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WEST LEIGH STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

Prepared for
Carver Area Civic Improvement League
and
Newtowne-West Civic League

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EXISTING CONDITIONS
**Study Area**

The study area is part of two neighborhoods, Carver and Newtowne-West, located in the City of Richmond's Near West Planning District. Located about a mile and a half west of downtown Richmond, the study area developed over a long period, beginning with the westward expansion of Richmond in the late 18th century. The study area includes the western half of the Carver neighborhood and the Newtowne-West neighborhood. Traditionally, Carver is considered that area of Richmond west of Belvidere Street, north of Broad Street, south of I-95 and east of Lombardy Street. Generally, the Newtowne-West neighborhood is the residential neighborhood along and north of Leigh Street between Lombardy Street and Hermitage Road. Traditionally, the non-residential areas south of Leigh Street are not considered part of the Newtowne-West neighborhood but for purposes of this study, they are considered part of the general Newtowne-West area. Each neighborhood has a unique history but the two are closely linked, due to their proximity. Given the importance Leigh Street plays in connecting these two neighborhoods and that it is an important corridor between the Boulevard and Downtown, this plan focuses on the areas along and around Leigh Street. This particular area was chosen in part because of the efforts of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) to redevelop and rehabilitate both communities. Currently RRHA is considering the delineation of a new Redevelopment and Conservation district in western Carver. Additionally, RRHA is in the process of acquiring and redeveloping many properties in Newtowne-West. Both neighborhoods are in transition and have both common and unique issues, but Leigh Street connects both and the Kroger Shopping Center serves as an important commercial node connecting the two neighborhoods. With all the recent redevelopment activity and potential for more, both residential and commercial, the need exists to consider the opportunities for ensuring both neighborhoods retain their historic character but also provide better connections between the two and create a stronger urban community in the area.

The study area is bounded by Broad Street (US 250) to the south, I-95/I-64 and the CSX railroad tracks to the north, Hermitage Road to the west and Hancock and Harrison Streets to the east. The one exception to this general boundary is the historically residential area to the north of the CSX railroad tracks along Dinneen Street. Since this area is under transition from residential to industrial and is historically part of Newtowne-West, it is included in this plan. The study area is entirely within Census Tract 402 but it includes parts of two Census Block Groups, 1 and 2. Within Block Group 1, the study area includes all of Census Blocks 3-12 and 29-30. Only part of Block 2 is within the study area but the part outside the study area includes only Carver Elementary School. Within Block Group 2, the study area includes all of Census Blocks 1-10, 29, 30 and 91-98. Only part of Blocks 27 and 28 are within the study area but the parts outside the study area do not include any residences. In total, there are 37 Census Blocks wholly or partially within the study area. Map 1 shows the study area and its surrounding area.
Map 1: Study Area and Surrounding Influences

Legend:
- Study Area
- Surrounding Influence
- VCU
- VUU
- Major Road
- Other Road
- Park

West Leigh Street Corridor Plan

Created by Scudder Wagg, MURP Program, April 2008. Source: City of Richmond GIS Database
History

The first development in Carver dates to the 1790’s, but it was not until the 1850’s that the area now known as Carver became a bustling neighborhood and even then, residential development barely went west of Hancock Street. After the Civil War, two significant events brought new development to the Carver area. First, in 1873, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad (RF&P) began building the first car shops of what would eventually become a major railroad maintenance depot called Boulton which included “a machine shop, car shop, blacksmith’s shop, paint shop, carpenter’s shop, offices, and storehouse in addition to a nine-stall roundhouse and a 65-foot iron turntable.” This development along with new City codes in response to the 1882 fire brought major industrial facilities to the southern and western sections of Carver. By the early 1900’s, Carver was an active, integrated working class neighborhood with much industrial and commercial activity on its southern and western edges. During the late 1800’s, residential development began in the Newtowne-West area, especially around Leigh and Allen Streets. Most early residential development in Newtowne-West housed African-American workers for the local meat packing industries.

In the early 20th century, changing demographics, aging housing stock and the lending practices towards African Americans took its toll on both neighborhoods. Studies of both neighborhoods showed that both had some of the highest population densities in the city. Furthermore, the age of the housing stock meant that in the areas west of Harrison, some 25-50% of the housing stock needed major repairs. Many plans were drawn up between 1920 and 1950 calling for clearance of what these plans now considered “slums”. Exacerbating the problem, the City’s first two zoning ordinances discouraged residential reinvestment by zoning many residential areas as industrial.

The 1950’s saw major changes come to the area as the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike was constructed along the northern edge of the area and Belvidere Street was widened to the east side of Carver, razing many residences in the process. The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) also implemented its plan of redevelopment in Carver, one of the largest projects being the development of the Hartshorn Home Community between Leigh, Moore, Harrison and Bowe Streets. Later, in the early 1960’s, the City’s newest plans continued to zone Newtowne-West as entirely industrial. Since the 1980’s significant improvements have been made in both neighborhoods. RRHA has provided assistance through its Redevelopment and Conservation Plans, Maggie Walker School has reopened as the regional Governor’s School, a shopping center has opened where the RF&P facilities used to stand and numerous industrial properties have been reused for housing. At the same time, VCU has constructed the Siegel Center along the southern edge of Carver and significant private investment has occurred. While many pockets of dilapidated or vacant housing and vacant industrial space remain, much improvement has been made to the neighborhood, due in large part to the efforts of long-time residents and some newer “urban homesteaders”. Thus, the West Leigh Street Corridor has seen significant improvement and is poised for continued progress.

Despite all these changes, there is still a strong desire to maintain the history of both neighborhoods. This desire is evidenced by the three historic districts, Carver Residential, Carver Industrial and West Broad Street Commercial, and two historic properties, Maggie L. Walker School and Southern Stove Works, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Map 2 shows the extent of these districts and the two listed properties.

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Map 2: Historic Districts and Historic Properties

Legend

- National Register Historic Property
- National Register Historic District
- Study Area

Created by Scudder Wagg, MURP Program, April 2008. Source: City of Richmond GIS Database
Surrounding Influences

There are numerous institutions and other major influences in and around the study area. One of the biggest influences on the area is Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). One of the largest state universities in Virginia with an enrollment of about 30,000, VCU has a significant affect on the entire metropolitan area. In particular, VCU has undergone a major expansion in the last 15 years. With this recent expansion, VCU has begun encroaching on its surrounding neighborhoods, especially the Fan, Oregon Hill and Carver. Carver, in particular, has seen the infiltration of VCU significantly alter the neighborhood. In the last 10 years, VCU has built a major sports arena, a sports medicine building, a fine arts center, a parking deck and two major residence halls on the southern edge of Carver. Some of these buildings are east of the study area, but four are within including Ackell Residence Hall, the Siegel Center, the Sports Medicine Building and the Bowe Street Parking Deck.

To reassure Carver residents that their neighborhood would not be replaced by the university, VCU promised not to expand further into the neighborhood, thus limiting its potential for additional physical impact on the neighborhood.2 In addition, VCU has collaborated with the Carver community to assist the neighborhood with revitalization through youth programs, interaction with the Carver Elementary School and use of the University’s various resources to support the neighborhood. This collaboration occurs through the Carver-VCU Partnership program, which the community and VCU started in 1998.

Virginia Union University (VUU) is also an important influence on the area. While the main campus is located just north of Carver and Newtowne-West, C. D. King Hall is located at the corner of Leigh and Lombardy Streets. The historically black college moved to its existing site in 1899 and today has an enrollment of about 1,600. King Hall, given to the university by the British American Tobacco Company in the 1980s, houses the University’s Business and Human Resources offices. One of the main ways it influences the area is during special events, such as the Gold Bowl, when numerous alumni and visitors arrive and park within the study area.

About a mile northwest of the study area are three major sports and recreation facilities: the Diamond, the Arthur Ashe Center and Sports Backers Stadium. The Diamond, a 12,000-seat baseball stadium, is currently home to the Richmond Braves and VCU men’s baseball teams. Adjacent to the Diamond is Sports Backers Stadium, a 3,250-seat facility, which includes a track and soccer field. The stadium is used by both the VCU and VUU track teams and by VCU soccer teams. The Arthur Ashe Center has an indoor track and basketball court and is used for many city and regionally sponsored sports activities. All of these facilities are easily accessible from the neighborhoods via Hermitage Road.

Two major transportation influences on the study area are Interstate 95/64 and the CSX railroad tracks. Both run along the northern edge of the study area. The CSX tracks are part of the Bellwood Subdivision and numerous freight and passenger trains use the tracks daily. Most freight trains use these tracks to access Acca or Fulton Yards. Currently, passenger service on these tracks is limited to trains bound for or originating from Newport News. Future passenger service could increase as these tracks are part of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor. If plans for that corridor are implemented, many more trains could use these tracks to connect with Richmond’s Main Street Station. The portion of Interstates 95 and 64 that passes north of the study area was originally built as part of the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike in 1958. Today it is a toll-free facility and carries about 143,000 vehicles per day as of 2006. Both of these major transportation corridors serve as barriers, which cut these two neighborhoods off from areas to the north. Furthermore, the noise from both can be disruptive in certain parts of both neighborhoods.

Major residential neighborhoods surrounding the study area include Jackson Ward to the east and the Fan and Monument Avenue to the south. Jackson Ward and Carver were more closely connected until the 1950’s when Belvidere Street was widened to provide access to the city’s Northside and connect to the new Richmond-Petersburgh Turnpike.

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There are two post offices within close proximity of the study area. Across Broad Street from the Lowe’s shopping center is the Saunders post office, just south of the study area. About a quarter mile north of the study area is the Richmond Main Post Office, the main mail sorting and routing facility for the metropolitan area.

Land Uses

Map 3 shows land uses within the study area. The portion of Carver within the study area is diverse in its uses. Along the southern boundary, Broad Street, there are facilities for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). These facilities take up most of the area between Broad and Marshall Streets from Hancock to Bowe Streets except for a few businesses and apartments at the corner of Broad and Bowe Streets. Just north of VCU along Marshall Street are a number of current or former industrial buildings, some of which have been converted to apartments. Businesses still in this area include Thacker Spence Casket Company and USA Staffing. Those industrial buildings already converted to other uses include the Eagle Mill Lofts and Apartments and the Cornish Brewery Apartments. Only the 1100 block of Marshall includes any single-family residential structures.

North, along Clay, Catherine, Leigh and Moore Streets and east of Bowe Street, most uses are residential and much of the original housing is intact. There are a few non-residential uses in the area, though, including Moore Street Baptist Church and a few businesses such as the Corner Bar and Grill. Some of these smaller neighborhood businesses are also mixed-use buildings as they include residences in the rear or above the business. A significant residential development in this part of the study area is Hartshorn Community. This community is quite different from the rest of the neighborhood as all the residences are ranch style and many do not front on the street. Built as the final part of the 1950’s RRHA plan for Carver, Hartshorn replaced many deteriorated properties north of Leigh Street.

Along the western edge of Carver is a recently developed shopping center with a Kroger grocery store and eight other businesses. This shopping center extends from Broad Street northward almost to Leigh Street but does not include the old Firestone building at the corner of Lombardy and Broad Streets, which is currently under renovation as a mixed-use building. North of the shopping center, residential uses and a small car lot line Leigh Street with new housing being built on the south side of Leigh Street. There are a few warehouses and light industrial properties along Bowe and Lombardy Streets, north of Leigh Street.

In contrast to Carver, land uses in the Newtown-West area are more segregated. West of Lombardy most uses south of Leigh Street are warehouse or light industrial, office and commercial, except for a block of residences facing Leigh on the south side of the street, east of Allen. Included in this area is the large Lowe’s Home Improvement store, the James River Bus Lines terminal, the U-Haul self-storage and rental facility, VUU’s C. D. King Hall, two gas stations on Broad Street, a small strip of offices and retail on Broad at Hermitage and the large Sauer Company building along Broad between Allen and Lodge. Nearly all property north of Leigh between Hermitage and Lombardy is residential, except for the Maggie L. Walker Governors School for Government and International Studies, the Crusade for Christ Worship Center and a few scattered other uses along the CSX tracks including a car lot and the Southern Environmental Services offices along Moore Street. The Southern Stove Works building, a former industrial site, is currently under renovation into apartments and is already partially complete with 100 units occupied of the 105 complete.
Overall, the pattern of land use is institutional, retail and industrial along Broad Street; some industrial uses along Marshall; largely residential uses in the core of western Carver; retail in the center of the study area; industrial uses in the south west corner of the study area; residential in the core of Newtowne-West with some industrial, especially north of the railroad. In total, there are about 144 acres of developed property in the study area. As seen in Table 1, of this total, about one-third is residential use, both vacant and developed, though in terms of the number of parcels, residential users account for nearly 80%. Nearly 30% of land area is industrial use, both vacant and developed. Institutional users, such as VCU, VUU, Maggie Walker and church, account for over 15% of the land use in the study area whereas retail users, such as the Kroger and Lowe’s, use over 12% of the land. The lack of park space in the study area is clearly visible in that only one-tenth of one percent of land use in the area is for parks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th># of Parcels</th>
<th>% Parcels</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>% Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>143.9</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Richmond GIS and Assessor Databases
Created by Scudder Wags, MURP Program, April 2008. Source: City of Richmond GIS Database, Assessor Database and Field Review.
**Property Ownership**

Of the 583 parcels in the study area, there are 393 owners. By number of parcels, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority owns the most property in the area, with 41 parcels, or about seven percent of all parcels. By acreage, however, the Maggie Walker Governor's School owns the most property at almost 9%. Sixty property owners, or 15%, own more than one parcel and together own over 42% of all parcels and 58% of all land. Some owners, however, are among the largest by area with only one property. Table 2 lists the owners with the most acreage owned within the study area. These nine owners control over 50% of all land within the study area, yet none own more than 10% of land in the area. Two owners, Lowe's and Aneka Guna LLC, make the list despite only owning one parcel each. Their parcels, however, are some of the largest in the study area.

The vast majority of property owners live in the metropolitan Richmond area. Only 7% of parcels are owned by persons or corporations outside the metro Richmond area but these parcels comprise 22% of all land. Very few parcels, only 5%, are owned by out-of-state persons or corporations but again these parcels comprise a larger share of the acreage, 19% total. This difference is because many large property owners are out of state corporations, such as Lowe’s, East Coast Realty Investments and CSX. Overall, these ownership patterns mean that the vast majority of parcels and acres are owned by persons in the area and therefore absentee ownership should not present a major obstacle to improving the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th># Parcels Owned</th>
<th>% of All Parcels Owned</th>
<th>Acres Owned</th>
<th>% Acres Owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maggie L. Walker &amp; Governor's School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowe’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>7.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauer Properties &amp; C.F. Sauer Co.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td>7.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCU</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>5.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyland Properties (James River Bus Lines)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>5.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aneka Guna LLC (Southern Stove Lofts)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Coast Realty Investments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>4.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartshorn Community Council (Common Areas)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>3.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSX Transportation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Richmond Assessors Database

**Zoning**

Property in the study area falls within one of seven zoning categories, three residential categories (R-6 Single Family, R-7 Single Family and R-53 Multifamily), two business categories (B-3 General Business and B-4 Central Business District) and two industrial categories (M-1 Light Industrial and M-2 Heavy Industrial). Over half of the study area falls within the M-1 zoning classifications, while another 4% is within the M-2 class. The areas within the M-1 zone include nearly all parcels along Broad Street, the shopping center, most of the industrial and warehouse facilities in the southern part of Newtowne-West, and nearly all the parcels fronting on Marshall Street. Properties zoned M-2 in the study area include the former Southern Stove Works, which is currently under renovation into apartments, and all properties north of the railroad tracks along Dinneen Street. Thirty-eight percent of the study area falls within one of the three residential zoning classes, with 18% in R-6, 14% in R-7 and 6% in R-53. This includes most properties along Clay, Catherine and Leigh Streets in Carver and north of Leigh Street in Newtowne-West. Two areas comprise the 3% of the study area classified as B-3 or B-4, both fronting Broad Street. The first area is along Broad between Hancock and Harrison, the other at the northwest corner of Broad and Hermitage. Map 4 shows the current zoning for the study area.

The major issues with zoning in the area relate to the extensive industrial zoning. Currently, many industrial properties that have been rehabilitated into apartments or other residences are within industrial zoning districts. For example, Southern Stove Works, Eagle Mill Apartments Lofts and Condos and the Cornish Brewery Apartments. Furthermore, under the City’s Master Plan, the areas along Broad Street should be commercial but the most of the properties along Broad Street within the study area are within the M-1 zoning district. This does not fit the underlying uses for most properties east of Allen Avenue while it does fit for the C.F. Sauer Property between Lodge and Allen, the
zoning does not encourage redevelopment to commercial or retail as the City’s plan envisions. The area north of Leigh, between Bowe and Lombardy is zoned industrial, which fits its current uses, but the City’s plan calls for office uses while the Carver Plan calls for Urban Commercial. Also, the areas along Broad Street used by VCU is zoned industrial and parts Maggie Walker School are zoned for both multifamily residential and industrial uses.
**Previous Plans**

The Richmond Master Plan (2000) includes a discussion of the major issues affecting Carver and Newtowne-West. Particularly noted is the issue of encroachment by VCU and the Plan recommends that VCU expansion should not encroach on Carver any further than the south side of Marshall Street. The Master Plan recommends mostly single family residential in the core of each neighborhood but with multifamily in scattered areas around Carver. It recommends the vacant industrial properties on the north side of Marshall be transitional office uses. It further recommends retail uses along properties fronting Broad and for the area that is now the Kroger Shopping Center. For the area between Bowe and Lombardy north of Leigh, the plan recommends general office uses. Around the Newtowne-West residential areas, the plan recommends industrial uses, including all of that area north of the railroad.

All of the transportation improvements recommended in the Master Plan for the study area have been implemented except for three. Two recommendations relate to the railroad. The plan recommends eliminating the Dinneen Street crossing of the railroad and building an overpass for the Hermitage Road crossing. Both of these recommendations are due to the expected increase in the number of trains once the railroad corridor becomes part of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor and the number of passenger trains increase substantially. The third recommendation is for a light rail transit route along Broad Street from downtown to the west end.

“Carver: The Neighborhood Plan” was completed by the Urban Studies and Planning Department at VCU in June of 2002, with Dr. Morton Gulak leading the planning team. Major recommendations of this plan for the study area were zoning changes, rehabilitation of housing west of Harrison and infill housing on vacant land, improvement of Catherine Street, pedestrian lighting, street tree planting and replacement and various intersection improvements to provide gateways to the neighborhood. One novel recommendation is the redevelopment concept for the four block area. Within the area bounded by Clay, Bowe, Leigh and Norton Streets, the plan recommends redevelopment on three sides of each block with interior parking and common green space along Catherine Street. Unfortunately, this would be difficult to implement today as new housing that fronts Catherine Street (See Figure 1) has been recently built within this area. Most of the zoning recommendations in this plan have been implemented. Improvements to housing in the western part of Carver, however, have been slow to develop. Figure 2 shows the recommended zoning and land use for the Carver neighborhood.

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3 City of Richmond, “Richmond Master Plan”, 2000, [http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/forms/Masterplan.aspx](http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/forms/Masterplan.aspx), 235
4 Ibid. 58

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The Richmond Downtown Master Plan, under review by the City Planning Commission as of March 2008, includes a small portion of the study area, specifically the area bounded by Harrison, Hancock, Broad and Marshall Streets. Recommendations of the plan would not alter this block, but the plan does recommend continued neighborhood revitalization efforts. Also, the transportation section of the plan recommends converting one-way streets to two-way streets, which might affect Clay and Marshall Streets, which are one-way in opposite directions west of Harrison Street.

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) is currently studying the creation of a new Redevelopment and Conservation District in the Carver neighborhood. This new district would generally include most properties in the two blocks bounded by Leigh, Norton, Hancock and Clay Streets, with the exception of properties facing Clay and those facing Norton or Hancock south of Catherine Street.

**Vehicular Circulation**

Map 5 shows the elements of vehicular circulation within the study area. As previously noted, the combined I-95 and I-64 corridor defines part of the northern boundary of the study area. This six-lane interstate is a major corridor for the east coast and along this section carries about 143,000 vehicles per day, as of 2006. Along southern boundary of the study area is Broad Street, signed as US 250, a six-lane divided roadway and a major commercial corridors that connects western parts of the city and Henrico County with downtown. As of 2006 it carries about 23,000 vehicles per day. Lombardy Street is a two-lane road that bisects the study area north to south and is a critical connection between Northside neighborhoods and Broad Street, VCU and the Fan. VDOT estimates from 2006 indicate Lombardy carries about 9,500 vehicles per day. Leigh is a major corridor from downtown that connects to I-95/64 at Belvidere Street. Through the study area, Leigh Street varies from two to four lanes. East of Hancock it is a four-lane undivided roadway. From Hancock to Harrison it is still wide enough for four lanes, but is only painted for two, to provide parking and space for school buses at Carver Elementary. From Harrison to Dinneen, Leigh Street is a relatively narrow two-lane road with a few, short left turn lanes at Allen, Lombardy and Bowe. West of Dinneen, Leigh widens to a
four-lane divided roadway. VDOT estimates it carries about 8,600 to 9,800 vehicles per day as of 2006. Hermitage Road, on the western edge of the study area, is a four lane divided roadway. It connects to Meadow Street, a major road through the Fan, to the south and I-95 and the Boulevard to the north. VDOT estimates it carried 10,000 vehicles per day in 2006. Harrison Street is also an important connecting road through the area from Leigh Street to VCU. It is a narrow two-lane roadway through the study area and VDOT estimates it carries 3,300 vehicles per day. Speed limits on most streets in and around the study area are 25 miles per hour. Speed limits on Hermitage Road and Leigh Street west of Allen Avenue are 35 miles per hour.

Signalized intersections exist only along the two major corridors within and around the study area, Leigh Street and Broad Street. Leigh Street has signalized intersections with Harrison Street, Lombardy Street and Hermitage Road within the study area. Broad Street has signalized intersections with Harrison Street, Ryland Street, Lombardy Street, Allen Avenue, Lodge Street and Meadow Street/Hermitage Road.

Major impediments to circulation through and around the study area are the interstate and CSX railroad corridors. Currently, of the roads that pass through or by the study area, only Hermitage Road, Dinneen Street and Lombardy Street cross the CSX tracks. Dinneen Street is a minor road and crosses the railroad at grade. It does not cross the interstate and the City’s Master Plan recommends closing it. Hermitage Road is a major route, but also crosses the railroad at grade. The City plans to replace the at-grade crossing with an overpass in the future, according to the 2000 master plan. Lombardy crosses the tracks on an old steel bridge structure, built in 1905. Belvidere Street, on the eastern edge of Carver, is the other major roadway that connects the study area to points north of the interstate and railroad.

The Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) provides transit service to the City of Richmond and surrounding communities. GRTC provides bus service to the study area via ten different routes that have stops in or immediately around the study area plus two additional routes that stop within a few blocks of the study area. Easy access to public transit is reflected in the fact that 17% of residents traveled to work on public transit, twice the 8.3% average for the city. Most of these routes follow Broad Street along the southern boundary of the study area, two routes use Leigh Street and begin and end in Newtowne-West and two use Hermitage Road.

Both Hermitage Road and Lombardy Street are designated bike routes by the City of Richmond. Lombardy Street has designated bicycle lanes from Broad Street north, though the study area, to Brook Road. There are no other designated bicycle facilities in the study area, nor do any other streets have signage indicating bicycles can share the road. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a number of VCU students who live in the study area commute via bicycle to the university. Census 2000 data, however, suggests that no one in the study area commutes to work via bicycle.
**Pedestrian Circulation and Infrastructure**

Given the urban nature of the study area, most streets have sidewalks along both sides of the street. Unfortunately, there are still a number of streets that lack any sidewalks or that have sidewalks with significant damage. Of the 9.6 miles of roadside in the study area, nearly 18% do not have any sidewalk. As seen in Map 6, much of the roadsides lacking sidewalks are in the predominantly industrial areas, such as along Dinnenn Street north of the railroad tracks and along Clay Street near Hermitage. Excluding the predominately industrial areas, over ten percent of roadsides within the study area still lack sidewalks. Catherine Street is a clear example of this as only one side of one block within the study area has sidewalks. Much of this is attributable to the deplorable conditions of this street. It is more of an alley than a street. Norton and Kinney Streets also lack sidewalks along at least one side between Clay and Marshall Streets. Furthermore, Kinney Street has no sidewalk on its west side between Clay and Catherine Streets. Moore Street also lacks sidewalks on its south side between Bowe and Lombardy. Lastly, Allen Avenue lacks sidewalks on either side just south of Leigh Street. The lack of sidewalks there is particularly problematic as there are two bus stops in the sections without any sidewalks.

Of the total 7.9 miles of existing sidewalk in the study area, about a quarter mile, or 9.5%, is damaged in some respect. About one-quarter of the damage includes missing sections of sidewalk, such as the 165 foot long segment of missing sidewalk in Figure 3 or the missing section in Figure 4. Another one-quarter of the damage to area sidewalks includes overgrowth that can slow pedestrians or completely prevent pedestrian from using the sidewalks such as those seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Overall, of the damaged sections, about 40% of the damage is of high or very high severity. Thus, much of this damage is sufficient to significantly impede pedestrians.
Sidewalk width is another factor that affects pedestrian comfort. Generally, sidewalks should be about 6 feet wide, to accommodate two pedestrians walking side by side. This width is also sufficient to accommodate two pedestrians passing comfortably. The mean sidewalk width in the area is 7.5 feet. (This excludes the sidewalks along Broad Street which are quite wide at 10 to 19 feet). Nevertheless, over two miles of sidewalk, or 29% of all sidewalks within the study area, are less than 6 feet wide. Not only does this include sidewalks on smaller streets like Moore, but also important pedestrian corridors like Harrison Street.

Street trees are also an important part of the urban streetscape. Dan Burden has identified 22 specific benefits of street trees including reduced traffic speeds, safer walking environments, shade and lower temperatures along the sidewalk and increased absorption of precipitation which reduces drainage flows along streets and sidewalks.\(^5\) Within the study area there are 254 street trees, 7 tree stumps that could be replaced and 40 empty tree wells. As seen in Map 7, these trees are along most streets in the study area. The largely industrial area in the southwest lacks many trees, as does Lombardy Street, except at its northern end. In Newtowne-West, Moore Street has many street trees on its south side, but the City has removed all trees on the north side. Leigh, Harrison, Moore and Kinney Streets in and around the Hartshorn Community lack street trees entirely. Only two sections of Harrison Street have any trees, the west side of the 800 and 900 blocks and a short section on the east side near the Broad Street intersection. Allen Avenue lacks trees altogether. Marshall Street has many trees on its southern side, due to the rebuilding of this sidewalk when the Siegel Center was built, but the north side lacks trees except in the 1100 block. There are a number of empty tree wells along Leigh Street, especially in front of Moore Street Missionary Baptist Church. Finally, there are no street trees along Catherine Street, again due to the deplorable conditions of this street.

Most of the street trees in the study area are small and quite new since many have been planted in the process of new developments. Some, such as those along Leigh Street between Lombardy and Middlesex, were recently planted by the City. While it is positive to see these new trees, especially along Leigh, their small size does not yet bring many of the benefits street trees can provide. Figure 7 is an example of the many small and recently planted street trees in the study area.

Though there are many problems with the pedestrian infrastructure of the study area, generally the sidewalk infrastructure of the area is of acceptable quality. Certain sections are in disrepair, especially around dilapidated properties. Most of the sidewalk network is continuous throughout the study area and allows residents to access shopping, other neighborhoods, VCU, VUU and other areas on foot. Busy corridors and intersections, such as Leigh, Broad, Lombardy and Harrison Streets are somewhat of a barrier to pedestrians due to their higher traffic volume and speeds.

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Population and Household Characteristics

Based on Census 2000 counts, there are 769 residents within the study area. This was a decline of 16% from the 1990 population of 910. This decline was faster than the citywide 2.3% decrease during the same time period. Looking at the racial and ethnic components of the 2000 population, 702, or 91%, are minority, much higher than the city average of 62%. The largest minority group is African-Americans, who comprise 89% of the population of the study area. The number of African-Americans living in the area is decreasing faster than the overall population decline. Between 1990 and 2000, the area lost 173 African-Americans, or 20%. At the same time it gained 37 non-Hispanic whites, a 132% increase. Table 4 details the racial and ethnic composition of the population in 2000 as well as its change since 1990.

Table 3 shows the household characteristics of the study area compared to the city overall. Generally, there is a higher percentage of one person households and a lower percentage of married couple household, both with and without children. Despite the higher percentage of one person households, the average household size is slightly higher than the city average. While the percentage of female headed households with children is a little lower than the city average, the percentage of female headed households without children is higher than the city average.

The Census geography of the area makes it difficult to analyze more detailed socioeconomic characteristics. No single Census Tract or Block Group covers the entire study area. Furthermore, the only Census geography that includes the entire study area, Census Tract 402, covers the entire area but includes all of Carver plus Scott’s Addition to the west and the North Boulevard area. Socioeconomic information from this Census Tract will still give a reasonable picture of the community as there were very few households in Scott’s Addition and the North Boulevard area in 2000. Comparing socioeconomic characteristics between 1990 and 2000 is even more complicated as the Census geography has changed dramatically over that time period. What constitutes Tract 402 in 2000 includes all of Tracts 401 and 402 plus most of Tract 101.98 in 1990. The only portion of 1990 Tract 101.98 that is outside of 2000 Tract 402 is the Bryan Park area, which only includes one household. Thus, comparisons between the areas are still reasonable if the numbers for 1990 Tracts 402, 401 and 101.98 are aggregated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Population Change by Racial and Ethnic Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Pop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000 SF1, Table P1, 1990 Census STF1, Table P001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-person household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more person household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female householder with own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female householder without children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000 SF1, Table P17
Educational and income characteristic of population and households as of 2000 are detailed in Table 5. The level of educational attainment by persons in the area is generally lower than for the city overall. The percentage of persons in the area who have had at least some college is lower while those with no more than a high school diploma is much higher. Thus, the people in this area have a distinct educational disadvantage compared to the overall population in the city. This disadvantage is reflected in part by the lower median household income. Households in the area have a median household income $10,000, or 32%, lower than the citywide average. Furthermore, among renters, the median rent asked in the area is $233, or 57%, higher than the city median. Thus, among renters, the median rent as a percent of income is over 33%, putting it 6% higher than the city average and near the maximum considered affordable by most measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Educational and Income Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Educational Attainment (Population over 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Rent Asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000, SF3, Tables P37, P53, P87, H60, H70

Another factor affecting the income characteristics of people in the area is the employment situation. Of the 744 persons considered in the civilian labor force, almost 20% were unemployed. This is much higher than the city average of 8%. Much of this can probably be attributed to the differences in educational attainment between those living in the area compared to the city as a whole.

Another interesting difference between the population in this area compared to the rest of this city is the difference in commuting patterns. While most commuters in the city drive alone less than 40% of commuters in the West Leigh Street Corridor drive alone. Over 17% of commuters in the area take public transportation to work, more than double the rate of the average city commuter, while over 13% walk to work, more than triple the city average. Workers from the West Leigh Street Corridor carpool more than the average city worker, more than 21% of area workers compared to less than 13% citywide. Some of these differences are attributable to differences in car ownership. While 21% of city households have no vehicles available, over 31% of households in the study area have no vehicles available. Thus, there is a much higher percentage of transit dependent population in the study area than in the city overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Employment (Population over 16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Labor Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000, SF3, Table P43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Means of Transportation to Work (Workers over 16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000, SF3, P31
**Current Population**

With all the new housing development that has occurred in the area since 2000, one would expect the population to have grown. Based on comparisons of the number of housing units, vacant housing and population at the block level from 2000 to today, the current population of the study area is estimated to be 1,314. Much of this increase is attributable to new apartments built since 2000, including Eagle Mill Loft, Eagle Mill Apartments, Cornish Brewery Apartments and the Southern Stove Lofts, which is partially occupied as of March 2008. Additionally, infill development of single family units has added new population to certain blocks, especially where there were few occupied housing units as of 2000. In total, accounting for demolished housing units and new housing units, the net increase in housing units in the study area is estimated to be 330 or 73% over the 451 units in 2000.

**Public Safety**

Crime is a typical concern of urban residents and the West Leigh Street Corridor is no exception. From 2000 to 2006 overall crime in Census Tract 402 has been relatively constant, with a small spike in 2003. Property crime has decreased in the area overall, while violent crime has been steady but drug related crimes have increased. As seen in Table 8, one finds that overall crime has increased nearly 37% in Carver since 2000, due mostly to increases in property crime. In Newtowne-West, overall crime has increased only about 7%, but violent crime and drug crime have increased markedly while property crime has decreased. Some reasons for these differences in how crime has increased or decreased relate to the level of rehabilitation in each neighborhood. Much renovation and rehabilitation activity has occurred in Carver since 2000 while the level has been lower in Newtowne-West. With more and new people coming to Carver, there are more opportunities for property crime. Additionally, with more people in the area, and hopefully more people who will not tolerate criminal activity, some of these increases could be attributable to a more active community that is no longer willing to accept criminal activity in its midst.

Whatever the differences in criminal activity between the neighborhoods, it is distressing to see that crime has generally been increasing in the study area, especially violent crime. For the city as a whole, crime has generally been decreasing in most categories. Thus, the city and community may need to implement some new measures to help this area achieve reductions in crime similar to those occurring in the rest of the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tract 402</th>
<th>Carver</th>
<th>Newtowne</th>
<th>Tract 402</th>
<th>Carver</th>
<th>Newtowne</th>
<th>Tract 402</th>
<th>Carver</th>
<th>Newtowne</th>
<th>Tract 402</th>
<th>Carver</th>
<th>Newtowne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,158</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,461</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,234</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Richmond Police Department.

*Violent Crime includes homicide, sexual offenses, robbery and assault.

Looking at the geographical distribution of two types of crime does tend to reinforce the predominant concerns of residents. As seen in Map 8, the patterns of vice crimes and thefts from vehicles clearly follow the concerns of residents. Vice crimes are much more likely in Newtowne-West while thefts from vehicles are much more common in Carver. Also, most vice crime in Newtowne-West seems to occur along Moore Street, but residents seem to think most of the drug activity occurs north of the railroad.
West Leigh Street Corridor Plan

Map 8: Distribution of Vice Crimes and Thefts from Vehicles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thefts from Vehicles</th>
<th>Vice Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Incidents</td>
<td>Criminal Incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Urban Design**

Given the long and rich history of the area, the architectural styles found among the residences and commercial industrial properties are quite varied. In the Carver community, there are many Italianate, Classical Revival and Queen Anne style residences. According to a 1997 study by students at VCU, the most common residential architectural style in the Carver community is Italianate.\(^6\) There are, however, some modern residences in the community. The Hartshorn Homes community is a development of 1960’s ranch homes. In addition, there is at least one example of new residential construction in a modern style at 1402 W. Clay Street. Of the dwellings in Carver, most are frame, but many, especially at prominent corners, are of brick construction. Among the commercial and industrial structures in Carver, most are of brick construction or have a brick façade. Most new homes built recently fit the historical architecture of the area, but some such as the example in Figure 10, do not fit with the prevailing styles of the neighborhood.

In Newtowne-West, there are also a variety of housing styles. Many of the older homes are early 20th century utilitarian wood frame homes but some are Italianate style, like many of the homes in Carver and the Fan. Most of the newer homes attempt to imitate the Italianate style but with asphalt shingle roofs instead of flat roofs.

One other urban design issue in the study area is the blank wall left by the shuttered Sears Building along Broad Street. C.F. Sauer Company uses the basement of the building for some manufacturing and the first floor for storage. The building fronts Broad Street for an entire block and while it has some redeeming architectural features, the void its presence creates along this block of Broad Street is significant. Figure 11 shows a portion of the building and the void it presents to the street.

**Resident Views**

Residents of Newtowne-West and Carver have strong opinions about how they wish their neighborhoods to grow and change. Three focus group meetings were held, two with Carver on October 20th, 2007 and December 17, 2007, and one with Newtowne-West on February 25, 2008, to gather input from residents. The consensus of most residents was that new housing in the core of the neighborhoods should be single family units and most of those should be detached units. Some Carver residents expressed a concern about the

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architectural style of new residential development in the neighborhood. They thought that any new housing should fit with the historical architectural styles and designs of the neighborhood and would prefer not to see more housing like that in Figure 10. When asked if they might want some kind of architectural rules or guidelines enforced for new development, some residents seemed very interested in this option.

The affordability of housing and rising assessments was an issue cited by Newtowne-West residents. The most recently developed new housing in the area is selling for $250,000 to $300,000 according to residents. These higher prices are raising the value of all properties in the area, to the point that some long-term and lower-income residents are having difficulty paying their real estate taxes. Most of those having difficulty were thought to be senior residents and many thought these residents owned their homes without any encumbrances. Thus, real estate taxes might be the only cost of ownership for these residents. Most of these residents do not want to leave the area because of historical and social ties to the neighborhood. Participants thought that some of these residents might consider moving to a senior housing facility if one was nearby and affordable.

Many Carver residents were particularly concerned with the number of apartments that have been built in the neighborhood in recent years. Carver residents, especially, are concerned with the influx of students into the neighborhood. A common theme residents expressed was their desire to see more owner-occupied housing. Many residents feel that too much housing is being rented to students from VCU. Residents are unhappy with students in the area for a variety of reasons, the biggest being that students living in the area create "party houses" that disrupt the peace, litter and take up too many parking spaces. Also, residents feel that property owners who rent to students do not maintain their properties well.

Most Carver residents did not believe that any new retail development was necessary in or around the area as they could not think of any retail or services they would prefer to have closer to the neighborhood. Newtowne-West residents were more receptive to the idea of new retail in the area but not within the core of the neighborhood.

Area residents appreciate the central location of the area but are concerned about the effects that traffic and limited parking are having on their quality of life. In Carver, many residents are unhappy with VCU commuter students parking on neighborhood streets. Most think that the newly instituted parking permit program will help reduce this problem. Additionally, Carver residents believe too many visitors to special events at the Siegel Center use neighborhood streets for parking. In Newtowne-West there is concern about Maggie Walker students parking on neighborhood streets during the day.

Traffic was of some concern to Carver residents, mostly the speed of traffic on neighborhood streets. Residents suggested new four-way stop signs or speed bumps on some streets to slow traffic. Newtowne-West residents are particularly concerned about traffic volume and speed on Leigh Street. Additionally, residents are unhappy with the bus activity on Leigh caused by James River Bus Lines (JRBL). They believe the buses bring too much noise and pollution to their neighborhood and would prefer to see these buses use other roads to access the JRBL facility.

Most residents said that they did walk around their neighborhoods and did use area sidewalks to get to the Kroger shopping center. Residents are pleased that the City has improved sidewalks in the area, particularly the 1400 block of Clay Street and Leigh Street in the core of Newtowne-West. Yet residents would like to see some sidewalks improved, especially the 1300 block of Clay Street. Some residents also mentioned that more street trees and street lamps would improve the aesthetics and safety of the neighborhood. Newtowne-West residents specifically mentioned that they would like to see the trees along the north side of Moore Street replaced, as the City removed these trees in the last few years.

Crime was mentioned as a problem by residents of both neighborhoods, especially drug activity. Newtowne-West residents seem particularly concerned as they feel there is a high level of drug dealing occurring along Dinneen Street north of the railroad. Crime data for the area, however, indicates most vice incidents occur along Moore Street. Graffiti and vandalism were also mentioned as problems. Residents of Carver were concerned about thefts from vehicles and seemed to think
that this problem was related to the many students who park in the area and do not secure their belongings.

One last issue of significance was the provision of public space in Newtoone-West. Currently, there is only one small playground near the intersection of Moore and Dinneen Streets. The neighborhood would like to have a basketball court and a small gathering place, perhaps with picnic tables. The logical location would be on the vacant lot adjacent to the playground.

**Business Views**

Based on a windshield survey of the area, there are 33 businesses in the study area with a variety of business types ranging from wholesale and manufacturing to retail and services. Most business along Broad Street are retailers while most wholesaling businesses are in the industrial areas in the southwest corner of the study area or in the area north of the railroad. To gauge the opinion of businesses in the area a short phone survey was conducted. Of the businesses contact, only 10 responded to questions regarding their businesses. Most were small industrial or warehouse businesses. Of these most have been in the area for over 10 years and expect to remain at their existing locations for the foreseeable future. All were please with their locations, mostly due to the accessibility of the area and its central location in the Richmond metropolitan area. When asked whether they would be interested in working with a local liaison or coordinator to connect local workers with jobs in local businesses, most said they would. Some businesses said they could not participate in such an arrangement because of preexisting relationships with temporary labor agencies or the Virginia Employment Commission. Most, however, indicated that such a program might not be valuable at this time as they have no intention of hiring any new employees in the near future. Most businesses were pleased with the improvements occurring in the area, especially decreases in crime. A few did mention continuing problems with litter and lack of responsiveness from the City in regarding to infrastructure problems, such as sidewalk repairs.
SWOT Analysis

Strengths
- Strong civic associations in both neighborhoods.
- Central location within the region and within Richmond.
- Walkable urban streetscapes along most neighborhood streets.
- Easy access to transit.
- Significant new investment in housing in recent years.
- Access to retail shops and services within the area.

Weaknesses
- Numerous vacant and abandoned properties give negative feel to some parts of study area.
- Criminal activity and perceptions of safety still a significant concern.
- Lack of good pedestrian scale lighting.
- Influx of students to low cost housing has hampered efforts to increase owner occupied residency in Carver especially.
- Traffic from some adjacent industrial uses negatively affects neighborhoods.

Opportunities
- Vacant parcels present opportunities to develop new single family housing.
- Additional green space in both neighborhoods.
- Connections between employers in area and neighborhoods could provide needed job opportunities for residents.
- Redevelop vacant properties on edge of neighborhoods to encourage students to rent there instead of in the core of the neighborhoods.

Threats
- Lack of any business association for the area.
- Rising real estate taxes forcing long time residents to leave.
- Occasional neighborhood tension between new and old residents.
WEST LEIGH STREET CORRIDOR PLAN
**Vision**
The West Leigh Street Corridor is a safe corridor anchored by two strong neighborhoods where residents are comfortable walking along the well lit and tree lined streets, shoppers come to find clean and successful stores and local businesses provide jobs to the community.

**Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1.** The land use pattern reinforces the strengths of the residential neighborhoods and provides employment opportunities in the adjacent retail and industrial areas.

- **Objective 1.01** Protect the core of each residential neighborhood as single family residential.
- **Objective 1.02** Provide a range of housing opportunities in the study area overall by allowing multifamily housing around the edges of each neighborhood.
- **Objective 1.03** Retain industrial uses in the southwest corner of the study area and north of the railroad tracks along Dinneen Street. Transition remaining residential uses in the area north of the railroad tracks to industrial use.

**Goal 2.** The urban grid system provides a safe street environment for walkers, bikers, transit users and drivers.

- **Objective 2.01** Decrease traffic speed along major roadways within study area, such as Leigh and Harrison, through use of proper traffic calming treatments, such as curb extensions, roundabouts and four-way stops.
- **Objective 2.02** Improve transit rider experience through improved bus stop amenities.
- **Objective 2.03** Enhance the pedestrian experience through improving existing sidewalks and building new sidewalks where none exist.
- **Objective 2.04** Add street furniture, such as trash cans and benches, near activity centers and along important pedestrian corridors to increase pedestrian comfort and reduce litter.
- **Objective 2.05** Improve and add new street lighting to enhance safety and comfort and discourages criminal activity.
- **Objective 2.06** Manage on-street parking within the neighborhood cores to the benefit of residents over visitors.

**Goal 3.** Vacant properties are reused or redeveloped in ways that reinforce the strengths of the area.

- **Objective 3.01** Improve the core of each neighborhood with new or rehabilitated single family housing.
- **Objective 3.02** Assure that all new single family housing conforms to the architectural style of the block on which it is built.
- **Objective 3.03** Hold property owners accountable for the safety and condition of their properties.
- **Objective 3.04** Add public green space in convenient and safe places to provide additional recreational and socializing opportunities to residents.

**Goal 4.** Carver and Newtowne-West are safe communities where the threat of crime does not hinder residents or visitors from enjoying the amenities of the community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 4.01</th>
<th>Increase resident participation in crime prevention.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4.02</td>
<td>Start or increase walking or driving crime patrols by neighborhood residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4.03</td>
<td>Work with area businesses to ensure their properties are properly secured and lighted during non-business hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4.04</td>
<td>Enhance relationships with local police through community activities that develop and further communication between residents and police.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal 5.** Residents are connected to the larger community through interaction with each other and connections to businesses and institutions around the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 5.01</th>
<th>Increase resident participation in both civic leagues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective 5.02</td>
<td>Continue to strengthen the partnership between Carver, Newtowne-West and VCU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 5.03</td>
<td>Connect residents to local employment opportunities with area businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 5.04</td>
<td>Develop relationships between area civic leagues and VCU students through expanded partnership efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plan
The corridor plan is a set of general and specific recommendations to bring the vision, goals and objectives to reality. The Illustrative Plan, in Map 9, shows the overall vision for how the area will look upon implementation of this plan.

Land Use
Significant housing development has occurred in the study area in recent years and the land use plan encourages the continuation of that trend. The land use plan envisions a strengthening of the core of each neighborhood by maintaining the single family residential nature at the core of both. Recognizing the trends in redevelopment along the north side of Marshall Street, the plan recommends the remaining industrial and warehouse uses transition to multi-family residential. Residents in Carver understandably do not want more students in the neighborhood, but unfortunately the demand for off-campus student housing around VCU is not likely to abate in the near future. Provision of additional rental housing along the Marshall Street corridor can hopefully absorb some of that demand, discouraging students from living in single family properties in the core of the neighborhood.

Along Broad Street the plan does not expect significant change except between Allen Avenue and Lodge Street. The old Sears building, currently used by C.F. Sauer Company, is a blank wall along that block creates a dead space along Broad Street. Reuse of this building, or complete replacement, is necessary to liven the streetscape and add activity to this section of Broad Street. The plan envisions a mixed use development at this site, with housing above retail. This type of development would bring new activity to this stretch of Broad Street, making it safer and more pedestrian friendly.

The other significant land use change recommended is a change from industrial to housing for the area between Lombardy and Bowe north of Leigh Street. This area is an underused industrial area between the Hartshorn Community and Maggie Walker. With its proximity to the Kroger and being along a bus line, this area would be a strong candidate for a senior housing development.

Lastly, the plan recommends that the area north of the CSX railroad continue to transition toward exclusively industrial use. Currently there are only a few residences left in this area and since it will be cut off from the rest of Newtowne-West when Dinneen Street is closed at the railroad, there is little point in maintaining residential development in that area. To ease the transition, residents in that area should be offered the opportunity to buy into new housing developed in the core of the Newtowne-West neighborhood.

Zoning
Most zoning in the study area is acceptable and fits with the existing or planned land uses. Some areas, however, should be rezoned. All VCU and VUU properties should be rezoned to Institutional. The parcels fronting Broad Street not used by VCU, should be zoned B-3, general business, or UB, urban business. The parcel currently occupied by the renovated Southern Stove Works should be rezoned R-53, multifamily. The area between Lombardy and Bowe, north of Leigh that is currently zoned industrial should be zoned R-53, multifamily, to reflect the plan for new housing in this area. The area at the southeast corner of Norton and Clay Streets currently zoned industrial should be rezoned R-7, single family, reflecting the plan to ensure the core of the neighborhood remains single family. The remaining areas of industrial zoning in Carver than have been redeveloped for multifamily use should be rezoned R-53 to properly reflect those changes.
Traffic Circulation

A major concern of residents in the area is the speed and volume of traffic and for Newtowne-West residents this is a particular issue on Leigh Street. A series of traffic calming measures is recommended for Leigh Street to help reduce traffic speed and ensure the safety of all users: pedestrians, drivers and bicyclists. First, to address the problem of excessive commercial traffic along Leigh Street, especially to and from the JRBL facility, Clay Street in the southwestern section of the study area, should be extended behind the old Sears building now used by C.F. Sauer Company, to connect to Allen Avenue. Along this extension, access to the JRBL parking facility should be provided to allow busses access directly from Clay Street. This extension will allow JRBL vehicles to bypass Leigh Street and Broad Street when coming from I-95 at the Boulevard/Hermitage exit. Busses could therefore use Clay Street through the largely industrial area to access Hermitage bypassing the neighborhood along Leigh Street and any traffic congestion along Broad Street.

To discourage speeding along Leigh Street, especially between Hermitage Road and Allen Avenue, Leigh Street should be narrowed to a two lane facility with on-street parking on the north side of the street. The newly narrowed street would run generally along the section of the existing street south of the existing median. This would discourage speeding and provide a continuous two-lane section through nearly the entire study area.

To further reduce speed along this section, a roundabout, similar to the one at Monument Avenue and Allen Avenue, should be constructed at the intersection of Leigh Street and Hermitage Road. Based FHWA informational guide, a two-lane 150 to 180 foot diameter roundabout could adequately serve traffic at this intersection given the estimated daily traffic along Leigh Street and Hermitage Road. This sized roundabout would provide continuous movement of traffic through the intersection at a reasonable speed of about 25mph. Figure 12 shows an example two lane roundabout. Such a roundabout would also be an excellent opportunity to create a western gateway feature for the Newtowne-West neighborhood.

Another means to reduce speed along this section of Leigh Street is to add an all way stop at the intersection with Elizabeth Street. Here an all-way stop would help slow traffic on Leigh, provide an exit point for residents and make it easier for buses from Maggie Walker to enter Leigh Street. To ensure adequate distance between stopping points along Leigh, the current all way stop at Allen would be converted to a simple stop controlled intersection, with Allen Avenue required to stop, but to add an all way stop at Dinneen Street. This would force traffic on Leigh Street to stop at least twice between Hermitage and Lombardy. With traffic stopping at both adjacent intersections, traffic from Allen Avenue should have enough opportunities to turn.

Methods to calm traffic along Leigh Street east Allen Avenue would be to add curb extensions, also known as bulb-outs, at Harrison Street and Kinney Street and to provide a continuous tree lined streetscape along the entire length of the street. This would require planting new trees along both

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8 Ibid. p. 133.
sides of Leigh between Elizabeth and Lombardy and from Kinney to Norton. Between Norton and Harrison, trees are needed only on the north side of the street. Additional curb extensions should be placed at the intersections of Harrison and Clay and Harrison and Marshall. Extensions in these locations would narrow crossing distances for pedestrians and calm traffic. Adding new street trees along Harrison Street would also help to calm traffic. Trees on the east side of Harrison would have to be of a lower growing type as the overhead utility lines and narrow sidewalk preclude adding trees that would grow too large.

Lastly, an important improvement for purposes of traffic circulation would be the grade separation of the Hermitage Road railroad crossing. With the proximity of the CSX Acca Rail Yards, just northwest of this crossing, many trains heading northwest tend to block this crossing for an excessive length of time. Given the proximity of the Richmond Ambulance Authority and the Fire Station on Hermitage Road, this is a significant issue for emergency response. Furthermore, commercial traffic that might use Hermitage Road to access the Interstate from facilities south of the railroad are discouraged from doing so, since they might be severely delayed at this crossing. Thus, this crossing encourages commercial traffic to use Leigh Street to access the Interstate at Belvidere or the Boulevard. Therefore, converting this to a grade separated crossing should be a priority for a number of reasons.
West Leigh Street Corridor Plan

Map 12: Carver Improvements

- Intersection Improvements
- Improved Crosswalks
- Curb Extensions

Created by Scudder Wagg, MURP Program, April 2008. Source: City of Richmond GIS Database.
Parking

Parking is a sensitive issue in both neighborhoods. Most commercial and industrial properties in the study area have ample parking for their needs but on-street parking is heavily used in the residential areas, often by non-residents. Currently only certain portions of Carver require permits to park for more than one hour. These restrictions should be extended to all on-street parking in front of residential properties in the study area. Also, all new development must have adequate off-street parking when possible. For single family housing, at least one space should be available at the rear of each property. For new multifamily housing, at least one space must be provided for each bedroom. These requirements will help minimize the added demand for on-street parking that new housing could bring.

Sidewalks and Streetscape

While most of the study area has adequate sidewalks, there are a number of areas where sidewalks are missing or severely damaged. Missing sidewalks in the predominately industrial area are not of much concern. The missing and damaged segments within the core of the neighborhoods, however, are an issue. Where sidewalks are missing or damaged in front of empty lots, it is likely more financially responsible to wait for new development to replace the existing sidewalk or build new sidewalks. In other places, where no new development is likely, the City needs to repair existing sidewalks or install new sidewalks to ensure the consistency of the pedestrian network of the study area.

Three areas of missing sidewalk warrant particular mention, as their issues are particularly sever or unique. The first area is the section of missing sidewalk along the east side of Kinney Street between Marshall and Clay Streets. Here, there is a gravel path, but cars park illegally at an angle, as seen in Figure 14. While this parking situation is illegal currently, it does provide additional parking in an area with scarce parking. Thus, to remedy the lack of sidewalks while maintaining as much parking as possible, Kinney Street in this block should be converted to a one-way street southbound, with parallel parking on the west side of the street and back-in angle parking on the east side. By narrowing the street to one 11 foot travel lane, enough space is available for a sidewalk of about 5 feet in width. Figure 15 shows an example of back in angle parking in Vancouver, Canada.

The second area is the redeveloped Firestone Building at Lombardy and Broad Streets. The existing building stretches all the way to the curb along Lombardy Street, leaving no space for a sidewalk. Pedestrians, thus, must step off the curb, into the bicycle lane, and walk along the busy street. Figure 16 illustrates the problem in the area. The City and property owner need to develop a solution to this problem. As seen in Figure 16, there is an opportunity to create a pass-through within the building for pedestrians by removing the wall of windows near the center of the photo and creating an arcade like
walkway through the building. This would remove some retail space from the building, but would significantly improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in the area.

The third area of concern is Catherine Street. From Harrison Street to Bowe Street, Catherine Street resembles more of an alley than a street, as seen in Figure 17. Given its narrow right-of-way and lack of alleys, significant reconstruction is necessary to turn Catherine Street into a decent residential street. The Illustrative Plan shows approximate areas for alleys to provide rear access to most properties in the blocks along Catherine Street. The other problem, however, is the narrow nature of the existing street. A mix of attached and detached single family housing is recommended by this plan for this section of Catherine Street. To provide adequate access to the front of all properties, this plan recommends a reconstruction of Catherine Street in the Dutch Style of “Woonerf” street or shared street. This concept, as seen in Figure 18, creates a shared street where motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists all share the same space. Along with some on-street parking and properly placed street trees, the shared street can provide access for all users within a narrow space. Expanding the existing street significantly to provide one lane of travel, one lane of on-street parking and adjacent sidewalks would require excessive right-of-way and would make it very difficult to develop reasonably sized homes on any remaining parcels. The shared-street concept, however, provides an alternative to address this problem.

**Streetscape**

In addition to improving the sidewalks, streetscape elements are necessary to enhance the pedestrian experience along major corridors in the area. First, consistent street trees are critical to providing shade in the summer, calming traffic and generally enhancing the beauty of the area. Also, street furniture at strategic locations is important for pedestrians. Of greatest need in the study area are more benches at bus stops and more, better quality trash cans along pedestrian corridors. Thus, at major bus stops along Leigh Street, benches should be added by GRTC both for their patrons and for pedestrians in general. Also, while there are some public trash cans on sidewalks in the study area, more should be added along Leigh and Harrison Streets and those that exist should be replaced with ones like those in Figure 19.

High quality streetscapes also include proper street trees and pedestrian scale lighting. Adding street trees has already been discussed for the major corridors, but it is also important to add trees, where possible, along neighborhood streets to beautify the street and increase pedestrian comfort. According to Dan Burden, Street
trees should generally be placed every 15 to 30 feet between curb and the sidewalk.\textsuperscript{9} Based on a GIS analysis, adding trees at these intervals along major corridors and neighborhood streets would require about 750 additional trees. Some of these trees could be added by developers as properties redevelop. Along major corridors, the City should take the lead in ensuring fully tree lined streets. Within the neighborhoods, property owners and the neighborhood associations could work with the Urban Forestry Division of the Department of Public Works to develop a detailed plan for adding trees. Specifically, where empty tree wells exist, property owners and the neighborhood associations can work through the Adopt a Tree Program to add trees individually. Under this program, property owners who pay $100 and commit to caring for a tree can get a new tree planted by the City in front of their homes.

Also critically important to improving pedestrian comfort, and general safety of each neighborhood, is proper street lighting. Currently, most street lighting in the area is typical cobra head lighting designed to light the street, such as the one in Figure 20. Better pedestrian street lighting along major corridors should be more pedestrian scale, like that in Figure 21.

\textbf{Housing}

One of the greatest challenges affecting the area is the increased presence of students residing in the community. Recent redevelopments of old industrial buildings to apartments, such as the Biggs Building, Eagle Mill, Firestone Building, reflect the increasing desire of students to live in the area. More problematic, however, are students renting single family homes and duplexes where residents would prefer to see owner occupied housing. It is likely that continued increases in enrollment at VCU will only add to the pressure to redevelop vacant industrial and commercial space into multifamily housing. There is no direct way to forbid property owners from renting to students. Nevertheless, one means to attempt to absorb demand for off-campus student housing is to allow redevelopment of Marshall Street industrial properties to multifamily use. While this may seem counter-intuitive in terms of discouraging students from living in the area, it would be beneficial overall by adding more rental property to the market. This, in turn, would help prevent a scarcity of apartments from driving up rents in the area and thus encouraging owners of single family homes to rent to students. Figure 22 shows Eagle Mill Apartments, a well done reuse of an industrial property for apartments. Any newly built multifamily structures along Marshall Street

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure20.png}
\caption{Figure 20: Typical Cobra Head Lighting}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure21.png}
\caption{Figure 21: Preferred Street Lamps}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure22.png}
\caption{Figure 22: Example of Industrial Property Reused for Apartments}
\end{figure}

should have similar design and scale, meaning 2 to 4 stories, similar architectural features and many windows.

There are many opportunities for redevelopment within both neighborhoods as there are many vacant lots still remaining. There are more than 80 vacant parcels within the study area that could be rebuilt with single family housing. A major challenge, however, in ensuring the integrity of the study area is the architectural style of any new housing built. Most, but not all, recently developed single family housing has fit with the predominate architectural styles of the neighborhoods. To ensure all future housing does fit, this plan recommends a design overlay district be implemented within each neighborhood. This design overlay district would operate like an extra layer of zoning and would provide architectural guidelines for owners and developers of vacant properties. In 1996, The West of The Boulevard Civic Association, now Museum District Association, worked with the City to develop appropriate design guidelines to ensure new development mixed properly with the original styles of housing in the area. Their efforts culminated in the enactment of the West of The Boulevard Design Overlay District. The guidelines reflect the architectural diversity of the area while delineating important factors, such as setback and style, so that new development will fit with existing. This plan recommends that the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) and the Newtowne-West Civic League (NWCL) develop their own guidelines. In Carver, development of the guidelines could draw from the existing historic inventory of Carver taken as part of the nomination process for the Carver Residential Historic District. Figure 23 shows well designed new housing along Catherine Street east of the study area that would also fit the architectural styles in western Carver. Figure 24 shows recently built homes in Newtowne-West that fit the architectural styles of the area.

With additional single family residential development in the core of each neighborhood and the potential for new multifamily units in strategic places, the entire study area could add upwards of 300 additional housing units. Assuming vacancy rates declined from the Census 2000 level of 20% to a more reasonable level of 10%, the overall population of the study area would increase to over 2,000.

To ensure the pressures of new development do not push long time residents from their homes due to rising assessments, the civic associations should work with older, low income homeowners to determine if they are eligible for the City’s Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled Program. This program provides for a reduction in the taxes due on property owned by persons over 65 or disabled who also earn less than $50,000 a year. The civic associations can work to educate residents about this program and assist residents in filing applications. Residents and the civic associations should also work to ensure this program is fully funded to guarantee residents receive the maximum amount for which they are eligible.

To assist older residents who wish to remain in their homes but have difficulty with accessibility, weatherization and general maintenance, the City and the civic associations should work with Elder Homes and other non-profit groups to provide assistance to older homeowners who have difficulty maintaining their properties. These organizations can not only assist with general maintenance, but also help with weatherization, thereby reducing utility costs for these residents.

Additionally, for those seniors who may no longer want to maintain a single family home, a new senior housing facility in the area would provide another housing option while allowing them to maintain
social ties to the neighborhood. The area on both sides of Moore Street between Lombardy and Bowe Streets would be a good redevelopment location for a senior housing facility. It is between both neighborhoods, only one block from a large grocery store, pharmacy and other retail outlets.

**Public Space**

Another important addition to the study area is additional open space. Currently in Newtowne-West, the only recreational space is a small playground near the corner of Dinneen and Moore Streets. The plan recommends expanding this space to include the vacant parcel adjacent to it and the industrial parcel to the north of it. The expanded park would be over an acre and should include at least one basketball court and a picnic area residents could use for family or neighborhood gatherings. Figure 25 shows an example of such a park. Additionally, access to the recreational facilities at Maggie Walker, such as the tennis courts, track and playing fields, would provide significantly more recreational space to Newtowne-West residents. This plan, therefore, recommends that Maggie Walker and the City work out a space sharing agreement to allow residents to use those facilities when not in use by the school.

In Carver there is Smith-Peters Park on Catherine Street, east of the study area and a community garden at the corner of Leigh and Kinney Streets. This plan recommends an additional community garden at the corner of Clay and Kinney Streets on a small vacant parcel that would be difficult to develop. The new community garden would be very similar to the existing one seen in Figure 26.

**Safety**

Continued improvement in the safety of the neighborhoods is critical to the continued revitalization of the area. To that end, increasing resident and business participation in crime prevention is critical. While some recommendations, such a better street lighting, should help, it is critical that cooperation between police and the neighborhood civic associations continue and increase to help reduce criminal activity. Starting or enhancing walking or driving crime patrols to provide additional eyes on the street is an important step to increasing neighborhood safety. Such programs require regular volunteers to walk or drive around the neighborhood during specified hours. The specific areas or hours would be determined based on community feedback and recent criminal incidents.

Encouraging residents to report any suspect activity is also important. Developing relationships with local businesses and encouraging them to properly secure their properties is also critical. Unsecured businesses, especially in the more industrial areas are easy targets but also potential activity centers for criminal activity such as drug dealing. One method to deal with such properties is to consider nominating such properties for the CAPS (Community Assisted Public Safety) program. For properties with multiple problems, such as high criminal activity and code violations, the CAPS program can address these issues simultaneously.

Most important, however, is building and maintaining relationships between local residents and the police. Interaction between residents and police at community events can build trust and increase the likelihood that residents will work with police when criminal activity does occur in the neighborhood. Thus, when feasible, police should be included in community activities such as community meeting and celebrations.
VCU is already involved in improving public safety in Carver as the VCU Police do patrol within the Carver neighborhood. With VCU’s expanding footprint now including the Sportsbacker Stadium and potentially new athletic facilities in the same area, VCU Police could extend their patrols to include the Hermitage Road corridor and Newtowne-West. These additional patrols would, at the very least, provide some additional eyes on the street at times and provide an additional resource for reducing crime in the area.

Also, area residents can take more steps to reduce the potential for being victims of crime by implementing some features of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). In particular, in areas where homes are close together, fencing the area between homes would lessen the opportunities for would be criminals to access one’s property. Improvements in street lighting, as already recommended, would also discourage criminal activity. Improvements to landscaping and fencing on individual properties would also help discourage crime. Using proper landscaping to frame the boundaries between public and private space and building appropriate fencing that separates space but does not block persons from seeing the space encourages natural surveillance by all users and discourages crime. Appropriate landscaping along front yards and low fencing around back yards would be the most appropriate means to delineate private and public spaces while maintaining natural surveillance in all parts of the residential neighborhoods.

**Community**

One of the most important aspects of improving the area is developing a sense of community, pride and ownership among residents, business owners and others. Thus, encouraging resident participation in the civic associations is important to ensuring the vitality of these neighborhoods. Some incentives already exist for membership, such as the ability to use the Siegel Center Gym. VCU has provided funding for parking permits for Carver residents in the first year of the program’s existence. Continuing that funding, but only for participants in the civic association, would encourage more participation in association activities. This, along with extending Carver-VCU Partnership activities to address more issues related to senior would help extend and solidify the relationship between the university and the neighborhood. Furthermore, reaching out to include participation of Newtowne-West residents in these activities would encourage more cooperation and interaction between these two adjacent neighborhoods.

Another aspect of the relationship between the university and the neighborhoods is the issue of students residing in the neighborhood. Through the Office of Off-Campus Housing, VCU should encourage off-campus students to be more active in the communities in which they live. Activities such as the Commuter Coffee Breaks, the University could work to encourage more student participation in their respective communities. The off-campus housing offices of other universities, such as George Washington University and Ohio State University include resources that encourage participation of students in their communities. Ohio State University has a Community Ambassador Program in which students help to build relationships among off-campus students and community stakeholders.10

Lastly, the relationship between area businesses and residents is important to a flourishing urban neighborhood. Currently, residents have a few issues with area businesses, mostly related to property upkeep or commercial traffic. Addressing these issues will require dialogue between residents and the businesses. One way to improve the relationship between local businesses and residents is to develop employment partnerships. A liaison between local businesses and the civic associations could provide an avenue for dialogue and an opportunity for businesses to connect with local workers. Connecting local workers with local jobs has many benefits including decreased unemployment, simpler commutes for workers and an improved relationship between the neighborhood and businesses as the residents could see direct benefits.

10 Off-Campus Housing Office, Ohio State University, Retrieved April 16, 2008, [http://offcampus.osu.edu/ambassadors.asp](http://offcampus.osu.edu/ambassadors.asp)
Implementation

Implementation of the West Leigh Street Corridor Plan will require coordinated action from many groups, individuals and government agencies. The Plan proposed has the advantage of advancing general trends already occurring in the area, such as the increasing housing development in the area. Ensuring redevelopment and rehabilitation continue is a critical element of this Plan. To fully implement this plan, however, requires its adoption by relevant groups and the City as well as support from residents, businesses and the City. Adoption of the plan should begin with the two civic associations where the Plan can be reviewed, understood and support for it developed. Once sufficient support is cultivated, the Plan can be adopted by the City as an amendment to the City’s Master Plan. Adoption by the City makes the document binding and provides opportunities for funding through the Capital Improvement Plan. The second major step to implementing the plan is to change the zoning of properties as recommended in the Plan.

Schedule

Table 9 shows the breakdown of recommended improvements, those responsible for completing or ensuring improvements are made, funding sources and the timeline for implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Complete</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Overlay District</td>
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<td>Year 2</td>
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<td>Curb Extensions</td>
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<td>CIP, SRTS</td>
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<td>Year 2</td>
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<td>Improved Crosswalks</td>
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<td>Benches and Trash Cans</td>
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<td>Parking Permits</td>
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<td>VCU, Residents</td>
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<td>Year 5</td>
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<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
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<td>Community Ambassador Program</td>
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<td>VCU</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
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<td>Crime Patrols</td>
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<td>CACIL, Plot Renters</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CACIL=Carver Area Civic Improvement League, NWCL = Newtowne-West Civic League, VDOT = Virginia Department of Transportation
DRPT=Department of Rail and Public Transit, GRTC = Greater Richmond Transit Company

West Leigh Street Corridor Plan
May 2008
**Funding**

The City’s Capital Improvement Plan should be amended to include many of the recommendations of this Plan, including the improvements to Leigh Street and the Hermitage Roundabout, street trees on the major corridors, new street lighting and sidewalk improvements. VDOT funding could also be sought for the Hermitage Road Roundabout and railroad overpass. Property owners and the civic associations should work in conjunction with the City’s Adopt a Tree program to fund additional street trees on neighborhood streets. GRTC would be the best source for funding additional street furniture at bus stops. RRHA is already active in redevelopment in both neighborhoods and is the best source for spurring redevelopment of vacant properties and funding rehabilitation efforts. Other programs which could provide funding for recommended improvements include:

Safe Routes to School (SRTS): Federally funded and state administered program for making pedestrian and bicycle related improvements within a two mile radius of elementary and middle schools to encourage students and others to walk or bike to school. With Carver Elementary School at the corner of Harrison and Leigh Streets, there is clearly an opportunity to use SRTS funding for crosswalk, sidewalk and other streetscape improvements in both Carver and Newtowne-West. An approved SRTS plan would be required to get infrastructure funding.

Enterprise Zone Tax Credits: The entire study area is within the North Richmond Enterprise Zone and qualifies for both job creation and real property improvement tax credits. Job creation credits are available to firm that pay over 175% of minimum wage, provide health benefits and are not retail, personal service or food and beverage related businesses. Real property investment credits are available for industrial, commercial or mixed use developments.