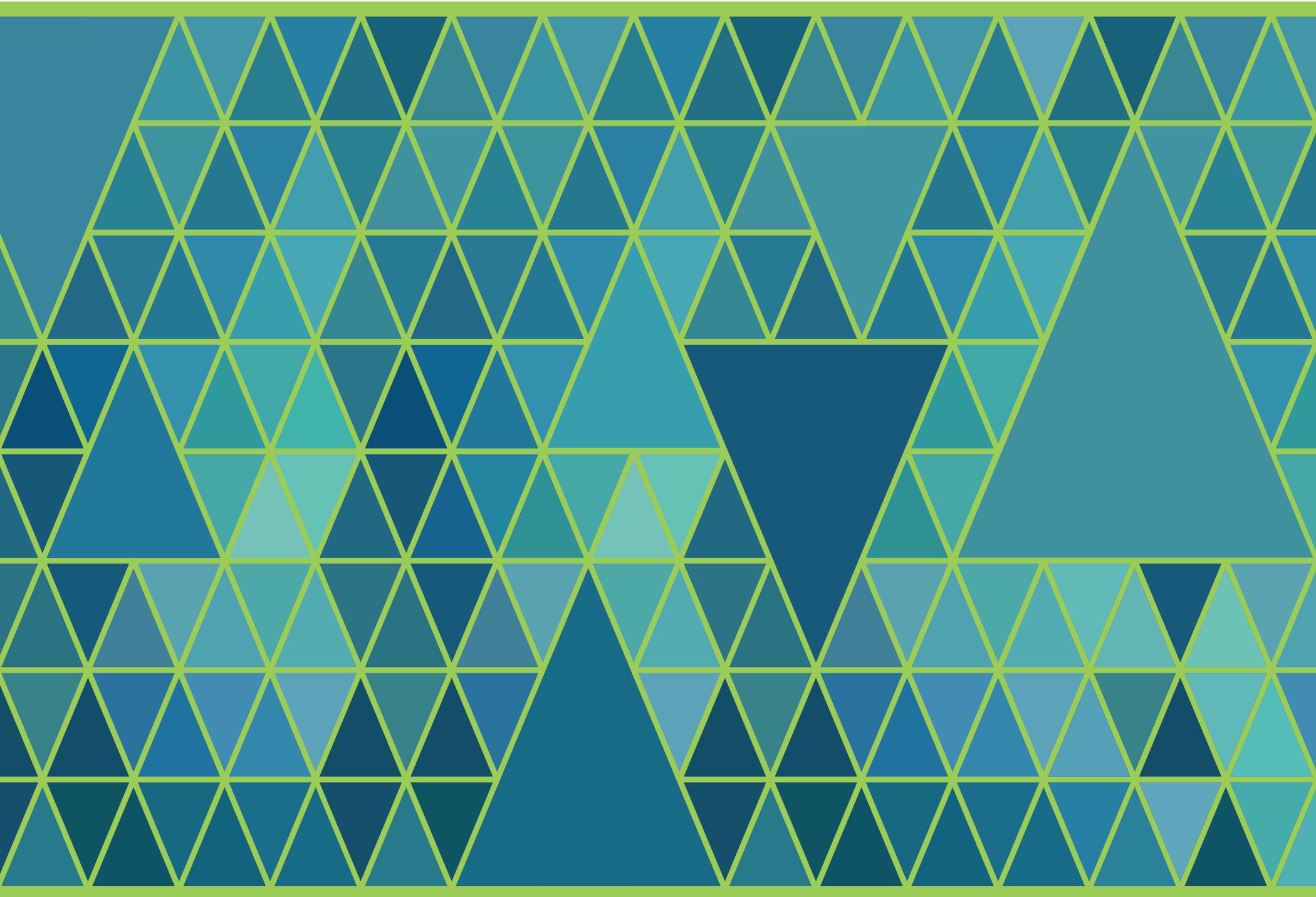


# VAN NESS

COMMERCIAL DISTRICT ACTION STRATEGY

April 21, 2016





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Typical View of Van Ness Today

## INTRODUCTION

The Van Ness Commercial District is a unique combination of a neighborhood retail center and a regional institutional cluster, home to the University of the District of Columbia, Howard University School of Law, American University Radio WAMU, The International Chancery Center, and the Levine School of Music. The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy brings public and private stakeholders together to reinvigorate Van Ness with attractive amenities, thriving retail, and leading institutions.

Fifty years ago the Van Ness Commercial District transitioned from federal campus to office district when the Bureau of Standards vacated their Van Ness facility. This change was driven by a growing suburban population and planning for the Metro Rail System. During this time, Van Ness developed a predominately institutional and office character on the Connecticut Avenue corridor that obscures the diversity of its retail

offerings and its nearby residential community.

Today, Van Ness is at another inflection point where increased demand for transit-oriented housing and a preference for downtown office space incentivize property owners to make transformative investments.

Housing demand is particularly pronounced in Metro-oriented communities like Van Ness where underutilized or under-performing properties can be redeveloped as housing. For example, the former Van Square, a low-scale, auto-oriented, office/retail building, is being redeveloped as a pedestrian-oriented, mid-rise, multifamily building with ground floor retail. New investments can help reinforce the successful features of the neighborhood while implementing new public space treatments that unify the community.

In fall 2014, the DC Office of Planning

launched the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy, a short, strategic planning initiative and engagement process.

The Action Strategy is a variation on a new type of planning tool called a vision framework. Unlike a small area plan which is a more in-depth plan adopted by DC Council, a vision framework is a lighter, briefer, strategic planning effort which delivers a high level vision for the neighborhood and identifies key implementation items to direct public investment and private investments. This model was simultaneously piloted in the Van Ness and Adams Morgan neighborhoods.

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy provides a framework to reinvigorate retail, enhance public space, increase sustainability, and guide development. This Action Strategy helps guide priorities and investments of both

public and private sector stakeholders.

Van Ness is an established neighborhood where change will be incremental. This Action Strategy links a series of investments from a range of stakeholders, enabling the Commercial District to become more cohesive and vibrant.

To ensure the vision is actionable, the recommendations were informed by existing market conditions and development regulations. They also employ short, mid and long term actions designed to establish an authentic community identity and build momentum for larger investments. Implementing the Action Strategy will require continued support from a wide range of partners including District agencies, property owners, institutions, and community groups.



Connecticut Avenue



Calvert Woodley



4201 Connecticut Avenue



Fannie Mae Building

# PROCESS

The genesis of the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy was leadership on the part of the Van Ness Vision Committee of Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3F, which looked to the DC Office of Planning to analyze the planning opportunities in the Commercial District and to build upon the agency's recently completed work in the neighborhood including: technical assistance with the Vibrant Retail Streets Toolkit; the Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Pilot Project (NSIPP); the Van Ness/UDC Metro and Commercial Corridor Enhancement Study, and the

Connecticut Avenue/Forest Hills Paving Removal Strategy.

The Van Ness Vision Committee produced a report detailing a vision for the community. The report was an additional resource for this Action Strategy that guided recommendations for Windom Place and public art.

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy was developed through extensive public participation. In 2014, the DC Office of Planning formed a Van Ness Advisory Committee to oversee the development of the Van Ness

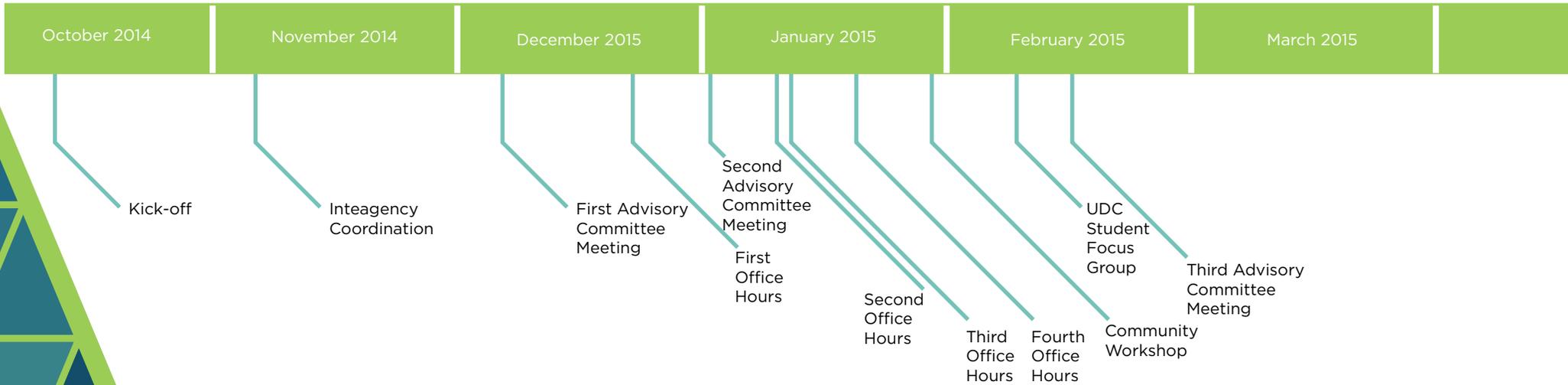
Commercial District Action Strategy and selected HOK and StreetSense as a technical consultant team to assist with analysis and production.

The Van Ness Advisory Committee was comprised of residents, business owners, and ANC Commissioners, as well as representatives from the Van Ness Vision Committee, the Forest Hills Connection, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), WAMU, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), real estate developers, and property owners. Notably, UDC faculty and staff were involved throughout this

project to connect the strategies with the University's programs and facilities. For a complete list, please see the Acknowledgments Section on the back cover. The Advisory Committee met four times during the process.

During the development of the Action Strategy the Van Ness Vision Committee transitioned to the independent Van Ness Main Street organization. Van Ness Main Street continued as a core partner and stakeholder.

An Interagency Working Group was also convened during the process to



identify issues and opportunities and ensure agency understanding of the proposed actions. This group included representatives from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT); the Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE); the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED); the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD); the District of Columbia Commission on Arts and Humanities (DCCA); and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

There were several opportunities for the general public to engage and contribute to the development of the Action Strategy. In addition to a project webpage, the Office of Planning hosted several office hour sessions at local establishments including a student-focused session on UDC's campus; provided an online engagement forum where stakeholders could post and share ideas and concerns; and carried out a widely publicized Community Workshop on January 31, 2015 and a well-attended Community Open House on proposed recommendations on April 28, 2015. The

Office of Planning also presented on the Action Strategy at several community meetings such as the Van Ness Vision Committee's meetings.

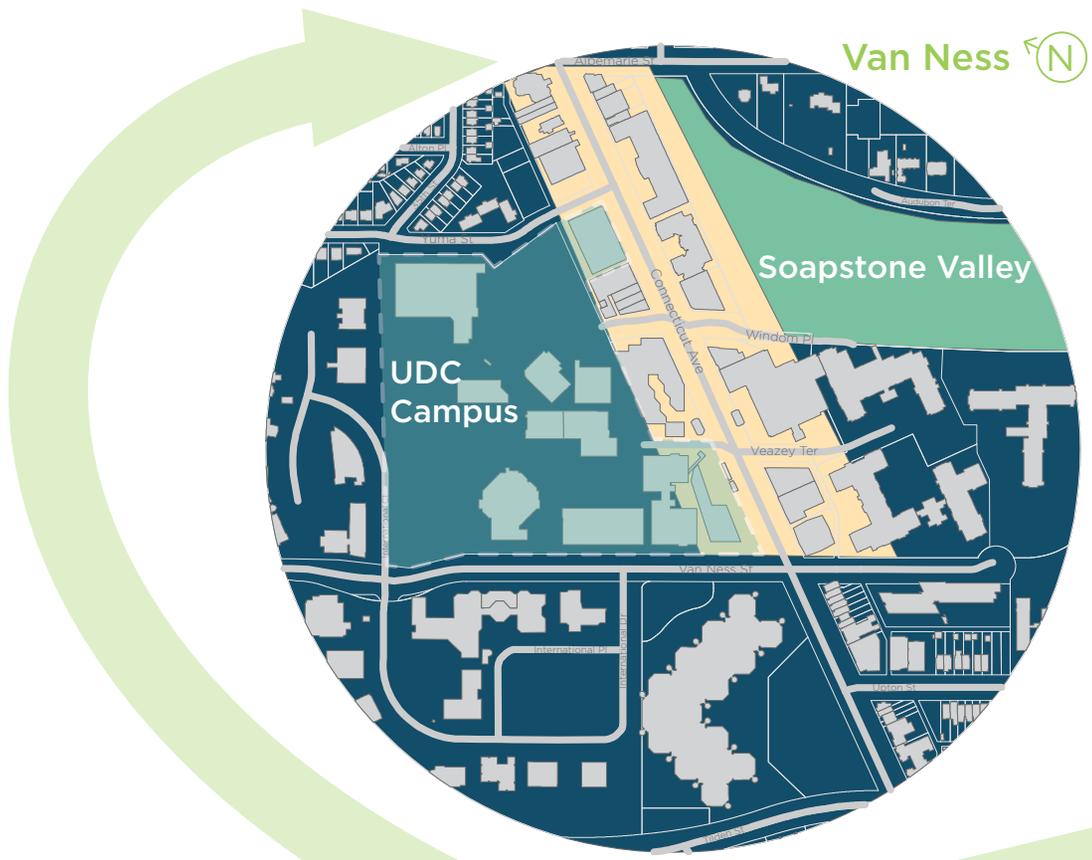
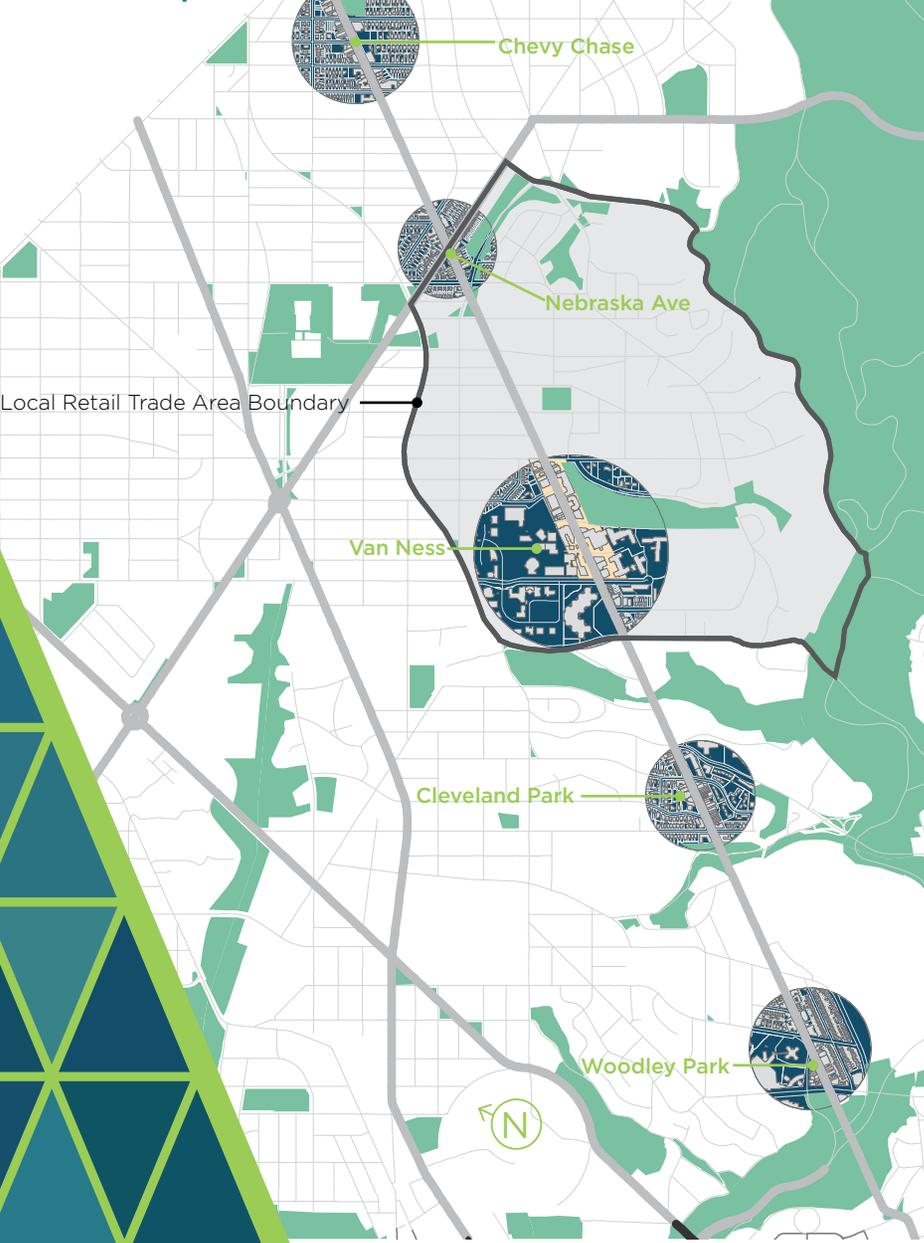
The project team completed extensive technical and data analysis of the study area and produced a companion document to this Action Strategy called the Van Ness Commercial District Profile (Appendix A), which analyzes existing conditions, data, issues and opportunities. The Profile helped inform and support stakeholders in discussions at the Van Ness Community Workshop and helped shape the recommendations

of the Commercial District Action Strategy.

Additionally, **Appendix B: Comprehensive Plan Analysis and Background** details the 2006 Comprehensive Plan policies and actions that guide planning and development in Van Ness. The Action Strategy's recommendations are consistent with and build upon the Comprehensive Plan policies, providing more detailed direction which may inform future updates to the Comprehensive Plan.



# Van Ness Context Map



- Park
- Local Retail Trade Area
- Study Area
- Commercial District
- UDC Campus

The Study Area includes properties fronting Connecticut Avenue from Albemarle Street NW to Van Ness Street NW.

## The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy Study Area

STUDY AREA CONTEXT

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy focuses on the properties lining Connecticut Avenue between Van Ness Street and Albemarle Street Northwest. The Study Area represents the retail center of the Van Ness community. The adjoining residential areas between Nebraska Avenue to the north, Tilden Street to the south, Rock Creek Park to the east and Reno Road to the west were also studied to evaluate the demand for retail in the local retail trade area.

Van Ness is one of five commercial districts along the Connecticut Avenue Corridor between the William Howard Taft Bridge and the District border with Maryland. Each of these districts formed around the Connecticut Avenue streetcar line, which fostered a linear, tree lined development pattern with high rise residential buildings interspersed by commercial districts at regular intervals.

The Metro Red line has stops at the three southern commercial districts: Woodley Park, Cleveland Park and Van Ness. Woodley Park is home to large hotels and tourism-oriented business. Cleveland Park is a low scale district with a unique mix of destination restaurants, retail, and entertainment. Van Ness reflects an institutional character rooted in its past as a federal campus, which has since been redeveloped to serve other institutions including UDC, The International Chancery Center, and formerly, IntelSat. The two northern commercial districts at Nebraska Avenue and Chevy Chase are conventionally neighborhood-focused.

The Van Ness Commercial District is a valuable part of this prominent corridor with a unique role to play. Its history as an institutional center has elevated Van Ness to a regional destination, attracting people for both work and school. The large daytime population comprised

of workers and students increase the opportunity for retailers to succeed.

Soapstone Valley, an off shoot from Rock Creek Park, is located immediately to the east of the Commercial District. The community deeply values this natural environment which includes a hiking trail connected to the extensive trail network in Rock Creek Park.

Some of these assets also present challenges. For example, connectivity to the broader community is constrained by the parkland to the east, the UDC campus along with the International Chancery Center to the west.

The Van Ness Commercial District has the potential to improve its retail offerings and public space, while showcasing world class sustainability measures by leveraging its substantial daytime population, accessibility, and the well established surrounding neighborhoods.

Van Ness by the Numbers:

- Population: 11,300
- Households: 3,000
- Median Household Income: \$91,000
- Average Age: 42
- Daytime Population: 4,200
- Full Time Student Population: 3,700
- Residents 25 and older with Master Degrees: 59%
- Metro Ridership: 6,500+
- Retail Space: 100,600 square feet
- Retail Vacancy: 8%
- Non Retail Ground Floor Uses: 26,500 square feet

\* Source: Nielson/Claritas Demographics January 2015 for the Van Ness Local Trade Area (see map on page 8)

EXISTING LAND USE MAP



● Commercial Use    
 ● Residential Use    
 ● Educational Use

## TOPIC AREAS

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy focuses on four key topic areas:

- **PUBLIC SPACE**
- **RETAIL**
- **SUSTAINABILITY**
- **COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Throughout the engagement process stakeholders provided feedback on their experience and aspirations for each.

### Public Space.

The Van Ness Commercial District has unique public space defined by exceptionally wide sidewalks between the building face and the curb. A majority of stakeholders expressed that the public space was unattractive, disorganized, sterile, and underutilized. To address these concerns, the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy recommends a unified streetscape design, a community wayfinding system, and a public art strategy.

Both the DC Office of Planning and Van Ness Main Street have already begun to take steps to improve the public space in Van Ness. The DC Office of Planning

received a Transportation Land Use Connection Grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to create preliminary streetscape designs that incorporate green infrastructure. The Van Ness Vision Committee has begun implementing public space beautification, community arts, and public space activation programs. The Action Strategy builds on these first steps to take full advantage of the community's generous public space.

### Retail.

Van Ness stakeholders, including residents, workers, and students, expressed unmet demand for retail in the Commercial District. Most notably, residents from a range of ages and backgrounds have a strong desire for family-friendly retail and restaurants corresponding to an increase of children in the neighborhood. Additionally, there was strong interest in casual dining, gathering places (e.g. cafés) home goods retailers, a hardware store, and apparel retailers.

The DC Office of Planning conducted a market analysis to inform the retail

strategy. The market analysis found strong demand for casual dining and cafés and limited opportunity for general merchandise retail. The Action Strategy seeks to build on the community's existing assets to reposition the Commercial District's retail market to attract the types of retailers that stakeholders are demanding.

### Sustainability.

Environmental sustainability is a core value of the Van Ness Community. Stakeholders place tremendous value on the quality of the natural environment. Soapstone Valley, located immediately east of the Commercial District, is a prized park space that has been significantly eroded by stormwater. Many community members expressed a strong desire to have stormwater management systems that reduce adverse impacts on the stream valley.

The Action Strategy recommends a comprehensive strategy for improved stormwater management that includes onsite mechanisms for new buildings, pavement removal, and green stormwater management infrastructure.

Additionally, the Action Strategy builds on the outcomes of the Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Pilot Project and the UDC College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) program to make the community an environmental sustainability showcase.

### Commercial Opportunities.

The Van Ness Commercial District has untapped development capacity that can be leveraged to improve retail, public space, and sustainability. The community through ANC 3F and Van Ness Main Street are encouraging new development. Both groups have engaged property owners and developers in an effort to encourage more development in the community. The Commercial District Action Strategy highlights key opportunity sites and strategies to attract and leverage real estate development.



Western Metro Entrance



Rendering: Park Van Ness

## VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy is to realize a thriving, vibrant and attractive commercial center. The Action Strategy lays out a blueprint for the Commercial District that focuses on creating a new retail identity, making better use of the corridor's wide sidewalks, embracing leadership in environmental sustainability, and maximizing the opportunities for commercial development. A repositioned Commercial District will redefine the community as an energetic, lush place that attracts new customers and allows residents, students, and workers to come together. The Action Strategy frames the commercial revitalization recommendations around the following visions for **Public Space, Retail, Sustainability, and Commercial Development.**



### **PUBLIC SPACE** VISION

The Van Ness Commercial District will be defined by attractive, activated and landscaped streets with spaces for retail, interaction and gathering for residents, students and workers.



### **RETAIL** VISION

The Van Ness Commercial District will be reinvented with a new identity and brand through management, repositioned retail spaces, and catalytic events.



### **SUSTAINABILITY** VISION

The Van Ness Commercial District will feature environmentally sensitive design and build an identity around the corridor's sustainable features.



### **COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES** VISION

The Van Ness Commercial District will provide an environment conducive to new development that complements a vibrant Commercial District.

## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Van Ness has tremendous potential and the key to overcoming its current challenges is a renewed identity. Recent investments in the Commercial District like the new UDC Student Center and Park Van Ness have begun the transformation. To maintain momentum a combination of temporary and permanent strategies will work together to establish and solidify a renewed identity as a Commercial District with dynamic retail offerings, spacious café dining areas, and gathering places that reflect the local arts community.

This change starts with widening the landscaped areas near the street to better buffer pedestrians from traffic. The new landscaping also increases sustainability by replacing pavement with plants that reduce stormwater

runoff and capture less heat. When new street trees are added, bio-retention facilities can be included to further reduce stormwater runoff.

Next, increased café dining and public gathering places that incorporate locally inspired public art will add vibrancy to the street by giving pedestrians a place to stop. The cafés are locations where retailers can contribute to the community identity through distinctive awnings, signage, and café seating. High quality signage that communicates the breadth of retail options to both vehicular and pedestrian audiences work together to create a sense of place and identity.

The following three pages contain illustrative renderings that conceptually depict how the visions for public space,

retail, sustainability, and commercial opportunities might come together in three key locations:

- Northeast side of Connecticut Avenue between Yuma and Albemarle Streets (Page 13);
- West side of Connecticut Avenue between Yuma Street and Veazey Terrace (Page 14); and
- Western Metro Plaza (Page 15).

Each location reflects different opportunities for the community. The first location on the northeast corner of the Study Area demonstrates how lower scale buildings could be modernized to meet contemporary commercial needs and public space could be enhanced to support a predominately neighborhood-

serving retail cluster.

The second location on the west side of Connecticut Avenue at Yuma Street demonstrates how the sidewalk can be restructured to create signature public space that maximizes retailing potential, bringing customers to the building edge and creating signature outdoor cafés in the sidewalk to support a food and beverage cluster. Finally, the western Metro Plaza demonstrates how public art, landscaping, and gathering places can create destinations within the community and how signage can bring better definition and visibility to retail.

Each view demonstrates how these visions can reinvigorate the Van Ness Commercial District by creating a strong identity complemented by signature public space and improved retail.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES





**EXISTING** View from Northeast side of Connecticut Avenue toward Albemarle Street



**PROPOSED CONCEPT**

 Differentiated Retailer Branding ●

 Café Seating Area ●

 Relocated Bus Shelter ●

 Landscaped Gathering Places ●

 Increased Landscaping ●



**EXISTING** View from west side of Connecticut Avenue toward Windom Place



**PROPOSED CONCEPT**

- 

Retail Space Extended to Building Face
- 

Branded Awnings
- 

Pedestrian-oriented Signage
- 


Extensive Cafe Seating
- 

Pedestrians Travel Near the Building Edge
- 

Landscaped Traffic Buffer



**EXISTING** View on Connecticut Avenue looking south toward the west Metro entrance

 Second Story Awnings

 Pedestrian-oriented Signage

 Public Art Focal Point at Metro Plaza

 Retail Extended into the Amenity Zone

 Retail Space Extended to the Building Face

 Gathering Places

 Landscaping Replaces Paving

**PROPOSED CONCEPT**

## PUBLIC SPACE OVERVIEW

Van Ness has a large amount of under-programmed, public space lining Connecticut Avenue. Currently, this space has fragmented urban design that is often auto-oriented including numerous curb cuts and highway style 'cobra head' streetlights. The sidewalks are wide and landscaping is inconsistent while public amenities, like seating and bicycle parking, are minimal.

Transforming this area to create clearly defined space with a well-defined pedestrian path, high quality landscaping, café spaces, and street furniture/amenities will help achieve numerous community goals- to strengthen retail, create identity, improve appearance and experience, and increase sustainability.

Since Van Ness is an established Commercial District, it is anticipated that public space changes will occur incrementally. To accommodate this challenge, the public space strategy is designed flexibly using **three common building blocks** to achieve maximum

impact while conforming to the existing context. The building blocks include a Landscape Amenity Zone, a Building Amenity Zone, and a Sidewalk Zone. These elements are arranged in two general configurations depicted in the diagram on page 17.

**The Landscape Amenity Zone** follows the curb on both sides of Connecticut Avenue for the entire Study Area. It will vary in width to support comfortable pedestrian travel along existing sidewalks. The zone will be created by expanding the current tree-boxes to form a green buffer between pedestrians and traffic traveling on Connecticut Avenue. The Landscape Amenity Zone can also include green stormwater management infrastructure that captures stormwater near where it falls, allowing it to infiltrate the soil below. These techniques may potentially replenish aquifers while reducing the impacts of stormwater run-off on nearby watersheds.

The **Building Amenity Zone** is a space

where retail can be extended into the public space. This zone is a place where businesses can maintain café dining or public gathering places.

The **Sidewalk Zone** is a paved transportation facility that allows easy and direct travel for all pedestrians traveling through or within the Commercial District.

These public space elements are combined in different configurations for the east side and west sides of the street that maximize public space while ensuring a predictable pedestrian travel path.

For the east alignment, the landscape amenity zone is aligned with the curb, and the building amenity zone is against the building face while the sidewalk travels between the two zones. In the western alignment, the building amenity zone and the sidewalk zone are reversed to maximize the quality space for gathering places and cafés, which sit further into the right of way and provide more direct access to retail for

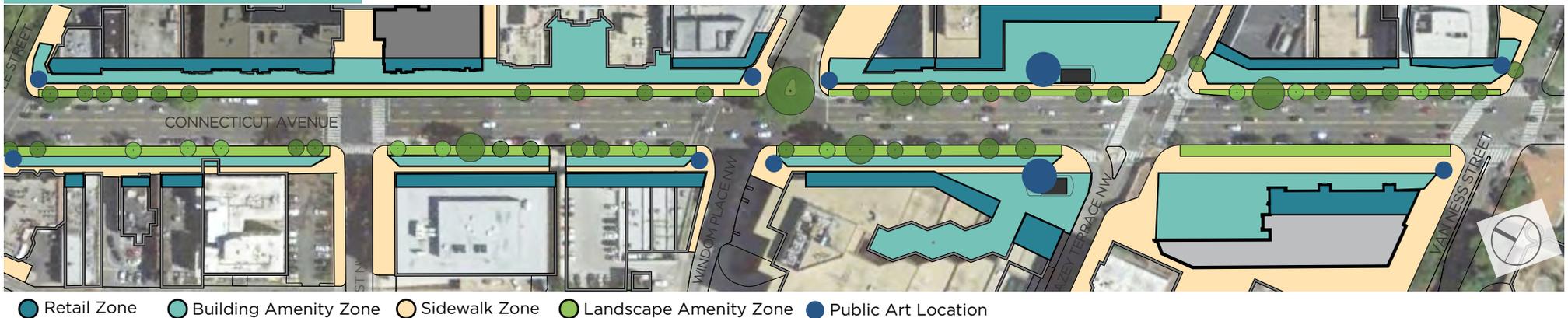
pedestrians.

Public space presents the opportunity to incorporate **public art** reflecting the community's identity. Van Ness Main Street has begun building the community's artistic identity by hosting public events featuring local artists. Both temporary and permanent public art installations are ideal venues for the community's artistic expression which will help establish an authentic community identity.

Both the east and west Metro plazas are natural focal points where installations can establish a strong sense of place. Additional installations at key intersections such as Windom Place or Albemarle Street can increase the definition along the corridor.

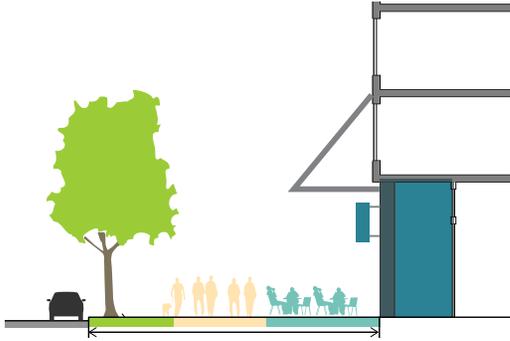
The streetscape was analyzed and planned in further detail in a complementary study entitled **Shades of Green: Green Infrastructure and Pavement Removal Strategy for Van Ness**. For more information please visit [planning.dc.gov](http://planning.dc.gov).

## PROPOSED CONCEPT



● Retail Zone ● Building Amenity Zone ● Sidewalk Zone ● Landscape Amenity Zone ● Public Art Location

## PROPOSED EAST SIDE CONCEPT



The **LANDSCAPE AMENITY ZONE** buffers public space users from traffic.

The **SIDEWALK** is a free and clear path for pedestrian travel.

The **BUILDING AMENITY ZONE** is public space programed by permit for retail.

The **RETAIL ZONE** is the space where merchants engage customers.

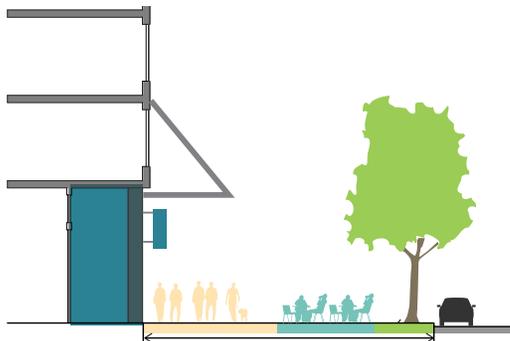
Existing Conditions



Proposed Concept



## PROPOSED WEST SIDE CONCEPT



The **RETAIL ZONE** is the space where merchants engage customers.

The **SIDEWALK** is a free and clear path for pedestrian travel.

The **BUILDING AMENITY ZONE** is public space programed by permit for retail.

The **LANDSCAPE AMENITY ZONE** buffers public space users from traffic.

Existing Conditions



Proposed Concept



## PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGIES

**VISION:** The Van Ness Commercial District will be defined by attractive, activated and landscaped streets with spaces for retail, interaction and gathering for residents, students and workers.

**1 IMPLEMENT THE VAN NESS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY.**

The Van Ness Green Infrastructure Study provides a strategy to reduce paving and impervious surfaces along Connecticut Avenue while protecting existing mature trees and adding sustainable stormwater management facilities that enable stormwater to percolate into the soil below the sidewalks instead of being diverted into the storm sewer.

**2 CREATE A LINEAR PUBLIC SPACE THAT SOFTENS AND GREENS THE CORRIDOR.**

A portion of the exceptionally wide sidewalks in the Van Ness Commercial District should be converted into landscaped public space that softens the hardscape, greens the corridor, provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicular traffic, and helps to better define pedestrian and retail zones.

**3 CREATE FOCAL POINTS THROUGH PUBLIC ART THAT ACTIVATE PUBLIC SPACES WITHIN EACH RETAIL CLUSTER.**

Different scales of public art installations should be used to communicate the function of gathering places along the corridor. Larger installations scaled to Connecticut Avenue should be installed in both Metro plazas while smaller, human-scaled installations should highlight potential community gathering places on Windom Place and Albemarle Street.

**4 ESTABLISH URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES THAT VISUALLY UNIFY VAN NESS.**

Standardized public space strategies will form connections between the retail clusters detailed on pages 19-20. Design guidelines should include paving design, street furniture, café furniture, and landscaping. Visually unifying Van Ness will help build the community's retail identity which helps attract customers and retailers.

**5 DIFFERENTIATE PUBLIC SPACE WITH THREE DISTINCT USE ZONES.**

Van Ness has large sidewalks that should be differentiated into distinct use zones to maximize the value of the space. A **landscaped amenity zone** would extend twelve feet toward the building line from the curb and will provide a buffer from moving traffic. Additionally, the **building amenity zone**, which should be approximately ten feet wide either located at the building face on the eastern side of Connecticut or adjacent to the landscape amenity zone on the western side of Connecticut. Finally, a **pedestrian zone**, free of obstructions, flows between the building and amenity zone. The pedestrian zone should have a consistent alignment throughout the Commercial District to ensure the safety of all users. The public space should include indicators where activity should occur through landscape and urban design treatments.

The numbers corresponding with each strategy indicates the priority for implementation.

**6 REPLACE COBRAHEAD STREETLIGHTS WITH TWIN-TWENTY OR TEARDROP STREETLIGHTS.**

Since Connecticut Avenue is a prominent entry point into the District of Columbia, a higher quality aesthetic for the light fixtures is merited as a placemaking and gateway treatment. Twin-twenty and teardrop street lights have already been implemented in other commercial districts along Connecticut Avenue. Adding these fixtures to Van Ness will improve the Commercial District's connection with other commercial areas along the corridor. Additionally, please reference Sustainability Recommendation number 3 on page 25 for information about LED lighting.

**7 BRAND THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT WITH BANNERS MOUNTED ON LIGHT POLES.**

Light pole banners help differentiate the Commercial District from other areas by reinforcing the community's brand.

**8 IMPLEMENT A WAYFINDING SYSTEM.**

Van Ness is home to a wide range of attractions including museums, parks, performance spaces, and embassies. Establishing a wayfinding system will help the Commercial District highlight surrounding amenities, helping to build the district's identity.

**9 INCORPORATE BICYCLE PARKING INTO THE STREETScape.**

Convenient bicycle parking increases the options and likelihood that people from the surrounding area will patronize the Commercial District without requiring a parking space.

**10 SUPPORT TEMPORARY PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES AND PLAZA ACTIVATION.**

Temporary plazas, art installations, and gathering places can build momentum for permanent change while exploring innovative approaches to activating the community's unique spaces and providing reasons to gather, linger and perceive the corridor in a new way.

**11 WORK WITH INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ACTIVATE WINDOM PLACE.**

Windom Place has the potential to connect the Commercial District with Rock Creek Park and UDC. Community leaders can collaborate with the adjoining property owners to develop short and long term activation of Windom Place, both east and west of Connecticut Avenue.



## RETAIL OVERVIEW

Van Ness is primarily a neighborhood-serving retail market where most businesses cater to customers living, working, or going to school in the neighborhood. The Commercial District has a primary customer base of 18,800 people comprised of 11,000 residents and 7,800 employees and students. The residential customer base has strong capacity to support neighborhood retail, with a median household income of \$91,000 a year, compared to \$65,800 for the District of Columbia.

The Commercial District is activated throughout the day by employees and students who purchase meals, convenience items and make household purchases. This customer base complements the residential customer base by enabling merchants to have more consistent sales during the daytime and throughout the week.

The Van Ness Commercial District's supply of retail space roughly matches demand from the customer base, with approximately 100,000 square feet of retail space currently in place. In addition to the existing retail space, 26,500 square feet of ground floor commercial space is occupied by non-retail uses, such as banks and gyms. These spaces could be converted to retail in the future. Taken together, these figures demonstrate that the retail market in Van Ness is most likely to change through repositioning and redevelopment of existing retail spaces.

Retailers are divided among three broad categories: Neighborhood Goods and Services; Food and Beverage; and General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishing, and Other. The Commercial District is well served by Neighborhood Goods and Services, which include the Giant Grocery

Store, CVS Pharmacy, and several dry cleaners. There is demand for the Food and Beverage segment to grow by 10,000 square feet. Neighborhood-serving Food and Beverage retailers require between 1,000 and 4,000 square feet depending on the business model. Additionally, the market analysis identified particularly significant opportunities for businesses offering prepared meals and fast casual dining options targeting working households, students, and employees.

Currently there are no retailers in the General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishing, Other category but there is potential for growth. The population could support up to 7,000 square feet in this segment – stores in this category are typically in the 2,000 square foot range. It is important to note that the residential customer base has two prominent market segments, young professionals and affluent retirees. To tap into the potential of this category, retailers will need to appeal to both of these segments. For example, a hardware store could take advantage of a convenient location to sell goods to a wide range of customers.

Looking ahead, Van Ness will need to renew its retail identity in order to take advantage of its market opportunities. This can be accomplished through a combination of branding, repositioning, and management.

Van Ness has two primary retail clusters, one on the east and the other on the west side of Connecticut Avenue. In general, retailers should be concentrated toward the Metro entrances and non-retail commercial uses such as banks should be targeted for ground floor spaces north of Yuma Street and south of Veazey Street.

The west side between Yuma Street and Van Ness Street has a unique combination of transitioning retail space, existing food businesses, unified public space, and accessibility to develop a strong **food and beverage focus area**. This area has the greatest potential to establish a renewed identity for the Commercial District.

The rest of the Commercial District will likely focus on a **neighborhood goods and services** cluster, building on the existing retail patterns and customer travel paths.

**Branding.** Property owners and retailers should use branding to distinguish their business while supporting a strong district identity. Property owners and retailers should project their brands through signs or awnings depicting the unique character of each business at a height visible to passing automotive traffic. Perpendicular pedestrian-level signage should be installed to complement and further engage passing pedestrians.

Additionally, retailers should extend their brand into the public space using café dining areas and gathering spaces in front of their businesses to further enhance their visibility to potential customers.

**Management.** Management is key to the success of retail districts. The District's Vibrant Retail Streets Toolkit, a technical assistance model for diagnosing retail markets and creating vibrant places, was deployed in Van Ness in 2013 and identified the creation of a management entity such as a Main Street organization as the top priority for advancing the Commercial District's vibrancy. Stakeholders have since formed the

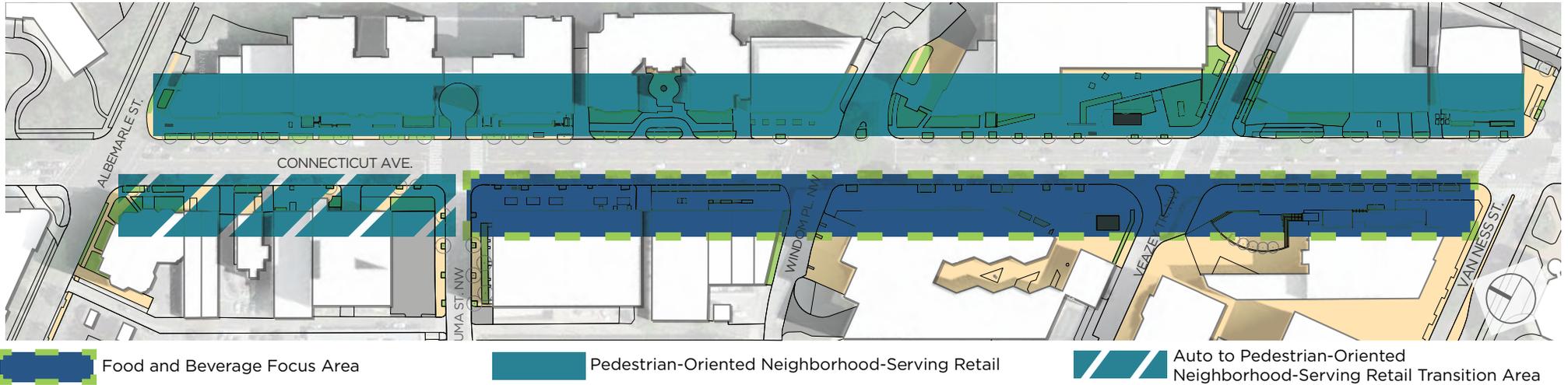
Van Ness Main Street, which will work with ANC 3F to provide management services such as marketing, public space management, retailer support, and resources for property owners seeking new tenants. Together these strategies can establish a renewed retail identity in Van Ness that helps unlock retail potential.

**Repositioning.** Van Ness has a lot of ground floor commercial space that does not meet the standards of many contemporary retailers. Renovating or redeveloping these spaces to meet current standards for visibility, accessibility, and layout will broaden the appeal of the Commercial District to potential retailers.

UDC's Building 52, which houses the law school, has ground floor retail space that can be repositioned as a powerful catalyst for a new food and beverage cluster within the Commercial District. This new food and beverage cluster can create a retail destination that anchors future retail growth. Please see page 38 for more information about how this building can be repositioned.

The northwest segment of the Commercial District between Yuma Street and Albemarle Street has a cluster of auto-oriented uses that are expected to transition in over time to pedestrian-oriented uses as the Action Strategy's public space recommendations and Comprehensive Plan Policies are implemented. Transition is anticipated because these properties currently have low-scale structures which do not take full advantage of the level of development permitted under the existing zoning.

## RETAIL CLUSTERS



## RETAIL STRATEGIES

Perpendicular Signage Engages Pedestrians



Restaurants Extended to the Sidewalk



Landscaping Buffers Pedestrians from Traffic



Gathering Places Bring People Together



Focusing Pedestrian Paths Along Storefronts



Arcades Are Extended to the Building Face



Second Story Awnings Engage People in Cars



Retail Branding Differentiates Storefronts



## RETAIL STRATEGIES

**VISION:** The Van Ness Commercial District will be reinvented with a new identity and brand through management, repositioned retail spaces, and catalytic events.

**1 DEVELOP AND PROMOTE A COHESIVE AND APPEALING RETAIL IDENTITY.**

A strong retail identity attracts shoppers as well as markets vacant and new retail space. The identity should highlight the retail experience that the Commercial District offers. It could also incorporate the assets and qualities that differentiate Van Ness, such as its role as a 'gateway' to Rock Creek and the presence of international embassies and educational/non-profit institutions.

**2 EXPRESS A UNIQUE IDENTITY FOR EACH RETAILER.**

Customers need to easily perceive the range of goods and services available in the Commercial District. Each retailer should express their unique identity through color and typography on signage, awnings, and café umbrellas. Pedestrian-oriented signage should be incorporated for retail space to engage pedestrians. Where possible the building designs should be complementary to surrounding buildings to reinforce community identity. Additionally, second story awnings can be an effective strategy for creating both visibility and attractive building storefront articulation for retail in office/institutional buildings.

**3 EXTEND RETAIL BRANDS HORIZONTALLY.**

Encourage retailers, as appropriate, to extend their brand into the building amenity zone (see page 17) in front of their storefront with elements such as café seating and landscaping. This brand extension enhances retailer visibility to customers while activating the public space. Approaches could include incorporating café seating into the landscape.

**4 SUPPORT REPOSITIONING OF RETAIL SPACES IN THE UDC LAW SCHOOL BUILDING (BUILDING 52).**

The UDC Law School has a significant opportunity to catalyze strong retail on the west side of Connecticut Avenue. To achieve this change, the storefronts should be moved to the building face, and the arcade built out with high quality materials. Additionally, please reference Commercial Opportunities recommendation five on page 27 for supporting information.

**5 REINFORCE DISTINCT RETAIL CLUSTERS.**

Strengthen the Van Ness Commercial District through a 'cluster' approach that concentrates retail at the Metro Plazas. Each cluster should have its own identity and function, and be connected through urban design and unifying streetscape elements to draw customers from one location to the next. Identify and undertake targeted strategies for each of the three retail clusters.

- **Western Retail Cluster:** Leverage the potential of the Western Retail Cluster to reestablish a retail identity for the corridor. The Metro plaza should become an iconic gathering place for residents, students and office workers. Retail spaces between Van Ness Street and Yuma street should be repositioned to meet the needs of contemporary retailers. Landscaping should be expanded to create a buffer between vehicular traffic and pedestrians while incorporating green stormwater infrastructure. UDC and Fannie Mae anchor this cluster. Both institutions should prioritize investments in their facilities to modernize retail while unifying and activating the public space. All commercial property owners should engage the services of a professional retail broker to fill vacant space. These brokers have relationships and strategic insight that attract and retain stronger tenants.

The numbers corresponding with each strategy indicates the priority for implementation.

- **Eastern Cluster:** This cluster successfully anchors the neighborhood goods and services segment of the Van Ness retail market. Investments in this cluster should seek to further connect adjoining areas and activate public space which will strengthen the Van Ness Commercial District's identity. Program the plaza near the Metro station to serve as a focal point that attracts more activity throughout the day. Encourage redevelopment of the parking garage on the 4200 block of Connecticut Avenue that provides modern retail spaces and eliminates curb cuts.
- **Transition Zones:** Encourage non-retail uses such as banks, insurance agencies and professional offices to utilize ground floor space at the northern and southern blocks of the Commercial District in order to help concentrate and strengthen retail near the center. Additionally, the northwest segment of the Commercial District between Yuma Street and Albemarle Street has a cluster of auto-oriented uses that are expected to transition to pedestrian-oriented uses as the Action Strategy's public space recommendations and Comprehensive Plan Policies are implemented. Transition is anticipated because these properties have a lot more development potential than the current structures utilize.

**6 ENSURE RETAIL SPACES HAVE ADEQUATE DIMENSIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY RETAIL TENANTS.**  
Commercial space planned for construction or renovation should incorporate the dimensions that are important for successful retailers. Existing spaces that are underperforming or vacant should be repositioned to meet the same standards where feasible. Retail space should have a floor-to-ceiling height between fourteen and twenty feet to connect with sightlines from the street. New retail space should be sixty to ninety feet deep to support modern merchandising and storage needs. The storefront should be fifteen to twenty-five feet wide to provide adequate visibility for passing customers. All new spaces should meet these specifications to ensure strong retail performance and continuity.

**7 DEVELOP A COORDINATED MARKETING APPROACH HIGHLIGHTING THE VAN NESS RETAIL IDENTITY AND STRONG CONSUMER BASE.**

Work with developers, property owners and brokers on identifying Food and Beverage retail operators, particularly in the prepared foods and fast casual dining categories.

- Drawing on the retail analysis, promote the Commercial District's potential to be a vibrant neighborhood-serving retail market that is supported by a varied customer base of residents, workers and students.
- Target food and beverage tenants that are broadly attractive to the Van Ness customer base (i.e., residents, students, office workers, embassy workers, and visitors). Leverage the overlapping needs of Van Ness' consumer base by strategizing for additional Food and Beverage tenants since goods in this category are in demand throughout the day and can support an additional 10,000 square feet of space. This category also offers opportunities for tenancing vacant retail space as well as activating the sidewalk through outdoor seating.

**8 SUPPORT THE VAN NESS VISION COMMITTEE'S EFFORTS TO CATALYZE THE VAN NESS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.**

Community-led stakeholder engagement, visioning, and strategy development will help to build momentum to achieve long term goals.

**9 SUPPORT A FORMAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION.**

A formal management organization such as a DC Main Street should manage the retail brand, promote retail growth, and maintain the public space. This organization will also strengthen the relationships between merchants, property owners, institutions, and residents.

**10 MARKET THE CORRIDOR WITH PERIODIC RETAIL AND ARTS/ CULTURAL EVENTS.**

These events draw shoppers and visitors while celebrating the unique assets in Van Ness. Consider events such as Passport DC, an international bazaar or market coordinated with the nearby embassies and Cultural Tourism DC. Keeping the UDC Farmers Market on Connecticut Avenue can work with other events to highlight and support the Commercial District.



## SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW

The District's award-winning roadmap for sustainability, Sustainable DC, envisions the District becoming the healthiest, greenest, and most livable city in the United States.

Sustainability is fundamentally about ensuring improved environmental, economic and social outcomes. Innovative policies and practices that can improve both quality of life and the environmental footprint of the District must rely on neighborhood-level implementation.

The Van Ness Community has embraced this opportunity to promote sustainable practices. The Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Pilot Project, a precursor to Sustainable DC, launched in Van Ness to demonstrate how neighborhood-level actions could

impact broader sustainability goals. The process has achieved concrete outcomes by leveraging high impact programs like River Smart Homes and the District Department of Energy and the Environment's stream restoration programs.

Additionally, The University of the District of Columbia College for Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) uses the Van Ness Campus to advance urban sustainability through cutting edge demonstrations and educational programs.

Currently, Van Ness has significant redevelopment opportunities that can be leveraged to increase sustainability. This strategy makes recommendations that build on the District of Columbia's

innovative regulations ensuring that new development increases sustainability by requiring buildings to achieve high levels of energy efficiency, storm and waste water management.

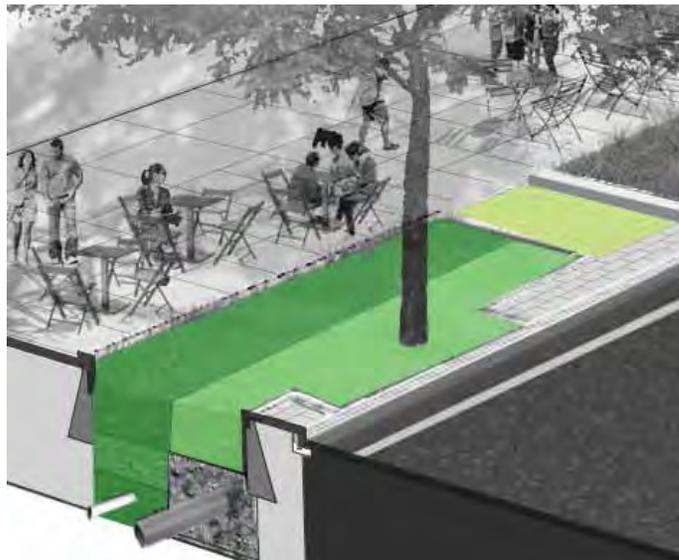
These regulations present an exciting opportunity to increase sustainability in Van Ness as private property owners redevelop their buildings. To aid this process the DC Office of Planning conducted the **Van Ness Green Infrastructure and Paving Removal Study**.

The Green Infrastructure Study identifies a strategy for removing unneeded paving, diverting roadway runoff, and incorporating green infrastructure designed to retain stormwater preventing degradation and contamination of Soapstone Valley.

These strategies will help meet the District's aggressive standards for 1.2 inches of stormwater retention in the public right of way.

In addition to green infrastructure, bicycle parking and recycling cans can be added to the Commercial District's wide sidewalks. Greater access to recycling facilities ensures that more waste is diverted from landfills, while increased bicycle parking enables more people to visit the district sustainably.

The following recommendations depict how Van Ness can build on the Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Pilot Project and UDC's CAUSES program to implement long term environmental sustainability.



### PERMEABLE PAVERS

New paving aligned with the tree planting that would allow water from the sidewalk to move into the root zone.

### TREE SPACE + PLANTING

A pavement removal zone that preserves existing trees, introduces plantings at ground level, yet is lined underneath with an impermeable liner to prevent water from impacting utilities.

### INFILTRATION ZONE

Areas within the tree planting zone that allow water to infiltrate into the soil. An underdrain may be necessary if soil infiltration rates do not allow for sufficient percolation.

This diagram depicts how public space in Van Ness can be redesigned to incorporate more landscaping and gathering places while incorporating green infrastructure that reduces stormwater runoff. For more information about this diagram please see *Shades of Green: The Green Infrastructure and Paving Removal Strategy for Van Ness*, a complementary study produced through a Transportation Land Use Connections Grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

## SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

**VISION:** The Van Ness Commercial District will feature environmentally sensitive design and build an identity around the corridor's sustainable features.

- 1 LEVERAGE THE COMMUNITY AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AROUND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT.**  
Examples include achieving improved performance in energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, transportation access and tenant engagement. Recommend physical urban design and public space changes, such as green infrastructure, efficient lighting and renewable energy generation that reduce costs and contribute to a more sustainable community.
- 2 INCORPORATE GREEN STORMWATER STRATEGIES INTO THE LANDSCAPE AMENITY ZONE.**  
The landscape amenity zones that buffer pedestrians from automotive traffic can also support infrastructure that collects, cleans, and slows stormwater, reducing the impact of the built environment on the natural environment. See page 16 for more information about the landscape amenity zones.
- 3 SUPPORT PROVISIONS IN PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS THAT ENCOURAGE DEVELOPERS TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE GREEN BUILDING ACT REQUIREMENTS.**  
LEED Gold or Platinum equivalent buildings provide significant efficiency increases that reduce energy and water consumption and reduce runoff over LEED Silver buildings.
- 4 REPLACE STREETLIGHTS WITH NEW LIGHT-EMITTING-DIODE (LED) TECHNOLOGY BY WORKING WITH THE DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DDOT).**  
LED streetlights use much less energy than traditional streetlights while providing high quality light. Note that LED lighting should be incorporated into either existing or new fixtures. For additional information about streetlight fixtures, please see public space recommendation six on page 19.
- 5 ENCOURAGE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS TO INSTALL RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS BY CONNECTING THEM WITH LOCAL SOLAR COOPS, RENEWABLE ENERGY REBATES, OR THE DC SUSTAINABLE ENERGY UTILITY.**  
The large commercial and institutional buildings lining this corridor have significant opportunities to reduce their energy usage by adding renewable energy systems.
- 6 WORK WITH THE NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE TO ENCOURAGE ONGOING PROGRAMING AND MAINTENANCE OF SOAPSTONE VALLEY.**  
Soapstone Valley is a valuable community asset. A partnership between the National Parks Service, Van Ness Main Street, or another Commercial District management entity will enhance the community by maximizing this important natural asset.
- 7 WORK WITH THE GREAT STREETS OR DC MAIN STREET PROGRAM TO IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN A PUBLIC RECYCLING PROGRAM.**  
A public recycling program can help divert a significant amount of waste from landfills, increasing sustainability.
- 8 ENCOURAGE PROPERTY OWNERS TO INSTALL GREEN OR COOL ROOFS.**  
Green roofs improve the environment by reducing stormwater runoff while retaining less heat than traditional asphalt roofs. The District Department of Energy and the Environment offers incentives for property owners to install green roofs on their property.
- 9 PURSUE A UDC SUSTAINABILITY SHOWCASE ALONG THE CORRIDOR.**  
Demonstrations of UDC's sustainability leadership will strengthen the role sustainability plays in the identity of Van Ness and provide positive exposure and public recognition for UDC's investments.

The numbers corresponding with each strategy indicates the priority for implementation.

## COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

There are a number of properties in the Study Area that are candidates for redevelopment. In some cases, property owners are considering redevelopment, in others, tenants are vacating or, existing buildings are not built to the full capacity allowed by current zoning.

Many sites are underbuilt relative to zoning. Every property fronting Connecticut Avenue in the Study Area is zoned C-3-A with the exception of a portion of UDC's campus. Properties zoned C-3-A can be developed by-right as mixed use buildings with maximum lot occupancy of 75 percent for residential uses and 100 percent for other uses, a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 4.0 for residential and 2.5 for other uses, and a maximum height of 65 feet. Planned Unit Developments in C-3-A can be as

tall as 90 feet and allow for higher FAR and lot occupancy.

Many buildings in the Study Area are more than three stories tall. These buildings make good use of development potential and are not likely redevelopment opportunities in the current market. In the land use analysis, eleven parcels were identified (see map below) that have not been recently developed or renovated and have structures of three stories or less. Additionally, three buildings have large retail spaces that can be repositioned to meet the needs of more retailers.

Each of these sites could potentially redevelop in the next 5 to 10 years. Each has the opportunity to replace existing conditions with more retail-appropriate space, a more continuous and inviting

public space and the types of retailers that are in line with current market demand.

New development has the opportunity to catalyze the transformation of the Van Ness section of Connecticut Avenue into a true vibrant street. Some redevelopment is already underway: the Park Van Ness building at 4455 Connecticut Avenue, NW, which is slated to include approximately 9,000 square feet of ground floor retail; and the UDC Student Center at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street. The new Student Center will directly engage with the corridor through new public space and increased interaction between UDC and Connecticut Avenue.

## COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY MAP



## COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY STRATEGIES

**VISION:** The Van Ness Commercial District will provide an environment conducive to new development that complements a vibrant Commercial District.

**1 FOSTER A CONTINUED DIALOGUE BETWEEN COMMUNITY LEADERS AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS.**

A healthy dialogue between community leaders and commercial property owners helps align priorities and resources to create mutually beneficial outcomes.

**2 POSITION RETAIL TO ENHANCE THE OFFICE LEASING MARKET.**

A strong neighborhood retail market that is inclusive of the office market can encourage new office tenants to lease space in the neighborhood. A more successful office market also strengthens the retail market by adding more potential customers.

**3 PRIORITIZE INVESTMENTS IN THE WESTERN METRO PLAZA CLUSTER.**

Redeveloping and remodeling the commercial properties in the Western Metro Plaza cluster will help establish a positive retail identity for Van Ness. These properties can form a row of high performing retail spaces that will define the Commercial District's identity.

**4 SUPPORT REDEVELOPMENT OF LOW-SCALE BUILDINGS INTO VERTICALLY MIXED USE BUILDINGS WITH GROUND FLOOR RETAIL.**

Unused building height permitted by existing zoning is an opportunity for the private sector to redevelop existing buildings to better connect with current market demand. Redevelopment of obsolete buildings will introduce contemporary retail space that is more attractive to retail tenants while expanding the immediate retail customer base.

**5 EXTEND RETAIL SPACES TO THE BUILDING EDGE.**

New construction should follow the building line with retail entrances and windows directly lining the building face. Entrances should not be recessed because retailers have lower visibility in these spaces. Existing arcades and recessed entryways should be built out to the building line when possible.

The numbers corresponding with each strategy indicates the priority for implementation.

## UDC FACILITIES

UDC has a major presence in Van Ness, and its facilities can play a significant role in the repositioning of this Commercial District. The soon-to-be-completed student center which will anchor the southern end of the neighborhood is a great start. The facility will add contemporary architecture and an active ground floor where students and neighbors can gather.

The Law School, also known as Building 52, located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Yuma Street, has tremendous potential to further enhance the community by modernizing the ground floor retail spaces. Extending the storefronts to the property line and adding modern signage that engages vehicles and pedestrians will improve retail performance in the building.

Additionally, repositioning and activating the retail bays in Building 52 will create a contiguous retail experience that is critical for reestablishing the community's retail identity. These improvements can incorporate design cues from the new student center to more clearly extend UDC's identity to Connecticut Avenue.

UDC is a sustainability leader both in its facilities and programs. Many of the University's green practices like Building 44's new green roof are not visible to the public. UDC has the opportunity to extend its image as a sustainability leader, by constructing an accessible showcase of their best practices.

Reinvigorating UDC's connection to Connecticut Avenue can be catalytic for the University and the community by creating a new opportunity for social intersection. Facilities like the amphitheater are ideal locations to unify the campus and residential communities.

### Key Opportunities

- Build out Law School's arcade (Building 52).
- Develop a sustainability showcase highlighting the leading practices in place on the campus.
- Partner with local organizations to increase programming of campus facilities like the amphitheater.



Built out arcade on the UDC Law School building



## ACTIVATING THE METRO ENTRANCE

Metro is a tremendous asset for the Van Ness Community. Like all complex systems, Metrorail stations need maintenance from time to time. WMATA has announced that the western entrance to the Van Ness Station will be closing for extended periods over the next three years to accommodate upgrades to escalators throughout the station. Over the long term, this investment will improve the customer experience at the station. However, in the short term, the project presents a challenge for enacting this Action Strategy.

The periodic closures present an opportunity to make a statement about the new Van Ness. While work is underway, a combination of art, activity, and wayfinding can be leveraged to revitalize the surrounding spaces, to generate interest during transition. Using rapidly deployable and temporary strategies can take advantage of the disruption as a catalyst for change.

Partners like UDC, WMATA, Fannie Mae, and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities can make leading investments in public art and creative place-making that can mitigate disruption to the station and start building an identity around the western entrance as a community focal point. Bold art installations will draw attention to all of the positive changes already in place like the new UDC student center and Park Van Ness. Activities such as musical performances, farmers markets, and community festivals can activate public space while creating opportunities to highlight assets, including the UDC amphitheater, student center, and performing arts center. Wayfinding signs also allow the community to express an artistic identity while highlighting local businesses, parks, and arts institutions such as the Levine School of Music and others. Using these strategies will make connections between catalytic investments throughout the community.

### Key Opportunities

- Improve wayfinding to nearby attractions.
- Activate public space during Metro entrance closures.
- Install distinctive public art.

# PUBLIC SPACE IMPLEMENTATION

**Vision:** The Van Ness Commercial District will be defined by attractive, activated and landscaped streets with spaces for retail, interaction and gathering for residents, students and workers.

PRIORITY	STRATEGY	TIMELINE	LEAD ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
1	Implement the Green Infrastructure Study.	Long Term	District Department of Transportation	District Department of Energy and the Environment Van Ness Main Street
2	Create a linear public space that softens and greens the corridor.	Mid Term	District Department of Transportation	DC Office of Planning Van Ness Main Street
3	Create focal points through public art that activate public spaces within each retail cluster.	Short to Mid Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities WMATA
4	Establish urban design guidelines that visually unify Van Ness.	Short Term	DC Office of Planning	District Department of Transportation
5	Differentiate public space with three distinct use zones.	Long Term	District Department of Transportation	DC Office of Planning Van Ness Main Street
6	Replace cobrahead streetlights with twin-twenty or teardrop streetlights.	Mid Term	District Department of Transportation	DC Office of Planning Van Ness Main Street
7	Brand the Commercial District with banners mounted on light poles.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
8	Implement a way-finding system.	Mid Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities DC Office of Planning
9	Incorporate bicycle parking into the streetscape.	Long Term	District Department of Transportation	Van Ness Main Street
10	Support temporary placemaking initiatives and plaza activation.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Office of Planning DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
11	Work with institutional and community partners to activate Windom Place.	Long Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Office of Planning

Short Term 1-2 years, Mid Term 2-5 years, Long Term 5-10 years

**VISION:** The Van Ness Commercial District will be reinvented with a new identity and brand through management, repositioned retail spaces, and catalytic events.

PRIORITY	STRATEGY	TIMELINE	LEAD ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
1	Develop and promote a cohesive and appealing retail identity.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development DC Office of Planning
2	Express a unique identity for each retailer.	Short to Mid Term	Commercial Property Owners Van Ness Main Street	Department of Small and Local Business Development Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
3	Extend retail brands toward the street	Mid Term	Commercial Property Owners Van Ness Main Street	DC Office of Planning DC Department of Transportation
4	Support repositioning of retail spaces in the UDC Law School building.	Mid Term	UDC	Van Ness Main Street
5	Reinforce distinct retail clusters.	Long Term	Van Ness Main Street	Department of Small and Local Business Development
6	Ensure retail spaces have adequate dimensions for contemporary retail tenants.	Long Term	Commercial Property Owners	DC Office of Planning Van Ness Main Street
7	Develop a coordinated marketing approach highlighting the Van Ness retail identity and strong consumer base.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	Washington DC Economic Partnership
8	Support the Van Ness Main Street efforts to catalyze the Van Ness Commercial District.	Long Term	Department of Small and Local Business Development	Van Ness Main Street DC Office of Planning
9	Support a formal commercial district management organization.	Short Term	Department of Small and Local Business Development	Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development DC Office of Planning
10	Market the corridor through periodic retail and arts/cultural events.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities DC Office of Planning

Short Term 1-2 years, Mid Term 2-5 years, Long Term 5-10 years

# SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION

**VISION:** Make Van Ness a precedent example for comprehensive sustainability.

PRIORITY	STRATEGY	TIMELINE	LEAD ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
1	Leverage the community and local institutions to identify opportunities for collaboration around sustainability in the Commercial District.	Long Term	District Department of Energy and the Environment	DC Office of Planning UDC
2	Incorporate green stormwater strategies into the landscape amenity zone.	Mid to Long Term	District Department of Transportation	District Department of Energy and the Environment DC Water
3	Support provisions in PUDs that encourage developers to go above and beyond the Green Building Act requirements.	Long Term	DC Office of Planning	Van Ness Main Street Commercial Property Owners
4	Replace streetlights with new light-emitting-diode (LED) technology by working with DDOT.	Mid Term	District Department of Transportation	Van Ness Main Street
5	Encourage residential and commercial property owners to install renewable energy systems.	Long Term	District Department of Energy and the Environment	Van Ness Main Street
6	Work with the National Parks Service to encourage ongoing programing and maintenance of Soapstone Valley.	Long Term	Van Ness Main Street	National Park Service DC Office of Planning
7	Work with the Great Streets or DC Main Street program to implement and maintain a public recycling program.	Short Term	Van Ness Main Street	Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development DC Department of Public Works
8	Encourage property owners to install green or cool roofs.	Long Term	District Department of Energy and the Environment	Van Ness Main Street DC Office of Planning
9	Pursue a UDC sustainability showcase along the corridor.	Mid Term	University of the District of Columbia	District Department of Energy and the Environment DC Office of Planning

Short Term 1-2 years, Mid Term 2-5 years, Long Term 5-10 years

**VISION:** These strategies will foster an environment conducive to new development that complements a vibrant Commercial District.

PRIORITY	STRATEGY	TIMELINE	LEAD ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
1	Foster a continued dialogue between community leaders and commercial property owners.	Long Term	Van Ness Main Street	DC Office of Planning
2	Position retail to enhance the office leasing market.	Long Term	Commercial Property Owners	Van Ness Main Street Washington DC Economic Partnership
3	Prioritize investments in the Western Metro Plaza cluster.	Short Term	Commercial Property Owners	Van Ness Main Street
4	Support redevelopment of low-scale buildings into vertically mixed use buildings with ground floor retail.	Long Term	DC Office of Planning	Van Ness Main Street
5	Extend retail spaces to the building edge.	Long Term	Commercial Property Owners	DC Office of Planning Van Ness Main Street

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy will be realized through a partnership between the District of Columbia, property owners, and community stakeholders. Each group has its own role to play and each must actively work with the others.

The Action Strategy was developed in response to a community-led effort by the ANC 3F Van Ness Vision Committee to reinvigorate the community.

Today, the Van Ness Vision Committee has evolved into the independent Van Ness Main Street organization. They will take on the day-to-day leadership role for local implementation of the Action Strategy for the Commercial District, in particular, leading the effort to optimize retail through developing branding, marketing, and technical assistance and by continuing advocacy.

Private property owners have a range

of opportunities to help realize this vision including redeveloping their property, repositioning spaces within their buildings, improving signage, and improving the space in front of their buildings.

The District of Columbia will align its resources to support the vision in a number of ways such as identifying programs and resources to achieve both short and long term goals.

Van Ness is part of the Connecticut Avenue Great Streets Corridor. Great Streets is the District's multi-year, multi-agency, commercial revitalization program led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). Through the Great Streets program, DMPED, the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and the DC Office of Planning

will provide support to the Van Ness Commercial District by building on the retail studies, public space analysis, sustainability initiatives, and small business grants that have already been developed.

Appendix B: Comprehensive Plan Analysis and Background highlights the Comprehensive Plan's policies and actions for Van Ness. The Appendix demonstrates how the Action Strategy's recommendations are aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.

Additionally, the Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP), a non-profit partnership between the District of Columbia and the local business community, will be a key partner for connecting Van Ness to organizations and businesses looking for new opportunities. WDCEP actively positions, promotes, and supports economic development and business

opportunities throughout the District and in neighborhood commercial areas. They engage businesses and investors to support economic development in the community.

This Action Strategy demonstrates how public space in the Commercial District is a key asset for building a new identity. The Action Strategy identifies both short and long term strategies for public space. Van Ness Main Street will lead the short term strategies which use lower cost, temporary strategies to change perceptions and use of the Commercial District.

The District Department of Transportation manages public space in the District. They will take the lead on long term public space strategies and provide guidance and oversight for short term public space strategies.

## PARTNERSHIP

### KEY GROUPS

Public Sector

The public Sector includes governmental entities like OP, DMPED, DDOT, DSLBD, DOEE, WMATA, and UDC.

Private Sector

The Private Sector includes real estate developers, bankers, and Property managers.

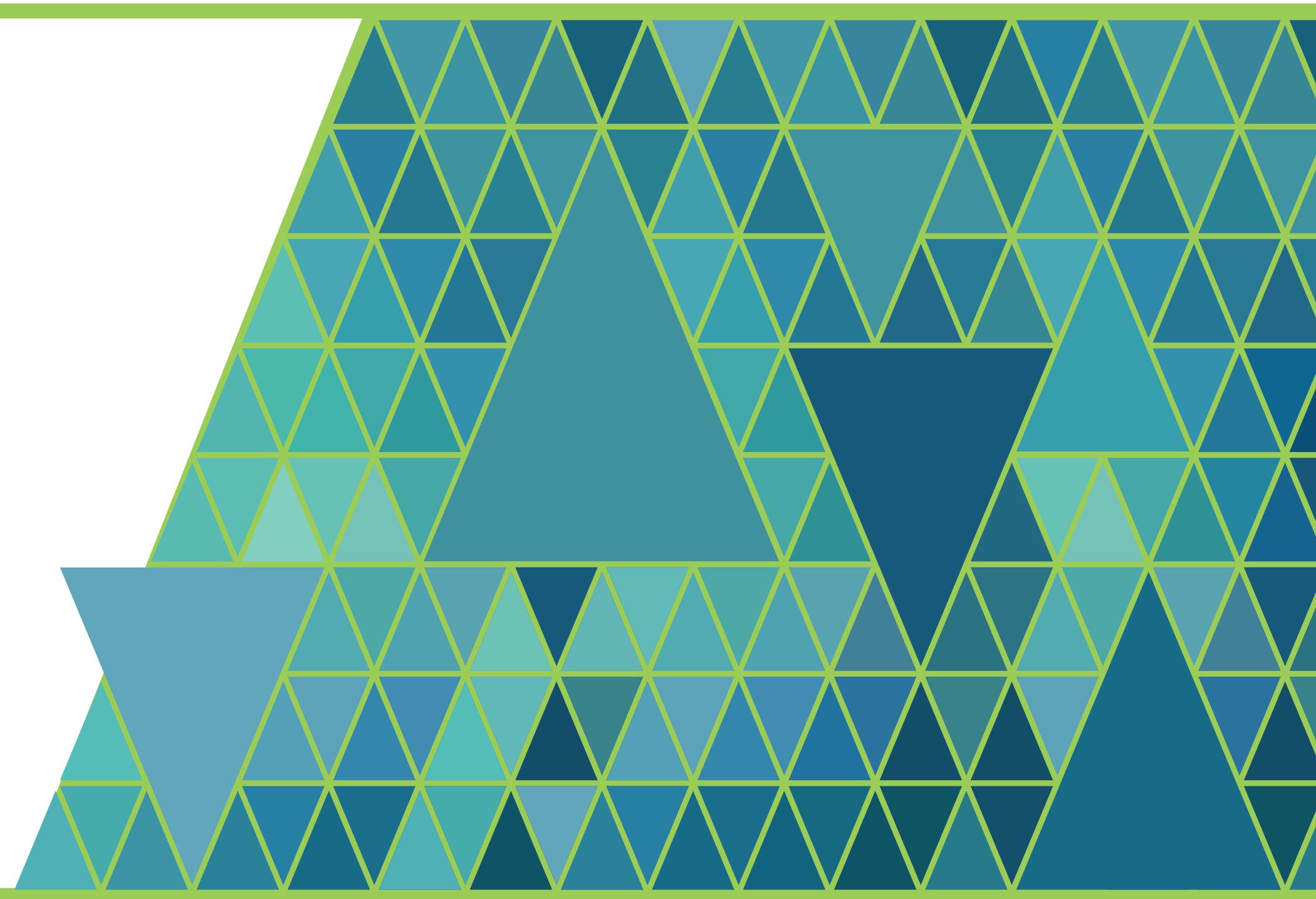
Community Stakeholders

Community Stakeholders include the ANC 3F and Van Ness Main Street.

### PARTNERSHIP MODELS



Partnership is the key to mutually beneficial implementation of the Action Strategy. In most cases the public sector, private sector, and community stakeholders can work in partnership to improve the outcomes for everyone. However, in some cases, two party partnership might be more impactful. For example, ANC 3F and the Office of Planning have collaborated for years to reposition Van Ness. Additionally, separate public sector entities like WMATA or UDC can align priorities and resources with District Agencies. Finally, Van Ness Main Street has also proven that direct community public partnership can yield powerful benefits. Ultimately, implementation of a renewed identity for Van Ness is stronger through partnerships.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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\* On behalf of the Project Team and the community, we would like to thank former ANC Commissioner Karen Perry who passed away before the Action Strategy was finished. Commissioner Perry was a long time leader and vocal advocate for the Van Ness Community.



streetsense.

