

Proposed vision for the Riggs Road streetscape improvements.



FROM THE OFFICE OF
COUNCILMEMBER MURIEL BOWSER
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For more information or to sign-up for my weekly e-newsletter, please contact: Jordyne Blaise at jblaise@dccouncil.us or 202-724-8052. In addition, my website, www.murielbowser.com, is updated as new information becomes available. Generally, the Lamond-Riggs Development Task Force meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Contact my office for details.

The LRDTF is a bi-ward committee, chaired by Ward 4 resident Gwen Cofield and Ward 5 resident Alexander Roberts. It keeps track of cross-ward issues affecting development and community design, including the Cafritz PUD—The Art Place and Shops at Fort Totten—in Ward 5

Art Place will span nearly 2 million square feet and will include 900 rental units of affordable housing, an anchor retailer, and other retail and cultural tenants. This project will be developed in phases; recently the Office of Zoning approved the Cafritz Foundation’s request to move the anchor retailer from the first to the second phase of the project (due to market forces), a plan supported by LRCA and LRDTF after review. The task force regularly holds meetings that are open to the public to discuss these and other projects.

LRDTF Members

Officers:

Charon Hines, LRCA President
Gwen Cofield, co-chair
Alexander Roberts, co-chair

Members:

Carla Billingslea
Peter Bishop
Muriel Bowser
Lisa Brannock

Barbara Carter
Uchenna Evans
Deborah Grimstead
Yvonne Jefferson
Delvia Lewis
Jessica Lombardo
Melvin Williams
Patricia Roberts
Keith Sellars
Keith White

Friends,

I am writing to update you on the status of the work near and around the intersection of Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue NE. Much has changed in the five years since community members came together to demand safer streets, better connections to the Metro, and enhanced retail opportunities right in our own neighborhood. And although delayed, we're hopeful that both the road and development projects will begin to take shape in the very near future.

History

- When I was your ANC Commissioner in 2006, I joined the Lamond-Riggs Citizens Association (LRCA) president to form the Lamond-Riggs Development Task Force (LRDTF) — a committee of the LRCA. We wanted to ensure that the community had a seat at the table in developing an approach to proposed development projects in Lamond-Riggs.
- In 2006, two large private parcels were purchased by developers at Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue NE. The City also agreed to consider the sale of a small traffic triangle parcel of land necessary for the redevelopment of the entire site. The developer proposed to transform the triangle and two private adjacent parcels into one big, mixed-use housing and retail development project.
- In 2009, the Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue Area Development Plan considered this proposal and the nearby Cafritz Planned Unit Development (PUD) in Ward 5, and placed both projects into a larger, long-range planning context. With the support of residents, business owners and community groups, I shepherded the plan through the Council for approval.

Fort Totten Square (Tiger Market site)

- Like many projects throughout the region, this project was slowed by the economic crisis.
- In the meantime, we pushed to keep vacant properties clean and safe. We secured funding for a new mural on one side of the project and pushed the City to demolish vacant and blighted buildings located on the Tiger Mart site and billed the developer for demolition costs incurred.
- This year, JBG, a large development company, became a partner in the project. The JBG development team has just announced that they have entered into negotiations with Walmart to lease the ground level retail space to anchor this project. We continue to push developers to deliver a project that creates a balance between residential and multiple retail uses.
- The JBG development team also tells us that they have stepped down the number of proposed housing units.



Councilmember Bowser with LRDTF Co-Chair Gwen Cofield.

Infrastructure Improvements

- In 2009, \$10 million was approved for much needed upgrades to transform the area into a safer more urban square, bringing retail closer to the street and developing better pedestrian access and reducing speed on the roadways. Upgrading utility lines and the installation of new DC Water infrastructure is being undertaken as well.
- Road construction was planned for completion in July, 2011, but is significantly behind schedule due to problems identified during utility work. I called on the City Administrator to intervene to ensure the project got back on track as soon as possible. DDOT brought on a new construction management team and now says work will be complete in Spring, 2012.

- A pedestrian refuge has been installed near the KFC restaurant; easier access to Food and Friends has been arranged, grass was planted on the vacant parcel at the Tiger Mart site, new sidewalks are accessible; and, we're working with DDOT to address additional traffic calming concerns.

Next Steps

- Because it's a large parcel, this project will undergo the Large Tract Review (LTR) process whereby the developer will have to submit an application to the Office of Planning (OP).

- OP then has 60 days to review the LTR. The following District agencies will submit comments regarding the application: DCRA, DPW, Fire and EMS, MPD, the Department of the Environment, and the ANCs.

- The JBG development team may re-initiate a discussion over the triangle parcel. Given the delays with the project and the failure to identify an anchor retailer, the city-negotiated agreement to sell the triangle parcel has lapsed.
- At my request, the LRCA and the LRDTF invited developers to a November 28 community meeting for an update on their plans. Since that time, Walmart's interest in the site was announced, and they were added to the agenda. For more information, please contact my office.

Your feedback, good ideas and patience have been appreciated during this process and I look forward to working with you until all projects are finished and open for business. Thank you for staying involved.

Your neighbor,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elin Bowser".

— Oglethorpe Street NE