Six Points Commercial Revitalization Plan 2010
Prepared for the Honorable Ellen Robertson, Councilwoman
City of Richmond

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Executive Summary

The Six Points commercial district is one of the first streetcar suburbs of Richmond, Virginia. Located at a unique, six-way intersection, it has long served as a neighborhood shopping destination, providing the surrounding single-family neighborhoods with a wide variety of goods and services. Today, however, the Six Points commercial district faces a number of challenges. Economic forces have prompted demographic shifts away from the inner city to outlying suburbs; the commercial district has dwindled in importance and vitality. Nearby commercial corridors present strong competition, luring shoppers out of the district for purchases they once made in Six Points. As a result, Six Points no longer has all of the businesses or services commonly found in a vibrant neighborhood commercial district.

Though some existing businesses maintain an informal network of cooperation, there is no formal business association that can organize collective efforts or advocate for the interests of businesses. Recent efforts to organize such a group have been short-lived. The district does not possess any real cohesive design elements to distinguish it as a unique place from the surrounding commercial areas. Inconsistent building setbacks, lack of street trees and pedestrian amenities, and a confusing and expansive intersection divide the district in two – a southern and a northern district.

Six Points lacks the necessary square footage to allow it to compete in all categories of 21st century retail. Interviews with representatives of retail chains revealed Six Points doesn't have any spaces large enough to house an urban Walmart or other grocery options. It is primarily a convenience goods district.

A series of stakeholder interviews, merchant interviews, shopper surveys, and churchgoer surveys revealed various opinions about crime, safety, available services, and desired changes. Some of those questioned saw the district’s problems as issues of perception. Others noted concerns with the district’s physical appearance and available services.

Despite these obstacles, the Six Points commercial district has several opportunities upon which it can build a strong foundation for future revitalization efforts. First, the surrounding Highland Park neighborhood provides a strong sense of identity and community not found in other neighborhoods across the city. This sense of community is critical for any revitalization effort to take hold. Second, there is a large untapped consumer market: the congregants of the numerous churches located near the commercial district. It is estimated that nearly 2,000 congregants pass through the district each
week on their way to church.\textsuperscript{1} Third, there is a core group of longtime businesses owners who are invested in the community and who wish to see it regain the luster of its past. Fourth, the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition is actively engaged with the community, and it has the potential to serve as the driver of future revitalization efforts. Finally, there is a strong sense of community outreach in the area; several non-profit organizations are located within the district and serve the community at large with a wide array of services.

In order to better understand the consumer demand of the surrounding community a competitive market analysis was conducted. This analysis revealed the goods and services for which there is unmet demand in the community, including a laundry facility, pharmacy, and clothing store.

An examination of existing conditions, stakeholder views, and the market analysis provides the framework for the following recommendations:

**Organization**
- Establish an organization to take responsibility for revitalization goals, both short term and long term.

**Promotion**
- Establish a district identity and strategy to market Six Points to both customers and potential investors.

**Design**
- Develop consistent urban design features using elements of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to enhance the overall appearance and create a safe built environment for the community and its visitors.
- Create a safe and coherent environment for all modes of transportation, especially pedestrian.

**Economic Structure**
- Strengthen and enhance existing businesses, with special attention to grocery options.
- Recruit new businesses to meet unmet market demand.
- Establish Six Points as a thrift retail destination.

**Social Development**
- Engage the youth in district upkeep and community building efforts.

\textsuperscript{1} Miles, 2010.
The Six Points Revitalization Plan: An Introduction

Healthy commercial districts are essential to the overall vitality of our communities. They are the places we go to eat and purchase everyday goods like gas and toothpaste. They are the places we go to work. And they are the places we go to see friends and catch up on the latest news. However, numerous trends over the last several decades have made it difficult for commercial districts in inner city neighborhoods to remain competitive. Urban neighborhoods continue to grapple with the effects of disinvestment and racial polarization.

The Six Points commercial district, like many main streets across the nation, has been negatively affected by multiple socioeconomic trends over the last 60 years. However, Six Points remains an important resource for the residents and business owners of Highland Park. At the request of Richmond City Councilwoman Ellen Robertson, this plan has been formed to revitalize Six Points as the economic driver for the health of the Highland Park community. The Six Points Revitalization Plan is a tool for the city and the community; a tool that may be used to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors, increase investment within the corridor, and create and enhance viable businesses.

The National Main Street Four-Point Approach® provides a framework to help focus development in Six Points. The Main Street approach has been successful in helping to revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors in many different settings and circumstances across the country. In urban settings, such as Six Points, the approach often includes a fifth element – social factors – to account for the diverse needs of urban communities. The five points are as follows:

1. **Physical Design:** Examine and enhance the physical characteristics and circulation of the corridor to appear inviting and operate effectively – now and in the future.
2. **Economic Restructuring:** Understand current economic conditions, including property ownership and business diversity. Employ techniques to strengthen existing businesses and recruit new viable and complementary uses.
3. **Promotion:** Identify and improve the overall image of the corridor. Define a concrete strategy to promote a positive image.

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4. **Organization**: Strengthen connections and communication among business owners and stakeholders in such a way that will allow the neighborhood to guide its own future.

5. **Social Factors**: Analyze the surrounding neighborhood and institutions that play key roles in defining corridor viability and safety.

Using this framework, the Six Points plan provides revitalization strategies to enhance the vitality of businesses and the community they serve. The plan is divided into two sections. The first section – an assessment of existing conditions and revitalization potential – focuses on describing Six Points as it exists today. It reviews social conditions such as public safety, utilizing public data from the Richmond Police Department and the U.S. Census Bureau. It looks at physical conditions including the states of buildings and the Six Points intersection. Economic conditions are analyzed using a market analysis. Lastly, it provides a snapshot of the current organizations and leadership guiding the commercial district’s future.

The assessments utilize descriptive data – obtained from interviews with merchants and stakeholders and surveys of Six Points churchgoers and shoppers – and quantitative data – from the market analysis and the U.S. Census. The market analysis provides the kind of pragmatic research that a business might conduct before expanding into the area. The assessment of current conditions in Six Points concludes with an analysis of the district’s strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

The second section contains the meat of the plan: a vision for the future, goals and objectives, and the implementation steps to achieve those objectives. The steps are based on interviews with retail operators inside and outside of the district, revitalization techniques used in similar communities, and some creative thinking about what is possible. The recommendations are organized by the five elements of the Main Street Approach®: organization, promotion, design, economic structure, and social development. Each objective has an explanation detailing why it is important, who should be responsible, what steps it requires, what the schedule for completion should be, and if applicable, where the steps should take place.
What is Six Points?

Six Points is a nickname given to the intersection at Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Road, Dill Avenue, and 2nd Avenue. These roadways converge at one point to create a six-way intersection. Through a series of shopper surveys and interviews with merchants and stakeholders, it was quickly discovered that the nickname is not universally recognized. As such, it is important to define both the commercial district and another frequently used term, trade area.

**Six Points Commercial District:** Surrounding the intersection is a commercial shopping district featuring convenience goods. The commercial district extends approximately five blocks north of the intersection on Meadowbridge Road and five blocks east of the intersection on East Brookland Park Boulevard (see Six Points Location map). When this document uses the terms “Six Points” or the “commercial district,” it is referring to the businesses, churches, organizations, and structures within this area.

**Trade Area:** In completing this study, a sphere of influence of approximately one mile around Six Points was estimated. The area is based on several factors, including the approximate distance a person can walk in 12 minutes and nearby commercial districts. Its formulation is discussed in detail later in the document (see Defining the Trade Area, Page 19). This ring of influence is what the document refers to as the “trade area.” It is intended to estimate where the bulk of customers for convenience goods and services, both existing and potential, live. Unlike the commercial district, the trade area is meant to include residents, households, and other institutions.
History

The Six Points commercial district is clustered around the intersection of Dill Avenue, Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Road, and 2nd Avenue in the Highland Park neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia. Located approximately two miles north of Richmond's central business district, the area was once known as Mount Comfort.

Until the 1880s, Mount Comfort was undeveloped farm land aside from some country homes for wealthy Richmond residents. Around the turn of the 20th century, industrialization and the development of the first electric streetcar system helped to lure many center-city residents north to newly developed areas in and around Mount Comfort. Developers began building the Highland Park neighborhood along the east side of Meadowbridge Road where the streetcar system ran. They attracted new residents to the area by building some of the first churches in Richmond’s new suburbs. One of the first churches to be built, in 1927, was the Highland Park Methodist Church (now the Fresh Anointing Cathedral) located at Six Points intersection.

By the late 1920s residential demand for services had spurred the creation of small neighborhood businesses such as corner convenience stores, pharmacies, launderers, and automobile service stations. Many of the original commercial structures located along Meadowbridge Road remain intact.

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4 Ibid.
Following World War II, the demand for suburban housing shifted from Richmond’s northern suburbs and Highland Park to the outlying counties. Wealthier families moved out, and by the 1960s, the transition to a working class neighborhood was well underway. Banks and insurance companies stopped investing in some urban neighborhoods, depressing property values and limiting important development in cities around the country.\(^5\) Highland Park suffered as a result. Neighborhood businesses were forced to close as competition from suburban commercial corridors. As if to compound the diminishing economic conditions, Highland Park began to experience problems common to aging communities: deteriorating building conditions, diminishing property values, increased vacancy, and escalating crime rates. By the 1990s, numerous commercial buildings stood in disrepair, vacancy rates were at all time highs, and violent crime plagued residents and businesses alike.\(^6\)

Crime rates have fallen since their peak in the mid-1990s, but perceptions of crime in Highland Park have never fully recovered.\(^7\) Commercial buildings still offer convenience services, but many of the former shops have been converted into churches, ministries, and nonprofit services. Others stand vacant, offering little evidence of the once bustling district.

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\(^6\) Virginia Department of Historic Resources 2004; Robertson, 2010.
\(^7\) Richmond Police Department, 2010; Robertson, 2010.
Social Conditions

The Highland Park community’s closely-knit social fabric is an important influence within Six Points and the surrounding neighborhoods. When walking through the commercial district, one may see friends calling to each other across the street and shop owners greeting customers by name. Residents can be found walking or bicycling around the neighborhood during the day time. Nearby Hotchkiss Park is crowded with parents and youth on weekends during sporting events such as football. The visible interactions between people at the street level provide a strong sense of place and community.

Demographics

The history of racial division within the city of Richmond remains an important influence in Six Points and its larger trade area. Interviews with local merchants indicated some concern that race remains a psychological barrier in attracting customers from outside of the community. According to the most recent available data, the 2000 U.S. Census, the Six Points trade area is a predominantly black community, especially when compared to the citywide population (see Race, Trade Area, 2000).

Youth, aged 5 to 19, comprise the largest segment of the trade area population.\(^8\) When compared to the city, the trade area also has a higher concentration of older residents aged 55 and above (24.7 percent of the trade area population, compared to 20.7 percent citywide).\(^9\) The trade area population between 20 and 34 years of age is proportionally smaller than the city as a whole (15.1 percent of the trade area population, compared to 25.9 percent citywide).\(^10\)

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\(^8\) U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.  
\(^9\) Ibid.  
\(^10\) Ibid.
The Six Points community has relatively high poverty rates when compared to the city. In 1999, close to 40 percent of all residents were living below the poverty level.\textsuperscript{11} In comparison, Richmond’s overall percentage of residents living below the poverty rate was around 25 percent\textsuperscript{12} (see Total and Percentage Below Poverty Level, 1999). The percentage of households with income less than $10,000 is the largest cohort in the trade area, comprising more than 20 percent of all households.\textsuperscript{13} Close to 65 percent of all households in the area make less than $30,000 per year\textsuperscript{14} (see % Households by Income). The estimated median household income for the trade area is just $24,000, close to 25 percent less than the median income for the city of $31,000 in 2000.\textsuperscript{15}

While significantly less wealthy than the other parts of the city, Highland Park – and the commercial district in particular – possesses other important assets that make a community vibrant.

**Public Safety and Crime**

Public safety came up as a topic of concern in numerous surveys. Both real and perceived crime in Highland Park have the potential to affect investment and revitalization. People are far less likely to shop, live, work, or operate a business in an area if crime, be it real or perceived, is prevalent. The Six Points trade area falls within the 411th Sector of the Richmond Police Department (RPD).

Data from the RPD indicates that a larger share of the city’s homicides, vice crimes, and assaults occur within the sector than theft, robbery, or burglary. However, the number of homicides in both the city and the sector has dropped significantly in the last decade, from a peak of 90 citywide and 25 sector 411 in 2004 to 42 citywide and 7 in sector 411 in 2009.\textsuperscript{16} However, vice

\textsuperscript{11} U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Richmond Police Department, 2010.
crimes have steadily increased in the area, and assaults have fluctuated between 650 and 750 annually in the sector from 2000 to 2009, while dropping citywide.\footnote{Richmond Police Department, 2010.}

A number of crime categories have dropped steadily in the sector from 2000 to 2009, including sex offenses, robbery, burglary, theft and vehicle theft.\footnote{Ibid.} However, area shoppers and churchgoers have expressed concern about the number of men sometimes found loitering around bus stops and businesses. Other community members have concerns that illicit drug use and sales are prevalent within the commercial district, particularly near bus stops and areas of congregation.

**Social Institutions**

Highland Park and the Six Points commercial trade area have a large number of faith-and community-based establishments. Faith-based institutions represent the single largest social activity within the area. More than 20 churches have established themselves within the Highland Park and adjacent Southern Tip communities. Many of the churches provide services to the community through community outreach activities. Surveys of churchgoers indicate that a large number of congregation members live outside of the Six Points trade area, and few spend time in the Six Points commercial district beyond the scope of church activities. This is both an opportunity and a weakness for revitalization efforts. It is an opportunity in that there is a large untapped consumer base and potential volunteers to take part in any number of community revitalization efforts. It is a weakness if congregants come to the district only to attend church services without patronizing services or stores, since the churches occupy space that might otherwise be used for a commercial activity.

In order to combat this dilemma, Pastor Larry Miles at the Fresh Anointing Cathedral on 2\textsuperscript{nd} Avenue is spearheading the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition (NRRC) to

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image5.png}
\caption{Fresh Anointing Cathedral is a central entity in the Six Points, both physically and socially. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image6.png}
\caption{Butch Johnson runs the Northside Outreach Center which provides after-school services for local children. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)}
\end{figure}
discuss and address issues facing area residents and organizations. This group will be particularly important to revitalization efforts as it is currently the only grassroots-level organization working toward the revitalization of the community.

At least two nonprofit organizations in the commercial district maintain an ecumenical presence without connection to a specific church. Boaz and Ruth, a faith-based community development organization, works to reduce recidivism by working with adults recently released from prison. They focus on job skill training and community service. Boaz and Ruth frequently employ their clients at several of the social enterprises they own and operate in the district.

The Northside Outreach Center (NOC) is another non-denominational faith-based nonprofit operating within the Six Points commercial district. The organization operates a thrift store on the lowest floor of its building on Meadowbridge Road. On the upper floor it offers after school activities for school-age children. The NOC has plans to expand its building to accommodate more partnerships, activities and clients.

Rubicon is one of the state’s oldest chemical dependency treatment centers. Serving over 1,000 clients each year, it is located just outside the Six Points commercial district. The organization has made efforts to interact positively with the community through free health screenings and fairs. Interviews revealed that Rubicon may be open to expanding their community outreach efforts within the Six Points and Highland Park community. Rubicon may also serve as a significant customer for a pharmacy.

**Educational influences**

A number of higher education and vocational institutions operate within two miles of the community, including Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Union University, Union Theological Seminary, Baptist Theological Seminary, and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. These institutions represent significant potential assets and may serve as key partnerships going forward.
Physical Conditions

Transportation and Circulation

The Six Points street layout predates the modern era of widespread automobile use. It is from a time when electric street cars bustled around vibrant single-family neighborhoods. The intersection is the center of activity in the neighborhood, and the buildings surrounding it have housed everyday convenience goods and services for decades.

The primary Six Points roadways are Brookland Park Boulevard and Meadowbridge Road. Brookland Park Boulevard serves as a minor arterial east-west road. It allows residents access to major arterial streets and commercial corridors such as Chamberlayne Avenue to the west, and other minor arterial roads leading to Mechanicsville Turnpike to the east. Collector streets help collect traffic from local streets and direct traffic towards arterial streets. Meadowbridge Road is a collector street and offers the most direct access to and from the Six Points commercial district. Other roads entering the intersection are 2nd Avenue and Dill Avenue (see Street Hierarchy and Gateways Map).

The physical intersection of these roads creates a vast expanse of visually confusing and nearly impassable asphalt. Navigation through this intersection is made difficult by the lack of painted lane designations, six different stop lights, confusing signal patterns, no pedestrian crosswalk lights, and faded pedestrian crosswalks. In order to cross from one side of the intersection to the other, pedestrians must navigate several potentially dangerous road crossings while simultaneously assessing where approaching traffic is coming from. New curb cuts allow disabled pedestrians access to the sidewalks; however the curb cuts have not been placed at all of the intersection’s crossing points. Many pedestrians and bicyclists cross the intersection through the shortest and least safe route: directly across multiple lanes of oncoming traffic. This creates a significant safety concern, and it hinders the walkability and connectedness of the Six Points commercial district.
Most of the commercial activities front Meadowbridge Road and Brookland Park Boulevard. Street parking is permitted on these streets and cars often utilize these spaces for quick trips. Surveys indicate that many of the shoppers walk or bicycle to the district. However, merchants have expressed a need for more parking.

U.S. Census data from 2000 indicates more than 16 percent of area residents use public transportation to get to work, compared to 8 percent citywide.\textsuperscript{19} The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) runs one regular route in the commercial district that offers residents access to Richmond’s central business district.\textsuperscript{20}

**Gateways**

The commercial activities on Meadowbridge Road and Brookland Park Boulevard create a distinct district, unique in its architecture and design from the surrounding neighborhoods. Upon entering this district from its main entry points at Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Road, or Dill Avenue, a traveler intuitively knows that he or she is in a commercial district, albeit an older one.

These gateways to the district can welcome travelers and shoppers; they can signal a cohesiveness of use and function. However, a gateway is only as welcoming as the elements that designate it. There are currently no clear designations of Six Points’ gateways. The gateways exist, but they are unmarked, leaving visitors unaware that they are in the Six Points commercial district.

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\textsuperscript{19} U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.
\textsuperscript{20} Greater Richmond Transit Authority, 2010.
Urban Form

Urban form refers the visual elements which make an urban place unique and identifiable. This includes structures, streets, sidewalks, street lamps, traffic signals, public space, and green space. Six Points displays the proud bones of a cohesive place; however, time has worn down paint, cracked sidewalks, and left vacant lots in need of caretakers.

A series of surveys and interviews indicated that the beautification of the area is a top concern of shoppers, merchants, churchgoers, property owners and residents. Numerous respondents expressed concern about litter and the overall cleanliness and appearance of businesses in the district.

Six Points is characterized by its unadorned, barebones form. Most spaces are maintained well enough to function. Sidewalks lack street furniture, bus stops lack appropriate shelters, trash receptacles are unsightly, and inoperable telephone booths and dilapidated billboards promote a sense of neglect and vacancy. Some sidewalks exhibit signs of advanced aging: grass and weeds grow from cracks, and in other places they have begun to crumble. New pedestrian-scale lighting on Meadowbridge Road makes the district more inviting, but any commercial venture may find it difficult to attract new customers without further improvements to the district.

Commercial buildings are one and two story structures that vary in scale and style. Many of the businesses have crowded storefront windows, ineffective signage, and inconsistent exterior lighting. Vacant buildings and parking lots pose public safety hazards; they create voids that prevent the necessary cohesiveness of a shopping district. Setbacks from the sidewalk are inconsistent, with some structures built to the sidewalk and others built further back to allow for parking. Building materials and colors vary from structure to structure, but the primary materials include brick and cinderblock.

Due to the street layout, land parcels exist in irregular shapes, limiting the size of structures and confining access to street fronts and the occasional parking lot. The odd road frontage makes addresses inconsistent or difficult to determine. Several businesses are bordered on all sides by different roads.

Green space within the district is limited. A small park at the northern

Figure 10: Access to green space is very limited in Six Points. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)
terminus of the district is maintained, but it remains locked at all times due to criminal activity. There is a small triangular parcel at the southern end of the district, located across the street from S&K grocery store. The land may have been an attractive public green space at one time, but it is now overgrown and neglected. There are few street trees in the district to provide shade and a sense of place.

**Real Estate and Ownership**

Commercial real estate in Six Points has relatively small square footages, the vast majority less than 5,000 square feet. While these sizes are appropriate and common for an urban environment, many categories of retail require spaces in excess of 10,000 square feet. Six Points cannot compete in all categories of 21st century retail without significantly larger structures. Given the existing building stock, its primary function is as a convenience retail center. From 2000 to 2010, the average property value in the Six Points commercial district increased by 47 percent. This rate of growth outpaced the 27 percent total rate of inflation occurring during the same time period. Further, the majority of vacant buildings rose in value despite the lack of upkeep. Those establishments which made improvements to their facades exhibited the greatest increase in value.

Currently there are 11 vacant commercial properties in the commercial district. All of the owners of these properties live in the Richmond area. This is a major asset, as local owners are generally more receptive to revitalization efforts, especially if they increase property values.

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21 City of Richmond, 2010.
22 Ibid.
24 City of Richmond, 2010
25 Ibid.
Six individuals own 45 percent of the properties located in the commercial district. Of these, one owner accounts for six properties alone, holding claim to 11 percent of the corridor.

**Building Conditions**

Surveys revealed concerns that a number of area building facades are unsightly and in need of improvement. Some business owners expressed interest in city financial incentives to help with exterior and structural improvements; others stated no changes are needed.

The Peter Dunbar and Associates system of building condition evaluation offers a scientific approach to grading area structures (see Appendix A). The Dunbar method is designed to grade the overall condition of a building based on a visual assessment of its structural elements such as walls, doors and windows, as well as aesthetic elements such as paint and appurtenances. Each building is graded by the severity and number of its deficiencies ranging from peeling paint or loose gutters to a sagging roof or a cracked foundation. A building is graded as sound if it has a few minor deficiencies, deteriorated if it has a number of minor deficiencies (or one major deficiency), and dilapidated if it has multiple major deficiencies. A structure graded as deteriorated may only need some cosmetic fixes such as paint and regular maintenance, or it may need some roof repairs. Dilapidated structures need significant repairs before their use can be considered safe.

Of the Six Points buildings surveyed, 43 (73 percent) were determined to be in sound condition, 13 (22 percent) in deteriorated condition, and 3 (5 percent) in dilapidated condition (see Building Condition Map).

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26 City of Richmond, 2000.  
27 Ibid.  
28 Dunbar and Associates.
Economic Conditions

Six Points provides several convenience services to the community. Restaurants, beauty and barber shops, convenience stores, an auto repair/gas station and a grocery store comprise the bulk of the commercial trade activity in the corridor. The district is also home to a large faith-based community, featuring no fewer than six church congregations. There are several non-profit and community outreach organizations providing additional services to the community as well.

Market Analysis: Defining the Trade Area

The purpose of a market analysis is to identify uses and services that will complement the current mix of businesses in Six Points. The Six Points commercial district is a neighborhood shopping area serving a relatively defined consumer market. Determining the appropriate trade area – the area from which shoppers come to purchase convenience goods and services in the commercial district – is necessary to assess the potential future of the area. The Six Points trade area was calculated by using an online time/distance travel calculator to determine the distance traveled by foot within 12 minutes. This process highlighted two physical boundaries of the trade area: Cannon Creek Park along the western boundary of the area, and a railroad line to the east, which also acts as the City of Richmond’s border with Henrico County.

U.S. Census block groups were selected that most appropriately fit the walk time/distance model, keeping in mind the geographical limitations of the trade area. The Six Points commercial district has strong competition from surrounding influences such as the Brookland Park Boulevard commercial corridor and shopping centers along Laburnum Avenue and Mechanicsville Turnpike. By focusing on the neighborhood that is primarily served by the Six Points commercial corridor, greater accuracy is achieved in examining potential future uses. The resulting commercial trade area resembles a bull with no

rear legs that is standing on its nose (see Study Area Selection Map).

As of 2008, there are approximately 3,500 households within the trade area with a median income of $29,182. That is lower than the citywide inflation-adjusted median income of $38,543. These households represent the district's primary potential shoppers.

**Market Analysis: Potential for New Goods and Services**

The methodology used in a market analysis is known as the unmet market demand model. It is an established method for determining market potential in existing business corridors. The process is characterized by four steps:

1. Define a commercial trade area (as above).
2. Calculate the total dollar amount of potential demand for each good and service within the commercial trade area and translate into supportable square feet.
3. Calculate the number and square footage of each business within the commercial district.
4. Subtract three from two to determine the number of potential new units that consumer expenditures within the district may support.

Step one has been described above. Total demand – step two – is determined by estimating how much money the trade area, as a whole, probably spends on different goods and services each year. Any given person in the country purchases...
common things like food, clothing, and entertainment in a given year. The average amount of money people spend in a year (expenditures), and what they spend that money on, is surveyed annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The total potential expenditures of the trade area were determined by looking at the most likely potential shoppers: residents, commuters, churchgoers, and neighbors living in group quarters (such as retirement homes and dormitories). For each group, household incomes were estimated based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That information is compared to the annual Consumer Expenditure Survey, indicating approximately how all of the money is likely to be spent (for example, on sit down restaurants, grocery stores, and music shops). From that result, it’s possible to estimate the number of supportable square feet for a number of categories of business. The analysis assumes that any existing businesses are meeting demand to their capacity. Therefore, the square footage of existing businesses must be subtracted from the supportable square feet, as they are already being supported. This calculation results in the total unmet demand in square feet. This represents sales that currently are leaking out of the trade area to other shopping areas. That number, when used with the average square footage of businesses of a particular type, may determine approximately how many potential new units of a given business the trade area can support.

The market analysis identified 19 areas of potential unmet demand in the trade area. These include laundry facilities, dry cleaning operations, women’s clothing stores, gas stations, fast food restaurants, tobacco stores, medical facilities, and others. The number of potential new units is illustrated in Table 3 along with the number of current establishments in each category. Each potential new use is ranked by the level of unmet demand as defined in the market analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Six Points District: Type of Commercial Activity with</th>
<th>Current Units</th>
<th>Potential New Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Level of Unmet Demand</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major appliances</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal services</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gasoline and motor oil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Food</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate Level of Unmet Demand</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco / Smoking Store</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical / Health Care Facility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Cleaners</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit Down Restaurants</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low Level of Unmet Demand</strong></td>
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<td>Electronics</td>
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<td>Educational Services</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
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<td>Specialty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women and girls</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-prescription</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>Pets, toys, and playground equipment</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Products</td>
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Organization

The Main Street Approach® depends on the effective organization of the diverse groups that have an interest in the health of the commercial district. The approach seeks to obtain an overall consensus of how best to manage and promote the commercial district. In order to do so, it is essential to create a unified voice for the area: a voice that will manage and promote the district to the rest of the community. Frequently, this voice is found in a merchants or business association.

The effectiveness of this strategy lies in both the interest of business owners in operating successful small businesses and their relationships with the larger community. Revitalization, especially in the case of a small neighborhood district such as Six Points, does not occur in isolation. Residents and businesses alike share in the benefits of a vibrant commercial district that fulfills the needs and desires of the community. It is with this relationship in mind that the Main Street Approach® guides revitalization efforts.

Though no formal merchant or business associations exist in the district, stakeholder interviews revealed the existence of an informal network of business owners who look out for, and lend support to, one another in times of need.

Community Organizations

Six Points has seen several merchant associations fail to grow past the initial stages of formation in the recent past. An active Highland Park Community Development Corporation was also unable to sustain operation.

The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition (NRRC) is a growing alliance of area stakeholders, including church pastors, merchants, and nonprofit leaders.
The organization meets monthly, but it is young. The group has organized community events, including a youth Christmas present giveaway. However, the NRRC has yet to incorporate as a nonprofit entity, limiting its access to some sources of funding. Its capacity to take on major tasks may be limited until it is incorporated. Fortunately, the NRRC has a great deal of energy behind it—an essential ingredient in the development of an active, successful Community Development Organization.

The Six Points commercial district features a large contingent of community and faith based organizations. Churches account for 12 of the 37 structures in the commercial district. Several Six Points churches have large congregations, though, as noted earlier, a large portion of congregants live outside of Highland Park. Presently, churches and nonprofits engage the community largely through ministry outreach.

Boaz and Ruth, a nonprofit organization, offers transitional jobs and workforce development to recently incarcerated men as they transition back into society. The group has also restored a number of buildings in the commercial district, utilizing them to incubate and operate businesses that provide jobs to clients and area residents. Boaz and Ruth owns six buildings in the commercial district including a restaurant, a furniture restoration workshop, and a community thrift store. These businesses have been influential in maintaining the commercial vitality of the district.

The Northside Outreach Center (NOC) operates a community thrift store and numerous education programs aimed targeted at area youth. The NOC is actively involved with the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition. Hotchkiss

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34 City of Richmond, 2010.
36 City of Richmond, 2010.
37 Northside Outreach Center, 2010.

Figure 15: Boaz and Ruth has a major presence in the neighborhood, through their social services and retail locations. (Courtesy of URSP 666)

Figure 16: The Firehouse Restaurant, owned and operated by Boaz and Ruth, is one of the only sit-down restaurants in Six Points. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)
Field Community Center offers a variety of programs targeted at the entire community from children to the elderly.

There are numerous other organizations in the Greater Richmond area whose goals align with maintaining and improving the Six Points commercial area. Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) plans to redevelop the Dove Court housing project located just south of Hotchkiss field. The organization’s mission is to develop quality, affordable housing and revitalize area communities. They also partner with the city’s Neighborhoods in Bloom program (NiB). The NiB program provides targeted investments to reduce blight and increase home ownership in historic neighborhoods in need of revitalization.

The Highland Park Restoration and Preservation Program, formed by five members of the Highland Park community, is likewise engaged in restoring homes and fostering economic development in the community. The Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (ACORN) has also been active in the renovation of vacant and blighted properties around Richmond, including the Highland Park neighborhood.

There are numerous civic associations within the Six Points trade area, some more active than others. They include: the Highland Park Plaza, Providence Park, Highland View, Green Park and Highland Park Southern Tip Neighborhood Associations.

This overview of the organizational structure, in combination with the social, economic, and physical conditions, establishes a snapshot of Six Points in the autumn of 2010. Six Points is a district in transition, but it is also a district with successful stores, available real estate, caring and able organizations, and residents in need of goods and services. In short, it is a commercial district with possibilities and potential. Careful analysis of the conditions as they are today will help to guide recommendations for tomorrow.
**Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities**

Evaluating the existing Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities of the Six Points commercial district is vital to address the needs and desires of the community and to develop a strategic framework of implementable goals and objectives. Strengths are factors that give the Six Points commercial district an advantage over other commercial districts in the area. Weaknesses are characteristics that place the district at a disadvantage in relation to other commercial districts. Opportunities are external factors that – if appropriately addressed – may serve to enhance the vitality of the commercial district. The following conditions were developed through the analysis of the existing conditions, stakeholder interviews and numerous surveys. They are:

**Strengths**

Six Points is strong in what ties it together, both socially and physically:

- Existing businesses and owners are well-established. Many are active or have expressed interest in becoming active within the community.
- The network of sidewalks is complete for the pedestrian shopping experience.
- There is a large and active network of churches and other social institutions.
- There is a high rate of homeownership and neighborhood stability. Most of the community residents surveyed for this study expressed positive views about the district and indicated a hopeful outlook on the future of both Six Points and Highland Park.

**Weaknesses**

The Six Points commercial district suffers from numerous tangible and several intangible weaknesses:

- Large, competitive commercial districts in close proximity to Six Points offer a wider variety of goods and services, and lower prices.
- There is no active merchant’s association.
- The Six Points intersection divides the district into two halves, disrupting the pedestrian

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**Figure 18:** Mike Simpson, owner of Simpson’s Market, has been a community leader for over 30 years. (Courtesy of URSP 666)

**Figure 19:** The city recently installed new pedestrian lighting throughout the corridor. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)
experience and discouraging cross-shopping.

- There is a lack of cohesive design and aesthetic concern. Some of the businesses have frontages in disrepair. Crowded storefronts discourage new customers and do little to deter crime. There are few pedestrian amenities such as benches for rest, or street trees for shade. Attracting foot traffic may be difficult with an uninviting streetscape.
- The commercial district has a weak identity. Many shoppers stated that they were unclear about what Six Points means or where it is, despite the fact that they were already there when they said this.
- Real and perceived crime deters both investment and customers. Shoppers and stakeholders noted problems with loitering and allegations of open-air drug sales. Likewise, many of the businesses interact with customers from behind what appears to be bullet-resistant glass.

**Opportunities**

The commercial district features several opportunities to enhance the overall capacity of the commercial district:

- When asked, business owners expressed a desire for a merchants association and a willingness to participate in one.
- Area church congregations represent a substantial potential market. Churches attract people to Six Points on a weekly basis; many of them live outside of the surrounding community and do not currently patronize Six Points businesses.
- The Six Points intersection is a heavily traveled thoroughfare. The vast majority of commuters pass through the area without stopping to shop, but that could change. These commuters represent a large potential market.
- Nearby Hotchkiss Park provides substantial opportunities for recreation and attracts plenty of visitors. The Six Points commercial district is only a short walk away, and regular visitors could quickly become regular customers.
- Six Points is full of energetic nonprofit and church leaders eager to form new partnerships. This kind of energy is essential to create and take advantage of opportunities when they arise.
Vision: The Future of Six Points

Place [pleys]: A space, area, or spot, set apart or used for a particular purpose

The Six Points commercial district is a source of convenience goods, and it serves the needs of nearby residents of Highland Park. However, disinvestment and a lack of variety have gradually pushed consumers into other commercial areas such as Laburnum Ave and Mechanicsville. The retail fabric of Six Points has slowly eroded. Merchants have grown tired of fighting against the odds. Six Points is in transition; a district that lacks a sense of “place.”

But what if Six Points could be a destination that is the center of activity in Highland Park, as it once was? Six Points: the commercial center that appeals to residents of Highland Park, to families using Hotchkiss Field for recreation, and to churchgoers and commuters who pass through on daily basis to destinations outside of the neighborhood. This Six Points is a place to get your hair cut, a place to grab a bite to eat, and a place to buy groceries and other goods. It’s a place to worship and a place that builds community. Six Points is a place that is convenient for shopping, and it offers variety that makes it the place to go.

Six Points is a place that is walkable and inviting. It’s central to the neighborhood: a pedestrian, bicycle and transit-friendly area with designated crosswalks and pedestrian amenities. Street trees provide shade and line the street. It’s a place with attractive storefronts and orderly stores that are clean and provide quality goods and services. Six Points provides even the most discerning customers a place to buy fresh and local groceries for dinner, a place to pick-up prescriptions for a family member or do their laundry, and a place to shop for thrift clothing and antique items.

This Six Points is a place with leadership and opportunity. It’s a place where new businesses want to locate, and existing businesses want to stay and expand. Six Points is a district with unique and vibrant signage that lets you know that this place is different and local. It is a place that is distinct in the surrounding neighborhood and in Richmond. Six Points is a place with identity.

This Six Points is a place that is more than a commercial district. It is the commercial heart of the Highland Park neighborhood, a place to shop, a place to eat and a place where community gathers. It is unlike any other commercial district; it is a place where residents and visitors choose to return again and again.
This *place* is Six Points, both as it could be and as it is today. Six Points has many of the pieces in place already. But it needs an organization to guide it through the steps that will make it the Six Points of tomorrow.
Recommendations

Here, we have set forth a series of goals, followed by their objectives, and the implementation steps required to see those goals realized. With each we have tried to set forth a realistic yet aggressive timeline.

Organization

Goal 1: Establish the framework for an organization to take responsibility for revitalization goals, both short term and long term.

Objective 1.1: Organize a merchant-led task force under the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition.

Why: For a revitalization effort to be successful, it must be led from within the community. That means current merchants and institutions not only must be part of the effort, they must lead it. The NRRC is currently the most appropriate organization to incubate such a group of merchants and property owners. The NRRC is the most active broad-based revitalization organization within the Highland Park community. We believe it has the influence and desire to work toward a strengthened commercial district. However, other active and willing nonprofits could fill this role.

Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, in coordination with area merchants and nonprofit leaders, including:

- The King Solomon Masonic Lodge
- Rubicon Inc.
- Property owners

What:

- Establish positions of leadership and focus: marketing and promotion, merchant relations, business recruitment, and youth involvement.
- Begin by undertaking some well-publicized community clean-up activities and storefront repair events/initiatives.
- While some merchants have historically been reluctant to sign on to similar efforts, it is important not only to carry forward, but also to show the community how such an organization benefits the commercial district. Likewise, it is important to show from the start how membership in such an organization will benefit any merchant willing to join.
• Utilize Richmond’s Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Funds, potential AmeriCorps members, and volunteer labor (perhaps from area organizations) to repaint facades, and fulfill landscape upkeep and litter disposal responsibilities.

**When:** Immediately.

**Objective 1.2: Transition responsibility of revitalization from the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition (NRRC) to a permanent community nonprofit.**

**Why:** We recognize that the NRRC is currently limited in its resources. It does not yet have the organizational capacity to receive or administer funds as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. But the NRRC may serve as a much-needed incubator, fostering dialogue and an initial framework for progress. It will be important to transition and expand many of the organization’s current, or temporary, functions to a nonprofit organization equipped to facilitate the long-term revitalization of the corridor.

**Who:** Current NRRC and prospective non-profit organization members should enlist the services and resources of such capacity-building organizations as: The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority’s (RRHA) Capacity Building Office, and/or the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development’s Office of Community Capacity Building.

**What:** This cooperation should result in the:

• Identification of a non-profit classification designed to best fit the corridor’s specific needs.
• Identification of key community members and area businesspeople to serve on the Board of Directors.
• Establishment of bylaws and a mission statement to guide internal organization.
• Establishment of funding sources through CARE, LISC, RRHA, Richmond’s Neighborhoods in Bloom, Local Enterprise Zone Program, and City of Richmond General Funds to sustain the future of the organization.
• Initially these funds should go to the:
  • Creation of an informational Welcome Packet to inform new merchants and business owners of the non-profit’s capacities.
  • Development and distribution of an economic development packet to begin actively pursuing possible investment interests.

**When:** Within five years.
**Promotion**

Goal 2: Establish a unified campaign to promote the Six Points commercial district to potential customers and businesses.

**Objective 2.1: Create a community identity, or brand, that may be used for marketing.**

- **Why:** A coherent and identifiable brand helps to communicate not only where a district is, but also its quality of service and a sense of community. Customers don’t think of a specific service they can get in a well-branded commercial district. They think of the variety of services available. A brand is simpler to market in fewer words than an address.

- **Who:** The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition

- **What:** The NRRC:
  - Design a recognizable community logo that serves as a visual representation of Six Points. Virginia Commonwealth University’s Brandcenter may be willing to offer pro bono design work.
  - Create a short, recognizable community slogan to guide community marketing initiatives.
  - Feature the logo and slogan on all signage and promotional materials.
  - Introduce signage to clearly identify the Six Points neighborhood, including light pole banners and wayfinding signs.
  - Establish a comprehensive website for potential customers, businesses, residents, and investors. This website will be updated regularly.

- **When:** Within six months.

**Objective 2.2: Promote and organize special and unique events that extend to market niches, furthering community awareness and encouraging cross-shopping opportunities.**

- **Why:** Special shopping deals and events will encourage consumers who would otherwise bypass the corridor to stop in search of goods, services, and deals. New customers can be attracted by special events and deals, at which point they may become regular customers. Community events help to create good will and offer a chance to get feedback from residents and shoppers.
Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition

What:

- Enhance existing events and sponsor potential new events, such as a Fourth of July Celebration, Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway, Holiday Gift Collection, or the Masonic Lodge Community Barbeque.
- Initiate a Thrift-Destination Weekend driven by substantial sale promotions, during the spring or winter shopping season.
- Initiate local events with music, refreshments, and other amenities to bring the community together and raise awareness of the new Six Points promotional campaign.

When: As soon as six months; ongoing thereafter.

Objective 2.3: Market the Six Points commercial district to potential investors and businesses looking to locate or expand in Richmond.

Why: Increasing the prominence and reputation of Highland Park as an area of economic opportunity is essential to attracting desired goods and services. Providing relevant information about market conditions and available properties is an important step in making investments in Highland Park attractive and simpler.

Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition

What:

- Work with the City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review to maintain an inventory of properties available for sale, tax-delinquent, vacant, or otherwise blighted.
- Develop and regularly update a Six Points information packet including resource and contact information, available properties, and market opportunities (including the market analysis conducted for this plan, see Appendix C).
- Feature vacant buildings on commercial real estate websites. These buildings should be marketed as ideal locations for pharmacies, laundry facilities, and restaurants. These marketing efforts will be supported by this study’s market analysis.

When: Inventorying of vacant properties should begin immediately. Marketing efforts should begin after brand has been established.
Design

Goal 3: Establish a safe, welcoming environment.

Objective 3.1: Utilize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies to create a unified commercial district.

- **Why:** The Six Points commercial district should be pleasant to spend time in; if people feel comfortable in the area and enjoy walking through the space, they will be more willing to stay longer and shop. CPTED refers to strategies intended to reduce both the fear of crime and the opportunity to commit crime through minor alterations to the physical environment. Crime and the perception of crime are issues that were identified in shopper surveys and stakeholder interviews. Design features should be consistent and characteristic of the Six Points area, so that people feel a sense of place when entering the district. This Six Points environment should be a unifying factor for the duration of their stay. Establishing attractive visual features in an area goes a long way toward establishing a connection with shoppers.

- **Who:** The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Richmond Department of Public Works, Richmond Clean City Commission, Greater Richmond Transit Authority, Richmond Police Department, Business Owners, Property Owners

- **What:**
  - Install additional lighting in dark parking lots, side streets, and alleyways. Make sure lighting is bright enough to avoid blind spots, but not so bright that it creates blinding glare.
  - Eliminate signs of neglect, such as litter, graffiti, cracked or peeling paint, and poorly maintained sidewalks.
  - Establish a semi-annual spring/fall cleanup event (NRRC). Recruit community residents and church members to work together to beautify the community in any way they see fit. Neighborhood associations or business owners may wish to participate in the City’s Adopt-a-Spot or Street programs.
  - Utilize storefront windows overlooking sidewalks as points of observation; keep windows clear of obstructions and keep any blinds open. Observation deters crime and makes customers feel safe.
  - Encourage businesses to agree to similar and consistent business hours.

![Figure 23: New CPTED approved benches provide shelter for those waiting for public transportation.](Courtesy of URSP 666)
• Clearly identify entrances to stores.
• Install wayfinding signs that direct all visitors to parking lots, stores, and other services.
• Utilize landscaping elements such as thorny bushes to deter people from peeking through windows.
• Create an atmosphere of activity and life through the use of new Six Points-branded signage, light-pole banners, street trees, and street furniture such as benches.
• Post CPTED-related guidelines for residents and businesses on the Six Points website. Incentivize these regulations by recruiting volunteers to help implement them.

**Where:** Signs should be placed at major gateway areas. Bus shelters should be installed at stops approved by the GRTC. Bushes and trees should be planted in a consistent pattern along Meadowbridge. Benches should be installed along the perimeter of open/green spaces, in the center of the district in front of major businesses (such as Trims Barber Shop, Sunny Days Thrift store, Firehouse Café, and Boaz and Ruth) and where the main roads converge.

**When:** Immediately and ongoing; adding street furniture and signage may take longer, from six months to two years.

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**Figure 24:** Crosswalks with ADA curbcuts, such as this one, are easier for pedestrians to navigate. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)

**Figure 25:** Clear windows in commercial spaces can attract customers and deter criminal activity. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)
Goal 4: Improve connectivity and safety.

Objective 4.1: Strengthen physical and psychological connectedness of the north and south sides of the commercial district.

- **Why:** The Six Points intersection is confusing and hazardous for all modes of traffic. The vast expanse of asphalt creates a physical and psychological barrier between the two halves of the commercial district.

- **Who:** VDOT, Richmond Department of Public Works

- **What:**
  - Clearly identify gateways – entrances and exits to the district – with signage and decorations.
  - Close the unnamed 50-foot stretch of street at the corner of 2nd Avenue and Brookland Park Boulevard. Reutilizing it as a public plaza would provide greater definition to the intersection and shorten the amount of space pedestrians have to cross. Incorporate the large streetlight into the plaza.
  - Extend current sidewalks at the intersections out to provide shorter distances across intersections for pedestrians. Slimming the space for automobile traffic with extended sidewalks and visually enclosing elements like trees will also slow down traffic.
  - Install forced turn islands to divert turning traffic and provide pedestrians a refuge from traffic.
  - Clearly mark all pedestrian crossings, preferably using a pattern of bricks that are raised slightly in order to slow traffic.
  - Ensure there are proper curb cuts at all points to allow access for disabled pedestrians.
  - Install pedestrian signals.
  - Paint clear wayfinding arrows on lanes, as well as lane guides going into the intersection.

- **When:** Three to five years.

- **Where:** The Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Avenue, Dill Street, 2nd Avenue intersection (See Primary Intersection Map).
Primary Intersection: Proposed Circulation Improvements

Legend:
- Street Trees
- Public Plaza
- Planted Traffic Island
- Curb
- Fountain
- Brick Paver Crosswalk

Data Source: URSP 666 Commercial Revitalization Class, 2010
Objective 4.2: Improve access to district from Dill Avenue.

- **Why:** Dill Avenue is an arterial road that carries traffic to and from Mechanicsville Turnpike. The intersection of Dill Avenue, 3rd Avenue, and Rady Street creates a similar large expanse of asphalt in which lane designations are unclear. Pedestrian crossings are similarly dangerous.

- **Who:** VDOT, Richmond Department of Public Works.

- **What:**
  - Extend the sidewalks at all corners of the intersection to more clearly direct automobile traffic.
  - Install forced turn islands for traffic turning right from Rady Street onto Dill Avenue, and from Dill Avenue onto 3rd Avenue.
  - Improve landscaping to create a sense of enclosure and reduce the speed of vehicular traffic.
  - Clearly mark lanes with wayfinding arrows.
  - Install flashing caution lights at the intersection.

- **When:** Three years.

- **Where:** The intersection of Dill Avenue, Rady Street, and 3rd Avenue (See Secondary Intersection Map).
Economic Structure

Goal 5: Strengthen existing businesses.

Objective 5.1: Utilize available financial incentives and organizational resources to enhance the effectiveness of businesses.

Why: Available financial incentives are not always well-publicized. These funding sources can greatly reduce the cost of any number of improvements, including storefront appearance, security, and fire suppression. Rebates and low-interest loans can help create thriving businesses, boosting the entire commercial district. Consistent publicity and knowledgeable city employees will advance this objective.

Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Richmond CARE area representatives, Richmond Department of Economic Development

What:

- Promote the use of the Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) program and other financial incentives (See Appendix C).
- Publish incentive information, design guidelines, meeting dates, and general business information on a section of the Six Points website dedicated to current businesses.
- Coordinate with the Metropolitan Business League, Richmond Economic Development Corporation and Virginia Community Capital to provide merchants with informational resources and financing to strengthen their businesses.
- Actively engage in business retention strategies, including regular conversations with local merchants to determine their needs, annual surveys, and regular updates on how the NRRC or other potential nonprofit is addressing those concerns.

When: Immediately.

Objective 5.2: Assist existing grocery and convenience stores to meet customer demand.

Why: Interviews and shopper surveys show demand for a grocery store. However, interviews with several regional and national grocers indicate the competitive commercial corridors surrounding Six Points (Mechanicsville Turnpike, Laburnum Avenue, Chamberlayne Avenue, Brookland Park Boulevard), the lack of large commercial spaces, and the volatile real estate market all work against attracting a chain grocery store to Six Points (see Appendix C). Fortunately, a grocer already exists in the district and improving this store is a far more realistic solution.
Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, S&K Supermarket, Richmond CARE officials, Richmond Department of Economic Development, SUPERVALU, Farm-to-Family or other fresh foods supplier, and convenience store merchants.

• SUPERVALU may act as a product distributor to S&K, bringing established, affordable brands of produce to the neighborhood. Suggested capital improvements are based on findings from shopper surveys.

What:

• Guide a partnership between S&K Supermarket and SUPERVALU to improve grocery options and access. SUPERVALU has significant experience in both supplying and operating urban grocery stores. Utilize available incentives and potential CDFI loans (see Appendix C) to make capital improvements to the store, such as automatic doors, a more safe and efficient layout, updated security, and an improved refrigeration system.

• Continue exploratory conversations with SUPERVALU begun during the process of this plan (see Appendix C). In researching potential partnerships, SUPERVALU representatives were receptive to taking on the role of supplier, but noncommittal. S&K Supermarket should pursue these conversations further in coordination with the Richmond Department of Economic Development.

• Rebrand and renovate S&K in an effort to present a fresh face to the community.

• Pursue a corner store conversion program. A local produce distributor such as Farm-to-Family may supply area convenience stores with fresh produce options. Fresh produce needs to be stored, handled, marketed, and displayed differently than typical convenience goods, and technical assistance may be necessary. Richmond’s CARE program would be an appropriate source of financial assistance or subsidies to help sustain this program while customers and merchants adjust to healthy new options (see Appendix C).38

When: Within two years.

38 Decker, 2010.
Goal 6: Recruit new businesses to meet unmet market demand.

Objective 6.1: Recruit a coin-operated laundry facility.

Why: Market analysis reveals that there is significant unmet demand within the community for a laundry facility. This represents an economic opportunity for interested investors, and would also provide residents with a needed service. Appropriate properties are available within the commercial corridor.

Who: The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Richmond Department of Economic Development

What:
- Assemble a marketing packet including financing opportunities, available real estate, return on investment schedules, local incentives, and local contacts.
- Acquire and rehabilitate an appropriate vacant or on-the-market commercial property. Locations near other convenience retail goods and services are favorable. Complementary uses allow laundry customers to complete other tasks — such as banking or shopping — while they wait for their clothes. (See Appendix C)
- Educate investors about the appropriate store frontage and layout.
- Coordinate machine purchase and installation with area commercial laundry equipment distributors.
- Coordinate marketing and parking between the laundry facility and complementary businesses such as grocers.

When: Within two years.
Objective 6.2: Recruit a pharmacy.

- **Why:** Surveys and interviews reveal that residents desire a pharmacy. The competitive advantage promised by offering delivery services would be enhanced by the area's significant population of seniors.
- **Who:** The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Richmond Department of Economic Development
- **What:**
  - Assemble a marketing packet including financing opportunities, available real estate, return on investment schedules, local incentives, and local contacts.
  - Acquire and rehabilitate an appropriate vacant or on-the-market commercial property. The southern portion of the study area — near complementary food retail and services — is favorable. A location in this area could attract customers running periodic errands. (See Appendix C)
  - Emphasize the competitive advantage held by pharmacies willing to offer delivery services. This is especially significant in Highland Park due to its high population of seniors.
  - Seek out other area stakeholders who may be potentially large customers such as Rubicon and the Senior Housing Centers in the area.
- **When:** Within five years.

Objective 6.3: Establish Six Points as a destination for thrift shoppers.

- **Why:** Market analyses demonstrated unmet demand for clothing stores. While two thrift stores are currently located in the district, further research indicated that location near other thrift stores, among other characteristics (see Appendix C), may add to the potential for additional consignment or thrift store operators. Likewise, a concentration of thrift, consignment, antiques, and used goods stores could create a mass of shops that will attract consumers from outside the district. Stores in the district would benefit and realize efficiencies from cross-promotional efforts. The destination may be easier to market to visitors as a whole than as individual stores.
- **Who:** The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Richmond Department of Economic Development, Junior League of Richmond, Salvation Army, Goodwill, Boaz and Ruth, independent or neighborhood entrepreneurs
**What:**

- Contact thrift and antique stores throughout metro-Richmond to discuss their interest in expanding. Stores may be seeking larger available buildings or secondary retail locations. Recruiting additional specialty used-goods stores to the area would help to create an important mass of retail.

- Create marketing packages for both customers and potential businesses that emphasize the concentration of quality used-goods stores in the district.

- Acquire and, if necessary, rehabilitate an appropriate vacant or on-the-market commercial property. The northern portion of the study area — near existing thrift retail and church activities — is a favorable area to locate a new thrift store. Co-location of thrift and used-goods stores will create a critical concentration of services that could establish the district as a thrift destination. (See Appendix C)

- Advertise and promote Six Points as a destination for thrift shopping in regional print and electronic publications (*Style Weekly, North of the James, Times-Dispatch, and Virginia Tourism Website*).

- Within the current stores, start compiling an email list of customers who may be interested in other thrift deals.

**When:** Immediately.

**Where:** Many of the vacant buildings on the corridor would be appropriate for a small, specialized thrift store.

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**Figure 30:** Thrift stores in Six Points sell a wide range of items from holiday decorations to men’s and women’s clothing. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)

**Figure 31:** Six Points could build upon the existing thrift shops to create a shopping destination. (Courtesy of Pink Photography)
Social Development

Goal 7: Strengthen the social bond between youth and the community.

Objective 7.1: Engage the youth and young adult populations in productive activities.

- **Why:** The loitering of young adults was cited by a number of shoppers and churchgoers as a negative influence on the commercial district. Providing more opportunities and positive activities for the youth and young-adult population may reduce loitering while allowing youth to interact productively with their environment.

- **Who:** The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition, Hotchkiss Community Center, Richmond Public Schools, Richmond Truancy and Diversion Center, VCU, VUU, University of Richmond, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

- **What:**
  - Increase or generate funding for the Hotchkiss Community Center for additional staffing, maintenance, and expansion of year-round activities.
  - Expand focus of mentorship programs, targeting young women and at-risk youths.
  - Increase capacity of area tutoring programs (such as at Hotchkiss Community Center). Solicit students from local high schools and university programs who have service learning requirements. They can be involved in district-wide clean-up initiatives.

- **Where:** Throughout the commercial district.

- **When:** Immediately.
Conclusion

The revitalization process will require a commitment to consistent progress, the cultivation of diverse partnerships, and the understanding that revitalization takes time. Revitalization is a real possibility, but it is one that requires patience and the ability to work through setbacks. It also requires realistic assessments of what is possible. It is our hope that Six Points is able to build upon the strengths that it already has, particularly its merchants. The merchant community in Six Points is fragmented, but the merchants themselves are strong; a unifying organization is needed.

The North Richmond Revitalization Coalition can only expect to accomplish the revitalization of Six Points by committing to a sustained level of effort. This new level of effort will require increasing organizational capacity and the ability to develop and leverage diverse partnerships among the business owners and merchants, members of the NRRC, the City of Richmond, and residents of Highland Park into meaningful and tangible results.

The vision of a thriving Six Points is not impossible, or even unrealistic. But its achievement will require the kind of shared resolve and commitment long-time Six Points merchants have displayed individually for decades.
Sources


Miles, L. (2010, September 18). (V. M. Class, Interviewer)


Robertson, E. (2010, September 18). (J. Snelling, Interviewer)


