

Judy Penny

From: Christine Bozarth <christine.bozarth@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 5:37 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: 2040 Comprehensive Plan: Trees and Natural Spaces for Health and Equity

Dear Mayor & Council, As you consider the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for Rockville City, please make sure that open natural spaces, the trees in our neighborhoods, and native plants are included in the plan.

Tree canopy is positively correlated with cleaner air and better mental health. This is a good tool to examine tree equity in Rockville, MD. <https://www.treeequityscore.org/> You sent a clear message by keeping RedGate a park (thank you!). Open natural places and a vibrant tree canopy extend places like RedGate into our community to make a healthier, more livable, and climate-friendly Rockville. Over the past twenty years I have lived here, I have witnessed the loss of many of our mature trees and it saddens me. The time is now to plant new native trees, while protecting existing mature trees. This applies to City trees and to encouraging residents to plant and protect trees in our community. The pandemic, along with the effects of climate change, have awakened an interest in our natural spaces, trees, and native plants and pollinators. These things are important to residents and should be reflected in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Thank you, Christine Bozarth
1214 Allison Drive, Twinbrook

Robert R. Harris
Attorney
301-841-3826
rrharris@lercheearly.com

June 16, 2021

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Bridget Newton, Mayor
and Members of the Rockville City Council
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update – Rockshire Village Shopping Center

Dear Mayor Newton and Members of the City Council:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide additional comments concerning the Planning Commission-Recommended Draft of the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan. I previously submitted written testimony providing land use recommendations for the vacant Rockshire Village Shopping Center site. As part of my testimony, I attached a 2005 study conducted by Streetsense outlining the problem with attempting to bring retail back to the site. The Streetsense study advised against the retail at Rockshire, citing the construction of recently-constructed and more competitive retail centers nearby.

More recently, Streetsense prepared an addendum outlining additional concerns with the viability of retail uses on the Rockshire Village Shopping Center site. The addendum reiterates the risks of developing retail on the currently vacant, under-performing site, particularly referencing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new world of retail. I have attached this addendum for your consideration.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Robert R. Harris

September 23, 2020

John D. Rhoad, Jr.
Managing Principal
RMJ Development Group, LLC
1650 Tysons Blvd, Suite 820
McLean, VA 22102

Dear Mr. Rhoad,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update for our October 2015 retail study for the Rockshire Shopping Center site located along Wootton Parkway in Rockville, Maryland.

As determined in our first assessment five years ago, the Rockshire site, which was once a well-positioned retail center within densely populated neighborhoods, has been outpositioned over the 40 years since it was first constructed. Development such as Fallsgrove Village Center (constructed in 2002) and Park Potomac (constructed in 2010) essentially reallocated major portions of the Rockshire site's retail demand. These retail-centric projects had significant impacts on the Rockville/West of I-170 submarket, shifting demand from smaller, traditional neighborhood centers, such as Rockshire Village Center, to other properties with nearly twice the retail space with stronger anchor tenants. This condition was further exacerbated in 2018 with the opening of a new Trader Joe's (located two miles west of the site) and the retail at Research Row, which is now anchored by a Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant as well as a Chick-Fil-A.

In addition to limitations for retail at the site caused by diluted market demand, the Rockshire Shopping Center location does not allow competitive levels of visibility for potential retail tenants. Superior retail sites exist and are available in areas that would be more appealing to store owners and restaurateurs than the Rockshire site. For example, Park Potomac and Research Row benefit from I-270 visibility and access; whereas Fallsgrove Village Center and Trader Joe's Travilah benefit from 30,000+ passing cars each day (Wootton Parkway has roughly half as many).

Our 2015 Retail Market Conditions Assessment for the site concluded that the potential draw for retail space at this location was insufficient to support a retail component at that time. In the five years since that study, the macroeconomics associated with isolated, suburban, retail real estate have deteriorated significantly - due in part to increased cultural acceptance of online shopping, home delivery, and now COVID-related business struggles.

From a broader perspective, following years of extensive study of the District of Columbia and Loudoun County, Virginia retail environments, our firm was very grateful for the opportunity to provide a similar demand analysis for our own Montgomery County in 2018.

One of the most significant conclusions of this document is that the county's restrained approach to the requirement and development of new retail spaces has served as an important factor in its ability to persevere through economic difficulties. Simply stated, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the county did not facilitate retail overbuilding. This approach will help buffer Montgomery County, as retail vacancies rise and profit margins for store owners and restaurateurs increasingly risk dwindling to unsustainable levels in the current economic climate.

Projects such as this one begin to unravel this smart stewardship. Building retail space for the sake of it - especially if it is not well-supported by customer demand - creates a situation where new retail space is essentially being constructed to be vacant. Vacant or under-performing, under-tenanted retail space at the Rockshire site will have a far more deleterious effect on the surrounding neighborhoods than no retail at all.

The future of retail activity and demand is practically unknown right now. One thing we are absolutely certain of is that the state of the retail industry and its real estate will never be the same. For this reason and all of the reasons above, **I would urge the City of Rockville to consider restraint and to not require retail space** in the redevelopment plans for Rockshire Village Center.

Thank you,



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Patricia A. Harris, Esq.
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July 2, 2021

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Bridget Newton, Mayor
and Members of the Rockville City Council
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update – 12 North Washington Street

Dear Mayor Newton and Members of the City Council:

On behalf of Federal Realty Investment Trust, the owners of the property located at 12 North Washington Street (“Property”), we are submitting these comments with respect to the draft Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations for the Property.

Christine McGuirl, a representative of Federal Realty, testified at the June 14, 2021 public hearing that a maximum height of 75 feet stepping down to 45 feet, as recommended by both the Planning Staff and Planning Commission, is appropriate for the Property. While we recognize that the Mayor and Council spent a considerable amount of time discussing the height issue at a prior worksession, there were several key facts that were omitted from that discussion which we believe merit consideration. Accordingly, we respectfully request the Mayor and Council’s consideration of this request, given these facts and the several unique aspects of the Property that differentiate it from other sites fronting the west side of North Washington Street from West Montgomery Avenue to Beall Avenue.

The Property is currently zoned MXNC and is improved with a one story retail shopping strip containing approximately 38,000 square feet that was constructed in 1952.

1. Current Zoning Ordinance Allows a Maximum Height of 65 Feet

While the base height in the MXNC Zone is 45 feet, Zoning Ordinance Section 25.13.05.b.2.c currently allows a maximum height of 65 feet when found suitable in accordance with the Plan and when 15 percent open area is provided. Consequently, a recommendation to now limit the overall height to 45 feet represents a downzoning. This is at a time when more, not less, residential uses are needed in the Town Center area to both support the existing Town Center development (as recommended by the ULI TAP Report) and respond to the increasing need for residential development.

Moreover, as Ms. McGuirl testified, in 2017 Federal Realty explored the potential redevelopment of the Property with a 65 foot tall multi-residential building, but determined that it simply was not economically feasible to pursue. While the existing retail center, complete with surface parking, is not necessarily an ideal use at this location from an urban design standpoint, it is nonetheless an income producing property and as such, the financial return of taking the Property off-line for almost two years and redeveloping it, needs to be economically supportable. A modest increase in height over the existing 65 feet to allow one more story of development over a portion of the Property would allow a reasonable return and make the redevelopment of the Property feasible. Without this assurance, the current development status of the Property will continue.

At the prior worksession, the Mayor and Council mentioned that townhouse development would be an appropriate redevelopment option for the properties on the west side of North Washington Street. However, it must be noted that if a 65 foot tall multi-family development project is not economically viable, a townhouse development will also not be economically viable and therefore is not a realistic development option.

2. The Property Exceeds 300 feet in Depth

As indicated on Exhibit A, the Property is approximately 340 deep -- almost one-third deeper than any other Property along the west side of North Washington Street. This depth, which exceeds the length of a football field, ensures that a building with a maximum height of 75 feet along North Washington, stepping down toward the west to 45 feet, could be constructed in a manner that is completely compatible with the surrounding area.

Critically, the City's layback slope requirements ensure that compatibility is achieved. More precisely, the 30 degree layback slope would limit heights of 45 feet within 78 feet of the western property line and heights of 75 feet would be precluded within 130 feet of the western property line. Such a development would not adversely impact the existing buildings along North Adams Street and at the same time, would achieve the desired urban design along North Washington Street.

During the course of the Mayor and Council's worksession on this issue, concern was expressed that allowing heights of 75 feet along North Washington would create a canyon effect and effectively "wall off" Town Center from the residential area further to the west. We disagree with this characterization and ask that the Mayor and Council consider the urban design character that has been achieved right across the street from the Property on East Middle Lane which is bordered on both sides with 5 to 12 story buildings (Exhibit B). Moreover, unlike the development on East Middle Lane that occurred as part of a comprehensive project, the properties along North Washington Street are owned individually, and it is highly unlikely that even if the zoning were changed on all of the sites between West Montgomery Avenue and Beall Avenue to allow higher heights (which we are not necessarily advocating), that they would all redevelop. Land development patterns simply do not occur in this manner.

Relatedly, during the worksession comments were made about the compatibility of 75 foot heights in proximity to the historic area. As noted, the height of the redevelopment closest to the buildings within the historic area would only be 45 feet and even then, because of the layback requirement, the redevelopment would be setback considerably from these buildings. A height of 45 feet that is setback from the historic area on North Adams because of the layback slope is compatible, common place and does not threaten the historic area. Throughout the Country there are specifically designated historic sites adjacent to taller buildings.

Given that the conditions of the Property are distinctly different than any of the other sites on the west side of North Washington, we urge the Mayor and Council to recommend a height of 75 feet, stepping down to 45 feet at the rear, for the Property. We note that variation in zoned height in a given area is the norm on the County zoning map, with different sites in the same block zoned to different maximum heights to reflect the circumstances of a given site.

Finally, as part of the Planning Commission's approval of a Site Plan it must find, among other things, that the Site Plan will not "adversely affect the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the proposed development," "be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the neighborhood" or "be incompatible with the surrounding uses or properties." As a result, the Planning Commission has the ability to evaluate every development on its own merits and assure that it will not have a negative impact on the surrounding area.

We appreciate this additional opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Plan. As indicated, we continue to believe that a maximum height of 75 feet is appropriate for the Property, consistent with both the Planning Staff's and Planning Commission's recommendations, and thus urge your support.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Harris

Encls.

cc: Ms. Christine McGuirl
Mr. David Levy
Ms. Andrea Gilles

**EXHIBIT A
PROPERTY DEPTH**

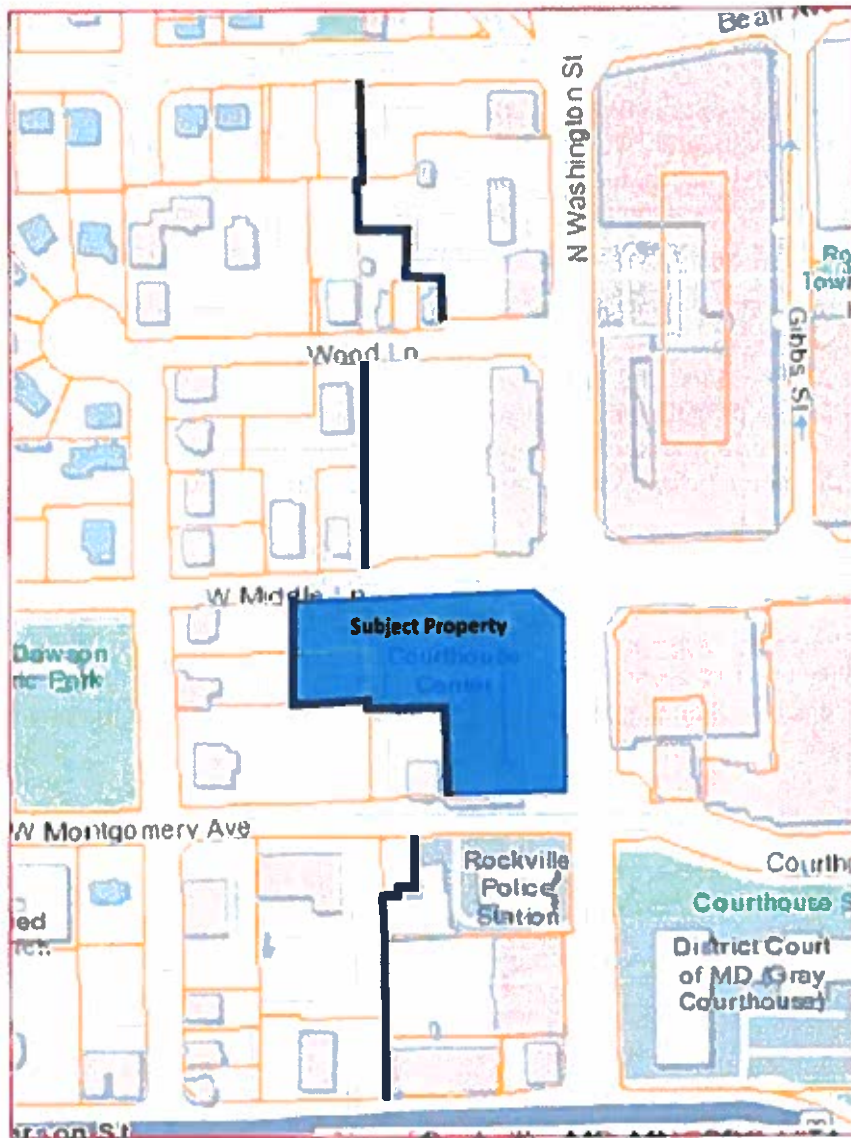




EXHIBIT B
Street view looking
east along Middle
Lane

Judy Penny

From: John Becker <jb.ic@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, July 2, 2021 3:20 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Cc: cityclerk
Subject: Comments on 2040 Rockville Comprehensive Plan

Mayor, Council-members and City Staff,

Below are a list of topics I ask you consider when approving/producing the final City of Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Area #1, Town Center:

Neighborhood Designation and Listings:

At the Mayor and Council, at the meeting on June 7, 2021 it was agreed that neighborhoods should be mentioned in some of the Planning Areas. I agree and support that as neighborhoods are the backbone of our City.

However, why should multi-family areas be excluded from the neighborhood designation? At Americana Centre, we have 425 homes and 800 + residents. Americana is a designated Historic Property (as noted in the Historic Preservation Element of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan). You all have noticed we are spending more than \$25,000,000 of our own money to complete repairs, replacements and upgrades resulting in a better neighborhood that is efficient and environmental friendly.

Should not other multi-family locations throughout Planning Area #1 be recognized as neighborhoods in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan?

This is similar to Planning Area #3's listing of the neighborhoods of Hungerford, New Mark Commons, Lynfield, and Fireside Park.

Consider other multi-family areas throughout Rockville that are neighborhoods as well as single-family and town-house communities (neighborhoods).

Transportation and Pedestrian 2040 Comprehensive Plan:

Continue to focus on reducing the stress in walking and biking around Town Center and other Planning Areas of the City. Although road ways and traffic volume may be within standard design guidelines, it is imperative that pedestrians and bicyclists are not placed in a stressful situation whereby they are a mere foot or two feet from rushing traffic at 25 - 35 miles per hour (or higher) as they traverse Planning Area #1 and other Planning Areas. Efforts on separating pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicles deserves attention in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Rockville Metro Access:

For those of us who access Metro from Monroe Place and Rockville Pike it is important the 2040 Comprehensive Plan address crossing this intersection safely. Not only do Americana residents and guests use this intersection but our fellow neighbors at Main Street, the staff and visitors of the Montgomery County Office Bldg., the Montgomery County Circuit Court and the tenants and guests of 51 Monroe Street. There are three methods of crossing from Town Center to the Rockville Metro Station and of those three, the crossing at Monroe Place and Rockville Pike is the second highest in volume. Mayor & Council and City Staff are urged to maintain and enhance this path of access to public transit, increasing its safety and reducing the stress of all who use this access point or who pass through.

Historic Element:

I support the concerns of Peerless Rockville in reducing the zoning classification from the intense MXCD as noted in Nancy Pickard's written testimony of June 4, 2021. It is important to maintain a buffer from intense development and associated uses from historic and associated residential uses. I urge Mayor & Council and City Staff to reconsider a less dense, less intense zoning classification on the west side of North Washington Street.

Historic District Commission Commission:

I urge you all to consider allowing the Commission to comment in an advisory capacity on any/all proposed development adjacent to an existing or future historic district or an isolated historically designated property. This is especially important when the character of a proposed development may affect an existing historically designated property. Is this a position to stop development? No it is not. My reason for bringing this to the attention of Mayor & Council, Staff and Rockville residents and property owners is to add to the consideration and review component of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan review process.

Thank you for considering the above as you work toward finalizing Rockville's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Good Luck!

**Regards,
John Becker
148 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850**

Judy Penny

From: Charles Littlefield <charleslittlefield3@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 2, 2021 4:59 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: CMP testimony related to tunneling under Rockville Pike at Park Road and Middle Lane to develop a ground level park and other infrastructure near the Rockville WMATA stop
Attachments: The high-tech, low-cost world of tunnel building - MarketWatch.pdf

Dear Mayor & Council:

I am submitting the attached article (link also pasted below) as public testimony for the City of Rockville Comprehensive Master Plan you are currently reviewing. Although this testimony relates back to my attendance (as a planning commissioner) at one of your sessions, during which the idea of building a tunnel was discussed, I am submitting this testimony as an individual/private resident, since this was not something I recall the commission discussing in open meeting.

As you will see, this article lays out a fairly clear logic as to why tunneling might actually be a superior option cost-wise -- due to new advances in technology and other factors -- compared to above-ground options. I suggest you consider this and ask staff to further research the points raised in this article.

Thank You,
Charles Littlefield
316 S Horners Ln, Rockville, MD 20850

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-high-tech-low-cost-world-of-tunnel-building-2016-05-10>

The high-tech, low-cost world of tunnel building

Published: May 10, 2016 at 5:59 a.m. ET

By Daniel Michaels

New technology has dramatically reduced the cost—and disruption—of building tunnels under busy cities for rail, road and utility projects



Britain's Queen Elizabeth stands with London's transport commissioner Mike Brown at the entrance to one of the new Crossrail train tunnels at the Bond Street station construction site in central London Feb. 23, 2016.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cities are going down.

To manage relentless growth, urban centers are expanding underground at an unprecedented pace. But it isn't just the crush of humanity above the ground that is behind the subterranean push. It also is the result of dramatic advances in a field almost as old as civilization: tunneling.

Engineers in recent decades have developed mechanized and automated systems to chew through deep rock or muck and immediately line an excavation to prevent collapse—all without disturbing the busy city above. That means projects that once would have taken armies of men years to dig now can advance in a fraction of the time and at much lower cost.

Massive robotic worms have been burrowing rail, road and utility tunnels under New York, Singapore and London, little noticed by residents. Washington, D.C. and Indianapolis are boring vast underground cisterns to store rainwater. And Cleveland is punching narrow sewer-pipe ducts through dirt and rock without ripping open streets or lawns.

Even cities prone to seismic activity, such as Los Angeles and Istanbul, are building tunnels thanks to innovations in equipment and techniques. In the Turkish megalopolis, a new roadway under the deep Bosphorus waterway includes joints that permit sections of the tunnel to move during an earthquake without structural damage.

"Major cities just can't function without going underground," says Joe Guertin, a retired geotechnical engineer who worked on tunnels in the U.S. for five decades, including New York subway projects in the 1970s. "Technology has changed the equation."

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Urban stealth

Not all projects advance smoothly. Under Seattle, one of the world's largest tunnel-boring machines sat idle for two years until December, undergoing repairs after unexpectedly hitting metal pipes near the start of a highway dig. But Seattle's experience—which attracted a lot of attention because of the

project's problems and delays—is unusual these days.

“There are tunnel-boring machines all over the world in very complex geology that never get any attention,” says Michael Mooney, a professor of underground construction and tunneling at the Colorado School of Mines.

Indeed, the number of tunnel-boring machines, or TBMs, in operation has surged since 2000. Herrenknecht AG, one of the world's biggest TBM makers, says it is providing machines for as many as 100 projects annually, up from as many as 20 some 15 years ago.

“The ability to deliver a tunnel on time and on budget has changed a lot...and really pushed the industry,” says Achim Kühn, a spokesman for the privately held German company, whose tunnel-boring machines can cost more than \$50 million each.

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Few places illustrate the progress more than New York. The metropolis was a tunneling pioneer a century ago, but financial woes after World War II ended that. Today, urgently needed rail tunnels are again advancing.





New York City's East Side Access project includes over 11 miles of tunneling and consists of work in multiple locations in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. When completed it will serve approximately 162,000 customers a day and provide a quicker and easier commute from Long Island and Queens to the east side of Manhattan.

GETTY IMAGES

Few New Yorkers are aware of the underground work that is going on, which makes the city's top rail tunneler happy. Michael Horodniceanu, president of capital construction for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, keeps a photograph of central Manhattan streets ripped open to build the Broadway subway line around 1900. The old construction approach, which turned the famously busy thoroughfare into a massive trench, cut off buildings and snarled traffic while the avenue was excavated and resurfaced.

Tunnelers then "weren't concerned with the impact of the construction on the surrounding area," says Horodniceanu. Today, upending lives and commerce isn't an option.

MTA projects now snake through spots with more than 100,000 people per square mile, including along Manhattan's Second Avenue and posh Park Avenue.

"The technology allows us to go and dig without people knowing we are there," Horodniceanu says.

Dramatic savings

Pioneering urban tunnels — including London's Thames Tunnel, which opened in 1843, and New York's Holland Tunnel, which opened in 1927 — were dug by workers with picks and shovels. Supplying air to

workers and fortifying the dig before it could collapse were constant challenges. Tunneling through hard rock required blasting that threatened the buildings above.

Machines began replacing human tunnelers in the 1950s, after American mining engineer James Robbins built a giant auger to eat through shale for a hydroelectric dam in South Dakota. The tunnel-boring machine, a cylinder with cutting wheels protruding from its circular face, dug up to 10 times as fast as traditional methods.

But most cities sit on softer ground that can collapse after excavation, like sand on a beach. Many urban tunnels must run below the water table in saturated, fluid earth. Even mild subsidence can damage pipes, rail tracks or buildings above. So during the 1970s, Japanese and German engineers learned to use water and air pressure to stabilize the ground around a borer. They developed tunnel-boring machines that could robotically install precast concrete tunnel-lining panels immediately behind the

cutting face, leaving a nearly completed thoroughfare in their wake.

The savings from automation can be dramatic. Horodniceanu says the MTA recently had to manually dig a particularly difficult 120-foot tunnel at a cost of almost \$1 million per foot. By contrast, tunneling 3 miles under Second Avenue with giant machines cost about \$19,000 per foot, he says.

"The fact we can utilize TBMs makes a hell of a difference," he says.

Other recent advances in tunneling technology include precision guidance to thread around existing infrastructure and electronic monitors to track vibrations, which let tunnelers stop at the first hint of trouble. Advances in chemistry allow engineers to thicken loose ground or soften hard terrain.

These innovations have enabled tunneling in areas once considered impassable. Miami recently dug a traffic tunnel beneath a busy waterway by eating through a mix of saturated ground and porous coral rock that previously defied affordable excavation. The dig was "wildly successful," Mooney says.

New technologies, analytical tools and materials have "facilitated the design of tunnels under adverse conditions," says George A. Munfakh, director of geotechnical and tunneling at engineering firm WSP-Parsons Brinckerhoff. With science and technology, "the engineering and economics of urban tunneling have definitely changed."

Daniel Michaels is an editor for The Wall Street Journal in Germany. He can be reached at dan.michaels@wsj.com.

The article ["The high-tech, low-cost world of tunnel building"](#) first appeared on [WSJ.com](#).



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