



Existing Conditions Analysis **2**

Context

Regional

The City of Mount Rainier is a historic community in Prince George's County, Maryland, inside the Capital Beltway along the northeast boundary of Washington, D.C. The city center, situated in the historic district, is located at the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street between the District of Columbia and Hyattsville, Maryland. Mount Rainier is adjacent to several residential neighborhoods, including Woodridge, Langdon, and Michigan Park in the District of Columbia, and Brentwood, Cottage City, and Hyattsville in Prince George's County.

Rhode Island Avenue is an important regional north/south thoroughfare, connecting Washington, D.C., to College Park and Laurel, Maryland. Bladensburg Road, which runs parallel to Rhode Island Avenue, provides an alternative, and at times competing, retail corridor within the area. Going north on US 1, the municipalities of Brentwood, Hyattsville, and College Park also have important nodes of economic activity that serve their adjacent neighborhoods along the corridor.

Additionally, Mount Rainier, along with the municipalities of Brentwood, North Brentwood, and Hyattsville, is located in the Prince George's County Gateway Arts District. This district was established by the 2004 *Approved Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for the Prince George's County Gateway Arts District* with the purpose of building upon the unique characteristics of the four municipalities as arts communities, while preserving the heart of the four small towns. It provides the basis for lively commercial and mixed-use centers that retain and attract new artists to these municipalities.

Site

The Mount Rainier M-U-TC area is surrounded by tributaries flowing into the Anacostia River. The topography of the area gently slopes downhill from west to east along Rhode Island Avenue, and dramatically slopes downhill from north to south along 34th Street.

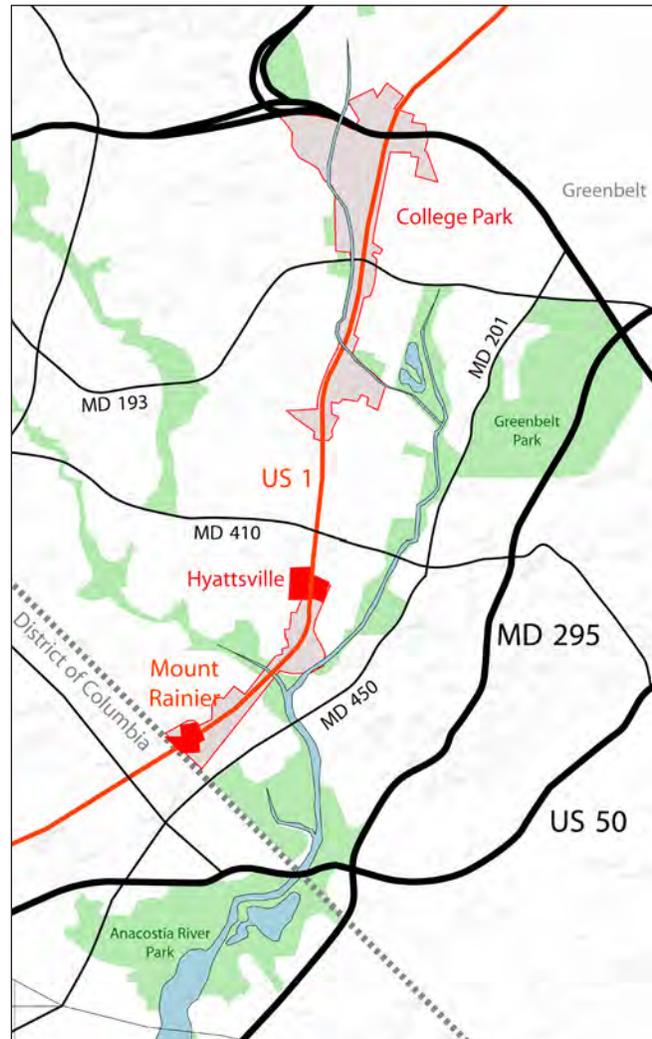
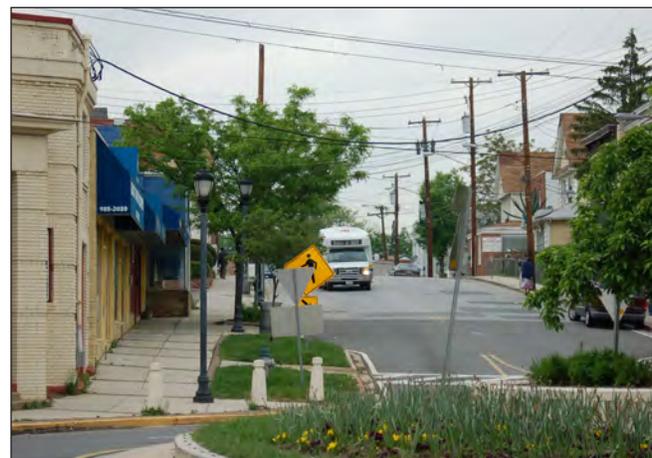


FIGURE 3: REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP.



Looking north up 34th Street from the traffic circle.

Specifically, across the M-U-TC area boundary, there is a 30-foot grade change between the upper and lower portion of 34th Street.

Rhode Island Avenue serves as the regional “Main Street” of the M-U-TC area, but lacks a defined and unified boulevard character. The other primary roadway within the M-U-TC, 34th Street, serves as the local “Main Street” for the immediate surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The entire mixed-use town center is located within a five-minute walk of the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street, which is the “symbolic center” of the M-U-TC. The area is accessible via multiple major bus routes operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and Prince George’s County. Additionally, a potential MARC station, referenced in the 2009 *Approved Port Towns Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment*, may be sited along the CSX railroad right-of-way in the future and would be within walking distance of the M-U-TC and surrounding residential areas.

The M-U-TC contains approximately 2,400 linear feet of frontage along both sides of Rhode Island Avenue (running from Eastern Avenue to the Mount Rainier Public Library) and approximately 2,000 linear feet of frontage along both sides of 34th Street.

Typical of many small town “Main Streets,” the M-U-TC originally contained a mixture of both mixed-use and solely residential buildings. The mixed-use buildings contained ground-floor retail with a residential use above. Over time, many residential structures were re-adapted for commercial uses, such as the buildings located on the east side of 34th Street. Additionally, many buildings were torn down and replaced (and/or modified) with lower-scaled buildings and surface parking lots. The continuous street wall frontages once found along both commercial streets of the M-U-TC no longer exist.

The Mount Rainier M-U-TC area is smaller in scale relative to other local redeveloping main streets, such as 8th Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. The modest scale of the mixed-use town center area creates a unique character and development opportunities for Mount Rainier along Rhode Island Avenue.



FIGURE 4: M-U-TC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AREA.

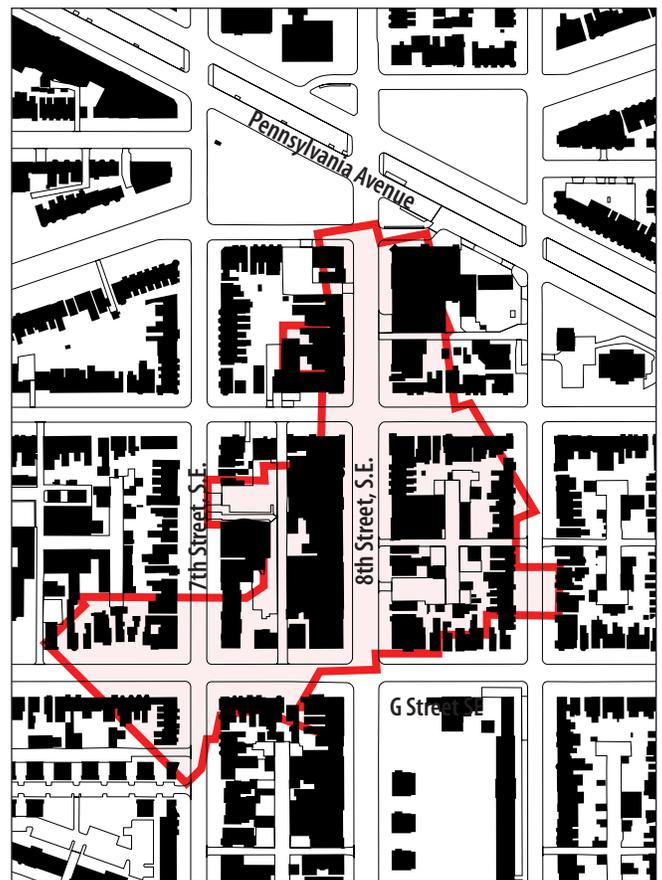
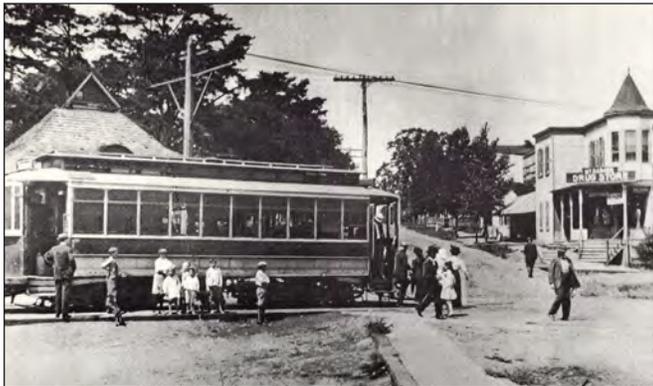


FIGURE 5: SCALE COMPARISON—8TH STREET, S.E., WASHINGTON, D.C.

Historical Analysis



Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street, circa 1910.



The scene of a fire in 34th Street, circa 1955.

Early History of the City: 1897 to 1945

The Maryland and Washington Railways started operations connecting what is now the area encompassing the City of Mount Rainier to the District of Columbia in 1897, with a stop located at the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street called the District Station. In 1902, local developers purchased 1,090 acres of the Clemson family farm, surveyed the land, and renamed it “Mount Rainier.” City residents petitioned and achieved incorporation of the City of Mount Rainier in 1910. At the time, the city had approximately 1,242 residents and contained 163 buildings.

During the period between its incorporation and the end of 1945, the city experienced growth in population, land area, and development. In 1929, the city annexed areas where the Queenstown and Queens Manor Garden Apartments are now situated. An additional annexation occurred in 1943. In 1934, upper 34th Street was extended through to Chillum Road making it a connector street to downtown Mount Rainier. Detached, one story, wood frame vernacular “bungalow style” homes became the predominant single-family residential architectural style built throughout the city between the 1920s and 1940s. The development patterns of the areas north and outside of the Mount Rainier M-U-TC became more suburban in character with the completion of the Kaywood Gardens, Queenstown, and Queens Manor Garden apartment complexes and their nearby strip shopping centers in 1943. At that time, the population of Mount Rainier grew to approximately 4,830 residents.

Post-1945 History: A Time of Expansion and Change

In 1955, the City of Mount Rainier annexed its final parcels and reached its highest recorded population at approximately 11,000 residents. Three years later, in 1958, the streetcar line servicing Mount Rainier closed and was replaced by various bus lines including some that are currently in operation. A period of gradual population decline followed and, in 1980, the population of Mount Rainier dipped to a post-1945 low of approximately 7,361 residents.

However since 1980, Mount Rainier has experienced a resurgence as the general public has become aware of the city’s charm, due in part, to the quantity of architecturally distinctive bungalow housing stock, its proximity to the District of Columbia, and a new, burgeoning arts district.

In 1994 the Mount Rainier M-U-TC zone was established to help revitalize the commercial areas along Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street, and in 1998 the Gateway Community Development Corporation was founded to develop an arts district to support the artists living in the municipalities of Mount Rainier, Brentwood, and Hyattsville. Today, Mount Rainier boasts one of the largest and most vibrant artist communities in the Washington metropolitan area. The works of prominent artists, based in Mount Rainier, are exhibited both locally and nationally.

Property Analysis



FIGURE 6: EXISTING PROPERTY MAP.

Existing Property Survey

There are approximately 90 properties, which contain a total of 86 buildings, within the boundary of the Mount Rainier M-U-TC. As of fall 2009, 70 buildings are occupied with various uses and the remaining 16 buildings are vacant. Additionally, there are a number of significant vacant parcels of land within the boundary. A total of approximately 350,000 square feet of residential, commercial, and institutional uses are contained within the existing occupied and vacant buildings. (For additional information regarding land uses within the M-U-TC, please refer to pages 20 and 21.)

Floor area ratio (FAR) is the calculation of the total building square footage, or building area, divided by the site size square footage. Rhode Island Avenue has an average density of 0.92 FAR, and 34th Street has an overall density of 0.49 FAR. It should be noted that the Artscape Lofts building, at 3311 Rhode Island Avenue, has a density of 1.71 FAR.

Building Heights

Building heights range from approximately 12–20 feet for one-story structures to approximately 40–50 feet for four-story structures.

Transportation Analysis



Study area roadway network and Rhode Island Avenue (AADT = annual average daily traffic volume).

Roadways

Rhode Island Avenue is classified as a collector road by the Prince George’s County 2009 *Approved Countywide Master Plan of Transportation*. Within the M-U-TC area, Rhode Island Avenue has two marked 11-foot wide travel lanes and one wide outside travel lane with marked on-street parking in each direction. A raised median strip/turn lane, which is approximately 13 feet wide, divides the eastbound and westbound travel lanes.

The county classifies 34th Street as a local street. It is an important north-south street within the M-U-TC

area and connects Chillum Road (MD 501) to Queens Chapel Road. The 34th Street roadway consists of two lanes with on-street parallel parking in both directions.

An oval-shaped traffic circle, measuring approximately 80 feet by 65 feet, marks the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street. Although two speed limit signs are posted for 25 miles per hour (MPH) and 35 MPH along Rhode Island Avenue, motorists typically exceed this limit, even through the circle.

Transit Connections

The Mount Rainier Town Center area still functions as a transit connection hub. Eight Metro stations and two MARC stations are located within five miles travel distance of the traffic circle at Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street. Eight Metrobus lines and one county bus line connect the study area to the surrounding rail stations. The average weekday morning and evening peak period ridership in the Mount Rainier area is approximately 800 people.

Parking Downtown

On-street metered parking is provided along most of Rhode Island Avenue and 34th Street inside the M-U-TC area. Various commercial uses and churches have off-street parking behind or adjacent to their buildings. Many of the off-street parking lots are

unpaved and underutilized. Businesses on upper 34th Street and along Rhode Island Avenue have expressed concern about a lack of adequate or easily accessible parking.

Pedestrian Conditions

A number of the intersections within the M-U-TC area are difficult for pedestrians to traverse. Cars entering the traffic circle tend to speed up, rather than slow down and yield to pedestrians. The intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and Eastern Avenue lacks a pedestrian crossing on the Prince George’s County side. Some sidewalks along 34th Street are extremely narrow and are not wheelchair accessible due to their width and the lack of handicap ramps. Additionally, a number of curbs within the M-U-TC area are deteriorating. The entire area is dominated by vehicular traffic rather than pedestrians.

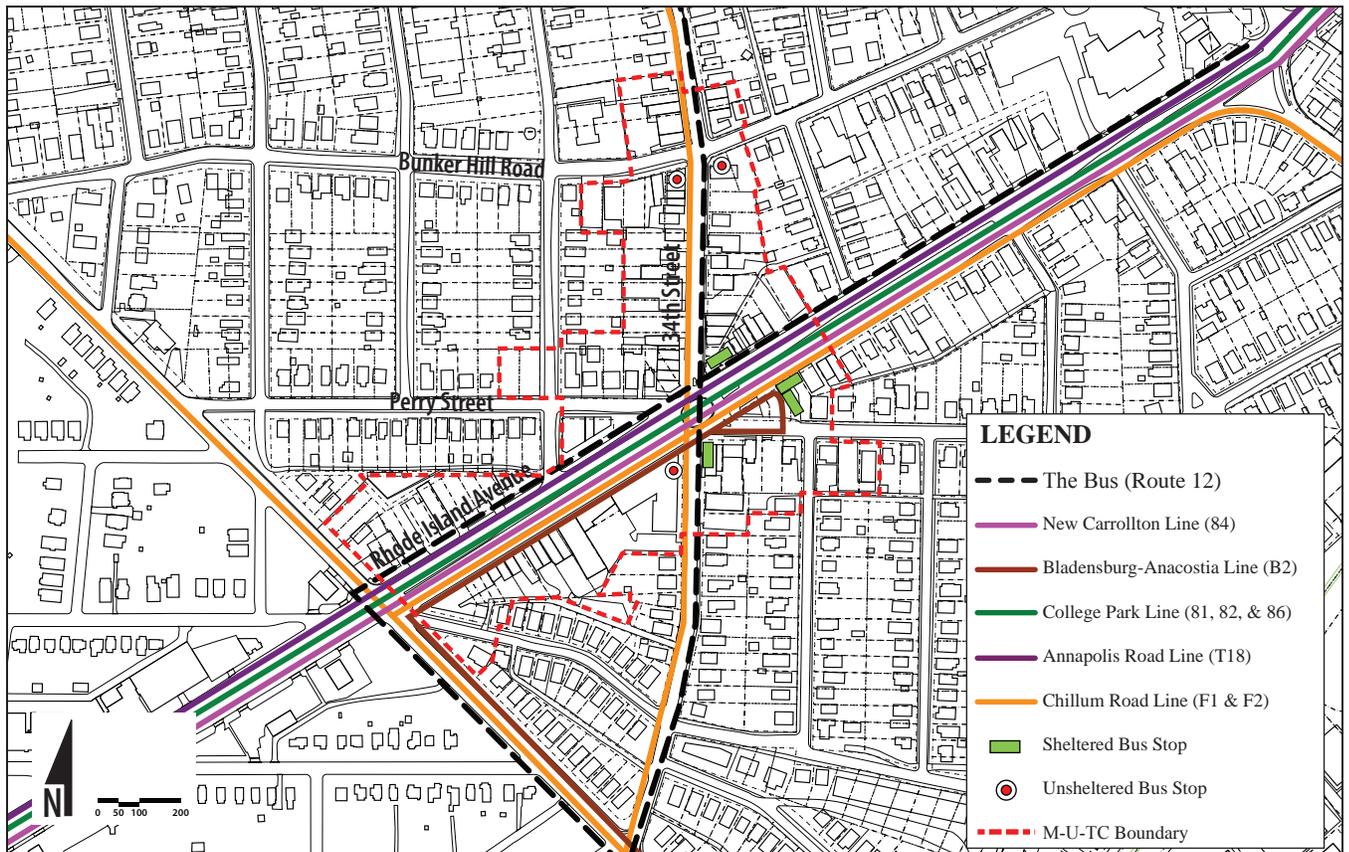


FIGURE 7: BUS LINES SERVING THE STUDY AREA.

Market Analysis

Primary Trade Area

The greatest demand for commercial use can be found in the immediate areas surrounding the M-U-TC boundary. This area, which is defined as the primary trade area (PTA), is a customized geographic area within a one-mile radius from the intersection of 34th Street and Rhode Island Avenue. The one-mile radius represents a 15- to 20-minute walk to downtown Mount Rainier. The specific boundary of this PTA is Michigan Avenue to Arundel Road on the north; open space and parks on the east; New York Avenue/US 50 on the south; and 13th Street, N.E., in the District of Columbia, on the west.

Current Demographic Profile of the PTA

There are approximately 25,700 residents and 10,400 households within the PTA boundary, which equates to 2.4 residents per household. The home ownership rate is approximately 60 percent. Approximately 45 percent of the population owns one vehicle and 21 percent owns two vehicles. Twenty-four percent of the population does not own a vehicle.

Additionally, an estimated 23 percent of working age residents use public transportation to get to work. **Table 1** compares a number of local and regional demographic profiles with the demographic profiles of the PTA.

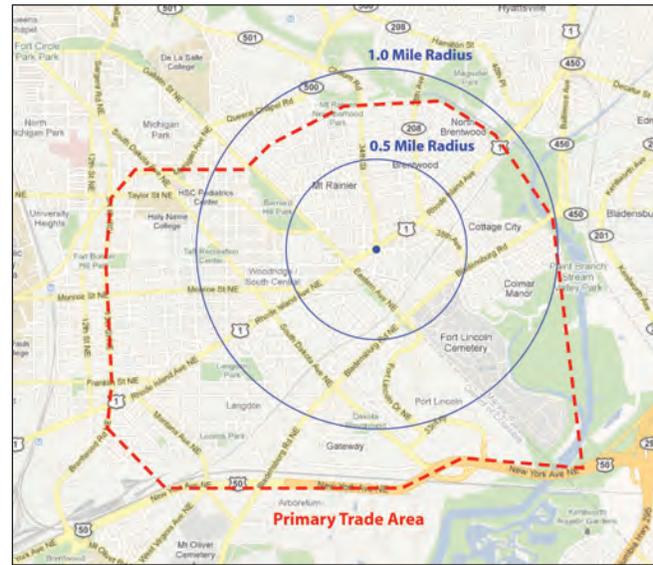


FIGURE 8: PRIMARY TRADE AREA.

TABLE 1: MOUNT RAINIER M-U-TC STUDY—2009 ESTIMATED DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

	0.5 MILE RADIUS	CITY OF MOUNT RAINIER	PRIMARY TRADE AREA	PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY	DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	WASHINGTON, D.C., MSA*
Population	5,400	8,400	25,700	827,400	591,700	5,400,000
RACE						
Black or African-American	56.3%	53.9%	72.5%	53.9%	53.5%	25.8%
White	17.9%	18.1%	12.7%	18.1%	35.9%	56.4%
Other ¹	25.8%	28.0%	14.8%	28.0%	10.6%	17.8%
Households	1,900	3,400	10,400	297,100	260,750	2,000,000
Average household size	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.1	2.6
Average age	38	35	41	35	38	37
Median household income	\$55,160	\$40,680	\$52,120	\$69,280	\$55,600	\$84,500
Average household income	\$70,220	\$49,070	\$66,670	\$81,690	\$86,200	\$106,500
Percentage homes owner occupied	64.7%	25.8%	60.1%	25.8%	40.3%	64.9%
Median home value	\$256,700	\$246,300	\$289,000	\$283,800	\$358,300	\$366,000
Percentage of family households	62.7%	52.8%	55.9%	69.1%	46.0%	62.5%
Percentage with high school degree or higher	67.5%	72.8%	73.1%	85.2%	77.8%	87.2%
Average number of vehicles per household	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.7	0.9	1.7

¹ The majority of "other" are Hispanic and Latino.

Source: US Census, Claritas, 10/09

* Metropolitan Statistical Area

Population and Household Growth Trends

Until 2005, the overall population and household growth within the PTA was relatively static. However, since that date, there has been an incremental population increase with aging households being replaced by younger families and new infill residential development and redevelopment. It is expected that in the long term there may be a 5–10 percent growth in population and number of households in the PTA (see Table 2).

The overall residential profile of the PTA is 72 percent African-American, 13 percent Caucasian, and 15 percent “other,” predominately made up of Hispanic people. The average age of residents is 41. However, 20 percent of the population consists of children under the age of 18. Persons 65 years or older make up 17 percent of the population. An estimated 73 percent of the population over the age of 25 have attained at least a high school degree.

The average income is approximately \$66,670, and the median household income is approximately \$52,100. The data for household income indicates that approximately 23 percent of the households within the PTA earn less than \$50,000 per year, and approximately one fifth of the households earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per

TABLE 2: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

TIMEFRAME	POPULATION	HOUSEHOLDS
1990–2000*	-5.4%	-2.4%
2000–2009*	-1.4%	0.3%
2009–2014 (projected)**	-0.0%	0.0%
2014+ (potential long term)***	5-10%	5-10%

SOURCE: *U.S. Census, **Claritas, ***Bolan Smart 10/09

year. On a comparative basis, within a half-mile radius of the intersection of 34th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, the population base is more diverse, with higher home-ownership rates and incomes than those found in the overall PTA.

Employment Characteristics

Table 3 summarizes employment within a half-mile radius of the intersection of 34th Street and Rhode Island Avenue. While there is a large employment base at the periphery of the PTA, this job base has had minimal impact on the retail environment of downtown Mount Rainier.

Housing Stock Characteristics

Most residential units within the PTA are roughly 60 years old and approximately 66 percent are single-family homes. Small multifamily buildings (between 3 and 19 units) make up approximately 19 percent of the housing stock. Another 11 percent of the residential units are large-scale multifamily buildings (50 plus units). Other housing types comprise the remaining three percent of housing stock within the PTA. A majority of the homes closer to downtown Mount Rainier are owner occupied single-family residences. The median home value within the PTA is estimated at \$289,000 compared to \$283,800 in greater Prince George’s County.

TABLE 3: HALF-MILE RADIUS EMPLOYMENT SECTOR (2009 ESTIMATE)

BUSINESS / LABOR SECTOR	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Retail	454	22.9
Construction	241	12.1
Finance	220	11.1
Personal services	159	8.0
Government and education	151	7.6
Wholesale trade	139	7.0
Manufacturing	138	7.0
Social services	118	5.9
Business services	93	4.7
Transportation and utilities	93	4.7
Other	181	9.0
TOTAL	1,987	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Census, Claritas, Bolan Smart 10/09

Market Analysis: Existing Land Uses

Overview

The buildings within the M-U-TC boundary total approximately 350,000 square feet. An estimated 25–30 percent of these buildings are vacant or under-utilized. Additionally, vacant lots and/or surface parking lots account for approximately two acres within the M-U-TC area.

Commercial Uses

Table 4 gives a breakdown of the commercial uses by category located within the M-U-TC. There is approximately 178,000 square feet of commercial space within the boundary of the M-U-TC, of which approximately 64,800 square feet—or 36 percent of the built commercial square footage—was vacant as of December 2009. Of the approximately 113,200 square feet of occupied commercial space within the area, consumer goods and personal care services comprise almost 57,000 square feet, or 50 percent of

that occupied space. Another ±34,600 square feet of commercial within the M-U-TC consists primarily of small office spaces, and ±20,160 square feet of commercial consists of cultural/arts related uses. A majority of the retail tenants are sole proprietors, and they are not representative of regional or national franchises/chains. By comparison, the commercial area surrounding the M-U-TC contains 1.5 million square feet of retail space comprised of numerous franchises/chains.

Even with the various retail businesses outside of the PTA, the Mount Rainier M-U-TC area offers opportunities for new commercial uses, such as a sit down restaurant and/or bank. **Table 5**, which is a commercial market summary, provides the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for future commercial uses within the M-U-TC area.

TABLE 4: EXISTING COMMERCIAL LAND USES BY CATEGORY

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES	SQUARE FEET	COMMERCIAL USE PERCENTAGE
RETAIL			
Food and Drink	10	18,745	16.6
Beauty Salon	11	12,811	11.3
Grocery / Convenience / Variety	5	12,670	11.2
Flowers / Gifts / Boutiques / Thrift	6	9,670	8.5
Art / Galleries	1	1,700	1.5
Services / Laundry	1	1,220	1.1
SUBTOTAL RETAIL:	34	56,816	50.2
OTHER COMMERCIAL / OFFICE	14	34,589	30.6
CULTURAL & ARTS	2	21,778	19.2
Totals:	50	113,183	100.0

SOURCE: Market Data, Mount Rainier Business Association and Bolan Smart, 10/09.

TABLE 5: COMMERCIAL MARKET SUMMARY

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two distinct commercial streets. • Historic character. • Regional demand draw for patrons of Joe’s Movement Emporium and Glut Food Co-op. • Pedestrian scale/neighborhood serving. • Arts/environment/health niche. • Parking generally available. • Relatively low rents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building storefronts/appearances. • Perceived crime and safety issues. • Vacant buildings, some obsolete space, and institutional street level uses. • Rhode Island Avenue pedestrian access and safety. • No cohesive streetscape or signage. • Parking is not always available directly in front of businesses. • Redundancy of uses. • Inconsistent hours of operation. • Proximate competitive retail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of retail offerings. • Household and income growth. • Improve visual appearances (i.e., signage, buildings, etc.). • More pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and amenities. • Assistance/incentives for future investors.

Civic and Institutional Uses

Public related land uses comprise ±36,100 square feet, or approximately 10 percent of the existing total estimated 350,000 square feet in the M-U-TC area.

Residential Uses

Residential land uses comprise ±135,600 square feet, or 39 percent of the total square footage within the M-U TC area. Approximately 75 percent of this residential square footage is distributed between the Mount Rainier Artist Lofts at 3311 Rhode Island Avenue, the Newton Square Apartment at 3201 Rhode Island Avenue, and HIPP Artist Housing at 3801 33rd Street. The remainder of the residential units within the M-U-TC are smaller one- to four-unit apartment buildings scattered throughout the area.

The residential neighborhoods immediately surrounding the M-U-TC, within the PTA boundary, are

predominantly low density single-family bungalow style homes. Moving outside of the PTA, there are a number of rental apartment complexes, including Queenstown Apartments, Queens Manor Garden, and Kaywood Gardens Apartments.

New residential development and redevelopment within and just outside of the M-U-TC represents a key opportunity with many benefits. While financing is a challenge, efforts need to be directed towards capturing new market-rate ownership housing.

