

# CENTRAL GARDENS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

DECEMBER 1998  
HENRICO COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE



# **CENTRAL GARDENS**

## **HENRICO COUNTY, VIRGINIA**



# **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

**Prepared by:**

**THE HENRICO COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE**

John R. Marlles, Director

**PLANNING OFFICE (Key Staff)**

Lee D. Householder, County Planner I

Jo Ann Morgan Hunter, County Planner III

**In Cooperation with:**

Central Gardens Civic Association

County of Henrico, Division of Police

County of Henrico, Public Works Department

County of Henrico, Division of Recreation and Parks

The Honorable Frank Thornton, Fairfield District Supervisor

**December 1998**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### *Purpose of a Neighborhood Plan*

Strong and vibrant neighborhoods are the foundation of a healthy community. A neighborhood plan empowers residents to shape the destiny of their neighborhood. Neighborhood plans provide detailed information about a neighborhood in order to identify its strengths and needs, as well as provides strategies to address those issues.

### *The Central Gardens Neighborhood*

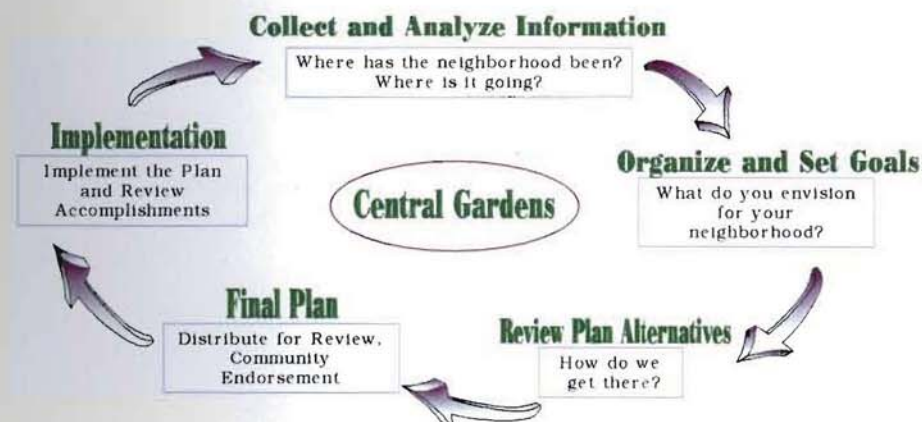
Central Gardens is a well-established neighborhood with a strong sense of community spirit. It has a high percentage of elderly residents and an aging housing stock. These two factors could contribute to future instability in the community. The neighborhood is also subject to the positive influence of a new community center that will impact the neighborhood. The Central Gardens Neighborhood Plan is designed to re-invigorate and energize this community. While some neighborhood plans are designed to show what the locality needs to address, this plan is designed to give the neighborhood the tools it needs to address issues that are important in their community. The residents of the community developed this plan with the assistance of the Henrico County Planning Office.

### *The Planning Process*

Preparing the Central Gardens Neighborhood Plan involved a series of public workshops. During the first public workshop, the citizens were divided into small focus groups. These groups discussed the positive factors of the community, as well as the conditions in their neighborhood that they would like to see improved. From this information, the staff was able to determine overall trends and concerns in the neighborhood and to lay the foundation for the plan. Through four (4) additional neighborhood workshops, goals and strategies for the community were developed.

#### EXHIBIT #1

### CENTRAL GARDENS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN PROCESS



# EXISTING CONDITIONS





## 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

### *Location*

Central Gardens is located in the Fairfield Magisterial District of Henrico County, north of the Richmond City line and east of Mechanicsville Turnpike. The neighborhood is bounded on the north by a Virginia Power easement; to the east by Glenwood Golf Course; to the south by Interstate 64; and to the west by Mechanicsville Turnpike (U.S. Route 360). The area contains approximately 200 acres.



### *History and Character*

Central Gardens Subdivision was recorded in 1956. Construction of the homes began shortly thereafter. The earliest homes were approved by the Veterans Administration and the purchase price of a home was fixed by that organization. Originally, Cleary Street was the main entrance to Mechanicsville Turnpike; however, the entrance was relocated to Bloom Lane when the interstate was constructed in the 1960's.

Two smaller subdivisions also contribute to the single-family residential area of Central Gardens. Roosevelt Park was recorded in 1965 and Executive Manor was recorded in 1977. Both of these subdivisions border Interstate 64 and consist of less than twenty homes.

The Mathematics and Science Center was originally constructed as the Henrico County Elementary School and served the neighborhood residents. As the demographics of this area and the County changed, the school was converted to the Mathematics and Science Center. The facility now serves the entire Richmond Metropolitan Region as a magnet school for special courses and programs in Math and Science. As a result, it no longer exclusively serves this neighborhood. The Mathematics and Science Center is well advertised along Interstate 64 and attracts a large number of students and teachers to Central Gardens everyday.

In 1985, the County developed the Hidden Creek Park, just west of the Mathematics and Science Center. The Park includes tennis courts, picnic shelters and walking trails. It is also the location for the future Hidden Creek Recreation Center.

There is an existing commercial area along Mechanicsville Turnpike developed during the late 1970's and early 1980's. Its current uses include a *Mobil* gas station, a *Tuffy Muffler*, *Public Storage* (a mini-storage facility), and *Glenfield Business Center* (an office/warehouse facility). The *Glenfield Business Center* is the most recent development and was built in 1987.



*The Mathematics and Science Center located at the corner of Hartman Street and Cleary Road serves the entire Richmond region.*

**ILLUSTRATION #1**

### ***Existing Land Use***

The predominant land use (approximately 77%) of the Central Gardens neighborhood is single-family residential. The western boundary along Mechanicsville Turnpike consists of commercial and limited industrial uses.

The northeast portion of the study area includes community facility uses such as the Mathematics and Science Center and the Hidden Creek Park. The remaining land use is a multi-family housing development, Glenwood Townhouse Apartments, located in the southeast corner of the study area.

There are only 3 vacant parcels of land within the Center Gardens neighborhood.

See the *Existing Land Use* Map on Page 4 for a detailed description of the land use of Central Gardens.



# **CENTRAL GARDENS**

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## **NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

**SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

**MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

**COMMERCIAL**

**INDUSTRIAL**

**INSTITUTIONAL**

**RECREATIONAL**

**VACANT LAND**



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## Zoning

The existing zoning of the area is predominantly R-4, One Family Residence District. The R-4 zoning district allows residential development with a maximum density of 4-5 units per acre. Approximately 6.3 acres of the neighborhood is zoned R-5, General Residence District. R-5 is a multi-family zoning district and allows for up to 14 units per acre. The portion of the neighborhood frontage along Mechanicsville Turnpike is zoned B-3, Business District and M-1C, Light Industrial District. These are commercial and industrial districts that allow for a variety of business uses. See the *Zoning Map* on Page 6 to see the relationship between zoning classifications.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

For the purposes of this profile, the area is contained within Census Tract 2010.03, block group 2. Demographic figures cited below are based on 1980 and 1990 Census data for the Central Gardens neighborhood and the County of Henrico.

### Population and Age

The Central Gardens neighborhood exhibited no change in population from 1980 to 1990. This is compared to a 20.6 % increase in population for the County as a whole. This data reveals that the population of the neighborhood is stationary.

In 1990, 1,668 residents lived in Central Gardens. The neighborhood population is comprised almost entirely of black residents (99 %), and is 55 % female and 45 % male. *Table 1. Population, 1990* illustrates the composition of Central Garden's population.

The elderly residents (persons over 65 years) in Central Gardens accounted for 17.6 % of the total population compared to 12.4 % for the County in 1990. In addition, those approaching their elderly years (55 to 64 years) accounted for 15 % of Central Garden's population compared to 8 % for the County. Given the static nature of the population in the neighborhood, it is probable that the elderly population has grown significantly since the 1990 Census. This is a significant trend because the elderly population has unique needs. This fact may also lead to the accelerated transition of the neighborhood.

**Table 1. Population, 1990**

	Central Gardens	County of Henrico
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	924	116,831
(% of total)	(55.3 %)	(53.6 %)
Male	744	101,050
(% of total)	(44.7 %)	(46.3 %)
<u>Race</u>		
Black	1,638	43,919
(% of total)	(99.0 %)	(20.2 %)
White/Other	30	168,423
(% of total)	(1.0 %)	(77.3 %)
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>217,881</b>

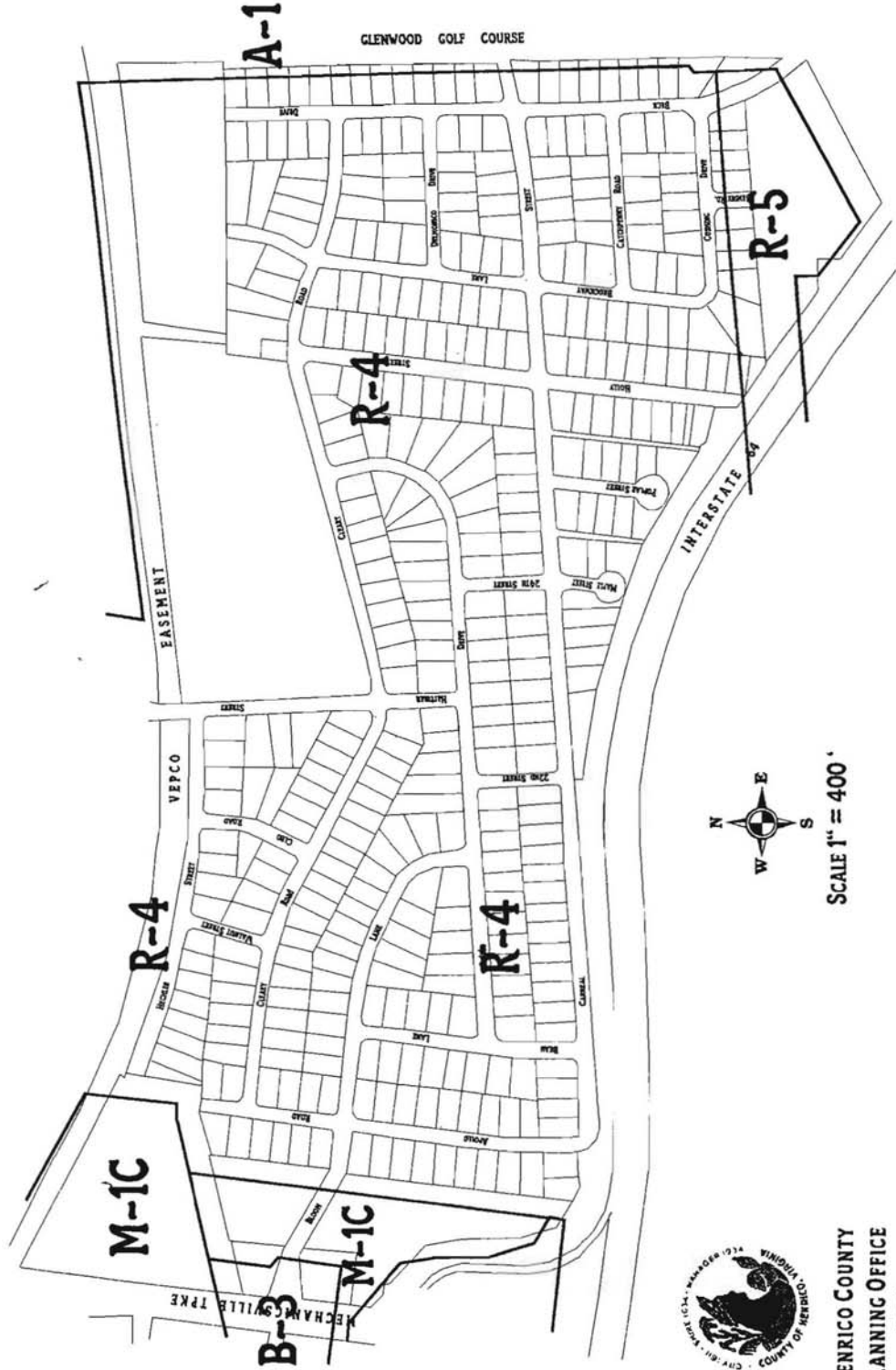
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990

# ZONING MAP

## CENTRAL GARDENS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

### Legend

- A-1 - Agricultural
- B-3 - General Business
- M-1C - Light Industrial
- R-4 - Single-Family Residential
- R-5 - Multi-Family Residential



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The population under 18 years old comprised only 15 % of the total population compared to 23 % Countywide. This indicates that residents in this community are less likely to have children living at home compared to the rest of the County. *Table 2. Age, 1990* shows these attributes.

**Table 2. Age, 1990**

	Central Gardens	County of Henrico
<b>Age</b>		
Under 18 years	254	50,073
(% of total)	(15.0 %)	(23.0 %)
55 to 64 years	253	18,355
(% of total)	(15.1 %)	(8.0 %)
Over 65 years	294	26,962
(% of total)	(17.6 %)	(12.0 %)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990

### **Households**

Of the total households living in Central Gardens, 52 % had no children present in 1990; this is significant when compared to only 36 % for the County of Henrico. This is probably due to the elderly nature of the community. Also notable, female-headed households accounted for 28 % of the households compared to 11 % for the County. *Table 3. Households, 1990* illustrates these trends.

**Table 3. Households, 1990**

	Central Gardens	County of Henrico
HH's with Children	288	56,945
(% of total)	(48.0 %)	(64.0 %)
HH's w/o Children	314	32,081
(% of total)	(52.0 %)	(36.0 %)
Female-Headed HH's	102	10,068
(% of total)	(17.0 %)	(11.0 %)
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>89,026</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990

### **Housing Types**

Of the 483 existing housing units, it is estimated that single-family units comprise 81 % of the housing stock, while multi-family units account for the remaining 19 %. There are 92 multi-family units in Central Gardens; these units are a part of the Glenwood Townhouse Apartments. *Table 4. Housing Units* shows the breakdown of housing types in Central Gardens. This information was gathered during a preliminary field survey conducted by the Planning Office in June 1998. During this survey, the Planning Office was able to identify only one vacant housing unit in the neighborhood.



## Age of Structures

The *Median-Year-Built* for the structures in Central Gardens is 1959, compared to 1970 for the County of Henrico. Considering the fast-paced growth that has continued in Henrico in the 1990's, the *Median-Year-Built* for the County will likely increase in the 2000 Census. This information reveals that Central Gardens is one of the oldest suburban residential communities in the County. This is significant because home maintenance problems are more common in older structures.



*Single-family homes account for over 80% of Central Gardens housing units. The Median-Year-Built for Central Garden's structures is 1959.*

**ILLUSTRATION #2**

## Duration of Occupancy

Of the occupied housing units in Central Gardens, 47 % were occupied by the current residents prior to 1970. This is significant when compared to 26 % for the County of Henrico. This data reveals a very stationary population in the neighborhood. In addition, these findings correlate with the Age and Income analysis that suggest an aging, possibly retired population in Central Gardens.

**Table 4. Housing Units**

Unit Type	Units
Total Housing Units	483
Residential Single-Family	391
(% of total)	(81.0 %)
Residential Multi-Family	92
(% of total)	(19.0 %)

*Source: Henrico County Real Estate Assessment and Planning Office field survey*

## Tenure

Central Gardens contains substantially more homeowners than renters. Of the 483 occupied housing units in the neighborhood, 74 % are owner-occupied. Of the 391 single-family homes, only 9 % are renter-occupied. This reveals a strong single-family homeowner base in the neighborhood. Homeowners tend to have more pride in their homes and this helps create a more cohesive neighborhood. *Table 5. Housing Tenure* illustrates these statistics.

**Table 5. Housing Tenure**

	Owner-Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units
Single- Family	356	35
(% of total)	(91.0 %)	(9.0 %)
Multi-Family	0	92
(% of total)	(0.0 %)	(100.0 %)
TOTAL	356	127
(% of total)	(73.7 %)	(26.3 %)

Source: Henrico County Real Estate Assessment and Planning Office field survey (June 1998)

### ***Income Characteristics***

1993 HUD data reveals that a large number of area residents (42.3%) were considered low income (household incomes 80% or less than metropolitan area median income of \$33,389 in 1989). The median household income level for the area is \$25,682 compared to \$35,604 for the County. What is significant is that while the incomes in Central Gardens were noticeably low, the poverty level is also low. Approximately 9 % of the residents were below the poverty level in 1989, slightly higher than the countywide total of 5 %. Comparing the age of residents, these relatively low incomes suggest a majority of residents could be retired and living on a fixed income. *Table 6. Income, 1993* highlights these income characteristics.

**Table 6. Income, 1993**

<u>Income Category</u>	
Persons in Poverty	156
(% of total)	(9.3 %)
Low-Income Persons	
(80 % or less of MSA)	707
(% of total)	(42.3 %)
Very Low-Income	
(50 % or less of MSA)	350
(% of total)	(20.90 %)

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1993

### **ILLUSTRATION #3**

Many yards in Central Gardens have attractive mature trees that accent the character of the neighborhood.





## PROFILE SUMMARY

This data reveals a single-family neighborhood with a high homeownership rate and an older population who has lived in the neighborhood for many years. There are few families with children and the housing stock is relatively old. The income levels in the community are relatively low, but reflective of those who would be on a fixed income. Overall, the combination of limited financial resources, the age of residents, aging housing stock raises the following questions about the future stability of the neighborhood:

1. As current homeowners leave the neighborhood how will this affect the desirable high rate of homeownership?
2. Will residents have the financial resources to maintain the aging housing stock ?



**ILLUSTRATION #4**

*These homes exhibit the character and pride in homeownership that is found throughout the Central Gardens Neighborhood*



**ILLUSTRATION #5**



# NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES



### 3.0 NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

The following six (6) issues were identified by the community as concerns in their neighborhood. Some issues have several different components. Each section has factual information as well as neighborhood comments. These core issues form the groundwork for the Central Gardens Neighborhood Plan.

#### COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

##### Facts:

The Central Gardens community is fortunate to have a neighborhood park within its boundaries. The Hidden Creek Park serves not only Central Gardens, but also adjacent neighborhoods. Currently, the park provides outdoor recreational opportunities such as tennis courts, walking trails, and picnic shelters. In addition, the Master Plan for Hidden Creek Park recommends a small community/recreational facility on the site to serve the surrounding community. This facility is currently in design, and construction will likely begin in the spring of 1999.

In the past, the Mathematics & Science Center has met the needs of the neighborhood by providing community access to the facility for recreational and neighborhood activities and meetings. Unfortunately, increased demand on the facility has limited its use by both the community and Henrico County Division of Recreation and Parks.

There are three schools serving the children of Central Gardens:

- Glen Lea Elementary - 3909 Austin Ave
- Fairfield Middle School - 5121 Nine Mile Road
- Highland Springs High - 15 S. Oak Ave



*The Hidden Creek Park provides recreational opportunities within the confines of the neighborhood.*

**ILLUSTRATION #6**

##### Neighborhood Comments:

Residents indicated they are enthusiastically anticipating the construction of the Hidden Creek Recreation Center. Many residents were concerned about the unauthorized use of the recreation facilities at the Mathematics & Science Center. They explained that there are often large crowds on the basketball courts, which causes parking problems on the streets of the neighborhood. In addition, residents expressed concern that the Hidden Creek Park was not secure at night and there was often illegal activity taking place.



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## SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

### **Facts:**

The Central Gardens Civic Association is a well-organized community group that meets monthly to discuss a variety of neighborhood issues. The organization consists of residents that are concerned about the future of their neighborhood. This group takes pride in their neighborhood and the maturity of the residents in Central Gardens. Central Garden's location (at intersection Mechanicsville Turnpike and I-64) combined with the location of the Mathematics & Science Center (well advertised from Interstate 64) makes the neighborhood highly visible to visitors. All visitors to the Mathematics & Science Center are routed through Central Gardens. This highlights the importance of presenting a positive identity and appearance in Central Gardens.

### **Neighborhood Comments:**

The citizens of Central Gardens are quick to mention the pride they take in their homes and the respect they have for their neighbors. They value their relationships and they respect the older, more mature, residents that reside in their neighborhood. They appreciate the affordable prices of their homes and wish to see them remain affordable.

Residents are worried that as the population grows older and moves on, their neighborhood will be an area of transition. They are worried that new homeowners may not take as much pride in their homes and community. Residents would like to see more neighborhood activities, with a particular emphasis on youth activities and activities for senior citizens. In addition, they would like to see year-round involvement from more residents in Central Gardens, not just when problems arise. Overall, residents feel increased community involvement will strengthen the community and help to establish a positive identity for the neighborhood.



**ILLUSTRATION #7**

*The entrance to Central Gardens from Bloom Lane.*

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## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Facts:**

The Henrico County Fire Station Number 7 is located at 2700 Laburnum Avenue only a few miles north of Central Gardens. Emergency rescue service is also provided at this facility. There are two hospitals near the neighborhood, Bon Secours Richmond Community Hospital at 1500 N. 28<sup>th</sup> Street and the Medical College of Virginia at 401 N. 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Both are located within the City of Richmond. The Henrico County Police Department District 1 headquarters is located only a few minutes away at 3820 Nine Mile Road. In addition, the Henrico County Community Police Program has an officer assigned to Central Gardens. This Officer's duty is not only to patrol the community, but also to get to know the neighborhood and its inhabitants. This enables the officer to be a vital resource to the community.

### **Neighborhood Comments:**

Residents expressed satisfaction with the presence of the community police officer, but they felt that an increased police presence was necessary. They feel that illegal activity, such as drugs, truancy, and loitering is noticeable throughout the community.

Solutions offered by residents to help relieve some of the crime in the community included activities to keep youth from roaming the streets and creating a better process for reporting crime.

## **UTILITIES**

### **Facts:**

Public sanitary sewer and water are available to all areas of Central Gardens. The neighborhood is located in the Shockoe Creek watershed and is not near any natural features that would cause flooding. There is no stormwater system in Central Gardens. In the spring of 1998, the Henrico County Public Works Department investigated complaints of excessive standing water in the rear yards of many residences. Drainage issues are an on-going concern for the residents in the neighborhood.

The northern boundary of Central Gardens is formed by a VEPCO utility easement that carries power to the metropolitan area. This easement is owned and maintained by VEPCO. Currently, overgrown weeds and shrubs in the easement characterize this unattractive feature of Central Gardens.

### **Neighborhood Comments:**

Residents of Central Gardens are concerned with the lack of adequate drainage during periods of abundant rainfall. They feel it is an on-going problem that requires additional analysis from the County.

Residents are extremely concerned about the appearance and maintenance of the VEPCO easement. The easement is seen as an eyesore in the neighborhood that could become worse if inadequate maintenance continues.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

### Facts:

The older suburban character of Central Gardens is evident in the layout of the streets and style of the homes. The homes exhibit a ranch style that is similar to many suburban communities built during the late 1950's and 1960's. The streets are very wide and are representative of some of the first curvilinear subdivision streets in Henrico.

The pride that residents have in their neighborhood is evident by the well-maintained homes, attractive landscaping, and many mature trees that accent the community. The Hidden Creek Park offers substantial greenspace and acts as a sanctuary to residents. Urban services are conveniently located to Central Gardens, yet inhabitants are somewhat secluded in the privacy of their quiet neighborhood.

Through the years most of the land in Central Gardens was developed leaving only a few vacant parcels. The small size of these remaining parcels makes them difficult to develop and minimizes land use and zoning concerns in the future.

### Neighborhood Comments:

Residents of Central Gardens are proud of the character of their neighborhood and they enjoy the seclusion created by their strong boundaries. The neighborhood is concerned that as the elderly leave the neighborhood, new residents will not have the same level of pride in their homes.

As in other neighborhoods, the gateway entrances into the neighborhood are important. Citizens expressed interest in improving the appearance of the entrance on Bloom Lane and designating another gateway entrance on Beck Drive.

Overall, the beautification of the neighborhood is a high priority for residents. Activities suggested include frequent street cleaning, removal of litter, and the removal of inoperable vehicles from various properties in the neighborhood. Residents also expressed satisfaction with County-sponsored community clean-ups and indicated they would like to see more clean-up activities in their neighborhood.

The possibility of adding sidewalks and streetlights were discussed with the residents. It was the consensus of the majority of residents that sidewalks were not compatible with the character of the community. In addition, residents felt streetlights were not necessary and people should instead be encouraged to use "front porch" lights.



**ILLUSTRATION #8**

*Wide neighborhood streets, mature trees, and well-maintained homes are common features in Central Gardens.*



## TRANSPORTATION

### Facts:

**Mechanicsville Turnpike** (Rt. 360) is classified as a major arterial (a road that carries high volume traffic between regional centers of activity) by the County's Major Thoroughfare Plan. It forms the western boundary of Central Gardens and carries approximately 14,000 cars a day to and from residences, jobs, and services in the City of Richmond and County of Henrico.

**Interstate 64** is considered a controlled access road (a road that moves large volumes of traffic through metropolitan areas) by the Major Thoroughfare Plan. Interstate 64 forms a substantial boundary to the south of the neighborhood and provides residents access to a statewide transportation network.

There are three vehicular entrances to the community: Bloom Lane, Beck Drive, and Hartman Street. Bloom Lane is the primary entrance to the community and Beck and Hartman are secondary entrances that provide access to and from neighboring communities.

### Neighborhood Comments:

A substantial concern to the citizens of Central Gardens is the amount of traffic combined with excessive speed of many vehicles traveling through the neighborhood. Residents also expressed their distress regarding the inordinate amount of time it takes for the traffic signal at Bloom Lane and Mechanicsville Turnpike to cycle. Some residents commented that a Stop sign instead of a Yield sign at the corner of Bloom and Apollo would be more effective.

Street maintenance was another issue raised by residents of Central Gardens. They were concerned about the amount of time it takes to fix pots holes and would like to see the streets repaved instead of patched. In addition, they expressed the need for periodic street cleaning in the neighborhood.



#### ILLUSTRATION #9

*This aerial photo taken in February 1998 shows Central Gardens and its major transportation features.*





# GOATS FOR CENTRAL GARDENS

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## **4.0 GOALS FOR CENTRAL GARDENS**

*Following the identification of the neighborhood concerns, goals for the neighborhood were developed to address these concerns.*

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

- Ensure the construction of the Hidden Creek Recreation Center;
- Encourage the creation of recreational activities for all members of the community;
- Formalize non-structured recreational activities on the Mathematics & Science Center grounds.

### **COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

- Maintain and strengthen the existing civic association;
- Establish efficient lines of communication with residents, county government, and other neighborhoods.

### **CRIME AWARENESS**

- Encourage residents to be on the lookout for and report potential criminal activity;
- Employ CPTED design principles where applicable;
- Advocate community involvement in crime prevention activities;
- Continue to cooperate with and utilize the skills of the Community Police Officer.



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## **4.0 GOALS FOR CENTRAL GARDENS**

### **DRAINAGE**

- Pursue strategy to alleviate standing water problems in the neighborhood.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

- Promote a positive image in the community for residents and non-residents;
- Keep individuals residences, easements, and vacant lots free of overgrown weeds and shrubs, trash, and inoperable vehicles;
- Improve the appearance of community entrances;
- Utilize a variety of public and private programs that are capable of providing beneficial services to the community.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- Seek strategy to have the streets in the neighborhood repaved;
- Improve and maintain convenient access to the neighborhood;
- Encourage increased police patrols in the neighborhood to reduce the incidence of speeding vehicles and discourage cut-through traffic.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE



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## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

*The following recommendations address the details necessary for the neighborhood to achieve their goals. Major subjects include community facilities and recreational activities, community organization, communication, crime awareness, drainage, neighborhood character, and transportation .*

### I. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

#### A. Hidden Creek Recreation Center

The construction of the Hidden Creek Recreation Center will bring a variety of events and activities to the Central Gardens neighborhood and the Fairfield District. Residents must continue to express their desire to see the Recreation Center constructed in a timely manner. The Recreation Center is seen as an opportunity to provide residents (young and old) a place to meet informally, hold community meetings, conduct workshops and classes, and advertise community events.

In order to be involved in the construction of the Recreation Center the following steps are advised:

1. Continue to be involved in the development process. Holding regular meetings with County staff on the construction of the facility will allow residents to ensure its successful and efficient completion.
2. Communicate with the Division of Parks and Recreation. Communicating periodically with County staff will facilitate community involvement in the activities planned for the facility and provide an opportunity for residents to recommend activities for the Recreation Center.

#### B. The Mathematics & Science Center

The outdoor basketball courts at the Mathematics & Science Center are often used for unsupervised pick-up games. Access to the courts is provided through a hole in the fence along Cleary Road. While this activity provides a safe and beneficial recreational opportunity for the youth in the community, better access should be provided.



*Access to this recreational facility at the Mathematics and Science Center is currently provided by the hole in this fence.*

**ILLUSTRATION #10**

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### III. COMMUNICATION

#### **A. Local and Governmental Relationships**

It is important to establish effective lines of communication between residents, county government, and surrounding communities. This will increase the neighborhood's awareness of local and county-wide issues and expand the County's knowledge of the community needs. In addition, improved communication provides an opportunity for local groups and government to work together more efficiently.

The following steps will help improve communication in the neighborhood:

1. Create a community newsletter. A newsletter will keep residents that have not been able to attend neighborhood meetings up-to-date with neighborhood news.
2. Invite various County staff members to attend community meetings. County staff can help familiarize residents with County departments and programs.
3. Select a neighborhood representative to attend local meetings. Attending local meetings such as: those of other civic associations, the County Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors will keep residents informed of local and countywide issues.

### IV. CRIME AWARENESS

#### **A. Community Policing**

The Community Officer for Central Gardens recommends that in order for the neighborhood to continue and improve, and not decline, the residents, Police Department and other County agencies must maintain a strong working relationship.

In order to retain this relationship the following steps are recommended:

1. Encourage expanded participation in the neighborhood watch. An active neighborhood watch not only works to discourage criminal activity, but also strengthens the community through neighborhood interaction.
2. Continue to meet with the Community Officer on a monthly basis. Utilizing the expertise of the Community Officer gives the community a chance to voice their public safety concerns and provides the Officer an opportunity to educate the community about public safety.
3. Encourage residents to use front porch lights and to watch for potential criminal activities. Leaving outdoor lights on at night and being observant of suspicious activity can discourage crime and make Central Gardens a safer place to live.
4. Report all crimes and suspicious activity to the police. Promptly reporting illegal and suspicious activity will assist the police in patrolling the neighborhood.
5. Publicize local criminal activity at community meetings. Residents should be advised of all criminal activity reported in the community.



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## **B. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

Henrico County Division of Police has adopted a proactive approach to crime prevention with the implementation of the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) program. The concepts of CPTED are the fundamental basis of an individual's perception of an area. CPTED is the theory that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life.

The concepts and strategies of CPTED can be seen in the Central Gardens area. It is evident throughout Central Gardens that the neighbors take pride in where they live through the maintenance and ownership shown of their homes and yards. The appearance and maintenance of a property can often influence whether someone chooses to vandalize or rob your property. If ownership is shown through maintenance of the buildings exterior and grounds, it signifies to a potential criminal that they may be noticed if they attempt to come onto your property.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design concepts include:

- **Territorial reinforcement:** Use of physical attributes that express ownership, such as fences, signage, pavement treatments, landscaping.
- **Natural access control:** The physical guidance of people coming and going from a space by the judicious placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, lighting.

Specific CPTED recommendations for the Central Gardens neighborhood are:

1. Repair fencing at dead ends. The dead ends on Hechler Street, Apollo Road, and Bendix Road should be properly secured to prevent individuals from trespassing on private property.
2. Eliminate overgrown shrubbery. Residents should be encouraged to trim or remove trees and shrubs that decrease visibility and provide a place for criminals to hide.
3. Offer individual CPTED property assessments. Residents interested in eliminating unsafe elements on their personal property can work with the Community Officer to guard their home against crime.
4. Investigate the possibility of having the County vacate Bendix Road. This property could be converted to community greenspace and used as a community garden or other neighborhood beatification purpose.
5. Encourage VEPCO to secure and maintain their easement. This will improve the appearance, visibility, and reduce the opportunity for illegal activity in the area.

Additional CPTED-related recommendations can be found in the section on *Neighborhood Character*.

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## V. DRAINAGE

### A. Storm Water Management

The Central Gardens neighborhood was designed over forty years ago; therefore, it lacks a modern drainage system. This creates the need for more capable means to deal with storm water run-off. This will prevent water from collecting on residential property and prevent hazardous conditions on streets.

The following recommendations will help to increase awareness and improve the drainage system in Central Gardens:

1. Hold a Public Works community meeting to discuss drainage issues. Bringing together residents and County staff members will increase staff's knowledge of drainage issues and expand residents' understanding of storm water management.
2. Conduct a series of follow-up meetings to discuss potential solutions. This will give County staff time to analyze the environment and thoroughly explain the technical and financial aspects of modernizing the drainage system in Central Gardens.
3. Identify funding sources to modernize drainage system. Once the appropriate solution (s) has been determined, residents and the County must work together to determine how a project to improve the drainage system could be funded.

## VI. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

### A. Preservation

It is important to maintain the unique sense of place that is found in Central Gardens. The pride that residents have in their homes and neighborhood should be evident to visitors and new residents. The following recommendations will help to enhance and sustain the present character of the neighborhood:

1. Continue to participate in annual Community Clean-ups. County-sponsored Clean-ups give residents, volunteers, and County staff an opportunity to work together to beautify the neighborhood.



*Another example of the mature trees that stand tall over the homes in Central Gardens .*

**ILLUSTRATION #11**



1. Proactive Code enforcement. The Henrico County Community Maintenance division should continue to actively enforce complaints of tall grass and weeds, inoperable vehicles, and other conditions that detract from the character of neighborhoods. Residents should report all complaints of this type to Community Maintenance.
2. Targeted Rehabilitation Assistance. Research the possibility of obtaining county-sponsored rehabilitation assistance for low/moderate income, elderly residents of Central Gardens will help those who can not afford to maintain their homes.
3. Obtain Permission to Garden/Landscape on Vacant lots. If permission is granted, a formal activity on vacant lots in the community will eliminate unsightly conditions, beautify the neighborhood, and provide an opportunity for additional community interaction.

## **B. Gateways**

Gateways are the important points of entry that play a significant role in defining a community's identity. Central Garden's gateways occur at the intersection of Bloom Lane and Mechanicsville Turnpike, the corner of Hechler Street and Hartman Street, and on Beck Drive just before Cushing Drive. All of these gateways serve as important entrances to the neighborhood.

The following steps should be taken to improve the gateways in Central Gardens:

1. Create a Community Beautification Committee. In order for the gateways to convey a positive message about the community, residents must work together to create an attractive entrance to Central Gardens.
2. Create a Landscaping Theme. The Beautification Committee should develop a theme or design for the gateways that reflects the character of the community.
3. Solicit support from resources in the community. Canvassing the community for support is essential to the creation of gateways. A variety of tasks such as, design, signage, labor, and landscaping will need to be acquired from resources within the community or by support solicited from businesses.



*This neighborhood entrance on Hartman Street reveals the need for attractive Gateways that will enhance the community's identity.*

**ILLUSTRATION**

## VII. TRANSPORTATION

### A. Residential Streets

The streets in Central Gardens provide a means of transportation for pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the neighborhood. Since there are no sidewalks, residents should be able to take a leisurely stroll through the community without feeling threatened by speeding vehicles and vehicles should be able to travel the streets without encountering pot holes or other similar hazards.

The following recommendations will help preserve the residential nature of the streets in Central Gardens:

1. Meet with the Public Works Department to discuss re-paving streets. Discussing community concerns about street maintenance with Public Works will help residents and County staff members address street maintenance problems.
2. Request increased police patrols. Additional police patrols will reduce the number vehicles using excessive speed and discourage cut-through traffic in Central Gardens.

### B. Convenience

Residents value the convenient location of Central Gardens. Easy access to services, jobs, and roads are features of the neighborhood that should be maintained.

*The following suggestions will add to the convenience of the neighborhood's location:*

1. Contact VDOT to discuss changing the timing of the signal at Bloom Lane and US Route 360. Residents feel that decreasing the signal time would be more convenient to those entering or leaving the neighborhood.
2. Contact the Greater Richmond Transit Authority to discuss placing a bus stop near the community. A nearby bus stop would provide residents without a means of personal transportation access to jobs and services in the County of Henrico and the City of Richmond.



*The traffic signal at the corner of Bloom Lane and Mechanicsville Tpke is depicted here, as well as, the commercial development that forms the western boundary of the neighborhood.*











**ILLUSTRATION #13**

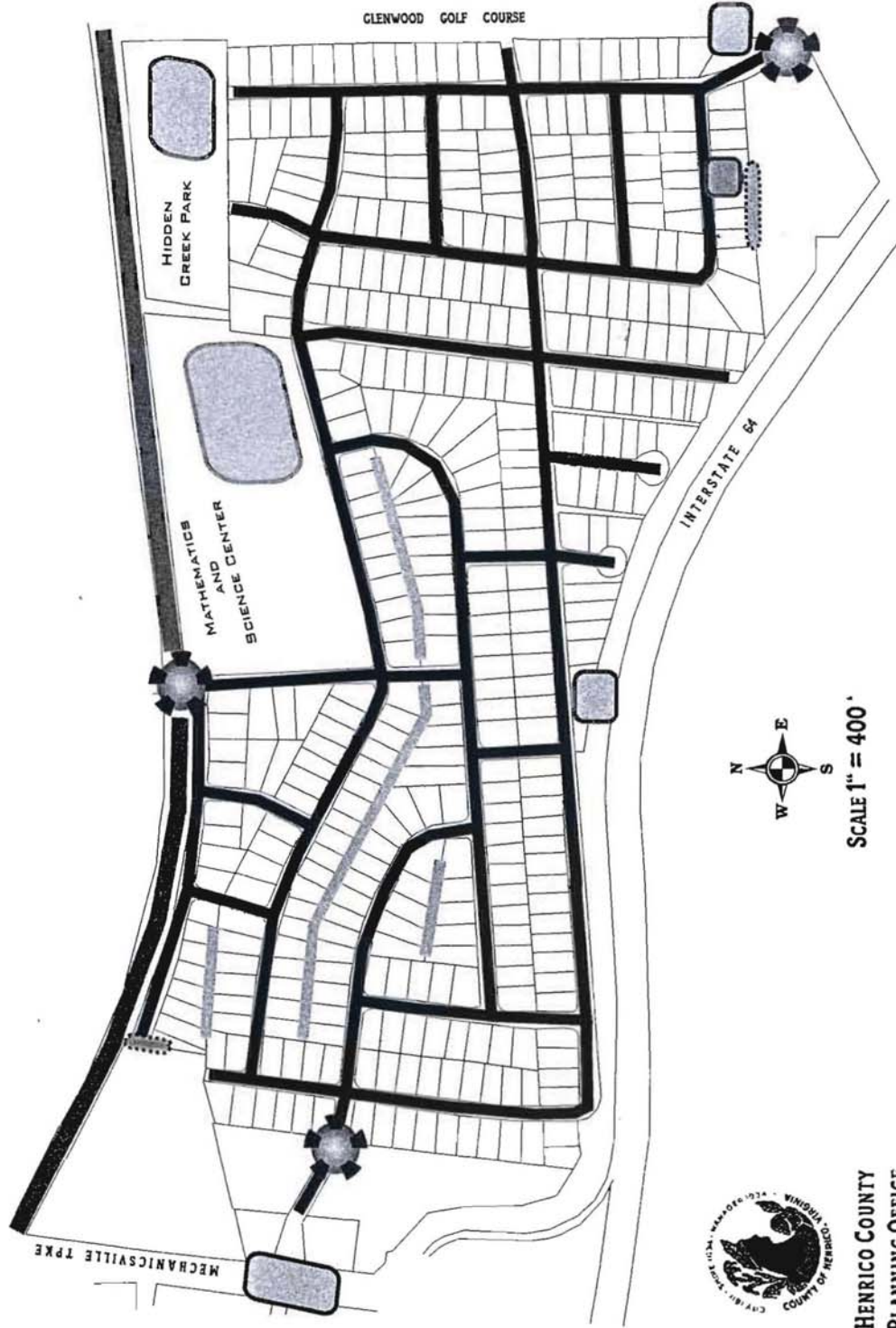


# PLAN STRATEGY AREAS

## CENTRAL GARDENS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

### Legend

-  The construction of the Hidden Creek Recreation Center
-  Formalize recreational activities on the Mathematics and Science Center Grounds
-  Improve convenience of location by reducing wait for traffic light and creating GRTC stop
-  Beautify vacant lots in the Neighborhood
-  Vacate Bendix Road and use for community greenspace
-  Repair fencing along property lines
-  Maintain and enhance VEP's easement
-  Repave the neighborhood streets
-  Establish gateways at community entrances
-  Address neighborhood drainage concerns



HENRICO COUNTY  
PLANNING OFFICE  
1998



ORGANIZATIONAL  
PARTICIPATION  
AND  
IMPLEMENTATION



## 6.0 ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Table 7. Time-Table of Actions

### Organization Key

CGCA	Central Gardens Civic Association
PW	Henrico County Public Works Department
CPO	Community Police Officer
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation
GRTC	Greater Richmond Transit Company
PLAN	Henrico County Planning Department
P & R	Henrico County Division of Recreation and Parks
MSC	Mathematics and Science Center
COMM	Henrico Community Maintenance Division
PROP	Individual Property Owners
REAL	Henrico County Real Property Department
VP	Virginia Power

Action Item	Who are participants?	When to Begin ?
<b>1. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>A. Hidden Creek Community Center</b>		
1) Continue to be involved in the development process.	CGCA, P & R, PLAN	On-going
2) Communicate with the Division of Recreation and Parks to discuss community needs and desires.	CGCA, P & R	4/99
<b>B. The Mathematics &amp; Science Center</b>		
1) Repair the fencing along Cleary Road.	MSC, CGCA, P & R	9/99
2) Encourage individuals to park in the Mathematics & Science Center parking lot.	MSC, CGCA, P & R CPO	9/99
3) Restrict access to the basketball courts to specific hours of operation.	MSC, CGCA, P & R CPO	9/99

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**Action Item****Who are  
participants?****When to  
Begin ?**

---

**2. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION****A. Central Gardens Civic Association**

- |   |      |          |
|---|------|----------|
| 1) Maintain a regular meeting schedule. | CGCA | On-going |
| 2) Adopt by-laws.                       | CGCA | 9/99     |
| 3) Create problem-solving committees    | CGCA | 3/99     |
| 4) Conduct issue-oriented meetings.     | CGCA | 3/99     |
| 5) Hold a membership drive.             | CGCA | 9/99     |

**3. COMMUNICATION****A. Local and Governmental Relationships**

- |  |      |      |
|--|------|------|
| 1) Create a community newsletter.                                    | CGCA | 3/00 |
| 2) Invite various County staff members to attend community meetings. | CGCA | 5/99 |
| 3) Select a neighborhood representative to attend local meetings.    | CGCA | 3/99 |

**ILLUSTRATION #14**

*Central Garden's streets represent some of the first curvilinear subdivision streets in the County.*



	<b>Who are participants?</b>	<b>When to Begin ?</b>
<b>4. CRIME AWARENESS</b>		
<b>A. Community Policing</b>		
1) Encourage expanded participation in the neighborhood watch.	CGCA, CPO	3/99
2) Continue to meet with the Community Officer on a monthly basis.	CGCA, CPO	On-going
3) Encourage residents to use front porch lights and to watch for potential criminal activities.	CGCA, CPO	On-going
4) Report all crimes and suspicious activity to the police.	CGCA, CPO	On-going
5) Publicize local criminal activity at community meetings.	CGCA, CPO	On-going
<b>B. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)</b>		
1) Repair fencing at dead ends.	CGCA, COMM, PROP	4/00
2) Eliminate overgrown shrubbery.	CGCA, COMM, PROP	4/00
3) Offer individual CPTED property assessments.	CGCA, CPO	4/00
4) Investigate the possibility of having the County vacate Bendix Road.	CGCA, REAL, PW, COMM	9/00
5) Encourage Virginia Power to secure and maintain their easement.	CGCA, VP, CPO	4/00

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**Who are  
participants?****When to  
Begin ?**

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**5. DRAINAGE****A. Storm Water Management**

- |   |                                      |       |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1) Hold a Public Works community meeting to discuss drainage problems.    | PW, CGCA, PLAN                       | 11/98 |
| 2) Conduct a series of follow-up meetings to discuss potential solutions. | PW, CGVA, PLAN,<br>ELECTED OFFICIALS | 3/98  |
| 3) Identify funding sources to correct drainage problem.                  | CGCA, PLAN,<br>ELECTED OFFICIALS     | 5/99  |

**6. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER****A. Preservation**

- |   |                 |       |
|---|-----------------|-------|
| 1) Continue to participate in annual Community Clean-ups. | CGCA, COMM, CPO | 4/99  |
| 2) Proactive Code enforcement.                            | COMM            | 11/98 |
| 3) Targeted Rehabilitation Assistance.                    | ELHM, COMM      | 6/00  |
| 4) Obtain Permission to Garden/Landscape on Vacant lots.  | CGCA            | 4/01  |

**B. Gateways**

- |   |      |      |
|---|------|------|
| 1) Create a Community Beautification Committee.     | CGCA | 4/01 |
| 2) Create a Landscaping Theme.                      | CGCA | 4/01 |
| 3) Solicit support from resources in the community. | CGCA | 4/01 |



Action Item	Who are participants?	When to Begin ?
-------------	-----------------------	-----------------

**A. Residential Streets**

- |  |           |      |
|--|-----------|------|
| 1) Meet with the Public Works Department to discuss re-paving streets. | CGVA, PW  | 6/99 |
| 2) Request increased police patrols.                                   | CGVA, CPO | 3/99 |

**B. Convenience**

- |   |                 |      |
|---|-----------------|------|
| 1) Contact VDOT to discuss changing the timing of the signal at Bloom Lane and US Route 360.        | VDOT, CGVA, PW  | 6/99 |
| 2) Contact the Greater Richmond Transit Authority to discuss placing a bus stop near the community. | GRTC, CGCA, CPO | 1/00 |

**ILLUSTRATION #15**



*Representatives from the neighborhood worked hard to ensure the Central Gardens Neighborhood Plan addressed the needs of the community.*