



## CITY OF RICHMOND

### Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

**File No. a2015 - 1312:** Presentation on a proposed City Master Plan Amendment that would incorporate the Chamberlayne/VUU Neighborhood Plan

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**To:** City Planning Commission  
**From:** Land Use Administration  
**Date:** October 19, 2015

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#### **PETITIONER**

City of Richmond  
900 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

#### **LOCATION**

The neighborhoods, commercial corridors, institutional uses, and industrial areas bordered by I-95 to the west and South, Brookland Park Blvd to the North, Chamberlayne Avenue and the Elson Redmond Memorial Golf Facility to the East, as studied during the Chamberlayne/VUU Neighborhood Plan.

#### **PURPOSE**

To update the City's Master Plan to include the recommendations and results of the Chamberlayne/VUU Neighborhood Plan to guide future development and investment in the area.

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#### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

##### **Background**

This plan began in late 2014 in order to look at a number of residential neighborhoods, institutional anchors, industrial areas, and commercial corridors that had not previously been closely studied before.

The Chamberlayne/VUU Plan looks at a number of sub-areas, some with very distinct land uses. The land use recommendations for the sub-areas within the plan are as follows:

A new mixed use area in the lower Chamberlayne area will provide new housing options and a mix of retail and office uses. New development and redevelopment within these mixed use areas should be a range of residential and commercial uses, be a mix of pedestrian and vehicular scales, be between 2 to 5 stories in height, should have setbacks that establish a relationship with the sidewalk, and have parking located at the rear of the building with opportunities for shared parking with adjacent development.

A second mixed use district in the Upper Chamberlayne area will likely have a more residential character. New development and redevelopment within these mixed use areas

should be a range of residential and commercial uses, be a mix of pedestrian and vehicular scales, be between 2 and 4 stories in height, should have setbacks that establish a relationship with the sidewalk, and have parking located at the rear of the building with opportunities for shared parking with adjacent development.

The new neighborhood gateway area on the Lombardy corridor will have primary uses including office, personal service, and retail uses intended to provide the daily convenience shopping and service needs of adjacent neighborhood residents. Such uses are typically small scale and low intensity and have limited hours of operation, involving a high percentage of walk-in trade and minimal vehicular traffic, and are especially compatible with adjacent low to medium density residential uses.

Existing residential neighborhoods will be preserved and strengthened. This plan does not envision any land use changes in the predominantly residential neighborhoods within the area. Single-family neighborhoods will remain with their existing single-family land use and zoning.

Likewise, the existing multi-family residential areas will be preserved and strengthened and continue the development of a medium density neighborhood comprised of a mix of residential uses. It will promote a pedestrian-oriented urban environment that is primarily residential in character, but may also include limited non-residential uses that serve many of the day-to-day convenience needs of neighborhood residents and provide opportunities for residents to live and work within the neighborhood. New residential development in mixed use areas along the southern half of Chamberlayne and south of the Neighborhood Center will provide further opportunities for housing not currently offered in the market.

The existing industrial area will retain its current land use, but in the future may become a mixed use business district that incorporates compatible industrial land uses as well as commercial, residential, and service uses.

The plan recognizes important existing public facilities within the area, and also envisions how new civic spaces may be created along key corridors and within public right of way as part of streetscape improvements as redevelopment occurs.

The Chamberlayne/VUU Plan also envisions a number of streetscape and public realm improvements to occur alongside redevelopment. On Chamberlayne Avenue, Brook Road, and Lombardy Street these improvements should provide on-street parking, improve pedestrian access and safety, accommodate bicycles, install better street lighting, and beautify landscaping. Finally, the plan encourages the City to pursue more innovative strategies for stormwater mitigation across the district.

### ***Master Plan***

The Chamberlayne/VUU Plan offers recommendations for a number of neighborhoods, including Douglass Court and Brookfield Gardens that did not receive much direct study during the preparation of the City's Master Plan except as general parts of the North District Plan (page 97). Some concerns during the Master Plan process, such as expansion of the Main Post Office, are now less of a concern; generally the Master Plan

supports protecting the character of existing neighborhoods, which the VUU/Chamberlayne Plan also identifies as a key priority (page 18).

While not envisioned in these areas specifically, the Master Plans does support neighborhood commercial clusters where they previously exist and are supported by the surrounding neighborhoods (page 259). The Chamberlayne/VUU Plan has established community support for a neighborhood commercial district on Lombardy St in the area.

The Master Plan identifies Chamberlayne Ave as a Principal Arterial Image Corridor, where the City should promote the creation of land uses at gateways and along image corridors that evoke high-quality and attractive images for the City (page 112). While the previous Master Plan does not envision mixed use and multi-family development on Chamberlayne Avenue in order to achieve this, there is now more community support for mixed use and multi-family development as expressed in the Chamberlayne/VUU planning process in service of the Master Plan's other image corridor goal of making the street the primary element in the urban fabric and requiring new development to reinforce the street with pedestrian-related activity (page 112, 257).

Finally, the Master Plan identifies Brook Road as bike route, as does the City's Bicycle Master Plan, and the Chamberlayne/VUU Plan reflects these recommendations (page 264).

### **Public Participation**

The Chamberlayne/VUU Plan was guided by a Steering Committee consisted of key stakeholders in the plan area. The Plan began with a series of public engagement sessions over two days. These sessions included charrettes, stakeholder conversations, and a public meeting with the plan consultants and were the primary drivers of the plan development. Residents, business owners, and civic associations were all involved in providing plan input. The plan recommendations were presented at a second open public meeting, and further updates were provided at one of Councilman Hilbert's District meetings. Finally, a number of community members who participated in the plan worked with staff to contribute the community history that follows the plan as an appendix.

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