

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Purple Line project is a new 16-mile light rail line that will include 21 stations located throughout Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. While this new public transit project brings exciting opportunities for development in both counties, it also presents great risks for disruption and displacement of current community structures. These risks are especially prominent for presently under-developed areas like the Takoma/Langley Crossroads (TLC) - an area made up of Langley Park in Prince George's County, portions of the city of Takoma Park in Montgomery County, and unincorporated areas of Montgomery County, collectively known as the International Corridor for its diverse immigrant populations. (Figure 1)

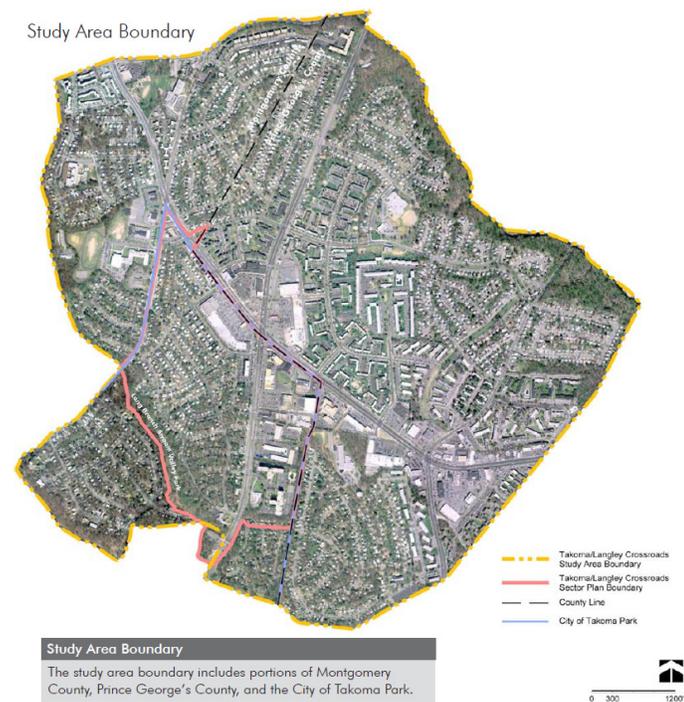


Figure 1: Takoma Langley Crossroads Study Area Boundary

The University of Maryland Urban Studies and Planning Program Studio assessed the demographics, housing, economic development and small business retention, transportation, urban design and zoning, and the policies, plans, and partnerships in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads in order to better

understand the implications of the development of this light rail line for the community. Based on the initial data and analysis, four areas of assessment were selected and a set of action strategies and recommendations were developed to address the concerns identified in the research phase. A summary of the Studio's recommendations follows.

Community Preservation, Open Space, and Zoning

As the Purple Line begins construction along the International Corridor, the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area faces outdated low-density zoning, disconnected community organization and resources, limited and inaccessible open space, and unsafe and uncomfortable pedestrian experiences. Moving forward, this report suggests three key strategies to begin resolving these challenges: taking advantage of the new zoning in Prince George's County, mobilizing community development, and improving open space amenities.



'Symbiosis' - Mural by Krsko Creative Group sponsored by the City of Takoma Park

New transit-oriented zoning measures can be employed during the Purple Line's construction phase as well as alongside any new development to encourage the installation of design and open space amenities for the Takoma/Langley Crossroads community. Furthermore, the establishment of a Crossroads-wide community association could

could greatly assist in informing and organizing residents and stakeholders, as well as addressing community needs. Lastly, using tactical urbanism to improve the pedestrian experience as the Purple Line develops will help to create a community that is designed for and by its residents, business owners, and other stakeholders.



Mapping diagram showcasing strategies to 'Create a Liveable Community'

Multimodal Transportation

Transportation in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area is heavily dominated by automobile through-traffic, with the heart of the community centered on two six-lane arterial streets, New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard. The variety of immigrant communities who make this post-war suburb their home depend primarily on carpooling, public transit, and walking to get around their community and commute to their jobs.

However, pedestrian infrastructure in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads is less than ideal: there is a notable lack of key stoplights and crosswalks along the major corridors, and sidewalks are limited and sometimes in disrepair. This underdeveloped pedestrian infrastructure, combined with considerable high-speed automobile traffic has sadly led to multiple pedestrian fatalities in the last decade. Furthermore, the area lacks bicycle infrastructure and cyclists often share the narrow sidewalks with pedestrians. (Figure 2)

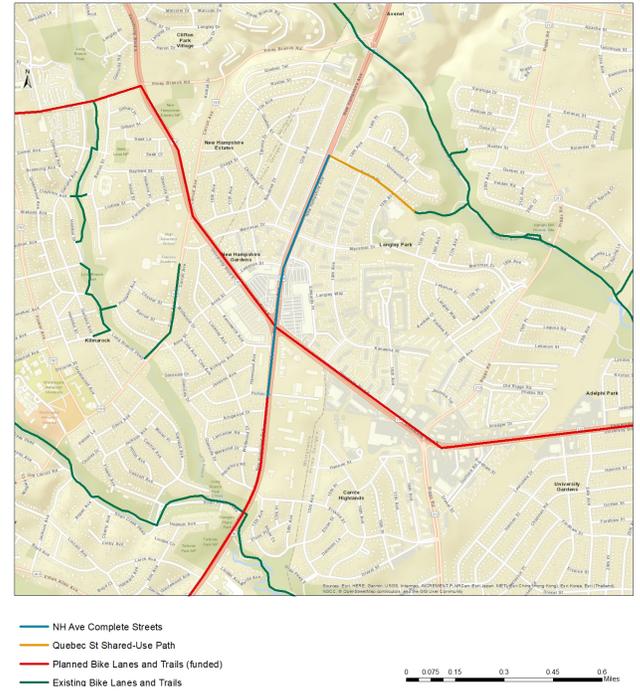


Figure 2: Recommended, Planned, and Existing Bicycle/Pedestrian Infrastructure

The impending construction of the Purple Line presents an opportunity to transform the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area into a transit-oriented, walkable, and bikeable community. New and improved transportation infrastructure can benefit the residents of the community, rather than focusing on the needs of automobile through-traffic.

Informed by a comprehensive assessment of current transportation conditions in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads, the recommendations presented here center upon bus timing integration and multimodal transit, infrastructure for pedestrian safety and walkability, a Complete Streets retrofit for New Hampshire Avenue (Figure 3), and connecting the disparate pieces of the extant bicycle and pedestrian network.

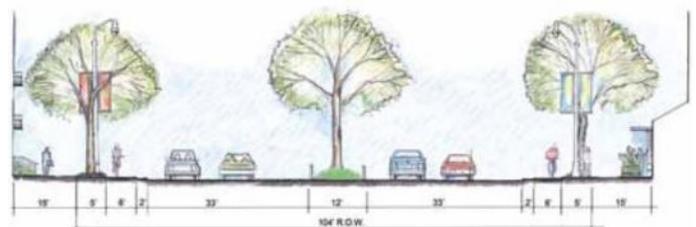


Figure 3: New Hampshire Ave Complete Streets (from 2009 Prince George's County TLC Sector Plan)

Housing

Housing in Takoma/Langley Crossroads is relatively affordable compared to the surrounding regions of Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties. Nevertheless, some community residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs and are therefore considered to be cost-burdened. Additionally, many housing units are overcrowded (with an average of more than 1.5 occupants per room) and there is a growing concern amongst residents regarding the declining quality of the housing stock.

In anticipation of the Purple Line, both counties have created sector plans for their respective portions of Takoma/Langley Crossroads to acknowledge the potential of increased density and development. In light of planned redevelopment for profitable commercial and residential properties in the area, the protection of current residents from displacement and poor-quality housing are concerns which need to be addressed.

This report’s housing strategies are organized around four main goals: mitigating the risk of displacing current residents, strengthening the community for resident advocacy, improving the existing housing stock quality, and increasing the number of affordable housing opportunities by diversifying housing unit types. (Figure 4) The report will also provide the counties’ and community organizations’ strategies to address these issues when redevelopment occurs.



Figure 4: Diagram of the Critical Housing Issues and Goals in the study area

Small Business Retention, Economic Development, and Branding

The Takoma/Langley Crossroads area is a thriving small business community. Many of the small businesses are immigrant-owned and/or provide products or services that specifically cater to ethnic communities. Currently, retail vacancies are low and retail rental prices are high. Many small business owners, community advocates, and local stakeholders have concerns regarding the ways in which the Purple Line Light Rail’s investment will change the current business landscape and the potential for displacement.

To address the concerns stemming from the potentially disruptive and displacing effects of Purple Line construction and operation, this report suggests several goals and achievable strategies that promote economic development, small business retention, and branding for the TLC area. It is essential that TLC business owners proactively capture the economic development potential offered by the Purple Line, enhance the customer experience through streetscape and pedestrian improvements, and establish and market a unified multijurisdictional place-identity to ensure a successful future for current TLC area businesses.

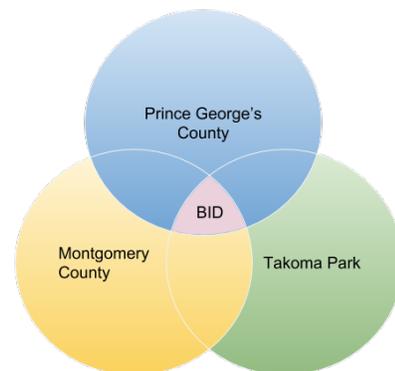


Figure 5: Diagram of the potential Business Improvement District (BID) structure

This report proposes that the best way for the TLC area to achieve these goals is for the local stakeholders to consider implementing a cross-jurisdictional Business Improvement District (BID) (Figure 5). The BID has the ability to advocate for small businesses during and after the construction phase of the Purple Line, create and establish a unified branding and marketing campaign, and build the economic capacity for long-term success and desirable economic growth for the area.