

Town of Kensington Technical Assistance Panel

Findings & Recommendations

JULY 13, 2023



What is a TAP?

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) offers technical analysis to communities and organizations facing land-use challenges.

ULI members volunteer their time to provide unbiased, expert advice and specific recommendations for improvement. Local industry leaders draft a plan to revive, rethink, and restore communities to ultimately enact change and improve the lives of people in the DC region

Day One

- Meetings with sponsor representatives
- Interviews with stakeholders and community representatives

Day Two

- Work session to develop recommendations
- Oral presentation to sponsor and stakeholders

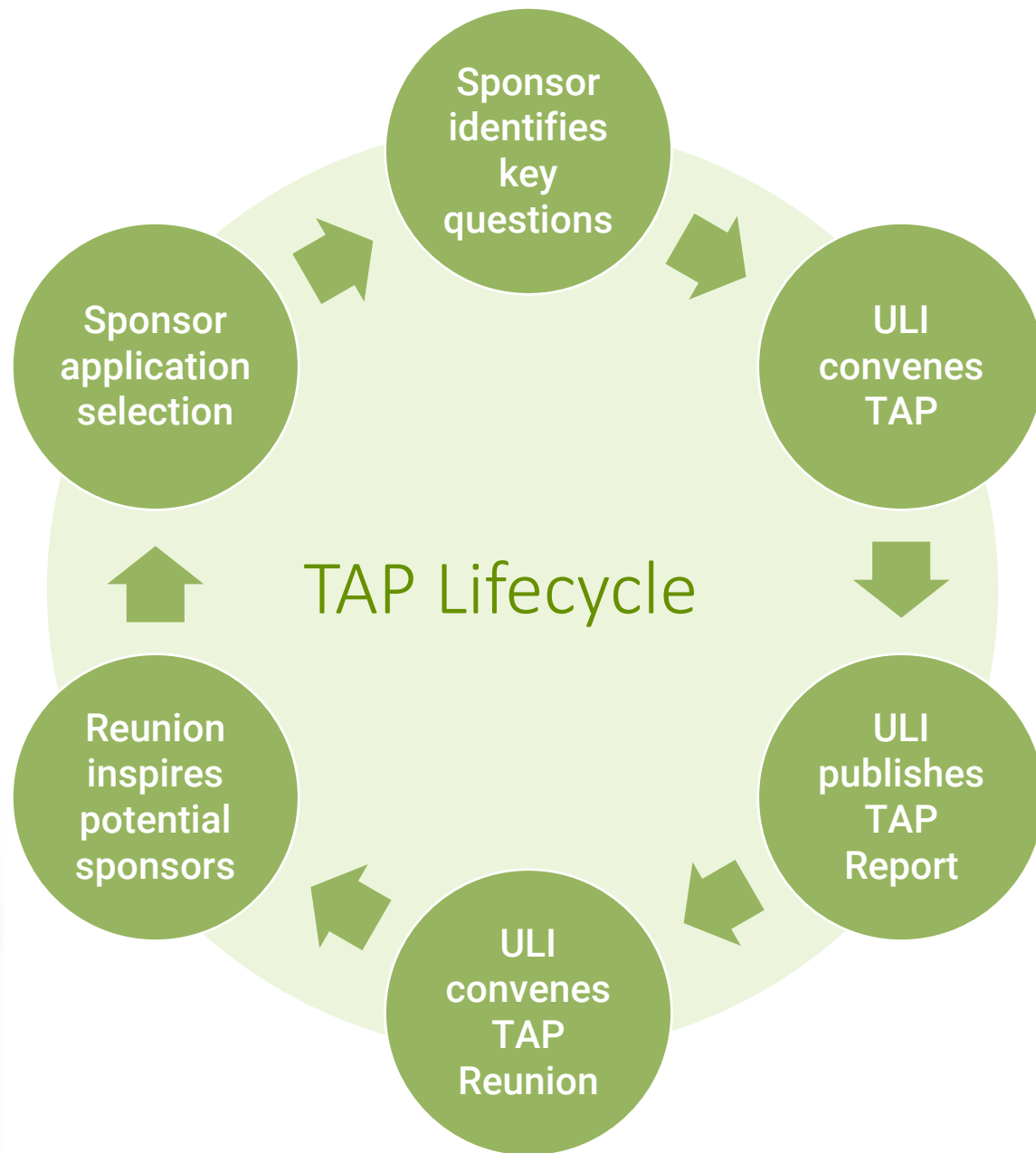
How does ULI provides this assistance?

A community group or organization approaches ULI with a request.

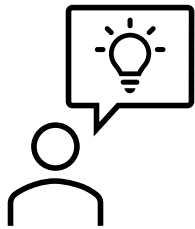
ULI convenes a group of experts to focus on specific questions in a concentrated, finite effort and communicates the results.

- group of experts = Technical Assistance Panel
- specific questions = defined by the sponsor
- concentrated, finite effort = two intense days
- communicates the results = presentation to the sponsor *and* published report

Sponsor pays a fee for service (\$25,000) to ULI Washington.

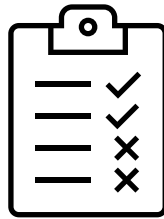


Participant Roles



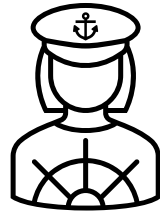
Sponsor

Funds the project and defines scope



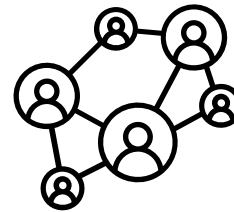
Staff

Manages the development, preparation, execution and communication



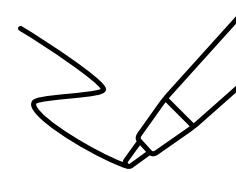
Panel Chair

Leads panel through the TAP process



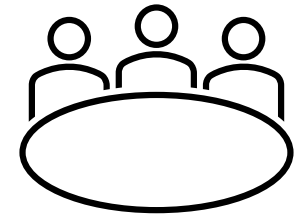
Panelist

Collaborates in 2-day intensive discovery, analysis and presentation



Writer

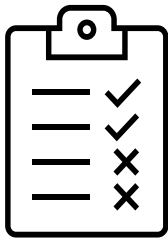
Documents the process and results



Committee

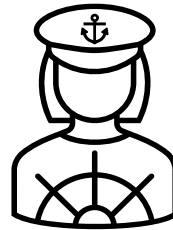
Sets vision for program and supports TAP process

Preparation



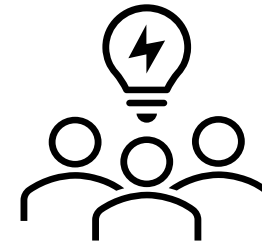
Staff works with sponsor to

- Define the questions
- Identify the stakeholders
- Prepare the briefing materials
- Coordinate site visit + onsite preparations



Staff works with Panel Chair and Committee

- Select the panelists
- Review briefing materials
- Review the agenda
- Organize final presentation



Panelists are expected to

- Meet with Chair for introductions and initial briefing
- Review briefing materials in advance

Panelists



Aileen Horn
KGD
Architecture



Justin Schor
Wells +
Associates



Justin Kennell
Bozzuto



Rick Liu
DC Office of the
CFO



Charles Sims
APAH

Panelists & Staff



Ivy Thompson
Prince George's
Parks



Katie Wagner
Gorove Slade



Xavier Williams
WSP



Emily McKnight
ULI Washington

Thank You to Our Stakeholders

Neil Burka, Kensington
Shopping Center
Deirdre Byrne, Ken-Gar Civic
Association
Barbara Thawley, Ken-Gar
Civic Association
Ronda Barrett, Ken-Gar Civic
Association
Katie Datin, Scheer Partners
Chris Bruch, Former
Resident/Donohoe
Paul Ellis, CM Kate Stewart's
Office
Tory Gibler, Fehr & Peers

Amy Hamilton, Resident
Joe Moges, SHA
Tracey Furman, Mayor of
Kensington
Ann Lichter, Town Council
Steve Harris, Mr. Wash
Evan Harris, Mr. Wash
John Blick, Atlantic Real
Estate
John Seymour, R.L. Voight
& Son
David Schlie, MDOT SHA
Eric Beckett, MDOT SHA
Tom Brault, Woodside

Development
Bill Hart, Woodside
Development
Alex Rixey, Montgomery
Planning
Darin Bantrom, Town
Council



The Assignment

- Develop a vision for the study area that addresses transportation, safety, and economic growth
- Financing and timeline for Summit Ave Extension
- Infill development opportunities for Summit Ave Extension
- Viability of relocating the Fire Station to the Connecticut Ave and University Blvd split



The Assignment

- Support affordable housing development
- Integrate Ken Gar into the neighborhood as a whole
- Reimagine corridor from its historical reputation as “gasoline alley”

What We Heard Stakeholders Need:

Transportation	Process	Development
Parking	Communication from Town about plans	Smartly done retail and housing
Walkable corridor	Clarity about future of Summit Ave	Stable property values
Transit access	Transparency	Diverse housing stock



“

All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work.

”

Calvin Coolidge,

30th President of the United States

Current Conditions of the Study Area

REALITIES

Historical exclusion of Ken-Gar; displacement of property owners

Improvements needed on Connecticut Ave

Fractured property ownership makes assemblage difficult

Absence of green space, tree canopy, and safe, walkable paths

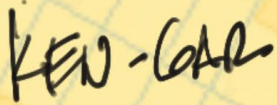
Low office demand; added retail interest is moderate; housing demand/need is high



SUMMIT AVENUE EXTENSION

We must reimagine Sumit Ave from a traffic passthrough to a green, residential bridge between Ken-Gar and Kensington.

Summit Ave Extension is recommended not as a traffic mitigation strategy, but rather a neighborhood development tool for housing/commercial, green space, walkability and connectivity.



URBAN
THRIFT
PARCEL

connecticut

FIRE
STATION
PARCEL

- Residential town street
- Linear park
- Separated bike lanes
- Built-out street canopy
- Walkable connectivity



Summit Ave Extension

- Residential street with a linear park
- Bike lane, front stoops up to low-rise residential
- Related in scale to Ken-Gar neighborhood
- Grade change will address noise and light pollution

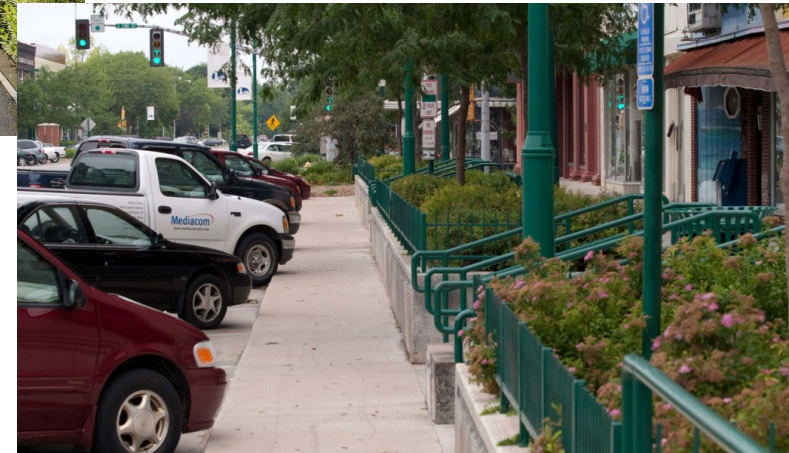
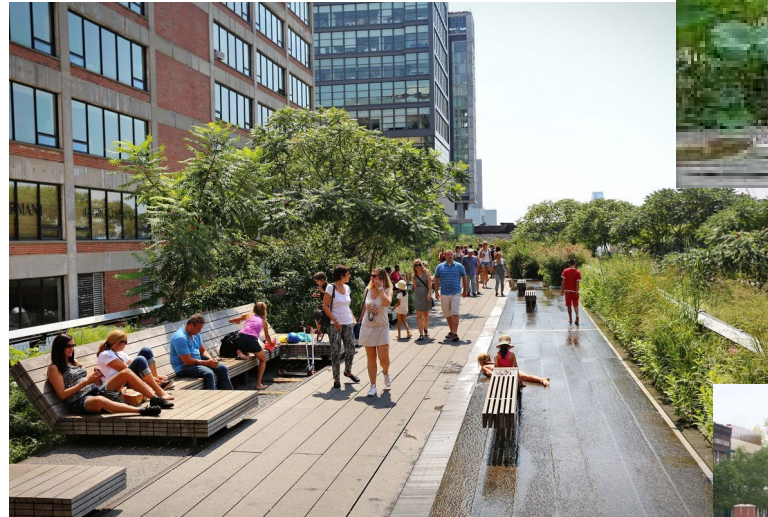
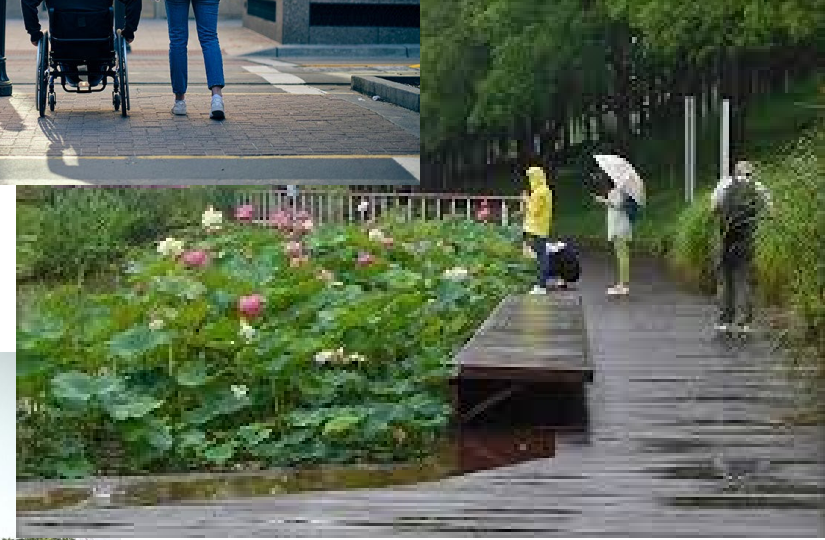
Visioning Summit Ave Extension

Unlocking Summit Avenue

The Summit Avenue extension realizes the vision of a walkable, inclusive and vibrant Town Center.

Methods

- Streetscape improvements
- Stormwater management
- Adding green public spaces
- Focus on pedestrian safety
- Condensed parking
- Developing attainable housing



The Summit Avenue Extension Project

Is this project a benefit to the community?

PROS

- Pedestrian safety/walkway
- Connectivity of Plyers Mill/Summit
- More housing (diversity)
- Egress to Ken-Gar
- Increased open and green space
- Added tree canopy
- Improved permeability
- Creating new neighborhood
- Traffic relief

CONS

- Impacts to Ken Gar
 - Taxes - property values increase
 - Noise/light pollution
- Displacement of local businesses, specifically auto companies



TRANSPORTATION

Kensington can be a place you drive to, not through.

Placemaking: Driving Into Kensington, Not Through It

Transportation Recommendations

Goal: Slow down vehicles to help them realize they are driving into the Town of Kensington.

Short-Term

- Restripe vehicle travel lanes on Connecticut Avenue to 10' to create a striped buffer.

Medium-Term

- Reallocate striped buffer to a permanent vegetated buffer and create an 11' side path on east side of Connecticut Avenue..
- Plant trees to create shade, a sense of place, address heat island effect, aid in stormwater management, and air quality.
- Implement connected multimodal street network



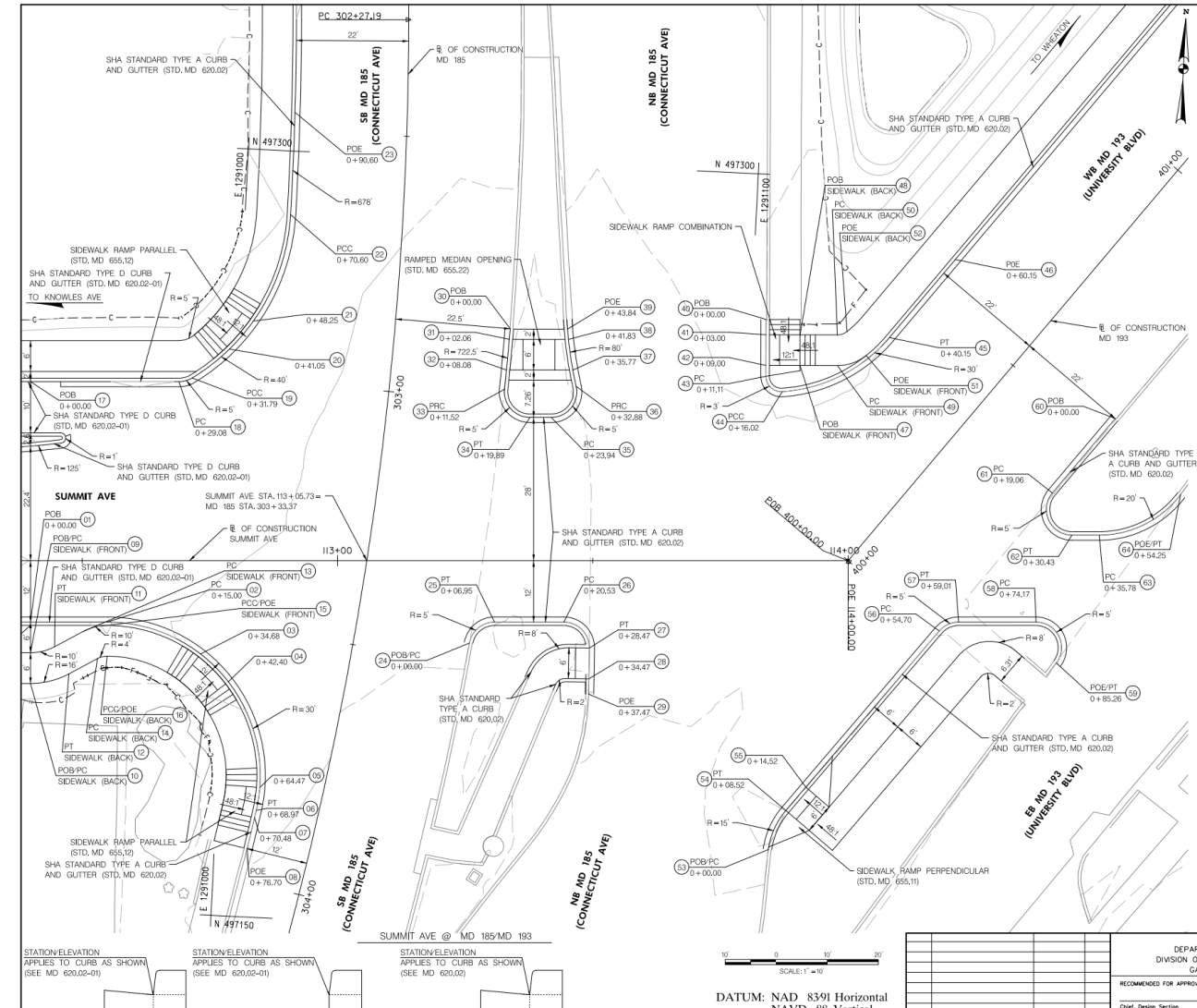
Transportation Recommendations

Placemaking: Driving into Kensington, Not Through It

Goal: Slow down vehicles to help them realize they are driving into the Town of Kensington.

Long-Term

- Implement a Road Diet by taking away a lane of travel in both directions on Connecticut Avenue.
- Leverage Road Diet to create separated bike lanes per Montgomery County Bike Master Plan.
- Improve Metropolitan Avenue and Plyers Mill Road Intersection.



Create Connected Street Grid

Transportation Recommendations

Summit Ave Extension

Connecticut Ave/Farragut Ave/Summit Ave Extension

- Realigned Intersection
- New Signal
- Address Long Pedestrian Crossing Times

Connecticut Ave/DuPont Ave

- New Signal

Connecticut Ave/Plyers Mill Rd

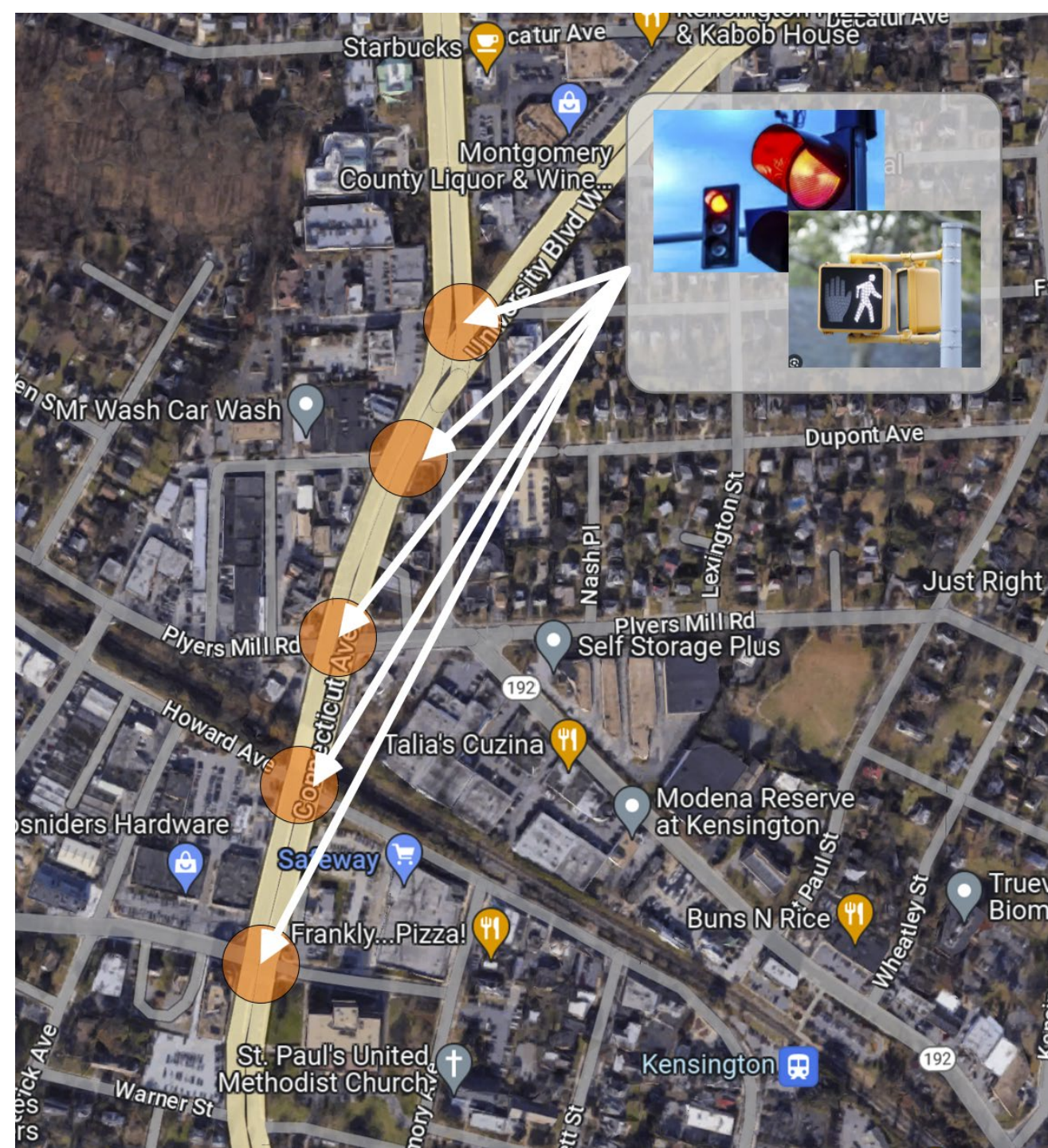
- High Visibility Crosswalk on all legs

Connecticut Ave/Howard Ave

- New Signal

Connecticut Ave/Knowles Ave

- High Visibility Crosswalk on all legs





Why: Multimodal Connectivity

Transportation Recommendations

Improve Pedestrian Crossings along Connecticut Ave

- Shorten the distance between protected pedestrian crossings to 400' Intervals (Montgomery Complete Streets Guide)
- Make all intersections safe for all users (Extended pedestrian signal timing, tactile warning strips, ADA compliant)
- Shorten long crossing time at the intersection of University Blvd and Connecticut Ave

Improve Bicycle Connectivity

- Increase connections to Greenway on Lexington between University Blvd and Plyers Mill Rd.

Improve Transit Access

- Increase pedestrian access and connections to bus stops along Connecticut Ave.

Improve Vehicle Circulation

- Disperse side street traffic volumes to address existing queuing and delay concerns
- Optimize and coordinate signals on Connecticut Ave.
- Enhance Access Management opportunities for potential optimized redevelopment.



Transportation recommendations can take place over short, medium, and long-term.



SHORT TERM

Restripe vehicle travel lanes on Connecticut Avenue to 10' to create a striped buffer



MEDIUM TERM

Striped Buffer
Plant trees
Implement connected multimodal network



LONG TERM

Implement road diet
Separated bike lane
Improve Metropolitan Ave and Plyers Mill intersections



ECONOMIC & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Summit Avenue Extension can unlock opportunities for more housing, including affordable/attainable housing.

Vision for Town of Kensington, County

A Focus on Smart Housing Growth

2012 Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan

- Promote a mixed-use Town Center.
- Broaden housing choices for an array of ages, abilities, and income.
- Commercial center excludes housing which deprives the area of street activity.
- Add housing to attract livelier and more active streets; increase housing diversity.

Thrive Montgomery 2050

- Concentrating growth in urban centers vs. sprawl.
- "15-minute living" and complete communities.
- Variety of housing sizes and types near employment and retail can help to ensure that people of diverse income levels can live and work in proximity to each other.

Stakeholder Input

- Generally, agree that the lack of and diversity of housing is an issue.



Summit Avenue Extension

Unlocking housing opportunities

- Extension creates a grid that could support housing.
 - Housing would be incredibly difficult as-is.
- Housing is a use that is in demand and compliments a new quiet, safe, and well landscaped Summit Avenue.
- A mix of low-scale residential housing (40-45') adjacent to the new Summit Avenue Extension could add more housing stock and diversity.
 - Can include affordable and workforce housing.
 - Height tapers down towards Ken-Gar.
 - Higher density/height and commercial can be positioned on Connecticut Avenue.



Summit Avenue Extension

Other considerations for adjacent land use

Commercial seems better positioned on Connecticut Avenue: alleviates traffic, noise and light pollution adjacent to Ken-Gar neighborhood.

Zoning needs to change to support higher density residential.

Residential market fundamentals are strong (rent, vacancy, new supply).

Current interest rate market and high construction pricing presents near term barriers.



THE KENSINGTON FIRE STATION

Together with the Summit Ave Extension, an RFP for re-development of the fire station could also be a catalyst for economic growth.

Re-Zoning

To support development, the study area must first be rezoned.

Encouraging the rezoning of the area to increase the residential Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) for the entire corridor

- Include retail FAR to encourage mixed use redevelopment of the area.
- Increase Residential FAR.
- Increase heights to 75 feet.
- Provide density bonuses for assembled parcels.

Encouraging Assemblage

- The fragmented nature of these sites requires assemblage to unlock the value of the property.
- The rezoning may encourage developers to assemble parcels
- Possible environmental concerns may be mitigated by a single developer, where it may be too costly for small parcel owners to address.

Relocating the Fire Station

Recommendations for Relocation and Redevelopment

Relocate fire station to Urban Thrift site

- This redevelopment can be combined with other uses on the property to align with the New Summit Ave entrance.

Redevelopment of existing Kensington Fire Station

- The existing fire station site at the intersection of Connecticut and Plyers Mill should be re-developed into a mixed-use Community Center & Housing Development: community uses on floors 1 and 2, and residential uses on floors 3+.
- Redevelopment can be realized via a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a shared redevelopment.

Redeveloping Existing Fire Station

Recommendations for Relocation and Redevelopment

Town of Kensington & Montgomery County should issue an RFP for the redevelopment of the existing fire station.

- Uses should be a re-imagined community center paired with housing development, at maximum heights.
- Development of this intersection should spur the revitalization of Gasoline Alley and serve as an anchor destination for community activities in the area.
- County should consider a long-term lease for the land to a developer to build and redevelop those spaces.
- Encourage creation of a Parking Facility for use of multiple parcels.



Case Study: Dominion Square

Affordable Housing Paired with Community Center

This development is the re-development of a Car Dealership parking lot near metro with the creation of new affordable housing paired with a community center adjacent to Metro

- Developed by APAH
- 33,000-square-foot, two-level community center
 - Includes: gymnasium, sensory and recreational spaces, multigenerational and community meeting rooms, fitness rooms, a kitchen, and administrative offices
- 516 units of Affordable Housing
- Income Level: 30% AMI – 70% AMI
- Replacement Parking on site

An architectural rendering of a modern urban development. The central focus is a tall, curved building with a light-colored facade and a grid of windows. To its left is a brick building, and to its right is another brick building. In the foreground, there is a glass-enclosed structure, likely a community center, with a blue logo on its corner. A grassy area with people is in the foreground. The text "Case Study: The Leggett" is overlaid in large white letters.

Case Study: The Leggett

**Affordable Housing Paired with
Community Center**

*Useful case study for co-location, not the
recommended density/height for Kensington*



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Challenges from the Summit Avenue Extension require policy solutions and coordinated efforts with stakeholders.

Unlocking Economic Value

Assemblage and redevelopment is key to unlock value in the new wedge "district"

Goal: Tweak zoning designations to encourage redevelopment in line with market/vision

Zoning Changes:

- For Market Feasibility: Increase residential FAR in zoning
 - "R" up to 1.0-2.0 FAR
- For Assemblage: Offer bonus density for assembled properties or consolidated projects
 - "R" up to 2.5 FAR



Unlocking Economic Value

Business & Property Owner coordination is key to ensuring phasing and use transitioning

Goal: Coordinated rules that can introduce/accommodate new uses over phases replete with open space and pedestrian improvements

Business/Owner Meetups: Business Improvement District may be premature, but regularly scheduled meetups to identify priorities

Key topics to consider for district coordination:

- Parking
 - Approaches: "Reservoirs", Transportation Demand Management
- Stormwater Management
 - Approaches: Consolidated Water Detention Pond, Swales, etc.
- Environmental Remediation
 - Approaches: MD VCP, EPA community-wide grant up to \$500,000

Master Plans

Community Considerations for Equity and Diversity

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Emphasizes the roles streets, parks, and public spaces play in creating a physical environment where a sense of community can flourish

2012 Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan

Create an active and vibrant Town Center that is connected to Kensington's rich history, cohesive neighborhoods, and human scale

Concerns about Displacement

Community Considerations for Equity and Diversity

We've heard that residents of the historically Black Ken-Gar neighborhood are concerned about impacts from the Summit Avenue Extension project.

Concerns:

- Affordable and market rate housing, and retail development from the Summit Avenue Extension will result in increased property taxes.
- Legacy, multi-generational owners, will be priced out.
- Pollution, noise, light, and traffic.

Opportunities:

- Anti-displacement Tax Fund
 - Westside Future Fund, Atlanta Beltline area
- Redevelopment Grant Fund
 - Baltimore Co. Department of Aging, New Home Repair Program for Older Adults
- Tax Abatement for Legacy Residents
 - Denver Property Tax Relief Program

Improved Public Amenities

Community Considerations for Equity and Diversity

The Summit Avenue Extension project is an opportunity for the Town of Kensington and Ken-Gar to find new common ground.

Within the overall vision, ensuring that a publicly accessible Community Center, if not at the Volunteer Fire Department, remains a fixture and continues to provide after-school services and a meeting place for local events.

A green corridor along the West side of Summit Avenue enhances the pedestrian experience and doubles as a visually attractive sound barrier.



Recommendations

Transportation Improvements

- Placemaking Opportunities
- Connected Multimodal Street Grid
- Streetscaping upgrades and linear park

Economic & Housing Development

- Relocate and rebuild fire station at Connecticut and Farragut.
- Issue RFP to redevelop existing fire station
- Create shared parking structure/"reservoirs"
- Market based zoning changes & density bonuses

Incentivizing Owners/Developers

- Structure for organizing business and property owners
- Protect Ken-Gar property owners through grants and tax abatements to improve housing.

Conclusions

- 1. We must reimagine Summit Ave from a traffic passthrough to a green, residential bridge between Ken-Gar and Kensington.** Summit Ave Extension is recommended not as a traffic mitigation strategy, but rather a neighborhood development tool for housing/commercial, green space, walkability and connectivity.
- 2. Town of Kensington should leverage the unlocked opportunities** for more housing, including affordable/attainable housing.
- 3. An RFP for re-development and/or relocation of the fire station** could catalyze the area's economic growth.
- 4. Slow down vehicles** to help them realize they are driving into the Town of Kensington, not through it.



Q&A

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Washington