

On Saturday, July 6th at 1 PM, I took a half hour stroll through the core downtown Chestertown business district with pad and pencil in hand. I wanted to take, what I will call, an informal survey of who was here (in terms of businesses) and how that might break down into different business categories. I was curious whether the downtown Chestertown that I think I'm a part of is the same as the Downtown Chestertown that is actually here, i.e., the one that someone who visits for the first time actually sees – not the one that I THINK they see.

The Survey - This is by no means scientific, I chose my own categories and with no strict criteria, other than my own opinion, I assigned a store, business or an establishment to one category. This being Chestertown I stopped several times to speak with friends and visitors. I tried to ensure that I did not forget where I was in my count. I tried to be sure that I counted every business that I passed. If a second floor business had no sign visible or displayed on a building, I did not count it.

The Stroll – I left my shop at the end of Cross Street, walked to High Street and turned right, went to the Queen Street crossed to the other side of High Street walking back toward Cross Street. At “Lawyer’s Row” I hung a right walking as far as the location of Chesapeake Architects and came back to the Hogans building and continued to Cross Street. There I turned right by the Episcopal Church and walked along Park Row toward the post office. I did include Dan Saunders’ office building, on Cross Street, in my survey. I did not include the courthouse, town hall or the visitor’s center.

At the Post Office I turned left onto Spring Street and walked to the corner of High Street and turned right and walked as far as what I will call the social services building. That building and any offices in that building I only counted as 1 business. I crossed over to the other side of High Street and walked back to Cross street, turned down Cross to Cannon. At Cannon I turned right and went as far as the building that is home to Occasions Catering and My Best Friend – Cakes and baked goods. I crossed to the other side of Cannon and went back to Cross, turned right to the end of the “street” at the Tide Water Trader and there my stroll ended.

The Categories - I tried to make this easy for myself so I broke down the categories in this manner:

- Retail – places like Twigs, The Natural Food Store, Dockside, Pauls, etc., etc.
- Services – financial, real estate, insurance, (places where you have to have an appointment) Flow is here as is massage therapy and caterers also.....
- Food – restaurants, Sam’s, Evergrain, Duncan Donut. The Imperial Hotel and the restaurant I counted as two businesses here and in Lodging
- Galleries – Carla, Riverarts, etc.
- Working Artist and Craft Studios (I put myself here)
- Attorneys/Newspapers/Political Headquarters

- Empty Store Fronts
- Lodging/Theatre/Historic Society
- Drug Stores

The Break Down:

- **Retail.....22 stores**
 - **Services.....32 store fronts**
 - **Food/Restaurants.....8**
 - **Galleries.....6**
 - **Working Artists/Craftsmen.....4**
 - **Attorneys/News/Politics.....16**
 - **Empty Stores/galleries.....14**
 - **Lodging/Theatre/Historic.....4**
 - **Drug Stores.....2**
- Total.....108**

Some thoughts for possible consideration and conversations...

-Is this a reasonable mix of stores for a thriving downtown in a historic Eastern Shore Town?

-On Saturday afternoon at 1 PM of the 108 stores and storefronts that a stranger to Chestertown would or could walk past, 27 were closed plus 14 were empty, i.e. 38% closed.

There are many other ways to parse the information here. I certainly have my own opinion and thoughts about what I learned by looking at the numbers and how they break down. I hope that this might start a conversation among my fellow business owners, elected town officials, citizens, friends and all those who care about our town.