

SMALL PLAN AREA 2: FALL HILL AVENUE

GENERAL CHARACTER

Planning Area 2 is bounded by Interstate-95 on the west, the Rappahannock River on the north and east, and the Fall Hill corridor to the south. Fall Hill Avenue, a major collector, serves as the spine to this small area. In the Spring of 2017, it was reconstructed as a four-lane controlled-access street with sidewalk and multi-use path. This area has over 125 acres of public open space, approximately 75 acres of private natural area, and almost a mile of Rappahannock River frontage. The area is primarily residential with a mix of housing types. Limited commercial businesses in this area require residents to travel some distance to access daily goods and services. The area has large undeveloped areas but steep slopes, streams, and easements will focus this potential to clustered areas. The goals for the area aim to protect the integrity of the natural areas, expand multi-modal access, and improve the livability of the residential areas in terms of housing and neighborhood quality.

CHALLENGES

- The residential neighborhoods, while near the river, lack connection to the resource and are disconnected from the surrounding natural environment.
- City-owned land containing natural resources has limited accessibility for visitors.
- Many of the commercial and residential structures in the area have reached an age now requiring substantial upgrade to key building elements and systems. Modernization and property investment are needed. This includes, Central Park Townhomes, a majority renter-occupied neighborhood that has struggled with property maintenance and community investment.
- The small aging storefronts on Fall Hill Avenue are zoned Commercial Highway. Existing and proposed commercial development of this intensity can have negative impacts on adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- Vacation of right-of-way for the realignment of Fall Hill Avenue has left property vacant along this key frontage.
- Interconnectivity within neighborhoods and connection to Fall Hill Avenue are incomplete making safe pedestrian access difficult.
- Undeveloped land is full of sensitive environmental features and topography and will have limited options for new development.

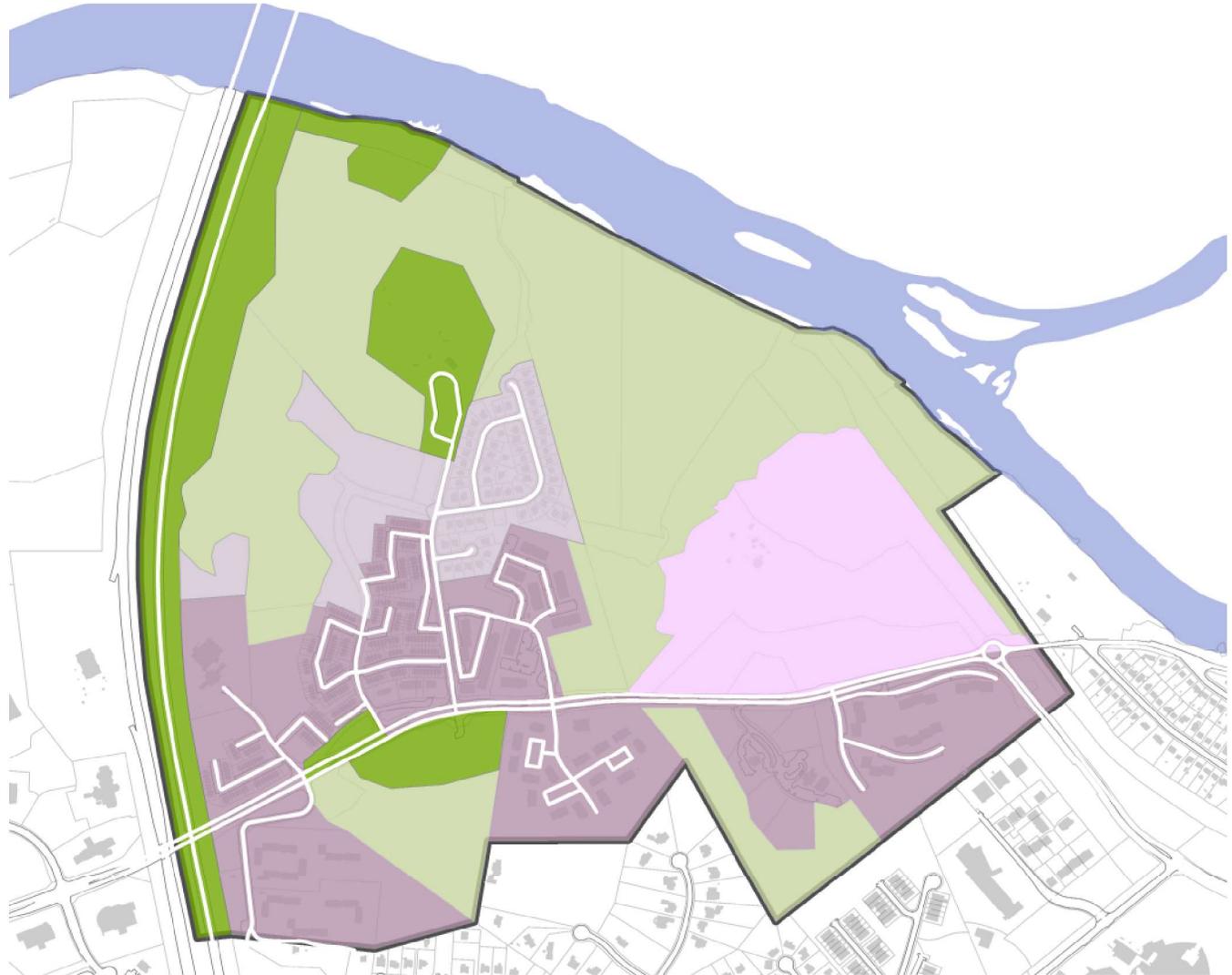
OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop City parks accessible from Fall Hill Avenue on the natural areas on the uplands overlooking the Rappahannock River. After the construction of I-95 bridges, at the bank a “wild riverfront park” should be developed to provide access to the river building on the natural and historic resources of the area.
- Connect the Riverside Trail through Area 2 that maintains the natural and scenic qualities of the river, its floodplain, and wetlands creating a key link in a full river frontage system.
- Leverage public investment and community programming to spur private reinvestment for strengthened residential communities.
- Protect established residential neighborhoods from intense commercial development, through transitional uses and design standards that minimize adverse impacts
- Vacate and consolidate unused right of way from the road realignment of Fall Hill Avenue for possible redevelopment of neighborhood serving commercial uses at a small scale. In the short term, use this City-owned land for community programming and open space.
- Plan for Gateway Boulevard to be extended from State Route 3 to Fall Hill Avenue, including a multi-use path to create a North-South pedestrian and bicycle link, aligning with Wicklow Drive, and connecting to the Riverfront.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands through clustering of residential development.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Area 2 is not an area of great commercial intensity and large scale change of land use is not envisioned. Moderate scaled incremental growth of single family, semi-detached, and attached homes may be appropriate where clustered to protect environmentally sensitive areas. Area 2 currently has modest retail development, approximately 10,000 square feet, situated between Wicklow Drive and Roffman Road. There is some capacity for improved forms and types of this local retail space to provide a broader range of neighborhood goods and services. A small office park is located to the south of Fall Hill Avenue tenants medical offices associated with its proximity to Mary Washington Hospital. The majority of developed land in this area is dedicated to residential land use. Of the nearly 1,000 units, the majority are rental apartments and townhomes in six main developments.

AREA 2 TRANSECT ZONES



PART III

KEY



TRANSECTS

The transect map illustrates current settlement and commerce patterns, and directs the character and intensity of new development, infill development or redevelopment within small area Area 2. The transect map for Area 2 was developed after studying the existing and potential future built environment. Area 2, which is served by public transportation, includes opportunities for revitalization with integrated mixed-use and some areas for higher density development.

Area 2 contains four standard transect zones and a civic transect.

AREA 2 TRANSECT ZONES

T-1 (PRESERVED OPEN SPACE) This area contains preserved or planned open space. In Area 2, this includes the steep slopes, dedicated park land, and deeded open space to the north of Fall Hill Avenue. Development is not intended in this area, but improvements to better access these public amenities are appropriate. South of Fall Hill Avenue, City-owned open space is currently partially programmed with fields and play equipment. The balance remains heavily wooded with steep slopes and streams. Expansion of these amenities is encouraged to better connect and support nearby neighborhoods. Fall Hill Professional Park is bounded by privately-held open space protecting steep slopes and streams.

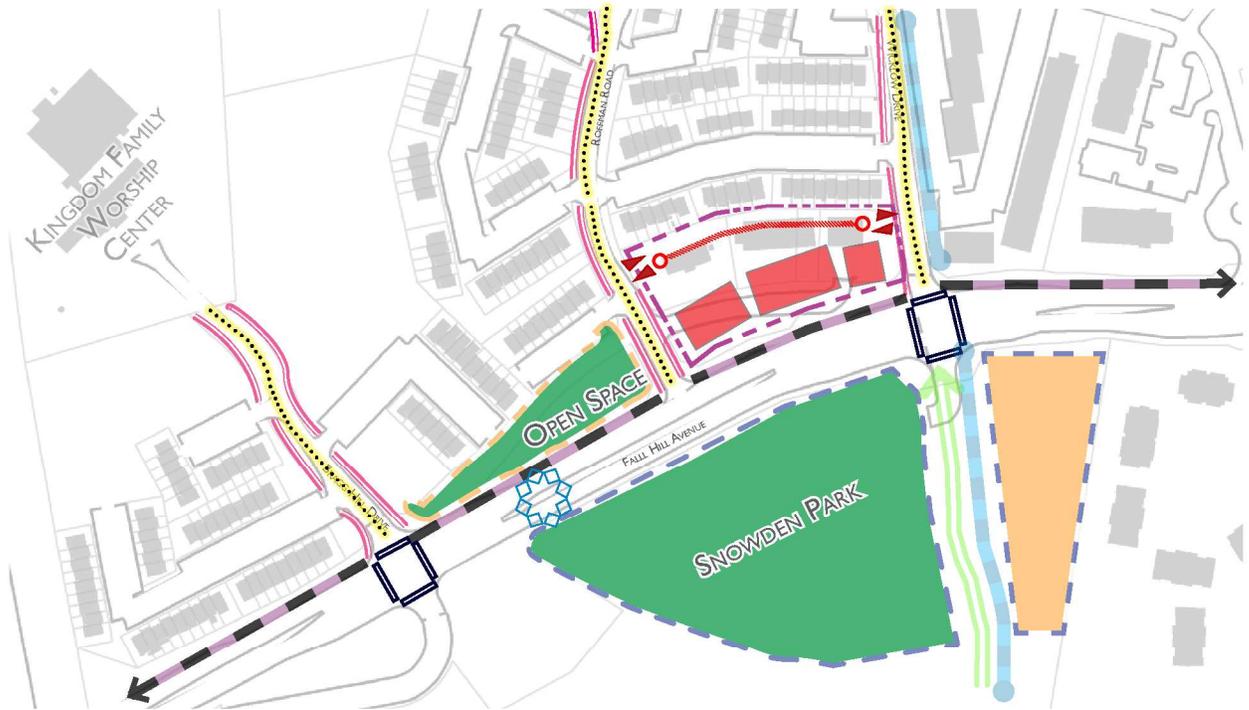
T-2 (RURAL) The majority of this 50 acres is under conservation easement with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources containing the ancestral home of the Thorton family, the 1790 Fall Hill House, as well as Civil War earthworks. The easement allows for development of four single-family homes. Newly developed properties will require improved access points to be shared with not more than two driveways on Fall Hill Avenue

T-3 (SUB-URBAN) This area includes the single-family neighborhood, Riverwalk and some flat developable parcels north of the Central Park Townhomes. Development here should appropriately transition between the existing townhomes and the adjacent natural areas. Full connectivity to these areas should be provided through pedestrian and vehicular access linking Roffman Road and Wicklow Drive.

T-4 (GENERAL URBAN) In Area 2, this zone currently consists of a horizontal mix of uses, with some commercial, higher and medium density developments. The Crestview Apartments, Weston Circle and Wicklow Apartments, and Heritage Park Apartments are affordable housing financed by the low-income housing tax credit program or as project-based section 8 communities. For this reason, social equity should be at the forefront for planning-based decisions in the area. The Central Park Townhomes, formerly Bragg Hill, is an established townhome community that is predominately renter occupied, has struggled with a property maintenance, and lacks inter-connectivity. The Kingdom Family Worship and Bragg Hill Family Life Center, located off Bragg Hill Road, serves as a community anchor. The realignment of Fall Hill Avenue created large green spaces and removed the small storefronts and commercial properties from direct access. Vacating this excess right-of-way could create opportunities for commercial redevelopment between Roffman Road and Wicklow Drive.

CIVIC Opportunities for expansion of I-95 should be careful to mitigate and minimize impact on adjoining neighborhoods, environmental features, and open spaces. The Sunshine Ball Park on Wicklow Drive is a City-owned public amenity developed for programmed outdoor recreation. To the south of Fall Hill Avenue, Snowden Park, provides other ball fields, basketball courts, and playgrounds. Construction of the extension of Gateway Boulevard through this area should improve the access to and quality of the facilities in this park. The green space between Roffman Road and Bragg Hill Drive should be improved and integrated as an amenity for the neighborhood. At the river, a Wild Riverfront Park serves as a launch point for recreational amenities in the area.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON A NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER WITHIN T-4 IN AREA 2



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|---|--|---|
|  Property Consolidation |  Existing Multi-Use Path |  Evaluate Ped. Crossing Safety |
|  Potential Infill Redevelopment |  Proposed Sidewalk |  Improved Pedestrian Crossing |
|  Alley |  Proposed Pedestrian Lighting |  Snowden Park |
|  Vehicle Access |  Potential Fire Station |  Proposed New Park |

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER SITE DESCRIPTION

Area 2 contains a mix of land uses that meet many daily needs of local residents. The center of the neighborhood includes community, recreational, commercial, and residential uses. Each of these uses is in need of reinvestment, to create stronger links to each other and to the broader community. Public investment in this area is generally threefold:

- Upgrade bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure for multi-modal access and mobility including along future extension of Gateway Boulevard
- Maintenance and programmed upgrades for the open spaces and parks
- Funds aimed at preserving the existing affordable housing stock and to promote community ownership.

Many of the existing commercial and residential structures in the Neighborhood Center are more than 50 years old and require substantial upgrade and reinvestment if they will remain able to meet people's needs for another fifty years. For example, the Central Park Townhomes are primarily investor owned and renter occupied. Their small square footage, often less than 1,000 square feet, make these units a natural source of affordable housing in the City. Many of these structures have foregone maintenance and renovation and are in need of private investment.

This section of the Area 2 Small Area Plan focuses on leveraging public investment and community programming to create the type of environment that should precipitate substantial private re-investment. The Area 2 Neighborhood Center has a unique wealth of existing assets located in close proximity to naturally occurring affordable housing. With combined public and private focus and energy the Area 2 Neighborhood Center could be one of the most desirable residential communities in the City.

Enhance Multi-Modal Connections: Prioritize safe and convenient pedestrian access throughout this area, especially in connecting the northern and southern sides of Fall Hill Avenue.

-  - Utilize grant funding and other resources to overcome barriers to access and mobility through neighborhood improvements. Sidewalks and lighting should be constructed along Roffman Road to safely connect the existing housing to the bus stops, trails, commercial areas and parks along Fall Hill Avenue. Sidewalk is present in places along one side of the road, but the final link between the neighborhood and Fall Hill Avenue is missing.
-  - Upgrade the pedestrian infrastructure at the Bragg Hill Drive and Wicklow Drive's intersections with Fall Hill and evaluate the mid-block Fall Hill Avenue pedestrian crossing to maximize safety and convenience.

Modernize Neighborhood Commercial: The existing commercial buildings between Roffman Road and Wicklow Drive are fifty years old. They were configured to front on Fall Hill Avenue's previous alignment. The change in road alignment altered automobile access and left excess right-of-way that could be put to better use. The upgrade in Fall Hill Avenue, the future connection of Gateway Boulevard, the age of the proposed structures, and the presence of vacant residual City owned property make this area a unique opportunity for non-residential redevelopment in Area 2.

-  - Combine the aging shopping center with the excess right-of-way to create a 2 acre redevelopment parcel.
-  - Reconfigure the orientation of the site in accordance with good urban design principles:
 -  - Utilize form based code elements to ensure buildings front onto Fall Hill Avenue and transition appropriately to adjacent neighborhoods. Enhance the corridor landscaping along Fall Hill Avenue.
 -  - Move access points and parking to the rear and buffer it appropriately from adjacent homes.
- Pursue grants and incentives to prioritize community business ownership as the center redevelops.

Upgrade Open Spaces and Expand Community Services:

-  - Utilize City owned land between Roffman Road and Bragg Hill Drive as a public open space including public art or historic interpretation, enhanced landscaping, trail amenities, or other recreational improvements.
-  - Upgrade the eastern portions of Snowden Park with temporary improvements designed to be responsive to the future construction of Gateway Boulevard. Expand the parking supply by adding a gravel parking area. Consider community gardens, court sports or other recreational improvements that can be rearranged if necessary in the future.
-  - A new fire station to the east of Snowden Park may be considered. Interim use of this area with temporary programming associated with Snowden Park should be allowed.
- Explore public and private partnerships to bring needed community services to the area including after-school events, childcare, sports and wellness activities, and other programs.

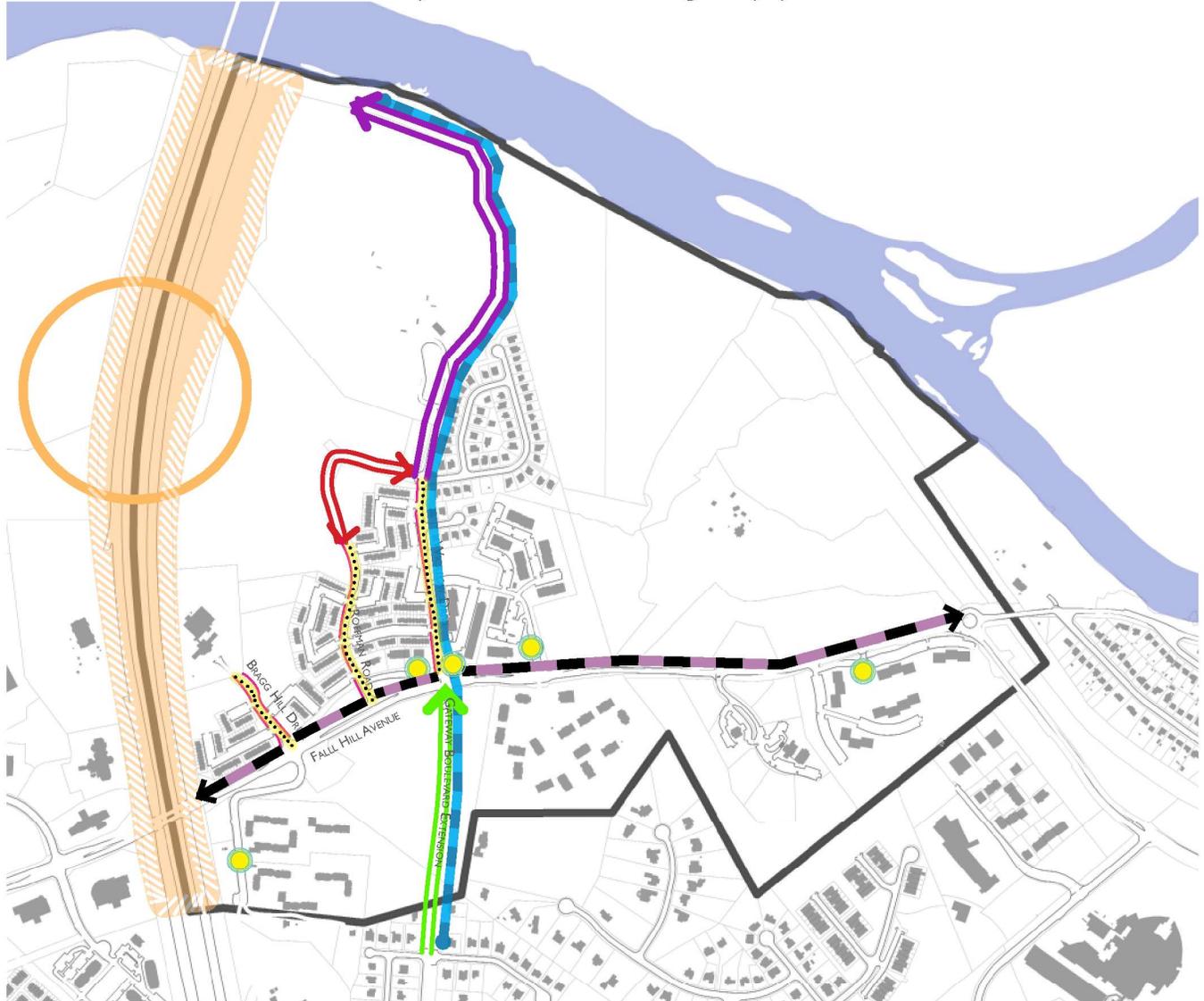
Neighborhood Residential Reinvestment: The Central Park Townhomes, formerly Bragg Hill, is an established townhome community of independently-owned homes built in the late 1970s in Spotsylvania County before it was annexed in 1984. Many of the structures have foregone maintenance and renovation and the neighborhood suffers from this disinvestment. A comprehensive re-investment strategy should be generated to ensure equitable design in the short-term and long-term displacement prevention. Community participation and collaboration will be key to the successful planning efforts:

- Short-term- Encourage community clean-ups and support requests by the neighborhood for a comprehensive property maintenance review program. Consider reestablishing and applying the Rental Inspection Program to address housing quality. Advertise the CDBG Emergency Home Repair program to make needed repairs to their homes as well as the Direct Homeownership Assistance Program to encourage more owner-occupied units. Prompt the Bragg Hill Townhome Home Owner's Association to invest in the community.
- Long-term- More creative strategies for neighborhood transformation should be studied. Any strategies should boost neighborhood investment and grow inter-generational wealth by offering residents affordable homeownership opportunities. This may include the creation of a community land trust to maintain ownership and community oversight along with homeowners.

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

A number of improvements were included with the widening of Fall Hill Avenue. Among them was the construction of a separated multi-use path. This addition created a key east-west link for alternate modes of transportation for residents to reach daily needs including a safe route over I-95 in this North end of the City. While there are safe routes along Area 2, there are still some points of conflict for reaching this resource and crossing Fall Hill Avenue. Public improvements within Area 2 aim to advance connectivity for the small area and larger City systems.

PART III



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|--|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| | Gateway Boulevard Extended | | River Access Street |
| | Bus Stop | | Existing Multi-Use Path |
| | I-95 Impact Area | | Proposed Multi-Use Path |
| | Future I-95 Interchange | | Sidewalk Expansion |
| | Roffman Road Extended | | Lighting Expansion |

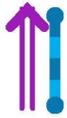
New Road Construction: New development in Area 2 should be interconnected through all modes of travel.



Gateway Boulevard Extended - Gateway Boulevard is planned to extend from US Route 3 to Fall Hill Avenue. This street, once complete should align with Wicklow Drive.



Wicklow/Roffman Connection - New development behind the Central Park townhomes should complete the existing right-of-way linking Roffman Road and Wicklow Drive. This will create a further connected community.



River Access - Completing physical improvements to I-95 has required upgrading a graveled access road off of Wicklow Drive. This road should continue to connect the neighborhood with riverfront resources. Continuing the multi-use path from Gateway Boulevard along Wicklow Drive to the Rappahannock River will create a multi-modal system for entire City to access this community asset.



I-95 Expansion - The Area 1 plan calls for an interchange to the west of I-95. Expansion, whether in right-of-way or infrastructure, should take precautions to reduce impacts to adjoining neighborhoods, environmentally sensitive lands, and open space.

Network Completion: Area 2 includes only a few publicly dedicated and maintained streets. Several of these streets are lacking in full sidewalk facilities but are heavily traveled on foot. Improvements to these streets are needed to accommodate all residents and improve safety for all modes of travel.

Wicklow Drive - This street is the primary access for the Riverwalk neighborhood and the Sunshine Ball Park as well as the Central Park Townhomes. Currently, this street has between fifty and sixty feet of right-of-way, but has incomplete pedestrian facilities. Many walking paths are visible along the street demonstrating use and need for improved walking facilities. The only sidewalks currently present are along Riverwalk Drive, leaving a quarter of a mile without facilities. The future extension of Gateway Boulevard to Fall Hill Avenue will align with Wicklow Drive. Continuing the Gateway multi-use path along Wicklow will link this neighborhood to the larger trail system and connect the rest of the City to Wild Riverfront park and open space amenities in this area. The eastern side of the Wicklow Drive, Fall Hill Avenue, and Gateway Boulevard intersection should be configured for a 10 foot wide shared use path.



Bragg Hill Drive - Sidewalks and lighting should be constructed along this street to safely connect the existing housing with the community's basketball courts, the Bragg Hill Family Life Center as well as bus stops, trails, commercial areas and parks along Fall Hill Avenue.

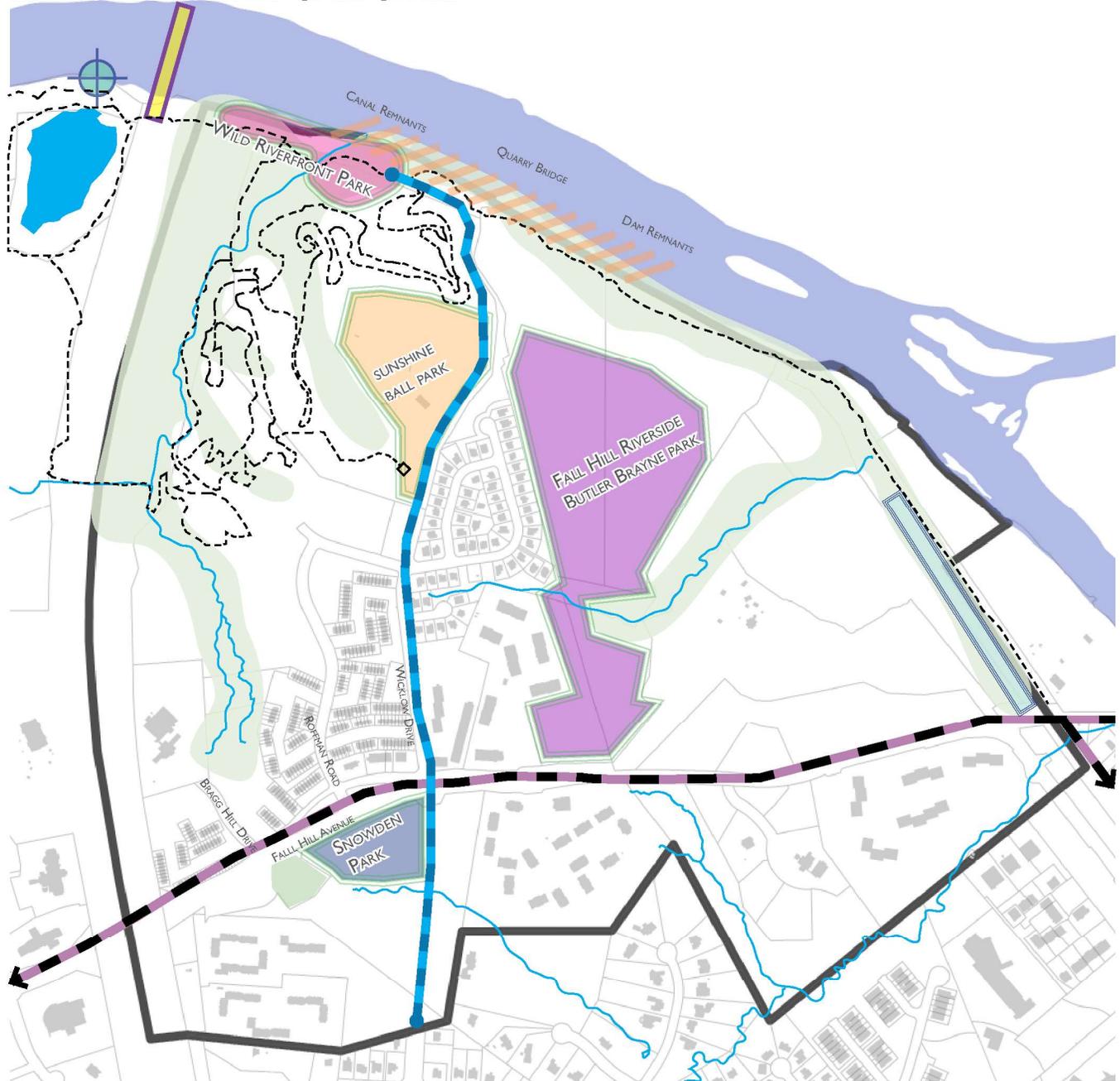
Roffman Road - This street is the central access for the Central Park Townhomes and currently only has sidewalk on one side, though both sides are needed to safely bring people to the Fall Hill Avenue trail from the neighborhood.

Access for New Development: Little development is expected along the northern frontage of Fall Hill Avenue outside of the neighborhood center. Four single-family homes permitted under current conservation easements could be built within the T-2 zone on Fall Hill Avenue. Should new homes be constructed, they should share access from Fall Hill Avenue to limit disruption to primary East/West traffic and limit potential point of conflict. Any new development located along the Canal should be accessed from the roundabout.

Public Transportation: This area is served by mass transit. FRED bus routes primarily travel along Fall Hill Avenue and make stops within nearby apartment complexes. Not all bus stops throughout Area 2 are complete with shelters and improvement of these facilities should be pursued. Ongoing evaluation of bus routes should be completed to ensure routes and stops are best serving residents and visitors to the area. This may include transportation access to the wild riverfront park.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND OPEN SPACE



-  River Access
-  Steep Slope/Environmental Facility
-  Stream
-  Bridge
-  Canal
-  Off-road Established Trails
-  Trail head
-  Proposed Multi-Use Path
-  Established Multi-Use Path
-  Historic Resources/Interpretation

PART III

PARKLAND



Snowden Park - This City owned park encompasses 25 acres south of Fall Hill Avenue. The property is bisected by a small stream with steep slopes to the south. To the north of the stream, the grade has been adjusted to accommodate playing fields and playgrounds. The extension of Gateway Boulevard through this park should maintain the facilities. In the short term, parking and other points of access to these amenities. Future facilities in this park could include community gardens, court sports or other recreational improvements.



Fall Hill Riverside Park/Butler Brayne Park - Develop a City Park accessible from Fall Hill Avenue that protects the natural areas of the uplands overlooking the Rappahannock Area. Automobile access and parking should be limited to the Fall Hill Avenue frontage. Park elements here should be naturalistic embracing the wooded nature of the topography and in fact embracing it as an amenity. Potential applications could include ropes courses, adventure sites, camping opportunities, and other environment-based experiences. Features in this park should maximize interaction while minimizing intervention in the natural environment. This area is an opportunity to work with FredTrails and other groups to expand the City's inventory of off-road trails.



Sunshine Ball Park - Improvements to the Sunshine Ball Park should focus on improving access to this amenity. Parking for this facility should be a shared resource for expansion of access to the riverfront.



Wild Riverfront Park - City-owned land adjacent to the Rappahannock River in this area provides an opportunity to access the river and interact with this resource where it is designated a state scenic river. There are existing flat areas, remnants of prior quarrying activities, near the riverfront that could be used for parking and services for those visiting the riverfront and quarry. Educational opportunities for this area would highlight both historical and environmental learning opportunities. A river access point should be included in this area.

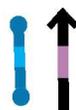


A suspended pedestrian bridge, under I-95, could be constructed along with expansions to connect the Fredericksburg riverfront trail with the planned Stafford County Rappahannock River Scenic Trail. This would provide an inter-jurisdictional pedestrian link across the river connecting two trail systems. Unlike other crossings, where pedestrian facilities are accommodated with other modes of transit, this crossing would become a destination and feature in its own right and serve the entire river region.

TRAILS



Off-Road Trails - The natural landscape throughout Area 2 contains a series of mountain bike trails. The City should continue to partner with groups to maintain existing trails and expand the network. Opportunities to formalize these trails as an established amenity should be pursued as the ability for such outdoor recreation within the City in close proximity to the River, is unparalleled.



Multi-Use Paths - The multi-use path along Fall Hill Avenue is an invaluable asset for both multi-modal access and recreation. This trail connects the Canal and Heritage trails with the venues and events in Celebrate Virginia. A cross connection is needed to complete trail access to Wild Riverfront Park. A multi-use path continues from the Gateway Boulevard extension through Fall Hill Avenue and down Wicklow Drive to the River closes the loop for a near complete loop both through the City and along its scenic and urban waterfront.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITIES



Steep slopes and streams - Protecting these areas is paramount. The upgrade or establishment of new environmental facilities in these sites should be explored during privately led development. Implementing policies and planning infrastructure aimed at achieving the City's Environmental Protection goals will remain an on-going process and opportunities to incorporate these areas into the City's public facilities for stormwater management should be considered.

Rappahannock Canal - Investigate opportunities, working with the Army Corps of Engineers, for ecological restoration and stormwater attenuation to make it a more suitable environment for water quality and recreational use.



HISTORIC RESOURCES

Planning Area 2 contains the brick mansion called Fall Hill (built c. 1779) and a collection of associated outbuildings. This high ground provided tactical advantages during the Civil War and a variety of Confederate earthworks are extant.

HISTORIC RESOURCES IN PLANNING AREA 2

SITE NAME	PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE	DESCRIPTION	OWNERSHIP
Fall Hill House	Built c. 1790	Brick dwelling with outbuildings; Civil War earthworks	Private
Embrey Dam (site)	Built 1910, removed 2003	Concrete abutments	City
Crib Dam (site)	Built 1850's, removed 2003	Stone abutments, canal lock, and spillway	City
Rappahannock Canal	Built 1830's	Canal, stone bridge abutment at Fall Hill Avenue	City
Civil War earthworks	Civil War	Gun pits and infantry trenches	Private

REVITALIZATION

The reconstruction of the Fall Hill Avenue corridor has created a significant change in the landscape of the area. In the future, the planned extension of Gateway Boulevard from the south to the intersection of Fall Hill Avenue and Wicklow Drive will significantly improve access and visibility in this area and will create new opportunities for revitalization.

The area has many residential projects. Several of them are of an age requiring significant reinvestment. The 264 Central Park (Bragg Hill) townhouses have not been substantially renovated since they were constructed. 92% of the units are owned by non-resident property owners. The 200 units at Heritage Park on the south side of Fall Hill Avenue adjacent to I-95 were constructed 45 years ago. While reasonably well maintained, they have the facility issues associated with structures this age. The livability and character of the area would be greatly improved with the revitalization of these developments.

With limited opportunity for greenfield development, new activity in the area will focus on revitalization. This section of the City is designated as a revitalization area that encompasses mass transit, includes and provides for mixed use development, and allows for a density of 3.0 floor area ratio in commercially zoned areas. Commercial density, higher than allowed by-right, should be allowed only as a Special Use and when any negative impacts of such additional density are addressed, such as traffic and parking congestion and the massing and scale of the project. In this small area, commercial zoning is currently limited to the north side of Fall Hill Avenue between Wicklow Drive and Roffman Road immediately adjacent to townhouse development. Impacts on this residential area should be carefully considered before a special use permit is approved for higher commercial density. New development here should incorporate form based code elements with transitional zones and appropriate buffers. 81% of Area 2's residential structures were built before 1980. Once structures reach an age of 30 to 40 years, their mechanical systems, roofing systems, and other structural elements are need of updating or replacement, an indicator of the need for revitalization. In addition, the reconstruction of Fall Hill Avenue realigned the road to the south in front of the existing 1.29 acres of Highway Commercial Zoning, which is occupied by structures dating from the 1970s. The shift created an additional .84 acres that could be added to the current commercial property and foster redevelopment of the entire two acres.

IMPLEMENTATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

-  Complete the street network on Bragg Hil Drive, Roffman Road, and Wicklow Drive with the addition of necessary pedestrian infrastructure including sidewalks and lighting.
-  Vacate unused right-of-way from the realignment of Fall Hill Avenue to create a more development-friendly site with a useful pattern for circulation using the side streets.
-  Ensure the extension of Gateway Boulevard includes a multi-use path to safely cross Fall Hill Avenue connecting to the existing trail, and continuing to the riverfront.

REGULATIONS

-  Rezone Commercial Highway zoned land to a more appropriate mix to support and transition to nearby neighborhoods
-  Rezone publicly held land and preserved open space categorized as Civic or T-1 to a public, recreational, open space, and environmental zoning district (PROSE).
-  Protect environmentally sensitive land by clustering and future development in the area away from these features.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

-  Implement the Chesapeake Total Maximum Total Daily Load Plan, identify and study possible locations for updated, create additional open spaces, create upgrade required best management practices, and reduce the amount of nutrients in storm water runoff.
-  Develop a Fall Hill Park that preserves the forested character of the area while allowing for experience based recreation for all ages.
-  Develop a “Wild Riverfront Park” accessible by all modes that links visitors with the scenic riverfront providing both historic interpretation and environmental interaction.
-  Continue to improve the Sunshine Ball Park and develop additional recreational amenities, as feasible at this facility and Snowden Park.

-  Immediate
-  Ongoing
-  As Resources Permit