

PHOTOS BY CLEMENT BRITT

Westhampton on Grove

Two penthouse condos in the sought-after area around Libbie and Grove avenues are on the market

Doug Childers | Homes Correspondent

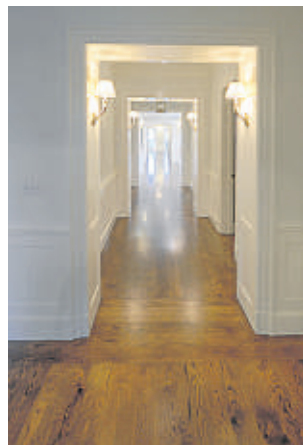
Here's a thought experiment for Richmonders of a certain age. Close your eyes and picture how the intersection of Pump Road and West Broad Street in western Henrico County looked in, say, 1970. Or 1980, for that matter. Rural, right? On a Sunday afternoon, you'd see cows, but you might wait a long time for a car to appear. These days, it's a sprawling suburbia. Now picture how the intersection of Libbie and Grove avenues in Richmond's West End looked in, say, the 1940s and 1950s.

Odds are, you're too young to remember. Here's a hint: It looked surprisingly close to the way it looks today – despite all the construction activity going on around it. The Westhampton area is experiencing a building boom, with luxury condominiums and high-ticket, single-family homes rising up in infill lots and in place of older, more modest homes. Work on one of the larger projects – Westhampton on Grove, a mixed-use development in the 5700 block of Grove Avenue – is wrapping up now, with two three-story buildings



replacing the Westhampton Theater and the original Long & Foster building, as well as a parking lot at the corner of Grove and Granite avenues. Westhampton on Grove has more than 36,000 square feet of retail and office space, as well as three luxury penthouse condominiums. The Greater Richmond Association for Commercial Real Estate recently gave the development its Top Mixed-Use Project Award. Despite the transformation, the area around Westhampton on Grove still feels like a walkable village, as some local residents call it, with sidewalks, small shops and locally owned restaurants. The more it changes, the more it stays the same: That's a part of its appeal. "Westhampton is original and authentic, and it's the type of community that new, mixed-use, large-scale planned developments in the suburbs strive to emulate," said Stefan Cam-

etas, who developed Westhampton on Grove with his business partner, Jason Guillot. The recent transformations are a sign of how design philosophy has come around to old-school ideas. "Westhampton was developed between 1930 and 1940 as a streetcar suburb, with buildings very close to the street to encourage pedestrian-oriented activity and automobiles relegated to rear parking lots," Cametas said. Just a couple decades later, that approach to planning fell out of favor with the rise of expansive suburban malls and tract-housing communities. "Today, we have come full circle as a society to revere and promote historic-neighborhood, mixed-use communities like Libbie and Grove," Cametas said.



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A closer look at the condos

Cametas and Guillot bought the Westhampton Theater in 2014 and then the Long & Foster building and the adjacent parking lot the following year with plans to build a mixed-use development with retail and office space on the first two levels and 12 apartments above.

As work advanced on the development's retail and office spaces, the residential component shifted after Cametas and Guillot reconsidered the market.

"While there is strong demand for both apartments and condominiums in the neighborhood, we believe that the best fit for the project and the highest demand is for one-level, maintenance-free penthouse condominiums with universal design features such as elevators and stepless entries in Richmond's best walkable neighborhood," Cametas said.

While both of the development's two buildings are new, Cametas and Guillot worked closely with Glavé & Holmes Architecture to model the building on the west-side after the Westhampton Theater, which opened in 1938. The new building features a red-brick facade with classical details, including the theater's original cast-stone elements.

In addition, crews salvaged and refinished walnut doors from the theater, and they've been repurposed as butler's pantry doors in the penthouse condos.

"The penthouses range from 3,000 to 4,400 square feet of open-concept living with 10-foot ceilings and floor-to-ceiling Marvin architectural sliding doors and windows to flood the interiors with light," said Pam Diemer, a real estate agent with Long & Foster / Christie's International Real Estate and the exclusive listing agent for the penthouses at Westhampton on Grove.

Each condo has a balcony terrace with views of Libbie and Grove avenues.

One of the units – the one over Mango Salon at the corner of Grove and Granite avenues – sold before it could be listed, and it will close this month. The other two units, which are above Taste restaurant, are on the market.

The 4,326-square-foot condo is listed for \$2.25 million, and the 2,979-square-foot condo is listed for \$1.575 million.

"We have had numerous showings and have a high level of interest from a number of excited potential buyers," Diemer said.

Westhampton on Grove's midtown location in a walkable neighborhood is helping to drive interest, as are the units' designer finishes and quality of construction, Diemer says.

She added: "Buyers also want the peace of mind that comes from maintenance-free living."



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