

## **2005 REVISIONS TO WESTERN BRANCH LAND STUDY**

### **STUDY DESCRIPTION:**

This study is a revisit of the 2001 Western Branch Land Study to consider the appropriateness of incorporating mixed use land use classifications within the study area. The study area is described as the area of the City to the west of Interstate 664, north of Route 13/58/460, south of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad right of way and east of the City of Suffolk. Land use recommendations from the 2001 Western Branch Land study formed the basis of the Land Use Plan element of the 2026 Forward Chesapeake Comprehensive Plan.

### **BACKGROUND:**

City Council, with the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan on March 9, 2005, directed staff to add language requiring review of the 2001 Western Branch Land Study for the possible inclusion of mixed use designations on the 2026 Land Use Plan. This directive was precipitated by a recommendation for the inclusion of a Medium Density Mixed Use designation for land to the south of Portsmouth Boulevard and west of Interstate 664 by the Plan Advisory Team. The rationale for the revisit to the Western Branch Land Study is that the 2001 study did not consider mixed use designations as possible land use plan classifications at the time since the committee did not have the opportunity to consider mixed use designations. City Council expressed a desire for the committee that worked on the Western Branch plan to have input on the proposed land use plan changes.

On May 26, 2005, the Western Branch Committee was reconvened to look at the appropriateness of mixed use designations in the area west of Interstate 664 and north of Route 13/58/460. Planning Department staff contacted persons that served on the 2001 Committee to give them an opportunity to work on this effort. Where original committee members were unavailable, replacements were selected that maintained the original committee makeup of four residents, four representatives of the business committee and the various ex-officia and staff members (see attached membership list). The Committee met five times between June and October of 2005 to discuss the concept of mixed use how it may be applied in the study area.

Additionally, staff sent a letter to all property owners of parcels with over 20 acres of land to inquire if there was an interest in mixed use designations for their property. Staff proceeded to interview four property owners regarding potential changes in their land use designations. The representative of the "Pine Grove Property" (located to the south of Portsmouth Boulevard and west of I-664) was the only interested party in regards to a specific mixed use designation at this time. However, through the interview process, two additional land use alterations

(Airport area and Charlton Drive area) were suggested by property owners and forwarded to the Western Branch Committee for their consideration.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN ALTERNATIVES**

In regards to the “Pine Grove property” (Portsmouth Boulevard area), staff presented a generalized version of the property owner concept as to how the concept of mixed use could be incorporated. After much discussion over three meetings, the following concept was developed for the area south of Portsmouth Boulevard:

- Designation of approximately 116 acres, immediately south of Portsmouth Boulevard, to the existing land use designation of Medium Density Mixed Use. This use is defined as predominately commercial with medium density residential (5-16 units per acre). This designation would replace existing land use plan designations for Business/Commercial and Office.
- Designation of approximately 70 acres, south of the above designation, as a new land use category to be called Medium Density Residential Mixed Use. The residential density remains the same as above but the total acreage is to be predominately residential. This designation would replace existing land use plan designations for Office use.
- Designation of approximately 40 acres, immediately to the north of Jolliff Woods, as a new land use category to be called Low/Medium Density Residential. This new category will have a density range of 5-10 units per acre. This replaces the existing land use plan designation for low density residential and is consistent with the developer’s intention for higher density residential to be incorporated into the master planned community.
- An additional Conservation land use designation was included for the area immediately to the west of Jolliff Woods to ensure that this area would remain in natural or park use.

The Committee generally supported the above designations for the “Pine Grove” property. However, the Western Branch residents on the committee expressed concern over City service levels, particularly in regards to schools. At the September 29, 2005 meeting, the Committee discussed three separate scenarios for approval of the mixed use for the Portsmouth Boulevard area. These scenarios are described as follows (**see attached maps and school impact memorandum**):

Scenario A was developed to offset the expected school impact of introducing residential use to the area immediately south of Portsmouth Boulevard. This scenario would re-designate the entire high density residential designation to the north of Portsmouth Boulevard and the adjacent conservation buffer area to Office, Research, and Commerce. This new designation would then become an

extension of the existing Office, Research and Commerce designation to the north. There were 2 committee member objections to this alternative.

Scenario B was developed to partially offset the school impact while maintaining some medium density residential to the former high density residential area north of Portsmouth Boulevard. The conservation buffer to the north is maintained. There was one objection to this scenario.

Scenario C was developed to include the new designations for the area south of Portsmouth Boulevard and not to alter the property to the north of Portsmouth Boulevard. This alternative has the greatest school impact. There were two objections to this scenario.

**Scenario B was chosen as the Committee's recommendation as it had the fewest objections by committee members present.**

The land use designation suggestion for the area immediately to the northeast of the Hampton Roads Airport is to go from Institution/Government use to Office, Research and Commerce. Staff presented this change to the committee on September 15, 2005 and stated that the public designation was an oversight as the land is not publicly owned and that the proposed designation would be consistent with the 2001 Western Branch Study. **The Committee endorsed changing the land use designation from Public to Office, Research, and Commerce with no objections.**

The final land use designation suggestion was for land to the south and west of Jolliff Woods and north of Willow Lakes. This land is also the subject of a current rezoning application know as the Villages at Jolliff. The land use designation that would best reflect the property owner's desire is the newly recommended Low/Medium density residential category. The current land use plan designates this area for Recreation/Open Space. Committee members did express concern for the roadway geometrics and stressed that the rezoning should address the roadway impacts. **The Committee endorsed the change in land use designation from Recreation/Open Space to Low/Medium Density Residential with no objections.**

### **PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY**

A public meeting was held on Monday, November 28, 2005 at Chittum Elementary School. A total of 34 attendees signed in with total attendance estimated at approximately 50. Display maps, informational handouts and a continuously running Power Point presentation describing mixed use were available for public review. Staff from the Planning, Economic Development and Public Works departments was available to answer questions. Attached are the written comments received from the meeting. The overriding concerns expressed by the majority of attendees was regarding insufficient school and

road service levels and not as much concern over the proposed land use if these service levels could be met.