



STREETSCAPE PLAN

An attractive pedestrian environment contributes to an active and lively CBD, encourages walking and social interaction, and provides a setting for public life. The public sidewalks form a major portion of the pedestrian environment within a CBD in addition to plazas, parks, and other open spaces.

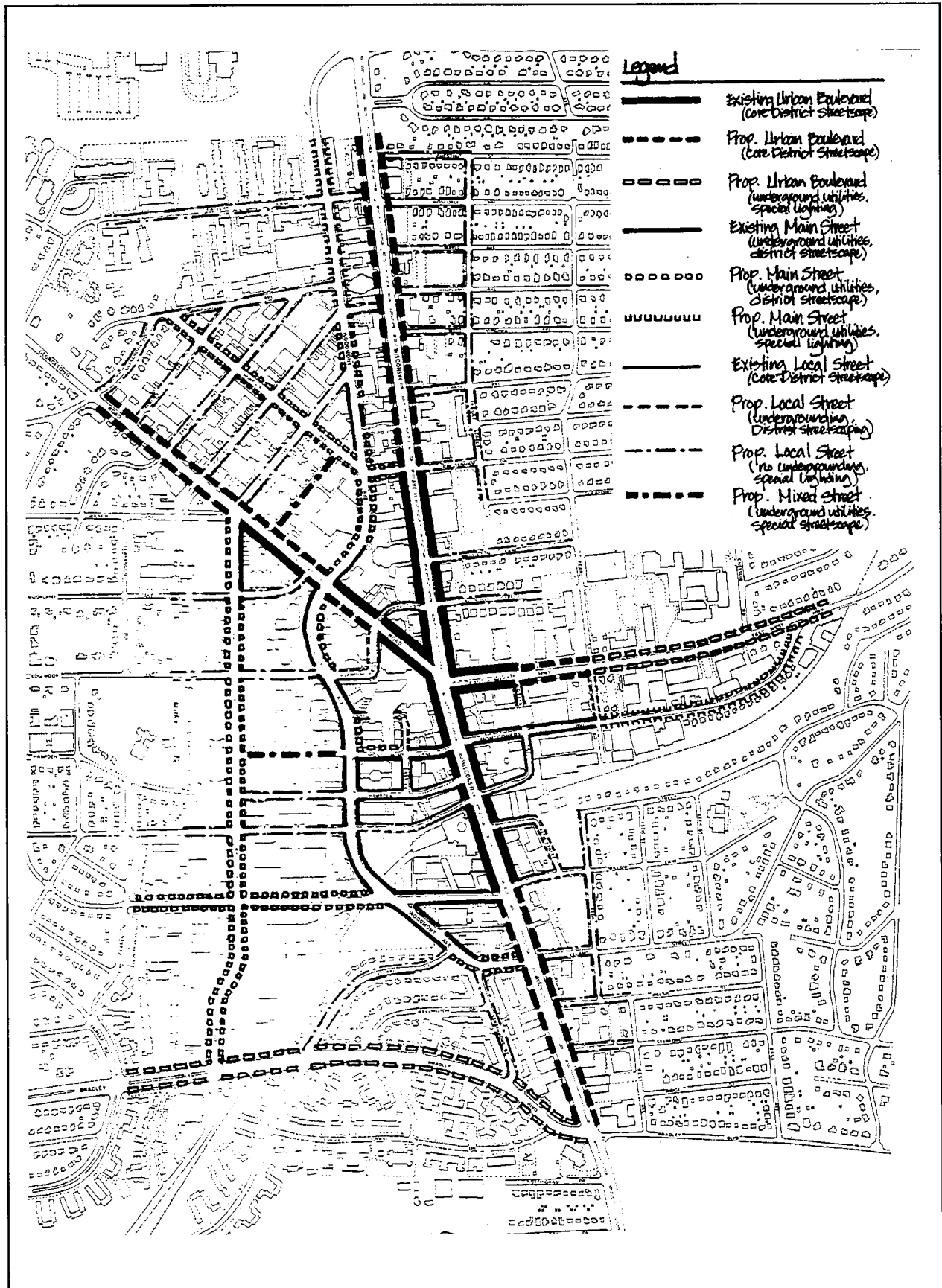
In 1984, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved the Bethesda Streetscape Plan for the Metro Core District. The plan recommended improvements that included placing utilities underground (undergrounding); planting trees; and installing brick pavers, lighting, and wood benches. For the most part, the 1984 plan has been implemented. The community now enjoys an attractive center with over 400 new street trees that help realize the theme of Bethesda as a “garden.”

The streetscape recommendations in this Sector Plan provide a conceptual framework for improvements to the pedestrian environment. (See Figure 6.1.) This Plan also builds upon the 1984 Bethesda Streetscape Plan for the Metro Core District and will help unify the entire CBD by providing a comprehensive approach for areas beyond the Metro Core.

6.1 PLAN OBJECTIVES

Recommendations for streetscape improvements should achieve the following objectives:

1. Reinforce the identity of the districts by developing distinguishing streetscapes for each one while creating a unified image for the entire CBD.
2. Reinforce the street hierarchy by achieving a higher level of streetscape improvements along the major corridors and significant pedestrian routes.
3. Provide for the “greening” of Bethesda by planting street trees along all streets, using a variety of species to achieve horticultural diversity.
4. Encourage walking by creating an attractive pedestrian environment and improving pedestrian access.
5. Reduce visual clutter and create attractive street corridors by undergrounding overhead utilities on major streets and pedestrian routes, and by upgrading streetscape character throughout the CBD.
6. Consider the fiscal implications of all streetscape recommendations.



The Sector Plan recognizes the following hierarchy of streets within the CBD, each with its own special character: Urban Boulevards, Main Streets, Local Streets, and Mixed Streets. (See Figure 6.2, Street Types.)

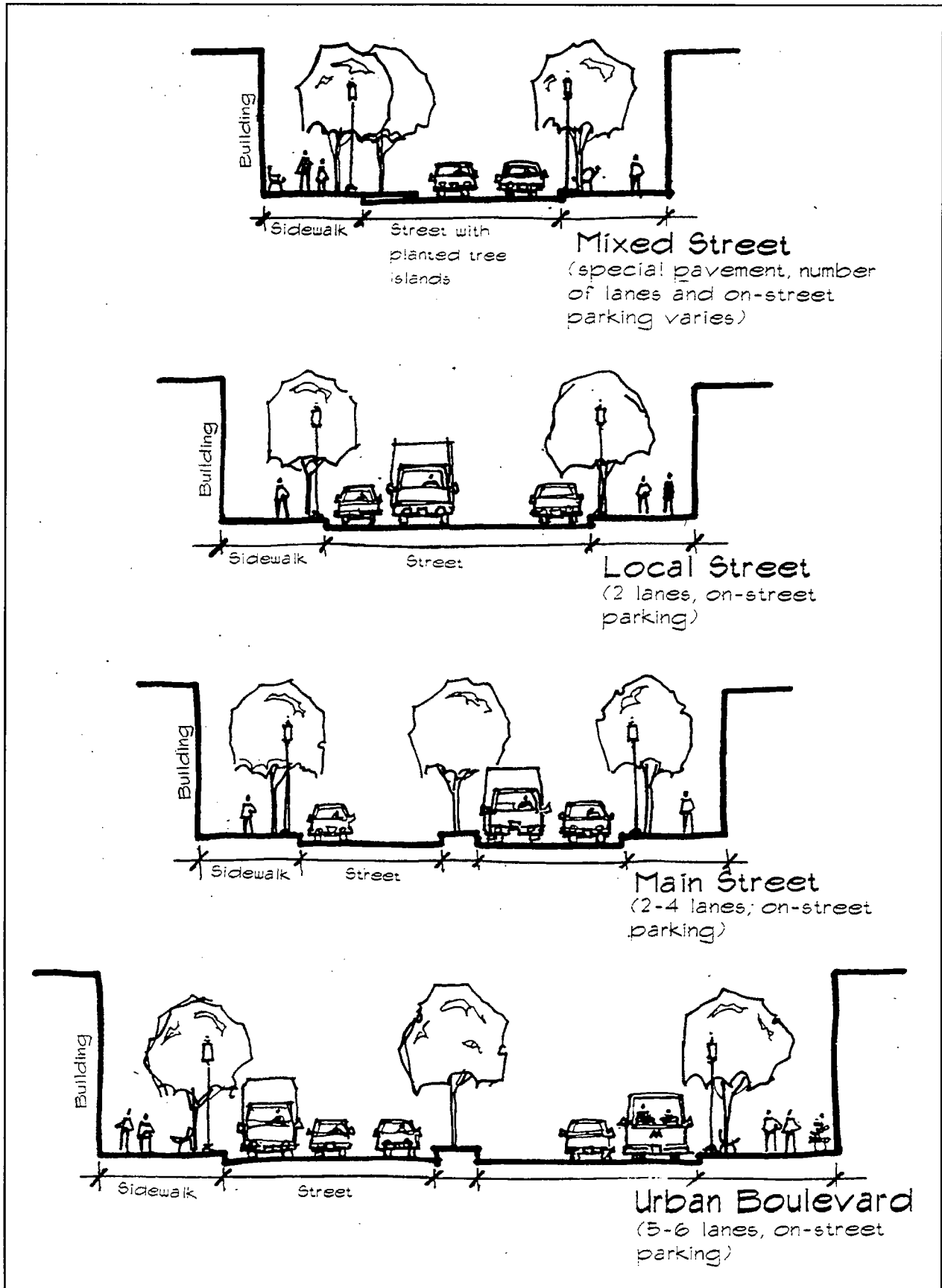
- **Urban Boulevards** are typically six-lane divided highways that carry a significant amount of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Wisconsin Avenue, East-West Highway, and Old Georgetown Road are Urban Boulevards.
- **Main Streets** are local streets that serve to collect and distribute local traffic and experience a significant level of pedestrian activity due to land uses such as retail stores or restaurants. Norfolk, Woodmont, and Bethesda Avenues are examples of Main Streets.
- **Local Streets** are internal CBD streets that provide general access for vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- **Mixed Streets** emphasize pedestrian circulation while allowing limited, slow vehicular traffic. These streets should be developed with streetscape elements, including trees, plantings, special paving, and furniture. Bollards may be used rather than curbs to emphasize the pedestrian character of the street. Mixed street designs will require interagency review prior to implementation. Currently, Bethesda has only one Mixed Street, a private driveway serving the office development behind CVS Pharmacy on Arlington Road.

A central feature of the Sector Plan is to give each district its own distinguishing characteristics while creating a unified image for the entire CBD. To achieve a unified character, the “garden” design theme developed in the 1984 *Bethesda Streetscape Plan* for the Core District should be used within other areas. The Streetscape Plan recommends a range of treatments for each district. These recommendations include high, medium, and low levels of improvements, which respond to the existing hierarchy of streets and take into account fiscal implications. Five levels of streetscape improvement are described in Section 10.4C. (See Figure 6.1 for an illustration of the Streetscape Plan and identification of street types within the CBD.)

The recommended improvements provide sufficient information to guide future development regarding lighting, paving, and street trees. It is necessary, at a minimum, to identify specific materials for different areas of the CBD to achieve a cohesive, unified streetscape as individual parcels are developed.

The Sector Plan recommends that all streets within the CBD have underground utilities to reduce visual clutter in an intensely developed area. However, because of the cost of undergrounding utilities, the Plan recommends that such a program follow the proposed priority list and proceed as resources allow. Both optional and standard method private sector development should participate in implementing the streetscape recommendations. Where feasible, relocation of overhead utilities to rear alleys should be considered in lieu of costly undergrounding.

Special attention should be given to gateways along major corridors leading into Bethesda, where landscape treatment should visually signal the transition into the CBD from surrounding areas. To express the “garden” design theme of Bethesda’s streetscape, groves of flowering trees and ground



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covers or median shade trees are preferred to pylon signs or sculptural artwork. Since each gateway is unique, design studies of each gateway are needed to develop specific recommendations.

6.2 AREA-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SIDEWALK PAVING

All sidewalks within the Core District, selected Main Streets, and Mixed Streets outside the Core should be upgraded with the Bethesda brick paver currently specified in the approved 1984 Bethesda Streetscape Plan. (On Mixed Streets, bricks will also be used in the travel lanes. See Figure 5.12.) The proposed use of these brick pavers has been limited to highly visible sidewalks along the Urban Boulevards, to locations where enhanced sidewalks would encourage use of Metro, and to areas that currently are or potentially will experience significant pedestrian activity.

The continued use of Bethesda brick pavers will provide continuity within the network of sidewalks. Brick substitutes of comparable or higher quality can be considered but must achieve a range in color value that is compatible with the existing brick sidewalks. (See Figure 6.3 for locations of the proposed brick pavers.)

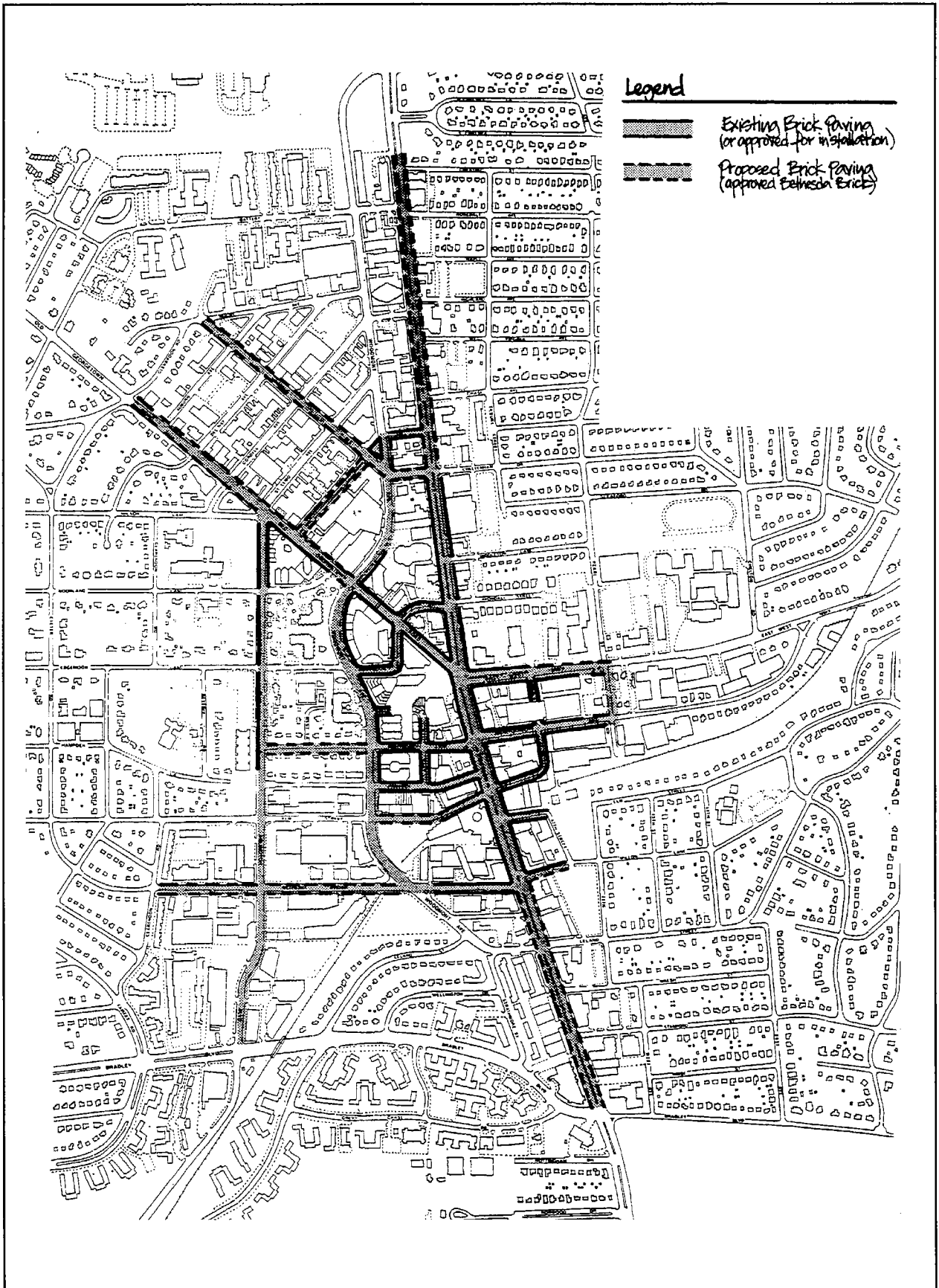
B. STREET LIGHTING

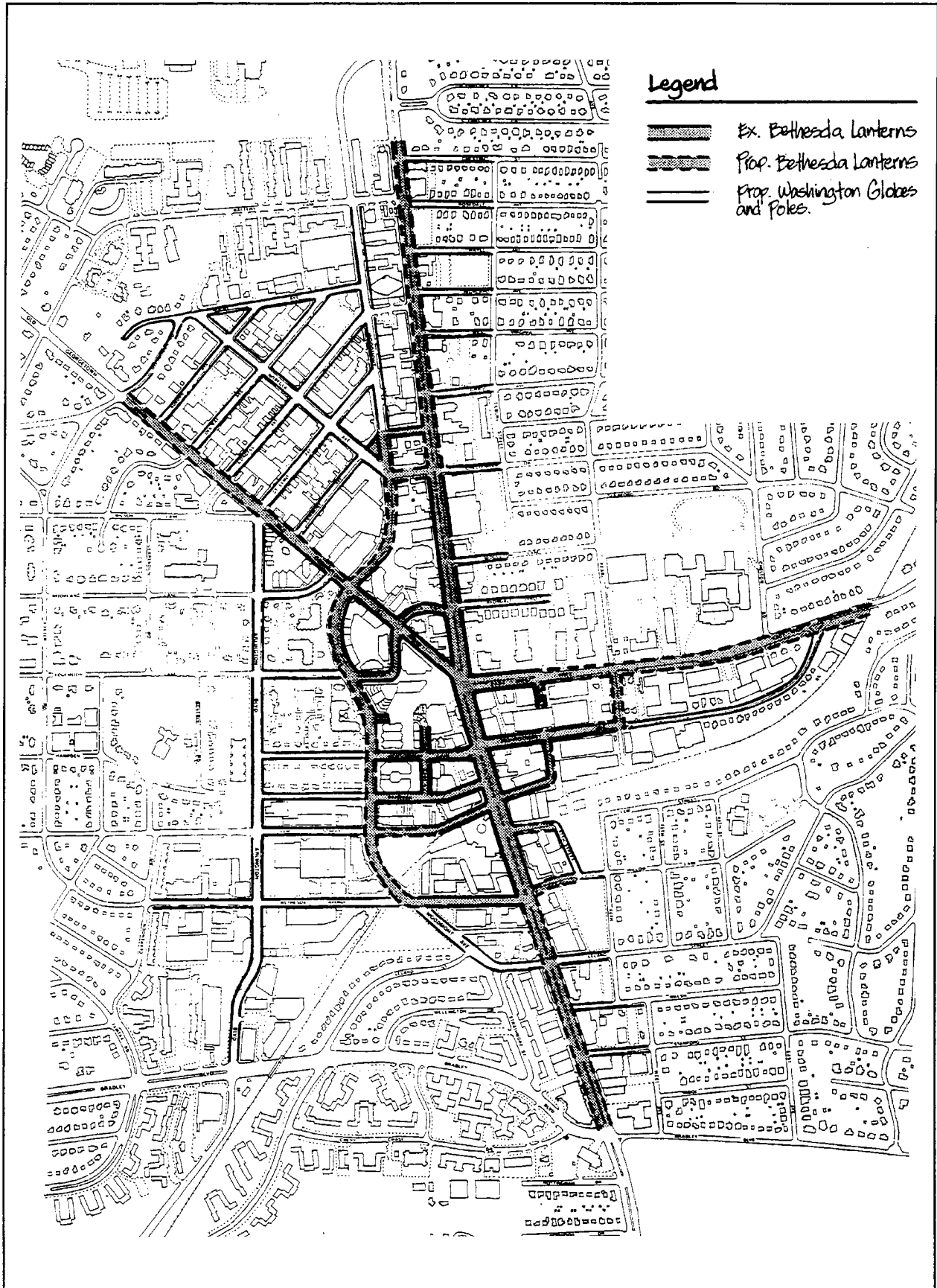
All streets within the Core District, including Woodmont Avenue and along the Urban Boulevards of Wisconsin Avenue, East-West Highway, and Old Georgetown Road should receive Bethesda Street Lanterns as the primary street light. The lanterns are limited to those streets to acknowledge fiscal constraints and accentuate the most heavily traveled Urban Boulevards, while increasing Bethesda's sense of identity. Should funds become available in the future, Norfolk and Bethesda Avenues, where significant pedestrian activity occurs, could also be considered for Bethesda Lanterns.

All other streets in the CBD should use the traditional Washington Globe, which has an "Acorn" globe fixture mounted on a fluted black 16-foot pole similar to the approved Silver Spring Decorative Lamp. This street light is pedestrian-friendly in scale, provides sufficient light for non-divided streets in the CBD, and is less expensive than the Bethesda Lantern. Signalized intersections throughout the CBD should continue to be lighted with bronze high-mount, cut-off luminaries as specified in the approved 1984 Bethesda Streetscape Plan. (See Figure 6.4 for the street lighting plan.)

C. STREET TREE PLANTING

The Plan recommends a policy of planting trees on all CBD streets. Street trees within an urban area provide needed shade, reduce the urban heat buildup, filter pollutants, maintain human scale next to tall buildings, and introduce visual interest with seasonal changes. There are also aesthetic benefits to planting a line of street trees to visually unify a diverse building environment.





The recommended tree species have been selected on the basis of vitality in an urban setting, form and height, aesthetic qualities, maintenance characteristics, and availability. The London Plane Tree should continue to be planted along the major Urban Boulevards to visually unify and accentuate these streets. A variety of different species will provide horticultural diversity within the rest of the CBD. Substitutions to the recommended tree planting plan will be considered if certain species are not available after an extensive search or have become more susceptible to disease or pests. However, it is important to try to achieve a consistent species for visual unity. (See Figure 6.5, for the recommended street tree planting plan.)

The botanical names of recommended tree cultivars are as follows:

- *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory', (Red Maple)
- *Acer saccharum* 'Green Mountain', (Sugar Maple)
- *Fraxinus p. lanceolata* 'Marshall's Seedless', (Marshall's S. Ash)
- *Gleditsia t. inermis* 'Shademaster', (Shademaster Honey Locust)
- *Platanus acerifolia*, (London Plane Tree)
- *Quercus acutissima*, (Sawtooth Oak)
- *Quercus borealis*, (Red Oak)
- *Quercus palustris*, (Pin Oak)
- *Quercus phellos*, (Willow Oak)
- *Sophora japonica*, (Sophora)
- *Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire', (Little Leaf Linden)
- *Ulmus parviflora*, (Chinese Elm)
- *Zelkova serrata* 'Village Gree', (Zelkova)

6.3 DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

A. THE METRO CORE DISTRICT

The adopted 1984 Bethesda Streetscape Plan should continue to guide improvements within the Metro Core District. The plan requires upgrading of all Core streets by undergrounding overhead utilities, using brick pavers, and installing Bethesda Lantern streetlights, wood benches, and tightly spaced street trees. This represents Level One streetscape, the highest level of improvements. In addition, the Urban Boulevards of Wisconsin Avenue, Old Georgetown Road, and East-West Highway should receive a high level of street furnishings, such as planters and additional benches, to accommodate greater pedestrian activity. The materials specified in the 1984 plan create a "garden"



character, intended to complement the surrounding residential gardens outside the CBD.

The Sector Plan recommends a few minor revisions to the 1984 Bethesda Streetscape Plan to improve pedestrian access and achieve a more unified approach. These revisions include:

1. Provide a minimum 20-foot building setback from the street curb along Wisconsin Avenue to better accommodate the higher volumes of pedestrian traffic on this street. The 1984 plan called for 15-foot sidewalks, a width that is more appropriate for side streets than for Wisconsin Avenue.
2. Unify Woodmont Avenue with Bethesda brick pavers and Bethesda Lanterns on both sides of the street, as shown in Figures 6.3 and 6.4. The 1984 plan considered each side of Woodmont Avenue to be in a different district, requiring different pavements. This Sector Plan treats the street as a unified corridor which should receive the same treatment on both sides.
3. Create signalized pedestrian crossings and new crosswalks to facilitate pedestrian movement within the Core. (See Chapter 5.0, Transportation.)
4. Upgrade the existing East-West Highway corridor and median.

B. THE WISCONSIN CORRIDORS, NORTH AND SOUTH

Both of these areas should receive the same level of streetscape improvement as the Metro Core District (Level One) to achieve a unified street corridor and respond to a higher level of pedestrian activity. This upgraded streetscape will visually define Wisconsin Avenue as one of Bethesda's most significant Urban Boulevards.

1. Provide a 20-foot building setback to match setbacks in the Metro Core and to help emphasize the street hierarchy.
2. Place overhead utilities underground.
3. Provide the 1984 streetscape standards, which call for Bethesda brick pavers, tightly spaced street trees, and Bethesda Lanterns.
4. Install a high level of pedestrian amenities, such as planters and seating.
5. Upgrade the existing median and sidewalks.

C. OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD CORRIDOR

Extending Metro Core District streetscape (Level One) along Old Georgetown Road will contribute to a unified street corridor and create an Urban Boulevard. However, due to the proposed reversible center lane, no median is proposed within the Sector Plan area.

1. Place overhead utilities underground.
2. Provide the 1984 streetscape standards, which call for Bethesda brick pavers, tightly spaced street trees, and Bethesda Lanterns.

D. MONTGOMERY TRIANGLE CORRIDOR

The two main roads in the Montgomery Triangle Corridor are East-West Highway and Montgomery Avenue, which make a one-way couplet through the CBD. The streetscape treatment should reflect the distinct character of each road.

East-West Highway should be developed as an Urban Boulevard but without a median, due to the one-way traffic pattern. This area receives heavy pedestrian traffic from the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. The current six to eight foot sidewalks are inadequate. There is sufficient pavement space to reduce travel lanes to 11 feet in certain areas, allowing installation of sidewalks wide enough for both pedestrians and street trees.

Although Montgomery Avenue carries significant traffic as half of the East-West Highway one-way couplet, its streetscape improvements should be limited to planting street trees, providing a concrete sidewalk, and maintaining the high-mount lighting.

Level Two streetscape is recommended for these streets. Level Two upgrades as follows:

1. Place overhead utilities underground.
2. Expand concrete sidewalks to a minimum of 15 feet and plant tightly spaced street trees.
3. Install Bethesda Lanterns along East-West Highway and provide Washington Globe lighting along Montgomery Avenue.

This Plan does not envision special pavement outside the Core District portion of the corridor because of fiscal constraints. However, the expansion of Metro Core District streetscape improvements along East-West Highway to the eastern gateway should be considered, if funds become available.

E. THE WOODMONT TRIANGLE DISTRICT

Streetscape improvements in the Woodmont Triangle should distinguish it as a unique restaurant and retail district. Several special pedestrian-oriented streets should be developed to create a hierarchy within the street grid, to improve orientation, and to respond to pedestrian routes.

Level Three streetscape should be provided for certain streets, as follows:

1. Provide the Washington Globe with fluted pole base throughout the area to help visually define the district. Should funds become available, the Bethesda Lantern could be considered for Norfolk Avenue to highlight this street within the grid.
2. Place utilities underground only along Norfolk Avenue, Cheltenham Drive, Fairmont Avenue, and Woodmont Avenue to reduce visual clutter along these important streets. If fiscal resources permit, undergrounding utilities should be considered for additional streets in the Woodmont Triangle after other streetscape improvements have been made.
3. Install Bethesda brick pavers along Cheltenham Drive and Norfolk and Fairmont Avenues to upgrade these sidewalks, which link with other open spaces. Provide



concrete sidewalks at least 15 feet wide for all other streets to accommodate additional street trees and provide adequate pedestrian space.

4. Consider most streets in the Woodmont Triangle as Local Streets, with Level Five streetscape. This level upgrades streets with only Washington Globe lighting, additional street trees, and repair of concrete sidewalks.

Recommendations for individual streets follow:

1. Develop Norfolk Avenue and Cheltenham Drive as Main Streets, with Level Three streetscape, to create a pedestrian path through the Woodmont Triangle. These upgraded Main Streets would tie together several existing and future open spaces and create an important link between the Battery Lane and East Bethesda communities.
2. Install tightly spaced street trees, a landscaped median, Bethesda brick pavers, the Washington Globe, and a high level of pedestrian amenities such as benches and planters along Norfolk Avenue and Cheltenham Drive. Expansion of sidewalk cafes is encouraged as long as it does not restrict adequate pedestrian space.
3. Develop Fairmont Avenue as a Mixed Street, with Level Four streetscape, to create a pedestrian-oriented zone with restaurants and retail shops along either side. This short block terminates in the War Memorial Park on the north and Chevy Chase Garden Plaza on the south. The street could become one-way, and should have expanded sidewalks, and allow on-street parking. A Mixed Street (Level Four) calls for Bethesda brick pavers within both the sidewalk zone and the travel lane to visually unify the street and reduce travel speeds. Washington Globe lighting, street trees, and a high level of pedestrian amenities should be provided. Outdoor cafes are encouraged as long as adequate pedestrian space is maintained.
4. Develop Woodmont Avenue from Old Georgetown Road to Fairmont Avenue as a Main Street, with Level One streetscape, to accommodate pedestrians attracted to the Triangle's restaurants. From Fairmont Avenue to the northern gateway near NIH, provide Level Two streetscape. Locate existing utilities along Woodmont Avenue underground to reduce the visual clutter and improve the overall character of the street. Due to fiscal considerations, no special streetscape is required in this segment other than to install Washington Globe street lighting. If funding becomes available after the Plan's recommendations have been implemented, consideration should be given to additional streetscape improvements to Woodmont Avenue.

F. THE TRANSIT STATION RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

Streetscape in the TS-R District should distinguish it as a residential district and create a hierarchy of streets and pedestrian routes. Montgomery Lane should become a link between the library and the Metro Core.

1. Provide upgraded streetscapes to highlight the area as a district and improve the pedestrian access.

2. Create a Mixed Street shared by cars and pedestrians along Montgomery Lane, with Level Four streetscape. A portion of this short block is already designated one-way to prevent cut-through traffic. Washington Globe street lighting, Bethesda brick pavers, tightly spaced street trees, and a higher level of pedestrian amenities should be installed to distinguish this street.
3. Place overhead utilities underground along Montgomery Lane to reduce the visual clutter and to highlight this street as the primary pedestrian focus of the neighborhood.

All other streets in the TS-R neighborhood are considered Local Streets, with Level Five streetscape, and because of fiscal constraints, should receive only tightly spaced street trees, Washington Globe lighting, and concrete sidewalks. If resources permit, consideration should be given to undergrounding utilities along Elm Street, Edgemoor Lane, and Moorland Lane.

G. THE ARLINGTON ROAD DISTRICT

Streetscape improvements in this busy shopping district should encourage walking to reduce traffic congestion, create a hierarchy in the street system, and improve the area's visual character. Improvements for pedestrian access and on-street parking are especially needed along the north side of Bethesda Avenue, west of Arlington Road. In all cases, sidewalks should be no less than 15 feet wide to accommodate both street trees and pedestrians.

The Plan recommends developing Bethesda Avenue as a Main Street to build upon the existing "main street" characteristics, create a hierarchy, and improve pedestrian connections from the Edgemoor Community along Bethesda Avenue to the Core District. However, because of limited space, there should be no median.

Level Three streetscape should be provided as follows:

1. Place overhead utilities underground.
2. Provide a minimum of 15-foot sidewalks and on-street parking for the entire street.
3. Provide Washington Globe street lighting, Bethesda brick pavers, street trees, and a high level of pedestrian amenities such as benches and planters.
4. Along Lot 31, provide streetscape improvements that incorporate a Class 1 Bikeway. (See Figure 5.6.)

The Plan recommends developing Arlington Road between Montgomery Lane and Bradley Boulevard as a Main Street. This segment forms the central spine of the shopping district, linking it with the TS-R District to the north and the residential areas to the south. Due to limited space and high traffic volumes, no median or on-street parking should be provided. Level Three streetscape should be provided as follows:

1. Place overhead utilities underground.



2. Provide Washington Globe street lighting, Bethesda brick pavers, and street trees.
3. Provide a signalized pedestrian crossing at Montgomery Lane, in front of the library.

H. THE TRANSITION AREAS

Although the residential streets provide pedestrian access to the Metro and CBD, the volume of pedestrian traffic is insufficient to warrant special treatment. Neither placement of overhead utilities underground nor special streetscape treatment will be required. The Plan recommends Level Five streetscape for the Transition Areas as follows:

1. Install standard concrete sidewalks along all residential streets that connect to the CBD.
2. Plant street trees along all residential streets that connect to the CBD.

6.4 STAGING PRIORITIES

The streetscape plan should be implemented in a sequence that reinforces the hierarchy of the street system. The sequence promotes maximum linkage between segments by emphasizing areas where improvements are likely to be completed primarily with private sector redevelopment funds. The priority list also attempts to disperse the staging of improvements throughout the CBD to all the districts, while responding first to areas with higher levels of pedestrian activity.

The Plan recommends that both standard and optional method private development within the CBD contribute to the proposed streetscape improvements. This recommendation will require certain changes in Chapters 49 and 50 of the County Code. These changes would be designed to create a reasonable and equitable distribution of support for improvements which benefit all property owners and businesses within the CBD.

The provision of a capital improvements program for those areas not likely to be redeveloped must be approved by the County Council and programmed over time to be financially feasible. The Plan recommends a sequence for implementation but does not identify a time schedule. Improvements, such as median retrofits, sidewalk repairs, and street tree plantings, can be achieved with a variety of other funding sources, for example Bethesda Urban Partnership funds and MCDOT's sidewalk repair funds.

- Priority 1:**
- A. All unfinished streetscapes within the Core District, such as the east side of Woodmont Avenue from Old Georgetown Road to Cheltenham Drive, and both sides of East-West Highway from Waverly Street to Pearl Street.
 - B. Northern Wisconsin Avenue from Cheltenham Drive to the northern gateway, if there is sufficient private sector development to coordinate public sector improvements.

- Priority 2:**
- A. Norfolk Avenue, Cheltenham Drive, and Woodmont Avenue within the Woodmont Triangle.
 - B. Southern Wisconsin Avenue from Bethesda Avenue to Bradley Boulevard.
 - C. All unfinished streetscapes along northern Wisconsin Avenue to be completed without delaying further for private sector development to occur.
- Priority 3:**
- A. Bethesda Avenue from Woodmont Avenue to Clarendon Road.
- Priority 4:**
- A. East-West Highway from the eastern gateway at the railroad bridge to Pearl Street.
 - B. Old Georgetown Road from Woodmont Avenue to the western gateway at Glenbrook Road.
- Priority 5:**
- A. Arlington Road from Old Georgetown Road to Bradley Boulevard.
 - B. Montgomery Avenue from Pearl Street to East-West Highway.



