and trash cans, weed removal, and landscaping are all recommended for this location. On the west side of Main Street, the parking may be more restrictive, but the sizeable holes and uneven terrain make driving and walking difficult. As activity increases, these areas become very important to the overall re-vamped curb appeal of Bowling Green.
  - Façade improvements to the buildings in the business district are critical to the overall appeal of Bowling Green. Creating a demand and renewed interest in doing business in Bowling Green is the most practical way of convincing property owners to reinvest in their properties.
  - Discussions with decision makers of the three local banks in Bowling Green must be explored regarding a partnership for establishment of a no-interest loan pool available to property owners for building improvements. The many details of this potential arrangement must be discussed by the Task Force and the local bank presidents.

## **Building Business Awareness and Support**

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Throughout the interview and survey process of Bowling Green, CE&O was continually reminded that the local support of the business base is drastically eroding. Although very appreciative of their customers, local business operators seem surprised and disappointed that the majority of shopping is done outside Bowling Green. Usually during these discussions, the local business operators are quick to assign blame elsewhere. Explanations range from encroachment of big box retailers, to aesthetics, to parking, to customers unaware of their inventory, to government re-investment, to Town and County relations, etc.

The business base of Bowling Green is the only group capable of changing this trend of shopping outside the community. The days of obligatory support for local businesses are long gone. The average household today is bombarded with merchandising mail offers, marketing calls, internet specials, newspaper flyers--all guaranteeing money saving specials that these households cannot possibly live without! However, how often are any of these national retailers offering the type of *customer service* every business operator in Bowling Green can offer?

The retailing sector of Bowling Green is extremely fortunate to have, at its doorstep:

- Caroline County Government Offices.
- Caroline County Court Offices.
- Route 301, Route 207 and Route 2.
- Fort A.P. Hill.
- Banking Establishments totaling over 450 employees.
- Rappahannock Electric Co-Op office.
- Virginia Department of Transportation office.
- Caroline County, which is currently experiencing a significant rate of growth.

Commitments must be made by the Town leadership and the business community to capitalize on all these opportunities. And the most opportune time is *now*.

CE&O recommends a campaign entitled “**Best for Bowling Green**” which incorporates the following methods of building business awareness in

Bowling Green. This campaign would include development of a logo to be displayed by the businesses and to complete the following recommendations:

- Develop a tri-fold brochure listing all the Bowling Green businesses by category. These brochures will be designed to be updated annually and printed in large quantities. Distribution of these brochures will be through their inclusion in Town mailings, at cash registers in Town, and in the visitor center(s).
- Develop a “punch-card” program among as many businesses as possible to encourage frequent shopping locally. Completed punch-cards will be deposited at a central location for entry into a drawing during the Harvest Festival. Local business participants of the program will determine the prize(s) to be given away for the drawing.
- Provide free access to the local cable channel. This access would provide one screen advertisement for each business based in Town.
- Develop a full page (preferably color) advertising template suitable for the Caroline Progress and additional regional newspapers. This page will be utilized in conjunction with special events in Bowling Green. Cost to be shared by participating businesses and sponsorship fund-raising.
- Work with the Caroline County Courts to provide a location for a brochures rack featuring the businesses of Bowling Green.
- Continue to look for opportunities to showcase the business district during all types of events in the County and the Town.
- Publish information regarding the support local businesses provide for the various groups in Bowling Green and how much more could be done by the community if the residents’ “spend-able income” was spent in Bowling Green.

Another tactic for building business awareness and support is to create activity in the business district. The organizers of the annual Bowling Green Harvest Festival are once again to be congratulated for such a successful event. The recent survey work completed by CE&O indicates a strong desire among the business operators to create a series of smaller events throughout the year. Given the expense and work that is required for events, the following recommendations are suggested for consideration as funding and support are identified:



- During the months of April, June & August, hold a “**Best of Bowling Green**” business after-hours event on Friday evenings at the Courthouse lawn on Main Street. This activity is to include sidewalk sales, live entertainment, farmers’ market, art & craft displays & food. The targeted audience is the entire region with special emphasis on the Town and County.
- Music festivals are very popular in this area. Serious evaluation and discussion should begin regarding a music festival for the late spring of 2005 that would encompass music, shopping & food. This activity is suggested to become an additional signature event for Bowling Green.

## **Business Retention and Recruitment Tactics**

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Existing businesses are major contributors to the community’s economy and tax base. They can generate up to 80 percent of the current job expansion in communities. The most practical method of improving the business climate of Bowling Green is to retain the businesses that are already established and provide opportunities for their expansion. As its businesses thrive, so will Bowling Green. Viable businesses are most apt to remain in communities that demonstrate visible and steadfast commitment.

CE&O recommends the Town of Bowling Green concentrate on retention of the current business base of the community. Recommendations for business retention are:

- Establishment of a Bowling Green Business Roundtable meeting once every quarter to discuss concerns and opportunities for the business community and to provide an opportunity for a luncheon presentation on timely topics.
- Development of a local Bowling Green business list of firms interested in providing goods and services for the Town.
- Commitment to business appreciation activities beginning with the special recognition of those businesses that have a long-term history in the community.

## **Bowling Green Recruitment Tactics**

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As the result of annexation, Bowling Green has new areas that will increase the tax base of the community. The area of east Broaddus Avenue, extending

to Route 301 and the entrance of Fort A.P. Hill, could offer opportunities for commercial highway and office park development. The increased activity of Fort A.P. Hill also provides links to potential Homeland Security initiatives. Additionally, the potential for industrially zoned land in the northeast quadrant of this area has been identified. However, at the very least, new business prospects expect utility infrastructure in place as site locations are evaluated. It is very unusual that companies can tolerate construction delays necessary to permit, engineer, bid and construct water and sewer lines.

Located on the western end of Broaddus Avenue is the Bowling Green Plaza. This is the newest retail center in Bowling Green and has recently gained two new tenants; Movie Gallery and the relocated state owned Virginia ABC store. The variety and compatibility of retailing businesses at this center will provide the everyday necessities for the residents of Bowling Green.

Located at the intersection of Broaddus Avenue and Main Street, is the Caroline Square Shopping Center offering a mix of office and retailing space. Currently, this center is one of a few locations that have retail space available. Although the location of this complex may be more centrally located, aesthetic enhancement of the overall site will aid in its marketability.

The downtown corridor of Bowling Green is one of the few areas in Town that offers a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. The combination of residential areas, sidewalks, shops, restaurants, offices, churches, and community facilities is an extremely unique total package that most communities are attempting to duplicate. Furthermore, this business corridor has the advantage of a road network that enables access from all directions. Although some of the buildings on Main Street may be underutilized, it is no surprise that the business base of this sector has remained very stable.

Given all the attributes of Bowling Green, and recognizing the challenges which make a small rural town, *a small rural town*; CE&O has identified several business recruitment strategies:

- Most important element---**become a partner with Caroline County utilizing all advantages of economic development web sites, tourism programs, and marketing initiatives.**

## Town of Bowling Green

- Review and adjust if necessary zoning ordinances to ensure the storefronts in specific blocks of Main Street remain retail.
- Encourage property owners to complete site inventory requirements and submit to Caroline County Economic Development & Tourism Office for inclusion in the local and regional web sites.
- Work with the County's ED office to develop a suitable informational sheet for inclusion in the County's marketing packet. This product should emphasize the attributes of living in a real town.
- Explore all state, federal and local partnership options available to extend infrastructure to the annexed areas.

The results of the survey work identified a list of desired business types to augment the existing business base of the Town. The top five business types most desired in Bowling Green in ranking order are:

- Restaurants
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Apparel
- Grocery Store
- Book/Music/Electronics

Results of the survey conducted on behalf of the Bowling Green/Milford Sub-Committee reflect the top five business types most desired for the Bowling Green/Milford area are:

- Restaurants
- Small Retail Establishments
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Medical/Dental
- Commercial Recreation

**Note:** The largest numbers of respondents to this survey, 36%, live in Bowling Green.

The consistencies of these two different surveys indicate willingness for the local larger community to “hub” in Bowling Green. And, most fortunate for the Town, these types of stores fit easily within the existing structures. CE&O notes in the discussions regarding the restaurant issue, the respondents are desirous of a dining style restaurant.

## **Tourism Opportunities**

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A realistic approach to increase revenues for the business sector of the Town of Bowling Green, will be to increase the tourism traffic and spending for the community. And by virtue of its significant history and location, Bowling Green is poised to do just that.

Realistic assessment of the criteria for new business locations is not in Bowling Greens favor. The required location demands of roof tops, work force, availability of sites and infrastructure will continue to be challenges for Bowling Green. Smaller, more individually owned commercial and retail businesses will be the type of business attraction Bowling Green can expect. Such development will thereby ensure this small, rural, historically significant town will remain as envisioned by its residents.

As the final recommendations, and perhaps the most significant of this study, CE&O hopes to provide sufficient detail for the development of the vision and implementation for the Route 301 & 207 Caroline and King George County Corridor Plan. Some of these ideas have certainly been bantered about in different settings around this region for several years. However, the rapid growth and traffic congestion of I-95, the events of 9/11, the change in the travel patterns and expectations of the traveling public have all now intersected to work in Bowling Greens favor. Furthermore, the strategic location of three visitor centers: Potomac Gateway located at the base of the Route 301 Bridge in King George County; the Bowling Green Visitor Center, located on Courthouse Lane in Bowling Green; and the soon to be constructed Visitor Center at Carmel Church, located in Caroline County, provides an unparalleled opportunity to capture the interest of the traveler in areas of history, shopping, recreational activity and dining.

The initial tourism recommendations for the Town of Bowling Green are:

- Request the Task Force convene a Route 301/207 Corridor Plan working lunch to identify opportunities and challenges of such a plan. Build consensus for expanded discussions relating to: historic significance of the area, agricultural farm tours, regional farmers' market/flea market, wine festivals, antique shopping trail, music festivals, and community festivals.

## Town of Bowling Green

- Formulate strategies to solicit formal partnership with Caroline County. This Partnership will invite discussions with King George County for continued planning, buy-in and funding of the Corridor Plan.
- Work closely with the Caroline County Office of Economic Development & Tourism to jointly participate in all heritage tourism programs.
- Discuss operational standards and reorganization strategies to ensure the Bowling Green Visitor Center meets the requirements of the customer and the community.
- Continue to monitor activity at the Old Mansion in Bowling Green. The historical significance, the size of the property, and the potential future uses of this site will have an impact on the Town of Bowling Green.

## **Preliminary Marketing Plan Budget Estimates**

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In order to provide estimates for implementing the aesthetics and marketing recommendations of this report, CE&O has supplied this preliminary budget estimate.

### **Streetscape Estimates**

- **Planters**



**CE&O suggests four planters to be strategically placed along Main Street.**

**Color suggestion: Evergreen**

- **Waste Receptacles**



**CE&O suggests four waste receptacles to be strategically placed along Main Street.**

**Color suggestion: Evergreen**

**Streetscape Accessories Estimate..... \$3,900**

**Hanging Planters & Hardware. ....\$500**

**Plants, soil, additional materials.....\$300**

**Total Streetscape Budget Estimates..... \$4,700**

**\*\*provided as an example only\*\***

**Preliminary Marketing Plan Budget Estimates**

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**Overall Marketing Plan Budget**

**Business Directory**

- **Design & Print.....\$2,500**

**Economic Development Inserts**

- **Design & Print.....\$3,500**

**Investment for Business After Hours Program..... \$500**

**Additional in-kind investment of support for set-up, clean-up, etc.**

**Additional items of shopping programs, business appreciation event, advertising templates would be paid by the participants.**

**Total Marketing Support Budget..... \$6,500**

**\*\*provided as an example only\*\***

## **Harvest Festival**

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CE&O would like to congratulate the organizers of one of the best community festivals ever attended.

As an element of this research project, CE&O staff observed the following items all during the day:

- The parking areas were fully utilized.
- Shuttle service provided by “Fred” maximized the event parking, and moved festival goers very efficiently throughout the day.
- Delivery of passengers to the festival site and to their respective parking areas was quick and efficient.
- Business was brisk both for festival vendors and local businesses.
- Festival vendors were comfortably spaced, mixed conveniently, and very friendly towards the crowds.
- Activity for the children was very popular.
- The antique and classic car show in Bowling Green has the reputation of being one of the best in the Commonwealth---this year it surpassed their expectation.
- Music was top notch and appropriate for the crowd.
- Great food vendors.
- CE&O staff specifically returned to Main Street at approximately 7:15 p.m. Main Street in Bowling Green was once again clean and ready to open for business the next day!



## Town of Bowling Green Harvest Festival

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## Town of Bowling Green Harvest Festival

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## Town of Bowling Green Harvest Festival

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## Town of Bowling Green Harvest Festival

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## Town of Bowling Green Harvest Festival

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**Example of Sidewalk Edging from the Town of Front Royal, VA**



**Example of brick and aggregate sidewalk improvements in Front Royal, Virginia.**



**Example of Sidewalk Edging from the Town of Front Royal, VA**



**Brick and aggregate entrance to municipal parking lot in Front Royal, Virginia**



**Example of Sidewalk Edging from the Town of Front Royal, VA**



**Brick and aggregate enhancements along the gazebo area of Front Royal, Virginia**



**Brick pavers along seams of sidewalk in Front Royal, Virginia**



## Caroline County and Town of Bowling Green

February 23, 2004

### Marketing Recommendations for the Town of Bowling Green

#### Summary Points

##### Business District Aesthetics

- Director of Public Works will escort members of the Town Council's Streets and Sidewalks committee down both sides of the Main Street business district to determine specific improvements that can be made by Town staff. A work plan with time line and cost estimates will be developed by staff for approval. This street level review of the area will occur twice a year.
- Continue Banner Program. Council is to be commended for initiating the seasonal banners displayed throughout the business district. These banners should remain only in the business district as indicators of the primary commerce area.
- Contract with local florists to provide four hanging floral baskets. These baskets are to be hung two per side of Main Street from Courthouse Land to Milford Street.
- Four flowering landscape planters and four waste receptacles to be placed strategically to enhance the hanging planters and to provide easy access for trash collection. **Note:** Decisions for these items should be made by the Streets & Sidewalks Committee and the Task Force with input by staff responsible for maintenance of these items. Bowling Green hardware stores and florists will be contacted regarding their abilities to acquire the desired style of these sidewalk furniture items and plants. As an example of these accessories, CE&O has provided information from the websites of Fairweather Site Furnishings & Accessories, [www.fairweathersf.com](http://www.fairweathersf.com), and from Weston Associates, [www.ckweston.com](http://www.ckweston.com). Pictures of the recommended styles and colors are located in the index of this report.
- Sidewalk enhancements are also recommended by CE&O. Again, Town Council is to be commended for their efforts, to date, in the sidewalks and gutter improvements to Main Street. Additional brick edging modifications to the newly completed aggregate sidewalks

- would provide a finished look to the sidewalks. Brick pavers at the cross-walk corners of Main Street and Milford Street would also enhance the area. Pictures of similar brick edging combined with aggregate sidewalks are located in the index of this report.
- Rear parking areas behind the buildings on Main Street are in need of improvement. What once was the “backyard” of the east side businesses has now become a major pathway for additional foot traffic generated by the newly constructed Caroline County Courthouse. Screening of equipment and trash cans, weed removal, and landscaping are all recommended for this location. On the west side of Main Street, the parking may be more restrictive, but the sizeable holes and uneven terrain make driving and walking difficult. As activity increases, these areas become very important to the overall re-vamped curb appeal of Bowling Green.
  - Façade improvements to the buildings in the business district are critical to the overall appeal of Bowling Green. Creating a demand and renewed interest in doing business in Bowling Green is the most practical way of convincing property owners to reinvest in their properties.
  - Discussions with decision makers of the three local banks in Bowling Green must be explored regarding a partnership for establishment of a no-interest loan pool available to property owners for building improvements. The many details of this potential arrangement must be discussed by the Task Force and the local bank presidents.

### **Building Business Awareness and Support**

- Develop a directory listing all the Bowling Green businesses by category. These directories will be designed to be updated annually and printed in large quantities. Distribution of these directories will be through their inclusion in Town mailings, at cast registers in Town, and in the visitor center(s).
- Develop a “punch-card” program among as many businesses as possible to encourage frequent shopping locally. Completed punch-cards will be deposited at a central location for entry into a drawing during the Harvest Festival. Local business participants of the program will determine the prize(s) to be given away for the drawing.
- Provide free access to the local cable channel. This access would provide one screen advertisement for each business based in the Town.

- Develop a full page (preferably color) advertising template suitable for The Caroline Progress and additional regional newspapers. This page will be utilized in conjunction with special events in Bowling Green. Cost to be shared by participating businesses and sponsorship fund-raising.
- Work with the Caroline County Courts to provide a location for a brochures rack featuring the businesses of Bowling Green.
- Continue to look for opportunities to showcase the business district during all types of events in the County and the Town.
- Publish information regarding the support local businesses provide for the various groups in Bowling Green and how much more could be done by the community if the residents' "spendable income" was spent in Bowling Green.
- During the months of April, June, and August, hold a "Best of Bowling Green" business after-hours event on Friday evenings at the Courthouse lawn on Main Street. This activity is to include sidewalk sales, live entertainment, farmers' market, art & craft displays and food. The targeted audience is the entire region with special emphasis on the Town and County.
- Music festivals are very popular in this area. Serious evaluation and discussion should begin regarding a music festival for the late spring of 2005 that would encompass music, shopping, and food. This activity is suggested to become an additional signature event for Bowling Green.

## **Business Retention and Recruitment Tactics**

Recommendations for business retention are:

- Establishment of a Bowling Green Business Roundtable meeting once every quarter to discuss concerns and opportunities for the business community and to provide an opportunity for a luncheon presentation of timely topics.
- Development of a local Bowling Green business list of firms interested in providing goods and services for the Town.
- Commitment to business appreciation activities beginning with the special recognition of those businesses that have a long-term history in the community.

Given all the attributes of Bowling Green, and recognizing the challenges which make a small rural town, *a small rural town*, CE&O has identified several business recruitment strategies:

- Most important element---**become a partner with Caroline County utilizing all advantages of economic development web sites, tourism programs, and marketing initiatives.**
- Review and adjust, if necessary, zoning ordinances to ensure the storefronts in specific blocks of Main Street remain retail.
- Encourage property owners to complete site inventory requirements and submit to Caroline County Economic Development & Tourism Office for inclusion in the local and regional web sites.
- Work with the County's ED office to develop a suitable information sheet for inclusion in the county's marketing packet. This product should emphasize the attributes of living in the real town.
- Explore all state, federal, and local partnership options available to extend infrastructure to the annexed areas.

The results of the survey work identified a list of desired business types to augment the existing business base of the Town. The top five business types most desired in Bowling Green in ranking order are:

- Restaurants
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Apparel
- Grocery Store
- Book/Music/Electronics

Results of the survey conducted on behalf of the Bowling Green/Milford Sub-Committee reflect the top five business types most desired for the Bowling Green/Milford area are:

- Restaurants
- Small Retail Establishments
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Medical/Dental
- Commercial Recreation

Note: The largest numbers of respondents to this survey, 36%, live in Bowling Green.

The consistencies of these two different surveys indicate willingness for the local larger community to “hub” in Bowling Green. And, most fortunate for the Town, these types of store fit easily within the existing structures. CE&O notes in the discussion regarding the restaurant issue, the respondents are desirous of a dining style restaurant.

## **Tourism Opportunity**

A realistic approach to increase revenues for the business sector of the Town of Bowling Green, will be to increase the tourism traffic and spending for the community. And by virtue of its significant history and location, Bowling Green is poised to do just that.

Realistic assessment of the criteria for new business location is not in Bowling Green’s favor. New business re-location demands of roof tops, work force, availability of sites and infrastructure will continue to be challenges for Bowling Green. Smaller, more individually owned commercial and retail businesses will be the type of business attraction Bowling Green can expect. Such development will thereby ensure this small, rural, historically significant town will remain as envisioned by its residents.

As the final recommendations, and perhaps the most significant of this study, CE&O hopes to provide sufficient detail for the development of the vision and implementation for the Route 301 and 207 Caroline and King George County Corridor Plan. Some of these ideas have certainly been bantered about in different settings around this region for several years. However, the rapid growth and traffic congestion of I-95, the events of 9/11, the change in the travel patterns and expectations of the traveling public have all now intersected to work in Bowling Green’s favor. Furthermore, the strategic location of three visitor centers: Potomac Gateway located at the base of the Route 301 Bridge in King George County; the Bowling Green Visitor Center located on Courthouse Lane in Bowling Green; and the soon to be constructed Visitor Center at Carmel Church located in Caroline County, provides an unparalleled opportunity to capture the interest of the traveler in areas of history, shopping, recreational activity, and dining.

The initial tourism recommendations for the Town of Bowling Green are:

## Town of Bowling Green

- Request the Task Force convene a Route 301/207 Corridor Plan working lunch to identify opportunities and challenges of such a plan. Build consensus for expanded discussions relating to: historic significance of the area, agricultural farm tours, regional farmer's market/flea market, wine festivals, antique shopping trail, music festivals, and community festivals.
- Formulate strategies to solicit formal partnership with Caroline County. This partnership will invite discussions with King George County for continued planning, buy-in and funding of the Corridor Plan.
- Work closely with the Caroline County Office of Economic Development & Tourism to jointly participate in all heritage tourism programs.
- Discuss operational standards and reorganization strategies to ensure the Bowling Green Visitor Center meets the requirement of the customer and the community.