

## Bethesda Downtown Plan Sector Plan Parcel File Clean Up Methodology and Workflow

When the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan began in January 2014, the existing on the ground development square footage (parcel file) was analyzed and evaluated in preparation for use with the new Sector Plan land use recommendations. Since the Approval and Adoption of the Bethesda Downtown Sector more than 3 years later and the creation of the Bethesda Overlay Zone which sets a cap on the overall development in Downtown Bethesda, planning staff re-evaluated the existing on the ground development square footage (parcel file) for 2017 to establish an up-to-date existing on the ground number (base) to more accurately monitor and track development in Downtown Bethesda against the newly established cap on development.

Below are the assumptions the team made in cleaning up the parcel file and in establishing the base.

### Methodology/Assumptions

- GENERAL
  - The first step was to create a work space for the data to be stored in and archived. Data stored in the “Bethesda\_Overlay\_Parcel\_Cleanup\_20170406.gdb” file geodatabase include:
    - SDAT polygon (parcel layer) and point files because the data is live and dynamic and we, therefore, needed a static copy so the numbers did not change. This was done May 8, 2017
    - Costar commercial and residential point file was captured April 11, 2017
    - Streetsense retail point file (created by consultants for Countywide retail study), transmitted to M-NCPPC Dec 12, 2016
    - 2016 DHCA multi-family buildings point file
  - Six columns were added to the parcel layer:
    - Verified – if a parcel was verified as looked at (or studied), a dropdown box for “yes” or “no” was checked
    - Change – if a parcel’s use or GFA was changed, a dropdown box indicating “yes” was checked, if not “no” was indicated
    - Change\_Comments – when the previously discussed “Change” field was marked with a “yes”, then a notation was made in this column regarding what was changed
    - Notes – general notes about the parcel were made in this column. In addition, this field should also include information on the data sources used or any issues discovered if applicable.
    - Issue\_to\_Resolve – if a parcel had to be flagged for the project manager in Area 1, the issue was noted in this column, after the issue was resolved, it was removed
    - Initial – a dropdown box for the author, should there be any questions
  - Each parcel was checked for its use and GFA
  - The following sources were used to check use and GFA
    - Maryland State Department of Taxation and Assessment (SDAT)’s & Montgomery County Planning’s Parcel file. This was the base data source which includes information on each parcel in the County. One limitation of this data file is that is

does not include information on mixed-uses in non-condo parcels. Mixed-uses is something that had to be verified using other data sources.

- CoStar, which gives us RBA<sup>1</sup> (Rentable Building Area), and unit numbers, average unit size, property type (multi-family, office, general retail, etc.), and building status (existing, proposed).
- DHCA 2016 Rental Survey for multi-family location and number of units. This data source does not include building size (GFA).
- Retail Survey from Streetsense 2016, a geocoded inventory of commercial and some office in Montgomery County, which also gave an estimate of the square feet and the name of the tenant
- Google maps and street view – to verify that a project is on the ground, might be under construction, or near construction
- Pipeline Current – when projects were found to be under construction they were cross-checked with the pipeline spreadsheet of approved projects for information on densities.
- Development Review – Plans layer (Preliminary plans and site plans layer) on parcels (note: generally, only parcels with applications from the years 2000 to current were active on GIS). This layer was used to confirm a project's Application Number for further research in the DAIC.
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- RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

- When looking at residential buildings we first deferred to the GFA included with the SDAT assessment data. If this number (a) seemed unreasonable, either the GFA seems to small or too big, or (b) the data is missing.
- When the Sq Ft of a residential building had to be ascertained, the following assumptions were made (in order of preference)
  - First, we used testimony from property owners (example, existing yield worksheet from Aldon properties along Battery lane) or the DAIC if there was a development application
  - Second, we used CoStar RBA if available
  - If those resources were not available, we used the method of multiplying the footprint by the number of floors for garden style apartment building
  - For mid- to high-rise mixed-used buildings multiply the number of units \* the 1,000 sq. ft. industry standard
- For condominium buildings, the number of units (or points) located in each parcel were summed, with the parking data queried out, for an accurate number of residential units in each condominium building.

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<sup>1</sup> Rentable Building Area

(RBA) Expressed in square feet, this area includes the usable area and its associated share of the common areas. Typically, rents are based on this area. It is the space the tenant will occupy in addition to the associated common areas of the building such as the lobby, hallways, bathrooms, equipment rooms, etc. There is no real difference between RBA and GLA (Gross Leasable Area) except that GLA is used when referring to retail properties while RBA is used for other commercial properties.

- Caveat: CoStar attributes their data and RBA (Rentable Building Area) to an address – not parcels and sometimes parcels are split across addresses
  - Sometimes CoStar uses proprietary data which adds the potential for intentionally inaccurate data
  - RBA reflects space useful to tenants, it does not reflect total building square footage that also include space that is not usable to tenants.
- MIXED-USE BUILDINGS
  - Because SDAT often only assigns all the square feet of a mixed-use building to whatever its predominant use is, we tried to parse out the GFA of mixed-use buildings using SDAT, Streetsense, CoStar, DAIC resolutions and staff reports. We also changed the land use category (LU\_CATEGORY) from office or residential to a land use of our own naming, “Mixed-Use,” and assigned the square footage accordingly for a more accurate representation of its use.
  - Once we found the correct distribution of use by space for a building, these were noted in the appropriate Residential, Office, Retail, Industrial, or Other fields.
- SPLIT PARCELS
  - For facilities/buildings that have their GFA split across parcel lines (i.e. buildings that take up multiple parcels), if SDAT didn’t assign the appropriate amount of GFA to each parcel boundary, all the GFA would be placed in one parcel with corresponding linked parcels GFA nulled out, and the account id for the other linked parcels detailed in the note column.
- PARKING
  - All parking garages had their GFA removed from the total GFA
- PIPELINE
  - Pipeline projects were handled two ways. For projects that were under construction, they were treated as if they were built – these existing on-the-ground projects use GFAs that were nulled out, and the pipeline GFA was added to the parcel file
  - Pipeline projects not under construction at the time of the analysis were not included in the existing on-the-ground numbers