

Executive Summary

Background

South Military Highway in Chesapeake, Virginia has a long and treasured history. It was the region's primary thoroughfare and economic driver prior to the construction of the interstate system in Hampton Roads during the late 1960s. However, the status and condition of the corridor has been in a steady decline for twenty years.

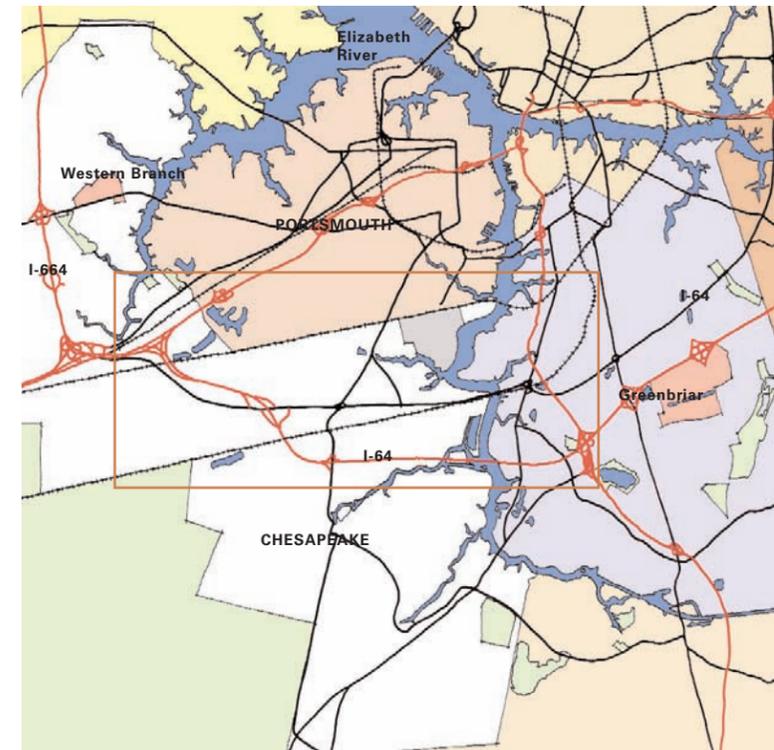
Currently the corridor is in disrepair. Many of the uses along it are poorly maintained and inappropriately located. The roadway is in need of repair and the traffic volumes and speeds split the community. Industrial access to the freeway is restricted due to limited capacity and an aging infrastructure. As a result, the residential neighborhoods are negatively effected by the circuitous industrial traffic. South Military highway is no longer a driver for economic development.

In February of 2003, recognizing the importance of the corridor in the community from an economic standpoint and in the region from a transportation perspective, the City Council established a task force to study and make recommendations for improving the corridor. The Task Force was organized into three committees (Fix Up, Clean Up and Build Up).

Process

In the Spring of 2005, Urban Design Associates and Kimley-Horn and Associates were retained by the City of Chesapeake to develop a plan for the future "Build Up" of South Military Highway.

Urban Design Associates (UDA) was the lead firm responsible for the planning process and the urban design plan. Joining the UDA team as sub-consultants to address traffic engineering and transportation planning was Kimley-Horn and Associates (KHA).



Existing conditions along South Military Highway

A representative and diverse South Military Highway Corridor Steering Committee was established prior to the onset of the planning work to include residents, property owners, merchants, cultural organizations, churches, and City and County government officials. The planning process had three phases:

Phase I: Understanding Data Collection and Analysis

Phase II: Exploring Design Charrette and Trying Out Design Ideas

Phase III: Deciding Creation of a Final Plan

Each phase was organized around a team visit to Chesapeake.

The first visit, in Phase I, involved collection of “hard” data, such as land use, traffic and transit data, and historic data, as well as the collection of “soft” data from interviews, focus groups, and an initial public meeting with residents, property owners, business persons, major institutions, churches, City officials, and other stakeholders (April 2005).

The second visit, in Phase II, was a four-day design charrette in Chesapeake to explore and test design alternatives. The charrette culminated in a public presentation (May 2005).

The third visit, in Phase III, included a final presentation of the plan at a public meeting and a meeting with the Steering Committee.

Vision

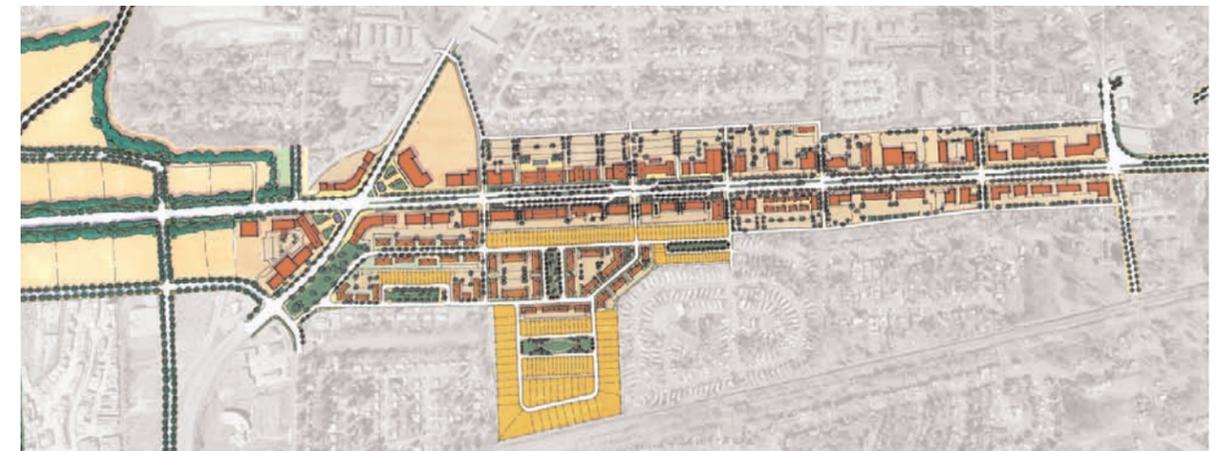
The planning process was highly participatory, engaging the citizens and stakeholders along the corridor and the neighborhoods astride it. An overall vision emerged which was embraced by all.



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

- A** New industrial/economic development opportunities
- B** Improved Interchange and new economic development opportunities
- C** Parallel roads and development opportunities
- D** Redeveloped core with neighborhood supportive uses
- E** Improved circulation and a redeveloped industrial waterfront
- F** New Gilmerton Bridge

South Military Highway will transform into a roadway that balances local needs and regional needs. South Military Highway will positively contribute to the quality of life of the immediate community by providing employment, retail, commercial and development opportunities.



Key Strategic Recommendations

The Plan contains five key recommendations. These recommendations organize land uses and structure the streets and open spaces in the study area.

1 Balance the Regional and Local Demands of Traffic

Facilitate access to properties as well as through traffic

2 Encourage Industrial Uses adjacent to the freeway

Improve freeway access, discourage industrial uses adjacent to neighborhoods

3 Reclaim the Core of the Corridor for the Community

Create a pedestrian friendly street with a mix of uses

4 Build a Network of Streets

Improve cross connections, create regular streets and blocks and signal spacing,

5 Connect to Open Spaces

Create greenways, blueways, paths, and trails that link the neighborhoods together.

Initiatives

The South Military Highway Corridor Plan focused on three initiative areas.

1 Bower's Hill

2 Community Core

3 Gilmerton

The three initiative areas represent three different land uses, community characters and functions. The western portion of the Study Area, Bower's Hill, extends from the I-664/Bower's Hill interchange

in the west to the I-64/Cavalier Boulevard Interchange and will develop as a low-density, light-industrial area. However it will remain rural in character. The roadway will become a four lane parkway, with industrial uses tucked behind the existing tree wall. A reconfigured interchange and an improved roadway will spur growth in the undeveloped portions of the corridor.

The Central portion of the Study Area will transition into the Community Core. The Community Core is defined as the area between the intersection of South Military Highway and George Washington Highway in the west and the South Military Highway/Canal Drive intersection in the east. This portion will contain mixed use buildings, improved intersections, additional traffic signals and a pedestrian friendly environment. The residential areas will become connected to the uses along the corridor as the uses will serve the daily needs of the residents and employees in the area. Industrial uses will be relocated to either of the other two initiative areas and new uses, compatible with neighborhood development, will continue to be developed.

The eastern portion of the corridor, the Gilmerton Area, will be strengthened as an industrial area. The Gilmerton Area begins immediately east of the South Military Highway/Canal Drive intersection and ends in the immediate vicinity of the South Military Highway/Bainbridge Boulevard interchange. Water dependent uses will be located along the southern branch of the Elizabeth River and Saint Julian Creek. Access to these properties will be improved in order to protect the adjacent residential communities. South Military Highway will be rebuilt as a six-lane boulevard with a median and regularly spaced traffic signals.



Perspective of the redeveloped core



Perspective of the redeveloped intersection of George Washington Boulevard and South Military Highway