

# Redevelopment

## gains traction

Former bank building eyed as community hub

**By Richard Crumbaker**

Crisfield-Somerset County Times

PRINCESS ANNE — The plan to redevelopment select properties in downtown Princess Anne is “creating a buzz” and attracting interested stakeholders ranging from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to Delaware State University.

Consultant David Wilk met privately with Princess Anne Commissioner, and during an open work session Monday last week said he’s ready to “stick around” and see about acquiring the former PNC Bank and transforming it into a mixed-use “community hub.”

He said he’s ready to start the conversation about the bank which is for sale at \$1.2 million but is “completely opposed” to the town taking on any debt for this project.

“My client is the town,” Mr. Wilk said, adding that together they “need to create an environment to facilitate the recommended

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# Downtown

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as a first step the commissioners designate the block on Somerset Avenue between Prince William and Washington streets a special redevelopment district and empower a new entity of stakeholders to carry it through.

The bank property includes not only the original Bank of Somerset building but offices on the north side. Mr. Wilk’s plan calls for a small business development center, medical/

wellness center, diversity office, classrooms, coffee bar and a new town office. To accommodate limited space at the former Washington Hotel, being redeveloped one block north into The Washington Inn, Mr. Wilk sees the old bank serving as place for wedding receptions and large parties.

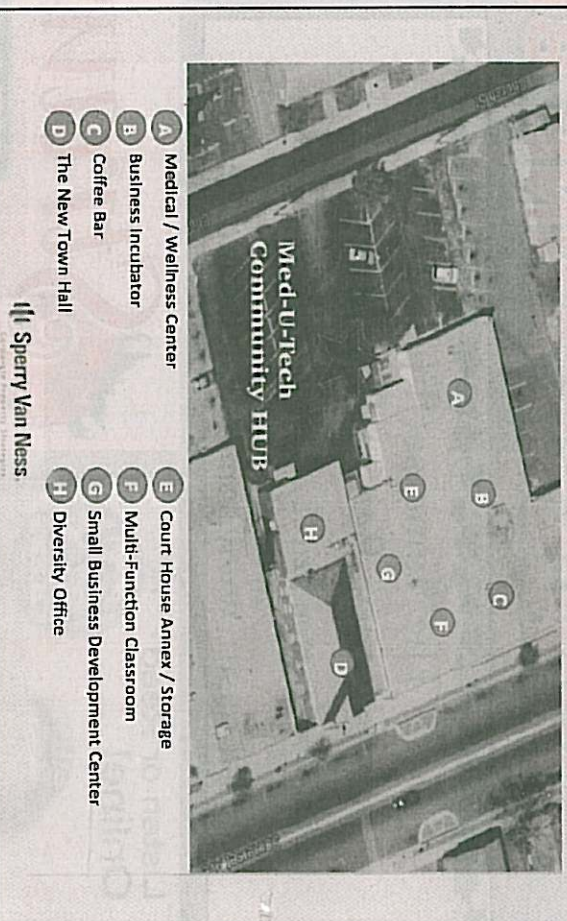
“UMES has given this a big thumbs up,” Mr. Wilk said, and suggested PNC be given naming rights for the property and that it even have a space set aside to tell of its history. At 20,000 square feet, it’s a lot of space, he said, adding that the flat roof lends itself to the placement of solar panels that would be leased “to create sustainability.”

Even a narrow alley could be utilized, with a wall taken down to create an atrium. It would be a lovely place for an art show, or music, Mr. Wilk said.

Mr. Wilk said the president and the UMES board would have to formally buy into the concept, but Dr.

## MED-U-TECH COMMUNITY HUB – CONCEPT PLAN

APRIL 2014



There’s 20,000 square feet under roof at the former PNC Bank property on Somerset Avenue in Princess Anne, and a consultant working on a redevelopment plan for the downtown envisions it reused for several purposes. David Wilk also suggests solar panels be added to the expansive flat roof as well.

Juliette Bell’s representative Walter Wood is interested, and so is the Center for Economic Development and International Trade at DSU. He added that he is also discussing the idea with Memo Dirker, founder of the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) at Salisbury University. Other partners may include USDA, Sysco, Somerset County and the Chamber of Commerce.

With his plan a “pitch book” will be created to explain the concept to financial groups and other interested parties. Mr. Wilk is branding the downtown as “The Avenue” unless

a new moniker is chosen. “I don’t think we’re going to have any problem getting traction,” he said.

Commissioner President Garland Hayward said a work session dedicated to the plan should be scheduled and the board should hear from all parties to know their level of commitment. “That’s going to be important,” he said. A tentative date of May 12 was selected for that.

Mr. Wilk said downtown property owners should be involved as well because these improvements will bring value to them. In addition he has financing strategies he would like to bring forward for discussion.