

**NEIGHBORHOOD
PRESERVATION
In Chesterfield County**

**STRATEGIES NOW FOR
SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE**

December 1995

Prepared by the

**CHESTERFIELD COUNTY
COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE**

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE

P.O. Box 40 • Chesterfield, Virginia 23832-0040 (804) 796-7079/Fax (804) 751-4988

November 20, 1995

The Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Chesterfield County
Chesterfield, Virginia 23832

Dear Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Chesterfield County Committee on the Future, I am proud to submit the Committee's report on Neighborhood Preservation.

As you know, many areas of our County have started to show signs of aging. In addition, some areas have slowly started to take on more urban than suburban characteristics. These changes can be expected to grow throughout the County over the next 20 to 30 years.

These types of changes can sometimes lead to the development of significant problems unless there is a strategic plan designed to protect and preserve these maturing neighborhoods. This is why the Committee on the Future selected to analyze and report upon this topic.

After researching issues that affect neighborhood aging and preservation, the Committee met with a number of business leaders and civic association representatives throughout the County. In addition, citizen meetings were held in all of the County's magisterial districts. This final report reflects the concerns and ideas gleaned from the Committee's research and these meetings.

The adoption and implementation of these strategies will help preserve those neighborhoods that have already started to show signs of change and will prevent decline of neighborhoods into the 21st century.

The Committee looks forward to meeting with you on December 13, 1995 to present this report.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Hardt

Kenneth F. Hardt
Chairman
Committee on the Future

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface..... I

Neighborhood Preservation: A Concern for the Future – A Reality Now.....1

Community Organizations5

Neighborhood Schools.....9

Community Safety & Crime Prevention.....15

Maintenance, Rehabilitation and Design of Public & Private Facilities19

Bibliography27

PREFACE

Origins and Mission of the Committee on the Future

The Committee on the Future was authorized by the 1987 Chesterfield County Charter. The Committee is composed of ten county residents, two from each of the county's five magisterial districts. The Committee serves at the pleasure of the Board.

The mission of the committee is to forecast comprehensive and long-range conditions facing the county in the 21st century. The Committee then develops recommendations concerning these forecasts and submits its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The recommendations of the Committee on the Future expand beyond present day limitations, presenting a view not necessarily bound by present constraints, but embracing the future's possibilities.

Chesterfield County Committee on the Future

Bermuda

Dorothy K. Jaeckle
Wayne F. Virag

Clover Hill

Victor W. Liu
Tracy Williamson

Dale

Kenneth F. Hardt,
Chairman
Nancy Hudson

Matoaca

Renny Bush
Vice Chairman
Grace Norbrey

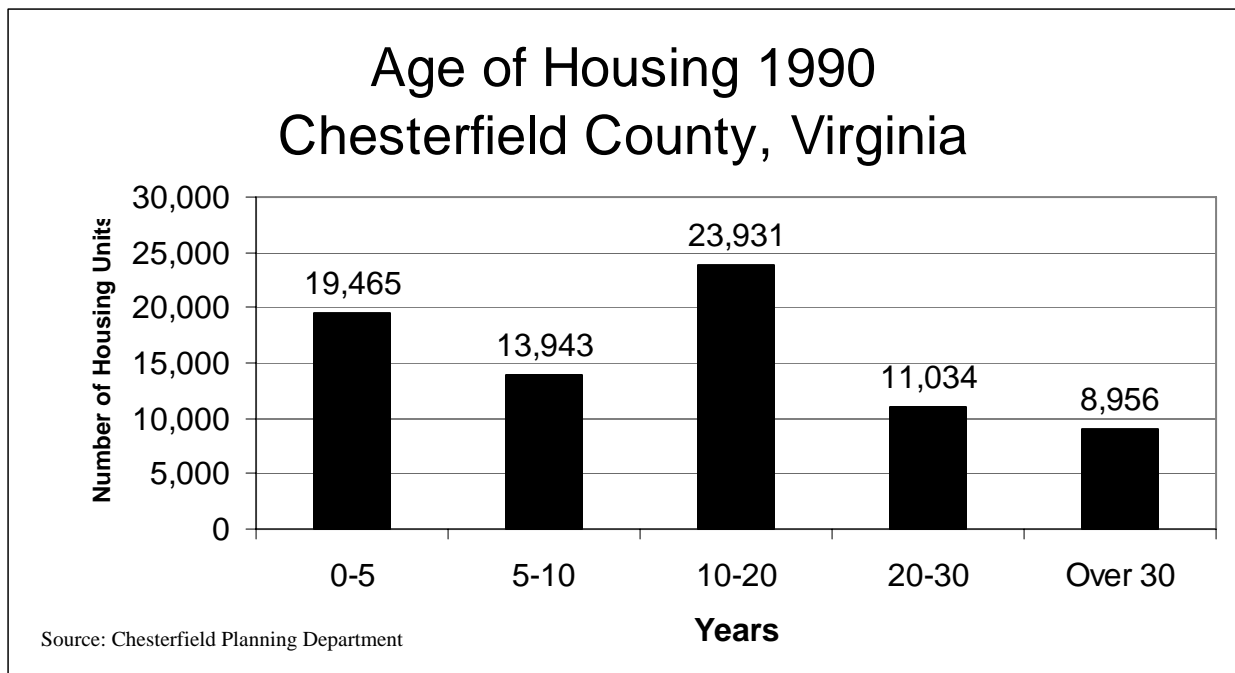
Midlothian

Dan B. Franks
William H. Shewmake

NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION
A Concern for the Future
A Reality Now

Chesterfield is a financially strong, economically diverse but still largely undeveloped county. The county was ranked sixth in City and State magazine's list of the "Twenty-five Up and Coming Counties" for 1993. In March of 1994, American Demographics, Inc. identified Chesterfield as one of the twenty fastest growing, wealthiest and most educated localities in the country, based upon such criteria as population growth, employment, education and income levels.

Generally, Chesterfield County can be characterized as a metropolitan suburban area. Nationwide, suburban areas have rapidly grown into major demographic and social forces. By the end of World War II, only 20% of the United States' population resided in suburbs. Today, however, suburbs are much more prevalent and powerful. According to the 1990 census, some 115 million Americans, or 46% of the country, live in suburbs. In Chesterfield County alone, over 90% of the population reside in suburban environments.



**Our Aging
Neighborhoods**

As Chesterfield County grows, it also ages. Given the growth over the last 20 years and the aging of the county's long established areas, the county must begin to focus on problems that can arise as neighborhoods begin to take on a more urban character.

Virtually everyone in a neighborhood is affected by the neighborhood's health and relative vitality, including homeowners, renters, schools, churches, businesses, commercial centers, nonprofit organizations and the local government. For example, homeowners are directly affected by the neighborhood's vitality in terms of the market value of one of their major investments - their homes. In addition, declining neighborhoods are often associated with higher costs related to crime, decreasing school test scores, deteriorating infrastructure, and lost tax revenue.

However, it is not just the residents and businesses that are physically located within an aging area that are affected by a neighborhood's vitality. Failure to maintain sustainable neighborhoods will result in loss of revenue, increased cost for services, and decline in the quality of life throughout the county.

Shifting the Focus

A recent Planning Department study found:

"Over the past two decades, Chesterfield's political discussion and resources have been focused on the management of a rapidly growing suburban population and its resultant service needs. Only in the past five years have early efforts been initiated to create and design programs to stabilize and improve the county's aging neighborhoods."

This concentration on the new versus the old is a common strategy for municipalities. Historically, public policies and private market forces have supported new development. Older areas are often abandoned in favor of new structures in different areas -often in the countryside.

The status of metropolitan suburbs has received recent attention by urban researchers and the press. During the fall of 1994, a study was published assessing the state of suburban areas in three metropolitan Virginia areas, including the Richmond Metropolitan Area. One concern addressed by the researchers was that metropolitan suburban areas do not normally adopt strategies to deal with aging neighborhoods and the related role of the local government.

**Planning
for the Future,
Beginning Today**

In order to protect Chesterfield County's unique character, the issues associated with aging neighborhoods must be addressed today. Goals, objectives and strategies must be adopted to maintain or improve the vitality of Chesterfield's neighborhoods. The Chesterfield County Committee on the Future therefore chose to analyze and address the issues associated with Neighborhood Preservation.

The Committee's first task was to identify the components of a healthy community. The Committee found that healthy communities are generally characterized by quality schools, public investment, private interest, safe environments, consistent community values, a shared vision, and a place where citizens feel a connection to the community. However, probably the best indication of the vitality of an area is its ability to keep and attract residents.

After initial research, the Committee interviewed over 25 prominent business leaders and held meetings with neighborhood organizers and relevant experts. Based on the research, interviews and meetings, the Committee developed draft strategies, which were presented at public forums throughout the county. Many of the ideas gleaned from these public forums were later integrated into this final report.

The overall goal of this report is twofold. First, it is important for the county and its citizens to realize that issues related to neighborhood preservation need to be addressed now. Parts of the county are already experiencing problems associated with aging. Over the next 20 or 30 years, a large portion of the populated areas of the county will also begin to experience these problems unless appropriate actions are taken.

Secondly, this report seeks to introduce strategies that can be used by all county communities, businesses and the county government to improve the quality of our neighborhoods. By preserving and improving our neighborhoods, the government will be able to more effectively utilize its resources, businesses will have access to active commercial centers and residents will continue to enjoy a high quality of life. The major areas addressed in this report are community involvement through neighborhood organizations, the impact of area schools in defining and strengthening a community, the need for residents to feel safe in their neighborhoods, and the preservation, rehabilitation and design of our neighborhoods. While the Committee has made specific recommendations in each of these areas, the connecting theme of this report is community pride.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The preservation and improvement of county neighborhoods depend upon the community pride of its residents and organizations. Some communities have neighborhood organizations which serve this goal. However, many areas, subdivisions and neighborhoods in the county are not represented by any type of organized community association. These neighborhoods are not taking advantage of their most valuable resource - the residents and businesses in their community.

Strong Community Organizations

Because a well organized community organization can help protect the interests of the citizens in a neighborhood, these organizations should be strengthened where they already exist and created where absent. In addition to developing community pride through community identity, these organizations will also develop a permanent working partnership among residents, businesses, and the county government.

Moreover, a strong neighborhood association can serve as an advocate for the entire area. Community organizations can develop community newsletters and brochures that can be used by residents, area schools, county government and the development community to increase awareness of neighborhood's accomplishments and activities.

County Partnership

The relationship between a neighborhood organization and the local government is crucial to the success of the community. A positive relationship between a neighborhood organizations and local government can result in creative solutions to problems that are unique to a neighborhood. A formal communication network should therefore be established and used by citizens groups and the county government.

It is also important that neighborhood organizations be recognized as a representative body for the subject neighborhood. Neighborhood councils and teams as well as other organized community associations should be permitted to represent the persons living in their communities.

**Assign
Neighborhood
Organization Staff**

The county needs to take an active role in assisting neighborhood organizations. Other localities have discovered that dedicating staff to improving neighborhoods represents a sound investment. Chesterfield should follow their example and designate specific staff within the Planning Department who would be responsible for working with existing neighborhood organizations and to assisting in the creation of associations in communities that do not have them. The staff can also serve to coordinate activities among community associations.

**Neighborhood
Leaders**

Nurturing neighborhood leaders is one of the key components to a successful community group. These "hometown heroes" can encourage the creation of effective "quality-of-life lobbies" within each neighborhood. Based upon this philosophy, the county's neighborhood organization staff should develop programs and initiatives to provide improved leadership to groups so that residents may act as advocates for their neighborhoods' needs.

County forums should also be developed to create enthusiasm and teach groups how to organize. A portion of this training should focus on community covenants in residential developments. Through the active enforcement of such covenants, communities can better ensure that the neighborhood does not physically deteriorate.

Funding

To further the formation and empowerment of community organizations, the county should evaluate whether to fund certain aspects of community organizations. Such funding could entail, at the least, the organizational costs of community groups. In addition, the county should study whether neighborhood organizations should have some input into how county funds are spent in their neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen and enhance the county's neighborhoods by establishing working partnerships among its residents, businesses, non-profit organizations and the county government.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
<p>Encourage the development and strengthening of neighborhood organizations to provide forums for community leadership, to help enforce community covenants in residential neighborhoods, to provide a communication network between the citizen and government, to develop community newsletters and brochures, and to supplement governmental services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize neighborhood organizations as official representatives of their respective neighborhoods, and involve them in decisions concerning improvements which can and should be made in their neighborhoods and surrounding areas. • Establish a formal communication process between the county government and neighborhood organizations by which information can be disseminated to neighborhoods and neighborhood concerns can be brought to the attention of the county government. • Designate staff within the Planning Department to work with existing neighborhood organizations, assist in the establishment and coordination of new neighborhood organizations and cooperate with other local jurisdictions in advancing the goal of neighborhood preservation. • Consider providing funding to neighborhood organizations to help finance the initial start up and administrative costs of the organizations.

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

The quality of schools in a community is one of the most important reasons why families move to or remain in a particular area. When a local school declines, many residents are tempted to move to another location. If the local school is perceived as a major problem, it will be hard to attract residents to replace those who desire to move. As a result, property values in an entire area are directly affected by the quality of the neighborhood school. Neighborhood schools, therefore, must remain strong.

Partnerships Neighborhoods, businesses and local schools need to work together not only to promote the advancement of the neighborhood as a whole, but also to maintain and improve the schools in the neighborhood. Partnerships among these organizations should be developed and encouraged.

In addition, teachers and staff should be encouraged to attend a course on community involvement for which they can receive credit towards their recertification. In this course, they could learn about the area in which they work. The training may encourage the participants to become involved with their school's local neighborhood activities.

**Senior Adults
and the Schools**

Senior adults are a community resource which is often not well utilized. While many existing neighborhood organizations are led by the senior adults in the area, local schools often do not receive the benefit of the experience and wisdom.

Senior adults should be encouraged to become involved in the activities of their local schools. A partnership between neighborhood organizations and schools will help open a communication link which can match volunteers with the needs of the schools.

Marketing

Neighborhood organizations, in concert with local businesses, realtors, and schools, should actively promote their local schools. Through these joint efforts, positive information about the local schools can be disseminated. Concepts developed by these organizations can also be used to create marketing strategies to promote the county's older schools and the area's neighborhood.

**Businesses
and Schools**

The county's existing School/Business Partnership Program brings together businesses and individual schools to increase the learning environment of students. Participants such as the Defense General Supply Center and Commonwealth Gas have dedicated time, equipment and resources to our area schools.

These types of programs should be expanded, with an initial emphasis on the schools located in the county's older neighborhoods. The businesses that assist in this program will benefit from a strengthened community. Neighborhood schools will also benefit from the experience of learning from outside, professional sources.

**Older Schools –
Make Them
Competitive**

Because the quality of a neighborhood school is one of the primary reasons why families remain in an area, the county must provide older schools with the funding and resources necessary to make them competitive with newer schools. Otherwise, residents may be tempted to move to newly developed areas of the county, leaving behind neighborhoods which in turn become a drain on the county's resources.

Accordingly, the funding of building improvements in older schools should be emphasized over the construction of new schools in bond referenda. In addition, all county schools must receive comparable resources and equipment. A standard for state-of-the-art integrated learning systems should be established and implemented and older schools have access to this technology. Advanced level courses should also be available to all students regardless of location.

Finally, the high academic standards that currently exist in all of our area schools must be maintained. There is a fear that once an area begins to decline, academic standards are lowered to attempt to "fit" the surrounding community. This type of activity only discourages residents who wish to remain in a neighborhood, yet want their children to be taught to the academic standards prevalent throughout other areas of the county. By insisting on high academic standards in all schools in the county, regardless of location, families in a potentially declining area will feel more comfortable remaining in that area.

**Creating
School Boundaries
and Districts**

When children in a community are kept together from elementary through high schools, these children and their families develop a stronger sense of community identity. Therefore, the school system should develop a long-range plan for the creation of school districts which considers community boundaries and emphasizes continuity of the student population. Because the size of existing secondary schools and feeder schools is already established, the focus of this plan should project into the future to focus on schools that will be needed in 20 or 30 years.

In addition, a large student population does not foster a sense of community in either the students or their parents. Accordingly, developing a sense of community needs to be a strong factor in designing future schools.

School buildings and grounds are often a focal point in the community. Many community activities take place in school auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias throughout the county. In addition, many athletic events are held on school grounds.

**School Maintenance
and Repair -
Consolidation**

Residents are concerned with the quality of the maintenance and upkeep of these important community assets. Too often, with the constant budgetary constraints of the school system, maintenance becomes a low priority in comparison with pupil-teacher ratios, teachers' salaries, etc.

If homeowners and businesses in a neighborhood are to be encouraged to maintain their properties, then the county must ensure that neighborhood schools are equally well maintained. Therefore, the maintenance of school facilities and grounds should be performed by the two county government departments whose functions include these activities - the county's General Services and Parks and Recreation Departments. This shift in responsibilities will allow the school system to concentrate on education and county service departments to focus upon upkeep and appearance.

**Adopt-a-
School Grounds**

An "Adopt-a-School Grounds" program should be developed. This initiative would encourage area businesses and community organizations to complete exterior planting and grounds maintenance work. Through the creation of this program, organizations will help to promote neighborhood pride through school beautification.

OBJECTIVE

Attract and retain families in the county's established communities by strengthening and promoting neighborhood schools.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
<p>A. Encourage partnerships among the school system, neighborhood associations and business organizations which can help promote neighborhood preservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include community involvement training and participation as a part of the school staff development. • Encourage the participation of senior adults in activities involving the schools. • Encourage the expansion of the School/Business Partnership Program. • Develop marketing strategies to promote older schools and area neighborhoods. • Disseminate to residents, businesses, and realtors positive information related to area schools.
<p>B. Ensure that older schools receive necessary funding and resources to make them competitive with newer schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the improvement of existing older schools as a priority over new school construction in bond referenda. • Establish and implement a county standard for state-of-the-art integrated learning technologies and provide the necessary resources to ensure that older schools have access to such technologies. • Locate magnet schools in older communities when those programs are created. • Ensure accessibility to advance level courses throughout the school system. • Adhere to high academic standards regardless of school location or population, and make that adherence a priority.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
<p>C. Encourage a sense of community and continuity when developing school districts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a long-range plan for school districts which includes continuity of student population from elementary through secondary schools. • Avoid the creation of oversized schools in order to establish a sense of community and to promote safety in schools.
<p>D. Insist upon quality maintenance of school buildings and grounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign the maintenance of school facilities and grounds to the county's General Services and Parks and Recreation Departments and ensure that work meets quality control standards. • Develop an "Adopt-a-School Grounds" program through which community organizations and area businesses can assist in the maintenance and upkeep of area schools.

COMMUNITY SAFETY & CRIME PREVENTION

If residents are to remain in the older areas of the county, they must feel safe. Along with active community organizations and schools, safety and crime prevention are important components of neighborhood preservation.

Expand Community Policing

The county's Police Department currently has a number of Community Policing operations in selected areas. A Community Policing program makes police officers more accessible and fosters communication between the Department and citizens. The county should continue to pursue Community Policing efforts and expand this service to areas where immediate and future needs are identified.

Neighborhood Organizations and the Police

The Police Department should utilize neighborhood groups in its efforts to prevent crime. Therefore the Department should hold periodic meetings with neighborhood organizations throughout the county. These meetings should be used to identify and prioritize community concerns, discuss the use of policing resources and provide feedback to area police officers and administration. In addition, to strengthen the connection between the police and neighborhood organizations, the police should provide statistical and pertinent follow-up information regarding area crimes. This would promote community involvement while assisting the police in preventing crime. Finally neighborhood groups and commercial establishments can also become more involved in community safety through the creation of new and expanded neighborhood and business watch programs.

Schools - Adjust Schedules

Many neighborhood businesses have experienced problems when the school system releases its students early. In addition, with the current secondary school schedule, many unsupervised children are left to congregate in neighborhoods and business establishments. Business people and residents throughout the county expressed concern about this situation. Accordingly, the county should seriously evaluate adjusting secondary school hours to begin later. The experience of other local school systems (such as Henrico) with later starting times, should be evaluated during this process.

**Expand
Community
Policing Into
Secondary Schools**

The Police Department has recently expanded the county's Community Policing Program into schools in some county areas. These policing activities have included ongoing communication with school administrators, education on such topics as rape prevention and Crime Solvers, and constant visibility on school grounds. The Police Department and School System should examine expanding the work of Community Policing operations into all county high schools. By operating in all secondary schools, students will view police officers as a part of the school environment and as members of the community. In addition, a police presence at secondary schools may help to ease parental concern about their children's safety.

**After School and
Youth Activities**

Similar to many other metropolitan counties, Chesterfield has limited after school activities for its youth. Community sponsorship of regularly scheduled youth activities by neighborhood organizations should be encouraged. Such youth activities could be located within community and school facilities. Through the use of existing buildings, these programs can begin in the near future with limited initiation costs. Recent teen center programs established in the Brandermill and Woodlake communities may serve as a model for such programs.

In the absence of activities sponsored by community organizations, the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the assistance from other departments such as Social Services, should expand its existing youth programs. Many of these activities could be held at school facilities to limit program expenses.

OBJECTIVE

Promote a sense of safety in neighborhoods.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
<p>A. Continue community policing efforts and expand those efforts to encompass additional areas where immediate need for such policing has been identified with a goal toward county wide coverage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new division within the Police Department which focuses upon Community Policing. • Hold meetings periodically between the police and residents in order to identify and prioritize citizens' concerns. • Continue to support existing neighborhood and business watch programs as well as the creation of new programs utilizing neighborhood associations. • Provide to neighborhood and business associations information concerning crimes committed within a community, including types of crimes and convictions.
<p>B. Expand efforts to deter juvenile crime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the cost and potential academic impact of starting and ending secondary school days at a later time. • Explore extending Community Policing to high schools so that high school students can have more contact and interaction with a police officer. • Encourage community sponsorship of regularly scheduled youth activities to be housed in local community association buildings and school facilities. • Encourage the Parks and Recreation Department to develop weekend and summer activities utilizing school facilities in targeted areas.

MAINTENANCE, REHABILITATION AND DESIGN OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE FACILITIES

Maintenance of and reinvestment of public and private infrastructure and facilities are necessary for the improvement of neighborhoods. An area will remain vital when residents, landlords, business people and the locality are equally concerned about the facilities within an area.

Although Chesterfield's population grew 48% during the 1980's, 26% of the county's housing stock is at least 25 years old. Age of the housing stock is one potential indicator of a declining area. To prevent that decline, precautions must be taken.

In addition, the physical design of a neighborhood can impact whether that community ages gracefully and whether a sense of community pride develops. We need to focus not only on existing communities, but also future communities that will, one day, become aging neighborhoods.

Tax Incentives for Residential Improvements

Some residents within the county may desire to improve their older houses but do not possess the resources to complete such improvements. To encourage the rehabilitation of older homes in an area, a comprehensive rehabilitation program should be created which would involve a tax incentive program for the rehabilitation, renovation or replacement of residential structures which are at least 25 years old. Similar programs are used in other parts of the Commonwealth, including Fairfax City and Richmond. The program would offer low interest loans and tax deferment for a given period of time. In addition, the county's neighborhood organization staff can work with local lending institutions to identify opportunities to help improve the credit worthiness of low and low-moderate income people. This may result in easier access to private loans which can be used to rehabilitate declining residential stock.

Self-Inspection Checklist

The county should develop a checklist which residents can use in evaluating their aging homes and which encourages clean-up activities in the neighborhood. The use of such a checklist can also decrease the number of property maintenance violations and promote neighborhood-wide adherence to building and maintenance codes.

**Community
Businesses**

A community is not made up solely of residents. Local businesses are a key component to the vitality of a neighborhood. The success of an area in attracting and retaining businesses is as important to a community as its success in attracting and retaining residents.

Often, a declining area can suffer not only the loss of residents but also the loss of key retail businesses that make an area more liveable. Consequently, the county's Economic Development Department should work with businesses to create marketing strategies to encourage commercial establishments to enter areas with high vacancy rates, including community shopping centers or malls.

Overlay Districts

The county has had success in relaxing certain zoning requirements in areas targeted for rehabilitation. These include requirements relating to signage and parking ordinances in designated overlay districts. The Planning Department should target other areas in the county that might benefit financially from reducing some design, setback and zoning regulations.

**Code Violation
Inspections**

Like some lending institutions that require a complete inspection of property at the time of sale, the county should require a mandatory code inspection of properties at the time of transfer. This initiative could reduce the continuing decline of houses that do not currently meet code requirements and, in the case of property sales, would probably place the burden of repair on the seller.

The county currently reacts to code violations on a complaint basis. This procedure is not well known in the community. Chesterfield's relevant departments should work with neighborhood organizations to encourage proactive enforcement by citizens in the area. An aggressive nuisance abatement program can assist neighborhood organizations in regularly monitoring property maintenance codes. This program could also encourage neighborhood improvement by offering assistance with community clean-ups, such as locating a county refuse truck at a weekend block party.

**Design of
Future
Communities**

The physical design of a neighborhood can affect the development of community pride. This should be taken into consideration when designing future communities. Specific design standards should be included within the county's development ordinances to further a community atmosphere. Design criteria which the Committee recommends include having neighborhood commercial establishments, a mix of housing types, and planting of trees along streets. Design standards which should be researched and evaluated by the county's Planning Department include encouraging reduced size lots, narrowing of streets with sidewalks, elimination of cul-de-sacs, and the location of garages to the side and rear of houses. In addition, when a shopping center is planned for a new community, strategies should be developed to coordinate its design with that of the surrounding community.

**Zoning Mediation
and Forums**

In virtually all rezoning cases that are contested, Planning Commissioners act as mediators in resolving rezoning issues. This has led to a better understanding between developers and local residents. However, in major rezoning cases which are particularly volatile, a Commissioner's motives and impartiality may be questioned by both sides. Parties may also try to exert political pressure on the Commissioner rather than use the Commissioner as a vehicle to resolve issues in a manner best for all concerned, including the long range interests of the county. In such cases, the county could try making recognized planning experts available to mediate the dispute in order to provide impartiality and to make unbiased suggestions. The county could also consider allowing the mediator to make recommendations should the parties fail to come to terms. Such a mediator program should be reserved for relatively few major rezoning cases and should be monitored to see if the program is cost effective.

The county should also consider assembling developers, neighborhood representatives and elected officials to participate in televised forums about planning and zoning theories and their effect on the entire county. This may give people a broader perspective when they are later faced with a proposed zoning change or redevelopment which affects or involves them.

**Identify and Protect
Key Resources**

A neighborhood's cultural and historical landmarks are important assets and need to be identified, protected, and marketed. By maintaining and promoting local landmarks, neighborhoods can preserve their past while planning for the future.

**Multi-Family
Housing**

Owners and residents of multi-family housing developments in the county are important members of the community. However, a lack of comprehensive planning by the county and poor management by owners and tenants can sometimes become a problem for surrounding neighborhoods.

When multi-family housing is clustered in an area, the sheer volume of residents often drains available county resources. The county must periodically review its Comprehensive Plan for the purpose of avoiding the concentration of multi-family housing in any particular location in the county.

In addition, to encourage maintenance and upkeep of multi-family housing, a county association of multi-family complex owners should be created to develop an information network and to discuss apartment related concerns. Issues to be discussed could include leadership skills, screening of tenants, evicting destructive tenants and responding appropriately to maintenance problems.

OBJECTIVE

Maintain, rehabilitate and design public and private facilities and infrastructure to protect the vitality of all neighborhoods.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
A. Develop a comprehensive program to rehabilitate older, substandard or distressed housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a residential tax incentive program for rehabilitation, renovation or replacement of residential structures that are at least 25 years old.• The neighborhood organization staff should develop programs with local banks to identify opportunities to improve the credit worthiness of low and low-to-moderate income families so that they will have easier access to private loans and could better meet Community Reinvestment Act (C.R.A.) requirements.• Provide recognition for older homes which have been successfully renovated.• Distribute a self-inspection property maintenance checklist for use by residents to encourage self-help cleanup activities and also to reduce incidents of property maintenance violations on private properties.• Encourage landlord and renter programs to promote maintenance and upkeep of rental homes in neighborhoods.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
<p>B. Develop a comprehensive program to rehabilitate declining commercial areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop marketing strategies that encourage commercial establishments to enter high vacancy shopping centers. • Provide tax incentives for commercial rehabilitation similar to those recommended for aging residential houses. • Provide flexible development regulations such as overlay zone districts which will allow exceptions to certain requirements where appropriate.
<p>C. Emphasize code enforcement as a tool to protect the vitality of neighborhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require code inspection and enforcement before a property can be transferred. • Encourage neighborhood organizations to take a proactive and aggressive approach in the enforcement of property maintenance codes.
<p>D. Design new communities and subdivisions to be more conducive to a sense of community and to resist decline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the county's development ordinances to encourage the location of neighborhood stores, mixed housing types and the planting of curbside trees. • Explore the possibility of revising development ordinances to encourage reduced lot sizes, the narrowing of streets in residential areas with sidewalks, the elimination of cul-de-sacs, locating garages to the side or rear of dwellings and creating strategies to improve shopping malls. • Evaluate using recognized qualified independent experts in the planning field to mediate contentious rezoning cases which will significantly impact the county. • Assemble developers, community leaders and elected officials to participate in televised forums about planning and zoning theories and their effect on the entire county.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Details</i>
E. Support a sense of community by identifying and protecting cultural and historical landmarks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The neighborhood organization staff should work with community groups in identifying significant local landmarks and develop strategies to promote these assets.
F. Provide adequate multi-family housing while also preventing such housing from deteriorating or becoming too concentrated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the Planning Department in its review of the Comprehensive Plan to strategically locate multi-family dwellings in order to avoid concentration. • Promote effective management of multi-family housing through the county's more aggressive code enforcement strategy. • The neighborhood organization staff should create a county association of multi-family complex owners to develop an information network and process for the screening of tenants, managing rental property, evicting destructive tenants and responding appropriately to property maintenance requirements.

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For information or printed copies of this report, please contact:

Chesterfield County Administration

Chesterfield County

P.O. Box 40

Chesterfield, Virginia 23832

(804) 796-7079

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Last Saved By: krusem
Total Editing Time: 467 Minutes
Last Printed On: 9/7/2005 3:47:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 29
Number of Words: 6,521 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 37,170 (approx.)