

Cherry Avenue

Small Area Plan

Summary Report

MARCH 2021

Developed on behalf of
the Fifeville Neighborhood
Association





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Acknowledgments

In September of 2017, the City of Charlottesville initiated the Cherry Avenue Small Area Planning effort. While the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) conducted the planning work and managed the public engagement process, many groups and individuals contributed to the effort. The TJPDC would like to thank those who contributed their time, resources, and creativity to make the final plan possible. Additional appreciation goes to all those who will make the plan a reality.

- **The Fifeville Neighborhood Association**
- **The Cherry Avenue Think Tank**
- **All Fifeville residents, business owners and community leaders who participated**
- **Charlottesville City Staff**
- **Charlottesville Planning Commission**
- **Charlottesville City Council**

Welcome

“There is a saying from an old movie I like: ‘strange how one man’s life touches so many others and when he isn’t around it leaves a hole’. So we should be kind and friendly to the people we come in contact with everyday. I believe in this community.

As big as Fifeville is, we cross paths with our neighbors. We should come together and work to keep Fifeville a vibrant, historic, livable, economical, and safe community that its residents can be proud of.

As we move forward with the Cherry Avenue Small Plan, I do believe that this is what Fifeville can become, and each of us can do a little and get involved in our neighborhood associations and let our voices and concerns be heard about the issues surrounding us and our neighbors.”



-Carmelita Wood, Fifeville Neighborhood Association President, Think Tank Member, and community resident

“I love the fact that this is our neighborhood. People may infringe upon us, but we have the history. I walk through there [Cherry Avenue] every day and there are OG’s [long-time Fifeville residents] and there are the new cats that show them respect. What I would like in the future is for the younger generation to get the real history of what our parents and grandparents and great grandparents went through to even open up stores on Cherry Ave. How black women and men looked out for one another’s kids. And you wouldn’t be here if not for their struggles. Help the black community have equal opportunities to own our homes. Don’t just sell them to the highest bidder, give us a chance. Don’t keep putting up hotels; put up community centers. Most of all, let the police know not everyone in a hoody or walking late is up to something. We still need equality, peace, happiness and the pursuit of justice. Sorry for rambling ... I love my neighborhood and this survey touched me.” ~ Cherry Avenue Survey Respondent, via email, 2015

Introduction

WHY NOW?

- Pressure of displacement of long-time residents and a need for affordable housing,
- Stresses on the neighborhood and its commercial corridor from commuter traffic,
- Large approved development under construction, anchoring the east and west ends of the corridor,
- Large numbers of vacant lots with potential for development along the corridor, and
- The ability to utilize the groundwork laid by the Fifeville Neighborhood Association (FNA) in the Cherry Avenue Community Visioning Summary Report (May 2016).

Available at: <https://fifevilleneighbor.wordpress.com/cherry-avenue/>

PLAN INTENT

The Cherry Avenue Small Area Plan sets a vision for the Cherry Avenue corridor and the surrounding Fifeville neighborhood. It is a policy document, commissioned by the City of Charlottesville, intended to:

- Create a clear vision for the study area,
- Provide recommendations for making that vision happen, and,
- Guide the actions of City officials and community stakeholders.

STUDY AREA



Introduction Continued

TIMELINE

- 2013: Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan update calls for small area plans**
 - The City of Charlottesville adopted an update to its citywide plan (the Comprehensive Plan), which sets local policies and provides a to-do list for local officials. That document called for additional plans for defined areas across the City.
- 2015: Fifeville Neighborhood Association (FNA) forms the Cherry Avenue Committee**
 - The Neighborhood Association formed the Cherry Avenue Committee, made up of residents and open to all neighborhood participants.
- 2016: FNA releases the Cherry Avenue Community Visioning Summary Report**
 - The Cherry Avenue Committee conducted a neighborhood-wide visioning effort for the future of Cherry Avenue, in response to FNA discussions about the future of the corridor. The resulting report outlined a vision, goals, desired uses and next steps.
- 2016: Charlottesville Planning Commission awards funding for the Cherry Avenue Small Area Plan to Fifeville**
 - Late in the summer, City Planning Commissioners designated the Cherry Avenue Corridor for its next small area planning initiative.
- 2017: Small Area planning process begins**
 - The City contracted with the TJPDC to run the process and develop the small area plan. The Fifeville Neighborhood Association formed a Think Tank of residents to guide the process.
 - March 2018: Community history event**
 - A community meeting was held at Buford Middle School focused on Fifeville's past, allowing residents to tell their stories.
 - Summer 2018: Front porch discussions and focus groups**
 - A series of meetings in the community, including front porch discussions and focus groups.
 - August 2018: Community open house**
 - The August 26th meeting was the largest gathering in the process allowing residents to participate in an interactive zoning and land use exercise.
 - Summer 2019: Cherry Avenue Technical Committee**
 - The Cherry Avenue Technical Committee, comprised of City staff, business owners, and Think Tank members met to review and revise the draft plan recommendations.
 - December 2019: Final recommendations open house**
 - A strong turn out of residents attended the open house event to review and prioritize the draft recommendations and discuss implementation actions moving forward.
- 2021: Adoption of the small area plan into the Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan**
 - Add the Cherry Avenue Small Area Plan as an amendment to the Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan.
- 2021 & Beyond: Implementation of recommendations**
 - Charlottesville, the Fifeville Neighborhood Association, community stakeholders and their partners collaborate on recommendations from the Cherry Avenue Small Area Plan.

Neighborhood Vision

Cherry Avenue will be a vibrant mixed-use area that supports a diverse, thriving Fifeville Community. Development on Cherry Avenue will respect and preserve the history and culture of the Fifeville neighborhood. New development and investment on Cherry Avenue and throughout the neighborhood will build a sense of community between long-time and newer residents and be accessible and welcoming to residents at the most vulnerable end of the socio-economic scale.



GOALS

- 1 Rebuild and strengthen the sense of belonging, inclusion, and community in Fifeville.
- 2 Lift up and preserve Fifeville's legacy of African American leadership, and highlight Fifeville's unique sense of place as a culturally diverse neighborhood.
- 3 Ensure that local land use laws encourage a vibrant, mixed-use corridor along Cherry Avenue while respecting the existing lower density historic housing forms.
- 4 Ensure low-income residents, people of color, and generational residents are able to remain in Fifeville and benefit from neighborhood investments
- 5 Invest in empowerment and upward mobility for neighborhood residents at the most vulnerable end of the socio-economic scale.
- 6 Foster an inclusive and welcoming community through place-keeping, place-making, and beautification.
- 7 Encourage new development that advances equity, is financially and socially accessible to residents, and represents Fifeville.
- 8 Provide a safe and more connected community that creates access and opportunities for residents.
- 9 Provide a transportation network that prioritizes safety and mobility for residents.
- 10 Increase health and well-being for all neighborhood residents.

Community Voices



“It’s important to connect with people. Talk with them. Show them some love. Listen to each other. And look out for each other. That’s what makes Fifeville a strong community.”

-Howard Robinson, Fifeville Neighborhood Association Member, Cherry Avenue Think Tank member, and community resident



“Coming from a different culture, as an immigrant, this neighborhood specifically gives you the back home feeling.”

-Mohammed Eitta, Cherry Avenue Think Tank Member and Boy Scout Troop #1437 Leader at the Islamic Society of Central Virginia



“Fifeville is not a cookie cutter neighborhood. It has so much history.”

-Bethany Hurley, Fifeville Neighborhood Association Member and community resident



“If we just respect each other's diversity, and just really respect each other's opinions, I think we're gonna do good. This neighborhood is the greatest neighborhood in Charlottesville.”

-Community Resident, at 2018 March History Event

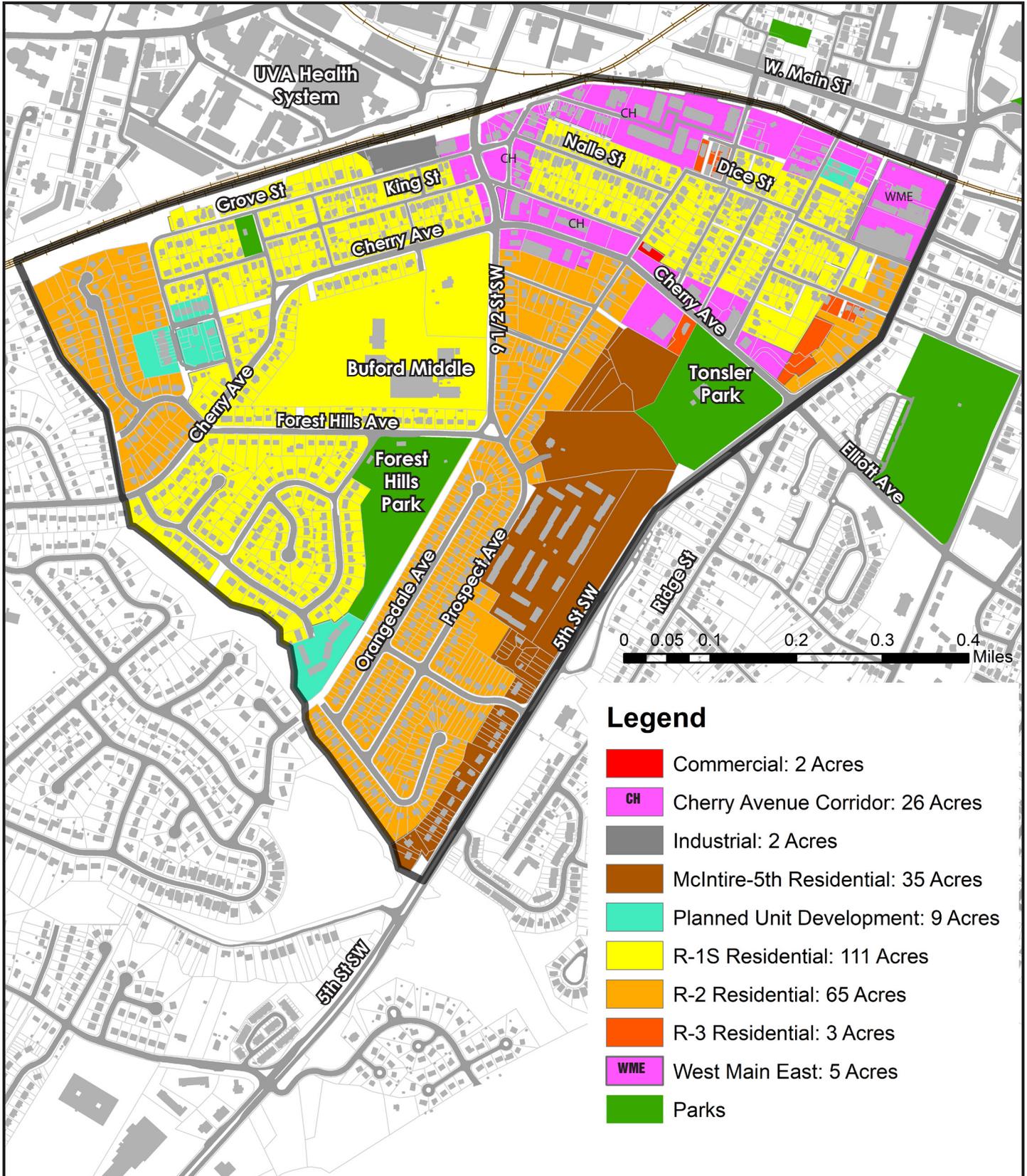


“A lot of changes have been made, but the community has to get involved together in order to make change work the way it should work.”

- Richard Feero, Community resident and Director of Leadership at Abundant Life Ministries

Existing Zoning in Fifeville

The map below shows the existing zoning in Fifeville. The vast majority of the neighborhood is zoned low-density residential, with higher-density mixed uses located along Cherry Avenue, Roosevelt Brown Boulevard, and West Main Street. The Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoned areas are intended to encourage a mix of housing types and densities.



Future Land Use Chart

The 2016 Cherry Avenue Visioning Summary Report captures the characteristics and land uses that residents would and would not like to see in Fifeville. Those in bold represent top responses and asterisks indicate topics where consensus was not met and warrant further discussion. The desired uses listed in the chart were confirmed through extensive community engagement efforts.

	What Residents Would <u>LIKE</u> to See	What Residents Would <u>NOT</u> Like to See
Housing, Sense of Community & Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of existing housing • Affordable housing, including subsidized housing for low-income residents that is incorporated throughout the neighborhood (as opposed to being isolated) • For generational families to remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge apartment buildings (like on Main Street) • Absentee landlords • Displacement of current residents • A divided community
Affordable Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An affordable grocery store, produce store, or co-op • Fruits and vegetables • Community garden • Farmer's market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilapidated grocery store with low quality goods • A grocery store that is too expensive for lower-income residents
Locally Owned and Operated Goods & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial services (bank, ATM, affordable taxes) • Laundromat • Restaurants (McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, coffee shop- like Cville Coffee)* • Convenience stores to remain • Art spaces (studios) • Businesses that hire locally/pay a living wage • Health care facility, affordable day care for neighborhood children, flower shop, department store, Family Dollar • Non-profit community center (rented for a commercial kitchen, parties, gatherings, classes) • Maker space/business incubator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel • Parking garage • Absentee landlords • Goods and services that are too expensive for lower-income residents • Chain restaurants*
History, Culture, & Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of history and culture (people and housing) • Standing exhibit of history • Historic signs and/or walking tours • Public art and murals 	
Walkability, Traffic, Public Transportation, & Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower the speed limit to 25 mph • Flashing crosswalk at all crosswalks • Additional infrastructure for pedestrians/ bikes • More frequent bus service • Consider parking in back of commercial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic congestion on Cherry Avenue and residential streets
Infrastructure, Aesthetics, & Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherry trees • Landscaping, flowers, and tree cover • Buildings at the present scale • Public trash and recycling cans along Cherry • Gazebo and botanical garden at Tonsler Park • Preserve and maintain old signs* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, blocky architecture that doesn't fit the neighborhood • Light pollution • Vacant lots • Old signs that are dilapidated*
Social Events & Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neighborhood block party • Use Tonsler amphitheater for performances, including showcasing neighborhood talent and live bands • Pop up events in vacant lots • After school programs and summer camps • Events for seniors, such as bingo 	
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police walking in the neighborhood* • More people out walking • Police substation in community-friendly location • Respect training for police officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilapidated grocery store • Increased presence of police (due to previous negative experiences)* • Police substation* • Drugs, prostitution, and loitering

Place-Keeping and Community Building

Fifeville's unique sense of place as a culturally diverse neighborhood will be preserved & enhanced.

SITUATION

Residents value Fifeville's proud history of African American leadership and the multicultural neighborhood it has become. Opportunities for neighbors to connect through community events such as concerts or festivals and the establishment of more community-oriented spaces on Cherry Avenue to gather for a meeting, a meal, or a family celebration are top priorities for residents.

OPPORTUNITY

Place-keeping, place-making, and beautification are tools that can be utilized to strengthen community bonds, inclusion, and equity. Beyond the simple preservation of space or buildings, these strategies weave together the stories and experiences of the people who call Fifeville home while looking to the future to foster an inclusive and accessible neighborhood to all. Strengthening the Fifeville Neighborhood Association presents an opportunity for strategy implementation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Easy Win:** Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.

- **PK-1:** Install community murals/public art displays.
- **PK-2:** Install signage and historic markers.
- **PK-3:** Build and strengthen relationships between community residents, non-profits, businesses, land owners, and other neighborhood institutions through community events and collaboration on community projects.
-  **PK-4:** Develop a lighting plan for the Fifeville neighborhood.
-  **PK-5:** Strengthen participation in the Fifeville Neighborhood Association, and expand its capacity for leading community building and community development efforts.
- **PK-6:** Pursue funding opportunities with partner organizations.
- **PK-7:** Build and strengthen relationships between community institutions & potential developers.
- **PK-8:** Expand after-school programming for Fifeville youth, and center their voices in community building and community development efforts.
- **PK-9:** Implement Cherry Avenue corridor landscaping improvements.

Economic Development

Cherry Avenue will be a vibrant, mixed-use corridor that is financially & socially accessible to all.

SITUATION

Residents want to see a greater variety of resident-oriented businesses in the corridor and greater access to economic mobility. They cited lack of dining options, gathering spaces, and service-oriented businesses. New businesses should be inclusive of existing residents- especially low-income residents- by creating spaces where they feel comfortable and welcome. New development should also create opportunity for new, locally-owned businesses and support existing businesses and entrepreneurs.

OPPORTUNITY

Leveraging the expertise of the existing business community in Fifeville is an opportunity to evaluate and improve the systems in place for entrepreneurial start-up and retention. The Federal Opportunity Zone designation could help drive investment to Fifeville, but care would need to be taken to ensure that any new investment is consistent with the community's vision. Formalizing a business association specific to Cherry Avenue is another opportunity to drive equitable community investment.



Image Credit: visitsoldona.com



Image Credit: twitter.com/reidsupermarket



Image Credit: nvaloft.com

RECOMMENDATIONS



Easy Win: Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.

- **E-1:** Provide skills-building opportunities and supports for Fifeville residents such as career development, budgeting and financial management classes, and renter and homeowner supports.
- **E-2:** Create a Fifeville food justice/community market feasibility report.
- **E-3:** Start a business association for Cherry Avenue businesses.
- **E-4:** Support/incentivize locally-owned, small, woman, and minority-owned business along Cherry Avenue and support/encourage existing businesses to stay in Fifeville.
- **E-5:** Explore founding a community development corporation or partnering with an existing one.
- **E-6:** Evaluate and leverage Opportunity Zone designation to attract capital investments consistent with community vision.
-  **E-7:** Increase access to supports for small businesses.
- **E-8:** Create incentives for the types of businesses and developments residents would like to see based on uses identified in the Future Land Use chart.

Housing

All Fifeville residents shall be able to remain and benefit from neighborhood investments.

SITUATION

Affordable housing—especially for low-income residents, people of color and generational residents—is a key issue. The residential character of Fifeville is central to the community's identity. While residents are interested in seeing economic development and commercial investment in Cherry Avenue, and hope to maintain and improve affordable housing options for all in Fifeville. They hope to maintain the ability to afford rent or own a home even as the community continues to develop and flourish.

OPPORTUNITY

The City's effort to re-examine affordable housing policy offers an opportunity for neighborhood-specific strategies focused on the creation and preservation of affordable housing to be evaluated. It is important that the Fifeville community be involved in this process and build upon the work completed in the small area plan. The regional affordability study being conducted by the TJPDC will also contain targeted affordability recommendations that could benefit Fifeville.



RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Easy Win:** *Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.*

-  **H-1:** Promote use of accessory dwelling units as affordable housing by revisiting the City's accessory dwelling unit policy.
-  **H-2:** Identify properties for housing development under Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund and local housing non-profits.
-  **H-3:** Inform residents of existing housing programs and services.
-  **H-4:** Protect historically significant homes.
-  **H-5:** Develop a Community Development Corporation to promote homebuyer, rental, and landlord training and communication.
-  **H-6:** Improve protections for renters with the aim of reducing displacement and eviction.
-  **H-7:** Fund affordable housing initiatives designed to help current residents and their families to remain in the neighborhood.
-  **H-8:** Develop list of area residents willing to volunteer skills/equipment to aid with home maintenance.
-  **H-9:** Develop incentives including density bonuses and expedited review for projects that create new affordable units.

Land Use

New development in Fifeville will be neighborhood-scaled & advance equity.

SITUATION

Fifeville is experiencing development pressure, with large-scale development happening on its periphery. Residents fear that displacement and gentrification could be the by-products of increased growth in Fifeville. There is also concern that the existing land use and zoning policies lack a focus on smart, intentional growth. The largely single-family zoning is also a challenge for increasing affordable housing in the neighborhood.

OPPORTUNITY

Fifeville residents want smart growth. Residents want to ensure that any new development is scaled appropriately, fosters inclusion and equity, and represents the neighborhood. The vacant parcels along Cherry Avenue have the potential to serve as catalyst projects that could spur investment in the neighborhood and ensuring collaborative community involvement is essential. The City's Comprehensive Plan update is an opportunity to reexamine current zoning and implement change.



RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Easy Win:** Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.

-  **LU-1:** Re-examine allowable uses in the zoning code.
-  **LU-2:** Explore traditional and creative opportunities to provide access to necessary services in the neighborhood.
-  **LU-3:** Include Cherry Avenue zoning review as a specific deliverable in City-wide zoning update.
-  **LU-4:** Explore opportunities for public/private partnerships to acquire property along Cherry Avenue to serve as a catalyst for community-driven development.
-  **LU-5:** Re-examine massing regulations along Cherry Avenue to support a respectful transition between more intensive development along Cherry Avenue and the existing historic low-density housing.

Transportation

The transportation network in Fifeville will be safe, connected, & accessible to all residents.

SITUATION

The Cherry Avenue corridor serves as the primary link for north-bound commuters traveling towards the University of Virginia Health System. As such, this increased travel demand has led to increased congestion along the corridor, concerns over bicycle and pedestrian safety, and cut-through traffic on residential streets. A lack of complete sidewalk infrastructure throughout the Fifeville neighborhood and higher demand for limited parking are also concerns for the community.

OPPORTUNITY

As redevelopment occurs along the corridor, opportunities exist to reduce curb cuts and increase sidewalk widths to make the corridor more pedestrian friendly. Increasing access and connectivity in the Fifeville is a top community priority and on-going trail planning activities can serve as a model for future projects identified in the recommendations list.



RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Easy Win:** Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.

- **T-1:** Create bike and pedestrian connection between Tonsler & Forest Hills Park.
- **T-2:** Add sidewalks on 6 1/2 Street, 6th Street, and 9th Street.
- **T-3:** Widen turn lane on Cherry Avenue at Ridge Street intersection and look at feasibility of adding a bicycle climbing lane.
-  **T-4:** Request formal speed/traffic study from the City on Cherry Avenue, Prospect Avenue, Forest Hills Avenue, and intersection of Cherry Avenue and 7 1/2 Street.
- **T-5:** Clearly mark 6 1/2 Street as one-way.
- **T-6:** Explore options to improve visibility along Dice Street.
-  **T-7:** Relocate CAT bus stop at intersection of Cherry Avenue. and 6th St. farther from crosswalk on Cherry Avenue.
- **T-8:** Add covered bus shelters where appropriate.
- **T-9:** Explore opportunities for creative traffic calming investments that articulate the neighborhood's history and culture while also reducing speed and traffic.
-  **T-10:** Add multi-use path between Tonsler Park and Greenstone on 5th.
- **T-11:** Expand transit service by providing more frequent service intervals.
- **T-12:** Add trail connection from Tonsler Park to 7 1/2 Street (per Tonsler Park Master Plan).
- **T-13:** Develop infrastructure asset inventory.
- **T-14:** Promote alternative commuting options.
- **T-15:** Open bike connection through Forest Hills Park to Antionette/Shamrock
- **T-16:** Identify locations where driveway entrances could be eliminated/redesigned to improve pedestrian safety.

Parks and Recreation

Fifeville will preserve & enhance its public spaces to strengthen community & foster inclusion.

SITUATION

Three parks in Fifeville serve as the main public gathering places for the neighborhood, and their role in fostering connection and community is vital. Recent investments such as the splash pad at Tonsler Park are welcome additions; however, many residents cited concerns over general upkeep and maintenance of the parks, a lack of covered outdoor seating, and safe connections to an between the parks.

OPPORTUNITY

Easy wins exist for adding park amenities, such as bleachers to the basketball courts, and increasing park maintenance and upkeep. These can help serve as a catalyst for the community to build on its successes and focus discussions on long-term improvements, such as the expansion of the community center at Tonsler Park and activation of potential future park space at Cherry Avenue and Rockcreek Road.



RECOMMENDATIONS

 **Easy Win:** Easy wins identify strategies that build off of existing efforts, require less capital funding, and could be implemented in a more immediate time frame.

-  **PR-1:** Expand, renovate, or reconfigure the community building at Tonsler Park.
-  **PR-2:** Add covered outdoor seating at Tonsler Park.
-  **PR-3:** Add seating/bleachers to the basketball courts at Tonsler Park.
-  **PR-4:** Add removable soccer goals to open field at Forest Hills Park.
-  **PR-5:** Improve trash collection in parks and public areas.
-  **PR-6:** Open the gate at the back of Tonsler Park to the multi-use path between Tonsler Park and Greenstone on 5th.
-  **PR-7:** Upgrade the existing baseball field at Tonsler Park.
-  **PR-8:** Develop a spring community event and activate the amphitheater space at Tonsler Park.
-  **PR-9:** Activate city park space at Cherry Avenue and Rockcreek Road intersection and explore possible site for community garden.
-  **PR-10:** Add a snack bar or other alternative to vending machines at both community parks.
-  **PR-11:** Add additional basketball courts at Forest Hills Park.

