



DC Public Library

Congress Heights/Parklands-Turner Library

Site Identification Study



Table of Contents

Part 1

Site Identification Study by Key Urban

Part 2

Summary of Initial Stakeholder Engagement

PART 1: Site Identification Study by Key Urban
completed September 30, 2019



District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL)

REAL PROPERTY CONSULTING SERVICES FOR PARKLANDS-TURNER LIBRARY

Contract No: DCPL-2019-C-0055

Parklands-Turner Library Site Identification

TASK 1 SUMMARY REPORT

Scope of Work

DCPL contracted with KeyUrban (KU) to identify a shortlist of suitable locations for the D.C. Public Library's potential 20,000 square foot new permanent library to replace the temporary leased location of the existing Parklands-Turner (P-T) Neighborhood Library branch in Congress Heights. There were two main criteria for the scope. First, the new site should be within ½-mile of the existing temporary branch. Second, the identified site should allow for a library facility that would be owned by the D.C. Public Libraries.

Process

Mapping

KeyUrban mapped a ½ - mile radius of record/tax lots with the present P-T library (1547 Alabama Ave SE) as a center point to define a study area. The maps included layers of streets and building footprints.

Using publicly available District property data and satellite and street view imagery, KU performed a thorough parcel by parcel review within the study area. KU first demarcated and eliminated infeasible lots, including areas of public housing residential development and of general residential character. These areas are infeasible due to the established residential uses with housing already built to the maximum allowable density according to the zoning. KU also highlighted areas of green and open space (including a large cemetery) that would be less preferable to develop. A final consideration involved marking the established institutional parcels throughout the study area – including schools, community centers, and child development centers.

The remaining parcels were identified as promising sites as well as a second tier of sites that also held promise, but posed challenges. Some factors that defined a promising parcel as challenging were: parcels with utility infrastructure (e.g. PEPCO transformer buildings), areas of complex ownership and acquisition (St. Elizabeth's campus –DMPED controlled), school/institutional sites (DCPS / DPR / THEARC), and surrounding parcel character (e.g. parcels nestled within residential areas).

Visual Surveying

After an initial desk review and throughout the identification process, KU conducted several in-person site visits, traversing every block of the study area by car and/or by foot. The iterative visual surveying in concert with the mapping exercises allowed for collecting observations on the identified areas of promise. KU sought out the following conditions to identify potential opportunities: vacant land, underutilized land (not highest and best use), underutilized commercial space, good access to main corridors (e.g. Alabama Ave SE), slated for (re)development, and for sale properties. Periodic reviews noted that there were no properties for sale in the study area that would meet DCPL's needs.

Cataloging

The resulting list of 29 promising sites was cataloged with the following identifiers: Site ID, Address, Square, Lot, Zoning, Owner / Controlling Entity, Lot Size, Notes. Some of these sites included consolidation of several adjacent tax lots to achieve the desired size.

KeyUrban began narrowing the list to fewer than 10 sites leveraging experience and quantitative analysis. KU relied on in-person observations and insights into development best practices to home in on the best areas of promise. Location of retail and civic uses rely on the real estate concepts of anchoring, transportation modalities, access, and concentrations of commercial and retail uses.

KU also initiated contact and conversations with public and private stakeholders to orient its efforts in the community. A meeting with D.C.'s Office of Planning provided insights into future land use plans and community considerations. Initial conversations with representatives at DC's DMPED clarified progress on the St. Elizabeth's East redevelopment plans. Finally, KU made initial inquiries with prominent landowners or developers who controlled sites of interest.

Devising and Applying Metrics

KeyUrban devised a set of 8 metrics to refine its list and arrive at the best three to five sites for consideration. These metrics are listed in Figure 1 below. Future metrics which may be applied to the sites include Development *Viability* and the Relative Development *Cost*. We assigned a score of 1-3 to each metric, as well as a relative weight for each metric, to achieve a highest potential score of 16.5. KU scored the list of sites and arrived at a clear shortlist.

Zoning:	Good Relief Required Poor	Vehicular Traffic:	High Medium Low
Current Library Distance:	< ¼ mile < ½ mile > ½ mile	Pedestrian Traffic:	High Medium Low
Metro Walk (Distance/Quality):	Easy Medium Hard	Status:	Dynamic Established Unknown
Surrounding Uses:	Commercial Mixed Residential	Lot size:	Adequate Relief Required Inadequate

Figure 1 – Metrics

Findings

Combining the metric scores with all analysis performed to date, KeyUrban presents five initial sites along Alabama Ave SE between the present P-T Library and the Congress Heights metro station for DCPL's consideration. A summary of each can be found in Figure 3 – Identified Sites as well as its corresponding map location and aerial images in Figures 4 and 5.

Site	Site Name	Ownership	Size	Zoning	Stakeholders	Considerations
1	WC Smith Giant	W.C. Smith	~22,500-30,000 sq. ft.	MU-5A	W.C. Smith Giant Other retail tenants	Parking requirements Subdivision of lot
2	1444-1454 Alabama	DHCD	~12,981 sq. ft.	RA-1	DHCD Adjacent residential property owners	Size Parking Surrounding uses
3	Malcom X Opportunity Center	DCPS?	~55,000 – 150,000+ sq. ft.	RA-1	DCPS DPR DGS CHCTDC?	Ownership Future use plans Field and facility renovations Condition of existing structures
4	CityPartners at Metro	CityPartners	~81,125 sq. ft.	RA-1 / PUD	CityPartners WMATA DHCD	Ownership Project status Negative perceptions
5	Redbrick St E Parcel 17	Redbrick LMD	~87,120 sq. ft.	StE-17	Redbrick DMPED	Condo retail space Population served Incorporative design

Figure 3 – Identified Sites



Figure 4 - Shortlist Sites Map



Figure 5 - Site Aerials

Site Descriptions

1. [WC Smith Giant](#)

The Giant supermarket parking lot where the current P-T library sits contains a seeming over-abundance of parking spaces. This commercial shopping center is owned by W.C. Smith – a landlord and developer with a strong presence in this neighborhood. KU envisions carving out an approximately 25,000 sq. ft. subdivision of the lot at the front of the property along Alabama Ave SE. This may result in the loss of 80-100 parking spaces. The recent decrease in parking requirements under the new zoning code could accommodate absorption of this loss. The established suburban strip mall character of the site and a longer walk to the metro are slight hindrances, but the MU-5 zoning points to higher density development potential.

2. [1444-1454 Alabama](#)

This assembly of 3 adjacent parcels on the northern side of Alabama Ave SE is located across the street from the existing P-T Library. The lots are controlled by DHCD's Property Acquisition and Disposition Division (PADD), which suggests they are likely slated for housing. The site is well located, with good access to the current library and Metro. Challenging aspects include the small size, the need for significant zoning relief, and the presence of single family homes on both sides.

3. Malcolm X Opportunity Center

This site consists of the former Malcolm X Elementary School and surrounding fields and parking lot. KU noted on its visual survey that at least some of the school structures are vacant. The courts and fields surrounding the site are also undergoing improvements with a DGS contractor: WKM Solutions. Advantages of the site include its large size and prominent location on Alabama Ave near the metro. It is unclear, however, what future plans are for the site or which DC agency (DCPS, DPR, DGS) will control it. KU feels that reactivating this site with a library would be a very attractive proposition for the city.

4. CityPartners at Metro

Four vacant, medium sized residential structures surround the southern escalator entrance of the Congress Heights metro station. These parcels, along with the WMATA owned land between them are subject to a previously approved Planned Unit Development (PUD) by CityPartners – a local developer. CityPartners intends to create a large mixed-use project surrounding the metro entrance with substantial space for retail in which a library condominium unit could be located. Recent media articles point to the developer’s intent to move forward with plans, despite losing control of one of the parcels of the site to a foreclosure by DHCD on the 12-unit apartment building at the corner of Alabama Ave SE and 13th St SE. Advantages of the site include its size and the location on top of the metro. Disadvantages include the negative public perception surrounding the history of the development proposal and initial unresponsiveness of the developer to respond to inquiries.

5. Redbrick St E Parcel 17

DMPED leads the redevelopment efforts for the St. Elizabeth’s East campus, which includes a master plan to guide its efforts. The parcels near the metro station entrance are envisioned as a “Transit Center” with dense commercial uses. St. Elizabeth’s Parcel 17 sits adjacent to the metro’s north entrance along Alabama Ave and is best suited to a potential library space serving the broader community. DMPED awarded this parcel to Redbrick LMD for redevelopment, and initial conversations with the developer reveal plans for two six-story buildings with a total of around 220,000 sq. ft. This site ranks the highest when metrics were applied, and the developers are open to initial conversations about a condo unit for the library in one of their proposed buildings.

PART 2: Summary of Initial Stakeholder Engagement

Summary of Initial Stakeholder Engagement

The Library met with several stakeholders from the community as part of the study. This included representatives from the Friends of the Parklands-Turner Library, the Anacostia Economic Development Corporation, the Congress Heights Community Training & Development Corporation and other stakeholders. Overall, there was general consensus that the community is eager for a new full-service library in the Congress Heights neighborhood, and that a location along the Alabama Avenue corridor, with bus routes, shopping and a Metro stop, is ideal. While no one site rose above the others in terms of preference, the stakeholders did offer some helpful guidance. This included:

- Ensure the location is easily accessible for school students
- If the library is part of a larger, mixed use project, consider the other amenities that are co-located for compatibility with the community's needs.
- Create the library to be responsive to the needs of the entire Congress Heights community.
- Prioritize safe pedestrian access

Next Steps

The Library will begin working with the City on site selection and finalization. Community engagement will be a vital part of this process. Initial funding for a new full-service Congress Heights Library will become available in fiscal year 2022 which begins October 1, 2021.