Date of Meeting: October 21, 2008

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

INFORMATION ITEM

#5

SUBJECT: Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Process – Final Report

ELECTION DISTRICTS: Potomac, Sterling, Sugarland Run, Dulles

BACKGROUND:

In February of 2008, the Board initiated the Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project. The purpose of the project was three-fold: 1) engage a diverse and large cross-section of the public in Potomac and Sterling in a dialogue to capture their key issues and concerns, along with their suggested opportunities and strategies; 2) ensure a collaborative and "citizen-driven" approach where the issues and topics are defined by the citizens and stakeholders participating in the process; and, 3) report the results of the public dialog back to the Board to assist them in future decision making efforts in Potomac and Sterling. The 8-month long process involved the development of a number of milestone documents including: existing conditions reports for Potomac and Sterling and a Preliminary Results Report. (These documents can be accessed online at the project web page, www.loudoun.gov/potomac-sterling.) These milestone documents helped to shape the Community Objectives and Strategies which, along with the Executive Summary and Introduction, form the basis of the final report, Attachment 1.

The Preliminary Results Report was a summary of the information, ideas, and solutions offered by stakeholders who participated in the project's stakeholder outreach process, including public sessions and a community survey. Key issues identified affecting the neighborhoods and communities included: 1.) decline in the appearance and conditions of neighborhoods and housing, 2.) increase in crime and gangs, 3.) transportation congestion and lack of connectivity, 4.) community change due to the influx of ethnic groups and illegal immigrants, and 5.) overcrowding. Stakeholders also suggested opportunities and solutions with some common themes, including: neighborhood and housing revitalization; transportation and land use corridor improvements; expanding and enhancing transportation choices; economic development; and community facilities and programs.

These emerging themes have been incorporated into the Final Report as a series of community objectives and strategies that can be used as a framework for the development of any number of community initiatives. The approach taken with these objectives and strategies has been to:

- Consider increasing proactive enforcement activities to address existing issues of neighborhood appearance, housing decline and rising crime;
- Target revitalization strategies to those areas most in need;
- Address not only physical infrastructure improvements for revitalization, but also focus on building the capacity of the community to work together to address common issues of concern; and
- Identify opportunities for collaborative efforts between the County and citizens.

ISSUES:

The Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project was envisioned by the Board of Supervisors as the first phase of larger Community Plan processes. The findings and suggestions gathered from the project provide the framework for developing strategies for the Board to consider that could lead to initiatives aimed towards addressing concerns and improving the quality of life for Potomac and Sterling residents. These suggested strategies are not an exhaustive or definitive list of potential actions, but are meant to help the Board assist in their decision-making about future efforts in these communities.

The Board's next steps would be to determine whether any actions they pursue are short-term or long-term goals. As part of that priority-setting process, the Board would: 1.) investigate further the potential effectiveness of the strategies, 2.) assess the cost-effectiveness and resource implications of the various strategies given the County's resource limitations, 3.) examine how the potential strategies relate to and impact the Board's current strategic planning efforts, and 4.) assess how the strategies relate to on-going programmatic and strategic planning efforts currently underway within County departments.

ATTACHMENT:

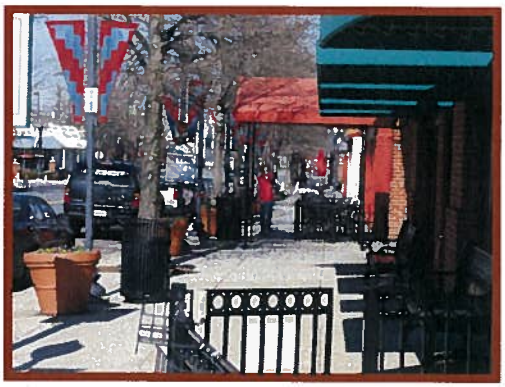
1. Final Report

STAFF CONTACT:

Michael "Miguel" Salinas, Project Manager, Planning Department

Final Report of the Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project

October 16, 2008



Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach

Prepared by:

Loudoun County Department of Planning
1 Harrison Street, 3rd Floor Leesburg, VA 20177-7000
(703) 777-0246 (703) 777-0441 (fax)

Project Webpage and e-mail:
www.loudoun.gov\potomac-sterling Potomac_Sterling@Loudoun.gov

I. Executive Summary

The "Preliminary Results Report for the Potomac and Sterling Communities", which was released in July 22, 2008, summarized what citizens valued within their neighborhoods and communities as well as their key issues and concerns. Key issues identified affecting the neighborhoods and communities included: 1.) decline in the appearance and conditions of neighborhoods and housing, 2.) increase in crime and gangs, 3.) transportation congestion and lack of connectivity, 4.) community change due to the influx of ethnic groups and illegal immigrants, and 5.) overcrowding. Stakeholders also suggested opportunities and solutions with some common themes, including: neighborhood and housing revitalization; transportation and land use corridor improvements; expanding and enhancing transportation choices; economic development; and community facilities and programs.

The emerging themes have been incorporated into a final report that includes a series of community objectives and strategies that can be used as a framework for the development of any number of community initiatives. The approach taken with these strategies has been to:

- Consider increasing proactive enforcement activities to address neighborhood appearance, housing decline and rising crime;
- Target revitalization strategies to those areas most in need;
- Address not only physical infrastructure improvements for revitalization, but also focus on building the capacity of the community to work together to address common issues of concern; and
- Identify opportunities for collaborative efforts between the County and citizens.

The Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project was envisioned by the Board of Supervisors as the first phase of larger Community Plan processes. The findings and suggestions gathered from the project provide the framework for developing strategies for the Board to consider that could lead to initiatives aimed towards improving the quality of life for Potomac and Sterling residents. These suggested strategies are not an exhaustive or definitive list of potential actions, but are meant to help the Board assist in their decision-making about future short-term and long-term efforts in Potomac and Sterling.

As part of the priority-setting process, the Board's next step would be to: 1.) investigate further the potential effectiveness of the strategies, 2.) assess the cost-effectiveness and resource implications of the various strategies given the County's resource limitations, 3.) examine how the potential strategies relate to and impact the Board's current strategic planning efforts, and 4.) assess how the strategies relate to on-going programmatic and strategic planning efforts currently underway with other County Departments.

II. Introduction

A. Background

Loudoun County is the nation's fifth fastest growing county[1]. Attracted to Loudoun's beautiful scenery and proximity to employment, Dulles International Airport, and Washington D.C., the County's population has grown by over 100,000 people since 2000 to almost 280,000 today. The growth experienced in the last eight years is expected to continue – increasing by 29% in the next ten years to over 360,000 residents[2].

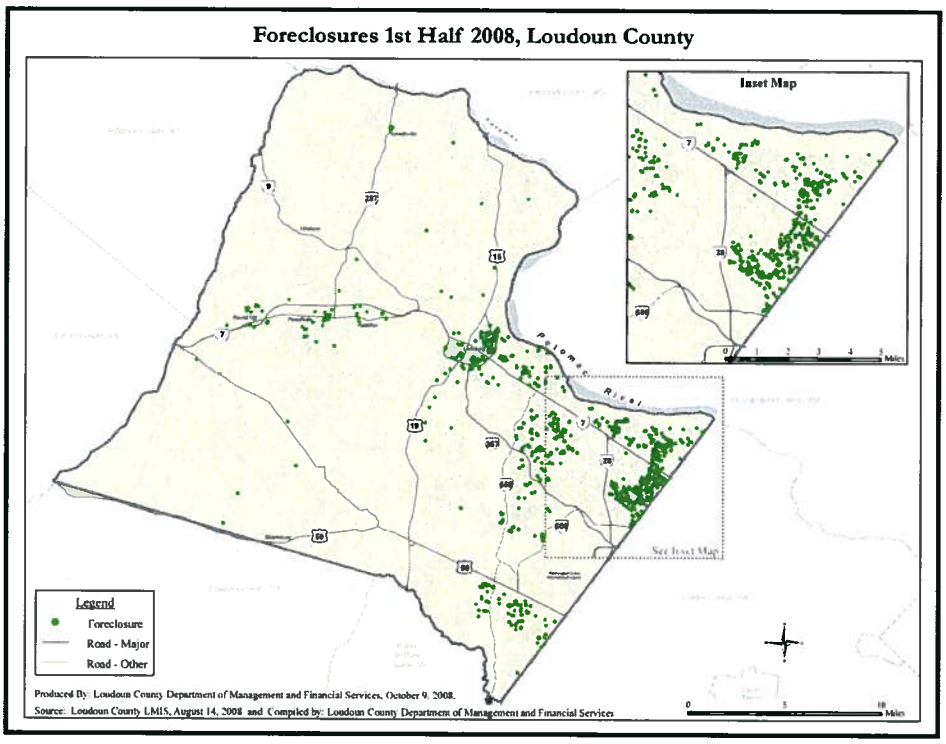
The 60,000-acre Suburban Policy Area, as laid out in the County's comprehensive plan, is the easternmost area where most of the residential and commercial growth has occurred. Amidst this growth stand two of the County's oldest and most diverse communities – the Potomac and Sterling Communities of eastern Loudoun County. The approval of the large-scale planned community of Sterling Park in 1961 signaled the beginning of the transformation of eastern Loudoun County from its 18th and early 19th century rural heritage to the suburban area that it is today. Two major events helped to open the area to residential development - the construction of Washington Dulles International Airport and the construction of a major sewer line that was to accommodate the airport and improvements to Route 7 and 28. In 1970, based on the success of Sterling Park and the continued demand for more affordable housing in the region, a second major planned community - Sugarland Run - was approved by the County. Although not planned as a self-contained community with a mix of uses like Sterling Park, Sugarland Run was a sizeable development of mixed housing styles including single-family homes and town-houses centered along a loop road called Sugarland Run Drive. Improvements to Routes 7 and 28 in 1971 and 1988 respectively further opened up the Sterling and Potomac communities to development, such as the planned communities of Cascades and CountrySide.

Today, the Potomac and Sterling communities are largely built-out and together they contain 27% of the County's population[3]. The two communities are defined by neighborhoods offering a variety of affordable housing choices, numerous trails and recreational opportunities, and proximity to a wide range of retail and service options. Routes 7 and 28 have evolved into critical transportation corridors that are establishing Loudoun County's reputation as an international center for technology, communications and transportation. Given its connection to Dulles International Airport, Route 28 is expected to continue its role as a major economic engine for Loudoun County.

Like many other maturing neighborhoods, the two communities are facing a number of challenges. The proliferation of newer developments to the west has shifted the focus away

[1] Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 Time Series Estimates
[2] Sources: Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services
[3] Source: Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services

from Potomac and Sterling to other parts of the County. In the meantime, the infrastructure and housing in the older parts of Potomac and Sterling continue to age. The area's diverse housing styles and choices can offer affordability to many County residents. However, affordability can be reflective of the age of housing. Housing constructed in these older communities is reaching anywhere from 30 to 50 years of age and some houses are beginning to suffer from neglect. Exacerbating this concern are two factors: 1.) the current housing market forces are impacting property values, and 2.) the large number of foreclosures and subsequent vacancies resulting from families caught up in the mortgage crisis in this area. The map below shows the disproportionate impact of foreclosures in the County within the Potomac and Sterling communities. Foreclosures have a ripple effect of deteriorating neighborhood housing conditions and a corresponding decrease in housing values for both the abandoned home as well as neighboring properties.



The area is also undergoing a population transformation. Many existing neighborhoods in Eastern Loudoun are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, with each group bringing a new set of expectations, attitudes and perspectives to a once homogenous community and consequently creating new challenges for the administration and outreach of County programs and services. In 2000, minority groups represented 24% and 34% of the population in the Potomac and Sterling communities, respectively, compared to 20% Countywide, as shown in the table and figure below[4]. Updated census data for the individual

[4] Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF1 Block Data & Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services

communities is not available. In 2007, however, 33% of the County's population was minorities, with the Asian and Hispanic populations experiencing the highest rate of growth, 264% and 183% respectively, from 2000 to 2007[5]. The area has also seen a rise in the number of foreign-born immigrants. In 2000, 14% and 20% of the populations in Potomac and Sterling, respectively, were foreign-born compared to 11% Countywide[6]. Again, based on more recent Countywide census data, the foreign-born population increased from 11% in 2000 to 20% in 2007[7].

Table 1: Percentage of Minorities in 2000 by Minority Group

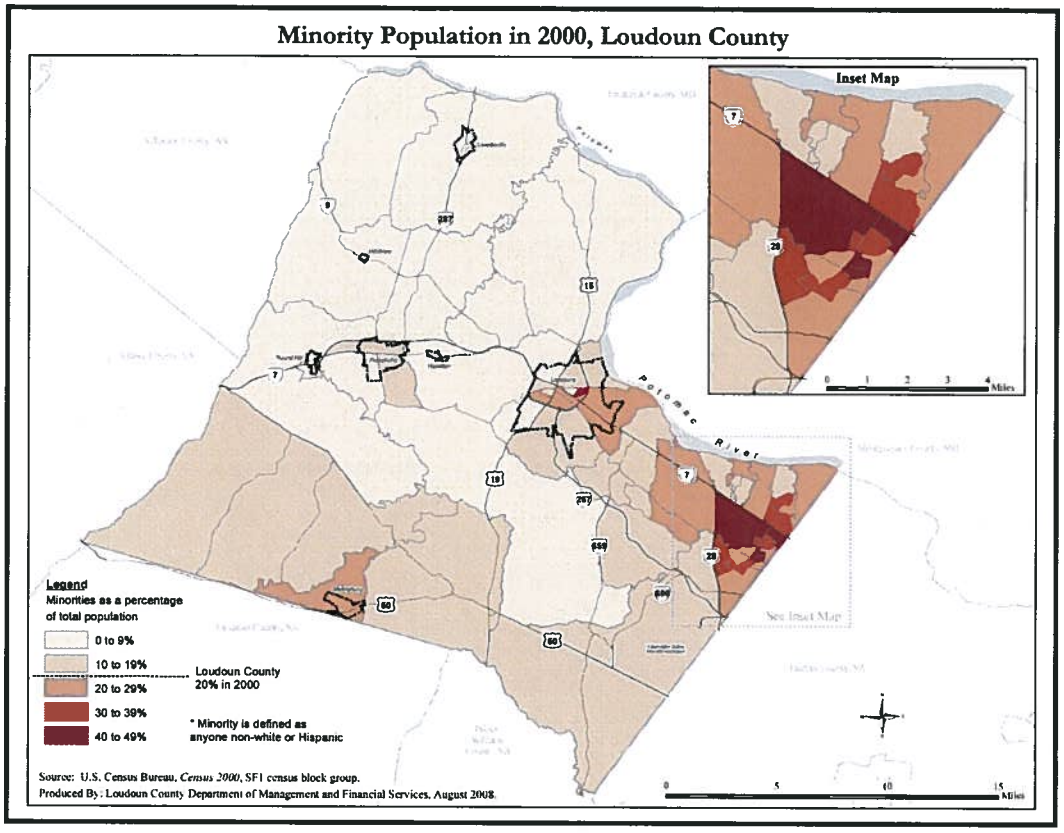
Minority Group	Potomac	Sterling	Loudoun Co.
Hispanic (all races)	6.6%	11.7%	5.9%
Black	6.6%	9.2%	6.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Asian	7.7%	9.6%	5.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Other Race	2.3%	5.1%	2.3%
Two or More Races	3.0%	3.6%	2.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF1 Block Data

[5] Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and 2007 Time Series Estimates & Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services

[6] Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF3 Block Group Data & Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services

[7] Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 and 2007 American Community Survey & Loudoun County Department of Management and Financial Services

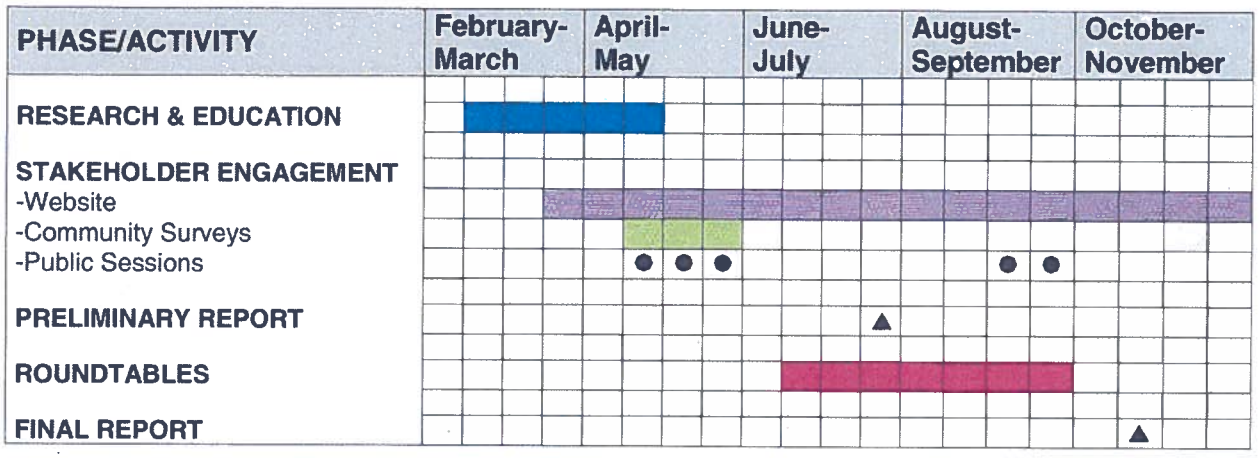


B. Project Process

The Board of Supervisors recognized that the need for a response to these and other unique challenges were long overdue. In early February of 2008, the Board initiated the Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project. The purpose of the project was three-fold:

- √ Engage a diverse and large cross-section of the citizens and stakeholders within the communities of Potomac and Sterling in a public dialogue to capture their key issues and concerns, along with their suggested opportunities and solutions;
- √ Ensure a collaborative and "citizen-driven" approach where the issues and topics are defined by the citizens and stakeholders participating in the process; and
- √ Report the results of the public dialogue back to the Board to assist in their decision-making about future efforts in Potomac and Sterling.

Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project – Workplan



▲ = Board Meeting ● = Public Meeting

The Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project was an 8-month public process that focused on three areas: Research, Preparation and Education; Stakeholder Engagement; and Stakeholder Communication. The Board of Supervisors consistently and continuously emphasized an outreach strategy designed to increase the opportunity for a diverse cross-section of the public to engage in the process – thereby reflecting a citizen-driven, bottom-up approach.

Research, Preparation and Education - Data research and collection efforts were undertaken to fully understand the existing conditions of each community and included field visits to survey existing land uses, photographing the area, researching applicable literature and websites, interviewing local officials and internal County staff, and reviewing historical information. The Department of Planning also established a Technical Review Team comprised of staff from various County departments and members of outside agencies that helped to assemble existing plans, documents, and studies, along with program information included in existing conditions reports for Potomac and Sterling. The reports provided a snapshot of the existing conditions of each community including: natural and cultural features, current land uses, zoning, infrastructure, transportation networks, public facilities, population, housing, employment, and economic development. The reports were available at the public sessions and also posted on the project web page at www.loudoun.gov/potomac-sterling for citizens and other stakeholders to use as an information resource. Finally, one-on-one interviews with members of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission were conducted to identify their key issues and concerns, along with their expectations for the project.

Stakeholder Engagement - More than 300 people participated in public meetings held in the Potomac Community (River Bend and Seneca Ridge Middle Schools) and Sterling Community (Park View High School) at different dates and times in order to give citizens the

flexibility to attend. Each session included small-group break-outs for a series of hands-on exercises, facilitated by members of Leadership Loudoun, that focused on identifying major assets and key issues, along with opportunities and solutions, to address those issues. The meeting concluded with each group reporting out their findings.

The Potomac/Sterling Community Survey was released to the public on April 22, 2008 and available through the end of May. The survey, provided in both English and Spanish, solicited public input to supplement the information gathered at the public sessions and provide an alternate means for the public to provide comments. The survey captured citizens' key issues and concerns, their ideas for addressing these concerns, and their perceptions of key community assets. The survey was available on the Internet and at three public facilities – Cascades Library, Sterling Library, and Claude Moore Park. In total, 551 surveys were received with approximately 3,000 written comments.

In addition to the surveys and public sessions, and in keeping with the primary goal of the effort to reach as many people as possible, stakeholder meetings and roundtables were held with various groups, including seniors, Hispanic families, and youth. Citizens and stakeholders also provided written comments via e-mail throughout the course of the project timeline.

Stakeholder Communication – A stakeholders list, initially starting from suggestions provided by members of the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and the project Technical Review Team, grew to become a network of over 700 "stakeholders" including organizations representing faith groups, schools (including parent-teacher organizations), businesses, homeowner associations and civic organizations. This network provided a vehicle to communicate with stakeholders on project updates and meeting schedules.

C. Final Report - Community Objectives and Strategies

The Final Report of the Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project is the culmination of Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project. The 8-month long process involved the development of a number of milestone documents including: existing conditions reports for Potomac and Sterling and a Preliminary Results Report[8]. These milestone documents helped to shape the Community Objectives and Strategies which, along with the Executive Summary and Introduction, formed the basis of the final report.

The Preliminary Results Report was a summary of the information, ideas, and solutions offered by stakeholders who participated in the project through the public sessions, community survey and written comments. The report was posted on the project web page for citizens to review and a special meeting of the Board was held on July 22nd, 2008 at Park View High School. A presentation of the report was made and citizens had the opportunity to provide additional public comment.

[8] These reports, including a more detailed breakdown of the community survey, can be accessed online at the Potomac/Sterling Community Outreach Project web page, www.loudoun.gov/potomac-sterling.

Overall, the findings established what stakeholders most valued within their neighborhoods and the larger community. Top among these were: 1.) proximity and accessibility of residents to jobs, services, and retail, 2.) sense of community, 3.) amount and quality of the area's parks, trails, and open spaces, and 4.) quality public schools and libraries, in that order.

Key issues identified affecting the neighborhoods and communities included: 1.) decline in the appearance and conditions of neighborhoods and housing, 2.) increase in crime and gangs, 3.) transportation congestion and lack of connectivity, 4.) community change due to the influx of ethnic groups and illegal immigrants, and 5.) overcrowding.

Stakeholders also suggested opportunities and solutions with some common themes, including: neighborhood and housing revitalization; transportation and land use corridor improvements; expanding and enhancing transportation choices; economic development; development patterns, housing affordability and diversity; community facilities and programs; parks and open space and environment.

The emerging themes outlined in the Preliminary Results Report were then incorporated into a series of draft community objectives and strategies that, in keeping with the workplan, were posted to the project web page and distributed to the stakeholders network for review and comments prior to the preparation of a final report to the Board. Also in keeping with the workplan, a Drop-In/Open House was held on Wednesday, October 1, 2008 at the Cascades Senior Center. The drop-in gave approximately 30-40 citizens a chance to meet with staff to provide feedback on the draft.

D. Conclusion & Next Steps

The Community Objectives and Strategies included in this final report can be used as a framework for the Board to consider developing into any number of community initiatives – thereby working towards addressing concerns and improving the quality of life for Potomac and Sterling, and for the citizens of Loudoun County as a whole. These suggested strategies are not an exhaustive or definitive list of potential actions, but are meant to help the Board assist in their decision-making about future efforts in these communities.

The approach taken with these objectives and strategies is to:

- Consider increasing proactive enforcement activities to address neighborhood appearance, housing decline and rising crime;
- Target revitalization strategies to those areas most in need;
- Address not only physical infrastructure improvements for revitalization, but also focus on building the capacity of the community to work together to address common issues of concern; and
- Identify opportunities for collaborative efforts between the County and citizens.

The Board's next steps would be to determine whether any actions they pursue are short-term or long-term goals. As part of that priority-setting process, the Board would: 1.) investigate further the potential effectiveness of the strategies, 2.) assess the cost-effectiveness and resource implications of the various strategies given the County's resource limitations, 3.)

examine how the potential strategies relate to and impact the Board's current strategic planning efforts, and 4.) assess how the strategies relate to on-going programmatic and strategic planning efforts currently underway within County departments.

III. Community Objectives & Strategies

Objective: Enhanced enforcement activities can be explored to further protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents in Potomac and Sterling and the County as a whole.

Since January 2008, the Board of Supervisors has initiated several efforts that begin to address quality of life issues affecting the Potomac and Sterling communities. These individual efforts range from proposed and adopted changes to the County Zoning Ordinance regarding zoning violations and neighborhood appearance and suggested changes to State Enabling Authority regarding housing overcrowding and graffiti abatement to development of programs that address workforce housing issues. Furthermore, the County has signed a formal agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding the 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act. As stated in the preliminary results report, the largest numbers of stakeholders concerned with community change believe that the Potomac and Sterling communities are becoming a haven for foreign-born, illegal immigrants. Stakeholders believe illegal immigrants are responsible for a number of issues, including increased crime, gangs, overcrowding, foreclosures, the loss of jobs and services from legal citizens, a lack of respect for their neighbors, and general lowering of community standards that are ultimately causing a negative impact on their property values. The ICE agreement, in affect since June, authorizes up to a maximum of 3 nominated, trained, and certified Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) personnel to perform certain immigration enforcement functions.

Table 1 below is a listing of Board initiatives to date and the status of each effort. These efforts support and/or enhance the suggested strategies discussed in this report.

Table 1: Current Board Initiatives to Date

Initiative	Date of Action	Status
Housing Overcrowding: Introduce/support legislation related to housing overcrowding that permits the County to double and triple fines for subsequent offenses	January 3, 2008	Include in 2008 Legislative Package for Virginia General Assembly.
Explore Zoning Enforcement Options for Overcrowding of Residential Dwellings	September 16, 2008	The 2008 General Assembly amended the zoning enabling statutes dealing with civil and criminal penalties. The Board has requested a review of the enforcement options under the amended law.
Graffiti Abatement: Seek State enabling authority to amend the nuisance provisions of State law to allow the County to bring action against responsible parties for recovery of the necessary costs incurred by the county for graffiti abatement and removal efforts. Consider efforts to establish a graffiti abatement program in the context of the suburban policy area plan initiative.	May 6, 2008	Include in 2009 Legislative Package for Virginia General Assembly. Staff to engage actively with non-profit organizations and other entities to assist in the education and community outreach efforts associated with the graffiti abatement and removal issue and report back on such efforts to the Public Safety and Human Services Committee on a periodic basis.
Workforce Housing/Home Foreclosure: Create a program for which up to $1,000,000 from the housing trust funds be used for the purpose of providing low interest loans or grants to Loudoun County government, school employees and employees of constitutional officers, to acquire foreclosed properties valued generally at less than $400,000 assessed value.	June 3, 2008	Discussed at Public Safety and Human Services Committee
Public Employee Live Near Your Work Program	September 2, 2008	Staff directed to develop ordinance and program materials.
Eastern Loudoun Revitalization Program modification	September 2, 2008	Provides rehabilitation loans at purchase to fund improvements to foreclosed properties.
Vehicles Parking For Commercial Purposes and Recreational Vehicles: Define vehicles parked for commercial purposes by amending the Loudoun County Codified Ordinances.	June 3, 2008	Board of Supervisors to consider at October 14, 2008 Public Hearing.
Parking of Vehicles on the Front Yard of Single Family Detached Housing: Restrict parking of vehicles on unpaved surfaces and limit paved parking areas to a percentage of the total front yard area in the Suburban Residential Districts.	June 17, 2008	Staff to prepare an "Intent to Amend" to amend the Zoning Ordinance/Facilities Standards Manual
ICE Agreement: Agreement with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) that authorizes up to a maximum of 3 nominated, trained, and certified Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) personnel to perform certain immigration enforcement functions.	Signed June 2008	In effect
Regulation of Roadside Charitable Solicitors: Seek State enabling authority, to restrict peddling, solicitations, and sale of merchandise along public roads. Seek State enabling authority which allows for a permitting and exemption process for charitable organizations soliciting for donations along public roadways.	July 1, 2008	Include in 2009 Legislative Package for Virginia General Assembly
Alternative Forms of Submitting Zoning Complaints: Changes to zoning complaint form: complaints by fax, e-mail, online.	July 15, 2008	Bring complaint issues to the Board before making any changes to the process and research possible action for people who abuse the zoning complaint system.
Tall Grass Ordinance: Ordinance (692): adopted as an emergency ordinance.	July 15, 2008	Permanently adopted, September 8, 2008
Stop signage at intersection of North Argonne Avenue/Fletcher Road in Sterling	September 2, 2008	Request to Virginia Department of Transportation

Strategy: Establish a cross-departmental county team to coordinate both complaint-based and proactive enforcement strategies, increase inter-agency communication and cooperation, avoid unnecessary duplication, maintain communications with community groups and conduct quality of life public education campaigns.

The Board of Supervisors at its strategic planning session on July 23rd identified the need to adopt a proactive or centralized approach to enforcement. The County's code enforcement is currently split between the several departments, including the Health Department, Fire Marshal, Parks, Recreation, and Community Services, Sheriff's Office, Solid Waste Management, and various disciplines within Building & Development. Staff and inspectors from these various departments could form a multi-agency team to provide a collaborative approach to enforcing zoning, building and safety codes. As examples, the team could oversee the expansion of the proactive zoning enforcement program, conduct periodic enforcement sweeps, develop performance benchmarks to measure success, and periodically assess results.

Several inter-agency collaborative models exist from other communities. One example the County could consider is the enhanced code enforcement model that has been operating in Fairfax County since June of 2007. This initiative of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors was intended to address both life safety and quality of life issues. The teams bring together inspectors from zoning, building, fire and health departments. The teams' activities are supported by law enforcement officers and the County Attorney's Office. Combating illegal overcrowding and zoning violations in single family homes was one of the main goals of this initiative. As of September 5, 2008, the teams have investigated a total of 336 cases; of this amount, 189 remain open and 147 have been closed. A total of 71 cases have been referred for criminal prosecution and 73 have been delivered to the County Attorney for civil action.

Besides proactive enforcement, the team would be the public face to the community for outreach and education. The team would oversee the development and distribution of educational materials related to code regulations and steps to take for voluntary compliance. The team could also conduct regular community workshops and seminars for citizens and Homeowners Associations, provide professional support for the creation of an eastern Loudoun County Homeowners' Association Coalition, and develop a County webpage for citizen education and information.

Strategy: Provide targeted enforcement strategies through the expansion of the Proactive Zoning Enforcement Program.

In addition to complaint-based enforcement, the Board of Supervisors on December 4, 2008 initiated a proactive zoning enforcement pilot program targeting two specific areas within Sterling Park that were known for multiple zoning complaints - North Argonne Avenue and Williamsburg Road. The pilot program, which took place from February 7, 2008 through June 23, 2008, included investigation of typical zoning complaints (unlicensed vehicles, commercial vehicles parked on residential lots, home-based businesses, structures without

permits, etc.) and residential overcrowding issues. During this period, zoning enforcement staff conducted a total of 935 field inspections on 204 properties. As a result, 34 Notices of Violation (NOV) and $1,800 in civil penalties were issued. The majority of violations were for inoperable vehicles (26). Residential overcrowding cases were not detected during the pilot program.

The proactive zoning enforcement pilot program has been effective in a couple of ways. An information meeting was held with residents of the two neighborhoods prior to the start of the program and education information related to zoning regulations and ways to achieve voluntary compliance were distributed. As a result, many residents appeared to have taken the initiative seriously as homeowners cleaned up their properties prior to inspections by County staff. Few violations were also actually found compared to the significant number of complaints received prior to the initiative.

Citizens continue to be concerned about deteriorating housing and neighborhood conditions in other areas of Potomac and Sterling, zoning violations may have shifted to another street or area, and it is not clear whether the improved conditions within the proactive zoning enforcement pilot program target area are temporary and may require continued attention from the County. The continuance and expansion of the Proactive Zoning Enforcement Program would provide targeted enforcement in areas where the need is great and where a constant and visible presence would encourage residents to voluntarily comply with ordinance requirements. The County's Active Citizen Response (ACR) system, which has been operational for approximately a year, has the ability to track the number of complaints per property. The ACR is in the process of being linked with the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) and can be used to identify "hot spots" and target enforcement activities. Additional criteria, such as public safety and foreclosure data, could be considered as well.

Strategy: Expand regulatory enforcement authority by adopting additional portions of the Virginia Maintenance Code.

The Virginia Property Maintenance Code is part of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) and provides regulations to protect occupants of existing buildings and structures from health and safety hazards arising from improper maintenance and use. Any local government may enforce the Virginia Property Maintenance Code and may assign enforcement responsibility to a local agency of its choice.

In September of 2004, the Board of Supervisors adopted Chapter 4 (Residential Occupancy Limitations) of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code and charged the Zoning Enforcement Team with its enforcement. This chapter regulates interior-habitable spaces and provides requirements for minimum areas for sleeping purposes, privacy, overcrowding, ceiling heights and room widths, etc. After its adoption, provisions of this chapter have been used in combination with Zoning Ordinance requirements as an enforcement tool for overcrowding.

Adopting additional portions of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code would enable staff from various departments to enforce a greater variety of property maintenance provisions. They would give the County greater enforcement authority to address many of the deteriorating neighborhood and housing issues that citizens have stated as their number one issue in Potomac and Sterling. Additional portions of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code include:

- Chapter 3 - General Requirements (exterior property areas; swimming pools, spas and hot tubs; exterior structure; interior structure; handrails and guardrails; rubbish and garbage; and extermination);
- Chapter 5 - Plumbing Facilities and Fixture Requirements (required facilities; toilet rooms; plumbing systems and fixtures; water system; sanitary drainage system; and storm drainage);
- Chapter 6 - Mechanical and Electrical Requirements (heating facilities; mechanical equipment; electrical facilities; electrical equipment; elevators, escalators and dumbwaiters, duct systems); and
- Chapter 7 - Fire Safety Requirements (means of egress, fire-resistance ratings; fire protection systems).

Adopting these additional provisions would authorize the County to ensure that exterior conditions of a property or structure are well maintained. Pro-active enforcement in this regard would be very similar to many HOA regulations that require upkeep of homes and properties.

Should the Board wish to pursue this direction, staff would work with the Board to identify which provisions of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code to enforce. If additional chapters of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code are adopted, additional staff resources should be examined as enforcement staff from various departments may be at capacity and struggling to keep up with the current enforcement workload.

Strategy: If state enabling authority is granted to the County to recover the costs for graffiti removal efforts from responsible parties and an anti-graffiti ordinance is enacted, the County could continue to pursue a broader program that focuses on anti-graffiti education and prevention.

According to a report by Loudoun County's Public Safety and Human Services Committee and provided to the Board of Supervisor's on May 6, 2008, graffiti represents the highest percentage of gang-related activity in Loudoun County. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Department also reports that in 2007, gang-related graffiti represented approximately 5% of the total reported destruction of property cases in Loudoun with the most frequent number of incidents occurring in Sterling Park and Sugarland Run. Neither the 1993 Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, nor the Property Maintenance Code, contains specific language to combat graffiti. Although state statutes allow counties, by ordinance, to remove or repair defacement, including graffiti, on public or private property where visible from the public

right-of-way, the County does not have the authority to recoup the costs and assess penalties. The County would have to do so at its own expense. Consequently, the Board of Supervisors has recommended the County seek state enabling authority to allow Loudoun County to recover the costs of graffiti removal efforts from responsible offenders prior to the adoption of an anti-graffiti ordinance.

While only 5% of reported property destruction incidents were gang-related graffiti cases, citizens participating in the outreach project believe increasing gang activity is resulting in an increase in crime and graffiti. Regardless of whether graffiti is gang-related or not, the presence of graffiti in areas such as Sugarland Run and Sterling Park indicates to the larger public that a neighborhood is in decline – encouraging further disinvestment. The Gang Response Intervention Team, or GRIT, is a multi-agency team whose mission is to proactively suppress, intervene, prevent and reduce street gang activity in Loudoun County. If state enabling authority is granted and an anti-graffiti ordinance is enacted, the County could continue to support GRIT's anti-graffiti efforts by pursuing a broader program that focuses on anti-graffiti education and prevention, including creating an anti-graffiti hotline, mapping of gang-related graffiti to help track specific gang operations, initiating Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with VDOT and other utilities to repair and remove defacement in a timely manner, and providing equipment and materials to landowners.

Strategy: Maintain an on-going foreclosure tracking program that tracks foreclosed properties and unsold foreclosed properties, for proactive code enforcement, strategic planning, and other activities.

Citizens cite the high rate of foreclosures as one reason for the decline in the appearance and conditions of housing in the neighborhoods of Potomac and Sterling. Residents are concerned that foreclosures are destroying their home investments, decreasing home values, leading to the deterioration of homes and properties, and crime such as vandalism and break-ins.

The Department of Management and Financial Services has been tracking foreclosed and vacant properties on a monthly basis and mapping their locations as needed. The foreclosure tracking system should be maintained as a regular and on-going activity. The information, gathered on a monthly basis, would continue to be shared with the Revitalization Team (see above) and departments involved with neighborhood services and enforcement to identify neighborhood trends for the purpose of strategic planning, and to take proactive measures on foreclosed unsold homes that may have the potential for nuisance violations. An on-going foreclosure tracking system could also help with any future County efforts to purchase and rehabilitate foreclosed homes by public sector workforce employees.

Strategy: Consider enhanced civilian staffing under the Sheriff's Department's full-service substation model for the Eastern Loudoun Sheriff's substation.

Crime is a key issue for citizens in eastern Loudoun and their fear has been heightened by recent violent crimes taking place in Sterling. According to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Department, the number of cases related to destruction of property (which includes graffiti and vandalism), larceny, and burglary in the first half of 2008 has increased over the first half of 2007 and patrol sectors within the Potomac and Sterling communities are receiving the highest number of calls for service compared to other patrol sectors in the County. Many citizens are concerned about the increase in crime and gangs affecting their neighborhoods and communities. Citizens feel unsafe around certain neighborhood shopping centers, believe there is too little law enforcement presence in the area to address issues of rising crime, and are concerned that gangs and gang-related crime and violence are infiltrating schools and neighborhoods. Some residents are afraid to walk after dark and will not let their children move freely within neighborhoods. Citizens are asking for a greater police presence in troublesome areas, investment in additional sheriff substations, and an expansion of the Community Policing Program.

An Eastern Loudoun Sheriff's Substation was recently approved by the County to serve the Potomac and Sterling Communities. The 18,000 square-foot facility, located on Frederick Drive between Briar Patch Park and Rolling Ridge Elementary School in Sterling Park, will soon be under construction.

A full-service substation, under the Sheriff Department's model, is designed to be a facility that provides law enforcement services to the area, extends the sheriff's community policing philosophy to enhance partnerships with the community, and makes services more convenient for citizens. Public safety and community service activities conducted from the substation are to include:

- Field patrol, property crime prevention, and traffic enforcement with coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Community Policing and School Resource Officer activities;
- Citizen group meetings through the provision of accessible conference room space for community groups and residents; and
- Assistance with the public to access services such as obtaining copies of accident reports and warrant verifications.

The substation also would include a video magistrate system that could arraign people without transporting them to Leesburg, giving deputies more time for field patrol availability within their sectors.

While the Sheriff Department's staffing plan for the substation anticipated civilian staff needed to develop a full-service facility, current funding levels do not include such staff. As a possible result, the facility may only serve to provide essential law enforcement functions, remain closed to the public, and its officers may be required to perform increased

administrative duties which will reduce field patrol availability. The Board could explore whether including enhanced civilian staffing under the Sheriff Department's full-service substation model would extend its community policing philosophy and partnerships with community residents. A full-service substation, if successful, could also serve as a model for future substations that may be considered within the area.

Strategy: Specific to the Potomac and Sterling patrol sectors, an assessment could be undertaken that examines crime statistics and program objectives and their correlation with current service standards and performance benchmarks for public safety. The assessment could also examine: 1.) whether these standards and benchmarks are being achieved, 2.) whether adjustments to service standards and performance benchmarks should be explored based on an analysis of other localities of the same size with similar demographics and crime statistics within the region and across the United States, and 3.) the impacts of potential adjustments on current and future program objectives and service responses.

Citizens are seeking a greater police presence in troublesome areas, investment in additional sheriff substations, and an expansion of the Community Policing Program and other strategic initiatives. Their recommendations could require additional resources, a reallocation of existing resources, or the consideration of new initiatives.

Along with the frequency and location of crime, staffing benchmarks can be used to establish and achieve program objectives and measure service response. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Department's current staffing ratio of .8 deputies for every 1,000 residents is the Board of Supervisor's adopted county-wide standard. It is not clear whether this standard is being achieved specific to the Potomac and Sterling community patrol sectors. Staffing ratios, however, are not the only standard used to achieve program objectives or measure service response. Additional benchmarks, such as frequency and magnitude of crime, ratio of calls for service per deputy, arrests per deputy, response time and patrol availability factor, or the measure of how much time a deputy is available to patrol (as opposed to administrative duties, calls for service, and time in transport) are also valuable benchmarks.

Specific to the Potomac and Sterling patrol sectors, an assessment could be undertaken that examines crime statistics and program objectives and their correlation with current service standards and performance benchmarks for public safety. The assessment could also examine: 1.) whether these standards and benchmarks are being achieved, 2.) whether adjustments to service standards and performance benchmarks should be explored based on an analysis of other localities of the same size with similar demographics and crime statistics within the region and across the United States, and 3.) the impacts of potential adjustments on current and future program objectives and service responses.

Strategy: Discuss the viability of adopting a teen curfew ordinance for Loudoun County.

The State Code of Virginia (§ 15.2-926) enables localities, by ordinance, to prohibit minors who are not attended by their parents from frequenting or being in public places, whether on public or private property, between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., as the governing body deems proper. The Town of Leesburg has responded to this enabling authority by adopting a "Curfew for Minors" ordinance where it is unlawful for any minor to frequent or be in public places, or places open to the public, between the hours of midnight and daylight unless attended by a parent or parents. Minors who are found to be in violation of the ordinance are subject to misdemeanor fines of not less than $25.00 or more than $250.00 and each violation constitutes a separate offense.

The Board may consider the adoption of a teen curfew ordinance similar to the one adopted by Leesburg. However, careful consideration should be given to its impacts on staff resources and on the County as a whole. As an example, this strategy may conflict with teen programs that are offered by the County and other entities. Also, current staffing levels of the Sheriff's Department may preclude them from enforcing the ordinance on a routine basis. Doing so would limit the availability of officers to be on patrol when they are required to stay with minors if parents cannot be located. This consequence would be contrary to the citizens' recommendation of the need for more deputies on patrol. Rather, if the Board were to adopt such an ordinance, it could be considered another tool for the Sheriff's Department to curtail illegal gang-activity, civil unrest, serial criminal activity, and where public order and control might be desired. In addition, alternative strategies besides misdemeanor fines should be considered, including family assessments to determine whether other County services are needed, or there exist opportunities for community service and other public service projects.

Strategy: Consider the implementation of a pilot project for the installation of surveillance cameras at a crime hotspot to determine the project's effectiveness in deterring crime and apprehending suspects.

Citizens identified several areas where they believe crime is occurring and where they feel unsafe, including area schools such as Seneca Ridge and Dominion High, the Sterling Park neighborhood shopping center located along Sterling Boulevard, Briar Patch Park, Sugarland Square Shopping Center, and Regal Plaza.

The installation of crime surveillance cameras at crime hot spots could act as "eyes on the streets", monitoring in real time when law enforcement cannot be there. However, current staffing resources of the Sheriff's Department may preclude live monitoring. Nevertheless, surveillance cameras can record criminal activity and assist the Sheriff's Department with the review of evidence after a crime has been committed. The public's awareness of the presence of surveillance cameras may also bring a greater sense of safety and comfort for residents of the area.

It is unclear whether surveillance cameras actually deter crime, especially when other strategies such as increased staffing and patrols, better lighting, and more civilian "eyes on the streets" may be equally, if not, more effective strategies. A pilot project at a specific crime hot spot may be a way to test and measure the success of such a program. Determining the pilot project's location should be based on thorough analysis of crime data, and not solely on the perception of where residents feel unsafe. Lastly, the presence of surveillance cameras in certain areas may feed into the image of the community as one in decline – exacerbating negative images of the community and encouraging further disinvestment. If a pilot project is pursued, the County should explore whether it would be beneficial to locate and conceal cameras so that they are not highly visible to the public or whether such an approach would have the opposite effect on deterring crime.

Strategy: Focus the Sheriff's Auxiliary volunteer service requirements towards increasing the number of Neighborhood Watch groups in Potomac and Sterling.

Neighborhood Watch is a community-based crime prevention program that was first initiated by the National Sheriffs' Association in 1972. It is a citizens' organization devoted to crime and vandalism prevention within a neighborhood. Neighborhood watch members stay alert to unusual activities and contact the police department or sheriff's office immediately to report suspicious or crime-related activities in their neighborhoods. Neighborhood Watch is a flexible program that can be adapted to a neighborhood's particular situation. For example, within high crime areas, citizen patrols are sometimes conducted. A neighborhood watch may be organized as its own group or may simply be a function of a neighborhood association or other community association. Neighborhoods actively participating in the program are provided with Neighborhood Watch signs which are posted on homes and help to deter crime and act as a reminder for residents to stay alert.

Numerous Neighborhood Watch groups are currently operating throughout Loudoun County, including several within the Sterling and Potomac communities. Although Neighborhood Watch groups are formed from the bottom up, resources are available to interested citizens. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), in particular the Community Policing Program, promotes and facilitates the formation of new Neighborhood Watch groups and provides support services to existing groups. LCSO also offers free Home Security Checks to interested homeowners throughout the County. Within the Potomac and Sterling communities, which currently do not participate in the Neighborhood Watch program, Homeowners Associations (HOA's), with assistance from the County, can take the lead in organizing their residents. In neighborhoods that do not have a similar organization, however, creating and sustaining neighborhood watch groups may be a greater challenge.

The Sheriff's Auxiliary could be the conduit to focus efforts at increasing and supporting the number of neighborhood watch groups in Potomac and Sterling. Auxiliary personnel provide services during public service events and assist law enforcement personnel in the performance of their duties. They may be assigned to conduct foot and vehicle patrols, traffic control, driver's license and sobriety checkpoints, and other public or ceremonial events at

festivals, shopping centers, parades, safety fairs, and community events. Members are volunteers and are required to perform at least eight hours of monthly volunteer service. Although they are not allowed to carry firearms or weapons of any kind while on duty, nor are they allowed to arrest or detain individuals, they do provide important services to the public that complements the work of law enforcement personnel. The department could focus auxiliary members' volunteer efforts towards the implementation of a strategic workplan with a goal of increasing the number of watch groups in targeted neighborhoods. In addition to increasing the number of groups, members would also provide support services on a regular basis to existing groups to ensure group continuity and sustainability.

Objective: Directing programs, services, and strategies to those areas most in need could be an effective approach to preventing blight, encouraging revitalization, and protecting and enhancing the assets of neighborhoods in Potomac and Sterling.

Strategy: Consider creating Neighborhood Revitalization and Enhancement Districts whose strategies work to prevent the further deterioration of neighborhood conditions, enhance and protect neighborhood assets, direct and concentrate programs, services, resources, and infrastructure improvements to areas that are in most need, and leverage federal, state, and local funding.

The Board of Supervisors may consider the adoption of Neighborhood Revitalization and Enhancement Districts (NRED) in Potomac and Sterling to prevent the further deterioration of neighborhood and housing conditions through revitalization while conserving and enhancing neighborhood assets. The Board of Supervisor's adoption of such districts would also signal a commitment to direct and concentrate programs, services, resources, and infrastructure improvements to areas that are in most need.

The creation of NRED's can provide access to local, state, and federal programs to address key citizen issues and accomplish a number of objectives, including:

- Protection and rehabilitation of existing housing;
- Revitalization of neighborhood commercial buildings and neighborhood commercial centers;
- Stabilization of property values;
- Increased public safety;
- Redirection and allocation of County resources to older and more mature neighborhoods; and
- Strengthening community pride and reversing negative perceptions from others in the larger community.

NRED would comprise one or more neighborhoods that are of a manageable size to target activities and achieve visible results. NRED boundaries would be determined by examining a number of factors whose levels may indicate distress, including area median incomes levels, crime data, code enforcement violations, etc.

Subsequent to the identification of each NRED, strategic plans that contain specific objectives and strategies for neighborhood revitalization activities would be developed. These plans could include activities related to many of the strategies listed in this report such as conducting housing and structural conditions surveys. Plans could also target existing County programs like the Eastern Loudoun Revitalization Home Loan Program for the renovation and rehabilitation of existing housing. Strategies may be developed that leverage additional resources from other sources. For example:

- The identification of County and state incentives, including grants, real estate tax exemptions, and tax credits, to stimulate renovation, rehabilitation, or replacement of older commercial buildings;
- Targeting federal Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG) funding to those areas within NRED's that fall within CDBG guidelines; and
- Leveraging of state, foundation and other private funds to support neighborhood revitalization activities and neighborhood-based revitalization organizations.

Strategy: Conduct Housing and Structural Condition Surveys to assist in determining targeted homeowner investment strategies, proactive education strategies, and efficient use of County home improvement funds.

Housing and Structural Condition Surveys assess and rate the conditions of homes to help the County determine areas where there are incidents of deteriorating and dilapidated housing. Surveys look at more than just facades. Housing and Structural Condition Surveys record the type, status (whether vacant, occupied, or for sale/rent), and approximate age of housing. Foundations, roofing, siding, and windows are also assessed and rated. These ratings are then added up to scores which then determine whether a home is categorized as sound, or experiencing minor, moderate, or substantial deterioration, or is dilapidated. The results of the surveys are then mapped and used to:

- Help preserve affordable homes;
- Build on the County's current housing strategies such as the use of existing home improvement funds to maximize the impact of limited resources;
- Assist the County in the development of new housing strategies;
- Help the County understand underlying issues that may be threatening the stability of neighborhoods in eastern Loudoun; and
- Provide a baseline standard for the County to measure yearly progress in home condition improvements.

Strategy: Propose Neighborhood Infrastructure Assessments as part of the development of Neighborhood Conservation Plans that would help to identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements necessary for the revitalization of aging neighborhoods.

Sound planning and implementation of infrastructure improvements in targeted, older communities can help to ensure that neighborhood residents have the same basic services and quality of life enjoyed by other County residents in newer developments. Many citizens expressed concern about infrastructure and safety issues along major corridors such as

Sterling Boulevard and Algonkian Parkway. Others expressed concern about these same issues on local neighborhood streets and blocks between these corridors. This recommended strategy expands on the Sterling and Potomac "walk" concept by involving a "team" approach comprised of multi-departmental County staff and neighborhood residents who inventory and assess existing neighborhood infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb and gutter, street lights, roadways, neighborhood parks, and other infrastructure. This inventory is then used to develop Neighborhood Conservation Plans that both identify needed infrastructure improvements and replacements, as well as opportunities for infrastructure enhancements, including traffic calming, infill, and landscape improvements.

The County may be able to learn from many models that exist in other communities throughout the region and country. Neighborhood Conservation Plans can inform and prioritize the County's planning and funding for future capital improvements, assist with the prioritization of secondary road maintenance and improvement requests to VDOT, and be included as part of strategic plans developed for NRED Districts. The County may also want to give consideration to combining Neighborhood Infrastructure Assessments with Housing and Structural Condition Surveys or conducting these types of surveys with NRED's, if established.

Objective: Building community partnerships through neighborhood involvement to develop more efficient and effective neighborhood revitalization strategies.

Strategy: The County should consider support for a neighborhood-based revitalization organization (NRO), whose mission would be to engage residents, business, and civic groups in building the capacity of the community to revitalize and enhance Sterling Park.

As one of the oldest planned communities in eastern Loudoun, Sterling Park does not have a home-owners association (HOA). HOA's are entities that have the legal authority to protect the interests of a planned community's residents through enforcement of its covenants, conditions and restrictions. HOA's oftentimes manage common area facilities of the community, such as recreational and community centers, and direct activities to improve neighborhood conditions. HOA's can be an effective mechanism for addressing quality of life issues within their planned communities. Without an HOA, many citizens believe Sterling Park is at a disadvantage from other communities in eastern Loudoun County.

A not-for-profit NRO would provide many of the functions an HOA performs, but its structure would provide the flexibility to also take advantage of a number of additional community building activities within different areas that work towards the revitalization of Sterling Park and the larger Sterling Community. These activities could include:

- Becoming a liaison between Sterling Park residents and Loudoun County on the planning, design, and implementation of revitalization strategies;
- Acting as a conduit for the dissemination of County information from various programs and services;
- Promoting and marketing Sterling Park as an affordable and desirable place to live;

- Coordinating with the County on educational workshops and seminars on topics of interest to community residents; and
- Holding special events throughout the year that build community cohesion.

Loudoun County may need to consider assistance in the form of seed funding and technical assistance for either a new organization or to build upon an existing one. Seed funding would assist the NRO in start-up or expansion and would provide initial stability for the organization as it develops a plan for financial sustainability. The State of Virginia's Office of Community Capacity Building may also be available to provide assistance, including training and technical assistance, seed money, and funding prospect searches.

Strategy: Consider the establishment of a grant project that would fund model neighborhood initiatives related to neighborhood improvement projects.

A model neighborhood initiative grant program is a cost-effective program that could leverage modest grant monies allocated by the County to citizen-driven model improvement projects. This gives opportunities for neighborhood residents to be involved in the design and application of projects within their neighborhoods while encouraging partnerships with local non-profit and civic organizations.

A model neighborhood initiative grant program would include funds allocated each year by the County to award matching grants to individual neighborhood groups, business associations, or non-profit organizations to fund citizen-driven neighborhood initiatives. A matching grant program provides a sense of ownership to the community on the requested project and encourages the leveraging of additional funds and "sweat equity". Program specifics, including the determination of eligible organizations and projects, where funds are targeted, the amount and frequency of funds to be allocated, and the application submittal, review, and approval process, would need to be determined. Examples of the types of projects that could be funded include:

- New or enhanced neighborhood playgrounds;
- Landscaping enhancements within roadway medians or landscape buffers along sidewalks and trails;
- Pocket parks and community gardens;
- Gateway and entryway enhancement features;
- Public art;
- Neighborhood clean-ups; and
- Special events.

Objective: The County should consider expanding and enhancing the transportation network in Potomac and Sterling to provide safe and accessible transportation choices for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Traffic congestion and bicycle and pedestrian connectivity were the top transportation concerns listed by stakeholders. Algonkian Parkway, in particular, was identified as a road

with a myriad of transportation and safety issues, ranging from traffic congestion and speeding to dangerous intersections and the lack of street lighting. Stakeholders suggested several measures that could be undertaken along this major commuter route, including (1) traffic monitoring and enforcement; (2) additional traffic lights throughout Countryside; (3) conversion from a "speedway" to a multi-modal thoroughfare for pedestrians to safely use; (4) traffic-calming designs; (5) pedestrian overpass at the entrance to River Bend Middle School and Potomac Falls High School; and (6) intersection design improvements for pedestrian safety, including Forest Drive, Falcons Landing, and Lowes Island Boulevard.

Specific recommendations to improve the safety of Algonkian Parkway are not provided in this report given that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has recently undertaken a seven-month pedestrian safety study for the roadway which includes a series of specific recommendations. The Algonkian Parkway Pedestrian Safety Study, which was completed in August 2008, examined conditions along a 6.7 mile stretch of Algonkian Parkway, including a portion of Atlantic Boulevard south of Route 7. The goal of the study was to identify pedestrian crash trends, locate areas with substandard pedestrian accommodations, and identify crash locations with high frequency. Both short- and long-term solutions to improve pedestrian safety along the roadway were recommended, including signage and marking changes, pedestrian accommodations, signal timing issues as well as physical changes to roadway or signal structure.

The study contains several specific recommendations that have been implemented to some degree, including: reducing the speed limit along the road from 45 to 40 miles per hour (for which VDOT has received approval) and undertaking the design of a new traffic signal at Winding Road and Sutherlin Place. The study also recommended numerous other safety improvements such as the construction of missing sidewalks and crosswalks, pavement markings, curb ramps, roadside hazards, reduction of sign clutter, and sight distance improvements. It is anticipated that VDOT and the consultant of the study will present the results of the Algonkian Parkway Pedestrian Safety Study to the County in October 2008. Citizens are currently being encouraged to provide public comment regarding this study to VDOT.

In addition to the VDOT study, additional strategies related to increasing transportation choices for bicyclists and pedestrians in Potomac and Sterling are provided below.

Strategy: Consider the construction of a multi-use recreational trail along the Broad Run linking the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail with the W&OD Trail.

Citizens cited the need for a north-south bicycle and pedestrian facility linking major parks and trails. A trail along the Broad Run provides the best opportunity to accomplish this objective through the development of the Broad Run Connector Trail, linking the Potomac Heritage Trail, Bles Park, the Historic Tollhouse and Bridge, and the W&OD Trail.

The Loudoun County Parks, Recreation, and Community Services envisions a linear park optimally 150 feet in depth along each side of the Broad Run stretching from the Potomac River, past the W&OD Trail, to the Route 50 area. One trail segment already exists. Bles Park includes a trail on the west side of Broad Run that includes a trail that takes trail users from the Potomac River to the Route 7 area. The Broad Run Connector Trail would pass under Route 7 to the Broad Run Tollhouse and Bridge, located on the south side of Route 7. Both the Broad Run Tollhouse and Bridge were constructed during the early 19th Century. These two historic resources were associated with the Leesburg Turnpike. The site is recognized for its local historical significance through its listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmark Register. The property is also designated locally as a Historic Site. The property is currently for sale, affording the County the opportunity to purchase the property and develop the site as a trailhead as part of the larger trail network. Although the Bridge was destroyed in 1972 by Tropical Storm Agnes, a footbridge could be constructed adjacent to the bridge ruins providing trail access across the Broad Run. Thereafter, the trail can continue along the east side of the river where much of the area remains undeveloped, providing the County with the opportunity to negotiate easements and proffers for the linear park.

Challenges remain with linking the Broad Run Connector Trail to the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The scenic trail is a 425-mile corridor between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands. The portion of the trail within Loudoun County begins at the Seneca Road Trailhead in Fairfax County and continues through Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) property through Lowe's Island Golf Course on a path being developed and maintained by the NVRPA. West of Algonkian Regional Park, the trail continues through the Countryside Homeowners' Association Open Space via a County owned easement. The next link to Bles Park and the Broad Run Connector Trail, however, is less defined. Currently, trail users must proceed southward along a portion of Algonkian Parkway along an existing shared use path.

In the long run, a Broad Run Connector Trail could achieve a number of goals in addition to proving a continuous north-south trail for recreational trail users. A Broad Run Connector Trail could also provide public access for fishing, hiking, and other passive outdoor activities. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has determined that the portion of Broad Run that forms the western border of the Sterling Community is impaired based on levels of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB's) in fish tissue. A 150-foot stream corridor and passive linear park could achieve some level of stream resource protection to improve the water quality of the river. Lastly, a connector trail could help with promoting economic development along the Route 28 employment corridor by highlighting the unique natural park qualities of the stream as an amenity for existing and potential employers.

Additional opportunities may exist down the road to link the W&OD Trail and Potomac River on the eastern portion of the Potomac and Sterling Communities via the Sugarland Run stream corridor, providing a continuous loop. A number of challenges would still need to be

addressed including inter-jurisdictional planning with Fairfax County and the crossing of Route 7.

Strategy: Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access to Claude Moore Park from residential areas to the east by considering the design of a more accessible, and enhanced entrance at the intersection of Juniper Avenue with the school access road.

Claude Moore Park has been cited as an important asset to the community. However, many citizens have expressed concerns about the lack of accessibility to the park from residential areas to the east. Currently, there are two entrances located along the park's eastern boundary: 1.) A pedestrian connection between the Park View High School property and the park facility, and 2.) A vehicular and pedestrian access at the end of Juniper Avenue in what appears to be school property. The first connection, located between the playing fields of the school and the park, is gated and not open during school hours. The second entrance at the end of Juniper Avenue provides an accessible pedestrian gate, but the vehicular gate is closed during daytime hours.

Opportunities exist to collaborate with Loudoun County Public Schools to provide an enhanced entrance at the Juniper Avenue location that would provide accessibility to vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists during park hours while maintaining school security. Features to be considered could include:

- Enhanced park entrance features including signage, entrance gates, and landscape amenities;
- Extension of Juniper Avenue through the park connecting with Loudoun Park Lane through the conversion of the gravel road into a more formalized drive with pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Intersection design improvements for pedestrian safety at the intersection of Juniper Avenue and the school access road;
- Wayfinding signs directing park users from the intersection of Laurel Avenue and Sterling Boulevard to the Juniper Avenue entrance; and
- A trail spur with signage that connects Juniper Avenue to the Vestal's Gap Trail and its associated historic assets.

Strategy: Initiate a joint effort with Loudoun County Public Schools, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and appropriate County agencies to establish 1-2 School Walk Zone Pilot Projects in the Potomac and Sterling Communities that incorporate safety education with phased physical improvements with a ½ - 2 mile walk zone.

Schools are identified by citizens in eastern Loudoun County as the area's biggest public asset. They liked the fact that neighborhoods are organized around schools, providing opportunities for children to walk. Yet, many citizens cited a lack of an integrated network of sidewalks, trails and bike lanes that safely connect neighborhoods to major destinations such as schools.

As part of bicycle and pedestrian safety opportunities and solutions, citizens recommended the County invest in Safe Routes to School (SFTS) initiatives in Potomac and Sterling. School Walk Zones are one way to implement a SRTS program. School walk zones are essentially school route improvements that identify and address both non-infrastructure and infrastructure-related improvements within a certain radius of a school site. Examples of improvements include:

- Inter-connected sidewalks or separated trails on both sides of roadways that are essential for a safe trip from home to school on foot or by bike;
- Parking prohibitions on approaches to intersections;
- Use of signs and markings (e.g. school advance warning signs and school speed limit signs);
- Creating school walking-route maps that can be sent home to parents; and
- Increased child supervision through such activities as the "virtual school bus".

A SRTS program, whether through a School Walk Zone project or a different model, requires a collaborative approach whereby appropriate County agencies, Loudoun County Public Schools, the Virginia Department of Transportation and others could work together to identify potential project locations, and assess and correct problems that make it difficult to make the school trip safe and walkable. The Loudoun County Public Schools is exploring SRTS funding opportunities for the County. The County could coordinate with the schools and other agencies such as the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to identify specific school locations within the Potomac and Sterling Communities as priority areas for SRTS programs. Opportunities for federal and sate funding would be explored.

One option for funding is through the SRTS program administered by the State of Virginia. The SRTS program is a federally-funded program created by Section 1404 of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The program was created to encourage children to walk and bike to school through education and physical improvements that help make walking and bicycling safer. In turn, the benefits not only include safe school routes, but can also include reducing traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution while encouraging a healthier lifestyle. The Virginia Department of Transportation is responsible for administering the SRTS program in Virginia. The state will receive $13.9 million from FY 2005 to FY 2009 for the federal-aid program.

When applying for funding, the first phase includes a local Safe Travel Plan that must be developed and approved. The Safe Travel Plan identifies the best location for a program, examines the existing conditions, identifies the issues, and offers potential solutions. Local community involvement is expected. Funding and assistance is available for the development of this plan. During the second phase, the SRTS Program provides funding to participating school divisions, localities and other eligible entities through a competitive application process. Both non-infrastructure and infrastructure projects can be approved. Up to $100,000 of non-infrastructure program funding can be approved for each application to go toward safety education, encouragement programs, improving the existing plan and other activities that support a local program. Up to $500,000 may be obtained for infrastructure

projects that would include improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities within 2 miles of participating schools. The SRTS Program reimburses the locally-administered programs, providing 100% of total funding with no match required.

To date, the only Northern Virginia locality that has received funding from the program is Alexandria. In 2008, the deadline for the submittal of a School Travel Plan to the Virginia SRTS Coordinator for preliminary review and comment is November 14, 2008. December 1, 2008 is the formal deadline for the submittal of the School Travel Plan for eligible 2008 SRTS funding. The application for funding is due by December 31, 2008.

Strategy: Inventory and assess identified priority roadways and linkages and map existing facilities, in order to target bicycle and pedestrian improvements in eastern Loudoun County.

Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity was cited as one of the top transportation concerns for citizens in the Potomac and Sterling communities. Although there are numerous bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the area, the overall network remains incomplete. This can be evidenced by worn dirt paths along several roadways that indicate the presence of regular foot traffic. Citizens describe the lack of an integrated network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect neighborhoods together and connect neighborhoods to major destinations. Citizens also expressed concerns regarding the unsafe walking environment and significant barriers to safe pedestrian crossings on higher speed roadways. A lack of a safe, accessible, and comfortable network of pedestrian facilities eliminates travel choice for people, forcing them into cars. For those without cars, travel choices are very limited. For those with impaired mobility and seniors, walking to destinations for daily basic needs can be virtually impossible.

Citizens in Potomac and Sterling have recommended bike lanes on major roadways and an interconnected pedestrian network where they can safely access major destinations and public facilities. The Loudoun County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan, adopted October 20, 2003, identifies primary routes and locations in the County for improvements to achieve a connected bicycle and pedestrian network. Conducting an inventory and assessment of roadways in Potomac and Sterling as identified by stakeholders as critical corridors[9] would serve to organize the implementation of the Loudoun County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan for this area. If successful, such a plan would serve as a model for future implementation plans in other areas of Loudoun County.

Phase I would be an inventory of stakeholder identified roadways, including fieldwork to determine a general assessment of walking and biking conditions and roadway characteristics. Fieldwork would include the width, materials, and landscape buffer width of existing sidewalks and trails as well as barriers, obstacles, street crossings, and roadway

[9] Roadways identified by stakeholders correspond with baseline connecting roadways identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan.

information (width, number of lanes, speed, etc.). Staff would also conduct research to determine unbuilt, proffered facilities and pedestrian and bicycle crash data along identified corridors.

Phase II would create baseline maps built from the inventory collected during Phase I. Staff would use the data along with the baseline maps to identify priority improvement corridors for bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements that in effect target limited funds and resources to specific corridors that will have the most beneficial impacts. Priority improvement corridors would also be based on which areas would serve the largest number of non-motorized travelers and would connect key destinations.

Phase III would be to develop an implementation plan which would identify specific recommendations for improving bicycle and pedestrian access along identified priority improvement corridors, along with a cost analysis, identification of potential sources of funding, and a multi-year implementation schedule,.

The designation of priority improvement corridors would allow the County to focus efforts on those areas in Potomac and Sterling that have the greatest need for improvements and what steps are necessary to provide safe and comfortable bicycle and pedestrian travel for the citizens of eastern Loudoun County.

Strategy: Create an Eastern Loudoun Bike/Ped Advisory Committee comprised of citizens and staff.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan recommended the creation of a permanent Bike/Ped Advisory Committee. This strategy would create a Board of Supervisors appointed advisory committee that would include citizens of Eastern Loudoun to oversee the development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Plan in eastern Loudoun County. The advisory committee would ensure that membership includes representation of bicycle and pedestrian advocates and users in eastern Loudoun. Appropriate staff resources would be directed to support the committee's work. The Bike/Ped Advisory Committee would:

a. Assist with the Phase I field inventory of the Potomac and Sterling Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Plan and other similar community plans to follow;
b. Monitor and advise the development and implementation of the Potomac and Sterling Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Plan and other similar community plans to follow;
c. Advise the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and County agency staff, regarding County policy and planning efforts related to bicycling, walking, and non-motorized travel in Potomac and Sterling;
d. Review and make recommendations regarding current and proposed VDOT and County capital improvement programs to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian needs are incorporated into planning, design and construction of transportation projects; and

e. Provide a forum for the public to identify needs and concerns of bicyclists and pedestrians, along with the opportunities for improving safety and access during the development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Plan.

Strategy: Create a Bike/Ped Coordinator position for Loudoun County.

Local jurisdictions that have successfully implemented bicycle and pedestrian programs have hired staff with professional training in the area of bicycle and pedestrian transportation or a related field. Other communities have started programs by identifying existing staff and providing significant support in the early years for professional development and training. Neighboring jurisdictions such as the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and the District of Columbia have 1 to 5 staff people dedicated to the coordination of bicycle and pedestrian-related activities. Staff from these jurisdictions implement various bicycle and pedestrian plans, assist with traffic calming projects, run bicycle and pedestrian safety campaigns, and oversee Safe Routes to School programs.

This strategy recommends dedicating staff resources towards a part-time or full-time Bike/Ped Coordinator. One option would be for the Board to consider a possible resource option for a Bike/Ped Coordinator in conjunction with a re-prioritization of work efforts in the Office of Transportation Services. The coordinator could oversee a number of activities, including:

- Managing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan and annual work plans;
- Overseeing the development of Community Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Plans;
- Developing and administering a Bicycle and Pedestrian Promotion and Safety Education Program;
- Coordinating efforts with Loudoun County Public Schools and VDOT on the Safe Walk Zone Pilot Project(s) in eastern Loudoun County;
- Coordinating efforts with the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Department on safety initiatives for the W&OD;
- Supporting the Eastern Loudoun Bike/Ped Advisory Committee; and
- Assisting other agencies such as the Office of Capital Construction in the management of sidewalk and trail projects

Strategy: Continue to develop and refine the Loudoun County Transit Plan, taking into consideration the comments and recommendations of the citizens of the Potomac and Sterling communities.

Traffic congestion and insufficient investments in public transportation were both identified as concerns by citizens in the Potomac and Sterling communities. Specifically, stakeholders felt that local bus routes do not connect to major uses and destinations in the County and have infrequent scheduled stops. Additionally, they felt that service is not accessible for many residents, including seniors, and that there is a lack of awareness regarding local bus service and the location of bus stops. Some citizens also felt that the County's lack of

Metrorail service makes the area a less desirable place to live given increasingly long commutes and traffic congestion within the region. A number of recommendations were suggested, including the following: (1) invest more money in public transportation; (2) bring Metrorail to the County; (3) provide more frequent bus service, additional bus stops, and expanded routes; (4) create an education and marketing program to encourage bus ridership; (5) develop a connected grid-system of bus routes or a circulator system; and (6) provide adequate parking at park and ride lots.

The County is currently developing a Countywide transit plan, which will provide strategic analysis and recommendations for public transit service enhancements over the next 20 years. The Loudoun County Transit Plan will establish goals and objectives for how transit will adapt to new Metrorail service and the changing needs in the County, focusing on three distinct phases that are associated with Metrorail extension along the Dulles corridor - pre-Metrorail expansion, Metrorail to Wiehle Avenue (east Reston), and Metrorail to Dulles Airport and the Ashburn area in Loudoun. All transit services throughout the County will be addressed, including connections to the new Metrorail line in the Dulles corridor as well as commuter, fixed route and demand-responsive transit services as well as ridesharing, travel demand, and the coordination of land use plans with transit services. Lastly, the plan will look at how to implement and fund the service proposals and recommend actions and policy to help achieve the long-term vision of transit.

The concerns and suggestions of citizens that came out of the Potomac-Sterling community outreach process will be considered during the development and review of the draft transit plan. In addition, citizens are encouraged to provide additional comments on the project's website at http://www.loudouncountytransitplan.com/. It is anticipated that the draft transit plan will be available for review in January 2009. On October 7, 2008, the Board of Supervisors referred the draft Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP), which is also being updated, to the Planning Commission for review, public hearing and recommendation, upon completion of the transit plan. This will allow the review of the transit plan to catch up with and become part of the overall CTP, rather than a separate document.

Objective: Potomac and Sterling should have adequate community facilities that fully serve the needs of its residents.

Strategy: Consider a new and expanded Sterling Library within the heart of Sterling Park to serve as a focal point and catalyst for a revitalized Sterling Park neighborhood center.

The Sterling Library is co-located with the Sterling Community Center at the edge of Sterling Park's neighborhood center. The library is one of Sterling Park's original public facilities and is cited by many citizens as an asset to the community. However, they perceive a lack of support for the facility. Citizens have expressed the need for a new library that is constructed to the same standards, along with providing the type of amenities, as newer libraries in the County.

The construction of a new Sterling Library within the existing neighborhood center could be the kind of catalyst needed for the community's revitalization. A Sterling Library in the Sterling neighborhood center would:

- Build public confidence in the County's commitment to the heart of Sterling Park;
- Stimulate private sector revitalization of the neighborhood commercial center; and
- Create a vibrant civic square or plaza that becomes the focal point and building block for the reinvention of the neighborhood center into an attractive, higher quality center that gives the area a sense of place.

One possibility is for the new Sterling Library to be co-located with an Eastern Community Service Center or Eastern Government Customer Service Center - both called for in the CNA. Co-location could save the County costs by taking advantage of space needs, community meeting space, shared parking facilities, and other site infrastructure costs. For example, the co-location of the library with an Eastern Community Service Center into a larger facility would facilitate bringing other essential human service and public safety programs associated with various agencies, including Family Services, Health Services, and Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services closer to the residents they serve. The community policing office at the Sterling Park Mall, currently in donated space, could also relocate to the new facility.

Strategy: Explore the opportunity for a stand-alone teen center in Potomac or Sterling to provide comprehensive programs and services in one location that is accessible and centrally located to the youth it is intended to serve.

Currently, there are no stand-alone teen centers located in the County. Diverse teen programs are offered through other public facilities, however. The County provides a teen program at Claude Moore Recreation Center ("Claude Moore") which is open to middle school students (grades 6-8) on Friday nights and high school students (grades 9-12) on Saturday nights. The program, which runs from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m., includes activities such as swimming, rock climbing, computer access, video gaming, basketball, and football. Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services (LCPRCS) also offers teen classes and activities through all its community centers, including the center co-located with the Sterling Library. The programs at Claude Moore and the community centers have been very successful at attracting middle school-aged youth. However, attendance from high school-aged youth has been limited. The reasons for this are unclear. The *"Proposal for the Development of a Teen Center"*, a report prepared by the Loudoun County Advisory Commission on Youth, reports that what is presently available for teens is limited and community centers are generally small, older converted schools that are not dedicated specifically for teens, but house programs for all ages - from preschoolers to senior citizens.

Staff has identified from citizens and staff through the outreach process that the current facilities and programs for teens and/or younger adults may be underutilized in the Sterling and Potomac Communities. The County may wish to consider the location of a stand-alone

teen center in Potomac or Sterling to provide comprehensive programs and services closer to the center of the youth population.

A teen center model has already been identified. According to the *"Proposal for the Development of a Teen Center"*, a stand-alone teen center could provide space for a full spectrum of teen programs and services, including coordinated and centralized services currently provided by Loudoun County government, non-profit organizations, and community groups. The stand-alone teen center, according to the report, would give teens a sense of ownership by having their own space among their peers, would foster increased self-reliance, and provide an enhanced sense of community. The report also includes a sample floor plan for a 20,000 square-foot facility that includes space to accommodate a number of activities related to recreation and leisure, special events, academic and career services, professional support services, and space to "hang-out" with a comfortable lounge area and snack bar.

Another consideration for the location of a stand-alone teen center in Potomac and Sterling is the ability to provide the kind of professional support services that can offer peer mentoring and counseling in a "safe environment". Citizens in Potomac and Sterling expressed a concern about unsupervised youth, an increase in the number of youth hanging out at night, as well as an increase in gangs in schools and incidents in graffiti and destruction of property. Providing a safe place for teens to socialize and access year-round activities and programs, according to the *"Proposal for the Development of a Teen Center"*, have been proven to greatly reduce the prospect that youth will be caught up in behaviors that can ruin their lives. Common issues that teens bring to teen centers include peer pressure, lack of self-esteem, problems at home, dating, anger, substance abuse and teen pregnancy. These kinds of issues, left unchecked, can lead to engagement in risky behavior, crime, and gang-related activities.

Until such time as a stand-alone teen center is available, the County could consider expanding and enhancing current programs in locations throughout the two communities that teens have identified as priorities. As part of the community outreach project and in coordination with the Loudoun Youth Initiative, a roundtable discussion with high school youth was held on September 8th of this year. When asked at the meeting about the kinds of activities they would like to see in a teen center, participants expressed interest in dances and music nights, live bands, and special events. Along with these entertainment and social activities, the *"Proposal for the Development of a Teen Center"* also identified tutoring, job training, peer support groups, computer lab, and a music recording studio as desirable activities. The county could develop a workplan that considers public/private partnerships with schools, faith-based organizations, non-profit groups, and businesses to achieve this goal.

Objective: Corridor planning through a collaborative design approach with citizens and stakeholders can be an effective and efficient way to address a number of economic, transportation, and design issues in a comprehensive manner.

Strategy: Create a Sterling Boulevard Corridor Plan that provides a better balance between the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles, improves the aesthetics of the corridor in such a way that the boulevard becomes the most distinctive feature of Sterling Park and is unique from any other major roadway in the county, and transforms the thoroughfare boulevard into a true main street for Sterling Park, giving the community a better sense of place.

Over 30,000 people call the Sterling Community their home. The population of Sterling is larger than the Town of Herndon and the Virginia cities of Fairfax, Fredericksburg, and Winchester. Sterling Boulevard is the major roadway in the Sterling Community that bisects the community and provides a critical link between Route 7 to Route 28; carrying over 27,000 vehicles per day.

Sterling Boulevard is also Sterling Park's main residential and commercial corridor. From its northern entrance at Route 7, the road passes through a residential district of single-family detached homes of various housing types before it enters the development's original neighborhood commercial and civic center. Continuing south, the road passes through additional residential development until it intersects with the W&OD Trail, marking the southern terminus of Sterling Park. From there, the road continues on through light industrial development before it reaches Route 28.

Citizens have expressed a number of concerns about the corridor. Below are some key concerns and issues that have been raised.

Sterling Boulevard: The focus on auto first is causing a number of concerns for local residents. Classified as a minor arterial in the County's functional classification system, the roadway includes a 40-mile per hour design speed that is engineered to carry commuter traffic quickly and efficiently through Sterling Park. Under the traditional suburban arterial model, the automobile is the priority, often to the detriment of other users. According to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Department, of those specific roadways mentioned by citizens as a concern for excessive speeding, Sterling Boulevard had the highest number of speeding citations issued from January through June of 2008. Citizens also expressed concern about the unsafe walking environment along the boulevard. Many noted that the sidewalks are old and not designed to be accessible to accommodate pedestrians with limited mobility. Others expressed concern about unsafe pedestrian crossings and a lack of adequate street lighting. Bicycle facilities are non-existent. And although water main replacement work currently underway by Loudoun Water includes funding granted to the Sterling Foundation for the planting of additional trees and plantings within the median, the center and side medians are generally sparsely planted with few additional amenities. Lastly, citizens expressed concern

about the appearance of the development's entrance at Route 7, and called for beautification improvements and roadway improvements.

Sterling Park Neighborhood Center: Located between East Holly Avenue and East Maple Drive on the east side of Sterling Boulevard is Sterling Park's neighborhood center. The entrance is marked by a war memorial at East Holly Avenue. Once the social, cultural, and entertainment center of Sterling Park, the area currently suffers from age, outdated design, and competition. Citizens are concerned about empty storefronts and poor retail choices. When Sterling Park Shopping Mall was constructed in 1967, the retail center was the largest commercial area in Potomac and Sterling. Starting in the mid-1980's, however, neighborhood, community, and regional commercial retail centers began to proliferate along the Route 7 corridor. Not even taking into account the Dulles Town Center Mall, the corridor today contains almost 2 million square feet of retail. Much of this strip commercial retail followed the emergence of newer planned residential communities in the area, including Cascades and Countryside in the Potomac Community. These retail centers along Route 7 tend to draw from a larger market than just the surrounding neighborhoods and the Sterling Park neighborhood center has been affected by the competition from the diverse retail choices offered along the corridor.

The neighborhood center also offers no unique amenities or design to distinguish itself from the mostly strip mall environment of Route 7. Many citizens note how buildings turn their back onto the community and create a streetscape that is pedestrian "unfriendly". The two main retail centers – the older Sterling Park Shopping Mall and the Sterling Plaza Shopping Center – include a combination of 1-story strip malls and freestanding retail. The strip malls are either oriented away from the boulevard or set significantly back, leaving segments of parking to abut the roadway. Buildings that do face the boulevard are freestanding pads surrounded by parking. Although the area contains a mix of uses, including office, retail, civic and residential, they are not well integrated. There are numerous civic uses. They include a post office, motor vehicle department, fire and rescue station, and the Sterling Library and Community Center, but they are scattered throughout the neighborhood center, offering no central civic focus to give the area a sense of place. Other citizens note the poor traffic circulation pattern around the center and are concerned about pedestrian safety. Still other citizens are concerned about storefront appearances and a lack of higher-quality retail. Lastly, citizens are concerned about their personal safety and security, especially at night.

W&OD Trail: The 100-foot wide Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail is a 45-mile multi-use trail that stretches from Purcellville, Virginia to Arlington County. The former rail bed is owned and operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA). The W&OD is perhaps the most significant non-motorized facility in Eastern Loudoun and in the Sterling Community in particular, providing connections along its route to various neighborhoods and businesses. Several citizens expressed concern about the lack of a safe crossing for users of the paved trail across Sterling Boulevard.

Responding to these issues, this strategy suggests the development of a corridor plan that would accomplish these goals:

- Provide a better balance between the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles;
- Improve the aesthetics of the corridor in such a way that the boulevard becomes the most distinctive feature of Sterling Park and is unique from any other major roadway in the county; and
- Transform the thoroughfare boulevard into a true main street for Sterling Park, giving the community a better sense of place.

One suggested approach would be to look at that portion of Sterling Boulevard within Sterling Park as a corridor with a series of districts and entryways. From north to south, that would include the:

- Northern Gateway – the entrance to Sterling Park from Route 7;
- Upper Residential District – the district of residential homes from Route 7 to Holly Avenue;
- Village Center Gateway – the area around the intersection of Holly Avenue and Sterling Boulevard that includes the war memorial and marks the entrance to the village center;
- Sterling Park Village Center – the heart of Sterling Park and it's main commercial and civic center;
- Lower Residential District – the district of residential homes from Maple Avenue to the W&OD; and
- Southern Gateway – the area around the intersection of the W&OD and the entryway into Sterling Park from the south.

Citizens and other stakeholders could then work collaboratively with a multi-disciplinary team of County staff and outside agencies to develop a corridor plan that comprehensively identifies solutions to the number of issues raised by citizens. Solutions could be considered that take into account the desired character of adjacent uses, the protection of the existing single-family homes along the corridor, the need to provide a better balance between pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles, and the overall aesthetics. Such a plan could positively raise the image of the community and transform the corridor into a true "main street" for Sterling Park.

For example, the upper Sterling Boulevard residential district is unique in that most of the roadway segment is a multi-way boulevard. An arterial is designed to move traffic quickly and efficiently partly by providing limited access to adjacent properties. The need to move traffic oftentimes conflicts with the residents' desires to slow traffic and provide more safe accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. On-street parking on suburban arterials, one technique for traffic calming, is generally prohibited. Multi-way boulevards address these conflicts by separating through traffic from local traffic by the use of side access roads. The section of the boulevard from Route 7 to Holly Avenue is a good example. This section includes four central lanes divided by a large median that carries through traffic. The side access roads flanking each side of the central thoroughfare, and separated by additional

medians, includes 2-way traffic lanes that are used for local residents to access their homes and intersecting side streets. Parallel parking is allowed along the side access roads.

True multi-way boulevards, however, are also "living streets". Oftentimes, they are distinct from other boulevards by their careful consideration to aesthetics. Trees are spaced along the central and side medians at regular intervals. It is common to see side medians used not just for sidewalks, but also as linear civic spaces that accommodate sidewalks, benches, landscaping, fountains, public art, and transit shelters. In addition to parking, side access lanes also accommodate bicyclists and public transportation. A corridor plan for the Upper Residential District could significantly expand the work that has been started by the Sterling Foundation and Loudoun County by providing the kinds of facilities and design that provide a better balance between the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists, calms traffic along the central thoroughfare, and completes a vision of the thoroughfare as a grand boulevard unique to Loudoun County.

Another example would be to revitalize the existing and underutilized neighborhood center into Sterling Park's Village Center. Countryside Plaza and Loudoun Tech Center are two commercial centers along Route 7 that have certain characteristics that citizens value, consequently identifying them as major landmarks and assets to the community. Amidst the rows of strip malls along the corridor, they offer something different than the standard – whether it's more of a pedestrian-scale and pedestrian-friendly environment or a sense of place. Building on those characteristics, the existing neighborhood center could be revitalized by a new design plan that where buildings are oriented towards the boulevard to create a more pedestrian-friendly and lively streetscape, uses are better integrated, and civic uses are combined to create a civic plaza or square that is the focal point for cultural, social, and recreational activities for the community such as a public marketplace, or special music events. Such an investment into the design of the village center could bring neighborhood residents back to the heart of the community, help spur greater diversity and choices of businesses for neighborhood residents, and provide a greater economic return for the community on what is now underutilized land.

Finally, the gateways could identify the beginning or end of a district. Entrances could be made to look special with landscaping, public art, monument markers, and welcome signs and a safer crossing for W&OD users could be integrated with other gateway enhancements.

Strategy: Maximize the economic benefit to the region and eastern Loudoun County from development in the Route 28 corridor by facilitating a sustainable land use strategy for the corridor.

Residents and landowners expressed concern that the existing and planned development pattern in the Route 28 corridor may not reflect current economic thinking and does not maximize the benefit to the adjacent community. Below are some critical issues:

- Rt. 28 is a gateway corridor. It is the County's connection to Fairfax County and Washington and, through Dulles Airport, the corridor is an international gateway. While

the proximity of Route 28 to the Sterling and Potomac communities suggests a physical and economic synergy, residents and landowners expressed concern that the corridor was isolated from the surrounding communities. People who live in the Sterling community do not see a connection to the corridor physically or economically. While the corridor seeks to bring in new jobs, those employees do not typically seek to live in the Sterling Community despite its close proximity. The potential for the corridor to act like a bypass around a town, drawing the market away from established retail centers leading to business closings, lack of new investment and a loss of services within the communities is an associated concern.

- Past planning and zoning in the corridor looked at the entire length of Route 28 and the surrounding area as a single entity and applied common policies throughout. In recent years however, planned road improvements have become reality and new development has established a regional retail base. These changes are starting to impact land uses and market demands. Rather than a broad swath of industrial land, the corridor can now be identified as distinct planning areas. As an example, the Old Sterling community, also known as the Belfort Park area, is addressing new land use and transportation realities arising from the completion of the Waxpool/Route 28 interchange.

- The planned land use along the corridor may no longer support a viable economic approach. The Board of Supervisors has identified the need to assess the planned land use for the Route 28 corridor in light of trends towards new land use patterns such as mixed-use development, which on their face offer the benefits of self-sufficiency, multiplied economic return and energy savings. Changing demographic profiles, expansion of Dulles Airport, tourism growth and the integration of home, work and entertainment are considerations in developing a responsive land use pattern that can benefit the County's economy while protecting the local community.

This strategy recommends developing a sustainable land use strategy for the Route 28 corridor that will maximize the economic benefit to the region and eastern Loudoun County. The components of the plan could be informed by a market analysis that will provide a series of findings that could then be translated into land use policy, development criteria, zoning standards and targeted investment that will facilitate a sustainable land use pattern. Below are the three components of the analysis to be explored.

Business: A corridor plan for Route 28 would be as much an economic plan as a land use plan. Current trends towards mixed use development suggest that competitive employment development relies on proximity to employee services and amenities and that creating a sense of place is as important in business communities as in retail and residential communities. The economic strategy would examine a variety of factors related to employment and development to assess the vitality of the current business land use pattern along with potential weaknesses and opportunities. Factors such as lease and vacancy rates, employment characteristics and siting characteristics would be used to evaluate land use patterns in other employment corridors to assess the competitiveness of the existing and planned Route 28

pattern. The strategy would also identify market advantages and obstacles that then allow the county to target appropriate industries and assess the need for support services and amenities such as transit and recreation.

Retail: The strategy could examine the range of regional and local-serving retail goods and services in the corridor to assess market reach and potential opportunities and obstacles. Of particular interest would be three analyses: 1.) An analysis of the existing retail with the larger regional market to determine existing retail leakage, 2.) The types of "niche" retail that would be supported along the corridor, and 3.) The relationship between the retail development and demands in the Route 28 corridor versus the Sterling and Potomac communities. As noted earlier, the corridor has the potential to draw customers and retailers away from the community centers in Sterling and Potomac. The study would evaluate the type and scale of retail development that could be sustained in the corridor without significantly impacting established community centers.

Residential: Residential development in the Route 28 corridor is a major issue in light of the Route 28 Highway Improvement Tax District, which relies on added tax from commercial property. Current policies do not envision housing outside of a few specified areas. However, recent development applications have sought to incorporate residential development by offering to "buy out" of the Tax District. Current market trends suggest the County may not achieve its employment goals without adding residential to the land use mix. The market study could also examine other successful mixed-use communities to determine the role residential development plays in successful employment areas, identify the type and scale of residential development and identify location and timing criteria for evaluating local proposals.

Strategy: Develop a Route 7 Corridor Plan that will include gateway design elements, address the aesthetics of the corridor, provide for multi-modal transportation, and facilitate a sustainable land use strategy that includes revitalization strategies particularly in the eastern portion of the corridor.

The eastern portion of Route 7 (generally east of Route 28) is a gateway to Loudoun County, linking the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area with northern Loudoun County and visitor destinations in western Loudoun County. Classified by the County as a principal arterial, Route 7 is a heavily trafficked road. In 2006, the segment that serves as the dividing line between the Potomac and Sterling communities carried on average over 70,000 car trips each day. Route 7 is envisioned to be a major office and research corridor in the County, with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Janelia Farm Research Campus, the future home of One Loudoun, and all of Loudoun's universities and colleges located along this roadway. The eastern portion of Route 7 within the Potomac and Sterling communities, from the Fairfax County line to Route 28, is unique from the rest of the corridor in that it has largely developed over the past thirty years with extensive retail uses.

For many residents of the Potomac and Sterling communities, Route 7 is not only a major commuter route but also a destination to fulfill their dining, shopping and entertainment needs. Indeed, citizens during the community outreach process cited the proximity and accessibility to jobs, services and retail was by as the top reason they value living in these two communities. Many of the shopping and dining areas along Route 7 were also identified as important landmarks in the community, in particular Dulles Town Center, Cascades Marketplace, CountrySide Marketplace, Regal Plaza, Potomac Run Shopping Center, and Loudoun Tech Center. They also valued the many universities and colleges located along or near the corridor as well as the historic resources of Vestal's Gap Road and the Broad Run Toll House.

Citizens, however, also expressed a number of concerns about Route 7 related to traffic congestion and safety, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, the appearance of the corridor, and the types of jobs available. Critical issues that were cited included the following:

- Citizens are increasingly concerned about the level of traffic congestion along this roadway. Route 7 and surrounding roadways have largely been constructed to their ultimate lane configurations as identified in the 2001 Revised Countywide Transportation Plan (Revised CTP). Citizens provided a number of suggestions for improving traffic flow along Route 7, including additional travel lanes, coordination with Fairfax County for widening the roadway, conversion to a limited access roadway, improvements to north-south road connections, light synchronization/ sensors/smart lights, and considerations for dedicated bus lanes or rail. Citizens were also concerned about unsafe conditions along Route 7, particularly dangerous intersections, and recommended that intersection design improvements are needed. Two of Loudoun's "Ten Most Dangerous Intersections" in 2007 as identified by the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office were along Route 7 at Potomac View Road (81 crashes) and Sterling Boulevard/Cardinal Glen Circle (43 crashes);
- The County and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) are currently in the process of conducting a study to improve traffic flow in the Route 7 corridor between Campus Drive and Lakeland Drive which includes turn lanes and related improvements, particularly between Potomac View Road and Sterling Boulevard. Completion of improvements by mid-2010 is anticipated. In conjunction with this Route 7 Traffic Flow Study, the County and VDOT are also working with Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) to better accommodate traffic entering and exiting the campus;
- Route 7 has been designed with few pedestrian and bicycle amenities and citizens raised concerns about unsafe walking and crossing conditions along this major roadway. The intersections at Lakeland Drive, Sterling Boulevard, Campus Drive, Potomac View Road and Countryside Boulevard in particular were noted as being dangerous. Numerous strategies were recommended, including that the sidewalk network along Route 7 be completed; that bicycle and pedestrian access from Route 7 to the Dulles Town Center, the shopping areas north of Route 7, and the W&OD Trail be improved; and that bike overpasses or underpasses be provided at major pedestrian points, including the Northern Virginia Community College (Campus Drive) and Countryside Boulevard. Traffic calming solutions along the roadway should also be applied. No additional grade-

separated interchanges are planned along Route 7 east of Route 28, providing opportunities for Route 7 to evolve into a more complete street that better balances the needs of pedestrian, bicycles and the automobile;

- Local residents also expressed concern that Route 7 does not provide an aesthetically pleasing gateway into Loudoun County and that it contains too many strip shopping centers. Other entrances, including Sterling Boulevard and the Route 7/Route 28 intersection, were identified as additional places in need of improvement. A number of suggestions were made to improve the sense of place along the Route 7 corridor, including encouraging more upscale businesses and the revitalization of existing, aging strip shopping centers into higher-quality, pedestrian-oriented designs, the removal of the jersey barrier wall separating Route 7 from Winchester Drive along the south side of the roadway, and numerous gateway improvements near the Fairfax County line and at Sterling Boulevard; and
- Several business development concerns were also identified by citizens, including that Loudoun County remains a bedroom community in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and that the County needs to attract more quality employers, including the high tech industry, to its major corridors like Route 7 and Route 28 in order to provide higher paying jobs. Other concerns are the incomplete development of the Dulles Town Center and the imbalance between high-end versus retail jobs. Local residents also called for the revitalization of existing shopping centers to attract more upscale businesses and reduce vacancy rates.

One approach to address residents' suggestions and concerns is to develop a Route 7 corridor plan that could focus on the segment of the corridor that is located within the Potomac and Sterling communities (i.e., between the Fairfax County line and Route 28) or even be expanded to include a larger segment of the roadway. Citizens and other stakeholders could work collaboratively with a multi-disciplinary team of County staff and outside agencies to develop such a plan in order to comprehensively identify solutions to these and other issues. This would help elevate the image of the corridor and help guide its development and revitalization over the next few decades. A detailed market study focusing on upscale retail opportunities within the corridor, including hotel entertainment uses, sit-down restaurants, home furnishing stores, fitness centers, and upscale department store of 50,000 square feet, could help inform and shape the plan. A corridor plan could be developed with the following goals in mind:

- Facilitate the transformation of Route 7 into an attractive gateway to Loudoun County by creating a sense of arrival to the County through both physical and landscape improvements;
- Reinforce a sense of place by physically improving the roadway, ensuring that developments are better integrated with surrounding land uses, and providing a better balance between the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles; and
- Revitalize existing and underutilized shopping centers into more pedestrian-oriented, compact designs that are better integrated with the roadway while protecting areas with

non-retail commercial development potential (i.e., office and industrial) in order to maintain a diverse economic base and an active daytime population.

While land use could be a component of the plan, much of Route 7 is already developed, particularly east of Route 28, and a number of revitalization strategies should also be considered. The eastern segment of the corridor in particular has predominantly developed with strip retail centers, some of which were built thirty years ago or more and are aging. Many of these strip centers may eventually reach the end of their lifecycles in the next 10 to 20 years. This presents a unique opportunity for the County to revitalize these areas in such a way that they will meet new market demands while creating a stronger sense of community. According to a 2006 retail market analysis for the Route 7 corridor (available on-line at http://loudoun.vhost.vipnet.org/business/retail.htm), as population growth in the area slows and stabilizes, the retail market will shift to focus more on market segmentation and differentiation of product type and mix in order to remain competitive. This could lead to opportunities for more of the high-end, pedestrian-oriented retail centers that are desired by local residents.