

# Hear Every Voice

## Case Study: Barracks Row, Washington, D.C.



Urban minor arterial streetscape. Eight-block reconstruction of business corridor.

Washington, D.C.

District Department of Transportation, Barracks Row Business Association (Barracks Row Main Street Association), DMJM (transportation consultant), landscape architecture consultant.

Project Budget: \$8.5 million

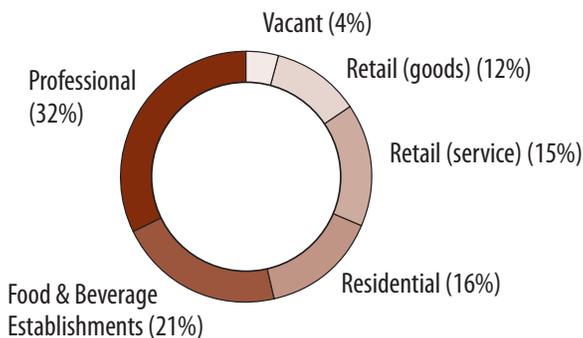
Public Participation Budget: not available

**Context:** The Barracks Row project is a three-quarter mile, six-block streetscape redesign project on Eighth Street SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District of Washington, D.C. It is the district's oldest commercial corridors, and still serves the nearby naval harbor on the Anacostia, the Marine Corps, and residential neighborhoods that have developed in this location. Located one block from the Eastern Market station on the Washington, D.C., Metrorail system, the street is highly accessible and frequently busy.

Following World War II, Barracks Row began to fall into decline, in part because of job loss at the naval yard, and suburban migration of city residents. Decline was exacerbated by the implementation of an elevated freeway, and riots following Martin Luther King Jr.'s death. Many businesses closed due to looting during this time (Barracks Row Main Street 2007).

In 2000, the corridor was redesigned with the needs of businesses, pedestrians, and vehicles in mind. As of 2011, Eighth Street Barracks Row is a thriving commercial corridor. There has been recent turnover in businesses due to changing consumer trends (Barracks Row Main Street 2011), and the corridor has been a successful place of commerce since the redesign effort.

### Tenants on 8th Street Barracks Row



source: Barracks Row Main Street. 2011. Business Census, Market Analysis Summary and Needs Assessment Summary.

## Project Details

## Location

## Organizations

## Budget

## Case Summary

Visualization

Meeting Activity

**Demographic Composition:** As compared to surrounding neighborhoods, persons living in the census tracts surrounding the Barracks Row Area are more likely to be living below the poverty line, have lower household incomes, and have lower educational attainment. According to the 2000 census, the area includes a significantly lower homeownership rate, but a significantly higher median housing value when compared to the greater Washington, D.C., area (\$213,000 and \$157,000, respectively). The adjacent neighborhoods include a mix of housing types and values, which is likely reflected in the disconnect between the lower income and educational levels, but higher median housing values (Schively 2007). An estimated 38 percent of residents use public transportation to get to work, compared to 33 percent of Washington, D.C., residents (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

**Public Involvement:** In the early 1990s business owners along this corridor formed the Barracks Row Business Association. This organization was later renamed the Barracks Row Main Street (BRMS) Association. In response to the District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) proposal to resurface the street, BRMS requested the street be not just repaved, but fully reconsidered as an important community asset. With the support of the Historic Main Streets Program and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, BRMS requested a streetscape design to address the entire corridor (MacCleery 2004). With funding from DDOT, and additional funding by the DC Main Streets Program, the process of redesigning this historic commercial corridor began.

In 2000, DDOT contracted with a transportation firm and a landscape architecture firm to conduct a corridor study and prepare a conceptual plan. Conceptual visuals were used to illustrate design ideas. During this process three public meetings were conducted and hundreds of people were surveyed. Subsequent working sessions were held to discuss various aspects of the concept, and to gain consensus on the plan. During the



image: Carissa Schively Slotterback



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working sessions, participants were encouraged to engage by drawing or writing down their ideas about the project and streetscape elements.

As the project moved into the construction phase, the outreach and participation efforts continued. BRMS staff provided an important link as communication facilitator between DDOT, the construction team, and local business owners. During construction, biweekly construction team meetings were hosted at BRMS, bimonthly “construction coffee updates” were held at a local coffee house, presentations were made to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, and articles were printed in neighborhood newspapers and the Barracks Row Bulletin. Meetings during the construction phase of the process were helpful in providing status reports, addressing current issues, and facilitating general project communication between stakeholders.

The involvement of businesses, from project inception to completion, was an important component of the public engagement effort. The area has experienced some business tenant turnover since project completion, but because businesses were involved throughout the process and had influence on the implemented design, it remains an attractive place for a variety of commercial activities.

Participation was an integral part of the Barracks Row streetscape redesign from planning through construction. The collaboration among agency staff, private consultants, Marines and Navy staff, business owners, and public participants produced a streetscape that has accommodated the needs of pedestrians and vehicles and revitalized the Barracks Row area.

Barracks Row Main Street. 2007. History of Barracks Row Main Street. <http://www.barracksrow.org/>

Barracks Row Main Street. 2011. Business and residential occupancy survey and needs assessment for Barracks Row Main Street. <http://www.barracksrow.org/>

MacCleery, R. 2004. Before and after: What I learned building a new Barracks Row. Unpublished document.

Schively, C. 2007. Enhancing transportation: The effects of public involvement in planning and design processes. Minneapolis: Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota.

**1. Barracks Row Main Street Association website:** <http://www.barracksrow.org/index.php>

**2. Context Sensitive Solutions information on Barracks Row:** [http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case\\_studies/DC\\_Barracks/](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case_studies/DC_Barracks/)

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## References

## Resources