

**REVITALIZATION
CONCEPT PLAN
FOR THE
WOODLAWN CBC
AND ACCOTINK
VILLAGE**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University | Urban Affairs and Planning
SOUTHEAST FAIRFAX COUNTY STUDIO JULY 2010

INSTRUCTOR

Shelley S. Mastran, Ph.D

STUDIO MEMBERS

Bill Cook

Christina Gaymon

Matthew Hall

Gareth James

Sergio Ritacco

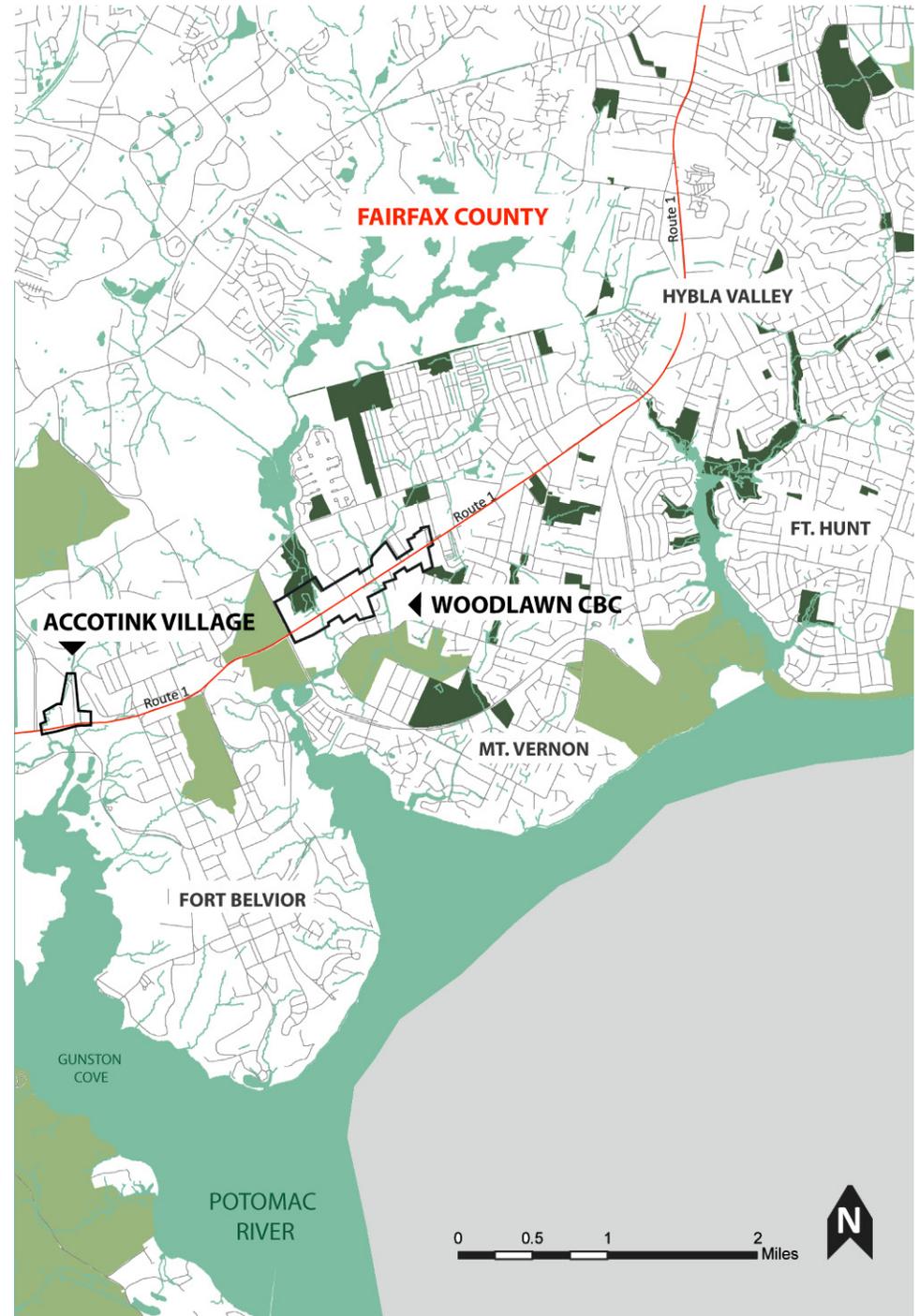
Andrew Shapiro

Daniel Sonenklar

Caitlin Sugrue

Raksha Vasudevan

Jeremy Watson



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Executive Summary

This report on the Woodlawn Community Business Center (CBC) and Accotink Village areas of the Richmond Highway corridor in Fairfax County is the result of a Virginia Tech graduate studio in Urban Affairs & Planning, conducted at the request of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation. The purpose of the report is to present a conceptual land use plan for the area to 2040, in phases, based on students' assessment of existing conditions and redevelopment opportunities, stakeholder forums, and targeted interviews.

The study area that includes the Woodlawn CBC and Accotink Village is a low-density, automobile-oriented series of suburban strip malls, apartments, single-family houses, hotels, and assorted commercial uses, some in blighted condition. It is a narrow corridor with limited east-west road access and includes a substantial portion of the Dogue Creek floodplain. Yet the area is adjacent to Fort Belvoir, which, as a result of Base Realignment and Closure, will receive thousands of additional employees and hospital visitors in the coming years. It is also close to Woodlawn Plantation, George Washington's Grist Mill, and Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens – all important tourist attractions. The neighborhoods surrounding the study area are mostly stable and long-standing, in need of retail support services. These characteristics make the corridor opportune for redevelopment over the coming decades.

The Virginia Tech concept plan proposes focusing redevelopment in three nodes: (from northeast to southwest) a Neighborhood-serving Node with residential and mixed uses; a Main Node with the highest density of largely mixed use development; and a Tourism Node near the intersection of Richmond Highway and Mount Vernon Highway with a focus on visitor services. Accotink Village to the southwest is a node unto itself, which is planned in two scenarios – one retaining the existing residential development; the other redeveloping the residential area into mixed use. The concept plan includes a new grid of streets in the Main Node to facilitate access to the new development and take traffic off Richmond Highway. The total area of proposed development in the study area to 2040 is more than 6,200,000 square feet, more than twice the floor area ratio of current land use. The concept plan also recommends transit improvement, including Bus Rapid Transit, and the creation of a bicycle and pedestrian network. Substantial emphasis is placed on the potential for environmental enhancement through stream clean-

up, trail building, expanded parkland, and stormwater best management practices. Urban design elements are considered integral to the corridor's revitalization. This proposed development will come in phases, but some initial steps can be taken in the next 10 years to start the transformation of the study area. These include: cleaning up Dogue Creek and beginning a trail network; developing the Tourism Node; redeveloping the portion of Accotink Village that fronts on Richmond Highway; installing streetscape improvements throughout the corridor; and improving bus shelters and other transit infrastructure. Although revitalization of the study area faces numerous challenges – financial, political, and organizational – strategic outreach to the wider Richmond Highway community should lead to increased stakeholder commitment.

The Main Study Area Overview

The Study Area Overview

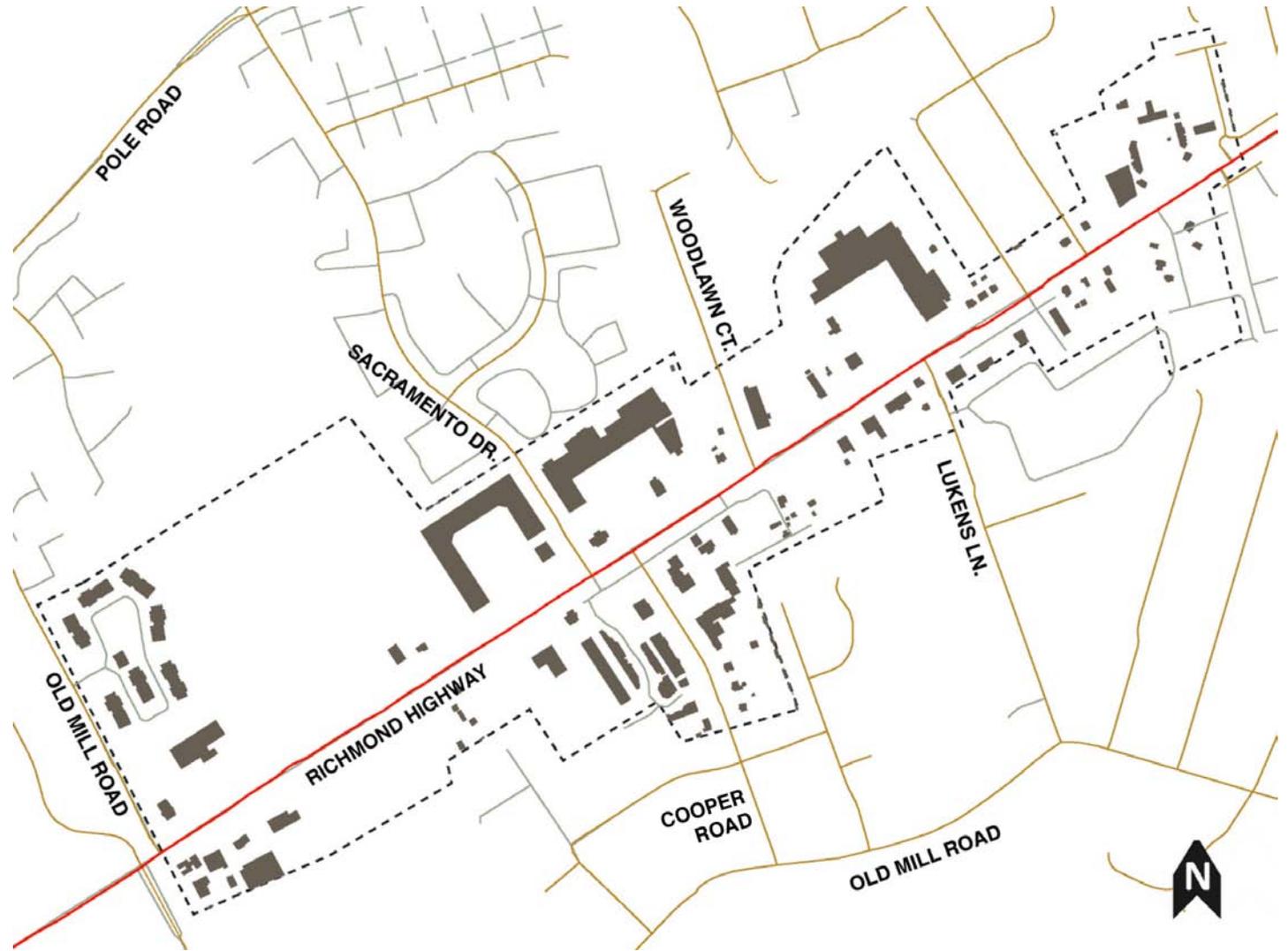
Image 1



Woodlawn CBC Existing Street Network

Richmond Highway and Secondary Roads

Image 2



Woodlawn CBC Study Area Overview

Roads, Sidewalks , Parkspace, Waterways

Image 3



I. INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction

This study of the Woodlawn CBC and Accotink Village areas of the Richmond Highway (US Route 1) corridor in Fairfax County came about at the request of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation (SFDC). The SFDC approached Virginia Tech's Urban Affairs & Planning program for planning and design assistance in this area. The request was prompted by the recent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) changes announced for Fort Belvoir and related transportation improvements proposed for the corridor. Fairfax County Planning & Zoning had not specifically reviewed this portion of the Richmond Highway corridor in several years and our task was to provide a fresh perspective. Accordingly, in spring 2010, a Virginia Tech graduate studio in Urban Planning focused on developing a vision for the area. The general scope of the inquiry is as follows:

- Review previous studies, existing land uses, demographics, transportation, and environmental conditions of the area.
- Conduct a stakeholder forum and interview stakeholders about their concerns and perspectives on the site area.
- Develop a long-range vision and conceptual land use plan for the area.

**Appendix A contains the project Scope of Work.*

The Study Area

The study area includes the Woodlawn Community Business Center (CBC) and Accotink Village, located in southeastern Fairfax County adjacent to Fort Belvoir along Richmond Highway. The Woodlawn CBC extends approximately one mile north of Woodlawn Plantation on both sides of Richmond Highway; it includes properties on both sides of the highway, most of which are commercial. Accotink Village is located on the west side of Richmond Highway just south of Fort Belvoir. The majority of Accotink Village is residential, with commercial properties along Richmond Highway.

The study area is the southern end of Fairfax County's Richmond Highway corridor. It is relatively inaccessible from the east and west. Mount Vernon Memorial Highway connects the Woodlawn Plantation area to Mount Vernon to the east, and the Fairfax County Parkway connects the Accotink Village area to Interstate 95, but for most of the study area Richmond Highway is not directly connected to key points to the west.

Engleside Plaza

Image 4



Woodlawn Center

Image 5



Sacramento Center

Image 6



Assorted Retail

Image 7



Strip Centers

Image 8



Northwest of Woodlawn CBC

Image 9



Northeast of Woodlawn CBC

Image 10



Southwest of the Woodlawn CBC

Image 11



Southwest of Woodlawn CBC

Image 12



Southwest of Woodlawn CBC

Image 13



Accotink Village Study Area

Image 14



BRAC

The acronym “BRAC” stands for Base Realignment and Closure, which is an operation overseen by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) in conjunction with all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces to maximize the efficiency of American domestic military installations, including closures, consolidations, and expansions. The latest BRAC process was approved by Congress in 2005, initiating several projects that will conclude in a span of several years ranging from 2010 to 2014, and beyond.

The BRAC movements affecting Fort Belvoir and the surrounding Richmond Highway corridor study area has led and will lead to changes in the economic dynamics in the area and provided much of the impetus for the studio. These BRAC-related changes that will affect the study area include the following¹:

- A net gain of about 3,400 civilian and military personnel on the main post (this gain excludes a figure of almost 16,000 additional employees that will be situated at other sites in northern Virginia away from the immediate study area)
- A 1.275 million square foot hospital complex that will hold 120 patient beds and 3,500 parking spaces
 - This facility alone is expected to employ a little over 2,000 more personnel than the current DeWitt Community Hospital
 - The facility is projected to draw about 500,000 out-patient visits per year²
- A wounded soldier transition complex that will be able to support 412 troops

The expansion of Fort Belvoir offers the potential for economic stimulus along the Richmond Highway corridor, particularly in the study area. This stimulus will come from the new employees to the base who may look for restaurant and retail opportunities nearby; the families visiting soldiers at the hospital and wounded warriors’ facility, who may need extended housing as well as retail and restaurant

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the following figures have been obtained from the *Fort Belvoir Development Briefing* compiled by Colonel Mark Moffat.

² Schumitz, Kali. Officials pressured to widen, upgrade Richmond Highway. *FairfaxTimes.com*. January 10, 2010

opportunities; and defense contractors who want to locate their offices near the base.

Fairfax County Transportation Plan

Image 15



A rendering of the new medical facility being constructed on the main post at Fort Belvoir (source: *Fort Belvoir Development Briefing*)

Previous Studies of the Area

The Richmond Highway corridor has been the subject of several studies since 1997. While these studies had different focuses, they all share common concerns and visions that are still relevant today.

In 1997, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) commissioned a study of the entire Richmond Highway Corridor located in Fairfax and Prince William County. The purpose of the study was to fulfill a Virginia General Assembly requirement to examine existing conditions along the highway, and to identify problems with revitalization in the area. While transportation was the main focus of the study, existing conditions in terms of residential uses and economic conditions were also presented.

Robert Charles Lesser & Co. (RCLCO) also completed a study in 1998 about the Richmond Highway Corridor. The purpose of this study was to provide a commercial revitalization analysis for the Richmond Highway commercial Revitalization District. The process included an extensive “community visioning process” which centered on the Commercial Revitalization Action Group (CRAG), interviews, meetings with other members of the community, and organizations outside of the community.

Finally, a study was prepared in 2005 by the Urban Land Institute (ULI). This study assessed the Richmond Highway corridor in terms of its marketability for office development, and subsequently provided specific design and planning recommendations for the area.

Some of the relevant strategies mentioned in one or more of the studies are identified below:

- **Transportation.** The studies by RCLCO and the ULI emphasized transportation improvements as a primary means to encourage accessibility to the area. They stressed the lack of east-west thoroughfares connecting to major north-south highways, making it difficult to stimulate economic development. In addition, both studies highlight need for a safe and continuous pedestrian environment.
- **Development.** The VDOT study's analysis of economic conditions identified the potential difficulty in consolidating small parcels for redevelopment. The study also identified suggestions to encourage redevelopment, such as the implementation of a tax abatement district and business relocation services for businesses that are impacted by any redevelopment efforts.

The RCLCO and ULI studies both recommended mixed-use development and higher densities as a strategy to attract more office and retail. These mixed-use developments would also foster a live/work/play environment that would build a sense of community for the businesses, residents, and visitors to the areas.

- **Design.** To ensure that the new development fosters an environment that is welcoming to residents, businesses, and visitors, the ULI reports recommended creating Urban Villages³, Urban wraps⁴, streetscaping, cultural spaces, and mixed-use developments with higher densities.

³ A place-making prototype for communities that encourages ample landscaping

⁴ Urban Wraps are mixed-use configurations that wrap retail and residences around structured parking.

Increasing Floor Area Ratios (FAR) was also recommended to increase economic viability.

Study Methodology

As guided by the scope of work defined by the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, the Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment, and the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, the studio class proceeded through a series of steps. (The scope of work is attached as Appendix A.)

First the students assessed existing conditions in the study area there through a review of documents and a two-hour field trip to the corridor. Students became familiar with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan for the study area as well as recent rezoning applications and applications for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan as part of Fairfax County's Area Plan Review (APR) process. They also reviewed previous studies of the Richmond Highway corridor, including a *Commercial Revitalization Analysis* conducted by Robert Charles Lesser & Co. for Fairfax County in 1997 and ULI's 2005 study, *Revitalizing the Richmond Highway Corridor to Attract Office Development*. Finally, they conducted research on the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) activities at Fort Belvoir, current VDOT projects and plans for Richmond Highway, and corridor demographics.

On March 3, 2010, the students conducted an outreach forum to engage key corridor stakeholders in the planning process. In addition to the students and client staff, six stakeholders participated in the forum. Earlier in the day several students conducted a separate forum with 15 students at West Potomac High School to discuss the study area. A summary of the conversations generated at the forums is presented in Section II part E of the report. Detailed notes from the forum are found in Appendix B.

In March 2010, the students invited Stewart Schwartz, executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, and James Snyder, a land use planning consultant, to talk with the class about their work in the Richmond Highway corridor. Students shared their preliminary ideas for the Woodlawn CBC and Accotink Village and received positive feedback.

In April 2010, the students conducted interviews with individual stakeholders who had not been able to attend the forum. A summary of these interviews is also

presented Section II part E of the report. A list of the stakeholders interviewed is found in Appendix C.

Based on all the information gathered through research, field trips, the forums, and the interviews, the students formed a conceptual plan for the study area, including land uses, a road network, floor area ratios (FARs), environmental amenities, and general design guidance. Throughout the studio process, students had been identifying key issues, opportunities, and constraints to take into consideration in re-planning the study area. From their conceptual plan, they prepared a set of recommendations.

Purpose of this Report

The report summarizes the studio process, presents a conceptual land use plan for the Woodlawn CBC and Accotink Village study area, presents ideas for phased development, identifies key issues involved in the future revitalization and enhancement of the area, offers preliminary comprehensive planning language, and proposes recommendations and next steps.

|| EXISTING CONDITIONS

II. Existing Conditions

A. Land Use, Comprehensive Plan, and Zoning

Development in the study area along the Richmond Highway corridor is scattered. There is currently no established land use pattern, largely due to the lack of established commercial nodes. The land use description is separated into two sections: (A) the portion of the study area located north of Fort Belvoir, and (B) the section of the study area located south of the base, known as Accotink Village. Interspersed with the land use description is a discussion of current Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan recommendations, rezoning applications, and any area plan reviews (APRs) that have been suggested or implemented.

The Northeastern Portion of the Study Area

Shopping Centers: Most of the retail offering in the study area could be characterized as a somewhat outdated version of the kind of retail development that is typical of suburban America. Most of the retail centers are not geared towards high-end consumers. A series of horseshoe-shaped commercial centers and smaller strip developments separated from Richmond Highway by plentiful parking provision (as well as parallel-running access roads, which are common in northern Virginia). The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan calls for a continuation of community-serving retail in the shopping centers, with an option for mixed-use office, retail, and hotel uses. An APR was recently amended to increase the density in the two shopping centers at the southwestern end of the study area, the Sacramento Center and Woodlawn Center. Tenants are mostly independent proprietors or local chains, with the commercial centers also featuring anchor tenants such as Safeway and CVS. The retail mix is diverse, though not sufficiently so to encourage 'one-stop shopping' habits. While the vacancy rate is low, especially in consideration of the challenging economic climate, there is a run-down look to many of the facades that suggests there has been underinvestment in recent years.

Fast Food Restaurants: The study area has a number of fast-food restaurants, with a mix of chain restaurants such as McDonald's and independent enterprises that reflect the diversity of the local population scattered along the highway. As with

the retail offering, these outlets are mostly positioned at the lower end of the market.

Office: While there are scattered neighborhood-serving offices such as doctors' offices, there is very little office space located in the study area. While the IMP building located near Fort Belvoir serves as the only office building in the study area, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the addition of more office space, retail, and a conference center.

Hotels: There are several hotels located in the southwestern part of this area. They are in varying condition, but two are of recent construction or renovation. There are also two hotels proposed in front of the existing IMP building. A change to a rezoning application was recently approved to build two hotels on this site. The hotels are all located in proximity to one another, near the Fort Belvoir main gates and the historic Woodlawn Plantation, and are recommended to serve as the base of a tourist-oriented area in the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. The hotels are generally four to five stories tall, set back from Richmond Highway.

Residential: There are multiple residential product types located in the study area. A significant amount of residential development has occurred within the past few years, adding a large number of high-end homes to the study area. Product types present in this area include apartment complexes, townhouses, and single-family detached homes. Most single-family detached homes are generally located on extremely small lots, and are made of brick. Townhouses are the most popular residential single-family product in the study area. As with the single-family detached homes in this portion of the study area, the townhouses are of recent construction. They are typically three floors made of brick. The aged residential portion in this portion of the study area consists of garden-style apartments, constructed at least 20 years ago.

Civic/Institutional: There are two civic / institutional buildings located adjacent to one another in the northeasternmost section of the study area. The first is a recently opened U.S. Post Office. Next to the post office lies a building that currently serves as a meeting hall for the local Knights of Columbus council. Both the post office and the meeting hall are one-story buildings with a large amount of green space located on the property. The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan recommends for a combination of community-serving retail, office, or residential uses and neighborhood-serving retail or office.

Miscellaneous Development: Throughout the study area, a significant amount of scattered development exists. An existing trailer sales office is located in a floodplain, and is recommended for protected open space by the Comprehensive Plan.

Accotink Village

Retail: The retail offering in Accotink Village is not dissimilar to that of the smaller strip developments in the northeastern portion of the study area. However, it features the addition of the kind of tenants that may be designed to attract the military personnel stationed nearby, such as barber shops, convenience stores and nightclubs. The Comprehensive Plan currently calls for neighborhood-serving retail in Accotink Village, to be located directly alongside Richmond Highway. An APR was submitted to amend the Comprehensive Plan for a restaurant use of up to 2,000 square feet with 50 parking spaces, but Fairfax County Planning staff did not accept the APR and recommended continuing with the current plan for that location.

Residential: A dated apartment complex is located in Accotink Village. It provides affordable housing for many residents in the area, and was recently auctioned after the property went into foreclosure. The Comprehensive Plan recommends higher density affordable apartments to replace this complex. Behind the apartment complex is a neighborhood of single-family detached homes. The houses appear to be at least 50 years old, and are in varying states of disrepair. This portion of Accotink Village is recommended to remain low to moderate residential.

B. Demographics

Understanding the current demographics for the Richmond Highway study area is an essential part of the information gathering process. It provides quantitative, unbiased, and accurate information on population, employment, household, and transportation factors. Demographic information helps establish the foundation upon which our recommendations will be made. This section will recap major findings from the community demographics analysis. Data was collected for the entire Richmond Highway Corridor (instead of study area) from Claritas, Inc. reports (<http://www.sfdc.org/demographics.html>). We felt this level of analysis was adequate because of the homogeneity of the Richmond Highway corridor and the general objective to establish a high-level understanding of the area. All figures are 2009 estimates unless otherwise noted.

The area saw large population growth between the 1990 and 2000 decennial Census (12.3 percent, from 4,341 to 4,875) but growth lessened between 2000 Census and 2009 estimate (2.1 percent, from 4,875 to 4,975). Projected growth is estimated to continue decreasing to 1.7 percent between 2009 and 2014 (4,975, to 5,057).

Population and Growth Statistics

Table 1

Year	1990	2000	2009	2014
Population	4,341	4,875	4,975	5,057
Growth		(12.3%)	(2.1%)	(1.7%)

Educational attainment is equally distributed between “Less than 9th grade” through “Bachelor’s Degree”. Less than 9th grade represents 13 percent, 16 percent have some high school, 24 percent have a high school degree (or GED equivalent), 19 percent some college, 4 percent associates, 15 percent bachelors, 6 percent masters, 3 percent professional or doctorate degree. In comparison to Fairfax County as a whole, the education levels are not as high, 58.6 percent of Fairfax County residents have a bachelor’s degree or more education versus 24 percent for the Richmond Highway corridor.

Study Area Education Statistics

Table 2

Educational Attainment	Richmond Highway	Fairfax (2000)	County
Less than 9 th Grade	13%	4%	
Some High School	16%	5%	
High School Degree or GED Equivalent	24%	14%	
Some College	19%	17%	
Associates Degree	4%	5%	

The Richmond Highway corridor can be defined as a minority-majority population; all minority populations (all populations except White alone) constitute 64 percent

of the population. The Hispanic or Latino population (36 percent total population, 67 percent Other Hispanic or Latino, 28 percent Mexican) represents the largest minority group but followed closely by African American (34 percent). Defined as “Some Other Race Alone,” additional research needs to be conducted on the third largest minority category, which constitutes 16 percent of the total population. The Asian population (8 percent total population) is largely “Other Asian” (29 percent), followed by Asian Indian (17 percent), Filipino (13 percent), and Korean (11 percent).

Study Area Population Statistics

Table 3

Population	Percent Total
African American	34%
Asian	8%
Hispanic or Latino	36%
Other Race Alone	16%

Household demographics factors for the study area are similar to Fairfax County but experience significantly lower income level. Median household income is \$53,553 for Richmond Highway versus \$107,448 for Fairfax County. While household size is similar to Fairfax County (2.76 versus 2.70) the study area is younger, median ages is 34.34 for the Richmond Highway area compared to 39.7 for Fairfax County.

Household Demographic Comparison

Table 4

Household Demographics	Richmond Highway	Fairfax County
Median Income	\$53,553	\$107,448
Household Size	2.76	2.70
Median Age	34.34	39.7

Commuting in the Richmond Highway area is more dependent on public transportation and takes longer than the rest of Fairfax County. Sixty-five percent of the population in the Richmond Highway area drives alone to work versus 73.4 percent for the Fairfax County, 16 percent uses public transportation versus 7.3 percent for Fairfax County, and 13 percent car pool versus 13.1 percent for Fairfax County. Travel time to work is greater in the Richmond Highway corridor than for

Fairfax County as a whole; the average estimated travel time to work is 37 minutes for Richmond Highway compared to 30.7 for Fairfax County.

The Richmond Highway corridor is a dynamic location with a diverse and active population. The above figures illustrate a place with a strong community and unique needs. Major points include a diverse population with a slowly growing population base. The population has varying education levels and income levels and is generally more dependent on public transportation than the rest of Fairfax County. This information is critical to understanding the needs of the community and as a foundation for recommendations.

Commuting Statistics

Table 5

Work Commuting	Richmond Highway	Fairfax County
Drive Alone	65%	73.4%
Public Transportation	16%	7.3%
Carpool	13%	13.1%
Average Travel Time	37 minutes	30.7 minutes

C. Transportation

Major roadways in the Mount Vernon Planning District include the Capital Beltway/Interstate 95, Richmond Highway, Fort Hunt Road, The George Washington Memorial Parkway, and Kings Highway. Richmond Highway and Fort Hunt Road provide access to the Capital Beltway and Interstate 95. The George Washington Parkway is a limited access, scenic highway. Huntington Metro station, located between Huntington Avenue and North Kings Highway, provides access to the regional mass transit system⁵.

Richmond Highway serves dual purposes in the region. It provides access to residents, businesses, and development within the corridor and at the same time it is also a major travel route to and from destinations outside the corridor. These two functions contribute heavy vehicle traffic along the highway.

⁵ Mount Vernon Planning District. Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition

Along the stretch of highway within the Woodlawn Community Business Center, the road is two lanes in each direction, with a center turn lane intermittently spaced throughout. There are approximately eight intersections (four signalized and four un-signalized). Several intersections are offset or closely spaced which creates additional points of

conflict along the corridor. There are approximately 30 driveways within the CBC, and many of these entrances are substandard. Also, the frequency of access points creates potential safety problems due to left turning vehicles crossing Richmond Highway and also there frequency increases the number of conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians. Sidewalks are inconsistent and discontinuous. Roadside footpaths are evidence of the need for additional sidewalks or trails. Currently there are no bike facilities along Richmond Highway.⁶ Currently two agencies provide bus service in the study area corridor: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Fairfax Connector and REX buses operated by Fairfax County.

A contributing factor to traffic along Richmond Highway is the lack of east-west access to and from the corridor; the study area lies between the Fairfax County Parkway and Interstate 95, beyond those options there are no major roads to connect travel in an east or west direction. Once travelers enter this particular part of the corridor, they are essentially trapped until reaching either of the aforementioned roadways. Also, a lack of connectivity between spaces along the corridor requires auto trips to travel within the corridor and adds vehicles to an already crowded roadway.

In an effort to alleviate some traffic and also provide an east-west route between Richmond Highway and Telegraph Road, the Mulligan Connector was proposed and approved. A transportation study was conducted in which several intersections were evaluated to determine current Levels of Service. Taking a look at the intersections closest to the study area presents a picture the traffic conditions in this area of the corridor. Traffic conditions at intersections are indicated by Levels of Service which range from A to E; A being the best and E being the worst. The amount time taken to traverse an intersection, or the delay, is measured in seconds and corresponds to a Level of Service indicator. Most intersections along Richmond Highway have a Level of Service of C or worse.⁷

⁶ Richmond Highway Corridor Study, retrieved from <http://leg2.state.va.us>, 1998

⁷ Richmond Highway/Telegraph Road Connector, Environmental Assessment. Federal Highway Administration EFLHD, July 2006

Levels of Service at Intersections

Table 6

Signalized Intersection	AM Delay	AM LOS	PM Delay	PM LOS
Rt. 1 at Telegraph Rd	35.0	D	78.7	E
Rt. 1 at Fairfax County Pkwy	27.0	C	32.2	C
Rt. 1 Hwy at Backlick Rd	23.7	C	91.2	C
Rt. 1 at Woodlawn Rd	7.6	A	11.7	B
Rt. 1 at Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy	69.4	E	70.6	E

Source: Richmond Highway/Telegraph Road Connector Environmental Assessment. Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, July 2006.

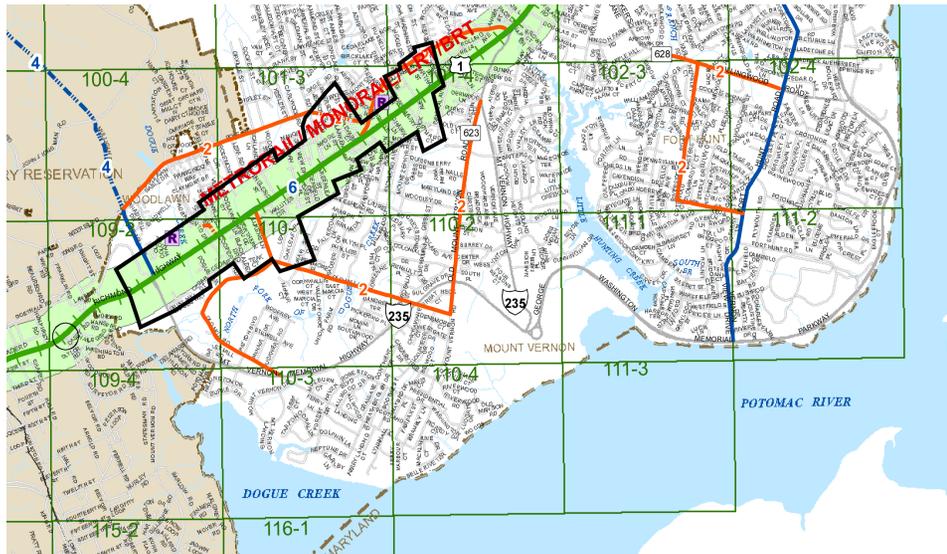
2008 Average Annual Daily Traffic

Table 7

Route Label	Link Length	Start Label	End Label	AADT
US 1	0.81	Prince William County Line	I-95 North of Woodbridge	34000
US 1	1.44	I-95 North of Woodbridge	SR 242 Gunston Rd	40000
US 1	1.14	SR 242 Gunston Rd	29-642 Lorton Rd	42000
US 1	0.77	29-642 Lorton Rd	29-611 Telegraph Rd	45000
US 1	1.61	29-611 Telegraph Rd	29-7100 Fairfax County Pkwy	36000
US 1	1.36	29-7100 Fairfax County Pkwy	29-618 Woodlawn Rd	42000
US 1	0.49	29-618 Woodlawn Rd	SR 235 S, Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy	39000
US 1	2.84	SR 235 S, Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy	SR 235 N, Mount Vernon Hwy	35000
US 1	3.19	SR 235 N, Mount Vernon Hwy	SR 241 Kings Hwy North	60000
US 1	1.31	SR 241 Kings Hwy North	SCL Alexandria, I-95, I-495	45000

Source: Virginia Department of Transportation, 2008

To accommodate this new traffic, Richmond Highway will be widened to six lanes from the Fairfax County Parkway to Woodlawn Road. The Fairfax County Transportation Plan shows plans for also widening Richmond Highway to six lanes through the Woodlawn Business Center, continuing to Huntington Metro station and proposed locations for Metro or light rail. Bus Rapid Transit is proposed as a more feasible alternative. Our transportation plan incorporates these planned improvements and though improving traffic in the corridor is beyond the scope of this project, a goal of the transportation plan is at the very least to not make it worse.



Source: Fairfax County Government, 2007

Proposed Improvements from Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan

Goals to guide transportation decisions in the Richmond Highway Corridor:

1. Provide improved traffic circulation and increased traffic safety during peak and non-peak hours.
2. Maximize the use of existing facilities to move people and goods more efficiently
3. Implement a firm policy concerning service roads, with clear design standards for their development.
4. Promote the increased usage of ridesharing and public transportation to reduce reliance on automobiles.

5. Minimize the impact of highway widening, new roadway alignments, and new development projects on adjacent residential communities.

In order to accomplish these goals it has been recommended that Richmond Highway be widened to six lanes from south of Mount Vernon Highway to the Prince William County line. Signalization should also be coordinated and improved along the highway. A service drive policy should be implemented and new development should be encouraged to provide inter parcel access instead of service roads. Consolidating or eliminating some of driveways onto Richmond Highway should also be considered. A system of transit centers providing timed transfer bus services and a complete system of pedestrian facilities would also improve the corridor.

Current Bus Mass Transit Conditions along the Study Area

The Richmond Highway corridor is served by two primary bus mass transit systems:

- 1) The Fairfax County Connector is a function of Fairfax County and runs five routes along the Richmond Highway.
- 2) The Richmond Highway Express (REX) operates through a joint venture of Fairfax County, the state of Virginia, the city of Alexandria, and WMATA. REX serves transit riders along Richmond Highway by running express bus service from Fort Belvoir to the Huntington and King Street Metro stations, and back.⁸

We note the following in regard to the five Richmond Highway oriented Fairfax County Connector routes⁹:

- combined average ridership of these lines is 1,572 people per weekday
- ridership is slightly higher on the weekend, averaging 1,593 people

⁸ Richmond Highway Express. Fairfax County.
http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/pdf/REX_brochure0804.pdf

⁹ Part 2: Route Level Operating Characteristics and Demographics. 2009. Transit Development Plan Fairfax County.
http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/pdf/tdp/appendix_a.pdf

- most riders are minorities – no route has less than 67 percent of riders identified as a minority
- many riders – approximately 49 percent – belong to a household making less than \$30,000 per year
- the vast majority of riders – approximately 83 percent – belong to a household making less than \$70,000 per year
- over half of riders utilize the Fairfax County Connector to get to and from work
- a substantial amount of riders – approximately 47 percent – do not belong to a household that owns an automobile

The above observations have also been made in regard to the REX ridership²:

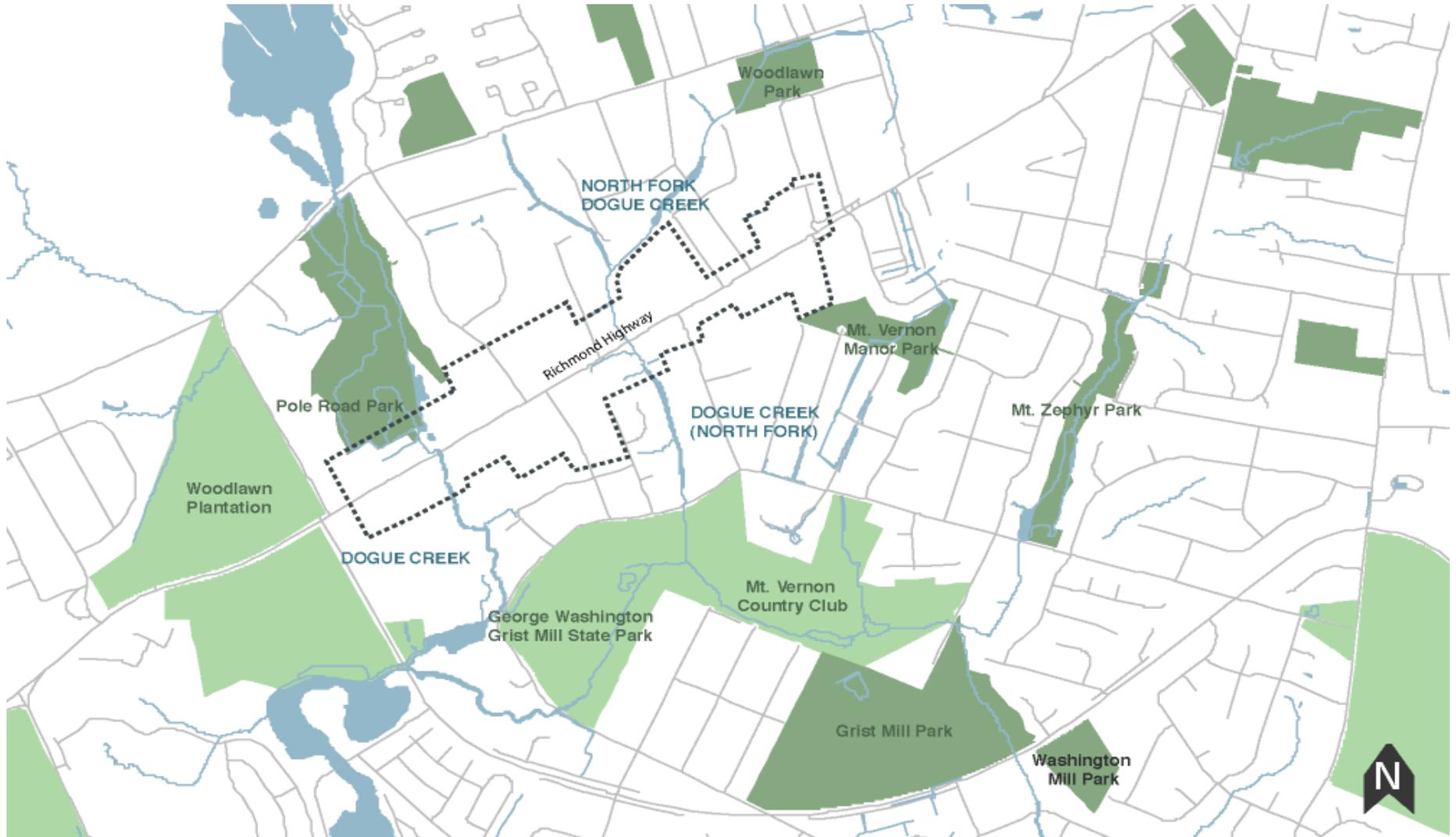
- REX averages about 4,741 riders per weekday and 4,847 per Saturday/Sunday
- 79 percent of REX's riders are of minority status and most riders – 60 percent - belong to a household making less than \$30,000 per year
- 68 percent of riders use REX for commuting to and from work, and about half of all riders do not belong to a household that owns an automobile

A general observation about all the routes served by the Fairfax County Connector and REX is that population density tends to be very high along the northern end of the routes that are close to the Huntington Metro Station, medium density along the mid sections, and of a lower population density in the southern tier closer to Fort Belvoir.

D. Environmental Assets

Study Area Context Map

Image 17



Dogue Creek

The study area is part of the Dogue Creek watershed, which drains into the Potomac River. Dogue Creek is a medium sized watershed, with approximately 17 miles of assessed streams. The study area is bisected by Dogue Creek and the North Fork of Dogue Creek.

The Dogue Creek watershed is assessed at a lower range of quality compared with the rest of the county in a stream assessment study for Fairfax County prepared by CH2MHILL. Their findings are summarized below.

Condition of Dogue Creek (in miles)

5 miles: poor condition
9 miles: fair condition
3 miles: good condition

Habitat Assessment Summary for Dogue Creek Watershed

Table 8

Stream (in feet)	V. Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
Dogue Creek	304	5,078	5,636	11,586	0	22,603
North Fork	0	12,430	17,866	0	0	30,295

The portions of Dogue Creek running through the study area are rated as Poor-Fair. Deficient buffers are recognized as a key point along Dogue Creek. This is particularly true of the study area and echoes the concerns of community groups and residents.

Dogue Creek originates approximately five miles north of the Woodlawn CBC in the Huntley Meadows Park area and flows through the western portion of the study area. The creek is surrounded by a significant amount of green space on both sides that falls within the flood plain and currently has a sight condition rating of 'Good' according Fairfax County. As it approaches Richmond Highway from the north, the creek passes through Pole Road Park, a Fairfax County owned un-utilized park that encompasses much of the floodplain land in this area. The floodplain designation has, thus far, kept any development from coming too close to the creek, and presents a great opportunity for enhancements that would improve the quality of

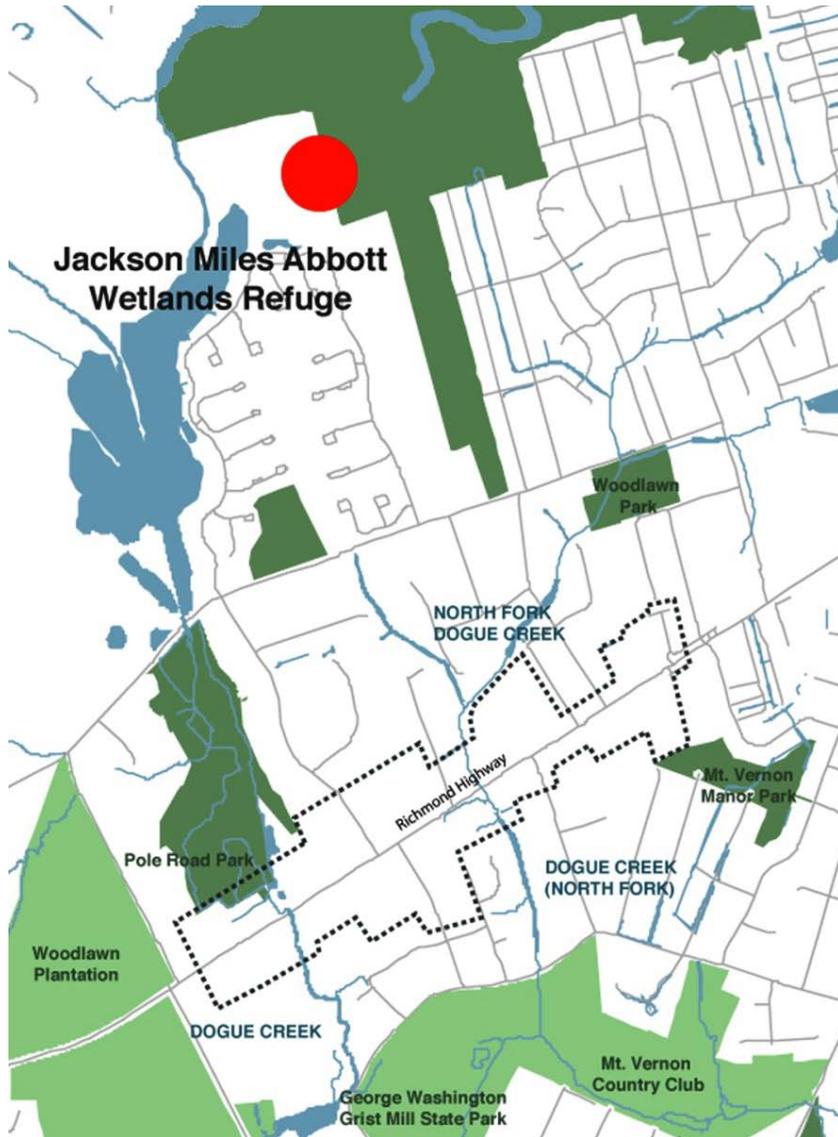
life experienced by surrounding residents (See "greenway" vision below). On the other hand, the floodplain limits the extent of development and redevelopment potential in the area and, combined with the lack of east-west road access in the corridor, serves to constrict the revitalization that can occur.

The North Fork of Dogue Creek (herein referred to as the North Fork) originates two miles north of the study area, and joins Dogue Creek on the south side of Richmond Hwy. just before it empties into the Potomac. The stream passes through the highly urbanized central portion of the study area, lacks supportive green space surrounding it, and received a poor site condition rating from the County of Fairfax (Fairfax). Wherever possible, provisions should be made for future development to reestablish stream buffers on the east and west sides of Richmond Highway.

The study area is also located close to **Huntley Meadows Park**, and the **Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge**. Huntley Meadows Park features a ½ mile wetland boardwalk trail and the area's best wildlife watching, and the Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland incorporates 150 acres of non-tidal wetland and forest near the Woodlawn Village Housing area along Dogue Creek. Unfortunately, these nearby by treasures are hidden from many of the patrons and residents of the study area, and should be properly connected to the Richmond Highway corridor through a multi-use trail network.

Environmental Assets Map w/ Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge and Historic Overlay District

Image 18



Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge

Image 19



E. Stakeholder Perspectives

The Forums: As part of the study process, two forums were conducted with community members. These provided insight into stakeholders' attitudes toward the Woodlawn CBC area and recommendations for how it could be improved. There was near unanimity on what people found offensive: blight, vacant properties, traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian amenities, vast parking lots, and an image of the place as crime-ridden and "down-market." Students found the area "sketchy" and "scary." Participants expressed dissatisfaction with Richmond Highway: it is congested and unsafe. Turning left and crossing the highway is difficult. Sidewalks are discontinuous and broken. It is very dangerous to bike in the area. Many wished there were more coherence to the corridor – a unified experience.

On the other hand, stakeholders expressed appreciation for the area's proximity to Mt. Vernon Estate and Gardens, Old Town Alexandria, Washington, D.C., and Fort Belvoir. They viewed the residential communities and small businesses along the corridor as assets. Participants appreciated the trees and Dogue Creek.

Many forum stakeholders said they would like to see higher-end retail, especially restaurants; offices; and residential space – particularly in mixed-use developments.

Although everyone recognized the long-term nature of Richmond Highway corridor revitalization, stakeholders believed there are short-term approaches to enhancing the study area. Cleaning up the corridor, landscaping, lighting and sidewalk improvements could begin to change people's perception of the area and encourage reinvestment.

(Detailed notes from the forums are found in Appendix B.)

The Interviews: One-on-one interviews were conducted with 13 key stakeholders in the corridor. Many were business owners or managers. Most of them expressed general satisfaction with the current state of their business. Hotels are doing well, and store vacancy rates are fairly low.

(A list of the interviewees is found in Appendix C.)

In general there was less unanimity among the stakeholders interviewed than those at the forums, probably because they were able to speak their minds without any group feedback. Although most agreed on both the negative and positive features of the study area, echoing what the forum participants had voiced, there was less agreement on what could benefit the area.

For example, the retailing stakeholders did not object to the traffic congestion on Richmond Highway, since it increases the likelihood of business. Stakeholders in the southern part of the corridor – the hotel managers – saw tourism as an important economic asset.

People interviewed agreed that Richmond Highway needed to be improved but did not agree on how this should happen. Several thought the road should not be widened; some believed it should. Interviewees mentioned light rail, bus lanes, BRT, and a Belvoir-based shuttle system as transit improvements.

F. Redevelopment Opportunities

The biggest potential for redevelopment within the study area is in mixed-used residential and commercial, particularly in retail. With the BRAC Commission relocating thousands of additional employees to Fort Belvoir and an increase in extended-stay visitors to the soon-to-open Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, developing quality dining and shopping, offices to serve government contractors, and other neighborhood serving amenities is critical for capturing the spending capacity needed to sustain an economically viable core development along Richmond Highway.

According to the market feasibility study conducted by the Urban Land Institute on office development, residential development is the catalyst for new office space comparable to other major developments throughout the region. Increasing quality multi- and single-family housing is the most immediate action that Fairfax County can take to increase speculation from investors. These residential units should be incorporated into mixed-use developments as much as possible to promote the environment of an urban village and display development cohesiveness, which is currently lacking along the corridor. Once a mixed used development is underway, business investors will take more consideration in relocating to the area.

Class A and B office space is also a potential development opportunity; however, much of the demand comes from government contractors associated with Fort Belvoir and it is speculated that many will relocate closer to the Fairfax County Parkway and Interstate 95.

Information from community members and stakeholders unveiled a general consensus that higher-end restaurants and retail stores are lacking along the corridor. Many local residents opt to travel to less convenient locations for better dining and shopping options. By incorporating higher-end restaurants and retail stores amidst existing specialty dining and shopping, developers can provide a choice to residents and visitors and recapture patronage needed to create a robust community-serving district.

||| THE PLAN

III. The Plan

A. The Land Use Plan

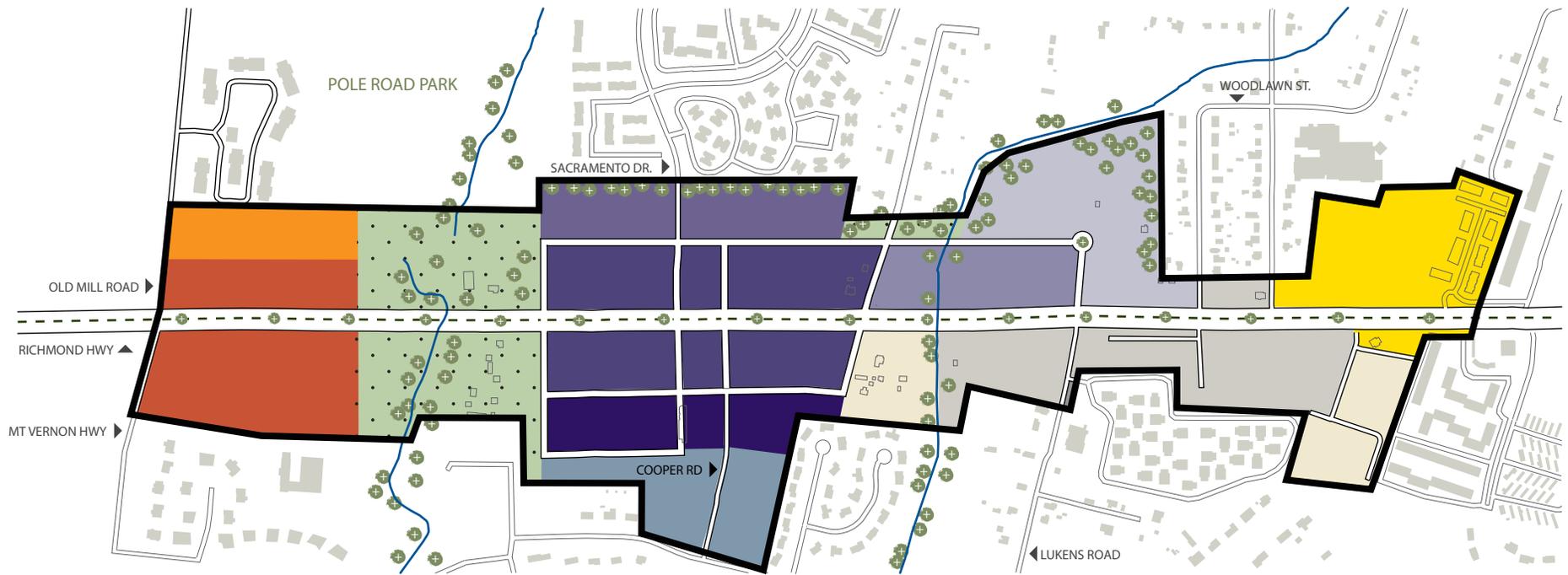
This section provides an overview of the land uses associated with the vision for the study area. The land uses are described for each of the planned nodes, as well as for transition areas between each node. Descriptions are presented from northeast to southwest, beginning with the portion of the study area where the United States Post Office is currently located, to Accotink Village in the southwest. Within each description, the presentation of uses also follows a northeast-southwest orientation.

The recommended densities have been chosen in an effort to create a unified feel for the entire study area, but also to respect existing structures and characteristics. At the northeastern section of the study area, densities are the lowest. Densities gradually increase to a maximum FAR of 2.5 in the Main Node, and then gradually decrease to a maximum FAR of 1.0 in the Tourism Node, which is part of an Historic Overlay District.

The FARs recommended in this study are based on several considerations. With few exceptions, mixed-use areas in Fairfax County do not have FARs in excess of 3.0. Yet, in order to create a vibrant mixed-use area and provide economic justification for structured parking, FARs should exceed 2.0. Because the study area is a narrow corridor surrounded by residential neighborhoods whose character should be respected, areas buffering those neighborhoods cannot have high FARs. Hence, we recommend an FAR of 2.5 for the most intensely developed area of the Main Node (discussed below) with lower FARs in other subareas.

Overall Landuse Concept Plan

Overall landuse Concept Plan
Image 20



1. Neighborhood Serving Node

Overall Land Use Concept Plan
Figure 22



Neighborhood Serving Retail	MixedUse (Office + Retail) High Density	MixedUse (Office + Retail) Medium Density	Existing Single Family Residential	Trees Median Creek
Office	MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Medium Density	MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Low Density	New Single Family Residential	
Mixed Use Hotel and Retail	Apartments	Civic	Proposed Open Space	

This node will serve as the northeastern entrance to the study area, and should be composed of mixed-use office and retail uses, as well as residential and civic uses. This node will have a lower density than the Main Node and will focus on the community aspect, taking advantage of existing residential communities, school, and civic facilities.

New Neighborhood Residential

Image 22

Source: MRIS Real Estate Listings

Source: MRIS Real Estate Listings



Residential: Recently constructed, the residential townhouse development across from the post office will remain in its current state. The area next to the existing residential development should be zoned for apartments. The apartments will be located on either side of the highway. It is also recommended that the apartments should include some affordable units, in an attempt to replace units that are targeted for redevelopment elsewhere in the study area. The FAR for the apartments should be 1.0, maintaining continuity with other land uses in this node. Possible funding opportunities for implementing the affordable units are discussed under Financial Constraints in section V.

Transition Area between Neighborhood Serving Node and Main Node

A small transition area between the Neighborhood-serving Node and the Main Node will assist in maintaining one vision for the study area. The density will be slightly increased from the Neighborhood-serving Node, and slightly decreased

from the density of the Main Node. Additionally, the open space that begins in the residential section of the Neighborhood-serving Node will continue through this area to the Main Node.

Mixed Use: Office/Retail: The mixed use section present in the Neighborhood-serving Node will continue in this area. Density will be the same, at 1.5, and the uses hosted in this area are recommended to be similar to those in the Neighborhood-serving Node. The open space area will run directly to the back, in an effort to maintain continuity between the two nodes, as well as to act as a buffer between the mixed use area along Richmond Highway and the adjacent neighborhoods farther away from the roadway.

Residential: Located across from the recommended mixed use, the existing residential use should remain. The homes present in this area are of recent construction and still represent a viable product in the local real estate market.

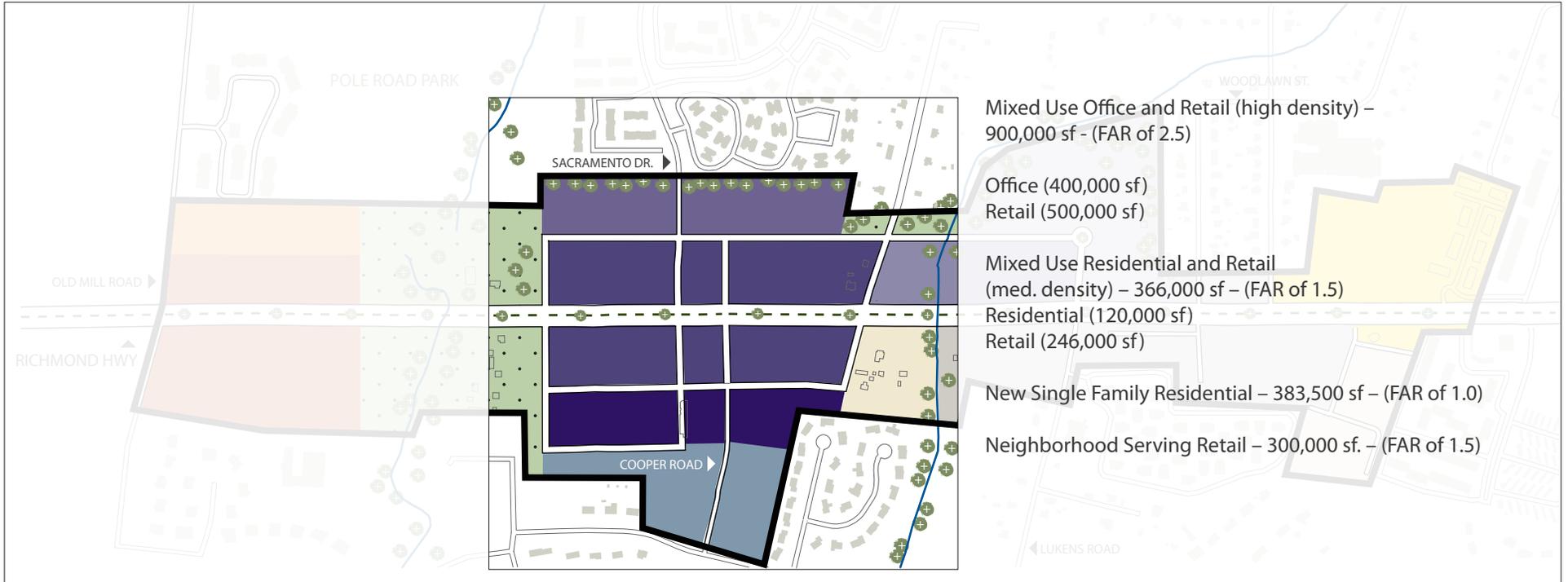
Civic: The existing United States Post Office will be maintained, due to its recent construction. It is recommended that a community recreation facility be built on the site of the current Knights of Columbus building next to the post office. This facility should take advantage of existing amenities from the nearby elementary school, and in an attempt to maintain continuity, should be of similar construction to the post office.

Mixed Use: Residential/Retail: Located next to the proposed apartments on the southwestern side of Richmond Highway where Engleside Plaza is currently located, it is recommended that a small neighborhood consisting of townhouses should be centered around the roundabout that is recommended in the Transportation section of this report. The townhouses should be designed in a “wedge” pattern. A small amount of neighborhood-oriented retail should also be present in this area. An example of the type of townhouse construction can be found in the Reston Town Center of Fairfax County. The FAR of the townhouses and retail should be 1.0, in an effort to gradually increase the density as the Main Node is approached.

Mixed Use: Office/Retail: It is recommended that this use be implemented from the northeast corner of the proposed roundabout to Richmond Highway. This use should have a density of 1.5, and businesses in this area should be geared toward serving local residents. Larger corporate offices and higher-end specialty retail stores should be located farther south in the study area, in the Main Node.

2. The Main Node

The Main Node
Figure 26



- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Serving Retail | MixedUse (Office + Retail) High Density | MixedUse (Office + Retail) Medium Density | Existing Single Family Residential |
| Office | MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Medium Density | MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Low Density | New Single Family Residential |
| Mixed Use Hotel and Retail | Apartments | Civic | Proposed Open Space |

- Trees
- Median
- Creek



Mixed-Use Office Retail

Image 24

Source: <http://blogs.seacoastonline.com/file/import/118fb5f9-beca-4187-8982-6dbe3771a44a.jpeg>



Mixed-Use: Office/Retail: In order to create a dense core, mixed-use office and retail space is encouraged directly on either side of the highway. The recommended FAR for these parcels is 2.5. Additionally, these parcels would be primary sites for higher end retail stores, as well as offices.

Neighborhood-Serving Retail: The southern portion of the Main Node should also provide a similar transition into the adjacent neighborhoods. Therefore, it is recommended that the parcels directly southwest of the mixed-use office and retail space along the highway are primarily neighborhood serving retail uses for the adjacent neighborhoods. The recommended FAR is 1.5.

Residential: The parcels farther southwest, along the edge of the Main Node, should be planned for lower density residential uses. The suggested housing type is townhouses, with an FAR of 1.0 in order to ensure successful integration of the newer large-scale construction along the highway with existing residential uses.

3. Open Space

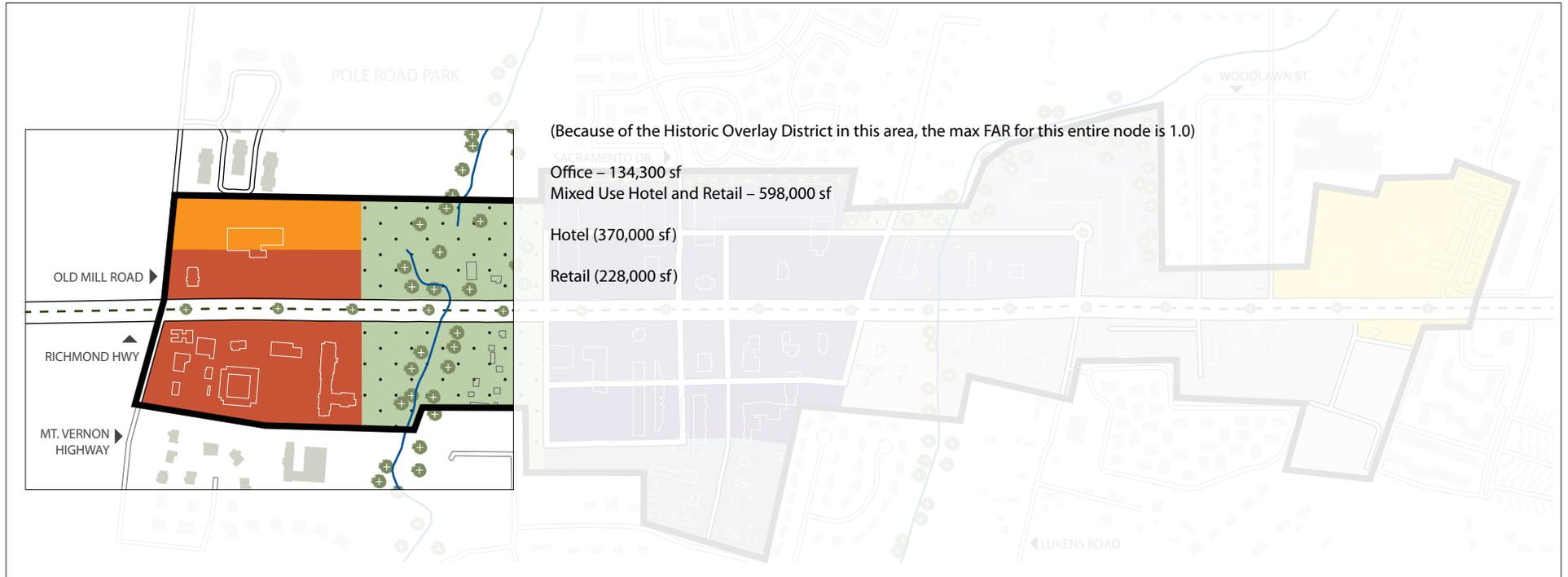
The Open Space area located next to the Main Node will be discussed in further detail in the section on Environmental Resources and Enhancement section below. This area will provide as a transition between the Main Node and the Tourism Node, which has a much lower density than the Main Node.

The Main Node along Richmond Highway in the general area where the Woodlawn Center and Sacramento Center are currently located should be planned for mixed- use retail, office, and/or residential uses. This node will serve as the primary office and retail space for this mile along Richmond Highway, attracting upscale businesses into the area and spurring growth along the corridor. Additionally, the outer edges of the node, as well as the network of roads and parks, will serve as key transitional areas into the surrounding residential communities. The Main Node is envisioned to become the central catalyst for this stretch of Richmond Highway, simultaneously enhancing the corridor experience and creating a unique destination for tourists and residents.

Mixed-Use, Residential/Retail: It is important that the neighborhoods adjacent to the Main Node be protected by the impacts of the commercial development along the corridor. Therefore, mixed use residential and retail uses would be ideal for the westernmost portion of this node, with a recommended FAR of 1.5. The shift in uses, the lower density construction, and the surrounding green buffer will create a visual and psychological transition from the more dense development along the highway and the surrounding neighborhoods.

3. The Tourism Node

Tourism Node
Figure 26



- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Serving Retail | MixedUse (Office + Retail) High Density | MixedUse (Office + Retail) Medium Density | Existing Single Family Residential |
| Office | MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Medium Density | MixedUse (Residential+ Retail) Low Density | New Single Family Residential |
| Mixed Use Hotel and Retail | Apartments | Civic | Proposed Open Space |

- Trees
- Median
- Creek



The Tourism Node will be centered around the tourism attractions and amenities that already exist in the study area. The presence of Fort Belvoir brings business visitors into the study area during the week, and the presence of Woodlawn Plantation in the study area, as well as the proximity to Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens and the proposed Army Museum, attracts visitors during the entire week.

Because of the Historic Overlay District in this area, the maximum FAR for this entire node is 1.0. In addition to a lower FAR than in the Main Node, it is recommended that existing design guidelines be followed, in an effort to maintain a unified vision for the node (discussed further in the section on Urban Design below).

Tourism-Oriented Commercial: Hotel/Retail: Several hotels have recently been constructed, experienced major renovations, or are planned in this portion of the study area. These hotels will remain and will serve as a base to the node. It is recommended that the planned new hotels be constructed in front of the IMP building. The building type of any new hotels should be of a similar density to the recently constructed Hampton Inn, and should follow the design guidelines for the Historic Overlay District.

In addition to the current and proposed hotels, small, tourism-oriented retail establishments and restaurants are recommended for this area, along both sides of Richmond Highway. This use will not extend as far back on the side where the IMP building is currently located. Some recommended product types include locally owned cafes or delis, as well as small boutiques for tourists to purchase items specific to the local area.

Tourism-Oriented Commercial Retail

Image 26

Source <http://www.cnu.org/node/3276>



Office: Behind the roadway-adjacent tourism-oriented hotel and retail, the IMP building will remain, and the area surrounding it will also be used for office space. The location of the Fort Belvoir gate nearby makes this a logical location for defense contractors affiliated with some portion of the base.

Civic/Recreational/Institutional: The historic Woodlawn Plantation owns property that may be used in the future for a visitors' center or similarly themed community use. Currently this site is rented out for horse stables, but the stables will be disrupted by the realignment of Richmond Highway. While Woodlawn representatives are open to the idea of a use that would make the property more available to members of the community, no construction is planned on the property and Woodlawn intends to maintain ownership.

5. Accotink Village

Located across Richmond Highway from Fort Belvoir's south gate, Accotink Village has a unique opportunity to develop as a node that accommodates the needs of the base, while enhancing the overall experience along the corridor. Two scenarios have been provided in order to accommodate any anticipated future development on the site.

Scenario 1

The valuable frontage along Richmond Highway should be renovated as a mixed-use development with retail on the ground floor and extended stay accommodations above. The location of Accotink Village next to Fort Belvoir makes it an ideal location for retail services that would cater to the base. Additionally, an extended stay hotel would allow family members of those on the base or in the hospital to reside close by for a longer period of time. The northern portion of the site would remain residential to accommodate current and future residents. In this scenario, the recommended FAR for the portion along the highway is 1.0 in order to maintain an appropriate scale with the preserved residential uses.

Scenario 1 FARs

In this scenario, the recommended FAR for the portion along the highway is 1.0 in order to maintain an appropriate scale with the preserved residential uses.

Mixed Use Hotel/Retail – 378,000 sf
Hotel (250,000 sf), Retail (128,000 sf)
Existing Residential – 710,000 sf

Accotink Village Scenario 1 Image 27



Scenario 2

Accotink Village's location next to Fort Belvoir makes it a prime location for office and retail services that would cater primarily to the base. The parcels along Richmond Highway should be developed into a combination of retail services and extended stay accommodations, with office spaces in the northern portion of the site. Additionally, open space in the center of the site would enhance the overall experience for those who may stay at the hotel for a longer period of time, and serve as a connection between the office and retail spaces. The recommended FAR for this scenario is 1.5 throughout the site.

Scenario 2 FARs

Mixed Use Hotel/Retail – 378,000 sf
Hotel (250,000 sf), Retail (128,000 sf)
Office – 617,400
Retail – 182,000 sf

Accotink Village Scenario 2 Image 28



6. Existing and recommended FARs

Existing and Proposed FARs Table 9

Node	Existing FAR	Proposed FAR
Main Node	0.6	1.86
Neighborhood-Serving Node	0.5	1.06
Tourism Node	0.9	1.00
Transition Area	0.1	0.00
Accotink Village (Scenario 1)	0.4	1.00
Accotink Village (Scenario 2)	0.4	1.18

Considerable increases in FAR at each location have been proposed to encourage density and community. Walkable neighborhoods, with retail and office space can only be achieved through greater density. Investments in sidewalks, new roads, bike paths and public transportation are all more feasible in neighborhoods with higher levels of density. Attracting pedestrian-friendly neighborhood-scale retail is not possible with the current FARs.

Proposed New Square Footage by Land Use Table 10

	Neighborhood Serving Node	Main Node	Tourism Node	Accotink 1	Accotink 2	Total
Mixed Use Office	150,000 O	400,000 O				550,000 O
Retail	100,800 R	500,000 R				600,000 R
MU Residential	443,500 Res	120,000 Res				563,500 Res
Retail	100,000 R	246,000 R				346,000 R
Mixed Use Hotel			598,000 MU	250,000 H	250,000 H	598,000 MU
Retail				128,000 R	128,000 R	250,000 H 128,000 R
Office			134,300 O		617,400 O	751,700 O
Hotel			370,000 H			370,000 H
Retail		300,000 R	228,000 R		182,000 R	710,000 R
Residential	510,000 Apts. 382,000 ex. SF	383,500 SF		710,000 ex. SF		893,500 Res
Civic	455,500 C					455,500 C
	1,759,800	1,949,500	1,330,300	(378,000)	1,177,400	6,217,000

Apts – Apartments
C – Civic
H - Hotel
MU – Mixed Use
O – Office
R – Retail
Res – Residential
SF – Single Family

Overall, the plan calls for 1,301,700 square feet of new office space; 1,784,000 square feet of retail; 620,000 square feet of hotel; 598,000 square feet of mixed use hotel/retail; 1,457,000 square feet of new residential space, and 455,500 square feet of civic space – for a total of 6,217,000 square feet of build-out.

B. Transportation and Circulation

Transportation is an integral part of our vision for the study area. Following are the transportation goals the plan should achieve:

- Improve and/or install pedestrian facilities
- Provide bike lanes
- Create a street network to increase connectivity
- Remove and/or limit frontage roads
- Reduce access point onto Richmond Highway throughout the corridor
- Support potential Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail, or Metro

In order to achieve these goals, the following strategies are proposed.

1. Create a Street Network

A street network can effectively provide connections among proposed land uses. The land use plan calls for significant retail, office and residential in each of the major nodes. An integrated street network will allow for connectivity between spaces; it will allow travel between parts of the Main Node without using Richmond Highway; and the network of streets can facilitate the creation of a sense of place.

Mobility within a region is often thought of as the ease or difficulty with which an individual can move from place to place. The study area is much smaller to be considered a region, but the concept still holds. Thus, in order to support the land use plan, residents, visitors, and workers must be able to move between nodes with ease. This will create foot traffic needed to support retail and spur other business development. The ability to move between nodes will create eyes on the street and provide an element of safety. The ability to move with ease will also encourage fewer auto trips.

To begin to achieve this kind of mobility, the proposed street network makes use of existing streets. Sacramento Drive, which leads into a residential neighborhood just west of study area, is continued across Richmond Highway. Similarly, Cooper Road is also continued across Richmond Highway, creating a very *walkable* core for the central node. These streets connect adjacent neighborhoods to the Main Node while also providing space to buffer them from the new development preserving their residential character.

Street Network

Image 29



Two primary streets of the new network will run parallel to Richmond Highway. They will serve the purpose of allowing travel between areas of the Main Node without adding traffic to Richmond Highway. A roundabout has also been proposed on the west side of Richmond Highway, giving the neighborhood node its own character.

A street is an edge, clearly indicating where a space begins and ends. The land uses proposed for each node, while collectively creating a new vision for the study area, individually also create a sense of place. The street network divides these spaces creating opportunities to develop and cultivate unique attractions for residents and visitors.

Circulation through the street network should give priority to pedestrians and bicycles. There will be no traffic lights within the nodes. Each intersection will be stop controlled and the lane widths will be narrow to encourage low speeds. A 34-foot cross section would provide a 10-foot travel lane in each direction as well as 7 feet for parallel on-street parking on each side.

In addition to limited on-street parking, one or more parking structures could be provided and integrated with proposed mixed use buildings. Structured parking will enhance the livability and pedestrian orientation of this node and can be justified by the 2.5 FAR. Until BRT or equivalent mass transit comes to the Richmond Highway corridor, people will drive to this destination node. Large asphalt surface parking lots would severely detract from the ambiance of the area.

There are two existing signals where Sacramento Drive and Cooper Road intersect with Richmond Highway. Unless warranted by traffic analysis, removing a signal is sometimes a difficult task. Thus, the proposed street network utilizes these existing signals as controls for the entry points into the Main Node. All other proposed streets that intersect with Richmond Highway will utilize right-in/right-out channelization. This will remove the conflict points created by vehicles attempting to make left turns from the number of driveways that currently exist along Richmond Highway.

To improve circulation through the network, the signal timing at the two aforementioned intersections should be synchronized and adjusted to include more time for pedestrians to cross Richmond Highway.

2. Improving Mass Transit Options in the Study Area

As is clear from the bus ridership numbers cited earlier in this report, the Richmond Highway Express (REX) system is popular, garnering a ridership that is practically equal to the population of the area served by the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation. Riders seem to prefer this method of transit to the complementary Fairfax County Connector. Two reasons for this could be the “express” form of REX’s route and the fact that its one dollar fare is less expensive than the Connector’s fare. However, mass transit ridership can be improved to include more riders who would ordinarily have the option of taking an automobile to their destinations and to attract more riders of varying income levels.

We believe that the optimal way to improve mass transit options along the study area would be to introduce bus rapid transit (BRT) service in the future. Reasons that BRT is an optimal choice for mass transit along Richmond Highway include:

- It would be unrealistic to expect Metro to extend rail service anywhere significantly south of the Huntington station anytime in the next 30 years.
- The eventual expansion of the Richmond Highway will provide an opportunity to accommodate a robust mass transit system without affecting automobile traffic flow.
- BRT is seen as an overall less expensive option to light rail.

BRT comes in various forms, but in the case of Richmond Highway we see it as potentially two center lanes – one moving in each direction – being completely dedicated for bus service along the corridor. In many cases, BRT is meant to simulate a light rail experience by running newer and quieter busses and by providing sophisticated infrastructure such as elevated platforms, bus stop shelters with benches, and ticket dispensers. Two examples of successfully implemented BRT systems include:

The Orange Line in Los Angeles¹⁰:

- A 14-mile transit line built over a former heavy rail right-of-way, stretching from Warner Center to Universal City along the northern edge of Los Angeles.
- A prime example of a BRT system meant to look and feel like light rail; among other features, the line includes park-and-ride lots, ticket machines, and widely dispersed stations.
- There is a parallel running dedicated bike path that makes it simple for cyclists to hop on and off of the Orange Line; all busses are equipped with high capacity bike racks.
- Travel time between beginning and end stations was about 81 minutes prior to implementation of BRT. Travel time is now about 44-52 minutes.
- Ridership has exceeded every expectation, garnering between 26,000-28,000 riders per day.

¹⁰ Eckerson Jr., Clarence. 2009. L.A.’s Orange Line: Bus Rapid Transit (plus bike path!). *StreetsFilms*: <http://www.streetfilms.org/las-orange-line-bus-rapid-transit-plus-bike-path/#more-1376>.

L.A.'s Orange Line BRT

Image 30

Source: STV: <http://www.stvinc.com/project.aspx?id=185>

EmX Green Line in Eugene, Oregon¹¹:



- Inspired by L.A.'s Orange Line, Eugene's Emerald Express (EmX) has many functional and aesthetic BRT features, such as elevated platforms, widely dispersed bus stops, and off-board fare collection.
- The Green Line – EmX's first installation of a wider BRT network - is a prime example of an efficient BRT system that operates in a smaller metropolitan area – roughly 200,000 people – and along a shorter distance – about four miles.
- The Green Line replaced a standard bus system that saw about 2,700 daily riders; the BRT system now accommodates a ridership that has risen about 50 percent.

¹¹ Eugene, OR EmX. 2007. *Bus Rapid Transit Policy Center:*

<http://www.gobrt.org/Eugene.html>.

- Mass transit in Eugene has become more efficient in that the amount of stations along this particular route has decreased by eight and travel time is a little over 16 minutes.
- A second BRT line in this system is set to open this year.

Eugene's EmX Green Line

Image 31

Source: BRT Policy Center: <http://www.gobrt.org/Eugene.html>



Not far north of the Richmond Highway study area, in Rockville, Maryland, a newly approved sector plan for the White Flint area along Rockville Pike calls for BRT. Rockville Pike's automobile congestion is similar to that of Richmond Highway. The Montgomery County Council has put its full faith behind BRT as a means of improving auto congestion while holding a place for a potential light rail line. The rendering below of the White Flint BRT is an example of how BRT can improve overall aesthetics of a thoroughfare and, along with several other pedestrian-friendly features, can transform it into an urban boulevard of sorts:

Urban Boulevard Figure 32



Source: White Flint Partnership: <http://www.whiteflintpartnership.com/index.php/mobility>

3. Promote a Mode Shift toward Cycling and Walking

Cycling

A significantly greater mode share for cycling is an integral part of our transportation vision for the study area. A simple cost-benefit analysis demonstrates the appeal of cycling to most local authorities, due to its potential to decrease journey times, encourage exercise and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the relative affordability of cycling will become increasingly important in promoting equitable access to jobs if the price of gas increases in the coming years.

There are two main ways in which a greater mode share for cycling can be realized: improved infrastructure and amenities, and educating the local citizenry about opportunities and benefits.

On the infrastructure side, the single most important aspect of our plan is the inclusion of bicycle lanes in both directions on Richmond Highway. Such lanes can take multiple forms, and the choice of form should be determined on a case-by-case basis (but even then, there is no firm consensus on this matter).

We believe that the separated bicycle lanes currently being tried in the District of Columbia merit serious consideration.

Unlike some European cities, where the higher mode share realized by cycling has allowed the emergence of a *shared space* philosophy that focuses on the desegregation of different modes, the District of Columbia has opted for a more traditional approach to establishing a cycling network: “Experience in other cities shows that separated lanes increase bicycling while decreasing crashes involving bicyclists.”¹² Not only is this statement likely to hold true for our study area, but the sophisticated analysis being conducted by the District’s Department of Transport (DDOT) may help to inform the direction of cycling policy in neighboring jurisdictions. Some preliminary results of DDOT’s analysis are already available. A brief overview of this analysis and the likely timeframe for its completion can be found in a letter from DDOT to the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board.¹³

One the next page is a photograph of the contra-flow bicycle lane on 15th Street, Washington, D.C., which is separated from the motorized traffic by a simple barrier system.

¹² Letter from the District of Columbia Department of Transport to the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, May 13, 2010: <http://ddot.dc.gov/DC/DDOT/On+Your+Street/Bicycles+and+Pedestrians/Bicycles/Downtown+Bike+Lane+Pilot+Project+-+DDOT+Letter+to+TPB+-+May+13,+2010>

¹³ Ibid.



Contra Flow Bike Lane Image 31

Source: The Washington Post

We believe the other bicycle lanes featured on our plan should also be of the separated variety, though the additional space that will be available away from Richmond Highway permits consideration of other methods of buffering the bicycle lane such as a lane of on-street vehicular parking.

To the right is a photograph of one such example in Portland, Oregon.



Bike Lane Image 32

Source: OregonLive.com

While the provision of a safe cycling network is critical, it is vital to provide an adequate supply of bike racks on sidewalks or in dedicated parking areas near the street, especially in close proximity to popular destinations and transit hubs.

We would encourage the consideration of more ambitious infrastructural developments that would demonstrate a high level of commitment to the promotion of cycling in the study area. For example, the proffering system utilized during negotiations with prospective developers could be augmented by the introduction of cycling-friendly elements such as the provision of shower facilities and bike parking.

The intra-modal coordination between bikes and buses appears to be reasonable in our study area, as WMATA and REX buses have bike racks. As cycling becomes more commonplace, it will be increasingly important to maintain a regular dialogue with both organizations (and any others that become relevant, such as a light rail or 'bus rapid transit' operator) in order to

make sure that cyclists can continue to be accommodated without detriment to other transit users.

Finally, it is vital to remember that the provision of a well-developed cycling network should always be complemented by ongoing education to encourage local citizens to travel by bike as often and as safely as possible. A good example of this may be found in the nearby jurisdiction of Arlington County, details of which are available on its website www.bikearlington.com.

Walking

A 2005 economic revitalization report produced by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) for Fairfax County stated, "Pedestrians perceive Richmond Highway as unsafe and inconvenient to cross. The county and VDOT should consider pedestrian improvements such as continuous, well-appointed, ADA-compliant sidewalks and trails, marked crosswalks, countdown pedestrian signal heads, appropriate signal timings, and place-making plazas and other public spaces."¹⁴

The community engagement events and field studies that we have undertaken lead us to strongly endorse the ULI's recommendations. Fairfax County already has a wealth of information at its disposal to aid this process; for example, its Merrifield Streetscape Design Manual includes a vast array of suggestions for enhancing the pedestrian-friendliness of its streetscape.¹⁵ The Comprehensive Plan also includes urban design guidelines that help promote more pedestrian-oriented forms of development, recommending the provision of public art, pedestrian plazas, cultural and recreational facilities, and landscaped open space. While the current economic climate means that public authorities may feel that they cannot be too demanding of prospective developers, many of these guidelines should be made non-negotiable.

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the pedestrian experience in our study area, we conducted an analysis that is adapted from one developed by Dr. Mariela Alfonzo of Virginia Tech for research on Houston's public space.

¹⁴ *Revitalizing the Richmond Highway Corridor to Attract Office Development*, ULI Washington, October 2005

¹⁵ Available on the Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization & Reinvestment's website:

<http://www.fcrevit.org/merrifield/download/MerrifieldSTSCP.pdf>

Such an analysis is inevitably somewhat subjective, and the results would be expected to vary in different parts of our study area, but it nonetheless provides further evidence of the need for the pedestrian experience to be improved and of the opportunities that might be available to realize such an improvement.

Pedestrian Experience

Table 11

Positive Elements	Y / N?
The presence of crosswalks	N
Safety of crossing	N
Convenience of crossing	N
Vertical mixed-use	N
The presence of a park/playground	N
The presence of plaza/square	N
The presence of public garden	N
The presence of restaurants	Y
The presence of coffee shops	Y
The presence of a library/bookstore	N
The presence of a corner store	N
The presence of an art gallery	N
The condition of the sidewalks	Average
The continuousness of the sidewalk system	Poor
The presence of awnings	N
The presence of outdoor dining	N
The presence of street benches	N
The presence of bus stops	Y
The presence of heat lamps	N
The presence of bike racks	N
The presence of street trees	Y
The presence of shaded sidewalks	N
The presence of well-maintained buildings	Y
The presence of outdoor lighting	Y
The presence of on-street parking	N
The presence of street vendors	N
The presence of public art	N

C. Environmental Resources and Enhancement

As stated earlier, the extent of floodplain in the study area provides both constraints and opportunities. Future development along the Richmond Highway corridor should be sensitive to existing natural features in order to ensure that the area's environmental resources are preserved and enhanced to the benefit of the community. Existing development does not appear to have been particularly attentive to the nearby environmental assets which are, on the whole, under-utilized along the entire corridor. Though much of the land in the study area is developed, green areas still remain and pose unique opportunities for enhancement.

The environmental vision revolves around two streams that pass through the study area and provide natural connections throughout. These are Dogue Creek and the North Fork of Dogue Creek, which both drain to the Potomac River. The protection and enrichment of these stream systems are vital to their environmental health, while the incorporation of them into the surrounding development can provide great benefits to the existing and proposed communities.

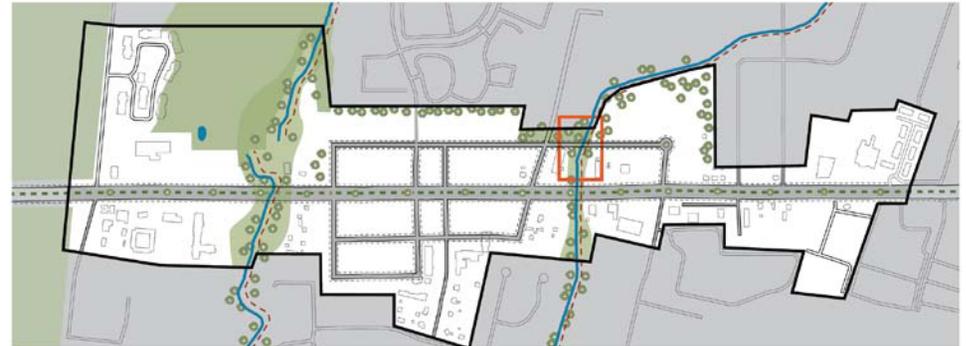
Untapped environmental assets in the study area provide the foundation for our environmental vision. We identify two key areas that contain environmental assets that should be enhanced to benefit the community and the sensitive resources.

The Greenway: Flood Plain Area, Dogue Creek, and Pole Road Park

A key element of the study area vision is to utilize the floodplain area surrounding Dogue Creek. The goal is to create a "greenway" along the creek, from its intersection with Richmond Highway, north to the intersection with Pole Road. Ultimately the greenway should continue along the southeastern side of Richmond Highway in order to provide connectivity to the North Fork as well as the surrounding parks and historical resources, such as Washington's Grist Mill, and Mt. Vernon. The following items are recommended to complete the greenway vision.

Environmental Map with Street Grid

Image 33

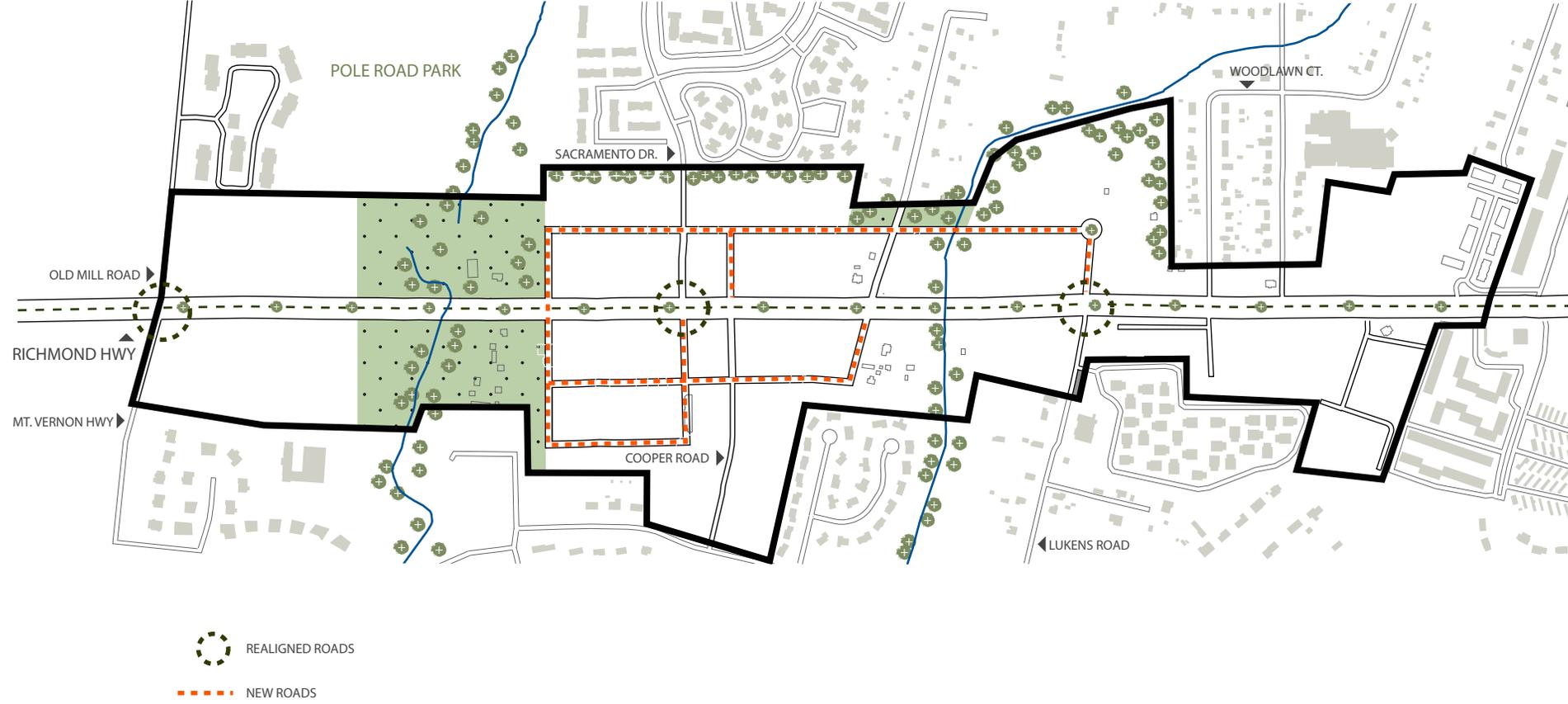


North Fork Trail and Stream Bed Repair

In accordance with Fairfax County regulations, we strongly recommend repairing the stream bed and riparian zone of the North Fork by installing green buffers and a trail made of permeable materials in the area immediately surrounding the stream. This trail should connect with the green buffer space that will be provided on the northwestern side of the Main Node. Provisions for pedestrian crossings should also be made on Richmond Highway and the new proposed roadway in the neighborhood node to ensure that trail users are able to safely cross the street while following the path of the North Fork stream. (Please see greenway map).

With regard to the continuousness of the sidewalk system, we note that the summary of active transportation projects in or near Mount Vernon District as of January 2010 includes the installation of four sidewalks and one pedestrian trail. At a time when local government funding for the development and maintenance of transportation infrastructure is severely stretched throughout the country, this represents a positive sign that progress is still being made toward providing the citizens of our study area with the pedestrian-oriented streetscape they desire.

New Street Network
Figure 33



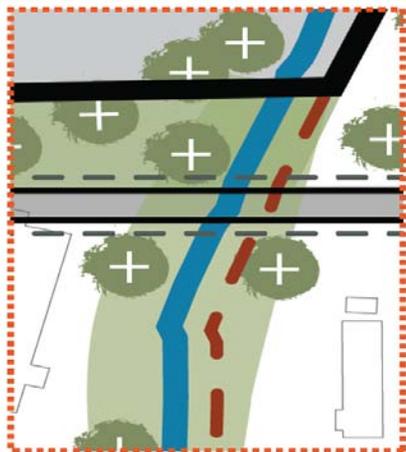
Multi-use Trail along Dogue Creek

A multi-use trail is a low impact environmental use with significant positive community impact. Connected to the Main Node, the trail will travel through the flood plain and Pole Road Park to an access point on Pole Road., continue north to connect with the Jackson M. Abbott Wetlands Refuge and Huntley Meadows Park, and provide the surrounding residential communities access to these resources. In addition, it is recommended to partner with Woodlawn Plantation in order to ensure additional access points and parkland, increasing the community connectivity with this historic asset.

A trail of this type provides more than just access; it improves both the livability and marketability of the area as a whole. Community members and tourist will, at last, have a scenic and safe place for physical activity separate from the bustle of Richmond Highway. As stated in “Development Recommendations” below, the trail should be built using permeable materials to minimize environmental degradation and ensure that storm water runoff can be properly absorbed into the ground. In addition to recreational benefits to residents, the trail network and associated vegetation provides stormwater buffers to decrease runoff into the water systems.

Dogue Creek Greenspace Rendering

Image 34



-  Trees
-  Sidewalk
-  New Road Network
-  Median
-  Creek



Picnic Tables and Related Amenities

Additional low-impact uses are recommended in order to increase activity and foot traffic throughout the greenway. These might include picnic tables, a gazebo, merry-go-round, and carousel. We recommend the addition of these items throughout the entire greenway, but with specific concentration on areas close to the multi-use trail and the Main Node. These additions will hopefully attract attention from the surrounding communities and inspire residents and tourists to make better use of the area's environmental assets.

Connection to Huntley Meadows Park, Jackson M. Abbott Wetlands Refuge via Pole Road Park, and Woodlawn Plantation

Providing access between the study area and nearby environmental assets increases attractiveness and quality of life in the community. Huntley Meadows Park, located north of the study area, should have a trail connection with the environmental protection area surrounding Dogue Creek. Woodlawn Plantation has expressed interest in partnering with the county, or redevelopment authority, in order to coordinate trails and access points throughout this valuable historic site. An interpretive Woodlawn Plantation trail could integrate the historic site into the surrounding community and provide additional parkland for public use. This will surely provide additional opportunities to educate the public on the history of the area and improve relations between Woodlawn Plantation and the community.

Stream Bed Repair and Clean-up

In its current state, Dogue Creek is not providing maximum benefit to the wildlife that inhabit this area. It is recommended to complete a comprehensive stream clean-up along this portion of the creek, repairing the stream bed, and reversing some of the damage that has been done. This will not only provide benefit to the wildlife, but also make it a more attractive destination for the surrounding communities.

Pocket Park: Northeast of the Woodlawn CBC

To the northeast of the Main Node, a pocket park will provide additional environmental and recreational benefit to the new and existing residents of the

Woodlawn area. The pocket park will provide a multi-use space and a green buffer that is easily accessible to the adjacent neighborhoods and new proposed residential development.

Neighborhood Parkspace

Image 35

Source <http://www.cnu.org/node/2105>



Public Space: Multi-use Space / Pocket-park

The study area currently lacks attractive and usable public space, so the addition of pocket parks can provide this much needed resource for residents of the established neighborhoods and proposed residential developments surrounding the park. Pocket parks could be established as a use for some of the small, irregular pieces of land around the study area. These parks will lack space for large scale recreational activities but will provide more passive, neighborhood serving green space using some of the smaller parcels.

Strategies for creating an attractive and usable public space include landscaped green space, ample seating, and inviting design.

The pocket park will also be a place that can adapt to various uses. Located between existing neighborhoods and higher density residential and commercial development, the pocket park should be functional for all needs. Design of the park should accommodate uses including a weekend farmers market, adaptable seating, a playground, and/or a basketball court.

Development Recommendations:

In addition to the previous environmental enhancements, we recommend that all new development and re-development follow best practices in regard to energy use, water management, and efficiency. These practices will reduce the environmental impact of the built environment and make development more attractive to tenants, investors, residents, and tourists.

LEED Certified and Green Buildings

All new development should be incentivized to follow LEED guidelines and strive to reach LEED certification (Include a level of LEED certification?). Strategies for reducing the environmental impact of the built environment include implementing green roofs, solar panels, and water conservation practices, as well as the use of sustainable materials, and energy efficient lighting.

Permeable Surfaces

A significant amount of the study area is occupied by impervious surfaces. According to Fairfax County, the projected percentage of impervious surfaces surrounding Dogue Creek and the North Fork are both above 30 percent. Any increase in impervious surfaces surrounding these creeks could channel more toxins directly into the streams and degrade their water quality even more than current levels. For this reason the county should adopt provisions that mandate or reward the use of permeable (porous) building materials for sidewalks and parking facilities. For example, porous concrete and permeable pavers and can be used in bike paths, parking lots, and sidewalks. This strategy, in addition to increasing tree cover and riparian vegetation, would be beneficial to the natural ecosystem of these streams.

Stormwater Management

All new construction should follow best practices outlining stormwater management techniques, especially for parking lots and sidewalks. Some examples of innovative stormwater management are bio-retention systems and water gardens that clean run-off water by retaining and filtering harmful chemicals. Increasing vegetation throughout the developed area can also help facilitate proper stormwater management. This vegetation can filter out water pollutants, including oil and grease, before it can enter the groundwater system. Other strategies include the installation of rain gardens, swales, tree box filters, and stormwater planters.

D. Urban Design

A new series of streets gives form to the center of a revitalized Woodlawn CBC. This revitalized layout helps realize goals for a harmonious appearance, better connectivity between parcels, appropriate density for new development, and the ability to create vibrant mixed-use spaces. A new urban village is possible, with a mix of retail, hotels, office space, residences, and entertainment options. Those who live in or nearby the new development will find it easier and safer to just leave the car at home and walk or bike instead. Those who visit will be able to "park once", then spend time enjoying a variety of amenities. Sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes will create better connections to the surrounding neighborhoods, and better access to underutilized natural areas nearby.

The existing Comprehensive Plan already includes many goals for urban design and the overall aesthetics and character of the Woodlawn CBC. The existing standards need to be consistently followed and enforced, and the County should investigate ways to expedite improvements. The urban design goals should be further developed and codified so that the County is clear about the intent and desired outcomes, and to give clearer direction to developers and existing property owners.

Building Design and Elements

Architectural style along the corridor should include a mix between traditional

and contemporary styles to emphasize the historical context of the site while still welcoming modern trends. While the architectural expression should be flexible, it should also be cohesive within the development to create the urban village and further enhance the connectivity between nodes. Provision of a form-based overlay could help to achieve style cohesiveness while allowing for a mix of uses to maximize economic gains.

Materials

1. Use environmentally sensitive building materials to prevent adverse effects to the natural landscape.
2. Materials should be natural in appearance and age well.
3. Restore quality materials of existing buildings as much as possible. Newer buildings should reflect existing context by using similar building materials.

Heights and Massing

- i. Limit building heights to five stories to reflect a sensitivity to human scale. Buildings should be highest along the Richmond Highway corridor and progressively decrease as they get closer to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- ii. Create buffers and soft transition areas between the commercial buildings and existing neighborhoods.
- iii. Consolidate smaller interspersed parcels and cluster new development to reinforce the urban village.

Style, Height and Materials

Image 36

Source <http://www.cnu.org/node/784>



Landscape Corridor

The existing Landscape Corridor standards in the Comprehensive Plan are compatible with future development within the Woodlawn CBC, and can be retained and implemented following Richmond Highway widening or transit improvements. The Landscape Corridor standards promote an improved identity, visual continuity and user safety by establishing a uniform roadway edge and streetscape on Richmond Highway and intersecting arteries. The standards define areas for landscaping, sidewalks, and landscaped parking lot edge, and implementation eliminates the confusing and disconnected parallel service roads. They also help further the goals of better pedestrian and bike access.

Currently these standards appear to not have been implemented within the

study area. Mt. Vernon Plaza on the 7600 block of Richmond Highway, and the Safeway center at 7451 Mount Vernon Square are properties to the northeast that have been redeveloped and had the landscaping standards applied. The visual improvement is noticeable, and the application of the standards have been implemented in conjunction with improved lighting, power line undergrounding, improved bus shelters, and other pedestrian improvements that enhance safety. Within the Woodlawn CBC, tree planting guidelines within the Landscape Corridor and along intersecting arterials should be rigorously followed. Unique trees, plants, or fence/wall features may be specified in order to incorporate a historic or rural/agricultural character to the corridor that respects and evokes nearby historic sites and contributes to a unique identity.

The specified multi-use trail on the west side of Richmond Highway should be carefully integrated into plans for improvements of intersecting arterials, like Sacramento drive. Particular attention should be paid to bicycle and pedestrian connectivity since arterials meeting Richmond Highway usually connect to residential areas. Specific signage and signaling for bicycles may be warranted at these intersections.

Parking Lots

Parking lots are a fact of life within the Woodlawn CBC, and will remain so until structured parking is economically feasible. The Comprehensive Plan currently contains recommendations for parking lot design and landscaping of the interior and edges. These recommendations should be improved, made more specific, and codified into required standards.

Parking lot design standards can be altered to simultaneously achieve two important goals in the project area:

- to enhance aesthetics
- to reduce environmental impacts, particularly related to stormwater management and Dogue Creek water quality

Example Parking Structures

Image 37

Source: Brick Industry Assoc.



Increasing the tree canopy and landscaped areas within parking lots creates a more attractive area, cools the surroundings with shade, and breaks up the monotony of asphalt. By designing these areas using best practices, better stormwater management systems can be designed that help filter and retain water that flows into Dogue Creek, while also being green and aesthetically pleasing. The Beatley Library in Alexandria provides a local example of a well-designed parking lot that retains and filters stormwater, has abundant trees and vegetation, and has pleasant park-like elements within it.

To encourage implementation of better stormwater management in parking lots, the County could consider allowing flexibility in meeting these standards. Rather than strictly defining parking lot design, developers could choose among several tools. Some developers may not require so many spaces on their property, and could therefore reduce the impervious surfaces and install larger planting areas, while others may choose to install bio-retention areas or

pervious paving to meet stormwater goals. The county could set higher standards based on distances from points where water enters the creek, or have flexible standards based on the size of the lot.

Parking lots can improve pedestrian comfort and safety by having delineated walkways within them. These can also be made of contrasting materials that have an aesthetic function, define the pedestrian realm, and have a different surface or elevation to calm vehicular traffic.

Lighting

Lighting design should accomplish multiple goals:

- Street lighting fixtures should have a common form and/or style to become part of the streetscape design and create visual continuity along the corridor.
- Street lighting should be pedestrian oriented and also installed along the residential arterials that intersect Richmond Highway.
- Pathway or landscape lighting may be appropriate for certain trail segments and pedestrian connections.
- Lighting installed adjacent to residential areas should be full cut-off designs that maximize downlighting and reduce glare.
- Lighting criteria should follow LEED guidelines for "light power density", which establish standards for illuminance at the site boundaries

Lighting and Streetscape

Image 38

Source <http://www.cnu.org/node/2102>



Landscaping

Landscaping design and elements throughout the Woodlawn CBC can also support multiple goals for community improvement:

- Landscaped areas can be integrated with storm water management techniques to improve the water quality of Dogue Creek.
- Landscaping design can specify native species of plants that are more drought resistant, require less watering and maintenance by the property owners or the County, and generally require no fertilizer.
- The County could adopt innovative ways to promote low-impact landscaping practices, perhaps by delineating zones around stream

corridors and resource protection areas where the practices should be followed.

- Plant and tree selections, and landscape designs, can make visual links to the rural and agricultural past of the surrounding area, contributing to the historic character and emphasizing a sense of place.
- Some cities have established small urban orchards in parks and on municipal lands, which provide beauty, trees, habitat value, and free fresh local produce to the surrounding community.

Tourism Retail

Image 39

Source <http://www.cnu.org/node/3276>



Many community members expressed the wish for a defined gateway when entering the Woodlawn CBC, particularly when traveling north along Richmond Highway at the intersection of Richmond Highway and Mount Vernon Highway. This point marks a transition from an adjacent open, rural landscape owned by Woodlawn Plantation, to a built-up commercial area. This intersection could be defined by special landscape elements and signage as place making devices to give character and definition to the Woodlawn CBC while paying respect to the historic surroundings. Architectural design, form, and materials within this zone should also play an important place-making role, buildings at the gateway

could incorporate a prominent feature like a clock tower or cupola to anchor the corner.

While the area lies within the Woodlawn/Pope-Leighey House Historic Overlay District, the design guidelines do not appear to have been given much consideration since their adoption in 1971. As with other county plans within the Woodlawn CBC, the Historic District Guidelines and Comprehensive Plan guidelines appear as only a wish-list of good intentions. Plan recommendations for consolidated parcel access, signage, building material, color, and architectural design have clearly not been followed in any consistent way. Firm standards need to be developed from these goals, then applied. Following the forthcoming realignment of Mount Vernon Highway with Old Mill Road, there may soon be opportunities for redevelopment or upgrades, and for creating a modestly scaled urban village at this node as suggested in the Comprehensive Plan.

Unlike the larger parcels in the center of the Woodlawn CBC, the properties at the Richmond Highway/Mt. Vernon Highway corner are smaller, face two different thoroughfares, and require a more contextually sensitive, fine-grained plan. Buildings fronting Richmond Highway could have a more urban form, while buildings fronting Mount Vernon Highway should be designed and sited to respect the fact that they directly face the rural, open landscape of the Woodlawn stables property directly across the road, and are adjacent to housing on the same side of the road. Property consolidation may be desirable in order to create a more logical site plan and consistent building face and massing. To enhance the aesthetics of the gateway, parking should be behind buildings that front the road, not in front of buildings. Because the Comprehensive Plan designates the area for tourist-related services and uses, and due to the nearby presence of existing hotels, special attention should be paid to pedestrian mobility and public space within the new development and connectivity between parcels. This is important to ensure that it is not only aesthetically pleasing to visitors and locals alike, but is easy and logical to navigate, and enhances the perception of safety.

Accotink Village

Approaches to urban design may vary depending upon the land use decisions ultimately made for Accotink Village. If single-family residential areas remain largely intact, the streets should be improved with sidewalks and street lighting to provide a visual and infrastructure upgrade to the community. There may be opportunities to provide unique elements to lend a "village" feel and appearance, such as an overlay district or form-based code.

Due to the compact size of Accotink Village, under any land use plan, pedestrian circulation should be prioritized so that it is easy to access the commercial businesses along Richmond Highway without having to drive or get on the highway. Several streets intersect with Richmond highway and extend into Accotink Village, but are not interconnected within Accotink Village. It may be difficult to obtain sufficient right-of-way to provide vehicular interconnection between the streets, but it may be feasible to create pedestrian paths.

IV PHASING

IV. Phasing

The first phase of the plan includes items that can be acted upon immediately. Environmental improvements to riparian areas and waterways are currently underway in Fairfax County. A concerted creek clean-up effort and effort to connect recreational paths to Huntley Meadows Park and the Jackson Miles Abbott Refuge would be a good way to indicate the intent to reinvest in this area the corridor, in addition to the obvious environmental benefits. The lack of connectivity to existing tourist destinations and public green spaces should be an immediate priority because taking advantage of those resources will be essential to crafting a sense of place along this stretch of the corridor. The following steps below which are slated for implementation by the year 2020 will form the foundation for reinvestment in the corridor.

By 2020

- Make greenway improvements: trail system for residents and hotel guests. Stream clean-up efforts and water quality improvement efforts.
- Develop Tourism Node to take advantage of nearby Woodlawn Plantation, Mount Vernon, Huntley Meadows Park and Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands.
- Redevelop Richmond Highway commercial uses in Accotink Village to serve the needs of Fort Belvoir and the expected influx of employees, military personnel and their families.
- Make streetscape improvements, install continuous sidewalks, make façade improvements and install bike lanes. These improvements are small scale but taken together can have a big impact on the perception of the corridor. The current visual disorganization promotes further disinvestment. That needs to change if current public perception of the corridor is to change.
- Improve bus service: shelters and infrastructure for existing users. Many residents rely of public transit to commute to work. Interview with local business owner indicated inadequate bus shelters for low-income residents who work along the Richmond Highway corridor.

2020-2025

- Complete Richmond Highway road expansion.
- Build out Main Node west of Richmond Highway. Create connectivity between streets and establish a road network to serve a mixed use neighborhood consisting of residential, office and retail space.
- Complete community recreation center.
- Reconsider public transit options.

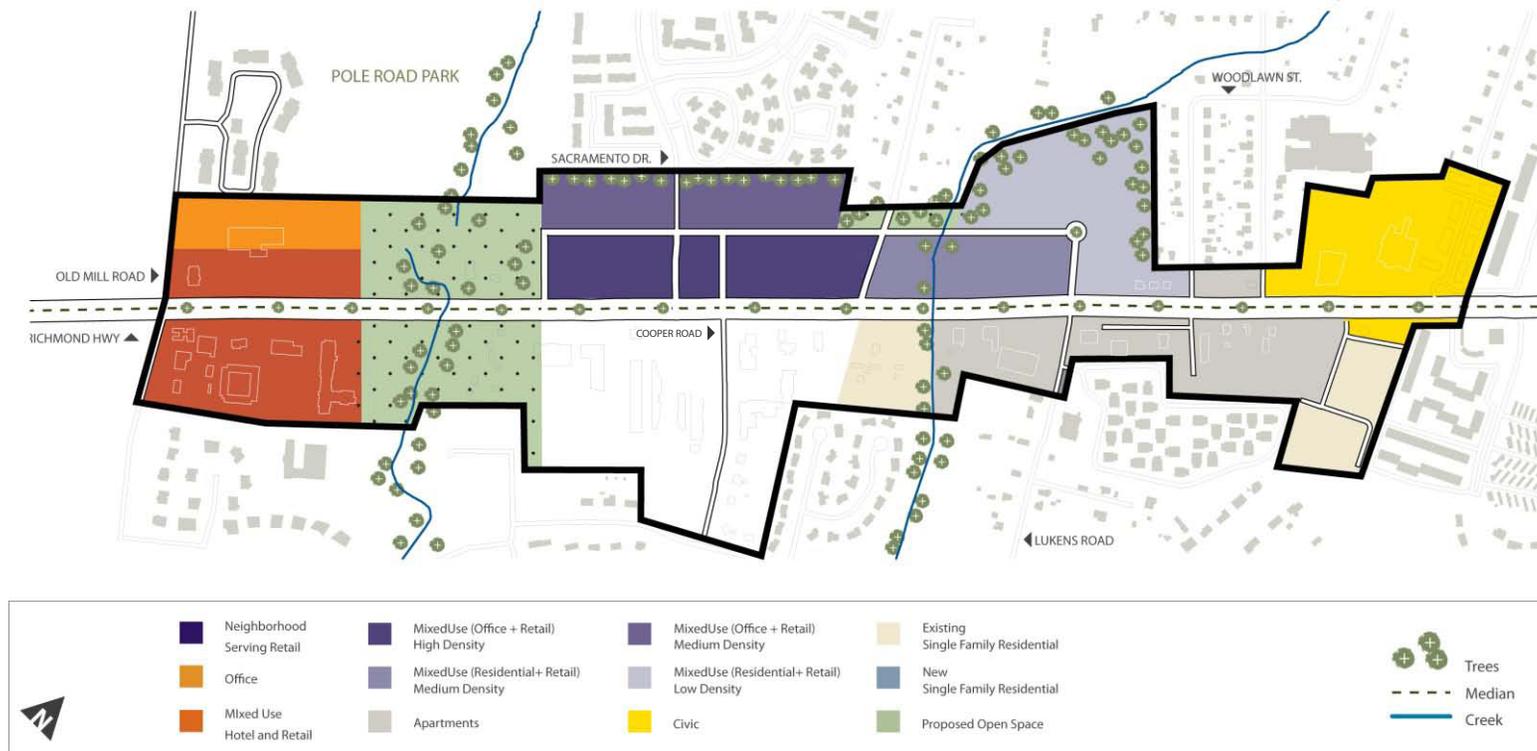
2020-2025 Phasing Map
Image 40



2025-2030

- Improve transit: BRT – if denser development comes in; otherwise permanent express bus lanes should be considered.
- Expand development efforts with the completion of the neighborhood serving node complete with turning circle and neighborhood park space.
- Complete apartments east of Main Node.

2025-2030 Phasing Map
Image 41



2030-2040

- Develop east portion of Main Node. This portion of the corridor is composed of many smaller parcels. As a result, we anticipate greater difficulty aggregating the space for redevelopment and have projected that this work will take some time to complete.
- Complete the residential portion of Accotink Village.

2030-2040 Phasing Map

Image 42



Transportation Phasing

The street network should be built in phases according to the land use plan. Accordingly, as development occurs so will the infrastructure for the street network. By 2025, the first phase of the main node will be complete and with it, that portion of the street network. By 2030, the neighborhood node will be complete and the first primary parallel road within the node will be complete. 2040 is a realistic time frame for phase two of the main node and its street network.

Public Transportation and BRT

We believe that any BRT system in the Richmond Highway corridor will be feasible only after the road widening that is expected to take place in the near future. It would be advisable to move forward with this improved transit option shortly after any road widening because taking away lanes dedicated to automobile traffic may be politically untenable.

Constructing BRT shortly after the road widening will allow residents to get an idea early on as to whether or not they like the system, and to provide more of an opportunity for the system to be bought into. Regardless of when the road widening occurs and whether or not residents of the area are supportive of BRT, any development of an improved mass transit line must be after considerable economic development has taken place along the corridor.

We suggest evaluating the need or possibility of bus rapid transit from the years 2020 to 2025, assuming that expansion of Richmond Highway is complete at that point. Additionally, local planners and county officials can examine whether or not enough development has taken place to complement the road widening, thereby legitimizing an introduction of BRT. If the road widening has not occurred at that point or if investment in the area has been substandard, it would be prudent to put off any decision to implement a BRT system until at least another 10 years has passed.

V REDEVELOPMENT ISSUES

V. Redevelopment Issues

A. Environment

Dogue Creek and the North Fork provide an opportunity for immediate redevelopment and investment in our study area as both waterways are rated as fair or poor in terms of water quality. Efforts to improve the quality of the creeks on site could segue with ongoing efforts to improve the greater Potomac watershed in Fairfax County.

Immediate efforts to improve the quality of Dogue Creek could be a powerful indicator that there is indeed a real commitment to improving conditions along this stretch of Richmond Highway. In addition to improved environmental benefits, the buffers and creekside improvements will provide necessary recreational amenities for residents in the form of walking and jogging paths. Efforts should be made to create a closed loop for walking and jogging that is accessible at many different points along the Main Node of the site. The Tourism node will also benefit from these improved environmental assets and a connector to the creekside recreational trails should attempt to connect to the hotel and service retail center located at the Tourism Node at the south end of the site.

Ultimately the greenway should continue along the southeastern side of Richmond Highway in order to provide connectivity to the North Fork as well as the surrounding parks and historical resources, such as Washington's Grist Mill, and Mt. Vernon. A multi-use trail is a low impact environmental use with significant positive community impact. Connected to the main node, the trail will travel through the flood plain and Pole Road Park to an access point on Pole Road, continue north to connect with the Jackson M. Abbott Wetlands Refuge and Huntley Meadows Park, and provide the surrounding residential communities access to these resources. In addition, it is recommended that the SFDC partner with Woodlawn Plantation in order to ensure additional access points and parkland, increasing the community connectivity with this historic asset.

The community should partner with local businesses to study storm water runoff, dumping and pollution. Public safety concerns should be addressed

through community forums with residents, public officials and community groups. The creek cleanup efforts provide an opportunity for community building and citizen involvement.

B. Transportation

Plans to widen Richmond Highway from the Fairfax County Parkway to Fort Belvoir have already been made and funding secured. Nevertheless, the number one challenge to accomplishing the majority of the transportation goals cited earlier in this report is financial constraint. The Commonwealth Transportation Board's Six Year Improvement Plan includes about \$650 million in budget cuts to highways and \$880 million in reductions to rail and transit.¹⁶ The cuts in highway largely result from decreases in state and federal revenue. These cutbacks have eliminated state funding for localities to use on secondary, primary, urban and unpaved road work.

Until funds are available for transportation improvements, not much can be done. Recommendations to supplement funding for the projects are impact fees and/or tax increment districts. In the meantime, planning efforts continue in order to find efficient land use and transportation connections to best serve the corridor and facilitate its revitalization.

The two primary issues related to the development of BRT and the overall improvement of mass transit along the Richmond Highway corridor are funding and the timing of denser development. As mentioned previously, density is a prerequisite for any expanded mass transit options. BRT in and of itself will not generate the development that the area is seeking; mass transit expansion will have to occur as a result of development.

There is no doubt that Fairfax County will have to go beyond the \$150 million in federal funding that Congressman Jim Moran (D-VA) has secured for Fort Belvoir area infrastructure improvements. In order to fund future projects, such as a potential BRT system or incremental extension of Metrorail, the county will have to continue to lobby for federal appropriations and hope for concurrent funding from state agencies such as VDOT.

¹⁶ Transportation Board Adopts VDOT Budget and Cuts, retrieved from <http://www.whsv.com>, June 2009

President Barack Obama recently signed into law an extension of the primary national transportation funding bill that had been signed by President George W. Bush in 2005 and expired in September of 2009¹⁷. In addition to providing overarching funding for all federal highway expenditures, the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) also contains the *Small Starts Program*. This program funds projects with an FTA New Starts share under \$75 million, and total project cost less than \$250 million. It has simplified procedures and criteria for funding. The *Very Small Starts Program* is available for projects with a total cost of less than \$50 million¹⁸. These are viable options for jurisdictions looking to fund BRT projects that fall within these parameters, but it should be noted that Congress has every intention of passing a new transportation bill within the next two years that may or may not extend this program.

C. Financial Feasibility of Redevelopment

Large-scale development has never occurred in the study area. In the current economic climate, it may be difficult for a developer to obtain financing to construct a large project in an area where similar projects have never been constructed. There may be few developers or investors with the financial resources available to consolidate land parcels necessary for a large development. A piecemeal, gradual redevelopment over a 20- to 30-year period is more feasible, with developers able to invest over a longer term on more stable products in a better market.

While large-scale development may not be financially feasible at this time, funding opportunities may be currently available for smaller aesthetic improvements, such as streetscape enhancement and new signage for existing shopping centers. Staff from SFDC should identify funding opportunities from local and state governments and provide the information in one place for current property owners to improve the overall aesthetic appeal of the area in

the short term. To implement some of the funding opportunities, it may be necessary for SFDC to assist businesses with organizing into a more formal body, such as a business improvement association.

Profiled below are several programs available for aesthetic and small-scale improvements in the study area:

- Fairfax County offers a partial tax exemption for the renovation or redevelopment of eligible commercial, industrial, or mixed-use properties located in any of the County's designated Revitalization Districts.¹⁹
- The County should seek Transportation Enhancements funding from VDOT. While Fairfax County is having difficulty obtaining funding from Virginia currently, this should be considered a viable form of financing for the future.
- A "one-stop shop" for way finding signage is offered by VDOT. Nonprofit and government organizations are exempt from annual fees for any signs provided.²⁰
- The County may also consider using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for some of the improvements. One of the stated purposes of CDBG funding is to attempt to remedy blighted conditions. In a similar case, Culpeper County, Virginia, re-granted its CDBG funding to private business owners for rehabilitation and façade improvements.

In addition to the small aesthetic and streetscape improvements, developers may be able to use Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) to finance some of the multifamily development in the current economic climate. The use of LIHTCs will also ensure that the affordable housing recommended to be demolished is replaced.

¹⁷ President Signs Jobs Bill, Extending Highway Trust Fund. 2010. *Fastlane*. U.S. Department of Transportation: <http://fastlane.dot.gov/2010/03/president-signs-jobs-bill-extending-highway-trust-fund.html>.

¹⁸ Funding Rapid Transit. National BRT Institute: <http://www.nbrti.org/fund.html>.

¹⁹ "Tax Abatement – Revitalization Program." Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration. http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dta/realestatetax_abatementprogram.htm (accessed May 1, 2010).

²⁰ "Integrated Directional Signing Program." Virginia Department of Transportation. <http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/sign-default.asp> (accessed May 1, 2010).

D. Political

Perhaps the chief political issue to be confronted in the revitalization of the study area is related to the perception that the Richmond Highway corridor is not (and cannot be) a serious economic force in Fairfax County. Other areas of the county – Tysons Corner and Merrifield, for example – have received considerable planning and investment attention; whereas, the Richmond Highway corridor has been relatively ignored. Yet the corridor’s location just south of Old Town Alexandria, near the Potomac River and adjacent to fairly high-income neighborhoods gives it considerable potential as a gateway that belies the lack of faith invested.

The fact that the study area falls into two Fairfax County supervisor districts is another political consideration. Several of the people interviewed for this study commented on the lack of cohesive vision for the area between the Mt. Vernon and Lee supervisors. If the area were within only one district, gaining political attention would probably be easier.

On a positive note, Delegate Scott Surovell is a strong advocate for the Richmond Highway corridor. In 2010 Surovell introduced a bill in the House of Delegates to designate Richmond Highway the U.S. Historic Richmond Highway Corridor, honoring its long transportation and settlement history. SFDC would do well to work with Delegate Surovell on redevelopment plans for the study area.

E. Community Engagement

As discussed earlier, community engagement was a feature of this study through a stakeholder forum, a student forum in a local high school, and one-on-one interviews. However, community engagement is not simply a requirement to be ‘checked off’ before proceeding with a redevelopment plan; the quality of the engagement exercise and level of public participation in the planning process can determine whether the plan is a success or failure.

One may expect successful public participation to realize a wide array of benefits:

- Improved quality of decisions (expands local knowledge, challenges assumptions)
- Minimizing cost and delay (in the long run, as decisions have greater legitimacy)
- Consensus building
- Increased ease of implementation (participation instills a sense of ownership)
- Avoiding worst-case confrontations
- Maintaining credibility and legitimacy (and leaving the public more informed)
- Anticipating public concerns and attitudes
- Developing civil society (as citizens learn about governance and coalition-building)²¹

For a public participation exercise to deliver all of these benefits, it must be representative of the local population. Few, if any, of the benefits listed will materialize if significant elements of the local population are disengaged from the participation process. As such, it is appropriate to reflect upon the community forums described earlier in the context of the demographic profile of the neighborhoods adjacent to the study area. Questions that we must consider include the following:

1. *Have we consulted a sufficient number of people for our assumptions regarding the views of the local population to be statistically representative?*
2. *Have we ensured that each section of the local population has been proportionately represented? ‘Sections’ of the local population may refer to age, gender, ethnic background, and the spatial distribution of people’s addresses within the study area.*

Although the people we spoke with were key community and business leaders, our study engaged only a small number of stakeholders. Also, we did not interview anyone from Accotink; nor did we speak with anyone representative of the African American or Latino communities who make up the majority of the Richmond Highway corridor’s population. It is hoped that such omissions would be corrected in any future stakeholder engagement.

²¹ Ibid.

F. Image

As noted earlier, the study area and most of the Richmond Highway corridor suffers from a public perception that it is unsafe, unattractive, and lacking in amenities. The SFDC and local businesses could do much to start changing that perception through small-scale improvements. Many of these were discussed earlier in the section on Urban Design.

The Main Street Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (www.mainstreet.org) is an excellent model for the study area. Although the Main Street program was developed to revitalize *historic* commercial districts, its principles apply just as well to corridors like Richmond Highway. The Main Street approach dictates that a revitalizing area should focus on four areas of endeavor:

- Organization**
- Marketing**
- Design**
- Economic Restructuring**

For the study area, this means simultaneously developing a local organization of all the businesses along the corridor; marketing the Woodlawn CBC as a destination unto itself; working to improve the appearance of the corridor; and recruiting appropriate new businesses.

Following the Main Street model, there are numerous short-term actions that don't require a huge financial investment and would engage the community. These include building an organization of local businesses devoted strictly to the study area (Organization); holding music and food festivals in the parking lots of the shopping centers (Marketing); cleaning up the parkland along Dogue Creek (Design); installing banners or signage that identifies the area (Design); and working aggressively to recruit new restaurants (Economic Restructuring). Just taking action on some of these initiatives would begin to improve the perception of the study area and could lead to further investment in it.

**VI RECOMMENDED
NEXT STEPS**

VI. Recommended Next Steps

In conclusion, we offer the following recommendations to the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment, and Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.

Immediate Next Steps

Implement small-scale streetscape improvements (e.g., trees, greenery, sidewalk repair, light posts, bus shelters, benches, banners)

Begin clean-up of Dogue Creek and trail building

Improve wayfinding to environmental and historic sites

Begin property consolidation in the Main Node

Initiate improvements to properties fronting Richmond Highway in Accotink Village

Submit APRs to Fairfax County to modify planning language to reflect the land-use vision

Process-Oriented Recommendations

Reach out to underrepresented minority constituencies

Form a comprehensive business organization that includes enterprises large and small

Create an ongoing community engagement program with a particular focus on youth involvement (e.g., involve school children in creekside clean-up and stream monitoring)

Promote the area through festivals and events

Seek creative funding sources for improvements

Appendix A

Richmond Highway Woodlawn CBC-Accotink Studio Scope of Work

1. Define Study Area, Roles and Responsibilities

- Have kick-off meeting with SFDC, EDA, and Fairfax County OCRR staff
- Define the area to be studied
- Define role of SFDC and County staff– (reviewing and commenting on plans, act as resource, provide technical assistance) and the role of Virginia Tech

2. Review Existing Conditions and Plans

- Conduct a bus tour of study area (date TBD)
- Review County Comp Plan, looking at existing uses, density and zoning, as well as language – is it sufficient, does it need to be changed?
- Review the 2008 BRAC APR and any 2009 BRAC APRs that have been submitted for consideration.
- Gather market and demographic information for the area and surrounding areas
- Review any current transportation plans – VDOT, and Fairfax County
- Review the BRAC expansion plans

3. Public Client Outreach

- Design, plan and facilitate a vision work shop with key stakeholders, e.g., business leaders, homeowners’ associations, Ft. Belvoir personnel (February)
- Conduct interviews with business leaders in the community and other key stakeholders (February)

4. Develop Work Product with Plan Options

- Land Use – including mix of uses, intensity, and heights

- Urban Design concepts
- Transportation concepts
- Complementary uses based on the BRAC expansion at Ft. Belvoir

5. Identify Issues that may Constrain Specific Land Uses

- Environmental
- Transportation
- Financial
- Political

6. Present Options

- Present recommendations and options to key stakeholders
- Include revised plan language to be incorporated into the county’s comp plan
- Include visuals – schematics, maps, etc.

7. Submit Work Product

Present final recommendations to the Review Panel for feedback

Appendix B

Notes from Forums

Stakeholder Meeting Notes, March 3, 2010

7.00 – 9.00 pm, Fort Belvoir Hampton Inn

Group 1: Themes

What do you like here?

- Historical Aspects. These are not currently capitalized on, partly due to transit and pedestrian friendliness.
- Proximity. Area is close to other things.
- Community. Still “tight knit” and small towny, yet proximate to other things.
- There are mature trees in the neighborhoods
- There are many useful small businesses that are valued by residents, which should be retained.

One participant says it’s “slower” than other places, which another participant also said, but they used the term in different ways one positive, one slightly negative

One person sees things from an economic development standpoint. Gives more rationale to pitch to retailers. Most visitors will be civilian and won’t have access to restaurant and retail on the base. Will need services off-base.

What do you not like here?

- Its run down and deteriorated. The area is difficult to pitch to potential investors or businesses.
- People might like the small businesses, and they are useful, but they often don’t like the façades and physical surroundings.
 - Looks and condition of buildings
 - Condition of sidewalks
 - Lack of trees and landscaping

- How do you encourage current owners/tenants to upgrade?
- Good things have happened to the area, but it gets really bad press and has reputation that is worse than reality
- “Needs a catalyst”
 - Businesses don’t want to be the first to “make a move”- they want something else big to happen first.
- All agree on the need for pedestrian and sidewalk improvements to improve safety and accessibility
 - “It doesn’t say much about your community if it just looks bad and people have nowhere safe to walk”

What should be here?

General

- It needs to be easier to “multi-task”. Park once and do several things in one place without having to get in the car again. (Mixed Use)
- “Get people to come, but get them to stay.” Tthe area is functional, but other than going there to get what you need, then get out as quickly as possible, there are no compelling reasons to linger.
 - Not many café type places
 - Few public areas to gather
- “The 3 legs of development: residential density, then retail, then business/office”
 - Retail tenants look at surround population density
 - Office tenants need to have amenities nearby for them to consider the location. Lease rates aren’t everything.
- Be careful to respect neighborhoods through tapering of building heights, controlled lighting, etc.

Specific

There are surrounding high-income communities that will avoid the area and instead travel farther, especially to OT Alexandria. There need to be reasons for them to spend money in the Richmond Highway corridor.

- Upscale, greater variety of supermarkets
 - Wegman’s is coming (nearby)
 - Whole Foods

- Harris Teeter
- Trader Joe's
- General Interest Bookstore
 - This was expressed by the panelists, and also by the students interviewed earlier in the day
- Costco
 - There have been discussions about Costco. Generally, "big box" stores are not necessarily feared, and can complement existing businesses
 - Some large tenants or projects can be sources of proffers and concessions that could benefit the whole area
- Bakeries
- Cafes
- "Sit-down" restaurants
- Public space
 - Something short of a convention center, but suitable for performances, small concerts, auditorium
 - Plazas and places near shopping to gather, away from cars

Office tenants strongly desire many of the above amenities

What should this corridor look like in 20 years?

- Visual attractiveness is critical
- BRAC could be part of the catalyst
 - BUT, rather than relying on one specific store or "catalyst" project, what are some interim ways to improve the area?
 - What are steps that can be taken now, working with what exists?
 - Small, steady, cumulative improvements and initiatives might have the best chance at success, particularly given the difficulties of the market currently

Woodlawn CBC Community Stakeholder Exercise

Group 2: Themes

What do you like here?

- Some eating options

- Very stable residential neighborhoods
- Mt. Vernon and historical tourism aspect
- Largest population in Fairfax
- Largest guaranteed employment growth
- Collection of smaller businesses

What do you not like here?

- Perceived as a "pass-through"
- Crime
 - Story of someone reaching into a car at a light to steal wallet
 - Accotik has a large number of sex offenders
- Real estate
 - "I've lived here a long time but I've never seen it grow properly"
 - Run down
 - Brand value is perceived "section 8"
- Areas is perceived poorly
- Lack of pedestrian friendly space
- Significant travel cost
- Lack of Class A office space

What should be here?

General

- Perceptual improvement in safety
- One signature development to help anchor the area
- Public transit improvements
 - Vision of Metro station north of Ft. Belvoir
- Accotink
 - Pull up and get good, safe, friendly service
- Mix used project similar to Pentagon Row (at a smaller scale)
 - In general more mix use
- Greater mix of commercial services
 - "Get everything I want without leaving the corridor"

What should this corridor look like in 20 years?

- Not CT Ave. but its very own Rt 1. A cohesive section
- Increase transition between residential parcels
- Significant environmental improvements
- Focus off of Richmond Highway to create neighborhood “courtyards”
- More pedestrian friendly
 - Livable and walkable especially near Woodlawn
- Architecturally unique place

General Notes

Group One Overall Notes

- This group had more of a residential perspective
- What the group likes about the area:
 - Historic elements: proximity to the subject site, not capitalized on
 - Site’s proximity to Fort Belvoir, DC, Alexandria
 - Tight-knit surrounding communities
 - Existing trees
 - Existing small businesses are useful
- What the group does not like about the area/what needs to be improved:
 - Lack of sidewalks and many parts of the roadway are unsafe to cross
 - Run-down
 - Lack of restaurants and hotels
 - No bookstores or destination grocery stores
 - Bad press about the area; there is a negative perception about the area

Group Two Overall Notes

- What the group likes about the area:
 - Existing food options
 - Stable residential neighborhoods
 - Largest population in corridor

- Largest guaranteed employment growth
- Dogue Creek
- What the group does not like about the area/what needs to be improved:
 - Runoff, stormwater control around creek
 - The area’s perception as a pass-through area
 - Lack of pedestrian friendly roadways and lack of cohesiveness on both sides
 - Auto dependent
 - Accotink (crime, poor perception)

What Should Be Here?

- Group One
 - Residential with density, retail, and office
 - Destination shopping such as Trader Joes, Whole Foods, bakeries, cafes, Kohl’s, Hallmark (mid-level retail and department stores)
 - These would attract office users and Fort Belvoir users
 - Some sort of performance space or public assembly space
 - Small improvements and interim uses
 - The area needs a catalyst
 - A seamless corridor needs to be created
 - The corridor should also be aesthetically pleasing
- Group Two
 - An improved perception of safety
 - A signature development that will help spark growth (ex: Pentagon Row)
 - Public transit improvements (possible Metro, as well as improvements to existing transit)
 - Think of Route One as a spine- the ribs need to be enhanced
 - Improve pedestrian elements- make the corridor livable and walkable, especially near Woodlawn
 - Unique architecture (place-making elements)

- A cohesive look along Route One

How to Capitalize on Historic Assets?

- More choices of places to eat at the Army Museum and Woodlawn (example: Mount Vernon Inn)
- After visiting the destination spot, make the visitor want to stay
- Tie all of the historic assets together; make a central location to direct and inform visitors
- Capitalize on the proximity to DC and the National Harbor
- Make more people spend the night
- Increase the cultural/art aspect of the area- galleries, etc.

How to Improve Perception?

- Facebook, Twitter, press pieces to counteract
- Come together as a community
- See progress through interim/incremental uses, which will improve perception

How Do We Define a Seamless Corridor?

- Complementary uses throughout the highway
- Remove blighted spots and make the area more aesthetically pleasing
- Make it a seamless transition
- Increase connectivity with continuous sidewalks
- Make the highway the same number of lanes throughout
- Increase the visual variety and variety of uses

What Kind of “Destination Shopping?”

- Smaller-scale with more destination points (example: Shirlington)
- Example: Costco- it brings people that don’t usually come to the area

How to Attract

- Create small interim improvements to attract others, so that owners are willing to invest
- While embracing changes, unique retailers need to be preserved

How to Reduce Auto Dependence

- Create mixed-use to keep people in one area
- Not going to be able to reduce auto dependence in this area
- The younger generation may not want to live in an auto dependent community

Student Forum: West Potomac High School

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

2:15 pm – 3 pm

Description of participants: Fifteen students, mostly juniors and senior, participated in the forum. Most were quite familiar with the area. Many knew the centers by name, some by only the appearance or the stores in the center. Several people were familiar with the basic definition of zoning. Most of the students live about a ten minute drive away from their school and towards the study area. One student used to live in the study area, but her family moved because they no longer felt safe. Four or five students said that, in the future, they would stay in the area if the conditions remained the same, and 2 or 3 said that they would stay here if it was nicer.

Perceptions of the Corridor

1. Perceptions of safety

Unsafe for pedestrians to cross

“I won’t walk the corridor”

“My mom won’t let me cross the street walking.”

“Sketchy”/ “Scary”

“There’s at least one cop down Richmond Highway every weekend.”

“Richmond Highway got so bad that my family moved to Kingstowne.”

Bad lighting in the developments/ parking lots

Lack of continuous sidewalks and road crossings

“I’ve been stranded on the little divider thing.”

Confusion about crime rate

"We don't see the crimes or hear about them that often."

"I don't necessarily think there's a high crime rate."

"I just haven't heard."

2. Driving conditions

Insufficient street lighting

Congested

"It's not fun to drive on Richmond Highway."

"When you're driving, there are people walking in the middle of the street."

Disconnected access roads

Hard to turn into streets

"My mom always complains about how hard it is to turn into places."

Other transportation conditions

"No one bikes on Richmond Highway." (Former resident of the area)

"To get anywhere on Richmond Highway you use the Connector."

Developments along Rt.1

Limited to options on one side of the road- food, etc.

Confusing to remember the order of the developments

3. Corridor's Appearance

Doesn't make an impression

"Unless you have to go there, you don't want to go there."

A lot of the buildings are run down

Not an inviting place (especially our part of Rt.1)

"The one stop shops on Rt.1 have everything you need, but it's not a place that you want to hang out."

4. Lack of entertainment for high school age

No bookstores, but there are many libraries nearby

Movie theatre closed down and there isn't one now

"There's nothing on Rt.1."

Visions for the Corridor

Future development

Some felt that it was nice having many separate developments because it provided you with options, but many felt that having one logical, organized center would be better (*"kill two birds with one stone"*)

Bookstore and movie theatre (*"Rec activities for our area get overlooked. The high school alone probably puts a lot of money into Kingstowne and Old Town."*)

The more commercial areas would benefit from a sidewalk

Improve lighting and landscaping

More even development on both sides of the road (restaurants, etc.)

"Make it prettier."

"If you can start more improvements, invest some economy, then we could make improvements."

Transportation

Most want to feel encouraged to use their bikes more but feel unsafe using it on the corridor (one suggestion included a barrier between the road for cars and the bike lane)

More people wanted an extra care lane than a bike lane (*"Rt.1 is predominantly for cars."*), but it was recognized that no one participating in the forum really lives in the area and that those who live closer to the corridor might use a bike lane more than a car lane (given low car ownership).

Better sidewalks and road crossings for pedestrians

Successful Case Studies Identified by Students

***Old Town**

Lots of little shops, with places to “hang out”

“You go to explore Old Town.”

***Kingstowne**

“You drive there and once you get there you’re able to get out and walk around.”

Lorton

A lot more friendly

I would drive all the way out there.”

More inviting to stay here and put more money into the area

Appendix C

List of Stakeholders Interviewed

Broker, The Cooper Center

Executive Staff, Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment

Executive Staff, Mt. Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce

KLNB, Real Estate Broker; and Owner, Engleside Plaza and Lukens Plaza

Executive Staff, Woodlawn Plantation and Pope-Leighey House

U.S. Army Medical Director, CIV USA MEDCOM DHCS

Jackson Prentice Real Estate, Pear Tree Village

Delegate, Virginia General Assembly, 44th District

Owner, Roy Rogers

General Manager, Best Western Mount Vernon

General Manager, Ft. Belvoir Hampton Inn

Broker, Sacramento Center