



April 3, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief 
Vision Division

William R. Barron, Team Leader 
South Central Transit Corridor Team Vision Division

FROM: Melissa Williams, Senior Planner (301.495.4642) 
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SUBJECT: Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan – Preliminary Recommendations

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Provide guidance to the staff regarding the direction of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan. The next steps will be the submission of a draft plan to the Planning Board with a request to set a public hearing date.

This memorandum contains preliminary recommendations for the Montgomery County portion of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan. It includes the following: a plan vision and recommendations for quality of life, land use, transportation, urban design, parks, environmental, and implementation.

BACKGROUND

The Takoma/Langley Crossroads (TLC) area overlaps the borders of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties at University Boulevard where it intersects with New Hampshire Avenue. The area was named the Takoma/Langley Crossroads during the 1980s by a group of community business leaders who recognized an opportunity to unite the strengths of the businesses in unincorporated Langley Park in Prince George's County to those within the City of Takoma Park in Montgomery County.

It is a densely populated area with a mixture of single-family residences, multifamily units, offices and retail spaces. Overall, its character is that of a post-World War II suburban style community with predominantly one story strip-shopping centers on New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) and University Boulevard (MD 193), behind which are located low to mid density residential communities. Within Montgomery County, the entire sector plan area lies within the City of Takoma Park. The December 2000 Takoma Park Master Plan provided few recommendations for development within this area. While strip mall shopping centers dominate the major intersection, roughly 75 percent of the Sector Plan area is stable single-family housing. As a result, reinvestment opportunities lie primarily along MD 193 and MD 650.

The community is a short drive from the University of Maryland and the revitalized Silver Spring Central Business District and is easily accessible to regional employment centers including Washington, D.C., and the Food and Drug Administration campus in White Oak. The Crossroads has traditionally served as a gateway into the region.

For a period of almost 30 years, the Washington Metropolitan area has served as a destination for immigrants from Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa. The Takoma/Langley Crossroads area now represents one of the region's largest concentrations of people from many countries, cultures, and religions. Hispanics with origins in El Salvador, other Central American countries, and South America comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in the area. Other significant immigrant groups include Vietnamese, Koreans, Indians, and West Africans. Local retail and neighborhood services reflect this diversity.

This resident population is dependent on public transportation. The Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) has proposed a new transit center (bus terminal) and a Purple Line station in the northwest quadrant of University Boulevard/New Hampshire Avenue (Prince George's County) to serve this community. Implementation of the transit center project has been stalled by property acquisition difficulties.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This effort was formally initiated in January 2008 as a joint Master Plan between Montgomery County and Prince George's County with the participation of the City of Takoma Park. The major goals of this plan were to provide for transit-oriented development (TOD) around planned transit facilities, enhance the community character and improve the quality of life in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads planning area. The collective vision was to use the proposed transit center on the north side of MD 193 and the proposed Purple Line as catalysts to develop a transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly community that will meet the needs of the existing and future residents.

This project was a complicated effort from the start, given the policies and procedures in the three jurisdictions. Budget constraints in Montgomery County and resulting schedule changes caused a separation of the Montgomery County and Prince George's County plans in November 2008. However, each county remained committed to the creation of plans with shared elements (i.e. Transportation, Land Use and Density).

Prior to the separation into two plans, staff from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and the City of Takoma Park worked with consultants PB PlaceMaking (PB) and Basile Baumann Prost Cole & Associates (BBPCA). Funded by Prince George's County, these consultants provided recommendations for alternative concepts, land use, density, community outreach and urban design. Montgomery County provided staff, translation services and transportation analysis. The results of the transportation analysis completed by Montgomery County served as the basis for the market analysis and feasibility study conducted by BBPCA.

Two key types of analyses were performed in order to determine the redevelopment potential in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan area:

- 1) market viability
- 2) financial viability

The consultants study determined that in addition to the existing 167,000 square feet of office space, 850,000 square feet of retail space, and 5,600 dwelling units, the Sector Plan market area could support an additional:

- 340,000 square feet of office space with transit, and 70,000 without
- 460,000 square feet of retail space with transit, and 230,000 without
- 2,800 residential units with transit, and 1,400 without
- Due to overcrowding and the demand for additional affordable housing within the community, the study estimated that an additional 2,000 residential units could be supported but would require financial subsidy.

While this additional density was allocated proportionally across the entire TLC Sector Plan area, it was concentrated in the areas nearest the proposed Transit Center and Purple Line stations to further the TOD goals of the Sector Plan. Although the construction of the Purple Line serves as the primary catalyst, the market study determined that a minimum FAR of 2.0 would be required in order to encourage redevelopment on the sites nearest the Transit Center and Purple Line stations.

Monthly meetings were held throughout the process to review the work of the consultant, coordinate community outreach and refine the plan objectives. Montgomery County continues to work with Prince George's County to insure plan consistency. The City of Takoma Park is interested in the revitalization of the New Hampshire Avenue corridor as a whole, including the TLC area and remains a part of the Montgomery County team which meets weekly.

Outreach Strategy

As part of the Bi-County project team's preplanning activities, community outreach for the Takoma/Langley Crossroads (TLC) Sector Plan actually began in July 2007 with the initiation of stakeholders meetings. A pedestrian safety and mobility study funded by the Council of Governments (COG) was also prepared. Various traditional and non-traditional mechanisms were utilized to publicize the upcoming Sector Plan effort including the creation of a Community Leadership Team (CLT) to assist in outreach and

educate area residents about the TLC sector planning effort. This non-traditional approach was designed to reach out to all elements of the community, including those who have not actively participated in the past and prepare them for roles as community leaders and commit them to acting as liaisons for the TLC Sector Plan. The CLT was designed to bridge the gap between the planning team and the community-at-large. Charged with soliciting input from community members and identifying issues of importance for the staff and consultants, the CLT members were responsible for leading their own community outreach program with the Bi-County staff serving as a resource.

The CLT effort was not as successful as planned. It became apparent that the volunteers who were selected underestimated the significant time commitment required. Eventually the CLT was disbanded since retraining, closer supervision and additional resources would have been required to improve their effectiveness.

Traditional community outreach methods such as flyers, posters, websites, door to door recruiting, open house meetings, work sessions and outdoor meetings proved more successful. The Bi-County Team held a total of four open house meetings, three outdoor meetings and two work sessions, all of which took place within the Takoma/Langley Crossroads planning area. These meetings were more successful as they allowed opportunities to address the issues and concerns of area stakeholders. Due to the diverse nature of this community, translation services and bi-lingual documents were provided at all public meetings. This will continue as a part of the outreach process.

The TLC Sector Plan will seek to address the following Land Use, Environmental, Transportation, Design and Quality of Life issues that were identified by the community as well as the more specific issues identified in the January 2008 Goals and Outreach Strategy Report for the TLC Sector Plan.

- Preservation of existing affordable housing
- Desire for a safe and secure community
- Pedestrian fatalities caused by heavily traveled roads with inadequate pedestrian networks and inadequate trails and bikeways
- Inadequate community services, recreational facilities and gathering places
- Insufficient open space and poor green networks
- Concerns about community's continuing affordability (commercial and residential) as a result of the development of proposed Purple Line and Transit Center
- Lack of community awareness, identity, and sense of place
- Impact of the proposed Transit Center and Purple Line along University Boulevard
- Poor image of commercial areas along University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TLC SECTOR PLAN

Plan Concept

The vision of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads (TLC) Sector Plan is to achieve a transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly community that celebrates and builds upon the cultural diversity of the Crossroads community. The Plan seeks to reposition the TLC community as “the” regional multicultural shopping destination. The Plan will be accompanied by urban design guidelines that will reinforce the community’s image within Maryland’s International Corridor as well as establishing a sense of place.

Key Recommendations

- Implement the Purple Line along University Boulevard and the construction of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads transit center.
- Preserve and improve community’s affordability and housing options.
- Improve transit access, connections and pedestrian mobility.
- Support creation of healthy community infrastructure and improve quality of life.
- Promote the Takoma/Langley Crossroads image as “the” multicultural shopping district in the region.
- Enhance capacity of the neighborhood’s economy.
- Encourage transit oriented mixed-use development and limit single use commercial development.
- Strengthen environmental systems and green space network.
- Encourage sustainable design and green building practices.

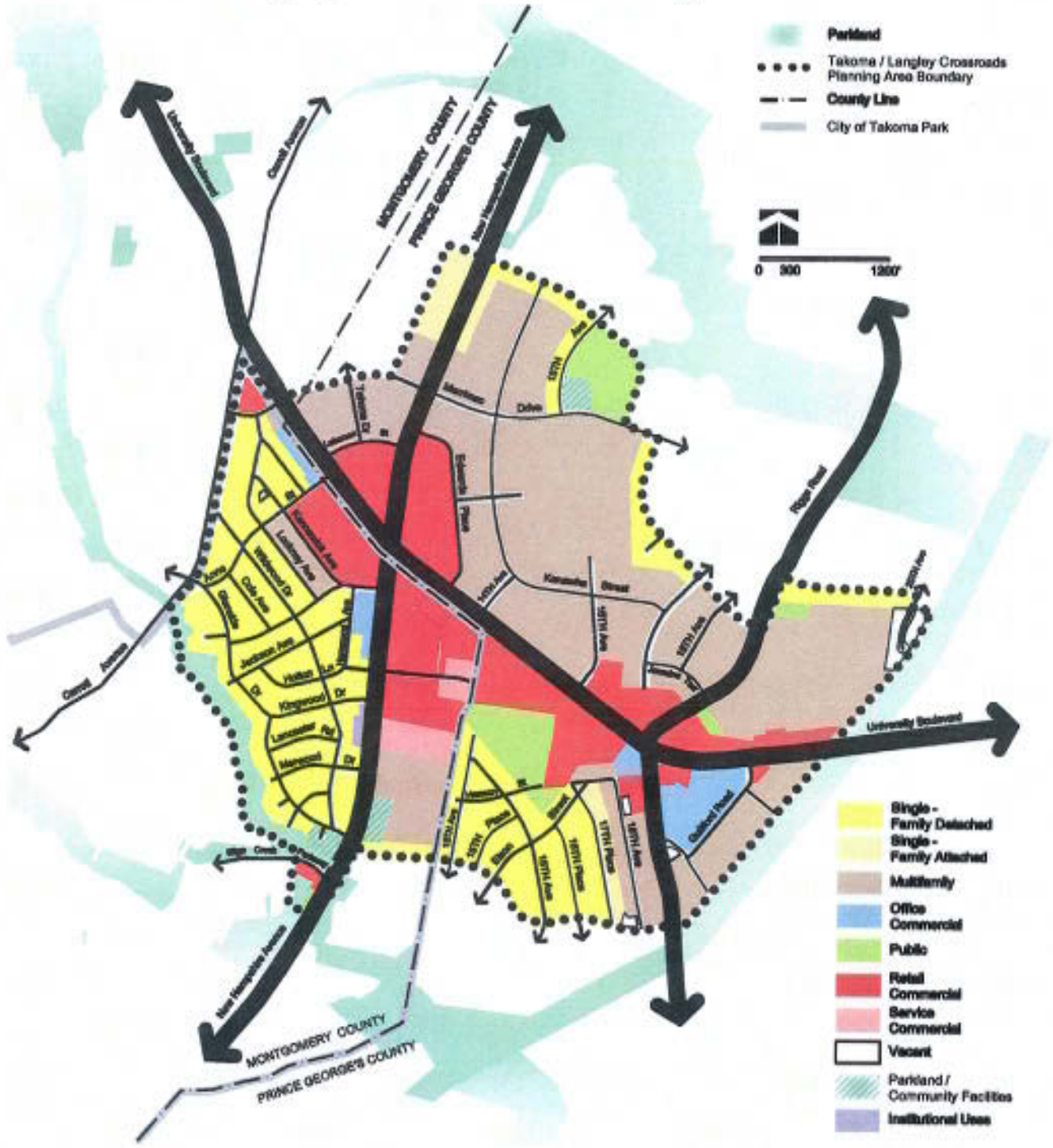
Area-Wide Recommendations

Land Use

- Preserve the character of the existing single-family community by confirming the existing R-60 zone and enforcing existing building code.
- Establish and maintain three distinct neighborhood districts:
 - The Crossroads District
 - New Hampshire Avenue Corridor
 - New Hampshire Gardens
- Provide transitional buffers where necessary to limit negative impact on adjoining residential communities.
- Encourage balanced mixed-use development through the application of the Commercial/Retail Use (CR) District.
- Encourage the retention of neighborhood service and local retail.
- Incorporate childcare, urban gardens, special needs residential options and meeting facilities into large scale mixed-use developments at the intersection of MD 193 and MD 650.
- Encourage maximum densities of 2.5 FAR at proposed transit center and proposed Purple Line station (intersection of MD 193 and MD 650).

- Increase the number of community gathering places and incorporate public art that illustrates the diversity of Maryland's International Corridor into the proposed one acre civic green.
- Reduce size of surface parking lots and encourage shared parking/reduced parking requirements.

Takoma / Langley Crossroads Existing Land Use



Urban Design

- Retain and preserve the character of the existing single-family community.
- Create compact, walkable developments with mixed-use centers having gathering spaces that will serve as local and/or regional amenities.
- Incorporate historic, cultural, and nature-oriented themes into development to strengthen community identity as diverse and multi-ethnic.
- Develop a hierarchy of open spaces throughout the TLC Sector Plan area that incorporate the following types of spaces in descending order of scale:
 - Stream valley parks
 - Active recreation spaces (possibly outside the TLC Sector Plan area)
 - Civic green or plaza
 - Smaller public use spaces
- Provide connections to existing natural open spaces of the adjacent Long Branch stream valley park and recreation spaces.
- Ensure gradual transitions in height and density between the three different districts.
- Connect the three districts to the adjacent neighborhoods in Prince George's County through coordination of future roads, bike paths and pedestrian routes.
- Establish Pedestrian Priority Streets in order to create animated building frontages.
- Improve or construct a network of roadways, streets, mid-block pedestrian connections, sidewalks, trails, and bikeways that will link all three districts within the TLC area.
- Build new streets to form block lengths of approximately 250 to 350 feet.
- Establish tree-lined boulevards on New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard that will provide for on-street parking, bike lanes, a wide planted median and wide sidewalks with street trees
- Locate parking on the street, in mid-block structures or in structures lined with street activating uses. Surface parking, where necessary, should be located behind or to the side of development.

Built Form:

- The tallest building in Takoma Langley Crossroads will be limited to 75 feet at the proposed Transit Center and Purple Line transit station, with heights of 45-60 feet at adjacent properties.
- Incorporate urban parks and public open space into future redevelopment projects.
- Commemorate Takoma Langley Crossroad's history, families, diversity and industries with amenities, building design, and interpretative elements
- Locate buildings to form well articulated street walls.
- Building bulk and massing will be controlled through building design and facade treatment to ensure light on the street, minimize shadows, and create a pedestrian scale along the street.
- Create street character by allowing activities within each building to spill onto the sidewalks.

Parks

- Provide a one-acre urban park in the area of highest density near the proposed Takoma/Langley Crossroads Transit Center and Purple Line station.

- Replace the existing Takoma Park Recreation Center with a larger multi-purpose recreational facility.
- Acquire an entrance to and additional green space for the Takoma Park Recreation Center.
- Purchase if available, the Takoma Academy High School (adjacent to the TLC Sector Plan area) site for M-NCPPC park use to meet active recreation facility needs identified in the 2005 LPPRP.
- Purchase properties, adjacent to parks as they become available, to help meet recreation needs identified in the LPPRP Plan and to expand existing green space.
- Consider a sanctioned North/South trail along Long Branch SVU 1A South of Carroll Avenue to Jackson Avenue only if WSSC requires access for sewer line replacement or repair.

Transportation

Transit:

- Support Light Rail mode for Purple Line with transitway in median of University Boulevard and a station at Transit Center.
- Support the development of the TLC Transit Center at the intersection of University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue (Prince George's County).
- Encourage the introduction of a circulator bus route that connects the Transit Center with residences, businesses and other activities within the Sector Plan area.
- Recommend that the MTA study the feasibility of a Purple Line spur that would connect the Transit Center to White Oak via New Hampshire Avenue. The connection could be either Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit but the focus should be on higher capacity, frequent service.

The Streets:

- A Business Street 70-foot right-of-way for Holton Lane.
- A new, 70-foot right-of-way, 2-lane Business Street connecting Holton Lane to University Boulevard.
- A 120-foot right-of-way for University Boulevard (most of University Boulevard is within Prince George's County).
- Reconfirm the master planned 150 foot ROW for New Hampshire Avenue.

Intersections:

- Recommend that SHA study prohibiting left turns at the New Hampshire Avenue/University Boulevard intersection as a supplemental study to the Sector Plan.

Pedestrian/Bikeway:

- Support buffered bike lanes along University Boulevard and shared use paths along New Hampshire Avenue.
- Provide full pedestrian accommodation for any new or reconstructed streets.
- Maximize pedestrian/bicycle accessibility to the TLC Transit Center and Purple Line.

Environmental

Site Design and Energy:

- Focus on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) – transit-served, compact, mixed-use.
- Incorporate energy efficient building and site design, including solar orientation.
- Apply building re-use and deconstruction techniques.
- Increase use of energy efficient lighting and appliances.
- Encourage renewable energy systems
 - solar photovoltaic systems
 - wind power systems
 - geothermal heat pumps

Green Space and Urban Forestry:

- Incorporate recycling and energy efficiency programs and standards in the design of new development and, where possible, into renovations.
- Enhance the natural environment by creating new green spaces and identifying locations for improved street tree planting.
- Encourage the application of urban forestry principles to landscaping projects to improve the diversity, health, and aesthetics of the urban ecosystem and better support the remaining natural ecosystem of the stream valley parks. Key principles include:
 - Using native plant species for landscape projects
 - Planting a mixture of overstory trees and understory trees and shrubs
 - Controlling existing alien invasive species and reduce their further use
 - Promote enhancement of all urban forest components: Street, park, and neighborhood trees, existing woodlots and forest fragments, and landscaping

Storm Water and Water Quality:

- Provide on-site stormwater treatments. Focus on Low-Impact Development techniques, including:
 - Minimize impervious surfaces
 - Use of bioretention facilities
 - Use of green roofs
 - Stormwater retention and re-use strategies
- Promote comprehensive regional solutions to support further off-site watershed restoration activities in Sligo Creek and Long Branch using stormwater quantity waiver fees from appropriate developing sites.
- Explore opportunities for joint watershed management planning to provide stormwater management and instream habitat projects among the City, Counties, and M-NCPPC.
- Explore opportunities to create linear stormwater ponds/wetlands within urban open space. Promote areas designed to increase infiltration within required open space or green space.
- Improve permeability of surface parking areas with green space that increases infiltration.

Quality of Life

Affordable Housing:

- Create housing opportunities close to public transit, commercial uses, employment, and community services.
- Support “lifecycle” by providing a range of affordable housing types.
- Preserve and create affordable housing through public/private partnerships.
- Provide resources and technical assistance to homeowners.

Economic Development:

- Support retention of local service business and neighborhood serving retail.
- Create, market and support a well defined retail district at the intersection of MD 193 and MD 650.

Health and Wellness:

- Promote healthy lifestyle through strategic partnerships with non-profits, faith based institutions and other stakeholders.
- Encourage creation of community gardens, a food co-op and secure a permanent location for the TLC Farmer’s Market.
- Support expanded programming of the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center.
- Encourage creation of community clinics and expand local healthcare facilities
- Improve access to recreational facilities, trails and parks.
- Encourage the development of adequate bicycling amenities (racks, lockers, showers, etc).
- Prioritize “Green Build” projects through fast track permitting.

Safety:

- Support Bi-County community policing efforts including the creation of a web based reporting system.
- Support the expansion of Multijurisdictional Collaborative Supervision and Focused Enforcement (CSAFE) program.
- Encourage application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in public and private projects.
- Encourage the development of neighborhood block watch program.

MAJOR REDEVELOPMENT SITES

1. 1101 University Boulevard East – Hampshire Langley Shopping Center (B.F.Saul)
 - Encourage mixed-use redevelopment
 - street level retail, restaurants and alternative housing (senior)
 - Secure purchase of land by Parks for 1-acre Civic Green
 - Pedestrian Path – provide access to Purple Line and Transit Center
2. Langley Park Shopping Center - (Walgreen's site)
 - Encourage mixed-use redevelopment
 - Street level retail, residential and office
3. 7411 New Hampshire Avenue – Choice International
 - Encourage mixed-use redevelopment
 - Support replacement of motels with hotel and small office park
4. 7333 New Hampshire Avenue – Hampshire Towers (Tenacity)
 - Retain high-density residential development
 - Replace existing Takoma Park Recreation Center with a larger facility
5. 7676 New Hampshire Avenue – Crossroads Professional Building (Stout and Teague)
 - Encourage mixed-use redevelopment
 - street level retail, office and commercial

Takoma / Langley Crossroads Neighborhood Districts



IMPLEMENTATION

- Utilize the proposed CR District zoning tool and apply through the Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) to encourage sustainable development that accomplishes major policy goals (connectivity, diversity, environment and design).
- Stage development to coincide with the construction of the proposed Transit Center and the Purple Line.
- Explore practical area-wide travel demand management measures.
- Support the creation of a Bi-County Transportation Management District (TMD).
- Support Bi-County expansion of Maryland's International Corridor Community Development Corporation.
- Define the role of other government agencies in implementing the plan including the regulatory process.
- Prepare and distribute bi-lingual urban design guidelines.
- Propose additions to Montgomery County's Capital Improvements Program.
- Use Amenity Fund and/or TIF funds to support creation of healthy infrastructure.
- Creation of Bi-County Weed and Seed program to deal with public safety.
- Explore creation of a Bi-County Parking Lot District.
- Encourage the creation of a New American Service Center to provide social service assistance to foreign born population (satellite of Suburban Washington Resettlement Center).
- Establish an Urban Main Street Program as a satellite of Main Street Takoma.
- Renew and expand the Long Branch Enterprise Zone to include the entire Crossroads Business District.
- Support the renewal of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Community Development Association.

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