



New Hampshire Avenue Corridor Concept Plan



New Hampshire Avenue Corridor Concept Plan



City of Takoma Park Mayor and Council

City of Takoma Park Staff

Barbara Matthews, City Manager
Sara Daines, Director of Housing and Community Development
Ilona Blanchard, Community Development Coordinator
David Suls, Associate Planner
Paul Grenier, Planning Staff
Martin Salmon, Planning Staff

Maryland National Capital Planning Commission

John Marcolin, Montgomery County M-NCPPC
Aldea Douglas, Prince George's County M-NCPPC

Consultant: TND Planning Group

Stuart Sirota, Project Manager
in collaboration with:
Randall Gross, Development Economics
Barry Mahaffey, Rettew Associates
Shaun Barattia, Rettew Associates
John Moynahan, Urban Design and Planning
Kevin Klinkenberg, 180 Degree Design Studio
Brian Hendrickson, 180 Degree Design Studio
Dan Jarrell, 180 Degree Design Studio
Rick Hall, Hall Planning and Engineering, Inc.
Kathy Poole, Poole Design

Table of Contents

	Page
1. Background	
1.1 Introduction	6
1.2 Historic context	8
1.3 Planning process and approach	10
2. Analysis	
2.1 Planning areas	14
2.2 Land use and zoning	18
2.3 Transportation network	19
2.4 Business conditions and market opportunities	22
2.5 Natural environment and open space	27
2.6 Precedents	29
3. Plan recommendations	
3.1 Corridor-wide recommendations	35
3.2 Planning-area specific recommendations	45
4. Implementation	64
4.1 Strategy for redevelopment	64
4.2 Priorities and phasing	66



1. Background

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

The City of Takoma Park initiated this plan in recognition of the need and potential for redeveloping the New Hampshire Avenue Corridor. New Hampshire Avenue (Maryland Route 650) is a major roadway linking the District of Columbia to Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and points beyond in Maryland. New Hampshire Avenue lies directly adjacent to much of Takoma Park's eastern edge. Yet travelers unfamiliar with the area easily drive through without realizing that Takoma Park exists or seeing what it has to offer. What they do see, however, is an area that has been in decline for some time and is widely viewed as unappealing and sometimes unsafe. Similarly, many area residents do not feel the corridor is an asset to the community in its current state and generally avoid patronizing the commercial

establishments along the corridor despite their proximity.

In 2000, the Takoma Park Master Plan identified the two commercial areas along the corridor as priorities for pedestrian-oriented, neighborhood serving redevelopment. These commercial areas are referred to as the Ethan Allen Gateway, around the intersection of Ethan Allen Avenue/East-West Highway (Maryland Route 410) and New Hampshire Avenue, and the Maryland Gateway, which extends from the District of Columbia line at Eastern Avenue north to just south of Poplar Avenue/Ray Road along New Hampshire Avenue. Developing a shared vision for improving the corridor and a conceptual framework for implementing that vision was the next step to improving the corridor

after the City master plan identified the need.

In August 2007, the City, citizens, property owners, and businesses of Takoma Park and neighboring jurisdictions, along with the town planning firm of TND Planning Group, gathered to create a plan for the redevelopment of the corridor. This document presents the recommendations that form the basis for the concept plan.



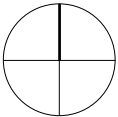
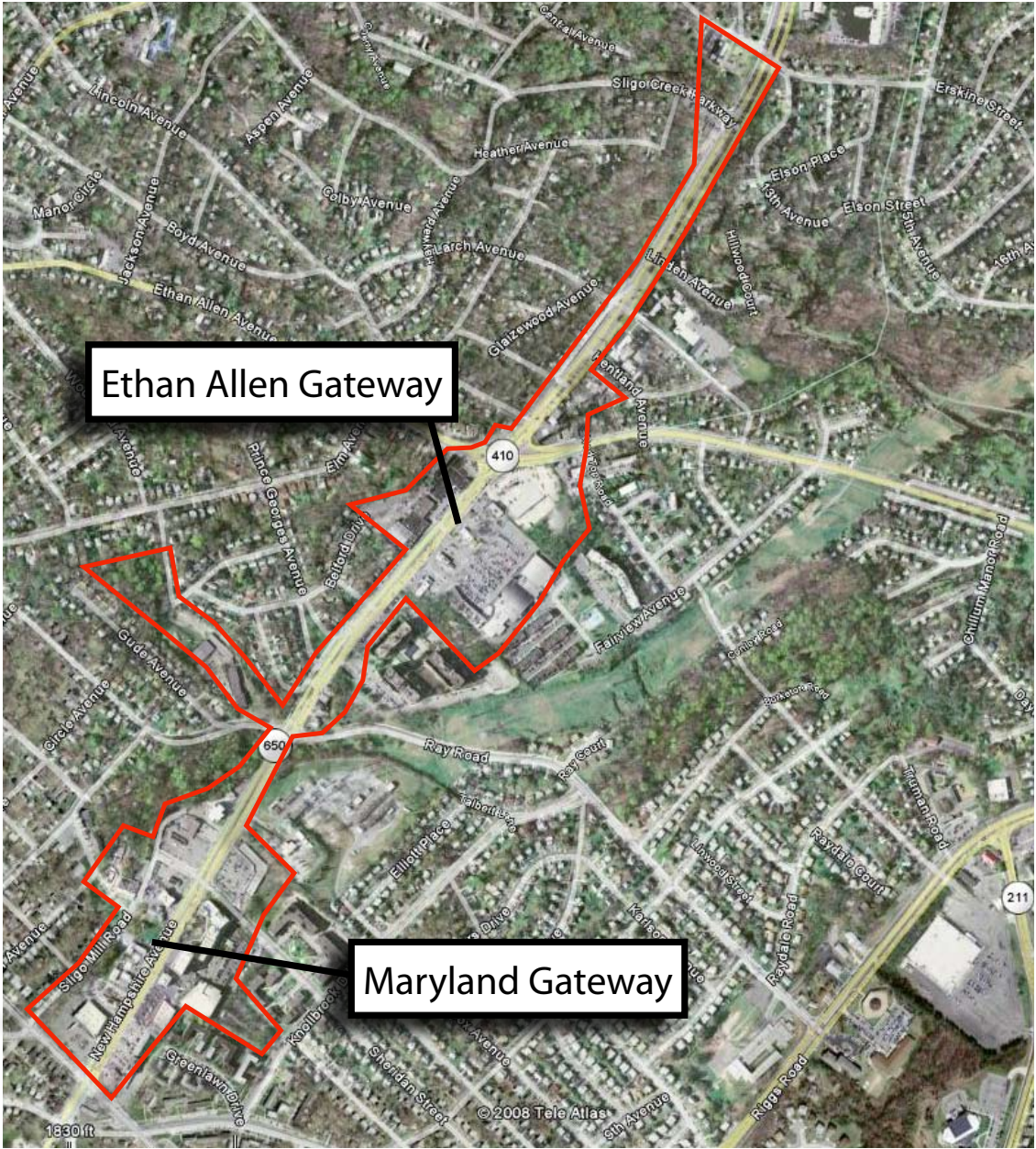
Ethan Allen Gateway: view north on New Hampshire Avenue from east sidewalk.



Maryland Gateway: view northeast from Eastern Avenue towards New Hampshire Avenue.

This aerial photograph shows the corridor outlined in red. It is approximately 1.25 miles long, extending from the District of Columbia line at Eastern Avenue, north to the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway.

The corridor includes the commercial properties in the two gateway areas, the New Hampshire Avenue right-of-way, as well as a number of other parcels that have the potential to be improved.



1. Background

1.2 Historic context

Takoma Park, founded in 1883, was the first “railroad suburb” of Washington, DC. During its early years, it was an enclave of Victorian and bungalow homes “out in the country,” considerably removed from the city itself. By the end of World War II, development within the District of Columbia had encroached to the southern and western edges of Takoma Park. However the areas to the north and east were still largely rural.

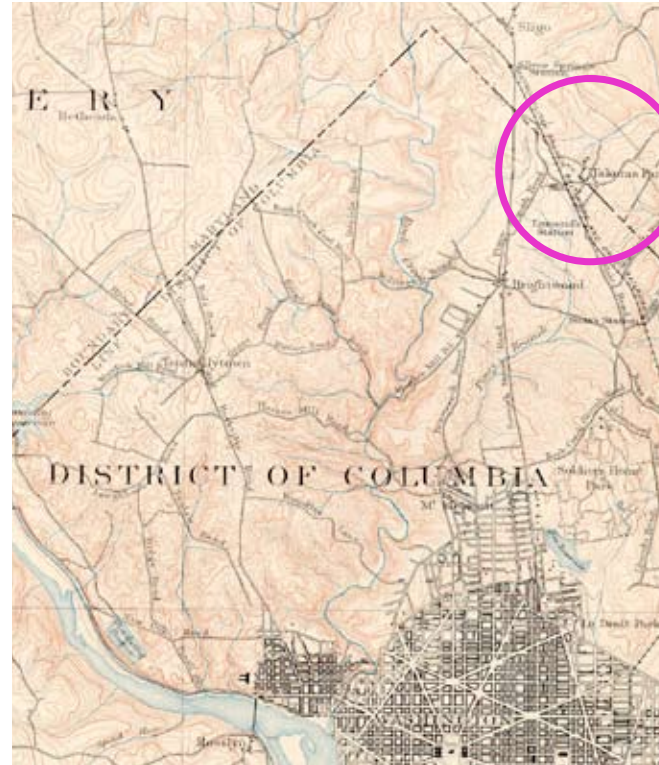
New Hampshire Avenue had been extended north from the District into

Prince George’s County, but remained a two-lane country road, effectively forming the eastern edge of Takoma Park. Immediately east of New Hampshire Avenue lay several miles of rolling countryside all the way to Hyattsville and College Park, similar railroad suburbs along another rail corridor emanating from Washington.

The rural areas between these developed rail corridors, and areas beyond, rapidly began to develop soon after the end of WWII, as an unprecedented demand for housing from returning GI’s, coupled with



Takoma Park was an original “transit oriented development.”



In the 1890s, Takoma Park was a tiny enclave well beyond the edge of Washington, accessible primarily by train.

a new form of automobile-centric suburbanization took hold in the Washington, DC region and the U.S. Vast tracts of mass-produced housing were developed to meet the burgeoning demand. With this also came a new form of arterial roadway, designed to move large volumes of cars quickly and efficiently, as well as shopping centers designed for the convenience of automobiles. In the following decades, New Hampshire Avenue was repeatedly

upgraded and widened to keep up with ever-increasing traffic volumes, as it evolved into a primary commuter corridor between booming “bedroom” communities in Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties and the downtown employment centers of Washington, DC.

Most of the development that occurred along this new suburban corridor reflected the automobile-oriented

development pattern in the postwar era: functional and utilitarian, yet lacking the pedestrian-friendly scale or small town character that typified older neighborhoods like Takoma Park. The corridor remained this way during much of the last forty years.

Prior to 1997, the entire study area was in Prince George’s County, as the City was split between two counties. On July 1, 1997, a unification process resulted in the Montgomery County boundary moving to include all of Takoma Park. As part of this process, an unincorporated portion of Prince George’s County was annexed into the City.

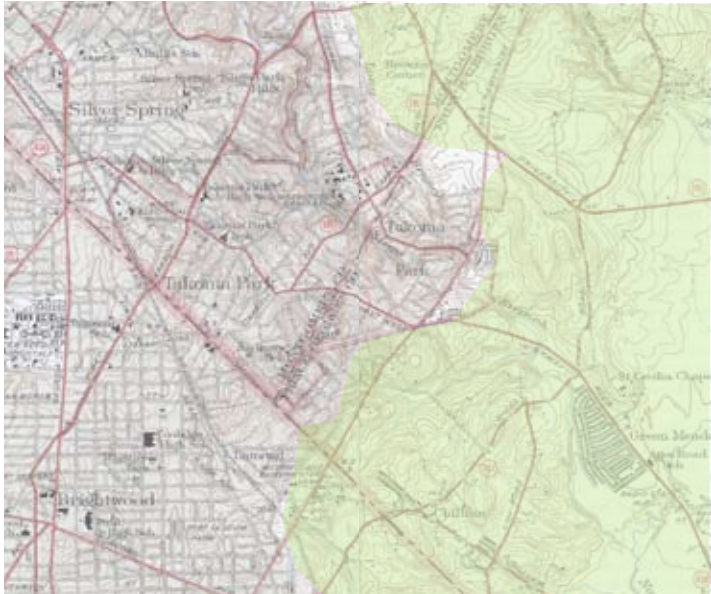
During the past decade, there has been an influx in international residents that has resulted in a marked change in the corridor. These new residents are more apt to walk and use public transit than their predecessors and there are more people out on the street. Small businesses and shops along the corridor largely cater to the new arrivals. This combination of increased pedestrian activity and international flair has given the corridor a somewhat edgy character, but also created conflicts between pedestrians and fast moving through-traffic on New Hampshire Avenue.

This aerial view of the corridor in 1951 shows the rapid pace of suburban development which occurred in the early post-war period.

The boundary line shown between Montgomery County and Prince George’s County was created in 1997 when the western side of the Maryland Gateway was incorporated into Takoma Park.



By 1948, Takoma Park had become contiguous with Washington, but the areas east of New Hampshire Avenue were still largely rural and undeveloped.



Today, the New Hampshire Avenue corridor in Maryland is typified by large volumes of relatively fast moving through-traffic, abutted by automobile-oriented land uses and poorly defined open space.



1. Background

1.3 Planning process and approach

In order for the New Hampshire Avenue corridor to realize its full potential, a dynamic planning process was initiated. This planning process was developed expressly for revitalizing communities and engaging the widest range of stakeholders possible.

At the heart of this process was a week-long design charrette. A charrette is a planning event lasting multiple days that brings together a team of community design consultants, public officials, residents, and other stakeholders who work together in a collaborative environment to devise a feasible plan and implementation framework.

The New Hampshire Avenue corridor charrette team was comprised of professionals who regularly conduct and participate in charrettes with the objective to revitalize a community or neighborhood and make it more pedestrian friendly. The expertise among team members included a wide array of disciplines including urban design and planning, architecture, illustration, economic and market analysis, traffic engineering, and environmental and landscape design. Expertise in all of these disciplines was necessary to holistically understand the corridor and to develop comprehensive solutions.

In the months leading up to the charrette, the consultant team undertook a thorough discovery and analysis of existing conditions and pertinent issues. Interviews with business and property owners in the corridor were conducted to gain information on business operation, market, and real estate conditions, and to begin understanding market opportunities and potential within the corridor.

In advance of the charrette, the City of Takoma Park engaged the public with an extensive outreach program through mailings, newsletters, the City web site, and direct contact with community leaders. In addition, the City coordinated closely with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

The charrette to develop the New Hampshire Avenue corridor concept plan was held at Takoma Park Community Center, August 14-20, 2007. Over 150 residents, business and property owners, local and state officials, and other stakeholders participated.

The charrette began with the consultant team touring the corridor with City staff to observe and document physical and social conditions, and to discuss



Residents drew ideas and provided suggestions during the visioning session on the opening night of the charrette.

site-specific issues. This was followed by a series of discussions back at the charrette studio to compare observations and begin formulating ideas.

Later that evening on Day 1, the public portion of the charrette began with a presentation about the corridor, the objectives of the project, the

background analysis performed to date, design principals, and the charrette process. After the presentation, a question and answer session was held, followed immediately by a "visioning session" with attendees. For this, residents gathered around tables with aerial maps and markers and were asked to identify issues and share ideas about the corridor. Maps were provided

that showed the entire corridor from the District line to Sligo Creek Park, as well as maps that focused in on the Ethan Allen and Maryland Gateways. This gave participants the opportunity to provide input at the location(s) and/or scale that they felt most comfortable.

Beginning the next morning and continuing over several days, the team summarized and synthesized the results of the input that was received from participants. This initial input was key to devising the first round of design concepts.

Throughout the charrette, there was virtually continuous opportunity for community and stakeholder input and dialogue. On the 2nd and 4th days of the charrette, the public was invited back for “pin up” presentations. These sessions were designed to provide the public with the latest work by the team and to solicit comments on it. This resulted in a series of feedback loops, which allowed the team to interactively and iteratively work towards development of a preferred alternative in real time.

In addition to the pin-up sessions, the charrette studio was open to the public throughout the day and into the evening. Residents and business owners were encouraged to drop by the charrette studio, see the team's

work in progress, and speak to the team members informally. City staff actively participated in the charrette and provided a great deal of insight and perspective throughout the charrette.

Besides engaging the public at large, six stakeholder focus meetings were also held during the first several days of the charrette. This provided the team with an opportunity to meet directly with groups such as civic associations, business owners, transportation officials, and others to discuss and sometimes even resolve issues as they unfolded during the charrette.

The predominant themes expressed during the charrette with virtual unanimity by participants included the need for significant change in the corridor, as well as strong support for transforming it into a vibrant, “walkable” and sustainable community asset. In this context, the term “walkable” refers to pedestrian, bike, and transit friendly conditions that make them a desirable and practical mode of transportation, and not just for exercise or recreation. Participants also expressed strong support for improving the aesthetic quality of the corridor, improving the overall quality of businesses, and increasing both the actual and perceived level of security throughout the corridor.



The charrette team worked long hours over a seven consecutive day period in the studio at City Hall.



2. Analysis

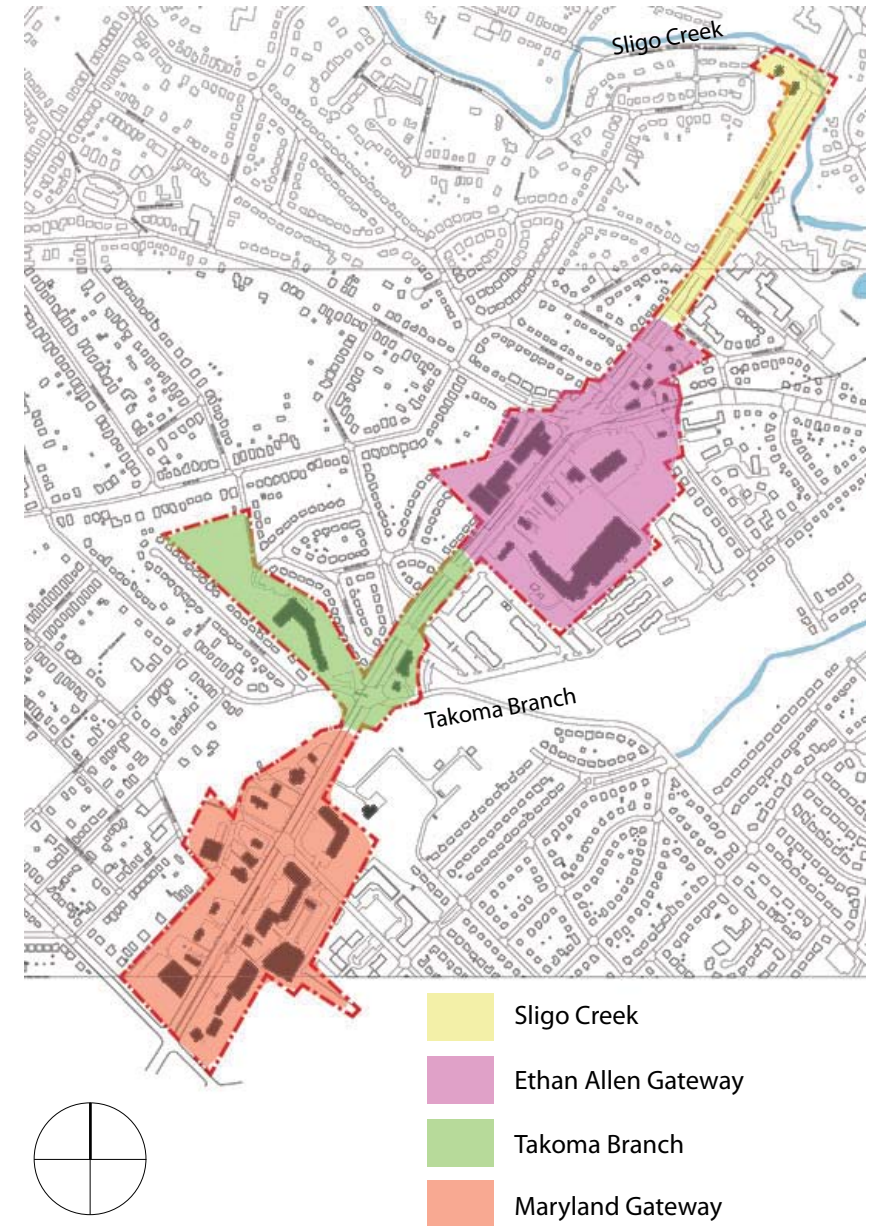
2. Analysis

2.1 Planning areas

The 1.25 mile long corridor that comprised the plan area was divided into four planning areas. The primary focus of the plan included the two existing commercial areas identified for redevelopment in the Takoma Park Master Plan. These include the Ethan Allen Gateway and Maryland Gateway as described in the previous section. Two secondary focus areas, representing the remaining portions of the corridor, were labelled Sligo Creek and Takoma Branch, in recognition of the important natural features contained in them.

In studying the area and developing recommendations, the team did not adhere strictly to the boundaries on the corridor map. While it was used as a general guide, it was also important to examine the area holistically.

Each of the planning areas are described in greater detail on the following pages of this section.



Ethan Allen Gateway

The Ethan Allen Gateway consists of commercial properties developed between the 1950's and 1980's. The most prominent feature within the gateway is the retail center with no formal name, commonly known as Bed and Carpet. This property has been poorly maintained for years and is occupied mostly by small business owners who cater to the various international ethnic groups in the area, and in some cases, the wider region. This center is widely viewed by Takoma Park residents as a detriment because of its poor condition, lack of businesses that appeal to them, and ongoing problems with garbage dumping in the rear and associated nuisances.

The largest commercial presence in the area is the Takoma Center retail center which contains just

over 100,000 square feet of floor area on 9.7 acres, and anchored by a Shoppers Food Warehouse. This property is the newest and best maintained commercial property in the Ethan Allen Gateway. It also has several smaller buildings with fast food establishments, a bank, and small retail stores.

The other properties in this area consist of a U-Haul rental facility at a highly visible intersection location and other small businesses including a photo shop, Ethiopian grocery, several gas stations, and a roofing contractor. Many businesses are supported by customers that live in area high-rise apartments, and residents interested in international foods and dining.



Aerial view



Bed and Carpet retail center.



View looking north on New Hampshire Avenue towards MD 410 Intersection.



View from the sidewalk on New Hampshire Avenue looking towards the Shoppers.

2. Analysis

Maryland Gateway

The Maryland Gateway consists of a collection of retail, office, and light industrial properties, which like the Ethan Allen Gateway, were developed primarily between the 1950's and 1980's. Included in this area is a seven story office building anchored by branch office of the Bank of America. It includes the only structured parking deck in the corridor, which has deteriorated with age. The building itself contains several hundred small businesses, mostly more international in character.

There are several smaller office buildings on the corridor in deteriorated condition, although there are currently efforts underway by the owners to rehabilitate and find new tenants.

A small class-A office building was recently built on a vacant lot block west of the corridor and is now fully leased.

Existing retail properties in the area include a strip center just north of the Bank of America center, a varied collection of aging free standing retail buildings, one with office space on a second floor, several restaurants, and two adjacent gas station franchises owned by the same regional gasoline distributor.

There are also many light industrial, contracting, and commercial businesses in the area that have unsightly storage units on their properties. This is inconsistent with the goals of the master plan and the zoning ordinance.



Aerial view



View from Eastern Avenue looking north towards New Hampshire Avenue.



Views of commercial properties along west side of New Hampshire Avenue.

Sligo Creek

This northern section of the corridor is characterized primarily by its lush wooded areas that provide a transition between the Ethan Allen Gateway and the Takoma Langley Crossroads area to the north.

Several small commercial properties sits at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway along with a vacant lot.

Sligo Creek itself crosses under New Hampshire Avenue, and Sligo Creek Park along with a well used hiker-biker trail, form the northern boundary of the plan area.

Aerial view



View looking north along New Hampshire Avenue intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway.

Takoma Branch

Sligo Mill Overlook Park is a five-acre wooded enclave that provides a green edge between Takoma Park neighborhoods and the strip commercial area of the Maryland Gateway area. Across from the park is a large PEPCO substation. This area contains the former McLaughlin School which now houses a privately run school combined with adult day care, three older high rise apartment buildings called Belford Towers, and a small cluster of older commercial buildings at Ray Road, including a veterinary hospital.

The Takoma Branch runs through the park, under the avenue, and through a channel adjacent to the PEPCO property meadow. Downstream, it feeds into Sligo Creek.

Aerial view



Looking southeast from New Hampshire Avenue towards the Animal Hospital and the PEPCO substation beyond.

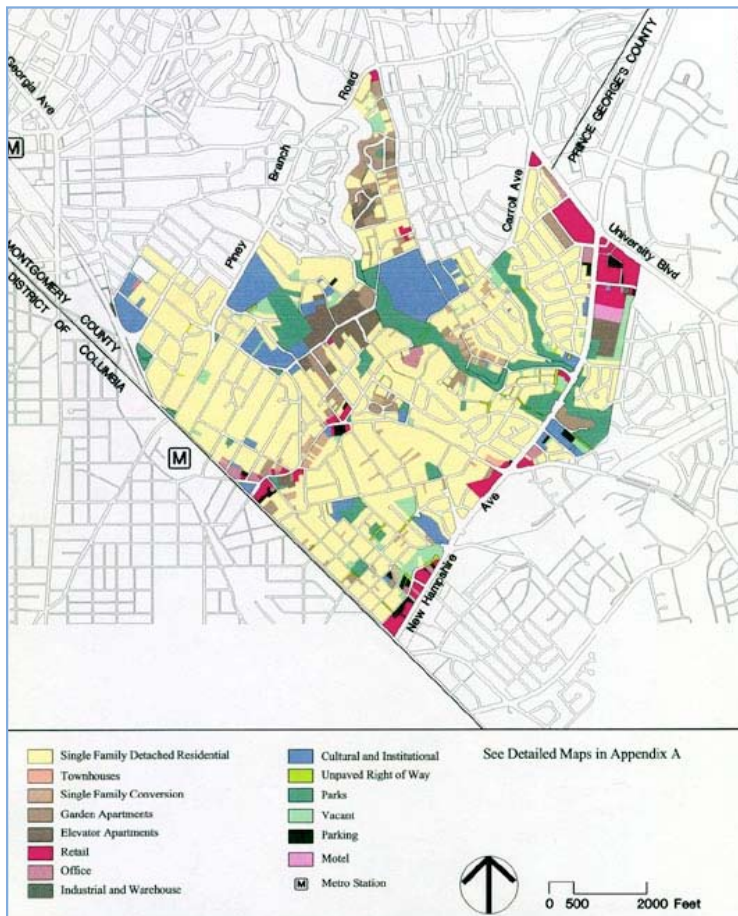
2. Analysis

2.2 Land use and zoning

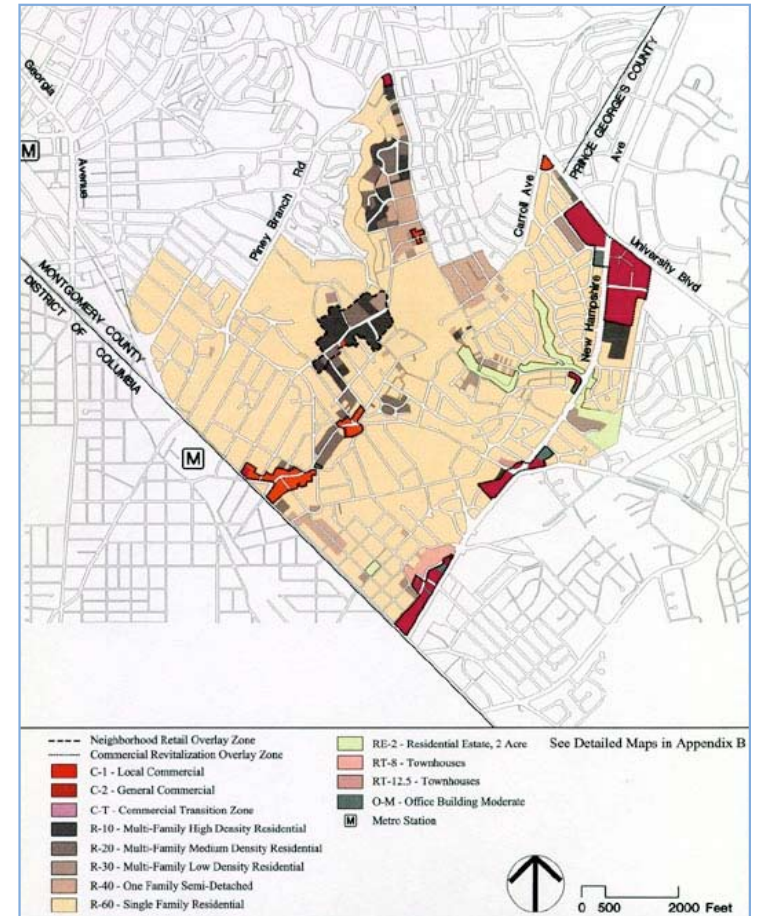
The maps below from the Takoma Park Master Plan December 2000 helped the team understand the land use pattern in Takoma Park and the corridor, as well as the current zoning. A special commercial revitalization overlay district (CROZ) was created

following the adoption of the master plan and applied to the two gateway areas of the corridor. This allows mixed-use and encourages the kind of development pattern that fosters pedestrian and transit-oriented development, with some exceptions.

Prince George's County is currently working to develop new zoning that may be applied to the east side of New Hampshire Avenue that may permit and/or encourage mixed use, pedestrian -friendly redevelopment.



Takoma Park land use



Takoma Park zoning

2.3 Transportation network

Roadway Design

New Hampshire Avenue, as stated earlier, evolved into a major commuter thoroughfare over the years. On any given day, it carries between 28,000 and 34,000 vehicles, depending on the location within the corridor. Much of this traffic, however, is carried during peak commuting periods. During the peak periods, the road is operating at an acceptable level of service by accepted engineering standards.



The configuration of New Hampshire Avenue encourages drivers to go fast.

The current six lane configuration of the roadway was designed to accommodate that level of peak hour traffic, which actually represents only a small portion of the hours of the week. During off-peak hours, however, the road operates at far below capacity and consequently, traffic flows freely. The team conducted speed tests during the charrette and consistently found average speeds to be in the 45 to 48 MPH range,



New Hampshire Avenue becomes a four lane boulevard with narrower lanes as it enters the District.

despite a posted 35 MPH limit. This is not unexpected given the design of the roadway.

Roads that are designed for maximum capacity and throughput will invariably encourage speeding. Conversely, once New Hampshire Avenue crosses into the District, the road immediately narrows from six to



Intersections in the corridor have been designed for unimpeded vehicular flow.

four lanes, and the individual lanes themselves are also not as wide. Not surprisingly, results found average speeds below 40 MPH on this narrower section of the road.

The intersections along the corridor, also have been designed to allow maximum unimpeded flow and



Most development in the corridor has been designed for the convenience of the automobile at the expense of the bicyclist, pedestrian and transit rider.

speed. As is standard engineering practice, the road has a minimal number of intersections along the corridor.

In short, New Hampshire Avenue is doing exactly what the engineers that designed it intended for it to do: efficiently move the maximum number of vehicles with the least delay. The unintended consequences of this efficiency is that the environment for pedestrians

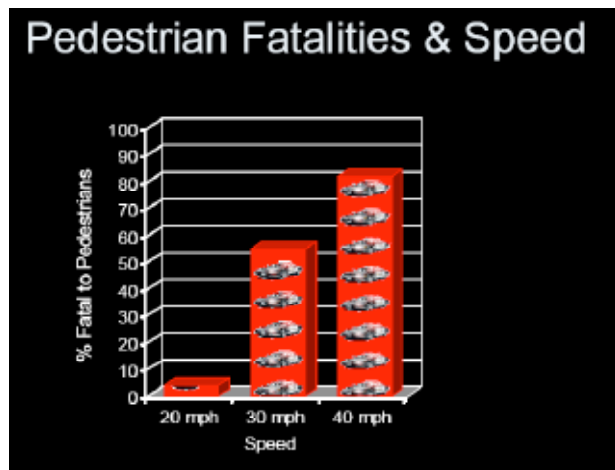
2. Analysis

and bicyclists becomes not only unpleasant, but also hazardous.

Any road configured in this way will have the same effect, particularly when the adjacent development is set back behind parking lots and designed solely for the convenience of the driver. This happens to be the case almost uniformly within the corridor. When conditions like this exist, this renders pedestrian and biking activity undesirable, and only those who have no other option will choose to walk in this type of environment. Those that do so put themselves at considerable risk, and tragically, there have been pedestrian fatalities within the corridor. The high rate of speed dramatically increases the chance

of serious injury or death when a pedestrian is struck. In recent years, the influx of international populations has led to dramatic increases in pedestrian activity and transit usage within the corridor. The potential for conflict will only increase unless significant changes are made.

Besides being hazardous and non-conducive to pedestrians, the current configuration of New Hampshire Avenue will make the introduction of a pedestrian friendly streetscape with associated destination retail virtually impossible. This limits potential redevelopment to more auto-oriented uses, and precludes an outcome that the 2000 Master Plan supports.



This chart shows the correlation between vehicular speed and the likelihood of a pedestrian being killed when struck by a vehicle. Vehicular speeds along New Hampshire Avenue are frequently above 40 mph.



These images highlight the pedestrian unfriendly environment that currently exists throughout the corridor.

Top: the pedestrian must walk on sidewalks that have no separation from fast-moving traffic, creating an uncomfortable or even dangerous situation.

Bottom: the sidewalk is so cluttered with obstructions that pedestrians have worn a path around it.



Transit

There is currently a significant amount of public transit service along or crossing the corridor, including six WMATA routes and one Ride-On route. These routes connect patrons to employment centers and Metro Rail stations such as Takoma, Silver Spring, Bethesda, White Oak, New Carrollton, College Park, and Fort Totten.

There are approximately 1200 riders per day in the corridor who board buses that either travel along or perpendicular to the corridor. These ridership figures, obtained from the various transit agencies, are several years old, and there is a high likelihood that the number of riders has increased since they were collected. Given the recent increase in gasoline prices and reports of surging transit ridership in Maryland and across the country, the number of transit riders in



The WMATA K6 bus in the Ethan Allen Gateway area.

the New Hampshire Avenue corridor will continue to steadily increase. Despite the significant number of transit patrons in the corridor, the bus stop facilities along the corridor do not provide the transit patron with a pleasant waiting experience or environment. Patrons are either exposed to the elements, have no where to sit, or are close to fast moving traffic.

Even when shelters and benches are provided, the vicinity around the stops lack pedestrian activity, adequate lighting, or buildings overlooking the street with occupants that provide natural surveillance. These factors tend to make people waiting for transit feel insecure and less safe.

The City is working with local transit providers to improve bus stop amenities, and WMATA has included the K6, which serves New Hampshire, in the list of bus routes to receive planning for significant improvements.

Transit patrons in the corridor must endure a demoralizing environment on a daily basis.



People waiting for a bus in 90 degree plus heat seeking shade.

A mother and child waiting at a bus stop must stand between travel lanes of fast-moving cars and a line of parked cars, while an elderly woman sits on the ground.



Bottom: two women waiting in a bus shelter next to an empty parking lot and a wooded area.



2. Analysis

2.4 Business conditions and market opportunities

This section provides a summary of the existing business mix and market conditions within the Ethan Allen and Maryland Gateway Corridor study area. Field reconnaissance was conducted that included interviews with 20 businesses, plus site inspections and analysis. An inventory of businesses was refined and prepared to illustrate the existing business mix. Data on individual businesses was collected and analyzed to assess overall trends and conditions. These findings are summarized below.

Business Inventory & Mix

The Ethan Allen and Maryland Gateway Corridor includes an estimated 323,000 square feet of commercial business space in about 106 businesses, excluding the New Hampshire Business Center, an office complex located in the former Providence Hospital at 6475-96 New Hampshire Avenue. More than 70% of the remaining commercial space is occupied by retail uses, with 22% in office and 3% in industrial services (e.g., automotive service).

Convenience retail businesses account for the largest single category, with an estimated 120,000 square feet or 37% of all business uses in the corridor (outside of the Business Center). Shopper's goods stores (e.g., apparel, furniture, or auto parts) account for about 18% of the business space. Shopper's goods are the types of merchandise that draw consumers for destination shopping.

Eating & drinking uses (restaurants) account for about 12% of the commercial space or almost 40,000 square feet. Personal services such as hair salons that often

occupy retail commercial units account for less than 3.0% of the space. There is no entertainment venue within the corridor.

Vacancy is relatively normal as compared to industry standards, at about 4.5%. Shopping center managers strive for vacancy rates of 5.0% or less as an indicator of healthy leasing activity. Some vacancy is natural as businesses expand or relocate or owners retire for reasons that have nothing to do with the health of the business district.

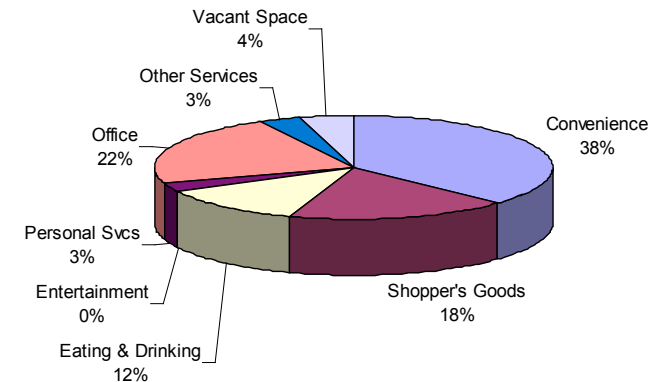
A more detailed inventory of retail and office business uses by specific category reveals that the area offers a relatively diverse mix of convenience uses, including small (mostly international) groceries and a large supermarket, Shoppers Food Warehouse (SFW), convenience stores, gas stations (6), cleaners, several liquor stores, and others. There is no pharmacy, other than the one included in the SFW, and no florist.

Shopper's goods businesses include six discount apparel and accessory stores, several general merchandise stores (including pawn shops), automotive supply, furniture, and other stores. The area lacks hardware, books/CDs and shoe stores, but these goods are sold within the merchandise mix offered by other types of stores. For example, several of the international groceries sell Bollywood videos or Jamaican music CDs as part of their merchandise mix. There are 15 restaurants in the area, including franchises as well as independent international

restaurants that cater to specific markets. International merchandise or food represented in the Corridor includes Guatemalan, Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran, Jamaican, Chinese, Ethiopian, Indian, Sri Lankan, and Cameroonian, among others. Some businesses have combined international cultures in creative mixes, such as the Indian grocery that now sells Caribbean foods, or the pizza takeout that sells El Salvadoran papusas. As noted previously, there are relatively few personal service establishments and no entertainment venues located in the Corridor.

Existing Corridor Business Mix by Type

Source: Randall Gross / Development Economics



Existing Business Conditions

Site reconnaissance and interviews were conducted with 20 businesses in the corridor to collect information on existing business conditions, including sales trends, merchandising mix, and issues affecting the area’s businesses. Key information from this assessment includes:

Median Year Business Established:	1993
Median Size (in square feet):	2,500
Median Rent (per square foot):	\$18.96
Rent Range:	\$10.80-\$21.80
Type of Lease:	none or five-year renewable
Annual Escalation:	Up to 10%
Average Sales (per square foot):	\$194.11
Annual Change:	-1.88%
Median Sales (per square foot):	\$200.00
Annual Change:	-0.80%

Rents. Retail rents within the Corridor are relatively high, at almost \$19.00 per square foot, although they range from a low of about \$10.00 per foot for anchor retail space up to almost \$22.00 per foot. Many of the local businesses lack a formal rental contract or lease that protects them from evictions and rent escalations, or provides for normal leasing services and building maintenance. As a result, maintenance is lacking in some centers and rent escalations can exceed 10% per year.

Sales. Sales are averaging \$194 per square foot, which is lower than that achieved by stores in Takoma Langley Crossroads, north of the study area, or regional averages. In some cases, businesses are generating sales at extremely low performance rates (as low as \$30 per foot) and are only able to meet their costs through subsidies from the owner or reduced rent offered through a family relationship. On the other hand, several businesses have been achieving sales in the \$300 per foot range, which exceeds national standards. Sales have been declining at an average rate of almost 2.0% per year during the last several years. However, there is an extremely broad range of business performance in the Corridor, with some establishments’ sales declining at 10% or more per year while others have seen an upward trend of 20% or more.

In the former cases, there are market constraints such as a dependency on low-income market base that is heavily impacted by economic down-cycles or maximized penetration of a limited market. Growing businesses are generally supported by a franchise advertising budget or are benefiting from a closure or lack of competition. For example, the liquor stores have benefited from the fact that SFW recently ceased selling liquor in the Takoma Center store.

Market Sources. Almost 70% of sales volumes at study area businesses are generated by residents living within 2 to 3 miles of New Hampshire Avenue. However, this local business base is heavily tilted to the Prince George’s County side of the market, with some businesses claiming less than 1.0% of sales from Takoma Park residents.

About 20% of trade was generated by commuters, mainly Maryland residents commuting into D.C. for work. About 12% of trade was considered to be destination, mainly in the form of cultural and linguistic-based business. A few businesses attract destination trade due to the individual store’s relatively low prices, or because of limited competition for their goods within the District. None of the businesses are attracting destination trade due to the consumer’s general interest in shopping in the area.

Existing businesses have not attracted a substantial share of their trade from the many office tenants or employees in the immediate market, including those in the New Hampshire Business Center. Professional office workers in this complex provide an important untapped market base for restaurants and other businesses in the area.

Primary Issues and Concerns. Several of the concerns raised by business owners are typical of these found in urban commercial districts: lack of parking, overall poor appearance, and crime or low security levels. However, there was a surprising number of business owners that complained about their property management situation. The vast majority of area businesses rent their facilities. In some cases, businesses were never given access to legal contracts or leases so that owners can raise rental rates, refuse regular maintenance, or remove tenants at will. This situation is particularly dire because it affects immigrant groups, operating a majority of the businesses in this area, who have limited experience with American leases and business contracts. Businesses with American-born operators tended to have fewer complaints about their property management.

2. Analysis

Businesses are also affected by market conditions. Some of the market issues are external to the area, such as gas prices that eat into disposable income. The existing market base is dominated by households with limited incomes, many of whom are buffeted by economic cycles. Many of the existing businesses have targeted their product to the discount portion of the market, thereby making themselves vulnerable to these cycles.

However, in many cases, a larger issue is market penetration and competition. The success of the businesses is somewhat related to their specific roles in offering a unique destination good or service. For example, where businesses that cater to a specific cultural market (e.g. Cameroonians) have few competitors, they have become a regional destination. Where a similar type of business may cater more to corridor's resident Ethiopians, a market where there are many competitors, they rely much more on the limited local area market base. Some businesses that have catered to one market (e.g., Indian) are attempting to respond to the competitive market by offering Caribbean merchandise. Among the independent businesses, this ad hoc merchandising strategy only yields benefits on a trial-and-error basis.

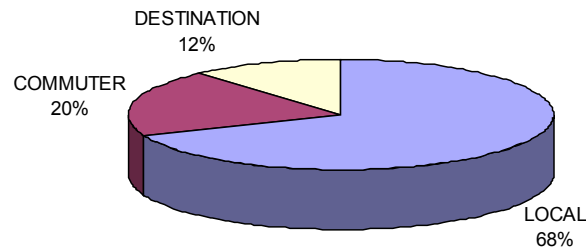
Site Analysis

A site analysis was conducted to assess existing conditions and factors impacting the overall marketability of the Ethan Allen and Maryland Gateways. Field reconnaissance to the study area as well as nearby competitive nodes, along with business

and real estate interviews, helped to inform the assessment. Key factors that were assessed as part of the site analysis included location, transportation access and traffic patterns, visibility, image and perceptions, amenities and key assets, physical environment (including design and architectural features), surrounding uses, and others. Findings from this assessment are summarized below.

Maryland Gateway Business Source of Market

Sources: Corridor businesses and Randall Gross / Development Economics



Location

The Corridor includes the portion of New Hampshire Avenue from the District boundary to Sligo Creek, a distance of approximately 1.25 miles, and several blocks along either side. This study area is located primarily within the City of Takoma Park, which is in Montgomery County, and in Prince George's County. The study area lies within a 30-minute drive northeast of downtown Washington, D.C., or about 20 minutes

from Silver Spring, Maryland. Just one mile further out from Washington along New Hampshire Avenue is the Takoma Langley Crossroads commercial area, a major retail and office commercial node centered at New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard. This area is included in the Takoma Park and Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties' International Corridor Community Legacy Area. The market for goods and services within the study area is heavily influenced and impacted by the competitive activity located in the Takoma Langley Crossroads.

Transportation Access and Traffic

New Hampshire Avenue (Route 650) is an important radial road corridor linking the study area to downtown Washington, D.C. and suburban areas of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. New Hampshire Avenue has primarily a residential character within the District, but becomes a major commercial corridor through Takoma Park and into Takoma Langley Crossroads. There are a number of lesser east-west roadways that bring access from neighboring areas of Prince George's (to the east) and Montgomery (to the west) counties. Ethan Allen Avenue and East-West Highway (Route 410) is a key east-west access route from Montgomery County and central Takoma Park to Prince George's Plaza shopping area to the east, but is a narrow, residentially-oriented road within the City boundaries.

Traffic counts provided by Maryland State Highway Administration indicate that Ethan Allen (East-West Highway) generated 2006 average annual daily traffic (ADT) counts of 12,551 at New Hampshire Avenue.

By comparison, University Boulevard generated 38,340 ADT at its intersection with New Hampshire Avenue. Thus, the University intersection has over 200% more traffic flow than that of Ethan Allen. University Boulevard is clearly the primary east-west transportation route in the area. New Hampshire Avenue carries 34,270 ADT from the District border, increasing to 39,130 at its intersection with East-West Highway. Figures from March 2007 indicate that bus routes along New Hampshire Avenue at East-West Highway have a total 688 Average Daily Ridership (ADR). Bus routes on New Hampshire Avenue into University Boulevard have ADR of 1,146 or nearly twice that of the East-West Highway intersection.

Visibility

While the businesses have good visibility from New Hampshire Avenue, they do not have the exposure from two major highway corridors afforded businesses at University Boulevard. Thus, the study area is at a competitive disadvantage from a commercial market perspective vis-à-vis the University Boulevard node. Further compounding this disadvantage is the placement and position of certain commercial buildings in the Corridor that block views of neighboring businesses.

Surrounding Uses

Away from the commercial strip retail that dominates New Hampshire Avenue, both sides of the Corridor are characterized by residential use. However, all similarities effectively end there, since the housing and associated residential base to the west in Takoma Park contrasts sharply with that of neighborhoods in Prince

George’s County directly to the east.

Takoma Park retains its unique and appealing character as one of Washington’s original “railroad suburbs,” with late 19th and early 20th century housing and natural environment maintained in impeccable condition by civic-minded and predominantly middle and upper income residents. Compact single-family housing characterizes the area, such as neighborhoods

and Prince George’s lower rent housing are clustered on along the Corridor. Hillwood Manor is tucked into the woods next to Sligo Creek. Belford Towers, a twin 12-story high-rise complex, dominates the skyline in the center of the Corridor. A cluster of mid-rise buildings with affordable housing units dominates the landscape just east of the Corridor south of there. The different types and prices of housing on each side of the Corridor help to cement the differences in market perceptions and preferences that characterize each side.

Primary Issues Raised by Corridor Businesses

Sources: Study Area businesses and Randall Gross / Development Economics

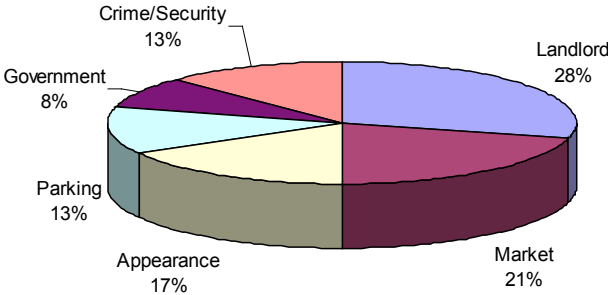


Image and Perceptions

Perceptions of the study area are colored by the personal experiences of the individual. For many single family home owners and some apartment dwellers, the strip highway commercial character of New Hampshire Avenue is anathema to the small-town, small-scale and walkable development orientation of Takoma Park’s other commercial districts. The area may not offer the types of goods and services that cater specifically to these residents’ tastes, income, and lifestyles.

Based on interviews with businesses, Takoma residents avoid the study area for shopping. On the other hand, the more international-in-origin tenants of apartment buildings are more dependent on the businesses in the Corridor for their convenience goods and services.

accessed from Ethan Allen Avenue. In contrast, while the neighborhoods in both unincorporated Prince George’s County and the City of Takoma Park that immediately adjoin the Corridor are characterized by single family neighborhoods, immediately adjacent to the corridor are many mid- and high-density older stock rental housing that caters to new immigrants and moderate-income households. Several Takoma Park’s rent-controlled apartments

In the 2000 census, residents of nearby Prince George’s County neighborhoods and upper northeast D.C. are predominately black, with some Hispanic and white in Prince George’s County, while nearby Takoma residents

2. Analysis

are more evenly distributed between white, black, Hispanic and a variety of other ethnicities. In Takoma Park and in Prince George's County, black may mean African-American, African or Afro-Caribbean. Income and culture help to divide these communities, while the Corridor may provide opportunities for bringing them together through shared amenities, retail, and mixed-income housing.

There is a large international community in the area (both Montgomery and Prince George's), and the Corridor's ethnic businesses attract some destination shoppers. But, these shoppers are easily diverted to University Boulevard where parking and a much larger and more diverse concentration of competitive international stores are located. But regardless of ethnicity and cultural background, many area residents perceive the area as aesthetically displeasing and unsafe as a shopping area. This perception is apparently shared by many of the commuters who pass through the area en route from Maryland into D.C. for work.

Design and Physical Environment

The existing physical environment is not supportive of many types of retail and commercial activity, particularly small-scale businesses and walkable shopping areas. Portions of the Corridor are characterized by typical highway-oriented commercial uses with set backs on parking lots, while others are built to the street and provide a more urban context. In general, the highway design of New Hampshire has discouraged the more urban format. As an urban commercial node, the area has no physical definition or design element that would help to establish its identity

as a distinct commercial district. This deficiency carries through architecture and building design, signage, lighting, and other elements. There is an urgent need to provide the study area with a unique identity through design elements in order to distinguish it from other highway commercial strips and to provide a context for destination marketing.

Aside from these overall design deficiencies, the area also suffers from neglect. Study area buildings are sometimes ill-maintained and parking areas poorly designed. Several large shopping centers and pad commercial sites are the exception, since these properties are more typically managed and maintained with oversight through national franchises or larger investors.

Amenities and Key Assets

Despite the design deficiencies of the study area, there are certain existing assets that help to increase the overall marketability of the area as a commercial district. Chief among these are the several international businesses that have clustered in the area and helped to create a "branch" international node separate from the one in Takoma Langley Crossroads. There are a number of businesses specifically marketed to an international constituency, including African, Caribbean, and South Asian groups. However, an even larger number of area businesses are owned and operated by immigrants, often marketing to a much broader community. This diversity should be seen as a strength in much the same way as it is on a larger scale in Takoma Langley Crossroads. The issues associated with this "asset" relate more to competition with Takoma Langley Crossroads and how the two nodes

can co-exist from a marketing perspective. This issue will be explored further in the recommendations.

Other assets include the Takoma Center shopping center, which includes the Shoppers (SFW). It offers good quality retail in a safe, suburban-style environment. While it is not pedestrian-oriented, it does provide a viable large supermarket that caters to both the adjacent modest-income community and to higher income communities nearby.

Nearby housing and residential neighborhoods are also an important asset for the commercial district, since they help to create a "built-in" market for retail and other commercial use. The further clustering of housing in or near the Corridor would help to provide the district with a more distinct market opportunity that would differentiate it from Takoma Langley Crossroads as an international district. Clearly, the large concentration of high-density affordable and moderate-income units heavily tilt the immediate market. Meanwhile, higher-income but low-density households in Takoma Park, Prince George's County, and the District of Columbia provide a relatively smaller and untapped adjacent market.

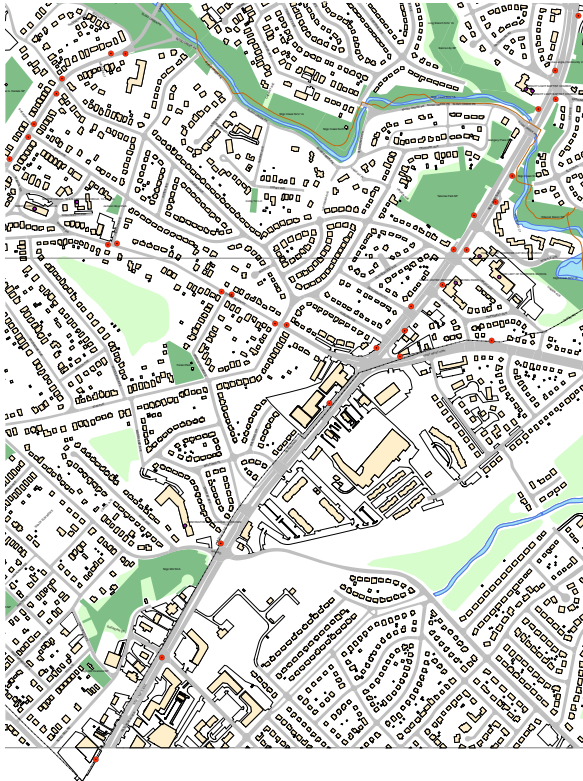
2.5 Natural environment and open space

The corridor contains a variety of natural amenities including Sligo Creek Park, Sligo Mill Natural Resource Area, and the Takoma Park Community Park. These are valuable but under-utilized assets which could be leveraged as part of the corridor revitalization.

Prior to the charrette, the team mapped natural features of the study area from available sources including parks, woodlands, topography, water bodies, wetlands, streams and stream corridors, floodplains, and undeveloped areas that are not designated as parks but function as open space.

These areas include officially recognized amenities: Sligo Creek and Sligo Creek Park, Takoma Branch, Sligo Mill Natural Resource Area, Glengary Place Park, and the Takoma Park Community Park. They also include the PEPCO powerline corridor on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue and small, remnant, deciduous woods in various stages of succession scattered throughout the residential areas. No known rare or endangered species were identified in the study area.

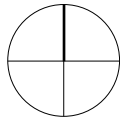
Field observations were made during the charrette in order to evaluate the natural features within the corridor and begin formulating recommendations. The most important natural feature is Sligo Creek and its riparian corridor. It is the ecosystem that harbors the greatest number of plant and animal species, contains the largest biodiversity, and



Sensitive environmental areas within the corridor



Natural features within the corridor



Environmental mapping produced prior to the charrette

2. Analysis

contains the greatest variety of habitats. It warrants special consideration and the greatest level of protection. In addition, Sligo Creek Park is an extremely popular and beloved public recreation landscape that is valued by neighborhoods on both sides of New Hampshire Avenue and thousands of metropolitan D.C. bicycle/pedestrian commuters and outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

The second most important features are the remnant, deciduous woodlands. All contain invasive species that threaten the continued health of the woodlands, particularly in the shrub and ground cover strata. The numbers of species and degree of coverage varies between woodlands. None of the woodlands are large enough to support forest interior dwelling species. Yet, those that are hundreds of feet wide provide micro climate variations and contain more species richness than thin, "edge-only" woodlands. These larger woodlands provide important habitats that support the life cycle needs for many invertebrates, insects, and small mammals. In addition, they add to the "nature in the city" sensibility that defines Takoma Park and contribute to the quality of life of its residents.

One of the most distinctive features of the natural resources of the project area is how fragmented they are. This condition hinders native plant propagation and animal movement through the landscape. In the long-term, it limits biodiversity and leads to general habitat and ecosystem degradation. It also limits residents' opportunities for chance encounters with wildlife and a rich and fulfilling appreciation of nature.

The New Hampshire Avenue roadway, and adjacent commercial areas are characterized by exposed



Existing Natural Features Diagram



Natural Features Opportunities Diagram

These map overlays were created during the charrette to help illustrate the orientation of existing natural features and identifying potential opportunities for improving them.

concrete and asphalt with little to no vegetation or tree cover. This creates excessive flows of water directly into the stream and reduces overall stream quality. In addition, very little rainwater falling onto these areas is absorbed into the ground, and does not recharge underground aquifers. Most rainwater flows quickly into the Anacostia watershed, carrying pollutants, trash, and particulate matter with it.

2.6 Precedents

Before and during the charrette, the team gathered examples of successful places nearby and in the region to use as models in exploring redevelopment options for the corridor. On other projects of this nature, teams must often draw upon models from outside the region, but we are fortunate to have no shortage of both historic and new examples from within Takoma Park and the Washington, DC region to draw from.



Eastern Market, DC (new)



Takoma, DC (new)

These images include a variety of traditional pedestrian friendly streetscapes. Charrette participants expressed a strong desire to see the plan emphasize the kind of building forms and styles that reflect the local vernacular and culture - sometimes traditional - but also eclectic and eye catching.



Shaw, DC (new and established)



Takoma Park, MD (historic)

2. Analysis



A pedestrian friendly streetscape in Bethesda Row, Bethesda



Redevelopment of car dealerships along U.S. 1 in the Prince George's County Arts District,



A pedestrian friendly commercial streetscape in Capitol Hill, Washington, DC



Franklin's in Hyattsville, MD



New mixed use infill and a roundabout along Rhode Island Avenue in Mount Rainier, MD





3. Plan Recommendations

3. Plan recommendations

The Corridor Concept Plan



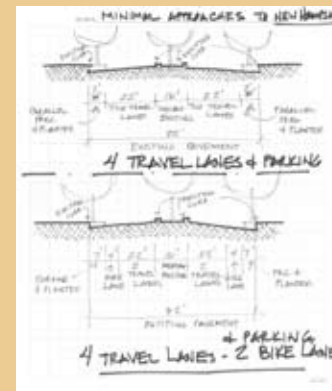
The illustrative plan, at left, shows the redeveloped corridor at build-out. The changes that would take place as a result of this plan will happen incrementally over time. A discussion of the priorities and mechanisms that are likely to guide these changes are

presented in the Implementation section of this document (Section 4).

This section presents the corridor plan in detail and is divided into corridor-wide and planning area-specific recommendations.

Creating the plan

During the charrette, the team went through multiple iterations of design concepts before arriving at the preferred concept. These are samples of some of the "works in progress." The public provided regular feedback during the concept development and refinement.



3.1 Corridor-wide recommendations

Transportation

Transform New Hampshire Avenue into a pedestrian friendly “multi-way” boulevard.

Converting New Hampshire Avenue from an arterial facility that serves primarily high-speed through traffic into a “great street” that adequately serves multiple modes of transportation, as well as a destination, is paramount to the success of this plan. In this new era of rising energy prices, increasing urgency about climate change, and growing demand for walkable and transit-oriented places, the need to re-tool single mode suburban thoroughfares like New Hampshire Avenue cannot be overstated. The policies of the last forty years which have kept traffic level of service as the primary driver of roadway design decisions are no longer sustainable, and decision makers must be open to innovative policies and solutions.

For New Hampshire Avenue, the optimal solution is to re-design the roadway as a “multi-way” boulevard, which separates higher speed traffic from local traffic and pedestrians walking along the sidewalk. While peak hour volumes along New Hampshire Avenue are relatively high (approximately 35,000 to 39,000 cars per average weekday) depending on location in the corridor, they have been steady or declining in the corridor for several years. The redesign to a multi-way boulevard, in conjunction with other recommended improvements, would accommodate peak hour traffic into the future. This would provide a safer environment for pedestrians and a stronger pedestrian-oriented retail experience. It will also



*A computer-generated view looking southbound on a transformed New Hampshire Avenue. The changes balance access and transportation modes along the public right-of-way. The traditional user, the **commuter vehicle**, retains two through lanes with turning lanes at intersections. **Buses** have improved pedestrian access, ample bus stop facilities, priority light access and the option of upgrading the outer lane for bus use only as transit ridership builds. **Bicycles** will use the sheltered access lanes on the side - protected from fast moving traffic but with a clear shot across intersections, and the conversion to a wide shared-use trail along the wooded, non-commercial areas. **Local vehicles** are a secondary user in this access lane designed for slower cars, parked car access, and bicycles. **Walkers** gain access to half of the right-of-way: from bus shelters next to through-lanes across slow vehicle access lanes to businesses fronting on fifteen foot wide sidewalks.*

3. Plan recommendations

create more parity for bicycle and bus users.

The specific elements of the multi-way boulevard are as follows:

1. A “through-traffic” zone consisting of:

A) **Four travel lanes (two in each direction) for higher speed through traffic.** New Hampshire Avenue within the District of Columbia, immediately south of the study corridor, consists of four travel lanes. The multi-way boulevard would continue this profile, while re-allocating the additional existing travel lanes to the local traffic zone.

The four through lanes would be 11’ and 10’ wide, rather than the current 12’ width that are typical for high-speed highways such as interstates. Narrower lanes affect driver behavior and encourage them to drive more slowly. Current observed speeds in the corridor are in the 40 to 50 miles per hour range. Speeds in the 30 to 35 miles-per-hour range are more appropriate for this context, and narrower lanes in conjunction with other measures can help achieve these lower speeds.

Ten foot lanes increase the level of pedestrian comfort and safety by reducing the distance pedestrians are

exposed to higher speed traffic.

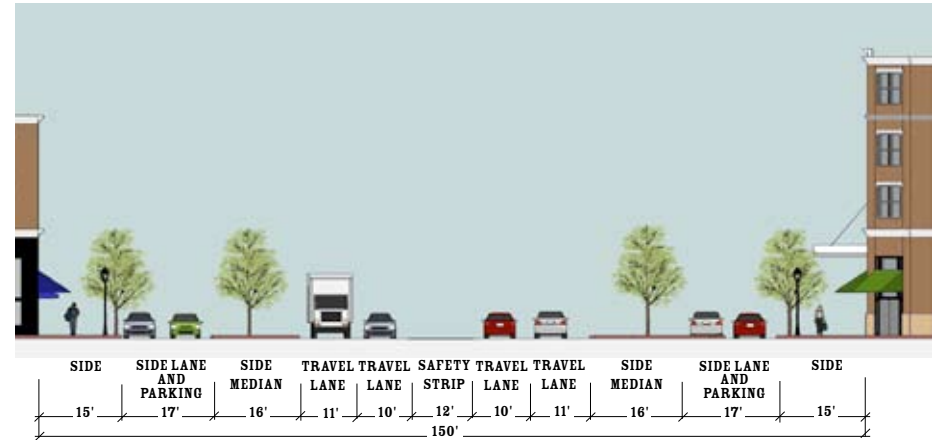
The distance pedestrians would need to cross higher speed through-traffic would be reduced from an average of 85’ to just 54’. This, combined with lower traffic speeds would help reduce the incidence and severity of pedestrian-vehicular crashes.

Vehicles traveling at slower speeds drive closer together, which will also increase the capacity of each lane.

B) **A 12’ foot wide “flush” median, also known as a “safety strip.”** This median would not be raised, but rather level with the travel lanes, and consist of a textured pavement material that simulates brick. This feature provides a separation from oncoming traffic as well as the ability for emergency vehicles to go around stopped traffic.

C) **Turning lanes at intersections.** At approaches to cross streets, the safety strip would transition into 10’ or 11’ turn lanes to accommodate turning vehicles. This would aid traffic operations by reducing congestion and the likelihood of rear end crashes.

2. A “local traffic and pedestrian” zone consisting of:



A cross section of the multi-way boulevard showing the separation of local and through traffic into distinct vehicular and pedestrian zones.

A) **Side medians.** These 16’ wide planted areas would form the transition between the auto-oriented “through traffic” and pedestrian-oriented “local traffic” zones. They would be planted with shade trees and other landscaping.

These would be designed to **capture and naturally treat stormwater** collecting in the roadway, as well as create a more aesthetically pleasing and greener pedestrian environment.

The use of **trees** planted at regular 20 foot intervals along the side medians would also create a wall of vertical elements that can help calm traffic by having a psychological effect on drivers to slow down.

The use of side medians along the multi-way boulevard could also promote traffic calming and deter “cut-through” traffic in adjacent neighborhoods by limiting access to local streets from the through-lanes.

This would be accomplished by extending the side medians across intersections with minor streets where limited access was desired. This would eliminate immediate access to those residential side streets and force motorists to turn a block or two early at major signalized intersections and use the side lanes to access residential neighborhoods.

B) Side lanes with parallel parking. Side lanes would be 17 feet wide, large enough to accommodate one travel lane and parking lane. Side lanes will foster a pedestrian-friendly retail and residential environment along New Hampshire Avenue by accommodating vehicular access and parking for retail, while ensuring that traffic will travel slowly so people can walk to and from parked cars comfortably.

It is the slow speeds in the side lanes that will contribute to an attractive

bicycle and pedestrian environment, since the noise and perceived danger from fast moving traffic deters risk-adverse bicyclists from vehicular lanes and pedestrian activity on nearby sidewalks. The desired observed speed of vehicles in the side lanes - cars and bicycles - would be in the 10 to 15 mile



per hour range, and could be achieved through the design characteristics of the multi-way boulevard.

The access lane will need to have a clear and smooth connection to a multi-use trail in the transition from commercial to residential areas.

The parking lane may be located on the side median in areas where a 24 foot wide side median is desirable, such as to provide cross traffic vehicles space to queue and at bus stops.

Side lanes also accommodate overflow pedestrians during events, and small delivery trucks.

C) Enhanced transit patron waiting areas and bus pull-offs. Creating a more functional and attractive environment for existing and potential transit patrons is key to the success of transforming the area to a less automobile-dependent place. Doing so will help transit become a more prominent transportation choice. New bus stops including attractive, well-defined waiting areas



Left: New bus stops in the heart of the transformed Ethan Allen Gateway are visible in this view looking northbound on New Hampshire Avenue. Buses would travel in the through lanes and pull off at bus turnouts carved out of the side medians.

At the each block end, the side medians expand to 24 feet to protect parking parking along the median and provide queuing space for cars crossing the avenue.

Right: A representative section of the multi-way boulevard shows the typical location of bus stops and pull-offs beyond intersections.



3. Plan recommendations

with amenities would be located along the side medians of the multi-way boulevard. Amenities would include distinctive shelters with seating, special paving, landscaping, lighting, and a high level of traveler information including maps, schedules, and real-time bus arrival message boards. Stops would be optimally located at major activity centers, including at commercial nodes and residential clusters. The City is already working with local transit providers to upgrade bus stops and these efforts should be coordinated with the corridor plan. In addition, bus pull-off lanes would be provided along the through lanes to allow buses to stay clear of travel lanes when boarding and alighting. This will help reduce congestion and reduce the potential for rear-end collisions. The use of advanced technologies that hold traffic at the light to assist buses in pulling back into the traffic stream should be considered to help maintain the reliability of transit schedules.

3. Streetscaping with people-friendly amenities.

A) **Sidewalks.** Within the two commercial areas, sidewalks along New Hampshire Avenue would have “urban” characteristics that promote pedestrian and business activity. They would be 15’ wide and have special pavement treatments with distinctive patterns.

B) **Multi-use trail.** In areas where there is less need for parking and especially where the terrain restricts widening the right-of-way, the through-traffic zones and the landscaped side median would be similar to in commercial area. However, the side lane and commercial streetscape would not be installed with the exception of lighting. The sidewalk would be converted to a multi-use trail ten to fifteen feet wide to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian trail users.

C) **Street trees.** The sidewalks would also include a row of street trees, planted close to the curb and spaced close enough to create a continuous shade canopy during summer months. These should match the row of trees in the side medians, and will effectively create an allée of trees over the side lanes.



An inviting, high quality streetscape is essential to create a desirable retail destination. Wide sidewalks paved with brick, plus shade-giving street trees and pedestrian scale lighting are some of the elements that create an attractive place to walk and visit.

D) **Landscaping.** Consideration should also be given to installing a variety of low-level landscaping in tree wells. These areas may also function to gather and filter stormwater.

E) **Pedestrian-oriented lighting.** Lighting needs to be at a uniform level throughout the sidewalk area so that pedestrians feel safe at

night. Shorter poles with luminaires that direct light towards the sidewalk should be decorative to add character to the commercial districts and residential neighborhoods. These lights must also be installed along the multi-use trail to provide a continuous multi-modal and transit/pedestrian friendly environment.



Enhanced crosswalks like the ones shown here can create a unified feel across a boulevard, while signifying to drivers that they are entering a pedestrian area and need to slow down.

F) **Placemaking.** Other elements that would be included to create an attractive streetscape would include items such as flowering baskets and/or banners, benches, wastebaskets, and wayfinding signage.

4. Enhanced crosswalks.

The multi-way boulevard design would significantly shorten the distance across faster moving traffic that pedestrians face, and the addition of enhanced crosswalks would further improve the pedestrian orientation of the intersection.

Creating a unified presence on both sides of New Hampshire Avenue within the commercial gateways is key to the success of the center. Crosswalks would contribute towards unifying the corridor by visually extending the look of the sidewalk streetscape across New Hampshire Avenue.

This will also send visual clues to drivers that this is a pedestrian area and to slow down.



A real world example of a multi-way boulevard with special pavement treatment

3. Plan recommendations

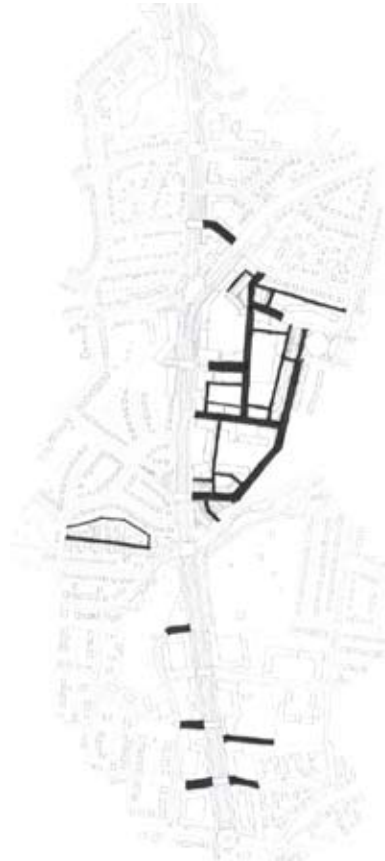
Introduce new streets in conjunction with redevelopment.

Creating a number of new streets, particularly on the east side of New Hampshire Avenue in the central and upper part of the corridor, would help disperse traffic and relieve congestion on New Hampshire Avenue at major intersections. Adding these new streets would introduce several new intersections along New Hampshire Avenue in order to distribute traffic through a new street grid.

Many of the new streets could be achieved simply by redesigning existing parking lots of commercial and multi-family residential properties on the east side of New Hampshire Avenue.

In addition, while not shown on the illustrative plan, another possibility that should be explored further is the creation of a new street using the right-of-way of the PEPCO power lines north of Ray Road.

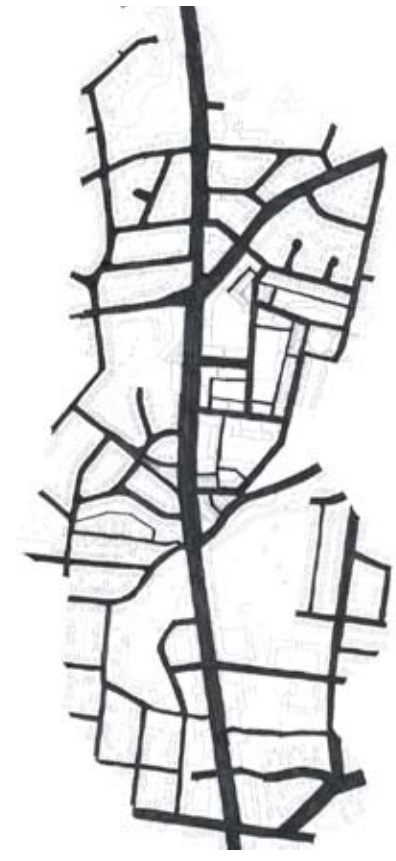
Currently, PEPCO does not allow access near transmission lines, but this may change in the future.



Proposed new or formalized streets shown in black.



Streets that could be converted with relative ease without new right of way.



Completed street network with existing and new streets.

Implement enhanced transit service in the corridor in conjunction with redevelopment.

Proximity to high quality transit service is increasingly being seen as an amenity. The corridor is close to, but not within walking distance of the existing Takoma, Prince George's Plaza or Fort Totten Metro stations, or the planned Purple Line stop at Takoma Langley Crossroads. The K6 connects directly to the metro, but often has lengthy delays.

While there is a considerable amount of existing local bus service and ridership in parts of the corridor, the routes are not oriented to the corridor itself as an activity center. Given the current development pattern and uses along the corridor, this is understandable. However, to foster better pedestrian and transit orientation as one of the key components in the transformation of the corridor, transit service will need to be repositioned.

As redevelopment begins to occur in the corridor, as well as in the Takoma Langley Crossroads area, enhanced bus service that supports and reinforces the emerging revitalized activity centers should be phased in. This could include:

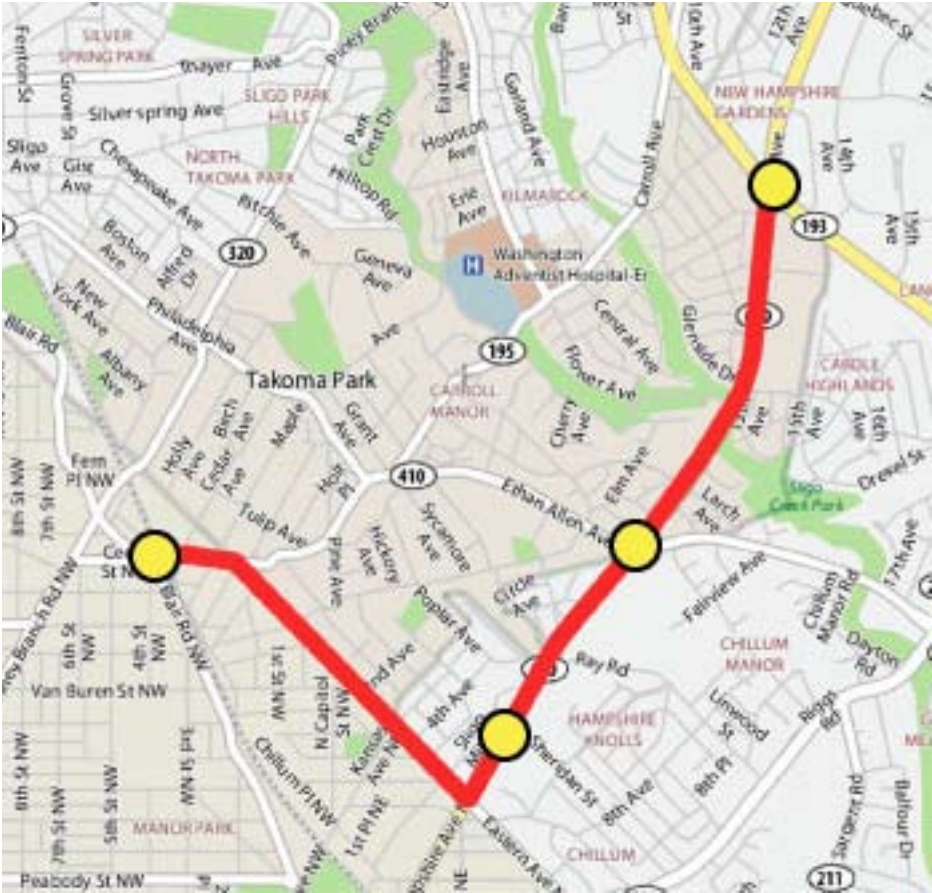
- A **"rapid bus"** route with limited stops and frequent service between White Flint Mall and Fort Totten Metro Station. This would largely follow the existing

K6 WMATA route, but provide a more metro rail-like service to enhanced bus stops in major activity centers in the corridor, with frequent buses, and providing service at a minimum as early in the morning and as late in the evening as metro rail. This part of New Hampshire Avenue has been identified as a rapid bus priority corridor in the 2003 WMATA regional bus study. Upgrading the K6 should be elevated to near term status.

- A **new circulator bus route** that provides frequent, fast access from points along the corridor to the Takoma metro, Old Takoma, Takoma Langley Crossroads area, and other points within Takoma Park, would enhance the desirability of the corridor.

This could be done as a variation to the Ride-On #16 bus which currently travels between Takoma Langley Park and the Takoma Metro Station, but does not serve the Maryland Gateway portion of the corridor.

Close coordination with WMATA, Ride-On, and The Bus should also occur to ensure that the enhancements happen in a way that mutually supports corridor redevelopment and builds new transit ridership.



A proposed transit circulator route (shown as a red line) would support the revitalization of the corridor by providing improved access to Metro and nearby activity centers (shown as yellow circles).

3. Plan recommendations

Redevelopment

Develop new pedestrian-oriented buildings along the corridor.

There are numerous opportunities along the corridor where automobile-oriented and other under-utilized properties can be redeveloped in a manner that creates a more intimate retail environment. This change is expected to happen gradually over time, by working with property owners and through market forces.

Designing new development to be pedestrian friendly creates identity and infuses a sense of place that is needed throughout the corridor. This can also help create better connections - physical, visual, and psychological - between the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods.

Whereas the proposed New Hampshire Avenue multi-way boulevard creates the foundation on which to develop a pedestrian friendly environment within the public right-of-way, the buildings and uses along New Hampshire must respond to this new environment accordingly to successfully create the desired outcome. Buildings must relate to the street, rather than to parking lots, as has been the norm for existing development. Use the following design principals to guide new development:



Mix uses whenever possible. Mixing of uses such as retail, housing, and office within close proximity of each other generates foot traffic when the design of the public right-of-way and the streetscape is also pedestrian-supportive. Mixing of uses can be “vertical,” that is, within buildings, or “horizontal,” across adjacent buildings. Vertical mixed use

buildings should have retail or dining on the ground floor, and residential and/or office uses on upper floors above.

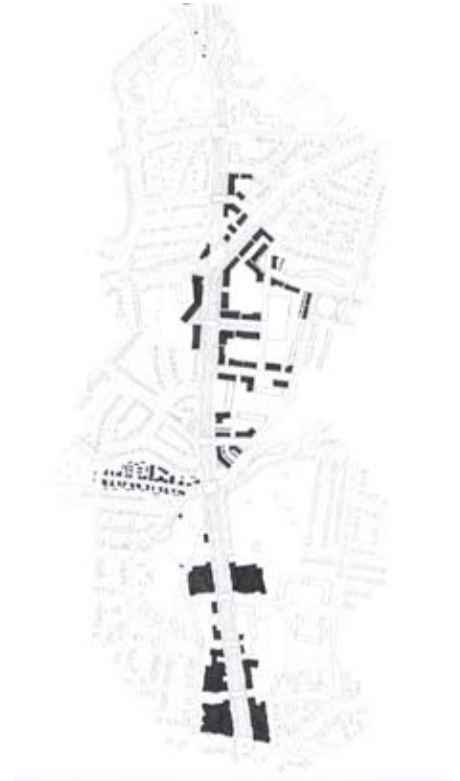
Build to the sidewalk. Fronts of buildings should be at or close to the edge of the sidewalk. There is typically little or no setback from the sidewalk for commercial mixed-use buildings. A “build-to” line or maximum setback is usually required. This type of building alignment is also applicable to new single-use buildings such as multi-family dwellings or office buildings.

Entrances on the sidewalk. The front of the building faces the street and the entrance is apparent.

Place buildings close together. Buildings should stand shoulder to shoulder to create a “street wall” with few gaps between them. Lining buildings up in this type of classic main street manner creates a “sense of enclosure” by creating a “street room.”

Build buildings with many openings. Nothing creates a more pedestrian hostile environment than blank walls and mirrored or tinted glass. Building should seem “porous” with 60-80% of the area at eye level glass so pedestrians can see inside public buildings and know that they are being seen by people looking out of the buildings.

Buildings with “human scale” features. Traditional design elements such as fenestration, decoration, patterns, quality materials and other interesting details that are intended to be seen up close, not merely from behind a windshield going by at



The diagram above shows a figure ground of proposed buildings highlighted in black.

40 miles per hour, should be integrated into the building facade. Details make the sidewalk an interesting place where pedestrians enjoy walking.

Include a variety of building types and sizes. The size and heights of buildings can be varied to some extent, although there should be an overall rhythm and composition to the street. The square footage of commercial stores will be constrained by the smaller size of many of the parcels within the corridor, as well as the limitations on the amount of land available for parking. For this corridor, there should be a mix of building heights ranging from 2.5 to 5 stories, with 3 and 4 stories being the most common. Taller buildings help create a sense of enclosure for the Avenue by simulating the dimensions of a living "room" that make pedestrians feel safe and less exposed.

Create short blocks. Frequent cross streets provide pedestrians with choices and add visual interest. A fine grained network of blocks and streets also provides better access from adjacent neighborhoods and provides a better sense of connection.

Locate off-street parking behind buildings. Parking lots in front of buildings discourage pedestrian activity and transit use. All new buildings should be developed with parking to the rear of buildings and shielded from public view, but well signed for public access.

Develop new housing as an integral component of new development along the corridor.

New market rate and affordable workforce housing opportunities will make the corridor more dynamic and sustainable. Developing new residential dwellings above and adjacent to commercial uses will increase the supply of housing that is less dependent on



automobiles, as well as help build the market for the improved commercial district. Opportunities exist to develop new housing choices within the corridor, from for-rent and for-sale apartments in mixed-use and traditional residential buildings to traditional townhouses and "live/work" townhouses. These can come in a wide variety of sizes and styles, but should all adhere to the tenets of pedestrian friendly design described in this section. Moreover, the form and type of housing can be varied to allow for greater intensity within the commercial gateways along New Hampshire Avenue, while smaller residential building types can be used to create compatible transitions between the New Hampshire Avenue and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Ensure that new development within the character is inspired by the eclectic mix of art-deco, modern, and traditional styles of nearby urban neighborhoods.

Charrette participants repeatedly stressed the importance of avoiding a generic look and feel to new development in the corridor. There is an overwhelming sense of affinity



for the "funkiness" of Takoma Park, and redevelopment along the New Hampshire Avenue corridor is a prime opportunity to extend that character to the gateways areas.

Build Green.

Develop the "green" identity of the Corridor by encouraging and advocating for environmentally sensitive building and site design and LEED certified projects in Takoma Park, Prince George's County and the District. Ensure compliance with green building regulations.

"Greening" of the corridor and enhancing parks and natural areas.

New street trees planted in medians and along sidewalks within the multi-way boulevard can play a key role in transforming the corridor from a traffic dominated commercial strip into an attractive and balanced commercial boulevard. New street trees will provide the needed shade for pedestrian friendly environments to encourage walking between transit, shopping, workplace, and home.

The corridor also contains a number of remarkable but under-utilized natural features and other open spaces that could be better leveraged with sensitive site planning of new development to become community assets. These will be discussed in greater detail in Section 3.2.



3. Plan recommendations

Integrate local public art to build identity in the corridor.

The City of Takoma Park should work with local artists to establish a public art program, and require all new and enhanced public spaces to include locally produced public art. The City of Takoma Park has budgeted for installation of public art. These efforts should be expanded and coordinated with the redevelopment efforts to ensure optimal allocation of resources.

Develop parking that is appropriate for mixed-use, pedestrian oriented places.

Mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places generate less demand for parking than conventional suburban development. This is due to a higher transit ridership potential, the inherent walkability between the mixed uses, and the ability for those who do arrive by car to park once and then run multiple errands. Current zoning allows the Planning Board to waive parking requirements for projects that support pedestrian, bicycle and transit use.

As the New Hampshire Avenue corridor redevelops into a more urban, pedestrian-friendly place, on-street and off-street parking spaces will still be needed. It will require the establishment of a “park once” environment that makes use of shared parking facilities and places greater emphasis on the



use of expanded on-street parking. This would happen by developing shared-use parking lots behind buildings and in the interior of blocks and dispersing them throughout as redevelopment occurs. Innovative parking management policies may also be needed to manage parking supply and demand. These could potentially include but are not limited to:

Calibrate parking requirements for mixed-use.

Reduce or abolish minimum parking standards, or setting a parking maximum for established walkable districts.

Unbundle parking from units. Allow new residential development to “unbundle” the cost of parking from housing by giving new residents the option of buying a parking space. This is also a way to achieve more affordable housing costs, and attract residents who are inclined to use transit or live within walking distance of work.

Shared parking. Encourage new commercial development to share parking and create pathways between adjacent properties so that a customer may shop several locations in one stop.

Parking district. Establish a parking benefits district to set parking rates to maintain a continuous supply of available parking and to use revenue for improvements within the district.



Natural Environment and Open Space

Adopt corridor-wide environmental initiatives.

A number of opportunities to enhance the “ecological structure” within the corridor were identified. These, combined with planning area-specific recommendations for enhancing the natural environment provide guidance on where to limit or focus potential redevelopment; where growth should be prohibited; where development and natural resources can be better integrated; and where protection/restoration efforts can be focused. The following corridor-wide recommendations include:

Connectivity. Improve landscape connectivity by linking disconnected woodlands with planted areas for continuous vegetative cover.

Water quality. Improve water quality of Sligo Creek and Takoma Branch by using stormwater best management practices (BMPs) in conjunction with any improvements of New Hampshire Avenue, particularly in reconstructing stormwater infrastructure and in introducing biofiltration techniques that use soil filtration and plant uptake for pollutant removal.

Surveillance. Reorient roads and building entries to “front” onto natural landscape features to help increase visibility and surveillance of natural features.

Manage resources. Develop a landscape management plan for the project area’s public landscapes that include:

- invasive plant removal protocol; and
- working with the community to craft a woodland management plan.

3. Plan recommendations

3.2 Planning area-specific recommendations

Ethan Allen Gateway

The Ethan Allen Gateway area is envisioned to be the pre-eminent destination in the corridor. It will become a walkable “Meeting Place,” centered around civic space for diverse shopping and bringing the community together. The diagram to the right shows the portion of the illustrative concept plan for the Ethan Allen Gateway area.

Buildings shown in black are existing and buildings shown in brown are proposed. The red circle shows the area where mixed-use commercial redevelopment would be focused and the streets where the greatest amount of pedestrian activity would be concentrated.

Key elements of the plan include the following:

1. Redevelop the aging strip center at the southwest corner of Ethan Allen and New Hampshire Avenues containing the Bed and Carpet business as mixed-use with street-facing shops and residential or office above.



Ethan Allen Gateway Illustrative Concept Plan with mixed-use redevelopment area for the Bed and Carpet property circled

3. Plan recommendations

2. In conjunction with the Bed and Carpet redevelopment, create a small civic plaza framed by the new mixed use buildings. The plaza will be the premier gathering place in the corridor, an “outdoor room” framed by new mixed use buildings with a diverse array of destination retail and restaurants. Local public art will be a prominent feature of the plaza, reinforcing the identity and appeal of the area.



The new civic plaza as part of the new mixed-use redevelopment along New Hampshire Avenue will become an exciting “Meeting Place” for residents to gather.

3. Plan recommendations

3. Create a new pedestrian-friendly street intersecting with New Hampshire Avenue at the location of the existing signalized entrance to the shopping centers. This will tie the two developments on either side together and help this area to become the “center” of the mixed use area, as opposed to the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and Ethan Allen Avenue.

4. Build new mixed use “liner” buildings at and around the Takoma Center to create a pedestrian friendly presence along street frontages. As part of any redevelopment, the Shoppers Food Warehouse would be retained as an anchor.

5. Create new streets providing a street grid network through the commercial area as properties redevelop. This would provide greater choice to motorists in choosing routes, and help relieve congestion at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and East-West Highway (MD 410) in particular. New streets will also create more “100% corners” or land that can support retail and anchor tenants. These new streets would be converted primarily by formalizing drive aisles in existing parking lots. A diagram illustrating this concept is shown on page 44 in Section 3.1.

6. Redevelop the smaller parcels on the north side of the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and East-West Highway to include medium density residential and small scale commercial. A landmark design here will reinforce a sense of arrival at somewhere special with a place-based identity.

7. In conjunction with the redesign of New Hampshire Avenue as a multi-way boulevard, redesign the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and MD 410 to reduce pedestrian crossing distances and reduce corner radii in order to slow turning vehicles.



The new tree-lined street, flanked by mixed-use buildings will terminate at the Shoppers, creating a strong visual focus on the area's anchor business. Parking will be available on-street in front of the buildings as well as in the rear of the buildings in larger parking lots.

3. Plan recommendations



Existing view looking southbound on New Hampshire Avenue at the intersection of Ethan Allen Avenue/East-West Highway.



View of redevelopment concept for the Ethan Allen Gateway area. The prominent mixed use buildings help frame the intersection as a gateway to Takoma Park and Prince George's County. The intersection will also become safer and easier to cross for pedestrians due to reduced crossing distances and improved intersection geometrics that will require vehicles to slow down as they make turns.

3. Plan recommendations



Aerial view looking northbound on New Hampshire Avenue at the existing commercial areas. The intersection of Ethan Allen Avenue/East-West Highway is at the top of the photo.

Redevelopment concept for the Ethan Allen Gateway showing a bird's-eye view of the transformed area. The new mixed-use infill buildings lines the street frontages, creating a sense of place. Parking is largely hidden from the street and located to the rear of buildings.



3. Plan recommendations



The view from a rooftop balcony of a new mixed-use building overlooking the new civic plaza and looking down the new street towards the redeveloped Shoppers.

3. Plan recommendations

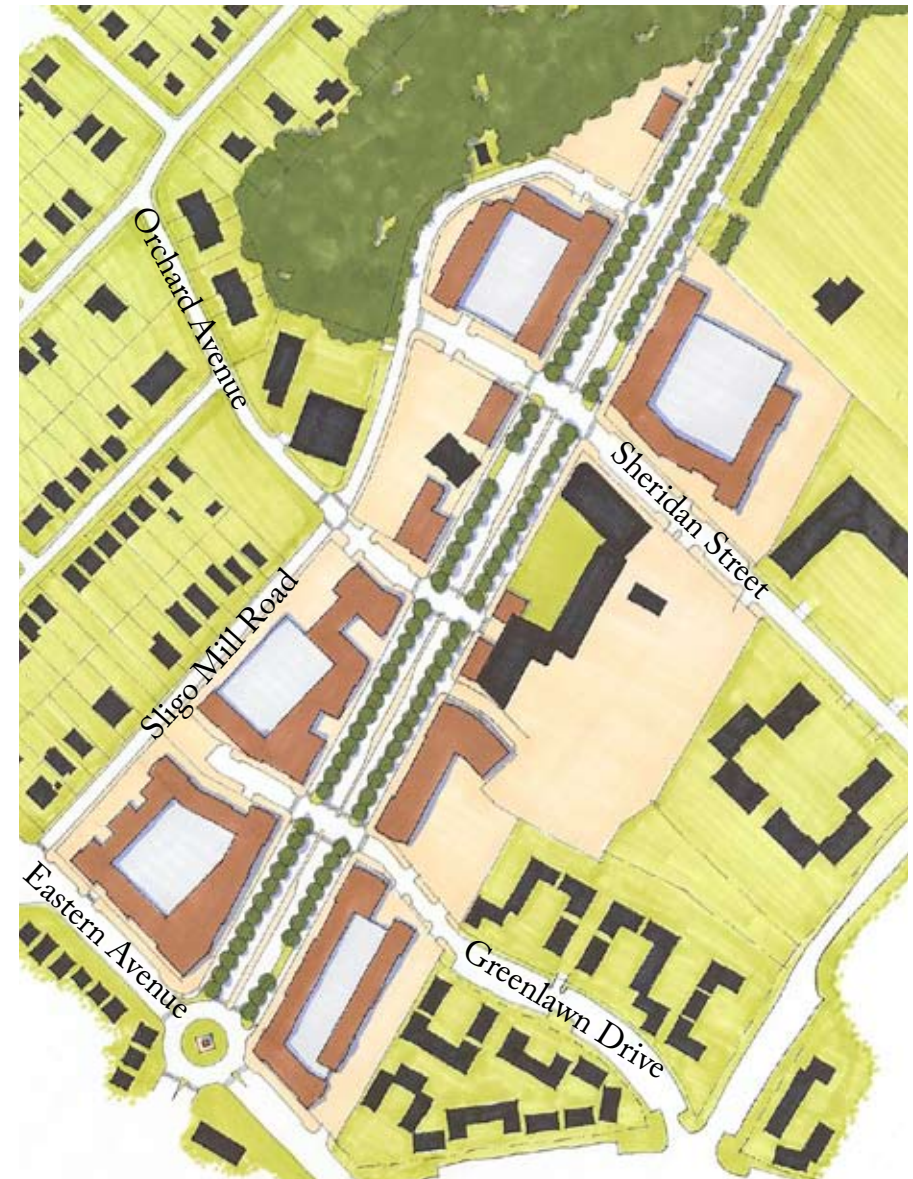
Maryland Gateway

The Maryland Gateway establishes the images of both Takoma Park and Prince George's County upon arrival over the Maryland/District line. The intersection of New Hampshire and Eastern Avenue represents an opportunity to maximize Takoma Park's exposure and share of the commuter market.

Like the Ethan Allen Gateway, the Maryland Gateway will become a pedestrian friendly mixed-use commercial district, but the two gateways will be complimentary, not competitive. Whereas the Ethan Allen Gateway will be more of a civic and destination retail center, the Maryland Gateway will be oriented to capturing trade from the District of Columbia market as well as building off of the emerging office activity at the Bank of America Business Center (the former Providence Hospital building).

Specific recommendations for the Maryland Gateway plan include:

1. Redevelop commercial properties where buildings are under three stories tall. Build new mixed-use buildings along New Hampshire Avenue. These new buildings will help create a new identity for the gateway, reflecting Takoma Park's eclectic and historic character.
2. Diversify. Add more mixed and upper income housing and Class A office space to the corridor. The new mix of uses will encourage additional office uses near the Bank of America center, additional medium density residential development,



3. Plan recommendations

and street level restaurants and convenience retail such as pharmacies, florists, and other uses oriented to office workers. Creating this dynamic mix will help draw workers across New Hampshire Avenue to patronize businesses, while also capturing pass-by traffic and local residents.

3. Gateway Feature. Introduction of a roundabout, sculpture or fountain at New Hampshire Avenue and Eastern Avenue will create a distinctive gateway feature signifying a sense of arrival. There is ample precedent for this in the Washington, DC metro area with traffic circles as boundaries between Maryland and the District. However, this would be designed as a modern roundabout, which is more compact than traffic circles, and is designed to have a traffic calming effect. This feature would unite the three jurisdictions, currently divided by roadways.

4. Create connections. Extend Orchard Avenue and Greenlawn Drive to create new intersections with New Hampshire Avenue. This will create important new connections between the corridor and neighborhoods and pedestrian crossings across New Hampshire Avenue.

5. Relocate auto service businesses. Allow existing gas stations to relocate to the corner of an extended Orchard Avenue or Sheridan Street and develop with a more urban character so they may service through traffic when the boulevard is constructed.

Right: Existing view looking northbound on New Hampshire Avenue at the intersection of Eastern Avenue.

Below: Proposed view of the Maryland Gateway area. A roundabout with plantings and a welcome marker is visible in the foreground.



3. Plan recommendations



Existing view looking northbound on New Hampshire Avenue at Sheridan Street from an upper floor of the Bank of America Center.



Proposed view of the corridor at Sheridan Street. New mixed use buildings and an improved streetscape create an inviting environment for office workers to venture out into during lunchtime. Better connections to and from adjacent neighborhoods are also created.

3. Plan recommendations

6. Neighborhood compatible development. Build medium-density residential structures on Sligo Mill Road that emulates the architectural features of traditional single-family homes within the Pinecrest residential neighborhood.

Existing birds-eye aerial view of the Maryland Gateway area with Sligo Mill Road in the foreground.



Proposed view of new residential and mixed use development between New Hampshire Avenue and Sligo Mill Road.

Under this redevelopment scenario, new homes would be built along the south side of Sligo Mill Road that compliment the character of the existing neighborhood.

This would also create an attractive transition along Eastern Avenue between the neighborhood and the mixed use commercial on New Hampshire Avenue.



3. Plan recommendations

Sligo Creek Area

While not formally a gateway, this area is the northernmost portion of the corridor, and is demarcated by an important natural feature and regional amenity: Sligo Creek Park. Much of this section of the corridor is characterized by undeveloped, environmentally sensitive woodland and wetlands. An opportunity exists to redevelop the small commercial node at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway in a manner that creates a stronger connection to the natural environment, while creating a special place for the local community and users of the Sligo Creek Park park trail. Recommendations for this section of the corridor include:



1. Redevelop the corner parcel into a small collection of community-oriented establishments that could include a cafe or “family-friendly” pub, possibly with a bicycle repair station. This eclectic grouping of buildings could also include an outdoor eating and gathering area, a small park, and multi-tiered decks and boardwalks for overlooking and accessing the natural landscape.

2. Improve the pedestrian experience along New Hampshire Avenue by removing the existing sidewalks that are directly adjacent to traffic and replacing them with an asphalt shared-use paths for pedestrian and bicyclists. These paths would be set back from the road far enough to plant street trees in most places.



3. Plan recommendations

- 3. Develop public amenities of appropriate scale at the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway and New Hampshire Avenue to support public enjoyment of the park.
- 4. Enhance the intersection as a gateway into the corridor with additional plantings native to the region. These plantings include trees along the southwest corner of the intersection and a series of stormwater biofiltration gardens that manage stormwater and enhance the visual quality of the corridor as well as a sizeable meadow and an upper level boardwalk to a community pavilion.
- 5. Enhance Sligo Creek east of New Hampshire Avenue with native plantings, a moderately-sized stormwater meadow that treats stormwater runoff from New Hampshire Ave.
- 6. Enhancing Sligo Creek west of the intersection with a small stormwater garden that connects the corner community-oriented establishments to Sligo Creek Park.

Right: proposed plan of the Sligo Creek area as it traverses the corridor.



Below: section view looking west through the site. Nature overlooks on the north and south sides of Sligo Creek Parkway, as well as a covered pavilion, are illustrated.



3. Plan recommendations

Takoma Branch Area

This quarter mile stretch of New Hampshire Avenue between the Ethan Allen and Maryland Gateway areas can provide a dramatically enhanced residential presence within the corridor. The design of the multi-way boulevard will improve access to the corridor for local residents, but also help calm traffic as it enters the neighborhood and discourage cut-through traffic.

A large portion of this area is unsuitable for redevelopment due to low lying environmental characteristics and the presence of a large PEPCO substation. However, there is the potential to introduce new low- and mid-rise residential development on existing developed parcels.

In addition, there are significant opportunities to enhance and restore open spaces as a way of further improving their function within an environmental network. This would enhance the desirability of residential properties in the immediate area.



3. Plan recommendations

Recommendations for the Takoma Branch area include:

1. Protect riparian assets. Protect and enhance the Takoma Branch riparian corridor by precluding development within the riparian corridor and identifying restoration project(s). This would also entail removing invasive plant species and replacing them with native plantings and removing debris and dumped material.

2. Access. Largely restore and maintain Sligo Mill Park as a passive, wild space, while improving its northern edge with an improved pedestrian path along Poplar Avenue, ornamental understory trees, native plantings, a tot lot, and nature overlook. This will enhance park surveillance and use by the neighborhood and create an appealing gateway into the Takoma Park neighborhoods. The removal of invasive plants in the park will improve visibility, improve habitat value, and safeguard the park area's future health.

Below, left: Concept for the enhanced edge of park land along Poplar Avenue. This will create an attractive natural gateway into the neighborhood, while providing a new community amenity and pleasant walking environment to and from the corridor.

Below: The section view of the enhanced park showing the overlook into the park.



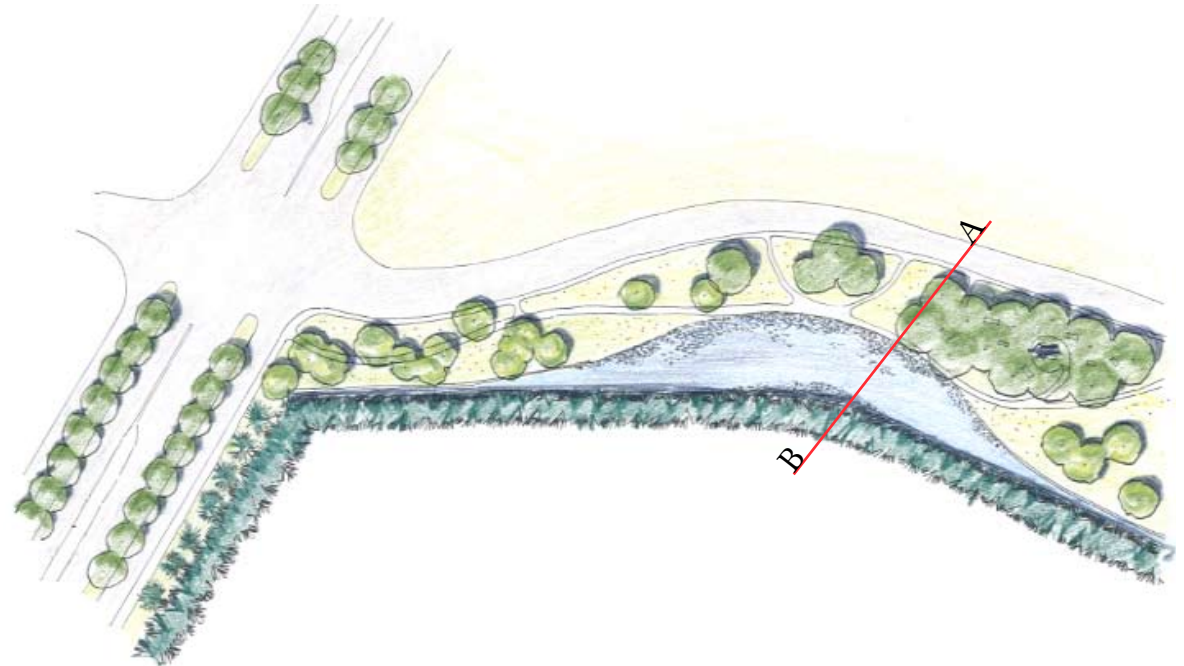
3. Plan recommendations

3. Restore the Takoma Branch south of Ray Road. Currently, this section of Takoma Branch is encased in vertical concrete walls. Its surrounding landscape is devoid of vegetation aside from mown non-native grass and many invasive vines, creating a degraded ecological condition within the riparian corridor. The space contains no public amenities, making it uninviting for nearby residents. Given its location at a major intersection along New Hampshire Avenue, it is a prime location for stream restoration that can also improve water quality and become a public park.

Build a passive park whose focus is an unchanneled and partially restored stream. Additional paths, picnic tables, and benches support pedestrians' and bicyclists' use of the regional trails. By removing the concrete walls and regrading the earth to slope gently to the creek, residents gain a safe and direct access to the water.

Plant closely-spaced, columnar evergreen trees along the southern edge to screen the PEPCO substation. Plant additional native species plantings within the park to enhance its experience as an untamed urban space.

Take advantage of the location at a low point along New Hampshire Avenue to construct a stormwater infiltration garden that catches debris and trash and naturally treats stormwater runoff before release into Takoma Branch.



Above: Plan view showing the restored Takoma Branch stream and community park along Ray Road. Improved screening across the PEPCO substation site is also shown.



Left: Section view looking east through the new open space with Ray Road at left.

3. Plan recommendations

4. Increase the screening of the PEPCO substation with new vegetation and/or fencing.

5. Redevelop the parcels between Ray Road and the Belford Towers, as high-end townhouses, and develop residential infill on the under-utilized spaces between the Belford Towers as mid-rise market rate residential units. This will help improve the residential character of this area by diversifying housing options.

This reinforces the economic vitality of the Ethan Allen activity center by concentrating commercial uses within walking distance with more opportunity for shared parking and synergy between businesses at this commercial hub.

6. Similarly, redevelop the McLaughlin School property with a mix of affordable and market residences of varying types.

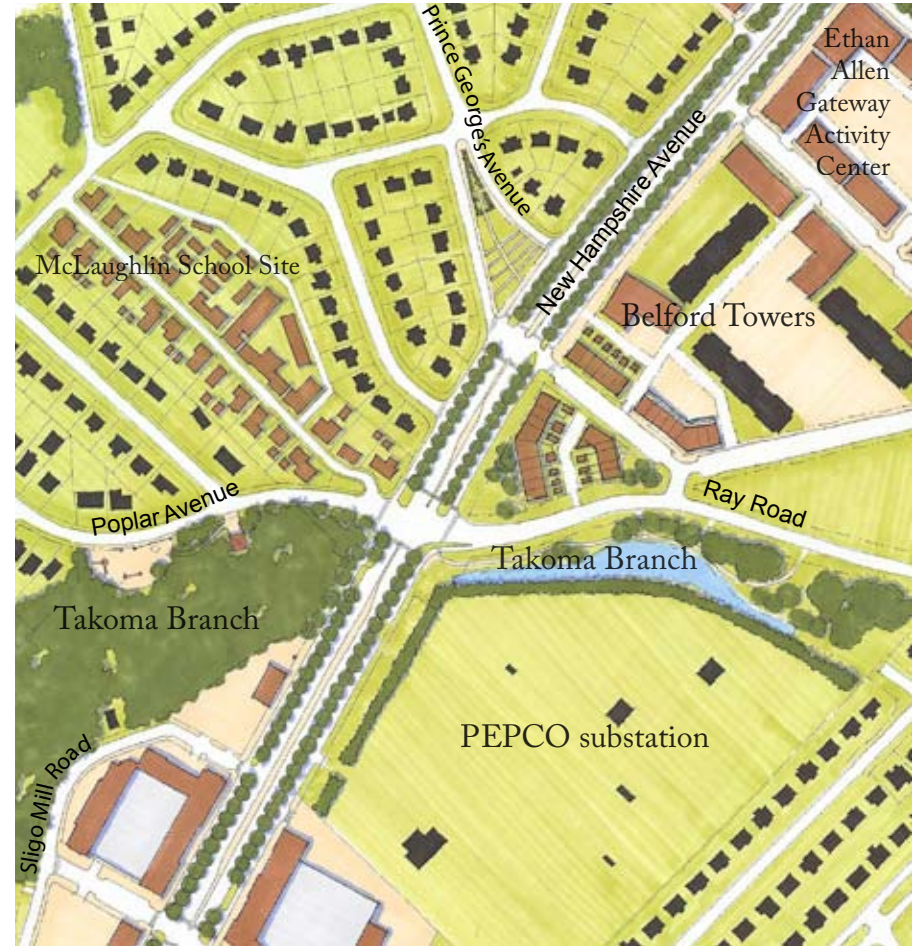
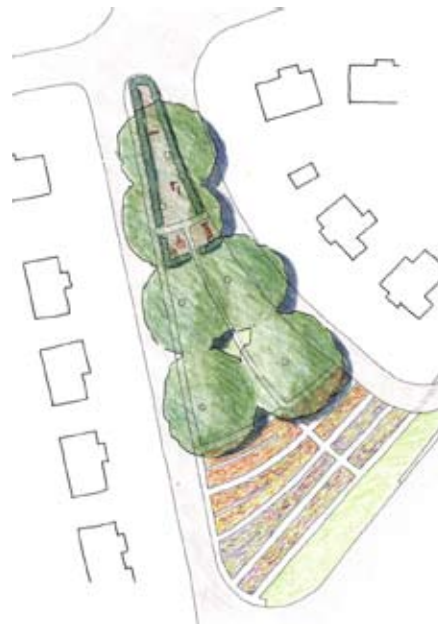
7. Convert the dead end at Sligo Mill Road into a through street that allows greater surveillance of natural area.

8. Develop building complexes that “face” Takoma Branch on the north side of Ray Road east of New Hampshire Avenue and on Sligo Mill Road.

9. Create new pocket parks at Belford Towers, the existing high density residential complexes.

10. Landscape the triangular shaped park space at Prince George’s Avenue as a gateway to the Takoma Park neighborhoods by creating an ornamental flower garden along New Hampshire Avenue.

Provide a garden where the community can grow flowers and ornamental shrubs, where social activities and garden interests can be shared. In the western, shady corner of the triangle, add a hedge-lined tot lot.



Above: Illustration of recommended projects.

Left: Plan view of the proposed improvements to the park at Prince George's Avenue.

Right: Existing triangular park at Prince George's Avenue.

Below: Proposed improvement to the park and new residential development across a tree-lined, traffic calmed New Hampshire Avenue.







4. Implementation

4. Implementation

4.1 Strategy for redevelopment

The process for redevelopment within the Corridor is based on the plan concepts and recommendations for key intersections along the Avenue. Plan implementation requires that the City of Takoma Park act as a facilitator among a variety of players, both public and private to implement the recommendations.

The City also has an important role to play in marketing and recruitment, particularly in the pro-active outreach and recruitment of potential developers to implement certain aspects of the conceptual plan. The following strategy provides a framework for implementation in the current context.

1. Prioritization

The first step in this process is to prioritize key infrastructure improvements and development nodes where the City's efforts can be focused. Phasing recommendations are provided later in this section.

2. Stakeholder Buy-In

Engage with key public and private stakeholders to gain buy-in to the basic concepts developed through the charrette process and marketing this implementation plan.

Engage the City's planning and economic development counterparts in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in the process, since a large portion of the study area is located in the counties and the redevelopment concepts require a bi-jurisdictional approach. In discussions with officials, it should be emphasized that the counties stand to

benefit from various aspects of this plan. This includes establishment of a more competitive development area that can harness expenditure potential from higher-income households and improved public space, safety, and access to services for lower income neighborhoods.

Engage existing property owners in the priority nodes in the process and advocate for their buy-in to the basic concepts of walkability, the multi-way boulevard concept, and the direct financial benefits of a combined development effort within the Ethan Allen Gateway and the Maryland Gateway.

There are opportunities for property owners to not to sell their properties to developers and to act as equity partners in a much more economically viable and profitable enterprise. Thus, the City of Takoma Park should work cooperatively with Prince George's County and Montgomery County to hold additional meetings and workshops with property owners along the corridor to educate them about the 1) goals and benefits of the specific plan elements to transform the corridor into a more pedestrian friendly environment and 2) help them understand how they can benefit

from redeveloping in tandem with adjoining properties.



3. Developer Recruitment

A third important part of this process is the recruitment of developers to help package redevelopment sites.

There are already small and large developers looking for sites in the Corridor, but the City can play an important role, on behalf of the property owners, in recruiting strong master developers with extensive experience in urban retail/housing mixed use.

Work closely with developers to facilitate site master planning processes that include a pre-feasibility effort. Hire consultants or work directly with developers who can help identify key constraints to leasing for small, local, independent or specialty tenants that Takoma Park wants to retain. Based on an understanding of those constraints, incentives can be developed that are targeted to the specific needs and

requirements for inclusion of the small, local, specialty retailer.

Use a similar approach to design incentives to encourage mixed-income and affordable housing.

Business & Development Incentives

Several sample business and development incentives appropriate for the context of this Corridor have been identified. These recommendations focus primarily on short-term or temporary direct business incentives as well as the creation of a special development district (coupled with existing Enterprise Zone incentives).

Direct Business Lease Programs

Takoma residents have indicated a desire for certain types of specialty retail businesses and support for struggling ethnic restaurants. Where the market volumes are insufficient to support rent structures for certain types of specialty retail stores, there are incentives that can be used on a temporary basis to help businesses survive transitional periods. This is particularly helpful for local or small independent businesses that would otherwise be “gentrified” out by the rents in a large new project.

Such incentives might include rent cross-subsidies and graduated leases offered by landlords or a direct rent abatement offered through the municipal government. Of course, the best protection for small businesses is building ownership. So, efforts by local government that can help small businesses gain an equity share in their building are also extremely beneficial.

Special District

Municipal and County Governments can also help to establish a Special District with a package of incentives and marketing that help to support development.

This could take the form of a Business Improvement District (BID) or a Parking District. Takoma Park could help establish a destination marketing entity between the developers and businesses to help promote the corridor to the local and regional market. Consider density bonuses that lessen the regulatory burden on developers while improving transit and retail market opportunities.

While the City would have to work within county jurisdiction, there are opportunities for property tax abatements and accelerated depreciation incentives that can generate up-front cash savings to developers that can be passed on to tenants.

There are also reductions in business licenses and fees that the City, County, or State can offer as part of the overall package within this district.

The City can also take a more hands-on approach through municipal contracting preferences and other direct use of City funding. Takoma Park should consider the development of Buy Local programs, which encourage residents to purchase goods and services within Takoma Park to reduce auto use and improve market opportunities for local businesses.

4. Implementation

4.2 Priorities and phasing

Re-design New Hampshire Avenue

A multi-way boulevard along the entire Avenue is the lynch pin of this plan. This multi-way boulevard has interrelated multi-modal transportation components described in detail in the corridor-wide recommendations section of this plan (Section 3.1). Re-design affects the ability to attract the envisioned redevelopment. For that reason, it has been broken out from the phasing and identified as a high priority project of critical importance.

It will take considerable advocacy and political will, funding, and sustained effort on the part of the City, counties, neighborhoods, and residents to bring it to fruition. The process must start immediately to lobby state legislative representative, “sell” the concept and secure commitments and approvals, while recognizing that the complex nature of this project will not allow it to be fully funded or completed within a short-term time frame.

It may be possible to structure the project to be done incrementally and in conjunction with redevelopment.

All of the following recommendation priorities would run concurrent with ongoing work to redevelop New Hampshire Avenue as a multi-way boulevard.

The short, medium, and long-term priorities for redevelopment, infrastructure, and programming within the Corridor are recommended based on the outcomes of the charrette process and on the baseline economic assessment.



Map of Priority Phasing

SHORT- TERM

Several short-term priorities are presented for completion by the City within 1 to 2 years.

These minor stake-holder buy-in, regulatory, placemaking, and pedestrian safety improvements can be accomplished within the short term (1-2 years) because they do not require the establishment of new policies, programs, or developments.

Stakeholder Equity Buy-In.

Communicate with key stakeholders and gain their buy-in to equity involvement in the two gateway redevelopment concepts and support for the multi-way boulevard presented in this plan.

These include state legislative representatives whose districts include the corridor as well as property owners from the following sites: All Star Carpet/ Gussini Strip Center, Takoma Center (Shoppers Food Warehouse), U-Haul Hitch World, New Hampshire Business Center (“Bank of America”); and 6900, 6530, 6600, and 6480 New Hampshire.

Develop a group of Takoma Park and Prince George’s residents committed to taking a strong advocacy role by writing letters, testifying at hearings, and lobbying representatives to obtain recognition, awareness, and commitments of the funding resources, and regulatory changes necessary to achieve the concepts over time.

Continue business outreach to strengthen and position existing businesses for future market shifts due to new development.

Use this plan to move forward with pursuing New Hampshire Avenue as a mode “sustainable transportation corridor”. Follow-up work should include a detailed study of how transformation of the road can help reduce the carbon footprint and greenhouse gases in this area, which has become a critical priority of the State of Maryland.

Pedestrian Safety and Design Improvements.

Another short term priority is to secure funding and implementation for basic pedestrian safety and design improvements in the existing New Hampshire Avenue roadway. Such improvements include:

Upgrade pedestrian safety crossing lights for existing crosswalks at New Hampshire and Ethan Allen, between Takoma Center and Gussini, and at New Hampshire Avenue and Sheridan Avenue.

Fund minor streetscaping improvements, including the buffering of the PEPCO sub-station.

Improve bus stops along the corridor.

Expand the commercial area facade improvement program in Takoma Park and obtain funds and staffing for Prince George’s County for the program.

Policy and Planning Initiatives.

Obtain commitment of funding for traffic counts and engineering for the redesign of New Hampshire Avenue.

Obtain designation in the Prince George’s County General Plan of New Hampshire Avenue as a corridor, Ethan Allen as a community center, and the Maryland Gateway as a node.

Develop and implement a “placemaking” program including, but not limited to: public art, outdoor events, street furniture, bus stops, landscaping, and other features.

Advocate for a priority bus corridor with frequent and express service.

Ensure that all jurisdictions have legislation to enable business improvement districts or other funding mechanism to ensure a high level of service to maintain future improvements.

Revitalize and fund the Maryland International CDC or a new CDC in order to create a source for new market tax credits, a development partner, and an entity that can assess and address cross-jurisdictional business and residential issues.

Regulatory Enforcement.

Enforce existing regulatory policies, with a focus on visible trouble spots including dumping, deteriorating buildings, and illegal signs.

4. Implementation

MID-TERM

There are a number of mid-term priorities that would engage the City over the next 2 to 6 years. Among these priorities are efforts to initiate redevelopment consistent with the illustrations for the two gateway commercial areas in the Concept Plan, as well as several types of extensive design improvements. Throughout this phase, the City will continue to work with community to ensure developments and businesses reflect a unique and local character.

Ethan Allen Gateway Project Initiation.

During the 2 to 6 year period, the City would engage in a process of developer recruitment, redevelopment planning and oversight of the Ethan Allen Gateway concept.

Develop pedestrian access and a civic plaza as integral into the overall development of the commercial area.

Create developer and tenant incentives to ensure new buildings conform to the interests of the community and that small and independent businesses have an opportunity to remain in the commercial area.

Initiate construction work on Phase 1 development to include New Hampshire Avenue street front buildings, Shoppers Food Warehouse, and the civic plaza.

Maryland Gateway Project Initiation.

There would be several distinct mid-term projects moving forward in the Takoma Gateway district.

The property at 6300 (Advance Auto) and 6350 New Hampshire will be examined for redevelopment as the "Maryland Gateway Building." The City will help work with the property owners and businesses to recruit a developer and provide redevelopment planning and oversight.

The City would work with Prince George's County on renovation planning for the large "Bank of America" building at Sheridan and New Hampshire Avenue for mixed office/retail use.

Key redevelopment sites include 6460 and 6494 New Hampshire. The City would help identify opportunities for local developers and community stakeholders, while providing redevelopment planning and oversight.

Design Improvements.

Finally, in the mid-term, the City will pro-actively seek funding for important major design improvements, including:

Complete engineering and obtain funding for reconstruction of New Hampshire Avenue.

Extend Orchard Avenue Extension and establish a pedestrian crosswalk across New Hampshire Avenue to improve the east-west linkages.

Fund the Poplar Avenue greenway trail, as a public amenity.

Fund clean-up of Takoma Branch and Sligo Overlook Park.

Establish a maintenance, promotions, and marketing program that operates in both counties to provide a high level of service and year round programming.

LONGER-TERM

There are several diverse longer-term projects that are either later phases of mid-term projects or will require a longer lead-in time for completion.

Ethan Allen Gateway Later Phases.

Phase 2 of the Ethan Allen project would be initiated during the longer-term and would include the development of remaining commercial properties.

This project would be followed by Phase 3 which include the redevelopment of the northeast and northwest corners at the intersection. The City's role again will be to facilitate buy-in from the property owners who, by this stage, will be largely integrated into the process underway. The City will again provide redevelopment planning and oversight.

Other Projects.

Several other long-term projects include redevelopment of the office building located at 6530 New Hampshire Avenue; construction of the proposed Maryland Gateway roundabout or gateway feature; restoration of Takoma Branch along Ray Road; and development of pedestrian access and support infrastructure for Sligo Creek and Takoma Branch.

The City's role in the Sligo Creek area would also include lobbying, funding, and planning in coordination with property owners, as well as recruitment of an operator for a pub concession at the park.



Residents planting trees and bulbs donated by Prince George's County to screen the electric substation and beautify the New Hampshire Avenue Corridor

