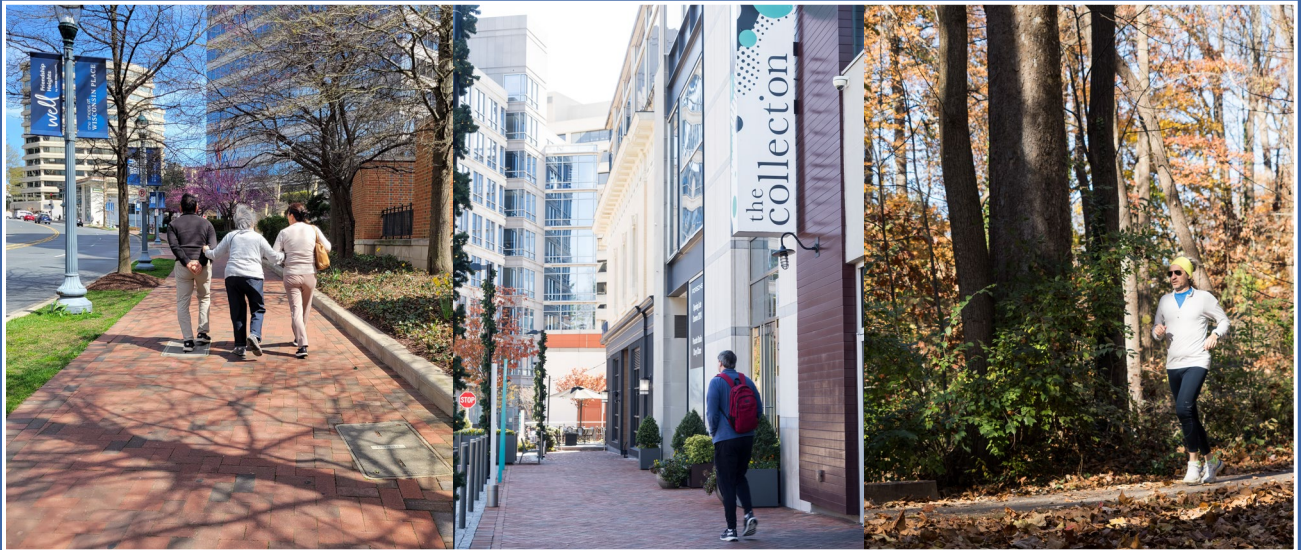


# FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS SECTOR PLAN

## PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS BRIEFING



### Description

Planning staff will present a summary of the Staff's Preliminary Recommendations for the Friendship Heights Sector Plan.

## MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

### Topic

Friendship Heights Sector Plan Preliminary  
Recommendations

### Date

February 12, 2026

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MCPB Item # 7

Date: 02-12-26

Completed: 02-05-26

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## SUMMARY

Since November 2025, the Friendship Heights Sector Plan team has been developing preliminary recommendations. These draft concepts draw on the feedback received through all plan engagement to date, including the visioning work, the existing conditions analysis work, meetings with stakeholders and property owners, and a market study completed by real estate consultant RCLCO.

Staff will brief the Planning Board on key takeaways from the market analysis, followed by an overview of the preliminary goals and recommendations for the Friendship Heights Sector Plan.

## INTRODUCTION


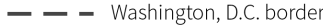

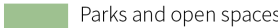


Friendship Heights is a unique urban area that extends along Wisconsin Avenue on both sides of the Washington, D.C. and Maryland border (Map 1). Friendship Heights has a centrally located Metro station, with entrances in both Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. Retail, office, and restaurant uses cluster along Wisconsin Avenue in both jurisdictions, while high-rise office and residential uses predominate on the Montgomery County side.

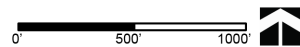
The Friendship Heights Sector Plan (FHSP) will update the 1998 *Friendship Heights Sector Plan*. The 1998 Plan made several recommendations that have been realized and have contributed significantly to the vibrancy of Friendship Heights. However, although Friendship Heights remains a mixed-use neighborhood today, recent years have seen rising retail and office vacancies, compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. With limited new development in the past 20 years, the population of Friendship Heights has remained relatively static, at approximately 6,000 residents.

The goal of this Plan update is to reinvigorate Friendship Heights, identify opportunities for appropriate growth and increased connectivity, and strengthen the identity of this unique urban neighborhood.



**LEGEND**

-  Plan boundary
-  Washington, D.C. border
-  Municipal borders
-  Parks and open spaces
-  Water features
-  Metrorail Red Line and Stations



*Map 1: Plan Area*

## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY VISIONING

Since November 2024, the Friendship Heights Sector Plan team has been gathering feedback on the future vision for Friendship Heights through in-person workshops, virtual meetings, online questionnaires, and dozens of meetings with community groups, property owners, business owners, residents, and other stakeholders. Although the visioning phase formally closed in November 2025, the Plan team continues to meet with community groups on an ongoing basis. A summary of the community engagement work thus far can be found on the [engagement page](#) of the Plan website.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Community members expressed support for welcoming additional people to Friendship Heights, emphasizing that more residents could help sustain and grow the existing retail corridor, although many expressed concerns about increased building density and traffic. Affordable housing emerged as a central priority, with participants highlighting the need for diverse, attainable options for seniors, young families, and first-time homeowners, even as opinions varied on the preferred types and locations of such housing. Ensuring pedestrian safety was another recurring theme, with calls for safer sidewalks, protected bike lanes, improved intersections, and better lighting. Community members expressed interest in new green spaces as part of future development, and emphasized the importance of preserving the existing parks, trees, and open spaces. Lastly, community amenities emerged as a key priority for stakeholders, with a movie theater, library and arts center among the preferred choices.

## SUMMARY OF MARKET ANALYSIS

From March – December 2025, Montgomery Planning engaged real estate consultant RCLCO to analyze the unique market conditions in Friendship Heights and identify any regional or national comparable location that could yield useful lessons learned. RCLCO was also tasked with analyzing a handful of sites in Friendship Heights to consider what building types would be most viable for future redevelopment. The results of these analyses informed the development of the preliminary recommendations. Refer to Attachment A for a summary memo of this work.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Friendship Heights is an urban area with a unique combination of assets, particularly it has a strong cluster of medical office uses without an anchor hospital, which is highly unusual. RCLCO could not identify other transit-oriented, small urban areas in a major metropolitan area that compare.

RCLCO analyzed several sites in the plan to assess their feasibility for future development. The key takeaway is that in the near-term, residential development is the most feasible, with both townhomes and mid-rise multifamily (in this case 6-7 stories) identified as viable.

The analysis of the retail, residential and office markets has led to overall economic development goals for the plan that address:

- Maintaining the existing medical office sector by improving nearby public realm and neighborhood amenities
- Increasing the daytime population (employees and residents) in Friendship Heights to support the local retail market
- Incentivizing housing production while considering what is viable in the near-term

## PRELIMINARY GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### OVERALL PLAN VISION AND GOALS

The draft Friendship Heights Sector Plan vision statement establishes a high-level direction for the Plan:

*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.*

This vision statement is supported by four plan-wide goals, listed below. Subsequent preliminary goals and recommendations support these goals:

- Enhance existing connections and create safer ways for people to walk, bike or ride between Friendship Heights and the surrounding communities.
- Provide new experiences for social connection, activity, and respite in parks and public spaces throughout the Plan Area.
- Strengthen the Wisconsin Avenue corridor as a center of activity with opportunities for economic growth.
- Achieve a resilient urban area that strives to mitigate climate change impacts.

### TOPIC-SPECIFIC GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on community stakeholder feedback and the economic development analysis discussed above, staff has developed preliminary goals and recommendations that address the following topics.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

Land use and zoning recommendations focus on flexibility and encouraging development that responds to the market and the context of the Plan area, including transitioning building heights from the neighborhood edges towards Western and Wisconsin Avenues, and incentivizing much-desired community amenities.

## HOUSING

Housing recommendations address production, affordability and diversification. As most of the existing residential properties were developed prior to the Moderately Price Dwelling Unit (MPDU) requirement, there are very few MPDUs in the Plan Area today.

## URBAN DESIGN

Recommendations include Increasing connectivity, strengthening the public realm, leveraging placemaking opportunities and improving the pedestrian experience through building design.

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES

New community-serving amenities and services, including a library and full-service pharmacy, are a priority for the community. The recommendations include incentives for new development to deliver public amenities.

## SCHOOLS

As enrollment at the elementary schools that draw students from the Plan Area is declining, the Preliminary Recommendations do not include additional school space.

## TRANSPORTATION

Recommendations in this section focus on improving access to both bus and Metrorail service, increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and enhancing pedestrian safety across the street network. The recommendations address the cross-jurisdictional collaboration that will be required to improve the pedestrian and bicycle networks in and around Friendship Heights.

## PARKS

Recommendations for parks and public spaces aim to create welcoming spaces that offer a range of activities and experiences, and to improve access to the existing park network in the Plan Area. Opportunities to improve several existing parks and public spaces are recognized, and high-level ideas about where new open spaces could be located are identified.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

There are only two historic properties in the Plan Area addressed by the preliminary recommendations. The 1899 Reynolds House in Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park is under review by Montgomery Planning Historic Resources staff for potential listing on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, and the Shoemaker Burial site is mentioned as a historic burial site that is already identified and protected at the county level in the Burial Sites Inventory.

## ENVIRONMENT

Draft recommendations focus on enhancing climate resiliency, introducing nature-based design elements, reducing impervious surfaces and protecting existing canopy trees, stream buffers and other natural resources. The environmental preliminary recommendations also encourage providing high-performing, energy-efficient buildings.

## PLAN SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS

Following this Planning Board briefing the Plan team will continue to develop the plan goals and recommendations. Staff anticipates returning to the community and the Board with the Working Draft in the summer of 2026. Significant Plan milestones are outlined below. The Planning Board Draft is currently scheduled for transmission to the County Executive and County Council by the end of 2026.

<b>Scope of Work:</b>	February 2025
<b>Existing Conditions Analysis:</b>	Winter – Spring 2025
<b>Visioning</b>	Spring – Fall 2025
<b>Preliminary Recommendations</b>	Winter 2026
<b>Working Draft:</b>	Summer 2026
<b>Planning Board Work Sessions and Public Hearing:</b>	Fall 2026
<b>County Executive Review, County Council Review and Work Sessions:</b>	Winter 2027
<b>Commission Adoption of Plan and Sectional Map Amendment:</b>	Spring 2027

## ATTACHMENTS

*Attachment A – RCLCO Market Analysis Summary Memo*