



December 12, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Vision Division *GK*

FROM: Khalid Afzal, Team Leader, East Transit Corridor Team (301.495.4650)
Vision Division *KA*

SUBJECT: Georgia Avenue Concept Study Final Draft Report

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval to transmit final report to the County Council

Attached is the final draft of the Georgia Avenue Concept Study for the Board's review and approval. This study looks at Georgia Avenue between Blair Road in Silver Spring and the County boundary in the north with the intent of creating a unified planning framework for the corridor. The specific goals of the study are to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive review of Georgia Avenue to define the most appropriate land use and urban design vision for the corridor;
2. Develop a planning and urban design framework to guide future master and sector plans in the corridor; and
3. Identify potential areas of improvement, especially for pedestrian accessibility.

The study identified three major issues:

1. A diminished public realm
2. An unsafe pedestrian environment
3. The future of single-family detached houses along the road

The proposed vision for Georgia Avenue calls for:

1. Mixed use nodes
2. A transit corridor
3. A green boulevard

The proposed planning framework for Georgia Avenue has four overall goals:

1. Focus major growth at Metro station areas.
2. Reinforce the Georgia Avenue corridor as a housing resource.
3. Focus on transit and non-motorized mobility.
4. Create an attractive green boulevard through design excellence and sustainability.

Some of the study's specific recommendations are:

Major growth at Metro station areas

1. Direct all new future growth in the corridor to Metro station areas of Silver Spring, Wheaton and Glenmont.
2. Do not support any new density increases outside the Metro station sector plans through rezonings unless specifically recommended in the area master plan.
3. Future amendments to the Aspen Hill and North Silver Spring master plans should explore the feasibility of creating compact mixed-use centers on the existing commercially zoned areas in Montgomery Hills and Aspen Hill shopping centers to create compact, walkable centers with housing, local retail, and community facilities.

Georgia Avenue Corridor as a housing resource

1. As part of a future Kensington-Wheaton master plan amendment, explore the feasibility of town houses and multiple units on single-family lots in appropriate locations along the roadway.
2. Limit all new special exceptions on R-60 and R-90 zoned properties facing the Georgia Avenue roadway to accessory apartments with design controls that limit parking spaces, front yard impervious areas, and out-of-scale additions. Require landscaping and screening in front yards to protect and enhance the visual appearance of the roadway frontage.

Transit and non-motorized mobility

1. All sidewalks along Georgia Avenue must have a green panel to separate the roadway from the sidewalk.
2. Provide adequate pedestrian crossing time at all signalized crossings of Georgia Avenue and provide adequate pedestrian islands in the median.
3. Provide signalized crosswalks at non-signalized intersections that have parks or other facilities on one side of the road.
4. Study the feasibility of a pedestrian tunnel under Forest Glen Road to access the Metro station from the east side of Georgia Avenue.
5. Operate Georgia Avenue Busway from Glenmont to Olney, and Veirs Mill Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from Wheaton to Rockville, on existing roadways to assess ridership before the full funding of these projects is in place.
6. Modify the Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) mitigation requirements for development projects to give sidewalk improvements equal or greater credits than ADA ramps to help improve sidewalks in the corridor.

A green boulevard/design excellence

1. Increase the Corridor's tree cover by expanding the County's tree planting program to add trees in available space in the right-of-way, and encourage homeowners to plant trees on their properties.
2. Sidewalks in mixed-use centers should have appropriate widths, quality surface materials, trees and planters to provide buffer from the road, benches, canopies, and pedestrian scale lighting.
3. Implement the green corridor through greater emphasis on the sustainable design for both public and private spaces, existing and future.

Staff is seeking the Board's approval to proceed with publishing the attached report and transmit it to the County Council. Data and other background information will be published as a separate document.

KA:ha: G:/Afzal/PB report for 12-11-08

Attachment