

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

# Pungo Crossing Virginia Beach, Virginia



Urban Land  
Institute

# Pungo Crossing Virginia Beach, Virginia

**Strategies for a Rural Gateway**

June 11–16, 2006  
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute  
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.  
Suite 500 West  
Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

# About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

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**T**he mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to:

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and

- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 35,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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# About ULI Advisory Services

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The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, partici-

pants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

## ULI Program Staff

William P. Kistler  
Executive Vice President, Exchange Group

Mary Beth Corrigan  
Senior Vice President, Advisory Services

Thomas W. Eitler  
Director, Advisory Services

Nicholas Gabel  
Senior Associate, Advisory Services

Carmen McCormick  
Panel Coordinator, Advisory Services

Yvonne Stanton  
Administrative Assistant

Nancy H. Stewart  
Director, Book Program

Lise Lingo, Publications Professionals LLC  
Manuscript Editor

Betsy Van Buskirk  
Art Director

Martha Loomis  
Desktop Publishing Specialist/Graphics

Kim Rusch  
Graphics

Craig Chapman  
Director, Publishing Operations

# Acknowledgments

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also extends its thanks to Melisa Chimienti, Robert Davis, and Deborah Zywna from the Planning Department for their assistance before and during the panel's visit.

The panel extends its sincerest gratitude to the more than 50 community members, including government officials, business leaders, property owners, and residents, who volunteered their time and candid thoughts during the interview process. Their insights were invaluable in helping the panel formulate its recommendations.

# Contents

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|                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------|----|
| ULI Panel and Project Staff                 | 6  |
| The Panel's Assignment                      | 7  |
| Introduction and Summary of Recommendations | 8  |
| Market Potential                            | 14 |
| Development Strategies                      | 17 |
| Planning and Design                         | 22 |
| Implementation                              | 32 |
| Conclusion                                  | 34 |
| About the Panel                             | 35 |

# ULI Panel and Project Staff

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## Panel Chair

Franklin A. Martin  
President  
Martin Community Development, LLC  
Boise, Idaho

## Panel Members

W. Easley Hamner  
Chairman  
Boston International Design Collaborative, LLC  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andrew Irvine  
Senior Associate  
EDAW  
Denver, Colorado

William G. Lashbrook III  
Senior Vice President  
PNC Bank  
East Brunswick, New York

Donna Lewis  
Planning Director  
Mercer County New Jersey  
Trenton, New Jersey

Ralph L. Núñez  
President/Design Principal  
DesignTeam Limited  
Southfield, Michigan

Bradley Scheib  
Vice President  
Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

## ULI Project Director

Thomas W. Eitler  
Director, Advisory Services

## ULI On-Site Coordinator

Rose Kim  
Manager, International Programs

# The Panel's Assignment

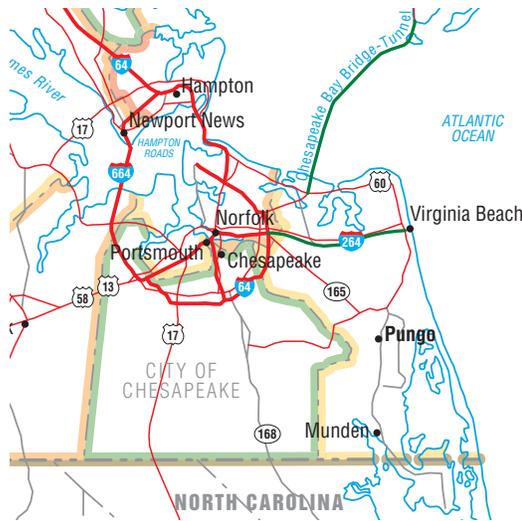
In response to a request from the Pungo Village Landowners Association, the Virginia Beach City Council passed a resolution to have ULI perform a land use study of the area immediately around Indian River and Princess Anne roads. Four specific tasks were to be addressed:

- Reaffirm or redefine the role of Pungo within the framework of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and the 2005 Hampton Roads Joint Land Use Study.
- Clarify and define the planning, design, and physical characteristics of the study area.
- Evaluate the economic viability of the proposed plan.
- Identify realistic development and implementation strategies to help achieve the goals and recommendations of the study.

After an extensive briefing and tour, the advisory panel members interviewed more than 50 stakeholders, then formulated recommendations based on what they had read, heard, and observed. The advantage of this approach is that each panelist is a leader in his or her field of expertise and has extensive experience in addressing and solving complex land use issues. Panelists have the added advantage of viewing land use issues from an objective and unbiased point of view, because they are from outside the area and have no specific financial interest in or preconceived knowledge of the issues.



Location map.



Regional map.

# Introduction and Summary of Recommendations

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**P**ungo is a rural crossroads, located at the intersection of Princess Anne and Indian River roads in the southern portion of Virginia Beach, Virginia. Pungo has been the focus of an on-again, off-again discussion of growth issues facing the city. Even the name Pungo is fraught with controversy. The area is alternatively called Pungo, Pungo Village, the Crossroads, Pungo proper, or one of a half-dozen other names. For the purposes of this document, the panel refers to the area immediately around the intersection of Princess Anne Road and Indian River Road as Pungo Crossing. This name, coined by the panel, is intended to produce recognition of the physical road intersection as well as the figurative bridge between the rural and urban areas of the city.

The northern half of the intersection lies in the transition area between the urban and rural areas of Virginia Beach, in which sanitary sewer and transitional suburban densities are permitted through the rezoning process. The southern half lies in the rural area, where, as a means of controlling density, sewer extension is not permitted. The older commercial areas of Pungo Crossing are located primarily along Princess Anne Road in the rural area. Sanitary waste disposal for these areas is provided either through standard septic systems or through pump-and-haul operations for those properties in which septic systems have failed.

The city has determined that, in the long term, portions of the city will have very different characters. The area south of Indian River Road, regardless of growth pressures, will remain primarily rural. Although some small commercial operations stand along the Princess Anne Road corridor south of Pungo Crossing, most are isolated or stand-alone uses serving a convenience or agricultural need. From this perspective, Pungo Crossing can be seen as the last outpost of significant commercial use until one reaches the North Carolina border. However, Pungo Crossing desperately needs new

and revitalized commercial uses—and these new and revitalized uses must fit with the character of Pungo Crossing. The panel believes that Pungo Crossing can be revitalized and improved without compromising the integrity of the rural line that the city has established.

## Guiding Principles and Major Recommendations

The panel used the following guiding principles as the basis for its recommendations:

- Preserve the rural character of Pungo Crossing.
- Create a gateway to an “environmental wonderland.”
- Create an appropriate character for the Pungo Crossing area that respects its history and environment.
- Ensure that the agricultural area south of Indian River Road is preserved.
- Celebrate life in Pungo Crossing by expanding activities over time.
- Share the experience and excitement of Pungo Crossing and the rural area with others.

## Preserve the Rural Character

The panel was impressed by the seemingly unanimous view that the rural character of Pungo Crossing is highly valued. That character is extremely fragile. There are enormous pressures from real estate interests to increase the density of development in the area, to construct what is expedient, and to seek approval for exemptions from the regulations that have been enacted to control development. As a consequence, the panel’s strongest recommendation is to develop even more stringent regulations and to ensure that these regulations are enforced for the vast majority of the rural area. The panel’s collective

Pungo is primarily an agricultural area.



experience is that most communities and cities across the nation are, in fact, successful in developing and enforcing regulations.

As a unique and historic part of the city, Pungo Crossing and the portions of the city south of Indian River Road all the way to the North Carolina border should have primarily agricultural, open-space, and rural residential uses. The land uses in the built-up portion of Pungo Crossing should be carefully prescribed to guarantee a pattern that does not, by its architectural and spatial nature, erode the rural and agricultural uses or provide justification for allowing increased densities outside the boundaries of Pungo Crossing. The land use plan and utility extension policies outlined by the panel conform with this approach.

### Create a Gateway

Pungo Crossing sits in a critical position geographically. Princess Anne Road is the primary north-south roadway that traverses what some have called an environmental wonderland. This wonderland consists of the watershed areas on either side: the Back Bay to the east and the North Landing River (part of the Intracoastal Waterway) to the west. Each watershed has its own

character, and each is extraordinarily beautiful—and fragile. Although each is protected by extensive regulation, each faces various threats. Pungo Crossing's location requires it to function as the gateway to and the guardian of the land to the south, both opening up to an exquisite farmland environment and the wetlands that lie beyond and holding back the forces that threaten to engulf and destroy that land.

The rural area offers unique and valuable outdoor recreation and open-space opportunities not available in most metropolitan areas. Pungo Crossing can both physically and symbolically distinguish the rural area from the urban area. Additional commercial uses such as outfitters, tour guide organizations, inns, bed and breakfast operations, and outdoor recreational suppliers should be encouraged, where the structures conform with the architectural character of the crossroads.

### Create an Appropriate Character

Parts of Pungo Crossing are little changed from nearly 100 years ago, and that contributes to the character that everyone the panel spoke with admires. Those parts are yet another portion of the fragile environment that is threatened by both the

Fruit stand on the northwest corner of Princess Anne and Indian River roads.



passage of time and the pressures for expedient development. If the panel had a magic wand, it would immediately erase several of the more recent developments. The protective instruments that the city has—stringent regulation and enforcement—can prevent further erosion of that character and ensure that future development suits the history, character, scale, and aesthetic of the older parts of the community.

The city can also require that any new development be environmentally sensitive and sustainable. Rather than a visual vocabulary of neo-Georgian brick, as in the Municipal Center, the panel advocates a wood construction vocabulary compatible with the appealing turn-of-the-century buildings that provide the charm to which everyone responds with a smile. Key components of this character include scale, memorable architecture, a streetscape, heritage values, sustainability, environmental management, walkability, and safety. The city should establish and encourage design guidelines that help retain the historic and rural nature of the area, while celebrating the rural marketplace character of this crossroads settlement. Additional commercial and residential uses

should be permitted only where they bolster this marketplace character or strengthen the area's gateway role.

#### **Preserve the Agricultural Area**

The panel is distressed by the suburbanization of the agricultural area south of Pungo Crossing. If it is allowed to continue, in only a few years the area's character will be forever lost—and that would be a tragedy. The panel congratulates the city on the strategic guidelines that it has established—namely, encouraging development in the northern portion of the city along the Virginia Beach Boulevard corridor (of which the Town Center is an excellent example); creating the rural area to the south of Indian River Road; and establishing the transitional zone in between. However, now is the time to reevaluate the regulations for the rural area. The panel has concluded that a moratorium, if not an outright prohibition, on development ought to be established for this area; otherwise, its character will be overwhelmed by new construction.

Agricultural and horse farms should define the character of the area, not McMansions. The panel believes that the clustering concept used in the

rural area is not visually acceptable, particularly immediately adjacent to Princess Anne Road. Instead, the panel recommends a maximum acceptable density of one dwelling unit per 15 acres. In addition to reaffirming rural uses, the city should ensure that incompatible uses are not introduced or expanded in a manner that threatens farm activities. For example, improper clustering of residential uses, however helpful it may be to the environment by preserving open space, still brings with it the feeling a suburban community. Residents of such clusters will expect that services should likewise be suburban.

### Expand Activities Over Time

For 23 years the Strawberry Festival has provided a reason for ever-increasing numbers of local visits to Pungo, with estimates of as many as 190,000 visitors over the 2006 Memorial Day weekend. The panel believes that additional celebrations would add to the sense of destination and pride in Pungo Crossing—perhaps as many as ten similar events developed over time. Events such as wine festivals, hayrides, harvest celebrations, midwinter fairs, Christmas tree lighting, and Mardi Gras festivities should be explored. As noted later, vacant parcels in Pungo Crossing may be able to be used for event parking.

To accommodate these events, facilities need to be developed that are economically justified, such as an arena that could host festivals, equestrian events, perhaps a rodeo, carnivals, and auto and truck events. Numerous examples of similar facilities in other jurisdictions can act as models for Virginia Beach. The panel was informed that there are reasons to consider relocating the farmers market and that a location closer to the rural farmlands might be preferable, because it would reinforce the relationship between the environment and the products sold. Pungo Crossing would be an entirely appropriate location for such an activity and has space available that can accommodate both the market's existing size and its future expansion to include more extensive offerings. In the market, a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, meats, prepared foods, and similar items should be available, as well as local crafts, arts, flowers, and other goods. A shopper there should

be able to purchase everything required for either a casual meal or a fancy dinner party.

Another aspect of the disappearing heritage of this region is the rather rapid loss of farm buildings and machinery that is underway. Unlike Williamsburg or Smithfield or Suffolk, Virginia Beach has no central historic area; individual buildings are widely separated and isolated. The panel believes that through the establishment of a trust, property owners might be willing to donate buildings that are no longer useful, such as barns, old houses, smokehouses, springhouses, one-room schoolhouses, small churches, and post offices. The panel's notion is to create an outdoor museum of such structures and artifacts, some of which might house displays and exhibits of blacksmithing, spinning, weaving, and similar crafts that were once part of the lifestyle that is rapidly being lost. If advertising signs and gas pumps from service stations have been retained, they would add to the appeal. The same is true for the legacy of the train that once connected Munden Point with Norfolk. Pungo Crossing could provide a unique resource both for the retention of such structures and for historical education.

Recognizing the gateway role that Pungo Crossing plays, outfitters for ecotourism and related activities might be housed in a new commercial area, one that is small in scale and compatible in style. To enjoy the environmental wonderland to the south, bicycles, canoes, kayaks, guides, horses, safety devices, shoes, waders, and all sorts of outdoor gear will be required, and Pungo Crossing is ideally situated for providers of such gear.

Another suggestion is to allow and even encourage small homes to be infilled between the somewhat isolated homes that lie within the area, particularly along Princess Anne Road. Again, they should be compatible in scale and size—so-called starter mansions should be prohibited through deed restrictions. There is a purpose in this: New sources of energy from residents will be required to establish and operate the activities that the panel is proposing, and these can best be provided by young people new to the area. They will need starter homes, a modern equivalent to the Aladdin kit homes that sprang up in the Pungo area many years ago.

The “monster truck” *Undertaker* is a fixture in Pungo.



The entries into the settlement provide opportunities to calm traffic through signage, landscaping, and lowering the speed limit to 25 miles per hour. In addition, pedestrian and equestrian road crossings and signage could identify Pungo Crossing as a small settlement.

There is perhaps no more important element in the new dedication to environmental quality than the Green Sea Byway proposed along Indian River Road, which the panel strongly supports. The byway would provide multiuse pathways alongside but separate from the roadway. Screening adjacent uses is another important part of this concept. The panel also supports the idea of designating Princess Anne Road in the Pungo Crossing area as a scenic byway. All these concepts must be implemented in an environmentally sustainable manner.

### Share the Experience and Excitement

It is the panel’s conviction that if these ideas are implemented, not only will Pungo Crossing have much more to celebrate, but the people of Pungo and the farms to the south will also be able to share this experience and excitement with others from Virginia Beach and beyond. The city of Vir-

ginia Beach is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a state-of-the-art convention center. It will attract an entirely different kind of visitor than the usual beachgoers and—perhaps more important—will operate year-round, not only during the beach season. Conventioneers tend to bring their families, who need activities beyond those available at the beach. Pungo Crossing is ideally suited to offer those events. The city should stop thinking of Pungo Crossing and the rural area as inconsistent with the urban and suburban nature of Virginia Beach. It should work toward the five goals recommended here to distinguish Pungo Crossing from other areas of the city. The effort should include establishing an advertising campaign that identifies Pungo Crossing and the rural wonderland as both an alternative and a complement to the beaching, boating, and shopping that have defined Virginia Beach in the past century.

### Background

The city of Virginia Beach was incorporated in 1963 with the merger of Princess Anne County and the resort town of Virginia Beach. Since then, the city has enjoyed a steady rate of growth in residents as well as visitors. The 2000 census indi-

cated a population of 425,257. Virginia Beach has been a popular resort destination since the 1880s. Railroad service to the beach began in 1883, transporting visitors from Norfolk to the oceanfront. Today vacationers and tourists are a vital part of life in Virginia Beach.

Although the beach and its boardwalk have provided the focal point for tourists and visitors, the city has a diversified economy. Four military installations—Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana, Dam Neck, Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, and Fort Story—make the city a vital presence on national and international maps. The city also has a thriving convention and conference industry, as well as numerous local museums and sports and entertainment arenas. Boating, fishing, and other marine activities are also based in Virginia Beach. The agricultural and rural uses are distinct and clearly separate from the modern uses, which are focused in the northern third of the city near I-64, I-264, and US-13. The rural part of the city, primarily lying south of Indian River Road, is still sometimes referred to as the “county,” reminiscent of the old boundaries of Princess Anne County.

Pungo Crossing consists of a relatively compact and varied arrangement of rural commercial uses that have, in large part, remained unchanged for many decades. These uses are located along the

approaches to and centered at the intersection of Princess Anne and Indian River roads, both of which are two-lane rural arterials. Pungo Crossing is a commercial and social gathering place for the rural community in the southern part of the city and a destination for visitors from Hampton Roads and around the state. The Pungo Strawberry Festival draws crowds of thousands each Memorial Day weekend. North of Indian River Road is the urban and suburban service area, where public water and sewer may be built to support low-density development. Immediately south of this road is the agricultural and rural service area, where extension of such facilities is prohibited under the policies of the city’s Comprehensive Plan. An expansive floodplain associated with West Neck Creek is located about a quarter mile to the west of Pungo Crossing.

The panel formulated a series of goals or guidelines for the preservation and development of Pungo Crossing. Panelists developed these goals through a process of intense discussion, research, exploration of alternatives, posing of “what if” scenarios, and sketching out of ideas.

# Market Potential

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Virginia Beach has experienced substantial change since the merger with Princess Anne County in 1963. At that time, much of the county was largely agricultural. From an original east-west axis across the upper quarter of the expanded city, low-density development spread during the 1970s and early 1980s to fill in the northern, coastal, and western areas. Roads and other infrastructure were built to accommodate that growth.

Well planned and well paced from a development standpoint, this conversion to a suburban, residential makeup dramatically altered what had been a primarily agricultural area, including a portion that had long been farmed by Mennonites, many of whom ultimately left the area. Recognizing the threat to the rural character of the old county areas of Virginia Beach, in 1979 the city conceptualized a line marking a development boundary and in 1986 drew that line roughly across the southern third of the city. Development south of that line—the Green Line—was at first discouraged and then held to lower densities.

## Creation of the Transition Area

By 1993, the demand-driven expansion north of the Green Line had strained resources and altered the quality of life for many residents. It was continuing to add to the municipal burden to construct, operate, deliver, and maintain facilities and services. Although still cognizant of its agricultural and rural past, the city decided to begin to allow controlled development south of the Green Line by creating a transition area.

Located between the Green Line to the north and Indian River Road to the south, the transition area was to be the buffer between the still rural southern area and the more developed northern areas. The type of development would be strictly controlled, primarily by density, with a goal of

lessening the burden on municipal services and avoiding the infrastructure costs incurred in the developed northern areas.

## Current Development Trends

Development in Virginia Beach has been and continues to be heavily oriented toward residential activity, which averages slightly over 70 percent of the cost of all new construction (excluding land) annually for the past ten years, even during periods of increased commercial development. In 2005, the cost of new residential construction was \$452 million, almost double that in 1998. Single-family construction accounted for almost \$200 million of the 2005 volume, with condominiums, townhouses, and apartments making up the bulk of the balance.

With the change in transition area policies in 2003, the character of residential development has become primarily upscale, planned communities with large lots in a suburban pattern and abundant amenities such as recreational space and open space. One requirement in the transition area is that new development be tax-neutral, in that the fees and tax revenue generated are to cover the incremental municipal capital costs, including water, sewer, and health and safety costs. Another requirement is to maintain more open space during development to buffer the more intensive (dense) uses in the west, the north, and to a lesser degree the east, from the less intensive uses in the predominately rural south. To achieve this, lower densities (one unit per acre) were sought in the transition area. Higher land prices in the transition area in turn pushed residential redevelopment activity back toward the already more densely developed areas of the city.

Given the robust economy of Virginia Beach and the in-migration caused by job creation and retirees, especially retired military personnel, housing production in both the transition area and other

areas has been absorbed. The mean assessment on a new home in Virginia Beach in 2005 was \$438,000, up from \$335,000 a year earlier and \$289,000 in 2003. Because the new single-family homes in the transition area and the southeast are of increasingly higher cost (value) than homes in other areas of the city, the growth in assessed real estate value in the Princess Anne area, which includes the transition area, has been quite dramatic.

At the south edge of the transition area, the line along Indian River Road was designated as the terminal point for city water and sewer for any development. South of Indian River Road, all development requires septic systems. In 1994, a zoning change was made to the residential permitting requirements in this area, from 150-foot frontage to a density allocation dependent on soil type and conditional use permit approval (with a minimum of five acres per dwelling unit as the highest density). Since that time, about 460 residential permits have been issued for land south of Indian River Road.

Another result of the creation of the transition area and its development requirements should be noted: a shift in the composition of homeownership and resident economics. Of those 460 permits, a fraction of the homes have been completed in the transition area. As measured by census and other data, the area within a one-, three-, and five-mile radius of Pungo Crossing—which includes much of

the eastern end of the transition area—has seen a marked change in resident composition, home value, and other metrics.

Growing populations with strong buying power are development drivers. Following that impetus, a 540,000-square-foot commercial center called Red Mill Commons opened just to the north of the eastern portion of the transition area and north of Pungo Crossing. Retail rents in this area are on the high end for Virginia Beach overall and vacancy is low.

As of June 2006, approximately 1,300 additional residential units, primarily single-family detached homes, had been approved in the transition area. This figure indicates that local developers believe the demand for these higher-cost units (higher cost relative to the balance of Virginia Beach residential units) will continue.

Within the transition area, much of the western portion falls under Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) for NAS Oceana and Fentress Auxiliary Landing Field noise contours. These areas are subject to residential development restrictions. In the rest of Virginia Beach, outside the transition area and north of the Green Line, very little raw land is available for development.

The panel is aware that the recent BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Commission order indicated that operations might be altered at NAS

**Figure 1**  
**Housing Demographics: Pungo Crossing, Virginia Beach**

| Households               | Distance from Center of Pungo Crossing |             |            |               |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
|                          | One Mile                               | Three Miles | Five Miles | Fifteen Miles |
| Housing Units            | 123                                    | 6,517       | 21,002     | 226,948       |
| Owner Occupied           | 88%                                    | 94%         | 85%        | 68%           |
| Median Year Built        | 1991                                   | 1994        | 1990       | 1982          |
| Built 1999–2006          | 17.78%                                 | 24.86%      | 20.30%     | 9.86%         |
| Built 1995–1998          | 18.70%                                 | 23.08%      | 14.83%     | 6.30%         |
| Estimated Home Value     | \$293,056                              | \$274,481   | \$236,791  | \$195,634     |
| Average Household Income | \$96,295                               | \$97,745    | \$81,943   | \$70,923      |

Oceana, a base that employs 12,000. Curtailed jet flight operations could reduce the AICUZ noise zones and free additional underused land for development. The city has already identified specific areas for residential restrictions for AICUZ-appropriate uses—areas that are closer to the existing transportation network and population centers.

For a variety of good reasons, Virginia Beach continues to attract new residents. With the limited amounts of land available for residential development, the panel notes that higher-density uses, including high-rise development, are occurring—the logical progression of urban development. If operations at NAS Oceana are curtailed, additional residential uses could be considered for the areas currently under the noise restrictions.

### **Market Opportunities for Pungo Crossing**

Of the approximately 1,300 new residential units approved in the transition area, most are within three miles of Pungo Crossing. At this time, most of the retail and service support for the needs of these residents will be met by businesses within the transition area and immediately adjacent, to the north and east. Indeed, Pungo Crossing residents and residents south of Indian River Road have already benefited from access to the larger array of retail and services now located nearby. Because there is an existing and increasing population concentration close to Pungo Crossing with strong buying power, it can be expected that developers and operators will be looking to add to the support stock on Princess Anne Road north of Pungo Crossing. Indeed, given the increased traffic already evident throughout the settlement

area, Pungo Crossing is becoming a more attractive location for specialty retail, restaurants, and other support real estate.

Aside from the straight population drivers, other considerations make Pungo's location attractive for additional services. The Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, False Cape State Park, Sandbridge, and other locations for ecotourism, kayaking, cycling, fishing, and other sports are but a short distance away. Retail and service opportunities based on these activities could easily offer low-impact ways to help reestablish Pungo as a meaningful crossroads.

There is currently an opportunity to take advantage of this confluence of events and influence, if not direct, this type of development. Large tracts of land in private hands lie both in and near Pungo Crossing. Property to the north of Indian River Road is already in the public utilities service area. Private land owners in this area can be expected to make decisions regarding their land on the basis of their understanding of current options, future coordinated development plans, and their financial circumstances. These opportunities are likely to vanish if private owners cannot see an economic reason for participating in the renewal of Pungo Crossing. Once individual owners begin to develop under current city standards, the opportunity to reposition and integrate property use and structural aesthetics will be lost.

# Development Strategies

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**G**rowth and preservation are not mutually exclusive. The vision and plan for Pungo Crossing will help set the character and direction for the settlement. It is important that the plan accord with the following principles:

- Be economically viable and self sufficient;
- Have a broad appeal to a wide range of people;
- Have adequate public facilities;
- Be aesthetically attractive; and
- Create strong neighborhoods.

The vision and concepts presented by the panel represent the initial step in the planning and design process. Much more needs to be done. The important next step is to refine and elaborate a detailed master plan for the creation of Pungo Crossing, either using in-house capabilities in the city or appointing appropriate master-planning consultants. The master plan needs to incorporate the following components:

- Physical development plan, with unifying public space network;
- Specific project definition (in particular city-led initiatives, such as relocation of the farmers market and establishment of a heritage park, development of civic facilities, and infrastructure improvements);
- Access, circulation, and parking plan;
- Regional trails and connection plan;
- Infrastructure improvement plan;
- Environmental management plan;
- Zoning and land use plan;
- Heritage controls;
- Financing and implementation plan; and

- Development guidelines.

It is important that the master plan reinforce and respond to or influence regional planning aspects, particularly in regard to regional transportation, the environment, land use, and open-space initiatives.

Realistic phasing and identification of capital funding mechanisms is an important requirement of the plan. Not everything can or will be funded or developed at one time. A phasing strategy will identify important catalytic projects that can initiate secondary development and infrastructure improvements.

## Plan Actions

The following actions are needed to realize the recommendations of the panel:

- Prepare a detailed master plan for Pungo Crossing.
- Prepare design guidelines.
- Plan and implement access improvements, including parking.
- Prepare an implementation strategy for regional pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails.
- Prepare a development strategy for relocation of the farmers market.
- Prepare an implementation strategy for relocation of historic farm buildings.
- Prepare an implementation strategy for the regional greenways plan.
- Prepare a development strategy for a civic park and a fire station.
- Implement the building improvement program.

## Governance

Leadership and advocacy are necessary for the successful realization of the vision for Pungo Crossing. Providing certainty to the community through a transparent process and timely decision making is necessary to ensure that the planning and implementation process moves forward in a positive manner, riding the momentum created by the development and investment community. The most important role of the city, besides providing the necessary leadership and advocacy, is to provide the necessary investment to initiate the plan. A feasibility study of the sale of the existing farmers market site and the generation of funds for the development of the public market and heritage park is an important first step. Other public investment needs to be identified and prioritized. The city must provide the catalyst for development and must do so in the early planning phase because delaying will increase costs.

Although city sponsorship is necessary to initiate the plan, the private sector will be responsible for delivering much of the built outcome. Public/private partnering may be desirable for delivering or managing aspects of the vision for Pungo Crossing. These opportunities and responsibilities need to be identified early in the planning phase. The panel also recommends that the city establish an appropriate development and approval process and a city-administered steering committee to help bring the plan to fruition.

Sustainable financing mechanisms and a tool kit of incentives are necessary if the development community is to deliver on the vision. In addition, the creation of a service district, a mini-TIF (tax increment financing), and other financing mechanisms should be explored in regard to implementing infrastructure, civic, landscape, and street-scapes improvements within the settlement.

The city has used establishment of strategic growth areas as a tool to concentrate growth; however, greater attention now needs to be given to redevelopment initiatives, to be able to cater to future growth demand, take advantage of existing physical and community infrastructure, and help move development pressure away from more fragile agricultural and environmentally sensitive land.

Now is the time to pause and reconsider the development policy in the transition area. What has been executed to date, in the panel's view, does not reflect the intent of the existing ordinance. During this period of policy reevaluation, the panel recommends a halt to further suburban-style development south of Pungo Crossing, regardless of whether it meets rural cluster standards. It also recommends that a limited number of houses be established in Pungo Crossing, on the eastern side of Princess Anne Road, south of Indian River Road. However, these housing sites should be developed only after the incorporation into the Agricultural Reserve Program (ARP) of the two remaining rural land parcels located immediately southeast of the settlement, thus forming a contiguous agricultural buffer along the southern boundary.

## Sustainability

Sustainability is a cornerstone of the plan. Pungo Crossing offers the opportunity to create a development model for Virginia Beach and other fringe communities. The environmental wonderland of the rural area requires stewardship to ensure that this regional amenity is maintained. This area is a community asset, like the oceanfront, and has the potential to enhance the regional experience for visitors and residents alike. The ARP has endeavored to contain residential development of agricultural lands. As with all such programs, it requires strong advocacy and realistic targets. To maintain momentum and ensure the effectiveness of the ARP, the panel recommends that the program be fully funded and aggressive take-up targets established, supported by a community marketing strategy.

Significant inroads have been made in the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Pungo Crossing and the rural area with the acquisition of Back Bay properties under public ownership. The city has established several open-space initiatives, including the Green Sea connection between Stumpy Lake and the Back Bay environmental and recreation areas; however, the physical construction of the trail network and landscape enhancements has yet to be implemented. An implementation and management strategy is required to deliver the benefits of the integrated trail and open-space network.

### Governance Actions

The following actions are needed to ensure that an appropriate course of action is taken to implement the panel's recommendations:

- Define the decision-making and administrative framework for Pungo Crossing.
- Facilitate public/private partnerships.
- Quickly initiate actions to begin planning and development of the plan.
- Review the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate plan recommendations.
- Develop an infrastructure funding plan, with emphasis on regional road implementation strategy and prioritization.
- Redefine and clarify the role and implementation of the ARP.
- Reinstate ARP funding and aggressively pursue the purchase of high-priority properties into the program.
- Do not pursue ARP purchases north of Indian River Road.
- Develop special district and funding mechanisms for Pungo Crossing improvements, with an incentives tool kit.
- Initiate scenic byway designation for Princess Anne Road.
- Initiate an environmental preservation strategy.
- Identify and adopt sustainable development principles and practices for Pungo Crossing.
- Review the planning ordinances and restrict further residential development south of Pungo Crossing.

### Marketing

The Pungo region is a regional amenity, and it is desirable to promote Pungo Crossing as an attractive Virginia Beach destination. Although the area is currently recognized for the Strawberry Festival, a broader program of events and activities based around the farmers market—including sea-

“Good marketing isn’t about selling the story...it is about telling the story.”

—Seth Goodin

*The Purple Cow—Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*

sonal events, local produce festivals, wine and food events, and heritage and environmental activities—will help reinforce the important role the area has to play within the city. The addition of specialty shops and services will help enhance the visitor experience and provide amenities for local residents. It is also important that the marketing strategy address strategic development and redevelopment opportunities in Virginia Beach as a whole, based on the best and most valuable use of available land and existing infrastructure.

### Marketing Actions

Appropriate marketing of Pungo Crossing depends on an orderly and detailed set of actions, with distinct responsibility for each action assigned to specific individuals or groups. The panel suggests the following measures to achieve this marketing concept:

- Prepare a marketing strategy to promote Pungo Crossing.
- Prepare an events calendar for regional and seasonal festivals and gatherings.
- Prepare a rural and environmental education program.
- Attract a mix of unique retailers and specialty service uses.
- Market the value and benefits of redevelopment opportunities in greater Virginia Beach.

### Agricultural Preservation

Virginia Beach has made great strides toward identifying a desire and need to preserve the elements of an agricultural economy and rural lifestyle. This message was delivered to the ULI

panel in numerous conversations with community members, municipal staff members, and elected and appointed officials. Critical to successful preservation is the ability to manage land use in a way that sustains agricultural operations such as row cropping, livestock operations, and truck farming. The tool for doing this in Virginia Beach is the ARP, which was started in 1995. The program allows landowners to sell development rights to the city through a perpetual easement that extinguishes development rights for a period of 25 years, at which time the property owner may petition to buy back the rights at a market rate. The voluntary program is targeted to lands in the rural area and transition area. The program is funded through a dedicated portion of the citywide real estate tax that has been as high as 1.5 percent and recently was lowered to 0.9 percent. Since its inception, roughly 7,000 acres of agricultural lands have been preserved through the program.

Although these lands have been successfully protected, the program relies entirely on the individual will of property owners electing to participate. This program also is perceived as a growth management and resource management tool. The observation of the panel is that this approach is not as successful as it could be in managing growth in the rural area or preserving valuable natural resources. Trends in the rural area show the emergence of equestrian uses and vegetable or truck farming. These uses are partly a result of the changing marketplace (that is, grain elevators and machinery businesses moving out of the area).

Zoning in the rural area caters more to fostering rural residential subdivisions of expensive, large, suburban-type homes that often create conflicts with the agricultural character of the area (which is characterized by slow-moving vehicles on roads, odors, dust, noise, and chemical uses). This rural subdivision pattern is not in keeping with the agricultural characteristics that seem to be the desire of the Virginia Beach community. Yet there is clearly a market for the so-called farmette, and there is a desire to retain a certain land value in the rural area that is not supported purely by agricultural uses.

This type of zoning relates to the study area in a number of ways. Pungo is at the critical juncture where country and city meet. The ability to retain some of its quaint charm and rural character hinges on the ability to control the amount of rural residential growth that occurs south of the crossing. Continuance of the pattern that is developing today will contribute to the erosion of that agricultural lifestyle. The panel's plan for Pungo Crossing emphasizes the agricultural heritage of the area and relies on the larger policy implications of achieving the true intentions of the ARP.

#### **Agricultural Reserve Program Modifications**

The panel recommends that the city consider modifying the ARP to accomplish the following objectives:

- Strengthen the ability to protect the agrarian economy.
- Secure priority sites in key locations (particularly in Pungo Crossing).
- Allow the evolution of the agricultural economy to adjust to changing markets and economies of scale.
- Limit the amount of rural residential subdivisions (and McMansions) that infringe on agricultural operations and lifestyles.
- Strengthen the design requirements for rural residential developments, emphasizing rural character, greater setbacks from main roads and agricultural uses, a wood construction vocabulary, and site designs reflective of more traditional farmsteads.

#### **Agricultural Actions**

The panel suggests the following actions to strengthen and protect the agriculture elements in the city:

- Limit development densities to one unit per 15 acres in the agricultural area.
- Support redevelopment in the core city.
- Prioritize and actively pursue key lands to preserve, as articulated in the plan for Pungo Crossing.

- Encourage more sustainable development practices—ecobuilding, energy efficiency, self-sufficiency (for example, community gardens and community-supportive agriculture).
- Increase the buffer between neighborhoods and agricultural uses.
- Encourage a more sensitive design pattern emphasizing farmyards, lanes, rural architectural character, no curbs or gutters, and minimal manicured lawn area.

# Planning and Design

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**P**lanning and design considerations must take into account the character and integrity of the rural crossroads that is Pungo Crossing. They must also reflect the transitional nature of this particular location as it relates to the more pastoral area to the south and the urbanizing area to the north. The following section outlines an appropriate approach to this design.

## Creating a Sustainable Community

The panel considered a number of fundamental questions regarding the future of Pungo Crossing: its role, its scale, and the character of current and future development. The area has evolved from an important regional service center for the adjacent rural community and is now at an important crossroads. It is evident to the panel that, without intervention to shape and focus development, the area will fall into decline, threatening the remaining heritage, the charming buildings, and the landscape character.

The panel envisions Pungo Crossing as a revitalized service community (restoring the rural service role of the past), supplemented with regionally relevant uses that help restore the area's rural and environmental identity and consolidate its regional role. The central concept of the plan is to build on the existing rural vernacular to create a living village, with a mixture of civic, commercial, and residential uses and a clearly defined edge. Strongly defined edges will help create a gateway to Virginia Beach from the southern approach, and a gateway to the rural and environmental wonderland from the northern approach. This will be reinforced by limiting vehicular speed to 25 miles per hour within the settlement.

The panel's recommended land use plan could result in an additional 40,000 to 50,000 square feet of commercial space, created by uses such as the farmers market and other retail draws that sup-

port the identity and theme of the Pungo Crossing (restaurants, outfitters, specialty retailers, and so on). The plan will result in 30 to 40 new single-family detached homes, most of which will be located north of Indian River Road. It will also result in a significant public attraction in the farmers market and the idea of using Pungo Crossing to connect the city of Virginia Beach with its rural heritage.

Panel members believe that it is important to implement the greenway improvements associated with the Green Sea Byway project, providing a strong landscape character and approach to the crossroads from the east and west. They also believe the establishment of a similar landscape character along Princess Anne Road will reinforce the rural experience that helps distinguish Pungo Crossing in the regional setting. This greenway provides a strong framework around which the plan is arranged.

## Elements of the Plan

The panel has divided the study area into four quadrants. It has made suggestions regarding the design character of structures and recommendations regarding the entrances or gateways to and from the study area. The land use suggestions of this plan are intended to stimulate positive private market reaction, while creating a "gatekeeping function" for the rural area.

### Gateways

In the context of this report, gateways act as both entryways to and boundaries between specific land use types. These gateways can be physical structures or merely perceived boundaries but they play a vital role in delineating the urban from the rural.

**Southern Gateway.** The southern edge of Pungo Crossing will be defined with a rural preservation buffer. The panel recommends the purchase of the

development rights for four additional farm parcels, with a combined area of 30 acres, into the ARP to preserve the agricultural open space in perpetuity. This edge will demark the regional-rural boundary, with the Pungo Crossing settlement as the transition point between the city and the country. An entrance feature will announce to visitors that they are entering or leaving Pungo Crossing.

**Northern Gateway.** A similar experience is proposed for entering the settlement from the north. The panel envisages the existing historical farmhouse and significant stands of trees southeast of Flanagans Lane as marking the northern gateway to Pungo Crossing. In addition, the panel suggests that small-scale, historically themed housing should front the western side of Princess Anne Road and the northern side of Seaboard Road.

#### Quadrant Development

The quadrants are those sections defined by the intersection of Princess Anne Road and Indian River Road.

**Southeast Quadrant.** A 2.5-acre civic park that is a focus for the local community is the centerpoint of the southeastern quadrant. The park will cater to community gatherings, ensuring sustainability and vitality. To provide emergency response facilities for the settlement, the park will also house a fire station.

The plan accommodates a mix of civic, commercial, residential, and open-space uses, providing a diversity of opportunity. Revitalization of the existing housing and shops, in accordance with strict architectural, streetscape, and landscape guidelines, will help achieve consistency in the character and quality of the settlement. The panel envisions a renovated Munden's store being an important historic cornerstone. Appropriate sidewalk, trail, and pedestrian facilities will allow movement between Munden's, the adjacent vacant parcels, and the commercial core on either side of Princess Anne Road to the south.

The city will need to determine the appropriate additional rights-of-way or easements necessary to accommodate these pedestrian facilities. The city should initiate and undertake these activities with cooperation from property owners. Participa-



tion in the sidewalk and trail network should be a requirement of property owners who take advantage of new facilities and utilities.

Vignette of pedestrian-equestrian interface with Princess Anne Road.

The panel believes that the addition of housing to the area will increase the vibrancy of the community, providing the “living community” necessary to sustain a village feeling. A modest number of additional houses are proposed on the western side of Princess Anne Road, pending the preservation of the southern parcels of land through the ARP. The potential exists for additional houses to be developed along the southern side of Indian River Road, east of the existing wetlands.

Vignette of suggested woodland preserve.



Suggested land use plan.



The plan promotes the preservation of the existing 15 acres of wooded wetlands and the incorporation of an extensive network of recreation trails. A 5-acre land parcel adjacent to the wooded wetlands will be designated an environmental services center. This area will accommodate either (1) a standard septic system or drainfield, (2) an alternative system such as filter or drip irrigation, or (3) if necessary, a pump station that will provide service specifically for the Pungo Crossing area. The panel recommends making a priority of acquiring development rights for the ARP of an additional 22.4-acre parcel of land east of the wetlands.

The trail network should be refined through a design charrette process, and the city should consider funding the trail network to ensure its implementation. The trail network will do much to provide a balance between the strictly rural uses to the south of the settlement and the marketplace use of the settlement itself. Development within the crossing should not be allowed to ignore or avoid accommodating the trail system. The integration of the trail into the commercial area will go a long way toward confirming the unique quality of Pungo Crossing. This unique quality will help defend against the argument that Pungo Crossing is just another rural crossroads along Indian River Road and that over time it should be suburbanized.

**Southwest Quadrant.** The existing commercial area should be renovated to reflect the common vernacular of American folk architecture (see the Design Character section of this report). To the extent possible, uses (whether new development or special use permits) should be encouraged to move toward the road to provide the feeling of an intimate community that is both walkable and safe, while avoiding conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. On a rural highway such as Princess Anne Road, the retail focus should be on the intersection, with mixed-use service and community retail located along either side of the road within the settlement.

As in the southeast quadrant, the agricultural-equestrian interface should be maintained both at the periphery and in the settlement proper. Finally, the wetlands and sensitive lands to the southwest should be protected and emphasized in

a way that strengthens the identification of Pungo Crossing as the gateway to an environmental wonderland.

**Northwest Quadrant.** The area planned for sanitary sewer service is located in this quadrant. The property immediately next to the intersection should accommodate primarily retail and services uses, and the buildings and structures should attempt to re-create a village street facade similar to that of older villages. Parking should be located behind the buildings, out of view of passing vehicles on Princess Anne and Indian River roads. Residential uses should provide a threshold leading into the village, with single-family homes fronting on both Princess Anne and Seaboard roads. The quadrant is an appropriate location for an inn, which could act as a distinct centerpiece, differentiating this quadrant from the others by projecting a certain vernacular panache while maintaining its architectural connection with the village. An inn would offer food, lodging, and resort-style services such as spa facilities, horseback riding, and “elder hostel” activities. It could act as an appropriate interface with the equestrian and agricultural uses in the northern and western extremities of the quadrant.

**Northeast Quadrant.** The panel suggests the preservation of small-scale retail and commercial uses at the intersection and the creation of a heritage park of about 15 acres incorporating a public market. The park would be an outdoor repository of historical structures as well as a site for facilities for the expansion of seasonal activities. In addition, this quadrant is ideal for an outdoor arena and livestock or horse exhibition area of about 45 acres. The panel also suggests the creation of a woodland preserve that creates a visual statement at the entrance to the outdoor arena area.

### **Design Character**

The scale and character of uses in all four quadrants should evoke the rural crossroads nature of Pungo Crossing. Suburban-style development, including auto-oriented shopping centers and cookie-cutter houses (especially “phony colonial” ones), is not appropriate in the core area of Pungo Crossing. American folk architecture that blends with its rural surroundings should be the dominant theme. The dominant residential look should

be Craftsman-style bungalows, using the Aladdin Read-Cut kit homes as an example. New commercial uses should also use bungalow-style architectural elements:

- Low-pitched, gabled roofs;
- Wide, overhanging eaves;
- Exposed rafters under the eaves;
- Decorative (false) brackets under the gables;
- Incised porches beneath the main roof;
- Tapered, square columns supporting the roof;
- Four-over-one or six-over-one sash windows, often with Frank Lloyd Wright design motifs; and
- Handcrafted stone or woodwork, often with mixed materials throughout the structure.

Bungalows can be either front-gabled or side-gabled. Larger commercial uses, particularly those that will go through the renovation process, should use the same architectural elements, modified for commercial uses.

To the extent possible, new parking should be oriented away from Princess Anne Road. Parking on the side of buildings should be screened; access points should be minimized and, where possible, combined to enhance the historic nature of Pungo Crossing. The area should be made safe for pedestrians. Sidewalks and pathways should provide the ability to walk from one end of the settlement to the other with a minimum of conflicts with vehicles.

## Infrastructure Systems

Road and sewer infrastructure were identified early in the panel process as two important and controversial subjects. The presence or lack of infrastructure should not be a hindrance to carrying out the city's policies.

### Circulation Systems and Mobility

Transportation systems and traffic patterns are integral to defining Pungo Crossing's identity. A successful transportation system is both a critical component in maintaining a community's economic

vitality and a building block of the Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan. Levels of traffic congestion and unsafe roadways are used as principal criteria when evaluating the effects of recent and past growth in Virginia Beach. As traffic congestion builds and roadway systems break down, the image and perception of a place also begins to break down. The rural character of Princess Anne and Indian River roads contributes to the rural identity of Pungo Crossing. It also contributes heavily to the ability of Pungo Crossing to sustain itself as a special place in Virginia Beach, the place where the city becomes country.

Simply folding under demands to reduce traffic congestion by expanding roadways and engineering intersection improvements will only exacerbate traffic congestion problems in the long term. An approach to transportation planning that balances good land use planning, community design, and transportation system engineering is the solution the panel advocates to ensure that Pungo Crossing is sustained as a strong and healthy neighborhood.

Traffic affecting Pungo Crossing comes from two primary sources: local traffic generated by local land use patterns (homes and businesses) and regional traffic generated by major retail centers, job centers, entertainment centers, or other regional destinations. Traffic is heaviest traveling northbound along Princess Anne Road and westbound along Indian River Road in the peak morning periods and in the opposite directions in the peak afternoon periods. On weekdays, these trips presumably are work trips coming from the rural areas of Virginia Beach and from North Carolina.

Significant truck traffic has been observed in the project area, which is also a concern for the community. Truck traffic is essential to the agricultural industry that is so prominent in the rural area of Virginia Beach, moving products from farm to market. In addition, agricultural equipment uses these roads to move between farm fields. This equipment moves slowly and often takes up both sides of the roadway. Truck traffic is also generated from a number of borrow pits used for extracting sand. The bulk of the agriculture-related truck traffic flows south from Pungo



Road with pavement width of 20 feet.



Far left: Bungalow-style commercial adaptive use.  
Left: Truck traffic in Pungo Crossing.



Crossing to markets in North Carolina, while the sand extraction uses have a primary destination within the region.

Pungo Crossing is bisected by two regionally significant transportation routes that fill local and regional transportation needs. Indian River Road carries an average daily traffic volume of approximately 2,800 vehicles per day east of Princess Anne Road and 6,000 vehicles per day west of Princess Anne Road through Pungo Crossing. It

serves as a major east-west roadway connecting portions of western Virginia Beach with the Back Bay and Sandbridge Beach areas. Within the project area, Indian River Road is a narrow two-lane roadway with varying right-of-way widths, from 34 feet at its narrowest point to 120 feet in locations near its intersection with Princess Anne Road. A 60-foot right-of-way width is a common cross-section for Indian River Road. Within the right-of-way are the two-lane roadway, a ditch section, and utilities. Indian River Road has been identified as a Virginia scenic byway, as part of the Green Sea Byway.

Princess Anne Road through Pungo Crossing carries upward of 9,000 trips per day south of Indian River Road and more than 11,000 trips per day northward toward the urbanized areas of Virginia Beach. As on Indian River Road, right-of-way widths along Princess Anne Road vary through the project area, ranging from 50 feet at its narrowest points to more than 100 feet in some locations near intersections.

The current traffic volumes on Princess Anne Road through Pungo Crossing might suggest that the existing roadway is insufficient to handle the traffic. This will continue to be a problem, principally because of growing regional markets that use Princess Anne Road. Future development in Pungo Crossing will affect Princess Anne Road, but it will pale in comparison with the impact created by regional growth pressures. Indian River Road currently operates at an acceptable level through the project area; however, the panel's observations at the intersection of Princess Anne and Indian River roads indicate that traffic most likely exceeds acceptable levels of operation, especially during peak periods.

Traffic impacts that will result from future development in Pungo Crossing cannot be fully understood within the scope of this analysis. As noted earlier, the panel recommends a slight increase in densities of 50,000 square feet of retail and up to 40 homes. The incremental growth in traffic generated by the introduction of these new uses could be about 2,600 average daily trips, but in the panel's opinion that is insignificant compared with the changes in traffic patterns and growth that will occur at the regional level.

#### **Management of Traffic Flow and Road Capacity**

The principal objectives of an efficient and successful transportation system are to provide access to local properties while ensuring safe mobility between origin and destination. As traffic grows (more from regional growth than from local growth), the ability to achieve these transportation objectives decreases. Two significant regional roadway system improvements will contribute to reducing the traffic pressure on Princess Anne and Indian River roads: the completion of Nimmo Parkway between Indian River Road and General Booth Boulevard and the completion of Southeast-

ern Parkway, connecting I-264 near the ocean-front and Great Neck to the city of Chesapeake. Nimmo Parkway will alleviate some of the east-west movement along Indian River Road, while Southeastern Parkway has the potential to pull some of the more regional north-south traffic off Princess Anne Road. Nimmo Parkway and Southeastern Parkway are Virginia Department of Transportation projects. These improvements by themselves will not resolve the longer-term need to improve the transportation system throughout the Pungo Crossing area.

The following potential roadway improvements will increase the level of capacity on Princess Anne and Indian River roads and at their intersection:

- Expansion of Princess Anne Road by six to eight feet of pavement on each side to accommodate bicycle traffic and passing by larger farm equipment vehicles, which often take up the entire 20 feet of existing pavement;
- Improvements to the intersection's traffic signal, including dedicated turn lights for the predominant turning movements during peak traffic periods; and
- Improvements to road geometry at the intersection, to clearly identify travel lanes while enhancing the pedestrian environment.

#### **Land Use Strategies**

The panel suggests that the following strategies be implemented when a property goes through the land use and zoning review process. Where appropriate, local conditional zoning or special use permit processes should be used to ensure that the specific components are implemented.

**Circulation and Access Management.** Circulation and access management is a means to control conflicts between the desire to have access to local property and the desire to minimize potential traffic conflicts. A local circulation system should serve each quadrant and provide focused points of access to Princess Anne and Indian River roads. The local circulation system should emphasize a rural design and should give priority to pedestrian-friendly systems and walkability. Individual access to properties should be directed to the internal circulation systems and side streets rather than Princess Anne Road or Indian River Road.

Suggested village lane for Pungo Crossing.



**Alternative Modes of Vehicle Travel.** Alternative modes of vehicle travel are an important means of reducing traffic congestion. The evolution of Pungo Crossing will result in a regional destination with an attraction at each of the four quadrants of the intersection. Good roadway design and traffic planning, coupled with a pedestrian path connecting the quadrants, will make it possible to park once and walk between destinations rather than driving from point to point. Every trip avoided reduces the amount of traffic. Currently, the retail uses on the four quadrants could encourage this pattern; however, crossing the road is not yet an appealing endeavor. Future road improvements and development patterns should place a priority on designing an internal pedestrian circulation system.

**Complementary Land Use Planning.** Complementary planning is an important aspect of traffic management. Good planning establishes land uses that complement one another and reduce the need or desire to travel by vehicles between quadrants. For example, mixing various uses in proximity enables people to park once and visit multiple places.

### Attention to Rural Character

The desire of the community to preserve rural heritage and rural character can be expressed in roadway design elements: narrow roads, gravel shoulders, drainage ditches, country lanes, and so on. The ability to retain the character and identity of Princess Anne and Indian River roads depends as much or more on future land use and transportation management practices outside the Pungo Crossing area as it does on future development within Pungo Crossing. Limiting rural residential growth to the south and prioritizing planned regional transportation improvements will make it possible to retain the rural character of Princess Anne and Indian River roads.

Local circulation roads serving the four quadrants should look like country lanes, with such characteristics as a narrow cross-section, gravel shoulders, no curbs, and a grade that allows drainage to infiltrate through drainage swales and bioswales rather than being collected by a stormwater collection system. Internal circulation systems and future improvements to Princess Anne and Indian

River roads should emphasize and prioritize pedestrians, as well as equestrians and bicyclists, as primary users of the circulation and mobility systems. The use of shared paths instead of traditional sidewalks should be encouraged as a means to emphasize and embrace the rural character of Pungo Crossing.

The panel recommends the following transportation actions:

- Prioritize improvements to the regional system (Nimmo Parkway, Southeastern Parkway).
- Prepare, adopt, and follow design standards for roadways in or through Pungo Crossing (through creation of a rural roadway section).
- Prepare and follow an access management strategy for major roadways (arterials and collectors). The strategy must include provisions for a more pedestrian-friendly environment in Pungo Crossing while maintaining the road's current vehicular capacity.
- Plan and provide for alternative modes of mobility (walking, biking, riding).
- Establish a land use pattern and roadway design that encourages and prioritizes walking within districts.

### Utilities

Control and coordination of water and sanitary sewer extensions are key to a successful rural preservation program. The ability to ensure Pungo Crossing as a viable commercial area

also depends on certain limited extension of these utilities.

### Water

The panel recommends permitting extension of public water into those portions of Pungo Crossing defined by the land use plan earlier in this report. This recommendation comes with the caveat that those wishing to gain access to public water do so at their own expense and that all other applicable portions of the plan are complied with, including density and design requirements.

### Sewer

The panel quickly recognized that public sewer is perhaps the most controversial issue facing the city in the Pungo Crossing area. For more than 20 years, the policy of prohibiting sewer south of Indian River Road has created an urban growth boundary and has steered growth to the urban service area and transition area. However, the panel observed that this prohibition has not stopped development in the rural area. Some subdivisions in the rural area cannot be distinguished, either architecturally or functionally, from subdivisions in the transition area or urban service area.

The prohibition against sewer in the immediate area of Pungo Crossing has contributed to the decline and stagnation of the rural commercial and service uses. Agricultural service uses have moved south into North Carolina and commercial retail has moved north. These trends have left Pungo Crossing without a mission. To support the concept of a viable crossroads, a center of rural activity, and a vehicle to help advertise, enhance, and preserve the rural and environmental areas of Virginia Beach, the panel recommends that sanitary sewer service be permitted in a very specific area surrounding the crossroads. The panel does not make this recommendation lightly, and it recognizes and appreciates how this recommendation will be received by various factions within the community. The panel does not believe that the manner in which sanitary sewer is recommended here violates the basic policy regarding sewer in the rural area. Instead it allows the community to control the destiny of the rural area and establish a firm and specific boundary for sewer service.

Expanding the Pungo Crossing service area would be difficult to justify, given the specific boundaries and conditions along the edges (as explained in the Planning and Design section). For other crossroads along Indian River Road, such as West Neck and North Landing roads, the same argument cannot be made. Those two locations have neither the existing zoning, nor the existing non-conforming uses, nor the cohesiveness of Pungo Crossing.

The panel recommends three options for addressing sanitary sewer service in Pungo Crossing. Each is framed by the overarching concept that a specific and precise boundary exists for service to property south of Indian River Road. The system is intended to serve either existing properties or new properties within the study area, in accordance with the study recommendations.

### Utility Actions

The panel suggests three options to address utilities in Pungo Crossing:

- Construct a city-owned community septic system to serve the Pungo Crossing area. Hook-ups to a community-based system can be controlled by the city. Doing this will require acquisition of an appropriate property to house the community tank and drainfield system. Such a system would be located in the southeast quadrant, where most of the soils are acceptable for waste disposal.
- Construct an alternative centralized sewer system to serve the specific Pungo Crossing area (for example, the Puraflo peat filter system). Hook-ups to the community-based system can be controlled by the city. Again, the location would be in the southeast quadrant.
- Extend standards for sanitary sewer south of Indian River Road. Provide service to all properties within the Pungo study area. This extension is approximately 3,000 feet from the southern portion of the transition area. A standard system will require a pump station. An alternative is a low-pressure grinder pump system. Such a system can be installed using relatively small-diameter piping (as small as 1¼- to two-inch laterals and mains), which can be laid in

shallow trenches. Because the wastewater is pumped under low pressure, the piping can follow the terrain and be installed at minimal depths (just under the frost line in colder climates), according to local codes.

Extending lines that connect with the centralized city system brings the perception of accommodating sprawl. The Pungo Crossing plan proposes development that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the prevailing policies of the city regarding rural centers. The southern edge of the settlement, as defined by the panel, provides a

hard line past which extension of sewer should generally be prohibited. The only exception would be for existing structures within 1,000 feet of the boundary whose current waste disposal system has failed and for which no other on-site system is possible or practical.

# Implementation

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**T**he panel has recommended an array of suggestions affecting every aspect of Pungo Crossing. These recommendations relate to the farmers market, roads, infrastructure, retail and residential uses, the environment, and agriculture.

The panel interviewed a great number of people representing these sectors who expressed many varied opinions. All these people—from the public sector and the private sector, landowners and entrepreneurs, politicians and civil servants—have important roles to play in ensuring a future for Pungo Crossing.

Development of Pungo Crossing will require substantial public support and political will, because it requires significant financial investment and changes to existing policies. However, the panel believes that, absent this commitment, Pungo Crossing will not continue to survive in its current form. Instead, left to market economics, both Pungo Crossing and the surrounding agricultural area will be consumed by large houses carved out of farmland. The rural landscape will ultimately disappear, and the greater Pungo rural region and the agrarian history of Virginia Beach will be nothing more than a memory—a story told to future generations.

Pungo Crossing is much more than a crossroads. It is the emblem of an agricultural area that has survived despite significant development pressures. The good news is that the principal reasons for its survival are the policies and actions taken by the city in 1979. The city of Virginia Beach has demonstrated the ability and will to face difficult challenges and recognizes that a policy crafted more than 20 years ago may not solve the problems of today. However, the plan for Pungo Crossing is not a plan that the city can implement on its own.

A complex public/private partnership sponsored and managed by the city and including representation from the larger community should be formed to implement the plan. This partnership will act as an advocate and champion for Pungo Crossing. There is a role for everyone, for all the people the panel interviewed and for the public at large.

An organizational structure or “implementation web” is needed to carry Pungo Crossing from a vision to a reality. The implementation web is a network of strategic public/private partnerships, each focusing on a single element. A steering committee, under the direction of the city manager, marries the individual elements and coordinates the implementation. Each subgroup is staffed by city staff members and includes stakeholders as well as interested members of the public.

The implementation web will ensure that the process of analyzing and implementing the plan is carried out transparently, with ample opportunity for participation by the larger community through public meetings, workshops, and other communication strategies. This partnership will help maintain movement on multiple fronts, ensure that progress is orderly and not redundant, and minimize conflicts among projects, as well as leverage funds.

Very often, multiple objectives can be achieved at lower expense when such partnerships exist. For example, the multiuse path that was recommended will move pedestrians out of the roadway. The land needed to accommodate the pathway can also be used to improve drainage, curtail non-point source pollution, and even contain water pipes. Each of these objectives could be accomplished as an independent project, but at substantially higher cost.

The parking proposed in the northeast quadrant should be shared by multiple users such as the re-

tail, inn, and equestrian uses. Shared parking will permit the distribution of initial costs while reducing impervious cover, thereby minimizing stormwater impacts.

The opportunity also exists to leverage city funds with funds from the state and federal governments, nonprofit agencies, and private individuals, to create projects that are bigger than the sum of their parts. Sometimes it is just a matter of looking at things a little differently. This leveraging is already happening. The lands being preserved for the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge are ideally suited for bird-watching and other passive recreational opportunities. This investment on the part of the federal government should be seen as an investment in Pungo Crossing.

These recommendations will take years to implement, under the best of circumstances. There will be recommendations that the city will reject. And there will be new ideas that the city will generate. The panel believes that the energy and interest that exist today should be capitalized upon now.

**Figure 2**  
**Implementation Web**



## Conclusion

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The panel believes that the foregoing recommendations are sustainable, supportable, and practical. They respond to the concerns expressed by landowners, environmentalists, builders, developers, and residents. A series of compromises and collaborative efforts will be needed. The slight intensification of land use densities suggested by the panel's plan will allow existing businesses to be more sustainable and will allow the settlement to fulfill its role as the gathering place and focal point of the rural community in Virginia Beach. The safeguards put in place by prescribing the southern boundary of Pungo Crossing, together with the strict limitation on sewer hook-ups, will maintain the rural boundary desired by the city. This package balances the

challenges, opportunities, and constraints to achieve a sustainable, attractive, and desirable community in Pungo Crossing.

Urban planner Alex Garvin, a professor at Yale University, once said that “successful urban planning can be described as public action that generates a desirable, widespread and sustained private market reaction.” The recommendations in this report provide a foundation for fulfilling this adage. The preservation of the city's rural area and the rebirth of Pungo Crossing as a vibrant gathering place for residents and visitors will be a self-sustaining exercise that balances preservation with progress.

# About the Panel

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## Franklin A. Martin

*Panel Chair  
Boise, Idaho*

Martin is president of Martin Community Development, LLC. Since August 1997 he has been responsible for the development of Hidden Springs, a 1,844-acre planned community in the Boise Front foothills.

Between 1971 and 1997, Martin was responsible for the development of more than 3,000 homes, primarily in metropolitan Chicago. From 1990 to 1997, he was president of Shaw Homes, Inc., and oversaw the development of several communities, including Homan Square, Garibaldi Square, Luther Village, Prairie Crossing, and The Reserve at the Merit Club.

Martin is chair of the Urban Land Institute's Sustainable Development Council, a member of the National Association of Home Builders, and a member of the Ada County, Idaho, Planning and Zoning Commission. He has served on six ULI Advisory Services panels, four of which he chaired.

Martin holds a bachelor's degree from Hanover College and an MBA from the University of Chicago; he is a licensed real estate broker in Idaho and Illinois.

## W. Easley Hamner

*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

Hamner is a senior principal in The Stubbins Associates, an architectural and planning firm that he joined in 1967. His career has been devoted to the creation of large-scale, memorable, urban mixed-use environments that enhance the city, create value, and engage the imagination. His experience began with the Citicorp Center in New York and continued with assignments in Boston, Nashville, Charlotte, San Francisco, Singapore,

Taipei, Kuwait, China, Korea, and Greece. He was principal-in-charge for the largest hotel complex in the world, the Venetian in Las Vegas. Mixed-use facilities are his primary design interest, and the effects of emerging technologies on communication, entertainment, education, and shopping particularly intrigue him.

Hamner holds a master's degree in architecture from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, a bachelor's degree in architecture from North Carolina State University, and a certificate from the Ecole des Beaux Arts Americaine in Fountainebleau, France.

A ULI member for more than 20 years, Hamner has served two terms on the Institute's Urban Development/Mixed-Use Council and is currently on the International Council. He served as a member of the Governor's Endowment Campaign of the ULI Foundation, and he is a member of the NAIOP Mixed-Use Development Forum.

## Andrew Irvine

*Denver, Colorado*

Irvine, a senior landscape architect at EDAW, Inc., has a broad range of project experience throughout the United States and Australia. He has more than 15 years of experience in landscape architecture and urban design, with specialized skills in site planning, master planning, and urban design guidelines. His projects include major infrastructure, urban renewal, public domain, and traditional park design. He has worked on numerous planning projects that included significant experience with transportation and waterfront development. Irvine also has completed projects that have incorporated comprehensive open-space networks and ecological restoration areas into planned communities. He has degrees in landscape architecture and environmental design.

### **William G. Lashbrook III**

*East Brunswick, New York*

Lashbrook began his career with the Bank of New York in 1973 and progressed through various management positions in the Bank's commercial lending and real estate divisions before becoming vice president and head of the National Real Estate Lending Division.

In 1993, Lashbrook moved to Midlantic Bank as senior vice president and credit officer for the real estate business, and then moved to Pittsburgh as real estate credit officer following PNC's acquisition of Midlantic in 1996. In 1997, he started the residential segment of PNC Real Estate Finance, a unit that focused on national homebuilders and multifamily development financing. He assumed his present position in 1998, when acquisitions and other new business initiatives called for developing new tools to manage real estate finance as a business rather than the traditional loan orientation.

Lashbrook is a member of the board of directors of the National Multi-Housing Council, where he chairs one of the Urban Development/Mixed-Use Councils, and the Real Estate Roundtable, where he chairs the Basel II working group. He received his BA in economics and political science from Duke University and earned his MBA from Seton Hall University.

### **Donna Lewis**

*Trenton, New Jersey*

Lewis is the planning director for Mercer County, New Jersey's capital county. She has served the county for 16 years. The Planning Division is responsible for growth management and redevelopment, open-space and farmland preservation, and transportation planning. Mercer County is a leader in applying cutting-edge transportation concepts, most notably through the creation of transportation development districts and development of access management plans. There is a strong redevelopment effort focused on both the

city of Trenton and the first-generation suburbs. Lewis serves on the Transportation Research Board Access Management Committee, the Central Jersey Transportation Forum Steering Committee, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Lewis holds bachelor's degrees in political science and English from the College of New Jersey and a master's degree in city and regional planning from Rutgers University. She is a New Jersey-licensed professional planner and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. She is an adjunct professor at the College of New Jersey.

### **Ralph L. Núñez**

*Southfield, Michigan*

Núñez is design principal of DesignTeam Limited (Landscape Architects & Planners). His efforts focus on the development and implementation of forward-thinking, realistic, and practical action plans. He has well-developed skills in project management and administration, knowledge of markets and trends, and a keen sensitivity to bottom-line results.

Núñez established DesignTeam Limited in 1984 in Houston, Texas. He has successfully designed, planned, and managed multimillion-dollar redevelopment projects. Specializing in land planning, landscape architecture, and land development, Núñez has been responsible for the master planning of residential communities; park and recreation amenities, and commercial, industrial, office campus, and resort developments ranging from ten to several thousand acres. He was appointed by the governor of Michigan as chairman of the State Board of Landscape Architects.

Núñez has directed multidisciplinary teams in broad-based problem-solving assignments. He has had significant involvement in the management and administration of large master plans throughout the United States and overseas. Núñez received his bachelor of science degree in landscape architecture and environmental planning from Pennsylvania State University in 1976.

## **Bradley Scheib**

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Scheib, a vice president and community planner with Hoisington Koegler Group (HKGi), has provided planning expertise to a number of large-scale projects covering a wide range of planning issues. Most significantly, this project experience includes redevelopment projects, especially those involving transportation and transit corridors, and comprehensive planning projects throughout Minnesota. Scheib also possesses project management experience with the comprehensive plans in Moorhead and Ramsey; the Chanhassen 2005 Alternative Urban Areawide Review; the redevelopment plans in Newport and the Corcoran neighborhood of Minneapolis; and the Southwest Transitway Analysis for Hennepin County.

Scheib specializes in land use analysis and planning. He has become HKGi's resident transit-oriented development (TOD) expert through his work on several projects. He possesses a broad

base of redevelopment planning knowledge. He has also toured several U.S. regions to learn how other areas have addressed redevelopment and TOD issues.

Scheib's communication and public facilitation skills have been essential to his professional success. These communication skills are especially important for building public support for planning initiatives developed during the planning process. He has been able to establish trust with members of the public, an ability that has helped ensure that projects progress smoothly once the planning process is finished and communities begin to implement their plans.

Scheib has a BS in community and regional planning from Iowa State University and is a licensed realtor in Minnesota.