Downtown Ward 7 Vision Plan:
Creating a pedestrian-friendly business and transit district in
a low income Washington, D.C. neighborhood

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Changing the TOD Cookie Cutter
Rail-Volution, November 6, 2006
Anacostia River concentrates traffic

Benning Rd

East Capitol St.

Minnesota Ave.
• Metro station ¼ mile from Downtown Ward 7
• Anacostia Freeway & Railroad tracks run west of Minnesota Avenue
• Anacostia River west of this area
• Limited bridge crossings to downtown concentrates traffic
Downtown Ward 7 Vision Plan

Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities

Downtown Ward 7 Vision Plan
Minnesota Ave. Metro station
Suburban transit station design
Pedestrian Bridge
Demographic Profile of Downtown Ward 7

- 98% African American
- Median Family Income: $26,800 (62% of DC’s)
- 43% of families have no access to a vehicle

Wide sidewalks and shops on Minnesota Avenue
Transit Ridership

Bus Boardings
(weekday)
• 6,400 boardings at Minn. Ave. Metro station
• 3,100 boardings at Minn. Ave. & Benning Road

Metrorail Boardings
(weekday)
• 3,000 weekday Metrorail boardings at Minnesota Ave. Metro station
Assets

Corner of Minnesota & Benning
Small scale street-oriented businesses
Safeway & East River Park Shopping Center
Boys & Girls Club
Benning Road & Minnesota Avenue intersection
Approach from Benning Road bridge
Pedestrian crashes
Bus shelter & surrounding land uses
Downtown Ward 7: Ripe for Change

**Current Neighborhood Projects**

Several projects are underway in Downtown Ward 7.

1. DC Government Center
2. Metro Bus Bay Upgrades
3. Minnesota Avenue Great Streets Project
4. Benning Road Great Streets Project
5. Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue Great Streets Project
6. Bridge reconstruction over Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue
7. Residential Development and Pedestrian Overpass Improvements
8. Library Renovation
9. Shopping Center Revitalization
Downtown Ward 7: Ripe for Change

Government Center
Emergent real estate market
Parkside
1,500+ units, 750,000 s.f. office space, 30,000 s.f. retail
Creating a Community Vision for Downtown Ward 7

Sponsors:
WRN & Marshall Heights Community Development Organization

Prepared by: Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (ZGF)

Coordinated with:
D.C. Dept. of Transportation &
D.C. Office of Planning

Supported by:
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Downtown Ward 7 Vision Plan
Workshop Preparation

• Business Survey
• Mailing lists
• Flyering intersection & Metro station
Community Workshop Process

- Walk through
- Saturday workshop
- Evening workshops
- Open House
- Presentation of Working Vision
Neighborhood Walk
Workshops
Concerns: Benning Rd bridge, intersection, Metro pedestrian bridge, park paths, vacant sites, parking lots, lack of retail
Opportunities: bridge as gateway, Senator Theater, improve bus stops, make intersection safe & orderly, streetscaping, civic space, links to parks, mixed use development

Summary of Community Members’ Input for Neighborhood Opportunities:

- Bridge as gateway
- Senator Theater
- Improve bus stops
- Make intersection safe & orderly
- Streetscaping
- Civic space
- Links to parks
- Mixed use development

1. Community Gateways
   - Entities at Minnesota Ave and Benning Rd
   - Make bridge attractive

2. Local Destinations
   - Theater frontage reflects historic main street
   - Provide cultural and children’s activities
   - Renovate historic buildings

3. Transit Improvements
   - Near Minnesota Ave and Metro should be improved

4. Improved Streetscape
   - Organize traffic at intersections
   - Improve significant pedestrian walkways
   - Increase presence of intersection

5. Traffic Calming
   - Cam traffic at school and along Minnesota
   - Improve Kiss and Ride area

6. Main-Drainage Systems
   - Minnesota Ave
   - Enhance with flowers, lighting, and furnishings
   - Maintain improvements

7. Stage Showroom, Retail, and Services
   - Increase diversity of shops and services
   - Entertainment
   - Evening uses
   - Redevelop vacant storefronts

8. Housing near transit and center
   - Mixed-use development of center
   - Housing on vacant lots

9. Civic Square
   - Build on cultural facilities
   - Community-based art theme
   - Local public art
   - Plaza near center

10. Parks
    - Near Boys club
    - Kenilworth Park
    - Fort Hanson Park
    - Enhance use of park with historical and cultural markers

11. Bike and Recreational Trails
    - Improve connections to and through neighborhood open space
    - Make links to parks safer
Open House Presentations
Goals for the Working Vision:

The Ward 7 Downtown should be a distinct neighborhood center of exceptional urban character and quality

Strengthen and Enhance Downtown Ward 7:

- Promote a self-sustaining community with activities and services for all generations
- Enhance existing cultural facilities and resources
- Attract and support new cultural facilities and resources
- Enhance existing educational facilities
- Improve the character of Downtown Ward 7 by enhancing the public realm with improved streetscapes and a civic gathering place
- Strengthen the cultural identity of Downtown Ward 7: integrate cultural themes into the design identity of the public realm
- Place priority on development of community-oriented retail and housing
- The architectural character and scale of new buildings should be compatible with existing buildings

Make Transit Convenient

- Improve pedestrian access to transit throughout the neighborhood (sidewalks, bus stops)
- Improve quality of transit facilities (such as the bus bays)
- Ensure quality connections between bus and rail transit

Make it Easy to Walk and Bike

- Establish pedestrian priority in Downtown Ward 7
- Improve pedestrian paths throughout the neighborhood
- Improve bicycle amenities throughout the neighborhood

Make the Community Safe

- Balance access and safety requirements for all forms of transportation
- Maintain the public realm with good lighting, garbage removal, etc.
- Encourage new development to be built with “eyes on the street”
Downtown Ward 7 Framework:
Gateways, Streets and Core

The Framework for Downtown Ward 7 recommends highlighting entries into the neighborhood, establishing special streetscapes for the main streets, and strengthening the Retail Core Area - from Clay Place to the Minnesota Metro Station.

Downtown Ward 7 “Core”
Retail Core Streetscape

Nannie Helen Burroughs Gateway

Mixed-Use Streetscape

Special Bridge Enhancements

Downtown Ward 7 Gateway

Fort Mohan Park

Benning Road Gateway

Mixed-Use Streetscape

East Capital Gateway

Enhanced Pedestrian Intersections
(N.H.B.: Grant)

Primary Pedestrian Intersections (Benning bus entry)

Enhanced Pedestrian Intersections
(Dix, Clay, Blaine, Ames)

Improve Pedestrian Safety at East Capitol Intersection

Minnesota Ave Principles:
The design of intersections and the street should reinforce Minnesota Avenue as the neighborhood core.

- The Minnesota-Benning Intersection should be “right-sized” for an urban neighborhood intersection.
- Implement traffic management techniques along Minnesota Ave to enhance pedestrian safety.
Guiding Community-Oriented Development

Encourage community-oriented development at opportunity sites in the core area.

Focus area for new community-oriented development

Preserve and enhance existing residential neighborhoods

Development Strategies

- Encourage development of additional local retail - shops and restaurants - near the Metro Station
- Investigate infill opportunities on surface parking lots
- Improve sidewalks and consolidate driveways to provide more continuous and safe pedestrian routes

Potential Minnesota Ave Infill (above)

- Encourage infill along Minnesota Avenue to reinforce a quality pedestrian environment

Potential Mixed-Use Development - Housing over Shops - in the Downtown Core (right)

- Consider focusing new housing over shops in the downtown area to create an active 18-hour area. Introduce housing types, such as artist housing, that will enhance the cultural environment.
Enhancing Public Open Space in the Community:

The Regional Open Space System:

Downtown Ward 7 is conveniently located to establish quality connections to the regional open space network.

- Improve access to parkland from community assets
- Connect all parkland and green open space with safe, well-maintained trails
- Provide connections between parkland and public transit

Creating Downtown Civic Space:

1. [Diagram]
2. [Diagram]
3. [Diagram]
Provide active uses at street level of Government Center. Consider opportunities for providing space for community and cultural facilities.

Improve neighborhood’s key intersection with streetscape enhancements, public art and quality, community-oriented development.

Promote infill at Senator Theater site. Investigate opportunities for civic uses.

Potential Civic plaza

Gateway intersection at improved bus plaza and school crossing with local public art

Potential infill quality shops and sit-down restaurants

Gateway with local public art

Potential Park Entry

Boys and Girls Club

Fort Mohan Park

Gateway with local public art

Senning Rd

School
### Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned and Potential Activities</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Related Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish master schedule for neighborhood projects: develop master map, meeting schedule and community kiosk</td>
<td>DCOP, DDOT, DCOPM, ANC</td>
<td>Community-Oriented Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organize development regulations workshop</td>
<td>DCOP, ANC, WRN, Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue storefront revitalization program. Develop strategic plan for Downtown Ward 7 mixed-use development and enhanced retail.</td>
<td>DC-ODMPED, NCRC, ANC, MHCDO, W7ACE, Business and Property Owners</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Identify design guidelines and regulatory tools to direct community-oriented development, such as build-to lines, curb-cut restrictions, building frontage and treatment requirements, appropriate parking strategies</td>
<td>DCOP, ANC, WRN, Community</td>
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<td>Develop transportation recommendations and improvements to enhance pedestrian safety and ensure transit reliability</td>
<td>DDOT, WMATA, ANC, WRN, Community</td>
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<td>Implement Great Streets Program and Streetscape Plans: Minnesota Avenue, Benning Road, Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue</td>
<td>DDOT (lead agency), ANC, DC-OPMPED, WMATA, Business and Property Owners, Community, W7AC</td>
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<td>Implement improvements at Metro Stations</td>
<td>WMATA, DDOT</td>
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<td>Create a Public Realm and Art Plan - Identify civic space opportunities and integrate community-based cultural themes and art</td>
<td>DCOP, DCAH, DCPR, DCPS, Community, W7AC</td>
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<td>Investigate opportunities for integrating public art into District Projects, such as District of Columbia Government Center (DOES and DHS) and the Library</td>
<td>DCOPM, DCAH, W7AC</td>
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<td>Implement Fort Circle Parks Plan and improvements for Fort Mahan Park</td>
<td>NPS, DCPR</td>
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Next Steps

Pedestrian or TOD Overlay
- Pedestrian-oriented shopping district
- Non-auto modes strongly favored
- Street level uses restricted to enliven sidewalk environment
- Shared parking encouraged
- Drive-thrus and other auto-oriented uses prohibited

Siting Specifications

Active building uses should front on Minnesota Avenue. Investigate opportunities for new housing above shops.
Great Streets
DDOT's investment in Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road
Downtown Ward 7 Streetscape Reconstruction - $5.5 Million
Metro’s bus bay redesign
Partners:

Linda Hembry, Marshall Heights Community Development Organization

Otto Condon, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (ZGF)

Karina Ricks, Great Streets Initiative Manager, D.C. Department of Transportation

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