



Urban Land  
Institute

Washington



Technical Assistance Panel Report

## Re-Envisioning Rhode Island Avenue

Sponsored by:

District of Columbia Office of Planning

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

September 30 – October 1, 2014

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Washington, DC

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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 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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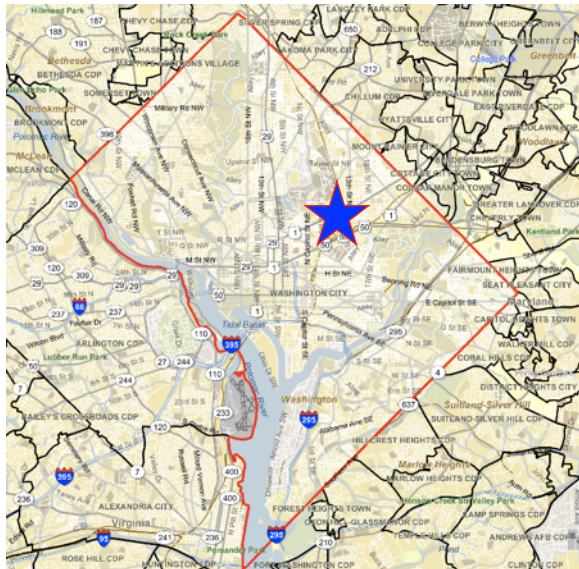
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# Study Area Overview and Panel Assignment

## Study Area Overview

As one of the original streets in the L'Enfant Plan of Washington, DC, Rhode Island Avenue serves as a major commuter corridor connecting the District's downtown with the Maryland suburbs. Recent transit-oriented development trends are creating pressures against existing auto-centric land uses, and are providing new opportunities for greater walkability and bicycle-friendly development – particularly in certain sections of this commuter corridor. The Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail Station area, which served as the study area for this TAP, is one specific section of this commuter corridor that is experiencing such a developmental tension. Located approximately 1.5 miles northeast of Union Station within Ward 5 of the District of Columbia, the study area is home to an aboveground Metrorail Station whose platform sits on a bridge atop Rhode Island Avenue. It was one of the original Red Line Metrorail stations, which opened in 1976. At that time, it was the terminus of the Red Line, and originally featured a surface parking lot upon which the recent mixed-use development, Rhode Island Row, was constructed and delivered in 2012.

### Location of the Study Area



Location of the Rhode Island Avenue Study Area within the District of Columbia. Map Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online.

### Location of Ward 5


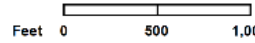


Location of Ward 5 within the District of Columbia. Map Source: District of Columbia Office of Zoning.

The TAP study area runs west to east from 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NE to Brookland Road, NE, and north to south from Channing Street, NE to V Street, NE. Although the Study Area extends for a mere 0.8 miles along Rhode Island Avenue and is only roughly half that distance at its widest section, it includes parts of four distinct and defined neighborhoods: Brentwood, Brookland, Eckington, and Edgewood.

### TAP Study Area





  
 Office of Planning ~ September 18, 2014  
 Government of the District of Columbia  
 This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

**Legend**  
 2013 Orthophoto  
 HCB  
 Red: Band\_1  
 Green: Band\_2  
 Blue: Band\_3

The District of Columbia  
 Orthophoto of Study Area and Neighborhood Context



The TAP Study Area includes the Rhode Island Avenue-Brentwood Metrorail Station and surrounding properties. Map source: District of Columbia Office of Planning.

The study area possesses a plethora of land uses, including new and successful mixed-use transit-oriented development (Rhode Island Row), along with aging, outdated retail (Rhode Island Avenue Center), and automobile-centric retail (Brentwood Shopping Center). These uses are coupled with older warehouse space – some of which is slated for demolition – as well as functional industrial space, a large number of small storefronts, and a variety of residential uses. Additionally, the area is uniquely characterized by an unusually large presence of industrial land uses, particularly in the northeast and southwest quadrants. These uses are consistent with the land use patterns throughout Ward 5, which contains approximately 50% of the District of Columbia’s industrially zoned land.

### Study Area’s Land Varied Land Uses



Warehouse space slated for demolition. Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.



Small storefronts/sidewalk space on Rhode Island Avenue. Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.

The study area features two strip-style shopping centers. Rhode Island Avenue Center, constructed in the early 1980s, is located in the northwest quadrant of the study area, and tenants of the center include Big Lots, Forman Mills, Popeye’s, Cricket Wireless, and a neighborhood legal services program. Some of the center’s spaces are vacant, and it had previously included a Safeway Grocery store, which closed in March 2010 due to poor sales and competition from the new Giant at the Brentwood Shopping Center.<sup>1</sup> The accessibility of the center is an issue, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists, and there is limited frontage on Rhode Island Avenue. A pedestrian bridge connects the center to the Metrorail station, and the area is accessible from the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

The Brentwood Shopping Center, which is situated in the southeast corner of the study area and sits adjacent to Rhode Island Row, was redeveloped in the early 2000s. It features two anchor retailers – Home Depot and a Giant Food grocery store – along with a surface parking lot and several smaller retailers, including TJ Maxx, TD Bank, Radio Shack, and Rhode Island Shoe City. In June 2013, Acadia Realty Trust purchased the seven-acre portion of the shopping center that

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/05/AR2010030504295.html>



includes all of the retail space with the exception of the Home Depot and Giant Food store. Acadia has shown an interest in redeveloping its portion of the shopping center.

### The Study Area's Two Strip-Style Shopping Centers



Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center. Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.



The surface parking lot of Brentwood Shopping Center. Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.

The Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station is an important transportation hub that provides service to the study area. In addition to the Metro station, the area has 15 bus routes, three Capital Bikeshare stations, as well as access to car-sharing services and the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The Metrorail station is also designated in the moveDC transportation vision plan as the starting point for an east-west corridor providing high-capacity surface transit.<sup>2</sup>

The demographic composition in the study area is rapidly changing as a result of recent development. According to the TAP briefing materials provided by the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the population of the study area was 576 persons in 2010, with a total of 213 households. Figures from the TAP briefing materials indicate current average incomes as \$24,324 per capita, and a median household income of \$45,034. Those figures are significantly lower than the District of Columbia's overall income per capita of \$45,004, and median household income of \$78,993. However, because the major mixed-use development Rhode Island Row delivered as recently as 2012, none of the residents of its 274 apartments are included in these demographic figures. With Rhode Island Row households possessing an average income of approximately \$105,000, both household and per capita income reported figures are expected to increase significantly within the study area.

The study area is constrained by its topography. In general, the Rhode Island Ave NE roadbed sits lower in the landscape than the remainder of the study area, and the land slopes up and away from the road. Some development, such as the Brentwood Shopping Center, constructed large retaining walls to address these topography challenges. These walls, which are 20 feet or higher in some

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more about moveDC, the District of Columbia's multimodal Long Range Transportation Plan, visit <http://www.wemovedc.org/>.

places, present streetscape obstacles. The drastic grade changes and large retaining walls have become barriers for pedestrian and bicycle activity, and have implications for stormwater runoff and drainage. These topographical issues also pose some challenge to future redevelopment.

## Panel Assignment

This TAP was selected as part of a partnership between ULI Washington and COG to conduct a focused study of the Rhode Island Avenue-Brentwood Metrorail Station Area as a COG-designated Activity Center. Activity Centers, which are defined by COG as urban centers, traditional towns, transit hubs, and areas expecting future growth, are viewed as key places where the region's growth and development will be concentrated over the next 30 years.<sup>3</sup> The intent of this TAP is to explore investment opportunities for the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail Station Area in order to re-envision it and make it a successful, thriving center. As part of this goal, the DC Office of Planning requested that the Panel address transportation and parking challenges, and develop recommendations that concentrate on knitting together the disconnected land uses in the area while also encouraging bicycle and pedestrian-friendly development.

In particular, the Panel was asked to consider the following questions over the course of the TAP:

1. The first two phases of redevelopment adjacent to the Metro station (Brentwood Shopping Center and Rhode Island Row, respectively) have brought new commercial activity and residents to the area, but may also present urban design and placemaking challenges for future redevelopment. How can the District incent new development that stitches the current urban fabric together to result in a more connected and accessible area?
2. The study area appears to be subject to speculative land-holding activity, particularly on under-utilized commercially- and industrially-zoned properties adjacent to Rhode Island Avenue and the rail tracks. How can the District encourage speculative landowners to reinvest in these properties, while ensuring that an adequate base of industrially zoned land remains available to support economic trends, such as the rise of shared office space, and the future "maker" economy?
3. Given the market demand, and the potential for more pedestrian-oriented urban-format development, what site and design recommendations exist for redevelopment opportunities at the Brentwood Shopping Center and Rhode Island Avenue Center?
4. The study area is a multi-modal area within a multi-modal corridor. However, in operation, the automobile has been the choice transportation mode for users. There is a great need to provide safe access to the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station and adjacent retail amenities because of the new, pedestrian-oriented, urban-format development in the neighborhood around the Metro station and more in the pipeline. What physical improvements or

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on COG-designated Activity Centers, and to read COG's Place + Opportunity Report, which outlines strategies for creating great communities in the region, visit: [http://www.mwco.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION\\_ID=472](http://www.mwco.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION_ID=472).

additional incentives should be implemented to increase the use of bikes, buses, and footpaths for short trips around the neighborhood, thereby reducing the number of cars on the corridor?

5. How does proximity to Metropolitan Branch trail impact development potential in the area? What opportunities does this proximity present for future development? How can developers and planners capitalize on these opportunities?
6. What interventions will be necessary to ensure that Rhode Island Avenue can support a high-capacity transit corridor and provide a safer, more attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists?
7. What regional challenges will be addressed through re-envisioning the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station area?
8. How can investment in the Rhode Island Avenue Activity Center enhance the quality of life for area residents, strengthen the local economy, and benefit the region?

## Recommendations

After meeting with stakeholders, touring the study area, and discussing redevelopment possibilities over a day and a half, the Panel developed a number of recommendations, which are detailed below.

### Prioritizing Open and Recreational Space

The Panel observed that the study area possesses minimal open space, and suggested that increasing open space would both enhance the character of the study area, and provide health benefits to residents and to visitors. One of the area's assets is its adjacency to the Metropolitan Branch Trail. When completed, the trail will extend for eight miles from the Silver Spring Transit Station to Union Station adjacent to the Red Line Metrorail tracks. The trail provides tremendous opportunities for attracting bicyclists, runners, and pedestrians to the study area. It serves as a great amenity for current and potential residents, and as a connection to other neighborhoods throughout the region.



The Metropolitan Branch Trail and Rhode Island Avenue Pedestrian Bridge to the Metrorail platform (in construction). Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.

The Panel recommended heightening the trail's impact on the study area so that it serves as a catalyst for development. For instance, some areas adjacent to the trail are currently underutilized, and could be transformed into a series of small pocket parks proximate the trail, which would add open space in the neighborhood. These pocket parks could feature bike storage spaces, picnic areas, rest spots, covered pavilions, and small gardens. The Panel further emphasized that any new open space should embrace a connection to the trail, and suggested creating a hierarchy of open space from large to small, including secondary and tertiary parks scattered throughout the study area. Further, the development of a single large open space, such as a town green that is surrounded by commercial food and/or retail uses, would provide a central gathering place for the neighborhood. The Panel recommended that a small business association should program this communal gathering space year-round, and that its maintenance be managed by the community and developers.

Private investment in open space would also enhance the study area. The Panel recommended that redevelopment in the two shopping centers should include significant, well-designed, publicly accessible open space, along with developer commitments to maintain those open spaces. A plan for maintaining green spaces in the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station Area should also be developed to encourage uniform and consistent maintenance.

## Leverage Community Involvement

The study area includes several engaged community stakeholders. In particular, representatives from the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church communicated to the Panel their strong connection to the neighborhood, and emphasized the Church's role in serving the community. The Church offers a number of community outreach programs, including rehabilitation support, a school, a fellowship hall used for gatherings up to 175 people, a bookstore, and affordable housing options for residents in the community. Furthermore, on Sundays, an average 2,500 worshippers (out of a 7,000-person membership base) convene at the Church to pray at one of two different services. In addition to providing services, the Church also owns significant land and operates several buildings in the area – all painted blue. Because of its influence, engaging the Church as a key and primary partner will be important for redevelopment.



Calvary Christian Academy, operated by the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church. Image Source: Brent Beane on behalf of ULI Washington.

Also active within the community is Rhode Island Avenue NE Main Street, one of eight Main Street programs in the District of Columbia. Previously known as the Friends of Rhode Island Avenue NE, this group focuses on positive redevelopment, neighborhood revitalization, improvements to commercial properties and streetscapes, promoting local businesses, and creating jobs.<sup>4</sup> Main Street organizations such as this one are especially helpful for attracting businesses to locate along a main street, and the District of Columbia Office of Planning can leverage the neighborhood revitalization work that Rhode Island Avenue NE Main Street is presently doing to effectively realize plans for strengthening the study area's commercial nodes.

## Effective Transportation, Circulation, and Access

The study area was designated by the Panel as unique “tweener” – a location that is “in between” the region's core and suburbs, and possesses transportation characteristics of both places. As one major illustration of its “tweener” status, the study area is home to many transportation options. The Metrorail station, in particular, is a tremendous “inner core” type asset that provides the neighborhood with access to other neighborhoods throughout the region. The connection to many different bus routes is a significant contributing factor to Metro ridership at this station. Proximate to the Metrorail stop, however, is a major suburban-style parking structure, with capacity for 220 parking spaces. This parking structure is owned by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), and is seldom filled to capacity. Though this parking structure was initially intended to serve as a commuter park-and-ride option when the Metrorail was first constructed, the Panel

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<sup>4</sup> <http://riamainstreet.org>

emphasized that it no longer makes sense to provide so many parking opportunities in this part of the study area, and insisted that there is a higher and better use for this site.

Rhode Island Avenue and the aboveground rail tracks pose both connectivity opportunities and challenges for the study area. As a major auto-centered thoroughfare and commuter route in the region, Rhode Island Avenue creates a physical and psychological barrier within the study area. Meeting growing pedestrian and cycling needs is tricky, and will require addressing the timing and attractiveness of pedestrian crossings in order to create safe and inviting places to cross Rhode Island Avenue. Additionally, while the rail tracks are key components of valuable transportation infrastructure that provide north-south connections to other neighborhoods, they also create barriers between the four quadrants of the study area, and impose restrictions on pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, the absence of track-crossings in the nearly 1-mile distance between Rhode Island Avenue and New York Avenue hampers east-west circulation. The Panel therefore recommended building a bridge over the rail tracks at T Street, just south of the U.S. Post Office building, in order to improve circulation throughout the study area.

Streetscaping improvements would enhance the bicycle and pedestrian experience in the study area. The Panel suggested small measures such as painting the underside of the rail track overpass with a mural or other form of art as a way to improve the pedestrian experience. The images below, which serve as successful examples of the Panel's recommendations, illustrate an underpass in Providence, RI, that was beautified with art and hand-painted signs directing people to local businesses. Adding additional lighting would also increase the perception of safety and complement any streetscaping investment.



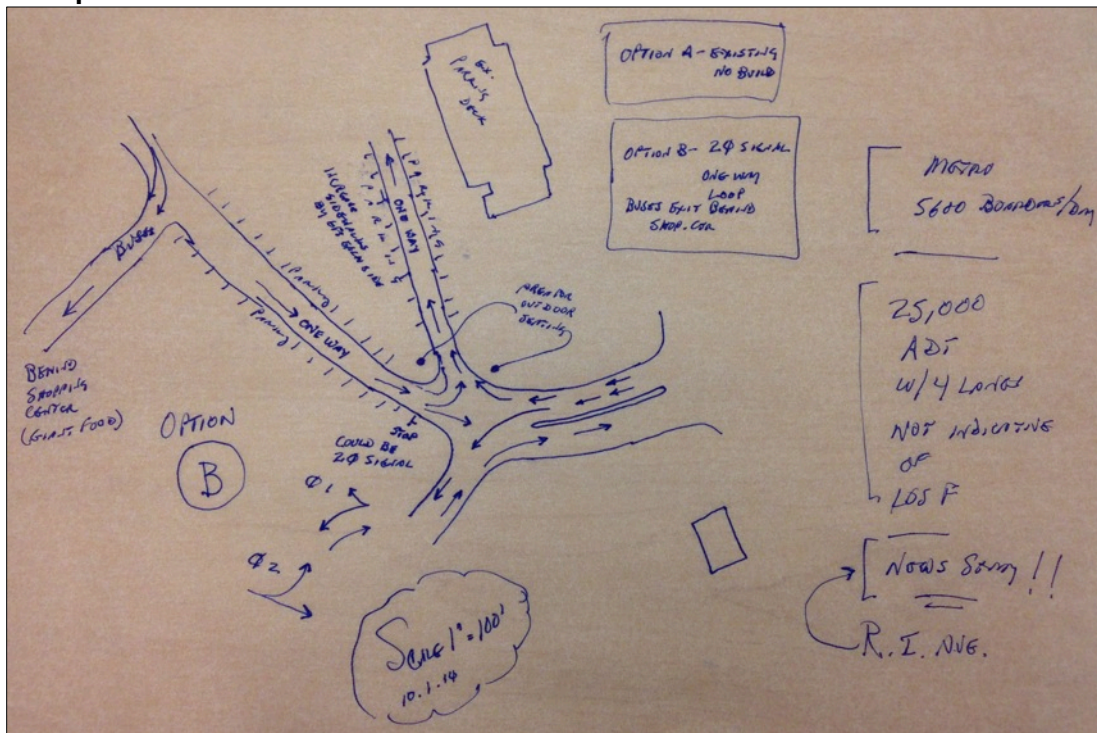
Art serving to beautify an overpass and direct people to local businesses in Providence, RI. Images Source: Larry Cole on behalf of ULI Washington.

Several grant opportunities exist to support enhancing the streetscape of the study area. For instance, the District of Columbia in 2006 began the Great Streets Program, which features Small

Business Capital Improvement Grants that are reimbursable for up to \$85,000.<sup>5</sup> In 2013, Rhode Island Avenue NE became one of eleven corridors whose businesses are eligible for such grants.<sup>6</sup> Tapping into the Great Streets Grant Program funding could provide resources for façade improvements, and enhanced landscaping.

The Panel focused several specific transportation-related recommendations on the southeast portion of the study area, which currently possesses a wide and unruly intersection that leads to uncontrolled vehicular movements.<sup>7</sup> As part of these recommendations, the Panel suggested re-routing buses behind the Brentwood Shopping Center so that they exit out of the back of the site. The Panel also proposed a one-way loop into and out of Rhode Island Row. These modifications are intended to simplify traffic movements, increase on-street parking opportunities, and increase sidewalk space for outdoor activities and dining options.

### Transportation Recommendations



The Panel's transportation recommendations in the southeast portion of the Study Area include simplifying movements, re-routing buses behind the shopping center and increasing on-street parking and sidewalk space. Source: ULI Washington.

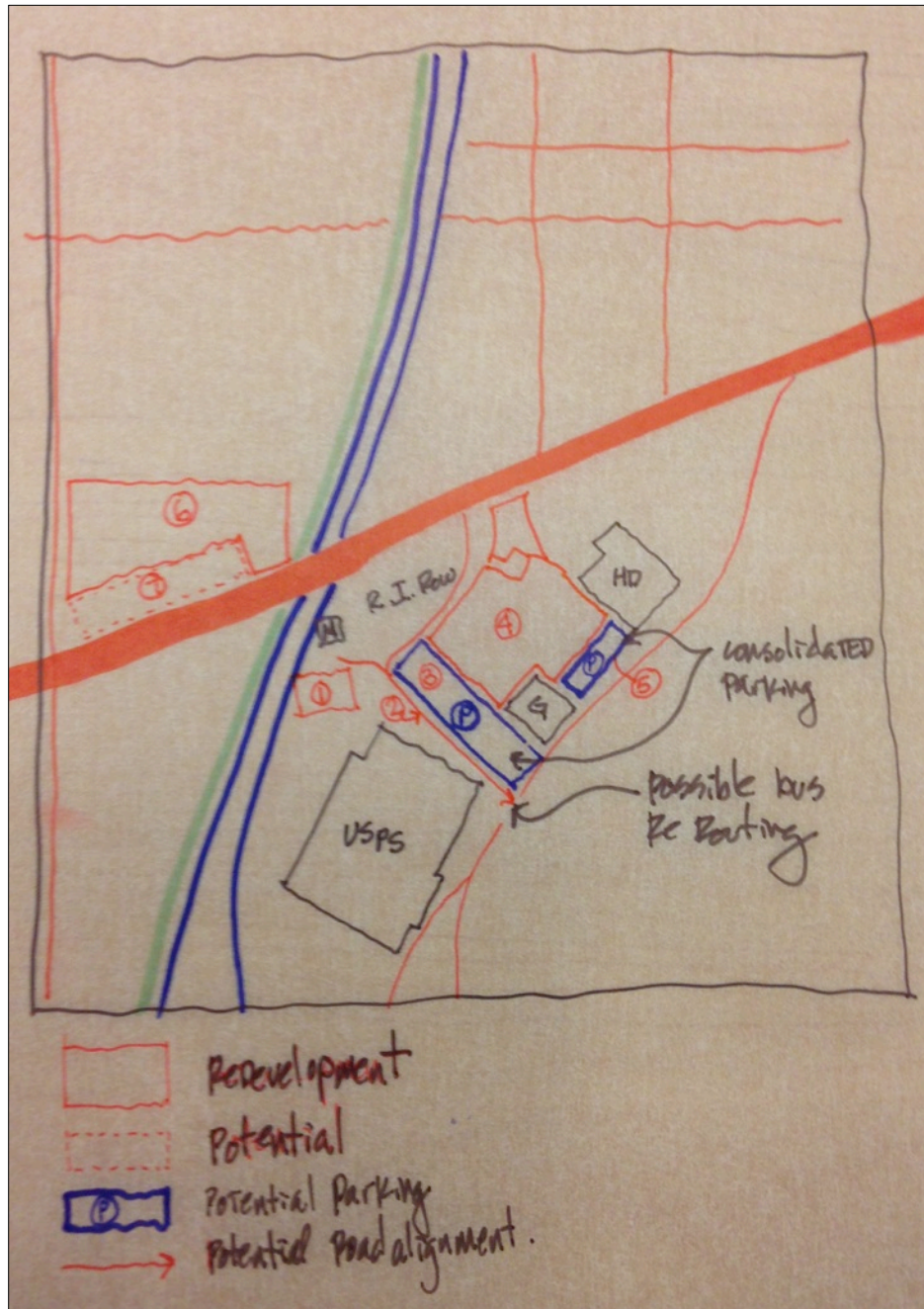
<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wdcep.com/dc-profile/neighborhoods/rhode-island-avenue-ne>

<sup>6</sup> <http://greatstreets.dc.gov/page/about-great-streets>

<sup>7</sup> Given the 1.5-day timeframe and the TAP's scope, the Panel's recommendations did not take into account how these suggestions may impact changes in transit service.

The Panel also suggested consolidating parking opportunities, particularly since the surface parking lot adjacent to the Giant and Home Depot is underutilized, and does not currently serve as the highest and best use of land in the study area. The rendering below illustrates where consolidated parking opportunities exist in conjunction with a suggested new road alignment.

### Traffic Movements and Consolidated Parking Opportunities



Traffic movements and parking in the study area can be reconsidered to alleviate awkward vehicular movements and underutilized parking. Image source: ULI Washington.



## Understanding Market Realities

Redevelopment is occurring within the District of Columbia at a fast pace. Based on the Panel's analysis of residential development, the District is home to 45,000 new residents since 2010, which equates to roughly 1,100 new residents per month. Further, since 2005, there will have been 23,600 new housing starts – or over 2,400 per year – with significant residential development occurring in the submarkets surrounding the study area. Developments in some of these submarkets are already complete or nearing completion, including Monroe St. Market (785 units), 901 Monroe (236 units), Brookland Metro (280 units), and NoMa (2,700+ units). Developments on other submarkets are forecast to increase nearby housing options, and include Brookland Manor (1,500+ net new units) and McMillan Reservoir (677 units). Rhode Island Row, with its 274 luxury apartments nestled in the heart of the study area, has been very successful in renting out its units since it opened in 2012.<sup>8</sup>

Given the culture of redevelopment in the District and within the study area, the Panel expressed support for residential redevelopment projects that will increase household buying power within the study area, but cautioned that a critical mass of new rooftops will be necessary to support significant retail development. The Panel also acknowledged that any current and future retail in the study area will suffer significant competition from neighboring retail nodes in the District, including Monroe Street Market, 901 Monroe, Brookland Station, Brookland Manor redevelopment, McMillan Reservoir, and the H Street corridor.

Based on the Panel's analysis, the market could support an increase of 1,200 new households with an average annual income of \$65,000 in the study area, provided that the specific placement of these new households in the study area is available given overall redevelopment plans. However, because of retail competition of nearby submarkets, the Panel cautioned that this increase in households would only fuel as much as 48,500 square feet (SF) of new retail development in the study area – analogous to the size of one grocery store.

### Critical Mass of New “Rooftops” Required to Support Additional Retail

New HHs:	1,200
x Annual Income:	x \$65,000
Gross Income:	\$78,000,000
x % Retail Spending:	x 22%
Total Spending:	\$17,000,000
/ Sales per SF:	/ \$350
<b>Supportable Space (SF):</b>	<b>48,500 (@ 100% capture)</b>

Household development would only support a limited amount of increased spending, particularly because of neighboring retail competition. Source: ULI Washington.

<sup>8</sup> As of October 16, 2014, of Rhode Island Avenue's 274 luxury apartments, 13 were available for lease. Source: <http://www.rhodeislandrow.com>

## Developing A Neighborhood Identity: The Maker Economy



A re-visioning of the old coal silos on land currently owned by the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church, which could serve as a neighborhood icon and marketing tool. Image Source: ULI Washington.

Defining a neighborhood's identity is an important component of placemaking. Given the existing warehouse and industrial space, the Panel recommended that the study area is ripe for an identity change into a Maker District. A Maker District provides a live/work community for Makers – an umbrella term that includes independent inventors, innovators, and designers who create imaginative new

products.<sup>9</sup> A Maker District is characterized by a neighborhood where storeowners could reside within the same property as their store, and includes opportunities for production space that is co-located with display space. A Maker District would consist of several such properties in immediate proximity to one another so that a cohesive community – or district – could be formed. Such an area would focus on supporting production-oriented entrepreneurs.

Creating a Maker District would be new in the District of Columbia, but the trend has gained traction in other areas of the country. The Panel recommended locating a Maker District at the southeast corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NE and Rhode Island Avenue, NE – a site that is relatively isolated from the rest of the study area with limited connectivity to the Metro. The Panel suggested that production uses could be cultivated and consolidated within this existing industrial area, with storefronts facing Rhode Island Avenue in order to support local retail and product-display. This location also takes advantage of the opportunity to brand the Maker District through repainting the old coal silos currently owned by the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church as a neighborhood entrance point and area icon.

### Case Study: Bend's Makers District

An example of a Maker District is in Bend, OR, where **14 small businesses** have located within a **two-block area** to establish Bend's Makers District (<http://makersdistrict.org>). The businesses produce food, beverages, jewelry, furniture, woodworks, and other items. Bend's Makers District sponsors special events, and the businesses promote one another and foster a sense of community.



<sup>9</sup> <http://time.com/104210/maker-faire-maker-movement/>

Successfully creating a Maker District will take several policy initiatives, and will require collaboration from both the public and private sectors. It was not entirely clear to the Panel if current zoning regulations allow for the creation of a Maker District. If these uses are currently disallowed, the Panel recommended that the Zoning Regulations be amended accordingly to encourage a Maker District. An important role of the public sector would also be to identify specific target areas to locate “live/make” spaces, which can be accomplished through small area planning. The Panel also encouraged the District of Columbia to support policies that reduce the risk for property owners to develop live/work spaces.

### **Articulate a Long-Term Redevelopment Strategy**

One of the major paradoxes of this study area is that the current suburban style retail works for the neighborhood, yet the retail does not fully utilize the transportation infrastructure serving the area. Panelists acknowledged that property owners of income-producing real estate are challenged to consider redevelopment since they already own an income-producing asset, and redeveloping this asset can be risky. With this dynamic in mind, the Panel offered the following recommendations for harnessing opportunities in the study area’s two shopping centers.

In the Brentwood Shopping Center, the Panel suggested a phased development approach that would occur over the long term. In the intermediate term, the area closest to the Metro station could be redeveloped to accommodate an office anchor – perhaps for the District of Columbia or for a Federal use – at a minimum of 150,000 square feet, and should include structured parking. Over the longer-term, once the leases on the Giant and Home Depot expire, redevelopment of this site can be fully realized. The Panel suggested incorporating the Giant and Home Depot locations into a mixed-use development with multi-family housing.

For the Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center area, the Panel strongly recommended involving the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church as a partner in redevelopment, since any new development will have to incorporate several Church-owned properties along Rhode Island Avenue. The Panel acknowledged the synergistic opportunities that emerge through partnering with the Church, including consolidating Church uses into a new facility with ample parking while simultaneously freeing up frontage along Rhode Island Ave. The Panel also suggested creating additional medium-scale residential density along Rhode Island Avenue, with neighborhood-scale retail along Rhode Island Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NE. This area would also be the site for the new Maker District – in large part because it exhibits the most limited connectivity of all sites in the study area, and therefore is a logical receiving zone for Maker uses. The presence of the silos also creates a unique opportunity to both demarcate and market the Maker District and its novel uses.

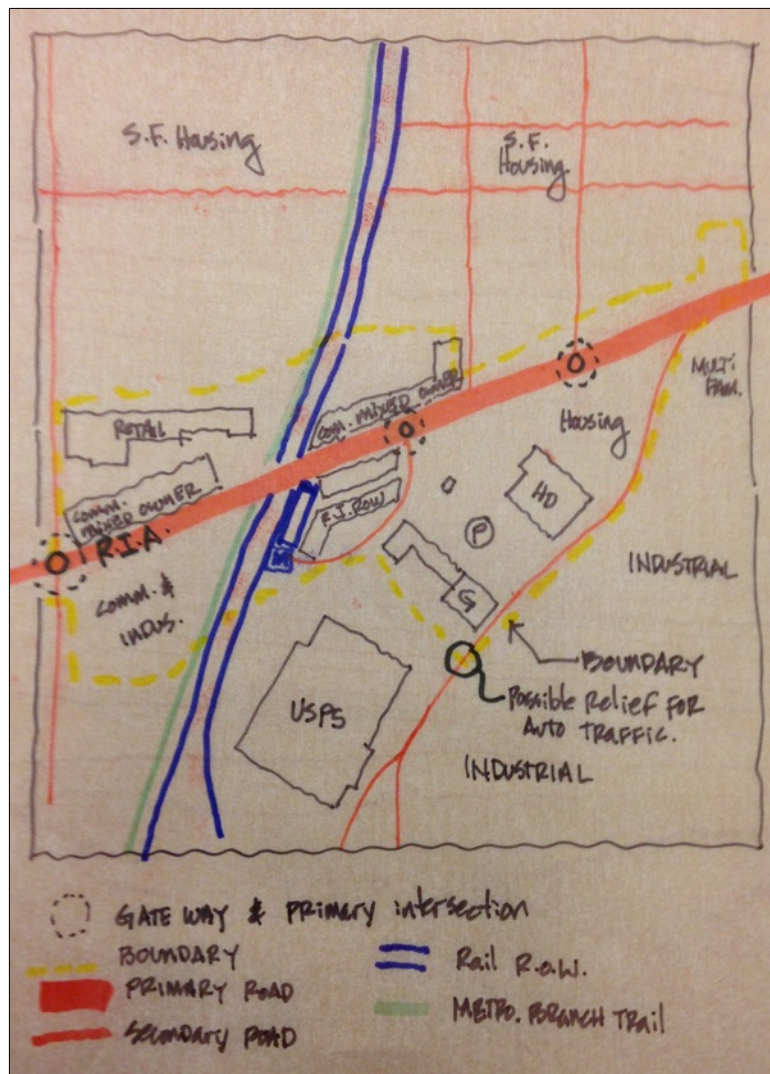
### **Conducting Small Area Planning**

The Panel reviewed the District’s “Diamond in the District” small area plan, which includes most of the TAP study area in its broader scope. Because the Diamond in the District Plan encompasses a corridor that is much larger than TAP study area, the Panel thought many of the recommendations in this plan were too general to be applied to the study area without further analysis of the study

area's specific needs. The Panel therefore recommended focusing a more detailed planning effort on the study area in order to hone in on the area's explicit needs. Panelists provided a several planning frameworks for the District Office of Planning staff to consider, in hopes that these suggestions may catalyze such a focused planning effort.

The overall suggested plan, below, shows the study area bounded in yellow. The plan illustrates how the primary and secondary roads create gateway intersections, and how these gateway intersections relate to current and proposed development. Of note, the Panel acknowledged the proximity of the United States Postal Service building, which lies just outside the study area, but nonetheless presents a potential land-use opportunity in the future – particularly as postal mail patterns change. Panelists also discussed opportunities for land consolidation, as well as ways to introduce more effective parking in order to realize redevelopment of current parcels, such as the surface lot adjacent to the Giant and Home Depot.

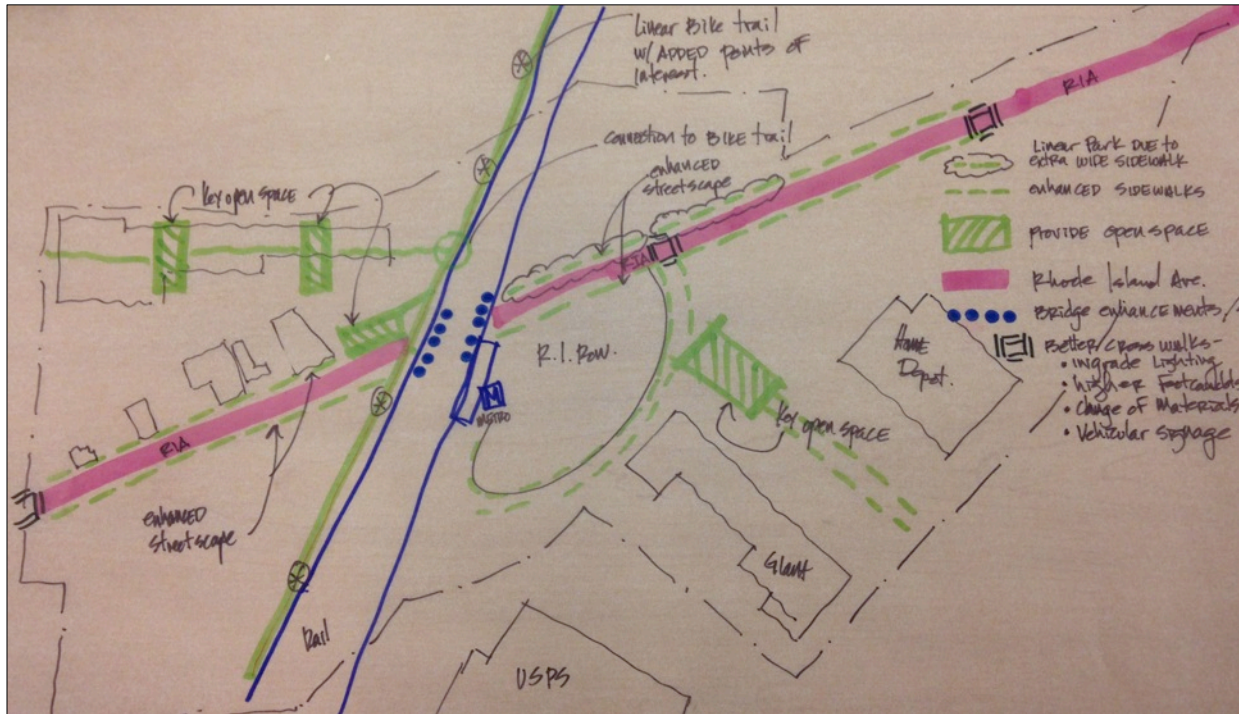
### Overall Framework Site Plan



The overall framework plan, above, illustrates how current and proposed land uses intersect with the varied infrastructure elements in the study area. Image source: ULI Washington.

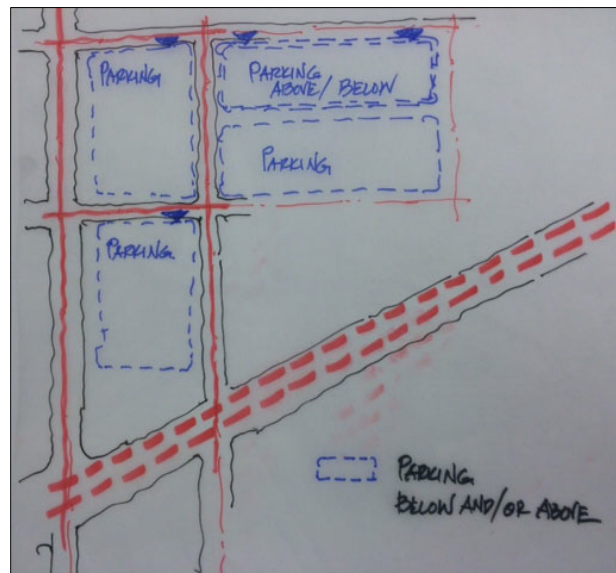
The Panel's Open Space/Sidewalk Enhancement Plan, illustrated below, outlines a mix of improvements, starting with the proposal for a linear park along Rhode Island Avenue, which is prompted by the sidewalk area's width of up to twenty-six feet in certain sections. The Panel's Open Space/Sidewalk Enhancement Plan also calls for improved crosswalks and bridge enhancements to address poor connectivity to the Metrorail area.

### Open Space/Sidewalk Enhancement Plan



The Panel's Open Space/Sidewalk Enhancement Plan calls for a linear park along Rhode Island Avenue, improved crosswalks, bridge enhancements, and more open space. Source: ULI Washington.

The Panel further divided its framework area plans by examining the attributes of both the north and south sides of Rhode Island Avenue. In the northwest quadrant of the study area, shown at right, Panelists agreed that there is a need for additional parking to accommodate some of the existing uses, particularly those of the Church. The topography of the area can aid in creating additional parking, with some parking available below grade and other parking available at-grade. Panelists also recommended adding circulation within the study area, and suggested creating a connection at 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NE to connect the area's two sides, but acknowledged such an improvement could be costly.



A more detailed sketch of the northern side of Rhode Island Avenue, below, illustrates a connection to the Metropolitan Branch Trail, and a general opportunity to enhance green space throughout the study area, which will provide a friendlier experience to pedestrians and cyclists alike. The orange quadrant represents an opportunity to move and consolidate the Church-owned properties into a concentrated cultural and civic space, which the Panel suggested would bridge a connection between the existing space and future development. The black coloring illustrates the Panel's proposal for residential development, which could include a mix of low- and high-rise buildings. The central northern-most block could also present an opportunity for an urban-format grocery location.

### Development Plan - North

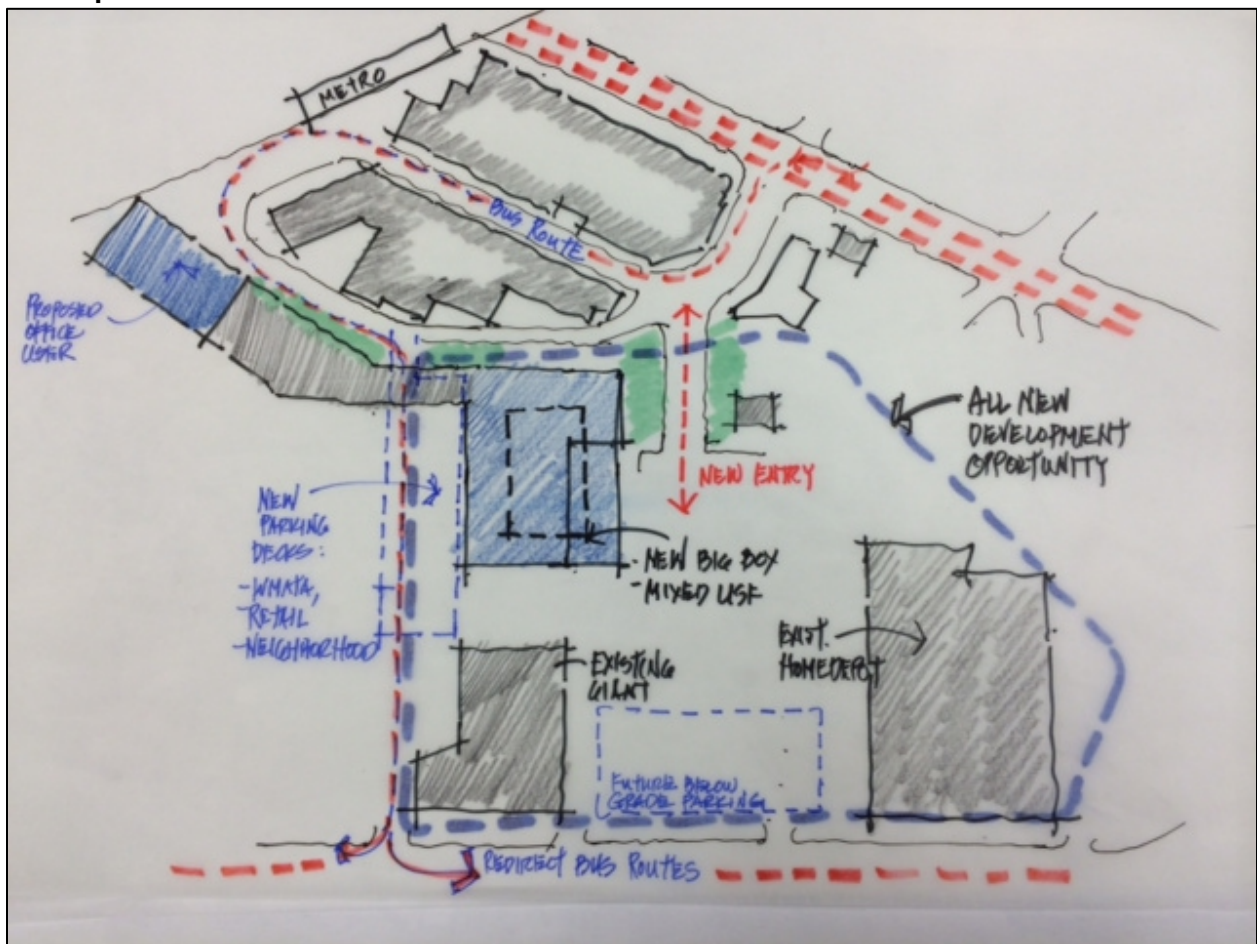


The Panel's proposed development plan for the north side of Rhode Island Avenue highlights open space, consolidating cultural and civic uses, and new residential development. Image source: ULI Washington.

The southern side of Rhode Island Avenue presents a wide variety of redevelopment options – but only if certain barriers are removed. The Panel emphasized that the existing overburdened intersection leading into Rhode Island Row impedes redevelopment opportunities. By redirecting traffic, as outlined under some of the transportation-related recommendations and illustrated below, the Panel sought to maximize the unused land behind the Brentwood Shopping Center, which results in improved bus movements and in creating new opportunities for development and design.

Once this intersection is clear of irregular traffic movement, the opportunities for redevelopment abound, and can include any or all of the following: shared structured parking between WMATA, retail, and neighborhood uses; new big-box or mixed-use development; or other options that consider future market needs. The Panel emphasized the importance of evaluating some of the existing retail tenants – particularly those near Giant – who may not be performing as highly as is desired. Such uses could ultimately be replaced with more appropriate options that better serve the neighborhood.

### Development Plan- South



The Development Plan for the Brentwood Shopping Center and the southern surrounding area highlights several development options. Source: ULI Washington.

## **Consider Benefits for Regional Connectivity**

The Rhode Island Avenue study area is one of 141 regional Activity Centers, which were designated by COG as the primary locations that are anticipated to see the majority of the region's population and job growth over the next 30 years. Taken together, Activity Centers represent less than 10% of the region's land area, but serve as important engines for regional economic development.

Several of the recommendations in this report can serve as examples for other regional Activity Centers that may struggle with similar land-use challenges. Concentrating density around a Metro station in a way that is both creative and sensitive to the surrounding community can draw new users to the Metro system. So, too, addressing circulation issues by enhancing bicycle and pedestrian access to the Metro station is a replicable approach that can serve other Activity Centers well.

Other recommendations in this report carry implications for regional connectivity and growth. For instance, Panelists learned that ridership numbers at the study area's Metrorail Station are relatively low, which presents an opportunity to examine how intensifying the land in this station area can maximize capacity of the Metrorail system. Panelists agreed that activating the land around the Metro Station could ultimately result in boosting ridership, which would encourage users to take better advantage of the Metro system. Additionally, a re-analysis of the bus routes along Rhode Island Avenue – particularly those that connect to destinations in Prince George's County – could be a key asset for creating effective regional transit connections.



## Conclusion and Next Steps

Successfully redeveloping the Rhode Island Avenue Study Area is within reach, and must include a variety of factors, such as: prioritizing open and recreational space, leveraging community involvement, addressing transportation challenges – including circulation and access – understanding market realities, developing a neighborhood identity, articulating a redevelopment strategy, and conducting a focused small area planning effort.

The Panel concluded with the following “big ideas” for the District Office of Planning to consider:

- Consolidate land and increase density around the station in a way that makes sense and helps connect the station with the rest of the neighborhood.
- Generate a neighborhood identity by enhancing open space, and by taking advantage of the industrial land to create a “Maker” District.
- Create a better transportation environment for cars, people, and bikes.
- Identify a reasonable office tenant to pursue as an anchor, if the market allows over the long term.
- Re-evaluate parking by repurposing the Metrorail garage, and by transitioning away from surface parking towards multi-use structured parking at retail centers.
- Consider how investment can benefit regional connectivity issues.
- Seek stakeholder involvement, especially from the Mount Calvary Holy Church and from other large property owners in the area.

Although various challenges exist, the Panel was optimistic about the development potential for the Rhode Island Avenue study area. According to the Panel, if these big ideas are addressed in a manner that balances future development potential with the neighborhood’s existing assets, the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Study Area has the capacity to transform into a vibrant center.

## About the Panel

### **Jonathan Eisen, Chair**

The Eisen Group  
Washington, DC

A native of Washington, D.C., Jon Eisen enjoys the history of his hometown, as well as the constantly evolving cities where he does his work. Across the United States, Mr. Eisen has contributed to more than 60 mixed-use projects. Trained as an architect and urban planner, Mr. Eisen works with private developers, universities and municipal officials to create special – and successful – places. He is currently leading the planning, architecture and strategy for developments in Maryland, Virginia, D.C., Pennsylvania, Delaware, Florida, Washington, North Carolina, Oregon, New Jersey, Kansas and Colorado. National Harbor, Crown Farm, Crystal City Revitalization, Reston Town Center Phase II, Bethesda Row, Park Potomac, Crocker Park and The Village of Valley Forge all bear his handiwork.

At TEG, Mr. Eisen has had a hand in more than 20 million square feet of mixed-use planning, architecture and development consulting. Earlier in his career, he worked on such large scale projects as the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Colorado Center in Denver and Channelside in Tampa, Florida. He also counsels developers, land owners, universities, cities and towns, providing them with market analyses and clear-headed thinking about development possibilities in their sites and municipalities. Washington, D.C. officials recently engaged Jon to scrutinize and recommend improvements to its aging commercial districts across the entire city.

Mr. Eisen speaks regularly at local and national industry conferences and before government gatherings. He sits on a National Council with the Urban Land Institute and is on the board and teaches for the College of Architecture and Real Estate at the University of Maryland. Whenever he travels, he continues to study and photograph the physical elements of municipal life that contribute to urban vitality. As managing principal of TEG, Mr. Eisen leads the company, particularly in the planning, entitlements, market analysis, architecture development consulting and sustainability. From his long experience, Jon has gained considerable expertise in creating great places.

**Andrew Brown**

Stanford Properties  
Bethesda, MD

Andy Brown directs all activities of Stanford Properties, LC, a real estate investment and development company based in Bethesda, Maryland. Mr. Brown has acquired and developed over twenty-five residential and commercial projects with an aggregate value in excess of \$250 million since the company's founding in 1992. His recent projects include conversion of an underperforming retail big-box center into a high density residential condominium project; development of a traditional grocery anchored retail center; and development of a 50-acre mixed-use residential and retail town center. Mr. Brown directs site selection, acquisition, governmental entitlements, financing, construction, leasing and ongoing asset management of completed projects. Prior to founding Stanford Properties, Mr. Brown was the Director of Retail Development for Baier Properties, Inc. where he oversaw development of numerous retail and residential land development projects, and prior to that held positions in acquisition and project management with two Washington-based real estate firms.

Mr. Brown received his B.A. in Economics from Stanford University in 1983. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute where he is an Officer of the Washington District Council's Advisory Board.

**Laurence Caudle**

Hickok Cole Architects  
Washington, DC

Laurence Caudle is a Principal and the Director of Housing at Hickok Cole Architects. He has many years' experience of custom residential projects (both small and large in size), mixed-use projects and commercial base building design. His projects have been featured in *MIMAR Magazine*, *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Digest*, *Residential Architect*, *Builder Magazine*, *Multi-Housing News*, *ULI*, and the *Washington Post*. Prior to joining Hickok Cole in 1997, Mr. Caudle worked for several award-winning firms, including Weinstein Associates Architects and Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA of Washington, DC. At Weinstein Associates, he was Project Architect and Designer for the Ellen Wilson Neighborhood Redevelopment, the first Hope VI funded project in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Caudle is a frequent guest juror for undergraduate and thesis juries at the University of Maryland's School of Architecture and The Catholic University of America's School of Architecture and Planning. He recently taught an urban, mixed-use design graduate studio at Catholic University with Hickok Cole Senior Associate, B. Devon Perkins, AIA, LEED AP. Mr. Caudle received a Bachelor of Science in Architecture and a Master of Architecture from the University of Maryland in College Park. He was recognized for his work, winning the Dean's Thesis Prize and the Faculty Award for Excellence in Design from the University.

Mr. Caudle is a Registered Architect in the District of Columbia, a member of the American Institute of Architects and the Urban Land Institute. He was invited to attend the 2006 AIA National Convention and Exposition in Los Angeles, CA as Hickok Cole's project, Adams Row, was honored with a national 2006 *Residential Architect* Award of Merit. Mr. Caudle was a speaker at the AIA|DC's 2009 DesignDC Conference on the topic of "Niche Housing Projects in New Communities," and in 2013 on "Lifestyle Design." In March of 2014, Mr. Caudle was invited by Multi-Housing News to be a panelist for their "What Renters Want: Development and Design Trends that Drive Occupancy" seminar.

**Larry Cole**

Montgomery County Planning Department  
Silver Spring, MD

Larry Cole is a professional engineer who has worked for the Montgomery County Planning Department for 18 years as the lead reviewer for capital transportation projects, prior to which he worked as a consultant managing the design of a range of transportation projects from commercial streetscapes to freeway interchanges. Mr. Cole was the lead planner for the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, which recommends a 102-mile network of bus rapid transit corridors and was approved in late 2013.

**Sara Collins**

Balfour Beatty Construction  
Fairfax, VA

Sara Collins has 20 years of experience in the commercial and institutional real estate industry. Currently, Ms. Collins is the Director of Project Solutions for Balfour Beatty Construction's Washington division. In this role, she is responsible for serving clients whose projects involve extensive preconstruction support and/or design-build or alternate delivery processes. Her unique background blends construction management experience with an owner's perspective – Sara spent three years on staff at Mayo Clinic as a project manager on numerous clinical, research and infrastructure projects. Her resume includes multiple healthcare facilities, significant higher education projects and design-build projects in the municipal, federal and private hospitality sectors. Ms. Collins has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Lehigh University and an MBA from West Virginia University.

**Shane Farthing**

Washington Area Bicyclist Association  
Washington, DC

Shane Farthing is the Executive Director of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and uses that position to combine and pursue interests in community outreach, transportation, sustainability, and urbanism. During his tenure at WABA, the organization has launched major outreach initiatives to expand mobility and affordable transportation east of the Anacostia River, address the gender gap in regional bicycling, and pursue next-generation protected bicycling infrastructure to make bicycling a mainstream transportation option for all. During the same period WABA has also taught over 6,000 people how to ride a bike, or how to ride a bike more safely, and hosted over 45,000 people on bikes at our various biking events and activities.

Prior to his work at WABA, Mr. Farthing served as head of the Office of Green Economy and as Land Use & Development Coordinator at the District Department of the Environment. Mr. Farthing is a LEED accredited professional and possesses graduate degrees in law and public policy from George Washington University, where he is also a Lecturer in public policy.

**Wes Guckert**

The Traffic Group, Inc.  
Baltimore, MD

Wes Guckert is a recognized and well-respected expert in the field of sustainable transportation traffic engineering, and transportation planning. Serving as a technical advisor in the areas of traffic impact analysis, traffic signal design, traffic circulation, access studies and transit planning, Mr. Guckert has played a major role in over 6,000 projects spanning both urban and suburban areas primarily in the Mid-Atlantic area. Mr. Guckert has provided consultation on projects throughout the United States, as well as internationally, including Mexico City, Indonesia, Dubai, South Africa, Istanbul, Saudi Arabia, and China.

Early in his career, Mr. Guckert served for five years with the Maryland State Highway Administration Traffic Division. Prior to founding The Traffic Group, Inc., Mr. Guckert served as a traffic engineering consultant for eight years. Mr. Guckert has provided consultation on numerous mixed-use projects and Transit Oriented Developments, each containing one to four million square feet of development.

Since founding The Traffic Group, Inc., Mr. Guckert has been responsible for providing a variety of traffic engineering services to both the public and private sector. He has directed the design and implementation of traffic access systems for numerous regional projects such as the National Business Park, Belcrest Center Metro Station, University of Maryland East Campus, Salisbury Centre, Maple Lawn Farms, Montgomery Mall, Annapolis Town Center at Parole, Owings Mills Metro Station, Konterra Town Center, Traville, Fallsgrove, King Farm, Westphalia Town Center,

Johns Hopkins Beward and Bayview Campuses, and Washington Adventist Hospital. Mr. Guckert has undertaken Traffic and Transportation Studies for retailers including, Wal\*Mart, Sam's Club, Target, Lowe's, Best Buy, Costco, and Home Depot.

**Tom Lavash**

WTL+a

Washington, DC

Tom Lavash is the Managing Principal of WTL+a, a national real estate and economic development consulting firm formed in 2009 and based in Washington, D.C. He has 30 years of experience and focuses his practice in urban real estate and economic planning and development. He directs real estate studies with an emphasis on mixed-use, downtown and waterfront, and commercial district redevelopment and repositioning. He serves as a key advisor on market and financial feasibility, multi-component land planning and pre-development programming/phasing, and specializes in feasibility of transit-oriented development (TOD), with multiple projects completed in eight states. He has worked on more than 375 projects throughout the U.S. and Caribbean, frequently as part of multi-disciplinary teams.

Mr. Lavash holds a Master of City Planning degree from the University of Pennsylvania with a Certificate in Real Estate Development from its Wharton School of Business (1983), and a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies, cum laude, from the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth (1980). He is a 28-year resident of the District, including 17 years in Adams-Morgan and Mt. Pleasant, and 11 years in Michigan Park, where he and his partner have restored an International-style house commissioned in 1960 and designed by noted African-American architect Lewis Giles, Jr. He is the immediate past president of the Michigan Park Citizens Association and is a Steward with Casey Trees in Brookland.

**Bob Pinkard**

The Pinkard Group

Bethesda, MD

Bob Pinkard is the founder and Principal of The Pinkard Group. Mr. Pinkard sets the strategic direction of The Pinkard Group and oversees all aspects of the firm. He is the former Chairman and CEO of Cassidy & Pinkard, which grew to be the largest locally-owned real estate services company in the Washington region and a dominant player in the sale of investment properties throughout the region. In addition, Mr. Pinkard was the Managing Member of Cassidy & Pinkard's investment portfolio. He is the Co-Chair of the Real Assets Committee of the Williams College endowment, and also serves as Chairman of the Board of the Bishop John T. Walker School for Boys, a tuition free Episcopal school in Ward 8 in the District of Columbia, and as a Board Member of The France Merrick Foundation. Previously, Mr. Pinkard served as Chairman of ULI Washington District Council. He is a graduate of Williams College.

**Tracy Strunk**

Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization  
Fairfax County, VA

Tracy Strunk is a Deputy Director (Tysons Coordinator) with the Fairfax County Office of Community Revitalization. She is responsible for overseeing development-related activities in OCR such as zoning case review for the Tysons Urban Center and the Reston metro corridor, as well as facilitating cross-agency initiatives related to the urbanizing areas of the County, and providing Tysons outreach to outside groups and agencies. Prior to joining OCR in November 2012, Ms. Strunk had 14 years of experience in development review with the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, culminating in the later years with a focus on Tysons Corner as the new metro Silver Line and associated planning effort were implemented. Previously, Ms. Strunk was a planner with the Lowcountry County of Governments in South Carolina. She holds a BA in sociology from Northwestern University and a Masters in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

**John Swanson**

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
Washington, DC

John Swanson is a principal transportation planner at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) where he works on long-range planning, public involvement and programs designed to promote transit-oriented development and livable and walkable communities. Prior to joining MWCOCG in 2000, he worked on transportation policy issues for national advocacy organizations and as a staffer on Capitol Hill. For three years in the mid-90s, Mr. Swanson was stationed in Romania where he managed political development programs for the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

A member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, Mr. Swanson received a masters in 1993 from the London School of Economics. In 2009, he conducted research on congestion pricing in Europe under a three-month fellowship from the German Marshall Fund. A native of Hammond, Indiana, Mr. Swanson lives with his wife Janet Meyers in the Petworth neighborhood of Washington, D.C.