

Chapter 4: Housing and Neighborhoods

4.1 Introduction

Neighborhoods are the building blocks of Manassas. There is pride in every community, and increasingly neighbors are talking about common issues. Some neighborhoods in the City are old and historic, some new, and all are benefiting from City initiatives devoted to neighborhood conservation. As the City continues to grow and evolve, maintaining the integrity and character of neighborhoods and housing remains a critical ingredient to the City's overall quality of life. Most residential areas are built out and the priority of this chapter is to maintain and preserve their character in accordance with the descriptions introduced in Chapter 3. However, principle areas for redevelopment are addressed in the City's approved sector plans offering opportunities for a diverse range of new, quality residential development.

One of the most important visions of this Plan is make sure that as development occurs, Manassas becomes a more "livable community." That is, a community that through careful long term planning, encourages the well-being of all of its citizens regardless of age, income or ability.¹ To do so, this chapter first establishes a goal for neighborhoods and housing in the City as well as objectives and strategies for achieving this goal. The keys to meeting this goal are to ensure our neighborhoods are safe and well-maintained, and to fully engage the talent and energy of these neighborhoods to resolve issues and plan in partnership with the City for future growth. Second, the chapter identifies key issues specific to the City's neighborhood areas identified in Figure 5 (page 4-6). Identifying these issues is an important step to ensure land use applications, capital improvement projects, and other City policies can address community and City-wide needs.

¹ Draft Report, *Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities*, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Commonwealth of Virginia, June 2011.

Legislative Requirement

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that comprehensive plans include “the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated.”

The Housing and Neighborhoods goal, objectives, and strategies in this chapter address this legislative mandate by setting the path to achieve a mixed housing stock that accommodates the needs of a diverse population in all residential areas of the City. The details of this path are subsequently folded into a City-wide action plan in Chapter 10.

4.2 Goals and Objectives

Manassas is made up of a diverse set of neighborhoods, all of which are connected to each other, have unique characteristics, and have a deep sense of pride. The following goal, supporting objectives and strategies build on this pride to engage neighborhood and community organizations to lead the City in maintaining quality housing for the full life-cycle of residential needs. This is a high but achievable goal. The following objectives articulate specific concepts that should be in the foreground as Manassas seeks to conserve the integrity of its neighborhoods and provide a diverse housing opportunities.

Goal

Manassas neighborhoods will be the building blocks of a sustainable community, assisting in preserving and maintaining quality housing opportunities for the full life-cycle of City residential needs, while creating an environment of supportive and positive community values.

Objectives and Strategies: Neighborhoods

- (Objective 4.1) Focus on supporting successful neighborhoods as the building blocks of a sustainable City.
 - (Strategy 4.1.1) Identify and formally recognize neighborhood boundaries, identities, and organizations in the City. Encourage the creation of neighborhood organizations in communities where such organizations do not exist.

- (Strategy 4.1.2) Continue to support and reinforce neighborhoods through neighborhood-oriented revitalization and safety services and other programs, focusing on ordinance enforcement, youth-oriented recreation, and community policing programs.
- (Strategy 4.1.3) Improve pedestrian and bike accessibility and mobility within neighborhoods, and provide pedestrian and bikeway connections to key activity areas.
- (Strategy 4.1.4) Maintain established City parks, and create a volunteer base to coordinate open space maintenance with City staff and neighborhood organizations.
- (Strategy 4.1.5) Develop policies and programs that reinforce the link between City schools and local neighborhoods, and establish school facilities as centers for community activity (such as health fairs or recreation/wellness activities). Encourage members of the community to actively participate in their schools and volunteer time for maintenance, mentoring, and other support.
- (Strategy 4.1.6) Continue meetings in alternating neighborhoods as a means to engage citizens and encourage face-to-face customer service. Broaden the publicity of these meetings.
- (Objective 4.2) Support local citizen organizations that preserve and maintain neighborhoods, promote community policies and support activities that are consistent with this plan.
 - (Strategy 4.2.1) Build neighborhood leadership capacity, and foster better neighborhood relations through outreach activities and by providing training to neighborhood representatives on conflict resolution, grant writing, planning, organizational leadership, and other topics.
 - (Strategy 4.2.2) Continue annual City-wide neighborhood conferences to anticipate, examine and address neighborhood-related issues.
 - (Strategy 4.2.3) Build positive relationships with community partners to foster understanding between diverse neighbors, find common ground on issues facing neighborhoods, and develop and implement neighborhood plans to solve these issues.
 - (Strategy 4.2.4) Develop policies and programs encouraging the preservation and enhancement of City neighborhoods.
 - (Strategy 4.2.5) Promote community pride and engagement by developing and promoting civic beautification awards.
 - (Strategy 4.2.6) Provide a “one-stop-shop” user-friendly clearinghouse of programs and public assistance available to neighborhoods and households, including those provided by not-

for-profit organizations and through Commonwealth and federal programs.

- (Objective 4.3) Promote neighborhood-based plans by assisting with their development, coordination and inclusion in City-wide planning.
 - (Strategy 4.3.1) Conduct neighborhood-oriented outreach programs to educate the community on the planning and zoning process, environmental sustainability, and building code regulations. Offer technical support to neighborhood planning initiatives.
 - (Strategy 4.3.2) Develop incentives to promote neighborhood planning to include awarding grants for community improvement projects to neighborhoods with approved plans.
 - (Strategy 4.3.3) Study the effect and, if feasible, seek approval to transform the City's Capital Improvement Program to include a neighborhood focus which addresses priority neighborhood needs and impacts.
 - (Strategy 4.3.4) Develop policies and procedures for coordinating and incorporating neighborhood plans into the comprehensive planning process.

Objectives and Strategies: Housing

- (Objective 4.4) Ensure the existing housing stock is well maintained.
 - (Strategy 4.4.1) Develop and enforce City Codes and Ordinances to ensure quality, safe, and sanitary housing.
 - (Strategy 4.4.2) Identify neighborhoods and houses that are in most need of preservation and rehabilitation. Partner with owners and neighborhood organizations to promote programs to renovate, or if necessary, remove substandard housing and improve physical community facilities (e.g. streets, sidewalks, and parks).
 - (Strategy 4.4.3) Stabilize residential neighborhoods next to commercial areas by establishing transitional land uses, controlling vehicular access, and establishing landscaping buffers and/or architectural screens. Regulate the amount of noise and/or lighting produced by land uses to minimize the impacts on nearby properties.
 - (Strategy 4.4.4) In partnership with neighborhood organizations, protect existing housing stock by organizing and coordinating volunteer construction/maintenance projects.
 - (Strategy 4.4.5) Encourage rental property owners to continue to improve property maintenance, eliminate occupancy violations, and renovate substandard housing. Register and inspect rental

properties within designated rental inspection districts on a routine basis to insure they comply with City standards.

- (Strategy 4.4.6) Review and amend Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to enable and enhance crime prevention through improved site design and building design standards.
- (Objective 4.5) Foster the adequate supply of a balanced mix of high quality and attractive housing, providing opportunities for a diverse population, including starter, work force, move-up, executive and senior housing.
 - (Strategy 4.5.1) Develop strategies for maintaining the diversity and health of quality housing consistent with neighborhood character. Develop measurements and procedures to track neighborhood conditions over time.
 - (Strategy 4.5.2) Provide appropriate re-development incentives encouraging a diverse mix of housing in accordance with approved sector development plans and redevelopment plans.
- (Objective 4.6) Consider initiatives to promote the lifelong health of Manassas citizens through careful community design and by engaging neighborhoods and health providers in promoting in-home and community-based services to meet the growing needs of the population.
 - (Strategy 4.6.1) Within two years after the approval of this Comprehensive Plan, complete a review of *Virginia's Blueprint for Livable Communities*. Recommend as an amendment to this Plan, community design standards, zoning changes, land use patterns, infrastructure improvements, and community partnerships and programs that promote improved community livability and Age Wave preparedness in Manassas.

4.3 General Neighborhood Areas

Ten general neighborhood areas of Manassas have been identified as having distinct individual residential character. A map on the next page shows the boundaries of the general neighborhood areas, and a summary describing each neighborhood area follows. Each area is comprised of clusters of individual neighborhoods with common features and character and, as such, may include more than one character area discussed in Chapter 3: Land Use.

Support for neighborhood initiatives has been a priority in Manassas. The City has recognized the importance of strong neighborhoods and has dedicated resources to help organize and run community events. For example, meetings are held regularly in alternating neighborhoods to provide opportunities for listening to, and addressing citizen concerns. Attention to neighborhood needs is a high priority in planning for public improvements, and attention to housing quality and affordability are critical to achieving a sustainable, viable city. The

following descriptions are intended to serve as a starting point for future neighborhood-based plans.

Figure 5: General Neighborhood-Areas



Downtown

Description of Area

The Downtown Area incorporates historic downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. Generally, it is bounded by Stonewall and Sudley Roads to the north, Prescott and Parkway Avenue to the east, and Sandalwood Drive to the south. The Norfolk Southern Railway bisects downtown in an east/west direction

This area is the center and “heart” of the City that includes commercial, civic, office and residential uses. Several schools, City Hall, police and fire stations, the historic train station, and Baldwin and Nelson Parks are located in this area. The approved sector plan for this area includes recommendations for preserving existing neighborhoods while allowing for continued residential growth which intersects gracefully with the downtown core area. New residential development should be integrated with the Old Town retail and arts and entertainment core to the extent feasible.

Dumfries Road Area

Description of Area

The Dumfries Road Area includes the south central areas of Manassas. It is generally bounded by Wellington and Hendley Roads to the west, neighborhoods south of Prince William Street to the north, Grant Avenue and Flowerden Lane to the east, and includes the Georgetown South neighborhood. This area extends to the southernmost City limits and abuts the Prince William County border. This area includes primarily townhouses and apartments with some low density residential and commercial uses. The Gateway area at Hastings and Dumfries Road is critical to the neighborhood. The residential corridor leading into Downtown from Wellington Road should be studied.

Mayfield Area

Description of Area

The Mayfield area is located in the southeastern corner of Manassas. It is bounded to the north by the Norfolk Southern Railway tracks, Fairview Avenue, and Sandalwood Drive, to the west by Grant Avenue and Flowerden Lane, and to the east by Liberia Avenue. This area extends to the southernmost and easternmost City limits and abuts the Prince William County border. Metz Junior High School and Mayfield Intermediate School are found in this neighborhood, as well as Winterset, Milic, Kinsley Mill, and Oakenshaw Parks. The majority of this area is low-density single-family residential development with primarily townhome and commercial development along Liberia Avenue. The area is close to Old Town and its many services and there are a variety of things to do because of commercial development along Liberia Avenue.

Wellington Area

Description of Area

The Wellington area is located in the southwestern corner of Manassas. It is generally bounded by Wellington and Hendley Roads to the east, Dean Park, Elementary School and Cloverhill Park to the north, and Godwin Drive to the west, and Cloverhill Road and Hastings Drive to the south. This area extends to the southernmost City limits and abuts the Prince William County border. Round Elementary School and Lee Manor Park are located in Wellington, and the Boys and Girls Club is an important, nearby recreation resource. This area consists primarily of low-density single-family residential development. Homeowners associations are proactive in dealing with community concerns. Hastings Drive is a barrier, slicing through the Wellington area, impeding pedestrian access, and dividing neighborhoods.

Gateway Area

Description of Area

The Gateway area is located at the westernmost side of Manassas. It is generally bounded by Wellington Road to the east, Dean Park, Elementary School and Cloverhill Park to the south, and Godwin Drive to the west and north. This area extends to the westernmost City limits and abuts the Prince William County border. The Manassas Ballfields, Jennie Dean Park and Elementary School, Boys and Girls Club, Cloverhill Park, and Cannon Branch Fort are located in the Gateway area. Industrial and business uses are located in this area along with the Manassas Regional Airport. The Manassas Landing Planned Mixed Use Development master plan will serve as the cornerstone for commercial redevelopment in this area. There are very few residences here, and there are no neighborhood recommendations for improvement at this time.

Haydon Area

Description of Area

The Haydon area is located on the western side of Manassas north of the Norfolk Southern Railway line. It is generally bounded by Stonewall Road to the east, Country Lane and Peabody Street to the north, Godwin Drive to the west, and the rail line and Center Street to the south. It abuts the Prince William County border to the west. Haydon Elementary School, All Saints Catholic School, and Cavalry Run Park are located here. This area is primarily low-density single-family residential with some medium-density residential, neighborhood commercial, and general commercial uses.

Sudley Area

Description of Area

Sudley is located in northwestern Manassas. It is generally bounded by Plantation Lane and Sudley Road to the east, neighborhoods south of Sudley Road to the south, Godwin Drive to the west, and the Prince William County border to the north and west. This area is comprised of general commercial, office, and higher density residential uses. The Prince William Hospital is located in this area along Sudley Road. If approved, the proposed Sudley Road Sector plan will serve as the primary planning vehicle for this area. It will likely focus on preserving existing residential areas while encouraging some new, housing opportunities.

Weems Area

Description of Area

The Weems area is located in the northernmost part of Manassas. It is generally bounded by Fairfax Street and Weems Road to the east, Sudley Road to the south, and Plantation Lane to the west. Weems abuts Prince William County and the City of Manassas Park to the north. This area includes Stonewall and Byrd Parks and Weems Elementary School. It is primarily low-density single-family residential with some townhouse developments. There is good access to services, work, and churches. Residents, neighbors and members of homeowners associations are active in neighborhood preservation. Neighborhood Watch is strong in addressing safety issues.

Mathis Area

Description of Area

The Mathis area is located in northeast Manassas, bordering the city limits of Manassas Park. It is generally bounded to the east by neighborhoods east of Centreville Road, to the south by Quarry Road, Maple Street, and Sudley Road, to the west by Weems Road and Fairfax Street, and to the north by the City limits. The Prince William County Library is located near Mathis in Prince William County. This area contains both commercial and residential uses and the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan addresses many of the redevelopment goals for this area. While preserving existing neighborhoods, the plan proposes uses which gradually transition from existing residential edges, to a higher density mix of office/commercial areas which also feature enclaves of first floor retail and upper floor residential uses. The Liberia House and Annaburg Manor are important assets in the area which should be maintained and used in ways to benefit the community.

Euclid Area

Description of Area

The Euclid area is located on the east side of Manassas. It is generally bounded by the Prince William County border to the east, Liberia Avenue, Quarry Road, the Norfolk Southern Railway line to the south, and the neighborhoods west of Euclid Avenue to the west. This area generally includes industrial and office uses with some general commercial. The historic Mayfield Fort Site is located in this area. There are very few residences and no neighborhood recommendations for improvement.