ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan would not have been possible without the generous assistance, knowledge, insight and vision of various individuals and organizations whom we would like to acknowledge:

The Westover Hills Merchants Association, the Westover Hills Neighborhood Association and Richmond City Council President Kathy Graziano’s office for welcoming us into the district and supporting our research efforts; specifically Dr. Greg Toler, Amen Kahwajy, Seth Humphreys, David Hathcock and Ryann Wayne for their time, guidance, and feedback that helped this plan become a reality.

We would like to thank all of the residents, merchants, and property owners of the Westover Hills Commercial District who invited us into their businesses and took time to provide us invaluable insight through surveys, interviews and focus group participation. The staff and management at Taza and O’Tooles were extremely helpful and accommodating with the use of their space, thank you.

We acknowledge the contributions of faculty and students from Virginia Commonwealth University who completed previous plans in the Westover Hills Neighborhood that served as a starting point for our work: The 1990 Westover Hills Revitalization Plan prepared by the Urban Commercial Revitalization Class and Professor John Accordino; The 1993 Westover Hills Shopper Profile prepared by John Accordino, Karen Becker, John Greir and Ellen Tarr; and the 1995 Walks at Westover Master Plan prepared by Ralph Higgins. These plans were foundational to our work, thank you.

We are grateful for the support of several commercial revitalization professionals who provided valuable feedback: Jim Smither, Rachel Kopelovich, Chris Sterling, Kyle Meyer, Jian Xu, Lisbeth Coker and Denise Lawus for their guidance in the revision and preparation of recommendations in this plan.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the communities that surround the Westover Hills Commercial District. It is our hope that all of you find our recommendations helpful.

Prepared by:
The Fall 2011 Urban Commercial Revitalization Class
Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University

Courtney Mailey, Instructor
Stephen Brown
Andrea Cuffee
Katrina Fontenla
Kelly Hall
Mark Hill

Tolu Ibikunle
Ryan Rinn
Emily Ruf
Joanne Simmelink
Kristin Smith
Sam Tuttle
# Westover Hills Commercial District Revitalization Plan

## Table of Contents

**Introduction** ................................................................. 4

**PART ONE - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**History** .................................................................................. 6
   - Neighborhood History ......................................................... 6
   - Past Plans ......................................................................... 7
   - Surrounding Commercial Areas ............................................. 8
   - Area Influences .................................................................. 10

**Traffic Circulation and Safety** ............................................ 12

**Built Environment** ............................................................. 13
   - Zoning ........................................................................... 13
   - Land Use ......................................................................... 14
   - Building Inventory & Public Spaces ..................................... 14
   - Design Analysis ................................................................ 15

**Stakeholder Attitudes** ....................................................... 17
   - Shopper Intercept Survey .................................................. 17
   - Merchant Survey .............................................................. 18
   - Focus Groups .................................................................. 19
   - Property Owner Survey .................................................... 20
   - Summary .......................................................................... 21

**Market Analysis** ............................................................... 22
   - Market Area Demographics ............................................... 22
   - Trade Area ...................................................................... 24
   - Business Development Potential ....................................... 26

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats** ................. 29
   - Strengths ........................................................................ 30
   - Weaknesses ..................................................................... 30
   - Opportunities .................................................................. 31
   - Threats ............................................................................. 31

**PART TWO - ACTION PLAN**

**Vision Statement** .................................................................. 33

**Action Plan** ......................................................................... 34

**Organization Recommendations** ........................................ 35
   - Build Membership .......................................................... 35
   - Develop a Strategic Plan .................................................. 37
   - Increase Revenue Streams .............................................. 38
   - Recruit and Engage Volunteers ........................................ 40

**Business Development Recommendations** ......................... 41
   - Support Existing Businesses ............................................ 41
   - Attract New Businesses ................................................... 43

**Promotion Recommendations** ............................................. 45
   - Identify Westover Hills as a Shopping Destination ............ 45
   - Develop Retail Marketing and Promotional Strategies .... 48
   - Organize and Promote Special Events .............................. 49

**Design Recommendations** .................................................. 50
   - Establish the District as a Distinct Place ........................... 50
   - Improve Curb Appeal ...................................................... 52
   - Make the Intersection the Visual Focal Point .................... 53
   - Make the District Pedestrian Friendly ............................... 54
   - Create Bicycle Friendly Environment .............................. 55
   - Improve Parking Accessibility ........................................ 57
INTRODUCTION

This plan is an organizational economic development tool that helps the stakeholders of the Westover Hills Commercial District effectively meet the challenges of its unique position in the City of Richmond.

From the long-standing restaurants that have attracted diners for generations to the nearby amenities of the James River Park System and the South of the James Farmers Market, the Westover Hills Commercial District is well positioned to emerge as a unique shopping and dining destination in the City of Richmond. At the request of Council President Kathy Graziano’s Office, the Westover Hills Merchants Association and the Westover Hills Neighborhood Association, the VCU Urban Commercial Revitalization Class has developed an implementable plan for making the Westover Hills Commercial District a unique destination for shoppers, diners and entrepreneurs.

The Westover Hills Commercial District is neither urban nor suburban; it is an eclectic mix of the best elements found in these two distinct types shopping districts. With the walkability and individual small business ownership usually noted in urban districts and the high visibility of being located on a major commuter route, Westover Hills has many opportunities for growth that capitalize on both convenience and uniqueness.

This Westover Hills Commercial District Revitalization Plan employs the balanced, highly successful Main Street Four Point Approach® to provide recommendations and strategies for improvements within the district. Part I of this document analyzes the history and existing conditions of the Westover Hills Commercial District that influence its potential for revitalization. Part II of this document lays the foundation for revitalization by outlining specific steps to be taken in each of the Four Points of the Main Street Approach®.

These steps include:

I. ORGANIZATION
Building the leadership, fundraising and volunteer recruitment capacity of the Merchants Association to guide the continued improvement of the district.

II. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Employing ways to retain and recruit businesses that fill the unique market position of the Westover Hills Commercial District.

III. PROMOTION
Creating specific branding, slogan, marketing and event strategies to build the unique image of the district that will position it as a citywide family friendly destination.

IV. DESIGN
Developing techniques to capitalize on the district’s unique visual appeal and to create a more cohesive and eclectic pedestrian-friendly space.
Part I

Existing Conditions
HISTORY

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Westover Hills is named for Colonel William Byrd’s plantation “Westover,” a country home on the lower James River. The history of Westover Hills begins with the construction of the Boulevard, or “Nickel” Bridge. The bridge, constructed in 1925, facilitated real estate growth and successful commercial development.

The plan for the entire Westover Hills community was completed in 1929 and the current layout was mostly complete by 1940. The residential areas of Westover Hills were laid to harmonize with the contour of the land, instead of the grid-pattern typical of the rest of Richmond.

The late 1930s and 1940s saw traditional businesses, such as grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, a 5&10 store, a movie theatre, gas stations, and specialty stores move into the Westover Hills commercial district. Most of the single-family homes were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1942 Westover Hills was annexed by the City of Richmond.

Commercial development north of Forest Hill Avenue, previously prohibited by deed restrictions, began in the 1940s. A fire station was built in the northeast quadrant of the district in 1942, followed by a post office, library, and elementary school. A log cabin that housed a variety of businesses stood on the lot that is now home to O’Toole’s pub. Other buildings included a two-story gift shop, the Cox homestead and several prominent houses. The now closed Westover Theater was constructed around 1950.

In the 1940s, a merchants association was established that paid close attention to the tenant mix and aesthetic maintenance of the area. The next two decades were a time of great prosperity for Westover Hills merchants. By the 1970s, however, the Westover Hills Merchants Association that had guided the district’s earlier commercial success had been inactive for close to 20 years. This, combined with inconsistent building rehabilitation, high tenant turnover and new commercial competition led to the decline of the shopping district as a whole.

2 Ibid
5 Ibid
PAST PLANS

Three previous plans for the Westover Hills Commercial District examined the area’s viability and made recommendations for its improvement. Primarily, the studies found potential for expansion of food and neighborhood-based services and noted the two major thoroughfares that divide the district and a lack of visual appeal as hindrances to economic success. Throughout, the positive relationship between the district and surrounding neighborhoods has been noted.

Westover Hills Revitalization Plan (1990)

The Westover Hills Revitalization Plan sought to diversify commercial uses in the corridor and improve the overall appearance. The plan also recommended active participation of the Westover Hills Merchants Association, which was re-established in 1989.9

Westover Hills Shopper Profile (1993)

The Westover Hills Shopper Profile found strong markets for food-related and family-oriented businesses (Figure 6). To best attract these businesses, the plan suggested the Merchants Association use the shopper profile to develop a targeted recruitment tool. The development of a cohesive and authentic district theme was also recommended.

The Walks at Westover Master Plan (1995)

Focused on improving urban design and pedestrian circulation, the Walks at Westover Master Plan recommended improving façades, adding consistent streetscape elements, and creating a logo that would accompany the moniker adopted by the Merchants Association, “The Walks at Westover.” More and better-marked crosswalks, fewer curb cuts, traffic calming measures, and organized on- and off-street parking were suggested to improve the shopper experience.

City of Richmond: Master Plan 2000-2010: Old South Planning District (2000)

The 2000-2010 City of Richmond Master Plan provides basic direction on future land use in the Westover Hills Commercial District. The future land use for the district is designated as “community commercial.”10 This use is intended to balance neighborhood-based scale with the intensity of use associated with high traffic corridors. The plan also supports keeping current land uses intact and specifically calls for no new non-residential uses east of 47th street.


10 The City of Richmond Master Plan. Richmond: City of Richmond, 2001, p. 279.
SURROUNDING INFLUENCES

SURROUNDING COMMERCIAL AREAS

The Westover Hills Commercial District competes with several nearby retail shopping centers, including Stratford Hills, Southside Plaza, Parkway Plaza, Stoney Point, and Carytown. Each of these shopping destinations offers a variety of goods and services, and most are anchored by a big-box chain retailer or grocery store. The proximity of these competing shopping areas to the Westover Hills Commercial District draws some potential customers and businesses away from Westover Hills.

The Parkway Plaza shopping center is located less than two miles from Westover Hills on Jahnke Road. Parkway Plaza contains the closest grocery store, a Food Lion, for residents in the Westover Hills area. The shopping center consists of over 125,000 square feet of commercial space with an average rental rate of $10 per square foot.\(^\text{11}\)

Table 1. Goods and Services Surrounding the Westover Hills Commercial District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping Destination</th>
<th>Food at/Away from Home</th>
<th>Alcohol/Tobacco</th>
<th>Household Operations</th>
<th>Housekeeping Supplies</th>
<th>Housekeeping Furnishings/Equipment</th>
<th>Apparel</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Personal Care/Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carytown</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3600 Forest Hill Ave</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkway Plaza</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside Plaza</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoney Point</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratford Hills</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westover Hills</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) Average retail rental rates were calculated based on the asking rental rates of available properties during October 2011 from Talhimer Commercial Real Estate Solutions. Square footage for surrounding shopping centers was estimated by the Fall 2011 Urban Commercial Revitalization Class.

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.
Stratford Hills, which is less than three miles from the Westover Hills Commercial District, has both Target and Wal-Mart big-box stores that offer a wide range of goods and services in one location. These two stores alone account for almost double the total square footage of the Westover Hills Commercial District. Additionally, two grocery stores are a major draw for customers. These shopping centers consist of nearly 700,000 square feet of commercial space with an average rental rate of $19 per square foot.

Less than two and half miles south on Westover Hills Boulevard is Southside Plaza, a large shopping center with a large number of apparel retailers, specialty grocery and food stores, and entertainment retailers. The Southside Plaza shopping center has over 530,000 square feet of commercial space at a rental rate of about $10 per square foot.

Nearby, Carytown is also a shopping destination for those who live in the Westover Hills community. Carytown provides a variety of unique goods and services in addition to two large grocery stores. The Carytown Merchants Association is a key reason for the unification and success of this shopping destination that is not under centralized management. The Merchants Association organizes several events throughout the year in addition to marketing and promotion activities. Carytown consists of over 650,000 square feet of commercial space with average rental rates ranging from $14 to $20 per square foot.

Westover Hills does provide several of the goods and services available at these other shopping destinations; however, at a much smaller scale. All of these shopping destinations have a larger amount of retail space and greater number of businesses while the Westover Hills Commercial District generally has lower rental rates at around $9.50 per square foot.
AREA INFLUENCES

Located less than five miles from downtown Richmond and 1.5 miles from Route 76 (Powhite Parkway), which connects interstates I-64, I-95 and I-195; the Westover Hills district is closely connected to several nearby amenities, neighborhoods and major commuter thoroughfares.

Nickel Bridge

A half mile north of the Westover Hills Commercial District, the Nickel Bridge connects Southside and central Richmond. An average of 13,000 vehicles cross the bridge daily, many of whom then pass through the intersection of Forest Hill Avenue and Westover Hills Boulevard. The bridge is also used by pedestrians and cyclists for commuting and recreation.

Parks

James River Park System: Located just north of the district, the James River Park System contains 550 acres of shoreline and islands within the City of Richmond. Between tourists and city residents, the entire park draws over 1,000,000 visitors a year, and the nearby access points at 43rd street, Reedy Creek and the Buttermilk Trail draw an estimated 250,000 visitors each year. These visitors can all be considered potential customers.

Byrd Park: Byrd Park is located just 2 miles north of the Westover Hills Commercial District. This 287-acre park offers three lakes for fishing and paddle boat rides, as well as tennis courts, a Vita exercise course and the historic Carillon and Dogwood Dell Amphitheatre.

Maymont Park: A mile and a half from the Westover Hills Commercial District, across the Nickel Bridge, is Maymont Park. The 100-acre park has a Children’s Farm, barn, nature center, gardens and wildlife exhibits. The park attracts over 530,000 visitors a year.

Forest Hill Park: Forest Hill Park is located three-quarters of a mile east of the Westover Hills commercial district. The park features a bicycle trail, a playground, tennis courts, pavilions, and a historic old stone house. Forest Hill Park is listed on both the Virginia and National Register of Historic Sites. The park is also the site of the South of the James Farmers Market.

Table 2. Surrounding Influences and Potential Customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surrounding Influence</th>
<th>Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickel Bridge</td>
<td>13,000 commuters/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westover Hills Elementary</td>
<td>360 students + 48 staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Waldorf School</td>
<td>100 students + 30 staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South of the James Farmer Market</td>
<td>1,500 customers/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James River Park (43rd Street, Reedy Creek, Buttermilk Trail and Pump House entrances)</td>
<td>250,000 visitors/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maymont Park</td>
<td>530,000 visitors/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrd Park</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Hill Park</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

References:
13 White, Ralph. Interview by author. Phone interview. Richmond, Va, September 20, 2011.
14 250,000 was estimated by taking the total number of visitors divided by the number of entrances, and weighting it due to popularity.
17 Rosenberg, Cathie. Interview by author. Email interview. Richmond, VA, October 11, 2011.
South of the James Farmers Market

Over 100 farmers, artisans and businesses are represented at the South of the James Farmers Market held every Saturday from 8 AM until noon from May to December in Forest Hill Park. Managed by the Market Umbrella, its average weekly attendance exceeds 1,500 customers from more than 30 zip codes.19

Schools

The Westover Hills Elementary and the Richmond Waldorf schools are located within the Westover Hills commercial district. Westover Hills Elementary is a public school for Pre-Kindergarten to 5th grade, serves 360 students20 and a staff of 48.21 About 340 students come from nearby communities, and other students are transported in from across the city.22

The Richmond Waldorf School is a private, nonsectarian school with grades from pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade. The school serves just under 100 students23 and has a staff of 30.24 As a private school, the students are drawn from all over the Richmond Metropolitan area, not just the surrounding neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods

The Westover Hills commercial district borders four neighborhoods: Westover Hills, Forest Hill, Forest Hill Terrace, and Forest View. The homes in these neighborhoods were built between the 1920’s and the 1950’s.25 The architectural style varies widely in the neighborhoods and includes Federal Revival, Victorian, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Craftsman, Cape Cod, and Modern.26

TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND SAFETY

The Westover Hills Commercial District accommodates multiple forms of transportation including major car, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian routes (Map 1). The district is divided by Westover Hills Boulevard and Forest Hill Avenue which serve as local arterials and commuter routes. There are seven bus stops and three different bus routes in the district. There are crosswalks, but they are missing at key intersections. It was noted by merchants that pedestrians largely use rear alleys to access the district from surrounding neighborhoods.

Parking
The parking supply in the Westover Hills Commercial District is predominately single row parking in front of business, creating a combination of suburban convenience with some feeling of an urban environment. There are a total of 790 parking spaces, 24 of which are designated for handicapped parking, and most of which are privately owned.

On-street parking is available along Forest Hill Avenue and Westover Hills Boulevard but is rarely used due to faded signage and the high volume and speed of traffic.

Driver Safety
Busy intersections in the district present safety issues for motorists.

Table 3. Traffic Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Crashes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hit and Runs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

Map 1. Traffic and Circulation

Dangerous intersections have contributed to five hit and run accidents along Forest Hill Ave between 2008 and 2011 (Map 1). Traffic crashes have been increasing steadily from 2008 to 2010, growing by a total of 125% (Table 2). Similarly, hit and runs increased from 2008 to 2009 (67%) but have not increased since that time (Table 2).

Locations are approximated from block-level data.
Public Safety

Although some types of crime increased in 2010, overall, crime in the district remained low from 2008 to early 2011. The number of burglaries increased from seven in 2009 to eleven in 2010 (57%), and the number of robberies increased significantly from zero to six (100%) during the same time period.\(^{28}\)

Destruction of private property increased from zero to five in 2011, and drug, DUI and shoplifting offenses increased in 2011.\(^{29}\) However, incidents of murder, aggravated assault, and simple assault all decreased in 2010. Table 4 gives a detailed account of crimes that occurred in and around the Westover Hills area, as well as the total number of calls made to the police for each year. The data shows that the total number of calls made to police was similar for each year.\(^{30}\) The incidents for 2011 only account for the months preceding September.

---

### Table 4. Summary of Crimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary/Breaking and Entering</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destruction of Private Property</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/Narcotic Violations</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUI</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery (ATM)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoplifting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Assault</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from Building</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from Motor Vehicle</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of Motor Vehicle Parts</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total calls</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

---

\(^{28}\) Richmond Police Department (RPD) Crime Incident Information Center. 
\(^{29}\) Richmond Police Department (RPD) Crime Incident Information Center. 
LAND USE

The Westover Hills Commercial District is primarily comprised of commercial land uses, with some institution, government, office, vacant and recreation uses (Map 3).

Map 3. Land Use in the Westover Hills Commercial District

BUILDING INVENTORY & PUBLIC SPACES

There are 35 buildings in the Westover Hills Commercial District with a total square footage of 204,939. There is substantial underutilized space in the district with three vacant buildings (12,143 square feet) and several vacant parcels (1.3 acres).

Overall building conditions are sound,\(^3\) with most deficiencies, such as cracks or peeling paint, located in the rear of buildings. However, there are multiple instances of deferred maintenance throughout the district and in general, public spaces are not as well kept as private areas, giving a perception of poor up-keep.

The majority of the buildings are single story, creating a human-scale environment. Most buildings in the shopping district are within 10 feet of each other and have large storefront windows, creating visual interest for pedestrian shoppers. However, there is a general lack of cohesive design in the district and signage is weathered.

\(^3\)The Dunbar Criteria was used to evaluate building conditionss. See Appendices for full methodology.
DESIGN ANALYSIS

Gateways

Gateways mark the entrances into a space. Gateways let visitors know that they have entered a distinct area with a recognizable character. There are four gateways into the Westover Hills Commercial District: a North Gateway (Figure 16); a West Gateway (Figure 17); a South Gateway (Figure 18); and an East Gateway (Figure 19). Currently, none of these entrances successfully announces entry into the unique district.

At the North Gateway, the thick canopy of trees that lines Westover Hills Boulevard quickly thins, making visitors feel more like they are exiting the Westover Hills residential community than entering the Westover Hills Commercial District. The West Gateway presents a lopsided urban vista with a continuous building line on one side of Forest Hill Avenue and an inactive space with large setbacks and vacant lots on the other. The South Gateway lacks greenery and is a confusing experience with a high level of traffic but little signage or other welcoming elements. At the East Gateway there are no features to visually enclose the area making it feel impersonal and generally unrecognizable from any other intersection. The “Walks of Westover” banners are not consistently positioned in a manner that welcomes visitors at all gateways.

Overall, the lack of specific markers and cohesive landscape elements allows visitors to pass through the district without ever recognizing it as a place to stop and shop.

Sidewalks

Although there are sidewalks throughout the district, their poor condition creates a dangerous experience for the shopper. Varying greatly in width, they are significantly cracked and uneven in places, with excessive curb cuts and a lack of grass buffers that could protect pedestrians from fast-moving traffic.

At the North Gateway, the thick canopy of trees that lines Westover Hills Boulevard quickly thins, making visitors feel more like they are exiting the Westover Hills residential community than entering the Westover Hills Commercial District.
Westover Hills Boulevard & Forest Hill Avenue Intersection

The Westover Hills Commercial District is defined by the central intersection of Westover Hills Boulevard and Forest Hill Avenue. However, the current design fails to communicate the importance of the intersection. Buildings on the corners are set too far back to create a welcoming and active space. Parking lots sit on each corner and disrupt the visual connectivity of the shopping district. Crosswalks exist, but aggressive traffic makes the intersection hostile to pedestrians who choose instead to jaywalk at calmer sections.

Most of the crossing signals at intersections in the district either do not work or are not visible during the day. Four-sided crosswalks are missing at major intersections: Jahnke Road and Forest Hill Avenue, and Westover Hills Boulevard, N 49th Street, and Dunston Avenue.

Lighting, Street Furniture and Landscaping

Pedestrian scale lighting is not consistent throughout the district. The primary light source is cobra head lighting with pedestrian-level acorn lights attached to utility poles. Overall there is a lack of street furniture in the district that makes the public realm uninviting for shoppers.

The quality and type of landscaping varies throughout the shopping district. Single-stalk crape myrtles along Forest Hill Avenue and mature trees along some stretches of Forest Hill Avenue and Westover Hills Boulevard create a sense of enclosure and visual appeal. However, the shopping district as a whole lacks consistent, maintained landscaping.
STAKEHOLDER ATTITUDES

The participation of diverse stakeholders in the communities surrounding the Westover Hills Commercial District is essential to developing a valuable revitalization plan. Gathering and analyzing the opinions of those invested in the district gave an idea about what is wanted, needed and possible for the future. The stakeholders, contacted over a month-long period in September 2011, included shoppers, merchants, property owners, surrounding institutions and residents. The following summaries of surveys and focus groups provide a snapshot of the attitudes and opinions of the people who can work together to make Westover Hills a more prosperous commercial district (see Appendices for full results).

SHOPPER INTERCEPT SURVEY

A total of 110 shopper intercept surveys were conducted between September 22nd and September 28th, 2011 in the Westover Hills Commercial District. These surveys were conducted between 8:00 AM to 1:00 AM by teams of two students outside businesses throughout the corridor including O’Tooles, CVS, Family Dollar, Exxon, TaZa, Walgreens and The Forest. Shoppers were asked to state the frequency of their visits, rate the appearance and conditions of the commercial district and to make recommendations for improvements. Customers were also asked about their means of transportation, parking, where they currently shop, and what types of establishments they would like to see in the commercial district. Demographic information such as age, gender, race and zip code were also collected. The shopper intercept sample matches closely with the demographics of the convenience market area discussed in the next section. No significant differences in responses were found based on age, gender or race.

Over 80% of those surveyed live in the market area and most of them (84.5%) shop in the district either daily (52.7%) or weekly (31.8%). Most customers travel to and from the district by car (76.4%) or walk from surrounding neighborhoods (29.1%). A majority of shoppers made between one and three stops in the district (86.4%) and found parking to be readily available (61.8%). Customers most often utilized the area to shop at the pharmacies (62.7%), gas stations (54.5%), convenience stores (45.5%) and full service restaurants (40.9%). Beyond district shopping options, customers stated they also came to the area to visit the James River (34.5%), the public library (31.8%) and the South of the James Farmer’s Market (31.8%).

Most customers (92.7%) did not perceive safety as an important issue in the district, rating it from average to very safe. Customers though, thought the area was unattractive overall with a majority (73.6%) rating it from average
to not attractive at all. When asked about physical improvements needed in the area half of the respondents (50%) wanted to see improvements in the visual appeal of the area followed by improvements in landscaping (40%), sidewalks (34.5%), traffic (31.8%), lighting (26.4%), safety (23.6%) and signage (10%).

The following chart shows the types of new businesses shoppers would like to see in the Westover Hills Commercial District.

**Chart 1. New Businesses Suggested by Shoppers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Foods</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Food</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Books Video</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Retail</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing/Apparel</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie Theater</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts/Artificates</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackle Shop</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

**MERCHAND SURVEY**

The study team interviewed 20 merchants in the Westover Hills Commercial District over a period of two weeks. The surveys were conducted in-person, by phone and by email to ensure as many merchants could participate as possible, yielding a response rate of 75%. The merchants interviewed have been in business from as little as one year to over 45 years. The businesses are diverse and represent retail, personal services, convenience stores and various types of restaurants. The merchants currently employ an average of four people at their businesses. The merchants have mixed feelings about safety in the district, with 50% feeling safe. Most businesses (59%) are experiencing a decline in sales but appear to have a positive outlook about the future of their businesses. The businesses reported having a favorable opinion about the location of the district and value the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Advantages and Disadvantages**

Respondents reported that the proximity to the Westover Hills and Forest Hill neighborhoods and the residents that support their businesses are a major advantage. Merchants also stated that affordability of the location is an asset compared to other commercial areas such as Carytown and the Fan. Additionally, the merchants remarked that the steady flow of traffic is a benefit for their business.

**Chart 2. Locational Disadvantages for Merchants**

Perception of crime in the Westover Hills Commercial District is the leading disadvantage for the merchants interviewed. Curb appeal of the district was mentioned as a problem that affects the perception of the area as run down and aged. Fast moving traffic is a concern and it is believed that commuters do not stop to shop. Traffic on Forest Hill Avenue and Westover Hills Boulevard is considered to move much faster than the posted speed limit, and loitering and parking are also seen as a disadvantage for merchants.
Patrons, Shoppers and Clients

Merchants reported that their customers span every generation, with most from the surrounding neighborhoods. A few merchants draw customers from the Greater Richmond region. Most believe a decline in the economy contributed to a reduction in their sales and merchants have adjusted their operations to accommodate.

Advertising

Merchants reported their primary methods of advertising to be websites and word of mouth. Many agreed that an opportunity to advertise jointly with other merchants in the district would be beneficial.

Merchants Association

There are currently 19 members of the Westover Hills Merchants Association out of 35 merchants in the area. Of those interviewed, 42% are members of the Association. Those interviewed have a positive opinion of most neighboring businesses, saying that new businesses would be welcomed in the district and more options for shoppers would enhance the perception of the area. The following new businesses were suggested by merchants:

Chart 3. New Businesses Suggested by Merchants

FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus groups were conducted on the Westover Hills Commercial District to gain residents’ opinions on improvements, safety, business mix and the future of the district. The groups were made up of active short-term and long-term residents of the community from both the north and south sides of Forest Hill Avenue. Overall, despite some criticisms, participants were extremely supportive of local business and would like to be involved in helping the district thrive.

Participants of both focus groups want to keep small, locally-owned businesses and restaurants in the area. Residents like the neighborhood feel, but do not believe it is currently a viable shopping district. A grocery store, week-long farmers market or specialty food store as well as a bait shop, bicycle shop, and a sporting goods/outdoor store were seen as desirable business additions.

Most respondents believe the district is a safe place, especially during the day. However, fast moving traffic, faded crosswalks, and the lack of sufficient street lighting were mentioned as impediments to safety.

Participants noted the disjointed nature of the buildings and current vacancies as issues. Participants felt there is great potential for the district if the unique building styles can be capitalized on with vivid colors and other design features to bring an eclectic yet unified look.
PROPERT ON OWER SURVEY

Seventeen property owners in the Westover Commercial District were contacted by phone, email and in-person for the Property Owner survey. Seven responded, giving a response rate of 41%. The following is a summary of those responses that were received over a survey period of two weeks.

Property Owner Characteristics

Property owners have held their properties from short-term (1–5 years; 30%) and mid-term (16–25 years; 30%) to long-term (36–50+ years; 30%). A majority (57%) do not occupy their properties, while a significant number do (43%), which show there is not a substantial imbalance of absentee ownership among those property owners surveyed.

Future Plans, Maintenance and Renovations

Property owners with tenants reported no recent change in rent, noting that demand has gotten slightly worse with the loss of key tenants and a slow economy. A majority (71%) do not plan to sell in the next five years, but others are unsure, due generally to the economy. Those that are responsible for maintenance usually receive maintenance requests three times a year or less; most are not planning any major renovations, excluding some exterior work, such as painting, or minor interior renovations.

Perceptions of the District

Property owners were asked to rate the current appearance, cleanliness, safety, crime, economic vitality and rental demand in the district in comparison to when the property was first purchased. Overall, property owners felt appearance, economic vitality and rental demand has gotten slightly worse while safety and crime has improved. Ratings for cleanliness were mixed. Property owners think economic vitality of the area has gotten slightly worse over the past few years. They note that due to the economy and a decrease in sales, the commercial district must attract additional customers to make up for losses.

Types of New Businesses

Property owners would like to see a variety of new businesses, echoing responses by other stakeholders in the areas. The following new types of businesses were seen as desirable in the Westover Hills Commercial District:

- Retail: 18%
- Grocery: 18%
- Bakery: 18%
- Restaurant: 9%
- Fast Food: 9%
- Coffee Shop: 9%
- Flower Shop: 9%
Advantages, Disadvantages and Improvements

The majority (71%) of property owners would buy their property again if given the choice today due to the good location, lower tax assessments, large volume of traffic and a feeling that it is “a good investment.” Those that would not buy again feel that the perception of parking in the area is an issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Location</td>
<td>• Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surrounding neighborhoods</td>
<td>• Street and alley litter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good business community</td>
<td>• Lack of tax incentives for capital improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government representation</td>
<td>• Challenging real estate market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shortage of parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High competition from other areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Property owners wish to see a number of physical, organizational, and promotional changes in the area. Respondents expressed a desire to change the “Walks of Westover” name; create a unified image and improve facades; perform a general clean-up of litter, grass and weeds; improve lighting, parking and alleyways; better police protection; and saw a need “to get owners to work together.”

SUMMARY

Qualitative research reveals that stakeholders have very clear opinions of the Westover Hills Commercial District: local small businesses are well liked and supported and the “neighborhood feel” of the district is a point of pride for shoppers and merchants alike. Most do, however, believe the district needs to improve its “curb appeal.” They view the current conditions of storefronts as a detriment to the district.

Shopping behaviors were consistent across most groups while the perception of crime and safety in the district was mixed - some feel quite safe, while others voiced concerns. Merchants and property owners expressed the need for additional parking, while shoppers did not find parking to be a matter of contention. Finally, the level of engagement from merchants and property owners was found to be low.

Figure 26. Stakeholders expressed pride in surrounding neighborhood assets, such as the Westover Hills United Methodist Church.
Source: www.hillsandheights.org.
MARKET ANALYSIS

MARKET AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

The convenience market area for the Westover Hills Commercial District consists of six census tracts: Tract 603, Tract 605, Tract 606, Tract 710.01, Tract 710.02 and Tract 711. The demographics of the convenience market area help paint a picture of the potential shopper in the Westover Hills Commercial District. Generally, the population in the market area has been stable over time. Between the years 1990 and 2000 the area experienced a slight decline in population, -1.6%, which was less than the overall rate of decline for the City at -2.6%. However, during this time there were pockets of growth and decline within the market area. Tract 710.01 experienced the highest rate of decline, at -9.7%, while Tract 606 had the most growth at a positive rate of 6.2%. Tracts 603 and 710.02 also declined, while Tracts 605 and 711 gained population. Table 5 below compares the recent population trends and presents 2009 American Community Survey estimates.

Table 5. Population Trends; 1990 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tract 603</td>
<td>1,758</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>1,397</td>
<td>-16.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 605</td>
<td>5,870</td>
<td>6,073</td>
<td>6,116</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 606</td>
<td>2,389</td>
<td>2,536</td>
<td>2,354</td>
<td>-7.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 710.01</td>
<td>5,394</td>
<td>4,870</td>
<td>5,978</td>
<td>22.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 710.02</td>
<td>3,332</td>
<td>3,157</td>
<td>3,516</td>
<td>11.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 711</td>
<td>4,697</td>
<td>4,766</td>
<td>4,785</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Richmond</td>
<td>203,056</td>
<td>197,790</td>
<td>200,976</td>
<td>1.61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Recent estimates show that the market area’s population is growing once again, with an estimated total population of 24,146 in 2009 or a 4.6% increase in total population from 2000 to 2009. Map 5 below shows population trends for each census tract within the market area. Tracts 710.01 and 710.02 experienced the largest population growths at 22.75% and 11.37% respectively. Tracts 605 and 711 saw minimal growth at 0.71% and 0.40%. Tracts 603 and 606 both experienced population loss at rates of 16.20% and 7.18%.


33 2010 Census tracts do not align with 2000 Census tracts used here and in previous plans.
35 At the time of the project the 2010 Census data was not available.
36 2005 – 2009 American Community Survey Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The value shown here is the 90 percent margin of error. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value. In addition to sampling variability, the ACS estimates are subject to nonsampling error. The effect of nonsampling error is not represented in these tables.
Population by Age

The convenience market area\(^{37}\) has a similar age distribution to that of the City although the population in the market area is slightly older than that of the City. The market area has a lower percentage of children under the age of 19 than the City (21% versus 25%) and a slightly higher percentage of persons above 35 years (51% versus 48%). The largest cohort in both the City and the market area following the Under 19 age group is the 25 to 34 year age group, accounting for 20% and 18% of the population, respectively.

Similar to the findings of the Shopper Profile report, the southwestern portion of the market area has a greater percentage of young families, ages 25 to 34, many with children under 19. The central and east-central areas have the highest percentage of older residents, above 65 years, as well as the highest percentage of those in the 25 to 34 age groups. This mix suggests a continued trend of new families moving into the homes of older homeowners that are transitioning out.

Though the market area has a slightly older population than the City, discussions with residents suggest that young families with children are an underserved market.

Household Income

The average household income for the market area is $40,956, which is much higher than the average income for the City of $37,735. However, this number masks significant disparities in the median income across the market area (Chart 7).

The western areas have the highest median income, with Tract 606 representing 210% of the Richmond median income. The eastern area has the lowest median income, at 47% of the City average, with the central and south-western areas around 80% of the area median income.

---

\(^{37}\) See page 25 for a definition of the convenience market area, referred to as “market area” from this point forward.
TRADE AREA

The market analysis identifies gaps in the market for goods and services demanded by customers and recommends business types that will complement existing business establishments in the Westover Hills Commercial District and enhance competitiveness. Figure 27 shows the method used to calculate unmet demand for the Westover Hills Commercial District.

The first step in determining unmet demand is calculating the total spending power of the trade area. Using the Consumer Expenditure Survey, the average percentage of household income spent on certain categories of goods and services was established and cross-referenced with U.S. Census data for households in the trade area to determine the total dollar amount of demand in the Westover Hills trade area, found to be $246,694,566.

Next, the current supply of goods and services in the district was calculated by multiplying the total square feet of selling space by the median sales per square foot for each type of good or service. Then, the total supply was subtracted from the total demand, resulting in a dollar amount of unmet demand: $88,284,294. Finally, this unmet demand is divided by the average sales per square foot for each category of commercial activity, producing the potential businesses that are currently underserved in the trade area (Table 6).

Three key takeaways came out of the market analysis. First, the market analysis shows significant commercial competition nearby. These shopping districts hold advantages over the Westover Hills Commercial District because they are centrally managed, have an abundance of highly visible parking and include familiar big-box stores. Second, there is a disconnect between what stakeholders want and what the market can support. For example, many stakeholders mentioned their desire for a grocery store; however, the empirical evidence suggests that a grocery store cannot remain profitable in the Westover Hills Commercial District. The last key takeaway is the opportunity for new entrepreneurial and independent businesses to open in the commercial district due to the low rents and close proximity to the urban core.

Table 6. Supportable New Uses in the Commercial District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music Products</th>
<th>Housewares and Accessories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Foods: Markets</td>
<td>Specialty Foods: Personal Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Dining</td>
<td>Cigar Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consignments</td>
<td>Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of New Stores

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

38 This two-part survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics collects national data on the buying habits of American consumers, including their expenditures on the types of goods and services found in local shopping districts. More information can be found at http://www.bls.gov/cex/.

39 Median sales per square foot was obtained from the 2008 Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers manual and the existing square footage for each category of goods and services was determined through an inventory of the district.
Market Boundaries

There are different distances that shoppers are willing to travel to purchase certain goods and services. Generally, the more commonplace an item the shorter the distance the shopper will travel and the more specialized an item the greater the distance the shopper will travel. Based on the goods and services it offers, the Westover Hills Commercial District serves two primary markets - a convenience goods market and a destination goods market.

Map 6. Convenience Market Area

Convenience goods and services are those purchased by shoppers with minimal effort and often at the most accessible store, they meet the day-to-day shopping needs of consumers in the immediate neighborhood. Map 6 outlines the convenience market area for the Westover Hills Commercial District. Currently the district predominately provides convenience goods and services such as gasoline, banking, beauty and dry cleaning.

Destination goods and services are those purchased by shoppers after conducting research on factors that include price, quality, and brands. The destination market area for the Westover Hills Commercial District, or the distance shoppers will travel for higher priced goods such as furniture, automobiles or specialty food, is the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area. A quantitative market analysis of the destination market area is beyond the scope of this plan; however demand for destination goods was identified through the qualitative analysis of stakeholder attitudes.

40 Downtown Milwaukee Market Analysis
41 International Council of Shopping Centers, ICSC.org
42 Originally defined in the Westover Hills Commercial Revitalization Plan as those Census Tracts within a five-minute drive from the district.
43 Downtown Milwaukee Market Analysis
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The combination of the convenience goods market, the shopper’s goods market, commuters and the large number of visitors to both the South of the James Farmers Market and the nearby parks provide a demand for the addition of several new businesses within the Westover Hills Commercial District. Based on the unmet demand calculated in the market analysis and the existing establishments in the Westover Hills Commercial District some of the new supportable business categories include: music products, housewares and accessories, specialty foods market, specialty foods personal services, neighborhood dining, a cigar bar, and specialty consignments shops.

Existing business establishments for each of these categories within the Richmond area were identified and interviewed in order to determine the key factors for locating a business of this type (see Appendices for interview notes).

Music Products

Music products have the highest quantitative unmet demand based on the market analysis. Music and entertainment was also mentioned several times in the qualitative analysis. A music or instrument store meets these unmet demands in addition to the demand for additional personal services and education if the store offers music lesson services.

Interviews with existing music instrument and record retailers indicate a desire for: high foot traffic, visibility, and a surrounding neighborhood with a market for these services, specifically a large youth population including the college and under-18 age groups. The typical customers include children taking lessons, college students, and professional players who are looking for specialty and vintage instruments. Retail space requirements vary between the instrument and record retailers; an instrument retailer would need at least 1,000 square feet of space with room and opportunity for 3 to 5 lesson rooms. A record store requires less space, only 600-800 square feet.

| Figure 29. Steady Sounds, Richmond, Virginia. Source: www.804enterprise.com. |
| Figure 30. South of the James Farmers Market. Source: www.themarketumbrella.com. |
Housewares and Accessories Store

Household products have a high quantitative unmet demand with a potential for 23 additional units in the market area. One possibility is for a larger retail space that leases out areas within the store to individuals to sell their unique creations, such as the Shops at 5807. A specialty gift boutique in Richmond was interviewed and identified the following factors that are considered when choosing a new location for this type of business: safety; aesthetics of the district including maintenance, signage, lighting and other street décor; the relationships among merchants within the district; and whether there is a neighborly feel for the district. A retail space between 2,000 to 2,500 square feet would be needed for this type of retail store. The typical customer was identified as having disposable income that allows them to make substantial purchases for gifts.

Specialty Foods

Market: Grocery and specialty foods both received the highest number of responses in the qualitative analysis, but had a low level of quantitative demand. A specialty food market that offers pre-made meals in addition to other convenience food options, such as Strawberry Street Market, might show some promise. The typical customer lives in the neighborhood surrounding the market and many walk or bike to the store. Several important factors go into choosing a successful location, including: close proximity to residential areas, significant pedestrian activity and high visibility. Commercial space between 2,200 to 3,000 square feet is required to accomodate goods as well as a kitchen to prepare food.

Personal Service: Connecting the high level of qualitative demand for specialty food stores to the high quantitative unmet demand for personal services creates a unique opportunity for food related personal services to locate within the district. A meal prep kitchen studio that provides cooking lessons might fill this niche. There are two chain franchise establishments that offer this type of service within the Richmond region. These businesses identified their typical customers as working women between the ages of 25 and 54 with families, typical customers also generally fall into the middle to upper-middle income range. Consideration in choosing a site for this type of business includes surrounding neighborhood demographics. Businesses identified median income levels in the upper-middle bracket to be very important. In terms of retail space, location in an upscale retail property with at least 1,500 square feet are the main priorities when selecting a business site.

Neighborhood Dining

Fast food was another type of food related establishment that came up in the qualitative analysis. Although it has a low level of quantitative unmet demand, most of the fast food restaurants in the area are clustered in the larger shopping centers. The shopping district has formed somewhat of a “independent restaurant cluster” and could potentially support additional casual neighborhood dining restaurants such as a sandwich shop/deli or a barbeque place. These local restaurants could serve as a place for people...
Business Development Potential

including gender, age, and income levels of residents. The typical customer is generally upper-middle income males between the ages of 28 to 55. Competitive rental rates for retail spaces were identified as being important when choosing a retail space in addition to the space being between 1,800 and 2,000 square feet.

Consignments

Unique consignment type boutiques cover several market categories and could add to the eclectic vibe of the shopping district. The three businesses interviewed all agreed that access to customers, visibility, good locations and affordable rent were significant factors when considering expanding or relocating their businesses. The typical customer for these shops were women with varying ages depending on the type of consignment shop. The typical retail space varied depending on the particular consignment shop with space required ranging from 1,500 square feet to 6,000 square feet.

Cigar Bar

A cigar bar style restaurant fits the qualitative demand for more sit down restaurants as well as the tobacco products category that has a moderate quantitative unmet demand. This unique type of restaurant would be a complement to the existing restaurants and add to the restaurant destination identity of Westover Hills. Both a cigar and wine store and a restaurant cigar bar were interviewed. Key locational factors of both of these establishments include the demographics of the surrounding area who work in or near the area to get a quick meal during their break. A successful Carytown diner identified several key factors when considering a new location. The typical customer was within the 25 to 35 age range including college students, locals and higher income shoppers visiting the district. Proximity to other destination retail shops was identified as a major draw for customers to the restaurant. A new location would need at least 1,500 square feet.

Figure 33. O'Toole's Pub, is just one example of the many restaurants in the Westover Hills Commercial District. Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

Figure 32. Clementine Consignment, Richmond, Virginia. Source: www.sweetclementineblog.com.
## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

### STRENGTHS
- Location
- Unique Retail Environment
- Invested Stakeholders

### WEAKNESSES
- Lack of Cohesive Identity
- Curb Appeal
- Organization & Collaboration

### OPPORTUNITIES
- Vacancies & Underutilized Space
- Population Growth
- High Traffic Volume
- Connectivity to Nearby Assets
- Young Families Staying Put

### THREATS
- Nearby Commercial Competition
- Perceptions of Safety
- Absentee Landlords and Property Owners
- Business/leadership succession/continuity

By building on strengths, capitalizing on opportunities, proactively addressing weaknesses and averting threats the Westover Hills Commercial District will emerge as a unique and viable shopping destination for years to come.
STRENGTHS

Location is one of the greatest strengths of the Westover Hills Commercial District.

- Near Forest Hill Park, Maymont, Byrd Park and the James River Park System
- Situated along two major commuter routes- Forest Hill Avenue and Westover Hills Boulevard
- Five minute travel time to downtown and five minute travel time to major highways

The unique retail environment is also a strength. Businesses are independently owned, rent is affordable and engaged merchants and neighborhood associations are involved in the district. Long-standing businesses with loyal patronage and national chain pharmacies also provide stability to the area. The mixed urban and suburban structure of the district gives it an eclectic feel and is a point of uniqueness and pride. Walkability from surrounding neighborhoods and the availability of public transportation in the area are also strengths of the Westover Hills Commercial District.

WEAKNESSES

Multiple competing shopping districts under central management surround the Westover Hills Commercial District. The district currently lacks a cohesive identity that would help it to better compete with these places. Currently, people are not welcomed to the district by any consistent design features which denote a sense of cohesion and place. The district lacks curb appeal. Maintenance and upkeep by both the city and property owners is sporadic and parts of the district appear run down and uncared for. While the Westover Hills Merchants Association is active, better organizational structure and capacity building will assist it in more collaboratively serving the district.
OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities abound in the Westover Hills Commercial District. Hundreds of thousands of people travel through the district each year as commuters, visitors to the many parks and patrons of the South of the James Farmers Market. Positioning the Westover Hills Commercial District as a destination for all of the people currently visiting nearby attractions is the biggest opportunity for the area.

While vacancies are low, underutilized real estate is prevalent in the district. Using space to its full potential will increase the vibrancy of the district and attract new customers and potential business owners. The vacant parcel of land along the south side of Forest Hill Avenue could be developed or at least kept up to increase the visual appeal of the district.

The lagging economic recovery provides an opportunity for the district as well. Many young families who moved into the district before the housing collapse with the thought of relocating when their children reached school age are now staying in the district. Capitalizing on family friendly options in the commercial district, increasing perceptions of safety and walkability and marketing to these young families could increase the vibrancy and patronage from surrounding neighborhoods.

THREATS

Nearby commercial competition is the biggest threat to this district. Four centrally-managed shopping districts with big-box chain stores are within the immediate vicinity. Developing a unique identity and capitalizing on locally owned businesses could assist in averting this threat.

Perceptions of safety are also a threat to this district. Whether it be the unsafe nature of the sidewalks with traffic whizzing by, or the perceptions of crime at certain locations in the district, a negative perception of safety will keep people from stopping and patronizing businesses in the district. Vacant land and derelict buildings also add to this perception, meaning absentee landlords and property owners are a threat that must also be addressed to improve the image of the Westover Hills Commercial District.

Additionally, a lack of leadership succession and a lack of business planning threaten the future of the district. Although currently the district is stable, many long-time business owners are nearing retirement. Many stores might soon be vacant and along with them the established leadership in the district will weaken if this trend is not planned for appropriately.
Vision
VISION STATEMENT

The Westover Hills Commercial District has historically served the convenience needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. Loyal patrons of long-standing restaurants and merchants who embrace the adjacent communities are a solid foundation for the future of the district. Nearby big-box shopping districts challenge local businesses but the lower rents, nearby attractions, neighborhood feel and eclectic nature of the Westover Hills Commercial District provide a great opportunity for the district to emerge as a unique destination in the City of Richmond.

Imagine a thriving dining district where patrons travel from all over the surrounding area to take part in the yearly Westover Hills Restaurant Week. They eat fresh local food from growers who sell their goods at the South of the James Farmers Market and partner with all of the local dining establishments.

Families from adjacent neighborhoods push their children in strollers down well-landscaped and welcoming sidewalks to window shop and socialize at family friendly businesses. Window displays in each of the businesses beckon customers to stop in and find that perfect unique item. The quirky eclectic feel of the district jumps out at them in the brightly colored storefronts and commissioned murals that let them know they are in the Westover Hills Commercial District.

Morning commuters take notice of the beautiful gateway signs that welcome them to a district that until now, they just sped through. They notice the accessible on-street and off-street parking and decide to make this their spot to stop for coffee and breakfast on their way to work each day.

The merchants and residents of Westover Hills have pride in their commercial district and their neighborhoods while entrepreneurs see this affordable, eclectic place as the home base for new ideas to take hold. The Merchants Association organizes effective, popular events that continue to build pride in the district, support existing merchants and bring in new businesses.

Many of the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the nearby parks know that Westover is the place to stop to get their supplies before heading to the river, and the best place to relax and have a nice meal after they spend the day enjoying the beautiful natural environment in the area.

The Westover Hills Commercial District is a hub of activity, fit for all ages and styles and the entire City of Richmond has taken notice.

The following list of recommendations are organized into the Four Points of the Main Street Approach®: Organization, Business Development, Promotion and Design. These recommendations are presented as goals and objectives and broken down to suggest who is responsible, why the objective is important, what actions need to be taken, when those actions should be taken and how to go about implementation. As you read through the document you will see objectives assigned within a committee structure that has not yet been formed by the Merchants Association. Organization objective 2.2. discusses this suggested committee structure utilized in successful Main Street® communities. In the absence of the development these committees, these objectives should be implemented by the Merchants Association. Cost estimates for each objective are also included. In order to provide as much detail as possible a companion Implementation Handbook is attached in the Appendices to this document. Contacts, time lines, examples, strategies and various options for implementation are included in full detail in this companion document.
**ORGANIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

“Organization means getting everyone working toward the same goal. The tough work of building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the district can be eased by using the commonsense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees.” - From the Main Street Approach®

Organization is the toughest step, but the step that is most important to the success of the district and the implementation of this plan. Having a solid structure, accountable leadership, engaged volunteers, and robust fundraising solidifies the essential financial and logistical aspects of a healthy and viable commercial district. The following goals and objectives outline steps to be taken for the enhanced viability of the Westover Hills Commercial District.

**GOAL 1: BUILD MEMBERSHIP OF WESTOVER HILLS MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION**

**Objective 1.1: Develop Leadership**

- **Who:** Merchants Association Officers (Board of Directors and Committee Chairs, once established).
- **Why:** To build understanding of non-profit management and learn techniques of running efficient meetings, volunteer management, budget development, strategic planning and reporting necessary to maintain a stable and thriving organization.
- **What:** Facilitated training sessions with industry professionals at one to two extended Merchants Association meetings.
- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1, ongoing with newly elected officers.
- **How:** Consider becoming a chapter member of the Richmond Retail Merchants Association to gain access to retail-specific networking events, information and resources that can help build your organization. There are also numerous workshops and classes available through the Nonprofit Learning Point, Connect Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Richmond, Leadership Metro Richmond and Southside Community Partners for leadership training.
- **Cost:** Nonprofit Learning Point: two-day seminars available for $45 per attendee; Leadership Coaching seminars and individual sessions for $35; Area universities: Potentially free or minimal fee for specialized expertise or technical assistance.

Figure 39. Leadership Quest event at Leadership Metro Richmond. Source: www.lmronline.org.
Objective 1.2: Develop “Benefits of Membership” Packet

- **Who:** Merchants Association (Governance Committee and Membership subcommittee, once established).¹

- **Why:** To explain the purpose, benefits, opportunities and events of the Merchants Association to area businesses.

- **What:** A packet of materials including, the background and purpose of Merchants Association; a “Benefits of Membership” pamphlet that outlines how to join, cost information and specific benefits of joining (such as advertising and a link on the website, use of Merchants Association logo, a sticker for the door, cross-promotional marketing, etc.); a list of current members with full contact information; a calendar of upcoming meetings and events with directions for accessing the calendar online; and cross-promotional coupons from member businesses. For examples see the Implementation Handbook.

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 2, update annually.

- **How:**
  - **Option 1:** Task members of Merchants Association to complete separate pieces of this packet with deadlines included. Print all materials and compile in nice folders.
  - **Option 2:** Hire a printing company to design, organize and print materials.

- **Cost:**
  - **Option 1:** Materials and Printing: $200.
  - **Option 2:** Contact a printing company for design, layout and printing services: $600- $1200.

Objective 1.3: Conduct Merchant Outreach

- **Who:** Membership Subcommittee.

- **Why:** To engage all district business owners and determine what they would like to see from the Merchants Association in order for them to become active members that can help improve the district.

- **What:** A paper or online survey or interview of each of the 35 commercial businesses in the district that asks:

  1) What can the Merchants Association do to better assist your business in the district?

  2) If you are not a current member, what could the Merchants Association change to make the organization more applicable to your business and get you to join?

  3) What one activity could the Merchants Association pursue that you would volunteer to assist with?

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 3, and every third year.

- **How:**
  - **Option 1:** Require member merchants to each complete one survey outside of their own businesses - with officers required to do two surveys outside of their own business.

  **Option 2:** Connect with Research Methods classes at area universities to get students to design, perform and compile surveys. For examples see the Implementation Handbook.

- **Cost:**
  - Printing cost for paper surveys: $20. If the survey is entered online through Survey Monkey or a comparable site: free.

¹ In the absence of the development of these committees, these objectives should be implemented by the Merchants Association.
Objective 1.4: Hold an Annual Membership Drive

- Who: Governance Committee and Membership Subcommittee.
- Why: To gain meaningful financial support and involvement from as many businesses as possible in the district.
- What: A one-month dedicated effort to increase Merchants Association membership. Each business should be asked for membership three times over a one-month period.
- When: Year 2, Quarter 1 - annual.
- How: Utilize website, newsletter and fliers to announce annual Merchants Association Membership drive. The First Ask: Distribute postage paid remittance envelopes attached to “Benefits of Membership Packet” to all 35 area businesses. The Second Ask: A follow-up phone call to answer any questions merchants might have about the Association or information received. The Third Ask: A drop-in visit to the business for a one-on-one conversation about membership. Consider contacting the Institute on Philanthropy for classes in fundraising and membership development. For examples see the Implementation Handbook.

GOAL 2: DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE WESTOVER HILLS MERCHANT ASSOCIATION

Objective 2.1: Conduct Annual Action Planning

- Who: Merchants Association (Board of Directors).
- Why: To understand the role of the Association and plan for yearly projects that help the Association fulfill its stated mission.
- What: A facilitated planning process that results in an action plan. An action plan is a written, but flexible, document that guides and focuses an organization’s efforts in certain initiatives. This plan should do the following: outline roles and responsibilities; organize the meeting schedule and structure by month; outline activities and events; develop a budget and a work plan for the Merchants Association over a year-long period. This process should also include updating the vision and mission of the organization and discuss branding options. See Promotion Recommendations for specific information on the branding process.
- When: Year 2, Quarter 2 - annual.
- How: Consider bringing in consultants from Business First Greater Richmond, Nonprofit Learning Point or the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce to do an initial analysis of current structure, processes and plans. Take the outline and suggestions from consultants and develop an annual action plan or hold your own action planning session with the entire Association. See Implementation Handbook for detailed documents.
- Cost: Consultation - $500 - $1500.
Objective 2.2: Identify an Appropriate Structure for the Continued Growth of the Association

- **Who:** Merchants Association Officers.
- **Why:** To further develop the capacity of the Merchants Association and plan for its future organizational needs.
- **What:** Consider developing a Board of Directors, a number of standing committees, and establishing a part-time coordinator position. For the stability and longevity of the organization, certain committees are essential, including a Governance Committee (to oversee budget, finance, and fundraising efforts) and a Membership Subcommittee. For continued impact in improving the business district, Promotions Committee, a Design Committee, and a Business Development Committee should be established. Other committees, such as a volunteer committee, can be added as structure and capacity allow. For examples see the Implementation Handbook.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 4, following the membership drive.
- **How:** Consult Nonprofit Learning Point, Business First Greater Richmond, the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce or Virginia Main Street to assist in development of board and committee structure with associated bylaws, definitions and timelines.
- **Cost:** Variable depending on consultant and services selected - $50 - $1,200.

GOAL 3: INCREASE REVENUE STREAMS FOR THE MERCHANT’S ASSOCIATION

Objective 3.1: Hold an Annual Fundraising Event

- **Who:** Governance Committee, Fundraising Subcommittee.
- **Why:** To pull in resources for the year, increase visibility of the Association’s activities and projects, and promote the businesses of the commercial district.
- **What:** A yearly event should be held in the district with an admission fee that will produce revenue for the Association. See Implementation Handbook for possible events.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 3, and annually in the spring or fall.
- **How:** Establish an event theme, date and location. Promote the event, sell advance tickets at discounted price and seek donations of time and goods for the event from merchants. Advertise the event on the website (see Promotion Recommendations), in local businesses and through local media. Contact Venture Richmond or C3 Creative Change Center for possible partnership and guidance. Contact the City of Richmond Special Events Coordinator for permitting and street closure requests if applicable. See the Implementation Handbook for helpful websites.

Figure 41. Organization chart. Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.
Objective 3.2: Create an Annual Fundraising and Budget Plan

- **Who:** Merchants Association (Board of Directors).
- **Why:** Fundraising is key to any organization's operations and is an essential determinant of the activities and projects that can be taken on in a year. To effectively manage current resources and leverage greater investment, the Merchants Association should create an annual revenue and expenditure plan for its funds. See the Implementation Handbook for specific budget figures.
- **What:** A plan that sets out the annual fundraising goal and activities that will be needed to achieve that goal, as well as other expected revenues and planned expenditures for that year.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 3.
- **How:** Involve expertise of local organizations in revenue and budget development. This could include workshops or personal sessions with representatives from the Nonprofit Learning Point, the Richmond Retail Merchants Association, the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Business First Greater Richmond, and/or Central Virginia Co-Pilot.
- **Cost:** Variable depending on consultant and service selected: $200 - $1200.

Objective 3.3: Identify and Apply for Appropriate Loans, Grants and Foundational Support

- **Who:** Governance Committee and Fundraising Subcommittee.
- **Why:** Increasing the funding mechanisms of the Merchants Association will provide support for the organization, helping to insure its longevity and improve its capacity to create benefit for the entire community.
- **What:** Grants, loans and foundational support opportunities can increase the likelihood that the tasks outlined in this plan can be achieved.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 4, ongoing.
- **How:** Research, select and apply for grants and foundational support opportunities. Or, hire outside grant writer to assist in this process. Consult and contact Virginia Community Capital Inc., REDC Community Capital Group, Richmond Community Foundation, LISC or the Robins Foundation to check for their latest Requests for Proposals (RFP) or lending guidelines. Consider developing a resume that includes essential information and narrative about the Association that can be used to apply for multiple grants. Determine which proposals fit the vision and mission of the Merchants Association and begin preparing an application.
- **Cost:** Free to apply – extensive time commitment required.

Table 7. Sample Chart of Expenses and Income Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Director’s salary</td>
<td>- City funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Support staff’s salary</td>
<td>- Earned income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rent/utilities</td>
<td>- Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Office supplies</td>
<td>- Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Insurance</td>
<td>- Corporate sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PR materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion Committee activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Design Committee activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- E.R. Committee activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GOAL 4: RECRUIT AND ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

Objective 4.1: Develop a Volunteer Bank of at Least 25 Committed Volunteers

- **Who:** Governance Committee, Volunteer Subcommittee and neighborhood associations.

- **Why:** Volunteers are an essential ingredient in the improvement of the Westover Hills Commercial District. Committed individuals are integral to the success of all revitalization efforts. They provide time, energy, unique expertise and ideas to benefit the entire community.

- **What:** Build a list of at least 25 dedicated volunteers who can commit to spending eight to ten hours per year volunteering for the Merchants Association and/or the Neighborhood Association.

- **When:** Year 3, Quarter 2, this should happen after appropriate organizational structures are in place, events are decided upon, and yearly action plans complete so that proper direction and detail can be provided to volunteers annual updates.

- **How:** Publicize volunteer opportunities for upcoming events/activities and consider developing a volunteer registration form to collect contact information. It is helpful to make repeated calls for volunteers to assist with events and activities in the district. Officers of both Merchant and Neighborhood Associations should make personal appeals to their neighbors and member businesses to volunteer. Hands On Greater Richmond should be consulted for volunteer recruitment and training services and expertise.

- **Cost:** Free to recruit volunteers and to register at Hands On Greater Richmond Website.

Objective 4.2: Hold an Annual Volunteer Recognition Event

- **Who:** Governance Chair, Volunteer Subcommittee and neighborhood associations.

- **Why:** Research shows that volunteers are more likely to stay engaged and recruit additional volunteers if their time and efforts are publicly recognized and appreciated.

- **What:** An annual “thank you” event to recognize that achievements made in the district would not have been possible without volunteer support.

- **When:** Year 4, Quarter 4, annual.

- **How:** Reserve space with an Association-member restaurant for the recognition event. Provide light fare and print certificates that recognize volunteers. Reach out via the district website and contact lists to invite all volunteers and solicit RSVPs. Each volunteer should be thanked publicly and presented with a certificate. Certificates should be mailed to volunteers unable to attend.

- **Cost:** Food: $200; Certificates and Printing: $20.

Figure 42. Red Cross recognizes outstanding volunteers. 
Source: www.sfredcross.org.
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

“By helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today’s market [Business Development] help[s] to convert unused space into productive property and sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises.” - From the Main Street Approach®

The Westover Hills Commercial District is home to many successful small businesses. These businesses are served by a steady stream of traffic from commuters and residents from surrounding neighborhoods. Business Development means building on these strengths by developing targeted retention and recruitment processes based in an analysis of the market so that the Westover Hills Commercial District will be well-positioned for years to come. The following goals and objectives seek to promote a thriving business community in the Westover Hills Commercial District.

GOAL 1: SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES

Objective 1.1: Hold Business Improvement Seminars and Workshops

- **Who**: Merchants Association (Business Development Committee, once established), Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce’s Small Business Development Center, SCORE Richmond, and Business First Richmond.
- **Why**: Small businesses face unique challenges but may not be up to date on best management practices. Because their time and resources can be limited, group consulting, workshops and seminars can connect small merchants with resources that might otherwise be cost prohibitive.
- **What**: Business improvement workshops/seminars such as: customer service, social media marketing, setting up an online store front, money management for entrepreneurial businesses and any additional topics that are of interest to merchants within the district.
- **When**: Year 1, Quarter 3.
- **How**: Encourage merchants to complete the free Virginia Small Town and Merchant Program’s Retail Business Check-up and/or Restaurant Check-up annually which can assist with some of the challenges individual businesses face. Additionally, the Business Development Committee should coordinate with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce to schedule training sessions within the Westover Hills Commercial District specifically designed for Westover Hills merchants. Once planned, these events should be added to the Westover Hills Merchants Association Calendar (See Promotion Recommendations). Options for different events are listed in the Implementation Handbook.
- **Cost**: Seminars and workshops vary in price from $35/per person to $200/per person.

2 The Merchants Association is responsible for all tasks of the Business Development Committee until or if it is established.

Figure 43. A busy commercial district with commuters. Source: www.valsbien.blogspot.com.
Objective 1.2: Conduct Succession Planning for Business Owners Nearing Retirement

- **Who:** Business Development Committee.
- **Why:** The district is comprised of mature small businesses with many owners nearing retirement or the end of the business cycle in the next ten to fifteen years. Succession planning for small businesses in Westover Hills Commercial District is vital to prevent a significant vacancy rate in the district.
- **What:** Business succession planning is the process of preparing to hand over control of the business to others in a way that is the least disruptive to the business operations and value. Identify merchants nearing retirement, looking to sell their businesses or transfer the business to a family member. Answering these two questions is crucial: 1) Who will manage the business when the owner retires? 2) How will the business be transferred or sold?

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 4 - Ongoing.
- **How:** The Business Development Committee should hold workshops/lectures on succession planning as part of the brown bag lunch series or a special topic seminar hosted by a consultant. Businesses should be linked to organizations (Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, SCORE and the Richmond Retail Merchants Association) that can assist with transitioning their businesses to family members or potential buyers. Free pamphlets on succession planning should be provided to support this outreach effort. Efforts to identify merchants in transition should be a continual priority. See Implementation Handbook for details.
- **Cost:** Free seminars are offered by consultants and online workshops are available at SCORE; First Friday Forum workshops offered through the Retail Merchants Association are $30 for members and $35 for non members; Greater Richmond Chamber offers workshops to non members at a rate of $20.

Objective 1.3: Create a Small Business Resource Center at the Westover Hills Public Library

- **Who:** Business Development Committee, Westover Hills Public Library and Richmond Public Library System.
- **Why:** Many trade journals and publications compile business-specific information and best management practices that could greatly improve how local merchants operate their businesses. These resources may be cost prohibitive to individual merchants, but compiled in one central location at the Westover Hills Library they can be made available to all.
- **What:** Specific resources such as The International Council of Shopping Center’s Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers® /The SCORE® 2008, The Small Business Source Book, Small Business Administration Industry Guides, small Business Tax Information from the IRS, Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey, small business publications,

---

"Brown Bag" Business Discussions

Each month a different business in the Westover Hills Commercial District should hold an informal “Brown Bag” discussion over the lunch hour or after the work day.

This bring-your-own-food event will give area merchants a chance to talk about the latest developments in the district, build relationships and network.

Once per quarter consider bringing in a speaker who could offer insight about the Greater Richmond region or suggest some tangible marketing or promotional activities for merchants.

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

---

3 Merchant Surveys, conducted Fall 2011.
Main Street tools, and other resources should be compiled and kept at the Westover Hills Library. See the Implementation Handbook for a more detailed list of potential resources.

- **When:** Year 4, Quarter 1.
- **How:** The Westover Hills Branch Library can request to be the repository for all small business trade publications, reports and journals from the Richmond Public Library System. In addition, the Westover Hills Library can request the purchase of any resources not currently available within the Richmond Public Library system that have been identified by the Business Development Committee through a poll of local merchants. The Westover Hills Branch Library should designate space in the library and an email should be sent out to all local merchants informing them of the resources that are available.
- **Cost:** $500-$1,500 to purchase any additional resources that are not already owned by the Richmond Public Library.

**GOAL 2: ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES**

To attract new businesses, the Westover Hills Merchants Association and the Business Development Committee should consider the following objectives as part of a holistic targeted business recruitment process. Each of the following objectives outline specific strategies and techniques beneficial to attracting entrepreneurs and expanding businesses.

**Objective 2.1 Develop a Business Recruitment Packet**

- **Who:** Merchants Association, Business Development Committee.
- **Why:** To actively encourage entrepreneurs and new businesses to locate in the district by providing relevant information on the benefits and assets of the Westover Hills Commercial District.
- **What:** A packet of resources that lets potential businesses and entrepreneurs know that Westover Hills is a valuable commercial district with the potential for independently owned businesses to thrive.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1.
- **How:** Either using in-house resources, or by hiring a professional design firm, the Westover Hills Merchants Association should develop a packet of materials that contains: general information about the district (location, major commuter routes, current business types/clusters, area demographics), market potential of the district (market analysis information from Part One of this plan), unmet demand, consumer/shopper traits, information about the Merchants Association, a calendar of local events (see Promotion Recommendations), maps, relevant articles and general support services.
- **Cost:** In-house development will cost about $1,500; professional design firm development would cost about $3,500 (see Implementation Handbook).
Objective 2.2 Conduct Targeted Business Recruitment

- **Who:** Business Development Committee.

- **Why:** The Westover Hills Commercial District is well-suited to attract the types of businesses listed in Part 1. Seeking out expanding businesses or businesses relocating from outside the region would help the Westover Hills Commercial District to position itself as a place for entrepreneurs and small business owners to thrive.

- **What:** Proactive outreach and networking with entrepreneurs and successful business owners looking to expand in the Richmond region who fall into the targeted businesses outlined in Part One.

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 2.

- **How:** Attend networking events and workshops hosted by the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, The Richmond Retail Merchants Association, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Greater Richmond Partnership and other professional organizations (see Implementation Handbook). Bring copies of Business Recruitment packet, once created, and sell Westover Hills Commercial District as a place for all relevant attendees to do business. Compile a list of potential new businesses and follow-up with them to build professional relationships and share the benefits of the district by inviting them to relevant events.

- **Cost:** Free.

Objective 2.3: Host Business Open House Event for Potential New Businesses

- **Who:** Business Development Committee.

- **Why:** When business owners and entrepreneurs are able to see the benefits of a district first-hand and feel camaraderie with fellow businesses, they are more likely to consider locating in Westover Hills.

- **What:** A semi-structured networking event that brings together potential businesses, entrepreneurs and existing merchants to discuss the benefits of being located in the Westover Hills Commercial District.

- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1.

- **How:** Recruit a local merchant to host the open house event, preferably a merchant next to a currently vacant space or a property owner/realtor with a vacancy. Then send out invitations to business owners and entrepreneurs met through previous networking events, businesses who fit targeted list outlined in Part One above, and the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the Richmond Retail Merchants Association. Publicize event on the Merchants Association website as well. Event should last about two hours and light food should be provided from a local restaurant. Collect business cards at the door and follow-up with attendees within two weeks of the event.

- **Cost:** $100-$500.

---

Establishing a supportive, proactive, business-friendly environment will help with recruitment and networking for years to come.
PROMOTION RECOMMENDATIONS

“Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in your commercial district.” - From the Main Street Approach®

Promotion communicates the unique and eccentric elements and values of the district to neighbors, visitors, customers, and potential investors. Through special events, marketing, branding and other creative strategies the Westover Hills Commercial District will attract visitors from the entire region. The following goals and objectives outline implementable steps to create a realistic and memorable sense of identity for the Westover Hills Commercial District that will help it grow and prosper for years to come.

GOAL 1: USE MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY WESTOVER HILLS AS A SHOPPING DESTINATION

Objective 1.1: Develop an Asset Map

- **Who:** Westover Hills Merchants Association, Neighborhood Association, the City of Richmond.
- **Why:** Asset mapping is a tool used to engage community members to think about what their community has to offer and to discover ways to build off of their current assets. The Westover Hills merchants will be better positioned to market themselves once an asset map is completed.
- **What:** A paper or electronic map that identifies nearby resources and attractions that make the Westover Hills Commercial District unique.
- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1.
- **How:** Hold a community meeting facilitated by a group from VCU or Storefront for Community Design to brainstorm local assets. Map nearby attractions and resources such as the South of the James Farmers Market, local parks and institutions - anything that draws potential customers to the area. Use a paper map of Westover Hills to plot these assets. Use this inventory map will identify possible partnerships that can maximize consumer attention to Westover Hills. Consider hiring a GIS professional to develop an electronic map of nearby attractions that can be integrated into marketing materials. Link this asset map, once completed, to the website.
- **Cost:** $50 - $2,500.

Figure 46. St. Patricks Day at O’Toole’s. Source: www.panoramio.com/photo/13922613.
Objective 1.2: Develop a Brand and Identity for the Westover Hills Commercial District

- **Who:** Merchants Association (Promotions Committee Chair*), Neighborhood Association.

- **Why:** Fully developed brands connect with people and shoppers. Currently, there is no distinguishable brand or identity that attracts people to shop in the Westover Hills Commercial District. Yet, there is an opportunity to uniquely position and distinguish the district from the large, big-box shopping centers that surround it.

- **What:** A brand would celebrate the unique aspects of the Westover Hills Commercial District. The James River and the South of the James Farmers Market are two distinguishable assets that could be used to leverage an identity. Potential brand identities include: “Westover South of the James”, “Shops at South of the James”, or simply “Westover.”

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 3, in line with the strategic planning process.

- **How:** The Merchants Association and neighborhood associations can work together to develop a new identity for the district during the strategic planning process proposed in the Organization section (see Goal 2).

- **Cost:** $0 - $2000.

---

Objective 1.3: Design Cohesive Promotional Materials

- **Who:** Promotions Committee Chair, Neighborhood Associations.

- **Why:** Good design is the piece that can hold together a successful marketing campaign. A clearly identifiable logo, tagline and/or colors will relate the brand of the the Westover Hills Commercial District and make it instantly recognizable to shoppers.

- **What:** Merchants should decide on a basic color scheme for promotional materials. A unique logo should be developed to support the brand and identity of the Westover Hills Commercial District. A tagline or slogan that will stick with shoppers should be added to all materials. For example, the tagline in Carytown is “One mile of Style.”

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1.

- **How:** The VCU Graphic Design Center does logo and design work for outside clients for a minimal fee. Contact John Malinowski to set up a meeting and to determine the extent to which the VCU Graphic Design Center can work with the Merchants Association. Other possibilities include Rocket Pop Media, or pro-bono work done by someone from the community.

- **Cost:** $0 - $2,500.

Objective 1.4: Promote the Westover Hills Commercial District as a Destination for Those Visiting Nearby Attractions

- **Who:** Promotion Committee, local businesses in conjunction with the park system, VDOT, and the Market Umbrella

- **Why:** These regional destinations bring potential customers from outside of the area into or through the District often. Attracting customers is essential to the growth and vibrancy of business in the district.

- **What:** Marketing strategies that appeal to visitors of nearby attractions, including parks, the James River and the South of the James Farmers Market.

---

*The Merchants Association is responsible for all tasks of the Promotion Committee until or if it is established.
Market.

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1, begin; Year 3, fully implemented.
- **How:** Develop marketing strategies that appeal to visitors to the James River, the South of the James Farmers Market and other nearby attractions. Options include:

  **Option 1:** Erect a series of way-finding signs on Forest Hill Avenue between Westover Hills and the Farmers Market, and on Westover Hills Boulevard between entrances to the river/trails and Westover Hills. Refer to the Design section for more information on way-finding signs.

  **Option 2:** Place brochures at an information booth at the farmers market and at the entrances to the trail that refer visitors to the district. Connect Merchants Association and area business owners with The Market Umbrella to begin the process of setting up booths at the South of the James Farmers Market.

  **Option 3:** Encourage Westover Hills restaurateurs to buy produce from vendors at the farmers’ market, in exchange for those vendors referring their customers to Westover Hills restaurants.

- **Cost:** Cost for signage and promotional elements will vary: $30,000 to $40,000.

### Objective 1.5: Share Positive News Stories About the Westover Hills Commercial District

- **Who:** Promotion Committee, local news sources such as television stations, local magazines (e.g., Style Weekly), local newspapers (e.g., Richmond Times Dispatch), and the Hills and Heights Neighborhood Blog.

- **Why:** Circulation of positive news about Westover Hills through print, television and electronic media can serve to paint a positive picture of the district and draw shoppers into the area.

- **What:** Positive news stories on the Hills and Heights Neighborhood Blog and press releases via television stations, local magazines and local newspapers.

- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1, Ongoing.

- **How:** Consult with C3 Creative Change Center, the Richmond Retail Merchants Association and the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce to develop press releases to highlight the positive news, special events and business developments in the district. Contact the Richmond Times Dispatch, Style Weekly and the Hills and Heights blog to publish this positive news about the district. A possible starting point would be to interview members of the Merchants or Neighborhood associations to create a pool of positive news stories for dissemination to the public. Individual merchant should share positive news via social networking mediums such as Facebook and Twitter.

- **Cost:** Marketing and communications courses and seminars: $25-$200. Dissemination of completed press releases: Free.
Objective 1.6: Create and Maintain a Website for the Westover Hills Commercial District

- **Who:** Promotions Committee Chair, merchants, Westover Hills Library, website design consultant.
- **Why:** To provide the community with a source of information concerning monthly events, news, merchant sales and discounts.
- **What:** A central website for the Westover Hills Merchants Association will focus on business promotions and special events and serve as a point of communication for the Merchants Association. On the site, links to merchant sites, the calendar of events, advertising space for merchants and other information about the district should be provided.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 2.
- **How:** First, check out the Libbie & Grove, Patterson & Libbie and Carytown Merchants’ websites to get an idea of how similar local districts have presented themselves. Then, decide on a domain name and start building the website (see Implementation Handbook). Advertise the website on all promotional materials, including merchant business cards, fliers and receipts.
- **Cost:** Free to $11.99/year for hosting the website. A very basic website template can be purchased for $100.

Goal 2: Develop Retail Marketing and Promotional Strategies

Objective 2.1: Expand Social Media Advertising

- **Who:** The Westover Hills Library, Promotion Committee Chair, the VCU Brand Center or other marketing consultants.
- **Why:** Social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Living Social are increasingly recognized as free and effective marketing tools.
- **What:** Innovative advertising and promotional strategies to connect to existing customers, reach new customers and circulate information about promotional events through social media.
- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1.
- **How:** To start, review the free small business social media toolkit available from Inc. Magazine online (see Implementation Handbook). Consider using “deal-of-the-day” websites such as Groupon or Living Social to distribute coupons to regional subscribers of these programs. Consult with C3 Creative Change Center, the Richmond Retail Merchants Association, Central Virginia CoPilot and the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce for technical assistance, or consider working with the VCU Brand Center to develop an innovative advertising program.
- **Cost:** Facebook and Twitter are free to join; Groupon and Living Social fees are dependent upon the number of people that purchase each coupon (see Implementation Handbook).

Objective 2.2: Develop Attractive Window Displays

- **Who:** Local Merchants, Promotion Committee Chair, Westover Hills/Richmond Public Library, student or professional consultants.
- **Why:** Window displays make the first impression on a potential shopper. Attractive displays can catch the attention of those that pass by, pique their interest and visually invite them into the store or restaurant.

![Figure 50. The Shops at 5807 uses decorative displays to attract shoppers. Source: www.richmondbargains.com.](image-url)
GOAL 3: ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE SPECIAL EVENTS IN WESTOVER HILLS

Objective 3.1: Organize Monthly Special Events

- **Who:** Promotion Committee Chair, neighborhood associations, City Special Event Coordinator, Richmond fire and police departments, local churches and schools.
- **Why:** To increase foot traffic in the district, build awareness and begin branding the district as a family friendly, regional commercial destination.
- **What:** Continue existing events and set up special events that include local merchants, residents and other community stakeholders. Events should be of three types – Image Building Events, Retail Events, and Fundraising Events. Refer to the events calendar (See Implementation Handbook) for more detail.
- **When:** In Year 1 begin planning events that can occur in Year 2.
- **How:** The Merchants Association should plan and organize at least one event per month. Work with the City Special Event Coordinator for necessary permitting and other businesses and organizations in the district to obtain a venue, food and beverages, entertainment and activities for all ages.
- **Cost:** $150 - $1,500.

Objective 2.3: Encourage Cross-promotional Marketing and Advertising Strategies

- **Who:** Local businesses, Promotion Committee Chair.
- **Why:** To leverage merchant resources in efforts to expand their customer base by reaching potential shoppers that frequent other Westover Hills businesses.
- **What:** Create mutually-beneficial cross advertising and promotions. Use social media (Westover Hills Merchants Association website, Facebook, Twitter) to promote other businesses and events.
- **When:** Year 2, after objective 3.2 is accomplished.
- **How:** Merchants should partner with complimentary businesses – those that reach out to the same market and customer base and provide supplementary goods and services. Partnering business should be located near each other, be equally engaged in the promotion and be familiar with each others’ goods and services (see Implementation Handbook).
- **Cost:** Free to advertise online.

Figure 51. Existing events like Music in the Park, various marathons, parades, picnics and other activities are a great asset for the Westover Hills Commercial District and can be built upon to attract additional shoppers. Source: www.richmondbargains.com.
Objective 3.2: Create and Maintain a Calendar of Events

- **Who:** Promotion Committee Chair, Westover Hills Neighborhood Association.
- **Why:** To actively promote events in Westover Hills.
- **What:** An easily accessible online calendar of events integrated into the Westover Hills Merchants Association website, neighborhood blog and local newsletters to promote special district events.
- **When:** Year 2, following website creation.
- **How:** Create an online calendar of events on the district’s website (see Implementation Handbook). The Promotion Committee should be in touch with area organizations, businesses and the City to get information on all events occurring in or near the district and update the calendar at least monthly with this information.

**Cost:** Free for an online calendar; printing and distribution of the calendar $50 - $500.

---

**DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers, and visitors. It takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials.

-From the Main Street Approach®

---

**GOAL 1: ESTABLISH THE WESTOVER HILLS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT AS A DISTINCT PLACE IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND**

Objective 1.1: Install Banners That Visually Identify the Westover Hills Commercial District

- **Who:** Design Committee\(^5\) with approval from City of Richmond’s Urban Design Committee.
- **Why:** The placement of consistent, eye-catching banners throughout the district will add visual identity to the district.
- **What:** Placement of four new banners in the district for a cohesive and attractive pattern.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1, submit a request for four new banner locations to City of Richmond’s Urban Design Committee.
- **How:** Seek approval from the City of Richmond’s Urban Design Committee to implement the banner pattern. Installation should occur within six months of purchase. Currently, banners are located on every...
Objective 1.2: Install Way-finding Signs to Connect the Westover Hills Commercial District to Nearby Attractions

- **Who:** Merchants Association, City of Richmond Procurement Services.
- **Why:** Way-finding signage will help visitors place Westover Hills Shopping District in the context of other attractions and guide them to the district.
- **What:** Signage that advertises Westover Hills Commercial District and directs visitors to its location.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1 – 2 submit a proposal to the City of Richmond Procurement Services; Year 3, Quarter 4 install signage in the district.
- **How:** Submit a proposal for way-finding signs to an from the river and the farmers market (See Promotions Objective 1.2).
- **Cost:** $500 to $60,000.

Objective 1.3: Place a Design Feature at Each Gateway

- **Who:** Design Committee with approval of the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee.
- **Why:** A design feature at each gateway will serve as a visible marker of the Westover Hills Commercial District. A site wall, pillar or archway will provide a permanent fixture in the district that will uphold integrity and require little maintenance.
- **What:** A design feature that reflects the Westover Hills District brand identity placed at each gateway. Three potential options for gateway entrances are thoroughly detailed in the Implementation Handbook, including: 1) a site wall made of traditional material, such as brick or stone, not exceeding more than 3’ in height placed either on the median, an island, or on the side of the road entering the district; 2) a pillar that offers a more progressive and eclectic designation for the gateway; or 3) an archway that encompasses the roadway and could be a striking focal point.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 3-4 begin design, Year 5, installation.
- **How:** The Merchants Association will apply for permits and get bids from potential designers and architects, such as Westover merchant Metropolitan Sign company, and request approval from the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee.
- **Cost:** $320 for four banner brackets ($80/bracket); $13,800 for printing 24 banners; from Merchants Association budget.

Objective 1.3: Place a Design Feature at Each Gateway

- **Who:** Design Committee with approval of the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee.
- **Why:** A design feature at each gateway will serve as a visible marker of the Westover Hills Commercial District. A site wall, pillar or archway will provide a permanent fixture in the district that will uphold integrity and require little maintenance.
- **What:** A design feature that reflects the Westover Hills District brand identity placed at each gateway. Three potential options for gateway entrances are thoroughly detailed in the Implementation Handbook, including: 1) a site wall made of traditional material, such as brick or stone, not exceeding more than 3’ in height placed either on the median, an island, or on the side of the road entering the district; 2) a pillar that offers a more progressive and eclectic designation for the gateway; or 3) an archway that encompasses the roadway and could be a striking focal point.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 3-4 begin design, Year 5, installation.
- **How:** The Merchants Association will apply for permits and get bids from potential designers and architects, such as Westover merchant Metropolitan Sign company, and request approval from the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee.
- **Cost:** $500 to $60,000.

Figure 53. A rendering of an archway as a distinctive gateway for the Westover Hills Commercial District at the intersection of Forest Hill Avenue and Jahnke Road. This type of design feature would mark the district as a unique and memorable place.

Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.

6 See Implementation Handbook for timetable of steps beyond Year 4, Quarter 4.
GOAL 2: IMPROVE THE CURB APPEAL OF THE WESTOVER HILLS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Objective 2.1 Upgrade Building Facades
- **Who:** District property owners and merchants
- **Why:** Interesting signage or address numbers are an opportunity to add a splash of design and make it easier for visitors to locate businesses
- **What:** Most buildings need a fresh coat of paint, signage replaced, and new address numbers installed.
- **When:** Year 2 Quarter 3 – 4 approach businesses and property owners about façade improvements. Year 3 Quarter 4 painting, business signs and address numbers completed. Year 4 Quarter 4 major renovations completed.
- **How:** Designate a paint color scheme that is appropriate for Westover Hills Shopping District; identify properties needing to be repainted; contact all businesses in reference to displaying addresses in a clear, decorative, and effective manner; and guide businesses and property owners through improvements. Resources for property owners needing major improvements can be found in the Implementation Handbook.
- **Cost:** Painting $1,000-$15,000 per building; Portico Removal $500-$1,000; Address Numbers $3-$15 per number; Design feature for façade extension depends on feature chosen; Labor for relocating signs on Antique Building $0 - $500.

Objective 2.2: Investigate Options for Putting Vacant Lots on Forest Hill Avenue to Productive Use
- **Who:** The Design Committee, Business Development Committee, property owners, prospective developers, and the City of Richmond Zoning Review Board.
- **Why:** By developing the vacant lots, Forest Hill Avenue will seem more enclosed and complete Westover Hills Shopping District.
- **What:**
  - **Option 1:** Construct two-story attached buildings on vacant lots to complete the west side of the Westover Hills Shopping District. There should be six connecting buildings that mirror the Shoppes at Westover.
  - **Option 2:** Develop vacant land as a space for community events and gathering. A two-story building on the western most lot, facing Forest Hill Avenue, could offer a flat surface for movie projection.
- **When:** Year 4 Quarter 1 – 2, approach property owners to vision for the vacant lot. Year 7 Quarter 1, hire a developer. Year 9 Quarter 4, site development complete.
- **How:** Collaborate with property owners and prospective developers to create a vision for the vacant lots and draft a plan of development. Submit the plan to the City of Richmond Zoning Review Board for approval and permitting and work with the Business Development Committee to identify potential merchants for the space. Consider holding a design charrette to develop multiple site plan options and design alternatives.

Figure 54. A local example of eclectic facades. Source: www.facebook.pages/Peter.blair.
• **Cost:** Project development will be labor intensive but will not cost the Merchants Association anything. The cost of site development relies on market conditions and the budget of the developer. For detailed information please refer to the Implementation Handbook.

**GOAL 3: MAKE THE INTERSECTION OF WESTOVER HILLS BOULEVARD AND FOREST HILL AVENUE THE VISUAL FOCAL POINT OF THE WESTOVER HILLS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT**

**Objective 3.1: Make the Intersection a Focal Point of the District**

- **Who:** Merchants Association, Design Committee, City of Richmond
- **Why:** The Westover Hills Commercial District is divided into four quadrants, both physically by design, and mentally for those who shop there.
- **What:**
  - **Option 1:** Create a traffic circle with space for street art, monument or other identifiable focal structure as decided by the community.
  - **Option 2:** Develop a structural landscaping design to create a sense of enclosure around the intersection that will enhance the connectivity of the four quadrants and provide a sense of place for pedestrians.
- **When:** Year 3, Quarter 4: initiate project; Year 7, Quarter 4: project complete.
- **How:** Hold a community charrette with a local design firm and develop a project proposal to submit to the City of Richmond’s Capital Project Division. These large scale projects will have to be approved and added to the City’s capital improvements program to be implemented.
- **Cost:** $8,000 - $100,000 from the Capital Improvement Plan budget.

![Figure 55. Rendering of Design Alternative One for Vacant Land](View from Forest Hill Avenue and Jahneke Road looking southeast of Design Alternative One: Fill vacant lots with six buildings. Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization class, Fall 2011.)

![Figure 56. Rendering of Design Alternative Two for Vacant Land](View from Forest Hill Avenue looking south of Design Alternative Two: develop vacant lots as a space for community events and gathering. Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization class, Fall 2011.)

![Figure 57. Rendering of Intersection Improvements](View of the intersection looking north with a rendering of a traffic circle. Source: Urban Commercial Revitalization Class, Fall 2011.)
Objective 3.2: Make the Intersection Safe for All Users

- **Who:** The Merchants Association and Design Committee, the City of Richmond.
- **Why:** The intersection is intimidating and unsafe for pedestrians. A safe intersection encourages shoppers to walk through the district and promotes connectivity between the different sections of the commercial district.
- **What:**
  - **Option 1:** Create bulb-outs at the intersection. A bulb-out is an extension of the sidewalk into the intersection that slows traffic and improves pedestrian safety.
  - **Option 2:** Extend the median to the crosswalk to create a pedestrian refuge in the intersection.
- **When:** Year 3 Quarter 4, initiate project. Year 7 Quarter 4, project complete.
- **How:** Develop a project proposal with the assistance of a local design firm, then approach the City of Richmond’s Capital Project Division. These large scale projects will have to be approved and added to the City’s capital improvement program to be implemented.
- **Cost:** $100,000-$150,000 from Capital Improvement Plan budget.

Goal 4: Make the Westover Hills Shopping District Pedestrian Friendly

Objective 4.1: Increase Safety for Pedestrians Crossing the Street

- **Who:** Design Committee, the Capital Projects Division and Department Public Works of the City of Richmond.
- **Why:** The crosswalks in the district are unsafe, inconvenient, promote jaywalking and three of the pedestrian signals are currently inoperable.
- **What:** Crosswalks should be added where needed, existing crosswalks should be improved and pedestrian signals at crosswalks should be repaired.
- **When:** Year 1, Quarter 1 request signal repair; Year 3, Quarter 1 - 2 initiate capital projects; Year 7, Quarter 4 projects complete.
- **How:** Submit a request to the Department of Public Works to fix pedestrian signals, repaint white lines at all existing crosswalks, and
place crosswalk signs at crosswalks. Propose new crosswalks and appropriate signage to the Capital Project Division. For details and standards see the Implementation Handbook.

- **Cost:** Repainting: $30/line; new crosswalks at midblocks: $65,000/each; crosswalk signs: $300/each, included in the City of Richmond capital improvements budget.

**Objective 4.2: Repair Broken Sidewalks in the Districts**

- **Who:** The Design Committee Chair and Department of Public Works.
- **Why:** Uneven, cracked and deteriorated sidewalks pose a safety hazard and discourage pedestrian usage of the Westover Hills Commercial District.
- **What:** Replace the deteriorated sidewalk sections between Westover Hills Boulevard and Jahnke Road.
- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1-2 place request with the Department of Public Works; Year 3, Quarter 2 sidewalks repaired.
- **How:** Place a request for sidewalk repair through Public Works’ Citizen Request feature on the City of Richmond’s website.
- **Cost:** Sidewalk repair is $50/section, included in the City of Richmond capital improvements budget.

**Objective 4.3: Expand and Improve Landscaping Features**

- **Who:** Design Committee, Urban Forestry Division in the Department of Public Works.
- **Why:** Coordinated landscape design will enhance the curb appeal and perception of the district. Landscaping, such as trees and planters, add enclosure and create a pedestrian scale for the currently auto-oriented environment.
- **What:** Landscaping should be improved by adding trees to empty tree wells, medians and wide sidewalks.

- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 3 – 4 request a permit to plant trees in; Year 3, Quarter 2 fill existing tree wells and landscape median; Year 5, Quarter 2 install new wells and plant trees.
- **How:** Obtain a “Street Tree Planting Permit” from the Urban Forestry Division, available on the City of Richmond website. Submit a request to the Department of Public Works for the installation of new tree wells where appropriate. Hire a consultant or utilize volunteers to plant and maintain new trees. Consider using services such as the Richmond Tree Steward Program or organizing a district wide tree planting day. See Implementation Handbook for specific placement and contact information.
- **Cost:** Trees from the Tree Steward Program: $50.00/tree; gator bags: complimentary depending on the Department of Planning’s budget.

**GOAL 5: CREATE BICYCLE FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT**

**Objective 5.1: Encourage Bicycle Use in the District**

- **Who:** The Design Committee and the Department of Public Works.
- **Why:** The Richmond Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan\(^7\) has designated a citywide bicycle route through the Westover Hills Shopping District.

\(^7\) Virginia Department Of Transportation. 2004.
along Forest Hill Avenue. Drivers must be informed cyclists will be sharing the road to provide safety for cyclists, pedestrians and car drivers.

- **What:** The roadways in the Westover Hills District should have sharrows, (Figure 57) on the road to inform drivers to share the road with cyclists. “Share-the-Road” signage should be placed along the designated bicycle route at eye-level as a reminder to the driver.

- **When:** The Merchants Association in collaboration with the Design Committee should contact the City of Richmond Pedestrian, Bicycle and Trail Coordinator to seek assistance in Year 3 Quarter 3 - 4. Then, a request should be submitted to Department of Public Work for the sharrows and signage Year 4, Quarter 1. The sharrows and signage should be implemented by Year 5, Quarter 1 – 2.

- **How:** The Design Committee Chair or Board President should seek advisement from the City of Richmond Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Trail Coordinator for the proper location of sharrows and “Share-the-Road” signage. With knowledge of the placement of the sharrows and signage, the Merchants Association Design Committee Chair or Board President should request these additions to the district from the Department of Public Works.

- **Cost:** Signage and street painting is part of the City of Richmond budget.

---

**Objective 5.2: Install Bicycle Parking Racks the Westover Hills Shopping District**

- **Who:** The Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants.
- **Why:** Cyclists currently have limited options for parking their bicycles in the Westover Hills Shopping District. To make cyclists feel more welcome in the district, there should be proper locations to park bicycles.

- **What:** Bicycle parking racks should be installed throughout the district. The bicycle parking in front of the Westover Hills Public Library serves as a good example of a useful bicycle rack, but this should not limit the creativity of property owners and merchants.

- **When:** Year 3, Quarter 1 approach property owners and merchants; Year 3, Quarter 4 bicycle racks installed.

- **How:** The Design Committee should work with property owners and merchants to establish appropriate locations for bicycle racks throughout the Westover Hills Shopping District. The City of Richmond should take the lead by installing bicycle parking at its other facility, the fire station, in the district. Ultimately, a bicycle rack should be placed in each quadrant of the Westover Hills Shopping District.

- **Cost:** $800 for four bicycle racks from property owners and merchants.

---

**GOAL 6: IMPROVE PARKING ACCESSIBILITY**

**Objective 6.1: Improve on-street parking**

- **Who:** The Merchants Association, the Design Committee, the Capital Projects Division and Department Public Works.
- **Why:** Well designed on-street parking can improve the accessibility and safety of the district for shoppers.

- **What:** On-street parking improvements can be accomplished in two phases: new parking signage and raised bulbouts to partition the
available street parking. Lines should be painted to delineate existing parking spots. Faded signage should be replaced and half-circle landscaped bulbouts should be installed at the height of the curb to protect on street parking.

- **When:** Year 2, Quarter 1 submit request; Year 2, Quarter 4 on-street parking lines and signage complete; Year 4, Quarter 1 initiate parking bulbouts; Year 7, Quarter 4 parking islands complete.

- **How:** Submit a request to the Department of Public Works for the on-street parking lines, signage and parking islands. The landscaped bulbouts should be placed at the beginning and end of the designated on-street parking area. Additionally, two landscaped bulbouts should be placed within the on-street parking zone to designate on-street parking. These bulbouts will enhance the district by having trees and appropriate foliage planted; this step supports Objective 3.3.

- **Cost:** $30/line in the City’s capital improvement projects budget.

**Objective 6.2: Improve off-street parking**

- **Who:** The Design Committee and Property Owners.

- **Why:** In some parking lots, the painted lines are faded and the speed bumps are deteriorated. By improving these conditions, parking will be more visible in the Westover Hills Shopping District.

- **What:** All parking lots, with the exception of CVS and Walgreens, need re-striping. The speed bumps in the parking lots between the Antique store and the Locker Room are deteriorated and need replacing.

- **When:** The Design Committee should approach property owners about parking lots in Year 2, Quarter 3 – 4. Parking lots should be re-striped and speed bumps should be replaced by Year 4, Quarter 3 – 4.

- **How:** The Design Committee must work with property owners to identify contractors to re-stripe and rebuild the speed bumps. For property owners needing help financing the improvement of their parking lots, consult the resource list in the Implementation Handbook.

- **Cost:** The cost of professional asphalt paving is $1 to $6 per square foot and will come from property owners’ budgets.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>Board of Directors and Committee Chairs</td>
<td>$35-$45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Membership Packet</td>
<td>Governance Committee/Membership subcommittee</td>
<td>$200-$1200</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant Outreach</td>
<td>Membership Subcommittee</td>
<td>Free-$200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>$50-$1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Drive</td>
<td>Governance Committee, Membership Subcommittee</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>$500-$1,500</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify an Appropriate Structure for the Continued Growth of the Association</td>
<td>Merchants Association Officers</td>
<td>$50-$1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Fundraising and Budget Plan</td>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>$200-$1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold an Annual Fundraising Event</td>
<td>Governance Committee, Fundraising Subcommittee, and Treasurer</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and Apply for Appropriate Funding</td>
<td>Governance Committee, Fundraising Subcommittee, and Treasurer</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Bank</td>
<td>Governance Committee, Volunteer Subcommittee and Neighborhood Association(s)</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold an Annual Volunteer Recognition Event</td>
<td>Governance Chair, Volunteer Subcommittee, and Neighborhood Association(s)</td>
<td>$220</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Targeted Business Recruitment</td>
<td>Business Development Committee</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Open House Events</td>
<td>Business Development Committee</td>
<td>$100-$450</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Succession Planning</td>
<td>Business Development Committee</td>
<td>Free to $20-$35</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Business Recruitment Packet</td>
<td>Westover Hills Merchants Association</td>
<td>$1,500-$3,500</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold Business Improvement Seminars and Workshops</td>
<td>Business Development Committee</td>
<td>$35/person to $200/person</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Bag Business Discussions</td>
<td>Business Development Committee and Merchants</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business Resource Center at Library</td>
<td>Business Development Committee, The Westover Hills Public Library, The Richmond Public Library System</td>
<td>$500-$1,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Asset Map</td>
<td>Merchants Association, Neighborhood Association, City of Richmond</td>
<td>$50-$2,500</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Cohesive Design for All Westover Hills Promotional Materials</td>
<td>Promotion Committee Chair, Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Free-$2,500</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share Positive News Stories About the Westover Merchants Association, The Westover Hills Commercial District</td>
<td>The Westover Hills Website, local news sources, Hills and Heights blog</td>
<td>$25-$200</td>
<td>Q1-Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>Who</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Social Network Presence</td>
<td>Westover Hills Library, Promotion Committee Chair, VCU Brand Center, consultant</td>
<td>Vary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an Identity and Brand for Westover Hills</td>
<td>Promotion Committee Chair, Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Free-$2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Slogan</td>
<td>Merchants Association</td>
<td>Free-$1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize Events</td>
<td>Promotion Committee Chair, neighborhood associations</td>
<td>$150-$1,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Website for Promotions and Events</td>
<td>Promotion Committee Chair, merchants, consultant</td>
<td>$0-$12/year, plus consultant fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and Maintain a Calendar of Events</td>
<td>Promotion Committee Chair, Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Free to $50-$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Window Displays</td>
<td>Merchants, Promotion Committee Chair, Westover Hills Library, student or professional consultants</td>
<td>$200+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Promotional Marketing and Advertising</td>
<td>Merchants, Promotion Committee Chair</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way Finding Signs</td>
<td>Merchants Association, VDOT</td>
<td>$30,000-$40,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Brochures at Farmers Market information</td>
<td>Merchants Association, Local businesses, Market Umbrella, Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>$200-$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of Placemaking</td>
<td>Design Committee and Promotions Committee</td>
<td>$2,000-$3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Banners</td>
<td>Design Committee and Richmond Design Committee</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix Sidewalks</td>
<td>Design Committee Chair and Richmond Public Works</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lined on Street Parking</td>
<td>Design Committee and Richmond Public Works</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way Finding</td>
<td>Merchants Association with Procurement</td>
<td>City Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway: Pillars</td>
<td>Merchants Association and Richmond Urban Design Committee</td>
<td>$1,000-$2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway: Archway</td>
<td>Merchants Association and Richmond Urban Design Committee</td>
<td>$500-$60,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway: Sitewall</td>
<td>Merchants Association Design Committee, Richmond Urban Design Committee</td>
<td>$500-$2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Street Parking</td>
<td>Design Committee and Property Owners</td>
<td>$1-$6 per square foot of asphalt paving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping: Trees and Treewells</td>
<td>Design Committee and Urban Forestry Division</td>
<td>$50 per tree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Facades: Painting</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants</td>
<td>$1,000-$5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Facades: Portico</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants</td>
<td>$1500-$1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Westover Hills Commercial District Revitalization Plan

## Implementation Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Facades: Numbers</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants</td>
<td>$3-$15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Facades: Extension</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants</td>
<td>$300-$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lined On Street Parking</td>
<td>Design Committee and Richmond Public Works</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Identity Features</td>
<td>Design Committee with Richmond Urban Design Committee</td>
<td>$320 + Printing Fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike Racks</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners and Merchants</td>
<td>$200 Each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosswalks</td>
<td>Design Committee, Capital Projects Division, and Richmond Public Works</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Street Parking Bulbouts</td>
<td>Merchants Association President and Design Committee</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulbouts and Media Extension</td>
<td>Design Committee Chair, Capital Projects Division and Public Works</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Circle</td>
<td>Merchants Association President, Design Committee, Board, Capital Projects Division</td>
<td>Capital Improvements Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharrows</td>
<td>Design Committee, Richmond Public Works</td>
<td>City Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Lots with Public Space</td>
<td>Design Committee, Property Owners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill Vacant Lots</td>
<td>Design Committee, Business Development Committee, Property Owners, Zoning Board, Developers</td>
<td>Developer costs dependant on market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above lists various projects and their implementation details, including who is responsible, the cost, and the timeline for each project. The costs range from $300 to $500, and the projects are spread across different quarters of the year.