GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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MEMORANDUM

TO: D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman
Director

DATE: February 4, 2002

SUBJECT: BZA Application No. 16833

APPLICATION

Application of TP2 LLC, pursuant to 11 DCMR Section 3104.1, for a special exception from the limitation on the number of roof structures and the roof structure setback requirements under subsection 411.11, and pursuant to 11 DCMR Section 3103.2, a variance from the residential recreation space requirements under section 773, to permit the construction of a mixed use (apartment house and retail) project in a C-2-A District at premises 306 Carroll Street, N.W. (Square 3354, Lot 26).

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the special exception for relief from the limitation on the number of roof structures and roof structure setback and a variance from the residential recreation space requirements (15 percent provided instead of the 20 percent required). Despite being relatively small on a complex site, this is an important project at a key location in the central district of the Takoma neighborhood.

BZA
Case No. 16833
Exhibit No. 25

Despite its importance, and the Office of Planning's recommendation that the special exception and variance request be approved, the project does raise a planning policy issue in a larger sense. The project occupies, along its western edge, one of four potential alignments for the Metropolitan Branch Trail, an important bicycle transportation initiative of the city. Studies of those alternative alignments are underway by the D.C. Division of Transportation and DDOT does not want to see the alignment involved with this site precluded from consideration. The developer says that the project cannot accommodate the trail.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16833
EXHIBIT NO.25A1

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the special exception and variance. However, OP also urges accelerated action by DDOT on the Metropolitan Branch Trail Study and coordination with the developer to see if there is a way the trail alignment along the west side of this property (Square 3354, Lot 26) can be accommodated.

BACKGROUND

This project at 306 Carroll Street (Lot 26, Square 3554), known as the RR Building, is being developed by TP2 LLC (Russell Katz). This is a mixed-use (retail and residential) project on a key site in the business center of the Takoma community, directly south across Carroll Street from the Takoma Metrorail Station. It is being developed on a difficult site in terms of site shape, topography and the adjacent railroad/Metrorail tracks along the western size of the site. Apparently due to the site challenges, as well as market conditions, the site has been vacant (sometimes partly used for parking) for over 20 years.

Now, this development proposal is being advanced and, as described further below, has received various community and District reviews, especially with respect to the design of the building and its compatibility with the Takoma Park Historic District. The project has also been developed at the same time that the Takoma Central District Plan (a small area plan) was being developed by the Office of Planning, other District agencies and the community. It is one of several projects in this immediate area that now seem ready to move forward. At the same time, planning for the Metropolitan Branch Trail has continued, which potentially bears on this project.

The community has worked with the developer and favors the project. The project is also important in obtaining additional development around the Takoma Metrorail Station.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The Site

The site, Lot 26, can best be described as a long, somewhat irregular pie-shaped lot, extending from Carroll Street on the north to Vine Street on the south. The frontage on Carroll Street is a curving frontage, following the curvature of the street, with a total length of approximately 180 feet. The lot frontage on Vine Street at the south end of the lot is 30 feet (Vine Street dead ends at the railroad tracks). The western side of the lot is angled, following the line of the railroad right-of-way (CSX railroad tracks and the WMATA Red Line tracks), with a length of approximately 326 feet. The WMATA tracks are on the inside and the railroad tracks are on the outside. The northbound railroad track is therefore adjacent to the lot. WMATA has five-foot easement along the railroad tracks on the site property. The total area of the lot is 34,531 square feet.

The lot also has a significant change of elevation from north to south. The southern three-quarters of the lot is approximately level, with a elevation of approximately 284 feet at

Vine Street on the south and elevation 282 at the northern end of the upper level of the lot. There are several old retaining walls on the site. The elevation then drops off to about 276 feet at the northeast corner of the lot and 268 feet at the northwest corner of the lot, adjacent to the Carroll Street underpass under the railroad/Metrorail tracks. In summary, approximately the northern quarter of the lot, facing on Carroll Street, is 8-16 feet lower than the southern portion of the lot. The adjoining lot to the east (Lot 4) has an old house with a commercial building with three storefronts in front of it, extending to Carroll Street. The southern portion of Lot 26 is bordered on the east by Lot 24, which is used as a contractor's work lot.

The odd shape of the lot, the change of topography and the adjacent railroad tracks have apparently been factors why the land has been undeveloped for over 20 years.

The Area

The Takoma Central District is the center of the District's Takoma neighborhood, and the project at 306 Carroll Avenue is essentially in the center of the Takoma Central District. The Takoma neighborhood is located in the far northeast corner of Ward 4. The Takoma Central District boundaries are generally defined as the area between Chestnut Street to the north, Eastern Avenue to the east, 4th Street to the west and Aspen Street to the south. Eastern Avenue is the boundary between Washington, D.C. and Maryland. The City of Takoma Park, Maryland is east of the boundary line (Eastern Avenue). The nearby Takoma Park business district is larger and more vibrant than on the District side.

Carroll Street is the central east-west connecting road through the center of the Takoma Central District, extending through an underpass under the railroad/WMATA tracks just west of Lot 26, the project site. To the north, across Carroll Street, is the existing Takoma Metorail Station and the related WMATA bus bays, "kiss and ride" area and parking lot. As described below, major changes are being proposed for this area.

Site Zoning and Historic District

This site is zoned C-2-A (Community Business Center Districts), described in Section 720 of the Zoning Regulations. The C-2-A district is designed to provide facilities for shopping and business needs, housing, and mixed uses for large segments of the city outside of the central core. C-2-A districts are to be located in low and medium density residential areas with access to main highways or rapid transit stops.

The site is also in the Takoma Park Historic District. A new building in an historic district requires review by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board. An historic preservation review has been undertaken for this building, as described in the *Other Agency Comments* section below.

Comprehensive Plan Designation

The District's Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map designates the Takoma Central District area for low-density residential and low density commercial. The Generalized Land Use Policies Map indicates the area west of the tracks as a multi-neighborhood commercial center.

The Ward 4 chapter of the District's Comprehensive Plan includes a number of policies relating to the Takoma neighborhood and especially the Takoma Central District. Section 1528.12 says: "The development of the areas surrounding the Fort Totten Metro Station, the proposed Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metro Station and the Takoma Metro Station are critical to the ward's future." Section 1530.1.c calls for a Takoma Metrorail Station Area Study to determine the appropriate mix, scale, intensity and design of development and recommends land use and zoning actions that "encourage new and accommodate existing town houses and garden apartment development and that discourage more industrial use."

Takoma Central District Plan Process

In the spring of 2000, WMATA announced that it selected a developer, Eakin Youngentob Associates, through its Joint Development Program to develop a town house project on WMATA land at the Takoma Metro Station. Because there was little citizen input in the selection of the developer and the development proposal, Mayor Williams committed to the Takoma residents that a small area planning process would be conducted. The Mayor instructed the Office of Planning to initiate the small area plan for the community. After selecting a consultant planning and design team, the Office of Planning initiated the Takoma Central District Plan with community partners in August 2000.

To facilitate direct citizen involvement in the planning process, the Takoma Central District Plan Citizens Working Group was organized at the beginning of the process to help coordinate, develop and review the plan. This group includes a cross-section of both D.C. and Takoma Park, Maryland stakeholders. The process for developing the plan began with a neighborhood assessment and community goal setting, followed by a series of town meetings, Citizen Working Group meetings, a neighborhood walk, a community design charette and topical meetings that enabled community stakeholders to discuss areas of particular concern and opportunity.

The initial plan development process with the community ended with public town meeting and Citizens Working Group meeting in January 2001. The Office of Planning, other city staff and the SmithGroup consultant team then worked through the summer 2001 to develop the Final Report document. The Draft Final Report was issued on September 27, 2001. Citizen comments regarding the draft report were heard at a public meeting on October 29, 2001 and written comments were accepted through October 31,

2001. The draft report was revised, reflecting citizen and agency comments, and was transmitted to the Mayor at the end of January 2002. The Mayor will transmit the report with a resolution to the Council. The Council will have 45 days to review and approve or disapprove the plan. The Council may choose to hold a public hearing during this time period.

The Takoma Central District Plan is organized around five critical revitalization components that frame significant issues and strategies for renewal of the area. These include historic preservation, market economics, land use, transportation and urban design. The community identified the following revitalization goals:

1. Preserve and enhance the Takoma small town/village character
2. Promote mixed-use development in existing commercial areas
3. Encourage a neighborhood scale for new development
4. Make major pedestrian corridors pedestrian-friendly
5. Enhance and increase small businesses and community services that support the needs of the community
6. Conserve existing resources and remove blight
7. Leverage public and private sector opportunities
8. Improve cross-jurisdictional planning.

The plan calls for a "village green" on the north side of Carroll Street, across from the project that is the subject of this application. New residential development would be north of the village green. Both the village green and the new residential development would be on WMATA property.

Five "Priority Redevelopment Sites" have been identified in the plan. These sites are relatively unconstrained and each are owned or controlled by a single landowner or developer. These sites should be the primary focus of initial efforts to attract new near-term investment to the Central District. The Plan recommends that the sites accommodate up to approximately up to 305 new housing units and 45,000 square feet of new retail/office space.

The site that is the subject of this BZA application, Lot 26, is one of the five priority redevelopment sites (shown as Site 3 on figure L on page 34 in the report). A copy of pages 33 and 34 are attached to this report.

The Takoma Central District Plan also includes a discussion and map (Figure M) indicating alternative Metropolitan Branch Trail alignments in this area of Takoma. One of the alignments (Eastern Off-Street Alignment) extends along the west side of the property that is the subject of this application. The report notes that a final decision on the preferred trail alignment will be made as part of a separate DDOT process to include community involvement and input.

A copy of the draft Takoma Central District Plan is being transmitted to the Board of Zoning Adjustment with this report.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

General Development

To address the shape and topography of the lot, the applicant is proposing a five level building. The ground floor (G) primarily occupies only the northern portion of the lot, which is at the elevation of Carroll Street. The retail space, totaling 3,580 square feet, is located along Carroll Street. An interior driveway extends through the building façade and circles behind the retail space, providing access to two retail parking spaces and 14 residential parking spaces. The two entrances and the circulation pattern for access to these parking spaces has raised some questions about the impact on general vehicular and pedestrian circulation in this section of Carroll Street, adjacent to the Carroll Street underpass and the entrance to the Takoma Metrorail Station.

The next three floors (1-3) are residential with a total of 58 apartments (18 on the first floor and 20 on both the second and third floors). Due to the shape of the site, and the developer's objective of having the apartments face inward away from the adjacent property and from the railroad tracks, these apartment floors are arranged around a triangular-shaped courtyard. The first floor of apartments is set back five feet due to the WMATA easement along the tracks. The upper two apartment floors are cantilevered over the easement. Above the third floor there is a fourth partial level which provides an upper level for 10 of the third-floor apartments.

The remaining residential parking spaces are provided in a surface parking area at the rear of the property, with an entrance from Vine Street.

Special Exception and Variance Requested

Special Exception for Multiple Roof Structures: Section 411.3 of the Zoning Regulations requires that all penthouses and mechanical equipment shall be placed in one enclosure. Section 770.6 requires that such roof structures shall be set back from all exterior walls a distance at least equal to its height above the roof on which it is located, i.e. a relationship of 1:1, and shall not exceed a height of 18 feet, six inches above the roof on which it located.

The applicant needs three roof structure elements and claims that, due to the shape of the building around a courtyard, he cannot place all these roof structures in one enclosure and cannot set all of them back at a 1:1 ratio from the edge of the building.

The first roof structure is the elevator shaft that is located near the front of the building. The applicant says that the elevator enclosure must be located on the Carroll Street side of the building because the Carroll Street lobby attaches vertically to lobbies on all floors, while the Vine Street lobby does not. This elevator shaft is eight feet high and will be set back just over eight feet from the front exterior wall.

The second roof structure is the stair and mechanical equipment structure at the southeast corner of the building, facing Vine Street. This roof structure is seven feet high and is set back just under seven feet (6 feet 8 inches) from the rear and side roofline.

The third roof structure is to house the cooling tower and is located at the southwest corner of the building, adjacent to the railroad/Metrorail tracks. This roof structure would be 18 feet 6 inches high with a setback of five feet two inches from the west building wall and 15 feet from the south building wall.

Variance for Residential Recreation Space: Section 773 of the Zoning Regulations require that, in the C-2-A District, not less than 20 percent of the gross floor area devoted to residential use shall be provided as residential recreation space. The required residential recreation space would 11, 719 square feet. The applicant is providing 8,846 square feet, primarily in the landscaped courtyard. The applicant claims that the unusual shape of the property, the change in elevation and the proximity to the railroad/Metrorail tracks require the building configuration that has been outlined and that additional residential recreation space is not feasible.

ANALYSIS

Special Exception for Multiple Roof Structures and Limited Setbacks

The Office of Planning recognizes the problems caused by the shape, topography and proximity to the railroad/Metrorail tracks and believes that the applicant's need for three separate roof structures is justified. The roof structure that will be visible from the front of the building (north side of Carroll Street) is the elevator shaft near Carroll Street. This roof structure in fact meets the setback requirement. The second roof structure is for the mechanical equipment and this is at the rear of the building facing Vine Street. This seven-foot high roof structure is very close to meeting the 1:1 setback requirement (it fails by 4 inches). The third roof structure, the cooling tower is 18 feet 6 inches high with a 15-foot setback from the Vine Street roof edge and only 5 feet two inches from the west roof edge facing the railroad tracks.

The first structure meets the setback requirement. The second roof structure is very close to meeting the requirement and is at the rear of the building. The third roof structure is also at the rear of the building and will rise above the "high roof" of the apartments. It will visible from Vine Street to the south. On the west, the view of the cooling tower is somewhat limited by the location next to the railroad tracks but it will be visible from Blair Road on the west side of the tracks.

Considering the shape of the site, the Office of Planning believes that having three roof structures is acceptable and understandable, and that the two roof structures which do not meet the setback requirements are acceptable in view of their location at the rear of the building, away from the center of the Takoma Central District. The Office of Planning therefore recommends granting a special exception for the roof structures.

Variance Request for Residential Recreation Space

The Office of Planning recognizes the site constraints with this project and the effort of the developer to focus most of the apartment units inward on the courtyard, creating a special environment in the center of the project. It does not appear possible to add additional meaningful recreation space. The Office of Planning believes that a variance in the recreation space provided is justified in this case. The Office of Planning recommends the granting of a variance for the recreation space.

The major issue that has arisen in this case is not so much the variance and special exception requested but the issue of how this project as designed would eliminate a potential alignment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. Suggestions have been made that the project be redesigned to accommodate the trail and that providing space for the trail would justify reduction of the residential recreation space requirement. Accommodating the trail would require a significant redesign of the project, reducing the width of the proposed building along the railroad tracks by approximately ten feet, therefore reducing the number of apartment units and reducing the size of the courtyard. That width, plus the five-foot WMATA easement, would allow for the alignment of the trail along the railroad tracks. The developer would need to be compensated for the lost land.

The developer has said that such a revision of the project would make it economically infeasible. No studies have been made of such a change.

ANC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Takoma is a very organized and concerned community, especially with reference to the area around the Takoma Metrorail Station where this project is located. There has been significant ongoing discussion of this project, both because of its key location, its location in the Takoma Park Historic District, the ongoing work on the Takoma Central District Plan and the community's interest in having new development. The involvement of the Office of Planning in the zoning issue is relatively recent. The Historic Preservation Division in the Office of Planning has been involved with the project and the Community Revitalization Division of the Office of Planning has had some contact with the project site during 2001 as the Takoma Central District Plan was being formulated. The general report from the community and reviewing officials is that the developer, Russell Katz, has been cooperative in meeting with the community and reviewers and making revisions to address concerns.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has discussed the project in the past, though not the zoning issues, which are new. ANC-4B reviewed the project again at their regular meeting on January 25 and voted to support the requested zoning variance and special exception and also to support the latest refinements that are being reviewed by the Historic Preservation Review Board on February 7.

Plan Takoma is a neighborhood association in the D.C. Takoma neighborhood that is concerned with the planning and development of the community. Plan Takoma met on January 29, 2002 and voted in support of the variance and the roof structure special exception being requested in this application.

Historic Takoma, Inc. is a community group founded in 1979 to promote historic preservation, citizen involvement and community development in the Takoma community in Washington, D.C and Takoma Park, Maryland. The community is split by the District of Columbia/Maryland line, so there is a D.C. Committee and a Maryland Committee. Historic Takoma has been supportive of this project, though their focus has been on the design of this new building in terms of its location in the Takoma Historic District.

OTHER AGENCY COMMENTS

Historic Preservation Review Board

The project is a new building in the Takoma Park Historic District and is therefore subject to review by the D.C. Historic Preservation Board (HPRB). The Board first reviewed the project at its October 25, 2001 meeting and approved the massing of the building and the overall direction of the design. Refinements were made and HPRB reviewed the project again on December 20, 2001. The HPRB gave conceptual approval and requested design refinements. The Historic Preservation staff has worked with Mr. Katz on refinements. The project is on the February 7 agenda (consent calendar) of the HPRB. The staff report recommends that the HPRB approve the concept incorporating the revised design details and delegate final approval to the staff. A copy of the Historic Preservation staff report is attached. OP will be able to report on the February 7 HPRB action at the BZA hearing on February 12.

D.C. Division of Transportation

Two transportation issues have arisen related to this project. The first issue is the larger issue of the alignment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the second issue is the possible impact of access to this building on vehicular and pedestrian circulation on Carroll Street immediately adjacent to the project. A report to the Office of Planning from the District Department of Transportation (DD0T) is attached.

Metropolitan Branch Bike Trail Alignment: The Metropolitan Branch Trail is a proposed urban bicycle and pedestrian trail linking suburban Maryland and the center of Washington generally following the "Metropolitan Branch" railroad alignment (now the CSX tracks and the Red Line Metrorail Line). The Metropolitan Branch Trail has been discussed for at least the past ten years. The Transportation Chapter of the District's Comprehensive Plan includes Section 509.1 (j) which states: "Support completion of a feasibility study and other measures necessary to construct the Metropolitan Branch Trail

for bicyclists and pedestrians adjacent to the Metrorail Red Line between Union Station and the Maryland border on the northeast side of the District."

Progress has been made on some sections of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The one-mile section along McCormick Road, adjacent to Catholic University, is constructed and in use. The half-mile section along First Street N.E. near Union Station is now under construction and will be completed in spring 2002. Three additional segments along Second Street, N.E., Eighth Street, N.E. and adjacent to the new New York Avenue Metrorail Station are under design. DDOT is presently undertaking a study of alternative alignments, including physical alignments and required property acquisition, for remaining sections that will lead to designation of the selected alignment.

There are four potential alignments in the Takoma section of the trail. One of the alignments, the Eastern Off-Street Alignment, follows the east side of the railroad/WMATA right-of-way and would require acquisition of a portion of Lot 26, which is the subject of this application. This alignment has advantages in terms of eliminating at-grade crossings of the Trail and major arterial streets. If this project moves ahead, it will essentially eliminate the Eastern Off-Street Alignment. The developer has told the Office of Planning that the project cannot be revised to incorporate the trail without killing the feasibility of the project. DDOT is concerned with foreclosing that alignment option.

Carroll Street Traffic Circulation: The parking access to the project has been previously described. In the course of preparing the Takoma Central District Plan, there has been community and planning staff concern about vehicular circulation (autos, trucks, buses and bicycles) and pedestrian circulation on Carroll Street and the movements into the adjacent Metrorail bus area. Some of this concern, though only a part, relate to turning movements into the 306 Carroll Street project. DDOT is beginning a traffic study of the larger Takoma area. OP has asked the District Division of Transportation to review traffic movements in this area and DDOT will undertake that review as part of the larger study.

In summary, there are several transportation issues related to this project that are not yet completely resolved. These transportation issues should be considered in the overall development of the area, though they are not directly related to the relief being requested from the BZA.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the special exception for relief from the limitation on the number of roof structures and roof structure setback and a variance from the residential recreation space requirements (15 percent provided instead of the 20 percent required).

The Office of Planning believes that additional work is needed, essentially outside the BZA review, to address the issue of the Metropolitan Branch Trail and traffic circulation on Carroll Street in relationship to this project.

Attachments

AA/jf

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

Memorandum

TO: Andrew Altman, Director, DC Office of Planning

FROM: Kenneth Laden, Associate Director, Division of Transportation

DATE: February 4, 2002

RE: BZA Application No.16833 – 306 Carroll Street

The above application was not referred to the Division of Transportation since the application involved a variance from recreational space and roof requirements. The Division has no objection to these requests.

However, the Division of Transportation is familiar with traffic and transportation issues in the area and has reviewed the applicant's site plans. We would like to work with the developer on two issues:

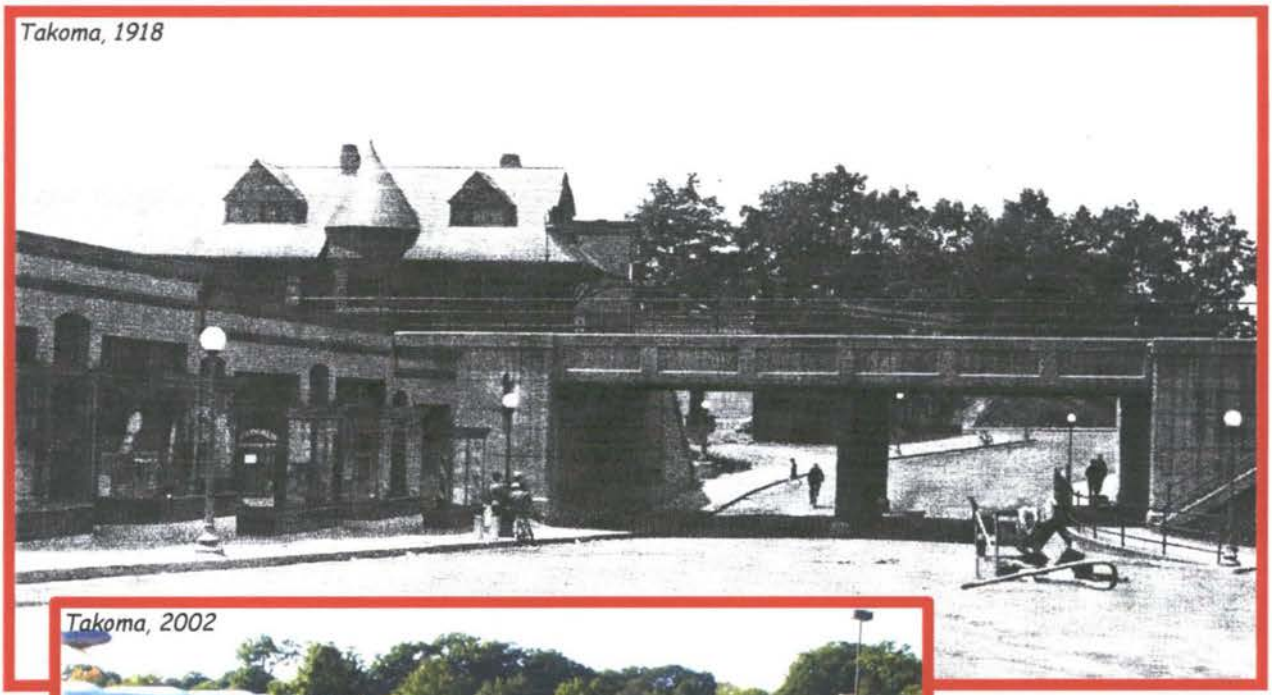
1) Possible traffic impacts of the project. During the development of the Takoma Central District Plan, residents expressed concern about the volume and nature of traffic in near the site. They are particularly concerned about congestion at the nearby intersection of Blair Road, 4th Street, Cedar Street and Carroll Street, about introducing new traffic movements in front of the Metro Station, and about pedestrian access and safety near the site. In the next few months, DDOT will be conducting a study of traffic in the Takoma area as requested in the Takoma Central District Plan.

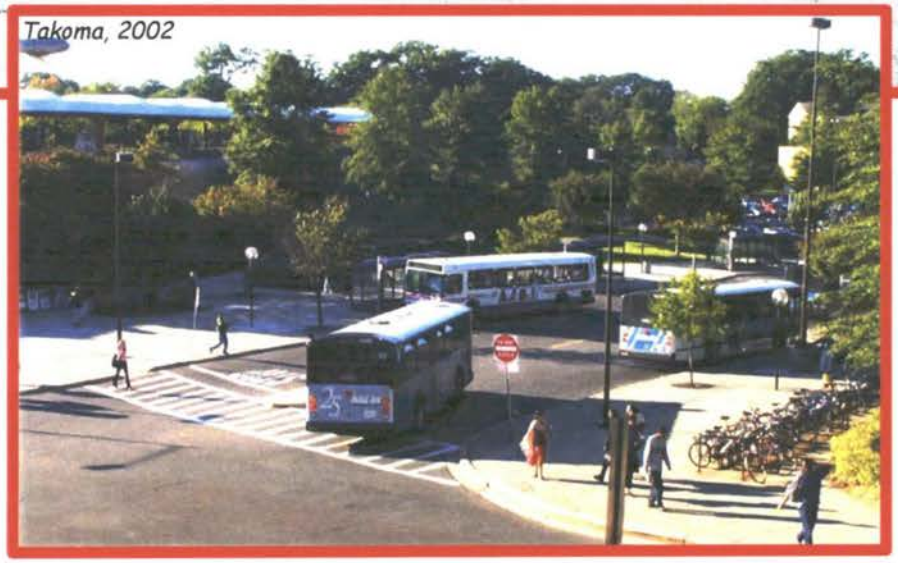
2) The Metropolitan Branch Trail. One of the four proposed alignments for the Trail in the Takoma Central District runs along the west side of the property, adjacent to the railroad tracks. This is the only alignment that allows for a grade-separated crossing of Carroll Street. We are conducting an alignment study to help determine which alignment is most appropriate.

We anticipate working with the applicant in the near future to develop a traffic management plan for this project that will address these issues.

Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Planning


Takoma, 1918


Takoma, 2002

Takoma Central District Plan

January 2002

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Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Planning

Takoma Central District Plan

Prepared by:

SmithGroup, Inc.
Gorove/Slade Associates
Economic Research Associates
EHT Traceries
&
DC Office of Planning Staff

January 2002

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

The Takoma Central District Plan is the product of a community-driven planning process for the Takoma neighborhood commercial district of Washington, DC. The plan defines near and mid-term strategies for revitalization and articulates broad development goals, urban design guidelines and priority actions necessary to encourage and facilitate reinvestment in the district. Key objectives for the plan include:

- To define and clearly articulate Takoma Central District Revitalization Goals.
- To serve as a predictable development guide that provides the community with a framework to assess the compatibility of new development in the district.
- To provide guidance and advice to potential developers or future businesses in their decision-making.
- To promote a consistent and integrated planning and design approach to the commercial and mixed-use areas of Takoma for the benefit of the entire neighborhood.
- To reinforce development and revitalization initiatives that are based on smart growth principles for transit oriented development and improved quality of life.
- To create a process that encourages citizen participation and embraces the principles of the Mayor's Neighborhood Action Initiative.

The Takoma Central District Plan presents a unique opportunity for Takoma residents, businesses and institutions to join with their City government and development professionals to renew their community. The plan provides a practical blueprint for a community-oriented, mixed-use district - a place for commerce, for living, for fun.

Organization of the Plan

Founded in the community vision, the Takoma Central District Plan is organized around several critical revitalization components that frame significant issues and strategies for renewal of the area. These include historic preservation, market economics, land use, transportation and

urban design. Following introductory information describing the planning process, community background, and citizen vision and goals, individual report sections provide detailed assessments and revitalization strategies for each of the five critical components. An Illustrative Revitalizatioon Scenario is then presented to help visualize how a renewed Takoma Central District may develop based on the plan's recommended revitalization strategies. The plan document concludes with a summary implementation plan for the recommended revitalization strategies.

Partners & Process

The Takoma Central District Plan is a collaborative effort between the District of Columbia, Takoma citizens and businesses, and a consultant planning and design team led by the SmithGroup of Washington, DC.

A Community Partnership

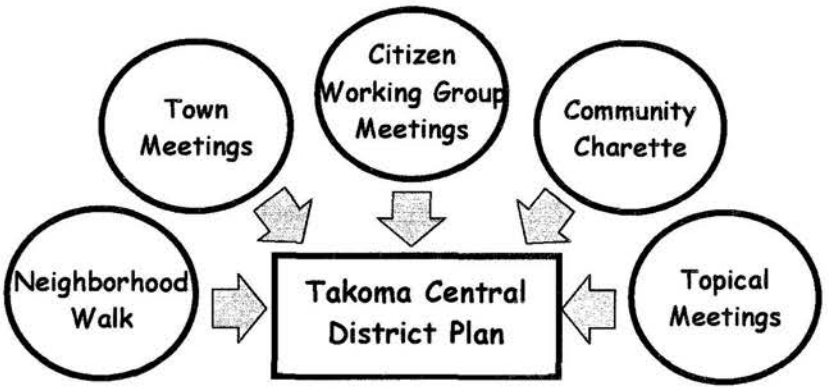
- *Takoma Central District Citizens Working Group*
  ANCs 4B01 & 4B02
  Historic Takoma
  Gateway Coalition
  Plan Takoma
  Takoma United
  Citizen & Business Representatives
- *The Honorable Adrian Fenty, Ward 4 Council Member*
- *District of Columbia Office of Planning*
- *Consultant Team*
  SmithGroup, Inc. - *land use & urban design*
  Gorove/Slade Associates - *transportation*
  Economic Research Associates - *economic analysis*
  EHT Traceries - *historic preservation*


Neighborhood Walk - August 30, 2000

To facilitate direct citizen involvement in the planning process, the Takoma Central District Plan Citizens Working Group was organized at the beginning of the planning process to help coordinate, develop and review the plan. The Citizens Working Group includes a cross-section of both District of Columbia and Maryland residents and business owners from the Takoma Central District and the surrounding neighborhood, each representing a broader constituency from the community.

The project partners began their work together in August 2000 and continued over an eight-month period. The process for developing the Takoma Central District Plan began with a neighborhood assessment and

community goal setting, followed by a series of public town meetings, Citizen Working Group meetings, neighborhood walk, community design charette and topical meetings that enabled community stakeholders to discuss areas of particular concern and opportunity.



The initial plan development process with the community ended with a public town meeting and a Citizen Working Group meeting in January 2001. DC Office of Planning staff and the SmithGroup consultant team then worked through Summer 2001 to develop a draft Final Report document based on the concepts and strategies identified during the public process and input from appropriate government agencies. The Draft Final Report was released on September 27, 2001 and the community was briefed on its contents and the process for submitting comments at a Citizen Working Group meeting on October 1, 2001. Citizen comments regarding the report were heard at a public meeting on October 29, 2001 and a 30-day period for written comments ended on October 31, 2001.

Over 265 specific suggestions were received from more than 45 citizens during the review and comment period. These suggestions were reviewed in consultation with Office of Planning staff, the SmithGroup consulting team, appropriate District of Columbia agencies, and the City of Takoma Park and Montgomery County, Maryland. The citizen input resulted in significant revisions to both the substance and organization of this Final Report document. A Public Hearing Record and Executive Summary of these citizen comments and the Office of Planning's response to this input will be prepared separately as required by the District of Columbia's Small Area Plan legislation.

Place & Possibilities

The Takoma Central District represents the heart of the Takoma neighborhood, located in the northeast corner of Ward 4 of the District of Columbia. The Takoma Central District Plan study area boundaries are generally defined by Chestnut Street to the north, Eastern Avenue and

the DC/MD boundary to the east, 4th and 5th Streets to the west, and Aspen and Laurel Streets to the south (see Figure A).

Figure A
Project Boundaries



Takoma Central District project boundaries are defined by the area between Chestnut Street to the north, Eastern Avenue to the east, 4th & 5th Streets to the west, and Aspen & Laurel Streets to the south.

The Takoma neighborhood is one of Washington, DC's most distinctive communities. In 1883, Takoma, DC was part of the Takoma Park community, established as a bucolic 100-acre, inter-jurisdictional, commuter suburb centered on the former Baltimore & Ohio Railroad station (formerly located just south of the current Takoma Metro station) and straddling the DC-Maryland border, far away from Washington's central city. The suburb's livelihood depended upon the conveyance of its goods and its people via the train line. Today, Takoma, DC is one of twenty-five neighborhood historic districts within the greatly enlarged central city, yet a similar focus on transportation continues to define much about the community's current condition and future development.

Takoma shares its history and its name with Takoma Park, Maryland. Both seamlessly embody classic pedestrian-scale streets, a mixture of well preserved, low to moderate density Victorian, Queen Anne and Bungalow style homes, as well as more modern housing types, and a diverse and active citizenry. Most notably, the area's principle neighborhood business district along Carroll Street links the DC and Maryland portions of the community. While a drive or walk along Carroll

Street from DC toward Laurel Street in Maryland presents no obviously defined border, Takoma, DC's public streetscape and quality and mix of retail uses lack the identity and vitality of the Maryland side. Neither Carroll Street or nearby 4th Street in DC have developed the critical mass of retail, commercial and housing that their Maryland neighbor enjoys, despite being anchored by the most heavily used pedestrian Metro transit station in the District of Columbia.



Carroll St. retail in Old Town Takoma Park, MD



4th Street retail

Many Takoma, DC residents find themselves shopping for basic goods and services across the border, even though their own commercial district has significant capacity to offer many of the same retail and service amenities. Similarly, daily Metro commuters enjoy few opportunities to shop in Takoma, DC and generally only pass through the business district on their way to and from the station. Inadequate parking accessibility and a lack of diverse and quality retail businesses contribute to the diminished potential of the area. Nonetheless, opportunities for revitalization are present, as many properties along Carroll Street and 4th Street are either underutilized or have become available for new development altogether.

Over the last twenty years, at least two planning studies have analyzed and made recommendations about overcoming the revitalization issues faced by the commercial district. A 1977 plan was developed in anticipation of the Metro station opening. In 1999, Takoma Park, MD and the Takoma, DC community partnered to outline strategies for improved linkages between the inter-jurisdictional commercial district. At the time of the development of those plans, however, the District of Columbia's economy was not in a position to support substantial public or private investment. Despite the opening of the Takoma Metro station and proximity to Downtown DC, few improvements were realized.

With the start of the new century, DC's overall economy is considerably stronger. As a result, the DC government is currently in a better position to respond and be an active participant in the revitalization of the city's neighborhoods. Simultaneously, DC's population is increasing, with new home starts and renovations reaching record levels over the last few years. Residents are reinvesting in their homes and their neighborhoods. Others are recognizing the advantages of central city living. DC's government is committed to retaining current residents and continuing to increase it resident base as part of the city's economic renaissance. At the neighborhood scale, population growth and new opportunities for housing are critical components of strengthening the local economy and restoring the city's urban fabric and heritage.

Neighborhoods like Takoma are beginning to feel the effects of economic growth in the city. Positioned around the city's most heavily used pedestrian Metro station with developable land surrounding it, the

Takoma Central District is well-positioned to realize some of its revitalization goals in the very near term. While the goals of previous planning efforts to protect the small-scale, residential character of Takoma are still valid, large new institutional tenants (such as the Washington Opera), increased vehicular commuter traffic through the area, and proposed private development projects slated for up to 140 units of housing and neighborhood-serving commercial uses suggest that Takoma is destined for change.

The present condition of the economy therefore requires an immediate, broader, more proactive revitalization strategy: one that leverages current market opportunities to foster positive change for the benefit of the entire community. However, the community is also very aware that if new development and the population it brings are not considered in a manner that is compatible with its surroundings, the changes will not contribute to the health and vitality of the neighborhood.

Vision & Goals

The desire for positive change and improvements to the Takoma Central District is strong within the Takoma community. Citizens who participated in the planning process agreed on many of the issues most in need of attention. These issues, which were defined and presented at a public meeting early in the process, include:

Market Economics & Land Use

- Improve neighborhood retail along Carroll Street and 4th Street.
- Remove/redevelop vacant buildings, empty lots and industrial areas that have a negative impact on the community.
- Add more infill housing of a scale that is compatible to the existing architectural character of the area.

Transportation & Public Services

- Improve the intersection of Cedar Street, Blair Road and 4th Street.
- Provide adequate parking for retail users and residents.
- Mitigate commuter traffic to protect neighborhoods.
- Improve street maintenance, trash removal and code enforcement.

Urban Design

- Improve and upgrade Metro open space area.
- Improve Metro underpass and entrance; add amenities such as kiosks, bicycle parking, etc.
- Improve pedestrian environment, access, safety and quality of streetscape, especially along Blair Road and to and from Metro.

Opinions differ as to exactly how and to what degree Takoma should change to address these issues. However, through the initial kick-off town meeting, the neighborhood walk, the community design charette,

the Citizen Working Group meetings, and other public town meetings, citizens developed a clear vision for the Central District's future.

Vision for the Future

Takoma's vision begins with the goal of strengthening the identity of the area's commercial district as a vibrant "town center" for residents of the surrounding neighborhood. Citizens debated the ways in which this goal could be realized, placing significant values and priorities on those community assets that already contribute to the area's identity. Top among these assets is the Metro station and the open space area that separates the station's surface parking lots from the adjacent residential community. There are varying points of view among residents about the preferred design and use of this space, ranging from a green buffer zone to a public park to mixed-use commercial and housing development. However, there is general agreement that this site marks a key "gateway" into the community and as such should be enhanced to contribute to the identity of the adjacent commercial district.

It is from this Metro gateway site that much of the core vision for Takoma is derived. Residents envision a village-scale, mixed-use commercial district for Takoma, drawing inspiration and guidance from the area's historic character and architecture, and anchored by a high quality, signature open space at the Metro station that defines the town center. The existing historic buildings within the district are revitalized with quality retail businesses and complemented by new infill development of compatible scale and design on key opportunity sites. This critical mass of development hosts a mix of uses that inject vitality and activity into the area. The town center connects to the district's commercial corridors along Carroll Street and 4th Street, as well as adjacent residential neighborhoods, with safe and attractive streets and sidewalks, balancing the needs of pedestrians, transit and automobiles. Adequate parking is provided both on street and off-street to accommodate non-commuter transit users and commercial district patrons. In this vision, neighbors see an organized community of residents, property owners and merchants playing an active role in the upkeep and programming of the public space and maintenance of the overall district.



Signature open space

Revitalization Goals

Early in the planning process, the vision for a revitalized Takoma Central District was further defined and presented to citizens as eight goals intended to guide planning activities and direct future redevelopment:

1. **Preserve and enhance Takoma's small town/village character.** The existing architectural character and scale makes Takoma DC and surrounding neighborhoods unique. An additional strength is



U Street, Washington, DC


Park Avenue, Winter Park, Fl


Mixed-use environment simulation


Village scale, Mashpee Commons, Massachusetts

the strong multi-cultural and ethnic base in the area, which should also be reflected in new development.

2. **Promote mixed-use development in existing commercial areas.**
A mixed-use plan for new development, including adding more housing at key opportunity sites, will support existing commercial uses and assist in creating a vital, pedestrian oriented environment in and around this important transit area.

3. **Encourage a neighborhood scale for new development.**
New commercial and residential development should be neighborhood-driven in scale and approach. New residential and commercial buildings should be no more than 2-4 stories in height to match existing neighborhood scale.

4. **Make major pedestrian corridors pedestrian-friendly.**
Improving the quality of the streetscape and repairing/upgrading building facades along important pedestrian corridors are significant steps needed to improve the image of Takoma and enhance the experience and safety of walking.

5. **Enhance and increase small businesses and community services that support the needs of the community.**
Provide quality local services for residents, as opposed to "undesirable" retail, such as liquor stores and bars, or regional destination-based retail. Commercial uses should be concentrated and continuous along existing, viable commercial corridors.

6. **Conserve existing resources and remove blight.**
Preserve and rehabilitate existing structures where possible, replacing particularly blighted buildings with new uses. Vacant and deteriorated buildings have an immense negative impact on the whole area and are a disincentive for redevelopment and investment.

7. **Leverage public and private sector opportunities.**
Coordinate neighborhood groups and business organizations in a focused partnership to take advantage of current economic health and marshal community, business and public sector resources to promote revitalization.

8. **Cross-jurisdictional planning.**
Improve the coordination of housing, commercial, transportation and streetscape programs and other planning issues broadly and across jurisdictional boundaries for the improvement and benefit of all surrounding DC and Maryland neighborhoods.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

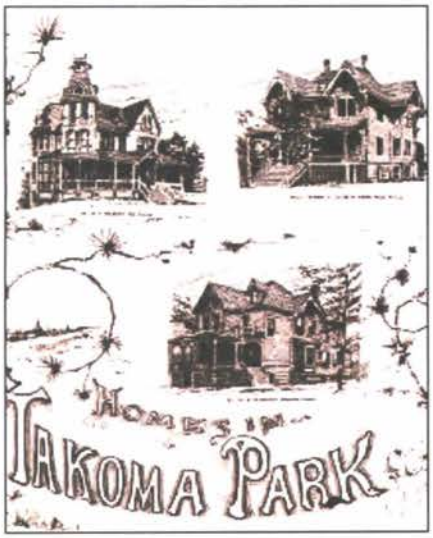


Benjamin Franklin Gilbert, 1841 1907, founder of Takoma Park
(Source: *Takoma Park, Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, Inc., 1984)*

Any study or plan for revitalization of DC's portion of the greater Takoma community must acknowledge and respect the history of this unique, inter-jurisdictional neighborhood. Takoma, DC is part of a proud and historic transit community and residents expect new development and revitalization efforts to maintain and enhance that character. Therefore, it is important for the Takoma Central District Plan to recognize and respect this rich heritage as an integral part of its revitalization, urban design and marketing strategies and initiatives. The following overview of the greater Takoma community's history and historic district, along with key preservation issues and strategies, is presented to help guide implementation of the plan's other recommendations in terms of this historic context.

A Historic Transit-Oriented Community

From its founding in 1883 by Benjamin Franklin Gilbert as a commuter suburb and resort community centered on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad station, development in Takoma Park has been driven by the area's attraction as a healthful, attractive and convenient place to live. With easy rail access to the employment and business center of Washington, a relatively high (and therefore healthier) elevation, and good sources for clean drinking water, Takoma Park possessed the critical elements for success as the capital city's first true suburb.



1888 B.F. Gilbert real estate brochure
(Source: *Takoma Park, Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, Inc., 198*

The new community straddled the DC/Maryland boundary on the B & O's Metropolitan Branch, which had opened in 1873. Initial growth in Takoma Park focused on residential development. Gilbert platted streets and subdivided the community into large lots for single-family homes. In 1884 Isaac Thomas opened Takoma Park's first store, initiating the community's tradition of neighborhood-serving businesses.

In 1886 a new railroad station was completed and the first church and public school arrived in 1888. By this time Takoma Park's fledgling business community around the train station included two general stores, a drug store, a carriage factory, coal and wood yards, and a blacksmith shop. Civic activism received a boost with the organization of the Takoma Park Citizens Association. The Maryland portion of the community was incorporated as a town in 1890, with Gilbert serving as the town's first mayor. In 1893 Gilbert completed his vision for the community with construction of a large resort hotel in North Takoma.

Although Gilbert subsequently suffered serious personal financial setbacks, the Takoma Park community continued to develop into the 20th



View west towards Cedar St. underpass and B & O station, 1918
(Source: Takoma Park, Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, Inc., 1984)

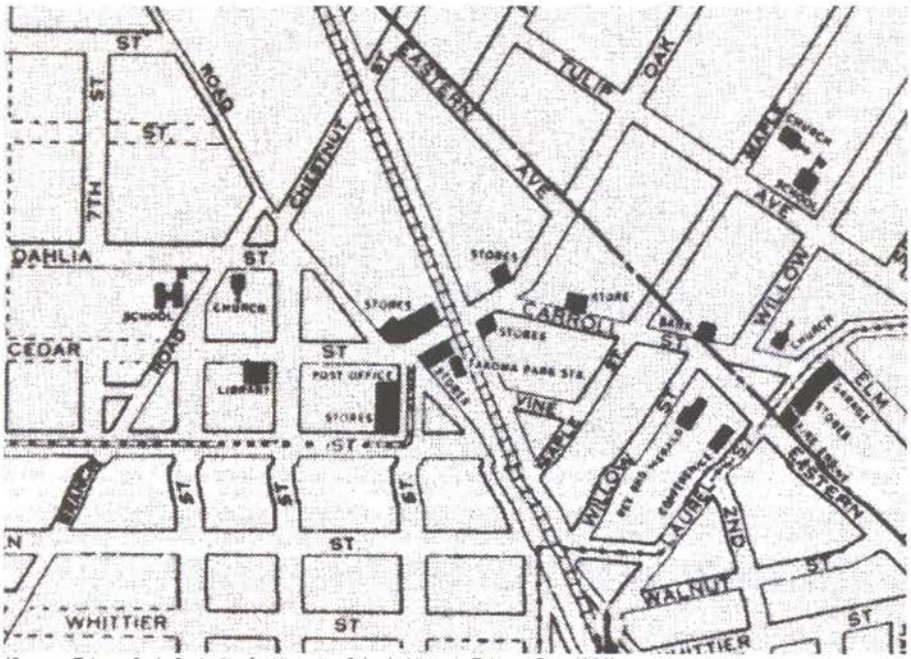


Takoma Hall, just east of railroad tracks, after 1912 construction of Cedar St. underpass
(Source: Takoma Park, Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, Inc., 1984)

century. In the 1890's, a volunteer fire department was organized, new commercial, community and church buildings were erected, a water and sewage system was constructed, and streetcar service was established into downtown Washington, further enhancing the community's accessibility. The District of Columbia's first branch library opened at 5th and Cedar Streets in 1911, erected with a $40,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie. Takoma Park's early Victorian homes were followed by Arts and Crafts, Bungalow, Classical and Colonial Revival style residences on smaller lots. The area around the railroad station area changed considerably with the construction of the Cedar St. underpass in 1912.

By the early 1920's the community had developed two somewhat distinct commercial nodes linked by Cedar and Carroll Streets – the original business district located adjacent to the B & O station in DC and a separate Maryland district at the intersection of Carroll and Laurel Streets (see Figure B). The DC side saw modern entertainment arrive with the Takoma Theatre at 4th and Butternut Streets in 1923.

Figure B
Map of Takoma Park showing business and community buildings, 1922



(Source: Takoma Park, Portrait of a Victorian Suburb, Historic Takoma, Inc., 1984)

Although differences between Takoma Park's DC and Maryland sections became more defined in the 20th century, the community retained its historic identity, with both jurisdictions celebrating anniversaries of their 1883 founding together in 1933, 1958 and 1983. A difficult but ultimately successful fight to prevent extension of the proposed ten-lane North Central Freeway project through the community also saw



Takoma Theatre, 4th & Butternut Streets

residents from both jurisdictions working effectively together from 1964 to 1970.

With the opening of the Takoma Metrorail station in 1978, Takoma Park came full circle to its historic origins. With Metrorail's Red Line and Metro buses replacing B & O steam trains as the primary means of conveyance, Takoma Park could once again prosper as an historic rail and transit oriented community.

Beginning in the 1970's, increased interest in historic preservation by old and new residents led to the renovation of many historic but neglected homes. Local and National Register historic districts were established in Takoma Park, Maryland in the 1970's and in Takoma, DC in the 1980's. Historic Takoma, Inc., organized in 1978 to promote historic preservation and community education and improvement, became an active and involved voice for Takoma Park's heritage.

Today, the rich, inter-jurisdictional nature of Takoma's cultural and architectural heritage is a critical aspect of life in the community and continues to frame the priorities and vision of the neighborhood's residents into the 21st century.

DC's Takoma Park Historic District

The District of Columbia's Takoma Park Historic District, named to reflect Takoma, DC's heritage as part of the original village of Takoma Park, was designated by the city in November 1980, with listing on the National Register in June 1983. Under the DC Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act, all new development and exterior alterations to existing structures within the Takoma Park Historic District must be reviewed and approved by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. The district contains approximately 160 contributing buildings dating from 1883 to 1940, and is generally bounded by Aspen Street on the south, Piney Branch Road and 7th Street on the west and Eastern Avenue on the northeast (see Figure C).

In 2002, the DC Office of Planning's Historic Preservation Division and Historic Takoma, Inc. are jointly funding and conducting a historic survey of properties within the traditional Takoma, DC community that are not already included in the original historic district. An estimated 1000 properties are located in the survey area, which extends from the existing district west to Georgia Avenue and south to Van Buren Street (also see Figure C). About 80-100 of these will be selected for more detailed study, and approximately 40 properties will be documented and photographed to the standards of the National Register of Historic

Places. This survey may lead to eventual expansion of the Takoma Park Historic District and protection of additional historic resources.

Figure C
Takoma Park Historic District & 2002 Survey Area



The entire Takoma Central District Plan area is located within the Takoma Park Historic District boundaries, with the exception of the CVS site on Carroll Ave. and the more modern structures between Willow and Laurel Streets. Therefore, in addition to required zoning and permitting approvals, virtually all new construction and renovation of existing buildings in the plan area is subject to review and approval by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. This review process will be a critical tool for ensuring that projects resulting from implementation of the plan's revitalization ideas, strategies and scenarios will be assessed for their compatibility with the community's historic character.

Key Historic Preservation Issues

Although Takoma's citizens are proud of their success in preserving and promoting the community's history and architectural heritage, participants in the planning process identified a number of historic preservation issues in need of attention within and around the plan area:

- Poorly maintained and deteriorating historic resources within DC's Takoma Park Historic District.
- Lack of citizen understanding of historic district designation and review processes.

- Lack of residential property tax credits for renovation of owner-occupied historic residential properties.
- Poor identification and marketing of the historic district.
- Need for better use of historic character to enhance economic development.
- Need for better inter-jurisdictional coordination on historic preservation issues.

Historic Preservation Revitalization Strategies

To address the issues identified by Takoma's citizens, the plan proposes basic strategies for preserving and enhancing the existing historic structures and character of the community and integrating historic preservation activities with revitalization efforts. Many of the strategies will require leadership from local residents and property owners. The strategies focus on specific actions related to historic resources; however, other strategies included elsewhere in the plan should also be implemented with Takoma's historic fabric as a guiding principle. Key historic preservation strategies include:

1. **Recognize and respect Takoma's rich heritage as an integral part of all revitalization, urban design and marketing strategies and initiatives.**

2. **Preserve existing historic resources by completing a neighborhood property survey to investigate the historic potential of areas and individual properties surrounding the existing historic district** (*a one year survey is funded for 2002 as a partnership between DC Office of Planning's Historic Preservation Division and Historic Takoma, Inc.*)

3. **Promote availability of Federal historic preservation tax credit program for certified rehabilitation projects and initiate legislative action to provide property tax credits for renovation of owner-occupied residential properties in the Takoma Park Historic District.**

4. **Update design guidelines (Kresscox/Sulton Campbell, 1986) for the Historic District to better reflect today's market conditions and rehabilitation techniques.**

5. **Improve signage for DC's Takoma Park Historic District, coordinated with the adjacent historic district in Takoma Park, Maryland.**

6. Develop and market a joint DC/MD historic walking tour in coordination with other historic preservation and cultural heritage programs (such as DC Heritage Tourism Council).

7. To enhance economic development in the area, develop and implement a marketing plan that emphasizes the historic charm, cultural heritage and history of the Takoma Park community.

MARKET ECONOMICS

A first step towards revitalization of the Takoma Central District is understanding what type of viable development is possible to support community goals for the area. The following review of market economics for the Takoma Central Distirct basically concludes that the revitalization program for the area should rely not so much on adding substantial new retail space, but should instead encourage a more diverse quality of retail uses in existing space, with limited new space in targeted locations. To strengthen and support this retail market, and support increased transit use, the program also calls for more people living within and in close proximity to the district and the Metrorail station.

Market Opportunities

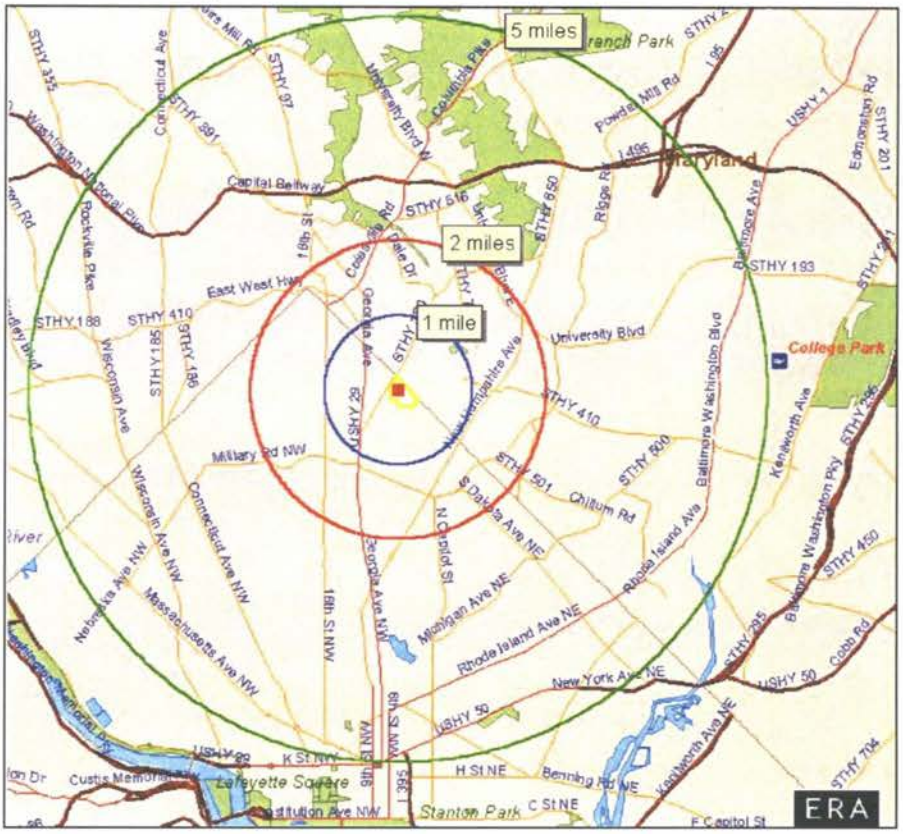
Retail Market Demand

The retail market demand model provides a method for identifying the amount and type of viable retail space within Takoma's Central District. The following preliminary demand model assesses the potential support provided by two key market segments: local residents and non-resident Metro users.

A trade area has been defined to include those residents living within a two-mile radius of Takoma (see Figure D), an appropriate trade area for neighborhood-oriented retail (a regional mall typically pulls residents from a 10-15 mile radius). Neighborhood-oriented retail is consistent with the community's revitalization goals and is appropriate in Takoma given the existing large retail center being developed in nearby Silver Spring, Maryland and the lack of a major arterial road through the community, a typical requirement for large-scale retailers. Small-scale retail space is also consistent with the neighborhood-oriented and specialty type retail character in the Old Town Takoma Park, MD business community, and such space will accommodate the potential development of similar specialty retail uses on the DC side as revitalization initiatives strengthen the attraction for visitors from outside the local trade area.

The resident trade area for Takoma includes approximately 45,883 households with an average household income of $58,117. Total expenditure potential for the resident market is based on the number of households, average disposable household income, and a typical spending pattern for goods (apparel, general merchandise and furniture) of 21% of disposable income (per spending surveys conducted by the US Census).

Figure D
Trade Area Map



Source: Economics Research Associates

Based on data provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), approximately 1.6 million riders exit the Takoma Metro station annually. It is assumed that a portion of these individuals live within the two-mile resident trade area and are thus already accounted for within the resident market area. The total expenditure potential for both market segments (local residents & non-resident Metro users) is approximately $445 million, as shown in Table A.

Table A
Retail Market Demand

Resident Market (2 mile radius)	
Households	45,883
Average Household Income*	$58,117
Total Annual Spending Potential	$442,291,436
Non-Resident Metro Riders	
Annual Exits at Takoma Station	1,567,540
Adjustment for Residents living within 2 mile radius	627,016
Total Annual Spending Potential @ $5 avg. per capita	$3,135,080
Total Market Demand	**$445,426,516**

**Source: CACI, 2000 (demographics software program based on U.S. Census)*

Table B below highlights the total expenditure potential for each market segment, as well as the amount of expenditure potential which can realistically be "captured" in Takoma. The capture rates are based on rates in similar neighborhood-oriented, retail districts near large urban areas. A range of capture rates has been included so that the amount of supportable space is not over or understated. An inflow factor of 10% has also been included to acknowledge that some spending will occur from individuals located outside of the trade area (such as visitors to the district). By dividing the total expenditure potential with average sales productivity figures of $175 to $200 per square foot, it is therefore determined that the Takoma retail market (DC & MD) can support approximately 100,000 to 150,000 sq. ft. of retail space.

An inventory of the Takoma retail market area reveals that there currently exists about 120,000 sq. ft. of retail space, well within the 100,000-150,000 sq. ft. range that is supportable by the community from a market perspective. Approximately 20% (24,000 sq. ft.) of the existing space is vacant, and other retail uses appear over-allocated (such as auto-related tenants). Thus, at a very minimum, 24,000 sq. ft. of retail space can be added in existing vacant space in order to better satisfy market demand and create a more attractive retail environment. At a maximum, new retail uses of up to 30,000 sq. ft. may also be viable in targeted locations.

Table B
Supportable Retail Space

	Total Annual Spending Potential	Capture Rate		Captured Spending Potential	
		Low	High	Low	High
Resident Market (2 mile radius)	$442,291,436	4%	5%	$17,691,657	$22,114,572
Non-Resident Metro Riders	$3,135,080	40%	45%	$1,254,032	$1,410,786
SUBTOTAL	**$445,426,516**			**$18,945,689**	**$23,525,358**
Inflow at 10%*				$1,894,569	$2,352,536
TOTAL				**$20,840,258**	**$25,877,894**
Supportable Retail Sq.Ft. **			@ $200 PSF	**104,201**	**129,389**
			@ $175 PSF	**119,087**	**147,874**

Source: Economics Research Associates

** Accounts for visitation from outside of the area.*

*** Includes DC & MD portions of Takoma retail market*

Retail Market Summary

- Small commercial sites such as those in Takoma are not conducive to regional retailers, who typically require large floor plates and locations along major arterial streets.

- A competitive environment (most significantly from Silver Spring) limits the amount of additional retail space that can be supported in Takoma.

- Neighborhood-oriented retail is the most appropriate type of retail use for the Takoma Central District. Such retail implies smaller floor spaces (1,500 to 4,000 sq. ft.) that support uses such as food service (bakeries, deli's, coffee shops), cleaners, book stores/newsstands, barber/beauty shops, repair shops, bicycle shops and florists.

- There is potential for additional specialty type retail uses (such as those in Old Town Takoma Park, MD) as revitalization efforts progress.

- When viewed as an aggregate retail market with Takoma Park, MD, the Takoma Central District has sufficient capacity and space to accommodate the market generated by local neighborhood demographics and non-resident customers.

- The aggregate Takoma retail market can support total retail space of approximately 100,000 to 150,000 sq. ft.

- An inventory of retail space revealed that 120,000 sq. ft. of retail space currently exists in the Takoma retail market area, an amount that is within a supportable range from a market perspective.

- Roughly twenty percent (24,000 sq. ft.) of existing retail space is vacant and certain retail uses appear over-supplied (such as auto-related tenants).

- At a minimum, 24,000 sq. ft. of retail space can be added within existing space in order to better satisfy market demand and enhance the retail environment.

- At a maximum, up to 30,000 sq. ft. of new retail space may also be viable in targeted locations.

- Strong emphasis should be placed on enhancing and attracting desired retail services near the Metro station and along 4th, Cedar and Carroll Streets.



Single-family homes in Takoma



Watkins apartment building on Cedar St.

Housing Market Demand

The strengthening of the District of Columbia as a healthy, viable urban community requires new opportunities for creating diverse housing choices and increasing the city's residential population. According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, for the first time in several years the District of Columbia is projected to gain population (at least 36,600 new residents are projected over the next ten years) and housing supply is severely constrained throughout much of the District. To help achieve the citywide goal of accommodating new residents, leverage strong market demand for housing and promote the traditional residential character of much of the Takoma community, new housing is encouraged within the Takoma Central District. Adding to Takoma's existing housing supply will enhance the neighborhood's market potential to attract the desired quality of retail services, as well as improve existing underperforming or underserving retail uses in the area.

To assess demand for housing within the Takoma area, various demand indicators were analyzed, including population projections, resale value of existing homes and the residential rental market. Housing demand indicators within the area are positive. Resale values of homes in the Takoma area have been escalating over the past several years. Local municipal sources indicate that the resale value of single-family detached homes increased from $157,500 in 1990 to $170,300 in 1999, and resale values have continued to increase significantly since 1999. In order to project demand for new housing, it is assumed that, given the size, scale and largely built-out character of the Takoma community, the area will capture a relatively small percentage (1%-1.5%) of the net new growth forecast for the District. As shown in Table C below, based on future market demand, approximately 183 to 275 new housing units can be accommodated within the study area through the year 2010.

Table C
Housing Market Demand

DC Population Growth Projections*	
2000	518,100
2005	523,500
2010	554,700
Net New Growth 2000-2010	**36,600**
Takoma Capture of New Population Growth	
@ 1%	366
@ 1.5%	549
Average Household Size of Study Area	2
Future Housing Market Demand 2000-2010**	
@ 1%	**183**
@1.5%	**275**

Source:
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Economics Research Associates

* Based on forecasts from Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
**Not including approx. 140 units proposed as of 2000 under existing market demand.

The normal market forces that are indicating a demand for new housing in Takoma are further reinforced by the presence of the Metro station. Transit service promotes a well-integrated residential and commercial hub and encourages pedestrian activity and fewer automobile trips.

The projection for future housing demand does not include the approximately 140 units of new housing proposed as part of the Eakin Youngentob and Eichner projects in the Central District. These projects were already proposed in 2000 and determined to be economically feasible by their developers based on existing market conditions rather than future housing demand. Therefore, they were part of *existing* market demand as of 2000 rather than projected 2000-2010 *future* market demand.

Housing Market Summary

- The citywide market for single-family homes is relatively strong – resale prices of existing homes are increasing, residents are moving back to the District, and the rental market remains strong.

- Takoma's *future* market demand can accommodate 183 to 275 new housing units; this does not include 140 housing units currently proposed as part of *existing* market demand.

- The proximity of the Metro station promotes a well-integrated, mixed use hub with strong pedestrian activity and reduced vehicle trips. This reinforces the normal market forces that are indicating a demand for new housing within the Takoma area

Office Market Demand

Discussions with various local brokers and property owners were conducted to most accurately depict demand for office space within the smaller Takoma market. A brief summary of comments from such discussions is included in Table D below. As with the retail market, large office space users in the Takoma market area generally locate in Silver Spring. There also exists a large inventory of older, obsolete office buildings in the eastern part of Takoma Park, MD along New Hampshire Avenue.



Office/mixed-use building on Willow Street

The majority of existing office space in the immediate area of Takoma is concentrated within the Takoma Professional Building on Carroll Street, and includes tenants such as small private businesses, non-profits, and professionals (such as lawyers and accountants). Other office space is scattered throughout the study area, including uses such as a contract lighting company and a real estate company. It is estimated that there is currently 140,000 sq. ft. of office space within the Takoma Park,

Maryland area, including the Takoma Professional Building, and an additional 50,000 - 75,000 sq. ft. scattered throughout the greater Takoma office market area.

Given the proximity of Silver Spring and current trends in the market, the strongest office market demand in Takoma is projected to be small-scale (3,500 - 5,000 sq. ft.) professional space, with lease rates in the range of $18/sq. ft. Representative tenants could include foundations and local service businesses (such as graphic designers). Demand for new office space should not exceed 40,000 to 50,000 sq. ft. (approximately ten new small-scale office tenants), and can be accommodated in buildings with existing office space and within new mixed use developments close to the Metro station.

Table D
Office Market: Takoma/Takoma Park Region

	Summary Comments from Local Brokers & Property Owners
Takoma Professional Building	Fully leased, current lease rate of $18.50 per sq. ft.; building was only 50% occupied for some time; *average space leased is 3,500 sq. ft; took ten years* to lease up the space after Seventh Day Adventists *vacated*
2nd Floor Office Space- Old Town Takoma Park	Demand for space for graphic companies, professionals, web designers, foundations, small space users
Old Town Takoma Park on Westmoreland	Kidney Dialysis moving out; $18 psf + electric; demand is moderate; mostly nearby residents looking for office space (psychiatrists, non-profits, attorneys)

Office Market Summary

- Demand for new office space in the Takoma study area does not exceed 40,000 to 50,000 sq. ft. (approximately ten new small-scale office tenants), and can be accommodated in existing buildings and new mixed-use projects. Office users best suited for the Takoma market include small space users (3,500-5,000 sq. ft.) such as local professionals, business services and foundations.

Industrial Market Demand

Industrial space in metropolitan Washington is comprised primarily of warehouse/distribution, flex-tech and research and development properties. The metropolitan area's inventory of industrial space totals 145 million sq. ft., of which nine percent was vacant in 1999.
With a significant amount of new industrial space under construction (virtually all in suburban sub-markets), vacancy levels are expected to

increase slightly over the coming year. Due to the availability of vacant industrial space throughout the metropolitan area, and the amount of existing occupied space, the demand for new industrial space in Takoma is limited.



Industrial area along Spring Street

Industrial space within the study area is currently concentrated along Blair Road/Spring Street and along Vine Street, and includes approximately 37,000 sq. ft. of space. With limited sites available in the Takoma neighborhood for redevelopment, and given the presence of the Metro station, mixed use commercial and residential uses are more appropriate since they will encourage pedestrian activity and enhance retail viability within the area. Industrial uses such as those found within close proximity to the Metro station are not preferred transit-oriented uses. Therefore, new industrial uses should be discouraged within the Central District and strategies should be implemented for eventual transition of existing industrial sites to other preferred uses.

Industrial Market Summary

- The demand for new industrial space (including warehouse, distribution and research and development properties) within the Takoma study area is limited given industrial space availability elsewhere in the District and surrounding suburban areas.

- With limited sites available in the Takoma neighborhood for redevelopment, and given the presence of the Metro station, industrial uses such as those found within the Takoma Central District are not preferred transit-oriented uses. New industrial uses should be discouraged within the Takoma Central District and strategies should be implemented for eventual transition of existing industrial sites to other preferred uses.

General Market Issues

A number of general market issues were identified for the Takoma Central District during the market assessment process. These include:

- Fragmented land ownership, such as that found in much of the Takoma Central District, can make it difficult for diverse owners to reach consensus on development strategies, or for larger developers to aggregate and redevelop existing buildings for new projects. However, this condition can be a key factor in supporting renovation of existing buildings for small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail revitalization.

- To help retain and reuse existing building stock that is suitable for small-scale renovation, new mixed use projects such as those supported by the retail and residential market demand should be encouraged to locate on key opportunity sites that are controlled by one or two landowners. These include properties on the west side of 4th Street, those west of the Metro site, the Metro site itself and selected parcels north and south of Carroll Street.

Market Economics Revitalization Strategies

To respond to the unique market opportunities and constraints of the Takoma Central District, the following strategies are recommended (and summarized with projected market demand in Table E below):

1. **Target initial public and private investment in the Takoma Central District towards projects and locations that can encourage and leverage other new private development.** Public investment could include streetscape, green space and pedestrian improvements, parking facilities, and intersection improvements.

2. **Use the relatively large, available and publicly owned parcel at the Metro station site as a key location to accommodate substantial new near-term investment in the Takoma Central District.** A public/private partnership to redevelop this site for transit, mixed use and public space can be implemented relatively quickly and can provide a significant incentive for attracting other new investment into the area.

3. **Organize a business management group or non-profit community development corporation (preferably inter-jurisdictional) to deal with issues such as beautification, tenant recruitment, property owner negotiations and marketing.** Non-profits can be funded through a variety of mechanisms, including municipal appropriations, special assessments on properties, and membership contributions. Main Street designation and management for the district may be a preferred approach for coordinating such activities.

4. **Investigate a zoning overlay district that ensures retention and establishment of small to moderate scale ground floor retail uses in a continuous pattern along Carroll Street, thus providing a better connection to Old Town Takoma Park, MD.** Transit-oriented overlay districts are often used to encourage pedestrian oriented development and encourage a mix of uses (such as neighborhood shopping) in close proximity to transit stops. Such districts can also discourage expansive land uses such as storage yards and warehouses.

5. **Investigate incentives to improve/develop key parcels and determine which incentives provide the largest pay-off.**
   - Historic tax credits for substantial rehabilitation of income-producing properties that are eligible for, or listed on, the National Register of Historic Places.
   - Low interest loan pools funded by consortium of local banks to help cover costs for renovations or expansions.
   - Tax abatements, often used by local governments as an incentive for property owners to rehabilitate deteriorated buildings (exemptions are often in place for 5-10 years).
   - Regulatory relief such as reduced or shared parking and increased densities.

6. **Address vacant or abandoned properties through targeted code enforcement.** This could include verifying the structural integrity of buildings and ensuring that yards are maintained and vehicles are not abandoned on properties.

Table E

Market Demand & Revitalization Strategies Summary

	Retail	Housing	Office	Industrial
Market Demand	Min. 24,000 sq. ft. of new retail uses in existing vacant space; max. 30,000 sq. ft. of retail uses in new space	183-275 new units *	Small-scale uses, up to 50,000 sq. ft. in mixed-use projects	No new industrial space; phase out existing space
Revitalization Strategies	•Public improvements (streetscape, etc.) •Use of publicly owned sites •Business mgt. Group / Main St. •Zoning overlay / regulatory relief •Special assessment districts •Historic tax credits •Low interest loan pool •Tax abatements •Code Enforcement	•Public improvements (streetscape, etc.) •Use of publicly owned sites •Historic tax credits	•Low interest loan pool •Zoning overlay / regulatory relief •Historic tax credits	

* Not including approximately 140 units planned as of 2000 under existing market demand.

LAND USE

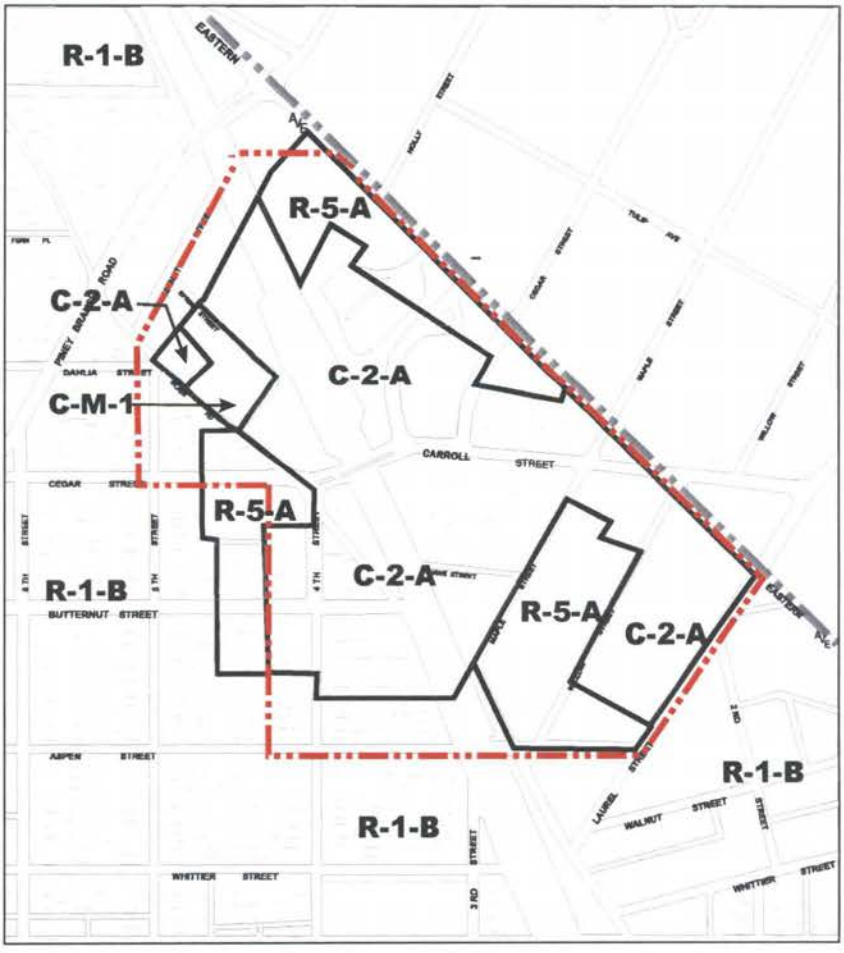
Land Use Concept

To address underutilized parcels and inappropriate uses, and encourage an appropriate mix of preferred land uses, the land use concept for the Takoma Central District recommends targeted land use strategies and specific adjustments to current zoning and land use designations.

Existing Zoning

Existing zoning in the Takoma Central District includes a mix of designations (see Figure E): C-2-A (medium density community business center/medium density residential) in the core area around the Metro station; R-5-A (low-density multi-family) in areas south of Carroll Street, north on Eastern Avenue and west on Cedar Street; C-M-1 (low bulk commercial/light manufacturing) along Blair Road and Spring Street; and R-1-A/R-1-B in adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods.

Figure E
Existing Zoning



Community Business Center/Medium Density — C-2-A

Low Bulk Commercial/Light Manufacturing — C-M-1

Low-Density Apartment House — R-5-A

One Family Detached Dwelling — R-1-B

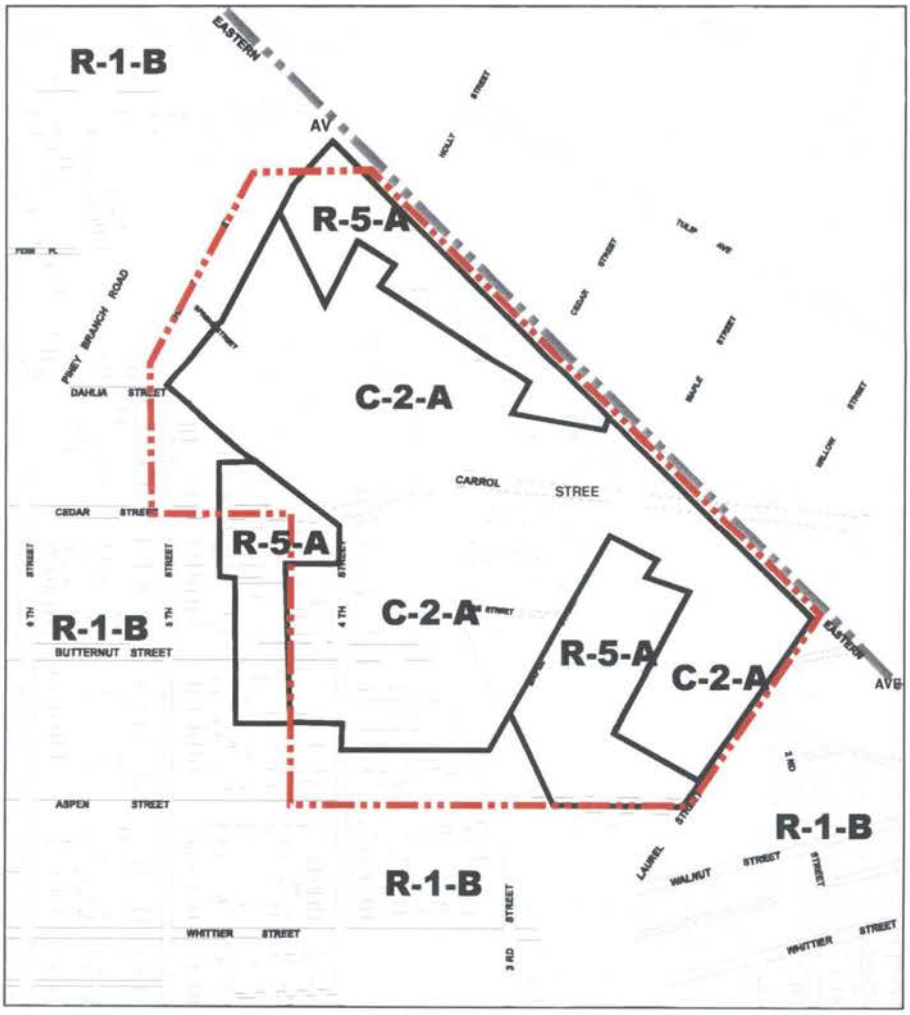
Plan Area Boundary

Current zoning designations effective May 12, 1958, with amendments through April 1, 1996.

Preferred Zoning Concept

Proposed revisions to the Central District's zoning map are shown in Figure F. The proposed zoning concept reaffirms the basic, current zoning designation of C-2-A as an appropriate classification for the Central District's core area. C-2-A supports development of a mixed-use neighborhood, including apartments, townhouses and retail and office uses. However, the concentration of retail activities along Carroll Street and 4th Street should be enhanced by also establishing a zoning overlay district along these corridors to encourage retention and establishment of viable ground floor retail uses. The current C-M-1 light manufacturing district along Blair Road and Spring Street should be incorporated into the core revitalization area by rezoning these parcels to C-2-A. Additional housing development should be encouraged on these properties as a more appropriate, long-term use of land located adjacent to a transit facility, as well as to phase out existing incompatible uses in this area.

Figure F
Preferred Zoning Concept



Community Business Center/Medium Density — C-2-A

Low-Density Apartment House — R-5-A

One Family Detached Dwelling — R-1-B

Plan Area Boundary

Preferred Land Use Concept

With few vacant, unconstrained and assembled sites in the Takoma Central District, the refined land use concept proposes strategies that maximize market potential at key opportunity sites. The intent of the land use concept is to strengthen existing commercial corridors and expand residential uses of an appropriate scale and character onto these key sites. Summary approaches for each type of land use are presented below, followed by a preferred land use concept map (see Figure C).

Housing

To leverage the strong market demand for housing, facilitate increased transit ridership and promote Takoma's traditional residential character, increased housing is encouraged within the Takoma Central District. New housing areas are proposed on both sides of the Metro station at densities that are compatible with the surrounding mix of residential types. Recommended building heights are generally 3-4 story garden style apartments and townhomes. Green space and other amenities to support additional housing should be provided within new projects, along with enhancements to existing open space in the area.

Retail

Since the market assessment suggests only a moderate absorption of new retail space within the district (minimum 24,000 sq. ft. in existing vacant space and maximum 30,000 sq. ft. in new space), retail development is targeted in key areas to help strengthen and extend retail activity along Carroll Street and 4th Street.

Office

The relatively small demand for office space should be primarily accommodated east of the Metro station in smaller, mixed-use infill redevelopment projects along Carroll Street. Additional areas suitable for some office and small service businesses include areas just south of Carroll Street near the existing concentration of office use.



Industrial use (B&B Catering) along Blair Road

Industrial

No new demand for industrial uses is anticipated. Since current light-industrial businesses present some of the area's most unattractive and incompatible properties, existing light industrial uses should be significantly enhanced or phased out of the Takoma Central District.

Institutional/Cultural

With the arrival of the Washington Opera practice facility in Takoma, DC's only major existing office/commercial building at Carroll and Willow Streets, it is likely that this area could attract related uses. Co-location of such uses within existing and new mixed-use buildings in the Carroll Street/Willow Street area is therefore encouraged.

Open Space

As described in the plan's Urban Design section, a public open space at the Metro site is proposed as a Village Green for the Takoma community. This open space will enhance the gateway function of the station and establish a "town center" as a focal point for the area. Given the density of surrounding areas, this space should be approximately 0.8-1.2 acres in size, facilitate both pedestrian and vehicular circulation along its edges and be framed by buildings of no more than 3-4 stories in height.

Transit

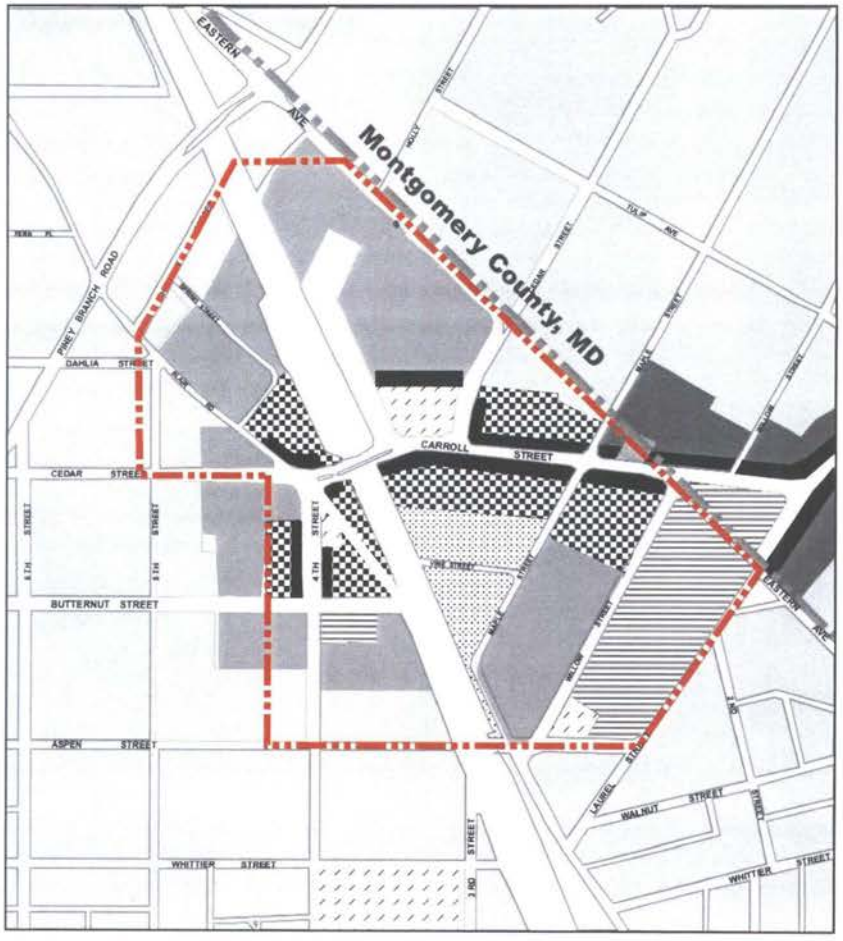
The Metro station represents a significant public investment, and the site's ability to enhance transit use and promote private investment should be leveraged for the community's benefit. As the major public asset in the Central District, the station can help create an integrated, transit-oriented residential and commercial hub, encouraging pedestrian activity and reducing vehicle trips. The station should also be enhanced with amenities and access improvements, including multiple station entries to better serve transit users and nearby development sites.



Takoma Metro station entrance

Figure G

Preferred Land Use Concept



Land Use Revitalization Strategies

There are numerous vacant parcels, underutilized lots and deteriorated areas within the Takoma Central District, many of which have potential for redevelopment with housing, retail and office projects. To ensure that available property is used effectively to support the Central District's revitalization goals, specific land use strategies are recommended for these targeted opportunity sites and areas. The following review of these sites and areas presents strategies for their revitalization, including a summary of five Priority Redevelopment Sites where initial near-term actions should focus.

1. **Accommodate near-term housing demand at key opportunity sites that are most appropriate for residential and mixed use development (see Figure H).**



Opportunity Site A

- Opportunity Site A: Encourage new housing as a primary element of Metro site redevelopment, ensuring that new development supports community revitalization goals and includes appropriate green space. The proposed redevelopment concept maintains green space as a 0.8-1.2 acre "Village Green", similar in size to the existing open space, and proposes a density of approximately 22-32 dwelling units per acre (DUA), or 65-95 total residential units on three acres of the site. Limited retail/service uses are incorporated into this development along the proposed Village Green, possibly in live/work units. Specific site development guidelines and transportation issues related to this site are described in the plan's Urban Design and Transportation sections. The proposed Eakin Youngentob townhome and live/work project is consistent with this land use strategy.



Opportunity Site B

- Opportunity Site B: Encourage new mixed use retail/residential development at the northeast corner of Cedar Street and Blair Road to offer housing choices adjacent to the Metro station, and as a first step in support of future development of housing opportunities to the north along Blair Road and Spring Street. Retail space on this site will also help provide continuous active ground floor uses along Carroll/Cedar Streets to Blair Road/4th Street. No zoning changes are recommended for these properties since current zoning allows approximately 72,000 sq. ft. of development, including approximately 50 residential units. The proposed Eichner/New Legacy Partners mixed use retail and residential project is consistent with this land use strategy.

- Opportunity Site C: Encourage redevelopment of this site with mixed retail/residential uses to help provide continuous active

ground floor uses along Carroll/Cedar Streets to Blair Road/4th Street and offer new housing choices in close proximity to the Metro station. The proposed Katz mixed use retail/residential project is consistent with this land use strategy.



Opportunity Site D

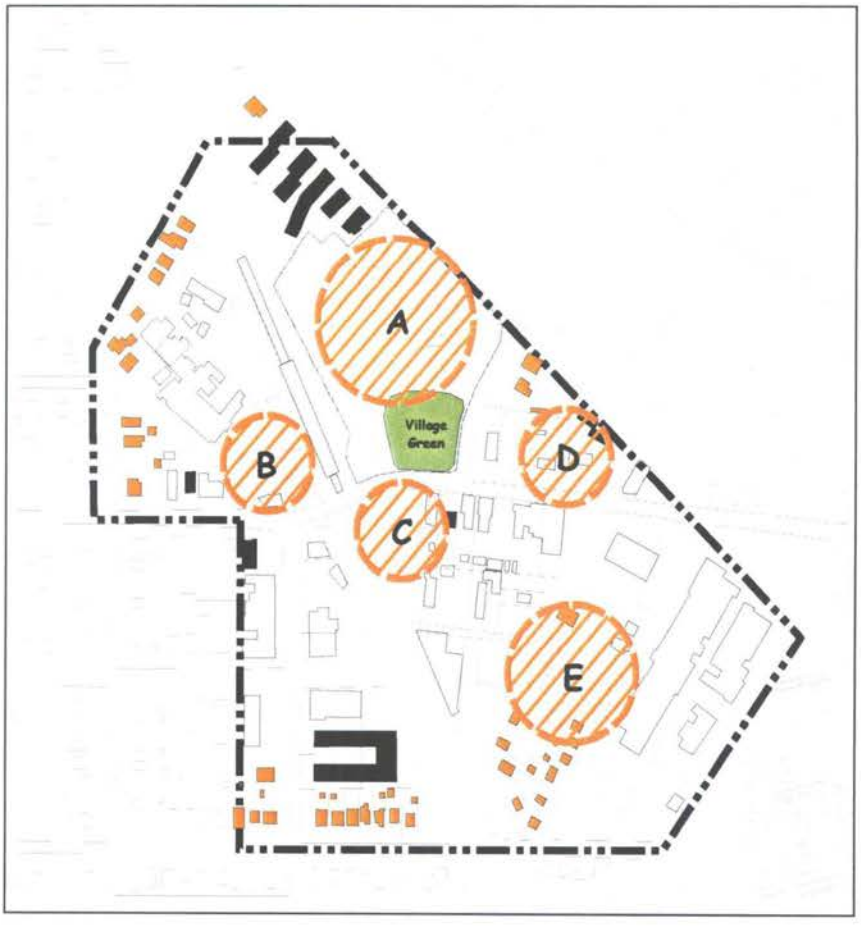
- Opportunity Site D: Encourage redevelopment of this auto service site on the corner of Carroll and Maple Streets as a mixed-use development accommodating approximately 30 residential units above two floors of retail/office space. This type of new development would help provide continuous active ground floor activity along Carroll Street and offer new housing choices in close proximity to the Metro station. .



Opportunity Site E

- Opportunity Site E: The area's largest privately owned development site should remain designated for residential development to help accommodate additional housing choices in the Takoma Central District. At current zoning (R-5-A), this site could yield approximately 80 residential units in 3-4 story garden style apartments at 36-40 DUA. At 24-36 DUA this site could yield approximately 50 townhouse units.

Figure H
Near-Term Housing Opportunity Sites



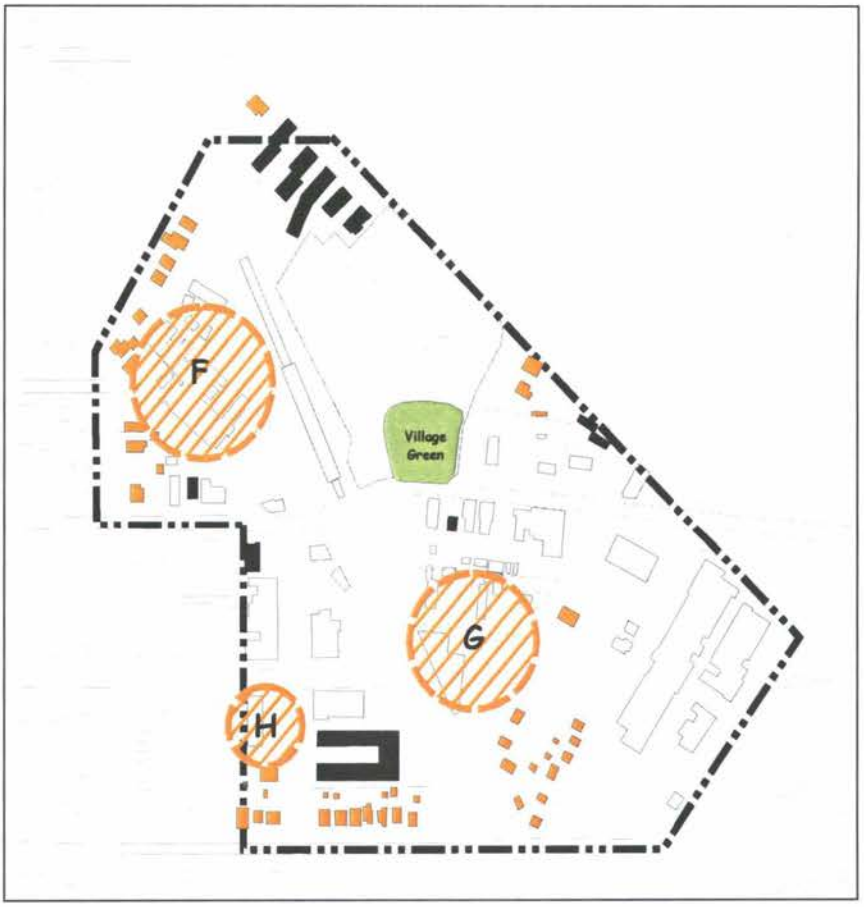
2. **Encourage redevelopment of light industrial areas and key vacant sites to accommodate additional longer-term housing development.** Three sites present longer-term revitalization opportunities for additional housing (see Figure I):

   - Opportunity Site F: Areas currently designated C-M-1 (light manufacturing) and adjacent commercial areas along Blair Road and Spring Street should be redeveloped with housing.

   - Opportunity Site G: Areas north and south of Vine Street should be redeveloped with housing or mixed-uses.

   - Opportunity Site H: The corner parking lot at Butternut and 4th Streets should be redeveloped with housing or mixed use.

Figure I
Longer-Term Housing Opportunity Sites

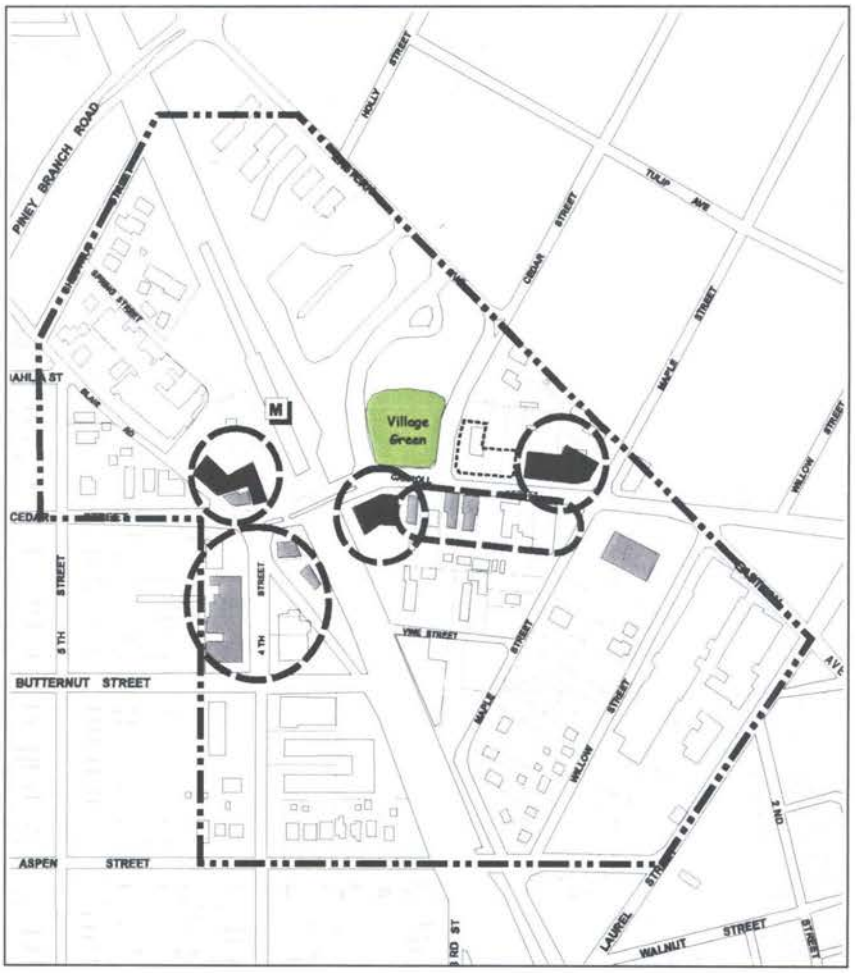


3. **Enhance the Metro station site with a signature open space as a focal point for the Takoma Central District.** The plan for a revitalized Central District focuses on an enhanced "Village Green" at the Metro site, which is discussed in more detail in the plan's

Urban Design Section. This new green space will provide a strong identity for the district, visual relief and buffering from Metro uses, a gathering place for residents and visitors and a focal point of civic life for the surrounding mixed use community.

4. **Concentrate retail activities in key opportunity sites and areas along Carroll Street and 4th Street by establishing a zoning overlay district along these corridors to require retention and establishment of ground floor retail uses.** Since the market assessment suggests that a moderate amount of new retail uses are viable within the district, these uses should be sited to strengthen Carroll Street and 4th Street as the two major retail corridors within the Takoma Central District (see Figure J). Active ground floor retail frontage, at or near the property line with few gaps, curb cuts or blank walls, should be encouraged in these areas.

Figure J
Retail Opportunity Sites & Areas



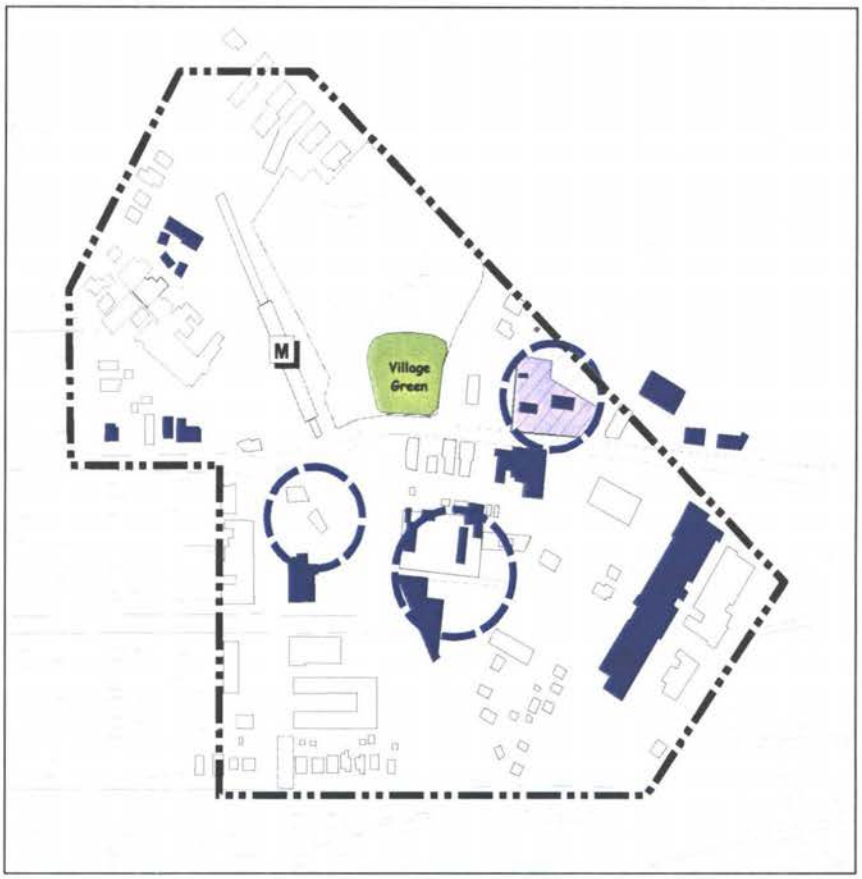
Retail Opportunity Site

Existing Retail Activity

Retail Opportunity Area

5. **Retain and strengthen the Takoma Central District as a mixed-use neighborhood.** The prevailing C-2-A zoning designation is intended for mixed-use development, allowing both residential uses with a 2.5 floor area ratio (FAR) and commercial uses (including retail) with a 1.5 FAR. Presently, market demand for housing is high and demand for office space is relatively low. However, mixed-use development with housing and/or office above one floor of retail may be appropriate in specific areas (see Figure K).

Figure K
Mixed Use Office/Residential Opportunity Areas



6. **Focus initial near-term actions on five priority redevelopment sites.** Among the Takoma Central District's key opportunity sites and areas identified above, five sites are relatively unconstrained and are owned or controlled by a single landowner or developer. These parcels have been identified as Priority Redevelopment Sites (see Figure L) and should be the primary focus of initial efforts to attract new near-term investment to the Central District. The proposed development mix for these priority sites is reviewed to the left of Figure L. The proposed mix is based on existing zoning, currently proposed projects, and preferred scale and intensity per

plan recommendations. As shown, these sites are could yield up to 305 new housing units and 45,000 sq. ft. of new retail/office space.

Priority Redevelopment Site 1
(C-2-A)
Preferred use: Residential & Retail/Service
Total lot area: +/-6.8ac
Metro Facilities: +/-2.3ac
Village Green/Buffer: +/- 1.5 ac
Developable Area: +/- 3.0 ac
Proposed Mix: +/-65-95 townhomes @ 22-32 units/acre with +/-10,000sf ground floor retail/service space fronting upon Village Green

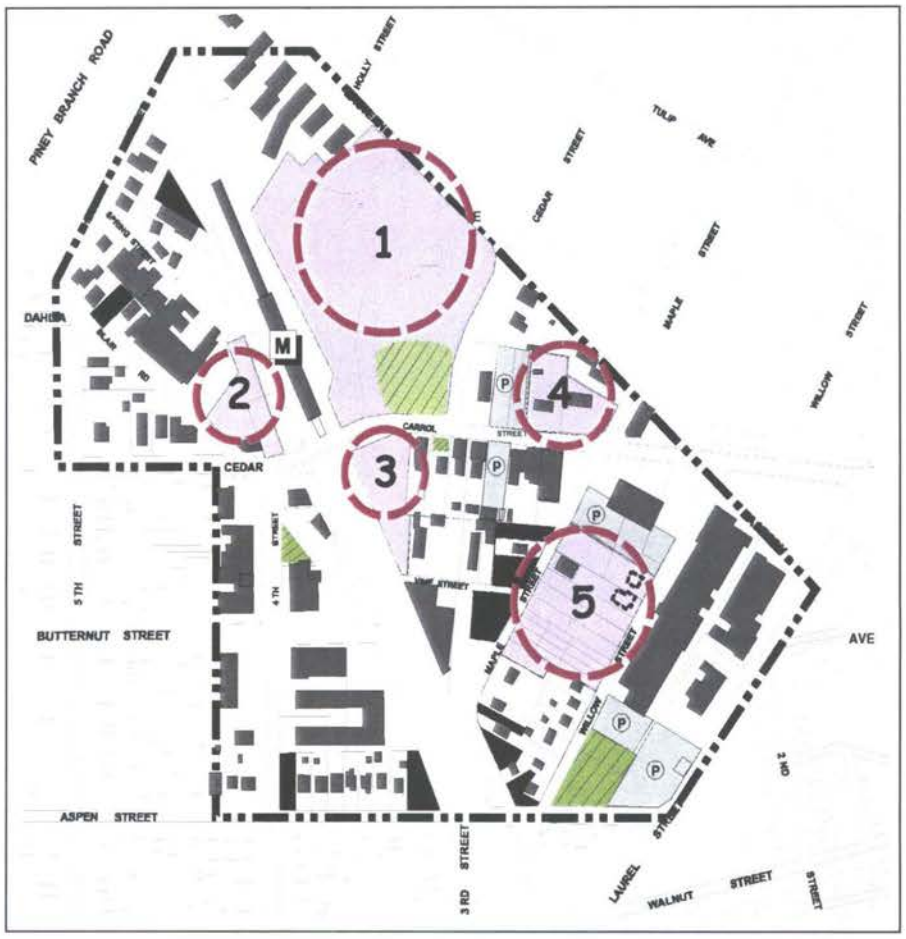
Priority Redevelopment Site 2
(C-2-A)
Preferred use: Residential/Retail
Total lot area: +/-0.7ac
Proposed Mix: +/-50 apartments with +/10,000sf ground floor retail

Priority Redevelopment Site 3
(C-2-A)
Preferred use: Residential/Retail
Total lot area: +/-0.8ac
Proposed Mix: +/- 50 apartments with +/5000sf ground floor retail

Priority Redevelopment Site 4
(C-2-A)
Preferred use: Residential & Retail/Office
Total lot area: +/-0.8ac
Proposed Mix: +/-30 units above 2 floors of retail/office with +/10,000sf each)

Priority Redevelopment Site 5
(R-5-A)
Preferred use: Residential
Total lot area: +/-2.2ac
Proposed Mix: +/-80 garden apartments @ 36 units/acre or +/-50 townhomes @ 22 units/acre

Figure L
Priority Redevelopment Sites



7. **Limit negative activities and inappropriate uses through targeted rezoning, a zoning overlay district, and coordination with DC's Neighborhood Services Initiative.** Inappropriate uses include: storage yards; auto sales, repair and storage; warehouses; parking lots (except behind buildings); truck/trailer rentals; and car washes.

8. **Encourage development of shared parking with Metro and other key landowners in locations that can better support the overall commercial district.** The proposed Metro site parking structure should be located to better serve both transit and business customers.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation has always been a defining factor in the historical development of the Takoma community. From its origins as a B & O Railroad village to its modern day role as a transit-oriented, urban mixed use neighborhood, Takoma's economic health and overall quality of life have been closely linked to the community's transportation facilities. As the Takoma community advances plans for continued development and revitalization, its transportation system presents both obstacles and opportunities for near-term and long-term economic viability.

The existing road system through Takoma, largely designed for local needs, is now accommodating substantial pass-through commuter traffic from outside the area. The resulting congestion presents challenges for the establishment of viable businesses and produces negative side effects on surrounding residential neighborhoods. The roots of this congestion go far beyond Takoma and will require long-term regional solutions. However, near-term actions can and should be undertaken to better manage traffic conditions within Takoma's core area to help ensure that new investment and revitalization in the local community can be advanced.

While traffic issues present significant challenges for Takoma, the community's transit facilities are a wonderful asset that can be leveraged to overcome vehicular congestion and attract new investment. The Metrorail station and its associated bus services present the opportunity to continue with revitalization efforts and new projects in Takoma even as near and long-term actions are initiated to deal with traffic concerns. The following transportation assessment and strategies are intended to set the stage for such traffic solutions while ensuring that transit services are maintained and strengthened.

Transportation Assessment

To assist with development of practical revitalization strategies for the Takoma Central District, the planning team conducted a preliminary transportation assessment for the study area, including:

- Existing traffic performance in and around the Central District
- Projected traffic volumes from proposed Priority Redevelopment Sites in the Central District
- Existing and projected needs for transit services and facilities located in the Central District

This assessment helped identify issues related to Takoma's current roadway network and transit infrastructure. Key information from this assessment is summarized below.

Traffic Performance

In order to identify the most significant traffic problems affecting the Takoma Central District, a preliminary analysis of existing traffic performance in the district and surrounding area was completed as part of the planning process. This analysis reviewed peak hour traffic volumes to determine the current Level of Service (LOS) for the area's road system and identify the most significantly congested locations. The results of this assessment for three key intersections in the Central District's core area are summarized in Table E below. A LOS of A indicates free flowing traffic during peak travel times. A LOS of F indicates severe traffic congestion during peak travel times.

Table E

AM/PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes & Levels of Service (LOS)

Intersection	AM/PM Peak Hour Traffic Volume	AM/PM LOS
Carroll St/Eastern Ave/Willow St	1138/1206	C/F
Carroll St/Cedar St	992/1096	B/A
Blair Rd/4th St/Cedar St/Carroll St	1794/1728	C/F

Source: Gorove/Slade 10/04/00

Within the Central District, the intersection at Blair Road and 4th/Cedar/Carroll Streets carries the greatest volume of peak hour traffic and, along with the Carroll Street/Eastern Avenue/Willow Street intersection at the DC/MD boundary, is one of the most congested points in the community's road system with LOS F during peak travel periods. This intersection will therefore be a primary focus for improvement in the transportation strategies that follow.

Traffic Volumes for Priority Redevelopment Sites

The plan's Land Use section identifies five Priority Redevelopment Sites that should be the focus of initial efforts to attract new investment in the Takoma Central District. To help understand the potential traffic impacts of development proposed for these sites, the planning team assessed the maximum likely amount of AM/PM peak hour vehicle trips that would be generated by the mix of uses described in Figure L. The results of this assessment are summarized in Table F below.

New development on the Priority Redevelopment Sites will generate additional vehicle trips in the Takoma Central District, although the traffic impacts of such development will be significantly mitigated by project phasing and transit's projected share of trips. The dispersal of the remaining trips throughout the area's road network, and potential impacts on the key intersections reviewed above, will require further area-wide analysis and specific assessments of projects on each site as they proceed through the District of Columbia's development review processes. However, given the broad scope and regional roots of

Takoma's traffic congestion discussed above, and the importance of attracting new investment to achieve community revitalization goals, the projected traffic volume from Priority Redevelopment Site projects should not be a deterrent to initiating strategies for their eventual development with preferred uses at projected intensities. Additionally, as discussed later in this section, the District Division of Transportation (DDOT) has committed to undertake a comprehensive transportation study to further analyze traffic issues affecting the Takoma community.

Table F

AM/PM Peak Hour Trip Generations for Priority Redevelopment Sites

Development Mix	Type	Maximum Projected Size	AM Peak Hr Trips	PM Peak Hr Trips
Priority Site 1				
Residential	townhomes	95 du	25	25
Retail	local retail	10,000 sf	0	26
Subtotal			25	51
Priority Site 2				
Residential	apartments	50 du	31	36
Retail	local retail	10,000 sf	0	26
Subtotal			31	62
Priority Site 3				
Residential	apartments	50 du	31	36
Retail	local retail	5000	0	13
Subtotal			31	49
Priority Site 4				
Residential	apartments	30 du	20	23
Retail	local retail	10,000	0	26
Office	general office	10,000	34	170
Subtotal			54	219
Priority Site 5				
Residential	garden apartments	80 du	46	55
Residential Subtotal			153	180
Retail Subtotal			0	91
Office Subtotal			34	170
% Trip Reduction due to Transit Station Proximity	Residential: 50% Retail: 30% Office: 20%			
Residential Trip Total			77	90
Retail Trip Total			0	64
Office Trip Total			27	136
Grand Total			**104**	**290**

Source: Gorove/Slade (1/02) per standardardized vehicle trip calculation methodologies

Existing & Projected Transit Services & Facilities

Approximately 1.6 million riders exit the Takoma Metrorail station annually. At least 220 WMATA Metro and 325 Montgomery County, Maryland Ride-On buses pass through the station each weekday. Transit service begins as early as 4:30 am and ends as late as 2:00 am.

Metro and Ride-On buses currently use the existing Carroll Street entrance as the primary point of entry and exit to the Metro station site. Approximately 15-20% (48-65) of Ride-On buses use the existing access on Eastern Avenue, primarily for exit only. The station's bus facility currently includes nine bus bays for loading/unloading passengers, with Metro and Ride-On each using four bays and one bay not assigned. Most bus stacking/idling occurs on-site near the existing bus turnaround. Although Ride-On officially prohibits the practice, the agency's buses have at times been observed stacking and idling along Cedar Street on the eastern side of the station site.

Parking for transit users at the Takoma station is provided in a surface lot accessed from Eastern Avenue with approximately 158 spaces, including approximately 10 Kiss & Ride spaces. Permitted parking hours and durations are limited to discourage all-day commuter use. These restrictions were a result of strong citizen action during the station's design that was intended to strengthen the station as a pedestrian and transit hub rather than an automobile-oriented commuter station.

Future bus needs at the Takoma station have been confirmed with each transit provider during the planning process as follows:

- Metro does not anticipate the need for any additional bus bays or access to accommodate current and future bus service at the station, although some additional stacking/idling space is desired.
- Ride-On has requested from WMATA one additional bus bay and one stacking/idling space to accommodate current and future service to the station.
- Ride-On requires retention of a bus exit to Eastern Avenue to avoid costly bus rerouting from the station.
- The City of Takoma Park, Maryland has indicated that Prince Georges's County's "The Bus" service intends to initiate bus service to the Langley Park/Takoma Park area. However, Prince George's County has not determined actual bus routes and has not requested use of a specific WMATA Metro station. Ride-On has confirmed that such a bus route to the Takoma Metro station can be accommodated at Ride-On's assigned bus bays through schedule adjustments and will not require an additional bay.

Key Transportation Issues

Based on traffic performance, field observations, and discussions with participants in the planning process, several key transportation issues were identified and are addressed as part of this plan. These include:

- **Vehicular Circulation & Pedestrian Safety.** The plan recognizes a need to improve key intersections and roadways that currently operate at capacity during the peak commuter hours and create significant congestion and safety issues. The improvements should include measures to mitigate commuter traffic congestion and should explore broader traffic calming opportunities for the neighborhood. The plan also recognizes an immediate need throughout the area for adequate sidewalks, improved pedestrian direction at the Metro station and better pavement markings and crosswalk delineation at major intersections.

- **Parking.** There is generally an adequate parking supply in the Central District, although its location and design does not effectively serve the community. Institutional peak hour usage from Strayer University causes parking infringements in the residential neighborhoods along Willow and Laurel Streets, located in the eastern section of the district. There is also a need to make parking more readily available and convenient for retail businesses on 4th and Carroll Streets. The parking facility at the Metro station site should also be relocated to a more strategic and convenient location to serve both commuters and retail shoppers.

- **Metro & Ride-On Bus Service.** Redevelopment planning must recognize that the primary function of the Metro station site is to provide transit services. Secondary functions accommodating the needs of the local business community or potential new development must be designed in a manner that continues to support current and future transit needs at the station. Even if redesigned to better accommodate new development opportunities, the current station site contains sufficient capacity to meet current and projected transit needs for Metrorail, Metro buses and Ride-On buses. In order to develop and use the Metro site most effectively, vehicular access should be separate from transit access, Metro and Ride-On buses should be required to use on-site boarding and stacking facilities, short-term curbside parking for kiss-and-ride functions should be provided and sufficient parking should be included to serve transit patrons, existing businesses and new development.

- **Metropolitan Branch Trail.** The Metropolitan Branch Trail is a regional bike path proposed to pass through the Takoma Central

District. The trail provides an opportunity for residents in the area to take advantage of this regional transportation and recreation resource and connect with other parts of DC and Montgomery County, Maryland. As the District Division of Transportation (DDOT) continues to develop the preferred alignment of the trail, proposed routes should be considered in light of the revitalization proposals included in the plan.

Transportation Revitalization Strategies

The strategies recommended below respond to transportation issues and opportunities identified for the Takoma Central District:

1. **Under DDOT direction and in partnership with a citizen transportation task force, initiate a comprehensive traffic study for the Takoma Central District and surrounding neighborhoods to identify methods for reducing adverse impacts from commuter/cut-through traffic, reducing congestion and improving parking and pedestrian safety.** A major concern for the area and for communities throughout the city relates to encroachment of commuter-related traffic on neighborhood streets. As a supplement to this plan, it is recommended that a comprehensive, community-wide study be performed to identify how commuter-related encroachment can be reduced on the area's neighborhood streets.

   This study should identify specific roads for accommodating major north-south and east-west through-traffic movements in the community. Guidelines should be established to identify streets eligible for traffic calming improvements. The study should be coordinated with the upgrading of the signal system to determine signal timings that would help facilitate traffic diversion strategies. The study's recommended actions should be consistent with DDOT and WMATA goals and guidelines for Metro station areas throughout the city. Coordination with neighboring communities will also be essential to generate consensus for needed changes to traffic patterns.

   In anticipation of this plan recommendation, DDOT has already funded and scheduled the Takoma Transportation Study in fiscal year 2002. Up to $200,000 has been budgeted for the study, which should be completed in six months. The study will examine existing traffic conditions in the proposed area and make recommendations to improve mobility, parking and traffic safety. The selected contractor will investigate current and future needs regarding vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety and parking issues. Work will involve affected community stakeholders

to address their specific concerns and those identified in this plan. The contractor's recommendations will include short and long term strategies to improve neighborhood parking, address traffic management and infrastructure improvements to reduce congestion, especially during peak hours, provide adequate transit services, improve traffic and pedestrian safety and protect surrounding residential streets from traffic impacts.

Although major recommendations for transportation improvements in the Takoma area will be derived from the DDOT study, revitalization strategies in the Central District should be initiated as outlined in this plan. With much of Takoma's congestion generated by outside commuters passing through the community, efforts to enhance the quality of life for neighborhood residents can and should be advanced.

Pending the more detailed analysis to be conducted with the DDOT study, the Central District's planning team identified a range of additional strategies for addressing specific transportation issues. These strategies are reviewed below. Implementation of these strategies will support and facilitate the continued revitalization of the Takoma Central District even as the more detailed DDOT transportation assessment is completed and acted upon.

2. **Mitigate intersection and corridor congestion on Blair Road and Carroll Street.** Based on DDOT's Classification of Roadways, there are two minor arterial roadways serving the plan area: Blair Road and Carroll Street. These streets have been identified as roadways that are to be maintained to serve significant traffic destined to and from this area and from one part of the city to another.

   The traffic volumes through both of these corridors are high since they serve commuter traffic, Metro station traffic and local traffic in and through the Takoma community. As a result, the intersections at Blair Road and Carroll/Cedar/4th Streets west of the Metro station and Carroll Street/Eastern Avenue/Willow Street at the eastern gateway to the Central District operate at capacity during the peak commuter hours and lines of traffic hinder the progression of vehicles in both the Blair Road and Carroll Street corridors. In addition to heavy commuter traffic, significant delay in the Blair Road corridor can be attributed to its narrow two-lane cross-section, conflicting turns causing delays for through movements, and conflicts with pedestrian traffic headed to and from the Metro station.

   Other intersections outside the Central District that contribute to the inefficiency of traffic through the Takoma community include

those at Piney Branch and Blair Roads and Piney Branch Road and Eastern Avenue.

Several options are proposed to address the Blair Road and Carroll Street corridor congestion, including:

- *Restrict peak period left turns from Blair Road to Piney Branch Road.* Because of the existing narrow cross-section of Blair Road, turns performed at intersections along this corridor add to through delays, especially for vehicles waiting to turn left from Blair Road. An improvement to this situation would be to restrict all left turns from Blair Road to Piney Branch Road during the commuter peak periods.



Commuter traffic along Blair Road

- *Reduce use of Blair Road as a commuter route.* This can be achieved by modifying the signal timing at the intersection of Blair Road and Georgia Avenue that currently encourages left-turns southbound from Georgia Avenue onto Blair Road at the DC/Maryland border. Another measure that can improve Blair Road conditions would be to restrict left turns from Piney Branch Road southbound to Blair Road during the AM peak hour. These diversion elements would be geared to discourage Blair Road as a commuter route, but may create the undesired impact of diverting some traffic to local neighborhood streets.

- *Improve traffic light coordination.* As DDOT continues to upgrade the existing traffic signal system, it is recommended that the existing signal timing patterns along the Blair Road and Carroll Street corridors be reviewed and changed as needed to better coordinate the signals from intersection to intersection and to employ an appropriate signal timing diversion plan.



Intersection of Blair Road/Carroll Street/Cedar Street/4th Street

- *Explore major design changes to the intersection of Blair Road and Carroll/Cedar/4th Streets west of the Metro station.* Such changes should reduce the number of vehicular entry points into the intersection from the current five to four, and provide for better traffic signal efficiency, better pedestrian safety measures and new parking opportunities to support potential retail uses.

  A preliminary design alternative for further study and consideration by DDOT is to modify 4th Street for southbound-only operation for one block between Blair Road and Butternut Street. This change will remove one approach from the intersection while still allowing vehicular circulation along 4th Street. A one-way 4th Street would also allow for approximately 20-25 short-term, angled parking spaces on at least one side of

the roadway to support adjacent retail uses in this key commercial area.

The one-way alternative for 4th Street will require the northbound routes of three existing Metro bus lines to be altered from 4th Street to Blair Road. Southbound buses will continue to use 4th Street. Metro is receptive to such a bus rerouting as long as any necessary reconstruction of the Blair Road/Butternut Street intersection is completed by DDOT to accommodate northbound left turns. Further study may also be required to determine the need for and feasibility of a new traffic signal at this location.

3. **Improve pedestrian safety in the Takoma Central District with a coordinated program of physical improvements.** An inventory of existing pedestrian facilities and observations of peak pedestrian movements through the study area have identified several pedestrian issues in Takoma, including the need for adequate sidewalks, controlled pedestrian activity at the Metro station, better pavement marking and crosswalk delineation at major intersection, and adequate timing for pedestrians to cross major streets. Proposed improvements include:

   - Construct and/or improve sidewalks in key locations:
     - Blair Road between Piney Branch Road and Cedar Street
     - Maple and Willow Streets south of Carroll Street
     - Sandy Spring Road near Aspen Street
     - Aspen Street under the rail line
   - Upgrade crosswalks with special pavement treatments at significant pedestrian crossing locations, including the intersection of Blair Road and Carroll/Cedar/4th Streets west of the Metro station and the intersection of Cedar and Carroll Streets east of the Metro station.
   - Revise signal timing to allow for safe pedestrian crossings at key locations, including the intersection of Blair Road and Carroll/Cedar/4th Streets west of the Metro station and the intersection of Cedar and Carroll Streets east of the station.
   - Develop a safe and appropriate design solution for the area under and adjacent to the Carroll Street Metro underpass to address mid-block pedestrian crossings and Metro patron drop off and pick up in this area.



Drop off and parking along Carroll Street at the Metro station

4. **Serve transit needs first and accommodate all Metro and Ride-On services on the Takoma Metro station site.** Planning for the Metro station site must first accommodate the site's current and future transit functions, with the needs of the local business community and potential new development as a secondary



Transit services at the Takoma station include Metrorail and Metro and Ride-On buses

consideration. In order to redevelop the Metro site effectively to serve confirmed transit needs, as well as achieve development goals and address community concerns, the following guidelines are recommended for the Metro site:

- Separate vehicular access from bus access.
- Provide sufficient bus bays and maneuvering space for current and projected Metro/Ride-On buses to board and stack on-site.
- Provide curbside areas for Kiss & Ride and Taxi functions, along with short-term retail parking.
- Provide sufficient and better-located on-site parking to accommodate both Metro patrons and retail customers.

To comply with these guidelines and accommodate the confirmed needs of each service provider, specific design solutions for the Metro station site are proposed and reviewed in the plan's Urban Design section that follows.

As the approval and redevelopment process for the Metro site evolves, it is important that interagency coordination is maintained between WMATA, Ride-On and DDOT, and is facilitated with a community committee to assist in the development approval process and the implementation of Metro site development guidelines.

It is also important for redevelopment of the Metro site to provide flexibility for the incorporation of the Metropolitan Branch Trail because of the trail's importance in providing an alternate means of connectivity to the Metro station. An example of such accommodation at a Metro station can be seen at the New York Avenue station currently under development.

5. **Improve parking for neighborhood residents.** Existing parking issues related to the Takoma area include institutional peak hour usage, parking enforcement and shared parking opportunities. As a Metro station community, residential permit parking has been instituted to prevent commuter parking in residential neighborhoods. It is important to stress rigorous enforcement as a mechanism to help protect parking for residents in the Takoma community. The effect of parking infringement is also related to institutional uses such as Strayer University located in the eastern section of the plan area along Willow and Laurel Streets. Parking restrictions should be extended later in the evening to protect residences in these areas from parking associated with these uses.



4th Street retail parking

6. **Improve parking for local retail businesses.** Approximately 20-25 additional parking spaces could be provided along 4th Street as part of the one-way southbound option previously identified. This parking,