



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Connections and Community:

Knitting Together La Plata's Center

LA PLATA, MD

SPONSORED BY:
La Plata Town Center Corporation
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 **Urban Land
Institute**
Washington

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The objective of ULI Washington's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary, and objective advice on land use and real estate issues facing public agencies and nonprofit organizations in the Metropolitan Washington Region. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Washington conducts one and one-half day panels offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues, ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. Learn more at washington.uli.org/TAPs.

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Executive Summary

La Plata is located in Charles County, a growing suburban/exurban commuter community that is part of the greater Washington, DC region. The Town of La Plata has long envisioned improving its downtown into a place where the community can come together and improve the economic vitality of the downtown while preserving and enhancing the historic character of the area.

The sponsor for the TAP is the La Plata Town Center Corporation (LPTCC), which was created in 2011 and is dedicated to the mission of downtown development. The LPTCC is an independent nonprofit and is comprised of representatives of the La Plata development community, which includes Architects, Developers, Business Owners, Hospital Administrators, Development Attorneys, County Planners, County Economic Development Staff, and is chaired currently by the Mayor of the Town of La Plata.

The study area's existing conditions highlight its challenges and strengths. On one hand, vehicular congestion, fragmented ownership, and lack of relocation and redevelopment readiness for two significant industrial properties hinder redevelopment prospects. On the other hand, the concentration of parcels, existing utility infrastructure, and market strength of the study area create opportunities for redevelopment.

Panelists recommended a host of strategies aimed at enhancing redevelopment potential for the site. These recommendations touch on issues relating to transportation, connectivity, and circulation; highest and best use for development; design; funding; prioritization; and implementation.

La Plata in Context

La Plata is located in Charles County, a growing suburban/exurban commuter community that is part of the greater Washington, DC region. Charles County was once largely rural, with tobacco farming a major occupation, and the Town of La Plata is the historic county seat. La Plata occupies an interesting cross-roads position that has shaped its development over time. The Route 301 highway corridor provides north-south connections and was once a primary interstate route. Today, the 301 corridor is dominated by big-box, chain and strip mall development, serving as a major retail destination for the surrounding area but offering little in the way of a clearly defined regional center. A rail line once provided passenger and freight service to points north, and is now used only to ship coal to a power plant located to the south. State Highway 6 is a principal east-west route extending into southern Maryland and is a frequently congested commuter corridor bisecting La Plata's traditional core, employment hubs, and services.

While La Plata is on the edge of exurban development for Washington, DC, it is perhaps more compelling to see La Plata as the first major retail, services, and employment destination for many of the areas to the south. La Plata has attracted region-serving national retailers inside the city limits along 301, including Walmart and Target. While the rest of Charles County and the surrounding areas of Southern Maryland are commuting towards Washington or several large defense installations, La Plata offers two strong employment anchors: the Charles County Government Center and the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical facility. Reflecting these conditions, the town has a comparatively higher income, well-educated population and anticipates continuing growth.

La Plata's historic role as the county seat, retail and services destination, and transportation crossroads is still evident in several interesting historic buildings in and adjacent to the study area. Much of the historic fabric of the city has been altered through new development, and most recently, the 2002 tornado that devastated the town's historic core. Immediately prior to the 2002 tornado, the Town of La Plata created an ambitious Vision Plan for the downtown, engaging a large number of community stakeholders. The Vision Plan sought to expand the small historic town core and create a walkable, mixed use, and more traditionally gridded town center anchored by a civic square in the study area. Now, as then, the study area contains the Southern Maryland Oil and Coca Cola facilities, as well as small retail, services, light industrial, and housing. The tornado's path, however, went through the town core and away from the study area. As the town rebuilt, many of the vision plan ideas were altered, responding to the immediate needs of the community and property owners although the new development, including a new town hall, incorporates some of the vision plans' guidance towards greater density and more pedestrian friendly public environment.

La Plata's cross-roads location, strong employment anchors, and civic leadership offer the opportunity to establish a strong sense of place with distinctive amenities that appeal to the surrounding community, distinct from the 301 corridor. The study area holds critical opportunities to provide additional residential density, create walkable, engaging connections that physically and perceptually connect the key sites, and consolidate other civic amenities.

Project Scope

The Town of La Plata has long envisioned improving its downtown into a place where the community can come together and improve the economic vitality while preserving and enhancing the historic character of the area.

The study area for this TAP is located centrally within La Plata, and measures about 15.5 acres on the north side of La Plata's downtown. The study area is bounded to the North by Talbot Street Extended, East by Maple Avenue, South by Charles Street (MD Route 6), and West by Washington Avenue. The study area parcels are owned by a number of private property owners, and the businesses include small retailers, personal service providers, office and industrial properties in the town's Central Business Zone. The mixture of uses and structure is reflective of a small town in which residential properties back up and/or have been converted to commercial uses and are in close proximity to industrial and commercial uses.



The TAP study area, identified in yellow, measures approximately 15.5 acres, and is located centrally in La Plata. *Map Source: ULI Washington.*

Charles Street (Maryland Route 6), which is a main east-west corridor through town and home to a number of businesses, is very congested at peak hours. This heavy traffic makes it a focal point for businesses, but also divides the downtown and makes it difficult—even dangerous—for pedestrians to cross the street.

The study area is also located between the two of the town's largest employers: Charles County Government and Court Complex to the west, and the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center (hospital). Within the study area are two large and currently operational industrial properties owned by Coca Cola and South Maryland Oil.

The sponsor for the TAP is the La Plata Town Center Corporation (LPTCC), which was created in 2011 and is dedicated to the mission of downtown development by trying to re-ignite the 2000 Vision Plan. The LPTCC is an independent nonprofit that receives funding from the Town of La Plata. The LPTCC is made up of representatives of the La Plata development community, and includes Architects, Developers, Business Owners, Hospital Administrator, Development Attorneys, County Planners, County Economic Development Staff, and is chaired currently by the Mayor of the Town of La Plata.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

The Panel was asked to address the following questions, which were grouped into four major themes:

REDEVELOPMENT

1. Is the redevelopment of downtown La Plata economically viable? Is a mixed use concept viable? What uses are best suited for the town? Provide comment on the strength of the La Plata market now and in the future. Consider tax revenues of proposed uses in order to provide an understanding of return on investments to the town over time (Market analysis of the highest and best use).
2. The current Charles County library is located at the southeast quadrant of Charles Street and Garret Avenue. The Town, County and UMCCRH are working together to relocate the library in the downtown core. The town owns property near Town Hall on the northwest quadrant of St Mary's Avenue and Queen Anne Street. The La Plata Town Center Corporation believes this location or somewhere else in the study area would be the ideal location for a new Library. Where do you think the Library should be located? What steps are needed to make relocation happen?

3. The Southern Maryland Oil and Coke properties lie in the center of the study area. These sites are seen as having significant potential for redevelopment as identified in the downtown plan to allow for additional street networks to be developed, but these sites may require remediation. How might this affect redevelopment and what planning is needed to address possible environmental impacts? Address the best financial resources and planning tools to facilitate redevelopment on privately owned properties within the study area. Discuss strategies to relocate the existing large industrial tenants.
4. What specific projects could help facilitate or implement the redevelopment of the study area? Please provide rough cost estimates that could be considered in future Town and County work programs, funding cycles and in grant applications.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

5. How can future development address current traffic issues and what traffic improvements are needed to improve vehicular circulation throughout downtown and La Plata as a whole? What would be the recommended development's traffic impacts to the existing infrastructure? (Traffic study or analysis is needed to address the traffic congestion and future development's impact on traffic)
6. How can pedestrian connections be strengthened in the study area and adjacent downtown areas with a focus on the south side of Charles Street, the County complex to the west? How will redevelopment encourage walking and other modes of transportation? What streetscape improvements should be required? How should these be funded and implemented?

FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

7. What Funding sources for site acquisition should be considered? What grants are available? Should the town consider a Public Private Partnership, TIF or other monetary resource? Are there grants or funding that the LPTCC could take advantage of?
8. How should the implementation be phased and which steps are necessary to serve as a catalyst for redevelopment?

Assessing the Study Area

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Panelist's experiences touring the study area corroborated many of the challenges outlined in the TAP briefing materials. Vehicular congestion, particularly during rush hour, creates challenges for pedestrian safety. Since the pedestrian experience has direct implications for the smaller scale retail experience, retail opportunities in the Charles and Washington corridors are also suffering. Additionally, pass-through traffic is creating competition with local circulation, which impedes the opportunity for successful retail.

The Panel acknowledged the town's Vision Plan, but observed a general diffusion of overall priorities for identifying short- and long-term strategies, particularly with regard to transportation. The Panel also noted that a culture of strictly adhering to the Vision Plan may be hampering progress, and counseled that the town be flexible in considering alternatives.

Development in the study area is largely fragmented and uncoordinated, and the existing zoning does not support or incentivize redevelopment. The restrictive zoning—especially with regard to residential development—discourages property owners from working together, thereby diminishing the opportunity to achieve an overall development vision for the area.

Two major property owners in the study area—Coca Cola and Southern Maryland Oil—represent approximately 1/3 of the total land area, but at the present time, do not have relocation prospects. Until relocation solutions are identified, it is unlikely that these property owners will allow development on their parcels, which stands in the way of redevelopment for the overall site.

On the other hand, these large parcels and their concentrated ownership also create a substantial opportunity. Once relocation plans are in place, the chance for these parcels to redevelop will serve as a major catalyst for the study area. Other potential catalysts exist as well, including relocating the library or expanding the government center.

One major benefit for the study area is that it already contains utility infrastructure to support future development. Utilities and stormwater management strategies are in place and working well. There is also a strong culture of stakeholder participation, evidenced by the creation and investment of the LPTCC.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The anticipated continuing growth in La Plata is expected to drive demand for a pattern of distinctive, quality, place-making development. The Panel analyzed the study area's market opportunities for various land uses, and drew two important conclusions. First, from a market perspective, the study area itself does not present any inherent problems. The challenges for the study area are rooted in its existing and surrounding conditions—fragmented ownership and traffic congestion. These challenges can be addressed through policy and other creative solutions, rendering the study area as a site that is favorable for redevelopment.

Second, there is a strong short- and long-term market opportunity for for-sale housing. The site's location is prime for housing employees who work either in or near the study area. The Panel recommended an attached town house product as the highest and best land use for the site. Rental housing, by contrast, tends to require more land than is currently available. Retail opportunities are limited due to competition with the nearby retail on Route 301 and with the boutique retail already located in the study area. The Panel acknowledged that a growing household base could lead to successful restaurant and boutique retail in the future, and emphasized that such uses would need to be complementary with the existing retail in order to be successful. Office uses are more limited for the study area, primarily due to the large amounts of existing office space surrounding the study area. Nevertheless, as the existing employment centers—the hospital and the courthouse—grow, there may be a future opportunity for “spinoff” office uses, such as medical spaces or attorney offices.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR LA PLATA

LAND USE	SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITY	LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITY	PRODUCT	TARGET AUDIENCE
For-Sale	Strong	Strong	2 over 2 product and Townhomes at \$200-\$300K and live/work units at \$400K+	Employees in area. Younger and older singles and couples. Divorcees. Local business owners
For-Rent	Limited	Moderate	Smaller buildings. Above office or retail	Employees in area. Younger singles and couples
Retail	Limited	Moderate	Integrated into current pattern. Walkable. Related to the creation of place and the addition of residents	Restaurants, local businesses. Collect the boutiques in downtown into one area. Create destination
Office	Limited	Moderate	Integrated into live/work units, free-standing buildings integrated into land plan	Locally serving, medical office, professional services, spin-off from near-by employers
Hospitality	Limited	Limited	Integrated into town center	Meets the needs of local employment

ABOVE

A market analysis of land uses provides a sense of the short- and long-term viability of various products, including target audiences. Ultimately for-sale housing is the most viable land use option for the study area. *Source: ULI Washington.*

In good news, the Panel found that town house products are already experiencing market acceptance in La Plata, which reduces the risk for future developers. Rather than having to create and market a new kind of product to the area, speculative developers can confidently build for-sale, attached, housing product knowing that area residents are already familiar with, perhaps even demanding, this type of housing.

LEFT

There is a precedent for townhouses in the area. Phillips Row, in Washington DC, illustrates the kind of residential townhouse product that could be suitable for the study area. *Photo credit: DLR Group | Sorg.*



RIGHT

This two-over-two product, which is modern in its design, can be a desired product for first-time buyers because of its affordability. *Photo credit DLR Group | Sorg.*



Transportation and Connectivity

ACCESSING LA PLATA

Considering La Plata in its regional context, the town represents a commercial center. Based on local and regional analysis, La Plata is home to 11,000 jobs and 4,000 households. The resulting 2.7 jobs/household ratio indicates that many people are arriving in La Plata in the morning, and departing in the evening. Introducing a mix of uses, particularly housing options, to the study area could therefore have implications for future transportation patterns; if more people lived closer to where they worked, overall travel demand during rush hour would decrease. Area forecasts indicate that La Plata is aiming to increase economic growth through both jobs and housing; over the next 30 years, La Plata is expecting a 20% increase in jobs and a 75% increase households.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Panelists repeatedly heard concern about the amount of traffic in La Plata, and observed that there is high traffic volume heading through La Plata every day, but not necessarily stopping in the area. Panelists acknowledged the development to the northeast of the study area and recommended identifying opportunities to create a series of streets that help disperse traffic both within La Plata and through La Plata over time.



Although Charles County, which houses La Plata, may appear to be a bedroom community that serves Washington, DC, data shows that La Plata itself is actually a commercial center, with commuters arriving in the morning and departing in the evening. *Map Source: ULI Washington.*

This map, which shows average daily traffic volumes on main roads serving La Plata, indicates that a variety of east-west trips are taken throughout La Plata. Some of this traffic comes to the study area, shaded in yellow, but much if it is local within the broader La Plata vicinity. *Map Source: ULI Washington.*



The Heritage Green mixed-use development in the northeast quadrant of La Plata is planned to ultimately consist of over 3,000 new residential units and about a half-million square feet of commercial development. Heritage Green Parkway, a collector roadway only partially constructed, will ultimately connect US 301 and Route 6 through this development, providing additional connectivity for traffic that does not need to travel through downtown. The construction of any new railroad crossing at grade, however, is complicated by the need for coordination with CSX transportation to either close or otherwise substantially upgrade existing at-grade crossings. The concept for a new Heritage Green Parkway crossing in 2007 included provision for active signal upgrades at three existing at-grade rail crossings but has not moved forward in the past decade. It will be important to continue addressing broad transportation strategies while moving forward with development progress. In other words, the Panel advised that La Plata should not rely on broad transportation strategies to influence major development decisions. Waiting for these transportation projects—either a bypass or a series of road extensions—to inform development decisions will only delay and hamper overall redevelopment.

Panelists also recommended balancing the needs for both through- and local traffic, and suggested several short-term improvements, such as slowing down traffic and improving pedestrian and cycling conditions, in order to make Charles Street feel more like a main street, and improving the activation and walkability of Washington Street. Furthermore, creating a street grid in the study area can have the dual benefit of improving internal circulation and defining and prioritizing parcels for redevelopment. Panelists also acknowledged the CSX tracks that penetrate the study area as a multimodal choke point: vehicles and pedestrians alike cross these tracks regularly. Developing better ways to enhance multimodal connections across the tracks will be key for success.

Finally, Panelists addressed the culture of parking in the study area. Currently, there is a lot of surface space devoted to parking, and this is coupled with a culture of “parking possessiveness,” a trend that finds storefronts oriented towards rear parking lots. As a result, the actual front doors of retail establishments are uninviting, and therefore unused. This culture blocks the potential for creating pedestrian-oriented streets, and needs to be addressed if La Plata is hoping to encourage pedestrian activity. Fostering a culture of shared parking—one that uses the existing spaces more efficiently based on uses that are occupied at different times and one that focuses on front doors—can help inspire pedestrian activity.

Concept Plans

Given the strengths of the study area, and the various opportunities for change, the Panel proposed two different concept plans. While both concept plans seek to enhance the existing fabric of the area, each concept plan approaches redevelopment possibilities in a unique way. The Panelists noted that multiple design approaches can achieve the desired outcomes for the study area. Strict adherence to the site plan shown in the original Vision Plan appears to limit flexibility to respond to changing conditions and act creatively. With that in mind, two concept plans highlight possibilities for the study area to redevelop, but achieve similar outcomes: a strong civic destination; vehicular and pedestrian connections between the major employment anchors; parking strategies, and housing with a mix of more locally-serving restaurants, retail, and offices.

CONCEPT PLAN A: TOWN SQUARE, INFILL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT, AND SHARED PARKING

The first concept plan centers around relocating the library so that it serves as the north end of an axis with La Plata's Town Hall at the south end. Public libraries have been used as catalysts for community place-making and development. For instance, the downtown Rockville Library is a key anchor for the town square mixed use development in Rockville, MD. In a different approach, several new stand-alone neighborhood libraries in Washington, DC have used striking, high quality architecture to establish gathering spaces with state of the art technology that rapidly became part of the community identity. If La Plata is going to pursue the library in the study area, it will be important to consider recent examples like these to maximize the impact of this public investment.

In this scenario, a town square concept completes the axis with Town Hall, and serves as a central gathering point at the junction of Charles Street and La Grange Street. This plan addresses the traffic concern of Washington Street backing up to Talbot Street by adding a new street, which creates an alternative access point to Washington Street.



Concept Plan A connects to La Plata's Town Hall by extending the end of La Grange Street into a town square at the base of the siteplan. *Image Source: ULI Washington.*



Concept Plan A relies on a town square concept and infill development to create a three-block redevelopment that could include residential development to the north, centrally-located shared parking, and mixed-use development along the site's perimeter. *Image Source: ULI Washington.*

Creating alternate connections leads to the formation of a block pattern. Infill development along the study area's perimeter creates an opportunity for shared parking in the center of the site. At first, this shared parking could take the form of a surface lot that would allow consumers to park immediately next to the buildings they wish to visit. If a parking structure were to be integrated with the site, then building heights—including the library—could be increased to accommodate multi-story units that could serve as live-work spaces or as residential-or office-over-retail. This structured parking could be shared, and could also support future residential development on the northern two blocks of the site.

Concept Plan A maximizes the opportunity of the corner of Maple Street and Charles Street. Small two- and three-story retail buildings could be constructed around the existing buildings to contribute to an “urban village” that includes plazas, pedestrian courts, and tree-lined pedestrian streets.

CONCEPT PLAN B: CIVIC PLAZA, UNDULATING RETAIL, AND DENSE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

This concept plan begins by seeking to divert traffic away from Washington Street and beyond the study area. In developing this plan, the Panel considered the properties that are more immediately available for possible redevelopment, including the for-sale bank-owned property near the southwest corner of the study area as well as the adjacent city-owned parcel that currently houses a surface parking lot, as a single development site. Together, these two parcels could serve as the genesis for a new vision that includes a major civic use.

This civic corner, which could house a courtyard and the relocated library, would then serve as the focal point and major gathering space for the study area. Once the Coca Cola parcel is vacated, Panelists suggested that commercial retail could locate on the northern side of Charles Street in a way that matches the existing retail on the southern side of the street. This new mercantile area could include live-work spaces and infill development that is designed to be pedestrian-oriented.

The existing blocks of the study area, in their current formation, could give rise to a new internal street grid which could support fairly dense housing. Developing for-sale residential units—either townhomes or two-over-twos—that could support and activate the civic and commercial space provides for an overall mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented environment.

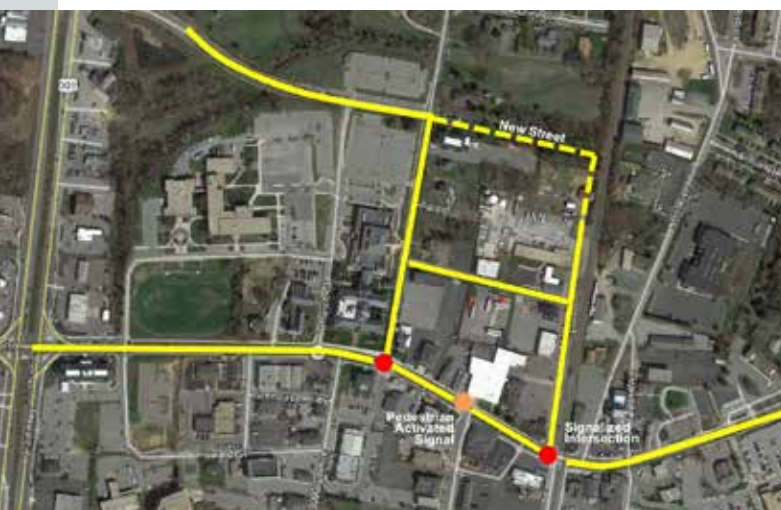


In Concept Plan B, the blue shaded parcels serve as the redevelopment catalyst by providing space for a civic center and mercantile area further down Charles Street, as indicated by the red shaded areas. Existing blocks give rise to a streetgrid which could ultimately serve as land for housing development. *Image Source: ULI Washington.*



Concept Plan B relies on a civic use as the initial redevelopment catalyst in the southwest corner of the site. Retail would flank the northern side of Charles Street, and dense housing development could be built along the existing block structure in such a way that a new street grid is created. *Image Source: ULI Washington.*

Circulation



The Panel's circulation plan calls for adding a pedestrian activated signal as well as a new signalized intersection in order to mitigate congestion and to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. *Map Source: ULI Washington.*

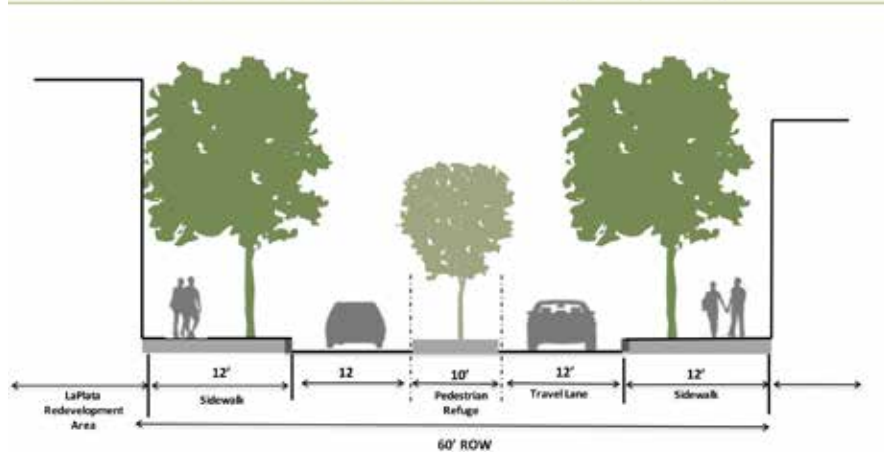
Though the concept plans depicted different visions for the study area, both underscored the importance of developing an internal grid of streets. Relieving congestion along Washington and Charles Street should be a main goal of any area redevelopment, and the Panel recommended several ways to address circulation.

Introducing an extension of Maple Street so that it extends and connects with Talbot Street will create a fourth corner to the study area, and provide alternative access points around and through it. Additionally, adding a signalized intersection at the corner of Maple Street and Charles Street, as well as a pedestrian-activated signal at the junction of La Grange and Charles Street will begin to pave the way for traffic-calming measures around the site. The Panel reviewed and commended the existing plans for Charles Street, which dates back to 2002, and suggested the town work with the State Highway Administration to identify and implement priority elements of that plan. The Panel recommended that funding transportation improvements incrementally, rather than as a single major transportation proposal, was likely a more successful funding strategy and would reinforce continuing, positive change along the corridors.

The Panel also introduced three street design concepts that each aim to enhance the pedestrian-oriented environment while maximizing the allowable auto-oriented space.

CHARLES STREET

Charles Street Typical Section (looking east)

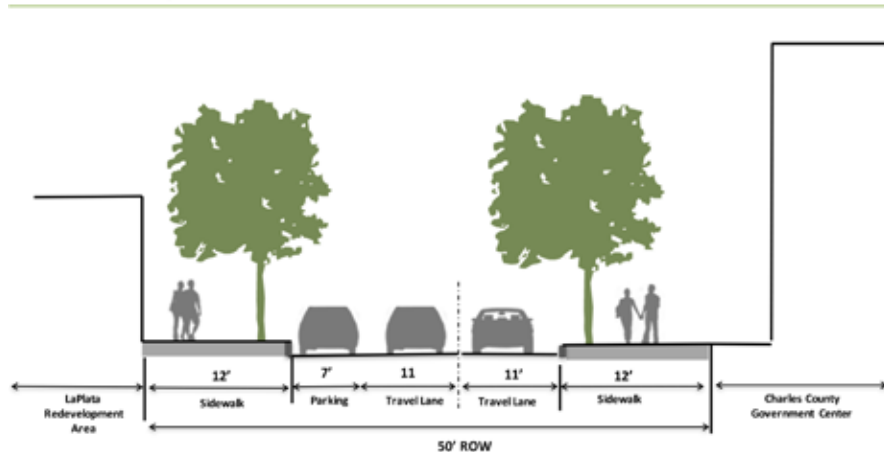


Charles Street Typical section, looking east. Image Source: ULI Washington.

Recommendations for Charles Street include two travel lanes on either side of a pedestrian refuge in the median. Extending the sidewalks on either side make for a more pleasant pedestrian environment.

WASHINGTON STREET

Washington Street Section (looking south)



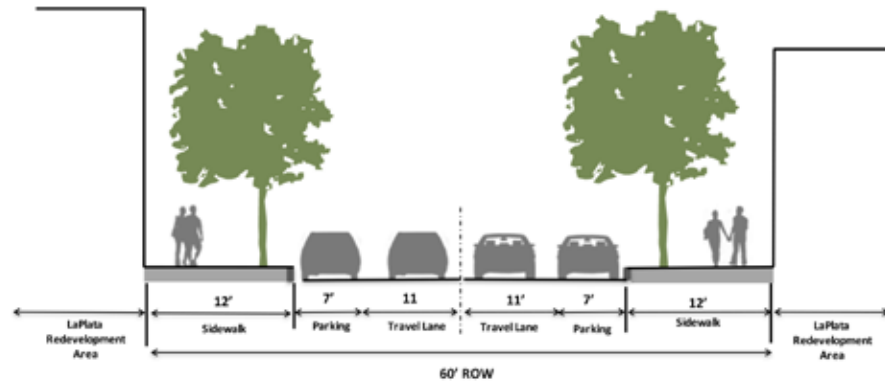
Washington Street Section, looking south. Image Source: ULI Washington.

Recommendations for Washington Street recognize the street's spatial constraints. This section allows for two travel lanes and one parking lane, which would be located adjacent to the redevelopment site and across from the existing Charles County Government Center. The Panel determined that there is enough space for a 50-foot right-of-way, which would allow the remainder of the area to be sidewalk for pedestrians.

TALBOT STREET

Talbot Street Typical Section, looking east. *Image Source: ULI Washington.*

Talbot Street Typical Section (looking east)



This street section, which could also be representative of new streets that are added to the internal street grid, could accommodate two travel lanes and parking lanes on each side. Parking lanes, which create a barrier between pedestrians and moving vehicles, add comfort to a pedestrian environment while also providing additional parking for businesses or residents.

Implementation

FUNDING TOOLS AND OPTIONS

Once the Town of La Plata makes definitive decisions about the redevelopment vision for the study area, the town will face three major predevelopment phases: master planning and zoning (which can cost approximately \$250,000), pre-development and engineering (which can cost approximately \$500,000), as well as conducting preliminary research on relocation sites for the two major landowners in the area—Coca Cola and Southern Maryland Oil (which can cost approximately \$30,000).

Many funding options exist for the planning and predevelopment, and can include: The Town of La Plata’s capital budget; the Charles County budget; State and Federal funding sources; and grants and technical assistance. Panelists suggested several grant opportunities for the Town of La Plata to consider. The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides funding for planning, preliminary engineering and technical assistance through a variety of competitive programs.¹ Additionally, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board offers a Transportation/Land-Use Connections technical assistance program, which provides support to local governments in the Metropolitan Washington Region on a competitive basis as they work to improve transportation and land-use coordination.²

Funding for the entire redevelopment can also come from a variety of sources. Tax increment financing, or TIF, subsidizes development projects by assessing a tax on the incremental increased value of a property after it is developed.³

¹ To learn more about EDA, visit: <https://www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/>

² To learn more about the TLC program, visit: <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/tlc/>

³ A TIF is authorized at the state level and administered by local governments. The local government designates an area it wants to target for redevelopment as a “TIF district.”

TIFs are generally used to assist with site acquisition and infrastructure development. Another option, revenue bond financing, offers an opportunity to pledge the revenues from property sales back into bonds.⁴ A revenue bond is an obligation issued to finance a revenue-producing enterprise. Both the principal and interest of such bonds are paid exclusively from the earnings of the enterprise.⁵ Industrial bond financing, which are tax-exempt loans issued by state or local governments to finance a private company's construction or acquisition of manufacturing facilities and equipment, is another financing tool. Industrial bond financing is characterized by lower interest rates and longer payment terms, which could be attractive to the town.⁶

Panelists recommended a host of additional financial opportunities. For instance, several funding opportunities are available through the Maryland Economic Development Corporation, which functions to promote economic development, and help retain and attract business activity in commerce throughout the state of Maryland.⁷ Since 1994, the Maryland Economic Development Corporation has provided financing assistance to projects throughout the state, including Charles County.⁸ In addition, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, is committed to empowering communities through programs for loans, grants, technical assistance, and tax credits.⁹ This agency runs such programs as the Community Development Block Grant program, a federal program that, since 1974, has provided communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs.¹⁰

For more information, visit <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/accountable-development/tax-increment-financing>

- 4 Panelists pointed to Stifel, a financial services firm, as an example of one that provides public financing for TIFs and development districts. Learn more at <http://www.stifel.com/institutional/public-finance>*
- 5 In general, revenue bonds are best suited for projects that (1) can operate on a service charge or user-fee basis; (2) have the potential to be self-supporting, previously demonstrated under public or private operation; and (3) can produce sufficient revenue without jeopardizing other important economic or social objectives of the community. For more information, visit: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~steiss/page63.html>*
- 6 http://content.pnccm.com/live/pnc/corporate/pncideas/articles/Industrial_Bond_Financing.pdf*
- 7 Visit <http://www.medco-corp.com/> for more information*
- 8 For a complete project list, visit <http://www.medco-corp.com/content/completeprojectlist.php>*
- 9 <http://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/default.aspx> and <http://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CDBG-EligibleNonEntitlement.aspx>*
- 10 For more on the Community Development Block Grant program, visit http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs*

HERDING THE ELEPHANTS: ADDRESSING THE BIG PARCEL OWNERS

Combined, the parcels owned by both Coca Cola and Southern Maryland Oil comprise roughly 1/3 of the 15.5 acre study area. Therefore, any redevelopment in the study area will require relocating these major businesses to other locations.

When faced with relocation, business owners tend to prefer remaining in place. Remaining in place is predictable, well-capitalized, and profitable. Consequently, it will be critical for the study area's stakeholders—the Town of La Plata government and the members of the LPTCC—to communicate with the two major landowners to help them understand the inefficiencies of remaining in the study area. These conversations should occur via a person-to-person interaction, and will need to be at a high level in order to be effective. The purpose of these conversations will be to build the case to the business owners on how they can be more efficient by relocating. Addressing the transportation challenges of the site will be an important part of this conversation.

Working to identify possible relocation sites will also be important, and Panelists suggested researching options along Route 301. Once an agreement about relocation is reached, the town must make it as easy as possible for the businesses to move by fast tracking the process and expediting approvals. Panelists emphasized that business owners are focused first and foremost on running and managing a successful business, not on development. The Town of La Plata should work to break down the perception that development is complicated, expensive, and bureaucratic. The end goal should be to work cooperatively with the large businesses to transition their facilities to new, more efficient locations, and allow their existing sites to become clean, available development parcels.

ZONING

Once the two major parcels are vacant, the Panel recommended rezoning the entire study area into its own new unique zone. The Town should initiate the zoning change, which can be used to promote redevelopment and relocation objectives. The new zone should be easily adoptable and attractive for parcels to develop according to the overall vision. Panelists encouraged a new zone that allows for maximum flexibility on what can be built, and should ensure public benefit, such as the needed right-of-way for new streets. Panelists pointed to the Crescent Design District in Leesburg, VA, as an example of a zoning district that was established to regulate development in a way that

achieves an overall mission for an area while still allowing developers flexibility.¹¹ Finally, the new zone should encourage collaboration—rather than competition—among property owners.

In order to determine the new zoning ordinance, the Panel recommended further examining the market possibilities for increased density and flexibility, as well as exploring shared parking incentives. Panelists pointed to two successful examples of shared parking. In the City of Pasadena, CA, multiple owners are permitted to enter into different lease agreements to share parking.¹² Montgomery County, MD, as another example, provides incentive density for providing public parking with low minimum parking requirements.¹³ Several Maryland jurisdictions—such as Annapolis and Bethesda—have implemented centralized, park-once facilities, which effectively provide parking for retail and commercial districts. The Town should also consider incentives for the advanced dedication of right-of-way for portions of the Talbot/Maple Street extensions.

CONTINUED AGENCY COORDINATION

Redevelopment will not happen in a vacuum; interagency coordination will be critical to success. Panelists strongly recommended continued engagement with the agencies involved in planning for the library. Community outreach to citizens as well as area property owners—especially Coca Cola and Southern Maryland Oil—will also be important. Furthermore, the hospital and government center represent the two largest employment anchors and destinations, and continuing communication with these stakeholders is crucial. The study area serves to potentially connect these anchors and create housing, services, retail and restaurants that can attract and retain employees, offering distinctive quality of life improvements. Finally, Panelists recommended that the LPTCC, in conjunction with the Town of La Plata, host a redevelopment workshop wherein staff invite developers and property owners to a common venue to brainstorm options and exchange ideas about what is of value to each property owner, and the potential for assembly.

¹¹ For more information on the Crescent Design District, visit: <http://www.leesburgva.gov/government/departments/planning-zoning/zoning/crescent-design-district>

¹² For more information, see 17.46 of code <http://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/zoning/P-4.html#table4-4>

¹³ For more information, visit page 19 of the *Commercial/Residential Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines* at <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/documents/CRZoneGuidelinesFINAL.pdf>

Conclusion

La Plata is poised for change, but change will require clear direction and focus. While there are several ongoing big initiatives in the greater La Plata area, Panelists cautioned that focusing solely on these initiatives hampers incremental progress in other areas.

Instead, the study area is braced for more immediate, smaller opportunities to catalyze change. Capitalizing on these opportunities will require area stakeholders to commit to developing an overall vision for the study area. Once this vision is identified, Panelists acknowledged that there are multiple routes to achieving this vision. The renderings provided in this document depict just two of many possible designs that can lead to success.

Achieving the vision will require offering fast-tracked incentives for relocating the larger property owners in the area. It will be imperative to create conditions to make it possible for Coca Cola and Southern Maryland Oil to relocate quickly and easily. Considering creative design, strategic infill development, and shared parking will also bring success to the study area.

Finally, communication and coordination among area stakeholders will also be key to success. Panelists acknowledged that multiple partners are currently working on several issues contemporaneously. All of these partners can be champions for redevelopment, but must be in regular communication in order to be effective champions for the site.

Panelists

Andrew Brown, CHAIR

Stanford Properties
Bethesda, MD

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

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

Daniel Anderton

Dewberry
Rockville, MD

Dan Anderton has served in the region for more than 30 years and has been directly involved in the creation of communities with services in all aspects of Land Use Planning and Physical Planning including: comprehensive and

master planning, urban and mixed-use planning, site planning, redevelopment planning, affordable housing, re-zoning, subdivision planning, Small Town Revitalization & Landscape Architecture. He has proven project management experience in the applicability of planning, zoning, subdivision and Landscape Architecture. He also has extensive experience with local and state government development review processes and effective working relationships with local and state agencies, boards, commissions and public officials in multiple jurisdictions.

Mr. Anderton has a goal to create communities that are comfortable, sustainable and inclusive to a wide demographic of residents and business owners while also being marketable for either public or private developers. He takes care to ensure that a conceptual design's integrity and density is maintained through the planning process. By carefully planning FAR and densities, providing for a mix of diverse building and product types and phasing, and by incorporating traditional and neo-traditional styles, community developments are poised to capture the needs of the market and a wide cross section of prospective renters, buyers, and shop owners.

Mr. Anderton has been involved with, and completed, hundreds of projects involving direct interaction with citizens, developers, planning boards, County Councils, Mayors, public utilities, State Highway officials, and other involved parties. The juggling of everyone's interests throughout the completion of a plan or project is extremely important. The desire being to make it through the design and planning process with the majority of stakeholders feeling as though they have succeeded in having their personal vision incorporated into the community.

Mr. Anderton graduated with a Bachelors of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning from Utah State University in 1983 and with a Masters of Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois in 1985.

Mr. Anderton is currently employed by Dewberry, a national planning, engineering, and architectural firm, and is responsible for Community Planning & Urban Design within the company. He has worked for architects, engineers, landscape architects, and horticulturalists throughout his career giving him a unique and holistic perspective of community planning and urban design.

Brian Cullen

Keane Enterprises
Ashburn, VA

Brian J. Cullen has been involved in real estate development projects in the Washington, DC area for over 30 years and has been instrumental in the

evolution of many commercial, residential, retail and multipurpose developments in Loudoun County, VA and the surrounding areas. Mr. Cullen recently led the team at Corbelis in the development of Willowsford, a new 2,200 unit residential community spanning over 4,000 acres in Loudoun County, VA. Willowsford features a variety of unique single family homes, an onsite “organic” farm, recreational amenities including two amenity centers with robust demonstration kitchens. In all, Willowsford will protect over 2,000 acres of open space dedicated to the Willowsford Conservancy, a 501c(3) entity.

In addition to his efforts at Willowsford, Mr. Cullen remains the founding Principal at Keane Enterprises, a firm he started in 1996. Keane is a full service development firm primarily developing investment properties for its own account. Keane is currently involved in a number of developments in the DC area including Oaklawn in Leesburg where they are building a new headquarters for K2M, and a mixed use project in College Park, MD consisting of a Courtyard Hotel, 25,000 sf of retail and 205 residential units. In 1998, he opened the Ashburn Ice House, Loudoun County’s only indoor skating complex. Mr. Cullen established CRP Management Group as a rink management company to operate the rink investment. CRP also manages the Kettler Capitals IcePlex, the training and practice facility of the NHL Washington Capitals.

Mr. Cullen is a full member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and has served on the Small Scale Development Council (SSDC) for over 15 years. Mr. Cullen spent two years as Chairman of the Washington District Council before becoming Chairman of the Governance Committee. In addition to these national sponsorships and affiliations, Brian remains involved on a local level as well. Brian is a member Emeritus of the Loudoun County Economic Development Commission (EDC) and served as the founding Chairman to the EDC Transportation Committee. He Chairs the Dulles Town Center Community Development Authority, the first such Authority in Virginia authorized to issue bonds for the purpose of furthering economic development.

Melina Duggal

Duggal Real Estate Advisors
McLean, VA

Melina has over 20 years of experience in the real estate industry. She provides clients with feasibility studies, competitive market analysis, economic development strategies, financial analysis, corridor studies, redevelopment strategies, and consumer research studies related to real estate and urban development issues throughout the United States. She consults on a wide-range of land uses including for-sale and for-rent residential housing, mixed-use, retail, office, hospitality, and industrial. This has included specialized land

uses such as transit oriented development (TOD), Active Adult Communities (AAC), infill projects, traditional neighborhood design (TND), and others.

Ms. Duggal worked for RCLCO, a real estate advisory firm from 1998 to 2016. She worked in three of their offices including Bethesda, Maryland; Orlando, Florida; and Atlanta, Georgia. She focused on market studies for practically all land uses, corridor studies, regional growth development trends, redevelopment projects, large-scale master-planned communities (MPC), regional demographic and economic growth trends, mixed-use projects, and financial analysis. Prior to joining RCLCO, Melina worked as a community planner for a consulting firm based in Detroit, Michigan.

She is an active member of ULI at both the local and national levels. She is on the national Urban Revitalization Council. She was on the Executive Committee of the Central Florida Chapter of the ULI, and ran the UrbanPlan program. She has spoken for organizations such as the Urban Land Institute (ULI), Commercial Real Estate for Women (CREW), National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), and the American Planning Association (APA). Melina has also written multiple articles published in Urban Land and is a contributing author to the ULI Resort Development Handbook. She has participated in multiple ULI Advisory Services Panels. She was appointed by the Fairfax County Public School Board to the Facilities Planning Advisory Committee.

Daniel K. Hardy

Renaissance Planning Group
Arlington, VA

Dan is a Principal with Renaissance Planning Group in the Washington, DC area practice. He has over twenty-five years of transportation planning and engineering experience in both the private and public sectors, including serving as the Transportation Planning chief for Montgomery County Planning Department. Mr. Hardy is a registered Professional Engineer in Maryland and Virginia and a Professional Transportation Planner. He is a member of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Dan currently serves as a subcommittee co-chair for TRB's Transportation and Sustainability Standing Committee.

Donny James

Revenue Authority of Prince George's County
Prince George's County, MD

Donny James is Chief Real Estate Officer for the Revenue Authority of Prince George's County. In this capacity, he works with the Executive Director to strategically identify real estate development opportunities that would spur

economic growth, create “destination points” and produce positive impacts for Prince George’s County. Mr. James also works with various sister agencies in addition to private developers to create public- private partnerships to assist with the execution of some of these projects.

Mr. James also works in tandem with the Executive Director to provide project status updates to the Revenue Authority’s Board of Directors and County officials. Mr. James joined the Revenue Authority with over 20 years of senior level real estate development experience. Most recently, he worked with a non-profit in Washington, DC where he served as the Director of Real Estate Development and was responsible for all the organization’s real estate transactions. In this role, he managed the design and construction of a new \$28MM, 50,000 sq. ft. health care facility in Southeast Washington, DC. He also managed the expansion of the organization’s birthing center in Northwest Washington.

Previously he served as the Real Estate Director for the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation, where he led the planning efforts for the redevelopment of Poplar Point, 110 acre development in SE Washington, DC. As Real Estate Director, he led the development efforts to relocate Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority to a new \$71 MM headquarters.

Mr. James served as a guest lecturer at Columbia University and has served on multiple panels surrounding redevelopment in urban areas. He received his Bachelor’s Degree in Mathematics and Economics from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and his Master of Science Degree with a concentration in Real Estate Development & Finance from Columbia University in New York City. Mr. James is also a graduate of the Senior Executive in State and Local Government program from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Julia Koster

National Capital Planning Commission
Washington, DC

Julia Koster directs the Office of Public Engagement at the National Capital Planning Commission, the federal government’s central planning agency for America’s capital. As Commission Secretary, she is the official liaison between the Commission and NCPA staff. Ms. Koster is a city planner with expertise in public involvement, sustainability, smart growth and environmental issues. Prior to joining the agency, she was the development coordinator for the Governor’s Office of Smart Growth in Maryland, and led waterfront redevelopment and environmental policy initiatives as a senior planner in Tacoma, Washington. She is the past president of the American Planning Association

National Capital Area Chapter, and teaches land use planning at the University of Maryland. Ms. Koster received a master's degree in Urban Planning from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Paul Moyer

VHB
Vienna, VA

Paul Moyer's extensive planning background and knowledge of the national capital region help VHB expand its planning practice throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, and bolsters the firm's ability to offer more comprehensive services to its federal, municipal, and private clients. Paul has worked on award-winning planning projects for federal, county/municipal, and private clients across the Mid-Atlantic as well as throughout the eastern U.S. His 25-year career has included master planning, environmental planning, and community planning, as well as extensive experience leading consensus-building processes. Mr. Moyer has collaborated with VHB previously in Virginia on projects including the Laurel Hill Master Plan and Sportsplex in Fairfax, the Reuse Plan for the Naval Radio Transmitter Facility in Suffolk, and the Capital One Headquarters project in Richmond.

Suman Sorg

DLR Group | Sorg
Washington, DC

Suman Sorg, FAIA is a Senior Principal with DLR Group | Sorg and serves as the Atlantic Coast Region's Design Leader. She is a leading voice for design excellence at the firm. Suman founded her firm, Sorg Architects, in 1986. Merging with DLR Group in 2015, Sorg Architects now operates as DLR Group | Sorg.

Ms. Sorg's body of work is diverse, including civic, mixed-use and multi-family developments, as well as education projects, both domestically and around the globe. With each design, she seeks to preserve and protect the environment, producing elegant design solutions that improve the city's building fabric and knit together its neighborhoods and communities.

Ms. Sorg is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, is a member of the Board of Trustees for the National Building Museum, and is also on the Board of Directors for the DC Building Industry Association. She is a Peer Reviewer for the General Services Administration Design Excellence Program and is also a member of the Lambda Alpha International Honor Society.



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