



Washington

UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD CORRIDOR PLAN

Montgomery County, MD



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ON THE COVER: Proposed street design for University Boulevard allows for protected pedestrian and bike travel.
Credit: ULI Washington Panel.



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The objective of ULI Washington's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary advice on land use and real estate issues facing public agencies and nonprofit organizations in the Metropolitan Washington Region. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Washington conducts two-day Panels offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues, ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. Learn more at <http://washington.uli.org/TAPs>.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

University Boulevard is home to an ethnically and economically diverse population and supports various residential, institutional, and commercial uses, including several prominent diverse retailers that often serve as community anchors and social support networks for foreign-born populations, religious communities and organizations, and communities of color.

The full University Boulevard corridor is a 12-mile stretch of road, of which a 3.4 mile stretch was selected for the Panel to review. This corridor faces the challenge of low density uses combined with high-speed, high-volume traffic. The Montgomery County Planning Department convened a two-day Technical Assistance Panel with the overall goal of addressing community needs as they pertain to traffic safety, regional connectivity, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The Panel was asked to explore potential opportunities for new infill development, bikeways, future bus rapid transit (BRT), and the potential for creating a “complete street” – a boulevard with wider sidewalks, comfortable public transportation stops and safe access.

The TAP Panelists listened to all the stakeholder concerns and spent time discussing some of the best ways forward, taking into account traffic patterns and potential economic development of the surrounding community, and the Panelists’ own professional expertise

The Panel’s recommendations focused on ways to improve the quality of life for neighborhoods along the corridor (and enhancing property values) by improving the walkability, attractiveness, and safety of the area. The goals included ways to beautify the adjacent areas with street trees, lighting and attractive Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) stations, making the transportation network safer for pedestrians, bikers and drivers, and accommodating growth and adding to the housing supply while substantially enhancing residents’ ability to access and enjoy neighborhood amenities.

The recommendations are organized into three categories: transportation, development and placemaking. Transportation recommendations focus on implementing a road diet, reducing the travel lanes to slow traffic and make space for pedestrian improvements, with both short term and long term goals to make the changes feasible as well as comply with the goals of Vision Zero, Complete Streets



Panel tours the site with Montgomery County staff.

and various Master Plans for pedestrians and cyclists. laid out for the county as a whole. Crosswalks and intersections near the high school should be improved, as well as the Four Corners Transportation Network.

The development recommendations were concentrated on improving the availability of housing, by creating housing infill on opportunity sites for larger projects and building more compact housing types such as townhouses, known as missing middle housing on single-family parcels. Policy changes can also be implemented to increase the housing supply, including those pertaining to single-family zoning, minimum lot size and setback requirements, impact fees and relaxing parking requirements. As the corridor gets taller buildings, more development conversations should include how to step the building volume down as the higher density meets existing single family homes.

The placemaking recommendations focus on adding more context and connectivity to the area, including better wayfinding options and creating a placemaking concept that takes into account the history and character of the corridor. The Panel believes community engagement is crucial and can make this a more successful endeavor overall.

The economically and racially diverse corridor of University Boulevard has much to offer. The Panel's time spent on the TAP devised a number of suggestions to improve the housing, transportation and connectivity of the area, which will benefit the community as a whole well into the future.



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The panel at a tour stop to hear from Montgomery County staff.

BACKGROUND

Questions Posed by Sponsors

Prior to the TAP, the sponsor provided ULI with a list of issues they would like to see addressed. These included:

What market conditions are necessary to advance corridor focused growth along University Boulevard envisioned by Thrive Montgomery 2050? What public sector investment, funding mechanisms, or incentives are needed? How can this growth support equity focus areas of Wheaton and Takoma/Langley?

The plan area has seen very limited growth over the last two decades, perpetuating a cycle of underinvestment by public and private entities. Single-family residential neighborhoods are the dominant building type along the University Boulevard corridor. These neighborhoods were built prior to or following World War II and are primarily in the single-family residential R-60 and R-90 Zones. These residential areas represent the type of suburban growth that occurred nationally in the mid-20th century.

To what extent is it economically feasible for the existing housing and institutional uses along University Boulevard to transition to a compact form of housing (or other uses) over the next two decades?

If the feasibility is there, will this compact form of housing support the transportation infrastructure (dedicated transit lanes and space for walkways, bikeways, and street buffers with street trees and landscaping) envisioned for the growth corridors in Thrive Montgomery 2050?

Montgomery County Planning Department staff anticipates that proposed BRT stations, identified in the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, will

serve as a framework to explore potential infill development. In addition, large institutional properties, such as churches, will also be critical to investigating infill opportunities.

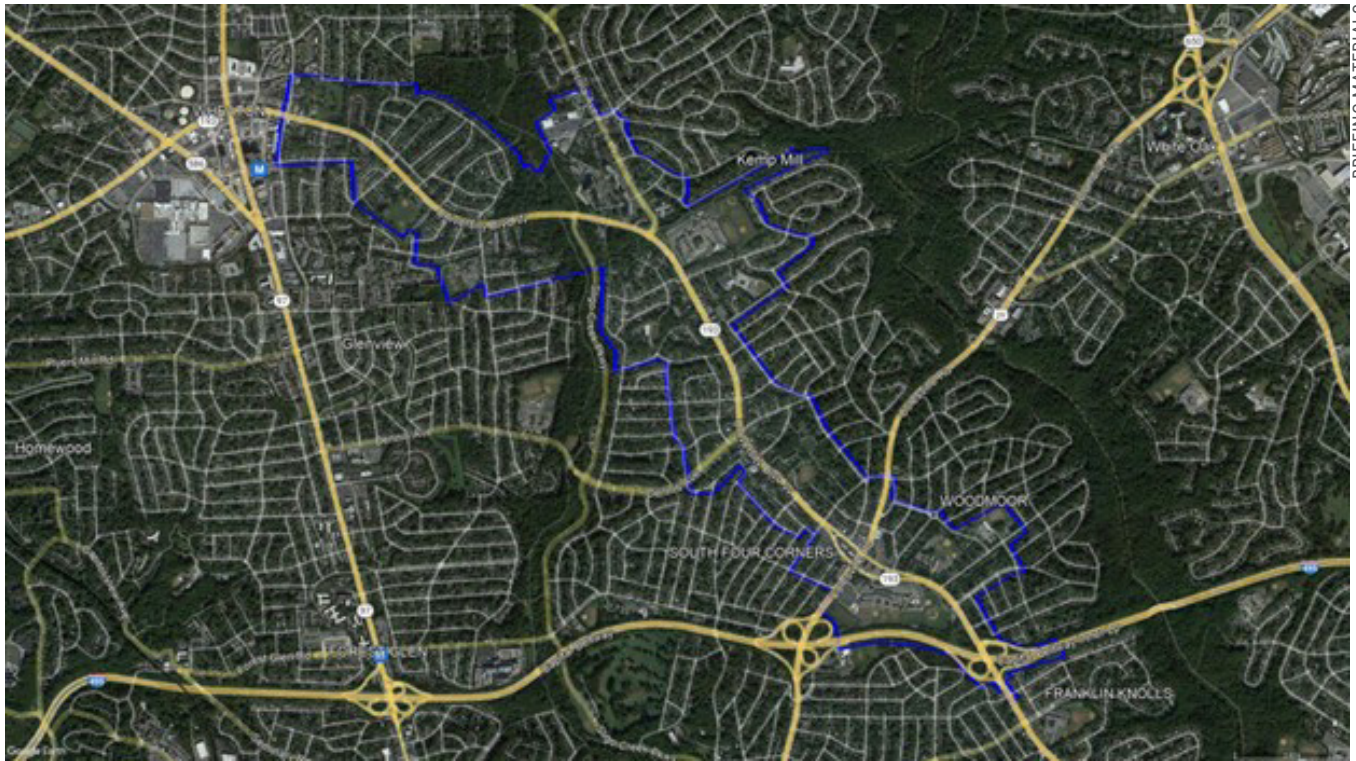
Alternatively, to what extent is it economically feasible for a transition towards a more compact form of housing to occur at specific nodes or centers of activity along the corridor, such as the Kemp Mill Center or Four Corners?

The Montgomery County Council adopted a resolution in 2019 to support a regional housing target, including the need for Montgomery County specifically to add an additional 10,000 housing units over the forecasted amount of 31,000 by 2030.

Examining existing zoning and land uses in the plan area is critical to strategic opportunities where alternative housing types could be accommodated at key locations.

Are there other planning and development options outside of these proposed feasibilities that the county is not yet considering, but should?

The approach to planning in legacy areas with limited infill opportunities is often characterized by incrementalism, which while having its virtues, can be limiting. Montgomery Planning staff would like the ULI Washington Technical Assistance Panel to explore planning innovations which will allow for meaningful growth and change as needed.



Aerial view of the site area.

The Current Climate of University Boulevard

University Boulevard is an important link serving the residential and business communities of Wheaton, Kemp Mill, and Four Corners in Montgomery County, Maryland. In addition, it provides a significant intercounty connection to destinations in Prince George’s County, including the Takoma Langley Crossroads Transit Center and University of Maryland, College Park. With six existing lanes and daily volumes that could be supported by a four-lane facility, this section within the corridor provides potential for the implementation of a road diet.

University Boulevard is also home to an ethnically and economically diverse population and supports various residential, institutional, and commercial uses, including several prominent diverse retailers that often serve as community anchors and social support networks for foreign-born populations and communities of color.

The 12-mile stretch of road faces the challenge of low density uses combined with high-speed, high-volume traffic. The plan area is centered on a three-mile stretch of University Boulevard (MD 193) from the edge of East Indian Spring Road, just south of I-495, to Amherst Avenue in Wheaton.

The upcoming University Boulevard Corridor Plan aims to examine the Wheaton to Four Corners portion of the corridor, predominantly characterized by single-family and institutional uses. The corridor is identified as a top 10 High Injury Network in [2030 Vision Zero Action Plan](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/visionzero/2030plan.html)¹ with 17 serious and fatal collisions over a four year time period. There are two major County high schools and several parks located directly along University Boulevard with existing stakeholder concerns about safe access. The Plan will explore opportunities to transition the auto-oriented roadway into a vibrant multimodal corridor. This transition will build on the recent pilot project implemented

¹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/visionzero/2030plan.html>

by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), in which protected bicycle lanes were temporarily installed between Amherst Avenue and Arcola Avenue in Wheaton. The pilot project sought to balance multimodal mobility and access to and from commercial, residential, and recreational centers in Wheaton. Community reaction to the project was mixed. The Panel learned that cyclists were thrilled with the additional bike lane infrastructure. However, some residents were opposed because it disrupted their travel patterns, such as the loss of a right turn lane as previously discussed. Other residents were opposed because they said they did not see many bikes in the bike lanes and thought it a waste².



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Panelists Chris Calott and Connie Fan discuss street design strategies along the corridor.

² The panel makes a point of noting bike lane usage is a long-term vision that requires a built out network, but in the interim the bike lanes do serve some volume of cyclists. Even when empty, they always provide a buffer between the sidewalk and traffic.

THE PROCESS

Montgomery Planning engaged ULI Washington to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) with the overall goal of addressing community needs as they pertain to traffic safety, regional connectivity, environmental sustainability, and economic development. The Panel was asked to explore potential opportunities for new infill development, bikeways, future bus rapid transit (BRT), and the potential for creating a “complete street” – a boulevard with wider sidewalks, comfortable public transportation stops and safe access. The Panel consisted of ten members with expertise in urban design and planning, transportation, architecture, real estate, placemaking and community development.

The two-day TAP convened on February 7-8, 2023 at the Montgomery County Planning Department headquarters in Wheaton, Maryland. The Panel spent part of the first morning on a RideOn bus through the study area, with representatives from the Planning Department on hand to answer questions. The rest of the morning was devoted to interviewing over 25 stakeholders and residents. That afternoon, the Panel reconvened to share what they had learned with Montgomery County Planning officials and formulate their recommendations. After the morning of the second day, stakeholders and the general public were invited to hear the Panel’s presentation of its findings and recommendations.

What did Panelists learn from stakeholder meetings?

Several themes came up in the stakeholder interviews that the Panelists took into account when forming their recommendations. These include:

- Public sector investments are needed on University Boulevard, including a separated and protected bike lane with a buffered sidewalk from Wheaton to Four Corners and a wide, buffered sidewalk that is well maintained, with improved street lighting to create a safer environment for pedestrians. Stakeholders had mixed feedback on the bike lanes, with complaints

focusing on design-related issues that could be solved with a more complete installation.

- Adequate bus stop facilities are needed with well-placed pedestrian crossings and better lighting.
- The corridor provides access to three high schools: Blair High School, Einstein High School, and Northwood High School, as well as access to the Wheaton Regional Park. Blair and Northwood High School are situated directly on the corridor. Yet it is very difficult for people to access each of these areas, either by car, bus, bike or walking. Stakeholders believe Wheaton Regional Park is underutilized because of the lack of easy access, and suggested a bus loop that connects each of these, which would be free to ride and run often.



Four Corners’ pedestrian traffic is exacerbated with the neighboring Blair High School, and the students who attempt to cross the street – without a crosswalk.

CREATIVE COMMONS

- Transportation experts requested a dedicated bus lane and more integration with the neighboring Prince George's County. Multiple stakeholders mentioned that the existing sidewalks are not safe.
- Gentrification concerns were raised in the conversations: what is the risk of pushing out residents and businesses with increased development?
- Concerns about what the fare policy will be for the incoming Purple Line. Without knowing the cost or method of payment, stakeholders speculated that it might be cheaper for residents to take the bus down University Boulevard rather than rail.
- The Four Corners shopping center and intersection was brought up many times as a major concern. The split and one-way couplets make access and getting around the area very difficult for drivers, pedestrians and bikers. Four Corners' pedestrian traffic is exacerbated with the neighboring Blair High School, and the students who attempt to cross the street – without a crosswalk – to get to the businesses or access the bus routes.
- Northwood High School representatives expressed concerns about kids walking across University Boulevard. Kids walk to school, as well as nearby churches for afterschool programs, and use the bus in front of the school on University. Making a left into the high school is very dangerous, especially with the bike lanes. Their goal would be a buffer in the middle of the street to discourage people from crossing. Plans have already been set to have Northwood High School demolished and rebuilt.
- Short term tactical bus lane project going in this summer which relies on paint and flex posts. Montgomery County is in the process of making design improvements and streetscape construction projects for four of 10 major bus corridors. University Boulevard is not one of the four selected, but it is still considered a central backbone of planning for the area.
- Consensus that a single median-running bus lane as specified in the 2013 BRT Master Plan was not a preferred design for bus lanes. Curb running was better

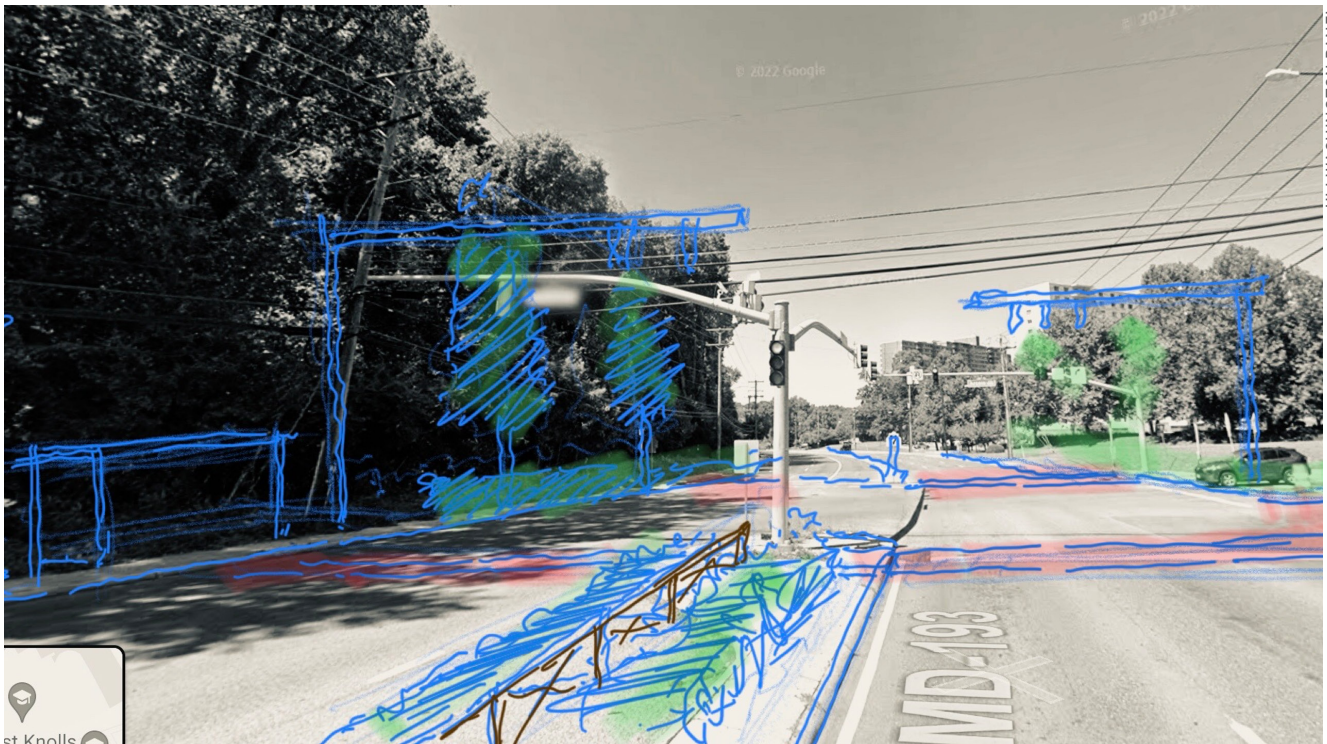


The Kemp Mill Shopping Center, a well-used retail destination, has an excess of surface parking, and could be repositioned as infill development.

for bike and pedestrian safety and access, but it does pose challenges with driveways.

- Civic associations and institutions were open to thoughtful development to make more walkable communities and there was a fair amount of support for “complete streets.” Residents do not have a serious appetite for residential development along the corridor, but they realize it’s probably inevitable.
- Bike lane advocates were thrilled with the temporary bike lanes on University and felt these increased ridership and made things more comfortable for pedestrians. Permanent bike lanes from Rock Creek to College Park were articulated as a priority for the long-term.
- Missing middle, another name for affordable housing in walkable neighborhoods, is needed in Montgomery County. University Boulevard, with its economic diversity and proximity to transportation nodes, is an ideal place to add more affordable housing options.

- Pedestrian safety is a high priority for the community and municipality – people have lost their lives crossing the street, as have bicyclists and people in vehicular crashes. Immediate change is needed to create a safer experience. As referenced earlier in this report, the corridor is identified as a top 10 High Injury Network in [2030 Vision Zero Action Plan](#) with 17 serious and fatal collisions over a four year time period.
- The creation of bike lanes meant that the right turn on Arcola Avenue was taken away, which is a major intersection in Kemp Mill and residents were negatively impacted because it removed drivers’ ability to make a right turn. (Note: this is a function of the temporary pilot installation, and a more complete installation would maintain that channelized right turn.) Community representatives from Kemp Mill also expressed concern about additional development in the Kemp Mill shopping center, which could bring more vehicular traffic on Saturdays when many people walk in the area to go to religious services. There were concerns that this intersection needs further study.



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Rendering of Northwood High Crossing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Panelists listened to all the stakeholder concerns and spent time discussing some of the best ways forward, taking into account traffic patterns and potential economic development of the surrounding community, and the Panelists' own professional expertise.

The Panelists came up with the following themes when formulating recommendations

- Improving the quality of life for neighborhoods along the corridor (and enhancing property values) by bettering the walkability, attractiveness, and safety of the area:
- Beautifying the adjacent areas with street trees, lighting, attractive BRT stations public art and other enhancements..
- Making it safer by providing bus and bike lanes along the sides to buffer pedestrians from dangerous drivers and providing more “eyes on the street” by encouraging infill development, while recognizing that some street parking may be necessary for retailers.
- Accommodating growth while substantially enhancing residents' ability to access and enjoy neighborhood amenities by bringing origins and destinations closer together, connecting trails, and improving wayfinding.

The recommendations are organized into three categories: **transportation, development** and **placemaking**. Several

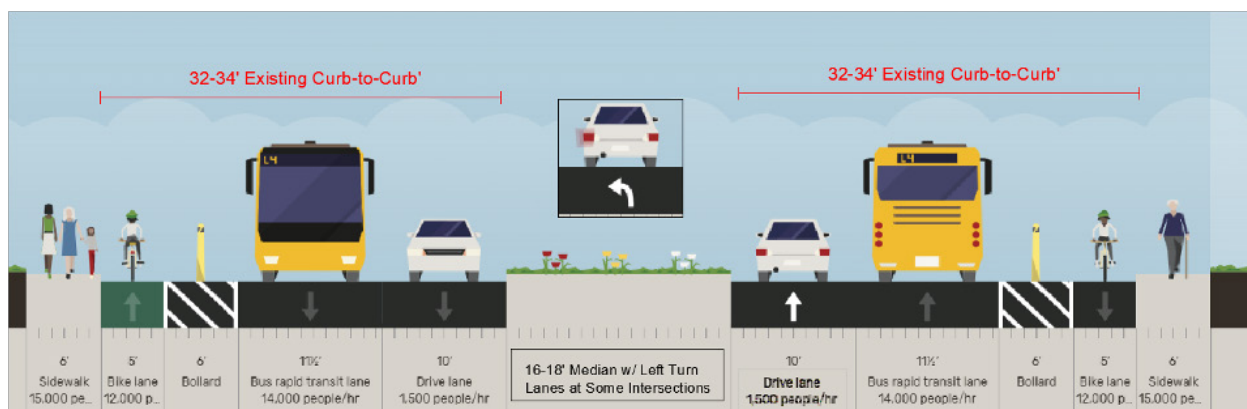
recommendations are further divided into long and short term goals, and in some cases, context and rationales.

Transportation Recommendations

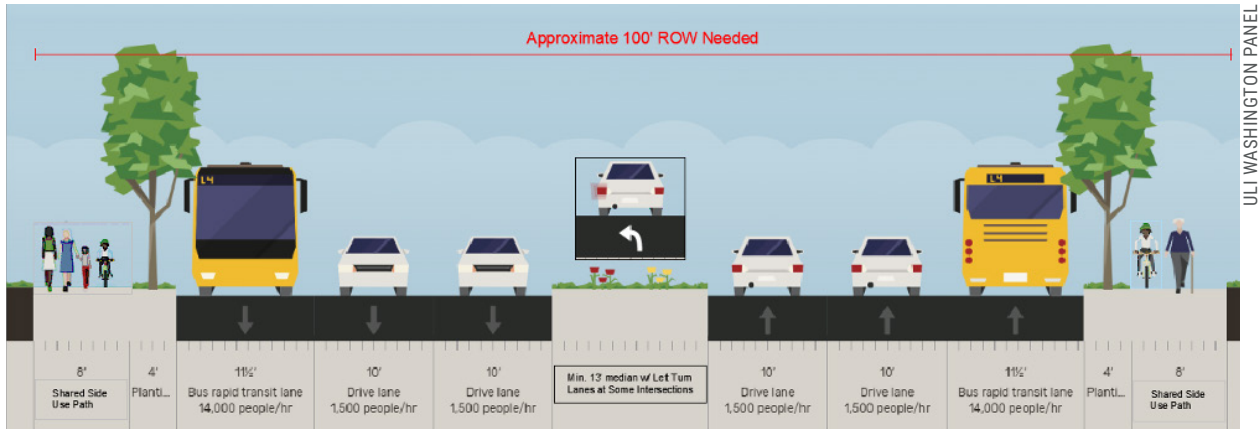
Implement a “Road Diet” for University Boulevard

A road diet will provide a safer experience for all who interact with University Boulevard. Existing volumes and adequate vehicle level of service (LOS) on University Boulevard support reduced travel lanes. The Panel believes interim and ultimately permanent improvements to protect pedestrians and bicyclists, promote transit efficiency and ridership, and reduce travel speeds should be implemented along the full corridor. The Panel has both a short-term and long-term recommendation for how to achieve this.

Short term: As part of this road diet, the Panel recommends that the roads be re-stripped to include two travel lanes in each direction, one of which will support bus service in a shared travel lane, and 5' bike lane and variable striped buffer of 6-8' in each direction. The buffer can accommodate layby space for bus service. **The Panel believes this should be done immediately, at a minimum the interim condition should be implemented.**



Road diet in the short term.



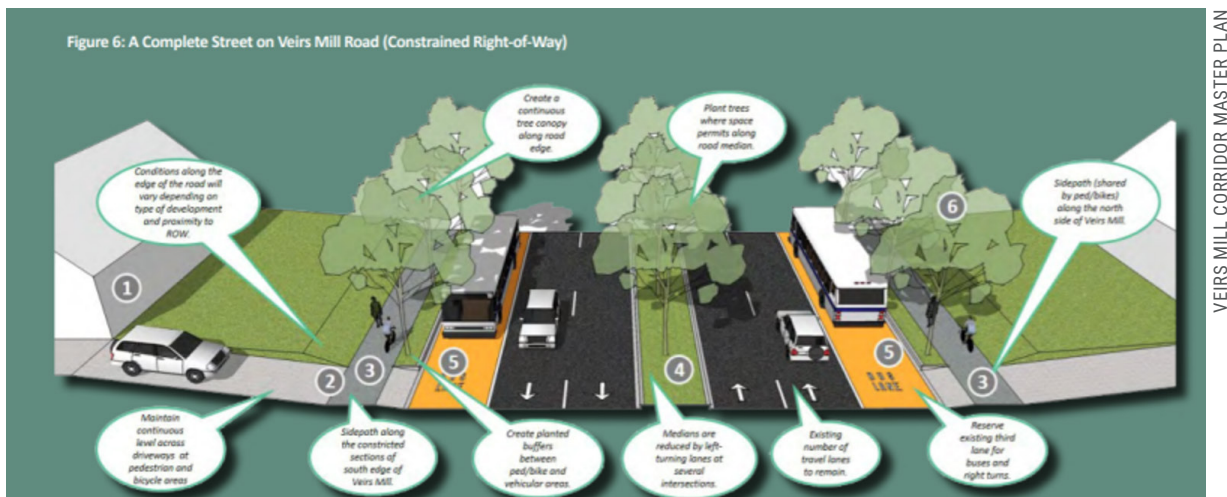
Road diet in the long term.

The Panel is aware that the interim improvement recommendations are generally consistent with the County’s Bike Master Plan and provide many of the components included in the Complete Streets recommendations for this section of University Boulevard.

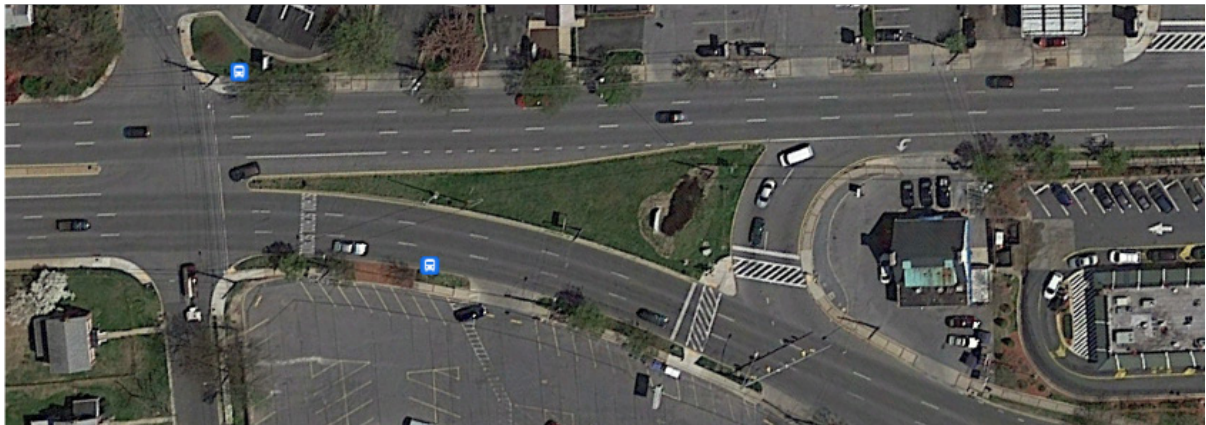
Long term: The Panel recommends a more complete reconfiguration to install the infrastructure to maintain this road diet. This can be achieved by replacing sidewalks with minimum 8’ shared use paths on both sides of the road – some sections may allow for more. This would achieve one BRT only lane in each direction, two vehicle lanes in each direction with a median and turn lanes at intersections, and space for a planting strip between shared use path and roadway. This reconfiguration would achieve the full Complete Streets recommendations for pedestrians, bicycles and BRT for this section of University Boulevard.

Improve crosswalks and intersections at the high schools.

The Panel recommends creating a fully protected intersection at Northwood High School and Blair High School, with better road crossing and pedestrian crossings on all legs, and be incorporated into the new construction of the school, if not sooner. This is a more balanced approach, one that prioritizes buses and placemaking. The Panel also recommends median improvements at Northwood and Blair High Schools to eliminate mid-block uncontrolled pedestrian crossings. This is similar to the long-term reconfiguration of the BRT project already moving forward in Veirs Mill, also in Montgomery County. The Panel also recommends that this barrier be a tasteful design reflective of the history and culture of the area, and not be erected as a fence.



Veirs Mill successfully implemented a road diet similar to the one proposed for University Boulevard.



The Four Corners shopping center and intersection was brought up many times as a major concern.

Improve the Four Corners Transportation Network.

The Panel recognizes that this is a difficult intersection and transportation network to reconfigure. But there are ways in which this can be improved and more space-efficient, and opens up opportunities to redistribute and reconfigure the road network in Four Corners. This can be done by transitioning from one-way pairs to a bi-directional road and requires focus on providing dedicated bus lanes and shared use paths for safe and efficient travel through the commercial district. The Panel also recommends establishing a traditional street grid to support development and safer transportation facilities for all modes.

Potential improvements to be further analyzed:

- Converting the westbound section to a 4-lane bi-directional road for general purpose traffic.
- Making the eastbound section a bus priority and pedestrian/bicyclist route with wide sidewalks or a path.
- Implementing measures to prevent cut through traffic using Lorain Avenue and Lanark Way to address stakeholder concerns.

A final note on the development of bike lanes.

The Panel is aware that the community can be resistant to bike lanes, or be uncertain of their effectiveness. This came up in stakeholder conversations and the TAP presentation about a right turn lane in Kemp Mill that had been taken away, leaving residents frustrated. There are ways to accommodate both right turns and bike lanes, and this can be done in the design process. For example, the

SHA pilot program included interim improvements within a limited scope, and a more complete installation would be designed to maintain the right-turn lane with modifications to the traffic signal. Success of the bike lanes can take time to be fully realized. Bike lanes are a long term plan, part of a complete network that needs to be built out over many years. The immediate effects can be seen in the buffers created between pedestrians and cars, and the Panel recommends a thoughtful process that engages the community in moving forward with the future bike lane project.

Development Recommendations

The county housing needs assessment forecasts 60K+ new households in the next 20 years. University Boulevard is a designated “growth corridor” in Thrive 2050, and the corridor sits at a “sweet spot” of affordability and access to retail amenities compared to other designated growth corridors in the county. The Panel has come up with the following recommendations to increase the development and infill of the corridor, while accommodating new growth and remaining a “sweet spot” for the middle class.

The “sweet spot” characterization is illustrated in the table on the following page. The table includes a selection of five of the growth corridors designated by the county’s adopted Thrive 2050 plan, with demographic and real estate data from a two-mile radius around a central street address on each corridor. The TAP study area (first row) has relatively high access to retail amenities compared to the county as a whole or to the New Hampshire Avenue corridor in the eastern part of the county, but much lower asking rents per square foot for multifamily housing than most other

Infill Development Analysis Table

| Address/Corridor | 2-mile Radius Population | Retail | | | Multifamily Rental | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|--------------------|---------|-------------|
| | | SF/capita | Vacancy | NNN Rent | Inventory | Vacancy | Asking Rent |
| 1111 University Boulevard / our study area | 71,130 | 43 | 2.4% | \$29.34 | 6,016,824 | 3.7% | \$1.89 |
| 2019 Viers Mill Road / near Twinbrook | 73,163 | 70 | 4.6% | \$32.10 | 10,240,350 | 5.9% | \$2.34 |
| 10550 Connecticut Avenue / Kensington | 79,229 | 47 | 2.2% | \$23.22 | 5,941,925 | 6.6% | \$2.15 |
| 10206 New Hampshire Avenue / Hillandale | 69,801 | 17 | 15.2% | \$38.12 | 8,711,769 | 3.5% | \$1.82 |
| 5214 River Road | 83,402 | 60 | 7.0% | \$41.73 | 11,339,581 | 5.6% | \$2.69 |
| Montgomery County | 1,054,827 | 35 | 5.4% | \$31.61 | 96,964,609 | 5.2% | \$2.11 |

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corridors. This combination of access to retail amenities and housing affordability is the “sweet spot.”

Implement policy changes to increase the housing supply, pertaining to zoning, impact fees and parking requirements.

The Panel recommends several policy changes that would help with the development of new housing opportunities, including the following:

- Allow missing middle densification of single-family zoning by-right with design criteria to ensure quality. More detail on how the missing middle housing can be achieved is included in the Development Recommendation #3.
- Waive impact fees for densification, creating an incentive for builders and developers to take action in an already densely populated area. This is consistent with the Thrive Montgomery 2050 goals which emphasize building in already dense areas, while leaving parkland and agricultural areas intact. There is already an impact fee waiver for affordable housing to incentivize that construction, and the Panel recommends exploring this as another material way the county could try and incentivize housing development.
- Reduce parking requirements concurrent with improving transportation (BRT), pedestrian and bicyclist experience. This, too, is consistent with the Thrive Montgomery 2050 themes to allow for additional

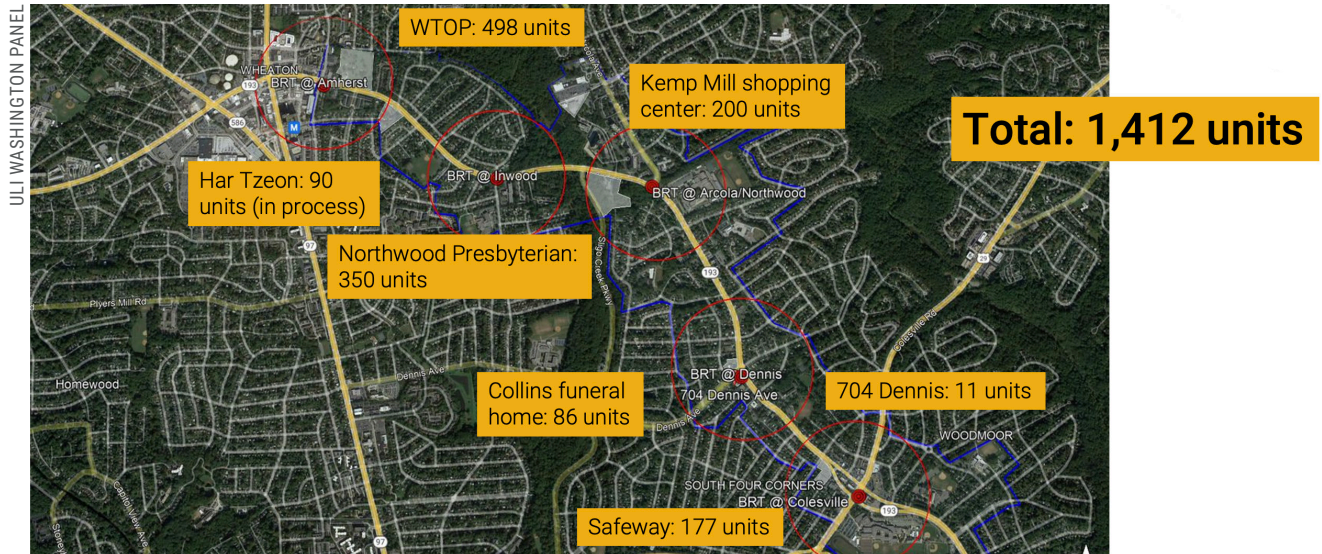
modes of transportation that do not rely on individual vehicles.

Create Housing Infill on Opportunity Sites for Larger Projects.

The corridor could accommodate new growth through infill development. Because the corridor is already built out, there are extremely limited opportunities for development, but the Panel was able to identify some parcels that could be incentivized to change their land use, or create a co-location opportunity. This would be in addition to the existing development, housing and retail projects in the area – not as a replacement. In identifying which parcels would be most viable and what the potential infill development yield for the corridor might be, the Panel took into consideration cost-effective construction (such as lower cost, non-high-rise 5/1 building structures, or reducing surface parking) in primarily multifamily format.

Suggested opportunity sites include:

- Har Tzeon synagogue (site plan approved: 90-units affordable)
- Kemp Mill shopping center
- Safeway (Four Corners)
- WTOP (largest parcel in the UBC; partial historic designation)
- Collins Funeral Home
- 704 Dennis Avenue (adjacent to Verizon building)
- Northwood Presbyterian Church



Map of Housing Yield Potential.

Create missing middle housing on single-family parcels

This corridor is already an example of a diverse mix of homes of various sizes and building types. However, the vast majority of the housing stock is aging. Seventy-four percent of the housing units in the study area were constructed before 1970, meaning the stock is mostly more than 50 years old.

The Panel recommends that some of the single-family housing stock be replaced by missing middle homes: affordable units in walkable neighborhoods. Residential unit types, such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, courtyard apartments, and bungalow courts are typically considered within the range of residential missing middle. We looked at the full inventory of R-60 and R-90 parcels in the study area and found that many were on relatively small lots, and there is a limit to the potential missing middle capacity on any single small parcel. For this particular corridor, the Panel

recommends establishing more policy solutions to create parcel assembly, such as transferable development rights.

The Panel came up with a hypothetical example of how potential parcels could be converted to small-scale multi-family homes that could potentially address the housing attainability challenges in the county. Even if there is only a 20 percent conversion, over 20 years, this could add 1,535 new homes to the study area.

The Panel notes that parcel assembly in built-out detached single-family areas is rare, and acquisition costs can be high. Even a 20 percent yield of new homes in this study is an outside, optimistic assumption. This is why the Panel makes this recommendation in conjunction with policy changes needed to incentivize housing production in the area.

However, if all single-family parcels in the study area had the zoning rights granted to potentially become quadplexes, and over 20 years, 20 percent of parcels converted, this could add 1,535 new homes to the study

Housing Yield Scenarios

| Potential parcels to upzone | Count | 20% Yield |
|--|-------|-----------|
| Single-family parcels fronting University Blvd | 102 | |
| Duplex | | 41 |
| 4-plex | | 82 |
| All single-family parcels in the study area | 1,919 | |
| Duplex | | 768 |
| 4-plex | | 1,535 |

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area, an 80 percent increase in the number of households currently accommodated by the R-60/90 land and a yield comparable to the aggregate from infill opportunity sites.

Placemaking Recommendations

The Panel believes many things can be done now to make this a more attractive corridor. There is no need to wait for the BRT to make the following changes. The following recommendations center around placemaking and engaging the community surrounding University Boulevard.

Create a placemaking concept for the corridor, including wayfinding.

The Panel recommends a placemaking concept for the corridor that celebrates its history and improves connections with wayfinding. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to building a stronger community – often with input directly from residents and in ways that makes the neighborhood more walkable and accessible. The placemaking concept should be based on the best qualities of the corridor and the sequence of places along it such as: Four Corners, Northwood High School and the Sligo Creek Trail Crossing and the entry to Downtown Wheaton with the WTOP historic resource. By transforming University Boulevard into an attractive ‘place of choice,’ it will better attract investment and residents at a full range of economic levels from lower to higher. It will help stimulate positive change to individual privately owned properties and create more compact and intensified residential uses.

The Panel recommends using the placemaking concept to improve wayfinding, which would facilitate better connections between people and destinations. Such positive transformations should take into consideration that a variety of people and populations from all walks of life that use the corridor: the seniors in high rises, the students in high schools, the families in the neighborhood and the religious institutions which attract pedestrian traffic. Coordinated signage to destinations should include: Wheaton Regional Park, Brookside Gardens, Wheaton Library and Community Center, Kemp Mill Shopping Center, Downtown Wheaton, Wheaton Ice Rink, Sligo Creek Trail, Chesapeake Bay Trail, Route to Northwest Branch Trail, Northwood High School and Montgomery Blair High School and Schools Along the Way. Paths and Routes to Silver Spring and Takoma Park, Downtown Wheaton and Georgia



BAKER ARTIST PORTFOLIOS AND CHARLES BERGEN STUDIOS

Examples of placemaking art.



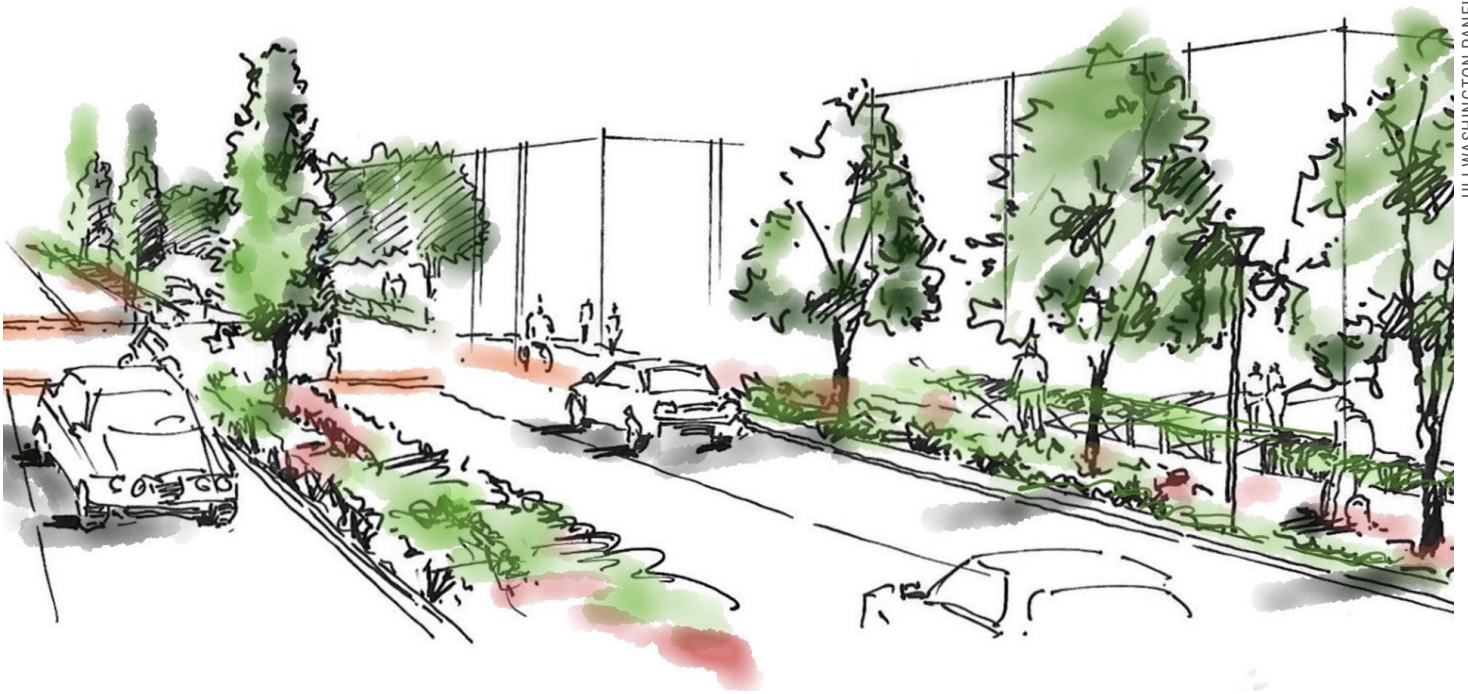
MNCPPC

Examples of wayfinding options.

Avenue, Wheaton Metro Station, Wheaton Mall, and other public destinations within Downtown Wheaton.

There is a precedent for local artists creating placemaking art in coordination with the county (see the work of Linda DePalma and Charles Bergen below). The Panel recommends leveraging functional urban design elements (signage, shade covers) as an opportunity for art, and therefore creating a sense of place.

Engage the community every step of the way. Stakeholders spoke to the Panel about gaps in the communication which have created friction. The Panel recommends every



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Renderings of University Boulevard Street Design.

step of the way to keep the community involved, both the neighborhood and sister agencies. Previous ULI TAP work includes suggestions for community engagement, and [can be found here](#).

Add lights, art, and trees, and connect the trails.

Street trees and street lights are needed, lights are crucial near the bus stops in particular. The Panel also recommends the choreography and inclusion of public art along the corridor, using the example of Linda DePalma's work in Brookside Gardens, or Charles Bergen's work in the DC area. Connecting trails with infrastructure and wayfinding will create a 'network effect' for trail users. This can also help transform the corridor into a "place of choice" which could increase the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods and increase home value. In addition, the Panel recommends energizing the parks and maximizing

the connectivity between the open space resources. Though the Panel agrees that streetscapes and pedestrian safety can be done in an aesthetically pleasing manner, when possible fences and view-blocking barriers should be avoided.

Do not wait for BRT.

The Panel recommends that action be taken now and not waiting until the BRT construction begins to make changes that affect the safety of pedestrians, bikers and vehicles. For example, at Northwood High School, a number of changes to the transportation program (outlined in this report) can be made to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, and interim improvements have been detailed for the majority of the corridor to provide bike lanes and pedestrian buffers without major infrastructure improvements.

CONCLUSION

The Panel is aware that there is a long process to achieve the development goals of a region, particularly one affecting so many people who live, work and pass through the University Boulevard corridor. The Panel is also aware that a previous temporary bike lane project was met with controversy. The county has had the opportunity to learn from this past project on how to better engage with the community, and future changes can be accompanied by realistic community-wide expectations, i.e. the success of a bike lane project cannot solely be measured by the number of additional bikes on the road.

Changes in the University Boulevard corridor have the power to be transformative, and the Panel applauds Montgomery County Planning Department's focus on the eastern side of the county, which is more racially and economically diverse than other parts of the region. Multiple stakeholders we spoke with shared those same goals; improvements in safety, wayfinding, accessibility and placemaking measures will economically benefit the area as a whole. The recommendations laid out in this report are meant to generate ideas to discuss with the community. We hope the expertise and strategic recommendations listed here will help inform the decisions made going forward, while still heavily relying on community input.

Finally, the Panel encourages the county to act immediately, particularly with the transportation recommendations that impact the bus riders, bikers, and pedestrians that must cross busy streets and intersections on a regular basis. These residents are often facing dangerous situations on poorly lit or heavily trafficked roads. Vision Zero has laid out clear, attainable goals for reducing roadway deaths and University Boulevard is capable of going further, especially where the high schools locations are concerned. The toll of each unnecessary death weighs heavily upon us all; we must take immediate action to prevent this from happening and use the many resources we have available to do so.



TAP panel presenting their recommendations.

ABOUT THE PANEL



Robert Atkinson Retired

Robert Atkinson is very active in ULI Washington. He chaired the membership committee and founded and co-chaired the He the Placemaking Initiative. He is an UrbanPlan volunteer

and has participated in numerous TAPs and previously served on the management committee and advisory board. Nationally he is a member of the TOD Product Council.

Until recently Robert was a Vice President and Associate Principal with Davis Carter Scott (DCS) architects where he was responsible for identifying new opportunities, expanding relationships with existing clients, writing design guidelines for mixed-use development projects, and serving as project leader on multiple urban planning commissions. Widely known throughout the Washington area real estate and development communities, Robert has extensive knowledge of local development conditions and opportunities.

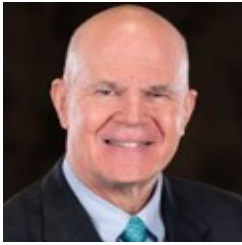
Prior to joining DCS, Robert spent fourteen years with the Department of Economic Development in Arlington County, Virginia, where he was responsible for the development of the award-winning Rosslyn Station Area Plan Addendum, which led to the creation of the new 10 FAR zoning district. Robert contributed to the development of the County through his various positions at the Department of Economic Development, including Senior Development Specialist, Business Conservation Coordinator, and Urban Designer. Previously, Robert was the City of Little Rock's first Urban Designer. Robert holds a Bachelor of University Studies from the University of New Mexico, with concentrations in Architecture, Planning, and Architectural History.



Christopher Calott UC Berkeley

Christopher Calott, AIA is an award-winning architect, urban designer, academic and real estate developer. He is the inaugural Lalanne Chair in Real Estate Development, Architecture

& Urbanism at UC Berkeley, and the founding Faculty Director of a new Master of Real Estate Development + Design Program, which he launched in 2018. He is also currently the Vice Chair of the Master of Urban Design Program, where he instructs on urban design practice, theory, and large scale urban redevelopment. In his current professional practice, Calott is the lead design and development consultant for private development partnerships working on a 50-acre redevelopment project in the heart of Silicon Valley, and a new mixed-use Civic Center development, both in East Palo Alto, California. Formerly, Chris was a founding principal of CALOTT + GIFFORD Architecture / Urban Design and founding partner of the real estate development firm INFILL SOLUTIONS: Innovative Urban Design and Development, based in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico. For over 15 years his two firms worked together to create innovative mixed-use housing, dense infill developments, historic adaptive re-use projects, and vibrant public spaces working principally in cities throughout the Southwest. Chris holds a Bachelor of Arts, Honors, in Urban Theory and Design from Brown University, and his Master of Architecture degree from Princeton University. Most recently, he was awarded a Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Chris is currently on sabbatical in 2023, living and working in Washington, DC.



John Coe **Coe Enterprises**

John Coe is a 44-year real estate executive who provides advice to investment and operating real estate companies in financial and operating decisions. He has a broad experience

base in all income producing property types in financial structuring and transactions. During his career, he has been involved in over \$5B of transactions in debt, equity, development, and investments. Eager to stay involved in ULI initiatives particularly with Young Leaders and in areas of overall influential impact to the value of urban property, John is an anchor for ULI Washington's Urban Plan program, a 3-week project-based-learning curriculum that offers high school students the opportunity to learn about real estate at the neighborhood scale. In his free time, John hosts a leadership podcast, "Icons of DC Area Real Estate" providing insights for young professionals from inspiring leaders.



Connie Fan **LSG Landscape Architecture Group**

Connie Fan holds degrees include a Master of Landscape Architecture from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, as well a degree

from the School of Architecture at Southeast University, Nanking and a certificate in Healthcare Garden Design from Chicago. In recent years, Connie's engagement with community reflects her experience: a few of her commitments include presentations and participations on "Place Making for Seniors" and "Environments for the Aging" in settings such as AIA Design DC and EF A; as well as participation in the ASLA Therapeutic Landscape Network. She has served on juries and as a reviewer for AIA DC, ASLA, in academic settings such as George Washington University and University of Maryland, as well as serving on Planning, Zoning and related committees in both Fairfax County and in the McLean and Tysons districts. Her Tysons engagements have ranged from contributions to the Park System Master Plan Advisory Group to participation in the Tysons Partnership Urban Design Council and the Sustainability Council. Among her regional affiliations, Ms. Fan has been influential in the growth of the Greater Washington Asian American Real Estate Professionals organization. Connie joined ULI in 2017 and continues with committee involvement, on a seasonal basis.

Ms. Fan's work with LSG has led to numerous awards, among them Maryland ASLA's General Design Honor award for the St. Elizabeth Mitigation Project in the Capitol Heights district of DC, and her work with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, both their Janelia Farm Research Campus in Northern Virginia and their Headquarters in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Indeed, her work with HHMI has bridged the years from 2006 through the present, across many phases of development, construction and expansion, and has achieved recognition through regional and Virginia and Maryland awards.



Alan Goldstein **AHC, Inc.**

Alan Goldstein is the Vice President of Real Estate Development for the Arlington Housing Corporation, AHC, Inc. Alan leads the team of development managers responsible for the acquisition,

financing, and renovation or new construction of multifamily residential communities throughout the Greater Washington area. He specializes in crafting innovative partnerships that leverage private sector capital to create and preserve affordable housing. Examples include ground-up construction joint ventures with faith-based organizations and for-profit developers and large-scale preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing in collaboration with local jurisdictions and private sector capital partners. Alan previously worked on Wall Street as an investment banker, structuring debt issuances for state housing finance agencies. He served for many years on the Board of Directors of Makom (formerly the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes) where he co-chaired the Housing Strategies Task Force and sought to expand housing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He is an active member of the Montgomery Housing Alliance which seeks to increase preservation and production of affordable housing in the County. He earned a Master's degree in public policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. Alan grew up in Silver Spring, attended Kennedy High School, and lives in Kensington with his wife and three children.



Tracy Hadden Loh
Brookings Metro

Tracy Hadden Loh is a Fellow with the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking at Brookings Metro, where she integrates her interests in commercial real estate, infrastructure, racial justice, and governance. She serves on the boards of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and Greater Greater Washington. Her writing can be found in two chapters of the new edited volume *Hyperlocal: Place Governance in a Fragmented World*. She previously served two years on the city council of Mount Rainier, a small town in Prince George's County, Maryland.



Ellen McCarthy
Urban Partnership, LLC

Ellen McCarthy serves on the faculty of the Master's Program in Urban & Regional Planning at Georgetown University and is a principal at the Urban Partnership, LLC. With over 35 years of professional experience focused on the practice of land use zoning, neighborhood planning, and historic preservation, McCarthy is widely recognized for her expertise in reconciling public and private value in urban revitalization. From 1999-2007, she served in the District of Columbia Office of Planning, first as deputy director for Land Use Review and subsequently as director. Under her leadership, the District of Columbia approved its first newly drafted Comprehensive Plan since the District of Columbia was granted Home Rule by Congress in 1973; the Plan later received an award from the local chapter of the American Planning Association. She served as Interim Planning Director as well in a subsequent mayoral administration.

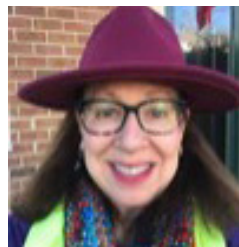
An expert negotiator and mediator, McCarthy is adept at facilitating complex multi-stakeholder land use cases which deliver mixed-use, transit-oriented development, and historic preservation outcomes. She has stewarded hundreds of complex zoning cases before the D.C. Zoning Commission, Historic Preservation Review Board and the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Whether entitling land for new development, engaging in public hearings, or bridging community conflict, McCarthy has facilitated planned unit developments, rezonings, variances, special exceptions, street and alley closings, roof structure reviews, downtown development district compliance and transfers of development rights, as well as federal land use, preservation, and environmental reviews.

A strong advocate for affordable housing, McCarthy has served on the boards of several nonprofits engaged in creating and preserving low- and moderate-income housing in DC and she directed the creation of the zoning provision that requires developers of new housing projects to reserve a percentage of the units as permanently affordable.

Ms. McCarthy co-chairs the Placemaking Council of the DC chapter of the Urban Land Institute and serves on the Steering Committee of Ward 3 Vision, a local organization which advocates for smart growth, livable streets, and affordable housing in upper Northwest DC.

In 2009, Partners for Livable Communities bestowed its Entrepreneurial American Leadership Award to McCarthy and her husband, faculty member Richard Bradley, for their efforts to revitalize Downtown D.C. She also received the Urban and Regional Planning program's award for Outstanding Faculty Member in 2018. She also was awarded a Fannie Mae Fellowship to attend the program for Senior Executives in State and Regional Government.

She holds a Master of City Planning from Harvard University and a B.A., Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Maryland.



Margaret Rifkin
The Art and Walkability Project

Margaret Rifkin is the founder of The Art and Walkability Project having worked until 2018 as an urban designer and planner for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, DC. She has worked extensively on a range of urban design and planning issues in this County over the past 30 years. Her work has included planning, design, and implementation to transform existing places into walkable centers. She has worked on the plans for transforming the Wheaton CBD as well as on the Downtown Bethesda Plan. She has been involved in the review of urban infill and large federal facilities. She led the launch of the new plan for the White Flint Metro Station area and prepared urban design studies and guidelines. She is experienced in community outreach. She most recently worked on the creation and management of a new Design Excellence Award Program in Montgomery County. Two of her favorite projects have been managing and participating in the design of collaborative public art installations at the Planning Department's former headquarter in Silver Spring. They are 'The Purple Path and Crosswalk' asphalt art, and 'Flash Art', a series of temporary works created by Planning

Department staff using colorful construction flags in a park over a period of months.

She is a member of the APA's Urban Design and Preservation Division Executive Committee and led their award-winning webinar program. She spoke at the 2010 and 2011 National Conferences in sessions titled "Reinvented and Authentic? Tomorrow's Suburbs", and "Open Space Systems for New Suburban Centers." She participated in an APA Community Planning Assistance Team for Deerfield Beach, Florida. She is a longtime member of the Congress for the New Urbanism and its Washington DC Chapter. She is a member of the Urban Land Institute and has earned its Real Estate Development Certificate. She is currently on Washington ULI's Placemaking Council. She is a Registered Landscape Architect in the State of Maryland.

She studied Urban Design at the University of California at Berkeley and holds both a Master's in Landscape Architecture and a Master's in City and Regional Planning. Immediately following graduate school, she worked in Singapore for a local enterprise and travelled throughout southeast Asia. She holds a Bachelor's Degree from Smith College.



Jonathan D. Rogers District Department of Transportation

Jonathan D. Rogers is the Neighborhood Planning Manager at the District Department of Transportation. Jonathan oversees development review, public

realm design and permitting, public space arts and activation, and neighborhood transportation studies. Jonathan's focus is on identifying and implementing multi-modal transportation needs for the District's most rapidly developing neighborhoods including Buzzard Point, Union Market, and Walter Reed. Before joining DDOT, he worked on regional transportation issues at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Jonathan holds a Master of City Planning degree from the University of California, Berkeley and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan. He lives in Kensington, MD with his wife, Tamara, and son, Max.



Will Zeid Gorove Slade

Will Zeid is a Senior Associate at Gorove Slade, a traffic engineering and planning firm operating in the DC, MD, and Virginia region for over 40 years. He has been working in the DC-MD region as a

transportation engineer for the last 11 years and joined Gorove Slade in 2021. He is a registered Professional Engineer in DC, Maryland and Indiana and has been qualified as an expert by the DC Board of Zoning Adjustment, the DC Zoning Commission, by numerous jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia, and has been recognized as an expert witness by the Loudoun County Circuit Court. In his role as a Project Manager, he is tasked with responsibilities related to both client service and overseeing internal office operations including staff growth and development. Will oversees a variety of transportation planning and engineering projects across the MD-DC region providing support for designing and entitling private and public development projects. Will provides a wide array of transportation planning and engineering services, including traffic multi-modal facilities design, impact studies, traffic simulation, site access and circulation planning, roadway signing and striping plans, traffic signal design, functional parking lot and garage design, parking demand studies, loading dock analysis, and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) planning. His projects cover a wide array of land uses in the educational, mixed-use, office, government, commercial and retail sectors. Will takes great interest in the multimodal elements of urban projects that require brainstorming creative solutions to benefit all modes of transportation.

Will is recognized in the development industry as a trusted advisor and transportation expert. He is an advocate for his clients, providing practical advice through each stage of development. Will prides himself in developing solutions to complex issues and finding a path forward towards the success of projects he is involved in. Will recently helped lead a stakeholder group with Montgomery County Transportation Staff to update the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) guidelines and is involved in ongoing discussions with County Staff to address new issues as they arise. He recognizes that a balance in commitments must be reached between all stakeholders, both public and private, if development are to be successful in Montgomery County while also ensuring adequate and robust public infrastructure is available for those who live, work and visit the County.



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