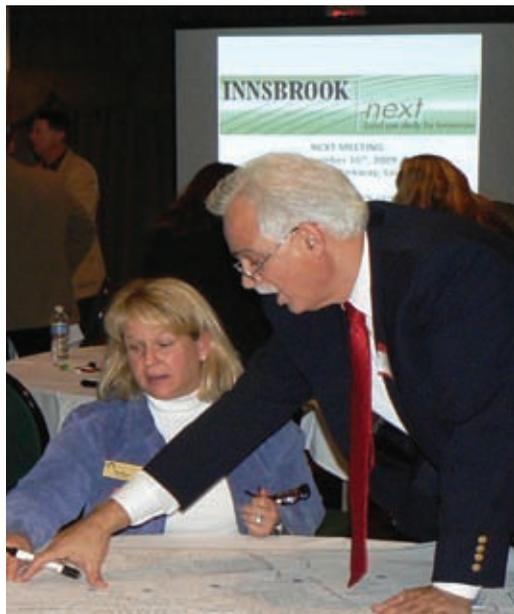




INNSBROOK

next
Land use study for tomorrow.



Photos/top left: Innsbrook Founder Sidney Gunst (right); center: Paul Kreckman (in grey suit), president of the host Innsbrook Owners Association; right: Participants in small groups discuss the future vision for Innsbrook; bottom left: Brian Menditto of the Innsbrook Owners Association facilitates a table discussion.

What's "Next" for Innsbrook?

More than 50 energized individuals who work and live in Innsbrook, neighbors, county officials and stakeholders rolled up their sleeves for a community conversation on the future of the Richmond region's most successful office park in mid-November at The Place.

"It's time to explore what is next," Paul W. Kreckman, president of the

host Innsbrook Owners Association said in outlining the purpose of the planning session, "because time moves onward."

If you did not attend, you can still experience the discussion virtually. Simply go to Innsbrook.com and click on the Innsbrook Next logo and watch it on videos. The website will allow Innsbrook workforce and residents to participate in the discussion online.

Conclusions from the initial input will be reported at a second public meeting at 4 pm Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 4501 Highwoods Parkway on the first floor in the Salons. That meeting will generate reactions to the initial findings and refine them for conceptual recommendations for use by Henrico County in its public process beginning in mid-January.

In lively discussions, participants in small working groups reported remarkable consensus on the community's significant strengths—and also its increasing challenges. Traffic in and around the park led the challenges. And, groups also agreed on future opportunities: a more mixed-use community where people live, work and play to a greater degree than they do now by making better use of "acres of asphalt parking lots."

David A. Kaechele, chair of the Henrico Board of Supervisors who represents Three Chopt District, participated in the discussions.

Based on their 10 summary reports, that future will likely involve putting Innsbrook under the recently established Urban Mixed-Use (UMU) designation of the county's Comprehensive Plan for land use. About 30 acres in Innsbrook around the Markel headquarters are already designated UMU.

The goal is to remain Henrico's leading "jobs engine" because, as Innsbrook founder Sidney Gunst said, Innsbrook must continue to give its companies a workforce productivity edge "to attract jobs because jobs drive everything else."

To accomplish that goal, Burrell Saunders, a principal with CMSS Architects, the primary planner for Innsbrook, outlined three guidelines for "placemaking" that future development must accomplish: social, environmental and economic sustainability.

While there was agreement on the goals for Innsbrook's future, there were varied ideas about what elements will be required to continue to set it apart from typical office parks as a unique urban place. Innsbrook achieved that distinction in its first 30 years, but what is needed to maintain its competitive advantage in the 21st century?

Ideas ranged from creating an entertainment center, pocket parks for informal outdoor gatherings, making the entire park more walkable (and bike-able), connecting the park's lakes with gondolas and paddle boats, a white collar incubator building, and an internal people mover system.

A video was produced jointly by the Urban Land Institute, National Multi Housing Council and the Sierra Club. That partnership, unlikely only a few years ago, illustrates how times are changing for development. The video offered a fresh perspective on more compact, mixed-use development as necessary to accommodate projected population growth, which will demand 50% more buildings of all types by 2030. It cited "the benefits of density" as the way to develop places that have a sense of community, as opposed to endless suburban sprawl. That's a 180-degree shift from a few years ago when density was a dirty word to neighbors of proposed developments.

Joe Emerson, director of planning for Henrico, outlined the steps in a study by county planners of a larger portion of the county's West End. The study area is 1,185 acres, which encompasses all of Innsbrook's 600 acres, plus undeveloped acreage to the northeast bounded by I-295 and mostly commercial development south of West Broad bounded by I-64 and Gaskins Road.

The county will conduct public hearings and meetings among Innsbrook area companies, residents and neighbors within the broader boundaries of the study area. It will also create a page for the Innsbrook area study on its website—www.co.henrico.va.us—which will link to Innsbrook.com and vice versa. **ITM**