In November 2013, Ward3Vision invited Ward 3 residents to a “Visioning Workshop” as part of a study of Tenleytown undertaken by graduate students of architecture and planning at Catholic University under the leadership of Associate Professor Hazel Edwards. In small and large groups, the participants discussed the neighborhood’s strengths and weaknesses from an urban planning perspective and tried to envision directions for the future.

On June 13 this year, Ward3Vision held a follow-up session to present a summary of the graduate student study, including the community input from the Visioning Workshop. (See Ward3Vision.org for copies of these documents.) Professor Matt Bell from the University of Maryland School of Architecture then led a discussion based on the issues raised in the study.

Bell created a ‘Letterman Top-Ten List’ of changes that could have significant impact on achieving the goals expressed by neighbors. His Top Ten List and the specific observations and suggestions it generated are listed below, and are not surprising if you know Tenleytown. What is more interesting is that neighbor comments, when asked to envision a future, were very different when that the future is not framed as a threat to which they need to respond with the usual traffic and parking concerns. Challenged to think about ‘what could be,’ Tenleytown neighbors chose to focus on:

1. Placemaking. The entrances to Metro, the Fort Drive space, and others were highlighted as places that could be attractive well-used public spaces if they were designed as good public places.
2. Planning. There was recognition that good planning can take the anxiety out of the development process for both the community and the developers. Now, each project is a ‘one-off’ affair without a community-based framework to guide discussions/negotiations with developers.
3. Green Space. There is too much undifferentiated green space in the area, starting with Tenley Circle itself which is broken up into a number of unrelated patches of grass. There was a lot of discussion about ways to consolidate these areas and make them useable.
4. Uses. Participants clearly agreed that street-level retail that caters to local needs is necessary for walkability and that mixed-use development – residential over retail – should be encouraged on most Wisconsin Avenue blocks. That said, there was considerable discussion about how those uses could respond to a neighborhood that is both aging and increasingly attracting new families.
5. Urban character. There are many qualities that the Tenley neighborhood holds dear, including the proximity of tree-lined low density streets to the more intense commercial area (one resident noted that she loves the feel of living in the suburbs and walking 2 blocks and she is in a city); the town/gown relationship with AU, Wilson, Deal, Janney, GDS, Sidwell, etc; and, the ‘town-like feel’ of the commercial areas. Any new development should enhance, not replace, these qualities.
6. Access. Automobile traffic was discussed, with ideas ranging from the hyper-local (no left turn at this or that intersection) to the big (but questionable) idea of tunneling Wisconsin under Tenley Circle. Everyone recognizes that car traffic needs to be managed. It was also clear that vitality is dependent on getting people to the area, so there was also a desire expressed for bike facilities in all public spaces, and for consideration of shuttle buses like Circulators between Cathedral Commons in Cleveland Park and Friendship Heights.

Please take the time to look over the recommendations and send us your comments. ([info@ward3vision.org](mailto:info@ward3vision.org) ) Ward3Vision hopes to work closely with the DC Office of Planning, Dept. of Transportation, and Economic Development, as well as with WMATA in promoting the need for significant, coordinated planning and incorporating neighborhood input into this process. Stay tuned to our website ([www.ward3vision.org](http://www.ward3vision.org) ) for updates and announcements about future meetings.

# Top Ten Changes as suggested by Matt Bell:

## Activate the front of the Best Buy – add a door and have it be a retail enterprise

### Partner with schools for temporary exhibits

### Or “Café by Best Buy” with franchise coffee shop

## Fill Brandywine Street at Wisconsin with mid-height multifamily residential

### CVS site

### Site on the north side of Brandywine

#### Corner of Brandywine Street is the air shaft for Metro – if building on this, have to look at structural aspects to this.

## Transform the Metro Station area into “Tenley Piazza”

### Good public spaces don’t need to be big, they just need to be designed. Take totally of the space and reimagine it.

### Foggy Bottom area Metro Station changed the whole area

### Before WMATA does their glass shelter over Tenley Station, we should hold a visioning session to propose highest and best use of the piazza.

### Could have public art here.

### Bicycle access to Metro is really important for local residents to get to WMATA – if we want to use the Plaza, have to figure out another solution for bike access.

### Put parking underground below the Fort Drive/Metro area so can turn the area into a pedestrian retail mall

### Improve bike parking so as to provide more car parking for less-mobile residents

## Make a plaza / public space on the triangle at River Road and Wisconsin

### Our “Flat Iron” building (alluding to the triangular shape of the office building in that block).

### It should be public space, not a private garden. Current landscaping is designed as a suburban office park. Landscaping should support the public realm. Work with building owners to change this.

### What is most important about buildings is what they do at the street level. Make the street level something that engages people.

## Build residential over the Whole Food parking deck.

### The Whole Foods here is utilitarian, and does not achieve architecture worth preserving. But it is worth saving the virtues of big box retail combined with in-line small scale retail.

### Hard to get in-line retail these days. (Row house increments) Typically, these days when we redevelop, we get larger footprints, which don’t support small-scale retail. So we should keep the in-line retail, and build over the Whole Foods parking lot.

## Fill in the undefined green space at the east side of Tenley Circle

### This is National Park Service property, but not a good use of public land.

### Buildings at Logan Circle really define the Circle.

#### Logan is a much large circle.

### No definable shape to area around Tenley Circle.

#### May have more streets than we need right around Tenley Circle.

#### Would need to understand bus routes and see how these might be accommodated differently.

### “Let’s not negotiate with ourselves.” Need to talk with all landowners to coordinate better use.

#### Find some places for great public art!!

#### There may be a public art program that could be pursued.

#### Tenley Circle is underwhelming; not much of a public presences.

#### Statue of a female hero.

### Put Wisconsin Ave. under Tenley circle with a tunnel

### Close one block of Fort Dr. off Nebraska and add a left turn onto a continuation of Alton to connect to Fort Drive.

#### Dangerous back-up of cars now waiting to make left onto Fort Drive

#### Proposed change would provide stacking area for left turns

#### Enlarge green space at Tenley Circle by making Fort Drive grass.

### Green areas by Tenley Circle – these could be community gardens – don’t have enough community gardens.

### Green NPS spaces – as someone who doesn’t drive, there are ridiculous number of streets in the area with green spaces that no one uses because bisected by the streets. Shutting off some of the roads could make more residential with park around it.

## Find a great school to inhabit St. Ann’s Academy / fill in the parking lot with active uses

### Currently closed.

### Parking lot on Wisconsin is not the most attractive feature.

### Need to get more people here;

### activate the area to help the vitality of the neighborhood.

### Yew hedge is quite threatening at night.

### Program public lot for public uses – e.g., farmers market.

## Slope of Wisconsin is a problem for retail (heading down to Friendship Heights). So focus retail to the south before the hill descends.

## Make at terrace café at the new AU building facing Tenley Circle

### Public access / public use on the front of the building.

### Universities around the country are softening the town/gown borders and making them more permeable.

#### Harvard’s outdoor space and Columbia’s new campus are examples.

## Sustainability is a critical goal

### Get serious about settlement patterns as a major factor in determining automobile traffic for commuting which directly increases global warming.

#### Good sustainability depends on good settlement patterns such as not requiring you to commute long distances to work, recreation, schools, shopping.

#### Connecticut Ave. planned to have pockets of retail between stretches of fairly dense residential

##### Cleveland Park – social sustainability – when one retires, can move to one-floor living in the same neighborhood.

#### Wisconsin Ave. may need a different model.

##### Also the buildings are at a different setback from street than along Connecticut Ave.

### We need to leave a development pattern that can be better used by future generations so that the public environment provides a much better sense of continuity.

#### Build on successes of already established development patterns.

#### Make more walkable communities – more healthy folks.

#### Have mix of retail within a 5 minute walk radius.

#### Physically and socially be more sustainable.

### Vitality is dependent on getting people there. Streetscape comes after people are already there. Can fix the streetscape, but without vitality, streetscape doesn’t matter.

# Comments from Participants

## There was a strong desire for input from planners

### Concern about getting a mish-mash of things – high, low, etc. Don’t want a mish-mash. How do we craft design to make Tenleytown better, and get the development we want.

### How do we get the right type of development at street level, and get people to live in downtown Tenley.

### Concern about projects that are one-off. Need a better comprehensive plan.

### Not having a plan for Tenleytown doesn’t mean that it is not going to develop. So important to have a plan – that’s why we’re doing this.

### Developers want certainty – they want to know what they can do or cannot do

### Good planning takes anxiety out of the development process.

### One tactic is to use the PUD process rather than allowing construction as a matter of right because PUDs give the community more say in what goes on.

### Streetscape of medium-sized building (up to 6 stories) does not overwhelm the neighborhood.

## A good community should to address the needs of various demographics

### Need to include much younger people in these planning efforts (neighbor comment) – this group needs to find ways to involve more young people.

### Way too little concern about older folks or people with disabilities.

#### The aging process – if this is a community for all generations, then we do need lots of apartment buildings. Older folks need apartments where they can live. Older – cannot drive, cannot go up and down steps

#### More (denser) residential will support more retail and sustainability by providing apartments for seniors with walkability to shopping

### Want “greener” retail (e.g., restaurants) that cater to the demographics of Whole Foods shoppers.

## A young person: these ideas are fabulous. Families, students, etc. would benefit from these ideas.

### There is no restaurant in neighborhood that is family-friendly / diner / Busboys and Poets.

### A common space where everyone can go – high school kids, college kids, families. Something with a local flair.

### A place to linger

## A 20-year resident: really like the suggestions – emphasis should be on “town.”

### Cleveland Park is not a model for her – does not feel like a town. She lives at 38th and Warren.

### She feels as if she lives in the suburbs and then can walk 2 blocks and she’s in the city.

### She would like to keep this balance and keep the feel. But the lack of planning has contributed to the mismatch between town feel and lack of quality.

### Keep sense of neighborhood and town, while bringing new people. But don’t overwhelm it. Want to continue to feel that you know your neighborhood.

## A supporter of smart growth recommends that TT residents be open to increased residential density. More people will shop here, live here, and won’t have to drive. Currently we have massive numbers of people coming from Maryland.

### Be open to more housing here

### Parking – need better parking management.

### Use large blocks with low rise along street for “town” feel and high-rise residential in the middle of the block

## Better use of green spaces

### Would like some public space (like Chevy Chase Community Center) with beautiful plantings and some seating as long as it doesn’t become a place to sleep for the homeless.

### To bring the community together provide free concerts, outdoor movies etc. at Fort Reno during the summer

## Strong need for better free shuttle bus service from Friendship Heights to Cathedral Commons, provided as a trade-off for development of GDS and Sidwell

### Will eliminate some traffic congestion

### Would provide access to grocery stores

### AU shuttle should advertise that it’s free to the public not only for AU students