

Memorandum

■
Suite 500
4500 Main Street
Virginia Beach, Virginia
23462

To: Colin Greene
HOK Planning Group

From: Emily Moser, P.E.
Karen McPherson, P.E.
Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Date: June 24, 2009

Subject: **Downtown Masterplan and Waterfront Strategy Review
Portsmouth, Virginia**

Thank you for providing us with a draft copy of your *Downtown Masterplan and Waterfront Strategy* for the City of Portsmouth, Virginia. Per your request, we have reviewed the appropriate sections of this draft document, which is dated June 12, 2009, as well as the "Analysis of Market Conditions and Opportunities," which was prepared by Bay Area Economics and dated April 2009. Our review of these documents considered previous recommendations that we made in the *Portsmouth Downtown Parking Master Plan* dated September 2006 as well as current recommendations that we are making as part of the upcoming *Master Transportation Plan*. We offer the following comments in response to your questions regarding parking and transportation.

1. Does the overall 10-year demand suggest that the City should consider new parking facilities? If so, where? And in what form (structure/surface)?

Kimley-Horn evaluated future parking demand in the downtown area by utilizing the 10-year land use demand estimates summarized on page 7 of the "Analysis of Market Conditions and Opportunities" section. A "high" scenario and "low" scenario were evaluated using the high and low end numbers provided for each land use. Future land use demand was mostly concentrated along the waterfront but also spread throughout several downtown zones based on areas of development and redevelopment opportunity identified in the plan. It should be noted that our analysis did not evaluate demand in the areas south of I-264. Our analysis also assumes that any redevelopment which removes existing parking facilities (structure/surface) will replace at least the same number of parking spaces. The following are recommended for each scenario:



Low Scenario

- Replace any existing parking spaces that are removed (e.g., the Harbor Court parking structure near the former Holiday Inn site).
- Construct a new parking structure in the waterfront area, preferably in the vicinity of Crawford Street and County Street, to replace existing surface lot and parking associated with the Courts building. Approximately an additional 350 parking spaces should be constructed above and beyond the spaces that must be replaced.
- Construct a new parking structure with approximately 300 parking spaces at the intersection of High Street and Effingham Street.
- Evaluate self-parking options on a site-by-site basis as development proposals are received (may reduce the number of spaces required at the above-mentioned public parking facilities).

High Scenario

- Replace any existing parking spaces that are removed (e.g., the Harbor Court parking structure near the former Holiday Inn site).
- Construct approximately an additional 200 parking spaces in the new parking structure on the former Holiday Inn site (above and beyond the spaces that must be replaced for the Harbor Court structure).
- Construct a new parking structure in the waterfront area, preferably in the vicinity of Crawford Street and County Street, to replace existing surface lot and parking associated with the Courts building. Approximately an additional 300 parking spaces should be constructed above and beyond the spaces that must be replaced.
- Construct approximately an additional 175 parking spaces with the redevelopment of the County Street parking structure and/or Lots P, V, N, and U (above and beyond the spaces that must be replaced for each of these existing facilities). It is anticipated that these additional spaces will be structured parking.
- Construct a new parking structure with approximately 425 parking spaces at the intersection of High Street and Effingham Street.
- Evaluate self-parking options on a site-by-site basis as development proposals are received (may reduce the number of spaces required at the above-mentioned public parking structures).

2. *Does the strategy of increasing available (currently free) on-street parking erode public transit investment? As a baseline, at what point does this begin to occur? If we add 100 new spaces does that cause problems, or does the erosion occur nearer to 300 or more spaces of free parking?*

At this time, we cannot make a direct correlation between the amount of on-street parking and transit investment. Based on data collected as part of the *Portsmouth Downtown Parking Master Plan* in 2005, public parking facilities in the City of Portsmouth average less than 50% occupancy throughout the weekday. In addition, the monthly user fees for City-owned parking facilities are significantly less than those being charged in neighboring cities. Nevertheless, as



the City looks provide more multimodal transportation choices in the downtown area, discussion of redevelopment opportunities should include transit oriented development such that the new uses are designed for and attractive to transit ridership. Prior to providing additional structured parking facilities as noted in the scenarios above, the City should consider implementing multiple transportation demand management (TDM) measures and programs to reduce parking (and vehicular travel) demand to create a better balance in the way people travel over the long-term.

3. *Should the City reconsider its parking policies – meter on-street parking? Charge more for parking garages, etc., etc....over the long-term?*

Unless the overall number of on-street parking spaces is significantly increased, the City does not need to install new meters. However, appropriate time restrictions (e.g., two-hour parking) need to be maintained for unmetered spaces, particularly along High Street. Certain blocks may need to be reevaluated in the future as new development or redevelopment occur to determine whether time restrictions should be modified (e.g., one-hour or four-hour parking) or meters should be added. Kimley-Horn still supports its recommendations outlined in the *Portsmouth Downtown Parking Master Plan*. As stated in that study, enforcement for both meter violations and time violations needs to be increased within the downtown area. It is also recommended that the City extend the hours of enforcement (for both metered and time restricted spaces) to 8 AM to 8 PM.

In the short-term, parking garage rates can remain the same, but with the introduction of pay stations, fees should be charged 24 hours per day in the garages with a flat fee (e.g., \$2.00) being charged between the hours of 8 PM and 8 AM. As new development comes online, the City may wish to reevaluate their parking rates in comparison to adjacent cities such as Norfolk.

4. *Are there any “fatal flaws” in the adjustments to the street sections provided by HPE in light of the more comprehensive transportation plan?*

Kimley-Horn did not identify any “fatal flaws” with the proposed street sections. However, we do have a different opinion regarding some recommendations. A summary of our comments on each provided street section follows.

High Street

- Removing the median negatively affects the character of this street.
- Retain parallel parking spaces. While these spaces are well-used, there is not a shortage of parking in the area. Perhaps the number of parallel spaces on each block can be increased by reducing existing parking stall dimensions.
- Preserve High Street as a pedestrian activity center by creating a transit/bicycle loop along King Street and Queen Street rather than down the center of High Street. This loop would allow patrons to exit the transit vehicles and walk into the central High Street corridor. The orientation of these one-way streets will allow for drop-off on the side closest to High Street. Minor street improvements and service vehicle restrictions may be required along King Street.



Crawford Parkway (along the water)

- No comments.

Crawford Parkway (at former Holiday Inn site)

- Maintain on-street parking restriction along both sides of the street to be consistent with street sections to the south (no on-street parking north of London Street).
- The transition from the portion of Crawford Parkway along the water to Crawford Street should integrate vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and proposed development. May want to consider a roundabout at the entrance to the new development on the former Holiday Inn site or other intersection geometry to transition between roadway sections.

Court Street (between London Street and Crawford Parkway)

- No comments.

Court Street (between High Street and London Street)

- Maintain existing cross-section between High Street and Queen Street due to existing sight distance issues with the Confederate Monument in the center of Court Street and the distance to the signalized intersection at High Street.

London Street (between London Street and Crawford Parkway)

- Concerned about the combination of narrow travel lanes, narrow parallel parking bays, and bicyclists. Provide 11' travel lanes and 8' parallel parking bays at a minimum.
- Consider providing parking only on one side of street and using additional ROW to create a 5' striped bike lane on other side.
- If parking is desired on both sides of the street, consider reducing sidewalk or verge to provide above-mentioned minimum lane widths.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any additional comments or questions.