ITEM #11G

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Greenlaw and Members of City Council
FROM: Beverly R. Cameron, City Manager
DATE: January 7, 2014
SUBJECT: City Manager's Update

Highlights of major activities and other notable developments:

9th Annual Restaurant Week January 17-27 - Tempt your taste buds with the flavors of the City of Fredericksburg's annual Restaurant Week. Indulge in three-course prix fixe meals in the historic district of downtown, which boasts more than 30 chef-owned restaurants. Two-course lunches are priced at $10.14 while three-course dinners are priced $20.14. Participating restaurants include: 25 30 Espresso, Bavarian Chef – Fredericksburg, Bistro Bethem, Brock's Riverside Grill, Capital Ale House, Castiglia's, Colonial Tavern, Home of the Irish Brigade, Eileen's Bakery and Café, Fizzlebottom's Café, Foode, The Happy Clam, J. Brian's Tap Room, Jake and Mike's Restaurant, Kenmore Inn, Kybecca, La Petite Auberge, The Orion Sushi Bar and Ultra Lounge, Poppy Hill Tuscan Kitchen, Ristorante Renato, The Sunken Well Tavern, Tea Thyme and What Nots, and Vivify. Go to VisitFred.com for sample menus and more information**.**

Department of Social Services receives Walmart Grant **-** The Fredericksburg Department of Social Services (FDSS) has been awarded a $1,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation's Local Facility Giving Program. These funds will be used to support the FDSS "Safe Sleep Campaign" by increasing outreach and collaboration with select community partners. A portion of the funds will be used to purchase marketing materials for distribution to the community through FDSS, Mary Washington Healthcare, Healthy Families, Fredericksburg City Schools, the Thurman Brisben Center and area Health Departments. Remaining funds will be used to purchase portable cribs.

The FDSS kicked off the "Safe Sleep Campaign" in October of 2012. The campaign's objective is to educate parents and caretakers about the risks of co-sleeping with infants. Many people are not aware that suffocation is currently the leading cause of preventable death for infants, with the majority of these suffocation fatalities occurring in the sleeping environment. Since the campaign's inception, the Department has distributed 47 portable cribs, at an average cost of $60 each, through the generosity of donors and community fund raising events. The award letter from the Walmart Foundation read in part: "We believe that your organization is doing important work to the communities you serve, and we are proud that we are able to support you in your efforts."

***Economic Development and Tourism Launches Data Center Website Feature* -** A new feature of the city's Economic Development website allows EDT staff, site consultants, commercial brokers and businesses to create an up-to-date custom report on the city. Data Center report options include: Demographic Profile, City Incentives, EDA Grants, Business Programs, Tax Rates, BPOL, Market Accessibility, Major Employers, New and Expanded Businesses, Quality of Life, Healthcare, Education, Local Utilities, Maps, Media, Tourism, Regional Overview and a City Directory.

The customized report process only involves four steps. These steps combine the selected information into a single PDF with a dated cover page and welcome letter from Mayor Greenlaw. The report also includes live links so the viewer may search for further information, link directly to the Economic Development website, contact a member of the staff or access the Property Search to view available commercial buildings and sites. It is easy to connect to the Data Center on the website by clicking on the small "Data Center" cart icon, located near the "E-mail," "Print" and "Facebook" icons on every page to create a customized report.

***Downtown Arts and Cultural District Applications for 2014* -** Thirty-five qualifying businesses have applied for Arts and Cultural District incentives this year, including four new businesses. Existing businesses get up to a $250 reduction on their 2014 business license tax and new businesses get 100 percent business license tax reduction for five years, plus waiver of any applicable permit fees up to $2,000. The tax incentives for existing businesses run through 2015.

***Cops and Kids* -** Members of the Fredericksburg Police Department, along with other local law enforcement agencies, participated in the Fraternal Order of Police 22nd Annual Cops and Kids event on December 14 at the local Target store. Formerly known as "Shop with a Cop", the project provides needy children with $100 spending money to buy clothes and toys as well as gifts for their families. During the event, the kids pair up with a police officer, deputy, or jail officer who volunteer their time to assist with the Christmas shopping. This year, over 150 children took part in the event.

Sgt. Darryl Labbe, Aux. Officers Peter Nguyen and John Fesq, Ofc. Scott Worley, Ms. Laura Mahaney, Sgt.(ret) Paul Peterson

***Department of Social Services recognized for their work in adoptions* -** On December 16, the Fredericksburg Department of Social Services was lauded at a reception in Richmond hosted by Governor Bob McDonnell and Governor-Elect Terry McAuliffe. FDSS was one of six local departments of social services, out of a total of 120, recognized at the event which was a culmination of Governor McDonnell's "VA Adopts 1000" campaign. The campaign was launched in May with the goal of matching 1,000 children in foster care with adoptive families. The Governor announced on December 20 that the goal was surpassed with 1,008 matches made in Virginia.

FDSS is committed to finding permanency for youth in foster care and consistently ranks among the top in the state in "Adoption within 24 months" and "Permanency discharge" measures. This means that the Department ensures that children do not languish in foster care and that they achieve permanency upon discharge from foster care. Since 2005, FDSS has facilitated the adoptions of 75 children. In the eight years previous to 2005, only 18 adoptions were finalized. On November 23, FDSS celebrated with nine families who have adopted this year at our National Adoption Day event.

Natalie Newton, Permanency Supervisor, Michelle Matthews, Resource Parent trainer, Kristin Shores, Adoption Caseworker, Christen Gallik, Director, and Beth Girone, Assistant Director

***City Planner Submits Article* -** The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association invited Senior Planner Erik Nelson to provide an article for a compilation called *The Greater Commonwealth: Stories About Planning and Places in Virginia, 2011-2013*. His contribution related to open space preservation during the development process. The piece was published in late 2013. See attached.

The Greater Commonwealth: Stories About Planning and Places in Virginia

2011-2013

American Planning Association
Virginia Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

The Greater Commonwealth: Stories About Planning and Places in Virginia

2011-2013

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7. Blacksburg
8. Lynchburg

INTRODUCTION

Why does Virginia need a book about planning? The answer is that planning is a profession that is poorly understood, yet critical to the vitality of the Commonwealth. When you look around this state, you see large areas of land set aside for conservation purposes, forever protected from development for their inherent contribution to the character of a place. You see productive business parks and main street shopping districts. You see a variety of homes, from single-family dwellings to apartments and everything in between, providing choices for a diverse range of citizens. You see civic buildings, central plazas or neighborhood parks, and other community institutions. You see transportation routes and systems linking people to where they live, work or play. In essence, you see vibrant communities, from both a cultural and an economic standpoint.

Planners and planning play a major role in making all these things happen. Planners do this through big-picture vision processes that draw stakeholders together to articulate common goals and shared opportunities for overall community prosperity. They work closely with citizens, land and business owners, community leaders, housing economic development experts, and conservation organizations to implement that vision by shaping strategies to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Board of Directors of the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Virginia) is pleased to present this book to provide a few examples of this passionate work and the various tools used to yield measurable success. The book emphasizes the importance of community planning to the economic strength of our communities. There are grassroots planning efforts, as seen in the Bellemeade neighborhood in the City of Richmond, where citizens realized an opportunity presented by building a new elementary school to bring greater health to both their children and their natural environment. Other stories highlight campaigns for civic investment. The City of Lynchburg has bet its future on its waterfront, and planners are in the forefront of revitalizing this historically important place to restore economic vitality. Rural locales are also benefiting from recognizing the natural assets they possess, such as Nelson County, where planners and businesspeople capitalized on the opportunity inherent in their mountains and streams to grow their local economy through agritourism. All selections in this book are written by local planners and citizens who know, whether through personal or professional connection, the unique stories of a particular place.

This collection is our portrait of the Greater Commonwealth, in every sense. People from across the state are working together for positive change—for the greater common wealth of our citizens—generating stories along the way that each particular place will come to tell as their own. It is our hope that these stories inspire you to consider the value and impact of planning in Virginia. It is also our hope that this initial collection will grow as more stories are created, collected and shared over time and will become a familiar part of our Chapter's annual celebration of APA's National Community Planning Month. Please contact us at **www.apavirginia.org** if you would like to contribute your own story to our next edition.

Acknowledgements

APA Virginia wishes to thank its members, the Chapter Presidents Council of the American Planning Association (APA), the Arlington Economic Development, and the Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia for their generous funding of this project.

Thomas Jefferson Foundation officials talk with APA Virginia members about rural preservation issues in Albemarle County at 2012 APA Virginia Conference. Photo courtesy of Jeryl Rose Phillips.

Welcome to Luray's "New Front Porch": The Luray-Hawksbill Greenway

By Patrick O'Brien and Kenneth Beyer

Luray, Virginia is a town of fewer than five thousand residents. It is situated in the Shenandoah Valley between the Shenandoah National Park and George Washington National Forest. Despite its small size, the town has over 300 acres of parks including the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway.

This highly visible, two-mile walking/biking trail borders the Hawksbill Creek for most of its length and runs through the middle of town. The greenway, which links several neighborhoods and parking areas with the downtown shopping district, is popular and well used by residents and visitors. Even though it has no special lighting, people can be seen walking the trail from early morning to late in the evening. There is an overall feeling of safety because the greenway is visible from many view points and is patrolled by police on bicycles and on foot. To assist walkers in determining the distance they have traveled on the greenway, yellow dots were placed on the trail every tenth of a mile. Users are able to enter the trail at any point, and by counting the number of markers passed, easily calculate the distance walked. For example, if you enter the trail and pass 10 markers, you will know that you have traveled a mile.

The corridor now occupied by the greenway was not always a source of pride for the town. From 1880 to 1980, the Virginia Oak Tannery operated on the east side of town, often drying animal hides on the banks of the Hawksbill Creek which contributed to water pollution. The creek banks were overgrown with unsightly vegetation, and the water was stagnant and swampy.

The greenway project began in 1999, when the Virginia Department of Forestry invited the Page County Tree Board, a local community forestry organization, to attend a conference on greenways and trails. Luray's Director of Parks and Recreation and a member of the Tree Board attended the conference and immediately realized the potential benefits of a paved walking/biking trail. The idea was presented to the Mayor and Town Council, who approved research into potential benefits of such a facility and possible funding sources.

An overall route plan was established and professional advice was sought from the Department of Forestry and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Department of Forestry offered to assist with the conceptual design, but with minimal

Luray

The Town where Caverns meet the Sky.

HAWKSBILL GREENWAY

Luray's New "Front Porch"

Photos courtesy of Hawksbill Greenway Foundation.

funding; DCR offered to help with "bricks and mortar" funding, but only if the greenway could be developed in phases. In addition, the two state agencies immediately posed two challenges. First, Hawksbill Creek would have to be assessed for pollution control and ways to improve the trout fish habitat. Second, Luray would have to pay for the services of a landscape engineer.

A landscape architectural firm in Roanoke proposed the development of a conceptual design plan for under $10,000. After the plan was presented, the Town Council decided to go to the community for a public hearing. Residents wholeheartedly supported the idea and the Council made recommendation to proceed with the plans for the first phase of construction and to seek grant funding. Application was made to DCR for the initial grant, and the town was awarded $62,500 for the construction of the first half mile of the trail. The Town of Luray provided the remaining funds required to complete this first phase.

During the time when the first phase of the greenway was being planned, work also began on the town-owned flood plain situated on the north end of town. The town purchased this area because it contained a spring that might be used as a future source of water. This area was situated on both sides

of the creek and was an active beef cattle operation. An area farmer had leased this field for years and his animals drank from and defecated in the creek.

After consulting with the Department of Forestry, the Page County Tree Board submitted a grant application to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. With $4,000 from the fund, the Town Council granted permission to develop a riparian buffer. More than 16 acres on either side of the creek were fenced off, drinking stations for the farm animals were installed, and volunteers helped to plant over 3,000 tree seedlings between the cattle grazing field and the creek. The cattle are now rotated among the three grazing areas, still occupying a visible portion of the riparian buffer as part of the greenway, but they no longer have access to the creek. This general area ultimately became the third phase of the greenway.

Volunteers have donated many hours to the greenway project, but especially the riparian buffer. Boy and Girl Scout troops, members of the Page County Tree Board and other interested citizens have given many hours of their time and effort to plant trees and otherwise develop this area. This was an important step for the Town to clean the waters of the Hawksbill in order to improve the fish habitat. The grasses and trees trap nutrients and prevent runoff from entering the creek, which has resulted in it being established as a Class A trout stream, the highest designation by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Some 200 children enjoy a kids-only trout fishing day on the first Saturday in May.

The greenway has been the catalyst for many other improvements in Luray, including creation of a downtown historic district; local artists' painting over a dozen murals on the greenway and Main Street; and construction of several downtown pocket parks. Several outdoor and bicycle shops have opened downtown since the trail was constructed, as well as several new restaurants.

Work on the greenway adjacent to downtown Luray had a powerful impact. A local artist volunteered to paint a mural on a building that is next to the walking trail. The building was constructed of concrete block and was very unattractive. A local company and the Luray Garden Club each donated $500, which was used to power wash, tuck point the mortar joints, and coat the building with green paint. The artist created a design that focused on the wildlife normally seen along the greenway corridor, but added an image of the American Flag draped over the Blue Ridge Mountains, in memory of 9/11. This mural was so impressive, that other artists,

working with the Town's Tree and Beautification Committee, painted eleven more murals along the greenway and throughout the town. The committee plans to add one or two additional murals each year.

The Luray Parks and Recreation Department continued to submit grant applications for further development of the greenway, and by 2007, had obtained over $400,000 for construction of additional phases. Ruffner Plaza, which is located where the greenway meets Main Street, was designed on the site of the first two lots sold in 1812 during the early stages of the town's development (Isaac Ruffner was an early settler who sold property to individuals in order to create the town so that it could become the county seat.) The Page Valley Master Gardeners volunteered to design the gardens of the plaza, donated monies and plants, and assisted in the actual work of planting.

The latest phase of the greenway was completed in the fall of 2008, adding approximately 1,800 feet to the trail. This phase has become a popular area for walking and sight-seeing with its beautiful scenery and trailside amenities. In 2010, a permeable paver parking lot and rain garden were installed along this section of the trail. Along with the additional parking, the main goal in this area was to filter run-off into the Hawksbill Creek. By installing the permeable pavers, rain garden, and associated landscaping, we have achieved our goal and are confident that the environmental benefits of this project will have a positive impact on our waterways for generations. This project was made possible through a grant provided by the Department of Forestry.

Also in 2010, with another DCR grant, comfort stations accessible to people with physical disabilities were constructed on the second and third phases of the trail. The exterior façades are designed to blend in with the trail's natural surroundings.

Trail-side bench and picnic table designs were researched due to the possibility of a high water event; the designs chosen have proven to be virtually flood proof. As the greenway phases were being constructed, town residents, businesses, and visitors to the greenway donated many of these benches and tables, as well as drinking fountains, trees, and gardens. Thus far, donations have exceeded over $350,000 for trail-side amenities.

The Hawksbill Greenway Foundation was founded as a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation in 2009. The goal of the foundation is to support and enhance the town's investment in the award-winning Hawksbill Greenway as well as the remainder of the town's 300 acre park system. The foundation also supports environmental

education throughout the community.

In a relatively short amount of time, this "eyesore" which was the gateway to the town, has been transformed into a place of pride and beauty for residents and tourists to enjoy not only for recreation, but for the health benefits as well. This project would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of staff, the support from Town Council, monetary contributions, and the many volunteers who have dedicated priceless hours to this rewarding project. The Luray-Hawksbill Greenway has truly become Luray's "New Front Porch."

For more information about the Luray-Hawksbill Greenway Trail, visit the Town of Luray website at **www.townofluray.com** or contact the Luray Parks and Recreation Department at 540-743-6475. ■

New Town: A New Revolution in Williamsburg

By Leanne Reidenbach, AICP

Take a walk around New Town and you can see it has developed differently than other areas of James City County. As a result, it also survived the economic and housing downturn quite differently. A 600-acre retail, office, and residential development at a gateway into the county from the City of Williamsburg, New Town celebrated the ten-year anniversary of its groundbreaking in 2012. But planning started much earlier. Careful visioning, public input, partnering, creativity, and flexibility went into making New Town one of the first living examples of a New Urbanist community in the Tidewater region. New Urbanism promotes pedestrian-friendly communities with a mix of uses, housing choices and job opportunities. Whereas in typical suburban development, uses like a grocery store and a house are separated and often require people to drive between them, new urbanism mixes retail and residential. This creates a more integrated community that increases transportation options; provides a wide array of commercial uses in a compact area; allows infrastructure (like roads and schools) to be used more efficiently; and creates an active and diverse area.

Placemaking

The seed for New Town was planted in the mid 1990s when James City County staff and community leaders recognized the need for new types of development in key areas. The County desired to create a physical town center and gathering place for its civic, residential, and retail activity. Others also saw this as an opportunity to create a new downtown for

the Greater Williamsburg community.

The impetus for New Town was two other projects in the same area. The first was the City of Williamsburg and James City County's search for a new courthouse site, which was selected at the boundary of the City, the County, and the College of William and Mary. Meanwhile, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) was in the design stages for the second project: a major roadway now recognized as Route 199. Plans for the road went through an agricultural and wooded area next to the courthouse site and most of it had been owned for years by the Casey family. In order to justify an exit ramp near the undeveloped land, the owners developed a plan for a typical suburban shopping center to show the site's potential. The courthouse and Route 199 projects brought new focus to the Casey tract as a critical gateway which, if approached carefully, could provide the County with its town center.

The early involvement of stakeholders through the Crossroads group helped further refine the vision for the Casey tract. This group included the County, City and College; Eastern State Hospital; Colonial Williamsburg; and, some large private landowners. The group dealt with projects in the area where their borders and interests converged and served to

Photo courtesy of James City County.

foster discussion and partnerships. The president of William and Mary, Timothy Sullivan, took a particular interest in a new urbanism concept that could link the College with the wider community to promote "lifestyle excellence" for students, faculty and staff. This approach also extended the pattern and feel of Williamsburg's downtown flavor into the County, but with a modern twist. Robert Casey, who represented his family in discussions with the County, agreed that this was the way to go. He recounted that as he was growing up, his family's property was seen as being "out in the country" while all that his family needed could be found in the Williamsburg downtown, which is now primarily Colonial Williamsburg. "Williamsburg had lost its center," Casey noted, and he liked the idea of getting that center back.

The Design Competition

To get the project started, the County held a public meeting to solicit ideas about what people wanted to see this area grow up to be. This feedback informed the criteria for parallel design competitions for the courthouse and the Casey tract. Goals for design submissions included plans that set a model for town planning, considered flexibility and economic feasibility, and were compatible with local history. By holding parallel competitions, the courthouse could be integrated with the urban area. The entries were displayed at an open house to get public comments which were then given to a panel of judges to consider in selecting finalists. An outside panel of expert judges was selected because it was believed that this was the best way to ensure selection of a quality and non-biased design solution.

The winning plan, designed by Cooper, Robertson & Partners, was chosen because it featured traditional neighborhood design where people could live, work, and play. The plan encouraged walkability; established an interconnecting urban street pattern that permitted a variety of lot sizes and housing types; and was responsive to environmental constraints.

At the time of the competition, the area was zoned R-8, a district set aside for rural residential development and agriculture. In a unique phased rezoning process, the property stayed R-8 but was rezoned so that the area had to develop in accordance with the winning design plan. A set of proffers, or items offered voluntarily by a developer to minimize development impacts or bind them to design features, was connected to the property at this time as well. The proffers established a New Town Design Review Board consisting of five local professionals; a system for reviewing financial and traffic impacts; and a

development pattern and design guidelines.

The Board of Supervisors approved the overall master plan for New Town in 1997. The plan was divided into 13 sections to allow for gradual development of activity areas as the developer, New Town Associates, L.L.C., and the market saw fit. As they were ready to develop a section, the developer proposed section-specific master plans and design guidelines and rezoned the areas to mixed use. The first rezoning to mixed use was the courthouse in 1997, followed by the town center area in 2001. The rezoning for Section 12, one of the last to be developed, was approved in 2012.

Over the years, the development details, proffer expectations for environmental protection or affordable housing, and design features have changed considerably from the original master plan. Flexible section-specific master plans allow the developer to adjust the amount of commercial and residential development within allowable ranges based on market conditions. The master plans show key design features, like building frontage lines, parking locations, and open spaces, (rather than specific building placement) and a range of uses from commercial and residential to institutional and open spaces. The master plans are paired with design guidelines to allow further flexibility. As each section is built, site plans, landscaping, signage, and architectural elevations for each building are reviewed by the Design Review Board for consistency with the guidelines. While this procedure has been largely successful, it has required a lot of determination by the County and landowners to hold true to the underlying principles of the plan. Virtually every section of the Casey tract has been rezoned and is under development with about two million square feet of commercial, institutional, and office space and over 1,500 houses built, planned, or projected in New Town.

Keys to Success

People involved in the Casey tract's development agree that the right conditions were in place and conscious decisions led to New Town's success. The development has weathered ten years of construction and has continued to build through economic growth and recession. Even in recent years, about 25 homes per year are sold and new office and retail uses are attracted to the project. So what are these elements of success?

1. Partnerships. The initial collaboration was between the county and the Caseys. As a result, the landowner and County were able to think creatively to plan a unique area that was a dramatic improvement

Photo courtesy of James City County.

over typical suburban patterns. The County-developer partnership has strengthened over the course of years of working together despite turnovers in County leadership. A broader collaboration was the Crossroads group, which looked at integrating New Town and nearby land into a coherent urban fabric.

There were also important partnerships in funding aspects of New Town. A significant amount of road construction was needed to serve the proposed houses, offices and stores. During the early planning phases, VDOT was working on designs for three roads bordering the Casey tract – Route 199; an extension of Monticello Avenue connecting to the City; and Ironbound Road. The County and the Caseys recognized some potential issues with the VDOT plans, particularly the plan to make Monticello Avenue a rural road, so they partnered to get funding to upgrade the road to accommodate traffic increases. Another partnership was with the College of William and Mary. President Sullivan fully supported the New Town concept to the point where the College's Endowment Association (now the College of William and Mary Foundation) helped financially support the effort. Through this partnership, Sullivan and Casey focused on the vision to do something positive for the community rather than on economics or profit and,

according to Larry Salzman, President of New Town Associates, L.L.C., if this hadn't been the case, New Town would look a lot different today.

2. Decision to be land developers only and not to build buildings. The developers concentrated on preparing areas by installing roads, water and sewer lines, and utilities. This decision was based on the long-term nature of the project recognizing that there would be times of economic growth and slowdown. Focusing on infrastructure gave the developer the ability to move quickly by having multiple buildings constructed simultaneously while reducing financial risk. New Town would have taken longer to build or could have failed in the recession had they developed both the land and buildings, said Salzman. John Horne, who was the county's Development Manager at the time of the design competition, noted that having varied building developers and architects, so that each building was unique, enriched the town's character.

3. Mix of uses and houses. In contrast to suburban neighborhoods, New Town is designed to have a spectrum of housing types geared toward people of different income levels, age, ownership, and familial status. The mix led to a variety of entertainment, dining, and retail options to cater to the needs of different residents. Stores and local organizations

Photo courtesy of James City County.

also hold special events, like car shows and farmer's markets, to further integrate New Town into the larger community. These events occur in well-placed civic spaces. The County built a public community building adjacent to a lawn that hosts many events. In addition, the developer has made an effort to attract "town-like" uses, like a church, daycare and gym, to New Town to serve residents. The result is a vibrant and active area that functions like a traditional downtown.

4. Flexibility. The biggest examples of flexibility are in the phased rezonings and broad design-focused plans. Horne noted that from the County's perspective, the phased development gave the public a chance to gradually adapt to changes in impacts like traffic. Elected officials had the chance to see what a new urbanist development actually looked like and get more comfortable with the intensity and pattern. Phasing also let officials assess the impacts of each section and change expectations based on current spending, road projects, and trends. Salzman observed that by developing smaller chunks of land at a time and having a broad plan, New Town Associates was better able to adapt plans to meet current market conditions, which allowed them to stay afloat during the economic downturn. It was also easier to make quick changes during negotiations with users because specific uses were not identified in specific areas. There are a few downsides to phasing and broad plans. For instance, it is hard to pinpoint what type of use is going to locate where, leading to some uncertainty. Phasing has also extended the process, bringing challenges with changing leadership, staff, and architects.

Another example of flexibility is shared parking. Shared parking is based on different uses having different peak times for parking demand. As such, a place like New Town does not need all of the required spaces for each use. Instead it can have the maximum required for one use and then share the spaces with other uses. A basic example is an office building and a house sharing a parking lot. An employee of the office is generally using one parking space during business hours. A resident can then use that same parking space during the times when the office is closed. There has to be a mix of uses in order to make shared parking work. Though shared parking is a new concept that was first used in the county on a large scale in New Town, it has proved beneficial. Salzman estimates that the town center would have required about 800 additional spaces had he not followed a shared parking plan. The additional spaces would have resulted in more than 250,000 square feet of

paved surface, which would have made it difficult to create a walkable area.

New Town is an example of how commercial, office, and residential development can coexist and how higher densities can be designed in ways that respect environmental and historical features to bolster community character and vibrancy. It is the result of collaboration, flexibility, a clear vision and sound planning practices. Without any one of these items, this gateway into James City County would have developed in a significantly different way. Instead, New Town has become a physical center of activity for the community and a center of discussion to introduce people to a living breathing example of New Urbanism. ■

The Brew Ridge Trail: Maximizing Community Assets in Nelson County

By Timothy M. Padalino

When Fred Boger arrived in Nelson County in 1996 as the new Director of Planning and Zoning, he inherited a responsibility to help make positive community change in this rural county in Central Virginia. Given that Nelson County is surrounded by localities with distinct market advantages – such as Lynchburg's access to industrial infrastructure, Waynesboro's access to the interstate system, and Charlottesville's vast reserve of social capital and institutional assets – Boger realized that the county was in a somewhat difficult position to carve its own niche. He recognized that a traditional "commercial-industrial development strategy" would not be the most appropriate or successful approach to community and economic development.

Instead, Boger saw place-based opportunities stemming from the county's unique assets. He worked slowly in collaboration with county staff and community members to facilitate a context-sensitive community and economic development strategy that was compatible with the Blue Ridge landscape, sense of place, and market trends of Nelson County. This included promoting agritourism and encouraging small home occupations and similar entrepreneurial ventures as opposed to chain hotels, corporate "big box" clients, and other large enterprises. Instead of directly competing with surrounding localities on their terms, an emphasis was placed on strategies

and activities that could be summarized as an “asset-based community development” (ABCD) framework.

Boger worked for more than a decade, in close collaboration with Maureen Kelley, the county’s Director of Economic Development and Tourism, to help realize such a place-based vision. The two department directors acted on their conviction that the best way to move Nelson County forward was through less conventional, more creative approaches. They understood that the community’s incredible scenic and recreational resources and historic rural agricultural heritage represented an opportunity to grow the local economy, attract and create jobs, and capture investments toward the county’s future. This belief influenced how they engaged prospective clients, administered and enforced local ordinances, and worked with the county’s Board of Supervisors.

Since this approach was somewhat unconventional, Boger and Kelley had to be proactive in communicating this vision with entrepreneurs, other agencies and departments, and elected officials. One of the

first steps was to formalize the vision through inclusion in the Nelson County Comprehensive Plan. For example, the Plan includes an economic development goal to "encourage a diverse and local economy… compatible with the county's size and rural character;" to "support and encourage tourism as a viable means to diversify the local economy;" and to "recognize the importance of the county's agricultural economy as an integral part of Nelson's economic heritage and as an important part of the current economy."

Out of this vision and goals emerged what is now a very successful agritourism industry in Nelson County. While farms, orchards, and vineyards have been a defining feature in Nelson County for a very long time, Boger and Kelley worked with the Board of Supervisors to generate a "bigger picture." This included the expansion of visitor services and tourism infrastructure; the promotion of value-added products; and the production (and attraction) of cultural events and activities. One of the most exciting examples associated with this thriving new agritourism industry is the Brew Ridge Trail.

The Brew Ridge Trail is a relatively new – but increasingly successful – tourism and economic development effort that spans Nelson County and neighboring Albemarle County. The "Trail" is not a physical amenity; rather, it is a marketing program unifying the area's many craft breweries. Currently, the trail consists of five participating breweries (see map), primarily located along the Route 250 and Route 151 corridors. South Street Brewery, in the City of Charlottesville, is the only establishment in an urban downtown setting. Starr Hill Brewery – originally located in Charlottesville, as well – now produces and distributes their goods in Crozet, a growing community in scenic western Albemarle County. Starr Hill's adjacency to the Blue Ridge Mountains is characteristic of the other three craft breweries, all of which are located on Route 151 in Nelson County. Blue Mountain Brewery, in Afton, serves up their craft brews on a sweeping outdoor terrace complete with horizon-wide views of Humpback Mountain and surrounding terrain. Wild Wolf Brewing Company, in Nellysford, maximizes their location at the toe slope of Crawford Knob with their outdoor biergarten, which is shaded by a grove of mature elm trees. In Roseland, Devils Backbone Brewing

Photo courtesy of Tim Padalino.

Company is situated in the Rockfish River Valley below Three Ridges and Devils Knob, with a VA Scenic Byway (Route 664) providing a connection up to the Blue Ridge Parkway and to Wintergreen Resort.

The trail project was initially conceived and implemented by Kelley, but the actual breweries are the products of a much more complex set of partnerships and local context.

To begin with, the Central Virginia area's deep-rooted cultural appreciation for all things local, sustainable, and artisanal is central to the emergence and flourishing of these individual establishments – and to the growing success of the Brew Ridge Trail as an attraction and community amenity. Other key components of the trail's success story include visionary and passionate entrepreneurship; relationship-based economic development services; and flexible planning and zoning services.

The proactive collaboration among several key stakeholders was critical to the initial success of the breweries in Nelson County. Boger and Kelley focused on the clients' vision and interests. Kelley noted that County staff intentionally resisted the convenience

of applying a black-and-white perspective toward applicants and prospective clients. They hesitated to arrive at a conclusion of "no" or "not possible" until careful and creative consideration had taken place. By being actively engaged with entrepreneurs, the two department directors were able to guide the projects forward despite various obstacles and challenges. Having a solution-oriented mindset and philosophy made the difference in successfully establishing a business-friendly atmosphere throughout the planning stages.

With support from Stephen A. Carter, Nelson's County Administrator, Boger implemented this solution-oriented ethic through creative zoning interpretations. For example, Blue Mountain Brewery was interested in locating along the Route 151 corridor, but the residential land use classification for the targeted property did not allow for beverage production or distribution. To overcome the fact that the existing zoning prohibited manufacturing and industrial uses, Boger pursued a re-zoning request from R-1 (residential) to A-1 (agricultural), which was much more favorable than a re-zoning request to M-2 (industrial). This strategy was pursued after Boger worked with the owners of Blue Mountain Brewery to ensure that the proposed operations could be interpreted as an agricultural "farm brewery" under the Zoning Ordinance – and avoid the need to be rezoned as industrial.

In similar examples of collaboration, County staff worked closely with local and state agencies to facilitate the opening or expansion of other establishments on the trail. They worked with VDOT to overcome site-specific commercial access issues with Wild Wolf Brewing Company; and with multiple agencies and stakeholders to secure special event permits for Devils Backbone Brewing Company. This has helped Devils Backbone to continue hosting the highly successful "Festy" live music and cultural event three years in a row, while incorporating adjustments to the event from year to year to best harmonize with requests from the local community and the County.

Out of the Brew Ridge Trail initiative emerged the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild (VCBG) – a unified voice for advancing industry-specific legislative action, identifying and implementing industry best practices, and amplifying promotional efforts. Along the Brew Ridge Trail, the member breweries increasingly see themselves as partners in a regional business effort – and not necessarily as direct competitors in a turf battle. This collaborative

Photo courtesy of Tim Padalino.

mindset has evolved to the point of self-initiated, semi-annual "collaboration brews" where head brewers come together and co-create small batches of unique beverages. Mary Wolf, the co-owner and operator of Wild Wolf Brewing Company, said, "I love that it brings everyone together. We all compete, but by doing stuff like this it creates a sense of camaraderie and collaboration, which is nice." Taylor Smack, the master brewer and co-owner of Blue Mountain Brewery and the recently opened Blue Mountain Barrel House, added that, "All of us together can make something cooler than each individual can make. It's a cool way for us to create something that we don't usually have the time or room for on our own schedule, so we can do something wacky."

The success of these strategic actions among so many participants has been amplified by the various assets that are intrinsic to Central Virginia. The abundance of high-quality freshwater resources in Nelson County – a headwaters community – is of central importance to the location and the success of Blue Mountain Brewery and other establishments. In addition, the beautiful Blue Ridge scenery and the abundance of public outdoor recreation attractions – including the Appalachian Trail, the Blue Ridge Parkway, U.S. Bicycle Route 76, and the George Washington National Forest – are valuable complements to the breweries. The ability to combine a craft brewery excursion with an adventure into the Three Ridges Wilderness Area, a visit to Crabtree Falls, or an

ascent of the 4,000-foot Priest make the Brew Ridge Trail a unique market force and community anchor.

Another complementary asset is the rich regional heritage of craft, artisanal, and experimental agriculture. This heritage is an important element that enhances the craft brewers' innovative techniques and products, and which continues to reinforce the trail as a commercial and cultural success. In fact, the Brew Ridge Trail now overlaps with an emerging rural economic development focus titled "Nelson 151." The self-titled "Main Street for the Rockfish Valley" is the most recent example of proactive collaboration among local entrepreneurs. The Nelson 151 marketing effort combines the success of the Brew Ridge Trail with the numerous other agritourism attractions in the Rockfish Valley, including historic orchards, award-winning vineyards, beyond-organic farms, and locavore-friendly eateries.

The establishments affiliated with Brew Ridge Trail and the Nelson 151 marketing campaigns have helped bring positive momentum to rural Nelson County, where both visitors and locals can taste the richness of Central Virginia. Visitors come to enjoy the craft beer and locally-sourced, seasonal foods – often combining these agritourism activities with exploration of the adjacent Blue Ridge Mountains, the area's rich history and cultural heritage, and the arts scene. Locals – many of whom engage in the same pursuits and passions – patronize the establishments along the Brew Ridge Trail and Nelson 151 not just as casual watering holes and eateries but also as important gathering spaces and "third places" within their decentralized rural community. It is often here that ideas, laughter, and cultural expression take place among visitors, among locals, and between the two groups.

Rural Nelson County is the setting for multiple creative asset-based community development initiatives involving the vision, collaboration, and determination of many stakeholders. It is an example of how a place-based vision for economic development and community prosperity can guide planning and zoning. And it is an example of how leadership, proactive collaboration, and relational service can converge and result in community progress.

Within the broader context of Central Virginia's agritourism, heritage tourism, ecotourism, and cultural events industries, Nelson County is well-positioned for continued economic success and ongoing community prosperity. This is an excellent example of how, through cultivation of sustained community

leadership, coupled with proactive collaboration, and place-based visioning by local government staff members charged with advancing community and economic development goals, other communities and regions throughout the Commonwealth can catalyze positive momentum and generate similar success stories through their own context-sensitive focus on asset-based community development.

[i] "Breweries unite to create a Belgian-style Tripel," Katrina Koerting, Nelson County Times, August 23, 2012. www2.nelsoncountytimes.com/news/2012/aug/22/breweries-unite-create-belgian-style-tripel-ar-2148420.

The Economics of Human Scale: The Remaking of Shirlington

By Terry Holzheimer, PhD, FAICP and Karen Vasquez

Imagine a block-long street lined with restaurants and local retailers, a place that is crowded on evenings and weekends with people drawn to one of the few art house movie theaters left anywhere – and then more than double its size. That is what Arlington County's economic development planners did in the Village at Shirlington. In the process, a new state-of-the art library was added, along with a new home for a highly successful regional theater company, both housed in a landmark theater-library complex. In addition, five new residential buildings with 644 units, a 142 room hotel, 42,000 square feet of retail space, a 195,000 square foot office building, two parking garages with nearly 1,500 spaces, and an urban transit station were added. All of this replaced an abandoned big box store and acres of parking lots. The new Village at Shirlington has become one of Arlington's most popular re-envisioned downtowns. The process Arlington took to get there was a long, but rewarding journey.

In the late 1970s, Arlington County, together with the community, developed a plan for the revitalization of Shirlington, a then-aging commercial area adjacent to a major interstate, I-395, just minutes from Washington, D.C. Shirlington was a relatively traditional suburban shopping center with a grocery store, tire and auto repair facility, a big box retailer, and a few small shops. Renovations in the 1980s created a traditional main street anchored at one end by two office buildings and at the other by the big box store and a movie theater. While an improvement over the previous development, Shirlington Village remained a rather small retail outpost, dependent almost entirely on the theater

and a few good restaurants for its survival. By 2000, the property owner, Federal Realty Investment Trust, the county and the community saw the need for an intensive planning effort to take a fresh look at the entire neighborhood. An extensive community process – a hallmark of Arlington development culture locally referred to as "the Arlington way," – guided the creation of Shirlington's Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) and the associated Shirlington Design Guidelines. The PDSP established the uses, densities, building heights, parking locations, transportation facilities, utilities, and community facilities for the entire area— in conceptual form.

The development plan for Shirlington specifically envisioned Campbell Avenue as the "Main Street" of this urban village. The detailed design for the street incorporates pedestrian-friendly elements that make Campbell Avenue a comfortable and exciting place for visitors and residents to walk. While the PDSP helped provide a blueprint for Shirlington, implementation of this plan required both the developer and the county to make significant investments in the area. Almost one million square feet of new mixed-use development was incorporated into the

Photo courtesy of Eric Taylor.

Photo courtesy of Arlington Economic Development.

PDSP, along with infrastructure and community amenities, most of which was situated along Campbell Avenue.

Within the PDSP, Campbell Avenue was designed to create an exceptional pedestrian experience, terminating in the Signature Theatre, Shirlington Library complex, and its public plaza. Street level amenities ensure that this main public space supports the desired character, in terms of plantings, outdoor dining, signs, lighting, and street furniture. Even the storefronts are an amenity with the high degree of window transparency which engages pedestrians and invites them into the stores and restaurants. Parking is distributed behind the commercial buildings with entrances from several streets to enhance the ease of access while improving pedestrian flow and safety.

The exceptional quality of the streetscape makes Shirlington one of the most notable neighborhoods in the D.C. metro region. It is important to point out that none of this happened by accident. Every element of the streetscape arose from careful planning and was incorporated into the Shirlington Design Guidelines, which were developed as part of the PDSP in 2000.

Anchoring Campbell Avenue on its west end is a landmark theater-library complex that houses Signature Theatre. Signature invested significantly as part of a unique public-private partnership with Arlington County to move from a converted garage, to this beautiful and spacious new home. Signature Theatre undertook a major fundraising effort to build out the interior of their space, with the agreement that Arlington County would fund and own the building which would house both the theatre and a new Shirlington Library. Over $10 million was raised by Signature, with Arlington County underwriting the cost of the entire building's core and shell, at a cost of $5.5 million for the Signature portion. The result was a fabulous new home for a popular and critically

acclaimed theatre company, but also a landmark anchor for the entire neighborhood. "Signature's presence here sealed Shirlington's reputation as a destination spot for the entire metropolitan region," said Chris Zimmerman, then-Chairman of the Arlington County Board. "We are proud that Arlington incubated this theatre, helped it grow, and partnered with Signature on its wonderful new home that showcases Arlington's commitment to the arts," Zimmerman added.

Arlington County provided the catalyst for still more development. Campbell Avenue, then South 28th Street, was extended westward one block and then an additional block to the north. This required that the county contribute roughly two and a half acres of land used by its Trade Center (public works yards) in order to allow the project to proceed. In addition to constructing the theater-library complex, Arlington needed to underwrite the risk and provide public parking. The resulting development agreement had a little bit of everything – a land swap, co-investment in a garage, and "home run" insurance related to county loans to the developer which provided for an earlier payback to the county should development occur faster, or generate greater returns, than anticipated. All of this helped defray some of the risk for all parties

Photo courtesy of Arlington Economic Development.

and allowed the county partner to get construction financing with reasonable terms. The overall leverage was $1 of County funds per $24 of private funds which, because the project was so successful, ultimately reduced to $1:$42.

The end result was an agreement that was equitable to both the county and the property owner. By ensuring an anchor, creating viable lots, covering the infrastructure expense and agreeing to pay for parking - ahead of the actual demand created by the new

residential and retail uses - Arlington enabled each of the proposed developments to secure financing. Thus, the county was able to achieve its planning goals as well as make good use of its capital, leveraging its investment at a ratio of roughly 25 to one. In addition to the many restaurants and cafes along Campbell Avenue, a new Harris Teeter grocery store at the north end of the street has provided a much-needed amenity for Shirlington and Fairlington residents, since the departure of the previous neighborhood grocery store in the mid- 1980s. An adjacent, attached parking garage with reserved ground-level parking for customers makes shopping easy whether on foot, bike, or car. Additional theaters including an art-house cinema, Theater on the Run, and Classika Theater make Shirlington one of the most notable arts destinations in the area.

The result of this new development is a neighborhood with both a renewed economic engine and an energized and attractive sense of place. During the day, Shirlington is friendly and relaxing, as young professionals, families, and retirees mix seamlessly, moving up and down the street, shopping, dining, or just enjoying an afternoon stroll. In the evenings, theater-goers and young people fill the street, enjoying pre-theater dinners or late-night gatherings with friends. The mood is energetic and exciting, yet accessible and safe, as Shirlington welcomes a diverse and friendly crowd. A variety of amenities and 24-7 activity helps create a secure, welcoming environment.

Overall, Shirlington has become one of the most popular and talked-about neighborhoods in the region. Its rise in popularity over the last three years has been well documented. In 2005, a Washington Post feature story “Making Shirlington a Magnet” examined the growing popularity of the neighborhood, the vision of Shirlington as an arts and entertainment destination, and the successful efforts of developers and Arlington government planning and economic development officials to create exactly that. Residents and business owners alike support the revitalization of Shirlington. Warren Brown, owner of Cakelove bakery and one of Inc. Magazine’s 26 Most Fascinating Entrepreneurs, opened a Shirlington location in 2007, noting the neighborhood’s amenable character and seamless accessibility to retail. Offering a friendly, exciting, and visually interesting place for the visitor, residents, and workforce, Shirlington is authentic, eclectic, and filled with character. It is truly one of the region’s great neighborhoods – and a true testament to thoughtfully planned economic development.

Finding Common Ground on the Battlefield: The Second Battle for Chancellorsville

By Erik Nelson

Spotsylvania County is sometimes called the Crossroads of the Civil War. Four major battles occurred there, including part of the battle of Fredericksburg. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park protects a total of 8,443 acres in fee simple as well as in easement, but a significant amount of historic land remains in private ownership. When private organizations and the federal government acquired land for this park, they purchased lines of military earthworks and specific points of interest, leaving the intervening fields and woods in private hands. The assumption was that the land would remain in agricultural use and not need further protection. The post-World War II National Highway System changed everything, however, by providing wonderful automobile access to relatively inexpensive land. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park has not been without development pressure ever since.

One reason more land was not acquired for the park was that local government pressure kept some land out of federal hands. From the local perspective, land in federal ownership did not do enough for the locality's tax base, despite numerous studies demonstrating parks having very positive economic impacts.

At Chancellorsville, the battlefield is situated along the axis of the old Plank Road, the modern State Route 3. In the early 1990s, the National Park Service worked to expand Chancellorsville's boundaries, so it could acquire sufficient acreage to protect the integrity of the historic setting, which relates directly to the visitor experience. The volatile real estate market had become a real challenge to the Park Service. Local governments coveted the promise of tax revenue if the land was developed. Schools and county services were more immediate needs than a concern with the experience of visitors.

At that time, relations between the federal agency and the local government were tenuous, so the Park Service focused on protecting the western end of the battleground, where Stonewall Jackson had led a celebrated flank attack on the afternoon of May 2, 1863. That part of Spotsylvania County was more distant from Interstate 95, and development pressure was considerably less. The historic terrain to the east, however, where the campaign opened on May 1,

Photo courtesy of Erik Nelson.

1863, was not identified for inclusion within the park boundary. The land that was within a few short miles of the interstate would inevitably be developed for commercial uses, enhancing the County's tax base.

This May 1st battlefield was also the potential site of a major crossroads, where a proposed circumferential highway around Fredericksburg would cross State Route 3. The example of "edge cities," such as Tysons Corner, provided a compelling vision. Even if the entire beltway was not completed, this northwest leg would bring significant development into the county. Such lucrative potential attracted investors and solidified a certain level of political support. Anticipating the new road, the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors rezoned a portion of the property for commercial use, which set off an immediate reaction.

Spotsylvania County voters responded to the road project with concern about increased traffic as well as the possible impacts to the recreational use of the nearby Rappahannock River. A well-organized group called Friends of the Rappahannock had consistently advocated for protection of the river corridor, which is characterized by a 25-mile long natural area without any bridges. This vocal group was eventually joined by two battlefield protection organizations: the Fredericksburg-based Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and the national Civil War Preservation Trust. These groups decried the negative impacts of the beltway on the nationally significant Chancellorsville Battlefield. Their argument was that loss of the May 1 field would severely compromise the experience of those who visit the National Battlefield Park.

In time, the local voters mounted a concerted campaign to replace the County Supervisors who were proponents of the road. Citizen interest had

focused on the natural beauty of the county as well as its historic significance. The Civil War battlefield preservation organizations worked together to mobilize voters to preserve the rural character of their county by preserving the historic terrain of May 1, 1863. Through this combination of river advocates and historic preservationists, who were also local voters, the county's newly elected officials voted to remove the proposed new highway from regional plans.

A very angry property owner claimed he intended to build anyway. The property owner was absolutely uninterested in selling the 277 acres he had acquired with such high hopes. Without the new highway that would create a new crossroads, though, the potential for that acreage had diminished. Despite the owner's claim of disinterest in selling, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust diligently figured out how much of the tract would need to be acquired to preserve the May 1, 1863 battlefield. The rolling ground was in agricultural use and very open. Historic maps, however, showed that woods had been present within 700 to 800 feet of the Plank Road, which eventually became State Route 3. In addition, the terrain rose to a low ridge, also about 800 feet from the road. There was no reason to preserve the entire tract, when this 800 foot wide area would suffice.

Photo courtesy of Erik Nelson.

Following the shake-up of the local election, a development firm, Tricord, looked at the potential for developing only a portion of the tract and approached the property owner. They also worked with the battlefield preservation groups to develop a proposal to purchase the 277-acre property. This process did not take very long because the preservation groups knew exactly what they wanted to preserve and what could be developed without harm to the overall battlefield park experience. Tricord

is a local firm with the same keen interest expressed by so many voters to keep the community attractive. This attitude recognizes the marketing potential of selling houses in attractive areas, but Tricord is also one of those firms that truly likes doing the right thing for their community.

When Tricord managed to acquire the 277 acre tract, it immediately sold 140 acres comprising the battlefield to the preservationists, at below-market price. This battlefield land is a 900 foot deep area adjacent to State Route 3 and will remain attractive open space. The remaining acreage, thus separated from traffic noise, would subsequently be subdivided into 300 house lots. The terrain was agricultural and very open, but the preserved acreage extended beyond the historic tree line. Over several years, volunteers planted trees where the historic woods had been located and in time these new trees will accurately define the Civil War battlefield while also screening the new housing development from view. The wooded screening will also provide the new houses with additional noise buffer from State Route 3.

The downturn in the economy forced Tricord to sell the partially built housing development, but the historic property remains intact and will not be affected by the change in ownership. In fact, the purchasing firm owns nearby acreage and had preserved an additional 75 acres of adjacent battlefield land, in return for greater residential density for the remaining acreage. This significant terrain was preserved through a three way partnership between preservationists, two developers, and the local government.

The key to this successful outcome was a clear idea of what needed to be preserved so investors could evaluate how the rest of the acreage could be developed. This process was also defined by respect for the local government's role in land use decisions as well as voters letting their elected representatives know that they appreciated the national battlefield's intrinsic economic value to their quality of life.

The Civil War Preservation Trust has opened this land to visitors and the impact has been tangible. John Hennessy, Chief Historian of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, says that the site is now heavily visited, even though it is not technically part of the park. "From an interpretive standpoint, it's now a critical part of the story we tell."

One City, Two Stories: Community Engagement, Hope and Rebirth in Richmond

Bellemeade Walkable Watershed

By Alisa Hefner

The Bellemeade neighborhood, situated on the south side of Richmond, has suffered from decades of disinvestment. The community lacks sidewalks, adequate drainage infrastructure, and basic recreational amenities. The neighborhood is surrounded by industrial corridors and bisected by an impaired and neglected urban creek. At the heart of the neighborhood is a new elementary school and a community center. 88% of the students who attend Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School are considered disadvantaged. Although many children live within a 10 minute walk to school, most are bused.

In 2011, Skeo Solutions joined forces with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) and the City of Richmond to develop a new vision for Bellemeade as a walkable watershed to improve both the quality of the creek and the neighborhood, resulting in an initiative known as "healthy watershed: healthy community." A walkable watershed integrates the flow of water and people into a cohesive strategy to improve overall community health. The concept is a creative, effective way to achieve environmental, public health, education and community development goals. A Watershed Concept Plan was developed on a unique framework that identifies strategies within the "schoolshed" and the watershed to improve the health of the creek and the community.

Photo courtesy of Alisa Hefner.

This collaborative effort leveraged funding from multiple sources including the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Altria Family of Companies and

Skeo Solutions. Altria's role is notable as part of the company's corporate giving/grant program. Environmental stewardship, specifically water quality, is one of the company's strategic focus areas. Because Richmond is home to Altria's corporate headquarters, Altria made the city one of its target geographic areas.

The Process

As a first step, the project team identified water flow and pedestrian flow challenges. In the neighborhood, water flows through a network of streets, drains and the creek. Urban development in the area has led to several challenges, including erosion, channelization and polluted water. Residents also complain about areas prone to flooding. Pedestrian movement through and within the neighborhood is also challenged due to safety concerns such as the lack of sidewalks; major roadways; poor visibility; and the lack of safe creek crossings.

In October 2011, the project team hosted a community tour and workshop to bring together residents, community leaders, organizations, city staff, elected officials and other local stakeholders to identify priorities to improve watershed and neighborhood health. The community workshop offered an opportunity to integrate a range of perspectives, from long-term resident to city engineer, into a shared vision for the watershed. Walking the watershed together allowed everyone, including agency and non-profit representatives to see the issues and start talking about solutions. The discussion provided additional insight into neighborhood conditions and needs, enabling a robust dialogue around opportunities for restoring the creek, bringing the community together and enhancing community health. These discussions led to the following set of goals for the Watershed Concept Plan:

- Connectivity – connect the neighborhood to the creek and the James River.
- Safe Passage – improve pedestrian routes to the community center and new school.
- Water + Environment – slow, infiltrate and clean rain water.
- Health + Community – develop a sense of community around the new school and watershed.
- Education + Awareness – create outdoor education opportunities for elementary school students.

A big driver for the project was the Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School, which was scheduled

to open its doors in 2012. School leaders boast that theirs is the most sustainable elementary school building in the country. The new school is located adjacent to Bellemeade Creek, a tributary to the James River and Chesapeake Bay, and offers a tremendous opportunity to connect children through outdoor learning environments to their local watershed. "We envision that the new school will embrace the adjacent creek as a tremendous learning opportunity for the students, and we hope to see the school become a real center for the neighborhood" said Jannie Laursen, the school's principal. Ideas from local fifth grade students informed the core strategies of the Watershed Concept Plan. As a component of the community workshop, students drew their preferred walking route to school and identified any obstacles within that route. Students also drew pictures of what they would like to learn in the park property next to their school and the creek. Ideas generated by the students, together with input from the community workshop were shared at a public open house to gather additional input.

The Plan

Building on the walking routes and outdoor education opportunities identified by the fifth graders, the Watershed Concept Plan identified three priority "green" connections between the community and the school and community center. The green streets plan included a series of infrastructure improvements that would support and enhance these community connections, including new creek and culvert crossings; sidewalk improvements; bicycle lanes; street lighting and a neighborhood connection to the proposed James River Branch regional trail. The plan also identified compatible strategies that would restore local water quality and natural systems, including street plantings, stream stabilization, creek bed restoration and stormwater infiltration.

Celebrating neighborhood connections and environmental restoration provides multiple benefits. The priority routes will connect open spaces that serve as community gathering places. Paths will also connect recreation areas, encouraging exercise and healthy lifestyles. Proposed nature trails, outdoor classrooms and community gardens along the routes will provide education opportunities.

The Result

Combining innovative planning with community capacity-building and a focus on youth leadership, the Bellemeade Walkable Watershed project led to a cohesive strategy to improve the overall health of the community. Today, the Watershed Concept

5 min
New School Center
Park Property
To James River Branch Rail-Trail
Mimosa
Oakland
Webber
Royall
Wright
Warwick
Afton
Colfer
Columbia
Lynhaven
Jefferson Davis
Kroute
Thaxton
Rolgemont
Commerce
Helen
Silver
Preston
Gunn
Bowen
Drewry
Willis
Ernald
Overlook

Plan is helping guide efforts to clean up the Goodes Creek watershed, strengthen local infrastructure and leverage investment in the Bellemeade neighborhood. Project outcomes include:

- A concept plan that is informing the City of Richmond's stormwater planning process, supporting water quality permit compliance, and helping prioritize capital investments to reduce flooding.
- Student-selected walking routes to the new elementary school that are helping prioritize sidewalk investments and promoting the idea of walking to school.
- Community priorities that are informing designs for a neighborhood park, including creek-side outdoor learning environments, watershed education, community gathering areas and community gardening.
- Partnership building and momentum focusing on improving quality of life for Bellemeade residents.
- Inter-department and inter-agency coordination within City government that is aligning and leveraging resources for this underserved community.

Building on the project's Watershed Concept Plan, follow-up actions to date include:

- Local non-profit and volunteer activities are underway. For example, the James River Association has led a volunteer stream cleanup and a storm drain marking campaign in the neighborhood.
- The City of Richmond has prioritized funding to complete sidewalks to the new school.
- Pro bono services have been provided to design the community park.
- Community events, including a Walk to School Health Day, are being held to celebrate the benefits of healthy living through access to the outdoors and healthy urban streams.

Next steps for the community include the development of a coalition to guide the funding and further implementation of the strategies outlined in the Watershed Concept Plan. The new, sustainably designed Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School is expected to open in early 2013.

Keys to Success

The following critical factors led to the success of this unique planning process, the vision and results:

1. Invite diverse stakeholders to the table. In the Bellemeade neighborhood, children were facing significant health challenges. They were also the population that would be using the community's new elementary school. Student leadership in partnership with residents, community organizations and city agencies was essential in developing the Watershed Concept Plan.
2. Think beyond the site scale to a watershed-wide strategy. Consideration of the broader Goodes Creek watershed enabled the project to achieve environmental, public health, education and community development goals as well as recognize the importance of key community assets such as the new elementary school.
3. Connect education, public health and environmental benefits. From the outset, the project recognized that planning tools and strategies should address the community's public health, quality of life and environmental concerns. Trails, for example, provide opportunities for recreation and outdoor education as well as wildlife habitat and stormwater infiltration.
4. Leverage multiple funding sources. Including potential partners, organizations and funders in the process generated interest and momentum to turn ideas into action. Working together toward a common vision allowed for a better use of limited funding and jump started investment in the community.
5. Generate fun and inspiration. A walkable watershed approach to address community health involves people of all ages and backgrounds to generate creative solutions and opportunities.

For more information on the project, visit **skeo.com** (www.skeo.com/index.php/outcomes/bellemeade_walkable_watershed_pilot)

For more information on the Walkable Watershed process, contact Alisa Hefner at ahefner@skeo.com | 434-975-6700 x235. ■

Greater Fulton's Future

By Juliellen Sarver, AICP and Jason Sawyer, PhD

The Birthplace of Richmond is being reborn. Just east of the better-known Church Hill and encompassing the banks of the James River to the Henrico County line, the neighborhoods that compose Greater Fulton have come together to address the wrongs committed in the name of urban renewal in the 1970s and to fully realize the untapped potential of Richmond's Best Kept Secret.

Greater Fulton combines the neighborhoods of Fulton, Fulton Hill, and Montrose Heights, and has seen its share of challenges over the decades. As the birthplace of Richmond, the community retains its strong ties to history and its residents are proud of their deep roots in the city.

The Community Embraces Visioning

Virginia Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) identified the Greater Fulton community for its Neighborhoods Rising program in 2010. Neighborhoods Rising was created to help neighborhoods understand the value of comprehensive community development, and to create and implement a plan to improve quality of life. The Neighborhood Resource Center of Greater Fulton (NRC), well-known for its initiatives in education and community improvement, was chosen as the convening agency to orchestrate a collaborative partnership and to work toward implementation of the community's goals. The name chosen for this effort was Greater Fulton's Future.

After many months of exhaustive community outreach, the Greater Fulton Community Vision Agreement emerged from a partnership between Virginia LISC, the NRC, and residents. The agreement delves into the community's legacy; economic development; housing resources and needs; education and youth issues; health and human services; and transportation. Working groups were created to focus on each of these issues.

Visioning sessions were held in various churches and community centers throughout the neighborhood to reach as many residents and business owners as possible. While the visioning sessions were facilitated by LISC staff, residents quickly embraced the process and made it their own. For the first time, residents were calling the shots and making the decisions about their own community. It was an empowering time and many residents emerged as leaders in their chosen topic area. These included Rosa Coleman, Spencer E. Jones, III, and Carl Otto.

Rosa Coleman has lived in Fulton for many years. She emerged as a passionate leader and advocate for improving the housing in Greater Fulton. Her

enthusiasm is contagious, and she has been instrumental in significant improvements in the housing conditions in the community. Ms. Coleman has led the Housing Work Group through a series of initiatives, including coordinating with VCU to conduct a comprehensive inventory of all the housing in the neighborhood.

Spencer E. Jones, III has been the voice of Fulton for many years, and emerged as a leader of the Legacy Working Group during the visioning process. Mr. Jones grew up in Fulton, and is extremely proud of his roots there. He has always advocated for the importance of Fulton in the history of Richmond, and has embraced the role of historian and voice of Fulton's past while creating opportunities for its future. Through the Greater Fulton's Future initiative, Mr. Jones has collaborated with other residents to create and sustain a lasting relationship with the Valentine Richmond History Center to document Fulton's past through archival documentation and an oral history project. Mr. Jones has also collaborated with other active residents and the Storefront for Community Design (a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing professional design services to underserved parts of the city) to establish the Fulton Memorial Park, which will honor Fulton's role in the history of Richmond as well as remember the community that was displaced during the urban renewal of the 1970s.

Carl Otto has long been an advocate for the numerous parks in Greater Fulton. These include Gillies Creek Park, which attracts users from throughout the city. Mr. Otto's family has roots in Greater Fulton going back five or six generations. Mr. Otto and his collaborators on the Parks and Recreation Working Group built bridges and trails in the parks and collaborated with outside groups such as the National Football League to improve the physical condition of the parks and ensure that adequate programming will be provided to park users.

The Community Vision Agreement is intended to be, and has become, a catalyst for continued community engagement – and has provided a new starting point for the community, the City government and other partners to strengthen Greater Fulton.

Transformation Comes to Greater Fulton

Over nearly two years, lasting partnerships have been formed in Greater Fulton between residents, area universities, non-profit organizations and city leaders. Actions and improvements include:

- **Economic Development:** Businesses from inside and outside of the community have taken a

renewed interest in the business district, led by the Economic Development Working Group. Community members have made real on-the-ground improvements to the businesses. A comprehensive Economic Development Assessment was conducted by an outside consultant, leading to targeted improvements in the area. The community has twice collaborated with Arts in the Alley to create murals in the commercial district. The city, along with local community development corporations, has also begun to take notice and has allocated over $125,000 for improvements to be made within the Greater Fulton business district. Organizers have also begun a matching grant program to allow existing businesses within the district to make much needed façade improvements. The Storefront for Community Design developed Business District Design Recommendations that illustrate what certain improvements will look like and facilitates their implementation. The first wave of recommendations was implemented in 2012. The City of Richmond's Planning Department is working with the community to study zoning changes that will make it easier for businesses to locate and operate in the business district.

- **Housing:** In close collaboration with the Housing Working Group, graduate students in VCU's urban planning program conducted a comprehensive inventory and assessment of Greater Fulton's housing stock, including potential historic resources and housing condition assessments. The inventory is being used to develop an action plan for improving housing and addressing the needs of the community's elderly population to allow them to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Rebuilding Together of Richmond, a local community development corporation, chose Greater Fulton for their spring build in 2013. Rebuilding Together will have a significant impact on the safety and condition of many houses in the community. Other housing groups such as Project Homes and Better Housing Coalition have begun to explore projects within the community.
- **Community Legacy:** The Legacy working group has been busy telling Fulton's story through the eyes of the residents who lived in the tight-knit community and who experienced first-hand the 1970s-era destruction of a community in the name of urban renewal. Those stories are being collected in the forms of

Photo courtesy of Juliellen Sarver.

oral histories, photographs, and a documentary film about the community to be archived at the Valentine Richmond History Center. A park to commemorate the community that was razed and to honor its most famous son, Admiral Samuel L. Gravely, America's first African American Admiral, has been designed in partnership with the Storefront for Community Design. Ground was expected to be broken in 2012 as the city allocated $100,000 to begin implementing the design.

- **Transportation:** Through the leadership of residents on the services work team, the City of Richmond has extended its Shopper's Shuttle to Greater Fulton. The Shopper's Shuttle serves areas of the city that are considered to be food deserts by providing free transportation to grocery stores to residents twice a month. In addition, the community has for years suffered the consequences of heavy truck traffic, including noise and vehicle damage. The community has successfully worked with the city and area trucking companies to re-route heavy truck traffic away from residential areas. Residents are actively working with the Greater Richmond Transit Corporation (GRTC) to improve public bus service, and bicycle sharrows are coming to the community as part of the city's East-West Bicycle Route (scheduled for the summer of 2012).
- **Parks and Recreation:** Environmental and recreational improvements to Gillies Creek Park are underway as a result of community leaders' efforts. Significant park improvement projects throughout the community to date include a new path connecting apartments to recreational facilities, a new bridge over a creek, and programming of new athletic activities for youth.
- **Human Services:** Greater Fulton lacks medical facilities and other essential human services for adults, children, and the elderly. The community is now working with regional health care providers to establish a satellite clinic in the community so that residents can have access to primary health care. Services work team members have successfully partnered with Bon Secours Health System to establish a dental van and health care van to come to the community twice a month with the goal of establishing a permanent satellite clinic in Greater Fulton.
- **Education:** Greater Fulton lacks a school despite the large number of children who live in the community. Although the Neighborhood Resource Center provides a small Montessori

school and youth programs, the community has identified the need for a public school in the community and is now working with the Richmond School Board to explore educational options.

For further information about the Greater Fulton project, please contact Juliellen Sarver, AICP, at jes@sarvergroup.com or 804-222-1326 or Jason Sawyer, MSW, Community Organizer, Neighborhood Resource Center at Jason@nrccafe.org or 804-882-0647. ■

Blacksburg Transit: Regional Cooperation to Bridge the Mobility Gap

By Erik C. B. Olsen, PhD

Plans for bus service in the Town of Blacksburg, located in the New River Valley south of Roanoke, started in the early 1970s. Blacksburg Transit (BT), a creation of the town, launched its first three bus routes a decade later, mainly to serve the large Virginia Tech student population living within the town.

In 1988, a new mall opened in the northern end of Christiansburg, within five miles of Blacksburg. With the opening of the mall and additional growth in the immediate area, demand grew for expanded bus service to connect the two towns. Citizens and students living in Blacksburg wanted to access this growing economic area and people in Christiansburg needed to travel to work and services in Blacksburg. In 1990 BT started a new service to connect the towns with hourly bus service. This new service was called the Two Town Trolley and provided a direct connection between the mall and destinations like the post office, Department of Motor Vehicles, and key department stores, as well as the Virginia Tech campus. It was the first time that Virginia Tech, the Town of Blacksburg, and the Town of Christiansburg pooled resources to expand bus service between the towns. The trolley helped begin to bridge the gap between the towns, providing a vital link across borders.

While the trolley represented an improvement, citizens continually requested additional services to provide expanded hours and better connections between downtown areas, residential neighborhoods, and other business districts. In addition, the trolley struggled with low ridership levels. The average daily

Photo courtesy of Erik C. B. Olsen.

ridership dipped to below eight passengers per hour on weekdays, in stark contrast to the ridership in more densely populated areas in Blacksburg. The type of route provided by BT had always been fixed routes – a route with pre-set, permanent stops. However, this approach did not appear to be the best solution for Christiansburg, with a population per square mile that is about half what it is in Blacksburg. Citizens wanted bus service to destinations outside the main corridor between the towns.

The trolley route provided just under 10,000 passenger trips annually. Available funding only provided an hourly service, serving major portions of Christiansburg. Many of the citizens that were most likely to ride the bus, families with low-to-moderate incomes, did not live close to the bus route and were often seen walking along the main roads to get to their destinations, including to the bus stops. Service could not be expanded until citizens demanded it and until the Christiansburg Town Council was able and willing to dedicate more money for expanded transit.

Important Catalysts for Change

In 2008, two important events occurred. First, BT received grant funding from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to expand and improve services within Christiansburg. Around the same time, the local area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), of which Virginia Tech and the towns are members, approved funding to conduct a survey of all Christiansburg households regarding their transit needs. These two events provided the catalysts leading to new bus services that would better serve residents.

The survey was important to clarify what bus routes would best serve citizens. While BT staff had traditionally made decisions about changes to routes, they wanted to have both objective and subjective data from stakeholders, including Town Council members and the citizenry as a whole. Several formats for the survey were considered. In the end a full-size, six-page paper survey was designed for distribution. This format was selected so that all citizens were included, including those without easy access to the Internet. Residents received up to three mailings from BT, with a letter signed by their Mayor and Town Manager, about the plans for expanded service.

The response rate was very good at 38 percent, with a total of 3,777 completed surveys out of over 11,000 mailed. Given that Christiansburg is a relatively small community, word of mouth likely helped spread information about the survey. In addition, numerous

Photo courtesy of Erik C. B. Olsen.

formats were used to notify the public. Over an eight month period, BT used email alerts, ads on the buses, paper hand-outs, paid radio advertisements, and interviews and articles on the radio and in the newspaper. The survey was also mentioned in notices sent out on all Town of Christiansburg water billing statements for one month.

The survey response showed that the demand for expanded bus services was strong. It revealed that 45 percent of respondents would be interested in using the bus to go shopping. The same percentage would use the bus for work or to attend college.

> The current service doesn't run early enough for most commuters. If bus service was available from 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. it would be a useful service.
> *Survey respondent*

Over 1,500 open-ended comments were also provided with detailed input for improving bus service, expanding hours, providing higher frequencies of service, and improving schedule information. One of the most notable responses was this: Over half of all respondents indicated they were very or somewhat likely to ride the bus if a new service were available.

Implementing New Services

BT's Planning division coordinated the survey and then worked with a team of managers, staff, citizens, volunteers, and decision-makers to identify potential expanded bus services. In the end, a series of three new services was proposed to Town Council for review and consideration in Spring 2009. Council carefully weighed the input from citizens, amid pressure to maintain a balanced budget during strained economic times. In early summer, six months after the citizen survey, and after hearing several presentations on the proposed services, the Council approved a roughly three-fold increase in funding.

BT's operations staff were now running at full speed to implement three new bus services in Christiansburg by late fall, just in time for the holidays. While all funding for the service increase was provided by Christiansburg, BT operates under the umbrella of the Town of Blacksburg. So, BT staff also had to present to the Blacksburg Town Council for their approval. Fortunately, all of the positive press, as well as the generally pro-transit attitude in Blacksburg, made this relatively easy.

Three new bus services were launched just a year after the survey was completed. A new fixed route called the Explorer was introduced to provide a connection between the east side of Christiansburg, downtown, and the northern areas of town. This route also included the ability to provide a limited number of "courtesy stops" to areas away from the regular route, upon request. A new flexible call-ahead route called Go Anywhere provided citizens the ability to call and request trips "from anywhere to anywhere" within the town limits, for the same price as a regular fixed-route bus trip ($0.50 for full-fare). This combination of new bus services appears to be working well for Christiansburg - an area that is spread out with lower population density, and where many portions of town are more rural in nature. The Commuter Route provides a morning and evening trip for Christiansburg residents from multiple locations to major employers within Blacksburg.

The success of these routes started with the marketing of the survey over four years ago. Now

in their third year of service, the new routes, in combination with a modified Two Town Trolley, have led to more than a 220% increase in ridership on Christiansburg routes, to 26,000 trips annually.

Meaningful Results

One regular wheelchair rider on the Go Anywhere bus told us:

> I use it just about every day to get to work. It's made my life easier and I'm more independent. Since all the vehicles have lifts, it makes work easier since I can bring my powerchair with me.
>
> *A Go Anywhere customer and Christiansburg resident*

Staff members from BT have spoken with this customer on several occasions. She indicated that in the past she was only able to get to work by depending on her parents, and she had to use her manual chair. She is now a regular passenger on the Go Anywhere bus and is able to work more often and to do so independently.

BT staff heard about an entire family that benefits from the new bus services available in the Town of Christiansburg. One gentleman goes to work at 7 a.m. and returns home at 3 p.m. using the Explorer bus. His wife works at 8:30 am and returns at 5 p.m. via the Explorer as well. Their daughter also rides the Go Anywhere service to the Christiansburg library for her afterschool program. Here we see the impact the new bus services have on an entire family!

We also heard from another woman who combines two of the new services on a daily basis. She rides the Go Anywhere service to a pick-up location for the Commuter Service, which she then rides to get to work in the Town of Blacksburg. We have another customer who takes the Go Anywhere bus to the mall, rides the Two Town Trolley to the hospital in Blacksburg, and then walks to his work at a nearby retirement community.

Finally, an article from last year's newspaper showed how some creative community volunteers arranged to use the Go Anywhere service to transport men in need of shelter during the winter. The bus service transported men to an overnight facility, and of those that participated in the program, several of the men found a job and/or a place to stay during the coldest time of the year.

By working together through regional transit planning to listen to, identify, plan for and invest in service delivery in ways that meet the real needs of their citizens and students, the communities of Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Virginia Tech have created enhanced mobility choices that have, in turn, improved the economic vitality of the region.

“ I use it just about every day to get to work. It’s made my life easier and I’m more independent. Since all the vehicles have lifts, it makes work easier since I can bring my powerchair with me.”

A Go Anywhere customer and Christiansburg resident

Photo courtesy of Erik C. B. Olsen.

Banking on the River: Lynchburg's Renaissance

By Louise Searle

The City of Lynchburg lies in the eastern foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the James River flows along the border of its downtown. Driven by Lynchburg's Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000, the Riverfront Park project emphasizes this unique feature of Lynchburg's downtown and gives residents and visitors a beautiful civic space on the waterfront.

The City began the transformation of its industrial riverfront into the beautiful park it is today in the early 1990's. After years of exodus from downtown Lynchburg by businesses and residents, a number of deteriorated structures and vacant lots remained. Several of these historic structures were demolished in the 1970's and 1980's to make way for parking garages, parking lots, and modern buildings that would spur economic development. Unfortunately, this did very little to contribute to a downtown revival.

Rachel Flynn, the City's new Community Development Director at the time, arrived in Lynchburg with a focus on downtown. An architect and urban planner by training and practice, Ms. Flynn related the

Photo courtesy of LuAnn Hunt.

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greatness of so many cities to the connection with their waterfronts. She invited Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston, South Carolina to speak to the citizens, political leaders, business leaders, and the media about Charleston's successful downtown and waterfront revitalization. Mayor Riley emphasized that the first step was to create a vision that could be implemented in clear steps. Inspired by Mayor Riley's direction, a group of retail merchants, historic preservationists and local residents formed a Main Street organization called Lynch's Landing to assist Flynn with implementing a vision for downtown.

The City hired a design firm, Sasaki Associates, to aid the development of the Lynchburg Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan 2000 – a document centrally focused on the economic development and historic preservation of the area. The plan included detailed streetscape and riverfront park designs, in-fill design recommendations, and an economic development and parking strategy. It also highlighted six key design and planning principles including (i) the creation of a downtown walking loop that focused on expanding retail businesses, street-level activities and streetscape environments; (ii) a celebration of stairs and bluffs that emphasized the stunning topography, views and historic resources; (iii) extension of the residential fabric of historic districts and neighborhood connections into the heart of downtown; (iv) reinventing the river as a place; (v) acknowledging gateways as a sequence of arrival experiences for those entering downtown; and (vi) development of a strategy to intertwine programmed activities, park design and economic development to balance these elements over time. With their endorsement of the plan, City Council pledged a significant financial commitment of $1 million per year for 20 years towards the implementation of the revitalization effort. Lynch's Landing also partnered with the City to initiate the Friday Cheers summer concert series to generate funds for downtown redevelopment.

During the planning process, citizens expressed concern that the plan would be just another to "collect dust" on the shelves of City Hall. To ensure the plan did not meet this fate, the City created implementation lists of one-year, five-year, and ten-year to twenty-year goals. The idea of balance in public and private investment – using a few key public investments to attract private ones – was crucial in the implementation of these goals. The City focused on defining public spaces such as the restoration of Lynchburg's 9th Street corridor; the historic

Photo courtesy of LuAnn Hunt.

Photo courtesy of LuAnn Hunt.

courthouse and Monument Terrace renovation; development of Riverfront Park; and conversion of the former J. W. Ould building into the Department of Social Services. Meanwhile Lynch's Landing, private developers and local nonprofits furthered the vision through the opening of Amazement Square Children's Museum, Riverviews Artist Lofts, the Academy of Music and the BluffWalk Hotel and Conference Center. The partnerships ultimately led to the revitalization of dozens of vacant historic structures downtown, as well as the addition of hundreds of new loft-style residences, retail establishments, restaurants, entertainment venues, and other businesses. The downtown and riverfront revival process also led to several projects not envisioned during the original planning process such as a skateboard park, a new federal courthouse and post office, and a repertory theater. The area has become the permanent home for a myriad of events including an outdoor summer cinema program, year-round races and festivals.

The Riverfront Park was one of the keys in creating an attractive downtown to further encourage Lynchburg's renaissance. It is downtown Lynchburg's "front yard" – a space for enjoying day-to-day encounters with neighbors in a walkable community – as well as a place for large public events. These events not only draw people to the park, but to surrounding businesses, making the park an economic driver. Showcasing the river's important role in the City as a natural, historical, and cultural resource provides a striking open space in the downtown area that offers opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and public events. Connections to the natural world are provided by the park's elements of sustainability and environmental education - including rain gardens, grass-paver vendor areas and interpretive signage explaining the role of these features in improving water quality. Plans for Riverfront Park were updated with the assistance of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects in 2006 to strengthen its core elements and its connection to the rest of the City. The City's current efforts focus on unifying Lynchburg's downtown by incorporating distinct pedestrian features such as an elevated sidewalk from Jefferson Street, a future "Bluff Walk" corridor connection among a number of historic buildings and strong pedestrian and bicycle connection paths to Blackwater Creek Bikeway. All of the elements of Lynchburg's downtown - the park, restored buildings, trails, community market, historic districts, diverse retail and restaurants and other amenities – come together to create a vibrant urban environment within a picturesque natural landscape.

Showcasing the river's important role in the City as a natural, historical, and cultural resource provides a striking open space in the downtown area that offers opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and public events.

The City of Lynchburg has been recognized for its efforts and successes with awards from the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Virginia Downtown Association, and the 2006 National Main Street Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Lynchburg also won the Virginia Recreation Society's award for Best New Facility in 2001 for Riverfront Park.

The remarkable result is Lynchburg witnessed a revival in its Downtown and Riverfront - thoughtful planning and determined implementation brought new ideas, inspired new initiatives, and spurred the growth and development of the built environment and community pride alike. New value was assigned to a place once written off as hopeless as the community came together to create a vision and worked together to make it become reality. Residents and visitors once again see their downtown as the heart of the city - as it was throughout most of Lynchburg's rich history. The Riverfront is now an integral part of Lynchburg's downtown because of the cultural attractions, entertainment venues, retail establishments, recreational opportunities, and residences in and near the park. It is a true mixed-use civic place – all thanks to the commitment of a few leaders to reconnect the elements of a special place.

ABOUT the Contributors

Kenneth Beyer

Kenneth Beyer became the president of the newly established Page County Tree Board in 1996. The Virginia Department of Forestry invited the tree board to attend the Governor's Conference on Greenways and Trails in Roanoke in 1999. Mr. Beyer contacted the Town of Luray on behalf of the tree board offering to pay the registration fee for D. Patrick O'Brien, the town's parks director. This connection was the first step in the development of the Hawksbill Greenway.

Alisa Hefner

Alisa Hefner serves as the senior project manager for Skeo Solutions' green infrastructure practice areas. Headquartered in Charlottesville, Skeo Solutions provides collaborative planning and technical assistance to communities and local governments. Ms. Hefner has pioneered innovative methods for conducting green infrastructure assessments and has provided advice and technical training to municipalities and non-profits on how to incorporate a green infrastructure approach into local land use planning. She has spearheaded Skeo's Walkable Watershed program, which is an integrated watershed planning approach to improve water quality and community health.

Terry Holzheimer, PhD, FAICP

Terry Holzheimer is the Director of Economic Development in Arlington County. Prior to joining Arlington County in 1996, he served as Director of Economic Development for Loudoun County. He has also served as the Washington Regional Manager for Legg Mason Real Estate Research, Inc. and Field Director for the National League of Cities. He is currently a member of the adjunct faculty at Virginia Tech in the Urban Affairs and Planning program and at George Mason University in the School of Public Policy. Mr. Holzheimer has a Ph.D. in Public Policy from George Mason University; studied Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Miami; and has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Florida. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

ABOUT the Contributors

Erik Nelson

Erik Nelson is the Senior Planner for the City of Fredericksburg. He is a U.S. Navy veteran and a graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara (MA in History, 1987). He has specialized in developing and implementing plans that integrate transportation, land use, and natural and historic preservation. He is a founding member and immediate past president of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, which has preserved over 800 acres of historic terrain in and around Fredericksburg, land valued in excess of $2 million. He is the founding editor of Fredericksburg History and Biography and also serves on the board of directors of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.

D. Patrick O'Brien

A native of Rockville, Maryland, David Patrick O'Brien moved to Luray in 1976. He graduated from Luray High School in 1977 and has attended a wide variety of continuing education courses related to parkland management and recreational activity and event planning. Mr. O'Brien has been the Town of Luray's Parks and Recreation Director since 1983 and is responsible for over 300 acres of parkland. He is most notably recognized for planning, design, and implementation of the award winning Hawksbill Greenway.

Erik C. B. Olsen, PhD

Erik Olsen earned a Ph.D. in Industrial & Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech in 2003. Erik spent ten years conducting transportation human factors research for the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, a university-led research center. In 2008, he became a transportation planner in 2008 for Blacksburg Transit (BT), a department of the Town of Blacksburg, where he solicits citizen feedback, plans new bus routes, assists in acquiring grant funding, and leads a transportation planning internship program for undergraduate and graduate students.

Timothy M. Padalino

Tim Padalino is Director of Planning & Zoning with Nelson County. He succeeded Fred Boger in the position in late 2012. His professional experience includes rural community planning and regional planning, asset-based community development, green infrastructure planning, and landscape architecture. Tim is interested in collaborative efforts that seek to effect positive community change. He promotes a place-based framework and an inclusive, relational approach for planning and design efforts in order to best facilitate more prosperous, more sustainable, and more enjoyable communities.

Leanne Reidenbach, AICP

Leanne Reidenbach, AICP, received a B.A. in Anthropology from the College of William and Mary in 2005 and a Post baccalaureate Certificate in Historic Preservation Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2008. She has been employed by James City County since 2005 and currently holds the position of Senior Planner II where she serves as a case manager for development applications, a liaison to New Town and the James City County Historical Commission, and participates in long-term projects and comprehensive planning.

Juliellen Sarver, AICP, ASLA

Juliellen Sarver is a resident of Montrose Heights in the Greater Fulton community in Richmond's East End and has lived there since 2008. Juliellen is a planning consultant in private practice focusing on affordable housing and active transportation. She is the past president of the Greater Fulton Hill Civic Association and was active in the early stages of the Greater Fulton's Future Initiative. She holds a Master of Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Landscape Architecture from North Carolina State University. When not working from her home in Greater Fulton, she can be found working in her garden or bicycling both near and far.

ABOUT the Contributors

Jason Sawyer, PhD

Jason Sawyer is the Community Organizer for the Neighborhood Resource Center in Fulton, Richmond, and has been working at the NRC since September 2010. He is a PhD candidate and Adjunct Faculty member in the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University. His diverse experience includes a Policy Fellowship in grassroots organizing, policy analysis, and social advocacy with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. Community work is his passion, and he is grateful for every day he gets to spend working with the people of Greater Fulton.

Louise Searle

Louise Searle spent most of her childhood in western Loudoun County. She is a 2012 graduate of Randolph College with a BA in Environmental Studies. During the Spring 2012 semester, Ms. Searle interned for the City of Lynchburg where she interviewed sources, researched and wrote the story – a project that left her with a strong connection to the Downtown and the James River. Louise is currently the manager of an organic farm in Fauquier County.

ABOUT the Project Sponsors

Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Virginia)

The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Virginia) is a component of the American Planning Association (APA). The mission of APA Virginia is to make great communities happen in Virginia by offering continuing professional development and other valuable services to our members that will enable them to excel in their practice. We are over 1,500 members, comprised of professional public, private sector and non-profit organization practitioners, academics, and students committed to raising awareness about the many benefits planning offers as a foundation for effectively addressing the physical, economic, and social changes that take place in Virginia, and to providing effective leadership in planning advocacy reflective of a diverse geography and population.

Chapter Presidents Council of the American Planning Association

The Chapter Presidents Council (CPC) is a leadership component of the American Planning Association (APA), comprised of the Chapter Presidents of each State APA Chapter. Competitive grants are made available to State APA Chapters on a semi-annual basis for projects which further the CPC's Strategic Plan, which aligns with the APA Development Plan. The American Planning Association provides leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change.

Arlington Economic Development

Arlington Economic Development (AED) is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of an economically competitive and sustainable community, and the creation of exciting, diverse and amenity-rich places in Arlington County, Virginia. AED provides visionary leadership and superior services to Arlington's business community, its tourism industry and its real estate development. AED is comprised of the following operating groups: Arlington Cultural Affairs, Arlington Convention & Visitors Service, Business Investment Group, and Real Estate Development Group. Services Provided by AED include:

- Community development updates
- Competitive industry trends and intelligence
- Economic/demographic trends and business tax and analysis
- County-sponsored research on emerging business and industry trends
- Public brand building and exposure
- Awards nomination and recognition opportunities
- Meeting and conference location specialists
- Site location and expansion facilitation
- Benefits and incentives for eligible businesses
- Planning, permitting, and zoning liaisons for complex projects

Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia

The Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia (RPC) is an organization dedicated to identifying, publicizing and satisfying the unique planning needs of small towns and rural areas. RPC's purpose is to provide an interactive forum for rural and small town planning professionals to gather and share ideas and information that focuses on rural planning matters that affect Virginia's rural lands and character. To further this purpose, the RPC strives to provide educational and professional development opportunities; improve rural and small town planning awareness among both local and state officials, citizens and other professional organizations; and promote legislation that does not result in an undue burden on rural localities.

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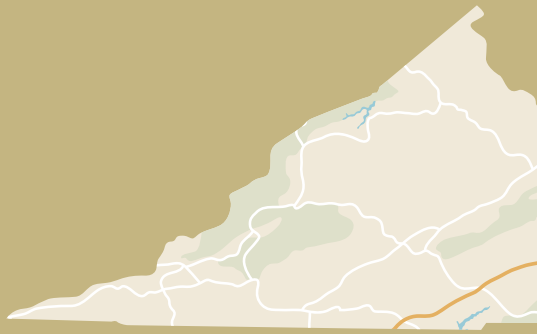
Making Great Communities Happen