

EXISTING CONDITIONS INVENTORY AND KEY FINDINGS PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING #2

A Southwest Ecodistrict public meeting was held on February 17, 2011 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Headquarters' building. Approximately 65 members of the public attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to share and receive feedback on information collected during the existing conditions inventory, as well as key opportunities and constraints gleaned from this inventory.

Staff from the National Capital Planning Commission and the District of Columbia Office of Planning briefly presented the project scope, each agency's work plan, and how the work would be coordinated. NCPC staff also presented key findings related to energy, water, waste, land use, transportation, and urban design. A question and answer period followed the presentation; however, a majority of the public discussion occurred on-on- one with members of the project team.

To learn more: go to <http://www.ncpc.gov/swecodistrict>.

At the meeting, the public was encouraged to provide written comments and record their comments directly on posted maps and images. The public was also encouraged to submit written comments by letter, email, or via a web-based Public Comment Forum site prior to April 4, 2011.

After the meeting, the public was notified via an email blast and e-newsletter that the deadline to comment on this first phase of work was extended to **April 15, 2011**.

Please send your comments to:

Mail:

National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street, NW Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Attention: Elizabeth Miller

District of Columbia Office of Planning
4th Street, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
Attention: Joyce Tsepas

email to: swecodistrict@ncpc.gov or post on line at <http://swecodistrict.ideascale.com>

Public Comment Summary

This summary is a compilation of comments provided by the public. These comments were written on forms provided at the meeting or were recorded on posted on materials displayed at the meeting. Some comments were documented by staff during the one-on-one discussions during the open house portion of the meeting.

1. Are there any details about the 10th Street and Maryland Avenue corridors that you'd like to make us aware of?

Land Use and Development

- Consider making 10th street the site of the New Solar Decathlon if it must come off the Mall.
- 1200 Maryland Ave is very lively during lunch; workers would have a drink with a co-worker if there were locales to do it.
- People won't leave their buildings and activate public spaces if there are cafeterias inside the building...even if it's only 1 –2 blocks away. It will take a cultural change on the part of the agencies + they'll need to be engaged as part of the redevelopment process, if/when it happens.

Walkability and Mobility

- How hard is it to walk from SW residential areas up to 10th St? There aren't even crosswalks to get across 9th St. and the new 9th St. Bridge has no pedestrian access.
- Engage runners and walkers for exercise potential.
- 4' bike lane has same capacity as 12' traffic lane.

Comfort and Amenities

- It is miserable to walk in the heat/sun
- The fountain area at end of L'Enfant Promenade is a hazard and should go.
- The trees at Banneker are in horrible shape. The space has so much hardscape that the trees will never be healthy there.
- Make sure there are good public restrooms at the Eisenhower Memorial like the ones near WWII Memorial.

Constituents

- Fort McNair needs to be drawn into this plan: the word of mouth of high ranking military officers is priceless!
- Are the private building business owners (e.g. JGB) actively involved?

Water and Energy

- Could use waste areas under buildings amongst foundations for storm water infiltration.

2. What do you consider to be important strengths within the study area that are worthy of preserving or building upon?

Land Use and Development

- Stable-constant employment. Employees will run errands and shop before/after work, during lunch if they can.
- Tons of hungry tourists. They are nearby and primed to spend money, however they vanish when museums close.

Waterfront

- Proximity to the waterfront.
- The view from Banneker Park of the water front.
- Develop a true connection to the waterfront, rather than a dead end.
- Banneker Park
- The fish market

Architecture and Development

- Mid-century Brutalist architecture; clean it, light it, and landscape it. It's about to be super cool
- Church with copper roof.
- Already graded & assembled site (large parcels).
- Convert middle section of the Energy Department building to all glass or colonnade to allow view through to the Smithsonian – avoids tearing down.

Transit

- The train stations.
- Transit

Energy and Water

- Large, obsolete buildings next to the Mall & waterfront that can be repurposed to improve energy efficiency and function (though less space than before).

3. What are critical weaknesses or constraints that should be addressed?

Development

- Redevelop marina waterfront to attract visitors.
- Large, sunless floor plates.

Open Space, Amenity, Walkability

- Lack of free land for parks/gardens; trees & grass to be planted on streets/sidewalks
- Pedestrian vibrancy won't happen without greenery and a canopy.
- Over sized plazas and dead space.
- Distance between building and destinations.
- Disconnects

Transit and Parking

- Not aggressive enough on car/parking space.
- Need to understand how to maximize transit use, internal capture of trips and bike use.

4. What is your vision for the study area?

Land Use and Development

- An area that is vibrant both day and night, weekday and weekend.
- Residential & retail all over L'Enfant Plaza, and the retail mall somehow open and accessible to SW residents.
- To have it be an area where other DC-area residents would want to have their offices located.
- Where I can get some errands accomplished when I am already here for work.

- To have it expand the interaction of tourists and worker/residents.
- Mixed use (residential & retail; not enough retail may be a good thing: want to create excess demand).
- Open space is not as important as desired space.
- CSX/VRE tracks being under grade and the space above being used.
- A new “Green-HPGB” (ALA Pittsburgh).

5. What are the most important issues and concerns you want us to consider?

Land Use and Development

- Development being too dense.
- Things that support nearby residential housing.
- Redirect rail line to eliminate “barrier” and bridge over I-395 with an eco-park for a “people’s park.”
- Building a dog park somewhere in the area (Banneker Park/Potomac Park).
- Increase residential/hotel zoning on 10th Street.
- Need a kid-friendly park with 24 hour security.
- Get rid of the house-boats and drastically reduce the number of boat slips available.
- Grocery stores and fitness centers don’t need residents.
- Give a place for live music.
- Consider moving public housing projects and developing some parkland along the waterfront. It is silly to waste the most valuable land in the city with subsidized housing and little used parks (not opposed to parks, just think there is too much undeveloped land along the water).
- Build dog park, full service restaurants, etc. that will make the area desirable as a lodging destination for tourists & attractive to residents who currently live in VA.
- SW can be better than Georgetown & Chinatown combined!
- Work with PN Hoffman & give them considerable space for creativity.
- Plan so people can get anything done.

Visual and Physical Access

- 10th Street view shed.
- Improve pedestrian access.
- It is interesting that all vistas point outward. What invites people in? An appealing place?

Open Space and Walkability

- A place that is safe and pleasant to pass through to the waterfront and beyond.
- Engage the Smithsonian Castle & grounds. Create a smooth, walkable crossing from there, across Independence and over to 10th St. to entice visitors to the Mall to make the trek to the waterfront.
- Plan for people without cars. Don’t provide super-fast wide roads; narrow streets are best for pedestrians.
- Non-traffic transportation (non-vehicular).
- Need to improve sidewalk widths and street trees.
- DC tree canopy goal is 40% cover by 2035; please help further this goal through the planning effort.
- As both a short-and long-term solution to improving 10th Street, consider installing shorter (around 20’ tall) street trees to help reduce the overwhelming scale of the street and encourage more pedestrian comfort along the street. Or keep larger street trees pruned to a uniform shape

(similar to the Champs Elysees) to reinforce the modern architecture and strengthen the axial geometry, yet still provide the shade needed for comfortable pedestrian use.

- Some fountains would anchor areas and provide cooler areas in good weather.

Transit and Parking

- Incorporate all the transportation into one centralized hub in the center of the study area.
- Tie the bus routes to other areas nearby, like a bus transit hub.
- Peripheral parking to bring residences & private commerce.
- Viaduct for parking, freight, and services: use building floor plates wisely.
- Stop using parking meters as an additional tax: it only drives revenue for businesses to VA.
- Need bike parking and bike lanes.
- Electrify the passenger lines all the way to Crystal City so MARC and VRE can overlap.

Schools and Services

- Involve the Mayor and Chancellor of Education to improve schools in SW.
- Attract a charter school to SW.
- SEU needs to be a branch at American, GWU, and Georgetown.
- Homeless encampments on Main Avenue discourage pedestrian traffic down 12th.

Energy and Water

- More trees are needed to reduce heat island and help with storm water issue.
- Green infrastructure: Use “fiscal conservatism” & “savings”.
- MIT is prototyping roofing tiles that change white in summer and black in winter. Development around station is not energy efficient.
- Redevelop existing buildings inventory to high performance green building functionality, maintaining, if appropriate, buildings of historic “importance” with latitude to incorporate current technology in windows/glazing/curtain wall assemblies and ATEP criteria.
- Address storm water & restore hydrology.
- Green infrastructure to serve SWM & Livability.
- Street trees [on the Southwest Freeway] needed. Especially on the south-facing walks.
- Storm water runoff is a problem.
- Storm water management: If many buildings, roads, and walks are above grade, you can use unused land for infiltration. Be careful of foundations of course. Reference the Alexandria Library on Duke.
- Introduce more pervious surfaces to lower the impact of storm water facilities.
- More green space, pervious sidewalks, and parking lots.
- Please consider developing/redeveloping sites in the Ecodistrict to the standards of the Sustainable Sites Initiative.
- Pump turbines for storm water.
- Viaduct (SW Freeway) for water storage.
- Capture rain water in fountain reservoirs for watering trees/greenery. See Lima, Peru.
- Utilize solar-powered streetscape lighting to minimize energy use.

Architecture

- Cotton Annex is not mentioned among historic buildings. Has determination been made?
- Please remove the Forrestal building or at least the center section.
- All glass or colonnade all or part of the Forrestal Building that blocks the view down 10th Street.

- Forrestal - What about food kiosks and seating on the plazas at each end?

Potential Themes

- Utilize the concept of eco-revelatory design / regenerative design as an overarching theme for the Ecodistrict – the streetscape should have an added focus on teaching people about the water cycle. This theme should be tied in with the cultural / civic locations as well.
- People want to learn more about what the government does inside the buildings. Transparency in government is a theme we hear about more and more – maybe it can help reshape this area.

Precedents

- Portland, Maine has wonderful downtown markets that engage with workers doing errands to support business.
- Krakow, Portland has more outdoor cafes than indoor—every free space in the plazas/center is used for resting.
- Look at Las Ramblas in Barcelona as a model for pedestrian activity on both Maryland Ave and 10th Street.
- Look at some projects in China like Dongtan (ARUP)...they've been doing a lot of work on this, although it's been more like the creation of a brand new city, and not redevelopment of an existing neighborhood or city.

6. Additional Comments

- Love it!
- There is a lot of information on the problem but no suggested solutions or examples of what may work and has worked in other parts of the city or localities.
- Topography maps need to show: 1. flood potential after levee is constructed; 2. watershed boundaries; 3. grade and top of build elevations on map
- Include the future Eisenhower Memorial location (and design, once it's finalized) on all of the maps. This feature needs to be given more attention and should be well-integrated into the Ecodistrict.
- Will the CSX tracks along Maryland and Virginia Avenues be wide enough to handle four tracks?