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INTRODUCTION

This document is a draft of a conceptual streetscape master plan for West North Avenue. It is the product of volunteers from the Neighborhood Design Center working in concert with Core Stakeholders from neighborhoods along West North Avenue.

The Neighborhood Design Center was invited to facilitate a conceptual design process by the 7th District Office of Councilman Nick Mosby, Reservoir Hill Improvement Council, Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation, and Druid Heights Community Development Corporation. These organizations had already reached out to the Baltimore City Department of Transportation, who has agreed to observe this process and review documentation that arises from it. The final report will be handed off to BCDOT for consideration for funding and implementation. Additionally some action items in the streetscape plan may be implementable by community organizations or other groups.

NDC volunteers started working in early 2014 by meeting with Core Stakeholders to listen to and better understand their concerns about the streetscape and vision for its future. They hosted three visioning workshops for neighbors to attend and brainstorm ideas and new options. After this they began drafting designs based on what they heard.

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GLOSSARY

PROCESS DEFINITIONS

Sponsoring Organization
The organization(s) that apply for design assistance from NDC and are parties to the scope memo.

Core Stakeholders
Key members of the Client Organization or other stakeholders selected by the Client Organization and NDC staff to be the main representatives of the Client Organization to the project process.

NDC Volunteer Team
The professional design volunteers assigned to the project.

Project Stakeholders
Anyone who is affected by the project.

PROJECT DEFINITIONS

Median
The median is the space between opposite directions of traffic. It can be as small as the double yellow line, large enough for a left turn lane, or even larger with trees or other “amenities.” The size of the median will vary throughout the corridor.

Roadway
The roadway is the paved surface provided for auto transit and/or bike transit. How autos and bikes interact is not defined by the term, other than that the spaces each occupies are all called “roadway.”

Curb
The curb is the defining line at the edge of the roadway. It can be a traditional curb with a 4-6” elevation change, or an at-level change in surface material (such as at the base of a ramp).

Buildings
The private and public structures along the streetscape but not in the right-of-way. Since this is a master plan focusing on the streetscape, buildings will be considered as they relate to the streetscape, but with the understanding that the main potential for impact by BCDOT and the community in this particular plan is through the space in between building faces: the streetscape. Therefore, recommendations dealing specifically with buildings should be very limited.

Pedestrian Space
This is the paved surface for walking along the streetscape. It will have a minimum legal width and connect to all street crossings. It may, however, only occupy part of the space between the Curb and the Building.

Amenity
Amenities are anything that occupies the streetscape between a Building or other property line and the Curb besides the Pedestrian Space. Amenities can include trees, bus stops, sidewalk cafes, green spaces, stormwater interventions, etc. Parking is an amenity that occurs on the other side of the Curb in the Roadway.
COMMUNITY VISION

Three Walks Held
April Xth - Middle West
April 5th - Far West
April 24th - Near West

Three Workshops Held
April 26th - Middle West
May 3rd - Far West
May 7th - Near West

Tabling/Door Knocking
To continue through summer/fall at locations along West North Avenue.

109 PEOPLE REACHED

- Near West: 38%
- Middle West: 46%
- Far West: 16%

Workshop Activities
Where Do You? Map
geographic analysis

A Walk Down West North Avenue
future visioning

Importance Difficulty Matrix
prioritizing goals

Connections & Barriers
how do we get there?

Memory Cards
remembering place

A WALK DOWN WEST NORTH AVENUE
future visioning

Get people on the street!
All ages, alone or in a group, locals, tourists, and jealous suburbanites.

“Street bustling with people out walking and shopping”

Multi-modal transportation
- Improved pedestrian access (landscaped sidewalks)
- Improved public transit (bus shelters with seats, streetcars, subways, circulator routes)

Increased development
- Shops, restaurants, Church, library, “University Village”, theater, dry cleaner, laundromat

“I can do most of my shopping on this street”

Recreational value
Dog friendly, landscaped sidewalk, trees, parks, music, art/murals, sidewalk cafes, water fountains.

Safe and Clean
Clean street and sidewalk, police presence, beautiful lighting.
The importance/difficulty matrix was a small-group discussion exercise that asked participants to rank self-identified elements on their importance to the streetscape and on the difficulty of implementation. This chart measures those responses as well as the frequency with which certain categories of elements were mentioned.

**IMPORTANCE DIFFICULTY MATRIX RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (LARGER SIZE = MORE TIMES MENTIONED)</th>
<th>AVG. IMPORTANCE</th>
<th>AVG. DIFFICULTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Pedestrian Safety/Accessibility</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Commercial Development</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greening</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Trash/Recycling Points</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More/Efficient Public Transit</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Development</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Lighting (Pedestrian)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Signage/Identity</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Bike Lanes</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slower Traffic</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCALE OF 1 TO 5, 5 BEING MOST IMPORTANT OR DIFFICULT.**

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CONNECTIONS

Commercial Development
Accessible (bus, subway, light rail, car, walk)
Vacant buildings home for future businesses
Historical character

Lack of variety in merchants (too many carry-outs)
Vacant buildings in general
No unified signage
Not enough parking
No market/investment/jobs

Crime & Safety
Strong neighborhood associations
Better lighting
Block Watchers

Perception of crime
Not enough police patrol
Unmaintained buildings

Greening/Beautification
Public Art
More trees
Better identified crosswalks
Better signage

Lack of cleaning/caring for area
Cost of maintenance/funding
Lack of trash cans
Lack of community participation

Neighborhood Unification
Knowing your neighbors event
Community festivals
Strong neighborhood associations

Some communities blocked by gates
Lack of space for gatherings
Lack of community participation
Need for signage/identity

Transit/Accessibility
North Ave is artery, close to institutions
Lots of transportation options
Better signage

Lack of pedestrian facilities
Stigma of riding public transit
Gates/roads and barriers to access

Identity
Strong history
Major Institutions
Public art/ gateway

Vacant buildings
Negative Reputation
No historical markers

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Balancing the wants and needs of motorists, bikers, pedestrians, and users of public transit is tough.

People should be able to utilize West North Avenue comfortably using any of these methods. Currently the corridor is highly motorist-oriented. Community members along West North Avenue want to make the corridor more friendly to the other users. However, there is a strong desire to maintain the existing minimum of two travel lanes in each direction along its length.

In the Middle and Far West sections of corridor, there is currently only two travel lanes in each direction. The inner travel lane in each direction should be made as narrow as possible within standards. Extra space should be devoted to the outer travel lane to contribute to a shared bike-drive lane.

There is not room in most of this section of corridor for a designated or protected bike lane. Community members preferred to keep bikers on West North Avenue. Bikers can be attractive to merchants because of the ease with which they can stop and patronize corridor establishments in contrast with motorists, who require parking spaces.

Community members also believed bikers would feel safer on highly-trafficked West North Avenue rather than a nearly-vacant side street. Although the vehicular traffic is greater, there are also more “eyes on the street” to alleviate concerns about potential crime.

One motorist concern is the backup behind those waiting for left turns at intersections without left turn lanes. One solution would be to prohibit left turns at minor intersections such as residential side streets. Motorists would need to make multiple right turns to reach those neighborhoods. At larger intersections, the parking lanes would disappear and travel lanes shift to create a space in the median large enough for a left turn lane. The half-lane space remaining on each side of the roadway is a great opportunity for a curb bump out.

Buses and alternative means of public transit were not addressed in this 30% draft, but may be discussed in the final plan.

MULTI-MODAL CORRIDOR: CARS, BUSES, PEDESTRIANS, AND BIKES

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Where there’s space, everyone gets a lane.

In the Near West section of corridor there are currently up to three travel lanes in each direction along with a large median. The median and left turn lanes would remain largely as is, but with improvements. The rightmost lane would switch to a designated bike lane with protective buffer (painted). This would allow West North Avenue to link with city biking networks and connect to the MICA campus and Station North.
At the Jones Falls Bridge the road narrows slightly and a painted buffer for the bike lane is no longer advisable. At this point it is recommended to switch to a bollard protected bike lane across the span.

BRIDGE OVER JONES FALLS

(2) Car driving lanes in each direction.

Protected bike lane (physical barrier)

Road width varies and is to be verified for future drafts.
CLEARER CROSSINGS

One of the issues raised most frequently was that of pedestrian access and safety. This has ramifications for both movement along and across West North Avenue. Currently a dividing line between many neighborhoods, improving crossings on West North Avenue both increases activity on the street as well as facilitates travel between neighborhoods.

DIAGONAL INTERSECTIONS

Squaring off crosswalks at diagonal intersections shortens the travel distance for pedestrians across West North Avenue. A community concern was the length of time required to cross the multiple lanes of traffic, especially in relation to the time provided by signaling. While many methods of improving this ratio are proposed in this document, one easy way is to orient crosswalks so they take the shortest possible path - perpendicular to traffic.

The majority of diagonal intersections lie within the near west portion of the corridor. Many of these crossstreets are smaller in width, meaning that it is more imperative to shorten the crossing distance across West North Avenue than along it. Therefore, squared-off crosswalks are recommended across West North Avenue at every diagonal crossstreet, but only across those crossstreets at major intersections.

CURB BUMP OUTS

Curb bump-outs are extensions of the sidewalk into the parking lane. At intersections, they decrease the travel distance across the street and put pedestrians waiting to cross in the sightlines of oncoming drivers.

Curb bump-outs are recommended at every intersection in the direction perpendicular to West North Avenue, as shown below.

At larger crossstreets, bump outs may be recommended in both directions.

A small curb bump out may take up the equivalent of one parallel parking space and serve just as a waiting area for crossing pedestrians. Longer bump outs can include amenity items such as benches, room for street cafes, stormwater-oriented plantings, or bus stops. Examples of such amenities are seen on the next page. Further detail of curb bump out amenities is expected in the final draft.
Curb bump outs can be phased in both in location and by degree. Initial bump outs can be created with new paint and temporary planters or bollards. This can hasten the benefits of the effort while waiting on design, funding, and approval for permanent implementation. They can also be a way to experiment with different options and see which style or shape is best received by motorists, pedestrians, merchants, and others.

30% Design Notes

- North Avenue- reduced to 2 Lanes and parking with bump-outs.
- Experiment with the crosswalk design- Design with the pedestrian movement
- Painted Bike Lanes near parking spaces
- Extend medians along North Avenue to create better pedestrian crossing the corridor.
- Potential for Streetcar in the future on North Avenue
- Open up Bolton Street and take down the barrier gate near Bolton Hill to open up North Avenue
- North Avenue Bridge and columns near Mt. Royal as a focal point of the corridor
- Fountains and Pocket Parks to provide gathering places along the corridor
- Change the timing of traffic signals to create a better flow of traffic.
- Pop-up (Pocket Park) Park or garden at the intersection of Park Avenue and North Avenue

Precedent Images

- Parklets Along the Bumps Outs on North Ave
- Bridge- The focal point on North Ave
CORRIDOR IDENTITY

“When I moved to Baltimore I went first to Bolton Hill and was told North Ave was a boundary I shouldn’t cross. When I finally did cross it, I found a vibrant, friendly community. I came to see it as a gateway rather than a boundary, but it has been difficult to get others to see that.”

-quote from visioning workshop

Many elements of the streetscape can perform dual purposes of function and identity crafting. These elements provide visual cues of placemaking and define North Avenue as a key Baltimore corridor and define the neighborhoods it borders.

On the following pages are precedent images of several methods of expressing an identity for the corridor. Future versions of the plan will look more closely at specific options for West North Avenue.
PAINTED INTERSECTIONS

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COMMUNITY IDENTIFIERS

Gateway Arches, Columbus, Ohio

branded bike rack

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FOCAL POINTS

High-pedestrian traffic intersections like Pennsylvania Avenue warrant additional crossing consideration.

Wider crosswalks enable pedestrians to flow more comfortably from metro station exits. They also help define the importance of the intersection and can be used to help craft corridor identity, as mentioned later. This intersection diagram shows curb bump outs across West North Avenue with squaring off of the diagonal to create extra wide crosswalks. Bus stops are given pull off areas further back from the intersection to help streamline traffic flow.
The underpass at I-83 and bridge over the Jones Falls are two of the defining elements of the Near West portion of the corridor and biggest barriers to pedestrian access to and from Station North.