



BACKGROUND

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE SECTOR PLAN AREA

The Friendship Heights Sector Plan area is located where Montgomery County meets Washington, D.C. on Wisconsin Avenue, with the Metrorail station at Wisconsin and Western Avenues at its center. It falls within the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning area. (See Figure 6.)

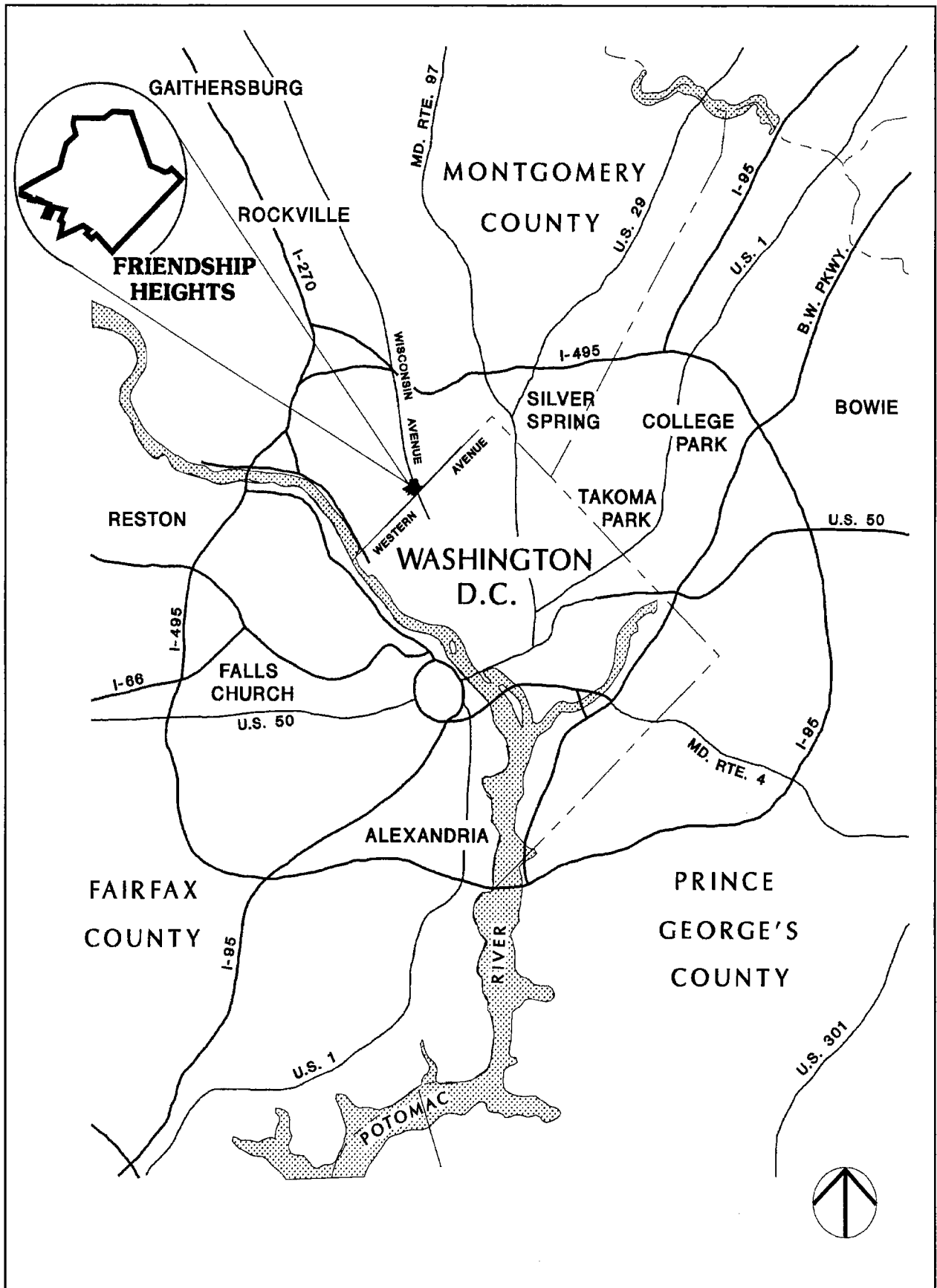
Chevy Chase Village forms the eastern boundary of the Sector Plan area, the Town of Somerset forms the northern boundary, and the Brookdale neighborhood the western boundary. The southern boundary is Western Avenue, where Montgomery County and the District of Columbia meet. The Sector Plan area is contiguous with the Friendship Heights Uptown Center on the D.C. side which extends generally from Harrison Street on the south and west to 42nd Street on the east. (See Figure 7.)

The Sector Plan area consists of approximately 92 acres. Of these, 37.5 acres comprise the central business district (CBD), one of two CBDs in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning area and one of four in Montgomery County. The four CBDs, Silver Spring, Wheaton, Bethesda, and Friendship Heights, are centers for major business activity and medium to high-density residential development in proximity to Metrorail (Metro) stations.

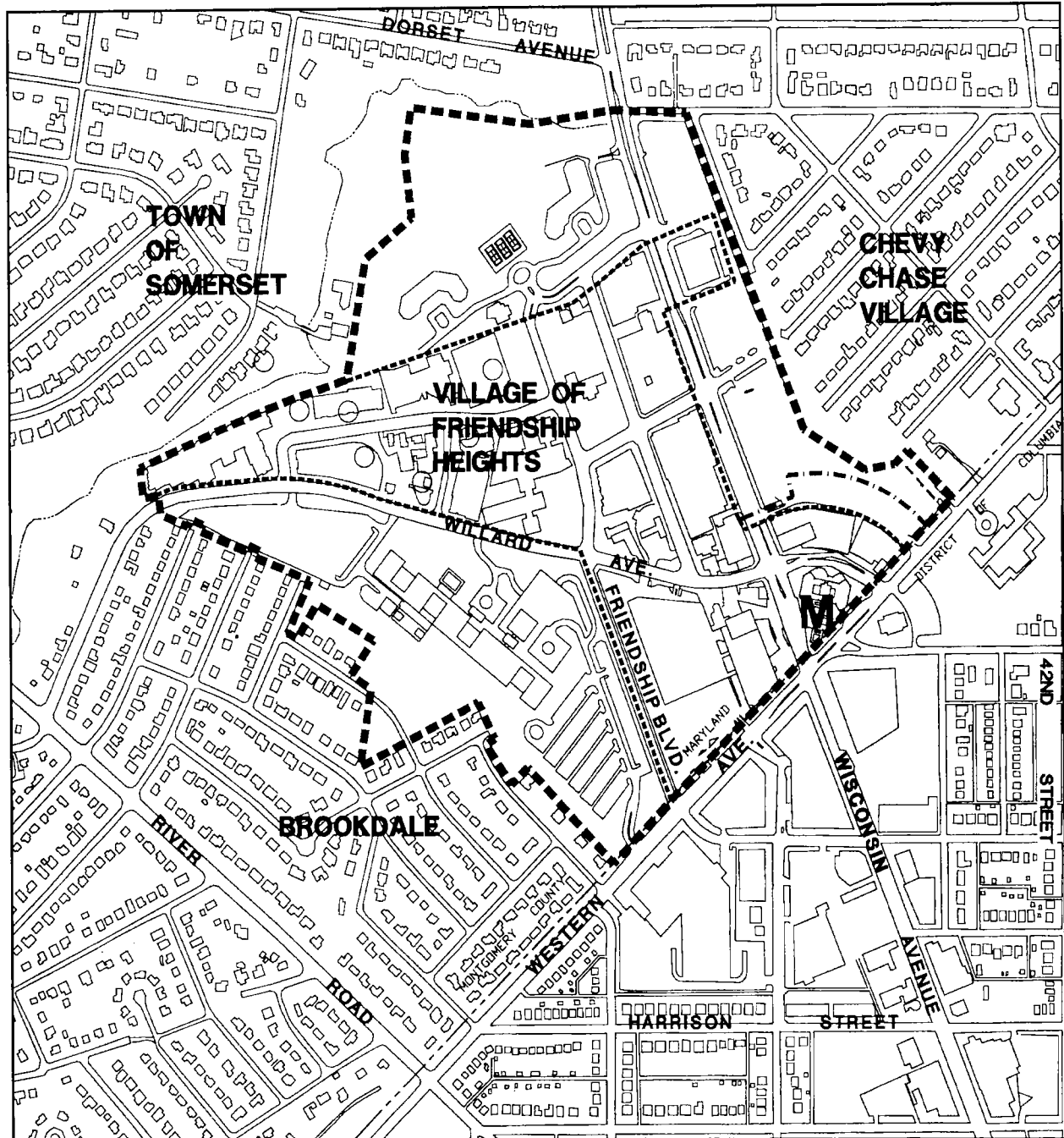
A substantial portion of the Friendship Heights Sector Plan area (32 acres) is a special taxing district known as the Village of Friendship Heights. Its boundaries are Wisconsin Avenue on the east, Willard Avenue on the south, and the Town of Somerset and the Somerset House development on the west and north (See Figure 8.) The Village was formed by the Maryland General Assembly in 1914 and is governed by an elected Council and a Mayor. The Village maintains its streets, storm drains, public rights-of-way, parks, and the Friendship Heights Village Center. The Village also provides other public services such as a shuttle bus to the shopping center, a security patrol, a grocery-shopping service for people who are elderly or handicapped, and Village Center programs.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Friendship Heights today consists of high-rise apartment and condominium buildings in the northwest portion of the Sector Plan area in the Village of Friendship Heights and the Somerset House complex, retail and office uses lining much of Wisconsin Avenue, and a corporate office headquarters in the middle of the 26-acre GEICO site. Taken together, the retail and offices accounted for 8,740 jobs in 1990.



page
2



- SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY
- EXISTING CBD BOUNDARY
- PROPOSED REVISION TO CBD BOUNDARY

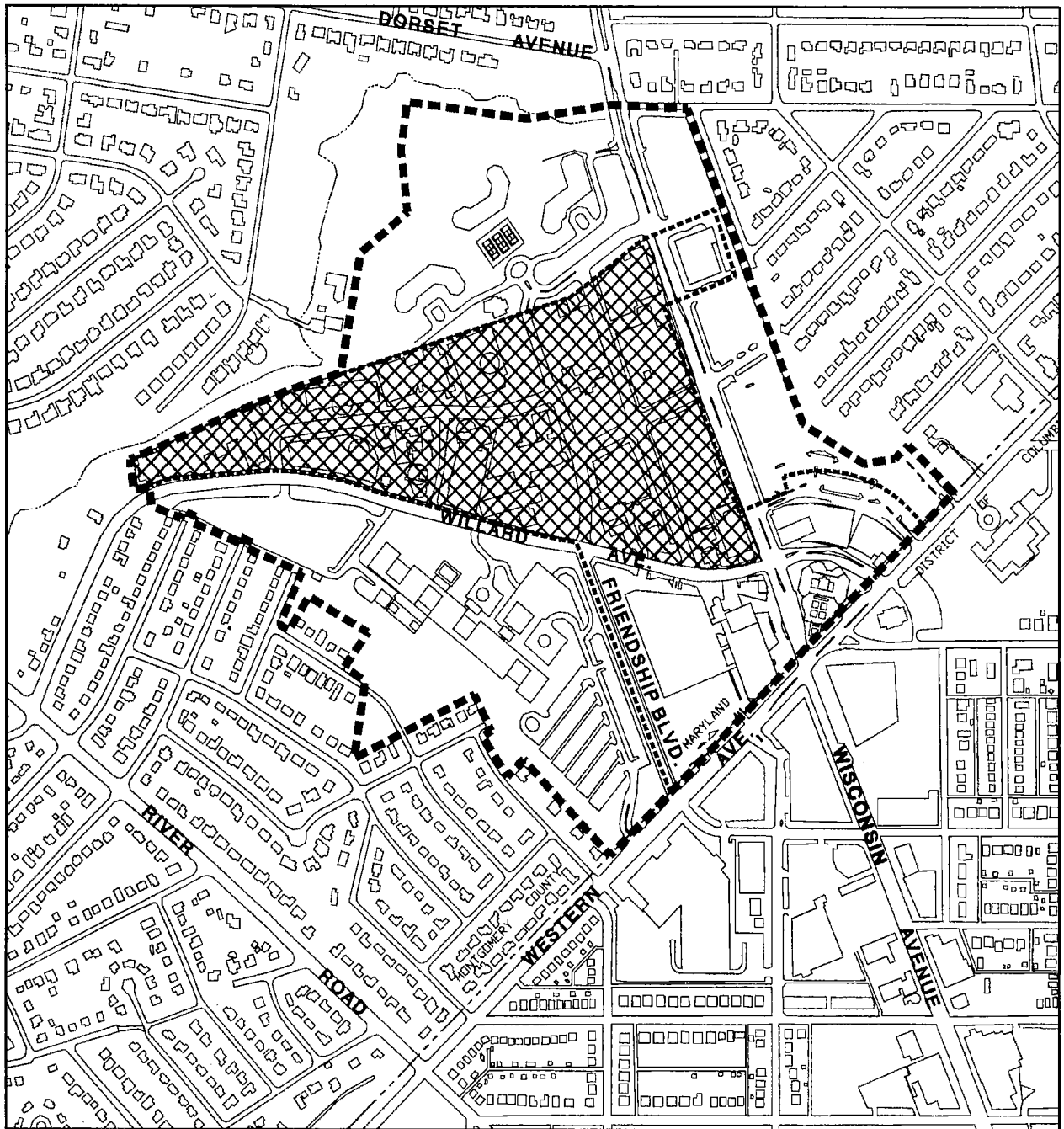


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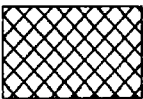


VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

FIGURE 8

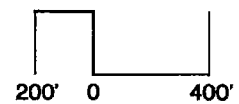


page
4

-  SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY
-  EXISTING CBD BOUNDARY (WITH PROPOSED REVISION)
-  VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS



North



The intersection of Wisconsin and Western Avenues, where the Metro station is located, is the logical center of the Sector Plan area, but the bulk of the density and height is a few blocks away from Metro, in the Village of Friendship Heights. The apartment buildings constructed there in the 1960s and 70s have heights up to 20 stories and minimal setbacks from adjoining structures, with land use densities as high as 9.0 FAR (i.e., nine square feet of building floor area for every one square foot of ground area), and few visible exterior amenities. The maximum FAR allowed in the highest CBD zone in Friendship Heights today, CBD-2, is 5.0 FAR, and development under that zone would be required to provide extensive open spaces and public amenities to offset the density.

Figure 9 shows the pattern of existing development in Friendship Heights. The Sector Plan area is largely built out, but there are several parcels that have the potential to be redeveloped. The major sites are the GEICO, Hecht's, and Chevy Chase Land Company parcels. (See Figure 13.) The recommendations in the Land Use, Zoning, and Urban Design Plan deal primarily with those three sites, where redevelopment affords the opportunity to bring major land uses closer to the Metro station and to provide some of the public amenities not included in earlier development.

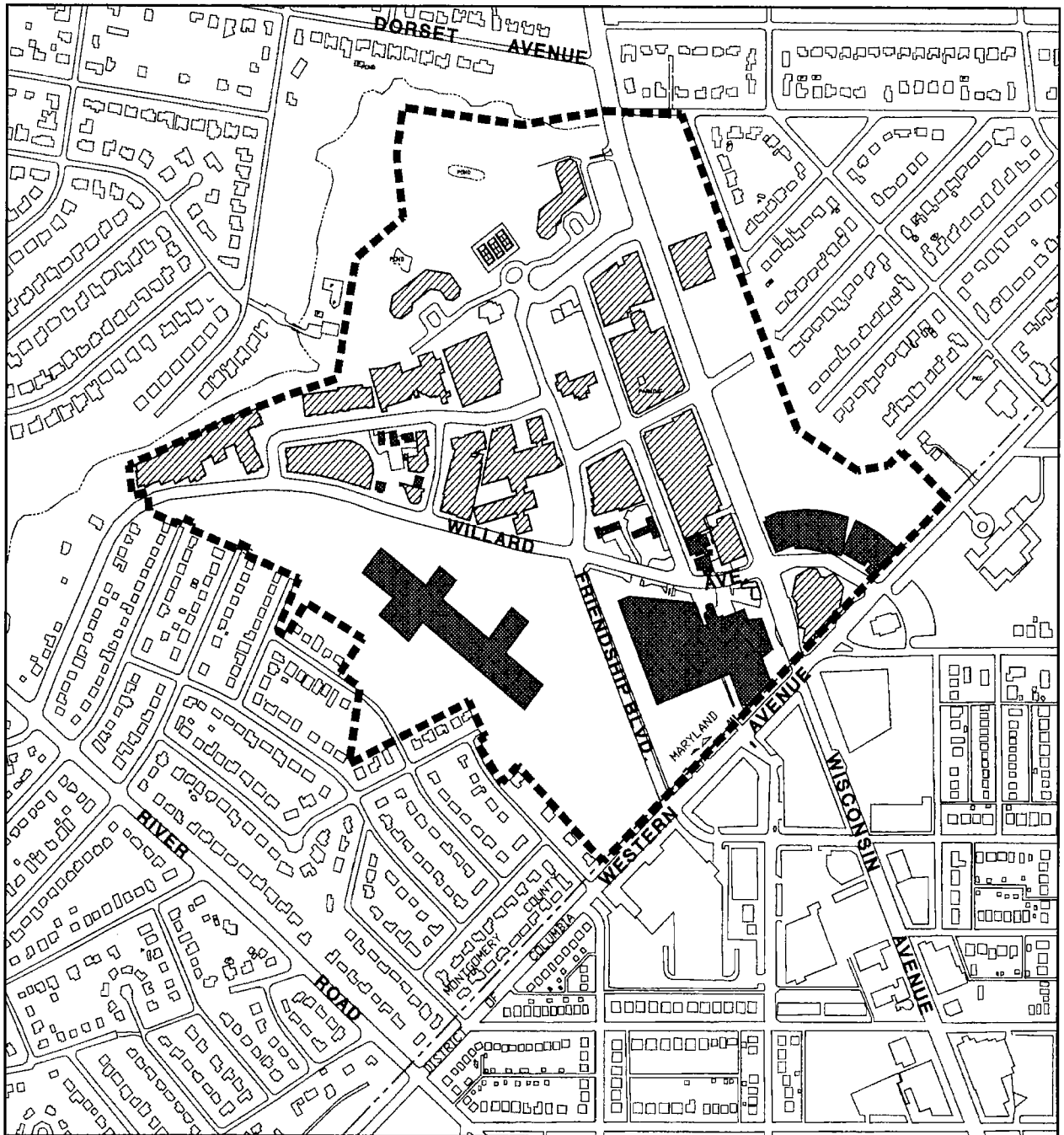
POPULATION AND HOUSING

Housing in the Friendship Heights Sector Plan area is exclusively multi-family, comprised primarily of high-rise apartments and condominiums; there is also a mid-rise condominium building. About 4,730 people live in these apartments, according to the 1990 Census. The Friendship Heights area population and household characteristics are typical of a high-rise community.

- Females are in the majority.
- One in 3 residents in the Sector Plan area is 65 years or older, compared to 1 in 10 in the County. The median age of high-rise residents is 54 years.
- Nearly 60 percent of the residents live alone.

Including the surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods of Somerset/Drummond/Chevy Chase West, Brookdale/Orchardale, and Chevy Chase Village, the typical resident of the Friendship Heights area compared to a typical County resident:

- Is more highly educated.
- Uses public transit more.
- Has a slightly higher income.
- Works outside the County, primarily in the District of Columbia; 57.5 percent of high-rise residents who work are employed in D.C.



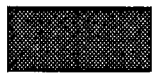
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6



SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY



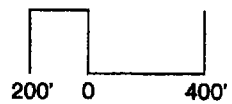
MAJOR STRUCTURES AND USES
ANTICIPATED TO REMAIN DURING
THE PLANNING PERIOD.



EXISTING STRUCTURES ON
REDEVELOPABLE PARCELS.
(SEE FIGURE 13)

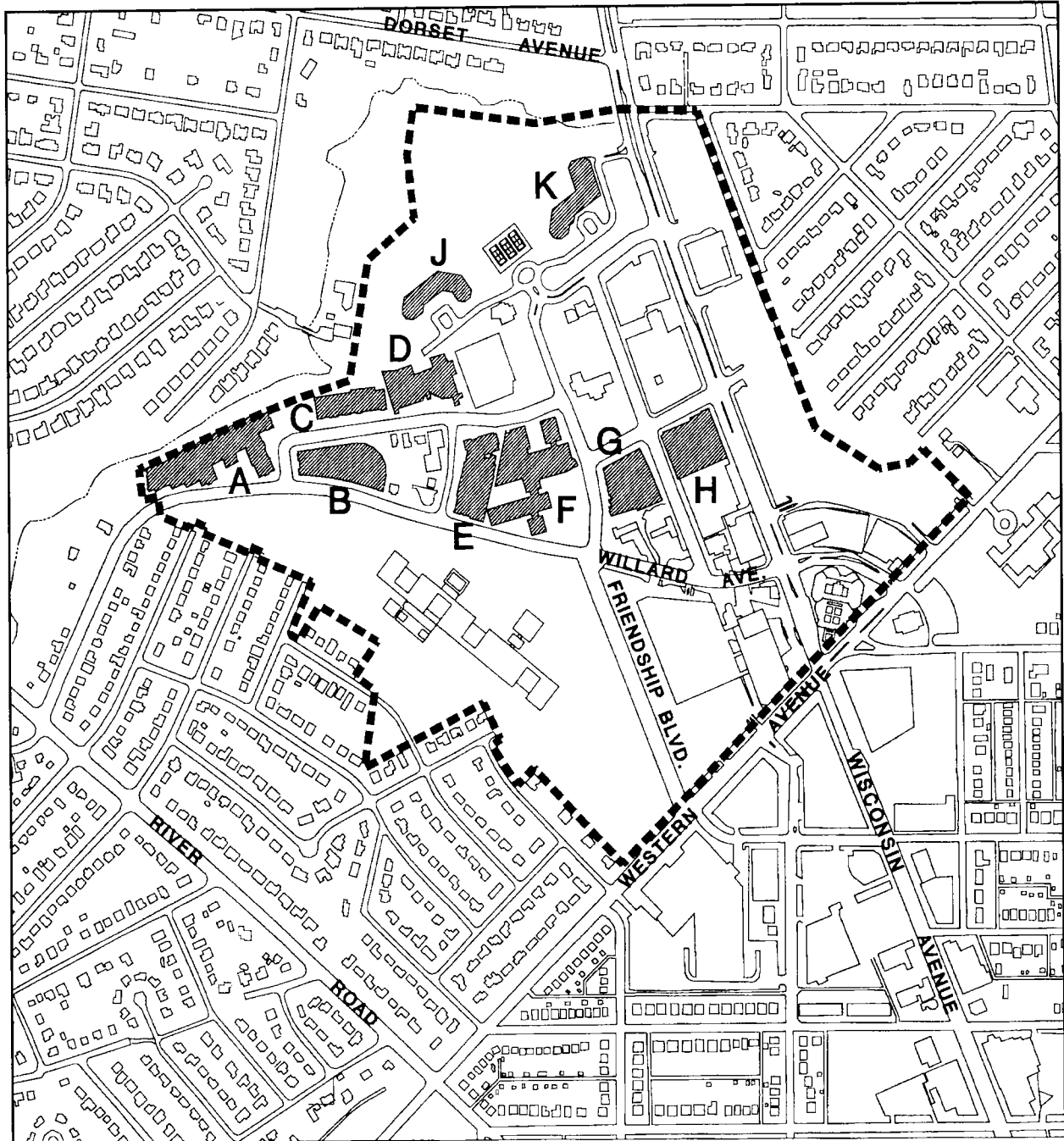


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FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

FIGURE 10

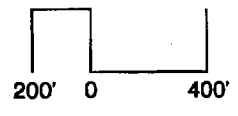


----- SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| A | THE IRENE | F | THE WILLOUGHBY |
| B | 4620 NORTH PARK AVENUE | G | HIGHLAND HOUSE WEST |
| C | NORTH PARK AVENUE | H | HIGHLAND HOUSE |
| D | THE ELIZABETH | J | SOMERSET HOUSE # 2 |
| E | THE CARLETON | K | SOMERSET HOUSE # 1 |



North





The Friendship Heights Sector Plan area in 1994-95 had 3,435 dwelling units in both rental and condominium apartments. (See Figure 10.) Friendship Heights is probably the strongest multi-family housing market in Montgomery County, and one of the strongest in the region. The key to Friendship Heights appeal appears to be its desirable location, its many urban amenities, and its attractive image. Attractions include the combination of local and regional retail, the aura of safety, and the proximity of the Metro station; it is one of the few areas in the County where one can live conveniently without a car.

Evidence of the strong housing market includes the following facts:

- Turnover rents (the rents charged to new tenants) are higher than County-wide high-rise rents for each unit size. (Friendship Heights rents average about \$260 more per unit than County-wide rents.)
- Vacancy rates are lower than the County's already low rates, signaling that the market could support additional housing. (Friendship Heights vacancy rates were 3.3 percent in 1993 and 2.8 percent in 1994 compared with County rates of 5.3 percent and 4.3 percent.)
- Condominium prices are varied and sales are strong. (Prices varied from just under \$40,000 for an efficiency unit in The Willoughby condominium to \$740,000 for a unit in Somerset House.)

Land costs in the Friendship Heights area are very high. Apart from small units in buildings like The Willoughby, the only opportunity for additional affordable housing will be moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) in proposed development.

EMPLOYMENT

The Friendship Heights commercial area is an attractive location for office development. It is accessible by roads and public transit, has a pleasant retail environment, is surrounded by stable residential neighborhoods, and is close to downtown Washington.

There are 1.9 million square feet of office space in the commercial area on both sides of the District/Maryland line between the Somerset House condominiums on the north and Harrison Street on the south. Owner-occupied space accounts for 29 percent, most of which (514,257 square feet) is in the GEICO headquarters. Most of the 1.35 million square feet of leasable office space is in high-rise structures along Wisconsin Avenue. A small percentage of leasable office space is located on the ground floor of high-rise apartment buildings and the second floor of two-story commercial buildings along Wisconsin Avenue.

Over 60 percent of the office space was built before 1980. The office development boom of the 1980s was less pronounced in Friendship Heights, despite the opening of the Metro station in 1984. The majority of the office development occurred on the District side, including Chevy Chase Pavilion (1990), a mixed-use commercial development with 141,000 square feet of office, and Chevy Chase Plaza (1990) with 223,000 square feet of office and retail uses and a small number of residential units. (See Figure 11.)

Of the two sites recommended for office development in the 1974 *Sector Plan for the Central Business District of Friendship Heights, Montgomery County Maryland*, only the 220,000- square-foot Metro Center Building (1985) was completed. Approval of an office project on the then Woodward and Lothrop (Hecht's) site occurred too late to take advantage of a strong real estate market. This was also the case for the Barlow II office development, subject of a 1990 Sector Plan Amendment, and the GEICO expansion recommended in the 1990 *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan*. If these projects had been approved during the mid-1980s, it is likely that they would have been developed.

The retail sector in Friendship Heights today, on both sides of the District/Maryland line, serves a community and a regional role. Friendship Heights provides a unique retail setting compared to shopping malls because of its urban character.

The area's retail success can be attributed to several factors: a high-quality urban environment; an upscale retail sector; a loyal consumer base from surrounding affluent communities; and a pleasant, urban shopping experience. A weakening in any of these factors or an inability to adjust to market changes could result in the deterioration of the retail sector.

The opening in 1950 of the Woodward and Lothrop (now Hecht's) store on the northwest corner of Wisconsin and Western Avenues introduced retail as a major land use into the residential suburb. Another department store, Lord and Taylor, and the neighborhood-oriented shops in the Chevy Chase Center opened about the same time. Saks Fifth Avenue followed in 1964, and Neiman Marcus in 1977 with the completion of Mazza Gallerie. Chevy Chase Pavilion (1990), which includes an office tower and a hotel, is the newest development in the area with a major retail component. (See Figure 11.)

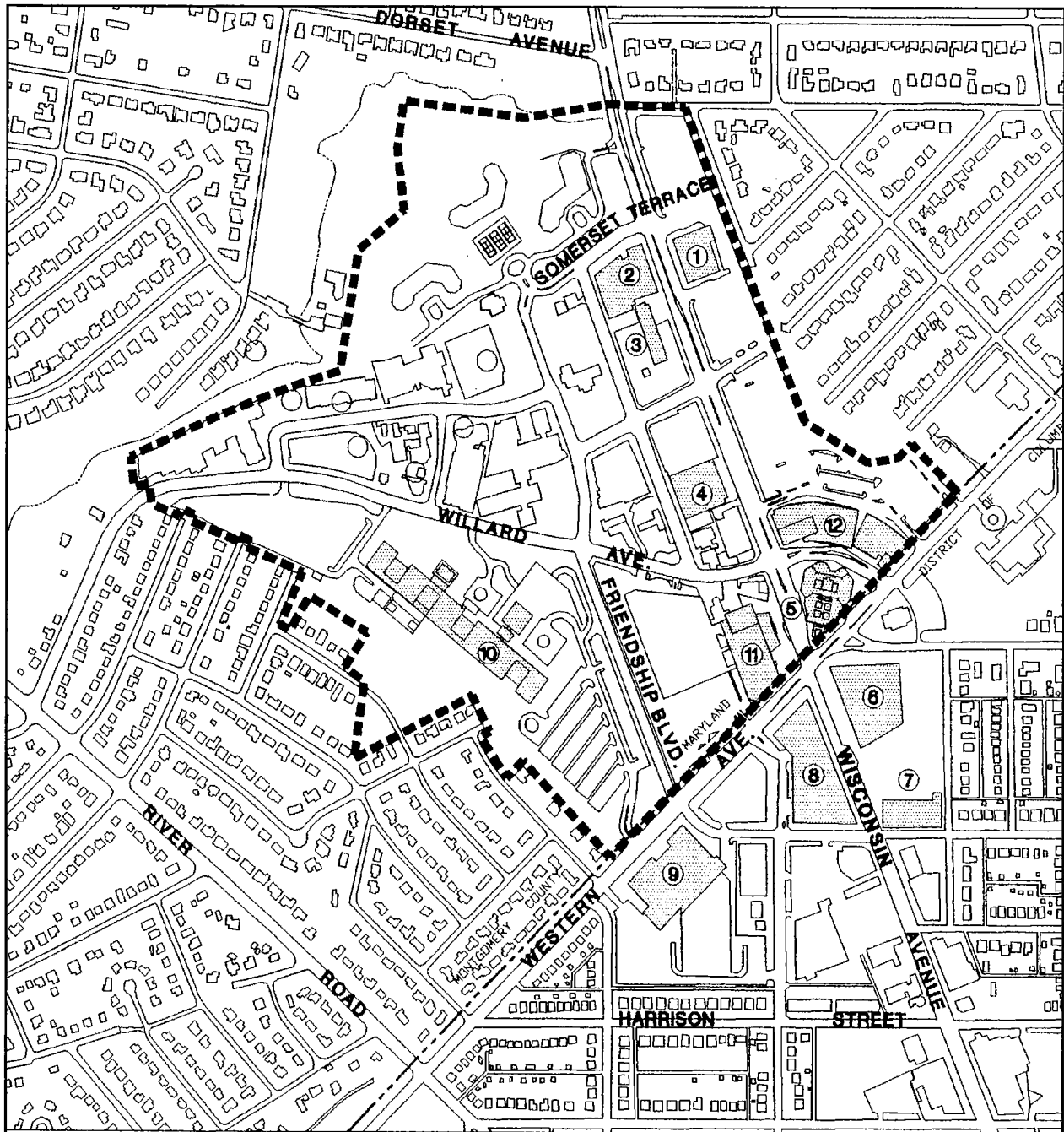
Today, the amount of retail space in the commercial area between Somerset Terrace on the north and Harrison Street on the south is equivalent to a regional mall. Taken together, the four department stores total 540,000 square feet. They account for the largest segment of the 1.25 million square feet of retail space in Friendship Heights. Sixty-one percent of the total space is in the District of Columbia; 39 percent is in Montgomery County.

An inventory taken during spring 1995 found about 183 stores in the retail study area, of which 47 were apparel stores. Restaurants, other entertainment retailers, and food stores comprise nearly one in five retailers.

The retail area in Friendship Heights has a low vacancy rate of 8.6 percent, suggesting a generally healthy retail market. Almost 80 percent of the vacant space is in two projects, Chevy Chase Pavilion and Mazza Gallerie. While the office and hotel components of the Pavilion have done very well, the retail portion has had difficulty leasing space because there is no major anchor tenant, the project completion coincided with the real estate industry downturn, and the parking is not well designed. Poorly designed parking and the real estate industry downturn also are reasons given for the vacancy rate at Mazza Gallerie.

SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

FIGURE 11



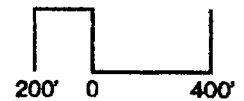
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10

----- SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ① SAKS FIFTH AVENUE | ⑦ CHEVY CHASE PLAZA |
| ② CHEVY CHASE OFFICE BUILDING | ⑧ NEIMAN MARCUS AND MAZZA GALLERIE |
| ③ HOLIDAY INN | ⑨ LORD AND TAYLOR |
| ④ BARLOW BUILDING | ⑩ GEICO |
| ⑤ CHEVY CHASE METRO BUILDING | ⑪ HECHT'S |
| ⑥ CHEVY CHASE PAVILION | ⑫ CHEVY CHASE CENTER |



North

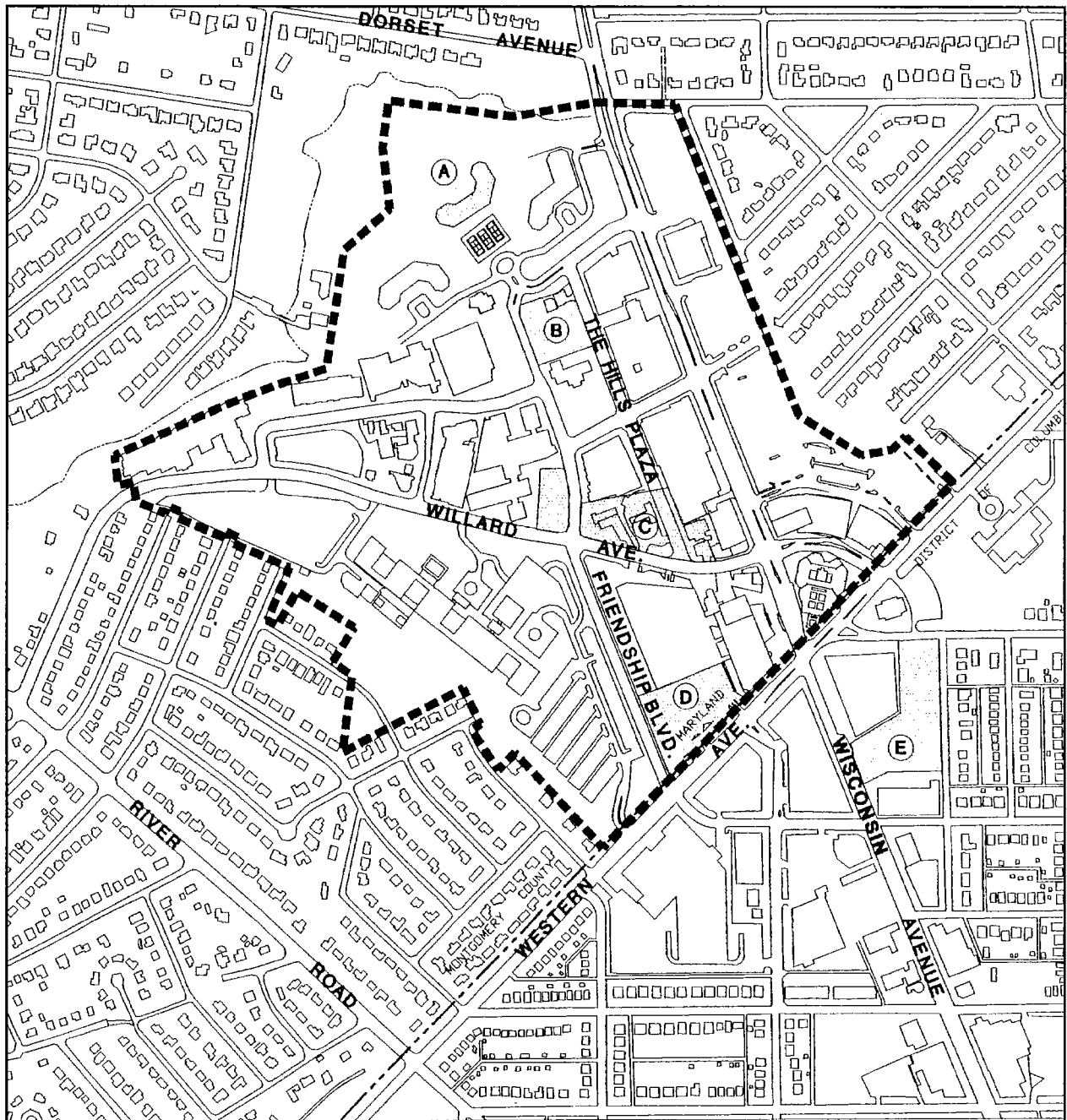


APPROVED DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPABLE PARCELS

Certain parcels that were vacant or underdeveloped had approved development plans and were considered in the “development pipeline” when the Friendship Heights Sector Plan process began. (See Figure 12.) They are:

- Somerset House: Approvals for a third condominium structure allowed up to 273 dwelling units. The final project has approximately 100 dwelling units.
- Marriott site (parcel 5): Construction has been completed for an assisted living project of 132 dwelling units, Brighton Gardens, north of the Friendship Heights Village Center.
- Barlow (parcels 8, 9B and 14): This approved project with approximately 226,500 square feet includes an office tower east of a relocated The Hills Plaza, a low-rise retail structure and a car wash along Willard Avenue to the west, and an urban park west of Friendship Boulevard.
- Hecht's site (parcel 2): An approved site plan allows a slight expansion of the existing department store and construction of an office building of about 230,000 square feet. The site plan limits development to below the maximum allowed by the zoning ordinance, in accordance with the 1974 Sector Plan. The ownership of this parcel has changed since the site plan approval.
- Xerox site, in the District of Columbia: This site had an approved planned unit development (PUD) that would allow a building totaling over 450,000 square feet (265,000 square feet of office, 100,000 square feet of retail, and 88 residential condominium units intended to provide a transition to the adjoining single-family neighborhood.) The site is further discussed below under the heading District of Columbia Planning.

Figure 13 includes the redevelopable parcels that are the subject of discussion in the Sector Plan. The Barlow parcels (8, 9B, and 14) and Hecht's parcel (2) could proceed with development under approvals already in place. The GEICO parcel (15) is limited to existing development by its zoning. The 1990 *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan* recommended expansion of the C-O zoning on the GEICO site by 220,000 square feet. Subsequent to the Master Plan, the owners secured the necessary approvals, but reversed the rezoning application when development plans changed. The GEICO building is obsolete and the existing zoning precludes construction of a replacement building in any other location. Chevy Chase Center, parcel 10B, is virtually built out. Parcel 10A is zoned R-60 and is used for parking as a legal, non-conforming use. The Plan also includes recommendations for parcel 6 and parcel 4 in the Village of Friendship Heights.



----- SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY

- (A) SOMERSET HOUSE #3
- (B) MARRIOTT - PARCEL 5
- (C) BARLOW - PARCELS 8, 9B AND 14
- (D) HECHT'S
- (E) XEROX

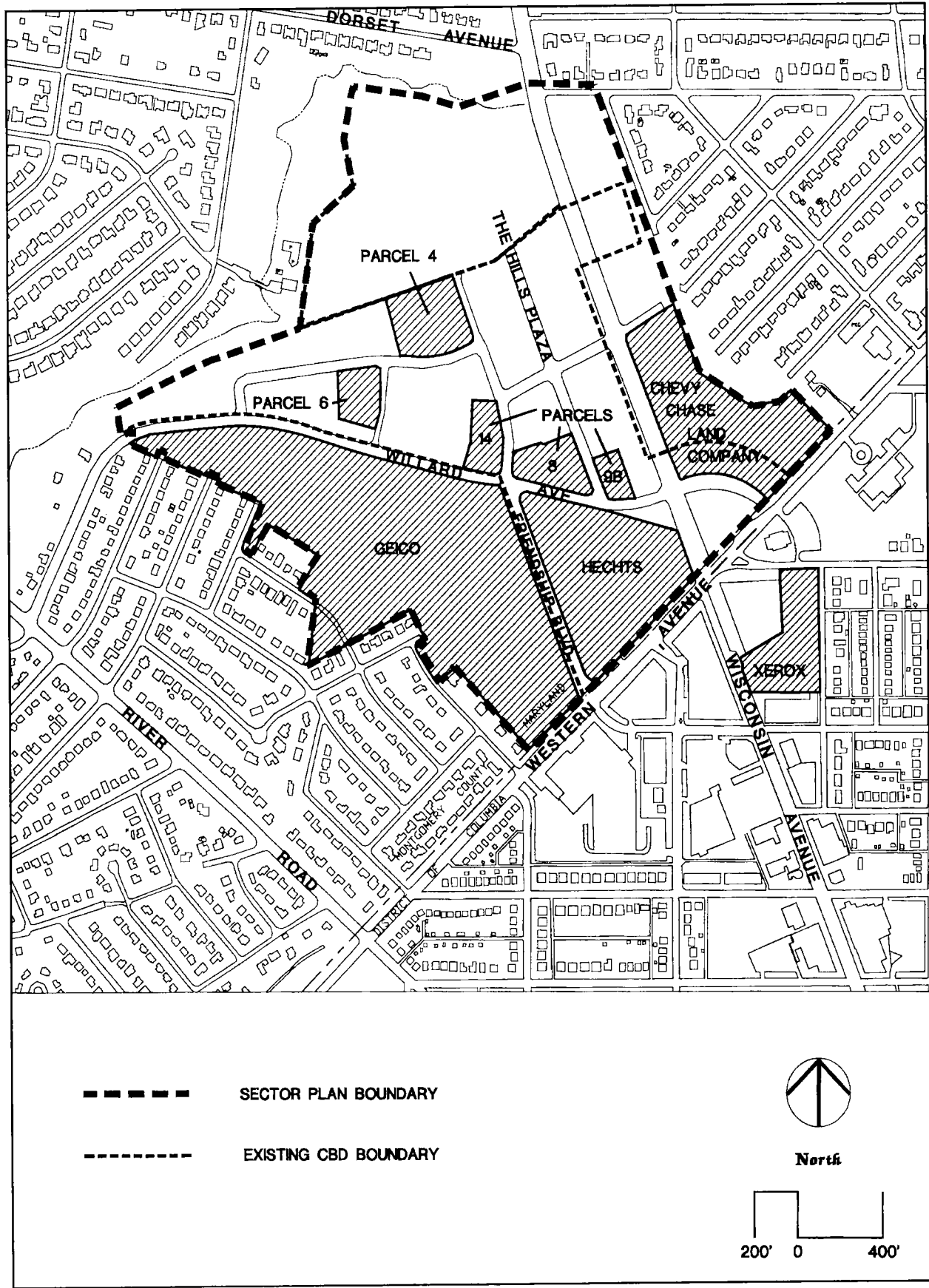


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LOCATION OF REDEVELOPABLE PARCELS

FIGURE 13





B. PLANNING CONTEXT

1964 WEST CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN AND 1970 BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN

In 1964, the County adopted the *Master Plan for West Chevy Chase and Vicinity*. The 1964 Master Plan recommended commercial use for all of the land now included in the Sector Plan area except the Somerset House property (the Bergdoll tract) and small buffer strips of undeveloped land along GEICO's southwest property line and the northeast border of the Chevy Chase Center/Sak's Fifth Avenue parking lots. The plan recommended the C-O Zone for the entire GEICO site, with the exception of an 85-foot-wide strip along Cortland Road, and the C-2 Zone for the remainder of the business district. Most of the area was already zoned C-2. Following the Master Plan, the respective land owners did not apply for C-O zoning on the remainder of the GEICO property nor for C-2 zoning on the Chevy Chase Center lot.

The 1970 *Master Plan for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area* left the existing zoning in place and recommended a detailed study of the entire business district. That study became the 1974 *Sector Plan for the Central Business District of Friendship Heights, Montgomery County, Maryland* (the 1974 Sector Plan).

1974 FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS SECTOR PLAN

The 1974 Sector Plan was developed to provide specific planning guidelines and detailed recommendations for development which were not furnished by the 1970 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan. The plan reaffirmed many of the recommendations in the 1970 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan, including provisions for orderly development around a Metro station and the protection of surrounding single-family neighborhoods. This plan was one of the first to consider the issue of traffic generation and trips in conjunction with different land uses.

The 1974 Sector Plan removed more than 24 acres from the designated central business district (CBD). It reduced the size of the CBD from 62 acres to approximately 37.5 acres. The 37.5 acres in the CBD were rezoned to the CBD-1 and CBD-2 categories. It also recommended a substantial scaling down of total allowable development to relate the amount of development to the ability of the existing feeder road system to serve the area.

The 1974 Sector Plan recommended medium-density commercial and office uses for the parcels nearest the Metro station and lower density primarily residential uses for undeveloped properties farther from the station. It prohibited expansion of commercial and high-density residential uses beyond the limits of the designated CBD boundary. Specifically, the 1974 Sector Plan recommended that no additional commercial or office development should be allowed on the GEICO tract. The plan recommended against development of the Chevy Chase Land Company's parking lot (Parcel 10A) and the Chevy Chase Center (Parcel 10B). The 1974 Sector Plan retained the R-60 Zone for the parking lot and removed it from the CBD in order to prevent any redevelopment during the life of the plan.

The 1974 Sector Plan identified the following policies and related recommendations:

- Provide orderly development within the constraints of the road system. The plan established density limits on each property.
- Protect residential neighborhoods. The plan recommended open space buffer areas and transition uses.
- Avoid degradation of the business community. The plan provided for the use of the new CBD zones and the optional method of development as a vehicle to encourage a mix of residential and commercial development.
- Undertake public improvements. The plan recommended an improved internal roadway network connecting Wisconsin Avenue to Western Avenue by way of Friendship Boulevard, to accommodate local traffic.
- Provide local parks and easements. The plan recommended the acquisition of Brookdale Park and the park known today as Page Park.

There have been three amendments to the 1974 Sector Plan, one in 1984 and two in 1990. The 1984 amendment allowed the abandonment of a portion of North Park Avenue between Friendship Boulevard and The Hills Plaza to facilitate construction of the Friendship Heights Village Center, designated a parcel as a public park to be maintained by the Village of Friendship Heights, and designated the segment of Friendship Boulevard running west from Wisconsin Avenue through the Bergdoll tract (now the Somerset House property) as Street "Z", to be renamed by the Bergdoll developer. The street was later named Somerset Terrace.

The first 1990 Sector Plan amendment was designed to permit development under the Annual Growth Policy special ceiling allocation standards for affordable housing, notwithstanding staging limitations in the Sector Plan.

The second 1990 Sector Plan amendment, referred to as the Barlow amendment, addressed parcels 8, 9B, and 14. It included a proposal for an optional method development as a combined development of more than one lot, with office and retail uses on parcels 8 and 9B, and open space on parcel 14. A complementary recommendation allowed the abandonment of a portion of The Hills Plaza and construction of a new street to the west, and a widening of the Willard Avenue right-of-way. It also included an alternative proposal for individual development of parcels 8, 9B, and 14.

1990 BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN

The 1990 *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan* recommended a moderate level of development for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area. This approach allows development that achieves many of the expectations of property owners and that which can be reasonably accommodated within the transportation capacity of the planning area. The 1990 B-CC Master Plan includes the following recommendations:



- Maintain or increase the proportion of households to jobs in the planning area.
- Place new employment and residential development in existing centers near Metro stations.
- Support existing businesses.
- Support increased housing density where compatible with nearby properties.

The 1990 B-CC Master Plan does not assign a specific development level to each employment center in the planning area. Instead, it concludes that such allocation should be done as part of each Sector Plan amendment and through the Annual Growth Policy. The available traffic capacity in Friendship Heights is to be determined through these studies. The moderate level of additional employment development endorsed by the 1990 B-CC Master Plan is intended to be shared among the major employment centers of the area, including Friendship Heights.

1998 FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS SECTOR PLAN: RATIONALE FOR THE REVISION

The 1974 Sector Plan viewed its recommendations as guiding development for six to ten years. It recommended a review prior to and two years following the opening of the Friendship Heights Metro station, and amending or replacing the plan if revisions were found necessary. Metro has been operating in Friendship Heights for more than ten years. Though there have been three plan amendments in the years since the 1974 Sector Plan, a full-scale review of the Sector Plan recommendations has not occurred.

page
16

Typically, M-NCPPC reviews master and sector plans every ten years. In the years since the 1974 Sector Plan, Montgomery County has experienced many changes that underscore the need to review the 1974 Sector Plan.

Population and employment growth between 1974 and 1995 in the County and the metropolitan area was far greater than expected. The current growth forecast for the region, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Round 5.3 forecast, projects a 23 percent population increase and a 36 percent employment increase by the year 2020. Within Montgomery County, the population is expected to increase from 810,000 in 1995 to more than one million people, with a major portion of that growth occurring over the next ten years. Similarly, jobs in Montgomery County are expected to increase from 463,300 to 630,000. According to State and County policies, discussed in the next section, the central business districts such as Friendship Heights are the appropriate places for many of these jobs.

There also have been major changes in laws and public policies regarding land use planning in the past twenty years. In the environmental area, the 1963 Clean Air Act and the 1990 amendments to it require greater reliance on transit and more concentrated development than in the past to encourage transit use. Increasing stormwater management, sediment control, and stream protection measures further limit development in less-developed suburban and rural areas. Chesapeake Bay preservation requirements, concerns about protecting agricultural areas, and recent forest conservation laws require better use of urban lands and less urban sprawl.

The Montgomery County Commission on the Future (1988), the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (1993), and other groups have underscored the need for development that is more compact. The 1992 *Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection, and Planning Act* (discussed below) also established a State-wide policy in favor of concentrating economic growth in urbanized areas. This Act related future State funding for public facilities to areas planned for such growth.

In the field of transportation, federal highway construction and State funding for new roads have substantially decreased and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act requires increased use of transit and existing transportation facilities. The Montgomery County Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) and Annual Growth Policy (AGP) procedures have been adopted since the 1974 Sector Plan. The AGP has recommended moratorium conditions in several areas of the County but it identified the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area, including Friendship Heights, as one of the few areas with appreciable capacity for both jobs and housing. Montgomery County growth policies identify Metro station areas as the most important development opportunities in the County. Moreover, County, State, and federal governments face increasing fiscal pressures on the development of new infrastructure to serve developing areas. At the same time, fiscal impact studies demonstrate that the greatest economic returns to the County occur where the development is located in areas with existing infrastructure.

Market conditions in Montgomery County also have changed in the last twenty years. The County has become a highly desirable location for high-tech, communications, biological research, and service companies. Major employers have sought suburban sites near Metro stations, but infrastructure limitations on development at various County locations have constrained the County's ability to respond. Since the economic decline of 1990, the State of Maryland and Montgomery County have become much more conscious of the need to accommodate existing and prospective businesses in order to bolster the tax base.

To respond to these changes, to adhere to the tradition of periodically reviewing master and sector plans, and to conform to State and County policy, a thorough review of the 1974 Sector Plan is appropriate.



1992 MARYLAND PLANNING ACT AND 1993 GENERAL PLAN REFINEMENT OF THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The Friendship Heights Sector Plan embraces and confirms the seven visions of the 1992 *Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection, and Planning Act* (the Planning Act). As stated in Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the visions are:

1. Development is to be concentrated in suitable areas.
2. Sensitive areas are to be protected.
3. In rural areas growth is to be directed to existing population centers and resource areas are to be protected.
4. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is to be considered a universal ethic.
5. Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is to be practiced.
6. To assure the achievement of paragraphs 1 through 5 above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are to be streamlined.
7. Funding mechanisms are to be addressed to achieve these objectives.

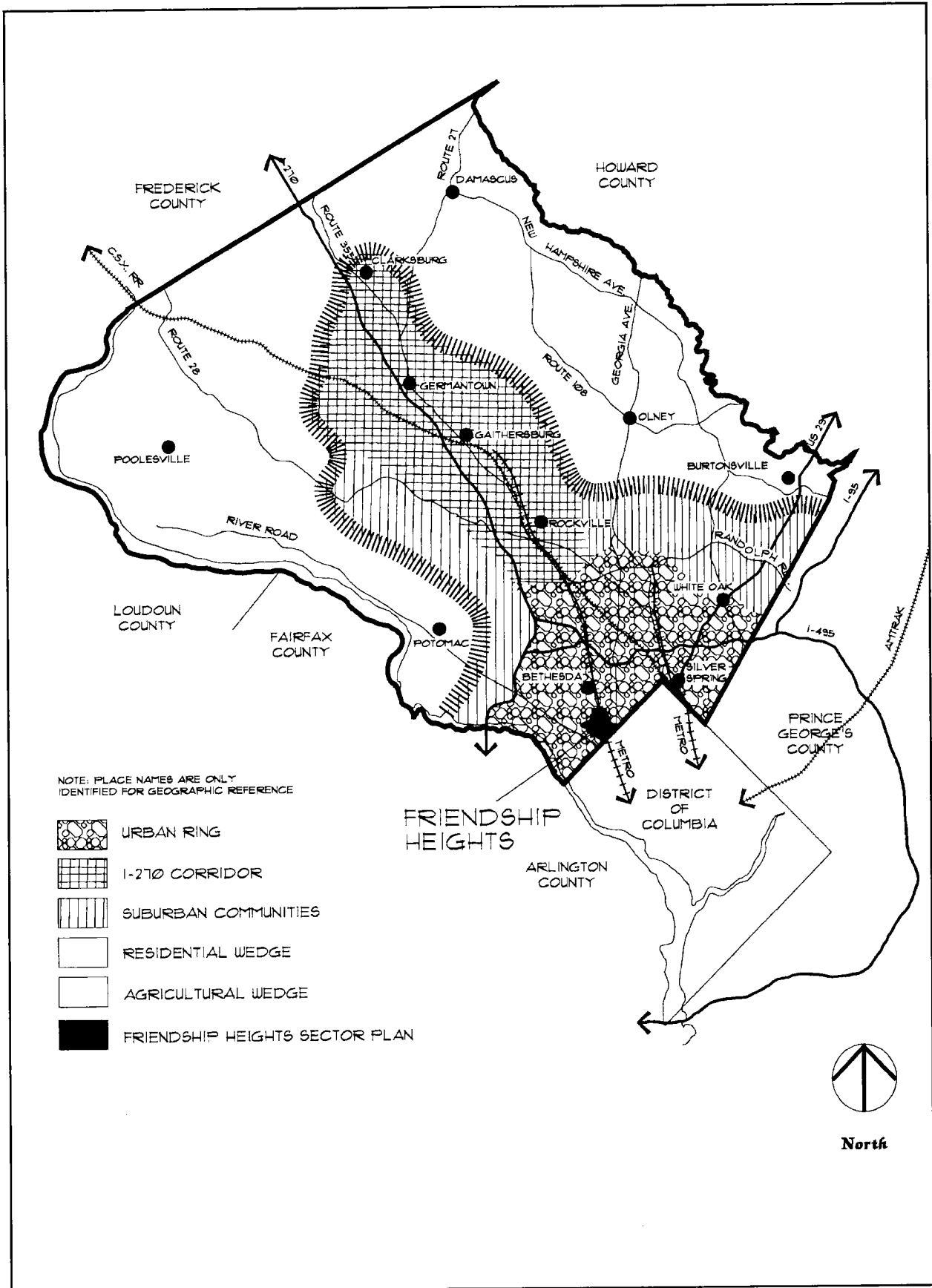
The Friendship Heights Sector Plan will help to implement the visions of the Planning Act by concentrating new development in a suitable area (close to an existing Metro station), by reducing the amount of development in rural areas and conserving agricultural resources through use of transferable development rights (TDRs), and by reducing the consumption of gasoline through transit-oriented policies. The Plan encourages economic growth and identifies capital facilities to be funded by a variety of sources.

page
18

In addition to stating seven visions, the Planning Act requires the implementation of a “sensitive areas” element designed to protect areas of environmental importance. Sensitive areas are described in the Act as 100-year floodplains, streams and associated buffer areas, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes. The Environmental Resources chapter of the Sector Plan complies with the sensitive areas requirement of the Planning Act, and recommends appropriate strategies for protecting these areas.

The Planning Act also requires flexible development regulations, a streamlined development process, and innovative economic development techniques. The Sector Plan uses flexible development standards in several instances where significant new development is contemplated.

While the Planning Act sets a general framework for development throughout the State, the 1993 *General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County* complies with the Planning Act and provides a more specific context for development within the County. The General Plan Refinement amends the 1964 General Plan and the 1969 Update which have guided the County’s land use pattern and transportation system for nearly three decades by channeling growth into the development corridors and an Urban Ring around Washington, D.C. The Friendship Heights Sector Plan, like other sector and master plans, constitutes an amendment to the General Plan.





The General Plan Refinement divides Montgomery County into four geographic components: the Urban Ring, the Corridors, the Suburban Communities, and the Wedge. Many of the goals and objectives of the General Plan Refinement direct new growth to major centers within the Urban Ring. Major centers are central business districts with commercial and high-density residential development surrounding Metro stations. Friendship Heights is a major Urban Ring center. (See Figure 14.)

The General Plan Refinement states:

“Relatively dense, compact centers are essential for Montgomery County’s future. The major centers especially will conserve energy, reduce vehicle trips, and minimize the amount of land that experiences the impacts of development...Major centers provide the best opportunity for growth with the least impact on land, water, air, and fiscal resources...The County’s major centers should ‘grow up’ rather than ‘grow out.’ Well defined boundaries of centers, established in small area plans, will give surrounding neighborhoods assurance that the center next door will not overwhelm their community.” (page 21)

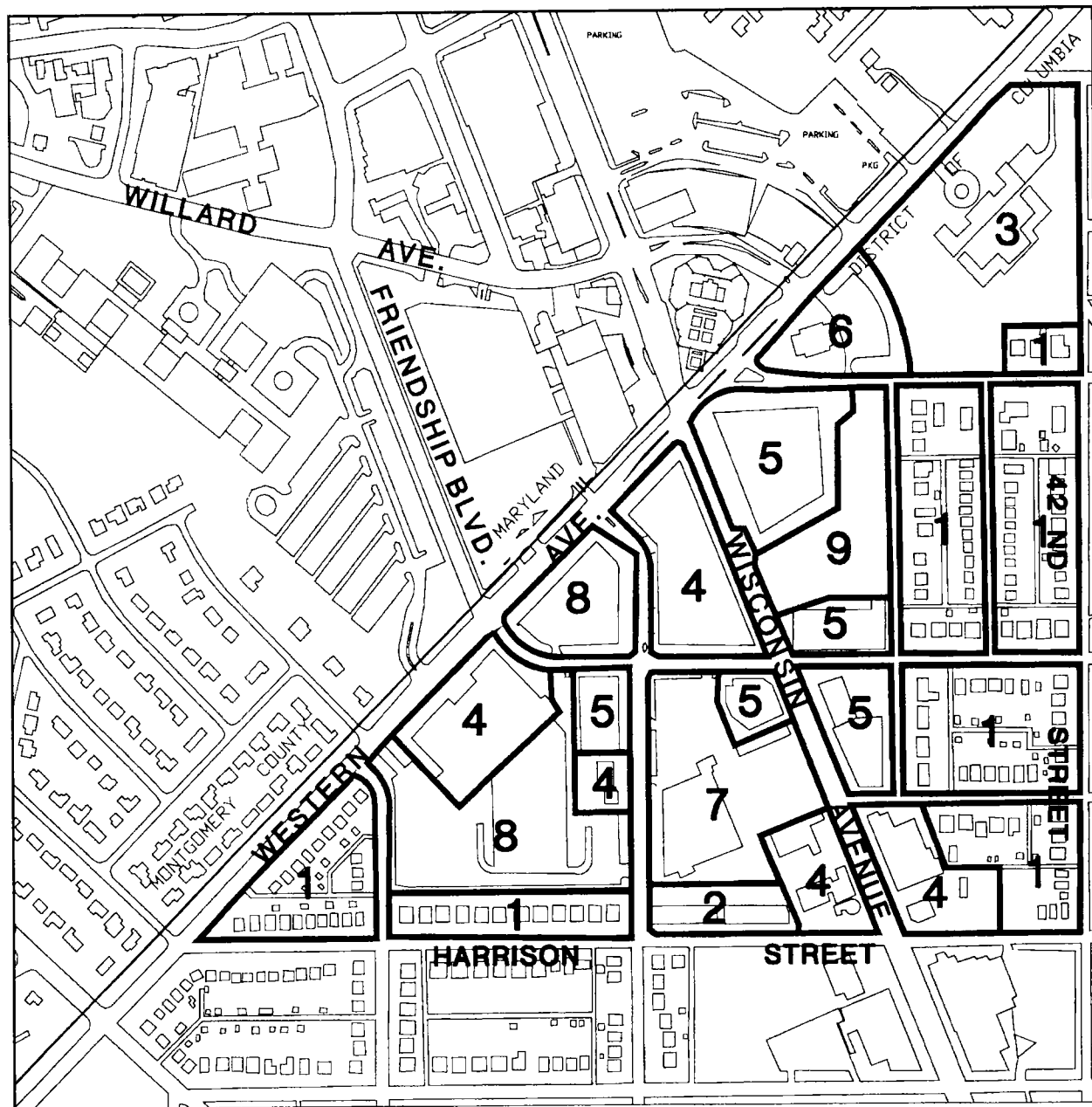
It continues:

“The County’s success in enhancing its existing central business districts and Metro station areas with additional planned development should be a cause for celebration as an environmentally sound means of accommodating new development. *The added activity in the buildings and parks which replace the surface parking lots between existing buildings can transform centers into a more inviting place to walk between destinations...* The County cannot afford to allow any deterioration in its centers. Each center is important to the County’s overall economic well being.” (page 23, italics added)

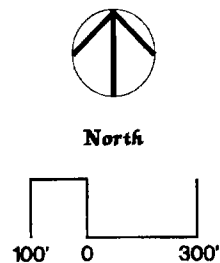
page
20

The General Plan Refinement notes several challenges for the future of the Urban Ring. First, it emphasizes the continued desirability of development and redevelopment in Metro station areas and generally encourages mixed uses there, including housing. Secondly, in foreseeing selective additional growth in these major centers, it stresses the need for compatibility with existing communities. It seeks to preserve the flourishing neighborhoods, and encourages the County to protect these areas from the encroachment of non-conforming land uses, excessive noise, and through traffic. Thirdly, the General Plan Refinement recommends expanding transportation options and encourages pedestrian-scale development with emphasis on urban design features and traffic management to create an inviting, safe, and pleasing atmosphere. Finally, it encourages protection of environmentally sensitive areas which, in the Urban Ring, frequently means rehabilitating streams or retrofitting—such protective measures as cleaning up streams, managing stormwater runoff, and planting street trees. (pages 25-26)

The General Plan Refinement sets forth seven goals with accompanying objectives. The specific ways that this Sector Plan implements the goals and objectives of the General Plan Refinement are summarized in Appendix A.



- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED | 6. MEDICAL OFFICE |
| 2. MULTI-FAMILY | 7. PUBLIC |
| 3. CONGREGATE CARE | 8. PARKING |
| 4. RETAIL | 9. VACANT |
| 5. MIXED-COMMERCIAL | |





DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PLANNING

The Friendship Heights Sector Plan area adjoins the District of Columbia along Western Avenue. The existing land uses in the adjacent D.C. area are shown in Figure 15.

Planning in the District of Columbia has a three-tiered structure consisting of the Comprehensive Plan, ward plans, and more detailed small area plans. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range policy document that provides overall guidance for future planning and development. Its twelve elements include a land use element and an accompanying generalized land use map. Ward plans for each of the District's eight wards (adopted as one of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan) are intended to provide neighborhood-level interpretation and application of the Comprehensive Plan objectives and policies.

The District of Columbia portion of Friendship Heights is in Ward 3. The 1994 Ward 3 Plan stresses that the Ward is predominantly residential; between 3 percent and 5 percent of the zoned land is in nonresidential use. The Ward 3 Plan general policy is to protect the residential neighborhoods and to control and channel the existing strong redevelopment pressures.

The land use map designates Friendship Heights as the only regional commercial center in the Ward. The map also designates Ward 3 as a housing opportunity area, defined as underused land that should be the focus for the development of new housing. To encourage the production of housing, the Ward 3 Plan recommends restricting major commercial development in the Friendship Heights housing opportunity area. The Ward 3 Plan also encourages mixed-use developments in commercial-zone districts to support the production of new housing. The Ward 3 Plan notes the opportunity for housing development on the large existing Lord and Taylor and Metrobus parking lots.

While most of the Wisconsin Avenue frontage in Ward 3 is zoned for a density comparable to CBD-1, The Chevy Chase Pavilion, on the southeast corner of Wisconsin and Western Avenues, is zoned for a density comparable to CBD-2. The Pavilion is developed under a Planned Unit Development (PUD), a planning tool which allows a developer greater flexibility in site planning and building design and the incorporation of amenities.

As noted in the earlier discussion of approved ("pipeline") development, the former Xerox site next to the Chevy Chase Pavilion on Wisconsin Avenue had a PUD that would have allowed a building with over 450,000 square feet. The ultimate development on this site consists of a low-rise building with 137,650 square feet of street-front retail and 29 townhouses facing the residential neighborhood to the east. (See Figure 12.)

C. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFILL DEVELOPMENT ON MAJOR PARCELS

The GEICO, Hecht's, and Chevy Chase Land Company sites, including their surface and decked parking lots, offer the greatest opportunity to meet important Plan objectives: increase employment opportunities in an urban setting; maximize use of Metro; provide amenities not provided by previous development; achieve integration among the separate commercial, office and residential districts; and help create a single community.

The Plan concept is to knit the different districts together into one community by bringing mixed land uses into the Town Center, creating spaces where people can meet to explore shared interests, and achieving an interconnected street and path system that promotes walking and cycling. The Town Center has as its focus the Metro station. The area immediately surrounding the station is termed the Metro Core. (See Figure 16.)

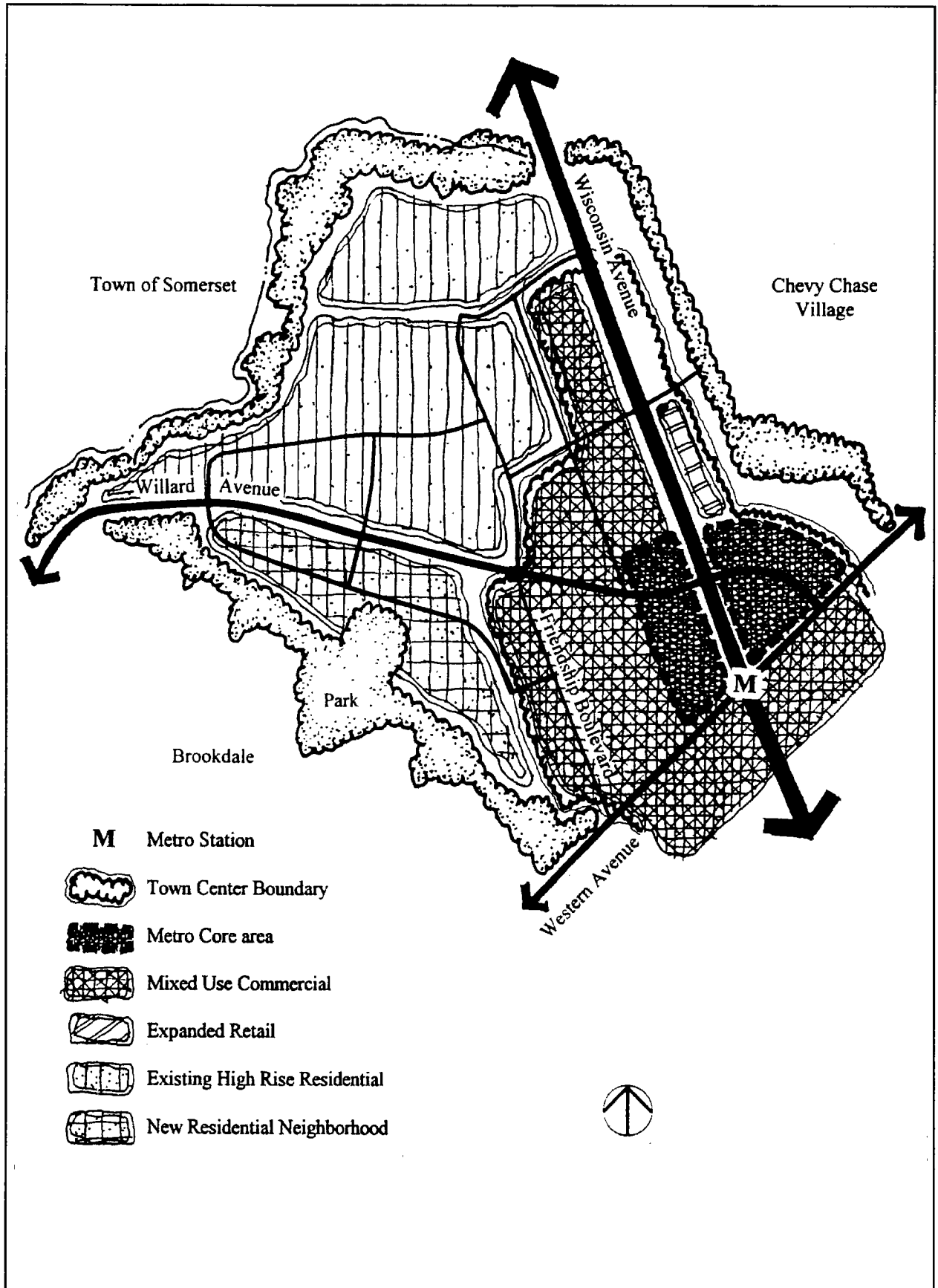
The parking lots on the Saks Fifth Avenue, Chevy Chase Land Company, Hecht's, and GEICO sites currently occupy a significant amount of land area within walking distance of the Metro station, and contribute to the separation between the existing districts. Of the 92 acres in the Friendship Heights Sector Plan area, 28.5 acres, or 30 percent, is surface or deck parking lot. (See Figures 17 and 18.)

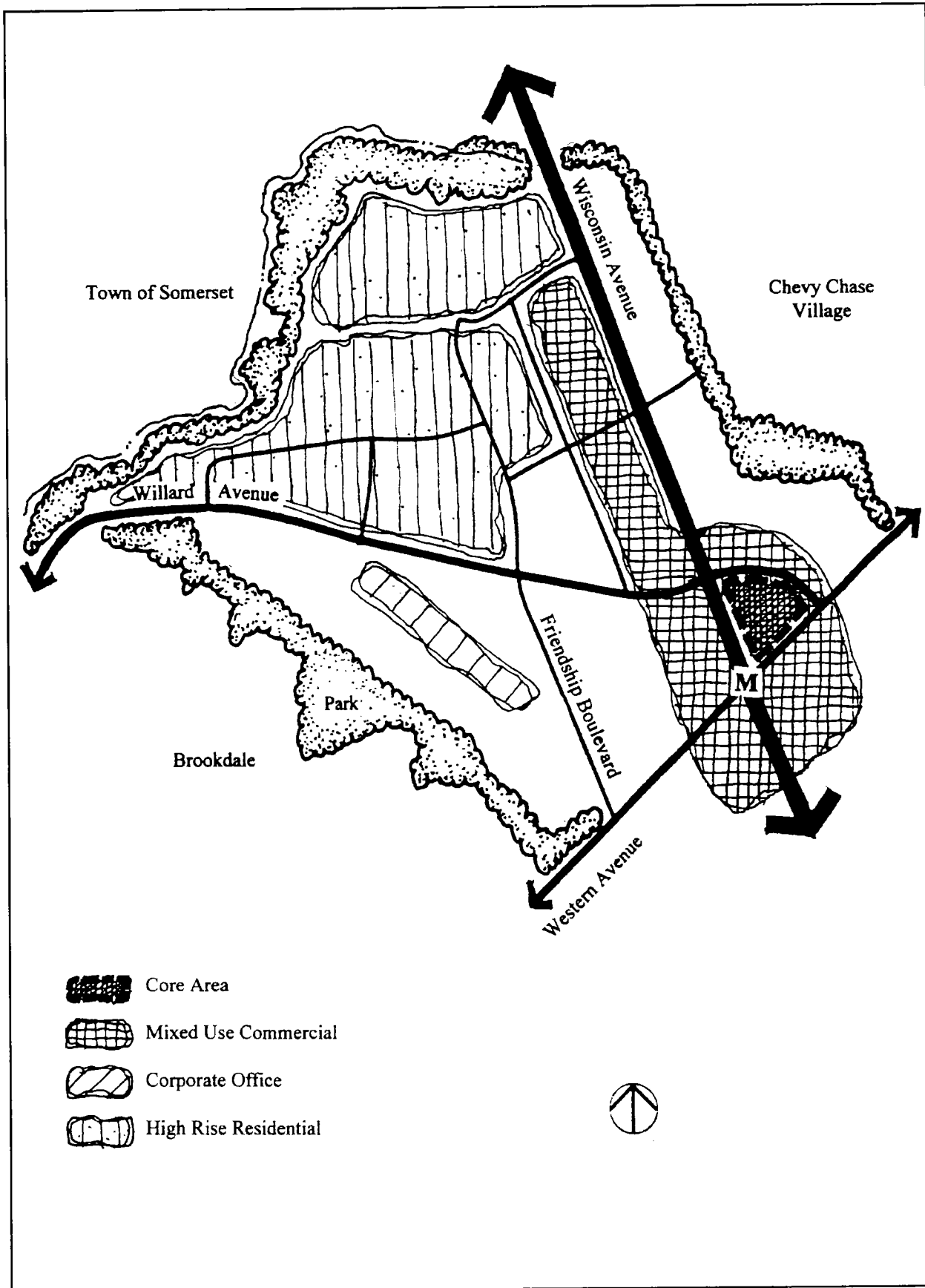
Most users regard the parking lots as safer and more convenient than underground parking. Residents of adjoining neighborhoods consider the lots buffers against commercial expansion and appreciate the visual break from the high-rise buildings. In addition, residents of apartment buildings enjoy the view of generous tree plantings in some of the parking lots.

Despite the landscaping, the lots are primarily stretches of asphalt designed for storing cars. To have this much space devoted to surface parking is not an efficient use of valuable land close to Metro and creates a void which saps urban vitality, discourages people from walking, and breaks the continuity of retail along the eastern side of Wisconsin Avenue.

The Plan attempts to retain the positive functions served by the parking lots and address residents' concerns in a series of proposals. The Plan limits commercial expansion into residential neighborhoods by recommending confirmation of the CBD boundaries, except for one slight extension at Chevy Chase Center, and by including guidelines for special exception land uses in surrounding neighborhoods. It encourages the retention of many surface parking spaces on the Chevy Chase Land Company parking lot to serve community retail, and requires measures to ensure safety and convenience in proposed structured parking on the Chevy Chase Land Company and Hecht's sites.

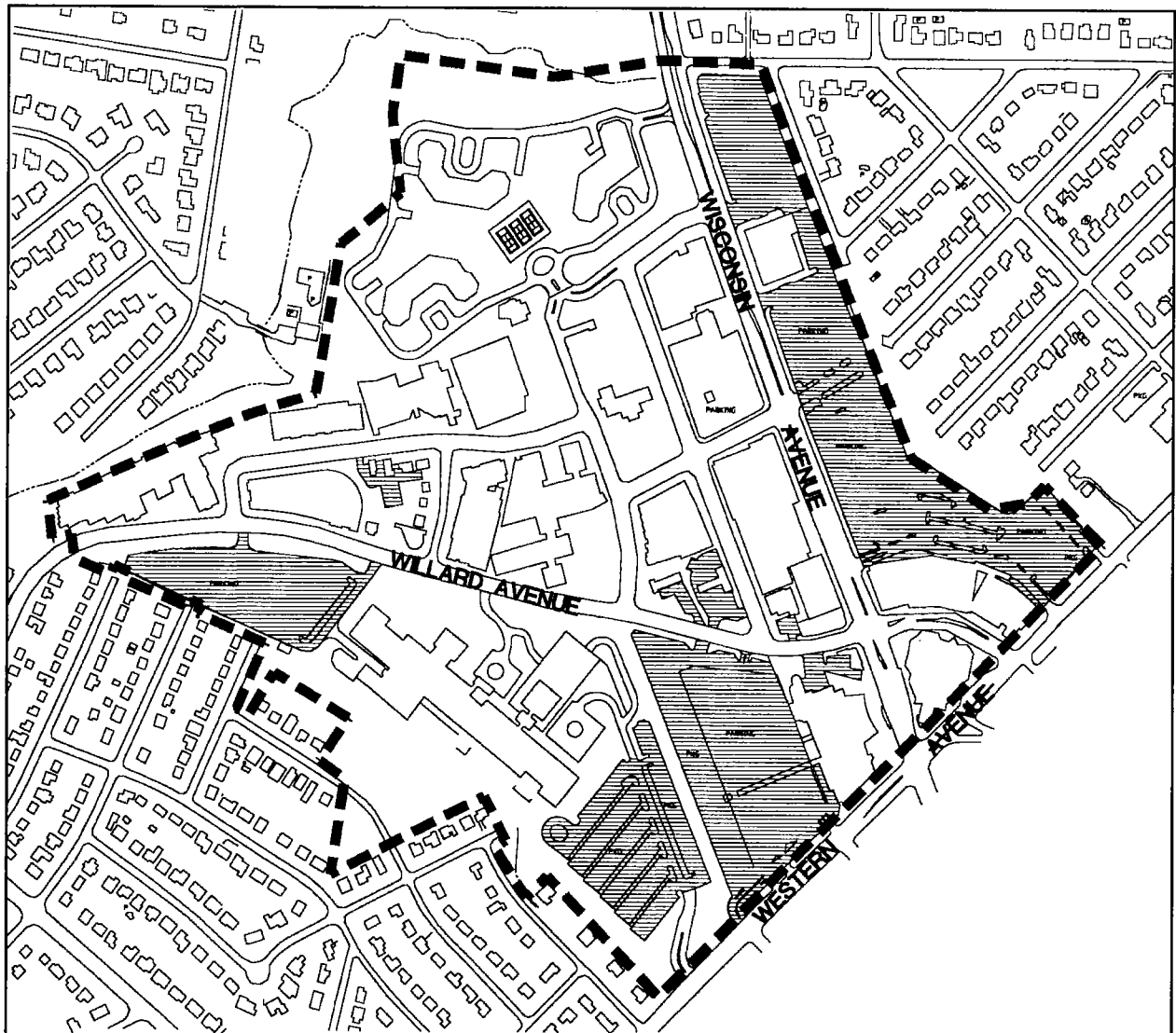
The Plan recommends replacing portions of the surface lots on the Hecht's, Chevy Chase Land Company, and GEICO sites with land uses that better meet Plan objectives, including usable open space for local residents, employees, and visitors and a higher return to the County for its investment in Metro. (Note: the parking lot on the Saks Fifth Avenue site has a long-term lease and is not the subject of redevelopment proposals in this Plan.)





SURFACE AND DECK PARKING

FIGURE 18



page
26



SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY



SURFACE AND DECK PARKING



North



On the Hecht's site, the Plan recommends replacing surface and decked parking with higher density land uses more appropriate next to Metro. The addition of retail, office, hotel, and housing to the site will allow the owners to provide several public amenities, including a major public park and community center on the corner of Friendship Boulevard and Willard Avenue. (See Figure 27.)

On the Chevy Chase Land Company parking lot, the Plan recommends a low-rise structure compatible with the adjacent neighborhood that will provide retail continuity along Wisconsin Avenue at ground level and office above. Redevelopment of this portion of the parking lot will allow creation of a usable green open space that will enhance the view for residents of Chevy Chase Village and Highland House apartments. Redevelopment of the Chevy Chase Center will allow creation of another open space for active enjoyment and the redesign of Wisconsin Circle to better accommodate pedestrians. (See Figure 23.)

Redevelopment of the GEICO site—removing the existing, obsolete building and planning for the whole site including the parking lots—will allow offices to be located farther from the Brookdale community and closer to the Town Center. A new neighborhood of townhouses and low-rise apartments, recommended by the Plan as a transition between the CBD and the Brookdale neighborhood, will provide more security for nearby residents than a deserted parking lot at night. An expanded neighborhood park and two significantly sized open spaces within a greenway will retain and enhance the current visual separation from the high-rise apartment buildings across Willard Avenue. The small urban park at the corner of Friendship Boulevard and Willard Avenue will help protect the views from the residential buildings in The Village of Friendship Heights of the new office development on the GEICO site. (See Figure 31.)

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDED DENSITIES, LAND USES, AND LOCATIONS OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT

There are potential benefits to the County and to the community from allowing development on the three major parcels—GEICO, Hecht's, and Chevy Chase Land Company—as discussed above. The task of the Sector Plan is to balance County-wide policies with the needs of the local business and residential community. The General Plan policies described earlier include recommendations to locate new growth in Metro-served areas, provide opportunities for new employment and housing, and protect surrounding neighborhoods. Residents of single-family neighborhoods near the Sector Plan area are concerned that too much additional growth will upset the delicate balance between commercial and residential uses and destroy the quality of life.

In developing specific proposals for the major parcels, it was necessary to determine the appropriate amount, land use mix, and location of additional development that would enhance Friendship Heights as a place in which to live and work. Supporting studies prepared for the Plan offered guidance for answering these questions, though no one study was definitive. (The studies, which include data from the adjacent portions of the District of Columbia, are published separately. See list of Reference Materials.)



- **Population and Household Profile**

The population and household study profiled current residents of the high-rise apartments inside the Sector Plan area as well as those in the surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods. The fact that within the Sector Plan area there is virtually one housing type (high-rise) and a high percentage of single people of middle age or older suggests adding other housing types in new development that might provide greater diversity and choice.

- **Housing Market Study**

The housing market study also documented that the existing housing stock of 3,435 units is primarily in high-rise buildings, and that Friendship Heights is a strong housing market, as discussed earlier.

The study found that between 800 and 1,100 new dwelling units could be absorbed in the next 15 to 20 years, including about 100 to 300 townhouses. The planning approvals for Somerset III allowed approximately 275 units, leaving an unmet demand of 525 to 825 dwelling units. Though the ultimate build-out of Somerset III provided approximately 100 rather than 275 units, the larger number was assumed for planning purposes.

- **Office Market Study**

Friendship Heights is a strong office market. The office market study covered the commercial area on both sides of the District/Maryland line between Somerset Terrace on the north and Harrison Street on the south. The study estimated a potential demand for 800,000 to 1,200,000 square feet of new office space during the life of the Plan. There were nearly 850,000 square feet of vacant and approved pipeline space in the study area when the Sector Plan process began. (The pipeline is the amount of approved but unbuilt development.) The pipeline included approved projects on the Barlow and Hecht's sites in Montgomery County and the Xerox site in the District of Columbia. The ultimate development on the Xerox site has a lower density and no office component. However, in calculating future supply, the Plan assumed the higher density of the original PUD, which included 265,000 square feet of office use.

The supply of approved office space and vacant space was considered adequate to satisfy the lower estimate of future demand. The higher estimate would require an additional 350,000 square feet of space above what was vacant and approved. Providing such additional space would allow greater flexibility in matching potential office space with future demand.

- **Retail Market Study**

The retail study noted that Friendship Heights provides a unique retail environment compared to shopping malls because of its urban character. The success of Friendship Heights stems from the location amid some of the most affluent residential neighborhoods in the region and the high quality built environment. The continued success of the retail sector will be determined by the continued attractiveness of the area for shoppers and the ability of the retail to evolve and take advantage of market conditions.

The retail study covered the same commercial area as the office study, on both sides of the District/Maryland line between Somerset Terrace on the north and Harrison Street on the south.

Projection of future demand for retail is hard to quantify, and the retail study did not project a specific amount of square footage that would equate to future demand. The retail market is changing nationally, with retailers trying to solidify specific niches and expand market share.

Study recommendations include the following:

- Provide flexibility in the Sector Plan to allow future retail development to adjust to changing market conditions.
- Preserve and enhance the urban character of the area.
- Provide an adequate number of well located and well designed short-term parking spaces for the safety and convenience of shoppers.
- Encourage street-fronting retail along both sides of Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights to strengthen retail, specifically on the Chevy Chase Land Company parking lot.

The retail market study also made the following findings:

- Today, 15,000 additional square feet of grocery and drug store space is supportable.
- The Friendship Heights comparison goods market is near equilibrium. That is not to say that other retailers could not survive. By filling a niche with a product or service that is not currently offered, a retailer could capture some of the dollars that are being spent outside of Friendship Heights.
- Additional retail opportunities exist in certain niches such as home furnishings, electronics, children's toys, and entertainment-related products and services such as bookstores, restaurants, and cafes.
- Predictions of long-range retail development needs are uncertain, since the retailing industry is expected to undergo continued change.
- Additional commercial development would strengthen the retail market, though it should not reduce the convenience of area shopping.

The retail study noted that the Hecht's site location makes it suitable for additional retail space and that an expansion could capitalize on existing market opportunities. The study cautioned that development of a large retail component on the Xerox site in the District could reduce market opportunities for a second retail component on the Hecht's site.



- **Transportation Analysis**

The transportation analysis conducted for this Plan studied existing traffic conditions on both sides of the District/Maryland line, existing traffic plus traffic from approved development (a “low” scenario), and the impact on traffic of a “medium” and “high” land use scenario for the three major redevelopable parcels. The recommended land use density is marginally above the medium land use alternative tested. (The transportation analysis is described in more detail in Chapter III and in Appendix C.)

The main objective of the analysis was to determine the effects of additional development on traffic generation and intersection congestion, measured by levels of service. The study concluded that existing levels of service during weekday evening peak hours and on Saturdays are well within standards the County finds acceptable in Metro-served policy areas.

The study also concluded that there would be little appreciable difference in future traffic between the medium and high land use alternatives over the next twenty years because of the influence of regional through traffic. The effect of future traffic on intersections within the Sector Plan area was not the deciding factor underlying the Plan recommendations on the amount of new development. Rather, it was one of many factors considered. Had future intersection levels of service within the Sector Plan area been the sole criterion, the Plan might have recommended higher amounts of development.

PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Urban design analysis, together with the studies of housing, office and retail markets, and the transportation analysis, determined the amount, mix, and location of land uses recommended for the major parcels. Urban design analysis throughout the planning process considered the opportunities and constraints provided by each of the redevelopable parcels and also an overall framework for Friendship Heights. The planning and design principles discussed in this section are a distillation of the urban design analysis process.

- **Create a vital, diverse urban center with a balanced mix of land uses, including places where one can live and work.**

Analysis of the redevelopable sites suggested that there was an appropriate set of land uses for each site because of its historic use, size, and location in relation to the CBD. The Hecht's site has a tradition of retail and its location along the main shopping street, Wisconsin Avenue, makes it suitable for that use. The size of the site and its location next to the Metro station also make it suitable for office, hotel, and high-density housing. Bringing residential uses into the Town Center would help ensure its vitality in the evening and on Sundays.

The 26-acre GEICO site has a tradition of office use and ample space for a corporate office environment. Its location between a high-rise residential neighborhood and a single-family residential neighborhood also makes it suitable for housing.

The Chevy Chase Land Company site has a community retail tradition. Because of its proximity to Metro, additional office use is also appropriate. Housing would ideally be a suitable transitional use between the CBD and the adjacent single-family residential neighborhood, but the site is too narrow to allow the creation of an attractive residential environment.

- **Concentrate the highest density in the Metro Core, stepping down toward the surrounding neighborhoods.**

The existing Chevy Chase Metro Building, built over the Metrobus terminal with escalators to the below-grade Metrorail station, has the highest density in the CBD: an FAR of 4.0, a gross floor area of 240,000, and a height of 12 stories. A land use plan that applied the above design principle to the Chevy Chase Land Company site would step down in density and height from the Chevy Chase Metro Building to a lower structure on a redeveloped Chevy Chase Center and still lower in any development on the adjacent parking lot. From the Hecht's site, density would step down on the portion of the GEICO site closest to the Brookdale neighborhood.

- **Preserve the existing strong single-family residential neighborhoods around the CBD.**

Using this principle to answer the question of the appropriate density, location, and mix of land uses for the major parcels involves the concept of compatibility. One aspect of compatibility is the juxtaposition of land uses and/or the amount of separation between them. Where the land use is the same or similar, compatibility is easier to achieve. For example, where there is space to build them, townhouses can be an effective transition between single-family detached homes and the central business district because residents share similar concerns for safety, noise, and maintenance of an attractive neighborhood environment. Where the juxtaposition of commercial with single-family residential uses occur in a narrower space, a landscape buffer may be the best way to preserve the views and privacy of a nearby neighborhood.

Even similar uses do not guarantee compatibility if the difference in scale is too abrupt—as in the case of the 16-story Irene apartments located at the edge of the Sector Plan area, only 120 feet from the two-story houses at the end of the Warwick Place in the Town of Somerset. The step-down in building heights recommended by the previous principle would help avoid a similar situation.

Ensuring compatibility between the CBD and the adjacent residential neighborhoods involves limiting both building height and density on new development near the neighborhoods. An amount of building density can either be expressed vertically, in a tall building, or horizontally, in low-rise buildings that use up more open space and create an environment that appears too crowded. In order to avoid either extreme, land use recommendations should address both density and height.

- **Preserve and enhance the environment for residents of high-rise buildings.**

This principle can be achieved in several ways: by limiting the height of new buildings close to the high-rise apartments to preserve views, by preserving as many existing trees as possible and planting new ones, and by adding new open spaces for the enjoyment of residents.



- **Help knit the diverse districts into a stronger community and provide spaces for activities that bring people together.**

As described previously in the discussion of the proposed land use pattern, existing parking lots near the Town Center offer an opportunity for infill development that can make a more vibrant, pedestrian-oriented community. Redevelopment of these lots and of buildings deemed obsolete can be the mechanism to provide amenity spaces where members of the community can meet.