Fairmount Historic District
Neighborhood Preservation Plan

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Planning Studio II/URSP 762

Studio Panel

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Nothing useless is, or low;
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.

Excerpt from "The Builders"
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Acknowledgements

The development of this plan would not have been possible without the generous support of a number of individuals whom I would like to wholeheartedly thank:

Panel members Kim Chen, Morton Gulak, and Tyler Potterfield, for their valuable input and guidance throughout the duration of this project; Mark Bridgman and John Taylor, City of Richmond staff, for assisting with data accession; Terry Necciai, whose National Register Nomination for Fairmount developed my initial interest in the neighborhood; and John Murden, for allowing the use of several photographs from the Church Hill People’s News website.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unstinting support and encouragement at all times.
# Table of Contents

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. 2  
Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 5  
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 6  

**Part I: Assessment of Existing Conditions and Preservation Potential**  
  History .......................................................................................................................... 10  
  Related Plans ................................................................................................................. 12  
  Public Safety .................................................................................................................. 14  
  Land Use and Zoning .................................................................................................... 15  
  Demographics .............................................................................................................. 21  
  Circulation ..................................................................................................................... 24  
  Housing and Ownership Trends ................................................................................... 26  
  Architectural Styles ..................................................................................................... 32  
  Design, Streetscape, and Infrastructure ...................................................................... 36  
  Surrounding Influences ............................................................................................... 39  
  Assets and Liabilities .................................................................................................... 41  

**Part II: Plan for the Revitalization and Preservation of the Fairmount Historic District**  
  Plan Description .......................................................................................................... 44  
  Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Strategies ...................................................... 45  
  Implementation Timeline .............................................................................................. 59  

**Works Consulted** ..................................................................................................... 61  

**Appendixes**  
  Appendix A .................................................................................................................. 63  
  Appendix B ................................................................................................................... 64
List of Figures

List of Figures*
Figure 1 – Oldest Building in the District
Figure 2 – Better Housing Coalition Flag
Figure 3 – Potential Site for Corner Commercial Activity
Figure 4 – Fairmount Avenue
Figure 5 – Target Enforcement Zone Signage
Figure 6 – Bus Stop Bench and Trash Can
Figure 7 - Fire on Fairmount Avenue*
Figure 8 – Deteriorated Vacant Buildings Detract From Newly Renovated Buildings
Figure 9 – Deteriorated Vacant Building
Figure 10 – Italianate Row Houses
Figure 11 – Queen Anne Style
Figure 12 – Bungalows
Figure 13 – Fairmount School
Figure 14 – Unkempt Vacant Lots
Figure 15 – Bright Orange House
Figure 16 – View of City Hall
Figure 17 – No Sidewalks
Figure 18 – No Trespassing Sign
Figure 19 – Mosby Court Housing
Figure 20 – Historic St. John’s Church
Figure 21 – Infill Development
Figure 22 – Severely Deteriorated Vacant Buildings
Figure 23 – Old and Historic Districts Handbook
Figure 24 – Vacant Lots
Figure 25 – Deteriorated Vacant Building
Figure 26 - Illegal Dumping Discovered During Sector Walk-Throughs*
Figure 27 – Sidewalk
Figure 28 - Graffiti

List of Tables
Table 1 – Crime Incidents
Table 2 – Racial Composition
Table 3 – Poverty Levels
Table 4 – Building Conditions Rating System
Table 5 – Building Conditions Survey Results
Table 6 – Timeline for Implementation

* Figures marked with an asterisk indicate a photo taken from the Church Hill People’s News website, used with the express permission of John Murden.
List of Maps
Map 1 – Location Reference
Map 2 – Study Area
Map 3 – Neighborhoods in Bloom
Map 4 – Master Plan Land Use
Map 5 – Existing Zoning
Map 6 – Census Tracts
Map 7 – GRTC Bus Stops
Map 8 – Vacant Buildings
Map 9 – Buildings Classified as “Poor” or “Failing” Condition
Map 10 – Historic Resources
Executive Summary

The Fairmount Historic District is located in the East End of Richmond, bounded approximately by North 20th Street to the west, North 24th Street to the east, Q Street to the south, and Y Street to the north. Originally established as an independent town in 1890, Fairmount was annexed by the City of Richmond in 1906. The area grew steadily in the early decades of the twentieth century, but gradually fell into a state of decline that has continued to the present day.

Like many East End neighborhoods, Fairmount has an astonishing collection of historic residential architecture. More than half of the buildings are estimated to have been constructed prior to 1900, and the majority of the remaining properties were built between 1915 and 1925. These historic homes should be a source of pride for the community. Instead, many are significantly deteriorated, creating an atmosphere of neglect that contributes to the blight of the neighborhood. A number of these properties are experiencing structural failure, and are in danger of being lost forever. Preservationists concerned about the neighborhood’s historic resources worked to establish Fairmount as a National Register Historic District in 2008. It is the thirty-fifth National Register Historic District in Richmond.

Historic preservation efforts are extremely challenging in a neighborhood such as Fairmount. Most households in the area have incomes well below the median household income for the Richmond region, and are unable to afford the rehabilitation of a historic home, which is a costly venture. Another problem the community faces is the very real threat of gentrification, which has already occurred in many older communities in the city. Revitalization efforts can oftentimes end up pricing low-income families out of their own neighborhoods, which is particularly harmful when there are shortages of affordable housing in the area.

The success of preservation efforts in Fairmount relies heavily on citizen participation. The plan calls for civic associations and community leaders to work alongside city agencies, non-profit organizations, and community development corporations to educate neighborhood residents about preservation practices, homeownership, and ways to fund rehabilitation projects. This knowledge will empower residents to improve their properties and resist displacement.

The preservation of the community’s historic resources goes beyond the rehabilitation of individual buildings. Historic architecture needs to be seen and appreciated by the people of the city, which means that the neighborhood needs to be safe, clean, and inviting. Other plan recommendations include ways with which to deal with litter and graffiti, reducing the number of vacant buildings in the neighborhood, and creating an identity for the Fairmount community through signage and infrastructure improvements.
Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to promote and guide the preservation of historic buildings within the Fairmount Historic District without displacing the low-income residents currently residing in the neighborhood. This plan fulfills the requirements for URSP 762, a mandatory course in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Fairmount is one of many neighborhoods located in Richmond’s East End. The study area for this plan only includes the portion of the neighborhood listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. The area is bounded approximately by North 20th Street to the west, North 24th Street to the east, Q Street to the south, and Y Street to the north. (See Location Reference and Study Area maps on the following pages.)
PART I: EXISTING CONDITIONS
History

Fairmount was one of the numerous new subdivisions in Richmond in the 1890s that developed in anticipation of the streetcar system developed by Frank Sprague in the late 1880s. Unlike the streetcar suburbs to the north of the city, the Fairmount Land Company developed the area with much less fanfare. The modest-sized lots offered for sale were more conducive to simpler designs, whereas the large lot sizes of developments such as Barton Heights and Ginter Park in the north were well-suited to the construction of grand, sprawling residences.

The earliest surviving residence in the neighborhood dates back to the 1860s (see figure 1), but most of the houses in the area were constructed between 1890 and 1925. As much as sixty percent of the housing still standing in the neighborhood today was constructed in the initial wave of development in the 1890s. Most of the residences constructed at this time were two-story Italianate row houses. After the development was incorporated as an independent town by the Virginia State Legislature in 1902, it became apparent that the leaders of the municipality welcomed annexation by the City of Richmond. Sewer lines were laid out according to the city’s system, and in 1905 town leaders officially requested annexation by the city.

Newspaper accounts in the Richmond Times-Dispatch chronicled the annexation debate. The majority of town leaders and residents favored annexation. One resident testified that the town needed fire protection since many of the buildings were frame construction, situated close together. Richmond residents were less eager to annex the territory, fearing that it would raise taxes. Their arguments ultimately failed, and the Town of Fairmount was incorporated into the city in 1906.

A second wave of development occurred in Fairmount between 1915 and 1925, and many of the neighborhood’s bungalows were constructed at this time. At the time of annexation in 1906, all but one family of the 1,500 residents of the town were African American, but the 1934 Master Plan for Richmond indicates that the portion of the neighborhood south of Fairmount Avenue was mostly African American, while the area north of Fairmount Avenue was predominantly white.

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As the city experienced “white flight” during the middle of the 20th century, upper- and middle-class homeowners left Richmond. Fairmount gradually evolved into a low-income neighborhood, and the housing stock began to suffer from neglect and inappropriate rehabilitation. A number of historic buildings fell into extremely poor condition and had to be demolished, leaving numerous empty lots in their wake. The City of Richmond launched its successful Neighborhoods in Bloom program in 2000, which supported the revitalization of several blighted areas in the city. Church Hill was one of these six neighborhoods, and included much of the Fairmount area. While this program has spurred significant revitalization efforts, Fairmount still suffers from a significant amount of neglect, and many of the historic resources in the neighborhood are in danger of being lost forever.
Related Plans and Initiatives

The Fairmount neighborhood has been the subject of or has been included in two recent plans: the 1996 *Fairmount Neighborhood Plan* and the *City of Richmond’s Master Plan, 2010-2020*. These two plans have provided guidance for the development of the area. Additionally, much of Fairmount has been included in the City of Richmond’s Neighborhoods in Bloom program.

**Fairmount Neighborhood Plan, 1996**
Prepared by Virginia Commonwealth University’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning for the Housing and Community Development Covenant Partnership, the plan established a number of priorities for the physical development and revitalization of the Fairmount neighborhood. Special emphasis was placed on improving the 22nd Street corridor, infill construction, and the need for gateways into the community.

**Richmond Master Plan: 2010-2020**
The Master Plan does not specifically address the Fairmount neighborhood, but includes it in the discussion of the East End. The plan addresses many of the problems that have plagued the area, including the high number of vacant buildings, land use conflicts between residential and non-residential uses, fragile, low-income neighborhoods, and criminal activities. The plan notes the historic nature of many East End neighborhoods, and underscores the importance of preservation efforts and design controls. The plan also addresses the need for low-intensity corner commercial activity in the area.

**Neighborhoods in Bloom**
The Neighborhoods in Bloom (NiB) initiative began in 1999, when city officials decided to target at-risk communities with concentrated revitalization efforts. The City of Richmond chose six neighborhoods with high poverty rates, numerous vacant buildings, significant criminal activity, and other serious problems, and devoted approximately eighty percent of city-wide Community Development Block Grants and HOME funding for these areas. The southeast corner of Fairmount is included in the Church Hill Central NiB area (see map), one of the five areas currently targeted by the program (see Neighborhoods in Bloom map).

Public and nonprofit organizations receive funding to rehabilitate dilapidated buildings and construct new residences in NiB communities (see figure 2). Police patrols are increased, code enforcement is stepped up, and residents receive homeownership counseling.

Figure 2 Magnolia flags denote houses built or restored by the Better Housing Coalition as a part of the Neighborhoods in Bloom initiative.
and help with down payments. Between July of 1999 and July of 2005, 79 units of housing were rehabilitated, repaired, or newly constructed in the Church Hill Central area. This in turn has spurred private investment along blocks that have experienced revitalization efforts in these neighborhoods.

Though these plans and programs have provided a vision for the future in the neighborhood, and have already improved the quality of life in the area, Fairmount is still a fragile area in need of additional planning efforts and city initiatives. Decaying buildings, poor infrastructure, and a lack of community identity are still plaguing an area that has been the focus of city and community efforts for years.

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3 John Accordino, George Galster, Peter Tatian, "The Impacts of Targeted Public and Nonprofit Investment on Neighborhood Development." 2005, p. 44.
Land Use and Zoning

Land Use
The Richmond Master Plan designates seven different land uses in the study area (see land use map on page 16). Much of the area is designated as Single-Family Low or Medium Density, which relates well to the primarily residential character of the neighborhood. Public and Open Space and Institutional uses are noted in and around the study area, as are Community and Neighborhood Commercial uses. The commercial designation is located solely along Fairmount Avenue, which is the main east-west thoroughfare through the neighborhood. While this is an excellent spot for commercial activity, the master plan fails to designate a number of corner lots that could be ideal for small-scale commercial uses if the neighborhood were economically viable. Several locations indicated in the land use plan as Single-Family Medium Density appear to have historically been used for as corner stores, and could easily be used commercial activity once again if the neighborhood were able to support it (see figure 3).
Master Plan Land Use

Legend

- Community Commercial
- Institutional
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Public & Open Space
- Single-Family (Low Density)
- Single-Family (Medium Density)
Zoning
There are three different zoning classifications in the study area which reflect the primarily residential character of the neighborhood (see map on page 17).

- **R-5**: The Single Family Residential District allows for single family detached residences, schools, churches, libraries, museums, parks, recreational facilities, and accessory buildings that are subordinate to the primary building.

- **R-6**: The Single Family Attached Residential District is similar in many ways to the R-5 classification, but allows for attached residences, two-family detached dwellings and two-family attached dwellings that were in existence before the zoning regulation was enacted.

- **B-2**: The Community Business District permits a number of moderate commercial activities, including art galleries, restaurants, banks, auto-service centers, print shops, funeral homes, day cares, hospitals, and grocery stores, among other uses. New construction of more than 50,000 square feet of retail space, or businesses that would use a drive-through, require the submittal for a plan of development in this zone.

The present zoning is appropriate for the neighborhood as it stands today. When revitalization efforts occur, the community could support small-scale commercial development along Fairmount Avenue and corner commercial locations throughout the neighborhood (see figure 4). Fairmount Avenue is ideally located between Mosby Street and 25th Street, a highly visible, well-traveled corridor that could be appropriate for increased commercial activity.
Crime

The study area is located in Police Precinct 1, which includes most of the East End as well as Manchester and Blackwell, just south of the James River. Perceived to be one of the most dangerous parts of the city, Precinct 1 only had the highest rates of criminal activity for one of nine categories in 2007. The vice category includes drug-related incidents. Precinct 1 actually ranked the lowest in terms of the number of sex offenses, robberies, and burglaries for the entire city. The area ranked third out of four in assault, theft, and vehicle theft. While this might seem positive, sixteen homicides occurred in the area last year, which is roughly one-third of all the murders committed in the city in 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Fairmount Crime Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Richmond Police Department Incident Reporting, 2006-2007

Though a significant amount of criminal activity takes place in the Fairmount neighborhood, crime has decreased in a number of categories since 2000, and has dropped dramatically since 2006 (see Table 1). Four homicides were committed in 2006, while only one took place in 2007. Thirty-one fewer assaults occurred in the neighborhood since 2006, and the number of burglaries decreased from 26 in 2006 to 11 in 2007.

Within the last several months, the Richmond Police Department posted signs in and around the Fairmount neighborhood designating the area as a Target Enforcement Zone (see figure 5). Previously, the presence of prostitutes was a serious problem in the neighborhood. This designation restricts convicted prostitutes from entering the neighborhood, and any violation will result in a class one misdemeanor that carries penalties of up to twelve months in jail and/or a $2,500 dollar fine. As this initiative has only recently begun, it is impossible to tell whether or not the Target Enforcement Zone has actually decreased prostitution in the Fairmount area.

Figure 5: One of the Target Enforcement Signs posted throughout the neighborhood.
Demographics

The study area falls primarily within two census tracts, both of whose boundaries remained the same from 1990 to 2000. The portion of Fairmount just east of 22nd Street lies within tract 203, while land west of 22nd is located in census tract 204 (see map on page 21). Tract 204 includes the Mosby Court Public Housing Project, which is one of the reasons data for the tracts varies dramatically in some cases.

Population
The population for the Fairmount area has slowly grown in the years between 1990 and 2000. The total population for both census tracts increased from 7,324 individuals to 7,409, an increase of 85 persons. Fairmount is predominantly minority, and about 97 percent of all residents in the neighborhood are African American (see table 2). This percentage has dropped slightly since 1990. Conversely, the white population has increased by 29 individuals.

| Table 2: Racial Makeup of Fairmount and the Surrounding Neighborhoods |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
|                       | 1990 | % Total Population | 2000 | % Total Population |
| African American      | 7,124 | 97.26%         | 7122 | 96.12%         |
| White                 | 175 | 2.3%            | 204 | 2.75%            |
| Other                 | 25 | 0.33%           | 83 | 1.13%           |


Household Type
A significant percentage of households in census tracts 203 and 204 can be considered “at-risk.” Unmarried female-headed households with children under the age of eighteen make up just over one quarter of the households in the area. There are even more households comprised of individuals over the age of sixty-five, a population which can be extremely vulnerable due to increasing levels of disability, shifts in income, and housing maintenance problems. These two groups alone account for more than 55 percent of households in the area, and historically have difficulties finding adequate, affordable housing.

Educational Attainment
The increasingly competitive job market necessitates the need for an educated working class, but educational attainment levels in the Fairmount area are distressingly low. In 1990, less than half of the population age 25 and over had graduated from high school. Education levels increased slightly over the next ten years, so that a little over half of the population had
received their high school diploma or its equivalent. Less than five percent of the population age 25 and up have received any sort of college education
**Income and Poverty Status**

The low education levels correspond to low incomes. The median family income in census tract 203 in 2000 was $30,962, while the median family income in census tract 204 was dramatically lower at $15,747. More than 500 families in the Fairmount area lived below the poverty level in 2000, which is approximately 36 percent of the total number of households (see table 3). Additionally, 2,403 individuals lived below the poverty level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tract 203</th>
<th>Tract 204</th>
<th>Entire City of Richmond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Family Income</strong></td>
<td>$30,962</td>
<td>$15,747</td>
<td>$38,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent of Total Families Living in Poverty</strong></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** US Census 2000 Data, SF 3

These individuals have a hard enough time trying to provide themselves with basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. Poverty-stricken areas such as Fairmount make the argument for historic preservation difficult. When people are struggling just to feed themselves and pay the rent, it is difficult to ask them to make appropriate home rehabilitation a priority.
Circulation
Developers of the Town of Fairmount generally adhered to the gridded street system established by the city of Richmond that numbered roads running north and south and alphabetized streets going east and west. The primary thoroughfare through the study area is Fairmount Avenue, which runs east/west along the southern portion of the neighborhood and leads directly to the Dollar General store and laundry mat at Fairmount and 25th Street. Fairmount Avenue is a busy street, and the Virginia Department of Transportation estimates approximately 8,000 vehicles travel the road each day. Several flashing traffic lights encourage drivers to proceed cautiously, though cars in the area tend to drive rather rapidly along this route. Cars entering Fairmount from side streets often have limited visibility, making it difficult to proceed into the intersection safely. Numerous stop signs throughout the rest of the neighborhood slows traffic to the 25 miles-per-hour speed limit posted.

Census records indicate that approximately half of neighborhood residents commuting to work use their own vehicles, but a little more than a quarter of commuters rely on public transportation to get to their jobs. There are twelve bus stops in the study area, all of which are located along 22nd Street (see map). Numerous additional stops are located just outside of the neighborhood, along Mosby, Venable, and 25th Streets. The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) runs the Robinson/Fairmount line in the neighborhood at regular intervals throughout the day (see map on page 24). Other lines, including the Riverview/Jefferson and the Seven Pines routes provide access to a number of different areas in the city. Most of the bus stop locations have no seating or shelter from the weather, making for an uncomfortable wait, though there is one bench located along 22nd Street for the benefit of passengers (see figure 6).

Figure 6: One of the few bus stops in the neighborhood with a place to sit.

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Housing and Ownership Trends
Recent Neighborhoods in Bloom funding and the efforts by non-profit organizations have improved the amount of decent affordable housing in the Fairmount. These efforts have encouraged homeownership in the neighborhood, and have spurred private investors to fix up a number of properties surrounding new infill construction. In spite of these initiatives, much of the housing stock in Fairmount is significantly deteriorated, and a number of decaying vacant buildings are left neglected. These vacant buildings often deteriorate to the point where public safety necessitates their demolition. Oftentimes these blighted buildings are the sites of fires or illicit activity, which further contribute to the unstable nature of the neighborhood (see figure 7). The numerous vacant lots throughout the neighborhoods generally indicate where an older building has been demolished due to substantial neglect. These empty lots oftentimes fill up with trash and weeds, and act disruptive to the sense of enclosure along the street.

There are approximately 714 buildings in the neighborhood, including accessory buildings such as sheds and garages.\(^5\) City of Richmond assessment data indicates that there are 51 property owners who do not live in the Richmond-Metropolitan area. Of these, 21 live in Virginia, while 31 owners live out-of-state. Four out-of-state banks own the title to properties in the area, possibly indicating recent foreclosures. Absentee landlords tend to have less interest in the upkeep of their property, and subsequently, their property tends to be more neglected than owner-occupied housing.

The City of Richmond has recently put together a vacant buildings taskforce that monitors the number of vacant buildings in each section of the city, tracks down missing owners, and increases code enforcement on vacant, neglected properties. Many times elderly owners will pass away without designating an heir, and city officials have to go through the lengthy process of tracking down family members before the property is allowed to go up for auction. Other vacant buildings are owned by individuals who abandoned the property after being unable to pay the property taxes on it. These ownerless homes cause considerable concern to people who live in the surrounding area and are unable to fix the blight (see figure 8).

According to census data from 2000, approximately 16 percent of the housing stock in Fairmount and the surrounding neighborhoods is classified as vacant. Data collected by the Department of Community Development indicates there are 83 vacant buildings in the district, which represents about 5.3% of the vacant buildings for the entire city (see map on page 27).⁶ Two back-to-back summer survey efforts by the Planning and Preservation division of the City’s Department of Community Development identified 19 vacant historic buildings in Fairmount, seven of which were in significant danger of collapsing or being demolished.

Census data for tracts 203 and 204 lists that there were 2,537 occupied housing units in the year 2000. Only about 30 percent of those properties were owner-occupied. Renters lived in the other seventy percent, which is an indicator of an overall highly transient population.

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⁶ Vacant Buildings Taskforce Data, April 2008.
Vacant Buildings

Legend

- Vacant Building

1 inch equals 465 feet
Building Conditions

A windshield survey of the primary residential, commercial, or institutional buildings in the Fairmount Historic District was conducted in April of 2008. (Accessory buildings such as sheds or garages were not included in the survey.) Buildings were classified as being in very good, good, fair, poor, or in a state of collapse according to the specifications in table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Building has no visible maintenance problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Building has one or two minor problems that are easily addressed, but the building is structurally sound. Problems could include a broken pane of glass, a dangling shutter, or peeling paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Building has a number of moderate maintenance problems, which could include broken gutters, loose shingles, or pieces of missing siding among other things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Building has significant structural problems. Walls could be bowing, foundations cracked, chimneys leaning, or porch supports failing. Buildings rated poor can still be saved if structural problems are addressed in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing</td>
<td>Building is in a state of collapse and is unfit for habitation. It poses as a safety threat to the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A quick drive through the neighborhood makes one think that the area is significantly deteriorated, but a careful inventory of the buildings reveals that most of the architecture can be classified as either in good or very good condition (see chart 1). There are a little over 100 buildings in very good conditions, primarily due to infill development within recent years, and over 100 buildings in good condition. Approximately two-thirds of the buildings rated as very good are located along Fairmount Avenue or south of it. This portion of Fairmount is designated as a part of the Neighborhoods in Bloom.

The buildings that are in fair, poor, or failing condition are the ones that give the neighborhood its blighted appearance. There are 40 buildings classified as poor, and these are in need of rehabilitation as soon as possible. There are only seven (7) buildings in the neighborhood in a state of complete collapse, and these are located along North 22nd Street, Fairmount Avenue, and North 20th Street adjacent to the
Mosby Court Housing Project.

The 47 buildings categorized as poor or failing are all historic, and most are located along the busiest thoroughfares through the neighborhood (see map on page 30). Though there are fewer significantly deteriorated buildings in the neighborhood, because they are so visible to travelers, they create a strong visual presence, when in fact it does not capture the true inventory of buildings in the area (see figure 9). Preservation efforts are needed in Fairmount immediately, or many of these buildings will be demolished or else fall down on their own. They not only pose a threat to the historic character of the neighborhood, but they also pose a safety hazard to the community.

Figure 9: Many severely deteriorated buildings are located along highly traveled routes in the neighborhood.
Location of Buildings Classified as Poor or Failing

Legend
- Poor Condition
- Failing Condition

1 inch equals 539 boq
**Architectural Styles**

The 2007 survey documenting the historic architecture for the Fairmount National Register Nomination identified 714 buildings, 542 of which were classified as resources contributing to the historic significance of the neighborhood, and 172 were classified as non-contributing (see map on page 32). Many of the non-contributing buildings are new infill development below Fairmount Avenue, which is the portion of the neighborhood included as a NiB community. The total number of buildings includes primary residences, commercial properties, and a number of outbuildings. The surveyors identified a variety of building forms and architectural styles, all of which create a unique identity for the Fairmount neighborhood. Listed below are brief descriptions of some of the more predominant architectural styles in the area.

**Italianate**

The two-story Italianate town house is the most prolific design in the Fairmount Historic District. Nearly 60 percent of the housing stock in the neighborhood is classified as an Italianate town house (see figure 10). The majority of these are detached units occupying most of their lot. The architecture is more austere in this neighborhood as opposed to more ornate examples throughout the rest of Richmond. The building form is usually three bay with a shed roof. The Italianate buildings usually have sawn brackets at the cornice.

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7 Necciai, 2.
Queen Anne
Queen Anne is another style that was used throughout Fairmount. Queen Anne buildings in the neighborhood often include projecting bays (see figure 11). Many have false mansard roofs, and in the examples where the roof remains uncompromised, playful designs are oftentimes evident in the slate or wood shingles. The 2007 architectural survey of the neighborhood identified 40 Queen Anne-style residences.

Craftsman/Bungalow
The third architectural style common to the neighborhood is the Craftsman Bungalow (see figure 12). These small residences were constructed during the second wave of development in the neighborhood, and the majority of these buildings date between 1915 and 1925. Like the Queen Anne and Italianate style houses, the bungalows are generally grouped together along particular blocks. These one- to one-and-one-half story residences generally have front-gable roofs, creating a rather jagged appearance against the skyline that contrasts sharply with the flat, continuous “wall” created by the shed roofs of the Italianate town houses.

Figure 11: A Queen Anne building in need of some rehabilitation.

Figure 12: The introduction of bungalows into the neighborhood around 1915 was a dramatic change from the previous decades of construction.
Monumental-Scale Architecture
There are several examples of large-scale, grand architecture in the neighborhood. These buildings dwarf the residential housing stock throughout the rest of neighborhood, and serve as landmarks and visual anchors. The most noticeable of these buildings is the old Fairmount School, the only building within the district that has the honor of being individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see figure 13). The school, built at the corner of 21st and T Streets around 1895, was designed according to the Second Empire style, and is the largest building in the district. It is presently being adaptively reused as apartments.

Figure 13: The Fairmount School is one of the most recognizable landmarks in the neighborhood.
Design, Streetscape, and Infrastructure

Design
Urban design plays a significant role in establishing the identity of a community. Good design makes people feel welcome, is aesthetically pleasing, and establishes a positive identity for the locality. Poor design can make people feel unwelcome and afraid. The Fairmount neighborhood has a few design strengths, but is largely lacking in a number of crucial elements.

The housing in the neighborhood is mostly harmonious. Single-family town houses clustered along blocks provides a sense of enclosure along many streets. The same building form is generally repeated over and over again, but the varying architectural details keep the street from being too repetitious. Unfortunately, the demolition of a number of dilapidated homes has created numerous vacant lots which interrupt the wall of architecture on many blocks. These lots are usually overgrown and littered with refuse, making the empty lot even more unfriendly to the area (see figure 14).

Inappropriate rehabilitation of a number of historic properties has also disrupted the harmony of the Fairmount area. Bricktex siding covers a number of older frame houses, and asphalt shingles have replaced a number of slate roofs. Several homeowners have chosen to paint their buildings extremely bright colors that are not compatible with the more muted tones throughout the rest of the neighborhood (see figure 15).

Figure 14: Unkempt vacant lots disrupt the rhythm of the architecture in Fairmount.

Figure 15: This bright orange house easily sticks out from the rest of the neighborhood.
The enclosure provided by the residential architecture in the area does draw one’s eye down the sight line of the street, but there are no deliberate vistas in the area. The views are generally lackluster, though there are a few places where one can catch a glimpse of some of the taller buildings near the city center (see figure 16).

**Streetscape and Infrastructure**
The streetscape throughout Fairmount is one of the neighborhoods biggest detractors. A community’s sidewalks should encourage strolling, but Fairmount’s streets are anything but inviting. Many sections of the neighborhood do not have any sidewalks, and people have worn their own dirt paths along the edge of the curb (see figure 17). The street trees do provide a nice canopy, but a number of them are in need to pruning. The City has recently undertaken the installation of new sidewalks along portions of Q Street, but the rest of the neighborhood is in need of some basic infrastructure improvements as well. The short retaining walls in many yards are also in very poor condition, and create an unsafe environment.

A number of lots are fronted with small fences that are generally either wooden picket or chain link. These fences are fairly short, but provide passersby with a subtle reminder to stay out of the yard. A few of these fences are quite attractive, but many are falling down, contributing to the deteriorated feel to the neighborhood.

Numerous signs throughout the area also contribute to the general feeling of unwelcome. Safety concerns have prompted property owners to post their own warnings about trespassing (see figure 18). While these signs might have a slight influence on the behavior of area criminals, they also create a hostile, unfriendly environment. The community could really use some positive signage to promote a sense of place. Fairmount lacks any sort of gateway or identifying feature that indicates one is entering or leaving the neighborhood, and the establishment of a shared community identity can be one of the factors that plays a role in helping a blighted community.
The neighborhood also lacks a considerable amount of street furniture, particularly trash cans. Trash receptacles are few and far between (one was noted at a bus stop on 22nd Street), and the lack of waste baskets is probably one of the reasons there is so much garbage littering the street. This trash gets caught in fences, is blown along curbs, and contributes to the neglected, run-down feeling of the neighborhood. Graffiti tags on houses, fences, and retaining walls add to the sense of hostility throughout the study area. One does not want to linger in Fairmount, even though cobblestone streets, gnarly old trees, and unique architecture good create a unifying, historic identity for the neighborhood.

Figure 18: No Trespassing signs are numerous in the neighborhood.
Surrounding Influences

Public Housing
The proximity of the Mosby Court and Whitcomb Court public housing projects is one of the most significant surrounding influences on the Fairmount neighborhood. Crime rates tend to be higher around housing project complexes, though the vast majority of crimes committed in and around public housing are committed by non-residents. The stigma attached to housing projects is strong, and it is evident in the way the Fairmount area has lagged behind similar neighborhoods undergoing revitalization efforts. Some of the most deteriorated housing stock within the Fairmount Historic District abuts the Mosby Court Housing Project.

Mosby Court contains 458 units of public housing (see figure 19). Approximately 93 percent of all households living in Mosby are headed by unmarried females. The average yearly income for households living in this housing project is $11,503 (the highest average income of all the other projects throughout the city), and the average resident lives in Mosby almost nine years. Over 900 children make up a large portion of the population of this housing project.

Whitcomb Court contains 447 units of public housing. Approximately 94 percent of all households living in Whitcomb Court are headed by unmarried females. The average yearly income for households living in this housing project is $10,090, and the average resident lives in Whitcomb approximately eight-and-one-half years. Whitcomb’s nearly 700 children make up a large portion of the population of this housing project.

Surrounding Neighborhoods
In addition to public housing, Fairmount is located near a number of East End neighborhoods, including Brauers, Union Hill, and Church Hill North. Union Hill and Church Hill North are both districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which has made them eligible for tax credits. This has been an impetus for revitalization efforts and the preservation of many historic properties, but has increasingly gentrified much of the East End and eliminated a portion of its supply of affordable housing. The Brauers neighborhood is eligible for listing on the National Register, but has yet to be nominated.

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Nearby Historic Sites
The city of Richmond has one of largest and richest collections of historic resources in the United States. Surrounded by historic neighborhoods, Fairmount is in close proximity to several significant historic sites which attract numerous visitors each year. St. John’s Church (see figure 20), Chimborazo Civil War Hospital (now a National Park Service Visitor Center), and the Oakwood and Evergreen cemeteries are all within a few minutes’ drive from Fairmount.

Schools
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School is just a couple of blocks west of Fairmount. During the 2005-2006 school year, 797 students were enrolled, over 99 percent of whom were African America. More than 93 percent of the student body qualified for a free lunch that year, which demonstrates the severe rate of poverty in the area.
Assets and Liabilities

The previous discussion about the existing conditions within the Fairmount Historic District reveal both the community’s numerous assets upon which it can strengthen itself, and its many liabilities, which can make neighborhood revitalization a daunting endeavor. These assets and liabilities will serve as the basis for the plan outlined in Part II of this document.

Assets

- Fairmount’s rich and varied history is unique to Richmond, and should be a source of pride among residents.
- Fairmount has recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places, making the neighborhood eligible for state and federal historic tax credits.
- The substantial number of largely intact, architecturally significant homes helps to create an identity for the neighborhood.
- The study area has not yet undergone gentrification, which makes it easier to develop affordable housing opportunities within the community.
- Numerous vacant lots provide opportunities for infill development (see figure 21).
- Southern Fairmount is included in Church Hill Central, a Neighborhoods in Bloom community that receives special funding for revitalization efforts.
- Numerous religious institutions in the area provide a network of social support.
- Two active community groups serve to unite residents and create a voice for the concerns of residents.
- Fairmount Avenue is a well-traveled corridor with commercial potential.
- Public transportation is easily accessible in the neighborhood.
- The newly established Target Enforcement Zone should help to curtail the prostitution problem.
Liabilities

- Crime, both real and perceived, has contributed to the reputation that Fairmount is a dangerous neighborhood.
- Lack of sidewalks throughout much of the neighborhood prevents safe pedestrian mobility, in addition to contributing to the unkempt look of much of the area.
- Numerous deteriorated buildings threaten the health, safety, and aesthetic of the community (see figure 22). A number of these buildings are candidates for demolition.
- High numbers of vacant buildings threaten the stability of the neighborhood. Many of these dwellings are significantly deteriorated, unsecured, and the sight of illicit activities.
- Significant amounts of litter and graffiti contribute to the blighted appearance of much of the neighborhood.
- The presence of public housing projects surrounding much of the neighborhood discourages private investment.
- Poverty rates indicate many households do not have the money to invest in even simple property repairs.
- Current zoning prevents commercial activities in areas which could serve the commercial needs of the community.

Figure 22: Severely deteriorated vacant buildings pose a safety hazard and contribute to blight in the neighborhood.
Part II

Plan for the Preservation of the Fairmount Historic District
Vision
The Fairmount Historic District is a safe, attractive, diverse community that showcases a large collection of well-maintained historic architecture.

The Preservation Plan for Fairmount

Preservation efforts in any community can be a difficult undertaking, but it is even more difficult in at-risk communities such as Fairmount. The deteriorated state of much of the historic architecture in the neighborhood is the primary preservation concern of this plan. Some roadblocks to rehabilitation within the district include abandoned vacant buildings with no clear owner, inappropriate renovations, and the poverty levels in the community. Many owners and tenants do not have the financial resources available to undertake oftentimes costly historic renovations, so one of the important cornerstones of the plan is that residents of the neighborhood become educated about the best preservation practices and sources of funding for such projects.

The preservation of the community's historic resources goes beyond the rehabilitation of individual buildings. Historic architecture needs to be seen and appreciated by the people of the city, which means that the neighborhood needs to be safe, clean, and inviting. Other plan recommendations include ways with which to deal with litter and graffiti, reducing the number of vacant buildings in the neighborhood, and creating an identity for the Fairmount community through signage and infrastructure improvements.

The following goals were developed in response to the numerous assets and liabilities present within the community:

**Goal 1:** Residents and property owners respect the historic architecture, and keep it well-maintained.

**Goal 2:** Fairmount is a diverse community where revitalization efforts have not triggered displacement of existing residents.

**Goal 3:** Fairmount is a safe, attractive community.

**Goal 4:** Fairmount Avenue is the vibrant core of the community.

The plan document lists a series of objectives, strategies, and implementation methods as a means of achieving those goals.
Goal 1: Residents and Property Owners respect the historic architecture of the neighborhood, and keep it well-maintained.

The substantial collection of historic architecture in Fairmount is one of the area’s greatest assets, and can be a valuable tool in creating an identity for the neighborhood. Historic neighborhoods such as Barton Heights and Ginter Park are already well-known throughout the city for their role in community development and the expansion of the streetcar suburbs just outside of the city. Fairmount developed as an independent town in anticipation of additional streetcar lines, but has not been promoted as a significant contributor to the broad patterns of Richmond’s development. Fairmount has instead deteriorated significantly over the course of the past 50 years, and has gained a reputation of blight, failing to keep up with the revitalization trend occurring in surrounding neighborhoods.

Fairmount can improve its image and encourage revitalization by protecting its historic resources. Property owners will be educated on the best practices for rehabilitating historic properties, and keep their properties well-maintained. New infill development on vacant lots will respect the historic architecture, ensuring compatibility with the character of the neighborhood. This is a daunting task, particularly since rampant poverty rates indicate many residents and property owners will not be able to afford even simple repairs to dwellings in the area. Owners and residents will need to be made aware of the variety of potential funding sources available for rehabilitation projects.

Objective 1.1
Promote the appropriate rehabilitation of historic properties throughout the neighborhood.

Strategy 1.1-1
The preservation of historic buildings in the neighborhood needs to begin by educating residents and property owners about the history of the neighborhood and its phases of development. Residents should develop a sense of pride in the unique history of the locality as a whole, and in their individual properties. A collective appreciation of the history of the neighborhood should act as an impetus for the rehabilitation of this historic fabric of the neighborhood.

Implementation 1.1-1 A
Efforts have already been underway to promote the history of the community. Several community meetings took place during the process of nominating the neighborhood to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination document is available online at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources webpage, and details the history of the community. Additionally, it provides brief architectural descriptions of each building in the neighborhood. This document should be made available for perusal at each of the two civic associations located in Fairmount.
Community leaders should promote educational opportunities, such as the seminar offered by the Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (ACORN) in January of 2008 to help property owners research the history of their buildings. This seminar in particular was advertised as costing non-members $15, which might be a hardship to some individuals. Civic associations could designate an individual to attend the workshop and report back their findings during community meetings. Another source of information is the City of Richmond, where preservation staff in the Department of Community Development are currently working on a document that details the process of researching a historic property.

**Strategy 1.1-2**
The most appropriate historic rehabilitations are those that follow the standards set forth by the Secretary of the Interior, and property owners wishing to undertake work on their house will need to be educated about preservation practices and opportunities.

**Implementation 1.1-2 A**
The resources listed in Appendix B can serve as an initial source of preservation practices and opportunities, but it will be up to individuals within the community to educate themselves about rehabilitation standards. Civic associations should designate a preservation go-to person who could be the neighborhood expert on historic rehabilitations, and can point people to valuable sources of information, including ACORN, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), the Library of Virginia, and the preservation staff of the City of Richmond. Civic associations should provide a sourcebook that includes a list of preservation contacts, the rehabilitation requirements established by the Secretary of the Interior, and a list of reputable contractors and consultants, similar to the listing on ACORN’s website. This information could also be made available to individuals online through community weblogs such as Church Hill People’s News.

**Strategy 1.1-3**
Residents should lobby to have the neighborhood designated as a City Old and Historic District, which gives an appointed architectural review board the authority to evaluate any proposed changes to a historic property which are visible from a public right-of-way. It also allows the board to approve or deny the design of new construction in the district. This designation will help prevent rehabilitations that that compromise the historic integrity of a building, in addition to preventing new construction that is not compatible with the architectural resources in the neighborhood.
Implementation 1.1-3 A
Designation as a local district requires the approval of City Council, whose decision largely hinges upon the will of neighborhood residents. Neighborhood approval can be tricky to obtain in areas where people are concerned about property rights being taken away, or where individuals are worried about property taxes increasing as a result of the design controls in place. Preservation staff with the City of Richmond oversee the designation process, which includes the passage of an ordinance by City Council designating the neighborhood as a City Old and Historic District.

Strategy 1.1-4
Historic rehabilitations can be extremely costly undertakings, which many Fairmount residents would normally not be able to afford. One of the most important strategies for promoting the rehabilitation of historic properties in Fairmount is informing property owners about sources of funding for these projects. Sources include State and Federal Historic Tax Credits, City of Richmond rehabilitation tax abatement, and non-profit organization grants and loans available to moderate- and low-income households. (Please see appendix B for a list of potential funding sources.)

Implementation 1.1-4 A
Civic association leaders should request guest speakers from local non-profits and preservation organizations to come into the community and give overviews about potential funding sources and eligibility requirements. The civic association should keep a sourcebook of information collected from these agencies, and make it available to the public at the civic center or online on community weblogs such as Church Hill People’s News.
Goal 2: Fairmount is a diverse community where revitalization efforts have not triggered displacement of existing residents.

After the period of “white flight” during the mid-twentieth century, Richmond was devastated by the loss of its wealthier citizenry. The population of the city continued to hemorrhage for the next fifty years, and as the municipality lost much of its tax base to the outlying counties, its problems increased exponentially. Crime skyrocketed, and the housing stock slowly deteriorated as residents were unable to afford upkeep on their properties. Many unsafe structures were demolished by the city, punctuating already fragile neighborhoods with unsightly vacant lots.

The advent of historic tax credits brought about a renewed interest in the Richmond. When National Register Historic Districts were established across much of the city in the late 1980s and the 1990s, property owners found they were able to invest in the rehabilitation of their buildings in return for significant tax abatement. Investors and childless couples began trickling back into the city, fixing up long-neglected properties in what were once blighted communities. In 2007, the population of the city rose about 200,000 for the first time since 1995, largely due to rehabilitation incentives offered by the local, state, and federal governments.

The significant reinvestment into the community has slowly begun to displace lower-income households. As a number of mostly white, affluent individuals bought older homes and rehabilitated them, the assessed value of properties in a number of neighborhoods increased significantly. Lower income residents in these areas found that they were unable to afford the increasing costs, and many of them were forced to relocate to more affordable areas. Decent, affordable housing has become even harder to find in Richmond as a result.

Fairmount has only just recently been designated as a National Register Historic District, so individuals have not yet had the opportunity to take advantage of rehabilitation tax credits. It has also not been designated as a City Old and Historic District. Both are reasons the neighborhood has not experienced any significant demographic shifts over the course of the last twenty years that is a precursor to displacement.

Goal two is perhaps just as important as the preservation of the community’s architectural resources. The story of Richmond, as told through its historic buildings, is something that should be enjoyed by all groups, regardless of income or age. The shortage in affordable housing is worse than ever, and when neighborhoods become gentrified, affordable housing shortages in the city grow even more severe. This is not to say that there cannot be a mix of incomes living in the Fairmount neighborhood. Revitalization will be extremely difficult to accomplish without at least some middle- and upper-income individuals investing in the community.
Objective 2.1
Revitalization efforts should include the creation of affordable housing options for residents currently living in and around Fairmount.

Strategy 2.1-1
Richmond will need to modify the boundaries of Church Hill Central, a Neighborhoods in Bloom (NiB) community, to include the northern portion of Fairmount. Non-profits such as the Better Housing Coalition have been able to use block grant funding from the NiB program to construct or rehabilitate a number of affordable homes at the south end of Fairmount. Numerous vacant lots and tax sale properties north of Fairmount Avenue are perfect candidates for non-profit intervention, and a change in boundaries will provide these organizations with the necessary funding to create decent, affordable housing in the neighborhood.

Implementation 2.1-1 A
Community leaders and activists will need to contact the Housing and Neighborhoods Division of the City’s Department of Community Development and lobby for a change in NiB boundaries. The City will need to evaluate the program and determine if there is realistically enough funding to support a boundary increase. If not, citizens can advocate that the City target new areas for NiB, since the program has proved to be so successful in many of its existing communities.

Strategy 2.1-2
The City should encourage the presence of non-profit housing groups in the neighborhood by making it easier for the organization to obtain vacant lots or other property up for tax sale (see figure 24). By giving non-profits the chance to obtain the property before the rest of the market, it prevents speculative development that has the potential to drive up property values in the neighborhood.

Implementation 2.1-2 A
The City of Richmond Department of Real Estate Development will need to collaborate with the Department of the Assessor of Real Estate to restructure the tax sale process in order to give community development corporations the first shot at purchasing tax delinquent property. The City will understandably need to set the price of the

Figure 24: Infill construction on vacant lots can help alleviate affordable housing needs.
property so as to recoup any losses. If no one non-profit is interested in pursuing the purchase of the property, it can be made available to any other interested party at public auction.

**Strategy 2.2-1**
The population of the neighborhood will become more stable as renters become homeowners.

**Implementation 2.2-1 A**
Non-profits will maintain rent-to-own programs that encourage residents to become homeowners. First-time homebuyer classes will continue to be held monthly in the East End.
Goal 3: Fairmount is an attractive, safe community.

The deterioration of historic buildings can result from normal wear and tear as well as deliberate neglect. Deteriorated architecture can be seen in any number of communities, not just the ones with bad reputations. However, blighted communities definitely pose more of a threat to historic resources. Vacant buildings are prevalent in such neighborhoods, and vacant buildings are more at risk of fire damage, destruction resulting from vandalism or illegal squatting, and demolition by neglect. Decaying buildings that share walls with renovated properties oftentimes create structural problems for the rehabilitated building if the owner of the deteriorated property refuses to address problems such as water damage or pest control.

The preservation of historic buildings in blighted neighborhoods such as Fairmount cannot just address the rehabilitation or use of deteriorated properties. In order to fully ensure the protection of these cultural resources, problems with public health and safety need to be addressed.

The large number of vacant buildings in Fairmount is one of the main contributors to the blight of the neighborhood (see figure 25). Many of these properties are historic, and a significant number of them have already been destroyed by fire damage and are slated for demolition. Other unoccupied buildings remain at risk of the same fate. Several of these properties are located along blocks that have undergone revitalization efforts in recent years; the decaying, boarded-up buildings detracts from the positive changes that have already been made. Vacant buildings are a problem that must be addressed to ensure the preservation of the neighborhood’s historic resources. Crime is another issue that must be addressed before residents are able to reap the full benefits of living in a historic community such as Fairmount. The neighborhood has experienced a decline in incidents of violent crime over the past several years, but drug activity and prostitution have increased. Neighborhoods with lower crime rates are less likely to experience acts of vandalism, something that poses a threat to historic buildings on a small scale. Vigilant neighbors who are less tolerant of crime become
less tolerant of other activities that contribute to the blight of the neighborhood, like illegal dumping.

As residents take back their community, the neighborhood will slowly establish a positive identity, which will lend itself to further enhancing the existing historic resources.

Objective 3.1
The proliferation of vacant buildings in Fairmount will be reduced by at least half within the next five years.

Strategy 3.1-1
Implement an aggressive tax sale process for vacant properties.

Implementation 3.1-1 A
The tax sale procedure normally takes approximately two years for an individual property due to necessary legal processes, so it is important to initiate tax sale immediately upon learning that an owner has been delinquent in paying taxes for more than six months. The Departments of Real Estate Services will work with the City Attorney’s Office to develop a streamlined way of processing tax sales to ensure rapid completion. The first years of this aggressive new process will target vacant buildings along Fairmount Avenue and North 22nd Street.

Implementation 3.1-1 B
When a property is purchased at tax sale, the new owner will be required to sign a development agreement, promising to rehabilitate the property in an appropriate manner within a specified period of time. The Department of Community Development will determine if the proposed rehabilitation is appropriate.

Strategy 3.1-2
Develop a system of monitoring vacant buildings within the community.

Implementation 3.1-2 A
The Department of Community Development already has a system of systematically tracking vacant buildings in the city. Their vacant buildings taskforce monitors building code violations and environmental violations on the property. This system has proved to be remarkably successful, but could be even better with a few changes. The Department of Community Development will be in charge of a database that includes a variety of information on the vacant buildings. It will include information on code violations, building permits, ownership, tax sale, and parties interested in purchasing the property if it is made available at tax sale. This will create one central

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9 City of Richmond Department of Real Estate Services, Timeline available online at http://www.richmondgov.com/departments/RealEstateServices/TaxDelinquentProp.aspx.
database of information. A portion of this information will be made public on a website designed to educate residents about vacant buildings in their communities.

**Strategy 3.1-3**
The Department of Community Development will continue to hold its free vacant buildings workshop each year, educating members of the public about code enforcement, tax sale, why buildings deteriorate, how vacant buildings negatively affect the community, and ways to fund the rehabilitation of these buildings.

**Implementation 3.1-3 A**
The department will discuss ways to improve the workshop, which was held for the first time in September of 2007.

**Strategy 3.1-4**
The city will use spot blight abatement to seize vacant property that poses a threat to public health and safety.

**Objective 3.2**
The Richmond Police Department will continue to work with residents in the neighborhood to monitor and prevent criminal activities. By establishing a good relationship with citizens, the PD will be able to more effectively combat illegal behavior in and around the historic district.

**Strategy 3.2-1**
The police in Sector 1 recently met with residents and walked through the Fairmount neighborhood in order to receive input about the location of illicit activities in the area (see figure 26). These walks should occur on a monthly basis to ensure that police are working to address areas where crime is a recurring activity. When walks are not scheduled, residents should be able send either verbal or written comments to a community liaison within the department.

**Figure 26:** A recent walk-through with residents alerted police to the location of illegal dumping sites in Fairmount. (Photo credit: John Murden, Church Hill People’s News)
Implementation 3.2-1 A
Neighborhood representatives will work with police to establish scheduled neighborhood walk-throughs.

Implementation 3.2-1 B
Police will designate a community liaison within the sector. This individual will establish a good relationship with members of the community, and will provide contact information where residents can voice their concerns about illegal activity in the neighborhood.

Strategy 3.2-2
Sector 1 police will promote public safety in the Fairmount community by educating citizens about the best crime prevention techniques. This will empower residents and reinforce the importance of resident participation in crime reduction.

Implementation 3.2-2 A
Police will distribute literature that explains ways to prevent theft.

Implementation 3.2-2 B
Self-defense courses such as RAD will be offered free of charge at local community centers or other public spaces.

Objective 3.3
Streetscape improvements will be implemented over the course of the next five years (see figure 27). Improving the walkability of the neighborhood and the aesthetic of the street will encourage greater pedestrian presence, which in turn will make the community safer by putting more eyes on the street.

Strategy 3.3-1
The Department of Public Works will initiate a sidewalk improvement system similar to the one under construction along Brookland Park Boulevard. The installation and/or the repair of sidewalks in the neighborhood will make the community more attractive and walkable.

Implementation 3.3-1 A

Figure 27: Sidewalk improvements are much-needed.
The Department of Public Works will need to act immediately to request funding for new sidewalks, either through the Capital Improvements budget or through Mayor Wilder’s City of the Future initiative.

**Strategy 3.3-2**
One of the best ways to fight graffiti is to remove it immediately, which discourages future tagging. Residents will need to make a point to initiate graffiti clean-up on their property (see figure 28).

**Implementation 3.3-2 A**
The City of Richmond will clean up graffiti visible from a public right-of-way (such as an alley or sidewalk) free of charge. Community activists can point interested residents to contacts within the Department of Public Works, who generally respond quickly to graffiti removal requests.

**Strategy 3.3-3**
One of the most prevalent but easily correctable problems in Fairmount is the littering, and it needs to be targeted. The community will establish a volunteer neighborhood cleanup crew that will promote the beautification of the area, and will organize regular litter clean-up walks throughout the neighborhood.

**Implementation 3.3-3 A**
The civic associations or Clean City Commission delegate for the East End will designate leaders for the neighborhood clean-up initiative, who will proceed to schedule and organize the volunteer effort.

**Implementation 3.3-3 B**
The civic associations can hold cleanup contests among residents, and will designate a “Fairmount Beautiful Yard” each month to promote attractive, litter-free property.

**Implementation 3.3-3 C**
Volunteer cleanup groups will apply for the use of refuse trucks made available free of charge by the City of Richmond. These trucks will be particularly helpful in the cleanup of illegal dumping sites.
**Strategy 3.3-4**
Residents will address deteriorated buildings and unkempt yards by making sure that property owners receive code violation notices from the City of Richmond.

**Implementation 3.3-4 A**
Residents will report property maintenance violations in the neighborhood to the Department of Community Development through the Citizens’ Request System.
Goal 4: Fairmount Avenue is the vibrant core of the Fairmount community.

Fairmount Avenue is the primary thoroughfare that bisects the district, and approximately 8,000 vehicles travel along it each day. There is currently some commercial activity along the Avenue immediately outside of the boundaries of the district, including a Dollar General, a Laundromat, and an eatery, which already attract people to the area. A number of buildings along Fairmount Avenue are appropriate for small-scale commercial activity that would serve the needs to residents in the area if the neighborhood was able to support a variety of commercial uses. The introduction of light commercial uses such as a drugstore, a daycare, or a barber shop will not only bring life to the neighborhood, but would improve the quality of life for residents, who currently have to travel outside of the neighborhood to receive goods and services. While existing zoning is largely appropriate for the needs of the community today, revitalization efforts can make it possible for corner commercial activity to resume in the neighborhood once again.

Business owners along Fairmount will want to create a pleasant environment which encourages commercial activity. Attractive street furniture and signage will not only meet the needs of shoppers, but will contribute to the identity of the corridor, and ultimately the entire Fairmount neighborhood.

Objective 4.1
Fairmount Avenue includes a mix of residential and neighborhood commercial uses.

Strategy 4.1-1
Determine if Fairmount is able to support additional commercial activity in the neighborhood.

Implementation 4.1-1 A
City planners will request the services of VCU graduate students enrolled in Urban Commercial Revitalization to conduct a free market analysis for the Fairmount neighborhood. Students will determine whether it is possible for the neighborhood to support any additional services or retail in the area.

Implementation 4.1-2 A
The Department of Community Development will undertake a rezoning study of the neighborhood, similar to the one that took place for Union Hill and Church Hill North between 2007 and 2008. Staff will look at the existing land use for the neighborhood and determine the extent to which commercial activity in the neighborhood is possible and compare their findings with the VCU market analysis. Staff will then hold
a series of public meetings to discuss possible rezoning within the neighborhood. Citizen input will be factored into the decision to rezone.

Implementation 4.1-3 A
When it is determined that the community can support additional commercial activity, the City will rezone non-residential portions of Fairmount Avenue as B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial).

Objective 4.2
Fairmount Avenue has a welcoming appearance that fosters vitality within the neighborhood.

Strategy 4.2-1
Install attractive benches and trash cans along the street to encourage pedestrian activity and litter prevention.

Implementation 4.2-1 A
Neighborhood civic associations will request funds from Community Development Corporations for benches and trash cans. If the CDCs are unable to provide assistance utilizing Neighborhoods in Bloom funds or other sources, the civic associations will work with residents and business owners to raise money for street furniture.

Strategy 4.2-2
Install attractive signage that identifies the Fairmount Historic District and promotes an identity for the neighborhood.

Implementation 4.2-2 A
Neighborhood civic associations will request funds from Community Development Corporations for signage. If the CDCs are unable to provide assistance utilizing Neighborhoods in Bloom funds or other sources, the civic associations will work with residents and business owners to raise money for signage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Anticipated Date of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1-1: Promote the History of the Neighborhood</td>
<td>Community leaders, Civic Associations, Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begin Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1-2: Educate Residents about Preservation Practices</td>
<td>Community leaders, Civic Associations, Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begin Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1-3: Designate the neighborhood as a City Old and Historic District</td>
<td>Department of Community Development Planning and Preservation Division</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1-4: Educate Residents about Funding Sources</td>
<td>Community leaders, Civic Associations, Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begin Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1-1: Expand the Boundaries of NiB to include the entire district</td>
<td>Department of Community Development Housing and Neighborhoods Division</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1-2: Restructure Tax Sale Process to Benefit Housing Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>Department of Real Estate Development, Department of the Assessor of Real Estate</td>
<td>Two-Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-1: Streamline Tax Sale Process to Prevent Long-Term Vacancies</td>
<td>Department of Real Estate Development, Department of the Assessor of Real Estate</td>
<td>Two-Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-2: Require all Owners of Tax Sale Properties to Sign a Development Agreement</td>
<td>Department of Real Estate Development, Department of the Assessor of Real Estate, Department of Community Development</td>
<td>One Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-3: Modify the Existing Vacant Buildings Monitoring System</td>
<td>Department of Community Development</td>
<td>One Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1-4: Expand the Offerings of the Vacant Buildings Workshop</td>
<td>Department of Community Development</td>
<td>One Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2-1: Increase Police/Resident Walk-</td>
<td>Civic Associations, Residents, Richmond Police</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughs</td>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2-2: Police Promote Crime Prevention Techniques</td>
<td>Richmond Police Department</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begins Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-1: Improve/Install Sidewalks</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Two-Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-2: Graffiti Clean-Up</td>
<td>Resident, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begins Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-3: Litter Clean-Up Programs/Contests</td>
<td>Civic Associations, Residents, Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Ongoing, Begins Immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-4: Increased Code Enforcement Activity</td>
<td>Department of Community Development, Residents</td>
<td>One Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1-1: Rezone Fairmount Avenue</td>
<td>Department of Community Development</td>
<td>Two-Five Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2-1: Install Street Furniture</td>
<td>Civic Associations, CDCs</td>
<td>Two Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2-2: Install Gateway Signage</td>
<td>Civic Associations, CDCs, Area Businesses</td>
<td>Two-Five Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Works Consulted


----------Vacant Buildings Taskforce Data for April 2008.


Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. Analysis of the Impediments to Fair Housing In Richmond, Virginia. October 2006.


---------*Census of the Population of the City of Richmond, VA, 1990.*

---------*Census of the Population of the City of Richmond, VA, 1980.*

---------*Census of the Population of the City of Richmond, VA, 1970.*


Appendix A

Comparison of Relevant Zoning District Regulations Proposed for Fairmount Avenue

B-1 Neighborhood Business District
A B-1 zone permits office, personal service, and retail uses intended to serve surrounding neighborhoods. It also permits shopping centers containing permitted principle uses. The B-1 zone allows for residential uses above or to the rear of the first floor in conjunction with other permitted uses as long as the area dedicated to residential use does not exceed three times the area dedicated to the other permitted use.

R-63 Multi-Family Urban Residential District
An R-63 zone is a mixed-use zoning district that allows single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family attached, two-family detached, and multi-family structures. Multi-family structures require a minimum lot size of 1,000 square feet per unit and permit a maximum lot coverage rate of 65%. The R-63 zone is intended to be pedestrian-oriented, with the commercial uses oriented to serve the immediate neighborhood and does not require off-street parking for the permitted commercial uses on corner lots.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>B-1 Neighborhood Business</th>
<th>R-63 Multi-Family Urban Residential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>25’</td>
<td>24’ minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35’ maximum (48’ with conditions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setback</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15’ maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Yard</td>
<td>None (unless adjacent to R or RO district)</td>
<td>3’ to 5’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear Yard</td>
<td>None (unless adjacent to R or RO district)</td>
<td>5’ to 15’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Width</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>18’ to 27’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Area</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2,200 sq. ft to 4,000 sq. ft minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>For dwelling units, none for first 3, otherwise 1 space per 4 units; other parking requirements based on proposed use</td>
<td>1 off-street space per dwelling unit; must be located to the rear of buildings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The source of this text is a zoning summary for possible rezoning in Union Hill and Church Hill that was distributed to residents of those neighborhoods. It includes excerpts and interpretations from the City of Richmond Zoning Ordinance. Persons with specific zoning issues should always consult the Zoning Ordinance and/or the City’s zoning officers.
Appendix B
Preservation Resources

Government Agencies

Virginia Department of Historic Resources (State Historic Preservation Office)
Phone: (804) 367-2323
http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/index.htm

DHR’s mission is to “foster, support, and encourage the stewardship of significant historic, architectural, archeological, and cultural resources.” The website includes information on applying for rehabilitation tax credits, archival research resources, and educational programs available, among many other things. The DHR is located in Richmond on Kensington Avenue near the Boulevard.

National Park Service
http://www.nps.gov/history/

The National Park Service is in charge of administering federal preservation programs, including the National Register of Historic Places. The website includes information on the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for rehabilitation, federal tax credits, and other available grants. The site also provides access to all 44 technical preservation briefs that inform individuals about the most up-to-date methods of caring for historic buildings.

Historic Preservation Non-Profits in Richmond

Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (A.C.O.R.N.)
http://www.richmondneighborhoods.org/

ACORN is an organization that promotes the purchase and renovation of vacant and abandoned buildings in Richmond’s historic neighborhoods. The website includes information on events and workshops sponsored by ACORN, non-profit housing providers, renovation resources, and their tax credit services.

Historic Richmond Foundation (HRF)
http://www.historicrichmond.com/

Among other things, the Historic Richmond Foundation buys and sells historic property and undertakes restoration projects. HRF’s website includes a very helpful architectural glossary and a comprehensive list of preservation contacts located in Richmond. The site also provides descriptions of many historic sites and neighborhoods throughout the city.
A Selection of Housing Organizations in the Richmond Area With Rehabilitation Programs

Better Housing Coalition
ElderHomes Corporation
Housing Opportunities Made Equal
Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Southside Community Development Corporation