



Planning Board Briefing, Bethesda Downtown Plan



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Description

Summary

Update the Planning Board on the progress of the Bethesda Downtown Plan regarding:

- Community Planning Workshop 2, May 17, 2014
- Visual Preference Survey
- Concept Framework Plan
- Some initial thoughts on implementation tools
- Consultants update.

Community Planning Workshop 2

On May 17, 2014, staff held a second Community Planning Workshop at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. Attended by over 125 people, the workshop unveiled the draft Concept Framework Plan and sought comment from participants, who worked in groups to graphically provide feedback.

Visual Preference Survey

In conjunction with the Workshop, staff prepared an online Visual Preference Survey for street character, gathering spaces, and types of landscaping for those spaces in each of the proposed districts. To date the informal survey has yielded over 900 responses and due to its popularity has been extended to June 16. The responses will inform staff's efforts in developing plan recommendations over the summer.

Concept Framework Plan

The Concept Framework Plan begins to identify key elements of a vision for Downtown Bethesda:

- activity centers
- civic gathering spaces
- parks and open space
- streets
- relative development intensity.

Staff has begun looking at ways to enhance and better connect existing activity centers – the Woodmont Triangle, the Metro core along Wisconsin Avenue, and the Bethesda Row area – through the creation or expansion of civic gathering spaces and by improving street character and function. Based on feedback from property owners and other community members, staff has also identified two “emerging” activity centers: “Arlington South” at the intersection of Arlington Road and Bradley Boulevard; and the “Pearl District” along Pearl Street between the Capital Crescent Trail and East-West Highway.

Staff’s initial thoughts about the distribution of development intensity in Downtown Bethesda take into account the existing and emerging activity centers, proximity to the Red Line and Purple Line stations, the heights of existing buildings, and compatibility with existing residential neighborhoods.

This Concept Framework Plan reflects some of the feedback staff received at and since the May 17 Planning Workshop. The Framework will continue to evolve as staff conducts further study of the Plan Area over the summer.

Some initial thoughts on implementation tools

Beyond master plan recommendations about zoning and public benefit priorities, staff is investigating some additional tools to help reach of master plan goals of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

These include:

- Density transfer: Adapt the Woodmont Triangle and CR zone density transfer provisions to create density transfer sending and receiving areas throughout Downtown Bethesda. The goal is to move development density within Downtown Bethesda from places to be reserved (e.g., new parks, historic sites, and other community resources) to where it is most appropriate (e.g., activity centers and priority retail areas).
- Amenities endowment: Implement public amenities in Downtown Bethesda where they will have the most impact, as defined in the Plan. In lieu of providing disconnected amenities on a site-by-site basis, projects would contribute to the Endowment.
- EcoDistrict: Further the aims of economic, social, and environmental sustainability in Downtown Bethesda using a variety of strategies for individual projects and for the Downtown as a whole.

Consultants

Staff is currently finalizing efforts to bring on board consultants for traffic modeling, a retail strategy, and the EcoDistrict.

Attachment: Bethesda Downtown Concept Framework Plan

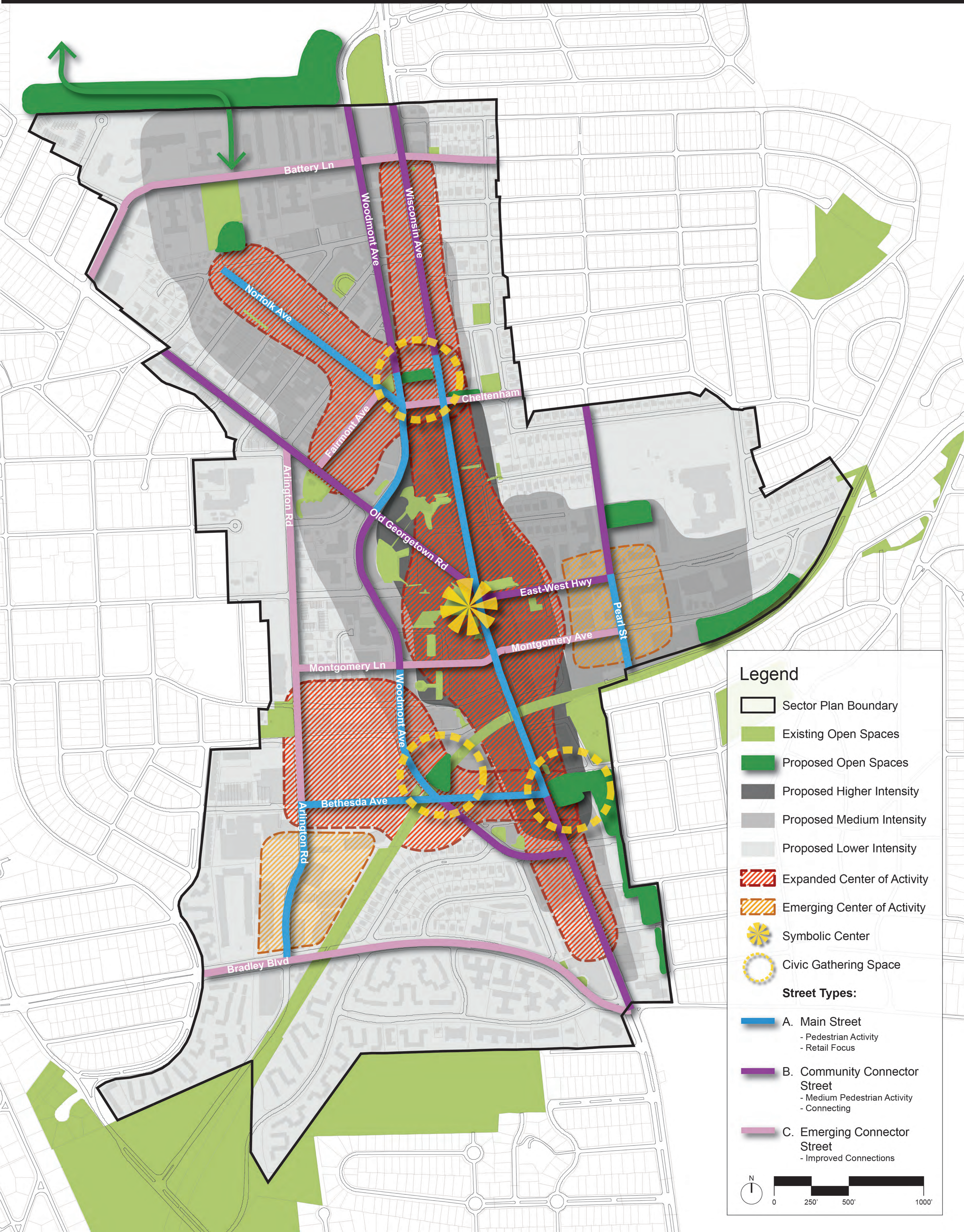


BETHESDA

DOWNTOWN PLAN



Draft Concept Framework Plan



Legend

- Sector Plan Boundary
 - Existing Open Spaces
 - Proposed Open Spaces
 - Proposed Higher Intensity
 - Proposed Medium Intensity
 - Proposed Lower Intensity
 - Expanded Center of Activity
 - Emerging Center of Activity
 - Symbolic Center
 - Civic Gathering Space
- Street Types:**
- A. Main Street
 - Pedestrian Activity
 - Retail Focus
 - B. Community Connector Street
 - Medium Pedestrian Activity
 - Connecting
 - C. Emerging Connector Street
 - Improved Connections

