RESOLUTION NO. 9008-98

A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE HILTON AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN AS AN AMENDMENT TO THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE, THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA.

WHEREAS, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the Framework for the Future, recommends that a neighborhood plan be developed for the Hilton Village area of the City of Newport News; and

WHEREAS, in March, 1993 preparation of such a neighborhood plan began; and

WHEREAS, numerous public workshops and meetings have been held concerning the proposed neighborhood plan to include meetings with organizations active in the area such as the Citizens for Hilton Area Revitalization, the Hilton Village Merchant’s Association, the Gateway Merchant’s Association, Historic Hilton Village, Inc., the Hilton Elementary P.T.A. and merchants in the immediate area; and

WHEREAS, the Newport News Planning Commission has advertised for and conducted the public hearing required by law for amendment of the City’s comprehensive plan; the said Planning Commission recommends the adoption of the neighborhood plan presented to it; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Newport News, Virginia (the Council) has advertised for and conducted the public hearing required by law for amendment of the City’s comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Council is of the opinion that the Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan recommended by the Planning Commission and presented to the Council for adoption is an appropriate planning tool for the Hilton Area neighborhood as described in the Plan and that it should therefore be adopted as an amendment to the Framework for the Future and used as a guide for future development and redevelopment of the neighborhood

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Newport News, Virginia:

1. That it desires to, and hereby does, approve and adopt the “Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan” presented to the Council at its February 24, 1998, meeting as an amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the Framework for the Future. This approval includes the following amendments to the draft plan document recommended to, and approved by the Planning Commission:

   a. Add to the Land Use Recommendation section (pages 6 and 7) as follows:
“When Fire Station #3 is relocated, the new fire station should remain within the plan area which meets the long-term goals of the City and adheres to goals of the plan.”

b. The accompanying text for Map 8 of the Land Use Plan shall be modified to read:

“... a mobile home park which abuts the southern edge of the publicly owned property would eventually be an appropriate location for the future transit station incorporating public parking and transit-oriented development in the future.”

c. Additional language shall be added to the Commercial area parking issues section (pages 14-16) of the Plan to read:

“To accommodate future parking needs for the historic Hilton Village commercial district, the gateways to the Historic District should be examined for opportunities to acquire properties at the edge of the Historic District which could be developed as public parking lots.”

d. Additional language shall be added to the Land Use Recommendations section (Page 7) which indicates the procedure through which the citizens of a neighborhood may request the neighborhood conservation designation. The paragraph shall be modified to read:

“If the citizens of a neighborhood desire additional regulations designed to protect the character of their neighborhood, they may seek City assistance with the development of a neighborhood conservation ordinance. Neighborhood conservation ordinances protect residential neighborhoods from commercial encroachments and incompatible infill development by providing controls over building size, style, setbacks, and parcel size and can be used to discourage demolition or rezoning to nonresidential uses. Residential neighborhoods within the plan area which may desire such additional regulations include Rivermont, Brandon Heights, North Hilton and Hilton Terrace.”

e. The reference to the Hilton Village Architectural Board on Plan page 6
should be modified to read:

“The Hilton Village Architectural board should review the design guidelines in the Homeowners Guide to allow citizens to adapt structures to accommodate the needs of modern-day families.”

2. That the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to take such actions as are necessary and appropriate to cause the Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan to be incorporated into the Framework for the future.

3. That the Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan shall henceforth be used as a guide for the development and redevelopment of the Hilton Area Neighborhood as defined in the Plan. City staff and the Planning Commission shall conduct the studies and make such recommendations as are necessary to implement the recommendations for action contained in the Plan.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS FEBRUARY 24, 1998

Bernice I. Berry, CMC/AAE
City Clerk

Joe S. Frank
Mayor

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk
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HILTON AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

NEWPORT NEWS
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 24, 1998
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HILTON AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

PLAN AREA

The Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan is the City's strategic response to the gradual economic decline of the areas surrounding Hilton Village and the alternatives available to arrest this decline and reinvigorate the area. Historic Hilton Village was developed in 1918 as the nation's first government-sponsored planned community. Designed to house shipyard workers, Hilton Village has its own shops, churches, parks and elementary school.

The Village's residential area is well maintained. Since 1971, additions and renovations to residential structures have been governed by the "Homeowner's Guide" developed by the Hilton Village Architectural Review Board. The commercial district on Warwick Boulevard, however, is showing signs of neglect. Vacant store fronts, building additions inconsistent with the architecture of Hilton Village, a hodgepodge of signs and a poorly maintained public streetscape give the commercial area a blighted appearance in spite of the several strong retailers in the area.

Stable, well-maintained residential neighborhoods flank Historic Hilton Village. North Newport News, Rivermont, and Brandon Heights were constructed prior to 1940, while North Hilton was constructed in the early 1940s. Each has strong historic architectural characteristics unique to their neighborhoods.

The Framework for the Future Plan recommended the preparation of a neighborhood plan for the Hilton Village area. The Hilton Area Neighborhood Plan began in March 1993 as part of the implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Numerous public workshops and meetings have been held with organizations active in the area, including Citizens for Hilton Area Revitalization (C.H.A.R.), Hilton Village Merchant's Association, Gateway Merchants Association, Historic Hilton Village, Inc., Hilton Elementary P. T. A and merchants in the area.

The plan area includes Historic Hilton Village, Rivermont, North Newport News, North Hilton and Brandon Heights, and the gateways along Warwick Boulevard and Main Street.

MAP 1 Plan Area Boundary Map
HISTORIC DISTRICT

Within the Hilton area, the Hilton Village historic district is composed of a grid approximately three blocks wide and five blocks deep extending from properties fronting Warwick Boulevard to River Road and from one-half block south of Hopkins Street to one-half block north of Post Street. The area is slightly less than one half mile across and contains 92 acres. The primary axis, Main Street, is anchored by public buildings at both ends.

Three related architectural themes—English, Dutch Colonial and Pre-Georgian—dominate the Village. Derived from the Cottage Style of Architecture, the simple, rectangular structures have idiosyncratic roof lines and entrances.

MAP 2  Historic Hilton Village Master Plan
GATEWAYS

Rivermont

The Rivermont area comprises the commercial frontage on Warwick Boulevard and the residential neighborhood west of Warwick Boulevard south of the Hilton Village historic district. This area was substantially developed in the 1940's. The residential neighborhood extends to the James River.

Rivermont is not governed by architectural controls. The area has had an increase in rental units which has contributed to a noticeable decline in home maintenance. Parking for the residential area appears to be sufficient to meet the need of the residents. There are no churches in the Rivermont neighborhood.

The commercial frontage has shown signs of decline with the addition of incompatible businesses within the corridor. The Rivermont area is a very heavily travelled segment of Warwick Boulevard through which 30,500 vehicles passed during a typical weekday in 1996. While the travel lanes of Warwick Boulevard have been maintained and upgraded to accommodate traffic flow, access to businesses and safety for parking and pedestrians have not kept pace with increased levels of neighborhood and shopping activity in the area.

North Hilton

The North Hilton gateway comprises the commercial frontage of Warwick Boulevard north of the Hilton Village historic district and the residential neighborhood east of Warwick Boulevard. The area is four blocks wide along Warwick Boulevard and extends to the railroad tracks.

The neighborhood is affected by through traffic using Hammond Street as a means of avoiding the traffic signal at Main Street and Warwick Boulevard. While truck traffic is restricted within the neighborhood, the area is affected by heavy truck traffic along Hunter Road which is the main access to the Camp Morrison industrial park north of the neighborhood. These traffic patterns have caused a decline in home sales and home maintenance in the affected areas. Closure of some of the six street entrances into the neighborhood has been suggested as a possible remedy to problems with excessive through-traffic.

The North Hilton commercial corridor extends from Post Street to Hunter Road. The majority of commercial activity occurs on the east side of Warwick Boulevard. Parking and access to these businesses is severely limited. Head-in parking creates dangerous conflicts between vehicles travelling northbound on Warwick Boulevard and those exiting the businesses.
ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Land Use and Zoning Issues

The mix of land uses within the Historic District is one of the greatest strengths of the area. Civic, retail, office and residential uses are combined in a pedestrian oriented center of activity. Another strength is the diversity in housing stock that includes single family homes, duplexes and apartments. This variety of housing types contribute to the demographic diversity of the population living in the Village.

The new 26,000 square foot Main Street library, re-opened in February 1996 at the corner of Main Street and Hammond Street, contributes greatly to the vitality of the area by providing expanded community-based services. A six-acre City-owned tract adjacent to the library will be refurbished for use as a neighborhood park. Other community assets serving the area include the 60 acre Huntington Park, and the Virginia War Museum, Hilton Elementary School and a six-acre City-owned ravine park located on the James River, in addition to numerous churches.

LAND USE ISSUES

- Deterioration of the commercial corridor along Warwick Boulevard is a major concern. Vacant buildings, marginal businesses, and poor maintenance are indicators of economic stress evident throughout the commercial corridor.

- A major concern expressed by residents and business owners is the proliferation of additional incompatible businesses, such as adult entertainment establishments, bingo parlors, pawn shops and boarding houses, locating in this area.

- Over time, commercial uses have encroached upon neighborhood boundaries. Residential parcels abutting the commercial strip have converted to retail uses. Parking lots, service areas, dumpsters and loading docks abut residences, without any screening or landscaping.

- There is limited open space along Warwick Boulevard to provide places to sit and relax away from the street. The original Hilton Village Square was lost by the realignment of Main Street. The spaces "left over" from this realignment are now largely devoted to parking.

- Church parking has been a problem, particularly in the Historic District. Churches have acquired and demolished residential properties to create new parking. Hilton Village is congested with parked cars on Sundays.

- Another concern expressed by residents is the proliferation of rental units within the neighborhood. This concern prompted an analysis of the number of rental units in the Village. Hilton Village is becoming a rental area, contributing to declining home maintenance. Table 1 shows the percentage of rental units, by
street, within Hilton Village. Single family neighborhoods north of Hilton Village for comparison, have an owner occupancy of 94%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Name</th>
<th>Number of Owner Occupied Units (%)</th>
<th>Number of Rental Units (%)</th>
<th>Total Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Street</td>
<td>30 (73%)</td>
<td>11 (27%)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Street</td>
<td>54 (84%)</td>
<td>12 (12%)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins Street</td>
<td>43 (80%)</td>
<td>11 (20%)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piez Avenue</td>
<td>35 (67%)</td>
<td>17 (33%)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurley Avenue</td>
<td>43 (86%)</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palen Avenue</td>
<td>49 (94%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson Avenue</td>
<td>38 (95%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Road</td>
<td>17 (82%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>309 (82%)</td>
<td>66 (18%)</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations**

- Apply more stringent land use controls in the Historic Zoning Regulations for Hilton Village by regulating permitted land uses.
- Develop and apply citywide a sexually-oriented business classification to regulate adult uses. Such businesses would not be permitted within either the Historic area or the gateways. An ordinance regulating adult entertainment establishments was adopted by City Council in 1996.
- The Hilton Village Architectural Review Board should review the design guidelines in the "Homeowners Guide" to allow citizens to adapt structures to accommodate the needs of modern-day families.
- Reestablish the concept of the Hilton Square by developing a plaza area in front of the new Main Street library which will link the new Hilton Village Commercial Streetscape with the library.
- The Historic District boundaries should be expanded to include Hilton Elementary School.
- Continue the programmed revitalization of the Warwick Boulevard corridor. The overall effort began in 1992 to revitalize the Hilton Village Historic District Commercial Area and has been aided by two Virginia Department of Transportation Funding Grants under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The City has made a third application for ISTEA funds for the Rivermont area. This project will provide new off-street parking and pedestrian circulation paths separate from the roadway, street trees and landscaping, acquisition of easements for historic preservation, mitigation of stormwater pollution and reduction of visual clutter from this primary gateway.

- If the citizens of a neighborhood desire additional regulations designed to protect the character of their neighborhood, they may seek City assistance with the development of a Neighborhood Conservation Ordinance. Neighborhood Conservation Ordinances protect residential neighborhoods from commercial encroachments and incompatible infill development by providing controls over building size, style, setbacks, and parcel size and can be used to discourage demolition or rezoning to nonresidential uses. Residential neighborhoods within the plan area which may desire such additional regulations include Rivermont, Brandon Heights, North Hilton and Hilton Terrace.

- When Fire Station #3 is relocated, the new fire station should remain within the plan area which meets the long term goals of the City and adheres to the goals of the plan.

- Investigate the possible closure of some of the six street entrances into North Hilton. Closure of one or more of the streets would provide greater protection for the neighborhood from the disruption of through traffic.

- Create a new or enhanced entrance into the Camp Morrison industrial park. A new entrance along Warwick Boulevard would relieve the conflict between industrial and residential traffic along Hunter Road.
The following rezonings were enacted with the recent adoption of the Zoning Ordinance:

1. The North Newport News neighborhood, specifically the area bounded by North Avenue and South Avenue from Warwick Boulevard to the River, was rezoned from R2-D high density residential, which permitted high-rise apartments, to R4 single family dwelling. This single family residential zoning classification was recommended, given the small scale, and moderate density of single-family homes in the area.

MAP 4 Zoning Diagram - Center Avenue and Craig Avenue
2. A portion of the large, industrial zoned tract abutting North Hilton was rezoned from M1 light industrial to R4 single family residential to match the zoning of the adjacent residential area. The new zoning line follows the centerline of a naturally wooded drainageway located between the residences and the industrial park.

MAP 5  Zoning Diagram - Hunter Road
3. Hilton Village had been zoned R2-A townhouse dwelling district due to its mix of housing types and density of development. This zoning designation was changed to R5 low density multiple family dwelling district with the adoption of the new Zoning Ordinance. This zoning remains the most appropriate for Hilton Village in order to allow the existing mix of single family dwellings and duplexes.

MAP 6  Zoning Diagram - Hilton Village
4. The commercial area south of Hilton Village had been zoned C2-A general commercial, which allowed a number of large scale wholesale and auto-related uses which were incompatible with the uses and image projected for the gateway of Warwick Boulevard. Rezoning the majority of the corridor to C1 retail commercial zoning was recommended to prevent additional auto sales, used car lots, indoor recreation and other uses not compatible with a residential neighborhood from locating in this area. Existing general commercial uses retained their zoning designation. The area south of South Avenue was rezoned to O1 office to recognize the predominance of offices in the area and encourage their future expansion. The Amtrak station was rezoned C3, regional business district.

MAP 7  Zoning Diagram - Commercial Area South of Hilton
Six sites in the southern gateway into Hilton Village are potential redevelopment areas. Three of the sites are located on Center Avenue. These sites are currently underutilized. They would be most appropriate for small scale office, retail uses and overflow public parking lots.

The fourth site, a mobile home park which abuts the southern edge of the publicly owned property would eventually be an appropriate location for the future transit station incorporating public parking and transit-oriented development in the future. The fifth site is the former Crown gas station property which could be acquired by the City and developed as a public parking lot for the southern gateway. The sixth site is a roominghouse which could be demolished to provide access to an improved public parking lot to the rear of the retail businesses.

MAP 8  Potential Redevelopment Sites
Vehicular Circulation and Parking Issues

Commercial Area - Vehicular Circulation

Maintaining a smooth flow of traffic on Warwick Boulevard is essential to avoid diverting traffic through Hilton's neighborhoods while providing regional access to the downtown area. However, there is an inherent conflict between Warwick Boulevard's function as an arterial street and its location within the Historic District. High traffic speeds on Warwick Boulevard (in excess of the posted 25 mph limit) divide the commercial corridor and impede access to area businesses by discouraging pedestrians from crossing Warwick Boulevard.

Previous studies by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) proposed widening Warwick Boulevard to six lanes from the current four, which would eliminate vital on-street parking which the merchants oppose. Traffic volume counts over the past five years indicate a consistent decrease in traffic on Warwick Boulevard which may be an effect of declining employment at Newport News Shipbuilding. By contrast, traffic volume on Main Street has remained consistent between Warwick Boulevard and Jefferson Avenue.

Parking and traffic volume analyses conducted by the City confirm the need to retain on-street parking and to restrict traffic speeds. The ten percent decline in traffic volumes indicate less of a need to widen Warwick Boulevard. Table 2 shows the traffic volumes for Warwick Boulevard and Main Street for the past six years (1990 to 1996).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warwick Blvd. Center Ave. to Main St.</td>
<td>34,269</td>
<td>33,502</td>
<td>31,574</td>
<td>30,978</td>
<td>32,048</td>
<td>31,388</td>
<td>30,574</td>
<td>-10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick Blvd. Main St. to Harpersville Rd.</td>
<td>39,272</td>
<td>41,613</td>
<td>38,378</td>
<td>37,092</td>
<td>36,496</td>
<td>35,847</td>
<td>35,279</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main St. Warwick Blvd. to Jefferson Ave.</td>
<td>18,338</td>
<td>17,428</td>
<td>17,630</td>
<td>17,756</td>
<td>16,609</td>
<td>16,776</td>
<td>16,781</td>
<td>-8.4</td>
</tr>
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Recommendations

- Maintain the current number of lanes on Warwick Boulevard (two southbound and three northbound). The northbound on-street parking lane should continue to revert to a driving lane to serve afternoon rush hour traffic. The southbound on-street parking lane should be widened to provide a safer parking lane.

- Signalized pedestrian crosswalks are proposed at the Post Street and Hopkins Street intersections on Warwick Boulevard and at the intersection of Hammond Street and Main Street. The latter two will facilitate pedestrian access to the new library. A traffic signal is proposed as part of a new entry into Huntington Park at the southern end of the plan area.

Commercial Area Parking

Issues

The lack of convenient parking was cited as a cause for the economic decline of the commercial corridor. Two city parking lots, in addition to the public on-street parking and private parking along the alleyways, provide a total of approximately 446 parking spaces in Hilton Village’s commercial area. National parking standards indicate the area needs an additional 36 parking spaces. However, actual counts of parked cars during weekends and weekday peak shopping periods indicate that only 50% of the existing parking spaces are occupied during peak hours.

The parking shortage has more to do with location and accessibility than with the actual number of spaces available. A study conducted by the Departments of Planning and Development and Engineering showed the retail west side of Warwick Boulevard has a parking deficit, while the more office/residential-oriented east side has a parking surplus.

The commercial corridor along Warwick Boulevard, in the Rivermont area, has limited parking. Head-in, angled parking conflicts with the traffic lanes on the west side of Warwick Boulevard. Parking is generally unattractive and inconvenient in this area, and space for pedestrians is minimal. Multiple driveways add to the congestion and visual confusion. Sites in the area have been identified for potential acquisition for public parking. An additional 80 spaces could be obtained by using these sites.

Churches in the area generate a heavy parking load on Sundays and occasional weekday evenings. There is continual pressure on the part of churches to acquire and demolish residential properties to provide more parking. These expansions are not desirable due to their deleterious affect on the stability of the neighborhood. Since the churches serve an important role in the cohesiveness of the Hilton community, efforts should be made to encourage distribution of parking rather than the concentrated congestion that currently occurs.
The alleyways are a critical element of the circulation plan for the Historic commercial district. They provide access to parking located at the rear of the commercial buildings. The existing system of privately owned parking at the rear of buildings, accessed by the alleys, is inefficient and unsuitable for customer parking. Existing drainage in the alleys is inefficient. Improved drainage should be included in any alley improvements. Consolidation of these areas into a community parking area would add spaces and increase its effectiveness. The concept of consolidating these areas envisions the existing arrangement of garages, outbuildings and other obstacles could be removed so that a well designed paved parking area could be installed. Acquiring any necessary additional right-of-way and improving the access would make the alleyway areas more appealing and safer for residents and businesses.

**MAP 9  Alleys of Hilton Village**

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**Recommendations**

- Improve pedestrian crossings, vehicular access to parking via the alleyways and directional signage to help alleviate the parking shortage in the Historic District.

- Construct reorganized public and private parking along Municipal Lane in addition to the ninety-five space lot at the new library.

- Provide a traffic signal at Municipal Lane and Warwick Boulevard to accommodate the additional traffic from the new library.

- Consolidate the private parking areas into public lots to increase the number of spaces available and make them useable for customer parking.
• Acquire a portion of the alley south of Main Street and west of Warwick Boulevard for the improvement and consolidation of parking.

• Pave the alleys, provide attractive lighting, signage, and aesthetic improvements. Adjacent residences should be buffered by a new, wooden fence located along the public right-of-way.

• To accommodate future parking needs for the historic Hilton Village commercial district, the gateways to the Historic District should be examined for opportunities to acquire properties at the edge of the Historic District which could be developed as public parking lots.¹

• Prevent encroachment of commercial/institutional parking into adjoining residential areas. Acquisition of residential properties for use by the churches as additional parking is not recommended. Future parking should be limited to those areas identified in this plan.

• The rear yards of buildings along Warwick Boulevard exhibit a wide range of uses and adaptations, from parking to storage to landscaped residential spaces to pads for trash dumpsters. Building owners and businesses are encouraged to provide rear entrances to their buildings, where appropriate, and to maintain the rear yards so that they are neat and attractive. To accomplish this, equipment and service functions should be improved and landscaping should be added where possible.

• Adopt a tree replacement plan for Historic Hilton Village which will gradually return the street trees to the original landscape design of the Village.
Residential Parking Issues

The architects of the original master plan for Hilton Village could not foresee the widespread automobile ownership and use which was to occur in the decades after World War II. The original master plan did not include provisions for either driveways or garages for all houses. The parcel frontages and streets are narrow, with little room available for on-street parking.

The Homeowner’s Guide, developed and administered by the Hilton Village Architectural Review Board, governs the establishment of new driveways in Hilton Village. The Guide, based on the Master Plan for Hilton Village, allows new driveways, which can accommodate two cars, to be constructed subject to restrictions. The Guide prohibits the installation of new "short" driveways which accommodate only one car and do not extend beyond the front facade of a residence. Several short driveways were created prior to the establishment of the Architectural Review Board. These driveways replace an on-street parking space with one in the front yard of the residence. There is no net increase in parking with these driveways. The effect of many such driveways has been the erosion in the quality of the public green area in Hilton Village.

While some residences have driveways, many do not. Residents have expressed concern about parking at the far end of their streets and walking to midblock units, particularly after dark.

In spite of these physical limitations, residential parking has been accommodated. Parallel parking is provided on one side of the residential streets. This slows traffic down and discourages through-traffic which are desirable outcomes.

Residential Parking Recommendations

- Rather than encourage more driveways which would further erode the quality of the green area in front of homes, install pedestrian-area lighting to increase safety of the area.

- Revise the "Homeowner’s Guide" to encourage the use of longer driveways which allow vehicles to be stored unobtrusively behind the front of the buildings.

Commercial District Streetscape - Historic Area Issues

There are weaknesses in the streetscape in the Hilton Village commercial district. Deteriorated storefronts, patchy sidewalks, poorly designed and deteriorated surface drainage, and a proliferation of signs contribute to a blighted appearance.
The historic area has been studied by the City's design consultants, PMA Consultant Services. The consultants found:

- The narrow median on Warwick Boulevard is unattractive.
- The sidewalks on the west side of Warwick Boulevard are too wide.
- The pedestrian area lacks shade and other amenities.
- Commercial signage which has developed over many years is uncoordinated, cluttered and detracts from the streetscape. Pole signs vary in height and location. Many of these are so low that they block the storefront display areas and often block other signs from view. Many of the sign posts are made of utilitarian materials which detract from the entire commercial area.
- The on-street parking lanes are too narrow.
- While the posted speed is acceptable, traffic exceeds this limit daily.
- The buildings on the primary corner (Warwick Boulevard and Main Street) do not contribute to the historic character of the Village.
- Building alterations have obliterated much of the historic fabric on the west side of Warwick Boulevard. In contrast, buildings on the east side of Warwick Boulevard have had fewer alterations and, therefore, retain many of their original historic features.

**Streetscape Recommendations**

Historic Hilton Village is a unique historic community which possesses the special characteristics needed for a specialty retail and commercial center. However, the retail and commercial "front door" to this community along Warwick Boulevard has slowly deteriorated over the years, and is in need of major renovations to the streetscape, building facades, and alleyways. Grant funding has been secured by the City through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) for improvements to the streetscape along Warwick Boulevard including the Historic District and areas immediately adjacent to it.

The master plan addresses design concepts for streetscape and alleyway enhancements which are needed to reestablish a cohesive pedestrian environment which is appropriate for the Historic District as shown in Map 10. These streetscape enhancements will be implemented through two ISTEA grants to improve the thoroughfare along Warwick Boulevard including sidewalks and other public spaces in the district. The Streetscape Plan was developed in coordination with recommendations for building facade renovations.
and signage improvements that are needed to enhance the image of the entire Historic District and begin the economic revitalization.

The streetscape plan, prepared by PMA Consultant Services and Allison Platt and Associates, is supported by the Hilton Village Merchants Association. The Streetscape Plan includes extensive streetscape improvements within the Hilton Village commercial district. Improvements are planned for the right-of-way and privately owned streetscape to enhance the image and vitality of the area. New uniform signage, improved sidewalks and street furniture will increase activity and usefulness of the public domain. The following illustrations show the proposed changes which will occur with the new streetscape improvements. Decorative, grey-colored concrete pavers, planters, inset on-street parking, new signage, facade improvements and additional landscaping are identified in the design drawings.

- The median will be widened to accommodate trees in the median. The on-street parking lane will be widened. The existing curbs will be moved to accommodate these changes.

- Neutral toned concrete pavers will be installed.

- Storm drainage will be handled through a combination of surface drainage and subsurface drains.

- Bike racks, benches, landscaping, and pedestrian lighting will be added.

- A consistent approach to sign size, design, and location will be developed. Additional standards are needed for building mounted signs, free-standing signs and other signs. Effective standards for these signs can augment the current guidelines for the Hilton Village Architectural Review Board.

- Signage will be restricted to a zone approximately three feet wide immediately in front of the buildings. Uniform post heights and materials will be specified.

- The objective of the streetscape improvements in the commercial area of Hilton Village is to create a distinctive image for the Village along Warwick Boulevard which will improve its viability as a specialty retail area.

- One of the primary goals is to restore a human scale to the street and reduce the visual impact of wide roads along the commercial area. Improvements to the sidewalks, landscaping, and other pedestrian elements of the streetscape are also important to create an environment which encourages pedestrians to come to the area to explore and shop. Another important goal is to encourage improvements on private property (front yards, side yards, and rear yards) which will enhance the appearance and utility of these areas and strengthen the cohesiveness of the Village.
FIGURE 1 Streetscape Design Detail
FIGURE 2 Existing Streetscape In Hilton Village
FIGURE 3 Proposed Streetscape In Hilton Village
Facade Recommendations

- Conceptual facade designs have been developed which will provide visual coherence and order within a framework of individual choices and a range of budgets.

- Unify the design of the most extensively altered buildings on the west side by constructing a continuous one story, glassed-in storefront addition reminiscent of the original residential porches. The front addition projection will vary by two to three feet in order to recall the staggered effect of the original architecture.

- Facade improvements proposed for the less heavily altered blocks emphasize the restoration of historic porches and details, but allow architecturally sympathetic conversions to retail storefronts with display windows.

- Completion of the conceptual facade and signage designs may trigger the need for revisions to the existing design guidelines for Hilton Village. This work should follow closely upon adoption of the plan.

- A revolving low-interest loan program financed by a Community Development Block Grant and managed by private financial institutions will help building owners finance the restoration of their building facades in accordance with design guidelines.
FIGURE 4 Existing Commercial District Facade
FIGURE 5 Proposed Improvements to Commercial District Facade
Gateways Issues

The Gateways have several strong, image enhancing retailers and offices that provide a foundation upon which to build. However, the entries to Historic Hilton Village exhibit signs of deterioration and disinvestment.

Problems are specific to the early, car-oriented, strip commercial development. The head-in parking on narrow strips of property provides no space for safe, pedestrian access. Many parcels have an excessive number of curb cuts. The building entryways are difficult to reach. Parking is often inadequate. In the illustrated example below, the existing head-in parking in the Southern Gateway encroaches into the pedestrian space. This visually and physically limits access to the businesses.

FIGURE 6 Existing Head-In Parking In South Hilton
The Southern Gateway

The Southern Gateway, in the area known as Rivermont, is the most deteriorated, although it contains many shops and neighborhood services. Overhead powerlines limit space for landscaping on the edge of the roadway. The head-in parking and numerous driveways further erode the street as it transitions from asphalt to gravel or patchy concrete. Parking lots are not landscaped. Building maintenance, in some cases, is poor. Traffic speeds are excessive and safe pedestrian access is virtually nonexistent.

The rear parcel lines are cluttered with storage sheds and dumpsters, causing unsightly views to be exposed to the historic residential areas they abut. Overhead utilities, jumbled signage and multiple driveways add to the visual confusion in the Center Avenue intersection as illustrated below in Figure 7.

The City has applied for a funding grant under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to continue the programmed revitalization and enhancement of the historic Warwick Boulevard corridor. The project will provide new off-street parking and pedestrian circulation paths separate from the roadway, street trees and landscaping, acquisition of easements for historic preservation, mitigation of stormwater pollution and reduction of visual clutter from the Rivermont gateway.

FIGURE 7 South Gateway
The Northern Gateway

The Northern Gateway, in the area known as North Hilton, is less heavily developed. It has residential neighborhoods fronting the west side of Warwick Boulevard. The area is less chaotic than the commercial areas to the south. However, problems with access, parking and a lack of uniformity occur in the blocks between Post Street and Hunter Road which are adjacent to the Historic District.

The two shopping centers located at the northern edge of the plan area have had significant vacancies. Warwick Shopping Center has received a recent building face lift and some landscaping due to the addition of a new Rite Aid store, but the majority of its parking lot remains unlandscaped. No internal connection is provided between Warwick Center and the adjacent Warwick Village Shopping Center due to an awkward entrance to the Camp Morrison industrial park.

Recent success in filling some of these vacancies have had a positive impact on the area. United Parcel Service opened its first regional customer service center in the former Kmart building and employs 800 employees. Over one thousand people will be employed when the business is fully staffed.

The management of the Warwick Village Shopping Center responded to United Parcel Service’s presence by upgrading the facade and parking lot of the center.

United Parcel Service was the first business to take advantage of the newly approved Enterprise Zone on Warwick Boulevard. The mid-city Enterprise Zone program is a package of tax incentives, financing eligibility and other benefits offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City to new and expanding businesses within the designated zone. Benefits offered by Virginia are tax incentives and job creation grants, while benefits offered by the City may include tax incentives, fee waivers and technical assistance.

The Main Street Gateway

The Main Street Gateway into the Hilton Village Historic District has less strip commercial development than the other entries. Riverside Health Center occupies the southern side of Main Street. A view of the Baptist Church steeple and the new Main Street library will make this an attractive entry, with the exception of the railroad underpass, and the lack of landscaping adjacent to the roadway. As part of the Streetscape Plan improvements, the Main Street right-of-way will be planted between Warwick Boulevard and the CSX underpass. Additional landscaping is recommended for the right-of-way between the CSX underpass and Jefferson Avenue.

Gateway Recommendations

- Landscaping, sidewalk improvements and the relocation or burial of utility lines are proposed for the gateways on Warwick Boulevard and Main Street.
- In some cases in Rivermont, redesigning the existing head-in parking on-street to parallel parking and the development of shared parking arrangements to open up space for landscaping and sidewalks in front of buildings would improve both access and safety.

- Acquisition of underutilized parcels for public parking is recommended.

- Plant street trees to provide better street definition. A design study should be initiated to develop a set of design guidelines for facade improvements and infill development in the gateway areas.

- Improved landscaping and fencing are proposed to improve the transitional areas between the residential neighborhoods and commercial properties.

Design Alternatives for Gateways

Rivermont

Two alternative designs for a block in the Southern Gateway, known as Rivermont, are included. One alternative assumes maintaining the existing layout of head-in parking while providing additional landscaping and improved access to parking located at the rear of the buildings.

MAP 11 Design Alternative One for South Gateway

**WARWICK BOULEVARD**

**WARWICK BOULEVARD – SOUTH HILTON**

*Landscape and Parking Improvements (Minimal Change Alternative)*
The second alternative proposes the acquisition and demolition of a single, narrow building on Warwick Boulevard to provide additional parking and improved access to the rear parking lot. As part of this design, the reduced need for extensive on-street parking can be reconfigured as parallel parking spaces to provide space for a landscaped walkway at the front of the stores. Wooden fencing is proposed to screen the commercial parking from adjacent residences.

MAP 12 Design Alternative Two for South Gateway

WARWICK BOULEVARD

WARWICK BOULEVARD – SOUTH HILTON

Streetscape and Parking Improvements
(Acquiring Parcel on Warwick Boulevard and Demolishing Building for Parking)
North Hilton

A streetscape and parking improvement schematic was developed for a block north of Hilton Village. The sample block is on the east side of Warwick Boulevard, between Westover Road and Hunter Road in the area known as North Hilton. The existing head-in parking off Warwick Boulevard leaves no room for pedestrians entering the stores. Raised curbs located along property lines preclude any shared parking. Overhead utility lines limit potential landscaping space.

- Construct a single access drive uniting five parcels, replacing the head-in parking and nearly continuous curb-cut. Shared parking would be provided at the side and rear of the buildings. This would allow space in front of the buildings for sidewalks and landscaping.

- A widened median with landscaping and left turn lanes was constructed as part of Warwick Boulevard Safety Improvements Plan.

- Burial of overhead utilities is recommended to reduce the visual confusion and to provide additional space for street trees to be planted.

- A wooden fence is recommended to screen the parking areas from adjacent homes.

MAP 13 Design Schematic for North Hilton

WARWICK BOULEVARD – NORTH HILTON
Proposed Streetscape and Parking Improvements
Department of Planning and Development
Shopping Centers North of Hilton

- Streetscape and parking lot landscaping improvements are recommended for the two shopping centers located at the northern end of the plan area. There are potential locations for landscaped islands and for an internal access road uniting the two shopping centers. The perimeter parking could be converted to a landscaped buffer, as shown in the illustration below. This would offer a far more attractive edge to the shopping center and be more compatible with the residences fronting on Warwick Boulevard.

- The Framework for the Future identifies the Warwick Village Shopping Center and Warwick (Shopping) Center as Community Centers. The City will continue to encourage the re-use of the large vacant buildings within these shopping centers. The re-use of one or more of these buildings by uses such as the United Parcel Service's customer service center serves to enhance the retail area of Warwick Boulevard as well as the economic viability of the center.

FIGURE 8 Proposed Improvements to Warwick Shopping Center
Main Street

- A planting plan has been prepared for Main Street, taking into account the overhead utilities and limited right-of-way. Low-growing hollies are proposed to form a continuous, edge-defining hedge. Kwanzan Cherry trees are proposed on the south side of Main Street. These trees are hardy, decorative plants and will not grow tall enough to conflict with overhead utilities.

MAP 14 Main Street Landscaping Plan

- Refinish the faces of the railroad underpass, possibly with stucco or a similarly textured material. The bridge could be fitted with sculptural panels and painted in a complementary color. The walkway should be elevated, resurfaced and a new railing constructed. The redesign of the underpass may be eligible for funding under the Design Arts program of the National Endowment of the Arts.
Tree Replacement Plan in Historic Hilton Village

The original master plan for Hilton Village envisioned symmetrically planted, tree-lined streets providing shade and enclosure for the public spaces. Over the past decade, the City has followed a policy of replacing dead trees with trees available at the City Nursery at the time. The result has been the gradual erosion of the original, historic streetscape as small, decorative varieties of trees replaced many of the large shade trees that were originally planted. Recommendations for the tree replacement include:

- Return to the original landscape design for Historic Hilton Village. New trees should be planted to replace dead trees and as infill between existing mature trees so that a continuous canopy will be maintained over the years.

- The tree species were chosen for their moderate-to-fast growth rates, high branching characteristics and ability to withstand urban conditions. The Sweet gum and Black gum are available in varieties that do not produce the characteristic "gum ball" seed which would litter the sidewalks.

- Large, deciduous shade trees should be the only species planted in the public right-of-way. The number of species recommended is limited to three to allow a clear, formal landscape pattern to emerge. Black gums are proposed to line the east/west streets—Post, Main and Hopkins. Sweet gums and Lacebark Elms to line the avenues—Pierz, Hurley, Palen, Ferguson and River Road. The Lacebark Elms would occur in the center of the avenues, where the right-of-way is larger. The elms will also follow the sidewalk alignment, providing a slight, visual opening at the central, park-like green areas.
MAP 15 Hilton Village Tree Replacement Plan
Parks issues

There are four park sites in the study area.

- A six acre, vacant tract of land adjacent to the new library is restricted by deed to public recreation. The parcel was the site of the old Newport News City Hall for many years. A private tennis club leases the southern corner of the tract, but the majority of the site remains unimproved.

- The Hilton Elementary school yard serves as a neighborhood park, but attracts many more visitors due to its fishing pier. The beach is a popular launching site for small sailboats, fishing boats and wind surfers. Severe erosion occurs behind the bulkhead, which has been undermined by the loss of sand from the beach. The playground equipment is out-of-date and in need of replacement. The ravine adjacent to the school is publicly owned and has been maintained as a natural area.

- The City owns land on the James River between North Avenue and the Municipal Drainage canal which is maintained as an informally landscaped area for enjoying views of the river.

- Huntington Park is a 60-acre district park located at the southern edge of the plan area. It is the most actively used park in the City. The park contains a boat launch, public beach and concessions, a tennis center, the Virginia War Museum, softball fields, a lake, and a large community-built wooden playground, known as Fort Fun. Pedestrian and bicycle access from the Rivermont area is provided by a foot bridge over the Municipal canal. The Virginia War Museum may expand at this site or it may move part of its collection to another location within the City.

Park Recommendations

Hilton Library Park

- A new park is proposed for the vacant land abutting the new library. The new park will contain a playground of moderate size; picnic tables; and a gazebo/band shell. Gently sloping grassed berms will provide informal seating surrounding the gazebo. A backboard practice area is proposed near the existing tennis courts. The park improvements are designed to facilitate revitalization of the commercial district and are compatible with the new library.
MAP 16 Hilton Library Park Plan

Main Street Library Park
Hilton Elementary Park and Ravine

- The "Ravine Committee" of the Hilton PTA and Historic Hilton, Inc., have developed an improvement plan for the ravine that protects its naturally wooded character. A new footbridge and outdoor classroom were constructed in the Spring of 1994. A wild flower display garden has been planted between the school and the ravine. Future plans include interpretive signage and minor trail improvements.

- Locate additional play equipment where it is more visible from the school. Upgrade the equipment to meet current safety standards. Additional equipment is proposed for younger children in a separate location since the school yard also functions as a neighborhood park.

- The seawall and beach should be restored and a handicapped accessible trail provided from the parking lot to the fishing pier.

- The asphalt courtyard immediately behind the school should be replaced with an outdoor classroom (using wooden decking) and a more attractively paved courtyard. Long range plans recommend the addition of a gymnasium to the school.

- The parking lot will eventually require repaving. A permeable paving system should be installed to minimize run-off into the James River.
MAP 17 Hilton School/Ravine Plan
Huntington Park

- The linear waterfront park located on River Road across the Municipal Drainage Canal from Huntington Park will remain essentially unchanged, but will provide a location for a second bike/pedestrian bridge over the canal to Huntington Park.

- Enlarge the existing pedestrian bridges to more safely accommodate cyclists as well as pedestrians.

- One option is to expand the Virginia War Museum at Huntington Park. Another option is to allow the main collection to remain at Huntington Park and relocate the Civil War collection to a new location in Lee Hall which would provide the area necessary to stage Civil War reenactments and other similar programming.
MAP 18 Huntington Park
IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendations enumerated below include administrative items, such as the recently adopted zoning amendments, and physical improvements which may be accomplished over a long period of time. This section of the plan suggests a framework by which the groups active in the Hilton area can work together with the City to achieve revitalization of the area.

Administrative

- The Warwick Boulevard commercial district extending from Mercury Boulevard to Hunter Road shares many common characteristics, despite the obvious difference in architectural styles between the Historic area and the Gateways.

- Small, family-owned, specialty retail and personal services dominate the corridor. The corridor is dominated by many strong retailers. Although economic decline has occurred within the corridor, appropriate infill business could revitalize the area. Access to parking remains a problem. Stormwater and other utility upgrades, streetscape and facade improvements are needed all along the commercial corridor.

- A market study of Hilton Village, prepared by Land Economics, Inc., indicates that approximately 120,000 square feet of gross floor area for retail uses can be supported within the Historic District's commercial area. The primary market niche for Hilton Village is specialty retail, combined with a limited amount of neighborhood services. An additional 40,616 square feet of gross floor area for retail use can be accommodated without a major conversion of the remaining residential and offices uses within the Historic commercial district to retail, given the availability of vacant retail space and potential infill sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Historic Area Commercial District Land Uses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gross Floor Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public/Institutional</td>
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<td>Retail</td>
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<td>Office</td>
<td>36,363</td>
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<td>Residential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>22,883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>269,213 GFA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Market Study recommended a mix of stores which is summarized in Table 4.
The market study made the following recommendations:

- Establish a farmers market.

- Create a restaurant as an adaptive-reuse of the Main Street fire station.

- The market study recommended establishing a "Main Street Office," modeled after the National Main Street program, to actively market and promote the Historic area. This concept should be extended to include the Gateways. With creation of the mid-city Enterprise Zone, the Gateways became eligible to receive Main Street designation. A "Main Street Manager" is needed to bring the various business owners together in marketing the area. Common-area maintenance, coordinated hours and stricter controls over leasing are tools commonly used by single-owner malls which can be transferred to the commercial corridor under the guidance of a central office.

- The commercial district located between Center Avenue and Hunter Road along Warwick Boulevard could form a Special Service District. An additional property tax of $0.40 to $0.50 per $100 of assessed value would generate annual revenues of $70,000-$87,000. The funding could be used to establish and staff a "Main Street Office." The budget would allow for marketing, and promotions for the area.

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1 The actual number of stores may be greater depending on actual sales performances and operating expenses of individual businesses.
A Main Street office would provide financial guidance to area businesses wishing to take advantage of State and Federal rehabilitation tax credits, local low interest loans and property tax abatement programs. If the office is successful in fundraising, the potential exists for acquisition, redevelopment/renovation of key properties, followed by sale or lease to suitable tenants.

Encourage the use of the low-interest loan program created by the City in conjunction with local banks to help fund facade improvements throughout the commercial corridor. The loan pool is needed to augment the Community Development Block Grant funding already available.

A neighborhood conservation district is established by an ordinance which requires new buildings to be similar in appearance with adjacent structures on the block and requires uniform front yard building setbacks. Neighborhood conservation districts may also control parking.

Recommend commercial and professional business owners contemplate the formation of a corporation to buy, own and manage the underutilized commercial properties to achieve greater flexibility in the redevelopment of the area and to ensure improvement to the properties.

Summary - Administrative Actions Required

- Revise Design Guidelines for Hilton Village - Residential and Commercial areas.
- Develop Neighborhood Conservation District development standards.
- Encourage participation in the low interest revolving loan program for building improvements.
- Prepare a redevelopment plan for the Warwick Village Center and Warwick (Shopping) Center according to the Framework for the Future's guidelines for Community Centers.
- Create a promotional brochure for the Hilton area.
- Establish a Main Street Office and hire a permanent Main Street manager.
- Encourage the establishment of a business investment organization to acquire, renovate, maintain and market commercial properties in the Hilton area.
- Establish Special Service District to fund a Main Street Office. The Main Street Office would be responsible for initiating the following recommendations from the Market Study:

  - Pursue the historic designation of significant buildings which currently lie outside the Hilton Village Historic District Overlay Zone but which are located in close proximity to the Hilton Village Business District.
  
  - Develop a coordinated strategy for marketing the retail establishments in the Hilton Village Business District.
  
  - Expand the Hilton Village Business District's capture of tourists' expenditures.
  
  - Assist in the creation of a Centralized Retail Management structure.
  
  - Develop specific programs to retain existing businesses within the Hilton Village Business District and businesses located north and south of the District.
  
  - Develop a retail business recruitment strategy to attract new businesses to the Hilton Village Business District and to the commercial areas north and south of the District.
  
  - Establish common business practices for the establishments within the Hilton Village Business District.
  
  - Research and organize retail business funding programs.
  
  - Organize numerous events and promotions to be held in the Hilton Village Business District.