

Friendship Heights Alliance Urban District Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is an Urban District?

Urban Districts are special taxing districts formed in mixed-use commercial areas of Montgomery County to increase the maintenance of the streetscape and its amenities; provide additional public amenities such as plantings, seating, shelters, and works of art; promote the commercial and residential interests of these areas; and program cultural and community activities. The Friendship Heights Urban District would be Montgomery County's fourth Urban District, along with Bethesda, Silver Spring and Wheaton.

Why establish an Urban District?

The Urban District model enables businesses to pool resources and to make a collective investment in marketing, placemaking, community building, and economic development within a defined geography. This model enables a concerted focus on improving the public realm, strengthening collaboration, and creating vibrancy to help neighborhoods thrive.

What are the boundaries of the proposed Urban District?

The Urban District covers the Wisconsin Avenue commercial corridor, GEICO, and commercial buildings on Willard Avenue. You can see a map [here](#). (Note: This map also includes the boundaries of the proposed Business Improvement District on the Washington, DC, side of Friendship Heights.) There are no residential condo buildings included within the Urban District Boundaries.

What is the Urban District annual charge?

The charge for commercial buildings is \$0.165 per SF. The charge for apartment buildings is \$120 per unit and \$120 per room for hotels.

Will residential condos be charged?

No. Residential condos will not be taxed.

Why did stakeholders choose to form an Urban District on the Maryland side and a Business Improvement District on the DC side?

The Friendship Heights Alliance conducted extensive research on cross-jurisdictional place management entities. Both business and government stakeholders recognized the value of creating a collaborative organization with fair and equitable representation from both sides of

the Maryland and DC border. In consultation with the County Executive's office, it was determined that Urban Districts are a proven model for providing place-based services in Montgomery County, while also ensuring accountability and oversight by the County Council. In addition, Washington, DC, has created 11 successful business improvement districts over the past 25 years. By merging these two funding models, the Friendship Heights Alliance will have a sustainable funding base with strong business and government buy-in from both sides of the Maryland and District border.

How will the Friendship Heights Urban District and the Friendship Heights BID on the DC side align?

The Friendship Heights Urban District and the Friendship Heights BID are the two funding streams that will support a cohesive and robust set of services and programs run by the Friendship Heights Alliance. The [Friendship Heights Alliance](#), a 501(c)6 nonprofit formed in 2021, has already established a track record of working collaboratively across the Maryland/DC border. These dual funding streams will grow these services.

Will residents and small businesses have a say in the kinds of programs and services the Friendship Heights Alliance offers?

The Friendship Heights Alliance roots everything it does in deep and extensive community engagement. You can read more about our community research in [the business plan](#). Through focus groups, one-on-one meetings, community presentations, and events, the Friendship Heights Alliance continually seeks feedback and ideas from a wide range of stakeholders. The Alliance also has a range of formal ways for residents and small businesses to participate in shaping the organization. There will be four board slots for residents and business owners. In addition there is a 15-person advisory committee that meets quarterly with Alliance board and staff. Finally, on the Montgomery County side, there will be a five-member advisory committee appointed by the County Executive to oversee the Urban District.

How did the Friendship Heights Alliance conduct outreach with property owners in Montgomery County?

Owners of over nearly half of the assessed value within the Montgomery County boundaries sit on the Friendship Heights Alliance Board and catalyzed this effort. Over the past year, the Friendship Heights Alliance has reached out by phone, email, and regular mail to all the owners within the proposed Urban District boundaries. Every owner received a business plan and letter explaining the effort by mail and, in some cases, by email. Friendship Heights board members and staff have met with many owners to share plans and answer questions.

How has Friendship Heights Alliance reached out to businesses about the Urban District?

The Alliance has reached out door-to-door and by email to businesses within the Urban District boundaries as it expands its [online business directory](#). The organization also regularly shares marketing opportunities with retailers and restaurants.

More Questions? Contact us at hello@friendshipheights.com