Dale City, Virginia AIA SDAT

“The Friendliest Greenest Little City Around!”
Presentation Outline

1. Process: Reframing the Challenges
2. Changing the Economic Model
3. Street Character / Connectivity / Mobility
4. A Vision for Walkable Downtown Dale City
5. Implementation Strategies
Process: Reframing the Challenges
The Challenge: Re-energize Dale Blvd

“West Gateway” (@ Hoadly)  
“Mapledale” (@ Ridgefield)
The Challenge: Re-energize Dale Blvd

“Minnieville” (@ Dale Blvd)  “East Gateway” (@ Gideon)
AIA SDAT Process

• We came
  – 3 days with 6 professionals from across the country
  – June (NY), Ed (OR), Cheryl (AL), Pat (CA), David (WA) and Ken (MA)

• We saw
  – Toured Dale Boulevard

• We listened
  – 1 day of stakeholder meetings & town hall meeting

• We planned
  – 2 days of intensive brainstorming, research, diagramming & sketching
We saw... touring Dale City

Kmart “ghostbox”  Center Plaza  Bus shelter  Neabsco Greenway
We saw... touring Dale City
We **listened...** stakeholder sessions
What we heard

• Placemaking / Community
  – Lack of “destination” places and places for neighbors to gather
  – Desire for walkability
  – Shopping centers are tired and unappealing

• Transportation / Streetscape
  – Road “improvements” make traffic worse
  – Lack of bike infrastructure
  – Loss of median trees

• Land Use / Economic Development
  – Deteriorated sites, buildings and services
  – New commercial development bypassed Dale City
  – Outdated approvals process
We listened... town hall meeting
What we heard

- GOOD STUFF
  - Greenery and open space
  - Diversity of residents
  - Good neighborhoods
  - Affordability of housing
  - Access to services
  - Easy to get out of town

- NEEDS TO CHANGE
  - Placelessness
  - Traffic congestion
  - Lack of sidewalks and bike paths
  - Rundown properties
  - Jobs/housing imbalance
We planned... for a better Dale City

- First steps: redefine the challenge of suburban corridor retrofit:
- Why these four nodes?
- Too many? Too few? How big?
- Dale City needs a center: where?
- What would/could “revitalization” look like?
- Which tools to use to make it happen?
Dale City: Vision Framework

• New tagline:
  “The Friendliest Greenest Little City Around”

• What do we mean by Greenest?
  – Physical: trails, trees and parks
  – Cultural: authentically diverse suburbia
  – Ecology: walking and cycling, not only car
  – Wellness: community supports a healthy lifestyle for families and aging residents
“West Gateway” (@ Hoadly Road)

- Not an significant node for community gathering
- Low priority: don’t incentivize development here
“Mapledale” (@ Ridgefield)

- Focus on health, wellness, and community gathering
- Shift circle to center around a place
- Connect people to the landscape and parks and back to people
“Minnieville” (@ Dale Blvd)

- Focus on a local mix of uses and mini-grid of streets
- Leverage commuter lot and farmers market assets
- Add network of new plazas and civic places for a reason to linger and hang out
“East Gateway” (@ Gideon)

- Shift circle to center around vacant lot
- Not *really* part of Dale City – but existing businesses need support
- Not a priority node – but Kmart lot could be cleared and prepped for future potential
Downtown Dale City: “planets & moons”

Focus effort on the **HEART** of Dale City: two centers and the linking section of Dale Boulevard between, also the mostly completed link of the Neabsco Greenway.
Downtown Dale City: “conjoined twins”

- Mapledale Plaza
- Refined Dale Blvd
- Streets at Minnieville & Dale
- Neabsco Greenway
Reframing the Challenges

Retrofit the physical framework from:
• passive to active community interaction
• inconvenient to convenient facilities
• congested single access to multiple access
• low utility dispersed retail to higher utility aggregated
• generic places to authentically local and vital

Dale City: “The Friendliest Greenest Little City Around!”
Changing the Economic Model

For the Heart of Dale City
Is there a Market?

Demand for:

• ±3 million SF office-flex in 10 years
• ± $590 million retail $$ not captured here
• need for senior housing increasing
• need for multifamily increasing
• existing single units for young families
20 Year Demographic Trends

Millennials, retirees and seniors want:
• Walkable, bikable neighborhoods, streets
• Amenities, work in walking radius
• Smaller houses or units at lower cost
• Urban street environment
• Access to transit
• Access to nature and recreation
• Strong sense of community
Roads and Retail

Big road capture model means:

• big setbacks
• wide frontages
• large signage
• inconvenient for walking or biking
Roads and Retail

Big road capture model means:

• high speed -- many cars = low capture
• lower sales per square foot
• lower property values

Low Utility + Generic Places = Boredom

= Low Sales and Low Values
What If Nothing Changes

Downward spiral:
• lower sales
• inability to maintain assets
• Inability to upgrade assets
• lower property values
• continued loss of business
Placemaking and Capture

Walkable centers with high auto traffic:
• respond to demographic trends
• have higher capture
• have rents sometimes twice as high
• have much higher sales
• have higher property values
A Possible Solution

Build on your assets:
• reinforce the heart of Dale City; and,
• fix the boulevard for the destination
East: Gideon and Dale Boulevard

Competition at Kmart:
- sales within 5 minutes ± $580 million greater than demand
- poor access
- poor visibility
- obsolete single-use building devalues site

Preferred use: office or residential, veteran’s center, minor services and retail
The Heart of Dale City

At Mapledale and Minnieville:
• ± $275 million surplus demand
• ± $22 million restaurant surplus demand
• development at centers needs reframing for success
• access and road needs walkability
• two modes of capture will increase sales
West: Dale and Hoadly

- Too small for significant aggregation
- Lower traffic counts
- At edge of residential density
- Lower nearby residential density
- Difficult to design walkable access

Preferred use: residential, minor services to support heart of Dale City
Placemaking in the Heart of Dale City

• Will allow aggregation and utility
• Can become an attractor for employment
• Can increase local values
• Can add convenience and amenity
• Can add genuine community space
• Will help make Dale City a destination
Street Character/Connectivity/Mobility

How do you get there?
Existing Street Character

• Does it say “You’re in Dale City”?  
• Does it need to function the same along the entire length?  
• Does it have to look the same?  

How can it better serve / represent Dale City and implement the vision?
Existing Conditions

- **West**: 12,000 – 20,000 ADT
- **Middle**: 22,000 ADT 35 mph
- **East**: 30,000-40,000+ ADT
Differences

Houses with driveways:
- 35 mph
- 1.8 mi.
- 2.6 mi.
- 2.9 mi.
Differences

East - freeway

Middle - boulevard

West – rural hwy.
Downtown Blvd.: Existing Midblock
In 35 mph zone

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Downtown Blvd.: Existing at Turn Lanes
Challenges

- High volumes and congestion at the east end.
- High speeds through downtown and west.
- Capacity improvements have unintentionally attracts more traffic/congestion.
- Signals favor through volume over local access
- Incomplete pedestrian/bike/transit connections make driving the only option.
Recommendations: Traffic Operations

- Emphasize local access and non-auto options over through volume capacity improvements.
- Prioritize safety – esp. pedestrian safety.
- Increase capacity by managing travel speed and signal operations.
- Take a pro-active role in VDOT signal operations.
- Expand level of service standards to include vehicle queuing, pedestrian/bicycle capacity, connectivity.
- Apply the Urban Boulevard Road Standard to Dale Boulevard.
Recommendations: Walking/Biking

- Extend 35 mph zone
- Bikeable/walkable residential boulevard
- Greenway system
- Permeability to neighborhoods
Downtown – Bikable / Walkable
Using County’s New Urban Center Blvd. Standard
Downtown Potential Midblock

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Downtown Potential at Turn Lanes

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Downtown Potential
Greenway System
Greenway System
Some Things Needed on Entire Street

Functional:
- Complete Sidewalks
- Safer Crossings
- Safety & Lighting
- Bus Stop Improvements
- Other Furniture
- Street Parks

Community Identity:
- Landscaping
- Gateway Elements
- Wayfinding
Complete Sidewalks on Both Sides

Missing Sidewalks
Complete Sidewalks

1. At all bus stops
2. South side
3. North side
Improve Crossing Conditions

• 1 crosswalk across Dale Blvd. at most marked crosswalks.
• 2 in Streets at Minnieville and Mapledale Plaza.
• High-visibility marking (Continental).
• Consider removing slip lanes in Downtown.
Improve Crossing Conditions
Improve Crossing Conditions
Improve Crossing Conditions
High Visibility Crosswalks
Transit

- Increase Omni-Ride routes/frequency from Minnieville Commuter Lot
  - Capture park & riders before east end
  - Encourage more SLUGing
  - Consider jitney service along Dale Blvd.
  - Consider HOV/right turn lanes east of Benita Fitzgerald
Transit Stops

- Sidewalks
- Far side
- Bus pull out where possible
- Lighting
- New distinctive shelters
Bus Stops
Safety and Lighting

- Establish signature street lighting Downtown
- Add street lighting leading in/out
- Add pedestrian lighting along Downtown Blvd. and in Centers
- Compliment benches and transit shelters with pedestrian lighting
- Add street lighting at all signalized intersections.
- Add missing pedestrian signals at intersections.
Historic replicas

Traditional

Modified historic

Modern
Furnishings/Rest Stops
Landscaping

• Maintain/replace medians trees between left-turn lanes
  • Big trees where 25’ or wider; small where less than 25’ in 45 mph zones
  • Big trees Downtown (35 mph zone)

• Complementary median planting at left-turn lanes, incl. flowering small trees and shrubs, e.g, Crape Myrtle.

• Add trees in parkways with adoption of Urban Boulevard standard.
Medians Where Big Trees Fit

45 mph zone

35 mph zone
Community Identity Signs

Dale City
Minnieville-
Mapledale
Neighborhoods
Gateway/Identity Elements
Wayfinding for People…

Driving

Walking/biking/hiking
Highlights

1. Manage traffic to
   • Increase safety
   • Reduce delay
   • Improve local access
   • Increase capacity

2. Enhance transit
   • Far side bus stops
   • Improve Omni Ride service
   • Encourage HOV Access

3. Apply Urban Blvd. standard to add
   • Walking/biking facilities
   • Street trees, landscaping, lighting
4. Improve local access
   • Complete the pedestrian/bike systems
   • Enhance neighborhood connections
   • Improve crossing experience

5. Reinforce community identity
   • Landscaped medians and parkways
   • Lighting and furnishings
   • Gateway/identity elements
   • Wayfinding
A Vision for Walkable (& Bikable!)
Downtown Dale City
Downtown Dale City: “conjoined twins”

- Mapledale Plaza
- Refined Dale Blvd
- Streets at Minnieville & Dale
- Neabsco Greenway
Streets at Minnieville & Dale
Streets at Minnieville & Dale
Good places to come together
Good places to linger
Places for kids
Good places to engage: Science Ctr.
Streets at Minnieville & Dale

A local mix of uses and places to linger and hang out:

• Retrofit with street grids & new intersection
• “Main Street” retail across Dale Boulevard
• Structured parking at park & ride lot
• Shade structures & plaza for farmers market
• Small liner shops at commuter bus stop
• New apartments with amenity stormwater park
• Science/ecology center civic anchor
Mapledale Plaza
Good places to gather
Good places to gather
Good places to learn

Library

Birding Tower
Energizers of public places
Good places to live

Aging in Community
Mapledale Plaza

Places & spaces for community gathering, supporting wellness & health:

• Amphitheater & flowering trees
• Relocated public library
• 55+ housing: cottage courts
• 55+ supportive housing: Green House concept
• Spa: adaptive reuse of gas station
• Infill office buildings
• Trail and bike connections
In the meantime...
Implementation Strategies
Game Changers

Change the perceptions of:
The value of property
The cost of doing business

Change the regulatory environment:
Reduce risk
Establish partnerships
Existing Condition
Reinvestment
Phased Development
Master Planned Development

Master Plan Development
Entitlement Process

• Create a master planning process for approval of projects
• Require master plan process for projects above a certain size
Master Planned Development

Provide Flexibility and Developer Involvement

• Decide on baseline minimum/maximum standards
• Negotiate all other standards in the Master Plan
• Base on a conceptual plan
Master Planned Development

Step 1: Master Plan Approval
• Approve Master Plan of Development based on a Conceptual Plan,
• Agree on design and performance standards to include
Master Planned Development

Step 2: Zoning Approval [Sec. 32-200.12.]
- Based on approved Master Plan and the design and performance standards
- Approve plans for construction
Master Planned Development

Criteria: for developer

- Min and max height or number of stories
- Provide a mix of uses
- Design for pedestrians and bicycles as well as cars, with multiple pathways
- Include civic and gathering places as focal points
- Provide densities that promote efficient use of land
- Include ‘green’ design elements
Master Planned Development

Criteria:
for government
  • Provide available information
  • Expedited process – decisions within 180 days
## Implementation Strategies

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## Implementation Strategies

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Downtown Dale City:
“The Friendliest **Greenest** Little City Around”

Questions?

www.aia.org/liv_sdat