



## Maryland Avenue SW Plan

### Executive Summary of Plan Revisions and Public Comments

On December 16, 2011, the Maryland Avenue SW Plan (“the Plan”) was released for a comment for a thirty (30) day public comment period that ended on February 3, 2012. Notice of the release of the draft plan of the public comment period was published in the District of Columbia Register on December 16, 2011. During the public comment period, written comments on the draft plan could be submitted to the Office of Planning (OP). In addition, a mayoral public hearing was held on February 1, 2012 to receive oral testimony on the draft plan. As part of the release of the draft plan, OP briefed ANC 6D on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

The study area is located in Ward 6, and is bounded by 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, SW, along the Maryland Avenue SW corridor. The purpose of the Plan is to assess the feasibility of decking and establishing Maryland Avenue SW, and creating a mixed-use development framework that guides land conveyed from federal to private use. It provides recommendations on land use, zoning, urban design, transit and infrastructure. The Plan conveys a shared vision for the study area based on goals that were developed through a stakeholder and community-based planning process. It also provides residents, land owners, developers, agencies and railroad and transit providers with a framework to guide future revitalization in the study area.

#### Overview of Common Themes from Public Comments:

OP received oral and written testimony from 16 different individuals and organizations, which resulted in a total of 59 specific comments. Many of the comments were targeted at future implementation steps, and on public realm and transit issues. Half of the testimonials included a note of support for OP’s planning process and plan recommendations. Below is an overview of the most common themes from public comments made on the draft plan, as well as OP’s responses. The full list of public comments received and how OP responded is included in the Public Comment Digest (included in the legislative package).

1. Need for comprehensive planning in the Southeast and Southwest quadrants related to ongoing and future rail planning and right-of-way issues. If looked at in a broader view, beyond the study area and scope of the Maryland Avenue SW Plan, there are different advantages associated with different options identified in the draft plan.
  - a. OP Response: The plan was initiated to establish a land use and transportation framework for Maryland Avenue, as a way to guide revitalization along the Avenue as land shifts from federal to private use. OP identified options for infrastructure improvements which will be available as considerations as additional planning and design are undertaken. The District, through other ongoing studies, will develop a comprehensive picture of the opportunities and impacts associated with rail planning along the broader rail corridor. OP also commits to participating in future discussions with CSX regarding National Gateway improvements.

In the revised plan, OP identified the future need for future coordinated rail planning efforts along the rail corridor.

2. Focus on the disappointing state of the underpasses and pedestrian walkways south of the study area, preventing residents from walking and biking through the study area safely.
  - a. OP Response: In the public realm section of the synthesis chapter, OP identifies pedestrian issues within the Maryland Avenue study area. NCPC is addressing connectivity issues in the broader Southwest Ecodistrict Initiative study area, and OP will share this comment. NCPC is anticipating that a draft plan for the Southwest Ecodistrict will be available for public review in summer 2012. After plan completion, OP will prepare a memo summarizing key next steps like underpass improvements, public realm enhancements and how the community can be involved.

In the revised plan, OP identified existing conditions south of the study area and near term steps for studying pedestrian improvements.

3. There are strengths and weaknesses associated with the topography of Reservation 113, and as Maryland Avenue declines in elevation between 9<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW.
  - a. OP Response: In order to deck Maryland Avenue, Reservation 113 will need to be terraced from the high point at the southwest corner to the low point at the northeast corner. OP's scope did not include a level of design detail and topography will change through further analysis; however there are examples of parks that use a shift in topography as an asset. The design of Reservation 113 will be determined by a future planning process, with the objective for the park to be inviting and well-connected, with dynamic views to the Capitol.

In the revised plan, OP described the step down potential of topography and building height along Maryland Avenue and the potential to maximize a variety of views to the Capitol through roof terraces, public realm terracing, and commuter rail design.

4. Opportunities and issues associated with inter-operability and electrification of the proposed four-track system through the multi-modal L'Enfant Station. *Note: Amtrak and CSX have differing perspectives.*
  - a. OP Response: OP understands that electrification is a genuine concern of CSX. The purpose of the plan is to identify items that need to be considered during future planning stages of Maryland Avenue. Electrification will not be a requirement, but the impact of electrification will help make strategic decisions about the four-track system. In the recommendations chapter, OP identifies the potentially hindering impact that electrification would have on the interoperability of the four-track system that serves multiple railway providers like CSX, VRE and MARC.

In the revised plan, OP stated the need to work with CSX, Amtrak, MARC and VRE to determine a configuration that best accommodates operational and safety issues.

5. Intermodal connectivity should address bicycle facilities, and the preferred cross section should include a larger bicycle path.
  - a. OP Response: In the transit section, the plan recommends generous bicycle facilities, such as bicycle share locations, water fountains, compressed air and secure parking. The objective of the preferred section for Maryland Avenue, developed through stakeholder and public input, is to maximize the amount of green space and reduce the width of the vehicular right of way for modest vehicular circulation. In the public realm section of the recommendations chapter, Maryland Avenue is described as "a place where recreation, relaxation, commerce, urban ecology and transportation coexist simultaneously". Bicycle lanes could be accommodated

between the alley of trees as a form of recreation, however this will be determined by a future design process.

6. The capacity for vehicular circulation (and on-street parking) on the new avenue should be informed by traffic studies. The reference to "modest" vehicular circulation is premature and subjective.
  - a. OP Response: The purpose of the plan is to identify aspirations and guidelines at a planning level, with additional information about next steps and studies needed to realize the vision. The study area is served by VRE, Metrorail, and Metro Bus. It also contains bike facilities like Bikeshare. In the future, there will be even more alternatives to the vehicle –potentially Streetcar, MARC, Amtrak and the Circulator. From an aspirational planning perspective, at this time, it is sufficient to recommend an option that accommodates modest vehicular circulation.
7. The Comprehensive Plan provides for incentives for both mixed-use objectives and infrastructure improvements, but incentives for infrastructure are not included in the plan.
  - a. OP Response: The Comprehensive Plan gives guidance to "use innovative zoning, as appropriate, to link development potential to identified infrastructure improvements". As part of OP's funding toolkit analysis, we considered the use of a density bonus for the four GSA conveyance sites to generate private funds for infrastructure improvements. We found this tool inappropriate for the four GSA conveyance sites. Relatively few means of augmenting the market to support residential uses exist, whereas there are numerous strategies to fund infrastructure enhancements. Splitting the bonus between residential subsidy and infrastructure would dilute the incentive effect for either purpose.

### Key Plan Revisions:

OP responded to all 59 comments received during the public comment period and, as a result, made 29 modifications to the draft plan. The modifications have been captured in the Public Comment Digest (included in the legislative package). OP revised the draft plan in all four chapters: Background, Synthesis, Recommendations, and Building Momentum. Below is a summary of major revisions to the Plan in response to public comments and agency review:

1. The entire document was reviewed for grammatical errors and proof reading corrections were made to text and graphics.
2. An executive summary was added to the table of contents.
3. Specific language was added to the background chapter in the Maryland Avenue Study Area Diagram to explain the study area boundary and relationship to areas of impact like the Southwest Rectangle, adjacent streets, and the rail corridor.
4. National Mall revitalization was added to the background chapter in the Context Diagram and in the narrative text, as an important piece of context.
5. Additional information about National Gateway and the Long Bridge Study was added to the background chapter to better illustrate how future planning initiatives are connected to Maryland Avenue SW planning.
6. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan -Future Land Use Map (showing "Production, Distribution, and Repair" and "High Density Commercial" along the Maryland Avenue right-of-way) was added to the background chapter. A statement about how the future land use map will need to be modified to support a mixed-use neighborhood was also added.
7. Information was added to the Property Ownership Diagram in the background chapter with more information about specific uses within each area.
8. An error was corrected in the synthesis chapter, adjusting the number of VRE riders using L'Enfant



Station to 40% of 19,000.

9. A clarification was added to the the land use section of the synthesis chapter explaining that 400-500 residential units under current zoning or 600 residential units under higher density zoning (ZRR) can only be met if the sites are developed exclusively as residential.
10. Text was added to the connections section of the synthesis chapter stating that alternatives must be analyzed in the context of broader rail and transit planning issues to identify the best option, during future planning and design.
11. Residents in the nearby SW Waterfront neighborhood identified numerous obstacles and safety issues that inhibit south/north pedestrian access to the study area. These underpasses and streets were added to the public realm section of the synthesis chapter.
12. The five following bulleted recommendations were modified in the recommendations chapter:
  - a. Respect the historic 160' wide L'Enfant vista and right-of-way for Maryland Avenue and maximize views to the Capitol.
  - b. Reinforce the concept of a connected series of signature open spaces as recommended in the Monumental Core Framework Plan and maximize the amount of open green space at Reservation 113.
  - c. A 14' minimum clear floor to ceiling height shall be encouraged for ground floor retail uses. This is subject to the type of desired retail and shall be targeted to selected retail nodes identified on page 3-17.
  - d. Enhance multimodal transit connectivity by linking pedestrians to a reconstructed intermodal L'Enfant commuter rail station that integrates VRE, Metrorail, and Metro Bus services, and envisions accommodating MARC, Amtrak, commuter/tour/inter-city buses and the Streetcar system in the future as benefits to the facility.
  - e. Incorporate ground floor retail at key commercial nodes identified on page 3-17, including the 10th Street intersection, Reservation 113 and L'Enfant Station, to help activate the Avenue and support the community.
13. A caption was added to the Approximate Elevations Diagram in the recommendations chapter to explain how the shifting topography should offer a continuously rewarding view of the Capitol for pedestrians moving west to east across Reservation 113, and a dramatic view of the Capitol for rail commuters as they exit under the decked Avenue. Another statement explained the potential for roof limits to step down in height with the elevation of the Avenue, affording the opportunity for programmable roof terraces with views to the Capitol.
14. The Retail Node Diagram was modified in the land use section of the recommendations chapter to show high density mixed-use residential along Maryland Avenue, identified in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2010 and recommended in the plan. The title of the diagram was changed to Future Land Use along Maryland Avenue SW.
15. A caption was added to the 7th Street SW Section between Maryland Avenue SW and D Street SW in the recommendations chapter explaining how additional study should address the impact of the expanded commuter rail station on adjacent streets, like Virginia Avenue, and operational and safety issues associated with platform configurations.
16. The near term focus section in the building momentum chapter was revised to specifically highlight other pedestrian improvements beyond the study area and the need to further analyze interim enhancements.
17. In the building momentum chapter, under step 1, OP committed to updating the Comprehensive Plan future land use map, shown as "Production, Distribution, and Repair" and "High Density Commercial" along Maryland Avenue, during the next amendment cycle so that it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2010.
18. In the building momentum chapter, under step 1, OP stated the need for a preliminary analysis of existing ownership conditions along the 160' right-of-way.

19. Under step 2, in the building momentum chapter, OP stated the need to address the impact of the expanded multimodal station on adjacent streets and safety issues associated with the four-track system. OP also included the need for the District to communicate recommendations identified in the plan through its future roles in Union Station, Long Bridge and National Gateway planning.
20. Under step 3, in the building momentum chapter, OP added the need to study views to the Capitol, and building height and design when considering the profile of the Avenue and shifting topography. OP also identified the need to consider the impact of rail noise in a mixed-use neighborhood.
21. The last page of the plan was modified to include future images of Maryland Avenue and multi-modal improvements. It was also reorganized to better highlight the vision of the plan and impact of new infrastructure, as well as the need to develop a brand for the study area that emphasizes healthy living.
22. A clarification was added to the introduction of the last chapter to help decipher between the content in the recommendations chapter and building momentum chapter. Chapter 3 contains recommendations for Maryland Avenue and Chapter 4 contains challenges to overcome, funding opportunities and key implementation steps as plans progress.