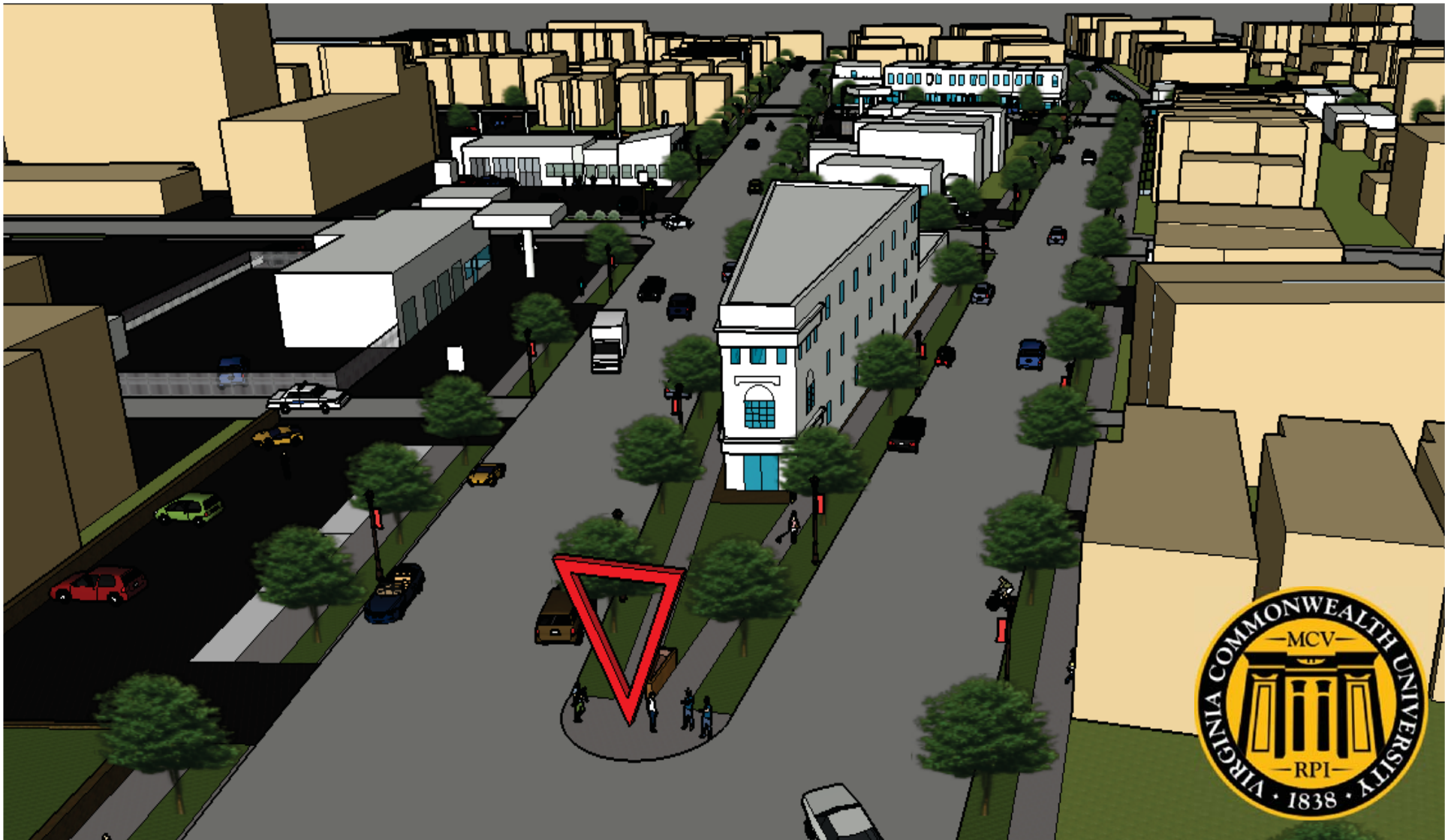


# The Devil's New Face: A Commercial Enhancement Plan for the "Devil's Triangle"



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Spring 2014



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Spring 2014

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### **Organizations**

City of Richmond  
Bandazian & Holden  
Museum District Association  
Greater Richmond Partnership  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

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Graham Bryant, Property Owner, Carroll’s Autoservice  
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Scott McGregor, Serenity  
Jose, Oaxaca  
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Cat Combs, Customer Surveys  
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## **Executive Summary**

This plan was produced for the City of Richmond, Virginia and Bandazian & Holden, Inc., a real estate, brokerage, and property management company that has called the “Devil’s Triangle” home for more than 20 years. Each of these organizations wishes to play a role in the area’s aesthetic and commercial enhancement of this commercial district. Additionally, this document fulfills the requirements of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at Virginia Commonwealth University for the author, Jeffrey Milner.

The “Devil’s Triangle,” as the study area in this plan has been known to some in Richmond since the 1970s, is a small neighborhood commercial district located in the Museum District Neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia. It has long operated as a sort of “Main Street” for the neighborhood and has traditionally provided residents with access to important neighborhood goods and services such as restaurants, laundry, beauty services, and fresh food. This area is advantageously located in a neighborhood that is rapidly becoming wealthier and is located within 1 mile of many of the preeminent attractions in the Richmond Region, including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Children’s Museum of Richmond, the Virginia Science Museum, The Diamond, and Byrd Park.

Despite these assets, this commercial district has not seen the same degree of improvement the surrounding neighborhoods have experienced. While several restaurants in the study area have gained notoriety for their food, the district’s proximity to other larger, more established urban shopping districts, such as Carytown, Robinson Street, and Willow Lawn, has made providing the level of retail desired by the Museum District residents and visitors to surrounding attractions a challenge.

These challenges are further augmented by the lack of a unified voice for merchants and property owners in the district. There is presently no merchant association for businesses in the “Devil’s Triangle” and there is a lack of physical and communicative cohesion in the district that limits the potential for commercial enhancement for the district as a whole. These are issues that can be rectified and quality examples of how improving in these areas can positively change the study area can be seen in many urban commercial districts in the City of Richmond.

A competitive market analysis of the study area and its nearby competition reveals that there is unmet demand for goods and services, such as a convenient neighborhood market, more entertainment options, and a variety of upscale retail shops in the district. These additions could serve as a way of capturing more visitors to the surrounding attractions as well as provide Museum District residents desired goods and services. An examination of the existing conditions in the “Devil’s Triangle,” stakeholder interviews and surveys, and the market analysis provide the framework for the following recommendations:

### **I. Economics**

- ▲ Recruit new businesses that complement the existing ambience and appeal to Museum District residents and visitors to surrounding attractions.
  - ▶ Recruit an entrepreneur with grocery experience and to operate an upscale neighborhood grocery store/market at 704 North Sheppard Street.
  - ▶ Increase entertainment options in the “Devil’s Triangle.”
- ▲ Increase commercial space in the study area.
  - ▶ Convert one-story buildings along Sheppard Street into two-story mixed-use buildings.
  - ▶ Convert residential buildings within and near the study area to bed and breakfast inns.
  - ▶ Acquire and redevelop the parcel currently occupied by 7 Eleven.



## II. Design

- ▲ Harness the eclectic and unique ambiance of the “Devil’s Triangle”
  - ▶ Create a recognizable gateway feature at the intersection where Park and Patterson Avenues meet Boulevard.
  - ▶ Establish a continuous, cohesive, and unique streetscape design.
- ▲ Make the “Devil’s Triangle” more accessible to people in automobiles and cyclists.
  - ▶ Simplify circulation patterns and develop a parking plan in the “Devil’s Triangle.”
  - ▶ Designate a spot in the study area for bicycle facilities such as bike racks, a Fixit Self-Repair Stand, and an outdoor water fountain.

## III. Promotion

- ▲ Capitalize on the unique personality and location of the “Devil’s Triangle” to enhance the area’s sense of place.
  - ▶ Develop a brand and identity for the study area.
  - ▶ Establish a promotional relationship with surrounding museums and regional attractions.
- ▲ Organize and promote special events in the Museum District Commercial Corridor.
  - ▶ Organize Quarterly special events.
  - ▶ Create and maintain a calendar of events

## IV. Organization

- ▲ Improve communication and cooperation among stakeholders.
  - ▶ Establish a merchant association for the commercial district and determine its role in the “Devil’s Triangle.”
  - ▶ Establish an organizational structure, create the organization’s official mission statement and establish agreed upon organizational goals and objectives for the merchant’s association.

- ▶ Develop a volunteer bank of non-merchants willing to assist the organization in making the commercial district a better place.
- ▶ Conduct succession planning for business owners considering retirement.

Implementation should occur in three different phases: The first phase consists of things that can be incorporated into the commercial district quickly and consist of recommendations that require little physical change to the study area, but offer immediate improvements to the commercial potential of the “Devil’s Triangle.” Some examples of these strategies include initiating the process of establishing a merchant association, increasing entertainment options, and promoting the commercial district at nearby attractions.

The second set of recommendations can be implemented in the short-term (years two to five). These are strategies that may require some physical changes to the study area such as adjusting the existing streetscape or changing traffic circulation patterns. Many of these strategies are important processes necessary for the success of the long-term strategies recommendations of this plan.

The last set of recommendations are strategies that, in some instances, require the increased organizational capacity gained from previously implemented strategies as well as drastic changes physical environment such as building renovation, property acquisition, and redevelopment. These recommendations are more complicated to implement, but are important to the long-term commercial enhancement of the “Devil’s Triangle.”

## Introduction

### *Planning Context*

Located in the historic Museum District neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia, the physical triangle formed by the intersection of Sheppard Street, Park Avenue, and Patterson Avenue pointing east towards the Boulevard has long been the home of an important commercial district for the surrounding neighborhoods. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, as suburbanization saw many families move further away from the central city, the neighborhood began to get a reputation for drugs and crime that, in the eyes of some, was embodied by the commercial district surrounding this triangle. It is this reputation that that led the area to become known colloquially as the “Devil’s Triangle.”

Today, the establishments that earned the study area that moniker are gone, but the name “Devil’s Triangle,” for many, continues to be part of the Richmond vernacular. The name has lived on despite the social and economic advancements the Museum District has seen since that time. However, while the surrounding neighborhoods have grown in population and household income level over time, the commercial district that serves the neighborhood has not seen the same level of improvement. It is the goal of this plan to provide the information, analysis, and tools necessary to see the “Devil’s Triangle” Commercial District achieve these enhancements.

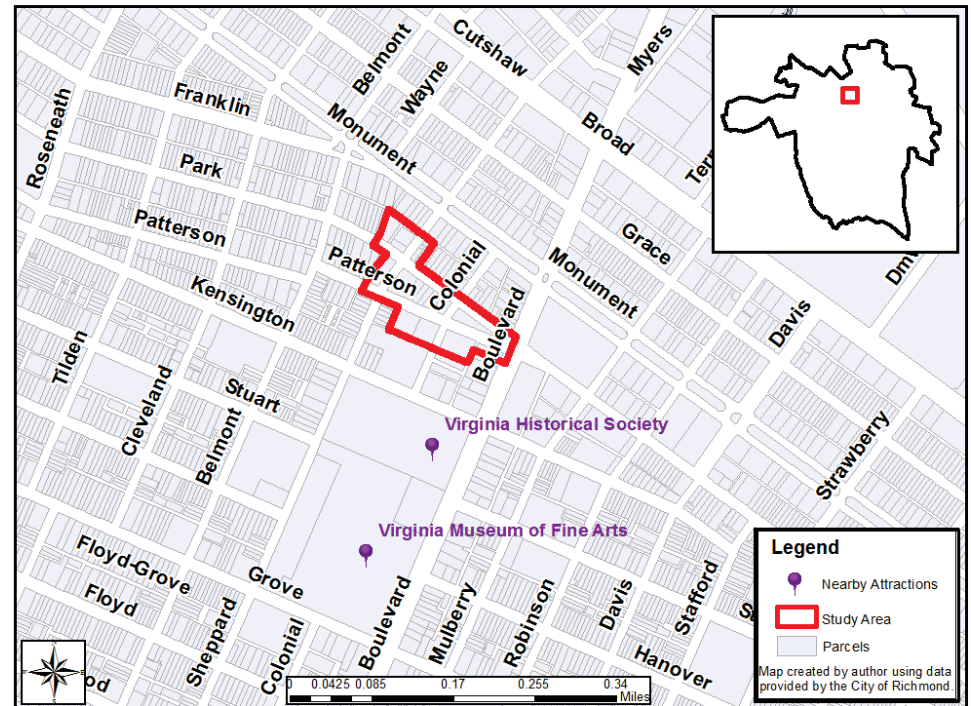
### *Clients*

This Commercial Enhancement Plan for the Devil’s Triangle Commercial District was requested by the City of Richmond and Bandazian & Holden, Inc. It also fulfills the requirements of the Master of Urban & Regional Planning program in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at VCU.



The City of Richmond identifies its primary mission as being “dedicated to promoting a high quality of municipal services and addressing community issues in partnership with its

Map 1: Plan Study Area



citizens, businesses, and neighbors” (City of Richmond, 2013). While this is the mission of the entire city government, all aspects of this mission are relevant to the context of this plan. Specifically, in its West of the Boulevard Plan the city defines the area as “Neighborhood Commercial.” Moreover, the city identifies Sheppard Street at Park Avenue as a “Neighborhood Commercial Cluster,” and describes it as a “group of small retail shops, convenience stores and restaurant fronts primarily on Sheppard Street, but also includes a number of properties fronting Patterson Avenue along a one and a half block stretch east to Boulevard.”



The plan goes on to describe desired future land use of the study area, stating that “commercial uses here should be limited to those that serve the immediate neighborhood” and that “additional auto-related uses (including service stations) are not appropriate” (City of Richmond 1999, p. 237). However, the city’s primary focus in the study area and the adjacent neighborhood is to maintain the architectural integrity of the surrounding historic neighborhoods and districts through the implementation of the *West of the Boulevard Design Overlay District Background and Design Guidelines*, which was adopted by the Richmond City Planning Commission on December 9, 1996 (West of the Boulevard Civic Association, 1996).

The Bandazian family and their real estate and brokerage company, Bandazian & Holden, Inc., own 60 percent of the property in this commercial district and manage several others as well as numerous residential properties in the Museum District. They have been involved in Richmond real estate for nearly 40 years, and on Sheppard Street for more than 20 years. Bandazian & Holden located their offices in the area when many of the problems that inspired the

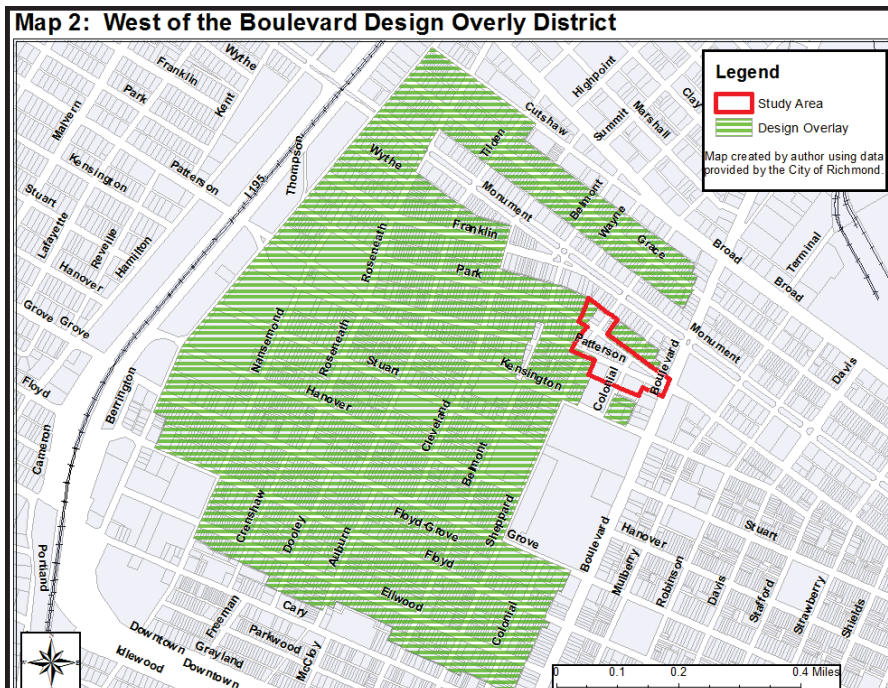


Image 1: Bandazian & Holden’s office on N. Sheppard Street. They have been at this location for more than 20 years.

name “Devil’s Triangle” still existed and the firm has worked tirelessly to revitalize this commercial district during their time there. They have passed on several opportunities to sell their properties in the area to national chains, such as CVS and Walgreens, despite the personal financial gains, because they believe in local businesses and want to maintain the neighborhood ambiance in the area. By doing their part to create a stable business environment that is both profitable for business owners and good for Museum District residents, Bandazian & Holden is intent on building upon the existing economic foundation to improve the commercial potential for the “Devil’s Triangle.”

### ***Client Expectations***

The City of Richmond wants a commercial enhancement plan in this district for several reasons. First, the study area is within walking distance of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Virginia Historical Society, the Children’s Museum of Richmond, the Virginia Science Museum, dozens of restaurants, and several churches. Moreover, the triangle abuts a major arterial roadway, Boulevard, which intersects with both Interstates 95 and 64 approximately 1.3 miles north of the study area, affording access for automobiles coming from other parts of the city and surrounding counties. In some cases, such as special events held at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts or the Virginia Science Muse-



Second, the study area is of particular importance because of its proximity to city recognized historic districts. The Monument Avenue Historic District runs east to west along Monument Avenue from Birch Street to Roseneath Road, and the Boulevard Historic District runs north to south from West Broad Street to Idlewood Avenue. Furthermore, nearly all surrounding neighborhoods, including Museum District, The Fan, and Carytown are on the National Registry of Historic Places. Historic significance in a city like Richmond is one of the region’s strengths and it is something people visiting Richmond for the first time like to explore. This reality, as well as the unique location and eclectic personalities of the study area’s businesses and regular patrons, are each elements of cultural significance in their own right and something the city would like to build upon. (Bandazian & Holden, 1996).

Lastly, the City of Richmond currently has plans to develop the site where The Diamond is currently located into a mixed use area with shopping, office space, and residences. However, if the current plan for a stadium in Shockoe Bottom fails, there remains the possibility of a new stadium located on the present site or on an adjacent site owned by the city that is slightly closer to the study area. Regardless of the final decision, the redevelopment of the area provides an opportunity for niche retail in this area that would be welcomed by the City of Richmond.

Bandazian & Holden want this plan because they would like to see the study area be able to compete with other commercial districts in the City of Richmond. The relatively small size of the storefronts has hampered the company’s ability to attract and retain the level of retail that the surrounding neighborhood wants and is capable of supporting. As the largest property owners in the study area, the ability to offer more retail space will increase their ability to attract the level of commercial retail that would complement the excellent dining options available. Furthermore, Bandazian & Holden has a long term goal of acquiring the property currently occupied by 7 Eleven and hopes to develop that property in a manner that would provide more desired goods and services for Museum District residents and capture more visitors to surrounding attractions.

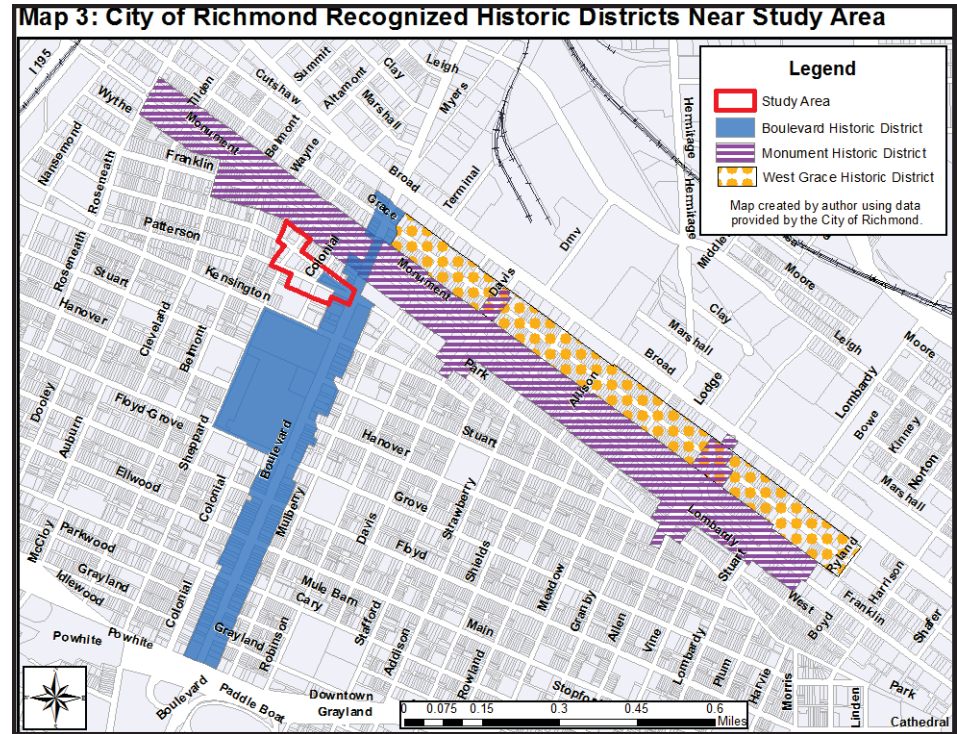


Image 2: Aerial photo of the current site of The Diamond, which the city hopes to redevelop into a mixed-use district. Source: WTVR

## *Applicable Planning Theory*

Both the City of Richmond and Bandazian & Holden want to see the study area increase its economic capacity through economic and physical improvements. There are three theories of planning that are particularly important to the commercial enhancement of this area.

One applicable planning theory to this project is the pragmatic rationality approach, in which the planner accepts the volatile nature of complex situations and attempts to “apply foresight and intelligence in our attempts to solve our problems or shape our future” (Brooks, 2002). Considering the existing land uses found in this study area, an understanding of this theory is important. The implication being that attempts to accurately quantify the dynamics of an ever shifting system, such as a commercial district, shaped by market forces, or a neighborhood, shaped by housing trends, is challenging. This does not, however, render quantitative analysis unnecessary to the process. Rather, through a process of collaboration, outlining goals, analyzing alternatives, understanding consequences, and choosing and then implementing a plan to later be evaluated, positive changes can occur (Brooks 2002).

Central place theory is another theory of planning relevant to this project. It explains the size, spatial distribution, and function of urban settlements through understanding how characteristics of each settlement position it on a hierarchy of settlements (City, Town, Village, etc.). Furthermore, the size and function of a place is determined by a multitude of factors, including the ability of that place to provide necessary goods and services to the people that live there. The most applicable tenet of this theory to this plan can be summarized as “the larger the size of a central place, the greater the number of retail and service functions or activities found in that central place” (Kaplan, Wheeler & Holloway, 2009). The study area is surrounded by many regional attractions that draw people from all over the Richmond Region which, depending on which level of the hierarchy one is analyzing, means it is either in or adjacent to a central place. However, the study area does not currently offer the level of goods and services that would be expected from a commercial district locat-

ed in a regionally significant central place.

Lastly, the concept of place is one that is important for a neighborhood commercial district. The study area is one that is unique in the City of Richmond, but incorporating aspects of placemaking theory will seek input from the community it serves and build on current assets to make this recognizable area more distinctive. This will be done by combining four key attributes that make a place great: 1. a diverse set of uses and activities, 2. a high degree of sociability, 3. a comfortable and safe environment, and 4. easy access to the place and other nearby attractions and linkages (Project for Public Spaces). The success of any commercial district’s success is determined by many things, but creating a place that people recognize as unique and want to be, is key to enhancing the “Devil’s Triangle.”



*Image 3: The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts draws visitors from all over the East Coast for some of its special exhibitions.*

## ***Relevant Plans and Literature***

The most common approach to achieve economic enhancement of a neighborhood commercial district is to utilize the National Main Street Four-Point Approach which endeavors to improve the potential of a commercial district in the areas of economic structure, urban design, branding/promotion, and organizing stakeholders in a manner that includes the people who are capable of making changes and the people who will be impacted by those changes. All four of these aspects of the study area could be improved to make this a more vibrant commercial district (National Trust for Historic Preservation).

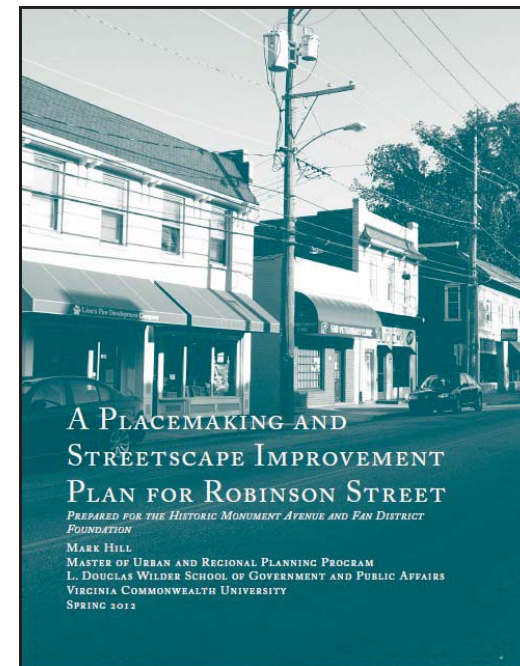
### **Relevant Plans**

#### ***Lakeside Avenue Revitalization Plan***

Lakeside Avenue is a commercial corridor on the north side of Richmond near Bryan Park and the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. This plan was developed by VCU students in the fall of 2007 for the County of Henrico. The proximity of this corridor to regional attractions is similar to the situation in the “Devil’s Triangle” although the density of the surrounding neighborhoods for the Lakeside Avenue Commercial Corridor is lower than that of the study area of this plan and Lakeside likely has less of a pedestrian and cyclist component due to the more the greater emphasis of the automobile in the area. However, there are several approaches to planning in this document that are particularly relevant and provided excellent guidance in the creation of the plan for this study area. This plan also utilized the Main Street Four Point approach and provided an excellent procedural framework for creating a plan of this nature.

#### ***Robinson Street Placemaking and Streetscape Improvement Plan***

This was a Professional Plan project done by VCU graduate Mark Hill in the spring of 2012 for the Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation. While this plan focused on placemaking, the mix of uses, density, and history of the area as a former trolley route of the Robinson Street study area is comparable to that of the “Devil’s Triangle.” This plan offers many ideas for physical improvements as well as excellent methodology for analyzing existing conditions and community outreach (Hill, 2012).



## Literature

### Main Street Ohio: Opportunities For Bringing People Back Downtown

This is a publication that was created by the Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development in the early 1980s as many cities, small and large, in the State of Ohio began to feel the effects of suburbanization, such as the degradation of their tax base and centralized poverty. It offers many strategies for revitalizing commercial areas that are still relevant to planning today, such as market analysis, organization, and design techniques that are timeless in the sense of what makes a commercial district a successful place that people want to experience.

### Project for Public Spaces Literature

The Project for Public Spaces is a non-profit planning organization that believes “placemaking” is the process through which we collectively shape our public realm to maximize shared value” (“Project for Public Spaces”). The concept was born from the mind and work of William Whyte, the creator of the book and film *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. In these works, Whyte analyzes the components of public spaces and posits the theory that public spaces, whether a park or a streetscape, will attract what they are designed for and that they should be designed for people (“Project for Public Spaces”). While, much development in the past 60 years has been designed primarily for the automobile, a place ultimately succeeds if it is designed at the level of a person. The streets, sidewalks, and most of the structures of the study area were built before the automobile became the primary mode of transportation in the United States, however there are also several places in this commercial district that could be improved upon to make the public space in the area more conducive to those not travelling in an automobile.



Image 4: North Sheppard Street looking south



Chart 1: the Place Diagram from the Project for Public

## Approach and Methods

This plan provides a planning context and infrastructure for the commercial enhancement of this vital neighborhood commercial district. Its purpose is to improve the quality of life for Museum District residents through sensible commercial enhancement, market research, and design concepts that promote the commercial district as a unique place within the City of Richmond, as well as raise the district's profile among the more than 2 million people that visit surrounding attractions annually.

To achieve these goals, this plan uses tools considered state of the art in commercial district revitalization planning. These include making physical observations, interviewing business and property owners in the study area, surveying current and potential customers of the commercial district, a focus group with members of the Museum District Association, a parking analysis, and the development of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis for the study area. Other analyses include market analysis techniques and the establishing the commercial district's existing trade area.

This was done by completing a retail market analysis and information obtained through interviews and surveys because it is important to understand the economic capabilities of the study area. The ultimate goal of the market analysis was to identify if unmet demand exists. Researching and analyzing this information allows this plan to make recommendations that will improve the profitability of the district for business owners, the value of the space for property owners, and provide needed services for local residents and visitors. To do this, some important questions needed to be answered:

### Economics

*What is the existing trade area for the study area?*

The current trade area is primarily residents of the Museum District and The Fan, but for the purposes of this plan, the trade area is a collection of 12 contiguous census tracts that are completely or partially within a one mile radius

from the study area. This is based on where people who took the customer intercept survey live. While the distance that people travel can vary greatly based on the type of good or service being offered, the overwhelming majority of people that shop or dine in the area live within the trade area used in this plan.

*Why do people come to the study area?*

The overwhelming majority of people shopping or dining in the "Devil's Triangle" live within one mile of the study area. Most of them go there to eat and drink at the numerous restaurants, to purchase convenience items such as beer, tobacco products, or quick food items, and to wash clothing or get their hair cut. Presently, there is little impact on the area from surrounding museums, churches, and other attractions.



*Image 5: Sylvia's Stitch & Suds operates as a designer of specialty curtains and drapes, a tailor, as well as a Laundramat. Multifaceted businesses are common in the "Devil's Triangle."*



*What are some potential new business types that have unmet demand in the area?*

Presently the commercial space in the study area consists of a mixture of restaurants, convenience stores, office space, and services ranging from a salon and laundromat to a Hispanic grocery store and a spinning studio (stationary bikes). There is also an auto repair shop and a law office. Based on extensive surveying of customers as well as merchant and property owner surveys there is a desire for more upscale shopping, a market that sells fresh food, and a greater variety of retail options in general. To determine unmet demand for specific goods and services, a retail market analysis of the study area was completed and the results compared responses from customer intercept surveys. Each customer was asked what types of goods and services they would like to see in the area. All recommendations are based on customer survey results of meeting unmet demand in the market analysis.

## **Design**

*Which design aspects of the “Devil’s Triangle” do merchants and customers like and which do they dislike?*

People like that they can walk to the study area and that it is accessible by automobile. They like that it is a convenient place to stop and get something to eat or drink without the hassle that comes with going to some other places in the city. However, in the eyes of many there is a significant shortage of parking in the district and both customers and merchants believe it has a negative impact on the number of people who visit the businesses there.

## **Promotion**

*What is the current image of the Devil’s Triangle?*

The image of the “Devil’s Triangle” varies greatly from person to person, even among the stakeholders. Business owner’s generally like the name and think the area should be promoted as such, however other groups, such as some members of the Museum District Association, believe the name has a negative connotation and wish to rebrand the area in a way that better fits the neigh-

borhood as it is now. Information and recommendations in this document relating to the image of the study area are based on extensive interviews and surveys.

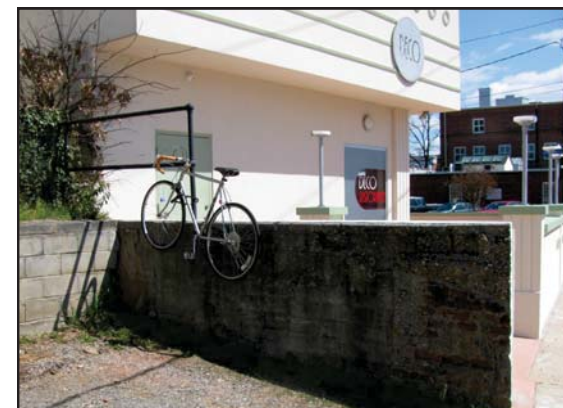
*How can the commercial district increase its capture rate of visitors to surrounding attractions?*

The study area should brand itself in a more cohesive manner. This should include promoting the area at surrounding attractions and improving the district’s social media presence. These recommendations are based on merchant interviews and surveys conducted at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

## **Organization**

*Is there interest from existing merchants in the formation of a merchant association?*

There is a strong desire among merchants for the businesses in the study area to work together for the long-term success of the commercial district. According to merchant interviews, they believe that raising the visibility of the commercial district is important and it is something they would be willing to contribute their time and money to so long as it benefits their business and the commercial district.



*Image 6: The lack of bicycle infrastructure in the study area often requires cyclists to find creative solutions when parking their bikes.*



## *Roadmap to the Document*

Part I of this document presents information on the existing conditions of the study area and research necessary to recommend changes that enhance the “Devil’s Triangle” as a unique place and a neighborhood commercial district.

The first section begins with an explanation of the current physical and regulatory conditions of the study area. This will include a series of maps and information about this commercial district that provide a context for the study area and how it fits into framework of the City of Richmond, the Museum District, and other surrounding influences. The second section will include demographic information about the study area and its existing trade area.

The third section will include information gathered from surveys and interviews with stakeholders in the study area. It will be divided into sections for merchants, customers, and other stakeholders as well as a section synthesizing the sentiments of all stakeholders.

The fourth section includes quantitative results from the retail market analysis

which will include information on the existing and potential trade area of the “Devil’s Triangle” and identifies potential new uses for the Devil’s Triangle based on consumer demands and the market analysis.

The last section will summarize the existing conditions and development potential through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis.

Part II of the plan lays out a long term and overarching vision for the future of the “Devil’s Triangle”, as well as the goals, objectives, recommendations, and strategies for implementation. This portion of the plan uses the National Main Street Four-Point Approach to explain its recommendations dividing them into four sections: Economics, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

# Part I: Assessment of Existing Conditions and Commercial Potential

## Existing Conditions

The “Devil’s Triangle” is an important neighborhood commercial corridor that primarily serves residents of the Museum District and the Fan. Presently it consists of 22 businesses, the majority of which would be classified as Food and Beverage, Convenience Retail, or Neighborhood Services. While there are a handful of offices in the area, it has become a popular restaurant hub in recent years and is an important cog in the localized economy of the Museum

District and, to some extent, The Fan. It is an area that has seen the demographics of its population shift in recent years, however the amount and level of available retail has remained relatively unchanged, while the target demographic of the food and beverage businesses has drastically shifted.

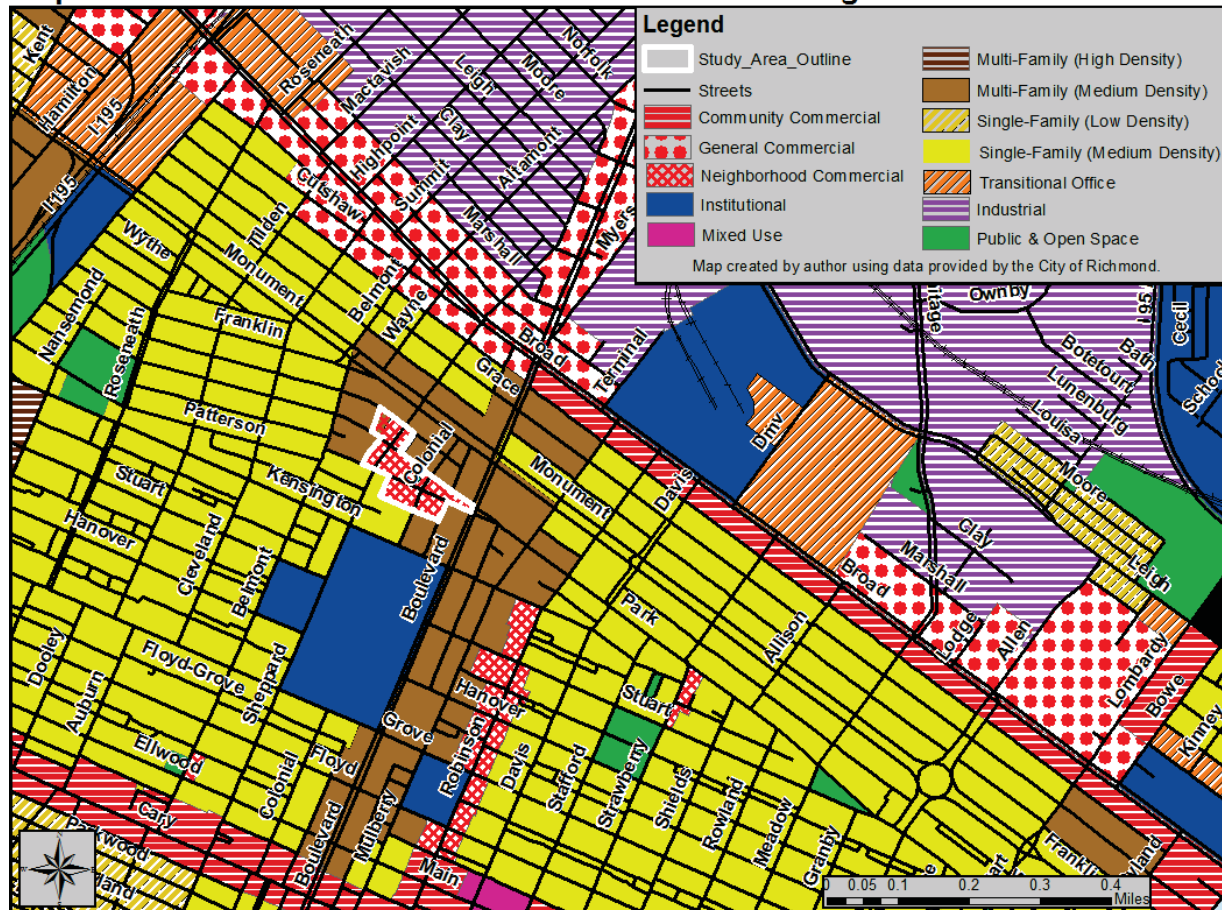
### Zoning and Land Use

#### Zoning

The present zoning of the entire study area is almost exclusively B-2 or Neighborhood Commercial District, the lone exception being a parking lot at the corner of Patterson and Boulevard that is zoned R-48, which is Multi-family. The permitted uses and building scale allowed in this district are numerous. However, due to the age of the neighborhood, many of the businesses in this area have grandfathered in parking requirements and signage restrictions allowed because they have been there since before the zoning code was adopted.

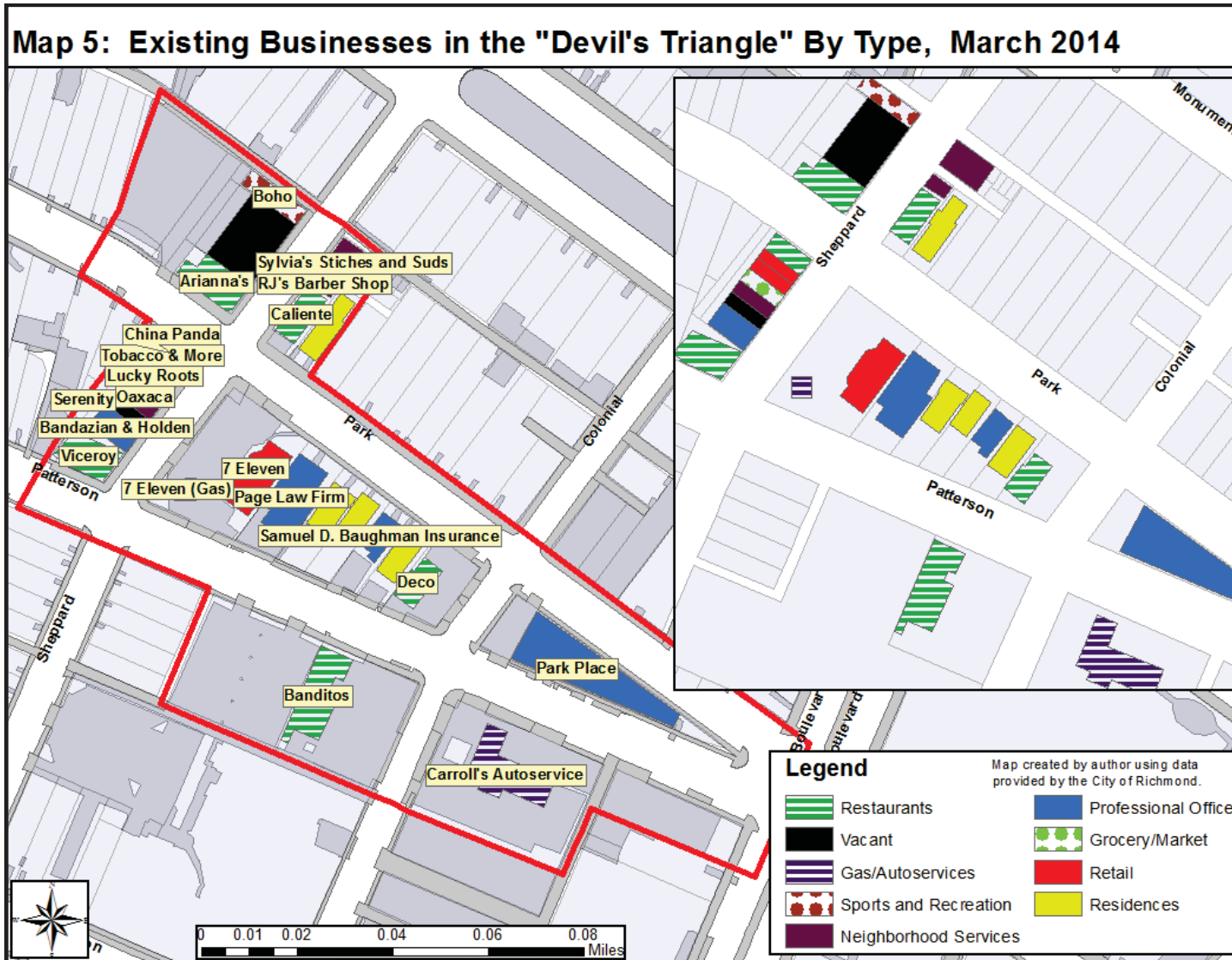
The maximum building height allowed in both B-2 and R-48 is 35 feet, however, none of the businesses in this area, outside of the flatiron building located on the smaller triangular lot facing Boulevard between Park and Patterson Avenues, are close to approaching the height limitations. Most are a single story with a handful of them being two-story with residential or storage space on the second floor. The map below is the future land use map for the study area and the surrounding neighborhoods based on the City of Richmond’s 2008 update to its master plan.

Map 4: Future Land Use In and Around the "Devil's Triangle"



## Building Conditions and Uses

There are twenty-five buildings in the study area and 88 percent of them are considered to be “normal” for their age or better on their most recent assessment by the City of Richmond. Of the three properties that are below normal, all are considered “fair.” One of them is presently vacant and is currently being renovated. The other two buildings are actually the same building that is divided into separate parcels and are both part of Sylvia’s Stitch and Suds.



**Table 1: Building Conditions**

Condition	Number	Percentage
Fair	3	12.0%
Normal	16	64.0%
Good	5	20.0%
Very Good	1	4.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: City of Richmond

## Design and Streetscape

In March 2014, an inventory of streetscape elements was taken in the study area. This analysis looked into the availability and quality of street furniture, lighting, and green space along the sidewalks of the study area. The results of this study can be seen in in Table 2.

Presently, there is a lack of cohesion in the streetscape in the “Devil’s Triangle.” Sidewalks along streets running north and south (Sheppard Street and Colonial Avenue) are not as wide as those along streets running east and west (Park and Patterson Avenues). While there is an ample amount of trashcans, there are three different styles of trashcan in the two and a half block area, including an area at the intersection of Park and Sheppard in which all three styles of trashcan can be found within 200 feet of each other. There are no benches anywhere in the study area despite the presence of two bus stops.

In terms of street lighting, there are primarily two types of lighting fixtures in the area: pedestrian focused lighting and automobile focused lighting. There is significantly more pedestrian lighting which is identified as such based on its placement on the sidewalk at height of 15-20 feet while automobile light fixtures

are generally attached to utility poles and higher in the air (30-40 feet) to reach out over the road.

There is an unequal distribution of sidewalk planters and trees in general in the “Devil’s Triangle.” More than half of all public trees in the study area are on Park Avenue, and another 30 percent are on Patterson Avenue. The most notable lack of street trees is on Sheppard Street, where there are only two, both of which are in front of 7 Eleven.



Image 7: Three styles of trashcan currently in the study area. The location from left to right: outside of Arianna’s, outside of 7 Eleven, and in front of Caliente.

Table 2: Devil's Triangle Existing Streetscape Analysis, March 2014	Trash Cans	Pedi-Lights	Auto-Lights	Utility Poles	Planters with Tree	Planters No Tree	Total Trees	Total Non-Tree Foliage
<b>Street</b>								
Sheppard Street	2	5	2	9	2	0	2	0
Patterson Avenue	2	12	6	11	5	1	17	7
Park Avenue	3	12	5	9	10	0	30	0
Colonial Avenue	0	3	1	4	2	0	7	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: Author Observations, March 2014



Image 8: There are an abundance of surface parking lots in the commercial district.



Image 9: Sheppard Street. Sidewalks on streets that run north and south are smaller than those running east and west.

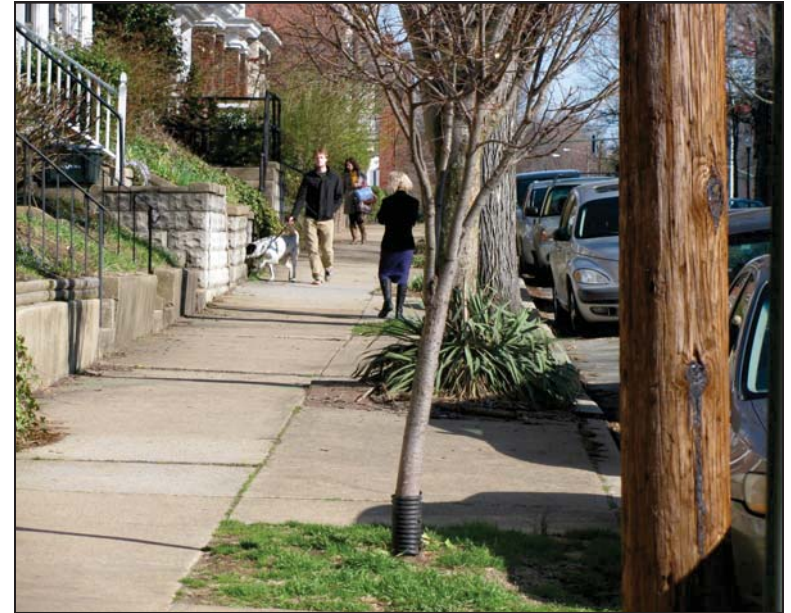


Image 10: Park Avenue boasts wider sidewalks, fewer utility poles, more trees than other streets in the "Devil's Triangle."



Image 11: Sheppard Street looking north. The two trees on the right hand side of this photo are the only trees on Sheppard between Patterson and Monument.



Image 12: Park Avenue looking east. More than half of all trees on public property within the study area are on Park Avenue.

## Traffic Circulation and Parking

The Museum District initially developed at a time in which the primary mode of transportation for most people was public transportation or walking, and it is for this reason that the neighborhood and the commercial district it contains remain walkable to this day. However, while the ease of access on foot and public transit remains there is a perception among customers and merchants that there is a lack of parking in the study area.

### **Traffic Analysis**

The study area's proximity to a major arterial road, Boulevard, ensures that a significant number of commuters pass nearby on a daily basis. Furthermore, both Park and Patterson Avenues serve as important neighborhood arterial streets, as Park extends all the way to VCU to the east and I-95 in the west, while Patterson Avenue is the name of State Highway 6 in the City of Richmond and Henrico County, but runs west to 288 as West River Road before terminating at State Highway 15 near Fort Union, VA. Patterson Avenue serves as an important conduit for people traveling to or through the Museum District looking to avoid the congestion or concentration of traffic signals on Broad Street.

This results in a high traffic volume for what otherwise appears to be an innocuous neighborhood street. A traffic study was done on vehicles traveling east and west at the intersection where Park and Patterson Avenues meet Boulevard between

8am on a Wednesday through 2pm on a Friday in February 2011.

As can be seen in Table 3, there was an average of 7,765 vehicles that passed through going both east and west. Many of these vehicles likely live in the Convenience Trade Area, but certainly all of them do not, and the drivers of these vehicles present businesses in the study area with an opportunity to gain new customers. When this figure is expanded as a daily estimate for the 260 weekdays of each year, there are more than 2 million vehicles that pass through the study area on weekdays. Moreover, this plan assumes that weekend traffic totals are 50 percent of weekday totals, so for the 105 weekend days there is an estimated total of 407,663 vehicles which brings the estimated total annual traffic volume of more than 2.4 million vehicles.

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**Table 3: Traffic Volume East and West at Intersection of Patterson and Park Avenues, February 9-11,**

Eastbound Traffic					Total
Day 1	8am to 7 am	24 hours	8,410	11,965	
Day 2	8am to 2 pm	7 hours	3,555		
Westbound Traffic					Total
Day 1	8am to 7 am	24 hours	7,119	9,852	
Day 2	8am to 2 pm	7 hours	2,733		
<b>Total Commuters</b>					<b>21,817</b>
<b>24 hour average (East and West)</b>					<b>7,765</b>

Source: City of Richmond

**Table 4: Traffic Volume North and South on Boulevard at Intersection of Patterson and Park Avenues, Wednesday October 22, 2008**

Time	North	South	Total
7am to 9 am	1,390	693	2,083
11am to 1 pm	1,062	815	1,877
4pm to 6 pm	1,164	1,307	2,471
<i>Directional Total</i>	<b>3,616</b>	<b>2,815</b>	
<b>6 hour total</b>			<b>6,431</b>

Source: Peggy Malone and Associates, for the City of Richmond

### ***Parking Inventory and Analysis***

One of the most cited issues by merchants as being a problem in the study area is the lack of parking spaces. For this reason, a parking inventory for the “Devil’s Triangle” was done to determine how many parking spaces are available in the area, whether those spaces are on-street or off-street, and how the residences in and adjacent to the study area impact the availability of parking. This data includes only spaces in the study area that are available to customers of businesses in the “Devil’s Triangle” and does not include off-street parking spaces in lots in or near the study area that are reserved for surrounding apartment complexes and churches. Furthermore, it does not include the 220 on-street parking spaces within a block of the study area along Patterson

This analysis was completed using two approaches: the first was a physical observation done by walking in and around the study area to count the number of off-street parking spaces available to people visiting the businesses in the “Devil’s Triangle,” as well as estimating the number of on-street parking spaces available along each street within the study area.

### ***Physical Observation Results***

The results of the observational analyses are summarized in Tables 5 and 6 and the number of spaces available are broken down by street within the study area. Based on these observations, there is a total of 292 parking spaces in the study area. Of these 292 spaces, five of them are reserved for

handicapped customers.

### ***Geographic Information Systems Analysis***

The second portion of the analysis was done using ArcGIS and data from the City of Richmond to estimate the amount of on-street parking spaces in the district based on the accepted standard for parallel parking spaces of 22 feet by 7 feet (Cyburbia, 3/5/14). A map of on-street parking spaces was created to determine the number of spaces that could potentially fit on each street in the study area based this standard for parallel parking spaces and the actual length of each block. This analysis resulted in 10 less on-street parking spaces when compared to observational analysis for a total of 282 parking spaces in the study area (see Map 6), however, much of the on-street parking availability is dependent on the ability of the people parking and the size of their vehicle. Obviously the study area is capable of absorbing more Honda Civics with on-street parking than Chevrolet Suburbans. There are certainly situations in which three or four small cars could comfortably fit in a space where there are only two standard spaces because on-street parking spaces are not painted on the streets of the study area.

<b>Table 5: Devil's Triangle Existing On-Street Parking Analysis, March 2014</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Blocks in Study Area</b>	<b>On-Street Parking</b>
<b>Street</b>			
Sheppard Street	North	1.5	7
Sheppard Street	South	1.5	15
Patterson Avenue	East	2.5	22
Patterson Avenue	West	2.5	22
Park Avenue	East	2.5	31
Park Avenue	West	2.5	28
Colonial Avenue	North	1.5	4
Colonial Avenue	South	1.5	6
<b>Total</b>			<b>135</b>

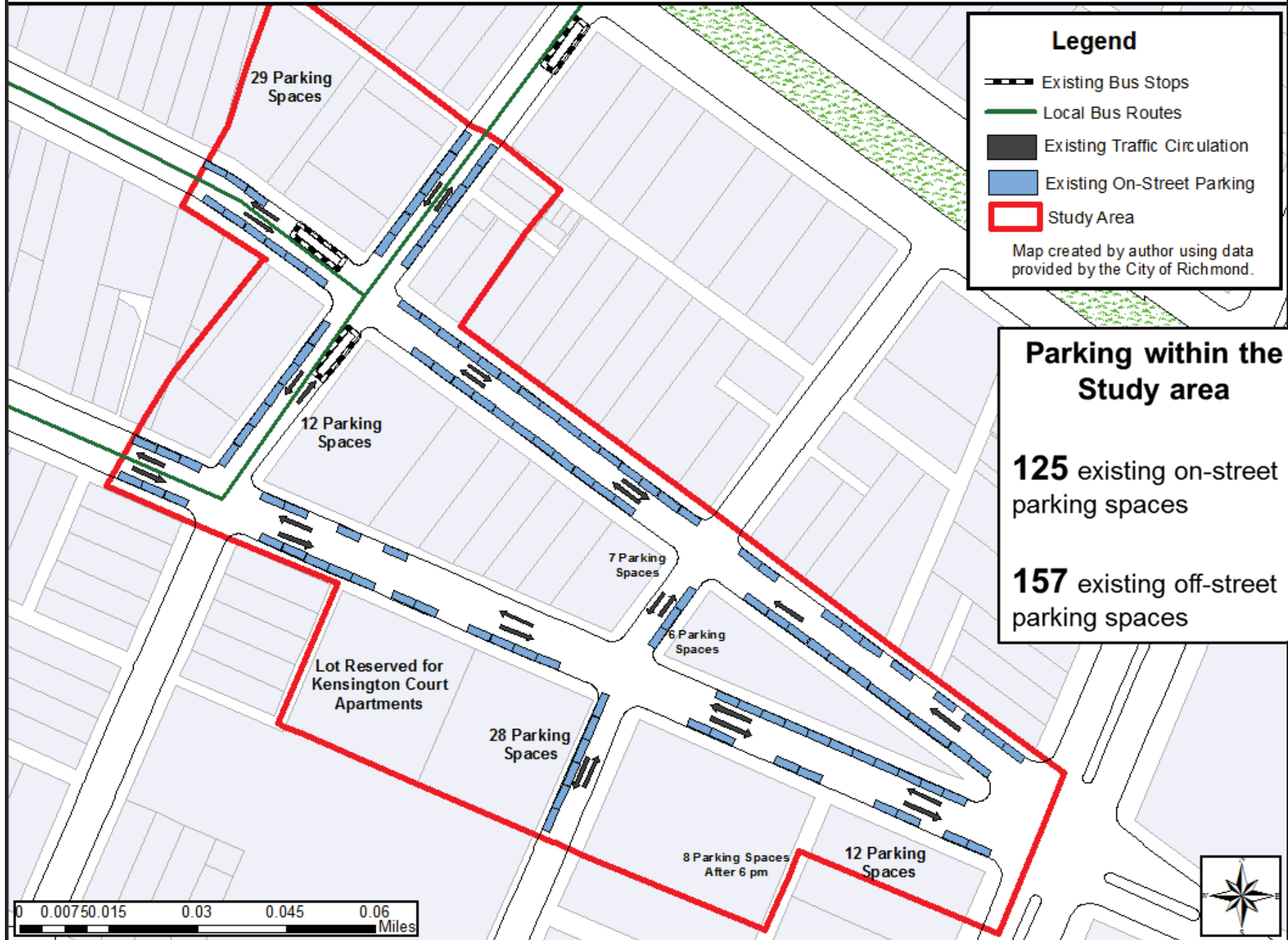
*Source: Author Observations, March 2014*

<b>Table 6: Devil's Triangle Existing Off-Street Parking Analysis, March 2014</b>	<b>Off-Street Parking Spaces</b>
<b>Parking Lot</b>	
Bandazian Lot	29
Carroll's Lot 1	12
Carroll's Lot 2	8
Banditos' Lot	28
7 Eleven Lot	12
Deco Lot	7
Park Place Lot	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>

*Source: Author Observations, 2014*



# Map 6: Existing Parking, Transit, and Traffic Circulation in the "Devil's Triangle"



## ***Other Modes of Transportation***

### ***Pedestrians***

The “Devil’s Triangle” is a very walkable commercial district, particularly when compared to suburban style commercial development, however, there are several issues that negatively impact pedestrians. First, there are four intersections in the study area (ignoring Boulevard at Park and Patterson Avenues) and two of them have no crosswalk at all (Patterson at Colonial and Park at Colonial), while the other two have crosswalks that are faded to the point that they are difficult to recognize.

Second, none of the intersections have pedestrian crossing signals and all of them are abutted by a surface parking lot that has 3 or more vehicle entrance and exit points, creating a situation where pedestrians have to not only account for the cars going left and right, but also cars turning into and out of these parking lots, making it more difficult to safely cross the street.

Third, none of the sidewalks are handicap accessible. A person in a wheelchair has to reach an alleyway or a curb cut to get onto the sidewalks at any of the intersections, and would be unable to cross any streets at the corner in the study area.

### ***Cyclists***

Presently, the “Devil’s Triangle” does not have any bicycle facilities or infrastructure. While the lack of bike lanes is not abnormal in the City of Richmond, there are no bike racks for cyclists and those that do ride to the area typically lock their bikes to parking signs on the sidewalk which takes space away from pedestrians and bothers merchants who do not like when cyclists leave their bicycles locked in front of their businesses for extended periods of time.

### ***Public Transportation***

There are presently two bus stops located in the study area and an additional two bus stops within a block of the study area making it easily accessible by bus. Line 1 and Line 2 of the Greater Richmond Transit Company’s regional network both have a presence in the study area, allowing those using transportation to easily access the “Devil’s Triangle” and making travelling to other parts of the Richmond Region from the study area relatively easy. Both of these are local routes (rather than express).



*Image 13: a man in a wheelchair heads north on Sheppard Street. None of the sidewalks in the study area have ramps leaving automobile curb cuts as*



*Image: 14: A bike is locked to a street sign outside of Banditos.*

## Surrounding Attractions and Influences

The study area is located in an established neighborhood that is within walking distance to many regional attractions and influences. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Virginia Historical Society, the Science Museum of Virginia, the Children’s Museum of Virginia, the Diamond, the Byrd Theatre, the Richmond Greyhound Bus Station, or the fifteen churches within the one mile radius are all places that draw visitors from across the Richmond Region, and in some cases, from even further. These are all influences on the study area at different times of the day, week, or year and bring a significant number of people to the Convenience Trade Area. Yet, when asked if there is a noticeable impact from destinations merchants describe it as “negligible” or flat out say “no.”

This is surprising for many reasons, not the least of which is that the combined number of visitors to the five attractions within the one mile radius that boast strong regional appeal: the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Children’s Muse-

um of Richmond, the Science Museum of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, and The Diamond was 1.6 million people in 2013, and that does not include people visiting the seasonal Redskin’s Training Camp or Movieland at Boulevard Square. This number is huge for a city with a population of less than 230,000 people and a metropolitan area population of less than 1.3 million. Essentially, if every individual person in the Richmond Region went to one of these five attractions only once in the last calendar year, the total would still be short of 2013 visitation by another 350,000 people.

### *Attractions Within One Mile of the “Devil’s Triangle:”*

#### **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (0.26 miles)**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is located on Boulevard and is one of the



premier art museums on the East Coast. Consistently attracting some of the top art exhibits in the world, it was attended by 479,907 people in 2013, making it the second most popular tourist attraction in the Richmond Region (Calos, 2014). While most of the museum is free of charge, the museum

hosts between four and six special collections annually which, depending on the exhibit, attract people from across the Eastern Seaboard.

#### **Children’s Museum of Richmond (0.36 miles)**

The Children’s Museum of Richmond is located near the corner of Broad Street



and Boulevard and was visited by 393,529 people in 2013, making it the third most visited museum in the Richmond Region (Calos, 2014).

Source: RichmondBizsense

**Map 7: Regional Attractions Within 1 Mile of the “Devil’s Triangle”**



### Science Museum of Virginia (0.42 miles)



Source: [architecturerichmond.com](http://architecturerichmond.com)

The Science Museum of Virginia is located in what used to be Broad Street Station (also called Union Station), which served as the main train station for the City of Richmond from when it opened in 1917 until 1975. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, with the museum opening in 1977 after extensive remodeling. This museum features many exhibits as well as an IMAX dome theatre and with 226,815 visitors in 2013, the science museum was the seventh most visited museum in the Richmond Region in 2013 (Calos, 2014).

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### Virginia Historical Society and Virginia House (0.15 miles)



Source: [virginiahistoricalsociety.com](http://virginiahistoricalsociety.com)

Although its permanent collection is currently unavailable due to a \$38 million renovation that will be occurring between January 2014 and June 2015, the Virginia Historical Society will be reopening as sections of the building are completed. In 2013, the historical society had 69,357 visitors which made it the thirteenth most visited museum in the Richmond Region (Calos, 2014).

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### The Diamond (0.96 miles)



Source: [onwayrichmond.com](http://onwayrichmond.com)

Home of the Richmond Flying Squirrels double-A baseball team (an affiliate of the San Francisco Giants), The Diamond is located on the former site of Parker Field and baseball has been played at the site since the 1930s. Since coming to Richmond for the 2010 season, the Flying Squirrels have been first or second in the Eastern League in attendance each year with a four year average annual attendance of 446,033 visitors over an average of 68 games annually, which is an average of 6,559 people per game ("Eastern League Attendance," 2013).

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### Movieland at Boulevard Square (0.59 miles)



Source: [bowtiecinemas.com](http://bowtiecinemas.com)

Movieland, or "Bowtie Cinema" as it is often called, is a 53,000 square foot movie theater with seventeen screens in a building that has been refabricated from its original use as a manufacturing plant. It shows first run movies, and recently expanded adding an additional five screens in a separate, but adjacent building that primarily show indie/artistic films. According to the manager of the theater, the average weekly attendance for the theatre is approximately 6,000 people with that number growing to 11,000 during the Christmas Holidays (C. Wells, personal communication, February 28, 2014).

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### The Byrd Theatre (0.61 miles)



Source: [styleweekly.com](http://styleweekly.com)

Named after the founder of the City of Richmond, William Byrd, "The Byrd," as it is popularly called, was one of the most impressive movie theaters in the country when it opened in 1928 and has shown movies almost continually since that time. Today, it is owned by the non-profit Byrd Foundation and it continues to show second run films at a cost of \$1.99 two times a day, 365 days a year. It is listed on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places ("Restoration & History," 2014).

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Table 7: Surrounding Attraction Visitors, 2013	
Attraction	2013 Visitors
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts	479,907
The Diamond	434,769
Children's Museum of Richmond	393,529
Science Museum of Virginia	226,815
Movieland at Boulevard Square	332,000
Washington Redskins Training Camp	165,571
Virginia Historical Society	69,357

Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch  
 Movieland visitors were estimated based on weekly averages

### William Byrd Park (1 mile)



Another place in Richmond named after its founder, Byrd Park has three lakes, an amphitheater, tennis courts, little league baseball fields, a one mile long VITA trail, and several children’s playgrounds. It is a popular place for recreation and relaxation when the weather permits and is adjacent to several river access points (“Byrd Park,” 2011).

Source: richmondcitybook.com

### Washington Redskins Training Camp, Seasonal (0.53 miles)



Last summer marked the first of an eight year contract the Washington Redskins of the National Football League will hold their three week long training camp at a complex built behind the Science Museum of Virginia. In the first year, between July 25 and August 17, a total of 165,571 people visited the training camp making it the most attended NFL training camp of 2013 season (Phillips, 2013).

Source: redskins.com

## Surrounding Commercial Corridors

### Carytown

Carytown is a one mile long shopping and entertainment corridor south of the “Devil’s Triangle” that is located within the Convenience Trade Area. In many ways, it represents how an urban shopping district can compete with the suburban shopping experience. It has an enhanced streetscape with on-street parking, street furniture, pedestrian crosswalks with signals and pedestrian scale lighting that often advertises upcoming special events. It is easily accessible by public transit, bicycle, or on foot and it has a strong merchants association and that routinely has district wide marketing campaigns and hosts several special events annually, including the Carytown Watermelon Festival, Restaurant Week, and the Carytown Beer Festival. Of those customer’s surveyed in the study area, 62 percent of them cited Carytown as a place they typically shop for goods and services, more than any other shopping center. This is like-

ly due in part to the proximity of this area to the “Devil’s Triangle.” For many of these customers, Carytown is equally as accessible as the study area and, considering it has well over 1 million square feet of retail/commercial space, Carytown is significantly larger than the “Devil’s Triangle” and offers more variety in terms of retail, dining, and entertainment.



Image 15: Carytown is a popular urban shopping district within the Convenience Trade Area of the “Devil’s Triangle.”

**Table 8: Percentage of Study Area Customers that Shop at Surrounding Competition, 2014**

Shopping District	Percentage
Carytown	62.0%
Willow lawn	32.9%
Short Pump	29.1%
Southside	19.0%
The Fan	30.4%
Other	25.3%

Source: Customer Intercept Survey, 2014

## Willow Lawn

The second most popular shopping district for customers in the study area is Willow Lawn, with 33 percent of respondents citing it as a place they shop. This is likely due to the fact that it is the closest regional shopping center to the study area and, as was noted by several survey respondents, it is the closest place that most people living in the Convenience Trade Area can access “big box” retail stores. The shopping center lies approximately two miles from the “Devil’s Triangle” and is the most similar commercial district within a fifteen minute drive of the study area. The importance of Willow Lawn as provider of goods and services is evident by the high percentage of customers in the study area that shop there, but the regional scale of this shopping center is very different from the type of retail that will be recommended in the “Devil’s Triangle.”



Image 16: Willow Lawn is a large regional shopping center a little over 2 miles from the “Devil’s Triangle.” It features many national chain stores. Source: federalrealty.com

## The Fan/Robinson Street

The third most visited shopping area of customers in the study area was the Fan, which mostly includes shops and restaurants along Main Street and Robinson Street. The businesses here are primarily focused on meeting the needs of the surrounding neighborhood than is Carytown, which has a stronger regional appeal. In this shopping district one is more likely to find a mixture of restaurants and personal services mixed with professional offices, record shops, and vintage stores. The mix of businesses here is most similar to that of the study area in terms of the types of businesses present and it is the closest

to the study area in terms of distance. This makes it easily accessible on foot from much of the Museum District which explains why more than 30 percent of people surveyed mentioned this commercial district as a place that they regularly shop.



Image 17: The intersection of Main and Robinson Streets is a hub of restaurants and small shops. Source: Mark Hill

## Short Pump

Short Pump Town Center is the largest and most diverse shopping district in the Richmond Region. It is a full scale mall packed with nearly every type of retail most of which are national chains. Generally, if the Richmond Region is going to have only one store of a national retailer, it will be in the Short Pump area. Examples of this are Whole Foods, Nordstrom’s, and, in the near future,

Cabela’s. These are not the types of retail people expect inside of a neighborhood commercial district, but they are places they often depend upon for unique goods and services, as is evidenced by the 29.1 percent of customers surveyed who shop at Short Pump.

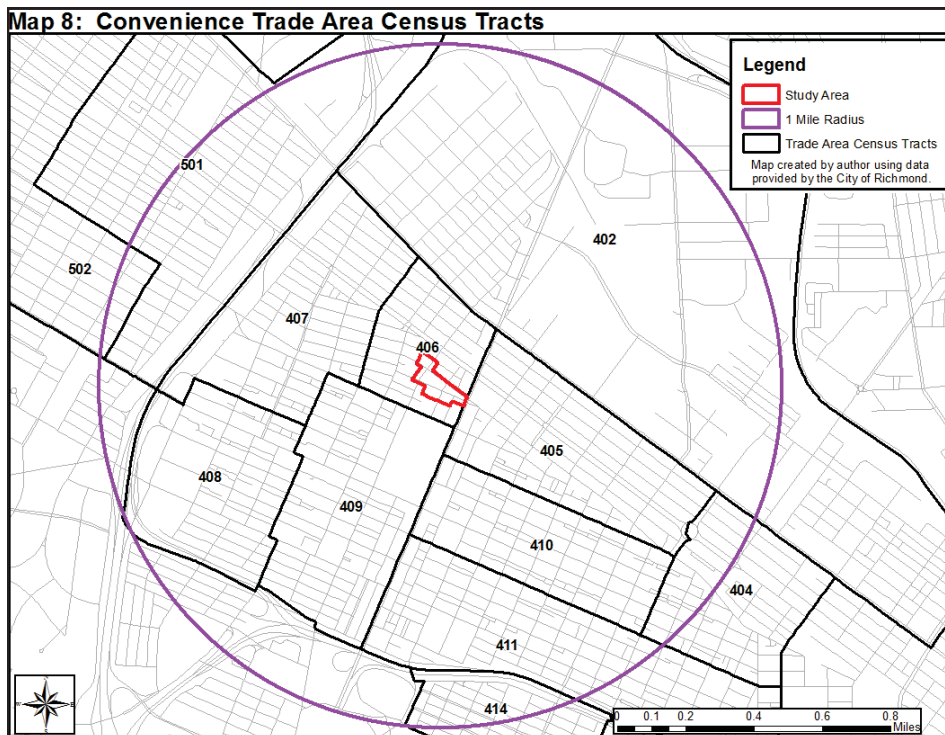


Image 18: Short Pump Town Center. Source: RichmondBizsense.com

## Demographic Analysis

The overwhelming majority of customers of businesses in the study area live within one mile of the commercial district. One explanation for this is the walkability of the Museum District and The Fan, the two neighborhoods nearest to the “Devil’s Triangle,” and parking is often challenging at peak hours. Another is that the majority of retail businesses in the study area provide convenience items (beer, tobacco products, snack food, etc.) that people are unlikely to travel a great distance to purchase, or services (laundromat, salon/barbershop, auto repair, etc.) which are typically used by people who live or work nearby. The circle on Map 8 illustrates how the one mile radius was used to determine the Convenience Trade Area. This distance was chosen based on survey information presented later in this plan.

*For the purposes of this study, all demographic information is based on the 12 census tracts identified as the Convenience Trade Area.*



### *Age*

The population of the Convenience Trade Area increased by 2,743 people between 2000 and 2010, and the general trend was that younger people moved in and older residents moved out of the area, a theory that is supported by the fact that the median age of the area decreased nearly three full years in a decade. However, further analysis suggests it is not that simple. Upon further analysis, three clear population trends emerge. The data is summarized in Table 9.

#### **People in their 20s moved in.**

The greatest change of all was seen in the age range of 20 to 24 years where the total number of residents increased by 3,646 people in 10 years. The increase in this age group was likely influenced by the growth of VCU over this same period, but while VCU has grown and the footprint of its student’s off-campus housing has increased, it is unlikely that all or even the majority of new residents in this age range are VCU students. Although VCU’s enrollment grew from 24,066 in the fall of 2000 to 32,303 in the fall of 2010, the study area is more than a mile from campus and during the same time the number of students living in Jackson and Monroe Wards also increased significantly (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2000 and 2010). Both of these neighborhoods are significantly closer to campus and generally have lower monthly rents than the Museum District. This shift is of particular importance as people in their 20s less likely to have children and more likely to spend on non-essential things like dining out.

### People in their late 30s and 40s moved out.

The second largest change in total population came in the age range of 35 to 44 which saw a decrease of 886 residents. The most likely explanation for this is the cultural shift of young adults waiting until later in their life to have children than they did in the past. For this reason, it can be inferred that people between the ages of 35 and 44 moved out of the city after they had children or once their children reached school age.

### Empty nesters moved in.

The number of people between the ages of 55 and 64 increased their population by 1,007 residents during this time frame, which seems to go against the general trend of the neighborhood becoming younger. One explanation for this is that “Baby Boomers,” whose children are no longer living at home, moved to the Convenience Trade Area. They are no longer concerned with the quality of public schools, and if they work in the City of Richmond, moving to one of the neighborhoods in the trade area reduces their commute drastically while also bringing them closer to many of the amenities of city life.

### Housing

For the most part, households did not change dramatically during this timeframe (2000-2010). The average household size remained nearly constant and most of the categories changed less than 1 percent, although there was a slight increase in the number of total households. More notably, several of these theories on the shifting demographic nature of the Convenience Trade Area are supported by housing. Changes in housing data can be seen in Table 10.

The increase of people in their 20s and/or college aged young adults can be seen in the increase of “Nonfamily households” which describes those in which two or more unrelated people are living in the same house. This same demographic is likely responsible for a considerable amount of the 4.22 percent decrease in people living alone in the area. People in their 30s had an impact on this category as well due to the habit of younger generations to live with a significant other but delay marriage. These households are classified as nonfamily despite functioning more like a married household. However, “empty nesters” do tend to be married and their increased presence explains the relatively small decrease in the percentage of people classified as a “Married-couple family.”

Table 9: Age Distribution Over Time For Convenience Trade Area, 2000-2010	2000	2010	Total Change
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>30616</b>	<b>33369</b>	<b>2753</b>
Children (0-14 years)	2,529	2,471	-58
20 to 34 years	13,292	16,975	3,683
35 to 54 years	8,055	6,550	-1,505
55 to 64	2,009	3,016	1,007
65 and over	3,488	2,803	-685

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Censuses

Table 10: Select Household Data For Convenience Trade Area Over Time, 2000-2010	2000	2010	Total Change
Total housing units	17,807	18,841	1,034
Total households	16,516	17,316	800
Vacant housing units	1,291	1,525	234
Family households (families)	4,894	4,740	-154
Nonfamily households	11,622	12,576	954
Householder living alone	8,026	7,684	-342
Average household size	1.83	1.87	0
Average family size	2.60	2.59	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010



## Educational Attainment

The population in the study area is extremely well educated when compared to both the nation and the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area as, as evident in Table 11. The population has a significantly higher number of high school graduates than the nation and the Richmond area, 92.7 percent compared to 85.7 and 86.1 percent respectively. However, the greatest differentiation can be seen in the area of higher education. Within the study area, more than 60 percent of the residents have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, which is more than twice that of the nation as a whole and nearly twice that of the Richmond region.

	United States	Richmond MSA	Study Area
Bachelor's degree	17.90%	20.20%	<b>36.51%</b>
Graduate or professional degree	10.60%	11.50%	<b>23.66%</b>
Percent high school graduate or higher	85.70%	86.10%	<b>92.77%</b>
<b>Percent bachelor's degree or higher</b>	<b>28.50%</b>	<b>31.70%</b>	<b>60.17%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 and American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2008-2012.

## Income

The household income of people living in the Convenience Trade Area has drastically shifted since the 2000 Census. In Table 12, all household income levels making less than \$49,999 in the last year saw a decrease, while all household income levels greater than \$50,000 saw an increase. The most notable of these is the 72.5 percent increase of households making \$100,000 or

	2000	2012	Total Change	Percent Change
\$24,999 or less	5,858	4,671	-1,187	-20.26%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4,434	4,073	-361	-8.14%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,442	2,494	52	2.13%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,172	1,561	389	33.19%
\$100,000 or more	1,924	3,319	1,395	72.51%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 and American Community Survey 5-year

more. This shift is even more stark when the fact that the Convenience Trade Area saw an increase of 1,046 households making more than \$150,000 annually, an increase of over 140 percent, is considered.

This shift in household income demographics is also evident in the change in the median income (Table 13). The results, at first glance, were astounding with a change of \$18,385. However, using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' inflation calculator the household income is represented by inflation adjusted dollars. After this adjustment, there is still a \$7,480 household income increase in a 12 year period.

The shift is even more notable when it is placed in the appropriate economic

	Inflation Adjusted 2000	Median Income 2012	Total Change	Percent Change
United States	\$54,855	\$51,371	-\$3,484	-8.3%
Virginia	\$60,973	\$61,741	\$768	1.6%
Chesterfield County	\$76,465	\$70,243	-\$6,222	-10.6%
Henrico County	\$64,249	\$58,338	-\$5,911	-12.0%
City of Richmond	\$40,652	\$38,185	-\$2,467	-7.9%
<b>Convenience Study Area</b>	<b>\$46,313</b>	<b>\$53,993</b>	<b>\$7,680</b>	<b>22.1%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 and American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2008-2012

context. This shift in the household income of the Convenience Trade Area occurred at a time of economic uncertainty at a national and local level. During this time frame the United States, as well as the affluent counties adjacent to the City of Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico, saw their household incomes decrease by significant amounts. The only exception to this was the Commonwealth of Virginia which saw a slight increase of \$768 (1.6 percent), but that increase pales in comparison to the "Devil's Triangle's" trade area which saw a whopping 22.1 percent increase.

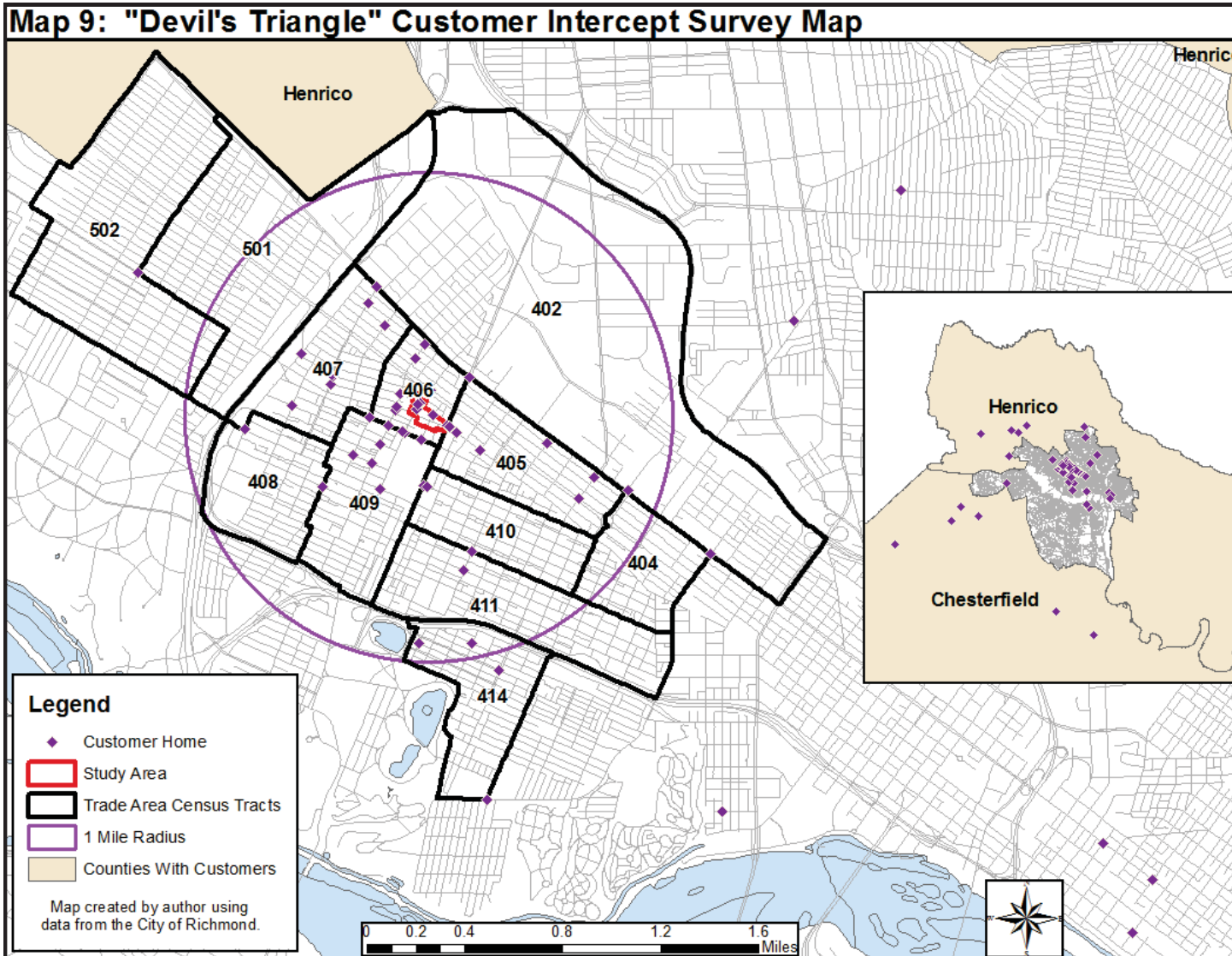
## Surveys and Stakeholder Response

### Shopper Intercept Survey

Over the course of a two week period in late January and early February of 2014 at varying times of day, days of the week, and locations, 81 shopper intercept surveys were conducted in the study area. Of the 78 respondents willing to answer the demographic questions at the end of the survey, 67 percent of them lived within a one mile radius of the “Devil’s Triangle,” and 72 percent lived within the Convenience Trade Area. Most of the remaining survey respondents live

in Chesterfield or Henrico Counties, and most lived relatively close to the central city. A small amount of those surveyed lived in other parts of the city as well. Map 9 shows the approximate location of where each respondent lives based on their answer to the question, “What is the closest intersection to your house?”

The proximity of where respondents live in relation to the study area is an important take away from this survey. However, perhaps a greater perspective on how localized and tied to the neighborhood the “Devil’s Triangle” is, can be seen by numerous anecdotal accounts from respondents that noted they used to live in the area and periodically return to the area to meet up with friends from when they lived nearby and to see how things have or have not changed since they moved elsewhere.



Included in the survey was a short matrix in which current customers were asked to rate the existing conditions of selected characteristics of the area. Table 14 summarizes responses of those surveyed.

**Selection of goods:** Shoppers are generally unimpressed with the selection of goods in the study area, with 67.6 percent of respondents rating the selection of goods as poor or fair. A common response was, “What goods? There really is not anywhere to shop in this area.” Those who rated the selection of goods more strongly generally purchased convenience goods such as beer or tobacco, but only three of the 77 people who responded to this topic felt the selection was excellent.

**Parking:** More than 65 percent of respondents felt that parking was poor or fair in the study area and, when asked what their least favorite thing about the study area, 19 percent responded parking. However, there is more available parking in the area than many people realize, particularly for those business in properties owned or managed by Bandazian & Holden. Of the 30 parcels that contain a business (some take up more than one or are presently vacant), Bandazian & Holden own eighteen of them, which is 60 percent. For those customers patronizing any of the businesses in these parcels, there is a parking lot behind the strip of shops at the corner of Sheppard Street and Park Avenue that is accessible from Park behind Arianna’s Italian Restaurant, but many of the respondents were unaware they could park there when going to other businesses in the area.

**Places to eat:** In the last ten years several new restaurants have opened in the study area and all of them have been successful as the area has slowly become a restaurant destination. In the last two years alone Deco, an upscale Italian restaurant, and Viceroy, a chef driven upscale neighborhood restaurant and bar, have begun to change the type of cuisine available in the study area. The respondents agreed, with more than 75 percent rating the food in the area as good or excellent and not a single person rated it poor. Furthermore, when asked which good or service typically brought them to the study area, more than 82 percent stated food and beverage.

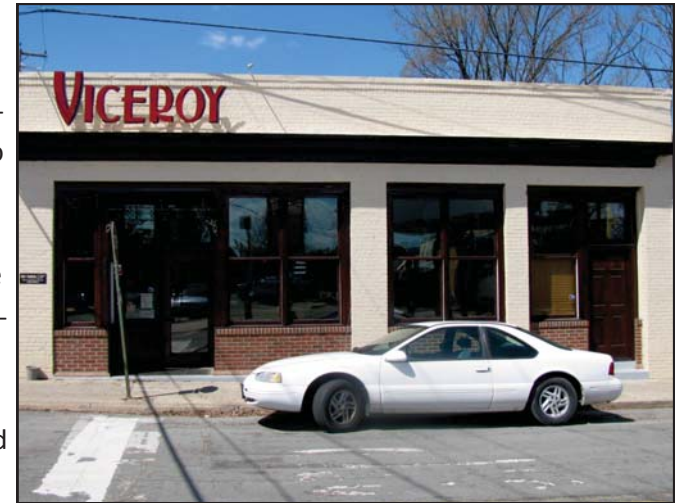


Image 19: Viceroy is the newest restaurant in the Devil’s Triangle.” It is more upscale than more established restaurants.



Image 20: Caliente serves traditional American cuisine with some flare.



Image 21: Arianna’s is a casual Italian restaurant.

**Entertainment/Culture:** Respondents were relatively indecisive about the quality of entertainment in the study area, however, most rated it fair or good. There is very little live entertainment and there is no place that most people would consider to be an “entertainment venue.” However, Banditos does have live music every Sunday night.

**Prices:** People generally think the pricing in the study area is appropriate for the goods and services they receive. More than 85 percent of respondents rated the pricing as good or excellent.

**Special events:** Nearly 60 percent of respondents rated this category as poor. Both Banditos and 7 Eleven mentioned specific events they have in their parking lots that draw larger crowds than normal, however, they aimed at customers of those specific businesses rather than for the commercial district as a whole.

**Personal safety:** People generally feel safe in the study area with 65.2 percent rating safety as good or excellent. This is particularly interesting because when asked what their least favorite thing about the study area was, 19 percent said that they felt it was unsafe.

### Merchant Interviews

There are 22 businesses in the study area, all of which are considered locally owned. Of these businesses, 15 owners agreed to be interviewed for this project, including all but one of the retail merchants (there is a total of thirteen non-office businesses). The amount of time that merchants’ have operated a business in the area ranges from more than thirty years to less than six months, but the majority of them have been in the area for at least five years. Interviews were conducted between January 23 and February 12, 2014 and lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour and 15 minutes.

### Business Climate

For the most part, merchants are content with the viability of their businesses going forward, although nearly all of those in the area since before 2008 noted that the recovery post-recession has been slower than they had hoped. All merchants believe that business will improve in the next three years and all intend to remain in business for the foreseeable future. Only two merchants suggested relocation is a possibility and one of them was the only retail merchant that declined to be interviewed.

**Table 14: Shopper Intercept Survey Existing Conditions According to Customers**

Characteristic	Poor/Fair	Good/Excellent
Selection of goods	67.5%	29.9%
Parking	65.8%	34.2%
Places to eat	16.0%	75.3%
Entertainment/Culture	53.3%	46.7%
Prices	13.5%	86.5%
Special events	87.5%	12.5%
Personal Safety	28.4%	65.4%

Source: Customer Intercept Survey, January - February, 2014



Image 22: The Park Place building is the most recognizable building in the study area.

**Table 15: Merchant Time in the Study Area, February 2014**

less than 1 year	1 - 4 years	5-9 years	More than 10 years
13.3%	13.3%	26.7%	46.7%

Source: Merchant Interviews

## New Business Types

Other important findings included the finding that 73.3 percent of merchants believe the study area needs more businesses. When asked which types of businesses more than half (53.8%) noted that a neighborhood grocery store or market would greatly enhance the area while another 46.2 percent want more retail in general, but most would like it to be upscale retail. This sentiment is strongest among restaurant owners who unanimously believe that their businesses would improve if there were better retail options available in the study area. In total, 60 percent of merchants want to see the variety of retail stores become more diverse.

Several merchants noted that the currently vacant property at 704 N. Shepard Street was recently occupied by a business that intended to be an upscale neighborhood market, however, merchants believe that it failed for several reasons, one of which is because it never became a fully operating market. According to merchants, the proprietor of the business seemed to lack the capital to implement their vision for the store. The staff never expanded beyond the owner, and, despite several merchants advising the owner to stick with upscale goods, the business ended up severely underutilizing the space available to them and attempting to compete with 7 Eleven for convenience customers rather than offering fresh produce, household goods, and other



Image 23: Strawberry Street Market in The Fan is similar to what some merchants want in the “Devil’s Tri-

angle.” items an successful neighborhood grocery or market typically carries.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

Merchants identified the following advantages and disadvantages of operating a business in the “Devil’s Triangle:”

### Merchant Survey Results: Advantages

- ▲ Located in a good neighborhood (67%)
- ▲ Other business owners and customers are “nice” (33%)
- ▲ Easily accessible to pedestrians and the automobile (33%)
- ▲ The area is “unique” and/or “eclectic” (27%)
- ▲ Nearby businesses bring in new customers (27%)

### Merchant Survey Results: Disadvantages

- ▲ Not enough parking (43%)
- ▲ Lack of visibility from major roads (36%)
- ▲ Need for streetscape or other aesthetic improvements (29%)
- ▲ The presence of homeless and/or drunk people (21%)
- ▲ Not enough retail space (14%)

Chart 2: Advantages and Disadvantages to doing business in the “Devil’s Triangle.”

## Other Stakeholder Response

### Surrounding Attraction Survey

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the “Devil’s Triangle” to improve its profitability is to capture a greater percentage of people who visit the surrounding regional attractions. The most popular of these attractions is the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and over the course of the weekend of February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of 2014, 20 visitors to the museum were surveyed to get an understanding of how often they visited the attractions surrounding the study area as well as their opinions of the district, and what would potentially draw them to the area when they visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts or one of the other surrounding attractions.

Of the 20 people surveyed, 12 of them had been to the study area, with six of the eight that had never been there noting that they did not know where it was or had never heard of it. Of the 12 that had been there, eight of them had been to Banditos and another two had been to one of the other restaurants in the area. Of the people who had been never been there, half of them cited the study area’s bad reputation as the main reason. One respondent said, “nothing” would entice him to visit the study area.

In general, the crowd at the museum was older and wealthier than the crowd typically found in the study area. Nearly identical percentages of the people surveyed at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts lived in a household of two people (57.9%) and had a household income of greater than \$75,000 (58.8%). This illustrates that the typical person visiting the museum is likely to have a high disposable income and provides some explanation for the types of businesses that people at the museum noted would attract them to the study area while visiting the museum. The income differential between those surveyed in the “Devil’s Triangle” and those at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is noteworthy because current trends have seen more people with demographic profiles like those visiting the museum than those that presently visit the study area suggesting that new residents of the Convenience Trade Area are shopping and dining elsewhere more often than not. The results are summarized in Table 16.

**Table 16: What types of businesses do visitors to surrounding attractions want in the Study area?**

Upscale food and beverage	52.60%
Specialty/Upscale retail	36.80%
Casual food and beverage	36.80%

Source: Attraction Survey, VMFA, 2014



Image 24: Banditos is the most popular restaurant in the commercial district for people living outside the Convenience Trade Area.

### **Museum District Association Focus Group**

On February 11, 2014, there was a meeting of the Museum District Association Land Use and Zoning Committee where members of the committee were briefed on the purpose and scope of this project and asked to provide input on how they would feel about development in the area, how it should occur, and what type of development it should be. Everyone present was a long time homeowner in the Museum District and member of the aforementioned committee. The sections below outline their opinions on several topics that were discussed.

#### *Retail*

The general sentiment of the group was that the area needs to improve its level of retail and that it needs a neighborhood market. Two of the focus group members talked about what the area was like before it gained the name “The

Devil’s Triangle” and spoke fondly about a small grocery store called Stanley’s that used to be at 704 N. Sheppard Street. They spoke of the importance of having a grocery/market in the area, but were clear that “it should not attempt to compete with Kroger.” It should be the type of place that “is upscale, but sells almost everything. The kind of place where you can buy “chemex coffee filters,’ some groceries, and a bottle of wine.”

The general consensus retail in the area is that it is of low quality, and that any increased or new retail should focus on serving the neighborhood and creating a unique place. The goal should not be to attract people from the counties, rather, if the place establishes itself as unique, then people will come, but that the neighborhood must be the foundation any change.

#### *Second Floor Development*

The idea of second floor development was positively received by the focus group, but the parking situation is considered the biggest issue with increasing the density of the area. One member felt as though second floor residences would be great and would attract people that may not drive by choice. He said, “This neighborhood is not a suburban neighborhood and the people who choose to live in it will deal with the parking situation because it is walkable and historic.”



Image 25: 704 N. Sheppard Street has been vacant since November, 2013, but has historically been occupied by a neighborhood grocery market.

## ***Stakeholder Sentiments***

*The following section is a collection of summations and qualitative analysis of the shopper intercept survey and the merchant survey. Due to the size and complexity of the tables, they are not included in the text of this document, however they can be found in the appendix.*

### **What brings people here?**

More than 64 percent of customer survey respondents shop or dine in the study area weekly or more than once a week, with another 23.5 percent saying they do so monthly. When this is paired with the fact that location is the favorite thing about the area for 46.8 percent of customer respondents, it illustrates that the majority of people who shop here do so because it is convenient. It also begins to explain why convenience retail and neighborhood services the primary reason more than half of those surveyed come to the study area. However, the most impressive statistic remains the fact that more than 80 percent of respondents come to the “Devil’s Triangle” for food and beverage.

### **How do they get here?**

How customers get to the “Devil’s Triangle” varies greatly based on the type of business. Restaurants, on average, say that nearly 50 percent of their customers come on foot, with some being as high as 70 percent, while other types of businesses are more auto-dependent. In some instances, the auto dependence is due to the type of service being offered than anything else. For example, as the owner of the Laundromat noted, “nobody wants to carry their laundry very far” (Sylvia, personal communication, February, 2014). Another example of this is Banditos which has its own parking lot. A significant portion of the people who have been customers in the area that were from outside of the Convenience Trade Area have been to Banditos and the owner believes that the restaurant’s stronger regional appeal is directly related to having a parking lot. He noted, “People from outside of the city do not like trying to find on-street parking” (S. McClain, personal communication, February, 2014).

In total, after averaging the percentages of each mode of transportation from all of the merchants willing to be interviewed, 63 percent of customers come in an automobile, 29 percent walk, 6 percent ride a bike and 1 percent each ride the bus or use another form of transportation. These numbers indicate that, like most shopping districts in the United States, automobile access is paramount. However, with more than 35 percent of customers estimated to reach their destination without using an automobile, it makes clear the importance of ensuring other modes of transportation have safe and easy access to the commercial district.

### **What do they like about the area?**

Most customers come to the study area because it is convenient, however, other things they like about the area are that it is walkable and that it has a “unique and eclectic neighborhood atmosphere.” Merchants have similar thoughts, citing that being in a neighborhood with good demographics and a unique vibe was good for their business. However, the most popular response from business owners was that the area was easily accessible from the anywhere in the city because of its central location and its easy access to highways. Moreover, some service based businesses mentioned triangulation between their business and others. RJ, the owner of the barber shop, noted that a lot of people come into his business to get their haircut while they are waiting on their laundry next door (R. Spratley, personal communication, February, 2014).



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### What do they not like?

Customers do not like the lack of shopping variety, as 25.3 percent cited it as the thing they like the least. The second most popular response to this is “nothing” at 21.5 percent. This particular paradox hits on the changing dynamics of the neighborhood and how, in some cases people who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time and those that recently moved here, are in disagreement. Many people like the “grittiness” of the area. They like to spend time in the area because it is NOT Carytown and they do not want anything about the place to change.

Yet, many of the people who moved to the neighborhood recently are not content with the types of stores that are available to them in their neighborhood commercial district, and would like to see that change. Nineteen percent of them still consider the area unsafe and another 13.9 percent describe the area as “dirty” or “seedy.” Furthermore, 19 percent of customers believe parking is the biggest issue and 43 percent of merchants. Merchants, however, are also concerned about the aesthetics of the district and the lack of visibility for their businesses. Several also mentioned that they want more retail space, and, while they are not planning to relocate in the short-term, they will consider moving in future to a place that offers more retail space. Some merchants also

believe that homelessness and “drunks,” are problems, however, more tenured merchants unanimously agree that “the bums aren’t nearly as bad as they used to be.”

### What would they like to see here?

More than half of all respondents want some sort of neighborhood grocery store or market. They noted that it should be “upscale” and have fresh produce along with other “specialty items.” People want a place they can go and pick-up what they need to cook a meal for one or two people without having to go to Kroger and walk around a “grocery store that is like a warehouse.” Several customers want something like Strawberry Street Market or Harvest, an organic grocery store that recently opened in The Fan. There is a general sentiment that going grocery shopping in Carytown is a hassle and they would prefer to do small scale shopping somewhere away from the crowds even if it cost a little bit more.

There is also a significant amount of interest in upscale retail. Nearly 37 percent of those surveyed want to increase the variety and quality of shopping options in the area, yet the second most popular request was for some sort of

nice bakery or café, preferably one with a patio. One customer suggested a place like Urban Farmhouse in Shockoe Slip and another mention Captain Buzzy’s in Church Hill. Another 26.3 percent want some form of live entertainment in the area whether that be music, theatre, or comedy.



Image 26: Urban Farmhouse in Downtown Richmond is a cross between a café and a market. Source: [realrichmondva.com](http://realrichmondva.com).

## Market Analysis

The objective of this market analysis is to determine if there is unmet demand for particular goods and services in the Convenience Trade Area based on analyzing household income and consumer spending habits. The demographic shift that has occurred in the trade area is of particular importance because the people that have recently moved in have significantly more spending power than the people they replaced, which impacts spending habits both in terms of quantity and quality.

Table 17 shows that there is a disproportionately high percentage of people who live in the immediate area that have a significant amount of disposable income. This could be good for business in this area considering the percentage of customers in the study area that live the Convenience Trade Area.

Table 17: 2013 Households by Disposable Income		
	Number	Percent
Total	17,533	100.00%
<\$15,000	3,254	18.6%
\$15,000-\$24,999	2,384	13.6%
\$25,000-\$34,999	2,614	14.9%
\$35,000-\$49,999	2,744	15.7%
\$50,000-\$74,999	2,601	14.8%
\$75,000-\$99,999	1,347	7.7%
\$100,000-\$149,999	1,636	9.3%
\$150,000-\$199,999	602	3.4%
\$200,000+	351	2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI forecasts

## Market Potential Index

Table 18 outlines how people living in the Convenience Trade Area com-

Table 18: Product/Consumer Behavior	Adult	Percent of Adults/HHs	MPI
<b>Apparel (Adults)</b>			
Bought any shoes in last 12 months	16,569	54.5%	105
<b>Beverages (Adults)</b>			
Drank beer/ale in last 6 months	15,364	50.5%	119
<b>Convenience Stores (Adults)</b>			
Shopped at convenience store in last 6 months	19,778	65.0%	108
Bought cigarettes at convenience store in last 30 days	4,877	16.0%	104
Bought gas at convenience store in last 30 days	10,261	33.7%	101
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: <\$20	3,453	11.4%	118
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: \$20-39	2,890	9.5%	94
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: \$40+	10,979	36.1%	101
<b>Entertainment (Adults)</b>			
Attended movies in last 6 months	20,793	68.4%	116
Went to live theater in last 12 months	5,220	17.2%	130
Went to a bar/night club in last 12 months	10,222	33.6%	176
Dined out in last 12 months	16,651	54.7%	111
Gambled at a casino in last 12 months	5,314	17.5%	109

Source: Market Potential Index, 2013

pare to the national average in consuming particular goods and services. In this index, the national average is 100 so categories in which the number is greater than 100 represent goods and services that that people in the trade area are more likely to purchase than the average person, while if it is below 100 then they are less likely to purchase the good or service.

The Convenience Trade Area is below the national average for all apparel items with the lone exception of shoes, and while the residents here drink less bottled water and cola, they drink significantly more beer. On some level this likely explains the numerous restaurants/bars in the study area. People here are also likely to spend more money on convenience items and to shop at a convenience store. The market potential index also suggests that people in the trade are likely to spend a significantly higher amount of money on entertainment than other people. This is particularly true in the case of live theater and a bar/nightclub which often offer music or other forms of live entertainment.

## Retail Market Analysis

This market analysis identifies gaps in the goods and services available in the Convenience Trade Area that are demanded by customers, and recommends types of businesses would complement existing businesses in the “Devil’s Triangle.”

### Demand Side

In order to determine if there was unmet demand in for goods and services in the study area, it was necessary to determine the total spending power of the study area. Estimated expenditures were based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics annual Consumer Expenditure Survey (2012) and all population estimates were based on the income and demographic data described previously in this document. There were two additional groups included, Attraction Visitors and Other/Commuters which consist of people that visit the trade area because of surrounding attractions and those that pass through as commuters or for some other reason. Each of these visitors were estimated at a small percentage of the total number and were presumed to have an annual household income of \$58,577 annually, the average for the Richmond Metropolitan Area in 2012. With all of this taken into account, the total spending power of the Convenience Trade Area was found to be \$3,104,422,857.

### Supply Side

The current supply of goods and services both in the study area and in competing shopping districts was determined by multiplying existing businesses in the study area and surrounding competition by the median sales per square foot for each type of business to determine if there is unmet demand for particular goods and services in the Convenience Trade Area.

### Potential New Uses

In total there were 18 tenant categories that had significant unmet demand within the Convenience Trade

Area based on spending habits of households and the surrounding competition, however, not all of them are suitable for the “Devil’s Triangle.” However, there is a clear unmet demand for the types of businesses listed in Table 19 in the trade area..

### Neighborhood Market/Specialty Grocery Store

There is clear unmet demand for a Grocery/Market/. People want a convenient market where they can do small scale shopping for food and other household items without having to go to a Martin’s or a Kroger, and the retail market analysis confirmed the viability of such a business. This type of store would be beneficial to the neighborhood by making fresh food available more locally. However, due to the proximity of the area to the collection of chain grocery stores at the west end of Carytown, it would need to be run by a business owner with an understanding of the grocery business. According to interviews with the owners of other neighborhood grocery stores in the Richmond Region, a neighborhood grocery store located in the study area cannot and should not attempt to compete with Kroger for groceries or 7 Eleven for convenience, rather it should

Table 19: Supportable New Uses in the "Devil's Triangle"
Convenience Grocery
Specialty Food Store
Wine Café/Store
Bakery/Sweets
Live Entertainment
Bed and Breakfast
Record/Music Store
Book Store
Park/Open Space

Source: Author

provide some aspects of each, but its focus should be on offering things that those stores cannot. This does not necessarily mean only selling specialty items, however. According to other grocery proprietors, it should be a space that is the proper mix of specialty and necessity.



Image 27: Libbie Market is a neighborhood grocery store 3 miles from the study area. Their inventory includes fresh produce,, beer and wine, prepared foods, and some household items.

### *Wine Store/Café*

A strong understanding of the neighborhood is also an important asset in operating an independent wine store or café. In speaking with the owners of several independent wine stores, it became clear that the vision and



Image 28: *Once Upon a Vine on Northside* hosts a tasting event. Source: [macarthuravenue.com](http://macarthuravenue.com)

personality of the proprietor is important in the wine business. An independent wine store should do well in the study area, however, it should be done by someone that not only knows wine, but can make customers that come into their store also feel like they know wine. This should be a space that sells wine, but could also host wine-centric events such as tastings or other events that would appeal to local residents.

### *Bakery/Desserts*

Numerous survey participants expressed interest in the presence of a nice bakery or a place where they could purchase sweets such as ice cream, yogurt, or candies. These types of products appeal to a diverse group of people and a good bakery is something that people are willing to drive or walk a little bit further for, if the product is of high enough quality. This is the sort of upscale retail that is not a necessity, but these are things that are desired by the new demographics of the Convenience Trade Area.

### *Entertainment*

There is unmet demand for entertainment of both the live and retail variety in the Convenience Trade Area. One thing that the study area pres-

ently lacks when competing with other neighborhood commercial districts is nightlife with consistent, high-quality live entertainment, and it is something that survey respondents want. This is something that has existed at times in the “Devil’s Triangle” and it is something that it wants to support again. Live entertainment would not only bring in new patrons, but would also provide an opportunity for the study area to be more than a restaurant district. This type of use could manifest itself as not only as a destination for live entertainment such as music or comedy, but there is also unmet demand for entertainment retail such as a music or game store. All of these things would be welcome in the area according to survey participants and the retail market analysis.

### *Bed and Breakfast*

The proximity of the study area to regional attractions has been well noted in this plan and this reality makes the study area, combined with the historical nature of the area, ideal for one or more bed and breakfast inns. Not only would this type of business bring in a constantly rotating group of people on vacation with money to spend, but would also bring a commercial use to existing residences in the study area. Furthermore, according to the owners of a nearby bed and breakfast, these types of businesses actually use very little parking because the majority of people that stay at a bed and breakfast arrive by cab which would likely free up some on-street parking spaces currently used by residents.



Image 29: Museum District Bed and Breakfast on Grove Avenue across the street from VMFA

## **SWOT Analysis**

### ***Strengths***

The location of the “Devil’s Triangle” is one of the greatest assets of the commercial district and is evident in nearly all of the area’s strengths:

- ▲ Stable, walkable neighborhood with strong income demographics
- ▲ Surrounding attractions
- ▲ Accessible by major roads and highways
- ▲ Proximity to historic assets
- ▲ Award winning restaurants

The “Devil’s Triangle” is located in an easily accessible historically relevant neighborhood in a centralized location within the Richmond Region. It is within walking distance of many of the most visited attractions and historic sites in the city and the surrounding neighborhoods are filled with people with high household incomes and few children giving them a higher disposable income than most places in the Richmond Region. The commercial district can easily be walked to by most of its regular customers giving it a strong local customer base of which many shop or dine in the area multiple times a week.

### ***Weaknesses***

Paradoxically, many of the “Devil’s Triangle’s” greatest weaknesses exist because its location:

- ▲ Parking availability
- ▲ Lack of shopping variety
- ▲ Limited commercial space
- ▲ Perception of crime
- ▲ Lack of communication among stakeholders
- ▲ Residential buildings in the commercial district

The study area’s location inside of a neighborhood limits the availability of parking in the area. These issues are exacerbated by the amount of nearby surface lots that are unavailable to customers despite their infrequent usage by the apartment complexes and churches that own them. This creates a situation in which there are generally a significant number of surface parking spac-

es in the area that are unavailable to customers of the businesses in the commercial district. Furthermore, the majority of the commercial buildings in the study area were constructed in the 1920s and 30s before the increased scale of commercial buildings that accompanied suburbanization in the 1980s and 90s, making it difficult for some types of businesses to have the necessary square footage to be competitive with other commercial districts in the City of Richmond.

Moreover, there is a public perception by some in the Richmond Region that the study area is still representative of the conditions that led the area to be dubbed the “Devil’s Triangle.” This sentiment is particularly strong among people who have not been to the area recently and is a minority view, however, it is a negative perception that the area has not been able to escape in the minds of some people. In many ways, this perception persists because of the lack of a cohesive plan for the future of the commercial district or an agreed upon brand for the area.

### ***Opportunities***

The greatest opportunities for the “Devil’s Triangle” rely on the ability of the study area to increase the number of visitors to surrounding attractions that the commercial district can capture:

- ▲ Increase capture rate from surrounding regional attractions
- ▲ Promote the area as a unified brand
- ▲ Establish the area as a commercial and entertainment district
- ▲ Increase retail space and shopping variety
- ▲ Improve parking and bicycle access



Image 30: Bicycles along Sheppard Street are locked to utility pole supports and street signs due to a lack of bicycle infrastructure.

Furthermore, improving the bicycle infrastructure of the study area would greatly improve the accessibility of the commercial district as well as put the “Devil’s Triangle” on the radar of cyclists ahead of the World Cycling Championships being held in Richmond in May 2015. Bicycle facilities are relatively inexpensive and would bring many people to the study area that may otherwise take their business elsewhere. Moreover, establishing a place for people to park their bicycles will reduce the amount of bicycles locked to street signs that often impede pedestrians walking through the district and annoy merchants that do not like when people leave their bikes in front of their store for days at a time.

### Threats

The greatest threat to the “Devil’s Triangle” is pending nearby development:

- ▲ New Downtown Stadium
- ▲ Potential development of the current site of The Diamond
- ▲ Development in Scott’s Addition
- ▲ Development of the Interbake site
- ▲ Lack of parking solutions

Businesses like stability, and the on-going and future development of areas near the study area is a concern for the continued viability of businesses in the study area. Presently, there is a strong possibility that the city will build a new baseball stadium for the Richmond Flying Squirrels closer to downtown which would move a significant regional attraction away from the commercial district. Moreover, the city’s current plans call for a mixed-use development on

the site which would likely bring in more residents to the area, but would also bring significant commercial and restaurant competition as well.

Scott’s Addition, a neighborhood two blocks north of the study area has been increasing its residential and commercial capacity in recent years and this trend is likely to continue. Furthermore, the site of the former Interbake factory is being renovated to include lofts, commercial retail, and potentially a grocery store. These developments will likely include parking garages or surface parking lots that will make them more easily accessible by automobile than the study area is presently, which would further exacerbate the parking issues present in the study area and makes finding a solution to this problem of particular importance.

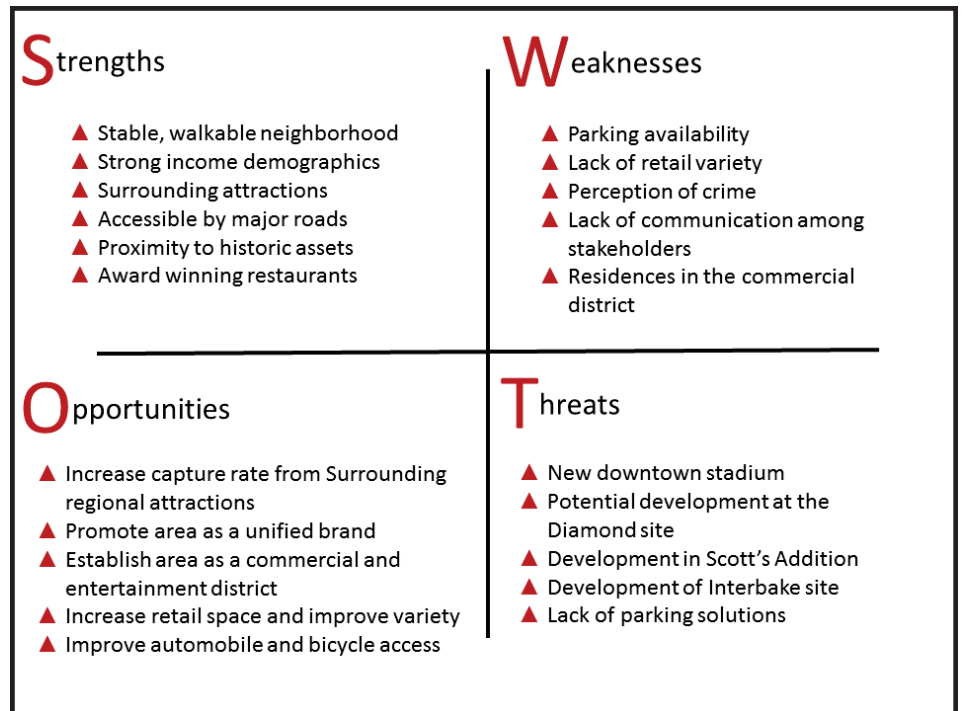


Chart 2: SWOT Analysis Breakdown

## Part II: A Plan for the Commercial Enhancement of the “Devil’s Triangle”



### Vision: The Future of the “Devil’s Triangle”

The “Devil’s Triangle” commercial district has long been a convenient place for Museum District residents to purchase necessary goods and services, however, its proximity to surrounding regional attractions provides it with a unique opportunity to be more than just a neighborhood restaurant district, but a destination for people throughout the Richmond Region.

Imagine a thriving dining district that is regularly packed with people from all over the Richmond Region. They dine on a variety of world class food heading across the triangle to hear some live music or assert their dominance at trivia night. The shops and restaurants are places where patrons from a street away and bed & breakfast guests meet to share local libations, stories, and moments.

A neighborhood grocery market has returned to its rightful place at 704 N. Sheppard Street restoring order to this commercial district and the Museum District at large and providing people both local and foreign with convenient access to fresh food, good wine, and everything else they might need in the next 2 days. It is the place neighborhood residents go to run into each other or for a monthly book or wine club or to see if they a particular brand of olive oil the chef from a nearby restaurant recommended.

Imagine a place where families from out of town visit the Children’s Museum of Richmond in the morning, grab lunch in the “Devil’s Triangle”, and then catch a Richmond Flying Squirrels game that evening, all while never having to move their car. As the parents drive by a young child shouts while pointing at the gateway feature installed at the tip of the “Devil’s Triangle.”

The new merchant association has organized several special events for the upcoming year that people ing in the neighborhood and the city cannot wait for. Many of the millions of visitors to nearby museums take coupons from museum and decide to try the restaurant around the corner. The “Devil’s Triangle” is a hub of activity for people young and old and the people in the Richmond Region finally know what to call the place.

## *Economic Recommendations*

### **Goal 1: Recruit new businesses that complement the existing personality of the area and appeal to local residents and visitors to surrounding attractions.**

*Objective 1.1: Recruit an entrepreneur with grocery experience to operate a somewhat upscale neighborhood grocery store/market at 704 North Sheppard Street.*

- ▲ Why: Existing customers of the study area want a neighborhood market, there is unmet demand for specialty food and convenience groceries, and, it is a site has historically been operated as a neighborhood grocery store dating back to at least 1948 according to City of Richmond Directories.
- ▲ Who: Bandazian & Holden
- ▲ What: A neighborhood grocery store/market with a blend of grocery store basics such as fresh produce, dairy products, deli meats, prepared foods, and basic household items as well as specialty items such as wines, cheeses, etc.
- ▲ How: This market will need to find the right mix of goods to sell to be successful so it should be operated by someone with an understanding of the grocery industry and the wants and needs of the Museum District. This business should be more than a grocery store, it should be a community meeting place for people who do not mind paying a little bit more for their groceries if the experience is convenient and the products are quality.
- ▲ When: Year 1-3

*Objective 1.2: Increase entertainment options in the “Devil’s Triangle.”*

- ▲ Why: Customer’s love to dine in the study area, but they often have to go to another part of the city for entertainment. Banditos is the only business in the study area that regularly offers entertainment beyond food, beverage, and good company and it is no coincidence that peo-

ple surveyed both in the study area and at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts cited Banditos as the business that most often brought them to the study area.

- ▲ Who: Merchants and Property Owners
- ▲ What: Live music, stand-up comedy, trivia nights, open-mics, improv shows, charity events, and other forms of live entertainment, as well as entertainment retail such as a music shop or a game store, would do well in the study area. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for these types of events and stores to draw a niche crowd that may otherwise have never come to the study area.
- ▲ How: An entertainment venue does not have to be a grand concert hall to host live music, comedy, or theater productions. Some of the best venues in the city and beyond are small places where there is limited space and audience can see face of the performer(s), whether they are a musician, comedian, or the person presiding over a game of trivia.
- ▲ When: Year 1



*Image 31: Many long time customers of the “Devil’s Triangle” wish that live music in the area occurred as frequently as it once did. Source: btbl.co.uk*



*Objective 1.3: Develop a “Business Recruitment Packet.”*

- ▲ Why: A Business Recruitment Packet provides up-to-date information about the City of Richmond and the “Devil’s Triangle” that a potential new or relocating business will want to know when considering the district for a business venture. Furthermore, increased commercial space will necessitate new businesses poised to succeed in the area.
- ▲ Who: Merchant Association, Property Owners
- ▲ What: This document will include information on the commercial districts established trade area demographics, income, education, households, and other economic indicators. It may also include information on potential target markets, unmet demand in the trade area, and specific sites available for development now and in the future.
- ▲ When: Years 2-3

**Goal 2: Increase commercial space in the study area.**

*Objective 2.1: Convert one-story buildings along Sheppard Street into two-story mixed-use buildings.*

- ▲ Why: People want more retail variety in the study area, but there is not presently enough commercial space to do so. Furthermore, buildings adjacent to the study area are all two –stories or more. Vertical expansion would bring the commercial district up to the scale of the surrounding neighborhood.
- ▲ Who: Bandazian & Holden
- ▲ What: The ultimate goal is to increase the amount of commercial square feet along the ground floor of buildings in the “Devil’s Triangle” which can be done by increasing the square footage of buildings through vertical expansion.
- ▲ How: Position all office or residential uses on the second floor of the buildings freeing ground floor space to be used solely by retail and restaurants. This provides an opportunity for increased retail variety as well as more floor space as offices and storage could

be upstairs which will allow for increased retail space on the ground level.

- ▲ When: Years 3 to 10, but sooner is better than later



*Image 32: These 3-story buildings at Monument and Sheppard are more standard for the streets closest to the “Devil’s Triangle.” In the distance the 1-story commercial buildings on Sheppard can be seen.*



*Objective 2.2: Convert residential buildings within or near the study area to bed and breakfast inns.*

- ▲ Why: The Devil’s Triangle is less than a mile from attractions that drew more than 2 million people from the Richmond Region and beyond and is located adjacent to two neighborhoods recognized by the National Registrar of Historic Places (the Museum District and The Fan), the Monument Avenue and Boulevard Historic Districts, and is a restaurant hub in its own right. All of these are assets that people who prefer to stay bed and breakfasts typically value. Furthermore, if these types of accommodations were available in or adjacent to the study area it would provide study area merchants with a constantly shifting group of new customers with disposable income and will create opportunities for cross promotion with surrounding museums and businesses in the “Devil’s Triangle.”
- ▲ Who: Bandazian & Holden, Property Owners, Merchant Association
- ▲ What: Historical houses in the and around the study area becoming bed & breakfast inns
- ▲ How: Purchasing and, if necessary, restoring historic houses and managing the properties
- ▲ When: Years 3 to 10, as property and funding is available

*Objective 2.3: Acquire and redevelop the parcel currently occupied by the 7 Eleven.*

- ▲ Why: A suburban style convenience store with a large surface parking lot and a significant setback from the road disrupts what should be the heart of the “Devil’s Triangle.” Moreover it prevents the commercial area from expanding horizontally and severely underutilizes its space. The presence of only 12 parking spaces in a surface lot the size with more than 10,000 square feet is paltry and is particularly problematic in the context of the commercial districts existing parking issues.
- ▲ Who: Bandazian & Holden, Property Owners, City of Richmond, Merchant Association

- ▲ What: A sidewalk fronting mixed-use development that includes a convenience market and parking behind the building with office or residential on the second floor where applicable.
- ▲ How: Acquire the parcel and redevelop it to include a convenience market that is a better fit for the “Devil’s Triangle.” The parking lot should be behind the building and designed to maximize off-street parking spaces. Furthermore, redesigning this parcel could provide the opportunity to build a two level parking garage that will ease some of the parking issues in the area, while still providing 7 Eleven with convenient customer parking.
- ▲ When: This is a long-term goal dependent on a multitude of factors.



*Image 33: A parking garage in Carytown helps ease the parking demand for the commercial district while reducing surface parking along the street frontage. A similar type of structure would be beneficial in the study area and the redevelopment of the 7 Eleven parcel should include a parking structure.*



## *Design Recommendations*

### **Goal 1: Harness the eclectic and unique ambience of the “Devil’s Triangle”**

*Objective 1.1: Create a recognizable gateway feature at the intersection where Park and Patterson Avenues meet Boulevard.*

- ▲ Why: The study area currently lacks visibility from a major arterial roadway, however, with the commercial district being adjacent to Boulevard, there is an opportunity to increase the area’s visibility while at the same time helping establish the district’s identity.
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association
- ▲ What: A unique piece of art that serves as a gateway feature, captures the eye of passers-by, and fits with the theme of the merchant association’s chosen brand for the area.
- ▲ How: Create a design for a gateway feature or hold a contest to be entered by local artists for the project. Judges can be a mix of merchant association members, local artists, and a member of the City of

Richmond’s Urban Design Review Committee. This last step would go a long way in having the gateway feature implemented, as the city will eventually have to approve any gateway feature.

▲ When: Year 3-5



*Image 34: View from proposed site of gateway feature.*

*Objective 1.2: Establish a continuous, cohesive, and unique streetscape design.*

- ▲ Why: As it currently exists, there is very little cohesion in the streetscape of the “Devil’s Triangle.” There are no public benches, many of the spaces where planters once were are empty or have been filled in with cement, there are several trash cans, but none of them match, and none of the sidewalks are ADA accessible for the physically handicapped. Furthermore, despite the area’s proximity to surrounding attractions, but there are no wayfinding signs directing visitors to the area to these attractions. These signs would not only serve the purpose of informing patrons of these attractions, could also latently get them to associate the study area with those attractions and increase the chances of a return visit.
- ▲ Who: City of Richmond, Merchant Association
- ▲ What: A cohesive streetscape plan for the Devil’s Triangle that fits the eclectic nature of the area and establishes continuity in the streetscape and creates a more aesthetically inviting commercial district.
- ▲ How: The City of Richmond and the Museum District Merchants Association should formulate a cohesive streetscape plan based on consensus and financial capabilities of merchants, property owners, and the City of Richmond.
- ▲ When: Years 2-5, dependent on capital improvement schedule for the City of Richmond



**Goal 2: Make the “Devil’s Triangle” more accessible to people in automobiles and cyclists.**

*Objective 2.1: Simplify circulation patterns and develop a parking plan in the “Devil’s Triangle.”*

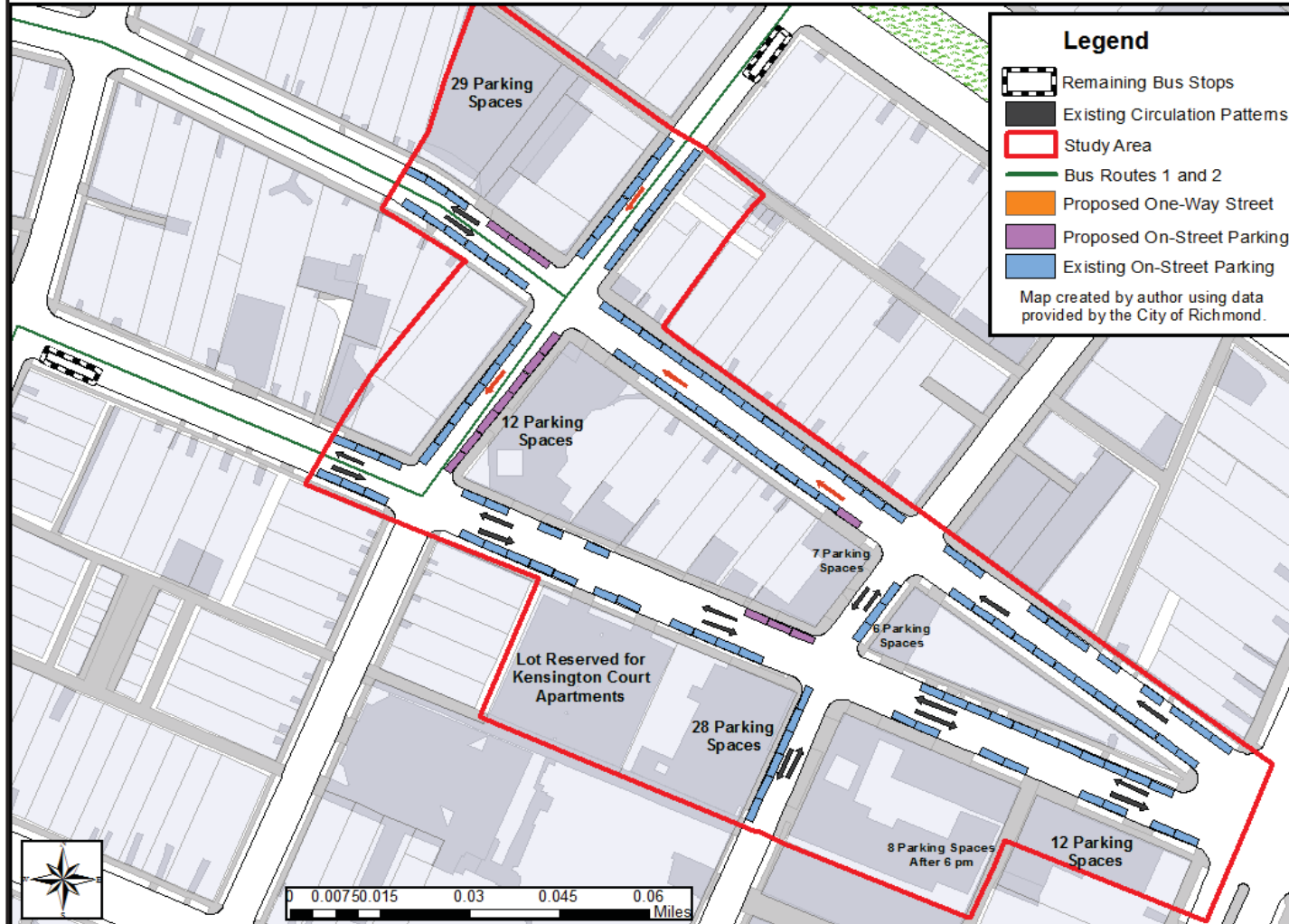
- ▲ Why: Current circulation patterns are confusing to those unfamiliar with the area and there are four bus stops for the same two lines within less than a block of the study area.
- ▲ Who: City of Richmond , Museum District Merchants Association
- ▲ What: Develop a new traffic circulation and parking plan for the commercial district that increases the number of on-street parking spaces, reduces the number of buses that stop traffic in the study area, and is safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

How: A potential short-term solution to the commercial districts lack of parking would be to discuss shared parking with surrounding apartment complexes and churches that do not use their lots as heavily during regular business hours. Several of the surrounding apartment complexes, particularly Kensington Court and those at the eastern corner where Park and Colonial Avenues meet. While both of these parking lots are typically less than half full, the latter is primarily occupied by vans and busses with the logos of local churches. However, there are other strategies for improving traffic circulation and parking in the study area which are listed by the street they would impact.

Sheppard Street:

- ▶ Make Sheppard Street a one-way street starting at Monument Avenue. Sheppard Street is already one-way once crossing Patterson Avenue at the edge of the study area, and it remains one-way all the way to Cary Street. Doing so would reduce confusion for all modes of transit without decreasing accessibility as there are many adjacent streets on which automobiles could easily loop back to the area or find street parking on an adjacent block.
- ▶ Remove the bus stop in front of the 7 Eleven and eliminate vehicular access to 7 Eleven from Sheppard Street. Doing this would increase the number of on-street parking spaces available in the area by a minimum of 7. Furthermore, there are currently three vehicle access points to the small parking lot for 7 Eleven and the one on Sheppard Street creates an unsafe situation for pedestrians as drivers pull out of the parking lot right next

**Map 10: Proposed Parking, Transit, and Circulation Patterns in the "Devil's Triangle"**



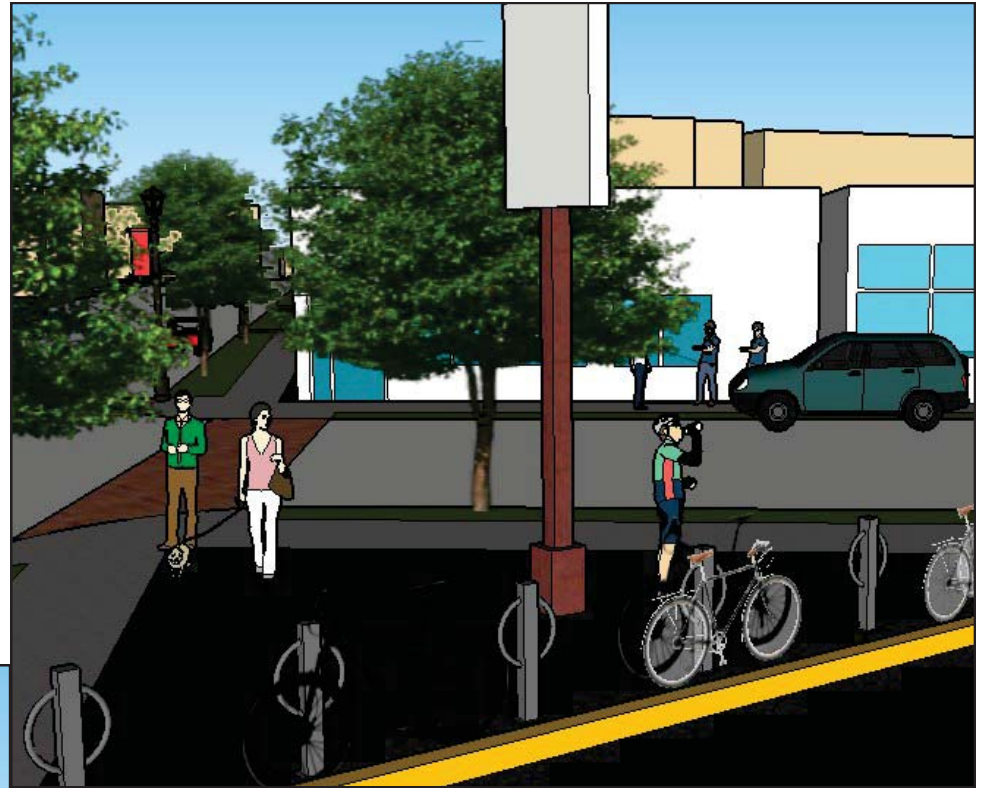
to a bus stop and cars pass going both ways. Eliminating this access point will have little to no impact on the accessibility of 7 Eleven while making it safer for pedestrians

Park Avenue:

- ▶ Park Avenue should continue to be one-way going west until it passes Sheppard Street. This simplifies the circulation patterns for the entire study area and would have a little to no impact on businesses while making the area safer for cyclists and pedestrians.
- ▶ Remove the bus stop adjacent to Arianna's. Doing so would increase the availability of on-street parking by a minimum of three spaces without inconveniencing those using public transit as there will still be a public transit stop less than one block north.
- ▲ When: Years 2-5, dependent on capital improvement schedule for the City of Richmond

*Objective 2.2: Designate a spot in the study area for bicycle facilities such as bike racks, a Fixit Self-Repair Stand, and an outdoor water fountain.*

- ▲ Why: Cycling has steadily increased in importance in the City of Richmond, and the city has made improving its bicycle infrastructure a priority ahead of the 2015 Cycling World Championships to be held in Richmond. There have been extensive discussions about converting Floyd Avenue into a “Bicycle Boulevard,” and as Sheppard Street intersects Floyd Avenue and there are currently no plans for a north/south “Bicycle Boulevard” Sheppard Street could at some point in the future meet the requirements for that sort of conversion. However, in the short-term, creating a space where cyclists could stop in and fill-up their water bottles, sit down on a bench for a moment or fill their tires up with air could be an inexpensive way to get more cyclists to



spend time and money in the study area. Moreover, it would serve as a convenient resource for cyclists living in the local area.

- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association, City of Richmond
- ▲ What: Bike racks, a Fixit Self-Repair Stand, and outdoor water access
- ▲ How: Establish a small area in the “Devil’s Triangle” that is large enough to include the items listed above. One potential spot is the underutilized patch of cement at the corner of Sheppard Street and Park Avenue where the bus stop is currently located.
- ▲ When: Years 1 to 2, Ideally, before the 2015 Cycling World Championships.

## Promotional Recommendations

### Goal 1: Capitalize on the unique personality and location of the “Devil’s Triangle” to promote the area’s sense of place.

Objective 1.1: Develop a brand and identity for the study area.

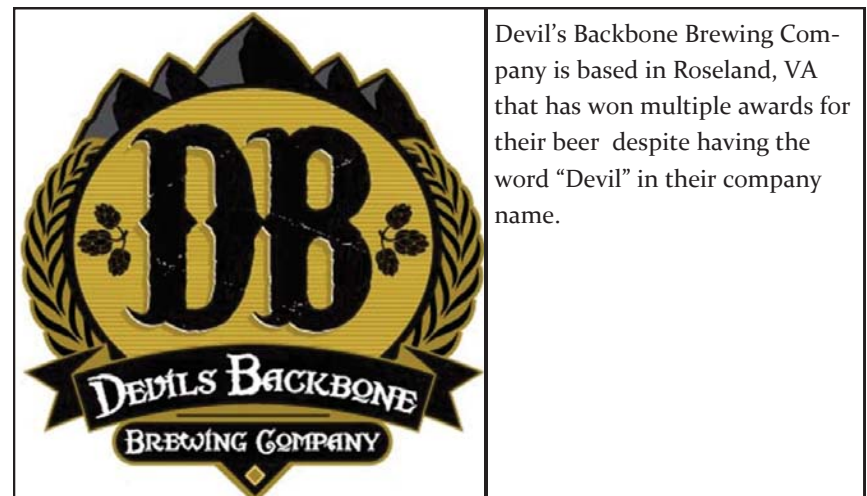
- ▲ Why: The “Devil’s Triangle” is an important neighborhood corridor, but its proximity to surrounding regional attractions and its recent development into a restaurant hub give it a solid foundation on which to increase its capture rate among visitors to these attractions. Currently, many people who visit these attractions are unaware that the study area is a convenient shopping and dining option for them and a big reason for that is the lack of a cohesive brand for the area.
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association, Promotion Committee
- ▲ What: The area needs an identity that resonates with people in the City of Richmond and the Richmond Region, but the study area does not presently have an official moniker. However, in the eyes of many Richmond residents, the study area not only has a name, but also an identity. The “Devil’s Triangle” is a name derived from a time when this district was drastically different in terms of demographics, household income, and crime statistics. However, the term “devil” does not necessarily carry the same negativity in the minds of Richmond residents that it likely did 10 years ago and certainly not 30 years ago. Many people in the Richmond Region fondly refer to the area as the “Devil’s Triangle,” but do not associate the name with its true origins. When they think hear the name it reminds them of the times they had and the people they met when they lived in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In this way, the “Devil’s Triangle is already a brand, and of the options for branding the area, it is clearly the most recognizable to Richmond residents. Other possibilities include “The Triangle” or the “Museum Triangle,” however, there is a precedent in Richmond for the vernacu-

lar to adopt a name and never give it up regardless of what its official name becomes. A prescient example of this is the insistence by a large portion of the Richmond population to continuing to call what is now “The Altria Theatre” and was formerly “The Landmark Theatre” by its original name, “The Mosque.”

However the area brands itself, there will still be people who call it “The Devil’s Triangle” and if that raises the profile of the commercial district and improves business for the merchants there, is it not worth the handful of people who clutch to the negativity of the terms origination?

- ▲ How: Develop cohesive promotional materials and devise a marketing strategy to promote the area as a destination for those visiting surrounding attractions. This can include but is not limited to:
  - ▶ Displaying street banners along Park Avenue, Patterson Avenue, and Sheppard Street
  - ▶ Creating and maintaining a website for the district.
  - ▶ Establishing a social media presence that markets the district as whole and individual businesses within the study area.
  - ▶ Capitalizing on the study area’s present role as a restaurant hub
- ▲ When: Years 2 to 3, The Merchant Association should lead this process



*Objective 1.2: Establish a promotional relationship with surrounding museums and regional attractions.*

- ▲ Why: Between the numerous museums, The Diamond, Redskins Training Camp, and Movieland at Boulevard Square, which is the only first run movie theater in the City of Richmond, more than 2 million people visited attractions within 1 mile of the “Devil’s Triangle” in 2013. These attractions provide the commercial district with an opportunity to significantly broaden the geographic footprint of its trade area.
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association, Promotional Committee
- ▲ What: Contact surrounding attractions and promote the commercial district among visitors there.
- ▲ How: Some possible techniques include, but are not limited to:
  - ▶ Coupons at museums or after Flying Squirrels games offering discounts at area restaurants and a map of their location on the back.
  - ▶ Having the district included on tourism maps for the Richmond Region available at nearby attractions
  - ▶ Working with the museums and attractions to include “dinner and a museum” type packages.
  - ▶ Having promotional materials and coupons at nearby bed and breakfast inns and local hotels.
- ▲ When: Year 1 to 2

**Goal 2: Organize and promote special events in the “Devil’s Triangle.”**

*Objective 2.1: Organize Quarterly special events.*

- ▲ Why: Special events create a buzz around the city about a specific area and bring people to the area that may not have otherwise come. Furthermore, these events can serve as a fundraising opportunity for the merchant association.
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association

- ▲ What: The merchant association should ultimately have special events three or four times annually, but initially focusing on a single event may be the best course of action. Some ideas include, but are not limited to:
  - ▶ a beer festival,
  - ▶ a culinary competition amongst district restaurants
  - ▶ a seasonal food festival.
- ▲ How: Establish a committee to organize special events and seek to utilize the database of volunteers for additional manpower. The merchant association should also seek out corporate sponsorship of events. If closing streets to vehicular traffic is deemed necessary by the association then the City of Richmond will need to be contacted and a permit received. Furthermore, because there are many festivals in the Richmond Region at certain times of the year, it would be wise to be aware of when other special events are occurring and schedule special events at a time when the event would not have to compete with other events that may be more established.
- ▲ When: Year 1



*Image 35: The Churchill Irish Festival has been taking place annually for more than 30 years and brings thousands of people to the area for the 3 day event.*



### Objective 2.2: Create and maintain a calendar of events

- ▲ Why: To keep people informed about upcoming events
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association
- ▲ What: This calendar should exist in many forms including online and posted in Museum District Merchants Association member businesses and, depending on the size of the event, potentially on banners lining the streets of the Museum District Commercial Corridor.
- ▲ How: Plan events in advance and make sure the calendar stays up-to-date.
- ▲ When: Year 2 to 3, on-going

### Organizational Recommendations

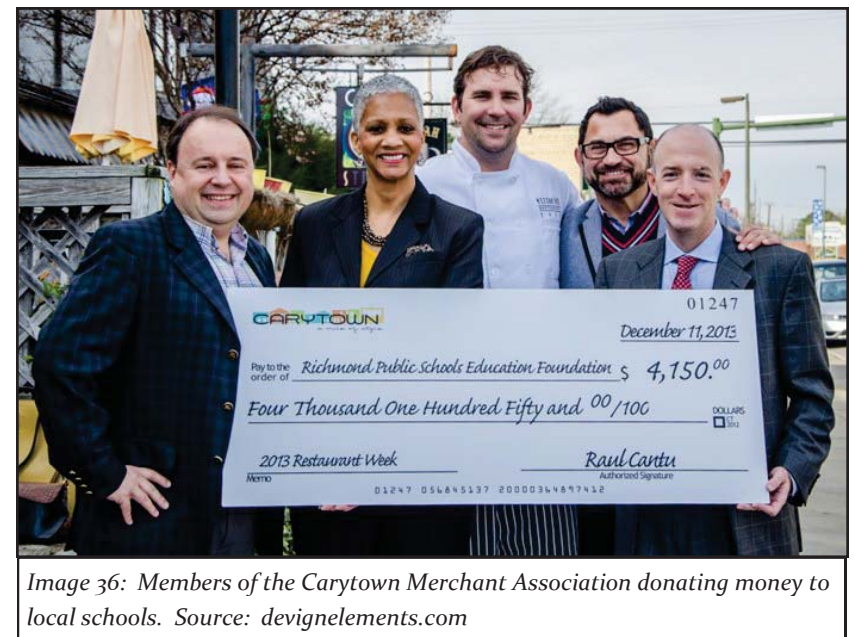
#### Goal 1: Improve communication and cooperation among stakeholders in the “Devil’s Triangle.”

##### Objective 1.1: Establish a merchant association for the commercial district and determine its role in the “Devil’s Triangle.”

- ▲ Why: There is little communication amongst merchants and property owners in the study area, however, all but two merchants are interested in being part of a merchant association. The sentiment among merchants is that a merchant association would improve commercial success, increasing visibility, and brand the area. Furthermore, a collection of merchants is a stronger voice for improvements than an individual business owner, particularly when dealing with other organizations such as the City of Richmond or the Museum District Association.
- ▲ Who: Merchants
- ▲ What: An organization of merchants for the “Devil’s Triangle” that exists to provide a unified voice that works towards the betterment the “Devil’s Triangle.”
- ▲ How: Hold an open meeting for merchant’s in the commercial district to share and discuss potential ideas for the future of the corridor.

Identify what the biggest obstacles are to the success of the commercial corridor and discuss potential solutions to the problems. This meeting can take many forms, but this meeting will likely form the foundation of the organizations eventual mission, goals, and objectives.

- ▲ When: Years 2 to 3, initial discussions should occur year 1



*Objective 1.2: Establish an organizational structure, create the organization's official mission statement and establish agreed upon organizational goals and objectives for the merchant's association.*

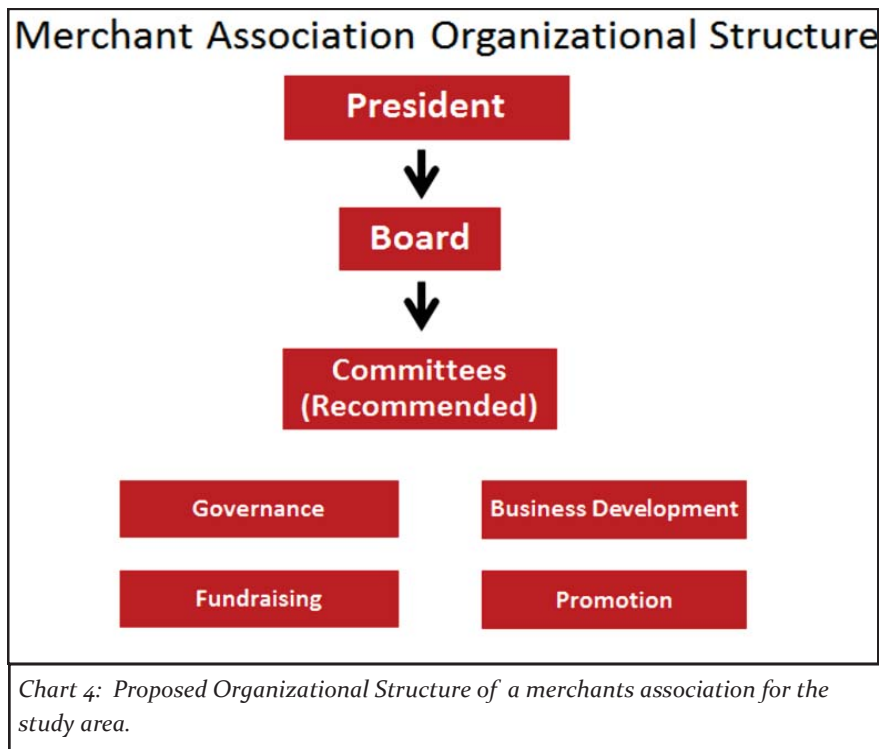
- ▲ Why: The organization will need to have a functional structure and strong leaders to ensure that efforts are efficient and representative of the member. Also, the process of applying for a non-profit organization Tax Identification Number is of extreme importance.
- ▲ Who: Current merchants
- ▲ What: Leaders should be elected and the officers will become the Governing Committee. The organization should be structured in a way that shares responsibility, and the strengths of each member are utilized in an efficient manner. The goals and objectives should be a document that outlines the purpose of the merchant association and should be based on consensus of the participating merchants.
- ▲ How: Identify leaders and begin to discuss what some possible committees of the organization should be. At the very least, there should be elected officers (the Governance Committee), a Fundraising Committee, a Business Development Committee, and possibly others as needed. These committees can be of varying sizes depending on the number of members, but the purpose is to have a small group of people in the organization that focus on particular issues the organization has identified as important issues.
- ▲ When: Years 2 to 3

*Objective 1.3: Develop a volunteer bank of non-merchants willing to assist the organization in making the commercial district a better place.*

- ▲ Why: In many respects, residents of the Museum District have a large stake in the future of the "Devil's Triangle" as well. Many of them already shop and dine in the district and have ideas about the future of the commercial district. Many of these people may be willing to volunteer their time if it improves their neighbor-

hood commercial district. Furthermore, establishing this type of direct connection with the neighborhood only makes the commercial district more engrained in the Museum District.

- ▲ Who: Museum District Association
- ▲ What: An ever evolving spreadsheet of volunteers
- ▲ How: Communicate with the Museum District Association to get some time at one of their meetings to talk about the type of volunteers the organization would need and some tentative dates. Furthermore, informally talking to loyal customers of the area can also be effective. The important thing with volunteers is to ensure they know their time is appreciated. This can be done in many ways, but a volunteer recognition event or special deals in the commercial district would likely be well received.
- ▲ When: Year 1. This is an ongoing process.



*Objective 1.4: Conduct succession planning for business owners considering retirement.*

- ▲ Why: When long time business owners decide to retire, it is important to do everything possible to ensure the commercial corridor remains strong. Within this commercial corridor there are many longtime business and property owners that may consider retirement in the next ten years and it is best for the Museum District Commercial Corridor if their storefront or property does not remain vacant for an extended period of time.
- ▲ Who: Museum District Merchants Association
- ▲ What: The most important questions to answer here are 1) who will manage the business when the owner retires? 2) How will the business to be transferred or sold? Long time business owners generally want the best for their former places of business and it is important to handle any transfers in a way that is the least disruptive to business operations.
- ▲ How: This is not about forcing or encouraging business owners to retire, rather, the goal is to offer assistance to those merchants that want to see commercial district they have been a part of continue to thrive.
- ▲ When: As necessary

## Implementation

### Year One

Year one recommendations are strategies that can positively impact the “Devil’s Triangle” now. These are strategies that can be implemented with little or no physical changes to the area that will make the commercial district more attractive to both its existing and potential customers. Although this implementation schedule recommends these strategies be implemented in year one, several of them are of an on-going process or the first-step towards a more long-term goal.

<b>Table 20: Year One Recommendations</b>					
Year	1	2 to 3	3 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10
<b><i>Economic Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Recruit new businesses that complement the eclectic nature of the area and offer new goods and services that appeal to Museum District residents and visitors to surrounding attractions.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.1: Recruit an entrepreneur with grocery experience to operate a somewhat upscale neighborhood grocery store/market at 704 North Sheppard Street.</i>					
<i>Objective 1.2: Increase entertainment options in the “Devil’s Triangle.”</i>					
<b><i>Design Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 2: Make the “Devil’s Triangle” more accessible to people in automobiles and cyclists.</b>					
<i>Objective 2.2: Designate a spot in the study area for bicycle facilities such as bike racks, a Fixit Self-Repair Stand, and an outdoor water fountain.</i>					
<b><i>Promotional Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Capitalize on the unique personality and location of the “Devil’s Triangle” to enhance the area’s sense of place.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.2: Establish a promotional relationship with surrounding museums and regional attractions.</i>					
<b>Goal 2: Organize and promote special events in the Museum District Commercial Corridor.</b>					
<i>Objective 2.1: Organize quarterly special events.</i>					
<b><i>Organizational Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Improve communication and cooperation amongst merchants, residents, and property owners in the study area and the Museum District.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.1: Establish a merchants association for the commercial district and determine its role in the “Devil’s Triangle.”</i>					

## Short-Term (2-5 Years)

Short-term implementation strategies include recommendations that can be implemented with little physical changes to the built environment and do not require the acquisition or redevelopment of property in the “Devil’s Triangle.” These are thing that can be done to improve the area in the short-term that in many ways will lay the foundation for the long-term commercial enhancement for the “Devil’s Triangle.” Some of these strategies could potentially occur in year one, depending on a number of variables.

<b>Table 21: Short-term Recommendations</b>					
Year	1	2 to 3	3 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10
<b><i>Economic Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Recruit new businesses that complement the eclectic nature of the area and offer new goods and services that appeal to Museum District residents and visitors to surrounding attractions.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.3: Develop a “Business Recruitment Packet.”</i>					
<b><i>Design Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Harness the eclectic and unique ambiance of the “Devil’s Triangle”</b>					
<i>Objective 1.1: Create a recognizable gateway feature at the intersection where Park and Patterson Avenues meet Boulevard.</i>					
<i>Objective 1.2: Establish a continuous, cohesive, and unique streetscape design.</i>					
<b>Goal 2: Make the “Devil’s Triangle” more accessible to people in automobiles and cyclists.</b>					
<i>Objective 2.1: Simplify circulation patterns and develop a parking plan for the “Devil’s</i>					
<b><i>Promotional Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Capitalize on the unique personality and location of the “Devil’s Triangle” to enhance the area’s sense of place.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.1: Develop a brand and identity for the study area.</i>					
<b>Goal 2: Organize and promote special events in the Museum District Commercial Corridor.</b>					
<i>Objective 2.2: Create and maintain a calendar of events</i>					
<b><i>Organizational Recommendations</i></b>					
<b>Goal 1: Improve communication and cooperation amongst merchants, residents, and property owners in the study area and the Museum District.</b>					
<i>Objective 1.2: Establish an organizational structure, create the organization’s official mission statement and establish agreed upon organizational goals and objectives for the merchant’s association.</i>					

**Long-term (6 years or more)**

These are recommendations that require the acquisition of property, exorbitant amounts of funding and organization, or considerable physical changes in the built environment of the “Devil’s Triangle.” Some of these recommendations could happen earlier than projected here depending on the availability of property, the City of Richmond’s capital improvement plan, the level of organization within the commercial district, and various other factors.

<b>Table 22: Long-term Recommendations</b>						
Year	1	2 to 3	3 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10	
<b><i>Economic Recommendations</i></b>						
<b>Goal 2: Increase commercial space available in the study area.</b>						
<i>Objective 2.1: Convert 1-story buildings along Sheppard Street to 2-story mixed-use buildings.</i>						
<i>Objective 2.2: Convert available residential buildings within the study area to bed &amp; breakfast inns.</i>						
<i>Objective 2.3: Redesign the parcel currently occupied by 7 Eleven.</i>						
<b><i>Organizational Recommendations</i></b>						
<b>Goal 1: Improve communication and cooperation amongst merchants, residents, and property owners in the study area and the Museum District.</b>						
<i>Objective 1.3: Develop a volunteer bank of non-merchants willing to assist the organization in making the Museum District Commercial Corridor a better place.</i>						
<i>Objective 1.4: Conduct succession planning for business owners considering retirement</i>						

## Conclusion

The “Devil’s Triangle” has always been a little bit different and the local residents that regularly go there for goods, services, or just a good time are an important part of what makes it so. Today the people living in the surrounding neighborhoods are drastically different than those that lived there 20 or even 10 years ago. These new residents desire different goods and services than the people they replaced and while it is the goal of merchants and property owners in the “Devil’s Triangle” to continue to meet their needs, the geographic footprint of this commercial district should not be restricted to people that can walk to it. This plan presents numerous strategies, both short-term and long-term aimed at raising the profile of the “Devil’s Triangle” among people beyond its current trade area and many of them are intended to overcome the negative perception the area had in previous decades when the study area was a considerably different place.

Most, if not all, of the conditions that earned the area the name “Devil’s Triangle” are gone, but while the area has become a safer, cleaner, and more stable commercial district than some in Richmond ever thought possible in the 1980s, the area has also maintained some of the positive eccentricities born from that period that are difficult to find in other parts of the Richmond Region. Gradually, the name “Devil’s Triangle,” much like the Museum District around it, has transformed itself from a place widely feared by Richmonders to a place with the right amount of grit, personality, and good people to be remembered by the only name people growing up in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s knew it as, the “Devil’s Triangle.” A name, much like a face, is rarely chosen by the person that bears it, but the way in which each is perceived by others eventually comes down to the unique attributes possessed by the individual or group of individuals. The “Devil’s Triangle” has been changing its face for decades, but this plan hopes to make Richmond notice.

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