



Urban Land
Institute

Washington



Technical Assistance Panel Report

Investing in Prince George's Plaza

Sponsored by:
Prince George's County
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

September 3-4 2014

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Prince George's Plaza, MD

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About ULI Washington

A District Council of the Urban Land Institute

ULI Washington is a district council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a nonprofit education and research organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute today has over 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use planning and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better communities.

ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI Washington carries out the ULI mission locally by sharing best practices, building consensus, and advancing solutions through educational programs and community outreach initiatives.

About the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

The objective of ULI Washington's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary, and objective 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 one and one-half 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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Study Area Background and Panel Assignment

The Prince George's Plaza Metro area, which served as the study area for this TAP, is located in northern Prince George's County, Maryland, approximately 1.7 miles northeast of the boundary with the District of Columbia. Measuring roughly 363 acres in size, the study area consists primarily of privately owned property, and also includes parkland owned by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The study area is bisected by East West Highway, or MD State Route 410, which is a major thoroughfare connecting Prince George's Plaza and Hyattsville with New Carrollton, as well as Silver Spring and Bethesda in Montgomery County.



There are by East West Highway, or MD State Route 410. Map Source: Prince Georges County TAP briefing materials. a wide

variety of uses within the study area, including civic, commercial retail, multifamily residential, and office. The study area encompasses the Prince George's Plaza Metro Station, which is situated approximately 280 feet south of East West Highway, behind a two-story building that houses several retail shops. The study area also includes a fair amount of retail space, the most prominent of which is the Mall at Prince Georges. "The Mall" – to which it is often referred – contains more than 900,000 square feet of net leasable space and over 100 retail establishments. In addition to the Mall, the Metropolitan Shops at Belcrest Center feature 160,623 square feet of retail development and include such anchors as Staples, Bob's Discount Furniture, and LA Fitness. The Metropolitan Shops and the Metro station are connected with the Mall via a two-story pedestrian bridge spanning East West Highway. The study area also includes several properties fronting on East West Highway, Belcrest Road, and Toledo Terrace. Home Depot and a Giant Foods supermarket are located in the western portion of the study area, south of East West Highway.

The study area is also home to University Town Center, a mixed-use development featuring retail, office, and residential uses, including 3,025 multi-family housing units in mid-rise and high-rise apartment buildings. Prince George's Plaza Community Center, which contains a gym, fitness center, and multi-purpose space for recreational programs, as well as six faith-based institutions, are also located within the study area.

Accessing the study area can be accomplished via Metrorail, by bus, or by auto. The site is oriented around the Prince George's Plaza Metro Station, and is located on the Yellow and Green Metrorail lines, just two stops northeast of the District of Columbia border. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, or WMATA, provides both Metrorail service as well as seven bus routes to the study area. WMATA's bus service is coupled with service provided by Prince George's County's "The Bus," and by shuttle service provided by the University of Maryland. Additionally, Adelphi Road and Queens Chapel Road lie just east of the study area, and are important arterials that provide vehicular access to the study area and carry large volumes of traffic.

While the study area is housed within Prince George's County, it also lies partly within the municipal boundary of Hyattsville, Maryland. Prince George's County, City of Hyattsville government officials, and local developers all recognize the major development potential of the Prince George's Plaza Metro area. Development has been challenged, however, by the post-2008 national economic recession. The recession's local impacts included the foreclosure of residential and retail portions of the University Town Center and delays in the start of construction of the Belcrest Plaza development. Nevertheless, some key property owners are planning major development and redevelopment projects, including some that relate to the Mall.

The study area faces several key obstacles. One obstacle is the predominance of East West Highway, a six-lane arterial that regularly sees high speeds, and poses a major challenge to the creation of the pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly public realm that is essential to successful transit-oriented development, or TOD. Although a pedestrian bridge over East West Highway provides a connection between the shopping mall with the Metro station, this overpass is generally uninviting, is marred by significant maintenance and accessibility issues, and therefore experiences low usage.

The goal of this TAP is to help determine short-term public improvements for the study area that can easily be implemented to knit together the disjointed land uses and address circulation challenges, including connectivity to the metro station. The TAP will also identify long-term strategies for development and

rebranding that can be phased in over time. In order to achieve these goals, Panelists were asked to address the following questions:

1. What incentives can the County and the State provide to help bring about the right mix and form of development in the Prince George's Plaza area?
2. What short-term and economical public infrastructure improvements and strategies exist that will connect the scattered development sites within the TOD into a coherent, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly mixed-use neighborhood?
3. What development concept would work best at the Mall at Prince George's site, given its close proximity to the Metro station? Should an enclosed shopping mall be part of the future transit-oriented development center?
4. Although it has not functioned as well as originally anticipated, the pedestrian overpass that spans East West Highway, or MD 410, is an iconic structure that potentially could do far more to connect areas north of East West Highway with the Prince George's Plaza Metro Station. To what extent can future development be used to fully realize the potential functionality of the pedestrian overpass?
5. What strategies can be employed to help re-brand the Prince George's Plaza area in order to avoid historical stigmas and negative perceptions of the area?
6. Does it make sense for the County to pursue a public-private partnership to address some of these reinvestment and re-branding issues? If so, what might this look like, and what steps should the County take to form such a partnership?
7. What regional challenges will be addressed through structuring a deal that will lead to redeveloping this site?
8. How can investing in Prince George's Plaza enhance the quality of life for area residents, strengthen the local economy, and benefit the region?

Panel Recommendations

Over the course of the TAP, the Panel surveyed the study area, heard from County staff, and met with a variety of stakeholders in order to develop a series of thoughtful recommendations to address redevelopment challenges and achieve an overall vision for a thriving center. The Panel’s recommendations are detailed below.

Existing Conditions Analysis

In order to form a baseline for their recommendations, the Panel first analyzed the site’s existing conditions, and concluded that the study area enjoys assets inherent to both the natural and built environment. The Mall itself, which is nestled amidst a significant greenway, is busy and attracts a lot of activity. The housing in the study area provides rooftops that can power both existing activity and future development. From a regional perspective, the study area is also extremely well positioned. With Silver Spring as its only major retail competitor, this study area is uniquely situated to draw consumers from a radius of at least five miles, and therefore serves as a major regional retail node, particularly for the eastern side of the region. Furthermore, transportation options in the area abound. The Prince George’s Plaza Metro station provides connectivity to other areas throughout the region, and the position of the road network – including East West Highway and Adelphi Road – superbly provides opportunities to access the area from a variety of different places by car, bus, and shuttle. The design of the mall further allows a variety of useful vehicular access points.

These assets are coupled with a series of challenges. While the Metro station is centrally located within the study area, the Panel conceded that this particular station – shown to the right – is perhaps the most “cleverly camouflaged” station within the entire Metro system. Finding the station amidst the surrounding parking structures, housing developments, and big-box retail is difficult, in large part because the study area lacks a way-finding system. Other transportation challenges exist as well. The configuration of East West Highway, which widens from four lanes outside the study area to six lanes inside the study area, encourages high speeds. It is these high speeds that necessitated the construction of the “iconic” pedestrian bridge over East West Highway to improve safety and reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflicts. Yet this unpleasant bridge, with its narrow stairwells and cage-like overpass, regularly falls victim to broken elevators and offensive odors.



The study area also possesses several traffic-stressed and amorphous road intersections. The area’s central intersection – Belcrest Road and East West Highway – holds the potential to serve as a gateway location that establishes a visual image for the study area. Unfortunately, the land uses surrounding this station – a dentistry building, a gas station, and charmless

retail – render this intersection formless and irrelevant. The Panel also noted an unusually large amount of surface parking throughout the study area, some of which is underutilized – particularly behind the Mall. This abundance of surface parking contributes to flooding issues in areas of existing development, which negatively impacts the communities adjacent to the study area.



Furthermore, the types of retail in the study area are inconsistent, and fail to provide the most appropriate options or variety to adequately serve the surrounding community. In particular, the southern side of East West Highway possesses retail options that lack continuity with each other. Further, much of the retail space in the University Town Center, illustrated at left, is vacant. The Panel emphasized the importance of a mix of retail uses to creating a vibrant place. Of note, the Panel noticed the absence of a central food, beverage and entertainment corridor in the study area.

The Mall, which is centered in the Study Area, has the potential to be a major asset to the community asset, but is not currently maximizing its potential. Panelists agreed that the Mall presents a viable and vibrant community in the area, and that the use of certain spaces within and around the mall indicates a real need for an authentic community gathering space. For instance, Panelists noticed that the food court is overcrowded, and that people are gathering at the few isolated benches in the parking lot outside the food court. However, without any positive developmental changes to the Mall itself, it is unlikely that significant change will occur to affect the overall urban landscape of the Study Area.

Finally, the placement of the civic spaces in the study area needs to be examined. The Panel acknowledged that the County has commenced discussions about replacing the Community Center, which lies at the periphery of the study area, and the Hyattsville Branch Library, which lies just outside the study area, adjacent to the University Town Center. Panelists agreed that the existing locations of these facilities fail to leverage much activity. Maintaining these community spaces on the site's periphery – rather than in a central location – continues to render these spaces underused, and lessens their overall potential to be a driving force for the neighborhood.



This image, developed by the Panel, illustrates the study area's existing conditions. While the study area possesses many assets, it also suffers from several challenges, including a large amount of surface parking (illustrated in pink), overstressed road intersections (illustrated in red), and inconsistent retail uses. Image Source: ULI Washington.

Transportation Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Transportation-related challenges, including circulation and connectivity, were a major focus of the Panel. Whereas an auto-dominated road network infuses the study area, the overall vision for redeveloping the area includes facilities that will accommodate multi-modal transportation with enhanced mobility options for area residents. While major streets provide terrific vehicular access, some of these streets – particularly East West Highway – act as a barrier to multi-modal uses. Pedestrian safety is a critical challenge: the study area lacks adequate connectivity, pedestrian amenities, and appropriate lighting. Broken or inconsistent sidewalks are pervasive, and dark intersections make it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street safely. The study area also lacks appropriate bicycle facilities; while there is some signage and indications of striped bicycle lanes on certain side streets, no coordinated network exists.

To address these needs, the Panel recommended several near-term solutions that could help transition the site from an auto-dominated area to a multi-modal network. Some low-cost enhancements include improving lighting along pedestrian routes and creating sidewalk connections through streetscaping measures. The Panel recommended evaluating how pedestrians and cyclists permeate through the surrounding area to access the Mall, which will aid the County in identifying and creating adequate bicycle facilities, such as lane markings, signage, and improved striping that will encourage bicycle use. Creating an East-West pedestrian/bicycle

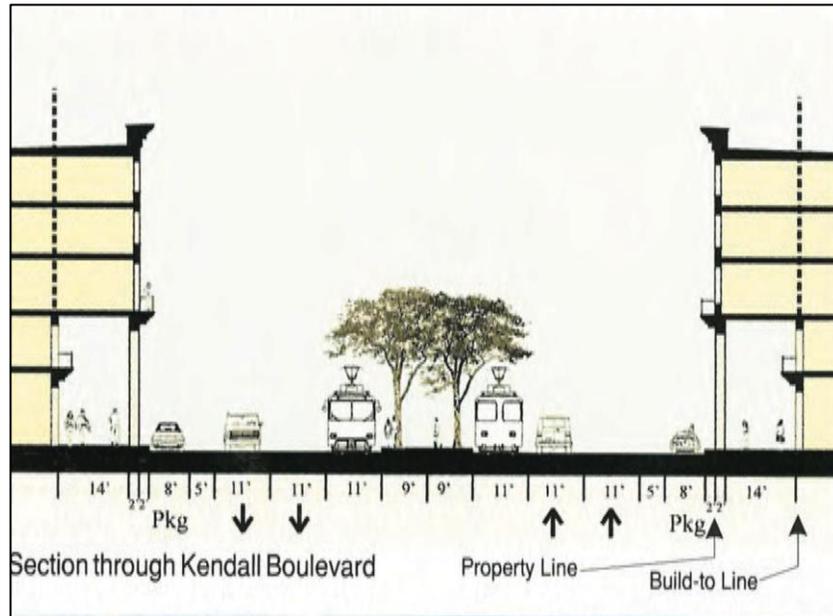


connection on the North side of East West Highway would further address the need for increased bicycle facilities. Additionally, the Panel recommended upgrading current transit stops, including benches and shelters, and coordinating the various transit and shuttle systems to the area to make sure these providers are serving the appropriate constituencies. Finally, the Panel suggested considering design concepts for East West Highway that might be needed in the future in order to transition this major arterial into a multi-modal, complete street. Such design concepts could include a “road diet,” curb parking, and new transit facilities.

The “Before” and “After” images above illustrate examples for how East West Highway could be transformed using the Panel’s suggestions. The Above image shows a four-lane divided roadway, with development set back off the road. The Below image shows a grassy median, with designated space for transit and parking. Image source: ULI Washington.

In the longer term, the Panel recommended additional strategies to modify East West Highway so that it becomes a complete street, which is defined as a street that safely and adequately accommodates motorized and non-motorized users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, emergency vehicles, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. East West Highway was built at a time when road standards and the reliance on the automobile were different from today. To bring the street up to date to meet the existing and future needs of the study area, the Panel recommended reducing travel speeds and removing the channelized “hot right” turn lanes that encourage vehicles to make a right-hand turn at speeds upwards of 30 mph, which inhibits a sense of pedestrian safety in crossing the street. The Panel recognized the challenges associated with implementing these strategies given current Maryland State Highway Administration standards, and suggested that a collaborative effort among all of the stakeholders would be needed to achieve the long-term goals for East West Highway. The Panel also recommended adding curb cuts, and enhancing bicycle facilities by striping sharrows for bicycle use on Belcrest and Adelphi roads. Most cycle trips are 1-2 miles in length, and cyclists are more inclined to ride when there is an established bike lane. According to the panel, “You don’t see anyone riding their bike until you build a bike lane; then it’s full of people.” Creating designated facilities for cyclists will encourage cycling throughout the study area.

The Panel further recommended that the County evaluate all of the bus and shuttle service to the area, and consider creating a local circulator or shuttle service that addresses the unmet needs of the surrounding community. Along with adding this transit element, the County should also consider coordinating its transportation demand management, or TDM, by creating a TDM district that provides real-time information to the area's consumers so that they can make informed decisions about their transportation options. Creating a TDM district can ultimately reduce overall reliance on parking.



The diagram above, provided by one of the Panelists, indicates suggested lane widths for a multitude of uses along East West Highway, including 11-foot travel lanes, 5-foot bike lanes, and 8-foot parking lanes. Image source: ULI Washington.

Overall, each of these transportation-related suggestions are aimed at achieving a balance between meeting the needs of – but not over-serving – vehicles, and creating a transportation network that is conducive to redevelopment in a multi-modal context.

The “Iconic” Pedestrian Bridge



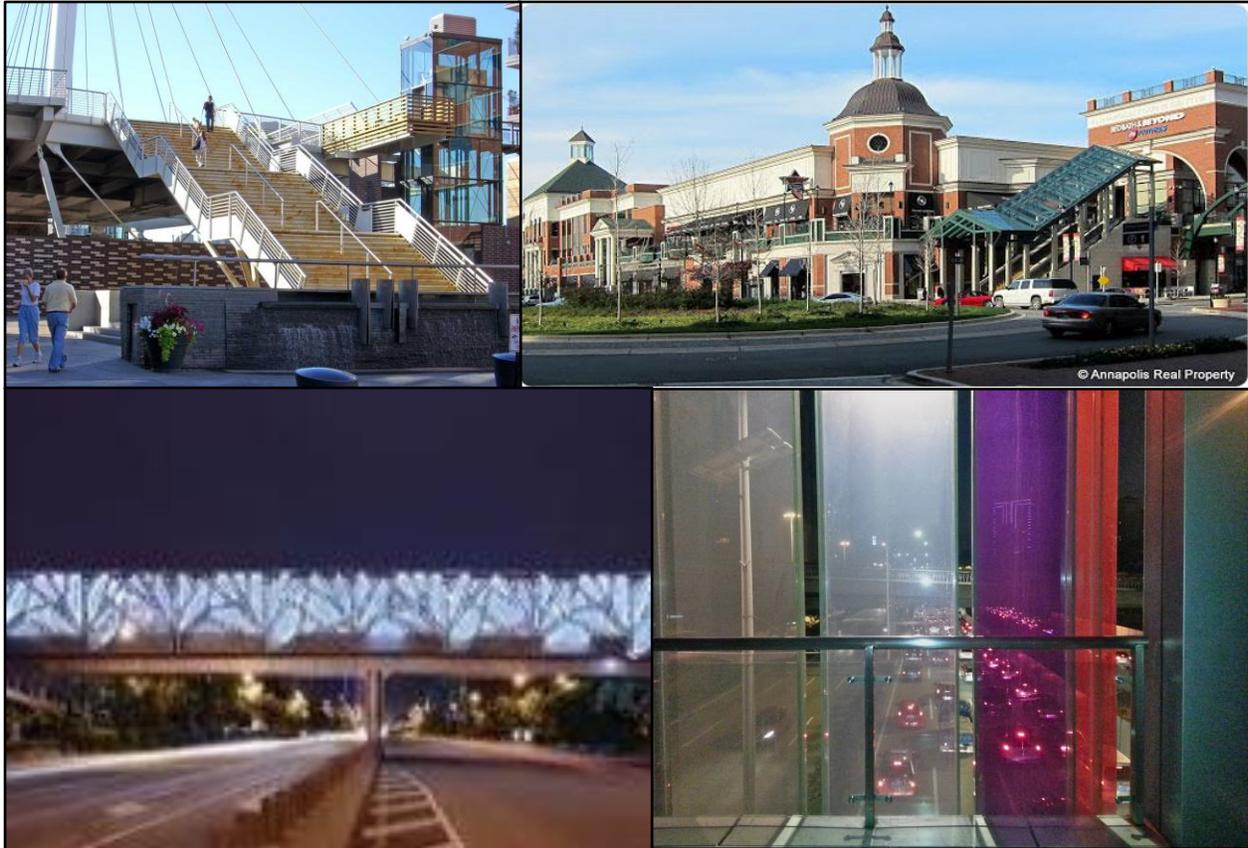
The bridge over East West Highway provides access between the Mall at Prince George’s and University Town Center, but is underutilized, uninviting, and in disrepair. Image source: ULI Washington.

Throughout the TAP briefing materials, the pedestrian crossing over East West Highway was consistently referred to as “The Iconic Bridge” that serves as THE major distinguishing landmark for the study area. While this bridge does provide pedestrian access between the Mall at Prince George’s and University Town Center, and is the only overpass of its kind for miles, it is mostly underutilized, is poorly maintained, and lacks a friendly character. Some might consider the bridge an eyesore rather than a neighborhood asset: it needs to be upgraded, and the continuing maintenance and operating costs are unclear. The panel therefore suggested that the County explore the idea of removing the bridge altogether and replacing it with an at-grade crossing that is both interesting and functional. The Panel emphasized

pedestrian crossings that creatively use color and different materials— such as in the image below – add to the community by creating a pedestrian-friendly facility while simultaneously reducing traffic speeds in a natural way that does not feel “forced.”

Should the County decide to keep the pedestrian bridge, the Panel provided several examples of pedestrian overpasses that successfully provide safe crossing options while also serving as a neighborhood amenity. In Denver, CO, for instance, the Riverfront Bridge’s open stairwell and wide landing doubles as a mini-plaza and gathering space. In Annapolis, MD, an outdoor overpass that shelters stairs and two escalators has been integrated into the fabric of the surrounding mixed-use Annapolis Town Center development. This major capital investment provides a reliable source of vertical transportation, and in the instance when one escalator requires maintenance, a second one can provide limited service in a way that protects users from weather and other elements. Finally, the Panel suggested upgrading materials from the existing wire fencing to other transparent options – such as glass. Two international examples, taken from different locations in China, illustrate how using glass windows along the span of a bridge can reclaim the icon in a positive way while still being functional for users.





These of bridges provide examples of successful ways for overhead pedestrian crossing to serve as a neighborhood amenity. Clockwise from top: Denver Riverfront Bridge (Image source: <http://binged.it/1EpKHSx>); Annapolis Town Center (Image source: Robert Atkinson), Pedestrian Crossing over major road in China (Image source: <http://bit.ly/1rV1yaf>); Glass-enclosed pedestrian bridge in China (Image source: Mariela Alfonzo).

Development Framework and Site Plan

In order to assist the County in envisioning possibilities for the study area, the Panel provided a development framework and site plan. This site plan aims to reduce the overall block size, add a mix of uses, intensify the area's current uses, and formalize East West Highway as a central main street for the neighborhood. The Panel presented the suggested site plan in two phases: short- and long-term.

Over the short term, the suggested site plan assumes that a portion of the Mall will remain within the study area. This plan introduces a street grid that will provide a better connection throughout the overall site, in part by adding connections through the existing underutilized Mall parking lot. The site plan also provides pedestrian access from the base of the current bridge – or future at-grade crossing of East West Highway – to the Mall. This access creates an opportunity to develop a pedestrian corridor between these two points, which will make it inviting for people to walk to the food court or other retail uses. The site plan also formalizes Toledo Road, which strengthens the connection between the two neighboring residential developments in the northern part of the study area, and the Mall.



The Panel's suggested Site Plan, illustrated above, introduces a street grid that provides better pedestrian connections between the area's economic engine – the Mall at Prince George's – and the surrounding neighborhoods. Image Source: ULI Washington.

Over the long term, the Panel envisioned more robust retail uses throughout the entire study area. Double-sided retail would exist along most of the East West Highway corridor, and the Mall would be more deliberately integrated into the rest of the study area. To accomplish this, the Panel suggested that a while a portion of the Mall should remain in the long-term, some of the anchors should develop into a more urbanized context, which would pave the way for the development of a more enhanced street grid. Eventually, the Panel envisioned that a street grid would traverse the existing Mall site in order to improve overall pedestrian connectivity. Additional pedestrian connections could be made around the area by utilizing the stream valley and by improving East West Highway into a complete street through implementing some of the transportation-related recommendations detailed earlier.



Over the long term, the Panel envisioned a more mixed-use study area, complete with a formalized street grid that would extend through the existing Mall site. Image source: ULI Washington.

Co-Locating Civic Uses

As part of this longer-term development plan, the Panel also addressed the study area’s civic uses. Both the library and the community center hold major importance for the area’s redevelopment. Currently, the community center sits at the site’s periphery, and the library is situated just outside – but proximate to – the study area. The Panel recommended that co-locating these facilities in an alternative, more prominent location with proper access presents many benefits and opportunities.

Co-locating these civic uses would be advantageous both economically and financially. First, because there is greater potential for shared first costs and an opportunity to reduce overall operating costs, co-locating these uses creates efficiencies in overall space and saves on resources. Co-locating the library and community center would also add a tremendous amenity to the study area by creating an anchor and activity generator with a focus on education, arts, culture, recreation, and fitness that serves a multi-generational audience at all times of the day. The Panel also pointed out that there are numerous precedents for successful co-located libraries in the region and nationwide, and that a wide variety of ownership formats exist.¹ Overall, while it may take some time to acquire land and transition the two facilities into one, the County can be creative and flexible in implementing such a co-location endeavor.

¹ One successful regional example of co-locating civic space includes the Signature Theater and a branch of the Arlington Public Library in Shirlington, VA. This project is a central part of a mixed-use development, and includes a public plaza and fountain. National examples of libraries with a mixed-use component can also be seen in Portland, OR, and Milwaukee, WI.

The Panel recommended several site-specific options for co-locating the library and community center – each with their own advantages and constraints. Perhaps the easiest logistical option would be to expand at the existing location at Adelphi Road, though this option would keep the site on the periphery of the study area and present challenges to creating obvious pedestrian connections to the study area’s center. An alternative suggestion is to explore a location at the connection where the pedestrian bridge crossing touches down on the north side of East West Highway. This would create a central anchor location and clear connection to Metro, but the location is relatively constrained, and would pose ownership challenges. The Panel also suggested exploring a location at the western corner of the Mall, which would create a western anchor along East West Highway and a better connection between the stream trail and the western side of the study area. This option also renders civic uses in a peripheral location, however. A final suggestion is to consider a site on the large surface lot at Belcrest Road and Toledo Road, which would locate the civic use as a northern anchor proximate to the high school. A possible outcome of this location is an enhanced opportunity to develop educational programming in conjunction with the school.

Implementation

It’s one thing to envision what a redeveloped Prince George’s Plaza study area may look and feel like; it’s another to execute this vision successfully. The Panel recognized that achieving some of the goals and milestones laid out in their recommendations may be challenging, and therefore provided a series of steps that frame a suggested “order of attack” for implementation.

First, the Panel emphasized the importance of establishing a common communication platform among property owners, stakeholders, business owners, and area residents. While there is some indication that these entities communicate on an irregular basis, the infrequency of these instances stands as an inhibitor to progress. Establishing a formal team that meets regularly, stays on task, and creates accountability

“Safety is an essential component to creating a vibrant street, and all stakeholders must assume guardianship of their commercial district’s public realm to help reduce possible dangers.”

among its members is key to success. Second, the Panel advised that this team work to determine an overall vision for the site. While this vision may be abstract, the act of establishing a vision sets a common goal and provides a framework for moving forward with the next important step: conducting a market analysis that will help all stakeholders understand the neighborhood better.

A critical component of this market analysis is addressing the perception of safety. According to Panelists, safety is an essential part to creating a vibrant street, and all stakeholders must assume guardianship of their commercial district’s public realm to help reduce

possible dangers. The Panel recommended meeting with a brokerage agency and a representative of the local law enforcement agency to seek real, hard advice about the perception of safety in the area. Walking through the streets and taking specific note of issues such as non-functioning street lamps, poorly maintained public trash receptacles or benches, grass or weeds in public areas that are in need of mowing, sidewalks in disrepair, graffiti, and secluded areas will also help elevate awareness about the general perception of safety – or lack thereof – in the study area.

Upon completion of the market analysis, the Panel recommended the next step: establishing a plan and finding a champion – typically a developer – who can propel the plan towards reality through facilitating the approval of master plan pieces and by solidifying an area anchor. Presently, the Mall contributes to vibrancy at the core of the study area: people park in the parking lot to access the mall for entertainment, food, and shopping. However, according to the Panel, this shopping model is anachronistic to the desired urban retail experience that includes walkability and creating more density around the study area’s Metro Station. According to Panelists, it will take a catalytic event – such as a mall department store closing – to cause significant enhancements to the study area. Based on the current evolution of regional mall business, it is likely that one or more of the anchor stores in the Mall will close within the next 5-10 years. Therefore, Panelists recommended that the County engage in an ongoing dialogue with the owner of the Mall to discuss methods of encouraging overall economic growth over the interim and long-term.

Upon reaching an implementation strategy that will require a capital investment, the County can implement several alternative strategies in conjunction with private landowners to stimulate and/or incentivize improvements that will increase overall value for both the public and private land in the study area. Some of these financial strategies include, but are not limited to: creating a tax increment financing district, public improvement grants, tax exempt bonds, public-private partnerships, land swaps, and utility districts.

Once an implementable plan is in place, the Panel recommended creating a walkable streetscape that complements the planned urban retail uses. Finally, after this streetscape is planned, the Panel recommended creating a brand for the area. This branding last step is fun, but also can be challenging. The Panel emphasized the importance of waiting to the end of the process to name and sell the area – once the area’s identity has been established and has garnered the appropriate levels of support from all stakeholders.

Collaboration among area retailers is also an important element to creating the vibrancy set forth in these recommendations. This study area has a core group of area retailers that could form a merchant or business association, which would be the precursor to formalizing a Business Improvement District, or BID. The first steps to creating this organization can be as informal as inviting a couple of landowners or area retailers to coffee with the purpose of discussing what is happening in the area. According to the Panel, these casual interactions serve as an important first step in aligning mutual interests and in deciding how to tackle them. Once a retailers’ organization is formally established, the Panel recommended that it become active in local municipal meetings as a way to strengthen the connection between the public and private sectors.²

Regional Implications of Implementation

The benefits of investing in this study area extend beyond Prince George’s County, and hold implications for the greater Metropolitan Washington Region. Uneven growth trends over the past several decades have led to economic disparities between the eastern and western side of the region – with the eastern side of the region experiencing less average household income, fewer employment opportunities, and fewer transportation options, particularly with regard to accessing job sites. Because of its location on the eastern side of the region, investing in the Prince George’s Plaza study area paves the way to balance growth and economic development across the region, and perhaps to address regional competitiveness as a whole.

² For additional resources on formulating a BID, visit the following: Hyattsville Community Development Corporation (www.hyccdc.org); Retail Merchants Association (www.retailmerchants.com); and Maryland Economic Development Association (www.medamd.com).

Taken in a larger context, the study area is well positioned to build on the momentum of the tremendous neighboring investment in the Green Line Metrorail corridor, and of the success of the nearby Hyattsville Arts District, which is a major retail outpost focusing on arts and culture.

Investment in the study area also addresses ridership needs at an underutilized Metrorail station. As a whole, the Metrorail system experiences excess capacity at certain stations, including Prince George's Plaza. Intensifying and activating the land around this Metro station could encourage increased ridership – including reverse commuting and “selling the same seat twice” – while also removing key barriers that may inhibit people from using the Metro. In addition to maximizing the potential of the Metrorail system, investing in this study area by retrofitting the Mall to increase walkability enhances the overall quality of place, and can serve as a demonstration for how to foster walkability and preserve active living in a suburban context.

Conclusion

The Prince George's Plaza study area sits at a key locational crossroads inside the Interstate 495 beltway. It serves as a regionally significant retail node, with high residential occupancies and high asset quality, particularly in the newer multi-family units that were recently developed. Furthermore, the area's growing and diverse population presents an opportunity of increased buying power, which could translate into an increased interest in spending locally if development can match the needs and demands of area residents.

Achieving the County's vision for the Prince George's Plaza study area is within reach. Throughout their recommendations, the Panel emphasized several key themes for the County to consider in moving forward with investment to reach their goals. These themes include:

- Convening disparate groups, particularly through a series of regular, frequent community meetings. The Panel applauds the County for laying the framework to begin this dialogue, and hopes that these efforts will continue and grow stronger and more frequent over time.
- Prioritizing small initiatives now. It only takes a few small steps to encourage collaboration and make a difference in a community. The Panel recommended organizing events such as a targeted cleaning campaign, which could become a community activity that generates local pride. The Panel also encouraged stakeholders to consider other means to foster positive neighborhood change, such as re-painting corroded benches, planting flowers, and other landscape beautification measures
- Addressing wayfinding and the perception of safety are critical to building vibrancy. Currently, the area is seriously deficient in wayfinding signage. Adding highly visible, colorful signs to the street is relatively inexpensive, and results in providing a sense of direction, and in creating unity. The Panel encouraged the County to consider resources such as walkyourcity.org, which provides online tools to create on-the-street signage for communities. With regard to safety, the County should consider enhancing street lighting through small-scale improvements such as changing the existing streetlights to LEDs that produce more light.
- Program communal spaces. Temporary venues should be created to provide programming opportunities like street fairs, farmers markets, and other educational programming. Acknowledging the proximity of the Hyattsville arts district, the Panel encouraged the County to create a space and "turn the artists loose!" as a way to activate the neighborhood.

These steps, taken in consideration with the larger recommendations in this report, will support and encourage the development of the Prince George's Plaza study area into the County's vision for a vibrant, thriving mixed-use center.

About the Panel

Robert Atkinson, Panel Chair
Davis Carter Scott

Robert Atkinson is an Associate Principal and Vice president at Davis Carter Scott, one of the leading architectural firms in the Metropolitan Washington Area. Prior to joining Davis Carter Scott, Mr. Atkinson spent 14 years with the Department of Economic Development in Arlington Virginia where he was responsible for the development of the award winning Rosslyn Station Area Plan Addendum, assisted numerous projects through the site plan approval process, and was an active participant in developing many of the County's land use policies. Mr. Atkinson began his career as Urban Designer for the City of Little Rock, Arkansas where he was instrumental in developing the Downtown Plan as well as numerous neighborhood plans and other studies. Mr. Atkinson holds a Bachelor of University Studies degree from the University of New Mexico in architecture, planning and architectural history.

Mariela Alfonzo
NYU School of Engineering

Bridging the worlds of academia and practice, Dr. Alfonzo is the Founder of State of Place, a data-driven decision-making and community engagement tool that guides investments, interventions and policies to boost walkability and economic development; the president of Urban Imprint, an urban design-behavior research and consulting firm; and an Assistant Research Professor at New York University, where she's examining the links between the built environment and health in rapidly urbanizing Chinese cities. An expert on the triple bottom line of urban design, Dr. Alfonzo focuses on how the relationship between the built environment and behavior impacts health, broadly defined to include physical, mental, social, community, environmental, and fiscal health, within the context of neighborhood revitalization. Dr. Alfonzo was awarded a Fulbright to examine walkability in China in the Fall of 2013, where she examined the socio-cultural and policy challenges to implementing walkable development. Dr. Alfonzo has a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning with an emphasis on Urban Design and Behavior, as well as a professional Masters in Urban Planning, from The University of California, Irvine (UCI), and a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and Psychology from the University of Miami.

John C. Coe
Ceres Capital Partners

John Coe is a Managing Director of Ceres Capital Partners and has 35 years of commercial real estate investment and financing experience with over \$3.5 billion in transaction history in debt, equity and sales of all types of commercial and multifamily real estate. Mr. Coe has been active with mortgage banking, lending, development and acquisitions throughout his career with stints at CGA Capital, Concord Eastridge, Ackman Ziff, Northmarq Capital, Legg Mason Real Estate, B. F. Saul Co., Coldwell Banker, Homart Development and Prudential. Mr. Coe is a licensed real estate broker in Maryland and Virginia and is on the Advisory Council of ULI Washington. Mr. Coe received his B.A. from the University of Michigan.

Matt Hopkins
Streetsense

A native and lifelong resident of the Washington, D.C. area, Matt Hopkins has planned, designed, detailed, and construction contracted over five million square feet of built architecture and development projects and designed another ten million square feet of development under entitlement in his nearly 25 years of experience. Mr. Hopkins has extensive experience in preliminary site analysis, development criteria, neighborhood/site/ shell/interiors/detail design, building and zoning code analysis, budgeting/estimating, value comparisons, construction management, LEED analysis and implementation, and community/neighborhood planning. Mr. Hopkins is active in many industry organizations including the ULI, AIA, APA, NCARB, NAIOP, USGBC, Habitat for Humanity, and the Association Builders and Contractors. In addition, Mr. Hopkins currently serves as a Planning Commissioner for the City of Gaithersburg in the Maryland suburbs of D.C.. An Architect, Certified Planner, and LEED BD+C accredited professional, he has given hundreds of presentations on the differing aspects of sustainable building and planning to the development industry and various jurisdictions.

Jeremy Hurlbutt
City of Rockville, MD

As a Planner with the City of Rockville, Jeremy Hurlbutt is the main person in charge of major development review projects, process and outreach development. Jeremy has been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) since 2007. Mr. Hurlbutt has gained strong planning experience by successfully managing several complex development projects. His work focuses on the daily management and coordination of infill and transit oriented development projects. These development projects have included one of the first LEED ND communities, Twinbrook Station and one of the region's best examples of new urbanism, King Farm, and the Twinbrook Metro Place Development. He works closely with citizens, developers and design professionals, other departments at the City and outside agencies.

Mr. Hurlbutt's previous work experience included an internship with Charlier Associates, a Boulder, Colorado based multimodal transit planning firm and an internship with the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina, at the time the fastest growing town in South Carolina. Mr. Hurlbutt also spent a year with the City and County of Broomfield, Colorado in their Open Space and Trails Department, working on open space and wildlife conservation, writing grants and planning the Denver suburb trails system. Mr. Hurlbutt attended college at the University of Colorado where he majored in architecture and later attained a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning (MURP). He is also a graduate of ULI Washington's Regional Land Use Leadership Institute.

Laura London
Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing

Laura London has worked in the real estate industry for over 15 years in multifamily and master plan community development, marketing, and asset management. Now at Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing, an award-winning non-profit affordable housing developer, Ms. London manages predevelopment, entitlement, financing and construction for multifamily projects, as well as design and construction

standards across the portfolio. She is currently spearheading development for a 104-unit property in the Ballston district of Arlington.

As Managing Director during six years with Kettler, Ms. London was involved in delivering more than 2,000 multifamily units and positioning mixed-use master plans. Previously, she spent four years in project management and acquisitions for Lennar in the San Francisco Bay area, focusing on higher density infill deals including several former military bases. Ms. London is also an Arlington Soccer youth coach and chair of her class's high school alumni group. She was a member of the 2013-2014 ULI Regional Land Use Leadership Institute class, and has participated with ULI as a mentor to young leaders, chair of Urban Plan, and council member. She is a member of the board of the Views at Clarendon Corporation. Ms. London holds a BA, Cum Laude in History of Art (Architectural History) from Yale University, and a Master in City Planning (Urban Design) and MS in Real Estate Development from MIT. An area native, Ms. London resides in Arlington, VA with husband Jed and three children.

Sophie Mintier
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Sophie Mintier, AICP is a Regional Planner at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. She is responsible for project management, planning, analysis, and partnerships to advance implementation of Region Forward, the region's first comprehensive vision plan. Her projects include project management of the COG report Place + Opportunity: Strategies for Creating Great Communities and a Stronger Region, and the Regional Activity Centers Map 2013 update. Ms. Mintier serves on the management committee for the Capital Area Foreclosure Network, a regional coalition that provides outreach to at-risk homeowners and grants and technical assistance to the front-line organizations that serve them. Before joining COG, Ms. Mintier was a consultant specializing in land use, housing, zoning, and environmental review projects for cities and counties throughout California, and coordinated a regional sustainability initiative in the Bay Area. She has a Master's Degree in Regional Planning from Cornell University, and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Stephanie Pankiewicz
LandDesign

Stephanie Pankiewicz is a Partner and Landscape Architect at LandDesign based in Alexandria, VA. As a professional landscape architect and dedicated community advocate for greenways, complete streets and green infrastructure, Ms. Pankiewicz is focused on integrating economically viable and environmentally sustainable community and site design through all of the projects on which she participates. Her current work includes several large-scale mixed-use urban design/landscaping architecture projects in the D.C. Metropolitan Area. Ms. Pankiewicz also has led many public planning projects with a community participation process, including an extensive community involvement process for the City of Asheville's signature River Arts district multi-modal transportation project which consists of complex NEPA, State, and federal agency submittal and review requirements balanced with other design factors. Ms. Pankiewicz earned a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from the University of Georgia with honors and is a registered landscape architect in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and California. She is also a member of several professional organizations, including the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Urban Land Institute.

Michael Workosky
Wells + Associates, LLC

Mike has over 25 years of experience in traffic, parking, and transportation planning and engineering. He has worked for both private real estate developers and public sector clients in the preparation of site traffic impact studies, shared parking and design studies, town center studies and design, master plan design and evaluation, feasibility analyses and site assessments, Transportation Demand Management plans, and transit, pedestrian, and bicycle analyses. Mr. Workosky has worked on TOD projects and town centers in the Greater Metropolitan Washington Region as well as several other states. These projects included preparing detailed traffic impact studies, parking demand studies, traffic signal warrant analyses and design, parking design and operations, expert testimony, and coordination with other architects, engineers, and public agencies. Many of these projects were located adjacent to Metrorail stations and included TOD planning and design elements. He also prepared and contributed to shared use parking case studies on behalf of Wells + Associates, several of which have been published in the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Shared Parking manual.