

**FRIENDSHIP
HEIGHTS GATEWAY
AREA DEVELOPMENT
STUDY**

JOHN GRAHAM A.I.A.

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ENGINEERS

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS GATEWAY AREA

DEVELOPMENT STUDY

January, 1969

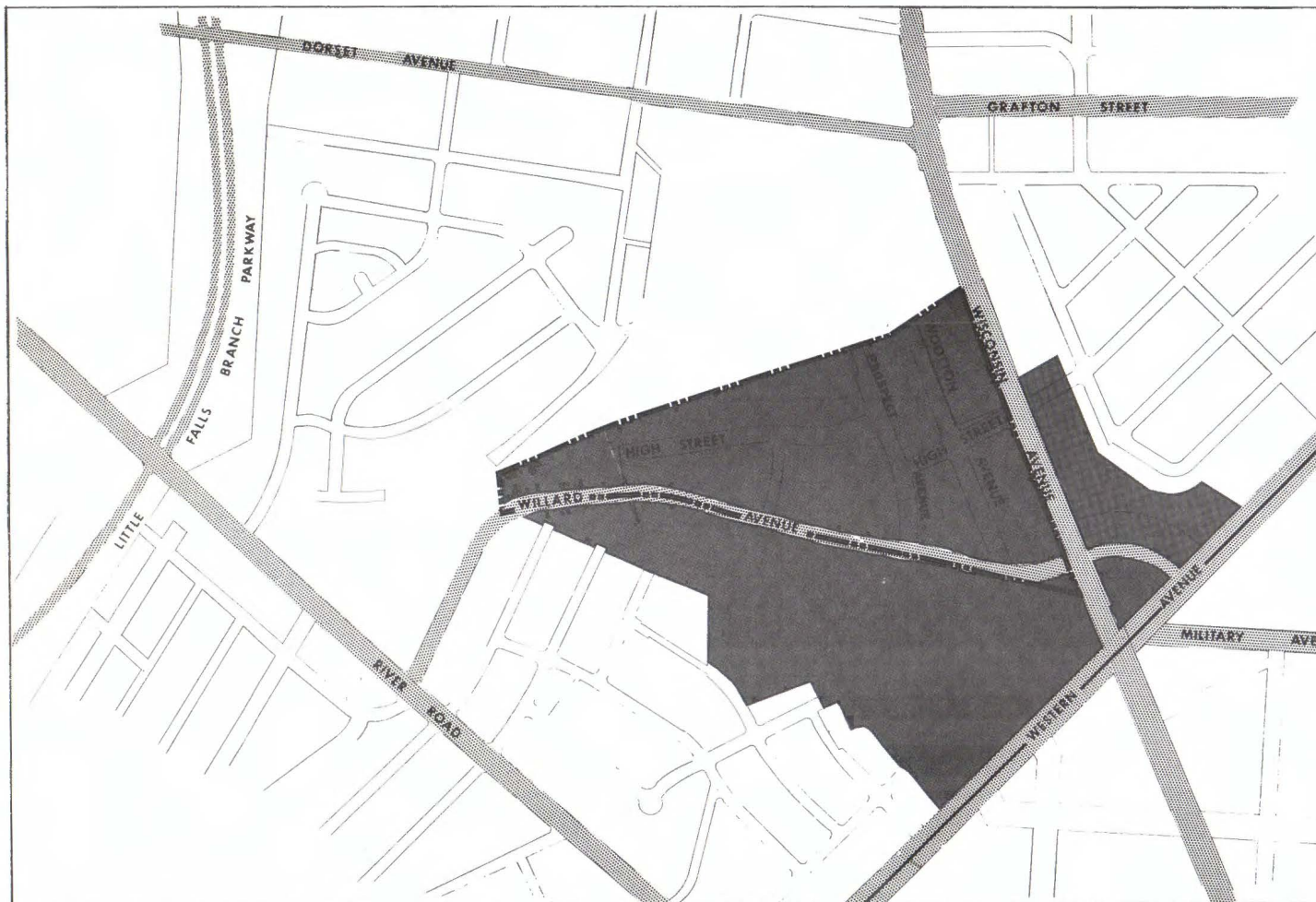
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HISTORY





Friendship Heights (formally known as Friendship Heights and the Hills) lies along Wisconsin Avenue for a distance of one-half mile north of the District of Columbia boundary line. It is one of the oldest suburbs of the nation's capital. Formed about the turn of the century from two adjacent farms, this pie-shaped area of approximately 32 acres began its development as a fine residential community.

In 1911, Friendship Heights was chartered by the State Legislature as a special taxing district, to be governed by a seven member elected body known as the Friendship Heights Citizens' Committee. This governing body has the authority to maintain and repair streets, sanitation and lighting facilities.

During the first half of this century, Friendship Heights developed and existed as a residential community at the terminus of the Washington, D. C. street car system. However, by the end of World War II there were signs of decay, lack of maintenance and conversions to rooming houses, and it was clear that Friendship Heights was declining from the fine residential community it once was. At this time, interest in the commercial potential of the area began to emerge and was first realized by the Woodward and Lothrop Department Store chain which constructed a 180,000 square foot branch store in 1951. This initial event began a trend of commercial development which was to transform the Friendship Heights-West Chevy Chase area into one of the most important commercial gateways in Montgomery County.



GATEWAY AREA

-  MAJOR ROADS
-  GATEWAY BUSINESS DISTRICT
-  FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS
-  MONTGOMERY COUNTY WASHINGTON D.C. BOUNDARY

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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The Woodward and Lothrop store was followed by the Chevy Chase Shopping Center, branches of Lord and Taylor (on the district side of the boundary line) and Saks Fifth Avenue, a major office complex for Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO), the Barlow Office Building, and the Highland House, Irene, and Willoughby apartment hotels. This represents approximately 570,000 square feet of retail space, 280,000 square feet of office space and 2,021 units of apartment hotel accommodations. Another office building of approximately 300,000 square feet (the Chevy Chase Building) is presently under construction. It can be seen plainly that this area has and is continuing to develop into a truly dynamic commercial gateway.

ZONING DEVELOPMENTS

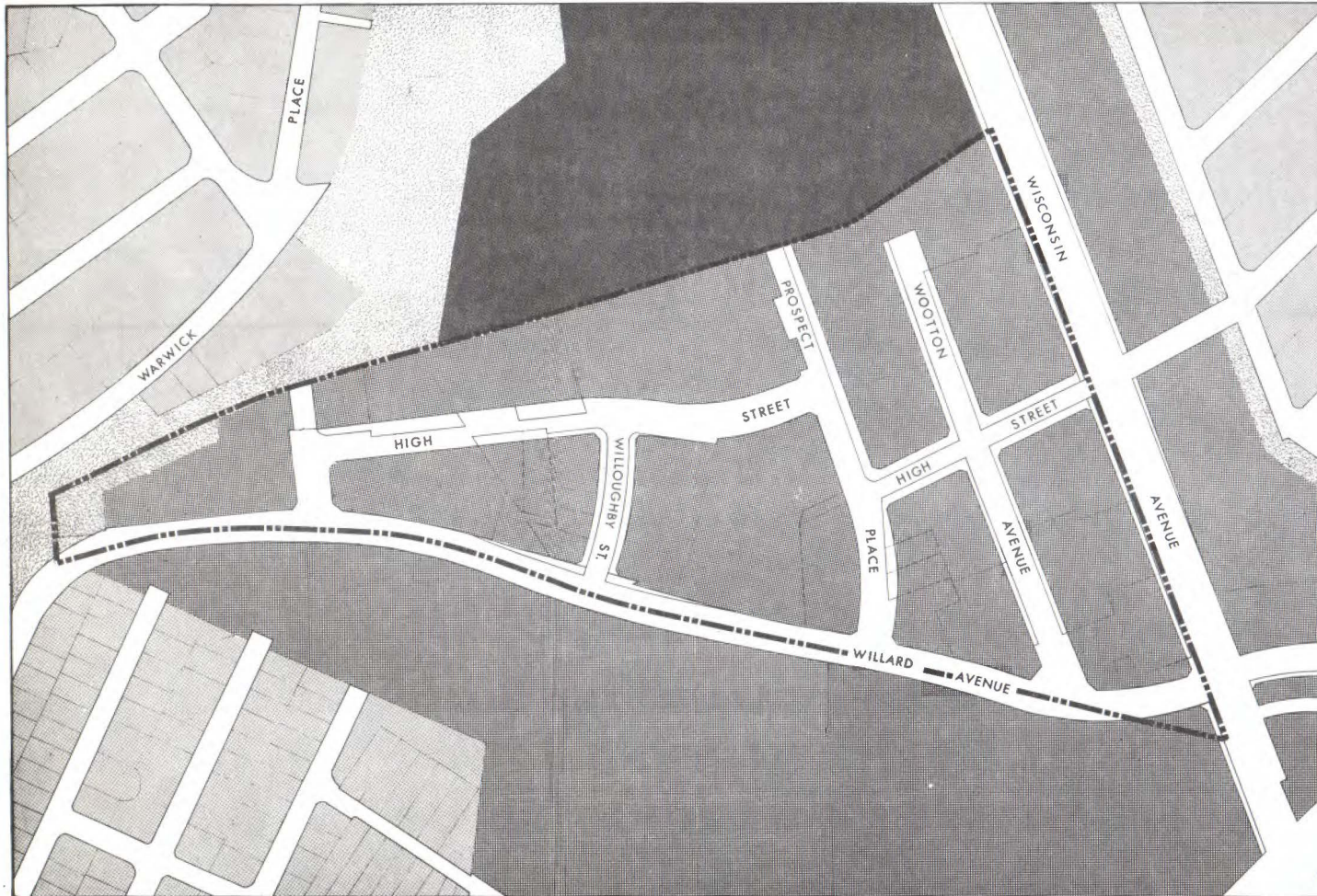
Prior to World War II, Friendship Heights and vicinity were almost entirely single family residential zoning. During the late 1940's, when commercial interest was just beginning, there were relatively few applications to the county for zoning change. With the completion of the first major commercial building in 1951, came more frequent applications for zoning changes for commercial uses.

The Friendship Heights Citizens' Committee was in favor of comprehensive zoning instead of spot zoning changes and founded the Long Range Planning Committee to further this goal. For some time, the Committee successfully resisted spot zoning, although the constant pressure of the commercial demand succeeded in changing a handful of parcels





along Wisconsin Avenue adjacent to the existing commercial zone.

In 1964, the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted a Master Plan for the area. Since then, most of Friendship Heights has been zoned General Commercial (C-2). The Master Plan recommended that all of Friendship Heights be zoned C-2. However, it was not, and several parcels are still zoned as One Family Detached Residential (R-60).

The only major central business district use not permitted in the C-2 zone was apartment house use (multiple family dwellings) which was eliminated from all commercial zones in 1959, except for facilities of very low density. However, apartment



ADOPTED LAND USE PLAN

-  SINGLE FAMILY (RESIDENTIAL)
-  MULTI-FAMILY (R-H)
-  PARKS & CONSERVATION AREAS
-  COMMERCIAL

NOTE: ADOPTED FEB. 5, 1964 AS PART OF MASTER
PLAN FOR WEST CHEVY CHASE AND VICINITY

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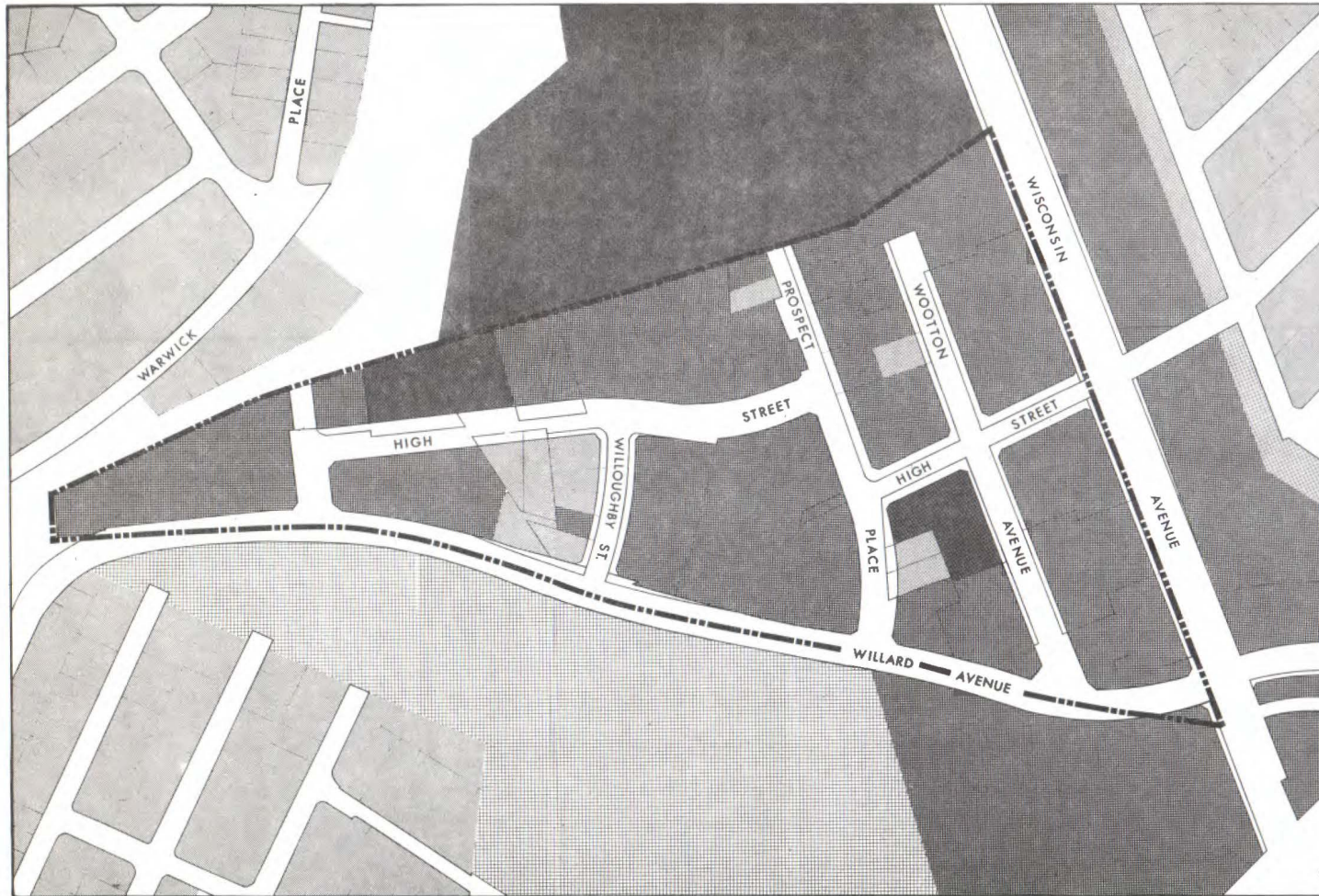
hotels remained as a special exception in Commercial Office Zone (C-O), and as a permitted use in the C-2 Zone.

No permits for apartment hotels were applied for until 1964 when there were a number of requests for building permits and special exceptions. The Planning Commission then urged the County Council to eliminate apartment hotels from all commercial zones. In January, 1966, the County Council deleted hotels and apartment hotels from the C-2 Zone and established a new "Multi Family Central Business District Residential" (RCBD) zone, designed to accommodate apartment houses and apartment hotels. The new R-CBD zone was limited to five areas of the country designated as central business districts, one of which is West Chevy Chase and vicinity. Only two applications for zoning changes

to R-CBD have been granted and both are in Friendship Heights.

The new R-CBD zone provided for apartment hotels, but ignored the question of hotels. It was not until early 1968 that the Planning Commission staff made a proposal to the County Planning Board to remedy this situation. Hotel use then was incorporated into the R-CBD zone as a permitted use in the Fall of 1968.

Today in Friendship Heights there are three different zones scattered throughout the area, each having its own particular set of requirements. This is precisely the type of non-comprehensive (spot) zoning which the Friendship Heights Citizens' Committee has been seeking to avoid, thus it is clear that comprehensive zoning for Friendship Heights has yet to be realized.



EXISTING ZONING

- R-60 SINGLE FAMILY
- R-H MULTI-FAMILY
- R-CBD MULTI-FAMILY C.B.D.
- COMMERCIAL OFFICE
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL

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EXISTING CONDITIONS AND POTENTIAL

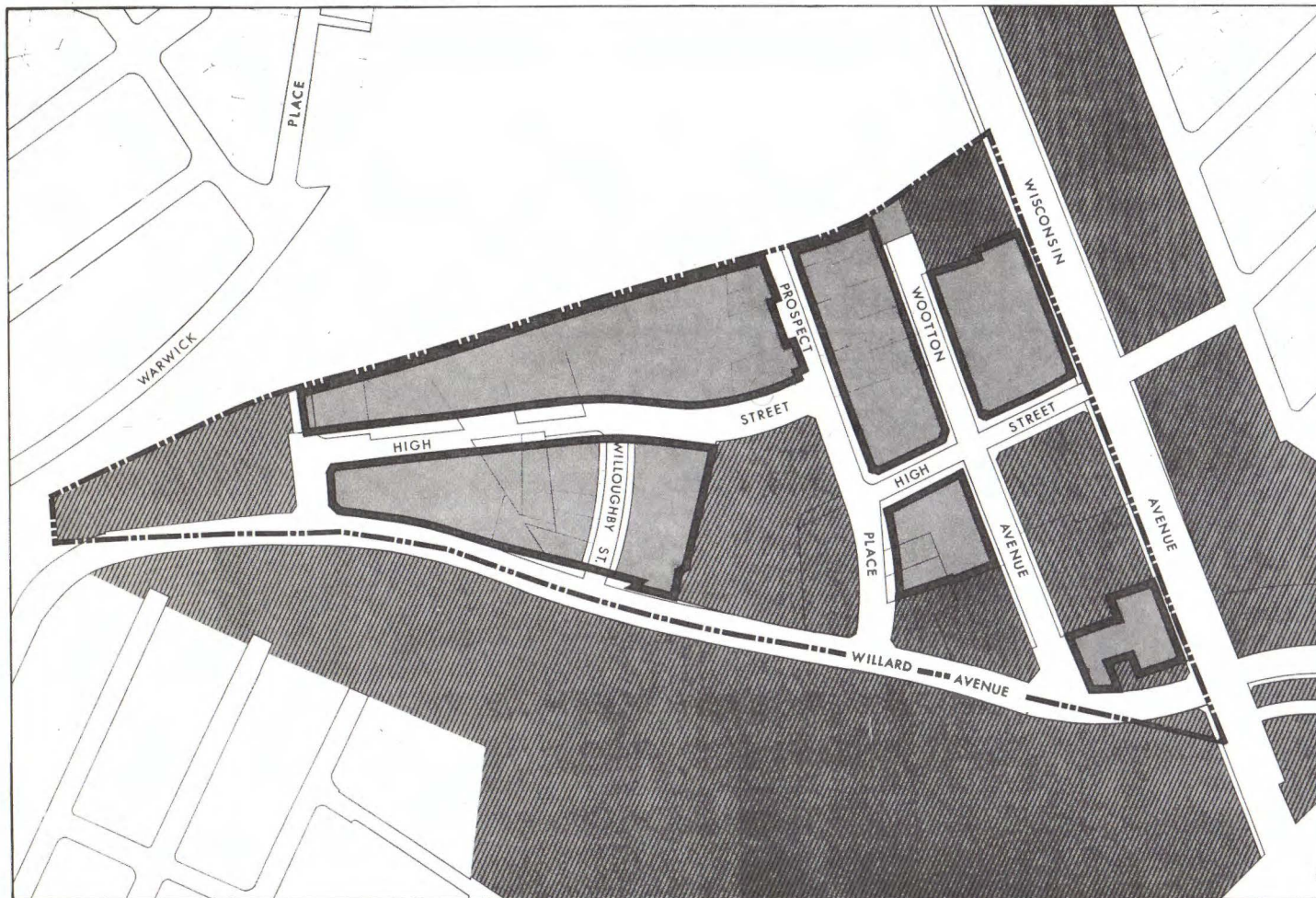
Being the only commercial gateway on the northwest D. C. line, and being a center for quality merchandise, the Friendship Heights-West Chevy Chase gateway market area reaches deep into both the county and the northwest section of the district. The regional nature and concentration of quality merchandise facilities makes the location very attractive, not only to shoppers and retailers, but to various other businesses. The strength of the market for commercial space is evidenced by the number, size and success of the commercial developments in recent years. The high occupancy rates of the apartment hotel units further indicates the attractiveness of living in the gateway area.

Friendship Heights is the only major portion of this gateway business area still in the transitional stage

from a residential past to a viable commercial complex of the present and future. It is adjacent to the fully developed areas east of Wisconsin Avenue and south of Willard Avenue which make up the remainder of this gateway business area.

Friendship Heights forms the heart of this gateway area and therefore has unique opportunities of being the main contributor to its future development and of being the principle catalyst in forming a related and cohesive commercial gateway district.

The existing development presently flanking Friendship Heights on two sides has primarily been suburban oriented. Each individual development unit was built as a self-contained entity, with little relation to other units and, seemingly, with little thought given to the eventuality of this gateway area develop-



AVAILABLE LAND

-  PRESENTLY DEVELOPED
-  GATEWAY BUSINESS AREA
-  AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

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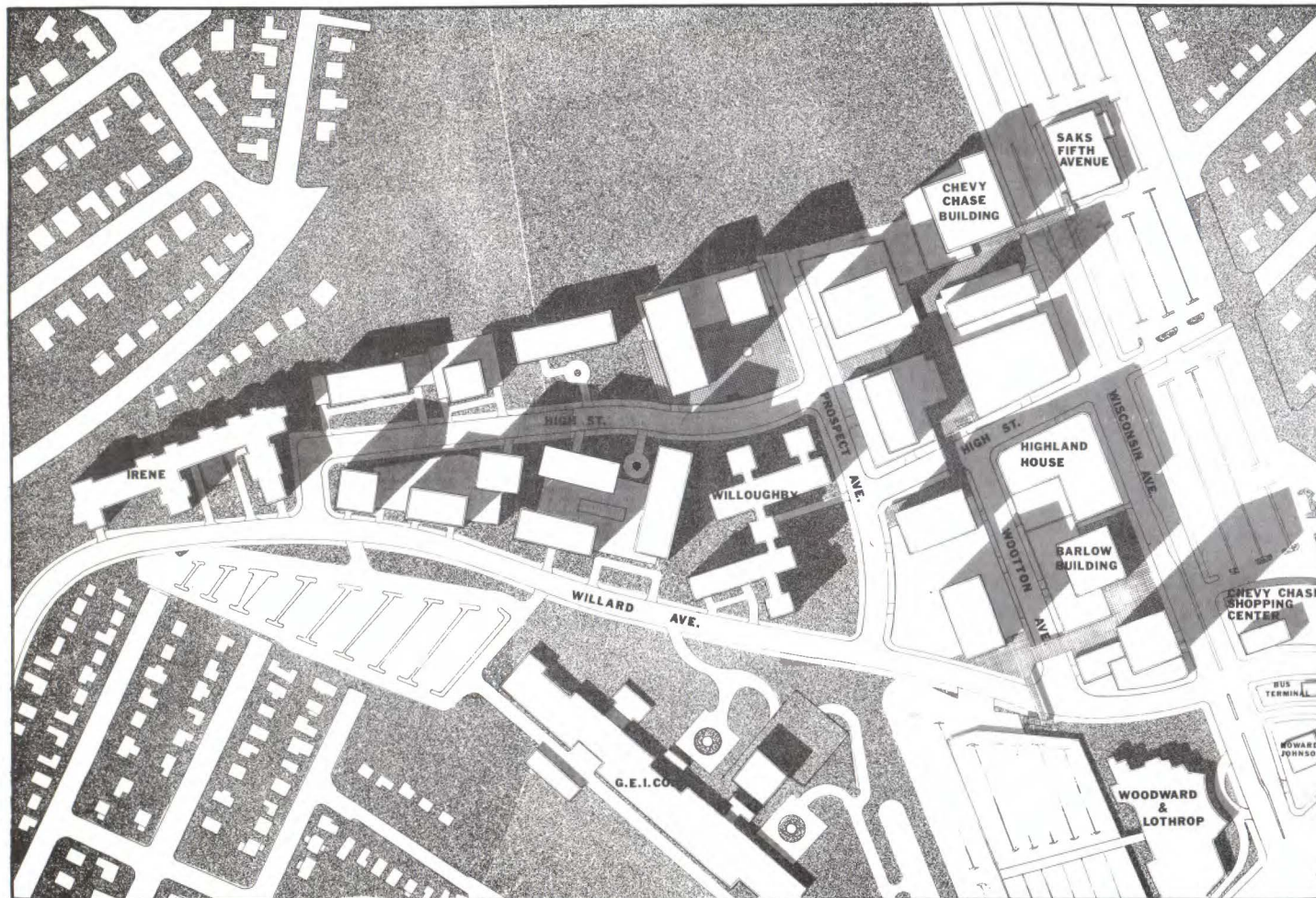
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ing its urban character. It is precisely this parcel by parcel development, with little relation to other uses and facilities, which brings about commercial sprawl and commercial strip development. Consequently, the opportunity of the future Friendship Heights development for tying together the unrelated facilities into a concentrated and stable commercial area is very great.

HIGHWAY AND STREETS

The 1964 Master Plan for West Chevy Chase and vicinity proposed several improvements to the highway and street system, particularly in the gateway commercial area. Since the plan's adoption, Willard Avenue has been widened to 70 feet and realigned at its intersection with Wisconsin Avenue and local streets in Friendship Heights are in the process of being improved and widened to 80 feet.



ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

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ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

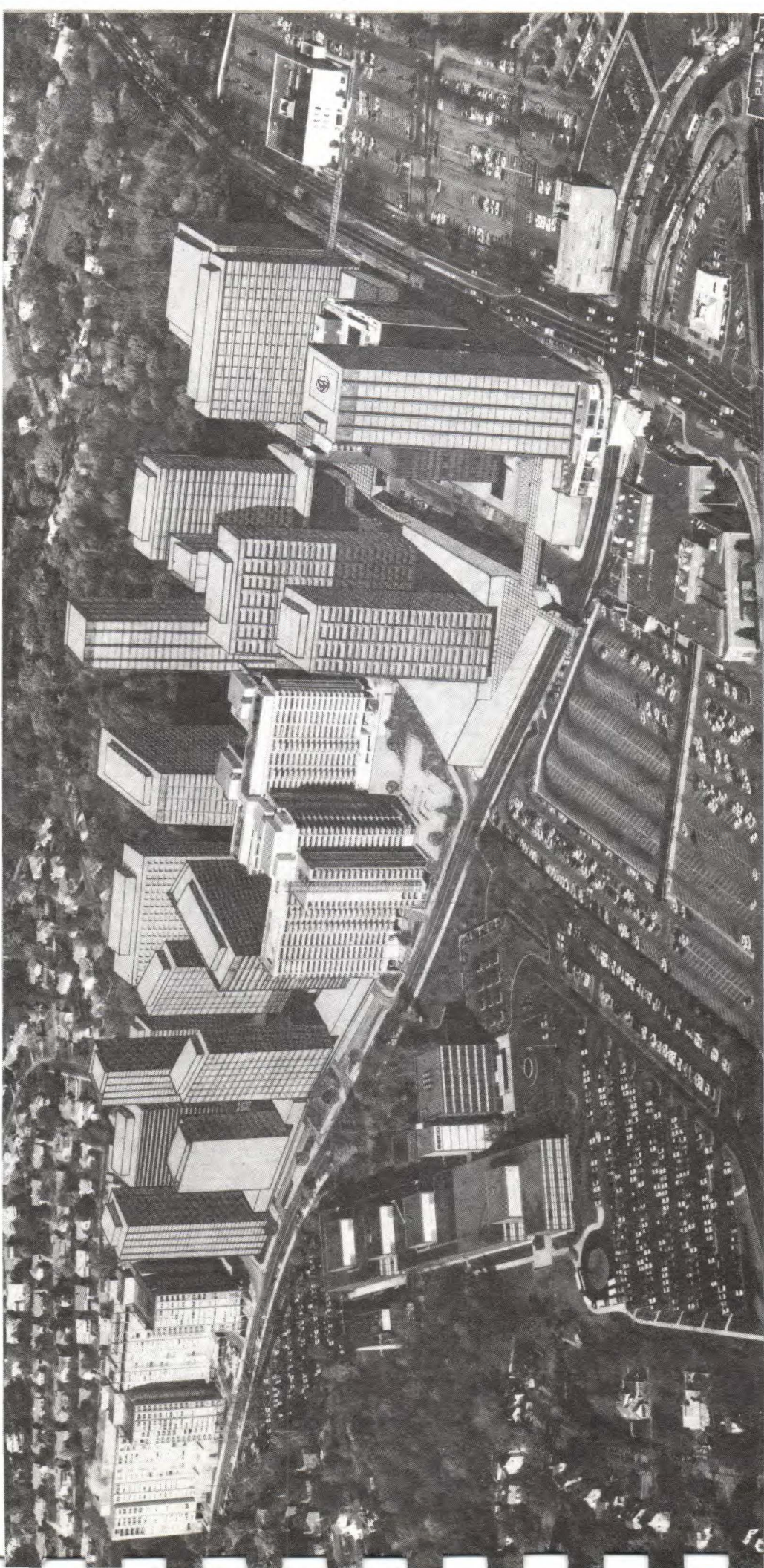
As indicated previously, Friendship Heights has the opportunity of becoming the main contributor to the gateway development, and to be the principle catalyst in the formation of a cohesive gateway. This Illustrative Plan indicates a method of bringing these opportunities to fruition. The uses proposed relate to, and are compatible with, existing and future development of the gateway area, in addition to being the highest and best use of the land under existing conditions.

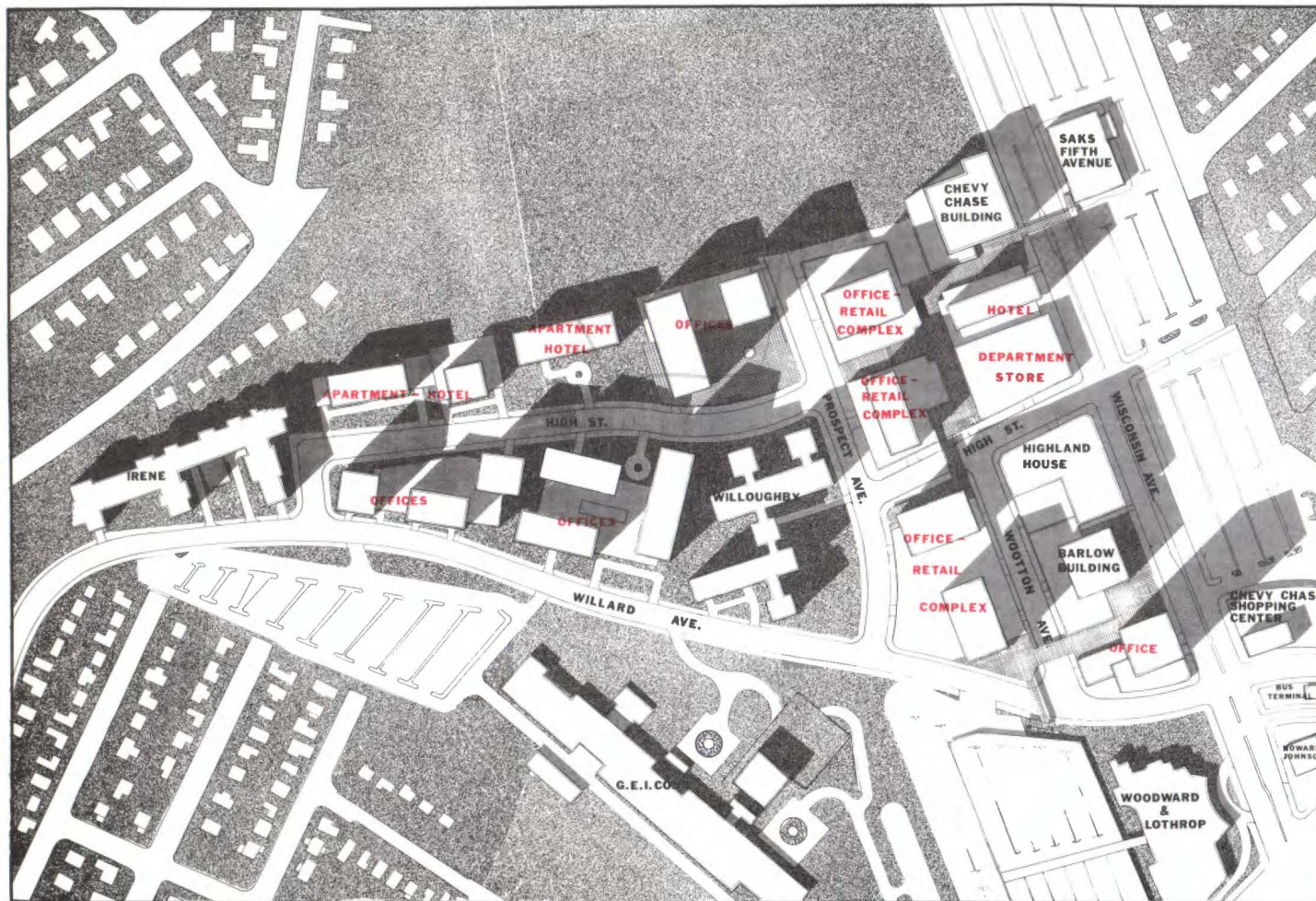
The proposed uses in the easterly portion of Friendship Heights are mainly commercial multi-use, multi-level facilities, with retail on pedestrian levels and office uses above. Sites for a proposed hotel and department store are also provided. A system of relating and interconnecting

pedestrian areas, such as plazas, arcades, open and closed malls, and overpasses, is proposed.

This system, shown in the Illustrative Plan, would allow for maximum pedestrian movement and freedom from conflict with vehicular traffic. Furthermore, this single pedestrian circulation system will tie together existing and proposed facilities from Saks to Woodward and Lothrop and help form a cohesive gateway area. The proposed service areas and parking are to be consolidated and placed below the pedestrian level.

In the westerly portion of Friendship Heights, the proposed development is for general and single purpose office buildings in the southern part along Willard Avenue and for single purpose office buildings or apartments and apartment hotels in the northern part.





NEW DEVELOPMENT

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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In view of these proposals, the available area was divided into eight development parcels, varying in size, scope, and possible uses. Development parcels #1 and #2 are not attractive sites for either retail or general purpose office facilities. Either or both of these sites could be attractive to a single purpose (single tenant) office facility. Both sites have the potential for residential use.

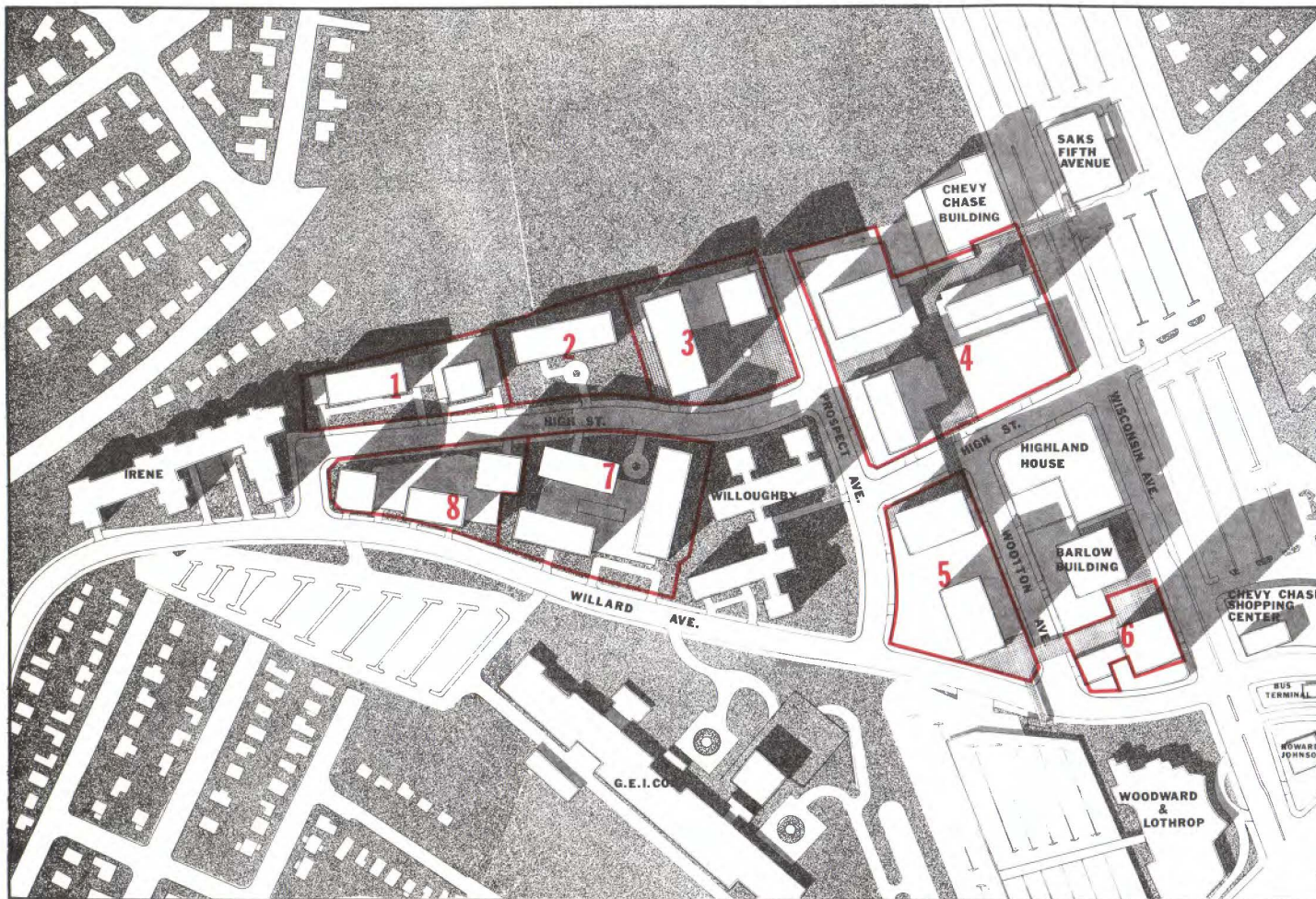
Development Parcel #3 generally embodies the same attractiveness as #1 and #2. However, being adjacent to the multiple use commercial area, its potential as a site for general purpose office use is greater than for parcels #1 and #2.

Development Parcel #4 is the largest and therefore a very important site. It has the potential for multi-use, multi-level development, including offices

(both single and general purpose), a hotel, retail and department store facilities, and the opportunity for tying all of these together with Saks Fifth Avenue.

Equally important is Development Parcel #5 which has potential for multi-use, multi-level office facilities (single and general purpose), retail use, and has the potential of tying together with Woodward and Lothrop on the south and the office area along Wisconsin Avenue and the Chevy Chase Shopping Center to the east.

Development Parcel #6, by virtue of its location, close to the intersection of Wisconsin and Willard Avenues, has the opportunity of developing a prestige office building which could become a gateway landmark.



DEVELOPMENT PARCELS

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Both development parcels #7 and #8 have frontages on Willard Avenue facing the GEICO headquarters complex. Both sites are suitable for office facilities (single and general purpose) and for apartment or apartment hotel use.

REVIEW OF EXISTING ZONING

Whether Friendship Heights realizes its full potential as a high quality gateway commercial area will depend largely on its zoning.

Under the existing zoning a large number of the uses permitted in the C-2 Zone are unsuitable for this type of development. They are definitely not gateway or central business district type uses and would be incompatible with, and represent potential blighting influences on, existing and future development. The potential of the Friendship Heights gateway area, of being a dynamic high quality shopping concentration and commercial complex, could be drastically diminished by construction of the incompatible uses now legally permissible under the existing C-2 zoning.

In addition, the C-2 zoning does not provide for uses normally considered as central business type uses, i.e., hotels, apartment hotels and apartment houses. For these uses, it is necessary to have the zoning of the particular parcel changed to R-CBD. These changes have proven to be long drawn out procedures for both the applicant and the Planning Board. Presently, there are two spots of R-CBD zoning in Friendship Heights. This spot zoning could be avoided with a comprehensive zone.

The parking requirements for the retail uses of the C-2 zoning, and in one instance the residential use of the R-CBD zoning are oriented toward a suburban situation where the automobile is the only means of transportation, and uses are locationally dispersed,

necessitating individual trips to accomplish each purpose. In view of the high density and commercial concentration of the gateway area, the existing retail parking requirement of one space per 100 square feet of sales area is too restrictive, uneconomical, and results in an oversupply of parking spaces. Furthermore, it is based on sales, trade, or merchandising area within a particular facility. These terms are not defined anywhere in the ordinance and, consequently, are open to individual interpretation and difficult to control.

With relation to residential parking requirements, allowance should be made for units occupied by elderly citizens. It has been found that one apartment hotel in Friendship Heights has a reasonably large proportion of elderly citizens and the parking facilities in this case are drastically under-utilized.

Similar results have been found in elderly citizens' facilities throughout the country.

The existing C-2 regulations rely only on a height limitation to determine the amount of allowable building space. This tends to encourage 100% land coverage. The allowance of 100% coverage for commercial districts has been standard practice practically everywhere since the days of the earliest zoning ordinances.

Many cities, having realized the desirability of light, air and open space in commercial areas, have deemphasized the older system of controlling height and coverage and now employ a floor area ratio (FAR) restriction.

Floor area ratio controls the amount of space that may be built by limiting the number of times the land

may be covered and is defined as gross floor area of buildings on a parcel divided by the area of that parcel.

The use of an FAR system does not prevent 100% coverage, but does encourage less lot coverage in return for a higher building. Some cities provide further encouragement through bonuses for the use of the uncovered land for desirable ground level amenities, such as plazas, arcades, front yards, etc.

As evidenced by the preceding discussion, there is a need for effective and comprehensive zoning concerned with the particular problems of this gateway area, which will aid it in realizing its full potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The type of planned development proposed can be done now in a creative and attractive manner with long-term meaning and value. However, it must be undertaken soon or other uses of vacant land will develop that will make the concept of the dynamic commercial gateway no more than a beautiful theory, incapable of being meaningfully implemented as a result of commitments and investment in improvements that preclude the application of the concept in this area.

Friendship Heights is ready now for development. The land area is available and the demand and market exist, thus justifying the development of the Friendship Heights Gateway Area as an attractive commercial center, and sound and valuable tax base to the county.

Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

I. ZONING

- A. Create a new comprehensive zone dealing with the requirements of the Friendship Heights Gateway area.
- B. Limit the permitted uses and special exceptions to those relating to, and compatible with, the high quality potentialities of the area. These should be the type to encourage the continuance and further development of the high quality shopping and commercial complex nature of the gateway, and in no instance should it constitute a present or potential blighting influence.

- C. Establish a floor area ratio (FAR) of 14 for all commercial, institutional, and multiple use buildings to encourage less than 100% lot coverage. The FAR of 14 is the result of converting the existing authorization for complete lot coverage and a maximum height restriction of 143 feet. This conversion does not increase the amount of allowable building space over that which is presently allowed. Consequently, it does not place any additional demands on the community or county facilities that would not exist under the C-2 requirements.
- D. Provide bonuses in the form of increased allowable gross floor area for the provision of plazas, arcades, and front

yards. The following bonuses are suggested for the provision of the aforementioned amenities:

Plaza - increase floor area 10 sq. ft. per one sq. ft. of plaza

Arcade - increase floor area 3 sq. ft. per 1 sq. ft. of arcade

Front Yard - increase floor area ratio by 1.0

- E. Establish the parking requirement for all retail on the basis of the "gross leasable area" (GLA) which is a standard real estate term and is defined as follows:
- "Gross Leasable Area is the total floor area designed for tenant or owner occupancy and exclusive use, including basements, mezzanines and upper floors, if any,

expressed in square feet and measured from center lines of joint partitions and exteriors of outside walls."

(Urban Land Institute, Technical Bulletin 53)

- F. Establish an off-street parking requirement of 5.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross leasable area for retail facilities (except furniture stores).

This standard is used and proven by many of the nation's suburban shopping centers, and recommended by the Urban Land Institute as adequate for suburban shopping centers without public transportation. Therefore, it should be adequate for Friendship Heights which has reasonably good bus service and is

expected to have a rapid subway transit service in the future. For retail office complexes, it is recommended that the retail parking be provided on the same basis as for retail only. For the office parking, it is recommended that no parking be required for office space up to 20% of the GLA of the entire complex. For office space in excess of 20%, it is recommended that parking be provided at a rate of 1 space per 500 square feet in office use, which is the present requirement for office facilities. For developments which mix retail with uses other than office, or which contain a mix of uses excluding retail, it is recommended that the parking required be the sum total of that which is required by the

individual uses.

- G. Establish reduced parking requirement for facilities whose occupancy is restricted to elderly citizens. In cases of mixed occupancy, only the portion restricted to elderly citizens should be eligible for a reduction.

- H. Add the following definitions to the zoning ordinance:

Gross Floor Area

The sum of the gross horizontal areas of the several floors of a building or buildings on the lot, measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls and from the center line of the walls separating two buildings. The term "gross floor area" shall be applied to all uses, in-

cluding basements, elevator shafts and stairwells at each story, floor space used for mechanical equipment, penthouse, attic space, interior and exterior balconies, interior mezzanines, and all otherwise habitable space. The term "gross floor area" shall exclude parking, cellars, and all non-habitable space, not more than four feet above the mean level of the finished grade of the adjoining ground.

Floor Area Ratio

The gross floor area of a building or buildings on a parcel divided by the area of that parcel.

Gross Leasable Area

The total floor area designed for tenant or owner occupancy and exclusive use, including basements, mezzanines and upper floors, if any, expressed in square feet and measured from center lines of joint partitions and exteriors of outer walls.

Plaza

An open area accessible to the public at all times, which is either:

- a. A continuous open area along a front lot line, not less than 10 feet deep (measured perpendicular to the front lot line), with an area of not less than 750 square feet, and extending for its entire depth along the full length of such lot line or for a distance of at least 50 feet

thereof, whichever is the lesser distance; or

- b. A continuous open area on a through lot, extending from street to street and not less than 40 feet in width, or measured perpendicular to the nearest lot line; or
- c. On a corner lot, an open area of not less than 500 square feet, which is bounded on two sides by the two intersecting street lines and which has a minimum dimension of 10 feet; or
- d. An open area of not less than 8,000 square feet, with a minimum dimension of 80 feet and which is bounded on one side by a front lot line or which is connected to the street by means of an arcade or by an open area not less than

40 feet wide.

Except for an open area as set forth in (d) above, no portion of such an area which is bounded on all sides except for one opening, by either building walls, or building walls and side lot lines, shall be considered part of the plaza, unless the opening of such portion is at least 50 feet in width.

A plaza shall not at any point be more than five feet above the curb level of the nearest adjoining street, and shall be unobstructed from its lowest level to the sky.

Arcade

A continuous area open to a street or to a plaza, which is open and unobstructed to a height of not less than 12 feet, is

accessible to the public at all times, and either:

- a. Adjoins a front lot line or a plaza boundary, is not less than 10 feet or more than 30 feet in depth (measured perpendicular to the front lot line or plaza boundary which it adjoins), and extends for the full length of, or at least 50 feet along, such front lot line or plaza boundary, whichever is the lesser distance; or
- b. On a corner lot, is bounded on two sides by the two intersecting street lines, and has an area of not less than 500 square feet and a minimum dimension of 10 feet.

Such an arcade shall not at any point be above

the level of the street or plaza which it adjoins, whichever is higher. Any portion of an arcade occupied by building columns shall be considered to be part of the area of the arcade for the purpose of computing a floor area bonus.

II. SUGGESTED FORM OF GATEWAY ZONE

The following is the suggested form of a new gateway zone, and incorporates all of the zoning recommendations:

A. Uses Permitted.

No building, structure, or land shall hereafter be erected, structurally altered, enlarged, or maintained, except for one or more of the following uses:

1. Apartment - Hotels

2. Banks and Trust Companies
3. Education Institutions (Higher Education)
4. Eleemosynary and Philanthropic Institutions
5. Helistop
6. Hotels
7. Multiple Family Dwellings
8. Office Building
 - a. Single purpose
 - b. General purpose
9. Off-Street Parking of private automobiles in connection with any use permitted by this section.
10. Retail (excluding automotive supply and filling stations)
11. Recreation and Entertainment
12. Services
 - a. Business

b. Personal

c. Repair (excluding repair service of larger items which cannot be carried by one average person.

B. Special Exceptions

The following uses may be permitted as Special Exceptions in accordance with the provisions of Sections 111-30 through 111-37:

Nursing and Care Homes.

Libraries, Museums and other similar non-commercial institutions.

Medical and Dental Clinics.

C. Nuisances

Any use which is found by the Board to be a public nuisance, by reason of

the emission of dust, fumes, gas, smoke, odor, noise, vibration or other disturbance is and shall be expressly prohibited in the C-3 Zone. No such finding shall be made by the Board except after hearing upon reasonable notice, and any person, the Commission or the District Council may file a petition with the Board for such hearing.

D. Yards

For commercial, multiple use and institutional buildings, yards shall be provided as per Section 111-18 c.

For multi-family dwellings and apartment hotels, only yards shall be provided as per Section 111-17A f.

E. Area Requirements

1. For commercial, institutional, or multiple use buildings, the floor area ratio shall not exceed 14.
 - a. Plazas - the permitted gross floor area may be increased at the rate of 10 square feet per square foot of plaza.
 - b. Arcade - the permitted gross floor area may be increased at the rate of 3 square feet per square foot of arcade.
 - c. Front Yard - the floor area ratio may be increased 1.0 provided that:
 - 1) On interior lots, a front yard not less than 30 feet in depth is provided.
 - 2) On corner lots, two front yards, each not less than 20 feet in depth are provided.
 - 3) On through lots, a front yard not less than 30 feet in depth is provided

along each lot line.

2. For multi-family dwellings and apartment hotels, the area requirements shall be the same as per Section 111-17A d.

F. Street Frontage

As provided for in Section 111-17A e.

G. Off-Street Parking

Off-Street Parking shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of Section 111-27 except for the following:

Apartment Hotel -

The parking requirement as listed in Section 111-27 may be reduced if the facilities are restricted to occupancy by elderly citizens. In cases of mixed occupancy,

only the portion restricted to
elderly citizens is eligible for
the reduction.

Commercial -

Retail (except furniture) -

5.5 spaces/1000 square feet
of the gross leasable area.

Retail Office Complexes -

Retail (except furniture) -

5.5 spaces/1000 square feet
of the gross leasable area.

Office space up to 20% of
the gross leasable area of
the complex -

Not required.

Office space in excess of
20% of the gross leasable
area of the complex -

1 space/500 square feet
in office use.

Multi-Family Dwelling -

See apartment hotel.

Off-Street Loading -

Shall be provided as per
Section 111-27 a (2).

Reduction of parking requirements for dwell-
ing facilities restricted to elderly citizens
will require an application to the Planning
Board which will set all informational

requirements for the application, and have
the power of approval.

III. MASTER PLAN

Amend the Master Plan to reflect the new
zoning category.

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS CITIZENS' COMMITTEE

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