Chapter 4 - Community Character (Draft 2)

The most important goal of the Comprehensive Plan is the first:

Protect and enhance Williamsburg's unique character as influenced by its iconic institutions – William and Mary and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation – and as reinforced by the natural and manmade environment of its entrance corridors, open spaces, residential neighborhoods and people places.

Protecting this character is by necessity a joint effort of the entire community. The City needs to work closely with its major institutions – William and Mary and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Cooperation and coordination with James City County and York County is also important, since the character and visual quality of the major entrance corridors into the City transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Important open space needs to be preserved, maintained and made accessible through efforts such as enforcement of the standards of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, public acquisition, delineation of greenbelt corridors, private dedication of easements, and passive recreational use.

This chapter deals with the built environment component of community character: historic preservation, design review and entrance corridors. The natural environment component, including greenbelts and open space, is discussed in Chapter 13 - Environmental Management. Each component is important separately, but collectively they define our community.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND DESIGN REVIEW

Recognition of the importance of history and historic preservation has strong roots in Williamsburg. When the capital of the Virginia colony was moved to the present site of Williamsburg in 1699, then Governor Francis Nicholson prepared a detailed plan for the colonial city based upon Baroque design principles, and including very specific standards – uniform setbacks for buildings, building size and specific prescriptions for street widths and the design of public buildings. Williamsburg's importance began to diminish after the capital was moved to Richmond in 1780. Through the generous support of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. extensive restoration efforts began in 1927 and continues today under the auspices of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Williamsburg has continued to grow and change since its beginning. A special challenge for historic preservation is to balance the need for healthy growth with the character of our older neighborhoods. These may be grand or modestly scaled but the range of the city's historic neighborhoods represents the complete scope of our community's history and character.

The following represents the development of neighborhoods in the City:

- A neighborhood of fashionable Victorian style houses, referred to as Peacock Hill, developed north of the City on the old Wheatland Farm following the coming of the C&O Railroad in 1881.
- The Penniman site (a dynamite plant owned by the DuPont Company) was purchased by the Navy in 1918 and became the Naval Weapons Station which spurred the need for more housing in the City. The shortage of housing during this time resulted in rooming houses in the City.
- After World War I residential neighborhoods close to Downtown such as Braxton Court, Chandler Court, College Terrace and West Williamsburg Heights followed during the 1920s and 1930s.
- Residential neighborhoods continued to develop around the Downtown as the Colonial Williamsburg restoration effort matured in the 1940s and 1950s. After World War II neighborhoods such as West Williamsburg, Pinecrest, Cary-Griffin-Newport-Boundary, Mimosa, Powhatan Park and Capitol Heights were developed.

- During the late 1950s and 1960s neighborhoods such as Burns Lane, Indian Springs, Highland Park, Walnut Hills, Wales, Richneck Heights and Skipwith Farms developed further from Downtown.
- The 1970s, 1980's and 1990's brought neighborhoods such as Port Anne, The Woods, Yorkshire, Piney Creek and Holly Hills.

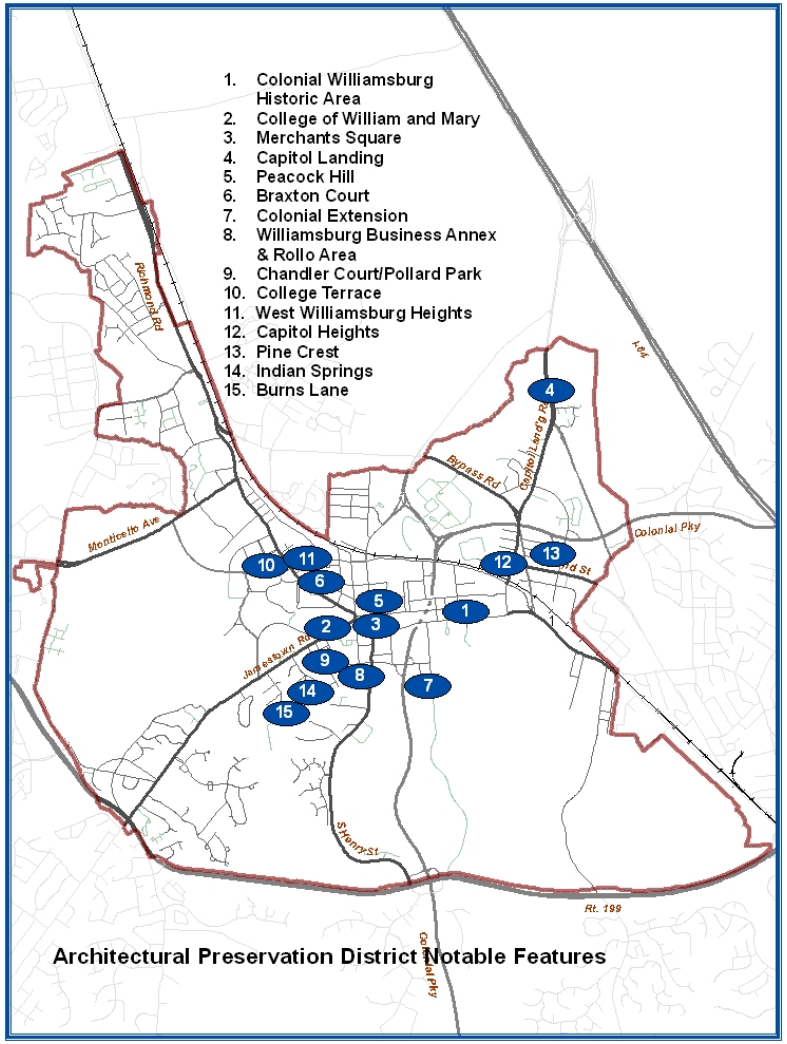
As the Downtown area evolved into a tourist destination, shopping centers followed the suburban movement away from downtown. ~~in the 1950's.~~ Developments of the past 20 years have seen the continued outward expansion of the City's residential areas; expansion, infill and redevelopment of the commercial corridors; and major investments in the Downtown area including the development of the City Square area, the Prince George Parking Garage, College Corner Building, Municipal Building expansion, Tribe Square, SunTrust Bank, Health Evaluation Center Building, The Cooke Building, Griffin Arms and Prince George Commons.

Williamsburg has ~~been involved in design review~~ taken care with architectural design since its founding. Governor Nicholson's ~~model~~ designs for the colonial capital ~~and the carefully researched standards used~~ and the Powder Magazine set a high standard that has been emulated by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in its restoration efforts. ~~are noteworthy precedents.~~ Since 1958, Williamsburg has had an Architectural Review Board responsible for reviewing new construction in the City.

As recommended by the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the City's historic preservation and design review efforts were strengthened based on Sec. 15.2-2306 of the State Code. This allows the designation of historic areas and areas of unique architectural value, as well as delineation of areas contiguous to arterial streets or highways that are significant routes of tourist access to these designated areas.

The architectural review section of the Zoning Ordinance was revised in 1991 and established an Architectural Preservation District (AP) and a Corridor Protection District (CP). The Architectural Review Board's duties include: review of all new construction and alterations to existing buildings in the AP and CP districts, review of signs in both districts; and review of demolition and relocation of buildings in the AP district. In the spring of 1994, the City's preservation program was recognized by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources when Williamsburg became the 13th Certified Local Government in Virginia.

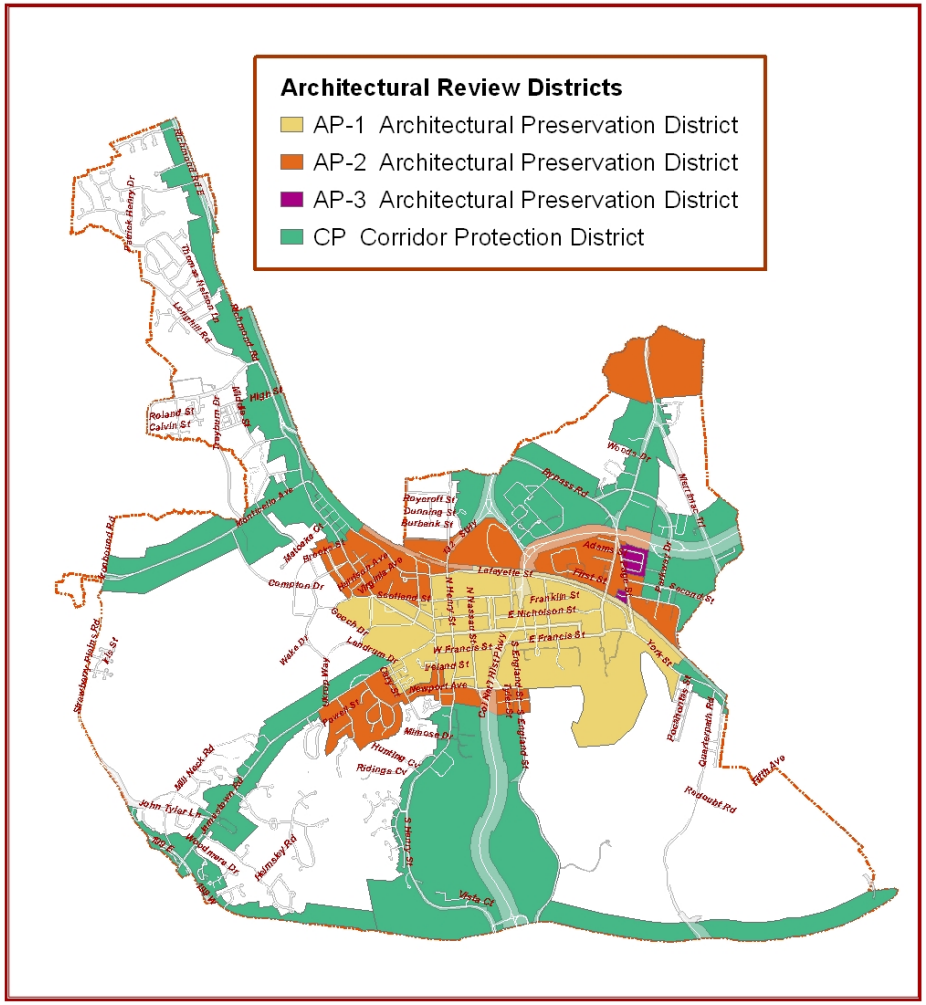
Map 4-1



Architectural Preservation District (AP)

While many associate Williamsburg's image and history with the restored colonial capital, Merchants Square, the Colonial Parkway and the College of William & Mary, there are also many other buildings and neighborhoods that have evolved over time. These contribute to a sense of history as well as to the visual character of the community, and enhance the setting of the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. These include the neighborhoods of Chandler Court and Pollard Park (both on the National Register of Historic Places), Braxton Court, Peacock Hill, College Terrace, West Williamsburg Heights, the downtown Richmond Road and Jamestown Road area, and the 18th century port of Capitol Landing (on the Virginia Landmarks Register). These areas should be protected from adverse influences and new uses, structures and signs should be in keeping with the character of the district. These significant areas are located on the map Architectural Preservation District – Notable Features (see Map 4-1). More details on the history and architectural character of each of these areas are contained in an appendix to the Design Review Guidelines.

Map 4-2



Corridor Protection District (CP)

The major entrance corridors provide significant routes of tourist access to the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area and are included in the design review process as Corridor Protection Districts. These routes are identified on Map 4-2 Architectural Review Districts, and include the following streets: Richmond Road, Jamestown Road, Monticello Avenue, Lafayette Street, North and South Henry Street, Route 132, Visitor Center Drive, Bypass Road, Merrimac Trail, Capitol Landing Road, Parkway Drive, Second Street, York Street and Route 199.

Because these entrance corridors do not always neatly conform to jurisdictional boundaries, Williamsburg, James City County and York County need to work together to insure that corridor beautification efforts are coordinated. This was done in 2011 for the Route 60 East corridor that is detailed in the discussion of the York Street Entrance Corridor later in this chapter.

Architectural Inventory

As recommended in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, a survey and assessment of architectural resources in the Architectural Preservation District was completed in 1992. With the assistance of a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), a reconnaissance level architectural survey was conducted for all buildings over 50 years old in the AP district. The report from the survey identified 12 buildings and five districts for potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. Based on the 1992 survey report, a listing of locally significant architecture and areas was created to assist the Architectural Review Board with their deliberations. This inventory was updated in 2013.

Architectural Review Guidelines

The 1989 Comprehensive Plan recommended the preparation of Design Review Guidelines, which were first adopted in 1993. The Guidelines assist the Architectural Review Board in reaching fair and objective decisions when reviewing proposals in the AP and CP districts. In 2013, a review and update of the Guidelines was conducted by the Architectural Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council. This resulted in updated Guidelines which were adopted by City Council in 2013. This extensive review process ensured that the Guidelines reflect the City's goals for development and redevelopment as well as those for architectural preservation and design review. These Guidelines are the City's best tool for encouraging the preservation and improvement of its architectural character.

The guidelines are based in part on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and distinguish between the different character of the AP and CP districts, and also between different parts of the AP District (AP-1, AP-2 and AP-3 Districts are designated). The most restrictive guidelines are in the AP-1 District which contain the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area, Merchant's Square, areas adjacent to the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area, the old campus of William & Mary, and the National Register Historic Districts of Pollard Park and Chandler Court. The Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area is the most important part of the AP district. To ensure that the integrity of this nationally significant resource is maintained for future generations, building projects are required to be based on documented historical and/or

archaeological evidence. Development in the AP district is encouraged to be compatible with existing buildings and neighborhoods. In the CP district, development is encouraged which respects the overall character of the City and enhances the City's entrance corridors. Since it has been six years since the last review, an update of the Design Review Guidelines is needed as a part of the Comprehensive Plan implementation process.

Archaeological Preservation

While the thrust of preservation activities in Williamsburg has centered on 17th, 18th and 19th-century American history, other remnants of Williamsburg's past ~~still exist and~~ can contribute toward an understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape. Some of these prehistoric and historic resources include sites and structures occupied or used since the 17th century, as well as important 20th century sites. In order to determine the level of significance of these resources, the areas should be studied prior to any proposed development or redevelopment, and should be protected from adverse influences whenever possible.

The City's known significant archaeological resources were identified in a Resource Protection Planning Process (RP3) study conducted by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for James City County, York County and the City in 1985 (revised in 1990). The 1989 Comprehensive Plan recommended that these areas be studied for significant resources to provide a reasonable assurance that any future development or redevelopment in the City does not have an adverse impact on unidentified resources.

As a means of identifying all documented historic archaeological resources and predicting prehistoric archaeological resource areas in the City, an Archaeological Map Assessment Study was developed for the City by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

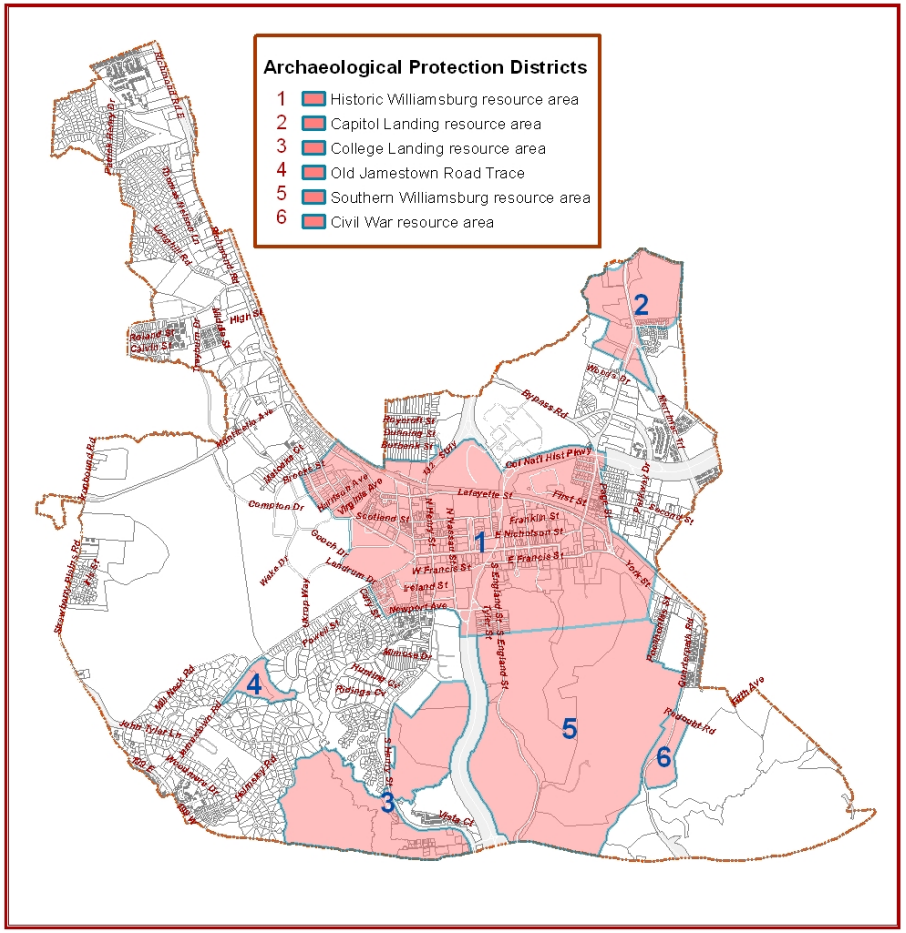
As recommended in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, an Archaeological Review section was added to the Zoning Ordinance in 1995. Five Archaeological Protection Districts were initially designated.

The Civil War resource area #6 on Map 4-3 was added in 2013. The development of plans for “Quarterpath at Williamsburg” by Riverside Healthcare System resulted in the construction of the 21 acre Redoubt Park on the east side of Quarterpath Road north of Tutter’s Neck Pond. Redoubts #1 and #2, which supported the defense of Fort

Magruder, have been preserved and interpreted as a part of the park. The setting of these redoubts beside historic Quarterpath Road should be preserved, and to this end it is proposed to convert the gravel portion of Quarterpath Road to a paved multi-use path, rerouting automobile traffic through the adjoining Quarterpath at Williamsburg development along Redoubt Road and Battery Boulevard. This is detailed in Chapter 11 - Infrastructure.

The mechanism triggering archaeological review is the preparation of site plans and subdivisions within these districts. Archaeological surveys and evaluation reports must be undertaken as part of the development review process, with the Planning Commission acting as the archaeological review board. If significant archaeological resources will be adversely affected by the development project, the Planning Commission may require the modification of the site plan or subdivision plan to avoid the resources.

MAP - 4-3

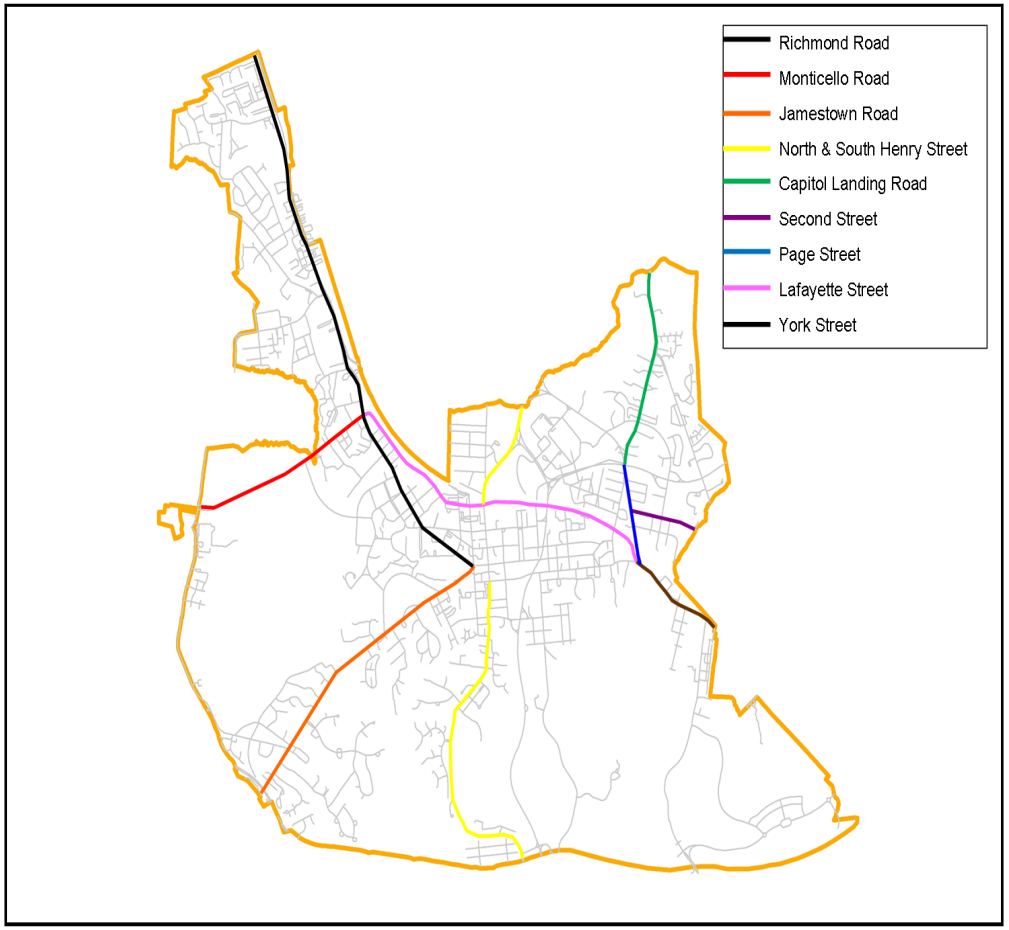


ENTRANCE CORRIDORS

The City's ten entrance corridors present the initial character and image of Williamsburg to those traveling into the City, and are shown on the Map 5-4 Williamsburg Entrance Corridors:

- **Richmond Road from the City limits to College Corner**
- **Monticello Avenue from Ironbound Road to Richmond Road**
- **Jamestown Road from Route 199 to College Corner**
- **North Henry Street/Route 132 from Bypass Road to Lafayette Street**
- **South Henry Street from Route 199 to Francis Street**
- **Capitol Landing Road from Queen's Creek to the Colonial Parkway**
- **Second Street from the City limits to Page Street**
- **Page Street from the Colonial Parkway to York Street**
- **Lafayette Street from Richmond Road to York Street**
- **York Street from the City limits to Page Street**

Map 4-4



In 1994, the City commissioned LDR International, Inc. to prepare an Entrance Corridor Beautification Study to develop strategies, concepts and standards to promote the improvement and beautification of these corridors. Based on these standards, the following goals were established for the City's entrance corridors:

- Strengthen the concept of "gateway" and create a strong sense of arrival, offering a clear message that one is entering Williamsburg.
- Improve the functional and visual character of the corridors, while maintaining a balance between convenient vehicular access and a quality pedestrian environment.
- Achieve consistency in streetscape through simplicity of design, repetition of common landscape and streetscape elements, and placing of utilities underground.
- Implement street improvements with an appropriate scale and capacity to serve long-range traffic demands, while respecting the environment and scale of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Support economic development by using publicly supported streetscape and landscape improvements to leverage and stimulate private investment.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation to improve the City's major entrance corridors, recognizing that the visual quality of these entrances transcend jurisdictional boundaries.
- Reinforce standards contained in the Architectural Review Board's Design Review Guidelines.
- Develop design standards for landscaping, sidewalks, lighting and other streetscape elements, and incorporate these standards into the City's zoning regulations.

Corridor Specifics

Richmond Road

Richmond Road is the City's predominant commercial corridor, serving as a transition from James City County to the heart of the City at College Corner, where Richmond Road meets Jamestown Road at the College of William & Mary. Great strides have been made over the past 20 years to enhance this corridor, and the greatest accomplishment has been the undergrounding of overhead utility lines from College Corner to the Dominion Power Easement near the City limits. Only one-half mile of the three-mile corridor remains to be placed underground. Other recommendations that have been implemented include new street name and traffic signage, new City entrance signs, requiring monument signs for commercial uses, wider brick sidewalks and landscaping from Merchants Square to Scotland Street, planting a substantial number of trees in the median of the dual-lane section of Richmond Road west of the Dominion Power easement, and planting additional street trees from Brooks Street to New Hope Road.

A number of improvements are still needed for the Richmond Road corridor. These include minimizing and consolidating the number of curb cuts for commercial properties, planting additional street trees where possible, and continuing to encourage the elimination or reduction of parking in front of commercial buildings (as has been done with Red, Hot and Blue, Applebee's, Chili's, and the General Store).

Monticello Avenue

Monticello Avenue is a scenic entrance corridor into the City from the west, connecting directly to Route 199 and Route 5 in James City County. The importance of this corridor has increased because of the completion of Route 199, the construction of the Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse, the New Town development in James City County, and the designation of Monticello Avenue as the primary entrance to the College of William & Mary. Adequate greenbelts of at least 50 feet should be maintained along both sides of the road.

The Ironbound Road/Monticello Avenue intersection has been improved with new signage and landscaping identifying this entrance as an important gateway into the City. In the future, the wooded section of Monticello Avenue between Ironbound Road and Treyburn Drive should be improved as a "more refined parkway" without curb and gutter. A multi-use trail connecting the College with New Town in James City County and with improved pedestrian connections to High Street and the Williamsburg & Monticello Shopping Centers is planned to start construction in 2020.

The commercial section of Monticello Avenue, from Treyburn Drive to Richmond Road, has been greatly improved by underground wiring and landscaping. Additional improvements planned as part of the Midtown Row Redevelopment include on street parking, a cycle track, street trees, and new lighting.

Jamestown Road

Jamestown Road connects the Downtown area to Route 199 and Jamestown and serves as an important entrance from the southwest. Jamestown Road should continue to retain its residential character along its southwest portion, with commercial uses limited to the area around the Route 199 intersection. Lake Matoaka provides a clear transition between the southwest portion of the corridor and its terminus at College Corner, with the campus of the College of William and Mary located along the north side bordered by residential and residential scale buildings along the south side of the road.

The "campus" character should be retained along the north side, but new development on the William & Mary campus should be compatible with the residential image of the south side. The lack of a sidewalk on the north side of the street in front of the College's Phi Beta Kappa Hall interrupts the pedestrian flow along the corridor in the College area, and this gap should be eliminated. The new sidewalk and pedestrian crosswalk at the corner of Ukrop Way and Jamestown Road has improved the connectivity between the campus and students who live at Ludwell Apartments. The maintenance of the College properties on the south side of Jamestown Road from Cary Street to the Undergraduate Admissions Office should be improved, since their physical condition detracts from the well-maintained character of the rest of the corridor. These buildings should be renovated and preserved since they represent good examples of architecture and housing after World War I which may provide housing for university faculty and *staff.*

North Henry Street/Route 132

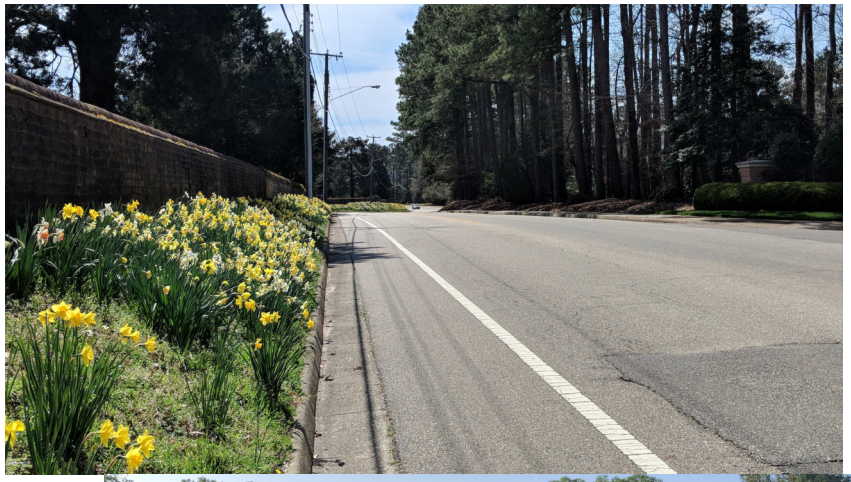
The North Henry Street/Route 132 corridor is a major access route from the north, connecting Interstate 64 with the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center and the Downtown. The portion of the route within the City (south of Bypass Road) retains its natural character because it follows the topography of the drainage swale, has little visible roadside development and has a heavily wooded edge.

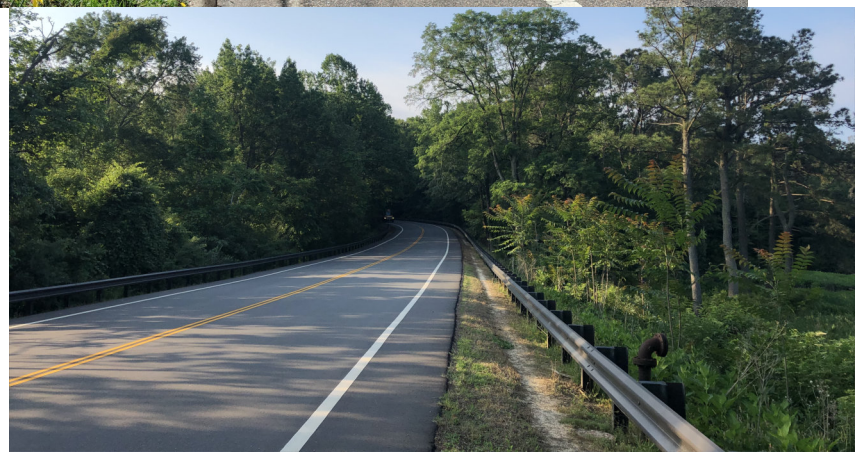
The character of this corridor should be maintained by avoiding unnecessary pavement widening or excessive curb cuts. The City should continue to maintain the high quality landscaping at the northeast corner of North Henry Street and Lafayette Street, and the vacant lot on the southwest corner should be improved with landscaping and/or buildings as the City Square area is redeveloped.

South Henry Street

South Henry Street is the major access route from the south connecting Route 199 with the Downtown. More importantly, the road section north of College Landing Park follows the historic route connecting Colonial Williamsburg with its southern port at College Landing on College Creek. The route retains much of its "country road" character with a natural landscaped edge and varied topography.

The gateway character of the South Henry Street/Route 199 intersection should be emphasized by protecting and enhancing the signage and landscaping in this area. The adjoining lower section of South Henry Street should continue to retain its rural character and the integrity of the historic route should be protected, and it should be continued to be designated as a greenbelt corridor. Views to College Creek, College Landing Park and the proposed Papermill Creek Park at the crossing of College Creek and South Henry Street should be emphasized through careful management of the roadside landscape. The mixed-use character of the corridor from Mimosa Drive to Francis Street should be retained and enhanced, and redevelopment on the west side of the street between Mimosa Drive and Ireland Street should respect both the residential character to the south and the "campus" character of the National Center for State Courts and the College of William & Mary Law School. Underground wiring from Mimosa Drive to Newport Avenue was completed in 2017.





Capitol Landing Road

Capitol Landing Road serves as an important entrance into the City from the north, and follows the approximate location of the original eighteenth century road from Capitol Landing on Queen's Creek into the Downtown. The present entrance corridor extends from the Route 143/Interstate 64 interchange in York County and continues across Queen's Creek (the corporate limits) for approximately one mile until it meets the Colonial Parkway and Page Street. The northern section from Queen's Creek to the Merrimac Trail intersection is predominantly undeveloped and wooded in character, while the remainder of the route to the Colonial Parkway is primarily commercial in character, with numerous opportunities for further development and redevelopment.

The section of the corridor from Queen's Creek to the Merrimac Trail intersection is an important "gateway" into the City, and its importance will be increased as the land adjoining the corridor is developed. A cluster subdivision on the west side of Merrimac Trail called Queen's Mary Port was approved for 41 lots in 2011. An important part of the design and approval was the provision of substantial landscape buffers along both Capitol Landing Road and Queen's Creek. The Queen's Creek buffer includes the future dedication of a conservation easement to the Williamsburg Land Conservancy to ensure its preservation. The majority of the road in this section is lined with mature trees and vegetation, and the greenbelt designation should be retained. The proposed future Capitol Landing Park at Queen's Creek will further enhance the character of this corridor.

As the commercial portion of this corridor is developed and redeveloped, redundant entrances to individual parcels should be eliminated or consolidated. Underground wiring with emphasis placed on removing cross street service lines, is being considered as part of the improvements planned to be completed by 2025. Sidewalks need to be extended toward Queen's Creek when the areas west of the Merrimac Trail intersection are *developed.*

Second Street

The Second Street corridor is dominated by auto-oriented commercial. The corridor was included in the Richmond Road and Second Street Streetscape Study, an in-depth analysis of the two commercial corridors that included specific recommendations for the visual improvement of the area. Suggestions included placing overhead utility lines underground, planting continuous street trees, improving the street lighting, screening of parking, new landscaping and signage. Based on this study, a specific streetscape plan for Second Street was developed and implemented in 1990-91. In 2017 and 2018 underground wiring and a road diet were completed.

There are several major parcels suitable for redevelopment east of Parkway Drive, which will present an opportunity to consolidate entrances and increase landscaping along the corridor.

Page Street

Page Street is not really an entrance corridor, but it provides an important connection between three other entrance corridors: Capitol Landing Road, Second Street and York Street. The section between the Colonial Parkway and Second Street is largely residential in character, and the east side of the street from Second Street to the CSX Railroad is commercial in character. There is a major redevelopment opportunity at the southeast corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, and the design for this area should be carefully reviewed because it is just across the railroad tracks from the eastern end of the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. Placing overhead wires underground between Penniman Road and Monumental Avenue was completed in 2014. The character of Page Street is defined more by the buildings than the landscaping, and the Architectural Review Board should carefully evaluate plans for new and renovated buildings in this corridor.

Lafayette Street

Lafayette Street, like Page Street, is not a formal entrance corridor. However, it provides an important connection between York Street and Richmond Road. The western end is anchored by the Arts and Cultural District in the Midtown Planning Area and the eastern end is defined by the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area. This corridor traverses residential neighborhoods, the Williamsburg Municipal Center, Matthew Whaley Elementary School, and the Historic Area. Landscaping has been installed along the CSX Railroad between Henry Street and Botetourt Street to beautify the area between the street and the railroad, and across the street the rear yard of Matthew Whaley Elementary School has been defined by a decorative fence and landscaping creating a well-defined street edge. The most noticeable future changes for this corridor will be in the Arts and Cultural District, which was established by City Council in February 2011 as a way to encourage and enhance the City's creative economy as an economic development initiative. The City purchased and demolished the hotel (Super 8) located between Lafayette Street and Richmond Road for future development to enhance the new development being constructed at Midtown Row. Infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks, streets and intersection improvements will be discussed further in the transportation section of the plan.

York Street

York Street enters the City from the east, and is the City portion of Route 60 from Route 199 to Page Street. This corridor parallels the CSX Railroad tracks and supports several businesses and four major hotels. A large portion of the southern frontage is owned and used by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and is part of the Historic Area. The corridor terminates at the "Tri-Corner" intersection on York Street where Lafayette Street, Page Street and York Street intersect. In 1997, the City relocated the granite curb and widened the asphalt paving between Page and Lafayette Streets to accommodate truck turning movements. In addition, new brick sidewalks and painted crosswalks were installed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Review and update the Design Review Guidelines.**
- **Investigate and review gateway signage from the interstate to downtown.**
- **Review existing entrance signs "Welcome to Williamsburg" to determine if they are adequate or need updating.**
- **Review and determine wayfinding signage needs for the downtown, midtown, and northeast triangle areas.**
- **Review bed and breakfast requirements in the Zoning Ordinance to determine if an increase from six rooms to less than 10 rooms shall be allowed on the city's main entrance corridors.**