U.S. ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR

Framework Goal: Promote redevelopment within the Arts District, and address Route 1 south commercial properties.

DESCRIPTION
U.S. Route 1 has historically been the traditional “main street” for Hyattsville. In the past, it has served as both a retail district and as the symbolic heart of the City. Its economic health remains vital to the identity of Hyattsville. However, over many decades the corridor has transitioned from its historic roots to accommodate more auto-oriented businesses and currently has many vacant and underutilized properties. The existing form is a mix that ranges from traditional main street, mid-century highway, suburban retail, and contemporary urban mixed-use.

This area is approximately 168 acres and is part of the Prince George's County Gateway Arts District and encompasses the eastern portion of the Hyattsville Historic District. Of the three planning areas in the “managed changed” category (see also Prince George’s Plaza Transit District and West Hyattsville), the U.S. Route 1 Corridor has the most historic urban form still intact. In this area, infill and reuse of existing buildings is much more germane to reinvestment than reestablishment of urban form.

In the 2006 Gateway Arts District Sector Plan, the Hyattsville portion of the corridor was designated as the economic center for the larger district that includes several Prince George’s County communities. Findings in that study indicated that the proximity to the University of Maryland and the presence of the County Courthouse and other institutional uses and the assemblages of vacant land all contributed to the area’s ability to function as an economic driver through redevelopment and reinvestment.
U.S. ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR

TRENDS AND ISSUES
This corridor serves as the City’s “main street” area.
The Corridor has a historic role as the City’s central business district and still exhibits the built character of a traditional “main street” environment. As a significant part of the Hyattsville Historic District, the Corridor boasts some of the City’s most notable landmarks and functions as a civic center with the County Services Building and Hyattsville Justice Center. The residual “main street” buildings and urban form offer a unique opportunity in the City to reuse a business district that already exhibits the desirable walkable urban form.

The Gateway Arts District Sector Plan suggests that infill and redevelopment will catalyze reinvestment and reuse of the existing contributing structures in a way that will enrich the whole corridor as part of the Prince George’s County Gateway Arts District. The “main street” function of the corridor is important to preserve through future development efforts. The following trends delve deeper into the specific implications of the function of this corridor.

The Corridor provides opportunity for central community identity and locally-owned business development.
The residual “main street” character is not only a good fit for use as an arts district as described in the Sector Plan, but also serves as a local example of the desired walkable urban form sought after as a key component of the Hyattsville community identity. Business districts, like the U.S. Route 1 Corridor, contribute architectural, cultural, and business identity to the City. As a major gateway to the region and the City, this corridor acts as the “face” of Hyattsville to outsiders, a district that locals and visitors can identify with Hyattsville. The presence of civic and historic resources adds to an identity for the City. Furthermore, locally-owned businesses may find reasonable rents and building sizes compatible with their needs and again add to the local feeling and identity. The corridor’s status as both a locally significant district in close proximity to neighborhoods and as a regional gateway provides unique advantages for business development.

Local businesses like Franklin’s Restaurant and Brewery (top) and historic buildings like the Tesst Building (bottom) represent the main street character. This area’s compatibility with local businesses illustrates how the corridor contributes to identity and presents opportunities for local business and arts development. Franklin’s represents appropriate reuse of a historic structure, while the Tesst Building represents a redevelopment opportunity.

Image Sources: David Whyte. 2010.
Preservation of historic buildings while retrofitting rights-of-ways to accommodate an improved pedestrian environment may present challenges. Creative urban design and redevelopment will be needed for improvements to the built environment.

Traditional settlement patterns often resulted in the central business district of towns and cities being oriented along major travel corridors, leading to the creation of main streets. In Hyattsville, this pattern played out by locating the business and cultural hub around what would become U.S. Route 1. The advantage regional travelers provided to the district was clientele for businesses, and the transportation routes provided local and regional accessibility to the essential business and civic functions of the City. The contemporary challenges are that this traditional travel route has continued to carry increasing volumes of traffic in modern times. To keep pace with the demand on the transportation network, the right-of-way dedicated to automobiles has been widened. This has resulted in areas where traditional building alignments remain, but sidewalks and pedestrian areas have lost ground to the automobile. The streetscaping and urban design will need to be responsive to the balance needed to accommodate the pedestrian and the automobile.

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Design and functionality of public spaces will play a role in the success of the district.

In addition to the access to natural or recreational open spaces available in the City, urban public spaces also strongly contribute to the functionality and livability of a community. The Sector Plan recognizes the importance of public open spaces in the urban environment as part of supporting the arts. Open spaces should be well-integrated with the business and pedestrian environments to function as outdoor extensions of the indoor uses throughout the corridor. The Sector Plan recommends enhancements or upgrades to the County Justice Center Plaza, the parking lot southeast of the intersection of Jefferson Street and U.S. Route 1, and the interface between the City and the stream valley park. The relationship of these public open spaces with the sidewalks and streets will play a vital role in the “street life” and the use of the corridor as an arts and culture events destination. Opportunities for street fairs, markets, festivals, galleries, and exhibits are all made possible by well designed public spaces integrated into the urban form.

The images of the open spaces and plazas associated with the County Justice Center provide good examples of urban open spaces where events and gatherings could be held. Efforts of reinvestment in the corridor should include attempts to include additional open spaces and provide pedestrian integration into the overall district.
Recent redevelopment has improved economic and arts development opportunities; however, additional redevelopment/enhancement is needed to complete the district’s renaissance.

The U.S. Route 1 Corridor is unique in Hyattsville in that unlike other commercial districts, it still retains areas with the traditional urban or “main street” form and industrial sites. However, during the automotive era of the 20th century many of the areas along the corridor were redeveloped with more suburban and automobile oriented development patterns. Older structures were removed to make way for fast-food restaurants, modern gas stations, and other commercial uses that have parking in front of the buildings. The image below shows the portions of the corridor that are contributing and not contributing to the traditional urban form.

Recent redevelopment efforts by EYA in the 5500-5800 block of U.S. Route 1 have made significant strides to rebuild the street wall and reinvigorate the corridor with both business and residential activity. While the new mixed-use development has made significant impacts and improved the outlook for other portions of the corridor, additional redevelopment is still needed before the corridor will reach its full potential. A number of underutilized or vacant parcels and storefronts are still available. Continued cooperation between the City, County, and private partners remains important in the reinvigoration of Hyattsville’s portion of the Gateway Arts District.
Addressing parking issues and creating transit connections to surrounding neighborhoods and Metro Stations is important to the success of the area. U.S. Route 1 is a major vehicular travel corridor in Hyattsville, for Prince George’s County, and the metropolitan area. Traffic is heavily southbound during weekday mornings and northbound during weekday evenings. Despite being served by local bus routes, without convenient access to the Metro, residential and commercial areas along the U.S. Route 1 corridor rely heavily on single-occupant vehicles to connect people with destinations within the area and in the surrounding County and District of Columbia.

Despite not being within convenient walking distance of a Metro Station, planning for multi-modal access and accommodation is important. Anticipating a limited parking supply in the area in the long-term, developing an interconnected system of sidewalks will enable a person to park once and walk between destinations, rather than drive and park multiple times within the area. Successfully implementing measures to support a park once strategy has the potential to reduce local vehicular traffic while at the same time increasing street life and pedestrian traffic. While implementing a park once strategy will help with traffic and parking issues, adequate parking will need to be provided throughout the corridor to support businesses, residential units, and other community facilities and events.

While walking is the most common access mode for Metro Stations in most urban locales throughout the region, bicycle access is increasing in many areas of the region. The implementation of an integrated bicycle sharing program in the District of Columbia and Arlington County is actively increasing the reach of the Metro in these communities. While a five to ten minute walk in most urban environments covers between 1/8 and ½ mile, a five to ten minute bike ride can cover distances up to a mile with ease. With other regional jurisdictions considering bike sharing programs to increase the reach of the Metro and to better connect their communities, Hyattsville should also consider the possibility of a bicycle sharing program.
U.S. ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. Route 1 Corridor will serve as the center of arts and culture in the City of Hyattsville and the economic engine of the Prince George's County Gateway Arts District. It will contribute identity to the City through revitalization of the traditional urban form, architecture, history, culture, art, and civic organizations. The corridor will serve as a local and regional destination, well-integrated into the City’s context with connectivity to other local hubs of activity, transit, and recreation.

U.S. Route 1 Corridor Actions

In order to achieve the vision for the U.S. Route 1 Corridor, the City should partner with the appropriate agencies and groups in the following actions organized by themes. A general set of considerations representing the spirit and intent of these actions are important for the City, community, and invested stakeholders to keep in mind during the implementation of the actions. In pursuit of the vision, stakeholders will:

1. Recognize that change will be the result of public and private partnerships, and that there are several agencies that have responsibility for implementation of the redevelopment and promotion efforts in the corridor. Those players include the Gateway Arts Management Team, The State of Maryland, Prince George County Council, Hyattsville Community Development Corporation (CDC) and the City of Hyattsville.

2. Focus resources on efforts to improve safety, accessibility, and design of public areas, including sidewalks and streets.

3. Recognize the importance of balancing aesthetic improvements with increased occupancy of store fronts and economic development initiatives.

4. Recognize the important role of locally-owned businesses in the revitalization of the corridor.

5. Emphasize the corridor's connections to Metro Stations.

6. Enhance and promote local arts and cultural events.

Theme: Land Use & Community Character

The successful merger of historic urban forms and modern urban pedestrian-friendly environments will be key components of the land use and community character theme in the U.S. Route 1 Corridor. The following actions are recommended to achieve that vision.

1. Prepare comprehensive streetscape and facade improvements for the Route 1 Corridor.

2. Coordinate with the State of Maryland to approve Low-Impact Design (LID) and "green" stormwater management infrastructure for the Route 1 Corridor.

3. Continue to implement the approved Gateway Arts District Sector Plan.

Theme: Infrastructure & Circulation

The publicly controlled infrastructure and circulation systems within the U.S. Route 1 Corridor play a vital role in the functionality and appearance of the area. Much like in the other areas of the community, public improvements can be used as a catalyst for
reinvestment in the private realm. The following actions are recommended to achieve that vision.

1. Develop and implement a streetscape master plan and design guidelines for the U.S. 1 corridor and key streets within the area. Use the master plan and guidelines to focus investment on better accommodating pedestrian safety and mobility while enhancing the aesthetics of the corridor and managing vehicular speeds through a shift in perception of the street as a place for people, instead of vehicles alone.

2. Consolidate and/or relocate utilities underground to maximize available sidewalk space and reduce visual clutter in the corridor.

3. As redevelopment occurs along properties currently developed with suburban forms, ensure that adequate right-of-way is reserved for the implementation of an appropriate streetscape.

4. Where possible, implement pedestrian safety and accommodation improvements through the use of high-visibility crosswalk markings, curb ramps, bulb outs, improved signal equipment and timings, lighting, medians, and landscaping.

5. Evaluate district parking options and develop additional public/shared parking in the south area to create a park once environment. Improve circulator service to connect the U.S. Route 1 District with the two Metro Stations.

6. Consider implementing bike sharing throughout the area to increase the practical reach of Metro Stations and offer people an additional travel opportunity within the area.

7. Create an interconnected system of two-way (unless insufficient space exists, then make one-way) parallel service/circulation streets in redevelopment areas to minimize local circulation pressure on U.S. Route 1.

**Theme: Economic Development**

As a central gateway into the City and region and as an existing urban center, the U.S. Route 1 Corridor offers significant economic development opportunity for the City, and presents challenges that will require economic development initiatives to flourish. The following actions are recommended to achieve redevelopment of the corridor into an arts, culture, and theater destination.

1. Create a capital improvements plan based on the streetscaping plan and identify costs for both public and private partners for the redevelopment of the area.

2. Initiate significant economic development/marketing effort to improve occupancy and reuse of existing buildings and spaces in the corridor.

3. Create a business incentive/reinvestment program to make the area viable for small local businesses.

4. Promote the district and events to be a regular draw for regional activity as an arts and cultural venue.