

North Valley Pike Corridor Strategic Plan
Kickoff Workshop Summary
September 15, 2009

www.northvalleypikeplan.org

Overview

On September 15, 2009 the North Valley Pike Corridor Plan held a successful kickoff workshop at the VDOT Residency office on Route 11. Strong public interest was evident by a full meeting room. At least fifty-eight persons took part in the workshop which was designed as a listening session to collect local knowledge and identify values that will guide the twelve month planning process. Following an introduction presentation the participants divided into small working groups around an aerial map of the study area to discuss issues and opportunities. The exercise was oriented around three questions designed to spark discussion:

1. What should stay the same?
2. What should be changed?
3. In 25 years, what should the corridor look like, and how should it function?

The small groups spent an hour deliberating, discussing, and marking on the maps. There was a lot of lively discussion generated by these three questions, and many common themes emerged. Each group had a member report to the entire room a summary of its group discussion. Some consistent themes that emerged were the importance of traffic safety; the need for alternate routes in this area; the importance of balancing growth and protecting farm land; the need for quality new growth; and visual and aesthetic improvements along Route 11, etc. All of the comment forms, annotated maps and flip chart notes were collected and transcribed and are summarized in Tables 1-4, and the map summary, below.

The workshop provided a good venue for people to learn about the County's current Comprehensive Plan, which identifies the area between Route 11 (east), Gravels Road (north) and Kratzer Road (west) as an important area for future growth (2020-2050). Comprehensive plans, however, are more general and don't contain details about the type or quality of new growth, nor how the roads will perform under desired future conditions. This corridor plan presents an opportunity to further analyze this area, examine how things could ideally develop in the long term, and help provide more specific guidance on how to get there.

Participants also learned that the corridor planning process was just beginning. There would be ample opportunity to get involved and help shape the plan. The public process is designed to be open and transparent. People were invited to submit applications to join a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). This CAC, which would represent a diverse group of citizens, would consistently work closely with the consultant team and County staff on developing the plan. The intention is to have the CAC meet up to three times over the next 10 months, at key points in the process to provide guidance and review the plan as it evolves. CAC meetings are open to the public. CAC applications were received and on October 9, 2009 a well balanced and diverse group of seventeen individuals was approved.

Table 1: Summary of At-Large Questions Asked in Plenary

At-large questions	Answers
What is the Purpose of this plan?	<i>There currently is no detailed plan for this area of the county which is designated as a growth area. There currently is no detail in the comprehensive plan now – this plan will help add detail and guidance on how future growth and development could be and function.</i>
What is the corridor study area?	<i>The focus is on Route 11 from Vine street to Gravels Road but it also includes the areas west of 11 all the way to Kratzer Road. However, the focus is really the corridor and its closest parcels.</i>
Who decided this corridor would, or should grow?	<i>The County's comprehensive planning process defined this area as an important growth area of the County. The Comprehensive Plan is available on the web: http://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/showpage.aspx?PageID=237</i>
What about agricultural land?	<i>Agricultural lands are important for the County and if specific areas need to remain farmland then this process should help identify this.</i>

Table 2: Summary of What People Like, What Should Stay the Same?

Number of References	What People Like? What Should Stay the Same?	Sub-topics included
10	The Rural Character	Preserve historic areas, consider wildlife habitat, protect farmland and view sheds.
9	Farmland, farming heritage	Example, Bar-B-Q Ranch.
5	Existing viable businesses	
3	Existing residential.	
3	Prefer it as it is, no change to Rt 11 or new roads.	
1	Good access to downtown via Route 11	
1	Good quality of life	
1	The Comprehensive plan.	

Table 3: Summary of What Should Change, What Could Be Improved.

Number of References	What Should Change? What Could Be Improved?	Sub-topics included
25	Improve aesthetics	Existing buildings need improvement; decaying buildings need removal; need better architectural standards; hide utilities; should be a gateway from rural to urban; needs better landscaping, signage and lighting controls; protect good views.
23	Transportation performance	Need alternative routes and new connections; need better biking and walking where appropriate; need to ensure steady traffic flow; manage access points and safety; consider roundabouts not signals; extend transit.
18	Safety improvements, concerns	Gravels Road is a major concern; speeding; fatalities; passing issues; need traffic calming and better road design; need better bike and pedestrian facilities.
9	Growth management, minimize impacts, harmonious development	Minimize growth impacts (traffic, safety); ensure harmonious land uses and buffering; keep low density areas; respect property rights; put residential west of 11, and industrial east; give comprehensive plan more detail; create a smooth transition from rural to urban areas.
9	Need quality new development	Better utilize undeveloped land; create a destination; needs a new hotel, new retail, new mixed uses; revitalization; new residential; interchange area needs special focus.
3	Infrastructure concerns	Electrical grid adequacies, water supply, sewer capacity.
1	Involve citizens in decision making	
1	Mitigate environmental impacts	



Table 4: Summarized (DRAFT) Vision Statement for 2035.

This draft statement was assembled from responses to the third question posed which was how should the corridor look and function by 2035. It is not presented as the final vision statement for the project but as initial input for the Citizen Advisory Committee to work with.

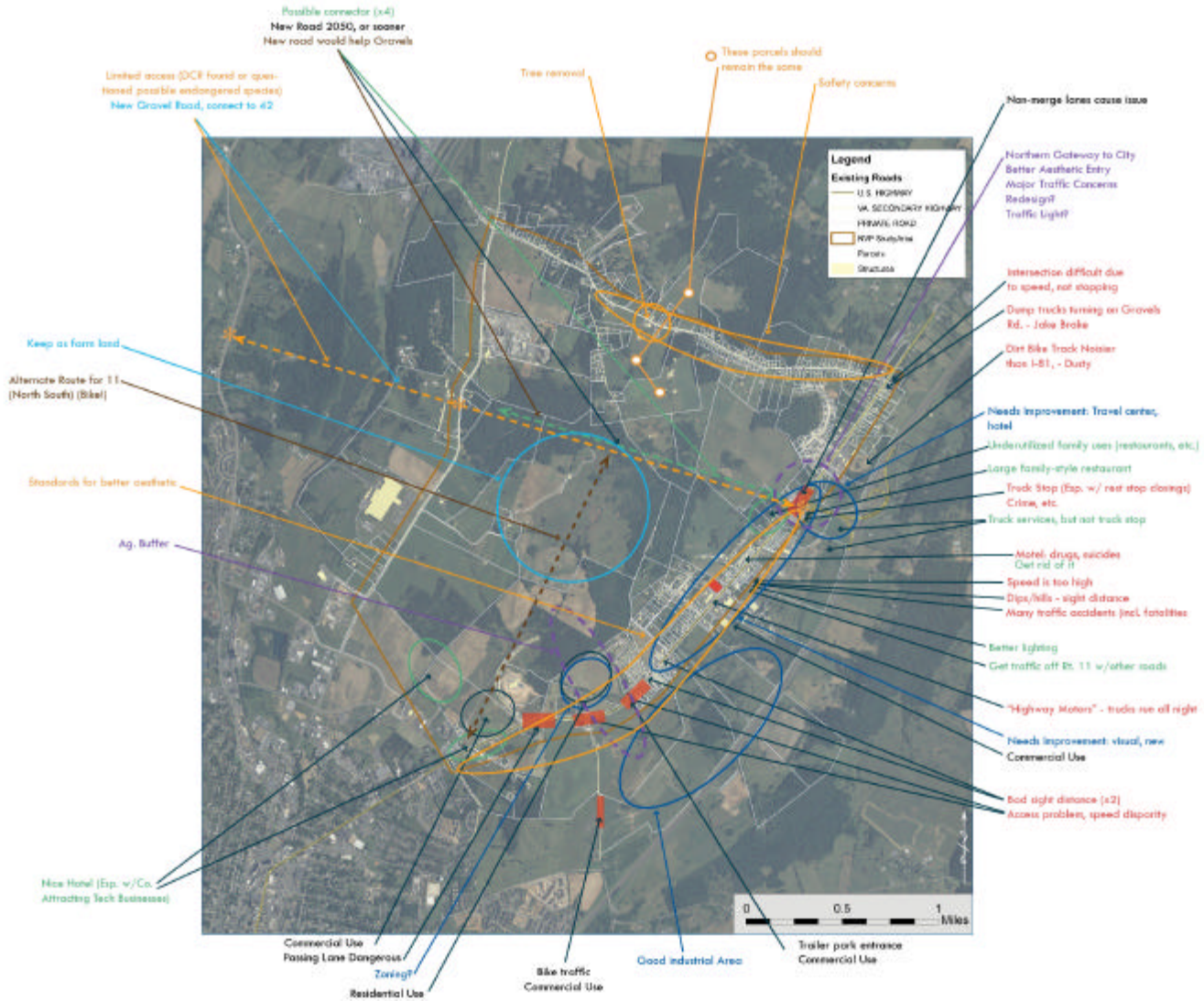
Summarized Vision Statement for How the Corridor Should Look and Function by 2035
<p><i>In 2035 the North Valley Pike corridor is an attractive, vibrant and beautiful place to work, live, and visit, and functions as a dynamic new arm and northern gateway to Harrisonburg. New high technology jobs exist, and new retail and commercial centers include restaurants and hotels. Well planned new residential areas nearby make for a viable mixed-used corridor with live and work opportunities, shorter commutes and bike/walk to work options. The Route 11 corridor is a safe, free flowing commercial corridor with carefully planned access points. The community is served by a more highly connected street system with new service and connector roads providing more mobility choices, not just for cars but have biking and walking facilities. Trucks and industrial traffic now have safer alternative routes on appropriately designed roads that do not impact residential areas. The corridor overlay ordinance that emerged from the plan respected the rural to urban transition and viable farmland and important historic areas were considered as quality new development occurred in this important growth area of the County. Design guidelines ensured that development was aesthetically pleasing, and clear standards exist for such things as signage, landscaping, and buffering, as well as street and site design.</i></p>



Summary of Map Comments

Kickoff Workshop 1, September 15, 2009

Not all groups annotated their maps. A comprehensive summary of all flip chart notes and worksheets contains more feedback than is provided on this summary map. This map, combined with that summary, contain all public input from the meeting.



Group 5 Comments
 Things to improve appearance of corridor:
 - New construction
 - New office
 - New hotel

Group 8 Comments

Group 6 Comments
 BBQ Ranch must stay
 - Historic Landmark

Group 1 Comments
 - Danger Spots

Group 3 Comments
 "No reason to get off 81, need to change this"
 "Build it up from scratch"

Group Comments:
 Use - "Thriving Really"
 Except keep the agriculture
 Red Text: Concern or Problem
 Green Text: Suggested Improvement or Change