VISION PLAN
Howard Street/University Center
INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first phase of the Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC). The SAAC process is part of the Red Line’s public involvement program.

What role did the SAACs fulfill?

SAACs are advisory to the MTA. Each SAAC was extremely helpful and provided input about their community and how the proposed station location would “behave” in their community. The SAACs functioned as a focus group. The SAACs have three major responsibilities:

• Vision Planning
• Station Design and Goals
• Sharing Information

This document summarizes the SAAC’s activities regarding Vision Planning and Station Location. The Vision Plans for each SAAC summarize the first half of the SAAC efforts. The second half of the effort will focus on Station Design and Goals. The meetings for this effort started in October of 2010 and concluded in early spring of 2011. The documentation of the Station Design and Goals efforts will be an addendum to the Vision Plans.

During the Vision Planning process, each SAAC decided on their station area’s boundaries; examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their areas; and reviewed the connectivity elements for the proposed station locations. The SAACs not only examined what existed, but also thought about the potential for their areas. They also reviewed the station locations in relation to the Vision Plan for their station area. In some of the SAAC areas, it was confirmed that the station location was in keeping with the community goals and in other instances station locations were modified. Each Vision Plan explains the elements of the Visioning Process and the Station Location.

Once the SAACs completed their Vision Plan and confirmed their desired Station Location, Open Houses were held for the general public. These Open Houses were extensively advertised and over 400 citizens attended. There were four Open House sessions; each one focused on a different portion of the Red Line corridor. The areas were West – Baltimore County, Route 40 West, Downtown and the Eastside. At these Open Houses, the draft Vision Plans were discussed with the community and feedback was obtained. After this public feedback, the SAAC members revisited their Vision Plans to ensure, “Did we get it right?” The Vision Plans are the result of this effort.
STATION AREA VISION PLAN

Station Area Defined (analysis):
What do we see? What do we know? What is our Vision Area?

Analysis

a) Physical Boundaries

This station area is located in the downtown Central Business District (CBD) along Lombard Street between South Eutaw and South Howard Streets.

Recognizing that most persons are willing to walk about 5-minutes, approximately ¼-mile, to transit and some persons will extend that to a 10-minute walk of approximately ½-mile, the SAAC identified boundaries for their Vision Area. This station location is within the downtown street network, which is a classic urban grid. While maps illustrate a general walking zone depicted as a ½-mile or ¼-mile radius, the group determined that actual travel paths follow the street network grid. This and other factors also impact the length of the travel path. One factor was the sense of security a pedestrian may have walking along certain blocks. Some blocks are perceived as safer than others, and the level of safety differs from block-to-block. The SAAC felt that if the shortest path to and from the station is not perceived as safe, some patrons will either lengthen their travel to avert potential trouble spots, entirely avoid the route or not use the Red Line. The group also considered that patrons may walk a bit further in an established grid street network in a downtown area vs. irregular network patterns in a less urban setting.

With these considerations, the SAAC identified the main destinations within the area across a five to seven block area and determined that the physical boundaries are defined: to the west by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK); to the south by Oriole Park in Camden Yards; to the east by Hopkins Place; and to the north by Franklin Street. Figure 1 shows the Station Area.

b) Existing Conditions/Context

This station area in the downtown CBD is in a neighborhood of varying uses, including businesses, retail, offices, cultural and civic facilities, sporting arenas, hospitality and entertainment services (which include numerous hotels and restaurants), mid and high-rise residential developments, and institutional and educational facilities. Figure 2 delineates Uses.

The University of Maryland’s professional campus occupies the largest acreage within the station area boundaries. It includes the University Medical Center and the University professional schools. The professional schools include the Schools of Dentistry, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work and inter-professional graduate work. It is the founding campus of the University of Maryland system with a daily population of more than 25,000 faculty, students, patients, visitors and staff. The campus employs approximately 7,000 persons and is responsible for 18,000 jobs in the state.
The University has a master plan for the campus and encourages collaboration with the MTA and its plans for transit planning in this area. The master plan considers a campus identity with defined campus edges using prominent borders, improved portals, green/open spaces, pedestrian friendly paths and plazas, traffic calming measures, good neighborhood connectivity and sustainable design initiatives. It also proposes to reduce traffic through the campus and to encourage bike and pedestrian movement. The master plan strives to provide a safer and more pedestrian friendly connection across MLK Boulevard to its expanding UMB Health Research Park campus to the west.

On and around the campus, there are prominent landmarks such as Davidge Hall, the oldest building for medical use in the country. Another is the historic site of Edgar Allen Poe’s Gravesite and Westminster Burial Ground at the center of the campus (Greene and Fayette Streets).

Another key employer in the area is the Social Security Administration (SSA) to the north. This facility is to be used by SSA for the next two years, after which SSA will be relocated to another TOD site in Baltimore City. It is anticipated that this building will be reused for another office or institutional use.

The Lexington Market and the surrounding commercial uses are at the northern end of the Vision Area. There are also commercial uses along Pratt Street between the campus and the Inner Harbor.

Over the past decade the City and Downtown Partnership have been working to create a 24-hour city by bringing more residential uses to downtown. The City Crescent Building is one example.

This station is also anticipated to serve major events and attractions including: Oriole Park at Camden Yards, the Ravens stadium, the Convention Center, the Arena and the Hippodrome Theater.

This area is served by an extensive bus network (Figure 3) with several key lines having transfers and stops along Lombard, Pratt, Baltimore, Howard, Eutaw, Paca, Saratoga and Greene Streets. Routes include the 7, 10, 11, 15, 23, 40, 150 and the Charm City Circulator Orange Route. The Charm City Circulator is a free bus that has its route connecting downtown locations. The most likely locations for Red Line transfers would be along Lombard Street at Howard Street, Hopkins Place, Greene Street and Eutaw Street. See Figure 3: Intermodal Connections and Figure 4: Pedestrian Access.

Along the metro subway’s west to east line from Owings Mills to Johns Hopkins Hospital, the system’s closest stops are at the perimeter of the Red Line station area within the 5-minute walk zone, at Charles Center to the east and Lexington Market to the north. Connection is made at Howard Street from the Red Line to the existing light rail, running north-south from Hunt Valley to BWI Airport/Cromwell/Glen Burnie and Penn Street to Camden Yards. This line provides further access to the MARC commuter rail at Camden Yards. The Red Line transit line is a part of the State/City and MTA’s greater regional transit vision plan that encourages connectivity system wide. As a result the SAAC recognized the importance of the intermodal connection at Howard Street to the existing light rail and the benefit system-wide, considering that 60-percent of downtown employees commute by car vs. 40-percent that currently use mass transit.
c) Stabilization Area vs. Redevelopment Area

This station area is considered to be stable mainly because of the established uses related to the University campus and the CBD. However, immediately to the north and east of the campus there have been several years of disappointing economic activity. There have been growing pockets of instability as streets with intermittent business activity have expanded to blocks of predominant vacancies. This is evident along Howard Street, north of Baltimore Street and along the desolate street malls around the Lexington Market area.

The SAAC recommended that retail around the University campus be redeveloped to become more attractive to students and University personnel.

The SAAC acknowledged that many alternative groups at various times have studied the redevelopment of the Westside, and proposed various plans to initiate and revitalize stressed pockets and blocks west of Charles Street, including the “super block” plans and the arena site. The “super block” is bounded by Baltimore, Park, Fayette and Howard Streets. As a result the SAAC believes the focus should be on enhancing the pedestrian experience in their station area by building on the private and public studies that have already been done, or are ongoing in the area. This in turn will increase walkability and encourage economic activity, which spurs street life and contributes to safe, secure, livable and workable neighborhoods.

Station Area Vision: What changes? What stays the same? What do we value?

Values

The Westside has a mixed character, and although it has not seen the level of redevelopment experienced by the developments of Inner Harbor East and Harbor Point, it represents an older section of the city that contains larger former loft factory structures that are good for loft residential conversions and open space offices. This provides a certain charm to this section of the city. Many of these types of developments have been completed and the SAAC believes they should continue. They think, however, that the success of this area is not only dependent on strong connections between key areas, but that there is also the need for substantial private-public partnerships that will foster investment in the Westside and take advantage of the existing building stock and street network.

a) Within the vision area, the strengths include:

The Hippodrome Theatre; the University of Maryland Campus and the UMB Health Research Park; the Civic Center; the ball parks; and the hotels all provide anchors in the community.
b) **Weaknesses and Threats include:**

The historic Howard Street retail corridor has sporadic business; there are blocks of vacant buildings scattered throughout the station area. The CSX freight train tunnel under Howard Street limits the location for this underground station.

MLK is seen as a wide barrier separating the west end of the CBD from the communities immediately west. Altering its character to enhance connectivity at main east-west arteries, such as Baltimore and Saratoga Streets, will strengthen the character of the communities on both sides of MLK.

c) **Opportunities include:**

Redevelopment of the First Mariner Arena site has the potential to reintroduce the urban street grid that is now blocked by the arena. Returning Redwood Street would encourage a pedestrian link between the Charles Center area of downtown and the University Center.

The Lexington Market is a unique shopping experience. The reinvigoration of this market, and the provision of an appropriate mix of uses, could help provide an anchor for the retail area.

The 700 block of Washington Boulevard has the potential to provide for uses, such as art galleries, music lounges, wine stores and bakeries. *See Figure 5: Economic Opportunities.*

Goals: What are our Vision Area Goals? What do we want to see for the future?

**Guiding Principles**

The SAAC examination of the Station Area determined what was of value to the community and their vision for the area. They assisted in developing guiding principles that were adopted and applied. These included considerations for Land Use, both existing and proposed, or having the potential for change; economic activity and any measures for job creation; plans by the Downtown Partnership, public or private, to spur revitalization or development in the area; regional transit and local plans that utilize the strengths intermodal network in the CBD; the need for enhanced connectivity using various means of street improvements, identifying key anchor sites, calming wide and heavily traveled streets; increasing walkability; embracing any city, state and private initiatives for sustainability in the CBD; working with key downtown stakeholders such as the University of Maryland, local authorities and the municipality to maintain safe and secure blocks throughout the station area.

**Vision Statement**

The Howard Street/University Center is defined as a Regional TOD Area Type because of the existing and extensive transit network of light rail, metro, bus, commuter train, and the downtown circulator. This station location is the central hub for City residents and the out-lying suburbs as far out as Hunt Valley, Cromwell/Glen Burnie, Owings Mills, and the D.C. area. All of these areas’ transit rail line access converge and allow for traverse at this station location.
In conjunction with the strong interconnected modes of transit, the station area’s urban make-up is comprised of major academic, medical, civic, and governmental institutions; entertainment and cultural venues; and significant mixed-use retail, residential, and hospitality uses.

The goal of the SAAC is to change the neighborhood character of the area west of Charles Street from an area that is weak, with many of the older buildings that are sporadically revitalized blocks with a high percentage of vacancies, and boarded up storefronts, to one with “living” streets that contain street life that extends past business hours into the night, comparable with the developments at Harbor East. The desire is to increase walkability in this neighborhood by using the various transit intermodal points as nodes that can spur economic activity along key street connections, such as Howard, Eutaw, Baltimore, Lombard and Saratoga Streets. This effort will provide downtown Baltimore with a well connected livable neighborhood on the west side with safe walkable streets through contextual and historic neighborhoods filled with vibrant businesses, active sporting, entertainment, civic and cultural venues, important academic, medical and government institutions, all served by a well connected transit network.

The Howard Street/University Center station is planned as a campus station as it is located at the easternmost edge of the UMB academic and medical institution. The University’s service to the community, city, and region in the fields of health care, research, and education provides a significant presence within downtown. In addition, the projected growth and daily population of more than 25,000 faculty, students, staff, patients, and visitors anchors the station area within an already established urban district.

**STATION CONCEPT**

**Station Location**

**Platform Location/Behavior**

The station is an underground station that is planned with a center platform alignment under Lombard Street between South Eutaw and South Howard Streets. The adjacency to the existing at grade Howard Street Station of the LRT provides for ease of ridership connections and transfers. The proximity to the existing CSX tunnel, the proximity to the UMB campus, and available open spaces for access zones all dictate the location ideally to the west of Howard Street.

The SAAC emphasized the need for seamless passenger transfers within existing and proposed transit systems in order to provide the most successful networks; the Red Line should reinforce intermodal connectivity. Thus, the alignment as close as possible to Howard Street is seen as facilitating viable walking and visible connections to surface and underground transfer points to the Howard Street LRT. In order to address the proximity to the CSX tunnel, the station box location is preferred on the west side of Howard Street. In turn, various station access options are available in open spaces, such as the surface parking...
lots along Lombard and Eutaw Streets or sidewalk areas along Howard Street. Within the station area, the station entrance is a central access node that must balance the key areas served, bound by Howard Street LRT to the east, the metro to the immediate north, UMB campus to the immediate west, and the ball parks, hotels, and the MARC commuter train to the immediate south. See Figure 6: Potential Station Access.

Platform Type

This is an underground station planned with a center platform configuration accessed from carefully positioned entrances at street level.

Alignment Issues

Underground station configuration based on various factors, including optimal tunneling applications, dependent in part on the area’s current geology. The sub-surface conditions in the CBD generally favor a deeper alignment profile resulting in platforms located deeper than 60 feet below the street.

Additionally, because the station is planned relatively close to Howard Street, within 2-blocks, the Red Line’s east to west alignment needs to be deep enough to clear the existing CSX freight tunnel running beneath Howard Street. This also impacts the final location of the station platform.

Station Performance & Station Image – Neighborhood Identity

The document summarized the Vision Plan and Station Location efforts of the SAAC. This concludes the first phase of the SAAC efforts.

The second phase of the efforts begins in October 12 2011 and is anticipated to run through early Spring 2012. During this second phase, the SAACs will focus on Station Performance and Station Image. The discussions will include elements such as:

Urban Design and Site Planning: This will cover the functional relationship of the station to the neighborhood. The SAAC will review station orientation, accessibility, landscape/hardscape opportunities, and vision and physical connectivity (pedestrian, bicycle and auto – intermodal).

Station Programming: This will include discussions on system-wide standard elements and elements that may become “customized” per neighborhood station.

Station Image–Neighborhood Identity: The SAAC will discuss special neighborhood features, art in transit and recommend station names.

The outcome of the second phase of SAAC efforts will be documented as an addendum to the Vision Plan.
Howard St./University Center - Station Area

Adjacent Red Line Stations
1. Poppleton Station Area
2. Charles Center Station Area

Key Landmarks
1. Lexington Market
2. Metro Stop
3. Hippodrome Theatre
4. UMB Square Park
5. 1st Mariner Arena
6. Convention Center
7. Oriole Park
8. Camden Yards Station
9. Oriole Park
10. UMB Law School
11. UMB Biopark Bldg 2
12. MSTF Building
13. UM Medical Center
14. Medical Bio Center
15. Allied Health Center
16. School of Nursing
17. HS & HSL Building
18. UMB University Suites
19. UMB Biopark Bldg 1
20. UM Medical Center
21. Medical Bio Center
22. Allied Health Center
23. School of Nursing
24. HS & HSL Building

Fig. 1

Howard St./University Center Station #11
Rail Station Design Open House

Red Line Surface Alignment
Red Line Tunnel Alignment
Approx. Station Location
Primary Corridors
Peripheral Station Area
Marketplace at Fell's Point
LRT Hunt Valley - BWI Airport
LRT Hunt Valley - Cromwell
Station / Glen Burnie
LRT Penn Station - Camden Yards
Metro Owings Mills - Johns Hopkins

Howard St./University Center - Station Area
Adjacent Red Line Stations

1. Poppleton Station Area
2. Charles Center Station Area

Fig. 2 Howard St./University Center - Uses

Key Landmarks

1. Lexington Market
2. Metro Stop
3. Hippodrome Theatre
4. UMB Square Park
5. 1st Mariner Arena
6. Convention Center
7. Oriole Park
8. Camden Yards Station
9. Walter P. Carter Center
10. UMB University Suites
11. UMB Biopark Bldg 1
12. UMB Biopark Bldg 2
13. UMB Law School
14. UMB Biopark Bldg
15. Dental School
17. UM Medical Center
18. Allied Health Center
19. School of Nursing
20. HS & HSL Building
Adjacent Red Line Stations

- Poppleton Station Area
- Charles Center Station Area

Key Landmarks

- Lexington Market
- Metro Stop
- Hippodrome Theatre
- UMB Square Park
- 1st Mariner Arena
- Convention Center
- Oriole Park
- Camden Yards Station
- Walter P. Carter Center
- UMB University Suites
- UMB Biopark Bldg 1
- Pharmacy Hall
- Dental School
- Balt. Vet. Affairs Med. Center
- UMB Law School
- UMB Biopark Bldg 2
- MSTF Building
- UM Medical Center
- Medical Bio Center
- Allied Health Center
- School of Nursing
- HS & HSL Building
Adjacent Red Line Stations

- Poppleton Station Area
- Charles Center Station Area

Key Landmarks

- Lexington Market
- Metro Stop
- Hippodrome Theatre
- UMB Square Park
- 1st Mariner Arena
- Convention Center
- Oriole Park
- Camden Yards Station
- Walter P. Carter Center
- UMB University Suites
- UMB Biopark Bldg 1

Howard St./University Center - Economic Opportunities

Red Line Surface Alignment
Red Line Tunnel Alignment
Approx. Station Location
Station Area Boundary
Primary Corridors
Peripheral Station Area
Area to Reinforce: enhanced business uses, storefront revitalization, facade improvements
Area of Stability
Future Development Opportunities
Major Development Planned
Newly Developed
Howard St./University Center - Potential Station Access Zones

Fig. 6