3.0 A Vision for Old Manchester

The following vision has been adopted by the Old Manchester community as a conceptual guide for the long term development of their neighborhood:

Old Manchester is one of Richmond’s most desirable urban villages located directly south of downtown on the James River. Residents, business owners and their employees have worked together to create a livable community that is safe, active, and pedestrian-oriented. Many residents once commuted to Richmond from outlying areas, but decided that living in Old Manchester, with its variety of housing, abundance of services and nearby employment opportunities, simply made good sense. First-time home owners have found that Old Manchester offers an excellent place to start a family.

The original street grid guides the layout of the neighborhood. New homes, mostly single-family detached units and duplexes, sit comfortably next to their historic neighbors, some almost 150 years old. Rehabilitated houses have been continually updated and maintained since the first wave of renovation in 1996. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish the old from the new. Significant historic structures are protected and have small plaques telling their stories. History is celebrated in Old Manchester!

The area’s parks provide safe and comfortable places to hold events, have lunch, relax and play. The James River is Old Manchester’s front door. The new bike path is part of a continuous park system along several miles of the river. A variety of paths and trails are popular places to walk dogs, jog and ride bikes. Pedestrian crossings make it easy for children to get to their favorite parks safely.

Several office buildings on Semmes Avenue have been sensitively incorporated into Old Manchester. They are good neighbors to nearby housing. The Tele-Community Center, located in the newest office building, offers tele-commuting residents a place to network and hold meetings.

Hull Street offers the residents and employees of Old Manchester, Blackwell and surrounding communities a place to shop, eat and recreate. Specially designed street lights and brick sidewalks create an historic atmosphere in the area. Several of the restaurants are regionally known for their outstanding menus and atmosphere. The variety of stores offer every service from groceries and fresh seafood to books and fine art framing. The Hull Street Festival is a widely attended annual event, which last year drew a record crowd. Parking is no longer as frustrating as it used to be. Several small lots, tucked into the historic fabric of Hull Street, allow people to park and safely walk to businesses.
Cowardin and Commerce Roads have changed considerably. Trees, now almost twenty years old, gracefully line the road. A mix of uses can be found along these corridors. These roads still carry large volumes of traffic, but cars move more slowly (and safely) through the neighborhood. The signs that once stood fifty feet tall are now more in character with the neighborhood; billboards no longer announce the arrival to Old Manchester. Instead, a monument set in a landscaped park sits at the entrance to the neighborhood.

Old Manchester is still home to several growing institutions. Area churches are among the best attended in Richmond, and the recent expansion of the award-winning day nursery has made it one of the City’s top day care facilities. The Old Manchester Community Center offers residents and employees a place to conduct meetings and get to know one another. The new community gym provides facilities for swimming and working out.

Old Manchester is still evolving, still growing. The spirited community has made new residents feel welcome, and those with special needs cared for. It was this strong community spirit that got Old Manchester to where it is today, and it will be this spirit that will lead it into the future.

### 4.0 Statement of City Policy Towards Old Manchester

The following statement articulates the City’s policy towards the Old Manchester Planning Area:

*The primary goal of the City is to encourage the development of Old Manchester as a premier in-town mixed-use community that builds on the unique historic character of the neighborhood. A blend of residential, commercial, office and institutional uses will be developed to create an urban village on the James River where the community (residents, business owners and employees) can live, work, shop and recreate. This goal will be achieved using both redevelopment and rehabilitation strategies. Development will capitalize on the area’s proximity to Downtown and the James River.*

*A mix of residential densities, from single-family detached to mid-rise multi-family, will be encouraged to satisfy the needs of a diverse population. A combination of high-quality new development and rehabilitation will eliminate all blight and deteriorating conditions in the neighborhood. Within the boundaries of the Rehabilitation Area, priority will be placed on rehabilitating existing residential structures. New construction will be designed to fit with the existing character of the neighborhood and will be consistent with the Old Manchester Redevelopment Design Guidelines (produced for the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority by Harnsberger & Associates).*
The Guidelines will serve as the standard for reviewing development proposals.

5.0 Goals for Old Manchester

The following goals are the supporting statements of the Vision for Old Manchester. They represent the many concerns expressed by the community during one-on-one interviews, the kick-off public forum and the initial meeting of the Old Manchester Plan Advisory Committee and Manchester Civic Association.

The Plan for Old Manchester builds on these goals and provides detailed recommendations and strategies for achieving the community’s shared vision for the future.

5.1 Land Use

- Develop Old Manchester as a community conducive to single-family residential land uses;

- Maintain the strong institutional presence in the community, especially of the area’s churches, police facilities, Manchester Court House and Southside Day Nursery;

- Develop appropriate uses at Old Manchester’s edges that respect the character and scale of the residential community;

- Encourage office uses along Semmes Avenue while preserving public access to the waterfront and viewsheds;

- Establish policies towards interim and transitional land uses.

5.2 Housing

- Revitalize Old Manchester as an in-town residential community—an urban village—with a range of housing types that provide opportunities for people of all incomes;

- Develop new housing and housing infill that is consistent with the Old Manchester Redevelopment Design Guidelines;

- Maintain affordability and expand opportunities for home ownership to create a community of home owners;

- Locate a range of senior housing facilities in Old Manchester, from independent living to nursing care;
• Reuse, whenever possible, the existing residential structures that represent the pride and rich heritage of Old Manchester;

• Develop infill housing where there are gaps in the neighborhood;

• Displace as few residents as possible, and provide new homes for displaced residents within Old Manchester.

5.3 Community Character and Design

• Build on the historic assets of Old Manchester to help establish its identity, foster community pride and encourage new investment;

• Create a high-quality neighborhood environment in Old Manchester by using approved quality standards (e.g. *Old Manchester Redevelopment Design Guidelines*);

• Develop and maintain an urban, low-density residential character for the neighborhood;

• Maintain the integrity of Old Manchester’s historic street grid;

• Improve and restore historic lighting and signage to be consistent with the *Old Manchester Redevelopment Design Guidelines*;

• Protect significant historic structures;

• Improve public safety in Old Manchester;

• Create a positive residential image at main entrances and important gateways into the community;

• Build on the existing palette of materials (brick and granite) for public improvements such as sidewalks and curbs.
5.4 Business/Economic Development

- Balance economic development activity with the needs of the residential community;
- Promote and reinforce Hull Street as an area-wide shopping street for residents and employees;
- Promote the area north of Semmes Avenue as a premier in-town office park;
- Develop and nurture mutually reinforcing relationships between Old Manchester’s residents and the area’s employers;
- Build on and tap into the potential market and employee energy of Semmes Avenue.

5.5 Circulation and Parking

- Balance the need for efficient traffic flow with pedestrian safety and Old Manchester’s residential image;
- Create strong pedestrian linkages between commercial uses on Hull Street and the recreational opportunities provided by the James River;
- Create a continuous public road network along the edge of the River, including connecting Riverside Drive to Riverview Parkway;
- Improve and increase parking resources while preserving the integrity of the neighborhood;
- Create convenient transit stops in Old Manchester and explore alternative means of transportation;
- Develop a continuous recreational path through Old Manchester.

5.6 Parks, Open Space and the James River

- Capitalize on Old Manchester’s location on the James River;
- Create a continuous greenway along the James River. Where possible, include connections to the islands;
- Build on existing open space such as the Flood Wall Walk;
• Develop parks in strategic locations for the maximum benefit of the community (residents, children and employees);

• Preserve existing trees and add new street trees to Old Manchester.

5.7 Public and Community Facilities and Infrastructure

• Provide for the educational, recreational and civic needs of Old Manchester’s children, adults and elderly;

• Reuse Maury School and the Bainbridge School Gymnasium.

6.0 The Plan for Old Manchester

The Plan for Old Manchester provides the recommendations for creating the unique urban village envisioned by the community. The Plan builds on the existing character and structure of Old Manchester to ensure that the revitalization of the community will respect the historic foundation of the neighborhood. Early in the process, potential development opportunities were identified, as were issues and constraints that would impact the neighborhood’s potential. This analysis is illustrated in the Issues, Opportunities and Constraints exhibit on page 20.

The Plan is based on several concepts that evolved through the interactive community planning process. The community quickly reached consensus on a vision, yet several options remained open for how the vision could be realized. A workshop with the Old Manchester Advisory Committee made many of the community’s sentiments concrete. The workshop also identified issues that required further exploration.

As a result of the Advisory Committee Workshop, three alternative development scenarios were drafted. Each showed a different concept for structuring the redevelopment of Old Manchester while remaining true to the community’s vision. A summary of the three alternatives can be found in the Appendix of this document.
6.1 Plan Concepts

The primary objective of the Plan is to develop Old Manchester as an urban village that contains a mix of rehabilitated and newly constructed housing units, an in-town office park, public amenities and a variety of activities and services that are within walking distance from home or work.

Major Plan concepts are illustrated on the Concept Plan, shown on page 25. While the Plan remains flexible in its details, the following concepts are the basic ingredients that constitute the community’s shared vision:

- Preserve as many residential structures as possible. The potential for rehabilitating existing structures should be assessed on a case-by-case basis;

- Preserve the existing street grid;

- Create a central park between Porter, Perry, 11th and 12th Streets that serves as a public amenity and focal point for the community;

- Reinforce 12th Street as an important pedestrian and open space connection between commercial activity on Hull Street and the riverfront. Uses north of Semmes should not cut off the community from views and access to the River;

- Create a recreational path along Riverview Parkway to link the neighborhood and uses north of Semmes with the River;

- Establish gateways at important entrances into Old Manchester. Major gateways include Cowardin and Semmes, Cowardin and Perry and Commerce and Semmes. Minor gateways occur at Cowardin and Hull, 12th and Hull, Commerce and Hull and 12th and Semmes;

- Establish a strong residential presence on the edges of Old Manchester. Higher density residential uses should be used to transition from commercial and office uses to single-family uses on the interior of the neighborhood;

- Reinforce Hull Street as the neighborhood-serving commercial center of Old Manchester;

- Maintain and expand existing institutional uses (i.e., the area’s churches, school, day nursery and police station);

- Maintain and reinforce existing office uses;
• Create a corporate office park north of Semmes and west of 12th Street. Flexibility to develop high-density residential uses should be maintained. Public access to the riverfront should be preserved;

• Encourage multi-family residential on the northwest corner of Cowardin and Semmes;

• Maintain and reinforce Old Manchester’s system of alleys. Place parking behind buildings when possible.

6.2 Proposed Land Use

The Old Manchester planning area currently contains a mix of land uses including residential, parks/open space, office, institutional and retail. On page 26, the Old Manchester Land Use Plan shows a long-term strategy for how the area should develop. The following land use categories are used:

SFD Single-Family Detached Residential. Single-family detached units are the most common type of residential structure in the neighborhood. The character of Old Manchester is created by the pattern of single-family homes lining its streets. A single-family dwelling is defined as a building completely separated from any other main building and containing only one family unit. Although densities in the neighborhood should remain flexible, it is recommended that new SFD construction follow the existing development pattern to the extent possible, that is, lots between 3,000 and 5,000 square feet.

SFA Single-Family Attached Residential. This unit type is defined as a single dwelling unit that is attached to one or more dwellings with party walls. This land use category includes duplexes, triplexes and townhomes. Units are typically 20 to 30 feet wide (each).

MF Multi-Family Residential. To provide a range of unit types for a variety of incomes, the community felt it was appropriate to include multi-family units in Old Manchester. Multi-family units are defined as any structure with three or more dwellings in the same building (not differentiated with party walls). This category does not reflect tenure, that is, multi-family in Old Manchester can include rental apartments as well as privately-owned condominiums.

R Retail. Proposed retail areas should contain uses generally coinciding with the City’s B-1 Neighborhood Business District, unless otherwise noted.
Office. Old Manchester contains several large office buildings. While the existing development pattern is characterized by mid-rise office buildings, large setbacks and surface parking lots, proposed office development should include the potential for smaller offices (new construction), adaptive reuse of commercial properties and living/working arrangements when appropriate.

Institutional. Old Manchester's existing institutions include several churches, a day nursery, two schools, a police station, a courthouse and a library. For the most part, proposed institutional areas reflect these existing users and their potential expansion areas.

Parks. Public parks and open space are areas that are publicly accessible for active and passive recreational use. Play areas belonging to institutional uses such as schools and day care facilities are also potentially part of the parks and open space network, but are not identified separately.

Two concepts form the basis of the Land Use Plan. First, single-family detached (lowest density) units form the core of the neighborhood. They are buffered from office and retail uses by higher density units (single-family attached and multi-family) along Old Manchester’s edges. Second, a strategically spaced system of parks is designed to place residential units close to open space amenities.

The proposal presented in this Plan illustrates approximately 360,000 to 430,000 square feet of new office space, approximately 100 new single-family detached homes, 105 single-family attached homes, and between 490 and 850 new apartments/condominium units, depending on what is developed north of Semmes. A detailed unit count is contained in the appendix of this document.
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CLICK HERE TO VIEW LAND USE PLAN MAP
The following description of the Land Use Plan is broken down into three areas: the core of Old Manchester, the edges of Old Manchester, and the area north of Semmes.

6.2.1 The Core of Old Manchester

Old Manchester’s core includes the area between Bainbridge and McDonough, from 9th to 15th Streets.

The Central Park. The focal point of Old Manchester is a new park surrounded by single-family residential units. The park is centrally located at the intersection of Old Manchester’s primary streets—Perry and 12th. Existing trees enhance the atmosphere, and make the park feel well established. Enhanced landscape improvements are recommended along 12th Street to reinforce the pedestrian link between Hull Street, the central park, uses north of Semmes and the riverfront trail system. This link should be designed with larger sidewalks and a double row of street trees.

McDonough. The character and scale of McDonough should remain residential between Cowardin and 12th Streets. A combination of single-family detached (SFD) and attached (SFA) units is appropriate along these blocks. The Southside Day Nursery occupies a half block between 14th and 15th. This facility’s desire to expand has been accommodated in its present location.

Perry Street. West of the central park, single-family detached units share Perry Street with two institutional uses (Sacred Heart Church and Sacred Heart School) and Alice Fitz Playground at the corner of 13th Street. Perry is Old Manchester’s primary east-west residential street. Most of the homes on Perry will be renovations, with new construction infilling vacant lots. The blocks on Perry immediately north of the park (between 9th and 12th) are proposed as single-family attached units. These units will serve as a buffer to Overnite Transportation and future neighboring offices.

Porter Street. Porter Street provides the opportunity for a combination of renovations and new construction. One block west of the central park, the Central United Methodist Church creates a second focal point in the community. Across the street to the west, an existing multi-family structure could be renovated as either market-rate apartments or senior housing. In keeping with the historical use of the building’s ground level, small office or neighborhood retail uses could be incorporated into this renovation provided it meets with community objectives. The block between 12th and 13th Streets offers an opportunity for a full block of new construction. Further east, the block between 9th and 10th Street offers a similar opportunity. The density (either SFD or SFA) on these blocks should be determined by market demand.
**Bainbridge Street.** Infill development along Bainbridge should reinforce the relatively dense existing pattern of development. The west end of Bainbridge is anchored by Maury School and the Manchester Medical Center. Maury School is proposed to remain Institutional (a new school) or be adaptively reused as multi-family. Between Cowardin and 15th Streets, the south side of Bainbridge offers an opportunity for the Medical Center to expand, although existing residential uses should be given priority. The Manchester Medical Complex currently operates a parking lot on several parcels on this block. Single-family attached units are most appropriate along the rest of the street, particularly on the south side of the street where units would back up to commercial uses on Hull Street.

### 6.2.2 Old Manchester's Edges

Old Manchester's edges include the blocks fronting Commerce, Cowardin and Semmes, as well as areas of the community where a change in use occurs, such as the blocks between Bainbridge and Hull (residential on one side, commercial on the other) and Perry and McDonough east of 12th Street (residential on one side, office on the other). The area north of Semmes is addressed separately. These edges are planned for a variety of uses that reinforce the residential core.

**Cowardin Avenue.** Old Manchester’s Cowardin Avenue edge is planned for a mix of residential, retail and institutional uses. The southeast corner of Cowardin and Semmes is proposed as higher density residential (single-family attached and multi-family). This corner is highly visible and should clearly demarcate the edge of the residential neighborhood. These units are envisioned as a combination of townhomes and/or walk-up apartments or condominiums.

The east side of the street should develop a strong residential presence, where an entrance sign and small park is proposed at Perry Street. The Plan endorses the long-term transition of this edge to residential.

The west side of Cowardin should remain a mix of commercial and institutional uses. Given Cowardin’s current development pattern, this area is most appropriate for automobile-oriented commercial, including restaurants (fast food), convenience retail, banks and similar uses such as those allowed in Richmond’s Community Business zoning district (B-2).

**Commerce Road.** Old Manchester’s Commerce Road frontage could develop as either office or multi-family. Either use would conform to the community’s vision if developed at a scale and character compatible with the residential neighborhood. The blocks between McDonough and Porter contain structures that fall within the Old Manchester Warehouse-Industrial Historic District that should be considered for adaptive reuse.
**Hull Street.** Hull Street forms Old Manchester’s southern edge. Single-family attached uses on Bainbridge will buffer the neighborhood from the mixed commercial uses found on Hull Street. Hull Street should be reinforced as the area’s neighborhood-serving commercial street. Institutional uses are also appropriate. Whenever possible, shared parking resources (serving Hull Street merchants as well as single-family attached units on Bainbridge) should be developed in the middle of the block between Hull and Bainbridge.

**Areas of Transition.** Two areas contain abrupt changes in use that are buffered with higher intensity residential development. Single-family attached units are used as a buffer between Hull Street and the rest of the neighborhood. Similarly, single-family attached units are used to buffer office uses on the south side of McDonough east of 12th Street. These blocks should be used as parking for neighboring offices. In the long term, the office uses on these blocks could be developed as residential-scale condominium offices.

### 6.2.3 North of Semmes

Semmes Avenue is a newly improved east-west street that divides the core residential area of Old Manchester from the River. The community expressed concern for maintaining public access to the riverfront, as well as maintaining the possibility to develop residential in this area. Corporate offices, including Overnite Transportation and Crestar, have located on either side of Semmes, east of 12th Street. The potential to develop a high-quality in-town office park should be reinforced, however office development should not be allowed to encroach further into the residential neighborhood. Two potential development areas have been identified on the Land Use Plan as flexible, with either office or multi-family uses acceptable.

A linear open space is proposed along Riverview Parkway to provide continuity between James River Park and the Flood Wall Walk. Existing ramps should be augmented with additional paths, stairs, lights, benches and fences. The path will connect the James River Park system and Flood Wall Walk to Belle Isle (and ultimately the riverfront canal system north of the River) either via a walkway under the Lee Bridge or some other method. As a multiple-use path, pedestrians would share the path with bicycles, joggers and skaters. While the interior parks are intended as amenities for Old Manchester’s residents, the park system north of Semmes is intended for area-wide use, connecting existing recreational amenities outside the planning area.
6.2.4 West of Cowardin

The northwest corner of Cowardin and Semmes is proposed as either multi-family or single-family attached units. A combination of townhouses, garden apartments and a mid-rise apartment (condominium) building at the end of 19th Street would take advantage of excellent views of the River and Downtown.

6.3 Multiple Land Use Designations

Because Old Manchester is a mixed-use community, portions of the planning area contain more than one land use designation, for example “O/MF.” In such instances, the development of the area is flexible. When such designations are shown on the Plan, the first use is the most appropriate. The second use is also acceptable, but should demonstrate that it meets the objectives of the community.

6.4 Policy Towards Interim and Transitional Land Uses

The Land Use Plan identifies several new uses on property not controlled (owned or optioned) by the City. The Plan supports existing commercial and retail uses. Land use recommendations different from current uses are intended to reflect the long-term vision for the neighborhood. Existing businesses slated for a change in use, especially along Semmes, should not be displaced, rather phased out in the long-term. Those uses wishing to expand within the limits of their existing property ownership should be allowed to do so, if approved by the community and found compatible with all other City regulations.