



Long Branch Sector Plan

June 2012

Long Branch is one of Montgomery County's most affordable, older communities and has served as a gateway community, especially for newly arriving immigrants, since the 1960s. Many within this population have settled permanently into the single-family neighborhoods within the greater Long Branch area. These residents share many common goals; among them are the desire to live in an affordable, family-friendly community that offers a variety of opportunities and amenities.

While Long Branch is not without its challenges, it remains immensely attractive to those seeking affordability and economic opportunity. Although the community has experienced dramatic increases in population (primarily within areas of multifamily housing) there has been very little development pressure, unlike the neighboring Silver Spring CBD and the City of Takoma Park. Missed opportunities for development aside, there has also been little incentive to reinvest in the Long Branch community, resulting in deferred maintenance, an aging building stock, and overburdened infrastructure.

The community also suffers from a variety of social ills, such as higher incidences of crime, poverty, and unemployment than typically found in Montgomery County. Previous studies have suggested that these issues, along with the aging physical infrastructure and insufficient zoning incentives, have inhibited private investment.

Considerable resources have previously been allocated to the Long Branch area in efforts to improve the community's physical and social conditions. While the Sector Plan acknowledges them, it also recognizes that land use and zoning recommendations alone cannot solve the community's social issues. Therefore, to advance this Plan's transformative vision for Long Branch the Plan instead focuses on how land use and zoning recommendations and strategies to address community, mobility and sustainability can be implemented.

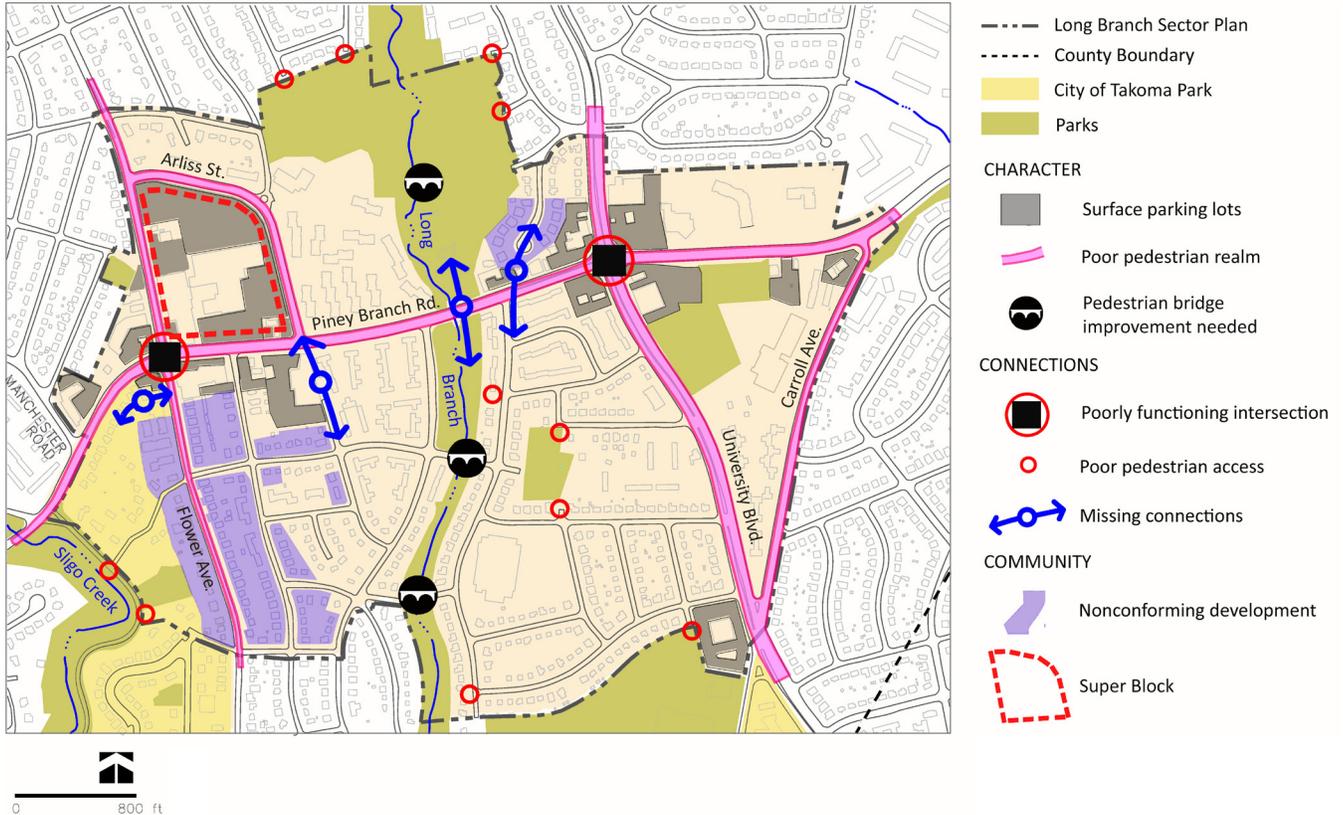


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Mobility

- missing/limited pedestrian and vehicular connections
- unsafe/poorly maintained access to public places and parks
- congested and/or failing intersections

Existing Challenges



Quality of Life

- crime and safety concerns
- aging streets and water/sewer systems
- buildings suffering from deferred maintenance
- lagging development/little reinvestment

Design, Land Use, and Zoning

- auto-orientation
 - strip shopping centers
 - inadequate streetscapes—missing street trees, lighting, and other design features

- current zoning does not reflect some existing uses or allow for appropriate redevelopment
- existing commercial development does not take advantage of allowed densities

Environment and Parks

- park and stream valley maintenance issues
- lack of a central public space
- missing links/connections between parks
- degraded environments
 - storm water not well managed
 - large paved areas
 - limited tree canopy

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Re-envision Long Branch based on planning principles: community, sustainability and mobility, and address unrealized potential through:

- mixed use development
- transportation choices
- new or improved parks/schools/trails/streets and other amenities
- improved quality of life—a safer, cleaner, affordable, and diverse place
- protection of the natural environment
- new design guidelines for development.

Mobility

Major streets serving the Long Branch community include University Boulevard, Piney Branch Road, Flower Avenue, and Carroll Avenue. However, most master-planned roadways in the Plan area are maintained and operated by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). Circulation can currently be described as generally poor, with local traffic often forced to use the already busy Piney Branch Road or University Boulevard, due to a lack of alternatives. This Sector Plan proposes to enhance mobility by providing a more balanced transportation system with improved connections, wider sidewalks, safer intersections, new streets and trail connections, and improved access to transit.

Mobility



Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Improved pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility to transit, shopping, schools, parks, trails, and recreational centers will be achieved by implementing:

Shared on-street bikeways:

- o Flower Avenue
- o Franklin Avenue
- o Sligo Creek Parkway
- o Domer Avenue
- o Piney Branch Road

Exclusive on-street bike lanes:

- o Piney Branch Road
- o Flower Avenue
- o Carroll Avenue
- o University Boulevard (interim)

Shared Use Paths

- o Piney Branch Road (University Boulevard to Carroll Avenue)
- o Wabash Avenue (Sligo Creek Parkway to Garland Avenue)
- o Domer Avenue (Flower Avenue to Barron Street/Seek Lane Local Park) with a connection to the Long Branch Trail.
- o Garland Avenue (Wabash Avenue to Clayborn Avenue)
- o Clayborn Avenue (Garland Avenue to Long Branch Trail) connecting Sligo Creek Trail to Long Branch Trail.
- o Gilbert Street (Barron Street to University Boulevard) with a connection to Long Branch Trail.
- o University Boulevard—(interim as part of the Purple Line Construction)

Trails

- o Extend and improve the Long Branch Trail
- o Improve the Long Branch Trail Crossing of Piney Branch Road.

Additional pedestrian-related recommendations include:

- develop a sidewalk improvement program for the Plan area
- ensure safe and adequate access to Purple Line stations on University Boulevard and Arliss Street
- consider a full pedestrian crossing signal on Piney Branch Road at Garland Avenue.

Roadways

Given the importance of roadway access, the Plan recommends improvements to and construction of:

New Streets

- o Extend and reclassify Glenview Avenue to Piney Branch Road to a Business Street (minimum 70 foot right-of-way)

Improved/Upgraded Streets

- o Increase right-of-way width to accommodate the Purple Line and other improvements on:
 - University Boulevard (minimum 112 feet)
 - Piney Branch Road (minimum 103 - 112 feet)
 - Arliss Street (minimum 100 feet)
 - Flower Avenue (minimum 70 feet)
 - Greenwood Road (minimum 70 feet)

New and/or consistent street design

- o Include medians, street trees, bike lanes, wide sidewalks, and a shared-use path, on:
 - Piney Branch Road
 - Carroll Avenue



Private Streets

- Accommodate new and/or improved private streets to enhance access:
 - Flower Theater Shopping Center
 - Extension of Winding Hill Way

Improved Intersections

- Reconfigure the Arliss Street/Piney Branch Road intersection to accommodate an extension of Glenview Avenue
- Reconfigure the University Boulevard/Piney Branch Road intersection to:
 - accommodate a proposed Purple Line station within the median of University Boulevard, just south of Piney Branch Road
 - better manage east/west traffic flow along Piney Branch
 - provide more time at signals to allow easier crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.

Transit

Two Purple Line stations are proposed within the Plan area. The Long Branch Station would be located on Arliss Street, just north of its intersection with Piney Branch Road, and the Piney Branch Road Station would be located on University Boulevard, just south of its intersection with Piney Branch Road.

- Implement *Purple Line Functional Master Plan* station recommendations.
- Implement safe pedestrian/bike access recommendations for Purple Line stations.
- Consider multilingual wayfinding signage for pedestrians.

Quality of Life

The Sector Plan seeks to improve the quality of life in Long Branch through recommendations addressing safety and security, maintaining affordability, encouraging small business and workforce development, engaging the public and youth and improving overall community health and sustainability.



Safe and Secure Community

- Support the continued implementation of the Long Branch Safety Plan
- Plan for a permanent police sub-station

Housing and Development

- Protect the character of existing single-family neighborhoods
- Encourage diverse types of housing
- Continue to support City of Takoma Park and DHCA efforts to address community revitalization needs
- Streamline the permit process to encourage sustainable development

Small Business and Workforce Development

- Promote and accommodate smaller stores to encourage neighborhood retail
- Focus reinvestment at/near Purple Line stations
- Provide economic development assistance to new and existing small businesses

Civic Engagement and Youth Development

- Support youth development services
- Encourage civic engagement and strengthen community identity by building capacity

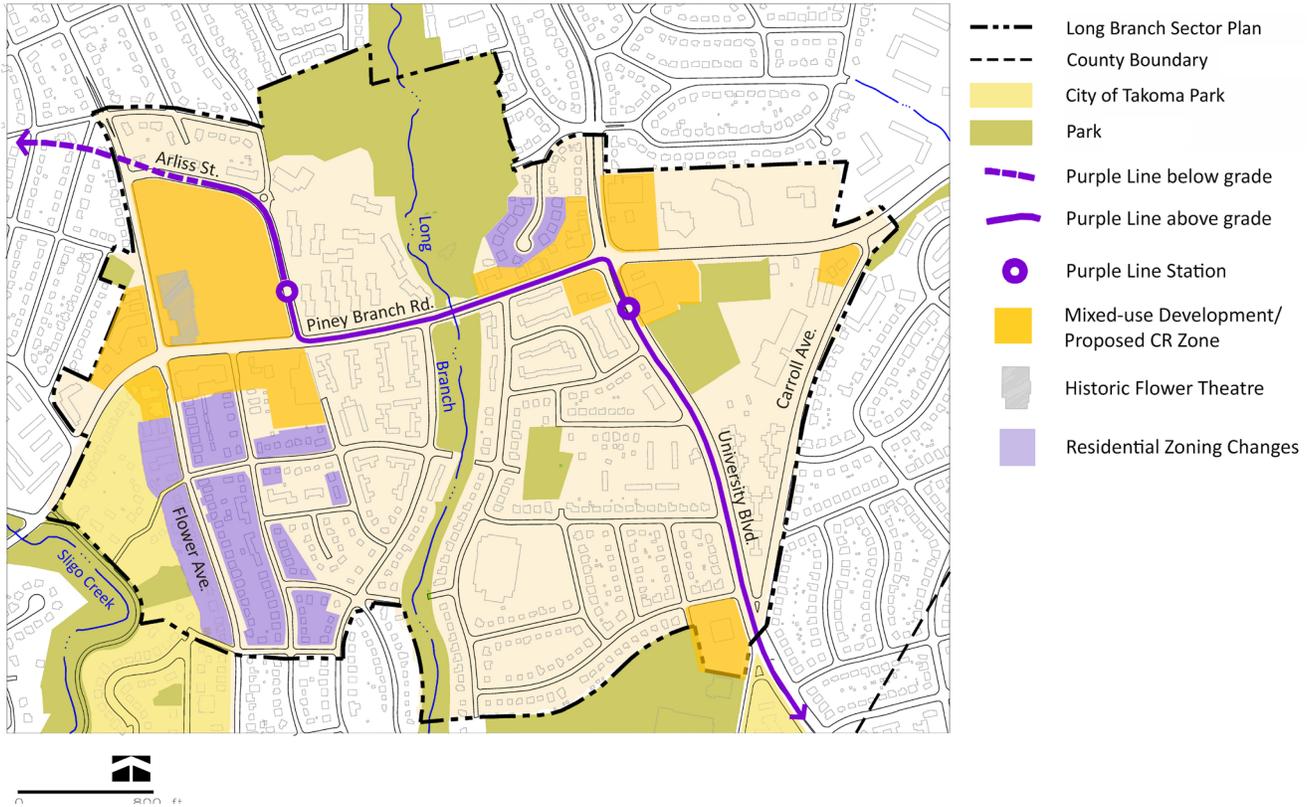
Improved Health and Sustainability

- Make Long Branch “greener”
- Investigate non-traditional opportunities for ball fields and other active recreational uses
- Support development that accommodates and facilitates physical activity

Design, Land Use, and Zoning

Key Sector Plan goals that encourage reinvestment seek to maximize the value of existing resources and capitalize on community access to transit, a large labor pool, and proximity to major employment centers. By expanding existing land use patterns through staged infill development, employing comprehensive design recommendations and implementing strategic zoning changes, appropriate levels of affordability will be preserved, while encouraging development with improved public amenities within attractive, pedestrian scale environments.

Land Use and Zoning



Design

- Improve the quality of streetscapes (wider sidewalks, more trees, and improved lighting and street furniture) on major roadways and near public amenities.
- Create a better place by allowing mixed land uses at the Flower Theater Shopping Center.
- Transition land uses between mixed-use areas and residential neighborhoods.
- Ask the community to participate in the design and placement of public art.
- Apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles to create safer places.
- Improve access to parks, trails and other public places by:
 - making sure key areas are well lit
 - providing signs to identify entrances/facilities/destinations
 - providing regular maintenance.

Land Use

- Encourage mixed-use land uses to realize quality streets and spaces for pedestrians.
- Create a vibrant neighborhood center by:
 - improving the Flower Theater and Shopping Center
 - providing a new and centrally located urban park
 - including structured parking
 - accommodating private streets to improve access.

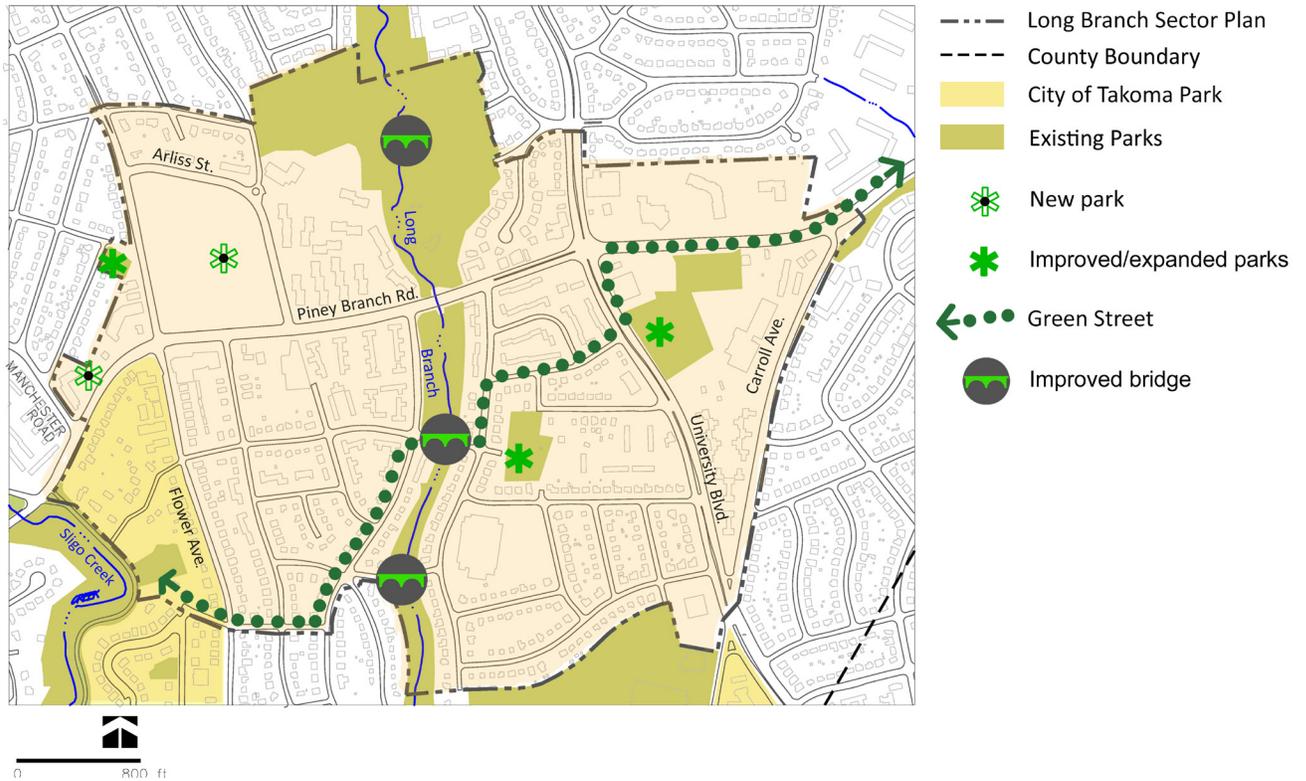
Zoning

- Rezone commercial properties to appropriate CRT zones
- Rezone selected residential parcels to appropriate CRN Zones
 - R-60 lots affiliated/linked with commercial development (parking, etc.)
 - R-10, R-20 and R-30 lots containing properties that don't conform to current development standards
 - Maximum Floor Area Ratio of 1.5
 - Building heights ranging from 25-50 feet
- Support zoning changes for infill development that are phased in over time.
- Use CRT Zone optional method density incentives to preserve affordability for small businesses.
- Create incentives to encourage land assembly.

Environment

The environmental recommendations in the Plan seek to address existing problems within Long Branch. They also focus on uniting County and State long-term sustainability goals with site specific recommendations for improvements. Specifically, they look at lessening ecological impacts to improve water quality, reduce heat island effect, improve habitat, and enhance quality of life through new and improved parks and public open space.

Environment



Urban Parks and Green Space

New parks:

- Flower Shopping Center Urban Park (central gathering place)
- Piney Branch Road Urban Park (recommended in 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan)

Improved and/or expanded parks:

- Long Branch-Garland Neighborhood Park (expand park and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections)
- Flower Avenue Urban Park (improved seating, play area and pedestrian connections)
- Seek Lane Neighborhood Park (renovate, expand and link park to Rolling Terrace Elementary School)

Preserve and enhance the following forested areas:

- Long Branch Stream Valley Park
- Sligo Creek Stream Valley
- New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park
- Wabash Park
- Long Branch-Arliss Neighborhood Park
- Long Branch Local Park.

Initiate programs to encourage property owners adjacent to Long Branch Stream Valley to plant native trees and shrubs within the stream valley buffer.

Pedestrian Bridges

- Install improved bridges over the Long Branch Stream Valley at:
 - Clayborn Avenue
 - Domer Avenue.



Sustainability

A Green Street is one that contains an upgraded streetscape, improved tree canopy, enhanced stormwater measures and efficient pedestrian and bike connections to larger open spaces and public amenities. For Long Branch, these open spaces and amenities include Sligo Creek, Long Branch and Northwest Branch Stream Valley Parks and trails.

The Plan recommends Green Street treatment along:

- University Boulevard (Piney Branch to Plan Boundary)
- Piney Branch Road (Manchester Road to Carroll Avenue)
- Flower Avenue (Arliss Street to Wabash Avenue)
- Glenview Avenue
- Wabash Avenue
- Barron Street
- Arliss Street (Flower Avenue to Piney Branch)
- Forston Street
- Gilbert Street.

Stormwater Treatment

- Use environmentally sound measures to handle stormwater management:
 - University Boulevard
 - Arliss Road
 - Piney Branch
 - Flower Avenue Center
 - in parks and open space.
- Require permeable materials for paved surfaces:
 - Flower Theater Shopping Center
 - Surface parking lots
 - Sidewalks.
- Integrate innovative stormwater management treatments into new development and in areas resulting from shifts in existing roads to accommodate the Purple Line or other road projects, including:
 - University Boulevard
 - Arliss Road
 - Piney Branch.

implementation

To encourage mixed-use development and innovative design solutions, and to promote increased diversity of housing choice, environmentally sound buildings, and active streets that connect communities the Long Branch Sector Plan area will be implemented through use of Commercial/Residential Town (CRT) and Commercial/Residential Neighborhood (CRN) Zones.

These zones are designed to:

- implement the goals and objectives of applicable master and sector plans
- target opportunities for reinventing commercial strips and surface parking lots through mixed use
- reduce auto dependence by encouraging development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, services, and amenities
- encourage an appropriate balance of employment and housing opportunities and create compatible relationships with adjoining neighborhoods
- provide certainty with regard to maximum densities and building heights in each zone, while allowing flexibility in site design and the mix of uses
- define the facilities and amenities required of private development to support the allowed optional method densities and heights.

Both the CRT and CRN Zones also require public use spaces for developments of a certain size and configuration. Public use spaces may be privately owned and located on-site, but must be accessible to the public. The requirement may also be satisfied by off-site physical improvements, or payments in support of public use space elsewhere in the Plan Area. The assumption is that much of the desired public space system in Long Branch will be achieved through this requirement.

The CRT Zones provide both a standard and an optional method of development. The standard method limits overall density to a 1.0 FAR (floor area ratio), while the optional method provides opportunities to earn additional density. This creates incentives to provide public benefits and other amenities. Projects in the reinvestment areas proposed for CRT Zones in this Plan can also achieve additional density using the optional method, based on proximity to public transit using a dedicated right-of-way.

Public benefits provided under the optional method are drawn from seven categories outlined in the Zoning Ordinance. The public benefits identified below should be considered priorities during project development and review of optional method projects in the CRT Zones. This list is not mandatory and it does not preclude considering other benefits, as listed in the CRT Zones, to achieve the maximum permitted FAR. The requested benefits should be carefully analyzed to make sure they are the most suitable for a particular location and consistent with the Sector Plan's vision, and that they satisfy changing community needs. When addressing such benefits, the Planning Board should consider community needs as a determining factor.

For Long Branch, these categories and public benefits are important to its successful revitalization:

- Connectivity and mobility
 - public parking facilities, as part of a parking lot district or shared parking program
 - enhanced streetscapes to improve the public realm
- Diversity of uses and activities
 - small business opportunities within the larger CRT-zoned properties
- Quality building and site design
 - public open space for community gatherings
 - exceptional design that is sympathetic to its context
 - historic resource protection.

- To facilitate implementation, urban design guidelines will also be incorporated into the Sector Plan. Guidelines are designed as an aid to help developers, citizens, regulatory reviewers and the Planning Board as they design, analyze and approve projects over the life of this Plan. CRT Zones require that optional method projects address design guidelines when going through the regulatory review process.

Capital Improvements Program

The following infrastructure projects will enable Long Branch to evolve into a mixed-use, transit-oriented community and should be funded through the Capital Improvements Program. Some projects may be completed with private sector participation, including:

Mobility

- Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard reconstruction
- Construction of the planned Purple Line and stations
- Sidewalk Improvement Program
- Planning, design and construction of Long Branch trail extension
- Intersection Improvements
 - Arliss Street at Piney Branch Road
 - University Boulevard at Piney Branch Road
- Construction of Glenview Avenue extension
- Construction and Improvement of pedestrian bridges (over Long Branch Stream)
 - Long Branch (between Long Branch Library and Community Center)
 - Domer Avenue
 - Clayborn Avenue

Quality of Life

- Planning for and construction of a permanent police substation
- Provide funding and technical assistance for a commercial façade improvement program
- Construction and placement of way-finding signage

Public and Place

- Planning and design of Long Branch Urban Park
- Planning and design of Central Civic Green

For more information:

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