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## QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN



Prepared for the Honorable Councilwoman Ellen Robertson and the North Highland Park Community  
By: VCU Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program  
Spring 2011 Studio I – URSP 761  
Instructor Dr. Meghan Z. Gough







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## North Highland Park Quality of Life Plan

The Honorable Councilwoman Ellen Robertson  
and the North Highland Park Community

Prepared by:  
VCU Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program, Spring 2011

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## Executive Summary

North Highland Park is located just to the north of downtown Richmond above the Shockoe Valley and is easily accessible via Interstates 64 and 95 and the Richmond–Henrico Turnpike. It was one of Richmond’s original street car suburbs, and is the home of Richmond’s largest remaining stock of Queen Anne style homes. As a result of the commitment and hard work of many of its residents, these stately homes will be around for future generations to enjoy.

This area is home to several community organizations that work tirelessly, side-by-side with residents showing a strong commitment to service in the form of neighborhood restaurants, community outreach, youth mentoring and retail and thrift stores. There is a historic commercial district located at the corner of Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Road, Dill Avenue, and 2nd Avenue, known as the Six-Points. Radiating out from this district and interwoven into the community are a number of churches that serve as the cornerstone of the community for many residents.

Despite the many assets found in North Highland Park, many challenges remain. The residents have voiced the need for more community connectedness, youth engagement and decreased real and perceived crime to help with community wellbeing and image, along with better access to food and employment.

North Highland Park has a great foundation to build upon. The neighborhood has an abundance of residents, businessmen and women, and church families who have shown a commitment to making North Highland Park a great neighborhood in which to live and raise their children. After an examination of existing conditions, stakeholder and resident interviews, the following guiding principles and goals have developed:

**Leadership and Neighborhood Connections** – Empower people to stay, cross boundaries, and make a difference in North Highland Park through volunteerism, neighbor relationships, civic associations and engagement, community action, and information circulation.

**Strengthening Neighborhood Youth** – Encourage youth participation in current and new programs and engage them in positive ways.

**Neighborhood Safety** – Increase neighborhood safety for community members and visitors by reducing real and perceived crime.

**Building Foundations for Success** – To have a neighborhood where all residents have the opportunity to be meaningfully and gainfully employed.

Implementation of these guiding principles and goals calls for community mobilization. North Highland Park residents and local business owners must prove this commitment and willingness to work together, for meaningful change does not happen quickly. They must also resolve to make the implementation of this Quality of Life Plan for North Highland Park their focus.

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## Introduction

This Quality of Life Plan was developed to improve the overall livability in the North Highland Park neighborhood. A quality of life plan captures the vision and goals of residents and turns them into achievable projects and programs that yield real, visible results. North Highland Park is a neighborhood with a distinct sense of community pride that should be highlighted both within the neighborhood and across the Richmond region. The plan aims to address the current challenges to quality of life within the neighborhood through identifying and mobilizing the community's key assets.

Through community input and research this plan was created as a community guide for improving the quality of life within North Highland Park. The first part of the plan examines the existing conditions within the neighborhood including the history, demographics, land use and zoning, surrounding influences, and community assets. The second part of the plan focuses on the four guiding principles on which the goals, objectives and implementation strategies are based. The implementation strategies should serve as a guide for achieving the goals set forth over the next three to five years. The guiding principles of the plan include:

**Leadership and Neighborhood Connections** – An approach to cultivating trust, progress, growth, accountability and respect among residents that utilizes the existing talents, culture and assets of the community must be leveraged to create stronger networks between residents, community organizations, and civic leaders in North Highland Park.

**Strengthening Neighborhood Youth**– Strategies for the overall development of youth so that they are a greater asset to the community. Creating a safe but monitored environment where they can interact with each other and form friendships.

**Neighborhood Safety** – Ways to decrease the threat of crime in the neighborhood while improving the image of the neighborhood for both community members and the general public.

**Building Foundations for Success** – Steps toward developing a neighborhood where all residents have the opportunity to be meaningfully and gainfully employed; where residents have access to resources that help them prepare for, locate, and retain quality jobs.

The North Highland Park community helped create this plan, and now is the time to use it to address the issues affecting the neighborhood's quality of life as a community.

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# Part I: Community Conditions and Background Information



## Description of North Highland Park

### NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

The spirit of the North Highland Park community is rooted in its history. It is a beautiful neighborhood with the largest remaining stock of historic Queen Anne style homes in Richmond which are being restored through concerted community efforts. North Highland Park is a community that has seen great leadership from dedicated community organizations and congregations that bring people together for the betterment of the community as a whole.

In the early 1800's North Highland Park was part of a private land holding known as Mount Comfort. The entire area of Henrico County north of Richmond served as the breadbasket for the city. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Battery No. 7, the city's north eastern fortification was established in Mount Comfort.<sup>1</sup>

The Northside Land and Improvement Company acquired Mount Comfort in 1889 and began development of residential plots. By 1893 the Chestnut Hill neighborhood was established. North of the neighborhood, the Highland Park Company developed a 150 acre plot known as Highland Park.<sup>2</sup> Developers played upon an anti-urban spirit among the Caucasian middle class, induced by political fears and health concerns, to promote the northern suburbs of Richmond. The completion of the Fifth Street viaduct in 1892, then a toll bridge, brought many lot sales to the region with promises of a street car connecting the northern suburb to the City of Richmond.<sup>3</sup> In 1908, the villages of Chestnut Hill and Highland Park were consolidated and incorporated into a town. In 1914 the City of Richmond annexed Highland Park from Henrico County.<sup>4</sup>

From 1917 to 1945 most of the vacant lots in the Highland Park neighborhood were developed and recreational activities began at Hotchkiss Field. Public housing projects began to be constructed in 1941

to provide affordable housing for Richmond's urban poor.<sup>5</sup> Middle class African American families began moving into suburban neighborhoods to take advantage of nicer homes, more space, and newer schools. As proof of the struggles in race relations that plagued Richmond and most of the South at the time, in 1942, almost all the residents of Highland Park signed a pledge not to be the first homeowner on the block to sell to an African American buyer. The campaign was sponsored by the Highland Park Citizens Association and included a fund-raising effort for a Caucasian veteran who was outbid by an African American purchaser. The residents feared that African American buyers would form syndicates to engage in "block busting."<sup>6</sup>

By 1985, the community suffered from a decrease in resident homeowners. Increased levels of crime devastated the area but a strong sense of community pride prevailed. The Highland Park Restoration and Preservation Program (HP-Rapp), a community development corporation, was established in the neighborhood and began buying vacant housing stock with the support of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to provide affordable home ownership opportunities for current and new residents. Local churches and non-profits also stepped in to help with neighborhood revitalization and began to create a new sense of community in North Highland Park. Progress came in fits and starts as funding dwindled and the net worth of the community continued to decline due to lack of investment.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century approached, Highland Park recommitted to a path of revival. Community congregations and Boaz & Ruth offered programs and services throughout the community and continued to acquire and renovate housing stock. Now in 2011, neighbors are organizing to revitalize North Highland Park and reinvestment is beginning to seep back into the neighborhood to restore many of the historic homes. Residents and community leaders are committing to the neighborhood that many of them have called home for decades. Through building upon the efforts of their predecessors and meeting new challenges that present themselves, the residents of North Highland Park are poised for a prosperous future.



## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

### Population

Knowing the people that this Quality of Life plan will serve is part of the planning process. These statistics give us a snapshot of the North Highland Park neighborhood in the past, present, and possible future.

The total population in 2000 for North Highland Park was 3,616 (Table 1). The Census designated area surrounding this neighborhood declined in population by approximately 9% by 2010 (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Population trends in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

	Population 2000	Population 2010	Percent Change
<b>North Highland Park</b>	3,616	3,290 (estimate)	(-9.0)% (estimate)
<b>Census Designated Area</b>	7,665	6,973	(-9.0)%
<b>City of Richmond</b>	197,790	204,214	+3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010

**Table 2:** Age demographics in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

	2000		2010		2015	
	NHP	City	NHP	City	NHP	City
<b>% Children (0-19)</b>	32.7	25.6	25.3	26.0	25.2	26.0
<b>% Adults (20-64)</b>	54.7	61.2	58.6	61.9	57.9	61.0
<b>% Elderly (65+)</b>	12.6	13.2	16.1	12.1	16.9	13.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, Geolytics Estimates and Projections 2010 and 2015

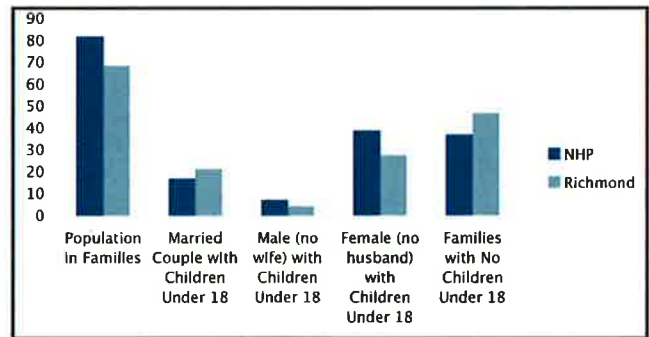
Over half of the residents in North Highland Park are adults aged 20-64 (Table 2). This age group is expected to increase by 2015. This shows a trend towards an aging population.

An important component of a quality of life plan is familial relationships. In 2000, 82% of the population of North Highland Park was part of a family (Table 3), defined as two or more related people residing together. The average family size was 3.5 persons.

Looking at all families with children under 18 in 2000, there are more single females raising children than married couples or single males raising children in North Highland Park (Table 3). Single females comprised 39% of families with children under 18.

The number of families is expected to decline in North Highland Park. This again shows that overall the population in North Highland Park is aging and decreasing in number.

**Table 3:** Total families and family type in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA



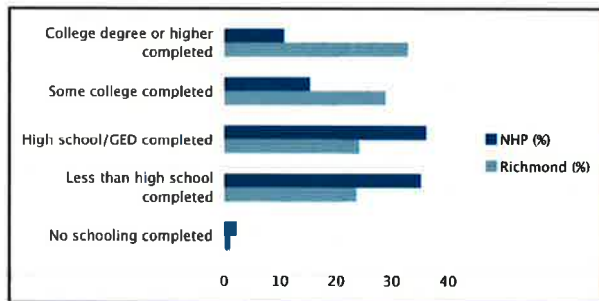
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000; Geolytics Estimates and Projections 2010



## Education

One of the key principles for fostering a healthy neighborhood is education, as it plays an important role in the growth and development of its residents. As of 2000, 63% of the population in North Highland Park over age 25 had obtained a high school diploma or the equivalent, but data show a higher percent of attainment in the City of Richmond (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Educational attainment in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000.

Completing high school is one of the building blocks to success. The majority of the schools that serve the youth population in grades 7 through 12 in North Highland Park had lower dropout rates when compared to all City of Richmond Public Schools (Table 5).

In the 2008–2009 school year around 90% of students at the local public schools that serve North Highland Park received free or reduced lunches (Table 6). Of all the public elementary and middle schools in Richmond, a little more than 75% received this same benefit.

Increasing the high school completion rate and maintaining the low drop out rates will ensure that the youth in North Highland Park will be able to achieve the level of success needed for a high quality of life.

**Table 5:** Dropout Rate for North Highland Park Schools – Grades 7–12

School Name	Total Students	Dropout Rate (%)
Thomas H. Henderson Middle	528	0.4
Martin Luther King Jr. Middle	553	0.2
John Marshall High	947	4.8
Richmond Community High	206	0.5
Richmond City Public Schools	339	3.6

Source: Virginia Department of Education, 2009–10.

**Table 6:** Students receiving free or reduced lunch in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

School	Total Students	Reduced	Free	Free or Reduced	% Total Students
<b>NHP Schools</b>					
Overby–Sheppard Elementary	320	27	264	291	90.9
Thomas H. Henderson Middle	547	50	444	494	90.3
Martin Luther King Jr. Middle	652	14	589	603	92.5
John Marshall High	743	42	617	659	88.6
Richmond Community High	193	9	54	63	32.7
<b>Richmond City Public Schools</b>					
Elementary Schools					78.4
Middle Schools					77.1
High Schools					60.2

Source: Richmond City Public Schools, 2008–09



## Neighborhood and School Safety

An often cited component of quality of life is safety and the prevalence of crime, such as violent crime or commercial and residential burglaries. Real crime may not always be the same as perceived crime so it is important to establish the actual facts. Since 2006, the total number of all crimes in the study area has declined.

Despite this decline in total crime, burglary incidents increased by 141% between 2009 and 2010 (Table 7). According to the City of Richmond crime log, 70 burglaries occurred between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2011. Figure 1 displays the general block and street locations of 64 of 70 incidents of burglaries in the study area. Burglaries appear to be concentrated in the southern end of the North Highland Park neighborhood, especially the 3100 and 3200 blocks of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

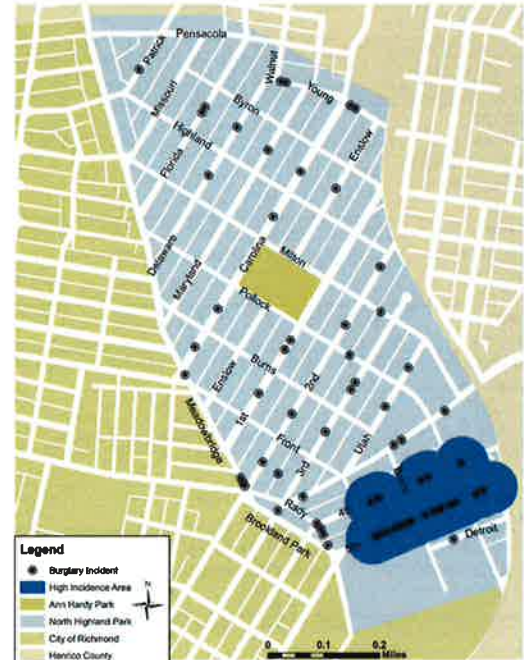
Table 7: Crime rates by category in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

	2009			2010			% Change
	City	NHP	% of City	City	NHP	% of City	
Homicide	42	2	4.8	43	0	0	(100)
Sex Offense	154	5	3.3	149	3	2.0	(3.2)
Robbery	849	12	1.4	731	10	1.4	(16.7)
Assault	5,079	110	2.2	5,058	111	2.2	0.9
Burglary	1,583	29	1.8	1,765	70	4.0	141.4
Vice	2,732	79	2.9	2,477	53	2.1	(32.9)
Theft	5,879	51	0.9	5,888	50	0.9	(2.0)
Vehicle Theft	978	13	1.3	867	13	1.5	0
Other	20,339	305	1.5	19,710	252	1.3	(17.4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,635</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>36,688</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>(7.3)</b>

Source: City of Richmond (2006–2010)

Figure 2 displays the general block and street locations of the incidents of assaults in the study area. According to the City of Richmond crime log, 111 assault incidents occurred between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2011. Unlike the burglaries, the assault incidents do not appear to be concentrated in a small section of the study area.

Figure 1: Burglary Incidents in North Highland Park



Source: Richmond City Police Department, 2010



Violence and other issues related to school safety are concerns that have been voiced by some of the North Highland Park youth during various community meetings (Appendix). Of all the North Highland Park schools, Henderson Middle School has the most offenses committed by students, with 16% of offenses involving weapons or misconduct against others (Table 8).

**Table 8: School Safety Violations as Percent of Richmond Public School Total, Richmond, VA**

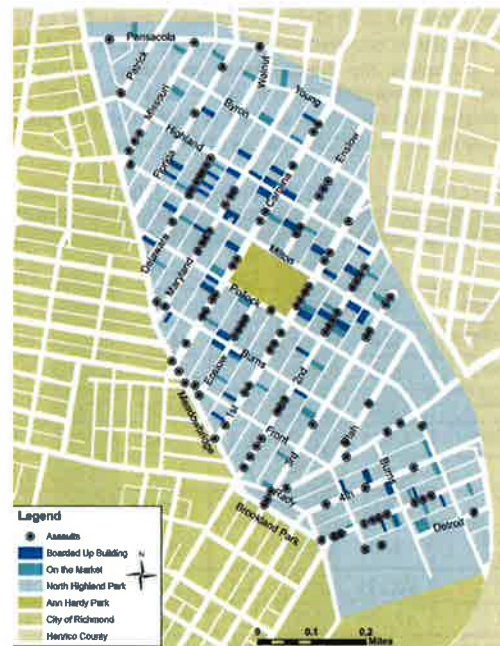
Offense category	OSE	HMS	MLK Jr. MS	RCH	JMH	Richmond Total
Weapons	2.1	8.3	5.6	2.1	4.2	144
Offenses against student, staff, or other persons	0	7.7	6.8	0.2	4.9	585
Alcohol, Tobacco, and other drug offenses	1.0	1.4	4.3	1.0	17.3	494
Property Offenses	0	3.4	4.7	0	3.4	2,310
Disorderly or disruptive behavior offenses	0.1	5.9	6.8	0.1	2.6	208
Technology offenses	0	1.2	0.8	0	5.2	234
All other offenses	0.3	18.0	5.9	0.3	1.6	13,637

Schools: Overby–Shepard Elementary (OSE); Henderson Middle (HMS); MLK Jr. Middle (MLK Jr. MS; Richmond Community High (RCH); John Marshall High (JMH).

Source: Virginia Department of Education, (2009–2010)

The other area schools had fewer weapon offenses. Drug and alcohol abuse can also play a role in reducing the quality of life among the North Highland Park youth. The alcohol and drug offenses of 17% at John Marshall High School exceed the total of all the other North Highland Park schools combined. Therefore, attention to neighborhood and school safety is central to the quality of life in North Highland Park.

**Figure 2: Assaults in North Highland Park**



Source: Richmond City Police Department, 2010.





## Housing and Land Use

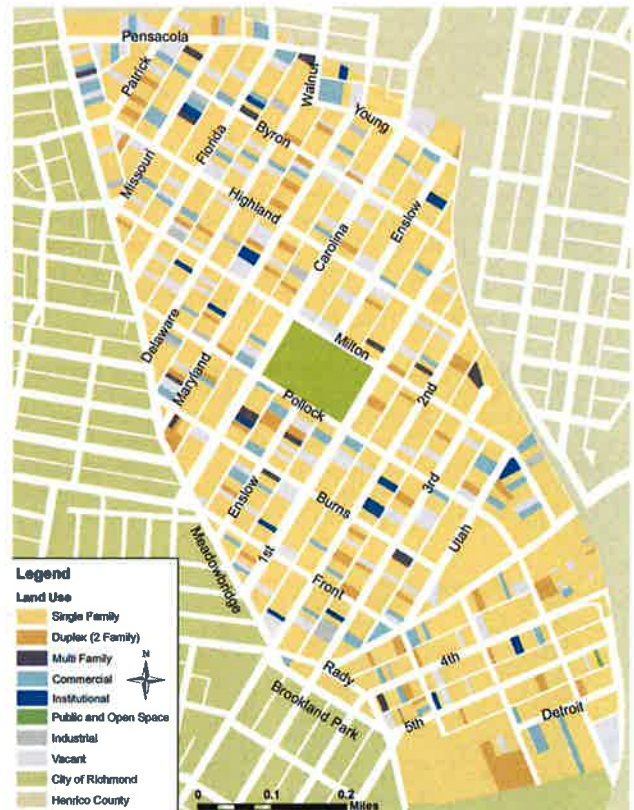
Quality shelter, occupancy, and living conditions can have a great impact on quality of life. High incidence of disrepair and vacancies can lead to disinvestment in a community and unaffordable housing options can exclude certain people from living in a neighborhood. The relationship between land uses, physical conditions, and quality of life is vital to this plan.

The majority of the neighborhood consists of two-story detached single family homes of varying architectural styles and sizes, as well as some attached single and two family homes. The northwest portion of the study area generally has smaller detached single family homes with larger front yards.

In addition to residential uses, there are also some multifamily, institutional, commercial, and office properties in North Highland Park. As detailed in Figure 3, commercial uses are concentrated along Meadowbridge Road and Institutional uses are concentrated in the southern portion of the study area.

While most houses in the neighborhood are in fair condition, there are some that require maintenance. Signs of disrepair include mold, mildew, and rust stains, cluttered yards, trash. More serious structural problems exist with siding, porches, and roofs that may be safety hazards. The homes that are in disrepair are concentrated in the southern portion of the study area. The houses have front and back porches, walkways, and landscaped yards with chain link, or other types of fences surrounding the property.

Figure 3: Land Use Map of North Highland Park



Source: City of Richmond, GIS Department, 2011



The vacancy rate in North Highland Park has continued to increase in 2010 as it did from 1990 to 2000 (Table 9). Figure 2 shows the location of vacant properties in 2011 as determined by a visual survey (Appendix). It appeared that 7% of properties in North Highland Park were vacant, 4% were boarded up, and 3% were on the market for sale or rent. The properties are concentrated mainly in the center of the neighborhood, on Second Avenue near the Ann M. Hardy Plaza.

The percentage of homeowners decreased by 6% in North Highland Park and remained stable in Richmond in 2000. Home addresses of property owners were used as a proxy for determining home ownership versus rental property in the study area for 2011 (Figure 4). This analysis showed a 57% ownership rate in the community. Homeownership is evenly dispersed throughout the community with lower numbers in the high vacancy areas surrounding the Ann M. Hardy Park.

Affordability and overcrowding can be indicators of poor living conditions. In 2000, 40% of residents, owners, and renters were not living in affordable housing (Table 10), which was higher than the City of Richmond. Housing is considered affordable if the monthly payment of either mortgage or rent is less than 30% of the total household income<sup>7</sup>. Overcrowding is defined here as more than one person per room in a housing unit<sup>8</sup>. The percent of overcrowded units is fairly similar between the study area and the city as a whole.



**Table 9:** Occupancy status and tenure in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

	1990		2000		2010	
	NHP	Richmond	NHP	Richmond	NHP	Richmond
<b>Housing Units</b>	1,771	94,141	1,737	92,282	n/a	98,349
<b>% Occupied</b>	91.9	90.6	89.6	91.6	91.6	91.7
<b>% Vacant</b>	8.1	9.4	10.4	8.4	18.7	11.4
<b>% Owner Occupied</b>	67.5	46.3	61.6	46.1	61.6	46.1
<b>% Renter Occupied</b>	32.5	53.7	38.4	53.9	38.4	53.9

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010; Geolytics Estimates and Projections 2010

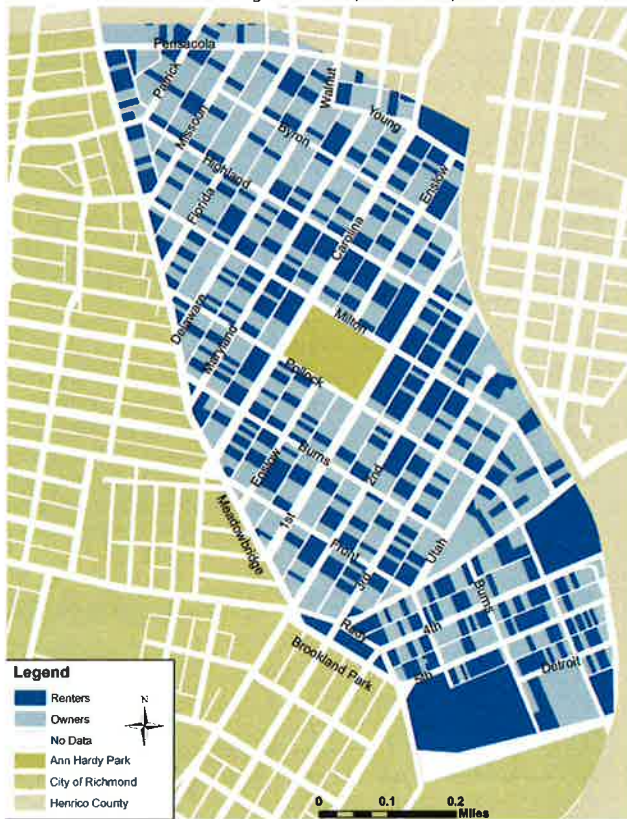
**Table 10:** Affordability and overcrowded housing units in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA

	NHP	Richmond
<b>Affordability</b>	39.5	34.0
<b>Owner (% of Owners)</b>	35.0	24.7
<b>Renter (% of Renters)</b>	46.2	41.4
<b>Overcrowded Units</b>	3.4	3.7

Source: U.S. Census 2000



**Figure 4: Homeownership and Rental Properties in North Highland Park, Richmond, VA**



Source: City of Richmond, GIS Department, 2010

## Economic Conditions

Income is a determining factor in many cases for quality of life. Nearly a quarter of the residents in North Highland Park lived below the poverty line in 2000 with an estimated per capita income in 1999 of \$11,800 (Table 11). This is almost half the per capita income for the City of Richmond in 1999. Poverty is more severe for children. With these high rates of poverty only 6% and 5% of households received public assistance in North Highland Park and Richmond respectively.

In 2008, North Highland Park had an unemployment rate of 13% with 11% of its workers being dependent on public transportation. As with the other economic indicators, this is higher than the City. With all of these benchmarks in mind, North Highland Park might be considered a pocket of poverty with its low income, high poverty rates, and high unemployment.

**Table 11: Economic indicators in North Highland Park and Richmond, VA**

	NHP	Richmond
Per Capita Income (1999)	11,863	20,337
Median Household Income (1999)	26,875	34,521
Households on Public Assistance (% of Households)	5.6	4.7
Population in Poverty (% of Total Population)	24.0	20.3
Children Under 5 in Poverty (% of Children Under 5)	27.8	33.4
Children Under 18 in Poverty (% of Children Under 18)	36.7	33.4
Unemployed (% of Civilian Labor Force)	12.7	8.1
Transit Dependent Workers (% of Workers 16yrs+)	10.7	8.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000



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## SURROUNDING INFLUENCES

The organizations, institutions, and amenities surrounding a neighborhood impact its quality of life. The North Highland Park neighborhood is accessible as it is in close proximity to downtown Richmond, Eastern Henrico, Church Hill, and Interstate 95.

### Organizations

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) is a City of Richmond governmental organization that acts as the redevelopment arm of the City of Richmond. It provides essential services like quality affordable housing, community revitalization, and career opportunities to the neighborhood. The RRHA police department implements crime prevention and public safety as well.

### Institutions

There are several institutions of higher education in the area including Virginia Commonwealth University, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, and Virginia Union University. These institutions provide education for employment and career advancement, promotes personal enrichment, and lifelong learning. There are also two seminaries near the neighborhood, Union Baptists Theological Seminary and Union Presbyterian Seminary.

### Amenities

Richmond International Raceway Complex is a race track and convention center located just outside the neighborhood in Henrico County. Races, as well as other events such as the Richmond Home and Garden Show, Richmond Boat Show, and Richmond Classic Sports Car Show are also hosted here.

The Cannon Creek Nature Area is a treasured recreational asset for the community. In response to a resident-led initiative, the city is working to clean up the area and build a bicycle and pedestrian trail which would connect to the Capital Trail.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS

The North Highland Park neighborhood may be affected by several plans currently adopted by the City of Richmond. Stakeholders and government officials rely on these plans to outline the revitalization of communities.

### Richmond City Master Plan 2000 – 2020<sup>9</sup>

This document is one of the most important documents that the City of Richmond maintains. It examines the vision, goals, and challenges for the City of Richmond as expressed by the Richmond community and sets standards for planning policies through 2020 as approved by City Council. However, these plans do not specifically address the issues associated with North Highland Park.

### Dove Street Area Plan<sup>10</sup>

Developed by the RRHA this plan proposes a redevelopment of a former public housing site located between the neighborhoods of Barton Heights, Green Park, Chestnut Hill, and Highland Terrace. It will have far reaching influences that will impact all neighboring communities, including North Highland Park. The Dove Street Plan proposes new single and multi-family development with an urban mixed use approach that would interconnect the communities surrounding Overby-Sheppard Elementary School and old armory building.

### Six Points at Highland Park Commercial Revitalization Plan<sup>11</sup>

This document examines the Six Points commercial district, located in the Highland Park neighborhood at the intersection of Brookland Park Boulevard, Meadowbridge Road, Dill Avenue, and 2nd Avenue. Once a highly active commercial district, this still remains the only shopping opportunity for many residents of the neighborhood. This plan outlines the physical design, economic restructuring, promotion, and organization for revitalizing the commercial corridor.



## Community Engagement

### NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY PANEL

#### Background and Purpose

North Highland Park began its Quality of Life planning process in January 2011 under the direction of the Honorable Councilwoman Ellen F. Robertson of Richmond's Sixth District. Twelve individuals who represent the diverse voices in the North Highland Park study area were recruited to comprise the Neighborhood Advisory Panel.

The primary purpose of the Neighborhood Advisory Panel is to help oversee the process, engage and educate the rest of the community about the Quality of Life Plan in a way that promotes neighborhood ownership and involvement in the plan. Since the start of this plan additional voices and organizations have joined in this effort.

#### The Community Input Process

The engagement of residents, business owners, organization leaders, and other stakeholders in the North Highland Park study area was sought during several meetings throughout the Quality of Life planning process. The goal of this data collection process was to genuinely capture the voice and the interests of all North Highland Park residents and stakeholders. Advisory Panel members were key in orchestrating community involvement.

## TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY INPUT

### Surveys

The tools used to gather community input included a survey with both closed-ended multiple choice and open-ended discussion questions (Appendix). A total of 72 surveys were collected between January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011.

### Small Group Discussions

Students prepared a set of discussion questions to guide conversations with community members. Respondents were asked to describe the circumstances that brought them to North Highland Park, their personal understanding of "community" and "neighborhood," and their general sentiment or attitude(s) toward the community. Homeowners, renters, youth, community leaders, and parishioners of congregations lying within or in close proximity to the North Highland Park study area were all engaged in this discussion. Students also conducted personal interviews to gather more in-depth perspectives (Appendix).





## Community Meetings

### North Highland Park Community Meeting

On Tuesday, January 25, 2011 residents and other stakeholders from North Highland Park gathered at the Boaz & Ruth Firehouse Restaurant to share their experiences and feelings of the community.

### Resident Renter's and Youth Meeting

On February 10, 2011 youth and resident renters gathered for an evening of fellowship and fun. Many current participants or graduates of the Boaz & Ruth re-entry program were joined by other residents. Youth expressed an overwhelming concern with, drugs, violence, a lack of services, and community activities.



### Gateway 6<sup>th</sup> District Community Meeting

On February 12, 2011 Councilwoman Ellen Robertson held a monthly meeting at the Fifth Street Baptist Church to discuss the Dove Street Project and other community issues with residents of the 6th District.



### Male Discipleship Class

On Sunday, February 13, 2011 students were invited to attend the Male Discipleship Class and Sunday Church Service at Pastor Lloyd Price's home. Community members emphasized the issue of unemployment, describing jobs as being crucially important to a male's self-esteem and sense of dignity.

### Northside Outreach Center (NOC) Meeting

On February 14, 2011 students met with two community leaders, Mr. Butch Johnson and Ms. Rosa Jiggets. Youth mentoring, strengthening of the African-American family, and expanded prisoner re-entry and substance abuse programs arose as needs for improving quality of life.



### Plan-ED Seminar Meeting

On February 15, 2011 a meeting was held at the Boaz & Ruth Firehouse 15 Restaurant with international and national planning faculty, practitioners and students. Martha Rollins and Councilwoman Ellen Robertson delivered a presentation addressing the challenges and opportunities facing North Highland Park.

### Fifth Street Baptist Church Meeting

On February 21, 2011 students facilitated a meeting at Fifth Street Baptist Church with parishioners from several churches in North Highland Park. The important social role of the church and the impact disinvestment has had on the fabric of the community was discussed.



### Community Feedback Meeting

On February 22, 2011 the second community meeting for the Quality of Life Plan was held at the Boaz & Ruth Firehouse 15 Restaurant. Students were joined by members of the Neighborhood Advisory Panel, the local Guardian Angels chapter, Youth Ministry Entertainment as well as long-time residents, new residents, and others who are dedicated to the community.

## CORE THEMES OF COMMUNITY VOICES

The core themes identified in the small group discussions, interviews, and community meetings included safety, the presence of drugs and crime, a lack of community interaction and cooperation, blighted and poorly maintained properties, apathy toward the image of the community, disinvestment, disengaged youth and young males, and the disintegration of the family. These themes were used to identify the main areas of focus for the plan: leadership and neighborhood connections, youth strengthening, neighborhood safety, and building foundations for success.



## Profile of North Highland Park Community Assets

### COMMUNITY ASSETS

There are a wealth of local assets existing in the invested individuals, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and local government institutions in North Highland Park (Appendix). These establishments work to provide the community with essential services, greater opportunities, and perhaps most importantly a place to meet and connect with neighbors and build a sense of community.

Assets can be considered as the human, material, financial, entrepreneurial, and other resources in a community<sup>12</sup>. The existing community assets were identified primarily through discussions with community members and leaders, the Neighborhood Advisory Panel, and research in city services and non-profit organization databases.

### Government Services

North Highland Park has a number of government-offered services that can be called upon to help develop the community's quality of life. Within the study area's boundaries there are nearly thirty bus stops, three parks, two civic associations, and one community center (Figure 6). The Ann M. Hardy Plaza is located in the center of the neighborhood and houses the Ann M. Hardy Park Plaza Community Center, an accessible community meeting place. Additionally, there are resource-targeted areas along the neighborhood's commercial corridor that show the city is invested in the community.

Hotchkiss Park, located on Brookland Park Boulevard is a major asset for the community, offering a number of activities for youth and families. As one resident explained in a discussion about strengths of the community, "Hotchkiss field is a resource. You can play football, be a cheerleader, play basketball, whatever you want"<sup>13</sup>.

### Schools & Education

The North Highland Park community is served by four Richmond Public Schools: Overby-Sheppard Elementary, Thomas H. Henderson Middle, John Marshall High, and Richmond Community High schools.

Local schools offer a range of programs that engage students in continued learning and healthy recreation opportunities. John Marshall High School links students with professional mentors and scholarships for higher education<sup>14</sup>. T.H. Henderson Middle School offers a free tutoring program that pairs students with volunteers from the University of Richmond to help students with reading, math, and life lessons<sup>15</sup>. There is also a regional pre-school program that serves the area at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, providing children with vital early-education that prepares children for success in later grades<sup>16</sup>.

Richmond Community High School is a particularly important asset for the community. Recently moved from the West End to serve the North Richmond community, this magnet school that targets academically talented students primarily from low-income and minority families whose ability might otherwise be unrealized<sup>17</sup>.







## Faith-Based Organizations

The faith-based organizations are extremely influential in North Highland Park and important assets to the community. There are seven churches located in the neighborhood's boundaries that aim to empower individuals through faith while helping build a stronger North Highland Park community.

- Providence Park Baptist Church
- Concord Fellowship Baptist Church
- Moorish Temple of Holy Science
- New Saint Mark Church of God in Christ
- Fresh Anointing Cathedral
- St. Elizabeth Catholic Church
- Fifth Street Baptist Church

These faith-based organizations have a long standing history in the community and they offer numerous opportunities for individuals to be involved, such as through worship services, prayer meetings, bible studies, and programs targeted for youth and adults. A leader in the community and member of Fifth Street Baptist Church stated, "You know the church isn't just open just on Sundays. You'll see cars and a lot of people coming through on Fridays. It's a different atmosphere. You can come on by see if you like it, hang out, maybe meet other kids your age, you know, whatever."<sup>18</sup>

## Non-Profit Organizations

Non-Profit organizations provide a wide array of programs, services, and resources within the North Highland Park community. There are six non-profit organizations located within the neighborhood. These organizations provide services ranging from youth and senior activities to ex-offender

rehabilitation. They provide resources to the community and should be utilized as key partners in this process.

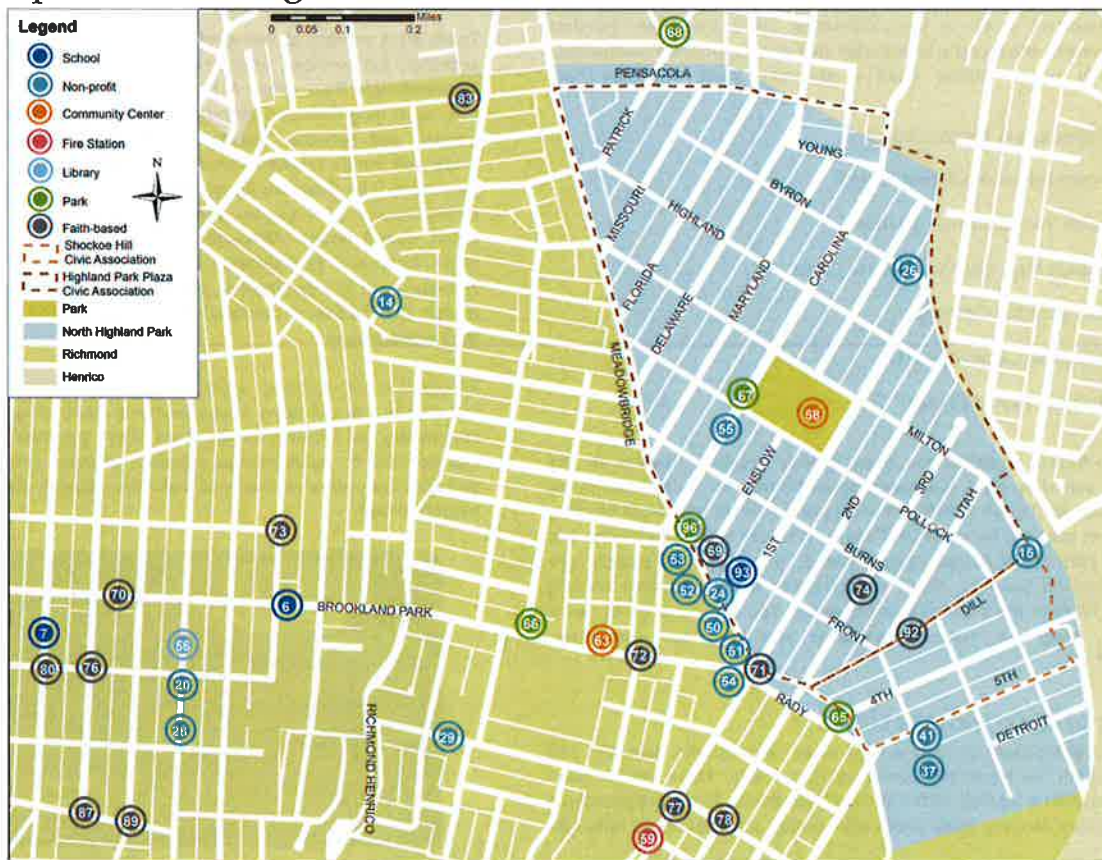
There are a number of non-profits in the neighborhood that provide youth activities, job services, and serve other community needs. Located along Meadowbridge Road, Boaz & Ruth is a great asset to the community that acts as a neighborhood resource center and specializes in re-entry job training and services. Nearby, the Northside Outreach Center provides youth and family services including education, family counseling, and teen mentoring. The Guardian Angels and Saving Our Youth also focus on youth strengthening by engaging youth in neighborhood service and debates about topical issues. Although it is not an incorporated non-profit, the North Richmond Revitalization Coalition (NRRC) is a key resource in the community. It is a coalition of many local churches, non-profits, and other leaders that facilitates cooperation and supports the revitalization efforts of the neighborhood.

Recognition of existing assets helps to identify what resources the community can call upon in cooperatively addressing the issues facing the community and identifies those areas where coordination and collaboration can be used to build internal capacity, increase community involvement, and ultimately allow residents to make the changes they want to see in their neighborhood.





## Asset Map for North Highland Park





## Asset Key for North Highland Park

### Schools & Education

Number	Name
6	Richmond Community High School
7	Nubian Village Academy, Inc
93	Youth Life Foundation Highland Park Learning Center

### Non-profits

Number	Name
14	Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond
15	Seniors 1st Choice Adult Day Care
20	Associated Educational Services of Virginia, Inc
22	Dominion School for Autism
24	Boaz & Ruth
26	New Jubilee Educational and Family Life Center
28	Northside Medical Center
29	Broad Haven Rest Home
30	Chamberlayne Assisted Living Facility
37	Daily Planet, Inc
41	Rubicon, Inc
50	Guardian Angels
51	Saving Our Youth
52	Northside Outreach Center
53	North Richmond Revitalization Coalition
54	The Playful Learning Institute Daycare
55	Community Outreach Ministries

### Government Services

Number	Name
56	Richmond Public Library
58	Highland Park Community Center
59	Richmond Fire Station
63	Hotchkiss Community Center

### Parks

Number	Name
64	Cannon Creek Park
65	Highland Park Square
66	Hotchkiss Park
67	Ann M. Hardy Plaza
68	Highland Gardens Park
96	Gabriel Prosser Park

### Faith-based Organizations

Number	Name
69	Concord Fellowship Baptist Church
70	New Mount Olive Pentecostal Faith Church
71	Fresh Anointing Cathedral
72	New St. Mark Church of God in Christ
73	Agape Love Fellowship
74	Moorish Holy Temple of Science
76	St Phillip's Episcopal Church
77	St Elizabeth's Church
78	Fifth Street Baptist Church
80	Trinity Baptist Church
83	Providence Park Baptist Church
86	Richmond Baptist Association
87	First African Baptist Church
89	Garland Avenue Baptist Church
92	New Kingdom Christian Ministries

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