

Dolfield Avenue Revitalization

Baltimore, MD

October 22nd & 23rd, 2012



Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is an international, non-profit research and education organization that serves to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Founded in 1936 by J.C. Nichols, the mission and principles of the ULI have withstood the test of time for 75 years. The ULI is based out of Washington, D.C., and is connected throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia by a network of District Councils. ULI has grown from seven regional district councils in 1983 to more than 60 global district councils today.

The ULI Baltimore District Council is an organization of diverse individual members who seek to provide leadership for fostering responsible land use in the Baltimore region. As a trusted convener for sharing knowledge and as an unbiased source for timely land use information, ULI Baltimore is a critical link in improving state and local land use policy and development practices.



ULI Advisory Services

The Urban Land Institute is a leader in conducting research and providing information on all aspects of real estate development and land use policy. In order to maintain its role as a valued and objective source in the private and public sectors, the ULI seeks to bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs; foster collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue and problem-solving; explore issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development; advance land use policies and design practices that respect both built and natural environments; share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing and electronic media; and, sustain a diverse global network of local practices and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Since 1947, ULI's Advisory Services Program has been assisting communities by bringing together panels of seasoned real estate, planning, financial, marketing and development experts to provide unbiased pragmatic advice on complex land use and development issues. This program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield development, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies. A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members. A wide variety of public, private, and non-profit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

ULI - Baltimore

At the local level, ULI Baltimore provides advisory services on specific issues, which are addressed in one or two day programs. Sponsors request the services of a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) on a specific issue that can be addressed by a panel of experts. The District Council assists the sponsor in refining the scope of work and convenes a panel to address those specific issues. Each panel is comprised of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge relative to the scope of the topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. Members of a TAP cannot be involved in matters pending before or be working for the sponsor of a TAP, and cannot solicit work from the sponsor during the panel's assignment period. ULI panel teams are interdisciplinary and typically include several developers, a planner, a market analyst, a finance expert, and others with the niche expertise needed to address a given project. ULI teams are structured to provide a holistic look at development problems. Each panel is chaired by a respected ULI member with previous panel experience.

The agenda for a panel assignment is intensive. Sponsor entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including providing extensive briefing materials to each member prior to the panel's convening. During the day of the TAP, members tour the site, hear from public and private stakeholders, and then deliberate on the assigned issues. Because of the in-depth preparation prior to the day of the TAP, panel members are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time. A written report with findings and recommendations is prepared and published. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this report is intended to provide objective advice that will further ULI's mission to share best practices and provide educational services in local land use planning and real estate development.

The City of Baltimore, in partnership with the community and local stakeholders, hosted a ULI Technical Assistance Panel to examine redevelopment opportunities for the Dolfield Avenue Commercial Core, adjacent to the West Cold Spring Metro Station in northwest Baltimore. The event was part of ULI Baltimore's Technical Advisory Panel ("TAP") program which provides expert, multidisciplinary advice on land use and real estate issues facing communities in the Greater Baltimore Region. One of the key priorities of the TAP program was to engage residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the process of developing a vision for the area.



ULI Technical Assistance Panel Process

Panelists were sent briefing materials that included various documents, site maps, and photographs, as significant preparation is required before the two day program. The briefing book prepared for the panelists provided extensive background information on the objectives for the Dolfield commercial core, the existing conditions, and the planning and projects in the surrounding area. The TAP panel included three developers, a traffic engineer, two landscape architects, and an economist, all with local and regional experience to address the issues facing Dolfield Avenue. A full list of panelists is included in the report addendum. Sean D. Davis, a registered landscape architect with Morris & Ritchie Associates in Baltimore, served as the TAP Chairperson.

On Day One, the TAP panel began with a presentation by various City of Baltimore staff from City Planning and the Baltimore Development Corporation, with the welcome and opening remarks by Tom Stosur, the Planning Director of the City of Baltimore. Transit and metro information was discussed, as well as the current Transform Baltimore zoning efforts, and the Park Heights Master plan redevelopment, less than ½-mile away.

Day one also included interviews with diverse community stakeholders, a site tour, a working session, and an evening spent formulating recommendations. Day One interviews included a Roundtable Q&A session, where residents, businesses, and other stakeholders were asked to share their perspective of the past, present and future vision of Dolfield Avenue commercial core.

The second day included specialized site tours, interviews with local business owners, a second working session to fine-tune the panel recommendations, and concluded with a public meeting where the panel offered its findings and recommendations to the City, neighborhood organizations and local residents.



Existing Streetscape Conditions

Technical Assistance Panel Questions

The City of Baltimore requested that the TAP Panelists evaluate and help the community and local stakeholders answer the following questions:

1. How do we strategically revitalize the commercial area by building off the adjacent transit station as an asset? The City was seeking a realistic, operational plan that identifies how to revitalize the commercial core. Revenue is available to the City to implement improvements, and the plan was requested to identify what the City should do, and in what order, to best utilize the revenue sources.

2. Market Potential and Land Use. What type of (re)development is appropriate for this area? How much development and what type of development can the area realistically support? What would be required to make each proposed (re)development happen? How should these actions be prioritized/phased?

3. Design. How does the City create and/or convert to transit and pedestrian-oriented design? What types of design are appropriate for each location? What would be required to make each design happen? What is the priority or proposed phasing for the recommendations?

- Crossing Wabash Avenue
- Right-of-way along Cold Spring Lane, south side
- Right-of-way along Cold Spring Lane, north side
- Right-of-way along Dolfield Avenue, east side
- Right-of-way along Dolfield Avenue, west side
- Parking
- Connection to Aldi's Grocery Store
- Connection to Abundant Life Towers Senior Center
- Businesses along Cold Spring Lane, south side
- Businesses along Cold Spring Lane, north side
- Businesses along Dolfield Avenue, east side
- Businesses along Dolfield Avenue, west side
- Vacant land next to Post Office on Dolfield
- Vacant land next to March Funeral Home on Wabash Avenue

4. Building Momentum. Revitalizing the Dolfield Avenue Commercial core will take many years and significant resources will not be available immediately. What types of projects and activities should the neighborhood and the City undertake to build momentum towards long term revitalization? What are some specific projects that could be highly visible and cost effective to do now while we await the resources to do major improvements (like a pedestrian promenade or new buildings)?

Dolfield Avenue

Commercial Core

Since 2008, the impacts of the recession in the City have been deep and widespread. Employment dropped, as did home values. Recent home sales in the Dolfield area average \$150,000 for a single family residence, with foreclosures hovering at 16% (information provided by local real estate agency during TAP). The community is an eclectic mix of detached homes, row homes, and apartment complexes. The majority of homeowners have lived in the community between 30 and 40 years, and more than 15% of the owners owning their property free and clear.

The Dolfield Avenue Commercial Core is an aging commercial area, surrounded by a well maintained, but aging residential neighborhood. The center of the Dolfield commercial core is a one block stretch of Dolfield Avenue between Cold Spring Lane and Belle Avenue, and parallel to Wabash Avenue. The commercial area includes two blocks of Cold Spring Lane, which links the Dolfield area to the West Cold Spring Metro Station.

Most of the land uses within the commercial core are local serving neighborhood uses and retail, and include Aldi's grocery store, the Ivy Center, the Post Office, and the March Funeral Home. Cold Spring Lane includes a few auto repair shops, carry out restaurants, a closed-for-renovation car wash, and a liquor store. Dolfield Avenue is lined with a number of blighted retail establishments covered with security bars, which include a beauty salon, barber shop, multiple take out shops, and a convenience store. Street lighting and landscaping is spotty, with the aging retail storefronts lacking sidewalks and curbs. Most customers will turn off of the street, onto and over the broken sidewalks to park and access the take-out shops, requiring pedestrians to dodge and walk around vehicles parked haphazardly in front of the retail. Adjacent to the strip retail is the Ivy Family Support Center, operated by the Epsilon Omega Graduate Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. The center served as the host location for the two-day TAP event, and provides programs and services to the surrounding neighborhood.



Dolfield Avenue Commercial Area

Existing Conditions

	East of Wabash	West of Wabash
TOTAL POPULATION	16,277	11,786
0 - 4 Years	1,318	708
5 - 11 Years	1,528	919
12 - 14 Years	626	420
15 - 17 Years	771	501
18 - 24 Years	1,845	1,130
25 - 34 Years	1,995	1,377
35 - 44 Years	1,830	1,325
45 - 64 Years	4,358	3,410
65+ Years	2,006	1,996
Median Age	35.3	41.3
RACE/ETHNICITY		
White	261	173
Black	15,661	11,390
American Indian	53	31
Asian	30	36
Other Race	59	40
Two or More Races	213	116
Hispanic	167	120
HOUSEHOLDS		
Total households	5,765	4,612
Family households (families)	3,791	3,239
With own children under 18 years	1,890	1,144
Married-couple family	1,255	1,264
With own children under 18 years	347	314
Male householder, no wife present, family	451	292
With own children under 18 years	231	90
Female householder, no husband present,	2,085	1,683
With own children under 18 years	1,312	740
Nonfamily households	1,974	1,373
Householder living alone	1,695	1,285
65 years and over	444	457
Average Household Size	2.78	2.54
Total housing units	7,855	5,481
Occupied housing units	5,765	4,612
Unoccupied housing units	2,090	869
Owner-occupied	2,369	2,872
Renter-occupied	3,396	1,740

Dolfield TAP Demographics

	East of Wabash	West of Wabash
HOUSEHOLDS		
Units in Structure		
Total housing units	7,855	5,481
1-unit, detached	487	1,712
1-unit, attached	4,946	1,987
2 units	507	578
3 or 4 units	196	604
5 to 9 units	437	323
10 to 19 units	430	144
20 or more units	840	133
Mobile home	12	0
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0
Value of Owner-occupied Units		
Owner-occupied units	2,369	2,872
Less than \$50,000	353	115
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1,325	592
\$100,000 to \$149,999	425	758
\$150,000 to \$199,999	162	561
\$200,000 to \$299,999	74	607
\$300,000 to \$499,999	23	189
\$500,000 to \$999,999	7	50
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Population 25 years and over	10,616	8,867
Less than 9th grade	708	374
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	2,484	1,143
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4,419	2,458
Some college, no degree	1,795	2,317
Associate's degree	532	521
Bachelor's degree	476	1,218
Graduate or professional degree	202	836
Percent high school graduate or higher	69.9%	82.9%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	6.4%	23.2%
LABOR FORCE		
Population 16 years and over	13,152	10,503
In labor force	7,296	6,172
Civilian labor force	7,281	6,152
Employed	5,953	5,474
Unemployed	1,328	678
Armed Forces	15	20
Not in labor force	5,856	4,331
Civilian labor force	7,281	6,152
Percent Unemployed	18.2%	11.0%
INCOME (IN 2010 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)		
Total households	5,765	4,612
Less than \$10,000	1,271	346
\$10,000 to \$14,999	633	190
\$15,000 to \$24,999	588	659
\$25,000 to \$34,999	655	637
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,003	820
\$50,000 to \$74,999	1,018	965
\$75,000 to \$99,999	343	495
\$100,000 to \$149,999	219	405
\$150,000 to \$199,999	24	85
\$200,000 or more	11	10
Median household income	30,274	42,356

Source: 2010 Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5 year Estimates

Auto
repair,
Carry out
restaurant,
Car wash,
Liquor
store

Aldi's
grocery
store

Retail
strip

Retail
strip

Ivy
Center



Aerial identifying Community Amenities

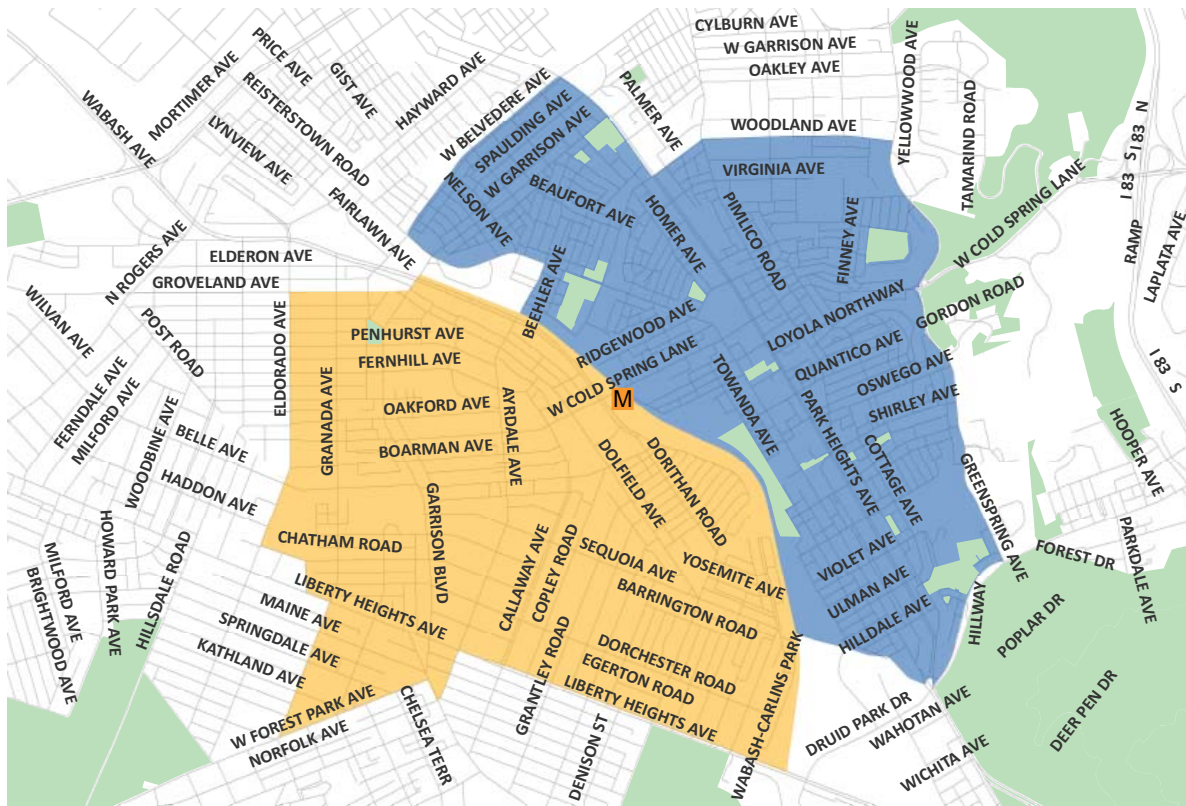


Metro
Station

Park and
Ride

March
Funeral
Home

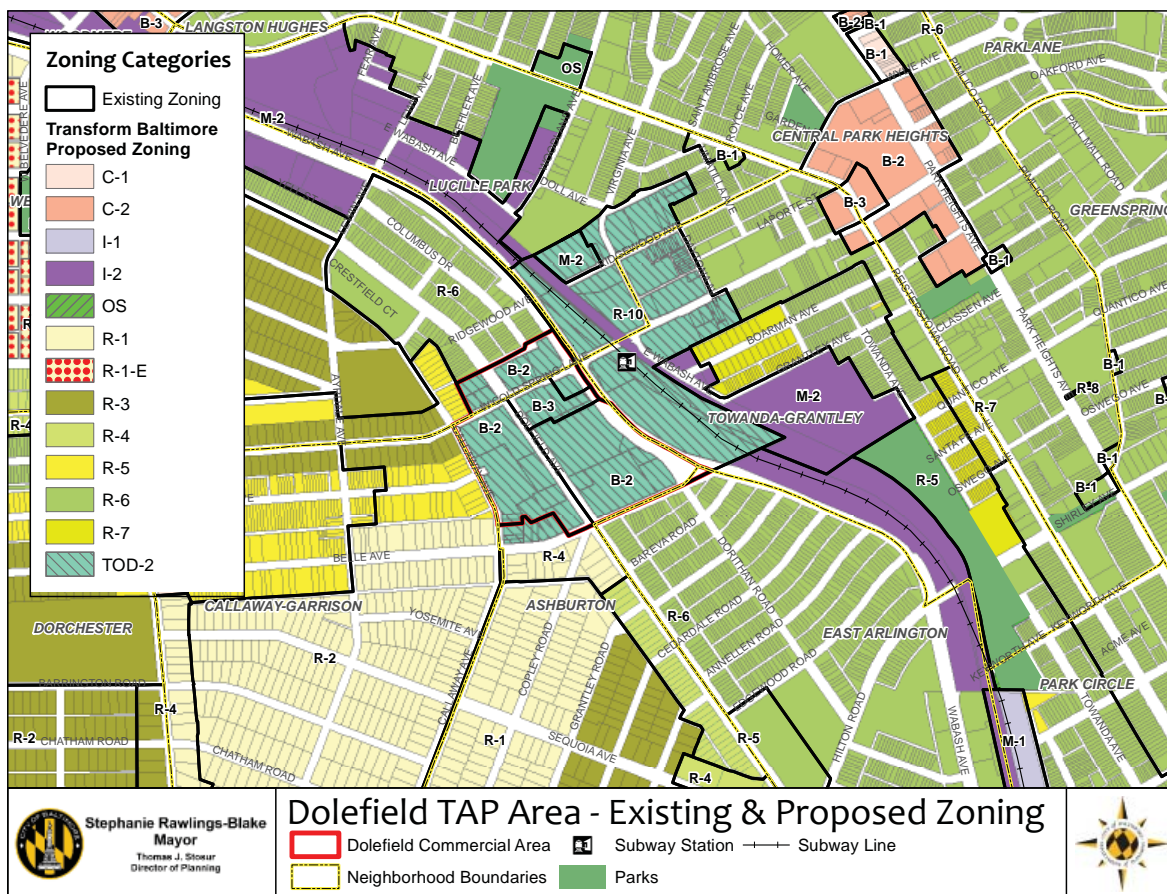
Post
Office



Dolfield TAP - Demographic Study Area



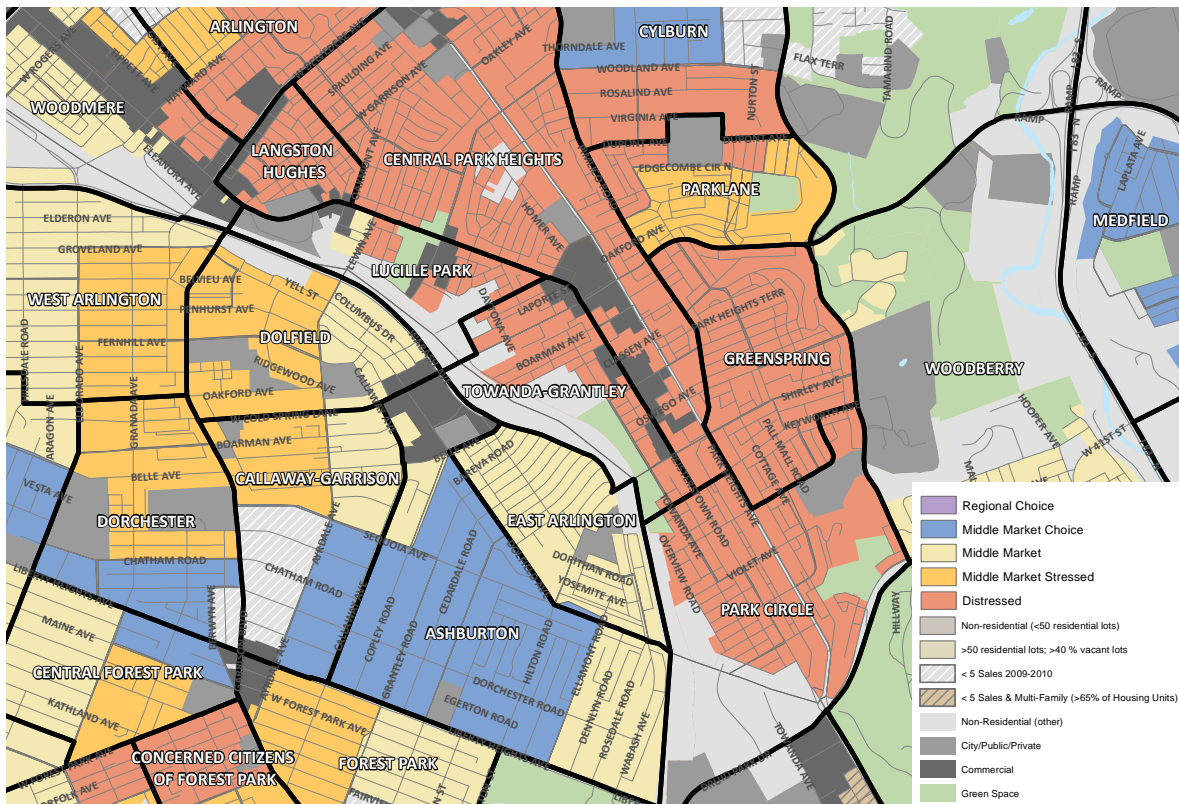
- M Metro Station
- East Study Area (2010 Census Tracts)
- City Park
- West Study Area (2010 Census Tracts)



Dolfield TAP Area - Existing & Proposed Zoning

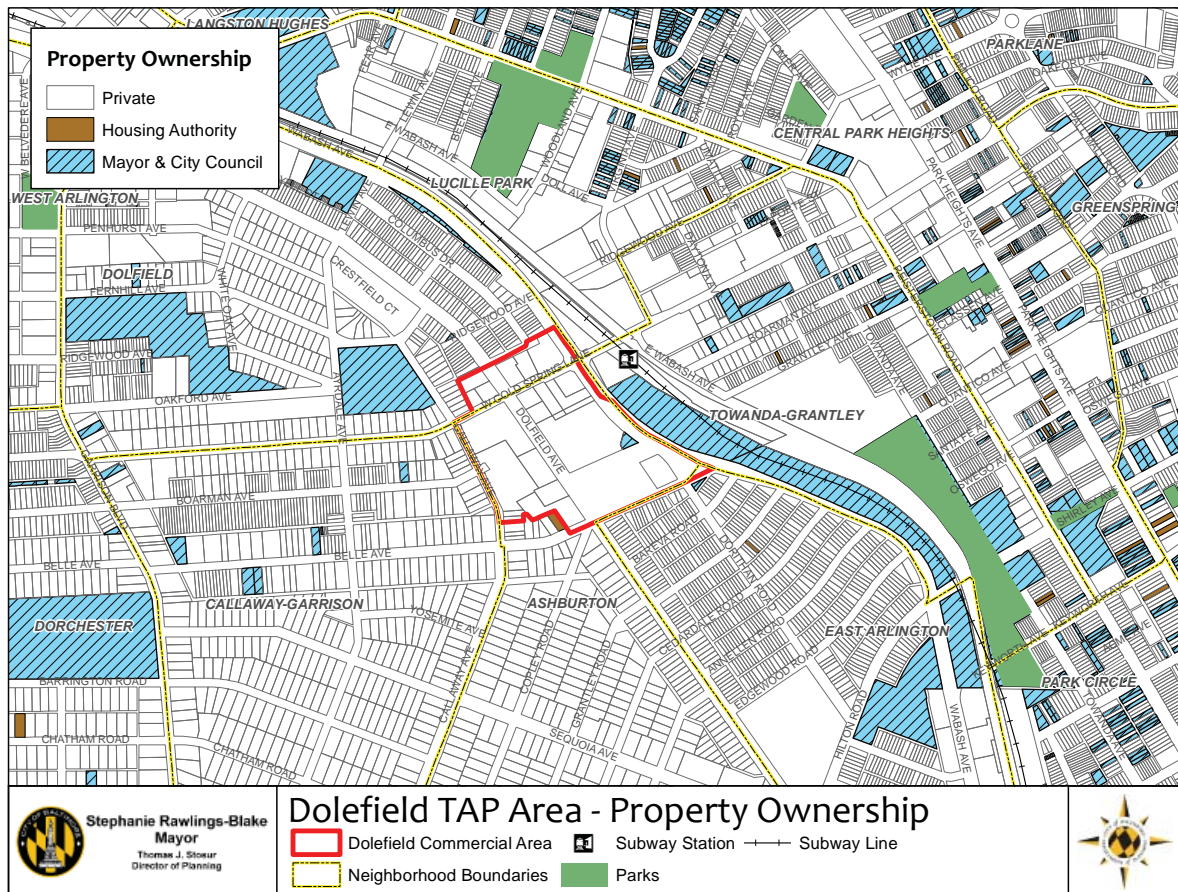
- Dolfield Commercial Area
- Parks
- Subway Station
- Subway Line
- Neighborhood Boundaries





Dolfield TAP Area 2011 Housing Market Typology

Developed in partnership between the Baltimore City Planning Department, Baltimore Housing, The Abell Foundation, and The Reinvestment Fund.



Existing Conditions (continued)

The Dolfield commercial area is a study in contrasts, with an abundance of assets and an abundance of challenges:

- Stable residential community, with more than 50% home ownership in surrounding local neighborhoods. Represents a great value, with affordable single-family homes near transit and local bus lines.
- Institutional and civic services are provided by the West Cold Spring Metro Station, the Post Office, the March Funeral Home, and the Ivy Center. These community services are well landscaped, well lit, secure, and are considered stable community assets.
- Surrounding retail competition is extensive, with large shopping centers that serve the regional shopping needs. Local residents indicated they drive outside of the community to surrounding retail centers to meet their shopping needs.
- Neighborhood-serving retail areas are aging, poorly lit, and none are destination services. Other than the local Aldi's grocery store, local retail-serving needs are served by substandard retail offerings in the Dolfield commercial core. The liquor store, convenience store, and various fast food restaurants all provide quick-stop services for shoppers.
- Business services include the gas station, various auto body and auto repair shops, the closed car wash, and the used car lot.
- Safety and security are an issue, with loitering and drug sales occurring on the street and in the parking lots. Dolfield Avenue and Cold Spring Lane are poorly lit with inadequate street lighting. Curbs and sidewalks are broken, missing, and incomplete in areas, making pedestrian movement difficult.



Existing community retail character

Existing Transit Systems

The Cold Spring Metro Station is located at the intersection of West Cold Spring Lane and Wabash Avenue. The above-grade transit line runs parallel to Wabash Avenue (at Cold Spring Lane), and includes a two-story station building, an at-grade bus transfer stop, on-grade parking, and a small park and ride lot. Most patrons accessing the station, either park and ride, or use Cold Spring Lane to cross Wabash Avenue from the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The community is well served by the West Cold Spring Metro Station, as it has easy access to the bus and transit system.

- The Metro station is a constrained site, and is separated from the commercial area by Wabash Avenue, a six-lane arterial roadway running north/south.
- Metro ridership is below average, with approximately 2,000 daily boardings, relatively low from a system perspective. Bus routes 33 and 51 load/unload at the station, with between 200 and 300 daily boardings generated by the bus lines. The station holds 300 parking spaces and is at 50% to 70% capacity on any given day. (Data provided by MTA)
- The Metro line crosses Cold Spring Lane above grade, running parallel to the CSX tracks, which are at grade and pass through various old industrial areas.
- The CSX lines create a strong demarcation between the Park Heights area and the Dolfield and Garrison-Hill neighborhood, with few pedestrians crossing Wabash Avenue to access the Dolfield commercial services.
- Average Daily Traffic (ADT) levels are low in the surrounding area; Wabash Avenue – 13,000 ADT; Cold Spring Lane – 20,000 ADT; Dolfield Avenue – 5,000 ADT. Wabash Avenue was originally designed to connect to 795, but ends at Patterson Avenue. As a result, the road truncates and it is a wide arterial road that does not go anywhere.

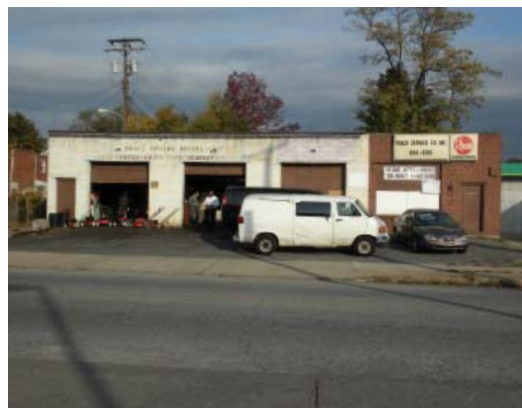


Existing MTA station and bus services

Community Concerns

The goal of the Dolfield TAP effort is to create a plan to revitalize the commercial core by building off the adjacent West Cold Spring Metro station as an asset. Day One of the TAP program included a roundtable discussion involving local business owners and residents, with panelists asking detailed questions to gain a greater understanding of the community concerns, issues, and perspective regarding the commercial core, which were noted:

1. No more auto-related services in the neighborhood, for it brings noise, smog, and health concerns;
2. No more convenience retail, for it is poorly maintained, held by absentee owners, and carries low quality merchandise;
3. Crime and safety challenges in the area;
4. Loitering, drug sales and drug use, hanging out;
5. Lack of general code enforcement in commercial core, as the City does not enforce zoning and building safety;
6. Uncertain future of the Post Office, as residents want it to stay;
7. Under-utilization of land uses in commercial core, such as the empty lot between post office and funeral home, large under-utilized parking lots;
8. The easement between Ivy Center and the retail strip mall should be cleaned up and maintained for access;
9. Drug paraphernalia is sold at local stores;
10. A need for adequate street lighting;
11. A Community Relations Police Officer assigned to the neighborhood;
12. Uninviting retail on Dolfield Avenue & Cold Spring Lane, so residents choose to shop elsewhere;
13. The existing retail doesn't serve the community;
14. Concern about the aging of the community, and the lack of senior services.
15. High volume traffic along Wabash Avenue and possibly exploring the need to reduce travel lanes.



Existing retail / services along W. Cold Spring Lane

The discussions also highlighted stakeholder recommendations for services and retail that might be frequented by the local residents, as well as uses that could serve the local community:

1. A desire for a Coffee Shop or Restaurant near Post Office, where residents can gather;
2. A desire for a Drug Store, such as a CVS or Walgreens;
3. A desire for a restaurant, such as Applebee's or Friday's;
4. A desire for a Deli, such as the 'Grateful Deli' on Hilton Street;
5. The development of additional space at the Ivy Center;
6. Seek to activate "Community", create a place to spend time in.

Recommendations

What does it take to make redevelopment work in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core, adjacent to the West Cold Spring Metro Station? A long term vision can provide the foundation for redevelopment opportunities in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core. The vision should be oriented toward the future, but based in reality; be stakeholder centered; focused on implementation; and flexible. With a strong vision, good planning, and the community and political support, the City of Baltimore can define a new direction of development in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core.

The following section presents the TAP panelists recommendations for the questions posed by the City of Baltimore.

1. *How do we strategically revitalize the commercial area by building off the adjacent transit station as an asset?*

Transit has seen a resurgence in the last ten years, with older cities, such as Baltimore, gaining population downtown, the center of the transit system, while losing population in the suburban areas. A number of major cities have focused their attention on developing, or redeveloping, around new or mature transit stations.

Pimlico Local Impact Aid from video lottery terminal revenue is available to the City to implement improvements and help the area realize its potential. The revenue is an annual commitment for twenty years, but does not yield a large annual sum for this area, given that the majority of the funds are legislated to be used in the Park Heights area. Estimates from the state for FY 2013 Pimlico Local Impact Aid are \$4 million, which would generate approximately \$150,000 in revenue for the Wabash area. The Wabash area includes, but is not limited to, the Dolfield Commercial Area. The revenue flow is not reliable enough to be bondable, but it could support debt service for a redevelopment opportunity. Beyond the slots revenue, the City has no other resources to bring to the table at this time.



Aging strip mall retail uses adjacent to senior housing, convenience and liquor stores, auto shops combined with unkempt vacant parcels present a significant challenge in attracting new investment to the Dolfield Avenue commercial core. The availability of developable land at other transit stations saps the ability of the West Cold Spring station / Dolfield commercial core to attract new retail development. Retail competition is extensive in the surrounding area with large centers that serve regional and local shopping needs. Mondawmin Mall, Walbrook, Northwest Plaza, Hilltop, and Reisterstown Road Plaza are all within the Dolfield & Garrison-Hill shopping radius.

From the panel's perspective, without significant and effective intervention, the commercial core will not capture a significant share of development to become self-sustaining. A detailed market study may help the community identify some local needs to be served, but the panel believes significant intervention and stimulus from the City and other financial entities will be required to solve the issues in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core.

The panel recommends a program focusing on addressing the safety and security issues of the commercial core, in order to strategically start the revitalization process now. Poor street lighting, drug sales in the parking lots, rundown building facades, all contribute to the crime and safety issues discussed by the residents. Retail, to be successful, needs to be clean, safe and well maintained. **The panel suggests the City direct the initial allocation of revenue towards the physical revitalization of Dolfield Avenue and Cold Spring Lane in the commercial core.**

2. What type of (Re)Development is realistic?

When asked to provide market recommendations for commercial cores, many cities and communities focus on attracting retail development. While the demand and market for different land uses varies from place to place, **the panel recommends the city pursue housing around the commercial core and transit station area.** Successful retail near transit is supported by riders and by the nearby neighborhoods. In order to get retail usage, you need to increase rooftops. New housing in the commercial core should target household types, such as workforce housing, that are more likely to live in this location and utilize the transit and bus systems.

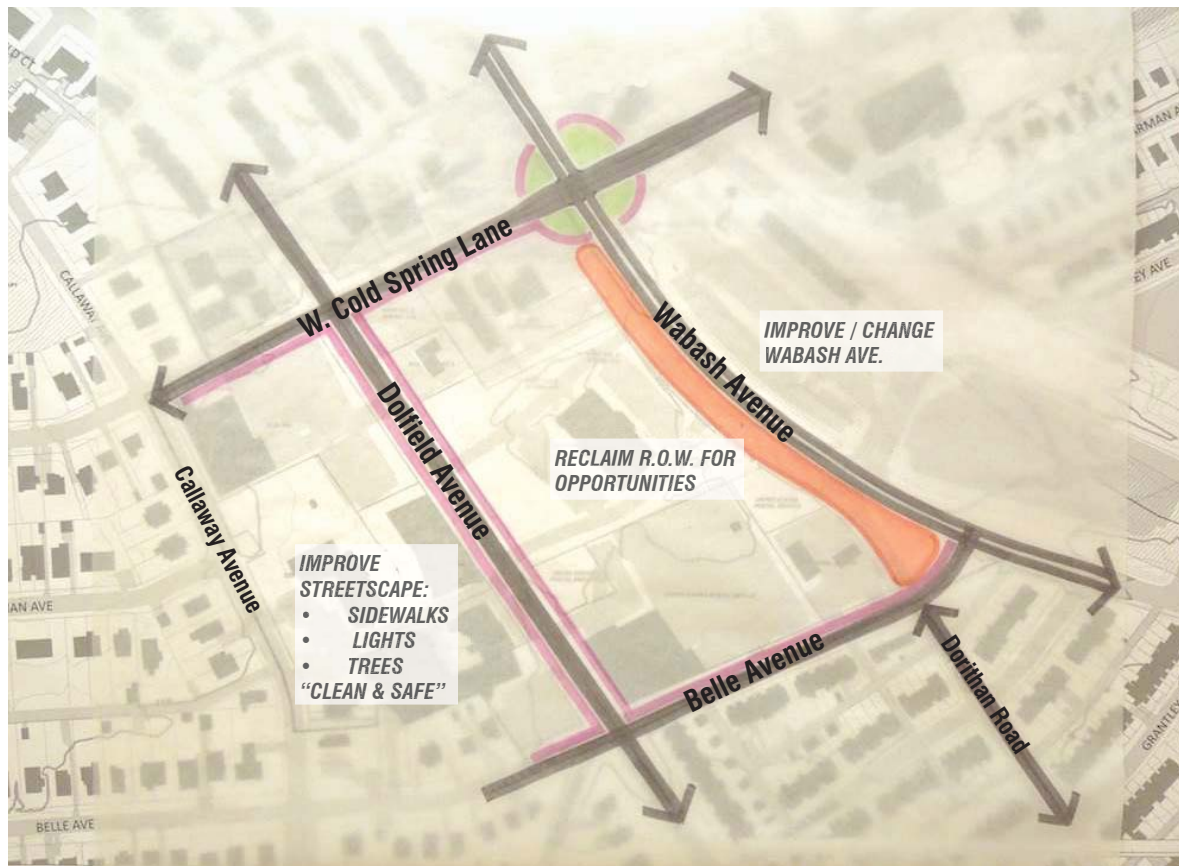
Affordable housing projects are especially good to pursue during a weak real estate market, since affordable housing developers do not rely on the same market-based financial tools as for-profit developers. Rental housing can stimulate future development of for-sale housing, as one project can kick-start other development activity in an area. Even the West Cold Spring Metro site is a development opportunity, should public and private investment be concentrated to replace the surface parking with a housing-wrapped parking structure. **The panel suggests housing can help anchor and catalyze investment, even if the scale is relatively small at first.**



3. What Design features can help spur (Re)Development?

Communities should not be designed for the purpose of luring people to transit stations. More importantly is to design places at a proper human scale so as to impart a sense of identity and belonging to a place. Design features may include extensive landscaping; adding parks, civic spaces and small consumer services in the neighborhood; varying building heights and materials to break the monotony of the structures; or providing pedestrian amenities such as continuous and paved sidewalks, street furniture and safe street crossings. Having vibrant, active public spaces would do as much to draw people into the community as any single design element.

Transforming the Dolfield Avenue commercial core into a more pedestrian-friendly, transit-connected environment might occur over a number of stages. Dolfield is a typical auto-oriented commercial district with parking that separates buildings, numerous driveways and curb cuts, no curbside sidewalks, and minimal landscaping and lighting. **Sidewalks and crosswalk improvements should be prioritized in places that create clear and inviting lines of pedestrian movement** between the transit station and the Dolfield commercial core. **Trees, street furniture and landscaping add interest and create a high-quality pedestrian realm.** **The panel recommends adding pedestrian signals and crosswalks** at Wabash/Cold Spring Lane, Dolfield Avenue/Cold Spring Lane, and Belle Avenue/Dolfield Avenue to facilitate pedestrian safety and movement. Other infrastructure improvements are suggested, such as the **narrowing of Wabash Avenue, and reclaiming the right-of-way for public or private development opportunities.**



Initial goals for re-building the community

4. Building Momentum.

Over time, the commercial area could be redesigned, modified, and retrofitted so it is more human in scale, compact, and attractive to pedestrians. In the early stages, less expensive things are done; installing sidewalks and street lighting, improving pedestrian crossings and consolidating driveways. **Create a sense of arrival into the neighborhood by installing identifying features at the intersection of Wabash Avenue and Cold Spring Lane.** The public improvements may even spark a renewed interest in the area. This might lead to the intensification of uses, including the addition of housing or the consolidation of retail into a central core.

The Dolfield Avenue commercial core will improve, incrementally, driven by market forces and its proximity to the West Cold Spring Station, with access to jobs and downtown activity. Over time, land in competing transit stations will increase in value or be built out; eventually Dolfield Avenue and the West Cold Spring Metro Station will have its turn. But, without a long term vision and effective intervention, the transit station may not capture its share of redevelopment opportunities to make a major change in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core. Transforming the commercial core will take significant time and investment from the community and the City.

Conclusions

Given the current economic conditions, Dolfield Avenue remains a redevelopment challenge because of its location, existing conditions, and the competition for redevelopment by other transit stations. The panel has sought to address the questions put forth by the city, and recommends steps that can be taken now and in the near future to add value to the land uses in the Dolfield Avenue commercial core. The panel hopes this report will help the city and local community to chart a direction to follow to make the commercial core a vital, safe, and active part of their neighborhood.

Step One: Engage existing stakeholders and resources; build a Task Force or Steering Committee

The City of Baltimore has noted that the Dolfield and Garrison Hill communities contain several community organizations that are well established and well meaning, but may not have the capacity to take on the challenges of the area. Neighborhood leaders look to the city for resources and answers to a variety of often difficult issues.

A community organizing process that engages existing stakeholders, gathers and accesses resources, can give the community a voice and make them part of the planning process.

No change ever happens without a champion. Identifying who speaks for the community is a key challenge. Yet, the community must not rely totally on one or two individuals. **Creating a board or partnership that consists of civic, business, faith leaders, and neighbors can be a catalyst to mobilize resources and build community support.** The board or partnership ensures that each organization or stakeholders has a voice in the process.

The stakeholders must include the public sector, such as planning organizations, transit agencies and elected officials; the private sector, such as developers and business groups; the community, such as neighborhood organizations and individual residents, and other advocacy groups. Visible support by public officials indicates the priority placed on revitalizing the neighborhood. At a minimum, the city must identify one of its staff members to participate in the planning process.



Transit parking



Charette participation



Example of new housing opportunity

Step Two: Clean, safe and welcoming

No issue is more important to attracting people to the Dolfield Avenue commercial core than public safety. The perception and reality of this commercial core is that it is unsafe. Residents must regard the area as a secure and safe place in which to live, for the residents are the most valuable asset of the community. The city needs to take specific action to make the commercial core safer. The panel recommends the city focus on the visual and physical characteristics. Substandard sidewalks, inadequate street lighting, vacant lots, and deteriorating buildings make it difficult to see the value of the area, if you are a resident, business owner or developer. **Consider instituting a code enforcement program, or institute a bicycle patrol initiative. Incorporate safescape design principles into any new construction or proposed renovations in the commercial core.** If development risk can be mitigated by removing unsafe or blighted conditions, the positive impact may influence a developer's decision to build in or near the commercial core.

Step Three: Explore investment and development opportunities

Long term planning helps stakeholders understand how transit can influence the real estate market around stations and deliver the benefits that support the transit station and the surrounding neighborhoods. In affluent neighborhoods, the challenge is to create new affordable housing; in lower income neighborhoods, such as Dolfield, the challenge involves developing retail that will attract much-needed goods and services, as well as keeping the housing costs affordable. Dolfield and Garrison-Hill are stable residential communities with a high percentage of ownership. While the neighborhoods were impacted by the recession, currently less than 16% of sales in the last quarter of 2013 represented distressed or bankruptcy sales. The neighborhood represents an affordable opportunity for individuals to move into a community near transit and bus lines, at great value.

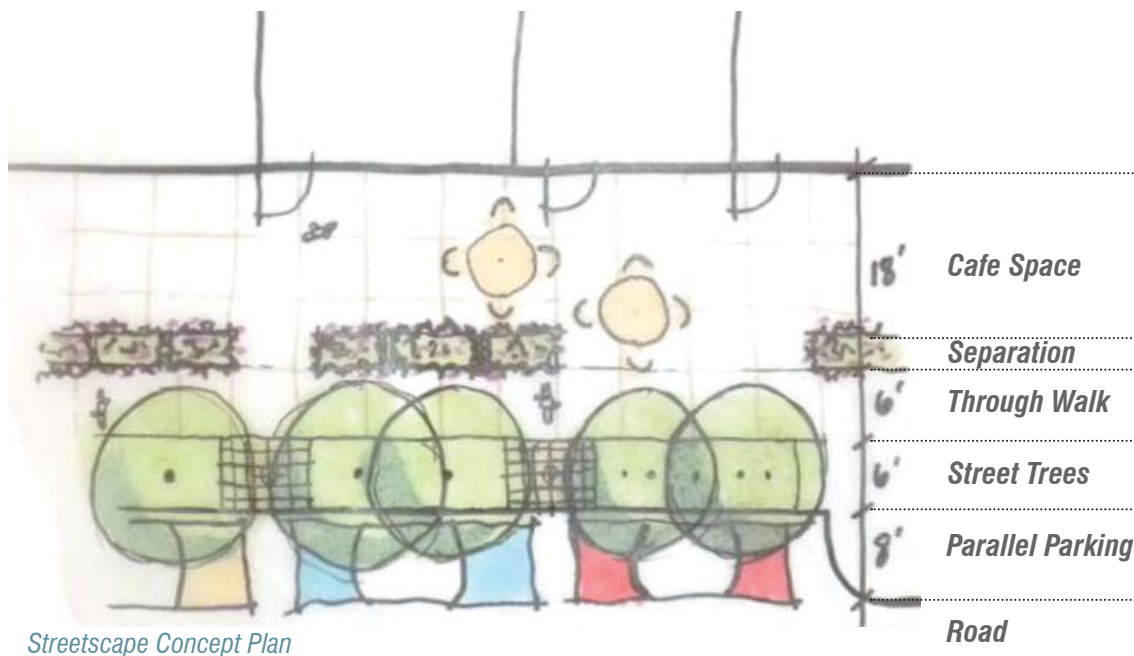
The panel recommends the city and community explore housing development opportunities, such as workforce housing. Ashland Commons and Woodbridge Commons are examples in Baltimore of affordable, multifamily development constructed for a particular segment of workforce housing. While accessing financing can be competitive, the proximity of any development to the transit and bus system will allow the project to rank high in the bidding process.

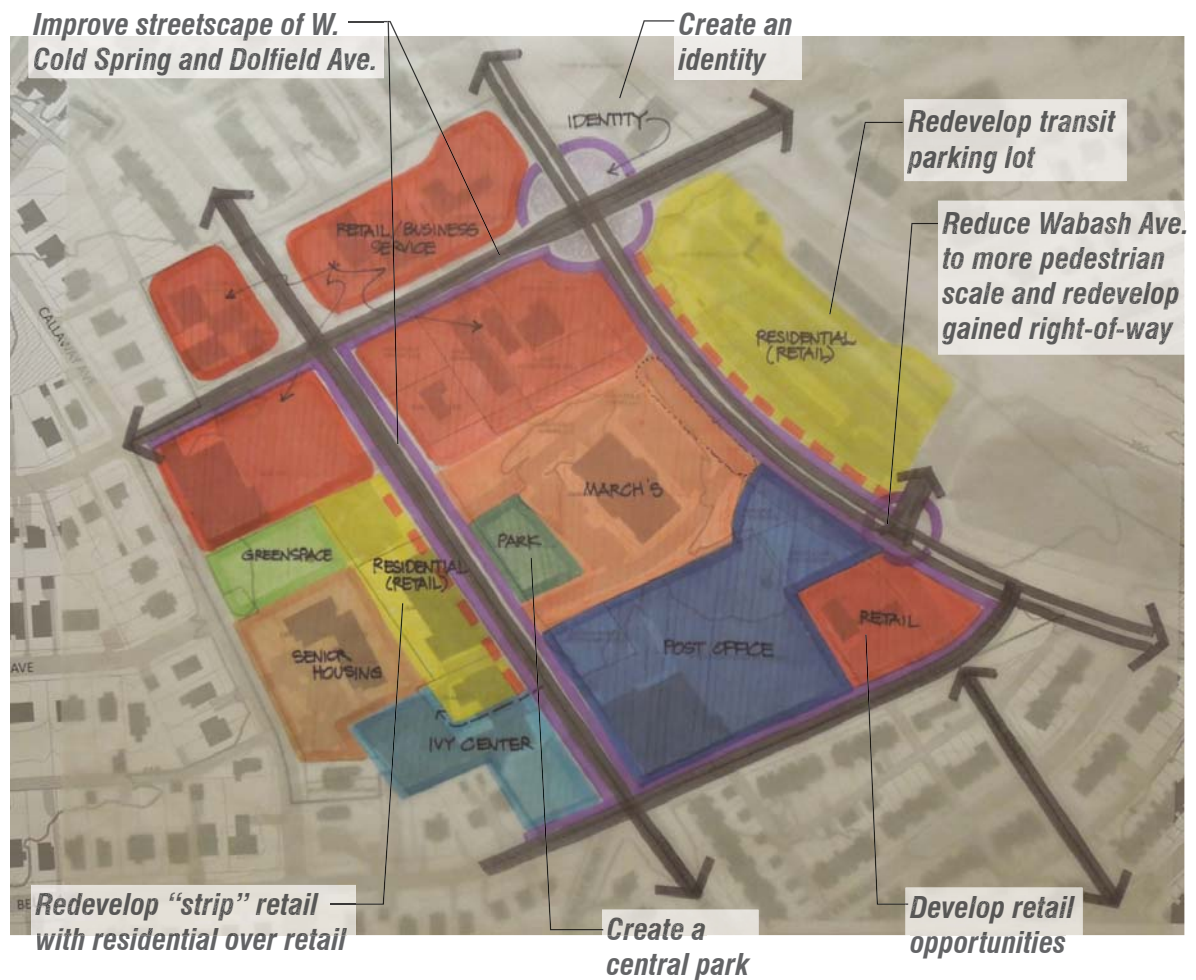
An issue the community may face in the future is the preservation of affordable housing. Dolfield has a lot of older single family housing, and currently the average home price is \$150,000. As development occurs around the transit stations, maintaining affordable housing may become an issue. Developing strategies to minimize involuntary displacement while leveraging expected development should be considered.

Step Four: Cluster retail into an identifiable, prosperous core

The panel strongly believes the way to start redevelopment of the commercial core is to concentrate on its obvious central core. The goal is to create a 'place' that causes individuals to stay in the area for an extended time. Currently, the commercial uses and rundown character of the commercial core creates one-stop shopping. Local residents drive to the convenience store or take out restaurant, pick up their items, then back in the car to drive to the next destination. The pedestrian experience is less than ideal; safety and security an issue. People need a reason to get – and stay – out of the car. Any retail redevelopment should be community oriented, and scaled to reflect the local demand. The panel believes any existing or new retail land uses will not achieve the best revenue-generating opportunities without community support.

The business, social and community value of quality urban spaces (streets, parks, restaurants, and coffee shops) should be recognized for the value they bring to development. Residents need welcoming, well-defined public spaces to stimulate face-to-face interaction. The panel recommends the inclusion of open spaces and public gathering places in the commercial core. The creation of several small open spaces, plazas or sitting areas can foster a sense of community in the commercial core. Designed around the civic institutions, such as the Post Office, they can provide opportunities for public engagement and become community anchors in partnership with any development program.





The Dolfield Avenue commercial core will improve over time. Ownership will transfer, renovation, improvements and demolition will occur. Land surrounding the competing stations will be absorbed and built out. To accelerate this process, the panel recommends the engagement of stakeholders and the selection of a Task Force or Committee; followed by the prudent use of revenue in streetscape and lighting design to move Dolfield Avenue toward a more safe and welcoming area. Additional steps include the exploration and identification of development opportunities, followed over time, with the redevelopment of the commercial core into a compact, identifiable center. Regardless of the order in which the steps are followed, patience will be required by all stakeholders to position the commercial core for long term success.

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