

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

# Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade Community Plan



Graphic recording mural from the April 2024 Vision Workshop



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
REVIEW**

Richmond **RWA**  
Building Communities.  
Changing Lives.

**OGHB**

October 2025

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# Acknowledgments

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# Reference Documents

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The data described in this report was drawn from numerous books, articles, reports, and the U.S. Census. The list below is a summary of some of the documents consulted in preparing this report.

## Urban Pattern and Demographics

*Land Use, Housing, and Demographic Analysis for Richmond 300* by VCU's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA), September 2017

*Urban Design Typology Analysis for Richmond 300* by VCU's CURA, September 2017

## Housing

*Where You Live Makes All The Difference: An Opportunity Map of the Richmond Region* by Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME)

*The Road Home: Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and Promote Housing Stability*, 2015-2018 Update by Homeward

*Addressing the Impact of Housing for Virginia's Economy* by the Virginia Coalition of Housing and Economic Development Researchers, November 2017

*Affordable Housing Trust Fund 2015-16 Impact Report* by ECD

*Consolidated Plan FY 2016-2020* by ECD

*Mayor's Housing Summit Draft Plan* by the Mayor's Affordable Housing Task Force, November 2017

*Excluded Communities: A Spatial Analysis of Segregation in the Richmond Region* by HOME

*Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, City of Richmond, 2013-2015*, by HOME for ECD

*Market Value Analysis of the Richmond Region* by the Reinvestment Fund, October 2017

*Policy Approaches to Racial Disparities in Neighborhood Home Values and Related Risks of Displacement* by Housing Opportunities Made Equal (2024)

## Transportation

*Bike Master Plan*, DPW, 2012

*Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan*, VA Dept. of Rail and Public Transportation, 2017

*Richmond Transit Network Plan*, DPW, 2017

*Richmond Vision Zero Plan*, DPW, 2017

*Richmond Connects*, DPW, 2013

## Economic Development and Employment

*Annual Report*, Office of Community Wealth Building, 2016

*Richmond Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*, Richmond Regional Planning District Commission (PlanRVA), 2014

## Utilities, Environmental Resources, & Sustainability

*Water Supply Plan*, DPU, 2008

*RVA Green 2050*, Office of Sustainability

*Assessing climate risks in Richmond – present trends and future projections*, Jeremy S. Hoffman, Ph.D., Climate and Earth Scientist, Science Museum of Virginia, 2017

*A Report on the City of Richmond's Existing and Possible Urban Tree Canopy*, Virginia Tech, 2010

*Street Tree Assessment Report*, Virginia Tech, 2012

*RVA Clean Water Plan*, DPU, 2017

*Watershed Characterization Report*, DPU, 2015

## Parks and Recreation

*James River Park System Economic Impact*, CURA, 2017

*Richmond ParkScore*, Trust for Public Land, 2017

## Historic Resources

*Virginia Historic Tax Credit Report*, CURA, 2014

## Arts & Culture

*Tourism Impact Brochure*, Richmond Region Tourism, 2016

*Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 in the Richmond & Tri-Cities Region*,

Americans for the Arts, 2017

*VCU's Impact on the Region*, CURA, 2016

# Executive Summary

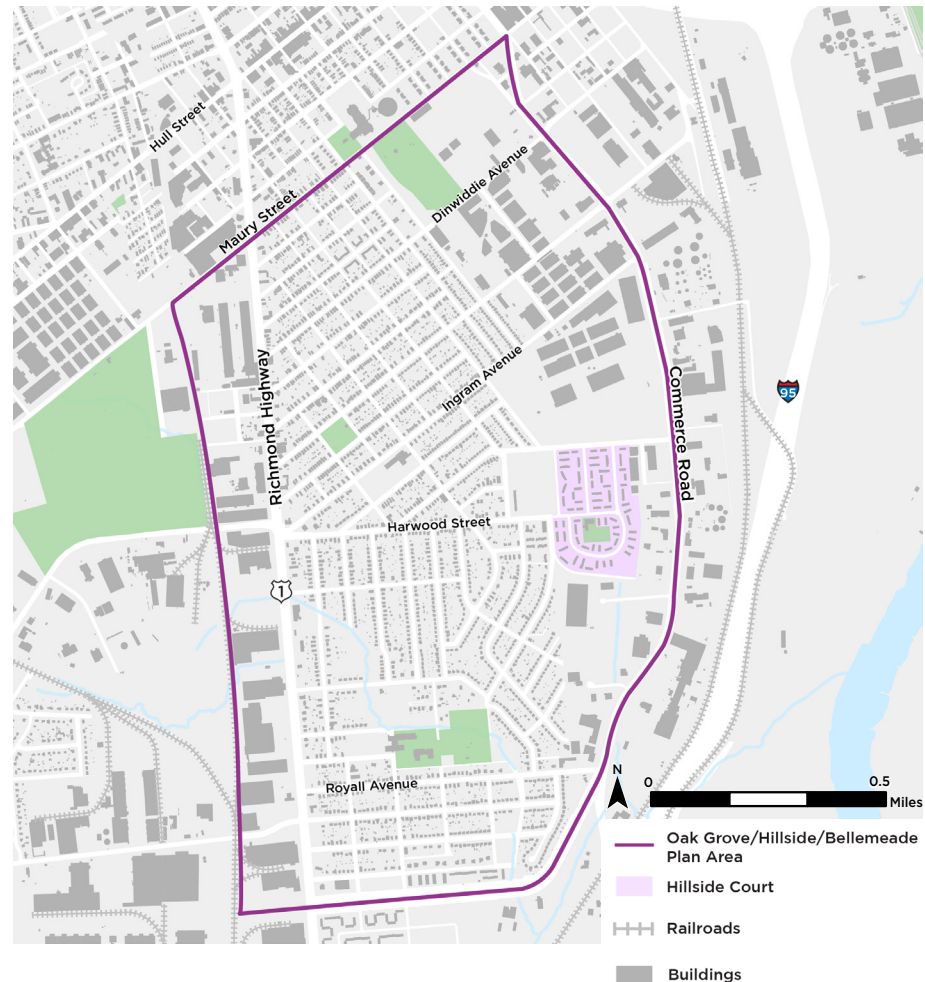
## Introduction

The Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade (OGHB) community is located approximately one mile south of Downtown Richmond in Richmond's Southside. Manchester and the majority of Blackwell are to the north while Clopton and Broad Rock Industrial Park are to the south and southwest respectively. In recent years, Manchester has undergone a rapid transformation, and as the city's population grows, some of that development pressure is mounting further south. That pressure, coupled with the area's attractiveness to newcomers for its accessibility to downtown, nearby public transit, affordable home prices, and proximity to I-95, makes this a critical time for Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade residents to plan for the future growth of their community. The Department of Planning and Development Review (PDR) developed the OGHB Community Plan in response to concerns that the area is and will soon be experiencing development pressures from Manchester to the north. The Plan encourages development to occur along the major corridors of Commerce Road and Richmond Highway and includes strategies to maintain the character of the existing residential neighborhoods.

The study area includes the neighborhoods of Oak Grove in the north and Bellemeade in the south, as well as Blackwell along Maury Street. It is situated between two major industrial corridors along Richmond Highway (Route 1) in the west and Commerce Road in the east. A majority of the area is comprised of single-family detached homes built in the mid-20th century with corner commercial and industrial uses along the fringe. Hillside Court, Richmond's only public housing complex in the Southside, is located in the center of the study area. OGHB falls into both the 6th and 8th Council Districts.

// **FIGURE 1. OGHB Small Area Plan Boundaries**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



## Purpose

The Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade Community Plan outlines strategies to direct growth to the major corridors while enhancing the quality of life for residents of the single-family neighborhoods. The Plan describes the vision, guiding principles, and strategies for OGHB in order to create a more equitable, sustainable, and beautiful community in alignment with Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth and the Priority Neighborhoods amendment. The final plan, once adopted, will serve as a roadmap for future development, policy-making, and resource allocation in these neighborhoods.

## Community Vision

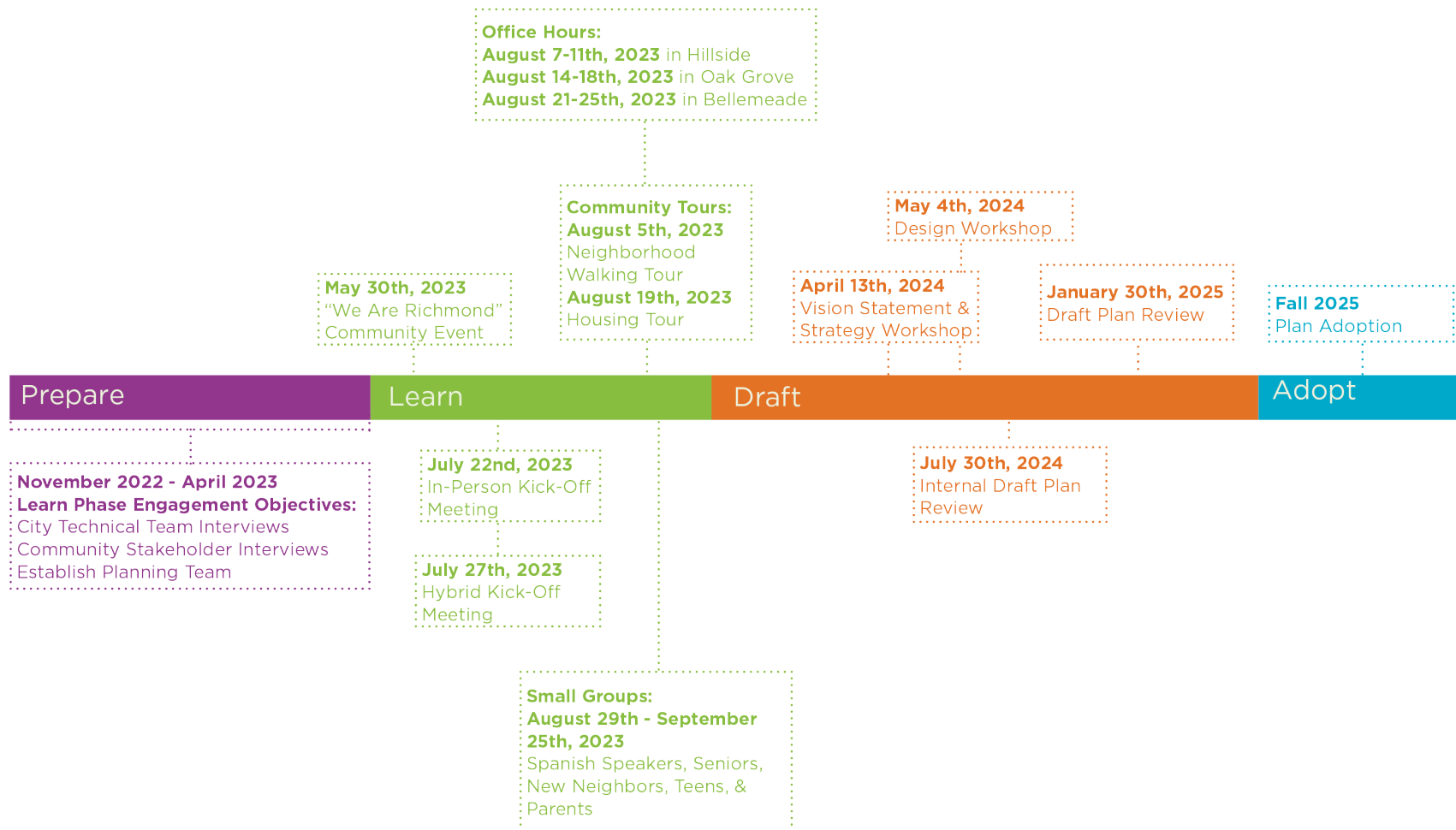
The community vision was crafted from community conversations and responses to activities both in person and virtually. The neighborhoods arrived at the following vision:

The Oak Grove, Hillside, Bellemeade (OGHB) community is an attractive, safe, socially connected, and diverse community of neighbors, that supports growth while maintaining the quiet and peaceful character of the neighborhoods where long-term residents have an opportunity to benefit from neighborhood investments without facing higher costs of living.

## Major Themes

The Community Plan prioritizes working to prevent the displacement of long term residents and protecting the residential feel and quietness of the existing neighborhoods while also planning for the future by establishing the appropriate location and form for future growth. The major themes in the Plan are:

- Create a beautiful, safe, and clean neighborhood, where everyone feels connected to each other and to amenities.
- Provide a variety of housing options in appropriate areas of the neighborhood while preserving the residential feel and long time residents of the community.
- Attract a variety of retail development, both large and small, along the main corridors that border OGHB.
- Build connections within the neighborhood and to the rest of the City through enhanced transit and safe walking and biking areas.
- Promote a healthy and resilient neighborhood that fosters ownership and pride among residents.



# Implementation

Given the size of the OGHB community, this plan suggests the following Big Moves to focus on. These Big Moves were priority strategies identified by the community in January 2025.

## **A. Improve Safety and Promote Cleanliness**

Safety and cleanliness take on many forms in the OGHB neighborhood. Traffic, pedestrian, and physical safety are paramount for residents. Cleanliness in the form of trash, biohazard, and brush removal are another top concern. Strategies related to improving safety in the built environment will increase the feeling of safety and wellbeing. Programs that target rehabilitation for and create a clean, welcoming community to include increase enforcement of existing property maintenance codes, implementing community clean ups, and installing new and more lighting.

## **B. Attract Retail & Expand Access to Healthy Food**

New regulatory and economic policies must be implemented to land anchor market and retail in and near the OGHB area. Economic development incentives must be greatly enhanced and be targeted to specific sites in the South Richmond and OGHB area. Site readiness, streamlining public utility and public works improvements on-site, up-front cost incentives, and public-private partnerships should all be on the table to bring retailers to the area. On a smaller scale, access to healthy food should be expanded through fostering community gardens and yard gardens with space for farm stands and promoting entrepreneurship within the food space.

## **C. Prioritize Long-Term Residents**

Long term residents are a core but diminishing demographic in OGHB. To retain residents in the neighborhood and insulate them from growing development pressures several policy tools will need to be implemented to prevent involuntary displacement. Tools such as tax breaks for long-term residents and the Healthy Homes program can assist residents with essential home care needs and provide additional money in the bank to continue to live in their established neighborhood. Lobbying the General Assembly for additional tools to limit the impact of increased property assessments should also be explored. In addition to addressing concerns regarding the increase in property values, existing issues with drainage and connectivity should be addressed.

## **D. Rezone OGHB**

Rezone the corridors to promote mixed-use development that is connected to the existing neighborhoods with increased residential density, activated ground floors, and high-quality design. Zoning for the single-family residential neighborhoods allows for compatible low-density residential development consistent with the historic single-family form. Careful consideration to the potential for increased displacement should be prioritized in the rezoning of the residential core. The rezoning should be completed in coordination with the citywide rezoning effort, Richmond 300: Code Refresh.

# Process and Engagement

The process to develop the OGHB Community Plan included a structured, phased approach to community planning that began in November 2022 and concluded in the fall of 2024. Plan development included internal meetings with City staff and leadership, three large public meetings, many stakeholder conversations and small group meetings, two public surveys, and reoccurring meetings of an external Planning Team.

## Prepare Phase (November 2022-April 2023)

This phase focused on gathering information, setting up the planning process, and spreading awareness within the community. Key activities included developing a plan process and timeline, creating branding and outreach materials, and conducting a community survey. This phase established the foundational elements of the planning process, such as assembling a Planning Team and collecting existing data, and engaging with various stakeholders, including City staff, City Council, and residents. Internal staff began meetings in November 2022 to determine the scope of the project and connect with the Council representatives. In February 2023, the team conducted internal interviews with a variety of City staff from the Office of Human Services, Department of Public Works, Department of Public Utilities, Office of Community Engagement, Parks, Sustainability, Fire, Libraries, and Immigrant and Refugee Services. Meetings were also held with external stakeholders Lynx Ventures, Harper and Associates, the Civic Associations, and Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

## Learn Phase (May 2023-September 2023)

This phase emphasized sharing and processing neighborhood

information. It involved hosting a Kick-Off Meeting, collecting, and disseminating insights and stories from the community, administering the community survey, and providing community tours. The insights and information gathered during this phase were critical in understanding the needs and aspirations of the Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade communities.

To kick off the Learn Phase, a festival called We Are Richmond was held at Bellemeade Park. Vendors included arts and crafts, bouncy houses, food trucks, community resource vendors, TruTimber tree climbing, bike riding, a DJ, and more. All food and activities were free. Due to the size of Bellemeade Park, attendance was estimated at about 600 people, including children.

A formal in-person kick off meeting was held on July 22, 2023 at Oak Grove Bellemeade Elementary School. Attendance was around 40 residents who participated in small and large group discussions. Broad questions were asked such as, “What do you like or dislike about your community?”, “What surprised you about the insights report information?”, and “What is missing in your neighborhood?”.

On July 27, 2023, three meetings were held simultaneously at Destiny Community Church, Hillside Recreation Center, and the Bellemeade Community Center, each with a virtual option. These meetings presented the same information and posed the same questions as the July 22 kickoff, in a slightly modified format to accommodate those participating via Microsoft Teams. The responses to these questions informed the next steps of the plan process.

During this phase, a survey was provided out to residents of OGHB and made available on the PDR website from July until

September 2023. A total of 248 total responses to the survey were recorded, and the results of the survey can be found in Appendix D. In addition to being shared online the survey was disseminated through door-to-door canvassing and at our partner locations; Hillside Resource Center, Destiny Community Church, and Bellemeade Community Center.

## Draft Phase (January 2024-January 2025)

The draft phase involves holding meetings to establish vision statements and strategies, designing elements of the plan, and vetting these strategies with the community. The Vision Workshop was held on April 13, 2024, in-person at Oak Grove Bellemeade Elementary School. About 35 people attended and participated in large and small group discussions led by members of the City Team. An interactive poll asked residents more specific questions based on their previous responses to the broad questions in the Learn phase. Residents were presented with a series of six options and asked, 'What is most important to you in OGHB?' for community amenities and activities based on the five themes in the plan. Options such as 'enjoy a meal outside', and 'support youth programs' were a part of the High Quality Places theme. Options in the Inclusive Housing theme included, 'finding nearby childcare', 'buy a first home', and 'walk to a nearby store'. This poll was presented at the meeting and was open for responses for two weeks. The results of the poll can be found in the Appendix B. Next, small groups were formed and led by members of the City Team. A map of the study area and a series of 10 questions were presented, and community members drilled into specific areas of the neighborhoods, answering the series of questions. These responses informed the map alternatives, and ultimately the final map for the plan area.

The Design workshop was held on May 4, 2024, at Oak Grove Bellemeade Elementary School. The City Team provided three

map alternatives that showed options for the location and scale of retail, green space, connections, and housing throughout the community based on feedback from the survey, poll, and map board questions. The Design workshop was open-house style, with participants able to move about the room freely to view each of the maps and provide input. The summary of the Vision and Design Meetings is provided in the Appendix B.

The final draft plan was presented to the community at a meeting on January 30th, 2025 held at the furniture store, LaDIFF, on Commerce Road. Planners presented the community with the strategies, who then prioritized the strategies by placing green dots on the ones they felt were most important to implement and fund before others. 45 community members attended and participated in the activity.

## Planning Team

The Planning Team was established during the Prepare phase and participated in all stages of the plan development. This body is made up of community stakeholders including civic and non-profit leaders and major property owners. These individuals were selected based on their connections to the neighborhoods and their willingness to serve as a sounding board for the City Team. Before each large public engagement, this team was consulted to edit content and guide the City Team on days and times for in-person engagement. Planning Team members were integral members in getting the word out about surveys and meetings and provided valuable connections to community organizations.

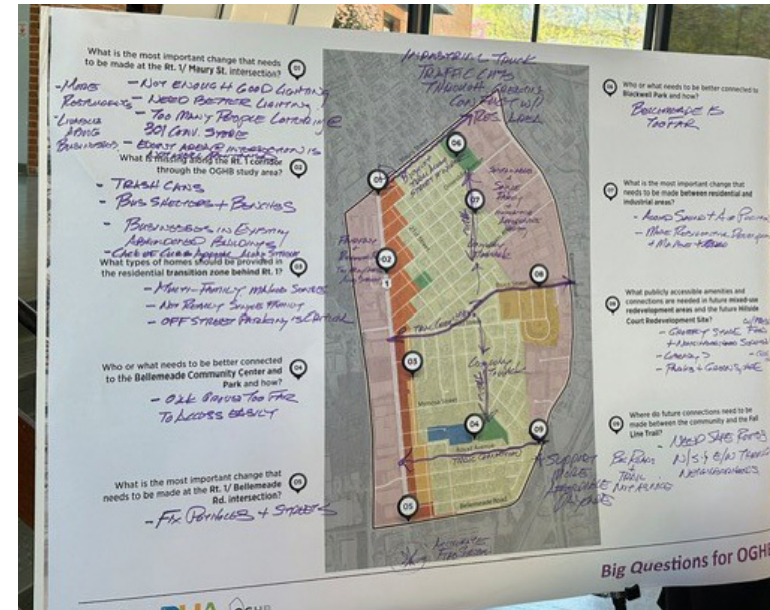
## Engagement Tools and Methodology

The City used both traditional and new tools to engage with the community. Surveys were provided online in both Spanish and English, and paper copies were placed at community partner locations. Community Walking Tours were conducted in the early

Summer of 2023. Flyers were distributed at all major resident gathering points, and provided to Planning Team members to distribute to their networks.

Postcards that advertised the day, time, and location of the Vision and Design workshops were mailed to all residents and property owners within the plan area. Several attendees of both workshops indicated they received the postcard. Yard signs were also deployed in the neighborhood to advertise the Vision workshop. Fifteen signs were placed at strategic intersections and at major resident gathering spots including the school, community centers, and parks. Again, residents saw the signs and were appreciative to see the message being brought out to the community.

Finally, one of the biggest hits was the graphic recorder artist at the Vision workshop whose work is featured on the cover of this plan. The artist was present in the community the day before and on the day of the Vision workshop. Residents were asked broad questions, and the graphic recorder artist drew, in real time, residents' responses. The artist attended the workshop and created a mindmap of the large group discussion that was held during the interactive poll. The results are valuable art pieces that visually tell the story of a future Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade community and how to get there.



*"Big Questions" Interactive Board at the In-Person Community Meeting, April 2024*



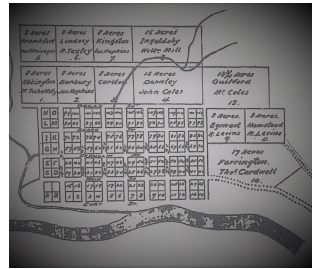
*Children enjoying an art activity at the We Are Richmond event, May 2023*



# A Brief History

**The Powhatan Chiefdom, comprised of 30 tribes,** inhabits the lands known today as Chesterfield and Henrico counties for 12,000 years before English colonization.

1600



William Mayo's original street grid layout (1737).

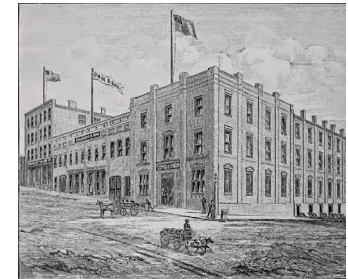
1742

**Richmond** becomes incorporated as a town.

Population: 250  
Area: 0.20 square miles

1838

**Richmond-Petersburg Railroad** is built to better connect the two cities, particularly for the coal and cotton trades. The line ends in Manchester's industrial center.

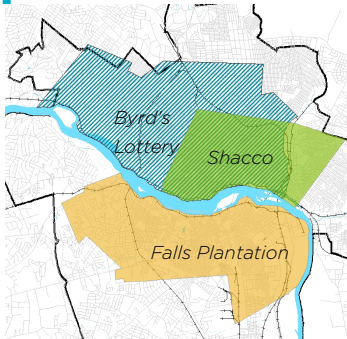


1874

**P.H. Mayo & Bros. Tobacco Company** introduces cigarette manufacturing in Richmond.

1659

**The Falls Plantation** is established by William Byrd's uncle, Thomas Stegge. Byrd inherits the land and becomes one of the wealthiest men in the 17th century due to the plantation's milling, farming, and mining activities.



1769

**Manchester** is incorporated as its own town and is commercially successful due to its mills and docks. It would later become an independent city in 1874 before being merged into Richmond City in 1910.

1846

**Drewry's Mansion:** Henry T. Drewry constructs a mansion on 1,500 acres of land, previously part of the Falls Plantation. Over 500 enslaved people maintained the land surrounding the mansion which contained fertile fields and a vista overlooking the James River. In the early 20th century, there were talks of potentially converting the mansion into a new school.



Drewry's Mansion (1920)  
After several changes in ownership, it was demolished in 1940. Today, the site of the former mansion is located at Harwood and 18th Streets.

## 1910-1970

### Annexations:

Richmond annexes a large part of Chesterfield County, including Manchester and the neighborhoods of OGHB. (Oak Grove annexed in 1914. Bellemeade annexed in 1942.)

### Final Annexation:

January 1, 1970  
Population: 249,621  
Area: 62.5 square miles



## 1952

**Hillside Court** is constructed as an all-White public housing complex as a solution to the overcrowding in inner-city neighborhoods. 402 units are built.

## 2012

### Bellemeade Park

is established by Bob Argabright and volunteers to transform an overgrown park space into an outdoor learning campus that provides educational and recreational opportunities for the area.



## 2020

**The Fall Line Trail**, a 43-mile shared-use trail from Ashland to Petersburg, is planned to run along Commerce Road.

# 2024

## 1930s-1960s

### New subdivisions

with single family homes are created throughout the Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade area, cohering with national trends of suburbanization.



## 1958

### Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike

is completed as a toll road to ease traffic congestion on U.S. Route 1 (Richmond Highway). It is 34.7 miles long and costs \$76.7 million to build.

## 1971-1974

### The Oak Grove Federally Assisted Code Enforcement (FACE) project

included the inspection of 172 Oak Grove homes. Property owners were given access to low-interest loans and grants to encourage home rehabilitation. The City combined this with the installation of necessary neighborhood improvements (sidewalks, lights, trees, signs, etc.)

## 2013

### Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School

opens as the former Oak Grove Elementary school on Ingram Avenue becomes structurally obsolete.

## 2022

### Model Tobacco Lofts

opens as a luxury housing development in the former Art-Deco style Model Tobacco factory building along Richmond Highway.



# Existing Conditions

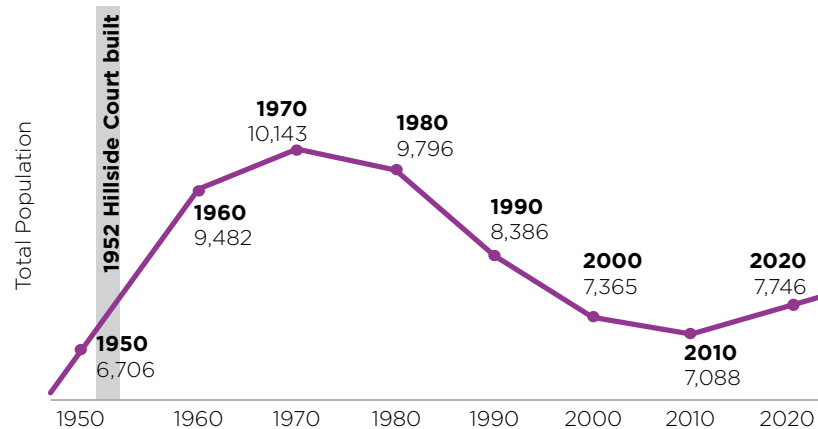
## Demographics

The OGHB area in Richmond had nearly 7,800 residents in 2020, experiencing a 9% growth from 2010 to 2020, partly due to the city's overall 11% percent growth in the same period. Historically, OGHB's population peaked in the 1970s but then declined, mirroring national suburbanization trends. Households in OGHB are slightly larger and younger than the Richmond average, with 30% containing at least one person under 18 and nearly 25% of the population under 18, mostly aged 5 to 14.

Originally a predominantly White area, OGHB saw a significant demographic shift due to suburbanization and White Flight, with the most dramatic decline in the White population occurring between 1970 and 1980. Today, OGHB is majority Black but is slowly diversifying, with 3% Hispanic or Latino residents and 13% identifying as a race other than Black or White.

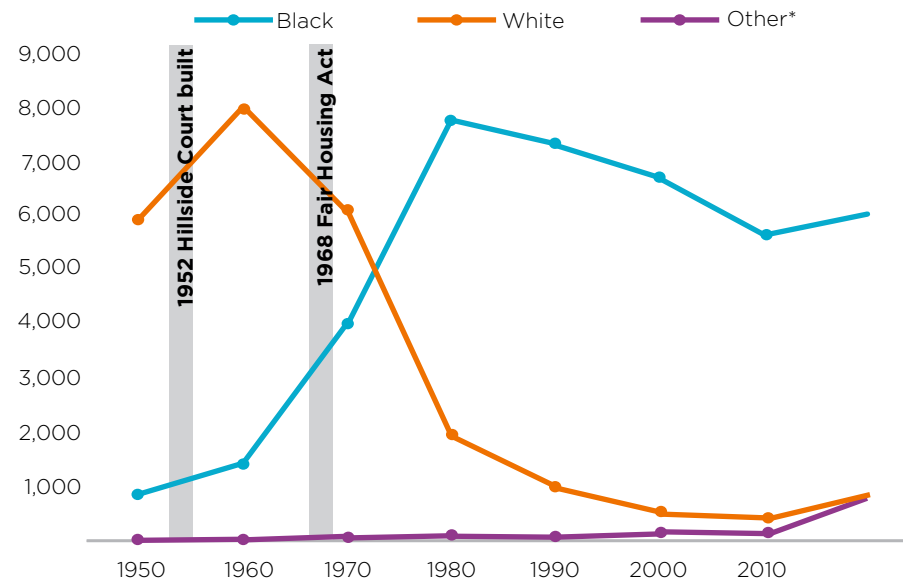
// **FIGURE 2. Historic Population in OGHB, 1950-2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



// **FIGURE 3. Historic Racial Makeup, 1950-2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



\*Includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and some other race

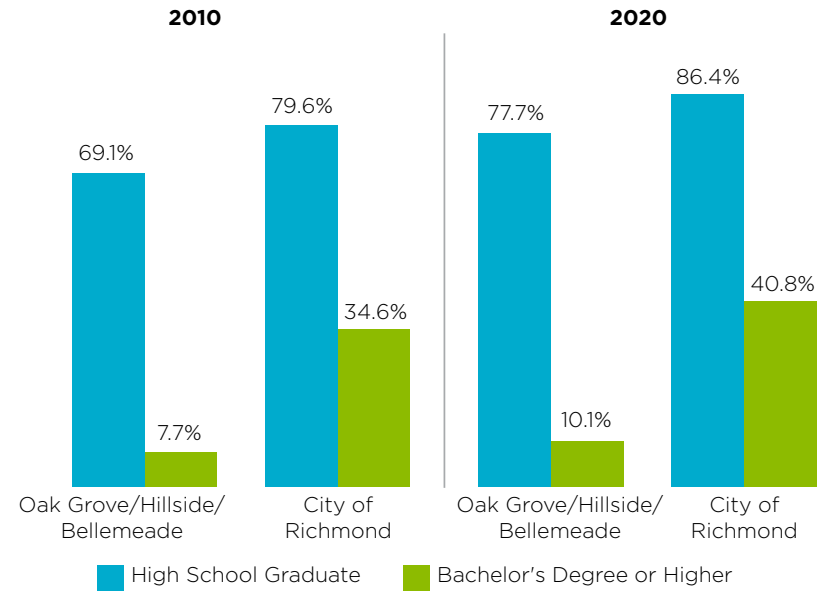
## Education

Educational attainment has improved in OGHB since 2010, but it still lags behind the city, with only 10% of residents holding a Bachelor's degree compared to over a third of Richmonders. High school graduation rates in OGHB have grown at a similar pace to the rest of the city.

// **FIGURE 4. Educational Attainment, 25 years and older**

Percentages shown are percent of that year's population for those 25 years and older.

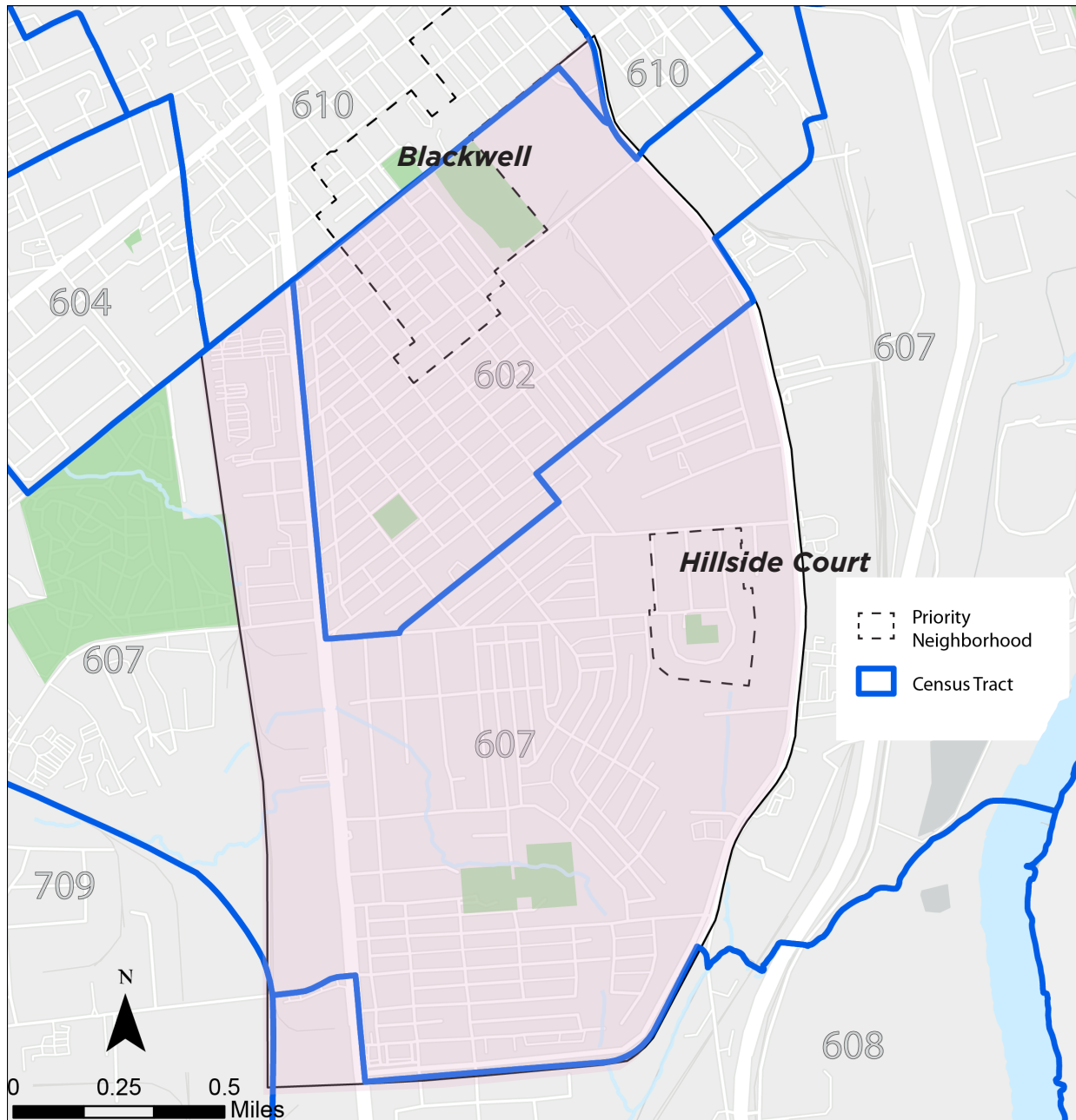
Source: U.S. Census Bureau: ACS 5-year Estimates (2016-2020) ; ACS 5-year Estimates (2006-2010)



*Oak Grove Bellemeade Elementary School, February 2023*

// **FIGURE 5. Census Tracts showing Priority Neighborhoods in OGHB**

Source: Census Bureau, Richmond 300 Master Plan

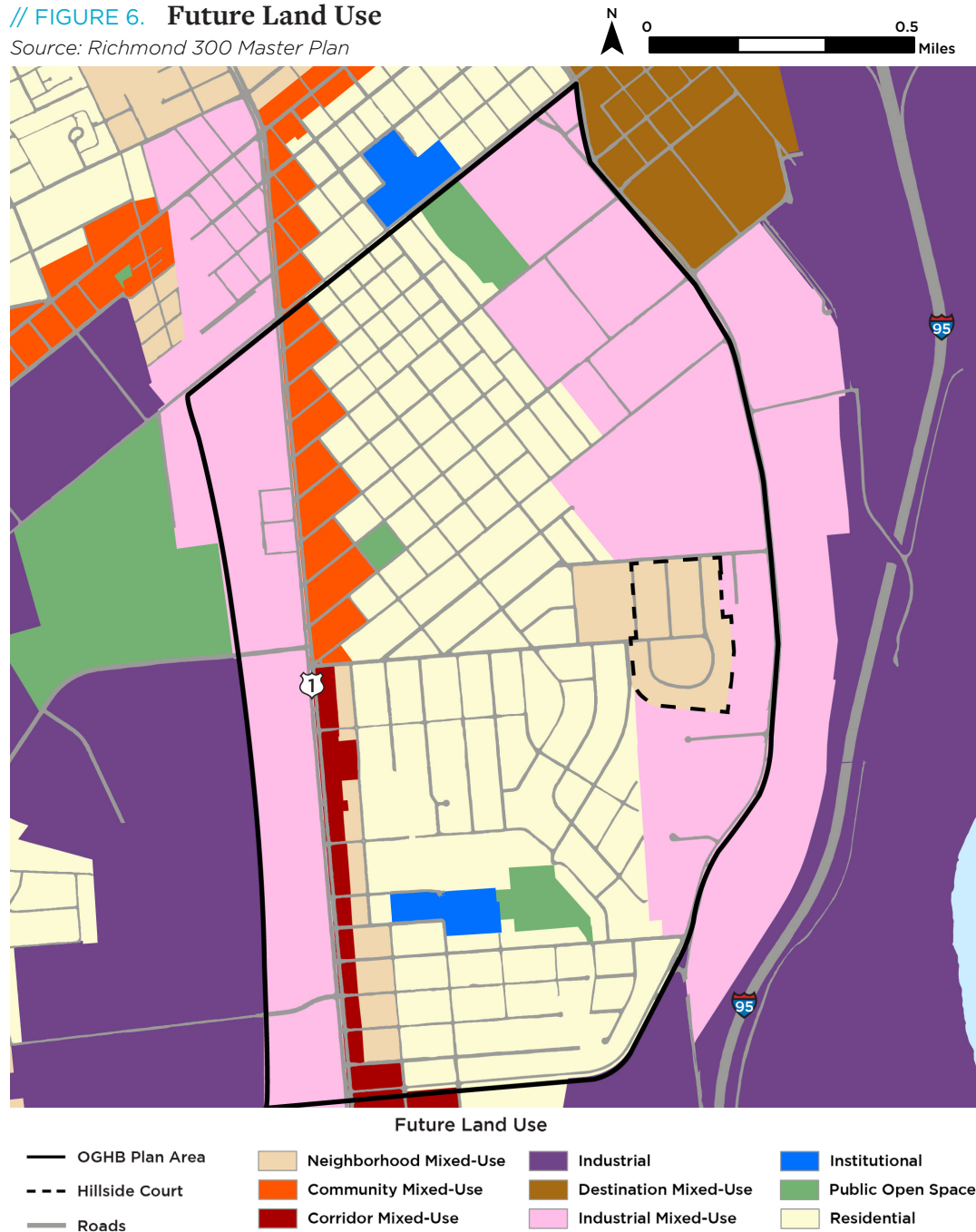


## Priority Neighborhoods

Hillside Court and Blackwell are classified as Priority Neighborhoods in the amended Master Plan *Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth*. Priority Neighborhoods are designated areas identified by the city for targeted investments and improvements based on various factors such as economic need, infrastructure conditions, and social challenges. These neighborhoods often face issues like high poverty rates, aging infrastructure, limited access to quality services, and housing instability. The goal of prioritizing these areas is to direct resources, such as housing redevelopment, infrastructure upgrades, public safety measures, and community services, in order to improve living conditions and promote equitable development.

// FIGURE 6. Future Land Use

Source: Richmond 300 Master Plan



## Future Land Use

Figure 6 highlights the future land use for Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade as outlined in the Richmond 300 Master Plan. The map preserves the area's single-family residential zones while surrounding them with highly walkable, urban land use categories such as Community Mixed-Use, Corridor Mixed-Use, and Industrial Mixed-Use. Additionally, Hillside Court is designated as Neighborhood Mixed-Use, suggesting the potential to redevelop the public housing complex into a diverse urban neighborhood that incorporates various housing types along with small-scale commercial and industrial activities.

**Industrial Mixed-Use:** Formerly traditional industrial areas that are transitioning to mixed-use because of their proximity to growing neighborhoods and changes in market conditions. These areas may still retain some light industrial uses.

**Community Mixed-Use:** Cluster of medium-density, walkable commercial and residential uses that provide neighborhood services to nearby residential communities and sometimes feature regional attractions.

**Neighborhood Mixed-Use:** Existing or new highly-walkable urban neighborhoods that are predominantly residential with a small, but critical, percentage of parcels providing retail, office, personal service, and institutional uses.

**Corridor Mixed-Use:** Found along major commercial corridors and envisioned to provide for medium- to medium-high-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development.

## Great Streets

Great Streets, shown in Figure 7, are significant entrances to the city and serve as major connectors between city destinations. Great Streets are roadways that require robust attention to make them prominent promenades to the city. Some parts of the Great Streets shown are quite beautiful and should be replicated in other parts of the city. For instance, Ashe Boulevard as it runs through the Museum District is a beautiful promenade with wide sidewalks, street trees, buried power lines, and buildings that address the street with windows, doors, and porches that engage the street. However, as it travels north toward I-95/I-64, its splendor is diminished. As the areas around Ashe Boulevard near the Diamond Site are redeveloped, it is envisioned that the street would be beautified and become a truly Great Street.

In the Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade neighborhoods Commerce Road, Bellemeade Road, and Richmond Highway are designated as Great Streets in Richmond 300. In the OGHB Community Plan, these streets will see the most change in development over time and efforts should be made to beautify these streets as well as improve the travel for all modes of transportation.

## Street Typologies

The character of a street changes as the adjacent land uses change. The Street Typology Map, shown in Figure 7, depicts four Street Typologies which are applied to the most frequently-used streets (those with high annual average daily traffic (AADT)). When planners, developers, and transportation engineers plan for changes to buildings and the streets identified in this map, they should all work closely together to meet the needs of the envisioned land uses. Additionally, future zoning will allow for more intense development on the major streets.

### Major Mixed-Use Streets

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, through commercial and mixed-use areas
- Prioritize use and density-scaled sidewalks and crosswalks
- Require form elements, such as buildings to the street with parking in the rear, as well as building windows and entrances on the street
- Incorporate streetscape features, such as trees, benches, and trash receptacles
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Prioritize the curbside for walking, bicycling, transit, and short-term parking access and loading for local shops and restaurants

### Major Residential Streets

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, as well as pedestrians and bicycles, through residential neighborhoods
- Prioritize for creating sidewalks and crosswalks
- Install street trees as a buffer between sidewalk and street
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops
- Ensure low street speed by utilizing traffic calming measures

### Major Industrial Streets

- Carry high volumes of vehicles, including a high percentage of truck traffic, through industrial areas
- Prioritize sidewalks and crosswalks
- Install street trees with a buffer between sidewalk and street
- Ideal locations for transit routes and transit stops

### Limited Access Highways

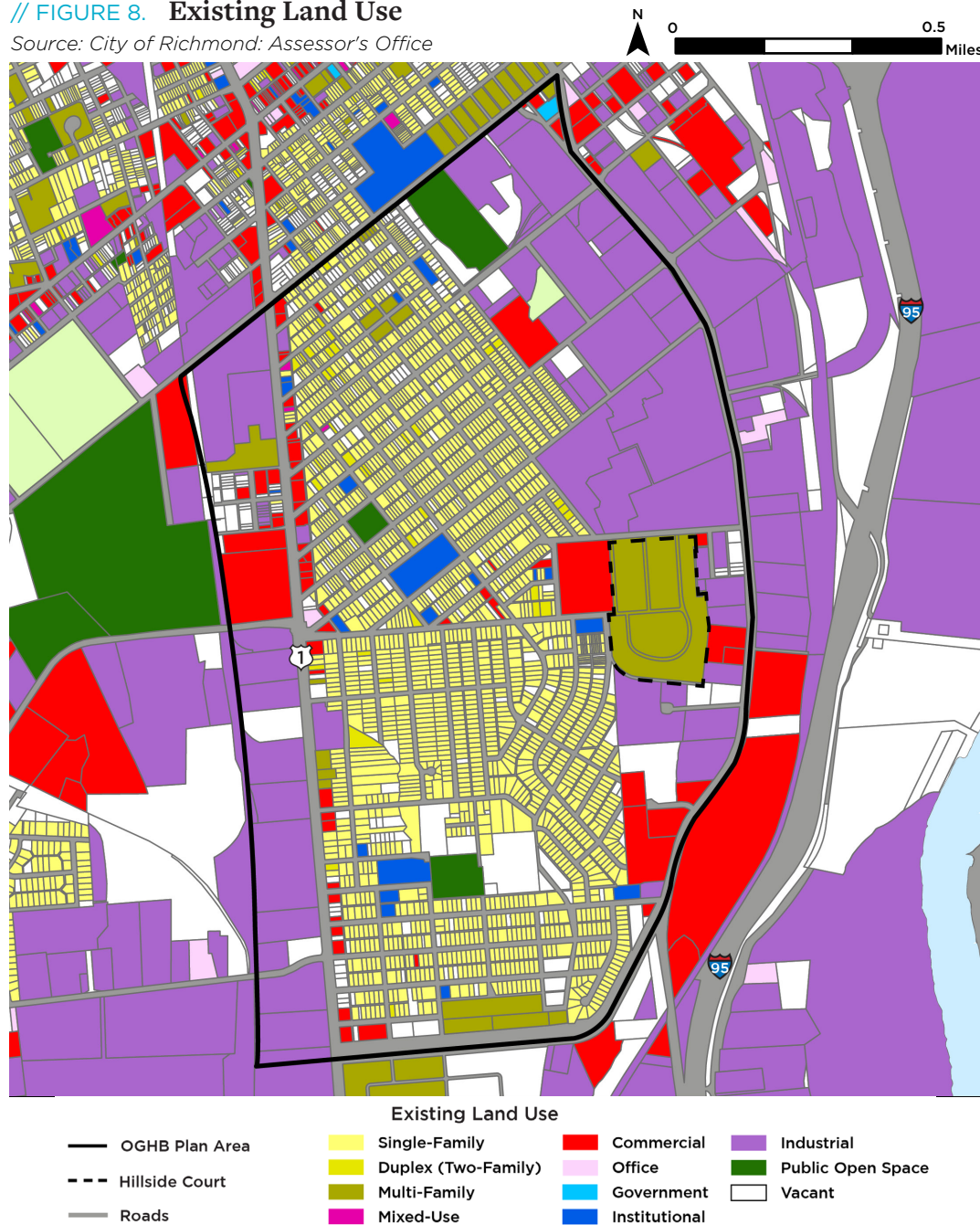
- Interstate, Downtown Expressway, Chippenham Parkway, and other limited-access highways that do not allow for non-vehicular access

Source: Richmond 300 Master Plan



## // FIGURE 8. Existing Land Use

Source: City of Richmond: Assessor's Office



## Existing Land Use & Zoning

Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade spans 2.6 square miles, making up 4.3% of Richmond's total area. Single-family residential homes are the primary land use, occupying 18% of the area. These neighborhoods are centrally located, with industrial land uses, comprising 15% of OGHB, situated to the east and west along major routes like Commerce Road and Richmond Highway. This area has a higher proportion of industrial land (15%) compared to the city's overall 10%. While small-scale commercial activities are present in some residential areas, most commercial uses are located along these major roads.

Much of OGHB falls under the R-5 Single-Family Residential Zoning District, which dictates existing lot sizes, lot coverage, yard setbacks, and the single-family use. However, in the past four years, there has been a rise in Special Use Permits (SUPs), allowing for zoning changes from R-5 to accommodate higher-density projects and different housing types. This trend is expected to continue due to the national housing shortage, increasing land values in OGHB, and rising demand for housing close to Downtown.

# Housing

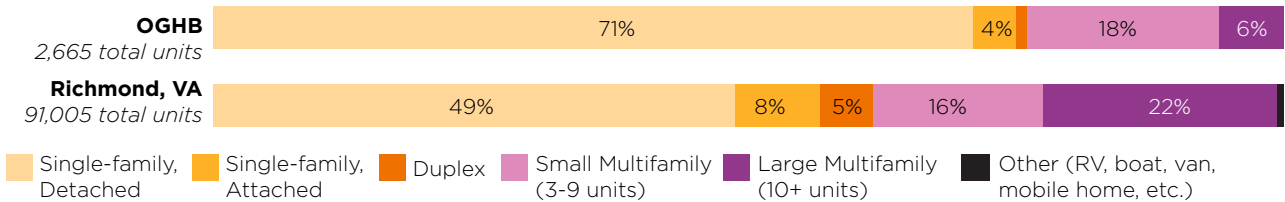
Oak Grove and Bellemeade feature a mix of detached, single-family homes in various styles, reflecting the area’s gradual development. While over half of the housing was built before 1950, new housing has been added in each subsequent decade, with the latest developments occurring in the 2010s by the Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation. After the subdivisions of the early to mid-1900s, OGHB was predominantly made up of single-family, owner-occupied homes. Most homes remain single-family detached, although many have transitioned into income-generating properties. In 2020, only 33% of OGHB housing is owner-occupied, which is lower than the city average of 44% (Table 1). Homeownership rates within OGHB differ, with the northern blocks (Maury Street to Gordon Avenue) having the highest rates (46-49%), and the central blocks (Ingram Avenue to Harwood Street) having the lowest (18%), as shown in Figure 9 on

page 22. Nearly half of tenant households in OGHB pay between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per month, and given the median income of \$35,235, these renters are spending over 30% of their income on housing, classifying them as cost-burdened according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Figure 10).

Property values in OGHB have risen significantly, with most assessments doubling in recent years. The median single-family home assessment increased from \$58,000 in 2019 to \$133,000 in 2023, and 40% of properties sold between 2020 and 2023 exceeded their assessed values. While the area is attracting new families due to its relative affordability compared to other Richmond neighborhoods, rising property taxes and new development present challenges for long-time residents.

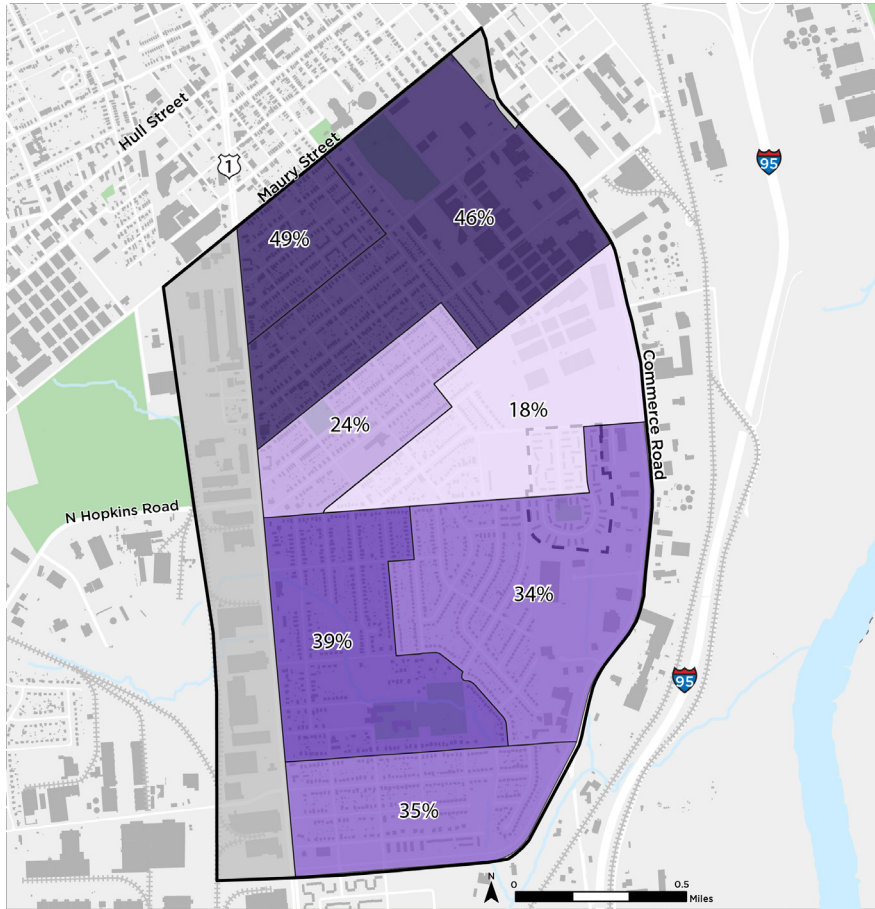
// **FIGURE 9. Housing Type Comparison, 2020**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Es

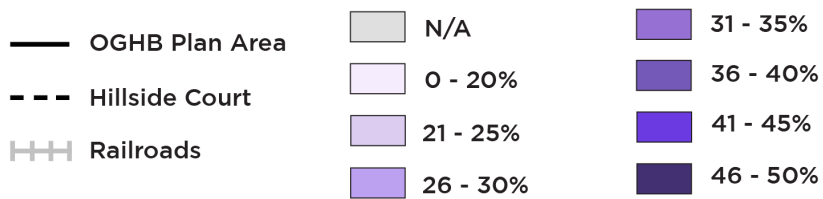


// **FIGURE 10. Percent Homeownership in OGHB by Census Block Group**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: ACS 5-year Estimates (2016-2020)



**Homeownership Rates**



// **TABLE 1. Tenure 2010, 2020**

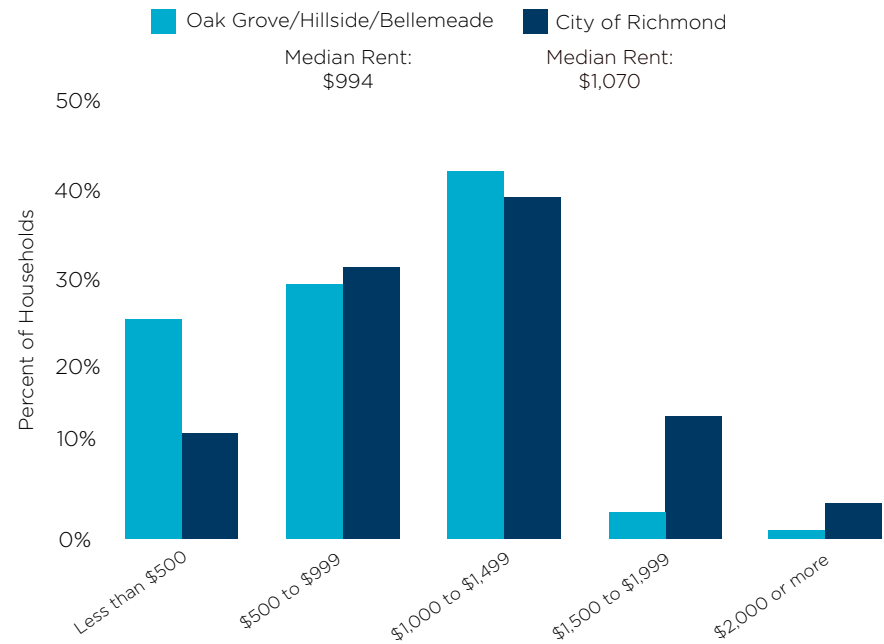
Tenure is a term used to describe if a housing unit is occupied by a tenant or an owner.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2010 Census, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

	Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade, 2010		Oak Grove/Hillside/Bellemeade, 2020		City of Richmond, 2020	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Owner-occupied	897	37%	870	33%	39,801	44%
Renter-occupied	1,542	63%	1,795	67%	51,204	56%
<b>Total units</b>	<b>2,439</b>		<b>2,665</b>		<b>91,005</b>	

// **FIGURE 11. Gross Rent Distribution of Households**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates



## Market Value Analysis

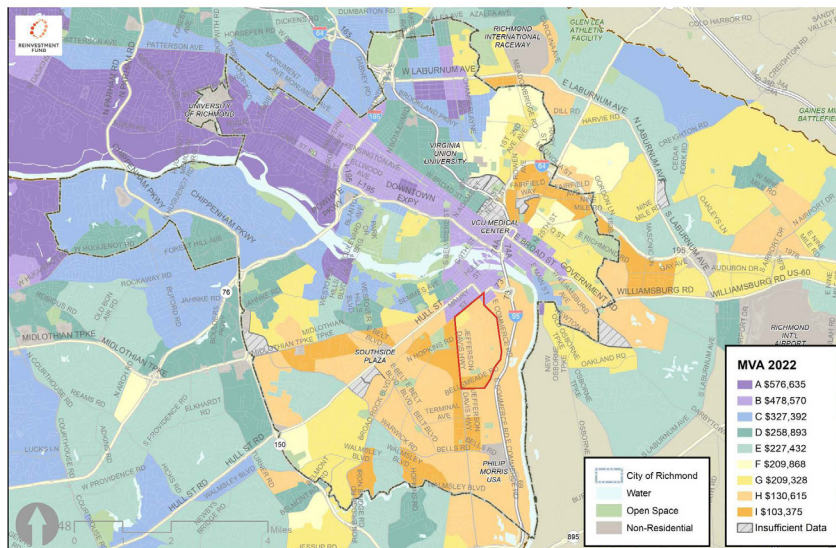
A Market Value Analysis (MVA) is an in-depth analysis and mapping of a community's housing market. The first MVA for the Richmond Region was completed in 2017, and a second MVA was completed in 2022. The MVA uses a cluster analysis technique to designate specific clusters with common market characteristics. In 2022, the majority of the OGHB community was in an orange market, which has a wide variety in sale prices, a mix of renters and owners, and a high amount of subsidized renters. Orange markets are among the lowest priced markets. The neighborhood immediately to the north of the plan area is within the highest priced purple market which is a change from 2017 when these neighborhoods were in the lower priced yellow markets. This change is indicative of the market pressure expanded further south into towards plan area which has impacted housing affordability.

## Displacement Risk Ratio

Displacement Risk Ratio (DRR) is calculated by taking the ratio between median sales prices over time and the income of a long-term resident at a fixed point in time (2010) and annually adjusted using the Consumer Price Index. High or rising DRR values signal longtime residents, or new residents with incomes like those of legacy residents, may be experiencing displacement pressure associated with elevated housing prices. Negative or declining DRR values indicate that housing prices are not keeping pace with larger market trends, which in weak or fragile markets may signal housing market decline.

The 2020-2021 Area Average DRR is 4.54 for the City of Richmond. This DRR is high compared to other cities of comparable size and population. The Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade area is among the neighborhoods that experienced the highest increase in DRR in the city between 2015 and 2021 (.76 or more). This means that Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade's longtime residents, or new residents with income similar to those of legacy residents, are at high risk of being displaced.

Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade has a high percentage of renter-occupied single-family housing. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of sales from owners to investors in the Oak Grove, Hillside, Bellemeade block groups were among the highest in the city (10 to 20% and 20 to 40%). Although median home sales in Oak Grove, Hillside, Bellemeade are significantly less than that of the overall city, the area is becoming increasingly less affordable for its long term residents.



// FIGURE 12. Market Value Analysis for the Richmond Region

Source: Reinvestment Fund Market Value Analysis 2022

Average Characteristics for Richmond Area Market Types

	Number of Block Groups*	Median Sales Price 2019-2021	Sales Price Variance, 2019-2021	Percent Bank Sales, 2019-2021	Owner Occupancy, 2015-19	Percent Subsidized Rental, 2021	Percent Vacant Residential, 2021	Housing Units per Acre, 2015-19	Percent Residential Parcels Built 2008-up	Percent Residential Parcels with Permits 2019-21
A	49	\$576,635	0.63	2%	86%	1%	0%	2.8	12%	17%
B	32	\$478,570	0.94	4%	29%	22%	2%	21.9	2%	10%
C	97	\$327,392	0.37	4%	84%	3%	1%	3.1	4%	9%
D	60	\$258,893	0.80	6%	34%	6%	1%	8.0	5%	8%
E	102	\$227,432	0.37	7%	81%	5%	0%	2.5	3%	6%
F	18	\$209,868	0.50	23%	59%	9%	7%	4.9	3%	15%
G	44	\$209,328	0.81	11%	44%	96%	3%	5.0	5%	10%
H	41	\$130,615	0.77	12%	42%	9%	3%	5.3	2%	5%
I	14	\$103,375	1.07	10%	23%	95%	4%	5.7	4%	6%
Block Group Avg.	457	\$292,885	0.60	7%	62%	17%	2%	5.3	4%	9%

## Community Assets

The OGHB community has several assets within the study area and nearby. Notable assets are called out in Figure 11, and some are described below in more detail.

### Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School

The original Oak Grove Elementary School was built in 1913 along Ingram Avenue and was later acquired by the City of Richmond through annexation in 1914. In 2013, the new Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School, a LEED Gold-certified facility with outdoor learning classrooms, opened its doors. The school accommodates 675 students ranging from Pre-K to 5th grade.

### Bellemeade Park and Outdoor Learning Center

Bellemeade Park and Outdoor Learning Center is an 8-acre city-owned space adjacent to Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School and Bellemeade Community Center. Through an award from Virginia Outdoor Foundation's (VOF) "Preservation Trust Fund" the park was granted permanent public access in 2022. The park features rain gardens, vermiculture bins, a vegetable garden, pollinator habitats, a chicken coop, and more. The park's bicycle shop is run by Groundwork RVA and Rag and Bones Bicycle Cooperative who jointly operate a biking summer camp for girls and gender non-conforming youth.

James River Association and the Blue Sky Fund assist in weekday programming for the park. On Saturdays, Bob Argabright, the park's founder, leads an Outdoor Club for local children and coordinates volunteers who maintain and further develop the outdoor learning campus.

## Playgrounds

The playgrounds in OGHB are Oak Grove, Blackwell, and Hillside Playgrounds. These three playgrounds account for 75% of the designated public green spaces in the area. Blackwell Park is across from J.H. Blackwell Elementary School and Community Center, separated by Maury Street. The park is currently undergoing a renovation with enhanced green space, new walking trails, and improved sports courts and fields.

Oak Grove Playground is nestled within the intersection of Gordon and 22nd Streets. The playground has a play set, garden space, basketball courts, a sheltered pavilion, open green space, and tennis courts. In June 2024, the City opened the newly renovated playground with new benches, fencing, drinking fountains, and the first mini pitch court in the city.

In 2021, Hillside Community Playground was built to memorialize the life of 3-year old resident Shamar Hill Jr. The playground has expanded and the area renovated to include athletic fields, volleyball courts, walking trails, and a mural painted by Hillside residents and volunteers. In December 2022, it was announced that another art installation is planned for the space.

### Bellemeade Community Center

Bellemeade Community Center is adjacent to Bellemeade Park and Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School. The center provides meals, programs, and fitness, dance, cooking, and computer classes to residents and students. Bellemeade Community Center's indoor amenities include a gym, computer lab, kitchen, meeting room, fitness room, swimming pool, and game area. Outdoor amenities include a playground, basketball court, and football fields.

// FIGURE 13. Community Assets

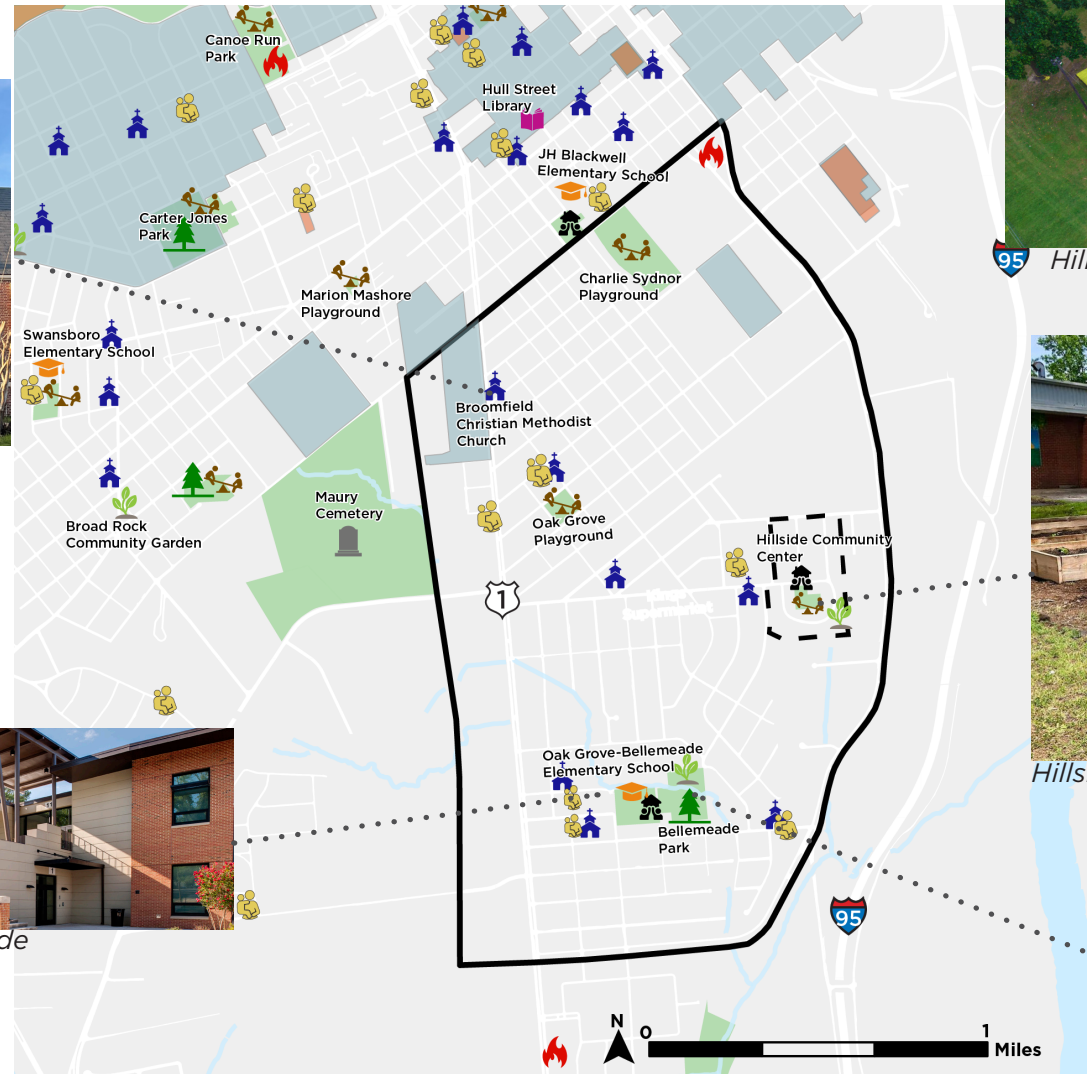
Source: City of Richmond



Broomfield Church



Oak Grove Bellemeade Elementary School



Hillside Court Playground



Hillside Community Garden



Gardens at Bellemeade Park

## Retail Analysis

### Context

The Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade community is currently underserved by basic retail and services. During stakeholder conversations, residents noted that quality grocery options, local-serving retail like pharmacies, and dining establishments are severely limited in and near the neighborhoods. Using measures defined by the Food Access Research Atlas, the OGHB community meets the definition of a “food desert.” To explore why the community is underserved in retail, including grocery, a market analysis was conducted for the Plan focused on the following types of local-serving retail:

- Full-service grocery stores - defined as offering fresh produce, along with perishables and dry goods.
- Pharmacies - defined as offering both over-the-counter and prescription medications.
- Restaurants/dining - defined as offering pre-prepared food for purchase.
- Convenience stores - defined as offering a limited selection of dry goods and perishables; very few offer any type of fresh produce, and the selection is typically severely limited.

Mapping nearby establishments confirm resident’s concerns. The predominate type of local-serving retail near the neighborhood are gas station convenience stores; this is also the only retail type within a reasonable (1/4 mile) walkshed of many parts of the community. The closest full-service grocery stores, Food Lion and

The Farm Fresh, are within a 10-minute drive time. The nearest pharmacy within a 10-minute drive time, Rite Aid, closed in 2024 as part of a larger corporate store restructuring.

### Market Overview

The purpose of the market analysis is to gain an understanding of why OGHB and the larger Southside area has been historically underserved by local-serving retail, and what incentives exist to encourage retailers to open stores. The analysis looked at the following grocery store chains with a presence in the Richmond region:

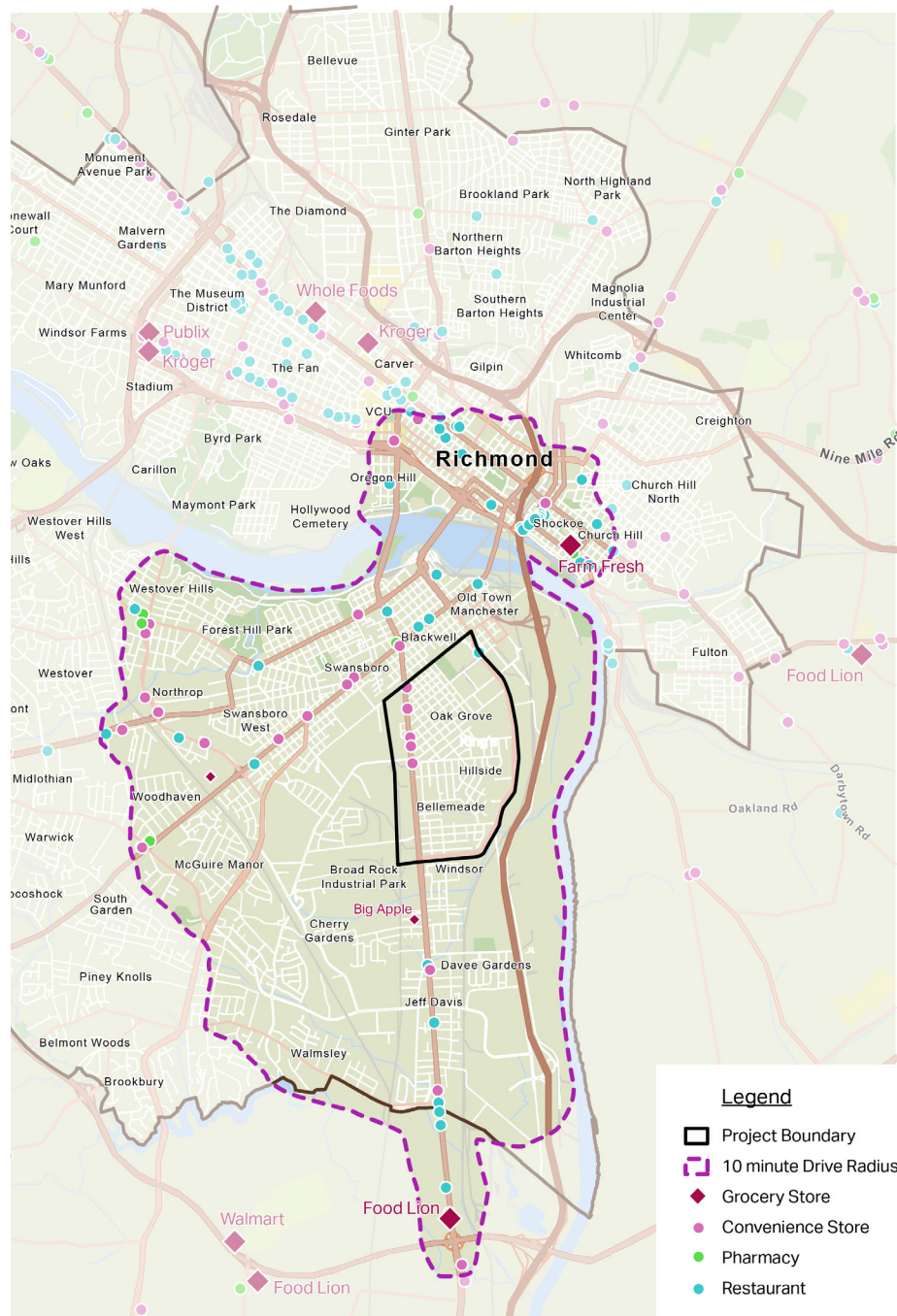
- Kroger
- Publix
- Food Lion
- Wegman’s
- Aldi
- Lidl

Richmond’s overall grocery market is viewed as “oversaturated” by retailers and developers, meaning that there are too many similar stores competing for the same shoppers. Since most residents prefer to shop for groceries close to home, and grocery retailers operate in small trade areas, overall market competition does not fully explain Southside’s “food desert.”

Since 2010, the City of Richmond overall has grown by more than 11%, however this growth is uneven. Different parts of the City have grown at faster rates than others. Population density and growth trajectory are key considerations by major retailers when determining the optimal location for a new store.

// **FIGURE 14. Grocery Retail Analysis Map**

Source: AECOM



## Site Selection Process

Not all retailers own or develop the properties that their stores are located on; for example, Kroger owns less than 50% of its stores. Many prefer to lease their properties, and work with a developer to build or renovate the store and associated site improvements.

## Market Metrics

Each chain has different criteria, as they each have a slightly different target demographic, as well as different-sized trade areas. Higher-end chains like Publix and Wegman's tend to target higher-income households; more moderately priced stores might focus on other demographic measurements that describe their most loyal customer types, including information on spending preferences. The top criteria that all stores consider when deciding where to open a new location are:

- Population/household density within their trade area
- Household income within their trade area
- Broader population/household growth patterns and trends
- Market competition
- Average daily traffic/overall traffic patterns
- Available sites and infrastructure
- Crime statistics, especially within a one-mile radius of the store location

Table 2 shows a range of what large retail chains with a presence in the Richmond area consider viable for opening a new store, and a summary of current conditions within a 10-minute drive of the center of the OGHG geography.

Another challenge for retail development in Richmond's Southside, according to local commercial real estate brokers, is

a combination of actual crime statistics and public perception around crime. Many chains have strict parameters around what level of crime is considered “tolerable” for their retail locations, particularly violent crime. Petty theft may be less of a concern, but they do not want to locate in areas where they feel their employees and core customer base may be in danger and/or where they may feel unsafe. Retailers typically look at crime statistics for an area for at least the past 18 months or so, before deciding whether to move forward with opening a new store there. They also look for improved site and area lighting, and clean, well-maintained properties and sidewalks. A strong police presence in the general vicinity can make a difference for retailers who may be “on the fence” about opening a new location.

### Site Considerations

Based on the research conducted for this analysis, along with conversations with local commercial real estate brokers, the following were key takeaways for site considerations for retail destinations in Southside.

- 1. Location.** In urban markets, most community-serving retail establishments like grocery stores and pharmacies want to be in very close proximity where their customer base lives and works. This is one reason that mixed-use developments have been successful in places like Scott’s Addition and Manchester; having residences directly adjacent to retailers creates a “captive market” of regular shoppers. Even if the retail offerings in a mixed-use development are not the residents’ preferred stores/destinations, they will still frequent those establishments for convenience items, particularly during the workweek.
- 2. Parking.** Most local brokers agree that Richmond’s market is still dominated by retailers who prefer to offer surface parking. Constructing parking decks can be prohibitively expensive for developers and can exacerbate safety concerns. As transit connections are built out, some

retailers may relax requirements; however, most experts agree that retailers make decisions based on existing infrastructure and market conditions, versus planned/proposed development.

- 3. Lighting and Access.** Chain retailers much prefer sites that are accessible from major roadways/well-served by transportation infrastructure (including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in more urban areas); already served by utility infrastructure and/or have nearby connections that require a simple tap; well-lit, well-maintained, and bordered by other properties that are similarly clean, well-lit, and well-maintained.
- 4. Store Footprint.** Stores like Aldi typically start around 18,000 square feet. A typical Food Lion is closer to 40,000 square feet, and a new Kroger Marketplace starts at around 100,000 square feet.
- 5. Colocation.** Retail stores prefer to collocate with other complementary (and sometimes even competitive) types of retail. Some fast-food and gas station establishments, along with pharmacies, are willing to build on outparcels not directly connected to an anchor tenant; however, the majority of other local-serving retailers prefer to co-locate in a shopping center with a larger anchor tenant (like a grocery store). Examples include the Carytown Kroger.

### Foot Traffic Analysis

In order to understand where OGHB residents currently shop, the analysis leveraged data from Placer.ai, which tracks cellphone location data to understand origin and destination for foot traffic in a given area.

According to Placer.ai, the most popular grocery destination for OGHB residents is Kroger in Chesterfield at the City/County line in the Stonebridge shopping center. This is a “Super Kroger” that offers a pharmacy. Outside of the Chesterfield Kroger, residents

are traveling between 3 and 6 miles to access a pharmacy, with the most popular being CVS on Midlothian Turnpike. The closest pharmacy, CVS Pharmacy on East Main Street, ranks as the 9th most popular pharmacy destination for OGHB residents.

Despite the presence of a number of gas stations with adjacent convenience stores within a 10-minute drive time of the OGHB neighborhood, residents prefer a full-service convenience store like Wawa, that offers hot and cold food, a small selection of fresh produce, coffee, and other amenities; Wawa is similar to a deli or other type of “fast-casual” restaurant. According to Placer.ai, Golden Corral in Chesterfield County is the most popular casual dining destination for OGHB residents, followed by McDonald’s at Southside Plaza and on Broad Street, another Golden Corral location, and Chick-fil-A in Henrico County.

### Recommendations and Strategies

Based on the results of the market analysis, as well as conversations with commercial real estate brokers and retail experts who have worked directly with major retailers in the past, the City and its regional partners are exploring opportunities to better incentivize private development and investment in local-serving retail in Southside. Recommendations from this analysis have been included in the Plan under the Diverse Economy theme. The full market analysis can be read in Appendix C of the plan.

#### // TABLE 2. OGHB and Grocery Store Benchmarks

*Table note: Sources of information for current conditions include ESRI, U.S. Census ACS 5-Year 2022, CoStar, and VDOT. Sources of information for the grocery store benchmark include Lidl, Aldi, Kroger, GroceryDive, and local brokers. These criteria may vary significantly, depending on the specific retailer.*

Metric	OGHB (10-Min Drive Time)	General Grocery Store Benchmark
Population Density	3,764 persons per square mile	7,000+ persons per square mile
Median Household Income	\$38,199	\$55,000+
Daily Traffic	12,000 vehicles/day (Commerce Rd) 14,000 vehicles/day (Rt. 1)	20,000+ vehicles/day
Annual Population Growth	-0.23%	2%+
Building Size	10,000 – 88,891 SF	12,000 – 22,000 SF
Shopping Center Size	N/A	60,000 – 150,000 SF
Lot size	0.05 – 11 acres	1.3 – 3 acres
Parking spaces	0 – 4 spaces per 1,000 SF	4-6 spaces per 1,000 SF

## Hillside Court

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) built Hillside Court in 1952 as segregated public housing designated exclusively for white residents. At the same time, RRHA developed Creighton Court in Richmond's east end for African Americans, reinforcing the city's racial divisions. Hillside Court was situated between a redlined area to the west and industrial land to the east, making it less appealing for private housing. The Colonial Revival-style complex consists of 402 housing units, arranged in a U-shape with three parallel streets converging at a circular road, forming a semi-circular block.

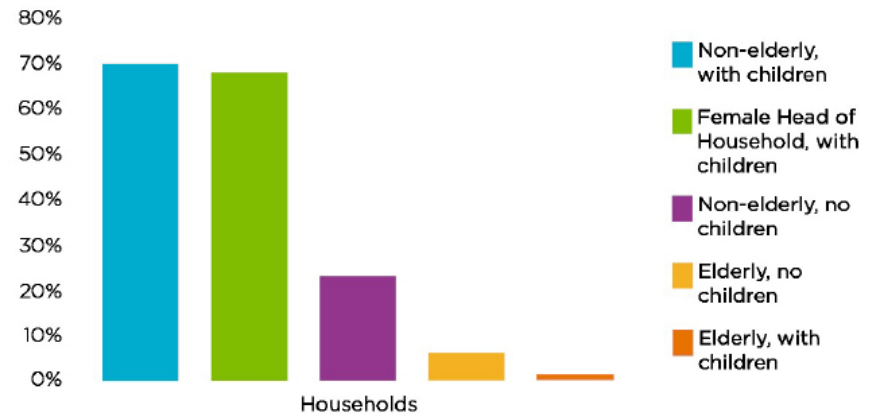
In 1987, improvements were made to Hillside Court, including the addition of recreational courts near the community center, new concrete installations, and regrading of the landscape. Afterward, the community center's façade underwent a redesign.



*Hillside Court dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony, October 9, 1953 (Library of Virginia)*

**// FIGURE 15. Hillside Court Household Distribution**

Source: RRHA, 2018-2019



Hillside Court makes up 14% of the study area's population. Hillside is significantly younger than the overall OGHB population. Over 50% of the Hillside population is under the age of 18 and 70% of Hillside households are headed by non-elderly adults with one or more children. A notably large percentage of these Hillside households are headed by a single female parent.



*1412-1418 Bruce Street in Hillside Court. This shows the deteriorating exterior of public housing.*

Hillside Court has suffered from neglect and deterioration over the years. A 2022 HUD inspection reported poor conditions, including at least one life-threatening issue. Based on these assessments, Hillside Court is considered functionally obsolete by HUD standards, meaning that its condition, location, or other factors make it unsuitable for housing, and there is no cost-effective way to restore it.

In 2021, Citizen HKS guided residents through a community process to redesign the Hillside Playground. The first phase saw a \$600,000 renovation of the playground behind the management office at 1500 Harwood Street. Future phases will include additional features like a children's playground, walking trail, and other community amenities.

Hillside Court will be undergoing a complete redevelopment in the future. Additional engagement and planning will be conducted by Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority.



*Hillside Playground by HKS. One of a handful of resident led projects.*

# Conceptual Community Map

The vision for OGHB is to become a connected community with new development concentrated on the main corridors and at the nodes, and the residential character of the existing neighborhoods be preserved and enhanced. The conceptual community map, developed from community feedback of three alternatives, expands upon the Future Land Use map (Figure 6) to illustrate the recommended redevelopment of the corridors, internal connections, and opportunities for greenspaces.

## Housing and Development

Residents were concerned about new development in the interior of the neighborhood but supported placing new development along the main corridors of Richmond Highway and Commerce Road. Zones of potential higher density residential use are proposed along the main corridors, particularly north of Harwood Street.

Residents flagged the intersection of Maury Street and Richmond Highway, which is designated as a node in Richmond 300, as a highly underutilized space. The northwest corner of the study area of Maury Street and Commerce Road was also identified as an area that can host additional density. Mixed-use is envisioned as part of this higher density residential, moving neighborhood serving retail to the corridors, instead of being interspersed within the neighborhood itself.

Moving from Commerce Road into the core neighborhood, the current industrial warehouses are envisioned for additional middle density residential with light industrial uses, similar to Scotts Addition uses (small breweries and small scale stores and entertainment areas). This is part of the buffer area to protect the quiet residential feel of the neighborhood.

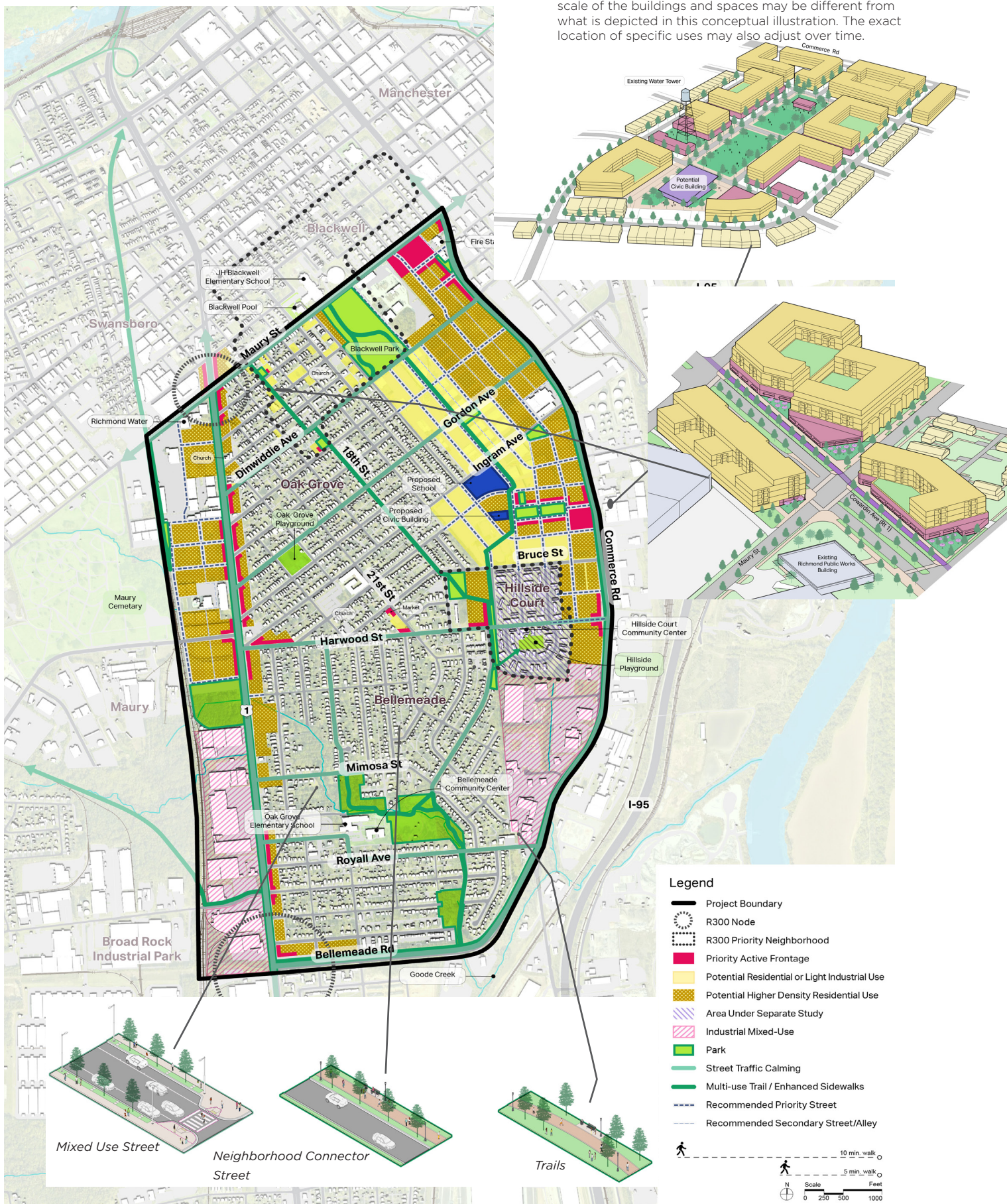
## Connectivity

Residents supported improving connections throughout the community from Blackwell to Bellemeade. A proposed network of interior multi-use paths or enhanced pedestrian walkways connects the newly renovated Blackwell Park to Bellemeade Park's gardens, fields, and outdoor learning classroom. Traffic calming measures are proposed for major interior road thoroughfares on Royall Avenue, Harwood Street, Gordon Avenue, and Dinwiddie Avenue. These streets connect Richmond Highway and Commerce Road, traversing through the neighborhood. The map shows the street grid being reconnected north of Harwood Street along Commerce Road with the redevelopment of these properties to improve the movement of people throughout the community. Additionally, these connections are important to eliminate the many dead-end streets within the community which residents have shared are often sites for trash accumulation and other nuisance issues. The plan also provides an example of how the large parcels can be redeveloped along Commerce Road for higher density, mixed-use residential with connected streets, appropriately sized blocks, commercial uses, and greenspace.

// FIGURE 16. Conceptual Massing Diagram

Source: AECOM

Note: The conceptual massing diagram illustrates the potential shape and scale of buildings and open space; however as these areas develop, the exact design and scale of the buildings and spaces may be different from what is depicted in this conceptual illustration. The exact location of specific uses may also adjust over time.



# Community Vision & Guiding Principles

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**The Vision:** The Oak Grove, Hillside, Bellemeade (OGHB) community is an attractive, safe, socially-connected, and diverse community of neighbors. The neighborhoods support growth while maintaining the quiet and peaceful character of the community where long-term residents have an opportunity to remain in their homes and benefit from neighborhood investments.

## Guiding Principles

- **Make OGHB a High-Quality Place:** The residential neighborhoods at the core of the community continue to thrive and benefit from the proximity of neighborhood-scale shops, retail, restaurants, and parks. New mixed-use developments along the Richmond Highway and Commerce Road corridors are seamlessly connected into the existing fabric of the neighborhoods. Activated public spaces and streetscapes offer activities and opportunities for social connections with neighbors. These neighborhoods, enhanced by excellent urban design, create a beautiful, safe, well-lit, and walkable community that serves the needs of all its residents.
- **Connect with Safe & Equitable Transportation:** The neighborhoods within the community are interconnected to each other and the rest of the city through a safe and walkable network of well-maintained streets, sidewalks, alleys, enhanced transit, and multi-use trails that link community members to nearby jobs, commerce, parks, and neighbors. Richmond Highway and Commerce Road are ADA-accessible, multimodal corridors with the streetscaping infrastructure needed to make travel comfortable for all modes of mobility. Traffic control and traffic calming measures are appropriately installed to protect people, promote safety, and preserve the quietness of the residential neighborhood.
- **Create Inclusive Housing Options:** The community is filled with a variety of affordable housing options, including detached single-family homes, townhouses, multifamily apartments, and condos. Mixed use, mixed income, mixed ability, and mixed density housing developments are present within the community at large, while preserving the residential feel of the existing neighborhoods. Residents are free from the pressures of involuntary displacement.
- **Stimulate a Diverse Economy:** Mixed use developments incorporating commercial businesses are focused on the multimodal Richmond Highway and Commerce Road corridors, where higher densities can be best served by transit. Both small and large businesses alike are integrated into the community, providing access to healthy foods, affordable retail, equitable medical care, entertainment, gainful employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities for all community members. Existing businesses transition to sustainable infrastructure and green technologies.
- **Nurture a Resilient and Thriving Environment:** Residents live in a clean community that promotes good health and inspires active lifestyles. The built environment is well maintained and well cared for, fostering a sense of ownership and community pride amongst neighbors. Green infrastructure and sustainable building design help manage the effects of stormwater drainage and urban heat. Community members can easily connect to nature through the parks, open space networks, playgrounds, trail systems, and beautiful landscaping.



*Residents working together at the July 2023 in person meeting.*

# High-Quality Places

**Guiding Principles:** The residential neighborhoods at the core of the community continue to thrive and benefit from the proximity of neighborhood-scale shops, retail, restaurants, and parks. New mixed-use developments along the Richmond Highway and Commerce Road corridors are seamlessly connected into the existing fabric of the neighborhoods. Activated public spaces and streetscapes offer activities and opportunities for social connections with neighbors. These neighborhoods, enhanced by excellent urban design create a beautiful, safe, well-lit, and walkable community that serves the needs of all its residents.

## 1. Public Safety and Welfare

Create a safe and clean neighborhood.

**Objective:** Implement programs to prioritize cleanliness and security in the community.

### Strategies:

- a. **Enforce convenience store property maintenance.** Residents expressed serious safety concerns around community convenience stores. Some of these stores are out of compliance with City maintenance requirements. To address concerns of safety, the City of Richmond Property Maintenance and Code Enforcement will take a closer look at convenience store properties to ensure upkeep. This can further a sense of a safe community and a more beautiful neighborhood. Richmond Police should continue to monitor and stop the practice of loitering and other unsafe practices at store locations.
- b. **Implement an anti-litter and graffiti removal campaign.** A clean community fosters ownership and pride. All development types including residential and commercial should have proper street facilities for trash and recycle disposal. Commercial and multifamily building types should have dumpster corrals. Specific steps to implement include:
  - Strategically deploy street trash cans and sharps containers in areas of high trash accumulation.
  - Set up monthly clean-up weekends that bring together all stakeholders to collect loose trash and litter.
  - Partner with James River Association to paint storm drains to bring attention to the damage litter can do to the environment.
- c. **Build a police substation on Richmond Highway.** Safety is paramount in the Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade neighborhoods. Current wait times for police are 20 minutes or longer. Retail services like grocery stores and pharmacies look at crime statistics to determine whether to locate in an area. Enhanced safety with a dedicated substation on Richmond Highway for the precinct should be a top consideration.
- d. **Install pedestrian-scale lighting.** Street lighting can improve the feeling of security after dark. Lighting can improve the quality of the streets in the neighborhood and bring connectivity among neighbors. Pedestrian-scale lighting is needed to enhance neighborhood safety. Identify areas in high need and install new streetlights. Bellemeade Park creek crossings at Overlook Street and Bob Argabright Bridge within the park should be prioritized. Lighting should be dark sky compliant.



*Oak Grove Playground newly renovated with new mulch and equipment. January 2025.*



*A resident led mural in Hillside Court. February 2023*

## 2. Zoning and Urban Design

Create a complete and beautiful community with activated major corridors that are integrated into the existing residential neighborhoods.

**Objective:** Rezone the Richmond Highway and Commerce Road corridors to accommodate mixed-use development consistent with the Richmond 300 Master Plan Future Land Use Designation and the OGHB Conceptual Map.

### Strategies:

- a. **Rezone Richmond Highway and Commerce Road.** Rezone Richmond Highway and Commerce Road (“the corridors”) to implement the Future Land Use Designation from Richmond 300 to encourage residential development and economic revitalization. Specifically, rezone the Industrial Mixed-Use areas to promote revitalization and adaptive reuse while enabling continuation of existing industrial and service uses. For the Community and Corridor Mixed-Use areas, explore zoning districts that promote a mix of uses including medium-density, walkable commercial and residential uses with an appropriate transition to the adjacent residential uses. (See Strategy 8a)
- b. **Designate Street Oriented Commercial Streets.** Identify the street frontages that should have priority street and street-oriented commercial designations to foster a walkable urban environment. This can take place during the zoning code refresh process.
- c. **Incorporate building scale transitions.** A buffer zone that transitions from higher density development on the corridors (Richmond Highway and Commerce Road) to the residential neighborhoods is included in the Conceptual Map. This area should be given special consideration during development review processes. This transition area should include screening of parking areas, compatible building heights, and appropriate exterior lighting.

**Objective:** Create a beautiful community with activated public spaces and integrated public art.

- d. **Establish a streateries ordinance.** Streatery means a private, on-street, outdoor dining establishment that occupies a portion of a parking lane. Allowing streateries in the transitional buffer zone and in new mixed-use developments will activate the urban realm and generate small, neighborhood-scale businesses to set up in the area.
- e. **Integrate public art.** Public art is a tool to transform public spaces and create tourism. Utilize expertise and funding opportunities of the Public Art Commission and with the direction of the community, to execute a greater amount of permanent art installations within OGHB.



*Bellemeade Rain Garden in full summer splendor. Rain gardens divert rain runoff to use to water plants or collect in barrels.*



*New trees, new fence, a clear sidewalk, and signs promoting good driving behavior. These are just some interventions that are possible to improve the quality of life. January 2025*



*A beloved sculpture in Bellemeade Park, the Bike Sculpture used real bikes and bike parts in its construction.*

# Equitable Transportation

**Guiding Principles:** The neighborhoods within the community are interconnected to each other and the rest of the city through a safe and walkable network of well-maintained streets, sidewalks, alleys, enhanced transit, and a braided network of trails. These amenities link community members to nearby jobs, commerce, parks, and neighbors. Richmond Highway and Commerce Road are ADA-accessible, multimodal corridors with the streetscaping infrastructure needed to make travel comfortable for all modes of mobility. Traffic control and traffic calming measures are appropriately installed to protect life, promote safety, and preserve the quietness of the residential neighborhood.

## 3. Non-Car Network

Enhance walking, biking, and transit infrastructure to provide safe universal access for all users.

**Objective:** Expand transit service within and around the community and provide amenities for transit riders.

### Strategies:

- a. **Increase GRTC Route 87 transit service.** Route 87 serves the Bellemeade and Hopkins neighborhoods, taking people from Southside Plaza and ending at the Transfer Station downtown. The route makes two stops within the Bellemeade neighborhood. Currently the route has 60-minute headways. Route 87 should work toward 30-minute headways or less.
- b. **Install transit infrastructure.** Both Richmond Highway and Commerce Road are identified as Major Mixed-Use Streets in the Richmond 300 Master Plan. Additionally, Richmond Highway (Route 1) is identified as an Enhanced Transit route. Bus shelters, benches, trash cans, bike racks, and pedestrian-scale lighting should be installed to improve safety and accessibility for existing riders and attract new riders. High demand stops within the neighborhoods, on Richmond Highway, and Commerce Road should be prioritized for protected bus shelters.
- Objective:** Improve the pedestrian experience throughout the community by improving sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and streetscapes for all ages and abilities.
- c. **Build sidewalks.** Address gaps in the sidewalk infrastructure within the neighborhoods. Residents specifically called out 21st Street, Mason Street, Overlook Street, and Mimosa Street for sidewalks, and extensions are needed on Gordon Avenue from 15th Street to Commerce Road. In the Bellemeade neighborhood, follow the Bellemeade Walkable Watershed (Appendix E) Priority Routes for sidewalk improvements. Mason Street, 21st Street, Overlook Street, Lynhaven Avenue, and parts of Keswick Avenue, Mimosa Street, and Harwood Street make up the Priority Routes in the Walkable Watershed plan.
- d. **Enforce development project requirements.** Require developers to construct sidewalks as a part of development projects per the Better Streets Manual. Provide for a clear width travel way, a building frontage zone, and a furniture or buffer zone.
- e. **Install pedestrian infrastructure.** Installing pedestrian infrastructure provides additional access by foot, improves safety and pedestrian visibility, and connects the neighborhoods. Infrastructure includes warning signs with flashing beacons, pedestrian hybrid beacons, raised crosswalks,

traffic control signals, curb extensions, and other proven measures in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program. Prioritize pedestrian infrastructure improvements on high traffic volume roads within the neighborhoods. See Strategy 6(a) for additional locations for pedestrian infrastructure.

**Objective:** Preserve the character of the residential streets through the installation of traffic control and traffic calming measures as appropriate.

- f. **Complete a streets circulation plan.** Street conversions have been done on a piecemeal basis for several years. A comprehensive, complete streets circulation plan should be studied for OGHB that addresses two-way street conversions and determine to locations needed for traffic calming infrastructures.
- g. **Develop a street typology and streetscape designs.** The Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade neighborhood is a traditional neighborhood design bordered by two high traffic roads. Establishing street typologies will capture which streets will be dedicated to bike sharing, enhanced transit streets, greenways, Safe Route to School streets, and other street typologies in the works. For streets in the Bellemeade neighborhood, the Green Streets typology and designation from the Bellemeade Walkable Watershed plan (Appendix E) should be followed.

**Objective:** Develop a braided network of greenways to connect to the Fall Line and James River Branch Trails.

- h. **Plan for connections to the Fall Line Trail and the James River Branch Trail.** New developments should plan to build pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Fall Line Trail and the James River Branch Trail.
- i. **Establish greenways throughout the community.** Throughout the engagement process, residents expressed a need for additional green space. This plan recommends connecting different parts of the neighborhood through a braided network or dedicated pedestrian pathways that pass through the various

activity areas within the neighborhood (new development, parks, playgrounds). The network should provide access to the Fall Line Trail and James River Branch Trail where feasible. The Conceptual Map shows a possible route for a network.

## 4. Great Streets

Transform the major corridors into Great Streets.

**Objective:** Reshape Richmond Highway and Commerce Road to be beautiful, ADA-accessible, multimodal corridors with the streetscaping infrastructure needed to make travel comfortable for all modes of mobility.

### Strategies:

- a. **Implement a road paving schedule.** Richmond Highway has been the subject of conversation at many community engagement sessions, most notably for the poor condition. Due to the high volume of traffic, and the type of traffic given the nearby industrial facilities, a paving schedule for highly traveled roads including Richmond Highway, Commerce Road, Harwood Street, and Royall Avenue should be implemented to improve road conditions. The curb reveal on Richmond Highway should be adjusted to a minimum of six inches, and the curb and gutter should be re-exposed to improve stormwater containment (see Strategy 11e). This work should be completed through an adjusted roadway pavement milling and paving program, with 'cool pavement' technology explored as an option.
- b. **Develop a street improvement plan.** Develop of street improvement plan that can be implemented in phases as funding is secured and as development occurs along the corridors. Such plan should consider lane configuration, traffic control, beautification features, multimodal facilities, burying of utilities, aesthetics, and infrastructure resilience.

## 5. Implement Vision Zero

**Objective:** Reduce all traffic-related deaths and serious injuries to zero by implementing the Vision Zero Action Plan in the Community.

**Strategies:**

- a. **Employ systemic safety treatments.** Safety treatments are proven safety measures to reduce the potential and severity of crashes on the high injury network and at locations showing higher crash frequencies. See Strategy 3(e) for pedestrian safety treatment types. Specific locations include:
  - Richmond Highway
  - Maury Street
  - Intersection of Richmond Highway, Harwood Street / Hopkins Road
  - Commerce Road (Fall Line Trail)
  - Intersection of Richmond Highway and Maury Street
- b. **Enhance intersection visibility.** Evaluate intersection sight distance where severe crashes occur to improve safety for people that walk, roll, bike, and drive. The City will employ best practices to reduce the potential for fatal and severe pedestrian collisions that occur at night. To enhance visibility at intersections, parking corner clearances and curb extensions are all techniques to improve safety.

## 6. Streets and Connection

Expand the street grid and incorporate bicycle and pedestrian connections.

**Objective:** Strengthen the street network by seamlessly integrating new development into the existing fabric of the neighborhoods through the expansion of the gridded street network and the creation of walkable blocks and narrow streets.

**Strategies:**

- a. **Connect to the existing street grid.** New development should reintroduce the street grid and connect to the existing street grid where possible.
- b. **Establish alleys.** New development should be served by new or existing alleys. New alleys should support alley-facing housing and businesses where appropriate and where aesthetically feasible, preferably close to or within the transitional buffer zones (see Conceptual Map). Alleys should accommodate pedestrians and bikes in addition to vehicles.
- c. **Eliminate superblocks.** Eliminating superblocks like those found in Hillside Court will enhance the pedestrian experience and recreate the neighborhood street grid. Maintaining the block structure as new development occurs keeps the neighborhoods consistent with their historic development pattern.



*GRTC Route 87 stop at Minefee and Gunn Streets. This is the only stop within the OGHB neighborhood, and takes riders to the downtown transfer plaza. Stops such as this one are ripe for a bench and covered shelter.*



*Intersection improvements at Lynhaven and Royall Avenues. The curb bumpouts slow drivers and add a small space for vegetation.*



*Bellemeade Bike Shop with eager young riders during the We Are Richmond event, May 2023*

# Diverse Economy

**Guiding Principles:** Mixed-use developments incorporating commercial businesses are focused on the multimodal Richmond Highway and Commerce Road corridors, where higher densities can be best served by transit. Both small and large businesses alike are integrated into the community, providing access to healthy foods, affordable retail, equitable medical care, entertainment, gainful employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities for all community members. Existing businesses successfully transition to sustainable infrastructure and green technologies.

## 7. Neighborhood Retail and Services

Provide OGHB residents with neighborhood serving retail and services within their community.

**Objective:** Facilitate development to provide OGHB residents with nearby access to healthy, affordable food options, pharmacies, restaurants, banks, and other local-serving retail, services, and amenities.

### Strategies:

- a. **Enhance local economic development incentives.** Review City of Richmond's existing economic development incentives, including tax abatements, rebates, and loan programs to determine which are effective and which may need to be revisited. Look at opportunities to incentivize both new retail development and residential development, to encourage the type of denser residential development that national retailers are targeting near their stores. Target incentives to both developers of retail space, and the retailers themselves for maximum effectiveness. Consider offering incentives that provide up-front costs versus rebates and other incentives that require the investor to apply for reimbursement. Offer incentives specifically tailored to "site readiness," including on-site infrastructure improvements, waiving tap fees and permit fees, and improving site access.
- b. **Establish regional and public-private partnerships to offer incentives.** Work with the surrounding counties, including Henrico and Chesterfield, to put together complementary incentives that encourage competition while considering broader regional benefits. Partner with local organizations like Venture Richmond and others to consider incentives for new tenant upfits for retail spaces, assistance with closing costs, waiving permit fees, and other up-front financial assistance to encourage businesses to locate in areas targeted for additional retail development.
- c. **Promote entrepreneurship.** Partner with Richmond DED and OMDB, local community colleges/workforce development centers, business incubators, and other business development organizations, including Capitol Region Small Business Development Center and Virginia Career Works, and interested OGHB residents to explore opportunities for residents to start their own local-serving businesses. Utilize the Hull Street and Broad Rock Libraries as incubator spaces, to hold classes and group workshops.
- d. **Provide workforce training.** Partner with the Richmond Public Schools, community-based organizations, community colleges, trade businesses, and other regional non-profits to provide workforce training, apprenticeships, professional development to residents seeking exposure to career pathways, certifications/licensure and other employment.

## 8. Transit-Oriented Development

Encourage development near multimodal infrastructure.

**Objective:** Cluster mixed-use developments near multimodal corridors that are higher in density and served by frequent transit serve households without vehicle access, create a sense of place, and provide a mix of housing, retail, jobs, and dining opportunities.

### Strategies:

- a. **Implement TOD zoning on Richmond Highway and Commerce Road.** Use TOD zoning, economic development incentives, policy tools (e.g., density bonuses in exchange for including below-market-rate housing units) and infrastructure improvements that create “shovel-ready” sites that can support dense housing, retail, dining, entertainment, and other commercial and office/medical office space.
- b. **Assemble and market public properties for redevelopment.** Collaborate with the Department of Economic Development to assemble publicly owned properties for redevelopment near Richmond 300 nodes in the OGHB study area and along Richmond Highway and Commerce Road to package and market those properties to the development community. Properties should be shovel ready. See Goal 7 for additional strategies to market properties for development.



*LaDIFF on Commerce Road hosted the final community draft plan event in January 2025.*



*Kings Supermarket, September 2022. Kings Supermarket burned down in February 2023 and is planning to reopen in the fall of 2025.*

# Inclusive Housing

**Guiding Principles:** The community is filled with a variety of affordable housing options, including detached single-family homes, townhouses, multifamily apartments, and condos. Mixed-use, mixed-income, mixed-ability, and mixed-density housing developments are present within the community at large, while preserving the residential feel of the existing neighborhoods. Residents are free from the pressures of involuntary displacement.

## 9. Displacement Prevention

Prevent involuntary displacement of residents.

**Objective:** Provide residents the opportunity to continue to live in their homes and benefit from the growth and improvements in the community. There are many policies at the local and state level that can prevent direct and indirect displacement of OGHB residents and ease the housing crisis for all. Several policies named in this section will need to be authorized by the state government for Richmond to enact. Other policies the City does have authority to use. All policies should be used together to ease the cost of housing and prevent residents from being priced out of their neighborhood.

### Strategies:

- a. **Establish a long-term owner occupancy program (LOOP).**  
LOOP is aimed at reducing real estate taxes for long-term residents experiencing recent hikes to their property tax bill. LOOP is aimed at long-term residents regardless of age, background, or ability status. This program would need to be authorized by the General Assembly.
- b. **Expand real property tax exemption.** The City of Richmond currently provides real estate tax relief to those that are elderly or disabled. Expanding this to low-income homeowners without placing a specific amount of time on their tenure in the neighborhood is another tool to prevent involuntary displacement. This program would need to be authorized by the

**Definition of Displacement:** Displacement occurs when residents are involuntarily relocated from their homes and neighborhoods. There are three types of displacement:

Direct displacement occurs when residents are forced out of their homes and neighborhoods, usually due to evictions, property repossession, unsafe building conditions/ property neglect by the landlord, building demolition, and eminent domain actions.

Indirect displacement generally occurs when residents are unable to afford to remain in their neighborhood due to rising rents and increased property taxes.

Cultural displacement occurs when new residents, new businesses, and new developments change the character of a neighborhood in ways that do not resonate with the legacy residents.

Gentrification, which can be described as the racial, ethnic, class, economic, cultural, and/ or social reclassification of a neighborhood through an influx of more affluent residents and businesses, can often lead to displacement. Gentrification can result in greater neighborhood investment, improved schools, access to more businesses and grocery stores, improvements in the built environment, increased real estate value and taxes, reductions in crime, and rising rents as the area becomes more desirable. When counterbalancing policies and programs are implemented alongside neighborhood improvements displacement can be reduced and even prevented.

General Assembly for low-income owners to be eligible.

- c. **Fund the Healthy Homes Program.** The City of Richmond's Department of Housing and Community Development currently administers the "Healthy Homes Program" which is dedicated to fostering safer, healthier, and more sustainable living environments for our residents. Funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this program is committed to addressing the critical need for improving housing conditions, reducing health disparities, and enhancing the overall well-being of our community. To fulfill this objective, the program offers a 5-year affordable housing grant assistance covering up to \$35,000 for essential home repairs and improvements. After the fifth year, the grant falls off the homeowner's obligations. Homeowners are not required to repay the grant unless they sell or move out of the home within the 5-year period. This ensures that every homeowner, regardless of financial constraints, can address critical housing needs without undue burden. To date, the funds available for the program are fully subscribed and no new funding sources have been identified. To meet the continued needs of its residents the City should pursue additional funding for this program, including direct City allocations and grant funding.



*One and a half story homes like these on Lynnhaven Avenue are the type of homes that make the OGHB a desirable neighborhood for first time homebuyers. February 2023.*



*Joplin Avenue's post-war bungalows are characteristic of the larger OGHB neighborhood. February 2023.*

## 10. Diverse Housing

Encourage diverse housing options within the community. Develop mixed-income, mixed-use, mixed-density housing appropriately throughout the community.

**Objective:** Stimulate the development of vacant and underutilized for residential developments to include affordable dwelling units.

### Strategies:

- a. **Explore land banking strategies.** Evaluate all properties that have an appealing Development Potential Ratio (DPR). The Development Potential Ratio is the ratio of improvement value to land value. Those properties that have a ratio of less than 1.0 are particularly attractive for redevelopment because the land is worth more than any improvements on the property and as such this ratio identifies areas that may see redevelopment soon by the private market. Land banking vacant and tax delinquent properties with an attractive DPR preserves land for affordable home building by incremental developers and local firms such as Project: HOMES and Better Housing Coalition. Land banking should target land within the core neighborhoods of Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade.
- b. **Establish a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Community Development Enterprise (CDE), or similar entity of the City which would allow the City to acquire properties that are ripe for redevelopment.** a. Certain Federal and State grant funds, otherwise inaccessible to the City, may be available to be used and leveraged for acquisition through such an entity. Using a CDFI, CDE, or similar entity would allow the City to acquire and bank land before the private market begins pursuing it and thus allow the City to purchase land before it becomes too costly to do so. Land banked through this entity can include City owned property and can be utilized for more types of housing such as apartments and condos. A successful example of this can be seen in the Housing

Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County and the Non-Profit Preservation Fund. This strategy should target land along the major corridors and neighborhood buffer zones.

- c. **Implement a vacant land tax.** This policy would discourage entities from holding land vacant and waiting to sell until its value rises. This would also produce additional revenue for the City which could be used to support affordable housing programs or used to fund the Healthy Homes Program (Strategy 9(d)). The Commonwealth of Virginia would have to authorize the City to levy this type of tax.
- d. **Implement a blighted and derelict land tax.** This policy would penalize entities for failing to maintain their property and provided the City with additional revenue that could be used to support affordable housing programs. With a Fiscal Stress score of 103.29 in 2020, the City of Richmond is considered a qualifying locality to levy a tax on the property at a rate different than that levied on other real property.
- e. **Develop pre-designed infill housing.** Pre-designed housing plans reduce cost, improve housing choices, decrease permit wait times, preserve a sense of place, and increase housing units and affordability. Housing plans should be compatible with the existing neighborhood character, as shown in the visual preference survey on page 53 of this plan.
- f. **Redevelop Hillside Court.** The redevelopment of Hillside Court will occur in the future. A future Hillside should be a mixed-use, mixed-income community with streets connecting to the surrounding OGHB neighborhood. A phased, build-first approach should be utilized to prevent resident displacement.

**Objective:** Increase the number of high quality affordable dwelling units in the community and preserve the existing affordable housing stock.

### Strategies:

- g. **Utilize RRHA's project-based voucher program.**

Project-based Voucher (PBV) units should be utilized during the redevelopment of Hillside Court. Additional PBV replacement units can be used off site on land owned by RRHA and the City of Richmond. These PBV apartments are deeply affordable units where residents will pay no more than 30% of their income.

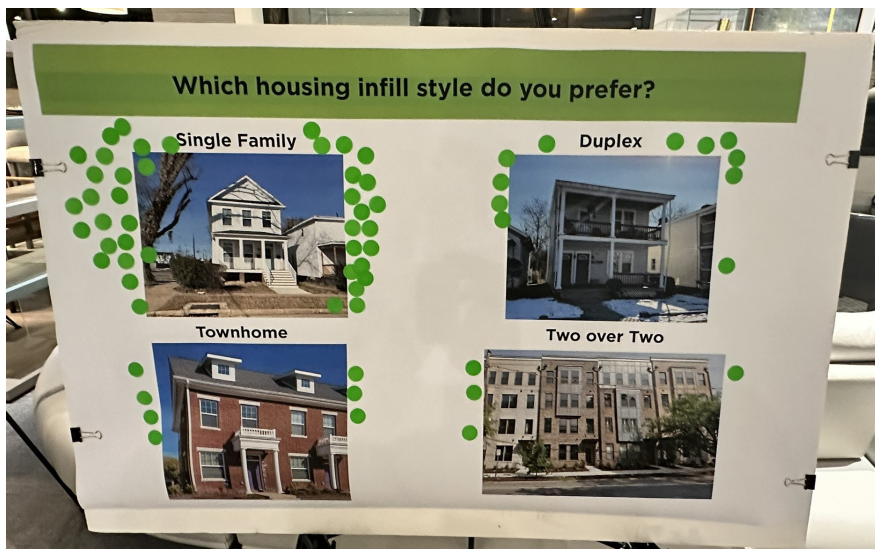
- h. **Explore real estate tax abatement.** These programs ease the tax burden of the increased property value across a set number of years. This is tied to the existing building value prior to a rehabilitation project or renovation and keeps costs down for long-term owners.
- i. **Establish a Rental Inspection Program.** Inspecting rental units prevents residents from living in poor conditions that are detrimental to health and safety. An inspection program to determine the habitability of a dwelling unit prevents the permanent loss of units due to dilapidation and neglect, and requires owners to take corrective action or risk fines.

**Objective:** Expand homeownership opportunities in the community.

**Strategies:**

- j. **Offer financial assistance to low-income and moderate-income home buyers.** Saving for down payment assistance and covering closing costs can be a considerable barrier to homeownership. Several programs exist to offer assistance to cover those costs. Working with state and local agencies and community organizations to promote those programs, residents will be informed and have an opportunity to participate in cost assistance grants.
- k. **Utilize the Housing Choice Voucher Program for Homeownership.** RRHA has authority for approximately 4,000 vouchers. Many current and future voucher residents have an interest in becoming homeowners with the assistance of their HCV. RRHA is working on launching the HCV Homeownership Program to allow voucher participants who have been renting for one year in the City to use their vouchers for homeownership. Through the HCV Homeownership Program,

qualified residents will be able to go from renter to homeowner by working through the program. Once a home is purchased, thirty percent of the residents' income will go towards their mortgage payment while the RRHA voucher subsidy would cover the rest of the mortgage.



*The visual preference survey was taken at the final draft plan event on January 30th, 2025. Residents overwhelmingly prefer single family homes for infill in the neighborhood.*



*Single family homes with front porches on Joplin Avenue sit across from the former Oak Grove School site. This style of home is reflective of the neighborhoods preference of single family infill in the neighborhood.*

# Thriving Environment

**Guiding Principles:** Residents live in a clean community that promotes good health and inspires active lifestyles. The built environment is well maintained and well cared for, fostering a sense of ownership and community pride amongst neighbors. Green infrastructure and sustainable building design help manage the effects of stormwater drainage and urban heat. Community members can easily connect to nature through the parks, open space networks, playgrounds, trail systems, and beautiful landscaping.

## 11. Clean Air and Water

Limit the effects of the built environment on the natural environment.

**Objective:** Incorporate green infrastructure and sustainable building design to reduce impacts on urban heat, air, and water quality, improve energy efficiency and promote energy saving techniques in the built environment.

### Strategies:

a. **Identify opportunities to implement renewable energy.**

Making existing structures more sustainable, encouraging renewable energy and sustainable design in new residential and commercial development, and expanding opportunities for residents to invest in community green energy programs (ex: community solar, sub-metered future developments) will alleviate the energy burden.

b. **Install air quality sensors.** Work with the City's Office of Sustainability, local entities, and regional academic institutions to install air quality sensors in the OGHB neighborhood to measure toxins in the air. These sensors should be connected to existing real time air quality maps.

c. **Evaluate the total effect of new development on public**

**utilities.** Reduce negative and harmful impacts of development on natural resources by promoting sustainable design guidelines such as the use of green roofs and light-colored roofs to reduce heat while developing site plans. Implement flood management street design such as curb cuts, stormwater planters and rain barrels, pervious surfaces, cool pavement material, and other environmental design elements to reduce urban heat and prevent localized street flooding.

d. **Apply sustainable design standards.** Sustainable design maximizes building performance and reduces negative impacts on residents and the environment. According to the Department of Energy, sustainable design principles aim to optimize site potential, minimize non-renewable energy consumption and waste, use environmentally preferable products, protect and conserve water, improve air quality, enhance operational and maintenance practices, and create healthy and productive environments. The City's Sustainable Design Standards will apply to new construction and major renovations of all City-owned buildings.

**Objective:** Address drainage issues in the community and increase stormwater infrastructure throughout the community.



*Bellemeade Park Community Garden is both a teaching garden and a place for community members to pick food.*

### Strategies:

- e. **Improve and maintain existing drainage along Richmond Highway.** During heavy rainfall, the outermost travel lanes in both directions of Richmond Highway flood due to insufficient curb reveal. This poses numerous safety, comfort, and usability issues for all users of the street. The current curb reveal on Richmond Highway is one to two inches, and the standard is a minimum of six inches to effectively control and contain stormwater. Over the years, repetitive roadway resurfacing has reduced the curb reveal, leading to a lack of proper containment of stormwater, contributing to flooding conditions. The curb and gutter should be re-exposed to restore the proper curb reveal and improve stormwater containment. This should be done in coordination with a roadway pavement milling and paving program (Strategy 5a).
- f. **Study drainage issues.** Standing water along streets within the OGHB community is an ongoing challenge for residents. Funding to correct drainage issues was provided for Wright Avenue, and additional funding will be necessary in the coming years to correct drainage issues in the wider community. The Department of Public Works should fund a study to investigate standing water in the right of way and make recommendations to correct these issues in coordination with the Department of Public Utilities. A study is a critical first step to fund new correction projects.
- g. **Fund CIP and Maintenance Drainage Correction Projects.** All standing water issues without stormwater infrastructure (ie: ditches, inlets, catch basins) are handled through DPW's roadway maintenance program. The OGHB neighborhoods have very limited stormwater infrastructure connections. When a drainage study has been completed through DPW, recommendations for remediation will be made to DPU to correct issues, which will likely include permeable pavers or curb and gutter installation depending on the location. Funding the drainage study recommendations and continuing

to fund DPW's roadway maintenance budget to address water corrections is a critical step to addressing drainage.

## 12. Healthy People

All residents have equitable access to nature and an environment that promotes health and wellness.

**Objective:** Increase the community's access to quality open space and opportunities for physical activity.

### Strategies:

- a. **Create and promote physical health programming for all ages.** During public engagement, residents expressed a desire for physical health programs for all ages. The Bellemeade Community Center primarily serves OGBES children after school and is limited in their capacity and space to provide adult physical health programs. Adult recreational sport leagues and physical exercise can serve as a stress reliever. Overall, physical activity can increase general health and reduce health risk for heart disease. Team play also presents opportunities to build mentorship between generations and bring leadership skills to young athletes.
- b. **Establish a resilience hub.** Community centers are an example of a location where residents could go during emergencies, extreme weather events, or anytime of the year to access resources to promote climate resilience. In a healthy and thriving community, community center hubs can also provide personal resilience in the form of healing and wellness centers to focus on personal growth.
- c. **Implement Phase Two of the Bellemeade Green Streets project.** Developed in 2019, the Bellemeade Green Streets project identified Minefee Street for receiving bike/pedestrian improvements. Phase two of the plan is to install a bike lane on the western side of Minefee Street, extending from Harwood Street to Bellemeade Park to connect the Park and Hillside Court.

**Objective:** Expand access to healthy food.

- d. **Attract healthy food retailers.** Attracting food retailers means increasing residential density and providing financial and technical support for retailer creation, expansion, remodeling, or equipment upgrades (See Diverse Economy Strategies).
- e. **Encourage community gardening & individuals growing their own food.** Support existing community gardens and promote neighborhood grown agriculture. Amend the zoning ordinance to allow for the sale of produce at community gardens.

### 13. Resilient Communities

**Objective:** Support a flourishing ecosystem to positively adapt to climate change.

**Strategies:**

- a. **Plant native species.** Healthy ecosystems filter air and water, recycle nutrients to provide healthy soil, and regulate climate. Planting native species reduces cost and maintenance and increases biodiversity. Coordinate with local non-profits to host community planting days that can increase the urban tree canopy and the overall plant ecosystem by identifying spaces for new plantings and further strengthen community relationships while strengthening ecosystems.
- b. **Identify areas that lack street trees and plant new trees.** Trees sequester carbon, provide shade, and assist in stormwater uptake. When servicing trees in the neighborhood, sensitivity should be given to large, established trees that contribute to the canopy. Pruning should be the priority to maintain a separation between trees and power lines. New trees should replace existing trees that are removed or taken out by natural events.



*Charlie Sydnor Playground sits across from Blackwell School on Maury Avenue. It hosts ballfields and a small playground.*



*Young bike riders enjoy the shade and refreshments at the May 2023 We Are Richmond Event.*



*Graphic Recorder Jim Nuttle in the garden speaking to community stakeholders, April 2024*

# Implementation Matrix

The implementation matrix builds on the strategies to define lead agencies, partners, metrics for determining success and general timeframes and cost estimates to complete a strategy. The matrix aims to assist City agencies with budget planning and project timelines. The metrics will be tracked in comparison to the date found in the Insights Report.

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
<b>HIGH QUALITY PLACES</b>						
1a	Enforce convenience store property maintenance	PDR- PMCE	Police	Short	n/a	# of zoning and code enforcement violations
1b	Implement anti-litter and graffiti campaign	Clean City Commission/ DPW	VACV, FOBP, civic associations, community members, JRA, PMCE	Short	\$	# of buildings with graffiti removal
1c	Build a police substation on Richmond Highway	CIP	Police, Budget	Medium	\$\$	Average police response times
1d	Install smart cities pedestrian scale lighting	DPW		Medium	\$\$	# of new pedestrian-scale streetlights installed
2a	Rezone Richmond Highway and Commerce Road	PDR		Short	n/a	# of new developments on the corridors

## **Timeframe:**

Short - 2- 4 years

Medium - 5- 7 years

Long - 8+ years

## **Cost Estimate:**

\$ - Less than \$1 Million

\$\$ - \$1-5 Million

\$\$\$ - Greater than \$5 Million

**Unknown** - The cost is unknown and depends on the type of work.

\* - Will have a cost to the City; the cost would be offset or worked out in the Budget process.

**n/a** - Not applicable; no cost or included in staff time.

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
2b	Designate Street Oriented Commercial streets	PDR		Short	n/a	# of commercial developments on the corridors
2c	Incorporate building scale transitions	PDR		Medium	n/a	
2d	Establish a streateries ordinance	PDR		Short	n/a	
2e	Integrate Public Art	PDR - PAC		Short	Unknown	# of permanent art installations
<b>EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION</b>						
3a	Improve GRTC Route 87 transit service	GRTC		Medium	\$\$	Frequency of GRTC Route 87
3b	Install transit infrastructure	GRTC	DPW	Medium	\$\$	Percentage of bus stops with a shelter or bench
3c	Build sidewalks	DPW		Medium	\$\$\$	Miles of sidewalk
3d	Enforce development project requirements	PDR-Zoning		Short	n/a	
3e	Install pedestrian infrastructure	DPW		Medium	\$\$\$	# of pedestrian-involved transportation crashes
3f	Complete a streets circulation plan	DPW	PDR	Long	\$\$	
3g	Develop a street typology and streetscape designs	DPW	PDR	Medium	\$\$	
3h	Plan for connections to the Fall Line Trail and the James River Branch Trail	PDR-Zoning		Long	n/a	
3i	Establish greenways throughout the community	DPW	PDR	Long	\$\$	# of linear miles of greenway established

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
4a	Implement a road paving schedule	DPW		Medium	\$\$\$	% of streets with a roadway rating of Good and Above
5a	Employ systemic safety treatments	DPW		Medium	\$\$\$	# of deaths & severe injury due to transportation crashes
5b	Enhance intersection visibility	DPW		Medium	\$\$	
6a	Connect to the existing street grid	PDR	DPW - ROW	Long	n/a	
6b	Establish alleys	DPW		Long	\$\$	
6c	Eliminate superblocks	PDR	DPW, RRHA	Long	n/a	
<b>DIVERSE ECONOMY</b>						
7a	Enhance local and economic development incentives*	DED	CAO, Finance	Long	*will have a cost to the City	# of businesses within the study area
7b	Establish regional and public private partnerships to offer incentives *	DED	CAO, Finance	Long	* Will have a cost to the City	
7c	Promote entrepreneurship	OCWB		Medium	\$	
7d	Provide workforce training	OCWB		Medium	\$	
8a	Implement TOD Zoning on Richmond Highway and Commerce Road	PDR		Short	n/a	Means of transportation to work for workers
8b	Assemble and market public properties for redevelopment	DED	DCAO	Short	\$\$	

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
<b>INCLUSIVE HOUSING</b>						
9a	Establish a Long Term Owner Occupancy program *	CAO	Budget	Short	* Will have a cost to the City	
9b	Expand real property tax exemption *	CAO	Finance	Short	* Will have a cost to the City	
9c	Fund the Healthy Homes Program	HCD	Finance, Budget	Medium	\$\$\$	# of homes awarded funds
10a	Explore land banking strategies	HCD	MWCLT	Short	n/a	
10b	Establish a CDFI or CDE	Finance	DCAO, DED, HCD	Short	n/a	
10c	Implement a vacant land tax	Finance	HCD	Short	n/a	
10d	Implement a blighted and derelict land tax	Finance	HCD, DCAO, DED	Short	n/a	# of blighted and derelict properties
10e	Develop pre-designed infill housing	PDR- Zoning, Building	Hired contractor	Medium	\$\$	# of infill housing units constructed
10f	Redevelop Hillside Court	RRHA		Long	\$\$\$	Ratio of number of replacement units to demolished units
10g	Utilize RRHA's project-based voucher program	RRHA		Long	Unknown	# of PBV units
10h	Explore real estate tax abatement	Finance		Short	\$\$	
10i	Establish a Rental Inspection Program	PDR - PMCE		Short	\$\$\$	# of rental units inspected

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
10j	Offer financial assistance to low income and moderate-income home buyers	Finance	HCD, Cap Center, other community entities	Short	\$\$	# of homeowners
10k	Utilize the Housing Choice Voucher Program	RRHA		Long	Unknown	# of HCV participants using their voucher for home ownership
<b>THRIVING ENVIRONMENT</b>						
11a	Identify opportunities to implement renewable energy	OOS		Short	n/a	
11b	Install air quality sensors	OOS		Short	\$	# of air quality sensors installed
11c	Evaluate the total effect of new development on public utilities	OOS	DPW, DPU, PDR	Long	n/a	
11d	Apply sustainable design standards	OOS	PDR		n/a	
11e	Improve and maintain existing drainage along Richmond Highway	DPW	DPU	Short	\$\$	Frequency of roadway flooding
11f	Study drainage issues	DPU	DPW	Medium	\$\$\$	
11g	Fund CIP and maintenance drainage correction projects	DPW, DPU		Long	\$\$\$	# of drainage related 311 calls
12a	Create and promote physical health programming for all ages	Parks		Medium	\$\$\$	# of participants in programming
12b	Establish a resilience hub	OOS		Long	\$\$\$	

Strategy	Item	Lead	Partner	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Applicable Metrics
12c	Implement Phase Two of the Bellemeade Green Streets Project	DPW	JRA	Short	\$	
12d	Attract healthy food retailers	DED	DCAO, CAO, Finance, OOS	Long		# of healthy food retailers
13a	Plant native species	DPW	Parks	Short	\$\$	
13b	Plant trees	Parks	Southside Releaf, Reforest Richmond, FOBP, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, JRA	Short	\$\$	Tree canopy coverage percentage Heat Vulnerability



# Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

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**ADA-accessibility:** The ability for people with disabilities to have the same access to program, services, and areas as people without disabilities.

**Affordable Housing:** Housing is considered affordable if a family pays no more than 30% of its household income on housing-related costs.

**Anchor Tenants /Anchor Institutions:** Businesses and organizations firmly established within a neighborhood that have regional significance and serve as economic and cultural drivers.

**Area Median Income (AMI):** Area Median Income is the midpoint of a region's household income distribution — half of families earn more than the median and half earn less than the median. AMI is calculated using the entire metro region. For the Richmond MSA, this includes the surrounding counties and Tri-cities.

**Carbon sequestration:** The process of removing carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) from the air.

**CDBG:** HUD's Community Development Block Grant program providing communities with resources to address a wide range of needs and priorities relating to housing and economic opportunity.

**Climate Resilience:** The ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to difficulties and challenges that are caused by a changing climate.

**Dark Sky Compliant:** Certification by the International Dark-Sky Association, which provides outdoor lighting design guidelines for reducing light pollution and glare.

**Development Potential Ratio:** The ratio of the improvement value of a property to the land value of the property.

**Displacement:** can be indirect or direct and is the involuntary relocation of residents from their homes and neighborhoods often brought on by gentrifying effects.

**Displacement, Involuntary:** when residents are unable to afford to remain in their neighborhoods due to rising rents and increased property taxes and those who are moving into a neighborhood differ from those moving out and/or residents leave due to changing neighborhood composition.

**Displacement Prevention:** Policies that enable residents to stay in their homes and continue living in their neighborhoods, despite economic/cultural changes out of one's control.

**Displacement Risk Ratio (DRR):** A measure of how likely a person in a specific area is to experience involuntary displacement due to market pressures. DRR is calculated by taking a ratio between median sales prices over time and the income of a long-term resident at a fixed point in time (2010) and annually adjusted using the Consumer Price Index.

**Enhanced Transit:** Transit service with higher frequency (ideally a bus arriving every 10 minutes) and longer hours of operation.

**Food desert:** An area that has limited access to affordable and nutritious food from grocery stores or vegetable shops.

**Green infrastructure:** A variety of improvements in the built environment that help improve the conditions of the natural environment. Green infrastructure includes street trees, bioswales, rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, and many other green building features.

**HCV:** Housing Choice Voucher is commonly known as a Section 8 voucher. With a HCV, the participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects.

**Healthy Homes Program:** A grant program that help homeowners assess the current condition of their homes and then perform moderate repairs to improve the sustainability, health, and affordability of their home.

**Heat vulnerability:** A measure of how likely a person in a specific location is to be injured or harmed during periods of hot weather.

**Individual Development Account (IDA):** A special savings account that helps low-income individuals and families save for specific goals over a set period, such as for education, the purchase of a home, or to start a business.

**Infill development:** The construction of buildings on vacant or underutilized land within an existing urban area that is already mostly developed. Infill development can occur on a single vacant lot in a residential neighborhood, or on a large tract of land that is surrounded by other buildings.

**Justice40 Initiative:** a federal policy mandating that federal agencies dedicate 40% of investments to disadvantaged communities that are actively experiencing negative environmentally-related impacts.

**LEED:** Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (a green building and neighborhood certification program).

**LOOP:** Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP) is a tax relief program aimed at reducing real estate taxes for long-term residents experiencing recent hikes to their tax bill.

**Low Income:** Households with income between 30% and 60% of AMI.

**Market-Rate Housing:** Housing units unrestricted by income.

**Multi-use trails:** A single track or natural surface trail that is open to one or more user groups, including walkers, joggers, hikers, bicyclists, rollerbladers, skateboarders, wheelchair users, people pushing strollers, and other users that are not using a vehicle for transportation.

**PBV:** Project-Based Voucher units are part of the Housing Choice Voucher program, also known as Section 8. PBVs are tied to a unit.

**Pervious surfaces:** Areas of the ground where rainwater can seep into the soil and be absorbed, thus reducing rainwater runoff, localized flooding, and stormwater infrastructure needs.

**Priority street:** A type of street designated on the official zoning map that prohibits new driveways/entrances and ground level parking along the frontage to improve the pedestrian experience.

**Public Art:** Art that is created through a public process, located within the public realm, and meant to be enjoyed by the public.

**Public Housing:** Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Rent is 30% of income. All existing units at Hillside Court are public housing.

**Public Realm:** Includes all exterior places, linkages, and built form elements that are physically and/or visually accessible to the public regardless of ownership; including publicly-owned streets, rights-of-way, parks, publicly-accessible open spaces, and public and civic buildings.

**Renewable Energy/Low-Impact Design:** Energy from natural resources such as sunlight and geothermal heat that is naturally replenished.

**Replacement Housing:** This refers to rental housing (public housing and PBV housing) that will replace any Hillside Court units that are demolished, disposed of, or reduced.

**Resilience hub:** A place where community members can go to seek refuge, obtain assistance, receive care, and recover during and after a disaster or other emergency event.

**Section 8 Housing:** Section 8 is a common name for the Housing Choice Voucher Program that allows private landlords to rent apartments and homes at fair market rates to qualified low-income tenants. Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies with funds from HUD.

**Setback:** The distance from the property line in which building is prohibited.

**Stepbacks:** An architectural design element where the upper stories of a building are further recessed, or stepped back, compared to the lower stories below it. A setback is defined as

the horizontal distance between a building's facade on a lower story and the building's facade on the story immediately above it.

**Streatory:** A private, on-street, outdoor dining establishment that occupies a portion of a parking lane that is closed to motor vehicle parking, used either as an extension of, and connected visually to, and for use by patrons of, a nearby food and beverage establishment at which is subject to all the terms and conditions of the nearby restaurant's food service permits and alcohol licenses.

**Street-oriented commercial street frontage:** A type of street designated on the official zoning map that requires nondwelling uses along the ground floor of buildings to activate the streetscape.

**Streetscape:** All the visual features of a street, including the road, adjoining buildings, sidewalks, trees, landscaping, lights, street furniture, public art, open space, and other design characteristics.

**Superblock:** One city block (or large tract of land) that is much larger than a usual city block, often disrupting the urban street grid and limiting connectivity.

**Sustainable design:** the process of designing buildings and environments to maximize building performance while reducing negative impacts on residents and the environment.

**Transit-oriented development (TOD):** Walkable development served by frequent transit with a mix of housing, retail, and employment choices designed to allow people to live and work with less or no dependence on a personal car.

**Tree canopy:** The layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above.

**Urban design:** The process of creating the public realm through the artful arrangement of buildings and site elements as cities grow and change. Successful urban designs create meaningful spaces that foster positive social interaction, cultural advancement, and civic identity.

**Vision Zero:** Road safety strategies with the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries through improved street design, policy changes, law enforcement, and road safety education.

## Abbreviations of organizations and agencies

**DPU:** Department of Public Utilities

**DPW:** Department of Public Works

**HCD:** Housing and Community Development

**OOS:** Office of Sustainability

**PD:** Police Department

**PDR:** Planning and Development Review

**PMCE:** Property Maintenance and Code Enforcement

**PRCF:** Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities

**RRHA:** Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority

**CVWMA:** Central Virginia Waste Management Authority

**Va. DHCD:** Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

**GRTC:** Greater Richmond Transit Company

**HUD:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**JRA:** James River Association

**JRPS:** James River Park System

**OGBES:** Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School

**VACV:** Virginia Community Voice

**VEDP:** Virginia Economic Development Partnership



*Vision Meeting at OGBES, April 2024*