Tomorrow’s White Flint: A Magnet for Investment and Innovation

Next Steps and Investment for Activating the White Flint Sector Plan

Steven W. Pedigo

Prepared for Federal Realty Investment Trust and Partners

June 2019

Tomorrow's White Flint: A Magnet for Investment and Innovation

I. Introduction

For most of its existence, Greater Washington, D.C.'s economy has been dominated by government and adjacent sectors. But two decades ago, something started to shift, and the region's economic growth has become increasingly predicated on high-tech industry and the innovation economy. Established companies like Capital One, Marriott and Hilton Hotels are beefing up their tech capabilities and becoming more like tech companies themselves, while local startups like InfoZen, MapBox, and Everfi are seeing massive growth. The biotech and life sciences cluster has also become promising, with area companies Vanda Pharmaceuticals, Macrogenics, and Supernus Pharmaceuticals all making it on to the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 list, which ranks the fastest-growing and most-innovative tech companies.[1] When Amazon chose to locate its second headquarters, or HQ2, in Northern Virginia—selecting the region over virtually every other major city in the country—there was no longer any question: Greater Washington is a tech town. The region has gone from being a more traditional HQ town to a center of the new economy.

Montgomery County, boasting 90,000 employees across 1,200 information technology firms, has played a significant role in this regional economic transformation. The county's business culture is not only innovative, it's also inclusive: 47 percent of its companies are owned by women. And here too, the biohealth sector is flourishing, with 300 companies employing 10,000 workers, many of whom work alongside the 49,000 government agency employees along the I-270 corridor.[2]

The question for a potential innovation cluster like the White Flint area is how can it capture a piece of this new growth? How can White Flint boosters convince businesses and developers to invest here in Montgomery County rather than in downtown D.C. or in Northern Virginia's National Landing, where Amazon is setting up shop? The answer, in brief, is to provide the urban form and urban experience where the highly talented, highly mobile, Creative Class workers—those who fill the ranks of today's leading-edge tech and innovation companies—want to spend their time.[3] In order to compete regionally, nationally, and globally, Montgomery County will need to transform the suburban landscape of major hubs like the White Flint area into dynamic urban destinations.

Of course, this is not news to Montgomery County officials or to the business leaders, anchor institutions, and neighborhood groups of the larger community. The original White Flint Sector Plan from 2010 lays the groundwork for a truly urban, mixed-use district by enabling relatively high-density development and a more fine-grained, pedestrian-oriented, street-level experience.[4]

But, the plan has not yet achieved all the results officials and business leaders were hoping for. Not enough businesses, particularly tech and innovation businesses, have signed major office leases.

And too many development projects are stagnating. Meanwhile, the urban form of the White Flint corridor hasn't changed as rapidly as anticipated, while other areas in the region—the District, Tysons, Arlington, and even nearby downtown Bethesda—have been made more walkable and urban in recent years. Instead, the landscape of White Flint remains dominated by cars and car infrastructure, due in part to a lack of investment in human-centered infrastructure.

In response to these concerns, Federal Realty Investment Trust convened a two-hour working session with a group of leading Montgomery County developers, economic development and planning practitioners, business leaders, and elected officials to discuss the successes, challenges, and future investments needed for jumpstarting the plan. The conversation was moderated by Steven Pedigo, an urban and economic development advisor and professor at the NYU Schack Institute of Real Estate. This paper serves as a detailed summary of those discussions and a template for exploring future interventions for the White Flint corridor.

This paper begins by assessing national trends in the development of suburban innovation districts, which are rooted in the demands of the Creative Class of technologists and innovators that drive economic growth. The paper then describes the White Flint Sector Plan's initial goals, its successes and challenges to date, and the steps local leaders are considering to make those initial goals a reality. Drawing from case studies of other successful innovation districts, as well as from the perspectives of local leaders, the paper concludes with a recommendation of next steps for the White Flint Sector Plan.

Ultimately, creating an appealing walkable urban form, identifying new infrastructure funding streams, attracting a life sciences business cluster, and developing a coherent brand identity will all be essential for the White Flint area to live up to its potential.

II. The Walkable Innovation Suburb

The tech and innovation sectors have driven America's economic comeback since the Great Recession, particularly in major cities. The Washington, D.C. metro, which includes Montgomery County, has seen the number of venture capital deals and the amount of venture capital invested approximately double between 2005 and 2017. The region is now a formidable player in the tech industry: among all American metros between 2015 and 2017, it attracted the 10th-most venture capital deals and ranked ninth for venture capital investment.[5] Meanwhile, the number of Fortune 500 companies based in the D.C. area increased by 13 between 1975 and 2017, making the region an impressive corporate headquarters destination.[6]

All of this economic growth is no coincidence. Rather, it is, at least in part, a product of Greater D.C.'s numerous and dynamic urban business districts. It is increasingly apparent that innovative companies and talented workers are attracted to high-density, mixed-use, transit-accessible urban environments—about as far from the traditional corporate office park as possible. Not only does this create an environment that is possible to navigate without a car—with easy access to amenities like stores, restaurants, and parks—it also spurs business growth by providing proximity to other companies. Having clients or service providers within walking distance promotes productivity and makes doing business easier. Having a large labor pool nearby makes it easier to recruit new employees, and the creative friction enabled by having so many workers in a small area generates the possibility for new partnerships, synergies, and perhaps even company formations.[7]

A recent study of the locational preferences of high-growth companies, published in *The Professional Geographer*, concluded that "high-growth firms cluster in employment centers that are more dense, diverse, walkable, and connected."[8] Downtowns are increasingly attractive sites for major company relocations and expansions: GE moved from its suburban Connecticut campus to downtown Boston, and major tech companies like Google and Facebook are moving more of their operations from suburban campuses to places like downtown San Francisco and New York.[9]

But a growing body of research shows that it isn't necessarily these downtowns themselves that are attractive to major companies—it's all the amenities and efficiencies they offer. Suburban innovation districts with characteristics similar to urban downtowns are the places that are most successful at attracting investment and talented workers that might otherwise head to central cities. In fact, suburban innovation clusters can present the best of both worlds: the vibrancy and density of a traditional downtown, as well as easy access to family-oriented single-family homes and more affordable housing than is generally available in the urban core. And despite the very real economic gains cities have made in recent years, suburbs—more so than cities—remain home to high-income, highly educated people.[10]

Transit oriented development (TOD) is a key pillar of a successful innovation district. As traffic worsens in regions like Washington, D.C., and more people seek out an urban lifestyle in which work, home, and amenities are all in close proximity, TOD is seen as a given in high-cost, forward-thinking cities. Not only does it give people and businesses the atmosphere they seek, it helps make the best use of valuable urban land and expensive transit infrastructure.[11] Indeed, once a metro area reaches a population greater than five million or so, cars cease to become the optimal means of transportation, and in fact become a liability, leading to countless hours stuck in traffic congestions and billions of dollars in lost productivity. Greater Washington, D.C., a metro of just over six million people, had the second-worst traffic congestion of all American metros, according to the 2018 INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard, costing $4.6 billion in lost productivity, or about $2,161 per driver.[12] As the region continues to grow, more workers will have to be able to commute by transit, bicycling, and, of course, walking.

The popularity of walking and bicycling—as recreation activities and as a means of getting to work—continues to increase. But in order to unlock the real demand for walking and bicycling, cities must first create an environment in which such options are safe and appealing. Arlington has boosted its pedestrian and bicycle trips to approximately 350,000 a day by allowing high-density development and redesigning streets with more crosswalks, protected bike lanes, expanded sidewalks, and pedestrian-friendly signage and signaling.[13] Even in notoriously pedestrian-unfriendly Dallas, walkable neighborhoods have higher land values and produce a disproportionate amount of economic activity.[14] Forward-thinking cities across the country are making long-term investments in their urban form, aggressively altering street design to create more dedicated space for transit, bicycles, and pedestrians. Denver, for instance, plans to lay out new transit-only lanes on major corridors, as well as new bicycle lanes, in order to reduce the share of commuters who drive alone to work from the current 73 percent to 50 percent by 2030.[15]

III. White Flint Sector Plan: Original Concept, Accomplishments, and Challenges

Creating a mixed-use jobs and housing hub in White Flint has been discussed since the 1970s. But until the White Flint Sector Plan was approved in April 2010, the area's development remained piecemeal and auto-oriented.[16] The plan aimed to promote more sustainable development, concentrated along Rockville Pike and close to the White Flint Metro Station. Streets like Rockville Pike were reimagined as more pedestrian-friendly, with street trees and improved crosswalks. New public spaces and other pedestrian and bicycle improvements were envisioned throughout the plan area. In all, the plan imagined 9,800 residential units and 12.98 million square feet of office space.

Accomplishments

A decade ago the White Flint corridor was a dreary no-man's land of arterial roads, strip malls, and office parks. But recently, the landscape has begun to change dramatically with the addition of the Pike and Rose development, over a thousand new housing units, and hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space, as well as popular businesses and entertainment venues.

National Recognition

From the start, the White Flint Plan was praised for its ambitiousness and recognized as a model of sustainable suburban redevelopment. In 2010, the Plan won the "Neighborhood/Small Area Plan Award" from the National Capital Area chapter of the American Planning Association. The Plan also received a 2012 Maryland Sustainable Growth Award in the Smart Growth Communities category.[17]

Community Support and Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Much of the Plan's success so far can be attributed to the collaboration between property owners leading major projects and public sector planners and officials.

The local community has also been remarkably supportive of transformative developments like Pike & Rose. Indeed, compared to other major redevelopment plans around the country that have faced enormous community opposition, like that which doomed Amazon's HQ2 project in Queens, the White Flint community is actually supportive of new development.[18] The value of this community support cannot be overstated. With the community on board, local officials and business leaders can focus on deals that make the most sense for all stakeholders involved, rather than get bogged down by protests and endless community meetings. Developers will know that there's no risk of the local community striking down their project, which is an especially important assurance in the post-Amazon HQ2 era.

The Success and Popularity of Pike & Rose

Of course, the physical developments that have been built have been great successes, setting in motion the beginnings of the transformation of White Flint. The largest development resulting from the plan is the Pike & Rose project on Old Georgetown Road. Owner, Federal Realty Investment Trust, replaced a strip mall with a walkable urban hub, complete with narrow streets to slow cars and sidewalks with brick inlays, creating pleasant, convenient routes to and from the White Flint Metro Station. The buildings in the development were designed by different architects to avoid a "cookie-cutter" feel. The development includes 864 housing units, 12.5 percent of which will be affordable to households earning less than 120 percent of the area's median income. The mega development also contains 80,000 square feet of office space, for companies like Bank of America and Regus, and a Hilton Canopy concept hotel. Future buildout could yield as many as 1,600 units.[19] Street level is characterized by entertainment-oriented retail, including a movie theater, a bowling alley, and a music venue by Strathmore (North Bethesda's multidisciplinary arts organization), along with numerous shops and restaurants. Outdoor public areas are enhanced by tables, chairs, and fountains, as well as Rose Park, a sloping grassy area.[20] The development represents the true potential of the entire White Flint area and should be shown to other investors as an example of what could be.

Other Major Developments

Other developments have already added hundreds of units of housing and hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space to the neighborhood, all with a similar commitment to urban, mixed-use development. While technically approved prior to the White Flint Sector Plan, the North Bethesda Center by LCOR and Washington Metro Area Transit Authority has already completed 643 housing units in the Aurora and Wentworth buildings, a 362,000 square foot office building home to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and a Harris Teeter grocery store.[21] Full future buildout will see 1,350 residential units, more than 1.1 million square feet of office space, a 320-room hotel, and 200,000 square feet of retail. Again, it is developments like these that demonstrate the potential of the White Flint corridor.

The popularity and growth of the nearby Strathmore complex, which hosts not only arts events but also private corporate events and conferences, is also a significant asset to White Flint. So is Marriott's recent decision to keep its corporate headquarters in Montgomery County, demonstrating—even as it was courted by D.C., Virginia, and other states—this major company's commitment to the county's economy. While Marriott did not select the White Flint area for its new headquarters, it still shows the enormous economic potential of Montgomery's dense, urban hubs.[22]

At least nine other major development projects have been filed or approved but have yet to break ground. Among the approved projects is The Gables White Flint, which will include 476 apartments and 31,000 square feet of retail space. Saul Centers White Flint is approved to build a 330-unit residential tower with ground-floor retail, along with a public promenade on the Pike. The developers have proposed plans for future phases with even more housing and office space. North Bethesda Market II will contain 470 residential units and 164,260 square feet of retail and office space. North Bethesda Gateway will contain 614 residential units and 34,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. Indeed, the map of development projects in White Flint shows the area rapidly filling in and demonstrates the tremendous amount of developer interest in the neighborhood.[23]

Challenges

Despite the positive change that has taken place since the White Flint Sector Plan was ratified in 2010, there remain a number of challenges in bringing the plan to its full potential.

Regional Competition

Numerous other innovation districts in the region, with marquee economic development announcements, have become powerful centers of gravity in recent years. Marriott's decision to move to Downtown Bethesda, for instance, created a lot of buzz in that area, just like Amazon's announcement at National Landing.[24] Tysons Corner and Downtown D.C. are also booming.[25] These areas are getting major investments and making White Flint appear less-exciting by comparison. In the fast-moving contemporary economy, it's never a good look to be behind the pack. Companies—especially the most innovative companies—and highly talented workers are looking for places that symbolize the cutting edge. The government should be leading the charge to create this kind of an environment. In fact, a 2014 Endeavor Global Study found that entrepreneurs are more attracted to communities where governments are investing in quality of place and infrastructure assets rather than even tax or attraction incentives.[26] And, as the progressive Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently reported, "Every state needs infrastructure improvements that can pay off economically in private-sector investment and productivity growth."[27]

Urban Design and Infrastructure

Urban design changes have not been as decisive or as swift as they should be. The White Flint corridor still looks much like it did before the plan was ratified: namely, inhospitable to pedestrians, bicycles, and scooters. Indeed, the plan was ratified before Capital Bikeshare became available in Montgomery County and obviously well before the current popularity of dockless scooters.[28] These new modes were not adequately anticipated, and the area remains fundamentally auto-centric, with relatively low densities and the majority of street space dedicated to cars. Unlike the development of private property, the street and the public realm are under the full control of the public sector. In other words, this is a territory where government is in a position to lead.

Developing an Industry Cluster

While the White Flint Plan has been fairly successful at attracting housing and entertainment-oriented retail, it has not been as effective at attracting offices. The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation has worked hard to promote the County as a center for economic investment, and the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce remains a powerful voice for the business community, but the White Flint corridor still lacks a strong target-sector economic development strategy. Areas like White Flint that are transitioning have the best outcomes when employing a place-based cluster economic development strategy that brings together multiple firms in the same sector.

Clusters are attractive to talented employees because they imply numerous job opportunities beyond the position they've been hired for. They also create healthy, hyper-localized competition among employers, who have to work harder to attract and retain talent. This gives prospective workers better salaries and amenities and creates the kind of environment where people enjoy going to work. Indeed, sector clusters are a natural complement to a well-designed urban form, bringing firms into close proximity to residents, stores, and entertainment destinations.

Promoting a Consistent Name and Brand

One impediment to becoming a high-tech business cluster is the lack of cohesive branding for the White Flint Corridor. There is agreement among business leaders, developers, and government officials that the area needs an improved consistent name and brand, but limited progress has been made on establishing an identity for the corridor. As place-branding experts have written, talented workers and successful businesses want to feel a part of a thriving, well-defined community. This subconscious cue has a major impact on people's perception of a place and, by extension, its economic viability of the area.[29]

IV. Jumpstarting the White Flint Corridor

The challenges faced by the White Flint area are hardly insurmountable. In fact, the White Flint corridor remains in an enviable position when compared to many would-be innovation districts around the country. In all of the following investment areas, public/private sector collaboration will be essential: it's the best way to maximize limited resources and work together to create shared value. Each of the following investment areas lists a number of ideas that local stakeholders have expressed, along with case studies from around the country where similar ideas have been successfully implemented.

Infrastructure and Urban Design Investments

Businesses and talent follow infrastructure investments, not the other way around. That means the White Flint corridor needs to create the kind of environment that will attract the kind of people and companies it wants—before they arrive. Indeed, at the roundtable, local leaders pointed to deficiencies in the area's existing infrastructure as a major reason Amazon did not choose it as an HQ2 site.

Pedestrian safety and access should be a high priority. The neighborhood needs a more porous pedestrian grid that provides an urban, neighborhood feel and prioritizes walking over driving. This would also ease movement between developments, further enabling synergy and competition between firms, as in a traditional downtown. Much can be done to improve the pedestrian experience to and from the metro station: adding wayfinding signs, clearer routes, and more-appealing paths and sidewalks. And of course, the long-awaited north entrance to the metro station must finally be completed.

The Beltway's traffic and poor connectivity with the White Flint area. Improving connectivity to the Beltway and Bethesda to the south and Rockville to the north should be a critical transportation priority. The long-contemplated reconfiguration of Rockville Pike into a pedestrian-oriented boulevard with a bi-directional center lane right-of-way dedicated for a new bus rapid transit (BRT) system will also be essential to improving the current connectivity shortcomings.

Case studies from around the country demonstrate how cities have to take the lead on infrastructure, even as they partner with major companies and anchor institutions to execute their plans. The studies also demonstrate the importance of linking major transit investments to greater allowable densities—not necessarily tall towers, but a mixture of scales that are appropriate for the local infrastructural context. For example, a major factor in Google's massive new campus planned for downtown San Jose is the presence of a nearby train station that is slated to be modernized into a massive, multimodal transportation hub. Google's planned arrival also spurred the city to update its downtown planning guidelines, which will ask new developments to provide a better street-level experience and more pedestrian amenities.[30]

Tysons Corner adopted its new zoning plan in conjunction with WMATA's Silver Line extension. In addition to allowing much greater height and density (up to 400 feet), the plan envisioned a new street grid to give the neighborhood a more urban feel and improve access to Metro.[31]

The rebirth of Downtown Phoenix was largely predicated on major public sector investments, including a new light rail system, the expansion of the convention center, and a new downtown campus for Arizona State University. Following these public sector investments, private sector investment began pouring in, leading to a downtown building boom with thousands of housing units and millions of square feet of office space.[32] Not only do these kinds of investments provide people with more reason to come to the neighborhood, they also signal government's commitment to making it a great urban space—a place worth investing in.

Targeted Economic Development Incentives

Innovation districts don't magically appear: they're a product of a targeted, long-term economic development strategy that is supported by place-based incentives. Just as high-quality infrastructure is a necessary prerequisite, so are advantageous financial incentives for companies to relocate. These are not "handouts," but rather targeted public sector investments that yield long-term dividends to the public in terms of future tax revenues and all the other benefits of a vibrant innovation cluster. Cities and communities across the country use place-based incentives to encourage investment—especially high-tech, innovative investments. Brooklyn Navy Yard was made possible by developer tax incentives, and New York City provided generous financial assistance to Cornell Tech to build a new engineering campus on underutilized land on Roosevelt Island.[33]

While state, county, and regional incentive programs exist, they aren't targeted enough for the White Flint corridor. Downtown Bethesda has historically had more leverage to offer place-based incentives, including the $62 million that Marriott claimed for its new headquarters.[34] Now that they have captured Marriott's headquarters, it's time for the county and state to shift focus on to the White Flint area. A county-wide asset mapping initiative would help identify White Flint as a key area of future development focus. Business Improvement Districts, such as the one in Tysons, could be a part of this process as well, advocating for new incentive structures and leveraging their own funds to provide small incentives of their own.

Other innovation districts have wielded incentives to much success. Boston's Waterfront Innovation District used tax increment financing (TIFs) to help major companies expand their footprint in the new district. Of course, incentives aren't the only factor behind the success of Boston's Innovation District: the creation of a mixed-use, live/work/play environment has attracted residents as well as businesses and will ensure that the region continues to thrive after the incentives run out.[35] Miami's Wynwood arts district has also seen a great deal more development thanks to its designation as an "opportunity zone," which unlocks certain tax breaks.[36]

But suburban innovation districts are actually in a uniquely privileged position right now. Between 2010 and 2014, suburban jobs grew by 9 percent nationally, compared to 6 percent in urban areas. With smaller governments, less bureaucracy, and fewer constituents, suburban cities and government agencies are in a better position to be innovative.[37] Montgomery County should mobilize to provide the incentives that will help turn the White Flint corridor into a world-class innovation district. This is indisputably one of the most promising development zones in the state, and it should be treated as such.

Leverage Anchor Institutions to Grow Innovation Clusters

Anchor institutions like universities, labs, and large corporations are major drivers of urban economic growth and innovation. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have turned Montgomery County into a life sciences hub, and their proximity is a huge asset to White Flint. With the support of these anchors, White Flint is in a strong position to be a life sciences and biotech cluster, offering these companies far more upside than a non-descript office park off the Beltway. However, before these efforts are advanced the County should undertake a cluster analysis to better understand specific competitive advantages for all of it knowledge and innovation clusters.

There are countless examples around the country of anchor institutions—particularly health and science anchor institutions—revitalizing neighborhoods and creating industry clusters. The Kendall Square area in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has become a wildly successful biotech hub by piggybacking on research being done at nearby MIT and Harvard.[38] The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, is planning to completely reconfigure its hometown as an innovation district, thanks to $6.5 million in public and private investment. The city's population is planned to double, and seven neighborhoods will be remade as the city creates new office buildings for biotech companies and medical facilities.[39]

However, before similar initiatives are advanced for the White Flint Corridor, Montgomery County should undertake a cluster analysis to better understand specific competitive advantages for all of it knowledge clusters and to prioritize target sectors for investment. A bold vision, coming from a public/private partnership, really can have a transformative effect on a city and its neighborhoods but it must be built around and leverage community advantages. The key is also getting all stakeholders on board and creating a mutually beneficial plan.

Consistent Brand, Message, and Name

It is not surprising that the White Flint corridor has not yet established itself as a life science cluster because it has not branded itself as such. Generally speaking, the White Flint has issues with branding, messaging, and marketing—beginning with its name. Should it still be the White Flint Corridor? Should it be the Pike District or the Pike and Rose Corridor? The most successful innovation districts have concise, memorable names, like Tysons, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and Miami's Wynwood. White Flint's branding and marketing need to be consistent and reflect the type of industries that local leaders hope to entice.

The logo for Chattanooga's Innovation District, for example, was unveiled by the city's mayor, Andy Berke, at a Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce meeting. That kind of commitment to the brand from the city's top official boosts investor confidence in an innovation district, demonstrating that this is a place the city and its leaders are excited about. The logo was subsequently displayed on banners throughout the 140-acre district. People who pass through have no doubt as to where they are.[40] Additionally, the logo can be used on future promotional material, brochures, letterhead, and at meetings.

V. Next Steps

The trends that will inform the future development of the White Flint area could not be clearer. Tech and innovation industries will continue to drive growth in employment and office demand in Greater Washington, D.C. in the coming years. These industries, in particular, benefit from clustering in innovation districts that offer a critical mass of specialized services, cutting-edge facilities, and a deep talent pool. Talented workers are increasingly drawn to urban environments that enable car-free living and offer a wealth of amenities in walking distance, satisfying their desire to live, work, and play.

The White Flint corridor is in an enviable position to take advantage of these trends, benefiting both new and long-term residents by improving quality of life, offering more amenities and extending employment opportunities into an under-utilized corridor. As a high-density, mixed-use, and transit-accessible area, the White Flint corridor has the base ingredients to become a growing suburban innovation district and a major regional economic development success story. But more needs to be done to make the area into the vibrant, attractive, and economically viable place that it can be.

First, a renewed focus on the public realm will be essential. Streets will need to be made safe for bicycles and pedestrians as well as cars, and new pedestrian-only zones need to be part of all new developments. The White Flint area needs more money and attention—from the state, the county, or a business improvement district—to adequately improve its public realm.

Second, companies and developers need a better deal in order to commit their resources to this newly developing district. Tax and other financial incentives need to be leveraged to make the White Flint district truly business-friendly, just as other innovation districts like the Boston Waterfront and Brooklyn Navy Yard have done.

Third, the firms the White Flint corridor seeks to attract should not be a potpourri: rather, the area needs to concertedly work to become a recognized industry cluster. Perhaps, the business sub-sector that makes the most sense to focus on is life sciences, due to the proximity of the NIH and the growth of this sector across the wider region. Other innovation districts have successfully partnered with anchor institutions to stimulate development and investment.

Fourth, in order to attract more innovative firms, as well as other businesses and talented residents, the White Flint area needs a more distinct identity. That starts with its name, which remains too variable.

Finally, to put these goals into action, key stakeholders must facilitate another private/public sector working group. The group should be inclusive but also intentional, reflecting the District's diverse stakeholders. It should be managed by a project manager who is accountable to the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation and the proposed working group.

Potential working group members, no more than eight to ten members, could include the following representatives: developers like Federal Realty Investment Trust, Lerner, LCOR, and B.F. Saul Company; and government agencies and public sector organizations like Montgomery County Council, Office of Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Planning Department, Department of Education, Chamber of Commerce, WMATA, and Maryland Departments of Commerce and Transportation. Also, the public should also be represented by a resident member on the working group, and higher education institutions like the University of Maryland and Montgomery County Community College and federal anchors like the NIH and HHS should be consulted as part of the engagement process. Simply put: improving the White Flint area must be an all-hands-on-deck effort, similar to the unprecedented collaboration that led to the county's Amazon bid.

Working group participants should work backwards, setting dates and benchmarks for key objectives. The working group needs to identify the low-hanging fruit and tackle those challenges quickly, while thinking in the longer term about the district's deeper challenges. All of this visioning and planning, however, must convey a sense of urgency: other innovation districts in Greater D.C. are developing quickly, and White Flint corridor can’t afford to look out of date.

The groundwork is in place for a potential world-class innovation cluster in the White Flint area. The next step is to give it the tools it needs to succeed.

Appendix A: Discussion Group Participants

Casey Anderson
Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board

Spiros Balntas
Director of Business Recruitment
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

Tina Benjamin
Special Projects Director
Office of County Executive

Robby Brewer
Vice Chairman, Board of Directors
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

Jay Brinson
Director, Development
Federal Realty Investment Trust

Cindy Brohoski
Managing Partner
Mohr Partners, Inc.

Bob Buchanan
Chairman, Board of Directors
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

Olivia Byrne
Partner
K&L Gates

Jeannette Chapman
Deputy Director
The Stephen S. Fuller Institute

Brian Downie
Senior Vice President, Development
Saul Centers, Inc.

The Honorable Marc Elrich
County Executive
Office of County Executive

Pete Fosselman
Master Plan Coordinator
Office of County Executive

Andrew Friedson
Councilmember
Montgomery County Council

Cindy Gibson
Chief of Staff (Friedson)
Montgomery County Council

Gigi Godwin
President and CEO
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

Stuart Miller
Senior Director, Development
Lerner Corporation

Mickey Papillon
Vice President and General Manager
Pike & Rose

David Peter
President and CEO
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

Jonathan Pilley
Owner
Push Pull Decorative Hardware

James Policaro
Senior Vice President, Development
Lerner Corporation

Hans Riemer
Councilmember
Montgomery County Council

Cecily Thorne
Chief of Staff (Jawando)
Montgomery County Council

Gwen Wright
Planning Director
Montgomery County Planning Board

About Steven W. Pedigo

Steven Pedigo is an expert in economic and urban development, city strategy and management, and placemaking. Steven has advised and collaborated with more than 50 cities, universities, developers, nonprofits, and Fortune 500 companies across the globe to build more creative, innovative, and inclusive communities.

Steven is the director of the LBJ Urban Lab Initiative and clinical professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

He is also the director of research and advising for the Creative Class Group, in addition to being vice president for strategy at Resonance Consultancy and a senior advisor for Bridge Economic Development.

Steven's city clients include New York, Jerusalem, Vancouver, Dallas, Washington, D.C., Brisbane, the Yukon, Tulsa, Austin, Portland, Newark, San Diego-Tijuana, Miami, Sao Paulo, Monterrey, Mexico City, and many others. His corporate clients include BMW, Converse, Starwood Hotels, Philips, Cirque du Soleil, Audi, Pinewood Studios, Zappos, EDENS, Kraft, among others.

Prior to joining UT-Austin, Steven was the director of the New York University Schack Institute of Real Estate Urban Lab and a clinical assistant professor of economic development at NYU. Earlier in his career, Steven served as vice president for the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), a national research organization founded by Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter to encourage private-sector investment into U.S. distressed urban areas.

Steven holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and graduate degrees from the H. John Heinz III School for Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

References

[1] Chris Frew, "These Five Capital Region Biotechs Are the Fastest Growing in America," *BioBuzz*, December 5, 2018.

[2] Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, "The MoCo Edge," May 8, 2019.

[3] Richard Florida, "The Rise of the Creative Class," Basic Books, 2014.

[4] Montgomery County Planning "White Flint Sector Plan: Midtown on the Pike," April 2010.

[5] Richard Florida and Ian Hathaway, "Rise of the Global Startup City," Center for American Entrepreneurship, September 2018.

[6] Richard Florida, "The Geography of Corporate Headquarters," *CityLab*, November 15, 2018.

[7] Martin Neil Baily and Nicholas Montalbano, "Clusters and Innovation Districts: Lessons from the United States Experience," Brookings Institution, January 2018.

[8] Emil Malizia and Yasuyuki Motoyama, "Vibrant Centers as Locations for High-Growth Firms: An Analysis of Thirty U.S. Metropolitan Areas," *The Professional Geographer*, November 19, 2018.

[9] Richard Florida, "The Geography of Innovation," *CityLab*, August 3, 2017.

[10] Richard Florida, "The Persistent Economic Advantage of America's Suburbs," *CityLab*, March 7, 2019.

[11] Transit Oriented Development Institute, "Benefits of Transit Oriented Development," accessed May 3, 2019.

[12] INRIX, "INRIX 2018 Global Traffic Scorecard," February 11, 2019.

[13] Jay Walljasper, "America's Most Walkable Suburb Offers Lessons for Towns Everywhere," *On the Commons*, March 25, 2015.

[14] Tracy Hadden Loh and Christopher B. Leinberger, "The WalkUP Wake-Up Call: Dallas-Fort Worth," Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis, George Washington University, January 2019.

[15] City and County of Denver, "Denver Moves: Transit Plan," January, 2019.

[16] Montgomery County Planning "White Flint Sector Plan: Midtown on the Pike," April 2010.

[17] Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission, "Maryland Sustainable Growth Forum and Awards," February 5, 2013.

[18] J. David Goodman, "Amazon Pulls Out of Planned New York City Headquarters," *New York Times*, February 14, 2019.

[19] Federal Realty Investment Trust, "Pike & Rose," 2019.

[20] Michele Lerner, "Pike & Rose: A Community Grows on Rockville Pike," *Washington Post*, October 4, 2017.

[21] Caitlynn Peetz, "Developers Break Ground on White Flint Apartments," *Bethesda Magazine,* March 11, 2019.

[22] Eugene L. Meyer, "Why Marriot Stayed," *Bethesda Magazine*, July 22, 2018.

[23] Peter Fosselman, "Pike District Projects in White Flint," Montgomery County, March 2019.

[24] Jonathan O'Connell, "Marriott to Move Headquarters to Downtown Bethesda With $62 Million in Incentives," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2016.

Michele Lerner, "Will Amazon's Effect on Northern Virginia Housing be as Feared—or Hoped For?" *Washington Post*, April 4, 2019.

[25] Michele Lerner, "Luxury Apartment Towers Rise in Tysons," *Washington Post*, March 28, 2019.

[26] Endeavor Global, "What Do the Best Entrepreneurs Want in a City? Lessons Learned from the Founder's of America's Fastest-Growing Companies," 2014.

[27] Elizabeth C. McNichol, "It's Time for States to Invest in Infrastructure," Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, March 19, 2019.

[28] Samantha Raphelson, "Dockless Scooters Gain Popularity and Scorn Across the U.S.," *NPR,* August 29, 2018.

[29] Chris Fair, "The Power of Place. The Importance of Place Branding," Resonance, accessed May 12, 2019.

[30] Emily DeRuy, "With Google Project Looming, San Jose Adopts New Downtown Design Guidelines," *Mercury News*, April 23, 2019.

[31] Rachel Cooper, "Tysons 40-Year Development Plan," *TripSavvy*, March 20, 2019.

[32] Catherine Reagor, Jessica Boehm, and Rachel Leingang, "Downtown Phoenix's Rebirth Has Been Decades in the Marking. Here's How They Did It," *Arizona Republic*, October 25, 2018.

[33] David W. Chen, "Where Halls of Ivy Meet Silicon Dreams, a New City Rises," *New York Times*, March 22, 2017.

[34] Jonathan O'Connell, "Marriott to Move Headquarters to Downtown Bethesda With $62 Million in Incentives," *Washington Post,* October 18, 2016.

[35] Hortencia Rodriguez, Dave Congdon, and Vanessa Ampelas, "The Development of Boston's Innovation District," The Intersector Project, 2015.

[36] Jay Steinman, Brad A. Molotsky, and William Rohrer, "Seeking to Capitalize on the Opportunity Zone Program? Move Quickly to Take Full Advantage," *Miami Herald*, January 18, 2019.

[37] Scott Fadness, "Why the Suburbs Are Where Innovation Will Happen," *Government Technology*, May 31, 2017.

[38] Karen Weintraub, "In the Heart of Biotech, Leaders Explain the Boston Area's 'BioBoom,'" *WBUR*, June 4, 2018.

[39] Neal Ungerleider, "The $6.5 Billion, 20-Year Plan to Transform an American City," *Fast Company*, May 26, 2015.

[40] Chloe Morrison, "New Innovation District Brand Unveiled," *Nooga Toady*, October 7, 2016.