

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **K Street Urban Design Charrette Panel Releases Recommendations**

**Washington, DC** – A team of design and transportation experts convened by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Downtown Business Improvement District (DBID) prescribes putting a bus-only transitway bordered by two tree-lined medians down the middle of K Street from 11th to 21st Streets in Northwest Washington, D.C.

The panel members unveiled their recommendations today at the NCPC offices following a three-day charrette arranged to examine possible design solutions for K Street. In addition to the transitway and tree-lined medians, the panel also recommends creating two traffic-oriented lanes in each direction on either side of the transitway, widening the sidewalks, planting trees on the sidewalks, and eliminating the existing medians, service lanes, and on-street parking.

K Street, one of the District's major streets and an important east-west connection from Georgetown to Union Station, suffers from serious traffic congestion and a lack of amenities appropriate for such a major transit corridor. The numerous connections, bus routes, and stops can be confusing to those not accustomed to using them and, despite its prominence as home to many of Washington's best known businesses, restaurants, and shops, the street does not evoke a strong sense of place.

“Although K Street is recognized as the heart of Washington's business district, it lacks the strong urban design presence appropriate for the power center of the nation's capital,” said NCPC Executive Director Patti Gallagher. “The charrette teams introduced some exciting design opportunities for this important thoroughfare. They really did an outstanding job in a short period of time.”

NCPC and DBID convened the charrette to build upon a recent District Office of Transportation (DDOT) study on the street. The agencies had four goals in mind:

1. Assess potential transportation alternatives from an urban design perspective.
2. Strengthen K Street's design image to better reflect its stature and importance to the city.

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3. Identify public amenities and other features that would benefit the corridor's workers, transit customers, residents, and visitors.
4. Propose an urban design concept that incorporates a transitway into the existing road and creates a more pedestrian and business-friendly environment.

During the three-day event, the six-member team attended briefing sessions, took walking and driving tours of the street, and met with K Street stakeholders. They then developed several themes before putting their designs to the drawing board. They determined that K Street should be a great street, a green boulevard, a transit corridor, a civic place, and a prominent address.

"K Street presents a very important opportunity for the city of Washington, D.C.," said panel chair Philip Enquist. "An opportunity to create a true main street for this area of the city. Our vision for K Street presents a bold, green, and transit-oriented plan. It is a balanced view but a bold concept with a clear vision and a community focus."

Specific panel recommendations included the following:

- Create a 24-foot-wide transitway in the middle of the street that would initially provide dedicated lanes for buses, including the new Downtown Circulator, but could later be converted to light rail.
- Develop 15-foot-wide medians on either side of the transitway that would be landscaped with trees, providing a green canopy down the center of the street and a secure waiting area for transit passengers.
- Provide two lanes of one-way traffic in 22-foot-wide sections on either side of the medians, and next to the sidewalks.
- Eliminate existing service lanes, side islands, and on-street parking. Current alley uses and delivery functions would be transitioned to side streets.
- Widen sidewalks on both sides of the street to 25 feet, allowing for a row of trees on both sides, and more room for pedestrians and other activities, such as sidewalk cafes.

"This concept enhances the pedestrian environment. Right now the sidewalks are too narrow to provide an effective buffer. Widening them provides the opportunity to expand restaurants and shops and add amenities such as trees, shade, and sidewalk seating," stated panel member Don Miles with the Zimmer, Gunsul, and Frasca Partnership.

"This is an exciting thrust—they have changed the tenor of the conversation from just a transitway to the entire street and system of streets through this great commercial district," added Rich Bradley, DBID executive director.

The panel's recommendations will be considered by DDOT during its K Street redesign planning according to DDOT Director Dan Tangherlini.

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“The District of Columbia has one of the largest central business districts in the nation, yet there is no single, high performance transit link to serve the workers, shoppers, convention attendees, and other visitors who travel this central core,” said Tangherlini. “The city’s goal is to put in place a system of transit, roadway, and infrastructure enhancements that would improve the transit situation and pedestrian mobility, and promote a great street.”

The charrette panel included the following design and transportation experts:

- Philip Enquist – Panel Chair, Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill
- Linda Fuller – Chicago Transit Authority
- Lou Slade – Gorove/Slade Associates, Inc.
- Alistair McIntosh – Sasaki Associates, Inc.
- Don Miles – Zimmer, Gunsul, and Frasca Partnership
- Theodore Wolff – Wolff Clements & Associates

*The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government’s central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.*

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