

The suburbs built in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s are beginning to show the same signs of decay that central cities have been experiencing over the past generation, yet neighborhoods still are being built on the fringe that probably will be thrown away in 20 years.”

Source: Christopher B. Leinberger, *Urban Land*, October 1998.

Forming and advancing the development agenda within commercial corridors requires a keen understanding of the goals and aspirations of its stakeholders, the realities of the marketplace, peculiarities of the political landscape and constraints of local public / private resources. With this understanding, project advocates are then positioned to establish priorities for action and investment. Through a process which involved educating stakeholders, soliciting their input, identifying barriers, and designing a program of actions to move the Hampton Road Corridor towards a vision of revitalization, the City of DeSoto and key stakeholders have sought to achieve this end.

In the context of defining a strategy for revitalization of the Hampton Road Corridor in DeSoto, RTKL Associates, Planners and Urban Designers, together with Leland Consulting Group (LCG), Real Estate Strategists, assisted by providing a technical

platform for discussions about market opportunities, development framework and program alternatives, regulatory and policy solutions, and financial incentives. Their efforts focused on investigating economic, financial, and market conditions in the Corridor and region (trade area), identifying niche opportunities, and formulating strategies to overcome barriers to investment. The results of this work are generally summarized in the discussion which follows and presented in greater detail in the supporting sections of the full report.

Project Purpose

Through the planning effort described herein, the City of DeSoto initiated a process that would ensure future improvements within the Hampton Road Corridor (the study area between approximately Pleasant Run and Belt Line Roads) occur with aesthetic and functional continuity. The *Hampton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan* is intended to serve as an approved redevelopment plan providing recommendations for improvements and policy reform which can be implemented over the near- and long-term. As a strategic document it is designed to promote (re) investment. Ultimately, it's been developed to articulate a vision, concept and strategy for the future use and

development of the Corridor from approximately Belt Line Road on the south to Ten Mile Creek on the north, including several properties with contiguity and adjacency to the road.

The vision and directives presented herein were developed with input from business and property owners in the study area, representatives of the City, and guidance from the consultant team. Project objectives for this process were to:

- Identify niche opportunities for growth and development, and priorities for investment based on assessments of the region's, community's and study area's economic and physical sectors.
- Balance community aspirations, marketplace realities, and public / private resources to craft effective investment strategies for the Hampton Road Corridor study area.
- Provide City and business leadership with a comprehensive assessment of barriers, opportunities and impacts, so future decisions are deliberate and consistent with the overall strategy.
- Develop a strategy which is physically and economically sustainable, and instills community pride.
- Advance recommendations related to public investment which are market-supported, fiscally-responsible, and which



ultimately promote consistent community character and a high standard for investment.

The results of the analyses presented here will assist the City of DeSoto and property owners in the project area with identification and implementation of projects, programs and policies, as well as funding options for investments, necessary to serve future development and redevelopment initiatives. The specific purpose statement which guided our work was: To prepare positioning strategies for catalyst projects in an effort to strategically target public initiatives and attract property investment and reinvestment.

Overview

The Hampton Road Corridor is a mile-long stretch of road which runs through the heart of the City of DeSoto and which is anchored by the DeSoto City Hall. This planning area includes properties within several hundred feet of Hampton Road from roughly Ten-Mile Creek to Belt Line Road. The purpose of the work completed here was to understand market conditions and identify strategies to revitalize this stretch of Hampton Road, restoring it to the “Main Street” it once was.

Over the twenty years from 1980 to 2000, retail activity moved from this central portion of Hampton Road towards the highway (I-35E) and into neighboring communities. With this exodus from the core of the community, the Hampton Road Corridor became less of a destination and more of a thoroughfare for car travel to Dallas. Hampton Road’s primary objective was to move cars quickly. Today, the result of these events is a degraded public realm and an area hostile to pedestrians -- two conditions critical for the creation of a memorable and recognizable place.

The *Hampton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan* is designed to explain these and other factors which have led to the condition of the study area today. Further, it is intended to identify those assets which can be built on to recreate the Corridor in the community and region.

As the market analysis presented here explains, the City of DeSoto has a strong residential base, including a good quality housing stock, something that can be capitalized on in the context of future redevelopment initiatives. Despite the proximity of these neighborhoods to the study area, however, most are disconnected from the road itself. This condition, combined with a conventional

retail format that turns its back on the neighborhoods, essentially leaves a “dead zone” of vacant and underperforming property between the neighborhoods and their “Main Street” -- Hampton Road. Opportunities to catalyze investment in the study area include addressing these disconnects, as well as capitalizing on the location of City Hall and related civic facilities such as the public library and recreation center. These uses provide the foundation for an anchor of development to build upon at the northern primary intersection of Hampton and Pleasant Run Roads. An additional asset is an excellent and extensive park and trail greenway system which borders and traverses the study area. These recreational opportunities were considered to present the potential for a more active pedestrian experience within a revitalized Hampton Road Corridor.

Report Format

The *Hampton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan* identifies specific objectives and strategies in order to make the Hampton Road Corridor a better place to conduct business, shop, visit and live. It is based on a realistic understanding of physical and market conditions, and is intended to be responsive to the community’s needs. It describes current conditions as analyzed by the

consultant team, niche market opportunities which the study area could capitalize on, potential catalyst concepts which public initiatives should support in order to grow the larger whole, and, actions for change designed to remove barriers and advance investment and reinvestment.

Input

During the process, which lasted approximately 10 months, the consultant team facilitated discussions with a range of stakeholders in a variety of venues. Among these forums were community meetings, small group (delivery system) meetings, and one-on-one interviews. Additionally, representatives from the City sought to raise awareness about the project through presentations to various business and special interest groups. An Advisory Committee received the input of the stakeholders through the consultants and guided their work. Each of the primary outreach efforts is summarized in the discussion which follows.

Community Meetings

Community meetings were held for area and at-large stakeholders during the process, providing participants an opportunity to review assembled data, identify study area issues and impacts and discuss concepts and strategies required to move concept recommendations towards adoption and implementation.

Delivery System Meetings (Small Group)

In addition to the community meetings, the consultant team facilitated a series of small group meetings held over several days at the beginning of the planning process. Meeting participants included real estate brokers, property owners, developers, institutional leaders (schools and churches), lenders, business owners and city staff (members of the “delivery system”¹) who were selected for the breadth of their experience and familiarity with the community. Each session lasted approximately one to one and one-half hours during which time the consultants asked participants to complete a series of statements defining aspects of the community and study area, its economy, and land base, over

¹ The “delivery system” includes those individuals and organizations which affect delivery of a project or product to the market.

the near- and long-term. The discussion focused on opportunities and barriers to accomplishing specific aspects of a redevelopment program for the Hampton Road Corridor. The groups’ input was used by the consultant team during subsequent phases of the analysis to: define strengths and vulnerabilities within the study area, as well as barriers to growth and investment; to outline a framework for implementation strategies; and, establish a foundation for supportive policies and ultimately a vision statement for the area.

In all, more than 150 residents and business and / or property owners participated in one of the forums. Among these individuals, many expressed their commitment to participating in future development initiatives, improving the character of the area and implementing the recommendations contained herein. Regardless of how they participated in the process, all of the stakeholders appeared to understand that opportunities existed for: a greater diversity of housing products on the Corridor; growing the commercial and business base; attracting users which would diversify the area’s daytime population; expanding cultural and civic programs; and, making infrastructure and economic development public priorities.

Market Opportunities

Planning for the strategic revitalization of business corridors requires that a community understand its physical limitations and know its market. The purpose of the market analysis was fourfold:

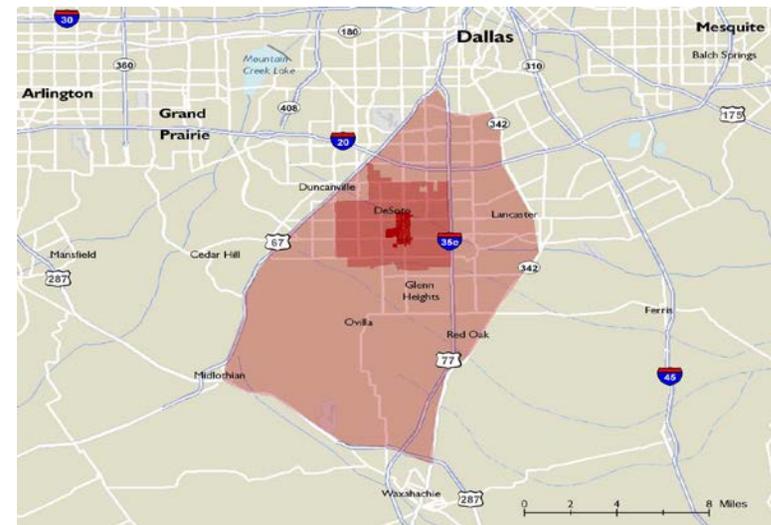
- Provide a “reality check” for the conceptual planning effort;
- Ensure that recommendations are grounded in market and economic reality;
- Set the stage for implementation; and
- Provide an accurate and independent “story” to tell potential development / investor audiences.

The market analysis, conducted by Leland Consulting Group (LCG) and summarized in the report, focused on identifying market opportunities within the City of DeSoto and a representative project trade area. This trade area was defined based on the following factors:

- Location of the interstate highway system
- Development growth patterns
- Concentrations of housing and commercial development
- Jurisdictional boundaries

Since the corridor and trade area represent sub-markets within a broader influence (trade) area, indicators and conditions for both geographic areas were analyzed (where possible).

A map of the influence area (trade area) is presented below.



What the analysis showed was that the region offers unique opportunities for the Corridor. There is market demand and Hampton Road, with strategic public and private reinvestment and supportive policies, could be positioned to capitalize on select niche and destination opportunities.

The analysis showed that the trade area:

- Reflects an established population, with higher incomes and higher education levels;
- Has a growing base of young, affluent households with significant discretionary income and more liberal purchasing habits;
- Has a significant concentration of more traditional households with more conservative values and spending patterns;
- Offers the potential to serve two significant psychographic segments of the population – “country living” and “suburban activity.”

Market conditions identified that:

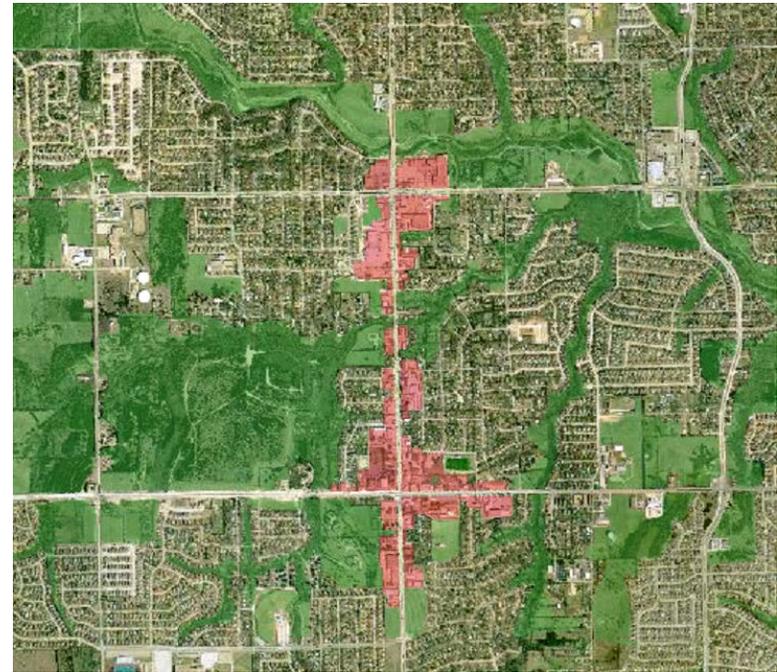
- Opportunities exist for additional residential density (attached ownership units – condos / townhomes / rowhouses);
- Additional residential will grow and diversify the existing retail and restaurant base;
- DeSoto demographics can support a higher-quality retail environment;
- New and existing residential densities will support retail, particularly convenience / service space;

- Aesthetics of a well-done mixed-use environment will also attract the attention of drive-through traffic;
- Creation of a “place” will stimulate new and interesting retail environments and attract new businesses;
- There exists an under-served market for attached ownership units (condos / townhomes / rowhouses) and luxury rental units;
- Supportable luxury rentals could be prices starting at \$875+;
- Supportable luxury attached ownership units could be priced starting at \$150K;
- “Premiums” associated with a quality mixed-use environment could command premiums 10% to 20% above the market;
- Best opportunities for office development are for local-service users (realtors, accountants, insurance agents, etc.) in mixed-use products;
- Possibility exists to incorporate “live / work” units into residential products – addressing growing “lone eagle” or semi-retired markets;
- Aesthetics of well-done mixed-use environment will attract employers and entrepreneurs seeking new and interesting work environments; and
- On-site support retail and structured parking may allow for premiums in office rents.

Physical Profile

Whereas the City of DeSoto has continued efforts to define itself as a shopping and service destination serving the community and region, the Corridor (study area) has yet to establish itself with an identifiable “address.” As observed, the majority of land uses within the study area include neighborhood, strip and free-standing commercial, medium density residential, and public and quasi-public spaces. Uses surrounding the study area include established residential neighborhoods, service and commercial space, civic and institutional facilities, and some light industry.

The Hampton Road Corridor can best be described as a mature transportation corridor, with limited new investment, fragmented ownership and distinct concentrations of commercial and service areas. The Corridor’s role as a commuter access route had a significant impact on the redevelopment programs presented here. Specifically, this fact influenced the character of catalyst projects identified for the study area, as well as the strategies to implement them. Other significant conditions observed included:



- The study area’s physical context offers opportunities and constraints towards achieving a “town center;”
- Although activity appears to focus at two intersections, expanding commercial development has diluted their strength as “centers”;
- The Corridor’s identity has become confused and anonymous;
- The study area exists within a complex natural system of open space, creeks, and trails;

- Existing development bridges this natural system and provides connections at three points along the Corridor;
- These connections haven't been leveraged to help energize a "town center" identity;
- Opportunities for mixed-use neighborhood transitions are revealed when the existing neighborhood pattern is overlaid; and
- These opportunities haven't been capitalized upon either.

Another condition identified during a review of public records was high levels of property under-utilization as a ratio of land to improvement values. The illustration which follows demonstrates this condition. (Note: Light green and yellow parcels are under-utilized).

Market Niches by Development Type

Given this understanding of the market and physical environment, select development niches were identified which presented immediate and long-term investment potential within the study area. Redevelopment recommendations were based on these analyses, as well as input received from the community, and are presented in a manner believed to offer real solutions to significant



conditions impacting the character and performance of properties and businesses within the study area.

As concluded in the market analysis completed for the study area, and taking into account future area improvements, coordinated planning efforts, and certain other catalyst events, the Hampton Road Corridor could be positioned to capture a reasonable share of the region's projected traffic and business growth. Forecasts indicate that over the next 10 years the trade area for the Hampton Road Corridor could generate new demand for more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial space, approximately 350,000 square feet of office space, and nearly 23,000 residential units.

Land Uses	Potential for Development	
	Short-Term (1 to 5 Years)	Mid-Term (5 to 10 Years)
Retail		
Specialty Retail (*)		X
Entertainment Retail (*)		X
Neighborhood-Serving (*)	X	
Community/Regional (*)	X	
Office/Industrial		
Corporate Campus (*)		X
Class B Mid-Rise (*)		X
Local Service/Professional (*)	X	
Office/Industrial "Flex" (*)	X	
Housing		
Single Family Detached (*)	X	
Rental Apartments (*)	X	
Rowhouse/Townhouse (*)	X	
Condominiums (*)	X	
Live/Work Lofts (*)		X
Senior Housing (*)	X	
(*) Indicates land uses appropriate for Corridor revitalization.		

The degree to which the Corridor is able to capture new demand within the trade area (and beyond) will be a function of the redevelopment process itself. Given the highly competitive nature of new development, and the heightened challenges of developing in an urban infill environment, successful redevelopment of the Hampton Road Corridor study area will depend on defining a

“place” in the minds of the region’s residents. Redeveloping key catalyst areas as retail, residential, employment and community destinations will necessarily increase its ability to capture not only a greater share of its trade area demand, but also to reach beyond those boundaries. As redevelopment begins to take hold and land prices begin to rise, physical limitations which currently restrict the scale of redevelopment opportunities will lessen as low FAR (Floor Area Ratio) uses succumb to market forces and land owners begin to seek the highest and best use for an increasingly valuable asset. This evolution will obviously be expedited if assisted by a favorable regulatory environment which encourages a denser product model, tighter building form, balanced parking requirements, and stronger connections.

The Vision

“A vision is an image of the future shared by the people of a region and comprehended in physical, social, economic, and environmental terms.”

Urban Land Institute

A well-crafted vision is realistic and recognizes economic, political and environmental constraints. Successful visions must have their roots in the community and must accurately reflect the views and

aspirations of those who live and work there. It is regularly evaluated and if necessary modified. Implementation of the vision requires consistent and disciplined public policy. Courage, patience, good planning, commitment, and money are required to stick to the vision over a long period of time.

One of the key directives for this Plan by participants in the process was articulation of a vision for the study area. The vision statement for Hampton Road Corridor drafted by the consultants with input from the stakeholders and affirmed by community meeting participants is presented as follows:

By 2015, the Hampton Road Corridor will be one of the community's premier shopping, business and entertainment districts. Seventy percent of businesses within the study area will be local or regional versus national. A variety of residential products will be available to residents at every stage of their life, serving a variety of lifestyle choices. The City, together with its advocacy partners, will make civic, public and open space improvements on the Corridor a visible priority. Major community initiatives which will have served to stabilize and enhance the Hampton Road Corridor business environment will

include pedestrian / roadway and gateway improvements, financial incentives and creation of an organization to promote businesses.

Catalyst Concepts

Encouraging strategic investment in a compact environment (catalyst areas) which contains an appropriate mix of land uses, gives greater emphasis to multiple forms of access, and creates a unique sense of place has been identified as the central approach for the renaissance of the study area. The premise behind the selection of catalyst nodes, sites, and concepts assumes concentrating resources in select areas that will have a positive economic “ripple effect” along the Corridor and in surrounding neighborhoods. In this way, the City of DeSoto (as a public partner) can effectively “leverage” investment efforts to overcome barriers and achieve desired outcomes. Catalyst concepts identified for the Hampton Road Corridor study area included: Town Square, Central Park and Belt Line Village. Each is described in greater detail in the discussion which follows.

Catalysts were generally identified and evaluated based on screening criteria, with guidance from stakeholders and

community leaders. While an expressed interest in an immediate development or redevelopment project influenced the selection of certain areas, most were selected because they presented a compelling location or market advantage for future investment. However, experience has proven that implementable plans must maintain a high degree of flexibility. As markets change, the physical realm must change with them. Therefore, while these areas have been identified today as offering potential for leveraged investment, the criteria used to identify them will provide the City with the tools to evaluate future projects which might occur outside these areas, and which are still consistent with the vision for Hampton Road.

Criteria used to select catalyst areas for detailed analysis included the following:

- 1 Presence of a market opportunity in the near- or long-term
- 2 Opportunities to strengthen and link existing districts or activity centers
- 3 Ability to leverage existing or planned public investment
- 4 Physical environment including parks and open space, public improvements

- 5 Potential for creating key entryways or “gateways” into development areas
- 6 Ownership patterns including public vs. private and multiple vs. assembled
- 7 Presence of unified, energetic stakeholders
- 8 Upward or flat trend in local investment
- 9 Compatibility with existing plans
- 10 Availability of public programs, incentives and tools for revitalization
- 11 Ability to create activity centers, emphasizing opportunities with multiple access modes
- 12 Presence of support organizations – service groups, churches, schools
- 13 Demonstrated community need, both perceived and quantified
- 14 Consistent with existing character and building on prevailing strengths

Each catalyst plan is described as follows:

Catalyst Project 1

The first catalyst project is titled “Town Square.” It is located at the corner of Hampton Road and Pleasant Run Road. The City Hall complex is currently situated in a conventional strip-center retail format, with a field of surface parking out front. The intent of this concept is to capitalize on dominant land uses and redevelop the parking lot into a combined use of retail, neighborhood services, and diverse housing organized around a new integrated public town square and clock tower, with the parking for the complex contained in a three-story garage on the interior.



Catalyst Project 2

The second project, deemed the “Central Park” concept, is essentially at the midpoint between the intersections of Pleasant Run and Belt Line Roads on the Corridor. It involves using existing open space in the area of Heath Creek and Spinner Road for a public park and surrounding it with townhomes. The concept spans Hampton Road with live-work townhomes facing the Corridor with a transition of townhomes and single-family units providing a transition into existing neighborhoods.



Catalyst Project 3

The third plan, entitled “Belt Line Village” is located at the southernmost intersection of Hampton and Belt Line Roads. This corner has historic significance as the area where the first residents of DeSoto settled. This concept assembles under-performing properties, including the land vacated by the City when city hall was relocated to its present location. The plan maintains the existing fire station and ties into the amenities of the nearby floodplain with a series of restaurants, retail, neighborhood services, and a diversity of housing types.



Action

As explained during the plan process, no one project will revitalize the Hampton Road Corridor. Rather, revitalization will be dependent on a series of actions designed to capitalize on market opportunities and overcome barriers - effectively readying the environment for investment. Key to the successful implementation of the corridor plan will be the continued identification and implementation of actions tailored to the unique issues of the Corridor and catalyst projects within the study area.² This approach will: build community goodwill; provide on-going opportunities for public participation; allow special-interest groups to have a role in the revitalization effort; send a message that the area is successful and making positive strides; and, creates an increasingly attractive environment for investment and development.

To build a strategy framework for implementing Corridor revitalization, it is useful to study the experiences of similar

² The definition of “actions” is broad as it applies here - it includes public, private or public-private physical projects, social programs, and educational programs: public relations and goodwill-building programs; and policy reform - identified to promote opportunities and overcome barriers.

corridors in other markets. In 2001, the Urban Land Institute commissioned a study of three suburban commercial corridors, chosen as representative of different prototypes of commercial environments. The results of that study were principles of revitalization that apply to most suburban strips. These principles formed the foundation of the actions for change developed for the Hampton Road Corridor.

10 Principles of Corridor Revitalization

1. Ignite Leadership and Nurture Partnership
2. Anticipate Evolution
3. Know the Market
4. Scale Commercial Land to the Market
5. Establish Pulse Nodes of Development
6. Tame the Traffic
7. Create the Place
8. Diversify the Character
9. Eradicate the Ugliness
10. Put Your Money (and Regulations) Where Your Policy Is

Source: Urban Land Institute

Guiding Principles

The range of actions identified to move the plan forward were selected based on a foundation of guiding principles. These guiding principles, while general in nature, are responsive to the

conditions analyses, market opportunities, catalyst concepts and (re)development programs and stakeholder input. A detailed description of each is presented in the last section of the full report.

Guiding Principles

- 1 Public-Private Partnerships
- 2 Advocacy Organization Participation
- 3 Holistic Approach to Economic Development
- 4 Programs, Policies and Projects (Action Plan)
- 5 Economic Diversification and Sustainability
- 6 Higher Standards With Off-Setting Incentives
- 7 Prioritized and Phased Improvements (Infrastructure)
- 8 Active Marketing and Promotion
- 9 Acquisition, Positioning and Disposition of Properties
- 10 Open and Community Space Planning
- 11 Regulatory Flexibility
- 12 Financial Creativity

Together, the public and private sector face the challenge of revitalizing the Hampton Road Corridor. Its competitive position will continue to be eroded unless there is a significant repositioning of its role in the market, restructuring of its physical layout, recognition of the economic challenges inherent in infill and corridor redevelopment, and, aggressive recruitment of niche opportunities. Key priorities of the plan include:

Priority Actions

- 1 Formalize Advocacy
- 2 Be Flexible, Yet Ensure Quality
- 3 Subsidize Catalysts
- 4 Market and Promote
- 5 Ready the Commercial Environment
- 6 Clean It Up
- 7 Mix It Up (Introduce Higher-Density Residential)
- 8 Reward Investment
- 9 Balance the Road
- 10 Green the Corridor
- 11 Commit to Implementation
- 12 Eliminate Barriers

Conclusion

The *Hampton Road Corridor Redevelopment Plan* has been developed to articulate a vision, concept and strategy for the future use and redevelopment of the area between approximately Pleasant Run and Belt Line Roads. The analyses and recommendations presented here are intended to assist the City of DeSoto, as well as property and business owners in the study area, with identification and implementation of projects, programs and policies, as well as funding options for investment, necessary to serve future development initiatives. It identifies specific objectives and strategies in order to make the study area a better

place to conduct business, shop, visit, live and play. It is based on a realistic understanding of physical and market conditions, and is intended to be responsive to the community's needs. Together, the public and private sectors face the challenge of advancing the Corridor "address" defined herein. This purpose of this document is to serve as the guidepost for those efforts and should be continually revisited and amended as more is learned about the market and challenges to investment in the Hampton Road Corridor study area.