

ULI Washington

A Technical Assistance Panel Report

The Commerce Corridor Revitalization Project

Sponsored by:
The City of Charles Town, West Virginia
The City of Ranson, West Virginia

October 19-20, 2004

The Commerce Corridor Revitalization Project Charles Town & Ranson, West Virginia

Enhancement and Implementation Recommendations for the Commerce Corridor Vision

October 19-20, 2004
A Technical Assistance Panel Report

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About ULI Washington—a District Council of the Urban Land Institute

ULI Washington is a district council of ULI - the Urban Land Institute, a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its 23,000 members worldwide. The preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better communities. ULI members who live in the Washington Region (1,300 total) are automatically members of the Washington District Council. They include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students and librarians.

About The Technical Assistance Panel Program (TAPs)

The objective of ULI Washington's TAP program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary advice on land use and real estate issues facing public agencies and non-profit organizations in the Washington metropolitan area. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Washington conducts one and one-half day panels offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues.

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Special thanks are extended to project coordinators Lisa Miller of the City of Charles Town and Stacey Dodson of the City of Ranson for the time they took to make sure that the panel went smoothly. The panel also appreciates the time of project consultants Gannett Fleming, Inc., Delta Development Group, and Environmental Resources & Consulting, LLC all for taking the time to present their work and provide the panel with briefing materials. Special thanks are also extended to U.S. EPA's Andrew Kreider for sponsoring and participating in the panel.

The panel would also like to extend its thanks to members of the Commerce Corridor Council, area stakeholders and local journalists for their participation in the panel process.

ULI Washington hopes that the comments and recommendations provided in this report result in a valuable contribution to the redevelopment of this area as a whole. We encourage the cities to inform us of new developments associated with this project and allow us to participate in future panels should the need arise.

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Foreword: Overview and Panel Assignment

The cities of Charles Town and Ranson are two adjacent communities with a combined total of 6,500 residents located on the rapidly growing fringe of the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan statistical area in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. The cities are working in partnership to revitalize a corridor – extending from downtown Charles Town into portions of Ranson, composed of abandoned properties and blighted buildings – into a “Commerce Corridor” of new businesses, jobs, and public recreational areas. On the border between Charles Town and Ranson, a number of vacant properties and abandoned buildings sit lifeless and unproductive in the middle of an otherwise prosperous community. Vacant grain silos, an old scrap and junk operation, vacant warehouses, railroad properties, unused parking lots, and a long-idled Maytag manufacturing complex are some of the areas of deterioration along the Charles Town-Ranson border.

Just one block off the central business districts of both Charles Town and Ranson, this blighted corridor represents lost opportunity and deterioration in one of the fastest growing areas in the region. These properties hold great potential for economic investment, new business, and community spaces. For more than two years, the cities have worked to establish a game plan for redevelopment; hire new staff to facilitate the initiative; and hire planning, environmental and economic development consultants to assist in this effort.

At the west end of the corridor, Charles Town and Ranson are planning a new “North Evitts Run Park” with a walking trail and picnic areas, and a “Ranson Civic Center” with a new public gymnasium and community center. At the east end of the corridor, Charles Town is obtaining a railroad property that would be turned into a landscaped community park. Between these two park areas, the cities seek to create a professional office campus for new retail and commercial enterprise, including a “Gateway Technology Center”, the area’s first multiplex movie theater, a farmers market-style shopping area, and civic and public facilities including a new Jefferson County Government & Judicial Center, and a structured parking garage. In Ranson, the “Lakeland Place” area is slated for new transportation and park facilities.

Already, the cities have made great progress toward the revitalization goal. The community has convened a “Commerce Corridor Council” of business leaders, citizens, government officials and other stakeholders to guide this initiative. An environmental assessment and cleanup plan is underway. Economic development and marketing feasibility studies have been established. In June 2003, the communities held a community design forum to determine the specific plans for the corridor, and Charles Town and Ranson just recently unveiled a specific strategy for design, development, infrastructure, business recruitment, and financing for the Commerce Corridor.

Because of this attention and effort, the private sector is already investing. Several key sites have been purchased by private developers, and site cleanup and preparation have begun on some parcels. In 2003, the first new business, a credit counseling firm with 50 new employees, opened its offices in the Commerce Corridor.

Issues

Although Charles Town and Ranson have made strides in the redevelopment of the corridor, the cities realize that there still remain challenges that must be addressed before they can fully realize their vision for a vibrant Commerce Corridor. To date, there has never been a mixed-use development in the region, so the vision to redevelop this corridor is the first of its kind. Prior to the development of this vision there were minimal land use regulations which has resulted in the use of a number of the parcels for storage of landscaping materials, heavy equipment and agricultural supplies – uses that contribute very little to the cities’ tax bases and overall sense of community. There also remains a significant number of blighted properties that are dilapidated and unusable.

The Assignment

Recognizing the need for an outside perspective on how to enhance and successfully implement its revitalization vision for the Commerce Corridor, the cities of Charles Town and Ranson, asked ULI Washington to convene a Technical Assistance Panel to study these issues. The nine member panel spent an intensive one and one-half days touring the Commerce Corridor; participating in a briefing led by the cities of Charles Town and Ranson; and spending hours behind closed doors deliberating on the issues and formulating recommendations.

In the context of the challenges outlined above, Charles Town and Ranson put forth the following questions for consideration by the ULI TAP panel:

- 1.) The Vision. Has the locality established a realistic and feasible vision for redevelopment of the Commerce Corridor?
- 2.) Attracting Private Investment and Financing. How can the locality best attract the right types of private sector development and financing partners to be able to achieve the vision for revitalization?
- 3.) Assemblage of Parcels. Should the local government and/or the private sector seek to implement the Commerce Corridor vision by assembling parcels into one redevelopment area, either via a public redevelopment authority, or via a private sector purchase and assembly of these mixed-ownership parcels? Or, should the mix of owners be only guided toward the vision with zoning and incentives?
- 4.) Public Investment to Prime the Pump. Charles Town is seeking federal and state funding to support the redevelopment. How would the private sector view and utilize funding obtained by the local government such as HUD EDI and CDBG, Economic Development Administration, State Economic Development grants, and/or TIF financing? If we are successful in obtaining such funding, what is the most strategic way for the local government to use and leverage, say, \$500,000?
- 5.) Movie Theater. What can Charles Town do to attract and obtain a multiplex movie theater in the Commerce Corridor?

- 6.) Commercial Office Building. How can the locality best promote the construction of a large commercial office building in the Commerce Corridor? Must tenants be obtained first, or can the building be built without committed tenants? How do you design the building to meet the needs of the potential market?
- 7.) Structured Parking. Should the locality move toward the creation of structured parking to serve economic development objectives in the Commerce Corridor? How can shared parking, joint-financing, and other arrangements for financing and construction be accomplished?
- 8.) Local Government Support. What are the best activities that the local government can pursue to prime the pump for the investment we seek?

After finalizing its recommendations, the panel presented its initial findings to staff and council members of Charles Town and Ranson, local journalists, and area stakeholders. A final presentation is scheduled for Saturday, December 4, 2004.

Introduction and Summary of Recommendations

The first step towards developing or redeveloping a successful project is a viable vision. When the ULI Washington panel came to Charles Town, West Virginia on October 19, 2004 they were presented with just that – an articulated vision for the revitalization of the Commerce Corridor.

Along with the recently completed downtown streetscape improvement project, the panel was very impressed by the level of energy demonstrated by the cities of Charles Town and Ranson towards improving their communities. The well thought out strategy for the Commerce Corridor and the recently completed streetscape improvements showed the panel that the cities have the commitment to implement their plans.

The panel spent a lot of time reviewing the vision, driving the corridor's roads, looking at the communities on a broader scale, and reviewing the analysis that supports the vision. The panel found the vision to be achievable. It has complementary parts and is driven by what the community wants to see and experience in this corridor.

In order to manage the expectations of the community as to the timeframe in which the vision for the Commerce Corridor will become a reality, the panel made clear that the cities must understand that they will be dealing with market realities, and the vision will take time to successfully implement.



Panel members participate in the sponsor briefing

Private sector real estate investment will avoid locations where there is uncertainty. There are currently four areas of uncertainty inhibiting development in the Commerce Corridor. The panel's principal recommendations identified and addressed removing these uncertainties.

1. Keep County Offices Downtown. Obtain a commitment from Jefferson County to keep their offices in the downtown Commerce Corridor, because without this anchor, further office development will be difficult; but with such a commitment, spin-off development from the local office market will be likely.
2. Enhance Sewer Capacity. Solve the sewer capacity problem. It is the panel's understanding that there is no additional sewer capacity, and without expanded capacity new development in the Commerce Corridor will be impossible. It was explained to the panel that the primary deficiency in the sewage treatment situation was not the processing capacity of the plant, but the amount of treated effluent that could be released into the stream. If the cities were to construct a wetland that would provide tertiary treatment of the effluent by "polishing" and oxygenating it, the cities could double the volume of treated water that could be released into the stream. Done right, this polished effluent could be of a higher quality than the water currently flowing in the stream. In addition,

Charles Town and Ranson should find an appropriate means to reserve sewer capacity for business, commercial and retail development including the Commerce Corridor development.

3. Make the Parcels Usable for the Vision. The EPA grant has been well-utilized to remove much of the potential brownfield uncertainty with clean Phase 1 reports. However, the cities must be prepared to take the next step: facilitate potential real estate developers' ability to purchase and assemble developable sites in the corridor. However, some landowners appear content to leave properties under-utilized, or use them for purposes inconsistent with the community's vision. This will mean assessing the willingness and ability of current corridor land owners to develop their land according to the vision; and for those land owners whose goals do not match the vision, be prepared to take public action.
4. Encourage the Hospital to Stay within the Community. Convince the Jefferson Memorial Hospital to remain near the Commerce Corridor so its 400 employees and 56 doctors will continue to eat lunch and shop in downtown Ranson and Charles Town. It is the panel's understanding that the hospital has determined that it might leave its current location near the corridor and that one of its location options would take it a significant distance from the corridor. The loss of this major employer and community institution could inhibit revitalization within the corridor. The Commerce Corridor vision can be achieved without the hospital, but keeping this economic engine nearby will speed the revitalization of the Commerce Corridor and the entire community.

The above issues are the core of the majority of the panel's vision assessments and recommendations which follow. In addition, the panel believed that two enhancements to the vision would help match the vision to the market and accelerate the revitalization process: assemble sites in the Commerce Corridor to accommodate the new Jefferson Memorial Hospital; and promote the development of multi-family residential housing.

Market Driven Development

Office Market

The existing office market is comprised of small tenants (2,000 to 5,000 square feet) whose growth produces the need for about 20,000 square feet of new office space per year. Attracting this local growth to the corridor will require that an office developer commit to build a spec building (probably 8,000 to 12,000 square feet) because such small tenants are generally unwilling to pre-lease space in a future building. Unfortunately lenders who finance office building construction generally require that a building be 50% or more pre-leased. To bridge this gap, the cities will need to recruit local lenders into the corridor development process. A local lender should be more willing to liberalize their underwriting criteria for a spec office project in the corridor. If financing is secured to support the development of a larger building (40,000-60,000 square feet) then the panel would recommend development of a larger building given the large tracts of land that the cities have to use.

Due to current low interest rates and benefits of ownership, the panel also suggested that the development of the office parcels as “for sale” office condominiums would allow this part of the development to move forward at a much quicker pace than if the office product was developed as “for rent” product. The office condo product is perfect for the type of small tenants such as doctors, lawyers, etc., that are likely to demand office space in this market.

In addition to attracting local office expansion to the corridor, the opportunity to attract larger tenants from throughout the larger national capital region should not be ignored. Of course, many local jurisdictions are competing for these prized tenants. Success in this area will require a long-term orientation and a strong local organization. Fortunately, a strong local group exists and should be supported by the cities to benefit the corridor vision.

The panel was impressed with the Gateway New Economy Council (GNEC), whose members are collaborating to advance regional high technology business development in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. The panel recommends that the cities work with GNEC to attract larger high tech tenants who will generate the demand for an additional commercial building in the downtown area. The panel pointed out however, that securing such a company is in essence a lottery. The company will be coming from outside of the area and it may take time before such a commitment is received.



Panel members are led on a tour of the Commerce Corridor by Charles Town Councilman Matt Ward.



To prepare for the future of high technology business development, the panel recommends that the cities position themselves with state of the art telecommunications. The panel understands that Charles Town and Ranson have joined with the West Virginia Economic Development Office to conduct a feasibility study in partnership with a private broadband fiber optic provider who has proposed to build an extensive fiber system to most of the businesses and residents of Charles Town, Ranson and the surrounding area. The panel understands that this “iTown Communications” system would be built and operated by a private operator, but owned and governed by the local governments, thus enabling the localities to utilize the network and its revenues to support economic and community development. Such fiber optic systems are being used in major metropolitan cities, but are not as common in more rural areas like Charles Town and Ranson, and would provide the area with an important competitive advantage.

Another example of innovative telecommunications that would set Charles Town and Ranson apart from even the Dulles Corridor is to invest, or have the private sector invest, in Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access – otherwise known as Wi-Max. This is a broadband wireless access network that is capable of transmitting network signals covering in excess of 30 miles. These systems can also be restricted to a lesser area such as the Commerce Corridor. Wi-Max’s benefit is that it provides wireless high-speed internet access to regions currently lacking wired infrastructure. Whatever the means of technology, the panel believes that it is important for the cities to position themselves so that when the opportunity presents itself, they are ready.¹

Movie Theater

There is no other catalyst like a movie theater to spur retail and restaurant development in a downtown area. The vision’s priority to bring a movie theater to Charles Town is very understandable.

It is essential however, to make sure that the cities’ expectations of a theater are balanced with an understanding of the state of the industry. The movie theater industry has in the last few years gone through a major downturn with a number of companies filing for bankruptcy or being purchased by the more financially stable theater operators. This resulted in a reduction or elimination of most theaters with fewer than eight to ten screens. While the industry has recently become profitable again, major national chains are reluctant to build new multiplexes with fewer than fourteen screens. This is primarily a result of the film distribution business which demands that first run films be run on a larger number of screens which results in a shorter run period. While the city was provided with the ratio that 5,000 residents within the market area will support one screen, panel members who have recently developed theaters believe more realistic ratios are 10,000 residents per screen or more. This ratio would require a minimum of 140,000 residents within a five-mile radius to support a new multiplex theater by a national theater operator. Furthermore, the trade areas of existing multiplex theaters overlap to shade the Charles Town / Ranson market. It is not reasonable to believe that Charles Town will be able to attract a multiplex theater, nor does the panel believe that a developer will be willing to build a small theater.

¹ Additional information on Wi-Max can be obtained by attending an annual Wi-Max conference. Please visit: www.wimaxworld.com for further information.

Although it will be a challenge, the panel does believe that near term demographics will support up to a four-screen theater. The Panel is aware the Delta Development Group, in their capacity as consultant to the Commerce Corridor, has suggested that a developer could be attracted to build a theatre with more than four screens. Delta estimates that an eight- to fifteen-screen theatre is possible for the Commerce Corridor based on the following assumptions: population per screen of 5,000 and a surrounding market population of 64,000 (increasing to 77,000 by 2008). The Panel's lower estimate of four screens is based on a different set of assumptions: population per screen of 10,000 and a current market area population of 35,000. In the long term, the panel believes that ten years from now the growth in population accompanied by the implementation of the other uses in the Commerce Corridor could potentially support up to an eight-screen theater.

The theater will require public subsidy such as the city financing the building shell and parking for the theater. The cities should also engage a broker to find a boutique theater chain to outfit and operate the theater. If the City elected to construct the entire theater with public funds, it could approach one of the merchant theater operators such as Phoenix Theaters to operate the theater for it. If the City owned the theater, it could also use the space and building for other public / civic events which would help to justify the use of public funds for the initial construction. Modern stadium style theaters cost average \$500,000 - \$700,000 per screen. By focusing on the niche market, perhaps by creating a one-of-a kind experience such as a café theater, the panel believes that the theater will draw additional people to the downtown corridor.



Panel members work to finalize their recommendations.

Parking

When addressing parking, the panel believes that parking should be developed in phases to meet the market's demand. In Phase 1, surface parking is all that is necessary to serve the county office buildings and local business. Surface parking space costs approximately 1/10 that of structured space and phasing will therefore save significant city dollars.

Once the county commits to maintaining its offices downtown and a theater operator has been secured, the cities can implement Phase 2 with the development of an approximate 350 space parking structure. While the panel noted that the city estimated 500 parking spaces were needed to meet parking demands, the panel referred to ULI's shared parking standards and determined that the peak daytime demand of the office buildings and the peak nighttime demand of the restaurants and theater results in the need for an approximate 350-space parking structure.

When the need arises, the panel believes that Phase 3 of the parking strategy should be to create overflow lots on current brownfields. If there is additional demand beyond that, parking structures could be built on those sites in the future.

Housing

While the panel realizes that large master planned communities are attracting an abundance of residents into the greenfields of Charles Town and Ranson, the panel believes that the downtown needs additional housing; especially multifamily housing (either for sale or rent) that appeals to the young professional, active adults, and hospital employees or medical residents. The panel believes that the downtown could support up to 200 medium density condominiums / apartments built at a density of 20-25 units per acre using a 4-story product. By adding housing to the land use vision, the city would meet the need for downtown housing; provide additional customers for downtown businesses, which would incentivize stores and restaurants to stay open past 5:00 pm; and create an overall more vibrant downtown.

Tourism

The panel was asked how the cities could draw into their downtown the 1.5 million visitors that visit the Charles Town Races and Slots (CTR&S) on an annual basis. The panel believes that at this time, the cities should focus their time, effort, money, and energy on creating an environment inviting to local and neighboring residents -- not CTR&S patrons. The gaming industry has mastered the art of keeping people within its four walls and CTR&S is no exception. By revitalizing the Commerce Corridor and providing retail, restaurants, and entertainment, a portion of CTR&S's visitors will naturally be drawn to downtown Charles Town, but to focus on this segment in the near term, would in the panel's opinion, be fighting the market.



Panelists Lee Quill and Bob Wulff present the panel's findings and recommendations.

Outside of the CTR&S tourists, however there are weekend tourists and day-trippers who visit the area to take advantage of the history, nature, and quaint towns that the area offers. Charles Town naturally forms the base of a triangular circuit with Harpers Ferry and Shepherdstown. By creating signage or newspaper articles proclaiming the area as "The West Virginia Heritage Triangle" Charles Town could pull from and build upon the popularity of Harpers Ferry and Shepherdstown increasing both traffic in the downtown and awareness of historic city of Charles Town.

Implementation

Organization

The relationship between the cities of Charles Town and Ranson; the community involvement process that Charles Town and Ranson has in place that has led to the creation of the community vision for the corridor; and the drive of the Commerce Corridor Council should be all be applauded. The process used to get the Commerce Corridor Revitalization project to where it is today has been very successful.

To continue the successful implementation of this redevelopment project, a strong central body with joint accountability to both Charles Town and Ranson must be created. This body, which could take the form of a joint economic redevelopment authority, must have the power to purchase land, use eminent domain if necessary, demolish, and remediate contaminated properties. For the cities to rely on cajoling land owners to fully participate in the process is naïve. However, the cities should attempt to work with corridor property owners to assess their goals and capacity vis-à-vis the corridor vision, and only use eminent domain as a last resort.



Area within downtown Charles Town that will be redeveloped as part of the Commerce Corridor.

The formation of this body should be the highest priority for initial public investment. The cities should recruit an experienced real estate person to exclusively run this body. This person will know the market, have relationships with major developers, and have the experience to make and close the major transactions. While a real estate professional of this caliber will require a high salary, the investment will pay heavy returns.

Funding Sources

There are various federal and local funding sources that the cities of Charles Town and Ranson can utilize in the redevelopment of the Commerce Corridor. What follows are a number of federal programs that may be applicable:

HUD Community Development Block Grant. Begun in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one of the oldest programs in HUD. The CDBG program provides annual grants to carry out development activities. Being a non-entitlement area – city with a population of less than 50,000, and counties with populations of less than 200,000 – Charles Town and Ranson will have to go through the West Virginia field office to apply for CDBG funds. CDBG funds can be used flexibly and in the panel’s opinion could be earmarked for land acquisition.²

²For more information on HUD’s CDBG program contact the West Virginia Field office located in Charleston, WV Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Charleston Office: Phone: (304) 347-7000 or visit HUD’s website: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/>

HUD Section 108. This loan guarantee provision of CDBG is one of the most powerful public investment tools that HUD offers to local governments. It allows cities to transform a small portion of their CDBG funds into federally guaranteed loans large enough to pursue physical and economic revitalization projects. Local governments borrowing funds guaranteed by Section 108 must pledge their current and future CDBG allocations to cover the loan amount as security for the loan. The panel believes that these funds could be used for revitalization.³

EPA Grants. While the panel is familiar with the grants that the EPA has given to the city of Ranson to facilitate the remediation and redevelopment of the corridor's contaminated properties, the panel feels that the cities can get more money from EPA for brownfield assessment, clean-up, and watershed restoration. There may also be capitalization grants for revolving loans funds available to the cities.

USDA. Given the size of the cities of Charles Town and Ranson, panel members believe that the cities may qualify for funding through USDA for site reuse and revitalization. While primarily concentrating on rural areas, the USDA is expanding its focus to revitalize those areas.



Panelists Noah Mehrkam and Lee Quill review renderings of the Downtown

On the local level there are a number of initiatives that the cities can undertake to raise funds for redevelopment.

City Tax Increment Financing. While there is no explicit Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in place, the panel did learn that Jefferson County has the ability to provide TIF under recent new West Virginia law. With the support of the County, and by linking tax revenues from one project or district to projects taking place in another district, the cities could use incoming tax revenues to finance a portion of the redevelopment of the commerce corridor.

City General Obligation Bonds. The cities could float General Obligations bonds for site clean-up and reuse depending upon how it fits within the cities' capacity.

City Asset Sales. The cities can sell surplus / vacant land within and outside of the corridor to raise funds for the project; and as an incentive to incoming investors the cities could tax the land, but not the improvements on the land.

Zoning and Land Use Tools

To facilitate the redevelopment of the corridor the panel recommends that zoning amendments be made to change this corridor into a Mixed-Use Zone to allow for the anticipated mixed-use development. The cities should also consider incentives such as density bonuses or tax abatements within the area to attract investors to the downtown area.

³ For more information on Section 108 visit: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/communitydevelopment/programs/108>

Historic Overlay. The panel read the results from the community interview process conducted by Delta Development Group and was pleased to learn that the historic character of the downtown is important to community members. To retain this historic character and ensure that future development is shaped in a way that is complimentary, the panel recommends a Historic Design Overlay accompanied by an urban design review process to ensure that the architecture of future development retains the look and feel of the downtown.

Downtown Residential. While the panel recommended adding medium-density residential to the downtown area, measures should be taken to make certain that the height and scale of the residential buildings are controlled to respect the historic and architectural assets of the community.

Enhancements to the Vision

While supportive of the vision set out for the Commerce Corridor, the panel looked at ways current land plans could be tweaked to ensure that the necessary critical mass of daytime and nighttime pedestrian traffic will be achieved in the Commerce Corridor.

Hospital Relocation

According to sources at Jefferson Memorial Hospital, the current hospital building is no longer adequate to serve current and future needs. Either a feasible plan for renovating the existing site must be established, or a new hospital site must be found. One potential option would move the hospital a significant distance from the Commerce Corridor.

The cities should make every effort to provide incentives to the hospital to remain in the community either in its current location or as close to the corridor as possible. The hospital's 400 employees, participating doctors, and incoming residents represent a powerful set of consumers that can jump start the revitalization of the corridor.

The most direct effort the cities can mount is to actually assemble a site within the corridor adequate for the hospital's needs. This will be extremely difficult but worth at least an exploratory effort. The following sites within the corridor could be assembled to create a hospital location:

1. Planned site of the new Ranson Civic Center and Recreation Complex;
2. AB&C Order Fulfillment Center property;
3. AFAC Sprinkler Systems, Inc, property;
4. Proposed Gateway Technology Center site;
5. Fairfax Plaza



Rendering illustrating an alternative hospital location within the downtown area. Larger scale rendering is located in the Appendix.

The panel recognizes that there are good reasons not to devote the above sites to a hospital; two parcels are occupied by successful industrial enterprises, and the Ranson Civic Center which is to be located here would be lost to the hospital. These are tough choices for public officials to confront, and it may be determined that the loss of existing users is greater than the gains of the hospital.

But both industrial facilities will fit better in a suburban industrial park, and the civic center is an inexpensive structure that could be duplicated on another site – for example, the current hospital site across Fairfax Boulevard from Ranson City Hall.

On the other side of the ledger, the hospital's presence in the Commerce Corridor will bring hundreds of hospital employees and patients into the corridor as pedestrians who patronize retailers and restaurants seven days a week.

Downtown Housing

While impressed that the cities felt strongly enough about green space in its downtown to include park and recreational amenities including soccer fields, the panel felt that sufficient green space can be achieved by creating linear parks along Evitts Run. The Commerce Corridor land is too valuable to be used as ball fields. By moving the ball fields out of the downtown area, a site is created for 200 multi-family homes. The location – two blocks off of George Street – is ideal for housing and would enhance the overall liveability and vitality of the corridor.

As the current landowner, the city could sell the land to a residential developer, generating revenue that could be fed back into the redevelopment project. This sale could create substantial resources for Charles Town that the city could devote to other aspects of the Commerce Corridor project.

Evitts Run

The panel feels that it is ideal to provide needed green space in the form of linear parks along Evitts Run. These parks, which could include walking and biking trails, would appeal to a broad range of users.

The panel also encourages the cities to revitalize the stream. Water sources have been proven as a regionalizing force and one of the most powerful elements of urban revitalization. By restoring the Evitts Run to a more natural state and uncovering portions of the buried stream through a stream exposure process called ‘daylighting,’ the stream and surrounding park space could become an attractive community asset.



Example of the buried stream that could be uncovered

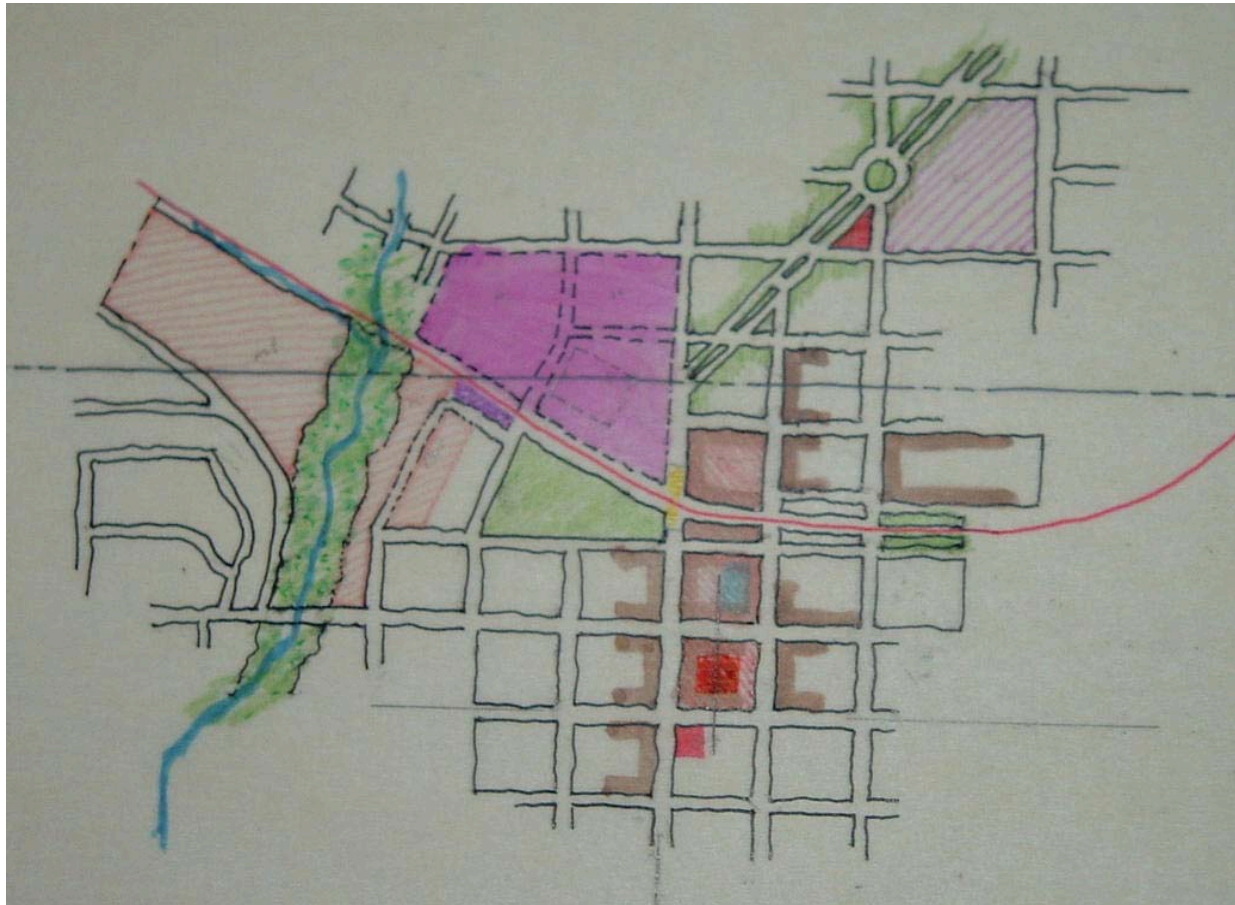
Conclusions

To realize the vibrant Commerce Corridor envisioned by Charles Town and Ranson, the cities must work within the market realities of their communities; focus on retaining their assets; and improve their public infrastructure.

The panel believes that the Commerce Corridor has tremendous potential to become a vibrant, mixed-use community with a mix of retail, office, entertainment, housing, and open space. The cities of Charles Town and Ranson have already proven that they have the drive and commitment to see their plans through to completion and with the proper staff, organization, and tools in place to implement the Commerce Corridor Revitalization Plan, their vision will become a reality.

Appendix

Commerce Corridor Enhancements: Alternative Location for the Hospital and Location for Downtown Housing



— - Evitts Run

— - Railroad Tracks

█ - Alternate location of the Jefferson Memorial Hospital

█ - Current location of the Jefferson Memorial Hospital

█ - Proposed ball fields location that could become downtown housing

About the Panel

Robert M. Wulff (Panel Chair)

Hazel Land Companies

Fredericksburg, VA

Robert M. Wulff is currently Executive Vice President of Hazel Land Companies, where he is responsible for directing the firm's mixed use projects. He has over 25 years experience in real estate development and finance. Prior to joining Hazel Land, Mr. Wulff spent 13 years with the Peterson Companies as Vice President for Community Development where he was responsible for directing all stages of project development from site planning and architectural design through construction budgeting to marketing and sales. He created and managed a regional portfolio of over 5,000 single family lots and multi-family units, and project managed "town center" projects like Washingtonian Center in Gaithersburg.

Mr. Wulff was an investment banker with the Wall Street firm of Smith Barney Harris Upham Company and served in Washington, DC as Deputy Development Director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In those positions he was responsible for underwriting over 1 Billion dollars of debt/equity investment for a variety of residential and commercial real estate projects.

Mr. Wulff holds a PhD from UCLA and earned a B.A from the University of Chicago. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute, and is sits on the Executive Committee of the Urban Land Institute's Washington District Council.

Charles Bartsch

Northeast Midwest Institute

Washington, DC

Charlie Bartsch is Director of Brownfield Studies at the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a public policy research organization based in Washington, D.C. Over the past twelve years, he has written numerous reports and other publications on various brownfield financing and reuse issues and strategies, including the pioneering *Coming Clean for Economic Development; New Life for Old Buildings; Coping with Contamination: Industrial Site Reuse and Urban Redevelopment*; and two annual reference resources, *Brownfields "State of the States"* and the *Guide to Federal Brownfield Programs*. He most recently co-authored *Financing Strategies for Brownfield Cleanup and Redevelopment* and *Recycling America's Gas Stations*. He works closely with Congressional offices on brownfield issues, in conjunction with the bipartisan Northeast-Midwest House and Senate Coalitions. Charlie often testifies before Congress on issues of economic development, most recently on HUD brownfield financing innovations and brownfield tax incentives. In addition, Charlie has advised the Chicago Brownfields Forum, and works with the NJIT Brownfields Team in EPA Region 2 to provide technical assistance information to grantee cities. He is chair of the National Brownfield Association's Advisory Board, and he received the International Economic Development Council's 2001 Chairman's Award for Outstanding Service for his ten years of work on brownfield policies and legislation.

Guy F. Campbell III

Manor Investments

Bethesda, MD

Guy F. (Jeff) Campbell is the President of Manor Investment Company, a real estate development subsidiary of Chevy Chase Bank in Bethesda, Maryland. Mr. Campbell has developed master planned communities in the Washington, D.C. area since 1991. At completion, the three communities will have approximately 13,000 residential units in addition to 300 acres of land utilized for retail, lodging and employment activities. The communities include the nationally award winning Kentlands, which incorporated traditional town design principles,

and locally award winning Cascades and Ashburn Village. Amenities in the communities include a 36-hole country club, a large sports pavilion that incorporates an indoor competition pool, parks, ponds, athletic fields, large natural areas, and miles of trails.

On a much smaller scale, Mr. Campbell has managed the creation of 300,000 square feet of office space and 600 rental apartments. Mr. Campbell has also completed numerous asset sales of commercial properties and unimproved land including 2000 acres entitled as a master plan community with 6200 units.

Mr. Campbell has been a member of the Urban Land Institute since 1995. He has served on the Community Development Council. He has been active in the Washington, D.C. District Council as a member of the Executive Committee, Co-chair of the Urban Plan Committee, and a member of the Smart Growth Committee. Mr. Campbell has served as a panelist at several national meetings.

Storm Cunningham
Revitalization Institute
Alexandria, VA

Storm Cunningham is Executive Director of the non-profit Revitalization Institute, the association of restoration, remediation, redevelopment, and revitalization professionals.

Storm is the author of *The Restoration Economy*, (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Nov. 2002), the groundbreaking book being hailed as “a modern classic”, and as “required reading” for both public and private leaders. He regularly keynotes conferences of developers, mayors, corporate leaders, futurists, environmentalists, planners, architects, engineers, and government agencies.

At Revitalization Institute, one of Storm’s activities is helping to create integrated revitalization plans for communities, regions, and nations. He helps coordinate Revitalization Institute’s global academic research network. Storm teaches executive seminars on restorative development at several universities, including Harvard and the University of Florida.

A former Green Beret SCUBA medic, Storm was—from 1996 to 2002—Director, Strategic Initiatives at the Construction Specifications Institute, a 50+ year-old association of 18,000 architects, engineers, contractors, and manufacturers. Prior to CSI, he was CEO of a manufacturer of commercial aquaculture systems based on a revolutionary water purification technology invented at the Smithsonian Institution.

Thomas Martens
Economics Research Associates
Washington, DC

Thomas Martens joined the Washington, DC, office of Economics Research Associates in 2002. He is highly skilled in excel modeling and focuses on market demand, financial feasibility, and fiscal and economic impact analyses. He has conducted projects on behalf of developers, economic development agencies, financial services firms, retailers, and manufacturers.

Public clients have included New York City Economic Development Corporation, Downtown DC Business Improvement District, National Capital Planning Commission, City of Fairfax, Virginia, Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority. Private clients have included Forest City Ratner Companies, The Tussauds Group, The American College of Cardiology, and Roseland Properties, among others.

Projects include several mixed-use development proposals incorporating market, feasibility and impacts components, commercial strip revitalization, fiscal and economic impacts of facilities and organizations, and tax increment financing potential.

Mr. Martens holds a Masters degree in City and Regional Planning (Real Estate Development Focus) from Rutgers University. Before joining ERA, he worked for five years with Ernst & Young's real estate group in New York, developing location and occupancy strategies for corporate clients, as well as economic development projects for public clients. Prior to graduate school, he worked for several years with Thompson Associates, a retail consulting firm, specializing in location strategies. Other employment experience includes land acquisition for a residential developer in New Jersey, and public policy analysis for regional policy organization in Northern California. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute and CORENET Global.

Judith Meany, PhD
Lozier Partners
Warrenton, VA

Judith Meany is a real estate developer who focuses on urban infill projects as well as rural town land acquisition/disposition, environmental review, highest and best use development, infrastructure requirements and financing. Ms. Meany is currently the Managing Partner of Lozier Partners where she manages a partnership constructing a 24 unit condo building in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland (Lofts 24). In this capacity Ms. Meany is responsible for all phases of development including approvals, financing, engineering consultants and general contractor management as well as marketing and sales.

From 1998 through 2003 Ms. Meany was the Vice President of Land Acquisition for The Craftmark Group. In this capacity Ms. Meany identified, negotiated and evaluated the feasibility for a minimum 500 unit land acquisition program of detached and attached single family product, including condominiums. Representative projects include: King Farm, Villages of Waxpool, River Oaks, Potomac Greens, Clarksburg Town Center, and Eaglehead. Prior to joining The Craftmark Group, Ms. Meany was a broker for Fraser Forbes Real Estate. Ms. Meany has also worked for the National Association of Realtors as a Research Director; Brownell Inc. and Market Station Properties as a Real Estate Acquisition / Disposition Manager; Shannon & Luchs Co., as a Commercial Real Estate Broker; and the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission as its principal planner.

Ms. Meany is currently an Adjunct Associate Professor of Urban Planning in the School of Architecture and Planning at The Catholic University of America and has been a Fulbright Teaching Scholar at the Polytechnical University of Tirana in Albania.

Ms. Meany is a member of the Urban Land Institute as well as Lambda Alpha, International Honorary Society for Land Economics, and the American Institute of Certified Planners. Ms. Meany holds a Ph.D. in Urban Geography from the University of Maryland, a Master of City and Regional Planning from the Catholic University of America, and a BA. in Political Science from the George Washington University.

Noah Mehrkam
The Civil War Preservation Trust
Washington, DC

Noah Mehrkam is responsible for all real estate-related matters at the Civil War Preservation Trust, a national, non-profit conservation organization that works with partners to protect the most important sites associated with the American Civil War. His focus is property acquisition and disposition, including developing strategies, negotiating transactions and assembling financing.

Noah was born in Winchester, Virginia and grew up in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. He graduated from West Virginia University (WVU) with a bachelor's degree, magna cum laude and has a Master of Science degree in Real Estate Development from Johns Hopkins University. He previously attended the Washington College of Law at American University. He is member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and serves on the Washington, DC, District Council, Technical Assistance Committee, in addition to serving on the Programs Committee for the ULI Young Leaders Group.

Jeff Parana
Peterson Companies
Fairfax, VA

Mr. Parana graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelors Degree in Architecture & Engineering in 1986 and a Masters Degree in Real Estate Development from Johns Hopkins University in 2000. Mr. Parana was employed as an architect with John C. Hass Associates in State College, PA prior to working as an engineer at E.K. Fox & Associates in Fairfax, VA. From 1989 to 1994, Mr. Parana was employed at TRW as a project manager supporting the US Navy in the development of facilities Worldwide. Mr. Parana joined The Peterson Companies of Fairfax Va., in 1994 and has directed the design and construction of mixed-use projects such as Washingtonian Center and Fairfax Corner. Mr. Parana is currently working on the 200,000 SF Waldorf Town Center and 5,000,000 SF National Harbor projects.

Lee Quill
Cunningham + Quill Architects
Washington, DC

Lee Quill is a principal of Cunningham + Quill Architects PLLC (C+Q), founded in 1996, and located in Canal Square in historic Georgetown. Mr. Quill has over twenty-eight years of experience in community planning, urban design, transit-oriented design, urban in-fill multifamily housing, institutional and commercial/corporate architecture. Prior to founding C+Q, he was an Associate in the Washington, D.C. office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (12 years).

Currently serving as an appointed member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' - *Metropolitan Development Policy Committee*, Mr. Quill remains actively involved in community/regional planning and urban design initiatives, having recently served on the District of Columbia's - Mayoral Task Force on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and as Chairman of the Alexandria Urban Design Advisory Committee (*Old Town North*).

He has received numerous awards, including the *Pro Bono Publico Award (1997)* from the Washington Architectural Foundation for his work on the Old Town North Community Master Plan, the Awards of Excellence and of Merit from the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and numerous AIA / Washingtonian Residential Design Awards. Mr. Quill has participated on numerous Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panels and has presented his firm's work at the National Building Museum - EPA's Smart Growth Speakers Series; ULI In-Fill Housing, TOD & Smart Growth Conferences and American Planning Association Symposiums on Urban Design and Land Use.

Cunningham + Quill Architects PLLC current and recent projects, in addition to a new residential mixed-use smart-growth/TOD town expansion plan for Charles Town, West Virginia, include the 1999 Potomac Yard Master Plan in Alexandria, Virginia, the Fortnightly Neighborhood Downtown Sector Master Plan in Herndon, Virginia and new in-fill housing in the Washington area; The Mather Lofts (*a 52 unit affordable and market rate artist's loft building*) in downtown Washington, D.C.; 800 South Washington Street (*a mixed-use retail and 75 unit luxury residential project*) in Old Town - Alexandria, Virginia; 1028 33rd Street, N.W. (*a mixed-use adaptive re-use residential-retail-office project along the C & O Canal in Georgetown*); a new senior affordable housing-retail project in the urban village of Cherrydale in Arlington, Virginia and a new senior-affordable mixed-use residential building in downtown Falls Church, Virginia.