

5500 WISCONSIN AVENUE SKETCH PLAN

Description

Sketch Plan: Request to allow up to 406,563 square feet of density for a mixed-use redevelopment (including 125,472 square feet of existing non-residential to remain), including up to 278,591 square feet of residential uses (which includes up to 50,238 square feet of MPDU Bonus density for providing 15% MPDUs) and up to 137,972 square feet of nonresidential uses.

PLAN TYPE: SKETCH PLAN
NO. 320220010
COMPLETED: 11-08-2021

MCPB
Item No. 3
11.18.2021

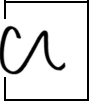
2425 Reddie Drive
Floor 13
Wheaton, MD 20902



Grace Bogdan, Planner Coordinator, DownCounty, grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4533



Stephanie Dickel, Supervisor, DownCounty, Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4527



Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, DownCounty, Elza.Hisel-McCoy@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.2115

LOCATION:

Located on in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and South Park Avenue;

PROPERTY SIZE

2.72 tract acres

MASTER PLAN ZONE

1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*

APPLICANT

Carr Companies, LLC & Donohoe Development Company, LLC

ACCEPTANCE DATE:

August 19, 2021

REVIEW BASIS:

Zoning Ordinance in effect on October 30, 2014



Summary

- Staff recommends **Approval** of the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Sketch Plan, with conditions.
- The Project is located within the boundary of Friendship Heights Village. The Village Council voted to deny the Project at their October 26th meeting. (Attachment F) However, this application is not subject to any requirement within the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland that would require a two-thirds majority vote if the Planning Board were to approve the Sketch Plan.
- The Applicant received a 30-day administrative extension of the review period from November 17, 2021 to December 9, 2021.
- The Applicant proposes to create a private shared street connecting Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza, envisioned to prioritize pedestrians and provide access for parking and loading, with the design to be finalized at time of Site Plan.
- The proposed development will be a maximum of 185 feet in height, exceeding the mapped height of the zone (90T) as allowed by the height-averaging provisions within Section 59.4.5.2.D of the Zoning Ordinance, which allows a portion of the building to exceed the mapped height of the zone so long as the average building height does not exceed the mapped height of the zone. See Section 4 for further discussion and analysis.
- The proposed public benefits include minimum parking, structured parking, a through block connection, affordable housing, architectural elevations, exceptional design, and measures to protect and enhance the natural environment.
- A subsequent Site Plan application will be required for the development.
- Staff has received correspondence for both support and opposition to the Project, see Section 5 for further description and Attachment G for correspondence.

SECTION 1: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Staff recommends approval of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, Sketch Plan No. 320220010, for up to 406,563 square feet of density for a mixed use redevelopment (including 125,472 square feet of existing non-residential to remain), including up to 278,591 square feet of residential uses (which includes up to 50,238 square feet of MPDU bonus density for providing 15% MPDUs) and up to 137,972 square feet of nonresidential uses on 2.72 acres, zoned CR 3.0 C 2.0 R 2.75 H 90T, in the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*. The following site development elements shown on the latest electronic version as of the date of this Staff Report submitted via ePlans to the M-NCPPC are required except as modified by the conditions below:

1. Maximum density and height;
2. Approximate location of lots and public dedications;
3. General location and extent of public open space;
4. General location of vehicular access points; and
5. Public benefit schedule.

All other elements of the Sketch Plan are illustrative and subject to refinement at the time of Site Plan.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Density

The Sketch Plan is limited to a maximum of 406,563 total square feet of total development, (including 125,472 square feet of existing non-residential to remain) including up to 278,591 square feet of residential uses (which includes up to 50,238 square feet of MPDU bonus density for providing 15% MPDUs) and up to 137,972 square feet of non-residential uses. Any given combination of commercial and residential density shall not exceed 406,563 square feet. The maximum number of dwelling units and use mix will be determined at Site Plan.

2. Height

The development is limited to a maximum average building height of 90 feet, as measured from the building height measuring point to be illustrated on the Certified Site Plan. The average building height will be determined as described in Section 59.4.5.2.D of the Zoning Ordinance.

3. Incentive Density

The development must be constructed with the public benefits listed below unless modifications are made under Section 59.7.3.3.I. and this Sketch Plan is amended. Total points must equal at least 100

and be chosen from at least four categories as required by Section 59.4.5.4.A.2. The requirements of Division 59.4.7 and the *CR Zone Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines* must be fulfilled for each public benefit. Final points will be established at Site Plan approval.

- a) Transit Proximity, achieved through level 1 transit proximity;
- b) Diversity of uses and activities, achieved by providing affordable housing beyond the zoning requirements;
- c) Connectivity and Mobility, achieved by providing fewer than the maximum parking spaces under the Zoning Ordinance and a through-block connection;
- d) Quality of Building and Site Design, achieved through architectural elevations, exceptional design, and structured parking; and
- e) Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment achieved through the purchase of building lot terminations. Additional public benefit subcategories within this Category may be considered at the time of Site Plan without further Sketch Plan amendment.

4. Public Open Space

The Applicant must provide a minimum of 10% of the Site Area (79,012 square feet) as Public Open Space, totaling 7,901 square feet.

5. Streetscape

At the time of Site Plan, the Applicant must adhere to the Complete Streets Design Guidelines as follows:

- a) Along the Site frontages on South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza must install the streetscape standards of a Downtown Street within the existing right-of-way, with the buffer, sidewalk, and frontage zones to be determined at Site Plan, subject to approval by the Village of Friendship Heights.
- b) In the coordination with the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), the Applicant must install on the Site frontage along Wisconsin Avenue the streetscape standards of a Downtown Boulevard and underground all utilities.

6. Future Street Connection

At the time of Site Plan, the Applicant will finalize the design and operation of the shared street. The Site Plan submittal must address the following:

- a) The alley must be flush (without curbs).
- b) The design must include vertical protection for pedestrians such as, but not limited to, bollards (permanent or removable) or similar protection as approved by Staff.
- c) To reduce conflicts with pedestrians on Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza, narrow the curb cuts to the minimum width acceptable to Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Fire & Rescue.
- d) Provide truck-turning templates for the intended design vehicle to inform the minimum width needed for safe operation of the vehicles.
- e) Explore ways to limit conflicts between pedestrians and motorists within the shared street through operational alternatives. Submit the following design alternatives for vehicular circulation along the future street:
 - i. One-way direction inbound from Wisconsin Avenue, with a narrower alley width where it intersects with Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza;
 - ii. Two-way circulation pattern with inbound and outbound access to the underground parking garage for the proposed residential units;
 - iii. Two-way circulation pattern of the shared street, but the parking garage access from the shared street would be inbound only;
 - iv. One-way operation of the shared street;
 - v. All design alternatives shall explore the potential to restrict parking garage access from the shared street to inbound only for the residents.
- f) The ultimate design of the future street must achieve the following performance criteria:
 - i. A continuous pedestrian pathway along the north side of the alley with vertical separation from vehicles (e.g., bollards);
 - ii. Access to and from the bike storage room;
 - iii. Access to abutting ground-floor retail uses;
 - iv. Pavement treatments delineating designated spaces for motorized users and for non-motorized users that prioritizes the pedestrian; and
 - v. Parking garage access from the private shared street will be for residents only.

8. Future Coordination for the Site Plan

In addition to any other requirements for Site Plans under Chapter 59, the following must be addressed in the Site Plan application:

- a) The Applicant must submit and receive approval of a Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan.
- b) Stormwater Management concept approval consistent with Chapter 19 of the Montgomery County Code.
- c) Provide a noise analysis or request a waiver per Section 2.2.2 of the 1983 *Noise Guidelines*.
- d) Submit a loading management plan which will avoid loading during peak activity hours (morning/evening peak travel times and midday peak activities).
- e) Provide Alternative Compliance justification under Section 59.6.8 for the two existing driveways (Section 59.6.1.4) related to the hotel to remain.
- f) Explore the feasibility of an alternative building massing that lowers the overall height of the future tower by one story, and offsets the height reduction by proportionately increasing the height and square footage of the building base.
- g) Ensure the first floor of the future development is of sufficient height to create a pedestrian friendly arcade along the future shared street.
- h) Provide screening for the existing parking structure from the future street connection in the form of art murals or other form acceptable by Staff.

SECTION 2: SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Vicinity and Analysis

Vicinity

The Property is located on the southern block of Wisconsin Avenue with frontage also on South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza. To the north is a 15-story medical office building, across Wisconsin Avenue to the east is the Collection at Chevy Chase which includes 1-3-story retail buildings and associated parking. To the west across The Hills Plaza is the Friendship Heights Community Center and Hubert Humphrey Park as well as multifamily residential buildings farther west. To the south are commercial, medical office, and residential buildings along Wisconsin Avenue, with the Shops at Wisconsin Place, the Friendship Heights Metro Station, and the District of Columbia boundary less than a ¼-mile south of the Property.

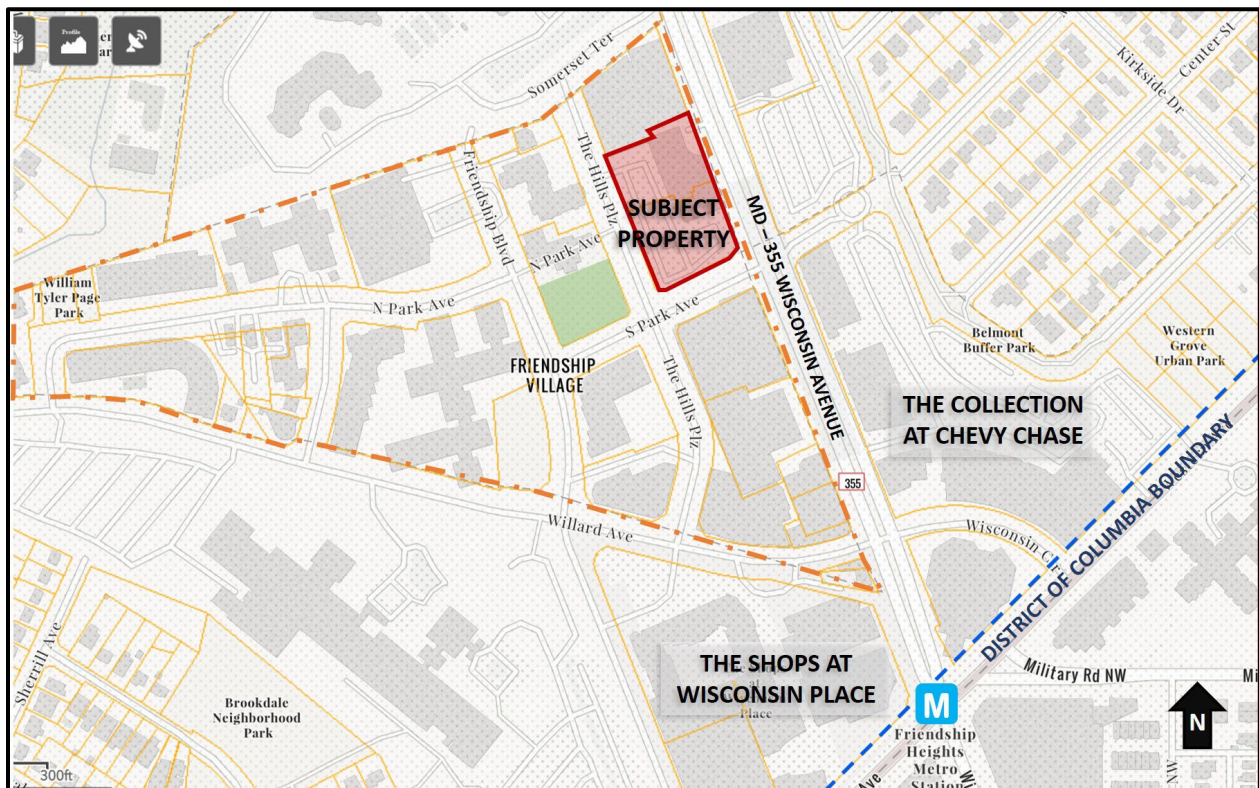


Figure 1 – Vicinity Map with Village of Friendship Heights Boundary shown in orange

Subject Property

The Subject Site (Subject Property or Property) is located within the Village of Friendship Heights and is within the Town Center as delineated within the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan* (Sector Plan). The Site is comprised of a single lot, Lot 21 in Block I within the “Friendship Heights” subdivision, as recorded in Montgomery County Land Records Plat No. 9126 (dated 1969). The Property is currently improved with a single building connected with a below-grade parking garage that contains a 12-story hotel and adjoining 1-story retail with structured parking above the retail.

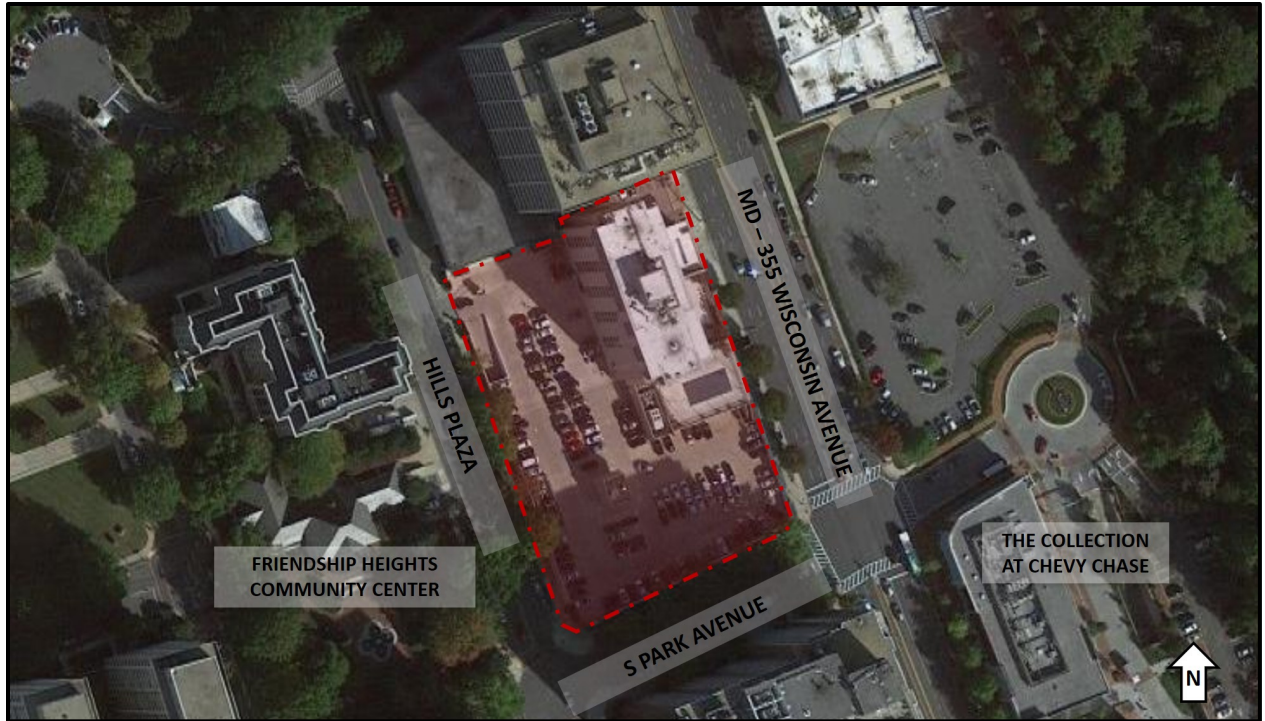


Figure 2 – Aerial Map



Figure 3 – Existing building viewed from Wisconsin Avenue, with the 12-story hotel and adjoining 1-story retail with structured parking

Site Analysis

The Property is zoned CR 3.0 C 2.0 R 2.75 H 90T. The Property contains three frontages along Wisconsin Avenue, South Park Avenue, and The Hills Plaza. Access to the existing hotel is gained through two existing curb cuts on Wisconsin Avenue which allow for drop off/pick up as well as access to the parking garage. There is a second entrance to the parking garage off The Hills Plaza, and there are no curb cuts on South Park Avenue. The Site's topography increases approximately 10 feet from Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza.

The Subject Property is located within the Little Falls Branch watershed which is a Use I-P¹ watershed. The Site is not associated with any environmentally sensitive features such as forest areas, stream buffers, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, or steep slopes. Numerous street trees border the site, some of which are considered significant trees with sizes measuring at least 24" but less than 30" in diameter-at-breast-height (DBH). Just west of the site, within the study area along South Park Ave and The Hills Plaza, two specimen sized Willow Oaks border Hubert Humphrey Park; however, these specimen trees are not expected to be impacted by this project. The soils associated with the Property are classified generally as urban land, which is not highly erodible or otherwise sensitive. There are no known rare, threatened, or endangered species on site. There are no known historic properties on site.

SECTION 3: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposal

The Applicant proposes to redevelop the southern portion of the existing lot that currently contains the 1-story retail with a new 18-story mixed-use development with ground floor retail and multifamily residential above, anticipating up to 380 dwelling units with 15% moderately priced dwelling units. The existing hotel, structured parking and associated access points along Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza are to remain. The Applicant proposes a total density of 406,563 total square feet. This includes up to 278,591 square feet of residential uses, which includes up to 50,238 square feet of MPDU bonus density for providing 15% MPDUs, and up to 137,972 square feet of non-residential uses (which includes 125,472 square feet of existing hotel). Any given combination of commercial and residential density shall not exceed 406,563 square feet.

The Applicant proposes to construct a private shared street connection between the existing hotel and future development, which will connect Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza and allow for loading and residential parking access from the future street. The proposed development will be considered one structure connected by the existing below grade parking garage that emerges at the surface as two towers, one for the existing hotel and one for the future mixed-use development. The proposed development will not require a Preliminary Plan as the Property is on a recorded lot and no additional dedication is required, however a subsequent Site Plan will be required.

¹ Use I-P:

WATER CONTACT RECREATION & PROTECTION OF AQUATIC LIFE, AND PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

Waters that are suitable for: water contact sports; play and leisure time activities where the human body may come in direct contact with the surface water; fishing; the growth and propagation of fish (other than trout); other aquatic life, and wildlife; agricultural water supply, industrial water supply, and use as a public water supply.

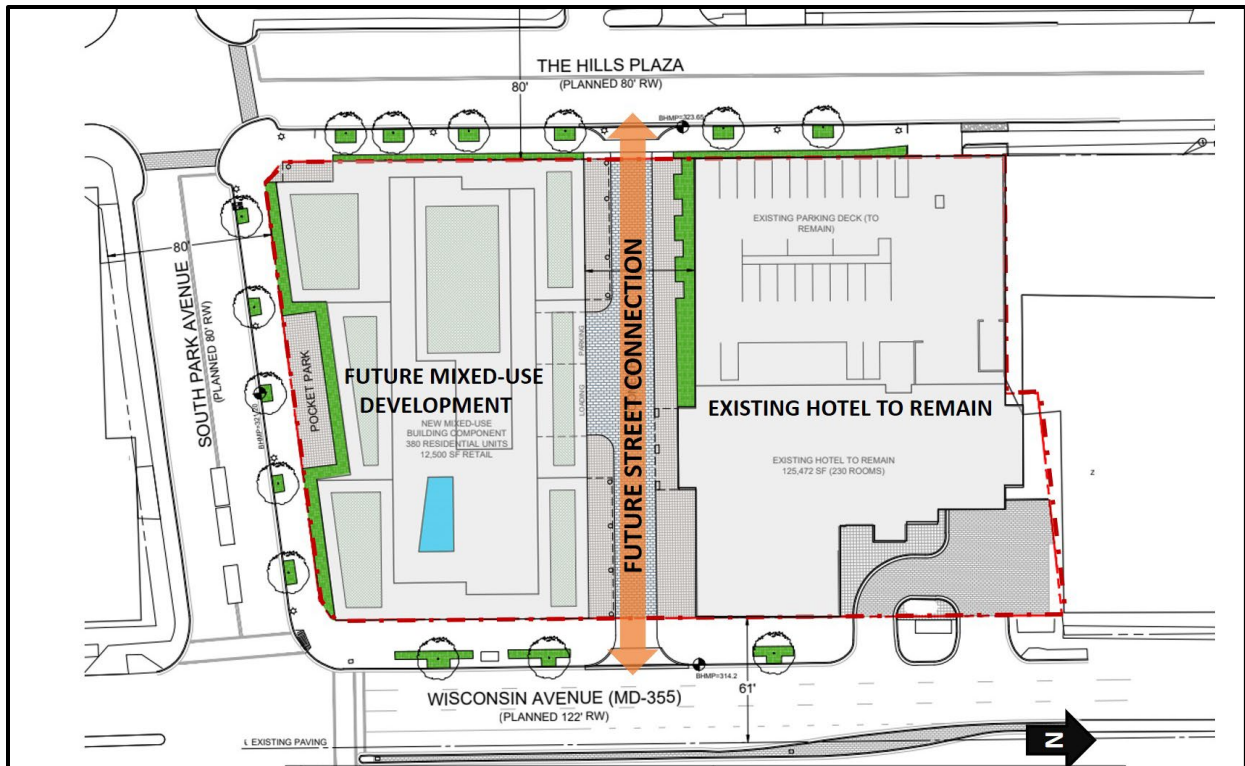


Figure 4 – Proposed Sketch Plan (north arrow adjusted to the right)

Mixed-Use Development

As proposed, the future development will provide a 6-story base that defines and contributes to the existing street wall along the Wisconsin Avenue frontage with a setback above the 6th story to allow a narrow tower for the remaining 13 stories. Along the South Park Avenue frontage, the base will be setback further from the property line to provide a pocket park and lower two-story base, with deep setbacks above the 6th floor to further define the tower from the inner street and provide additional separation from the existing residential building to the south. The main entrance will be on the corner of South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza, strengthening the future development’s relationship to the existing residential to the southwest as well as the Hubert Humphrey Park and Friendship Heights Community Center located across The Hills Plaza. The proposed first floor retail is envisioned to front along the future shared street connection to activate the area and allow for additional porosity through the large existing block. The future shared street connection will also provide access for loading and the existing parking garage, as well as a new entrance to the hotel.

Maximum Building Height

The Property is zoned CR 3.0 C 2.0 R 2.75 H 90T. The T provision, as specified within Section 59.4.5.2.D of the Zoning Ordinance, allows height on a portion of a building to increase above the number following the H, in this case 90’, so long as the average height of the building is no greater than the maximum height allowed by the mapped zone. The Applicant proposes a maximum building height of 185 feet, however with the existing 12-story building and the massing of the future building to contain lower levels, the average overall building height of the Site will remain below the mapped zone of 90 feet. The Applicant has received confirmation from the Department of Permitting Services that the methodology used to determine the average height for this Site is in

conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. Staff has also reviewed and analyzed the methodology, which is further described in Section 4, Finding 1.

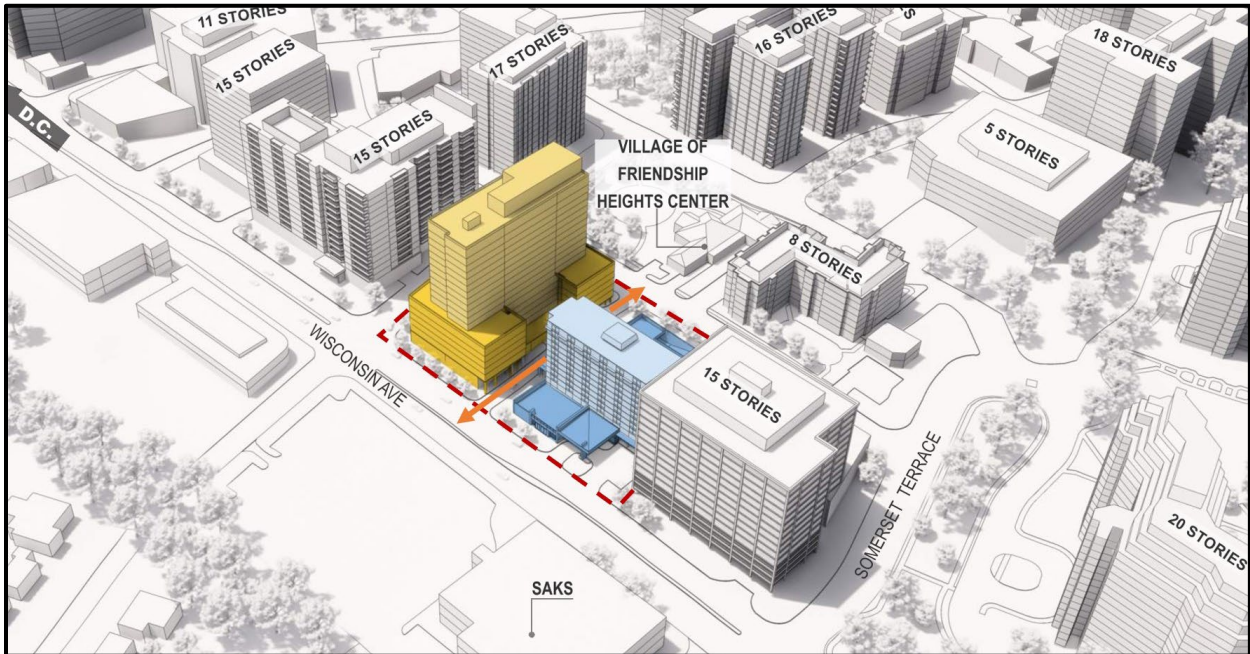


Figure 5 – Massing from Wisconsin Avenue looking south (existing hotel in blue, future development in yellow, future street in orange)

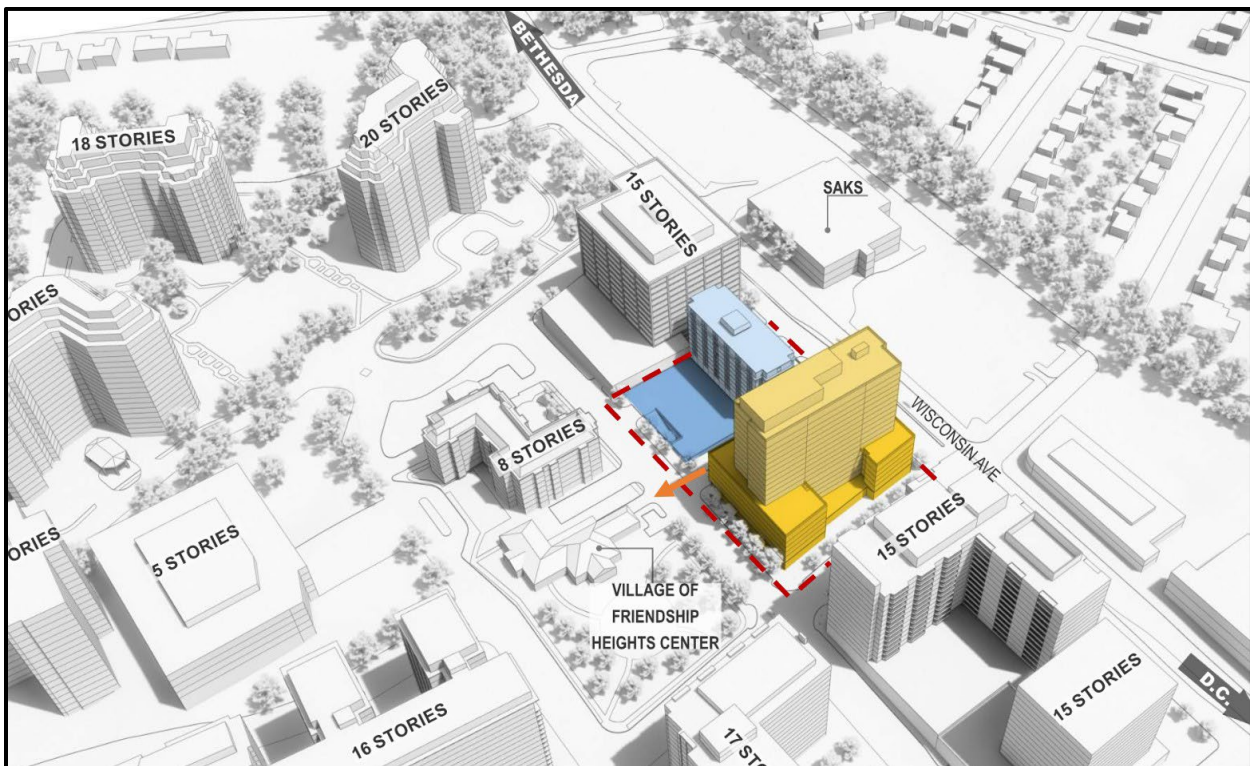


Figure 6 – Massing from Willard Avenue looking north (existing hotel in blue, future development in yellow, future street in orange)

Open Space

With a tract area of 2.73 acres and three frontages, the Applicant is required to provide 10% of the Site as public open space. The Applicant proposes to achieve this requirement by providing a pocket park along the South Park Avenue frontage as well as pedestrian-oriented space along the future shared street connection between Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza, as shown in Figure 7 below. Public Open Space must meet the requirements of Section 59.6.3 and will be further reviewed at the time of Site Plan.

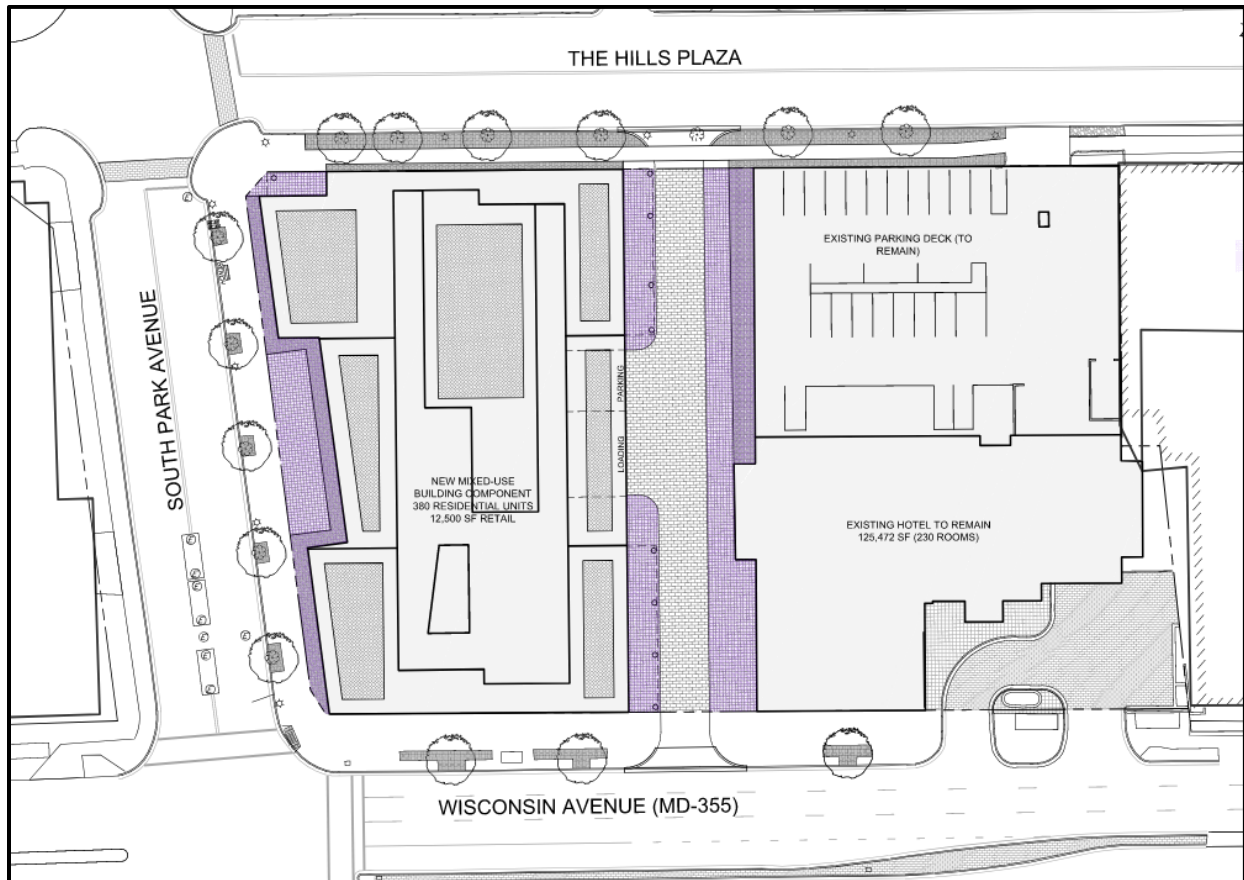


Figure 7 – Conceptual Public Open Space highlighted in purple

Environment

The Subject Property is located within the Little Falls watershed, which is a Use I-P watershed. The site is not associated with any environmentally sensitive features such as forest areas, stream buffers, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, steep slopes or specimen trees. There are street trees generally measuring less than 24" DBH associated with the Subject Property frontages.

Forest Conservation

Since the approval of the recent amendments to the Forest Conservation Law, all properties seeking approval of a Sketch Plan after February 26, 2018, must obtain approval of a Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) or Forest Conservation Exemption prior to Planning Board action on the Sketch Plan.

Staff approved an NRI/FSD, plan no. 420220270, for the site on September 14, 2021 (Attachment B). The plan identifies the existing man-made and natural features associated with the Property, such as the buildings, associated parking, the street trees and landscape elements. As briefly discussed previously in this report, the on-site setting includes street trees measuring at least 24" DBH. There are no rare, threatened, or endangered species, no stream/buffers, or steep slopes on site. There are no historic or cultural properties onsite.

Sketch Plan Applications do not require a Forest Conservation Plan, however at time of Site Plan, the Applicant must submit a combined Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan. Although there is no forest on-site or adjacent to the Property, due to tract area, land use, and anticipated offsite work for utility purposes, Staff anticipates a minor afforestation requirement resulting from the proposed development.

Noise

The Subject Application proposes residential units to be built within 300 feet arterial roads with more than 5,000 cars per day. As a result, a noise analysis, or waiver per Section 2.2.2 of the Noise Guidelines, is needed prior to approval of the future Site Plan.

Stormwater Management (SWM)

A Stormwater Management Concept Plan is not required at the time of Sketch Plan; however, the Applicant submitted a stormwater narrative with this Application. In accordance with stormwater regulations, the narrative states that this project will employ ESD measures such as bioretention planters and green roofs with a minimum depth of eight inches. Submission of an official stormwater concept plan to the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and approval will be required at the time of Site Plan.

Transportation

Vehicular access to the existing (and remaining) hotel component of the Project will remain unchanged and will continue to be provided off The Hills Plaza and Wisconsin Avenue. The hotel just recently underwent renovation and therefore no additional physical changes are proposed on the hotel portion of the Site at this time. The Applicant will be subject to alternative compliance analysis for a corner lot with more than one driveway (Section 59-6.1.4.E) at the time of Site Plan.

Vehicular access to the new, residential tower component will be provided internal to the Property, off of the proposed private shared street. The intent of the shared street is to create an inviting space for outdoor seating, gathering, and special events while also providing an area on-site for loading, routine and non-routine deliveries, ride-share queuing, and trash collection that will not disrupt the flow of travel for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists on any of the Site's three street frontages. It has the added benefit of breaking up the urban block and expanding pedestrian connectivity within the Village of Friendship Heights.

Parking is provided on-site within the below-grade parking facility which spans the entire lot. The parking facility is comprised of two levels and is proposed to accommodate 391 spaces, which is more than the minimum parking required for the existing hotel as well as the proposed mixed-use development (288 parking spaces). The final number of parking spaces will be determined at Site Plan.

The Application was reviewed by Planning, MCDOT and MDOT SHA Staff, as well as the Village of Friendship Heights and there was discussion among the reviewers about the design and the operation of the shared street. There was interest in exploring a one-way configuration of the private street. Additionally, reviewers had thoughts about how the shared street should be connected to the below-grade parking facility on the Site. The final width of the private street both at the connections with Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza and throughout the shared street will be determined at Site Plan. For this reason, the Applicant was directed to explore multiple design and operational configurations to be further refined for an ultimate design at the time of Site Plan review.

In response, the Applicant submitted four (4) design alternatives which included exhibits and brief descriptions, included as Attachment D to this report. In all of the design alternatives, the Applicant agreed to limit the use of the parking garage access from the shared street to the residential units, to be controlled by a key fob. The variables amongst the alternatives focused on permutations of one-way/two-way circulation and ingress/egress restrictions to the on-site parking facility from the shared street.

The following summarizes the alternatives review and Staff's recommendations for the final design at Site Plan.

Alternative 1 (The Applicant preferred alternative) proposes a two-way circulation pattern with inbound and outbound access to the underground parking garage for the proposed residential units. In this and all of the design options, patrons and employees of the hotel will continue to use the existing driveways on Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza. This design option provides the most flexibility in access to and from the Site. However, the two-way operation of the alley requires the alley to be wider than perhaps necessary, thereby increasing the exposure to conflicts between motorists entering/leaving the Site and pedestrians walking along The Hills Plaza and Wisconsin Avenue.

Alternative 2 also proposes a two-way circulation pattern of the shared street, but the parking garage access from the shared street would be inbound only. All outbound movements from both the residential use and the hotel will occur from The Hills Plaza. This has the benefit of reducing conflicts between the pedestrians and motorists within the private street. The trade-off is that all egress movements will occur from the existing driveway on The Hills Plaza.

Alternative 3 (Staff's preferred alternative) explores the potential for a one-way operation of the shared street. As presented, Alternative 3 shows motorists entering the Site from The Hills Plaza and exiting onto Wisconsin Avenue. Staff prefers this alternative because it allows for a narrower curb cut, thereby reducing conflict exposure between motorists entering and leaving the Site and pedestrians traveling along Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza. A one-way operation of the private street also reduces potential conflicts between non-motorized and motorized users within the confines of the shared street. Staff requests the Applicant explore the reverse circulation pattern with motorists entering the Site from Wisconsin Avenue and exiting onto The Hills Plaza. Staff would also like the Applicant to study the impacts of configuring the garage access such that it is inbound only from the shared street as shown in Alternative 2.

Alternative 4 shows a two-way vehicular access point from Wisconsin Avenue but does not continue through to The Hills Plaza. Non-motorized travel modes would be able to connect to the sidewalks on The Hills Plaza. This has the benefit of reducing through-trips but requires a wider curb cut on Wisconsin Avenue.

As conditioned the Applicant will further refine the design Alternatives and incorporate Staff's recommendations for additional study. This includes a design alternative that includes the following elements:

- One-way direction inbound from Wisconsin Avenue, with a narrower alley width where it intersects with Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza;
- Inbound-only parking garage access for resident-use only;
- A 15-ft wide minimum, continuous pedestrian pathway along the north side of the alley with vertical separation from vehicles (e.g., bollards);
- Access to and from the bike storage room;
- Access to ground-floor retail uses; and
- Pavement treatments delineating designated spaces for motorized users and for non-motorized users.

The Applicant will continue to refine previously submitted Alternatives 1 and 2 for further study at the time of Site Plan. The design alternatives will be evaluated for safety, perceived comfort of non-motorized transportation modes, traffic flow, and potential impacts on the adjacent public streets.

Pedestrian and bicycle access will be provided from the established sidewalk network along Wisconsin Avenue, South Park Avenue, and The Hills Plaza. As proposed, the bicycle storage room will be accessible from the shared street. Section 6.2.4.C of the Zoning Ordinance requires 0.5 bicycle spaces be provided per dwelling unit, up to a maximum of 100 spaces, for every new multi-family residential use containing 20 or more dwelling units. Of the residential bicycle parking spaces required, 95% must be provided as long-term spaces. For retail/service establishments and restaurants, the Zoning Ordinance requires one (1) bicycle space for every 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, of which 15% must be devoted to long term use (up to a maximum of 50 spaces for retail/service establishments and 10 spaces for restaurants). For hotel, the Zoning Ordinance requires one (1) bicycle parking space for every 10 guest rooms (up to 25 spaces), of which 100% must be provided as long-term spaces. The Project will provide sufficient bicycle parking on-site to satisfy the requirements of Section 6.2.4. Accordingly, the Project will incorporate a minimum of 125 bicycle parking spaces, of which 118 spaces are required to be long-term spaces (with the final number and location to be determined at time of Site Plan)².

² Minimum requirement calculated for up to 380 units, up to 12,500 square foot retail, and 230 guest rooms. Final bicycle parking counts will be determined at Site Plan, when the exact number of residential units and commercial mix is determined.

SECTION 4: PROJECT ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of a Sketch Plan is to identify general land uses, development intensity, and public benefits for the optional method of development in the CR, CRT, EOF or LSC zones. The Sketch Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature with an emphasis on building densities, massing, heights and anticipated uses, the locations of open and public use spaces, the general circulation patterns for all modes of transportation, an estimated range of peak hour trips and relationships between existing or proposed adjacent buildings and rights-of-way. Details of the proposed development are determined during Preliminary and Site Plan review. Section 59.7.3.3.E of the Zoning Ordinance states: “To approve a Sketch Plan the Planning Board must find that the following elements are appropriate in concept and appropriate for further detailed review at Site Plan. The Sketch Plan must:

1. Meet the objectives, general requirements, and standards of this Chapter;

The Sketch Plan meets the development standards of Section 59.4.5.4, as shown in the following Data Table:

Table 1: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Sketch Plan Data Table

Section 59.4	Development Standard	Permitted/ Required	Proposed
	Tract Area	n/a	118,775 sf (2.72 ac)
	Prior Dedication	n/a	39,763 sf (0.91 ac)
	Proposed Dedication	n/a	0 sf
	Site Area	n/a	79,012 sf (1.81 ac)
	Mapped Density		
	CR 3.0 C 2.0 R 2.75 H 90'T		
	Residential (GFA/ FAR)	326,631 sf (2.75)	228,353 sf (1.84)
	Commercial (GFA/FAR)	237,550 sf (2.0)	137,972 sf (1.16) ¹
	Total Mapped Density (GFA/FAR)	356,325 SF (3.0)	356,325 (3.0)
	Total GFA/FAR	n/a	406,563 sf (3.42)²
	MPDU requirement	15%	15% ³
	MPDU Bonus Density³ (GFA/FAR)	71,858 sf (0.61)	50,238 (0.42)
	Building Height, max average	90 feet ¹	90 feet ^{4,5}
	Public Open Space (min s.f.)	10%	10% (7,907 sf)
	Minimum Setbacks (ft)		
	Front (Wisconsin Ave)	0	0
	Front (South Park Ave)	0	0
	Front (The Hills Plaza)	0	0
	Side	0	0

¹ Commercial Density includes 125,472 square feet of existing hotel to remain and up to 12,500 square feet of additional non-residential density for the first floor of the proposed development.

² Proposed Residential and Commercial density reflects ‘up to’ however the combination of each will not exceed 406,563 square feet.

³ Section 59.4.5.2.C.1 of the Zoning Ordinance allows residential density to be increased above the mapped residential FAR by 22% for any application that includes more than 12.5% of the gross residential floor area as MPDUs.

⁴ Section 59.4.5.2.D of the Zoning Ordinance allows provisions for “T” zones, allowing height on a portion of the building to be increased above the number following the H on the zoning map so long as the average height of the building is no greater than the maximum height allowed by the mapped zone. Final maximum building height to be determined at Site Plan.

⁵ Section 59.4.9.2.C.7 of the Zoning Ordinance eliminates the height requirement to the extent necessary to provide MPDUs beyond 12.5%. Final maximum height to be determined at Site Plan.

The final number of vehicular parking spaces will be determined at Site Plan based on the residential units.

Height Averaging (T Provision)

The Project has a mapped height of 90T, and as described in Table 1 footnote 4 above, the Zoning Ordinance allows provisions for “T” zones, allowing height on a portion of the building to be increased above the number following the H on the zoning map so long as the average height of the building is no greater than the maximum height allowed by the mapped zone.

For this particular Project, the Site will contain one structure that is connected underground by one parking structure and emerges above the surface as two defined towers, one for the existing hotel and one for the new mixed use development, for the purposes of applying and calculating average height, the development is considered one building. Section 59.4.5.2.D states that height averaging will be determined by the following:

Average building height is calculated as the sum of the area of each section of the roof having a different height multiplied by that height, divided by the total roof area. Height is measured at the midpoint of each roof section along each frontage.

Per Section 59.4.1.7.c.2.a height is measured in the CR zone as follows:

For a corner lot or a lot extending through from street to street, the height is measured from the curb grade opposite the middle of the building façade along either right-of-way; however, under Section 7.3.4, Site Plan, the Planning Board may approve an alternative point of measurement as part of site plan approval. The alternative measurement point must be taken from the approved curb grade along either right-of-way. In approving an alternative point of measurement, the Planning Board must consider compatibility and building height variation on the site.

This particular Site is both a corner and through lot and contains three frontages, and the Site’s topography gains in elevation from the Wisconsin Avenue frontage to The Hills Plaza frontage. Given the varied elevation, the Applicant took the midpoint of each three frontages and averaged those midpoints, resulting in an average measuring point of 319.33 feet³.

With the average measuring point, the Applicant measured the square footages of each of the building heights, including the existing hotel main roof, and the proposed tower’s tallest roof point and lower base roof sections. The square footages of each roof section were multiplied by the height of that particular section and then divided by the total roof area, as required by Section 59.4.5.2.D, resulting in an average height of 78 feet. This average height is well below the required average height of 90 feet. Staff reviewed this methodology with the conceptual roof heights proposed by the future tower and existing hotel and concurs with the application. The Applicant chose to not include certain roof sections such as the existing hotel’s 1-story porte cochere along the Wisconsin Avenue frontage and the shared street (technically a roof to the parking structure below) as this would only skew the average to a lesser building height. As the Project moves from Sketch to Site, Staff understands that the numbers provided may change in

³ Midpoint of Wisconsin Avenue is 313.5’, Midpoint of South Park Avenue is 321’, Midpoint of The Hills Plaza is 323.5’ (313.5+321+323.5= 958/3 =319.33)

regards to the future tower as the sections and heights will become finalized, and that will be reviewed at the time of Site Plan.

In addition to Staff's analysis, the Applicant sent a letter of interpretation to the Department of Permitting Services for confirmation, which was signed by Mark Beall on April 6, 2021 confirming the methodology.

The Sketch Plan conforms to the intent of the CR zone as described below:

a) *Implement the recommendations of applicable master plans.*

The Project substantially conforms to the recommendations included in the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan. The Sector Plan seeks to encourage economic growth in the metro-served area while preserving surrounding neighborhoods.

The Sector Plan did not provide any site-specific goals for the Property. As shown in Figure 9 of the Sector Plan, in 1998 it was identified as a major structure and use then anticipated to remain. It was zoned CBD-1, later updated to CR 3.0 C 2.0 R 2.75 H 90T after the adoption of the new Zoning Ordinance in October of 2014.

- *Create a vital, diverse urban center with a balanced mix of land uses, including places where one can live and work*

The Project proposes a new multifamily development along Wisconsin Avenue near several commercial and retail buildings, expanding the mix of land uses along the Wisconsin corridor and bringing residential uses into the Town Center to ensure its vitality in the evening and weekends.

- *Concentrate the highest density in the metro core, stepping down toward the surrounding neighborhoods*

The Project is located less than ¼-mile of the Friendship Heights Metro Station. The proposed maximum and average height of the development are appropriate given the Property's location along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor.

- *Preserve and enhance the environment for residents of the high-rise buildings*

The proposed mixed-use tower will be located across the street (South Park Avenue) from an existing 15-story high-rise residential building, the Highlands of Chevy Chase and kitty-corner to an existing 17-story high-rise, Highland House West. As proposed, the new tower will maintain an 80-foot separation from the 15-story high-rise, and the proposed massing of the future development will provide a tower stepback above the 6th floor, thereby increasing the tower separation by another 30 feet. The orientation of the tower perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue will provide views east-west on either side, from the adjacent high-rise buildings as well as from the park and adjoining streets, preventing a building wall along the Avenue.

- *Help knit the diverse districts into a stronger community and provide spaces for activities that bring people together. Existing parking lots near the Town Center that offer an opportunity for infill development that can make a more vibrant, pedestrian oriented community.*

Redevelopment of these lots and buildings deemed obsolete can be the mechanism to provide amenity spaces where members of the community can meet.

As proposed, the redevelopment of the 1-story retail with parking above will allow for a new mixed-use tower with amenity spaces including a pocket park and shared street that will allow for new, vibrant spaces for community and activities.

- b) *Target opportunities for redevelopment of single-use commercial areas and surface parking lots with a mix of uses.*

The Project will redevelop a property with an existing hotel and one-story retail with structured parking to retain the hotel, while revitalizing the underutilized one-story retail with multi-family housing and ground floor retail. The redevelopment will bring new residents into the region that will support the surrounding retail and office uses to increase the mix of uses in the area.

- c) *Encourage development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, commercial services, and public facilities and amenities, where parking is prohibited between the building and the street.*

The Project encourages such development by proposing 380 residential units. The housing will be in walking distance of the nearby the Friendship Heights Station on Metrorail's Red Line, and Ride On Route 34 and Metrobus Route L8, and other urban amenities.

- d) *Allows a flexible mix of uses, densities, and building heights appropriate to various settings to ensure compatible relationships with adjoining neighborhoods.*

The Proposal will retain the existing hotel and construct a new mixed-use development with ground floor retail, to be separated by a new shared street connection between Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza. The proposed mixed-use nature of the Site will provide an appropriate mix of uses, density, and heights given the Property's frontage on the Wisconsin Corridor. The existing hotel is approximately 12-stories in height, the new tower will contain varying levels of height including lower 6-story base with a maximum 18-story tower.

- e) *Integrate an appropriate balance of employment and housing opportunities.*

The Project will provide a new mixed-use tower with ground floor retail and an envisioned 380 units with 15% of units to be MPDUs, the redevelopment will provide additional housing on a Site within ¼ mile to the Friendship Heights Metro Station and the nearby existing commercial and retail uses.

- f) *Standardize optional method development by establishing minimum requirements for the provision of public benefits that will support and accommodate density above the standard Method limit.*

The Project will provide the required 100 public benefit points from a minimum of 4 categories to achieve the desired incentive density above the standard method limit. Final determination of public benefit points will be determined at the time of Site Plan.

2. *Substantially conform with the recommendations of the applicable master plan;*

As discussed in Finding 1.a above, the Project substantially conforms to the recommendation of the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan. The Proposal will enhance the Town Center with a mix of uses and diversity of housing, as the Project will maintain the hotel use while redeveloping the underutilized one-story retail into a mixed-use tower with ground floor retail and multifamily above.

3. *Satisfy any development plan or schematic development plan in effect on October 29, 2014;*

The Sketch Plan is not subject to a development plan or schematic development plan.

4. *Achieve compatible internal and external relationships between existing and pending nearby development;*

The surrounding area is developed with several high-rise residential and office buildings, and the proposed tower will be located between two existing 15-story buildings on Wisconsin Avenue, one to the northern end of the block, a 15-story medical office building, and one to the south across South Park Avenue, 15-story Highlands at Chevy Chase residential building. Several other tall buildings exist in the area to the south and west with heights ranging from 12-21 stories. Given the location within the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, the proposed height of the future 18-story tower will be compatible.

Further, while the existing buildings along Wisconsin Avenue corridor will be of a slightly lower height, the existing building façades along Wisconsin Avenue are flat in nature, and the proposed massing of the future tower will provide a base contributing to the street wall and a stepback above the 6th floor from Wisconsin Avenue, South Park Avenue, and the future street connection to create a defined tower distinctly separated from other buildings along the corridor. As above, the orientation of the tower perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue will provide views east-west on either side, from the adjacent high-rise buildings as well as from the park and adjoining streets, preventing a building wall along the Avenue.

To the rear, the future development and shared street connection will provide direct access to the Friendship Heights Community Center. Further, the separation between the existing hotel from the future development will further assist in providing light and air and physical access to the Hubert Humphrey Park.

5. *Provides satisfactory general vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist access, circulation, parking, and loading:*

As proposed, circulation, parking, and loading is safe adequate and efficient. Pedestrian access to the Site will be from the established sidewalk network along all three site frontages: Wisconsin Avenue, The Hills Plaza and South Park Avenue. Pedestrian travel will be further enhanced by streetscape improvements in compliance with the Complete Streets Design Guidelines. The Applicant also proposes a private shared street that will increase pedestrian connectivity within the Site as well as to points within the Village of Friendship Heights such as the Friendship Heights Community Center and Hubert Humphrey Park.

Vehicular Access to the Site will be provided from Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza. The existing hotel use has one full-movement driveway on The Hills Plaza and two driveways on Wisconsin Avenue. The northernmost driveway on Wisconsin Avenue functions as a right-in, right-out and the southern driveway is egress-only. The hotel just recently underwent renovation and therefore no additional physical changes are proposed on the hotel portion of the Site at this time. The Applicant will be subject to alternative compliance analysis for a corner lot with more than one driveway (Section 59-6.1.4.E) at the time of Site Plan.

For the new residential portion of the Site, vehicles will be able to access the parking facility from the proposed private street, and from the existing driveways serving the hotel. The ultimate design of the shared street will be finalized at Site Plan. The intent is to create a space that will prioritize pedestrian connectivity, safety, and comfort, while providing space for loading, delivery, and trash collection activities in such a way that disruptions to the adjacent public transportation network will be limited. Comments were provided by Planning, MCDOT, MDOT SHA and the Village of Friendship Heights on the potential circulation patterns of the private shared street. The Applicant provided concept plans of four design alternatives that address the conditions of approval for the Sketch Plan and will be further refined with the Site Plan submittal. At the time of Site Plan review, a final circulation plan will be determined.

The Site includes a below-grade parking facility that spans the entire Site. It will serve all uses on the Site including the existing hotel as well as the proposed residential units and retail uses. The minimum parking required for the Site is 288 spaces, and the Project proposes 391 spaces⁴. Final parking counts will be determined at Site Plan, when the final number of retail/residential units is determined

For retail/service establishments and restaurants, the Zoning Ordinance requires one (1) bicycle space for every 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, of which 15% must be devoted to long term use (up to a maximum of 50 spaces for retail/service establishments and 10 spaces for restaurants). For hotel, the Zoning Ordinance requires one (1) bicycle parking space for every 10 guest rooms (up to 25 spaces), of which 100% must be provided as long-term spaces. The Project will provide sufficient bicycle parking on-site to satisfy the requirements of Section 6.2.4. Accordingly, the Project will incorporate a minimum of 125 bicycle parking spaces, of which 118 spaces are required to be long-term spaces (with the final number and location to be determined at time of Site Plan).

For a project proposing at least 50 residential units, a designated on-site loading spaces is required. The Applicant proposes a designated loading area within the private shared street. By locating the loading space within the private shared street, it limits disruptions (such as trucks reversing in and out of the space) to the adjacent roadway network. As conditioned, the Applicant will also include a loading management plan with the Site Plan submittal.

Transit Connectivity

The immediate area is served by transit that includes the Red Line Friendship Heights Metrorail Station (approximately two blocks from the Site), bus transit via Metrobus and RideOn along

⁴ Parking is calculated based on 380 units, 12,500 square feet of retail, 230 guest rooms and 11,255 sf of meeting room and dining area for the existing hotel.

Wisconsin Avenue. The MD 355 South BRT line is master-planned to ultimately terminate in Friendship Heights in the long-term.

Master Plan Transportation Facilities

The Site has frontage along three streets include Wisconsin Avenue, which is owned and maintained by MDOT SHA and South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza, which are controlled by the Village of Friendship Heights.

Both South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza are classified as Downtown Streets, per the Complete Streets Design Guidelines, and they have a master-planned right-of-way width of 80 feet total. No further dedication is required.

Wisconsin Avenue is classified as a Downtown Boulevard per the Complete Streets Design Guidelines, with a master-planned width of 122 feet total. As of this report, 120 feet have been dedicated; however, MDOT SHA declined to require additional right-of-way in their correspondence addressed to Staff dated April 21, 2021. For this reason, no additional right-of-way dedication will be required at the time of Site Plan.

Adequate Public Facilities

As proposed, the Project is estimated to generate fewer than 50 peak hour person trips in both the morning and evening peak periods when compared to the retail use to be removed. Therefore, in compliance with the 2021-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy, and the 2021 Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines (LATR), the Applicant will be required to submit a transportation exemption statement with the forthcoming Site Plan. The trip estimate will reflect the final unit count, at the time of Site Plan. Further adequate facilities such as schools will be evaluated at the time of Site Plan.

6. *Propose an outline of public benefits that supports the requested incentive density and is appropriate for the specific community;*

Taking into account the considerations in Section 59.4.7.1.B, including the recommendations and objectives of the Sector Plan and any applicable design guidelines, the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines, the size and configuration of the site and its relationship to adjacent properties, similar public benefits nearby, and additional enhancements related to the individual public benefits, the following outline of public benefits supports the Applicant's request for incentive density and is appropriate for the community surrounding the site, as described below.

For the proposed development, the Zoning Ordinance requires 100 points in 4 categories. The Applicant proposes to exceed the 100 point requirement utilizing 5 categories. Although at the time of Sketch Plan review only the categories need be approved, the following table shows both the categories and points for the public benefits requested at Sketch Plan to demonstrate the project's ability to meet the requirement to provide sufficient benefit points.

Table 2: Public Benefit Calculations

Public Benefits Calculations		
Public Benefit	Incentive Density Points	
	Max Allowed	Requested
59.4.7.3.B: Transit Proximity		
Level 1	50	30
59.4.7.3C: Connectivity and Mobility		
Minimum Parking	10	8
Through Block Connection	20	10
59.4.7.3.D: Diversity of Uses and Activities		
Affordable Housing	n/a	30
59.4.7.3E: Quality of Building and Site Design		
Architectural Elevations	20	10
Exceptional Design¹	10	10
Structured Parking	20	19
59.4.7.3.F: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment		
Building Lot Terminations (BLT)	25	7
TOTAL		124

Transit Proximity

Level 1: The Applicant requests 30 points for locating new development near transit stops. Level 1 allows up to 50 points based on proximity to an existing or master planned Metrorail station. The Property is located within ¼-mile from the Friendship Heights Metro Station, therefore the Staff supports the category at this time.

Connectivity and Mobility

Minimum Parking: The Applicant requests 8 point for providing fewer than the maximum allowed number of parking spaces. Points for this incentive are granted on a sliding scale from no points for providing maximum allowable number of on-site spaces to 20 points for providing no more than the minimum numbers of spaces on-site. Staff supports the category at this time.

Through Block Connection: The Applicant requests 10 point for providing a through block connection from Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza. Through block connection are intended to create safe and attractive pedestrian only connections between streets. While the proposed through block connection would not be exclusive to pedestrians, the connection will serve as an important access to the Friendship Heights Community Center and is envisioned as a flush curb street that will prioritize pedestrians. Staff will further review the design of the space at the time of Site Plan to ensure that the pedestrian only area will meet the intent of the public benefit category. Staff supports the category at this time.

Diversity of Uses and Activities

Affordable Housing: The Applicant requests 30 points for providing 15% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units. While 15% MPDUs is the requirement for areas of the County where 45% of the census tracts have a median income of 150% of the County’s AMI, the Applicant is still eligible to receive public benefit

points for the provision of 15% MPDUs. The final percentage and number of affordable units will be determined at Site Plan. Staff supports the Applicant's request at this time.

Quality of Building and Site Design

Architectural Elevations: The Applicant requests 10 points for providing architectural elevations as part of the Certified Site Plan showing particular elements of the design such as minimum amounts of transparency, maximum separation between doors, and other design priorities of the applicable Sector Plan and implementing design guidelines. The Sketch Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature with an emphasis on building densities, massing, and heights. Staff supports the category at this time with further details and refinement to be provided at the time of Site Plan.

Exceptional Design: The Applicant requests 10 points for building and/or site design that enhances the character of a setting. Staff will continue to evaluate the design as the project moves forward. The design of the future mixed-use development and the relationship to the future shared street will be further evaluated at Site Plan to ensure that the entire Site responds uniquely to the surrounding context and provides an enhanced space for pedestrians and members of the community. Based on the conceptual materials submitted with the Application, Staff supports the category at this time.

Structured Parking: The Applicant requests 19 points for providing structured parking. Staff supports the category at this time.

Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

Building Lot Termination (BLT): The Applicant requests 7 points for the purchase of BLT easements or equivalent payment made for every 31,500 square feet of gross floor area comprising the 7.5% incentive density floor area. Points are granted by the calculation of BLTs as provided in Section 59.4.7.3.F of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff supports the Applicant's request at this time.

In support of the County's 2035 net zero goal, Staff encourages the Applicant to include additional energy efficiency and renewable resources in the future development, therefore additional public benefit subcategories within this Category may be considered at the time of Site Plan without further Sketch Plan amendment.

7. *Establish a feasible and appropriate provisional phasing plan for all structures, uses, rights-of-way, sidewalks, dedications, public benefits, and future preliminary and site plan applications.*

The Project will be built in one phase.

SECTION 5: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ISSUES

Applicant Outreach

The Applicant held a pre-submittal public meeting on June 9, 2021 related to the Sketch Plan Amendment. The meeting was conducted virtually per COVID-19 Guidelines and has complied with all submittal and noticing requirements. In addition to the required public meeting, the Applicant has conducted additional outreach.

Correspondence

Staff received over 20 letters of support for the Project, including from the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, the Coalition of Smarter Growth and numerous community members. The letters support the redevelopment for the following reasons: being a catalyst for an area that has seen economic decline, providing diversity of housing opportunities through MPDUs, creating a pedestrian oriented shared street, concentrating new growth less than ¼-mile from the Friendship Heights Metro Station, and preserving the surrounding neighborhoods.

Staff also received five letters of opposition which include the Village of Friendship Heights, Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, Somerset House and two community members as described below (traffic, height, parking, etc). The Village of Friendship Heights has voiced concerns of the Project throughout the review process. Additionally, on October 5, 2021, Staff met with the Village of Friendship Heights and several members of the public to discuss their concerns. At their October 27th meeting, the Village Council voted 5-2 to deny the Project with suggestions (Attachment F). Staff notes that this application is not subject to any requirement within the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland that would require a two-thirds majority vote if the Planning Board were to approve the Sketch Plan.

Concerns that were raised by the Village, Somerset House, and members of the public are summarized below and all correspondence is included as Attachment G. The Applicant also provided a response to the Village's concerns, which is included as Attachment H.

Height Averaging, 'Canyonization', Sector Plan Conformance

The Village of Friendship Heights and their consulting architect have sent several concerns regarding the calculation of height averaging, specifically with an inability to confirm the accuracy of the drawings. Both Planning and DPS Staff have reviewed the drawings as analyzed in Section 4 above, and found the data and methodology to be accurate in concept, understanding that as the Project moves forward and the future tower's massing and size of roof sections are finalized that numbers will fluctuate. Given that this is a Sketch Plan application, the conceptual methodology is satisfactory to Staff at this time for further review at Site Plan.

The biggest concern from the Village is the maximum height of the proposed tower and the concern that it is incompatible with the surrounding area, Sector Plan, and will result in a "canyonization" of the Wisconsin Avenue corridor. Many comments reference the overall building height as being 213 feet. The drawings provided by the Applicant show the top of the 18th story measuring at 185 feet with a rooftop amenity being an additional 20 feet. Rooftop amenities are commonly located atop residential high-rise buildings and are considered a

height encroachment allowed by Section 59.4.1.7.3.d for accessory structures located on roofs. Final maximum height for the proposed building will be determined at Site Plan.

As previously described in Section 4, Finding 4 above, the surrounding area is developed with several high-rise residential and office buildings, and the proposed future tower will be located between two existing 15-story buildings on Wisconsin, one to the north, a 15-story medical office building, and one to the south, 15-story Highlands at Chevy Chase residential building. Several other tall buildings exist in the area to the south and west, with a range of 12-21 stories in height. Given the location within the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, the height of the future development will be compatible. Further, while the existing buildings along Wisconsin Avenue corridor will be of a slightly lower height, the buildings themselves are flat in nature, while the proposed massing of the future development will provide a similar base and stepback from Wisconsin Avenue, South Park Avenue, and the future street connection to create a defined tower. The orientation of the tower perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue will provide views east-west on either side, from the adjacent high-rise buildings as well as from the park and adjoining streets, preventing a building wall along the Avenue.

In the Village's letter denying the Project with suggestions, one suggestion regarding height was for the Applicant to lower the overall height and raise the height of the lower stories so as to lower the overall building height but not lose FAR or density. While Staff is open to reviewing an alternative massing at the time of Site Plan as recommended in Condition 7.e, lowering the overall height and raising the lower stories may affect the proportionality of the future development resulting in a more bulky appearance. As analyzed in Finding 4, the massing as proposed is compatible with the surrounding development.

The Village also raised a concern regarding nonconformance to a *Friendship Heights Sector Plan* reference from the 1974 Sector Plan. That plan was superseded by the 1998 *Sector Plan*. Staff has analyzed conformance based on the current 1998 Sector Plan.

Concerns related to the Sector Plan conformance reference a statement that open space is critical to the quality of life, and a recommendation to preserve the environment for residents by limiting heights of new buildings close to high-rise apartments to preserve views. The *Sector Plan's* Open Space and Environmental Protection recommendations encourage small, green open spaces to complement promenades and create quiet seating areas on redevelopment sites, and this Project will provide both a pocket park and urban promenade along the future street connection. The proposed mixed-use tower will be located across the street (South Park Avenue) from an existing 15-story high-rise residential building, the Highlands of Chevy Chase and caddy corner to an existing 17-story high-rise, Highland House West. As proposed, the new tower will maintain an 80-foot separation from the 15-story high-rise, and the proposed massing of the future development will provide a tower stepback above the 6th floor, thereby increasing the tower separation by another 30 feet. Again, the orientation of the tower perpendicular to Wisconsin Avenue will provide views east-west on either side, from the adjacent high-rise buildings as well as from the park and adjoining streets, preventing a building wall along the Avenue. This Property is located within the Town Center and will provide redevelopment of an under-utilized site along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor within ¼ mile of the Metro. As analyzed in Section 4 Finding 1, the Project is in conformance with the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*.

FAR and Public Open Space calculations

The concerns regarding FAR and open space are a result of misunderstanding how these requirements are applied to a project. The letters state that the actual FAR of the Project is 5.14, however this is incorrectly applying how FAR is calculated by utilizing the site area as opposed to the tract area. As defined in the Zoning Ordinance (Section 59.1.4.2) Floor Area Ratio is the ratio between the gross floor area of all buildings on a tract divided by the area of the tract. For this Project, the gross floor area requested is 406,563 square feet and the tract area is 118,775, resulting in an FAR of 3.42.

The letters also state that the application is deficient in the amount of public open space required by stating it should be 10% of the tract area, as opposed to the site area. As described in Section 59.4.5.4.B.1 of the Zoning Ordinance, the amount of public open space is determined by the amount of tract area and the number of frontages a site contains, however the percentage of open space is based on the site area, not tract area. For this Project, the tract area is 118,775 square feet (2.73 acres) and has 3 frontages, therefore the requirement is 10% of the site area (79,012 square feet) resulting in 7,901 square feet of required public open space. The public open space must meet the requirements of Section 59.6.3, which will be finalized at the of Site Plan.

Traffic analysis

There are concerns that the project's Transportation Exemption Statement (Attachment C) was based on the trips generated by the retail uses such as Brooks Brothers, which is currently empty, and that a Transportation Impact Analysis should have been required.

The Applicant submitted a transportation exemption statement with the Sketch Plan in conformance with the 2021-2024 *Growth and Infrastructure Policy* (GIP) and the 2021 *Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines* (LATR). Sites are permitted to apply a credit to their trip generation estimate for existing and/or the most recent use on the Site. For this reason, the exemption statement has been reviewed and accepted by Planning Staff.

Somerset Terrace traffic

There are concerns regarding the impact of additional trips on Somerset Terrace given the existing backups that occur due to the medical office building located at Somerset Terrace and Wisconsin Avenue.

Staff acknowledges this concern. Any redevelopment of this Site is likely to generate trips that will make use of the adjacent transportation network. Per the 2021-2024 GIP and the 2021 LATR, the Site is located within a Red Policy area (Friendship Heights No. 12) and therefore a vehicular modal adequacy test is not required. Staff from Planning, Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the Maryland Department of State Highway Administration will continue to review the finalized circulation plan for the Site with an emphasis on safety both on-site as well as with connections with the adjacent roadways at the time of Site Plan.

Shared Street Design

There are concerns that the design of the proposed future street should not be considered for through block connection, nor exceptional design public benefit points. Additionally, there are concerns regarding the purpose of the street, that given all the purposes the street is intended for including loading, parking garage access, deliveries, and a safe place for pedestrians and bicycles, that the street as proposed may be undersized.

For review of the Sketch Plan, it is important for the Applicant to demonstrate the general concept for the Site access points and the general concept for loading, trash collection, deliveries and parking garage access. Furthermore, the Applicant is required to propose a public benefits table that will be further refined at the time of Site Plan. The Applicant has proposed a shared street concept to alleviate the disturbances of these activities to the local street network. Staff is generally in support of the concept of a shared street. The design and circulation of the shared street will continue to be reviewed and analyzed at the time of Site Plan. As conditioned, the Applicant will need to consider design elements that will help the shared street achieve its intended purpose in the design alternatives to be included with the Site Plan submittal. The Applicant will be required to submit design alternatives at the time of Site Plan to address questions raised by Staff and by the Village. The Sketch Plan Staff report includes direction and guidance the Applicant needs to apply when finalizing the design at the time of Site Plan. After the design is finalized, the public benefit points table will be updated accordingly.

The Village Council's letter suggests the Applicant 'provide a two-lane pick-up/drop-off area, running the frontage of the future development on The Hills Plaza, located on the street level, set back under the second story of the building to allow additional space for the quick stops of delivery vehicles such as Amazon, grocery deliveries, FedEx, etc., as well as resident and guest drop-offs and pick-ups. Based on this description, it appears the Village is recommending the installation of a porte-cochere along The Hills Plaza frontage, which would provide a covered area for ride-sharing and small deliveries. The advantage of this design is that it creates an off-street queuing area for taxis, ridesharing drivers and small, on-demand delivery services. The disadvantage is the additional curb cuts which present new conflict points for pedestrians and motorists leaving/entering the Site. These new conflict points are discouraged by the County's Vision Zero policy and are therefore evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Given that the proposed new shared street would accommodate these activities, along with loading, trash collection, and parking garage access, it does not seem gainful to include both facilities at this site. As proposed, the Project will be required to provide an off-street facility regardless, and the shared street, which will be refined at Site Plan will be evaluated on how it accommodates all of these activities and connections. Furthermore, additional curb cuts on this Site would require a finding for alternative compliance from Section 59-6.1.4. which stipulates that a vehicle must enter a corner lot with only one driveway, and there are already driveways provided on Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza for the existing Hotel and parking garage access. Therefore, to minimize conflict points on the Site, Staff recommends that the Applicant further analyze and refine the design of the shared street to address the vehicular needs of the proposed tower.

Parking

The letters state there is already an existing street parking problem within the Village and there are concerns the project will not provide sufficient off-street parking for the proposed use.

Section 59-6.2.4 of the Zoning Ordinance provides parking tables that help determine the minimum and maximum number of off-street parking spaces required by a project based on the proposed uses and densities. While the uses and densities for a project are not finalized until the time of Site Plan, Applicants are required to provide a general outline of the proposed densities to get a sense of the number of parking spaces that will be required with future submittals. Based on the Subject Application, the Applicant would be required to provide a minimum of approximately 294 spaces and a maximum of 893 spaces (depending on the residential unit mix, to be determined at Site Plan) to accommodate the existing hotel and the proposed retail, and residential uses. The Applicant indicated that they are currently proposing 391 spaces and is therefore within the range of required off-street parking spaces. It is important to note that this Site is located within two blocks of WMATA's Friendship Heights Metro station along the Red Line, which is also served by several Metrobus routes. Given that the Subject Application is providing more than the minimum number of required spaces given the Site's zone and the Project's proposed uses, and that the Site is located within close proximity to transit, Staff has no further comment for the Applicant on the proposed parking capacity on-site.

Streetscape

During a meeting with Planning Staff a concern regarding the width of the sidewalks along the Site's three frontages was raised. Additionally, there was a question about the Applicant's responsibility for undergrounding utilities.

Streetscape details for a Project are finalized at the time of Site Plan. As conditioned, the Applicant will be required to comply with the County's *Complete Streets Design Guidelines*, which establishes the widths of the street buffer, sidewalks and frontage zones, based on the street classification. In compliance with the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*, the Applicant will be required to underground all utilities along the Site's Wisconsin Avenue frontage (pages 59, 115).

CONCLUSION

As conditioned the Sketch Plan application satisfies the findings under Section 59.4.5.4 of the Zoning Ordinance and substantially conforms to the recommendations of the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Sketch Plan No. 320220010, with the conditions specified at the beginning of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

- a. Sketch Plan
- b. Approved NRI/FSD
- c. Transportation Exemption Statement
- d. Shared Street Design Alternatives
- e. DPS confirmation on Height Methodology
- f. Village of Friendship Heights letter from Village Council October 26, 2021
- g. Correspondence
- h. Applicant's response to Village of Friendship Heights concerns