



**Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy
Executive Summary of Revisions
April 21, 2016**

The purpose of this memo is to provide a general summary of the comments received during the public comment period and the revisions to the Draft Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy (“Draft Strategy”) as a result of this input and other information. The DC Office of Planning (“OP”) released the Draft Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy on November 12, 2015 for public comment. The Draft Strategy was posted for viewing and download on the project webpage (planning.dc.gov/vanness). The public comment period was announced in a posting to community listservs, an email to previous participants in the planning process, an in-person announcement at the November 17th ANC 3F meeting, and an announcement on the project webpage. The public comment period concluded on December 14th 2015.

Background on Process

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy was developed through a community-based strategic planning process that built on several preceding studies from the Office of Planning and community led visioning work by ANC 3F. Robust community engagement was conducted at every stage in the process including a public workshop on January 31, 2015, an open house on April 28th 2015, focus groups, community office hours, online engagement opportunities, and extensive ANC coordination. An Advisory Committee comprised of ANC Commissioners, business owners, commercial property owners, civic organization members, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, and University of the District of Columbia representatives provided detailed feedback and guidance on a regular basis throughout the entire process as a group and individually. Specifically, the Advisory Committee provided guidance on the project’s goals and objectives, public meetings, outreach, interpretation of community feedback, and refinement of goals and recommendations. The Advisory Committee’s feedback on goals and recommendations was incorporated into the Draft Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy released for public comment. See pages 6 and 7 of the Action Strategy for additional information on the process used to develop the Action Strategy.

Comment and Revision Summary

Ten individuals and/or organizations submitted written comments during the public comment period. All of these parties expressed general support for the Draft Strategy. In addition to written submissions, many stakeholders informally expressed their support at ANC 3F meetings, Van Ness Main Street meetings, and via phone calls to the DC Office of Planning. Additionally, ANC 3F and the Van Ness Main Street passed unanimous resolutions in November 2015 commending both the Draft Strategy and the OP-led process and endorsed the draft recommendations. The ANC 3F resolution states that the Action Strategy captures the



community's vision, requests that the Office of Planning widely disseminate the document, and encourages the Office of Planning to work with other District Agencies to implement its recommendations.

The following is a summary of comments and revisions.

Corrections/Entire Document

- Throughout the document, “Van Ness Main Streets” has been changed to “Van Ness Main Street” to reflect the organization’s name change associated with its current official designation as a DC Main Street.
- Typographic, punctuation, grammatical and formatting errors were corrected throughout the document.

Introduction, Process, Overview and Context

- Text on Page 7 was also updated to refer to the Van Ness Commercial District Profile which contains data and technical analysis for the Draft Strategy as “Appendix A.” This addition is designed to guide readers to supporting information that answers some common questions.
- Text on Page 7 was updated to include a new reference to “Appendix B: Comprehensive Plan Analysis and Background.” An additional sentence was added to explain how the Draft Action Strategy can inform the next Update to the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Space

- Some commenters expressed support for the streetscape concept that expands the planted area, increases café seating, and locates the western sidewalk zones along with building face to increase retail options.
 - Note that Public Space Recommendations 4,5 and Retail recommendations 2, 3, and 5 support the comments received.

Retail

- OP received comments expressing concern for potential impacts of the auto- oriented retail along the northwest section of the corridor in the Commercial District. The following revisions were made to acknowledge these comments.
 - Text has been added to Page 20 noting that existing auto oriented retail are expected to transition over time to pedestrian oriented retail, based on the opportunity for developers to take fully advantage of development permitted under existing zoning, and be in accordance with other recommendations listed within the strategy.
 - The diagram on Page 21 has been adjusted to specifically identify an auto oriented retail/ pedestrian oriented retail transition area.
 - Retail Recommendation 5 on Page 23 has been clarified to state that in the future auto-oriented uses on the northwest transition zone are expected to transition to

pedestrian orientation use when redeveloped as Action Strategy public space recommendations and Comprehensive Plan policies are implemented.

- Commenter support for Van Ness becoming a cultural destination that leverages and better connects to existing institutions/assets including UDC, the Levine School of Music, The Hillwood Museum, and The International Chancery Center.
 - Public Space Recommendation 8 supports wayfinding to showcase existing cultural institutions. Retail Recommendations 1 and 10 support identity-building and marketing around community anchors and cultural activities.
- Many commenters enthusiastically supported the Draft Strategy's Retail Recommendation 10 which calls for periodic retail, cultural, and arts events. Specifically, there is interest in supporting and expanding the existing farmers market.
 - Revision: Additional wording add encouraging UDC to keep the Farmers Market on Connecticut.
- One commenter suggested incorporation of kiosk-type retail along the corridor.
 - This concept was considered but not incorporated as a strategy. The District does not have strong precedents for this model in neighborhood-scale commercial revitalization. The Draft Strategy Retail Recommendations 1, 3, and 5 all support bringing retail into public space and creating episodic retail opportunities through events, markets, etc. The Draft Strategy leaves flexibility for the Van Ness Main Street to figure out the best implementation strategies for achieving an active and lively retail experience.
- Several comments noted desire for a good, diverse retail mix and more independent retailers. Suggestions were given as to types of retailers desired. A commenter raised concerns about the operations/management of the grocery store and drug store anchors.
 - Retail Recommendations 1 and 7 supports these comments.

Sustainability

- General supportive comments. No revisions.

Commercial Opportunities

- A commenter expressed a desire for more commercial space along Connecticut Avenue, especially along UDC property.
 - Commercial Opportunity Recommendation 5 and text on page 28 foster the repositioning of Building 52 (UDC Law School) to create contemporary ground floor commercial space.
- A commenter expressed desire to see redevelopment at Walgreens site.
 - The Opportunity Map on Page 16 labels the former Walgreens Site as an opportunity to reposition retail. Additionally, Commercial Opportunity

Recommendation 4 supports the redevelopment of low-scale buildings and the accommodation of contemporary retail space.

Implementation

- Text on Page 29 was updated to include the latest information regarding Metro closure at the West Plaza.

Epilogue

- Text has been updated to provide information on how the Comprehensive Plan relates to the Action Strategy.

Acknowledgements

- A commenter requested acknowledgement that ANC 3F Commissioner Perry, a member of the Advisory Committee, passed away during the planning process.
 - The Acknowledgments page on the back cover has been modified to include a memorial footnote honoring the late Commissioner Perry. The note reads, “On behalf of the Project Team and the community, we would like to thank former ANC Commissioner Karen Perry who passed away before the Action Strategy was finished. Commissioner Perry was a longtime leader and vocal advocate for the Van Ness Community.”

Outside of Scope

- It is important to note that several comments received were outside of the Draft Strategy’s stated scope. Those comments included concerns related to transportation and parking analysis (not a topic area for this Draft Strategy), and retail outside of the study area boundaries.

