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M E M O R A N D U M

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Subject: Redevelopment Strategies

Discussion: Following is a brief report that summarizes our research on Redevelopment and Revitalization efforts in Virginia and elsewhere and our recommendations for potential applicability to James City County. We would be happy to answer any questions or discuss this material further with your staff.

cc: Milt Herd, Herd Planning and Design

Report On Redevelopment Strategies

DRAFT – March 13, 2009

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

This memo is in response to a request from James City County staff and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for information about successful strategies for encouraging infill and redevelopment. Since the County's focus is on land use and the Comprehensive Plan, this memo will not address financial incentives for redevelopment such as Tax Increment Financing, Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Zones or capital facility investments in targeted development areas. However, any or all of these tools may be used effectively in addition to redevelopment policies or regulations that may be included in the Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance. In fact, most successful redevelopment programs rely on a combination of policy, regulatory and financial incentives to bring about revitalization.

Several communities in Virginia have developed specific policies and programs for infill, redevelopment and revitalization. As would be expected, the programs that have demonstrated the most success or that have been in place the longest tend to be in the most urbanized areas – including older cities and historic towns - or in counties with the oldest “first-tier” suburbs, such as Arlington or Fairfax. These communities also offer funding or capital improvement incentives to support redevelopment and revitalization activity. Other counties with suburban development dating from the 1960s and 1970s are starting to address issues of infill, redevelopment and revitalization as their earliest suburbs age. A review of tools used in Virginia and elsewhere is useful in evaluating what might be appropriate in James City County.

REDEVELOPMENT/REVITALIZATION

Fairfax County - Commercial Revitalization Districts & Revitalization Areas¹:

In 1998, Fairfax County adopted zoning ordinance and procedural amendments specifically to provide incentives for redevelopment and revitalization in targeted areas. The County has designated five commercial revitalization districts that are subject to specialized Commercial Revitalization Zoning Overlays. Additionally, properties subject to the Commercial Revitalization Zoning Overlay and properties in two other designated Revitalization Areas may take advantage of expedited review procedures. The areas of the County subject to the revitalization incentives were initially identified and mapped through special studies or in the Comprehensive Plan prior to the adoption of the revised zoning and processing regulations.

¹ More detailed information about this program can be found in “An Overview of the Planning, Zoning & Development Review Process within Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas.” Prepared By the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, March 2004.

Zoning Incentives: The five areas subject to the Commercial Revitalization Zoning Overlays include aging commercial areas in Fairfax County: Annandale, Bailey’s Crossroads/Seven Corners, McLean, Richmond Highway and Springfield. The zoning provisions vary by location to address specific issues in each community; therefore there are five separate overlay districts in the Zoning Ordinance. The specialized zoning provisions are intended to encourage redevelopment and rehabilitation of parcels that may be hampered by dilapidated structures, non-conforming lot sizes and widths, and the need to provide for transitions to adjacent residential areas. The relaxed standards also make urban design improvements such as landscaping and streetscaping more feasible. Properties in these districts retain their underlying commercial zoning designation (unless the applicant submits a rezoning request) but have more flexibility for reduced front yards, reduced parking requirements, more flexible transitional and parking lot landscaping requirements and increased building heights. Some of the modifications are granted administratively and others require special exception approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Expedited Review: Land development applications for properties in revitalization areas benefit from expedited review. Rezoning and special exceptions receive preferential scheduling, site plans may be processed concurrently with rezonings and special exceptions. Out-of-turn Comprehensive Plan amendments may also be processed with a rezoning or special exception application if one of the following revitalization objectives is met:

- Elimination of a blighted property from the County’s Blight Abatement Inventory
- New development will increase employment by at least 25 full time employees
- Consolidation of two or more parcels totaling at least 2 acres for a new development or redevelopment project
- The proposal significantly advances the Revitalization Goal, Objectives, or Policies, as set forth in the Policy Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Implementation: Dozens of projects have taken advantage of the Commercial Revitalization Commercial District regulations since their adoption in 1998. Fairfax County Planning Staff estimates that on average of a half dozen legislative special exceptions are processed in each district per year. Requests range from sign modifications, to requests for reduced parking requirements, building height increases, landscaping modifications, and lot size and setback waivers. Requests are evaluated for conformity with the comprehensive plan which generally contains detailed recommendations for the revitalization areas. For example, a nursery and garden center located on a prime corner in the McLean central business district was redeveloped into a hotel in 1999-2000. This property was one of the first to implement detailed streetscaping standards specified in the Comprehensive Plan for the McLean Business district. The CRD designation allowed modifications to typical development standards, expedited review of the project and ensured concurrent processing of the site plan.

Other improvements in the revitalization districts range from façade improvements and burying utility lines, to additional or improved landscaping and streetscaping (see photos below). Wholesale consolidation and redevelopment of key properties has also occurred in the revitalization districts. In 2006, Fairfax County reported that over 23 redevelopment projects were planned or underway in the seven designated revitalization districts/areas with a total worth of over \$4.9 million dollars. This success is the result of a multi-tiered approach that included significant public investment funded through state and federal grants and local public bonds.



Before and After Photos of Columbia Pike in Fairfax County showing publicly funded streetscape improvements. Photos from "Southeast Quadrant of the Bailey's Crossroads Commercial Revitalization District" study by Basil, Baumann, Prost & Associates", March 2005.

Arlington County – Form Based Code:

Form based codes are an emerging land use tool that can be appropriate for redevelopment and infill development, particularly in areas where the goal is to promote mixed use development. Form based planning and form based zoning both emphasize the physical form and placement of buildings rather than the uses themselves. For example, a typical zoning ordinance includes a list of permitted uses, setbacks, height limitations and other regulatory statements to control development. Form based codes provide regulations and often illustrations that address how close buildings are to the street; window and door openings on walls facing the street, particularly at street level; and how buildings relate to public spaces. The width and design of streets is also regulated to ensure that buildings and streets are properly designed to create a pedestrian friendly environment. Multiple uses are encouraged in buildings so that residential areas are not separated from employment or shopping activities.

Arlington County has successfully used a form based code to encourage redevelopment in its Columbia Pike corridor. Despite successful redevelopment of properties in and around metro stations, Columbia Pike remained relatively underdeveloped with predominantly auto-oriented commercial strip development. Following an intensive two year planning effort, Arlington County elected to adopt a form based zoning code for the Columbia Pike corridor to create a new main street that could ultimately be served by light rail or bus rapid transit. The overall goal of the

form base zoning code is to make development more predictable and the development process less cumbersome.

The Columbia Pike form based code is an optional zoning overlay that provides for streamlined processing, like Fairfax County, but that goes into much greater detail about the physical form of development. Property owners opting to develop under the code receive more flexibility with respect to uses and density but must follow specific development standards depending on property location. Design regulations provide specific standards for building envelopes (stories, fenestration, siting, uses permitted in the buildings according building story) architecture (materials, ratio of glass to solid walls, location of doors), and streetscaping (trees, landscaping, open space). In exchange for agreeing to develop according to specific standards, developers become eligible for significant public investments deriving from a Tax Increment Financing program and a very expedited approval process - 30 days for projects under 40,000 square feet and 55 days for all others. Since adoption of the form based code overlay in 2003, the County has approved at least five major mixed use development projects, totaling over \$200 million of investment in the 3.2 mile corridor; two projects are completing the construction process and are actively leasing.

Form based code districts are under development in other Virginia localities including Albemarle County (Crozet), Leesburg and Fauquier County (Marshall). These latter initiatives are so new that their success is still untested. The form based district in Leesburg is being developed to guide redevelopment of a former industrial area adjacent to the historic downtown. In Albemarle County, the form based zoning district is being used to encourage compatible new development, infill development and redevelopment in and around the Village of Crozet. A form based code is also being developed by Fauquier County for the Village of Marshall to encourage traditionally-styled new development adjacent to the existing village.

Some of the most dramatic before and after examples of redevelopment using form based code are from Petaluma, California. The City adopted a form based code in 2003 after an intensive seven year planning effort for a 400-acre riverfront industrial site undergoing redevelopment. The following photos show before and after images of actual projects constructed since adoption of the new regulations (Photo credits: Fisher Town Design).



Petaluma Movie Theater



Before



After

Petaluma Riverfront Warehouses/Condos



Before



After

Petaluma Riverwalk



Before



After

City of Hampton – Greyfield Development

Greyfield is a fairly recent redevelopment term used to describe underused, failing or poorly performing shopping malls, regional shopping centers and big box sites. In contrast to brownfields (contaminated sites often found in urban areas) and greenfields (undeveloped properties in rural areas or at the edge of developed areas), greyfields are typically found in urban and suburban locations. These sites present unique infill, redevelopment and “smart growth” opportunities by allowing growth at the center rather than at the edge of established communities. Typically located on transit lines or accessible by bus, many of these properties are large enough to accommodate a mix of uses including civic spaces and a range of housing types and housing prices. In several localities, greyfield sites have been converted to mixed use developments that provide a “town center” or “downtown” that acts as a regional focal point.

The City of Hampton recently approved a large scale redevelopment of the Coliseum Mall property that will significantly transform the site. The mall is being partially demolished to make way for the Peninsula Town Center, which will include approximately 900,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, entertainment, office, and residential space with pedestrian-friendly roads, streetscapes, parks and sidewalks. Replacing the indoor mall and parking area is series of buildings in a traditional street grid. The first residential building in the project scheduled to open in April 2009.



Peninsula Town Center Model (Photos: Steiner & Associates)

Redevelopment of the mall property grew out of the City’s Coliseum Central Master Plan, adopted in September, 2004. The plan, which creates an overall vision for the Coliseum Central Business Improvement District was developed by landowners, the public, city staff and consultants. It is a richly illustrated land use plan aimed at the conversion of aging commercial strip centers

and the existing mall into a vibrant activity center. The Coliseum Central Business Improvement District is a special taxing district that is funded through a property surtax and matching funds from the City. Revenues are used for improvement projects in the district.

Albemarle County's Neighborhood Development Model, which is part of the County's Comprehensive Plan, encourages redevelopment of strip commercial centers along the Route 29 corridor. The plan lists ten ways to redevelop mixed use centers, allow for increased density and improve the appearance of strip centers:

1. Change the facade
2. Add upper level apartments or offices
3. Modify the parking lot to make streets
4. Add sidewalks and street trees
5. Add curbside parking
6. Orient the buildings to the newly created streets
7. Add green space
8. Add a bus stop or transfer station
9. Add a parking garage
10. Provide a community meeting place

One useful tool for illustrating the impact of such changes is photo montages. These can be used to assist a community in developing a vision for a potential redevelopment area. Albemarle County, Fairfax County and other Virginia localities are using these techniques to help citizens visualize how improvements might look and to develop specific plans for key site.



Hydraulic Road, Albemarle County. (Illustration Credit: TJPDC)

Infill Guidelines & Policies:

Infill development has become an increasingly controversial subject in established communities. Tear-downs and "mansionizations" have gained national attention in affluent older suburbs where existing houses have been demolished and replaced, or over-improved, to the point where the new or improved home is completely out of scale with the context of the existing neighborhood. One of the most promising new approaches to addressing this issue is the designation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts. A

Neighborhood Conservation District can be established by means of a zoning overlay or as a separate zoning district. Each distinct Neighborhood Conservation District would be designed according to individual neighborhood character and context. Much like a traditional historic district, design guidelines would be developed to regulate new development. Implementation can occur ministerially by staff, or through a design review committee with reviews handled at the neighborhood level. The Neighborhood Conservation District concept has been adopted in Prince George’s County, Maryland, Chapel Hill, N.C. and Boulder, Colorado among others.

Densification of suburbs to encourage transit oriented development or mixed use development can also be a source of conflict with existing residents. Key to avoiding such conflicts is to develop detailed plans for areas that may undergo redevelopment and to include significant public input in such plans. Visualization tools like the photo montages noted above, visual preference surveys, public design charrettes, and design competitions have been successfully used to educate and involve members of the public in planning for infill and redevelopment. Arlington County, the Town of Leesburg, Fairfax County and the City of Richmond have conducted extensive public involvement programs to develop detailed plans for redevelopment or important infill properties. In the 1960’s and 70’s, when Arlington County was first considering revising its land use plans to address the proposed extension of Metro along its major corridors, they developed a “bulls eye” policy in approving rezonings for greater intensity around the proposed Metro stops. This policy was designed to protect the surrounding single family neighborhoods from the impacts of spill-over transit-oriented redevelopment, and enforced a hard edge to the rezoning areas, based on a ¼ mile radius around each Metro stop. The ¼ mile radius was also conducive to concentrating the redevelopment within walking distance of the Metro stations and became a major redevelopment incentive for compact transit-oriented development.

Several comprehensive plans in Virginia contain policies for infill, redevelopment and revitalization. While they generally do not provide detailed guidance, they do provide a means of evaluating development proposals for appropriateness. Fairfax County uses a set of residential development criteria to evaluate all rezoning applications and to determine appropriate density levels within ranges specified in the County’s Comprehensive Plan. One of the evaluation criteria addresses neighborhood context. As an example, the following language is from Fairfax County’s Residential Development Criteria in Appendix 9 of the Land Use Element of the Policy Plan:

2. Neighborhood Context:

All rezoning applications for residential development, regardless of the proposed density, should be designed to fit into the community within which the development is to be located. Developments should fit into the fabric of their adjacent neighborhoods, as evidenced by an evaluation of:



- *transitions to abutting and adjacent uses;*
- *lot sizes, particularly along the periphery;*
- *bulk/mass of the proposed dwelling units;*
- *setbacks (front, side and rear);*
- *orientation of the proposed dwelling units to adjacent streets and homes;*
- *architectural elevations and materials;*
- *pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections to off-site trails, roadways, transit facilities and land uses;*
- *existing topography and vegetative cover and proposed changes to them as a result of clearing and grading.*

It is not expected that developments will be identical to their neighbors, but that the development fit into the fabric of the community. In evaluating this criterion, the individual circumstances of the property will be considered: such as, the nature of existing and planned development surrounding and/or adjacent to the property; whether the property provides a transition between different uses or densities; whether access to an infill development is through an existing neighborhood; or, whether the property is within an area that is planned for redevelopment.

Redevelopment and infill policies in other plans also frequently address issues such as:

- parcel consolidation
- inter-parcel access
- connection to existing street grids
- pedestrian access
- support for public investment in areas designated for redevelopment and revitalization.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

James City County's current comprehensive plan includes some general policies for infill and redevelopment. In order to focus more attention on these issues, though, the County may want to consider adding more specific language and a discussion of implementation strategies as part of this Comprehensive Plan update. For example, following is a list of specific recommendations that the County may consider adding to its Comprehensive Plan to address

- Identify areas that are ripe for redevelopment, including specific sites, districts and corridors and develop a list of these areas and priority actions or policies for each
- Identify specific incentives for encouraging redevelopment through the regulatory process, such as rezoning, expedited review, relaxed standards, etc.



- Develop a set of criteria related to the County's overall redevelopment objectives as a guide to reviewing redevelopment proposals and applying regulatory incentives
- Identify key infill sites or areas for more detailed study, and/or the development of revitalization plans during or after this Comprehensive Plan update.

It is also important to recognize that encouraging successful redevelopment and appropriate infill development may require revisions to other County documents such as the Zoning or Subdivision Ordinances. Finally, it is also important to note that, based on experiences in many other communities, the success of redevelopment and revitalization strategies may depend on financial incentives as much or more than on the kinds of land-use based incentives that can typically be implemented in the Comprehensive Plan process.

