

WILLIAMSBURG

Neighborhood Conservation Plan

January 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 3**
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4**
 - PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION 4
 - TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY 5
 - LAND USE AND ZONING 5
 - SIDEWALKS, LIGHTING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNS 6
 - BUSINESS CONSERVATION 6
 - PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES 6
- INTRODUCTION 7**
- HISTORY OF WILLIAMSBURG 8**
- NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION 11**
- NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS 13**
- PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION 15**
 - PARKS AND RECREATION 15
 - MINOR HILL 15
 - BEAUTIFICATION 17
- TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY 19**
 - SPEEDING 19
 - LITTLE FALLS ROAD 20
 - CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC 20
 - TRAFFIC NEAR SCHOOLS 21
 - TRAFFIC SIGNAGE AND VISIBILITY 21
 - POWHATEN AND WILLIAMSBURG TRAFFIC CIRCLE 22
 - SYCAMORE STREET AND WILLIAMSBURG CIRCLE 22
 - PEDESTRIAN SAFETY 23
- LAND USE AND ZONING 25**
- SIDEWALKS, LIGHTING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNS 26**
 - SIDEWALKS 26
 - LIGHTING 27
 - NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNS 28
- BUSINESS CONSERVATION 29**
- PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES 31**
 - PUBLIC SAFETY 31
 - COMMUNITY SERVICES 31
- APPENDIX A - HISTORY OF THE WILLIAMSBURG NEIGHBORHOOD 33**
- APPENDIX B - HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY OF THE WILLIAMSBURG NEIGHBORHOOD 39**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This conservation plan would not have been possible without the assistance and hard work of the many volunteers who helped prepare the plan. Dozens of people provided input, but special acknowledgment must be given to two. Ellen Jones initially chaired the steering committee for the Williamsburg Civic Association's conservation plan and compiled the questionnaire and managed the survey. Howard McGowan, 1998-2000 president of the Association, wrote and revised the first drafts of the plan with assistance from the Executive Committee and coordinated the effort to move the plan through the complex review and approval process.

Other volunteers who served on the steering committee during this effort included Jennifer Farmer, Brett Fox, Ron Hargreaves, Ann Lunson, Bob O'Donnell, and Dede O'Donnell.

This plan would not have been completed without the excellent efforts of all those volunteers who endured long meetings, logged many miles while on walking surveys of the community, reviewed mounds of documents, and who donated their time and expertise during the development of this plan.

Most important of all are the Williamsburg area residents who provided written comments on the draft plan and who participated in the various meetings to discuss and approve the plan.

Finally, the Williamsburg Civic Association wishes to express its appreciation to the county staff, in particular Chris Nixon, for all the valuable advice and assistance they provided during the preparation of this plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Williamsburg Civic Association began its neighborhood planning effort in March 1997, when the Association sent a letter of commitment to the county and joined the Arlington County Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee. In April 1997, a conservation plan steering committee was organized and began meeting regularly.

Boundaries for the Williamsburg area are North 27th Street, North Trinidad Street, the Arlington County line, and North Kensington Street. The area is dominated by single family homes but includes a small commercial area and one townhouse development.

Since the planning effort began, the Association:

- Developed a written survey and hand delivered it to every household in the Association.
- Compiled the survey results and identified preservation, safety and public improvement goals.
- Conducted walking surveys of the neighborhood.
- Drafted a plan and distributed the draft to all interested property owners and invited them to support or oppose the plan and to make specific recommendations in writing.
- Adopted the final draft at a meeting on September 8, 1999.

The plan is intended to guide future development of the neighborhood and make specific recommendations for its improvement. Of equal importance, the plan is intended to protect those features of Williamsburg which make it such an attractive place to live.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey, neighborhood meetings, walk-throughs, and discussions between members of the steering committee and county staff, a list of 54 recommendations was developed. The major issues are the following:

Parks and Beautification

- 1) Acquire additional parkland and install additional recreational facilities in the Williamsburg area.
- 2) Maintain Minor Hill as natural open space and install additional landscaping and hardscape at both Emily Sharp Park and the county's water storage facility.

- 3) Preserve the Birch-Payne Cemetery and the large median near 3100 John Marshall Drive and install appropriate landscaping.
- 4) Create landscaped pedestrian paths on the undeveloped 28th Street right-of-way between Lexington Street and John Marshall Drive and on the site of the current footpath between Kensington and 27th Streets.
- 5) Install additional landscaping on the traffic circle at Williamsburg Boulevard and Sycamore Street and on the traffic island at the junction of Little Falls Road, Kensington Street and Yorktown Boulevard.
- 6) Install additional landscaping and seating at Nottingham Elementary School.

Traffic Management and Pedestrian Safety

- 7) Install additional speed limit signs and increase police surveillance and enforcement of speed limits on designated streets.
- 8) Install landscaped medians on both Little Falls Road and Sycamore Street.
- 9) Support the installation of four-way stop signs at designated intersections.
- 10) Evaluate existing school zone signs on the approaches to Nottingham Elementary, Tuckahoe Elementary and Bishop O'Connell High Schools and replace them if more effective signs are available.
- 11) Work with property owners and county staff to eliminate hazardous obstructions such as tree limbs and shrubs which restrict visibility at intersections.
- 12) Install at-grade or textured pavement crosswalks at designated locations.
- 13) Install traffic nubs at designated locations.

Land Use and Zoning

- 14) Improve the county's notification procedures about variance applications and require notification of adjacent property owners about all construction, including "by-right" construction.
- 15) Re-examine the county's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances on allowable heights for the construction of new residential housing and renovation of existing homes, access requirements for pipestem and in-fill development, minimum street coverage

for new houses, and lot coverage for buildings, including decks and detached structures.

Sidewalks, Lighting and Neighborhood Signs

- 16) Install curb, gutter and sidewalk on the north side of Little Falls Road from John Marshall Drive to Ohio Street, around the large median near 3100 John Marshall Drive, and in any other location where it is supported by property owners.
- 17) Replace the tar-and-chip street surface on John Marshall Drive and other applicable locations with asphalt.
- 18) Improve lighting at designated locations and install pedestrian-style lighting in any location where it is supported by residents.
- 19) Install neighborhood signs at appropriate entrances to the neighborhood.

Business Conservation

- 20) Support efforts to maintain and improve the appearance of the businesses in the shopping center.
- 21) Screen dumpsters, loading areas and other service elements from adjacent residential neighbors where possible with fencing and/or landscaping.
- 22) Support the installation of additional trees and/or landscaping around the shopping center parking lots.
- 23) Support continued efforts by businesses to control and/or eliminate rats and other pests and to manage litter and trash.

Public Safety and Community Services

- 24) Work with the Police Department to increase the number of active Neighborhood Watch Programs.
- 25) Increase police surveillance around the shopping area, Nottingham Elementary School and Minor Hill to eliminate vandalism, loitering, public drinking, and drug sales and use.

INTRODUCTION

The preparation of this conservation plan had its beginning when a cellular telephone company sought to install a monopole atop the Minor Hill water storage facility. Minor Hill is the highest point in Arlington County and is of significant historical importance not only to residents of the Williamsburg area but to all county residents. The Williamsburg Civic Association was revitalized to deal with this perceived threat to our neighborhood.

At the same time, Association leaders discovered the many positive features of the county's Neighborhood Conservation Program. They realized that protecting the community's interests would be easier if residents worked together to identify concerns and formulate solutions.

The Williamsburg Civic Association began work on this conservation plan in March 1997, when the Association sent a letter of commitment to the county and joined the Arlington County Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee. In April 1997, a steering committee was organized and began meeting regularly to define general guidelines for developing a conservation plan.

Using input from the Metro Area Planning Group, Arlington County staff, and members of other civic associations, the steering committee compiled a multi-part questionnaire to identify the preservation, safety and public improvement goals of area residents. The questionnaire was hand-delivered to over 1,000 households and businesses in July 1997, and 252 responses were returned. The responses were collated and analyzed by the steering committee, and a meeting was held in December 1997, to brief residents on the survey results. At the same meeting, the steering committee organized volunteers into task groups so work could begin on a list of goals and recommendations.

The questionnaire, walking surveys of the neighborhood, and discussions with residents provided the steering committee with a clearer definition of the neighborhood's concerns and priorities for improvements. In addition, the effort involved a substantial collection of data and background information and an analysis of ways to correct problems. As ideas were raised, they were presented to the neighborhood in newsletters and at Association meetings.

The initial draft plan was presented at a civic association meeting in June 1999, and copies were distributed to all interested residents and property owners for their comments and suggestions. County staff also commented and made recommendations on this draft plan. Based on all comments received, the draft was revised extensively, and a meeting on the final draft took place in September 1999, at which time the Williamsburg Neighborhood Conservation Plan was endorsed by residents.

This conservation plan embodies the principle that Williamsburg will continue to flourish

as long as residents and property owners work together to improve their neighborhood. Preparation of this plan has enhanced neighborhood identity, strengthened the sense of shared commitment to civic activism, boosted interest in the history of the Williamsburg area, and has given new direction and a clearer sense of purpose and priorities to the Williamsburg Civic Association as a representative voice of the community.

This conservation plan presents general as well as specific suggestions and project proposals for the Williamsburg community. It will serve as an effective framework to guide the neighborhood as it addresses issues and problems that arise. The Association's leadership recommends that the plan be reviewed and updated after six to eight years, and every ten years thereafter.

Throughout this plan, the terms Williamsburg Civic Association, civic association and Association are used interchangeably. All refer solely to the Williamsburg Civic Association.

HISTORY OF WILLIAMSBURG

EARLY DAYS

The Williamsburg area was inhabited by Native Americans of the Powhatan chiefdom for hundreds of years until they moved south in the 1600's due to intertribal warfare. In the 1730's European immigrants came to the area as farmers, probably attracted by the plentiful water supply from numerous natural springs. One of these settlers was George Minor, head of a prominent family of large landowners, who gave his name to Minor Hill, the highest point in what is now Arlington County. The area was sparsely inhabited and was occupied by half a dozen heavily wooded farms where tobacco, wheat, corn and oats were grown. The Revolutionary War had little impact on the area, although a French army, marching to reinforce Americans at Yorktown, did pass by and take on water at Minor Hill. During the War of 1812 several settlers from the area participated in the defense of Washington and Baltimore.

THE CIVIL WAR

Union forces occupied the Williamsburg area during most of the Civil War. Minor Hill was a strategic location for observation and signaling, and Federal troops were quartered along its flanks. Some of the first casualties of the war occurred when Union forces dislodged an encampment of Confederates dug in on Minor Hill. The Federals built an observation fort and signal tower on the summit of the hill, and it was also at this site where watch fires were used to warn of the approach of Confederate troops. It was this line of signal fires around Washington, DC, which inspired a line in Julia Ward

Howe's Battle Hymn of the Republic, "I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps."

THE POST-WAR PERIOD

As a result of extensive damage to the area's property and infrastructure during the Civil War, Williamsburg entered a period of economic decline from which the area did not recover for decades. Residents gradually turned to truck farming as Washington's population increased and the railroads arrived. While prosperity did not result, residents were able to repair and rebuild homes and buildings damaged during the Civil War. Although the influenza epidemic killed 17 people, the area was otherwise unaffected by World War I. The Great Depression once again brought difficult times to Williamsburg. Money was scarce, and even truck farming suffered the effects of the downturn. Area residents regularly donated substantial amounts of vegetables from their gardens and fields to soup kitchens in Alexandria and Washington during these lean years.

WORLD WAR II

Williamsburg was greatly impacted by World War II. Many people in the community worked on wartime activities, and housing became scarce. As many women went to work and household income surged, more money was available for amenities, and more than 150 houses were built in the area. Many of the local roads were paved during World War II, and Arlington County officials began planning for a housing and population boom in Williamsburg, one of the last tracts in Arlington to be developed.

SINCE THE WAR

Large scale housing construction began in Williamsburg soon after V-J Day and within five years transformed the area from open farm land into a community of nearly 600 single-family homes. With this rapid development came the threat of runaway commercial development, and in 1951 the Williamsburg Civic Association was organized to retain "the desirable residential community."

Over the years the civic association was successful in opposing the construction of five gasoline stations on Minor Hill and in the surrounding community. The Association led the campaign to eradicate Japanese beetles, which were a serious problem in the 1950's. In the Sixties, the civic association campaigned to transform the weed-strewn median in the middle of the traffic circle into an attractively landscaped area. In the 1970s the Association was instrumental in having a leaf storage site on Minor Hill removed and persuaded the new Peoples Drug Store to build a brick retaining wall along the boundary of its parking lot. More recently, the civic association supported the effort

to landscape the area at the base of Minor Hill, which was planted with many beautiful azaleas and other flowers as a memorial to the late Emily L. Sharp.

It has been quite a few years since horses grazed on the north side of 31st Street and families with young children were moving into new homes. The toddlers of 1951 have grown up, married, and in many cases are now raising their own families in the area. Whatever the changes, the Williamsburg Civic Association strives to maintain the neighborhood as a desirable residential area.

For a more detailed history of the Williamsburg area, see Appendix A.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The Williamsburg neighborhood is located in the northwest corner of Arlington County and occupies an area bounded by North Kensington Street, North 27th Street, North Trinidad Street, and the Arlington County line. The natural lay of the land is gently rolling terrain with low-lying hills. Minor Hill, at 464 feet, is the highest point in Arlington and the community's most prominent feature.

The neighborhood is a rich mixture of frame houses, modest brick and wood colonials, one story ramblers, Cape Cods, and a few cottages. There are only 16 townhouses in Williamsburg, all off Rochester Street. The average house is over 40 years old, with few houses less than 10 years old and little land available for building any new single-family homes.

The sole shopping area within Williamsburg is the Williamsburg Neighborhood Shopping Center, two small strips of shops (zoned C-1) at the intersection of Williamsburg Boulevard and Sycamore Street.

Nottingham Elementary School is located within the boundaries of the Williamsburg Civic Association. In addition, Tuckahoe Elementary School, Williamsburg Middle School, Yorktown High School and Bishop O'Connell High School are nearby and serve community residents as well. Little Falls Presbyterian Church is the only place of worship located within Williamsburg's boundaries.

Tree-lined streets give Williamsburg much of its peaceful and comforting atmosphere, which has attracted home buyers from all over the metropolitan area. The close proximity of the East Falls Church Metro Station and easy access to I-66 are major factors in bringing people to live in the community. The neighborhood has a charming character, a spirited history, and a well developed sense of community pride and involvement.

Census data from 1990 does not correspond exactly to the present boundaries of the Williamsburg Civic Association but still provides interesting and reasonably accurate statistics. The data reveals that approximately 2,571 people lived in the Williamsburg area in a total of 1,029 households. The median household income was \$75,256. Especially noteworthy were the 465 Armed Forces veterans residing in the community.

More than 95 percent (95%) of residents had a high school diploma, and over 60 percent (60%) had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher education level. In 1990, 492 residents were enrolled in school, including college. It is interesting to note that despite the sustained high quality of public schools in the Williamsburg area, 21.7 percent (21.7%) of all elementary and secondary students were enrolled in private schools.

Less than 20 percent (20%) of Williamsburg residents in 1990 were born in Virginia. There were 141 foreign-born residents and more than 70 ancestries represented in the community, attesting to the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood survey results revealed that 98 percent (98%) of residents live in single family houses, and 96 percent (96%) own their own homes. Responses indicate the typical resident has lived here for slightly more than 22 years. Rehabilitation and replacement of aging and inadequate housing stock is, and will continue to be, the chief means of meeting housing needs. Significant remodeling and repair work are being done by many homeowners. Despite its age, housing in Williamsburg has continued to appreciate in value, and appreciated nearly 100 percent (100%) between 1980 and 1994, even accounting for inflation. In general, older homes in the neighborhood retained their value due to the high quality of their construction, their potential for additions and/or refurbishing, lot sizes, and the desirable location and atmosphere of the neighborhood.

Respondents said they liked the community's quiet and safe surroundings and convenient location and gave high marks to quality of housing and schools. Traffic and speeding led the list of dislikes. Some of the major concerns were in-fill and pipestem construction, the destruction of trees, lack of parkland and recreational facilities and the unsightly appearance of rental housing.

Williamsburg is a community very much in transition. Many long-time residents are now elderly, and younger families are moving into the neighborhood. More and more children are seen on the streets and in the schools. The changing demographics are putting pressure on the very limited recreation and park areas of Williamsburg and raise serious concerns about street and pedestrian safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS

Williamsburg is a pleasant, attractive and safe urban community in which privacy, excellent schools, a safe environment and an agreeable atmosphere are highly prized. This is a fine place in which to live and raise a family; however, the community is concerned about increasing traffic, the relentless pressures of development, and a trend toward overbuilding. Responses on the neighborhood conservation questionnaire and discussions at community meetings confirm that Williamsburg's residents are committed to preserving and protecting the neighborhood and support the following goals:

Preserve the neighborhood as a stable area of single-family homes.

Discourage further commercial development in the neighborhood.

Obtain additional parkland in the Williamsburg area.

Preserve and protect the open, uncrowded nature of the neighborhood by discouraging pipestem and infill development and promoting correlation of house size to lot coverage and/or lot size.

Protect the neighborhood and its residents from cut-through and speeding traffic while maintaining convenient access to and across major arterial streets and to nearby retail centers and the Metro.

Promote completion of gutters, curbs and sidewalks, maintenance of sidewalks already in place, and improved street lighting and signage where it is inadequate.

Improve the appearance of Emily Sharp Park and other green spaces and add appropriate recreation facilities on Minor Hill.

Seek recognition of Minor Hill as a point of historic significance.

Support neighborhood schools.

Improve the appearance of streetscapes with additional landscaping or street improvements.

Promote broader recognition of the Williamsburg area by placing signs at appropriate neighborhood entrances.

Encourage a spirit of friendly, open relations among residents and promote community involvement.

Cooperate with police, school officials and the business community to discourage crime by promoting the formation of Neighborhood Watch groups and increasing public awareness of and prompt attention to problems as they arise.

Monitor public services such as snow removal, leaf pickup, pest control and zoning enforcement.

Encourage commercial property owners and their tenants to maintain the appearance of the shopping areas so they will be attractive and inviting to the community.

Survey responses indicate the current priorities for neighborhood planning are parks and recreation, beautification, and traffic control.

PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION

Parks and Recreation

A major component of this conservation plan is improving parks and recreational opportunities for Williamsburg residents. In their survey responses, residents expressed a strong concern about the lack of intimate community parks where neighbors can gather. The only existing park is the small Emily Sharp Park at the foot of the Minor Hill water storage facility. No additional green space was preserved when developers began building houses in the Williamsburg area. The county even allowed most of the Birch-Payne Cemetery, once several acres in size, to be subdivided for housing. Only approximately one-third of an acre still exists. Residents envision local green areas and passive parks as a way to bring neighbors together and generate a stronger community spirit.

Residents would like to see the county establish another park in the Williamsburg Neighborhood similar in size to Emily Sharp Park. The Williamsburg Civic Association will work with county authorities in this very worthwhile effort.

The only public recreation facilities in the neighborhood are on the grounds of Nottingham Elementary School. With the increase of families with children, residents see the need for additional recreation activities for small children, teenagers and adults.

Recommendation

- 1) Support efforts by Arlington County to acquire additional parkland in the Williamsburg neighborhood.

Minor Hill

Minor Hill, which includes both the Emily Sharp Park and the county's water storage facility, is of particular importance to the Williamsburg community because of its prominence and its history. Eighty percent (80%) of survey respondents indicated better use could be made of this site. Sharp Park was established on privately donated land as part of a neighborhood initiative. Minor Hill, the highest point in Arlington, was an important Civil War observation post and signal station, and was the location of the first settlement in the northern portion of Arlington. The neighborhood has, on several occasions, successfully opposed inappropriate uses of Minor Hill. This site is critical to Williamsburg's conservation plan.

At the urging of the Williamsburg Civic Association about 20 years ago, landscaping was installed at the water storage site, and the underground reservoirs were topped with tennis and basketball courts. The addition of these recreation facilities transformed Minor Hill into a useful, and very used, neighborhood gathering point. The removal of the tennis and basketball courts several years ago is a loss still keenly felt by the community.

Residents understand that maintaining the integrity of the underground reservoirs which contain the county's drinking water supply is of primary importance. They would like to see appropriate mixed uses developed at the site which would satisfy the neighborhood's desire for more recreational facilities. Increased use of the site by residents could help deter vandalism and other behavior which is detrimental to both the water supply and the neighborhood. Additional landscaping would improve the appearance of the site and could be used to visually unify Minor Hill.

Recommendations

- 2) Preserve Minor Hill, including Emily Sharp Park and the water storage facility, as natural open space by:
 - a) Evaluating the existing landscaping and hardscape and creating a master plan to create visual unity throughout the site. Using this plan as a guide, install appropriate landscaping and hardscape to make the site more attractive and inviting to residents. Residents have expressed a desire for more flowers and flowering shrubs.
 - b) Protecting the mature trees on the site.
 - c) Clearing away underbrush to allow pedestrians better access to the site.
 - d) Implementing erosion control measures to protect the slope between the park and the storage facility and to improve drainage in the park.
- 3) Provide appropriate recreational facilities at Minor Hill by:
 - a) Converting the former parking area off Powhatan Street into a children's play area.
 - b) Initiating a feasibility study to determine what types of recreational uses are practical and appropriate at the site. Residents have suggested the following: an all-weather foot path suitable for walking and jogging around the reservoir platform, basketball and tennis courts.
- 4) Install additional trash receptacles. Trash and litter are a constant problem at the lower end of the reservoir platform and in the park. Neighborhood residents will assist with the effort to keep the site clean.

Beautification

Virtually all residents who responded to the survey deemed it very important to install and maintain natural vegetation, especially trees, in the Williamsburg community. Residents see this as a responsibility to be shared with Arlington County. As one resident commented, "Vegetation and trees contribute significantly to the aesthetic quality of Williamsburg. Even the most banal suburban architecture will be lovable if veiled by layers of trees, shrubs and flowers. These things soften the hard-edged, constructed environment." They provide food for birds and small wildlife, absorb noise, screen outdoor spaces, and provide refreshing shade.

There are several public areas that would benefit from some special beautification measures. These include the traffic circle at Williamsburg Boulevard and Sycamore Street (Williamsburg traffic circle), the Birch-Payne Cemetery, the traffic island at the junction of Little Falls Road, Kensington Street and Yorktown Boulevard, the undeveloped 28th Street right-of-way between Lexington Street and John Marshall Drive, and the pedestrian path between Kensington and 27th Streets.

Recommendations

- 5) Preserve the Birch-Payne Cemetery by:
 - a) Installing new fencing and an appropriate historical marker at the site.
 - b) Identifying and marking the locations of the 19 graves where possible. Most of the original headstones have been damaged or stolen.
 - c) Installing appropriate landscaping and seating. For example, a serenity garden or a healing garden might allow residents respectful access to the site.
- 6) Improve the appearance of Nottingham Elementary School by installing additional landscaping around the building and on the grounds. Install additional seating along the street perimeter of the playground.
- 7) Improve the Williamsburg traffic circle by:
 - a) Evaluating the current landscaping and designing a master landscape plan which will provide seasonal interest. The site has a haphazard appearance and lacks unity. The surrounding small traffic islands should be incorporated into the planting scheme for continuity.
 - b) Restoring the electrical supply which was severed during maintenance operations several years ago.
 - c) Installing a water faucet, which would make it easier for residents to assist with care and maintenance of the landscaping.
- 8) Preserve as a small green space the undeveloped 28th Street right-of-way between

Lexington Street and John Marshall Drive and create a landscaped pedestrian path.

- 9) Improve the appearance of the foot path between Kensington Street and 27th Street by replacing the current concrete sidewalk with a landscaped pedestrian path.
- 10) Install additional landscaping on the traffic island at the junction of Little Falls Road, Kensington Street and Yorktown Boulevard.

Under the direction of the Williamsburg Civic Association, residents of John Marshall Drive applied for and received a small parks grant in 1998 to plant hollies and flowering shrubs and trees on the median. The south end of the median already had a small garden of flowering plants created and maintained by a resident. Additional work is needed to preserve the mature trees on the site.

- 11) Preserve as a small green space the large landscaped median near 3100 John Marshall Drive where the Minor family spring house once stood by:
 - a) Installing additional beds of woodland and native plants.
 - b) Installing a water faucet to make it easier for residents to assist with care and maintenance of the landscaping.
 - c) Removing underbrush and dead trees and limbs.
 - d) Preserving mature trees.
 - e) Thinning saplings to promote healthy growth among remaining trees.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Speeding

In their survey responses, three-quarters of Williamsburg residents reported speeding as a serious problem on their neighborhood streets. There is a growing concern about the heavy volume of traffic and accompanying noise on principle arterial streets, cut-through traffic, excessive speeding, failure of drivers to obey traffic laws and observe speed limits, declining pedestrian safety, and on-street parking problems around neighborhood schools.

The high volume of traffic and the excessive speed of many vehicles has led to growing concerns regarding the safety of both pedestrians and neighborhood drivers. The topography of Williamsburg, with its rolling hills and numerous curves, also contributes to dangerous conditions by increasing the number of blind spots on streets and in intersections.

The majority of neighborhood streets in Williamsburg are narrow, two-lane streets designed to carry only local residential traffic. A heavy volume of cut-through traffic can make these narrow streets dangerous. Williamsburg residents strongly support active measures which will discourage or minimize the use of neighborhood streets as major thoroughfares in order to reduce the disruption and threat of through traffic to residents and their children.

Williamsburg contains parts of major traffic arterials including Sycamore Street, Williamsburg Boulevard, and Little Falls Road. Residents who live on these streets are adversely impacted by speeding and traffic noise. Although precise measurements have not been made, many residents feel that speeding on Sycamore and Williamsburg is easily more than 10 to 15 miles above the respective speed limits, particularly during the early morning rush period when children are going to school. This excess of speed would be classified as a high-priority speeding problem under the Traffic Calming Studies. There is almost unanimous agreement on the need for increased enforcement of current speed limits on these streets.

Recommendations

- 12) Install additional speed limit signs and increase police surveillance, especially along Little Falls Road, Williamsburg Boulevard, Sycamore Street, Lexington Street and Powhatan Street.
- 13) Increase police surveillance and enforcement of speed limits on 36th and Somerset Streets from Powhatan to Williamsburg Boulevard when students are driving to and

from Bishop O'Connell High School.

Little Falls Road

Little Falls Road from Kensington Street to the Williamsburg traffic circle presents a special problem. Little Falls is not a uniform width along this section, and the roadway is not aligned properly. This creates dangerous visibility problems at the intersections of John Marshall Drive, Nottingham Street, and Ohio Street. Even though Little Falls is striped as a two-lane street, some motorists drive at dangerous speeds and attempt to carve out additional lanes of traffic through the wider sections of the street. Residents support the installation of landscaped medians along this section of Little Falls Road to discourage speeding and reckless driving.

Recommendations

- 14) Install a landscaped median strip along Little Falls Road from Kensington Street to the Williamsburg traffic circle, keep Little Falls a two-lane road, and add parking lanes.
- 15) Realign the roadway from John Marshall Drive to Ohio Street and install curb and gutter on the north side of the street.

Cut-through Traffic

Several through streets have intersections where visibility is very poor for drivers on side streets. The danger increases when speeding is involved. There is strong but not unanimous sentiment for the installation of four-way stop signs at the following dangerous intersections: Little Falls Road and Lexington Street, Little Falls Road and Ohio Street, Lexington and 27th Streets, John Marshall Drive and 27th Street.

We suggest the county consider modifying current restrictions on the use of multi-way stop signs as a neighborhood traffic control measure. We disagree with the current requirement for traffic warrants to install multi-way stop signs. We urge that this policy be revised and a process developed in which neighborhoods can participate in determining the use of stop signs, including multi-way stop signs, as a traffic control measure.

Recommendations

- 16) Modify county policy to permit greater use of multi-way stop signs as a neighborhood traffic control measures.

17) Install four-way stop signs on Little Falls Road at Lexington Street and Ohio Street, at Lexington and 27th Streets, and at John Marshall Drive and 27th Street.

Traffic Near Schools

When parents are dropping off or picking up students at Nottingham Elementary School, traffic congestion on Little Falls Road is a concern for many residents and parents. Some drivers disregard current school zone signs and exceed the 25 mph speed limit, the roadway is narrow, and there are no curbs, sidewalks or parking lanes on the north side of the street.

There is another school zone on Sycamore Street. This serves students attending Tuckahoe Elementary School and Bishop O'Connell High School. Speeding traffic is also a problem at this location.

Recommendations

- 18) Evaluate existing school zone signs on the approaches to Nottingham Elementary School, Tuckahoe Elementary School and Bishop O'Connell High School and replace them if more effective signs are available.
- 19) Increase police surveillance and enforcement of the 25 mph speed limit when children are going to and from school.

Traffic Signage and Visibility

A substantial number of residents commented in their survey responses that traffic signs are inadequate, inconspicuous or obscured by foliage or other obstructions. There were also general complaints of foliage and trees blocking views of oncoming traffic. This is a particular problem for vehicles moving onto or across main arterials which have fast moving traffic.

Recommendations

- 20) Evaluate the need for more traffic signs and install additional signs where appropriate. Work with property owners and county staff to eliminate obstructions obscuring signs from view.
- 21) Identify specific intersections where poor visibility is a problem and work with

property owners and county staff to eliminate hazardous obstructions.

Powhatan and Williamsburg Traffic Circle

The intersection of Powhatan Street and the Williamsburg traffic circle is a particular problem. An informal survey of traffic at this location revealed that 43 percent (43%) of traffic does not come to a full stop at the stop sign on Powhatan Street, a perilous situation because traffic comes from two directions on the left at this location. Nearly half of the traffic observed not coming to a full stop actually moved through the stop sign with no appreciable reduction in speed. This maneuver endangers traffic in the circle as well as pedestrians in the crosswalk. The potential here for a serious accident or fatality is of abiding concern to community residents. Increasingly, motorists are also failing to come to a full stop at the juncture of Little Falls Road and the traffic circle.

Recommendations

- 22) Increase police surveillance and enforcement of full stops at stop signs and yield signs at the traffic circle.
- 23) Install at-grade crosswalks or textured pavement on Little Falls Road, Williamsburg Boulevard, and Powhatan Street at the traffic circle.

Sycamore Street and Williamsburg Circle

Many residents have complained that the timing of lights at Sycamore Street and the traffic circle does not allow pedestrians enough time to cross. The Traffic Division has checked the timing and found it adequate if pedestrians push the walk button and the walk light comes up. With the large number of residents walking to nearby shopping and with three bus stops nearby, pedestrian traffic is very heavy at this location, and safety is a big concern.

Recommendations

- 24) Review the timing of lights at Sycamore Street and the traffic circle periodically to make sure pedestrians have enough time to cross safely.
- 25) Seek ways to educate residents about the necessity to use the walk buttons.

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian safety is a concern to Williamsburg residents, particularly at night and at certain locations. Additional crosswalks would be helpful for pedestrians trying to cross Little Falls Road, Williamsburg Boulevard, Sycamore Street and Powhatan Street. There are currently few crosswalks on these streets, and drivers rarely yield to pedestrians who are trying to cross. Areas of particular concern include the entrances to Minor Hill on Williamsburg and Powhatan, Sycamore and 28th Streets, and Williamsburg and Trinidad Street. There is strong but not unanimous sentiment for the installation of traffic nubs at certain locations for pedestrian safety.

Recommendations

- 26) Install a textured pavement crosswalk on Williamsburg Boulevard at the entrance to Minor Hill (at the top of the hill just past the traffic circle).
- 27) Install a textured pavement crosswalk on Powhatan Street at either 35th Street or 36th Street.
- 28) Install textured pavement crosswalks at intersections where school crossing guards are on duty:
 - a) Williamsburg Boulevard and Ohio Street
 - b) Little Falls Road and John Marshall Drive
 - c) Little Falls Road and Ohio Street
 - d) Sycamore and 28th Streets
- 29) Install textured pavement crosswalks on Williamsburg Boulevard at Trinidad Street.
- 30) Evaluate whether additional crosswalks are needed at other locations on Little Falls Road, Williamsburg Boulevard and Sycamore Street for pedestrian safety. Install additional crosswalks if appropriate.
- 31) Install signs near crosswalks on major arterials to remind drivers that pedestrians have the right-of-way.
- 32) Install traffic nubs at the following intersections:
 - a) Little Falls Road and John Marshall Drive
 - b) Little Falls Road and Ohio Street
 - c) 27th and Lexington Streets
 - d) 27th Street and John Marshall Drive

Like Little Falls Road, Sycamore Street was identified by survey respondents as particularly dangerous for pedestrians. As noted above, there are few crosswalks on Sycamore, and it carries a high volume of traffic. Some residents have suggested a landscaped median be installed on Sycamore from 26th Street to Williamsburg Boulevard, with appropriate breaks for crossovers and crosswalks. A landscaped median would not only improve the appearance of this area but would also serve to discipline and direct traffic. Speeding often occurs on Sycamore Street, and some drivers make U-turns across the roadway. A median and crosswalks would afford some additional protection to the many pedestrians who cross Sycamore Street .

Recommendation

33) Install a landscaped median and appropriate crosswalks on Sycamore Street from 26th Street to Williamsburg Boulevard.

On-street parking problems, traffic congestion, and speeding traffic around Bishop O'Connell High School generated a number of complaints on survey responses. The parking complaints reflect the large number of students driving to school and parking on neighborhood streets. Traffic complaints involved problems with inconsiderate behavior by parents dropping off and picking up students, students speeding on residential streets, and students obstructing traffic by walking in the roadway.

Recommendations

34) Create zone permit parking around Bishop O'Connell High School where it is supported by residents.

35) Increase police surveillance and enforcement of speed limits, stop signs, and traffic regulations which prohibit interfering with or obstructing the flow of traffic.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Most of the development and construction in the Williamsburg community occurred before Arlington County adopted its first General Land Use Plan (GLUP) in 1961. The current residential zoning designation for Williamsburg is R-6, one residence per 6,000 square feet in building lot. Under GLUP, the area is designated as low density residential, one to ten units per acre. Housing is almost totally single-family detached homes, and survey responses indicate residents wish to preserve this characteristic. There is currently one small neighborhood shopping area (zoned C-1) in Williamsburg. Residents do not support additional commercial development.

There is increasing pressure for redevelopment in Williamsburg. The relatively large lots, modest older homes, and convenient location make the community potentially attractive for higher density development. A majority of residents strongly oppose higher density. The Williamsburg Civic Association supports the Arlington County Board resolution of March 15, 1980, on Neighborhood Conservation Program policy which states, "The County Board, in its consideration of land use and zoning changes, use permits, and site plans will give full consideration to the recommendations of the [neighborhood conservation] plan within the context provided by Virginia Supreme Court zoning decisions and enabling legislation."

The civic association recognizes that many houses in the community are undergoing renovation. For the most part, new additions are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and have been received positively by the community; however, some residents disapprove of the recent county-wide trend to build new homes on inappropriately small lots and strongly disapprove of "shoehorning," the construction of oversized houses in odd positions or with very small setbacks. Some residents also oppose in-fill and pipestem development when this type of construction adversely changes the character of the neighborhood. Some residents are also concerned about houses which are larger and higher than current zoning allows. Procedures for notifying surrounding property owners of such projects should ensure that all affected homeowners are aware of the project and are given an opportunity to protect their property rights.

Williamsburg urges the County Board to address citizens' concerns about in-fill and pipestem development through greater involvement of civic associations and nearby neighbors.

Recommendations

36) Modify the county's Zoning Ordinance to require developers to consult with civic associations on "by-right" construction, including issues such as maintenance of

mature trees on site and other impacts of construction. Initiate new procedures for notifying adjacent neighbors of “by-right” development.

- 37) Re-examine the county’s Zoning Ordinance on allowable heights for the construction of new residential housing and the renovation of existing homes, balancing the interests of nearby neighbors with the need for the Williamsburg area to adapt to changing consumer needs.
- 38) Re-examine the county’s Subdivision Ordinance on access requirements for pipestem and in-fill development and minimum street coverage to ensure that the property values of nearby homes are not adversely affected.
- 39) Re-examine the county’s Zoning Ordinance for residential zones in terms of lot coverage for buildings (including decks and detached structures), balancing the goal of preserving open spaces with the need to create housing responsive to consumer needs and compatible with the high land values in this part of North Arlington.
- 40) Improve the procedures for notifying civic associations and community residents about variance applications.

SIDEWALKS, LIGHTING AND NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNS

The neighborhood survey indicated that most of Williamsburg has an adequate infrastructure of sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Most of those who responded indicated a willingness to share in the costs of installation. The property owners who do not support installation of sidewalks cited the need to remove existing trees or shrubs as the reason for their opposition. The civic association supports the installation of sidewalks, curbs and gutters in any location where it is supported by property owners through submission of a qualifying petition (or compliance with standard Neighborhood Conservation procedures).

Sidewalks

Walking surveys revealed that the general condition of sidewalks, curbs and gutters ranged from adequate to poor, and there is an urgent need for maintenance in a number of places.

A few streets in Williamsburg are of a tar-and-chip material which was laid in the 1950's. These streets need resurfacing with asphalt.

Recommendations

- 41) Install curbs, gutters and sidewalks on the north side of Little Falls Road from John Marshall Drive to Ohio Street.
- 42) Replace the current tar-and-chip street surface with asphalt on John Marshall Drive and other applicable locations.
- 43) Install curbs and gutters around the large landscaped median located near 3100 John Marshall Drive.

Lighting

Street lighting is generally adequate throughout the Williamsburg area. Most current lighting is cobra lights mounted on utility poles. Many residents have expressed interest in replacing the cobra lights with pedestrian-style lighting as a beautification measure. The civic association supports the installation of pedestrian-style street lighting in any location where it is supported by residents through submission of a qualifying petition (or compliance with standard Neighborhood Conservation procedures).

Recommendation

- 44) Install additional street lighting at the following locations:
 - a) Ohio Street between Little Falls Road and 35th Street.
 - b) 3600 block of Rockingham Street.
 - c) Ottawa Street cul-de-sac off 35th Street.
 - d) Powhatan Street between 28th and 29th Streets.
 - e) Along Trinidad Street adjacent to Bishop O'Connell High School.
 - f) John Marshall Drive from the county line to 27th Street.
 - g) Kensington Street cul-de-sac off Little Falls Road.
 - h) Roosevelt and 27th Streets.
 - i) Along the pedestrian path between Kensington and 27th Streets.

Survey results indicate residents are concerned about graffiti, vandalism and loitering in areas around the Williamsburg Neighborhood Shopping Center, Minor Hill, and Nottingham Elementary School. Residents are particularly concerned about teenagers and others who congregate at the lower end of the Minor Hill reservoir platform to drink and possibly to use drugs. Resulting noise and litter are adversely impacting the neighborhood around the site.

Recommendations

45) Install appropriate lighting in the following areas:

- a) Williamsburg Neighborhood Shopping Center.
- b) Williamsburg Traffic Circle.
- c) Nottingham Elementary School.
- d) Along the boundaries and paths of Emily Sharp Park and Minor Hill.

46) Install appropriate lighting at the lower end of the reservoir platform on Minor Hill. Clearing underbrush and trimming trees may be necessary for lighting to be effective.

Neighborhood Signs

Because the Williamsburg community is almost entirely residential, most people passing through are not aware of the neighborhood's identity. Newer residents also have trouble identifying the boundaries of the Williamsburg Civic Association. Neighborhood signs at entrances to the community or in prominent locations within the community would help to identify Williamsburg.

Recommendation

47) Install neighborhood signs at appropriate entrances to the neighborhood. For example:

- a) The traffic triangle at the junction of Little Falls Road, Kensington Street and Yorktown Boulevard.
- b) On the median at the intersection of Sycamore and 26th Streets.
- c) On the median at the intersection of Williamsburg Boulevard and Kensington Street.
- d) Near the intersection of Williamsburg Boulevard and Trinidad Street.

BUSINESS CONSERVATION

The Williamsburg neighborhood is served by the Williamsburg Neighborhood Shopping Center, two small commercial strips at the intersection of Sycamore Street and Williamsburg Boulevard. Like other low-density shopping areas built in the 1950's, it was designed to serve the immediate community and blend in with the residential character of the neighborhood. Shopping Area One, composed of 13 businesses, has 47,937 square feet. Area Two, composed of 5 businesses, is 73,942 square feet. Tenants include a barber shop, two beauty salons, two dry cleaners, a dentist, two banks, a drug store, a fabric store, a florist, a convenience store, a martial arts center, a tailor, a print shop, and a music store. Patrons may dine at a full service Chinese restaurant or a sandwich shop.

Both shopping areas were renovated several years ago. Improvements included new awnings, updated signage, brick sidewalks and new landscaping. Williamsburg will support efforts by tenants and property owners to take advantage of the services and support offered by the Arlington County Business Conservation Program and the Small Business Assistance Program to improve the appearance of the shops. Williamsburg will support efforts by tenants and property owners to initiate a tree planting and/or beautification project with the Arlington County Beautification Committee.

While some residents have complained that parking is inadequate at Area One, parking problems appear to be sporadic and are most likely to occur at mid-day. Since there is no practical way to expand parking on the site, there is no way to alleviate this concern.

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of survey respondents do not support additional commercial development within the Williamsburg area. The neighborhood survey also reveals a high level of satisfaction with the services and products offered by neighborhood businesses, with the most frequently requested addition a small family restaurant or coffee shop.

Recommendations

- 48) Support efforts to maintain and improve the appearance of the businesses in the shopping center.
- 49) Support the installation of trees and/or landscaping around shopping center parking lots.
- 50) Support the continued efforts by businesses to control and/or eliminate rats and other pests and to manage litter and trash.

51) Screen dumpsters, loading areas and other service elements from view where possible with fencing and/or landscaping.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Public Safety

Seventy-five percent of survey responses indicated residents do not feel crime is a large problem in the Williamsburg community. Vandalism, stolen vehicles, thefts from carports, and broken car windows were the main incidents reported. There were reports of suspected illegal drug sales on the grounds of Nottingham Elementary School and around Minor Hill.

Residents are concerned about loiterers around the convenience store and the drug store in the shopping center and the attendant problems of noise and rowdiness, public drinking, possible drug sales and use, and litter. In addition, there is concern about vandalism and the negative effect that will have on the appearance of the commercial strips and on the ability of the owners to attract high-quality tenants. Several incidents of vandalism have plagued the Williamsburg Neighborhood Shopping Center, including a fire which destroyed the interior of the CVS drug store several years ago.

The civic association would like to sponsor more programs on crime and to involve our neighborhood police more in community activities, including the formation of additional Neighborhood Watch Programs.

Recommendations

- 52) Work with the Police Department to increase the number of active Neighborhood Watch Programs.
- 53) Increase police surveillance and improve lighting at the shopping center and at Minor Hill to eliminate vandalism, loitering, public drinking, and drug sales and use.
- 54) Encourage residents to report vandalism and loitering to the Police Department.

Community Services

There are one elementary school (Nottingham) and one church (Little Falls Presbyterian) within the boundaries of the Williamsburg community. In addition, Tuckahoe Elementary School, Williamsburg Middle School, Yorktown High School, and Bishop O'Connell High School are within easy walking distance and serve some of the community's residents as well. Almost all survey respondents had a very favorable view of Nottingham, Tuckahoe and Williamsburg Schools. Yorktown was not included in the survey. Bishop O'Connell had a favorable rating among 95 percent (95%) of residents; however, five

percent (5%) of residents viewed O'Connell very unfavorably because of parking and speeding problems generated by O'Connell students.

Residents responding to the survey were most satisfied with the following Arlington County services: refuse/garbage collection (87%), leaf collection (73%), library facilities (73%), schools (69%), street maintenance (66%), and police protection (63%). The following services were rated the least satisfactory: cable TV (33%), street cleaning (37%) pet control (39%), and snow removal (40%). Comments from residents indicate the rating for police protection reflects a certain degree of dissatisfaction with police enforcement of traffic laws, particularly speed limits.

APPENDIX A - HISTORY OF THE WILLIAMSBURG NEIGHBORHOOD

Located at the northwest boundary of Arlington County, the Williamsburg neighborhood is an area with traditions and a history dating back several hundred years. Its most prominent feature, Minor Hill, was the focal point of settlements and has played an important and lasting role in the history of Arlington County. With an elevation of 484 feet above sea level, Minor Hill sits above the intersection of Williamsburg Boulevard and Little Falls Road. The latter was originally an Indian trail and later a “rolling road” on which hogsheads of tobacco were rolled to a loading location at what is presently Chain Bridge.

Native Americans, most probably of the Dodgs and Necostin tribes (related to the Algonquians and part of the Powhatan chiefdom) had a continuous presence on Minor Hill for hundreds of years until they moved south in the late 1600's due to intertribal warfare. The prominent elevation of Minor Hill made it an excellent location for observation and defensive purposes. A plentiful water supply from numerous natural springs, deposits of pottery clay and soapstone, large trees for dugout canoes, and plentiful fowl and game made it an attractive location for native settlements.

Early in the 18th century, Simon Pearson, James Going, James Wren, and Gabriel Adams held land grants and settled in the Williamsburg area. By the 1730s, European colonists were cultivating corn, wheat, oats, and tobacco in the area.

The George Minor family moved to this area a bit later and constructed a substantial two-story house, built of bricks and logs, on the hill that soon took their name. The Minor family's presence at this location resulted from three separate land grants to George Minor, the patriarch who later served as a Justice of the Peace in Fairfax and as a colonel in the Fairfax Militia. George Minor had grant title to lands stretching from present-day Falls Church through the Williamsburg area and all the way to and including what is now Seven Corners. George Minor's son, also named George, was born on Minor Hill in 1777, probably the first settler child born in the Williamsburg area to live to majority. This son later served in the Virginia House of Delegates and participated in the defense of Baltimore and Washington during the War of 1812.

During the Revolutionary War, the Williamsburg area was rather quiet and peaceful, with the residents, a number of whom were Loyalists, dedicating themselves to agriculture rather than war. In the summer of 1781, a French Army crossed the Potomac at Georgetown en route to Yorktown to join General Washington. The French marched through the Williamsburg area, stopping at Minor Hill to take on spring water and salt.

In 1817, the Williamsburg area was described this way by one of its residents:

“The area consists of sprawling farmlands with narrow, unfinished, and often impassable, dirt roads with no ditches or walkways. The trees are many, including oaks, elms, birches, and walnuts, along with untold dozens of cherry trees, and break the farmlands into patches. In places not farmed, the prairie grass grows thickly and as high as your belt. The houses are typically wood-sided or brick with ample yards, large vegetable gardens and plentiful trees. Almost everyone keeps hogs, cats, chickens, turkeys, cows, several dogs and horses. There are lots of rabbits and squirrels in the area and a meal can be had for the shooting. Occasionally fish is taken from the nearby river although a horse is needed to bring it quickly to the fire before it begins to smell badly. Several community wells have been dug although the many springs of sweet water renders these largely unnecessary. Outhouses are very common, including for the slaves, and are cleaned out by a scavenger who deposits the materials in honey-wagons and carries it away. Several times a year a big event, like a church party, barn dance, cake walk, or sleigh-ride, is held for everyone in the area.”

In 1822 the first school in the Williamsburg area was constructed on a portion of Minor Hill called “Elderfield.” The school had four paying students.

The area, although sparsely populated, was a strategic location during the Civil War. Williamsburg itself was still comprised of a half-dozen heavily wooded farms. It was first held by Confederates and then became part of the defensive ring for Washington. On May 24, 1861, under orders from General Winfield Scott, Federal troops from New York moved against the Confederates dug in on Minor Hill as the Union troops began their march to First Manassas (Battle of Bull Run). Confederate sharpshooters fired on the Federals moving below Minor Hill, along what is now Little Falls Road, and numerous Yankees, under General Burdan, returned fire briskly and then proceeded in force against the Confederate works. The Confederates were overwhelmed and routed, and several casualties resulted, among the first combat fatalities of the Civil War and a precursor to years of carnage. The Federals then built an observation fort and signal tower at the summit of Minor Hill as well as a spot for signal fires which were used to warn of the approach of rebel forces. These signal fires, along with those on other hills in Arlington, were occasionally lighted at night. Julia Ward Howe drew inspiration from these fires, visible for many miles, for one of the lines of her stirring *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, “I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps.”

In addition to the observation fort and signal tower on Minor Hill, there was also a large cantonment for the quartering of Federal reserve forces at the base and along one flank of Minor Hill. In September of 1861, these forces intercepted Confederate infiltrators who had penetrated the defensive ring as far as Minor Hill. Individual Confederates did breach Federal lines in this area from time to time, likely aided by Confederate sympathizers, including the slave-holding Minor families. There were several incidents of Federals and Confederates bumping into one another, often as they foraged for

supplies or visited young ladies in the area. Apparently, there were informal rules of engagement among these moonstruck suitors which kept bloodshed to a minimum.

At the end of the Civil War, the Williamsburg area, which had enjoyed a certain level of prosperity up to 1861, especially after guano fertilizer became available to replenish depleted fields, had been ravaged by the effects of occupation. Trees, including many of the majestic birches and elms which once lined Minor Hill, had been cut down, fields were untended, and undergrowth prevailed in many locations. On Minor Hill many of the cherry trees, once prolific at this location, had been cut down to clear lanes for gunfire. One Union soldier described the Williamsburg area in October of 1862: "The country between here and Washington is in a sorry condition, the fences all burnt up, houses damaged or occupied by soldiers, crops annihilated, larders empty, and everything showing the footprints of war."

In 1867, most of Minor Hill itself was leased to Eugene Crimmins, an immigrant from Ireland who had served in the famed Irish Brigade of the Union Army, including at the battles of Fredericksburg and Gettysburg. Crimmins, who eventually became one of the most important landowners in the area, built an imposing house near the crest of Minor Hill and maintained a large pig farm where Rockingham Street now runs. It is through the generosity of his son Francis that one of the original District of Columbia milestones, Northwest Number 1 (adjacent to 3611 Powhatan Street) was preserved.

The Minor family still held bits and pieces of the Hill area and both John Minor and his brother Fairfax built houses there. Neither house stands today. The site of John's farmhouse is now 5600 North 35th Road, a cul-de-sac. He and his two wives were buried on the south side of an ancient walnut tree that stood in the backyard, but their gravesite was destroyed when real estate development turned the farmland into a residential area.

Many other graves were desecrated by developers. George Minor, Junior, passed away as the Civil War began and was buried on Minor Hill. One of the daughters of the Minor family became ill and died at the family homestead during the war and was quietly buried beneath an expansive lilac bush on Minor Hill. One Minor family gravesite was at what is now 2450 North Powhatan Street but disappeared when Minor Hill became a residential tract. There was also a Phillips family gravesite at 2829 North Tacoma Street.

John's son George Minor, who married Annie Birch, is buried in the Birch-Payne cemetery at Sycamore and North 28th Streets. Also laid to rest there were Colonel Samuel Birch (1790-1878), who fought in the War of 1812, his two wives, their children and grandchildren, and some husbands of both generations. There are also five or six of their African American servants buried in one corner of the graveyard. In her will, Samuel Birch's daughter Sarah set aside the one-acre burial ground and it was duly recorded in the County archives. At one time, it was attractively landscaped with fine fir trees, holly and boxwood. The last burial was made in 1930. With the development of

the Berkshire Gardens Subdivision, the acre restricted for cemetery purposes shrunk to about one-third of an acre. The graves there have been vandalized, and all but one of the headstones have been stolen.

Fairfax Minor's home was located at the site of 3018 John Marshall Drive. It was destroyed about 1920. The street divides around the site of their stone spring house. The structure was demolished and Little Pimmit Run diverted into a storm sewer in 1950 when a real estate developer built houses on the street. Only one of the four handsome oaks that shaded the spring house still survives.

The Williamsburg neighborhood had been economically devastated by the war. The Appomattox peace did not bring immediate relief. Many of the residents had difficulty returning to their tobacco farming due to the vast increase in prices for seeds, building supplies, and farm animals, which had been stolen during the war, and the overall lack of capital. Documents reveal that Williamsburg area residents gradually turned from grain crops and tobacco to truck farming in order to supply the growing needs of Washington and to take advantage of the railroads which had recently been constructed through the area. Roads, which followed trails established by Native Americans, were still often of dirt and generally very inadequate. While prosperity did not result, enough earnings were generated to allow for repair and reconstruction of homes and buildings damaged during the Federal occupation. By 1898, residents of the Williamsburg area, probably still no more than 70 people, had enhanced access to the Capital through electric trolley lines. The trolley lines did not change the fundamental nature of Williamsburg, which seems to have maintained a static population during this period, even as the rest of Arlington County began to take on the appearance of a rural community.

During the first few years of 1900, Williamsburg residents would occasionally enjoy the sight of the vigorous President Teddy Roosevelt riding to a preferred spot on Minor Hill which featured a stone-lined well of sweet, cool water shaded by ancient oaks belonging to the Birch family. President Roosevelt was most often accompanied to the area by his friend and physician, Admiral Presley M. Rixey. This spot of sylvan beauty and tranquility was destroyed in 1950 to make room for the construction of a house, which was itself demolished in the late 1970's.

Although the influenza epidemic of 1918 killed 17 people, the Williamsburg area changed little during or following World War I. Into the 1920's frame houses and cottages, along with a few larger farmhouses, characterized the Williamsburg area. Limited bus service began in the area in 1921 and improved in 1928 when Lee Highway was paved. Those using the buses had to find their way to bus stops on Lee Highway. During the period of the Great Depression (1929-1941), residents of Williamsburg donated substantial amounts of vegetables from their gardens and fields to the soup kitchens of Alexandria, Washington and Arlington itself.

The Williamsburg area was greatly impacted by World War II. Many people in the

community worked on wartime activities, and housing became scarce. As many women went to work and household income surged, more money was available for amenities, and more than 150 houses were built in the area. Many of the local roads were paved during World War II, and Arlington County officials began planning for a housing and population boom in the Williamsburg area, one of the last tracts in Arlington to be developed.

Pressures for single-family housing surged due to the rapid population growth of the Washington metropolitan area at the end of World War II. This, coupled with rising affluence, led to large scale housing construction which began soon after V-J Day. Within five years the area was transformed from open farm land into a community of nearly 600 single-family homes.

The construction in 1951 of nearly 200 houses on its slopes and summit transformed Minor Hill into a heavily occupied middle class subdivision, featuring dozens of essentially identical houses on small plots of land, framed by greatly reduced numbers of elms, birches and oaks. This construction project, occurring during the Korean conflict, was briefly interrupted when it became impossible to maintain a supply of a larger brick used for the houses. The builder finished the project using smaller bricks. Thus, many of the houses on Minor Hill feature bricks of two different sizes, a legacy of Korean Conflict shortages.

The crest of Minor Hill, the one remaining large green space in Williamsburg, was roughly used, first as a dumping ground and then as a malodorous leaf collection point. The Williamsburg area was also changed by the completion of the Williamsburg Shopping Center in 1950 and the construction, beginning the next year, of Sycamore Street and Williamsburg Boulevard, where once a small stream ran.

With this rapid development came the threat of runaway commercial development, and in 1951 the Williamsburg Civic Association was organized to retain "the desirable residential community." During the first decade of its existence, the civic association successfully opposed pressure for substantial commercial development, including five gasoline stations on Minor Hill and in the surrounding community. The Williamsburg community was forced to oppose further commercial encroachment all the way up to the Virginia Supreme Court, where it won.

The civic association led the campaign to eradicate Japanese beetles, which were a serious problem in the 1950s. In the Sixties, the civic association campaigned to transform the unsightly median in the middle of the traffic circle into an attractively landscaped area. In the Seventies the association was instrumental in having the leaf storage site on Minor Hill removed and persuaded the new Peoples Drug Store to build a brick retaining wall along the boundary of its parking lot. More recently, the civic association supported the effort to create a park at the base of Minor Hill, which was planted with many beautiful azaleas and other flowers as a memorial to the late Emily L. Sharp.

It has been quite a few years since horses grazed on the north side of 31st Street and families with young children were moving into new homes. The toddlers of 1951 have grown up, married, and in many cases are now raising their own families in the area. Whatever the changes, the Williamsburg Civic Association still strives to maintain the neighborhood as a desirable residential area.

This history was compiled by Howard McGowan, 1998-2000 president of the Williamsburg Civic Association.

APPENDIX B - HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY OF THE WILLIAMSBURG NEIGHBORHOOD

- Pre-1700's WILLIAMSBURG area inhabited by Algonquian tribe.
- 1607 Captain John Smith visited what is now Arlington County, including Native American villages on both sides of the Potomac.
- 1669 Last Native Americans leave WILLIAMSBURG area following internecine warfare among tribes.
- 1702 Early exploration and mapping of area by William Doane.
- 1730's First European settlers arrive, later move on to Fairfax.
- 1731 First house in WILLIAMSBURG area constructed.
- 1753 Most likely date for arrival of George Minor Family in area.
- 1777 On Minor Hill, birth of first settler child to survive infancy.
- 1781 French Army marches to Yorktown through WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1790-1846 WILLIAMSBURG area part of the District of Columbia.
- 1800 Arlington County population is 667 persons, of whom 297 are slaves.
- 1801 Arlington incorporated into the District of Columbia.
- 1822 First school house constructed in WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1846 Voters approve returning Arlington to Virginia.
- 1861-1865 Civil War period. Minor Hill becomes Federation observation point and signal station. Federal Reserve Force quartered along flanks of Minor Hill.
- 1867 Much of Minor Hill leased to E. Crimmins, who constructs large house and operates large hog farm.
- 1870 Federal Army leaves WILLIAMSBURG area. Government for area becomes Civilian Board of Supervisors.
- 1874 One-room free public school established in WILLIAMSBURG area.

- 1890 Census shows some 70 residents in WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1897 Camp Alger established at East Falls Church for Spanish-American War soldiers. Camp buys fruits and vegetables from WILLIAMSBURG area residents.
- 1898 Trolley line begins service to WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1900 Census shows only 2,000 people in all of Arlington.
- 1914 Electric lines reach WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1916-1917 Influenza kills 17 people in WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1920 Arlington County is created.
- 1921 Limited bus service begins to WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1928 Lee Highway paved as two-lane road. Provides easier access to WILLIAMSBURG community.
- 1929 Limited "city" water service comes to WILLIAMSBURG area.
- 1930 Arlington County population is 26,600.
- 1934 Sewer lines installed in WILLIAMSBURG community.
- 1941 Planning begins for Williamsburg Boulevard and John Marshall Drive.
- 1943 Minor Hill water storage tanks constructed.
- 1945 Arlington County population surges to 120,000.
- 1946 Hunting prohibited in Arlington County.
- 1950 WILLIAMSBURG Shopping Center (both sides) completed.
- 1951 Large scale housing project on Minor Hill and along flanks -- more than 200 houses built.
- 1951 WILLIAMSBURG Civic Association formed.
- 1951 Nottingham School opens.

- 1954 WILLIAMSBURG Junior High School opens.
- 1958 Bishop O'Connell High School opens.
- 1959 Lee Highway widened to four lanes.
- 1960 Yorktown High School opens.
- 1964 Yorktown High School and WILLIAMSBURG Junior High School are officially integrated.
- 1982 I-66 opens.
- 1986 East Falls Church Metro Station opens.
- 1997 WILLIAMSBURG Civic Association begins work on Neighborhood Conservation Plan.
- 2000 Neighborhood Conservation Plan approved.