

ULI

BAYFRONT VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA



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VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

An Evaluation of the Area's Potential and
A Strategy for its Enhancement and
Development

May 18–23, 1997
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
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ABOUT ULI-THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on this research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has some 13,000 members and associates from 50 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Profession-

als represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academicians, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
Executive Vice President

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Each interdisciplinary panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. Panelists are chosen for their knowledge of the topics to be addressed and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI teams provide a comprehensive look at development problems and questions. Each panel is chaired by a highly respected ULI member who has had previous panel experience.

A key strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of its members—including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and other professionals—many of whom are not available for traditional consulting assignments.

In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report provides objective advice that promotes the responsible use of land

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Both personally and on behalf of ULI—the Urban Land Institute, the panel members and staff would like to thank the City of Virginia Beach and its leaders for inviting ULI to undertake this challenging assignment. Special thanks are due to several key individuals: Meyera E. Oberndorf, mayor; James K. Spore, city manager; Robert H. Vakos, planning commission chairman; William W. Harrison, Jr., city councilman; Louis Jones, city councilman; and Kal Kassir, president, Great Neck/Shore Drive Merchants' Association. The panel was pleased and honored to participate in the analysis of market potential and the development of a plan for enhancing the area.

Special thanks are also due to Robert J. Scott, planning director, who provided an overview of the issues to be considered and generously made the resources of his department available to the panel. Thanks are due as well to several members of the planning

department staff—including Stephen J. White, Karen Lasley, Travis Campbell, Thomas C. Pauls, Mia Lloyd, and Jolinda Saunders—who were very helpful in various capacities, including the preparation of the briefing book and coordination of the tour and the interviews.

Many other community leaders were very helpful in supplying information and insights during the interviews and other meetings. The panel would like to thank the many area restaurant and business owners, real estate developers, civic league representatives, environmental community leaders, military leaders, and area citizens who generously shared their views with the panel during the course of its visit. The participation of individuals representing a wide range of organizations, viewpoints, and interests enabled the panel to base its recommendations on thorough, balanced, and timely information.

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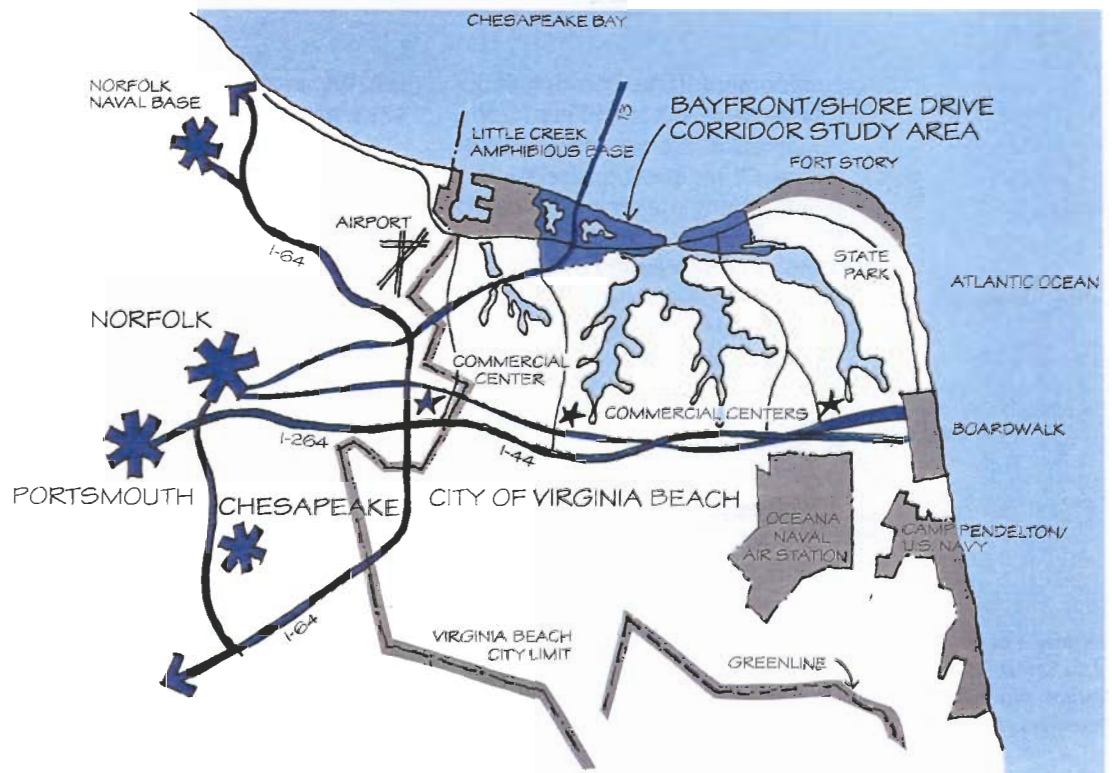
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FOREWORD: THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

The Bayfront/Shore Drive Corridor is located in the northern part of the City of Virginia Beach, parallel to the city's beachfront along the Chesapeake Bay. Shore Drive (U.S. Route 60) is a major four-lane east-west arterial highway that accommodates a wide variety of land uses. Major portions of the Bayfront area are residential (both single-family and multifamily) while other sections are commercial, public, and semi-public. The corridor serves as one of the primary routes of access to the city's oceanfront resort area. Thus, its appearance and role are vital to the city. It possesses a beautiful beachfront that could be used by the public to a greater degree; however, ownership of the beach is in question. The area also includes one of the state's largest and most significant parks (First Landing/Seashore State Park) and the site of the initial landing of the Jamestown colonists in America in 1607. The City of Virginia Beach believes that without a strategy for the future, the attractiveness and functional efficiency of the corridor will deteriorate as the area grows.

To assist in developing such a strategy, the city invited the participation of this ULI Advisory



CONTEXT MAP

Services panel. Major issues the panel was asked to address included: understanding the interplay between vacation and year-round markets in the area, identifying ways to attract quality residential and commercial development along Shore Drive, and planning strategies to achieve the city's goals.

The questions the panel was asked to address were divided into four major topic areas: market potential, development and marketing strategies, planning and design, and implementation. Regarding market potential, the panel was asked to evaluate the potential for commercial, retail, residential, and recreational de-

An aerial view of the Lesner Bridge and environs, an area of considerable beauty and one that the panel was asked to consider for new development. The panel was asked to review two opportunity sites in particular: the site running from the city marina toward the Lesner Bridge (in the foreground) and the sand spoils site adjacent to the Lesner Bridge (in the upper left).



velopment in the corridor, and how these sectors differed from markets in the oceanfront resort area. Other questions related to positioning the area with regard to tourists and residents, the most appropriate and marketable mixture of housing types in the area, and the impact of beach ownership issues on the marketability of the area. The panel was also asked to evaluate two opportunity sites identified by the city, and to consider other areas for development opportunities.

Regarding development and marketing strategies, the issues to be addressed included the important elements of a targeted plan for the area, the staging and phasing of development, development strategies for the two opportunity sites, marketing strategies for the area, sign control strategies, and ways to provide better beach access for nearby residents and the city in general.

The planning and design issues were many, but were largely focused on improving the design features, image, and overall quality of the Shore Drive Corridor. Other issues related to the overall design theme, gateway features, streetscape issues, housing density, road widths, public transportation, pedestrian movement, signage, land use planning, nat-

ural resources, the opportunity sites, and public utilities

Finally, the panel was asked to propose an implementation strategy. The questions here related to redevelopment tools, financing mechanisms, land use regulation mechanisms, and development time frames.

Upon their arrival in Virginia Beach, the panel members received briefings from the planning director and then toured the site by both bus and helicopter. The panel then interviewed over 60 individuals, including representa-

tives from the business, civic, neighborhood, government, military, environmental, and real estate communities. Panel members met continuously throughout the week, both formally and informally, to discuss their findings and reach a consensus on their conclusions and recommendations.

This report records the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the ULI panel, and outlines both a short-term strategy and a long-term vision for the future development of this mature area. These panel results were presented on May 23, 1997, in Virginia Beach in a public session. The Urban Land Institute and the panel hope that the recommendations presented here will contribute to the successful further development and enhancement of the Bayfront/Shore Drive area of Virginia Beach.

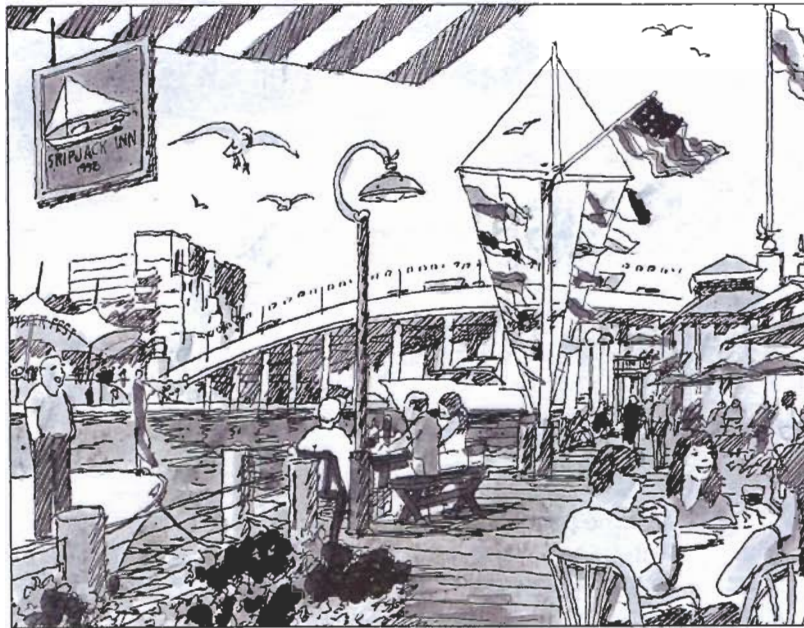
An aerial view of the area west of the Lesner Bridge, which features attractive and stable beachfront communities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is the panel's first and lasting impression, reinforced by its interviews, that the Bayfront/Shore Drive area of Virginia Beach is a "resort community" as opposed to a "resort destination." While this general community character is desirable, the area does not have a clear image or unifying identity, and both the Bayfront community and the city currently lack a definite vision of what the area should be like in ten years. In the course of its visit to the city, the ULI panel heard far more comments about things that went wrong than it did about what should be done. The absence of a vision results in unclear plans for the future and a tendency toward hodgepodge development patterns. The city has many of the tools necessary to implement a plan and create a stronger image for the area, but in the absence of a clear vision it is hard to find the basis for consistent administrative action and strong political will, especially when pressures to accommodate narrow interests are significant.

Much of the area is already built out, and development potential is currently limited to primarily residential development on infill parcels. The retail and commercial sectors currently are

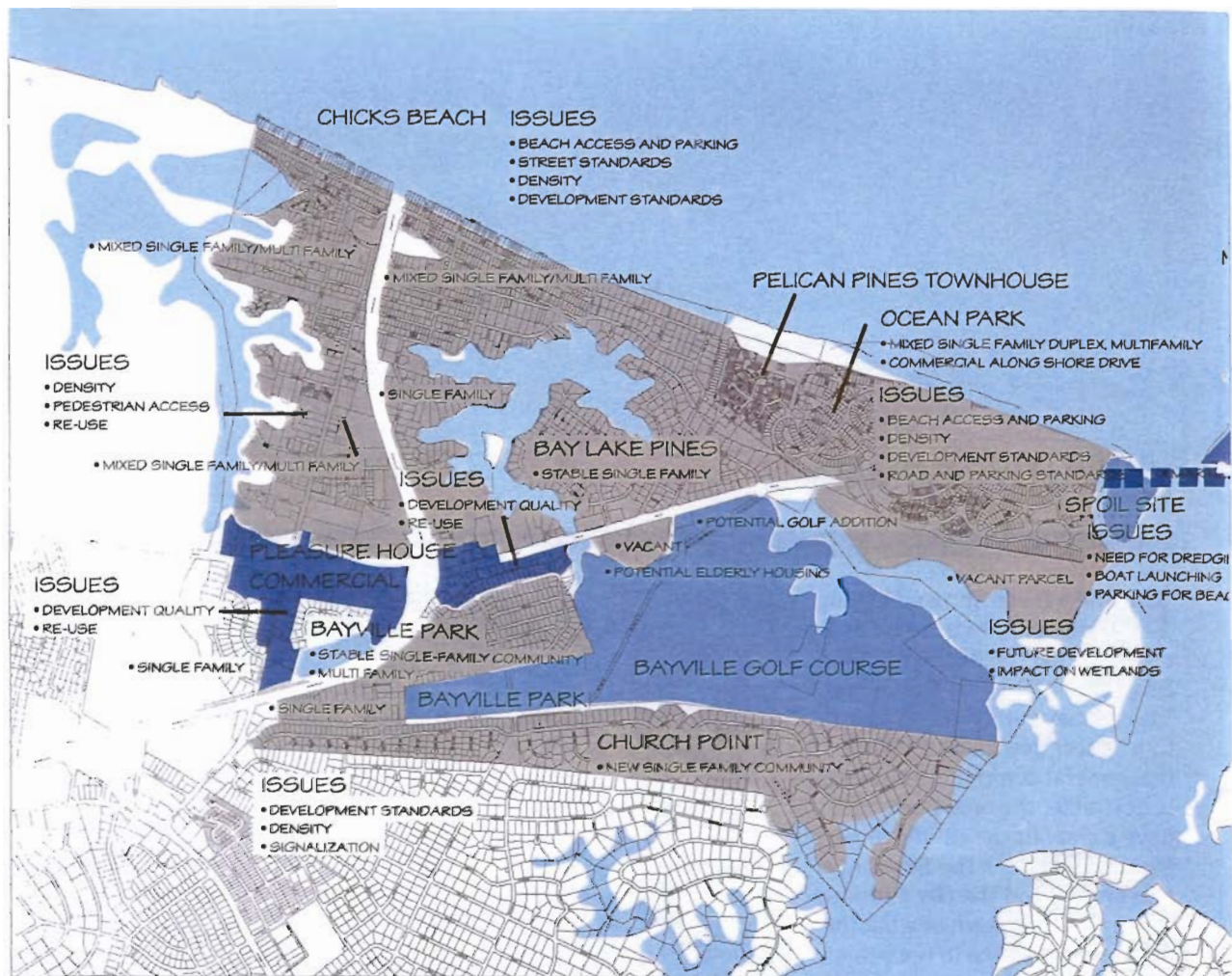


experiencing high vacancies in many properties, and there is little demand evident for new retail development along Shore Drive. However, several sites offer some opportunities for specialty retail, restaurant, residential, and recreational development if the city is willing to get involved in the development process, either through public/private partnerships or as the primary developer. Three opportunities of high priority are:



The panel recommends that the area just east of the bridge from the pilot boats to the city marina be redeveloped as an attractively designed specialty retail and "working waterfront" area, including a fresh fish market, boat docking areas, restaurants, and themed specialty retail.

Panel Chair Christopher Degenhardt during panel deliberations.



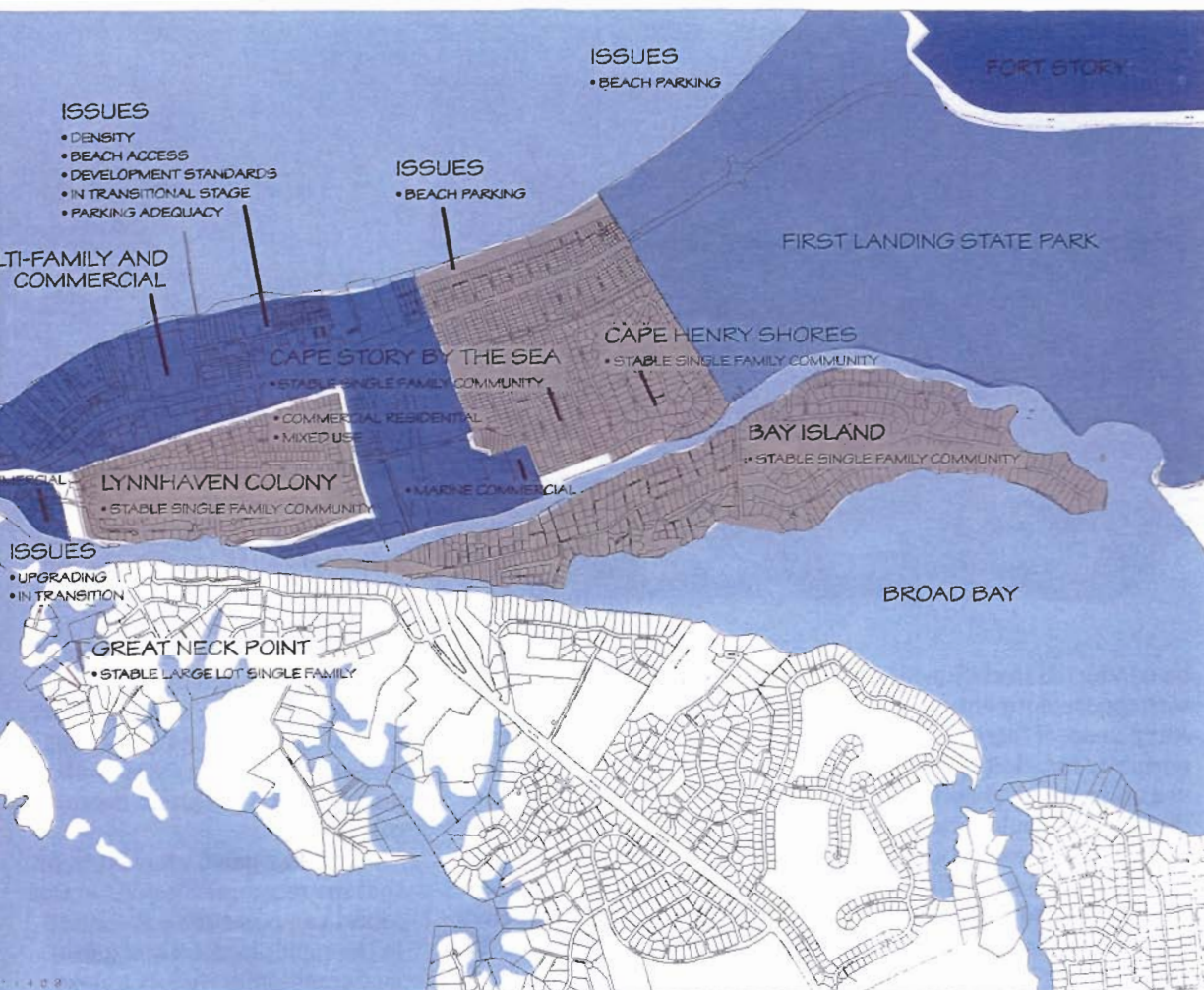
DEVELOPMENT ISSUES MAP

- The site that the panel has dubbed Watermen's Walk, just east of the bridge from the pilot boats to the city marina;
- The sand spoils area on the Lynnhaven Inlet—what the panel has called Fisherman's Park—for boat launching, recreation, and events; and
- A public/private partnership for the development of a new marina on the 70-acre planned unit development (PUD) parcel on Pleasure House Creek, hereafter referred to as Marina Village.

Each of these opportunities involve waterfront development around the Lynnhaven Inlet, an area that offers an unusually attractive setting for new development.

In considering development strategies for the area, two key points should be kept in mind. The panel believes that the attractive residential neighborhoods and the amenities they enjoy must be preserved and/or further enhanced, but the area also needs to be improved both as a scenic corridor and as an amenity area for all Virginia Beach residents—and as an ancillary amenity for resort visitors. Development strategies for the area should involve several major initiatives, including creating a sense of arrival at key gateways, beautifying Shore Drive, targeting the three opportunity sites for development, focusing on better site plan review and design quality, and promoting the area more effectively to the city and the region.

In terms of planning and design, it is imperative that a strong image and identity is created for the community by making Shore Drive a scenic highway from Route 13 to Fort Story. Lesner Bridge can act as the focal point of the scenic Shore Drive, and road treatment and landscape design should distinguish residential from commercial uses along this route while still developing an overall unifying theme. The panel does not believe the road should be widened, its role as a scenic corridor should take precedence over its role as a traffic carrier to the boardwalk. The panel has designated five zones along the scenic corridor (see illustration on pages 30, 31), each involving



different planning and design objectives and treatments. The panel also recommends the extension of the bicycle path through the area. Apart from the improvement to Shore Drive, the most important element in upgrading the image of the area relates to the design and development of the three opportunity sites around the Lynnhaven Inlet. The Watermen's Walk and Fisherman's Park proposals, in particular, can have a great impact on the image and identity of the area if they are attractively designed; the panel has provided some sketches of what these areas could look like

Regarding implementation, the panel proposes the following action plan, with steps listed roughly in the order they should be undertaken:

- Create an advisory commission or board made up of citizen and business leaders in the Bayfront community, the role of which should be to create a unified voice to promote the area and to ensure timely implementation of the plan and recommendations that have been proposed here. The community, using this commission as a vehicle, needs to unify and act in two clear ways: First, the business community should form a stronger alliance to promote activities that will benefit the whole area, such as events and festivals. Second, the business community, in conjunction with residents, needs to play a stronger role in obtaining city funds for development and promotion.
- Initiate demonstration projects and tighten the enforcement of existing regulations in order to effect some immediate changes and send a message that important plans are underway for the area.
- Develop the landscape design plan for Shore Drive as outlined.
- Develop a public beach plan as follows: (1) day use should be permitted for at least half of the beach area at Seashore State Park; (2) studies should

Virginia Beach Planning Director Robert Scott provided an overview of the area and the issues during the first day of the assignment.



be conducted in conjunction with the Department of the Army to see if there is any opportunity for additional day use and parking at Fort Story; (3) the city should acquire, at one or two different locations along the corridor, sufficient land to provide parking and a beachfront park; and (4) the beach ownership issue—currently a source of conflict that divides the community and confuses visitors—should be resolved. The city should obtain clear title to the beaches, through condemnation if necessary, and then move quickly to improve access and parking.

- Initiate the development of Watermen's Walk, Fisherman's Park, and Marina Village—three projects that will serve to create a focal point and a sense of place for the area
- Encourage better design in new development projects, and develop criteria for an incentive zoning overlay district. Watermen's Walk and much of the area zoned B-4 would benefit the most from such measures.

Although the community and the city should adopt these recommendations and see that they are incorporated in the comprehensive plan update, the future success of the area will depend more on the *quality* of development that takes place than on the *type* of development. The panel feels strongly that the city needs to take a more rigorous approach to approving and controlling development in the area, and that the city council needs to heed the political convictions and advance the interests of the larger community

rather than simply responding to the needs of individual property owners or interests. The community needs to sustain this involvement all the way to the zoning appeals board. As discussed later in this study, the panel urges resident and city involvement to guide and influence future development, using advisory commissions, design guidelines, and other planning tools available to shape the future destiny of the corridor.

It is the panel's fervent hope that the recommendations in this report can point the community in the right direction and galvanize community leaders to take action while the opportunity still exists. The Bayfront area has great potential to become an exemplary resort community if the community comes together to support a common vision.

The panel during a review session.



DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The panel has been impressed by the variety of resources that, collectively, make the Bayfront/Shore Drive area of Virginia Beach a truly distinctive place. It has exceptional water amenities—including the Chesapeake/Atlantic beachfront and Lynnhaven Bay—is rich in some of the earliest history of the United States, is a fisherman's dream, and is rich in wildlife as well. It is not surprising, therefore, that the area also has some of the most desirable residential neighborhoods in Virginia Beach.

The panel addressed many factors influencing market demand and affecting the nature and extent of real estate development opportunities within the Bayfront area. Participants used information gleaned from interviews with local developers, civic league representatives, brokers, regulatory agency staff, and others knowledgeable about the Bayfront area's land use patterns and prospects, as well as data on Virginia Beach and the Hampton Roads region.



Several panel members toured the area by helicopter.

Developers working within the Bayfront area emphasize that single-family residential units remain the most feasible land use. Sales prices for new construction range from about \$180 per square foot (psf) for beachfront houses down to about \$80 psf for more modest homes within the study area's interior. Others identified uses catering to the pleasure boating market, but cautioned that obtaining the approvals necessary for projects affecting the shoreline was difficult.

The handful of developers working within the Bayfront area share several characteristics that enable them to earn profits while helping to revitalize the area. As local sons and daughters, they benefit from strong roots within the community. Several enjoyed favorable development economics by capitalizing on land acquisitions completed decades ago. For the most part, each identified a niche within the Bayfront area and specialized in that real estate product.

Panel members Elaine Carmichael and James Callard during an interview session with Bill Dragas of Dragas Homes.



Nonetheless, the vacant storefronts and tales of bankrupt and stalled projects attest to the difficulty of identifying profitable real estate investment opportunities within the corridor. Few national enterprises attempt it, even as they invest elsewhere in the region. Bankruptcies (and narrow escapes) continue to influence land prices and activity within the corridor well after most communities finished repositioning projects that collapsed during the recession of the early 1990s. Moreover, Bayfront area projects seldom use the full density allowable under current zoning, suggesting that the market cannot generate the activity contemplated by the regulatory system. The B-4 zoning is too wide open, and a more defined zoning approach would be preferable.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Trends affecting residential development within the Shore Drive Corridor include the following:

- The market for new single-family residential includes retirees (including former military personnel once stationed within the region), local empty-nesters, and single mothers with children seeking smaller homes within the corridor's desirable school district. While demand for housing (both to rent and buy) from nearby military personnel exists, most cannot afford existing units within the study area and land prices preclude developers from providing more affordable housing. The existing inventory of detached single-family units has proved popular with families seeking housing within the school district.
- As land becomes scarcer, rehabilitation activity (including some tear-downs) has increased.

- Multifamily structures, whether low- or high-rise, are predominantly condominiums. Development economics within the corridor do not favor constructing new apartment complexes. Land prices lead to rents affordable to only a small segment of the market for whom homeownership makes more sense economically. There is only one notable upscale apartment complex (Marina Shores) that has benefited from favorable land economics.
- The seasonal residential rental market is negligible, with most vacationers preferring properties located near the ocean and boardwalk.
- Senior-oriented housing (that is, the Westminster-Canterbury complex) has been developed to meet demand from this emerging market segment. While some activity suggests additional untapped demand, other projects have languished during the past few years. One senior housing project generated significant controversy within the community; now gutted after a fire, all that remains is its foundation and its future is uncertain.



Recent and ongoing residential development consists of both single-family and multifamily structures, including substantial infill development and redevelopment within existing subdivisions and along the bayfront. Sales prices, which vary depending upon the area and distance from the water, are generally producing acceptable structures and maintaining, if not increasing, property values and the livability of the neighborhood. Land costs and other market conditions will dictate primarily owner-occupied single-family and multifamily condominium and townhouse development, and will limit apartment and rental housing development.

However, infill development has been occurring in a hodge-podge manner due to lack of planning and an overall zoning classification that exceeds the economic development potential of the area. The panel believes that the creation of design standards—or the better enforcement of existing standards—will create a modest

upgrading of the existing residential area without changing its current economic and social mix.

The opportunity for new residential subdivisions is limited by the availability of the parcel sizes in the study area. (The one exception is the 70-acre PUD site on Pleasure House Creek.) The market potential for the other larger parcels has already been determined by existing and announced projects, most notably the developments occurring along Great Neck Road consisting of 2,000-plus-square-foot homes—on small lots without water views or other significant amenities—selling for \$160,000 and above, and a water amenity project announced on Long Creek for 2,000-square-foot-plus detached houses with boat slips and two-car garages to be offered for around \$400,000. These projects indicate the clear positive influence of waterfront location on property values.

Land costs and general market conditions will dictate primarily owner-occupied single-family and multifamily condominium development, and will effectively limit rental housing development.



Panel member James Callard, who focused on development potential issues.

RETAIL/COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The area possesses several characteristics that may influence future prospects for commercial development:

- Strip retail dominates the commercial real estate sector.
- With the exception of a few restaurants and hotels, few properties are oriented toward the water. However, the Long Creek shoreline features several successful marinas with ancillary support activities, including retail.

Strip retail dominates the commercial retail sector, and significant vacancies and evidence of disinvestment bode poorly for additional community-serving retail projects.

- Beyond several restaurants and hotel properties, the corridor's commercial inventory features very limited visitor-serving uses. Restaurants and hoteliers doing business within the corridor need to plan around seasonality in order to succeed.
- Budget brands and local operators make up most of the corridor's hotel/motel inventory. There is only one business-caliber lodging facility, a beach-front establishment that features recreational amenities, suite-style accommodations, and meeting space and positions itself as an alternative venue for events/conferences that do not require a full-fledged convention center hotel.
- Over the past decade, numerous new restaurants have opened; however, the subsequent high turnover and vacancy rates signify some overly optimistic assessments of market demand, as well as the challenges of dealing with seasonality. Nevertheless, the area is known for having some of the best restaurants in Virginia Beach.



- There is no critical mass of established retail within the corridor, and local residents routinely travel out of the study area to shop. Among the retail inventory, moreover, significant vacancies and evidence of disinvestment bode poorly for additional community-serving projects. In the absence of additional leasing activity to fill existing gaps in the retail menu, vacant storefront space will be recycled or abandoned en route to eventual redevelopment.
- Few options are available for those needing office space for business services.

In short, existing conditions do not suggest significant latent demand available within the Shore Drive Corridor.

The panel sees virtually no current market, beyond boating/marine supplies, for retail and commercial development along Shore Drive, with the exception

of Watermen's Walk. Although alternative shopping in adjacent areas currently meets existing demand, the study area should be able to support some specialty retail uses. Demand for such retail will have to be created through the development of an unusual and compelling retail environment, and existing vacancies will need to be absorbed into uses that can generate a return to justify the land cost. Development of three specific opportunity sites, with city involvement, will help attract such demand, and development of specialty retail and commercial—especially at Watermen's Walk—on these sites will encourage further development along Shore Drive.



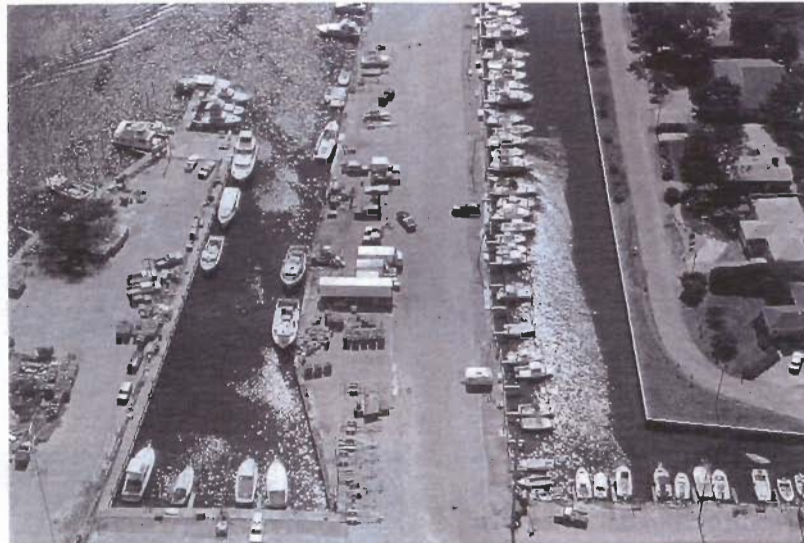
Although a few vacant parcels remain, the Shore Drive Corridor is essentially built out.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS AND PATTERNS

From a development perspective, existing land use conditions somewhat constrain opportunities for profitable investment:

- Although a few vacant parcels remain, the Shore Drive Corridor is essentially built out.
- With a few notable exceptions, the majority of vacant parcels are quite small, precluding consideration of most nonresidential uses and eliminating economies of scale for residential builders.
- Small overall square footage, along with the shallow depths or narrow frontages that characterize many corridor lot configurations, hinders the assembly of adequately sized parcels: the more parcels that must be acquired, the more time and money it takes.

The development potential of the Bayfront area will continue to be influenced by the predominantly residential and neighborhood uses currently existing in the study area. Absent an unforeseen event—or significant public intervention—the panel believes that development generally will continue along the same patterns and at the same rates. Land

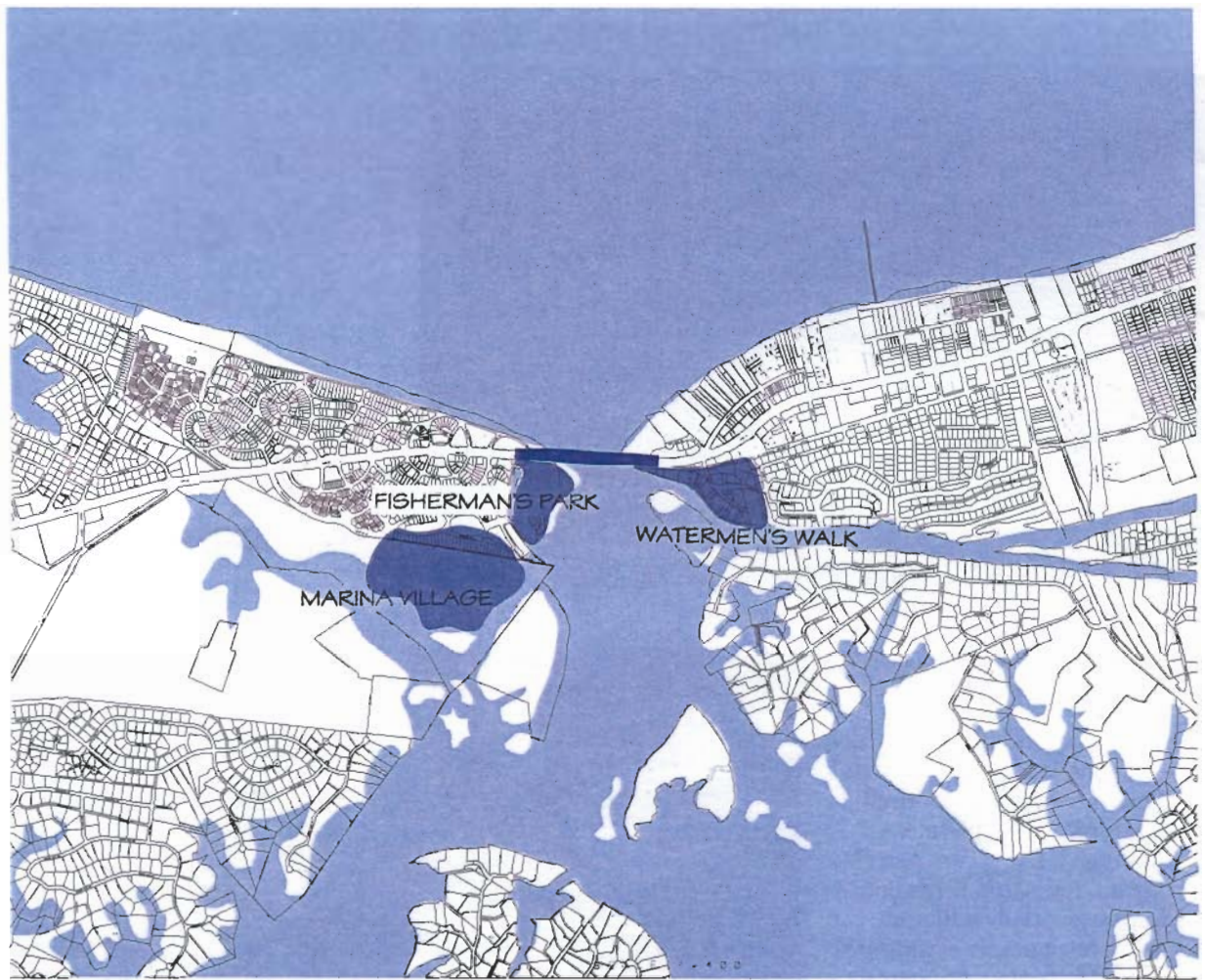


Marinas and ancillary retail and service uses should remain a strong market as the recreational boater market continues to expand.

costs—influenced by water access, view, and availability—will be the key determinant of development activity, dictating primarily residential development and redevelopment as existing lots and remaining sites experience infill development pressures. The panel also expects that existing neighborhood properties will increase in value as infill development and new development take advantage of the many nearby resort amenities and the overall livability of the area.

The existing market does little to inspire investment and without significant public intervention, current patterns of development are likely to continue:

- **Residential.** Residential activity will be characterized by continued single-family fixup and tear-down/redevelopment activities, with some subdivision of larger lots. Some developers are likely to assemble a few parcels together to accommodate five- to eight-unit condominium projects or clustered housing.



OPPORTUNITY SITES MAP

The panel proposes that a pedestrian-oriented destination retail development—dubbed Watermen's Walk—be developed between the city marina and Henry's.

- **Retail.** The panel foresees virtually no market for additional traditional retail space over the coming decade, although specialty retail clusters built in conjunction with other destination uses could succeed, given the right development economics (that is, public participation or partnerships).
- **Hotels.** Development over the coming decade remains unlikely, with the only potential being on the spoils site adjacent to Fisherman's Park.
- **Marinas.** Marinas and ancillary retail and service uses should remain an opportunity as the recreational boater market continues to expand. This is especially true when accompanied by new residential development on the waterfront.





The area around the Watermen's Walk site already is an important focal point for the community, boasting two popular waterfront restaurants—Henry's and Bubba's—as well as commercial fishing and boat launching and docking facilities.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY SITES

While the overall market assessment discussed heretofore suggests limited opportunities, three sites exist that—if developed attractively with considerable city guidance and visionary direction and the coordinated involvement of residents, civic, environmental, military, and business leaders—could positively influence the character of the area and the development potential of surrounding sites. These opportunity sites are all located on the waterfront around the inlet at Lesner Bridge:



WATERMEN'S WALK—THE WATERFRONT BETWEEN THE CITY MARINA AND HENRY'S

The panel believes that the waterfront extending from the city-owned marina on Long Creek to Henry's Restaurant has the potential for pedestrian-oriented destination retail and commercial development. The area has several attractive features, including water access, scenic views, and working commercial fishing operations, all of which can be used to advantage to create a project with character, authenticity, and appeal. A well-designed

project of modest size—including a fish market and other specialty retail shops and restaurants—on this site could provide an unusually attractive environment for both residents and tourists, offering an interesting alternative to the usual beach activities. Because of its location at the inlet, successful development of this site is also likely to spur additional commercial development radiating in both directions along Shore Drive. The provision of additional parking will be a key element of the success of this development.

FISHERMAN'S PARK—THE SPOILS SITE

The panel recommends development of the spoils site primarily as a boat launch and recreational fishing site, with ancillary uses in a parklike setting. The program could include at least four boat launching ramps on the inlet side, away from the main channel, with parking for cars and trailers. A park and events area should also be included, and bulkheads could be installed along the waterfront to discourage swimming and encourage fishing. The panel also

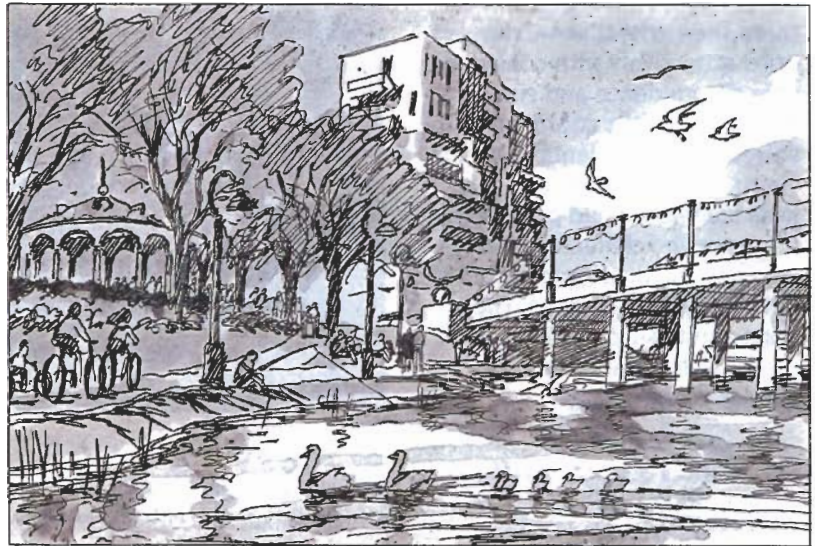
The panel proposes that the sand spoils site should be redeveloped as a park, recreational fishing, and boat launch area called Fisher-man's Park.



sees the highest and best use for a part of this site eventually becoming an upscale hotel or high-rise condominium; however, if and when demand materializes for such a higher use, the park, fishing, and boat launch elements should be retained. This recommendation is predicated on the ability to pump sand from dredge areas directly onto beaches that need replenishing, a process that, if implemented, would make sand storage on the spoils site unnecessary.

MARINA VILLAGE—THE 70-ACRE PARCEL ALONG PLEASURE HOUSE CREEK ON THE LYNNHAVEN RIVER

This site is currently zoned for a planned unit development, providing the flexibility for a very upscale, mixed-use, residentially oriented development. The location of this parcel on the Lynnhaven River across from the recently completed Bayville golf course offers the opportunity for a development with both a water view and golf course, a very desirable

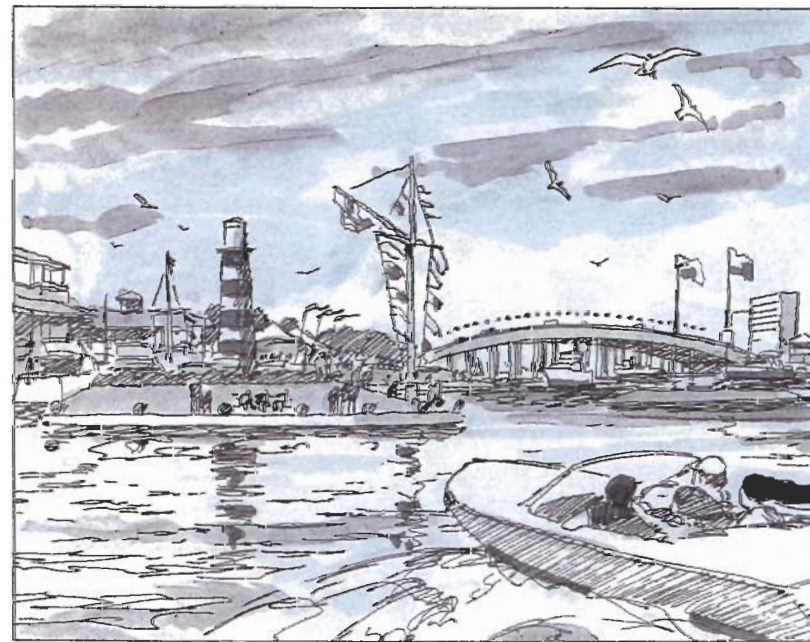


combination that should afford high-end development. The panel believes that the city should take the lead in developing this site—through a public/private partnership—in order to establish a marina on the river that would become the focal point for a planned community. Such a development would encompass both residential and commercial uses, and eventually could spark

retail and commercial development along scenic Shore Drive at the entrance to the golf course. The panel estimates that the site could support approximately 250 slips near the mouth of Pleasure House Creek. Approximately half of the slips should be public, thus replacing slips lost by the redevelopment of the city marina at Watermen's Walk.



The panel believes that the 70-acre parcel along Pleasure House Creek offers an excellent opportunity for residential development, and also the opportunity for the city to undertake a public/private partnership to develop a marina that would include both public and private boat slips.



The panel believes that city involvement and investment—primarily at the inlet—is integral to achieving the highest, best, and most compatible and attractive land uses within the study area. Investment in these opportunity sites at the inlet, together with citizen involvement and appropriate design regulations, will also influence redevelopment, which will preserve the residential resort character of the area as an affordable and livable community and an alternative visitor destination to the oceanfront beach.

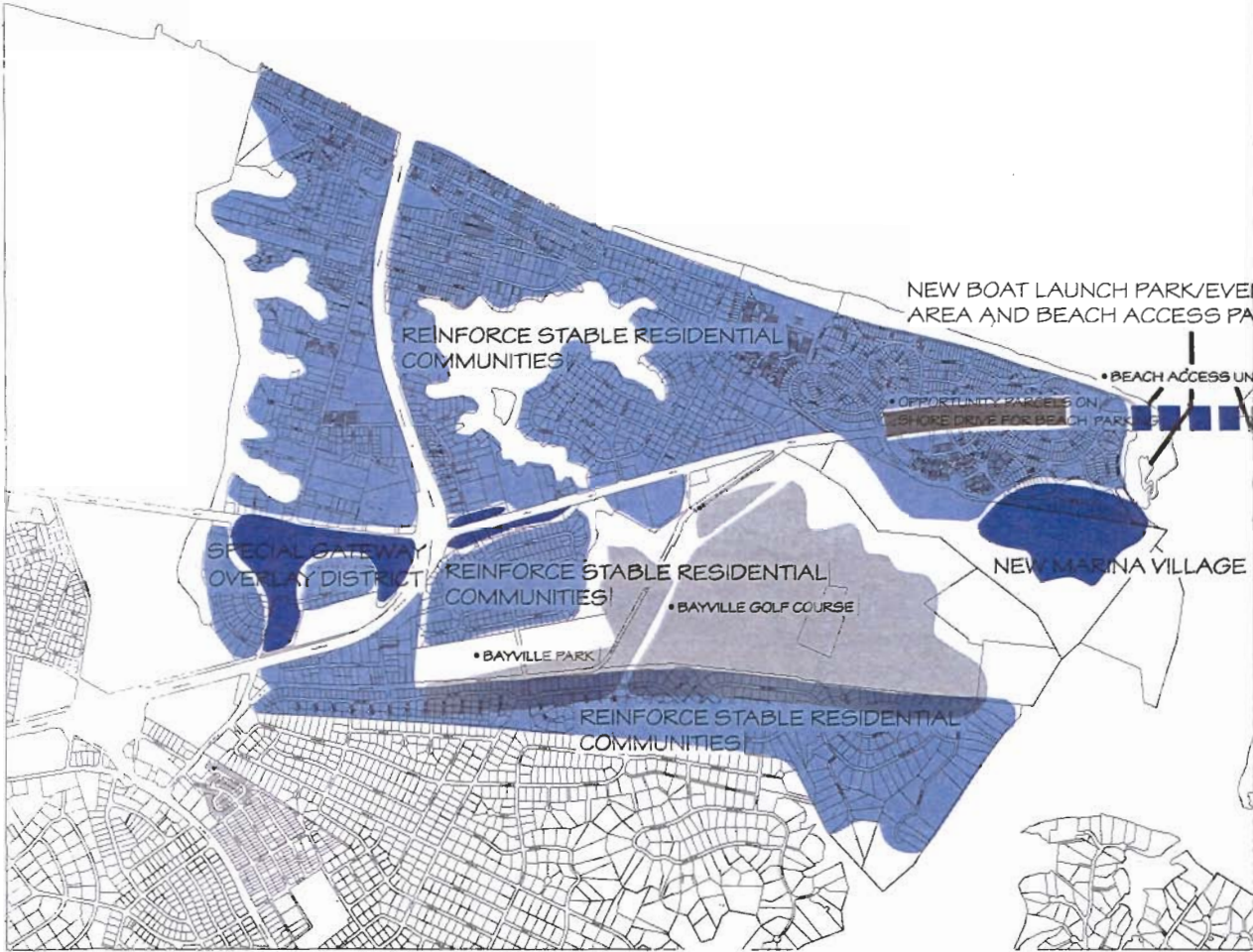
The proposed Marina Village as viewed from the inlet. The panel found that there is a demand for a new marina and more fishing/boating opportunities, and this site is well positioned to meet this demand.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The role that the Bayfront area plays in the larger Virginia Beach community is best understood by first recognizing two key characteristics that distinguish it

from the oceanfront area: (1) The Bayfront area is a residential resort area as contrasted with the boardwalk and oceanfront area, which is a hotel and tourist resort area; and (2) The Bayfront area is a gateway scenic area whereas the boardwalk is a destination tourist area.

The panel believes that the area's attractive residential neighborhoods and the amenities they enjoy must be preserved and/or further enhanced, but that the area also needs to be improved both as a scenic corridor and as an amenity area for all Virginia Beach residents, and as an ancillary amenity for resort visitors. As it continues to grow, the Bayfront area should and will play an increasingly important role in the overall economic picture of Virginia Beach, enhancing the quality of life for residents of both the corridor and the larger Virginia Beach community.



DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

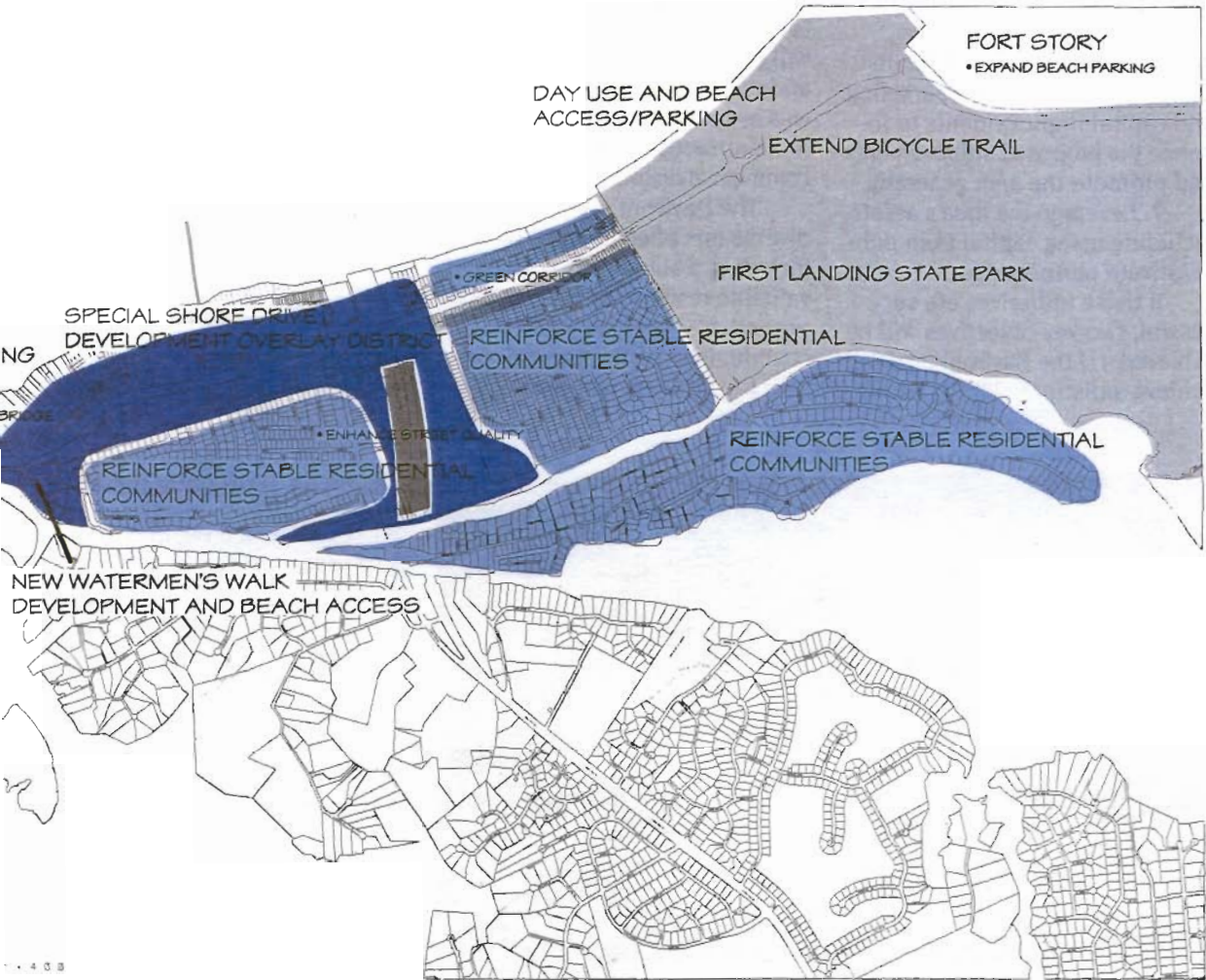
MAJOR INITIATIVES

If the area is to fulfill its rightful role as an exceptional place for residents and visitors alike, a new vision and a clear development strategy must be established. The following initiatives form the basis of such a development strategy, and the vision that goes with the strategy is outlined in detail in the section on planning and design. Individually, each initiative fulfills a need; collectively, they will provide a comprehensive push toward achieving a new vision:

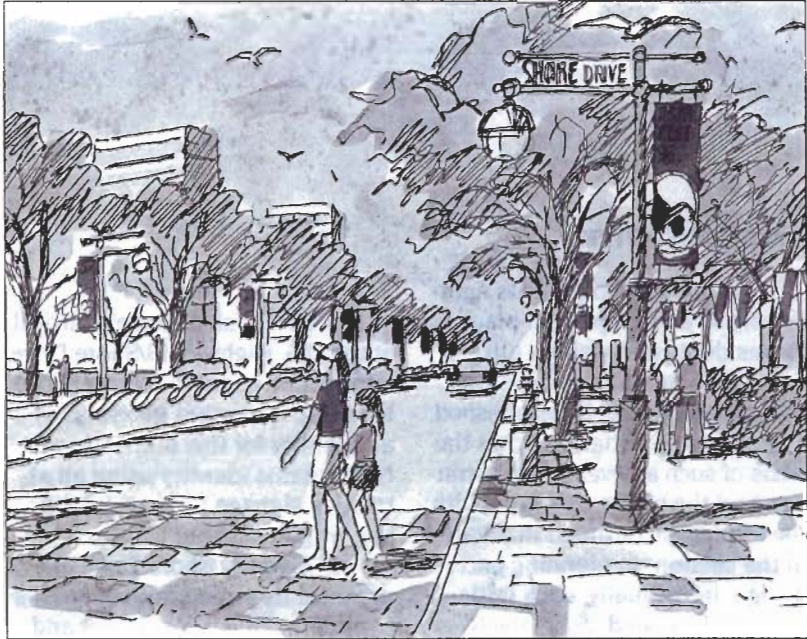
1. Establish a sense of arrival at the U.S. Highway 13/Shore Drive intersection and at the Lesner Bridge to create important gateways and an identity for this scenic drive. Nurture this identity using an attractive signage program along the length of Shore Drive.

2. Beautify Shore Drive and organize its streetscape elements toward making a consistent and comprehensive scenic drive statement.

3. Complete Watermen's Walk and Fisherman's Park to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment around the Lynnhaven Inlet. It is important that the two be undertaken together, as they will help create a critical mass of activity around the inlet that will be mutually supportive to each and will establish the area as an important and interesting place to visit.



Streetscape improvements along Shore Drive, especially around the area of Watermen's Walk, are of critical importance in improving the image of the area.



- 4. Demand better site plan review and approval for proposed new developments.
- 5. Create programs, including incentive zoning provisions, to induce upgrading and increased control over project design, density, and development standards in the future.
- 6. Obtain funding commitments from the city for marketing and capital improvements to finance the proposed improvements and promote the area generally.
- 7. Leverage the area's assets, including using capital from public/private partnerships.

If these initiatives are successful, two key objectives will be achieved: (1) the Bayfront area will achieve a distinct identity within

the community and the region, and its value will be clearly visible in the context of Virginia Beach tourism; and (2) the Bayfront area will be able to foster more orderly and responsible growth, leading to a reduction in conflicts and more attractive neighborhoods, commercial districts, and roadways.

The Bayfront area contains a diverse mix of economic engines, including a significant number of valuable residential and personal properties; thus, the residential community contributes significantly to the city's budget through the

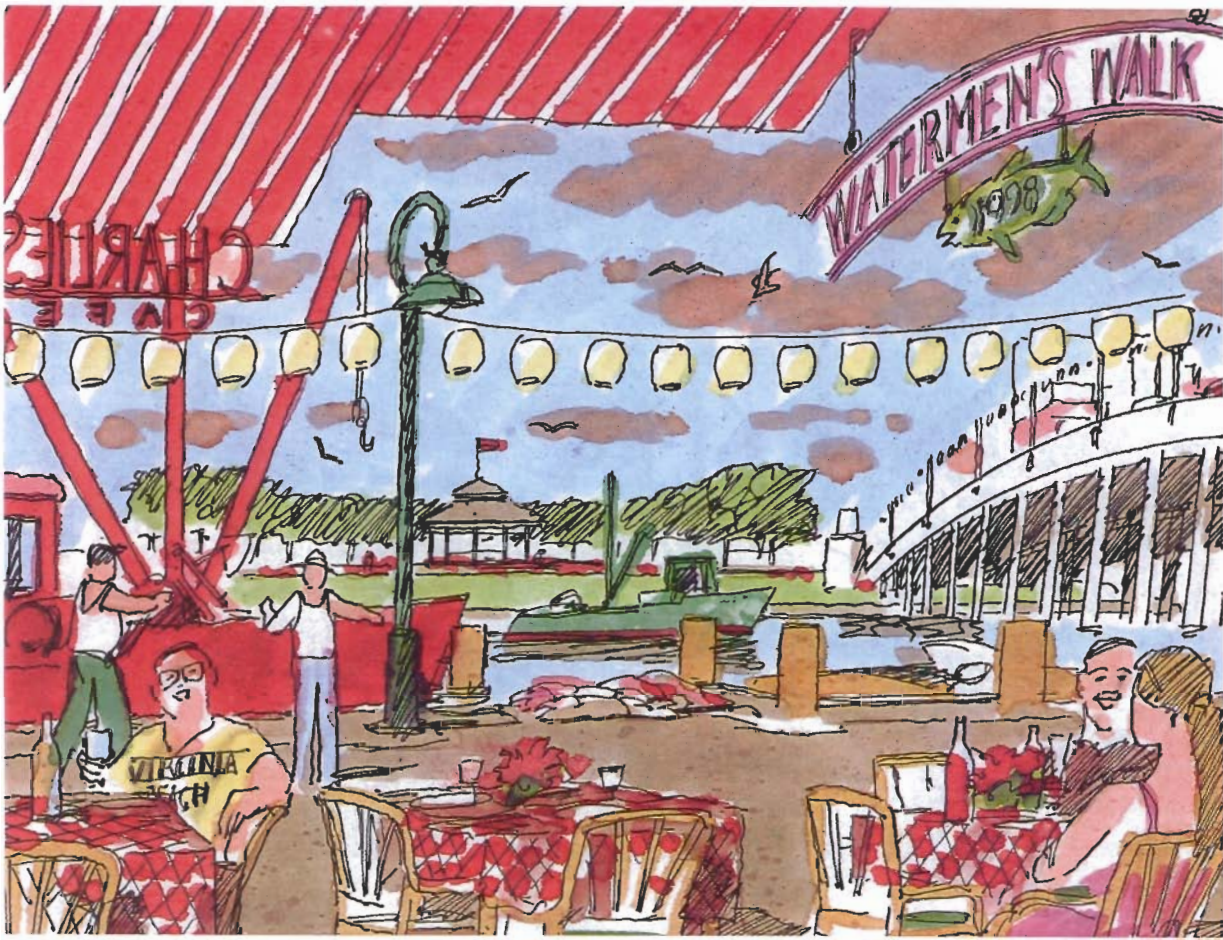
payment of personal, real property, and utility taxes. The area also contains a number of highly successful restaurants and the Conference Center Hotel, all of which contribute significantly not only to the traditional taxation coffers, but also to the Tourism Growth Investment Special Revenue Fund (TGIF). The city should recognize the Bayfront area and the Shore Drive Corridor as an economically important area of the community and respond to it appropriately with a commitment of resources to the programs and projects set forth in this report.

The City of Virginia Beach should dedicate the land and the resources to create a continuous bikepath from First Landing Seashore State Park to Bayville Park.

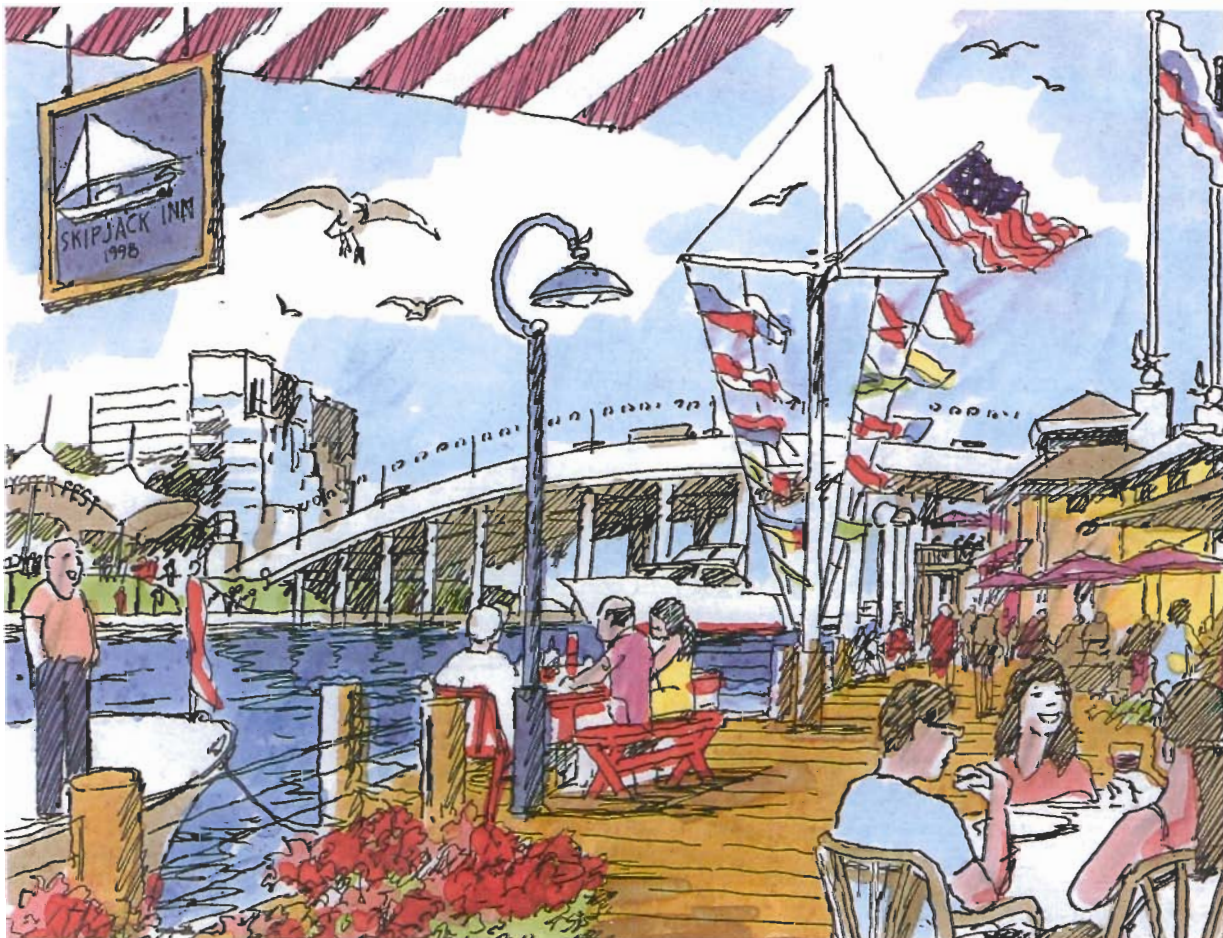


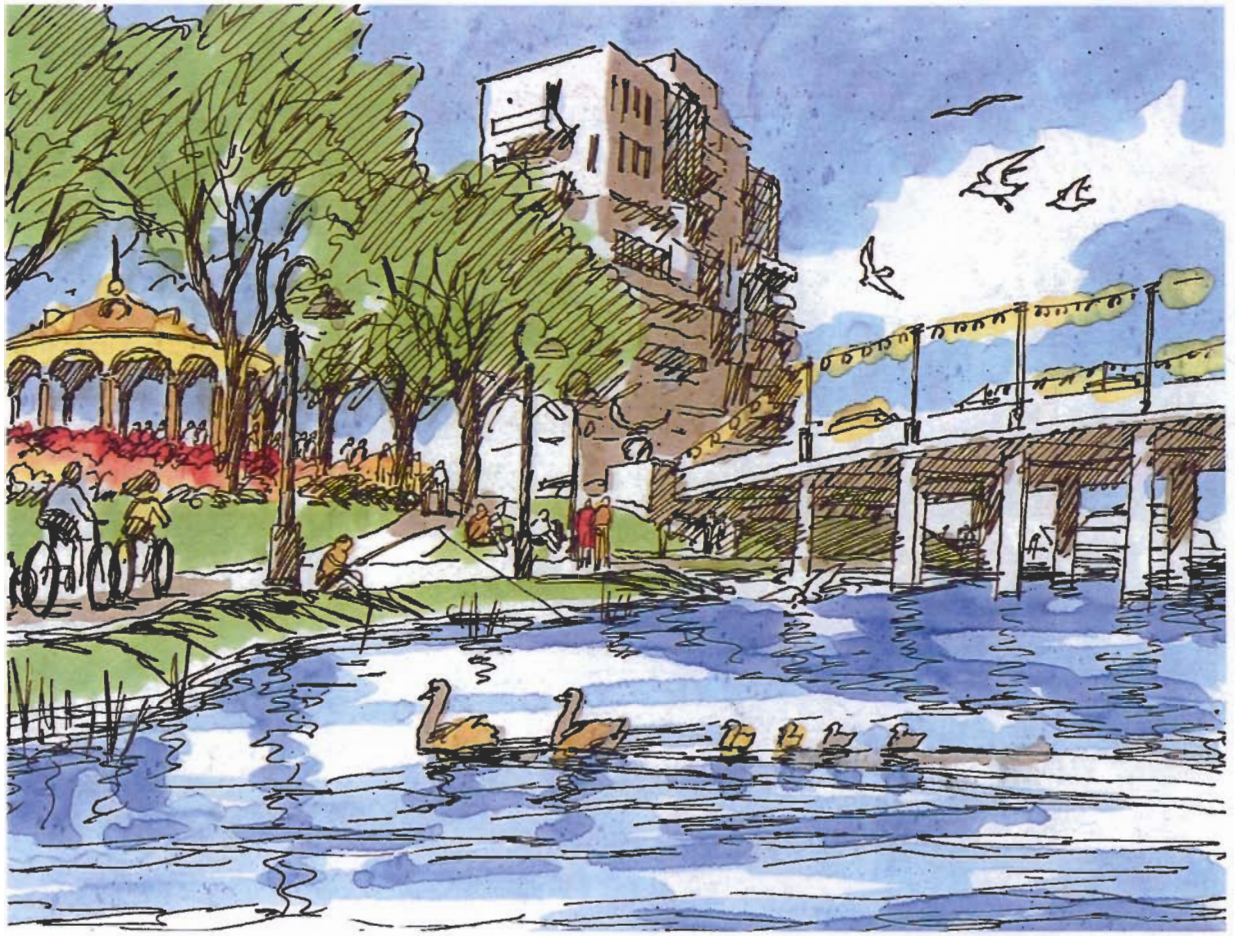
PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Because the Bayfront area is primarily a residential resort area, the strategy for development must address the conflicts created by the integration of the recreational visitor, commercial uses, the boardwalk destination visitor, and community residents. The objective of the development strategy must be to identify ways in which the area can be improved for all of these users, while minimizing the conflicts inherent in these differing uses.



Views of Watermen's Walk.

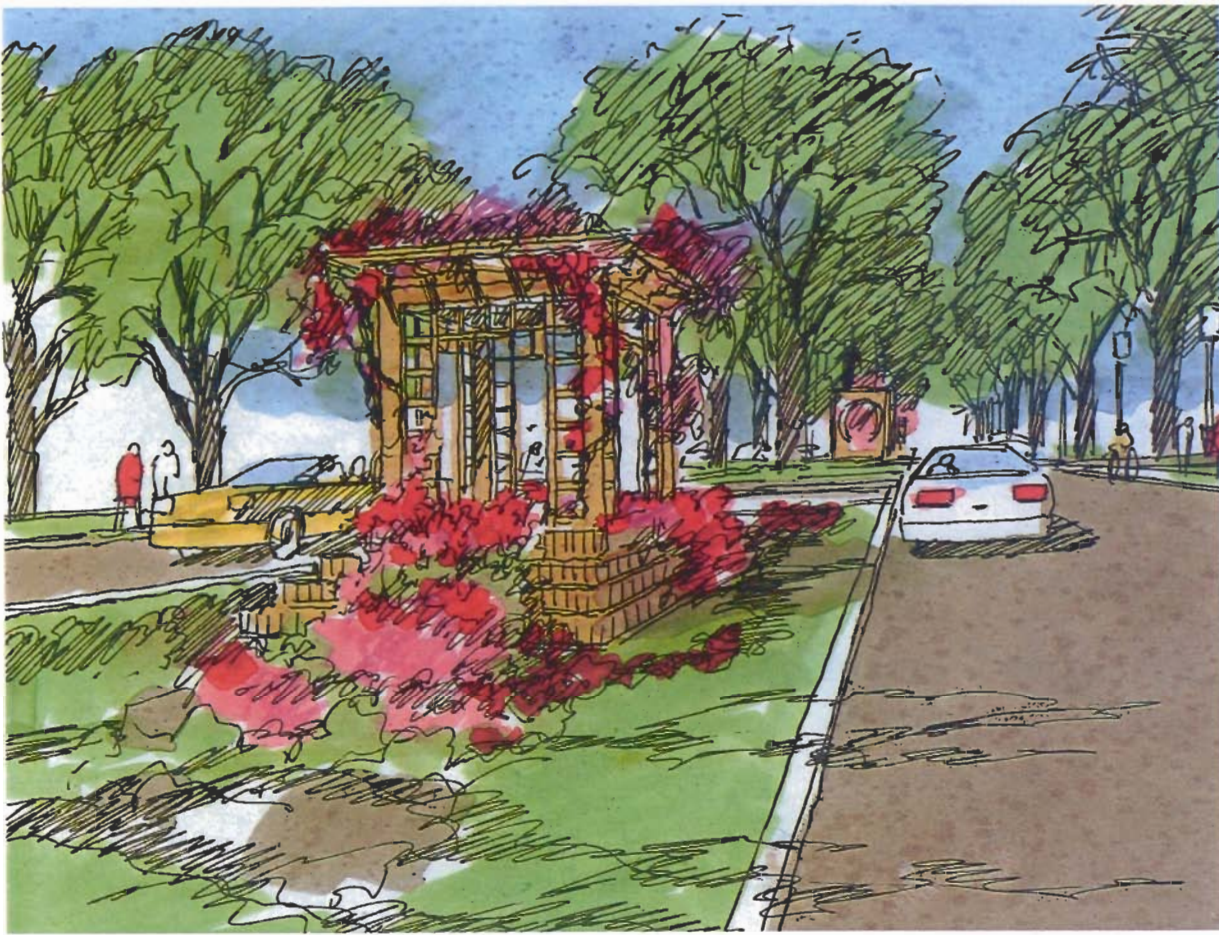




View of Fisherman's Park.

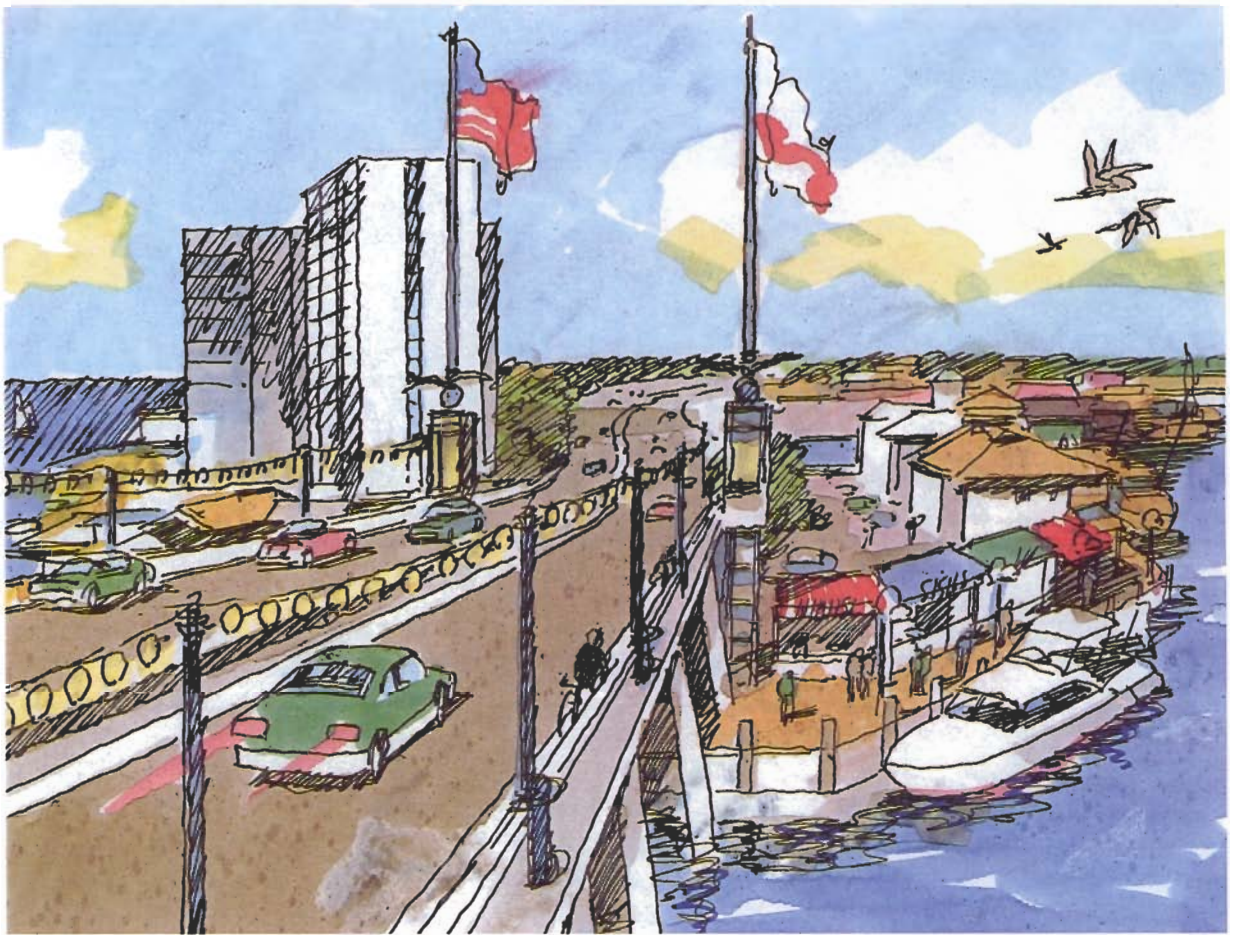


View of Marina Village.



Proposed landscape features and treatments along Shore Drive.





Lesner Bridge enhancements with Watermen's Walk to the right (top photo). Shore Drive west of Lesner Bridge (bottom photo).



STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

The area clearly needs more streetscape improvements and amenities along the major corridors, particularly along Shore Drive. Such improvements will make community residents feel like the commercial areas are truly a part of their community. These improvements should be undertaken by the city, with professional guidance, and should focus on landscaping, the underground placement of utilities where economically feasible, pedestrian-scale street lighting, sidewalks and crosswalks, benches, bus shelters, and banners that identify the area or highlight ongoing activities/festivals. Attention should also be given to the slowing of traffic at critical pedestrian-oriented intersections.

The area around the proposed Watermen's Walk particularly should focus on these improvements, as it is intended to be a pedestrian destination. Such improvements would encourage local residents to walk or bicycle to the commercial centers.

BIKE AND WALKING PATHS

Each year the U.S. population has become increasingly more drawn to physical fitness and outdoor activities, and bicycling and fitness walking are two of the most popular of these activities. The Shore Drive Corridor provides some of the best dedicated paths in Virginia Beach for bicyclists, walkers, and joggers. The city should dedicate the land and the



Panel members Christopher Degenhardt, top right, and James Callard, lower right, discussing the 70-acre parcel along Pleasure House Creek with Wayne McCleskey, top center, the owner/developer of the site, and a colleague.

resources to extend a continuous bike path from its present limits—running through First Landing/Seashore State Park to a point near the Lesner Bridge, and from the vicinity of First Court Road to Bay Lake Road—across the bridge to Bayville Park. Completion of this pathway will not only serve the local residential population, but also be used as a marketing tool by the Convention and Visitors Development Department (CVD) and the resort industry. The development of safe and scenic bikeways will be a draw to local families and provide opportunities for those businesses catering to the cycling enthusiast.

WATERWAYS AND WATER AMENITIES

Another area of importance to the Bayfront area community is its waterways. Many residents choose to live in the area because of the Chesapeake Bay and the Lynnhaven River; however, the community harbors a number of

concerns with respect to water activities on these waterways, and there is a clear need to improve the local residents' use of, and access to, those resources.

The panel found that there is demand for a new marina and more fishing/boating opportunities. The city can greatly enhance fishing and boating opportunities by taking a lead role in developing a boat launching facility at Fisherman's Park, and by encouraging the development of a new marina, through a public/private partnership, at Marina Village.

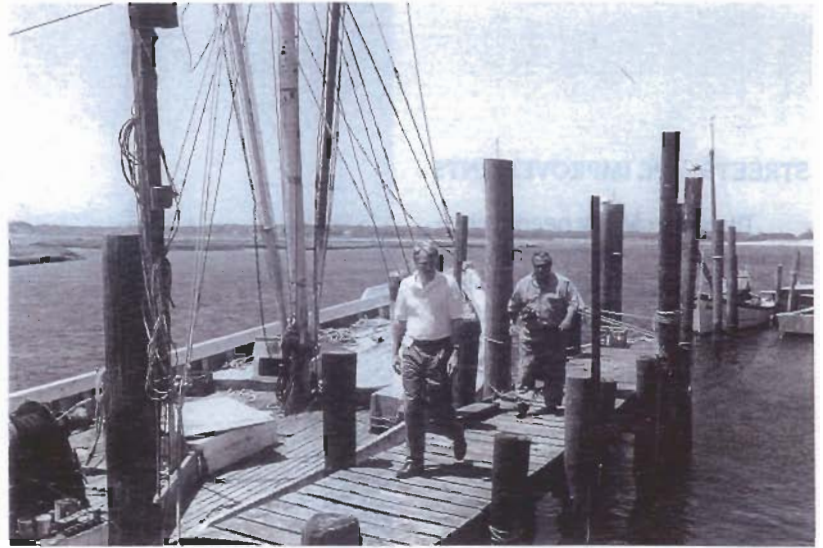
In addition, there is opportunity in the future to reopen the Long Creek area for fishing, crabbing, and oystering. To the extent that environmental considerations can be addressed, the city should take an active role in ensuring that these activities—which would benefit both local recreational and commercial fisherman—are available.

The panel touring some of the existing waterfront in the vicinity of the proposed Watermen's Walk.

IDENTITY

The Bayfront area contains several elements that set it apart from other areas within the city and provide it with a distinct identity. The overriding element is the Shore Drive Scenic Corridor, particularly as it traverses First Landing/Seashore State Park. Shore Drive provides primary access to the region from the Delmarva peninsula to the north and is the preferred route of more than 20 percent of the tourists who visit the boardwalk every year. Opportunity exists for the local business community to capitalize on that attribute while at the same time maintaining a sense of regional pride for local residents.

The corridor also contains a number of natural and historical assets that draw visitors, including the First Landing State Park with its nature trails and wetlands, the site of the first landing, the old Cape Henry lighthouse at Fort Story, and the many waterways



that can be used for swimming, boating, fishing and other recreational activities. All of these amenities can be accessed from Shore Drive and should be incorporated into a marketing and image-building program for that scenic drive. In order to initiate a distinct identity program for the area, the city should accelerate its development of the major entrance project included in the city's capital improvement program.

MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Bayfront community is primarily residential, represented by its civic leagues, which are very strong forces within the larger Virginia Beach community. The Bayfront business community has been a soft voice in the context of the Virginia Beach tourist industry, upon which the city is so dependent as a source of revenue for its general fund. While the business community is primarily composed of the fishing and waterfront recreational industries, restaurants, and hotel/motels, it also includes a number of other neighborhood-serving commercial and professional businesses. All of these diverse interests deserve the opportunity to have their interests represented in an orderly, organized manner. The panel believes there is a need to market and promote this area both internally to the city as well as externally.

It is therefore recommended that the city council establish a Bayfront advisory board or commission, with representative membership from the residential and business communities. With respect to marketing, such a

Panel members Stan Brown (left) and Ceil Cirillo during interviews with Robert Vakos, planning commission chairman (far right), and Kal Kassir, representing the Great Neck/Shore Drive Merchants Association.



board is clearly the most important component. It should be staffed by the Convention and Visitors Department; receive funding from the TGIF, or a financial entity modeled after the TGIF; and be formatted similarly to the Resort Area Advisory Commission (RAAC), serving in an advisory capacity to either the RAAC or the city council.

The responsibilities of this bureau or commission would include:

- Proposing financing alternatives for the implementation of the capital improvements recommended;
- Reviewing and recommending council action on proposed development in the Bayfront area;
- Providing oversight in the consistent application of sign control policing;
- Organizing events and marketing programs for Watermen's Walk, Fisherman's Park, the marine/fishing industry, and tennis events; and
- Providing general oversight to ensure that the area continues to take its rightful place in the overall economic development of Virginia Beach.

The marketing of fishing and other local events should be strongly emphasized. An effort staffed at the level of the boardwalk promotion effort will be needed initially in order to elevate awareness for the area. Advertising for the boardwalk and Virginia Beach area should include references to Bayfront and the Shore Drive Scenic Corridor. The city should consider providing fireworks at the inlet as well as at the boardwalk for special events. Local private marketing initiatives that support the development of area awareness should receive financial contributions. Consideration should also be given to allocating a portion of the CVD annual marketing budget to the Bayfront area.



City Councilman William W. Harrison, Jr., during an interview with panel member Stan Brown.

Strong efforts should be made to ensure that the Bayfront/Shore Drive Scenic Corridor is seen as a significant contributor to the economic vitality of the Virginia Beach area. Long-term plans for the boardwalk include attracting an affluent visitor population, and such interests are best served by embracing the Shore Line scenic drive as an important gateway to the area.

One of the key marketing and management problems the commission should address immediately is beach access and ownership. The current uncertainty surrounding beach ownership creates conflicts between the beachfront property owners and other residents of and visitors to the beach, forcing the city to play a "beach police" or enforcement role. Resolving the beach access problem would allow the city to devote resources to the parking and public restroom needs of the public beaches. The city should eventually revisit the extension of trolley service to this area, particularly during the high season and when special events are being sponsored by the business community. This would allow for better tourist access and alleviate parking problems caused by such events and promotions.

The panel also believes that the area suffers from identity problems due to lack of a consistently used name; both the names Bayfront and Shore Drive Corridor have been used extensively. The panel prefers the former, as it emphasizes the natural setting of the area rather than the roadway. The panel suggests that the Bayfront name be officially adopted and used in all marketing materials as well as in the name for the advisory commission. The name Shore Drive Scenic Corridor may also be used to describe the highway and its immediate environs, but the panel does not believe it should be used to identify or describe the entire area.

Finally, the three proposed projects around the Lynnhaven Inlet—Marina Village, Fisherman's Park, and Watermen's Walk—will require marketing and promotion. Special events should be developed throughout the year that would draw the greater Virginia Beach community as well as the seasonal tourists. Special monthly events should be organized with prizes and awards to include the restaurants (a clam chowder contest, for example), the boating industries (a fishing contest), and music and art festivals (Octoberfests, etc.). These three projects will be critical to enhancing the image of the area and promoting it more broadly.

To enhance the Shore Drive Corridor, significant landscape improvements should be undertaken and the entire route from U.S. Highway 13 to First Landing/Seashore State Park should be designated a scenic corridor.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

Shore Drive provides access to the beautiful beachfront communities along the Chesapeake Bay in the City of Virginia Beach. It also serves the significant resources of the bayfront beaches, the Lynnhaven Inlet, the unique natural-forested state park, the Cape Henry Lighthouse, and the first landing site at Fort Story. Where conflict might occur between its role as a scenic corridor—with access to these regional and nationally significant resources—and its role as a traffic carrier to the boardwalk area of the city, the panel believes that the scenic corridor role should take priority. The present four-lane divided section, with additional left and right turn lanes in the commercial segments of Shore Drive, should not be ex-



One of the key problems that must be addressed immediately is beach access and ownership; because of the uncertainty surrounding beach ownership, it is critical that the city take aggressive action to clear title to the beaches to ensure their availability for public use.



panded to carry more cars to other areas of the city. Expanded trafficways will negatively affect the significant resources and disrupt the integrity and continuity of the bayfront communities.

Instead, to enhance Shore Drive, the entire route from the gateway at Highway 13 to the state park should be designated a scenic corridor, with a design theme appropriate to the character of the surrounding communities and resources.



SCENIC CORRIDOR ZONES

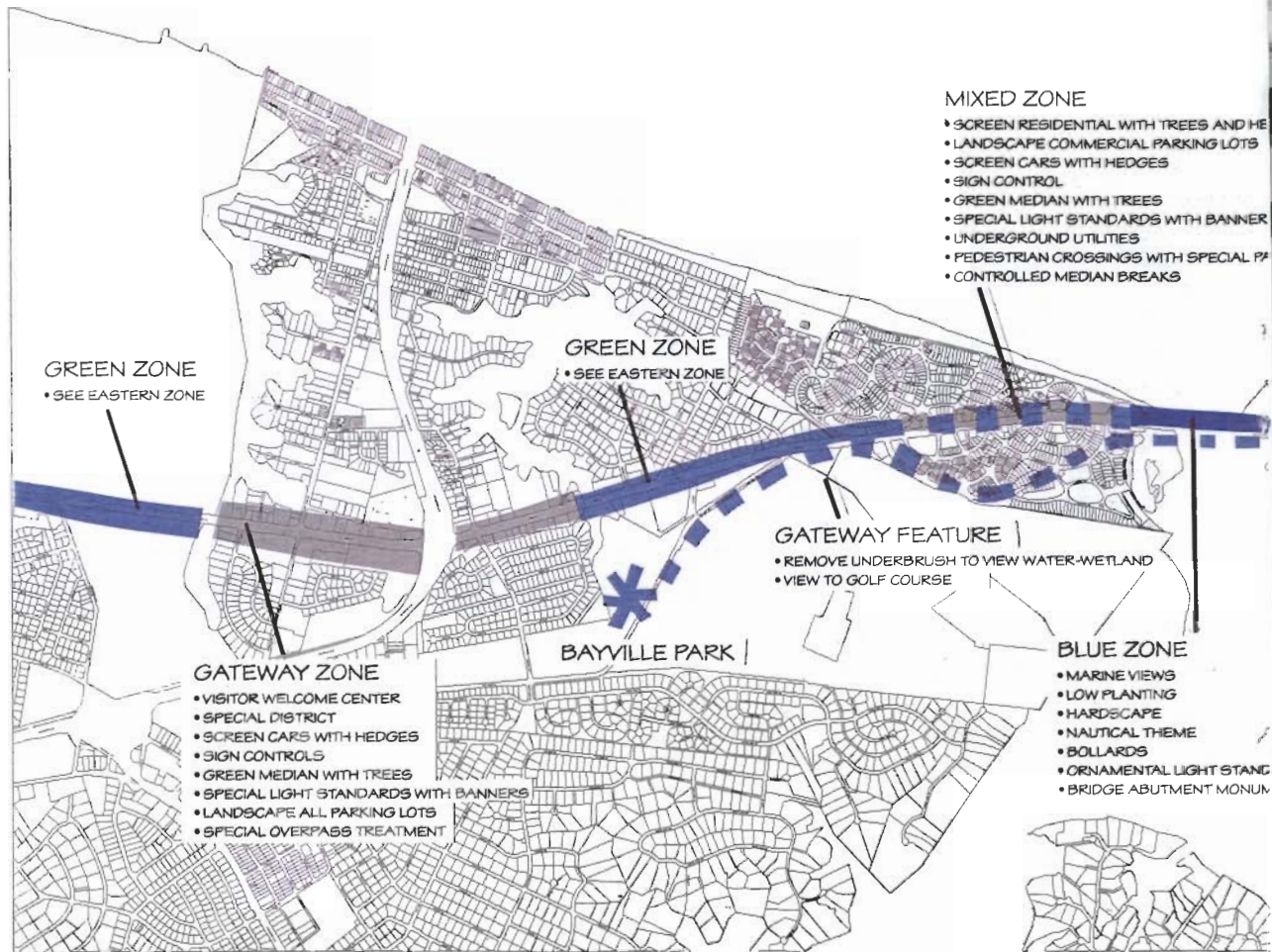
The panel recommends separating the diverse Shore Drive into five distinct zones. Each zone should have several aspects, but all five should integrate into a continuous, but diverse, experience for the motorist, bicyclist, or pedestrian:

- *Green Zone.* This zone would extend the natural beauty of a tree-lined drive through the First Landing/Seashore State Park, and provide a continuous green edge to the roadway by preserving the mature live oak and pine forest and

adding other appropriate trees and shrubs to create the green screening effect. The median should have drifts of large trees to complement the overall forest.

- *Blue Zone.* This zone would enhance the other positive resources of the bayfront—the Chesapeake Bay and the Lynnhaven Inlet and river system. The Blue Zone would encompass the Lesner Bridge and its approaches, with the objective being to facilitate views to the water environment. Only low planting is suggested, with a nautical theme to include stone and brick paving and bridge abutment monuments, bollards, and ornamental lighting on the bridge.
- *Red Zone.* This zone would be located in the intense resort village environment adjacent to the bridge, and feature special ornamental light standards with banners, street trees along continuous sidewalks, underground utilities, and special stone and brick paving in the parkway between the curb and sidewalk and at pedestrian crossings. This zone also would eliminate billboards and involve strict sign controls. Parking lots would be landscaped with trees and hedges or low masonry walls to screen parked cars. The median would have pedestrian safety islands of special paving, and trees and low monuments where possible and safe. Bus turnouts and shelters should be provided in high user locations.

The panel feels that all billboards should be removed, landscaping standards be enforced and/or improved around truck docks and parking lots, and power lines be buried wherever feasible.



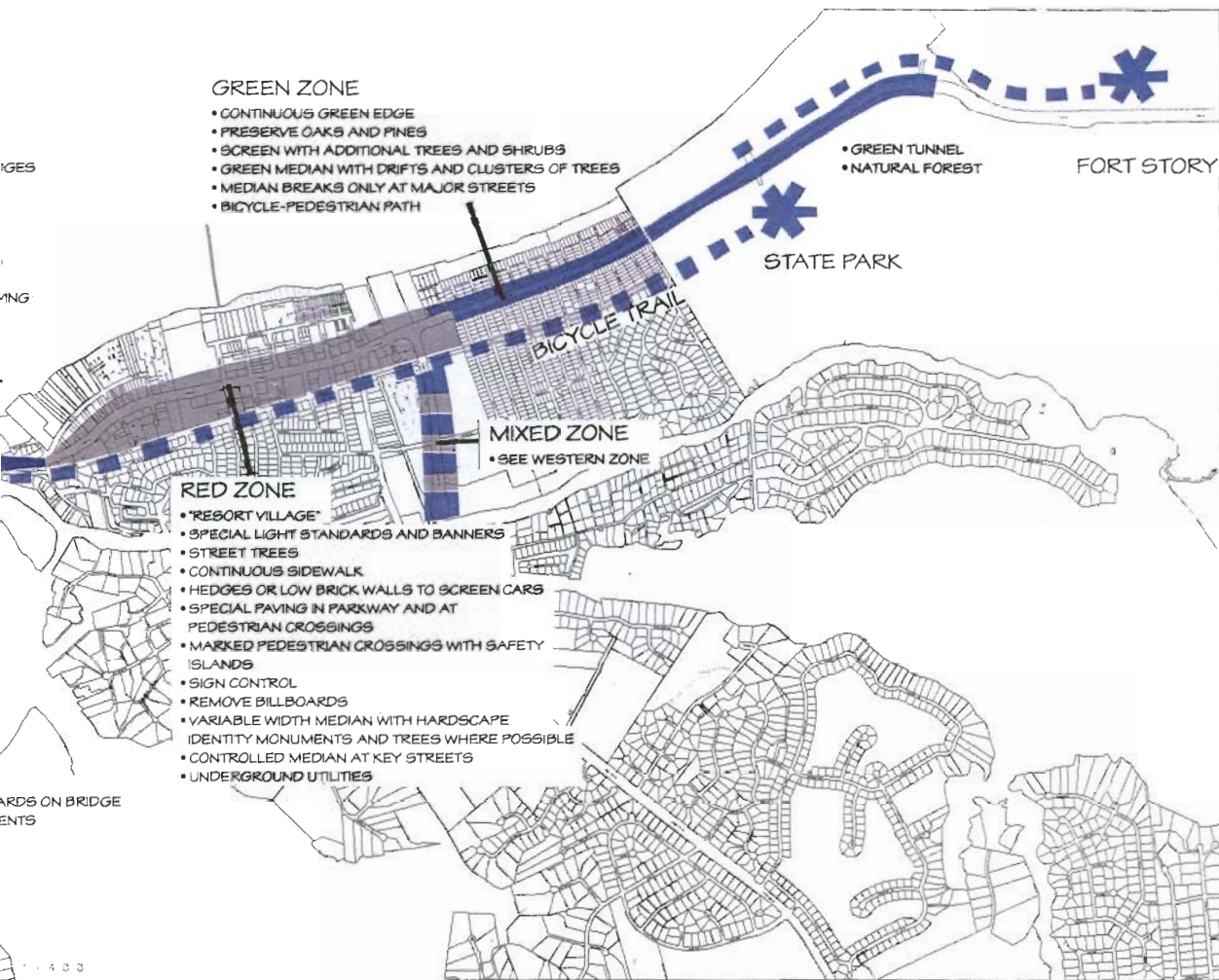
SHORE DRIVE SCENIC CORRIDOR ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

- *Mixed Zone.* To accommodate a mixture of uses, residential uses would be screened in a manner similar to the Green Zone, and commercial uses would have landscaped parking lots and sites with trees and hedges to screen the cars. The area's image could be improved by sign control and placing utilities underground. The median would provide trees appropriate to the road's width and have controlled breaks. The entire area would have special lighting standards and banners for continuity.

- *Gateway Zone.* This zone would be located on both sides of the U.S. Highway 13 overpass of Shore Drive near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and would include the overpass. The zone would have street trees and special light standards and banners, and the overpass would have a special design treatment and color. Sign controls would be improved for the commercial uses, with landscaping required for the parking lots and sites and hedges to screen the cars. The median would be planted with trees.

SHORE DRIVE ROAD DESIGN AND TRAFFIC PLANNING

Several road design and traffic planning issues need to be addressed, including access, curbs and gutters, median cuts, signage, and utilities. Additional access to the boardwalk area should focus on the major access corridor paralleling Virginia Beach Boulevard and Highway 44, and should include long-term plans for light rail. The less-sensitive nature of this central corridor to the effects of natural resources and its role as a major commercial corridor make it a better candidate for light rail than Shore Drive.



A number of commercial establishments and residential properties facing Shore Drive do not have curbs and gutters. Cars often back into the traffic, causing congestion and accidents. It would be relatively easy to provide curb and gutter where appropriate, thus better channeling traffic. Efforts should also be made to close some of the streets and driveways that are not needed. The city should review the entire corridor and make necessary street improvements in conjunction with or before the landscape plan is implemented.

Shore Drive median cuts should be limited to major streets. Where streets are closer together than traffic safety requirements allow, the median should be cut at the next safe street. Where the median is reduced to disallow a planting strip, median cuts should be moved to the next safe street.

Signage should be distinct from that of the resort oceanfront. The bayfront environment can be expressed through special light fixtures and banners that are tied in with the street and directional sign system. All billboards should be removed in line with the scenic corridor concept for Shore Drive; they are inappropriate and have a negative impact on the quality of future development.

In conjunction with the implementation of the landscaping, powerlines should be placed underground wherever feasible. This is an expensive undertaking and, if necessary, can be done in phases. The area in the proposed Green Zone to the west of Lesner Bridge should be focused on first for this effort.

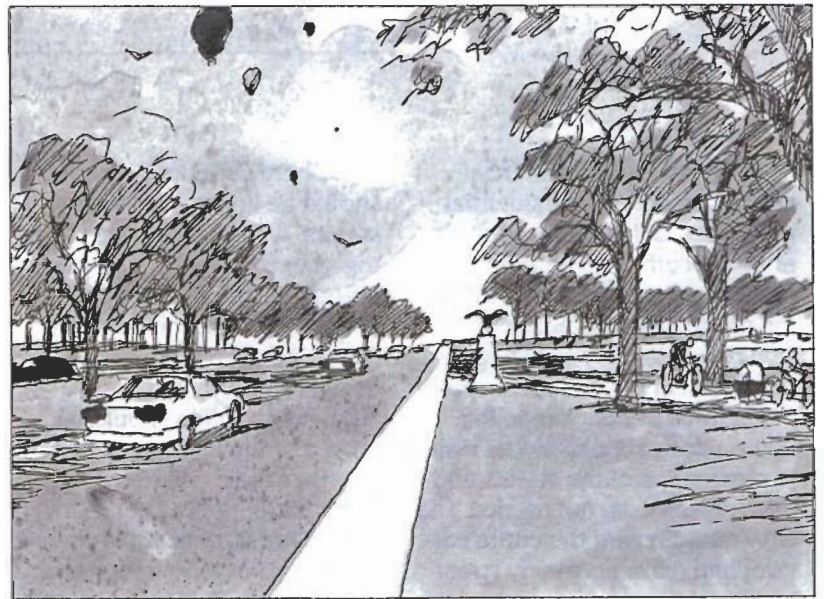
Landscape design along the Shore Drive Corridor should include gateway features and attractive medians to help define the area.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

The existing bikeway along the old railroad corridor is an excellent amenity for the city. It should be available to pedestrians and extended on both ends to connect Bayville Park to Fort Story. Provisions should also be made to relocate the bike path away from Shore Drive, west of the bridge, as much as possible.

Further use of the railroad right-of-way to the west is suggested, and should be compatible with the surrounding development in Lynnhaven Colony. The city should take the initiative to secure rights-of-way for this purpose before development takes place. The path could extend across the Lesner Bridge via the existing pedestrian walk—or on a new bikepath that could be hung along the edge of the bridge—and then continue under the bridge to the spoils site boat launching facility to Ocean Park, along Marlin Bay Drive to First Court Drive to Bayville Park.

To the east, the path could cross at the state park signal and traverse through the park campground to Fort Story. In either the east or west extension, a path directly along Shore Drive for any distance is not recommended, due to high driving speeds and lack of rights-of-way.



BEACH ACCESS

The beaches in the bayfront communities of the City of Virginia Beach are primarily used by the local communities along Shore Drive. The buildout of these communities, questions of beach ownership, and increased density of new beachfront development have created access problems to these beaches. Parking and restrooms are scarce or nonexistent.

The solution to this problem is not readily apparent, as there are no vacant beachfront parcels or room for additional parking on the narrow streets. The city needs to work with each unique community to create pedestrian accessways similar to other areas of the city and individualized community-based solutions. In the Ocean Park community, west of Lesner Bridge, there is some opportunity to close awkward street intersections along Shore Drive for safety reasons and to use the abandoned right-of-way, in judicious coordination with some of the opportunity sites near Shore Drive, for beach parking.

The long-term solutions involve purchase by the city of a few key parcels for access, working with the state park to increase access to the campground beach, and further development of the Fort Story beach access agreements. Most important, the city needs to resolve the beach ownership issue.



One solution to beach access problems in Virginia Beach that should be explored involves working with First Landing/Seashore State Park officials to increase access to the park.

HOUSING DENSITY

There are a number of fine communities along Shore Drive with a variety of character and density. Many of the communities are made up of single-family homes and should be protected from the intrusion of higher-density development.

In the communities of Ocean Park and Chick's Beach, where zoning allows a transition from single-family to duplex or higher-density units, attention should be paid to the results of this intensification. The density of new development in this area should not overwhelm these two communities, which have made fine homes and neighborhoods for their residents. This is mostly a

quality and development standards issue. The city should carefully consider revising its zoning and development standards to achieve greater overall quality and compatibility with surrounding uses. Downzoning to single-family construction should be considered only if the development issues cannot be resolved otherwise. Duplexes or small multifamily buildings can be harmonious with these neighborhoods, but the small parcels in many cases will not sustain the maximum use of multifamily zoning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Panel member Peter Hasselman working on one of the many conceptual renderings developed during the panel's visit.

Successful implementation of this plan will require the ongoing proactive involvement of the people who live and work within the Bayfront community. As stakeholders who have invested in homes and businesses, they must accept the challenge of working together for the common good of their community. The development plan outlined in this report represents a vision for the area that should be reviewed, refined, and modified if necessary; however, the end result must be the immediate establishment of a shared vision that sets the course for all future decisions affecting the corridor.

Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf makes opening remarks before the presentation of the panel's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.



ACTION PLAN

The panel has developed an action plan that is presented in the accompanying chart and summarized as follows:

A. CREATE AN ADVISORY BOARD

A Bayfront advisory commission or board should be established by resolution of the city council. The board should consist of a representative from each of the neighborhood civic associations, the hotel tourist industry, restaurants, retailers, commercial fishing interests, developers, and other representative groups within the Bayfront community. The two city council members whose districts include the Shore Drive Corridor should serve as ex officio members of the board. Participation by a cross section of the Bayfront/Shore Drive community should aid in the consensus-building process and ensure that all points of view are being considered.



ACTION PLAN

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
A. Create Community-Based Shore Drive Corridor Advisory Board	■			
B. Initiate Demonstration Projects				
1. Gateway	■			
2. Code enforcement	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■
3. Sign ordinance enforcement	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■
C. Develop a Shore Drive Scenic Corridor Right-of-Way Landscape Design Plan	■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■		
D. Develop a Beach Acquisition Policy and Implementation Plan	■ ■	■		
E. Develop Watermen's Walk, Fisherman's Park, and Marina Village	■ ■	■ ■		
1. Planning and design	■ ■			
2. Consider financing alternatives	■ ■			
F. Develop Design Criteria for Use with an Incentive Zoning Overlay District	■	■		
1. Site plan reviews	■	■		
2. Landscape design	■	■		
3. Sign ordinance	■	■		
G. Initiate Beach Access Parking Acquisition		■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■
H. Review and Amend Policies and Objectives of the Bayfront Planning Area Section of the Comprehensive Plan		■ ■	■ ■	

The role of the board is to create a unified voice to ensure timely implementation of the proposed plan. This role carries with it the responsibility to resolve issues at the neighborhood level, which could result in more expedient action at the city council level. The board should disseminate information on critical issues and seek support for plans, programs, and legislation. It should

be involved in the planning and design process—including the selection of consultants and review of design guidelines and landscape plans—and provide the board with recommendations regarding modifications to the Bayfront section of the comprehensive plan. It should also provide input on any proposed changes to the regulatory mechanisms that may have an impact on the corridor, such as revised zoning categories, overlay districts, and sign ordinances.

The board should be assigned a city staff member from the CVD that can devote a portion of his or her time to supporting the work of the board. This has proven effective for the Resort Area Advisory Council, and a similar relationship should be established for the Bayfront area. The staff member would assist in the development of meeting agendas, ensuring proper notification of meeting times, researching issues related to the board's work, financing alternatives, and serving as a liaison to other city departments.

Development of a landscape design plan for the Shore Drive Corridor should begin immediately.



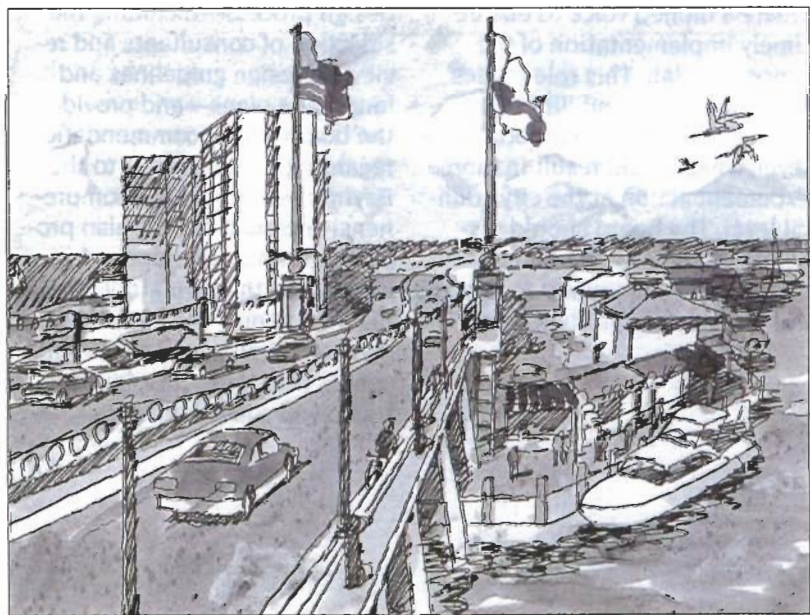
Implementation of the proposed plan should begin with demonstration projects, including improvements such as flags and banners along the Lesner Bridge, to send a message that important changes are underway for the area.

The city's annual operating budget should include an allocation for the work of the board, or the program could be incorporated into the appropriate city department's budget. The advisory board should report directly to the city council.

B. INITIATE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AND TIGHTEN ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING REGULATIONS

Initial demonstration projects that could be undertaken immediately at little cost are numerous. For example, the addition of flags, banners, and night lighting to the Lesner Bridge could make an important and immediate visual statement that could both improve the image of the area and send a message that things are starting to happen.

In addition, better enforcement of existing codes, zoning, and sign ordinances could and should also be implemented immediately. An inspection and review of the existing signage along the corridor—and whether it complies with existing ordinances—would be a good place to start this effort.





The city must play a lead role via a public/private partnership in the development of Watermen's Walk.

C. DEVELOP A LANDSCAPE DESIGN PLAN

Developing a landscape plan and design guidelines for the Shore Drive Corridor should be one of the highest priorities of the community and the advisory board. As mentioned, the plan should strive to beautify the area while establishing an identity for the corridor by providing a common theme. The plan should recognize the five zones established by the panel and should include, in addition to landscaping, the following elements: lighting, street furniture, banners, signage, sidewalk treatment, and crosswalks. Implementation of the plan should take place as soon as possible, and priority should be given to the gateway project, the Lesner and Great Neck Bridges, and—if possible—the Red Zone.

To achieve a truly distinctive and attractive design for Shore Drive will require the expertise and design talents of a professional landscape architecture firm, as well as city funding for plant purchases and professional installation. The recent and ongoing efforts on the part of the neighborhoods, civic associations, and the city to improve Shore Drive through new landscaping are admirable, and the city should continue to work with and provide professional guidance to these efforts in order to achieve a high-quality landscaped environment. Private property owners, both commercial and residential, should be encouraged to landscape their properties in conjunction with public improvements.

D. DEVELOP A BEACH ACQUISITION POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The panel believes that the beach access and ownership issue needs to be resolved through decisive action, and recommends that the city initiate condemnation and beach acquisition efforts so that all of the beaches in the study area become publicly owned and available for public use. As the city is ultimately responsible for maintaining the beaches, including those that erode and need to be replenished, it is only reasonable to expect that the beaches become public.

The city must be sensitive, however, to those residents who currently own the beach; therefore, part of the acquisition plan should involve the development of an effective public and community relations program to smooth over the problems and ruffled feathers that will result from such an initiative.

Panel members James Callard (top right) and Calvin Platt (lower left) during an interview with Bill Miller of the Duck Inn.



E. INITIATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATERMEN'S WALK, FISHERMAN'S PARK, AND MARINA VILLAGE

A public/private cooperative approach should be taken to the development of these three sites. The city should begin by initiating the development of concept plans for these special activity nodes, and must play the lead role in the development of Watermen's Walk and Fisherman's Park, assigning or hiring staff with the necessary expertise to undertake these two development efforts.

Watermen's Walk will be the most difficult to implement, as it will require a creative programming and design solution to be successful. A retail development consultant with waterfront project experience should be retained to determine what mix of tenants is feasible, what the city will need to put into the deal to make it work, and what kind of a public/private partnership will be necessary.

Fisherman's Park is less problematic from a development point of view, and can be undertaken with the assistance of a good planning and design firm familiar with waterfronts, boat launching areas, and park design.

The Marina Village project will most likely require the city to take some initiative regarding the development of the marina portion of the project. The residential portion can be undertaken privately.

F. ENCOURAGE BETTER DESIGN

In conjunction with the Shore Drive landscape plan, the city should develop design guidelines for the entire study area, with emphasis on the Bayfront beach areas and inland waterways. Emphasis should be given to commercial areas and the Bayfront to determine existing land use and densities and their compliance with the existing zoning. This would be an important determining factor in establishing possible overlay zones.

The city also has several tools at its disposal to correct a number of noncomplying uses and violations; one tool is to increase efforts in code enforcement. Rather than simply responding to complaints, city inspectors should periodically undertake inspections of the entire area—or at least the identified problem areas—in order to correct problems and enforce the existing code.

In addition, a number of Virginia communities have been able to better control development by requiring compliance with environmental regulations, site design criteria, and landscape and parking design regulations; these tools should be used aggressively to improve the overall quality of development in the area. The city has the capacity to better communicate with developers regarding design issues, and should endeavor to work more closely with the development community—without beating them over the head—to achieve better design outcomes. The Bayfront advisory board could be instrumental in this effort.

G. DEVELOP CRITERIA FOR AN INCENTIVE ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT

A large portion of the Bayfront area, especially east of the Lesner Bridge, is zoned B-4, a mixed-use zone. This was the original zoning for the boardwalk area along Atlantic Avenue. Although the area under study is mostly developed, there is potential for further development in the future. While the zone allows mixed-use development—a potentially good feature—it does not require design review or special exception. Everything is allowed by right, thus minimizing public review.

It is therefore advisable for the city to investigate the development of overlay zones. This would have the effect of not taking anything away from the existing property owners, while providing them with the incentive to request rezoning that may be advantageous to them—by possibly providing additional density or parking—but with special exceptions that would offer additional review and possible proffer.

This is very similar to what was done in the boardwalk area recently. The difference here would be to establish a zone that would be consistent with the requirements of the Bayfront area.

H. INITIATE EFFORTS TO EXPAND BEACH PARKING AND ACCESS

The city should initiate discussions with the state regarding expansion of parking and day use at the state park. This is an exceptionally beautiful stretch of beach that is currently underutilized, and the addition of sensitively sited parking could open it to Virginia Beach residents who currently do not have ready access to it. Discussions with the state should begin as soon as possible, with the understanding that considerable time and effort may be required bring about any change in access and use of the park.

The city should also explore the possibility of expanding the beach parking at Fort Story, identify other sites in the corridor that could be suitable for beach parking, and seek to acquire them before they become unavailable or too expensive.

The final element of implementation is to review and amend the policies and objectives of the Bayfront planning area section of the comprehensive plan.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

The aforementioned action plan provides a tentative time line for implementing the recommendations of this report. These time frames may have to be adjusted as funding strategies for specific projects are developed and sources of funds are identified. Several of the action items will not require any additional funds, such as more comprehensive enforcement of building and sign codes.

Nevertheless, every effort should be made to secure funds in the upcoming fiscal year for as many of the proposed projects as possible. Immediate action will help rally the region behind the plan and create the momentum to carry it forward.

Panel members Engin Artemel (left) and Don Paight focused on implementation issues.



Panel member Calvin Platt presents the panel's planning and design recommendations.

Citizen-led efforts have already begun within the Shore Drive area. The Cape Henry Shores community raised over \$20,000 and, with the assistance of the city, landscaped a portion of the Shore Drive median and the entryway to its neighborhood. Such efforts could benefit from more professional guidance, but in general should be publicized and encouraged in the hope that other civic associations, garden clubs, businesses, the chamber of commerce, and others will follow suit.

It is imperative, however, that the landscape design plan be undertaken as soon as possible to ensure coordination of streetscape improvements. Larger projects such as parking improvements, site acquisition, and public facilities development will require more extensive funding. Large-scale capital improvements such as development of the city-owned spoils site may need to be included in the capital improvement program. The advisory board should work diligently to incorporate these projects into the program.



Additional funding sources include a portion of the TGIF. The spoils site would be a good candidate for the TGIF, as it will provide increased opportunities for tourists and visitors to launch boats, fish, and have access to the bay and tidal marshes. It is also an excellent location for festivals and special events that will increase retail sales in the area.

Tax increment financing (TIF) is another funding mechanism that could be utilized. TIF earmarks the additional property taxes generated—as a result of public improvements or publicly funded redevelopment—within a defined redevelopment district to fund the cost of the public improvements within the district.

Funding for capital improvements that directly benefit private property owners may be raised through special assessment districts. Projects such as street lighting, landscaping of rights-of-way, utility services, and other

projects that benefit a large number of owners can be financed by the city if property owners pledge to pay the debt service through a special assessment on their property. State and federal grant programs should also be explored for the public improvement projects identified in the plan.

If these recommendations are successfully implemented, the panel believes that the City of Virginia Beach and the Bayfront community can solve many of the problems they have been struggling with and create a greatly enhanced environment for both residents and visitors—a place that can offer an unusual combination of natural beauty, attractive built environments, a variety of recreational opportunities, and charming visitor settings.

ABOUT THE PANEL

CHRISTOPHER DEGENHARDT PANEL CHAIR

Mill Valley, California

Degenhardt formed his own consulting practice in 1995, focusing on the development strategy and master planning of resort and recreation developments, large-scale residential or community development, and urban revitalization. Degenhardt's experience includes the conceptualization and management of numerous large-scale projects in the United States, Europe, and southeast Asia, including: the Konak Pier Redevelopment, Izmir, Turkey—a festival retail and entertainment complex of some 150,000 feet of gross leasable space—and the Melbourne Docklands Authority, Melbourne, Australia—a redevelopment project that will turn some 200 hectares of discontinued docks and unused waterfront property into a 60,000-seat stadium, as well as office, residential,

waterfront retail, and recreation uses. He recently chaired an international delegation of ten developers and professionals to the state of Montenegro to assist in the revitalization and privatization of its tourist industry.

Prior to forming his own company Degenhardt spent 28 years with EDAW, Inc., including 15 years as its president and chairman. During that time he played a major role in projects such as the plan for Mission Bay, San Francisco, Northstar at Tahoe, a year-round resort near Tahoe, California, and Phase II of the Green Valley Community in Henderson, Nevada.

ENGIN ARTEMEL

Alexandria, Virginia

Artemel has more than 30 years of professional experience as an architect, civil engineer, and city planner in both the public and private sectors, as well as in academia. He is best known for his waterfront planning and redevelopment activities, including a number of projects in urban downtown waterfront revitalization. These include: Buffalo Bayou in Houston, Crown Cruise Lines Terminal in West Palm Beach, the Eastport Revitalization Project in Annapolis, and the Medina Waterfront Preservation Project in Tangier, Morocco. Presently, he is helping Frederiksted, St. Croix, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, plan their waterfront redevelopments.

Artemel's career encompasses public service, international consulting, teaching, and community activities. He has served as director of planning and community development for the city of Alexandria, Virginia, and chairman of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments Technical Advisory Committee, and has worked closely with the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission. For the past ten years, as president of The Artemel Group, he has consulted extensively in waterfront planning, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and the development of mixed-use projects in the Washington metropolitan area, throughout the United States, and internationally.

STANLEY C. BROWN

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Brown is founder and president of Stan Brown Associates, Inc., a developer of commercial, industrial, retail, and residential properties, and SBA Consulting, Inc., which provides real estate reuse strategies and advisory services. He has been involved in the development and finance of real estate for over 20 years, and has planned and constructed more than 20 real estate projects, ranging from resort hotels and retail shopping centers to commercial office and industrial properties. He has developed large properties in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York, and throughout Florida, and is responsible for developing the sixth-largest resort in Bermuda. Brown was an undergraduate at Duke University and holds a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a trustee of the Urban Land Institute.

JAMES H. CALLARD

Centreville, Virginia

Callard currently serves as executive vice president of American Apartment Communities, a private real estate investment trust that owns and manages more than 11,000 apartments located in nine states. Callard is responsible for acquisition, investment portfolio management, disposition, and merger activities. American Apartment Communities was formed from The Klingbeil Company, a domestic and international real estate firm recognized as a market innovator in all aspects of real estate development. At Klingbeil, Callard had responsibility for the international and domestic (East Coast and Midwest) operations. He structured acquisitions, coordinated lending relationships, and created private and public capital market investment vehicles.

Callard is also the principal of the Executive Club Management Company, which operates three all-suite apartment hotels in Rosslyn, Arlington, and Alexandria, Virginia. The Executive Club pioneered the concept of converting strategically located existing apartment communities to meet a need for extended-stay business lodgings with hotel and meeting services.

ELAINE VAN S. CARMICHAEL

Washington, D.C.

Carmichael joined Economics Research Associates in 1987 and is a principal of the firm. Her assignments include a variety of public and private sector consulting projects involving community revitalization, tourism enhancement, economic development, and land use planning that require her to assess market strength and analyze the financial feasibility of an array of real estate products. Carmichael has prepared market analyses for apartment complexes, office buildings, retail centers, business parks, hotels, convention centers, stadiums, museums, and commercial recreation attractions throughout the United States. She has worked in numerous resort communities, including Nantucket, Daytona Beach, Miami Beach, Myrtle Beach, Cape Cod, Palm Springs, Hobe Sound, San Juan, and Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Carmichael teaches at the Berman Institute of Real Estate, a graduate program at Johns Hopkins University. A frequent speaker on urban development issues, she serves as an adviser to the National Center for Heritage Areas and is a member of the American Planning Association, the National Council on Urban Economic Development, and the international honorary land economics society Lambda Alpha. Carmichael received her BA from Yale University and her master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

CEIL CIRILLO

Santa Cruz, California

Cirillo currently serves as executive director for the City of Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency, a position for which she was recruited after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. She established a new department for the redevelopment of the historic downtown, which was devastated by the earthquake, while addressing redevelopment issues in the Eastside Redevelopment Project Area and the beach. The agency's activities have included: a business outreach program to ensure the retention of existing businesses citywide while recruiting new tenants for the rebuilt downtown; alley walk planning and construction projects; mural programs; facade improvement programs; feasibility studies on a conference hotel facility at the beach; the development of year-round tourism and destination retail activities; and a number of affordable housing initiatives.

Prior to her current position, Cirillo was director of redevelopment for the city of Signal Hill, California; vice president of Houk Development of Los Angeles; special assistant to the city manager of Pasadena; and vice president of Grence Consultants. She holds a BSBA from Redlands University.

PETER M. HASSELMAN, FAIA
Orinda, California

Hasselmann is an architect, urban designer, and perspectivist providing consulting services to clients across the United States. He began his career after graduation from the University of Illinois and completion of military service; his first client was President Lyndon B. Johnson, for whom he designed the 1964 inaugural pavilion. As a designer with several leading firms, Hasselmann was associated with such projects as: the Pennsylvania Avenue master plan in Washington, D.C.; the town of Reston, Virginia; the Baltimore interstate highway system; and the rehabilitation of the Amtrak stations and design of new railroad maintenance facilities between Washington and Boston.

Hasselmann now provides consulting services in planning, architectural design, and presentation drawings. His recent projects include the conversion of a Seoul Olympic site into a mixed-use commercial facility; the development of Ford Island, Pearl Harbor; urban developments in Australia and Malaysia; a new town in Belgium that uses defunct coal mine structures as its core; a 3 million-square-foot mixed-use symbolic structure in Tokyo Bay; resorts in Saipan, Mexico, Spain, and Japan; a national science park and world exposition in Korea; a state-of-the-art theme park in Dubai; development of Long Beach Harbor using the Queen Mary as the focus; and illustrating the future uses of the Presidio of San Francisco army post. As a frequent member of AIA and ULI panels, Hasselmann has participated in studies of 16 cities in the United States.

DON PAIGHT

Fort Myers, Florida

Paight is the executive director of the Fort Myers Downtown Redevelopment Agency, a position he has held since the agency was formed ten years ago. The DRA is the city agency responsible for implementing the downtown plan. Its major accomplishments include: development of a comprehensive government office district that includes over 1.1 million square feet of city, county, state, and federal offices; the increase of downtown parking by more than 3,100 spaces, including construction of two public parking decks; development of a ten-acre waterfront park and three-quarter-mile-long riverwalk; adaptive reuse of three historic hotels into mixed-use retail and residential developments; and development of a four-block entertainment district.

Paight's previous positions include: executive director of the private nonprofit Downtown Development Program in Norwich, Connecticut; assistant executive director of the Center City Commission in Memphis, Tennessee; an urban systems specialist for the city of Memphis; and work with the Metropolitan Dade County Community Improvement Program. Paight has a BA in public administration from the University of Miami, and a master's degree in geography from Memphis State University.

KALVIN PLATT, FAIA

Sausalito, California

Platt is a planner and architect with 35 years of experience in land planning and urban design in both public and private consultant capacities. He is currently chairman of The SWA Group. Since joining SWA in 1967, Platt has directed land planning and site design for many of the new communities and urban development projects undertaken by the firm. He has directed master-planning studies for the 5,000-acre Arvida Villages at Boca Raton, Florida, including the Arvida Park of Commerce; the Irvine Central Ranch General Plan; the Woodbridge New Town Development Plan; the Greenway Communities Plan for the 40,000-acre holdings in Palm Beach County of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; the Tam Site Redevelopment in Marin City, California; the 3,800-acre Mountain House New Town in San Joaquin Valley, California; Alameda Marina Village, California; and the City Center Development Project in Oakland, California. He has also led projects in the public sector, such as the Kezar Stadium area of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, the Las Vegas Downtown Redevelopment Study, the Long Beach Shoreline Plan, and the San Diego Embarcadero Plan. Platt currently leads the SWA planning efforts in the Pacific Rim. He holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Florida, and a master's degree in city planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

DEAN SCHWANKE

Washington, D.C.

Schwanke is senior director, policy and practice, at ULI. He has authored or coauthored five books for ULI on a variety of real estate topics, including the *Resort Development Handbook* (1997), *Re-making the Shopping Center* (1994), *Professional Real Estate Development: the ULI Guide to the Business* (1992), *Mixed-Use Development Handbook* (1987), and *Smart Buildings and Technology-Enhanced Real Estate* (1985). He has also served as project director and principal author of the 1996 and 1997 editions of the annual *ULI Real Estate Forecast*. In addition, he is project director for two other annual publications, *ULI Market Profiles* and *ULI on the Future*, and serves as general editor of the *ULI Development Handbook Series*. He holds a BA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a master's degree in planning from the University of Virginia.

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT
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