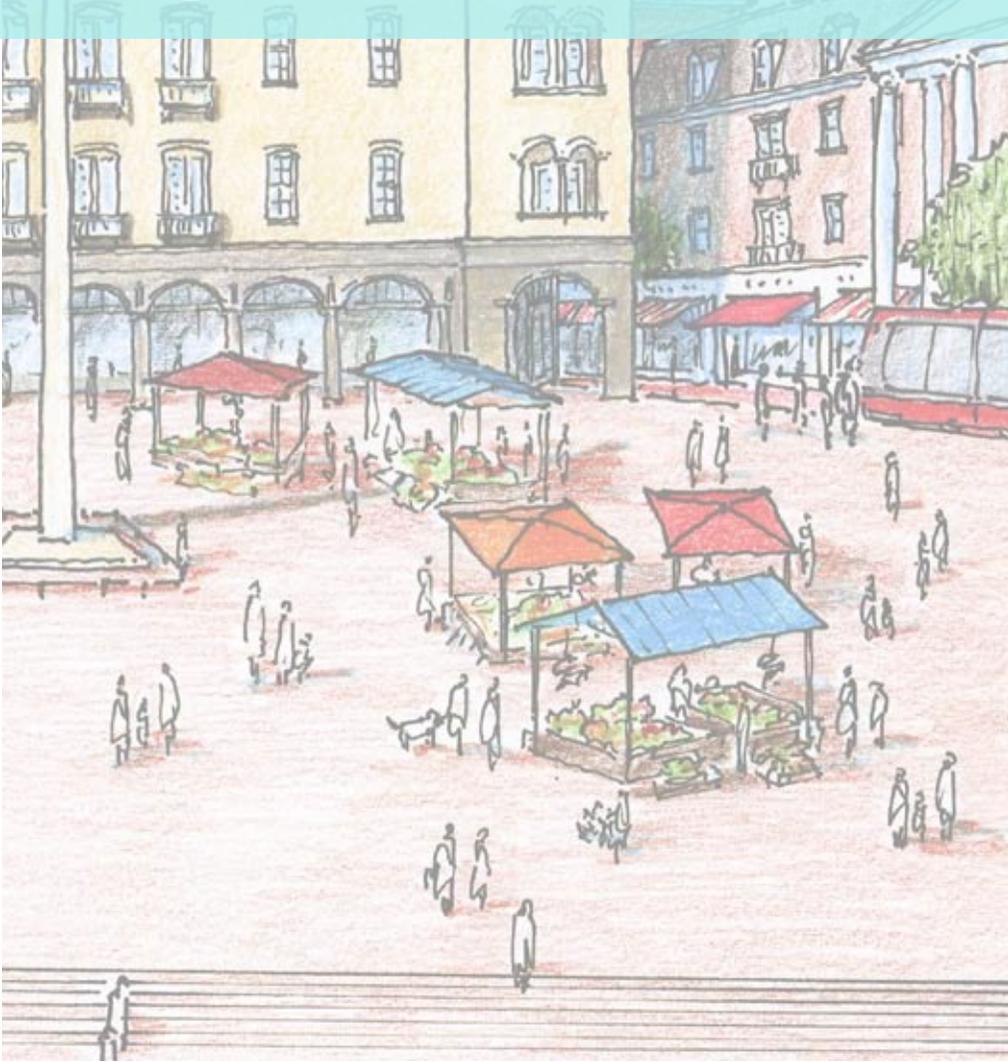




Highlandtown-Greektown



Transit-Oriented Development

Charrette Plan and Report
Baltimore, Maryland

July, 2009



SOUTHEAST
community development corporation



GREEKTOWN CDC

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Highlandtown-Greektown

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Introduction

Reason Behind the Process

The Southeast Community Development Corporation (SECDC), in cooperation with the Greektown Community Development Corporation (GCDC), is seeking to maximize the potential community and economic benefits of the proposed Red Line transit station in the vicinity of the Eastern Avenue underpass.

The Highlandtown and Greektown neighborhoods have the potential to be Baltimore City's "next great address". Their close proximity to major urban amenities, employment centers, and regional highway facilities provide for many of the ingredients that will attract new urban dwellers and reinvestment.

Creating a comprehensive vision for a future rail station area which integrates the full range of land use, transportation, and economic issues, particularly several years in advance of construction, is breaking new ground in the Baltimore Region. This kind of multi-disciplinary approach that focuses on "place-making" rather than individual projects in isolation is the embodiment of the Red Line Compact. It will help the Highlandtown-Greektown area realize its full potential and become greater than the sum of its parts. Finally, the unique partnership between CDC's, government agencies, and community stakeholders that comprised this process can become a model for proactive, sustainable planning in Baltimore and beyond.





Above: Team members discussing issues during the first day of the charrette.

Right: Initial Study area showing 10-minute walk radius around station area.



Description of the Process

This Plan has been developed to guide community and business organizations, property owners, the City Departments of Economic Development, Planning, and Transportation and the Maryland Transit Administration on the best way to enable new transit oriented development (TOD) in the vicinity of the proposed Red Line transit station. This includes recommendations on how to implement TOD in such a way that enhances the existing neighborhood and existing retail areas, as well as in leveraging the investment in the Red Line to create better connections between Highlandtown-Greektown and surrounding neighborhoods.

The process used to develop the Plan was done through a “charrette” process. A charrette is an intensive design workshop which brings together a multi-disciplinary team of designers, planners, and economists to work with stakeholders on complex development or redevelopment issues. During the charrette, the team works on site for upwards of a week, drawing ideas and presenting them to stakeholder in an iterative process. This provides the opportunity for “real-time” feedback, and the ability for the team and disparate stakeholder groups to hear and discuss various viewpoints simultaneously. The charrette process consists of three distinct phases: 1) Base Analysis which involves collecting background data, interviewing stakeholder groups to understand initial concerns and issues; 2) The Charrette, which is the design workshop itself where ideas are formulated and tested; and 3) Documentation, which takes the preferred outcomes of the charrette and synthesizes it into the Plan. The Plan is a conceptual, but achievable plan that serves as a blueprint for action. It is intended to be highly visual, and also an educational tool that shows what is possible.



Typical scenes of underutilized and vacant land within the study area.

Overview of Existing Conditions

In the last five years the Highlandtown and Greektown communities have seen significant improvements in their real estate markets, vacancy rates, and infrastructure. Persistent weaknesses remain, however, in the retail real estate market on Eastern Avenue and a number of redevelopment projects are on hold due to the downturn in the housing market.

The proposed Red Line will cross Eastern Avenue in the vicinity of the underpass immediately east of Haven Street. The area is an industrial corridor between two neighborhoods, and includes a vital truck route on Haven Street that connects the Port of Baltimore to industrial areas and rail yards to the north.

The City Planning Department completed a rezoning study in 2006 for the Greektown community that allowed several redevelopment projects slightly east of the proposed Red Line corridor to move forward, but the study predated the selection of an alignment of the Red Line and did not address potential land use changes created by the new transit line. Many of those redevelopment projects were implemented in the form of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) but have not been constructed.

Highlandtown currently has a disproportionately high amount of vacant or under-utilized retail space. While the space off of Eastern Avenue in traditional corner stores accounts for approximately half of all vacancies, vacant space on Eastern Avenue itself has a vacancy of 18%. Moreover, local shops appear to be achieving only 20% to 40% of average sales per square foot.

Finally, after years of disinvestment, the neighborhood retains a gritty appearance. While Greektown has made substantial progress along Eastern Avenue in creating a more attractive streetscape with maturing street trees and new textured crosswalks, the area overall, particularly the Eastern Avenue section of Highlandtown, appears somewhat barren and less welcoming than the area's premier "main street" it had been for many years.

Citizen's Design Workshop

An Advisory Board consisting of community representatives, business associations, City agencies, and the MTA was convened in March, 2009 to begin the process of planning the charrette. A series of stakeholder focus group meetings were also held in March and April to solicit initial input.

The charrette was held over a consecutive five-day period from May 4-8th, 2009. The charrette studio was set up at the former Highlandtown Library Branch at 3323 Eastern Avenue and was open to the public. In fact, the public was invited and encouraged to stop in throughout the week. In addition, public presentations were made at key points at the beginning, middle, and end of the charrette in order to solicit comment and feedback on the team's ideas and conceptual drawings. While it is generally difficult to visualize the potential that exists and to see how an area can undergo a transformation, the charrette process was very effective in demonstrating "place-making" principles .

The stakeholders who participated in the charrette were a diverse group of residents, business owners, property owners, institutional representatives, and government officials. Throughout the charrette, there was strong recognition among participants that the Red Line could be a catalyst in revitalizing the area. There was also great enthusiasm expressed by participants in transforming the area into a more vibrant, safe, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, with better access into the area, stronger connections to surrounding areas and institutions, higher caliber business establishments, and more appealing streetscapes.



Stakeholders discussing ideas during an initial charrette. "visioning" session.



Residents presenting ideas.



The charrette studio on Eastern Avenue.



Charrette team members work on developing concepts.

Key concepts and findings

1. Use the Red Line to create a vibrant transit-oriented destination.

Simply building a new transit line and station by no means assures that revitalization of a neighborhood will occur. The design of a transit station and its environs can have a profound effect on the extent and pace to which urban reinvestment happens. Achieving desirable outcomes requires the application of good design principles, but also often the intervention of the public sector to create the physical and policy framework that can ultimately stimulate the market.

Retrofitting a new passenger transit station into a neglected industrial area along a struggling commercial corridor poses challenges but in this case, also creates a remarkable opportunity. The illustrative plan, at right, developed during the charrette, shows how the “gap” between the two neighborhoods of Highlandtown and Greektown can be “filled in” with an appropriate mix of uses to create a compelling urban environment around the Red Line station. The transit-oriented design is intended to reinforce the pedestrian- friendly



Illustrative Plan for the Highlandtown-Greektown area. Parcels recommended for redevelopment are highlighted in purple.

character and form of the traditional urban fabric developed in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in East Baltimore. These characteristics of good design principles include elements such as:

- *Short blocks and an interconnected street network;*
- *Appropriately scaled sidewalks;*
- *Interesting building facades with pedestrian-scale articulation and detailing, with doors and windows oriented to the street.;*
- *Minimal or no building setbacks in order to frame the street space or public realm such as parks or plazas;*
- *Streetscape details including shade trees, landscaping, and street furniture, where appropriate;*
- *Parking and service courts placed to the rear of buildings, away from public view.*

Designing streets, public spaces, and buildings in this manner leading to and from the future Red Line station will increase pedestrian and bicycle activity as well as promote business activity.

Applying these principles at the immediate

station location will create a desirable transit environment, attracting new transit riders, and also increase the value of the properties in close proximity to the station.

As of this writing, the MTA has not yet determined the exact placement of the transit station other than that it will be in close proximity to the Eastern Avenue overpass. The Plan recommends that the station, which needs to consist only of a boarding platform and shelters, be located directly north of the Eastern Avenue underpass. The boarding area would be integrated into a new “Transit Plaza” framed by new buildings to the North and East, with the plaza extending to Haven Street on the West and Eastern Avenue on the South. The plaza would also extend across the new railroad overpass to the south side of Eastern Avenue where it would extend eastward along the south side of Eastern Avenue. A new pedestrian staircase and elevator buildings would be constructed over the active freight railroad tracks in front of a restored Crown, Cork, and Seal building facade replacing its 1930’s addition. This “L” shaped Transit Plaza would be “fronted” by new mixed-use buildings with ground floor cafes, galleries, and other active uses.

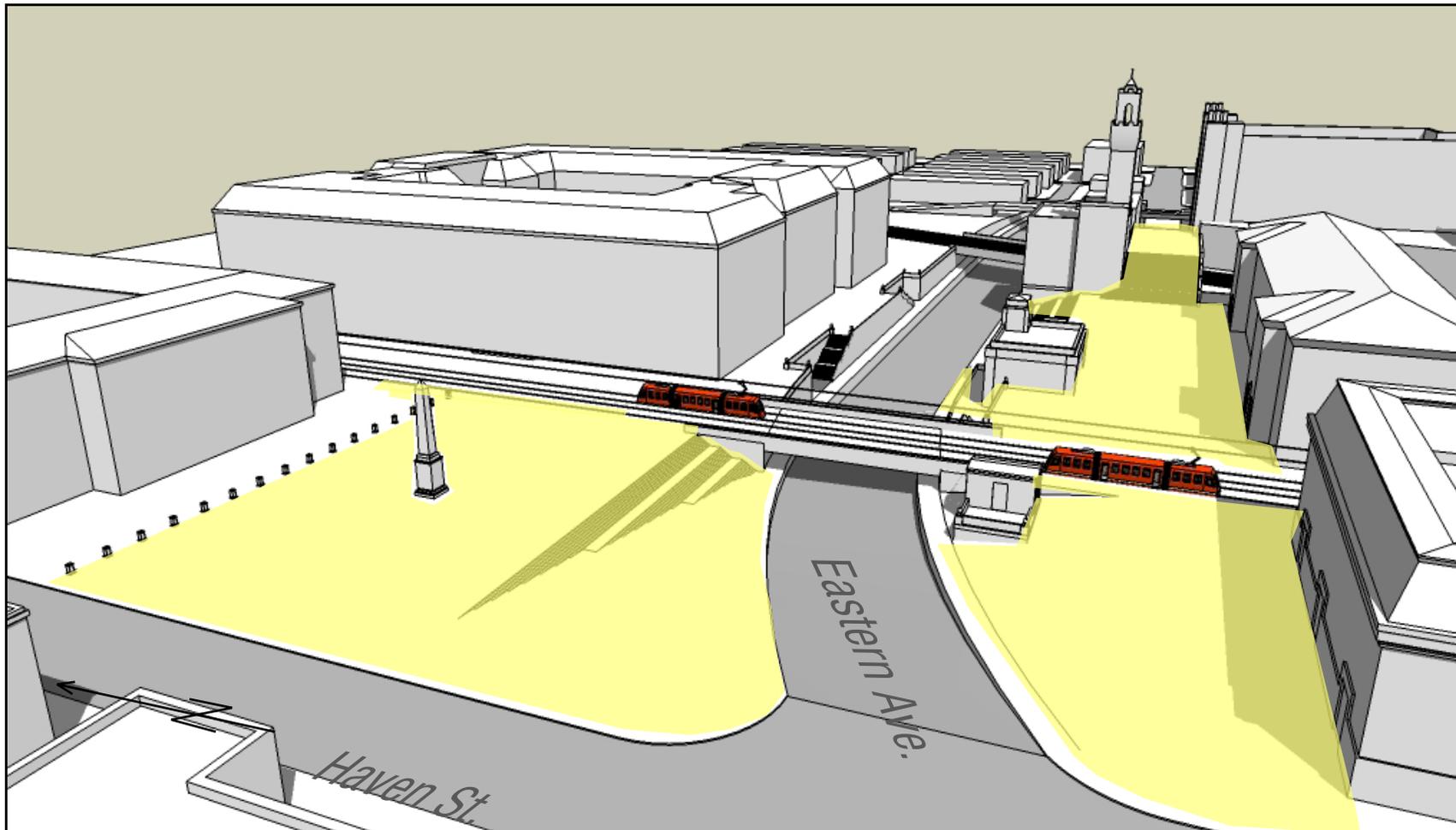


The areas in orange show the potential industrial redevelopment parcels in the proposed station area.



Section of the Illustrative Plan showing detail of the station area and Transit Plaza . The blue rectangles show the recommended boarding location.

The Transit Plaza as a Great Public Space



The Transit Plaza will transform what has been a barrier and no man's land into a unifying feature. The plaza will knit together the Highlandtown and Greektown areas, while creating a high quality connection between the north and south sides of Eastern Avenue. The plaza, framed by new buildings with active uses on the plaza, combined with the constant activity of the Red Line, has the potential to create one of the most exciting and desirable new destinations in the Baltimore region. New housing and office space would be developed in the buildings around the plaza and beyond, helping to further activate the street and support local commercial establishments.

The Transit Plaza as a Great Public Space

The Transit Plaza will become a new focal point for the Highlandtown-Greektown area and help reinforce the existing pattern of commercial businesses and residential areas. It will be an ideal location for cultural and community events such as farmers markets, outdoor performances, holiday celebrations, and social gatherings of all types.

The renderings below depict two potential scenarios, both with European and Latin American influences, which are both very much in keeping with the history and heritage of East Baltimore residents.



Looking east towards the Transit Plaza with an open air market pavillion to the left and a seasonal farmers market with vendor stall set up. The Red Line boarding area, a seamless part of the plaza, can be sign at right.

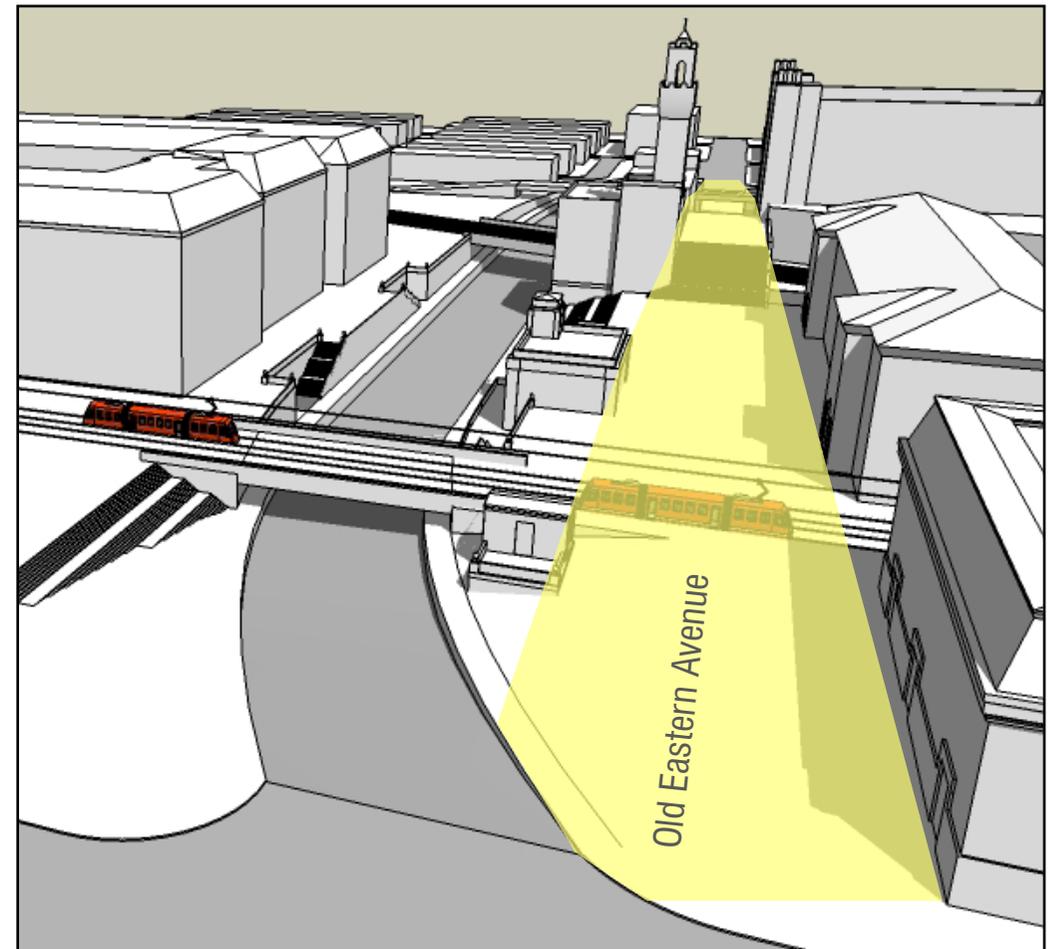
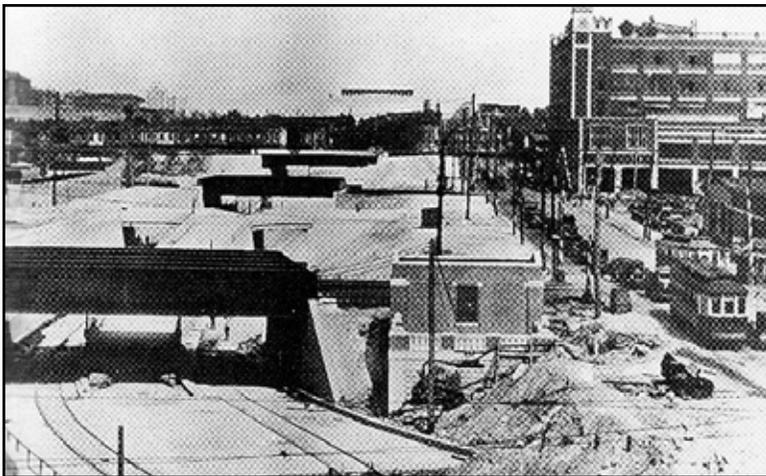


A birds eye view looking east shows the station area and Transit Plaza with new buildings and the restored iconic Crown, Cork, and Seal building.

Re-activating “old” Eastern Avenue as a pedestrian corridor

An important part of the Transit Plaza is the reactivation of the old Eastern Avenue alignment as a new high quality pedestrian connection between Highlandtown and Greektown. The photo below shows the underpass under construction in the late 1920’s with traffic along the old section of Eastern Avenue. After old Eastern Avenue was abandoned in 1930, the Crown Cork and Seal (CCS) plant constructed an addition in the mid 1930’s in the abandoned right of way.

The Transit Plaza concept includes removal of the 1930’s CCS addition and adding a new pedestrian staircase over the freight railroad tracks between Highlandtown and Greektown. This would provide a much more appealing walking environment than the underpass.



Left: construction of the Eastern Avenue underpass with traffic on old Eastern Avenue (image courtesy of Arcadia Press). Right: The reactivated Old Eastern Avenue becomes the southern leg of the Transit Plaza with staircase over the freight railroad. Elevator buildings that mimic the historic pumphouse and the industrial architectural style of the CCS building are also included.



Above: Existing view of Old Eastern Avenue alignment looking east from Highlandtown toward the CCS building. The 1930's addition sits directly on the old roadbed.

Right: Rendering of same view with the Transit Plaza and pedestrian connection with new staircase, elevator building, and architectural features. The Red Line is shown passing over Eastern Avenue through the Transit Plaza.





Above: Existing view from Greektown looking west towards the CCS building. The 1930's CCS addition sits in the foreground.

Right: Rendering of same view with the CCS addition removed and redeveloped with pedestrian staircase and distinctive architectural features. A n elevator building designed to look like the pumphouse on the west side of the railroad tracks sits in the foreground.

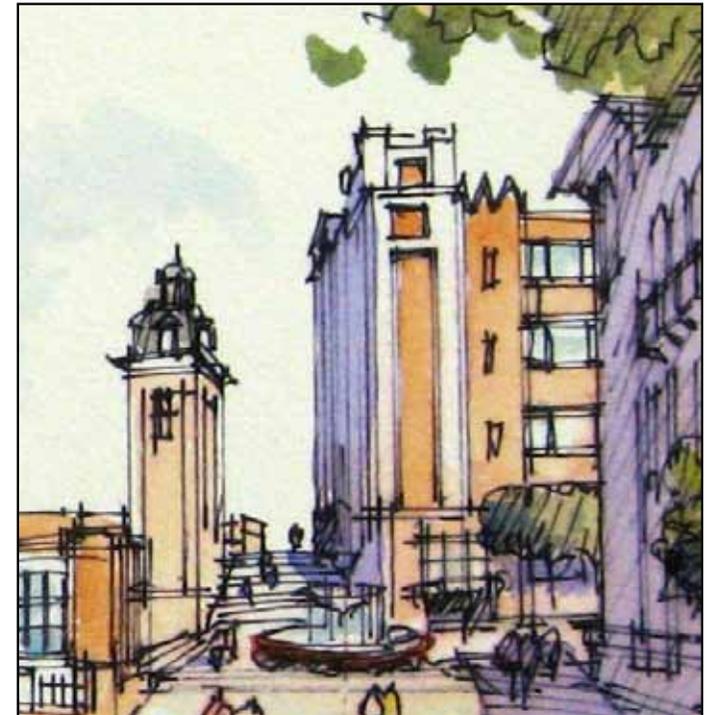
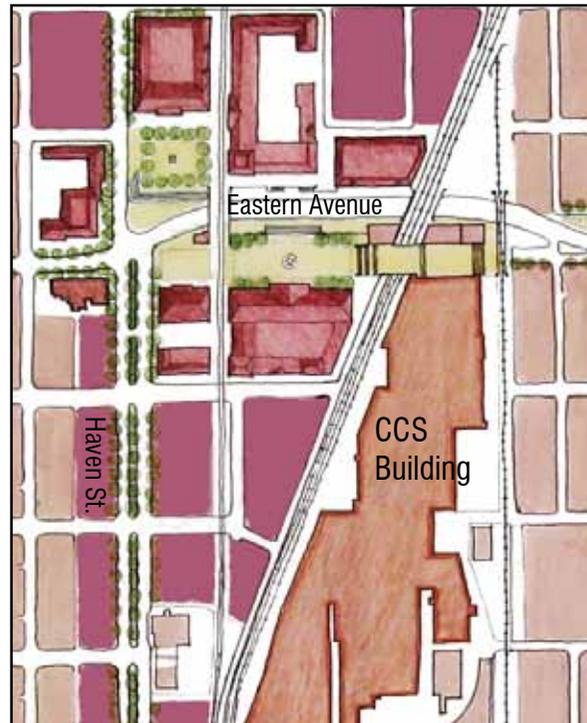


Crown, Cork, and Seal Redevelopment

The Crown Cork, and Seal Building is an iconic symbol of Baltimore’s industrial past. It sits directly between Highlandtown and Greektown along the industrial corridor. A portion of the building is currently being used for artist studios and other inexpensive tenant uses. There is currently no heat in the building.

In conjunction with the development of the Transit Plaza, the CCS building should become an integral part of the transit station area, with its stately original facade restored and integrated into the pedestrian connection across the freight railroad tracks. New plaza level uses such as galleries, expanded artist and artisan space, eating and drinking establishments, and entertainment venues could all be part of its redevelopment and adaptive reuse. Upper floors of the CCS building could be converted into artists lofts and affordable housing that would further activate the station area and provide a built in market for expanded commercial activity in the area.

The environs around CCS and the Transit Plaza could become the East Baltimore hub of Baltimore’s burgeoning art scene. It could be seen as a complimentary node to the Station North Arts district, conveniently connected by regional transit, but with its own distinct vibe and scene.



Above left: CCS Building location in Illustrative Plan.

Abvoe: Restored CCS Building.

Left: Woodberry Kitchen at Clipper Mill, a recent example of a popular new eating establishment in a historic industrial building near the Light Rail line.





A panoramic view looking east toward the station area and Transit Plaza.

2. Revitalize Eastern Avenue “Main Street”

Before suburban shopping centers became ubiquitous, Eastern Avenue was East Baltimore’s traditional “Main Street”. While many local residents still shop there, Eastern Avenue is not the major commercial center it once was. Today, local shops are achieving only 20% to 40% of average sales per square foot. The potential does exist, however, to significantly improve the viability and attractiveness of this commercial district.

When the Red Line is built, the Highlandtown-Greektown area will increasingly become an attractive place for educated professionals seeking a transit-oriented urban lifestyle. Good transit access, walkability, and less dependence on cars are becoming an essential part of this new urban way of life. The trend in East Baltimore has been towards urban professionals bring increased buying power. This is expected to continue and will likely be the primary driver of goods and services along Eastern Avenue.

However, the Highlandtown-Greektown area has faced persistent challenges that have likely curtailed demand for new residents that could improve the health of Eastern Avenue. These challenges include safety and security, aesthetics, and a business regulatory environment that has not been as conducive to new business development as it could be.

The development of the Transit Plaza and surrounding properties itself as proposed in this Plan would be a



tremendous catalyst in improving the attractiveness and vitality of the Eastern Avenue commercial corridor. However, the following strategies should be pursued in advance of that which will create synergy between the station area and the Eastern Avenue corridor in Highlandtown and Greektown:

Establish a business corridor strategy

Existing organizations and institutions including the two local CDC’s, the Main Street Program, and BDC, should work together to implement a number of changes and improvements that promote a healthier business climate. This can include but is not limited to:

- **Target new retail based on recent market study.** A market study provided by the Department of Planning

offers a retail opportunity gap analysis. This analysis can be used by the district to target appropriate and supportable new retail uses that will provide a complimentary mix of merchandise and services. In reviewing this report it is important to recognize that surpluses of sales may indicate areas of competence that residents from other areas travel here to spend money, particularly on the categories of Foodservice, and General Merchandise.

- **Focus retail concentration and guide formats.** New retail facilities should be kept to a minimum of “filling in missing teeth” along the corridor, since there is already too much space for the existing market. A typical strategy for corridors facing such difficulties is to try and concentrate the most viable retailers together to create a smaller node of successful businesses, and then infill corridor vacancy as the market develops.

This means helping key retailers relocate to the best sites to establish a thriving business community, which will then work to attract other retail uses.

The location of the study area near a major highway interchange may make it an attractive site for more regionally serving, auto oriented retail uses. If these uses are to be accommodated in this area, great care must be taken in the siting and design of such facilities. Most importantly, the street frontage along Eastern Avenue is one of the corridor's competitive assets, allowing a "two-sided" main street configuration. This continuous frontage should not be broken, and the existing parking lots with frontage on Eastern should be gradually filled in with buildings that reconnect the human scale fabric on either side. This is important because gaps and "missing teeth" in a mainstreet can act like black holes, separating the otherwise proximal uses on either side making each side stand alone as separate destinations rather than achieving synergy and market draw as one place. Parking lots should be accessed from side streets to avoid this disruption. Incidentally, blank walls without fenestration, common to auto oriented structures, act in the same way and should not be allowed on the commercial street, but should be located on side streets with easy access and visibility from the freeway.

Enhanced streetscape program

While Greektown has recently implemented new streetscape improvements including textured crosswalks, Highlandtown is long overdue for a streetscape "makeover". In anticipation of the Red Line, a streetscape improvement program should be initiated as soon as possible. The streetscape improvements should focus on creating a more attractive, safe, pedestrian-friendly public realm along Eastern Avenue leading to and from the future station area. This would entail repairing broken sidewalks, installing new pedestrian crosswalks, new street trees, street furniture, and pedestrian level lighting. It could also include additional improvements such as landscaping and hardscaping, hanging baskets, and special architectural or artistic markers and signage that "brand" the area as a transit-oriented neighborhood.

Expanded Public Art Program

Highlandtown is already officially recognized as an Arts District, and this concept can be reinforced by increased use of public art along Eastern Avenue, and eventually at the Transit Plaza and Red Line station area. This could set the tone of the neighborhood as an eclectic destination. The CCS Building could house a public art incubator and other artisan facilities such as custom iron works and glazier shops.

Create a more business-friendly climate

The following policy changes could help foster an improved business climate along the corridor:

- **Eliminate the "Minor Privilege" sign tax.** Merchants are currently taxed for any "right of way incursion" that include signs, lights, awnings and anything attached to the building. This is an impediment to restoring building facades with elements that enhance the pedestrian environment (and thus retail sales.) If this policy is not revoked, the proceeds should be allocated to public infrastructure improvements and local business support along the corridor.
- **Shift the benefits district tax from business owners to property owners.** There may be a disconnect between the sources and beneficiaries of this tax since it is levied on the businesses rather than the property owners, but seems largely oriented to improving property values. It may be appropriate to reallocate the tax to the land owners, who benefit from property improvements and higher rents.
- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund streetscape and facade improvements.** Introduction of TIF for the station area could generate significant revenue for public infrastructure improvements and local business

support along the corridor.

- Re-zoning to support the commercial corridor and TOD. A comprehensive overhaul of the city zoning code is currently underway. Changes to zoning that enhance the commercial corridor along Eastern Avenue (and several blocks of Highland Avenue where it intersects Eastern) should occur that encourage concentration of retail activity along Eastern Avenue, particularly around the proposed Red Line Station location.

Such changes could include the following:

- Form-based regulations which reinforce the pedestrian oriented character along Eastern and Highland and around the Red Line station area.

A form based code or zoning category around the station area, which would be a replacement to the current zoning, is strongly recommended. Creating an overlay zone that merely *allows* developers to do transit oriented development has rarely been effective when applied elsewhere. New regulations must *require* new development to adhere to appropriate TOD design principles within the 10-15 minute “walk shed” (the area within a reasonable walking radius) around the proposed station in order to achieve desired outcomes. This would ensure that only appropriate and compatible building typologies and urban design occur in the area. The City has recently developed a range of transit oriented development (TOD) place types, and calibrating these for Highlandtown-Greektown could form the basis of the new zoning regulations for the station area.

- Restriction of retail uses off of Eastern Avenue.

While many corner stores were once the norm in Baltimore, they have become less of a viable retail model in today’s market. Zoning changes that restrict new retail or entertainment establishments from locating in corner buildings off of Eastern Avenue could help concentrate retail and entertainment uses along Eastern where they can be most effective.

- Restriction of ground floor uses along Eastern Avenue to retail.

Ground floor uses other than retail establishments that generate foot traffic can be detrimental to a retail district. Limiting street level uses to retail and dining while encouraging upper floor uses for offices, studios, and residential can also help focus revitalization efforts along the corridor.

Strengthen facade improvement program

The Eastern Avenue commercial corridor, like many main streets around the U.S. have been neglected over the last forty years. Disinvestment and alterations that covered up historic facade details in futile attempts to compete with the “modern” suburban shopping centers, have left Eastern Avenue in major need of a makeover. There is much architectural detail waiting to be uncovered and restored, which could dramatically improve the appearance of the area. Local facade improvement programs have been modest in scope and have not made sufficient impact on the appearance of the Eastern Avenue corridor to date. A significant increase in funding is needed in order to induce wider participation. A key strategy for significantly increasing funding could be the establishment of a TIF district to fund facade and streetscape improvements within the localized area.

Existing



Proposed



Additional renderings which show how existing facades and streetscapes can be dramatically improved. Doing so will attract new residents, shoppers, transit patrons, as well as increase pressure for additional reinvestment.

Existing



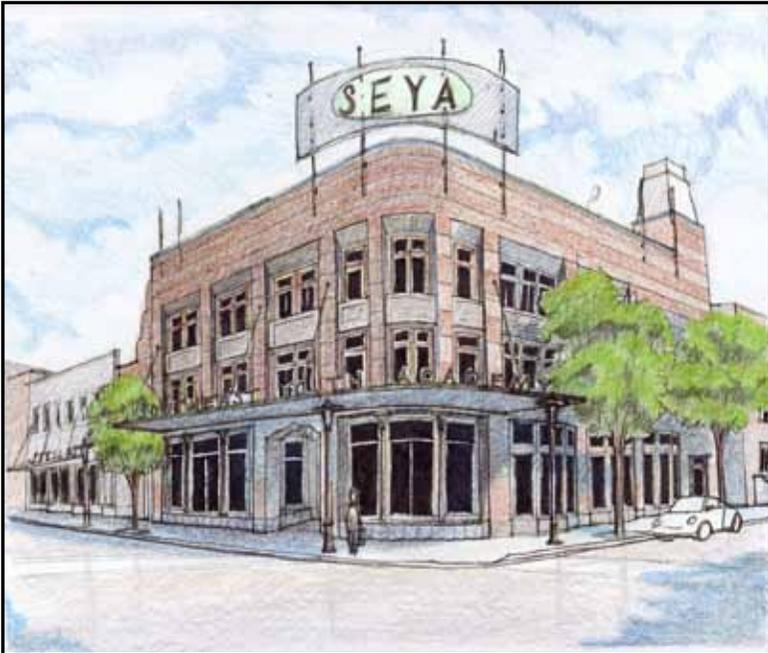
Proposed



Existing



Proposed



3. Maximize opportunities for new residential and other infill development

There is an important need to increase the number of households in the Highlandtown-Greektown area. The population of this area has been steadily declining for decades, and this has also contributed to the decline of the retail district. Transit stations generally do not by themselves attract or support retail, but are attractive to the professional workforce as an amenity. It is the infill of these households around new transit stations that can drive neighborhood revitalization.

To better support the existing neighborhood retail, an additional 2000 new households within walking distance of the station and retail corridor are needed to adequately support and stabilize existing retail businesses along Eastern and Highland Avenues. This is based on an analysis of the existing retail market and household spending in the market trade area. Another 1800 to 2000 households beyond that would be needed to fill in vacancies along Eastern Avenue plus support a limited amount of new retail services envisioned as part of the station area concept and redevelopment potential along Eastern Avenue.

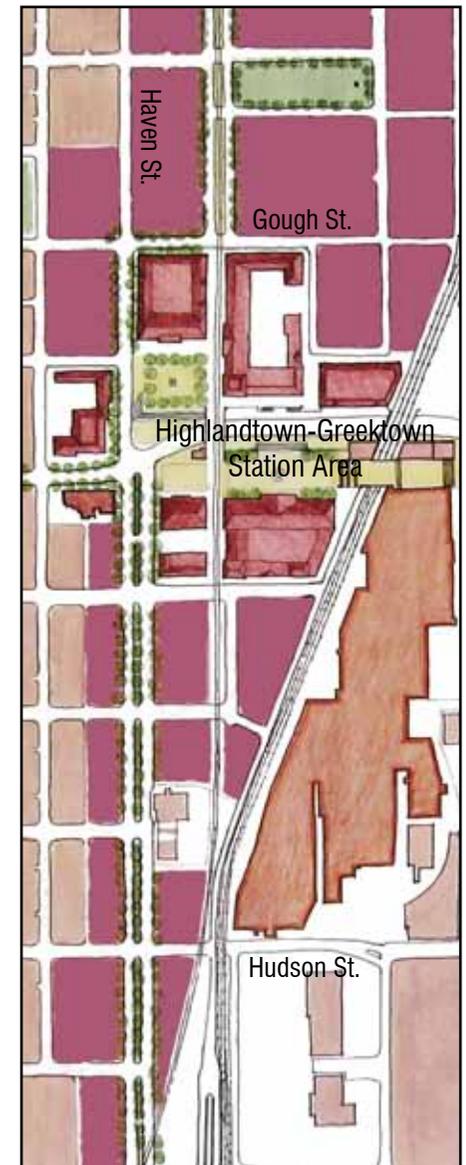
Fortunately, the Highlandtown-Greektown area is ideally suited and located for new multi-family residential because of the proximity to major destinations and urban amenities including Hopkins-Bayview, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Canton Crossing,



downtown Baltimore, Patterson Park, the waterfront areas, access to I-95/I-895, and eventually excellent transit access to the Red Line and a future Bayview MARC station. Concentrating new housing within close proximity to rail stations will maximize the effectiveness of transit investments and help reduce dependence on driving. This will help lower Baltimore’s carbon footprint and achieve sustainability goals.

The design and program of new uses that evolved from the charrette create significant opportunities for revitalizing the neighborhood and enabling infill development. The development of the station area as a Transit Plaza with new retail and residential uses would create a focal point of activity with hundreds of new households in the immediate vicinity of the station. This assumes a mix of moderate intensity “loft-style” buildings of between 4 and 10 stories, which is an optimal building typology to support walkable, transit-oriented environments such as this, while not overwhelming the low scale character of Baltimore’s urban fabric in this area. Baltimore has what could reasonably be characterized as an oversupply of the two to three story rowhouse dwelling type. New hi-rises are being developed along the waterfront to take advantage of views and extremely high real estate values and seem less appropriate in this area. The immediate station area and industrial parcels adjacent to rowhouse neighborhoods away from

Left: Examples of urban loft-type residential buildings. Right: Section of the plan highlighting areas in purple that would be attractive for redevelopment as urban loft-style residential buildings which could also incorporate compatible employment uses.



the waterfront represents the optimal program for this kind of “medium” scale emerging transit-oriented neighborhood in Baltimore.

The plan, shown at right, identifies areas emanating outward from the station area along several corridors that are best suited for urban redevelopment in conjunction with the Red Line. North of the station, there are numerous underutilized or vacant industrial properties that would be best suited to become transit-oriented uses, particularly housing. There are also additional locations to the south and east of the proposed station that would support significant new housing, which will be discussed in more detail in the next two sections of this report.

The area to the north of the station and east of Haven Street would be redeveloped as a new neighborhood that would include extension of the street grid of small blocks to foster walkability. It would also include a new pocket park along the east edge of Red Line alignment which would travel within the new street network. Some commercial activity could also be compatible in this environment.



Plan detail of new neighborhood traversed by the Red Line.



Top: Illustration looking west through proposed pocket park and Red Line traversing new residential development at comparable or slightly higher density than existings today (25 to 40 dwellings/acre). Above: Identical view with a somewhat higher development intensity (50-75 dwellings/acre) .

4. Enhance the Connection Between Greektown and Hopkins-Bayview

An important destination close to the proposed Highlandtown-Greektown Red Line Station is the Hopkins-Bayview Medical Center. Another Red Line station is planned on the Bayview campus itself, which would be the last stop on the Red Line, and interface with a future MARC commuter rail stop. However, the large Bayview complex is close enough to the proposed Highlandtown-Greektown Red Line station area, with its numerous choices for dining and shopping, that it could be a preferred Red Line stop for many passengers bound for Bayview.

Although Greektown is virtually adjacent to Bayview, some physical characteristics of the area create physical and psychological barriers that make the two destinations feel farther apart than they really are. This poses challenges to creating the kind of walkable environment that is needed to promote pedestrian activity near the Red Line station. The Harbor Tunnel Thruway (I-895) creates an east-west barrier, and Eastern Avenue itself along the Bayview campus frontage creates a north-south barrier.

Despite it being a relatively short walk, few people are inclined to venture from Highlandtown or Greektown across the



I-895 overpass and then walk along Eastern Avenue and into the Bayview entrance drive. Eastern Avenue east of I-895 quickly transitions to a largely automobile-oriented character in this vicinity, with more vehicular lanes and faster moving traffic. The absence of buildings or trees lining the sidewalks along Eastern Avenue and along the Bayview entrance roadways, coupled with fast moving traffic, make it an unappealing route for pedestrians. In order to maximize urban redevelopment potential that enhances the connection between Bayview and the Red Line station area, the automobile-dominant character

of Eastern Avenue east of Ponca Street should be modified to create more of a balance between vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit patrons. The series of recommendations on the following pages provide guidance on achieving that goal.

Redevelopment of MTA Eastern Bus Division and Underutilized Parcels Along Eastern Avenue

Existing conditions. The roadway network and development pattern between Greektown and Bayview is automobile-oriented, dominated by parking lots and fast moving traffic, making it less conducive to pedestrian, biking, or transit activity than it could be. The MTA Eastern Bus Division sits just off of Eastern Avenue to the north. The MTA has been exploring relocating this facility to a different location, which could create a significant redevelopment opportunity.

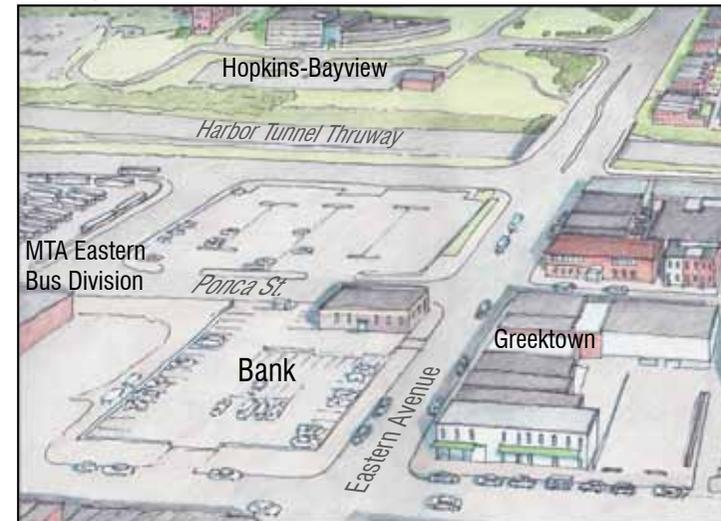
Recommendations. Opportunities should be pursued to redevelop the properties along the north side of Eastern Avenue in Greektown as mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development that could become the “gateway” into Greektown from the east. This would include new buildings oriented to the sidewalk with retail establishments at ground level and residential and/or office uses above.

The scale of this development along Eastern Avenue should not overwhelm the rest of Greektown and should generally be three to five stories. Off-street parking for this new development should be located to the rear of the buildings, out of public view. There should generally be a continuous line of buildings to the corners without interruption, in order to reinforce the pedestrian-friendly character of the neighborhood.

This new development could occur independently of the MTA Eastern Bus Division relocation. If the Bus Division relocation did occur, this larger site would become available for redevelopment. The optimal development program for the MTA site would consist of medium to high density residential development of pedestrian-oriented urban design which would support Eastern Avenue corridor commercial activity and Red Line patronage.

There is interest in developing new retail uses on this parcel. However most large scale, highway-oriented retail uses introduced on to this site would likely compete against the existing Eastern Avenue commercial corridor and could harm revitalization efforts.

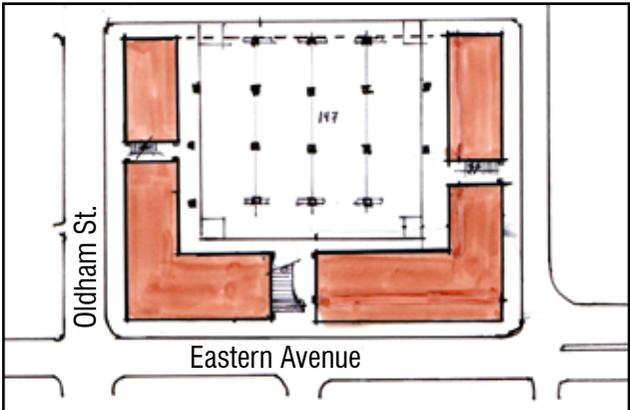
Existing



Proposed



Redevelopment of MTA Eastern Bus Division and Underutilized Parcels Along Eastern Avenue



Plan view - street level commercial & live/work



Plan view - 2nd level residential with private court



Section views across Eastern Ave. and Oldham St.

The rendering above illustrates the character of new mixed use buildings along the north side of Eastern Avenue, drawn with a Mediterranean architectural feel to reinforce Greektown’s cultural identity. Discussions with stakeholders during the charrette suggest strong market potential for new multi-family housing and medical office space because of its proximity to Hopkins-Bayview. The drawing at right show how this development scenario along the frontage of Eastern Avenue could be designed in a way that achieves transit-oriented development goals and helps “close the distance” between Greektown and the Hopkins-Bayview campus.

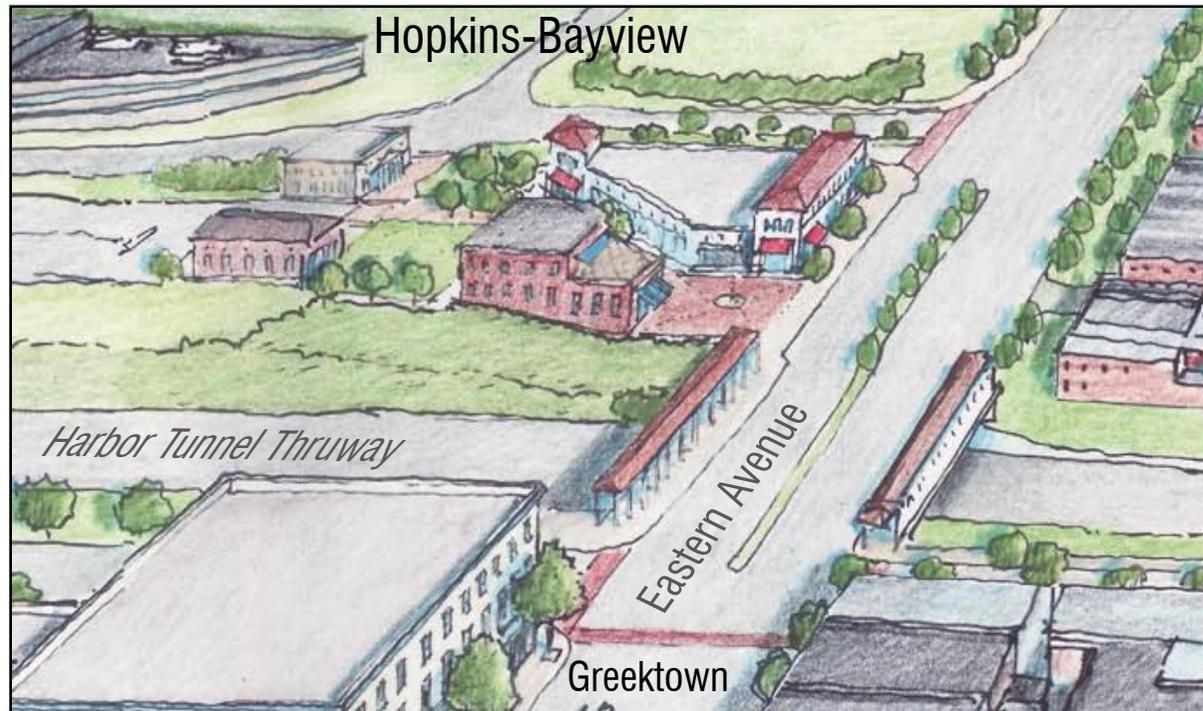
Develop a “Pedestrian-Friendly” Connection and Gateway to Hopkins-Bayview

Existing conditions. Currently, the frontage along Bayview along Eastern Avenue is suburban in character and automobile-dominated. While there has been a well intentioned agreement in place between Hopkins-Bayview and the Greektown community to maintain “open space” along Eastern Avenue and set the medical center buildings back from the street, this has created open space that feels unusable and unwelcoming to pedestrians. It also reinforces a disconnection between Bayview and the surrounding communities.

Recommendations. If the Greektown community embraced the concept of creating a high quality pedestrian-friendly connection to Bayview, this could be accomplished by introducing several smaller scale buildings at the southwest corner of the Bayview campus, specifically designed to create a walkable environment. The rendering at right illustrates how a few appropriately placed smaller scale buildings with retail and/or dining on the ground floor, plus small plazas and pocket parks could create an inviting pedestrian environment. Doing so could actually enhance the existing open space and make it more appealing and usable. Also shown in the rendering are covered walkways across the I-95 overpass that could provide shelter to pedestrians in inclement weather.



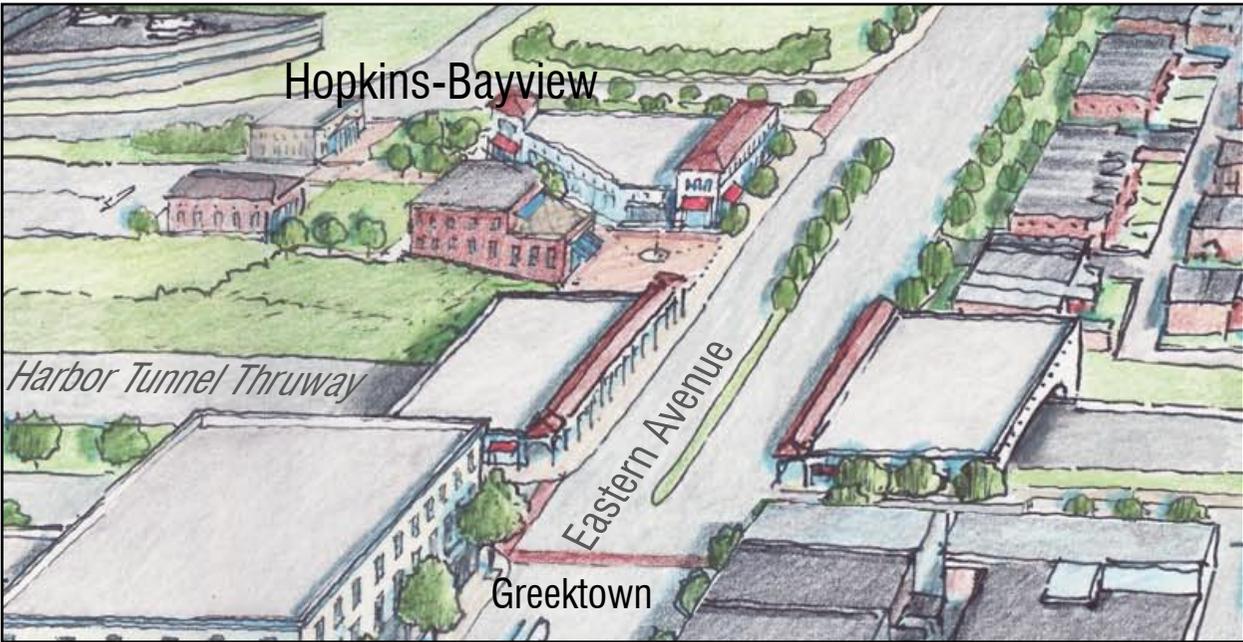
Existing



Proposed

A bold, additional step towards establishing a high quality pedestrian environment could include development of new retail shops along the sides of the overpass over I-895, as added in the rendering below.

This could have a dramatic effect by reunifying the neighborhood that had been divided by the highway. This innovative, award-winning technique has been successfully accomplished in Columbus, Ohio over the existing I-670 highway which had been a barrier between the Short North neighborhood and downtown Columbus, as shown in the photos at right.



5. Connect to the Waterfront

Although Highlandtown-Greektown are only a few blocks away from the revitalized Canton area, it feels like a world away. Much of East Baltimore has an “east-west” orientation with very few major streets or corridors with a north-south orientation.

Despite their close proximity, Highlandtown and Greektown have little connection to the revitalized waterfront. Both areas could greatly benefit from an improved connection in terms of attracting new businesses and residents.

Transit Boulevard concept

The preferred Red Line route under study will join Boston Street as it leaves Fells Point and then make a dramatic turn northward at Canton Crossing towards Highlandtown-Greektown. This creates an opportunity to use the Red Line to “extend the energy” of the Canton waterfront directly up to Highlandtown-Greektown by establishing an important new corridor via a new “Transit Boulevard”. The Red Line travel time between Canton Crossing stop and the Highlandtown-Greektown stop will be only 4 minutes.

The Transit Boulevard would create a new multi-modal street that takes advantage of the abandoned railroad right of way through a former industrial site between Boston and O’Donnell Streets, and connects to Haven Street. Haven street would be upgraded to become part of the



boulevard. The Red Line would continue from its planned alignment on Boston Street down the center of the new curved section of boulevard and continue along the center of Haven Street before shifting over to the abandoned Norfolk-Southern right of way as it approaches the station.

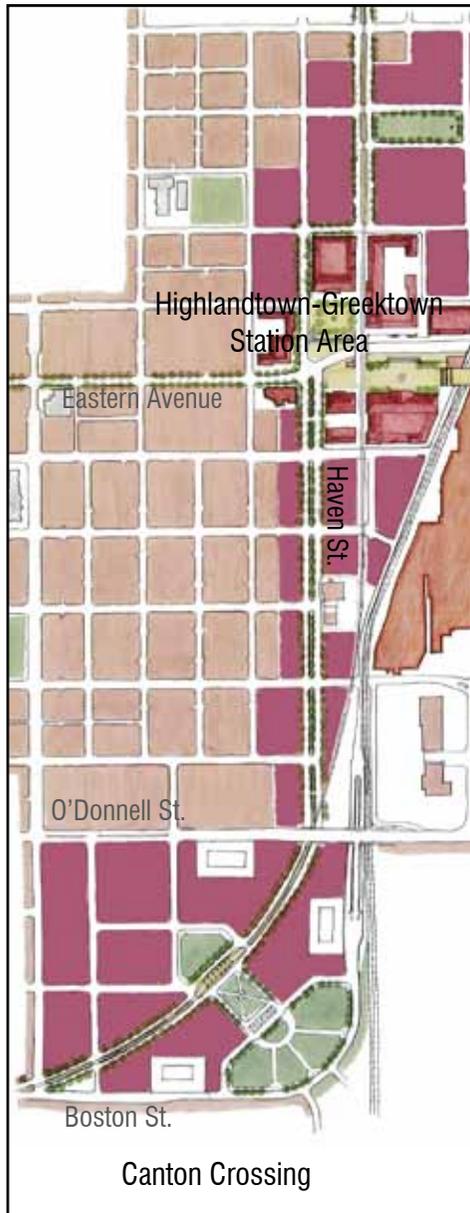
The Transit Boulevard would maximize the development potential of the former industrial site and facilitate the



assembly and redevelopment of numerous industrial properties along Haven Street as well as the rebuilding of Haven Street itself. The result would be the transformation of this corridor into a premier new “address” in East Baltimore along the Transit Boulevard lined with new residential development and some employment activity.

The concept is flexible, in that if routing the Red Line on Haven Street should prove to be infeasible, the Transit Boulevard could still be developed through the former industrial site and then shifted on to the railroad right of way immediately north of O’Donnell Street. Haven Street could still be redeveloped as a prominent new boulevard, although having the Red Line behind buildings would diminish its visibility as part of the urban landscape.

The benefit of new tax base from developing underutilized land in this area could be substantial. When marginal land is put into more productive use there is a large tax benefit to the city. In this



case, transforming underutilized and vacant land into transit oriented development could account for \$40 million annually in new tax revenues when build-out is complete.

Net tax revenues from redevelopment along the six block stretch along Haven Street between Eastern Avenue and O'Donnell Street alone would total \$4.3 million annually when completed. When compared to the estimated right of way tax value of \$5.1 million (generating only \$90,000 currently), this opportunity looks like an efficient public investment, and might reasonably be financed through a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district.

A TIF district for properties along the proposed transit boulevard and station site could capture the long term change in property value from the assessor's estimate of \$17 million to \$151 million when redevelopment is complete. This would be the archetypal use of a TIF district to fund public improvements that have the potential to revitalize a neighborhood. Bonding on the future tax revenues of the district to generate capital at the start of the project has the draw back that the new tax revenues are already committed, and the City will not be able to include them in the general fund. Because of this, other funding mechanisms may be more advantageous if available. As of the drafting of this report, we see that there may be new opportunities for federal money that would obviate the need for a TIF to pay for the road, rail and station improvements. These are the opportunities unlocked by targeting new public infrastructure that leverage transit investments and changing the development regulations in the area to allow new uses according to the station area plan.

The section of the plan shown at left shows the Transit Boulevard from Boston Street in the south, then turning north along Haven Street. As it approaches the station area, the Red Line leaves Haven Street to join the former NS railroad right of way into the Transit Plaza. North of the station, the Transit Boulevard continues along a new street through the new neighborhood created on former industrial properties.



The aerial image shown above, right of the former industrial site is owned by Exxon Corporation and is heavily contaminated. Development potential is constrained by the contamination, however, the plan shows a substantial portion of that site as a new park, one that could include a dog park. The image below shows how development parcels would be created and maximized by the routing of the transit boulevard.





This rendering illustrates the Transit Boulevard concept through the former industrial property between Boston and O'Donnell Streets. By integrating the Red Line into the urban fabric and developing new residential uses along the boulevard, along with new parks, new urban amenities are created that add value to the neighborhood and the investment in transit.

Resolving local transportation issues

Developing a plan to revitalize and redevelop an older, established urban district always poses challenges. During the charrette, the team became keenly aware of two transportation issues that affect the ability to create the Transit Boulevard and redevelop the former industrial property north of Canton Crossing as envisioned on the previous pages. These issues include:

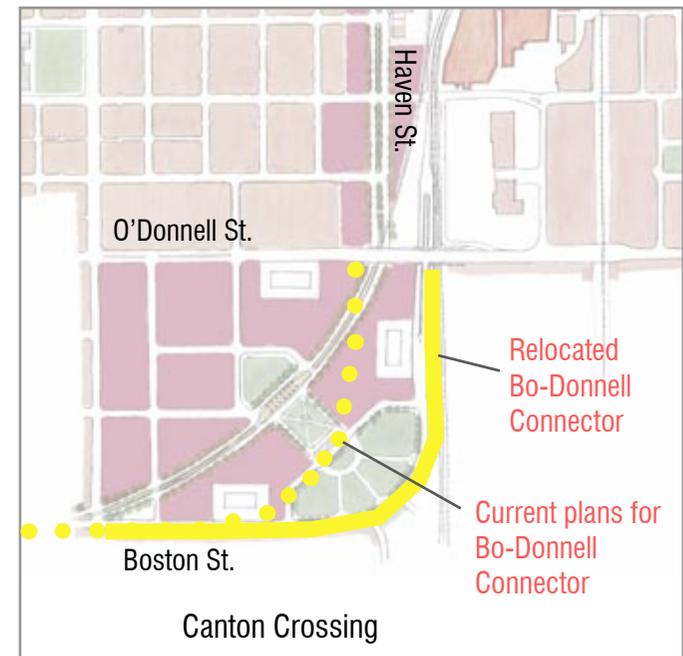
- **The planned Boston-O'Donnell Street (Bo-Donnell) Connector.** The City of Baltimore is planning to construct a new section of roadway to reduce peak hour commuter delays along Boston Street bound for I-95. The preferred alternative for the roadway, shown below in yellow on the aerial photograph would conflict with the ability to construct the Transit Boulevard as envisioned, as well as severely



limit the development potential created by the Transit Boulevard concept.

- **The need to maintain north-south trucking access between the Port of Baltimore and the Pulaski Industrial Area north of Highlandtown.** Haven Street has become the sole route available for heavy trucks travelling between the Port and the industrial areas to the North. The redevelopment scenario as envisioned here calls for the elimination of Haven Street between Boston and O'Donnell Street, which creates a conflict between the plan and the need to maintain efficient truck access.

To resolve these conflicts, the team developed a solution that addresses both of these issues. To resolve the BoDonnell Connector issue, the team modified the existing preferred design by shifting it several hundred feet to the east and adding an at-grade lanes in the north-south section for trucks. This would provide the connector for commuters as planned by the City, while creating a new truck route alignment. This also locates both commuter and truck traffic to the far edge of the site which enable both the at-grade Transit Boulevard and maximum development potential for the site.

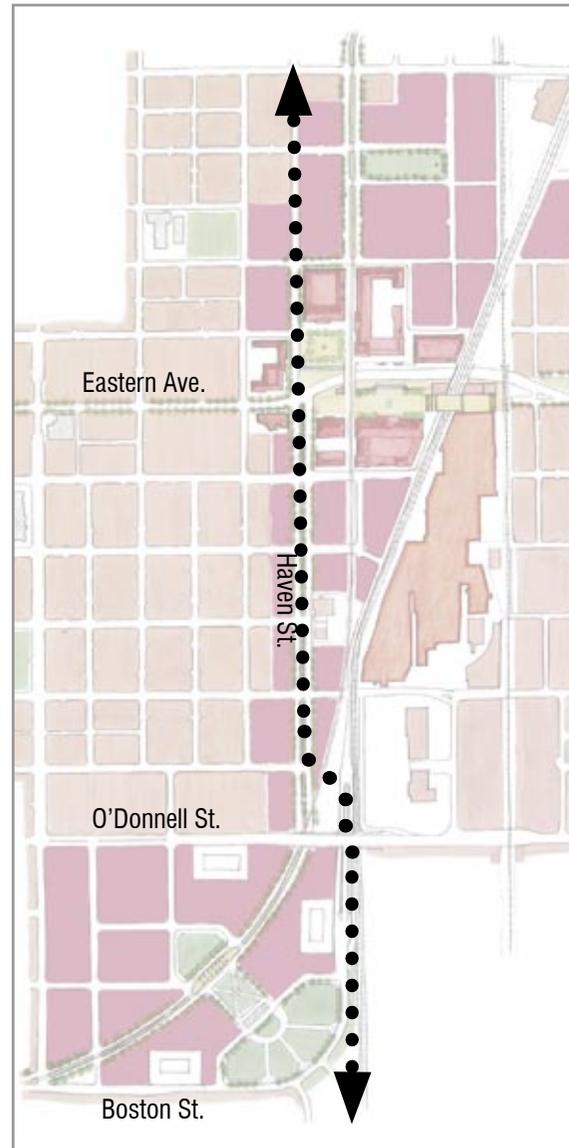


Several options exist for the new truck route including the following:

Option 1: Travel adjacent to the new Bo-Donnell Connector at-grade and under O'Donnell Street and then rejoin existing Haven Street. The redevelopment of Haven Street as a new north-south boulevard (regardless of whether the Red Line is on Haven Street or the NS right-of-way) could be designed in such a way to be compatible with trucks. This might include more of a light industrial loft district character with live-work units at street level for artisans and other light commercial uses and housing above.

Option 2: Travel adjacent to the new Bo-Donnell Connector at-grade and under O'Donnell Street and then along a new section of roadway adjacent and parallel to the active CSX railroad tracks. This would reduce the pressure on Haven Street as the sole truck route and create a more desirable condition for Highlandtown, particularly in the station area. It also creates an additional truck route, and having alternate routes for trucks provides a more flexible solution for the health of Baltimore's industrial base.

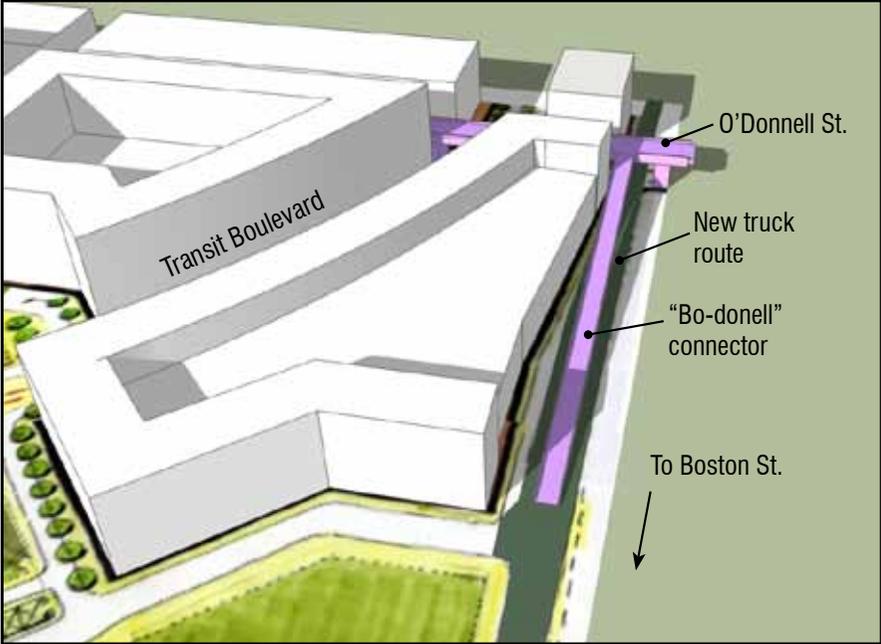
The Maryland Department of Transportation should also study other under-utilized north-south transportation infrastructure in this area for additional truck routes. With some design modifications, the Harbor Tunnel Thruway right of way could possibly be utilized to accommodate additional truck movements.



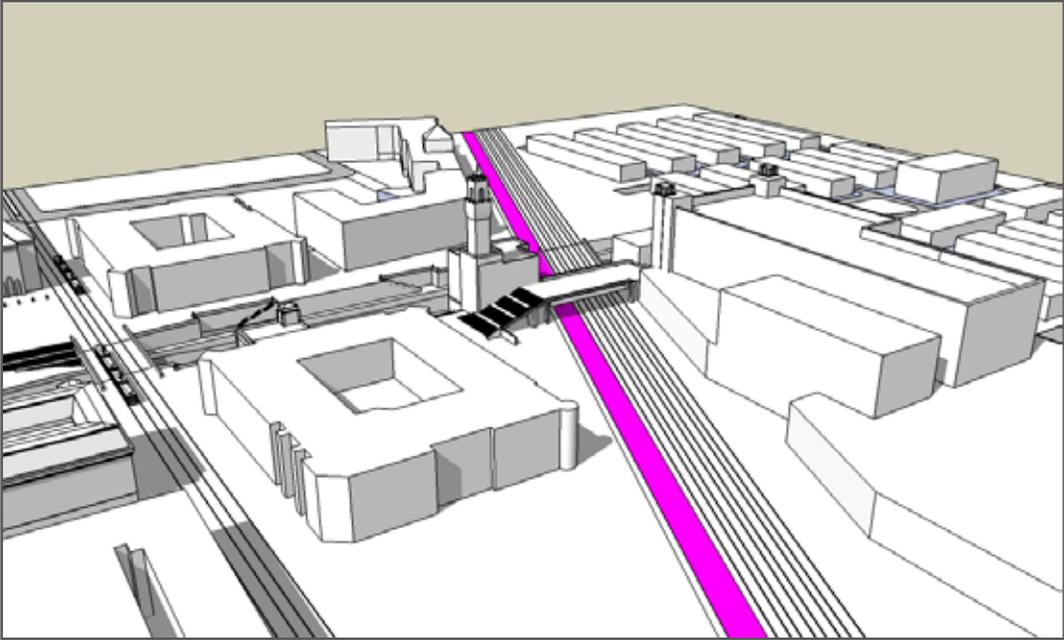
OPTION 1



OPTION 2



The illustration above shows how for either Option 1 or 2, trucks would stay at grade and travel under O'Donnell Street, while commuter traffic from Boston Street would use the ramp (shown in purple) to reach O'Donnell Street.



This illustration shows how the new truck route (shown in purple) would operate in Option 2, paralleling the CSX tracks. Here, it is shown in the vicinity of the station area as it goes under the proposed pedestrian staircase and over the Eastern Avenue underpass.

6. Enhance Multi-modal Travel Options

In order for the Highlandtown-Greektown to fully realize its potential as “transit-oriented” Red Line neighborhood, convenient and attractive mobility options must exist for getting to and from the station other than having to rely on private automobiles. The following recommendations provide guidance on how to achieve these characteristics:

“Complete Streets”

Complete Streets is a concept that refers to creating environments that are as welcoming to pedestrians and bicyclists as they are to drivers. Streets in East Baltimore tend to be wide, which encourages traffic to go fast. This creates an environment which discourages pedestrian and bicycle activity. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation has been gradually adopting a more progressive approach to multi-modal transportation. This is encouraging to see, and more should be done to focus efforts around existing and future transit facilities to ensure that more of a balance is created between the needs of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The Highlandtown-Greektown Red Line station area could become a model for “complete streets” transformation. This could include adding bike lanes, improved pedestrian crosswalks, small roundabouts at intersections to calm traffic, as well as streetscaping that includes improved sidewalks, street trees, and street furniture. It could also include additional “greening” of streets to reduce the width of travel ways by introducing bio-retention areas to assist with stormwater runoff.



Transit circulators

Prior to the opening of the Red Line, the MTA will carry out a feeder bus study to determine how to restructure local bus routes to best serve the new Red Line stations. The MTA should ensure that local bus services are coordinated to provide frequent and convenient transfers between the Red Line and other “line haul” routes that serve other parts of the City. However, other innovative transit services such as neighborhood shuttle that circulates through the Highlandtown-Greektown area and connects at the Red Line stop should also be explored. This could provide a convenient way to distribute passengers getting on and off the Red Line within and around the neighborhood, particularly for those who cannot walk very far or who are disabled. This service should be structured to coordinate with Red Line service frequencies so that passengers know there will never be a long wait when transferring between modes. This predictability is the key to building successful transit patronage.



Car-sharing

The City of Baltimore is in the process of implementing the first “car-sharing” program in Baltimore. This is a relatively new concept that has taken off in other major cities including Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The idea of car sharing is simple: a pool of cars, available for hourly rental, are located at transit stops and in dense urban neighborhoods. Members join for a nominal annual fee, and cars can be reserved on-line and are accessed by swipe card technology. The Highlandtown-Greektown Red Line station would be an ideal location for a car-sharing location. Having cars available for occasional use to local residents who live within walking distance of the station increase the attractiveness of this location as a high quality transit-oriented neighborhood where owning a car is less necessary because convenient alternatives to car ownership are present.



Next Steps

The following “next steps” are recommended to move the vision toward implementation:

Plan adoption: Present the plan to the Baltimore City Planning Commission for consideration as a formal plan to be adopted. This could begin the process of undertaking the necessary urban renewal plan amendments required for land assembly.

Zoning: The Baltimore City Planning Department should incorporate this plan into the Transform Baltimore process and implement appropriate zoning measures as described herein.

Coordinated land use and transportation design: The MTA, Baltimore City DOT, and Baltimore City Planning Department should reach consensus on a coordinated design for the Transit Plaza area as well as the Transit Boulevard and redevelopment corridor between Boston Street and Eastern Avenue before proceeding further with the BoDonnell Connector or Red Line engineering. Appropriate steps should be taken to plan for acquisition and development of this public infrastructure that will catalyze additional private investment.

Economic and Policy measures to support Eastern Avenue revitalization: The City should establish an ongoing working group and partnership with the two CDCs to further study and implement the recommendations herein.

Sustainability: The City’s Sustainability Task Force should coordinate with the CDC’s to make the Highlandtown-Greektown Station area a model for sustainable transportation and land use. This station area could become a showcase for developing green, sustainable development as well as “green streets”.