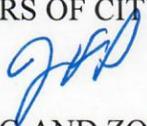


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: KARL W. MORITZ, DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND ZONING
YON LAMBERT, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: MONTGOMERY STREET CONVERSION UPDATE

The purpose of this memo is to provide City Council with an update on the recommendation from the Old Town North Small Area Plan to convert Montgomery Street from a one-way street to two-way street.

Staff has determined that the Montgomery Street conversion project should not move forward and that the funding should be allocated to implementation of the Old Town North Linear Park. Although the conversion was recommended in the Small Area Plan, opposition to the project was expressed during the Plan public hearing and as a result City Council directed staff to evaluate whether the project should proceed. Public opposition persisted after the public hearing and there has been an absence of community support since. For these reasons, Staff will not pursue implementation of the project.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION: As part of the public hearing on June 24, 2017, for the Old Town North Small Area Plan, several residents spoke in opposition to the proposed conversion of Montgomery Street and expressed a desire to revisit this discussion after completion of the Eden's (now Gables) development project at 530 First Street. The objections to the conversion were that Montgomery Street and Madison Street offer an efficient one-way pair to move people in and out of Old Town North, and that future loading for the new commercial uses on Montgomery Street would provide too great an obstacle to traffic movement if the road were converted to two-way. After public testimony, the following recommendation was added to the Old Town North Small Area Plan:

Evaluate the feasibility of converting Montgomery Street from a one-way street to a two-way street, with parking generally on each side of the street between North Henry Street and North Fairfax Street, and there will be good faith to work with the community. As part of the conversion of the street from a one-way to a two-way street, loading for existing businesses and future development will be evaluated and addressed.

In June 2018, staff provided an update to City Council (Attachment 1) that outlined a process and timeline for conducting another traffic analysis and engagement process with the community to determine a path forward for this corridor. The timeline indicated that the traffic study would take place one year after the completion of the Eden's development, which occurred in Spring 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts to traffic, the study was put on hold.

In February 2021, staff provided an additional update to City Council (Attachment 2) indicating that traffic volumes were still impacted by the effects of the pandemic and proposed delaying the traffic study until at least the spring of 2022 when traffic conditions may be more reliable. Staff indicated that the community engagement process would occur after an analysis was complete and should the results of the study and community outreach recommend that Montgomery Street be converted, the issue would be brought before the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council.

In May of this year, staff held a community meeting to update the residents of Old Town North on implementation efforts since the Plan's adoption, including the evaluation of converting Montgomery Street. During the meeting, staff communicated that based on continuing community concerns over the potential conversion, the conversion project is not moving forward. No community objections were raised during or following the meeting.

The Old Town North Developer Contribution policy adopted by City Council in March 2018 anticipated contributions to fund the conversion of Montgomery Street in the amount of \$1.3M (2018\$). As part of the City Council approval of the policy, the issue of Montgomery Street was discussed extensively. It was agreed that staff would evaluate/study the conversion later and engage with the community. The staff report discusses options for handling developer contributions should the Montgomery conversion not move forward. During discussion, Council set the developer contribution rate at \$9/SF (2018\$) whether or not the conversion occurs and left open the option that if the conversion of Montgomery Street did not move forward, all developer contribution funds would be put toward the other community amenity identified in the policy, the Old Town North Linear Park.

The central community benefit recommended by the Plan is implementation of the linear park, which entails acquisition of the Norfolk Southern rail line to create a 7-acre linear park from Waterfront Park to Slaters Lane. Implementation of the park will be a long and complex process, and Interdepartmental staff is in the early pre-launch stages of communicating with Norfolk Southern and laying the groundwork for future discussions regarding acquisition and implementation. Staff is also coordinating with the developers of property adjoining the future linear park. Conversations with other jurisdictions and with the Rails to Trails organization indicate that the rail acquisition and park implementation process, once launched, will typically take five years or more to proceed through the complexities of this multi-step endeavor, including but not limited to title search, appraisal, negotiation, rail abandonment, acquisition, design and community engagement, planning and construction.

For the reasons outlined above, Staff has determined that the Montgomery Street conversion project should not move forward and that the funding be allocated to the implementation of the Old Town North Linear Park.

Attachments:

- June 2018 Memo to Council
- February 2021 Memo to Council

cc: Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 13, 2018
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 
SUBJECT: MONTGOMERY STREET UPDATE

The purpose of this memo is to provide City Council with an update on the future Council policy choice of whether or not to convert Montgomery Street to two-way which is proposed in the adopted Old Town North Small Area Plan.

Given City Council guidance during adoption of the plan and, more recently, in March 2018 while considering a developer contribution policy, it is staff's recommendation to initiate a focused community engagement process on Montgomery Street in FY 2020. The process would begin with an updated traffic analysis which staff contemplates to begin one year after occupation of the Edens Giant/ABC site development. Staff will consider funding for this traffic analysis and community outreach in the FY2020 budget as such an effort was not previously contemplated. Assuming the schedule for completion of Edens holds and the City Manager recommends, and Council approves funding for a study, the next steps would be:

1. Summer/fall 2019: Completion of Edens development
2. Fall/winter 2019-2020: Commencement of traffic study
3. Winter/spring 2020: Community outreach process
4. Late 2020 or early 2021: Traffic and Parking Board and City Council consideration (if needed) of Montgomery Street conversion

BACKGROUND: As part of the Old Town North Small Area planning process, a traffic study was conducted to evaluate future traffic volumes and potential modifications to the roadway based on existing and planned development. One proposal was to convert Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way to make it a more pedestrian-oriented street, enhance the street as a retail corridor and provide options for access to the commercial uses in Old Town North. Montgomery Street and Saint Asaph Streets are planned as the primary retail corridors within the Old Town North Small Area Plan. (See attachment.)

The issue of the conversion of Montgomery Street was raised during the week-long community charrette process as part of the Old Town North Small Area Plan. As part of the public hearing and approval of the Small Area Plan on June 24, 2017, a number of residents spoke in opposition to the proposed conversion of Montgomery Street. Some community members expressed a desire for this decision to be made after completion of the Edens project in order to have a more accurate assessment of the additional traffic volumes and the impact they would have on the proposed street conversion.

After the public testimony, the following recommendation was added to the Old Town North Small Area plan:

Evaluate the feasibility of converting Montgomery Street from a one-way street to a two-way street, with parking generally on each side of the street between North Henry Street and North Fairfax Street, and there will be good faith to work with the community. As part of the conversion of the street from a one-way street to a two-way street, loading for existing businesses and future development will be evaluated and addressed.

Also, as part of the recent approval of the developer contributions policy for Old Town North by City Council on March 17, 2018 it was clarified that the approval of the developer contributions, in no way committed the City to converting Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way. Rather, this issue would be discussed as part of a future community process and would require a future decision by City Council. As part of this public hearing, community members testified regarding their concern pertaining to the proposed conversion of Montgomery Street.

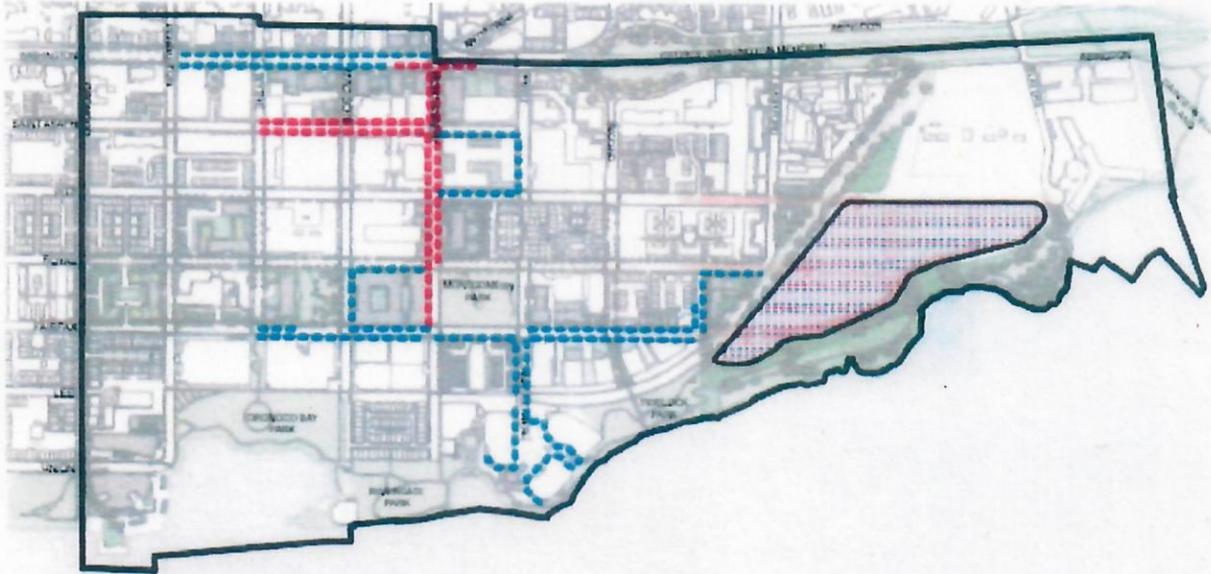
DISCUSSION: Based on input from City Council, some members of the community and the recommendation in the Old Town North Small Area plan, staff is recommending that a future analysis of the potential conversion of Montgomery Street to two-way take place after the Edens development is occupied and additional traffic analysis can be conducted and used to reevaluate the proposal. The Edens development is currently scheduled for completion in summer/fall 2019. In addition, there are a number of office building to residential conversions that may occur in Old Town North that may change traffic patterns.

At that time, staff will determine the feasibility of the two-way conversion and present the findings to the community for discussion. Staff will then use input from this future process to make a recommendation to the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council. In conclusion, staff recommends:

1. The Edens development be completed and occupied for approximately one year before traffic counts are collected to evaluate potential conversion of Montgomery Street
2. Following the traffic analysis along and near the corridor, a community process will occur to consider the analysis and the potential conversion of Montgomery Street
3. Following the analysis and community input, staff will provide a recommendation for consideration by the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council

cc: Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Yon Lambert, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Karl Moritz, Director, Planning and Zoning
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, Transportation and Environmental Services
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

Attachment



LEGEND

-  Required Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses
-  Optional Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses
-  Area for Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses

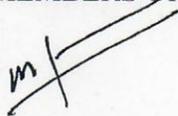
Note:
The final location and amount of retail or arts and cultural uses for the former power plant site will be established as part of the Coordinated Development District (CDD) approval(s) for the site.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 10, 2021

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: MONTGOMERY STREET UPDATE

The purpose of this memo is to provide City Council with an update on the issue of whether or not to convert Montgomery Street to two-way traffic, which is a recommendation in the adopted Old Town North Small Area Plan.

BACKGROUND: As part of the public hearing on June 24, 2017 for the Old Town North Small Area Plan, a number of residents spoke in opposition to the proposed conversion of Montgomery Street and some expressed a desire to revisit this discussion after completion of the Edens project. After public testimony, the following recommendation was added to the Old Town North Small Area plan:

Evaluate the feasibility of converting Montgomery Street from a one-way street to a two-way street, with parking generally on each side of the street between North Henry Street and North Fairfax Street, and there will be good faith to work with the community. As part of the conversion of the street from a one-way street to a two-way street, loading for existing businesses and future development will be evaluated and addressed.

In June 2018, staff provided an update to City Council (Attachment) that outlined a process and timeline for conducting a traffic analysis and engagement process with the community to determine a path forward for this corridor. The following timeline was proposed:

1. Summer/fall 2019: Completion of Edens development
2. Fall/winter 2019-2020: Commencement of traffic study
3. Winter/spring 2020: Community outreach process
4. Late 2020 or early 2021: Traffic and Parking Board and City Council consideration (if needed) of Montgomery Street conversion

The timeline indicated that the traffic study would take place one year after the occupation of the Edens development, which occurred in Spring 2020. However, due to COVID-19 and impacts to traffic all across the region, the study was put on hold until more reliable traffic data would be available for analysis.

DISCUSSION: Because traffic volumes are still not what they were prior to the pandemic, staff is proposing to further delay the traffic study until at least Spring 2022 when traffic conditions will be more

reliable. Prior to initiating a study, staff would evaluate if the conditions are appropriate for the analysis. The community engagement process would occur after the analysis is complete in fall 2022. Should the results of the study and community process recommend that Montgomery Street be converted from one-way to two-way, the issue would be brought before the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council in winter 2022 or early 2023.

Attachment: Process and Timeline Memo to Council – June 2018

cc: Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Karl Moritz, Director, P&Z
Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director P&Z
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, T&ES