

Sandston Commercial Area Study



County of Henrico, Virginia



January 2002

Sandston Commercial Area Study

Sandston Commercial Area Plan



Prepared for:
Henrico County Planning Office

Prepared by:
Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.
Frazier Associates
Patricia Curran
A. Morton Thomas and Associates, Inc.

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Adopted:

Acknowledgments

County of Henrico Board of Supervisors

James B. Donati, Jr., CPC	Chairman, Varina District
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Director of Planning

John R. Marlles, AICP

Planning Commission

Allen Taylor, PE	Chairman, Three Chopt District
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C.W. Archer, CPC	Fairfield District
Ernest B. Vanarsdall, CPC	Brookland District
Lisa Ware	Tuckahoe District
Frank J. Thornton	Board of Supervisors Representative (Fairfield)

A special thanks is owed to those residents and business owners who gave their time and energy to participate in this important process.

Sandston Advisory Group

Tracy Pendleton, Lillian Barnett, Elnora Walker, Wayne Morris, Pat Buheller, Nellie Richardson, Mark Daniel, Joe Taylor Sr., Joseph Holt, Jane Osby, A.J. Penley, Tracey Coker, Barbra Wright, Helen Talman, Alvie Morris, Ada Chinn, Thelma Moore, David Mehfoud, Jimmy Mehfoud, John Montgomery, Mark Romers, John Ragsdale, Neil Chiappa, Dean Cobb, Joe Holt, Bucky Dean, Nancy Taylor, Robby Prezioso

Example Sites

Joe Holt, Chuck's Supermarket	Neil Chiappa, N & W Salvage
Al Penley, 400 West Williamsburg Road	Rodney McNew, Windmill Building Corporation
John Ragsdale, Sandston Cleaners and the Shake Shop	

Consultants

Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.
Frazier Associates
Patricia Curran
A. Morton Thomas, Associates, Inc.

County of Henrico Staff

Lee Householder, Project Manager

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Summary

Sandston is a small town within the larger, more suburban Henrico County. Williamsburg Road (also known as Route 60 and the old road between Richmond and Williamsburg), shrinks from four to two lanes within the community's boundaries. Sandston has an established commercial area comprised of a mixture of office and service uses with residential intermixed. More pedestrian at its center, its western and eastern edges are automobile oriented with many of the buildings surrounded by asphalt, unbroken by landscape plantings.

This study is a community-based effort to examine the Williamsburg Road Corridor, bounded by Early Avenue to the west, and Nine Mile/Beulah Road to the east. The result of the study is an outline of the conceptual plan for the commercial area of Sandston, with immediate (one to two years) and long-term actions (three to five years) to assist the community in achieving stability and a cohesive appearance for years to come.

Interest in Sandston is growing, with a new bank constructed and new houses under construction. These changes, coupled with the County of Henrico's new initiatives for older commercial areas, makes this study timely. A community-led effort, coordinated and supported by a County initiative and staff, will help lead to a renewal of Sandston - a small town with a lively neighborhood commercial heart.

Context

This document outlines the Sandston Commercial Area Study and recommends immediate and long-term actions to rejuvenate and grow its commercial area. It is supplemented with Technical Appendices providing associated background material, including a Market Climate memorandum, a summary of Issues and Opportunities, a brief infrastructure review memorandum, a synopsis of the five 'Example Sites', comments from the Advisory Group and Community-wide Workshops, plant lists, and a probable statement of cost.

Attractiveness of Sandston - circa 1923

The present strong movement of home builders from city to suburbs and nearby country has been noted by many. Roger Babson, Statistician and profound student of economic and social conditions as they act and re-act on each other, recently made a study of this tendency and reached the conclusion that this movement would not only continue, but also grow in volume. His principle reason was the automobile; first, because the rapid multiplication of automobiles and trucks has made life in the cities dangerous, especially for children and old people – the two ages least able to protect themselves; second, because the automobile, responsible for these dangers, also, with good roads, make it possible for those whose business is in the city to have a home in the suburbs, and thus escape congestion and dangers, and the city's high cost of homes and living.'

Sandston Virginia, The Ideal Residential Suburb, by the Richmond Fairfield Railway Co. 1923.

Background

The consultant team, composed of landscape architects, architects, engineers, and economic planners, looked at Sandston and noted its physical layout, strengths, and assets on which to build. They produced a Market Climate Report that identifies market trends and challenges, developed a memorandum from field notes regarding general infrastructure needs, evaluated streetscape and general building façade conditions and compiled the results as a series of strategies into a plan for future improvements to Sandston. Most importantly, the team worked with the community to create a plan with an implementation program that fit these pieces together to reinforce and bolster a memorable place.

The County of Henrico's Planning Office identified Sandston as a good candidate for this study. As an older commercial area, the community can benefit from the collective effort on the part of the County, a consultant team, and community members examining the commercial area's physical and economic needs and developing a realistic plan for its improvement. Such a plan requires community leadership to carry-out its recommendations. The Informal Advisory Group will need to become a formal group, working directly with County staff to implement the study. Together the Sandston Advisory Group (SAG) and the County can take the study's recommendations and make real improvements to the Sandston Commercial Area.

Purpose

The overall intent of this effort is to outline a conceptual plan for the commercial area of Sandston, with immediate and long-term strategies articulated to assist the community in achieving stability and a cohesive appearance for years to come. The plan will build on Sandston's role in the community as a neighborhood commercial area, with eating spots, banks, shops, and professional services serving the surrounding population.

To succeed, the plan must capitalize on Sandston's location near a major interchange and its proximity to new development and growing areas, while remembering and embracing its history. The plan's strategies must take into account the aspirations of community members, the history and

character of the existing community, and identify opportunities for future growth and development. The community's integrity must be maintained, while its physical and economic characteristics are enhanced. If the plan fails, new development that could have come to Sandston may find its way farther east or west.



Looking east along Williamsburg Road towards East Nine Mile Road

This study includes recommendations on how to embrace and enhance the small town character of Sandston, while addressing:

- new gateways and streetscape improvements
- vehicular circulation, parking, and infrastructure;
- building infill, facade and building renovations;
- retention and recruitment of businesses; and
- operation and marketing.



Illustration from the promotional booklet published in 1923

Setting

Sandston is located in eastern Henrico County, south of and parallel to Interstate 64 and east of I-295. Access from I-64 is through other commercial areas. Plans are underway for new commercial development east of Sandston along the Route 60 corridor. The immediate Sandston area is established with few remaining parcels for new residential growth. However, residential and commercial growth in Henrico County is likely to occur south and east of the Sandston community. Known developments include the Virginia State Fair Park site (or a large scale office complex), the White Oak Technology Park, and the Richmond International Airport.

Up until World War I, the Sandston area was a collection of farms and wooded lands. It was the site of one of the Seven Days Battles during the Civil War. Known at that time as Seven Pines – named so because of the unusual growth of seven pine trees in the area - the border today between Sandston and Seven Pines is known only to natives of the area, and even they disagree at times. Sandston received its name from one of its founders in the 1920's.



Marker located at the Sandston Library commemorating the area's history

Sandston was once marketed as 'The Ideal Residential Suburb'. (Richmond Fairfield Railway Co., 1923). Connected to Richmond by an electric streetcar, 230 six-room and bath bungalows had been built on nearly six hundred acres at the end of World War I. Purchased from the U.S.. Housing Corporation by the Richmond Fairfield Railway Co. in 1921, the original houses were sold and additional ones were built. What is today the Richmond International Airport began as the Richmond Army Air Base. Its growth during World War II led to more growth and change in Sandston.



Looking east towards the East Nine Mile/Beulah Roads intersection with East Williamsburg Road

Interest in the community remains, from long-time residents and second and third generation families, to new businesses such as the bank on Williamsburg Road and new subdivisions such as the one in Sandston's southeast quadrant.

Sandston 'Firsts'

- The **first** community in Virginia to have a Public Library
- The **first** county in the state to adopt the County Manager form of government.
- The **first** community in the county to install water, sewerage, and street lights.
- The **first** community in the county to have a public park (this is being constructed at the present time).
- And, believe it or not, Sandston installed the Dial Telephone System before the City of Richmond!

Source: *A Directory of Sandston*, 1947, Sandston Men's Civic Club

Study Boundaries

The Sandston Commercial Area incorporates the properties abutting Williamsburg Road between Early Avenue and East Nine Mile/Beulah Road in eastern Henrico County.

Study Process and Citizen Involvement

The project began in October 1999, when the County of Henrico's Planning Office held a citizen workshop in the community. From that effort a list of concerns and valued community characteristics was developed. The consultant team was hired the following spring, and a public 'kickoff' meeting was held in July, with those who had attended the October meeting as well as local property and business owners invited. Named the Sandston Advisory Group, this group continued to meet throughout the course of the project to discuss and guide the consultant team and the County's Planning Office. The team's understanding of 'Issues and Opportunities' was presented for review and comment at a community-wide forum in September. A second Sandston Advisory Group meeting focused on selecting a concept plan for the commercial area and the third meeting focused on the five 'Example Sites' that illustrated applications of the Design Concept on real sites within the study area. A final community-wide forum was held in April, 2001. This will be followed with a work session with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

Most importantly, the Sandston Advisory Group will evolve into a formal community-based and led group and will become the 'keeper' and guardian of the plan. This newly evolved group will work directly with County staff to ensure that the study proposals be implemented in a manner satisfactory to the community as well as the County.



Kemper Court with treed boulevard and original houses

Summary of Issues and Opportunities

An assessment of the Sandston Commercial area was done to identify Issues and Opportunities related to:

- Character
- Circulation
- Physical Patterns
- Land Use and Commercial Offerings

The assessment was compiled by members of the consultant team and focused on conditions affecting the enhancement of the commercial area. Although faced with numerous challenges to effectively enhance the commercial area, many can be effectively addressed. These issues and opportunities are summarized on pages 6 and 7.

Character

Originally, Sandston was pedestrian friendly - old movies show children on bikes riding up and down Williamsburg Road. In some segments, the commercial area still retains that character. In other

areas, the corridor is dominated by the automobile. The rejuvenation of a pedestrian oriented community can both strengthen the community's inherent qualities and distinguish it from adjacent, more strip-like and vehicular oriented commercial areas. Sandston's edges have become geared to the automobile, but the edges' existing buildings and site plans can be renovated to make them more pedestrian friendly, while new construction can be encouraged to complement the pedestrian character of Sandston's core. One bench, no pedestrian crosswalks and no pedestrian signals are currently located in the Sandston Commercial area. The opportunity exists to enhance the legacy of Sandston as a pedestrian-oriented village while addressing the issues related to retaining and reclaiming the 'small town' character of Sandston.



Residential neighborhood with sidewalk near center of Sandston

There is a mixture of residential and commercial building types in the district, most of which were constructed in the first half of the twentieth century. Pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential buildings are grouped around the center of the district where the post office and library are located. Larger-footprint, auto-oriented commercial buildings and businesses are located at the edges of the district. The majority of buildings are one-story detached structures, giving the district a more rural, small town feel as contrasted with more densely organized urban commercial districts.



Example of a building developed in the 'Modern Style'

There is a mixture of materials ranging from masonry and wood to metal and other twentieth century building materials. Many of the one story commercial buildings at the center of the district are brick and constructed in the Colonial Revival style or a simpler vernacular commercial style of the 1920's. Many of the residential buildings are wood frame and are clad with either wood or vinyl siding. Larger, newer buildings are constructed of masonry. A few buildings such as gas stations and N & W Salvage were constructed in the modern style, typical of the 1950's. They are clad in 20th Century materials such as enamel steel panels.



Example of a building with a new gable roof - with the gable oriented toward the street rather than the building's sides

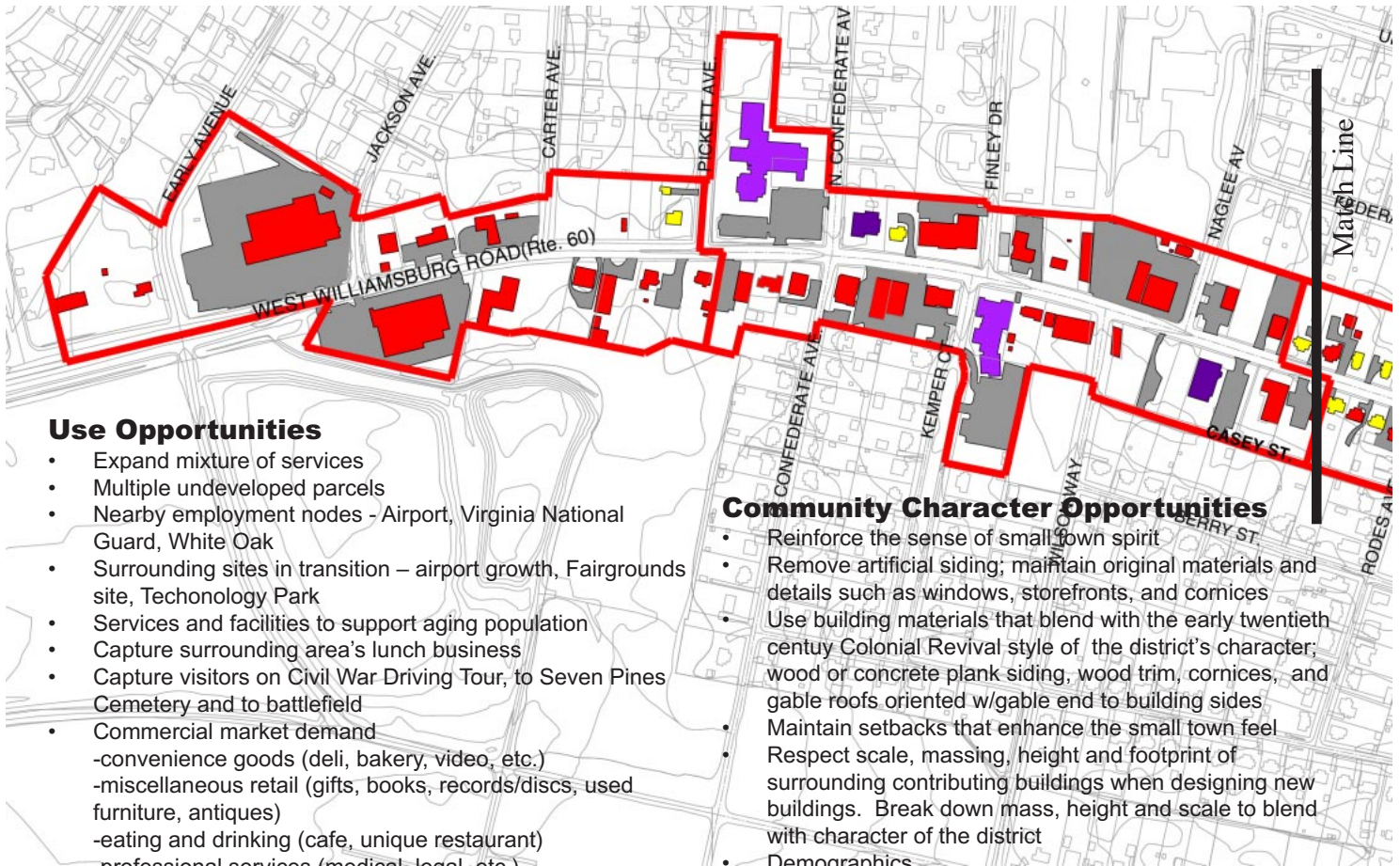
Sandston Commercial Area Study

Use Issues

- Size of parcels limits development opportunities
- No economic incentive for development
- Lack of anchor as major draw
- Prevalence of third tier uses (beauty shops, auto-related)
- Current zoning standards often difficult to meet physically
- Current zoning creates parcels that are not marketable by competitive standards
- Perception that property won't sell
- Shortage of parking on some parcels, including post office
- Fragmented, difficult to assemble parcels, little contiguous vacant land
- Convenience and shoppers goods available at nearby locations
- Uneven distribution/concentration of use and density
- Fragmentation of use, established uses changing such as residential to commercial
- Perception of missing 'essential services'
- Perception of lack of or shortage of professional and retail services (i.e. bank)
- Past opposition to grocery store at Beulah

Community Character Issues

- Variety of setbacks (building façade to street)
- Variety of building styles and degree of maintenance
- Degrees of success with adaptive reuse of buildings
- Few pedestrian amenities, underutilized pedestrian spaces
- Aging building stock, challenge to reuse residential stock for commercial purposes
- Rents do not justify new construction or rehabilitation
- Poor merchandising, insufficient marketing, lack of merchant cooperation in marketing, etc.
- Aging population, with minimal growth
- Good provision of public services (Library, Post Office, Recreation Center, Ball fields)
- Four primary clusters of sites with similar land use, parcel size, parking lot configurations and building placement
- Preservation of scale
- Area of service: 3000 +/- residents of Sandston, or larger area – drawing on 'outsiders'
- Service oriented rather than retail oriented corridor



Use Opportunities

- Expand mixture of services
- Multiple undeveloped parcels
- Nearby employment nodes - Airport, Virginia National Guard, White Oak
- Surrounding sites in transition – airport growth, Fairgrounds site, Technology Park
- Services and facilities to support aging population
- Capture surrounding area's lunch business
- Capture visitors on Civil War Driving Tour, to Seven Pines Cemetery and to battlefield
- Commercial market demand
 - convenience goods (deli, bakery, video, etc.)
 - miscellaneous retail (gifts, books, records/discs, used furniture, antiques)
 - eating and drinking (cafe, unique restaurant)
 - professional services (medical, legal, etc.)
 - personal services (bank, shoe repair)
- Residential market demand
 - infill townhouses - young families
 - senior citizens - aging population
- Build on positive relationship between residents and building owners

Community Character Opportunities

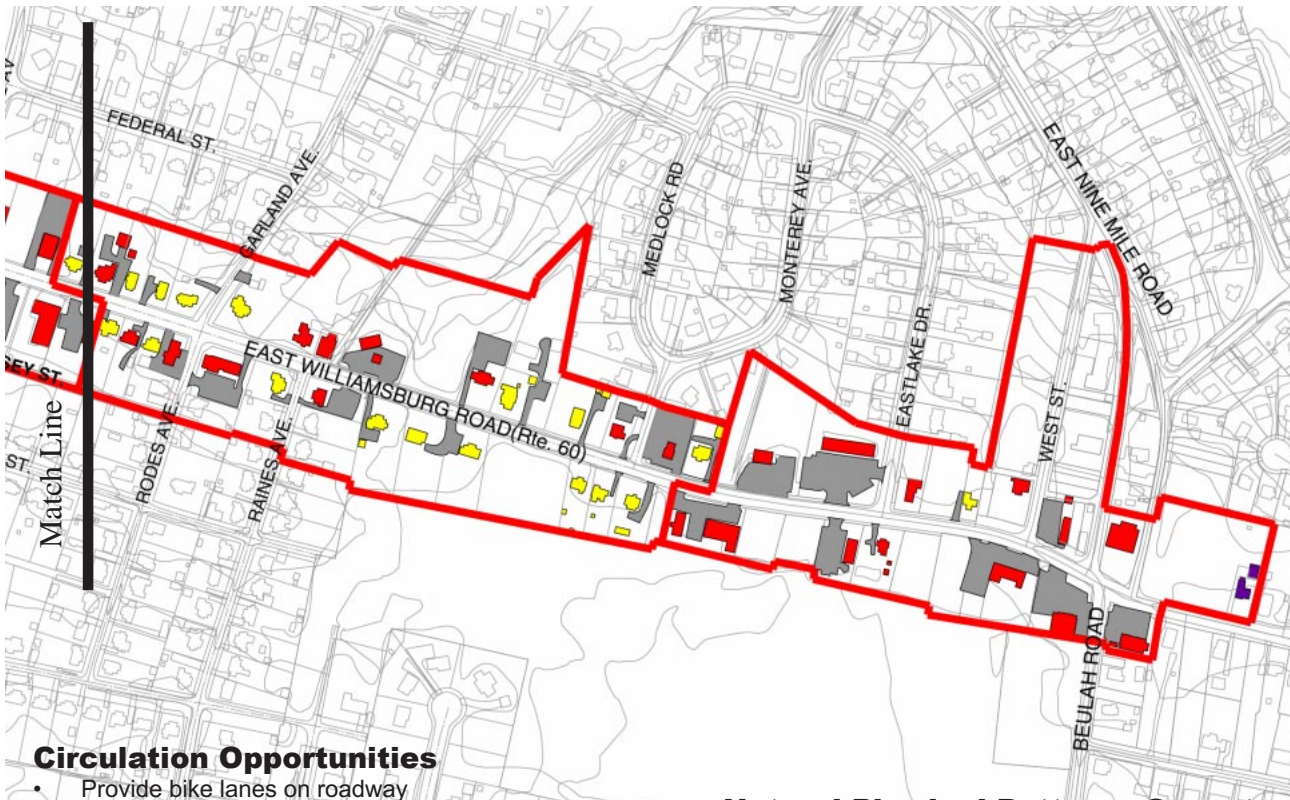
- Reinforce the sense of small town spirit
- Remove artificial siding; maintain original materials and details such as windows, storefronts, and cornices
- Use building materials that blend with the early twentieth century Colonial Revival style of the district's character; wood or concrete plank siding, wood trim, cornices, and gable roofs oriented w/gable end to building sides
- Maintain setbacks that enhance the small town feel
- Respect scale, massing, height and footprint of surrounding contributing buildings when designing new buildings. Break down mass, height and scale to blend with character of the district
- Demographics
 - immediate area stable with aging and young families
 - adjoining area growing
- Create pedestrian spaces and add pedestrian amenities
- Reinforce positive sense of identity
- Build on active upgrading and rehabilitation
- Display and recognize layers of building styles and patterns - 1920's, 1940's, 1990's

Circulation Issues

- Awkward access to mail drop at Post Office
- Fragmented sidewalk system
 - Does not meet ADA standards
 - Does not meet VDOT standards
 - Obstructions such as utility poles in walkway
 - Areas of walk in poor repair or settled
- No formal pedestrian crosswalk
- Left hand turning movements difficult
- No bicycle accommodations
- Uneven distribution of parking spaces
- Multiple drive way entrances
- Confusing traffic patterns at Seven Pines intersection
- Four to two lane transition at western end conflicts with access to properties at western end of study area (speed and turning movements)
- Naglee and Nine Mile Road are north-south links
- No pedestrian or left turn signalization in corridor
- Traffic back-ups on Beulah Road (particularly on Friday pms)
- Past studies have recommended bypasses, Williamsburg Road widening, connector roads

Natural Physical Patterns Issues

- Ponding at intersections and driveways during storms
- Potential loss of mature woodlands and specimen trees
- 'Fit' of current landscape standards
- Stark appearance of drainage ditches
- Damaged and below standard height concrete curb along central and western ends of Williamsburg Road
- 'Flat' landscape presents potential drainage challenges
- Conflict between overhead utility lines and mature trees



Circulation Opportunities

- Provide bike lanes on roadway
- Request traffic volume and warrant study of Naglee intersection for left turn and pedestrian signalization
- Develop community serving public parking lot(s)
- Consolidate driveways for better traffic movement and potentially better site circulation and parking space additions
- Explore possibility of moving four to two lane transition further west
- Sidewalk system that does exist is in fair to good condition and can be expanded

Natural Physical Patterns Opportunities

- Addition of inlets in central stretch of corridor, similar to those in eastern and western ends to meet VDOT and County standards
- Retention of mature woodlands, provide character for commercial corridor
- Addition of landscape plantings to reinforce corridor and provide continuity
- Incorporation of drainage ditches into landscape concept

Sandston Commercial Area Study



Pedestrian bench in the heart of Sandston

In general, most existing buildings are in good condition, requiring only moderate improvements. A number of flat or shed roofed buildings have received large new gable roofs in recent years, thereby altering the character of the building. Materials for the new roofs are generally not consistent with the materials of the original building and the gable end is oriented to the street instead of the side of the building. Other buildings have received artificial siding that covers original materials and details. This type of improvement takes away from the character of the district. A few new buildings have been introduced in the district and do

not blend with the overall character and village feel. These new buildings tend to reflect national corporate design and not the character of the district. The effort to maintain, improve, and construct new buildings, however, is a positive indication of the economic health of the district and the desire to maintain and reinvest in properties.

Sandston's character and appearance as a small, pedestrian oriented town is at risk. Some buildings are aging, and some are obsolete. Generally there is a low turnover of owners and occupants. Some of the buildings do not generate sufficient rent levels to cover the costs of rehabilitation or redevelopment. One of the issues facing the community is to ensure that new construction and building renovations capitalize on the small town nature of Sandston and don't introduce materials, building styles, or setbacks that contrast or denigrate the existing character.

The location of parking lots also affects the character of the place. Within the heart of Sandston, parking tends to be located in smaller, off-street lots either to the side of a building or behind it. On either edge of the core, parking is often located between the building and the street. There is an opportunity to encourage the placement of parking at the side and the rear of a building.



Parking lot with old road ROW next to the Sandston Pharmacy

Sandston's visibility as a retail and service alternative suffers because there is no joint marketing effort or formal merchant association for the Sandston commercial area. Sandston has no standard operating hours or special and promotional events, a necessity when merchants are competing with adjacent malls and retail strip centers.

Large stands of remaining mature woodlands contribute to the sense that Sandston, although urban in some ways, is a small town, with a single commercial street. Early movie footage shows trees continuing along Williamsburg Road. The planting was simple and not ornate, but clearly marked a vertical edge to what was then a country road. Today's existing landscape shows minimal improvements. The addition of streetlights and other streetscape improvements will do much to reinforce the notion of a commercial center. Welcoming people to the Sandston Community through the creation of gateways will also reinforce the notion of a community, distinct from other nearby areas.

Circulation

The existing sidewalk system needs improvement. In addition to missing segments, tilted and damaged slabs (recently improved with patching by VDOT), the sidewalks are frequently overgrown with vegetation and are spotted with utility poles. All intersections do not have curb cut ramps, nor are there any formal crosswalks. No bicycle facilities are currently provided, but based on comments received at the community workshops, not much interest in them is evident.

Two intersections currently have a yellow flashing light as a traffic signal. Community members and initial analysis by the consultant team identified the Naglee Avenue and Williamsburg Road intersection as a place that could benefit from a traffic signal with a pedestrian cycle. VDOT performed a preliminary traffic count, and current numbers do not meet the minimum standards for a signalized intersection. (If maintenance were required on the existing flashing yellow light, it would likely be removed rather than repaired.) However, as the area to the east and south of Sandston grows, it may be possible to assess the opportunity again. A signalized intersection would address the need for left turn movements, pedestrian crossings, and potentially create gaps (through the red light cycle) at other intersections within Sandston, easing access onto Williamsburg Road throughout the community.

Route 60, otherwise known as Williamsburg Road, is a state road and is not maintained by the County. Therefore, all improvements on Williamsburg Road must be approved by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Automobile circulation can also be improved with an earlier merge lane west of Sandston for eastbound traffic entering the community. Pulling the merge farther to the west will reduce the conflicts with existing driveways and the intersection at Jackson Avenue. It also may provide an opportunity to create a raised and planted median at the community's western end in the remaining right-of-way.

Internally, circulation in the community might be improved with the development of a one way street system on North Confederate to simplify the traffic pattern related to the Post Office. Opportunities to improve circula-



Intersection at the heart of Sandston



Entry to Sandston from the west

tion throughout the community also exist through voluntary driveway consolidations.

Although there is a perception that available parking is inadequate, it is more likely that parking space and lot location is uneven, with a shortage of spaces on some parcels while other parcels have ample parking but are used infrequently. Other lots may have more available parking than is visible. Reorganizing, striping, or somehow marking spaces will help squeeze all available space out of a parking lot.

Physical Patterns

Sandston's topography makes it difficult to achieve good drainage. The most affected area is the paved roadway where intersections pond with water following rain showers. Physical improvements can address other issues related to drainage. The existing concrete curb should be replaced where it is less than 6" in height and damaged. A storm drainage system should be installed to reduce the width of stormwater flow, meeting VDOT standards for stormwater drainage collection on Williamsburg Road, and

concurrently reducing stormwater ponding at intersections. Drainage will require stormwater drainage outlets to be installed in the core of the community.



Ponding at intersections

Land Use and Commercial Offerings

While the Williamsburg Road corridor suffers from a variety of market constraints, it also exhibits an array of opportunities that can serve as market support to the redevelopment and revitalization of the community. The Sandston neighborhood is small, with a modest amount of

expenditure potential, but it also is stable (in 1990 over 50 percent of the area households had occupied their place of residence for at least 20 years). Many of Sandston households exhibit a long-standing loyalty to the stores and services along Williamsburg Road, or remember the corridor in a more vital era. In addition, the neighborhood's affordable housing units and excellent school system have and will continue to attract younger families with children and a higher expenditure potential.

Although the Sandston neighborhood itself is not expanding, the adjoining neighborhoods south of I-64, are experiencing stronger growth, especially those to the south and east of Sandston. Many of the residents of this area commute to work daily along Williamsburg Road and could form a secondary trade area for the businesses located along this corridor.

The Richmond International Airport and the Virginia Air National Guard adjoin the Sandston neighborhood. In addition, a variety of business

parks are under development along South Airport Drive and South Laburnum Avenue. Airport employees and passenger commercial needs are being adequately satisfied at the airport or at nearby commercial facilities located along Williamsburg Road to the west of Sandston. A small number of National Guard employees/visitors and business park employees are already purchasing convenience goods and meals in Sandston. An expansion of convenience and eating opportunities along the Williamsburg Road Corridor could serve to attract these employees in greater numbers and more frequently.



A vacant lot for sale along East Williamsburg Road

Two major activity nodes are currently planned or under development to the south and east of the Sandston commercial corridor: the Virginia State Fair Park and the White Oak Technology Park. For the most part, Fair Park visitor expenditures will be provided for and satisfied on site. However, Technology Park employees could be drawn to Sandston for convenience and eating and drinking needs.

Some of the property owners located along the Sandston corridor are in the process of or are interested in renovating their structures. Similarly, a few of the merchants are upgrading their merchandising, marketing and other operations. These changes can serve as models to spur further improvement and upgrading of the Sandston commercial area.



A new use for a former gas station - sandwiches

While viable convenience and eating and drinking facilities are scarce along Williamsburg Road, the corridor has slowly evolved into a service center, offering a variety of professional and personal services and a core of medical offices. The high occupancy of the Eastwing Building and other area professional buildings further demonstrate the strong demand for quality office space along the corridor.

A number of uses could be provided along the corridor and could serve to fill the needs of neighborhood residents or attract the expenditures of commuters, area employees and others residing in nearby areas. A new bank branch is under construction for a site near the heart of Sandston.

Sandston Commercial Area Study

Due to site constraints, transportation patterns, and location, Sandston will not appeal to 'big box' retailers or large chains other than convenience, fuel, or fast food stores. Sandston is an ideal location for small, family-operated convenience stores, restaurants, specialty shops, and services. Potentially supportable commercial uses include:

- Convenience Goods – deli, bakery, wine/cheese, video, fresh fish, farmer's market
- Miscellaneous Retail – gifts, books, music, used furniture, antiques, toys
- Eating and Drinking – café, destination restaurant, catering services
- Personal Services – bank, shoe repair, spa
- Professional Services- medical, legal, real estate, financial

The adaptive reuse of the community's residential structures for commercial purposes has created a mismatch between supply and demand for commercial goods and services. It has also reduced the number of structures available as residences. Recent residential sales in Sandston indicate its continued marketability as an affordable neighborhood for young families seeking home ownership. A new subdivision is currently under construction in Sandston's southeast corner. Continued conversion of residential structures for commercial uses may work against the enhancement of the community's small town character - a character that requires both a local neighborhood serving commercial area as well as viable residential neighborhoods.

The aging of the population also creates an opportunity and demand for some form of senior citizen housing. Future conversion of residential structures should be limited. In addition, a small multifamily project catering to senior citizens could be marketed to elderly households requiring some care who wish to remain in the Sandston neighborhood. The provision of services encourages a community where residents can walk to places such as stores, doctors, and the library.

The existing parcel size of many of the lots in Sandston limits their use. Platted many years ago, parcel lots within the heart of Sandston average 60 feet in frontage and 200 feet in depth. Parcels at either edge of the core tend to be wider and more shallow, ranging from 100 feet to 150 feet of frontage and 130 feet deep. Additional zoning requirements preclude many uses, due to more 'suburban' parking demands, setbacks, or landscape requirements. On the older, smaller lot there is just not enough room for all that is required. Aggregating parcels and relaxing or modifying current zoning standards may provide additional development opportunities.

Sandston lacks a traditional anchor to draw shoppers to the commercial area. The opportunity exists to make the entire commercial area the anchor, with its pieces combining into a greater whole. Joint marketing

efforts, and synergetic goods and merchandise offerings can work together to establish an image of a district, a place to come to for specific types of activities and goods. Sandston could become a place for meals, with specialty owner operated stores and services providing a personal touch and warmth.

Alternative Concepts

Two Alternative Concept Plans were developed - A and B. Concept A was more modest and addressed issues located within the public right-of-way. Concept B incorporates the items in A and then extends the improvements and recommendations to private properties. Generally, Concept B included recommendations for land use, infill opportunities and the relocation of overhead utilities.



Aerial view of the heart of Sandston, note the shallow parcel depth

Each Concept focused on four distinct areas:

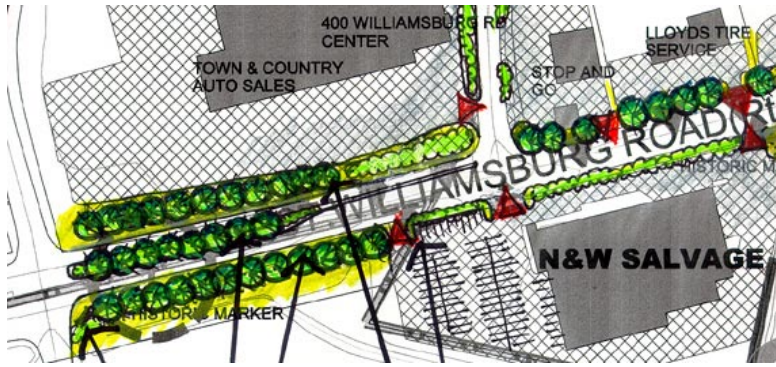
- West Gateway
- Pedestrian Core
- East Gateway
- Connecting Section – on each side of the Pedestrian Core

Elements Common to the Commercial Area

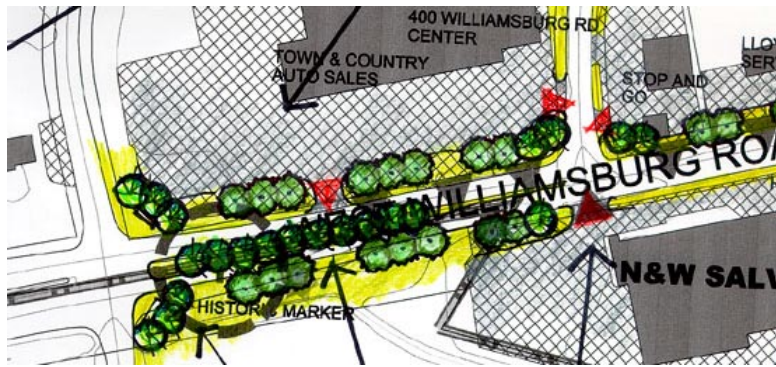
A number of design and planning recommendations are common to the entire commercial area. They include:

- Street Trees
- Sidewalks, curb ramps, and curb replacement
- Reconfigured uniform signs for businesses
- Driveway consolidation to limit vehicle conflict points (more in Alternative B)
- Facade enhancements and vehicle circulation improvements
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting (more in Alternative B)
- Overhead utilities remain in Alternative A, relocated in B

Sandston Commercial Area Study



Alternative A for the West Gateway (note triangles signifying driveway entrances to be consolidated)



Alternative B for the West Gateway (circles represent new trees)



Sketch of Alternative A at the proposed western gateway

West Gateway

The area between Early and Jackson Avenues can serve as a western gateway to Sandston. Concepts A and B both addressed concerns related to excessive vehicular speed in the area, congestion and confusion with the large number of vehicular turns while other vehicles merged, aesthetics, the lack of a sense of entry, and the fairly invisible historical significance as indicated by a highway marker sign. Both Concepts A and B recommended:

- Welcome Sign
- Landscape plantings to slow traffic and enhance entry
- Narrow lanes and extended, raised, planted median
- Display enhancement for boat and car dealers
- Addition of a right turn lane for eastbound traffic
- Extension of a left turn lane for eastbound traffic
- Addition of ornamental pedestrian-scaled lighting
- Reconfigured, more uniform signs for businesses

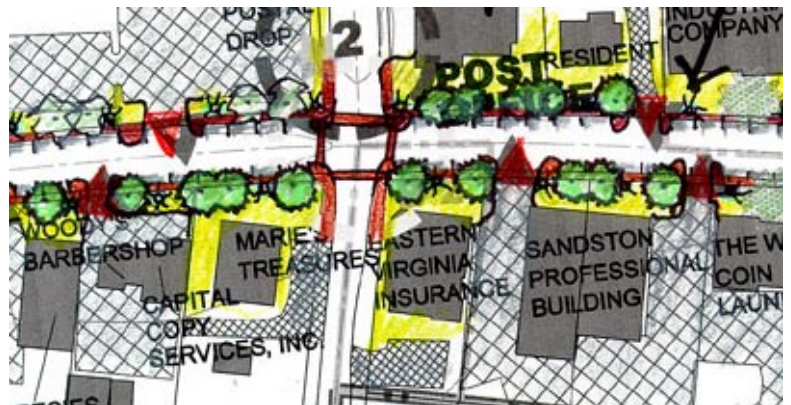
Pedestrian Core

This is the ‘heart’ of the community as identified by community members. Concepts A and B addressed the lack of pedestrian facilities – missing curb ramps, crosswalks, benches, etc., perceived shortage of parking, aesthetics, vehicular speeds, and traffic congestion. Concept A and B recommended:

- Widen sidewalk with public/private cooperation
- Reconfigure existing parking lot
- Add painted crosswalks at the Naglee and Williamsburg Road intersection
- Request a traffic signal with a pedestrian cycle at the Naglee and Williamsburg Road intersection
- Create shared parking at the library addition
- Add benches, trash cans, and new signs
- Build infill against the street, with parking behind the buildings



Alternative A, Pedestrian Core



Alternative B, Pedestrian Core

Differences include:

- Concept A
 - Overhead utilities remain in place, use ornamental flowering trees
- Concept B
 - Overhead utilities are relocated, use large deciduous shade trees
 - Formalized on-street parking with ‘bump-outs’

Connecting Sections

Sandston’s character between the Pedestrian Core and each Gateway is primarily residential. Retention of the existing residential uses is a fundamental piece of maintaining the small town character of the place. However, since the entire frontage of Williamsburg Road is zoned for commercial uses, it is likely that residential uses will be converted to commercial uses. As these changes occur, it will be important to retain the characteristics that reinforce the sense of a small town.



Sketch of improvements to the Pedestrian Core



Sketch of proposed improvements in Connecting Section

Sandston Commercial Area Study

Both Concepts A and B recommended the first two points, while B added the third:

- Improved sidewalk and pedestrian links
- Encourage driveway consolidations to limit vehicle conflict points
- Infill vacant lots with residential use or a mixed use with residential uses on the upper floor and commercial uses on the first floor

East Gateway

The gateway at Sandston's eastern end addressed the confusing five point intersection, the decision over where Sandston begins and Seven Pines ends, the lack of greeting and welcoming, and needed aesthetic improvements. Concept A and B recommended:

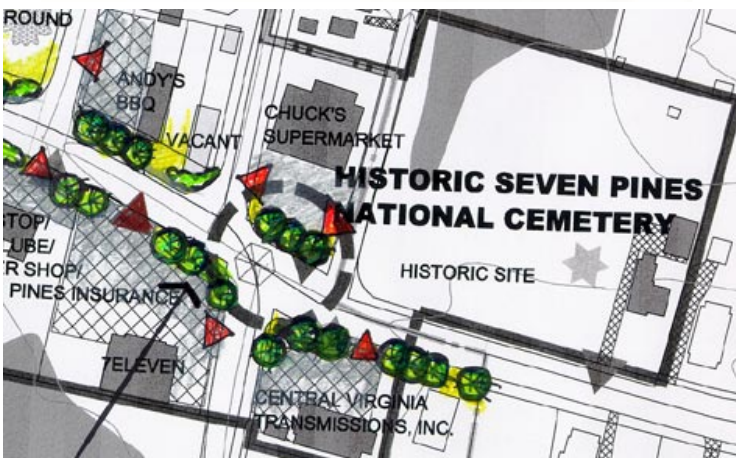
- Addition of a welcome sign at the intersection of Beulah and Williamsburg Road
- Landscape improvements
- Pedestrian-scaled light fixtures
- Addition of a painted crosswalk at the intersection of Beulah and Williamsburg Roads
- Extension of the sidewalk east to connect to the YMCA and other sites

Concept B also recommended:

- Relocation of the overhead utility wires
- Closing the existing southbound one-way street to expand parking and simplify the complex intersection



Sketch of proposed East Gateway



Alternative A opportunities for the East Gateway

Example Sites

Members of the Sandston Advisory Group worked with the planning team to explore ideas that addressed real site issues and meet the intent of the project, enhancing Sandston's commercial area. With permission from the property owners, five real-life sites were matched with some of the ideas and recommendations of this study. Although many ideas were tested, property owners are not obligated to implement them. The lessons learned from these specific site investigations are applicable to other sites within the commercial corridor.

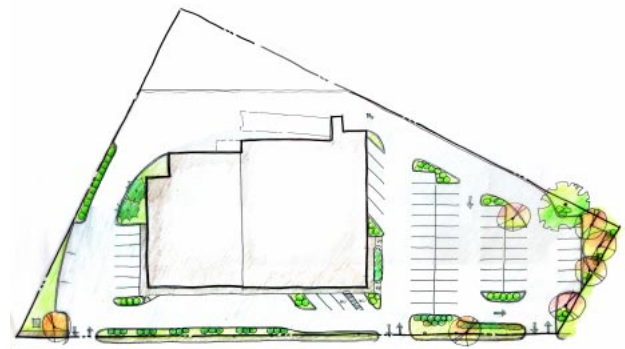
The example site recommendations grew through a successful collaboration between community members, the County, and the consultant team. Implementation of such projects in the future will require a local organization that can serve as convener, advocator, grant-finder/administrator, and facilitator of 'shared use agreements' to move these projects along, and to replicate this voluntary approach to other sites.

Following are descriptions of the five examples sites and recommendations for each.

N&W Salvage

The N&W Salvage Store is locally owned and operated and sells a variety of dry goods including food and toiletry items. This site was chosen because of its circulation issues and its key location in the corridor at Sandston's western entrance.

Access to the site is located at the point where the West Williamsburg Road narrows from four to two lanes. Cars turn on to and from West Williamsburg Road without a signalized intersection. The current parking situation is confusing and inconvenient. Parking stalls are laid out at an angle that forces cars to circulate in a one-way direction only. The numerous large delivery trucks must maneuver towards the back loading dock throughout the day, often with parked cars from customers blocking their way.



N&W Salvage Proposed Plan

With the site reconfigured, room for landscape plantings exist and the number of parking spaces remains the same. Cosmetic improvements were proposed for the sign wall, and included paint and new graphics. The facade improvements would cost approximately \$15,000 - \$18,500.



Sketch of new signs and landscape plantings

400 West Williamsburg Road

The strip of stores at 400 W. Williamsburg Road exists on one of the larger parcels in the corridor and is located at the western entry area of Sandston. Extensive structural improvements to the buildings on this site could serve as an excellent example for the rest of the corridor and further emphasize the architectural character of Sandston. This site was chosen because of its large size, automobile orientation, and facade enhancement opportunities.

This older strip development has a large parking lot in front and to the west of the building, with many access drives directly off of West Williamsburg Road. It is hard to see individual businesses and their goods on display from the road; some get lost within the monotonous building strip and lack significant signs. The multiple access drives add to the traffic confusion on West Williamsburg Road and take away from other space possibilities on site. Landscape plantings are lacking on this site as well, even though space constraints are not an issue.

Ideas explored included site planning issues - how to better display items, reconfigure business signs, adjust parking and internal site circulation, and add landscape plantings. Two alternatives were developed for facade improvements; one as a cosmetic approach with paint and awnings and one that was more complex and involved structural changes. The cosmetic changes to the facades would probably cost approximately \$16,000 - \$20,000 and the more complex changes approximately \$120,000 to \$140,000.

Shake Shop and Sandston Cleaners

This site example explored three continuous lots, two controlled by one owner. This site provides an opportunity to explore a number of issues beyond cosmetic enhancements because there is a possibility



Artist's interpretation of alternative scheme for the Shake Shop/Cleaners

of lot consolidation with new development. Located in the heart of the Sandston business district at a key intersection, the site was chosen for its many exciting possibilities.

Currently there is little or no landscaping on these three lots. The middle lot is vacant with just grass and a public bus stop near the road right-of-way. The Shake Shop has no permanent sign and lacks a landscape buffer/parking lot screening from East Williamsburg Road. Sandston Cleaners has a busy access drive off of East Williamsburg Road. The Cleaners may benefit from more parking, easier access to and from East Williamsburg Road, and a more prominent sign.

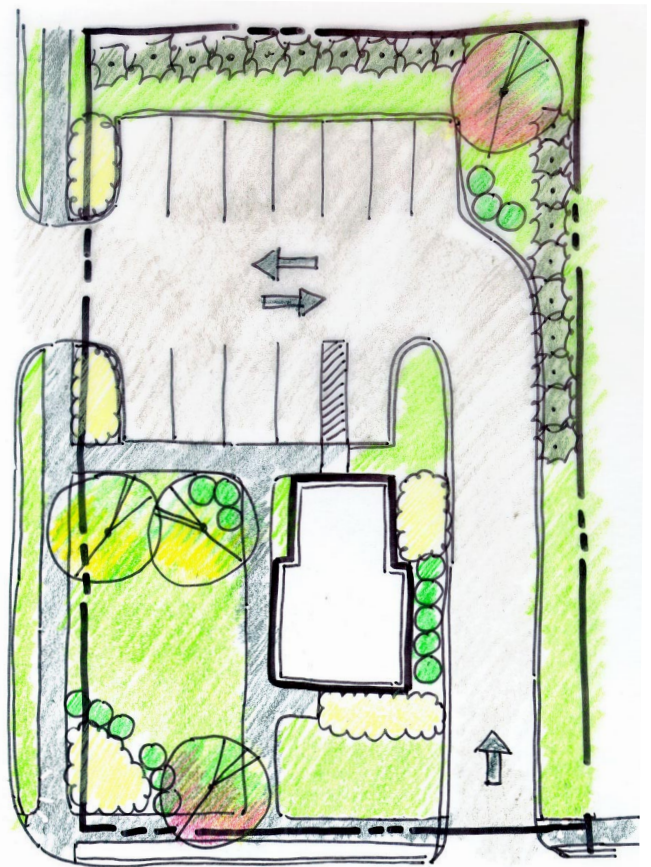
The first plan looked at what could be done with minimal expense at the Shake Shop. This scheme incorporated landscape plantings, the creation of an outside eating area, cosmetic facade enhancements, and a reconfigured parking area and improved sign. This idea is illustrated on the previous page. The second and third schemes involved infill building. One option explored retaining the existing buildings and placing new buildings on the vacant lot and incorporating site plan improvements. The other option looked at new development on the three lots combined. Changes to the facade of the Shake Shop would run approximately \$3,000 for cosmetic improvements and \$8,000 for more complex structural changes. Facade enhancements to the Sandston Cleaners building range from an estimate of \$5,200 to \$7,000.

Windmill Building Corporation

The building that houses the Windmill Building Corporation is located in the eastern "Connecting Section." This area has a residential character. The recently renovated structure was once a hot dog stand. The site was chosen to exhibit how improvements can be made that are sensitive to the surrounding residences, while enhancing a commercial operation.

There have been recent improvements to the building which reflect a residential character. The site has little landscaping and is mostly unmarked asphalt pavement meant for parking. The entire asphalt pad is never fully utilized for vehicles.

This Example Site explored site planning issues - how to improve an existing parking lot to reflect the improvements already made in the building. Circulation was reconfigured, moving parking to the back of the building, and creating a large landscaped area on the corner.



Site plan of improvements at Windmill Building

Chuck's Supermarket

Chuck's Supermarket is located in the east gateway section of the Sandston Corridor at the East Williamsburg Road and Nine Mile Road intersection. This site was chosen for its gateway location and to illustrate display enhancement of goods and minor site improvements for a prosperous business in the corridor.

Chuck's Supermarket occupies a small lot and has a very limited area for parking. The lot is consistently full of cars and is located at a busy intersection. The market is using all its available front space for a parking lot, with only potted plants for landscape for the streetscape buffer.

This site explored site planning issues - how to better display items, reconfigure business signs, and add landscape plantings. Two alternatives were developed for facade improvements, one as a cosmetic approach with paint and awnings and one that was more complex and involved structural changes. Facade improvements costs ranged from \$4,000 - \$ 10,000.



Sketch of Chuck's Supermarket with more complex improvements

Insert example site fold out sheet

Insert concept plan here 11x17

The Recommended Concept Plan

Sandston offers what many strip corridors don't – it looks, feels, and acts as a small town. It is not a sea of parking spaces along a highway, with buildings stretched along the back of each lot. It is comprised of clusters of commercial activities connected by stretches of mostly well-kept single-family houses. Valued for its historic significance, it is home to public services such as a Post Office, library branch, park, and elementary school, along with churches and civic groups drawing directly from the Sandston population.

Community members frequently mentioned reasons why Sandston has remained their home and held their heart through the years. The primary reason was its small town character: its commercial area is walkable, with public facilities and civic structures close by. Residents most commonly identified the area around the Post Office as the community's 'heart'. The intersection of Naglee and Williamsburg Road is the core of the commercial sector of the area and is in close proximity to the civic heart. Reinforcing the two will further strengthen the community's identity.

Retaining and enhancing the small town characteristics of Sandston is a key component of this plan. A lunchtime crowd can be drawn to an expanded and improved Sandston core, focused on pedestrian improvements, wider sidewalks, additional lunch spots and specialty stores. Creation of outdoor eating areas, additional visible parking - both on-street and off, and both public and private, pedestrian crosswalks and landscape and lighting additions will reinforce the heart of Sandston. Business recruitment will also be key. Soliciting and encouraging uses identified through the market study will help to expand the existing offerings and attract new customers.

This plan establishes a guide with recommended immediate and long-term actions to ensure that Sandston's commercial area is stabilized and enhanced, regains its vibrancy and provides a center for the overall community. These involve public actions, private initiative, and public/private partnerships.

Five Planning Principles guide the development and implementation of the Concept Plan. The drawing of the Concept Plan illustrates some of the recommendations. It is followed by a summary of action steps, the responsible party for each step, and a timetable for their accomplishment.



Awnings, food, attractive landscaping - the beginnings of what can come

Planning Principles

- Organize and **establish a nonprofit community-based group** to oversee the plan's implementation through joint marketing efforts, advertising, and operation schedules.
- Establish strong physical **gateways** to the Sandston Community, linked by a coherent **streetscape design** incorporating plant materials, pedestrian light fixtures, street furniture, and special paving materials.
- Improve Sandston's public infrastructure – its **vehicular and pedestrian circulation, parking, and drainage**.
- Reinforce Sandston's small town character through a **pedestrian-focused core and sensitive building infill and renovation**.
- **Retain existing and recruit appropriate businesses**, supporting and promoting those that generate economic activity, while maintaining the integrity of the existing community.

Implementation Strategies and Actions

Growing out of the plan development are a number of strategies and actions that spell out the steps the community needs to take to achieve the Sandston Commercial Area Study's recommendations. Each of these are identified below, and organized by the Planning Principle they achieve. The time-frame to address the immediate action is identified, and the entity that should lead is noted in bold type following the action.

1. Non-profit Community-based Group

Sandston Advisory Group (SAG)

- **Community members shall formalize the Sandston Advisory Group into a non-profit or merchant advocate entity.**



Sandston citizens review draft proposal

None of the physical improvements will independently revitalize the Sandston Commercial area. Besides individual business improvements to facades and County improvements to the streetscape, a number of essential initiatives need to be implemented by the County and the citizens of Sandston.

Most importantly, the citizens, business owners and operators of Sandston need to remain involved in the process of improvements. An informal Advisory Group has worked with the County and consultant team on the development of this plan. This group should be formalized and continue to work directly with Henrico County staff to implement its recommendations.

Immediate - Fall 2001

- Establish a Sandston Merchants and Citizens Group as a 501 c3 (**SAG**)
- Develop marketing materials (**SAG**)

2. Entrance and Streetscape Aesthetic Enhancements Gateways

- ***Local service groups and businesses, in conjunction with VDOT's permission, will establish two primary gateways to Sandston on Williamsburg Road with welcome signs, special plantings, and lighting identifying the community as a special place. Special plantings at other intersections along Williamsburg Road can share similar planting styles and materials.***

There are no greeting or gateway signs defining the boundaries of the Sandston Community. Signs and plantings welcome residents and visitors to the community while reinforcing the identity of an established, successful community to all.

One concept, as illustrated in the accompanying overall design concept, locates a gateway at the southeast corner of the Early Avenue and West Williamsburg Road intersection. Located at the western end of the community, an entry sign and new landscape plantings should be coordinated with proposed VDOT improvements to the existing merge lane on Williamsburg Road. The road is four lanes west of Sandston, and is reduced to two lanes just east of Airport Drive before entering Sandston. The existing merge lane conflicts with the turning movements at existing businesses and the Early Avenue intersection, creating driver confusion. As proposed in this plan, an earlier tapering of the merge lane further to the west will likely reduce the number of potential conflict points. The right-of-way removed from pavement could be used for additional landscape planting in a raised median and incorporate an entry sign on the eastbound side of the road, all in coordination with VDOT.

The entry sign, which could be sponsored by a local service organization such as the area Women's Club, can incorporate a logo that speaks of Sandston's long history and origins related to the nearby airport. Low plantings of colorful groundcovers or perennials can be planted in front of the sign, while ornamental trees and shrubs could be placed behind the sign.

At the community's eastern end, near the Seven Pines Cemetery, a similar sign and planting can be erected. It is likely that additional traffic to Sandston will come from the newly developing areas of the White Oak Technology Park and the State Fair Park.



Gateway intersection at eastern end of study area

Immediate - Fall/Winter 2001

- Apply for a VDOT landscape permit to gain permission for a sign and landscape planting within the VDOT right-of-way along the eastbound side of Williamsburg Road at the community's western end **(SAG)**
- Request that VDOT permit and fund an earlier merger of the two eastbound lanes west of Early Avenue and that a raised median at least 16 feet wide with a barrier curb be developed to allow for boulevard tree plantings within the median **(SAG/Henrico Co.)**
- Identify and establish sponsors for each gateway sign by contacting local organizations for funding and maintenance support **(SAG)**
- Identify and solicit contributions from community organizations wishing to be included/noted on an entry sign to Sandston **(SAG)**

Sandston Commercial Area Study

- Work with property owners at the intersection of Beulah and Williamsburg Road to identify anyone willing to grant an easement or permission to place a gateway sign and landscape plantings on their property (ideally the corner of 7/Seven's parking lot). **(SAG)**

Long-Term

- Encourage VDOT to construct merge lane modifications and a raised median at the western end of Sandston **(SAG/Henrico Co.)**
- Plant similar materials as gateways at intersections throughout Sandston along Williamsburg Road **(SAG, local property owners)**

Streetscape Improvements

- ***The Sandston Advisory Group, in conjunction with Henrico County, Dominion Virginia Power, Sanitary District Number 2, VDOT, and adjacent property owners should unify the Sandston Commercial Area through the common use of pedestrian lights, ornamental plantings, paving materials, and crosswalks.***

Sandston is already pedestrian friendly in some stretches along Williamsburg Road. This character can be expanded through widening some sections of sidewalks with the use of special pavers and repair of existing sidewalks in others. Painted crosswalks at several key intersections along Williamsburg Road will help connect the businesses and residents with the other side of the road. Long-term, the creation of 'bump-outs' around on-street parking spaces in the heart of Sandston will help to reinforce the shopping district nature of the core, provide additional visible parking places, and signal to through travelers that activities are ongoing on adjacent parcels. The bump-outs will not only define the location of on-

street parking places, but also when used at the pedestrian crossing, reduce the length of street needed to be crossed. Pedestrian-scale lights, ornamental street trees, benches, trash cans, and planting beds can be used throughout the corridor to unify it.



Ornamental street trees that have been recommended for planting include Kousa Dogwoods, such as in the photo above

This plan does not recommend spending the potentially large sum of money needed to place the overhead wires underground at this time. If, in the future, there are upgrades of wiring networks and road work, then relocating the overhead utilities underground may make more financial sense.

A number of agencies and entities must be coordinated to develop a successful streetscape. Much of the right-of-way line for Williamsburg Road falls directly on the back of the existing sidewalk. In lieu of acquiring additional right-of-way, the County will need to work directly with property owners to gain permission for tree plantings and easements for light fixtures. Similarly, VDOT has planting guidelines that must be adhered to if any plant materials are placed in their right-of-way. Sanitary District Number 2 incorporates all of the Sandston Commercial Area and could be used as means to fund street lighting along Williamsburg Road.

Immediate - Fall 2001

- Provide a 'zebra stripe' painted 12 foot wide crosswalk at Naglee Avenue and Williamsburg Road **(VDOT/SAG/Henrico Co.)**
- Encourage renewal and replacement of out-sized and outdated signs **(SAG w/Property Owners)**

Immediate - 2002

- Replace worn and extend sidewalk outside of the 'Pedestrian Core' to make a continuous pedestrian system from Early Avenue to East Nine Mile Road on the northern side of Williamsburg Road and from the Jackson Avenue intersection to Beulah Road on the southern side **(VDOT and Henrico Co.)**
- Provide 115 pedestrian-scaled lights along Williamsburg Road, with the fixture's lens calibrated for either residential or commercial conditions. Fixtures and poles may be acquired either through Dominion Virginia Power or a private vendor. If using a private vendor the recommended fixture is Prague, by Holophane or equal. If using the fixtures available through Virginia Power, the fixture selection should be 'Traditional' or 'Standard'. Cost differential is provided in the statement of probable costs. If capital monies are available, use the Holophane fixture or equal. If not, work with Dominion Virginia Power for ongoing fee - may require an additional utility tax. **(Henrico Co. with Dominion Virginia Power or funded by Henrico Co.)**



Recommended lighting fixture, Prague by Holophane

Long-term

- Request a traffic signal with a pedestrian cycle for the intersection of Naglee and Williamsburg Road as development continues east of Sandston. Although unlikely to meet VDOT warrant requirements today, that may change in the future **(SAG/Henrico Co./VDOT)**
- Use decorative paver to replace existing concrete sidewalks in the 'Pedestrian Core' **(SAG w/ Henrico Co./VDOT)**
- Provide benches, trash cans, and flower baskets throughout the 'Pedestrian Core' area **(SAG)**
- Install street trees along Williamsburg Road, as described in the accompanying plan. If necessary due to funding constraints, install trees initially in the 'Pedestrian Core' area, the 'Western Gateway', and the 'Eastern Gateway' **(SAG)**
- Develop a 'wayfinding' system with signs and directions for local businesses, public facilities such as parking lots, attractions, and destinations. Ensure that it is simple and graphically legible **(SAG w/ Henrico Co./VDOT)**



New benches should match the style of the existing bench used in Sandston

Sandston Commercial Area Study

- Encourage private owners to create outdoor seating for restaurants, retail goods display area, etc. **(SAG)**
- Consider relocation underground of overhead utilities **(SAG/Henrico Co./Utilities)**

3. Business Support and Recruitment

Retain and Recruit Uses

- ***SAG, in conjunction with Henrico County's Proposed Commercial Assistance Staff, should work to ensure that viable businesses remain in the corridor and receive support.***

Sandston's Post Office is the 'heart' of the community according to many residents. It is small, and has inadequate parking. But, allowing it to move may prove very detrimental to the revitalization of the commercial area. Fortunately, a member of the informal Advisory Group contacted Congressman Scott's office and determined that there were no plans to relocate the facility within the next five years.

The corridor is an ideal location for small, family-operated convenience stores, restaurants, specialty shops and services. Possible uses that should be encouraged in Sandston include:

- Convenience Goods - deli, bakery, wine/cheese, video, fresh fish, farmer's market
- Miscellaneous Retail - gifts, books, music, used furniture, antiques, toys
- Eating and Drinking - cafe, destination restaurant, catering services
- Personal Services - bank, shoe repair, spa
- Professional Services - medical, legal, real estate, financial

Recent residential sales in Sandston indicate its continued marketability as an affordable neighborhood for young families seeking homeownership. The aging of the population also creates an opportunity and demand for some form of senior citizen housing. Future conversion of residential structures should be limited. In addition, a small multifamily project catering to senior citizens could be marketed to elderly households requiring some care and desiring to remain in the Sandston neighborhood.

Immediate - Ongoing

- Recruit complementary uses for infill parcel development **(SAG)**

Long-term

- Hire a professional County staff member to oversee and guide revitalization efforts in the County. The staff member can work with SAG to help develop marketing brochures, manage festivals and special events, and recruit new businesses. **(Henrico Co.)**

4. Infrastructure Improvements

Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

- ***SAG should work directly with VDOT, Henrico County, and local property owners to improve circulation throughout the commercial area with driveway consolidations, new traffic patterns for several streets, and the preservation of the existing and remaining alleyways.***

One of the traffic challenges in Sandston area is the difficulty in making a left turn movement onto Williamsburg Road from one of the many side streets or driveways along its length. The plan calls for the installation of a traffic signal at Naglee, with a pedestrian cycle. Some citizens felt that a signal was also called for at N. Confederate, but it does not connect with East Nine Mile Road as does Naglee, providing an alternative north/south route.

Another challenge is the bottleneck at the Post Office. According to citizens, it is difficult to use the mail drop (access to the drop box is from the passenger side of the vehicle currently) and congestion associated with Post Office traffic. In addition to coordinating with the County Traffic Division, VDOT, and the residents along N. Confederate, the Sandston Baptist Church and the Post Office should be involved in any discussions regarding one way systems or relocating the mail drop box.



The Post Office Drop Boxes are located on the wrong side of the street and create traffic confusion

At the West Gateway, SAG will need to work with VDOT and the County to pull the existing merge lane further to the east. This improvement is possibly eligible for VDOT safety funding. If the merge lane is reconfigured, adequate space remains to create a raised, tree-planted median in its place.



View west of west gateway, and position of relocated merge lane

Driveway consolidation is a long-term action for the Sandston community. The more that drives are voluntarily consolidated, the fewer 'conflict' points will remain in the corridor. This will have to be done on a voluntary basis by property owners for existing projects. Beyond reducing the amount of in and out traffic and therefore confusion and conflict points, it can be a benefit to a property owner by providing additional parking spaces or circulation areas. Any new development requiring rezoning, or if a special district is put in place, would involve discussion with the County staff and approval and presents an opportunity to limit drives within a single parcel.

Immediate - Fall/Winter 2001

- Look at possibilities for relocating mail drop box at Post Office, or consider development of one-way circulation pattern on Confederate to ease congestion. **(SAG w/Henrico Co.)**
- Encourage private property owners to consolidate driveways, with the potential increase of parking spaces and better circulation **(SAG)**

Sandston Commercial Area Study

- Work with VDOT to pull the merge lane at the western end of Sandston back, and create a raised median that can be planted with flowering trees **(Henrico Co. w/VDOT)**

Long-Term

- Limit number of driveways for new development or redevelopment. **(Henrico Co.)**

Parking

- **SAG, in conjunction with local property owners and Henrico County, should address the commercial area's parking needs through the provision of additional public parking spaces, organized on-street parking with bump-outs, better definition of existing lots, and the establishment of the public/private shared-use agreements for existing private parking lots.**

The Sandston commercial area has an ample number of parking spaces, but they are not all located in convenient areas or publicly available. There is a shortage of clear, publicly available spaces within the stretch between N. Confederate and Naglee Avenue.

Inserting new privately owned parking lots in the commercial area should be done with much sensitivity to retain the small town character of Sandston. New parking lots should be developed behind a building wherever possible, placing or leaving the building directly adjacent to the sidewalk and street. This concept is illustrated in the plan for the Shake Shop and Sandston Cleaners Example Site. A new public parking area can be built west of the library if the County chooses to acquire an additional vacant lot as part of the library expansion.

On-street parking is available along much of the corridor, yet no one is using these spaces because they are undefined and it is perceived that they pose a dangerous situation in high-speed traffic. Adding 'bump-outs' at intersections and using painted lines will greatly assist those needing a convenient parking space along the corridor. Adding these improvements may also reduce the speeds of the passing traffic, as existing lanes will feel more narrow.



A car is parked in the grass because of lack of parking spaces at the day care facility. Creating on-street parking here will help this parking problem.

Many private parking lots are not up to standards, lacking designated handicapped parking, and provide fewer spaces than they could. The size of the parking space is either undefined by painted parking strips, or is undersized according to current codes. Circulation of cars through these lots can also prove difficult. The reconfiguration of these existing lots, with new painted lines and landscape plantings, can greatly improve the exist-

ing parking situation – functionally and aesthetically. Organizing a lot can actually add spaces, forcing people to park a certain way for maximum availability of parking. One example of a lot that could be reconfigured functionally and aesthetically is the large parking area next to the Sandston Pharmacy. It is not up to its potential because of a right-of-way through the middle of the parking lot. A raised and landscaped median can be added in the center, redirecting and clarifying the circulation pattern of the lot.



The Sandston Library plans to expand their facilities. A new parking lot in the vacant lot to the east could serve the library and the public parking needs simultaneously.

Shared private lots for multiple uses may be another solution to the parking problem. Two churches, the Methodist and the Baptist Churches, have large lots that are used intermittently and may provide an opportunity to formalize a shared use agreement between the institutions and the County to allow public parking in privately owned lots. The Sandston Baptist Church and the Post Office already have such a formalized agreement.

Immediate - 2001

- Encourage willing private property owners to reconfigure existing parking lots to increase the number of available spaces, add landscape plantings, handicap facilities, and improve circulation within the parking lot as shown on the Example Site for N & W Salvage **(SAG)**
- Vacate easement/right-of-way for paper street and create planted median in its place at parking lot east of Sandston Pharmacy **(SAG/Henrico Co.)**
- Explore public/private use agreements (similar to the one already in place at between the Sandston Baptist Church and the Post Office) with owners of large, underutilized parking lots **(SAG)**

Immediate - 2002

- Develop two lots west of library for additional parking shared between users **(Henrico Co.)**

Long-Term

- Evaluate commercial parking needs if building infill increases **(SAG)**
- Construct bump-outs and painted lines for on street parking where possible in heart of the corridor between N. Confederate and Garland Avenue **(Henrico Co.)**

Drainage

- **Henrico County should program funds for continued upgrade of the storm drainage collection system along East Williamsburg Road, from Early Avenue to Monterey Avenue in Sandston.**



A drainage swale along East Williamsburg Road

Avenue, Kemper Court, Finley Drive, and North Confederate Avenue intersections were observed to have substantial stormwater cross flows and ponded areas after rain events, which is a traffic hazard. These locations need a storm drainage collection system. This includes inlets on each side of the intersection and storm drainage sewers to convey the storm drainage away from the streets. Storm drainage collection systems have been added to East Williamsburg Road east and west of this area.

Immediate - 2001

- Budget construction of a storm drainage sewer collection system from Early Avenue to Monterey Avenue (**Henrico Co./VDOT**)

5. Retain Small Town Character

Building Infill, Renovation, and Use

- **Henrico County, in conjunction with the Sandston Advisory Group, should establish sensitive building infill and renovation guidelines, which recognize the importance of retaining and enhancing Sandston's pedestrian character, while expanding its mixture of land uses to better support a vibrant pedestrian-oriented commercial area.**

Sandston's character is partially derived from its collection of building styles and sizes, the lot pattern, and the relationship of the buildings to the street. Much of Sandston was developed between the two World Wars, with additional housing built off of Williamsburg Road in the 1950's and 1960's. The existing character of the older commercial buildings varies from what is constructed today – in size, façade treatment, building materials and placement within the lot itself.

Currently, there is some parcel aggregation, resulting in a larger overall lot with the capacity to place a larger building with more surface parking on it. How these new projects are inserted into Sandston will greatly affect the overall character of the community and its likelihood of retaining its small town feel to

its commercial area versus a more typical strip commercial suburban pattern to the community. East of Sandston there is much undeveloped land that will easily absorb more 'big box retail' uses. It is important that Sandston target a different market, more suitable to its available physical space.

There are also several vacant lots in the eastern end of the corridor that could be developed. How these sites are 'infilled' will either reinforce the desired characteristics of Sandston, or will contribute to further fraying of a building pattern that is pedestrian friendly, residential in scale, and small town in character. If the infill parcels and aggregated parcels are developed with a parcel that is automobile oriented – say for a drive through banking window or fast food offering, the pedestrian orientation and 'people' scale of the commercial area will be negatively affected. One of the more attractive potentials of the "Pedestrian Core" in the center of Sandston is the string of stores with their front doors directly on the sidewalk. A shopper can move from one store to the next on foot, and enjoy a delightful, pedestrian experience.



Sandston Pharmacy in the heart of the Pedestrian Core

Some research supports that façade improvements correspond to an increase in sales. Establishing a matching grant fund for facade improvements can encourage local business operators to participate. There are several models to learn from in Virginia, including the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, Inc. and the City of Waynesboro Economic Development Office.



Residential area along East Williamsburg Road

Immediate - Fall 2001

- Develop a survey and guide to the architecture of Sandston **(SAG)**
- Develop an Overlay District or amend the 'Special Strategy Area' in Comprehensive Plan to guide parking requirements, pedestrian access, building locations within a parcel, inclusion of residential uses within a commercial zone, outdoor seating/eating areas, retail goods display, landscaping **(Henrico Co.)**
- Develop an educational 'primer' and guidelines for façade renovation and infill development for buildings in the commercial area that reinforces the relationship of building to street found in the

Sandston Commercial Area Study

'Pedestrian Core' of the commercial area **(Henrico Co.)**

- Establish a Design Review Committee to oversee guideline implementation and grant allocation **(SAG)**
- Establish guidelines (voluntary) for new construction **(Henrico Co.)**
- Encourage development of vacant sites for mixed use, with commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the second **(Henrico Co.)**
- Recruit complementary uses for infill parcel development **(SAG)**

Long-term

- Create a 50/50 matching grant program for facade enhancements and streetscape improvements (those on private property such as tree planting) with an award of \$3,000-\$5,000 per project per year limit **(Henrico Co.)**
- Establish a loan pool with matching funds for façade improvements - discuss its development with local banks, particularly the one building in Sandston **(SAG)**