Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Union Hill Historic District has many assets on which to build on. The historic character of the neighborhood gives Union Hill a unique and comfortable feel. The surrounding neighborhoods, Church Hill and Fairmount, are being revitalized. Though the percentage of renter occupation remains high, homes being revitalized and new infill developments are now occupied by homeowners. There is also access to four bus lines, two of which pass through the core of the neighborhood. The proximity to downtown is also a plus for residents who work and go to school downtown.

Though Union Hill has many assets, it also has liabilities. The primary problems, which will be addressed in this plan, are inappropriate zoning classifications, the failure to attract families into the neighborhood, and the high crime rate. According to the City’s Vacant Building Review Team, the East District has the highest number of vacant properties. Continuing revitalization efforts will decrease the vacancy rate.

Many opportunities exist for improvement of the Union Hill Historic District. The possibility for housing development and revitalization is a great opportunity for new investment, in particular first-time homeowners. Securing Union Hill’s unique cultural identity will attract homeowners from other cities and counties as well as from other states to the neighborhood, hence increasing the percentage of homeowners in area. As more people move into the neighborhood, the crime rate will decrease due to the substantial amount of eyes on the street. Additionally, for those who are looking to buy and renovate for homeowner occupancy, historic tax credits are available to finance improvements.
Introduction

Union Hill is an amazing neighborhood with a growing population and since 2002 there has been some change and positive revitalization occurring due to the efforts of developers and non-profit organizations in Richmond, Virginia. However, enhancing a neighborhood should be done by the efforts of community. In 2002, a plan for the Union Hill Historic District entitled Union Hill: A Revitalization and Neighborhood Plan was prepared. This plan is based on the previous plan and will complete efforts for revitalization by down zoning the zoning classification in Union Hill. As a land use plan for the City of Richmond, it will demonstrate how land use and zoning could be used as tools to sculpt a neighborhood as well as strengthen its mixed-income characteristic. As a revitalization plan, it will market Union Hill to investors who are searching for opportunities to provide housing options for all income levels, and first-time home buyers who are searching for a distinctive yet safe community to raise their children. This plan also seeks to revitalize vacant buildings and attract developers to develop infill that’s compatible with other buildings in the neighborhood, on vacant lots.

The Union Hill: Land Use and Revitalization Plan outlines the community’s vision of what the Union Hill Historic District should be like in 2016. This vision is based upon an assessment of the neighborhood’s top issues and the changes desired to address those issues. The following goals are identified to accomplish this vision:

1. Strengthen community involvement among residents of all ages, and socio-economic statues.
2. Sustain and enhance the established character of Union Hill’s older residential areas.
3. Enhance the neighborhood’s diverse socio-economic community.
4. Provide alternatives in the housing market to meet diverse housing needs in Union Hill.
5. Improve the overall appearance of Union Hill.
6. Preserve the historical character of Union Hill.
7. Improve the urban business district.
9. Foster the community’s desire to provide a safe and secure neighborhood.
Section I. Existing Conditions

History of Union Hill

Originally part of the large parcel of land owned by Richard Adams and his heirs, Union Hill was first mentioned as a distinct Richmond neighborhood in 1817. Most of the development in the area before the mid 1840s occurred on Venable Street, a well traveled thoroughfare, which also was part of the coach road to Williamsburg. As the neighborhood continued to develop, the hilly terrain of the area dictated the use of an irregular street pattern. Narrow streets navigated hills and gullies. Even Venable Street zigzagged up the rough terrain. For much of its early history, neighborhood development was limited to the base of Venable Street or the plateaus overlooking the valley.

Later development of the Union Hill neighborhood was aided by dramatic street grading which made the community more accessible. However, progressive street grading exposed the foundations and basements of many neighborhood houses. These exposed foundations and basements contribute to the neighborhood’s architectural charm, but to this day the only way to reach the front door of most of these houses is to climb a tall, narrow staircase. The influence of the irregular street pattern can further be seen in the shape of some neighborhood homes. According to legendary Richmond preservationist and architectural historian Mary Wingfield Scott, it took a journey of one mile to travel the three blocks between the Leigh Street Baptist Church, at Twenty-fifth and Leigh Streets, and Asbury Chapel, on Twenty-Fifth Street between N and O Streets. Many of the homes situated on irregularly shaped parcels were built in trapezoid shapes to take full advantage of the size and shape of the angular lot.

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1 The information in this history section has been adapted from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form which was also used in Jennifer Wickham’s Union Hill Revitalization Plan.
2 Chen, Kimberly Merkel, National Register Registration Form.
3 Scott, Old Richmond Neighborhoods.
Between 1830 and 1860 Richmond grew rapidly, despite the rugged landscape. The success of the tobacco, flour and iron industries precipitated a demand for more worker and factory owner housing. In response to this healthy demand, affluent Union Hill and Church Hill inhabitants bought property in the neighborhood and developed houses as investments or rental property. Many laborers, clerks and other working class people bought or rented houses and shops in the area.

During the Civil War there was little building activity in Union Hill. However, after the war the neighborhood continued to grow, prompting the City to annex Union Hill in 1867. Union Hill remained physically isolated by deep ravines and gullies until 1882 when Jefferson Avenue was filled in and graded. Five years later, in 1888, Jefferson Avenue was designated as a trolley route; Union Hill became more accessible and attractive to potential residents.

Between 1865 and 1917 the population of Union Hill continued to grow. In addition to residential development, new churches, businesses, and industries developed in the neighborhood to serve the local inhabitants. During this period much of the residential construction continued to be speculative in nature. In the 1880s and 1890s Union Hill’s three churches, Christ Episcopal, Venable Street Baptist, and Union Station Methodist erected or rebuilt their buildings. In 1890 a four-story brick factory building was erected on Venable Street to house a paper tag and label manufacturer. In recent years this factory building was converted to housing for people with special needs.

By World War I residential development in Union Hill had tapered off. Most of the land had been substantially developed. Instead, the period between World War I and War World II is marked by increased commercial development. A major trend along 25th and Venable Streets was in converting residences into commercial buildings by adding a storefront to the first floor. In the 1930s service stations were introduced. Three small service station establishments were located in
Union Hill. They were ornate and eye-catching and featured Mission style architecture complete with a stucco finish and a tile roof.

After World War II the racial composition of the neighborhood began to change. During the mid-1950s Christ Church, Union Station Methodist and Venable Street Baptist all sold their church buildings to African American congregations. Christ Church became the Temple of Judah, Union Station became Cedar Street Memorial Baptist, and Venable Street Baptist became Great Hope Baptist. In addition the all-white Church of the Nazarene became the black congregation of Shiloh Baptist Church.
Previous Revitalization Plans

City of Richmond Master Plan

Richmond’s most recent Master Plan recognizes the need for revitalization due to the high number of vacant buildings in the East End. Although Union Hill is smallest neighborhood in the East End, it has the most vacant, abandoned and dilapidated buildings in the City. Due to this finding, the Master Plan highlights recommendations regarding the elimination of blight in this neighborhood. It plans to resolve the negative effects of financial and physical disinvestments through organized revitalization efforts.

The City of Richmond’s Master Plan Land Use Principles recommends maintaining the residential character of the East End, and eliminating non-residential uses, except for neighborhood commercial uses, within the residential area. The Master Plan may be a bit controversial calling for medium-density residential development in the Union Hill Neighborhood, when the residential zoning is R-53 which is classified as multi-family residential (high density). Land-use principles include:

- Most of what currently exists is correct and appropriate.
- Infill development of like density and use is appropriate.
- The predominant land use is residential and should be preserved.
- Existing historic preservation design controls should be maintained and where neighborhood support exists, and new design controls should be encouraged to preserve existing historic neighborhoods from inappropriate development or design.
Union Hill: A Revitalization and Neighborhood Plan  
-Jennifer Wickham, 2002

The Union Hill: A Revitalization and Neighborhood Plan, prepared for Union Hill, discussed issues concerning occupied and vacant properties, the high rate of vacancy and absentee ownership, and the declining population and family population. This plan is subdivided into three sections focusing on historic preservation, urban design improvements, and infill development in an attempt to retain existing residents while attracting new residents.

Historic Preservation Plan:

➤ Rehabilitation of dilapidated structures and the construction of historically sympathetic infill housing.
➤ Rehabilitation through property acquisition, code enforcement, financial assistance, and homeownership.
➤ Appropriate infill construction will be accomplished through making changes to zoning regulations, implementing design controls and promoting opportunities in the neighborhood.

Urban Design Improvements

➤ Promotes a more attractive and safer neighborhood.
➤ The neighborhood will be more attractive if sidewalks are installed where needed, and weed and debris are cleared from the sidewalks.
➤ Street trees and street lamps will be appropriately placed along sidewalks.
➤ Beautify church parking lots by redesign and landscaping improvements.
➤ Establish a monument in Jefferson Park

Infill Construction
Current zoning classification, R-53 does not allow for infill construction on narrower lots. Therefore, the City should rezone the residential area to a more appropriate classification.

The City should enact design controls in Union Hill to ensure that the new structures built are compatible with existing structures.

ACORN should undertake an awareness campaign that will draw private developers and non-profit groups to build in the neighborhood.

Union Hill is seen as a neighborhood with great revitalization and development potential. The Better Housing Coalition continues to build new homes that respect the historical fabric of the neighborhood. ACORN is now educating people and servicing potential homeowners on how to complete the historic tax credit application in order rehabilitate an exiting building in need of repair. ACORN’s new program will attract everyday people who otherwise would not have the time or patience to complete and submit the historic tax credit application.

Though revitalization is occurring, problems still remain in the area. Most of the housing units are renter occupied instead of owner occupied. The dilapidated appearance is caused by vacant buildings and lots that are not maintained by property owners. Sidewalks are in great need of repair. The crime rate fluctuated in the previous four years but remains too high for a small neighborhood like Union Hill. Wickham’s Urban Design Plan noted sidewalks that needed to be improved or installed, Church parking lot improvements, and places where lamppost, street trees and public art should be installed. The sidewalks on Carrington Street and Mosby Street have not been installed and Church parking lots have not been landscaped. Lampposts have not been installed on Venable Street.
Neighborhood Description

Location and Boundaries

Union Hill, a National Historic District, is roughly one mile from downtown Richmond, Virginia. It is a small neighborhood adjacent to the Church Hill City Old and Historic District and is within the targeted area for the Neighborhoods in Bloom program. As a vital residential location, due to its proximity to downtown, it is the ideal walkable neighborhood that promotes many amenities. The study area is bounded East of Mosby Street, North of Jefferson Street, South of Carrington Street, and West of North 25th Street (Map 1). Jefferson Hill Park (Image 1 and Image 2) is also included as part of the plan area because it is an asset to the Union Hill neighborhood.

4 Some information in this neighborhood description section has been adapted from a previous plan prepared by Jennifer Wickham.
Neighborhood Description

Visitors and residents entering Union Hill from North 21st Street are greeted by Jefferson Hill Park. Jefferson Hill Park is well maintained and offers a wide field of grass with a panoramic view of downtown. The paths in the park are walkable and equipped with benches that serve as rest stops for visitors. Jefferson Hill Park is bounded by East Marshall Street, Jefferson Avenue, Clay Street and Princess Anne Avenue. Buildings on Clay Street and Princess Anne Avenue are well maintained and are in better condition than some other buildings in the neighborhood. There is 1 vacant building but vacant lots do not exist in this area of Union Hill due to continuous revitalization efforts. Sidewalks and curbs are well maintained. Though this area is well kept, other parts of Union Hill are run down due to deteriorating building conditions, overgrown sidewalks, overhead wires, and the lack of pedestrian scale street lamps. These factors give Union Hill a negative appearance deterring anyone may want to reside in the neighborhood.

As indicated in the previous plan written by Jennifer Wickham in 2002, the historic character and value of the rest of Union Hill is obscured by its rundown appearance. Wickham continues by acknowledging contributing factors such deteriorating vacant buildings, overgrown lots, and overhead utility wires that gives Union Hill a negative appearance. In 2006, Union Hill remains cluttered with boarded vacant buildings and vacant lots giving the neighborhood an unpleasant feeling. Abandoned buildings are an eyesore, promote illegal activities and lower neighboring property values. Some vacant buildings and lots have a substantial amount of debris in the yard and are overgrown with vegetation (see image 4). The extent of this overgrowth can be seen on a vacant corner lot in the heart of the neighborhood along 22nd street. The vacant lot has high weeds. Venable Street also has a substantial number of abandoned boarded up properties where plywood boards cover all the windows and doors (see image 3). Boarding-up properties is done in an attempt to protect the property from elements like snow and rain that cause further deterioration as well as
from unwelcome intruders. However this practice does little to improve the appearance of the neighborhood. Contractors and carpenters are seen throughout the neighborhood revitalizing some boarded vacant buildings and constructing infill (development/housing) on vacant lots. Among revitalized buildings and infill projects, a massive number of vacant buildings and lots remain in Union Hill detracting from the neighborhood’s aesthetic value hence discouraging potential homebuyers. These images, to potential homebuyers, suggest that Union Hill has been abandoned and there are no indicators that revitalization will continue throughout the Northern tip of Union Hill. Unfortunately, these factors may communicate to potential homebuyers that the neighborhood is not worth the investment and it is not worth inhabiting. However, revitalization work continues to progress into Northern areas of Union Hill. This effort foresees Union Hill as an inhabitable and desirable neighborhood to reside. Long and Foster Real Estate, like other real estate companies, are selling rehabilitated and revitalized houses that were in great disrepair. The massive number of vacant buildings and lots (Table 8) may portray this neighborhood as having a problem regarding the accumulation of refuse, but for the most part the rundown appearance of the neighborhood comes from deteriorated building conditions and overgrown vegetation.

The historic character of Union Hill is accentuated by the neighborhood’s brick sidewalks and granite curbs. However, the un-maintained condition of the sidewalks further contributes to the neighborhood’s rundown appearance. Grass and weeds have grown up through the sidewalks on some blocks in the neighborhood. It is almost impossible, in some places, to see the sidewalk due to the extensive amount of grass and weeds growing up through the sidewalk (Image 5). The City of Richmond has spent a total of $324,183.63 on sidewalk repairs/installations and tree plantings. Table 1 list Council Projects in Union Hill as well as the scope of work completed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>SCOPE OF WORK</th>
<th>START - FINISH DATE</th>
<th>TOTAL BUDGET</th>
<th>SPENT TO DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church Hill NIB 24th St, from M to Cedar St</td>
<td>Install sidewalk</td>
<td>9/9/2005-11/4/20</td>
<td>$61,000.00</td>
<td>$59,750.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Hill NIB CIB Projects Jessamine St. between Burton and Cedar Streets</td>
<td>Sidewalk repair, installation and tree planting</td>
<td>4/9/2005-6/15/20</td>
<td>$75,000.00</td>
<td>$56,828.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Street (Phase II)</td>
<td>Install decorative street lights, trees, and sidewalk repair</td>
<td>3/25/2004-8/12/2</td>
<td>$300,000.00</td>
<td>$207,605.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Spent: $324,183.63

Source: City of Richmond Department of Public Works

Table 1

Appropriate lighting in a residential neighborhood is vital. Gooseneck lighting illuminating the streets is more suitable for automobiles than pedestrians who may want to walk through their neighborhood at night or for those who are waiting for the bus. Rusted pedestrian scale street lamps convey previous efforts supporting pedestrian scale lighting, which also indicating that Union Hill was once a walkable neighborhood. Pedestrian scale lighting will eliminate shadows hence creating a safer environment further improving Union Hill’s streetscape and restoring its historical appearance.

Due to the number of vacant buildings and lots, Union Hill has great potential for more infill developments and further rehabilitation. The neighborhood retains much of its historic character through its historic structures, brick sidewalks and cobblestone streets. However, Union Hill remains rundown in appearance, vacant buildings and lots still exist, overgrown vegetation has gotten worse and inhospitable streetscapes present challenges to revitalization.
Land Use and Zoning

At this time, Union Hill is zoned pre-dominantly for multi-family residential with quite a bit of land designated for single and two-family residences (see map 3). These classifications are R-53 and R-7. The “R-53” zoning area is for the most part located in the core of the study area while “R-7” is located along the Northeast boarder of North 25th Street. Other designated zoned areas are RO-2 Residential-Office District, B-2 Community Business District, and UB Urban Business District.

The largest amount of land in Union Hill is classified as “R-53”. The Zoning Ordinance requires the same minimum lot areas and lot widths for single-family and two-family dwellings in “R-53” as in “R-7”. It permits single-family attached dwellings, two-family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, day nurseries, tourist homes, parking, and adult day care facilities. In some instances, single-family dwellings and dwelling developments that are attached to each other and share common ground are required by the Zoning Ordinance to be maintained by both property owners. Single-family detached dwellings must be located on area lots no less than three thousand six hundred (3,600) square feet with a width of at least thirty (30) feet. Single-family attached dwellings are required to be at least two thousand two hundred (2,200) square feet in area, eighteen (18) feet wide on the lot the dwelling unit is located, and twenty-one feet wide at the end of a series of attached dwelling units. Two-family detached dwellings must be located on lots that are no less than four thousand four hundred (4,400) square feet with a width of at least forty-two feet. Two-family attached dwellings must be located on lots that are no less than four hundred four thousand square feet with a width of at least thirty-six (36) feet. Because multi-family dwellings are permitted in this zone, “R-53”, “Vegetable Gardens” may be allowed as usable open space when the main building is

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5 Zoning information in this section has been adapted from the Chapter 23, Zoning, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Richmond, VA.
devoted to multi-family use.  Multi-family dwellings can not be on lots less than five thousand (5,000) square feet in total area and must allow each dwelling unit at least twelve hundred fifty (1,250) square feet in area.

A small portion of Union Hill is zoned R-7 single family and two-family urban residential district, which is intended to preserve and enhance the established character of older urban residential neighborhoods in the inner areas of the City. Regulations for this district are designed to reflect the urban nature of neighborhoods characterized by a mixture of detached and attached single and two-family dwellings situated of small lots with narrow and modest setbacks. It permits principal uses as in the R-1 district along with single-family attached and two-family detached attached dwellings. One dwelling unit located in an accessory building, containing two (2) or more stories, which is existing at the effective date of this provision and which is located on the same lot as a single-family dwelling. However, single-family dwellings shall not contain any accessory lodging units and lots shall meet the lots area requirement for a two-family dwelling. One off-street parking space will be provided for the additional dwelling unit and access to the accessory building shall be provided in accordance with requirements of the Department of Public Works and Department of Fire and Emergency Services. The minimum lot size for single-family detached dwellings is 3,600 square feet with a minimum width of 30 feet. Single-family attached dwellings shall not be located on lots less than 2,200 square feet in area and 18 feet in width. Four thousand four hundred square feet is the minimum lot size and 42 feet is the minimum width for two-family detached dwellings. Two-family attached dwelling are afforded at least 4,400 square feet in area with a minimum width of 36 feet. Attached dwellings are limited to 4 dwelling units.
Demographic Profile

Statistical data was collected from the U.S. Census for census tracts 205, 206, and 207 from 1990-2000. Statistical data collected from summary file 1 in 2000 was collected by block. This section will address demographic change among the population of the Union Hill Historic District in the City of Richmond, Virginia. The analysis also focuses on two other basic demographic standards – the household and the housing unit. Given that the Northern tip of Union Hill has yet to be rehabilitated, household growth from 1990 and 2000 will provide the most accurate implication to go on with revitalization efforts in the plan area.

Population, Elderly, and Race

In 1990 Union Hill was populated by 2,006 residents. However, during the early 1990s, redevelopment and rehabilitation in Church Hill had not yet fully migrated north to the Union Hill Neighborhood. Efforts to revitalize the plan area, in a sense, can be contributed to the Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods® (A.C.O.R.N.) and later to other organizations like Better Housing Coalition, private developers and the Neighborhoods in Bloom Program. Despite revitalization efforts in the plan area by A.C.O.R.N., other organizations and developers, population declined by 1007 persons, a 49.8%, decrease between 1990 and 2000. Continuing revitalization efforts may possibly increase the population in the plan area, which will further encourage a mix of land use to cater to present and future resident needs.

As of 2000, individuals over the age of 65 represented 18% of Union Hill, a 1% decrease from 1990 (Table 2). Twenty-eight percent of these individuals are homeowners in the plan area, while 72% (357 individuals) rent their home. The Senior Apartments on Burton Street does account for a large percent of renter occupied units in the Union Hill neighborhood. As elderly residents

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6 A.C.O.R.N. is an organization that connects people with other organizations, agencies, and real estate agents who are selling homes in historic neighborhoods.
move or are forced to move and as others pass on, more housing will become available for newer residents. On the other hand, the remaining 65 and older demographic group may need aid, financial or physical, to help maintain their current housing.

### Union Hill Population Trends 1990-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Total Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Richmond</td>
<td>203,056</td>
<td>197,790</td>
<td>-5,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Area</td>
<td>2,006⁷</td>
<td>999⁸</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Elderly Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Total Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Richmond</td>
<td>31,181</td>
<td>16,788</td>
<td>-14,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Total</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Area</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>-210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Total</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census of Population, Sex by Age 1990
Source: U.S. Census of Population, Sex by Age 2000

Table 2

Statistical data regarding racial makeup shows that the decline in the overall population is mostly attributed to the Black population. Between 1990 and 2000, the Black population declined from 1912 persons to 894 persons, a 45% decrease. Ironically, the White population grew 7%, from 87 to 132 persons over the same period of time. Additionally, the significant loss of the Black population is not mirrored in other racial and ethnic persons in Union Hill. U.S. Census figures show that the American Indian and Alaska Native population remained the same while the Asian or

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⁷ The 1990 Census only allows users to get accurate data for block groups. These block groups partially includes blocks on Broad Street and extends into the Union Hill (non-historic), Fairmount, and Church Hill North neighborhoods.

⁸ The 2000 Census allows users to gather block data for Summary File 1 (SF1). The population might have grown from the time 2000 data was released to now. Census data is updated every ten years.
Pacific Islander origin population decreased by less than 1% and the Hispanic population increased from 5 in 1990 to 9 persons in 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>White alone</th>
<th>Black alone</th>
<th>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</th>
<th>Asian or Pacific Islander alone</th>
<th>Some other race alone</th>
<th>Two or more races</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino alone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2,006</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census of Population, Race of Householder 1990
Source: U.S. Census of Population, Race of Householder 2000

Table 3

The decline of the existing predominately Black population, coupled with an increase in white population, raises the issue of neighborhood gentrification. Gentrification, or displacement of existing residents, typically occurs when lower income Blacks or Minorities are displaced when middle and upper income non-minority populations move in and improve properties leading to increased property values and taxes.

The influx of 45 White persons, makes displacement seem unlikely at this point in time. However, the only sure way to determine if gentrification is happening in Union Hill is to look at household incomes. If the new neighborhood residents have higher incomes than the existing residents who are leaving the community, then the gentrification process may be on the horizon.
Revitalization efforts that began in the 1990s spurred some population growth, as well as a decline in the Black population by 45%. The overall income level in Union Hill has not drastically changed indicating gentrification is not an issue. Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 20% decrease in the population earning an annual income of less than $10,000 and a 7% increase in those earning between $10,001 and $24,999 (see Table 4). In 1990, there weren’t any households that earned an annual income over $125,000 but that number increased by 23 persons in 2000.

Safeguards are a necessity and will allow existing residents to remain in the neighborhood. These safeguards (financial incentives), which are discussed in detail in a later section, provide alternatives to displacement and allow existing residents to participant in the revitalization of the community. Currently the survival of the Union Hill neighborhood depends on the ability to retain and attract residents.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Bracket</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001-24,999</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-39,999</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-59,999</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-124,999</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $125,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Income 1990 and 2000

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9 Numbers are different from the population data gathered because the Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3) only allows users to collect information by block group, which includes other neighborhoods besides the Union Hill Historic District.
Housing

Household Composition

According to the United States Census Bureau, a household includes all of the people who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit refers to a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms or a single room occupied as a separate living quarter. Households are categorized by the Census as family, non-family, and 1-person households. A family household includes a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. A non-family household includes a householder living alone or with nonrelatives only. Nonrelatives are household members that are not related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. The Census lists other nonrelatives as roommates, unmarried partners, and foster children. The following discusses the change in household composition from 1990 to 2000.

Census data from 2000 reveals that there are 744 households in the three block-groups of which Union Hill is a part. There was a 45% decrease of family occupied units between 1990 and 2000. A significant amount of non-family households outnumber family households, in particular single people (Table 5). Current Census data reveals that there is a widening gap between family and non-family households. The number of family households drastically decreased from 429 to 191, while non-family households grew by 98 households from 455 to 553. It is safe to say that single-persons are responsible for the overall growth of Union Hill. The 1-person household total is a part of the non-family household category.

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10 The block-groups (205, 206, and 207) used to review household composition in Union Hill expand further than the neighborhood boundaries. Though this method looks at a larger geographic area, it gives a better indication of geographic trends in the neighborhood as well as in the surrounding neighborhoods.
Housing Units

As previously stated, a housing unit refers to a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms or a single room occupied as a separate living quarter. Of the 1,154 existing units, it is estimated that most units, 84%, are occupied and of the units that are occupied, 74% are renter occupied. Many of the residents contributing to the owner occupied housing units (22% of the total number of housing units) have expressed their interest in attracting more homeowners to the area. Residents proclaim that the renter occupied housing units were at one time owner occupied. In spite of this, other housing opportunities arose, and homeowners moved out while renting their homes to students and young newlyweds who desired to live close to Downtown Richmond, Virginia. With a majority of renter occupied units, it appears that fewer families are attracted to this area. Revitalization efforts focus on assisting existing tenants to become homeowners where possible and encouraging absentee owners to improve their units through financial incentives or subsidies.

11 Residents interviewed, believe that renter occupied houses were once owner occupied.
Table 7 shows that in 2000 the Union Hill plan area contained more renters than homeowners. Whether housing units are occupied by renters or left vacant, absentee owners are obligated to keep up the exterior appearance of the home. With revitalization efforts taking off, residents are hoping that the neighborhood will appeal to families like it used to. Due to its proximity to downtown, VCU’s Monroe Park and MCV campuses, GRTC transit accessibility, and rising employment opportunities, Union Hill has become very attractive to young urban professionals. Whatever the case, families are more worried about other neighborhood characteristics like the quality of schools in the City of Richmond, public services, and safety. Evidently, negative neighborhood characteristics are forcing families to move elsewhere, advising that there remains a need for improvement.
Building Conditions

A building condition analysis conducted in 2002, adapted from an architectural historian who completed the National Register nomination for the Union Hill neighborhood in 2001, remains relevant in 2006. It has been 5 years, and though revitalization efforts are breaking ground at rapid rates, there are indicators of neighborhood disinvestment.

Union Hill is made up of approximately 600 buildings and for the sole purpose of this analysis, only residential buildings will be surveyed. This building survey was prepared in June 2006. Most of the buildings are designated residential. Buildings within the plan area are classified by the City of Richmond Zoning Ordinance as single, two family, and multi-family residential. Thirteen percent (77) of the buildings in Union Hill are currently vacant and of those buildings that are vacant, almost all buildings violate the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code\textsuperscript{12} (USBC). “This portion of the USBC known as The Virginia Maintenance Code, provides administrative guidelines for the enforcement of maintenance standards set forth in the International Property Maintenance Code” (Department of Community Development, 2006). The following table indicates violations observed that vary from permit required to general exterior. Table 8 lists the number of violations, type of violation and on which street the building is located that violated USBC.

\textsuperscript{12} Part III of USBC was adopted as Richmond’s Property Maintenance Code.
Table 8

Map 4 illustrates the concentration of vacant residential buildings in Union Hill throughout the revitalization area. Of these buildings, 14 or 2% are dilapidated and some vacant buildings have major deficiencies in the structural elements. For example, on the 800 block of Mosby Street, some of the roofs have collapsed, the siding is falling off, and two of the building’s foundations are cracking. All nine of these buildings, 8 single family and 1 multifamily, on this block were condemned by the City of Richmond. At 900 ½ North 20th Street, the rear wall has collapsed but the Italianate structure is undergoing renovation; because this house is located near one of the main entrances to Union Hill it creates a significant problem because it is an eyesore. Those entering Union Hill from the Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge see buildings that are vacant and dilapidated which gives the whole neighborhood a negative image. Buildings found to be in a dilapidated condition were observed to have structural problems related to a combination of cracked or sinking foundations, or roofs and porches that are missing (see Image 6). The residential building survey showed a number of structures that were renovated or showed signs of structures that were in the process of being
renovated. Image 7 shows three properties that were renovated this year; 2225, 2227, and 2229 Venable Street.

**Building Sizes**

The building sizes in the Union Hill revitalization plan area vary depending upon the size of the parcel lot. The extent of the building sizes are 1,000 square feet to approximately 9,000 square feet; however the average square footage is 1,800. Almost half, 50%, of the buildings in Union Hill are between 1,500 and 2,000 square feet. One building is approximately 9,000 square feet; The Senior Apartments on Burton Street. The building illustrated in image 6 is about 5,000 square feet. Almost all of the buildings in Union Hill are two-story structures except for the Senior Apartments on Burton Street, which is four stories (see Image 8). The square footage is approximated by multiplying the building footprint by the number of floors in the building.

The residential buildings in Union Hill were assessed using the building survey criteria set forth by Bunbar, Milby, Williams, Pittman, & Vaughan, PLLC, a structural engineering firm in Richmond, Virginia. Buildings were evaluated based on imperfections in structural elements such as foundations, walls and roofs, and other accessory elements such as trim, gutters and downspouts, porches and exterior stairways, chimneys, and paint (see table 9 for building condition classifications).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Condition Classification</th>
<th>No. of Deficiencies</th>
<th>Level of skill to repair</th>
<th>Corresponding Dunbar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>No or few deficiencies in the accessory elements</td>
<td>Owner can probably make repairs without professional assistance</td>
<td>Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deteriorated</td>
<td>Several intermediate to major deficiencies in the accessory elements, one or two minor deficiencies in the structural elements</td>
<td>Owner may need professional help from contractor to repair deficiencies</td>
<td>Deteriorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilapidated</td>
<td>Multiple major deficiencies in the structural elements</td>
<td>Necessary for professional assistance from architect, engineer, or contractor in returning the building to a habitable state</td>
<td>Dilapidated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9
Architectural Styles

The Union Hill Historic District is a part of the larger Church Hill area of the City of Richmond. The predominant historic period represented by the surveyed resources is that of construction and growth (1817-1950s), reflecting an era of Richmond’s post-war expansion, during which time industrial, commercial, and residential growth transformed Union Hill. An extended analysis will accompany the infill development plan.
**Vacant Building & Lot Analysis**

There is no clear definition of structure abandonment. As noted by Accordino and Johnson (2000), there is a dearth of literature by researchers and policy makers on the problem of housing abandonment because it is viewed mainly as a symptom of urban decline rather than as a cause\(^1\). There are structures for which private ownership has long defaulted and yet have not been foreclosed by local authorities. If they are vacant, with no effective ownership interest, they may meet the definition of abandonment. The Historic District of Union Hill is home to many of the vacant and dilapidated buildings throughout the city. As buildings remain vacant, physical and natural elements prove to be endangering to the structure. The 2000 Census data indicates that there are 179 vacant structures in the Union Hill Historic District\(^{14}\) (see Table 7).

**Definition:** Vacant structures for which the original use is no longer economically viable and are largely unoccupied due to their level of deterioration. The owners have walked away from these buildings and the services which normally keep them intact are no longer being provided. Additionally, required property taxes are frequently unpaid and the city is or may be in the process of taking title to the properties via tax foreclosure\(^5\).

Union Hill has suffered a wide array of abandonment and disinvestment for many years due in part to various factors. Homeowners in the City of Richmond, as like many other cities throughout the U.S., cannot afford exterior as well as interior repairs and are not eligible for first time home buyer incentive programs\(^{16}\). However, homeowners and property owners can take advantage of Richmond’s Tax Abatement Program if they meet certain requirements. The tax abatement program is a positive tool used to assist property owners repair the exterior of their home while decreasing blighted conditions in their neighborhood. Declining revenues lead to a dynamic in which many landlords refrain from making essential repairs, fall behind or default on their mortgage payments, and stop paying property taxes\(^{17}\). There are 98 properties in Union Hill that are tax delinquent and most are located on Venable Street (17%) (see table 10). The number of families has

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\(^1\) Accordino, John and Gary T. Johnson, Addressing the Vacant and Abandoned Property Problem.

\(^14\) The City of Richmond GIS vacant building layer indicates that there are only 120 vacant buildings in Union Hill. This number has decreased because of revitalization efforts, and owner and city demolition.


\(^7\) Cohen, James R. Abandoned Housing: Exploring Lessons from Baltimore.
also decreased and will continue to decrease because of the perceived notion of crime in Union Hill that is most likely derived from the site of groups loitering or hanging out on street corners. The increased perception of crime also stems from media statements. Families may also refuse to reside in Union Hill because of the lack of quality schools and amenities in the area. Empty nesters and newly weds find Union Hill to be a fascinating place to live because it is close to downtown Richmond, the financial district, and entertainment. The younger generation is also attracted to the locally owned coffee shops like Jumpin J’s Java. Vacant buildings are not too much a concern for residents who rent their home but homeowners are educated enough to know that vacant buildings will decrease or stabilize the property value of their home. This brings us to the concentration of vacant buildings in Union Hill and how it relates to future revitalization efforts in this community.

The National Vacant Properties Campaign (NVPC) was launched by Smart Growth America, LISC, and ICMA in 2003 to help local governments throughout the country develop effective solutions to solve the problem of property abandonment. More specifically, the City of Richmond requested the assistance of NVPC to:

1. Develop methodologies and best practices that assist in preventive as well as pro-active deployment strategies;\footnote{http://www.vacantproperties.org/technical/programs/richmond.html}
2. Develop and inventory a tracking system for Richmond’s vacant properties;\footnote{Ibid}
3. Develop an evaluation tool that establishes benchmarks, monitors efficiency and effectiveness and measures impact of improvements over time\footnote{http://www.vacantproperties.org/technical/programs/richmond.html}.

As a result of NVPC, the Department of Community Development, Division Historic Preservation is giving priority to vacant buildings. More importantly, this Division has provided NVPC with a
map indicating the location of vacant buildings, thus enabling the team to keep an accurate count of all vacant buildings. There are 77\textsuperscript{21} vacant buildings in Union Hill. The majority of vacant buildings in this community are clustered on Venable Street (13) followed by North 21\textsuperscript{st} Street (11), Mosby Street (10), and North 23rd Street (9). Rehabilitation of abandoned buildings began in the southern neighborhoods of Church Hill and has been working itself towards the northwest neighborhoods. Blocks with a lower number of vacant buildings do not indicate that the block is undergoing revitalization. In Union Hill not only are there vacant buildings but there are a number of vacant lots in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Name</th>
<th>No. of Vacant Buildings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Violations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N. 21st Street</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. 22nd Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. 23rd Street</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. 24th Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. 25th Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton Street</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrington Street</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessamine Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Street</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosby Street</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venable Street</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Richmond Department of Community Development Historic Preservation Unit
Code Enforcement Inspection Tracking

Table 10

Most vacant lots in Union Hill are well maintained. The grass is properly manicured and debris is cleared from the lots (see image 9). To some extent, this statement is true but some vacant lots do have an accumulation of refuse and debris (see image 10). Vacant buildings throughout Union Hill are being used as dumping sites. It is not clear whether residents are dumping garbage or

\textsuperscript{21} The City of Richmond Department of Community Development, GIS ArcMap, Vacant Buildings Layer, 2006.
whether people from other communities are dumping their garbage there (see image 10). Either way dumping garbage anywhere other than public trash cans or trash receptacles provided by the City of Richmond violates the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. One partially vacant lot\textsuperscript{22} in Union Hill is home to a homeless mentally challenged gentleman who does not harm residents or visitors but he is an endangerment to himself (see image 11).

The City of Richmond utilizes an array of techniques with the intentions of eliminating blight. Boarding vacant and abandoned buildings is a technique utilized by the City of Richmond and other cities to eliminate blight. Using this technique may also decrease crime by securing a place that may have been once used for drug dealing. Residents are encouraged to report open and vacant properties to the Police Department or the City’s Permits and Inspections Division. The New Vision Civic League Association members report suspicious activities throughout the neighborhood such as boards that have been removed from vacant buildings, yards that are overgrown, vacant buildings and lots that are being used for dumping garbage and so forth to reduce blight in their neighborhood. Boarding vacant buildings does not eliminate blight. Though buildings are boarded, elements can easily cause further deterioration. Rain water can seep in through cracks in the roof causing the roof to collapse as well as further damaging floor and walls. Eventually deterioration will cause the house to lean and collapse.

\textsuperscript{23}Vacant buildings were not proven to be a hot spot for criminal activities. They are hazardous and should not be resided or played in by anyone. Often times, homeless people are entering vacant buildings and squatting (illegally residing in a vacant building) for as long as they can and then moving to the next vacant building when they are caught. Prostitutes and drug dealers

\textsuperscript{22}Rear of 2230 Venable Street.
\textsuperscript{23}Data in this paragraph was collected by questioning the Vacant Building Review Team on field work days. Members of this team are architects, City Employees, and certain members from the Commission of Architectural Review.
choose vacant buildings as a place where they can work. Vacant buildings may attract unwanted crime into the community but reports show that most criminal activities do not take place in or outside of vacant buildings. However, in order to decrease crime, vacant buildings should be rehabilitated using Historic and Low Income Housing Tax Credits.
Public Safety

Safety is one of the public’s greatest concerns. People are far less likely to shop, work, function, and most importantly live in an area if people perceive that the area has significant safety dilemmas. Data collected from the Richmond Police Department Office\textsuperscript{24} comparison report in Union Hill shows that crime has increased by 6.40\% over a 3 year period from January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005. Within one year, from 2003 to 2004, crime decreased by 12.06\%, showing a decrease in every category but homicide, which increase by more than 90\%.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
\hline
Assault & 66 & 80 & 71 \\
Homicide & 0 & 2 & 4 \\
Burglary & 28 & 16 & 22 \\
Robbery & 18 & 17 & 15 \\
Sex Offences & 5 & 1 & 4 \\
Theft (Larceny) & 94 & 71 & 63 \\
Vehicular Theft & 37 & 24 & 18 \\
Vice & 31 & 5 & 33 \\
Other & 87 & 111 & 94 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Percentage Change in Crime Rates from 1/1/2003 to 12/31/2005}
\end{table}

Further data concerning reported crime incidents in Union Hill was collected and geo-coded by year (4/1/2003 - 4/1/2006) and location (neighborhood block). Crime report categories were condensed into two smaller categories, violent crime and property crime, which are the categories used by the United States Department of Justice to analyze crime throughout the U.S. Crime incidents recorded between 4/1/2003 and 4/1/2004 indicate that 11\% (41) of Union Hill’s criminal activities occurred on the 700 block of Mosby Street. Though crime reports indicate a decrease of

\textsuperscript{24} 25\textsuperscript{th} Street Prescient
criminal activities during 4/1/2004 and 4/1/2005, reports also indicate that 19% (62) of Union Hill’s criminal acts occurred on the 700 block of Mosby Street. Although statistics show a decrease in crime by 76 incidents, the 700 block of Mosby Street remains the hot spot for criminal acts (18% or 46) between 4/1/2005 and 4/1/2006. Map 5 illustrates crime hot spots for the year 4/1/2005 thru 4/1/2006.

According to table 12, 51% of criminal acts reported are violent crimes. As family households are compared with the number of criminal acts reported in Union Hill, it is clear that families are moving out of the neighborhood because of the crime rate. As the crime rate decreases, especially the percentage of violent crimes, more families will move into Union Hill because the neighborhood will be safer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Total Reported</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Crime</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Richmond, Police Department, 2006

Table 12

Reviewing Code Enforcement History25 for vacant buildings in Union Hill does not indicate a significant relationship between vacant buildings and criminal activities. Addresses given by the report does show that criminal activities are located near vacant buildings and vacant lots. Most incidents occurred on Venable Street where most vacant buildings are located but incidents did not take place in vacant buildings. Code Enforcement History collected indicates that all vacant buildings, at some point between 2003 and 2006, violated codes pertaining to “Open and Vacant,”

25 The Code Enforcement Inspection Tracking allows City Employees with access to StarNet application to search and collected violation data on buildings and lots located on parcels throughout the City of Richmond.
“Weed Violation on Property” and “Unlawful Accumulation of Refuse.” As blocks are revitalized and homes are occupied crime will decrease or relocate to another area.

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26 Refuse is not the same as garbage. Code Enforcement’s two categories for garbage is “Disposal of Rubbish” and “Accumulation of Garbage and Rubbish.” Refuse is waste.
Commercial Development

Union Hill can support the 25th Street Commercial Corridor, which extends from the northern tip of the neighborhood into the Fairmount neighborhood and Nile Mile Road Corridor. The businesses along the 25th Street UB Corridor can and do take advantage of Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Loans. These loans are for commercial structures only. Loans are available for the amounts of $125,000, $125,001 to $200,000 and above $200,000. CARE grants are also available. The City gives up to $3,000 each for rehabilitation, façade and security improvements to a property. Grants for sprinklers and water lateral hook-ups, are given up to a maximum of $25,000 are also available. Businesses who have taken advantage of the CARE program are Jumpin Jo's Java, Mo's Deli, Caroline Worshen Flower Shop, and the Bakery at 1111 North 25th Street. Minor problems that businesses encounter revolve around zoning. Businesses overcome problems by applying for special use permits and zoning variances.
Assets and Liabilities of the Union Hill Historic District

Table 14 summarizes the assets and liabilities of the Union Hill Historic District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union Hill is listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places.</td>
<td>A high rate of vacancy among buildings and lots give Union Hill a negative appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecturally significant buildings add character to Union Hill.</td>
<td>Absentee ownership and landlords do not maintain properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proximity to downtown is vital to those who go to school and work in downtown Richmond.</td>
<td>The crime rate is too high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design elements give the district a distinctive character.</td>
<td>Church parking lots are not properly landscaped and are oftentimes mistaken for a vacant lot covered by gravel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrounding influences are positive influences on Union Hill and encourage homeowners to move back into the City.</td>
<td>Zoning is inappropriate for the residential land uses throughout Union Hill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a significant GRTC presence.</td>
<td>Sidewalks are overgrown and overhead wires create a visual clutter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Hill Park offers impeccable views of the City and an urban open space for parents to bring their children.</td>
<td>Population continues to decline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Union Hill is failing to attract families into the neighborhood.
Vision

The Union Hill Historic District provides a safe community atmosphere and a high quality of life for its residents. Residents interact with each other and have a shared investment in the community. Homeowners and renters take an interest in, and assume responsibility for keeping the neighborhood clean and well maintained. Residents who are civically engaged proactively take steps to preserve the historic character of their neighborhood. It is a neighborhood with clean streets and sidewalks that result not only from city services but because residents work to keep them clean. Residents in Union Hill take advantage of all amenities the neighborhood has to offer such as a local coffee café Jumpin J’s Java, access to four GRTC bus lines, and the proximity to downtown. Families enjoy summer and winter activities in Jefferson Hill Park as well as in other pocket parks located in neighborhood. The historic character and affordability of the neighborhood attract new residents and foster business investments to Union Hill. Infill developments, on vacant lots, are designated as contributing structures to the Union Hill Historic District. Brick sidewalks, street signs, and human scale lighting contribute to the overall appearance of the neighborhood.
Community Involvement

As in the past, the neighborhood was unusually fragmented and there was a great deal of skepticism among different groups of people. The re-organization of the Union Hill Civic Association and the collaboration between other neighborhood organizations is crucial to the success of the plan. The purpose of this plan is to spark the successful re-organization of the Union Hill Civic Association. All residents will be offered membership regardless of age and socio-economic status. Residents who do not wish to be a member of the civic association should be requested to make donations and take part in all activities.

**Goal:** Strengthen community involvement among residents of all ages, and socio-economic statuses.

**Objective**

Re-organize the Union Hill Civic Association so that neighborhood residents may begin stimulating the formulation of city policies regarding their community. The responsible persons re-organizing the civic association will be the core members of the original group. (Immediately)

**Implementation:**

A small group of residents come together and form a core organization whose sole purpose is “unity”. This group should familiarize itself with the guidelines set for organizing a neighborhood civic association that will be recognized by the City of Richmond. Though a small group is already working with the Police Department, it should also open up a line of communication with other neighborhood organizations, local churches, and residents to formulate a universal program for Union Hill, Church Hill, and Fairmount neighborhoods. The primary role of the civic association is to implement and monitor the plan and its effectiveness. The organization will also be responsible for the
continued reevaluation of the plan’s appropriateness as the neighborhood’s program is formulated and tested. (0-6 months)

**Objective:** The Union Hill Civic Association will prepare revitalization plans.

**Implementation:** Since the City of Richmond no longer hosts neighborhood teams, A.C.O.R.N. should develop a program to help community groups undertake community revitalization projects. This program might include elements on how to start a community development group, management, fundraising, and the nuts and bolts of rehabilitation. The ultimate goal is to help the Union Hill community undertake its own revitalization. (6 months-1 year)

Within the first six months, the core group of the civic association will meet amongst themselves to establish various committees that will address issues such as public safety, events/activities, clean-up program, marketing/promotion, etc. The core members of the civic association will also establish times to meet every month.

**Best Practices for Organizing the Union Hill Civic Association**

Residents of the Union Hill Historic District were once civically engaged and were active members of the Union Hill Civic Association (UHCA). Residents can become more involved with their community by joining the UHCA. The purpose behind this section is to provide organizational guidance, reduce difficulties during times of dispute or disagreement, and to provide flexibility for future needs.

If the purpose of the civic association was unclear, the purpose should be redefined. Because the East End District encompasses several neighborhoods, boundaries should be determined; the civic association should use the boundaries of the historic district. In order to keep all residents informed about upcoming meetings names, addresses, and home phone numbers...
should be collected. Meeting dates should be set for a specific day every month to eliminate the confusion of when the civic association is meeting. Committees should be formed to work on rules and regulations. Other committees should be but are not limited to:

1. Expenses and Revenue  
2. Fundraiser  
3. Entertainment and activities  
4. Marketing  
5. Neighborhood Clean-Up  
6. Public Safety

Committees listed above should be given operating mandates and deadlines.

Membership should be open to all residents in the Union Hill Historic District. The Civic association should not express preference of homeowner membership over renter membership. A successful civic association is one that includes all residents, both homeowners and renters. Membership dues will be determined by the Expenses and Revenue Committee. Dues and any other funds should not be kept at any member’s residence or commingled in any officer’s private bank account. Instead, a bank account should be opened for the civic association.

Communicating

Once the UHCA is meeting on a regular time schedule, it should take further steps to plant its roots in the community by developing a website that will provide residents with information regarding meetings and events that are taking place throughout the neighborhood. In Arlington, VA, the Williamsburg Civic Association has a website that informs residents of meetings, community news, social events and neighborhood developments. This civic association also creates a list of priorities based on accomplishments from the previous year (both lists are available on the website). The Hillcrest Community Civic Association in Washington, D.C. also has a website but monthly meetings and events are noted on the calendar two months in advance. On account of the
Hillcrest Community Civic Association’s diligence to keep residents informed, not only are residents aware of meetings and events, but they can plan to attend every meeting and event because of the advance notice. The Hillcrest Community Civic Association is also involved with neighborhood revitalization plans that are prepared by local organizations and corporations like the National Capitol Revitalization Corporation. Another practice that will benefit the UHCA is to write letters to the Mayor regarding streetscape improvements among other issues like crime and vacant buildings. The Hillcrest Community Civic Association wrote letters to their Mayor expressing concerns about streetscape and infrastructure improvements and also requested an increase in capitol improvements to fund such projects. If the UHCA was as active as these civic associations Union Hill will be a vibrant neighborhood to reside and raise children.

Planning Consultant Recommendations

The Union Hill Civic Association’s missions are to increase community involvement, encourage friendship among residents, inform residents of City related issues, and encourage residents to become more involve with the City government. Union Hill is a small neighborhood comprised of mostly residential homes, commercial stores, and parks/open space on 34 blocks. I was hired to help the residents of Union Hill and members of the Civic Association to identify crime, give advice as to how to minimize crime, increase family households, beautify the neighborhood, and preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

During all residential and group interviews, I discovered that most people are concerned with the current crime rate and how it might be affecting Union Hill’s family residents. From April 1, 2005 to April 1, 2006 there were a total of 277 reported crime incidents that occurred within the neighborhood boundaries. Seventeen percent (46) of those criminal acts occurred on the 700 block of Mosby Street which is located directly across the street from the Union Hill Historic District, the study area for this revitalization plan. Other crime hot spots included the 2200 (odd), 2300, and 2400 blocks of Venable Street. Because the City’s website displays criminal acts in smaller subcategories, I grouped all activities under three categories, violent crime, property crime, and hate crime which are used the by U.S. Department of Justice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crime</th>
<th>Total Reported</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Crime</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Richmond, Police Department, 2006

Table 14

More than half of all criminal activities reported are violent crimes (51%). Though it may appear that property crimes occurs the least, destruction of private property (30) is reported more than any other criminal act.

Reducing the crime rate will encourage existing residents to remain in Union Hill, attract more families into the neighborhood, and allow residents and visitors to walk through the area without any fears.

**Recommendations:**

1. A popular trend in other Cities, such as Nashville, Las Vegas, and San Diego, is community policing. The Union Hill Civic Association should invite a police officer from Sector 1-11 (neighborhood police office) to discuss programs similar to police bike patrols, drug awareness, and foot patrol officers. The officer attending meetings geared towards crime prevention should be asked to explain how residents could participate in aggressive neighborhood watch patrols. As discussed in Wesley G. Skogan’s “Community Policing,” residents should take an active role during neighborhood watch patrols by walking side by side with foot patrol officers and police on bicycles. Residents who sit on their porches during the day as well as at night are another approach to aggressive neighborhood watch patrols because it places eyes on the street.

2. The Union Hill Civic Association should collaborate with Sector 1-11 (neighborhood police office) and form a Neighborhood Nuisance Program that will help residents report and eliminate crime against private property. The City of San Diego supports the efforts of the Police Department by sponsoring this program. According to San Diego’s Police Department, nuisances can include an unsightly property, excessive noise, gang activity, prostitution, drug activity, trespassing, and City Code Regulation violations. In the event
that residents can show evidence of criminal acts and code violations, a City representative from the City of Richmond Building Code Enforcement Division should guide them in the process to eliminate the nuisance. Members of the Union Hill Civic Association should file suit in small claims court against owners who fail to abate the nuisance. In turn, the judge has the power to demand the owner abate the nuisance and pay court fees.

Union Hill will be a more appealing neighborhood to existing and future residents as the crime rate in the area decreases. More importantly, residents will become better acquainted with their neighbors and take charge of daily happenings in the area.

Residents expressed concerns regarding the beautification of Union Hill. Although some sidewalks were installed and repaired, other sidewalks are overgrown with grass or do not exist. Considerably small neighborhoods like Union Hill are beautified by planting trees and installing human scale street lambs that would illuminate streets at night for pedestrians.

3. The Union Hill Civic Association should contact the Department of Public Works to inquire about the budget for Council District 7 and research the projects that were completed. Residents should then write letters to the City Council as well as Public Works regarding blocks that were not on the list but are in need of repairs or installations. The Department of Public Works will repair and install sidewalks if more than have of the residents write letters concerning this matter.

Finally, community involvement and police enforcement will help carry out this plan and make Union Hill a more child-friendly environment, by implementing programs that will decrease the crime rate significantly.
Land Use

Goal: Sustain and enhance the established character of Union Hill’s older residential areas.

Zoning classification R-53 allows for the same uses as in R-7, but R-53 also allows multifamily dwellings to be built on lots no less than 5,000 square feet in total area. Additionally, multifamily dwellings must allocate 1250 square feet per unit. These allowances threaten the residential character of the historic district.

Objective Protect the existing, urban residential neighborhood.

Implementation: The Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals should rezone the Union Hill Residential neighborhood from R-53 to R-7. R-53 is inappropriate for a neighborhood whose land use reflects that of R-7. (Immediately)

Implementation: Once established and recognized by the City of Richmond, the Union Hill Civic Association should establish a Zoning Committee. The Zoning Committee should evaluate existing land uses, identify blocks with high concentrations of owner-occupants and single-family residences, and compile the documentation necessary to petition City Council to change the zoning. The Land Use Administration and Neighborhood Preservation Planning Division should be contacted for technical support and guidance. If City Council asks the Land Use Administration the study and rezone the area there would be no cost to the civic association. (3-6 months)

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See map 7.
Objective All development is compatible with the scale, historic
classic, and adjacent uses in the area.

Implementation: The Design Overlay District (see map 6), recommended in another
part of this section, will protect the historic character of the neighborhood. Any exterior
changes (to structures) within this district must be consistent with the other buildings in the
neighborhood. The Commission of Architectural Review will review applications and
proposals.

The Union Hill Historic District was surveyed and analyzed before developing a preferred,
or recommended, land use plan. This included driving/ walking through the neighborhood and also
reviewing the City of Richmond Master Land Use Plan.

The results show a clear preference towards maintaining the residential character of the
neighborhood, preserving salvageable residential stock, and infill development where residential
structures are not salvageable. At the same time, it allows for duplex construction throughout the
area.

Land uses proposed for the Union Hill Historic District and their location, are shown on the
Future Land Use map (see map 7). These uses reflect the desires of the residents to maintain the
single family character of the neighborhood, while recognizing that other community needs must be
accommodated. The Land Use Plan calls for refraining from developing any new multi-family units.

1. Residential Single Family and Duplex

The proposed Land Use Plan represents a land use pattern that reflects the community goal
to retain the single family character of the neighborhood while permitting duplex dwelling
units within residential units fronting Venable Street, Carrington Street, and Cedar Street.
2. **Neighborhood and Community Commercial**

During the planning process of the plan area, it was decided that all neighborhood and community commercial uses will remain in the same location. There are a few buildings fronting 25th Street that can serve as opportunity sites for new businesses to come into the community. The Business Association and the Department of Economic Development will collaborate on marketing tools that could be used to attract new business to the 25th Street Corridor CARE area.

3. **Parks and Open Space**

The primary open spaces, like Jefferson Hill Park are owned by the City of Richmond. This park features a band stand with comfort facility, along with a beautiful view of the western part of the City. It is also the site of a buried steam train, which occurred on October 2, 1925. A plaque commemorates this tragic accident and is located at the tunnel’s sealed entrance off 18th Street. In order to reserve this park for use by an organization, an application must be submitted 14 business days prior to the event.

**Recommendations**

- Primary land use in the Union Hill Historic District should be R-7 single family-medium density because it will protect historic character of the neighborhood
- Vacant houses will be bought by local developers with the intentions of using the Historic Tax Credits to rehabilitate.
Housing

**Goal**  Enhance the neighborhood’s diverse socio-economic community.

**Objective:** Increase affordable housing options in Union Hill

**Implementation:** The City’s Neighborhood Preservation Division in the Department of Community Development will work with agencies like Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and developers to produce new homes (owner occupancy) for all income levels. (2-3 years)

**Objective** Educate residents and potential residents on the subject of affordable homeownership opportunities.

**Implementation:** The Union Hill Civic Association should collaborate with Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) to advertise classes for first-time homebuyers, who will be new residents in Union Hill as well as to existing renters who wish to buy their first home in Union Hill. (2 years)

Recommendations

 Homeowners who will be rehabilitating their historic homes can consult A.C.O.R.N.’s new Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Service. A.C.O.R.N.’s Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Service was recently established to assist and guide property owners in historic districts who plan to qualify for credits on their incomes taxes for renovating buildings according to certain historically sensitive requirements. A.C.O.R.N.’s goal in providing assistance with tax credit applications is to encourage more and better rehabilitations, which will help to preserve the historic character of older communities.

**Objective** Promote rent to own programs like the Housing Voucher Homeownership Program that will afford low-income residents to eventually buy their home.
Implementation: RRHA builds homes for all socio-economic groups and often offers the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program to low-income individuals who would like to buy their own home but do not have enough funds for a down-payment or market rate mortgages. This program offers a homeownership option for families that hold a housing choice voucher but are not required to buy a house in the same jurisdiction. RRHA administers the program through partnerships with Neighborhood Housing Services of Richmond, Inc. and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME).

Families must meet these requirements:

- First-time homeowner or has not owned or has not had ownership interest in the past three years.
- Minimum income requirement. The qualified monthly income of the family who will own the home must not be, less than the Federal minimum hourly wage multiplied by 2,000 hours. Except in the case of an elderly household or a family with a disable person, welfare assistance is not counted in determining whether the family meets the RRHA established minimum income requirement of $17,500 annually.
- Employment requirement. Except in the case of elderly and families with a disable person, one or more adults in the family who will own the home is currently employed on a full-time basis and has been continuously employed on a full-time basis for at least one year before commencement of homeownership assistance.
- Additional RRHA eligibility requirements. The family meets any other initial eligibility requirements set by RRHA, such as participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.
- Homeownership counseling. The family must attend and satisfactorily complete RRHA's pre- and post-assistance homeownership counseling.

Objective: Develop a marketing scheme to promote Union Hill as a place for all people.
Implementation: The Union Hill Civic Association should partner with ACORN to market Union Hill as a mixed-income neighborhood. (1-2 years)

Objective: Decrease the number of vacant buildings in Union Hill.

Implementation:

☞ A major problem the City of Richmond is confronted with, is tracking the owners of vacant buildings. Most properties are tied up in heir disputes or taxes are not paid to date (properties are tax delinquent). The Department of Real Estate Services, through City Sells, markets tax delinquent properties ordered for sale by the Court. (Immediate)

☞ A draft report prepared by the National Vacant Properties Campaign suggests that the City of Richmond pursue criminal and civil actions to acquire vacant properties. The appointment of receivers, the assessment of civil penalties, and the issuance of injunctions or court orders, could be a more effective remedy, especially for out-of-town and out-of-state property owners. (6 months)

Implementation: The Union Hill Civic Association will report properties that violate the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code to the Department of Community Development, Permits and Inspections, Property Maintenance Division.

Though residents would like to see vacant properties convert into owner occupied homes, the plan calls for homes to first be stabilized. A stabilizing technique used in a previous plan was code enforcement. Most of Union Hill’s dilapidated properties violate the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. Rigorous enforcement of these codes would create an incentive for property owners to maintain their properties. However, the City of Richmond does not possess the manpower to continuously patrol the neighborhood for code violations. The National Vacant Properties Campaign suggests that the Department of Community Development staff a
Special Vacant Properties Enforcement Unit. The New Vision Civic League (Fairmount Neighborhood) reports code violations to Community Assisted Public Safety (CAPS). Once the Union Hill Civic Association is re-organized all residents should be given the responsibility of reporting properties that violate the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. (1 year)

**Goal**  
Provide alternatives in the housing market to meet the diverse housing needs in Union Hill.

**Objective**  
Encourage affordable homeownership opportunities for all income groups to serve the long-term needs of the neighborhood.

**Implementation:** The City of Richmond’s Block Grant Administration will work with non-profit agencies (Better Housing Coalition, LISC, etc.) and developers to produce new homes for all income levels. The Block Grant Administration and Housing (Department of Community Development) has an annual budget of $266,000. Funds should be allocated for development within 2-3 years so that by the end of the fourth year first-time homebuyers will be able to move into their new homes.

Better Housing Coalition aids first time homebuyers through the application process, helping buyers obtain below market mortgage rates and coordinating available grant and mortgage opportunities. Often, for an investment of less than a $1,500, a qualifying purchaser can become a BHC homeowner.

**City of Richmond Real Estate Tax Abatement Program**

The City of Richmond allows partial exemption from real estate taxes for qualifying rehabilitated and replaced structures. For those properties that qualify, the initial increase in real estate taxes caused by rehabilitation or replacement will be excused for ten years or up to fifteen years depending on qualifying districts. As part of the application process, owners must set
appointments for their structure to be inspected and acquire building permits before renovation or rehabilitation work can begin. Inspectors in this aspect are more like appraisal officers inspecting structures to declare the current value. Owners are given a time frame of 3 years to complete proposed projects. After the project is complete, the inspector returns to the site and sets a new value for the structure. To receive the tax abatement credit the structure’s property value must increase by 20%. Over a 10 year period, owners will be awarded a credit return on their real estate taxes. The tax abatement program can be a positive tool to assist property owners repair the exterior of their home while decreasing blighted conditions in their neighborhood. Property taxes in the immediate area will only increase if the replaced or rehabilitated structure is sold. However, from a developer’s standpoint the abatement can be used as an incentive for new homebuyers, hence increase the property taxes of the surrounding structures.

The Tax Abatement Program also extends opportunities to commercial property owners, decreasing taxes for structures no less than 20 years old. Rehabilitation must increase the structure’s assessed value by a minimum of 40%. The abatement commences at the beginning of the tax quarter immediately following completion of rehabilitation.

**Neighborhoods in Bloom – Financial Incentives**

Neighborhoods in Bloom (NIB) is vital in that it attempts to link people with the tools needed to buy a home. These financial incentives are a mix of loans and programs that are offered in NIB designated areas. NIB only mentions this list as recommended sources of information. All loans are subject to approval.

**Credit Counseling Services** Neighborhood Housing Services of Richmond and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) will council individuals on the basis of getting their credit back on track and preparing them for home ownership.
Down Payment Assistance\textsuperscript{28}: HOME provides down payment and closing cost assistance to low income families who are purchasing their first homes. HOME suggests that many low income families can financially manage a mortgage payment but cannot cover down payment costs. The assistance, which is coupled with rigorous pre-purchasing counseling, is in the form of a loan forgivable over a period of five years, as long as the family remains in the house. HOME offers forgivable loans of up to $10,000 for down payment and closing cost assistance to qualified applicants.

Home Buyer Education Classes: Classes are offered by NHS of Richmond and HOME. Classes are offered to provide individual pre-purchase counseling, as well as general background and information regarding the home buying process.

State and Federal Historic Tax Credits\textsuperscript{29}: The Commonwealth of Virginia offers a 25% investment tax credit to qualified rehabilitation work done to historic properties or properties that contribute to the character of a recognized historic district. This tax credit is available to both owner-occupied (state) houses and income-producing (rental) properties (federal). The investment tax credit available from the federal government is 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses. This can be used in combination with the 25% state investment tax credit. The federal tax credit is only available to income-producing (rental) property.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit\textsuperscript{30}: The Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is sponsored by the U.S. Treasury Department and administered by VHDA in Virginia. The LIHTC program is authorized under Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and it encourages the development of affordable rental housing by providing owners with a federal income tax credit. The program also

\textsuperscript{28} http://www.phonehome.org/programs.htm
\textsuperscript{29} http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/Departments/communitydev/neighborhoods/programs.aspx
\textsuperscript{30} http://www.vhda.com/vhda_com
serves as an incentive for private investors to participate with developers in the construction and rehabilitation of low-income housing.

LIHTC can be awarded to developers of qualified projects. Developers can then sell credits to investors to raise funds for their projects, reducing the amount developers have to borrow. Because the developer’s debt is lower, the tax credit property can charge affordable rent to low-income residents.

Projects eligible for LIHTC must meet the low-income occupancy threshold requirements. A minimum of 20% of the units are required to be rent restricted and occupied by households with incomes at or below 50-60% of the HUD-determined area-median income. These rent and income restrictions must be in place for 30 years or longer. LIHTC requirements also include rehabilitation costs if a developer is acquiring an existing building.
Neighborhood Character & Urban Design

| Goal | Improve the overall appearance of Union Hill. |

**Objective**  Develop an on-going neighborhood clean-up program.

**Implementation**: The newly reorganized Union Hill Civic Association will arrange a committee comprised of established members to pick up lose garbage in their neighborhood. Residents in the neighborhood can take part in such events by picking up lose garbage on their blocks. This program will be fund by donations. The civic association should also partner with the Clean City Commission, in the Department of Public Works, to launch a resident volunteer clean up program. (6-9 months)

**Objective**  Increase the number of street trees on wider streets to establish a feeling of enclosure (see Map 8).

**Implementation**: The Urban Forestry Division of the Department of Public Works will plant and maintain all trees. The division will use the same type of tree that is used throughout Union Hill. (6 months)

**Objective**  Increase the number of human scale street lamps on narrower streets and along the boundaries of the historic district (see Map 8).

**Implementation**: The Civic Association will work with Dominion Power to install appropriate street lamps that will enhance the neighborhood’s historic character. The number of street lamps and locations are indicated on the Urban Design map (map 8). (9 months)
Objective: Maintain sidewalks and facilitate the use of brick when repairing or installing new sidewalks. Sidewalk maintenance is indicated on the Urban Design map (see Map 9).

Implementation: The Department of Public Works is responsible for repairing and installing sidewalks. The Union Hill Civic Association will establish a Maintenance Committee who will survey the neighborhood every 6 months, searching for sidewalks that need to be repaired or installed. This committee will then notify Public Works for maintenance services. (6 months)

Objective: Appropriate gateways create a sense of place when entering the Union Hill Historic District. The locations of gateways are indicated on the Urban Design map (see map 10).

Implementation: The Department of Public Works will collaborate with the Union Hill Civic Association to design and install gateway signage at Jefferson Avenue and Clay Street. (1 year)

By addressing these challenges, the neighborhood will become more attractive to, and improve the quality of life for, residents, both existing and new. In addition, confidence in the neighborhood will increase, community investment will be stimulated, and revitalization will further occur.
Historic Preservation

**Goal**    
Preserve the historical character of Union Hill.

**Objective:**  
Increase the number of rehabilitated structures and infill developments that compliment the historic character of the neighborhood.

**Implementation:**  
The Union Hill Civic Association will work with the Historic Preservation Planners at the City of Richmond, to prepare a study that shows which blocks are in danger of being modernized. The study should be allotted 5 months to complete. Once the study is completed the civic association should contact City Council petitioning a Design Overlay District (see map 11) designation be assigned to specific blocks chosen as a result of the study. (6 months)

In response to the residents' desire to keep the historic character of the neighborhood intact, proposed in map 10, are boundaries for the Union Hill Old & historic District. At the moment, the buildings within these boundaries contribute to Union Hill's unique character. However, these boundaries are not protected against demolition and residents have no control of new infill development. Designating Union Hill as an Old & Historic District will protect the historic charm and cultural identity of the neighborhood while attracting more families to the area.
Commercial Development

**Goals**

- Improve the urban business district.
- Establish a Business Association.

**Objective**

Ensure that new and existing commercial developments are attractive in appearance.

**Implementation:** The Business Association and Department of Economic Development will work together to retain and attract new businesses through the use of incentives. Both maintain an ongoing relationship that encourages new business while enforcing commercial design and façade guidelines. (4-5 years)

**Commercial Area Revitalization (CARE) Program**

The Richmond Commercial Area Program (CARE) is maintained by the Department of Economic Development and currently offers assistance with the following programs:

- **Operation Facelift** - A program that provides a modest, but free storefront makeover to give an initial boost to the area.
- **Storefront Façade and Security Rebate Program** - The City will rebate up to 50%, up to $3,000, for façade renovation and security improvements.
- **Rehabilitation Loan and Rebate Program** - This program provides low interest loans and rebates for building rehabilitation.
- **Business Assistance Program** - Managerial and technical assistance is provided to help business owners operate more successfully.
- **Business Recruitment Program** - A program that recruits needed new businesses to the CARE area.
- **Public Improvements Program** - The City will construct public improvements to enhance the streetscape to support the revitalization of CARE areas.
- **Corridor Signage Program** - $5,000 signage grants to promote the desired new uniqueness of the CARE area using banners and other promotional items.

The businesses along the 25th Street UB Corridor can also continue to take advantage of Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Loans. These loans are for commercial structures only. Loans are available for the amounts of $125,000, $125,001 to $200,000 and above $200,000.
CARE grants are also available. The City gives up to $3,000 each for rehabilitation, façade and security improvements to a property. Grants for sprinklers and water lateral hook-ups up to a maximum of $25,000 are also available.

City of Richmond Real Estate Tax Abatement Program

The City of Richmond allows partial exemption from real estate taxes for qualifying rehabilitated and replaced structures. For those properties that qualify, the initial increase in real estate taxes caused by rehabilitation or replacement will be excused for ten years or up to fifteen years depending on qualifying districts. As part of the application process, owners must set appointments for their structure to be inspected and acquire building permits before renovation or rehabilitation work can begin. Inspectors in this aspect are more like appraisal officers inspecting structures to declare the current value. Owners are given a time frame of 3 years to complete proposed projects. After the project is complete, the inspector returns to the site and sets a new value for the structure. To receive the tax abatement credit the structure's property value must increase by 20%. Over a 10 year period, owners will be awarded a credit return on their real estate taxes. The tax abatement program can be a positive tool to assist property owners repair the exterior of their home while decreasing blighted conditions in their neighborhood. Property taxes in the immediate area will only increase if the replaced or rehabilitated structure is sold. However, from a developer's standpoint the abatement can be used as an incentive for new homebuyers, hence increase the property taxes of the surrounding structures.

The Tax Abatement Program also extends opportunities to commercial property owners, decreasing taxes for structures no less than 20 years old. Rehabilitation must increase the structure's assessed value by a minimum of 40%. The abatement commences at the beginning of the tax quarter immediately following completion of rehabilitation.
Real Property Improvement Tax Credit

Building rehabilitation projects of at least $50,000, which exceed the current assessed value of the property and new construction projects of at least $250,000, are eligible for a refundable state tax credit of 30% of qualified improvements. The maximum credit cannot exceed $125,000, in any five-year period.

In partnership with local banks and the IDA, DED provides lower-interest loans to growing existing small businesses to finance inventory, working capital, equipment and leasehold improvements.

MicroEnterprise Loan Program

In partnership with the United States Small Business Administration, the Department of Economic Development provides loans to eligible businesses like for-profit small business and non-profit child care providers (with lack of accessibility to traditional funding) with valid business licenses. Loans and technical assistance from are available up to $35,000 and competitive interest rates are also available.

The purpose of these loans are: start-up financing, seasonal or permanent working capital, equipment purchases, minor leasehold improvements and other legitimate business purposes. Owners must have 5 to 10% equity investment in the businesses and/or in assets acquired with loan proceeds. Existing businesses must meet personally guaranteed indebtedness. Loans will normally be secured with business assets or other personal assets as necessary.

Community Development Block Grants

Community Development Block Grants help underserved communities develop plans that will address their needs. The Union Hill community would benefit from the following grants: Business District Revitalization- Project Planning Grants (BDRG), Community Needs
Assessment/Economic Assessment Planning Grants for recruitment of commercial anchors and community Organizing Planning Grants for assistance with civic associations.

The Department of Housing and Community Development offers tiered grants for construction projects. Projects must improve the economic vitality of the community. The Community Needs/Economic Assessment Planning Grant is a potential funding source for projects in this plan. Localities can be awarded up to $10,000, available through Community Organizing Planning Grants. In addition, community residents can use the grant to develop strategies for future improvements.

Business District Revitalization Grants require complicated preparation and can take years to carry out. Therefore, the following grants are precursors to the BDRG: the Community Needs Assessment/Economic Assessment Grants are worth up to $10,000 and are used to perform a general needs analysis and determine the community’s needs. A focus is placed on social and physical improvements with resident input.
Public Safety

Goal
Foster the community’s desire to provide a safe and secure neighborhood.

Objective
Develop a lasting relationship with the Union Hill Civic Association and the neighborhood Police Department (Sector 1-11).

Implementation: Police Officers from the 25th Street Police Office will periodically attend civic association meetings. The Richmond Police Department will assign two officers to attend monthly meetings. (9 months)

Implementation: The Richmond Police will encourage the civic association to participate in CAPS (Community Assisted Public Safety). The civic association will publish issues and meeting minutes from the CAPS and civic association meetings in their monthly newsletter. (1 year)

Objective
Increase the number of police officers patrolling Union Hill to expand community-policing initiatives.

Implementation: Crime hot spots have been determined to be along Mosby Street and Venable Street. Police Officers will be assigned to patrol those blocks on foot and bikes during the daytime hours. During the evening hours, police will patrol the neighborhood in their patrol cars. The City of Richmond will offer bonuses for officers willing to participate in the patrols. (1 year)
Regardless of revitalization efforts, Union Hill’s streetscape is still in need of major improvement. For the most part, Union Hill South of Burton Street has improved from 2002. The neighborhood North of Burton Street is still in need of major improvements. A lack of street trees creates an exposed environment which detracts from the neighborhood’s residential character and should be plant within 6 months of this plan. Overhead utility wires create visual clutter in Union Hill’s and detract from the neighborhood’s historic character. The aesthetic and historic character of the neighborhood would be improved by burying utilities. Aesthetic and historic character can be further accentuated on some streets, like Carrington and Burton, where the original cobblestones are still present.

An indicator of a brighter future for Union Hill is the cooperation and dedication of the re-organized Union Hill Civic Association, a civic group in Union Hill, and New Vision Civic Association31 who is more active North of Venable Street, in the Fairmount Neighborhood. This civic association will foster change in the neighborhood by persuading existing residents to remain while attracting new residents of various incomes into the community. Union Hill’s population can be significantly increased pending the influx of mixed-income residents, street maintenance, and the decrease of violent and property crimes.

Union Hill residents have identified, through individual and group interviews, crime as a community problem. According to the Richmond Police Department the numbers of reported crimes has fluctuated over the last six years. However, residents remain concerned about the crime presence on Union Hill’s streets.

31 The civic association is partially within the boundaries of the Union Hill Historic District.
Residents feel that poor maintenance, vacant lots, poor police protection, loitering, and minimal lighting all contribute to the actual and perceived crime problem in Union Hill. A comprehensive public safety plan will help Union Hill residents “take back” their neighborhood. Union Hill’s strength lies with the people. By working together neighbors can build upon the community’s strength and minimize weaknesses. Union Hill will become a safe and secure neighborhood.

Within 6 months, a civic association meeting will be scheduled to discuss useful programs that will reduce the crime rate. Such programs will include police bike and foot patrols and drug awareness programs. Police officers will be asked to discuss how residents could participate in aggressive neighborhood watch patrols. During these patrols, residents will sit on their porches at night when police officers are patrolling the neighborhood at night. During the day residents will also patrol the street on bike or foot with an assigned police officer. There will be at least five police officers patrolling the neighborhood at all times. Residents are not required to patrol the neighborhood after 9:00PM.

Rehabilitation of Historic Structures

In previous plans, rehabilitating structures that where in deteriorate, poor or fair condition was presumably a technique used to slow the loss of Union Hill’s valuable historic resources. The purpose of this plan is to first stabilize the external walls of vacant buildings and then grant ownership to non-profit organizations or private developers. Those who are granted ownership are required to use the historic tax credits when revitalizing buildings in Union Hill.
Infill Development Projects

The plan illustrates the location of vacant lots that ought to be developed. The purpose of infill development in this National Historic District is to fill the spaces of the built-up fabric. Vacant lots that are bought for the sole purpose of infill development must abide by the Infill Development Guidelines for Compatible Design (Appendix A).

Streetscape Improvements

Though the civic association is allocated 6 months to re-organize itself and become recognized by the City of Richmond, the plan calls for residents to be responsible for maintaining the overall appearance of Union Hill. Within 6-9 months the civic association forms a Clean Street Committee. The Clean Street Committee will be responsible for collecting loose trash.

Within 9 months exposed streets will be furnished with historic street lamps and trees. Three – four trees per block will be placed on Venable Street, Carrington Street, and O Street. One historic street lamp will be placed on the corner of each block. As lamps and trees are being installed side walks should be repaired or installed wherever needed.

Church Parking Lots

Many church leaders overlook the important role of landscaping in enhancing the attractiveness and appeal of their church facilities, oftentimes completely omitting this aspect of construction. To create a welcoming environment for passersby and visitors, landscaping should be both beautiful and functional. When developing landscape designs for parking lots, church leaders should also leave areas of land around buildings for lawns and planting.

orbital symbol All Church parking lots will have one ornamental tree on every curb island.
orbital symbol Parking lots will be paved and maintained every other year.
orbital symbol Curbs are the entrance of parking lots will direct the flow of traffic.
Materials for permanent fencing include wood, iron, brick, or stone to enclose parking lots.

All parking lots will be lighted.

**Infill Development**

Union Hill’s strongest feature is its variety of architectural styles. On any given street, several examples of different architectural styles can be found. This mixture of styles creates a rich fabric that is not only aesthetically pleasing but establishes a unique cultural identity for the neighborhood. Greek Revival and Italianate structures are represented the most throughout Union Hill. Other styles include Late Victorian, Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival, and Colonial and Neoclassical Revival. In many cases an architectural style is represented by three or more consecutive structures. On the other hand, individual clusters of Greek Revival, Italianate, Late Victorian, Colonial Revival, Second Empire, and Queen Anne structures can be found in the neighborhood.

Future infill developments should resemble but not mimic these architectural styles. The favored architectural style is the Queen Anne structure. When designing homes for infill developments, architects should respect the character of the neighborhood defined by existing homes. They should also design various styles of the Queen Anne structure while keeping in mind the description of a Queen Anne structure provided by the Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (ACORN). These guidelines are not provided to create a false historical appearance but to allow developers to construct a building that is more contemporary in style while complimenting other structures in the neighborhood.

The following is a description of a Queen Anne structure according to ACORN:

An asymmetrical structural plan employing a variety of shapes, colors, and textures
Roofs are high, with dormers and gables. Towards the end of the period, the round or polygonal turret with tile roof is found.

Gables, often including a large porch gable, are frequent and are given many different treatments. A projecting gable is supported by brackets over a window, a bay window, or a half turret. Turrets may be places diagonally to the building.

Windows may be of any shape, with large and small panes. Pointed arches are not used for windows in this style. Commonly used are large panes, or small panes on the upper sash with a single pane on the lower sash. Colored glass may be used for small panes. Bay windows are frequently used.

Different materials may be found on a single building or row of buildings: Red and white brick, stone blocks, shingles, terra cotta and stucco. Paint color is used for variety and effect. Small-scale carved stone or terra cotta is used, as are decorative brick patterns.

Dormer windows may have pediments adorned with sunflower or sunburst ornaments.

Chimneys are important decorative features, often being paneled or made of patterned brick.

Later in the Queen Anne period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, house plans were simple and more uniform. They have bold shapes and more balanced unity, and the turret appears to bulge out from the house.

In row houses of this later period, Queen Anne is identified by a projecting bay front topped by a gable or pinnacle roof, decorative brick patterns, and colorful glass transoms.

Roof and porch cresting was common from 1850 until 1900 and is found on almost any architectural style, but predominantly on Second Empire and Queen Anne.

Originally, Queen Anne houses used up to three or four paint colors to point up the various architectural patterns.

On porches and balconies, Eastlake style ornamentation is frequently used.

As developers receive ownership of vacant blocks, an appropriate building should be built to compliment but not mimic the other buildings in the neighborhood. For example, image 11 and 12 should be constructed on Carrington Street, Venable Street and 23rd Street. These buildings will compliment other buildings on those blocks because they are similar to existing structures.
Image 13, an Italianate structure should be constructed where at least one other house on the block is similar. According to ACORN, Italianate structures are characterized by their pressed red brick façade and cast iron fronts. Roofs are flat or low pitched, cornices are usually vented and elevations are symmetrical. Window panes became larger in this period. Two panes in each sash are found in houses built before 1860 and larger panes thereafter. A prominent bracketed cornice and a bracketed hood over the front doorway are distinguishing characteristics. For this style, elaborate metal and wooden ornamentation was developed, including turned and scroll-sawn wooden ornaments (gingerbread) and cast iron porches and eaves. Verandas, balconies, and entrance porches, often balustraded, are commonly used. Paint colors were often darker than those used on earlier styles, with trim painted in lighter or darker shades or another hue. Earth tones - stone, grass, wood- were used.

The Queen Anne and Italianate structures will best serve the needs of exiting and future residents. The Queen Anne structure can serve are multi-use structure by providing either single or multi family dwellings. The Italianate structure is limited to single family dwellings and constructed on the southern end of 23rd Street and on Venable Street.

Urban Design

Streetscape Improvements

Though the City of Richmond is responsible for streetscape improvements, the Union Hill Civic Association is responsible for writing to or calling Customer Care to ensure that improvements occur when they are needed. The civic association will work with the City of Richmond to coordinate these improvements with the construction of infill developments and the rehabilitation of historic structures.
Church Parking Lots

In a previous plan, improvements to church parking lots were the responsibility of area churches. In this plan, churches are still responsible for church parking lot improvements. Churches must realize that they play an active role in the revitalization of the neighborhood. ACORN and the Union Hill Civic Association should work with local churches to help them develop a vision for neighborhood revitalization.

ACORN should begin by developing a relationship with Great Hope Baptist Church, a church in the neighborhood with a problem parking lot. ACORN should present this church with examples of what the parking lot should look like with improvements and landscaping. ACORN should take church decision makers on tours of model parking lots around Richmond to show how design elements could improve the imageability of Union Hill. Once the improvements are made to the parking lot at Great Hope Baptist Church, ACORN and the Union Hill Civic Association should then pursue relationships with other area churches, encouraging them to make parking lot improvements. Great Hope Baptist Church should be used as a success story when other churches are approached.
SUMMARY

Union Hill is a neighborhood in transition and is capable of maintaining its historic character as it is converted to a mixed socio-economic community. This vision can be implemented if the Union Hill Civic Association is established and works diligently with non-profit organizations and City of Richmond agencies toward revitalizing the neighborhood. The Union Hill Neighborhood can continue to be revitalized if the area is rezoned to R-7.

According to the statistical analysis, there is no indication of the neighborhood gentrifying anytime in the near future. However, data collected is bias because current U.S. Census data does not reflect the changes that occurred in the past six years. However, if Union Hill is monitored by the civic association using this plan the vision for the neighborhood will prevail.
Appendix A.

Design Overlay District
Guidelines for Compatible Design

This district designates guidelines for infill development and blocks where 50% of the structures contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood.

Developers constructing infill on vacant lots in the design overlay district must abide by these guidelines. Appropriate infill development increases the neighborhood vitality, property values, safety, and livability of the district.

Structure

☞ New construction should be compatible with at least one other structure on the block.

☞ New construction should not mimic architectural styles by creating a false historical appearance.

Style and Building Type

☞ Adopt a compatible style for infill development that upholds the traditional character of older residential buildings in the historic district, yet avoids exact imitation of existing buildings.

☞ New construction should be the same height as buildings on the block in order to maintain the existing human scale of historic residential neighborhoods.

Roof Forms

☞ Comply with the predominant height of adjacent neighborhood buildings. Most residential buildings in the historic district are two-three stories in height, although there is some variation. New construction should not differ in height by more than 15% from the typical buildings on the street.

32 These guidelines are based on the City of Richmond’s Old and Historic Districts Handbook.
Respect the character of the streetscape along which the new building will be located and comply with the predominant width and proportion of existing buildings.

Materials, Color, and Details

Choose materials that are appropriate to the residential character of the historic district, such as:

- Brick
- Stucco
- Stone
- Wood

Use the predominant materials found in the neighborhood, such as brick or painted wood siding, for infill development to promote a sense of consistency.

Make sure the colors of the materials selected are compatible with those of neighboring houses, particularly when choosing brick that is an inherent color.

Incorporate an appropriate amount of detail and decoration in infill development to promote uniformity with existing buildings and avoid blandness. Refer to design motifs of neighboring houses but avoid duplicating features unique to a particular house.

Windows and Doors

Consider the size, proportion, spacing, and rhythm of existing window and door openings of neighboring buildings. Infill development should reflect characteristic window and door patterns.

Respect the relationship of window to wall area of existing buildings. Most residential buildings in the historic district have a higher proportion of solid wall surface than windows.
Do not incorporate large expanses of either glass or solid wall to promote a contemporary or modern appearance.
Appendix B. Images

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Image 5

Image 6

Collapsed roof at 2323 Venable St
Renovated structures at 2225, 2227, & 2229 Venable Street

Senior Apartments on Burton Street.
Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Appendix C. Maps

Map 1

Union Hill: National Historic District
City of Richmond, Virginia

Mapper: Nicole J. Francis Studio 11 Plan Spring 2006

Legend:
- Building zones
- Corridor zones
- Comprehensive land use zones
- 0.2 Miles

Union Hill: A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Union Hill: National Historic District
City of Richmond, Virginia

Mapper: Nicole J. Francis
Studio II Plan
Spring 2006
Union Hill: National Historic District
City of Richmond, Virginia

Mapper: Nicole J. Francis
Studio II Plan
Spring 2006
Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Concentration of Criminal Activities

Legend
- Least (1-9 reports)
- Moderate (10-19 reports)
- Most (40 or more reports)
- Union Hill Historic District
- Single & Two Family Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Community Commercial
- Parks & Open Space

Map 5

Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Map 6 Buildings within the boundaries of the overlay district contribute to the Historical Character of Union Hill.
Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Urban Design

Map 8

Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
Sidewalk Installation/Repair

Sidewalk installation/repair completed by the City of Richmond

Install Sidewalk
Repair Sidewalk

Mapper:
Nicole J. Francis Studio II
Spring 2006

Map 9
Union Hill:  
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan  
Preserving the Present for the Future
Proposed Design Overlay District
Union Hill Old & Historic District

Legend
- Design Overlay District
- Union Hill Historic District
- Single & Two Family Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Community Commercial
- Parks & Open Space

Map 11

Union Hill:
A Land Use & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
Preserving the Present for the Future
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