

A COMMUNITY'S VOICE



FOREST GLEN METRO REDEVELOPMENT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Forest Glen Metro was the subject of possible redevelopment as part of WMATA's station development program. This Forest Glen Metro Redevelopment Report seeks to bring awareness to the possibility of developing the metro parking lot and describes how some of Forest Glen's neighbors, residents and other community stakeholders have articulated their visions for the space and its overall use. The report includes a general overview and context of the neighborhood as well as a summary of direct community feedback on the potential development based on comments collected during an open-invitation community gathering held on the evening of August 26, 2015. Our hope is that this report will serve to inform and enhance the quality of on-going project discussions affecting the greater Forest Glen community.

Another primary purpose of this report is to provide WMATA planners and decision-makers with direct community input on the proposed development and detailed feedback which also includes several possible concepts and renderings for the Forest Glen metro parking lot development. By capturing our ideas in writing, our goal is for this feedback to inform the potential RFP (Request for Proposal) process so that any prospective developers can create a work product that accurately reflects the voice of the broader community. In addition to feedback collected on August 26, the content of this report also reflects on-going correspondence and conversations that have taken place on the Finding Forest Glen website as well as other social media and online venues. The redevelopment renderings and concepts presented in this report have been articulated and conceived by the greater Forest Glen community and urban designers. These drawings are purely conceptual -- the result of

several brainstorming sessions and are designed to start the conversation on what possible development *could look like* if the development moves forward. These concepts are not hard requirements of the community, but reflect the initiative and creative process of several active community members. The concepts also reflect certain urban design principles and preferences such as the preference for green open space and neighborhood- based retail.

FOREST GLEN OVERVIEW

Forest Glen, Maryland is a census designated area with approximately 6,582 residents over a 1.4 square mile area. The Forest Glen Metro is one of three Georgia Ave. stations located in Forest Glen West. Forest Glen East is delineated by Georgia Avenue on the West, covering mostly a residential area with the exception of the Holy Cross Hospital and the Forest Glen Medical Center. Like Forest Glen East, the dominant character of Forest Glen West is residential with the exception of the WMATA station and its parking lot as well as a small amount of commercially-zoned land at the intersection of Forest Glen and Seminary Road.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On August 26, 2015, a community meeting was held at the Montgomery Hills Baptist Church to discuss the possibility of redevelopment at Forest Glen. At the meeting, almost 45 residents participated in a series of interactive focus groups (“residents”) where they were able to share their views on a variety of community development topics. Using a SWOT analysis (alternatively SWOT matrix) to structure the discussion, residents

developed their recommendations and issues as a part of the Forest Glen redevelopment conversation.

A SWOT analysis is a structured planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a project or in this case, for the redevelopment of a prior-use space. The analytical framework involves specifying a project's objective while also capturing the factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving that objective. The components of this analysis are summarized below.

- **Strengths:** characteristics of the current site that give it an advantage over others.
- **Weaknesses:** characteristics that place the current site at a disadvantage relative to others.
- **Opportunities:** elements that the project could exploit to its advantage.
- **Threats:** elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the project.



For the purposes of the meeting, the residents were told to view strengths and weaknesses as present issues and opportunities and threats as potential future issues.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES:

Strengths

For the Forest Glen focus group residents, the strengths surrounding the possibility for any type of metro parking lot development were very strong. Residents emphasized the location's proximity to a relatively affluent area and the location's central connection to many other parts of the community. Many long-standing residents reminded the group that the community has been "waiting with patience" for redevelopment to the area for many years now, and were excited about the prospect of new commercial retail space and stated they would support such ventures.

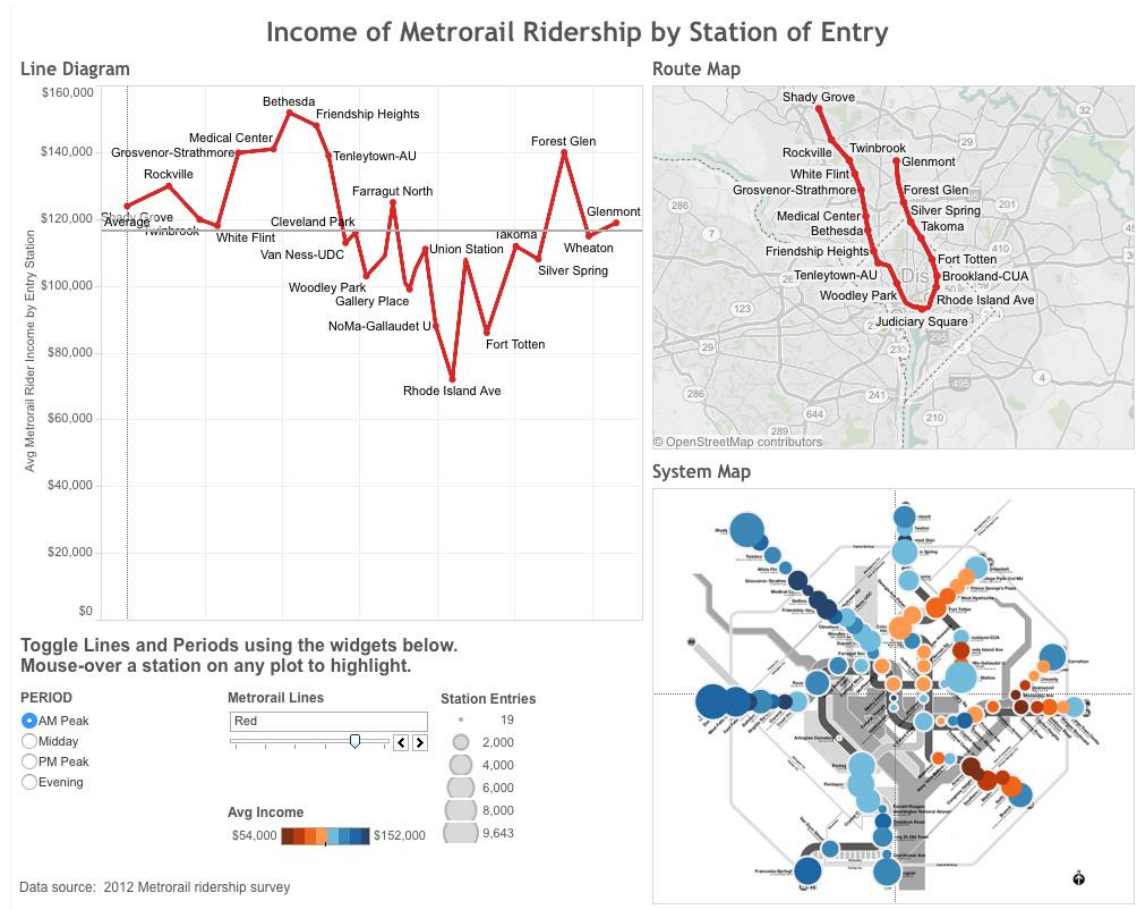
Forest Glen Income and Commuting Snapshot

In terms of the ability to support such commercial/retail space, Forest Glen's estimated median household income in 2013 was at \$75,781 (compared to \$72,483 for Maryland).

In terms of typical Forest Glen metro-riders, WMATA recently released a collection of data that indicates that at peak AM hours, the Forest Glen Metro's average income per household (in 2015) is around \$140,000 – right behind Bethesda and Friendship Heights stations. In fact, metro riders at only 5 of Metro's 91 stations have higher average household income than Forest Glen's riders.

The only 5 stations with higher average peak AM metro rider household income, according to that survey, are

- \$152K Bethesda
- \$145K Federal Triangle
- \$142K East Falls Church
- \$141K Metro Center
- \$141K Clarendon
- \$140K Grosvenor-Strathmore tied with Forest Glen



Some residents felt that the current site's strength included the relatively ease-of-access to the metro due to light traffic in the direct vicinity of the Kiss-and-Ride and Park-and-Ride, and a large number of available parking spaces. Many residents generally thought of the Forest Glen metro area as a safe one.

Furthermore, residents supported the idea that proximity to Holy Cross Hospital could support additional doctor offices and neighborhood-based retail and commercial space at the location. Residents also stated that the Beltway Pedestrian Bridge could connect any Forest Glen development to

Montgomery Hills as a larger commercial/retail district area that could provide substantial support to a somewhat sleepy but very large community nestled between Wheaton and Downtown Silver Spring.

Weaknesses

Despite the overall positive feedback on the strengths of any possible Forest Glen redevelopment, many residents addressed the weaknesses and challenges of the area. Many residents think that the parking lot area (and metro stop itself) in general is often difficult to access for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and can be particularly challenging for cyclists coming from all directions. Residents think that there are some significant ADA access issues with the general site – making it very challenging for wheelchair users and families with strollers to access the mezzanine level of the metro. A large part of access issues involved pedestrian and bicycle access from East Forest Glen to the metro site due to problems crossing Georgia Avenue. There is also a general concern that the signage for the Forest Glen Metro is poor and that it is often difficult to decipher the two entrances (both Forest Glen Road and Coleridge Road entry points) and the fact that there is no mention of Holy Cross Hospital connections despite the metro being in close proximity to the hospital. Other residents also stated that there seems to be very little signage about the availability of a Holy Cross Hospital shuttle service.

Some residents stated that the limited parking suffered from a lack of a “full-light” signage indicating that there were no more available spaces at the parking lot. With Forest Glen Road being a state road, there was concern that it was harder to develop and maintain because of the interfacing requiring with the SHA (State Highway Administration). Some residents also think that the Forest Glen Medical Center property on the

East Forest Glen side of Georgia Avenue is under-utilized and could be tied in with the larger metro parking lot development and as an adjacent area ripe for development.

In terms of bus availability, there are concerns that the Forest Glen parking lot does not utilize the bus bay since the feeder buses seem to be limited in their routes. The bus routes that are currently available are viewed as weak and limited as viable and consistent transportation options.

Finally, many residents think that Forest Glen as a whole lacks a sense of place and identity. Some residents feel that the area in general has too few amenities and doesn't seem to have – despite a rich history and strong sense of community -- an appropriate or well established sense of “brand.”

Opportunities

Generally, residents are optimistic about the potential opportunities to redevelop the Forest Glen parking lot. Regarding location, some residents think that the commercial development in the relatively large 8-acre parking lot could be supported by both East and West Forest Glen – *especially* if pedestrian access was improved across Georgia Avenue. Many residents emphasized that significant redevelopment could also occur at the Forest Glen Medical Center (Forest Glen East) and entire communities adjoining both sides would patronize such development. Due to the relative lack of commercial/retail space and the overall safe nature of the neighborhood, residents believe that the area is long-overdue for some kind of mixed-use development.

The ability to fix any safety issues and improve pedestrian access on Forest Glen Road and Georgia Ave. were both high on everyone's priority list. The development of an additional metro entrance/access point on the Eastern Forest Glen side of Georgia Avenue (in the vicinity of to the

Forest Glen Medical Center) is also high priority because some residents think that this will connect the entire East Forest Glen with mass transit. Additionally, many residents think that any redevelopment could connect the site to other trails, parks and other access points such as the Americana Finmark complex, in a way that was not possible before.

By adding bike share racks and including bike lanes on Forest Glen Road, the new development could be a catalyst for a new type of transportation and access that is currently lacking. Many residents view any new development as an “oasis” for the community where commercial/retail space support the needs of the community as well some form of open green space that could bring all of Forest Glen together.

In terms of retail, the residents overwhelmingly support the idea of a coffee shop as a wonderful family gathering retail space as well as other family friendly restaurants, cafes and other neighborhood based retail such as grocers and other basic services.

Threats

Many residents expressed that any redevelopment needs to be done in a way that will not compromise the overall neighborhood. Specifically, there are concerns that traffic could get worse if the development doesn't serve both the current level of vehicle traffic for those who must drive to Forest Glen as well as increased pedestrian access. In conjunction with this idea, many residents are concerned about pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle safety.

For metro-users who drive and park in the parking lot, residents are worried that their parking spaces will be displaced by any new development. Residents are also concerned that any new development will

unnecessarily replicate the existing commercial/retail areas in Montgomery Hills and that this will not help an overall goal of complementary services and economic ties to both areas. Additionally, there are concerns of construction disruption and that without community oversight; developers could erect structures that are neither aesthetically pleasing nor reflective of the community's overall desires.

Additional Questions

In addition to the SWOT analysis portion, community members were asked additional questions about the possibility of redevelopment.

What kind of activities happen here?

Many residents express a strong interest in making a coffee shop or café in conjunction with a corner store or grocer as the centerpiece for retail at Forest Glen. A commercial presence that reflects the needs of the neighborhood is a constant point of emphasis. Residents also think that open green space with some kind of community center and park will serve the needs of the neighborhood. Additionally, residents are nearly unanimous in their belief that an improved network of sidewalks along with safe and easy parking for vehicles and bikes must come with any redevelopment plans.

What should it look like?

Residents think that any new development should feel architecturally connected to the rest of the neighborhood. Specifically, residents envision a gathering place where families can enjoy the space with the possibility of a fountain for summer activities as implemented in downtown Silver Spring. Other residents emphasize that any parking garage erected on the

site should be hidden architecturally and should include connection to the metro via bicycle and better pedestrian access. Some residents think that some kind of architectural theme inspired by the National Park Seminary should be included in any new development so that the new space fits the general character of the neighborhood. Like other recent mix-used developments, residents speculate that a space for food trucks, community art and a general space for the community to gather and engage in community activities like farmer's markets and other community based events could be welcomed additions if considered as part of any redevelopment planning.

Who would use this place?

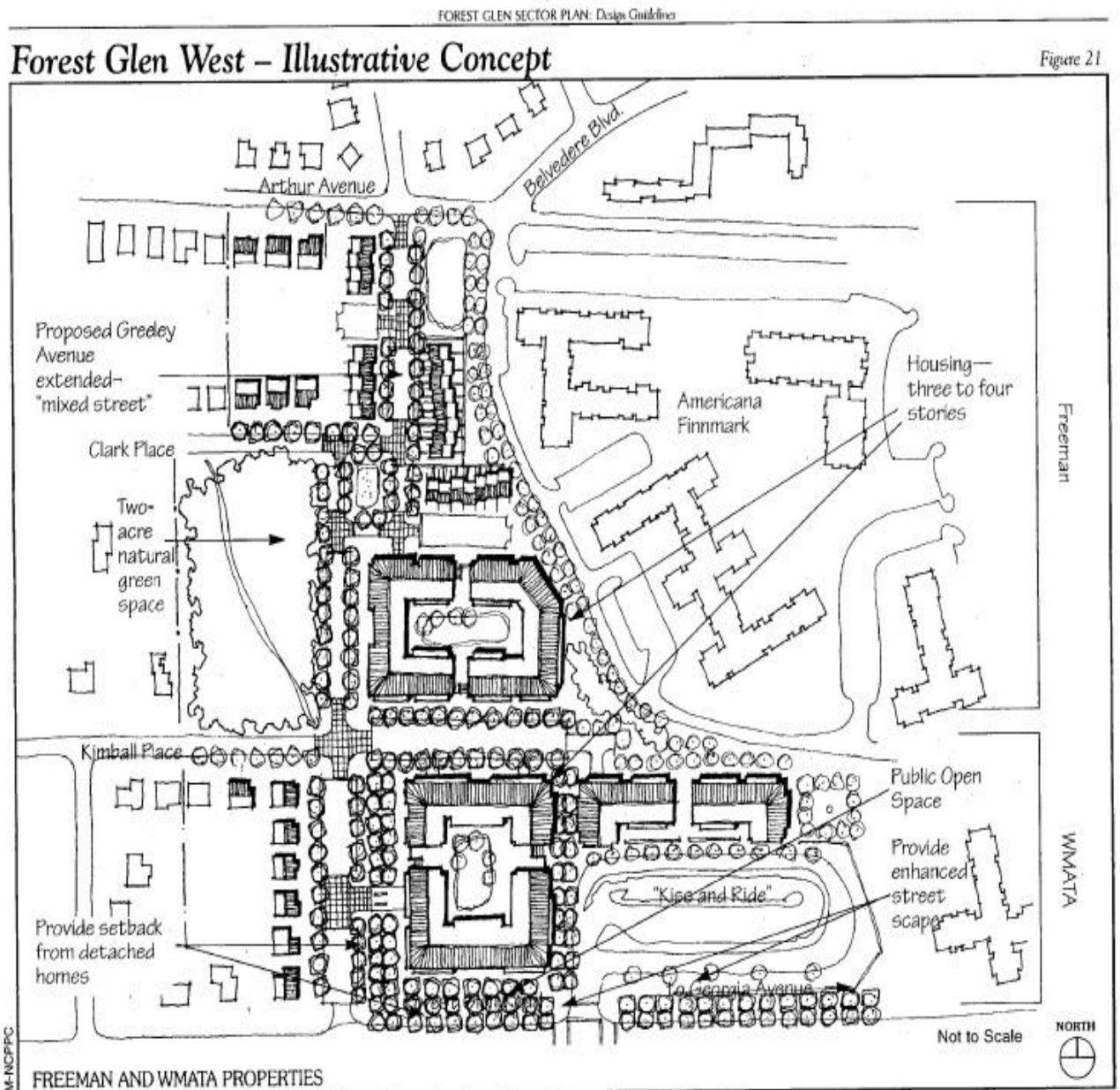
Residents overwhelmingly believe that any retail or commercial space should serve the needs of the community and/or be supported by any metro riders. Generally, residents are not interested in substantially increasing any residential footprint at the Forest Glen Parking Lot but are not opposed to some light residential development.

Forest Glen Sector Plan Principles

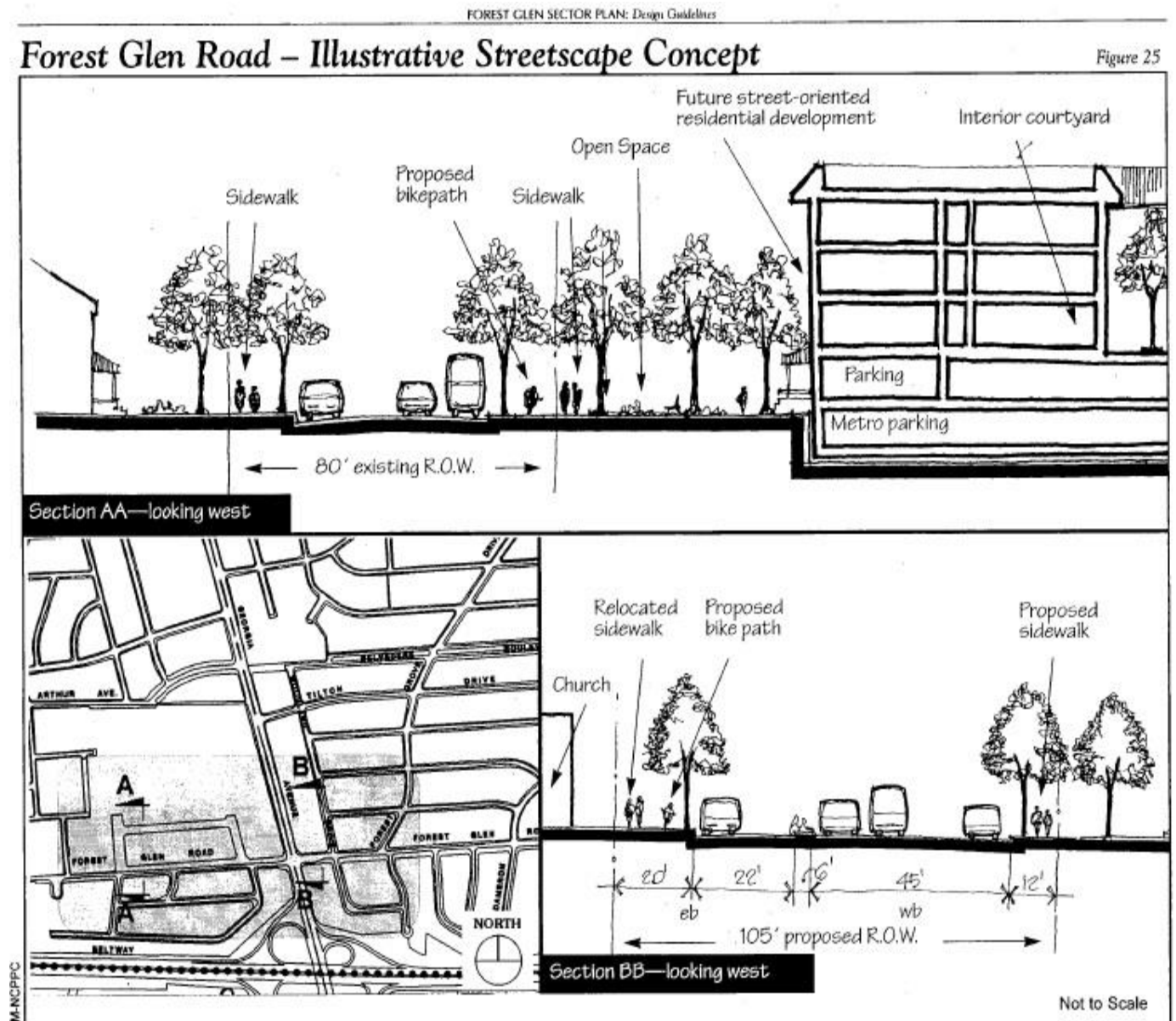
During various in-person and online engagements, many residents focused on previously planned concepts as outlined in the Forest Glen Sector Plan. The Forest Glen Sector Plan (approved and adopted in 1996), provides for certain guidelines for any new development at the Forest Glen Station. Specifically, the Design Guidelines section specifies criteria for ideal future development at the WMATA site and surrounding areas. The following are relevant portions of the Sector Plan in regards to any new development:

- New development along Forest Glen Road should be orientated towards the street to enliven the street and provide safety. The following elements would be appropriate to encourage street activity: residential buildings with multiple street entrances and front porches and community uses that provide opportunities to meet.
- A central open space should be provided at the Metrorail station if the WMATA property redevelops.
- A public open space should be provided along the north side of Forest Glen road as part of any WMATA air rights development.
- This open space should be designed to provide opportunities for community gathering, passive recreation, and some play activities for children. Attractive landscaping should be provided to promote interest and comfort.

Forest Glen Parking Lot Development Concept (Forest Glen Sector Plan - 1996)



Forest Glen Road Streetscape Concept with Parking Redevelopment (Forest Glen Sector Plan – 1996)



Redevelopment Renderings

Based on community engagement data, the following renderings are conceptual illustrations that show what the redevelopment could potentially look like. These concepts are in no way definitive in nature and only represent the creative process. The community as a whole stressed that any development at the station should reflect the following:

- Open, usable green space
- Light neighborhood serving retail
- Better pedestrian, bicycle, car access

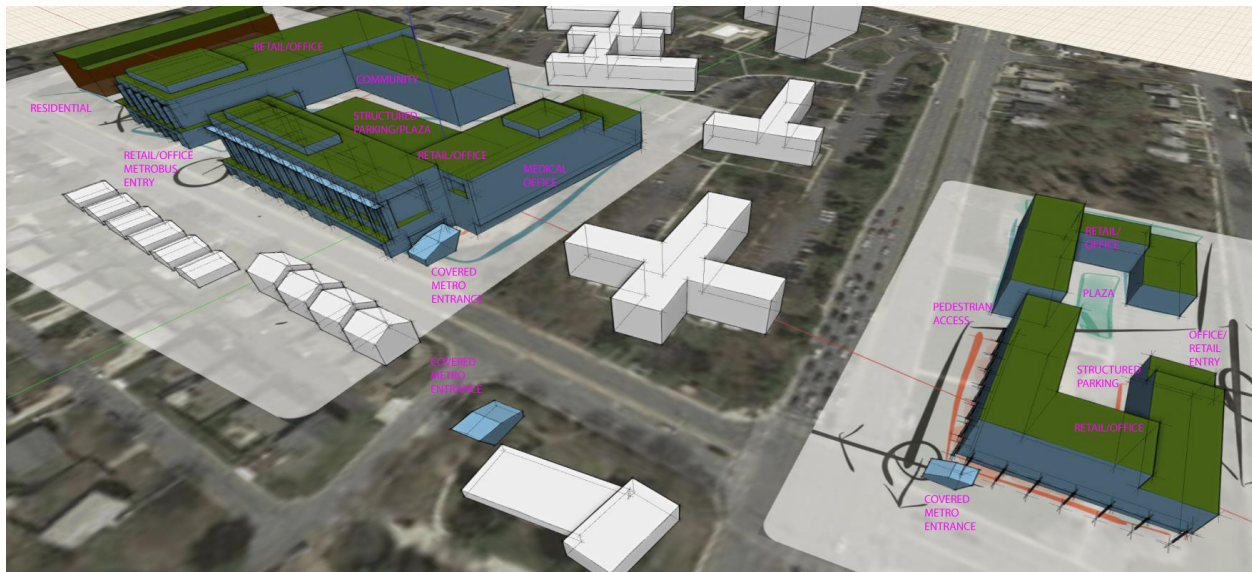
CONCEPT 1 (Bell Architects)

Concept 1 shows redevelopment at the Forest Glen metro parking lot as well as the Forest Glen Medical Center. At the parking lot is a mixed-use development that includes light residential (townhomes or apartments/condominiums) on the Darcy Forest Dr side. As a mixed-use development, this concept envisions a 4-5 story retail/office space facing Forest Glen Road with retail, commercial and community space surrounding a green open space “quad” in the middle of the development and a large green roof. Below the open space as well as the residential area is a parking garage that is hidden below grade. The Forest Glen road entrance is also omitted and a new entrance is added off of Woodland Drive. Above the below ground dedicated commuter parking garage is a public park resting between the condos/apartments and the mixed use building.

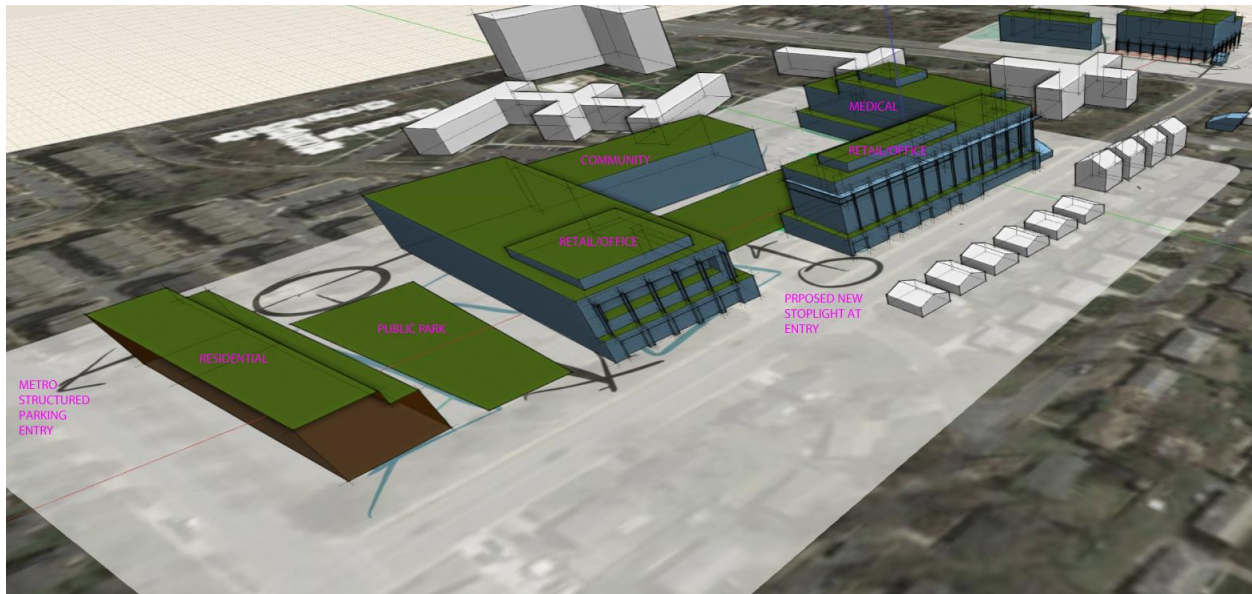
On the Forest Glen East side, the Forest Glen Medical Center is reimagined with better pedestrian access, a secondary metro entrance via elevators to the mezzanine level and a large central plaza area with a hidden

structured parking below grade. **Please note that this concept does not reflect accurate building heights since areas near existing residences would generally be lower.**

Concept 1 (Bird's Eye View)



Concept 1 (West View)



Concept 1 (Forest Glen Rd View at Georgia Ave)

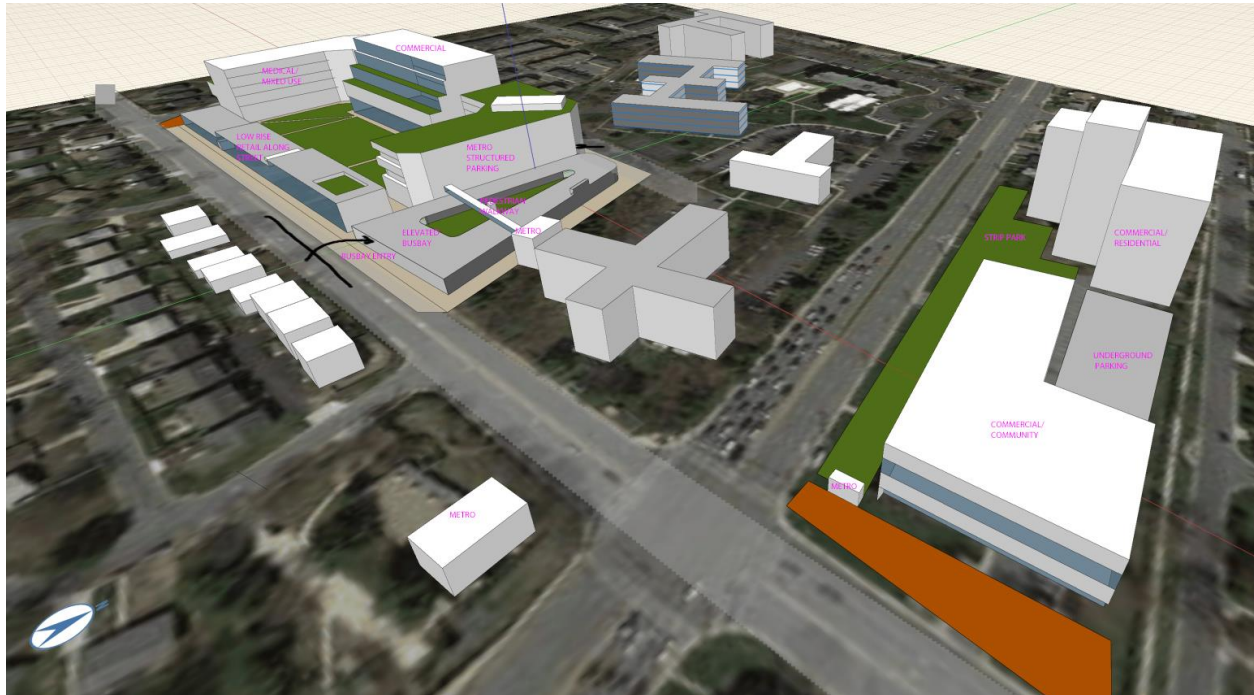


Concept 2 (Bell Architects)

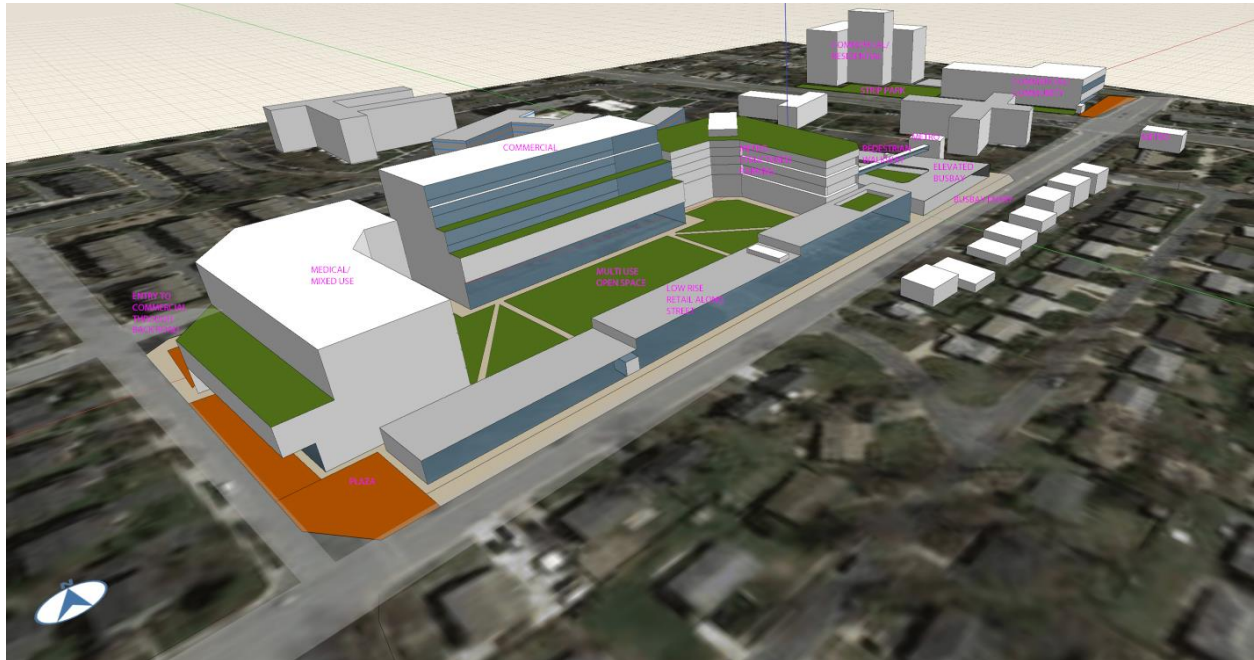
Concept 2 is a multi-layered development that includes general metro functions as well as residential, retail and commercial space in the form of medical offices. Specifically, this rendering includes low-rise retail space along Forest Glen Rd with taller commercial and medical space towards the north-side of the development. An elevated bus bay and pedestrian bridge connects to the structured parking garage while a green plaza and green roofs break up the development space. Additionally, this rendering shows Kimball place as a road extension behind the development as it curves over to the parking garage.

On the Forest Glen east side, the Forest Glen Medical Center is reimaged with a large strip park alongside Georgia Ave flanked by a multi-story commercial/residential building and an underground parking garage as well as a metro elevator access. In this rendering, the Forest Glen road entrance is also omitted and a new entrance is added off of Woodland Drive. **Please note that this concept does not reflect accurate building heights since areas near existing residences would generally be lower.**

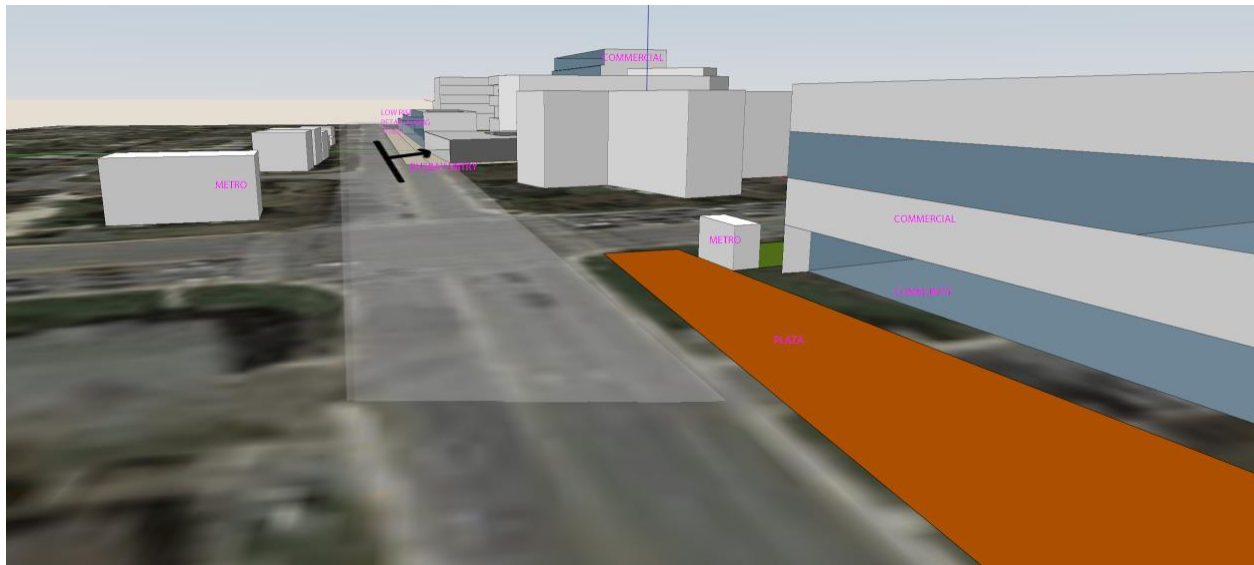
Concept 2 (Bird's Eye View)



Concept 2 (Forest Glen Rd West View)



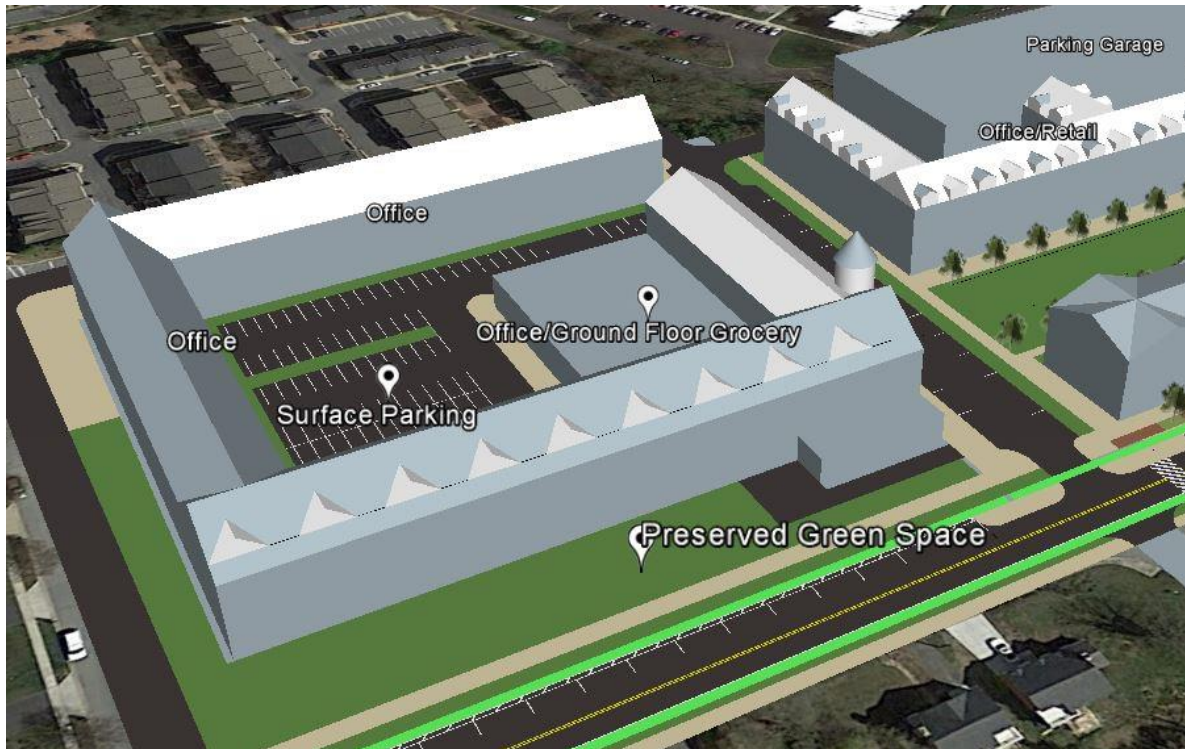
Concept 2 (Forest Glen Rd. and Georgia Ave View)

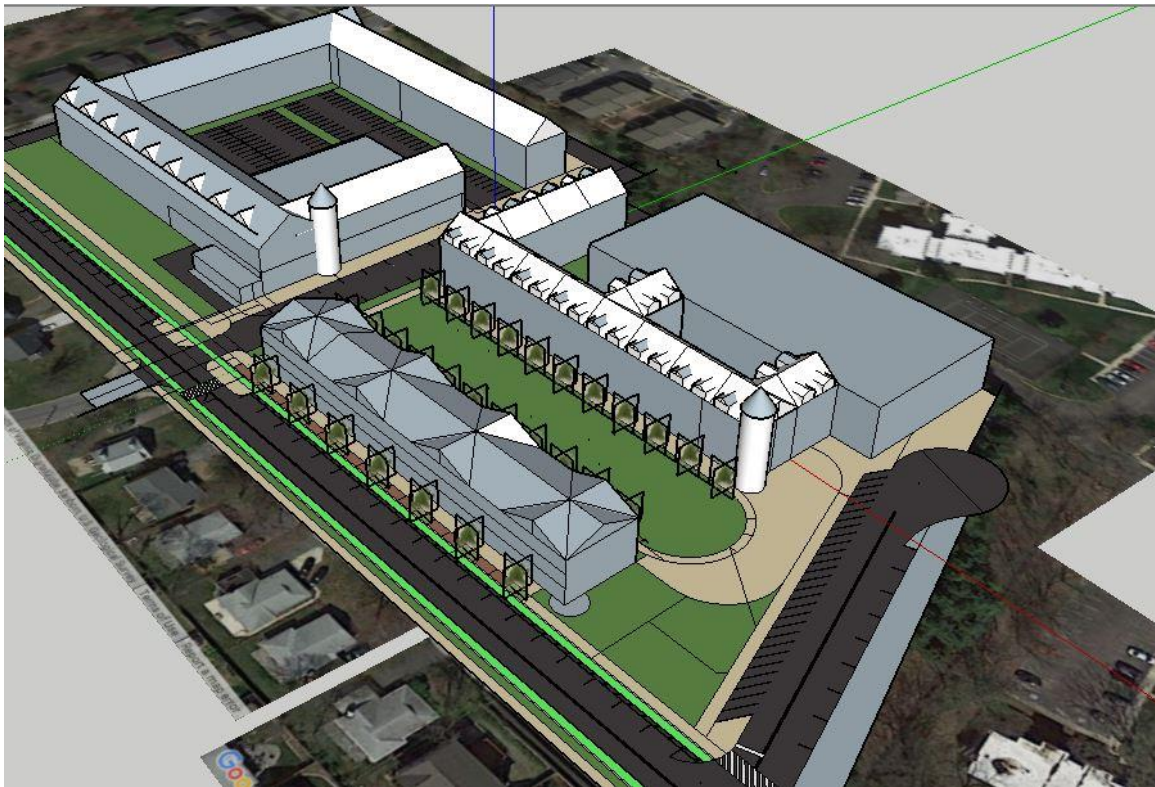


Concept 3 (Sean Emerson)

Concept 3 is inspired by the architecture of National Park Seminary and is envisioned as a green campus with metro functions as well as residential, commercial and retail space. In this rendering, the existing Kiss & Ride area is replaced with a green open space between two midrise office/ground floor retail buildings. The new Kiss & Ride is a "deck-over" of the easternmost part of the dug-in part of the bus loop/sidewalk approaching the station. The Kiss & Ride is accessed directly from Forest Glen Road and is about 16-20 ft. higher than the green/ground floor building level, with access down to the portal/green level is via steps and ADA ramps.

In this concept, commuters exiting the station are greeted by the green open space and the two buildings flanking it, rather than a parking lot. Behind the northern office building is a 5- story parking garage to replace the lost surface parking. The garage is largely "wrapped" by the building for aesthetics and efficient site use. The garage is also accessed from the end of Kimball Place.







Conclusion

The Forest Glen redevelopment report is an effort to represent the general Forest Glen community with the ambition to help shape community orientated development at the parking lot site. It is the goal of this report to start the conversation on how this site should be developed as well as ensuring that any future development truly reflects the needs of the community and fits the overall character of the surrounding neighborhood. Community members in general are advocating for a space at the Forest Glen parking lot that meets the principles outlined in the Forest Glen Sector Plan as well as those ideas, values and attributes expressed at community engagement meetings and over social media. As WMATA moves forward with the redevelopment process, we hope this report be utilized as part of the planning and implementing process.

