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# Commercial Revitalization Program

## Proposal Cover Sheet

DATE SUBMITTED: June 18, 2004

### COMMERCIAL AREA LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

**Garden City Shopping Center**

5117 – 5175 Lee Highway (intersection with George Mason Dr.)

This project would involve the completion of improvements called for 10 years ago in the Yorktown Civic Association’s Neighborhood Conservation Plan to improve the appearance of the Garden City Shopping Center, a collection of 1950’s vintage shops which stand at the very visible N. Arlington Lee Highway intersection with George Mason Drive. This intersection is the gateway to the Yorktown neighborhood, and improving the appearance of this neglected shopping center has long been a major priority of the neighborhood.

### SUBMITTED BY:

**Yorktown Civic Association**

### ADDRESS:

**2732 N. Harrison St.  
Arlington, VA 22207**

CONTACT PERSON: **David Haring**  
TITLE/AFFILIATION: **President, Yorktown Civic Association**  
PHONE NUMBER: **703/208-5660 (O); 703/241-8111 (H)**  
E-MAIL: **dharing@YorktownCivic.com**

ALTERNATE CONTACT: **Claudia Volk**  
TITLE/AFFILIATION: **Executive Committee Member, Yorktown Civic Association**  
PHONE NUMBER: **703/536-3305**  
E-MAIL: **Claudia.Volk@Verizon.net**

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(For County Use)

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Team Review: \_\_\_\_\_

# Arlington County Commercial Revitalization Proposal Evaluation Criteria

## Identification and Purpose

### Description of the commercial area in general:

The Garden City Shopping Center is located at the intersection of Lee Highway and N. George Mason Road, one of the most prominent intersections in N. Arlington. This collection of small shops was constructed in the late 1950's. Rather than having a single owner or property management firm, its ownership and management is fragmented. There appear to be a dozen owners of 17 distinct properties housing 29 separate businesses (see attachment I). Despite its prime location and heavy use, this fragmented ownership has resulted in a general neglect of the appearance of the facility (see attachment II for photos). The Garden City site is just over 2 acres in size (excluding public right-of-way).

The area surrounding Garden City is residential. The shopping center is separated from single family homes to the north by a large alley.

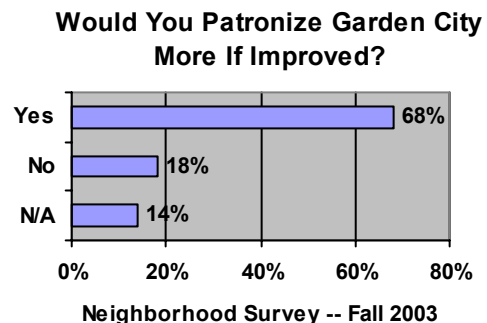
The surrounding neighborhood is home to Yorktown High School, Greenbrier Park, and the Lee/Harrison Shopping Center. The Virginia Hospital Center-Arlington is just a few blocks to the south and Marymount University is to the northeast.

### Description of the proposal:

This application calls for completion of a proposal contained in the Yorktown Neighborhood Conservation Plan, as approved by the County Board, nearly 10 years ago (see Attachment III). In summary, that proposal called for the County to “undertake a Business Conservation project with the owners of the Garden City Shopping Center and adjacent business properties that would provide landscaping at the front of the shopping center along North Lee Highway (replacing current sidewalk and concrete wall); move sidewalk adjacent to the shops; resurface and re-tri-pe parking lot; change entrance to include turning lanes; upgrade shops with awnings; provide uniform signage and paint; and provide additional landscaping and screening behind the commercial buildings.” That plan is still relevant – and clearly more needed – today!

### Explanation of the purpose and benefits of the proposal:

A Commercial Revitalization effort at Garden City would benefit the existing shop owners and the community alike. Survey data indicates that a large majority of



neighborhood residents would be more likely to patronize the Garden City shops if they were improved. Not only could the County make significant improvements to the appearance of this vital intersection through landscape and other improvements in the County right-of-way, a formal effort to improve the facility could energize the many separate owners to work together to make additional improvements.

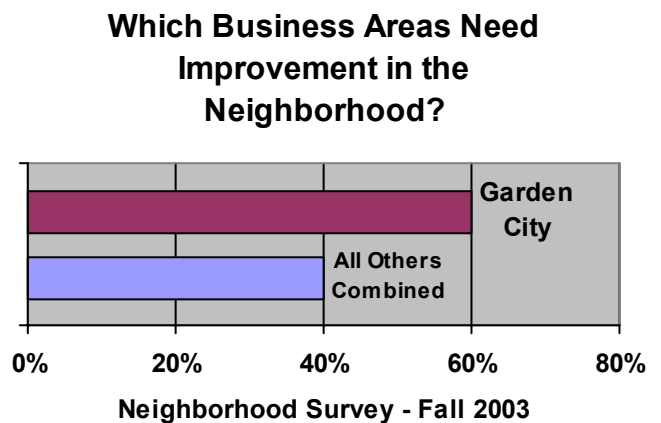
Recent renovations at the nearby Lee/Harrison Shopping Center have proven to be quite successful and well received by the community, and demonstrate the potential benefits of investment in other older shopping facilities in the area. Recent dramatic increases in property values in the area have also fueled the interest of investors in N. Arlington, both in residential and commercial properties.

Just to the east of Garden City, an aging auto-repair shop was recently replaced with an independently owned drug store, Preston's Pharmacy, in another example of the kind of improvements that are occurring in the immediate area.

## Community Support

**Has a community planning process been undertaken for this commercial area (Sector Plan, Neighborhood Conservation Plan, Neighborhood Strategy Area Plan, etc.)? If so, how recent/current is the plan?**

Possible improvements for this area were thoroughly addressed in the Yorktown Neighborhood Conservation Plan as adopted by the County Board in February 1995. While almost no changes have occurred at the site since that plan was adopted, the Yorktown Civic Association is currently engaged in a major update to its neighborhood plan. Based on the 405 responses received to our neighborhood survey in late 2003, we have confirmed that neighborhood support for improvements at Garden City remains quite strong. The commercial and business section of the recent survey is attached, including the written comments (see attachment IV).



**Is there current civic or business association interest and support for the proposal?**

**Yes:** ✓

**No:**

**Explain:**

The membership of the Yorktown Civic Association voted at its Fall Meeting on

November 12, 2003, to request Commercial Revitalization funding for Garden City. The resolution (see attachment V) was advertised in the association newsletter, which was sent to all 1,060 households in the neighborhood, prior to the meeting.

## **Description and Condition**

### **Is the general appearance of the commercial area unsightly and/or in poor condition?**

Yes. Examples of problems include peeling paint, weeds, exposed trash, faded awnings, large potholes, and crumbling retaining walls (see photos in attachment II). The site is also reported to have a vermin problem. This commercial area would benefit greatly from improvements to, and better maintenance of, the buildings, the parking areas, and the County right-of-way.

### **Are pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic facilities in the area unsafe or inadequate? Is there a high volume of pedestrian, bicycle and/or vehicular traffic in the area?**

This commercial area is at one of the busiest intersections in North Arlington, with roughly 30,000 vehicles a-day traveling on Lee Highway and another 15,000 vehicles on George Mason Drive. Entrance into the facility is extremely difficult from Lee Highway. Conditions for the many pedestrians in the area are also less than optimal.

### **Is the area seen by a high number of residents, visitors and/or commuters?**

Lee Highway is a major commuter corridor through Arlington to the nation's capital next door. This intersection is also just blocks away from the growing Virginia Hospital Center-Arlington, one of the region's top high schools, and other facilities which draw many people to the area. The intersection serves as the gateway to the Yorktown neighborhood, and with improvement, the Garden City shops could serve as a defining element of the neighborhood.

**Please Note: Other evaluation criteria necessary for the review of this proposal will be provided by Arlington County staff.**