

Pennsylvania Avenue East of the River Taskforce Report from 12/8/01

-Ann Kendall, Washington Architectural Foundation

This report reflects a representative sample of residents and business owners in the Pennsylvania Avenue Corridor, from the Sousa Bridge to 28th Street, based on the community design workshop of December 8, 2001. With 40 people in attendance, which were primarily residents, DC government officials and some business owners, following represents conclusions from survey data and breakout group discussions.

Most attendees:

- Are residents of the area surrounding the corridor.
- Commuted by car to other areas for work.
- Of the business owners, most operate businesses from their homes in the area
- Find less than 10% of their retail and service needs met by the corridor
- Prefer either Maryland, DC or Virginia to meet their commerce needs due to reasons including: lack of diversity and quality of available retail and services as well as little or no parking
- Safety considerations including traffic and personal threat were listed as reasons to avoid the limited retail and services in the area
- Do not favor additional zoning requirements to control/maintain/change current mix of business, signage, etc.
- Rated traffic - speed, amount, and rate as the primary concern to the Corridor
- Rated the lack of parking and sidewalk improvements (trees, lighting, crosswalks) as the secondary concern
- Believed that Pennsylvania Avenue should remain a mixed-use corridor and not simply become just a residential corridor like 16th St., NW at the City border.

Desired Improvements:

- Retail and services relevant to a broader range of residents i.e. bank, dry cleaning, café, grocery, hardware store, office supply. Current retail options are oriented to the transit-dependent population of the ward
- Add small dispersed parking lots behind businesses
- Mixed use retail/housing
- Improved mix of businesses to improve community identity
- Enforcement of current codes to eliminate run-down businesses
- Improved police presence for resident/shopper safety
- Slow traffic to reasonable, non-highway speed
- Add more crosswalks (intersection lights) as an effort to slow traffic and allow for pedestrian traffic to safely cross the Corridor
- Access to the River by foot and vehicle for continuity of Corridor
- General improvements to the infrastructure - lights, sidewalks, signage

Next steps

- A Market Demand Analysis to determine mix of businesses that would best serve area residents and commuters (design phase would occur after the analysis). This analysis shall include:
 - Population trends
 - Household trends
 - Rental and Ownership Housing Demands
 - Retail Market Demands including expenditure potential, capture rate and inflow sales
 - Continued outreach to storefront business owners (Asian community) to gather insight, ideas, and support for potential upgrades of business area based on Market Demand Analysis
 - Conceptual design phase for street front and streetscape improvements, signage design, etc. - all based on marketing study outcome. The design may include selective demolition to accommodate new development, parking and traffic control enhancements.

General concerns

As mentioned by several attendees, resident participation in any planning process is key - apathy is an unfortunate characteristic of many neighborhoods. Engagement of all stakeholders of the Corridor is essential for success. Dispelling negative images of the Corridor is essential to success of improvements as attendees felt that there area many strengths of the area including natural beauty, community spirit, and history of the area, culture and ease of accessibility when trying to reach the area.