

RICHMOND HISTORIC COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR STUDY



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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The City of Richmond's Department of Planning and Development Review seeks innovative strategies to revitalize the city's historic commercial corridors. Currently, many of the city's historic commercial corridors suffer from a lack of economic development, with blight, vacancy, and concentrated poverty surfacing symptomatically. The purpose of this plan is to provide detailed, specific, and thorough recommendations for the revitalization of the city's historic corridors, with North 25th Street, Robinson Street, Six Points, and Hull Street serving as the four focus areas.

METHODOLOGY

A four step process was used to develop this study:

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

In order to develop effective revitalization recommendations, it was necessary to first complete an existing conditions report for each of the four corridors within the plan. Data for this report was compiled from national databases, city documents, walking assessments, and stakeholder interviews. The existing condition report summarizes the key characteristics of the corridor, which includes site boundaries, existing land use, zoning, future land use, population demographics, transportation considerations, and corridor shift. The existing conditions were presented at a mid-year review. The full results of the existing conditions are in the appendix.

GAP ANALYSIS

The existing conditions analysis helped to reveal areas of concern along the corridors that could be addressed by changes in regulation of the introduction of new programs.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies of programs and projects in cities across the nation served as precedents for each corridor. The case studies revealed potential recommendations for each corridor. The complete case studies can be found in the appendix.

RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT

The corridor teams developed recommendations and reviewed them with key stakeholders in April. The recommendations include action steps and lead organizations for implementation.

RICHMOND'S HISTORIC COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The history of transit in the City of Richmond includes horse-drawn cars, electric trolleys, and buses. "The Richmond region has had public transit for over 150 years, making it one of the oldest continually operating transit companies in the United States."¹ Horse-drawn cars were the popular form of transit until the introduction of the electric streetcar system. A 1935 newspaper article from the Richmond Times-Dispatch recollected the transition from horse-drawn cars to electric trolleys. "Hotels and inns had omnibuses, some drawn by four horses, to serve patrons to and from the railroad and canal depots, but townsmen used their mounts or carriages if disinclined to walk the uneven streets."² As the conversion began, there was a great deal of competition for space along major streets. In 1860, the Richmond Railway was organized and began operation. "Richmond's pioneer streetcar promoter was George L. Earnest, who started the company to operate omnibuses from Brook Road to Rocketts Landing

¹ GRTC. "Our History." <http://www.ridegrtc.com/about-us/our-history/>

² Allyn Tunis. "Father of the Trolley." Richmond Times-Dispatch. December 29, 1935. <http://richmond-thenandnow.com/Newspaper-Articles/Streetcars.html>

in 1860 “for the convenience of the public.”³ In 1887, an ordinance was adopted by Richmond’s City Council that allowed for the creation of an electric streetcar system.

This was the first electric streetcar system in the world, which was a major accomplishment for the City of Richmond. This was made possible due to Frank J. Sprague’s, also known as the “Father of the Trolley Line”. “Baltimore lays claim to operating the first electric car, which was run by a motor powered by storage batteries. Sprague was the first to develop and first to operate the trolley system, powered by energy supplied from a central station in Richmond.”⁴ By 1888, the electric streetcar system began operations, and it had a significant impact on the city’s development. “To the electric car Richmond is indebted for much of its growth, its three viaducts--First, Fifth and Marshall--and for many of its most beautiful parks. Some of the most populous sections of the city were developed entirely by the trolley. Forest Hill, Highland Park, Ginter

³ Earle Lutz, “You’ve Missed the Last Trolley.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. November 27, 1949. <http://richmondthenandnow.com/News-Articles/Last-Trolley.html>
⁴ Allyn Tunis. “Father of the Trolley.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. December 29, 1935. <http://richmondthenandnow.com/News-Articles/Streetcars.html>

ESTABLISHED IN 1888, THE RICHMOND STREETCAR SYSTEM WAS THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL ELECTRICALLY POWERED STREETCAR SYSTEM IN THE WORLD.

- RICHMOND HAD RAILS

Park, Fairmount, and Westhampton are a few examples of areas whose development was coincident with the new type of cheap and comparatively rapid transportation.”⁵ The streetcar map from 1900 shows how far the routes extended from the city’s center, see “Figure 1 Historic Streetcar Map” on page 6. Affordable transportation allowed residents to move further away from Downtown creating streetcar suburbs.

The streetcar system began to fade out as the transition to a bus system started in 1949. The Richmond Times-
 5 *ibid*

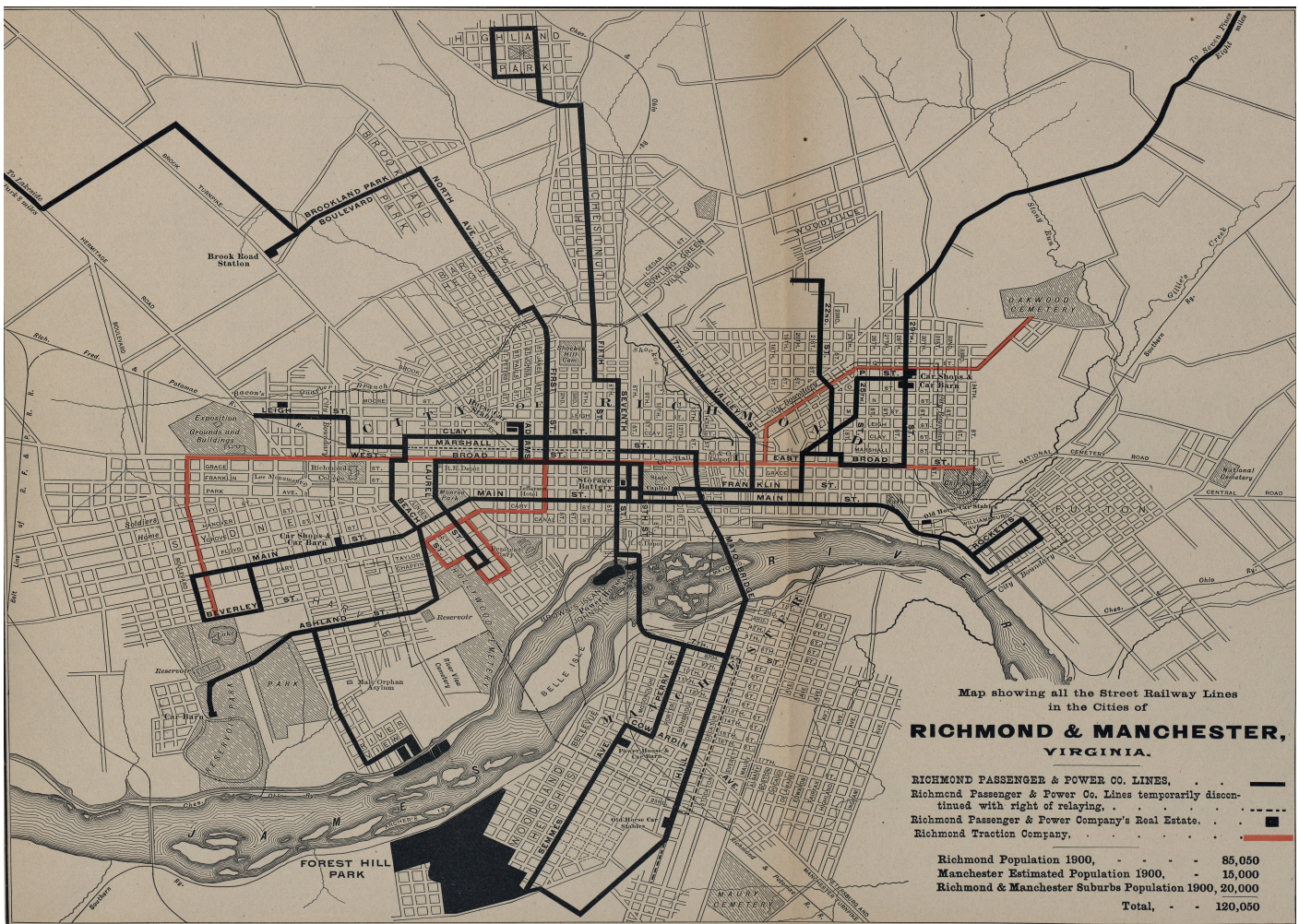


FIGURE 1 Historic Streetcar Map
 University of Texas At Austin

Dispatch article, "You've Missed the Last Trolley", was written the same year that the last ten streetcars made their final run.³ The transit system was under the control of several different owners throughout time until it finally became GRTC, which is the same transit system that serves Richmond today. In 1973, "funds were used to purchase the assets of the Virginia Transit Company and a new public service company was set up, Greater Richmond Transit Company. GRTC was wholly owned by the City of Richmond. A one-half interest was later purchased by Chesterfield County."⁶ Forms of transit changed from the trackless trolleys in the 1980s to electric buses in the 1990s. Currently, GRTC runs several local and express routes throughout the region. Also, they have special services that provide transportation for welfare to work participants as well as elderly or disabled citizens.⁷ Although Richmond's transit system has undergone several technological and administrative changes throughout time, the routes have remained largely unaltered. Many of the current bus routes follow the same paths as the original streetcar lines. The only noticeable change has been the extension of routes into the surrounding counties.

CASE STUDY CORRIDORS

A set of criteria was used to select four commercial corridors to focus on. First, the corridor must be located on a former streetcar line, or it must be along a current bus route that contains historic commercial properties. Second, the area must have commercial activity today. The base of the project is to provide a revitalization plan for a commercial corridor so it is important that it still have businesses. Third, the corridor must be in a historic area. Fourth, market drivers pushing for development must be present. Fifth, the corridor must have conventional zoning and parking requirements. Zoning and parking can either support a healthy commercial atmosphere, or it can present several problems if it has not been updated to match the corridor's development over time. Sixth, the area must not have a current detailed plan that addresses revitalization. Lastly, the options were further limited by choosing one commercial corridor from the northern, eastern, southern, and western parts of the City of Richmond. These criteria led to the final decision of North 25th Street, Robinson Street, Six Points, and Old Manchester. These corridors would become the focus of detailed revitalization plans.

⁶ *ibid*
⁷ GRTC. "Our History." <http://www.ridegrtc.com/about-us/our-history/>

MAP OF CASE STUDY CORRIDORS

FIGURE 2 Case Study Corridors
Source:



Commercial Center Between Q and R Streets



Star-lite Restaurant on Robinson and Main



Highland Park Merchants



N 25TH STREET

The North 25th Street corridor is a historic commercial corridor located in the East End of the City of Richmond that has benefited in recent years from private philanthropy and community planning. This section describes in detail the existing conditions of the area, the successful private and public programs implemented within the corridor, and the effect said programs have had on economic growth.

ROBINSON STREET

In order to better suit the corridors' present land use, the Robinson Street corridor needs to be rezoned. Because the Robinson Street Corridor is located in the Fan, parking is an ongoing issue. If zoning were to change, then parking would be affected, so a parking study was conducted. The results of the parking study influenced the recommendations.

SIX POINTS

The Six Points Corridor suffers from issues such as unemployment, vacant buildings, and lack of access to basic services such as grocery stores. A market analysis of the commercial corridor provided a base to create recommendations that address these issues. The recommendations prioritize access to healthy food, creating small businesses, and forming a marketing strategy for the corridor.

OLD MANCHESTER

The Old Manchester study area is located on the south bank of the James River. Unlike the other three study areas, it is not a linear corridor, but rather a polygonal area encompassing several streets. The area is in a transitional phase of converting from primarily industrial land uses to commercial and residential uses. Recommendations take into account the rapid development currently in progress.

N 25TH STREET

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

Although the historic trolley car line did not travel along 25th Street, Richmond’s GRTC program has served the North 25th Street corridor since the early 1970s, making it an important commercial corridor centered on public transit.

SITE BOUNDARIES

Located in the East End of the city of Richmond, the North 25th Street corridor consists of 11 contiguous blocks running three quarters of a mile from Broad Street in the South to Nine Mile Rd in the North.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

EAST END VISION

The Vision for East End, Good Planning for our Community is a vision and design based plan focused on the built environment of the East End of Richmond, with a specific emphasis on the North 25th Street corridor. The planning process for The Vision for the East End was led by the design firm Duany Plater & Zyberk and sponsored by the City of Richmond, Bon Secours, and the Richmond Regional Housing Authority (RRHA). The planning process included public charrettes, stakeholder interviews, and scheduled public engagement. The plan provides recommendations for architectural design and economic development policy, but provides little market and land use analysis.

CARE AND ENTERPRISE

The City of Richmond offers two financial incentive programs for businesses located within the corridor: the Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) program and the Enterprise Zone incentives. CARE provides rebates for façade and building improvements to investors and business owners. The Enterprise Zone program offers

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD AND RELATED INITIATIVES, THE CHARRETTE’S EMPHASIS ON THE CORRIDOR CONCENTRATES ON “MAIN STREET,” LEVERAGING PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN ORDER TO ENHANCE BOTH REALITY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE OVERALL AREA, ENSURE A PREDICTABLE FUTURE, AND ENCOURAGE PRIVATE INVESTMENT.

-DUANY PLATER-ZYBERK

business owners tax abatements, funding for equipment, employment assistance grants, and start up loans. Several businesses in the East End have taken advantage of the Enterprise Zone incentives and cited the incentives as invaluable tools for establishing roots in the North 25th Street corridor.

SEED

Another major incentive program available to businesses within the corridor is the Bon Secours SEED (Seeking Entrepreneurial East End Development) grant program. Unlike the CARE and Enterprise Zone Incentive Program, the SEED grant program is privately funded and well branded. Since the inception of the program in 2011, the SEED grant program has received multiple applications from entrepreneurs and business owners seeking to locate or expand within the corridor. Since 2011, Bon Secours

has made \$150,000 in private capital available to businesses looking to locate or expand within the East End.. The majority of North 25th Street grant recipients are located in the South and Central parts of the corridor, which are perceived by grant recipients as a safe and thus appealing place to open a business. The SEED grant program is available to businesses who have already received prior funding from the program, which has ensured continued investment in businesses establishing themselves in the area. Bon Secours has extended the SEED grant program commitment through 2015. (Full case study can be found in the appendix)

BETTER BLOCK

The Better Block Program is a “living charrette” in which a blighted commercial block is temporarily converted into an amenity-rich neighborhood center to show the potential of the site. The Better Block program is unlike traditional top down planning, working without traditional timelines, budgets, or managerial structure. The project is only as successful as the enthusiasm, creativity, and teamwork of the community. The beauty of the Better Block program is its inspiration for creating change. It gives entrepreneurs a boost for starting a new business, improves the desirability of an area, and displays to city officials that perceived barriers aren’t an issue. Many better blocks result in policy changes as well as creation of long lasting businesses. The N25th Better Block program will focus on the 1000 and 1100 block with the final event occurring in June of this year. The transformation of the 1000 and 1100 block on North 25th Street potentially will include pop-up shops, pallet furniture, wayfinding signage, and parklets. Walkability and community space are key goals of the Better Block program. (Full case study can be found in the appendix)

REVOLVING LOAN FUND

REVOLVING LOAN FUND CASE STUDY

- The City of Richmond’s Revolving Loan Fund is designed to provide capital for development projects in blighted corridors such as North 25th Street.
- A best practices case study of Salt Lake City’s program shows that revolving loan funds succeed when serving as a provider of gap financing for established businesses.
- It is recommended that the City of Richmond reform its revolving loan fund program to focus on small, gap financing loans.

Full case study can be found in the appendix

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DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area falls within three census tracts, in the Northern, Central, and Southern Sections of the corridor, see “Figure 3 Study Area Census Tracts” on page 10. The tracts’ demographics vary in income, education, and race, and help to illustrate the shift between the Northern and Southern corridor, with the central census tract acting as a transition between the two. Total population for the corridor is 4,329 as of the 2010 Census.

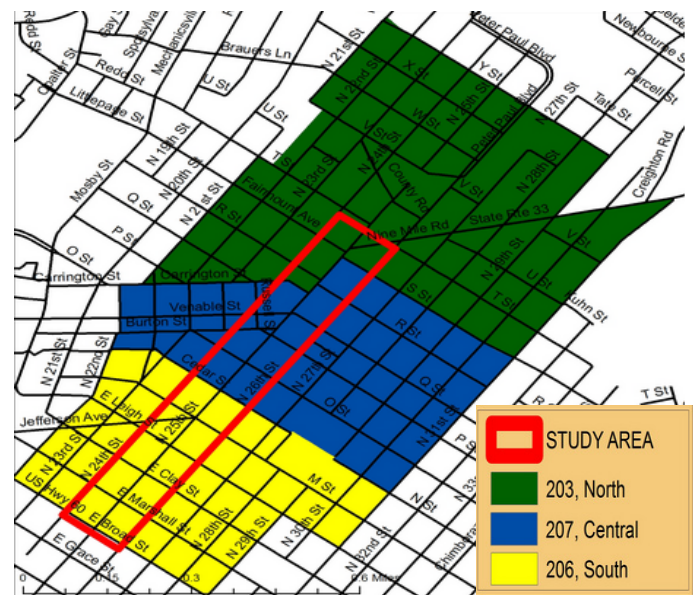


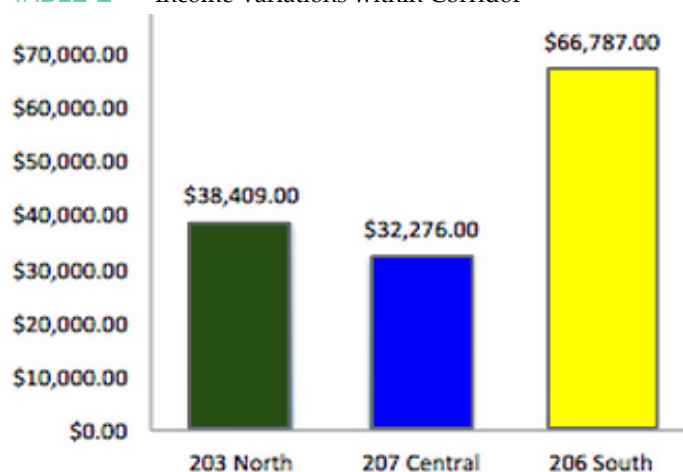
FIGURE 3 Study Area Census Tracts

US Census, American Community Survey

The lower corridor has median income of close to \$67,000. It is worth noting that this census tract is bounded at Broad St. and does not include the affluence of the Libby Hill neighborhood. Meanwhile, the upper portion of the corridor had a median income of close to \$38,000, substantially lower than the city median income of \$57,000, see “Table 1 Income Variations within Corridor” on page 11.

The educational attainment of residents aged 25 and older also illustrates the corridor shift. Within the Southern corridor, 65% of residents had some college education or higher while in the Northern portion, only 30% of resi-

TABLE 1 Income Variations within Corridor



US Census, American Community Survey

dents had achieved that level of education. Additionally, in the Northern corridor, nearly 40% had less than a high school diploma.

The corridor is predominantly African-American in the northern portion, with 96% of the population being African-American and 4% of the population being Caucasian. The central portion is 67% African-American, 25% Caucasian, and 8% two or more races. The southern portion is the most equitably distributed in terms of race, with 40% African-American, 55% Caucasian, 3% two or more, and 2% Asian.

ZONING AND LAND USE

In 2010, the City of Richmond rezoned the corridor in pursuance of the city-wide master plan’s goal of redeveloping the ailing historic commercial corridors within Richmond. The rezoning introduced the Urban Business (UB) and Multi Family Urban Residential (R-63) zoning classifications to the corridor, with the former allowing pedestrian oriented commercial development and the latter allowing for dense residential development. Today, the corridor is zoned for a mix of uses, with the Urban Business and Multi Family Urban Residential classification covering the majority of the southern and central corridor and the Community Business (B-2) district covering the northern section. Future land use for the corridor places a mix of Commercial and Residential in the South, Residential in the Central portion, and Mixed use in the North. (M a p s can be found in the full existing conditions memo in the appendix.)

Our walking survey revealed that close to 50% of the existing land use in the corridor is commercial, with 39% being used for single family and 13% for multifamily. The corridor is a mix of commercial, residential, and institutional buildings throughout, with a concentration of businesses in the Northern section. The majority of buildings are in excellent and fair condition, with only a few in need of repair.

Barren and vacant land is found in every part of North 25th Street with a concentration of barren and vacant parcels in the central section of the corridor. This is displayed in “Figure 4 Vacant and Barren Properties” on page 11. This concentrated blight creates a visual barrier between the southern and northern. These missing teeth create visual breaks in the continuity of the streetscape and weaken the effect of what should be a concentrated commercial center. Little infill has been undertaken in recent years, and there are very few examples of modern construction along the corridor, with a few exceptions in the northern section.

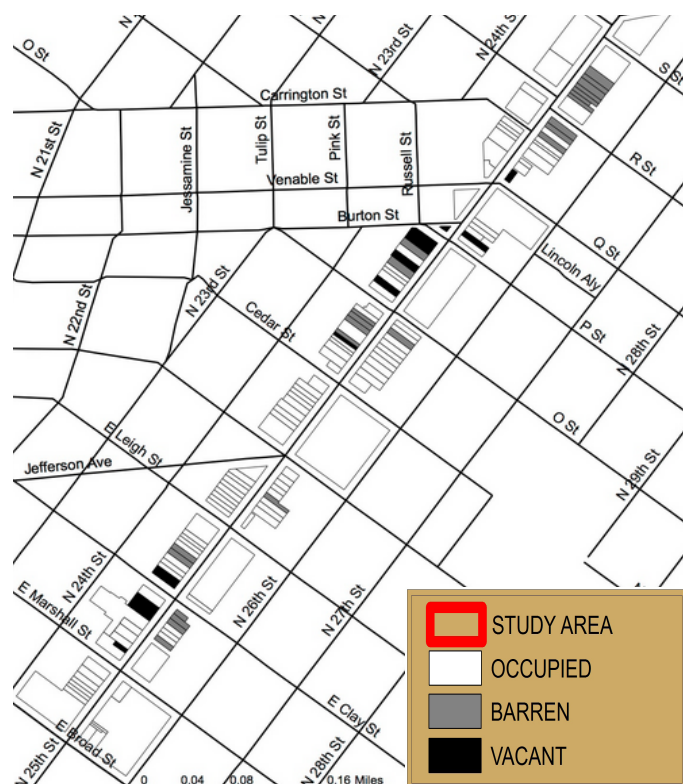


FIGURE 4 Vacant and Barren Properties

WALKABILITY

Street lighting, crosswalks, curb cuts, and sidewalks are a consistent presence throughout the corridor. Although the sidewalk condition deteriorates towards Nine Mile, the sidewalks are in fair condition throughout the rest of the corridor. Walkability in the corridor is most affected by the condition of the streetscape, which is negatively impacted by a lack of facade maintenance. Vacant and blighted buildings contribute to the perception of the area as an unsafe environment for pedestrians, as does loitering north of O Street. The concentration of business in the Northern corridor is an attractive walking destination, yet the negative perception of the central section likely wards away pedestrians from the northern section. This is in stark contrast to the well maintained, appealing blocks of the Southern corridor, where there are less businesses but more people walking,

BUS ACCESS

Several GRTC bus routes travel through N 25th Street. There are four bus stops along the corridor each with covered bench bus stops. In one sampled week of ridership during the summer of 2013, the stops closest to Broad Street had the lowest ridership and the stop at the intersection of R and N 25th had the highest with 40 passengers. This data reinforces the idea that the Northern corridor is an activity hub with the transportation infrastructure.

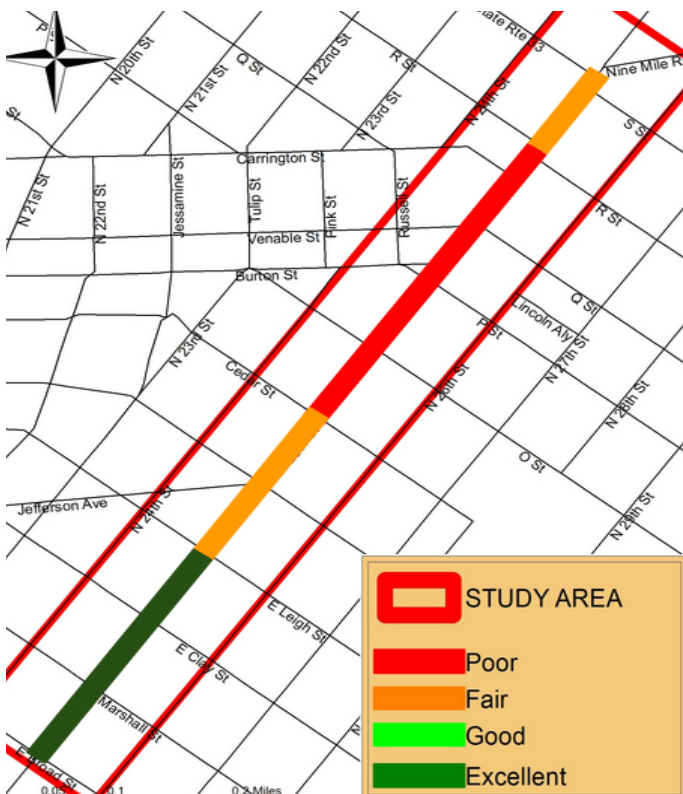


FIGURE 5 Streetscape Condition

CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

Commercial structures are located in each section of the corridor, although the types of businesses in each area differ. Higher-income serving and specialty businesses thrive in the Southern corridor, typified by Sub Rosa bakery, while lower-income serving businesses such as the Family Dollar anchor the commercial activity in the north. The greatest financial barrier facing businesses in the corridor is high rental rates, which burdens established business owners and entrepreneurs alike.

PROPERTY VALUE ANALYSIS

In order to further assess the current economic conditions along the corridor, the property values were analyzed. The property value of 2014 and 2004 were compared and the property value percent change was calculated. This highlighted what areas and property types have increased in value and desirability in the past ten years, as seen in "Figure 6 Property Value Change, 2004-2014" on page 12. This change is likely due to the 2010 rezoning process. Small parcels rezoned Urban Business saw the largest property value increase. Additionally, the blocks re-zoned as R-63 overall gained in property value. However, those parcels of low-density residential and those that were not re-zoned lost property value, as great as -87%. The land value shift speaks to the success of the 2010 rezoning process.

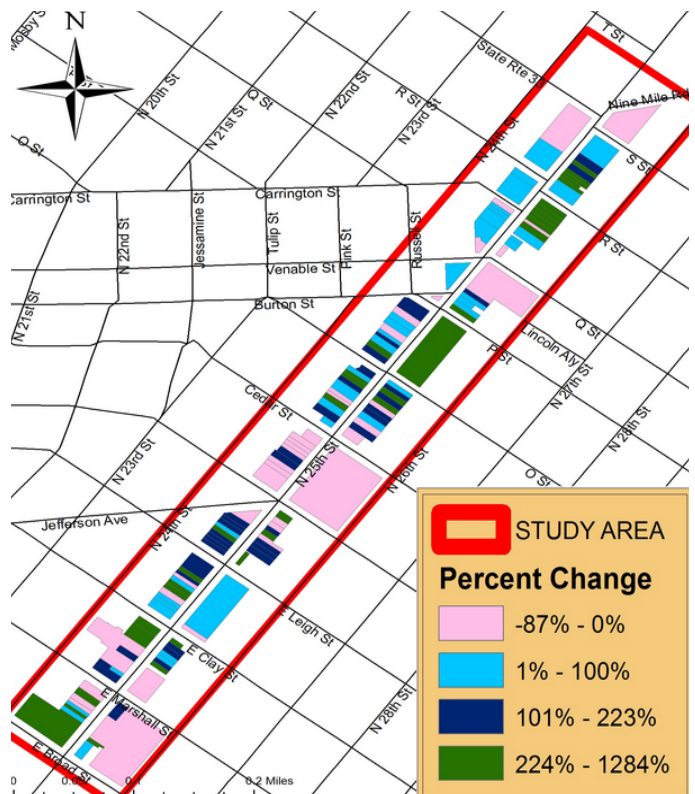


FIGURE 6 Property Value Change, 2004-2014
City of Richmond

NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT

Two National Register Historic Districts overlap the N 25 study area commercial corridor, Union Hill and Church Hill North, see “Figure 8 National Register Districts” on page 13. These districts cover the majority of the corridor but not the Eastern blocks between O St. and Nine Mile Rd. This designation alone does not guarantee any preservation. However, a contributing building within a Historic District is eligible to receive Historic Tax Credits if rehabilitation follows the Secretary of the Interior’s standards. These financial incentives are major motivators for locating businesses within historic spaces. This program has no doubt contributed to the re-use and rehabilitation of the Southern corridor and the lack thereof in the Northern.

SAMPLE BLOCK ANALYSIS

Duany Plater-Zyberk focused on the design of infill and streetscape of the corridor in the East End Vision Plan. The plan identifies several blocks as economically significant and provides detailed design recommendations for each one. One such block, between Q and R, currently has four structures facing the street and five barren parcels. This block is located in the center of the UB commercial zone of the corridor and links the southern and northern portions. According to the established DPZ recommendations, completing development of this block would create a cohesive commercial center for the corridor.

The certificates of occupancy and the cost of previous developments were examined to calculate the cost of future development for the five barren parcels fronting North 25th Street on this block. These records were examined to identify the average development cost per square per land for multi-family, single family, and multi-use commercial projects . Once the building costs were determined, the vacant lot size and zoning were assessed to determine the maximum build-out for the three parcels, each of which has a maximum build out of 100%. By multiplying the average cost of development per square foot by the total square footage of each parcel, it was determined that the total cost of infill development on the Q and R block is \$1,028,755. The development cost for each parcel is listed in “Table 2 Infill Development Costs for Sample Block” on page 13. All development assumed to be two stories high and of mixed use first floor commercial and second floor residential use.

TABLE 2 Infill Development Costs for Sample Block

ADDRESS	STORYS	SQ. FT.	ZONING	INFILL COST
1127	2	4165	UB-PE3	\$247,817
1125	2	3185	UB-PE3	\$189,507
1121	2	3500	UB-PE3	\$208,250
1109.5	2	1820	UB-PE3	\$108,290
1109	2	4620	UB-PE3	\$274,890

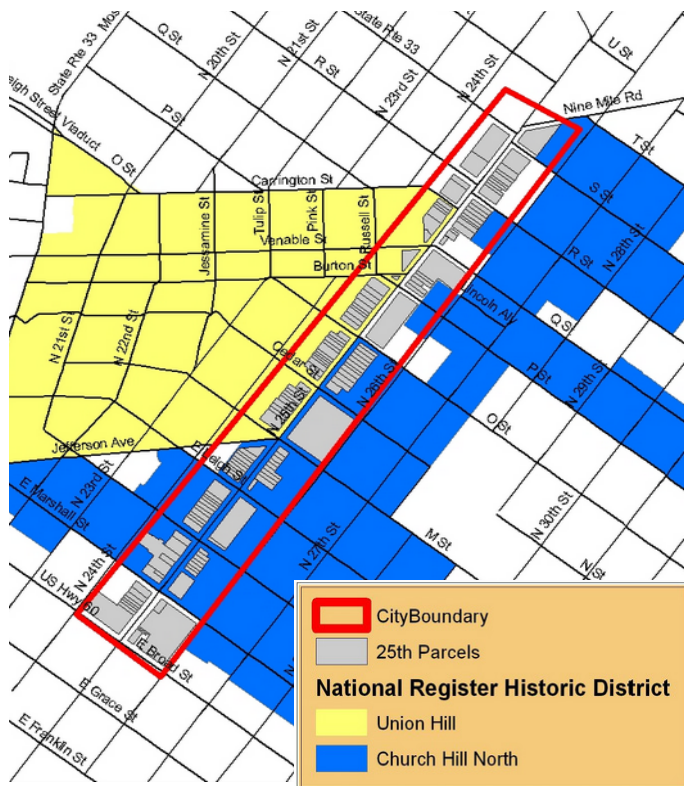


FIGURE 8 National Register Districts
Virginia Department of Historic Resources



FIGURE 7 Sample Block
East End Vision, Duany Plater-Zyberk

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Description—A business association is a coalition of businesses that represents and advocates for the needs of the association's members.

Intent—To create a unified group that represents and advocates for the businesses located in the North 25th Street Corridor. Running from Nine Mile to Broad Street, this organization would help to bridge the separation between the upper and lower corridor as well as help to dispel the perceived challenges to owning a business along the corridor. An organization such as this would manage the streetscape and maintenance of the corridor ensuring that resources are evenly applied throughout the corridor and to create a cohesive neighborhood center. Successful models, like the Cary Street Merchant's Association, will act as a guide for creating this new organization.

Steps—Gauge interest of businesses in corridor and establish charter for such organization detailing purpose, leadership, dues, etc.

Leading Organizations—Established businesses in the corridor will create and govern the business association.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond can partner with the business association to promote the marketing of N 25th Street.

Timeline—The business association could be created and implemented within two years of this plan.

2. EXISTING PROGRAM EDUCATION

Description—Improve visibility and education of economic development tools offered by the city, CARE, enterprise zones, and revolving loan funds.

Intent—The city currently offers a number of financial incentives for small businesses and property owners located within the N 25th St. corridor. However, these incentives are under-utilized due to a lack of visibility in the public sphere. By increasing the visibility of these programs and educating the public, the city can ensure that businesses have greater access to existing government services.

Steps—Host workshops led by incentive program administrators. Additionally, these employees should reach out to businesses within the corridor and establish a presence on the corridor.

Leading Organization—The City of Richmond will implement the tax abatement program.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond can partner with established businesses in the corridor to promote the

specifics of existing economic development tools.

Timeline—The City of Richmond could promote the economic development tools in the corridor within two years of this plan.

3. BLUEBERRY MARKETING PARTNERSHIP

Description—Develop a business partnership between Blueberry Marketing and the Business Association to facilitate workshops and small business mentorship for struggling and start up businesses along the corridor.

Intent—Blueberry Marketing already partners with LISC to facilitate the Bon Secours SEED grants and has an established knowledge of small business issues in general as well as specific to Church Hill. The intent of the partnership is to create a link between the City of Richmond and a group familiar with the corridor.

Steps—The foundation of the business association is required first, then the organization will develop a cooperation with Blueberry Marketing. Followed with facilitated advising.

Leading Organization—Blueberry Marketing and the City of Richmond will take the lead in creating this partnership.

Potential Partners—Blueberry Marketing and the City of Richmond will partner with local businesses to create an effective marketing strategy.

Timeline—The partnership could be created within three years of the plan.

4. TAX ABATEMENT

Description—A Renovation Tax Abatement is a development incentive that would hold taxable property value at the fixed pre-renovation value for a guaranteed period of time.

Intent—The intent of the tax abatement program is to encourage the rehabilitation of underutilized historic structures, which are prevalent in the northern portion of the corridor. The added commercial activity and associated sales tax and employment will financially benefit the city and improve the corridor overall.

Steps—This program would expand upon the tax abatement program issued through the Enterprise Zones. To complete this recommendations, it is necessary to develop boundaries for the tax abatement corridor, set the length of time for which the abatement program will run, publish the program and educate potential business and property owners. This would be undertaken by the City of Richmond and is a short term priority.

Leading Organization—The City of Richmond will implement the tax abatement program.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond could partner with the N 25th Street Business Association to promote the tax abatement program.

Timeline—The tax abatement program could be created and implemented within two years of this plan.

5. MT. OLIVET CHURCH LOTS

Description—Encourage infill for the 7 vacant lots adjacent to and currently owned by the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church.

Intent—In addition to being a missed opportunity for potential infill, these vacant lots are detracting from the vibrant streetscape of a commercial corridor. This is the penultimate block of the business corridor, closing this gap in development will create a more cohesive commercial connection with Nine Mile Rd.

Steps—Seek out the Mt. Olivet Church and gauge their level of interest either in developing or selling the parcels. Negotiate potential development. Construct infill according to the proposed designs in the East End Vision Plan.

Leading Organization—The City of Richmond will facilitate the discussion with Mt. Olivet regarding the vacant lots.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond could partner with Mt. Olivet to discuss the lots.

Timeline—The City of Richmond could have this discussion within two years of the plan, although the actual infill development would occur over the next ten years.

6. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Description—Housing affordability may become an issue as the corridor redevelops. Therefore, this study recommends the city increase incentives for creating affordable housing including greater density, parking exemptions, or an expedited permit process.

Intent—This type of incentive program will encourage the development of affordable housing in Church Hill. This will ensure that the area remains affordable for the various income types present throughout the corridor. These incentives will increase the feasibility and likelihood of developing this housing in addition to adding to the urban village. Ideally, this development would occur in existing historic structures or vacant parcels.

Steps—Work with the Better Housing Coalition to identify potential locations and sources of funding unique

and applicable to a potential project. Additionally, use the management of the Coalition to seek developers and facilitate implementation.

Leading Organization—The City of Richmond will expand and promote the affordable housing incentives.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond could partner with Better Housing Coalition to promote affordable housing options.

Timeline—The affordable housing options can be created and promoted within the next ten years.

7. ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

Description—Infill development should follow the design recommendations established by the Urban Design Associates for the Better Housing Coalition

Intent—Though this area is outside of the city old and historic district and therefore out of the control of the Commission of Architectural Review, infill and redevelopment should continue with an established style and scale sympathetic to existing historic structures throughout the East End and specifically along N 25th St, this will help to connect the corridor to the rest of the neighborhood and will visually reinforce the corridor as the neighborhood commercial zone while encouraging continued development without sacrificing the architectural neighborhood identity.

Steps—Create an architectural zoning overlay to include limitations on block long buildings instead focusing development on short store frontage with deep lot development. This will build upon established architectural recommendations set forth by the UDA.

Leading Organization—The City of Richmond will create and oversee the architectural standards.

Potential Partner—The City of Richmond could partner with the N 25th Street Business Association to create appropriate architectural standards.

Timeline—The City of Richmond could create these standards within two years of this plan.

8. MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Description—Develop the 1000 and 1100 blocks, between P and R streets, as the East End's commercial center.

Intent—Due to the rezoning of 2010, accessible public transportation, and the opening of several nearby businesses, the 1000 & 1100 block is primed for redevelopment. By redeveloping the vacant and barren parcels in this block, the Central and Northern portion will have a

commercial anchor.

Steps—Create a marketing campaign featuring the Better Block program and the city’s financial incentives to promote redevelopment of the 1000 block.

Leading Organization— The City of Richmond will promote the Better Block program and financial incentives.

Potential Partner—The City of Richmond could partner with the N 25th Business Association to promote the Better Block program and financial incentives within the corridor.

Timeline—The City of Richmond could create the marketing campaign and oversee development of the block within the next ten years.

CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

Due to strategic planning and private philanthropy, the southern portion of the North 25th Street corridor has flourished in recent years, with the central and northern portions of the corridor suffering from a lack of economic development. Currently, the corridor has two public incentive programs, CARE and Enterprise Zone designation, and the benefit of the Bon Secours SEED grant program, which is responsible for the establishment of many of the new businesses on the corridor. The current zoning of the corridor allows for the development of pedestrian oriented businesses and denser housing, although construction costs and high rent remain barriers for entrepreneurs and established business owners in the corridor. To maximize economic growth in the coming years, the City should focus on the following three recommendations:

- Creation of Business Association
- Affordable Housing Incentives
- Tax Abatement Program

ROBINSON STREET

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The Robinson Street Corridor is located in the Fan District neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia. Running North/South, Robinson Street is two blocks east of Boulevard, which serves as the western edge of the Fan District. The northern boundary is Broad Street, and the southern is the Downtown Expressway. For this study, the Robinson Study Area, pictured in Figure 1, stretches from Monument Avenue to Cary Street, just over a half mile in length.

The Corridor itself and the surrounding area is a medium-density, primarily residential neighborhood with spots of commercial activity spread throughout. Robison features a collection of well-established restaurants and bars, as well as institutional land uses including Verizon, Retreat Hospital and the Boys and Girls Club of Richmond.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

HISTORY

Originally a Henrico County Road, Robinson Street has been a commercial corridor since the introduction of the trolley in the 1880s. By 1920, most of the structures that exist today had been constructed. While the trolley system no longer exists, the corridor has remained a transit corridor with three GRTC bus lines connecting to other city neighborhoods.¹

DEMOGRAPHICS

The census tracts comprising the Robinson Street area is primarily white in race² with a median income of \$44,222.50, which is higher than Richmond's median income of \$39,445.00.³ Most residents are renters⁴ and most have attained education beyond high school.⁵

1. "History." *Robinson Street RVA*.

2. "Race." *U.S. Census*.

3. "Median Household Income." *U.S. Census*.

4. "Selected Housing Characteristics." *U.S. Census*.

5. "Educational Attainment." *U.S. Census*.



FIGURE 9 Study Area

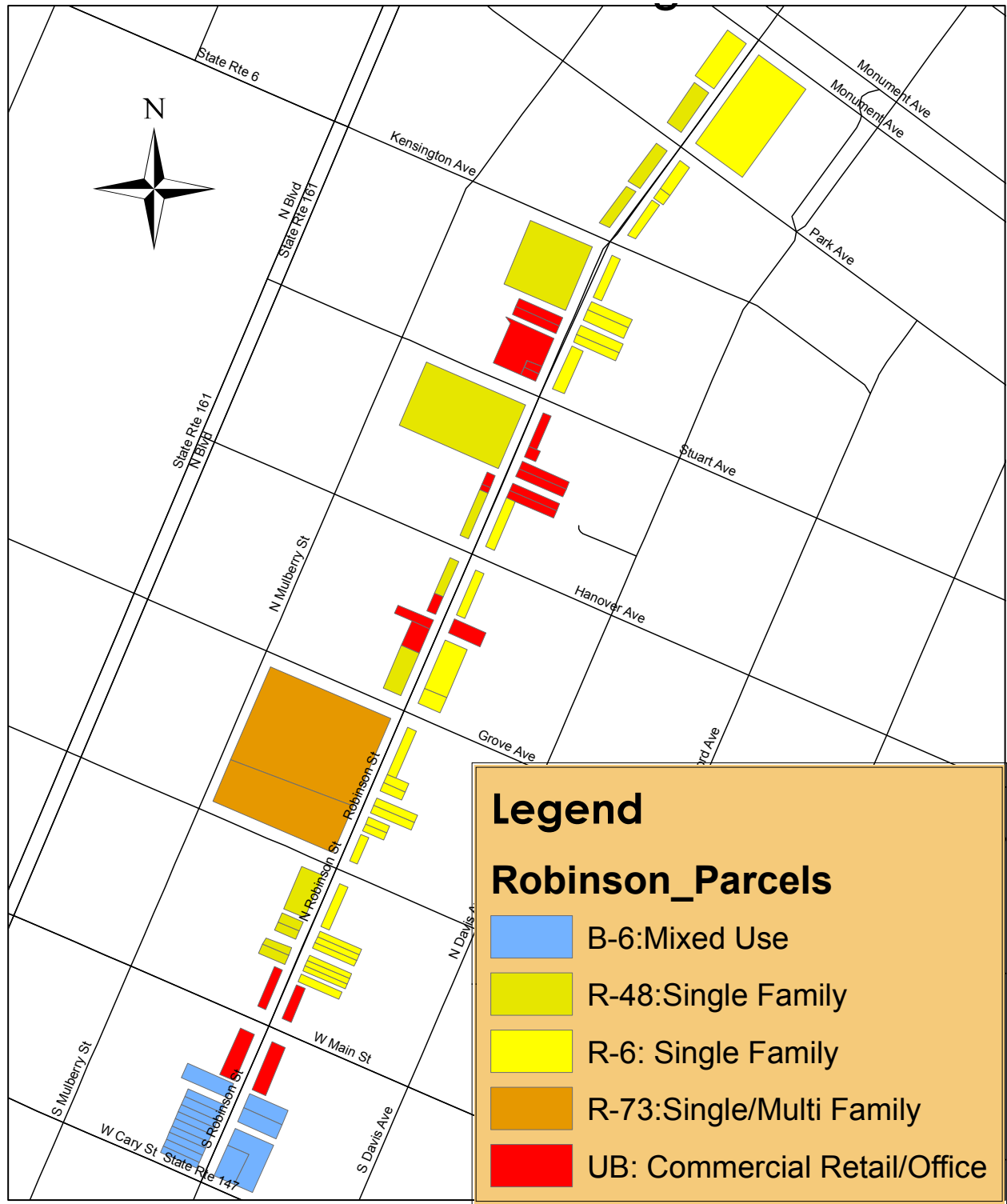
CURRENT ZONING AND LAND USE (SEE FIGURE 2)

The current zoning on Robinson Street does not align with the existing land use. The area is mostly zoned for different types of residential uses and a very small emphasis on commercial uses; however the existing land use is predominantly commercial with scattered residential uses.

Most properties have applied for special use permits and variances (see Figure 3). Some of these applications date back to the 40s and 50s. The high number of applications implies current zoning does not meet the needs of the corridor. Most permits were requested for the conversion of residential dwellings into commercial or office space.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

GRTC Bus Routes 3, 4, and 16 travel on Robinson. There are over 20 bus stops on the street itself and serves as one of the only north-south corridors in the western portion of the Fan with GRTC bus traffic.



0 125 250 500 Feet
FIGURE 10 Current Zoning Map

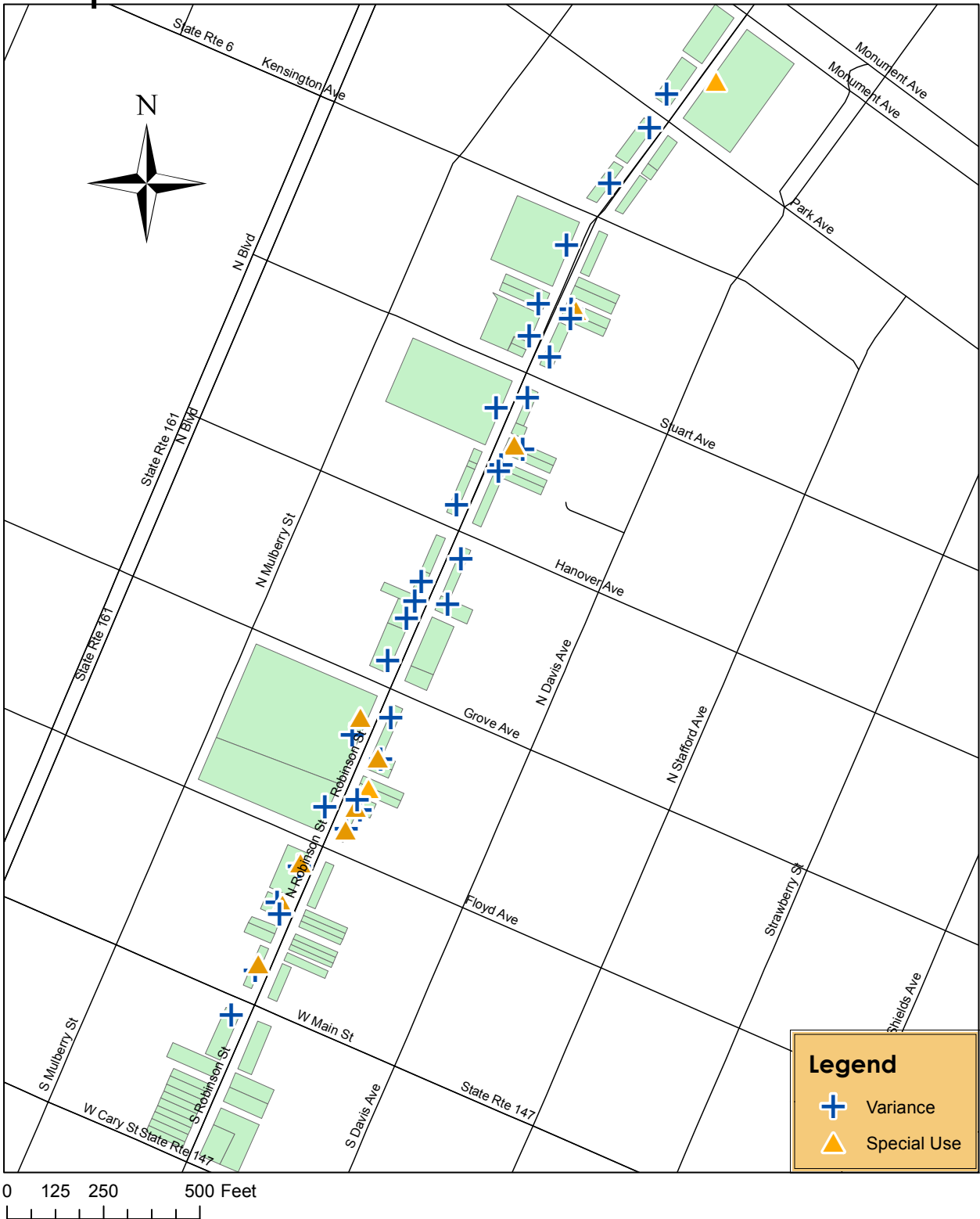


FIGURE 11 Special Use and Variance/Ordinance Map

PARKING

Parking in the area is limited. Parking is prohibited on most of the western side of Robinson and is regulated and restricted on the eastern side. Side streets feature few restrictions, however their residential surroundings result in few spots available. Parking lots throughout the corridor are also regulated and restricted and usually serve a single business.

EXISTING CONDITIONS CONCLUSIONS

Because zoning differs vastly from current uses, Robinson Street is in need of a change in zoning. Zoning revisions would result in changes in parking: already a noticeable problem area throughout the Fan. The planning team decided that a parking study would support future zoning changes. See appendix for detailed existing conditions review.

PARKING STUDY METHODOLOGY

PHASE ONE

In order to develop a parking study, the planning team conducted three case studies to examine the techniques of other parking studies performed along commercial corridor. These case studies are outlined below.

Greenpoint-Williamsburg Environmental Impact Survey

Brooklyn, New York planned to rezone an industrial corridor to spur development. A parking study was performed to analyze the impacts of the zoning change. Because zoning required new developments to have parking lots and land was available for their creation, the city determined that changes in on street parking were not required. However, due to the recession, the plan never came to full fruition, though the area did experience rapid growth before the housing market crash. See appendix for full case study.

Chapel Hill Parking Study

The Town of Chapel Hill was growing rapidly because of its proximity to the "Research Triangle Park Region." Deciding to conduct a study before parking became a problem, the data gathered from the study prompted several preemptive changes in the planning process, leading to implementations of the studies recommendations such as metered parking. As they produced positive results the town began implementing even more of the recommendations. See appendix for full case study.

Old Town Alexandria Parking Study

Performed as part of the overall Waterfront Small Area plan for Alexandria VA. The parking study was meant to find out what should be done about increasing parking amounts in Old Town Alexandria's commercial core. The city is in a watch-and-wait mode. It has a series of changes it will implement when it nears the 85% threshold. The

plan as some ideas that are applicable to Robinson. This includes a limit on the amount of Parking Permits each household can obtain; opening private lots to public use; and increased use of parking meters. See appendix for full case study.

PHASE TWO

A one-block buffer was established east and west of the Robinson Street Study Area. One block in both directions was determined to be the longest possible extent for the team to complete the task within the allotted time frame. The team performed a preliminary site walk in order to record parking regulations and major parking lots.

PHASE THREE

Based upon the three parking case studies, the team chose a weekday morning, a weekday evening, a weekday night, a weekend afternoon, and a weekend night. The reasoning for each is as follows:

WEEKDAY COUNTS

- **Weekday, 9:00 – 10:00 AM** – This time was chosen to assess the availability of parking would be after residents left and/or arrived for work.
- **Weekday, 5:00 – 6:00 PM** – This time was chosen to assess the availability of parking would be during the evening hours when residents were coming home from work and customers might possibly be shopping or eating dinner after work.
- **Weekday Night, 10:00 – 11:00 PM** – This time was chosen to assess what the availability of parking would be during the night hours when most residents would be home and customers might be patronizing later night businesses like bars.

WEEKEND COUNTS

- **Weekend Afternoon, 1:00 – 2:00 PM** – This time was chosen to assess what the availability of parking would be during a time when both residents of the area might be home and outside customers might be patronizing businesses during lunch time.
- **Weekend Night, 10:00 – 11:00 PM** – This time was chosen to assess what the availability of parking would be during a time when both residents of the area and the outside customers might be utilizing the businesses in the area during night hours.

The team recorded the number of cars parked on each block in the designated buffer at each of the study times. The maximum on-street parking capacity was calculated by dividing the street length (distance between parking regulation signs) by 18 feet (length of a parallel-parked

car).

PHASE FOUR

The data was compiled into basic grid maps displaying the day and time the count was recorded, the number of cars counted on the street, and the maximum capacity of the segment. Segments West and East of the Robinson were totaled separately, while the Robinson Street segments was totaled together. The totals were then divided by the capacity, resulting in the percentage of usage. Additionally a total usage of the area was tallied and divided by a total number of capacities to create a total percentage usage for the entire study area, seen below in Table 1.

Study Time	Occupancy
Weekday Morning	48%
Weekday Evening	57%
Weekday Night	62%
Weekday Afternoon	65%
Weekday Night	80%

TABLE 3 Capacity Results

PARKING STUDY RESULTS

STUDY RESULTS

Using 85% for the threshold of parking usage before intervention is required, it was determined that no immediate action is required in the corridor. Weekend nights are the closest to the 85% threshold. It is important to note that during this time certain segments are over-parked, being at over 100% capacity. This is common in the area between Hanover Ave and Cary Street. This correlates with a time when many residents are home and customers are patronizing restaurants and bars. If a rezoning supported an expedited process that allowed more restaurants and even retail to move into the buildings existent on Robinson, parking requirements would increase greatly- both within zoning regulations and in physical need.

POTENTIAL CONVERSIONS

A second simple survey was taken of potential buildings that were readily available to be converted into mixed use structures (see Figure 4). These buildings were chosen for three different factors:

1. The first floor was close to grade. While many businesses have steps for entry on Robinson Street, they all share a closeness to the ground that structures with upwards of five steps do not.
2. The buildings feature accommodating setbacks. As widely featured in neighboring Carytown, converted residential structures generally sacrifice their yard frontage by extending the building to

the curb. This is a hallmark manifestation of the Urban Business Zoning.

3. The buildings showed no signs of remaining their current use. This included buildings that had been recently renovated and most structures facing the highly residential side streets that intersect with Robinson.

The first floor square footage of the 12 buildings that met these criteria were measured and added. Using a conservative (that all the buildings would be converted to restaurants, and thus requiring the most parking spaces) and aggressive estimate (that all the buildings would be converted to the retail, and thus requiring the least amount of spaces) of the required amount of parking spaces of a converted residential structure, the team determined how many spots would be required, with the results shown below in Table 2.

These additional spots cannot be accomodated on site and would require designated parking lots nearby. However, the exploration of shared parking is featured in the recommendation section below.

Sq Ft to be Converted	Conservative Estimate	Aggressive Estimate	Average
12,080	120.8	40.3	80.5

TABLE 4 Required parking after rezoning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will address the future parking concerns of Robinson Street, as well as the promotion and strengthening of Robinson as a commercial corridor.

1. ZONING CHANGES (SEE FIGURE 5)

Description— Outlined in the proposed zoning map, a ring around the parcels that make up Robinson Street, both facing Robinson and facing side streets, designates the proposed zoning change area to Urban Business (UB).

Intent— Urban Business is defined as a district that encourages businesses with mixed uses, having a pedestrian orientation, being compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, and minimal disruption from automobiles. UB zoning allows for a greater variety of uses. UB would remove the need for special use permits and variances, making it much easier for new businesses to open on Robinson Street.

Steps—After following Richmond’s process of zoning changes and approval by the city, Robinson’s zoning would be officially changed and take effect on any future

Potential Commercial Properties



FIGURE 12 Potential Commercial Properties Map

development and use in the area.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Timeline— Short term to mid term, 0-5 years

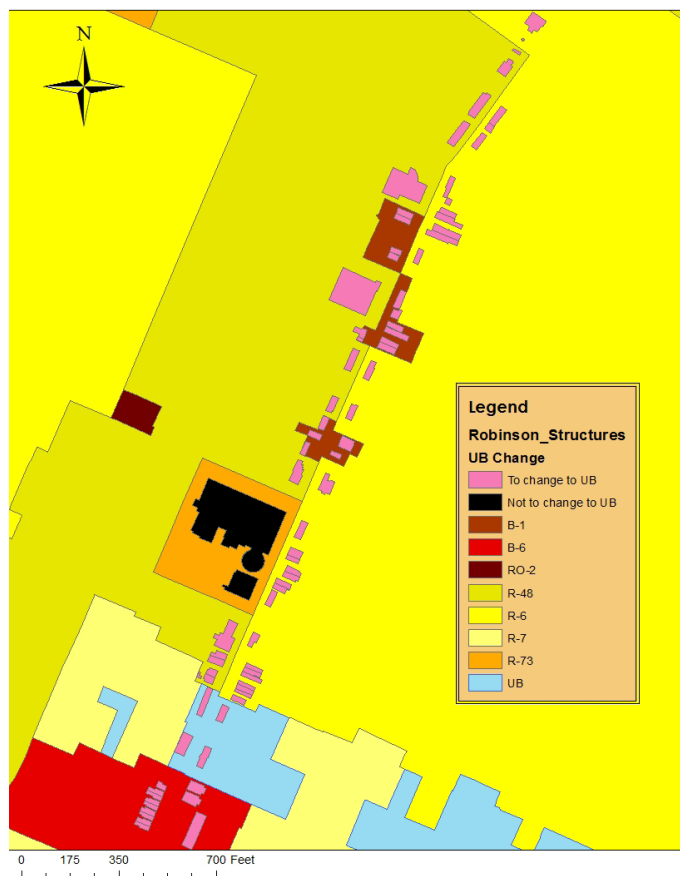


FIGURE 13 Proposed Rezoning

2. ON-STREET PARKING MANAGEMENT

Description— Currently there are a variety of parking regulations on Robinson Street and cross streets. In areas especially affected by overparking it is recommended that onstreet parking management strategies such as electronic parking meter stations, two-hour parking restrictions and encouragement of off street parking, be implemented.

Intent— These actions are intended to increase parking turnover.

Steps— To determine where turnover is needed the most. Place restrictions on these segments. Use parking meters if necessary

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Fan District Association and the Robinson Street Association

Timeline— Short-term, 0-2 years

3. SHARED PARKING LOTS

Description— There are a few private parking lots around Robinson which have the potential to become public. These lots are:

- Retreat Doctors Hospital
- First Baptist Church
- Starbucks Lot
- Starlite/Black Swan Lot
- GRTC Trolley Barn Site

The city or Fan association should engage in talks with the entities that own these lots to make them available to either those with Fan Parking passes or to anyone looking to park. A map of potential shared parking spots with a quarter mile buffer can be found in Figure 6.

Intent—To increase the amount of off-street parking available to residents and visitors.

Steps— The Fan District Association in conjunction with the Robinson Street Association, should to talk to local business owners and local residents to discover their opinions and thoughts on parking and whether or not they would like to have those private decks open for use. Then, the owners of these lots should be approached to find out if they would accept opening them up to public use.

Lead Organization— Fan District Association

Potential Partners— The City of Richmond, and the Robinson Street Association

Timeline— Midterm, 2-4 years

4. WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Description— Wayfinding and parking signage directs drivers to parking and helps provide an easy experience for drivers and pedestrians using the corridor.

Intent— Well placed wayfinding kiosk/signage, parking directional signs, parking location signs, and parking identifications signs will all promote a clear and concise message as to where someone can park. This provides an easy entry and exit to the corridor

Steps— Take inventory of what is already in place, then draft designs, decide on placements, and create wayfinding methods. Finally, raise / acquire funds to pay for implementation and install signs, kiosks, etc.

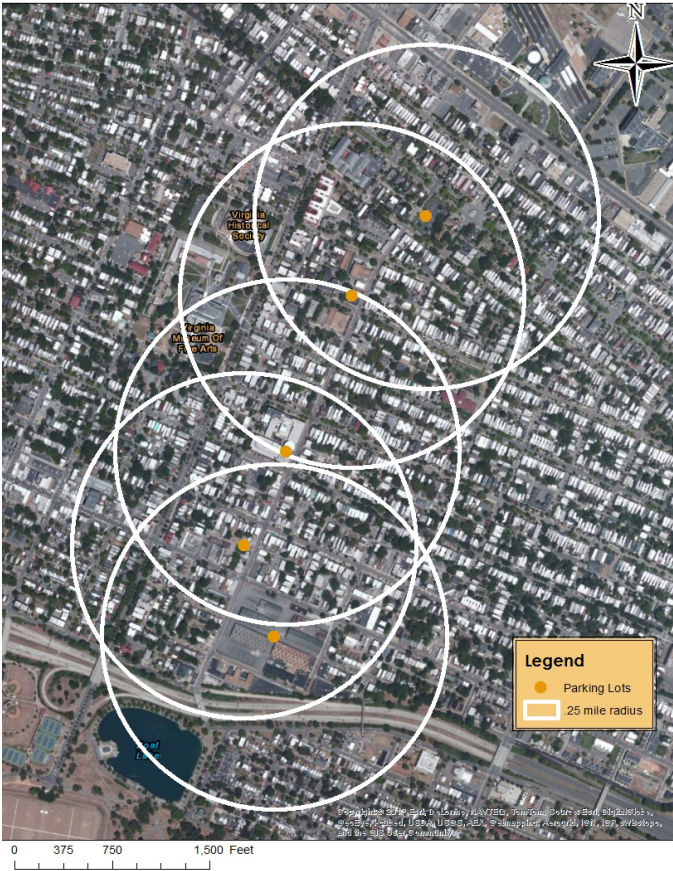


FIGURE 14 Potential Shared Parking Sites

Lead Organization — City of Richmond
Potential Partners — Carry Street Merchants Association, Robinson Street Merchants Association, Fan District Association, Virginia Commonwealth University, Storefront Richmond

Timeline — Short term, 0-2 years

5. CARYTOWN-FAN CIRCULATOR

Description — Robinson, though not saturated in shopping destinations, is home to a variety of restaurants and bars, giving it a reputation as a nightlife location. Just to the West, Carytown serves a similar purpose, though features much more shopping retail. Additionally, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) and other assets in the Museum District host many visitors daily. Carytown and the VMFA also feature high parking capacities. Increasing the connectivity from Carytown and the Museum District to Robinson would allow the corridor to flourish from the successes of its Western neighbors. Robinson is only a short two block walk from Carytown and the VMFA. However, the width and volume of traffic of Boulevard acts as a barrier to pedestrian travel. The route would begin at Thompson and Cary, travel down Cary and across the Boulevard, turn up Robinson, turn left on to Monu-

ment, travel down Boulevard, up Ellwood, and left on to Thompson, making as many stops as desired.

Intent — To connect these three neighborhoods, their visitors, and their parking structures, a circulating bus line that serves this limited area is recommended. The Circulator would run constantly, adapting to the different populations utilizing it through the day and night.

Steps — The Circulator requires more study before implementation. Future study would determine ideal stop locations, optimum bus size, and number of circulations at points throughout the day. After the study, an operator of the line would need to be determined. From there, stops would need to be designated and buses purchased and designed to differentiate them as circulators.

Lead Organization — City of Richmond and a Bus Service

Potential Partners — GRTC or a Private Bus Service

Time Line — Mid term, 3-5

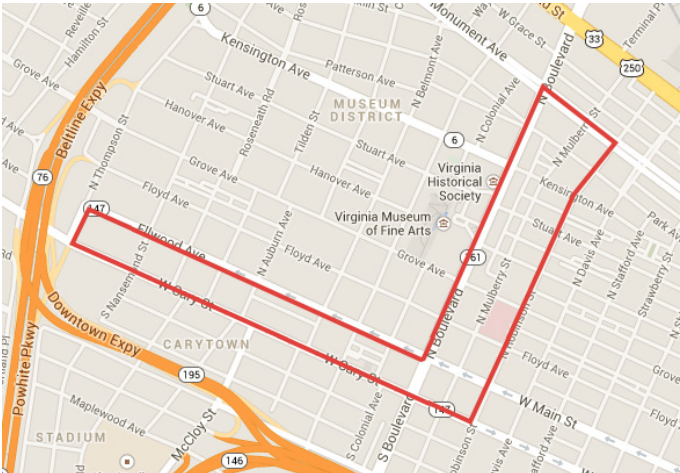


FIGURE 15 Carytown-Fan Circulator

6. PROFESSIONAL PARKING TURNOVER AND OCCUPANCY STUDY

Description — A Turnover and Occupancy study documents the number of vehicles that occupy a parking space over a particular period of time. This measures how much usage a parking area is used in a given time period as well as the demand during a given time period. This will help define whether or not the parking is being used most by consumers, employees, or residents in the area. It will also indicate the demand at any given time period to measure when parking is most needed.

Intent — Parking studies are an analytical tool that provides data to lead to recommendations. They give solid and convincing evidence to how an area is being used and

performing. A parking study of the Fan will provide data on how to approach any future changes to zoning that may affect future parking and provide many other useful recommendations.

Steps— Develop parking study scope, issue request for proposals and hire a consultant

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Carry Street Merchants Association, Robinson Street Merchants Association, Fan District

Timeline— Short term, 0-2 Years

CONCLUSION

Robinson Street has an active life as a commercial corridor. Its successes thus far have been in spite of zoning. If zoning changes were to occur, Robinson could potentially have a bloom in commercial business. It is essential that three of our six recommendations be implemented to see these changes:

- 1. Professional Parking Turnover and Occupancy Study
- 2. Zoning Changes
- 3. Increased Parking Restrictions

SIX POINTS

INTRODUCTION

The Six Points Commercial Corridor study begins with an existing conditions analysis that dissects Six Points' physical characteristics such as zoning, land use, and demographics and is coupled with a market analysis that revealed the market gaps existing along the economic corridor. The findings from the existing conditions analysis and market analysis provide the data necessary to create and shape detailed recommendations to improve the economic vitality along the Six Points commercial corridor. Furthermore, the data retrieved from the existing conditions analysis and market analysis legitimizes the prescribed recommendations and implementation steps designed to decrease market losses and increase economic reinvestment along the Six Points commercial corridor.

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

Six Points is located in Highland Park, in the northern portion of the City of Richmond. It was once a vibrant economic corridor that grew as a result of the streetcar stop and surrounding streetcar suburb, Highland Park. However, the Highland Park streetcar suburb saw a steady decline after World War II when social and economic factors drew the middle and upper class residents to the city's west end.

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

The existing conditions report utilized eight surrounding census blocks to gather demographic data. These census blocks were chosen because they are within ¼ mile of the study area. This is a standard measurement used in demographic analysis because it considers people within the census blocks to be within a comfortable walking distance to goods and services of the central corridor. A summary of the existing conditions is provided here. The full analysis can be found in the Appendix.

SITE BOUNDARIES

Named after the central intersection of six streets, Six Points is approximately 20.35 acres. The commercial corri-



FIGURE 15 Map of Six Points Corridor
Source: Studio 1 Ground Survey, 2014

dor is located along Meadowbridge Road and Brookland Park Boulevard between Northside Avenue and 4th Avenue (see figure 1)

ZONING

Existing zoning is primarily, Community Business (B-3) and General Business (B-2) which permits principal uses that include but are not limited to grocery stores, artist studios, bakeries, gardening centers, specialty shops, restaurants, permanent on-site recycling collection facilities, building material stores, farm supply stores, and wholesale establishments.

EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use data was collected during a walking survey of Six Points commercial corridor and revealed that are 22 Commercial Retail structures and eight Institutional structures make up the majority of existing land use

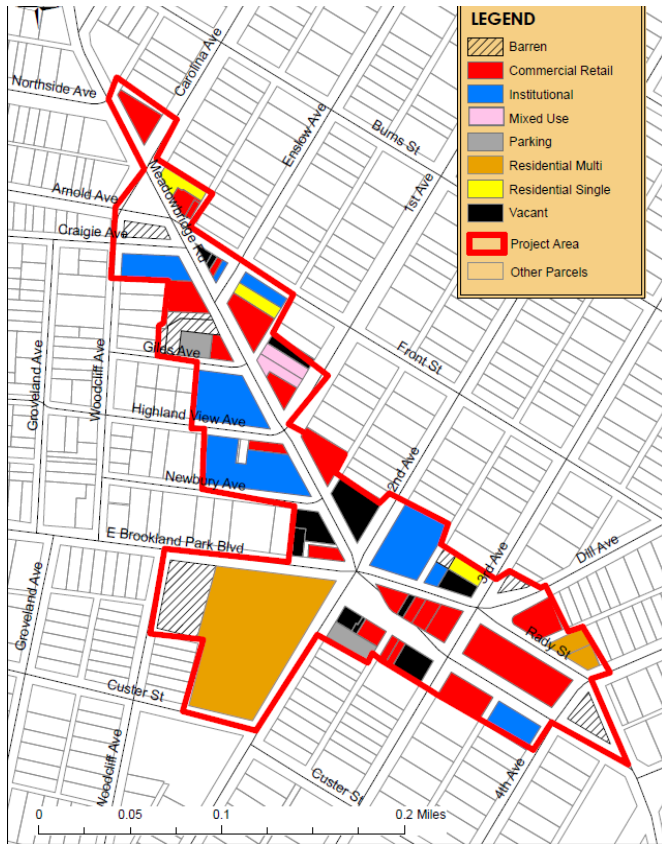


FIGURE 16 Existing Land Use
Source: Studio 1 Ground Survey, 2014

along the corridor. The remainder of the corridor is made up of several mixed-use, multi-residential, and residential land uses. The large dark yellow parcel located on the corner of Brookland Park Boulevard and 2nd Avenue is the location of a former school that is being rehabilitated and converted into a senior living facility. Several periphery lots colored black indicate vacancies, some of which were barren land without any structure or notable use. The va-

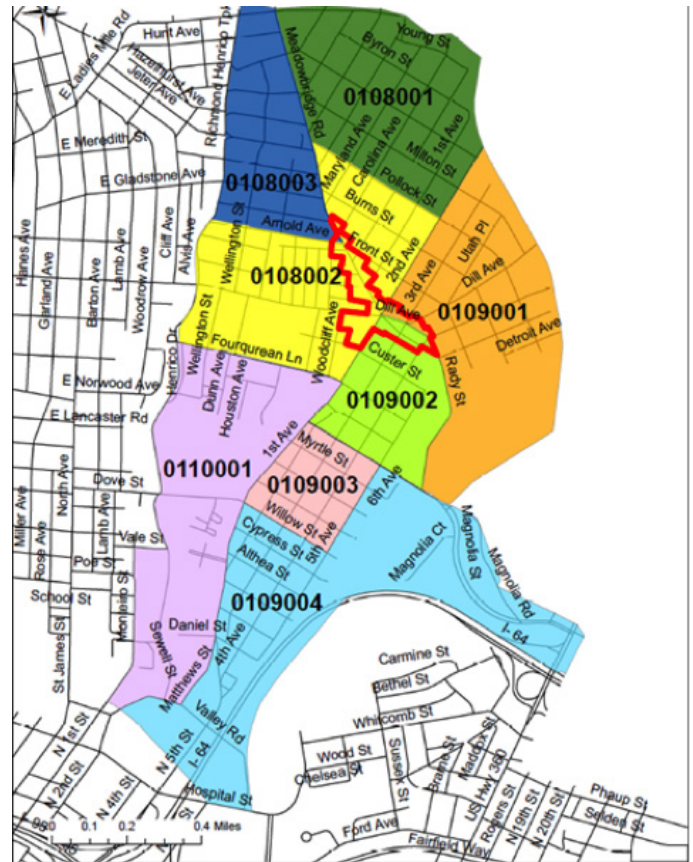


FIGURE 17 Six Points Census Blocks
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

cant properties are concentrated around the core of the Six Points intersection.(see figure 2)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Six Points is comprised of three census blocks, yet a viable demographic analysis required the census blocks located within .25 of the Six Points be selected. As a result eight census blocks were selected as the Six Points study area. (see figure 3) Demographic analysis revealed that the Six Points total population experienced a 14% decline from 2000-2010 settling at 7,670. Residents are primarily African-American and the median annual household income ranges from \$12,458 to \$40,000. The unemployment rates are high ranging from 14.1 to 21.1%. The high rate of unemployment may be contributed to from several factors such as lack of entry-level jobs, low educational attainment, limited transportation options, and a high level of ex-offenders living in the area. Census tract information reveals low education levels and a high rate of both unemployment and poverty.¹

PUBLIC TRANSIT

GRTC Route 34 is the only route that provides transit access to the study area and it has remained unchanged

¹ American Community Survey 2012. U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

since 1930 when it was first established for use in the streetcar system. The isolated route does not connect with other routes and riders are required to make transfers to other routes in Downtown Richmond. This requires riders to spend more money and time on the bus, which makes transit unaffordable and inconvenient. As a low access area where many residents solely rely on transit, the community is isolated from accessing food, healthcare, and job opportunities.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

A market analysis was conducted to examine what businesses and services are lacking in the Six Points commercial corridor. An analysis of the average expenditure survey provides a broad overview of spending power of Six Points. This examines what the current population could support in terms of new businesses. Also, it is necessary to take a more in depth look at the gaps in the study area by analyzing the retail marketplace profile, which shows what businesses are absent and how money is leaving the commercial corridor. A summary of the market analysis is provided here. The full analysis can be found in the appendix.

ITEM	2010	2012	%CHANGE '10-'12
Food	\$6,129	\$6,599	7.6%
Food Consumed At Home	\$3,624	\$3,921	8.1%
Food Consumed Away from Home	\$2,505	\$2,678	6.8%

TABLE 5 Average Annual Expenditures
Source: County Business Patterns. <http://www.census.gov/econ/cbpl/>. (February, 2014).

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE SURVEY

The average expenditure survey provides a broad overview of how households around Six Points spend their income each year. When comparing spending trends from 2010 to 2012, there was an increase in spending in a few categories as the economy recovered from the recession (see table 1). Specifically, the categories that had a significant increase in spending since 2010 were transportation, health care, and food. Transportation saw the largest increase in spending with a 16.5% increase since 2010. This increase is attributed to people spending a significant amount of their income on gasoline. Health care saw a 12.2% increase, caused by the aging population of Six Points and increased health insurance costs. These categories of food, transportation, and health care are important to keep in mind throughout the recommendation section for new businesses in the commercial corridor.²

² Average Consumer Expenditure Survey 2012. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/cex/> (February 2014).

BUSINESS	DEMAND	SUPPLY	GAP	LEAKAGE
Grocery	\$5,982,630	\$1,264,215	\$4,718,415	65.1%
Full-Service Restaurant	\$1,628,206	\$66,686	\$1,561,520	92.1%
Limited Food Service	\$1,827,728	\$464,525	\$1,363,203	59.5%

TABLE 6 Retail Marketplace Profile
Source:

RETAIL MARKETPLACE PROFILE

The retail marketplace profile determined the percentage of total income that is leaving Six Points due to the lack of retail services along the commercial corridor (see table 2). The retail marketplace profile supports the average expenditure survey as it further determines how much income is being spent outside the study area. Several categories stood out as having a lack of services in Six Points. These categories include food and beverage stores, food services, and general merchandise stores. In many cases, the leakage factor of the various industries within Six Points is at 60% or more.

The retail marketplace profile highlights food and beverage stores as an industry Six Points can build up as a means to strengthen the economic foundation of the commercial corridor. The average expenditure survey classifies corner markets as grocery stores, which is misleading because there are many corner markets and only one grocery store located along the corridor. The sole grocery store, the S & K Supermarket, is grossly inadequate in providing a comfortable shopping experience and selection of products.

Food services are another group of industries that Six Points can develop to strengthen the corridor. Food service industries include full service restaurants, bars, and fast food establishments. Food services and drinking places could potentially recapture \$3.8 million from consumers within the study area. Richmond is well known for its unique restaurants and establishing a local restaurant scene would be an asset that Six Points could capitalize on.

General merchandise stores are non-existent in the Six Points commercial corridor, and there is a need for affordable merchandise stores. General Merchandise Stores do not include thrift stores. In fact, thrift stores were the only services that are in surplus in Six Points. At 100% leakage, department stores or other general stores could potentially draw residents from within the surrounding neighborhoods to the Six Points commercial corridor.³

AREAS OF CONCERN

Throughout the market analysis, a few categories stood

³ Retail Marketplace Profile. Business Data. ESRI 2013. (March 2014).

out as potential avenues to pursue for improving existing businesses and promoting new ones in Six Points. The corridor could recapture retail profits by establishing grocery stores and restaurants. Providing a variety of food options within existing corner stores and improving the S & K Supermarket would attract more residents to buy groceries locally. In addition, the formation of a café or restaurant would provide another avenue for locals and visitors to dine in the commercial corridor. Health care saw an increase in spending, specifically on health insurance. This stresses the importance to provide improved access to healthy and fresh foods as a means to promote healthy lifestyles and encourage future growth of the Six Points commercial corridor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The market analysis revealed the areas of concern in Six Points, which helped shape the recommendations. There are three main recommendations initiatives that aim to address problems in the commercial corridor. The healthy food initiative addresses the need for improved access to healthy food in the commercial corridor and aims to establish a Healthy Corners program, refresh the S & K Supermarket, establish a Farmers Market, and establish a Richmond Fresh Food Loan Fund. The small business

**CASE STUDY:
GET FRESH! EAST END**

Tricycle Garden’s Get Fresh! Healthy Corner Store Initiative increases community access to fresh locally grown produce in neighborhood corner stores throughout Richmond, VA. Tricycle Gardens organized and implemented the healthy corners initiative, Get Fresh! East End in Churchill, a Richmond neighborhood that is a USDA designated food desert. Tricycle Gardens is planning to build on the success of the Get Fresh! East End program by expanding to other food deserts in Richmond. See appendix for full case study.

initiative aims to provide the appropriate funds and technical support to new businesses that will fill the vacancies along the commercial corridor with a community survey, a small business grant program, and a pro forma. Lastly, the community branding initiative aims to create a Six Points brand identity that will help to attract new businesses.

1.1 HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE: HEALTHY CORNERS PROGRAM

Description— The Healthy Corners recommendation will create a program that will provide fresh food in corner stores in the Six Points commercial corridor. Building on the existing Get Fresh! East End program, the goal is to set the framework for Tricycle Gardens to partner with corner stores in the Six Points commercial corridor.

Intent— Implementing a Healthy Corners program in Six Points is recommended to provide fresh, healthy food options to the study area and its surrounding neighborhoods. Six Points is located within a USDA designated low income and low access area, which means the local residents experience a significant lack of access to fresh food options. “Richmond has been identified as the largest food desert for a city its size in the United States. In absence of a traditional grocery store, many residents of urban food deserts are primarily purchasing food from local corner stores that carry high calorie, processed, and unhealthy foods. This consumption trend has significant health impacts, particularly for youth.”⁴ Six Points has five corner stores and one grocery store, but none of these are providing sufficient produce to the community.(see figure 4)

From discussions with the community, people with access to a vehicle will travel to Mechanicsville to shop at full service grocery stores. Transit does not connect the community to nearby full service grocery stores so those without access to a vehicle must do their shopping at local corner



FIGURE 18 Six Points Food Access
Source: Studio 1 Ground Survey, 2014

⁴ Get Fresh! <http://tricyclegardens.org/vision/getfresh-healthy-corner-store-initiative/>. (March, 2014).

stores. It is vital to improve the existing corner stores in the commercial corridor so they can better provide for the surrounding community.

“STORE OWNERS AND RESIDENTS ALIKE HAVE RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO FRESH FOODS AND OUTREACH EFFORTS PROVIDED BY TRICYCLE GARDENS. RICHMOND’S EAST END IS NOW ENJOYING FRESHER, HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES AT TWO OF THEIR FAVORITE CORNER STORES.”

-TERI LOVELACE

Steps

- Tricycle Gardens will conduct a community survey to learn what types of produce are in demand in the neighborhood. This will ensure the corner stores will receive the produce their customers want to purchase.
- It is necessary to approach corner store owners about partnering with Tricycle Gardens in an effort to implement the Health Corners program.
- There is a need to identify and use capital improvement funds to provide refrigerators and other tools that allow store owners to sell fresh produce.
- Tricycle Gardens will provide small business technical assistance in the form of produce training, small business loans, and food skills education. This provides participating corner store owners with the necessary knowledge and experience to ensure success and continued participation in the Healthy Corners program.
- Tricycle Gardens provides nutrition education for the community in order to teach people ways to incorporate fresh produce into their diet and to show that eating healthy can be affordable.

Steps— Tricycle Gardens is the lead organization for this recommendation. They connect store owners with affordable, fresh produce in an effort to provide healthy food options to USDA designated low income and low access area.

Potential Partners— Other organizations such as Virginia



*Caption 1: S & K Supermarket Interior Beverage Aisle
Source: Anna Lauher, 2014*

Community Capital, Feed RVA, and the Highland Park Quality of Life committee could be beneficial partners for this recommendation.

Timeline— This short term goal should be implemented in 1-2 years and could have a lasting impression with the work of Tricycle Gardens, corner store owners, and the community.

1.2 HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE: GROCERY REFRESH DESCRIPTION

An urban, fresh format grocery store refresh is recommended for the S & K Supermarket as a means to provide Six Points and the surrounding area access to healthy foods.

Intent—Urban grocery and corner stores located in low income areas, typically neglect stocking healthier food items because they profit from the sale of cigarettes, alcohol, and lottery tickets. Such is the case of the S & K Supermarket located in Six Points which provides a large selection of alcoholic beverages, soda, process foods, packaged snacks, but insufficiently stock the deli and produce sections.(see caption 1) Refreshing the S & K Supermarket would provide the surrounding neighborhoods access to healthier food options. In addition, access to food is limited and refreshing the S & K Supermarket would reduce the inconvenience and cost associated with traveling outside Six Points to purchase food.

CASE STUDY: BROAD STREET REFRESH PROJECT NEW ORLEANS, LA

Broad Street ReFresh focused on rehabilitation of the historic Robert's Fresh Market into a fresh healthy food hub that created 300 permanent jobs and acted as an anchor for retail reinvestment along the corridor.

Aspects of the ReFresh project that are necessary to make a grocery store refresh project viable in Six Points are to adopt a supportive organization much like NORA to guide the project, a development plan that creatively reuses and rehabilitates the S and K Supermarket, the support from local government and community businesses in Six Points.

Creatively redeveloping and refreshing the 8,880 square foot building into an urban fresh format market could adequately provide the Six Point and Highland Park residents access to healthier foods and jobs while increasing interest and bolstering economic reinvestment along the Six Points economic corridor.

See appendix for full case study.

Steps

- Assessing the community food access is necessary to document the food retail landscape and how the landscape affects residents' access to healthy food options. The corner stores and S & K Supermarket are not equipped to fully service the surrounding neighborhood forcing residents to travel outside of the area to make food purchases.
- It is important to conduct a community health assessment to determine whether the community would want access to healthier foods. Refreshing the S & K Supermarket could provide the surrounding neighborhoods access to healthier food options, but the dilemma lies in whether the community would be willing to routinely shop at the store as healthier food options often come with a higher purchase price. Educating the community on the benefits of healthier food options increases the desire for them.
- A grocery store refresh requires support from the community and a dedicated coalition of leaders

equipped with a range of skills working together to oversee the success of project. Members would include people who have skills in running a business, marketing, financing, nutrition, and policy.

- Securing financing, participation of the store owner, and marketing for the grocery store refresh is essential. A grocery store refresh is an investment that takes time and money as well as the communities support. Financing can be achieved through the Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund (VFFLF), a 10 million dollar fund dedicated to providing small business technical assistance, and lending opportunities to bolster urban markets capacity to provide healthy food items. This fund works towards providing access to healthy food options by creating food hubs within low income and low access neighborhood such as Six Points.

Lead Organization—The Highland Park Quality of Life committee is currently working to improve conditions in Six Points and its surrounding neighborhoods. This group would be the foundation of the coalition overseeing the grocery store refresh.

Potential Partners—To see the grocery store refresh come to fruition would require partnering with additional stakeholders such as Virginia Community Capital, Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, and the S & K Supermarket.

Timeline—The timeline to accomplish the refresh of the S & K Supermarket would be described as a mid-range timeline as the project would require 3-5 years to complete. The first 1-2 years involve gaining community interest, developing the coalition of partners to oversee the success of the project, and gaining the cooperation of the owners of the S & K Supermarket. The following year would involve determining renovation costs, developing a business plan for the refreshed S & K Supermarket, and acquiring funding for the grocery store refresh project. The last year would be needed to complete actual renovations of the S & K Supermarket.

1.3 HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE: FARMERS MARKET

Description—Establishing a farmers market could provide a venue for farmers to sell their products directly to consumers, create access to fresh, healthy, and locally grown foods, and provide health, nutrition, and economic benefits to the community.

Intent—A farmers market could provide healthy foods while building a sense of community identity that is dedicated to providing quality food for the Six Points community. Six Points is a viable location for a farmers market. Boaz and Ruth, a strong leadership and community outreach organization, already exists to advertise the devel-



FIGURE 19 Farmers Market

Source: <http://eatSMARTmd.blogspot.com/2012/04/have-fun-at-farmers-market.html>

opment of a farmers market as well as provide the educational tools necessary to teach residents the benefits of purchasing locally sourced foods.(see figure 5)

Steps

- A thorough cost-benefit analysis could determine the maximum profitability of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, as a means for the low income community of Six Points to purchase produce at the Farmers Market. The USDA provides an in-depth “How-To” guide on the guidelines and necessary expenses required to successfully institute a SNAP-purchasing program at a Farmers Market.
- It is vital to develop a task force that could oversee the institution of the separate steps necessary to create a sustainable farmers market program. The farmers market task force would create a board composed of diverse, passionate community leaders determined to develop a successful farmers market within the neighborhood. Prospective vendors, consumers, city government, and local businesses should have representatives on the board. The farmers market board members would be responsible for making key policy decisions and overseeing market management. The farmers market task force would also be responsible for employing a market manager to work approximately 30 hours during the season and 20 hours during the offseason.
- Beyond the creation of the board, the hiring of a market manager is perhaps the most important

step that will be taken in the physical operation of the market. It is also one of the most difficult roles to fill because of the required funding necessary to pay for the market manager’s time. Nearly all other positions needed to successfully run a farmers market can be done through volunteer work. However, the market manager must be a dedicated, paid employee. The market manager would be the main point of contact for the board and be responsible for overseeing operations, user fees, acquiring permits necessary to operate the market and permits required for vendors, enforcing rules and regulations created by the board, and establishing strong community contacts as the face of the farmers market.

- In order to pay for the market manager, funds must be allocated. The money used to purchase equipment, pay the market manager, and run the farmers market can be procured through grants and donations from the residents of Six Points. The most well-known grant dedicated to the creation of farmers markets, is the Farmers Market Promotion Program. However, this program was last used in 2012, and as of 2014, there are currently no active grant opportunities available. Although not active, the Farmers Market Promotion Program, if funded by the federal government, would have potential to pay for the majority of the costs associated with the creation of a Six Points farmers market.
- An equally important grant that could benefit Six Points as a low income area is the USDA’s Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. This federal program provides low income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible food items at farmers market. Farmers markets located in low income communities are often faced with the challenge of the residents’ reluctance to use their SNAP dollars on produce and healthier food options that are generally more expensive. The grant is administered by the Virginia Department of Agriculture, and with their help, low income seniors in Six Points would receive coupons that can be used exclusively at Farmers Market that could reduce the use of their SNAP card dollars. Not only could this program encourage participation of senior residents, the coupons could help stretch senior citizens SNAP card dollars.

Lead Organization—Boaz and Ruth has begun the necessary steps to create a market, and the inclusion of Boaz and Ruth on the board as well as Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, and members of the Highland Park Quality of Life committee could be incremental in implementing a

farmers market.

Potential Partners— Other organizations such as Tricycle Gardens, RVA Fresh, Shalom Gardens, Feed RVA, and the Virginia Cooperative could be valuable partners in the creation of the farmers market.

Timeline— The farmers Market should be established within 1-2 years, and it is considered a short-term goal with long-lasting results.

1.4 HEALTHY FOOD INITIATIVE: RICHMOND FRESH FOOD LOAN FUND

Description—It is recommended to create the Richmond Fresh Food Loan Fund, which could be modeled after the Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund (VFFLF), recently implemented by Virginia Community Capital (VCC), a community development financial institution.

Intent—The Richmond Fresh Food Loan Fund is intended to serve the entire city by creating a fund specific to the City of Richmond’s food deserts. This fund could address all of the Healthy Food recommendations by providing funding and technical support. It is vital to have the necessary capital to fund the recommendations, but the inclusion of technical support will ensure the continued success of corner store owners by teaching them how to conduct a sustainable business.

As noted earlier in the recommendations, Richmond is the largest food desert for a city its size in the entire country. This displays a dire need for a fund that focuses solely on improving access to healthy food options in Richmond.

The “VFFLF is a \$10 million fund and represents a scale up and expansion of Get Fresh! East End, the Healthy Corner Store pilot program in Richmond’s East End neighborhood.”⁵ The fund has its roots in Richmond and VCC has an office in the city so it is feasible to create a

⁵ Get Fresh! <http://tricyclegardens.org/vision/getfresh-healthy-corner-store-initiative/>. March, 2014).

CASE STUDY:

VIRGINIA FRESH FOOD LOAN FUND

Virginia Community Capital (VCC) a community development investment firm partnered with Community Capital Bank of Virginia (CCB) offer broad and flexible loans to underserved communities and markets through the Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund (VFFLF). The VFFLF combines small business technical assistance and lending opportunities to foster successful growth of fresh food hubs located in urban and rural communities. See appendix for full case study.

fund that solely focuses on the city. It is important to create a part of the existing statewide loan that directly addresses the food deserts within the City of Richmond.

Steps

- The first step towards implementation requires the Quality of Life committee to contact VCC in order to utilize the existing Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund. This existing fund would support all of the Healthy Food recommendations including the Healthy Corners program, refreshing the S & K Supermarket, and establishing a Farmers Market.
- In addition, VCC would create a loan fund specific to addressing food deserts in the City of Richmond. Micro-loans would best be utilized to fund the Healthy Corners program and supporting the farmers’ market. Larger loans would be an ideal funding option for revitalizing the S & K Supermarket.
- It is necessary to utilize the newly formed Richmond Fresh Food Loan Fund for any remaining implementation necessary for the Healthy Food recommendations for Six Points. The Richmond Fresh Food Loan Fund would also be utilized to improve food access to any food desert within the city.⁶

“THE VFFLF SERVES AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN BUILDING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS IN URBAN AREAS AS WELL AS STRENGTHENING THE OVERALL FOOD SYSTEM THROUGHOUT RURAL VIRGINIA.”

-WWW.VACOMMUNITYCAPITAL.ORG

Lead Organization—Virginia Community Capital is the lead organization for this recommendation.

Potential Partners— The Highland Park Quality of Life committee could be incremental in collaborating with VCC to fund the additional Healthy Food recommendations.

Timeline— This recommendation should be implemented within 3-5 years.

⁶ Virginia Fresh Food Loan. www.vacommunitycapital.org. (March, 2014).

2.1 SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVE: COMMUNITY SURVEY

Description—This recommendation calls for a newly designed community survey that revolves around the need to stem the loss of revenue the community is enduring in the food market.

Intent—The Six Points community has been intimately involved with the VCU Masters of Urban and Regional Planning students for several commercial revitalization plans. Among the plans that have been created, several community surveys have taken place highlighting the aspirations of businesses that residents would hope to see. Although the idea of creating a new community survey to take inventory of what needs to be constructed in Six Points is not new, a refreshed survey focusing on three different business options should be addressed.

The three businesses that the market analysis described as positive assets for reinvestment along the commercial corridor are restaurants, café/coffee shops, and, a grocery store. The total economic loss of revenue from the food market, detailed by the retail marketplace profile, brings the total to more than \$5 million annually. Specifically, \$5 million annually is leaving the Six Points community to benefit other neighborhoods that provide services that Six Points cannot.

Steps

- A revamped and updated community survey that includes a business directory of established businesses in the community may provide an ease of contact between business owners, prospective customers, and future business owners seeking to relocate to the area.
- This recommendation calls for the future VCU Masters of Urban and Regional Planning students to create a survey that the Highland Park Quality of Life committee and Storefront for Community Design might use as an updated analysis of what businesses residents could hope to see within the area.
- The recommended survey analysis could identify what specific industries could potentially be supported based off the market analysis findings.

Lead Organization—The beneficial arrangement of this recommendation is that Storefront for Community Design is currently working on a community survey.

Potential Partners— VCU Masters of Urban and Regional Planning students may assist Storefront for Community Design in creating the survey.

Timeline— This a short-term goal, which should be com-

pleted within 2 years. The results of the survey will lead to new businesses to focus on bringing to the Six Points commercial corridor.

2.2 SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVE: SMALL BUSINESS GRANT PROGRAM

Description— This recommendation could establish a small business grant program that supports Northside small business owners and future entrepreneurs.

Intent— The grant program will spark and sustain economic development and reinvestment in Six Points and its surrounding neighborhoods. The program would provide the means for local organizations and neighborhood institutions to strengthen Six Points through a range of community revitalization tactics such as funding for development of commercial and retail space.

Steps

- First, it is important to partner with the Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC), to develop a Northside Entrepreneurship Development Fund (NEDF) that would provide grants ranging from \$50,000-\$100,000. This would act as a financial foundation to launch startup businesses and bolster the growth of established Northside businesses.
- Secondly, the Northside Entrepreneurship Development Fund would be established through the partnership of the City of Richmond, Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, LISC, and a key-contributing corporation like Capital One or Amazon.
- Lastly, these loans will be utilized to foster a sustainable business environment in Six Points. The \$50,000 loans are meant to help businesses expand and perform capital improvement projects, while larger loans of \$100,000-\$200,000 would be used to provide capital for establishing new businesses.⁷

Lead Organization— The Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) will be the lead organization for this recommendation.

Potential Partners—The City of Richmond, Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, and a contributing corporation like Capital One or Amazon could be highly beneficial to implementing this recommendation.

Timeline—This is a short-term goal, and it may take no more than two years to establish the Northside Entrepreneurship Development Fund.

⁷ Grants and Other Services. http://www.lisc.org/section/ourwork/grants_services. (March 2014).

2.3 SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVE: PRO FORMA FOR NEW BUSINESS

Description—VCU School of Business students could design a business plan and pro forma around a concrete industry that the residents of Six Points hope to see come to

ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT MICRO-GRANT PROGRAM

Micro-grants are vital to businesses and organizations pioneering community engagement and development. The desired outcome of a micro-grant program is to supply small investments in return for enhancing community and commercial vibrancy. Introduced in October 2013 and implemented in a four-phase process over the span of one year, the Richmond Arts and Cultural District, a micro-grant program was created to finance community-based events. It primarily serves Broad Street in downtown Richmond, VA. The Richmond Arts and Culture District provided support for small capital improvement projects. Project support for art related community events were awarded up to \$1,000. Capital improvement recipients were awarded amounts up to \$2,500. See appendix for full case study.

the area. The pro forma is an in-depth financial statement and plan that may be prepared in order to assist a restaurant, café, or grocery store coming into the area.

Intent—Creating a professional business plan will be similar in time and work to the MURP Studio I project that was created for the Six Points Commercial Corridor study. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to provide the Highland Park Quality of Life committee with the means to generate useful business data and financial plans that give support to the recommendations set forth within this plan. The leakage factors are clearly evident in showing the need for more food-oriented businesses. In order to stem the revenue losses in Six Points, factual figures have to be put into action. The pro forma gives the Highland Park Quality of Life committee the necessary means to implement the recommendation of new businesses in a responsible and action-oriented way.

Steps

- The Highland Park Quality of Life committee can propose workshops and audit options for aspiring business owners currently residing in the community. Attracting a business to the area is not enough to create sustained economic development.
- There is an evident need for business education to take place. The creation of a prosperous neighbor-

hood market can begin by educating aspiring local business owners and providing them with the means to obtain and sustain their own business.

- The VCU School of Business can be utilized by creating an entrepreneurial handbook. This handbook's purpose would be to categorize and detail the application, process, and requirements for all funds currently available to aspiring small business owners. The hurdle in keeping the majority of new businesses viable is the difficulty in navigating taxes and loans that were utilized to finance the startup cost of the business. This recommendation calls for the Highland Park Quality of Life committee to partner with the VCU School of Business to create an entrepreneur handbook that serves as a resource for future business owners to easily identify and utilize existing funds and programs that help sustain their business.
- The pro forma is predicated upon the community survey and the community's agreement on what type of industry to pursue in the neighborhood. The market analysis shows that the leakage for "food at home" and "food away from home" totals more than \$5 million. Six Points has one restaurant in a city that is known for restaurants.

Lead Organization—VCU's involvement in the Six Points community should not be limited to the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) students. With the previous recommendation focusing on attracting new sustainable businesses to the area, the VCU School of Business is a resource that should be utilized to develop useful data for business development and operations, workshops for aspiring local business owners, and community projects that can be presented to the school so that a future class can create a business plan for potential new businesses within the community.

Potential Partners— The Highland Park Quality of Life committee could be an influential collaborative partner for this recommendation.

Timeline— This is a long-term goal and should be implemented in 3-5 years.

3.1 MARKETING INITIATIVE: CREATE SIX POINTS BRAND IDENTITY

Description—This recommendation would create a unique community identity in Six Points through logo design, brand strategy, and arts and culture events as a means to communicate the values and distinctive qualities of the Six Points community.

Intent—The Six Points community has a rich and unique

history, but it is also growing and changing in a way that present challenges in creating an identity that reflects its character and community spirit. In 2009, The Highland Park Merchants at Six Points had branding created and installed signs along Meadowbridge Road, but the branding failed because it does not represent the community as a whole. (see caption 2) It is vital to the brand identity's success to bring unity between the community and the Highland Park Merchants at Six Points. It is recommended to create a representative brand that may provide Six Points a comprehensive identity.

Steps

- Event-based community projects should be held in the neighborhood on a regular monthly or quarterly basis. It is important to create a welcoming and sociable atmosphere to gain interest and involve people in the community. These events would attract people of all ages and cultural backgrounds and allow them to express their visual representations of Six Points. These ideas could be put on posters to be compared and contrasted to see if there are any common themes that need to be considered as the official brand. These events would also need to be culturally attractive with food, music, and other tools that will catch the neighborhood's attention. Specific kinds of events would be fairs, festivals, farmers' markets, and "First Fridays".
- A skilled group of students and community volunteers would take ideas gathered from these events to create a logo for the community. Middle of Broad, design collaboration between students at VCU and Storefront for Community Design, would be key in developing the community's ideas artistically. The products developed from these teams would create tangible resources and a level of marketability for Six Points. Many of the ideas replicated in the event-based community projects and community meetings would link the economic strengths of Six Points and its marketability to the overall scheme of the logo and brand identity.
- A Six Points community organization that includes business, organizations, local churches and anyone who has a role in the community will create a foundation for effective action in implementing the brand and marketing. These types of community meetings would be a time for brainstorming to develop the brand message including catch phrases and concepts that are commonly agreed upon.
- After these goals are met within this group, the design team can also develop the ideas. The designers would take the concepts that were envisioned

on paper and create the logo so that it could be transferred to customized signs, bumper stickers, street banners, t-shirts, social media outlets, and other forms of promotion. Any opportunity to showcase the progress and successes of the community should be taken advantage of utilizing digital media, websites, and mobile applications, which would provide an interactive element of community engagement through technology.

Lead Organization— Storefront for Community Design is the lead organization overseeing the implementation of the marketing recommendation.

Potential Partners— Middle of Broad, design collaboration between students at VCU and Storefront for Community Design, will be necessary for the creating the artistic brand or logo. Also, the Highland Park Quality of Life committee will provide invaluable input for the new Six Points identity.

Timeline—The implementation of these recommendations could be accomplished in a 1-3 year time frame.



*Caption 2 Six Points Signage
Source: Anna Lauher, 2014*

CONCLUSION

The existing conditions analysis and market analysis provide the necessary knowledge and data to support the implementation of the recommendations. The three recommendation categories aim to address the needs of the community and local businesses in practical ways. Creating a prosperous commercial corridor will demand full cooperation of the community, local business owners, and supporting lead organizations. The community network is strong, and it will continue to expand as the recommendations are implemented. Community input and support is perhaps the most important next step in reviving the Six Points commercial corridor. The Highland Park Quality of Life committee in cooperation with the lead organizations for each recommendation will collaborate to achieve implementation. The ultimate goal is for Six Points to be transformed into a thriving commercial corridor that

provides valuable goods and services to the surrounding neighborhoods and visitors.

It is the recommendation of the Six Points Commercial Corridor study that the healthy corners and farmers market recommendations be implemented as the first steps to improving the economic vitality of Six Points economic corridor. Secondly, immediate implementation of Six Point community branding initiative could provide Six Points the necessary identify that might make Six Points a destination and place of interest within the City of Richmond. Lastly, implementation of the business development initiative, pro forma and small business grant program recommendations could provide the foundation for attracting businesses to the corridor. By implementing the recommendations for healthy food, small business, and marketing, the Six Points economic corridor will see increased reinvestment and sustainable economic growth.

OLD MANCHESTER

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The study area is within Old Manchester, defined by the red polygon in the map shown below (see Figure 2), with key streets highlighted in yellow. Encompassing approximately 75 acres, the area is bound by the James River to the north, Commerce Road to the southwest and Decatur Street to the southeast. Historically, manufacturing had a heavy presence in the neighborhood, but this is changing

as developers are purchasing large parcels of land for residential and commercial uses.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions analysis provided background information about the corridor. This section includes a summary of the existing conditions. The detailed analysis can be found in the appendix.



FIGURE 20 Map of Old Manchester Study Area
Source: Bing Maps

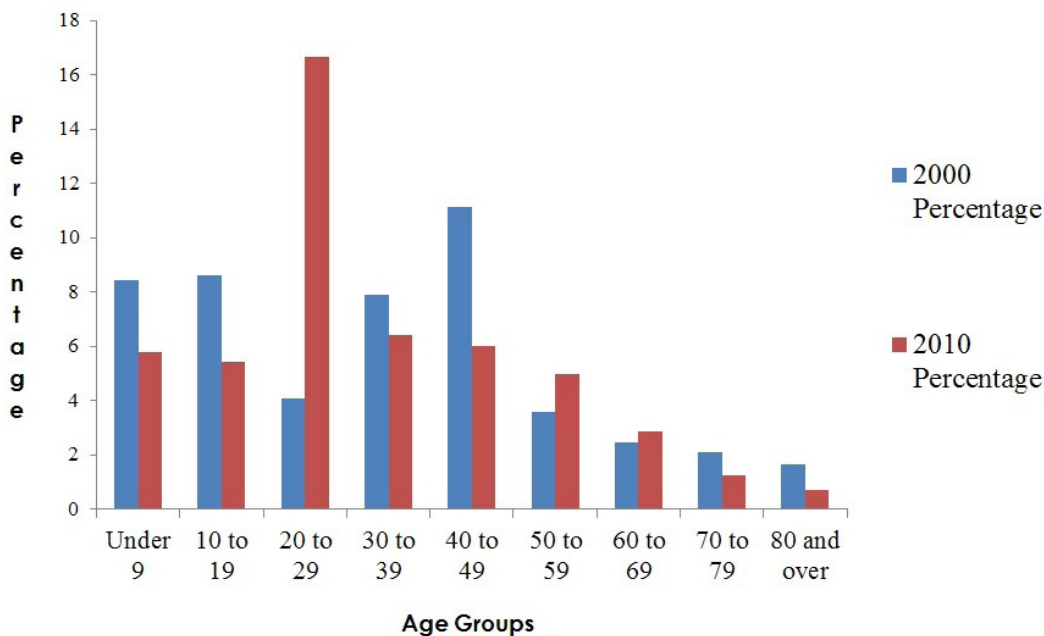


FIGURE 21 Population Change From 2000 to 2010
 Source: United States Census Bureau

DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area approximately corresponds to the boundaries of Virginia census tract 610. From 2000 to 2010 the area experienced a dramatic growth in population as a consequence of transitioning from an industrial zone to a mixed use zone. In 2010 the area had a population of 3,284, and the greatest share of the population was people aged 20-29 years old. This age group also experienced a population surge from 2000 to 2010 which is illustrated in Figure 3. Recent investment in multifamily residences combined with the influence of VCU can help explain this population characteristic. As a consequence of this youthful population, most of the households within the census tract are renters. Renters accounted for 80% of housing tenure type. This dominance of renter occupied units is likely to continue as most new residential development taking place is leased rather than sold.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Regulatory changes in 2010 rezoned a large portion of the study area from industrial to mixed uses. Current land use reflects these zoning changes, as well as the previous industrial nature of the area. Figures 4 and 5 show the current land uses and zoning designations. The most common land use is a mixed use of some kind. In most cases, the zoning classification of each parcel aligns with land use. Zoning districts exclusively for industrial uses no longer exists in the area; instead, the zoning ordinance permits compatible industry within the B-7 mixed use zone, which is the most prevalent zoning district in the area. RF-1 and RF-2 are riverfront zoning districts, designed to promote development along the James River. Current zoning pro-

motes residential, retail, and waterfront development, but also seeks to retain some of the historic industrial character of the neighborhood. This is consistent with the future land use goals in Richmond’s Downtown Master Plan of 2009, which recommends broad mixed used development in the area.

Other major goals of the 2010 regulatory changes were to promote infill development and to capitalize on vacant land in the area. While vacant and barren land remains prevalent, several of these parcels are either under construction or have proposed developments. Reynolds South, located on the largest parcel of vacant land, will feature more than 500 units as well as ground floor retail space. Along the waterfront, the proposed development South Canal Lofts will have 93 dwelling units. In the future, this new residential development will help to support and expand the current commercial market in the area.

Existing commercial uses are primarily clustered along Commerce Road and to the eastern corner of the study area (Figure 6). These include a mix of both office and retail. Examples of the businesses in the area include Plant Zero Coffee, W.M. Jordan Co, and Nationwide Electric Supply. As the figure illustrates, the area lacks continuous commercial store frontage, a quality that is important to achieve the goal of a pedestrian oriented retail environment. Gaps in commercial store frontage are most visible along 7th and Hull Street, two important corridors to the area. This is primarily a result of the large swaths of vacant land located along these streets.

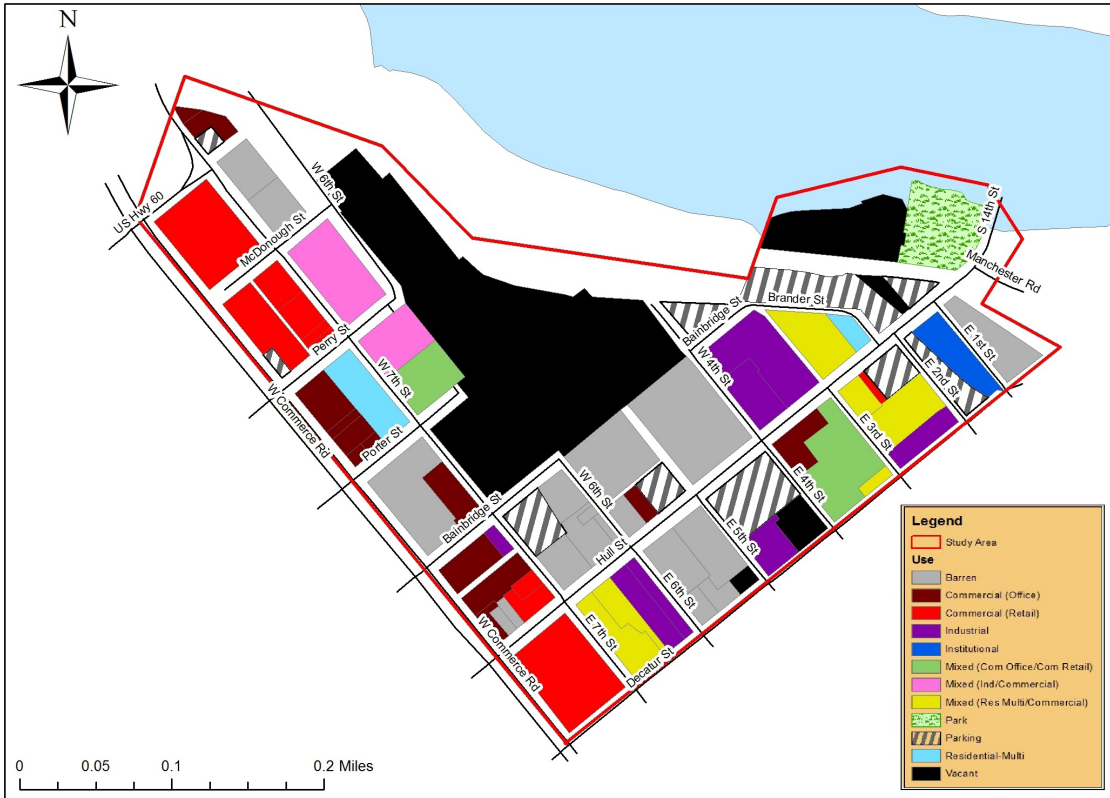


FIGURE 22 Map of Current Land Use
 Source: City of Richmond

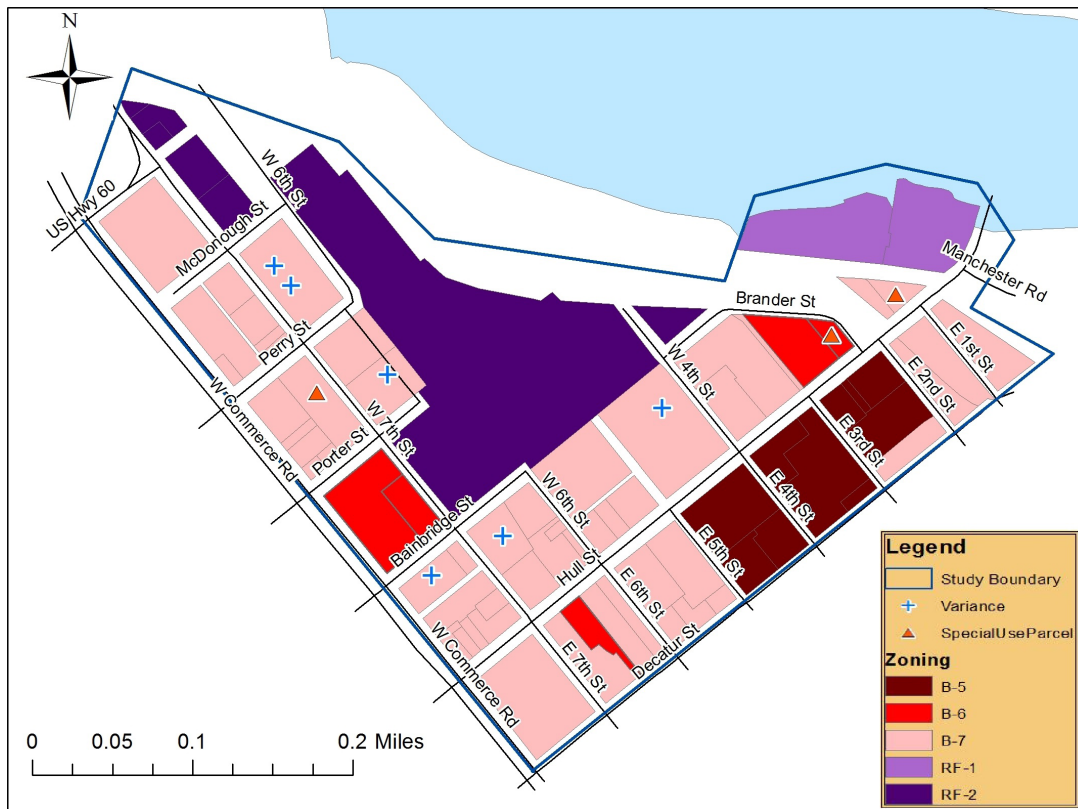


FIGURE 23 Map of Current Zoning
 Source: City of Richmond

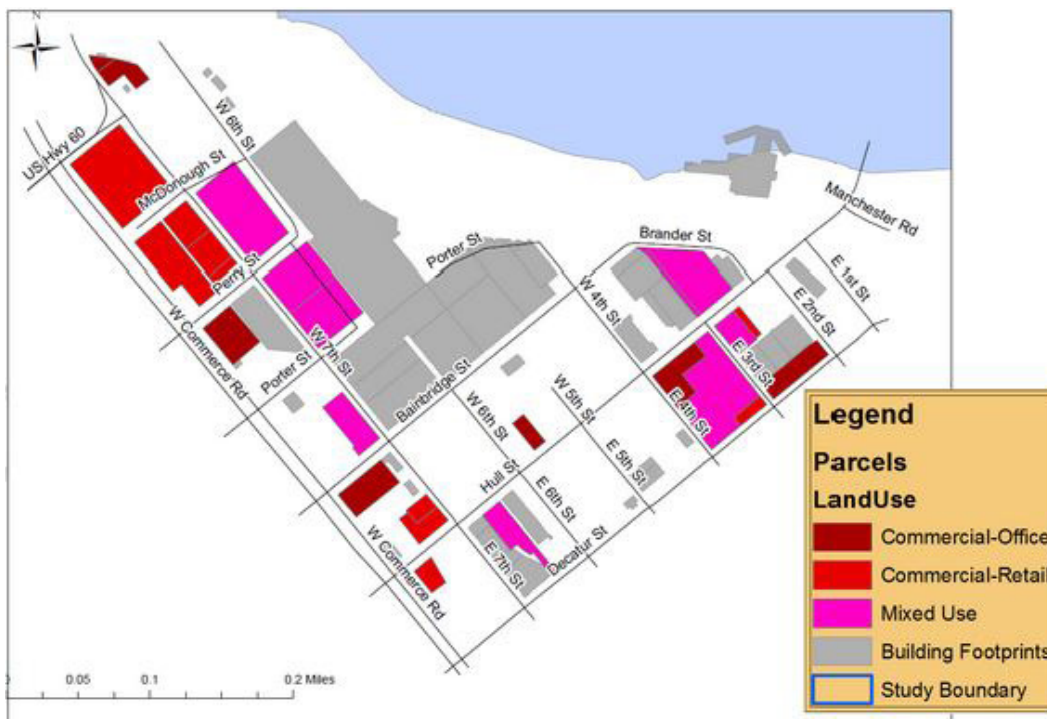


FIGURE 24 Existing Commercial Uses
 Source: City of Richmond

PARKING

As residential and commercial development proceeds in the area, providing parking will become a major challenge given the regulatory and spatial barriers. During stakeholder interviews, developers and business owners cited parking as one of the major concerns for the area in the future. Figure 7 illustrates that parking is widely available, in the form of parking lots, unlimited on-street parking, and limited on-street parking. Current zoning regulations are inhibiting factors to future commercial growth since the code requires developers to adhere to strict parking requirements. The zoning code for districts B-6, B-7, RF-1, and RF-2 require one parking spot per dwelling unit. This acts as a barrier to development as it not only increases the cost of residential projects, but also impacts the spatial layout of commercial spaces. Comparable zoning districts not located in the study area, namely UB-1 and UB-2, require one parking spot per four dwelling units and one per two dwelling units, respectively.

BIKE, PEDESTRIAN, AND BUS ACCESS

Concerns about traffic flow, circulation, and lack of pedestrian friendly connections were other major topics that arose during stakeholder interviews. Figure 8 illustrates the buffers between the road and the pedestrian. As the figure illustrates, most sidewalks in the area lack street trees or grass; this takes away from general walkability in the area. Other factors impacting cyclists and pedestrian safety is the absence of bike lanes and the inadequate crosswalks. Of particular note is the crosswalk at the in-

tersection of Hull and 7th street that is currently not functioning.

There is easy access to public transit along Hull Street and Commerce Road, as serviced by the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC). However, bus stop ridership is unequally distributed, with the largest concentration of high-ridership stops located close to the intersection of Hull Street and Commerce Road. Within a one-block radius of that intersection, 4 GRTC stops can be found with weekday ridership numbers between 23 and 96 passengers. It is important to also note that north-bound routes along Hull and Commerce only feed to the downtown traffic center.

CORRIDOR GAP ANALYSIS

Based on the data collected through on-the-ground surveys, interviews, and research, the primary areas of concern include:

- **STREETSCAPE INVESTMENT AND PARKS.** The lack of green space, street trees, and street lights creates an environment that pedestrians might perceive as unsafe.
- **CONNECTIVITY.** There are currently two nodes within the study area (One around plant zero and one around Legend Brewing Company), but there is a lack of connectivity between these two nodes.



FIGURE 25 Map of Parking Restrictions
 Source: City of Richmond



FIGURE 26 Map of Sidewalk Buffers
 Source: City of Richmond

OLD MANCHESTER PARCEL CASE STUDY

A developer in Old Manchester owns a parcel of land at the corner of Hull and 7th Streets. Parking requirements under the current zoning code limit the way the developer can use the property. The developer wants to build a mixed use development with first floor commercial space and apartments on the upper floors, however the parcel of land is not large enough to accommodate a building and the parking required for commercial and residential uses. The location of this parcel is a vital connection between the commercial corridors in Old Manchester, and therefore it should house a sizeable structure as opposed to a small building and a large parking lot.

Having gathered the necessary data on the parcel and corresponding data from the zoning ordinance, the maximum build-out is 75,000 square feet (see Table 2). With five floors of residential uses and a ground floor for commercial uses, it was determined that a development of this size would require 130 parking spaces (68 spaces for commercial and 62 spaces for residential). While there is an adjacent parking lot which is owned by the same developer, 66 of the 71 parking spaces are under long term lease with other area developments. With a minimal amount of acreage to work with, developing the barren parcel at maximum build-out is not feasible without relaxing the parking requirements.

A parking trust could give the developer the option of paying a fee in lieu of parking requirements. These fees would then finance parking structures in the area. By leasing parking spaces in these structures to area tenants, the cost of the parking structure is offset. An added bonus is parking structures, as opposed to parking lots, will allow development in its densest form.

Uses	Square Footage	Parking Spaces Required
Commercial office	7,800	23
Commercial retail	2,500	25
Restaurant	2,000	20
Storage, circulation, mechanical, etc	200	
First floor total	12,500	68
Residential (floors 2-6)*	62,500	62
Total	75,000	130

TABLE 8 Parcel Usage, Square Footage, and Required Parking Spaces

* Based on 62 units



FIGURE 27 Aerial Image of Undeveloped Parcel

Source: Bing Maps

- **CREATING A CONTIGUOUS COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR WITH LOCAL SERVING RETAIL.** There is a significant amount of multifamily residential development occurring within the study area, and little to no accompanying retail development. The Downtown Master Plan envisioned a mixed used community for this area. Identifying the primary commercial corridors is an important step in achieving this vision. Based on the path of development, these corridors would likely be Hull street

and 7th street.

- **PARKING.** While currently there is not an issue with parking, proposed developments will put a strain on the existing parking infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section recommends possible strategies and regulatory changes for addressing the primary areas of concern. Recommendations are divided into three categories: park-

ing, streetscape, and funding.

1.1 PARKING OVERLAY

Description— With current zoning requirements, off-street parking requirements require businesses to provide parking lots for their buildings. With a parking overlay, the requirement of off-street parking spaces for non-dwelling buildings in Old Manchester would be significantly less. This could lessen the gaps in contiguous buildings along the corridor made by parking lots. This is also recommended for developers, as seen in the Old Manchester case study, so that developers are encouraged to develop buildings on their parcels without having to provide a significant number of off-street parking spaces.

Intent— Old Manchester should establish a parking overlay district. This would encourage further development by relaxing off-street parking requirements. It could potentially lessen gaps parking lots typically occupy between buildings and create a contiguous enclosure of structures along the commercial corridor.

Steps—The parameters for the overlay district would be decided first. Then a parking study would have to be conducted for the potential overlay district. If the parking study recommends a parking overlay, a proposal would be sent to the zoning board to change the zoning code to also include the present underlay zoning for a parking overlay. Currently, only UB, B-1, B-2, and B-3 zoning can be used as the underlay for parking overlays. The commercial corridor includes B-5, B-6, B-7, and RF-2. A change in zoning is not recommended because the uses of the current zoning matches the area appropriately. If the change in underlay zoning is approved, the parking overlay would be implemented. Later, another parking study would need to be conducted as the area grows denser.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Timeline— In the short term, the district parameters would be established, a parking study would be conducted, and the parking overlay would be implemented. In the long term, there would be a re-evaluation of the the parking situation.

1.2 PARKING TRUST

Description— A parking trust is a form of shared parking where developers pay a fee in lieu of parking requirements. The city uses these fees to build parking structures in strategic locations within the area. Tenants of the developments are then given the option of renting parking spaces in these structures. Spaces are also made available for public use and charged at an hourly rate. This system is beneficial to both parties involved. No longer worried

about leaving enough room for parking, developers are able to increase the density of their developments granted they pay the additional fees. The city also benefits from this denser development through added tax revenues and the money collected through parking fees.

Intent— Due to the efficiency of shared parking, developers in Old Manchester and the City of Richmond would save money on construction costs as a whole. A mixed-use Manchester means people are attracted to the area at different times of the day. This decreases the total number of parking spaces needed for the area. Other benefits include better urban design from the reduction of curb cuts and fewer miles traveled searching for a parking space. This system would benefit all parties involved and foster a denser, more sustainable area.

Steps— For a parking trust to work in Old Manchester, a parking management district would need to be created. This would define the area from which fees would be collected. Working with community stakeholders, the city would then need to determine the price of the in-lieu fees. These fees would likely be based on the cost of providing parking the traditional way. The parking price for public users would also need to be determined. At this point, the city can begin collecting fees and using the money to construct parking structures in strategic locations throughout the area. These parking spaces would then be made available to the developments, possibly for a fee.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Local developers

Timeline— In the short term (0-2 years), the details of the parking trust would need to be worked out with area developers. Once that is done, locations for parking structures would need to be identified. In the mid term (3-5 years), once the density is high enough, parking structures would need to be constructed and operated.

1.3 PAY FOR PARKING

Description— A pay-for-parking scheme is recommended for Old Manchester because of the reality of increased future demand for commercial and residential parking. This recommendation has two facets: charging per-car rates for parking lots around the region and installing dynamic, demand-responsive meters along the commercial streets, as well as secondary streets. On-street metered parking is a crucial aspect to this strategy, as is the ability to create fluctuating, demand-responsive pricing for drivers. As demand rises throughout a given day, the pricing rises and falls to achieve an 80% on-street occupancy level for all spaces in the region.

Intent— This promotes alternative forms of transportation, such as bicycling and public buses. Pay-for-parking in Old Manchester can also benefit the city, as it will provide a small stream of income. An additional benefit is less congestion during peak traffic hours.

Steps— The first step in this initiative is to secure designated lots which will charge for parking. The city must then aggressively cut back on free, on-street parking so as to bring the true cost of parking to bear on those who use it. The city must also study other pay-for-parking schemes around the country to determine the best rates to charge.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partner— Venture Richmond is a potential partner, as the Special Assessment District might provide funding for parking meters or a parking-rate study to be used in Old Manchester.

Timeline— Within the first few weeks, the city might charge a standard (below market) rate for parking spaces, but after several months the rate would be raised. In this way, drivers will be “conditioned” to pay a small (but slowly increasing) fee for parking.

1.4 PERFORMANCE ZONING

Description— Performance zoning is another approach to alleviate off-street parking requirements. It would require developers to offer features which will benefit the area. Some examples of performance zoning incentives would be additional bike parking, pedestrian amenities, and interesting building design on the pedestrian level in exchange for relaxed parking requirements.

Intent— This would provide incentives for developers to positively contribute to the streetscape and design of Old Manchester.

Steps— The standards and guidelines that would warrant granting an off-street parking easement could be established first. The City of Richmond along with local partners could decide what amenities and design they would like to encourage in Old Manchester that would qualify for off-street parking. Once decided, the City of Richmond need to decide how to quantify and approve if these standards and guidelines have been met. A review board or government agency could then be elected to be the body that reviews if projects fulfill these guidelines and standards that warrant off-street parking space easements. The guidelines and standards, quantification, and proposal for reviewing body could all be brought to the Board of Zoning Appeals for approval. If passed, this in-

formation could then be distributed to developers in the area.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Manchester Alliance and local developers

Timeline— Short term (0-2 years).

2.1 PRIORITIZE BIKE & PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Description— Recommendations for improving bicycle and pedestrian circulation include eliminating curb cuts and missing sidewalks, installing protected and designated bike lanes, and creating a more interesting pedestrian experience through public art.

Intent— This would improve non-automotive circulation by creating safe routes tailored to cyclists and pedestrians.

Steps— The first step (and the lowest-hanging fruit) in this process is to repair the non-functioning pedestrian crosswalk signal at Hull and W 7th Street. The next step is to install bike racks periodically throughout Old Manchester, so that a cyclist does not have to wander far to find a suitable place to lock up his/her bicycle. Next, the city should implement a road diet along Hull Street, so as to carve out space for designated bicycle lanes (or at the very least, “sharrows”).

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Bike Walk RVA

Timeline— In the short term (0-2 years), the city can experiment by using tactical urbanism. This can provide easy, cost-effective ways of assessing strategies for enhancing cyclist and pedestrian safety. These strategies might include painted or taped-on temporary bike lanes and crosswalks, as well as planters containing street trees and greenery. Clearly-marked and functioning pedestrian crosswalks are essential, as they slow traffic and enhance real and perceived safety. Another immediate-term recommendation is installing a speeding detector along Hull, as many drivers ignore the speed limit and thus create hazardous conditions for both the cyclist and pedestrian.

2.2 STREET-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL FRONTAGE

Description— The current zoning code permits dwelling units on the ground floor of buildings on Hull Street and Commerce Road as long as a minimum of one-third of the ground floor area is devoted to other principal uses. Section 12 of the B-7 district does not have this requirement for W 7th street, another important corridor in the study

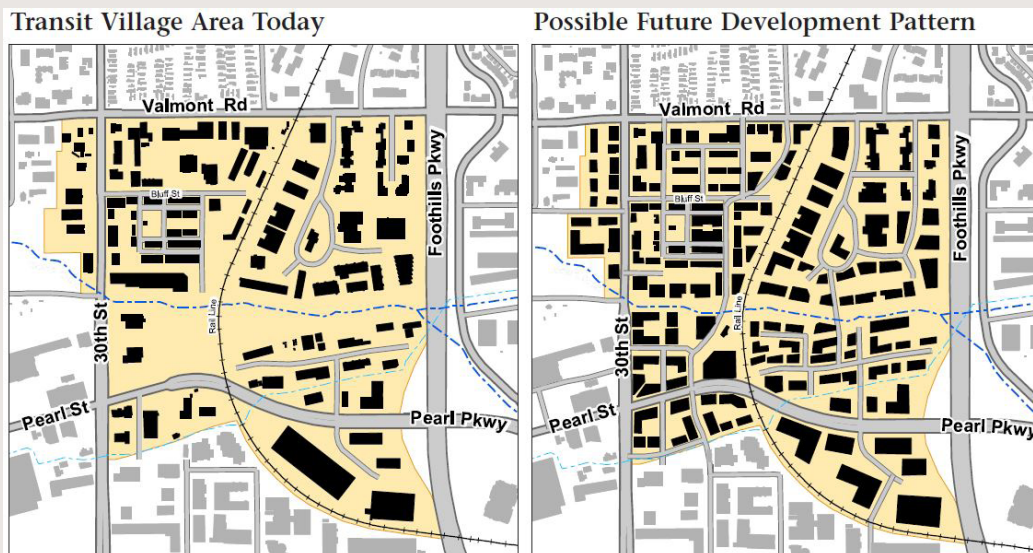
BOULDER JUNCTION CASE STUDY

Developed in 2007, the aim of the Boulder Junction project is to redevelop an area in a strategic center of the city. The focus of the one-hundred and sixty acre site is on multi-modal transportation connecting both the new site development and Boulder to areas in and around the city. The existing condition of the area was a low-density, automobile-oriented environment. Like Old Town Manchester, Boulder Junction plans seek to create a more compact and walkable grid that eliminates the existing gaps by adding additional buildings and extending the street network.

The plan proposes zoning changes the low density chiefly industrial zoning into a higher density with residential, retail, and mixed use areas. Retail zoning is to be neighborhood-serving with first floor establishments and larger “mid-box” stores in the southwest portion of the site to serve community-level needs. High density residential development is zoned near transportation stops so residents can easily get to work. In order to keep the existing service commercial and service industrial businesses when real estate prices rise, the plan preserves a large portion with the zoning areas Service Commercial and Mixed Use Industrial. The plan points out that this “provides flexibility for changes in market demand.”

BOULDER JUNCTION'S 30TH STREET CORRIDOR

The 30th Street Corridor Character District most closely aligns with the Old Manchester commercial corridor. The area plan changes the corridor zoning from commercial to mixed use. The vision for the corridor is to transform it into a commercial main street, with local serving retail, restaurants, and offices. The area guidelines include locating buildings along the street with parking behind, improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety on the main corridor by eliminating driveway curb cuts, providing pedestrian interest by selecting active ground-floor commercial uses, and providing street furnishings.



area.

Intent— By promoting more store frontage along Hull Street and W 7th Street, this amendment to the zoning ordinance for B-7 districts is an important step in developing a contiguous commercial corridor in Old Manchester.

Steps—Working with business owners and developers, support would be gained for amending the zoning

ordinance. Once the details of the amendment were determined, it would be proposed to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Lastly, the store frontage requirements for new developments would be implemented on W 7th Street.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Manchester Alliance

Timeline— Short term (0-2 years)

2.3 PLACEMAKING

Description— The focus on placemaking in Old Manchester could be through physical installations in the area which could add identity and character in the form of public art, signage, and defined gateways. Signage should be placed at major gateway points along the commercial corridor to welcome people to district. Public art can add points of visual interest, making buildings and pedestrian areas more attractive to people eating and shopping.

Intent— This could provide cohesion, interest, and a clear identity to designate Old Manchester as a destination. Public art and signage could reinforce Old Manchester’s identity and character.

Steps— The Public Art Commission could first reach out to the Manchester Alliance, Art Works, and Plant Zero Artists to provide ideas on the types of public art and signage to be installed in the area. Then the funding for the projects could be determined and developers could be asked to support projects financially. If funding is secured, the artists, graphic designers, and a branding agency could then be hired to produce signage and art. Manchester Alliance and other community members could be engaged in this process and give feedback and expertise of the area. Finally, once approved, art and signage could be installed throughout the area.

Lead Organization— Public Art Commission

Potential Partners — Plant Zero artists, ArtWorks, and the Manchester Alliance

Timeline— Short term (0-2 years).

2.4 GREENING

Description— Greening a street can have an immediate impact on its walkability. Street trees and other plants can help to reduce traffic speeds due to the sense of enclosure they create when properly spaced along a street. This enclosure is also more inviting for pedestrians as it creates a safe and secure environment for walking. Furthermore, greenery brings nature to the city by attracting birds and other wildlife. All of this benefits businesses located along these streets, as a more comfortable environment encourages pedestrians to stay out longer and spend more money.

Intent— Given the industrial history of Old Manchester, the importance of greenery resonates even louder. Historically, the streets in this area never had trees along them. From an industrial standpoint this makes sense, but now

that the area is becoming more mixed use it is problematic. In addition to not being safe, the lack of greenery contributes to an environment which is not attractive for walking.

Additionally, the planned construction of the Brown’s Island Damn Walk means the trailhead will start at the end of W 7th Street. This creates the potential for bicyclists and pedestrians to come south across the river and eat/shop/play in the businesses along W 7th Street. Overall, greenery improvements will help the walkability of the area and improve connections to the James River.



FIGURE 28 Public Art in Manchester, U.K. Which Reflects the Area’s Industrial History
Source: www.flickr.com

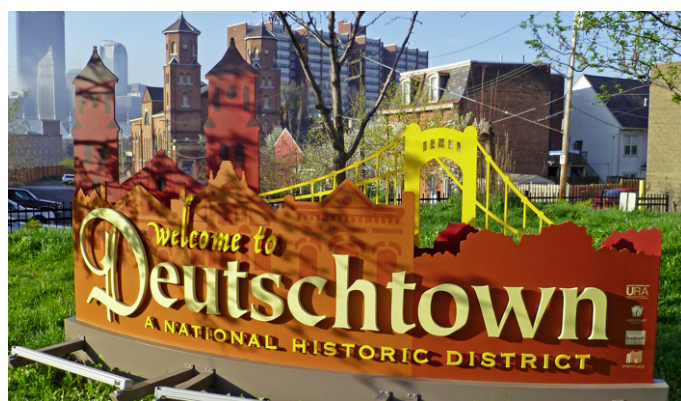


FIGURE 29 Community Branding Through Wayfinding Signage
Source: <http://strothmanassociates.com>

Steps

The first step of this process would be to prioritize the commercial corridors in Old Manchester (Hull and W 7th Streets). This will connect the two existing nodes within the study area (one around the Corrugated Box Building and one around Plant Zero). Because the sidewalks along W 7th Street are not as wide as those along Hull Street, it

needs to be determined if they can accommodate street trees. If they can, the next step would be to plant street trees at consistent intervals, but if they cannot, alternative methods of greening need to be determined. Once priority streets are planted with street trees, plant trees along all other streets.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— Beautiful RVA and Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

Timeline— In the short term (0-2 years), the high-priority streets should be planted with trees. In the mid term (3-5 years), all other streets should be planted with trees.

3.1 SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

Description— Special Assessment Districts function the same way as BIDs. They are run by private organizations who collect taxes within the district's boundaries, and use the tax to fund programs within the districts. Taxes are based on the property tax of parcels within the district's

boundaries.

Intent— Venture Richmond is a Special Assessment District within Richmond. Its boundaries encompass the central business district and extend to parts of Jackson Ward, Shockoe Bottom and Monroe Ward. Venture Richmond's interest is in enhancing downtown Richmond, and it does this by offering support and providing extended services, among other things. Since the 2009 Downtown Master Plan considers Old Manchester part of downtown, it makes sense to extend the boundaries of Venture Richmond to include it. This way Old Manchester can take advantage of initiatives such as the Clean & Safe Program, which helps improve the cleanliness and safety of the Special Assessment District. Venture Richmond's programs can be an effective way of dealing with existing problems in Old Manchester.

Steps— In order to do this, Manchester Alliance would likely need to reach out to Venture Richmond to inquire about the extension. If there is mutual interest, the exact boundary lines need to be determined. Once the new

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT CASE STUDIES

CRYSTAL CITY

Crystal City, VA, is an example of a BID, a region in which commercial property owners participate in a tax program which funds various marketing and branding strategies for that specific district. In 2006, a task force was organized to gauge public interest and elect a board of directors. The proximate need consistently identified by stakeholders was attracting and retaining businesses and young professionals. As a result of its implementation, the Crystal City BID now enjoys remarkable access to the rest of Arlington and the entire Washington, D.C. metro area via bike and pedestrian paths, as well a variety of light-rail options for residents.

CENTER CITY DISTRICT

The Center City District is a BID in Philadelphia, PA. Its mission is to keep Philadelphia's downtown clean, safe, beautiful and fun. The Center City District (CCD) achieves this by providing security, cleaning and maintenance services, capital improvements, and marketing and communication materials which supplement the services provided by the city. CCD independently collects a tax from the district's property owners, which is based on the property owners' tax assessment. Most of the money is budgeted for cleaning and maintenance.

Center City District's five initiatives (cleaning and maintenance; safety and crime prevention; streetscape maintenance, enhancement and capital improvements; park and plaza maintenance; and marketing and communications) were not instituted at its founding in 1990. Initially CCD set out to solve the major problems within the district which were shaping others' perceptions of it: crime and filth. It employed teams of sidewalk cleaners and community ambassadors to handle the tasks. To date, serious crimes have been cut in half and quality of life crimes reduced by 75%. Given the success of the two original initiatives, CCD added the other three.

Through the actions of CCD, the district has seen tremendous growth; the district has gone from zero outdoor cafes to 273 and one major residential condominium tower to 49. This success has come with little regret. CCD has advised other BIDs to start simple with programs which enjoy the widest support. Then, once that is taken care of, the BIDs can slowly grow in complexity and diversity of services. While there are major differences between the size of Old Manchester and CCD (77 acres to 585 acres respectively), this model is still relative. Old Manchester simply needs to make sure it can secure enough funds to support necessary programming.

boundary is set, the extension can be put to a vote to make it official.

Lead Organization— Venture Richmond

Potential Partners— Manchester Alliance

Timeline— Short term (0-2 years)

3.2 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Description— Several Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are in place around the commonwealth of Virginia, creating income streams for localities to improve the defined area. A BID is a geographic region, in which commercial property owners agree to pay into a shared fund that finances various public improvement projects, such as street cleaning, bike infrastructure, or marketing and branding. The BID collects an additional (albeit marginal) tax that is based on the assessed land value (usually 5-10 cents per \$100 of value).

Intent— Old Manchester can potentially partner with Venture Richmond, a quasi-BID operating across the James River, and use them as a model for what the BID could look like and accomplish. Manchester Alliance would play an important role in establishing this BID. Owners would be taxed on their assessed land value, and revenue gained from this could be used to help fund any or all of the above recommendations (street cleaning, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, or other marketing initiatives).

Steps— The first step would be to form a board of directors consisting of key stakeholders and business owners in and around Old Manchester. This board must strategically decide on a boundary, as too small a region will result in insignificant tax revenue, and too large a region will be cumbersome to govern and implement the purported benefits. The BID board must also think strategically about incorporating commercial property owners into its boundary, as those will be paying into the BID “trust.” The final step would require setting the tax rate, and once established, collecting the taxes to fund the BIDs operations.

Lead Organization— Manchester Alliance

Potential Partners— Venture Richmond

Timeline— In the short term (0-2 years), Manchester Alliance could study Venture Richmond to use them as a model for the BID. In the mid term (3-4 years), the details of the BID could be determined and it could begin operation.

3.3 TAX INCREMENT PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT FUND

Description— With the impending developments in the Old Manchester area, there are several opportunities available to implement a Tax Increment Public Improvement Fund (TIPIF) type policy. This type of fund would capture tax growth as the area develops and reinvest that growth into the area. Following the model of Columbia Pike would be the most effective way of implementing and operating this fund.

Intent— A TIPIF would not generate large sums of money, but city officials can use the small, dedicated stream of income to fund greening, crosswalks, sidewalk repair, and other small projects.

Steps— The primary barrier to this type of fund is that it would first have to pass through city council. The city must oversee any policy concerning taxation. After discussing the feasibility of TIPIF with City Council, the amount of tax increment which goes toward the fund would have to be determined. Then the types of improvements the fund will finance would need to be decided, as well as the criteria for choosing projects which will donate to the fund. Lastly a TIPIF account would need to be set up under the general fund.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Timeline— With many impending developments in the area, a TIPIF should be implemented in the short term (0-2 years).

3.4 TAX ABATEMENT REDUCTION

Description— Currently, Old Manchester is within Enterprise Zone I which qualifies for real estate tax abatement for seven full years with a three year reduced tax relief incentive.

Intent— A reduced tax abatement period could potentially raise additional funds for the area if paired with an area specific administrative organization such as a BID. Without an administrative organization, the money would go to the City of Richmond’s general fund.

Steps— For implementation, the reduced tax abatement area could be established within the Enterprise Zone 1 for Old Manchester. The City of Richmond’s Department of Housing and Community Development runs the tax abatement program, so they would have to approve the reduction for the Old Manchester district. Finally, the reduced tax abatement area would be implemented to raise funds.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond’s Department of

Economic and Community Development

Timeline— The tax abatement reduction should be implemented in the short term (0-2 years) because many developments in the area will begin construction soon.

3.5 CONSTRUCTION TAX

Description— A final recommendation for raising funds by the city of Richmond concerns a construction tax. The tax is levied on general construction contractors over the process of a new construction project. This immediately highlights a potential benefit for the Old Manchester area: there is a lot of new construction either in progress or in

COLUMBIA PIKE CASE STUDY

Columbia Pike is a 3 ½ mile long transportation corridor in Arlington, VA that is currently undergoing a revitalization effort to create a more pedestrian-oriented commercial area. In 2002 the county adopted a Tax Increment Public Infrastructure Fund (TIPIF) policy to generate revenue from significant development projects that can anchor revitalization efforts along the Pike. This tool differs from standard tax increment financing (TIF) in that it is project specific. The policy dedicates tax revenue growth from a specific development project towards financing public infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, parking, and landscaping. Public officials chose projects on a case by case basis, with up to 85% of the tax increment going towards the TIPIF for a period of up to 15 years. This results in the accumulation of a small amount of revenue over time.

the planning stages. The tax can either be paid by the general contractors of the project or passed along to the smaller, specified contractor such as the electricians, carpenters, or plumbers.

Intent— Our research has not found any examples of construction taxes being implemented and levied in the Commonwealth of Virginia, only in states such as Colorado and Washington. However, this should not preclude the construction tax from being recommended for Old Manchester.

Steps— This recommendation may need more rigorous implementation steps than those listed previously, such as safe passage through the Virginia General Assembly. This is the first and most obvious step in the process, and may be the only step necessary to see this tax come to fruition.

Lead Organization— City of Richmond

Potential Partners— General Assembly

Timeline— Mid term (3-5 years)

CONCLUSION

Implementation of these recommendations will require coordinated efforts from many parties, especially the City of Richmond. With the rapid development of commercial businesses and residential dwellings, several opportunities exist to implement policies which can improve economic growth. Priority recommendations include conducting a parking study to assess the need of a parking overlay, improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and extending the boundaries of the Venture Richmond Special Assessment District.

