Carver-VCU Partnership

The Carver-VCU Partnership strives to create a shared urban community with a commitment to improving the neighborhood’s quality of life including its health, community development, youth development, safety and neighborhood school, while extending the experience of the community into the classroom and the university. The goal of the partnership is to create a safe and nurturing community for everyone who lives, works and studies in the area.

Rather than viewing the shared physical boundary between VCU and Carver as a dividing line between an academic community and an inner-city neighborhood, the partnership establishes a collaboration that has positive outcomes for the neighborhood, the university and the city of Richmond.

Community Development

Rather than viewing the shared physical boundary between VCU and Carver as a dividing line between the academic community and an inner-city neighborhood, a collaboration exists, which links community members with VCU resources, strengthening both communities. VCU offers a variety of community-building programs and resources in the Carver community.

Community Programs Space

In summer 2001, a new community programs space opened to serve the Carver neighborhood. The space features a multipurpose room, a computer lab and a suite of offices to support community outreach programs, such as tutoring sessions for school-aged children.

Carver Community Center
1103 West Marshall
P.O. Box 843034
Richmond, Virginia 23284-3034
(804) 828-8850

Community Day

An annual Health, Housing and Event fair takes place at the Commonwealth Cancer Institute, 100 Block of Marshall Street, in the Carver Community bringing together VCU faculty, staff and students; community members; and area service providers representing health, housing and safety.
Additional Resources

- VCU’s Cary Street gym is open to all members of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League, including teachers at Carver Elementary School.
- VCU Police have a satellite office within the community programs space at 1103 W. Marshall St. The office is accessible to the community.
- VCU Police received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to increase the number of community police officers, including a bike patrol for Carver.
- An Adopt-a-Senior program was created by VCU Police. Officers visit seniors regularly, providing assistance and support.

Youth Development

VCU is committed to investing in the Carver community’s young people through programs that assist with academic success and partnerships with community schools.

Homework Assistance and Tutoring

The Carver-VCU Partnership offers a drop-in after-school tutoring program for children in the Carver community while VCU is in session. Tutors are available to work with children Monday through Friday from 3 to 5 p.m. Sessions are held in the community space multipurpose room located at 1103 W. Marshall St. Our volunteer tutors are VCU students who dedicate their time and knowledge toward assisting children with their homework.

Partnerships with Neighborhood Schools

A major goal of the Carver-VCU Partnership is to increase the academic achievement of Carver students through increasing parental, community and university involvement in the community’s school activities. Centrally located in the Carver community is George Washington Carver Elementary School.

Partnership History

In 1996, the Carver-VCU Partnership was launched in an agreement between Dr. Eugene Trani, president of VCU at the time, and Ms. Barbara Abernathy, president of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League. The partnership established a steering committee composed of university and community representatives.

The efforts of the partnership have benefited all parties. For Carver, crime has dropped dramatically, a master plan has been developed to guide the future of the neighborhood and community and youth development programs have provided access and support to residents.

For VCU, undergraduate and graduate students have gained real-world learning experiences, faculty have participated in interdisciplinary activities with support from new external funding sources and the institution has gained a sensitivity and appreciation for its role as a neighbor and partner in an urban community.

About the Carver Community

The Carver community is primarily a residential neighborhood; however, some commercial and industrial land uses exist within its boundaries. The area was established in the 1840s and quickly developed into a working class neighborhood. It became a home for freed slaves and eastern European immigrants. At one time the neighborhood had a population of 5,000 residents, but by the 1990s that number had dwindled to fewer than 1,000.
When the partnership began in 1996, the Carver neighborhood had numerous challenges. It had the highest rate of vacant housing in the City of Richmond with a rate of 29.6 percent or 230 vacant properties. Carver ranked the highest in violent crime and second highest in property crime among 33 neighborhoods in the city’s third precinct. The unemployment rate was 12.4 percent; twice the average of the city, and 18 percent of families fell below the poverty line. Carver Elementary School served 1,000 children, 98 percent of whom qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The majority of these elementary school students reside in Gilpin Court, the largest public housing community in Richmond. Carver students’ scores on standardized tests were among the lowest in the Richmond school system.

**Partnership Leads to Transformation**

Today the neighborhood is experiencing remarkable transformation. The social conditions that contributed to the community’s loss of population are reversing. According to the 2000 Census, the vacant housing rate dropped to 23.1 percent. Unemployment has dropped to 10.3 percent, and the number of families below the poverty line has been reduced to 14.7 percent. Over a three-year period, the neighborhood experienced a 35 percent drop in violent crime and a 53 percent reduction in property crime.

As predicted by city officials when the partnership began, if social conditions improve, development will follow. In recent years, restoration of aging homes and a citywide effort to attract new residents has spurred renewed interest in Carver. The City of Richmond has invested resources in the redevelopment of Carver through its Neighborhoods in Bloom program, which concentrates grant funding into targeted neighborhoods.

**Carver Area Civic Improvement League**

The Carver Area Civic Improvement League was founded in the 1950s and continues to work in preserving a healthy and vibrant community. Through CACIL, neighbors work together to address issues such as housing, public improvements, land use, litter control and planning the neighborhood’s future. Citizen involvement is critical to the success of Carver’s development.

Membership is open to Carver residents, as well as business and property owners who may not live in the Carver community. A yearly membership fee of $10 is required for residents. The fee for associate members is $25.

CACIL meets the last Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at 1103 West Marshall Street. Meetings do not occur in July and August.

**Additional Carver Community Information**

- “Sheep Hill Memories, Carver Dreams” – A play performed in 2000 and again in 2002 enabled the neighborhood to recapture its unique history. Written by Laura Browder, Ph.D., in the VCU Department of English and produced by VCU’s Department of Theatre and the Richmond Community Theatre Guild, the play was based on interviews with Carver residents as well as research conducted by VCU students and Carver residents.
Bringing All Partners to the Table: The Virginia Commonwealth University and Carver Community Partnership
Catherine W. Howard and Kevin W. Allison

Abstract
Creating a university-community partnership generates ideas, resources, and unanticipated benefits for those who come to the table willing to trust the process. Virginia Commonwealth University and the Carver Community share the many accomplishments from their partnership and the lessons learned from the journey. Reflections of participants and current literature capture the learning that has occurred from a partnership that grew from grassroots community organizing strategies.

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the neighborhood along its northern border, the Carver community, have forged a partnership that strives to enhance the well-being for all who live, work, and study within our shared urban environment. This growing, land-locked research university and struggling urban neighborhood with a long and rich history have chosen to work as partners rather than adversaries. They have pulled their chairs up to a table where frank dialogue over the years has fostered individual and institutional relationships and collective action for change in the neighborhood and within the university.

In 1996, the Carver-VCU Partnership was launched in an agreement between Dr. Eugene Trani, President of VCU, and Ms. Barbara Abernathy, President of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL). The partnership established a Steering Committee composed of university and community representatives, and VCU’s Office of Community Programs was designated as the Partnership’s administrative home. The efforts of the Partnership have been richly rewarded. For Carver, crime has dropped dramatically, a master plan has been developed to guide the future of the neighborhood, a play has been written and performed to document and share the history and resolve of the community, access to health care for children and adults has increased, and children at Carver school have access to a greater range of educational opportunities. For VCU, undergraduate and graduate students have gained real-world learning experiences, faculty have participated in interdisciplinary activities with support from new external funding sources, and the institution has gained a sensitivity
and appreciation for its role as a neighbor and partner in an urban community. In addition, legislation was passed in the Virginia General Assembly supported by findings from studies conducted on blighted and tax delinquent properties in the Carver neighborhood, and the law now requires fewer years to elapse before Virginia’s cities can take action on abandoned properties.

With the birth of this partnership came an opportunity for all involved to chart a new course for long-term collaboration. In this paper we describe the process of bringing various parties to the table to develop a plan of action and a mechanism for monitoring results; we identify our model for program delivery; describe interdisciplinary projects; review the factors that have contributed to the partnership’s success; and finally, discuss venues for partnership sustainability.

**University-Community Partnerships**

Partnerships have been defined as two or more parties who make a commitment to invest resources in joint pursuit of a mutually beneficial end. By implication, each party to a partnership has something at stake—a contributed asset, whether money, expertise, time, data, or reputation—for which they expect some benefit in return (The Urban Institute 2002). Campuses and community partners possess and contribute very different assets, and benefit in noticeably different ways. Based on an analysis of university-community partnerships that have participated in the Community Outreach Partnership Center program of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Urban Institute developed a framework of factors that relate to the integration and institutionalization of community partnerships. From their assessment, successful partnership performance depends centrally on the organizational capacity of the partners (i.e., the ability to bring the necessary resources to the table and the ability to negotiate and problem-solve together).

The process of bringing together partners to forge bonds that will result in mutually beneficial outcomes is the critical challenge in the early stages of partnership development. This process is especially formidable when the partners involved come from very different backgrounds, have access to different resources, have a difficult or challenging history, and may have very different outcomes in mind for the partnership. How can it be done? Guidelines on partnerships between communities and institutions of higher education have been developed by organizations such as Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, HUD’s Office of University Partnerships, and the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. Several core tenets emerge from these guidelines:

- **Respect**: each partner understands and acknowledges the value and the opportunity it has to learn as much as it has to offer;
- **Responsiveness**: each partner hears the pressing needs and formulates acceptable strategies using available resources;
- **Shared vision and mission**: each partner contributes to the mission’s creation followed by a clear understanding of roles and processes for partnership activities;
- Organizational capacity: each partner, starting with its leadership, claims the partnership’s mission as central to the mission of its organization and recognizes the long-term commitment; and
- Mutual benefit: each partner gains from the relationship and the credit for accomplishments is shared.

The process for establishing campus-community partnership has been described by Strand and colleagues (2003). They outline ten principles that comprise a framework for successful campus-community partnerships. At the beginning, there is the entering into partnerships where the partners share a worldview, agree about goals and strategies, and have trust and mutual respect. This phase evolves into conducting partnerships where the partners share power, communicate clearly and listen carefully, understand and empathize with each other, and remain flexible. Finally, the outcomes of the partnership are determined by community and campus partners when they satisfy each other’s interests or needs, have their organizational capacities enhanced, and adopt long-range social change perspectives (p. 29). These principles are interrelated and provide a conceptual tool for understanding the key features of successful community-campus partnerships.

In a recent presentation entitled “Transforming Communities, Transforming Higher Education” (2003), VCU President Dr. Eugene Trani asserts, “Forward-looking universities have partnerships with their most important communities as a defining feature of institutional identity.” He notes that linking basic and applied research is an obligation of the entire university and that the commitment to partnerships extends beyond the academic units to include administrative units as well, such as the campus police department and athletics. The successful university-community partnership focuses on the significant issues that face the city-at-large and its neighborhoods. Hence, if the university is truly responsive to its community, it will have a material impact on the quality of life of the community and will be seen as indispensable by leaders of the community. Through community partnerships, universities pursue creative scholarship that invokes interdisciplinary endeavors that are more effective and better able to address the pressing issues of our contemporary society.

These recent conclusions reflect the learning of a university leader who has been willing to pursue and invest in a number of university-community partnerships since the early 1990s, including the partnership with the Carver neighborhood. VCU is in the company of more than half of the nation’s institutions of higher education that are located in central cities or in their immediate surroundings (CEOs for Cities 2001). Campuses are intertwined with their communities, giving them the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the community’s economic growth, as well as the educational, health, and social service needs of its residents.
Background about Partners

Virginia Commonwealth University. Virginia Commonwealth University is an urban public research university with 26,000 students. Its academic campus borders three residential neighborhoods—to its north (Carver), west (The Fan) and south (Oregon Hill), and a mixed business/industrial area to its east. VCU has a history of strained and often callous relationships with its neighbors. In the early 1990s VCU had prepared a master plan that involved expansion into the Oregon Hill community. When Dr. Trani was invited to campus to accept the position of university President, he was met with irate Oregon Hill residents opposing the master plan. One of his first actions as president was to scrap the master plan and establish a Community Advisory Board to foster better communications between the university and its neighbors. Over the past decade the need for dialogue has been especially critical as the university has experienced steady growth requiring physical expansion, especially for student housing.

A segment of the university’s mission statement declares that “VCU is inseparable from the urban environment in which it resides. Extensive interaction with the Richmond metropolitan region yields a two-way flow of benefits between University and community, and generates capabilities for addressing urban issues throughout the nation and world.” One strategy to fulfill VCU’s mission was the establishment of the Office of Community Programs (OCP) in 1995 to provide VCU with a centralized administrative unit focused on community service and community outreach programs. This new unit was an outgrowth of the implementation plan generated by the Strategic Plan for the Future of Virginia Commonwealth University that was approved in 1993. The Office of Community Programs supports and facilitates innovative teaching, service, and research opportunities by creating partnerships on campus and with community-based organizations. In keeping with VCU’s mission, the office facilitates and coordinates innovative academic programs, on and off campus, to enhance the community’s access to VCU; provides technical assistance and logistical support for faculty and student engagement in the community; and creates opportunities for multidisciplinary community-based collaborations that integrate research, teaching, and service. OCP reports directly to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. The office administers a variety of programs linked to the community such as service learning, the Community Service Associates Program, VCU AmeriCorps and America Reads, the Virginia Mentoring Partnership, and the Carver-VCU Partnership, which is linked to a HUD Community Outreach Partnership Center and New Directions grant.

Two programs that have been tremendous resources for the Carver-VCU Partnership have been the Community Service Associates Program (CSAP) and service-learning classes. CSAP provides opportunities for faculty to assist with projects of neighborhood groups, civic associations, governmental or professional organizations, and nonprofit agencies. Dr. Trani launched this program upon his arrival at VCU in 1990. Since that time there have been 260 faculty-led projects from 44 different departments. Each project is individually designed to be of mutual benefit to the
agency and the faculty member. Faculty have provided expertise on program evaluation, strategic planning, marketing studies, board development, small business development, youth mentoring, community health projects, design of homeless shelters, and many public school initiatives. As a Community Associate, faculty members bring expertise to bear on problems or issues of importance to the community while concurrently receiving the benefits of hands-on experience that relates directly to their teaching or research. In return for a semester of service, the faculty member is released from teaching one course and the department is compensated to hire an adjunct. Community Service Associates have participated in projects with the Carver community and projects associated with Carver continue to receive high priority.

OCP supports service learning primarily through its Service Learning Associates Program, which encourages faculty to develop service-learning courses in their disciplines by providing training and logistical assistance. Faculty contribute service to the Richmond community by extending their expertise through the direct service of their students. Eight faculty members per year receive faculty development support to participate in the program. They spend one semester developing the course and then offer the course the following semester. To date, several service learning courses have been developed with the service projects located at Carver Elementary School and in the community.

The Carver Community. Currently, the Carver community is primarily a residential neighborhood; however, some commercial and industrial land uses exist within its boundaries. The area was established in the 1840s and quickly developed into a working class neighborhood. It became the home for freed slaves and eastern European immigrants. At one time the neighborhood had a population of 5,000 residents, but by the 1990s that number had dwindled to fewer than 1,000.

When the partnership began in 1996, the Carver neighborhood had numerous challenges. It had the highest rate of vacant housing in the City of Richmond with a rate of 29.6 percent, equivalent to 230 vacant properties. Carver ranked the highest in violent crime and second highest in property crime among the 33 neighborhoods in the city’s third precinct. The unemployment rate was 12.4 percent; twice the average of the city, and 18 percent of the families fell below the poverty line. Carver Elementary School served 1,000 children, 98 percent of whom qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The majority of these elementary school students reside in Gilpin Court, the largest public housing community in Richmond. Carver students’ scores on standardized tests were among the lowest in the Richmond school system.

Today the neighborhood is experiencing remarkable transformation. The social conditions that contributed to the community’s loss of population are reversing. According to the 2000 Census, the vacant housing rate has dropped to 23.1 percent. Unemployment has dropped to 10.3 percent, and the number of families below the poverty level has been reduced to 14.7 percent. Over a three-year period, the neighborhood experienced a 35 percent drop in violent crime and 53 percent reduction
in property crime. The community remains primarily minority, with 94 percent self-
identifying as African American and 5 percent reporting to be European American.
Due to changes in the school zones, the student population at Carver Elementary has
been reduced to 700 students, but the demographics remain about the same.

As predicted by city officials when the partnership began, if social conditions improve,
development will follow. In recent years, restoration of aging homes and a citywide
effort to attract new residents has spurred renewed interest in Carver. The City of
Richmond has invested resources in the redevelopment of Carver through its
Neighborhoods in Bloom program. This nationally recognized program concentrates
Community Development Block Grant funds into targeted neighborhoods. The Carver-
VCU Partnership provided assistance with the Carver community’s application, and
Carver was selected as one of the six targeted neighborhoods. Through this program,
blighted properties have been purchased and either demolished or, if possible, restored
and sold. Urban homesteading and newly constructed homes on cleared lots have also
attracted new home ownership. Recently, two community development corporations
have invested in land for the building of approximately 22 new homes. In addition,
private developers targeting a burgeoning student population at VCU have been drawn
to the neighborhood with a keen interest in converting old warehouses and industrial
buildings into apartments. Development activities targeting VCU students have
presented a new range of concerns for long standing community residents.

Establishment of Partnership

The impetus for the partnership began when Ms. Barbara Abernathy, President of the
Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL), attended a session on universities
and communities at a Neighborhood USA conference in the mid-1990s. Expecting to
learn ways to deter the university from northward expansion, Ms. Abernathy was
surprised that the session was focused on ways in which neighborhoods and urban
universities could collaborate to address challenges that communities face. Armed with
this new perspective, Ms. Abernathy approached Dr. Trani about the establishment of a
partnership between the Carver community and the university that would provide
assistance to the community to offset the growing inconveniences that result from
university encroachment. In a public statement announcing the partnership, Dr. Trani
stated, “It is critical that we build partnerships, not fences, between the University and
our neighbors.” Rather than viewing the shared physical boundary between VCU and
Carver as a dividing line between an academic community and an inner-city
neighborhood, they agreed that a collaborative could be established that would have
far-reaching positive outcomes for the neighborhood, the university, and the city of
Richmond. For VCU, the partnership would provide opportunities for faculty and
students to become involved in the real challenges of urban communities and to apply
their professional skills to the creation of solutions. For the Carver community and
Carver Elementary School, the partnership would provide new resources to address
problems and concerns, and in so doing, create a stimulating learning environment for
all participants. For the City of Richmond, the partnership represented a new model of
collaboration committed to improving the quality of life for a segment of the city.
After the meeting between Dr. Trani and Ms. Abernathy when the partnership was
conceived, the university leadership and city officials publicly expressed support for
the Carver-VCU partnership and it became a university priority.

One of the first steps in this partnership was the establishment of the Carver-VCU
Partnership Steering Committee. Dr. Grace Harris, then Provost, appointed VCU
representatives, which included faculty and staff from the Schools of Education, Social
Work, Business, Nursing, Pharmacy, the Departments of Urban Studies and Planning,
Psychology; the Division of Student Affairs, and the VCU Police. CACIL identified
community residents who represented the racial and economic diversity of the
community. The Committee also included the principal, a teacher, and guidance
counselor of Carver Elementary School and representatives from the Richmond
Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA), Department of Social Services, and
Department of Community Development. Dr. Trani also committed funds for a special
coordinator position at the university dedicated to the partnership and gave the
partnership an administrative home within VCU’s Office of Community Programs. He
was very clear in his message to the university community that the partnership was an
important university-wide initiative and he expected all units to participate in any way
feasible. This message was articulated to the council of deans and communicated
through various university publications. This strong and supportive message from the
university’s president served to encourage and affirm participation of faculty, students,
and staff in the array of partnership activities.

The steering committee was inducted in a formal meeting attended by VCU’s
president, provost, and other administrative leaders as well as the neighborhood’s
member of Richmond City Council and the Director of the Richmond Redevelopment
and Housing Authority. These leaders shared their expectations for the steering
committee and charged the committee with its responsibilities. This public launching
of the partnership provided a critical mandate of support to all participants. The
steering committee would be responsible for setting the priorities for the partnership,
identifying resources, and monitoring the activities. The steering committee would also
select and hire the person to serve as the partnership coordinator. Many of the original
steering committee members remain active to this day.

The steering committee met regularly in places where everyone felt comfortable such
as the local church, the School of Social Work, and Carver Elementary School. These
initial meetings focused on getting to know each other and brainstorming about the
community and university needs and assets. In one session a facilitator helped to focus
on the partnership vision and developed a focus question that would be posed to the
larger community. This session was followed several months later with a large
community meeting at the church. At this spaghetti dinner gathering of 90 people,
including the city manager, the school board representative, and key nonprofit leaders,
an interactive exchange resulted in identifying critical issues and potential resources
from the university and the community. This input served to direct the steering
committee in setting priorities for the partnership and strategies for implementing activities that were sensitive to the community. The steering committee continues to be a vital force in directing the partnership and its agenda.

During the first year of the Carver-VCU Partnership, the Steering Committee developed its mission to “create a shared urban community with a commitment to improving the community’s quality of life including its health, community development, youth development, safety, and community school; and with a commitment to extending the experience of the community into the classroom and the university.”

An initial issue for the partnership was VCU’s potential encroachment into the neighborhood. Dr. Trani made a pledge that was adopted by the Board of Visitors that stated that VCU would not build or invest in any properties north of Marshall Street, the first residential street of the neighborhood. Early in the partnership VCU approached the neighborhood about the construction of a student apartment complex on the south side of Marshall Street. VCU offered to set aside space facing the community that could be used as a community center. With input from the community, the space was designed with a multi-purpose area, a computer lab, a police precinct office, and a suite of offices for the partnership coordinator and outreach programs.

In September 1997, the partnership received a grant from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC). With support from the grant, the partnership focused on two sets of activities. The inner set involved three core activities: Networking and Neighboring; Leadership and Community Training; and Assessment and Evaluation. These activities supported and provided the core structure of the partnership. The second set of activities targeted the specific priorities, challenges and concerns expressed by Carver community residents. These include a focus on (a) Neighborhood Safety, (b) Community and Economic Development, (c) Youth, (d) Community School, and (e) Health Promotion and Services Integration. The fifth focal area, Health Promotions and Services Integration, was based on a desire for improved access to and effective utilization of mental health, physical health, and social services for Carver residents and the children and families served by Carver Elementary School. Each of these five focus areas was assigned to a committee with shared leadership between a Carver community resident and a VCU faculty or staff member.
The inner set of activities focus on capacity building within the community as well as determining needs to be addressed and monitoring partnership progress. The assessment and evaluation activities have utilized an array of methodologies including focus groups, town meetings that incorporated audio response technology, and concept mapping (Allison et al., 2004). The intent was that the areas of leadership development and networking and neighboring would occur early in the partnership and support the work in specific content areas. Ironically, networking and leadership building activities have been the most difficult to launch and are just now in the implementation stages. Hence, the major accomplishments have occurred within the outer circle of partnership activities.

**Partnership Activities**
Each committee took ownership of the capacity building activities that would meet the expressed needs of the community. The committees broadened their membership to include additional residents and representatives from organizations who could contribute to their activities. While the committees developed their independent tasks
and monitored them through regular meetings, the steering committee meetings provided a forum for exchanging information that often led to beneficial linkages. For example, the Economic and Community Development Committee oversaw a study of blighted and tax delinquent properties in the neighborhood. The final report listed the properties and their owners. The VCU police officers on the Safety Committee used this report to contact owners of vacant properties to request permission to set up stakeouts to monitor illegal drug activity, which led to a number of arrests. This example represents one of many unanticipated benefits that result from interdisciplinary efforts.

**Neighborhood Safety.** The partnership established the goal to improve the quality of community life by decreasing actual and perceived neighborhood risks. In addition to funding from the COPC, the VCU Police Department received a grant from the U.S. Justice Department to increase the number of community policing officers in the area, including a bike patrol. The department received jurisdiction of the Carver community in 1998 and that gave it full policing authority. The police have aggressively closed down open-air drug markets, crack houses, and nip joints. They assist with security at Carver Elementary School and have developed an adopt-a-senior program. The results of the VCU police involvement with the Carver community have been tremendous. In a three-year period, major crime in Carver decreased by 48 percent, with violent crime dropping 35 percent and property crime dropping 53 percent. While violent crime in the city dropped at about the same rate as Carver, the property crime drop was only 20 percent for the city. More telling was the Carver residents’ response to their perceptions of helpfulness of police in the neighborhood. In 1998, 45 percent of Carver residents agreed to the statement, “Police are helpful in the Carver community.” In 1999, when the question separated VCU Police from the Richmond police, 52 percent agreed that the Richmond police were helpful and 78 percent agreed that the VCU Police were helpful.

The VCU police have become widely accepted by the neighborhood. Each year they encourage VCU departments to sponsor families at Thanksgiving and Christmas by providing food, clothing, and toys. They have collected and purchased air conditioners and fans for seniors during the summer. They have provided boxes of school supplies for Carver Elementary School children—purchased with their personal funds. Officers attend the monthly meetings of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) and respond to residents’ questions and concerns. VCU is now fully funding the community police officers in the Carver community. In addition, all new VCU police officers receive community policing training, developed during the first years of the community policing efforts in Carver, as a part of their formal training. The VCU police also staff the precinct office located in the Carver-VCU Partnership space on Marshall Street.

**Health Promotion and Social Services Integration.** The primary goal for this area was to promote the physical and mental health of individuals and families in the Carver community. Two strategies were adopted to address this goal: an annual community health fair and the Carver Health Project at Carver Elementary School. The health fair
is offered each spring and brings together approximately 35 vendors from across the
city that provide health and social service information. Faculty and students from
VCU’s Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, and Pharmacy provide services such as
dental check-ups, mammograms, and screenings for blood pressure, vision, hearing, and
prostate cancer. Immunizations for children are provided as well as consultations for
seniors about their medications. AmeriCorps members and VCU student volunteers
offer face painting for children and assist with serving lunch. The fair has become a
social and educational gathering for the community and a time for many VCU faculty,
students, and staff to mingle with residents. The most recent fair was expanded to
include housing-related information; hence it was transformed into the Health and
Housing Fair. Due to its success, this format will be continued in the future.

Another avenue for addressing physical and mental health needs has been the Carver
Health Project (Allison et al. 2001). With funding support from the COPC grant and
the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, a nurse coordinator from VCU’s School of Nursing has
been assigned to Carver Elementary School. She works closely with the school nurse
to provide services for the 700 students. With the tremendous demands for monitoring
medications and providing immediate services for sick or injured children, the school
nurse rarely has time to concentrate on health education and prevention. Nursing
students supervised by the Carver Health Project Coordinator provide annual health
screenings for all students. Children are then referred to additional services such as a
visit to VCU’s dental van or to an optometrist. In a two-year period, 365 children
received dental evaluations and of these 249, were treated for identified dental
problems. During this same period, the nurse coordinator arranged for 80 children to
receive free eyeglasses through the LensCrafters Vision Program. In addition to
clinical services, the nurse coordinator provides health education workshops for
teachers on topics such as asthma and stress management. She arranges for community
nursing students to go into the classrooms and teach on topics such as dental hygiene,
hand washing, bicycle safety, and Halloween safety. She provides physical exams for
children who require them for school entrance, daycare, sports participation, or
Special Olympics. The mere presence of the nurse coordinator in the school makes it
possible for her to ascertain students’ physical and social needs and then respond to
those needs with resources at VCU and in the broader community. The School of
Nursing has provided support to continue this position beyond the funding provided by
the duPont Fund.

Another component of the Carver Health Project is the provision of counseling and
support services to students and their families. The School of Social Work and the
Department of Psychology have assigned graduate students to the school. As a
component of their clinical training, all child clinical psychology students are assigned
to Carver throughout their doctoral program. During their first year at VCU they
provide tutoring to Carver students, during their second year they provide assessments,
and by their third year they are providing individual and family counseling. The Social
Work students support the guidance counselors by providing mentoring for identified
students and small group sessions on topics such as anger management for boys and
self-esteem enhancement for girls. The services have been extended to Albert Hill
Middle School in circumstances when an entire family has been in crises. The principal and the VCU students and faculty meet monthly to exchange ideas and discuss issues. This has proven to be an effective interdisciplinary meeting that has improved the services for children and the learning for VCU students and faculty.

**Educational Opportunities for Carver Elementary School.** A major goal of the partnership has been to increase the academic achievement of Carver students through an increase in parental and community involvement in the school’s activities. The academic challenges at Carver Elementary are enormous. Each year, VCU students tutor or provide special assistance at Carver through their service-learning courses in Psychology, Education, and Art Education. A team of AmeriCorps and America Reads tutors provides intensive reading tutoring to identified first and second graders. As many as 80 VCU students volunteer weekly to serve as mentors in the Carver Promise program, a long-term mentoring program. VCU faculty have provided professional development in the areas of science education and reading. Carver Elementary School, with the assistance of VCU faculty, was the first school in the City of Richmond (and one of only 20 in the state) to receive a two-year $200,000 Reading Excellence grant, which began July 2001. The reviewers commented that Carver has developed strong partnerships that will support its ability to achieve the goal of having all students read at grade level by the third grade. Two faculty from VCU’s School of Education have provided extensive staff development and coaching services for the entire Carver instructional staff, and a VCU graduate student has assisted with the evaluation for this grant.

The actual academic outcomes as measured by Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) tests reveal steady progress toward the state required accreditation goals. Students have done well in Science, Writing, and Technology—areas where VCU has provided special assistance. The school and community have created a stronger bond that has enhanced the overall services for children and families.

**Community and Economic Development.** An ultimate goal for the community has been to increase the availability of affordable and quality housing. To accomplish this goal, the community established a more fundamental goal of creating a master plan that would address the blighted properties, examine appropriate uses of unused lands, and propose improvements in public areas. The community worked very closely with the primary faculty member and committee co-chair, Dr. Morton Gulak, from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Through various Urban Studies and Planning graduate classes and studio projects, key work was done for the community. Projects examined the issues of vacant and tax delinquent properties, market feasibility for the community, and revitalizing the commercial corridors. The final document, *Carver: The Neighborhood Plan* (VCU Urban Studies and Planning 2002), has been approved by CACIL and the City Planning Commission. It is anticipated that it will be approved by City Council and incorporated into the City of Richmond’s comprehensive plan.
Because of the master plan planning process, the Carver community was selected as one of the City’s “Neighborhood in Bloom communities,” which entitles it to receive additional Community Development Block Grant funds for neighborhood revitalization. This program provides resources to the community over a six-year period to refurbish a core area of the neighborhood. In addition, the study on vacant properties resulted in new legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly that will reduce the number of years before cities can take action on abandoned properties. Delegate Viola Baskerville, the representative for the Carver neighborhood, introduced this bill.

A Play to Preserve the Community’s History. During steering committee meetings in the early stages of the partnership, community members commented on the fact that many of their senior residents were moving away or dying, and as they left, so did their stories and knowledge about the history of the community. They wondered aloud if seniors could be interviewed and their stories transformed into a play about the community. This idea was taken seriously by the steering committee and with a multidisciplinary team of faculty and students, a play was written and produced in November 2000. The play, Sheep Hill Memories, Carver Dreams, was written by a faculty member in VCU’s Department of English (Browder 2001). The oral histories were collected by students from Urban Studies and Planning, Sociology, and Psychology, along with community members. In addition to COPC funds, the project was supported by a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy. The play was performed by the Richmond Community Theatre Guild, an organization founded 30 years ago by a Carver resident who is now an octogenarian.

The VCU Theatre Outreach Council, a student organization, provided the technical support for the play. Three hundred and fifty people, consisting of residents from Carver and other urban neighborhoods, VCU administrators, students, and staff, and city officials, attended the two performances. The play was followed by a panel discussion about the nature and importance of urban neighborhoods. The audience was asked to complete a survey about how the play had affected their image of the Carver neighborhood.

The survey results revealed that 58 percent of the respondents knew almost nothing or very little about the history of the Carver neighborhood. Before the play, only 27 percent of the audience thought the Carver community had any promise as a neighborhood but, as a result of the production, 68 percent agreed that their impressions of the neighborhood had changed. Eighty percent claimed they had a better understanding of challenges faced by urban neighborhoods, and 60 percent agreed the panel added to their understanding of the challenges faced by urban neighborhoods. Dr. Trani attended the performance and served as host for a post-performance reception. The transcripts from the 36 interviews and copies of the research materials are in a special collection at the VCU library.

In a debriefing with the project participants, all parties claimed that the project had been a positive learning experience for their organizations as well as an educational service to the community. The Community Theatre Guild praised the level of expertise and dedication of the VCU students and faculty and acknowledged that they gained
new knowledge and experience that would serve their company. The VCU students claimed that this project gave them a sense of purpose and an appreciation of the experiences of the Theatre Guild as well as the history of Richmond. As one student said, “Their art has purpose and academic work pales in comparison.” The VCU Theatre faculty commented that the spirit of the Guild and its founder were inspirational; some members have belonged for 27 years. There was a cross-pollination of energy between all participants.

This project represents the flexibility of the partnership to respond to community needs and to grasp opportunities to address those needs. It was also a tremendous collaboration across VCU disciplines and with various community groups.

**Attributions for Partnership Successes**

After five years as the Carver-VCU Partnership, we began to prepare for a HUD New Directions grant. A first step was a session with the steering committee where we discussed the accomplishments of the partnership and, more importantly, explored the question “How did we make it happen?” There was a high turnout for this meeting with good representation from the community and the university. The variety of comments was very enlightening and seemed to fall into three categories: organizational structure, committed people, and mutual benefits. These categories parallel the guidelines discussed earlier about working partnerships.

**Organizational Structure.** From the beginning, the governance of the partnership was with the steering committee that was composed of equal representation from the Carver community and the university. The Steering committee was co-chaired by the president of the civic association and the university’s designated administrator. The subcommittees followed the same leadership pattern with a co-chair from the university and one from the community. The initial meetings were held in the community in living rooms, church fellowship halls, and the local elementary school. These were all places where the community felt comfortable and empowered and the university could demonstrate its genuine desire to consider the community as an equal partner.

During the first years of the partnership, annual retreats were held where questions were addressed such as, “Who are the key decision-makers at the university and what relationship do they have to the university representatives?” It was important to use these times to clarify roles within the university and the distinctions between administration and faculty in their roles as they relate to the community. For example, the day before one retreat the local newspaper printed a story that stated the university’s intentions to play all home basketball games in the new arena, bordering the Carver community, instead of the city’s coliseum. This was viewed as a real breach with the Carver community, since the university’s previous assurance was that home games would continue to be played at the downtown coliseum and they would not suffer the inconvenience of crowds at the sporting events. At the retreat the faculty were seriously questioned about this policy shift. When the community members heard
faculty say that the newspaper article was also the first they had learned of this change they realized that, like the community, faculty are often not informed of the actions of the university's administration. Thus began a better understanding of the different university units and positions of power. But it was of critical importance to the community that the leadership of the steering committee had access to the university administration so that concerns could be communicated and responses delivered. The university president and provost agreed to meet at least once a year with the steering committee for an open discussion, and the co-chairs of the steering committee have access to the provost for any immediate concerns.

Retreats were also the time for story telling by older members of the community to give us a shared history of the community and its traditions.

**Committed People.** The individuals selected to serve on the steering committee had a strong commitment to community development and empowerment. From the university, the provost selected individuals because they had a history of personal or professional community involvement. The community members later referred to them as "community activists in university clothing." The members from the community were all individuals willing to take a risk to "trust" the university and its extension of partnership. This was not an easy role since there were still many in the community who felt the partnership could compromise the community's real interests. There were assertions of "doing business with the devil" and questions about how the community could have a real partnership when one partner is the obvious 800 pound gorilla. The time spent developing relationships among the steering committee helped to navigate periods of tension on several occasions. One such time was soon after the announcement of the grant from HUD. At a subsequent civic association meeting, new faces appeared who accused VCU of taking money that belonged to the community. They wanted to find out how they could access these new resources for their purposes. Because community residents had been involved with every step of the grant development, they responded to the demands and questions. They assured these individuals that Carver had been in the driver seat of determining what activities were important and how the resources would be used for the community. Fortunately, the community representatives were able to understand both the potential of the partnership’s benefits and its dangers, coming to the table with a dose of healthy skepticism.

A core group of steering committee members remain involved after seven years. What began as a university or community obligation has evolved into personal caring relationships between individuals with a sense of investment. As a result, community members described the university representatives as "real" and "genuine," claiming that when they encountered someone from the university in different settings, they were always greeted and treated with respect. While everyone acknowledged that there had been rocky times in the partnership’s development, we were willing to work through the issues and the result is a feeling of open and honest communication among steering committee members. The primary reward for involvement with the partnership has been the intrinsic sense that one’s contributions are helping to transform a community.
However, each year the provost acknowledges the service of the faculty members with letters of appreciation which are sent to their department chairs and deans. These letters serve as documents to incorporate into faculty members' annual reviews.

As for the community representatives, it was noted that their efforts for the partnership often entailed considerable personal sacrifice of time and effort. Typically the same individuals took on the extra responsibilities to co-chair committees and to participate in the various activities. For this reason, ambitious agendas would occasionally need to be adjusted or curtailed. Patience and flexibility were key to steady progress.

It has been critical to have retreats or extended meetings to “check-in” on our progress. Occasionally these meetings were facilitated by someone outside of the partnership to allow for objective processing of issues, especially when tensions had developed. These times were also designed to acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments.

Mutual Benefits. At the beginning of the partnership, the assumption by all was that the key recipient of benefits from the partnership efforts would be the Carver community. In fact, to even consider benefits to VCU would be viewed as opportunistic for faculty, students, and the institution. Yet, in the process of identifying accomplishments, we recognized grants received, articles published, and student research and learning. Over the course of the partnership, community members had become more astute about how universities work. They understood that to engage faculty in community-based work, the faculty had to find a way to fit this work into the roles and rewards system. So, to write a grant with a focus on Carver or publish a paper based on the work in the community for example, was understood as critical to keeping an important faculty member involved in the partnership. It became apparent that it is acceptable to enter into partnerships with a public expectation that all parties can and will benefit. In fact, that position is the more honest and trustworthy position to assume.

The process acknowledged various benefits of the partnership for the community, several of which have already been described. When the partnership began, the primary concerns were to reduce crime and to focus on the social fabric of the community. Public officials had claimed that once these issues were addressed, the physical revitalization would follow. Indeed, with the VCU Police jurisdiction extended to cover Carver, the crime rate dropped dramatically. This new responsibility confronted the VCU Police with a need to enhance its community policing capabilities. Community police training was developed and has been integrated into the VCU training academy, which is required of all police officers. The need in the community generated a change in the training and operations of a university unit.

Confidence in development was then spurred by the City Council selecting Carver as one of the “Neighborhoods in Bloom” and committing Community Development Block Grant funds for rehabilitation of a core section of the community. Now the community is challenged to manage the development requests and proposals for new housing and conversion of large abandoned buildings to apartments.
Another benefit has been the change in the way VCU does business with its neighboring communities. From the onset, Dr. Trani considered the Carver-VCU Partnership a university priority, a position that he has reiterated in various university and community forums and publications. This assertion set the expectation for all university units to reach out to the Carver community and to support their faculty and staff in activities that involve the partnership. As a result, university administrators consult with steering committee members when their areas are contemplating an activity or issue that could have some bearing on the community. There is an increased willingness to negotiate with the community and an effort to do no harm. This is especially true when building programs are involved. The university attends civic association meetings to present building plans when they are in the initial stages of planning and seeks community input. Developers with any association with the university are strongly encouraged to do the same. Units of the university also take the initiative to actively reach out to the community; for example, the athletic department offers scholarships to basketball camps, and student organizations sponsor tutoring and enrichment services to residents.

Finally, VCU students have experiential learning opportunities within the Carver community and at Carver Elementary School. Students are involved with Carver through participation in the VCU AmeriCorps and America Reads program, in service-learning courses, Urban Studies studio courses, internships, and clinical assignments. They also learn about community-based issues from talks provided by Carver community members who come to class or through the examples provided by faculty who are engaged in activities with Carver.

**Sustainability of Partnerships**

Sustainability is a critical issue from the first day that a university/community partnership is formed. The guidelines noted earlier apply to the commencement and the long-term survival of a partnership. For a partnership to endure, an infrastructure with committed resources has to be embedded within the university. In our experience, having an active community civic association and the university’s prior structural and financial commitment to the development of an Office of Community Programs provided critical infrastructures on which to build a partnership. In addition, the continuity, commitment, and ongoing relationship development between the university and community leadership within the Partnership has been vital. A coordinator for the Carver-VCU Partnership supported by university funds plus a dedicated physical space to serve partnership activities has made it possible to deliver the requested activities as well as to respond to opportunities and needs as they arise. The value of the partnership also has to be embraced in the university’s mission and strategic plan. As for the community, the civic association maintains the responsibility of appointing individuals to the Partnership Steering Committee and having them serve as liaisons between the organizations.

The governance structure provides the foundation of the partnership. As noted earlier, the dedication of a core of university and community members has been critical to the
formation of trust that can withstand times of tension. Yet, the group needs to be careful not to be perceived as enmeshed to the point of exclusion. The involvement of new people nourishes the partnership with new energy. New members bring fresh ideas and possibilities plus a willingness to assume duties.

The integration of Partnership activities into university programs and curricula has been central in supporting the benefits that the university receives from this work. For example, the School of Nursing and Department of Psychology have fully and structurally integrated student participation at Carver Elementary School into their graduate and professional training curricula. Graduates from these programs report on the value and importance of these training experiences as developing professionals. Service-learning courses and programs such as America Reads provide ongoing programmatic support for the community. Programs without the commitment or flexibility to provide such educational opportunities may limit their students’ access to meaningful experiential learning activities that can provide rich training.

Sustainability of the partnership is contingent on both parties remaining as strong independent entities. Hence, the leadership development and building of strong community capacity is essential for the community’s ability to advocate for itself with the university, the city, and other major institutions in its vicinity. A strong civic association with operational bylaws and the diversification of duties in the association builds a base of promising leaders. The Partnership can provide the consultations and technical assistance for the organizational structure and provide the training and mentoring of residents assuming leadership roles.

Finally, the Partnership must have the ongoing capacity to seek funds necessary to support on-going and new activities. Grant writing is a role that university personnel can provide as funds are sought from local foundations or corporations to support particular projects. The likelihood of funding is higher if the community’s voice is clearly articulated in the proposal and there is no doubt that the community is intricately involved in the proposal process.

**Conclusion**

Forming a long-term partnership is an on-going learning process for which there is no guaranteed mold for success, much like a marriage. Every community and university has its unique resources, challenges, politics, and idiosyncrasies. Reflecting on our experience with the Carver-VCU Partnership, it is difficult to identify anything specifically that we would do differently in the partnership’s formation or processes for implementation. We have had our share of disappointments with not meeting certain expectations within established timeframes, but with patience we have found that the accomplishments far outweigh the failures.

It has been noted that campuses often address concerns with their communities by establishing advisory boards or inviting members of the community to sit on existing campus committees. This approach has been described as treating the community as guests at a dinner party rather than as members of a family (Goodman and MacNeil
1999). At a dinner party, individuals are polite and feelings of hospitality and companionship are shared for the moment. In contrast, at the family dinner table one finds noise, joy, chaos, and occasional dissonance. But as Goodman and MacNeil note, "Underneath it is trust and participation, because everyone is a stakeholder who cares about the long-term health of the family and who knows that we will all have dinner together again tomorrow.... Instead of treating the communities we work with as guests, we need to embrace them as family—family whose members understand that they depend on each other to thrive." A true partnership requires us to add another permanent leaf to the family dinner table and partake in a home-cooked meal.

References


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CARVER
The Neighborhood Plan
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CARVER IS A VITAL NEIGHBORHOOD with great strengths and opportunities. Stable institutions such as Carver Elementary School, the Moore Street Baptist Church, and the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) have played an important role in the neighborhood’s past and continue to serve its people in the present. Carver also exhibits historic homes, a classic grid of urban streets, tree lined sidewalks and a location that is accessible to the entire region. The physical and social environments of Carver come together to establish a sense of identity and place in this urban neighborhood.

Carver also faces challenges. Its population has declined significantly over the past years, many of its older homes are in need of improvement and, although declining, crime is still present. Marshall Street, on Carver’s southern industrial boundary, contains vestiges of an older economy in need of change that reflects compatible uses with the neighborhood’s revitalization and emerging commerce.

Once a severely blighted neighborhood with few prospects for revitalization, Carver has experienced new growth in recent years as a result of the dedicated efforts of its residents and of public redevelopment efforts.

Due to these efforts there also is renewed interest by private investors to rehabilitate or construct buildings in the neighborhood. While some of these development plans further the neighborhood’s goal of becoming a single-family affordable residential community, other efforts would serve to undermine its achievements.

This neighborhood plan builds on the foundation established by the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan as written by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) in collaboration with the Carver neighborhood in 1986 and as amended through 1996. While the Conservation and Redevelopment plan focuses on a specific area within the neighborhood, this plan encompasses the entire Carver area thus assuring that all issues vital to achieving a vibrant community are addressed.

The Carver Neighborhood Plan will enable the Planning Commission and the City Council to make informed and consistent decisions regarding specific development projects within the area. The Plan also can be used to guide the allocation of public finan-
cial resources and to assist investors in identifying viable development opportunities. Lastly, an approved neighborhood plan provides a level of security to Carver residents that their emotional and financial investment in their community will be worthwhile.

**ROLE OF THE CARVER – VCU PARTNERSHIP**

In 1996, the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) formed the Carver-VCU Partnership with a goal of “creating a safe and nurturing community for everyone who lives, works, and studies in the area.” A steering committee composed of Carver residents, VCU faculty, and representatives of Carver Elementary School, the RRHA, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Community Development was appointed to direct partnership activities.

In 1996, steering committee members from Carver outlined to the Partnership Steering Committee specific needs of their community. VCU faculty representing the College of Humanities and Sciences and the Schools of Education, Nursing, and Social Work then worked with Carver representatives in writing three-year work plans to address these needs. The work plan proposed by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning addressed issues related to the built environment and has thus supported the development of this neighborhood plan. Activities undertaken by this department with the Carver neighborhood have resulted in three reports authored by Dr. John Accordino and urban planning graduate students. These are: “The Broad Street Corridor Commercial Plan”, “Addressing the Vacant Property Problem in Carver”, and “Revitalizing Carver: Preliminary Analysis of Issues and Opportunities”. At the same time, Urban Studies and Planning Professor Dr. Morton Gulak and graduate students were engaged in activities specifically related to the development of this planning document. These included an assessment of Carver housing conditions, data collection and analysis, and development of revitalization strategies. The document “History, Urban Design Elements and Historic Resources of the Carver Neighborhood” and three student authored neighborhood plans resulted from these efforts and serve as a basis for this plan. These activities have brought Carver resi-
dents and VCU faculty and students together frequently as they have worked toward a mutual goal. CACIL President Barbara Abernathy has been instrumental in facilitating communication between all parties, thus increasing the relevance and accuracy of any specific endeavor.

These and other activities undertaken by the Carver-VCU Partnership have been supported by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1997. Oversight of work plan activities has come from the Partnership’s five committees: Community Safety, Community and Economic Development, Community School, and Youth. The Community and Economic Development Committee, working through CACIL, has guided the preparation of this neighborhood plan.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Neighborhood Planning

The Carver Neighborhood Plan has been prepared by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning for the Carver Area Civic Improvement League. Its preparation has been guided by the vision of Carver residents for a revitalized community. On June 20, 1998 and May 24, 1999, CACIL held two community wide town meetings for the purpose of identifying neighborhood goals. These goals were then compiled and on November 30, 1999, at a Carver community meeting, the neighborhood assembled to lay the foundation and begin identifying specific elements for inclusion in the neighborhood plan.

All current Carver property owners, neighborhood residents, and business owners were notified of this November meeting and of its purpose. This ensured that all potentially interested parties were aware of this activity and would have an opportunity to express their viewpoints. Also invited were representatives from RRHA, the entity largely responsible for redevelopment in Carver to date; the City of Richmond’s Department of Community Development; and VCU. Fifty people were in attendance. At this meeting Dr. Morton Gulak explained the planning process, noting that the purpose of a master plan was to provide direction to the City, guide revitalization activities of property owners and developers, and assist CACIL in managing neighborhood growth and development. Actions taken at this first meeting were the development of a vision statement, the adoption of the goals previously identified at the town meetings, and the appointing by CACIL of an advisory planning committee composed of seven Carver residents and/or property owners.

The CACIL planning committee held five meetings between June 6, 2000 and August 21, 2000. All committee meetings were held in the Carver neighborhood at Moore Street Baptist Church and were led by Morton Gulak. Meetings were open to the public and were always attended by other interested Carver residents and business representatives.

Prior to these planning meetings, the Carver-VCU Partnership Economic and Community Development Subcommittee met to discuss the unique planning issues of West Marshall Street. A separate sub-committee for this planning focus was formed and began meeting August 1999. The two sub-commit-
tees continued to meet concurrently during the planning process. Each committee was informed of the other's actions and numerous persons attended both committee meetings. Updates regarding all planning related activities were given to the general CACIL membership at their monthly meetings.

**Marshall Street Corridor**

An additional facet to this planning process has been the activity of the Carver-VCU Partnership, Economic and Community Development Sub-Committee regarding a focussed plan for West Marshall Street. CACIL requested this sub-committee to meet with business representatives, property owners, and community residents to work through the issues that will guide future development along this street. These separate planning meetings were deemed necessary due to the mixed-use character of the Marshall Street corridor that is different from the predominantly residential portion of the neighborhood. Specifically, Marshall Street contains a mix of private manufacturing, commercial, retail, and residential uses in older historic buildings. The street also is impacted by new VCU buildings (Siegel Center, Fine Arts, and the impending student housing and sports medicine buildings), and will be altered further if proposals for new VCU buildings and those from private developers are constructed. In addition, RRHA is strengthening the residential character of the street with rehabilitation to presently vacant housing stock.

The Economic and Community Development Sub-Committee and interested property owners, businesses representatives, and community residents held their first meeting August 10, 1999 with the purpose of developing a vision for and identifying needed improvements to West Marshall Street. The most difficult issue for this committee was zoning, as the current zoning of Light Industrial (M1) is no longer appropriate with the activities now in place or with the vision of the future shared by Carver residents.

The Marshall Street Corridor planning committee held three meetings at the VCU Welcome Center during the past two years. All meetings were open to the general public and were well attended by both community residents and business interests.

**Plan Approval**

The final Carver Neighborhood Plan was presented to the full CACIL membership on September 26, 2000 and was approved by an overwhelming majority.

Implementation of the Carver Neighborhood Plan will now require adoption by the City of Richmond Planning Commission and the City Council. In addition, an amendment to the Richmond Master Plan reflecting the proposed land use and zoning changes will be necessary so that this plan is in conformance with that document.

**NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES**

The Carver community is located immediately to the west of Richmond's central business district. The neighborhood is bordered on the south by West Marshall Street, the north by Interstate 95, the east by Belvidere Street and on the west by Lombardy Street. (See Neighborhood Area map) Adjacent residential neighborhoods are Jackson Ward to the east and Newtowe-West to the west.

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1 Virginia Commonwealth University, “Carver-VCU Background,” (Richmond, Va., 1997).
CARVER HISTORY
THE CARVER HISTORY is one of explosive growth followed by a struggle for survival. During the neighborhood’s early years it was defined by outside forces: the location of the railroad, city industrial growth, and Richmond’s residential expansion. Both immigrant families and former slaves found a home and a job within the neighborhood’s borders. Years later the effects of racial politics become evident. From 1930 through 1960, the area was considered a “Negro neighborhood,” one in which African-Americans were permitted to live. During this time, with a dense population and limited available housing, some sections became blighted. In spite of the mixed housing conditions, a thriving community existed – a community in which many worked, worshiped, and played.

Carver lies to the west of downtown Richmond bordered generally on the south by West Marshall Street, on the north Interstate 95, on the east Belvidere Street, and on the west Lombardy Street. The development of this area has been significant in the history of the City of Richmond. Its history is presented in five eras: Early Development 1767-1866, City Annexation and Growth 1867-1919, Early City Planning 1920-1949, Urban Renewal 1950-1985, and Neighborhood Revitalization 1986-1999. Within each era residential and industrial growth will be explored.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT: 1767 – 1866

In the early 1700s, William Byrd III, son of Richmond’s founder, owned the land to the west of Richmond that would become the Carver neighborhood. This land was characterized by a rolling terrain, which sloped from a flat plateau along its southern edge toward the steep ravine of Bacon’s Quarter Branch, a creek, to the north. Numerous small springs bisected the area. The largest spring, which flowed in the area of today’s Hancock and Harrison Streets, impacted land development by both fostering growth along its banks and slowing expansion to the west.

The area began attracting investors in the early 1800s when the Richmond Turnpike (later renamed Broad Street) was constructed providing access. Residences were built along the eastern edge as early as 1818 (Figure 1). The northern edge was less desirable as a residential location due to the rugged ravine formed by Bacon’s Quarter Branch and thus was the location of brickyards along West Leigh Street.

Carver began to resemble a small neighborhood in the 1840s and 1850s when row houses were built along West Marshall, West Clay, and Catherine Streets between Munford and Graham (later renamed Goshen) Streets for European-American settlers. These early homes usually exhibited the Classic Revival or Greek Revival architectural styles. Many homes were owned and occupied by shopkeepers, mechanics, bricklayers and carpenters, but large real estate owners or builders also constructed homes as
investments. During this antebellum period, free blacks had built homes in the vicinity of West Leigh Street and Brook Avenue, and it is likely that some of these homes were within the present Carver boundaries.\(^2\) By 1865, Clay and Leigh Streets had been extended beyond the city limits to the general vicinity of Lombardy Street. These streets provided access to interior land parcels thus furthering continued growth.\(^3\)

**ANNEXATION AND GROWTH: 1867 – 1919**

The second era in Carver's history began with city annexation in 1867. Carver, then referred to as “Sheep Hill,” was to become one of the most densely populated sections of the city.\(^4\) As a primarily residential neighborhood continued to grow along the eastern streets, industrial development to the south and west was being driven by the presence of the Richmond Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad whose tracks ran down Broad Street before angling to the northwest at Hancock Street. Large three to four story industrial structures were soon built along the streets of West Marshall, West Clay, Bowe and Lombardy. The Peter Strumpf Brewing Company, c.1890, became the earliest of these large-scale industries when it purchased and expanded the Home Brewery that was located on the spring at Harrison and Clay Streets. At least eight additional large industries built factories in Carver between 1895 and 1915\(^5\) (Figures 2 and 3). Also thriving were small neighborhood businesses. Black owned businesses in 1906 included watchmaker Marcellus Waller, blacksmith Benjamin Waller, and grocer John Pryor. By 1910, listings in the Hill City Directory of African-American businesses included sixteen grocery stores, located primarily on Catherine, West Leigh and Moore Streets, and the University Pharmacy at 825 West Leigh Street.

Industrial growth, with its accompanying demand for workers, was the dominant factor promoting residential growth in the new neighborhood. By 1889, single-family dwellings had been built on all major streets. These homes were built predominately in the Italianate or Queen Anne architectural style. As early as 1886 tenement housing had also been built along Ram Cat Alley between Munford and Graham Streets and, in the early 1900s, apartments were erected on the cross streets of Hancock, Harrison, and Bowe.\(^6\)

Early city directories indicate Carver was a predominately working class neighborhood though teachers and physicians were also present in 1879. The housing pattern at the time was a primarily segregated one with African-Americans living between West...
Leigh Street and Bacon’s Quarter Branch and primarily European-Americans settling along West Marshall, West Clay and Catherine Streets. By the 1870s there was increased integration, yet specific streets remain segregated – West Clay Street was entirely European-American, while the cross-streets of Gilmer, Hancock, Kinney, Norton, and Oak were occupied by African-Americans. Segregated city housing policies and movement by European-Americans to new suburbs would lead to Carver becoming almost entirely African-American by 1930.

Public transportation would have been an important issue to these early residents. By May 1888, the first electric trolleys were operating through the neighborhood along the Clay Street Line. Passenger rail service became convenient when the RF&P opened the Elba Station at West Broad and Pine Streets (1880) and the Richmond to Ashland Electric Railway began operations from a terminal at 814 West Broad Street (1907). The construction of a railway-elevated trestle destroyed numerous dwellings between Broad and Moore Streets and loomed above neighborhood homes (Figure 4). A number of neighborhood private and public institutions were also founded in the last half of the nineteenth century. The first schools established were private schools for African-American students: Moore Street Industrial School in 1878 and Hartshorn Memorial College, for young women, in 1883 (Figure 5). Two public elementary schools built at the time were Elba School (1880), for European-American children, at 1000 West Marshall Street and Moore School (1887), for African-American children, at 1113 Moore Street. Residents also founded churches: Moore Street Missionary Baptist Church (812 Moore Street in 1875), Elba Park Church, and West Clay Street Baptist Church. In addition to these schools and churches, community gathering places would have been “Spring Garden Park” at Harrison and Clay Streets and the Broad Street baseball grounds at Lombardy and Broad Streets.

**EARLY CITY PLANNING: 1920-1949**

In the 1920s, the neighborhood focus began to change from one of expansion to one of maintaining a viable community. Dense housing conditions, older and deteriorating housing stock, and little private housing reinvestment led to areas plagued by unhealthy conditions. The Richmond city government, faced with the physical deterioration of central city neighborhoods, began to consider the public’s role in the provision of affordable housing. Carver, then known as “Uptown,” was among the areas significantly impacted by the city’s plans.

The planning movement had begun in Richmond in 1919 with the formation of an

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*Figure 3: British American Tobacco Company at 700 to 900 Lombardy Street in 1914.*

Source: Valentine Museum

*Figure 4: Richmond to Ashland Electric Railway trestle over 800 block of West Marshall Street in 1907.*

Source: Valentine Museum
interim planning committee. Following a national trend, land use zoning was one of the first areas addressed and in 1927 the City Council adopted the city’s first zoning map. Zoning for Carver deviated from existing land use in that the north side of West Marshall Street and the south side of West Clay Street were zoned industrial to the west of Gilmer Street. Though some industries were located in this area, the eastern portions of these streets were primarily residential and thus early zoning favored industrial expansion.11

At the same time studies were documenting Carver’s dense residential conditions – 55.9 persons per acre and a population of almost five thousand residents.12 Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the city grappled with the problem of providing affordable housing in central city neighborhoods while also altering land use to stimulate the city’s economic growth. Extensive redevelopment plans were proposed with removal of blighted properties, slum clearance, as the first step. By the late 1940s the issue for Carver residents was the threat of wholesale housing clearance when in fact many neighborhood homes were soundly constructed but in need of repair.13 As city redevelopment plans stalled due to lack of consensus, industrial zoning remained in place along Carver’s perimeter and new factories were constructed. These businesses, while providing jobs to residents, also discouraged private reinvestment in the area as a residential neighborhood.

For many during these years, daily life in Carver was vibrant and supportive. As in the earlier era, the neighborhood’s African-American population owned small businesses. In 1930, the Hill’s city directory documents twenty-two black owned businesses. These included barber and beauty shops, cleaners, shoe repair shops, a jewelry store, a physician, a nursing home, and restaurants. Jewish and German owned corner stores were also prevalent, and would continue to dominate the neighborhood grocery business through 1940 (Figure 6). The African-American community’s pressing need for
better schools was finally addressed in 1938 with the opening of Maggie L. Walker High School at Lombardy and Leigh Streets (Figure 7) and in 1949 when a large addition was built onto the Moore Street School and Elba Elementary closed. The former enlarged elementary school was renamed George Washington Carver Elementary School. This school, along with providing a modern educational facility for neighborhood children, also provided the neighborhood with a new name – Carver.14

**URBAN RENEWAL: 1950 – 1985**

Between 1950 and 1985 the city implemented programs to address needs identified in the 1946 city master plan. Most important to Carver were those plans dealing with transportation and housing issues. These plans required extensive redevelopment within the neighborhood and thus prompted residents to organize in an effort to influence public policy.

In 1950, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) conducted a housing study of the 122-acre area encompassing all of Jackson Ward – including northern and eastern Carver. This study revealed a market for new housing close to the city’s center and again confirmed severely deteriorating housing conditions. The first “Carver Plan” was part of the resulting Jackson Ward redevelopment strategy. The Carver plan specifically called for the razing of more than 400 dwellings to make way for a turnpike, the extension and widening of Belvidere Street, and allocation of land for industrial reuse – it immediately created controversy.15 The newly formed Carver Displacement League, representing a neighborhood viewpoint, proposed a program of spot removal and rehabilitation and attempted to educate the general public by stressing that newspaper coverage had focused on deteriorated rental properties and was thus misleading (Figure 8). League president Oliver P. Chiles stated, “We would not have you believe we are against progress or against the city being made more beautiful, but we are gravely concerned with one fact and that is, that this progress and beauty not be purchased by those persons who are least able to do so.”16 Despite neighborhood concerns, the Carver redevelopment plan moved forward.

Although the city and RRHA had rejected the residents’ recommendation that rehabilitation be substituted for a total clearance strategy, the city Health Department designated Carver for housing code enforcement and rehabilitation in 1954. The Richmond Home Builders Association also joined the effort and set up a corporation to provide homeowner loans.17 These actions lent support to the idea that clearance was not the only feasible strategy. By 1959, 97 percent of 888 substandard dwellings had been brought into compliance with the city’s housing code and owner occupancy had risen from 40 percent to 60 percent. Carver citizens had actively supported the rehabilitation program and were credited with being integral to its success.18

Area developments the neighborhood could not stop were the continued intrusion of Broad Street commercial ventures, the construction of a truck terminal on residentially zoned Catherine Street, and the city's
construction of a large gas holding tank at Moore and Oak Streets. Also moving forward was the transportation segment of the Carver plan. In the summer of 1958, the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike (Interstate I-95) was built through the northern edge of Carver demolishing Boyd, Williams, and Axtell Streets and part of Moore Street. Coinciding with interstate construction was the extension of Belvidere Street along Carver’s eastern boundary. The construction of these roads did remove many dilapidated and unhealthy structures from Carver, but they also had a major impact on the neighborhood by increasing traffic, altering the residential nature of the northern and eastern edges, and creating a division of the neighborhood and the area now known as Jackson Ward. In 1962, the final phase of the Carver plan was implemented with additional clearance by RRHA of deteriorated properties north of Leigh Street and then construction of the ninety-eight unit Hartshorn Home community by private developers (Figure 9). This ranch style housing development offered affordable homes for purchase and had the distinction of being the first of its kind to be insured by the Federal Home Administration.¹⁹

As isolated central city housing redevelopment was being undertaken, the city’s planning commission and the housing authority again evaluated citywide needs and, in 1966, drew up a community renewal plan. This plan highlighted the effects of the existing incompatible land uses in Carver stating that “scattered nonresidential uses, heavy through traffic…and abandoned railroad viaduct constitute problems” and that along Catherine Street incompatible industrial use exerted a “poor influence on [the] residential area.”²⁰ Addressing these issues and rebuilding the residential community would become central to Carver’s survival during the coming years.

In the most recent era, 1986 to 1999, Carver residents and the city have built upon the lessons learned from early urban renewal efforts. During this period the two neighborhood associations, West of Belvidere Neighborhood Association and Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) worked with the city in establishing public policy and joined RRHA in writing a conservation and redevelopment plan. Also, the Carver–VCU Partnership was formed to facilitate these entities working toward mutual goals.

In the early 1980s, Madeline Peters, president of the West of Belvidere Association, led the effort to have Carver designated as a conservation and rehabilitation district. The process had begun in 1985 when RRHA personnel, city planners, and VCU students conducted a preliminary housing survey of Carver. This survey became the basis for “The Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Area Plan,” which was approved by the City Council in 1986. This revitalization plan encompassed an area extending generally from a southern boundary formed by West Marshall and West Clay Streets north to West Leigh Street between...
Munford and Bowe Streets. It centered around five efforts: 1) low interest loans and grants to homeowners for property renovation, 2) urban homesteading – acquisition of vacant houses for low and moderate-income persons willing to repair and occupy them, 3) rehabilitation loans to rental property owners, 4) removal of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, and 5) clearing specific areas for redevelopment.

In the late 1980s CACIL became the primary advocate for the Carver community. Led first by Helen M. Smith, Marilyn Tyler Peters and later by Barbara Abernathy, CACIL worked actively with the RRHA and the city to further the conservation and redevelopment goals. A major hurdle was cleared in 1989 when the zoning was changed from industrial to residential for fifty-six properties in the 800 and 1000 blocks of West Marshall Street and the conservation district was expanded to include these blocks.21

The largest building program proposed in the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan, thirty-four town homes to be located in the 800 blocks of West Leigh and Catherine Streets, was funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1988. The neighborhood worked diligently with RRHA to assure the Victorian style town home plans would complement the neighborhood’s existing architecture. The first of these homes were dedicated in 1994 (Figure 10). Accomplishments under the plan have also included the homesteading program’s purchase, rehabilitation, and sale of thirty-two houses to first-time homeowners and the construction of Smith-Peters Park on Catherine Street.22 Continued revitalization and growth were bolstered in 1999 when the combined Carver/Newtowne-West neighborhood was selected by the city to be one of six city neighborhoods participating in the Neighborhoods in Bloom program. This program committed an increased level of funding to these neighborhoods for redevelopment and rehabilitation activities over a period of two years.

As housing units were being redeveloped into single-family homes, adaptive reuse of
the former industrial buildings to uses compatible with a residential neighborhood became the next challenge. In the past, demolition of large buildings along Broad and Marshall Streets had occurred to make way for new commercial and university structures, such as Virginia Commonwealth University’s Stuart C. Siegel Center, Sports Medicine and School of Fine Arts buildings. But the feasibility of an adaptive reuse strategy was also evident in the wide range of businesses that had moved into the solid factory buildings. In 1999, the Carver Industrial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places to foster reuse by enabling developers to take advantage of the federal and state rehabilitation tax credits. Positive rehabilitation has occurred as Maggie L. Walker High School, vacant for ten years, reopened as the Governor’s School for Government and International Studies in 2001.

SUMMARY

Carver became an established Richmond neighborhood in the last half of the nineteenth century. The presence of the RF&P Railroad along its southern border attracted large industries, which in turn created employment opportunities and thus brought residents to the area. Between 1840 and 1920 Carver was an integrated community of primarily working class residents. By 1930 the neighborhood had become a self-sufficient African-American community with stores, physicians, schools, and churches.

Though a vibrant neighborhood, Carver’s changing demographics, the mixture of industrial and residential uses, the predominately older housing stock, and the bank lending practices in African-American residential areas presented obstacles to its renewal and growth. The city, recognizing that public funds would be needed for revitalization to occur, conducted housing surveys and drew up redevelopment plans during the 1930s and 1940s. These plans, implemented in the 1950s, significantly changed the face of Carver as blighted residences were demolished to make way for roads and for affordable housing.

Early redevelopment plans had little citizen input. In the 1980s, the neighborhood associations gained strength and successfully worked with the city in writing the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan. Results of these efforts are evident in Carver’s new town homes and rehabilitated nineteenth century residences. Adapting former industri-
al buildings to new uses and sustaining revitalization of the core residential neighborhood are Carver’s challenges in the twenty-first century. Success provides a strong foundation to ensure that Carver will continue to be a neighborhood “on the move.”


4 Scott, 302. Also Richard Waller, Interview by Dennis D. Joyner, 1999; Irving Haggins, Interview by Lucy Lucas and Trina Davis, 1999. “Sheep Hill” referred to the early practice of the herding sheep and cattle along Leigh Street to the stockyards and slaughterhouses located along Bacon Quarter Branch.

5 Kimberly M. Chen, “Carver Industrial Historic District,” (Richmond, Va., 1999); 7-2, 8-13, 8-14, 8-15, 8-17. Some factories in Carver were so large they covered as much as half of a block.


8 Richmond, Va., “An Ordinance to Authorize the Construction and Operation of a Street Railway,” 1899(?), 4, 8.

9 William Griffin, One Hundred Fifty Years of History, (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1984); 45. Also Carlton McKenney, Rails in Richmond, (Glendale: Interurban Press, 1986); 95, 100. The trestle was constructed between Graham and Gilmer Streets north from Broad Street. Rail service ended in 1938.

10 Wm. H. Deierhoi, “A Bicentennial Sketch of the Richmond Public Schools,” (Richmond, Va.: Richmond Public Schools, 1976). Enrollment at Moore School was 947 students during its first year. Also Sanborn (1905).


12 Richmond Planning Commission, A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City, (Richmond, 1946); 70, 79, 71, pl. 14, 15, 16. Density was especially high considering Carver’s one and two story housing stock. New housing construction in Carver from 1926 to 1935 only resulted in five houses and one apartment building.

13 Richmond, Master Plan, pl. 25. The 1940 Federal census indicated the number of residences needing major repairs between Henry and Harrison Streets was 5 to 10 percent and between Harrison and Boulevard was 25 to 50 percent.

14 Richmond News Leader, 5 June 1952. The earliest references to Carver as a geographical location are found in Richmond newspaper articles of 1954.

15 Christopher Silver, Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race, (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); 212, 213, 221.

16 Ibid., 219.

17 Richmond Times Dispatch, 20 June 1954. Also Richmond News Leader, 1 July 1959. Financing was a major obstacle impeding success of rehabilitation efforts as few lending institutions would provide loans due to the low assessment value of neighborhood housing. The Home Builders also renovated 1209 Catherine Street to serve both as a rehabilitation model and as headquarters for the Carver Area Citizen’s Committee.

18 Silver, 220. Also Richmond News Leader, 30 June 1959.


20 Richmond City Planning Commission and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Community Renewal Program, Richmond, Virginia, (Richmond, Va.: City, 1966); 60, 61. Also Richmond, zoning map, (1961).


23 Barbara Abernathy, Interview by Kathryn Colwell, 2000. Since the 1980s, CACIL has used the slogan “A neighborhood on the move.”
EXISTING CONDITIONS
RESIDENTIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA REGARDING population and housing has been taken from the 2000 U.S. Census. At the time of the final editing, 2000 census information for income and occupation was not yet available. 1990 census information has been used instead for income and occupation.

Carver lies within the City of Richmond census tract 402. The majority of persons living in this census tract are Carver residents, with residents of the Newtowne-West neighborhood to the west of Lombardy Street comprising approximately 10 percent of the area’s total population.

Population

According to census information provided by Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the population of the Carver area was 1,012 residents in 2000. This represents a decrease of about 6 percent from the previous 1990 statistics when 1,079 people lived in the area. Between 1940 and 2000, Carver experienced a continually shrinking population.

The racial composition of the Carver area in 2000 was 890 blacks, 96 whites, and 26 others. Thus, 88 percent of Carver residents were African American. In 1990, 94 percent of Carver residents were African American.

Population has been significantly influenced by implementation of the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan. The first phase of this plan, acquisition and demolition of vacant and severely deteriorated properties, resulted in a continued decrease in the Carver population. However, subsequent revitalization efforts resulted in new and rehabilitated housing units and will reverse this trend.

According to projections by the VCU planning team, the Carver population is expected to increase in 2002. This population would include new residents relocating to the area as part of the Neighborhoods in Bloom program and also those living in apartment buildings proposed for the north side of Marshall Street. Carver also is impacted by the VCU student housing facility, occupancy approximately 400, on the south side of Marshall Street at Harrison Street. The community will be further impacted by the construction of an additional VCU student housing facility planned for the south side of Marshall at Belvidere. By 2010, with full implementation of this plan, the population within Carver’s borders could reach 1,800 persons.

Resident age is an important consideration in development of a neighborhood plan. In 2000, census data indicates that the median age of Carver residents was 38 years. Children younger than 18 made up approximately 21 percent of the population and those individuals age 65 and over comprised 14 percent. The age groupings were fairly well distributed without concern for one major group like the elderly. Figure 1 indicates the age distribution within Carver as of the 2000 U.S. Census.

Household Structure

Household statistics as documented by the U. S. Census indicate that the Carver area
contained 450 households in 2000. Of these households, 49 percent were composed of unrelated individuals, referred to as “non-families,” and 51 percent were composed of families. Of the family households, a single female headed 119, or approximately 51 percent. The census also indicates that 116 households were composed of someone living alone. The recent experience of the RRHA is that the average age of new residents purchasing homes constructed or rehabilitated by that agency is between the ages of 30 and 35.

Income and Occupation
The median household income for the Carver area in 1990 was $18,438. A comparison of this income to the medium income for the City of Richmond and for the United States as a whole would indicate it to be approximately $5,000 less than that for the city and $11,700 less than the medium income for the U.S. The average income of an individual moving into Carver as a result of RRHA programs is between $20,000 and $25,000.

Further insight regarding income may be gained from the statistic that 41 percent of Carver households earned less than $15,000 per year in 1990. Occupation and number of persons in the labor force directly impact this statistic. In 1990, 45 percent of the neighborhood’s 1,353 residents were in the labor force. But of those in the labor force, 12.6 percent were unemployed. The occupational profile of those employed was 54 percent in service positions or working as operators/laborers, 27 percent in technical or sales positions, 13 percent in managerial occupations, and 6 percent in crafts or repair occupations.

This overview of the population demographics indicates that in 2000, the overall population had continued to decline from earlier years. Although the higher number of single female-headed households may not have indicated a concern, the low household incomes in 1990 imply some special need for their group. The low participation in the workforce also suggests some concern. The higher incomes of new residents coming into Carver through RRHA programs, however, show improvement.

Crime
Crime in the Carver was reduced significantly between 1995 and 1999. This has come about due to the proactive role the neighborhood residents have taken in requesting police assistance with drug related problems and, since 1997, the presence of VCU police in the neighborhood. The VCU police patrol the entire neighborhood and works in conjunction
with the Richmond City Police Department. Figure 2 illustrates the reduction in major crime activities between 1995 and 1999.

The incidence of specific crimes during 1995 and 1999 is illustrated in Figure 3.

Factors which contribute to the continued presence of crime include: vacant houses and abandoned commercial buildings that provide a safe haven for drug users and prostitutes, lack of pedestrian scale street lighting that result in darkly lit sidewalks, and inadequate lighting and overgrown foliage in alleyways that provide hiding places. Implementation of the following neighborhood plan will alleviate many of these factors. Equally important to controlling crime is vigilance on the part of neighborhood residents and their continuing to work with the Richmond City and VCU police officers.

**EXISTING LAND USE\*\*

**Land Uses**

Land use within the Carver community is primarily residential, with industrial and commercial uses along its southern, western, and northeastern edges, and with commercial uses in isolated locations within the interior (see Existing Land Use map). The industrial and commercial locations are primarily in areas that have historically been used for this type of business; along Marshall and Bowe Streets and at street intersections. The residential area is located between Clay and Leigh Streets from Munford Street west to Bowe Street, and north of Leigh Street between Harrison and Lombardy Streets. In addition there are numerous residential structures on the north side of Marshall Street between Gilmer and Harrison Streets.

Other land uses within Carver's boundaries are of either a public nature, George Washington Carver Elementary School in the 1100 block of West Leigh Street and Smith-Peters Park in the 900 block of Catherine Street, or a religious nature, Moore Street Baptist Church at 1408 West Leigh and Bethany Baptist Church at 900 Catherine Street. In addition, several locations are used for off-street parking lots. Most of these lots are adjacent to the structure they serve such as Carver Elementary School, Moore Street Baptist Church, and Saunders Oil Company. A large parking lot at Belvidere and Marshall Streets for VCU students and staff also borders the neighborhood.

Off-street parking for Carver residents is very limited since this nineteenth century neighborhood was built before the automobile era. During weekday business hours, neighborhood residents find that they must compete with area businesses’ employees and customers and VCU faculty and students for parking spaces. In the evening, events at the VCU Siegel Center can compound parking problems further. The RRHA and CACIL have addressed the parking issue for new residential units by ensuring that ample off street parking is incorporated into all development plans approved.

**Zoning**

Zoning in the Carver area is consistent with the land use pattern although it allows for a more intense use than is presently required or is desirable within a primarily single family residential neighborhood. The majority of the Carver area is zoned Multi-Family Residential (R-53). This district allows for multi-family dwellings of up to ten units. The allowable higher population densities and accompanying automobile ownership are also contradictory to the new goal Carver envisions of mostly single-family housing. Light Industrial (M1) zoning is designated along both sides of Marshall Street between Gilmer and Bowe Streets, with the exception of residential structures in the 700, 800, and 1100 blocks, and along the south-side of Clay Street in the 1100 and 1200...
blocks. This zoning category allows for nox-
ious, heavy industries to locate on this street. 
Other zoning in the neighborhood includes 
Neighborhood Business (B1) on the south-
side of Leigh Street at Norton Street and 
Central Business (B4) along the south side of 
the 700 block of Marshall Street.

Zoning in the areas surrounding Carver is 
primarily Light Industrial (M1), with small 
segments also zoned Business (either B3 or 
B4) and the Hartshorn Homes and Carver 
Elementary School areas zoned Single 
Family Attached Residential (R6). (see 
Existing Zoning Map).

As noted earlier, the zoning within the 
Carver community is generally consistent 
with the existing land use though it has the 
potential to create a significant and negative 
impact on the neighborhood if current 
allowed uses were to locate in the area. The 
most pressing issues evolve around the Light 
Industrial (M1) zoning along Marshall 
Street. A transitional zoning category to per-
mit land uses that would buffer Carver’s res-
idential streets from the commercial activity 
along Broad Street would be more appropri-
ate. A lower intensity residential zoning that 
is consistent with current and historical 
occupancy patterns would also be more 
appropriate in the residential core of the 
neighborhood.

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<th>Intersection or Street</th>
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<td>Catherine and Leigh</td>
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Table 1: Traffic Counts for the Carver Area: 1993 to 1997
Source: City of Richmond

Transportation and Circulation

Carver contains both one-way and two-way 
streets of a typical urban grid pattern. Leigh 
Street, the major east-west street, is the only 
street that is four lanes wide. Other streets 
that carry a significant amount of traffic are 
the one-way streets of Marshall and Clay, 
which are east bound and west bound respec-
tively, between Munford and Harrison 
Streets, and Harrison Street, which is the 
only two-way street carrying traffic into the 
neighborhood from the south.

Traffic count data was obtained from the 
City of Richmond for the years 1993 through 
1997. This data indicates that the heaviest 
traffic flows along Carver’s eastern border 
Belvidere Street. On March 19, 1996, 55,262 
cars passed through the intersection of 
Belvidere and Leigh Streets. One block to the 
west where an Interstate 95 off ramp exits into 
the city at Gilmer and Leigh Streets 21,865 
cars were counted on May 2, 1997. This area 
of the neighborhood thus is one where traffic 
at its periphery regularly becomes backed-up 
and can create a problem for local residents.

Traffic counts along Harrison Street indi-
cate this to be a heavily traveled interior 
street. Though dated, these counts are 
cluded in Table 1. With the opening of 
VCU’s School of the Arts building, West 
Broad Street Student Apartments, and 
Siegel Center on Broad Street, Marshall 
Street also has experienced a significant 
increase in traffic. A traffic count for this 
street has not been taken.
THE CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
Existing Zoning

- M-1
- R-53
- B-1
- M-1
- R-53
- R-6

CLAY STREET
MARSHALL STREET
BROAD STREET
LEIGH STREET

BELVIDERE
BROAD STREET
CLAY STREET
CATHHERINE STREET
GOSHEN

HARRISON
RICHARDSON
POWELL
PINNEY
CORTEZ

HANCOCK
HARRISON
NORTON
KINNEY
BOWELO
MBARD
GILMER
HANCOCK
HARRISON
NORTON
KINNEY
BOWELO
MBARD
GILMER

I-64
Motor vehicle accident data is available for the years 1992-1993 and 1994-1995. These counts indicate that most accidents occur on the heavily traveled arterial streets of Belvidere and Broad. Harrison and Leigh Streets, each a collector street within the neighborhood, also recorded a significant number of accidents. Traffic accidents are listed in Table 2.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'92-'93</th>
<th>'94-'95</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BELVIDERE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Broad and Leigh</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Broad and Marshall</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HARRISON</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Broad and Clay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Clay and Leigh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOMBARDY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Broad and Leigh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BROAD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Belvidere and Harrison</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEIGH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Belvidere and I-95 exit ramp</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between I-95 exit ramp and Harrison</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between Harrison and Lombardy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Motor Vehicle Accidents in Carver Area: 1992-1993 and 1994-1995

Source: City of Richmond

**HOUSING**

Housing data was obtained from the City of Richmond Assessor’s Office and the Office of Code Enforcement, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Housing condition and vacancy data compiled by the city is based on an exterior visual inspection of the property every two to three years. The RRHA data is based on that agency’s experience in administering the Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan for Carver, as well as 2000 census data. The data compiled by VCU was obtained from a block by block thorough examination of the neighborhood in 1997 and was expanded by additional research during 1998 and 1999.

**Housing Characteristics**

In 2000, according to the U.S. Census, Carver contained a total of 584 housing units. At this time, approximately 47 percent of the occupied housing was owner occupied and about 53 percent was renter occupied. Due to the Carver Redevelopment and Conservation Plan’s emphasis on home ownership, the current level of owner/occupancy has increased since 1990 when the census showed the homeowner rate at approximately 45 percent. An ideal base for an urban neighborhood would be a minimum of 60 percent owner occupied housing.

The census data from the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority shows there were 134 vacant housing units in Carver in 2000, creating a vacancy rate of 23 percent. This number has decreased since the 1990 census which reported 211 vacant housing units at a vacancy rate of 30 percent. Although the vacancy rate has improved, the large number of vacant properties that still exist is a major planning issue to be addressed.

The high incidence of vacant properties has come about for a variety of reasons. These include the death of the owner, the owner has insufficient funds to rehabilitate and lease or occupy a property, or the owner feels that the cost of rehabilitating a vacant property will not be offset by expected gains. The City of Richmond has numerous programs available to assist with the latter two causes. Programs administered by the RRHA include the lease/purchase homeownership program, the rehabilitation loan and grant program, and the homeownership program for first-time homebuyers.

According to housing vacancy data compiled for a study conducted by VCU professor
John Accordino and graduate students during the summer of 1998, the primary locations of vacant properties in 1998 were the northeast corner, the northwest corner, and a small pocket in the southeast corner. RRHA has, as part of their ongoing effort to redevelop the northeast corner, demolished vacant and severely deteriorated housing units along West Leigh and Catherine Streets and has constructed townhouses and single-family residences in this area. In addition, RRHA has also demolished the vacant properties in the southeast corner along West Marshall Street. Thus, the majority of vacant housing units are currently concentrated in the northwest corner with others scattered throughout the neighborhood.

**Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority**

In August of 1986 the Richmond City Council approved the Conservation and Redevelopment Plan for Carver. This plan was developed through a collaborative effort of the RRHA and the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL). Following the guidelines of this plan, the RRHA has worked with CACIL in revitalizing Carver through the demolition of dilapidated housing, construction of new homes and, where feasible, the rehabilitation of substandard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARCHITECTURAL STYLE</th>
<th># OF BUILDINGS</th>
<th>% OF BUILDINGS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical Revival</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>711, 913, 105, 1421 W. Leigh St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Revival</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>707, 1013, 1015 W. Catherine St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1315 W. Leigh Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1302 W. Catherine St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Revival</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>900, 902, 909, 911 N. Harrison St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italianate</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>705, 933, 1015, 1223 W. Leigh St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italianate/Greek Revival</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>712, 714, 721 W. Marshall St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italianate/Late Victorian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>915, 111, 1408 W. Clay St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italianate/Victorian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>806, 810, 812 Norton St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1421 and 1423 W. Clay St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1100, 1110, 1114 W. Marshall St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanesque</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>811, 817, 821, 825 Bowe St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanesque Revival</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1016, 1018, 1020 W. Catherine St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Empire</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>908, 912, 914 W. Clay St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vernacular</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>715, 725, 729 W. Catherine St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular Greek</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1203, 1304, 1314 W. Catherine St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>925, 927, 929 W. Clay St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 497* 100%

*Includes small commercial structures and some buildings that have been demolished since data collection in 1997.

Table 3: Architectural Styles in the Carver Area
Source: VCU, Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning
housing units. This comprehensive approach will provide safe, affordable, and decent housing for low and moderate-income persons. In addition, the plan promotes homeownership for first-time homebuyers. Accomplishments under the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan as of June 2000 are:

- Provision of rehabilitation grants and loans for 161 housing units, an investment equaling five million dollars.
- Acquisition of 175 properties for rehabilitation or demolition and new construction.
- Relocation of seventy-three households
- Demolition of eighty dilapidated properties
- Construction of forty-five single family residences (thirty-four townhouses and eleven detached houses)
- Rehabilitation of 180 single-family residences and twelve rental structures

In 1999, Carver was designated as one of six Richmond neighborhoods to be part of the City’s Neighborhoods in Bloom (NIB) program. NIB is an aggressive and focussed neighborhood investment program. The program’s philosophy is that through committing city revitalization moneys to a limited number of neighborhoods a greater positive change will be achieved. Community and private investment within each neighborhood also is encouraged and is critical to the program’s long-term success. Through the NIB program, two million dollars in Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds have been allocated to the Carver/Newtowne West area for a two-year period. As fiscal agent and administrator of this program in Carver, the RRHA has been able to step up efforts previously outlined in the Conservation and Redevelopment Plan: property acquisition, rehabilitation, demolition and construction. Activities for the first year, both planned and completed, and plans for the program’s second year are identified in Table 4. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed by the year 2008.

**Architectural Resources**

Carver buildings display a rich legacy of architectural styles from the nineteenth century. This is true of both the commercial and residential structures. An architectural inventory of Carver buildings conducted by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources indicated that twenty-six architectural styles were represented. A summary of this inventory is included as Table 3.

The most frequently observed architectural style is Italianate, which is displayed by 34 percent of Carver buildings. This style, popular between 1840 and 1885, is characterized by low-pitched roofs, wide eaves usually supported by large brackets, and tall narrow and often arched windows. Greek Revival style is the second most commonly seen with 11 percent of the buildings displaying this style. These homes are among the oldest in the neighborhood having been constructed between 1825 and 1860. Characteristics are low-pitched gabled or hipped roofs, a wide cornice below the roof, porches with columns, and entry doors accentuated by sidelights or transoms.

This concentration of historic structures has guided the conservation and redevelop-
ment efforts within the community during the past two decades. In addition to the nineteenth century buildings, Carver also contains the Hartshorn Home community. This ninety-eight home development was built in the early 1960s of one-story Ranch style homes.

In addition to the funds identified above for the Neighborhoods in Bloom program, the RRHA also utilizes other U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant programs to achieve Carver revitalization goals. But, the goals of the Carver Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan cannot be achieved without private investment in the neighborhood, through renovating existing structures and the construction of new housing units.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Many of the large former industrial structures along the southern and western edges of Carver (West Marshall Street and Bowe Street) have been adapted for reuse and thus are occupied by businesses with low impact on a primarily residential neighborhood. Others, including the new VCU facilities along West Broad Street, house uses unrelated to the neighborhood. Another has been approved for reuse as forty-five apartments that may contribute to traffic congestion and aggravate parking problems along Carver’s streets. Still others sit empty creating a potential safety hazard and sense of abandonment.

To promote adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings and recognize the important architectural contribution these buildings bring to the Carver landscape, the Carver Industrial Historic District was designated in 1999 through private efforts. As a result of this National Register of Historic Places designation, property owners are eligible to take advantage of federal and state rehabilitation tax credits when rehabilitating these turn of the century factories. A current challenge is that the adaptation of these buildings be to uses compatible with a residential neighborhood.

URBAN DESIGN

Urban Design Structure

Areas of intense activity surround the Carver neighborhood. On the east and south are major urban arterial streets, to the west industrial buildings, and to the north Interstate 95. An analysis of the neighborhood structure begins by defining these activities along the borders. (See Carver Neighborhood: Planning and Design Structure map)

Carver’s eastern edge is adjacent to Belvidere Street (State Highway 1 and 301), which carries six lanes of north-south traffic to the Richmond suburbs and is intersected by an Interstate 95 interchange at the northeastern corner of Carver. To the south is Broad Street (State Highway 250), which functions as Richmond’s primary east-west thoroughfare. Fronting on Broad Street are five major Virginia Commonwealth University facilities – the Stuart C. Siegel Center, the School of the Arts building, the Sports Medicine building, the West Broad Street Student Apartments and the West Broad Street Parking Deck, with the VCU e2 Bookstore and VCU offices on the first floor. The western edge, along Bowe Street from Marshall to Leigh, is being redeveloped for use by a large grocery store. This property blocks through traffic and forces traffic from interior Carver streets to turn either to the north or south. Lombardy Street, running parallel to Carver’s western edge, is the first street west of Belvidere to cross Interstate 95 and it thus carries a high volume of traffic. Lombardy also separates Carver from the Newtowne-West neighborhood. Interstate 95, constructed during the 1950s and 1960s, borders Carver on the north. The northern area of the neighbor-
hood contains the Hartshorn Home development, Carver Elementary School, several small businesses, and an Interstate 95 exit ramp.

Major connecting streets through Carver are West Marshall Street on the south and West Leigh Street on the north. Harrison Street, located approximately in the center of the community, forms a vertical ‘neighborhood spine’ from north to south. Gateways to the community are thus formed at the intersections of these streets: Harrison with Marshall, Leigh with Belvidere, and Leigh with Lombardy. A fourth important interior intersection is located at the juncture of Harrison and Leigh Streets.

There are two public areas within Carver. The first, George Washington Carver Elementary School and its accompanying playground and parking lot are to the north of Leigh Street and east of Harrison Street. This school building is a two-story brick structure with a newer large addition to the east. On its north elevation, it is also connected to the former Moore Street School (c1887). Carver Elementary School has a strong presence both on Leigh Street and in the neighborhood. The second public space is Smith-Peters Park in the 900 block of Catherine Street.

Twenty-one interior residential blocks, in a grid pattern, define the Carver neighborhood. They are characterized by 19th century structures exhibiting a wide range of physical conditions. Building styles and conditions divide the neighborhood approximately in half at Harrison Street. To the east intense redevelopment and rehabilitation activities have occurred. To the west of Harrison Street isolated properties have been rehabilitated, but clearance and redevelopment has not taken place. Housing rehabilitation programs of the past two decades are especially evident in the number of improved properties along West Clay Street. These residences are complimented by the new townhouses constructed by RRHA and CACIL, which are located in northeastern Carver along Leigh and Catherine Streets.

The Carver neighborhood has numerous opportunities for private housing rehabilitation and residential infill construction. Three areas have been identified as the areas of greatest housing need based on housing condition studies. (See map Carver Neighborhood: Planning and Design Structure map)

Urban Design Features
Streets, Alleys, and Parking

Streets within the neighborhood are in good condition. All streets, with the exception of Harrison, Munford and Goshen, allow parking on both sides of the street. The presence of parked cars can create traffic problems on the narrower streets of Goshen, Gilmer, and Catherine.

Passage along neighborhood alleys is also aggravated by parked cars and, in some alleys, by obstacles and overgrown vegetation. The latter contributes to alleyways becoming less safe.

Sidewalks

Carver contains a mixture of brick and concrete sidewalks. The majority of the sidewalks in Carver are in good condition, with isolated blocks in need of repair. Some of the brick sidewalks, which by nature of construction require frequent attention, have been allowed to become overgrown with weeds and grass and thus are unattractive and do not provide a safe walking surface. Several cross streets have blocks without sidewalks.

Street lighting

Street light fixtures are of the “Cobra Head” style. Lighting is sufficient for vehicle
traffic in the neighborhood but sidewalks are poorly lit due to shadows cast by the street tree canopy.

Dark sidewalks result in safety issues for pedestrians.

Community spaces
The Carver neighborhood's one public space is Smith-Peters Park in the 900 block of Catherine Street. This park contains a playground and community shelter. Neighborhood functions that require an indoor space are usually held in Moore Street Baptist Church. On occasion, Carver Elementary School is used for neighborhood functions.

Landscaping
Street trees have been consistently planted along streets in Carver's redeveloped areas on Leigh, Catherine, and Goshen Streets. Clay Street is lined with mature trees, some of which have become overgrown and thus prevent streetlights from illuminating the sidewalks. In many of the other areas street trees provide only poor to fair coverage. This is especially true along the south side of Leigh Street and along the cross streets. The entire length of Marshall Street currently contains few trees.

Trees and shrubs create a somewhat inadequate buffer between Munford and Belvidere Streets. A sparse vegetative buffer was planted between Interstate 95 and Leigh Street along the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) fence, but it is not dense enough to obscure noise from the Interstate to the north or pleasing entrance to Carver or the city.

Landscaping around private dwellings is minimal due to the small front yards and little, if any, side yards. Many of these yards though throughout the neighborhood are tastefully planted and maintained and thus create pleasant streetscapes and convey community pride. The land around vacant properties does present a problem as it is frequently overgrown and thus creates unsightly areas along individual streets. These overgrown properties also foster crime by sending a message to outsiders that no one cares about what occurs in and around these structures.
A vision for the Carver neighborhood’s future was developed by fifty of the community’s residents at a CACIL meeting. It reads:

*The Carver neighborhood is an active and exciting place, a stable residential neighborhood, clean, beautiful, and safe and historical in character. The neighborhood contains a majority of beautiful single-family houses, renovated churches, a community and cultural center and people walking on the sidewalks. There is convenient shopping nearby (on Broad Street) with cleaners, family-type restaurants and stores that benefit the neighborhood. The residents and the Association (CACIL) maintain positive interaction with VCU.*

This vision is composed of the following goals:

1. **Improved Neighborhood Conditions**
   - Clean environment – backyards, abandoned cars
   - More environmentally sensitive development
   - Cleaner community – pleasant
   - Trees appropriately trimmed

2. **Safe and Convenient Transportation**
   - Changed traffic patterns to stop congestion
   - Community transportation for elderly and handicapped
   - Mass transportation for community
   - Parking for residents without competing with students
   - Clearly marked school zones
   - Improved street and sidewalk lighting

3. **Enhanced Recreation for Children**
   - Thriving community center with activities for adults and children
   - More programs for children with supervised activity
   - Programming in Smith-Peters Park
   - Affordable daycare for children

4. **Greater Public Safety**
   - More lighting
   - No youth on corners selling drugs
   - More enforcement of drug violations
   - Reduced crime
   - More police presence
   - Drugs out of the neighborhood
   - Enforce noise pollution laws

5. **Better Housing Opportunities**
   - More home ownership
   - Historical buildings in Carver preserved
   - Property value increased
   - Affordable home ownership for current residents
   - Greater accountability of rental property
   - No abandoned houses or buildings
   - A better place to live

6. **Community Preservation**
   - Carver history saved
   - Happy, united, social and economically stable indigenous residents
   - Generation of people remaining in the community
   - Political power
   - Community action
   - Activities that encourage neighbors
   - Carver to be more respected to interact with each other

This vision and accompanying six goals have directed the development of the neighborhood plan that is outlined in the chapters that follow.
THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
THE CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN is a guide with specific action steps that may be taken to achieve the goals expressed by the Carver community. The Plan strives to build on the area’s historical residential character while also accommodating new commercial ventures located in existing industrial buildings along the neighborhood’s southern border.

Plan recommendations are also directly related to the opportunities previously noted in the analysis of the neighborhood structure. These include the provision of additional public spaces, a compatible transition zone between commercial and residential uses, housing rehabilitation and infill development, effective traffic circulation, and enhanced residential street amenities.

Crime is not addressed in a separate recommendation, as plan implementation will improve the neighborhood character and thus reduce opportunities for criminal activity. The revitalized streetscape, in conjunction with the neighborhood’s present crime prevention strategies, should effectively deter future criminal acts in Carver.

LAND USE

The proposed land use plan follows the framework of existing uses while supporting the further development of Carver’s residential core. Residential revitalization is one of the primary goals of the neighborhood and of this plan. A revitalized and thriving commercial district along Marshall Street is the other major goal. Specific land uses addressed are residential, residential/office, commercial, and public. (See Proposed Land Use and Zoning map)

Public Spaces

The smallest portion of land is devoted to public spaces. These are important though to neighborhood vitality in that they facilitate neighbors learning to know one another and thus help create a sense of community. They also provide additional open space needed in older urban neighborhoods.

Community Center

Carver currently does not have a community center. The majority of CACIL meetings and community functions are held in Moore Street Baptist Church on West Leigh Street. A small community meeting space and computer lab are available to Carver organizations in the Community Programs portion of the new VCU student housing facility located at Marshall and Harrison Streets. This space does not fulfill the need for a centrally located community center for children’s programs or for neighborhood town meetings. A new community center is proposed on the northwest corner of the block bordered by Catherine, Harrison, Leigh, and Hancock Streets. This is an ideal location for a center as it would be conveniently located across the street from Carver Elementary School and within a block of Smith-Peters Park.

Green Space

Smith-Peters Park is presently the only neighborhood public green space. This park is located in the 900 block of Catherine Street, in the eastern half of the neighborhood. A second park, easily accessible to residents in Carver’s western half, is proposed for the vacant land along the west side of Kinney Street between Clay and Catherine Streets. And, a third public green space is proposed for the narrow strip of land within the 800 block between West Marshall and West Clay Streets that was originally the site of the Richmond-Ashland Electric Railway trestle. The latter green space could also incorporate several spaces for off-street parking and be developed as a pedestrian respite and thoroughfare.

Commercial Land presently used for commercial purposes is located predominately
along the south edge of Carver. This plan proposes that this use continue but in a controlled fashion. Also proposed is the development of small neighborhood businesses within Carver.

Urban Business – Harrison Street
Harrison Street, the primary north-south street through Carver, has historically been the location of commercial or urban business ventures in addition to being a residential street. This street should continue to be developed in a manner that encourages residences, offices, and neighborhood stores.

An important neighborhood intersection is at Harrison and Leigh Streets. At this location are Carver Elementary School, an entrance to Hartshorn Homes, a small neighborhood store, and the city bus stop. A small commercial center is proposed for the southwest corner. This facility could house neighborhood-oriented businesses such as a sandwich shop, an ice cream store, and dry-cleaning drop-off. Proposals for this site should be reviewed by the community under a Special Use Permit. The location is central to the neighborhood and easily accessible from the school and by patrons at the bus stop.

Marshall Street Corridor
The Marshall Street corridor is currently a mix of private manufacturing, commercial, retail, and residential uses in older historic buildings. To the south along Broad Street are located commercial buildings and large VCU facilities. Marshall Street should serve as a transition area between the intensely used buildings on Broad Street and the core Carver residential neighborhood to the north.

Development along Marshall Street should emphasize mixed uses. On the south and north sides of Marshall Street west of Harrison Street, low impact industrial, commercial, and university uses are proposed. For the north side of Marshall Street east of Harrison Street, residential and office uses are proposed. Redevelopment of former industrial buildings into uses compatible with the neighborhood’s vision should be encouraged.

ZONING
Land use zoning is critical to an urban neighborhood’s character. The majority of Carver is currently zoned Multi-Family Residential (R-53) with Light Industrial (M-1) zoning along much of Marshall Street. These two zoning categories allow uses more intense and intrusive than are appropriate for the neighborhood’s goal of a predominantly single-family area. The Plan recommends the following zoning be implemented to maintain the core residential district, to enable historic factory buildings to be adapted to uses with new economic value and compatible within a residential neighborhood, and to provide a transition zone between residences and commercial facilities.

- (R-7) Single and Two-Family Urban Residential: Clay to Leigh Street between Munford and Bowe Streets, excluding Harrison Street.
- (RO-2) Residential Office District: Harrison Street between Marshall and Leigh Streets; North side of Marshall Street between Munford and Harrison Streets, except properties at 816 and 900 West Marshall Street, and including properties on the
CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
Proposed Land Use and Zoning

- Residential (R-7)
- Residential-Office (RO-2)
- Urban Commercial (UC)
- Public
- Urban Business

Street Names:
- Clay Street
- Leigh Street
- Catherine Street
- Marshall Street
- Broad Street
- Belvedere
- Lombardy
south side of Marshall Street numbers 821, 823, and 901.

RO-2 is a zoning district designed to accommodate both residential and small neighborhood compatible office uses. These uses are in keeping with Harrison Street's role as the primary north-south street through Carver. On Marshall Street, RO-2 zoning can provide a transitional zone between the intense commercial uses along Broad Street and the south side of Marshall Street to the family residential use to the north. The RO-2 district allows small apartments (up to ten units without an approved development plan) thus reducing the possibility of large apartment buildings and yet establishing a multifamily district at an appropriate location in the neighborhood.

- (UC) Urban Commercial: Marshall Street on the north side between Harrison and Bowe Streets and on the south side between Munford and Bowe Streets (except as indicated above under RO-2).

UC is a proposed new zoning category to be considered by the city. It is composed of uses compatible with current business activities on Marshall Street and brings a potential to create new business development and job creation and a population that can support retail uses proposed for Broad Street. This new zoning district (UC) is composed of uses from three existing city zoning categories: (UB) Urban Business, (B-1) Neighborhood Business, (B-2) Community Business and OS Office Service. Compatible uses were combined and adjusted to allow a reasonable number of employees in the larger structures while producing a district in keeping with conditions on Marshall Street and the revitalizing Carver neighborhood.

The Carver Neighborhood Proposed Zoning map on the following page illustrates areas to be encompassed by each zoning category.

**HOUSING**

**East of Harrison**

Housing rehabilitation and redevelopment completed under the direction of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) has had a profound impact on housing conditions and thus the availability of affordable and healthy dwellings in the eastern portion of Carver. Today, efforts by these entities are focused on the Neighborhood's in Bloom.
(NIB) target blocks of 1000 West Marshall; 700, 900, and 1000 Catherine Street; 700, 900, 1000, and 1100 West Leigh Street; 500 and 600 Hancock Street and 800 and 900 Harrison Street. This federally funded initiative is focussed primarily on rehabilitation, with new construction occurring on Catherine and West Leigh Streets.

Due to this ongoing effort the eastern portion of Carver is now considered an area of opportunity for private single and two-family housing rehabilitation and infill. Properties, outside of the NIB impact areas, in greatest need are located in the following blocks: 700 West Clay including frontage on Munford and Gilmer Streets, 1100 West Clay (north side), 900 and 1000 blocks bordered by Catherine, Harrison, West Leigh, and Hancock Streets. (See map Carver Neighborhood: Structure and Analysis)

**West of Harrison**

Housing efforts completed under the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan to the west of Harrison Street have been primarily rehabilitation of individual properties and stabilizing vacant and unsafe properties. The only area targeted by the NIB program for rehabilitation is the 800 and 900 blocks of North Harrison Street. A detailed plan is thus proposed for revitalizing this western Carver residential area.

A large number of properties have been demolished in Carver during the past fifty years. Residents thus express strong sentiment that all existing housing structures should be preserved in the western area. This sentiment is articulated in two of the neighborhood goals: prevent further displacement of current residents and maintain the neighborhood’s historical architectural character. Housing proposals for west of Harrison Street focus on the opportunity for aggressive housing rehabilitation and infill. The blocks identified as areas of greatest need are the 1200 blocks of West Clay and Catherine Streets including frontage on Harrison Street, 1300 block of West Clay Street, and 1300 and 1400 blocks bordered by Catherine, Bowe, West Leigh, and Norton Streets. (See map Carver Neighborhood: Planning and Design Structure)

Rehabilitation of a four-block area in northwest Carver (bordered by West Clay, Bowe, West Leigh, and Norton Streets) offers an example of the opportunity to provide amenities frequently lacking in older and densely built neighborhoods. These include off street parking, a small shared green space, and private back yards – all within each block’s interior. Rehabilitation to existing dwellings and construction of compatible infill housing on vacant lots is proposed on three sides of each block. Most lots in the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Catherine Street are vacant and thus can be developed to provide the shared parking area and open green space within each ‘U’ shaped housing area. Small-enclosed yards will also be located behind each residence. The neighborhood park on the vacant land bordered by Kinney, Clay, and Catherine Streets and improvements to Catherine Street also will encourage investment in properties and enhance the quality of life for area residents. (See Illustrative Plan)

**TRAFFIC CIRCULATION**

**Streets**

Street design along the perimeter of Carver has a significant impact on traffic circulation within the neighborhood. The major thoroughfares to the south and east, Broad and Belvidere Streets carry large numbers of vehicles to and from the city and thus have medians and limit intersections where left hand turns are allowed. This affects Carver residents in that they can only exit the neighborhood and turn left or right onto Broad Street at Goshen, Hancock, Harrison, and Bowe Streets and onto Belvidere Street...
at Marshall and Leigh Streets. Left-hand turns cannot be made into the neighborhood from Belvidere Street; but can be made from Broad Street only at Goshen and Bowe Streets. The residents propose the following system of circulation.

The majority of Carver’s streets should be two-way to enhance the residential character of the neighborhood by facilitating traffic circulation. The following streets should be designated as one-way:

- **Marshall Street** – one-way eastbound between Munford and Harrison Streets. Due to the number of commercial facilities along this street, it carries a high volume of truck traffic. The street is not wide enough to safely accommodate two-way traffic, parked cars, and commercial vehicles turning in and out of driveways.

- **Gilmer Street** – one-way northbound for the entire length. Gilmer Street is located directly across Leigh Street from the Interstate 95-exit ramp. In the past, the southbound configuration led to the street being used by drug dealers who could easily exit and reenter the interstate at this point.

- **Clay Street** – one-way westbound between Munford and Harrison Streets, two-way between Harrison and Bowe Streets. Clay Street carries a significant amount of traffic exiting the downtown Richmond area. The street is presently designated as one-way between Munford and Harrison Streets; a designation that Carver residents feel increases public safety.

- **Munford Street** – one-way southbound between Leigh and Broad Streets. Munford Street functions as an access road to the neighborhood and also carries traffic exiting from the Interstate south to Broad Street.

Catherine Street is presently very narrow and the portion between Norton and Bowe is unpaved and overgrown with trees and shrubs. As properties in the northwest corner of Carver are rehabilitated or redeveloped, it will become important that Catherine Street be improved so that residents can use the street to access the rear of their properties. Catherine Street should be widened where possible, paved, and have streetlights installed.

### Alley improvements

Alleyways are important in providing access to off-street parking areas, and provide a location for trash collection. Currently, illegally parked vehicles or overgrown vegetation blocks passage through some alleys. Alleys should be posted with “No Parking” signs to educate drivers and enable immediate towing of parked cars. In addition, dense underbrush should be eliminated, streetlights installed, and the alleys improved to increase public safety in these areas.

### Parking

A lack of parking for residents and guests is a problem frequently expressed by Carver citizens. The pre-automobile platting of the neighborhood has resulted in narrower streets and smaller lots than are commonly built today and thus there is not an easy solution to accommodate the numerous cars. The ability of motorists to navigate the neighborhood is of primary importance and thus on-street parking is evaluated. A critical need is for new residential development to provide enough off-street parking for all of its residents.

#### On-Street Parking

Parking on both sides of the street should be allowed on all streets whose widths are equal to four traffic lanes. On streets with a width of three traffic lanes, parking should be restricted to one side of the street – ideally the side containing the largest number of residences. These streets are Munford, Gilmer, Goshen and Catherine.
Off-Street Parking

The housing units built in Carver during the past decade have been designed with off-street parking behind each structure. This parking is accessed from an alleyway thus preserving the historical streetscape of row or detached townhomes. Future construction should continue to incorporate parking to the rear of residences. This same configuration can be adapted for many of the older dwellings if homeowners move the fences at the rear of their property forward. In some blocks alleyways will need to be cleared to enable access to individual properties.

The proposed footprint for housing in the northwest corner of the neighborhood incorporates off-street parking in lot formation in the interior of each block. This configuration can allow for more than one parking space per dwelling if so desired.

Another opportunity for off-street parking is the vacant land on the southeast corner of the intersection of Norton and Clay Streets. A landscaped surface parking lot could be built on this land for parking cars associated with businesses along Marshall Street or nearby neighborhood residents.

Access

The current limited access from Lombardy Street is preferred to preserve the residential character of the neighborhood. Leigh and Broad Streets should remain the only streets accessible to the neighborhood.

PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

The following improvements are proposed to increase safety for pedestrians within the neighborhood, improve the physical appearance of the neighborhood, and help to establish a sense of place. Proposed elements will build on and enhance Carver’s historic architectural character.

Gateway markers

Enhancing both the gateway intersections to the neighborhood and the Marshall Street corridor will strengthen travelers’ perceptions that this is a unique urban neighborhood. Pedestal markers with the name Carver engraved into the base are recommended at a number of locations: on Leigh Street at Munford Street and at Lombardy Street, at evenly spaced distances along
Marshall Street between its intersections with Lombardy and Munford Streets, and at the northern terminus of Harrison Street at Moore Street.

**Intersection improvements**

Corner extensions and crosswalk pavers should accent the importance of Harrison Street as the predominate north-south street connecting the neighborhood to both Broad Street and the activity centers along Leigh Street, such as Carver Elementary School and Moore Street Baptist Church. Harrison Street’s importance will be further enhanced by the location of the proposed commercial center and community center at its northern end.

A brick colored paving block is recommended for corner extensions and crosswalks at Harrison Street intersections to slow traffic, provide additional safety for pedestrians and children, highlight the mixed use core, and strengthen the design character of this street. Other improvements include a granite band inlaid at crosswalks announcing entry into the Carver neighborhood and sidewalk widening to improve convenience and safety. The location of specific enhancements are depicted in the Intersection Improvements illustration and are:

- **Harrison and Marshall Streets** – crosswalk pavers on all four sides and a granite inlaid band of stone engraved with the name Carver on the north side (note: corner extensions are not recommended due to the volume of truck traffic along Marshall Street).
- **Harrison and Clay Streets** – crosswalk pavers on all four sides and four corner extensions into Clay Street.
- **Harrison and Leigh Streets** – crosswalk pavers on all four sides, a granite inlaid band of stone engraved with the name Carver on the south side, four corner extensions into Leigh Street to create protected parking for both school and city buses, and sidewalks widened to fifteen feet on the southside of Leigh Street in front of proposed commercial center and community center. (See Proposed Intersection Improvements Illustration)

**Sidewalk improvements**

Sidewalks should be installed along streets where none exist at present. In all areas, sidewalks should be maintained and repaired as needed. To complement the neighborhood’s historic architecture, new or replacement sidewalks should be constructed of brick behind granite curbs.

**Pedestrian street lighting**

Existing streetlights are designed to provide illumination for automobile traffic and thus provide inadequate lighting along side-
walks. Pedestrian-scaled lights should also be installed at intersections and along streets to improve pedestrian safety, discourage criminal activities, and to establish a consistent design element throughout the neighborhood. New lighting fixtures should be of a historic design and similar to those installed in the Jackson Ward neighborhood.

The first priority for new fixtures is Harrison Street intersections. Two lights should be installed on each corner with spacing as indicated in the illustration Intersection Improvements. The next priority should be the installation of fixtures, at no more than fifty-foot intervals, along neighborhood streets.

**Street tree planting and replacement**

Trees should be planted to create pedestrian friendly sidewalks that encourage resident interaction. Regularly spaced street trees also establish a consistent streetscape design that contributes to neighborhood beauty. Planting should include both replacements of missing trees and planting new trees in areas without adequate tree coverage. All streets should have trees along both sides. Priorities for planting and replacement are:

**Leigh Street** – to create a continuous linear quality on this entrance/exit street through the neighborhood

**Harrison Street**, from Broad to Leigh – to establish this street’s role as the important north-south connector street, as a route to the community and neighborhood commercial buildings at Leigh Street, and as a link between Carver and other parts of the city.

**Marshall Street** – to soften and enhance the streetscape along this mixed-use corridor

**All east-west cross streets**

Older trees in the neighborhood, particularly along Clay Street, should be properly pruned to increase the amount of light from both the sun and streetlights that reaches the sidewalk. Removing lower limbs will also provide greater visibility of sidewalks and the street from within residences and thus improve neighborhood safety.

**Community landscaping**

Public green spaces within Carver should be planted and maintained with proper vegetation for the specific area. In Smith-Peters Park and for the proposed park fronting Kinney Street between Clay and Catherine Streets, vegetation should be planted and maintained by the City of Richmond. Common green spaces located behind housing within individual blocks should be planted under the auspices of CACIL and then maintained by each area’s surrounding residents.

Landscaping should be provided by the State of Virginia to improve the gateway to Carver at Interstate-95 (Area bordered Belvidere, Leigh, and Gilmer Streets.) In addition, fencing and vegetation should be provided to serve as a sound barrier between Carver’s northern edge and Interstate-95.
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
CACIL HAS BEEN A STRONG VOICE for the neighborhood. Their role in the future development of Carver is vitally important. Recommendations for strengthening the league, and thus their influence, include expanding the existing committee structure, increasing involvement in fund raising, building a larger membership base and obtaining non-profit status. Their first priority should be assuring the adoption of this neighborhood plan.

Adoption of the neighborhood plan
The first implementation step is the approval of the Carver Neighborhood Plan by the Richmond City Council as an amendment to the current City Master Plan. This approval will facilitate Plan strategies being incorporated into the City’s Capital Budget and also improve Carver’s opportunities for accessing other resources. To assure City Council approval, it is critical that members of CACIL and other neighborhood residents and area property owners support the Plan’s passage. The steps to accomplish this are:
1. CACIL presents the Plan to the City Planning Commission.
2. The Planning Commission conducts a public hearing to solicit comments regarding the proposed Plan. Prior to this hearing, CACIL will be notified of the date of the hearing and an advertisement announcing the hearing will be placed in the neighborhood. This is in keeping with existing regulations.
3. The Planning Commission takes action regarding the adoption of the Plan.
4. The Richmond City Council takes public testimony regarding the Plan at a regularly scheduled City Council meeting. The Council will then make a decision regarding adopting the plan as an amendment to the City’s Master Plan.

Contact with the Department of Community Development, Division of Comprehensive Planning should be made as soon as possible. CACIL should coordinate their efforts with this division in an effort to expedite the adoption process. Contact should also be made with Carver’s City Council representative to solicit their support.

Expand committee structure
An expanded committee structure will increase resident involvement and improve the organization’s effectiveness by distributing responsibilities. In addition to Carver residents, representatives from the city, the adjoining business community and VCU should be considered for appointment to committees. Designated committees should include the following:

- **Safety Committee** – This committee should meet regularly with the VCU police patrol and City of Richmond Police Department. Activities could also include organizing a Neighborhood Watch program and sponsorship of the “Neighborhood Night Out” event.

- **Housing Committee** – The housing committee’s focus is the revitalization and ongoing maintenance of Carver’s residential core. Proper maintenance including painting, roof repair, trim upkeep and clearing the property of refuse, old vehicles and trash will help to maintain property values and create an environment in which it is deemed worthwhile to invest in the rehabilitation of existing vacant structures.

Communication with the city to assure code enforcement will be an important committee responsibility.

The housing committee should explore establishing a pool of funds for use to offset the cost of increased property taxes incurred due to higher assessed property values. Lower income residents could
request financial assistance from CACIL for this purpose. Funds could be raised through public and private foundations and developer contributions. A Board of Carver and community representatives should be established to make decisions regarding these monies.

Another responsibility of the housing committee would be working with RRHA and non-profit housing entities to assure that affordable housing, through rehabilitation and infill construction, continues to be available in the neighborhood.

- Marketing Committee – The mission of this committee is to market the entire Carver neighborhood. Potential markets should be identified and marketing methods studied so that a marketing strategy can be developed with the goal of establishing Carver's identity as a desirable residential location. Current area developers and preservation groups are potential collaborative partners in this effort. Contact with the city’s Department of Economic Development should be made to assure that the neighborhood is included in all materials that the city distributes. The Department of Economic Development can also be instrumental in helping CACIL attract neighborhood compatible businesses to the area.

Build membership base
Involving a larger number of current residents in community activities is an important task. CACIL should develop strategies to involve all segments of the neighborhood's population in the association’s activities. These efforts should be directed to residents residing in apartment buildings in addition to those in single-family homes.

Obtain non-profit (501C3) status
Non-profit status enhances CACIL's ability to raise funds. As a non-profit organization, CACIL becomes an eligible recipient for grant moneys, corporate giving programs and gift designation. At the present time, Carver is the beneficiary of CDBG and other funds administered by the RRHA under the Neighborhoods in Bloom program. To assure that neighborhood revitalization continues after this program ends, CACIL should position itself now. Non-profit status is an important first step in CACIL controlling its own long-term development, with the possibility of evolving into a Community Development Corporation.

ZONING
It is critical that Carver’s zoning be changed to conform with the new master plan, which recommends a strengthening of the core residential district by zoning Carver as single family residential, transitional office, and community commercial. Establishing the R-7 and the RO-2 and new Urban Commercial zoning categories will allow compatible development to occur throughout the neighborhood.

The zoning change process can be initiated by one of the following methods:
1. CACIL can initiate by obtaining signatures from the owners of every property that would be affected by the proposed zoning change.
2. The City Planning Commission can initiate the process.
3. A City Council member can initiate the process.

It is recommended that CACIL contact the city Department of Community Development for assistance in initiating the proposed zoning changes. CACIL should monitor this process to assure that zoning is in conformance with the Plan as soon as possible. A speedy passage will ensure that there is not a gap allowing unwanted uses to be put in
place during the interim. Since the new zoning category may take time to develop, the highest priority should be to get the R-7 and RO-2 zoning in place. It is thus suggested that each zoning change be requested as a separate action.

HOUSING

Housing efforts should be focussed on marketing, rehabilitation and new infill construction, and code enforcement.

To effectively market Carver as a desirable residential location, CACIL should collaborate with other entities working to revitalize Richmond’s urban neighborhoods. These include the Department of Community Development, Neighborhood Planning and Preservation Division, the RRHA and non-profit preservation and housing organizations. In addition, area developers are an important ally in promoting both properties and the neighborhood.

Community housing revitalization activities should encompass all areas of the Carver neighborhood. Initiatives currently underway as part of the Neighborhoods in Bloom program should be continued by CACIL with assistance from others. Partnering with an existing Community Development Corporation (CDC) and RRHA would result in less administrative responsibility for CACIL. Other advantages to this arrangement would include benefiting the existing CDC’s experience in building affordable housing, its knowledge of funding contracts and its structural organization with staff necessary for daily oversight of large housing projects.

Revitalizing the residential core requires the rehabilitation of deteriorated properties and the construction of new infill housing on vacant lots. Because Carver has several distinct historic architectural styles, it is important that historic architectural features be maintained and repaired on existing structures and reflected in new construction. In addition, revitalization activity should include the education and monitoring of property owners so that routine maintenance of property is performed. This includes painting, roof repair, trim upkeep, and clearing the property of refuse. These actions will help assure that property values are maintained and that new residents are attracted to Carver to newly renovated and constructed houses.

CACIL working with the city code inspectors has been effectively identifying delinquent properties for some time. These efforts should be continued in future years to assure that properties are not allowed to deteriorate after regular inspections are no longer conducted under the Neighborhoods in Bloom program.

A Federal and State Historic District should be established in Carver. This Historic District should encompass the older historic residential streets. Designation as a historic district will make historic preservation tax credits available to homeowners rehabilitating properties within the district and thus serve as an additional incentive for neighborhood revitalization.

COMMUNITY CENTER AND GREEN SPACE

An important characteristic of a thriving residential neighborhood is the sense of place that it holds for its residents. Public areas such as community centers and open green spaces where neighbors can meet and learn to know one another foster this sense of place.

A high priority is the development of a community center on the corner of Harrison and Leigh Streets. This center will provide a location for programs for children and seniors
as well as a meeting place for the neighborhood. CACIL should work with RRHA to obtain title to this property to ensure that this property is reserved for this use. A committee should then be formed to devise a plan whereby funding sources are identified and ultimately the community center is designed and built.

An alternative to a new community center is the reuse of the 1888 building of the Carver Elementary School. The building is scheduled for demolition by the Richmond School Board but has been offered for community reuse under a request for proposal. To save the building from demolition, a feasible proposal must be submitted by March 2001. CACIL can become involved as a partner with others in reusing the building as a neighborhood community center. Other potential partners might include the William Byrd Community Center with its neighborhood-oriented youth and adult programs, a private daycare business or local arts groups. The key to the buildings reuse is a financially solvent proposal that can fund renovation and long term operating costs.

New neighborhood parks are proposed in two locations so that all Carver residents have open green space easily accessible from their homes. The first priority is developing a park on the eastern, half of the block bound by Clay, Bowe, Catherine and Kinney Streets. This park, in the western half of Carver, will compliment the already established Smith-Peters Park in northeastern Carver. CACIL should work with the RRHA and the City Department of Parks and Recreation in making this park a reality. A second priority is the proposed narrow linear park in the 800 block between Marshall and Clay Streets. This park is proposed as a mews providing a pleasant meeting, walking and sitting area for residents.

Development of common green space within residential blocks is encouraged. These open spaces will facilitate residents meeting informally and also provide a safe area for children to play within sight of their residence. CACIL should take the lead by encouraging property owners and developers to work together to develop these spaces.

Other important green spaces are the Interstate 95 exit ramp at Belvidere and Leigh Streets and the land separating the neighborhood from Interstate 95 along Carver’s northern border. The Virginia Department of Transportation should plant these areas with trees and shrubbery to form a visual barrier between the neighborhood and the roadway and a pleasant gateway to the city.

**TRAFFIC CIRCULATION**

It is important that changes to traffic circulation be implemented quickly to counter the increasing traffic and parking problems. CACIL should work with the city’s traffic division and public works department to implement the proposed changes summarized below.

**Streets**

- Convert Gilmer Street to one-way heading north
- Catherine Street improvements: Cut back and remove overgrown vegetation, widen as feasible and pave between Norton and Bowe
- Post “no trucks” signs on Clay Street and study further truck restrictions

**Alley improvements**

- Request Capital Improvement Funds be designated by Department of Public Works to
- Remove obstacles, cut back and remove overgrown vegetation
- Install streetlights within alleys
- Post “no-parking” signs
Parking

On-Street Parking
• Implement resident parking sticker program in conjunction with the city and VCU
• Limit parking to one side on Munford, Gilmer, Goshen, and Catherine Streets
• Develop plan to alleviate parking congestion during Siegel Center events

Off-Street Parking
• Where possible, provide parking to the rear of all new and rehabilitated housing units to accommodate all residential vehicles

VISION FOR MARSHALL STREET

• Improved landscaping including trimming trees, new trees where needed and clean yards
• Better lighting for people walking on the street
• Stabilized residential buildings
• Improved sidewalks
• If possible, utility lines in the alley
• Improved visual access for drivers entering from side streets
• More parking to alleviate problems for businesses and residents
• Street cleaning at night rather than during the day so businesses can operate without interruption

Marshall Street's strategic location—near the Central Business District, next to VCU, accessible to Broad Street and the region's major highways—coincide with its available industrial buildings in a designated historic district and a Business Enterprise Zone. Tax advantages for businesses locating on Marshall Street include historic tax credits, city and state tax deductions and the benefits of rehabilitation in a special zone.

CACIL along with property owners and representatives from the Carver-VCU Partnership should work with the City's Department of Economic Development and private developers to make them aware of these opportunities and assist them in the implementation process.

PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Similar to achieving traffic circulation changes, CACIL should work with the same city departments to achieve the following public space improvements in priority:

Pedestrian street lighting
• Install pedestrian scaled lighting (first priority: intersections on Harrison Street, second priority: along neighborhood streets)

Intersection improvements
• Install corner extensions and crosswalk pavers

Sidewalk improvements
• Installation of sidewalks as needed
• Repair and maintain existing brick sidewalks as needed

Street tree planting and replacement
• Plant new and replacement trees along streets
• Prune older tree canopy to increase light at sidewalk level

Gateway markers
• Design, purchase and install gateway markers
64 THE CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN


Griffin, William E. *One Hundred Fifty Years of History: Along the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad.*


Michie, Peter S. “Richmond, Virginia.” map. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), 1865.

Richmond, Virginia. “An Ordinance to Authorize the Construction and Operation of a Street Railway.” City Ordinance, 1899(?).

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A HISTORY OF THE CARVER AND NEWTOWNE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Carver-Newtowne history is one of explosive growth followed by a struggle for survival. During the neighborhood’s early years it was defined by outside forces: the location of the railroad, city industrial growth, and Richmond’s residential expansion. Both immigrant families and former slaves found a home and a job within the neighborhood’s borders. Years later the effects of racial politics become evident. From 1930 through 1960, the area was considered a “Negro neighborhood,” one in which African Americans were permitted to live. With an increased African American population and limited available housing, all residents could not be adequately housed in the neighborhood’s older dwellings. This situation was compounded by indifferent landlords and the inability of neighborhood residents to obtain home improvement loans to update and expand their homes. In spite of the mixed housing conditions, a thriving community existed. A community in which many worked, worshiped, and played.

Carver and Newtowne-West lie to the west of downtown Richmond, bordered generally by West Marshall Street on the south, Interstate 95 to the north, Belvidere Street on the east, and Hermitage Road to the west. The development of this area has been significant in the history of the city of Richmond. Its history is presented in five eras: Early Development: 1767-1866, City Annexation and Growth: 1867-1919, Early City Planning: 1920-1949, Urban Renewal: 1950-1985, and Neighborhood Revitalization: 1986-1999. Residential, industrial, and institutional development will be explored as influenced first by the City of Richmond’s expansion and later by demographics, city planning policy, and neighborhood activism.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT: 1767 - 1866

In the early 1700s, William Byrd III, son of Richmond’s founder, owned a large land holding west of Richmond that included what would become the Carver and Newtowne neighborhoods. When Byrd, who had spent beyond his means while living in England, was forced to raise cash to pay his debts he sold lottery chances on this land. James Buchanan “won” much of the present Carver in this lottery.1 Buchanan’s land was characterized by a rolling

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1 Drew St. J. Carneal, Richmond’s Fan District, (Richmond: Historic Richmond Foundation, 1996); 11,13.
terrain which sloped from a flat plateau along its southern edge toward the steep ravine of Bacon Quarter Branch, a creek, to the north. Numerous small springs bisected the area. Two springs noted on early maps were Cove Spring, at what are now Moore and Bowe streets, and Buchanan’s Spring, which flowed through the area between Hancock and Harrison streets. Author Virginius Dabney in describing the latter location states, “the cool spring was notable for its translucent purity, and the shade of the huge trees made it a place of restful quietude.” The presence of Buchanan’s Spring had a large impact on land development—both fostering growth along its banks and also hindering expansion to the west. In 1787, the Reverend John Buchanan inherited his brother’s land and constructed Carver’s first known residence at this spring near today’s West Broad and Hancock streets.

The Carver area attracted additional settlers in the 1800s. At that time, with barriers imposed by the James River on the south and Shockoe Creek to the east and north, Richmond residents looked to the west for new home sites. This growth was facilitated by construction of the Richmond Turnpike in 1804. The Turnpike, later renamed Broad Street, helped with the transport of coal and tobacco from outlying areas and though that may have been the Turnpike’s initial purpose, shortly land speculation was booming and the Turnpike provided access to the Carver area. For investors, the “most coveted tract” was the property owned by Rev. John Buchanan. In 1810, Buchanan sold the eastern portion of his land to fellow Scotsman John Graham. Bullock and Harris platted the first development within this area in 1817. Surrounding large property owners, some of them land-speculators, included J. McMurdo, Robert Gordon, E. Carrington, Daniel Call, Chief Justice John Marshall, Will McKinzie, and A. Blair.

Michael Hancock built the second area’s second large home between 1815 and 1817 on Marshall Street to the east of Rev. Buchanan. What is interesting about this property is that it

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2 Virginius Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); 69.
3 Carneal, 23.
4 F.W. Beers, Illustrated Atlas of the City of Richmond, (Richmond: F.W. Beers, 1876). Also Richard Young, Map of the City of Richmond and it’s Jurisdiction, (Richmond, Va.: Frank D. Bailes, 1817); Mary Wingfield Scott, Old Richmond Neighborhoods, (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1950; reprint, Richmond: Wm Byrd Press, 1984); 251.
5 Scott, 231. Also Dabney, 171. Dabney states that this residence later became the home of Judge Dabney Carr, who called the place ‘Elba,’ and, prior to the Civil War, it was the home of John Minor Botts—“an unremitting foe of secession.”
was also the home of African Americans Sam Poser and Sam Smith, who lived on the northwest corner in the 1820s and 1830s. They are among the first African Americans to be living in this area. It is not known if these men were free blacks or slaves.6

The northeastern edge of Carver was less desirable as a residential location due to the rugged and impassable ravine formed by Bacon Quarter Branch and it thus developed in a different manner. As early as 1819, a brickyard was located on the present day West Leigh Street between Belvidere and Glimmer streets and by 1845 three additional brickyards were in operation: Davis and Son at 719-721 West Leigh Street, and William Davis and Son, W. Ragland, and Carter and Bowles each located at the intersection of West Leigh and Glimmer streets. At the southwestern edge of Carver industrial development occurred due to the presence of the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad (RF&P) whose tracks ran along West Broad Street to Hancock Street where they angled to the northwest.7

The first planned development was residential in nature. Several homes were built as early as 1818 along the seven hundred block of West Marshall Street.8 (Figure 1:701 and 703 West Marshall Street) Carver though, would not resemble a small neighborhood until the 1840s and 1850s when residences were built along West Marshall, West Clay and Catherine streets between Munford and Graham streets for European American settlers. (Figure 2: 712 West Marshall) (Figure 3: 722 West Clay Street) The homes built on West Marshall and Catherine streets were small frame residences, while those along West Clay Street were larger and primarily constructed of brick. These early homes usually exhibited the Classic Revival or Greek Revival architectural styles. Many homes were owned and occupied by shopkeepers and laborers, such as mechanics, bricklayers and carpenters, but large real estate owners or builders

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6 Carr, “The Garden,” (Richmond, Va., n.d.). Carr writes that the brick house of Posser and Smith sat at the edge of the property’s garden. Sam Smith was “the boss of the place and had charge of the fruit trees, the vine yard, the berries and vegetables.”

7 Kimberly M. Chen, “Carver Industrial Historic District,” (Richmond, Va., 1999); 8-13. The RF&P depot was located at Eighth and Broad Streets. The first RF&P train was dispatched from Richmond in 1836.

8 Mary Wingfield Scott, “Mary Wingfield Scott papers 1935 to 1953: Houses, Catherine Street to Clarke Street,” (File Box 6, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Va.). Scott notes an insurance policy was issued to Joshua Carter for a dwelling and carriage house at 701 West Marshall in 1818.
also constructed homes as investments.\textsuperscript{9}

During this antebellum period to the east of Carver at West Leigh Street and Brook Avenue, there were the homes of a number of free blacks. Most likely free blacks were also living within the present Carver boundaries.\textsuperscript{10} In 1866, the Mills & Starke city directory identified eleven “colored” residents in the 700 and 800 blocks of West Leigh and West Marshall Streets and in the 300 block of Gilmer Street.

The Carver area was becoming more and more accessible to the city by 1866. In 1860, the Virginia State Legislature had authorized construction of street railroads and shortly thereafter horse drawn cars traveled west on Broad Street to the then city limits at Adams Street, within walking distance for the new residents east of Munford.\textsuperscript{11} Clay and Leigh streets had been extended beyond the city limits to the general vicinity of Lombardy Street by 1865.\textsuperscript{12} (Figure 4: 1861-1865 map of Richmond drawn during the Civil War, Lt. Peter S. Michie.) And, following the burning of downtown Richmond by evacuating Confederate soldiers, many of the burned out businesses relocated to Broad Street—rapidly transforming it from a country road into a commercial thoroughfare expanding toward Carver.\textsuperscript{13} The stage was set for continued growth westward.

**ANNEXATION AND GROWTH: 1867 - 1919**

The second era in Carver’s history began with City annexation in 1867 of lands as far west as Lombardy Street. The Carver area, then referred to as “Sheep Hill,” was to become one of the most densely populated sections of the city.\textsuperscript{14} Plats reflecting Richmond’s established grid

\textsuperscript{9}Scott, 237. Studio I Class, Department of Urban Studies, VCU, “History, Urban Design Elements and Historic Resources of the Carver Neighborhood,” Class Project, (Richmond, Va., 1997); 8.
\textsuperscript{10}Scott, 245. The concentration of free blacks led to the formation of Ebenezer Baptist Church at West Leigh and Judah Streets in May 1858. In 1866, this church was also used as a Freedman’s Bureau school.
\textsuperscript{11}Richmond News Leader, n.d. (Valentine Museum, Richmond, Va.).
\textsuperscript{12}Peter S. Michie, “Richmond, Virginia.” map. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1865).
\textsuperscript{13}William Griffin, *One Hundred Fifty Years of History: Along the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad*, (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1984); 44.
\textsuperscript{14}Scott, 302. Also Richard Waller, Interview by Dennis D. Joyner, 14 April, 1999; Irving Haggins, Interview by Lucy Lucas and Trina Davis, 12, December 1999. “Sheep Hill” referred to the early practice of the herding sheep and cattle along Leigh Street to the stock yards and slaughterhouses located at Brook Road and Bacon Quarter Branch.
street pattern were quickly filed for land development. Two of these plans subdivided the area between Broad and Leigh streets, the Graham Plan from Munford to Hancock streets and the Gallstone Plan between Hancock and Bowe streets. By 1846 Graham’s Plan had been further subdivided into the Bosher and Harvie subdivision plans. To the north between West Leigh and Moore streets, the large Glazebrook Plan extended between Oak and Bowe streets. This plan was further subdivided by 1889 into the Hazelbrook Tract to the east and the West End Land Company Plan to the west.\(^\text{15}\) New developments required that streets be extended and this required that gullies be filled and some elevations leveled. Author Michael Chesson points out these were “minor obstacles compared to the imposing hills and deep ravines to the east [of the city].”\(^\text{16}\) These streets though, would run at an angle due to the northwesterly forty degree angle established earlier by Carver’s southern boundary, West Broad Street (the Richmond Turnpike). The city engineer’s annual report for 1874 indicates how slowly improvements would be completed. During that year, Hancock was the only Carver street to be improved, it was graded between Clay and Leigh streets.\(^\text{17}\) Maps document the opening of streets across Buchanan’s Spring, West Marshall by 1876 and Catherine, West Leigh, and Moore by 1889. Also, by 1889, two streets enabled passage to the north across Bacon Quarter Branch ravine. These were Oak with a small bridge at grade within the ravine and Dinnen with a narrow footbridge across the shallower western end of the creek. By 1905 a steel bridge spanning the ravine allowed wagons and carriages to cross at Lombardy Street.\(^\text{18}\)

As a primarily residential neighborhood grew in the eastern part of Carver, industrial development along the south and west was being driven by the presence of the RF&P railroad. The first industrial structures in the area were built by this railroad. In 1873, the RF&P constructed car shops along Leigh Street west of Lombardy Street and in 1875 locomotive

\(^{15}\)Beers, map. Also G. Wm. Baist, *Atlas of the City of Richmond, Virginia.* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1889), and Scott, notes.

\(^{16}\)Chesson, Michael B. *Chesson, Richmond After the War 1865-1890,* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981); 122.

\(^{17}\)W. E. Cutshaw, *Annual Report of the Engineer Department of the City of Richmond,* (Richmond: Evening News Steam Presses, 1874); 13. Other improvements in the immediate vicinity included the grading of Broad Street to Hancock and its graveling to Belvidere. During 1874 the city sewer was also extended along Clay Street to just east of Brooke Road.

\(^{18}\)Beers. Also Baist and Sanborn, 1905.
facilities. This resulted in a huge complex, known as Boulton, which included a machine shop, car shop, blacksmith’s shop, paint shop, carpenter’s shop, offices, and storehouse in addition to a nine-stall roundhouse and a 65-foot iron turntable. (Figure 5: RF&P Boulton shops) In 1880, the railroad expanded further by building a freight depot alongside their tracks on Broad Street between Hancock and Harrison streets. These facilities, though luring other industrial enterprises to the area and providing employment to the neighborhood.

Industry began locating in Carver after Richmond’s 1882 river front fire prompted the passage of ordinances banning certain businesses from expanding or building along the James River. Large three to four story industrial structures were soon built along the southern streets of West Marshall and West Clay and the western streets of Bowe and Lombardy. The Peter Strumpf Brewing Company, c.1890, was the earliest of these large-scale industries. This company purchased the Home Brewery, located on Buchanan’s Spring at Harrison and Clay Streets, and added a two-story brick office building (1125 West Clay Street), brick stables (700 Harrison Street), and a beer garden. At least six large industries built or expanded their factories in Carver between 1895 and 1906. These were Joseph Heppert’s planning mill and lumberyard (512 Goshen Street), the print shop for Baughman Stationary Company (1418-28 West Marshall Street), the Sitterding, Carneal, and Davis Company planing mill (Moore and Lombardy streets), the Consumer’s Ice Company (700 Harrison Street), the American Tobacco Company warehouse (700 to 900 blocks of Bowe Street) and the Eagle Paper Company (1402-08 West Marshall Street). (Figure 6: Consumer’s Ice Company) (Figure 7: British American Tobacco Company) The construction of large structures continued along West Marshall and West Clay streets between 1910 and 1915 with the Pin Money Pickles Company (1500 West Marshall Street) and the Virginia Railroad and Power Company (1120 West Clay Street) locating along these streets, and the Eagle Paper Company expanding its operations.

19 Griffin, 45, 61. In 1903, RF&P expanded their facilities further by constructing a large steam power plant. Also Sanborn map, (1905).

20 Chen, 8-13.

21 Ibid., 8-14, 8-15.

22 Ibid., 8-15, 8-17.
Also, prevalent were small neighborhood businesses. Black owned businesses in 1906 included watchmaker Marcellus Waller (1100 West Leigh Street), blacksmith Benjamin Waller (1019 West Leigh Street), and J. Pryor’s grocery (1227 Moore Street). By 1910, listings in the city directory of black owned businesses were much more extensive. These included sixteen grocery stores located primarily on Catherine, West Leigh and Moore streets, the University Pharmacy (825 West Leigh Street), Waller Jewelry (1007 West Leigh Street), and Benjamin Waller’s blacksmith shop (308 Graham Street).  

Industrial growth, with its accompanying demand for workers, was the dominate factor promoting residential growth in the Carver and Newtowne neighborhoods. By 1889 residences had been built on all major streets. West Leigh, Moore and Boyd streets had predominately one and two story frame houses. (Figure 8: 1430 West Clay Street) West Clay and West Marshall Streets contained a mixture of frame and brick two story residences. These homes were predominately in the Italianate or Queen Anne architectural style. Housing was also built for lower income residents in the form of tenements. These structures appear on the 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map along Ram Cat Alley between Munford and Graham streets. In the early twentieth century tenements were also erected on the cross streets of Hancock, Harrison, and Bowe.

Early city directories provide information on occupation and race of neighborhood residents. The 1879 city directory indicates that a mixture of economic and social classes with laborers as the predominate occupation, but teachers and physicians also represented. The housing pattern in Carver was a predominately segregated one with African Americans living between West Leigh Street and Bacon Quarter Branch and primarily European immigrants.

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23Hill Directory, Richmond, Virginia, 1900, (Richmond: Hill Directory, 1900). University Pharmacy was known by neighborhood residents as Dr. Jackson’s drug store.
24Baist. Also Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, “The Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Area,” (Richmond, Va., 1999). The former brickyard locations were initially considered unsuitable for construction due to the poor quality of soil that had replaced the clay removed for brick manufacturing. Inexpensive housing ultimately was built on these sites and occupied by low-income workers.
26Sanborn map, (1886). Alley was located between Broad and Marshall streets. Also Chen, 7-2.
settling along West Marshall, West Clay and Catherine streets. By the 1870s there was increased integration, yet specific streets remain segregated. West Clay Street was entirely European-American, while the cross-streets of Glimmer, Hancock, Kinney, Norton, and Oak were occupied entirely by African Americans. By the end of this era, 1919, the racial composition of the Carver neighborhood would become almost entirely African-American.

Residential development was also occurring to the west of Lombardy in what is now Newtonte-West. By 1889 J. H. Dinnen had plated land from Allen Street to Hermitage Road into a grid pattern with narrow lots. Small frame one and two story houses were built over the next years to house workers from the nearby meat packing operations. Often two residences were built on a single lot, thus increasing the density within the housing area.

Public transportation was a pressing issue for these early residents and major streetcar companies reportedly fought in front of the city council and the state legislature for exclusive rights to build new lines. Carver residents took advantage of this political situation and successfully lobbied to be included in the 1887 city ordinance authorizing electric streetcars. By May 1888 the first trolleys were in continuous operation running along Clay Street to Hancock Street before continuing along Broad Street west to Harrison Street. The Clay Street Line could provide frequent access to the city with its double tracks. These allowed trolley cars to pass each point along the route every five minutes between 6:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. seven days a week. By the early 1900s, public transportation was available to Newtonte residents via a single track trolley line along West Leigh Street that connected to the Clay Line at Clay and Hancock streets. Passenger rail service became convenient to residents in 1880 when the RF&P opened the Elba Station at West Broad and Pine streets and, in 1907, when the Richmond to Ashland

29 Richmond, Va., “An Ordinance to Authorize the Construction and Operation of a Street Railway,” 1899(?), 8.
30 Richmond Department of Public Works, Directors of Public Works for the City of Richmond, Va. 1828-1956, (Richmond, 1957);38. Also Richmond, “Ordinance to Authorize Street Railway,” 4. The ordinance required trains to pass every 20 minutes on this line.
Electric Railway began operations from a terminal at 814 West Broad Street. (Figure 9: Terminal of the Richmond-Ashland Railway Line) The construction of this railway’s elevated trestle though, necessary to cross Bacon Quarter Branch, destroyed numerous dwellings between Broad and Moore streets.31(Figure 10: Richmond to Ashland trestle)

A large number of neighborhood public and private institutions were also begun in the nineteenth century. The first schools established were private schools for African American students. In 1867, Richmond Institute (later Virginia Union University) was founded to the north of Carver along Lombardy Street, Moore Street Industrial School was established by a mission of the Second Baptist Church in 1878, and Hartshorn Memorial College, on Lombardy and Leigh streets, was founded in 1883 for the education of young black women. (Figure 11: Hartshorn Memorial College) Two public schools were also built. Elba School, an elementary school for the white children, was built in 1880 at 1000 West Marshall Street and Moore School, an African American elementary school, was built in 1887 at 1113 Moore Street. Moore School had a large enrollment of 947 students during its first year, foreshadowing that growth would continue and necessitate the construction of an addition in 1914. By 1905, two more schools were also constructed in Newtowne along Moore Street.32

Other neighborhood institutions, which demonstrate the communities’ growth and vitality, were the churches. In 1875, Moore Street Missionary Baptist Church was organized by members of the Second Baptist Church. Its first location was at 812 Moore Street. Other churches formed by 1886 were Elba Park Church and West Clay Street Baptist Church. By 1906 Hill’s city directory indicates that Carver was home to five churches: Marshall Street Christian Church, College View Mission, Broad Rock Baptist Mission, Moore Street Baptist Church, and First Union Baptist Church. In addition to schools and churches, other early community

31 Griffin, 45. Also Carlton McKenney, Rails in Richmond, (Glendale: Interurban Press, 1986); 95, 100. The trestle was constructed between Graham and Gilmer streets from 814 West Broad Street to Moore Street where it curved to the north. Rail service was interrupted between 1917 and 1919, the line ceased operations in 1938.

gathering places would have been, “Spring Garden Park” at Harrison and Clay streets and the Broad Street baseball grounds which, in 1905, were located at Lombardy and Broad Streets.\textsuperscript{33}

**EARLY CITY PLANNING: 1920-1949**

The historical focus for Carver and Newtowne-West begins to change in the 1920s from one of construction of the built environment to one of maintaining a viable community. During the era from 1920 to 1949 the physical deterioration of Richmond’s densely populated central city neighborhoods forced the city to address the issue of public housing. Carver, then known as “Uptown,” was one area significantly impacted by the city’s plans. Though a vibrant neighborhood, the changing demographics, the mixture of industrial and residential uses, the predominately older housing stock, and the bank lending practices in African American residential areas presented obstacles to Carver’s renewal and growth.

The planning movement began in Richmond in 1919 with the formation of an interim planning committee. Following a national trend, land use zoning was one of the first areas addressed through city planning efforts. In 1927, the City Council adopted the city’s first zoning map. Zoning for Carver deviated from existing land use in that the north side of West Marshall Street and the south side of West Clay Street were zoned industrial west of Gilmer Street, in Newtowne-West residences west of Allen Street on the south side of West Leigh Street were zoned industrial. Though some industries were located in these areas, they were primarily residential streets.\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to evaluating land use, the city also studied population and housing conditions during these years. In 1934, they found that approximately 5,000 African Americans lived within Carver’s boundaries, thus making it one of the most densely populated of the older central city neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{35} Statistics for the Carver-Jackson Ward area north of Broad Street between

\textsuperscript{33}Beers. Also Sanborn, (1905).

\textsuperscript{34} Richmond City Planning Commission, “Zoning: District Maps.” (Richmond, Va., 1925 and 1927). The 1925 proposed zoning map had designated Leigh Street west of Munford as commercial.

\textsuperscript{35} Richmond Planning Commission, *A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City*, (Richmond, 1946); 79, 71, pl. 14.
Henry and Harrison Streets revealed the dense housing conditions documenting 70.5 persons per acre in 1920 and 55.9 persons per acre in 1930.36 City housing inspectors provided further evidence of density by calculating that from 1926 to 1935 a total of 425 houses had been demolished in African American neighborhoods with developers and individuals constructing only thirty new dwellings. New housing construction in Carver and Newtowne from 1926 to 1935 only resulted in five units in Carver and four in Newtowne, and one apartment building in each area.37

The city drew up extensive redevelopment plans in an effort to alleviate the dense and unhealthy living conditions. Slum clearance was always the proposed first step. Urban planning professor Christopher Silver, analyzing public policy during this time, stated, “The demise of the public-private partnership in low-income housing construction led to a pervasive belief that, until all traces of existing housing deterioration had been eradicated, center-city neighborhoods were not worthy of private housing investment.”38 Initial plans for slum clearance and construction of public housing units, both in Carver and other neighborhoods, created controversy and were ultimately vetoed at the polls. Thus, little was accomplished in the 1930s other than to document a need. In 1940, the city Housing Authority was established to deal directly with housing related issues. Harland Bartholomew, author of the city’s 1946 master plan, encouraged action by emphasizing the housing plight of the city’s African American population in the master plan. He also alluded to the effects of segregated housing practices, by observing that shortage of “available housing facilities for this [African American] population” had “forced large numbers back into previously discarded quarters.”39

By the late 1940s the city’s planners and policymakers had become even more convinced that massive slum clearance was necessary. Central city housing areas were evaluated for slum or “blighted” conditions with the intent that these areas would be redeveloped. “Blight”

36Ibid., pl. 15, 16. Housing type within this area was almost entirely one and two story residences, many without indoor plumbing facilities.
37Christopher Silver, Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race, (Knoxville, Tenn: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); 141. Also Richmond, Master Plan, 70.
38Silver, 142.
39Richmond, Master Plan, 68.
characteristics, as defined by Bartholomew at the time, included both buildings that were no longer maintained in a state of good repair and the replacing of owner/occupants with renters. He elaborated further on the causes: the proximity of objectionable industrial development, encroachment of more intensive or inappropriate uses, proximity of Negro development, and other factors such as schools or parks that were too small or poor street paving within the community.40 Carver’s designation as a blighted neighborhood would have been in keeping with these criteria.

The issue for Carver residents would be the threat of wholesale housing clearance when a mixture of housing conditions existed in much of the neighborhood. This variety was documented by the 1940 federal census, which indicated that the number of residences needing major repairs between Henry and Harrison streets was 5 to 10 percent and between Harrison Street and the Boulevard was 25 to 50 percent. The percentage of overcrowded dwellings (homes with more than one and one-half persons per room) between Henry and Harrison was 10 to 15 percent and between Harrison Street and the Boulevard was 20 percent or more.41 Current Carver residents provide additional detail regarding housing conditions recalling homes without electricity or indoor plumbing and families carrying their drinking water from the open springs at Catherine and Harrison Streets.42 One can thus determine that numerous dwellings needed some level of upgrading.

The city’s second zoning map, adopted in 1943, did not encourage residential reinvestment in these neighborhoods as industrial zoning remained in place along the perimeters and along Lombardy Street.43 Although the boom period of industrial construction had passed, a sizeable number of industrial buildings were constructed between 1926 and 1935.44 These

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40 Harland Bartholomew, “Housing Conditions and Policies, Richmond, Virginia,” (Richmond: City Planning Commission, 1942); 5, 6.
41 Richmond, Master Plan, pl. 25, 27.
42 Scott. Also Lucy Lucas and Viola Robinson, Interview by author, 29 April 2000, and Barbara Abernathy, Interview by author, 2000.
43 Richmond, zoning map, (1943). Zoning in Newtowne was changed from industrial to residential for the block between Allen and Mossella streets on the south side of West Leigh Street.
44 Richmond, Master Plan, Pl. 10, 11. Eleven commercial structures were built during these years.
businesses continued to provide easily accessed employment to neighborhood residents when other large employers, such as the RF&P Boulton shop, had moved from the area. Local employment was important as few residents owned automobiles during this period. Businesses building in Carver between 1920 and 1950 included the Cusson, May and Company printers (715-721 Bowe Street), the Hajoca Heating Company (1208 West Marshall Street), Tomlinson Heating and Plumbing Supplies (1300 West Marshall Street), the Beaufont Company (703-07 Harrison Street), the Haines, Jones and Cadbury Company (1208 West Marshall Street), the City Ice Company (1200 West Marshall Street), and Biggs Antique Company (900 West Marshall Street). The vacant Eagle Paper Company buildings (1402-08 West Marshall) were purchased by Friedman-Marks for suit manufacture.46

As in the earlier era, the neighborhood’s African American population owned small businesses. Also, due to early settlement by Jewish and German immigrants several corner stores were owned by these individuals. An evaluation of the major east west streets in 1920 indicates that at least eight black owned businesses thrived at this time, with the majority located on West Leigh Street. These businesses included the European Boot Black Parlor, University Pharmacy, West End Hair Dressing Parlor, Virginia Cafè, West End Electric Shoe Repairing Shop, and the Afro American Old Folks Home. (Figure 12: Afro American Old Folks Home) Other small businesses, such as laundries, beauty shops, and cafes operated out of homes but were not reflected in the city directory.47

The 1930 Hill’s city directory documents a dramatic increase in the variety of small black owned businesses. Businesses located on the streets of West Clay, West Marshall, and West Leigh totaled twenty-two. These included service-oriented businesses, such as barber and beauty shops, cleaners, and shoe repair shops, a jewelry store, a physician, a notary, and restaurants. African American owned business opening in the 1940s included the Carter Brothers’ Funeral

45Lucas and Robinson Interview. Also Waller interview; Griffin, 62. The Boulton operation, with the exception of passenger car shops and mechanical department offices, moved from Lombardy and West Leigh streets to the company’s Acca freight yard outside the city limits in 1924.

46Chen, 7-7, 7-8, 8-15. Also Hill, (1920, 1930, 1940, 1950).

47Hill, (1920).
Home on West Leigh Street and Edward Bushell’s dental practice on West Clay Street.\textsuperscript{48} Jewish and German owned corner stores had also grown in number since 1920 and would continue to dominate the grocery business through 1940. (Figure 13: Moore Street Market) The number and variety of businesses present would indicate that this was a self-contained neighborhood; one where residents could meet daily needs without leaving the area.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the pressing need for additional neighborhood schools was finally addressed. Maggie L. Walker High School opened in 1938 at Lombardy and Leigh streets. (Figure 14: Maggie Walker High School) All Richmond African American ninth grade students attended this school and then, following their freshman year, chose to attend either Maggie Walker High School for vocational and industrial courses or Armstrong High School for college preparatory classes.\textsuperscript{49} A new elementary facility would also be built. As early as 1913, the neighborhood Elba Elementary School had been labeled as antiquated. In 1941, the Richmond School Board developed plans to replace the aging school with a new structure.\textsuperscript{50} A replacement though was not built until after World War II when, in 1949, a large addition was built onto the Moore Street School and the Elba School was closed. The combined school was renamed George Washington Carver Elementary School. This school, along with providing a modern educational facility for neighborhood children, also provided the neighborhood with a new name—Carver.\textsuperscript{51}

**URBAN RENEWAL: 1950 - 1985**

Between 1950 and 1985 the city implemented programs to address needs identified in the 1946 city master plan. Most important to Carver, were those plans dealing with transportation and housing issues. These plans required extensive redevelopment within the neighborhood and thus prompted residents to organize in an effort to influence public policy.

\textsuperscript{48} Hill, (1930, 1940).

\textsuperscript{49} Richmond News Leader, 7 September 1938.

\textsuperscript{50} Richmond News Leader, 5 June 1952.

\textsuperscript{51} The earliest references to Carver as a geographical location are found in Richmond newspaper articles of 1954. The Richmond Times Dispatch in June 20, 1954 references the Carver Area Citizen’s Committee.
In 1950, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) conducted an extensive housing study of the 122-acre area encompassing all of Jackson Ward—including northern and eastern Carver. This study revealed a strong market for new housing close to the central business district and also the severely deteriorated housing throughout the Jackson Ward area.\textsuperscript{52} The first “Carver Plan” was part of the resulting Jackson Ward redevelopment strategy. The Carver plan specifically called for the razing of more than 400 dwellings to make way for a turnpike, the extension and widening of Belvidere Street, and allocation of land for industrial reuse—it immediately created controversy.\textsuperscript{53} A 1953 editorial in the \textit{Richmond News Leader} presents one perspective asserting that the “structures involved in the Carver Project for the most part appear to be the very sort of dilapidated and unhealthy dwellings contemplated under the State and Federal slum clearance acts.”\textsuperscript{54} (Figure 15: Dilapidated Housing on Axtell Street) The newly formed Carver Displacement League, representing the neighborhood viewpoint, proposed a program of spot removal and rehabilitation. League president Oliver P. Chiles, took issue with coverage by the paper contending that housing pictured in the newspaper focused on deteriorated rental properties and was thus misleading to the public. He also stressed that displaced elderly persons would not find acceptable housing elsewhere with the proposed compensation for their homes. Desiring to convey the League’s support for improved housing he stated, “We would not have you believe we are against progress or against the city being made more beautiful, but we are gravely concerned with one fact and that is, that this progress and beauty not be purchased by those persons who are least able to do so.”\textsuperscript{55} Despite neighborhood concerns, the Carver redevelopment plan moved forward.

Although the city and RRHA had rejected the resident’s recommendation that rehabilitation be substituted for a total clearance strategy, the city Health Department designated Carver for housing code enforcement and rehabilitation in 1954. Their action provided support

\textsuperscript{52} Silver, 212, 213. More than 25 percent of city residents surveyed favoring new housing construction in the central city area.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 221.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Richmond News Leader}, 8 December 1953.

\textsuperscript{55} Silver, 219.
to the idea that clearance was not the only feasible strategy. Another entity joining the rehabilitation effort was the Richmond Home Builders Association, who formed the Home Builders Rehabilitation Corporation for the purpose of providing loans to owner-occupants for property improvements. The joint effort was focused on a seventeen-block area bounded generally by the streets of West Marshall, West Leigh, Munford, and Bowe. Within this area the Home Builders also renovated 1209 Catherine Street to serve both as a model for rehabilitation and as headquarters for the Carver Area Citizen’s Committee and the Home Builder’s health and rehabilitation committee. By 1959 this collaborative effort had assisted in bringing 97 percent of the 888 substandard dwellings into compliance with the city’s housing code. New homeowners had also been attracted to the neighborhood, thus increasing owner occupancy from 40 percent to 60 percent. Carver citizens had actively supported the rehabilitation program and were credited for being integral to success. Among these citizens were Oliver Chiles, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hughes and Mrs. Carrie Faines, who had gone door to door educating and encouraging their neighbors.

Area developments the neighborhood could not influence were the continued intrusion of Broad Street commercial ventures, the construction of a truck terminal on residentially zoned Catherine Street, and the city’s construction of a large gas holding tank. Also, moving forward was Richmond’s transportation plan. In the summer of 1958, the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike (Interstate I-95) was built along the northern edge of Carver. Interstate construction required extensive housing clearance and thus demolished Boyd Street and the eastern end of Moore Street. Coinciding with interstate construction was the extension of Belvidere Street along Carver’s eastern boundary. (Figure 16: Belvidere Street extension) The construction of these roads had a major impact on the neighborhood by not only reducing the number of dwellings, but

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56 Richmond Times Dispatch, 20 June 1954. Also Richmond News Leader, 1 July 1959. Financing was major obstacle impeding success of rehabilitation efforts. Few lending institutions would provide loans due to the low assessment value of neighborhood housing.

57 Silver, 220. Also Richmond News Leader, 30 June 1959.

also by increasing traffic, altering the residential nature of the northern and eastern edges, and isolating Carver from its residential neighbor Jackson Ward.

In 1962, the final phase of the Carver plan was implemented with additional clearance of deteriorated properties north of Leigh Street by the RRHA and then construction of the ninety-eight unit Hartshorn Home community by private developers. This ranch style housing development offered affordable housing and also a community room and swimming pool. (Figure 17: Hartshorn Homes) The homes, located north of West Leigh Street between Harrison and Bowe streets, were also close to both the G.W. Carver and Maggie Walker schools. The Hartshorn community had the distinction of being the first of its kind to be insured by the Federal Home Administration.59

In the early 1960s the city also adopted its third zoning map and wrote a comprehensive community renewal plan.60 These documents were not entirely compatible in their visions for Carver and Newtowne-West. For Carver, the renewal plan highlighted incompatible land use zoning by stating that industries exerted a “poor influence on [the] residential area” and that neighborhood problems included “heavy through traffic, some narrow streets, and [the] abandoned railroad viaduct.” The report’s recommendations, which promoted a “potentially sound residential neighborhood,” included the rehabilitation of properties generally south and southeast of Carver Elementary School and the removal of scattered incompatible land uses, the abandoned railway viaduct, and excessively deteriorated residences.61 The two documents were also significant to Newtowne’s future. Zoning as revised in 1961 designated the entire area west of Lombardy Street as industrial. The community renewal report did not take issue with this


60 Richmond Times Dispatch, 11 January 1959. This study, encompassing 298 blocks with 6,500 houses, was the largest slum clearance and rehabilitation program ever considered by the city.

61 Richmond City Planning Commission and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Community Renewal Program, Richmond, Virginia, (Richmond, Va.: City, 1966); 60, 61. Also Richmond, zoning map, (1961). The 1961 zoning map expanded the industrial zone along Broad and Marshall streets to include West Clay between Hancock and Norton streets.
industrial zoning though it did acknowledged that the “residential areas [were] adversely affected by industrially oriented traffic, noise, odors, and dust from adjacent incompatible uses.” The report also encouraged the expansion of the Maggie Walker High School grounds from twelve to twenty acres.62

During the 1960s and 1970s there were also important changes associated with either existing or former area industries. In 1965, West Marshall Street resident Mrs. Lillie Thomas was successful in persuading the city to dismantle the former Richmond-Ashland railway viaduct between Clay and Catherine streets. And in 1969, the Export Leaf Tobacco Company contributed to the neighborhood street scape by constructing a new office at 1601 West Leigh Street. This building was designed by Richmond architect David Warren Hardwicke. But also during these years the Home Brewing Company closed leaving a vacant structure and the RF&P freight depot at Hancock and Broad was demolished to make way for a parking lot. The reuse of former industrial sites would become a component in future revitalization efforts.

During this era, Carver residents had formed two neighborhood associations, the West of Belvidere Neighborhood Association and the Carver Area Civic Improvement League, and had achieved a level of success influencing redevelopment and revitalization plans for their neighborhood. Newtowne residents had also organized as the Newtowne Civic League. A city-wide change that could not be altered by neighborhood activism though, was the Richmond School Board’s consolidation of the city’s seven high schools in 1979.63 The consolidation of Maggie Walker High School with John Marshall High School, which resulted in Maggie Walker housing grades seven through ten, was an emotional one for the community. Not only had they identified strongly with in their high school, but events evolved from the school’s presence. One example is the long-standing rivalry with Armstrong High School that was played-out each year.

62 Richmond, zoning map, (1961). Also Richmond and RRHA, 68, 69. The last comprehensive evaluation of city zoning took place in 1979. The approved zoning map included only one change for Carver and Newtowne areas, the north side of West Marshall Street between Munford to Gilmer streets was zoned residential.

63 Richmond News Leader, 19 March 1985. After 1979, students attended Maggie Walker through the tenth grade and then transfer to John Marshall High School. Also Richmond News Leader, 12 July 1963. Two wings were added to Maggie Walker High School in 1963 to increase school capacity from 900 to 1400 students.
in a Thanksgiving football game known as the “Classic.” This was an occasion that drew people together and forged neighborhood bonds.

For Carver and Newtowne this era of physical change, combined with neighborhood residents relocating to other areas of the city, made reestablishing a neighborhood identity an essential ingredient in neighborhood revitalization during the coming years.

**NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION: 1986 - 1999**

The most recent era in the Carver and Newtowne history, 1986 to 1999, is an exciting one as evidenced by the positive changes within the neighborhood. During this period the neighborhood associations successfully impacted public policy and joined RRHA in writing conservation and redevelopment plans. Also, the Carver-VCU Partnership was formed to facilitate their working toward mutual goals.

In the early 1980s, Madeline Peters, president of West of Belvidere neighborhood association, led the effort to have Carver designated as a conservation and rehabilitation district. The process was begun in 1985 when RRHA personnel, city planners, and VCU students conducted a preliminary housing survey of Carver. Their survey would become the basis for a neighborhood revitalization plan entitled “The Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Area Plan” and that the City Council would approve in 1986. This conservation and redevelopment plan encompassed an area extending generally from a southern boundary formed by West Marshall and West Clay streets to West Leigh Street between Munford and Bowe streets. Mayor Roy A. West, Carver City Council representative at this time, championed its passage emphasizing that the neighborhood supported the plan while also recognizing that there would “have to be some give and take,” and that additional planning would cause inconveniences. He further elaborated, “That’s what’s so exciting to me about the Carver project—the people bought it, they worked with it, and they are willing to stick with it to see it through.”

The Conservation and Redevelopment Plan centered around five efforts: 1) low interest loans and grants to homeowners for property renovation, 2) urban homesteading—acquisition and provision of

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64 *Richmond Times Dispatch*. 7 September 1986.
vacant houses to low and moderate-income persons willing to repair and occupy them, 3) rehabilitation loans to rental property owners, 4) removal of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, and 5) clearing specific areas for redevelopment. The Carver plan also divided the conservation district into three geographical areas and outlined recommendations appropriate to each area. The plan’s smooth adoption was due in part to private efforts already evident in the neighborhood. These include new homeowners renovating houses along West Clay and West Marshall streets, neighborhood residents using FHA loans to renovate frame buildings between Harrison and Kinney streets, and the Task Force for Historic Preservation in the Minority Community purchasing five houses for renovation and resale to residents.

In the late 1980s the influence of the West of Belvidere association faded and the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) became the primary advocate for the Carver community. Led by CACIL president Helen Smith, the community actively worked with the RRHA and the city to further the conservation and redevelopment plan. A first hurdle was cleared in 1988 when the city’s master plan was amended to recommended a zoning change from industrial to residential or residential-office for fifty-six properties in the 800 and 1000 blocks of West Marshall Street. Neighborhood residents had requested this amendment, and though some area property owners expressed opposition, others, such as Barbara Abernathy and JoAnn Childs, worked for its passage. The conservation district was subsequently expanded to include these West Marshall Street properties and in 1989 zoning was changed along these blocks.

The largest building program proposed in the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan, thirty-four town homes to be located in the 800 blocks of West Leigh and Catherine streets, was funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1988. The neighborhood worked diligently with RRHA to assure the Victorian style town home plans would complement the neighborhood’s existing architecture. They were so successful that the

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
plans were commended by the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Before construction began, the project was interrupted for two years when opponents filed a class action lawsuit. The case was finally dismissed in April of 1991. In 1993 the groundbreaking for the town homes was held and by 1994 the first homes were dedicated.  

(Figure 19: New Carver town homes)

By 1997 accomplishments under the Carver Conservation and Redevelopment Plan included the rehabilitation program’s support for renovation of 157 residences, the homesteading program’s purchase, rehabilitation, and sale of thirty-two houses to first-time homeowners, and the redevelopment program’s purchase of eighty-one dilapidated structures.  

(Figure 20: 706 Catherine St.) Other revitalization efforts were also taking place in Carver. These included the construction in 1991 of a Habitat for Humanity home on the corner of Catherine and Munford streets and the renovation the former Home Brewery building at 1125 West Clay into Clay House, Virginia’s first single-room occupancy facility.  

The neighborhood Smith-Peters Park, named in honor of community leaders Helen Smith and Madeline Peters, was constructed on Catherine Street in 1997.

The Newtowne-West Civic League, led by Marian G. Carter, was actively involved in determining their neighborhood’s future during this period. Since 1961 Newtowne homeowners had been unable to get rehabilitation loans for their properties due to the area’s industrial zoning. Thus, in 1987, the League requested assistance from the RRHA. The program initiated by RRHA at that time provided much needed emergency assistance for home repairs. In 1988, the League, with support from their City Council representative William J. Leidinger, was successful in having the city’s master plan amended to change the proposed zoning of 100 properties from industrial to residential. This was an important step as industrial zoning had not only prevented residents from obtaining improvement loans, but had also encouraged investors

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69 RRHA, progress report, 2,3.

70 RRHA, staff report.
to purchase residential properties with the intent of consolidating land parcels for development as industrial sites. In 1990, the City Council passed the zoning change. Areas affected by this change were between West Leigh Street and the alley north of Moore Street from Middlesex Street to Elizabeth Street, and the south frontage along West Leigh Street between Allen Avenue and Mossella Street. As a result of these initiatives public/private partnerships were formed between the RRHA and the nonprofit Habitat for Humanity and the private developer Richmond Homes. These partnerships constructed fifteen new homes for lower income residents between 1990 and 1996.

In 1996, the “Newtowne-West Redevelopment and Conservation Plan” was written by the Newtowne-West Civic League and RRHA. The principal strategies put forth in this plan were for clearance and redevelopment and for capital improvements. (Figure 21: Newtowne-West homes) For this plan to be fully implemented an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance will be necessary to change existing industrial zoning to residential in sections of the conservation area.

Continued revitalization and growth were bolstered in 1999 when the combined Carver/Newtowne-West neighborhood was selected by the city to be one of six city neighborhoods participating in the Neighborhoods in Bloom program. This program commits an increased level of funding to these neighborhoods for redevelopment and rehabilitation activities over a period of two years. In the Carver/Newtowne-West area, the RRHA was requested to administer the program. Neighborhoods in Bloom also has a Blitz to Bloom component, which incorporates other city agencies to increase public safety and the provision of human services in the targeted neighborhoods.

As the residential areas are being redeveloped into single family homes, demolition or adaptive reuse of the former industrial buildings becomes the next challenge. During the past

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72 Newtowne-West Civic League and RRHA, 1,2.

73 Ibid., 2, 22.
fifteen years numerous industrial buildings were demolished to facilitate construction of new structures. In 1998 and 1999, VCU two buildings along Carver’s southern edge, the Siegel Center at Harrison and West Broad streets and, to the east of this building, the Fine Arts College. Adaptive reuse of buildings is evident by the wide range of newer businesses prospering in the neighborhood. These businesses provide a variety of services such as printing, employment referral, health care, automobile repair, and loan financing. Also present are a large rental-storage facility and a trucking firm. Though economic development is important to Carver’s future, some businesses create parking problems and traffic congestion, and thus are not appropriate for the area. In 1999, the Carver Industrial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places to foster reuse by enabling developers to take advantage of the federal and state rehabilitation tax credits. This historic district is located in southeastern Carver generally along Lombardy and West Marshall streets. Structures in the district represent the area’s industrial development between 1890 and 1930 and include a “collection of skillfully crafted and finely detailed” buildings, which also represent a wide range of architectural styles. The current challenge is the conversion of these structures to uses which are compatible with the rest of the neighborhood.

The Carver and Newtowne neighborhood associations have worked closely with the RRHA since the early 1980s. Another promising partnership was recently formed between Carver and Virginia Commonwealth University. In 1998, Barbara Abernathy, president of CACIL, and Dr. Eugene Trani, president of VCU, formed the Carver-VCU Partnership with a goal of “creating a safe and nurturing community for everyone who lives, works, and studies in the area.” A year later the partnership received a two-year grant from HUD for the purpose of developing a Community Outreach Partnership Center and engaging in supportive activities. One example of partnership promoted cooperation may be seen in the design for a new VCU student dormitory to be constructed at 1100 West Broad Street. This facility will provide student

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75 Chen, 7-1.
76 “Carver-VCU Partnership Background,” 1.
housing and also contain a community center for Carver residents.\textsuperscript{77}

During the coming year the community will see the Maggie Walker High School building reopen as a Governor’s School. This building housed the public school’s Arts and Humanities Center, Open High School, and Richmond Community High School from 1987 to 1990 and had then stood vacant for ten years.\textsuperscript{78} Located at Lombardy and West Leigh streets, the school’s reopening will contribute to the continued revitalization of the area. Other important institutions are George Washington Carver Elementary School and Moore Street Baptist Church. Carver Elementary continues to educate neighborhood children and also provides support programs to local families. The neighborhood landmark, Moore Street Baptist Church, has served as a spiritual center for over 100 years and draws its large membership from across the city. The church also fosters a strong community by opening its doors to the many neighborhood groups which use its facilities as a meeting place. Two other supportive neighborhood churches are Bethany Baptist Church at 900 West Catherine Street and Crusade for Christ Temple at 1700 Moore Street in Newtowne.

**SUMMARY:**

The physical history of the Carver and Newtowne neighborhoods spans a period of over 200 years. It is a history of contrasts, from the early treed estate neighboring a brick yard to the current beautifully renovated dwelling adjacent to an abandoned and graffiti marked factory. The presence of the RF&P Railroad along the southern border attracted large industries, which in turn created employment opportunities. Between 1840 and 1920 Carver was an integrated community of primarily working class residents. Newtowne-West, developing after 1890, was from inception an African American laborer community. By 1930 the joint neighborhoods had become a self-sufficient African American community with stores, physicians, schools, and churches. Important Richmond institutions founded during these years included Hartshorn Memorial College, Moore Street Baptist Church, Maggie Walker High School, and George

\textsuperscript{77} Richmond, Va., “Ordinance No. 99-282-256: To Authorize a Special Use of Real Estate, Property Known as 1100 West Broad Street.” (Richmond, Va., 1999).

\textsuperscript{78} North Light, February 1987. Also Richmond Free Press, 9-11 December, 1999.
By 1930, little private housing reinvestment was occurring in the area and thus dense and deteriorating housing conditions developed in some sections. The city, recognizing that public funds would be needed to revitalize central city neighborhoods, conducted studies and designed redevelopment plans. At first of these plans had little citizen input, but in the 1950s neighborhood residents organized and promoted their vision for a rehabilitated residential neighborhood. Though large buildings along the perimeter foster a continued commercial presence, neighborhood residents have worked collaboratively with both public and private entities to sustain their neighborhood’s historical residential character and rebuild its vitality. Many of these individuals are long-time residents, but also important are the new residents—“urban homesteaders.” Challenges remain, but successes provide a strong foundation to ensure that these communities continue to be neighborhoods “on the move.”

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79Abernathy interview. CACIL has used the slogan “A neighborhood on the move” since the 1980s.
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