



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# Rockville Town Center: Strengthening Its Vitality

SPONSORED BY:

The City of Rockville, MD  
The Metropolitan Washington Council  
of Governments, Washington D.C.

July 9-10, 2019



**Urban Land  
Institute**  
Washington

## ABOUT ULI WASHINGTON

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ULI Washington is a district council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a non-profit education and research organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute today has over 45,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use planning and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. As the pre-eminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better communities.

ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI Washington carries out the ULI mission locally by sharing best practices, building consensus, and advancing solutions through educational programs and community outreach initiatives.

### ABOUT THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL (TAP) PROGRAM

The objective of ULI Washington's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary, and objective advice on land use and real estate issues facing public agencies and nonprofit organizations in the Metropolitan Washington Region. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Washington conducts one and one-half day panels offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues, ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. Learn more at <http://washington.uli.org/TAPs>.

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# Executive Summary

On July 9-10, 2019, a Panel of ULI Washington members set out to address current challenges at the Rockville Town Center in the City of Rockville, Maryland. Rockville Town Center is approximately 200 acres, generally bounded by properties along Fleet Street to the south, S. and N. Washington Street along the west, and the railroad tracks along the east, within the City of Rockville.

The Technical Assistance Panel, or TAP, was jointly sponsored by the City of Rockville and The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The TAP's goal was to make recommendations for strengthening the Town Center by analyzing the following elements: design actions to improve the urban environment; methods to attract and retain new uses; types of uses that will serve the demographic and income profile in the vicinity; the Town Center's competition, and how it can differentiate itself from competitors; whether existing development density and land use mix are enough to sustain current retail; jurisdictional policy obstacles towards achieving a successful retail environment; and whether there are any major civic and/or economic opportunities that the City should pursue.

Prior to brainstorming design recommendations, the TAP team toured the Rockville Town Center and surroundings, and was briefed by the Department of Planning and Development Services, City of Rockville and Cindy Stewart, Executive Director, Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI). The Panel conducted extensive interviews of diverse stakeholders – residents of rental apartments and condominiums including Americana Center, Palladian and Upton; property owners including Foulger-Pratt, Federal Realty, Duball, Eldridge and Investment Properties; cultural organizations including Peerless Rockville; business owners including Choice Hotels, Cottage Monet, Gordon Biersch; realtors and brokers with CapStar Realty and JLL; and government staff from Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation and the County Executive's Office.

Panelists grouped their analysis and recommendations into four categories: contextualizing Rockville; retail strategy & design; organizing stakeholders; and urgent steps and prioritization.



Photo showing the TAP team touring the study area.  
Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing the TAP team brainstorming solutions.  
Image source: ULI Washington.



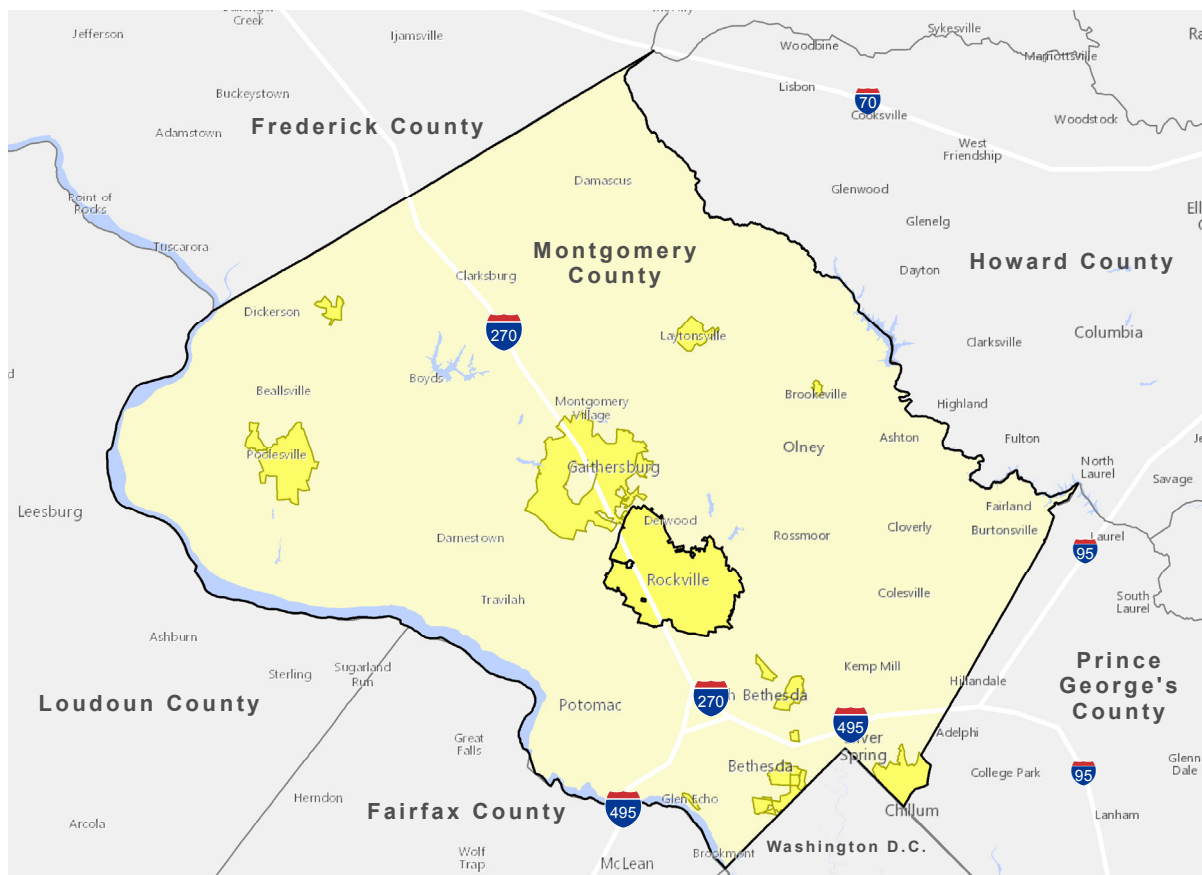
Residents spoke with TAP team about their experiences in the study area. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photos showing stakeholder interviews conducted during the TAP. Image source: ULI Washington.

# Background & Scope

## Regional and City Context



Map showing location of City of Rockville in the region. Image source: Sponsor briefing materials.

Rockville is a 13.5-square-mile city of nearly 70,000 residents located in south-central Montgomery County, Maryland, approximately twelve miles northwest of Washington D.C. The road network of Rockville includes Interstate 270, which has two exits that are within one mile of Town Center, and provide direct access to the regional Capital Beltway (I-495). MD 355 (Rockville Pike, Hungerford Drive, Frederick Road) passes through Rockville, carrying more than 50,000 average daily trips into and beyond Rockville Town Center. Rockville enjoys rail service from MARC and Amtrak, in addition to two stations on the DC Metro Red Line - Twinbrook and Rockville, plus the Shady Grove station just outside of the City. The Rockville Station is a hub

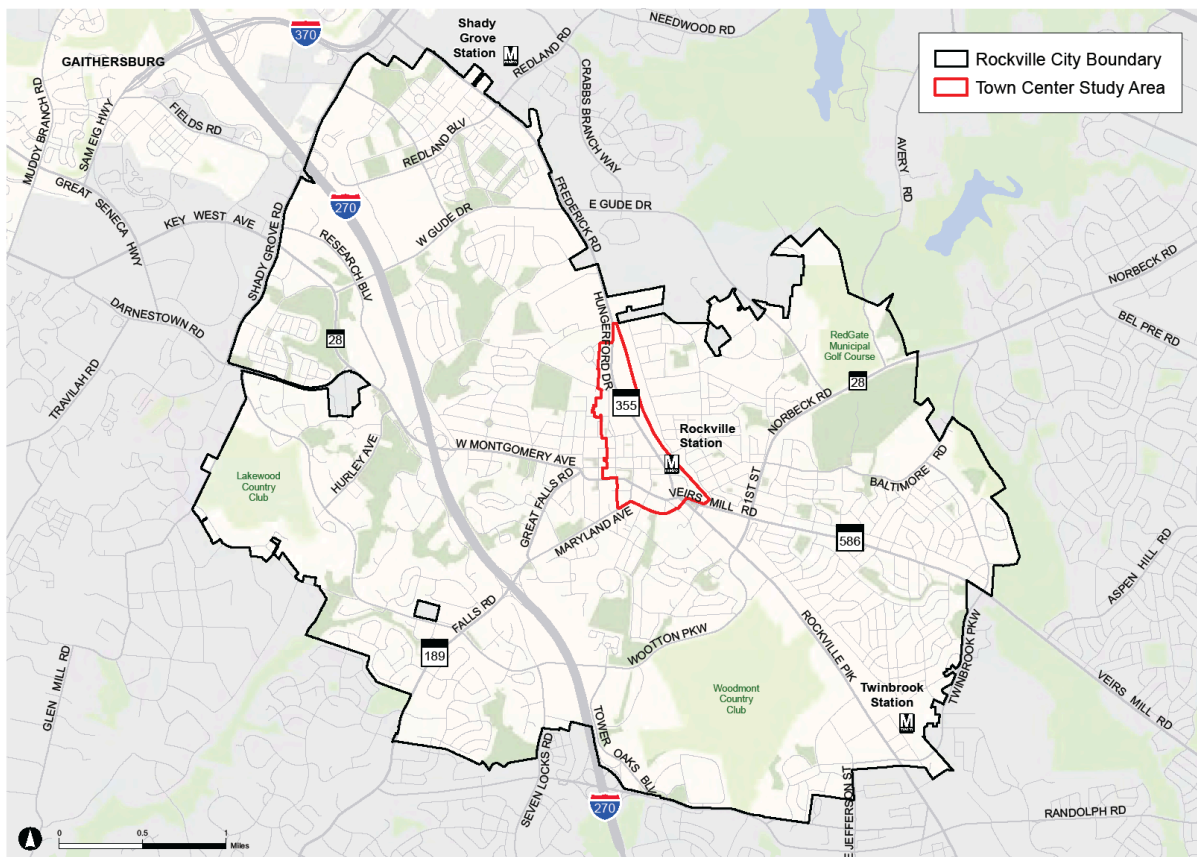


for Montgomery County's Ride-On buses, WMATA's Metro bus and is served well by private taxi companies and ride-share services. Commuters can also access Capital Bikeshare and daytime surface parking.

Rockville is at the core of the I-270 technology corridor with a high concentration of biotechnology and information technology companies. The City serves as the seat of Montgomery County with thousands of jobs in government services.

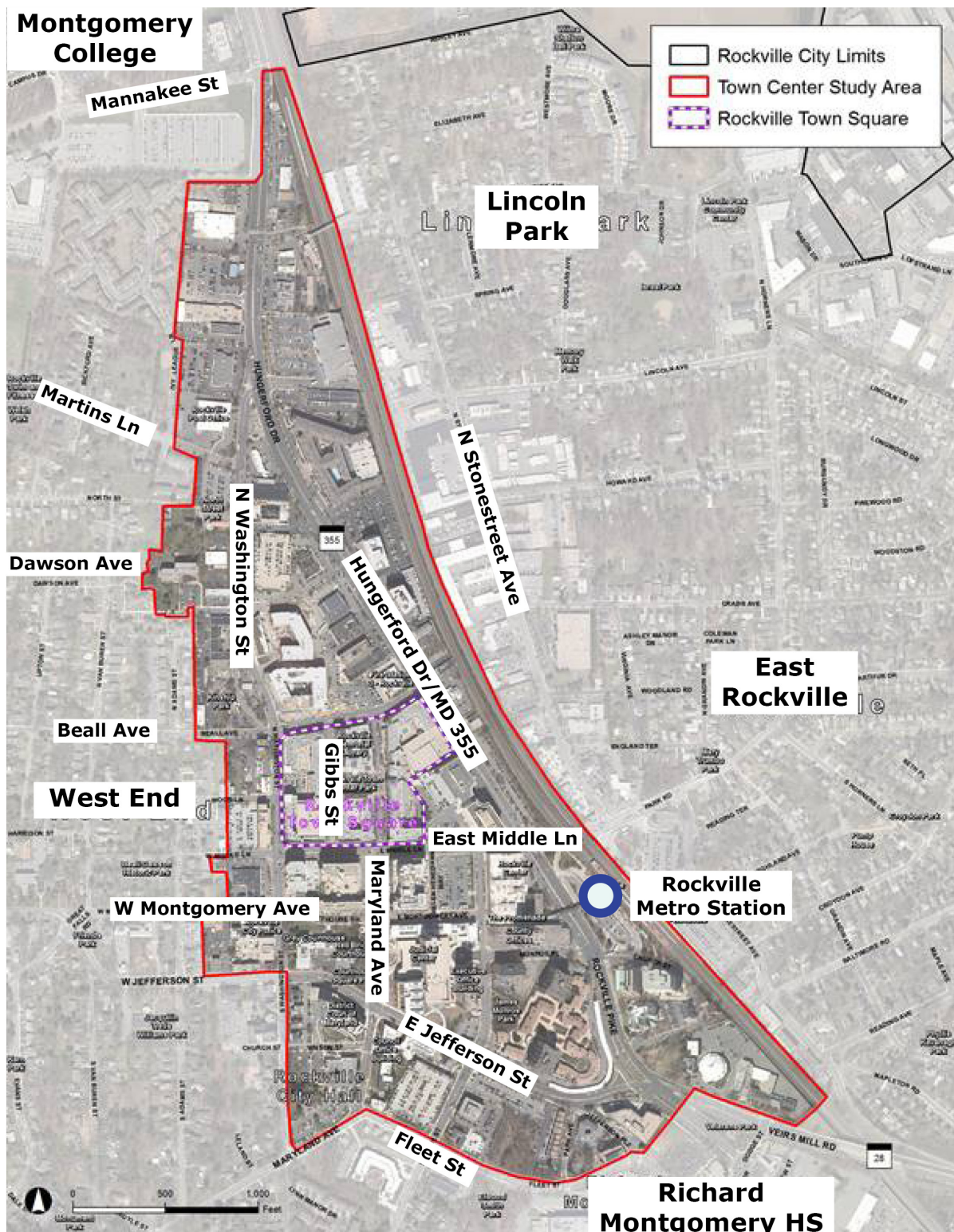
Rockville's population has grown significantly since 2000, due to a combination of annexation that led to new development, redevelopment along the key commercial corridors, and neighborhood turnover. Rockville's population remained in the 40,000s from 1970 until 2000, but has grown since then to almost 70,000.

## Description of the Study Area



Town Center is approximately 200 acres in land area, generally bounded by properties along Fleet Street to the south, S. and N. Washington Street along the west, and the railroad tracks on the east. The area is developed with a mix of uses that include office, retail, residential, government and cultural uses. Residential buildings include high- and medium-rise apartments and

Map showing location of study area in the City of Rockville. Image source: Sponsor briefing materials.

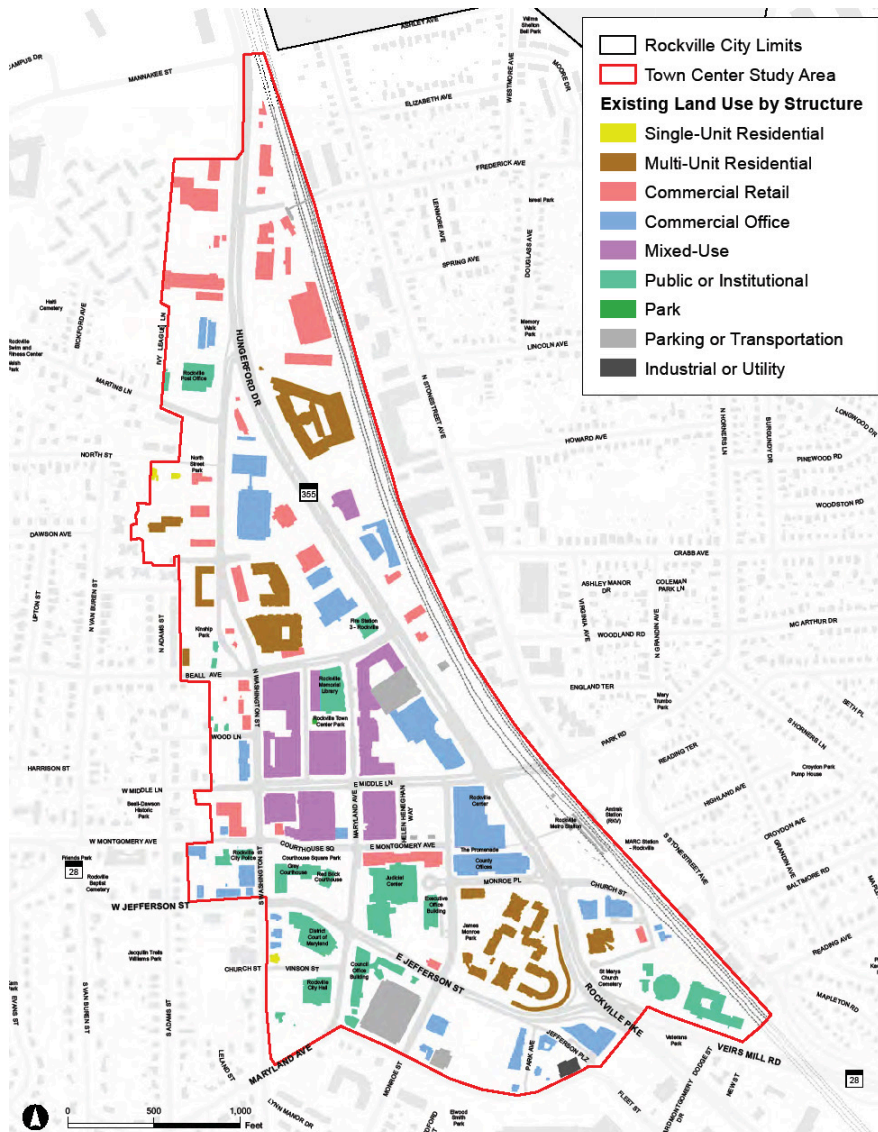


Aerial map of existing conditions in the study area - Rockville Town Center. Image source: Sponsor briefing materials.

condominiums, with both market-rate and income-restricted affordable units. Private offices range from 51 Monroe Street, the city's tallest building, to small offices in converted Victorian-style homes. Cambria Hotel and Suites (part of Choice Hotels International) opened in 2015, bringing the first hotel into downtown Rockville in many years. The hotel is across the street from Choice



Hotels International Headquarters, which is in the Rockville Metro Plaza development across MD 355 from the Rockville Metro Station. Government uses include Rockville's City Hall and Police Station; Montgomery County's executive, legislative, and judicial offices; a State of Maryland District Courthouse, and Montgomery County's Rockville Memorial Library branch. Just to the south of the study area is the 2,500-student Richard Montgomery High School, whose students are regular customers to the Town Center merchants. A half-mile north of Town Center is the 15,000-student Rockville campus of Montgomery College. In total, about 4,500 people live in Town Center, while approximately 20,000 work there.



Aerial map showing existing land use conditions in the study area, Rockville Town Center. Image source: Sponsor briefing materials.



Photo showing office building at intersection of East Middle Lane and North Washington Street. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing Upton apartments at the intersection of East Middle Lane and Maryland Avenue. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing Cambria Hotel in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.

## Summary of the Problem

Town Center is the heart of the Rockville community and the seat of Montgomery County government. Prior to the adoption of the 2001 Town Center Master Plan, Rockville had envisioned Town Center as a vibrant downtown with a mix of offices, residences, retail and activities attractive to visitors. Public and private investments have resulted in new streets, a public plaza, a library, an expanded courthouse, a new courthouse, residences, offices and parking garages. With a Red Line Metro station, multiple bus lines, and both an Amtrak and MARC stop, downtown Rockville is accessible by transit and a regional hub. The public investments and regulations have encouraged an environment that is increasingly comfortable for walking and street life. Rockville Town Center has received several awards for incorporating New Urbanism principles for mixed-use developments.

Both the City of Rockville and private businesses sponsor events, festivals and other activities to encourage visits. While events are very well attended, the retail environment and office investment remain less than what Rockville has envisioned. Retail closures and sub-par performance remain a great challenge, especially in the Town Square portion between East Middle Lane and Beall Avenue. Furthermore, Town Center office lease rates have not been high enough to attract non-incentivized investments in new office projects, despite a broad trend for office space to be near transit and urban amenities, both of which are in Town Center. New and extended vacancies prompted the Mayor and Council to hold a Town Hall meeting which more than 400 people attended in October of 2018. Of particular concern were the announced closures of Dawson's Market, (a grocer that has subsequently reopened with City support), and two restaurants in prominent locations. These closings were followed by closures of other long-time tenants, both in Town Square and in surrounding Town Center locations.

The Mayor and Council had two subsequent public discussions, identifying eleven areas of potential action to improve the vitality of Town Center. One of those areas is to bring outside consulting help to assist in diagnosing the challenges and providing recommendations for improvement. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Washington's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program was identified as a source of such consulting advice.

## Questions to be Answered by the Panel:

The fundamental task for the Panel is to provide guidance on what actions the City can take to improve the vitality of the Town Center. The questions to be addressed by the Panel include the following:

1. What are the design actions that the City could take to improve the urban environment, to attract and retain new uses to Rockville Town Center?



2. What are the area demographics and income profiles that will be attracted to existing and new retail/restaurant/entertainment sectors in Town Center? What types of uses will serve this population?
3. What and where is the Town Center's retail competition, and how can Town Center pose to be differentiated from those other areas?
4. Is the development density and land use mix, both - existing and expected, sufficient to support a strong retail environment?
5. What are jurisdictional policy obstacles to retail success in Town Center? Examples may include parking, regulations, signage, Downtown coordination.
6. Are there major civic and/or economic opportunities that the City should pursue? Examples could include attracting a new corporate headquarters, new cultural organizations, improved transit center, or more.



Retail sign indicating last days in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing vacant retail space along southern edge of Town Square. Image source: ULI Washington.



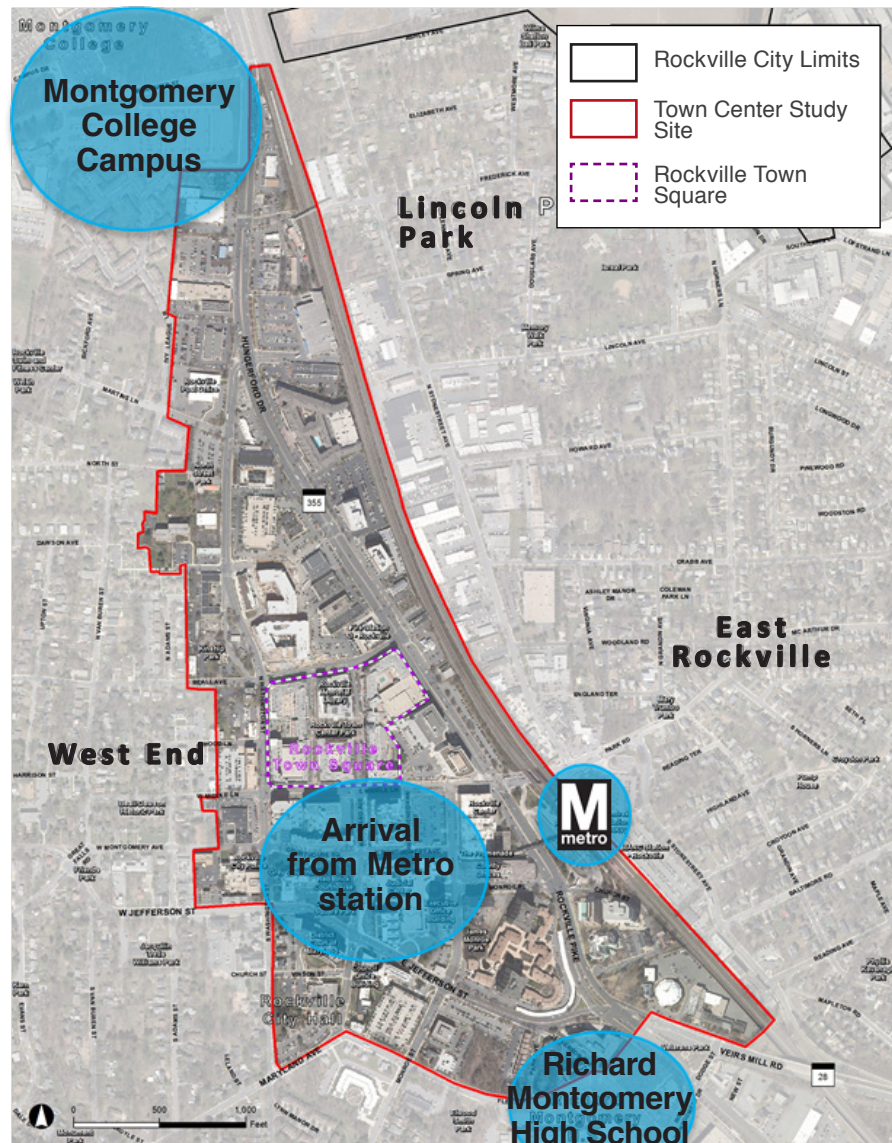
Photo showing vacant retail space on Town Square, along Maryland Avenue. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing vacant retail space along East Middle Lane in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.

# Existing Conditions & Recommendations

## Contextualizing Rockville



Map showing the Town Center boundary, Town Square, and important arrival points. Image source: ULI Washington.



At the beginning of the TAP presentation, the Panel Chair acknowledged all the stakeholders who participated in the interviews, and asked a question before presenting recommendations for the study area:

“ *As we went through stakeholder interviews and had discussions, we all of a sudden realized, that we had to ask the question – what is Town Center, and how does it differ from Town Square?* ”  
– David Kitchens, Panel Chair

Through detailed discussions with the stakeholders, Panelists quickly learned that there is no clear differentiation between the Town Center and Town Square, and pointed out that there was a lack of unifying vision, brand and operational approach between the two entities. They elaborated how Rockville is in a highly competitive retail market environment. According to Panelists, it is very important for The City of Rockville to develop a unified vision for the Town Center, and the Town Square should be a part of it. The visioning process should include a diverse set of stakeholders ranging from public-private partnerships to various residential, institutional and commercial land and user groups. All these players will have to come together and determine, what differentiates Rockville from all the other competition in the north-south direction.

As the historic government center for Montgomery County, many local & regional leaders and employees visit the City on a daily basis, and contribute to the environment of the Town Center. There are also many families who live on the east and west side of Rockville that visit and can potentially make more visits to the Town Center. While these families contribute to the daily environment of the Town Center, their children attend County schools including Richard Montgomery High School south of Downtown. In addition, the 15,000-student Montgomery College is located only 8/10th of a mile north of the Town Center. However, the current transportation connections and programming synergies between the campus and Town Center are not well-defined, thus providing an opportunity to attract an untapped customer base. The Panel foresees an opportunity to begin to connect and visualize how Rockville can differentiate itself by including government, education, community and the private sector in order to support and strengthen its retail environment.

Over the course of the TAP, Panelists aimed to:

- Share their observations
- Address issues raised by the stakeholders, and
- Develop recommendations for how the City can strengthen its business and retail strategies; foster the unification of the Town Center and Town

Square into an organized coalition under public sector leadership; and identify a revisited public realm framework plan that better defines and connects the City's Town Center.

## Retail Strategy & Design

### Existing Conditions: Town Square

Panelists experienced the Town Square first-hand via a walking tour, around the edges and the center. They praised the City of Rockville for its high quality environment consisting of pleasant streetscape and well-designed storefronts; programming of events with a stage for live performers; and open spaces to support passive recreation for families. They pointed out that the Town Square successfully facilitated community engagement but lacks a consistent flow of shoppers to support the existing businesses.

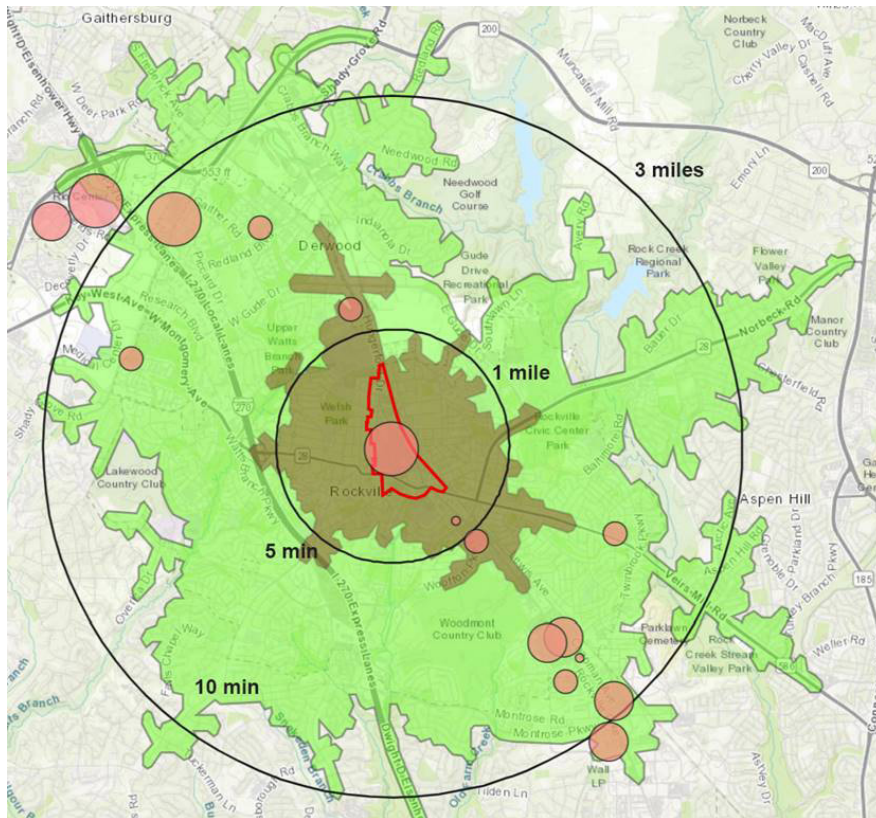
“ *This is not a project which needs major physical transformation.* ”  
– Andy Brown, Panelist

### Retail Competition & Micro Market

Referring to the regional map, the Town Square is marked as a red circle in the center of the Town Center (study area) boundary demarcated with a red outline. While Town Center offers 500,000 SF of retail, restaurant & entertainment options, newer mixed-use developments such as Rio Washingtonian (760,000 SF of retail) and Pike & Rose (443,000 SF) offer a more curated shopping & eating experience with a perceived favorable parking experience. Traditionally, the study area was an important retail node in Montgomery County; but now, newer developments nearby possess higher concentrations of retail and density as well as more visible connections to major thoroughfares, Rockville Town Center is perceived more as a neighborhood center with a small population base surrounding it.

As a part of their analysis, the Panel reviewed demographic data of Rockville residents. Census data informed them that households within a 1 mile range of the Town Center include residents that reported as 21% Asian alone, 14% Black alone, and 53% white alone amongst categories tracked by the Census. Of the total reported households, 20% also identified as Hispanic Origin, which can be any race and is asked separately. The same area's households are 31% single households, 31% with 2 person households and 21% over 3 person households. There are about 17,000 people who live in this area, and there is a higher day time population with about 20,000 people coming in every day. These people in the Town Center frequent the retail during the day, but their numbers are smaller than other areas with larger private sector employees. Over and above the





## Legend

### Rockville BioTech



### Rockville Town Square Retail Centers

#### Retail SF



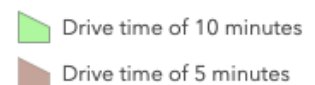
### Rockville Town Center AOI



### Radius Rockville Town Center



### Rockville Town Center Drive Time



residents, there is an estimated 15,000 student population on the Montgomery College campus on a regular basis.

While walking around the Town Center and through conversations with stakeholders, the Panel identified several prime issues in the study area – quantity of retail within the Town Center, visibility of the retail, and parking and access. According to them, the City’s main goal should be to get people to the town center, get them to shop and encourage them to return. There has been a lot of turnover in the retail establishments, and duplication of concepts. This stems from the fact that there is over 500,000 SF of retail with about 17,000 to 20,000 people in the retail catchment area for the Town Center. Typically in the U.S., there is an average of about 23 SF of retail per capita. According to that standard, Rockville Town Center should have no more than 400,000 SF of retail to serve the current population. Thus the Town Center is over-retailed in the current scenario, and hence the duplication and closure of businesses. These retail establishments are unable to generate the sales volume key to maintaining sustainable, profitable businesses that will be successful long-term.

Map showing retail competition for the Rockville Town Center within the 1 mile and 3 miles radius. Image source: <http://arcg.is/1Lvr9S>.

“ Rockville was the first to do a lot of things, and now we need to update it. ”

—Sarah Miller, Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, Stakeholder





Photos showing streetscape and pedestrian friendly environment along Gibbs Street; photos showing performance stage and event signs in the Town Square; Photos showing adults and children enjoying passive recreation in the central open space in the Town Square. Images source: ULI Washington.

### Arrival Points

Panelists elaborated on the various entry points to the Town Center, which they experienced first-hand by walking. They focused on the northern entry point by Montgomery College, and shared photos of the experience for automobile drivers as well as pedestrians. They experienced the walk from Rockville



Metro Station to the Town Center first-hand as well – whereby one crosses the long linear bridge, and then arrives along a barren concrete square, which has much untapped potential in terms of design and programming. According to them, these are not welcome entry points and lack wayfinding signage to retail, residences, government buildings or offices. They felt that bringing the Montgomery College population to the Town Center is the most important step towards increasing retail sales. They learned that for a total student population of 15,000, there is only a single cafe operating from morning until only 6:30 PM. Also, due to a short supply in parking capacity on campus, once students park their cars, they prefer not to move them for the day. However, due to a lack of food choices on campus, they drive to the Chipotle in Wintergreen Plaza on Rockville Pike, which is double the distance than driving to the Town Center.

Panelists noted that the current transportation infrastructure between Montgomery College and Town Center is not conducive to establishing a strong pedestrian connection. From the main campus entry, one must walk a quarter



Photo showing Hungerford Dr / N Washington Split (heading south). Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing MD 355/Rockville Pike heading south. Image source: ULI Washington.

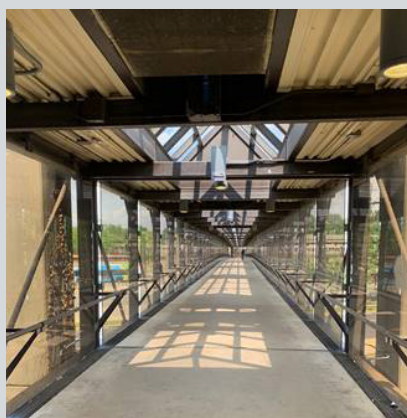


Photo showing the metro bridge. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing a barren terrace adjoining the metro bridge entrance, connecting the metro station to the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.



Map showing proposed potential shuttle bus route. Image source: ULI Washington.

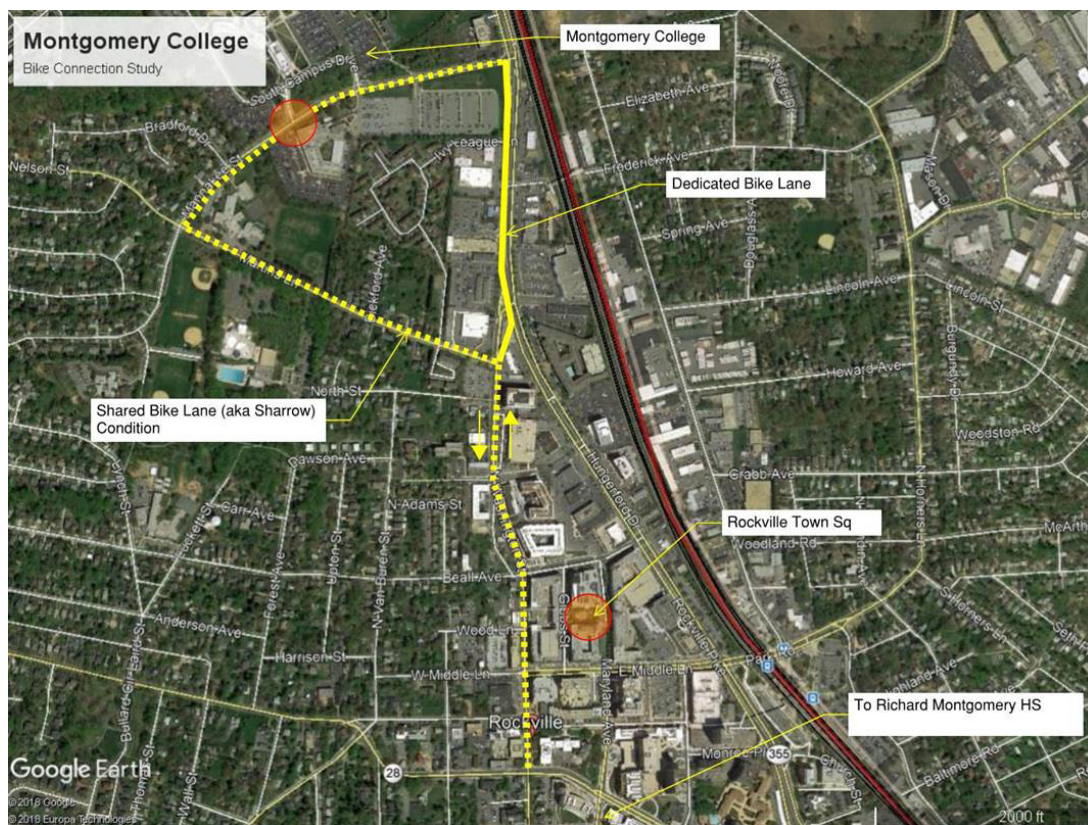
mile just to reach Hungerford Drive and it is then another three quarters of a mile along this heavily trafficked road to the northernmost point of the study area. They feel very doubtful that the Town Center can attract students in a pedestrian fashion without significant pedestrian infrastructure improvements. They suggested exploring opportunities to bring them in other ways, and they recommended a potential shuttle service which could circulate from Montgomery College, down along MD 355, make various stops along the circles marked on the map – Middle Lane, Rockville Metro Station, and back up North Washington Street. They pointed out that the current shuttle bus service run by Montgomery College does not go through the Town Center; it connects the Rockville, Germantown and Silver Spring campuses. There may be a Ride On bus to the metro station, but there is a lack of a convenient way for students to get to the Town Center. They further shared an example of a shuttle service in Fairfax VA, where it costs \$130,000 per year to operate 5 days of the week, 8 hours per day including four hours in the morning and four hours in the evening. They recommended that a similar shuttle service be implemented in the study area around lunch time and in the evenings. According to the Panel, capturing even a portion of that 15,000 college student population would be of tremendous help to revitalize retail opportunities in the Town Center.

Towards facilitating connectivity and getting more people into the Town Center, Panelists studied the Town Center Master Plan. They pointed to a few opportunities – getting student population from Montgomery College and other passersby to North Washington Street, and then pulling them into the Town Center. While cars still dominate the local transportation option, alternate forms of mobility need to be embraced. As per the City of Rockville Bikeway Master Plan, dedicated bike lanes could be introduced and in some places along MD 355 they would run parallel to the road. If dedicated lanes were not feasible then Panelists recommended the idea of a shared-lane marking, or sharrow (a white bicycle outline topped with two chevrons on a road lane that denotes that bikes and cars can both use this lane) as a viable option. Panelists advocated for additional bike share stations, besides the ones south of the Town Square. While there are no stations immediately to the north of the Town Square, there is one on the Montgomery College campus. They encouraged establishing a robust series of bike sharing to bring students into the Town Center.

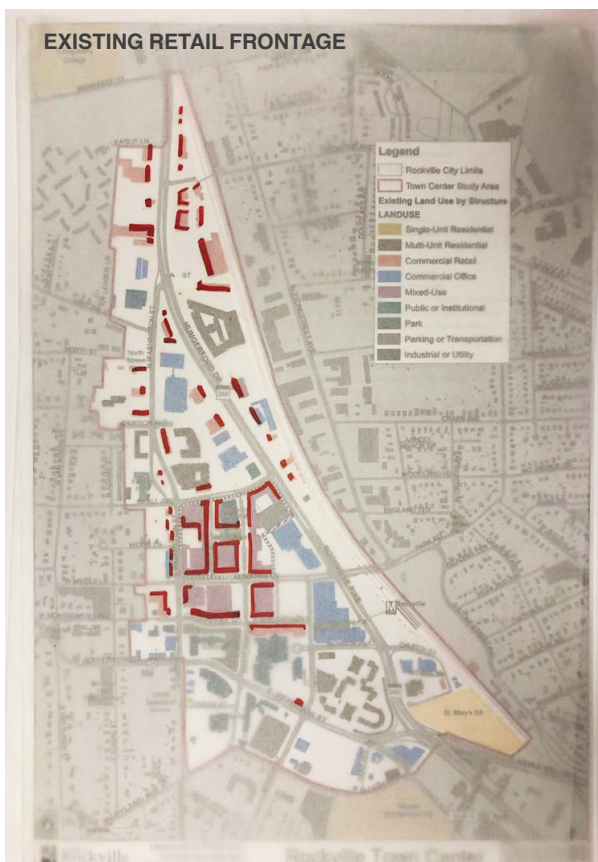
### How to Fix Retail

After analyzing the quantity of retail space in the Town Center, Panelists further proceeded to investigate where the retail was located, types of retail, what is the right size of retail, and how to reinforce the right formula to strengthen the Town Center. They started with a physical analysis of where the retail is located. Referring to the diagram, retail marked in red is street facing retail space – it is concentrated in the Town Square, as well as spread out in lower densities. According to previous calculations by the Panel, they

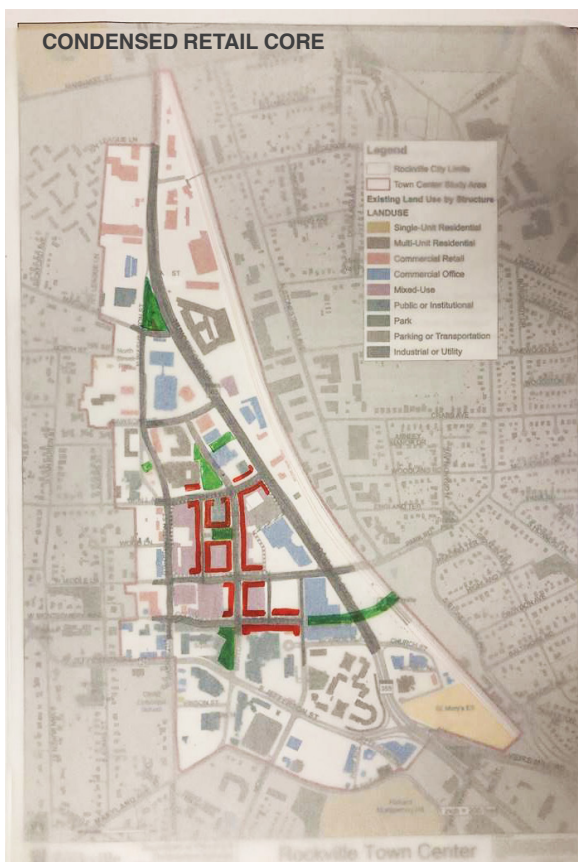




Map showing potential bicycle paths diagram indicating potential locations for dedicated bike lanes and sharrows. Image source: ULI Washington.



Map showing existing retail frontage in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.



Map showing a condensed retail core in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.

reiterated that the appropriate amount of retail should be around 400,000 SF. They recommended consolidating all this retail within a condensed retail core, as retail tends to work well when retail uses are adjacent to each other. Considering the Town Square is a strong and vibrant core of the Town Center, they looked for opportunities for appropriate retail locations, and recommended that it should not continue along the edges of the Town Square and Town Center, but be consolidated in the core of the Town Square.

Panelists reiterated that the foremost issue was getting people into the Town Center, exacerbated by the lack of visibility. The Panel believes it will be important to focus on signage at the corners to attract people in, and to amplify the arrival experience of visitors coming off the bridge from the Metro station and the main vehicular road, MD 355. Currently, the entrances fail to announce arrival into the Town Center, and one doesn't know where to go to find the active center of the Town Square. Visitors and customers arrive on the concrete pad with minimal directional signage. While there is a sign for the movie theater there is a high probability it will be obstructed with the upcoming mixed-use development. Installing simple directories at key points in the Town Center would be very useful in leading visitors to food, shopping, events and open spaces. Such quick fixes would help improve circulation, and bring people into the study area.

According to the Panel, there is an issue of having too much retail and not the right mix of retail. From a use standpoint to generate and draw traffic to the Town Center, the Panel recommended that primary retail establishments should include a grocery store, fitness club, cultural facility and pharmacy. They pointed out that these types of retail establishments are already present in the Town Center, and duplicating these uses will not help solve the problem but could inadvertently hurt those businesses. Converting some of this retail into medical and dentist offices, services and educational uses could be optimal solutions for vacancies while serving the daily needs of the residents and visitors. Moreover, with the growing restaurant scene in the Town Center, the City should consider whether the concentration of the Asian-owned restaurants could help differentiate RTC. They recommended that the City explore with Montgomery College, and potentially bring some of the college's programming to the Town Square itself either through remote classes or partnerships. For example, if the college has a law program there could be a joint partnership / program with the courthouses, bringing students to the courthouses on a regular basis. A similar relationship could be explored for any classes focused on government, planning, and civics with the county government. With the presence of a relatively large senior population living near the Town Center, and the overcrowding at the senior center on Gude Drive, the Town Center poses an opportunity for a satellite facility to serve seniors.

The Panel stressed the importance of preventing the loss of any major businesses with a large employee base, most importantly Choice Hotels





Photo showing arrival experience from the Metro Station bridge, through the hardscaped plaza and into the Town Center. Images source: ULI Washington.

“ If you are not from this area, you don’t necessarily know how to find this Town Center from MD 355 or I-270, from where most of the traffic is coming.”

– Katie Bucklew, Panelist

which has about 400 employees or Emmes, a biopharmaceutical research company headquartered in Rockville on North Washington Street. The Panel recommended that the City make a concerted effort to keep these companies in the Town Center and allot a reasonable amount of public resources if needed for retention. Should the Town Center lose its large employer base, it will suffer and attracting new employers will become even more difficult.

The Panel revisited the 2002 Town Center Master Plan, acknowledged the connectivity to the Metro station, commercial centers, Montgomery College, and government center. With this in mind, the Panel posed the questions: how do we bring people from the Metro station, and across the site east-west, to the north-south artery that passes through Town Square?

### Anchor Uses

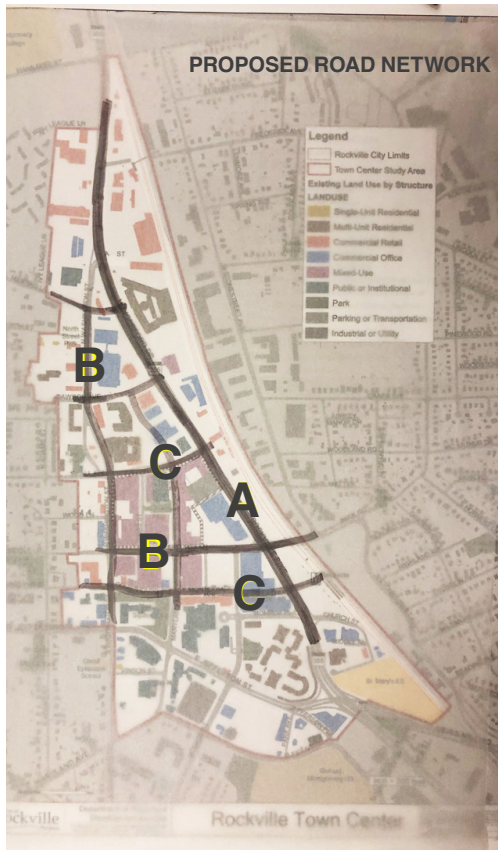
According to the Panel, the Town Center lacks an attractive anchor in tune with its unique user group consisting of families with children, government employees and seniors amongst other user types. As stated previously, with the establishment and success of Washingtonian Rio in Gaithersburg and Pike & Rose in North Bethesda, just north of the study area, the Town Center’s retail has suffered. Panelists strongly recommend that the City work towards differentiating the Town Center from these surrounding mixed-use developments by focusing on uses that serve their unique user group.

They elaborated on investigating the following existing uses to serve their aforementioned user group better:

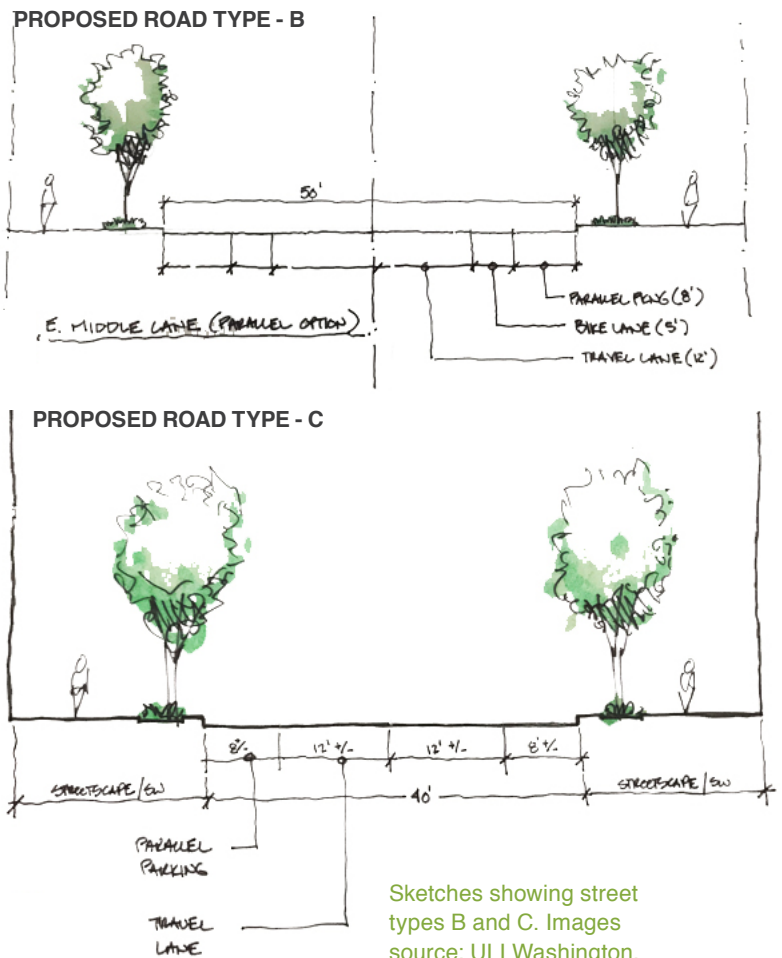
1. Library – According to them, the library building on the Town Square is a cultural and social landmark, but it is often perceived as being detrimental to surrounding retailers, as per the general belief that retail succeeds around other retail. This location should have a use that generates more person-traffic per square foot than what is produced by a large multi-story library, in which a significant amount of the square footage is not intensively used. The design of the library also results in some blank facades. Panelists encourage the City and Town Center community to investigate the library efficiency, impact on surrounding retail, and consider downsizing or moving the library to another appropriate location in Rockville. They recommended that the City investigate, and potentially bring a large-footprint retailer, or a high-volume institutional user - such as Montgomery College or a children-oriented use that attracts repeat visits. With respect to Montgomery College, both day and evening programs related to culture and performing arts could be brought to the Town Center. They recommended the City also explore with the KID Museum in Bethesda Maryland for potential re-location in the Town Center in tune with their child-friendly programs.
2. Grocery store – According to the Panel, the City needs to investigate if the Dawson's grocery store which shut down and re-opened with substantial financial help from the City, is appropriate to cater to their user population. They should look into whether their residents are buying groceries from Dawson's or driving out to Giant and Safeway to buy at more affordable price points. Moreover, they learned that a Wegmans is scheduled to open in the next few years to the south of the study area, within 3 miles of the Town Square. This will have a huge draw and could make it very difficult for any grocer to compete. Whether it is Dawson's or another (example- Streets Market & Café), they are going to have to rely on convenience or unique experience / products to survive. Thus, the City should conduct a thorough investigation towards the long-term plans for the Dawson's site; and then determine whether Dawson's should stay, get replaced by another grocery store brand, or get replaced by a different use.
3. Fitness Club – With regards to the existing fitness club, Panelists recommended that the City and Town Center community look into adding a state-of-the-art facility, embellish the existing facility or introduce a fitness club or collection of special fitness tenants.

Panelists recommended the City also explore with the KID Museum in Bethesda Maryland for potential re-location in the Town Center in tune with their child-friendly programs.

Panelists commended the Town Center for all the features it has in place in the current scenario, including a grid of streets that serves traffic circulation well



Map showing proposed road network. Images source: ULI Washington.



Sketches showing street types B and C. Images source: ULI Washington.

and allows connections in multiple directions. According to them, there are a few spots where improvements could help, and these recommendations are in line with the plan made by the City. The Panel highlighted that cities are made of different kinds of streets. They introduced three types of streets – A, B and C. They assigned street type A to MD 355 – it facilitates through traffic with infrequent stops, is meant to carry high volumes of traffic at a relatively high speed, serves as an edge for the Town Center, and brings in a lot of people. They identified one major problem within the existing road network:

“ There are too many streets in the Town Center that are not just bringing people to the area, but through the area. ”

– Suzette Goldstein, Panelist

According to the Panel, when one leaves the main thoroughfare to enter the Town Center, there need to be other types of streets – streets that slow down the traffic. Traffic volume is a legitimate concern, and in urban areas traffic volume can be a positive because it promotes people to drive slowly, stop, feel comfortable and safe getting out of their cars to walk and shop. While walkers



become customers, through traffic does not bring customers. The Panel assigned street type B to North Washington Street and East Middle Lane, which generally have two travel lanes in each direction with varying quality of sidewalks and the quality of pedestrian experiences associated with them. The Panel feels very strongly that these streets need to change and they should not be traffic volume carriers; they currently are turning the Town Center into an island, both in the north-south as well as east-west directions.

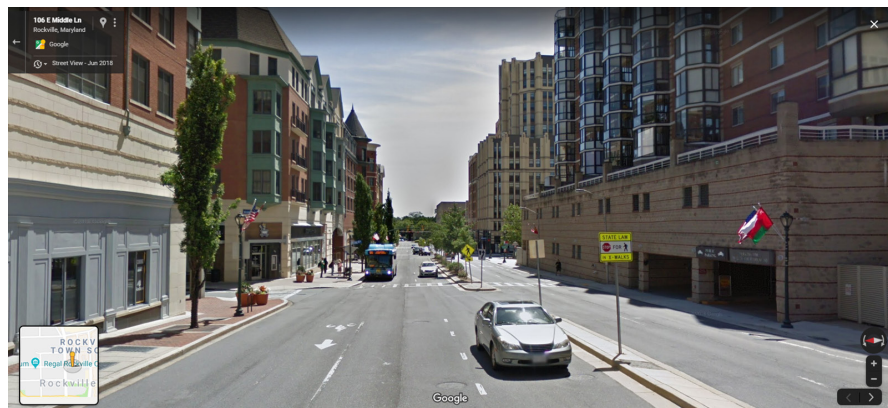
They acknowledged that the West End of Rockville is a thriving neighborhood, but to get from the West End to the Town Center one has to cross North Washington Street, a road which encourages through traffic since it connects to MD 355 in the north. According to the Panel, this connection encourages drivers to drive faster than appropriate, and also makes it hard for pedestrians to cross or walk along North Washington Street. Similarly, East Middle Lane in this section of the Town Center has two driving lanes in each direction, and poses as a barrier between the Town Square project and the area in and around the movie theatres.

With respect to the highest population of employees and potential guests into the area stem from county buildings and courts, Panelists pointed out that they have a limited time frame for the lunch hour, and it is important to make it worthwhile for them to step out. Thus, it is important to facilitate crossing of East Middle Lane, and walking along the length of Maryland Avenue to

Photo showing North Washington Street looking northwards. Images source: Google Maps.



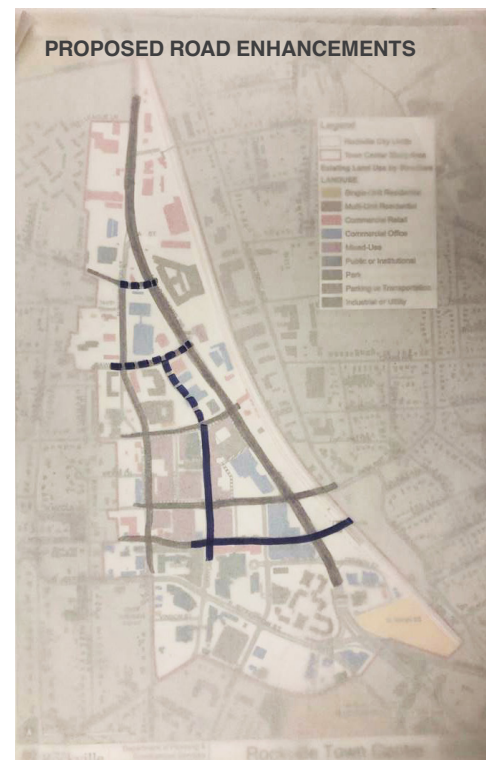
Photo showing East Middle Lane looking northwards. Images source: Google Maps.



boost business in the Town Square. They recommended putting both North Washington Street and East Middle Lane on a “road diet” – i.e. replace the two lanes in each direction with one lane in each direction with on-street parking; and improve the sidewalk. These streets are different from the street type C in the core of the retail, because the latter are very narrow, meant for very slow traffic speed and on-street parking. The proposed street sections along North Washington Street and East Middle Lane will be a little bit wider, carry a little more traffic volume and have fewer intersections on them than street type C. Panelists recommended adding bicycle lanes to both streets to promote a multimodal approach to transit – including pedestrians, vehicles, bikes, and scooters which are now being called micro-transit.

The Panel further elaborated on the road network, and recommended adding a T-shaped connection to the existing road network, by extending Maryland Avenue north of Beall Avenue, and extending Dawson Avenue eastwards to connect with Hungerford Drive (shown as dashed blue line on the proposed road network map). According to them, breaking down the existing mega blocks into developable parcels at a walkable scale will be better for the future of the Town Center. This way traffic will get distributed on the new surrounding street grid allowing the removal and/or narrowing of lanes on East Middle Lane. Thus, by facilitating a grid of streets and more connections, the traffic volume will get distributed, rather than confined to a limited grid which can cause delays. In the north, they recommended improving the intersection where North Washington Street meets MD 355, and move it further south by extending Martins Lane up to MD 355/Hungerford Drive. By implementing this, North Washington Street is no longer a through street, and that allows the City to create a new character that will provide an opportunity for new land uses more appropriate for the renewed street. As of today, the types of land uses that exist are low density, and those land uses are not giving the Town Center the population and density required to support the retail, office uses and other development.

With respect to East Middle Lane, they pointed out that the median existing in the current scenario promotes faster movement for automobile drivers. The Panel strongly recommends slowing down drivers on that street. Cars



Map showing proposed road enhancements on North Washington Street and East Middle Lane. Images source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing proposed location - for extension of Maryland Avenue to meet extended Dawson Avenue. Images source: Google Maps.

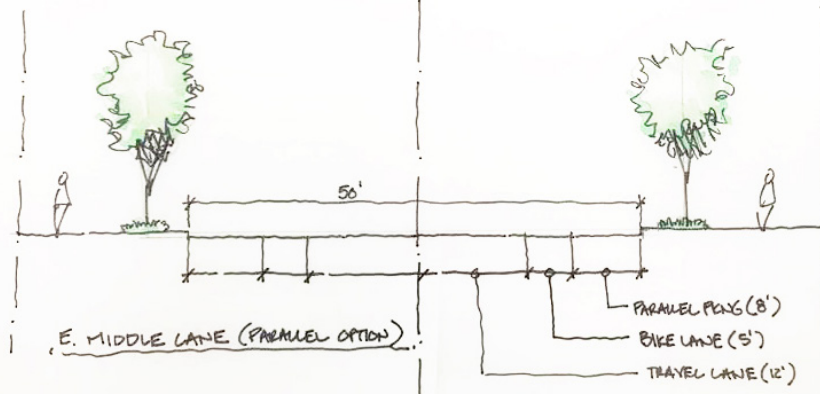


driving next to each other are better, as they tend to slow down next to another moving object, allowing pedestrians to feel comfortable when crossing the street. Thus north-south pedestrian connections can be established in the entire Town Center. The proposed sketch street section shows the following - right of way where sidewalk conditions can be improved especially along retail frontage, bike lanes added in both directions, reduction in width of travel lanes and introduction of on-street parking. According to the Panel, on-street parking

**EAST MIDDLE LANE - EXISTING**



**EAST MIDDLE LANE - PARALLEL PARKING OPTION**



Sketch showing existing and proposed street section for East Middle Lane. Images source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing Gibbs Street with bike lane. Image source: ULI Washington.



will also facilitate traffic calming, and foster pedestrian life for retailers. On the same note, if one adds parallel parking on that section of East Middle Lane in the Town Center, 50 to 60 additional parking spaces can be created.

Panelists lamented the lack of visibility of the Town Center and re-emphasized that it was a critical problem that while the Town Square is well designed and vibrant, it is hidden. Thus it will be important to design key nodes in the Town Center to lead people to the Town Square. Arrival points into the Town Center are critically important - for automobile drivers on MD 355 as well as pedestrians getting off the Metro station at the southern end on MD 355. Panelists learned that WMATA is planning to rebuild the connecting bridge



Photo showing bridge connecting Rockville Metro Station to the Town Center; Photo showing barren hardscaped plaza connecting the metro bridge to the Town Center; Photo showing terrace at arrival point from bridge to the Town Center; Photo showing the barren hardscaped plaza from metro, lacking in a sense of arrival for visitors into the Town Center. Images source: ULI Washington.

Photo showing the High Line in NYC. Image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/davidberkowitz/5923527436>.



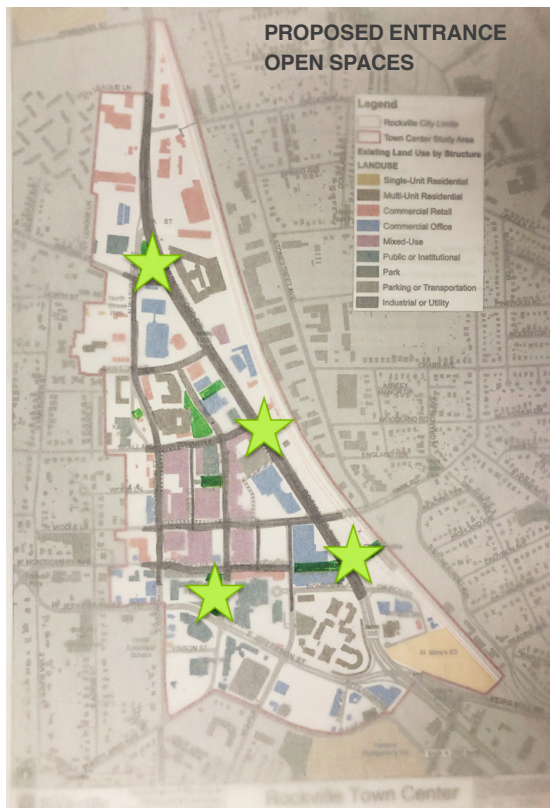
from the station to the Town Center, and they strongly recommended that the new design include a landscaped space where pedestrians experience a positive walk and community gatherings could be facilitated. They referred to the High Line in New York City and recommended that the Metro connection could be designed on a similar note, and would require coordination amongst the City of Rockville, Montgomery County and WMATA. A lot of people come to the courthouses and government buildings from the Metro and it is very important that the pedestrian walk provides a good first impression and leads them to all the amenities the Town Center has to offer.

Panelists applauded the design and maintenance of Courthouse Square Park, and noted that it presents as a wonderful entry point to the Government Center. At the northern entrance on MD 355 there is a need for a strong entry marker to point automobile drivers towards the Town Center. Also in the north where Panelists proposed a redesign of the North Washington Street and MD 355 intersection, they recommend creating an attractive landscaped space so that drivers traveling south are introduced to the idea that this is a special place they are entering.

They elaborated on designing gateways to the study area in the form of retail, open spaces and any other form whereby the message to the automobile drivers on MD 355 is about getting them to turn into the Town Center and walk around rather than treat the Town Center as auto-centric highway retail to drive through instead of into. With regards to the overall open space network, Panelists recommend focusing on a series and connectivity of open spaces. They acknowledged existing open spaces and pointed out opportunities; as the Town Center evolves along with the addition of proposed and modified roads, the Panel strongly recommends adding more open space, thereby creating a connected network of open spaces. In tune with these

“ *People with young kids say there is no place to bounce a ball.* ”  
– Judy Rudolph, Resident at the Upton, Stakeholder





Sketch showing proposed entrance open spaces in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.



Sketch showing proposed open space network in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.

recommendations, they highlighted three categories of open spaces that should be well designed with a balance of hardscape and softscape elements:

1. Open spaces demarcated in the Proposed Entrance Open Spaces diagram.
2. Open spaces demarcated in the Proposed Open Space Network diagram.
3. Existing pedestrian connection from the Metro station to the Town Center.

During the design process of the aforementioned open spaces, Panelists highlighted the importance of establishing strong connections - with the Court House Square Park; Town Square; and the proposed triangular park at the north-end of the Town Square, as recommended by the Panel in the Proposed Land Use in the Town Center diagram. They envisioned this triangular park as a larger gathering space to compliment the intimate Town Square green with the performance stage. They further suggested that during special events, certain roadways could be temporarily closed, and the open spaces and roads could be combined to facilitate a larger public realm.

With regards to maintenance of the open spaces, they stressed the importance of trimming the trees in a timely manner so that retail signage is clearly visible. A customer walking by retail hidden by overgrown trees might miss the retail, and this hurts discoverability and wayfinding.



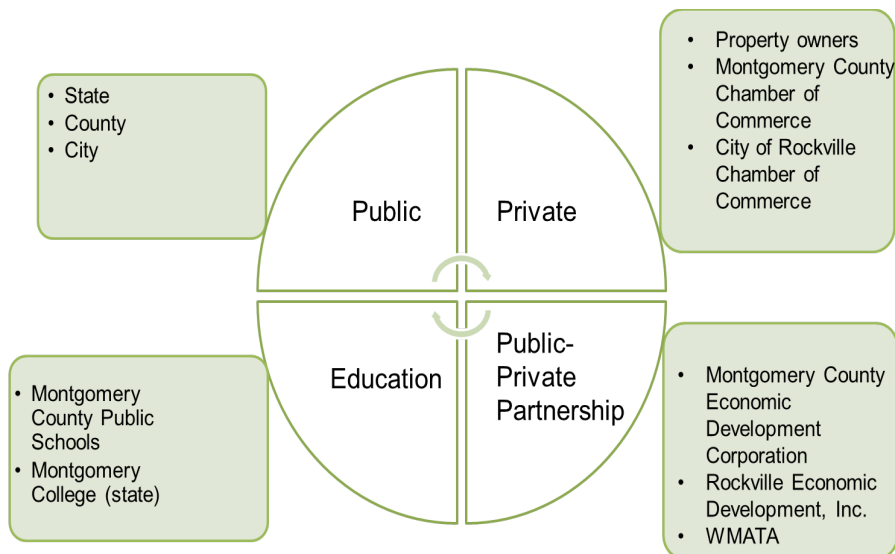


Sketch showing proposed land use in the Town Center. Image source: ULI Washington.

To consolidate all these components of the framework plan together, the Panel prepared a Proposed Land Use plan, explaining how the Town Center will be connected to the greater community, how it can be more visible from MD 355, and how the streets can be designed better to facilitate a different type of development opportunity. They analyzed the density and existing buildings, and recommended that all the parcels along North Washington Street are an opportunity – particularly for medium density housing after traffic calming strategies are put in place. Looking at the scale of the blocks, with about 10 to 15 acres of developable land, they discouraged further retail development. Allowing the retail to concentrate on main roads could make other roads to feel more quiet/residential in nature. They encouraged the City to think about mitigating the scale between the Town Center and single-family housing to the west, and adding higher density in the Town Center. According to the Panel, these parcels could easily accommodate 1800 to 2000 dwelling units, thereby adding about 4000 more residents in the study area; which would in turn support the retail core (shown in brown on the proposed land use map). Thus, the existing residential density around the retail core can be extended and strengthened in the Town Center. On an end note, they also emphasized that it will be difficult to achieve the intended residential density along North Washington Street without making the proposed changes where North Washington Street intersects with MD 355. They acknowledged existing precedents in the Town Square, where there is 4-story residential over 1-story retail; and they recommended this building type without the retail component to bring the scale into alignment with the needs of the Town Center. As per the Proposed Land Use in the Town Center diagram, they recommended increasing living density in the Town Center, on the west side of North Washington Street; and condensing the retail core. This would support the idea of increasing residential living density along North Washington Street, which would serve as a residential street transitioning into the west residential neighborhood rather than the present commercial street that serves more as a barrier than a buffer.

## Organizing Stakeholders

Panelists elaborated upon how the City could organize to implement the recommended changes. There are a wide range of stakeholders involved – public, Montgomery County, State of Maryland, City of Rockville, private property owners, small businesses and tenants, residents, chambers of commerce, public and private partnerships, WMATA and the development corporation REDI. There is also an educational component – Montgomery College which is a part of the state, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) with the Richard Montgomery High School in close proximity to the study area, and the MCPS headquarters further north of the Town Center. All these players will have to communicate, coordinate and implement necessary changes to make the Town Center a success.



According to the Panel, the study area consists of great bones, but lacks in a high level of cohesiveness. They recommended creating an identity and a brand for the study area, so the Town Center can differentiate itself from surrounding competition. For this effort, all the diverse set of stakeholders will have to come together, start a community conversation, build on their history and develop a story. To instill cohesiveness, the stakeholders will have to come up with a common wayfinding and signage system, designed to draw people into the public realm and establish digital presence in the form of a strong website and social media. The City of Rockville should appoint additional personnel over and above a Business Improvement Liaison (FTE) – basically a point of contact for the private sector, who can help to coordinate government resources, foster relationships with key stakeholders and drive government to business communications. Thus, as plans develop and as changes are under way, as opportunities come up, this person can receive information, and disseminate information out, while maintaining very strong communication among the different stakeholders. They recommended a separate public-private partnership to address operations and infrastructure management, and be responsible for parking, open spaces, programming coordination, convening, communications and outreach amongst stakeholders and marketing.

With regards to parking, Panelists pointed out that all the stakeholders interviewed had mentioned parking as one of their top concerns. They learned that the current parking scenario in the Town Center is being compared to parking at its retail competition and found to be lacking. It is confusing for visitors with regards to validation practices; lacks a cohesive message to visitors and customers; and lacks signs and directions for visitors coming and going. They posed an important question about the parking problem:

“ Is the issue of parking really only a perception, or is this a reality? ”

– Jill Hunger, Panelist

They recommended that the City conduct a pilot program under the guidance of a Parking Consultant to analyze the current parking issues. One element of this program would be, for a period of time, to facilitate free 2-hour parking across the board in public as well as private garages. This will require a conversation and buy-in by all stakeholders. Moreover, metrics will have to be developed and performance should be measured during the pilot program. A meticulously measured pilot program should reveal whether sales have improved for businesses and if more people are visiting the Town Center because of the free parking and less confusion about the parking fees and availability. Moreover, the pilot program allows the City to assess the situation, and abandon the program if it doesn't work, and build the idea forward if it works. According to the Panel this should also reveal the real problem with respect to parking in the Town Center.

## Urgent Steps: Prioritization

### **Next Steps: Urgent, Strengthen, Maturity**

The Panel envisions that there are certain issues which need urgent attention and actions in the near future; and there are other issues which the City and the community can build on and strengthen over time. Some of the retail and urban design strategies have to begin quickly; those features that are working currently can be improved and strengthened over time, within a schedule created for such improvements. They also addressed the idea of maturation – Rockville has been around for a long time, and there are things that are already relatively mature here. They posed an important question: what is the 21st century maturation that the City of Rockville is going to prepare to create a competitive position amongst other sites to the north and south, and create a brand that brings the Town & Gown idea together? According to them, the City can build off the strength and identity of existing educational institutions, government and the mainstays. It will be important that the City strengthen these connections to implement changes in the Town Center.

On an urgent note, Panelists recommended that the City and the Town Center community:

- Continue building & fostering relationships
- Support operations & infrastructure management via a partnership (with the structure of the partnership to be determined later)
- Conduct a pilot program for parking
- Develop an identity and a story for the Town Center and communicate it widely to potential patrons and residents.





Photos showing existing wayfinding and branding in the Town center and Town Square. Images source: ULI Washington.

With regards to strengthening existing features, Panelists recommended that the City and the Town Center community:

- Conduct marketing & messaging campaigns
- Improve wayfinding features – by using branding and the story as a cohesive design guide.

On an end note, Panelists recommended that the City and the Town Center community aim for a maturation goal

- Formation of formal organization - like a BID (business improvement district) or an Urban Partnership



Photo showing low scale building with residential over retail on East Middle Lane. Image source: ULI Washington.



Photo showing low scale building with residential over retail in the Town Square. Image source: ULI Washington.

## Actionable Items

Panelists also described issues that need to be addressed as the Town Center matures, and made the following recommendations:

1. Retain significant employers – According to the Panel, these employers should be retained, and the community needs to decide which group will negotiate and what incentives the City and community can offer them to stay. For example, Emmes at the north end is an employer that represents a technology group that has multiple locations along the I-270 corridor. Such companies can be drawn here as they look for transit oriented developments. The City needs to find similar companies, and retain those they have – for example, Choice Hotels.
2. Build density in Town Center without compromising character – and not get bogged down by maintaining the fine-grain community and low scale as of right now. They recommended that those features can still be retained by creating a range of densities across the blocks at the edges, and grade transitions into the surrounding single family housing communities. Such changes would also facilitate better walking environments.
3. Strengthen relationships with Montgomery College and the County Board of Education – and have them bring some of their programs and classes that could actually back-fill some of the retail in the Town Center during the lunch hour, evenings and potentially on weekends. With respect to Richard Montgomery High School, the Panel pointed out that they were setting up temporary classrooms in their parking lot, and they could bring some of their classes, possibly an art program in conjunction with VisArts, to the Town Center.
4. Hire a parking consultant to create and manage a potential change to the fee structure for all Town Center parking.
5. Engage a branding, marketing, and wayfinding consultant – and include digital and social media messaging to the surrounding community and the region at large.
6. Redesign East Middle Lane and North Washington Street to make the connections easier for pedestrians, automobile drivers, bikers, scooter riders, so that the interface between pedestrians and other mode drivers is friendly.
7. Implement downtown shuttle and extend its route to Montgomery College in the north of the study area.



# Conclusion

At the onset of the TAP, Panelists applauded the City for a high quality environment in the Town Center and particularly Town Square, consisting of pleasant streetscape and well-designed storefronts; programming of events with a stage for live performers; and a large central open space to support passive recreation for families. They pointed out that the Town Square was successful facilitating community engagement, which is much harder to do than build buildings. However, they observed the lack of shoppers in this vibrant environment.

Over the course of the TAP, Panelists toured the study area, analyzed the existing conditions, and interviewed a wide range of stakeholders. Panelists pointed out that they saw no clear definition between the Town Center and Town Square, and that there was a lack of a unifying vision, brand and operational approach for the two entities. According to them, it will be very important for The City of Rockville to develop a unified vision for the Town Center, and the Town Square should be a part of it. The visioning process should include a diverse set of stakeholders ranging from public-private partnerships to various residential, institutional and commercial land and user groups. All these groups will have to come together and determine, what differentiates Rockville from all the other retail competition in the north-south direction.

After brainstorming, they laid down recommendations under four categories – contextualizing Rockville, retail strategy & design, organizing stakeholders and urgent steps: prioritization. They elaborated on the next steps for the City and community in three different categories – urgent, strengthen and maturation. They further shared a list of actionable items towards the future transformation and success of retail in the Town Center.

On an end note, the Panel greatly appreciated the opportunity to study and analyze issues in the Town Center, brainstorm recommendations and present their ideas before an enthusiastic audience.



Photos showing audience at the final presentation, including Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton. Images source: ULI Washington.



# Panelist Bios



## David W. Kitchens, AIA, Panel Chair

**Principal, Cooper Carry**

**Alexandria, VA**

David Kitchens, AIA serves as Principal-in-Charge of Cooper Carry's Washington, DC office. Cooper Carry is a dynamic, context-driven architecture and design firm focused on the creation of exceptional places.

In 30+ years of leadership in Cooper Carry, Mr. Kitchens has led design efforts on a variety of award-winning projects including Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Florida. This mixed-use development has been recognized by a variety of organizations including the AIA, which bestowed upon it the Excellence of Design Award. Mr. Kitchens led the design of the master plan and many of the buildings that make up Bethesda Row. The project was awarded the Best Block in America by The Congress for New Urbanism, the Excellence Award from the Urban Land Institute and the Maryland/DC NAIOP Award of Excellence for Best Smart Growth Master Plan. More recently, Mr. Kitchens has participated in the development of the White Flint Sector plan and led the design of the Ballston Quarter redevelopment in Arlington, Virginia.

Through his leadership, Cooper Carry's Washington, DC office is recognized as a regional and national innovator in the urban design and architecture of mixed-use projects that create walkable community environments and take advantage of sustainable modes of connectivity and transit.

## Andrew K. Brown

**Chairman, Stanford Properties, LC**  
**Bethesda, MD**

Mr. Brown directs all activities of Stanford Properties, LC, a real estate investment and development firm based in Bethesda, Maryland. Mr. Brown has acquired and developed over thirty residential and commercial projects with an aggregate value in excess of \$300 million since the company's founding in 1992. His recent projects include conversion of an underperforming retail big-box center into a high-density residential condominium project; development of a 50 acre mixed-use residential and retail town center; and redevelopment of a church and independent school into an urban townhome community. In 2013, Mr. Brown led the successful rezoning of the 1.8 million sq. ft. Tysons West mixed-use project at the new Spring Hill Metro station. Mr. Brown directs site selection, acquisition, governmental entitlements, financing, construction, leasing, and ongoing asset management of completed projects. Prior to founding Stanford Properties, Mr. Brown was the Director of Retail Development for Baier Properties, Inc. where he oversaw development of numerous retail and residential land development projects, and prior to that held positions in acquisition and project management with two Washington based real estate firms. He started his career as an Acquisition and Portfolio Manager for the Woodmont Companies in Belmont, California, where he supervised the acquisition and management of a \$100 million portfolio of apartment, office, industrial, and retail properties.

Mr. Brown received his B.A. in Economics from Stanford University in 1983. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute where he is an Officer of the Washington District Council's Executive Committee and was previously Co-Chair of the TAP Committee. He is also a guest lecturer at the Schools of Architecture and Engineering at the University of Maryland and the Washington College of Law at American University. He has served on the boards of several local educational and philanthropic organizations, including Greater D.C. Cares, Inc., which Mr. Brown helped found in 1989 to promote volunteerism throughout the Washington area and the New Community Foundation which Mr. Brown founded in 2000 to provide scholarships to low income students of the Shaw neighborhood of Washington to attend college and independent schools. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland with his wife, Robyn. They have three adult children scattered across the country.

## Katie Bucklew

**EDENS Vice President – Development**  
**Washington D.C.**

Katie Bucklew is Vice President of Development, working directly with Steve Boyle, Chief Development Officer, on the acquisition, vision, leasing strategy, project management and execution for ground-up development and redevelopment activity in the portfolio.

Katie began her career in EDENS' financial management analyst program, working on debt and equity raises, new development projects, acquisitions and corporate reporting. She has since held a number of high-profile roles at EDENS that have given her a broad perspective of the retail real estate industry. Previously, Katie worked directly for Jodie McLean, EDENS' Chief Executive Officer, on portfolio transactions and strategic growth, capital allocation and operational strategy. Katie ran point on the \$861M AMREIT transaction that brought in 50 assets from Texas and Atlanta to the portfolio. Prior to this role, Katie spent three years on the Mid-Atlantic investment team, directing the daily activities and executing

strategic plans for the 35-center Mid-Atlantic portfolio comprised of more than 4 million square feet and \$1B in asset value. She also spent two years on the EDENS leasing team, where she was the second-leading leasing producer in 2010, responsible for 11 retail centers totaling over 1.2 million square feet.

Katie holds a Master of Business Administration from The Wharton School; a Master of Accounting from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School. As a dedicated contributor to the community of industry professionals, Katie is a member of ICSC, Women in Retail Real Estate and The Urban Land Institute. She is an active leader in the Urban Land Institute (ULI) sitting on the ULI Washington Governance Board (2017-present), ULI Washington Advisory Board (2016-present), ULI Washington Women's Leadership Initiative committee (2013 – present) and ULI Urban Mixed Use Blue National Product Council (2012-present, Vice Chair 2017-present). Katie is also a board member of Ivymount Foundation, an organization that supports the education, training and outreach of people with autism and special needs as well as their families.

## Matt Clark, PLA, LEED

### **Green Associate, Managing Partner, LandDesign Alexandria, VA**

Matt Clark is a Landscape Architect with LandDesign's Washington DC office where he has served for 22 years. His expertise lies in his ability to understand a client's vision and translate it into a place that is within-budget, build-able and most importantly that matters.

In addition to managing a 10-person design studio, Matt is the Managing Partner of the Washington DC office and is involved with project management and coordination of his design staff colleagues while also prioritizing business development and marketing efforts. As a project manager, he continues to be responsible for client management, scheduling, and project development, including conceptual design through preparation of final construction documents to construction administration/implementation.

Matt has extensive experience with multi-family, mixed-use and active adult communities. One of Matt's most notable projects is the redevelopment of Potomac Yard, the largest mixed-use development in Alexandria, VA. Matt was involved in large-scale land planning through detailed park and streetscape design. He was also an integral part of the design of major public open space areas for both passive and active recreation, an area that Matt is especially passionate about.

Matt earned a Master of Landscape Architecture from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and a Bachelor of Science in Urban Forestry and Landscape Horticulture from the University of Vermont. He is registered Landscape Architect in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Massachusetts and New York. He is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and Urban Land Institute. He serves on the Landscape Architecture Advisory Council for SUNY ESF and on the City of Alexandria Public Art Task Force.



## Sophie Barral

**Director of Events & Placemaking, Rosslyn BID  
Arlington, VA**

Sophie Barral is the Director of Events and Placemaking at the Rosslyn BID. She leads the events, placemaking, and marketing strategies to enhance the perception of Rosslyn. Through her tenure, Sophie has implemented over 200 events every year including Rosslyn Cinema, Jazz Fest, Arlington's first book festival, Rosslyn Reads! and flower market, Rosslyn Blooms!. In addition, she also created and managed two seasonal pop-up community spaces, The Alcove, a bookstore and experiential retail space, and Rosslyn Putt-Putt + Candy BAR, a summer mini-golf and bar.

Prior to her work at the Rosslyn BID, Sophie was working in the international development field, implementing events and programs in various countries in partnership with international organizations and businesses. She earned a master's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Sciences Po Bordeaux, in France.

## Suzette Goldstein

**Senior Vice President, Director of Planning, HOK  
Washington D.C.**

Suzette Goldstein is the Director of Planning for the firm wide practice of HOK and practices in Washington DC. While with HOK, Suzette has had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects that have put a stamp on our Nation's Capital, starting early in her career with planning of the National Air and Space Museums, Steven F Hazy Center. She was also personally involved in the creation of several national monuments in DC; and most recently the restoration of the National Mall, and the Master Plan for the US Capital Complex. For the private sector, Suzette has worked locally for numerous developers and corporations, and has expertise in planning entitlements and mixed-use developments such as Chevy Chase Center, and Rockville Center. Suzette's resume also includes various international projects such as the South Dhahran Homeownership community, Saudi Aramco Cultural District, and Capital Bay mixed use development.

Suzette's passion is for urban planning and design. She believes that our success can be gaged by how people use the spaces we create. But planning is a long-term endeavor, so it is particularly rewarding to see, our worked constructed and to know that the places we have created are making people's lives richer.

Suzette graduated from the University of Cincinnati, School of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning with a Bachelor of Urban Planning. She is qualified as a planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners and a LEED accredited professional. She has represented HOK by speaking at conferences and participated in critiques for the University of Maryland, and has receive awards for her planning efforts.

## Jill Hunger, AICP

**Commercial Development Specialist, Arlington County  
Arlington, VA**

Long fascinated by maps and how cities work; a firm believer that a good wander unveils the wonders of a city; a professional planner and a passionate wanderer. Jill has been a planner for regional and local governments for 20+ years; she understands bureaucracy and strives to span the connection between visionary statements and pragmatic approaches. Collaboration is a strong theme running through her career. She currently works for Arlington Economic Development (AED). Jill is directly involved in virtually all long-range planning studies: she authored a core planning policy document – the Arlington County Retail Plan. Because of her experience and ability to work cross-departmentally, she has been asked to assist in several key County initiatives – most recently work pertaining to Amazon’s HQ2. Jill holds a BA in Environmental Sciences and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

## Walter Ploskon, AIA, LEED AP

**Managing Director, Niles Bolton Associates  
Washington D.C.**

Walter J. Ploskon is a Principal with Niles Bolton Associates, a national multi-disciplinary design firm continually recognized by Architectural Record and Building Design and Construction magazines. He is the Managing Director of the firm’s regional office located in Alexandria, VA. With nearly 20 years of experience designing complex project types, Walter’s strength of strategic problem solving, with an emphasis on urban planning and design, has produced national and international projects of all sizes and budgets including multiple award-winning mixed-use multi-family and commercial projects. Walter is currently leading the design on a number of mixed-use multi-family projects including senior housing, student housing and transit-oriented development projects throughout the mid-Atlantic and Northeast. His pursuit of quality design while fostering a culture of mentorship and professional development at all levels reflects his genuine interest in realizing the potential in quality community development. A registered architect in eight states including the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, Walter has served as a committee member with AIAIDC and NCARB and has participated in public speaking engagements on successful project management practices. He is currently a full member of ULI and the Maryland Building Industry Association and is LEED AP BD+C accredited. Walter earned both his Bachelor and Master’s degree of Architecture from the University of Maryland.

## Kaushambi Shah

**Urban Designer and Report Writer  
Rockville, MD**

Kaushambi Shah is a LEED accredited Urban Designer/Planner with a background in Architecture. She has 12 years of experience in the private sector, including design and planning in the domestic as well as international realm. Besides working on projects in U.S. cities like Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Boston, Fairfax and smaller towns in New York, she has also worked on projects in India, China, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. Her project experiences range from design of Entertainment Cities, Mixed

Use Town Centers, Campus Plans and Redevelopment, Resort Communities, Residential Communities, Waterfront Developments and Transit Oriented Development.

She has a Bachelors in Architecture from the University of Mumbai, India and a Masters in Urban Design from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is a member of the American Planning Association and Urban Land Institute, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Urban Plan program by ULI, and has served as a TAP report writer for previous ULI Washington TAPs, including: “Research Boulevard: It’s Not An Office Park!”, “What’s Next For Westfields?” and “Creating an Eastern Gateway in Falls Church.

## Chad Shuskey

### **Senior Vice President of Research & Real Estate, Washington DC Economic Partnership Washington D.C.**

Mr. Shuskey is instrumental in positioning the organization as an information clearinghouse and a leader in research on real estate development and construction activity in Washington, DC.

His primary responsibilities include implementation and strategy for WDCEP’s retail attraction program (ranging from start-ups to national brands); management of the WDCEP’s Geographical Information Systems & information technology; collection of development information and economic indicators for the District of Columbia; and demographics, development, and site location analysis for business attraction and retention efforts.

Additionally, Mr. Shuskey oversees production of the WDCEP’s publications and on-line tools. Chief among these are The DC Development Report, an annual census of the real estate development activity in the District of Columbia; the IEDC Gold Award Winning Neighborhood Profiles, an annual series offering demographic and other information about 54 neighborhoods across the District of Columbia; and both the DC Real Estate Search, an interactive catalog of available retail space and forthcoming development projects.

Mr. Shuskey has worked for the Washington DC Economic Partnership since 2001. He previously held the titles of Research Analyst, Manager of Research & Information and then Director, Research & Visual Communications.





# Urban Land Institute

## Washington

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