

GREATER SIX POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD

RICHMOND, VA



About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission: shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, with members in 80 countries.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

About ULI Virginia

ULI Virginia serves Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Charlottesville and has over 400 members. As a preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI Virginia facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, and regional leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

ULI District Council Leadership

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Technical Assistance Program:
(TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed its members' technical expertise to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Tampa Bay area. Drawing from our seasoned professional membership base, ULI Tampa Bay offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and presenting it to the panel. TAP members typically spend two days developing an understanding of the problem, coming up with recommendations, and contributing those findings and recommendations to the sponsoring organization.

The focus of this TAP program for Woodberry aligns with the Urban Land Institute's Net Zero Imperative, a multiyear program providing research and technical assistance to public and private-sector leaders to accelerate decarbonization in the built environment through a combination of technical panels and long-term engagement. The goal of the effort is to help owners, cities, and other relevant constituents reduce or eliminate carbon emissions by providing concrete ideas and strategies to the beneficiaries of the panels and the general public.

Panelists at Work!



Acknowledgments

ULI Virginia is grateful to the City of Richmond and Councilwoman Ellen Robertson for inviting ULI Virginia to participate in this effort. Special thanks to the following individuals and local businesses for their assistance to the TAP team before and during the program:

- Councilwoman Ellen F. Robertson – City of Richmond City Council
- Kevin Vonck – Planning and Development Review Director – City of Richmond
- Marianne Pitts – Deputy Director | Planning & Policy – City of Richmond
- Erica Banks – Planning and Development Review – City of Richmond
- Megan Rollins – Owner, Boaz and Ruth
- Kitchen Magician Catering

The Six Points Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Team

The TAP panel was selected from Urban Land Institute (ULI) membership based upon their unique qualifications, subject matter expertise, and project experience relative to the problem statement. The following subject matter expertise was the basis for panel selection:

- Economic Development
- Community Planning
- Land Planning and Site Design
- Landscape Architecture
- Community Engagement
- Transportation Planning & Traffic Engineering

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT & TAP OBJECTIVES

After years of disinvestment in the Six Points neighborhood commercial node what strategies and resources can be employed to encourage people to invest their resources in the greater Six Points neighborhood? How can the community create a place that offers outstanding business opportunities and a vibrant quality of life?

The City of Richmond engaged the ULI Virginia Technical Assistance Panel to elicit ideas, prioritize actions, and assign tasks that can help shape a vision and strategy to improve the built environment in the study area.

SIX POINTS - HISTORICAL REFERENCE



SPONSOR QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

The sponsor questions that follow formed the framework for the panel’s approach to the study. The panel attempted to answer each question specifically during their deliberations and capture their responses within the final presentation to the sponsor on day two of the program. The intent of this report is to respond to each of these questions in broad terms throughout the entirety of this document and to include a summary response to each question in **Section V** within.

1. *What differentiates the Six Points neighborhood from other Richmond neighborhoods?*
2. *What does our future business corridor look like?*
3. *What types of housing products are needed in this neighborhood? What types of products can address “transitional” or “starter” housing for young adults moving out on their own? How do we invite broad change without causing displacement of disadvantaged and legacy residents?*
4. *What are opportunities for “placemaking” in the neighborhood?*

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

- **Community Champions** – There are a limited number of neighborhood groups and individuals passionate about bringing change to the Six Points area. The opportunity exists to build a more robust organizational structure to bring organizations, civic associations, key stakeholders, and the city into alignment around a vision for the future of the Six Points area.
- **New Investment** – Evidence of new construction and infill housing activity reflects demand characterized by an appreciation in the marketplace for housing and community assets such as affordability and location in the study area. The associated opportunity is to further enhance demand and investment by improving the commercial core serving the neighborhood.
- **Connectivity To Community Assets** - Examples of nearby assets include parks, schools, and greenways. However, these are only valued community assets with good accessibility and connectivity via transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure.
- **Public Transit** – Local bus routes are an important asset. There is much opportunity for improvement with improved routes and headways and enhanced bus stops to connect residents to goods and services beyond walking distance.
- **Vacant and Underutilized Land** - Underutilized (i.e surface parking; underperforming commercial), undeveloped, or vacant lots located strategically in the core Six Points area represent both an asset and an opportunity. Developing a strategy to gain control or work with current owners to create public green space or an improved commercial district could be a catalyst for revitalization.
- **Enterprise Zone and CARE Zone** – Access to these two programs offering resources and funding aimed at revitalizing areas of need is an asset that can be better leveraged with additional public education about these programs.
- **Natural Resources** – Nearby Shockoe Creek and wetland conservation areas along the Richmond-Henrico Turnpike are important natural resource areas impacting the overall environmental health of the community and offering recreational opportunities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: BARRIERS TO CHANGE

- **Lack of Organized Community Advocacy** – There are many passionate and motivated people and organizations in the community but they are less effective as agents of change in the absence of a well-organized community advocacy to focus on developing a coordinated vision and implementation plan.
- **Public Perception**: Public perception of the neighborhood by residents, local business operators, and visitors as an aging, high-crime, blighted area can be a barrier to attracting new investment. Aging building inventory and vacant and blighted properties create visual clutter and contribute to this perception.
- **Transportation Challenges** - Wide Street sections, poorly performing intersections, and a lack of multi-modal infrastructure can be disincentives to attracting new investment.
- **Lack of Neighborhood Goods and Services** – The core commercial node in Six Points does not serve the majority of residents in the area. In some cases active businesses take advantage of those lacking the resources to access better options for convenient and cost-effective goods and services such as healthcare, employment centers, healthy and affordable food options, art and culture related activities.
- **Lack of Community Social Spaces** – Vibrant neighborhoods are marked by places of social activity and commercial nodes that inherently have a social aspect to them as places to see and meet your neighbors on a regular basis. These places are largely missing from this area including the lack of a significant central gathering space in the heart of the community.
- **Poor Public Realm** – The physical and aesthetic condition of streets and sidewalks is critical to our perception of place and for attracting investment. The primary streets have wide street sections connecting to Six Points but have narrow sidewalks, overhead utility lines, and limited urban tree canopy. Gaps in the building massing and poorly maintained facades add to a poorly perceived public realm.
- **Zoning Updates** - Existing zoning may lack flexibility in height limits, uses, and densities that may be beneficial to attracting new investment. The city is currently undergoing an update to the zoning ordinance which presents an opportunity to plan for change.

C. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS: the following recommendations were deemed the most important to begin the process of change. They are all interrelated in many aspects but the order of execution is important to a successful process.

Recommendation 1: Proactively Organize and Advocate

ACTION: Develop a Framework and Culture for Robust Community Engagement.

Recommendation 2: Articulate The Vision

ACTION: Convene a process to create a vision for the community with robust community engagement and leadership.

Recommendation 3: Create Guiding Documents

ACTION: Develop a Small Area Plan and other guiding documents to support the vision.

Recommendation 4: Develop An Economic Development Strategy

ACTION: Develop an economic development plan specifically aligned with the neighborhood vision.

SUPPORTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS: Supportive Recommendations do not imply a chronological order of action but may occur concurrently in support of the priority actions, assuming they do not distract focus or drain resources away from those priorities.

- 1. Address barriers to change:** Modify zoning to support the neighborhood vision.
- 2. Address barriers to change:** Provide more, and convenient, resources to potential investors to help mitigate barriers related to funding and the time and cost related to navigating the entitlements and permitting process.
- 3. Address food scarcity:** Develop strategies to attract local businesses offering affordable and healthy food options, including access to neighborhood grocery stores, farmer's markets, community food banks, and food co-ops.
- 4. Improve the public realm:** Develop funding streams to enhance pedestrian zones and building facades, including tree planting and landscaping programs to mitigate heat gain.
- 5. Improve wayfinding and branding elements:** Develop design standards for a unified system of signage to help create a visible brand for the neighborhood.
- 6. Implement a Catalyst Project:** Consider partnering with experienced developers with the resources to determine the feasibility of the Benefield Building, or similar projects, toward implementation.
- 7. Policy review and enforcement:** Ensure that adequate policies are in place to address illegal activities and blighted properties and commit to code and law enforcement toward achieving tangible results.
- 8. Main Street America Strategies:** Apply proven strategies from the Main Street America program approach to revitalization including **Promotion, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Organizations.**

II. THE CHALLENGE: TAP PROCESS & FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

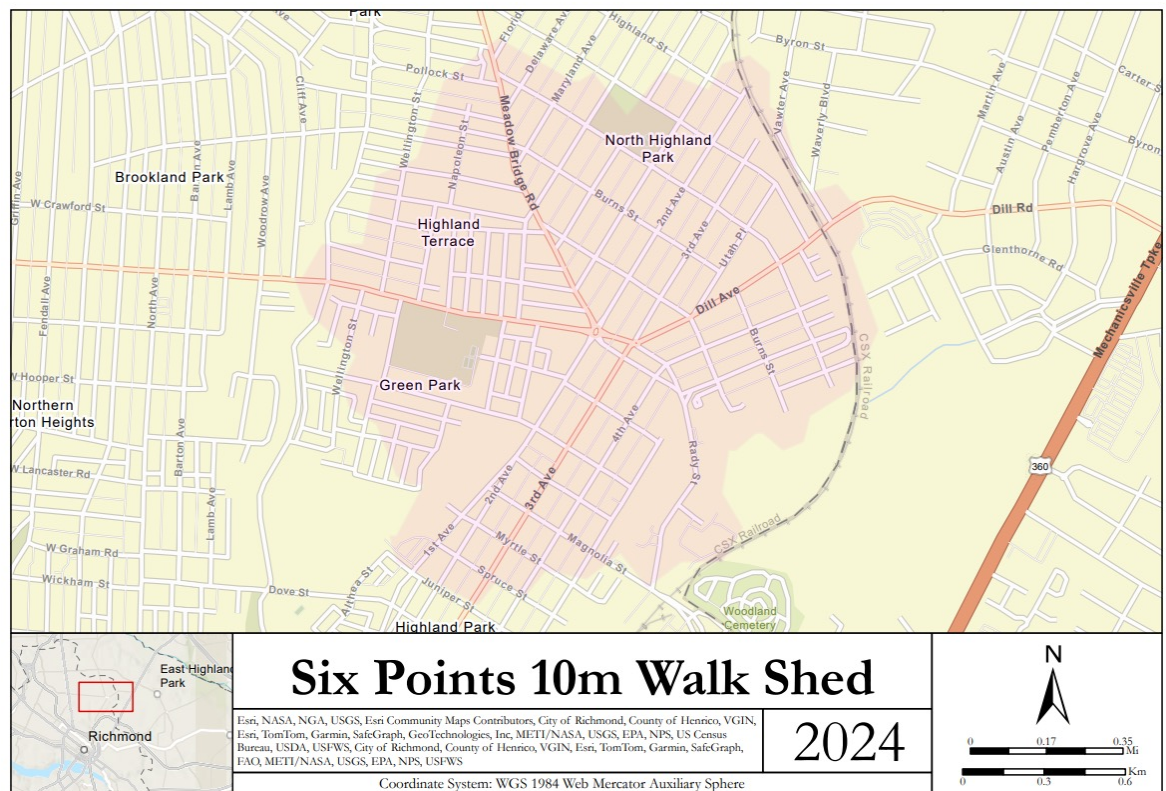
II.a SPONSOR VISION AND TAP OBJECTIVES

Many years of disinvestment in the Six Points neighborhood and redevelopment pressure from adjacent areas in the city have resulted in a complex neighborhood dynamic with a diverse population, a variety of housing options, changing community demographics, rising housing costs, and a challenged commercial corridor. The City of Richmond engaged the ULI Virginia Technical Assistance Panel to generate ideas, prioritize actions, and assign tasks that can help shape a vision and strategy to improve the built environment in the study area. The panel was asked to explore strategies and resources that could be employed to encourage people to invest their resources in the greater Six Points neighborhood toward creation of a place that offers outstanding business opportunities and a vibrant quality of life.

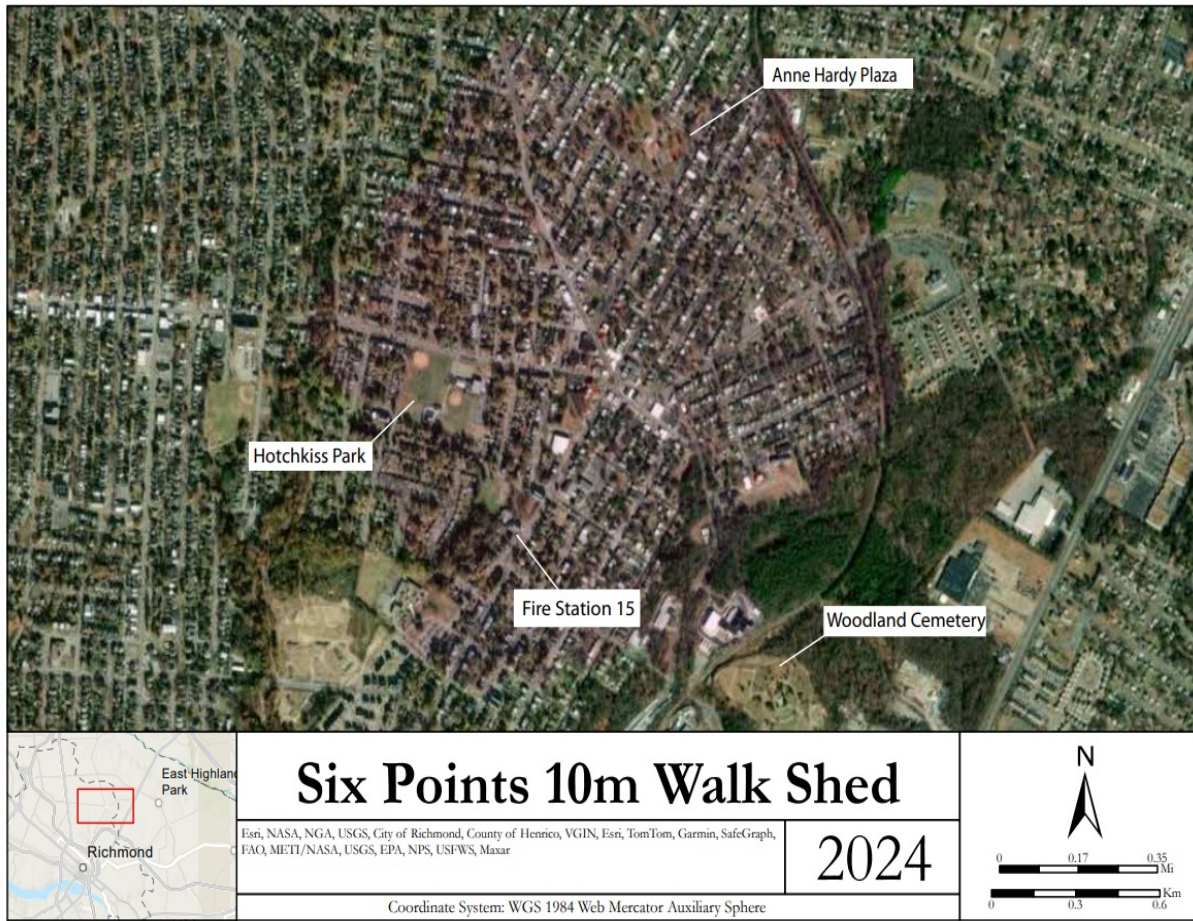
Defining the Study Area: The study area limits were broadly described as the area within a ten-minute walkshed from the Six Points commercial node. The Six Points node is centered on a six-way roundabout intersection that was recently improved and landscaped. Small-scale neighborhood commercial uses are located at or near the intersection and extend for several blocks along Meadowbridge Road. The expansive Highland Park neighborhood surrounds this commercial area.

The panel was asked to consider planning and implementation strategies toward creation of a more enlivened community center with more neighborhood services, a variety of residential uses, better connectivity to and around the area, and placemaking with public art amenities that focus on the history and cultural assets of the area. The city asked the panel to have a particular focus and attention to greater opportunities for housing and economic development within the ten-minute walkshed from the central Six Points commercial node.

STUDY AREA MAP



STUDY AREA MAP



II.b TAP METHODOLOGY & APPROACH TO CHALLENGE

The ULI TAP program is designed to provide a valuable resource for communities to inform future planning efforts related to important land use issues. The process included a review of background materials provided by the sponsor prior to the team’s arrival, followed by a two-day program working locally near the study area.

ULI VIRGINIA SIX POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD TAP PROGRAM AGENDA

Tuesday July 19, 2024	
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Team arrival and sponsor introductions
10:00 am– 11:00 pm	Site Tour
12:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Stakeholder Interviews:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councilwoman Ellen F. Robertson - Richmond City Council (6th District) • Rachel Hightman - Department of Housing and Community Development • Eric Mai - HDAdvisors; Maggie Walker Land Trust • Kai Banks - Storefront for Community Design • Rob Jones - Groundwork RVA • Jackie McDonnough - Highland Park Resident • James Hald - Highland Park Resident • Danielle Leek - Highland Park Resident • Megan Rollins - Boaz & Ruth • Phil Miller - Boaz & Ruth • Robin Pope-Moss Boaz & Ruth • Jerry Scott - Master Officer, Richmond Police Department • Nissa Richardson - City of Richmond, Deputy Director for Park, Recreation, & Community Facilities
Wednesday July 10, 2024	
8:00 am – 3:30 pm	Panel working session
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Presentation of recommendations to sponsor and guests
5:00 pm	Close Program

The panel's findings and recommendations were presented to representatives from the sponsor (invited staff from the City of Richmond) and invited members of the community to conclude the two-day TAP program. This report documents the overall process, observations, and the final recommendations of the panel.

III. FINDINGS: ASSETS, OPPORTUNITIES, & BARRIERS TO CHANGE

The characterization of existing conditions is framed around identification of primary **Assets, Opportunities, and Barriers to Change**. These observations are based upon various inputs prior to, and during the program, including the following sources of information:

- review of background materials provided by the sponsor prior to the event
- observations made while touring the study area
- stakeholder interviews

Background materials provided for review by the panel prior to the program included historical context, applicable regulatory and planning guidelines, and physical site conditions within the study area. Resources included links to the city Comprehensive Plan documents, physical maps, transportation plans, zoning ordinance, economic development reports, and market studies. Touring the site and surrounding areas gave the ULI panel context for existing land uses and important land use relationships beyond the study area. Stakeholder interviews provided additional context around visions for the area, major concerns, and potential resources to implement change.

III.a OBSERVED ASSETS and OPPORTUNITIES

Identifying community assets and opportunities can be a subjective exercise but is essential to the process. Assets can be physical, political, financial resources, aesthetic, cultural, or other real or perceived advantages. In some cases, an asset may be characterized as both an asset and an opportunity, depending on whether that asset is being fully utilized. The observed assets and opportunities below are not listed in any order of importance.

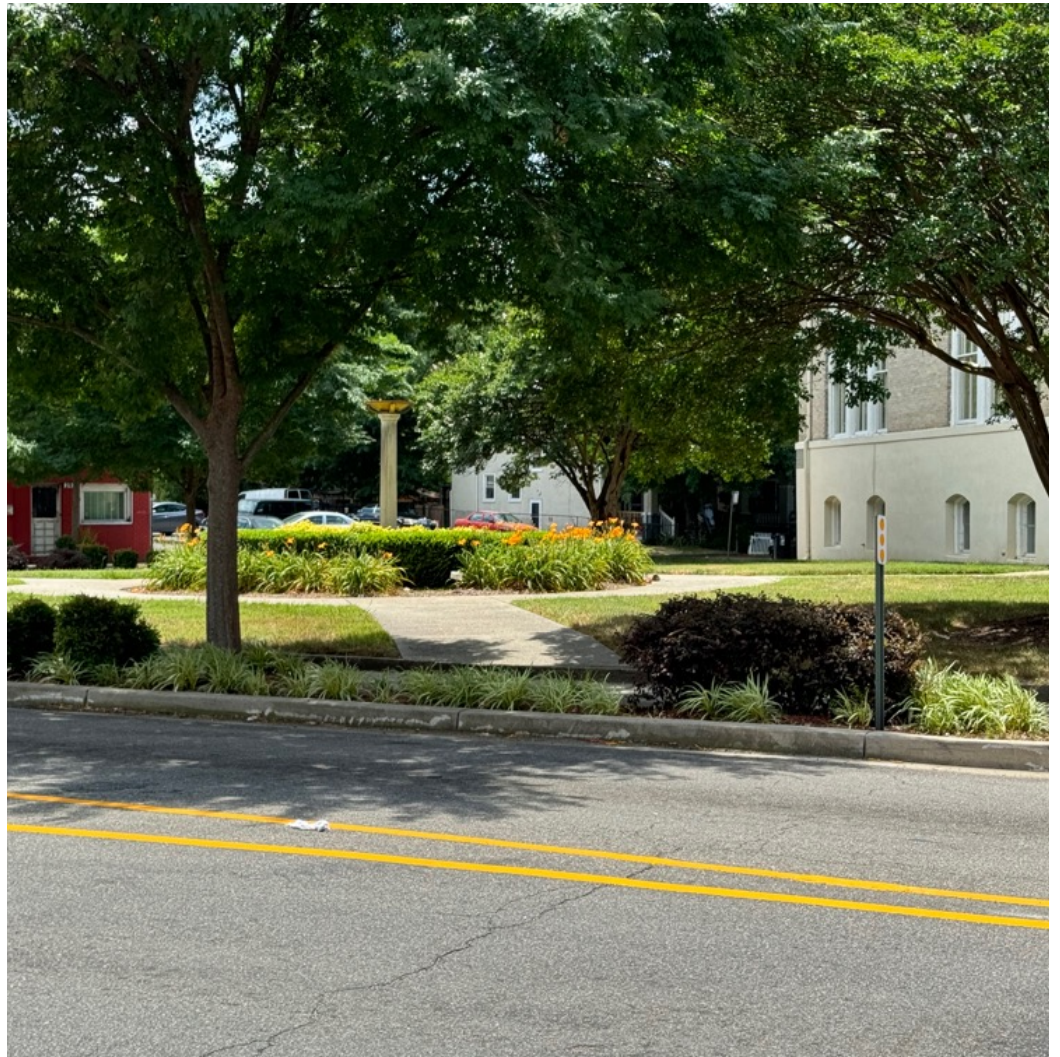
- **Community Champions** – The presence of active community organizations and passionate leaders from within the community is a critical asset for the Six Points area. However, the lack of an overarching structure to organize these groups and voices is both an opportunity and a barrier to change. The presence of several church communities within the study can be an asset but is currently more of an opportunity as it appears those institutions do not yet act in a coordinated, collaborative manner toward addressing key community needs. Community champions can come from individual residents passionate about the community or from various types of organizations such as the following:
 - Faith-Based Communities
 - Non-profits (i.e. Storefront, Groundworks, Boaz & Ruth)
 - Civic and business associations
- **Community Pride and Connectivity** – The community has several annual events that attract people from within and beyond the community (i.e. Community Pride Festival, Jazz Festival, Holiday Crawl, Annual Garden Walk). This is one indicator of a healthy community and helps to build and maintain community pride, identity and connectedness.
- **Enterprise Zone and CARE Zone program** – The study area has access to these two programs offering resources and funding aimed at revitalizing areas of need. More robust public education about these programs can help leverage these assets, make them more accessible, and lead to more utilization of these resources.

- **Private Investment Momentum** – The Highland Park area is a desirable neighborhood for existing residents and is attracting a steady stream of newcomers looking to locate in the city. Housing activity in the form of new construction and rehabilitation is a positive force, although displacement is a risk and concern associated with these trends.
- **Proximity to Parks and Open Space** – Complete (or fully functional) communities often rely on assets beyond perceived neighborhood boundaries for those with the resources and mobility to access those remote assets. Several nice public parks and natural areas are within reasonable distance of the neighborhood by bike, car, or walking for those able to do so. Among nearby community amenities are Anne Hardy Park, Hotchkiss Park, public school properties, and Cannon Creek Greenway.
- **Multi-Generational Households** – Data from the city indicates a relatively high number of multi-generational households in the study area. This can be an indicator of good social structure, reflect the availability of a variety of housing types, and be a driver of demand for a better variety of goods and services to attract and retain people of all ages.
- **Natural Resources** – Natural resource areas are valuable assets to provide recreation opportunities, help to mitigate heat gain, filter stormwater runoff, and provide valuable animal habitat. Nearby Shockoe Creek is classified as a Resource Protection Area and wetland conservation areas along the Richmond-Henrico Turnpike are two important natural resource areas impacting the overall environmental health of the community.
- **Transit** – The presence of public transit routes through the area is essential to those without personal vehicles especially due to the lack of neighborhood goods and services in the neighborhood core. The location and physical condition of bus stops is critical as is the frequency of service.
- **Undeveloped and Underutilized Land** – There are a few vacant or underutilized (i.e surface parking, blighted properties), along primary streets within the study area. Developing a strategy to gain control or work with current owners to create new housing products, public green space, or new neighborhood goods and service options could be important to revitalization of the neighborhood core.

Images of the Study Area



SIX POINTS INTERSECTION



AMENITY SPACE



SIX POINTS COMMERCIAL CORE



BOAZ AND RUTH



III.b OBSERVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Opportunities for change are an expression of the ***potential for change*** based upon specific assets that might present a path to change with willing partners including landowners, developers, the city, and other stakeholders. **It is important to note that the opportunities for change referenced within this report are not an indicator of willing property owners or intended to suggest any active plans regarding change of use or ownership.** For purposes of this study, opportunities for change typically include conditions such as the following:

- **Vacant or blighted properties**
- **City or development authority owned properties**
- **Undeveloped land**
- **Under-utilized properties (i.e. surface parking, under-performing commercial businesses)**
- **Properties held by absentee owners**
- **Property for sale, or with a known willing seller**

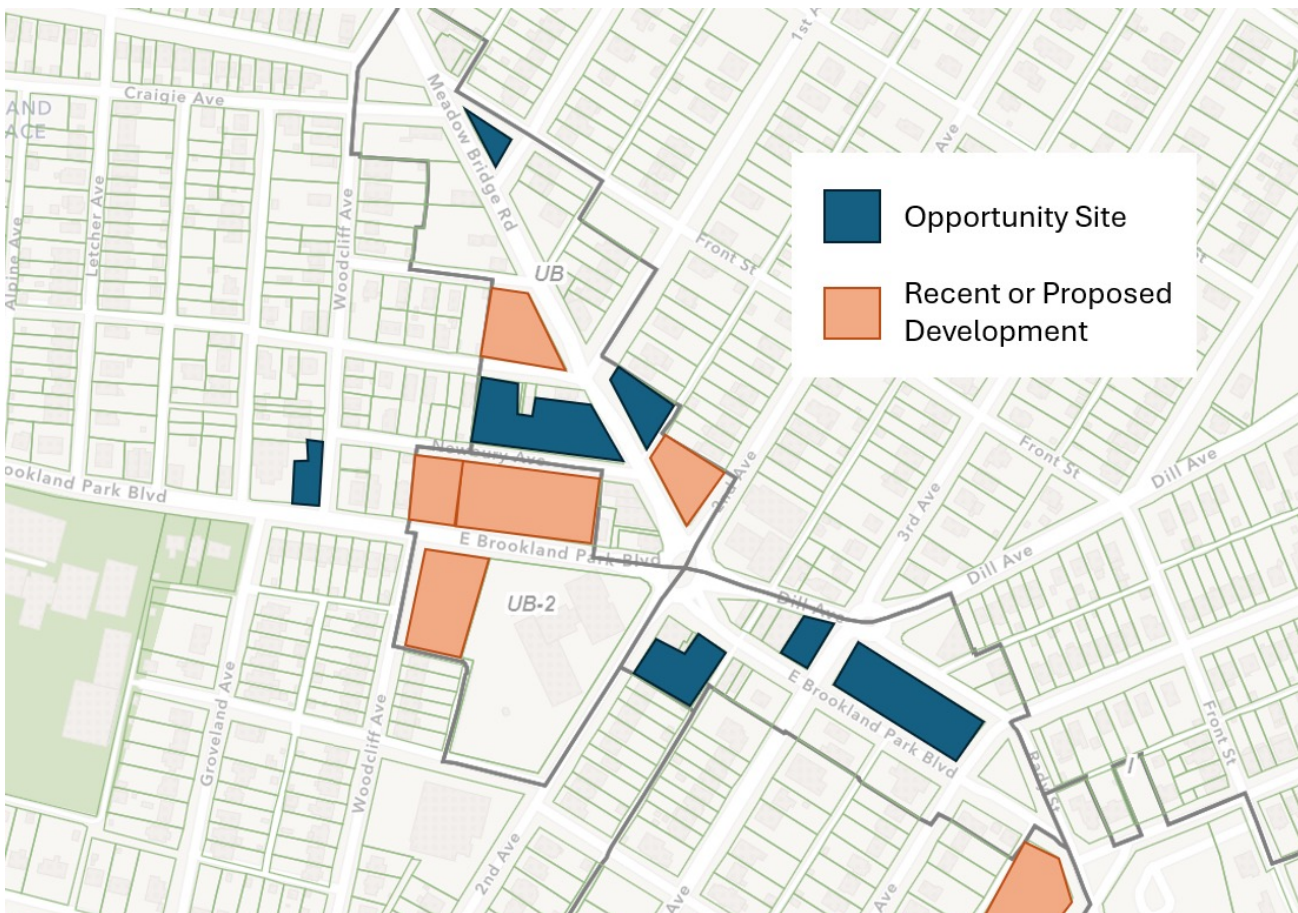
Within the study area, the panel identified some potential opportunities for change including the following sites:

1. **Former church (3014 Meadowbridge Rd)**
2. **Former church (1106 Brookland Park Blvd)**
3. **Bank of America building (Maggie Walker CLT)**
4. **Chicken Box (3000 3rd Ave)**

5. Jin's Market (3105 Meadowbridge Rd)
6. 6 PIC (aka Benefield Building project)
7. Family Dollar (1404 E Brookland Park Blvd)
8. 3016 1st Ave – green space
9. Brown's auto shop (3003 Meadowbridge Rd)
10. Miscellaneous vacant or blighted properties

Opportunity Sites

1. Former church (burned down)
2. Former church 1106 Brookland Park Blvd
3. BOA Building
4. Chicken Box 3rd Ave
5. Jin's Market
6. 6 PIC (Benefield Building)
7. Family Dollar
8. 3016 1st Ave – green space
9. Brown's Auto Shop
10. Misc. vacant or blighted properties



MODIFIED INTERSECTION CONCEPT



III.c OBSERVED CHALLENGES & BARRIERS TO CHANGE

The TAP panel identified several existing or potential challenges to efforts for positive change. Challenges and barriers to change may present as physical impediments, social issues, political environment, regulatory constraints, or broader economic and market forces. The observed challenges and barriers below are not listed in order of importance

Lack of Structure for Community Advocacy to Implement Change

– Also mentioned above as a community asset, the lack of organized community advocates, champions, or an organizational structure to focus energy on developing a coordinated vision and implementation plan is a key challenge for the community.

Crime and Public Safety - Perceptions of the study area as a high-crime area by residents or potential change-agents can be a barrier to attracting new investment and retaining valued assets. The lack of highly activated streets and community gathering spaces limits the volume of “eyes on the street” which is important to drive away unwanted activity and maintain public safety in the public realm.

Poor Quality Physical Conditions and Fractured Urban Form

- **Poor Public Realm** - Poor quality of design and poor physical conditions within the pedestrian zone throughout the commercial core can be both a physical and visual impediment to new investment. The pedestrian zone, from street curb to building façade, is lacking some of the amenities that make for safe and inviting pedestrian zones such as consistent design vocabulary of paving materials, site furnishings, landscaping, canopy trees, lighting,

and wayfinding. Breaks in building masses fronting streets reduce the visual impact and ability to activate the pedestrian zones.

- **Vacant and Blighted Properties** – Buildings and vacant lots that are not maintained or fully occupied also present a barrier to new investment and contribute to a feeling of disinvestment, lack of resources, and lack of pride in the neighborhood.

Auto-Dominant Transportation Infrastructure

- **Street Design and Intersections:** The decision to implement the current roundabouts appears to have helped mitigate traffic congestion and improve the general aesthetic of the commercial core. In that sense, those improvements are viewed favorably by some residents. However, the new geometry represents a compromise toward creating strong urban form and safe, convenient pedestrian and bike mobility. In addition, poorly performing intersections where side streets meet the primary streets are an issue within the study area. The lack of a complete-streets approach to provide multi-modal infrastructure can also be a barrier to investment and higher levels of activity.
- **Bus Stops** – Poor quality bus stops are both a visual and functional negative impacting community pride and perception. Bus stops are public-facing infrastructure that send a visual message to residents and visitors about how we care for our citizens who by choice or by necessity choose to use public transportation.

Land Use Gaps

- **Lack of Access to Goods and Services** – Many critical neighborhood goods and services have disappeared from the neighborhood fabric leaving behind issues related to lack of access to these vital assets. Many residents simply default to leaving the neighborhood to access these needs in nearby commercial areas.
- **Blight and Vacant Properties** - An aging building inventory, vacant, and blighted properties are a visual and economic deterrent to new investment. These same properties also represent opportunities for change.
- **Lack of a Central Community Gathering space** – Communities need central gathering spaces where people instinctively come together for special events to celebrate, protest, or for everyday social activities. While there are public open spaces within reach from the Six Points area, there is no signature gathering space within the core neighborhood area.
- **Lack of “Third Places”** – Complete neighborhoods are marked by places of social activity and commercial places that inherently have a social aspect to them as places outside of the home and workplace to see and meet your neighbors on a regular basis. Six Points residents most often find these places outside of the neighborhood.

Regulatory and Administrative Barriers

- **Barriers to Entrepreneurship** – The process for local and state permitting or finding funding resources for new investment can represent a barrier for some existing residents, potential

small developers, and entrepreneurs. Improved education resources and support can help real or perceived challenges to new investment.

- **Lack of resources focused on this area** – In the past, limited city resources have been focused on the study area due to constraints (real or perceived) on funding, staff capacity, and lack of a defined vision for the neighborhood. Additionally, competing interests for resources often result in economic development priorities in other parts of the city as part of long-term planning strategies. During this TAP program, Councilwoman Robertson noted that a request has been made for additional funds to assist the community with selected improvements in addition to the improvements made to implement the recent street design modifications, and access to funds for this study. These types of commitments are important but everyone recognizes that more resources are needed to address key needs such as additional infrastructure improvements, development of green space, blighted property and law enforcement, and resources targeted at food and housing insecurity. Identification of those needs and associated budgets for city review and action should be part of an overall vision and implementation plan.
- **Zoning** – At the time of this study, the city is in the process of updating their zoning ordinance. Zoning changes could help to attract private development and reinvestment including higher density residential products, and locally owned business.

Housing Insecurity – The market forces behind rapidly rising costs for home ownership and renters are a reality in most urban areas of the city. This is creating more housing insecurity for those already housed but with insufficient incomes to sustain ownership and for those seeking affordable housing, starter homes, or transitional housing.

"Development pressure is spilling over into long-neglected places, leading to displacement of residents that have endured for decades. It is essential that the benefits of development and investment are shared by residents of all incomes and tenure"

- CNU "Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development"

Changing Community Culture – Six Points residents readily acknowledge the changing cultural landscape in their community as new families move in, legacy families relocate or get priced out, and as demand for living in this area increases. While many residents understand the impact of this trend on the character of the neighborhood, it remains to be seen how people collectively respond to the changes in a way that preserves the valued assets and leverages new opportunities to create a unique and authentic neighborhood. This, in the opinion of the panel, is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Environmental Health and Community Wellbeing

– A lack of tree canopy, green space, and flooding issues contribute to poor environmental conditions including higher daytime temperatures and contribute to higher percentages of the study area population with health issues (per city data).



IV. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The identification of key issues is the process of characterizing those issues that rise to the level of critical importance warranting community attention and focus. These issues may relate to **leveraging key assets or addressing critical barriers to change** identified in Section III above. Ultimately, the following issues represent key takeaways for the panel and inform the panel's recommendations in Section V that follows.

ISSUE: A NEED FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The need for a structure to help individuals, neighborhood organizations, civic organizations, key stakeholders and the city to form a coordinated effort to address neighborhood needs is a critical issue for success.

ISSUE: THE NEED FOR AN ARTICULATED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Having the framework of a community vision in place can help in the development of guiding documents for planning and implementation. Understanding the desired end game captured in a vision with defined measures for success can be key to a successful planning process.

ISSUE: THE NEED FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD-SPECIFIC PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION

With the proper neighborhood organizations in place, and a guiding vision, development of tools to guide future development can begin in earnest. The lack of such guidance can be a barrier to redevelopment. These tools might include, but not be limited to the following:

- Overlay Districts
- Small Area Plan
- Design Standards
- Zoning Modifications

ISSUE: THE LACK OF A CENTRAL COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

A central gathering space can be a part of activating the core commercial node and creating new energy at the heart of Six Points.

ISSUE: THE LACK OF LOCALLY SERVING AND LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

One of the most defining characteristics of the community is the desire to live here (for those who have the means to live elsewhere), even in the absence of a strong commercial center with vital goods and services.

ISSUE: PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIME. AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Crime and undesirable activities are obvious and visually apparent in the center of this community. Eliminating these elements are critical to change.

ISSUE: FOOD INSECURITY

A food desert within an area with so much housing diversity is a challenge that impacts all residents but is particularly problematic to those without the resources and mobility to access healthy and affordable food options outside of the area.

ISSUE: HOUSING INSECURITY DISPLACEMENT CONCERNS

Market forces will continue to change the housing profile of the area but not without displacing those who cannot overcome rising costs and limited inventory. Committed resources and financial support are necessary to limit widescale displacement and maintain cultural diversity.



**MULTI-FAMILY
HOUSING**



ISSUE: REGULATORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Making access to educational and financial resources for new homeowners, small businesses, locally owned business, and makers and entrepreneurs is essential to removing barriers to change and helping to maintain a unique character for the Six Points neighborhood.

ISSUE: ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY AND THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The influx of new buyers moving into the neighborhood to buy, renovate, or build homes and businesses inevitably results in changing demographics and the overall neighborhood profile relative race, gender, age, economic status, and culture. Adapting to those changes is hardest on legacy residents and can create challenges to maintain connectivity and authenticity in neighborhood character.

ISSUE: VACANT and BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

Vacant, underutilized, and blighted properties are barriers to change but also represent opportunities for change in the form of infill housing, renovations and re-purposing, public pocket parks, or new commercial development at key nodes and intersections. A coordinated strategy focused on converting these properties to productive uses should be part of a community plan.

ISSUE: A NEED FOR IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

Good public realm, safe pedestrian crossings, right-sized street sections, and connectivity to key destinations within and beyond the neighborhood are key issues relative to encouraging redevelopment of the study area.

Following is a summary of some key issues associated with infrastructure and connectivity:

Street Sections: Wide street sections reflect the characteristics of streets in many older communities that give preference to the automobile, resulting in a less appealing, and less safe, pedestrian environment. There may be opportunities to reduce the overall street widths in some areas to accommodate two travel lanes and on-street parking, calm traffic, and provide improved pedestrian zones and bike lanes.

Public Realm Improvements: The public realm along the main arteries are characterized by inconsistent sidewalk widths, minimal tree canopy, sporadic on-street parking, and significant volume of utility poles and overhead utility lines. Improved pedestrian zones can help improve overall aesthetics, character, and public safety, and encourage new investment.



Transit and Mobility

Vibrant, thriving neighborhoods missing all the key ingredients that make for fully functional neighborhoods (goods and services, amenities, etc.) rely on good connectivity to those elements elsewhere through the presence of good public transit, bike infrastructure, and pedestrian paths. Mobility infrastructure is critical to the quality of life for residents within the study area, particularly those dependent upon public transit, walking, bikes, or the kindness of others to get around.

V. A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

This section is intended to provide ideas for addressing each of the key issues above within a framework for action and implementation including key recommendations and priorities. The recommendations are focused on actionable items tied to the creation and implementation of a long-term vision for the neighborhood, as well as small, incremental, and short-term actions. All recommendations are viewed as important, and connected but some are deemed a higher priority as they are time-sensitive or represent enabling projects, decisions, or actions necessary to set the table for other actions.

The development of recommendations is framed around the following **Guiding Principles** specific to this study:

- Recommendations should inform and support a neighborhood vision and guiding plans for creating a fully functional neighborhood.
- Recommended strategies should promote land uses that are appropriate for the study area with respect to scale, community character, critical needs and gaps in demand, market viability, and authenticity.
- Land use recommendations should be market-driven to ensure long-term viability and sustainability.
- Recommended improvements should aim to create or enhance opportunities for improved connectivity from within the study area, to nearby community services with infrastructure for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, including enhanced public transportation service and facilities.
- Land use and economic development strategies should:

- Focus on incremental change and small, early, public-facing improvements.
- Build an economic development strategy around small and locally owned goods and services.

Introductory Comments to Recommendations and Priorities:

The lack of a formal structure for advocacy within the community as well as a lack of structure within city government for a more robust community engagement are important barriers to success. It is critical to establish an organizational framework for stakeholders to come together around a broad vision and realistic goals for the community and to bring some structure to this effort including identification of leadership from within the community. Action items related to creating a formal structure with accountable leadership and community representation are among the highest-level recommendations of the TAP panel. The panel believes that a strong lead neighborhood organization with leadership from within the community is the first critical step to guide a visioning process for the community prior toward development of a physical master plan and economic development strategies.

Creating a guiding vision for the neighborhood is essential to inform development of a small area plan and supporting documents. The visioning process should be creative and aspirational but achievable. A vision for a fully functional and sustainable Six Points neighborhood could be one that leverages its existing housing assets and its desirability as a place to live while focusing on the need to revitalize the neighborhood core to provide essential goods, services, and social gathering spaces. The neighborhood characteristics most often identified as part of a long-term vision include

the following:

- Safe and attractive streets, sidewalks, and multi-modal facilities
- Elimination of blighted conditions and well maintained residential and commercial properties
- Elimination of illegal activities and more resources to assist those in need of housing or rehabilitation services
- A healthy community with significant tree canopy, reduced paved areas, good drainage, and access to community healthcare for all
- A commercial core focused on neighborhood goods and services including healthy food options and locally-owned businesses
- A central community gathering space for everyone
- A Happy and Connected community that cultivates and celebrates a multi-generational and diverse population and maintains a robust calendar of community events and access to meaningful social places.

Inclusive development is about building communities, not just housing. A holistic vision for community development is missing from many long-neglected neighborhoods. It's hard to focus on the big picture when the problems are immediate and severe—yet without that vision, neighborhoods may be caught in long-term poverty cycles or waves of displacement. A

community vision—addressing cultural, social, health, and economic concerns, formed through robust community participation—is a necessary part of a successful revitalization effort.

- CNU: Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development

V.a PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority recommendations represent the most critical strategies and actions toward achieving a neighborhood vision. It is important to note that they are all interrelated and some dependent upon others as enabling projects or table-setting for future actions. While not necessarily listed in order of importance, **recommendations 1 through 4 below are best executed in chronological order as each action builds upon the previous action to be successful.**

RECOMMENDATION 1: PROACTIVELY ORGANIZE AND ADVOCATE

ACTION: Develop a Framework and Culture for Robust Community Engagement

Develop a more intentional, robust structure for community advocacy organizations to build capacity to implement change. This priority item includes three distinct actions:

1. Identification of active groups, key stakeholders, and missing representation.
2. Organization of groups and key stakeholders.
3. Creating sustainable lines of communication and influence within the city process for planning and development.
4. Convene a meeting or series of meetings with community leaders and strategic planning partners (private and public sector) to advance several key objectives:
 - To define the perceived and functional boundaries of the neighborhood.
 - To develop and implement an equitable and inclusive community engagement plan rooted in building trust and relationships within the community and between the community and the city.
 - To identify and connect strategic partners from the public, private, non-profit sectors with community leaders around key assets and opportunities. (Refer to the list of potential partners in section V below).

RECOMMENDATION 2: ARTICULATE THE VISION

ACTION: Convene a process to create a vision for the community with robust community engagement and leadership

Convene a meeting, or series of meetings to create a shared vision and commitment to revitalization of the commercial core.

ACTION: Consider a 90-day Community Challenge – Small and early wins can be build trust and momentum. Develop a list of achievable goals that can be implemented within a small window of time with readily available resources to demonstrate the impact of small, incremental change. Report on your progress to the whole community.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CREATE GUIDING DOCUMENTS

ACTION: Zoning Updates

Engage with the city during their current zoning update process to address any parts of the ordinance that might represent barriers to change. This is a priority, time-sensitive action that requires close coordination with the city and is ultimately tied to the community visioning process and development of guiding documents.

ACTION: Develop A Small Area Plan

Creation of a guiding plan will define a long-term vision, help build reinvestment interest in the area, give the community a stake in implementing the vision, and give the city another tool for guiding development.

Well-crafted guiding plans and ordinances give the community and the city tools for encouraging good development and a basis for formal review of development plans to make sure they are consistent with the vision. Plans also provide the development community and investors with guidance, and some assurances that proposals consistent with these guiding documents should be met with some level of community support, thus reducing some risk in the development process. The planning process must be rooted in community engagement and be a collaboration between the community, the city, and key stakeholders. When properly executed, the result is a plan that reflects the community needs and vision, with support from community leadership.

Guiding documents for the corridor should identify and leverage the unique assets of the neighborhood to guide redevelopment strategies, and encourage investment including guidelines and action plans for the following issues:

1. Blighted properties – bring all properties into conformance, condemnation, or demolition consistent with city policies.
2. Zoning and land use – consider modifications to adopted planning documents that promote good urban form and a mix of uses
3. Opportunity sites – a strategy and action plan to inventory properties and encourage change
4. Pedestrian and bike infrastructure – continue to improve sidewalks and bike lanes for better connectivity within and beyond the neighborhood

5. Design Standards – small area plans and overlay districts can be enhanced with design standards to create a unified, high-quality and well-designed neighborhood node.
6. Central Community Gathering Space – plans should identify sites for a central green space to create an anchor for community gatherings
7. Public Art - an intentional strategy and a funded program for integrating public art as part of revitalization efforts can be embedded in guiding documents
8. Housing Insecurity – Plans should limit any barriers to new investment for housing options serving people from all levels of housing needs from transitional, to first home buyers, multi-family, senior living, and single-family detached products. Options should include options such as accessory dwelling units and artist lofts to support multi-generational and creative influences in the community.

RECOMMENDATION 4: DEVELOP AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ACTION: Develop an economic development plan aligned with the neighborhood vision

A neighborhood-specific economic development strategy for Six Points should reflect the unique needs of the community with respect to the highest priority needs for goods and services, and the community's desire for an identity distinct from surrounding neighborhoods. This plan should

include focus on the characteristics identified by stakeholders as issues of importance including the following:

1. Leveraging commercial developers and institutional partnerships as change agents. Foster those partnerships to help address redevelopment of opportunity sites and development of missing goods and services, particularly those aimed at food insecurity in the area.
2. Achieving early, public-facing improvements to initiate incremental change.
3. Creating an attractive and inclusive environment for maker space and incubators that are more cost sensitive but less dependent on location. This includes the artist and creative community.
4. Creating acquisition or redevelopment strategies for vacant, blighted, and underutilized properties. Inventory all blighted, underutilized, and vacant properties within the study area and develop a plan for timely disposition of those properties.
5. Frame a plan around the creation of a unique, authentic commercial core with a focus on small, locally owned, and locally serving goods and services.

FOCUS ON LOCAL CHARACTER



"Smaller, more gradual changes occur at a pace and on a scale that does not overwhelm the character of a place. Innovation, flexibility, adaptation, and a nimble response are all baked in."

- CNU "Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development"

V.b SUPPORTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Supportive Recommendations do not imply a chronological order of action but may occur concurrently in support of the priority actions, assuming they do not distract focus or drain resources away from those priorities.

1. Address barriers to change: Create education programs for owners and small investors to navigate the entitlement, permitting, and construction process. Work with the city to improve their resources to do the same.

2. Improve the public realm - Study the road sections and intersection geometry to evaluate alternative designs that are more context sensitive and supportive of multi-modal infrastructure, improved public realm, and pedestrian safety. Leverage funding resources from programs such as Main Street and the city's CARE Zone designation (rva.gov/economic-development/incentive-programs).

3. Improve wayfinding and branding
– Design and implement signs and wayfinding to visually identify the unique boundaries of the neighborhood. This may include identity signs, gateway signs, banners, and directional signage as well as coordinated site furnishings.

4. Increase tree canopy – embark upon a tree planting program that includes urban street trees to add shade and character

to the primary streets feeding into the Six Points node. Trees help mitigate heat gain, create urban form and rhythm, calm traffic, and help define community character.

5. Implement A Catalyst Project – While small, incremental development is most effective, the city and community should support plans to implement a catalyst project when the opportunity arises. The proposed Benefield Building project appears to offer a chance to add some missing elements to the heart of the community in the form of a mixed-use project and perhaps warrants a new perspective for realizing that concept. Explore partnerships with developers experienced in the design, financing, and construction of similar projects to see if it remains feasible.

6. Policy review and enforcement – Work with the city to review maintenance practices of public property and ROW to address visual impact of unkept areas within public view. Enforce code provisions for addressing blighted and abandoned properties as well as law enforcement policies to remove undesirable activities from the streets.

7. National Main Street strategies – apply the Main Street program approach to revitalization including Promotion, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Organizations

BENEFIELD BUILDING CONCEPT



Tools for Implementing Neighborhood Change

CNU “Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development”

- 1. Permit Accessory Dwelling Units**
- 2. Acquire And Aggregate Land For Developer Rfp’s**
- 3. Finance Through Crowdfunding And Crowd Investing**
- 4. Provide Opportunities For Local Ownership**
- 5. Promote Incremental Development**
- 6. Build “Missing Middle” Housing**
- 7. Create An Active And Beautiful Public Realm**
- 8. Create A Philanthropic Fund Or Revolving Loan Fund**
- 9. Use Tactical Urbanism**

V.c POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

“It takes a village to raise a child”. So goes the African proverb, but the same could be said about the many partners it takes to create complete communities. Success stories in many similar American communities are characterized by strategic partnerships from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, including mission-oriented and philanthropic individuals and companies seeking to create great places to live and do business. These partnerships must go beyond transactional. They must be engaged in visioning, planning, and implementation to effect change. Some of the existing and potential partners identified during the TAP program include the following:

- 1. Champion Residents and Trusted Community Leaders**
- 2. Civic Associations**
- 3. Private Businesses**
- 4. Non-Profits and Non-governmental Agencies**
 - a. ART180
 - b. Boaz & Ruth
 - c. Community Preservation and Development Corporation
 - d. Faith-based organizations
 - e. Groundwork RVA (groundworkrva.org)
 - f. Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC)
 - g. Maggie Walker Community Land Trust
 - h. Saving Our Youth Virginia
 - i. Storefront for Community Design
 - j. Virginia Local Initiatives Support Corp (LISC)

5. Healthcare

- a. Bon Secours Health System
- b. VCU Health

6. Institutional partners

- a. Higher Education
- b. Virginia Commonwealth University
- c. University of Richmond
- d. Virginia Union University
- e. Reynolds Community College

V.d REVIEW OF SPONSOR QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

This report aims to capture the process, inputs, and recommendations that collectively address the specific panel questions provided as guidance by the TAP sponsor for this program. Following is a review of each question with an associated summary response reflecting the observations and recommendations provided within this report.

1. What differentiates the Six Points neighborhood from other Richmond neighborhoods?

Six Points has a unique set of conditions that make this neighborhood extremely desirable as a place to live, despite the lack of a vibrant community core. Residents are willing to compromise by leaving the neighborhood for goods and services for the benefits associated with housing options and proximity to amenities beyond the neighborhood. The revitalization of the core area would only enhance the desirability of an already desirable place to live.

2. What does our future business corridor look like?

The future corridor and commercial core should reflect a renewed focus on local, neighborhood goods and services. It is less of a destination and more focused on serving the residents of the immediate neighborhood. In this sense, it is less like Carytown, and more like the Libbie Grove area of the city in terms of scale and types of businesses.

3. What types of housing products are needed in this neighborhood? What types of products can address “transitional” or “starter” housing for young adults moving out on their own? How do we invite broad change without causing displacement of disadvantaged and legacy residents?

The panel was impressed by the variety of housing products in the community, including some new medium and high-density residential types. Like many places, there is some element of need and demand for the missing middle housing products, but the range of housing activity including single renovations and new builds, and multi-family affordable units is impressive. That said, rising prices make it imperative to find market support and financial resources for starter homes and affordable units within the limited property opportunities that do exist. Programs supporting the unhoused and legacy residents who are struggling to keep up with rising costs are also key to limiting displacement.

4. What are opportunities for “placemaking” in the neighborhood?

There may be opportunities to create some “found” green space in the core commercial area. For example, modifications to the roundabout (refer to sketch exhibit “A”) could reclaim some space for a central community gathering place. In addition, there are a few vacant or underutilized properties that should be evaluated as potential green space or locations for pop-up activity (*this is already organically happening on the Family Dollar site*). Streetscape improvements including signage, enhanced sidewalks, landscaping, site furnishings, etc. can also contribute to some placemaking moments.



APPENDIX: REFERENCES AND CASE STUDIES

APPENDIX A. FUNDING RESOURCES

- VDACS AFID Grants - Planning, Infrastructure, Facility
- Enterprise Zone Grants - Real Property Investment Grant (RPIG)

APPENDIX B. RESOURCE GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

“Virginia Community Voice Blueprint” virginiacommunityvoice.org

APPENDIX C. POTENTIAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Model Program: Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Program [CARE Brochure.pdf \(rva.gov\)](http://CARE.Brochure.pdf(rva.gov))
- Virginia Statewide Business District Resurgence Grant [va-statewide-resurgence-grant-one-page.pdf \(virginiamainstreet.com\)](http://va-statewide-resurgence-grant-one-page.pdf(virginiamainstreet.com))
- Resource Guide for Community Engagement: Virginia Community Voice Blueprint [Blueprint – Virginia Community Voice \(vacommunityvoice.org\)](http://Blueprint—VirginiaCommunityVoice(vacommunityvoice.org))
- Congress for the New Urbanism: “Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development”
 - Incremental Development Alliance [IncDev Alliance \(incrementaldevelopment.org\)](http://IncDevAlliance(incrementaldevelopment.org))
 - Virginia Main Street – DHCD

APPENDIX D. WALKABLE CITY STRATEGIES

Walk [your city] is a quick and relatively inexpensive way to orient pedestrians and support connectivity. A QR code on signs opens a map with multiple nearby landmarks, and provides directions for walking from a current location. Some signs are directed to cyclists as well. <https://walkyourcity.wordpress.com/>

<https://walkyourcity.wordpress.com/about/>

<https://www.facebook.com/WalkYourCity>

Tactical Urbanist’s Guide to Getting it Done <https://tacticalurbanismguide.com/portfolio/walk-your-city-signs/>

APPENDIX E. MAKER SPACE AS A COMMUNITY CATALYST: CASE STUDY

Cassco Historic Ice House Building - Harrisonburg, VA

This building was constructed in 1934 for ice manufacture and cold storage services and sat vacant for many years until redevelopment was completed in 2015. The building now houses offices, residential units and retail spaces. Stakeholders included:

- Andrew Forward and Barry Kelley, local developers
- City of Harrisonburg
- James Madison University

- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Community Development Industrial Revitalization Fund (\$500K grant)

Unique among the current businesses is Hugo Kohl. HK was named one of America's Coolest Small Stores in 2020 by In-Store magazine. The award goes to businesses with 6 or fewer employees.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=595638091341326

SOURCE: From Ice House to business center

Samantha Ellis, contributing writer - The Breeze (JMU newspaper)

Feb 10, 2014 Updated Apr 3, 2017

https://www.breezejmu.org/news/from-ice-house-to-business-center/article_28e73ddc-91ff-11e3-b388-001a4bcf6878.html

APPENDIX F. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT REPLICABLE STRATEGIES and CASE STUDIES

“Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development” - The Congress for New Urbanism

Washington, DC - Anacostia Neighborhood

- Develop an Equitable Development Plan to ensure the needs of legacy residents are addressed.
- Build a coalition of organizations with overlap in mission and service area to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Establish a Community Land Trust to maintain below-market-rate housing while allowing homeowners to gain equity as values rise.
- Focus on wealth building opportunities, not just affordable rental housing, which includes homeownership, workforce development, financial counseling, and small business development.

Detroit, MI – Boston Edison and Fitzgerald

- Provide legacy residents with opportunities for wealth building, such as shared equity in redeveloped properties, including rehabbed rental homes.
- Invest in locally owned businesses by prioritizing contracts with construction, rehabilitation, and landscaping firms based in the city.
- Consolidate vacant land to maximize redevelopment impact while supporting existing residents by providing needed population density.

Desoto, TX – Desoto Market Place

- Consolidate vacant land to maximize redevelopment impact while supporting existing residents by providing needed population density.
- Make use of existing assets to bring urbanism to aging commercial corridors.
- Build the capacity of small business owners through mentorship, collaboration, and

access to tools.

- Convert surface parking to active spaces through creative placemaking, landscaping, and retail uses.
- Work with local officials to reduce regulatory barriers to creative reuse projects, including zoning and building code changes and reduced parking requirements.

Louisville, KY – Portland Neighborhood

- Acquire inexpensive, dilapidated property to minimize acquisition costs and maximize community benefit.
- Allow neighborhood residents to realize permanent affordable housing through homeownership.
- Target rehab projects that raise neighborhood comp prices, allowing property owners to receive better mortgage rates.
- Use a “one building at a time” approach to repair the most dilapidated properties.

Atlanta, GA – Historic Westside Neighborhood

- Use gap financing to create more affordable housing.
- Give current homeowners in distressed neighborhoods relief from rising property taxes that result from increasing home values.
- Form partnerships between the city and nonprofits to work with communities to refurbish existing parks and build new ones at varying scales.
- Leverage corporate and philanthropic funding to permanently ensure housing is affordable for legacy residents.

South Bend, IN - Westside Neighborhood

- Implement a “complete streets” approach to help to break the cycle of decline.
- Facade improvement and home maintenance programs encourage local business owners and residents to have “skin in the game” by investing in their own neighborhood revival.
- Zoning updates and policy reforms, like reducing minimum parking requirements, permitting accessory dwelling units, and incentives for renovation and affordable housing can encourage investment



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