

# Crossing Looking at Major Retrofit

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An ambitious plan is in play to reinvent Williamsburg Crossing.

The idea is to revitalize the shopping center with more diversity through mixed-use, including housing over the stores.

Developer Calvin Davis is adding a mix of housing, office and commercial space, smaller neighborhood parks, walking and bike trails, and revamped intersections.

According to a conceptual plan filed in the Planning office, Davis wants to build 240 apartments in a bank of eight 2- or 3-story walk-ups. Another 14 buildings, each with 10 units, would yield 140 more.

Three other buildings would feature 2-story townhomes over retail or office space, as found in New Town.

Two additional commercial buildings and more “flex” buildings are to be configured for retail or small-scale manufacturing.

Architectural and planning firm Hopke & Associates worked a number of neighborhood elements into the plan.

The old main entrance at the clock tower no longer serves very well, architect John Hopke wrote in a memo to county planners. Instead, he proposes a “Central Park,” with band shell, to host community events like farmers markets and music festivals.

Five more neighborhood parks would weave trails through the shops and housing, as more pedestrian-friendly. It’s all part of what Hopke describes as a “complete community.”

He also proposes narrowing some entrances into the center to calm traffic. At least one roundabout and textured pavers would help slow traffic.

Some adjustments are called for next door at La Fontaine, to increase connectivity and relieve pressure on John Tyler Highway.

Hopke referenced five guiding questions proposed by the Urban Land Institute to guide revitalization. They outlined a number of goals, including reducing vehicle travel, improving access to jobs and affordable housing, supporting interconnectivity and accommodating a diverse population with a variety of personal needs. And perhaps most important for Williamsburg Crossing: Finding a mix and flexibility that will endure over time.

In a February interview with the Gazette, Anita Kramer, Urban Planning Institute’s senior director of retail and mixed-use, said that the best way for a center like Williamsburg Crossing to reinvent itself was to literally consider it as an entirely fresh parcel.

She pointed to Brentwood Square, an older strip mall in St. Louis, as a case study of successful redevelopment.

Although Brentwood Square was “doing okay” as a strip mall, the city pushed for a better product, she said. Today, Brentwood Square hosts a cultural arts center and a thriving mix of grocery, restaurants and retailers.

The amendments to the Crossing’s master plan will require rezoning the area, which is now a mix of commercial, general business and mixed use.

Hopke is requesting waivers for some setback requirements as well as waivers for cash proffers.

Senior planner Jason Purse said Friday he expects to have his first round of comments available by month-end.