Bethesda Today
Rich with unique history, community character and established residential neighborhoods
Home to more than 10,000 residents within the Plan boundary and adjacent to two major federal employers
A County arts, entertainment and nightlife destination
Pedestrian-oriented with good access to transit
Lacking central green spaces and continuous tree canopy
High in impervious cover within watersheds with poor to fair water quality
An area with the highest average rents in the County and a need to increase affordable housing options
A greener and more connected Downtown
What we heard from the Community

A place with grass and trees and benches

A place to run, walk or bike

A place for big events like concerts or movies

A place to gather with friends
What we heard from the Community

A place to skateboard

A place to bounce, kick, or throw a ball

A place where I can meditate and/or connect with nature

A place where I can run my dog

What we heard from the Community
Urban Parks and Open Space Hierarchy

A HIERARCHY

Each area master plan should include a system of open spaces based on the roles of each type of open space. The amount and size of open spaces may vary from plan to plan and should be directly proportional to the projected density, and adjusted to the pattern of existing open space and other factors such as community-specific needs.

The following hierarchy should be applied to any new urbanizing area:

FOR THE SECTOR PLAN AREA:
- Active recreation destinations located within or near the plan area, including courts, playgrounds, and lawn areas large enough for pick up soccer, festivals or events, etc.
- A central “civic green” urban park (Chapter 3), ranging in size from ½ to 2 acres, depending on projected densities, located in close proximity to a public transit hub, next to activating uses, with a mixture of hard and soft surfaces including a central lawn area for events
- An interconnected system of sidewalks and trails to connect parks and open spaces
- Wooded areas that will provide a sense of contact with nature

FOR EACH URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD: a neighborhood green, urban buffer park, or community use recreational park

FOR EACH BLOCK: an urban square, plaza, or green area

FOR EACH BUILDING: outdoor recreation space

FOR EACH RESIDENCE: private outdoor space
Roadway Recommendations

- New Streets
- Two-Way Reconfiguration
- Capacity Analysis
Pedestrian and Bicycle Recommendations

Specific Roadways:

• Woodmont Avenue
• Norfolk Avenue
• Arlington Road
A more affordable Downtown with a mix of housing options
Affordable Housing

- Add more units to the marketplace by requiring 15% MPDUs within the Downtown.

- Provide 15% MPDUs on-site as a first priority.

- Preserve existing market-rate affordable housing through density averaging and priority sending sites.
Affordable Housing

• Prioritize 2 and 3 bedroom units through increased public benefit points and DHCA evaluation of area needs and through negotiations with developer (potentially off-site).

• Reach deeper levels of affordability (below 65% AIM) by providing 10% of MPDU units below 65% AMI.

• Off-site MPDUs on a case-by-case basis through negotiations with DHCA (must remain in Downtown Bethesda).
A competitive Downtown that fosters innovation
Urban Ecosystem

• Provide a minimum of 35 percent green cover, which may include:
  
a) Intensive green roof (6 inches or deeper) on 35 percent of rooftop
  
b) Tree canopy cover on 35 percent of landscape
  
c) Combination of the two
High Performance Area

Public benefits category for Energy Conservation and Generation:

• Any building located in whole or in part within the High Performance Area should exceed ASHRAE 90.1 (Appendix G) standard by 15%.

• Should the County approve the International Green Construction Code (IGCC), building energy performance must be 2 points more efficient.
Expanded and Emerging Centers

Height Based on Character

low to high-rise

low to high-rise

high-rise

high-rise

low to high-rise

low to mid-rise
Symbolic Center and Civic Gathering Spaces

Up to 290 ft
Edges as Transitions
Up to 70 ft
Blank ground floor walls with poor relationship to the sidewalk

Imposing building massing and bulk
Building Form Recommendations

**Bulk:** Limit tower floor plates, vary geometry and articulate facades to reduce building bulk

**Separation:** Separate towers to allow access to light and air, and reduce impact of shadows on the public realm

**Innovation:** Encourage innovative building form and allow flexibility for design that meets the intent of the recommendations

**Variation:** Vary tower heights, setbacks, orientation, and building materials

**Top:** For buildings in prominent locations and with significant height, consider creating a special top that contributes to the quality of the skyline

**Tower Step-back:** Step back upper floors along streets, open spaces and midblock connections in a way that distinctly differentiates the tower from the building base

**Base:** Provide a low-to mid-rise building base that frames the street with fine-grain facade articulation

**Setback:** Allow sufficient setback from the curb for a clear pedestrian walkway lined by plantings and furnishings per the Bethesda Streetscape Standards

**Mid-block Connection:** Provide public connections for people to walk and bike through large blocks
Building Form Recommendations

+ **Innovation:** Encourage innovative building form and allow flexibility for design that meets the intent of the recommendations.

+ **Variation:** Vary tower heights, upper floor setbacks orientation and building materials.
A truly sustainable Downtown...

- Economic: competitive + innovative
- Social: unique + affordable
- Environmental: greener + connected
...with strengthened Centers of Activity
and this is **how** to get there:

- Great Transit + Walkability
- Bethesda Overlay Zone
- Optional Method Public Benefits
- High Performance Area
- Design Excellence
## Plan Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Existing on the Ground</th>
<th>Land Use Vision</th>
<th>Realized Development</th>
<th>Realistic Development Potential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976 Plan</td>
<td>9.2M SF</td>
<td>20.9M SF</td>
<td>7.1M SF</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994 Plan</td>
<td>16.3M SF</td>
<td>27.8M SF</td>
<td>7.3M SF</td>
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<td>2015 Plan</td>
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<td>32.4M SF</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>8.8M SF</td>
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## Bethesda Overlay Zone

### Requirements:
- Park Impact Payment
- 15% MPDU Requirement
- Design Review Panel

### Affordable Housing (MPDUs):
- MPDU square footage does not count against the FAR (same as CR zone today)
- No additional height given with MPDUs outside of the HPA boundary

### Process:
- Board may approve a project that exceeds the mapped CR density
- For the Board to approve a project with additional density it must find that no more than a total of 32.4 million SF has been approved
- Project receiving additional density must go to permit within 24 months of receiving site plan approval
How Buildings are Approved in Bethesda

How much square footage is allowed?

STANDARD METHOD/BY-RIGHT DEVELOPMENT

1 FAR OR LESS
- By-right development
- Planning Board approval not required
- May immediately apply for building permit

END

OPTIONAL METHOD DEVELOPMENT

MORE THAN 1 FAR
- Development up to the FAR shown on the zoning map requires at least 100 CR public benefit points.

Do you want to exceed density shown on the zoning map?

YES

BETESDA OVERLAY ZONE
- New maximum heights
- Retain existing density
- May apply for allocation of "bonus density" to exceed mapped FAR

NO

END

OPTIONS TO EXCEED MAPPED DENSITY

A. DENSITY AVERAGING
Density may be averaged between properties within 1/4 mile of each other under the current zoning code. This may be done to acquire additional density to exceed the mapped FAR and reach mapped heights.

B. BETESDA OVERLAY ZONE
To acquire bonus density from this finite pool, developments must pay a Park Impact Payment, have 15% MPDLUs, and are subject to a Design Review Panel.

C. PRIORITY SENDING SITES
The priority sending sites option is density averaging with some additional incentives. These include lifting the 1/4 mile restriction, eliminating the requirement for sketch plan or site plan, removing the BFT requirement, eliminating the 15% MPDLU requirement, and waiving the park impact payment.
Priority Sending Sites

Working Draft Incentives:

- Lift the 0.25-mile restriction
- Eliminate the requirement for a common sketch plan or site plan

Staff Recommendation for additional incentives:

- Remove the BLT requirement for priority sending site density
- Eliminate the 15 percent MPDU requirement for priority sending site density, and leave it at the mandatory 12.5 percent
- Remove Park Amenity Payment