



FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

SECTOR PLAN



Montgomery Planning

February 2026



Friendship Heights Sector Plan

Preliminary Recommendations



INTRODUCTION

Agenda

- Introduction/Plan Update
- Plan Vision
- Economic Development Context
- Preliminary Goals and Recommendations
- Next steps



Plan Boundary



Plan Schedule

- Pre-scope engagement - Fall 2024
- Scope of Work + Boundary – Winter 2025
- Existing Conditions – Spring 2025
- Visioning – Spring-Fall 2025
- ➔ • Preliminary Recommendations – Winter 2026
- Working Draft – Summer 2026
- Planning Board Work sessions – Fall 2026
- Transmit to Council – Fall 2026
- Council + Executive Review – Winter 2027
- Approval and Adoption – Spring 2027





PLAN VISION

What We Heard

In 20 years Friendship Heights should be

Vibrant, mixed-use, multi-generational neighborhood

Affordable, local retail and restaurants

A fun place to hang out

Walkable, accessible, affordable

Still feel like Friendship Heights

Safe, vibrant commercial district

Green, walkable, pedestrian-friendly

Diverse and inclusive

A denser, more thriving urban area

Small town vibe

Plan Vision Statement

The revitalization of Friendship Heights will transform this urban neighborhood into a thriving regional destination and a welcoming community where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can live, work and play.

Plan Vision: Goals

Enhance existing connections and create safer ways for people to walk, bike or ride between Friendship Heights and the surrounding communities.



Plan Vision: Goals

Provide new experiences for social connection, activity, and respite in parks and public spaces throughout the Plan Area.



Plan Vision: Goals

Strengthen the Wisconsin Avenue corridor as a center of activity with opportunities for economic growth.



Plan Vision: Goals

Achieve a resilient urban area that strives to mitigate climate change impacts.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS



Economic + Real Estate Context

- Snapshot vs. Trajectory
 - Rents remain strong, occupancy is not abnormal, area incomes remain high
 - Underlying weaknesses require intervention
- Office, Retail, Residential markets are interconnected
 - New development can deliver amenities
 - Improve economic conditions by supporting and spurring private market activity



Real Estate Market Analysis

National consulting firm RCLCO conducted comparable district case studies, development feasibility analyses.

Key takeaways:

- Nationally-unique combination of assets
 - Faces competitive challenges
- Few comparable clusters of medical office without a major anchor institution
- Identified strategies and best practices



Real Estate Market Analysis

The small plan area allowed RCLCO to look closely at individual sites to assess feasibility.

Key takeaways:

- Residential development is the most likely under current market conditions.
 - Mid-rise (6- to 7-stories) and high-rise (14- to 22-stories) forms are most viable long-term.
 - For-sale townhouse development is competitive with denser, rental forms under current market conditions and near-term expectations.



Office Market Context

- Contraction and decline
 - Over 1 million square feet vacated since 2015; medical office backfills older space
 - Office contraction risks imbalance, threatens retail viability, reduces residential demand

Goals:

- Maintain and grow office sector with improved placemaking and amenities
- Attract major employers to key sites



Retail Market Context

- Transition from luxury to the everyday
 - Departure of high-end retailers, food + beverage concepts struggle
 - Aging and shrinking area population = projected contraction in retail spending

Goals:

- Increase employee and resident populations to support retail offerings
- Spur new construction with ground-floor retail

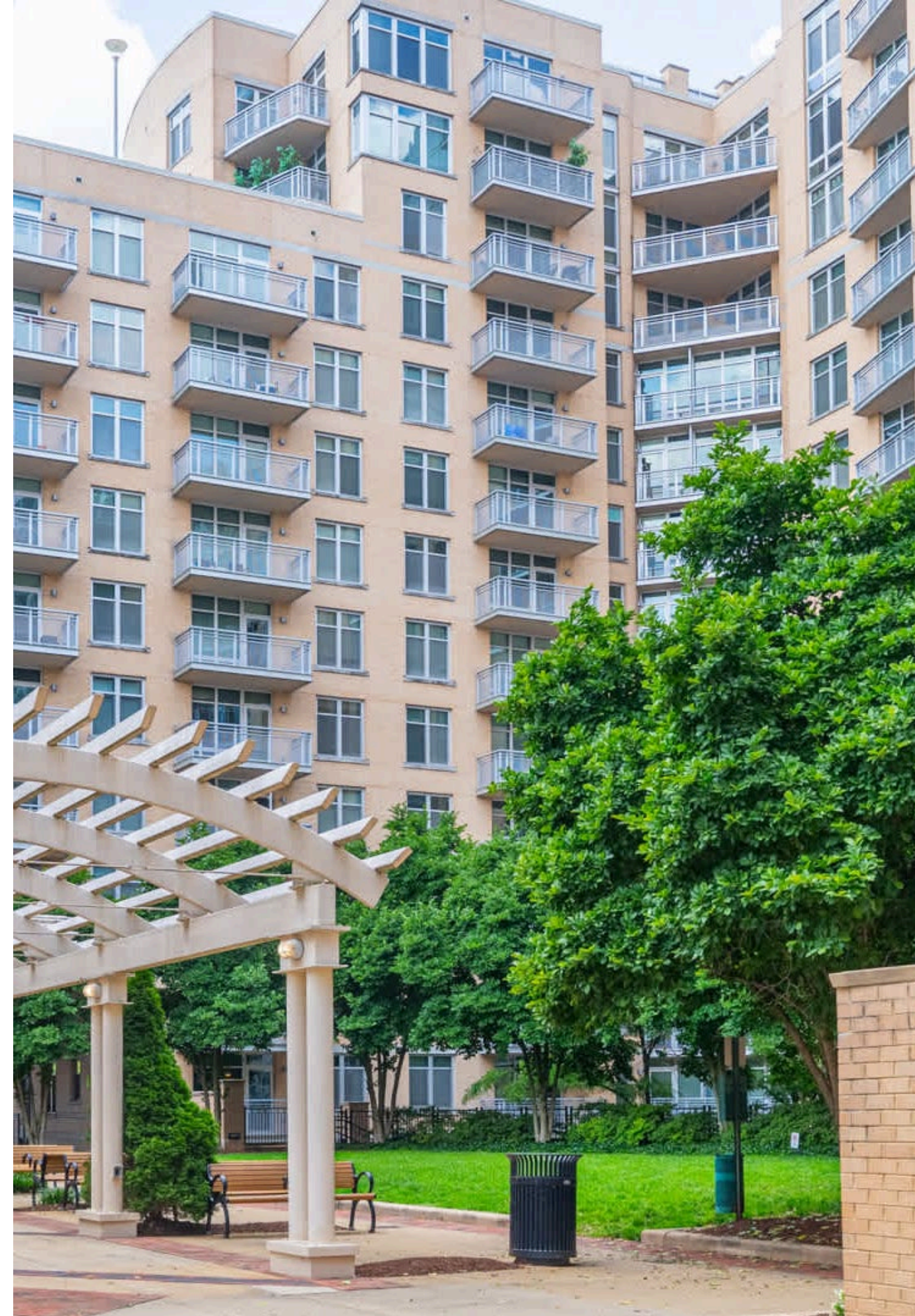


Residential Market Context

- Opportunities and challenges
 - Strong link between housing and amenities
 - More housing works toward multiple goals
 - Near-term challenges to new construction

Goals:

- Spur residential development on opportunity sites
- Maximize long-term housing production, enhance near-term financial feasibility



Preliminary Goals and Recommendations

- Land Use and Zoning
- Housing
- Urban Design
- Community Amenities
- Schools
- Transportation
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Historic Resources
- Environment



LAND USE AND ZONING

Land Use + Zoning: Goals

- Encourage redevelopment of **opportunity sites** in the Plan Area.
- Provide **flexibility** so future projects can respond to market conditions
- Strengthen the existing **retail corridor** along Wisconsin Avenue.
- Promote the development of more housing, including **affordable housing**, throughout the Plan Area.
- Support opportunities for future **community amenities** within the Plan Area.
- Respect the **transition of building heights** from the downtown core to the surrounding neighborhoods

Opportunity Sites

Sites with existing development potential that are more likely to redevelop during the sector plan vision period.



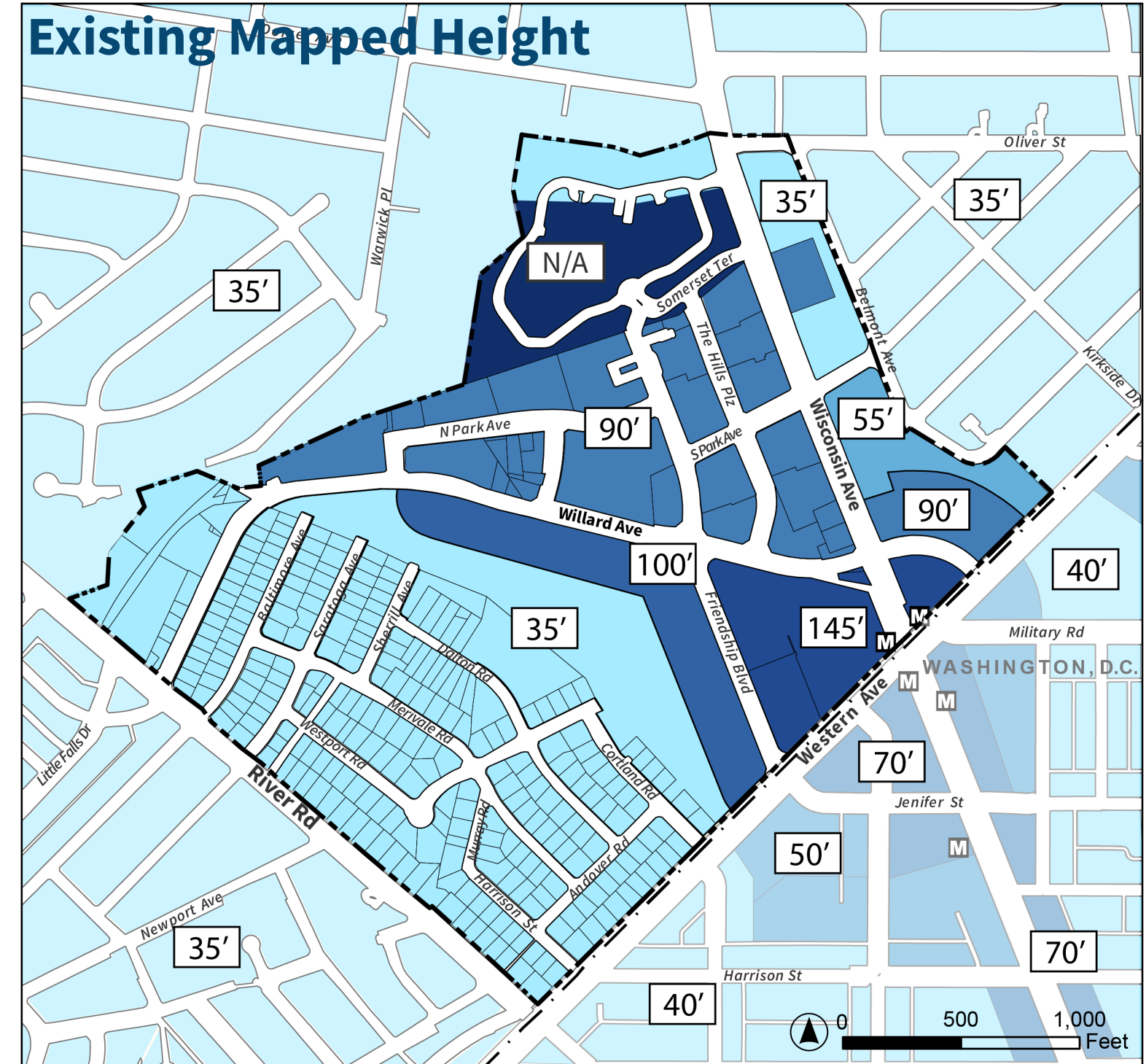
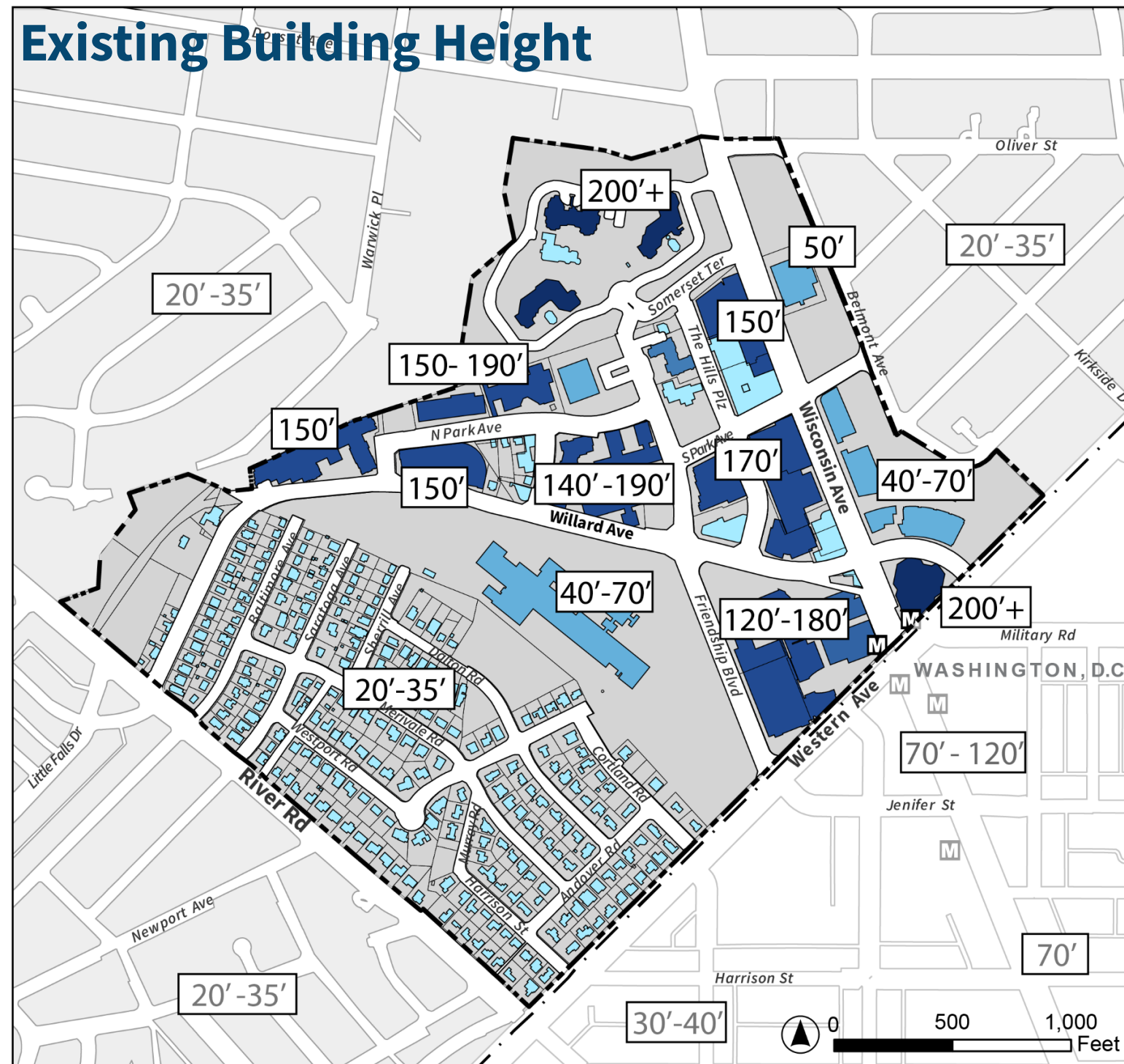
Land Use + Zoning: Recommendations

Height

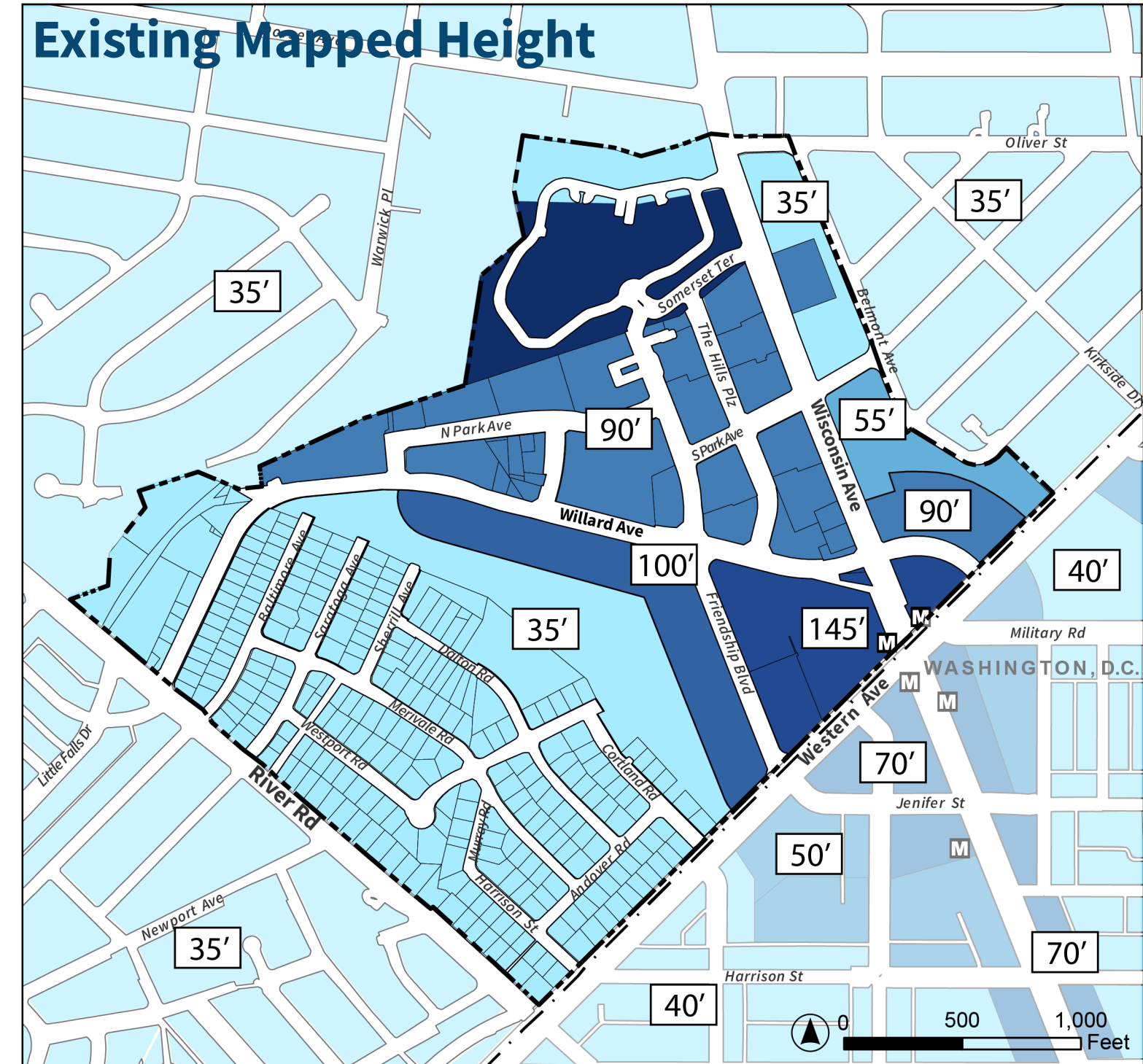
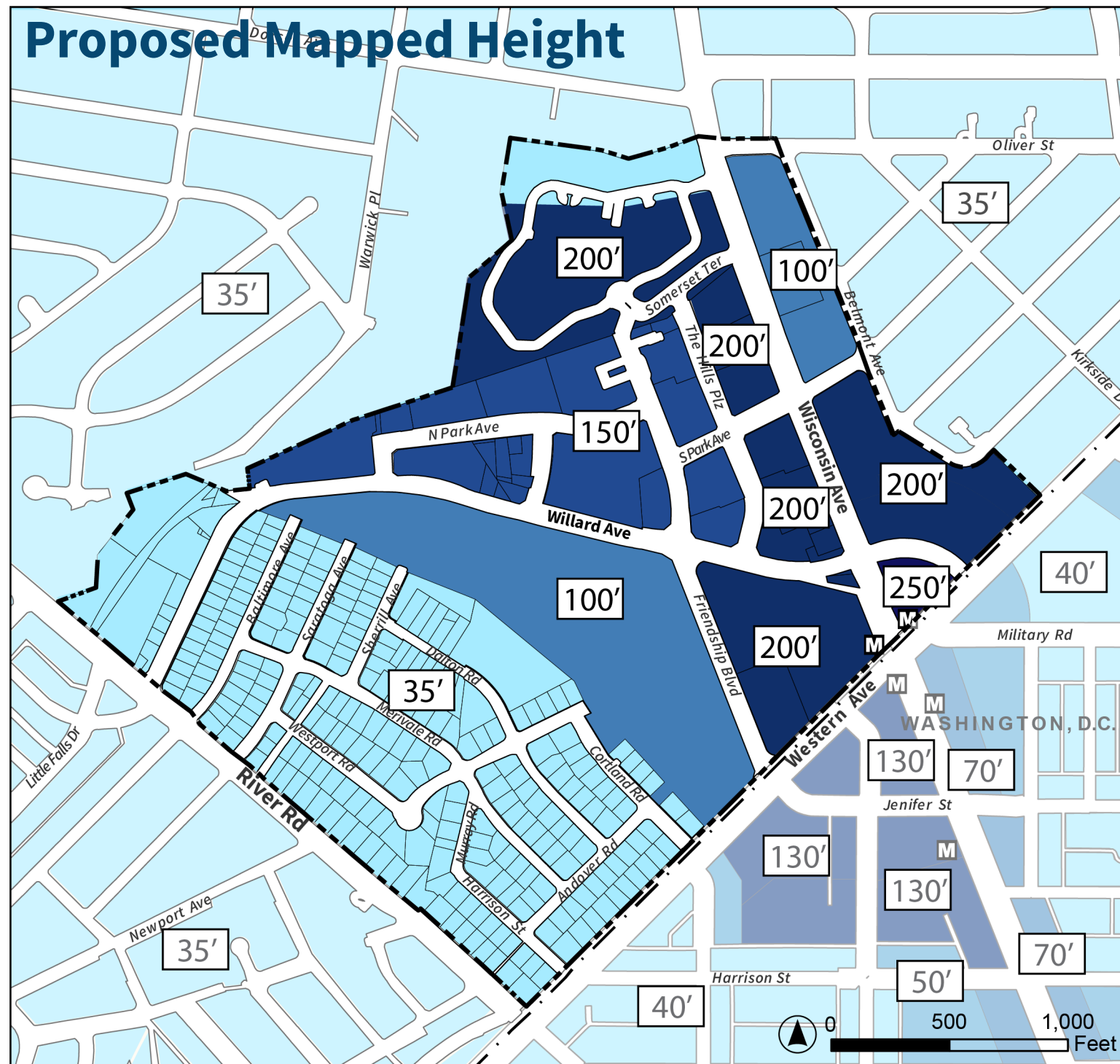
- Adjust heights throughout the plan so that the tallest heights are at Western Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue
- Provide height transitions from the downtown to adjacent residential neighborhoods



Mapped Height & Existing Building Height



Mapped Height: Existing vs Proposed




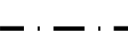








Land Use + Zoning: Recommendations

Density

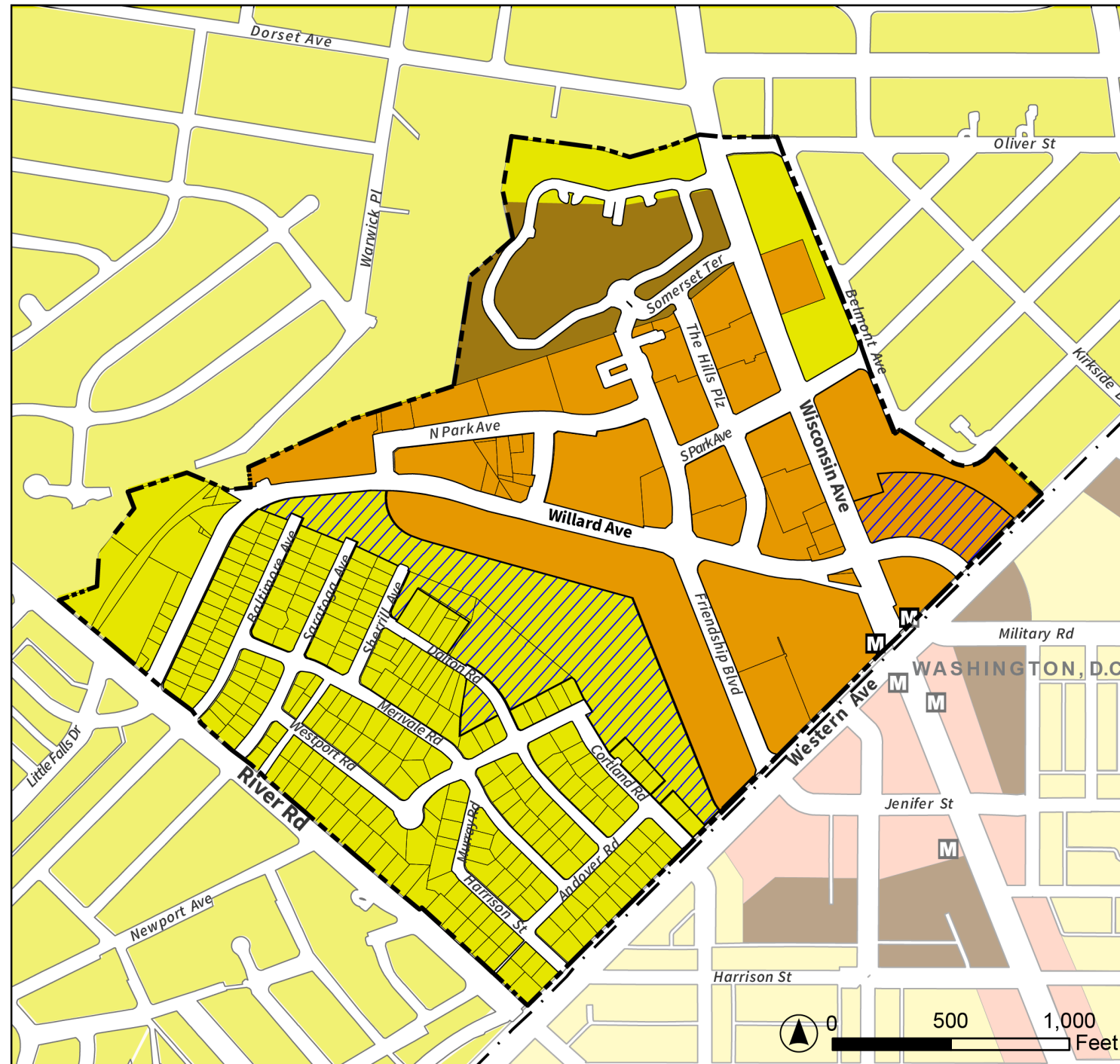
- Update zoning to replace outdated zones.
- Make Commercial-Residential (CR) zoning more flexible by equalizing C and R values
- Confirm existing R-60 zoning for the Brookdale neighborhood
- Revise existing R-60 parcels in the downtown core to CR
- Address outdated overlay zones

Mapped Zoning: Existing vs Proposed

LEGEND


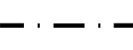






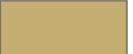
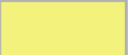
-  Plan Boundary
-  Washington, D.C. Border
-  Metro Station Entrance
-  CR (Mixed-Use)
-  R-60 (Residential)
-  R-H (High-Rise Residential)
-  Overlay Zone
-  DC: Mixed-Use
-  DC: High-Rise Residential
-  DC: Semi-Detached Residential

Existing Zones

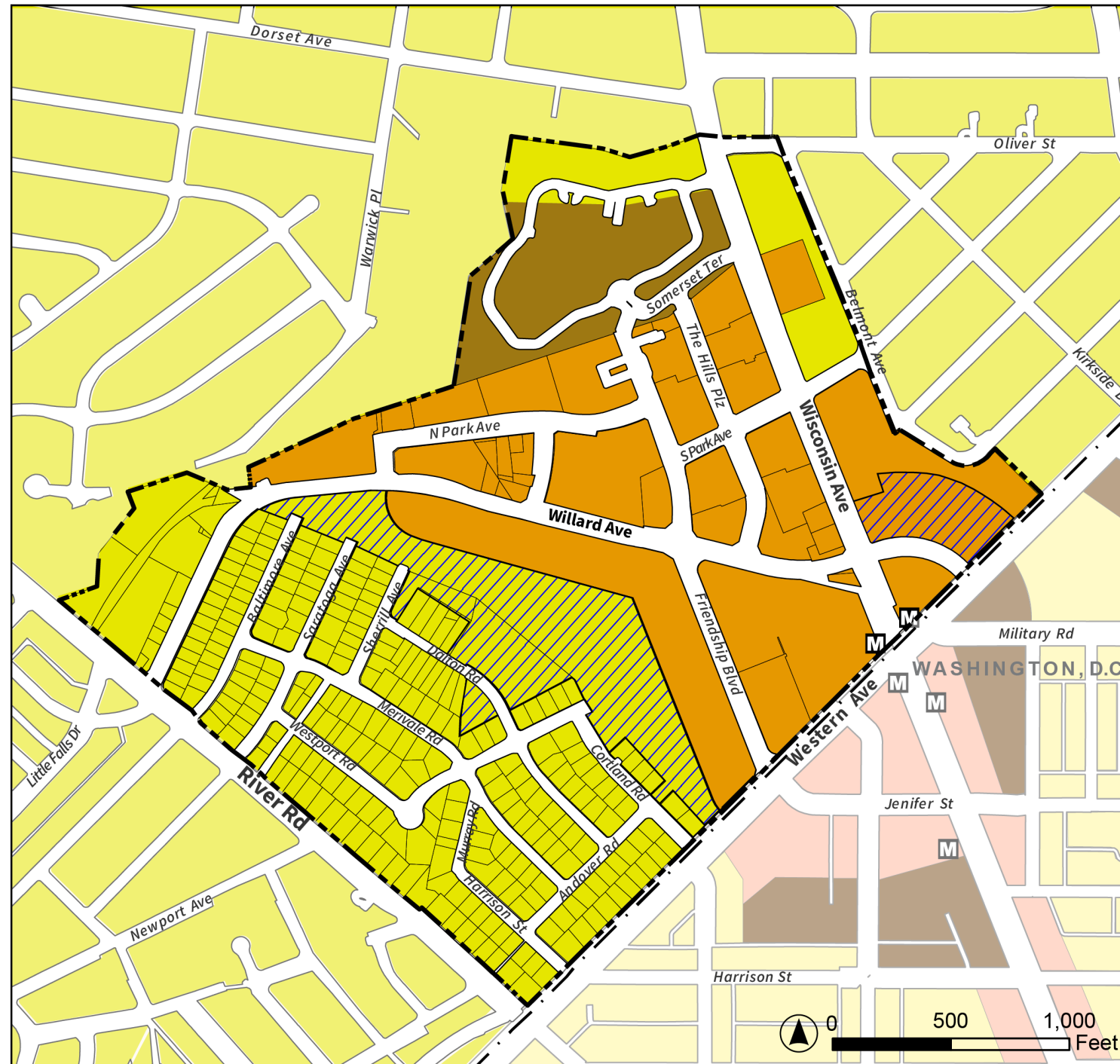


Mapped Zoning: Existing vs Proposed

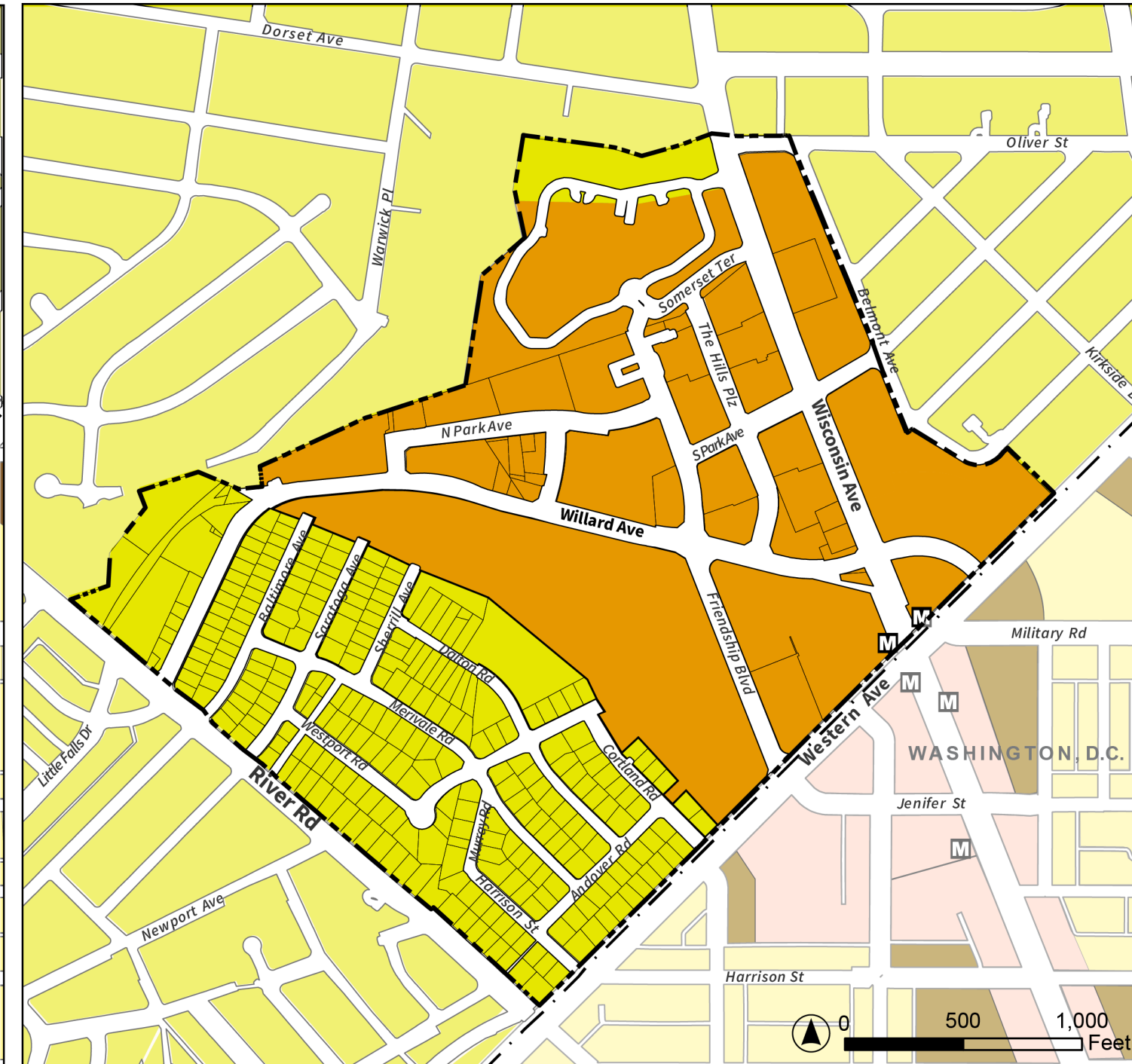
LEGEND

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Existing Zones



Proposed Zones



Friendship Heights Overlay Zone

- Maintain height transition between downtown core and adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Allow projects to obtain additional density to build to the maximum mapped height



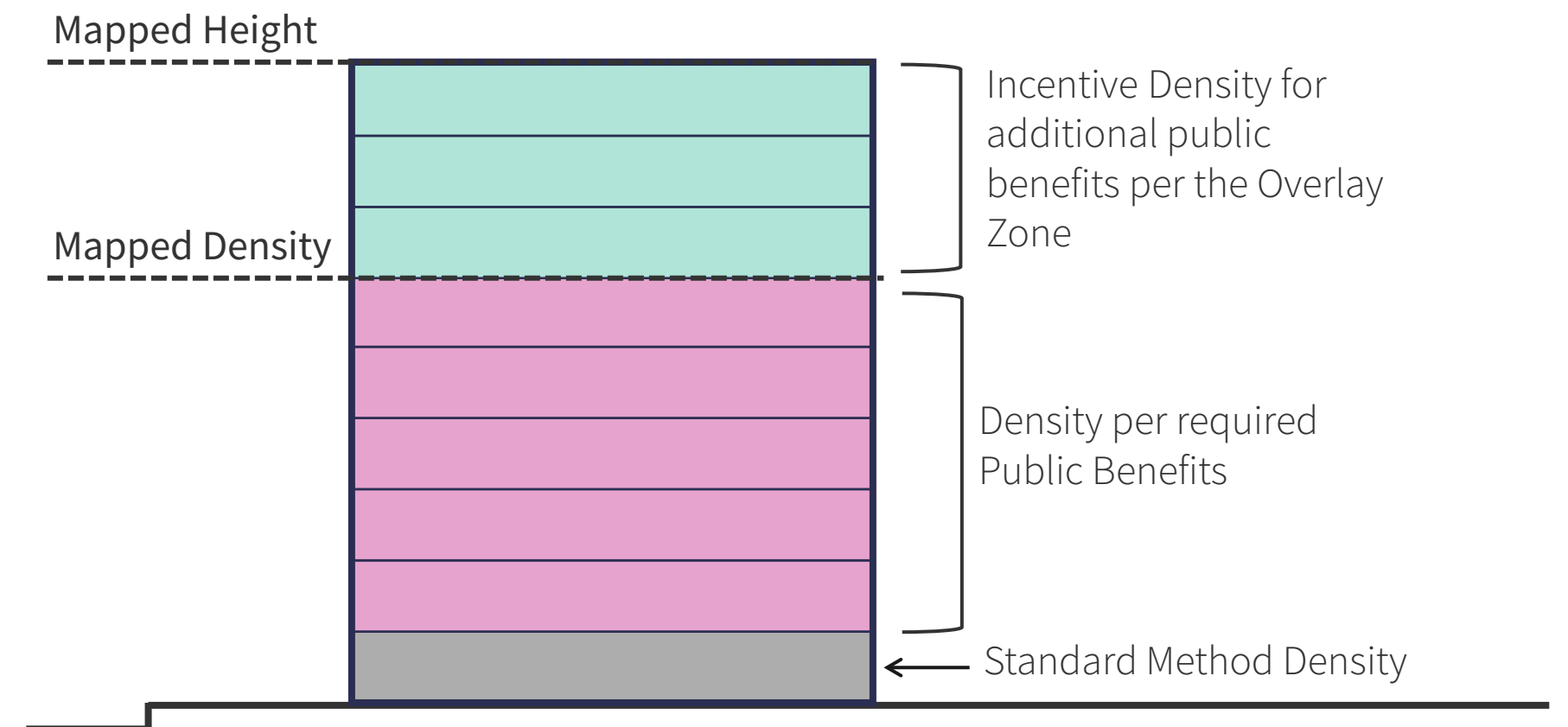
Friendship Heights Overlay Zone

- “Transition area” at opportunity sites that are immediately adjacent to low density residential neighborhoods
- Buildings at maximum height on these sites to front on Willard Avenue, Friendship Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue.



Friendship Heights Overlay Zone

Allow properties to obtain additional density (FAR) above mapped density to reach mapped height by providing specific public benefits from the Incentive Density Implementation guide.





HOUSING

Housing Goals

Production

- Increase housing in the Plan Area to meet the growing demand and to support reaching the county's housing goals.

Diversification

- Facilitate the development of a variety of housing types, especially near transit stations and lines that contribute to corridor-focused growth.

Affordability

- Expand access to safe, healthy, and affordable housing for people across a range of income levels, household sizes, and life stages.

Housing Production Recommendations

- Add more housing units available to **renters, families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.**
- Promote the use of incentives to boost market rate and affordable housing, especially near **transit stations** and along **major corridors.**
- Make property owners aware of existing incentives, such as the **C2R Expedited Plan**, that can help make new office-to-residential conversions more feasible.



Strathmore Square

Housing Diversification Recommendations

- Encourage a **mix of housing types** and unit sizes to accommodate **young families** with children, **first-time homeowners**, and **seniors**.
- Prioritize **family-sized market rate units** and **MPDUs** for rent and sale in residential developments and redevelopments.
- Explore opportunities to provide housing types with **active ground floor uses**.



Housing Affordability Recommendations

- Provide at least **15% MPDUs** in new developments and redevelopments with 20 or more units.
- Prioritize **affordable housing units below 65% of AMI** in new developments and redevelopments.
- Encourage the use of the **county, state, and federal incentives** (i.e., PILOT, LIHTC) to help make feasible and spur the production of new affordable housing.



The Residences at Forest Glen



URBAN DESIGN

Urban Design Goals

Public Realm

- Increase connectivity throughout the Plan Area to promote walking, and social interaction, while fostering stronger bonds with the surrounding communities.
- Strengthen Friendship Heights as a destination that has a distinct identity with welcoming public spaces, lively streets, and a variety of uses.

Building Form

- Elevate the quality of design in new development to create a welcoming environment that enhances the human experience while fostering equitable and resilient communities.

Identity and Connectivity

- Build upon the multi-jurisdictional **local character** of Friendship Heights with Wisconsin Avenue as its primary commercial corridor and framed by its diverse neighborhoods.
- Enhance **wayfinding** and **pedestrian/bike connections** to surrounding neighborhoods to foster greater interaction and patronage to local amenities.
- Break up large blocks with new streets and **pedestrian through-block connections** to promote walkability, social interaction, and expanded connectivity when new development occurs.



The Claude at Chevy Chase Lake

Open Spaces and Placemaking

- Encourage **public spaces** that are easily identifiable, locatable, and accessible for public use.
- Frame streets, plazas, and other public open spaces with **activating uses, human-scaled frontages** and streets to enhance the pedestrian experience while creating a lively experience.
- Use **placemaking strategies** at key locations to enhance the sense of place and provide activation.



Placemaking at “Wheels in Wheaton”

Elevating Design

- Explore methods to provide **design review** for optional method projects in the plan area, such as a Design Advisory Panel (DAP).
- Provide **design guidance** that showcases strategies to achieve design excellence for new development throughout the Plan Area.
- Incorporate **biophilic elements** into the design of buildings, streetscapes and sites to extend the benefits and beauty of nature deeper into the built environment.



The Bartlett - LEED Silver

Enhancing the Human Experience

- Ensure buildings along Wisconsin Avenue **enhance the public realm** with active ground floor uses, streetscape improvements, and architectural elements that relate to the pedestrian scale.
- Prioritize the **pedestrian experience** by locating new buildings close to the street.
- Provide **variation** in building types, massing, and scale throughout developments to deliver **visual interest** and a **diversified building stock**.





COMMUNITY AMENITIES

Community Amenities: Goals

- Encourage community-oriented amenities that foster social interaction, civic gathering, and neighborhood identity.
- Expand access to community services and daily needs within the Plan area



Community Amenities: Recommendations

- Incentivize a **significant community-focused** amenity through future development that may include any of the following:
 - Social and civic gathering spaces
 - Opportunities for learning, recreation, or arts
 - Activities for all ages and abilities

Community Amenities: Recommendations

- Incentivize “**third places**” into new development that are highly visible, easy to access, and comfortable
- Provide active ground-floor uses that foster street-level vitality throughout the plan area.



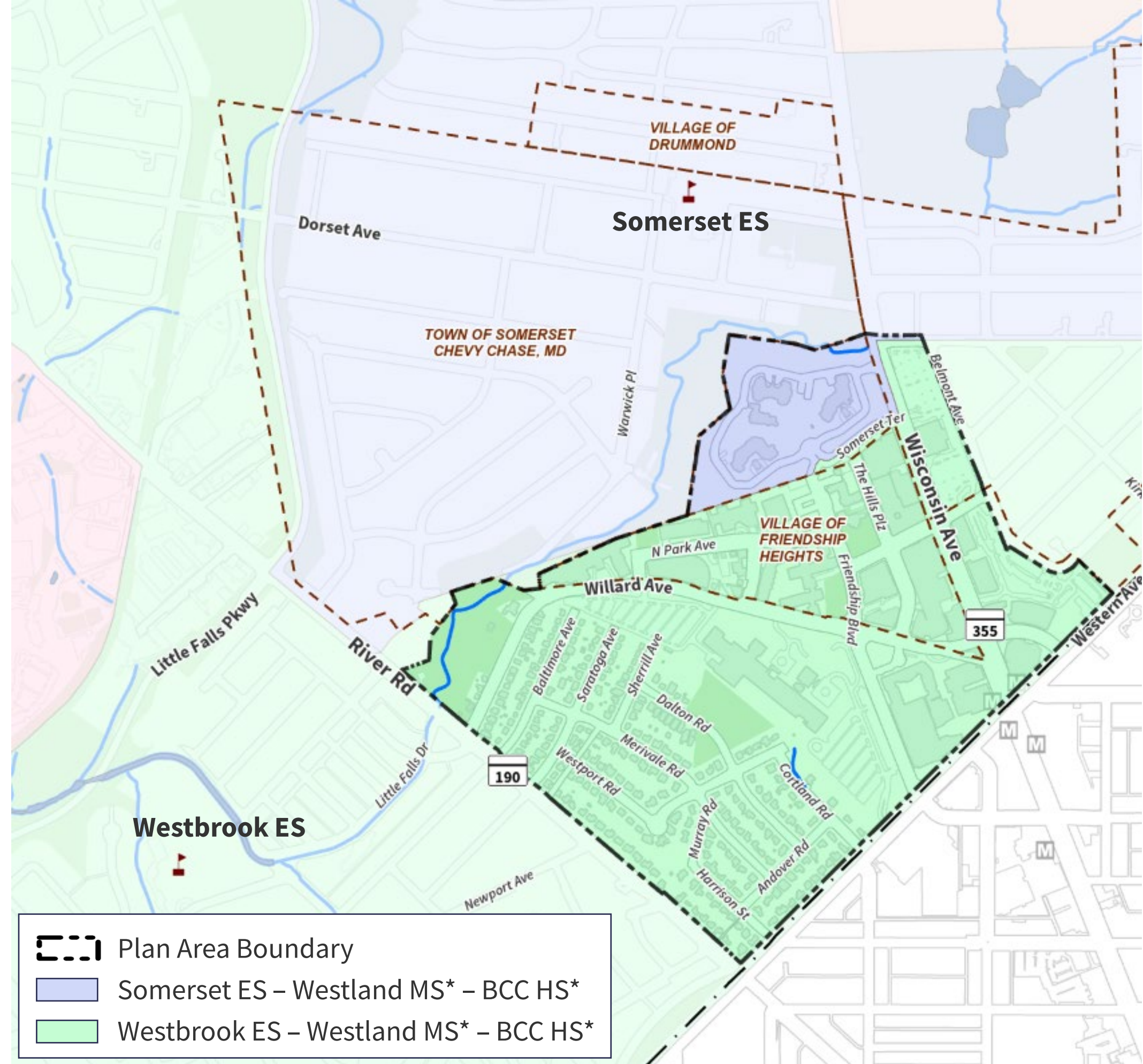


SCHOOLS

Schools

- Enrollment peaked and has been declining across all schools serving Plan area.
- Without additional growth planned in area, elementary schools and middle school are projected to be utilized below the enrollment level MCPS considers efficient.

* The middle school and high school service area boundaries are currently under review and subject to change for the reopening of Charles Woodward High School in 2027.





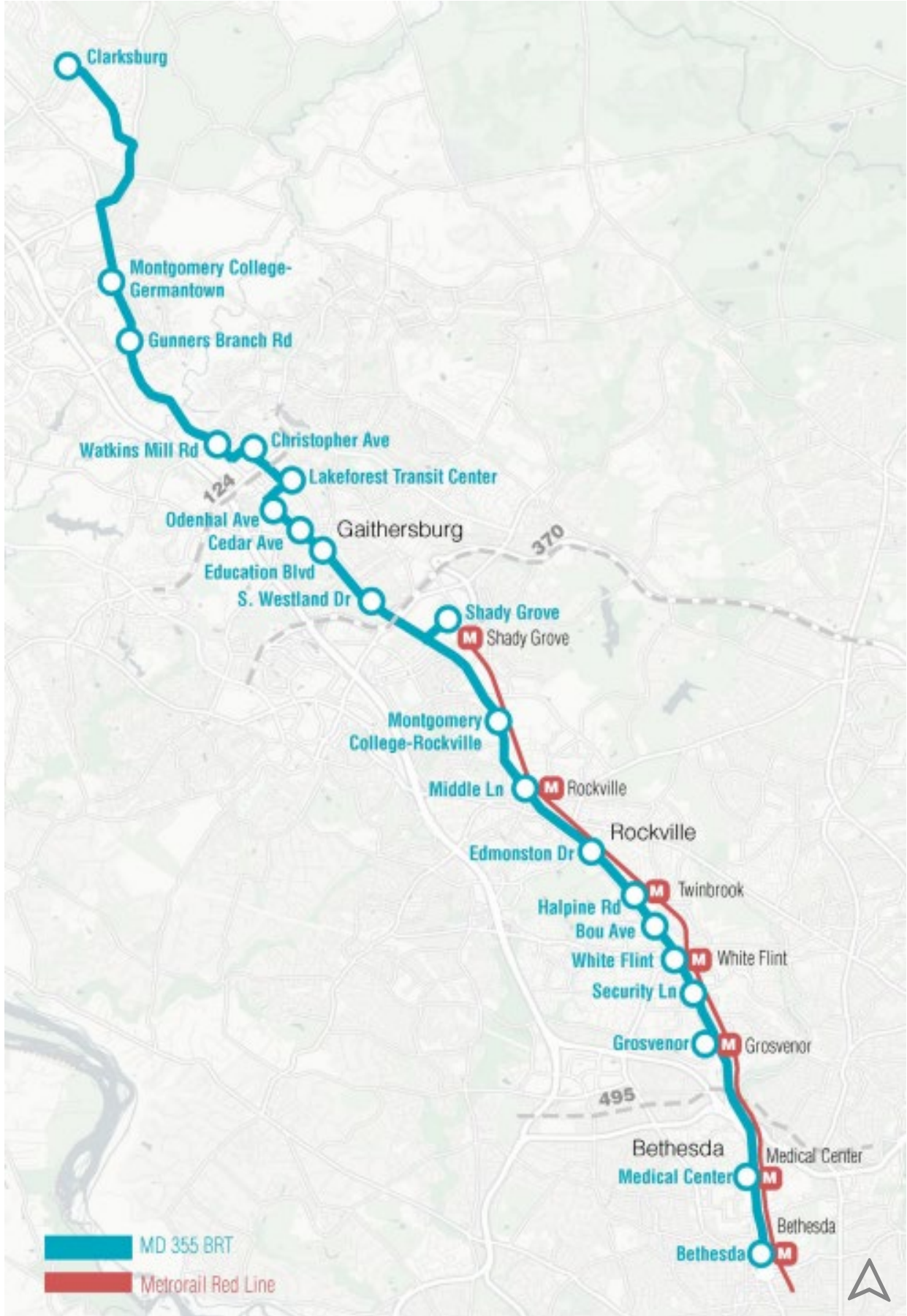
TRANSPORTATION

Goals

- Provide a safe, efficient, and reliable transportation network that serves both current and future land uses.
- Enhance the current street grid to improve connectivity and facilitate multimodal travel.
- Improve the bicycle and pedestrian network in the Plan Area and to adjacent neighborhoods to ensure a safe and inviting environment.
- Enhance transit facilities and operations to increase service reliability, accessibility, and the user experience.
- Ensure all public pathways are compliant with ADA standards.

Transit

- Explore extending the MD 355 Flash BRT South route to Friendship Heights and dedicating one travel lane in each direction.
- Align existing and future bus stops with protected crossings.



Transit

- Explore relocating the WMATA bus loop during redevelopment to a location screened by active ground floor uses.
- Evaluate improving access to the Metrorail station with a second escalator at the west side entrance.



Bus Loop at Western Ave and Wisconsin Circle



West Side Metrorail Entrance

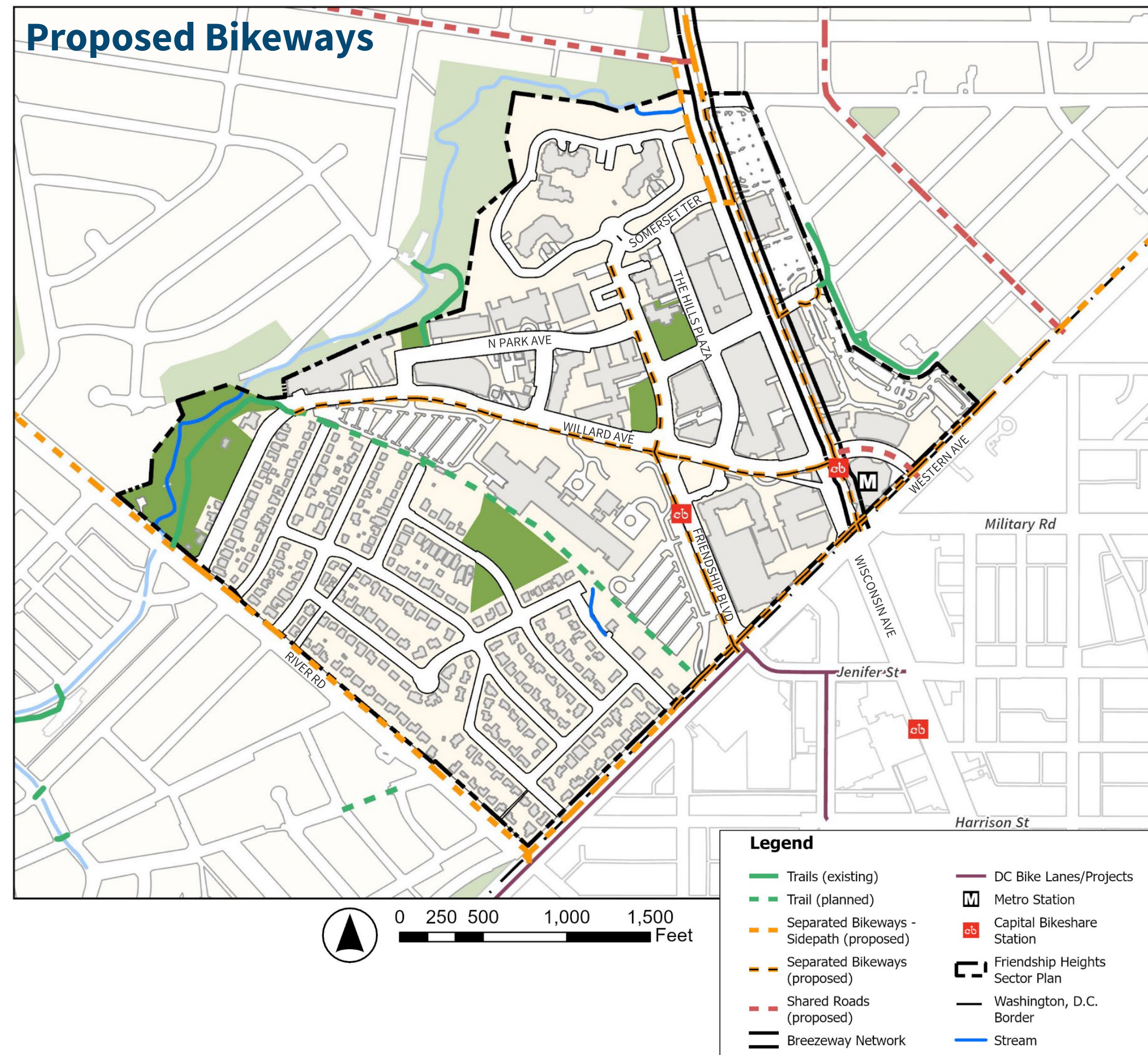
Pedestrian Network

- Improve lighting with an emphasis at intersections, bus stops, the Metro bus bay, and future pedestrian/bike paths.
- Collaborate with the Village of Friendship Heights to remove pedestrian obstructions and install high-visibility crosswalks.
- Upgrade existing brick sidewalks with accessible materials.
- Establish new pedestrian routes, linking Chevy Chase Village and Brookdale to the Downtown.
- Improve wayfinding and signage.



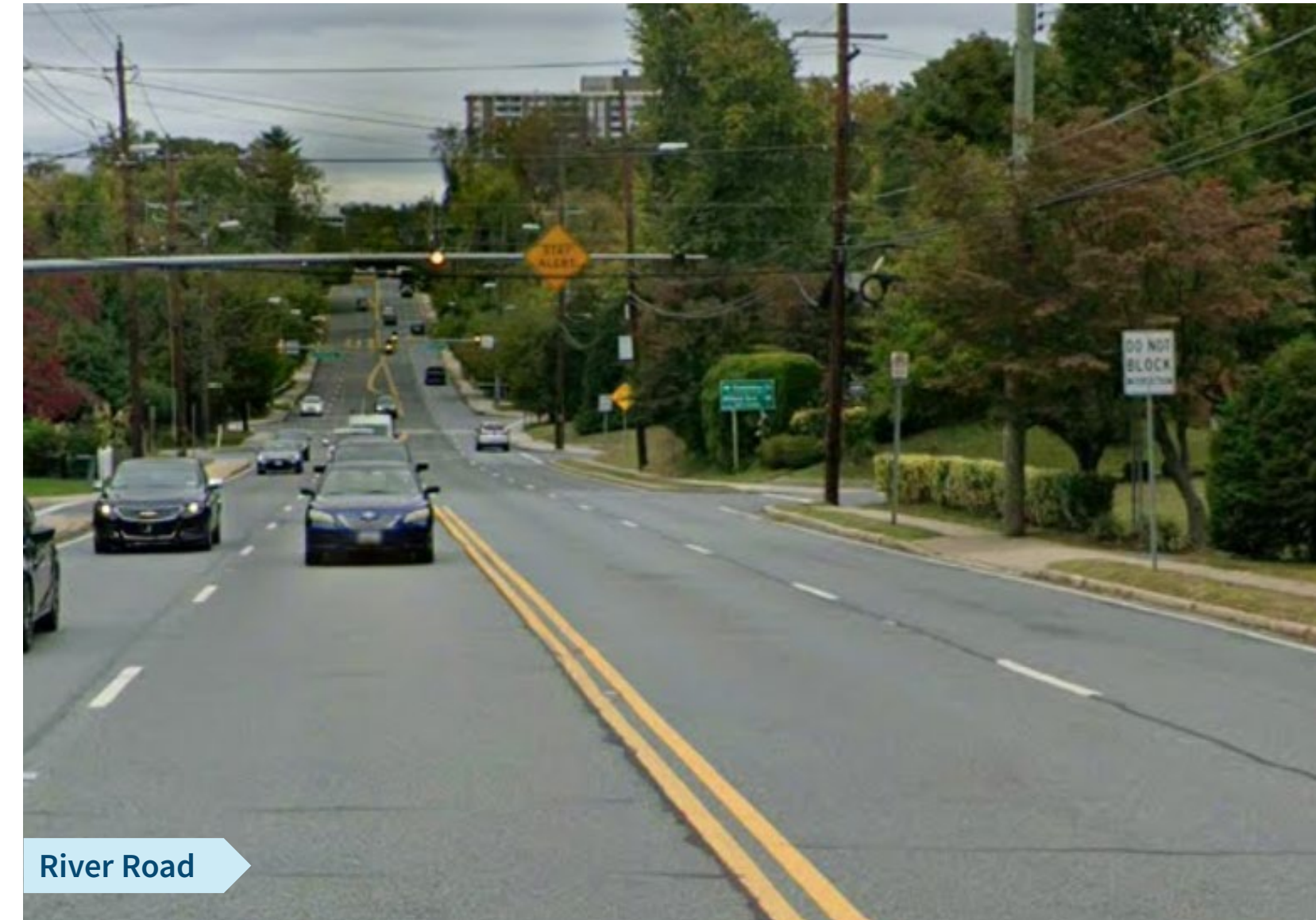
Bicycle Network/ Micromobility

- Reconfirm the bikeways recommendations of the *2018 Bicycle Master Plan*.
- Collaborate with the Village of Friendship Heights and the Town of Somerset to improve bicycle/pedestrian connections.
- Develop designated bikeways that connect Brookdale to the Downtown.
- Expand micromobility options, such as scooters and shared bikes, in the plan area.



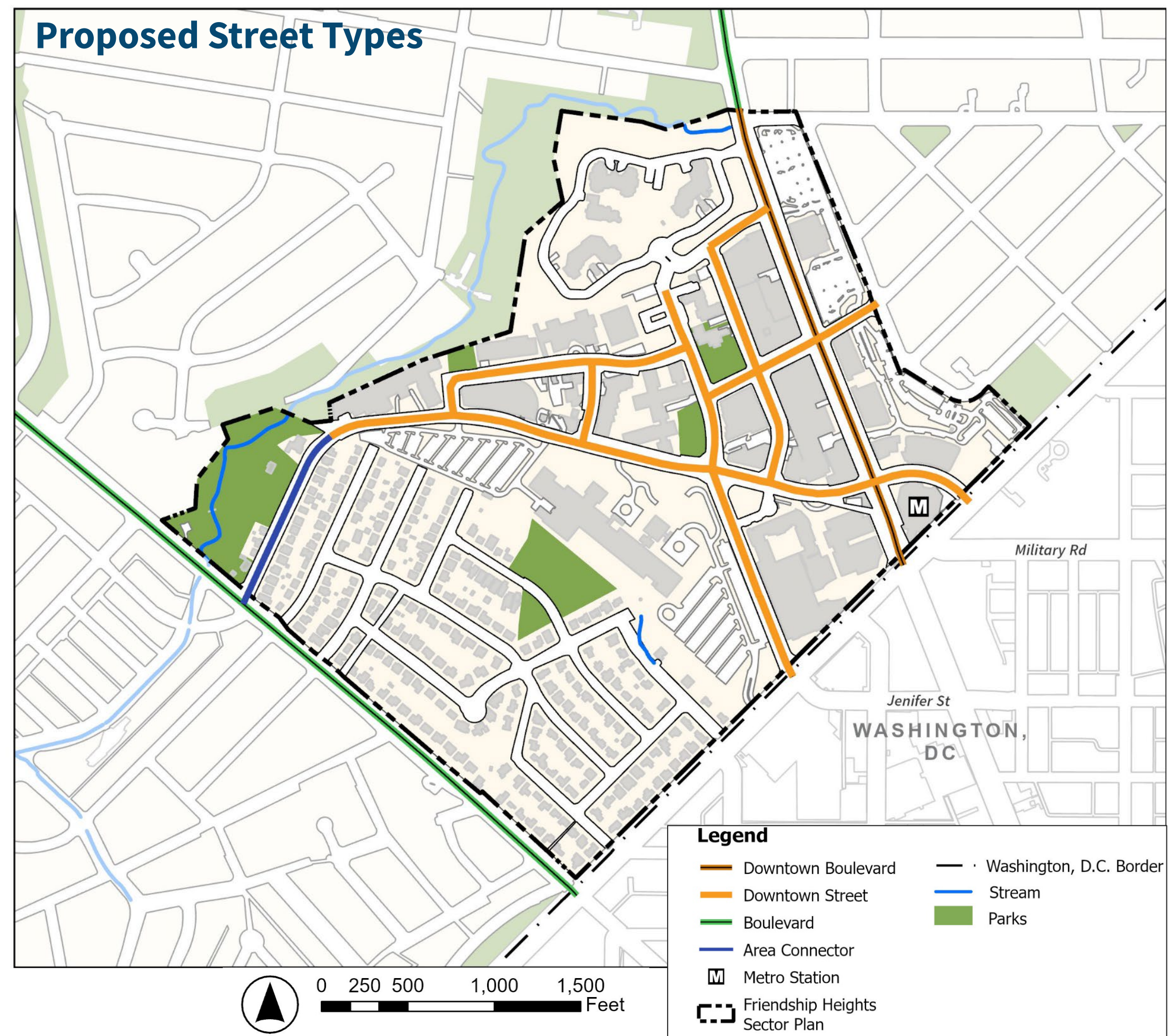
Street Network

- During redevelopment, consolidate and relocate driveways from Wisconsin Ave to side streets.
- Evaluate implementing a road diet on River Road and reallocating space for a bicycle facility.
- Consider upgrading the HAWK (High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk) signal at The Hills Plaza and Willard Avenue to full traffic signal.
- Implement safety improvements at existing intersections.



Street Network

- Reduce Downtown Streets to two lanes in each direction and reduce the target speed to 20mph.
- Reclassify the following as Downtown Streets:
 - Friendship Blvd (Willard Ave to Western Ave)
 - Willard Ave (Friendship Blvd to Wisconsin Ave)



Parking/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

- Explore opportunities for public private partnership to integrate a new county public parking garage with a mixed-use redevelopment project.
- Reevaluate the Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goal.
- Continue to encourage TDM strategies in the Friendship Heights Downtown.





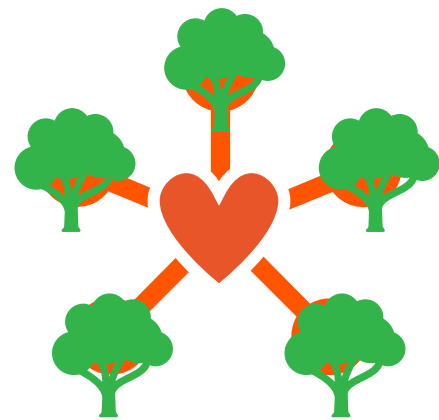
PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Parks & Public Spaces

Goals



Create welcoming spaces that offer opportunities for outdoor recreation, community gathering for all ages and abilities, and enjoyment and protection of natural resources and wildlife habitats.



Improve and integrate access to the network of parks and public spaces – connections and visibility.

Parks & Public Spaces Recommendations

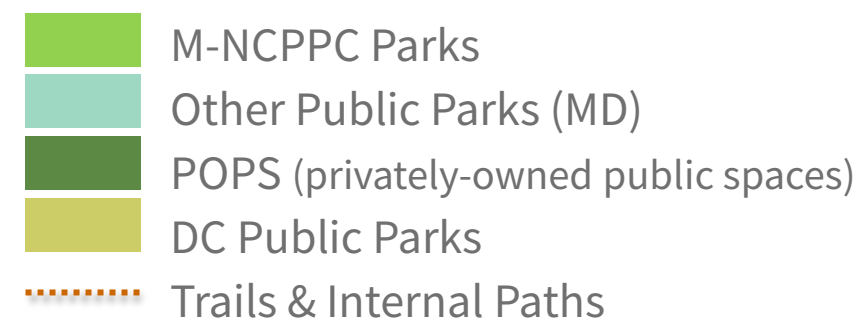
Existing Parks & Public Spaces:

A. Improve Visibility, Connections and Entries:

Willard Ave Park, Brookdale Park, Western Grove Park, and all other public spaces.

B. Consider improving to make it more welcoming to all –

Willoughby Park, Friendship Heights Park, Wisconsin Place



Opportunity Sites

Parks & Public Spaces Recommendations

Existing Parks & Public Spaces:

- **Expand existing adjacent parks on larger development sites** – Brookdale Park into GEICO site
- **Activate Public Spaces** – partner with other public spaces providers and community organizations to offer complementary experiences and integrated programming.

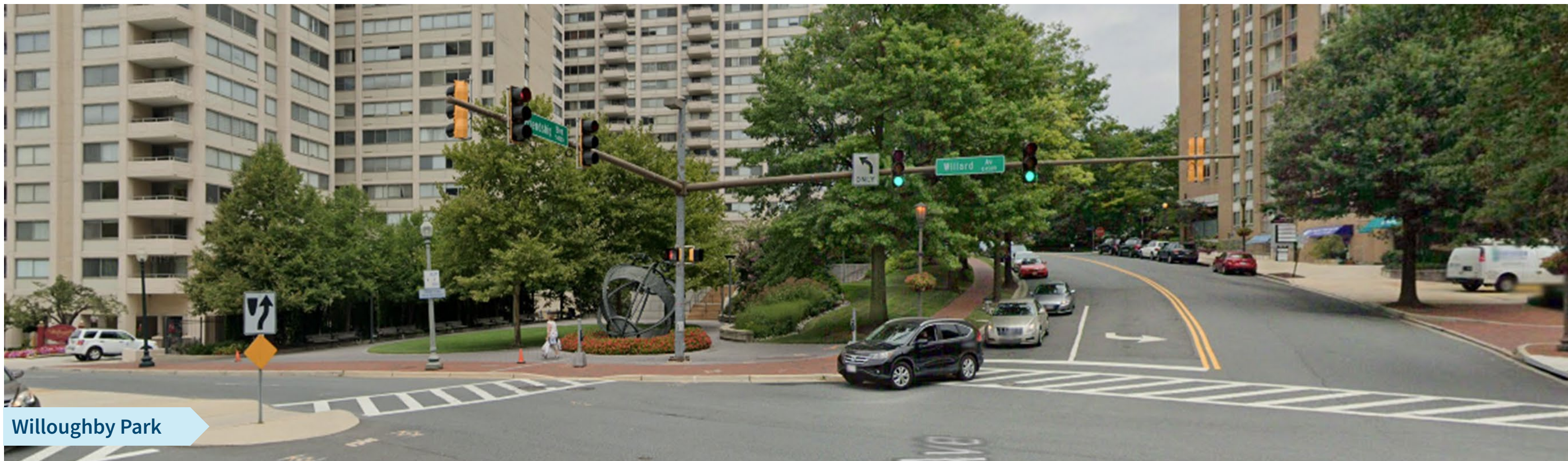


Parks & Public Spaces

Recommendations

Existing Parks & Public Spaces:

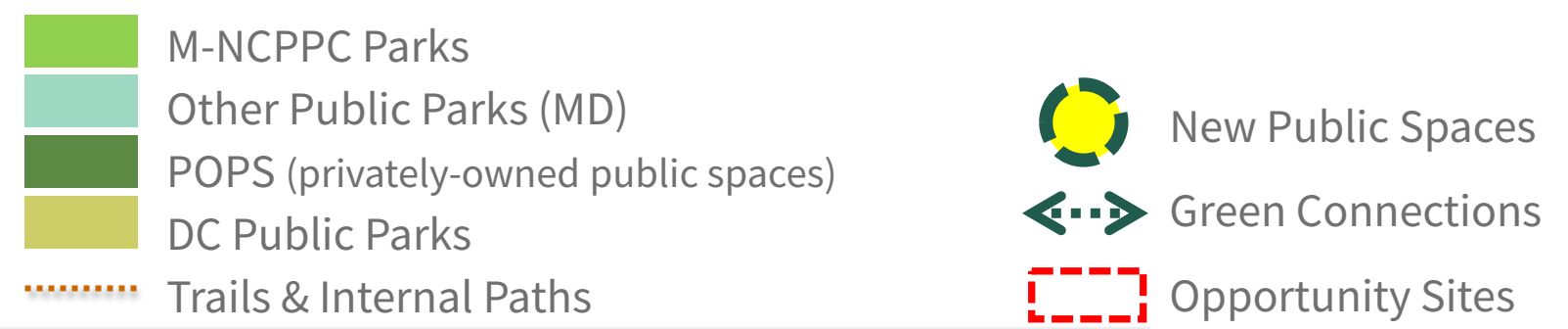
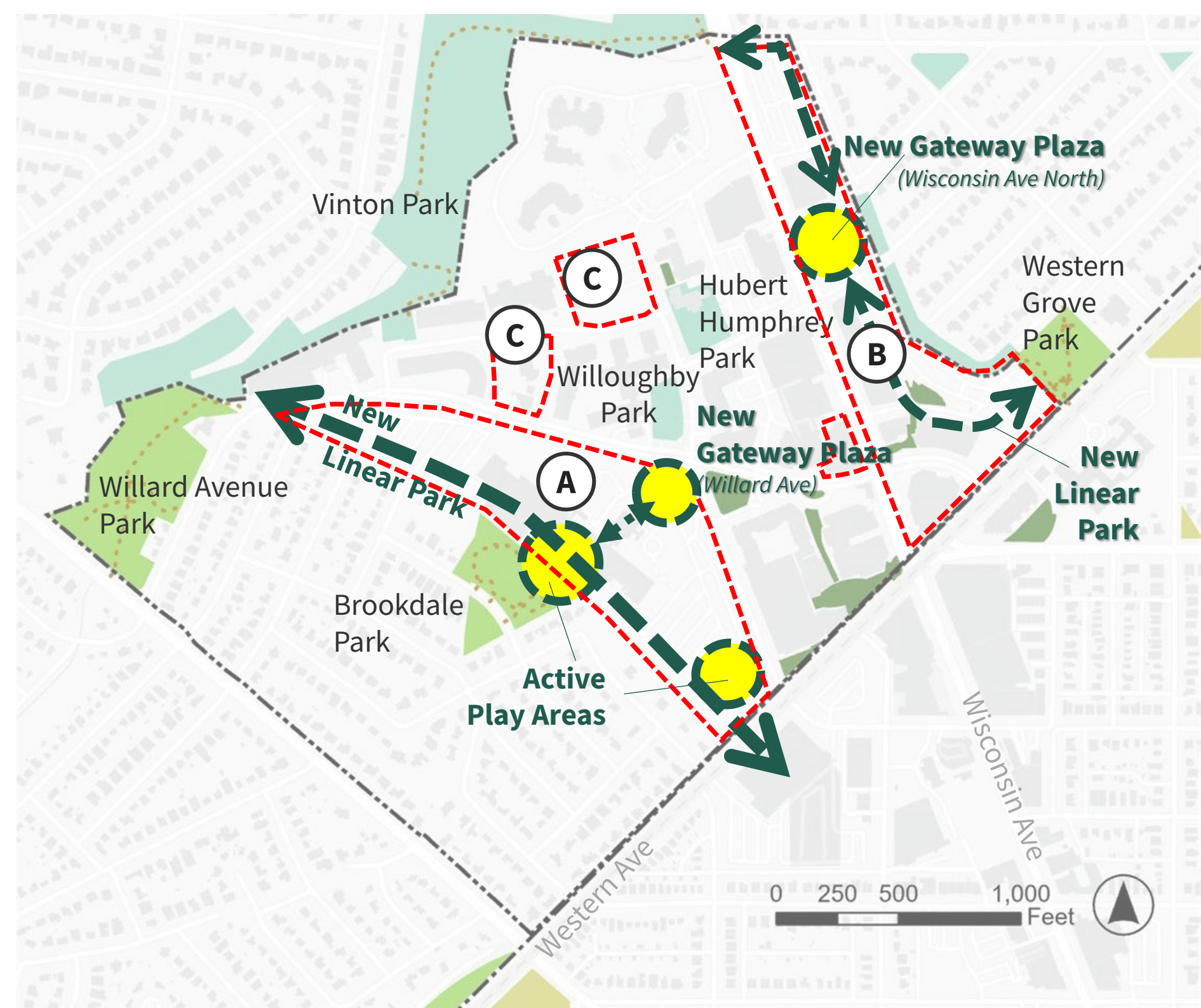
- **Consider improving existing public spaces** that are not welcoming and not well-visited.



Parks & Public Spaces Recommendations

New Public Spaces:

- A. GEICO Site:** New Linear Park, Active Play Areas (expand Brookdale Park) & New Gateway Plaza
- B. Saks/The Collection Site:** New Gateway Plaza – social gathering focus / New Linear Park (with redevelopment)
- C. Other sites:** public spaces with social gathering areas and small play areas



Parks & Public Spaces Recommendations

New Public Spaces:

- **Create new public spaces focused on active and social experiences on larger development sites** such as GEICO and Saks/The Collection.
- **Provide connections to proposed parks and public spaces** especially on larger development sites such as the GEICO and Saks parcels.





HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation: Goals

- Recognize and interpret the diversity, heritage, and history of the Plan area.
- Encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of historically significant properties.

Historic Preservation: Recommendations

Evaluate the Edwin and Julia Reynolds House located at 5320 Willard Avenue for listing in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.



Historic Preservation: Recommendations

Preserve and protect the Shoemaker (Isaac) Family Cemetery during development review, subdivision review, and approval processes.

The screenshot displays a web application interface for "Burial Sites of Montgomery County". The header includes the "iti" logo, the title "Burial Sites of Montgomery County", a "Planning Web Link", and an information icon. The main content area is split into two panels. The left panel shows a metadata table for a specific burial site, and the right panel shows a map with a red location pin.

Burial Sites Inventory: Shoemaker (Isaac) Family Cemetery	
Name	Shoemaker (Isaac) Family Cemetery
Earliest Burial	1,853.00
Latest Burial	
Location Confirmed	Yes
GIS Source	2006 inventory
GIS Confidence	Known
Number of Burials	approx 5
Source Data Date	10/15/18
Source Data Datum	
Revision Date	12/14/2018, 7:00 PM
Boundary Type	Point
Extant	Yes
Horizontal Accuracy	
Originator	Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
Sensitive Location	NO
Restrictions	
Maximum Public Display Scale	0
Sensitivity Contacts	

The map on the right shows a residential street grid with a red location pin marking the cemetery site. The map includes a search bar at the top with the text "Find address or place" and a search icon. The map also features standard navigation controls like zoom in (+), zoom out (-), home, and refresh.



ENVIRONMENT

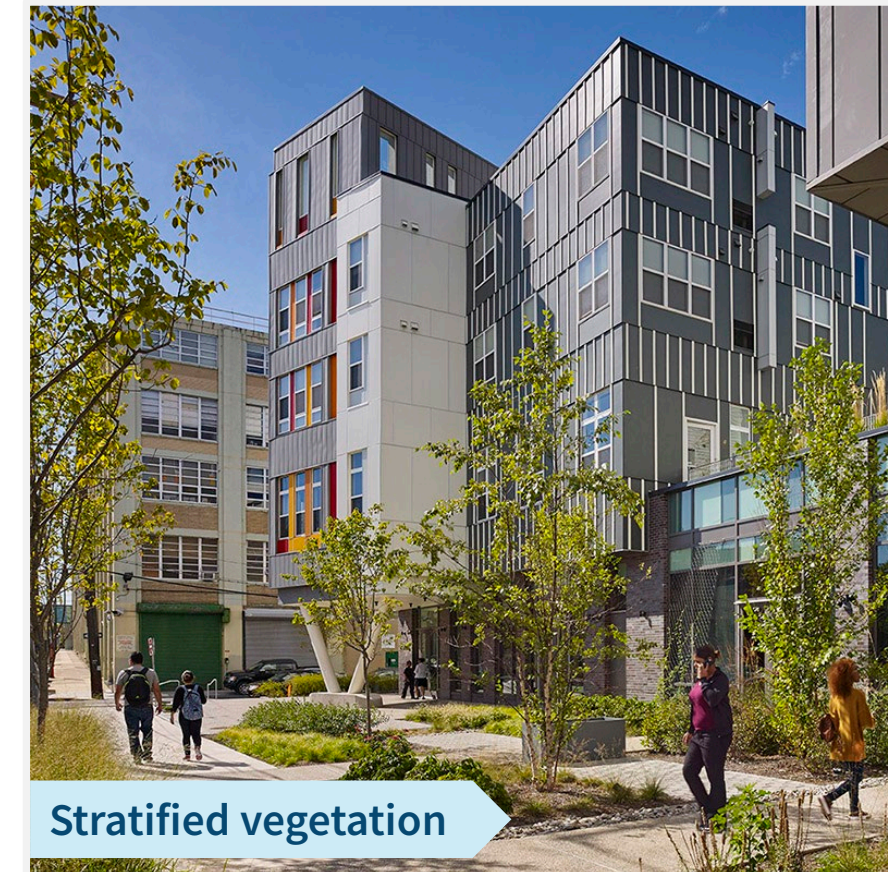
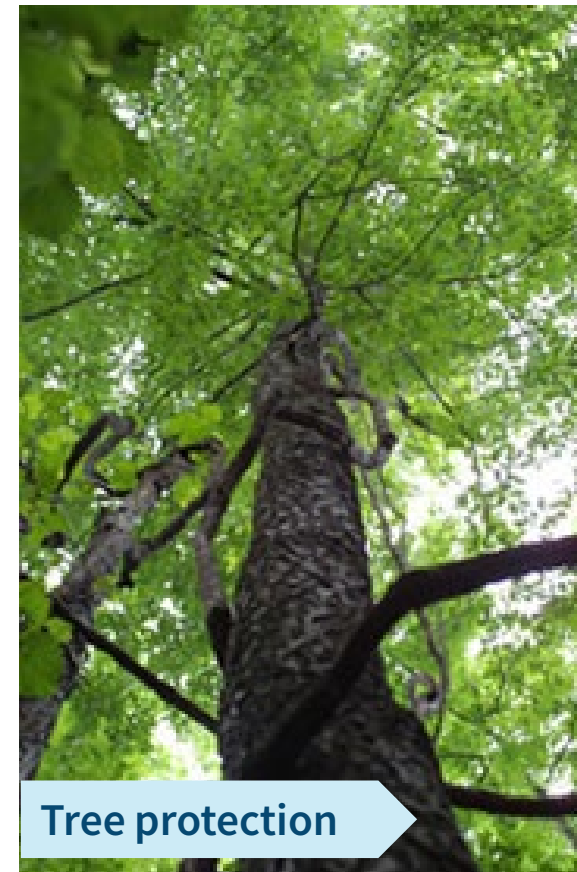
Goals: Environment

- **Enhance climate resiliency** through the implementation of environmental features & infrastructure that can withstand and reduce climate stressors such as urban heat, biodiversity decline, and fossil fuel consumption.
- **Use Nature-Based Design Solutions** to increase and enhance green cover throughout the community improving the public and private realm.
- **Restore and improve the ecological health** and performance of existing habitats.
- **Prioritize high performance & energy efficient buildings** to minimize carbon emissions, reduce utility costs and the reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Implement innovative urban design** principals to reduce environmental impacts and enhance resilience to create a vibrant and equitable community where people, place, and nature come together.



Environment: Recommendations

- **Protect and restore** existing forests, stream buffers, woodlands, and streams.
- Protect mature **canopy trees** and use state of the art tree-save measures.
- Implement **cool, shaded elements** into the landscape and streetscape including canopy trees, stratified vegetation, shade structures, & shaded bus shelters.



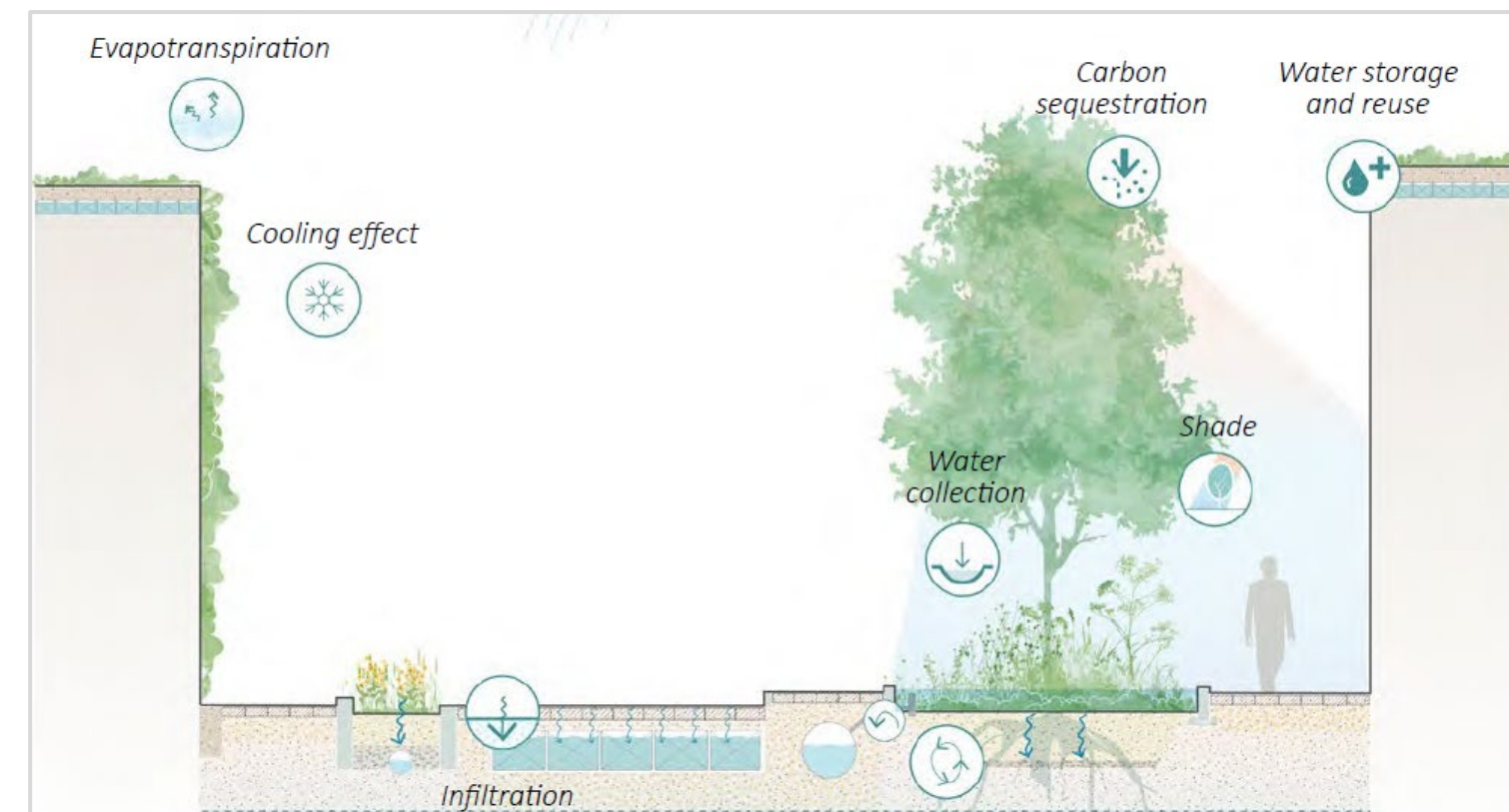
Environment: Recommendations

- Integrate **Nature-Based Design Solutions** (NBDS) elements into the landscape to cool and shade landscapes, sequester greenhouse gas emissions, increase biodiversity, and provide habitat.
- **Reduce impervious surfaces**, particularly where impervious cover is over 90 percent of lot size.



Environment: Recommendations

- When feasible, use light-colored, **highly reflective surfaces** on sidewalks, parking areas/lots, playgrounds, and gathering areas to reduce urban heat temperatures
- Provide a minimum of **35 percent green cover**. This may include intensive green roofs or native canopy tree cover, or a combination of both.



Environment: Building Recommendations

- On Commercial-Residential (CR) zones use **Incentive Zoning points in the category of Green Buildings** to achieve high performing, energy efficient buildings.
- Use **on-site alternative energy generation** such as solar and geothermal, micro-grids, co-generation, energy hubs, and/or future renewable energy technologies.
- To the extent possible, optimize **building and site orientation** to maximize passive and active solar energy.
- Prioritize **adaptive reuse** of existing buildings





NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

- Community feedback on Preliminary Recommendations
- Working Draft expected by Summer 2026



Staying Connected

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Q & A



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