Chapter 4. Neighborhoods and Housing

Housing is a basic need of all citizens. Housing is extremely important to the quality of people's lives, their self-esteem, and socio-economic attitudes. Housing often dictates where people work, shop, attend school, socialize, and worship. Also, the quality of housing in the community mirrors its economic stability and social values.

The following recognize the need for decent and affordable housing, the preservation of residential neighborhoods, and improved opportunities for homeownership.

Characteristics of Neighborhoods and Housing

Single-family residential homes are the prevailing land use in Colonial Heights. The City has a wide variety of architectural styles that would appeal to a population seeking both older homes and newer homes at affordable prices.

Housing Stock
About 10% of City housing predates 1940; about 80% of housing predates 1978. Only a small percentage of housing has been built in the last decade. Most of the newer development is infill housing, or multifamily. Conjurer's Neck has seen growth. Most of these are larger-lot, higher end homes.

Exhibit 9: Housing Units

|	2000 Total	2000 Percent	2010 Total	2010 Percent
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	7,340	100	7,831	100
Occupied housing units	7,027	96	7,275	93
Owner occupied	4,871	69	4,750	65
Renter occupied	2,156	31	2,525	35
Vacant housing units	313	4	556	7

U. S. Census Bureau

Housing Units
Since the 2000 Census, the City had an increase of nearly 500 units. This is due to some single family development, but mostly because of the construction of a couple of multi-family housing units. Although there has been an increase in rental units, there was only an increase of 4%, from 31% of total occupied units in 2000 being rental to 35% in 2010.

Between 2000 and 2010, there was an increase in vacancy rate. Whereas in 2000, only 4% of the housing units were vacant; this increased to 7% in 2010 or an increase of 246 vacancies.

Exhibit 10: Rental vs. Owner
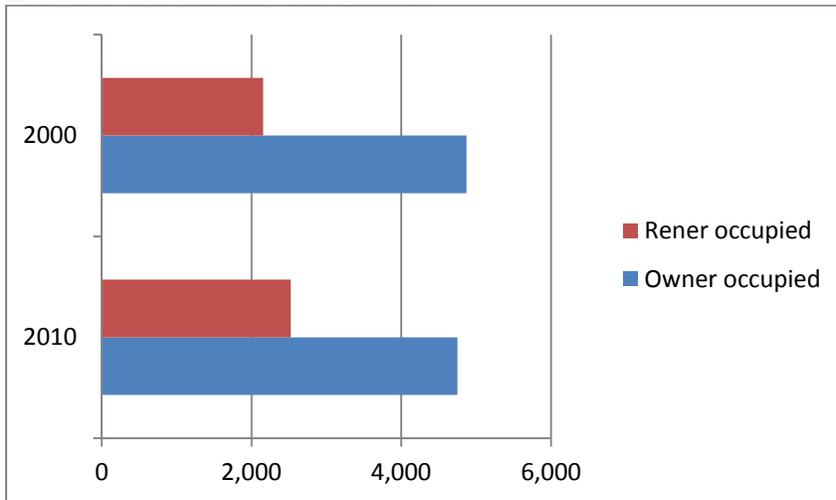
U. S. Census Bureau

Households

As for the change in types of households between 2000 and 2010, there was a decrease in family households. A family household is defined two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit. Conversely, a nonfamily household is one that could be a roommate situation or an older individual living alone whose children have reached adulthood and moved out and their spouse has died. There has also been an increase of 144 female-headed households during the same period, which, for the most part, is a single mother household.

Exhibit 11: Households

	2000 Total	2000 Percent	2010 Total	2010 Percent
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	7,027	100	7,275	100
Household type				
Family households	4,720	67	4,682	64
Husband-wife family	3,534	75	3,282	70
Other family	1,186	25	1,400	30
Male household, no wife present	272	23	342	24
Female household, no husband present	914	77	1,058	76
Nonfamily households	2,307	33	2,593	36
Average Household Size	2.37	N/A	2.37	N/A

U.S. Census Bureau

Housing

Housing is a substantial concern in Colonial Heights. A crucial element to the success of housing programs is an overarching policy and strategy direction to guide program development and implementation. Housing is an important part of maintaining a high

quality of life and a powerful economic development tool to attract new residents and jobs.

It is well established that City residents are getting older and there is a need for senior housing in the City. There is also a need to attract younger adults and young families. Housing will play a major role in drawing these populations to the City. The Neighborhoods and Housing Opportunities Map identifies three mixed use areas that provide an opportunity to house seniors and young people. There is also a need to adapt the current housing stock in the City for young families.

Mall Area Mixed Use Center
As many residents reach retirement age and look for alternative housing, there is little opportunity for them to stay in the City. Providing senior-friendly apartments in the Mall area would provide an opportunity for residents to stay in the City and be close to shopping and services.

Additionally, this mixed use center is an opportunity to attract young adults. With the marriage age increasing and the impact of the recent recession, young people are putting off buying homes and are choosing to live closer to their jobs and entertainment. Mixed use developments allow them to live, work and play in one area. Attracting this population could benefit the City in the future, because these young people may choose to stay, purchase homes and start families in Colonial Heights.

Conduit at Westover Mixed Use Center
As the needs for housing change, new, higher density residential is recommended by this plan to attract new residents and house the aging population. The Neighborhood and Housing Opportunities Map identifies a smaller mixed use area at the corner of Conduit Road and Westover Avenue. The intention is to provide alternative housing at this location as well as an opportunity for new neighborhood convenience services. Offices and specialty markets could serve the needs of area residents without requiring a lot of parking or causing an increase of traffic.

Development of this mixed use center must be done as part of a plan for the entire property and must complement the adjacent neighborhood. Additionally, the community must play a role in the design and use of the property.

Housing Pattern Book

Many local governments are using housing pattern books as a guide for creating, preserving, or reinforcing the distinctive architectural character of an area. These books can also provide guidance for retrofitting a house to accommodate certain needs such as a growing family or universal design that allows people to age in place.

Much of the City's housing stock does not offer the characteristics of a modern home such as family rooms, large kitchens or home office space. At the same time, the City's housing is very affordable; there are great schools and many services. A housing pattern book can offer ideas on how to turn a house in the City into one with modern conveniences without having to move. The housing pattern book may also be uses as a tool to attract new homeowners. Unlike zoning and design guidelines, which are regulatory, a housing pattern book can be used as a guide for renovating, remodeling or updating a home.

Universal Design

Universal Design has not been adopted in the City, but is an important standard that helps to alleviate some of the problems that are being experienced by an aging populace. The concept of universal design is that homes are built in a way that accessibility and aging-in-place are possible in these homes. It means that from the beginning, homes are built with features that allow anyone to use and enjoy the home regardless of mobility.

ADA standards were designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and have become the gold standard for handicap accessibility and modifications. These guidelines are used in public and private spaces and should be used not only in buildings, but for sidewalks and parking lots as well as building approaches. These standards are required for public access to buildings of all kinds and should be accounted for in overall accessibility and housing planning.

Residential Tax Abatement Program

Residential tax abatement programs are designed to encourage property owners to make improvements to their property which benefits the overall housing stock and community. Residential tax abatement allows a homeowner to avoid paying taxes on their property for a certain period of time. These programs are regulated by state and local governments and property owners must meet certain criteria to qualify. The City had a residential tax abatement program, but it was eliminated in 2009.

Historic District Designation

Many of the City's neighborhoods are over or near 50 years old. Once a property or district is 50 years old, it is eligible to be listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Registry.

The National Registry of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of historic properties. This list is administered by the National Park Services of the Department of the Interior.

Properties listed in the National Registry include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is responsible for managing the Virginia Landmarks Registry, the state's official list of properties important to Virginia's history. State and federal tax credits are available for renovations that are done in accordance with these programs. Federal tax credits, however, are only available on revenue generating properties.

Both federal and state registration is considered an honor. It recognizes the historic value of a property or the neighborhood and encourages present and future owners to continue to exercise good stewardship. Residents can purchase placards with the district or property name and the year the property was built to place on their house.

National and state register listings do not place any restrictions on private property owners. Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them, if they choose not to do so. Under federal and state laws, private property owners can do anything they wish to their listed property, provided no federal or state license, permit or funding is involved.

Home Values
Home values rose regularly in most metropolitan areas around the country over the last couple of decades; however, beginning in 2007 housing prices began to slip nationally as a result of the housing market bubble and subsequent "Great Recession". For many, their home represents a large portion of their personal wealth and when it is threatened it has a real impact on future financial stability. In order to attract homebuyers to the City, stable property values are essential.

Housing Standards
Housing standards in the City are based on the Virginia uniform codes and City ordinances. The basis for housing construction standards in new and renovation projects are from the Virginia uniform building code which is derived from the International building code. The City code gives authority to a designated building official and inspectors to enforce these standards. The main codes used for housing enforcement by the City are the Virginia Uniform Building Code and the Virginia Uniform Maintenance Code.

Rental Inspection and Property Maintenance
Two special code enforcement programs are: the rental inspection program adopted by City ordinance and a City-wide property maintenance inspection program designed to reduce the number of infractions.

The Rental Inspection Program was established in 2007 by City Council. Its purpose is to address the compliance by landlords to the current Virginia Property Maintenance Code. The intent of the code is to make sure that the housing stock does not become unsafe, a public nuisance, and unfit for human habitation.

The City has recently revamped the property maintenance code enforcement program to be one that is proactive. The City is divided into inspection districts. Each district is assigned a property maintenance inspector who inspects the district 1-2 times a month. Since its inception, the number of violations has increased significantly. The intent of this program is to improve the appearance of the City and aid in revitalization efforts.

Neighborhoods

The Citizen Survey, done in accordance with the development of this plan, asked residents which neighborhood they lived in. Answers ranged from names of a subdivision, a planning district and geographic locations such as "near the high school".

For study purposes, the City's land area has been divided into 10 planning districts; Violet Bank-Flora Hill, Shepherd Stadium, Ellerslie, Westover Snead, Mt. Pleasant-Southpark, Ft. Clifton, Sherwood Hills, Toll House, Oak Hill, and Lakeview shown on the Neighborhoods and Housing Map (Map 3). These districts are based on the census geography in the City. The names come from historic and neighborhood characteristics; however, these designations are not necessarily based on strong neighborhood identities. The following are basic descriptions of each of these planning districts.

Oak Hill
The Oak Hill Planning District takes its name from Oak Hill, the most popular name for this area. The area is also widely known as Archer's Hill. Oak Hill is also the name of a private residence (built c. 1825) on Carroll Avenue which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Oak Hill District is bounded on the north by Dupuy and Bradsher Avenues, on the south by the Appomattox River, on the west by the Chesterfield County Line, and on the east by the Boulevard. The bordering properties with a Bradsher Avenue or Boulevard address, are included in this district. Dupuy Avenue addresses in the 100 and 200 blocks are also included. City assessment records show that aside from the property known as Oak Hill (built c. 1825), this area was developed from 1910 onwards.

Overall, the Oak Hill District has a sound housing stock and relatively low property maintenance violations. Issues identified for this area include aging infrastructure and drainage problems leading to flooding at Dupuy Ave. and Battery Place.

Violet Bank-Flora Hill
The Violet Bank-Flora Hill Planning District takes its name from the Violet Bank Museum (built c. 1800) and the Flora Hill neighborhood. The Violet Bank Museum is on the National Register of Historic Places. The areas are popularly known by both names. The Violet Bank-Flora Hill District is bounded on the north by Westover Avenue, on the south by the Appomattox River, on the west by the Boulevard, and on the east by the Seaboard Rail Road Line. The Violet Bank-Flora Hill planning district also includes the Chesterfield Highlands Historic District which is newly listed on the State and National Historic Registries. City assessment records show that this area was almost fully

developed from 1911 to 1940. Approximately 60% of the City's pre-1940 houses are located here.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include deteriorated building conditions, a high incidence of property maintenance violations, aging infrastructure, and concern regarding homeownership decrease in the area.

Shepherd Stadium
The Shepherd Stadium Planning District takes its name from the much beloved nearby Shepherd Stadium. It is popularly known as such. The Shepherd Stadium District is bounded on the north by the CSXT Railroad Right of Way, on the south by Bradsher and Dupuy Avenues, on the west by the Chesterfield County line, and on the east by the Boulevard. City assessment records show that most of this area was developed from 1914 to 1960. Approximately 15% of the City's pre-1940 houses are located here.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include deteriorated building conditions, a high incidence of property maintenance violations, aging infrastructure, and concern regarding homeownership decrease in the area; drainage problems leading to flooding at Wright Ave.

Westover-Snead
The Westover-Snead Planning District does not have a popularly identifiable name. Residents usually refer to their own individual streets and subdivision names when referring to their neighborhood. The name Westover-Snead references Westover Avenue, the district's southern boundary, and Snead Avenue, which runs north to south parallel to the Boulevard from James Avenue to Spring Drive. The Westover-Snead District is bounded on the north by Old Town Creek, on the south by East Westover Avenue, on the west by the Boulevard, and on the east by the Seaboard Coastline Right of Way. City assessment records show that the majority of this area was developed from 1940 to 1970.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include a high incidence of property maintenance violations, aging infrastructure, a high rate of vacancy and concern regarding homeownership decrease in area.

Lakeview
The Lakeview Planning District takes its name from Lakeview Avenue which runs across it from east to west. The neighborhood is popularly known as Lakeview. The Lakeview District is bounded on the north by Swift Creek Lake and Sherwood Drive, on the south by the CSXT Railroad Right of Way, on the west by the Chesterfield County line, and on the east by the Boulevard. City assessment records show that most of this area was developed between 1950 and 1960. The southeastern section of this district also experienced new residential single-family development from 2000 to 2004.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include a high incidence of property maintenance violations, aging infrastructure, and concern regarding homeownership

decrease in area and flooding at Cabel and Lakeview due to storm sewer and Sadler Avenue and Lundy when the creek floods.

Sherwood Hills
The Sherwood Hills Planning District takes its name from the subdivision which makes up most of the area. It is popularly called Sherwood Hills. The Sherwood Hills District is bounded on the north by the Chesterfield County line, on the south by Swift Creek Lake and Sherwood Drive, on the west by the Chesterfield County line, and on the east by Swift Creek and the Boulevard. City assessment records show that the majority of this area was developed in the 1960's.

Overall, the Sherwood Hills District has a sound housing stock, and although there has been a slight increase in property maintenance violations, is stable. Issues identified for this area include aging infrastructure and drainage problems.

Toll House
The Toll House Planning District does not have a popularly identifiable name. Residents usually refer to their own individual streets when referring to their neighborhood. The name Toll House references a toll gate which once stood on the Boulevard when the road was a turnpike. The Toll House District is bounded on the north by Swift Creek, on the south by Old Town Creek, on the west by the Boulevard, and on the east by Swift Creek and the CSXT Rail Road Right of Way.

Various apartment and multi-family dwellings are located between Ellerslie Avenue and the Boulevard.   These account for the lower than average homeownership rate. Assessment records show that the majority of the residential properties were built in the 1960's.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include an increase in property maintenance violations, a high vacancy rate, and flooding at Newcastle.

Ellerslie
The Ellerslie Planning District is comprised of the Dunlop Farms area and the neighborhood directly to the south of it. The neighborhoods are divided by Ellerslie Avenue. The Ellerslie mansion (built c. 1856,) which is located within Dunlop Farms, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ellerslie District is bounded on the north by Swift Creek, on the south by Old Town Creek, on the east by Interstate 95, and on the west by the CSXT Rail Road Right of Way.

City assessment records show that the northern part of this district (Dunlop Farms PUD) was developed from 1982-2003. The southern portion was developed in sections from 1956 to 1983.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include a lack of neighborhood parks and flooding at Old Town Drive.

Fort Clifton
The Fort Clifton Planning District does not have a popularly identifiable name. Residents usually refer to their own individual streets and subdivision names when referring to their neighborhood. The name Fort Clifton references the Fort Clifton Archeological Site (c.1850) which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Fort Clifton District is bounded on the north by Swift Creek, on the south by Ellerslie Avenue and Yacht Basin Drive, on the east by the Appomattox River, and on the west by Interstate 95. City assessment records show that with a couple of exceptions, the oldest homes date from 1960.

This district has sound building conditions and low property maintenance violations. Traffic access and noise from Interstate 95 are notable concerns in this district.

Mt. Pleasant –Southpark
The Mount Pleasant-Southpark Planning District combines the Mount Pleasant and Southpark areas. The areas are popularly referred to by both names. The Mount Pleasant-Southpark District is bounded on the north by Ellerslie Avenue, Yacht Basin Drive, and Old Town Creek, on the south and east by the Appomattox River, and on the west by Interstate 95 and the Seaboard Rail Road Line. City assessment records show that residential development in this area took placefrom1960 to 2003.

Issues and concerns identified for this area include traffic, erosion and soil deposits along the Appomattox River, flooding on Conduit at Old Town Creek and a slight increase in property maintenance violations.

City of Colonial Heights Comprehensive Plan 2044 Neighborhoods and Housing Opportunities

June 2014
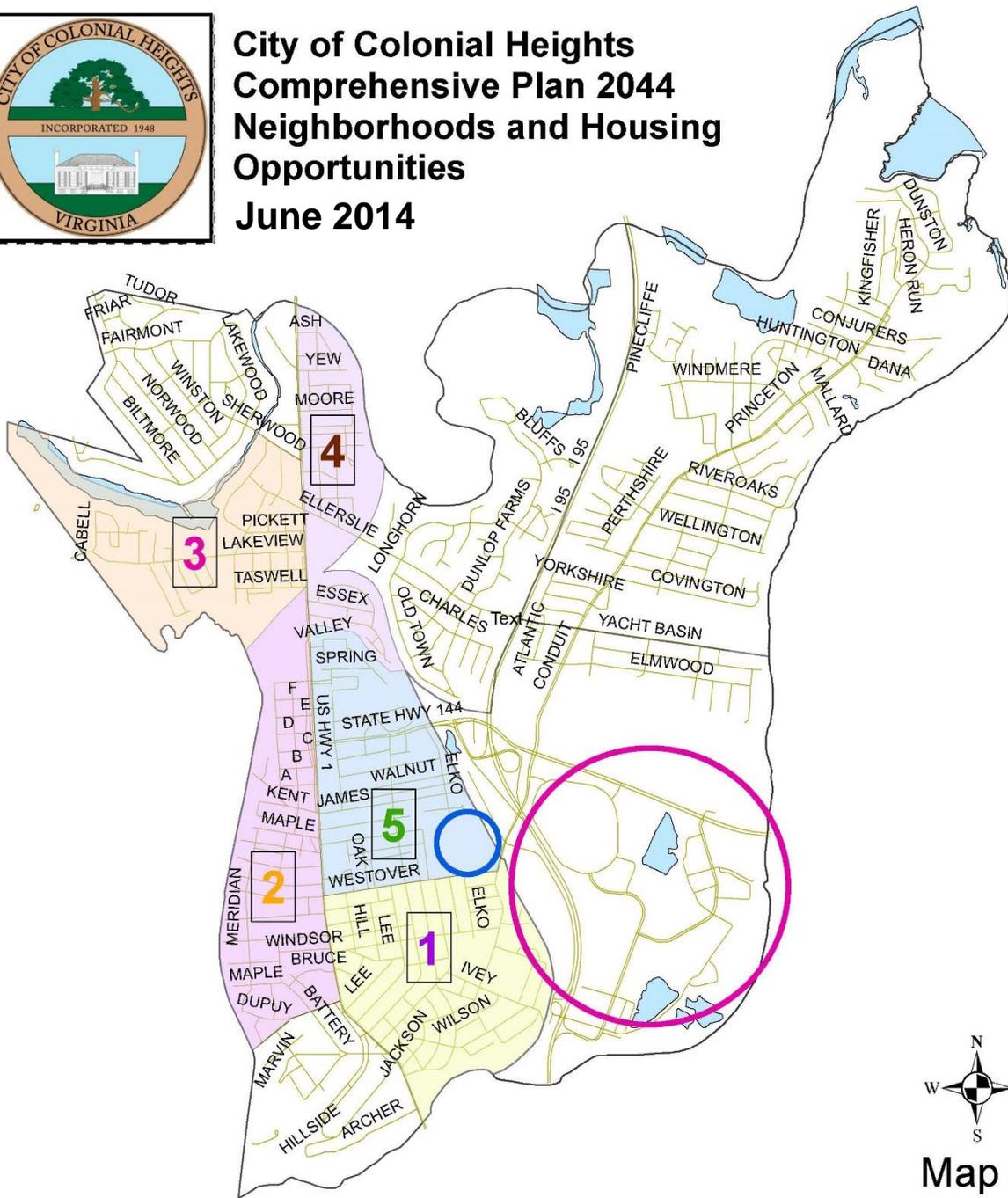
Map 3

Revitalization Strategy Areas
1- Violet Bank-Flora Hill
2 - Shepherd Stadium
3 - Lakeview
4 - Toll House
5 - Westover - Snead

⬭ Mall Area Mixed Use Center

⬭ Conduit at Westover Mixed Use Center

Revitalization Strategy Areas

This plan prioritizes 5 (five) revitalization strategy areas that have been identified for small area plans that will provide detailed revitalization strategies designed specifically for that strategy area.

The Revitalization Strategy Areas are identified on the Neighborhoods and Housing Map (Map 3) and are in order of priority below:

1. Violet Bank-Flora Hill Planning District
2. Shepherd Stadium Planning District
3. Lakeview Planning District
4. Toll House Planning District
5. Westover - Snead Planning District

Each Revitalization Strategy Area plan should include an analysis of the existing conditions, staff observation and community input and include strategies that focus on the following priorities.

1. Property Maintenance & Housing Rehabilitation
2. Historic Preservation, Urban Design & Neighborhood Identity
3. Homeownership
4. Infrastructure Improvements

Property Maintenance & Housing Rehabilitation
Improving property maintenance is one of the City's priorities. A more proactive approach includes regular inspections throughout the City along with educating citizens about the property maintenance ordinances.

Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Identity
Historic preservation is a proven community revitalization tool. The federal government recognizes the importance of preserving our heritage by providing monetary incentives and support for historic preservation purposes. Less tangibly, historic roots and identity help promote a sense of community pride often lacking in aging areas that are experiencing decay and disinvestment.

Homeownership
The Citizen Survey and the City-wide visioning session indicate that homeownership is priority to residents of the City. It encourages personal and financial investment in the community. Homeownership also provides opportunities for wealth-building by way of the accumulation of home equity and mortgage interest tax breaks.

Infrastructure Improvements
One of the most voiced community concerns is the aging infrastructure such as overhead wires, posts, broken streets and sewers. These issues are systematically handled by Public Works and Engineering Department. However, as they so directly affect our neighborhoods and revitalization efforts, a more active partnership with these departments and the Department of Planning and Community Development would aid public perception and be beneficial to all.

Land Use Conflicts

Boulevard/Neighborhood
The City's zoning ordinance does not allow the placement of commercial uses in a residential neighborhood without a zoning amendment that requires approval by City Council. Additionally, new commercial uses located next to residential zones are required to provide buffers and other development standards to protect the neighborhood. However, this has not always been the case. Over the years, the Boulevard business district has expanded into the surrounding residential area by either locating businesses or expanded existing businesses into the neighborhoods. As a result, businesses are located adjacent to residential uses without buffering or screening. .

Home Based Businesses
The City's zoning ordinance allows certain small-scaled commercial activities within residential dwellings. There are limitations on the amount of floor area used for the business as well as restrictions on altering the building. These types of businesses should not increase the volume of traffic in the neighborhood and, with the exception of limited signage, there should not ba any visual indication that there is a business located in the home.

The following Neighborhood and Housing Policies correspond to a specific goal and objective found in Chapter 2. The goal and policy number are abbreviated within the parenthesis.

- Allow for home based businesses that do not disrupt the normal life of a neighborhood. Such businesses must not allow for out-of-the-ordinary traffic or noise. (CC-4)

- Complete detailed area plans for each of the five (5) revitalization strategy areas in numeric priority identified in the Neighborhoods and Housing Plan (Map 3). (SD-1, QL-3)

- All new and infill housing should be built to blend into the fabric of the existing neighborhood to create a sense of place. (CC-3)

- Do not allow business areas to expand into neighborhoods. When there are conflicting land uses, create buffers to include landscaping and fencing that protect neighborhood uses. Additional protections should include limiting the hours of operation and restricting truck deliveries. (CC-4)

- Create regulations for existing conflicts between residential and commercial land uses that provide landscaping or fences to separate the two uses. Consider reinstating and expanding the Boulevard grant program to include funding to provide buffer and improve the visibility from the neighborhood. (CC-4)

- Allow for mixed use development to provide for a diversity of housing types to meet the needs of the young families as well as the City's aging population, including market rate and low to moderate income housing. (QL-4, SD-4)

- Construct senior apartments in mixed use areas so residents are close to services and shopping areas. Redevelop older, existing apartment buildings in the City for senior housing. (QL-4)

- Create a Housing Pattern Book to encourage redevelopment of the existing housing stock for modern family needs and the aging population while respecting the appearance and function of existing neighborhoods. (QL-4, EP-8)

- The City should support retrofitting existing houses and promoting universal design to allow for options for citizens to age in place. (QL-4, EP-8)

- Create a team of City employees from the Police, Fire, Engineering and Planning and Building Inspections Departments to focus on revitalization areas. (QL-3, EP-8, SD-1)

- Have quarterly neighborhood cleanups and periodically waive fees for trash removal. (SD-1)

- Encourage architecturally appropriate renovations and restorations of the City's historic resources and minimize the demolition of historic structures. Expand the City's Historic Resource District to include any Honorary Historic District that has been placed on State or National Register. (SD-6)

- Pursue honorary historic districts in neighborhoods 50 years or older to allow for tax credits and promote pride in neighborhoods. (QL-3, EP-8, SD-6)

- Encourage and assist property owners when renovating their historic structures by educating them about tax credits and developing a pattern book. (SD-6)

- Place historical markers at the entrance of all historic districts placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. (SD-6)

- The City should help create neighborhood associations in all parts of the City to help foster local identity and promote community activities to create relationships between residents. (SD-4, CC-2)

- Place additional signage at neighborhood entrances to welcome visitors and help create a sense of community for residents. (CC-2)

- The City should partner with local real estate agents to encourage the redevelopment of older houses by promoting a pattern book and residential tax abatement program. (QL-5)

- The City should partner with local real estate agents to promote homeownership by offering homeownership counseling, marketing the neighborhoods for families and promoting the school system. (CC-2)

- Reinstate the Residential Tax Abatement Program, and consider adjusting the threshold of investment so more homeowners can take advantage of this program for minor repairs and renovations. The amount of tax relief should be graduated, meaning the more the investment the larger the tax break.

- Provide other tax incentives to attract and encourage private investment in housing. (QL-3, EP-8)

- Efforts should be made to maintain and increase home values in the City by implementing revitalization efforts. (QL-3, QL-5)

- Strengthen code enforcement efforts on graffiti and litter. (SD-1)