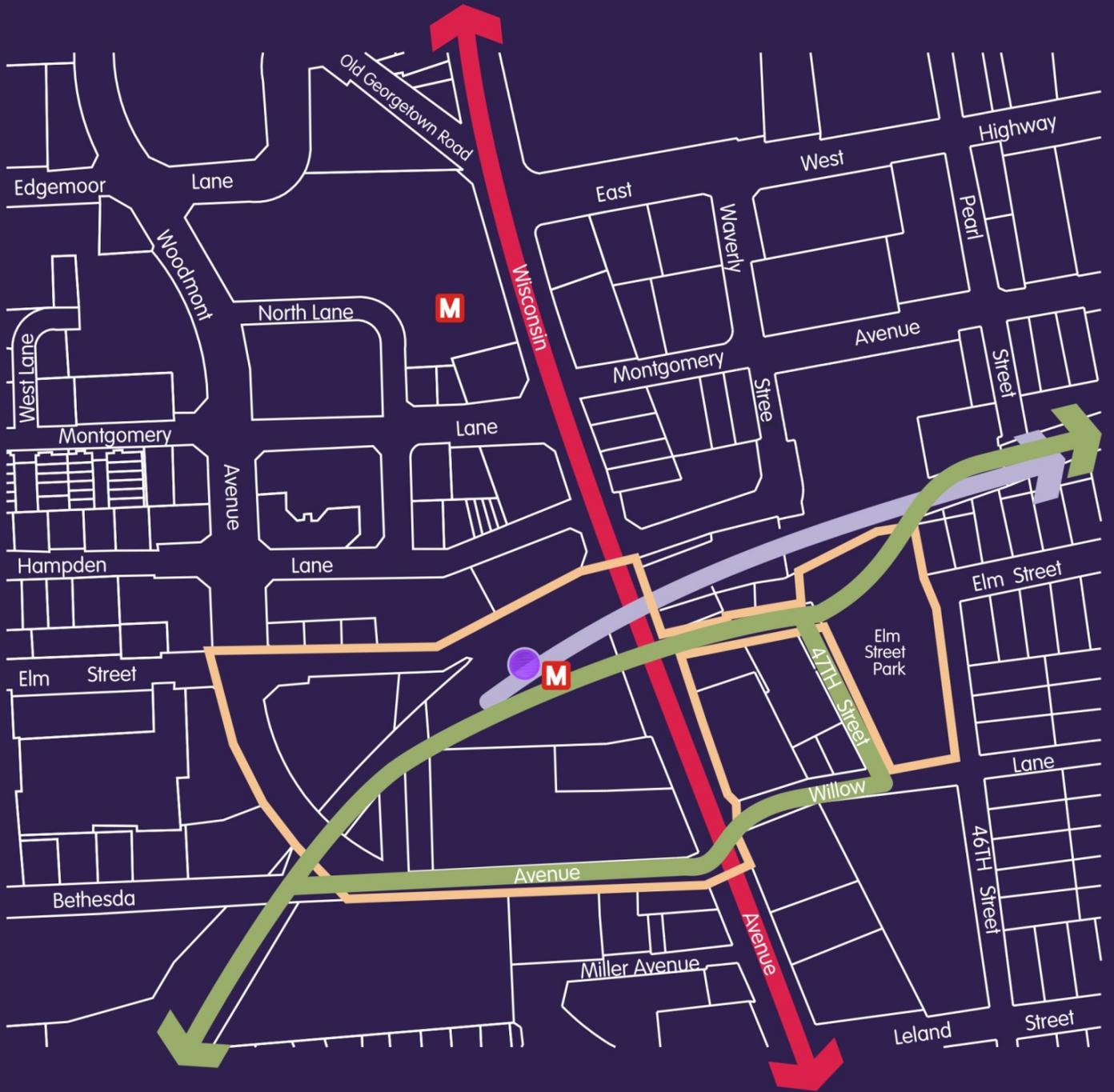




# Bethesda



## *Purple Line Station Plan* Minor Master Plan Amendment



## **Abstract**

This Plan contains the text and supporting maps for a limited amendment to the to the Approved and Adopted 1994 *Bethesda CBD Sector Plan*, as amended; *The General Plan (on Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*, as amended; the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways within Montgomery County*, as amended; and the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*, as amended.

The Amendment seeks to realize the substantial public benefits to the County and the community of an improved multi-modal transit station in downtown Bethesda. The Plan recommends changes in zoning to encourage the timely redevelopment of the Plan area to facilitate construction of the improved station design, with access to both the Purple Line station and the new Bethesda Metro station south entrance, as well as a new tunnel for the Capital Crescent Trail under Wisconsin Avenue.

### Source of Copies

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Online at [www.MontgomeryPlanning.org/community/bethesda\\_purple\\_line](http://www.MontgomeryPlanning.org/community/bethesda_purple_line)

## **Notice to Readers**

An area master plan, after approval by the District Council and adoption by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, constitutes an amendment to the General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for Montgomery County. Each area master plan reflects a vision of future development that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of a Countywide perspective. Area master plans are intended to convey land use policy for defined geographic areas and should be interpreted together with relevant Countywide functional master plans.

Master plans generally look ahead about 20 years from the date of adoption. As communities evolve, the specifics of a master plan may become less relevant over time. Generally, sketches or drawings in an adopted master plan are for illustrative purposes only; they are intended to convey a general character rather than a specific commitment to a particular detailed design.

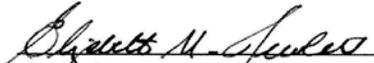
Master plans do not specify all development possibilities for a particular property or area. In order to understand the full range of development options, the reader should be aware of additional land uses and development potential available through permitted special exception uses; variances; transferrable development rights (TDRs); moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs); rezoning by local map amendments; public projects and the mandatory referral process; and municipal annexations.

BETHESDA PURPLE LINE STATION MINOR MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

This Limited Amendment to the Approved and Adopted 1994 *Bethesda CBD Sector Plan*, as amended; *The General Plan (on Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*, as amended; the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways within Montgomery County*, as amended; and the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*, as amended; has been approved by the Montgomery County Council, sitting as the District Council, by Resolution No. 17-1007 on February 11, 2014, and has been adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, by Resolution 14-01, on February 20, 2014, after a duly advertised public hearing as required by Article 28 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

  
Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Chair

  
Casey Anderson, Vice-Chair

  
Joseph Zimmerman  
Secretary-Treasurer



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
6611 Kenilworth Avenue • Riverdale, Maryland 20737

M-NCPPC No. 14-01  
MCPB 14-05

### RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, under the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is authorized and empowered, from time to time, to make and adopt, amend, extend and add to *The General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District*; and in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, pursuant to Montgomery County Code, Chapter 33A, held a duly advertised public hearing on November 7, 2013, on the Public Hearing Draft of the *Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment*, being also an amendment to the 1994 *Bethesda CBD Sector Plan*, as amended; the 2010 *Purple Line Functional Plan*, as amended; the *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County*, as amended; and the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*, as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board, after said public hearing and due deliberation and consideration, on December 5, 2013, approved the Planning Board Draft of the proposed Plan, and recommended that it be approved by the District Council and forwarded it to the County Executive and District Council for recommendation and analysis; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Executive transmitted to the District Council his fiscal impact analysis for the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment on January 31, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Council, sitting as the District Council for the portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District lying within Montgomery County, held a public hearing on January 14, 2014, wherein testimony was received concerning the Planning Board Draft *Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment*; and

  
Approved for legal sufficiency  
M-NCPPC Office of General Counsel

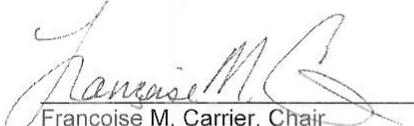
WHEREAS, the District Council, on February 11, 2014, approved the Planning Board Draft *Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment* subject to the modifications and revisions set forth in Resolution No. 17-1007; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hereby adopt the *Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment*, together with the 2010 *Purple Line Functional Plan*, as amended; the *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County*, as amended; and the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*, as amended; and as approved by the District Council in the attached Resolution No. 17-1007 and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of the *Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment* must be certified by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and filed with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of each of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as required by law.

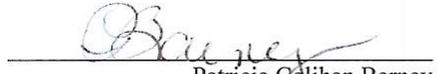
\* \* \* \* \*

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Dreyfuss, with Chair Carrier, Vice Chair Wells-Harley, and Commissioners Anderson, Dreyfuss, and Presley voting in favor at its regular meeting held on Thursday, February 20, 2014, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

  
Françoise M. Carrier, Chair  
Montgomery County Planning Board

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution No. 14-01, adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner Hewlett, seconded by Commissioner Geraldo, with Commissioners Carrier, Anderson, Bailey, Dreyfuss, Shoaff, and Wells-Harley voting in favor of the motion, and Commissioners Presley and Washington absent during the vote at its meeting held on Wednesday, March 19, 2014, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

  
Patricia Colihan Barney  
Executive Director

Resolution No.: 17-1007  
Introduced: February 11, 2014  
Adopted: February 11, 2014

**COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION  
OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT  
WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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By: County Council

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**SUBJECT:** Approval of Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment

**Background**

1. On December 6, 2013, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the County Executive and the County Council the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment.
2. The Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment amends the Approved and Adopted 1994 Bethesda CBD, as amended. It also amends the General Plan (on Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as amended; the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways within Montgomery County, as amended; and the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan, as amended.
3. On January 31, 2014, the County Executive transmitted to the County Council his fiscal impact analysis for the Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment.
4. On January 14, 2014, the County Council held a public hearing regarding the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment. The Plan was referred to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee for review and recommendation.
5. On January 27 and February 3, 2014, the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee held worksessions to review the issues raised in connection with the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment.
6. On February 11, 2014, the County Council reviewed the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment and the recommendations of the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee.

**Action**

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment, dated December 2013, is approved with revisions. County Council revisions to the Planning Board Draft Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment are identified below. Deletions to the text of the Plan are indicated by [brackets], additions by underscoring. All page references are to the December 2013 Planning Board Draft Plan.

Add the following text on the first page or inside cover of the Minor Master Plan:

This Plan amends the Approved and Adopted 1994 Bethesda CBD, as amended. It also amends the General Plan (on Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as amended; the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways within Montgomery County, as amended; and the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan, as amended.

Page 5: Revise the second full paragraph as follows:

A key component of redeveloping the station site will be the station entrances, at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Elm Street, and in Woodmont Plaza, at the intersection of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues. These spaces serve not only as critical access points to the transit station, but also as gateways to Downtown Bethesda. While in general these [These] spaces should be functional, welcoming, and activated by retail and entertainment uses and building entrances, the design of Woodmont Plaza, in particular, will be an essential part of any future redevelopment of the site.

Woodmont Plaza will be the central open space for the area around the junction of Bethesda Avenue, Woodmont Avenue, and the Capital Crescent Trail. The design should successfully integrate pedestrians and cyclists moving along and through the plaza, and feature shaded lawn areas and a variety of seating options within the overall design.

Page 7: Revise the third paragraph under the section "Capital Crescent Trail" as follows:

The Plan recommendations segment the CCT into the Mainline, Tunnel Route, and Surface Route. The Plan recommends construction of the mainline and the surface and tunnel routes to function as complementary transportation choices to serve a variety of needs. Each segment is described below. Beyond the recommendations for each of the segments, the Plan recommends keeping the rest of Elm Street Park operational, with no further decrease in the amount of usable parkland.

**General**

All illustrations and tables included in the Plan are to be revised to reflect District Council changes to the December 2013 Planning Board Draft Plan. The text and graphics are to be revised as necessary to achieve clarity and consistency, to update factual information, and to convey the actions of the District Council. All identifying references pertain to the Planning Board Draft.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

---

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council

## Introduction

### ***A Vision of Transit Future***

With an improved Purple Line Station, the south entrance to the Bethesda Red Line Metrorail Station and the Capital Crescent Trail literally under one roof, the Minor Master Plan Amendment Area has the potential to become the new “best address” of the Bethesda Central Business District (CBD). This Area, chiefly the block bound by Wisconsin Avenue, Elm Street, Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue, is the eastern gateway to the popular and successful Bethesda Row – the primary center of activity in the CBD – and a key component of the Wisconsin Avenue commercial corridor. The addition of this multi-modal transit hub will enhance the level of activation, access and amenity for residents, businesses and visitors.

This Minor Master Plan Amendment envisions an urban, multi-modal transit station that is integrated into the life of Bethesda. Thousands of transit riders will use the station to come to Bethesda to live, work, and play and to go elsewhere from Bethesda to access the many rich benefits of the region. Hundreds of cyclists will use the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) to get to the many centers and neighborhoods between Silver Spring and Georgetown.

Every day, this station will bring thousands of people to Wisconsin Avenue, Elm Street, Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue. This foot and bicycle traffic will make the station location the pre-eminent address in the CBD. With the redevelopment envisioned by this Plan, it will be anchored by a signature building at this “100 percent corner,” a source of renewed growth and activity for the surrounding business, lifestyle and entertainment district.

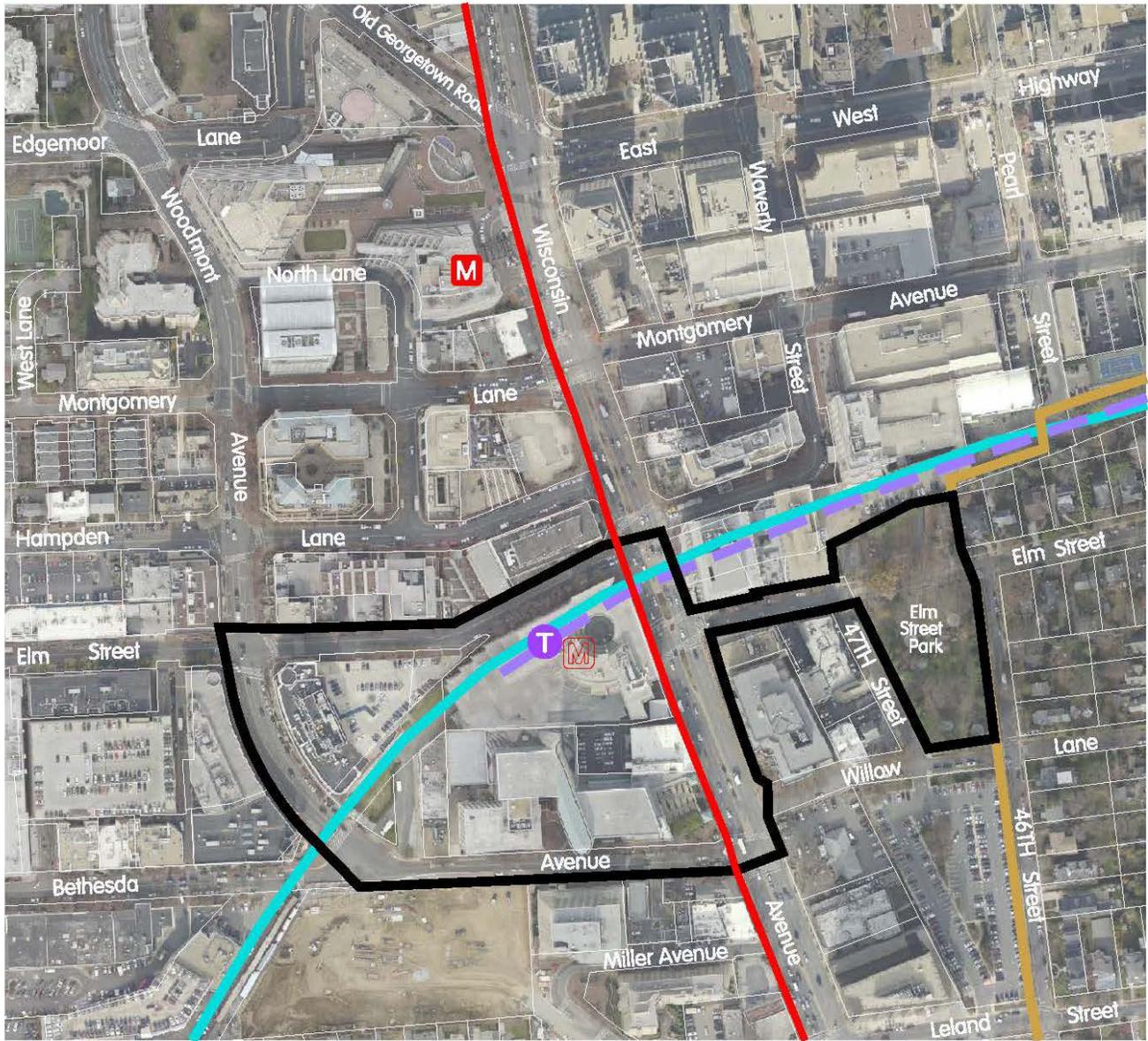
The Plan vision for the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Elm Street showcases a generous and welcoming plaza at the ground floor of a signature building, where commuters have easy direct access to the Purple Line station and, via high-speed elevators, to the Red Line Metrorail station below. The spacious Purple Line station would be welcoming and easy to navigate, with a large open platform and plenty of room for the projected 10,000-plus daily riders. Getting to the Red Line station would be efficient and streamlined. One level below the street, cyclists will be able to rapidly move through the CBD to get to work, play or home, in an environment free of automobiles.

From Woodmont Avenue, pedestrians will walk past the many shops, cafes and restaurants into the landscaped Woodmont Plaza and directly into the Purple Line station. Cyclists will have a direct route through the plaza into a short tunnel that comes out just the other side of Wisconsin Avenue, with an easy ride through Elm Street Park and on toward Rock Creek Park and Silver Spring.

Businesses around the station would benefit from greatly increased pedestrian traffic, with more eyes on shop windows. Offices, hotels and apartments around the station block will command premiums for their proximity to the multi-modal station, CCT and the Bethesda Row entertainment district.

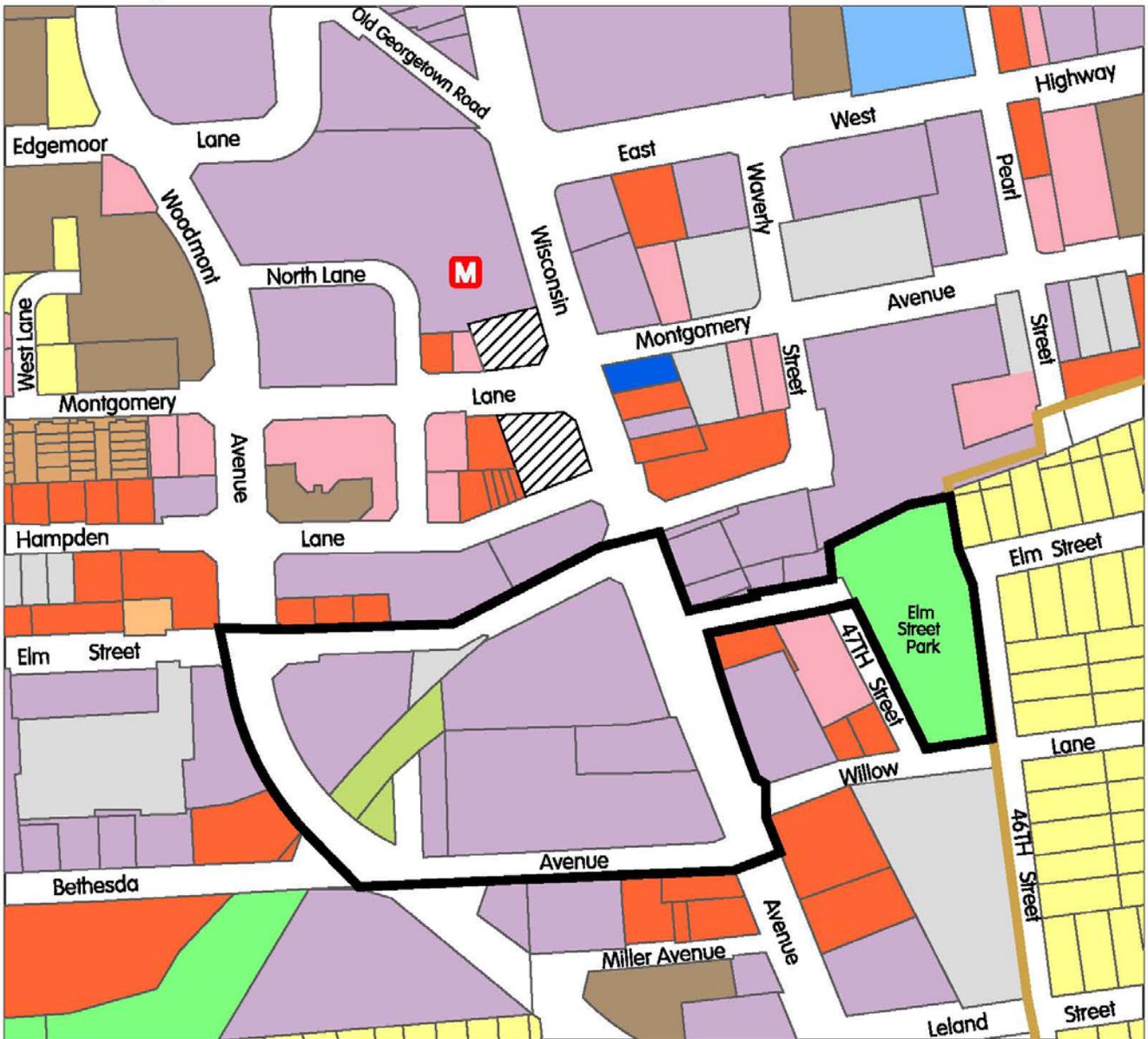
This vision of a new multi-modal transit station provides room for Bethesda to grow, creating new opportunities for businesses, residents and visitors.

**Existing Conditions**



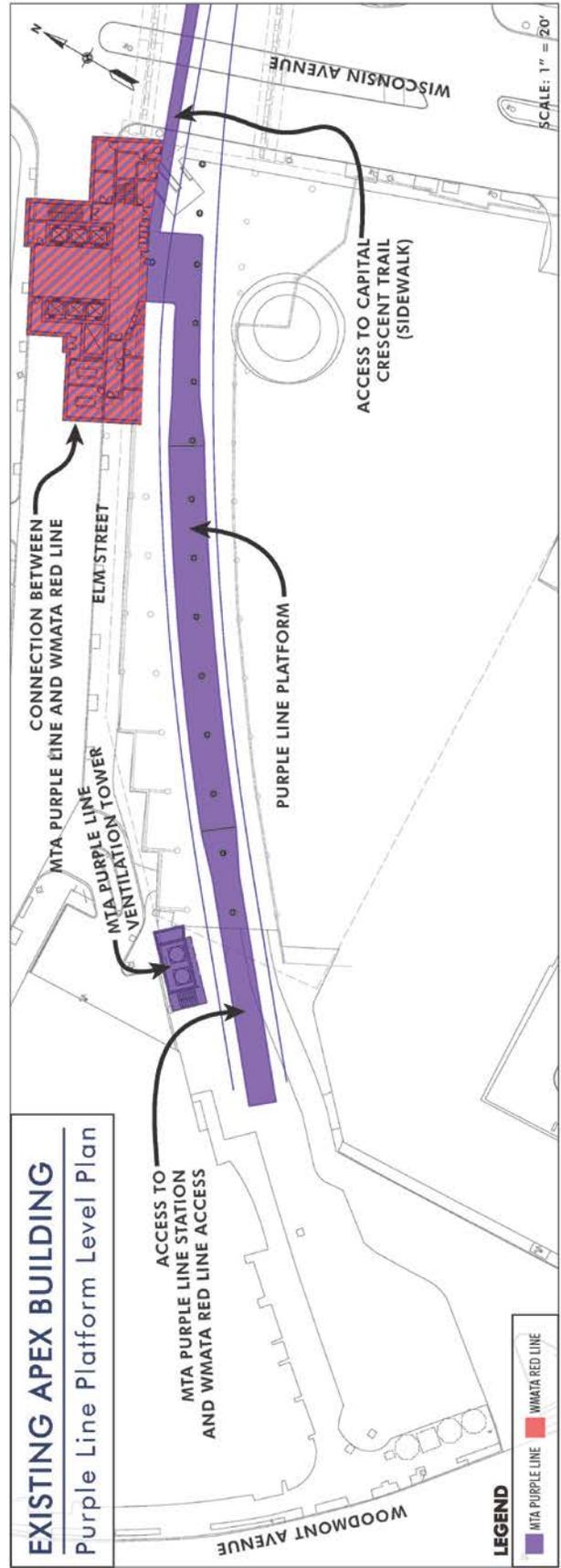
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|--|---|
|  BPLS Plan Boundary         |  Red Line                              |
|  Bethesda CBD Plan Boundary |  Metro Station                         |
|  Capital Crescent Trail     |  Proposed Metro Station South Entrance |
|  Purple Line                |  Planned Purple Line Station           |
- 
  


# Existing Land Use



- BPLS Plan Boundary
- Bethesda CBD Plan Boundary
- Single-Family
- Multi-Family
- Townhomes
- Mixed-Use
- Commercial
- Office
- Automotive
- Government
- Civic
- Parkland
- Private Open Space
- Parking
- Vacant
- M Metro Station





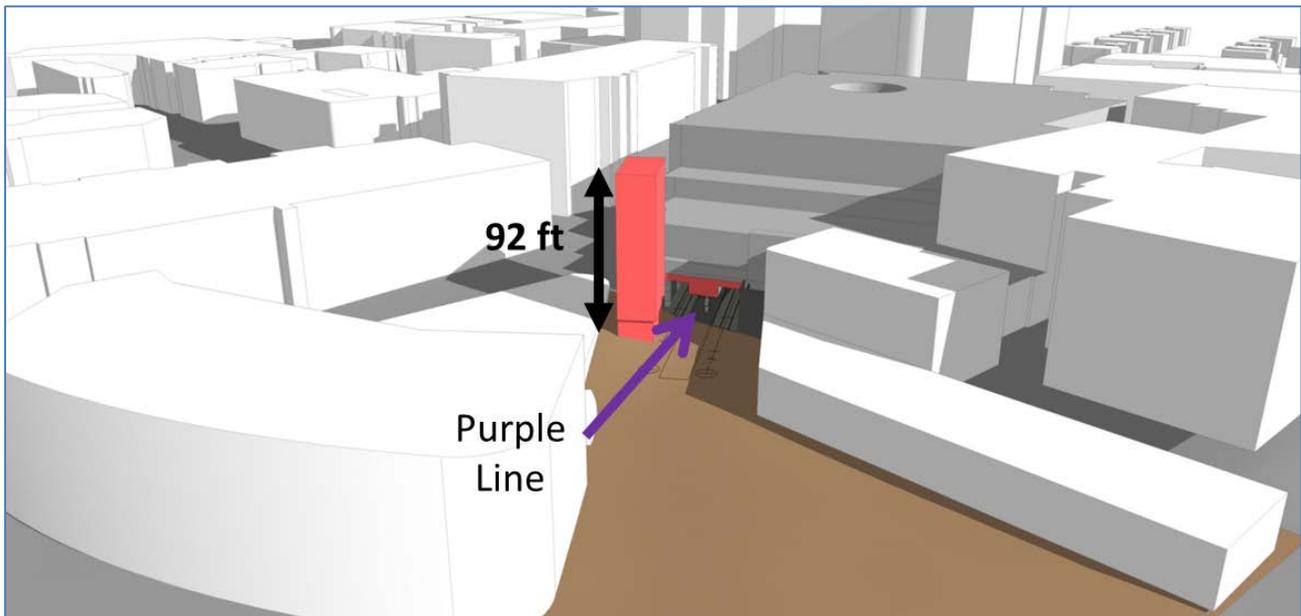
### **Station Default**

Almost 30 years ago, when the existing Apex Building was constructed over the Georgetown Branch right-of-way, it was designed to accommodate some form of transit station. But today, the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) default designs for what is now the Bethesda Purple Line station, while fitting with the space made available by the original Apex Building design, will not be able to fully implement the exciting vision proposed by this Plan. The default designs are constrained by the limits of the existing conditions, particularly the configuration of the current tunnel and Apex building support structures.

The Purple Line tracks will be located within the existing tunnel – now used as a bicycle path – that runs east from Woodmont Plaza, under the Apex building, Wisconsin Avenue and Air Rights building. The physical limitations of this tunnel will negatively impact the quality of service provided by the station as follows:

- the tunnel forces a narrower platform that constrains the number of people able to fit on it at one time;
- the platform is interrupted by numerous structural columns supporting the Apex building above, impeding circulation for riders;
- the tunnel is curved, necessitating a curved station platform that creates gaps between the train cars and platform;
- the narrowness of the existing tunnel requires the station platform to be located closer to Woodmont Plaza, resulting in “over-run” tracks extending 100 feet into the plaza, near the existing movie theater and eateries;
- a free-standing metal ventilation tower – about the size of a 90-foot-tall townhouse– must be located in Woodmont Plaza.

### **Aerial View of Vent Tower Impact**



With only a minimum amount of space in the existing tunnel for the Purple Line station, the new south entrance to the Red Line Metrorail station must be located underneath Elm Street, within the public right-of-way. This location negatively impacts the quality of service of the station as follows:

- commuters will have limited direct access from the street to the Metrorail station, and may have to travel one level down for additional elevators;
- stair and elevator access from street level to the Metro elevators below will be located in a structure projecting into the sidewalk along Elm Street, creating potential bottle-necks that significantly disrupt the pedestrian use of Elm Street;
- riders transferring between the Red and Purple Lines will have to cross the train tracks at track level, creating potential conflicts between trains and riders.

### Rendering of Elm Street Elevators



Finally, with no room in the existing tunnel for the CCT, cyclists will be forced to use a surface route along busy Bethesda Avenue and across the heavily trafficked Wisconsin Avenue.

This default design provides adequate service while minimizing costs, but would be challenged to accommodate the future growth that would be expected of a successful and attractive transit center in downtown Bethesda.

#### *(Re)Developing a Better Alternative*

In coordination with the Planning and Parks Departments and regional, state and local transportation agencies, MTA has developed an alternative station design that better realizes the Plan vision. But the vision and its many public benefits will not be realized unless the station site, the location of the existing Apex building, is redeveloped in coordination with the construction of the Purple Line, expected to begin by the end of 2015.

The alternative design significantly improves the quality of the service provided by the station as follows:

- the Purple Line platform would be larger and, without interrupting columns, would provide more room for riders and trains;
- the Purple Line station platform would be straight, eliminating gaps between the train and the platform;
- the Red Line Metro south entrance would be located within the new building with access to high-speed elevators directly from the street;
- CCT users would have a choice to cross Wisconsin Avenue either in a new tunnel or at street level;
- the 90-foot-tall ventilation tower would be incorporated into a new building and the over-run tracks would be significantly shortened, leaving more of Woodmont Plaza available for public enjoyment;
- the station can accommodate space for full-service bike storage (i.e., a “bike station”).

This alternative design moves well beyond an adequate solution to provide a high quality transit experience that will be attractive, highly functional and able to serve Bethesda now and in the future.

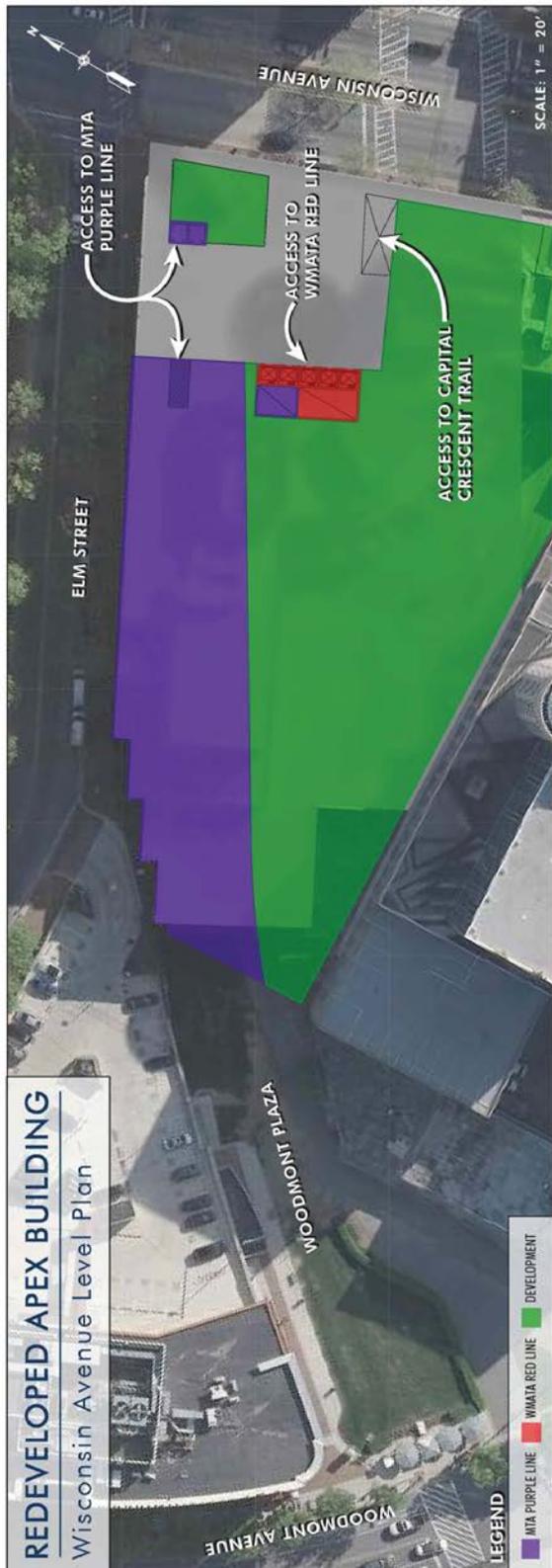
## **Realizing the Vision**

### ***Land Use and Zoning***

To encourage redevelopment of the Apex Building to allow for the realization of a superior multi-modal transit station and a new tunnel for the CCT, the Plan recommends significant additional density on the Apex building site. The Plan recommends rezoning the Apex site from CBD-2 (FAR 5.0, max. height 143 feet) to CR 8.0, C 7.5, R 7.5, H 250.

This added density and building height are consistent with those recommended in the 1994 *Bethesda CBD Sector Plan* for the area around the north entrance of the Red Line Metro Station, under the CBD-3 zone (FAR 8.0, max. height 200 feet). The Plan recommends a maximum building height of 250 feet to allow greater flexibility in accommodating the numerous program elements of the improved station and trail (described above) on the Apex site. Alternatively, if the site is redeveloped after construction of the default station design, the Plan recommends a maximum height of only 200 feet.

The CR zone provides both a standard and an optional method of development. The standard method limits overall density to a 0.5 FAR (floor area ratio), while the optional method creates incentives to provide public benefits, thereby qualifying for additional density. Public benefits provided under the optional method are drawn from seven categories outlined in the County Zoning Ordinance. The top priority public benefits for this Plan area are the provision of space on the Apex Building site necessary for planning, construction and operation of the “major public facilities” of the improved transit station and the CCT tunnel. They do not preclude consideration of other benefits, as listed in the CR Zone, to achieve the maximum permitted FAR. All public benefits requested by the developer will be analyzed to make sure they are the most suitable for the Plan area and consistent with the Plan’s vision as well as satisfying the changing needs of the area over



time. For example, if the Apex Building site is redeveloped after construction of the default station design, to achieve the maximum FAR the requested public benefits would need to be significant and commensurate with the major public facilities recommended above.

The configuration of the Apex site and its relationship to the transit station and existing development on the block may limit the amount of density that can be accommodated on the site. The increase in density recommended in the Plan is thus further intended to encourage joint redevelopment with abutting properties on the block, and properties confronting the Apex Building site across Elm Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Under a joint redevelopment scenario, allowable density from multiple sites within one redevelopment project can be combined and redistributed among the sites, as long as the height limitations of the zones are not exceeded.

Coordinated redevelopment that looks at the Plan Area as a whole will take maximum advantage of these unique circumstances, resulting in a better and more efficient design, with more inviting open space connections and a better mix of activating uses that is more economical to build. To facilitate this joint redevelopment, the Plan recommends rezoning the remaining properties on the block from CBD-2 to CR 5.0, C 5.0, R 5.0, H145.

A key component of redeveloping the station site will be the station entrances, at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Elm Street, and in Woodmont Plaza, at the intersection of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues. These spaces serve not only as critical access points to the transit station, but also as gateways to Downtown Bethesda. While in general these spaces should be functional, welcoming, and activated by retail and entertainment uses and building entrances, the design of Woodmont Plaza, in particular, will be an essential part of any future redevelopment of the site.

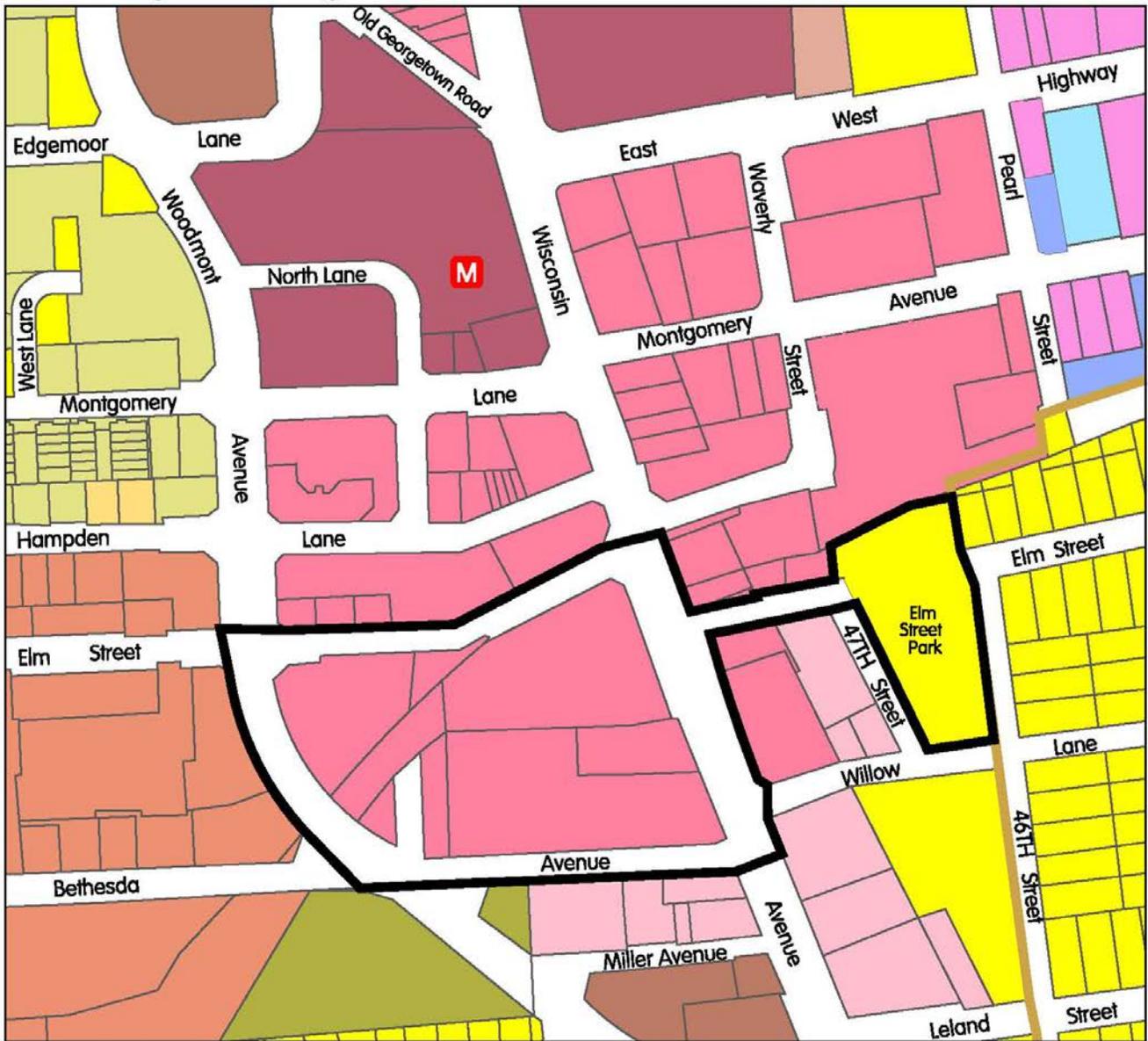
Woodmont Plaza will be the central open space for the area around the junction of Bethesda Avenue, Woodmont Avenue, and the Capital Crescent Trail. The design should successfully integrate pedestrians and cyclists moving along and through the plaza, and feature shaded lawn areas and a variety of seating options within the overall design.

### ***Beyond Land Use and Zoning: Visionary Partners***

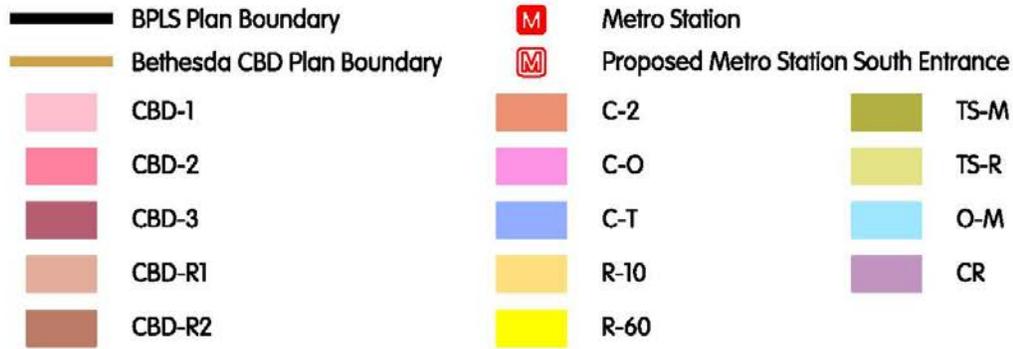
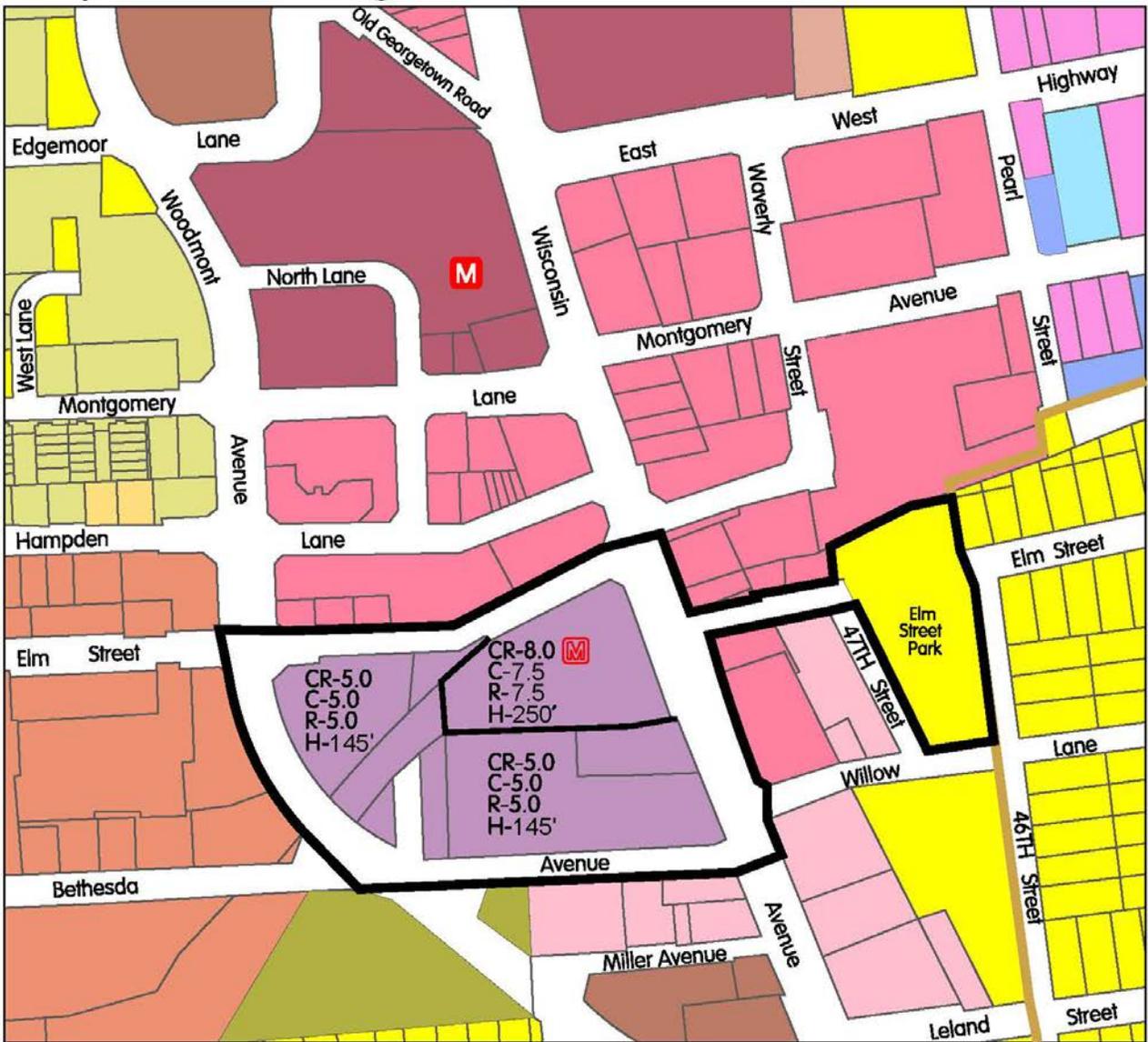
The Planning Department hired Bolan Smart Associates to review the public and private costs of realizing the alternative station designs within the 2015 timeframe set by MTA. The consultant's analysis, which is included in the appendix, shows that, from the perspective of the owner of the Apex building, the increased economic value of additional density on the Apex site is largely offset by the significant costs associated with relocating the existing tenants. These expenses include moving the building owner and an established, though aging, movie theater, and the additional private costs related to construction of the Purple Line station. Although additional zoning may incentivize redevelopment, additional measures, beyond those available to the Planning Board, are necessary to help guarantee redevelopment on MTA's timetable.

Planning staff has worked closely with the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development (DED) and others to explore additional tools to incentivize redevelopment. Beyond or in concert with joint redevelopment of the block, these methods include financing based on significant anticipated increases in property taxes, as well as participation of the public-private partnership ("P3") that MTA is exploring for the construction and operation of the Purple Line. This Plan supports those efforts.

# Existing Zoning



# Proposed Zoning



## **Making the Connections: Transit and Bikeway Recommendations**

### ***Transit Station***

The Plan makes station area recommendations under two scenarios, depending on whether the Apex Building is demolished before or after construction of the Purple Line.

#### **The Apex building is demolished before Purple Line construction**

If the Apex Building is demolished before the Purple Line is constructed, for MTA's concept design to work, the Plan recommends that:

- the property owner provide easements on the Purple Line platform level and Wisconsin Avenue level to accommodate the station;
- station platforms be located under a future building on the Apex site;
- station and tracks follow a straight alignment;
- stairs providing pedestrian and bicycle connections be located between Wisconsin Avenue and the Purple Line platform ;
- high-speed elevators for a new south entrance to the Bethesda Red Line Metro station provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection to Wisconsin Avenue and the Purple Line platform;
- a travel time study and a pedestrian level of service study for Red Line passengers is conducted to determine whether the elevators stop at Wisconsin Avenue and / or the Purple Line level;
- a walkway supplies a pedestrian and bicycle connection to Woodmont Avenue via Woodmont Plaza;
- over-run tracks extend west from the station platform into the Woodmont Plaza for not more than 30 feet from the tunnel's western end;
- ventilation equipment is incorporated into the new building;
- a minimum 10,000-square-foot space is reserved for a full-service bicycle storage facility located adjacent to the CCT tunnel route, Purple Line platform and Red Line entrance. At a minimum, this facility should offer a range of bicycle parking options (e.g., short v. long term; minimum security v. higher security), shower and changing facilities, and bicycle repair.

#### **The Apex building is demolished after Purple Line construction**

If the Apex Building is demolished after the Purple Line is constructed, for MTA's concept design to work, the Plan recommends that:

- the property owner provides easements on the Purple Line platform level and Wisconsin Avenue level to accommodate the station;
- station platforms extend under the Apex Building;
- station and tracks follow a curved alignment;
- stairs for pedestrian connection are provided between Elm Street and the Purple Line platform;
- high-speed elevators for a new south entrance to the Bethesda Red Line Metro station provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection between Elm Street, Purple Line platform and Red Line mezzanine;
- a walkway provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection to Woodmont Avenue via Woodmont Plaza ;

- a pedestrian connection in the existing tunnel east to the CCT is made via a 5-7-foot-wide sidewalk on the north side of the tracks;
- over-run tracks extend west from the station platform into Woodmont Plaza for not more than 100 feet from the tunnel's western end;
- ventilation equipment will be incorporated into a redeveloped Federal Realty Investment Trust site or in Woodmont Plaza;
- a minimum 10,000-square-foot space is reserved for a full-service bicycle storage facility located adjacent to the CCT tunnel route, Purple Line platform and Red Line entrance. At a minimum, this facility should offer a range of bicycle parking options (e.g., short v. long term; minimum security v. higher security), shower and changing facilities, and bicycle repair.

### ***Capital Crescent Trail***

The CCT is a master-planned, shared use path that runs through Bethesda and is proposed to connect to the Silver Spring Transit Center. Between Elm Street Park and Woodmont Avenue, the trail branches into a tunnel route under Wisconsin Avenue and a surface route that crosses Wisconsin Avenue at grade. The two branches converge at the intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue, and the trail continues to Georgetown via an existing, hard-surface park trail.

Early CCT plans showed the path sharing a tunnel with the Purple Line. In 2012, the County Council decided not to proceed with the tunnel as then envisioned, because of cost and liability issues associated with having the trail and Purple Line in the same tunnel under the Apex Building. This decision meant that all trail users would have to use a surface route.

An alternative design of the Purple Line station that includes redevelopment of the Apex Building would result in a wider space under the building, with room for the CCT in its own tunnel as well as on local streets. However, the Plan recommends this route under any redevelopment of the Apex Building site, whether with the improved or the default station design. The Plan encourages flexibility in the alignment of the CCT route through the Apex Building property to facilitate coordination of building, station and trail elements.

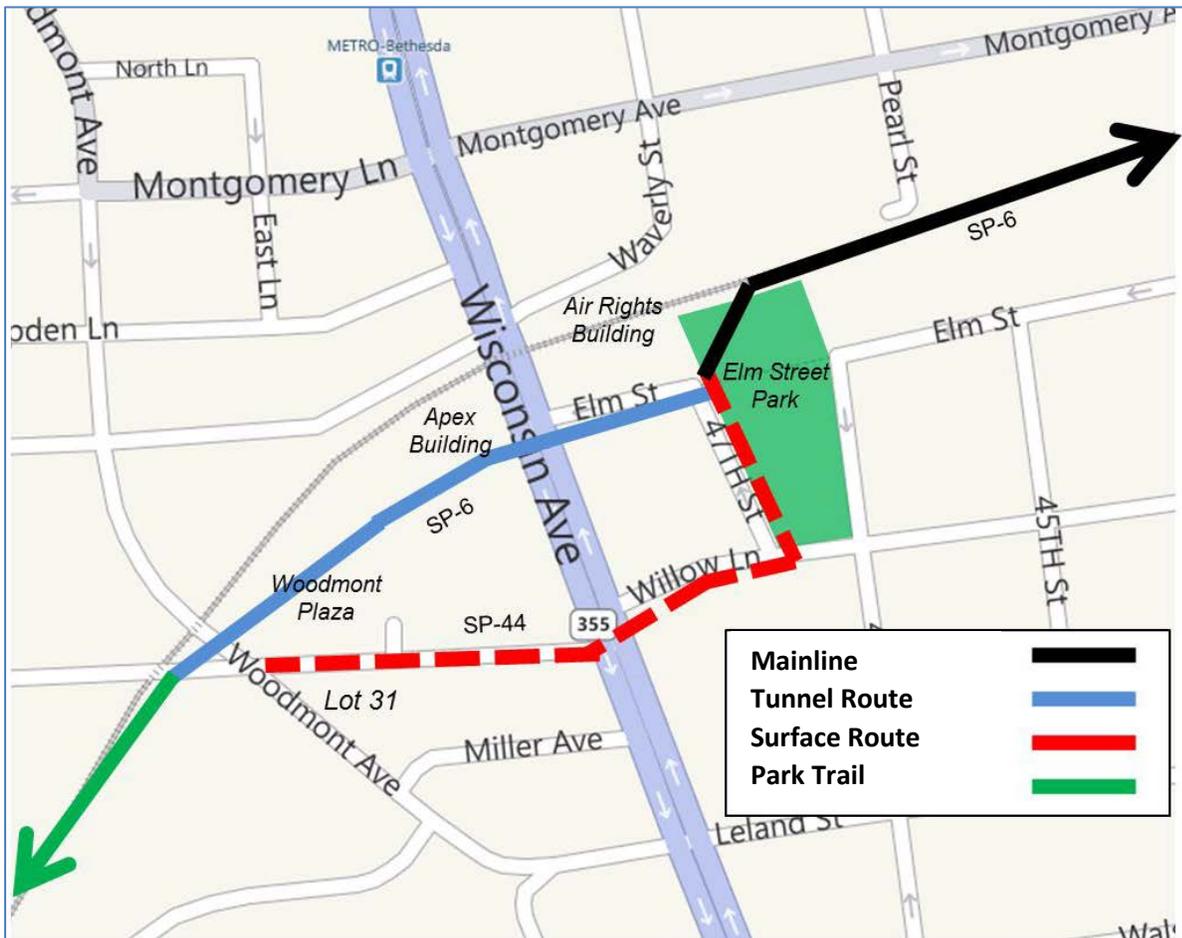
The Plan divides the CCT into the mainline, tunnel route and surface route segments for analysis and recommendations. The Plan recommends construction of the mainline and surface and tunnel routes to function as complementary transportation choices to serve a variety of needs. Each segment is described below. Beyond the recommendations for each of the segments, the Plan recommends keeping the rest of Elm Street Park operational, with no further decrease in the amount of usable parkland.

### **Capital Crescent Trail Mainline**

In the Plan area, the CCT mainline (SP-6) runs from the northern edge of Elm Street Park (just south of the Purple Line) southwest to the intersection of Elm and 47<sup>th</sup> Streets, where it branches into the tunnel route and surface route. The Plan recommends key features of the CCT mainline within the Plan area as follows:

- a smooth transition into Elm Street Park, avoiding sharp turns;
- a trail 11 feet wide with 2-foot-wide shoulders through the northern portion of Elm Street Park, subject to grading analysis;
- an identifiable junction with the tunnel route and surface route in Elm Street Park at the corner of Elm Street and 47<sup>th</sup> Street;
- stormwater management and grading impacts associated with the CCT and/or Purple Line improvements within Elm Street Park are to be included as part of the overall Purple Line stormwater management plan and designed so as not to reduce the usable area of the park available for existing and planned recreational facilities.

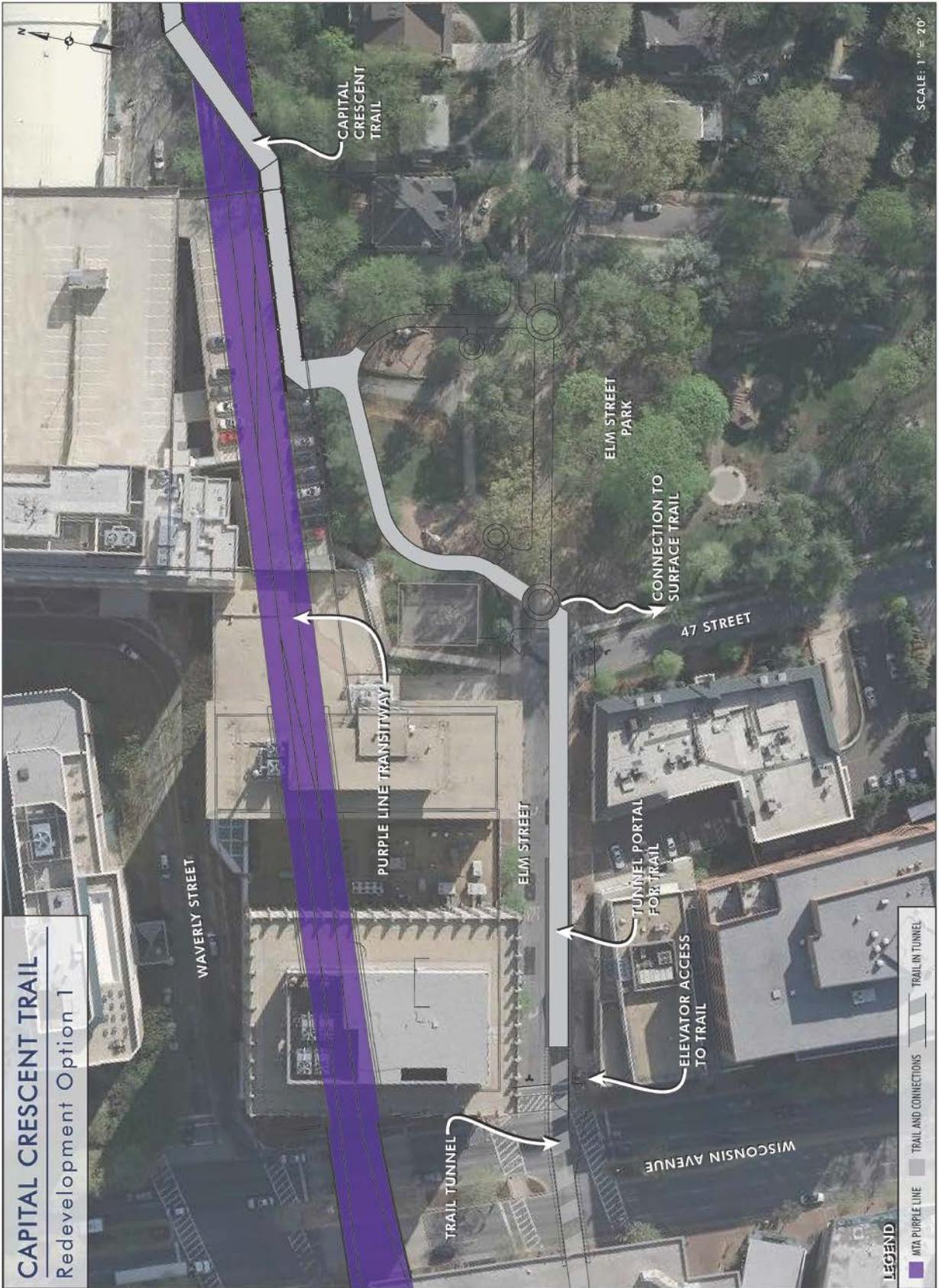
**Capital Crescent Trail Route Segments**



**Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel Route**

The CCT Tunnel Route (SP-6) would run from the intersection of Elm Street and 47<sup>th</sup> Street to Woodmont Avenue in a new tunnel beneath Wisconsin Avenue. The Plan recommends key features of the Tunnel Route as follows:

- a marked at-grade crossing of 47<sup>th</sup> Street that prioritizes trail users, with physical identifiers (such as a raised crosswalk) conveying a transition zone;
- a minimum 15-foot-wide trail on the south side of Elm Street between 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Wisconsin Avenue with ADA-compliant transitions from street level to tunnel level;



- a new tunnel (with a minimum 10-foot vertical clearance and 16-foot width) under Wisconsin Avenue south of the Purple Line station ;
- a trail between Wisconsin Avenue and Woodmont Plaza (with a minimum 14-foot vertical clearance and 16-foot width) that limits conflicts with non-trail users and is visible from other areas of the station by non-trail users. As stated above, the Plan encourages flexibility in the alignment of the CCT route through the Apex Building property to facilitate coordination of building, station and trail elements.

To encourage ease of use, the Plan recommends that the tunnel not exceed a 5 percent slope, to the greatest extent practicable. The recommended tunnel concept is constrained at its eastern portal by a driveway serving 4610 Elm Street, potentially resulting in an 8 percent slope where the tunnel comes to grade. In order to be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), this slope may require an elevator at the southeast corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Elm Street to service the tunnel. To avoid this addition, the Plan recommends either closing or relocating the 4610 Elm Street driveway, which the County should explore with the property owner.

### **Capital Crescent Trail Surface Route**

The CCT Surface Route (SP-44) would run from the intersection of Elm Street and 47<sup>th</sup> Street to Woodmont Avenue, crossing Wisconsin Avenue at grade. The Plan recommends as key features of the surface route:

- a trail along the west side of Elm Street Park that consists of an 11-foot-wide, shared-use path separated from 47<sup>th</sup> Street by a 5-foot buffer, to be located within the 47<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way and/or Elm Street Park;
- a trail along the south side of Willow Lane that includes an 11-foot-wide, two-way cycle track<sup>1</sup> for bicyclists and a sidewalk for pedestrians;
- a safer and more convenient protected crossing at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue, Willow Lane and Bethesda Avenue;
- a trail along the north side of Bethesda Avenue that includes an 11-foot-wide, two-way cycle track for bicyclists and a minimum 10-foot-wide sidewalk for pedestrians;
- consolidated driveways on the north side of Bethesda Avenue to minimize conflicts between trail users and vehicles using driveways;
- sufficient queuing space for trail users and non-trail users at all intersections.

### ***Improving the User Experience***

The branding of the tunnel and surface routes for the CCT should be consistent with the mainline trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring, including lighting, signage, surface treatments, furniture and pavement markings. As a segment of the trail where usage is expected to be the highest, continuous lighting on the trail is a priority. Lighting spillover into adjacent homes should be

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<sup>1</sup> Cycle tracks include the following characteristics:

- maintain horizontal separation with a buffer between the sidewalk and cycle track and a minimum 3 foot buffer between the cycle track and street;
- maintain vertical separation between cycle track, roadway, and pedestrian space; and
- maintain visual continuity and be differentiated from the pedestrian space by utilizing an asphalt surface along with a unique paver or concrete treatment, or by utilizing a green marking.

minimized by installing fixtures that prevent the light from rising above the level of the fixture and extending beyond the desired area.

### *Issues to be addressed in Future Plans*

#### **Bethesda CBD Sector Plan Update**

- CCT crossing of Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue intersection;
- transfers between the Purple Line and bus routes that currently stop only at the bus loop at the current Bethesda Metrorail station.

## **Outreach**

Within the limited timeframe afforded by MTA's schedule, staff has sought to engage the public in the development of the staff draft recommendations. Staff maintains a dedicated Plan website ([www.montgomeryplanning.org/bethesdapurpleline](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/bethesdapurpleline)) updated with new information, including MTA's latest plans, and an opportunity to leave comments. Staff regularly updates interested parties via e-mail and more on twitter (@bethesdaPlanner, #bethesdapurpleline). The Plan has also received a fair amount of media coverage.

In early September, staff held a series of well-publicized Open House meetings at the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. Attended by 50-75 people, the meetings provided face-to-face opportunities for the public, media and elected officials to see the new design alternatives, ask questions and share thoughts.

The comments received from our outreach efforts indicate strong support for both the improved Purple Line station design, including the larger platform and potential for long-term bike storage, and the new CCT tunnel. Safety and security were also of particular concern for the Purple Line Station, CCT tunnel and CCT surface route, specifically:

- the length and curve of the tunnel;
- the slope of the tunnel as it rises to street level;
- the tunnel will be safer than the surface route;
- the surface route should be designed for safety and marked clearly;
- lighting and security within the tunnel.

Other comments indicated the interest in an upgraded movie theater, increased building height on this site and the CBD in general, pedestrian access to the Purple Line Station from the east, and consideration for future upgrade to heavy rail.

Analysis of the costs of redevelopment and CCT tunnel options was incomplete by the time of the Open Houses and, therefore, was not presented. It is included in the appendices to this Plan.

## **Elected and Appointed Officials**

### *County Council*

Craig Rice, President

George Leventhal, Vice President

Philip Andrews

Roger Berliner

Marc Elrich

Valerie Ervin

Nancy Floreen

Nancy Navarro

Hans Riemer

### *County Executive*

Isiah Leggett

### *The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission*

Elizabeth Hewlett, Chair

Francoise Carrier, Vice Chair

### *Commissioners*

#### Montgomery County Planning Board

Francoise Carrier, Chair

Marye Wells-Harley, Vice Chair

Casey Anderson

Norman Dreyfuss

Amy Presley A.

#### Prince George's County Planning Board

Elizabeth Hewlett, Chair

Dorothy Bailey, Vice Chair

Manuel Geraldo

John Shoaff

Shuanise Washington

## **The Plan Process**

A plan provides comprehensive recommendations for the use of publicly and privately owned land. Each plan reflects a vision of the future that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of a countywide perspective.

Together with relevant policies, plans should be referred to by public officials and private individuals when making land use decisions.

STAFF DRAFT PLAN is prepared by the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning for presentation to the Montgomery County Planning Board. The Planning Board reviews the Staff Draft Plan, makes preliminary changes as appropriate, and approves the Plan for public hearing. After the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Public Hearing Draft Plan.

The PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN is the formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan or sector plan. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony, after which it holds public worksessions to review the testimony and revise the Public Hearing Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board Draft Plan.

The PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLAN is the Board's recommended Plan and reflects their revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit a sector plan to the County Council with copies to the County Executive who must, within sixty days, prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the County Council other comments and recommendations.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council holds a public hearing to receive public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the relevant Council committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised.

After Council approval the plan is forwarded to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the plan officially amends the master plans, functional plans, and sector plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

## **Staff Acknowledgements**

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Approved and Adopted

March 2014



# Bethesda



## *People Line Station Plan*

Minor Master Plan Amendment



M-NCPPC

Montgomery County Planning Department

[montgomeryplanning.org](http://montgomeryplanning.org)



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