



December 1, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

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

**FROM:** Khalid Afzal, Team Leader, East Transit Corridor Team  
Vision Division

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**SUBJECT:** Roundtable Discussion—Kensington Sector Plan Status Report

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Staff will provide an update on development of the Kensington Sector Plan as part of the December 11 roundtable. Staff also will summarize the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel's visit to Kensington in November and highlight the panel's findings and recommendations.

This memorandum offers a brief overview of what will be discussed in more detail in the roundtable with the Board on December 11.

**Kensington in Context**

Kensington is located between the denser Metro-related development nodes of Wheaton and White Flint. The town is about two miles from Wheaton's Metro station and about three miles from White Flint's. Commuter rail serves the town, but service is limited compared to Metro's frequent headways and extensive rail network. Six inbound trains to Silver Spring and Union Station stop at Kensington between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. weekdays; six outbound trains from the District stop there between 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Kensington also is located at a critical bottleneck in the area's road network. Crossing from east to west in this part of the County requires drivers to use Connecticut Avenue between Plyers Mill Road and Knowles Avenue in order to complete their east or westbound journey since this is one of the few railroad crossings in the area's road network. For this short segment, east-west and north-south motorists must use the same roadway.

This same short segment is at the center of Kensington's business district. Two important neighborhood shopping centers—Safeway and the Kensington Shopping Center—sit opposite each other at Connecticut and Knowles Avenues. A third, smaller neighborhood center lies near the junction of Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard. Residents who wish to run basic errands must often cross Connecticut Avenue to do so.

Kensington's location has some environmental significance as well. It is located in the watershed that also includes parts of Wheaton Mall. Tributaries of Rock Creek flow from east to west from Wheaton through Kensington Heights and into Silver Creek. Stormwater from the Westfield shopping mall in Wheaton is directed west as well. Silver Creek must absorb some of this flow. In that regard, any development activity in the western part of Wheaton could have an impact on Kensington's streams and stormwater facilities.

### **ULI Panel in Kensington**

Earlier this year, the Town of Kensington arranged for a two-day visit from a ULI Technical Assistance Panel. The Town charged ULI with providing direction for a revitalization strategy that would also preserve Kensington's character. The panel consisted of nine locally-based private sector land use professionals, including attorneys, developers, real estate finance and marketing executives, architects, designers and transportation planners. On the first day, the group toured the town center on foot and engaged local residents, elected officials, businesspeople and other stakeholders in roundtable discussions on land use, transportation and design issues. Planning Department staff provided technical assistance and an outline of the sector plan process and scope of work based on the discussion earlier this fall with the Planning Board.

The panel spent the second day developing and presenting its findings and recommendations. It concluded that Kensington's market potential was significant; it suggested that the Town could absorb an increase in multi-family housing of up to approximately 1,600 multi-family units as well as additional retail and office space. The panel focused on three locations: the area between Metropolitan Avenue and the railroad tracks; the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Plyers Mill Road; and the Kensington Shopping Center blocks.

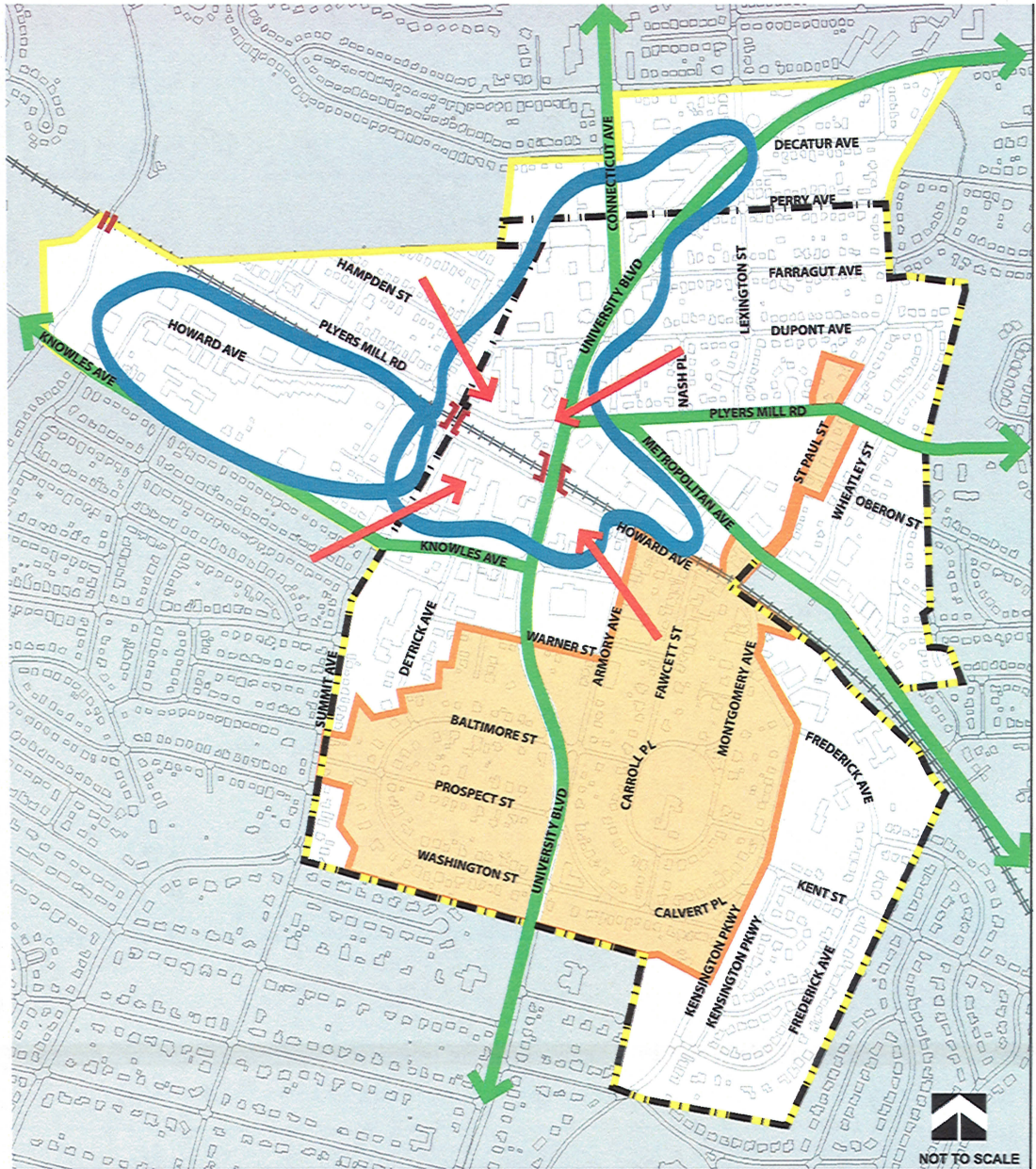
The panel recommended off-peak parking along Connecticut Avenue, reduced lane widths and lower travel speeds, extending Summit Avenue, creating a traffic circle at Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard and considering a "one way pair" through the town center.









The panel's recommendations for implementing its vision included a mixed-use zone that would allow ground floor retail, residential development on upper floors, floor area ratios of 1.0 and 1.5, and maximum building heights of 65 feet.

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Attachment

kensington plan area



-  Enliven Town Center
-  Connect Neighborhoods to Town Center
-  Preserve Neighborhoods' Scale and Character
-  Balance Regional Traffic and Pedestrian Atmosphere
-  Sector Plan Boundary
-  Town of Kensington Boundary
-  CSX Railroad
-  Bridge and Underpass