Upper West Street Sector Study

Community Workshop Summary
March 29-31, 2016

Issued: April 18, 2016

Upper West Street Corridor - Charrette Summary

1. Introduction

This memo provides a summary of input received and documented during a three-day workshop held from March 29-31, 2016 as part of the Upper West Street Sector Study. The information provided herein is organized by topic; presentations from each workshop day and comprehensive results of the board exercises are available on the City's website.
http://www.annapolis.gov/government/city-departments/planning-and-zoning/upper-west-street-sector-study

Planning Process and Goals

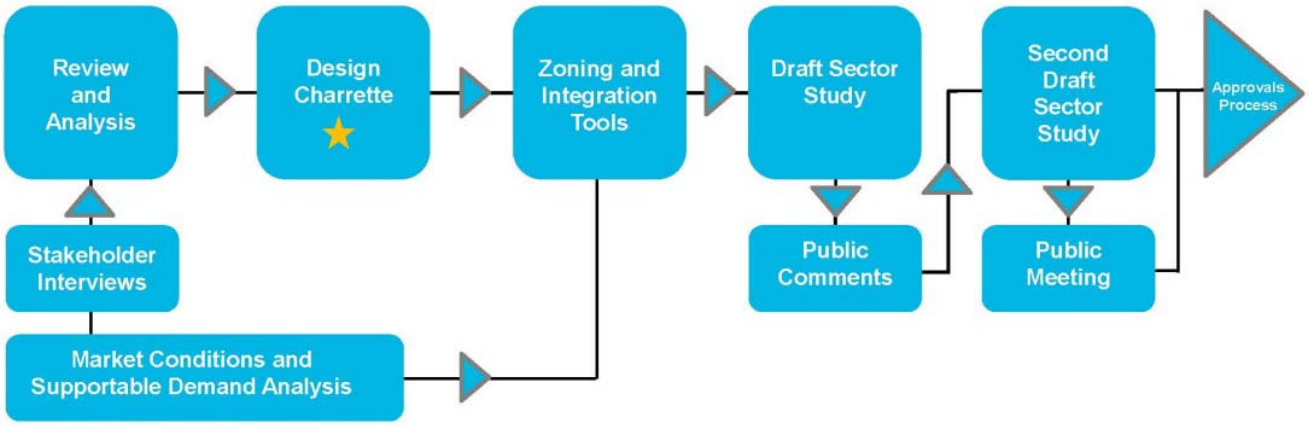
The overall planning study is guided by a series of nine broad goals listed below. These goals were developed a based on input from stakeholders and consultation with city staff.

- Improve aesthetics and physical appearance
- Strengthen existing neighborhoods
- Promote residential redevelopment
- Facilitate economic development and job creation
- Incentivize private sector investment
- Improve safety and walkability
- Balance and connect transportation modes
- Improve access and connectivity
- Create a gateway, identity, and focal points

The Study Area and Purpose of the Plan
Upper West Street is one of four identified Opportunity Areas in the 2009 City of Annapolis Comprehensive Plan. Primarily regarded as an automobile-focused corridor, the Upper West Street corridor provides a connection to the downtown and city dock, but also exists as a destination in itself. The study area extends from Westgate Circle to the City-County line.

The purpose of the study is to formulate a realistic way-forward to transform the area from an automobile-oriented environment to a more an urban environment focused on residential development and commercial uses. The Upper West Street corridor has the potential to incorporate mixed-use infill and redevelopment practices in complement with the existing residential, commercial, and unique industrial uses.

A simplified illustration of the planning process is provided below. The Sector Study will undergo a traditional public review process that will provide additional review and input opportunities at the Draft and Second Draft stage of the process.



2. Charrette Agenda and Activities

The workshop was conducted over three days from March 29-31, 2016 at the Mt. Olive Community Life Center on Hicks Avenue, Annapolis. A broad outline of the workshop agenda is provided below. In addition, an online survey (English and Spanish) was developed to mirror workshop activities and offer an additional means of input for citizens that were unable to attend the workshop. The survey is open until April 22, 2016. https://aecom.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4YkztZesSJcdKuN

In addition to identifying likes and dislikes of the corridor, upon arrival to the workshop, participants were asked to provide input through a series of stations around the topics of mobility, community, and investment. Activities included using dots to endorse ideas or techniques for mobility, access, community activities, and development types and identifying specific areas to apply those preferred ideas. Input received was used to help shape the work of the project team during the workshop and will guide the development of the Sector plan.

Day 1: Study Area Overview / Issues and Opportunities

- The planning team provided an overview of existing conditions of the Upper West Street Corridor, highlighting challenges associated with mobility, safety, and access; land use and development; market conditions, and overall corridor character. Following the presentation, a question and answer session occurred.

Day 2: Validation of Feedback / Ideas and Choices

- The planning team recapped the initial findings and input from the previous day and provided visual examples of potential recommendations for addressing the issues reported, including options for addressing right-of-way constraints. Following the presentation, the public had another opportunity to engage in a question and answer session.

Day 3: Initial Recommendations

- The final presentation included a proposed land use and development framework plan and initial recommendations for the area based on feedback collected over the previous two days. The planning team displayed examples of future architectural styles and potential safety and roadway modifications. Graphics included before and after images of existing properties showing how they may appear under future conditions. Discussion also included the mobility and safety phasing plan.

Public attendance at the workshop ranged between 30 and 46 participants and included residents, business owners, developers, City Councilmembers, and other local citizens with vested interest in the community.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
46	30	32

As of the date of this memo, a total of 143 online surveys have been registered. The survey mirrored the public meeting board questions and allowed users to respond via multiple choice questions or using an interactive mapping module. Raw survey data will be provided to the city when the survey period ends.

3. Community Priorities

Discussion during the meetings provided an overview of the community's prevailing concerns and priorities. Results from the meeting boards ultimately supported these views. Five main topics emerged as community priorities described below.

1. Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety

The corridor is primarily automobile-oriented leaving pedestrians and bicyclists vulnerable. Particular concerns were raised in regards to children walking to and from school. There are multiple documented accounts of accidents across the sector including some fatalities. In an effort to transition to a more pedestrian friendly and walkable community, certain treatments are necessary to calm traffic and allow alternate forms of circulation to occur.

2. Neighborhood Conservation

Residents are apprehensive over the idea of future development and wondered "why another study" was necessary. Many of the residents have lived in the area their entire lives and experienced change that has not always been positive. In acknowledgement of this, one of the most visible outcomes of the workshop is the expansion of the study area/framework plan to highlight the adjacent communities. This embraces the communities as a critical component of the plan.

Additionally, participants stressed that development must be sensitive to the abundant local significance and history of the area. The plan must provide benefits to the people - those living in and near the corridor (not just new development). Ideal planning will allow development to occur while celebrating this rich legacy and enhancing the surrounding communities where possible.

3. Affordable Housing

The availability of affordable housing and high cost of living was mentioned several times throughout the workshop. Many of the participants feared that they and their neighbors could be forced to sell or priced out of the real estate market or that affordable housing programs would not be (or are not currently) enforced with sufficient transparency. The Sector Study aligns with City of Annapolis policy that affordable housing is provided under future conditions following moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) law.

4. Appropriate Land Uses

Participants generally supported higher intensity development near Old Solomon's Island Road, adjacent to the Annapolis Town Center. However, concerns about impacts of higher intensity development such as increased traffic, were expressed as well as a need to appropriately transition to adjacent housing. Modifications to the zoning are necessary to facilitate redevelopment and provide proper transition across the sector as well as stimulate investment.

5. Implementation Plan

Residents expressed a sensitivity and caution in the implementation process particularly toward the application of public safety and traffic control devices. The community noted that certain measures were promised years ago but never materialized which has left the community feeling as though their concerns are not being heard. A strong desire for quick action was expressed. The community favored practical approaches that could be implemented in the short term and was skeptical of action that would require additional major right-of-way or had the potential to be a non-starter with the State Highway Administration (SHA).

The Sector Study will outline an implementation plan with short-, mid-, and long-term actions. The groundwork for long-term actions must begin as early as feasible.

4. What We Heard – The Boards

A series of informational and voting board stations at the charrette provided the principal means for obtaining community input and included: the Welcome Station, Mobility Station, Community Station, and Investment Station. Each participant was allotted a certain number of adhesive voting dots and asked to apply their vote to the most desired answer at each station. In addition to available choices, participants were given the opportunity to suggest their own idea via "write in" boxes. This section summarizes the results of the input (please download images of the boards from the city's website for more detail).

A. Welcome Station

The first in a series of stations, the Welcome Station asked for input on the where the participant live and what he or she liked most and least about the corridor. Overall, participants had many more "dislikes" than likes.

Where do you Live? Based on the board responses, most workshop participants were residents of the City and over half lived in or very near the study area.

What do you Like Most/Like Least about the Upper West Street Corridor? The characteristics that participants like the most include proximity to major transportation routes, proximity to jobs and other amenities, a clear sense of community, history, and community character. The characteristics that participants dislike about the area are associated with traffic volumes (speed, lack of lights), unsafe

conditions for pedestrians (lack of crosswalks, amenities) and lack of bicycle infrastructures. Secondary concerns involved difficulty for development to occur as well as the unsightly appearance of the area and "urban blight." A generalized summary of the responses is shown in in the graphic below.

Like the MOST	Like the LEAST
• The history of my community • Access to RT 50 and I-97 • Business options • Unique small businesses • Charming and close-knit residential communities on both sides of street near library • Proximity to everything– roads, food, jobs, shopping • Compact– close proximity to Annapolis and Parole • Easy access in and out of town– walk, drive, bike • Near Regional Library • Fast food shops • Mt. Olive Church and CDC • Home to Maryland's ONLY professional ballet company, Ballet Theater of Maryland	• Traffic on West Street (speed, visibility, crosswalks) • Traffic on Chinquapin during rush hour • Traffic/congestion during drop-off at Mills-Parole Elementary School • Lack of bikeability (not safe, no dedicated lanes) • Aesthetics – lack of unity along streetscape • Lack of pedestrian amenities; too many auto-centric (vs. lack of walk-in businesses) • Speeding traffic, crosswalks ignored, dangerous • Unappealing, unattractive from Chinquapin to RT 2, not welcoming • 2 lane each way encourages speeding • No effective alternate route for pedestrians and cyclists • Lack of incentives to renovate and repurpose existing buildings and homes • Unpleasant and dangerous to bike unless you go far off West St. • Frequent crashes and fast traffic • Danger driving during peak hours • Absence of traffic lights at crosswalks for fast food patrons • Difficult rules discourage accessory homes in rear yards • Rental properties with unlawful numbers of rentals and cars in yards, on streets • Urban blight • Zoning does not need to change • Lack of healthy eateries • No pocket park on Lee Street (dead end) • Poor streetscape • Highly impervious

B. Mobility Station

The Mobility Station included a map of study area hot spots (crash locations and problem intersections) and asked participants to identify tools (via dot voting) they would support to improve mobility for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit in the study area. Next participants were asked to identify where to apply those tools using sticky notes. Mobility solutions for vehicles that received high endorsement included traffic calming devices, adding turn lanes, and roundabouts/traffic circles. Mobility solutions for pedestrians that received high endorsement included widening sidewalks, adding crosswalks, street tree planting and lighting. Mobility solutions for bicycling that received high endorsement included providing separated (off-road) bicycle facilities and having dedicated bicycle lanes. Finally, mobility solutions for transit that received the highest endorsement included increased bus service frequency and development of a multi-modal transportation center. During open discussion and comment participants stressed the importance of addressing safety and mobility concerns in the neighborhoods as well as along the main West Street corridor. Most of the mobility concerns identified occurred along West Street from MD 2 to Legion Avenue—the stretch of road prior to lane-narrowing going east. Many of the located treatments correlated with traffic study crash data findings.

MOBILITY
What tools should be used to address these challenges?

Select 4 Priority Suggestions

Vehicular

- Add turn lanes
- Add traffic through lanes
- Add roundabouts/ traffic circles
- Eliminate some curb cuts
- Add traffic-calming measures (landscaped bump-outs, lane narrowing, etc.)
- Add road connections or extensions
- Add raised or landscaped medians (to prohibit mid-block left turns)
- Manage on-street parking/provide off-street parking
- Add signage and gateways to mark important locations

Pedestrian

- Add crosswalks
- Add traffic signals
- Road closures (convert to pedestrian and bicycle corridors)
- Add or widen sidewalks
- Develop a signage/ wayfinding system
- Improve ADA access with curb ramps
- Add pedestrian scale lighting
- Add landscaping between sidewalks and parking
- Add street tree planting

Bicycling

- Add separated (off-road) bicycle paths
- Add dedicated bicycle lanes
- Add shared-lane markings
- Connect trails to schools and community resources
- Provide more bicycle parking and storage
- Introduce bikeshare program

Transit

- Increase bus service frequency
- Enhance quality of buses
- Enhance quality of bus shelters and stops
- Develop a Multi-modal Transportation Center (transit hub)
- Extend weekday bus hours of operation
- Extend weekend bus hours of operation
- Your Suggestion Here

AECOM

COMMUNITY
What activities would you like to do in the Upper West Street Corridor?

Select Your Top 5 Choices

- Ride a Bike
- Go for a Walk or Run
- Play on a Playground
- Tend a Garden
- Eat Outdoors
- Service Your Vehicle
- Visit a Farmer's Market
- Learn about History
- Interact with Art
- Attend Community Events
- Have a Picnic
- Shop
- Live
- Work
- Relax in the Shade
- Visit a Gallery
- Utilize Neighborhood Services
- Take a Class/Learn a Skill
- Your Suggestion Here
- Your Suggestion Here
- Your Suggestion Here
- Your Suggestion Here
- Your Suggestion Here

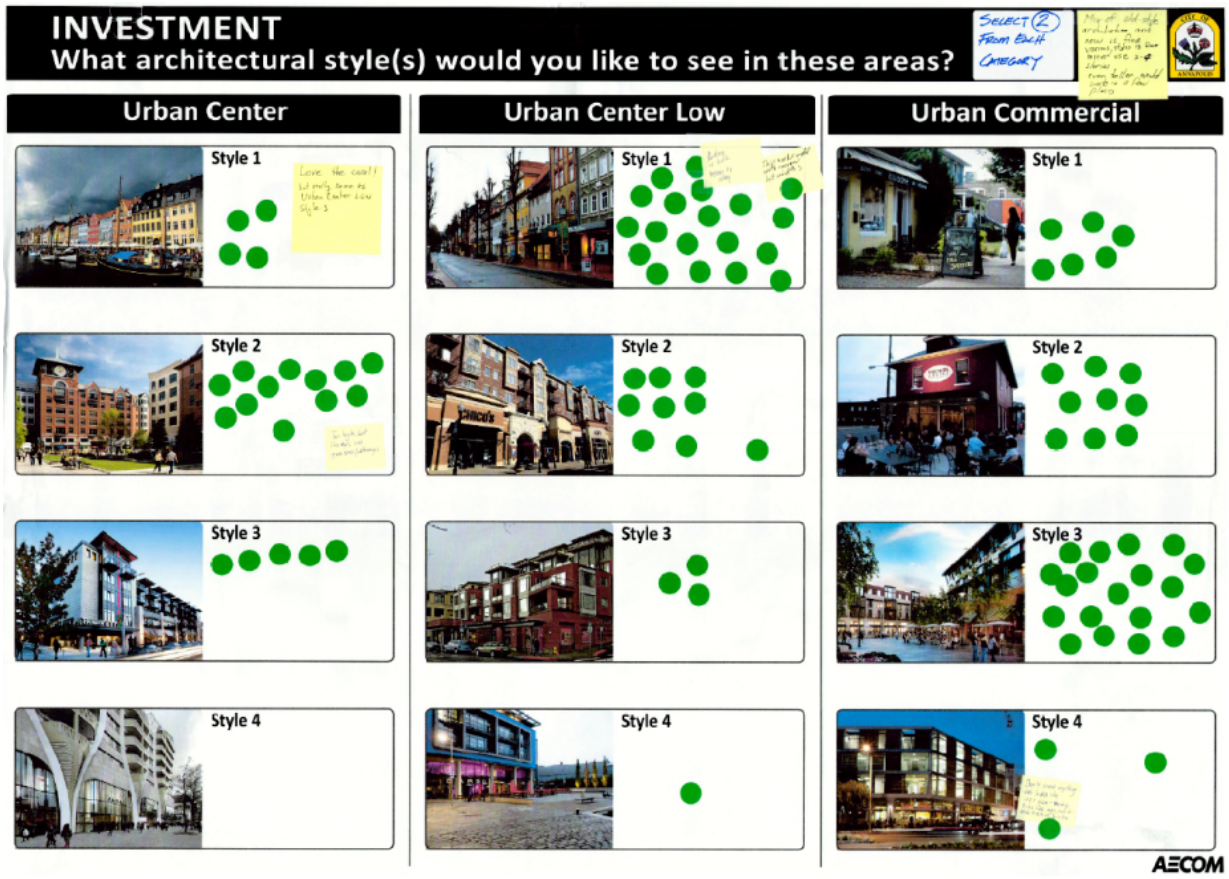
AECOM

C. Community Station

The Community Station asked participants to identify from a series of options, those activities they would like to be able to do in the Upper West Street corridor and provide feedback on where they would like to have those activities made available. It was pointed out that many of the activities identified on the voting board already occur in the study area or nearby, but perhaps they are unknown or not very accessible or visible. Aside from living and working in the study area, the most desired activities per the voting exercise included relaxing in the shade -including access to green space, attending a farmer's market, eating outdoors, and providing bicycling connections.

D. Investment Station

The Investment Station asked participants to evaluate a series of images that depicted different architectural styles that could be considered for the Urban Center, Urban Center Low, and Urban Commercial Areas (which were described on a board). There was favorable interest in allowing a fusion of historical and contemporary architectural styles in the study area, though some comments did express a concern about overall building height. The styles selected allow for sense of distinction and transition between character type areas.

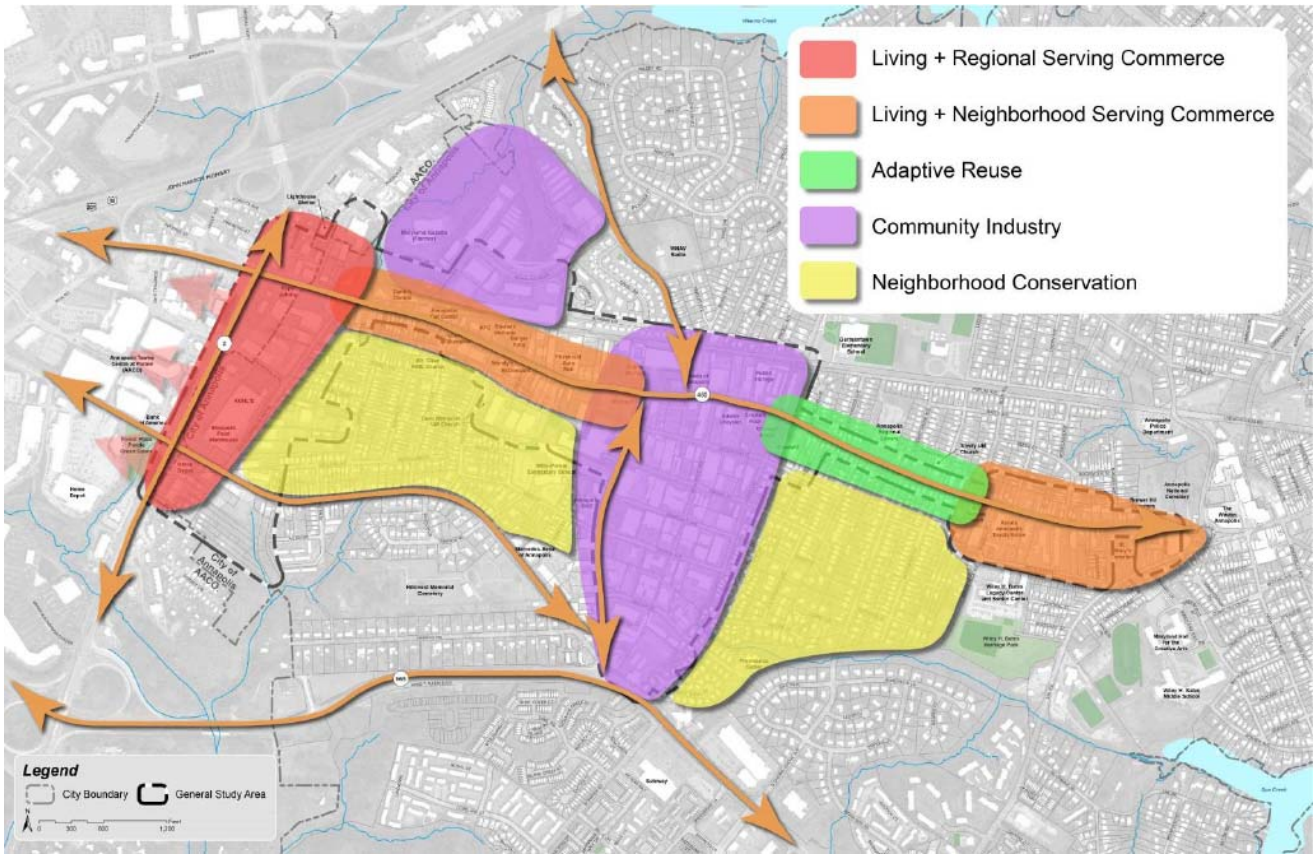


5. Preliminary Recommendations

Based on the collaboration between the community, planning team, and City of Annapolis, the preliminary recommendations proposed during the charrette act as a foundation for advancing the Sector Study. Recommendations are in the form of policy change and development techniques.

Land Use and Development Framework

A proposed land use and development framework plan was created to articulate the character and type of development and the location of the development within the study area. The framework will serve as a tool in further developing supportive land use, regulatory and zoning mechanisms as part of the Sector Plan. A description of each area is included in the table.



Framework Area	Preliminary Recommendations / Description
Living + Regional Serving Commerce	• Higher intensity redevelopment • Revise existing zoning categories or create a new zoning category to allow more intensive urban scale mixed use west of Solomon's Island Road -Assess B2 and BCE zoning categories • Ensure code appropriate transition to neighborhood east of Solomon's Island Road • Incorporate greenspace/park amenity to serve existing neighborhood and new development • Enhance connection for the community to access amenities • Incorporate innovative stormwater management to address city pollutant loading requirements
Living + Neighborhood Serving Commerce	• Consider changing BCE zone to Mixed Use zone • Allow Multi-family as a permitted use • Incentivize mixed use development with multi-family-oriented incentives -Floor Area Ratio -Height • Remove administrative review of commercial uses >25,000 SF (allow as a permitted use) • Promote landscape improvements on private commercial property • Maryland Department Housing Community Development Sustainable Communities Program • Incorporate innovative stormwater management to address city pollutant loading requirements
Adaptive Reuse	• Reuse existing residential for other commercial or office uses • Consider expanding allowable uses • Explore creative use of accessory structures • Retain architectural character
Community Industry	• Continue to protect/retain Industrial areas • Consider allowing some retail use in Industrial (I) District for goods stored or wholesaled on premises • Incorporate innovative stormwater management to address city pollutant loading requirements • Parking enforcement -Non-street legal vehicles off of roadway -No parking on sidewalks • Add sidewalks and improve walkability
Neighborhood Conservation	• Pursue funding for sidewalk and crosswalk improvements • Street lighting • Promote Property Rehabilitation and Home Repair Program • Enhance bike trail (off-road) connectivity • Consider allowing accessory dwelling units in appropriate areas

In redefining the character style for each of the framework areas, charrette participants selected their ideal examples that best represent their vision for the study area. These character styles align with the character types outlined in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

Living + Regional Serving Commerce

Living + Neighborhood Serving Commerce

Adaptive Reuse

Community Industry

Mobility Improvements

Safety of pedestrians and bicyclists along West Street was one of the leading community concerns voiced during the charrette. The roadway layout varies along its length, lacks a separation between vehicles and other modes, and contributes to traffic speed. Two primary courses of action, presented on Day 2 of the workshop, could be pursued to begin addressing these traffic concerns: 1) maintain the existing right-of-way (ROW) and modify traffic lanes and/or apply treatments within it, or 2) expand the ROW to provide for a larger zone that could be used to better separate travel modes (vehicle and bicycle) and create a desired landscape edge treatment.

Within those two courses of action there are several options that can be evaluated including maintaining the existing number lanes, reducing the number of lanes to allow for expanded sidewalks or bike lane, placing the sidewalk adjacent to the road or behind a landscape edge, and placing utilities underground. See figures A through F, below, for potential ROW and roadway options presented during Day 2 of the workshop. Figures A through C represent roadway modifications occurring within the existing ROW and Figures D through F involve expanding the ROW.

Maintain Existing ROW Width (60'-62')

Figure A
(Existing Conditions)

Figure B

Figure C

Expand ROW Width (72'-74')

Figure D

Figure E

Figure F

The consensus from charrette participants was to maintain the existing ROW and avoid, to the extent possible, any impact on property owners as roadway improvements are implemented. Treatments would focus primarily on intersection improvements and safety enhancements, such as enhanced crosswalks to facilitate pedestrian movement.

Intersection Enhancements

Charrette participants favored a strong intersection improvement plan to facilitate safe vehicular and pedestrian movement throughout the study area. Highlighted measures include better designed and more frequent crosswalks and additional traffic signals at problem intersections. Crosswalks with elevated paths, pedestrian-scale lighting, and proper signage were also discussed as techniques to support a safer pedestrian environment. A traffic signal warrant study has been commissioned to analyze the feasibility of additional traffic signals at Gibraltar and Parole Streets along West Street. Results of the study will be incorporated into the Sector Study.

Beyond intersection improvements, utility undergrounding was discussed as a means to visually improve and declutter the West Street corridor and improve visibility among vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Building support for undergrounding utilities in the short-term is needed as well as an evaluation of costs and feasibility. Placing utilities underground is generally very costly however keeping it as a long term goal was supported by the community and improves community resiliency overall.

Philosophy for Mobility Improvements

Based upon guidance from workshop participants, a Philosophy for Mobility Improvements was developed to emphasize the preferred approach for implementing any mobility-related improvements. This is based on a desire for action and a belief that short-term actions can build towards a long term vision.

- Promote safety along West Street as a critical and a moral imperative.
  - Foster a roadway that is calm and intuitive, not chaotic and distracting.
  - Focus on techniques that are practical and achievable.
- Make clear distinction between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Provide more visible crossing for pedestrians.
- Encourage healthy options for the community.
  - Implement surgical interventions that achieve beautification and resiliency through redevelopment and stormwater improvements.
- Take bold action within most problematic section of West Street; strongly pursue placing utilities underground to enhance physical conditions.

Beautification

Landscape design is an important element in the transformation of the corridor. Community preferences for safer, more attractive and more walkable streets will require improvements to the existing corridor. Implementing such improvements will occur over time as the corridor redevelops. A series of before and after images, as shown below, were used to illustrate how existing property could be transformed through redevelopment, including opportunities for enhanced stormwater management and landscape design treatments. Property and building frontage beautification efforts cans serve to unify the corridor.

Over time, redevelopment of West Street (shown near Gibraltar Street and proposed extension of Poplar Trail) could include a mix of uses that activate the corridor and provide 'gateway moments' along an enhanced streetscape that improves safety and access.

Implementation of streetscape improvements can include innovative stormwater techniques that reduce impervious coverage, beautify the corridor and better manage vehicle access to West Street.

6. Phasing

Preliminary recommendations developed during the workshop will be refined and organized into a phased program of short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations. Below is a table of the preliminary phasing plan presented at the charrette.

Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
- Improve intersections - Enhance crosswalks (more, elevated, visible) - Adjust the Zoning Code as needed - Warrant Signal Analysis - Pedestrian Roadway Safety Audit - Vehicle Road Safety Audit - Reduce curb cuts in concert with stormwater management enhancements (target properties) - Assist Design District to be leader in business community - Follow Inner West Street Streetscape Guidelines - Investigate use of traffic control officers	- Poplar Trail Extension and connection to Spa Creek Trail - Forest Drive Bike lanes - Art on the corridor - Pursue incentives to encourage implementation of the corridor vision	- Consolidate smaller parcels for coordinated development and physical improvements
- **Build support for undergrounding utilities**	- **Conduct feasibility study for undergrounding utilities**	- **Implement utility undergrounding program (construction)**