
Drexel
UNIVERSITY

Chapter 2:
Vision

2.1 Context

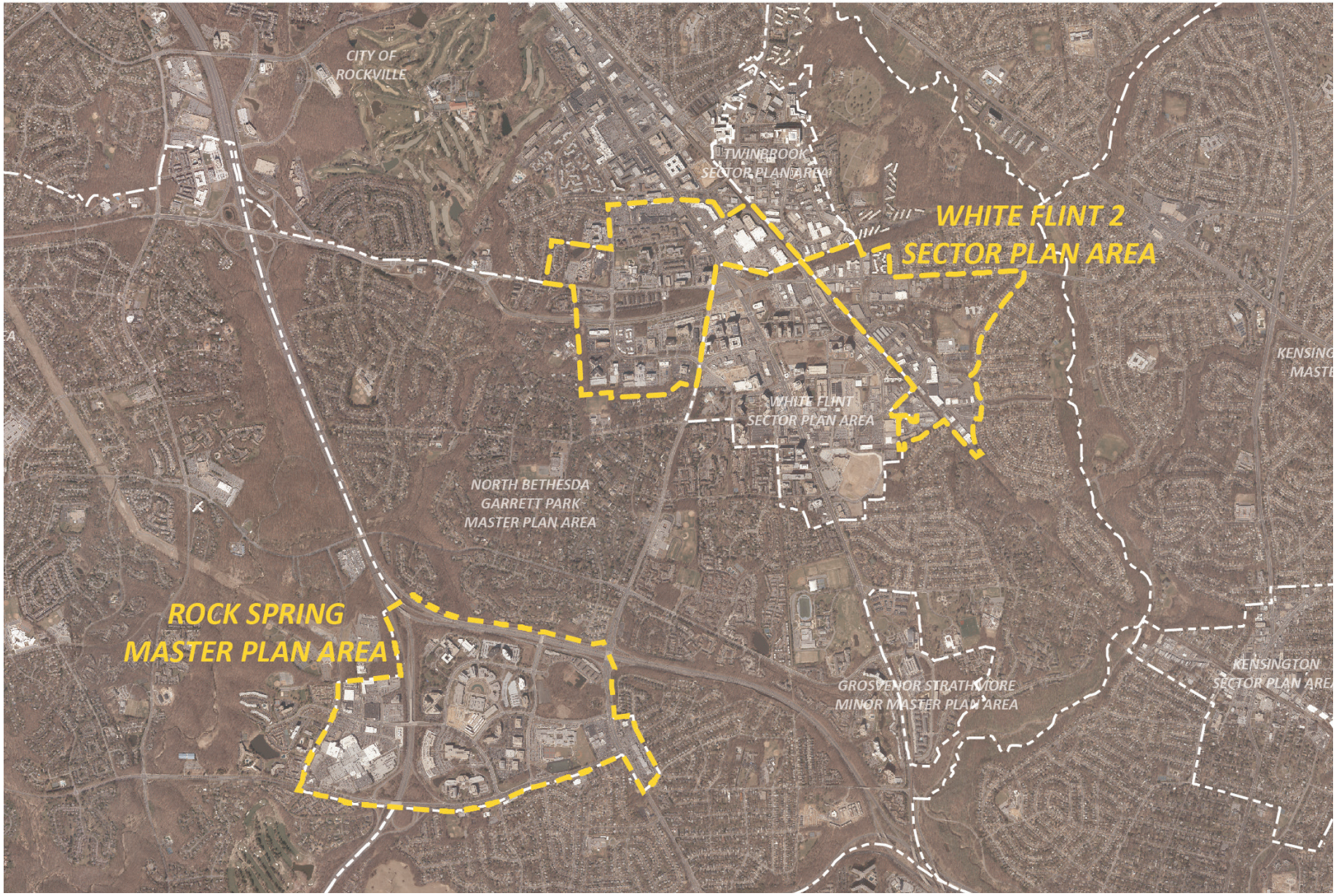
The Rock Spring and the White Flint 2 Sector Plan areas are just a mile-and-a-half apart, linked by Old Georgetown Road. Both plans were prepared concurrently by the Planning Department, partly due to the similar challenges faced in both plan areas, particularly high office vacancy rates. Both the Rock Spring and White Flint 2 areas have office buildings that are secluded uses, generally surrounded by parking lots and garages, and do not offer the type of retail or residential environments that have become essential for attracting new office tenants, residents and shoppers in today's marketplace.

Both plan areas feature arterial roads that are generously sized for automobile traffic, but lack adequate pedestrian and bike facilities, making destinations inaccessible by foot, bike and transit. Old commercial and light industrial uses scattered throughout the two plan areas are considered essential for supporting the surrounding communities, but their physical layout and operations often clash with the desire for attractive streetscapes and safe walking and biking environments. Growth pressures on both planning areas highlight issues of building compatibility and school capacity. Given these common challenges, the guidelines outline overarching design principles that apply to both plan areas. This overall guidance is provided in this chapter titled "Vision."

At the same time, the design guidelines recognize the importance of respecting the distinctive features of the two plan areas. Rock Spring's core is an office park with retail destinations at each end, while White Flint is a collection of neighborhoods, each with its own character. White Flint 2's office buildings are concentrated along a linear boulevard that serves the broader area-- Executive Boulevard and Jefferson Street between Old Georgetown Road and Montrose Parkway. In contrast, Rock Spring is a conventional, sequestered office park where some roads were built specifically to provide access only to the office buildings. White Flint 2 is located adjacent to two Metrorail stations, while Rock Spring is serviced primarily by bus and private vehicles.

To address these differences, the guidelines' recommendations for districts and key properties are more specific and context-sensitive, and separated into individual chapters for the two plan areas. Overarching design principles will have to be tailored to apply to specific districts and properties within each of the two plan areas.

Figure 2.1: Plan Areas Map



2.2 Urban Design Principles

The urban design principles outlined below reinforce the vision set forth in the Rock Spring and White Flint 2 Sector Plans to create interconnected communities that are livable, healthy, offer transportation choices and support growth with adequate infrastructure. These principles illustrate how innovative urban design solutions can integrate new development into existing communities while enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

Transformation

Promote the conversion of single-use areas into mixed-use places.

Both Plans establish a flexible zoning framework that allows the development of mixed-use projects throughout most of the plan areas. As sites are redeveloped within the two plan areas, single uses will give way to blended, compatible uses to create vibrant destinations. These guidelines provide recommendations as to the elements needed to create such successful mixed-use projects, ranging from the location of buildings to their façade designs and desirable public space features. Strategies for successful infill and adaptive reuse projects within existing office, retail and industrial properties are also discussed.

Mixed-use buildings create vibrant streets

Connectivity

Integrate mobility alternatives with a focus on pedestrian and bike connections to amenities and destinations.

Destinations within both plan areas are hard to reach by foot, transit or biking. Large, auto-dominated streets create unsafe and unattractive walking and biking environments. These conditions are impediments to achieving Vision Zero and the recommendations set forth in the two plans and the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan. Recommendations within these guidelines illustrate the desired layouts for streets, sidewalks, landscaping and building frontages that lead to a safe and attractive experience for all transportation modes. Within the streetscape guidance for each chapter, an illustrative cross section is provided for each street within the two plan areas. These sections were developed in consultation with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA).

Multi-modal streets encourage walking and biking

Human-Scale Design

Design buildings, public spaces and streets for pedestrian engagement and comfort.

The transformation envisioned in the two Plans requires a compelling change in the way buildings and public spaces look and function. Currently, certain office buildings within the two plan areas are large and monolithic and lack design features that provide pedestrian comfort at the street level. As a result, recommendations within these guidelines are focused on specific ground-floor components of buildings, such as entrances and other elements experienced by pedestrians, that must be designed sensitively to ensure the architecture relates

Places with human-scaled elements attract people

beautifully to people and the public realm. The recommendations in this document seek to create buildings that relate to the human scale and will be appreciated and maintained, regardless of use and market trends.

Innovative Schools

Encourage the design of new school prototypes that employ adaptive reuse, co-location and multi-level buildings.

Montgomery County is projected to experience continued growth in population, including within Rock Spring and White Flint 2. Both areas belong to one of the most coveted school clusters in the county. The sector plans for both areas identify the school infrastructure and physical planning strategies that Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) intends to deploy to ensure school capacity can keep up with the increasing student populations. within the two Plan areas. As outlined in the two Plans, analyzing every property for a potential school site is a requisite. However, the standard format sites historically used by MCPS for schools are extremely large and difficult to secure. The recommendations in this document highlight innovative school designs that create more compact building footprints through multi-level layouts and co-location with parks and recreation facilities. As part of the guidelines, case studies provide examples where vacant office buildings have been converted into schools. This conversion strategy could be considered as a particularly appropriate solution to relieve pressure on existing schools given the large number of vacant office buildings in the plan areas that are ripe for redevelopment.

Vibrant Public Spaces

Complement urban development with easily accessible and high-quality public and private parks, and open spaces.

Both Plans propose a system of parks and open spaces that will result in a combination of public and private facilities. The new open spaces should support vibrant and sustainable urban centers by including facilities that are comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, safe and provide a range of experiences, including festivals and outdoor events.

Sustainable Design

Apply sustainable design practices to protect natural resources and improve the health of residents in the plan areas.

Montgomery County is committed to environmental stewardship and awareness. Both Plans emphasize the importance of sustainable development practices. Goals outlined in the plans include protecting and improving water and air quality, minimizing impacts of sedimentation and erosion, minimizing noise levels and promoting energy efficiency. They aim to transform the current auto-centric environments in both areas that have resulted in degraded water quality, air pollution and heat island effects. Reducing the stress of development on the environment will increase the health of our communities as well as our natural resources. Following the goals outlined in these guidelines will contribute to increased physical activity, safer streets and improved mental health through access to nature and low stress transportation alternatives, such as walking and biking.

Innovative school types encourage learning through interaction in well designed spaces

Parks and open spaces with activities are inviting

Creative solutions to environmental site design can enhance the urban environment

2.2.1 Transformation

Goal: Promote infill and redevelopment of retail centers into mixed-use places with strong connections to surrounding communities.

- Utilize parking lots as development sites for added density and compatible uses.
- Establish a framework of streets and sidewalks that supports ground-floor retail and makes movement within and through the site more efficient.
- Create public open spaces that connect new and old development and anchor retail tenants by providing space for seating, outdoor programming and visibility from the surrounding streets.

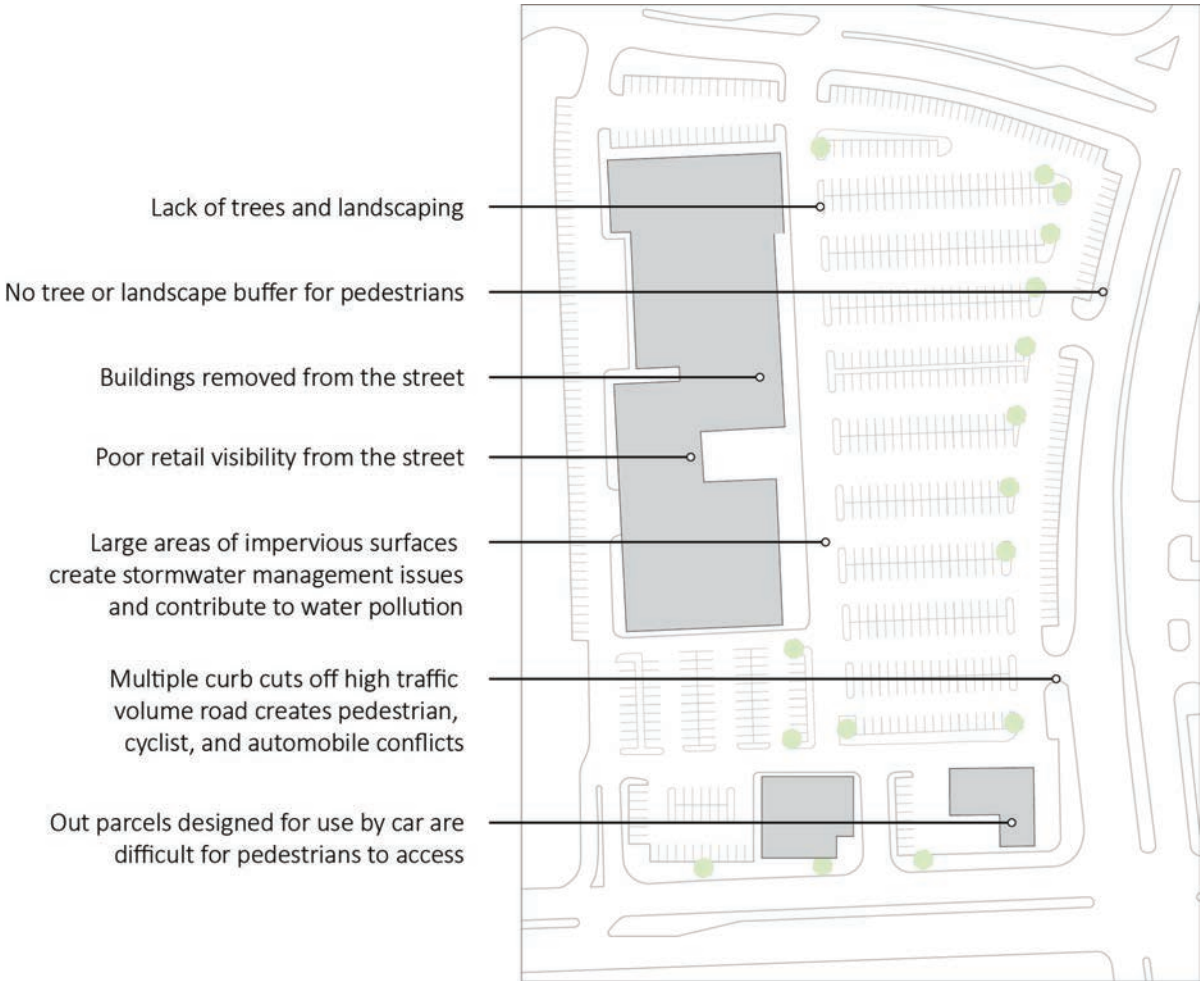


Figure 2.2: Diagram of existing conditions in a typical shopping center

Note: Diagrams are for illustrative purposes only. Actual site, building design and location of open spaces will be evaluated during the regulatory review process

Figure 2.3: Diagram of potential development in a typical shopping center
Diagram shows potential infill and partial redevelopemnt of a typical shopping center that creates a pedestrian friendly street network, welcoming open spaces and added density in urban buildings.
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Infill created new streets at the Belmar Shopping District in Lakewood, Colorado

Small attractions like this plaza can be inserted into residual spaces between existing buildings

Goal: Facilitate infill and adaptive reuse of office buildings and sites to introduce a mix of uses near existing office workers and activate such areas during evenings and weekends.

- Convert underperforming office buildings into residential or civic uses.
- Utilize shared parking strategies to reduce the amount of land dedicated to parking.
- Retain office buildings where feasible and integrate them into the overall block structure.
- Create public open spaces that connect existing buildings to the surrounding streets and new development.
- Locate new development at the edges of large blocks to create a walkable environment and screen parking and servicing areas from public view.

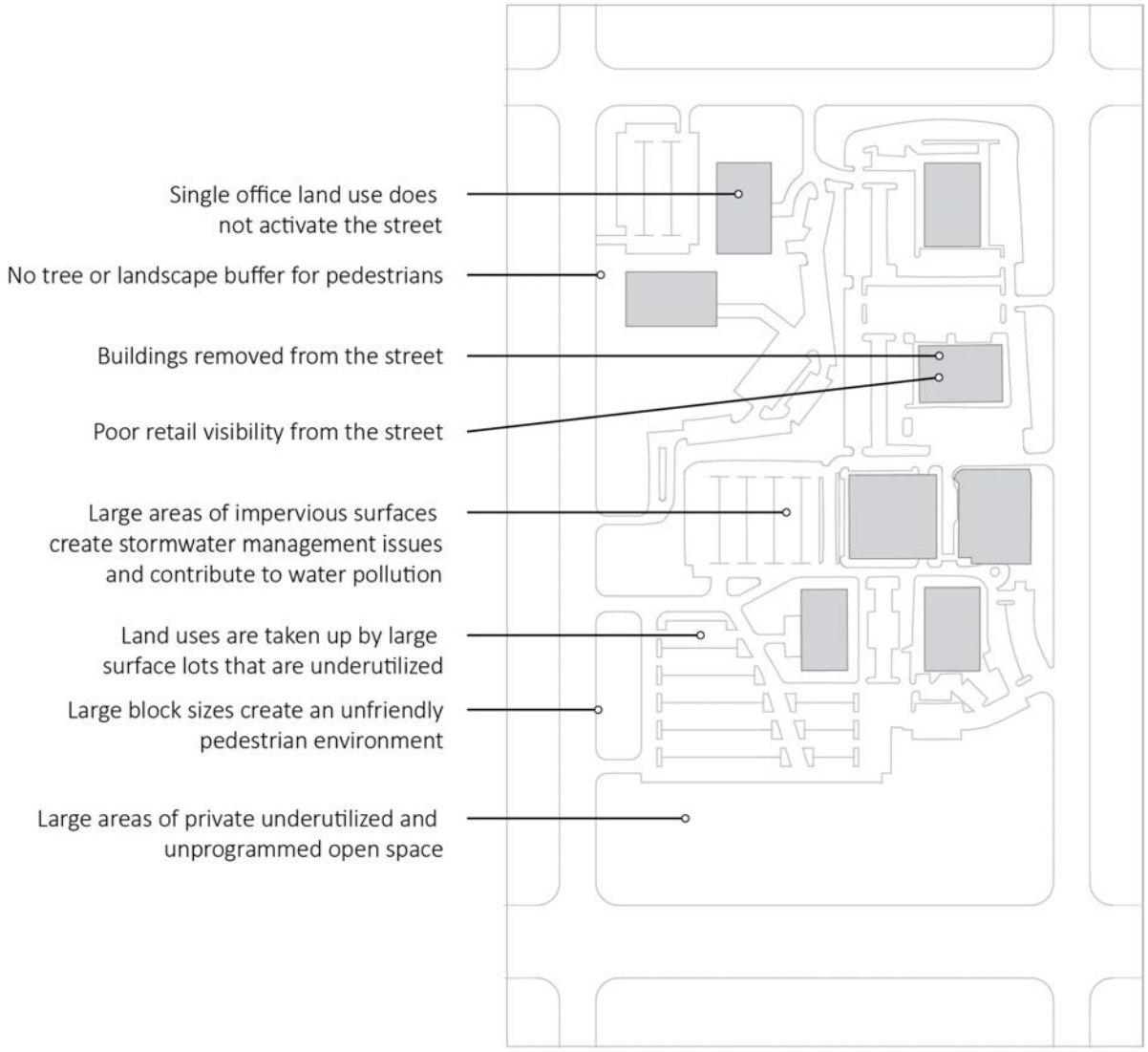

Figure 2.4: Diagram of existing conditions in a typical suburban office park

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Figure 2.5: Diagram of potential development in a typical suburban office park

Diagram shows potential infill, adaptive reuse, and partial redevelopement of a typical office park that creates smaller development blocks connected by a complete street network and varying open spaces.

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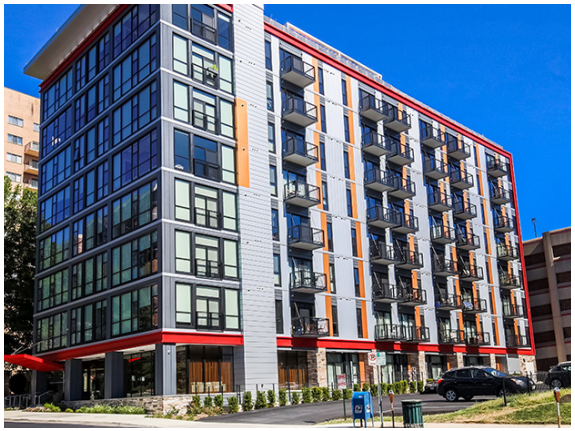
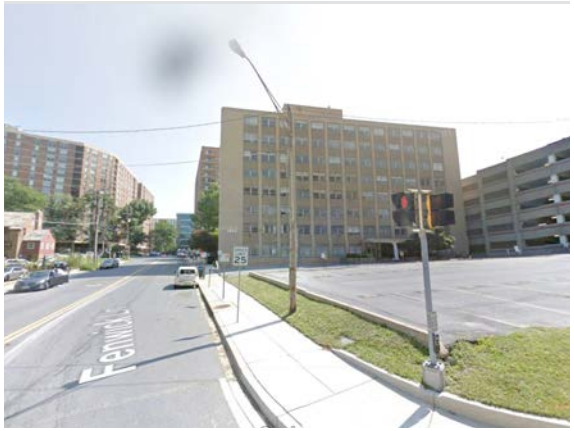


The Octave adaptively reused an office building with a narrow floor plate into residential condominiums in downtown Silver Spring

Legacy Town Center in Plano, Texas infilled large tracts of land with walkable, mixed used buildings



Octave Condominiums were a Class-B office building prior to conversion

Case Study: Octave Apartments

Silver Spring, MD

Transit-served locations, less parking and affordability in urban centers can drive recycling of offices into residences and other uses.

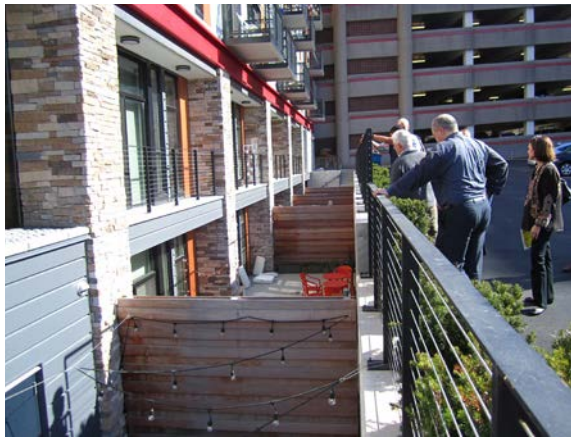
Octave, a 102- unit condominium building housed vacant offices and an eatery in its basement. The transformation of the 10-story building highlights important lessons for adaptive reuse projects within the two Plan areas:

Location is key: The most likely candidates for conversions continue to be in locations that are well served by transit and situated within a walkable framework of blocks and streets. Both Plan areas are implementing a framework that will provide these key ingredients.

Onsite parking is no longer a prerequisite: Parking today is less critical to development as boomers age out of driving and millennials forgo driver licenses altogether. Especially within transit-served areas, pulling the plug for on-site parking in lieu of shared parking or parking lot districts is a reasonable development strategy.

Building quirks can be assets: Adaptive reuse often presents conditions that can create more distinctive and attractive designs. The Octave features a "sky lounge" on the top floor that was formerly a boiler room for the office building. With 20-foot ceilings and unobstructed views, it was a unique selling point for the developer and has quickly become a central gathering space for residents. Similarly, on the basement level, a former service ramp has been converted into outdoor terraces for units are some of the most sought-after units in the building.

Home ownership options: In a market dominated by rental apartments, selling condos may seem counter-intuitive. But when Promark analyzed the Downtown Silver Spring market, the developer saw numerous rental apartments in the pipeline and no options for multifamily ownership. Promark also acknowledged that it could not compete with the standard 200-300 unit new rental buildings on the Octave's small site in terms of amenities and rates.



Loading docks converted into outdoor patios

The project contains ample bike storage but no car parking on site

Balconies extend living spaces outdoor

A former boiler plant was converted into a roof top amenity space

The building facade was reskinned and its scale broken down using balconies, bays, canopies and different architecutral materials

Goal: Promote development within industrial areas that retains critical neighborhood services and adds vitality to these properties through the addition of compatible uses and public realm and streetscape improvements.

- Consolidate curb cuts off high traffic roads and streamline vehicular movement through the sites.
- Introduce wayfinding, alternative paving surfaces and landscaping to clearly demarcate areas for walking through the sites.
- Use large parking lots for outdoor programming and events during off peak hours.
- Regularize and make parking layouts more efficient and use regained space for greening and stormwater management opportunities.
- Explore vertical stacking of compatible uses and utilize extra space for mixed-use infill development.
- Engage with local food, art and fitness businesses to host community events in residual spaces and parking lots.

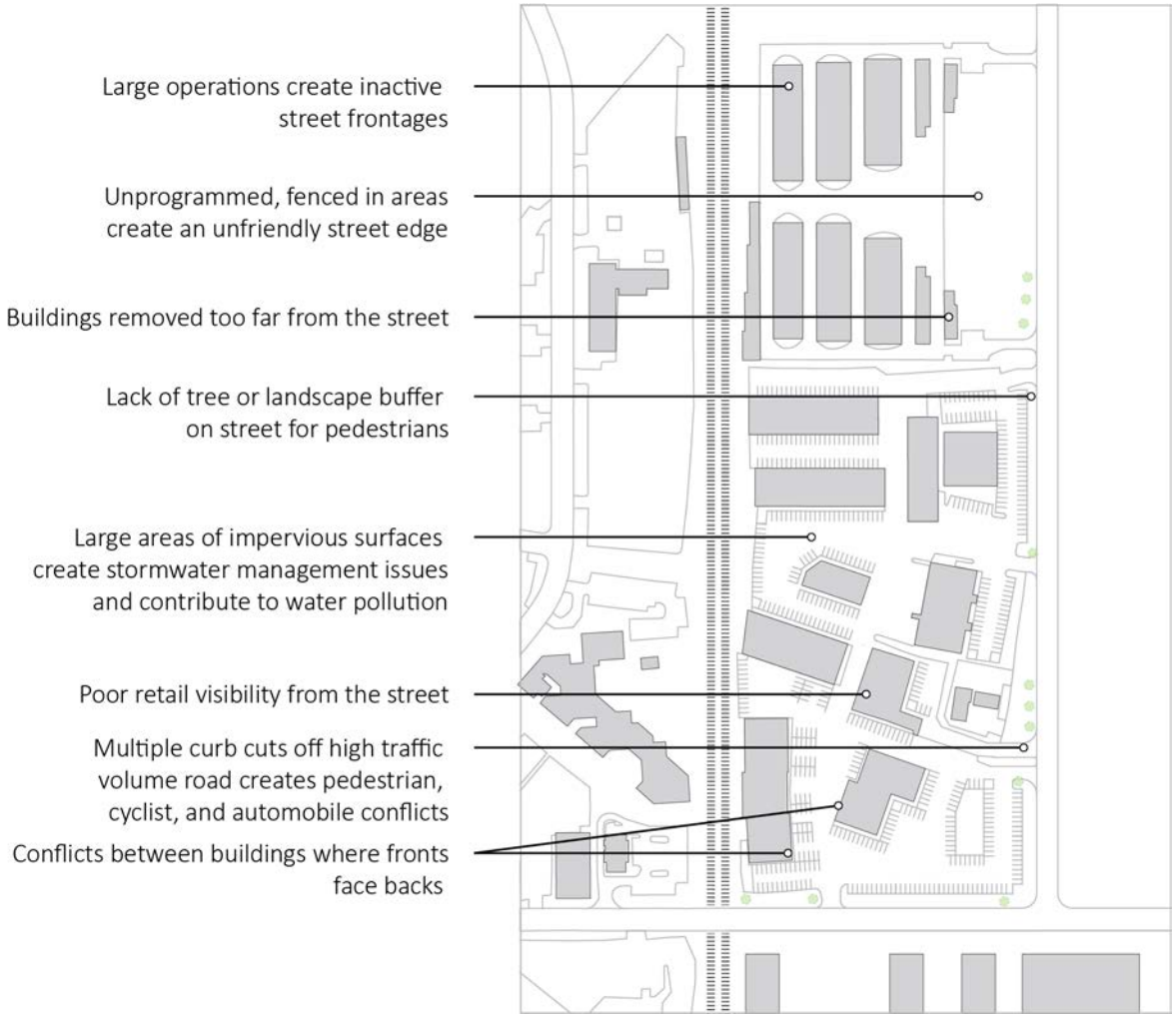


Figure 2.6: Diagram of existing conditions in a typical industrial area

Note: Diagrams are for illustrative purposes only. Actual site, building design and location of open spaces will be evaluated during the regulatory review process

Figure 2.7: Diagram of potential development in a typical industrial area

Diagram shows infill and streetscape strategies that retain industrial uses, improve circulation, enhance environmental performance, and adds new uses to a typical industrial site.

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Large parking lots can be used for community activities during evenings and weekends

Plantings in parking lots enhance environmental performance of industrial sites

Clearly demarcated walking zones within existing parking lots reduce conflicts between cars and pedestrians

2.2.2 Connectivity

Goal: Use infill and redevelopment opportunities to break up large properties into smaller blocks that are more walkable and create urban frontages.

- Subdivide large properties, especially those with surface parking lots, into a series of developable blocks with pedestrian-friendly frontages.
- Blocks longer than 600 feet are discouraged. If longer blocks are unavoidable, pedestrian and bike-friendly mid-block connections should be provided.
- Redevelopment and infill on large properties should evenly distribute amenities for pedestrians to provide frequent opportunities to rest and socialize.

Case Study: Mosaic District

Walkable mixed-use infill within a former movie theater site.

Mosaic District provides a great model for redeveloping single use sites with large surface parking lots into compact walkable blocks that can support mixed use development. Prior to its redevelopment, the area contained an auto repair shop, an industrial equipment rental business and a multiscreen movie theater. The transit adjacent location is bounded by Lee Highway and Gallows Road, two regional arterials. Its location and large tract size provided a great opportunity to redevelop the site into a 31-acre mixed-use district that has become a regional destination.

A key component of the mixed-use core is a network of pedestrian friendly streets. The original super block was almost 1500 feet long and was subdivided into a dozen smaller blocks. Parking is accommodated in lined parking structures tucked within perimeter blocks, that create a walkable streetscape with broad, tree-lined sidewalks, and outdoor seating. Typical block sizes for new blocks range from 200 to 500 feet in length. The building types constructed within these blocks are similar to the types being considered for development within the two Plan areas.

The site in 2002 contained a movie theater and light industrial uses surrounded by surface parking lots

Mosaic District today is a collection of compact blocks supporting mixed-use development

Pedestrian friendly streetscapes encourage walking

Public spaces of varying sizes cater to users of all ages, encouraging groups to stay longer

Townhouses provide an ideal transition to lower intensity neighboring uses

A central gathering green space anchors the development and is programmed frequently with community events

Goal: Create streetscapes that treat streets as places not just to move through but also to socialize and gather, especially for walkers, bikers and transit users.

- Allow sufficient setbacks from the curb for adequate curb zone, planting / furnishing zone, pedestrian zone and building frontage zone.
- Accommodate outdoor seating, awnings, signage and landscaping within the frontage zone along commercial ground-floor uses such as retail.
- Create privacy and a transition from the public realm through landscaping within the frontage zone next to the ground floors of residential buildings. Incorporate

A successful street frontage along commercial uses

Good streetscapes provide plenty of seating opportunities

Trees provide shade, pedestrian comfort and buffer from traffic

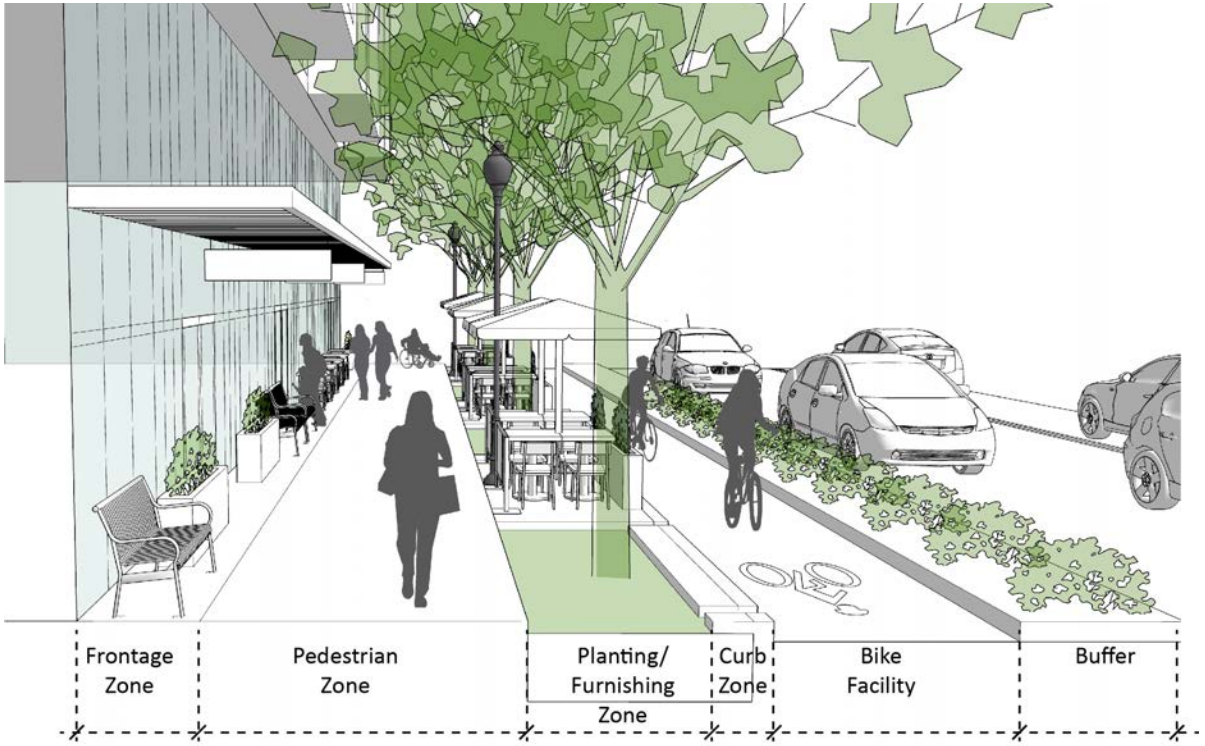

Diagram showing the various zones within a typical sidewalk

Note: Diagrams are for illustrative purposes only. Actual site, building design and location of open spaces will be evaluated during the regulatory review process

recommendations from the Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan into the design of streets throughout the two plan areas.

- Work with staff from Montgomery Planning, Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Maryland State Highway Administration to implement recommendations from the Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan during the regulatory review process. See chapters on streetscape recommendations for recommended street sections for the various streets within the two plan areas.
- Design and build private streets to accommodate the same level of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as adjoining public streets, at a minimum.

A shared use path can serve both pedestrians and cyclists where separate facilities are not feasible

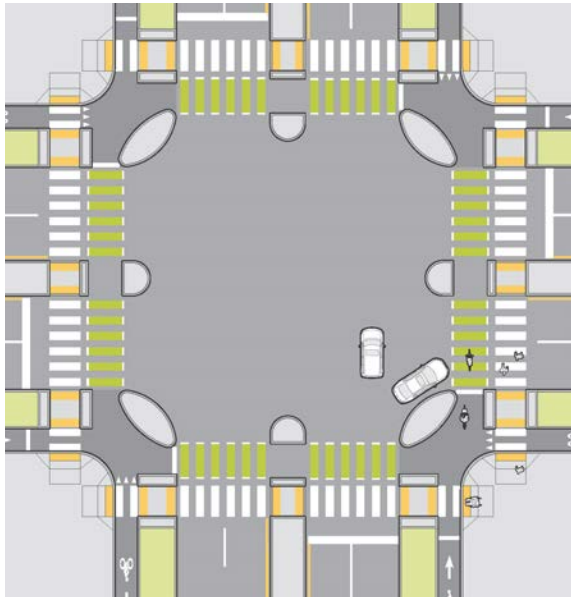

Diagram showing a protected intersection that allows smooth traffic flow while protecting cyclists and pedestrians
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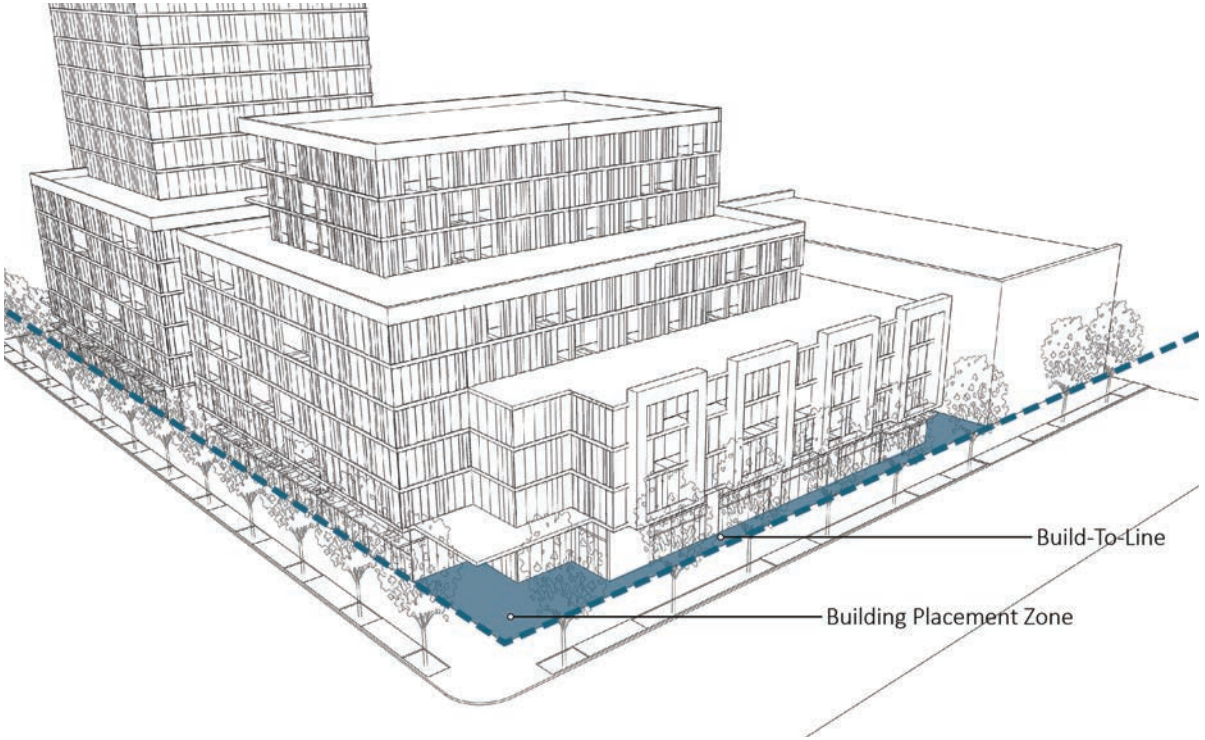
A separated bike lane buffered by landscape provides a safe and efficient route for cyclists

2.2.3 Human-Scale Design

Building Placement

Goal: Locate buildings to frame streets and open space and create comfortable “rooms” for pedestrians.

- Place the base of buildings along the edges of streets, parks and open spaces to enclose and define the public realm.
- Locate the façade of the building base within the build-to-area or along the build-to-line.
- Provide greater building setbacks, where appropriate, to improve pedestrian amenities, including more space for tree planting, sidewalks, forecourt plazas and other publicly accessible open spaces.



Building Placement Diagram

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Building facade lining a public open space

Building base provides a continuous frontage along the street

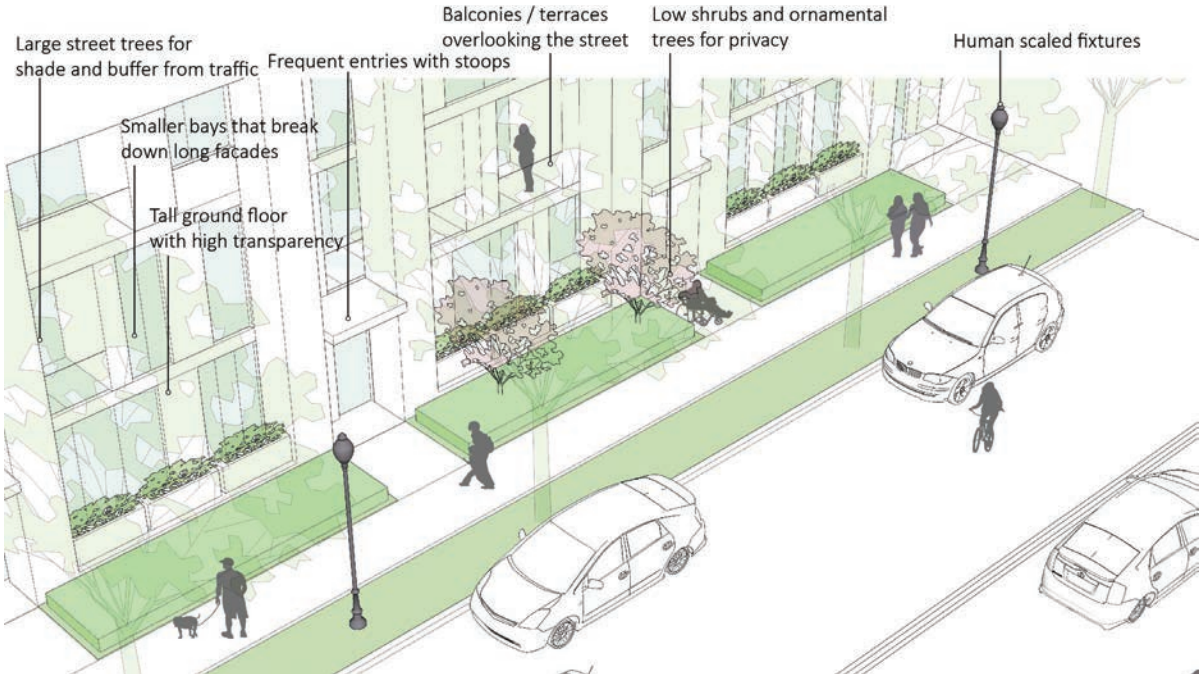
Greater setback creates a forecourt plaza and connection to green space

Street Activation

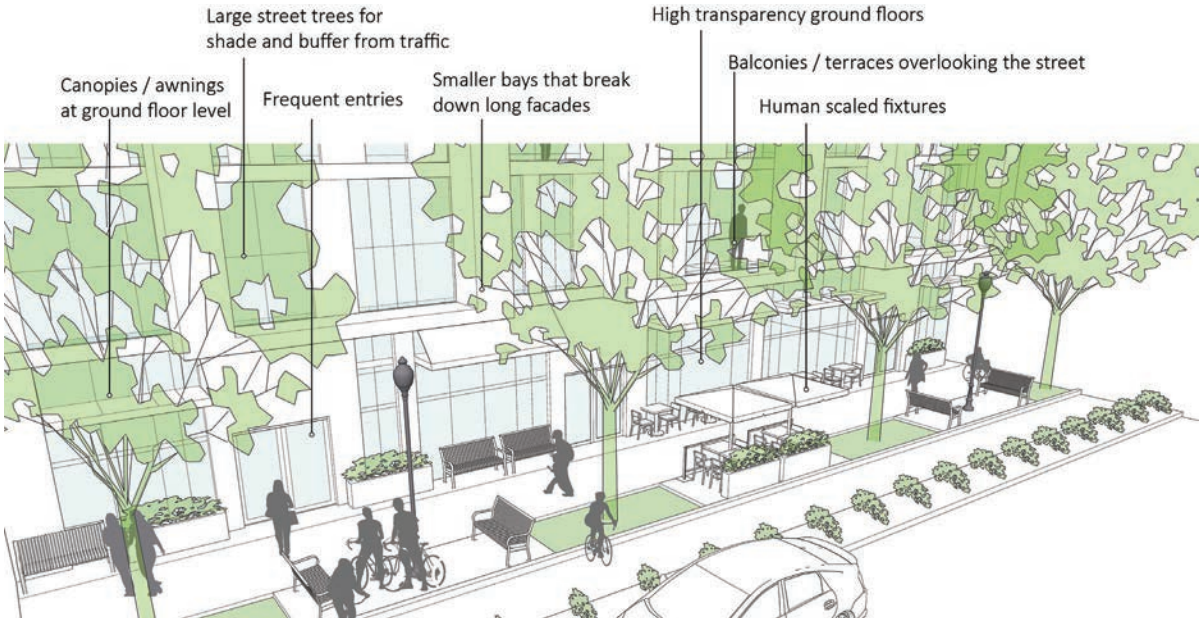
Goal: Provide ground floor and base design elements that engage with the sidewalk and street environment.

- Provide frequent entries, transparency and operable storefronts where possible to encourage visual and physical connections between a building's ground floor and public sidewalk. Avoid long blank walls along the sidewalk.
- Orient private balconies and terraces toward the street to encourage an interface between the private and public realms, and provide eyes on the street.
- Include elements such as public art, awnings, signage, plantings and seating to create a visually engaging and inviting ground floor to frame the sidewalks and open spaces.

Ground floor retail that opens on to the sidewalk



Residential ground floor activation diagram



Commercial ground floor activation diagram

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Corner Treatments

Goal: Anchor street intersections with a continuous building wall and striking design features.

- Provide signature design elements on prominent corners or intersections that will establish a distinctive identity for the plan areas. Prominent locations include sites adjacent to open spaces and sites that terminate view corridors within the two plan areas.
- The full height of tall buildings may be expressed at corners as a way to provide emphasis and variation along the building's facades.
- Consider placing retail, when feasible, and other activating uses, such as entrance lobbies, at prominent / visible locations.

Full height of tower expressed at key corner

A rounded archtectural treatment at the corner

Corner expressed through tower element with unique geometry

Corner emphasized by a taller entry portal into the building

Building Bulk

Goal: Design the massing of buildings in a way that reduces the perceived bulk of buildings, limits shadows cast onto the public realm and improves the quality of the indoor environment.

Buildings within the Rock Spring and White Flint 2 areas should be designed to avoid blank facades, bulky massing and proportions that do not respond to the human scale. Recommendations in these guidelines for achieving well designed buildings are organized according to building typology. They seek to create pedestrian-friendly, ground-floor experiences, allow access to light and air, contribute to a safe and vibrant public realm and celebrate architectural diversity. These recommendations apply to both new construction and adaptive reuse projects, with an understanding that the latter may encounter unique constraints that make achieving some of the goals difficult. However, the intent of these recommendations as outlined above should be addressed for all projects within the two plan areas.

Uniform application of materials across the facade

A. Townhouse Scale Development (3-4 stories tall)

- Provide human scaled entryways and ground-floor windows that line sidewalks and open spaces.
- Project bays and balconies on the façade that are either grounded or supported by robust architectural elements.
- Establish a clear and strong cornice at the roofline that expresses continuity across attached units.
- Keep roof forms simple and provide dormers and roof decks when compatible with the architectural vocabulary.
- Apply materials across the façade that reflect the underlying structure of the building. Avoid a haphazard application of different materials as purely surface treatments.

Bays and balconies articulate the facade of a string of townhouses

B. Low-Rise Development (5-7 stories tall)

- Provide tall ground floors with active uses and generous lobbies lining sidewalks and open spaces.
- Extend canopies and awnings over individual entryways to distinguish ground-floor residential units, businesses and amenities.
- Break down the scale of large facades with architectural elements like bays, balconies and façade projections.
- Animate the roofline with varying heights, significant vertical elements and roof canopies as well as façade projections.
- Apply materials across the façade to reflect the underlying structure of the building. Avoid a haphazard application of different materials as purely surface treatments.

Tall ground floor expression and active uses on the ground floor create an inviting street frontage

Large facades are broken down using elements such as bays, balconies and terraces

C. Mid Rise Development (8-12 stories tall)

- Incorporate active uses into tall ground floors with generous lobbies lining sidewalks and open spaces.
- Distinguish entryways to ground-floor residential units, businesses and amenities with canopies and awnings.
- Create a clear base, middle and top for the building. The base or podium should have a height of three to six stories with details that respond to the human scale.
- Break down the overall mass into distinct pieces and avoid large, contiguous floor slabs.
- Break down the scale of large facades with architectural elements like bays, balconies and facade projections.
- Animate the roof line with varying heights, significant vertical elements and roof canopies as well as façade projections.
- Express corners as slender tower-like elements topped with iconic roof forms.
- Apply materials across the façade that reflect the underlying structure of the building. Avoid a haphazard application of different materials as purely surface treatments.

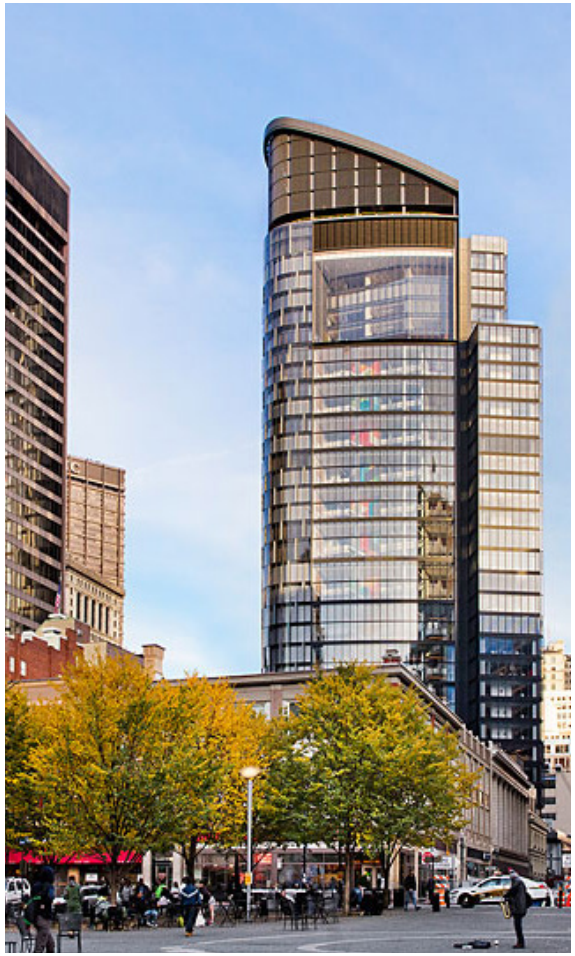
Building with a clear base, middle and top section capped by an expressive roof canopy

Clearly expressed low rise podium with human-scaled design elements

D. High Rise Development (greater than 12 stories tall)

- Provide tall ground floors with active uses and generous lobbies lining sidewalks and open spaces.
- Extend canopies and awnings over entrances to distinguish ground-floor residential units, businesses and amenities.
- Create a clear base, middle and top for the buildings. The base or podium should have a height of three to six stories with details that respond to the human scale.
- Limit tower floor plates to a reasonable size and keep their proportions slender so they don't overwhelm nearby structures.
- Break down the scale of large facades with architectural elements like bays, balconies and facade projections.
- Sculpt building tops into expressive shapes that enhance the area's skyline and create gateways at key intersections.
- Apply materials across the façade that reflect the underlying structure of the building. Avoid a haphazard application of different materials as purely surface treatments.

Tower floor plate is divided into distinct masses with slender proportions



Rooftop utliites are screened using an aesthetically pleasing building top

Building Compatibility

Goal: Ensure that new buildings respond to and strengthen the character of existing districts within the two plan areas.

- Step down buildings to create a smooth transition in scale to existing structures. Follow compatibility requirements per the Zoning Ordinance where applicable.
- Draw on architectural vocabularies that express compatibility with buildings in the surrounding area in terms of scale, elements, materials and articulation strategies.
- Celebrate local culture and heritage through public art and signage.

Building mass reduces in scale to create a pedestrian scaled mid-block connection

Building steps down to meet the scale of adjacent properties

Utilities, Servicing and Parking

Goal: Loading, servicing and parking should be designed to minimize conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists while reducing the visual impacts of vehicle access and parking on the public realm. Site design should prioritize public sidewalks and bikeways over private vehicular driveways.

- Provide a continuous, level and clearly delineated pedestrian through zone across driveways to encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians. Apply the same materials, across these vehicle access points as the adjoining sidewalks.
- Locate loading and servicing at the rear and within the interior of a building, whenever possible. Service alleys are recommended to access these areas.
- Minimize the width and height of driveways and vehicular entrances. Where possible, combine loading dock and garage access and coordinate with adjacent and confronting properties.
- Screen vehicle and servicing access areas and trash storage with landscaping or other vertical elements, and design vehicle access doors to incorporate high-quality materials and finishes that are consistent with the rest of the building.
- Avoid placing entries to loading docks, service areas and parking garages on neighborhood residential streets or a public open space when alternative access is feasible.
- Provide queuing spaces for pick-up and drop-off where feasible to reduce idling in the travel lanes.
- Ensure continuous tree canopy along service areas and lay-by areas to the greatest extent feasible.
- Locate parking lots at the back of the building, with the frontage left uninterrupted along the primary streets and sidewalks.

Loading dock with quality architectural treatment

Designated spaces along streets for drop-off

- For interim lots, design the parking to provide flexibility for temporary events, such as pop-up events and public gatherings, to maintain an active street edge.
- Design structured parking floors to be flexible for future retrofit to other uses where possible.
- Line structured parking with retail or other uses to maintain an active building edge.

Temporary festival in an existing parking lot

Parking lots with landscaping and shading structures can accomodate other temporary uses like farmers' markets

- Where active uses are infeasible, screen parking floors through architectural treatments that are composed as a part of the larger building facades. It is recommended that screening utilize building materials similar to the rest of the architecture and be placed away from prominent corners and high visibility streets.
- Where garage screens are unavoidable, they may be designed as a public art element to enliven the parking garage façade.
- Garage entries may be highlighted through the use of artistic elements.

Residential liner screens a parking garage along the street

Parking is screened in select locations to minimize exposure

Parking garage with multiple artistic screening elements that break down its large scale

Building with a completely lined parking garage

Parking garage with ground floor liner and a well composed architectural facade with shading and solar panels

Parking garage entrance highlighted through the use of public art elements

2.2.4 Innovative Schools

Goal: Encourage the use of new school prototypes that employ adaptive reuse, colocation and multi-level compact designs for better integration into the surrounding communities.

Both the Rock Spring and White Flint 2 areas are served by desirable school clusters with limited student capacity. The plans for these areas clearly state that "each and every development application should be thoroughly evaluated for a potential school site, notwithstanding any previous development approvals." Since finding a site of 7.5 to 35 acres (minimum sizes for of an ideal leveled site) will be difficult, new opportunities for new school prototypes should be explored. Potential models could include multi-level buildings, smaller land areas with more efficient circulation and parking, shared playfields and adaptive reuse of office buildings. Detailed proposals for school sites should be considered in coordination with Montgomery County Public Schools and property owners.

Map of Basis Independent School in McLean, Virginia

Case Study: Basis Independent School

Shrinking space per office worker and pressures on school capacity are leading to adaptive reuse of office buildings into school facilities.

Basis Independent is a private school that sits within 120,000 square feet of a former office building in Tysons Corner. The transformation at Basis Independent is impressive and there are some key lessons for undertaking similar efforts within the two planning areas:

Location is a key determinant. Basis Independent is located near the Jones Branch Park, providing co-location benefits for recreational needs of students. The site is nestled between office complexes and is in close proximity to large retail centers and flagship hotels. It has great highway access and abundant parking. As places like Tysons Corner continue to add high and mid density housing to their commercial centers, such schools over time will become a part of mixed-use districts, making it convenient to walk, bike or take transit to such locations.

Office buildings with the right bones. Basis Independent is a low rise, three-story building that used to be the corporate headquarters for the defense contractor BDM. It is a building with a great structural skeleton, long clear spans and flexible spaces. All these attributes make this particular building a great candidate for such a transformation.

Using the architecture that exists makes sense. It is cost effective to keep interventions to a minimum. In the case of Basis Independent, the office building already housed a cafeteria and an auditorium, which were retained. A central atrium space was preserved as a social gathering spot, with the introduction of a grand staircase where the escalators once existed. The gym was tucked into a portion of the building that was constructed to hold a double height space and a former loading dock was converted into a separate entrance for the pre-K classes.

Transformations should be incremental. Adaptive reuse often creates buildings and spaces that are atypical and have to be tested against market demands and competition from standard building types. Transformations undertaken incrementally can minimize risk and adapt as a project grows. In the case of Basis Independent, half the office building has been moth-balled for future expansion, if it makes sense. Any lessons learnt in this phase will certainly make future phases perform better.

Two story volume converted into a gym

Classrooms line the edges for maximum natural light

Separate entrance created for younger students off an existing loading dock

Central hall with grand staircase

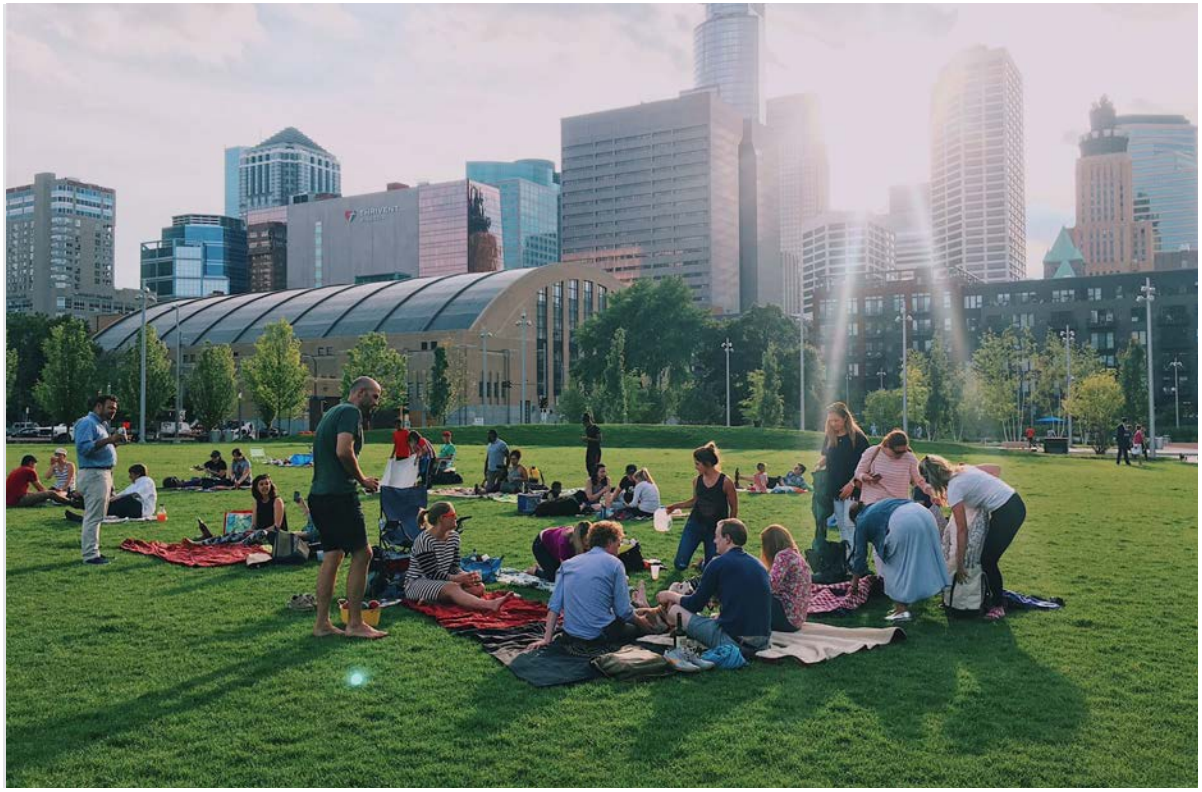
Central atrium was retained and retrofitted with secure access

Exterior of the building was largely retained, but a canopy added for protection from the elements

2.2.5 Vibrant Public Spaces

Goal: Create a hierarchy of parks and open spaces throughout the two plan areas.

The 2017 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan recommends that for each urban area, an open space system should be planned and tailored to serve the projected demographics of residents, workers and visitors. Both Sector Plans recommend the creation of an interconnected network of open spaces with diverse functions. The urban design vision that was developed through the two plans and detailed in these guidelines will help steer the design, pattern, location, siting and amount of open space. The new open space system should support a vibrant and sustainable urban center by including areas that will be comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, safe and provide a range of experiences, including festivals and outdoor events.



A multi purpose open lawn can support intimate gatherings as well as large community festivals

An actively programmed internal courtyard

Social gathering space

Contemplative pocket park

Park Hierarchy

The 2017 PROS Plan recommends that each urban area include a system of public spaces based on the different roles of each type of space. The amount and size of open spaces may vary within each Plan area but should be directly proportional to the project density. Each park and public space should respond to the character of existing public spaces and other neighborhood needs. The following hierarchy should be applied:

A. Within the Sector Plan:

- Social gathering spaces (civic green, plaza)
- Active recreation destinations (local park, urban recreational park)
- Contemplative places (urban greenway)
- Interconnected network of sidewalks, trails, parks and public spaces

B. Within Neighborhoods:

- Neighborhood parks or neighborhood greens

C. For Buildings and Residences:

- Private or communal outdoor spaces

Park Design Elements

The design elements are described generally for each urban park type. The new ***Energized Public Spaces (EPS) Design Guidelines*** provide additional design guidance for each park type and should be consulted in conjunction with this document. Designers should consult case studies in the ***EPS Design Guidelines*** for creative ideas that may promote diverse parks and open spaces in different sizes and configurations. For more information, please refer to Chapter 2 of the ***EPS Design Guidelines*** for areawide design guidance, and Chapter 3 for design guidance appropriate for specific park types.

Civic Green

- Service Area: Sector Plan.
- Main Program: Accommodate social gatherings, special events and casual play elements.
- Key Features: Large central lawn as focal point with seating, trees or shade structures. Designed with several activity zones and is an inclusive space for all ages. Include interactive public art and identity features.
- Site Placement: Locate in area of highest concentration of commercial and civic uses. Should be centrally placed and highly visible from the major street frontages.
- Size: ½ acre minimum, 1.5 acre ideal.

Seating under shade along the edges of the green

Civic Green with a large central green lawn for flexible use

Urban Plaza

- Service Area: Sector Plan.
- Main program: Public use space integrated into commercial or mixed-use development, to serve as focal point for community activity.
- Key Features: Central hardscape as focal point, with seating, trees and shade structures. Defined by building walls containing ground-floor activating uses. Include visitor amenities and interactive public art. Design as inclusive space for all ages.
- Site Placement: Locate in area of highest concentration of commercial and civic uses. Should be centrally placed and highly visible from the main street frontages.
- Size: ½ acre minimum, 1 acre ideal.

Seating areas with shade structures along the edges

Urban Plaza with central hardscaped area surrounded by active ground floor uses

Urban Recreational Park

- Service Area: Sector Plan and beyond.
- Main Program: Local and regional destination with a focus on active play.
- Key Features: Primarily recreational program such as a playground, a basketball court, a dog park/spot or a skate park/spot. Design as inclusive space for all ages.
- Site Placement: Locate near community facilities such as schools, libraries etc. when possible. Should be highly visible from the main street frontages.
- Size: Varies based on community served.

Play courts for active recreation

Active recreation facilites along a walking path

Neighborhood Green

- Service Area: Neighborhood.
- Main Program: Mix of social gathering, active recreation and contemplative areas.
- Key Features: May include a play area, skate spot or community garden, or other similar neighborhood-serving recreational facilities. Includes plantings and landscaped areas for sitting.
- Site Placement: Surrounded by local streets and medium density development. Visibility and access from adjacent sidewalks, streets and buildings.
- Size: 1/4 acre minimum.

Plantings and landscaped areas for sitting

Central gathering space within a Neighborhood Green

Pocket Green

- Service Area: Neighborhood.
- Main Program: Small scale urban open space tucked into and scattered throughout urban fabric. Serve as contemplative spaces for the immediately local population.
- Key Features: Hardscape, landscape or a mix, with trees for shading, seating and art. Designed as a single “room” but may include space for small gatherings.
- Site Placement: Direct access to a local street. Visibility and access from adjacent sidewalks, streets, and buildings.
- Size: 1/10 to 1/4 acre.

Pocket green with hardscape and seating

Pocket green with a water feature and shade trees

Goal: Incorporate stormwater management into the design of parks and public open spaces without impeding their functionality for users.

- Limit the use of stormwater management facilities within public open spaces.
- Locate stormwater management facilities in a manner that does not restrict the use of public open space for active recreation and programming.
- Use compact treatment methods that do not require excessive land dedicated to stormwater management within public open spaces.

Flexible lawn with minimal stormwater treatment facilities around the edges maximize its usability

Structured bio-retention areas take up less space

Stormwater management integrated into the streetscape

Goal: Promote community led placemaking activities throughout the two plan areas.

The Rock Spring and White Flint 2 Sector Plans outline a vision for the long-term transformation of the two plan areas. However, they present several opportunities for stakeholders to achieve short-term changes that improve their quality of life and celebrate their community's cultural assets. One of these opportunities is community-led placemaking that brings residents, property owners and public agencies together around a particular site or a local issue, highlight an area's untapped potential and form partnerships that can result in longer term transformative projects.

Collaborative placemaking provides a platform for promoting local and small businesses, testing ideas for improving pedestrian and bike safety and creating interim public open spaces that are desired by a community. The Planning Department recently teamed up with the Better Block Foundation, Montgomery Parks, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Randolph Hills Civic Association and Kronstadt Realty, owner of the Randolph Hills Shopping Center, to host the White Flint Placemaking Festival. Held in mid-October 2018 after six months of planning, this weekend event transformed a patch of grass and an underutilized parking lot into a pop-up park and community gathering space. Similar projects should be explored and undertaken throughout Rock Spring and White Flint 2 to demonstrate the improvements recommended in the plans. A step-by-step guide to undertaking community led placemaking projects has been included in the chapter of these guidelines titled "Community Led Placemaking" for reference.

Using this resource, stakeholders should:

- Explore the potential of retrofitting streets, alleys, excess rights-of-way and medians into public spaces for gathering, playing and relaxing.
- Transform parking lots into interim public spaces for seasonal use and events.
- Activate existing parks and open spaces with temporary seating, programming and public art to make them more usable and inviting.
- Use construction sites and staging areas as opportunities for artistic fencing and pop-up activities.

Community led placemaking should offer multiple activites to engage a broader set of people

Underutlilized spaces can be activated with temporary seating and programming to provide gathering places

2.2.6 Sustainable Design

Goal: Extend the life of existing structures through adaptive reuse and retrofit strategies to accommodate new uses and upgrade systems.

- Explore creative solutions that incorporate the retrofitting of existing buildings to increase energy efficiency, automate building systems to reduce waste, promote up-to-date sustainable practices and contribute to a healthier environment.
- Adapt and reuse existing buildings to accommodate new uses supported by current market demands.
- Concentrate infill development on existing surface parking lots.
- Retrofit facades of existing buildings to extend the life of viable structures.

The George in Wheaton reused an existing office structure and converted it into a residential building by adding more floors on top

Goal: Reduce and slow untreated stormwater runoff to improve water quality in surrounding streams and creeks.

- Plant street trees for stormwater interception and design tree wells to capture and infiltrate runoff.
- Install soft landscaping in open space areas to allow for adequate drainage and reduce strain on stormwater systems.
- Improve water quality through filtering using permeable pavement, stormwater management facilities and tree coverage.
- Retrofit existing surface parking lots with stormwater management features and increased tree coverage.
- Incorporate Environmental Site Design elements such as bioretention systems, bioswales, rainwater harvesting, underground detention/retention vaults and vegetated roofs.
- Use native and adaptive plants in landscape areas that require less irrigation, are not invasive and benefit local wildlife.
- Plant trees and other green features in public and private open spaces.
- Encourage use of rainwater for watering planted areas.
- Utilize intensive green roofs with a minimum of six inches of soil depth or greater to maximize water treatment.

Open space designed to treat stormwater

Intensive green roof with skylights for daylighting

Stormwater management within street design reduces run-off

Goal: Sequester carbon, reduce urban heat island and improve air quality.

- Increase the urban tree cover along streets, in open spaces and existing parking lots.
- Use native and adaptive species in landscaping and tree planting that require less irrigation, are not invasive and benefit local wildlife.
- Develop mixed-use communities with walkable and bikeable destinations that reduce dependence on vehicular travel.
- Place soft landscaping in open areas to reduce heat island effect.

Goal: Promote energy conservation and on-site energy production.

- Encourage the installation of solar panels on buildings, parking lots and garages to shade parking spaces and generate clean energy.
- Seek opportunities for on-site renewable energy generation.
- Consider block and building orientation to maximize passive solar heating, cooling and lighting, and optimize siting for solar energy generation.
- Encourage the design and construction of green roofs to reduce heating and cooling demand.
- Use building construction design, materials and systems that save energy.
- Design buildings and sites to maximize natural ventilation and air flow.

The Bullitt Center in Seattle produces all its enegy on site using a rooftop solar array

Trees mitigate urban heat island effect and sequester carbon

A combination of green roof and solar panels can lower energy consumption and produce on site energy for a building