PARKS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE
REPORT ON SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

In its meeting on March 8, 2021, the Council referred a proposal from Securitas Security Services USA (*A Security Proposal for Village of Friendship Heights*, dated February 17, 2021) to the Infrastructure Committee (now Parks and Grounds Committee) for review. This proposal envisioned six AXIS Q6010- E Network Cameras placed throughout the Village. Two would be located on lower North Park Avenue, one off South Park Avenue opposite the Carleton, one at the intersection of Friendship Boulevard and North Park Avenue, one in Willoughby Park, and one at the intersection of The Hills Plaza and South Park Avenue. With this proposal as a starting point, the Committee examined the issue of surveillance cameras, starting with threat that might impel the Council to authorize their purchase.

THREAT TO FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

How endangered is Friendship Heights?

Summary

Friendship Heights is a prosperous, tranquil, safe community, but she is at risk to perpetrators from outside. Montgomery County is one of the safest in Maryland, but crimes against property, especially theft from motor vehicles are a concern. The District of Columbia suffers the familiar problems of large cities and has crime at levels twice the national average. However, gentrification has pushed crime away from the Maryland border near Friendship Heights. Two recent incidents illustrate the Village's vulnerability: the burglary of Friendship Gourmet Market and the vandalization of our beloved crossing guard. (See "Recent Incidents" below.)

Overview

Crime in Friendship Heights is about three quarters of the national average, making the Village an exceptionally safe place to reside. (statistics derived from *Federal Bureau of Investigation Report*, September 2020) However, Friendship Heights is at risk to perpetrators from Montgomery County and the District of Columbia.

In overall crime, Maryland reflects the national average, but Montgomery County is one of the safest in the state. In Montgomery, violent crime against persons (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) has declined greatly from its height in 1990-1995 and is now at approximately the level of the late 1970's. Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) continues to be the largest gang operating within Montgomery County, and is responsible for nearly half the gang-related assaults in the county. (*Montgomery County Department of Police, 2019 Annual Report on Crime and Safety*, p. 1) Crime against property (breaking and entering, larceny, auto theft) has declined even more and now stands at less than half the level of the later 1970's. (*Bethesda Magazine*, "How Safe is MoCo?,

October 22, 2019) Comparing 2018 with 2019, crime against persons declined 3% and crimes against property increased 2.3%. (*Montgomery County Department of Police 2019 Annual Report on Crime & Safety*, National Incident-Based Reporting System data from MCPD dashboard 2/12/2020) Against this favorable trend, theft from motor vehicles is disturbingly high. The 2nd District Bethesda, Montgomery County Police, advises that thefts from unlocked vehicles are a high-volume crime in Montgomery County and urges residents to take precautions. (*Crime Summary*, 2nd District, January 2020)

Although violent crime in the District of Columbia has declined greatly since the crack epidemic in the 1990's, it still remains twice the national average (FBI Uniform Crime Statistics). Moreover, the District and Prince George's County, in common with numerous cities across the nation, are currently experiencing an upwards spike in violent crime. (See the September 2020 incident noted below.) There were 198 homicides in 2020, the highest since 2004. As of May 5, 2021, there were 66 homicides for the year. (*Metropolitan Police Department, Crime Data at a Glance*) Since the 1990's, crimes against property in the District have declined by about half. As gentrification progressed, crime moved towards the eastern parts of the District. The northwestern neighborhoods nearest Friendship Heights are among the most prosperous with the lowest crime rates. In contrast, Ward 8 (Anacostia) in the farthest corner is the least prosperous and most crime ridden.

Recent Incidents

This list captures serious incidents that occurred in and near Friendship Heights during the past eighteen months.

February 2020
A motor vehicle struck and seriously injured a pedestrian while she was attempting to cross Willard Avenue near the corner with Shoemaker Lane. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) subsequently decided to install pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHB) at this location and also near the corner of Willard Avenue and North Park Avenue.

7:30 PM September 24, 2020 (near the Village)
There was a fatal shooting in the 5200 block of Western Avenue near 45th Street. A twenty year-old man residing in North Baltimore was found dead at the location of the incident. A second man was found wounded about two blocks away on Harrison Street. Police thought the shootings might be related to sale of marijuana. (*Washington Post*)

Late September 2020
Unknown perpetrators vandalized the Elizabeth arcade and the garage entrance to the Carleton.

11:00 PM October 29, 2020 (near the Village)
Police foiled an attempt to loot the Saks Fifth Avenue store. Police monitoring protests in Washington, D.C., learned that a group of protestors was planning action in Friendship Heights. In response, Montgomery County Police patrolled along Western Avenue near Wisconsin Avenue. Just before 11:00 PM twenty young people exited vehicles in front of Saks and broke a window. Police arrived quickly, causing the perpetrators to flee in a car and on foot. Police detained and subsequently arrested one of these perpetrators. An hour later, plain clothes officers arrested seven people, thought to be among the people seen at Saks, who were trying door handles and entering cars. Five were adults and two were juveniles, all from D.C. (Chevy Chase, *Weekly Police Beat*)

First week January, 2021
Thieves smashed windows on several cars parked in the commercial area of Friendship Heights on streets and in parking garages. They stole laptops, iPads, and other personal possessions. (Chevy Chase, *Weekly Police Beat*)

First week, January, 2020
Thieves stole items from a car in the area of South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza. (*Montgomery County Police, Recent Crime Summary*, January 4, 2020)

January 11, 2021
Masked perpetrators broke the glass front door of the Friendship Gourmet Market, 5550 Friendship Boulevard. The store front is located across North Park Avenue from the Carleton. The perpetrators stole money from the state lottery, a laptop computer and cigarettes among other items. They were imaged by a security camera mounted on the wall behind the counter, but wore masks. Since this burglary, the store has added a system of smaller security cameras scattered throughout the store. In addition, the camera located above the main entrance of the Carleton now covers the front of the store.

January 21, 2021
Unknown perpetrators vandalized the statue of a crossing guard entitled "Oh, It's You, Welcome!" by Seward Johnson on the corner of South Park Avenue and Hills Plaza. The vandals beat the statue's face with some hard object. They spray painted the statue and the surrounding sidewalk. The statue had to be sent to the sculptor's atelier for repair at a cost of approximately $24,000.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

How much do surveillance cameras contribute to public security?

Summary

Humans cannot be expected to monitor the output from security cameras continuously and even if they chance to see an offense in progress, law enforcement may not arrive in time. But surveillance cameras have deterrent effect, especially in crimes against property, and they are commonly used after the incident to assist investigation and to provide evidence for trial. Automated programs, especially license plate recognition and facial recognition, enormously increase the usefulness of imagery and are in wide use throughout the U.S.

General Use

Surveillance cameras are ubiquitous in the industrialized world. The U.S. alone has some seventy million cameras currently in operation. (*Moneywatch*, December 10, 2019; statistics from IHS Markit) Cameras appear to have some deterrent effect, especially as concerns premeditated crimes against property. Imagery from surveillance cameras is often used after incidents to assist investigation and to provide evidence. Constant monitoring by humans is not feasible, except in very specific, closely limited applications. Constant monitoring by software includes license plate recognition and facial recognition, described below.

Response Time

Even when a human happens to see imagery at the time a crime is being committed, perpetrators might still flee before police arrived on the scene. The average response time for an emergency call for services in Montgomery County is about 8.5 minutes. (Montgomery County Department of Police, *2019 Annual Report on Crime and Safety*, p. 4) Individual response times vary widely depending on where police happen to be at the time of the incident. The Second District of the Montgomery County Department of Police has responsibility for Friendship Heights. Second District Station is located in Bethesda, approximately 2.3 road miles distant from the Village Center. The Montgomery County Police Field Office at 4602 North Park Avenue is manned sporadically. If police happened to be in the Field Office at the time of an incident, the response time would be very short. Securitas Security Systems is under contract to enforce parking regulations within the Village. Securitas patrols the Village in marked vehicles, which may have some deterrent effect, but their personnel are not armed and have no police powers.

License Plate Recognition

Security personnel and law enforcement officials can identify individual license plates just by observing imagery, but in many cases automation is necessary. Almost three quarters of all police departments in the U.S. employ automated license plate recognition software, typically to control traffic, collect revenue from delinquent tax payers, recover stolen vehicles, and apprehend known felons.

Sophisticated software finds license plates, compensates for skew, averages values over multiple images, identifies characters, and checks them against the format of

state license plates. License plate recognition is usually done with specialized high speed cameras. For example, shutter speeds of 1/500 of a second are required to capture plates on vehicles moving at 40 miles per hour.

Facial Recognition

Security personnel and law enforcement officials can identify a known individual just by observing imagery, but automation is often necessary. Over one hundred countries in the world, including the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and most European countries use some form of automated facial recognition. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has access to over six hundred million photos, including access to over twenty state databases, for example those generated by licensing drivers. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Government approved the National Capital Region Facial Recognition Investigative Leads System (NCRFRILS) in 2017. Over a dozen law enforcement agencies have had access to this database which now contains about 1.4 million photos. However, in May 2021, the District decided to shut down NCRFRILS after a review prompted by a new Virginia law tightening restrictions on use of facial recognition technology. (WP, *"Facial recognition system used to identify Lafayette Square Protester to be halted,"* May 18, 2021) The Department of Homeland Security uses facial recognition to monitor traffic at airports. Facebook uses facial recognition to tag people in photos and link these photos to their profiles. Apple uses facial recognition to unlock its latest phones. Despite such widespread use, Congress still has not passed legislation clarifying how this new technology may be legally applied.

Facial recognition technology uses biometrics to create numerical codes that identify individual faces. Current systems employ deep learning, a form of artificial intelligence that passes inputs through multiple stacked layers to identify patterns. Facial recognition software identifies a face, which may be singly or in a crowd, frontal or in profile. It creates a geographic map by measuring the distances between various features or nodal points, e.g., the distance between eyes or from forehead to chin. It combines these measurements through a mathematical formula that yields a numerical code, which may be compared with other codes to discover matches. Verification of cooperative subjects, e.g., unlocking a smart phone, is much easier than identifying uncooperative subjects, e.g., identifying people in a crowd of rioters. Under ideal conditions, facial recognition has near perfect accuracy, but under more difficult conditions there may be large numbers of false positives. These may be screened out by setting confidence thresholds. The obvious drawback is that correct matches may be among those that are discarded.

CAMERAS ON BUILDINGS

What exterior areas are covered by building cameras?

Summary

All of the buildings except one have exterior security cameras in operation. These cameras are located at pedestrian entrances, vehicular entrances, loading docks, parking lots, and grounds. Most of these cameras are intended to surveil traffic entering and exiting the buildings, but some happen to include narrow swaths of sidewalks and streets. A few cameras capture more extensive views. For example, the 4620 Condominium has a camera next to the pedestrian entrance on Willard Avenue that looks up the street towards Friendship Boulevard. These cameras are monitored as needed and are not directly connected to police or security services. Imagery is usually kept for fifteen to thirty days.

Carleton

The Carleton has four cameras mounted outside the building: one over the main entrance on North Park Avenue looking towards the street, one on Willard Avenue looking towards the pedestrian door, one on Willard Avenue looking towards the gate, and one by the loading dock on Shoemaker Farm Lane.

Two of these cameras - those over the main entrance and next to the loading dock - look outward from the building. The camera over the main entrance shows the driveway under the portico and part of North Park Avenue including the Friendship Gourmet Market. The Carleton added this camera in 2021 in response to interest from the Village. It has sufficient resolution to recognize a person's features as far away as the sidewalk on the near side of North Park Avenue. The camera by the loading dock shows the dock and part of Shoemaker Farm Lane down to the intersection with Willard Avenue.

The person on duty at the main desk in the lobby on floor and the dock master in his office on floor T2 have access to imagery from all cameras. They observe the screens as needed for particular purposes. The imagery is retained for two weeks. There is no direct connection to agencies outside the building, but images can easily be sent by flash drive or email.

Brighton Gardens of Friendship Heights

Brighton Gardens has one of the newest and most comprehensive arrays of external cameras. The camera overlooking the back courtyard also offers a glimpse of The Hills Plaza beyond the fence. There are two cameras covering the front entrance, one over the vehicular entrance, one at the loading dock, and one overlooking the rear patio. Imagery from all these cameras is displayed at the reception desk. It is monitored as needed by the staff. There is no connectivity with land enforcement or security agencies. The staff can request recent imagery from the purveyor of the system.

Elizabeth

The Elizabeth has two cameras mounted outside the building: one over the semi-circular driveway and one at the vehicular entrance and exit. The camera over the

semi-circular driveway shows the driveway and a swath of North Park Avenue opposite the Elizabeth. The camera at the vehicular entrance and exit shows the interior of the garage at the entrance and a narrow glimpse of North Park Avenue. The resolution is good and might be enhanced. Imagery is retained for one month, after which it is erased. The Elizabeth Condominium Association is considering the addition of cameras in the building. During the same process, it will also consider upgrades to its system.

4615 North Park Avenue

4615 North Park Avenue has one camera that looks outside the building. It captures the vehicular entrance, the sidewalk immediately adjacent to this entrance, and a small swath of the street.

4620

The 4620 Condominium has one externally mounted camera. It is located next to the the pedestrian entrance to the parking garage on Willard Avenue. This camera is directed eastward towards Wisconsin Avenue. It covers the pedestrian entrance, the nearby vehicular entrance, the adjacent sidewalk, and Willard Avenue as far as the intersection with The Hills Plaza. The imagery is available to personnel working at the front desk behind the main entrance on North Park Avenue. They monitor the input as necessary to perform their tasks. The building retains imagery for one month. There is no connectivity with law enforcement or a security service, but they might receive imagery as needed in particular cases.

Highland House

The Highland House has four cameras that show views outside the building. One camera is at the main entrance on Wisconsin Avenue. One camera above the visitor garage parking entrance on South Park Avenue shows the entrance and a swath of sidewalk and street. One camera above the resident garage entrance on The Hills Plaza shows the entrance, the sidewalk, part of the Hills Plaza, and the sidewalk on the far side of the street. One camera at the loading dock on South Park Avenue shows just the entrance and sidewalk next to the entrance. Output from the Highland House and Highland House West cameras is displayed at the reception desks and in the offices. Images are monitored on an as-needed basis and retained for thirty days. There is no direct connectivity with law enforcement. Highland Hose staff can access imagery on smart phones using an application supplied by the firm that installed the system.

Highland House West

Highland House West has three cameras that show outside views. The camera at the main entrance on South Park Avenue shows part of the lobby and areas of the sidewalk just outside the entrance. The camera at the garage entrance on The Hills Plaza shows

the entrance and the street beyond. The camera at the loading dock on Friendship Boulevard shows the dock, the sidewalk next to the dock and a portion of the street.

Willard Towers

Willard Towers has no cameras that cover areas outside the building. It plans to add cameras, but has not yet determined their locations.

Willoughby

The Willoughby has seven cameras mounted outside the building or directed towards an entrance. Two cameras are mounted above the semicircular driveway off Willard Avenue. These capture primarily the driveway with glimpses of Willard Avenue. One camera is mounted at the entrance to the parking garage on Willard Avenue. This camera also captures a swath of the avenue and the facade of the GEICO headquarters. One camera at the entrance beneath the building on Friendship Boulevard shows a small bit of the street. One camera at the vehicular entrance on Friendship Boulevard next to the Willoughby Park captures just the entrance. One camera is mounted within the pedestrian entrance on North Park Avenue. The camera shows the interior of the entrance, part of the outside ramp, and a small bit of the street. One camera is mounted above the vehicular entrance on North Park Avenue. It shows primarily the driveway with a small segment of North Park Avenue and the office building across the street.

The person on duty at the main desk and persons within the office have access to the imagery. They view this imagery as needed. Imagery is retained 15-20 days. There is no direct connectivity with police or security services. Two years ago, images of a resident at the entrance on Willard Avenue were entered as evidence in a trial for rape that ended in conviction.

POSSIBLE COVERAGE

What areas should Village surveillance cameras cover?

Summary

The Village has a range of options for installing surveillance cameras, ranging from single installations to coverage of the entire Village. We outlined five options, identified for convenience by a key word, e.g., "Core." These options might be implemented singly or together with others, except Option 5, which encompasses the entire Village.

Option 1: Spot (e.g., corner of South Park Ave and Hills Plaza)
The Village might opt to mount surveillance cameras at certain spots of exceptional interest. An example would be the heavily traveled intersection of South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza. Soon, construction will start next to the Holiday Inn on Wisconsin Ave, implying more cars, more foot traffic, and sporadic street closings.

Option 2: Core (Village Center and the parks)
The Village welcomes and encourages residents to use public space for meetings, entertainment, and relaxation. She thus acquires a responsibility to promote safety while people use this space, including the Village Center, Humphries Park, Willoughby Park, and Page Park.

Option 3: Traffic (intersections of major streets)
Traffic safety is a concern, especially where pedestrians and motor vehicles interact frequently. Perhaps the most hazardous intersection is that of South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza, mentioned in Option 1, but other intersections also present hazards. These include the intersections of North Park Avenue and Willard Avenue, Shoemaker Farm Lane and Willard Avenue, Friendship Boulevard and Willard Avenue, The Hills Plaza and Willard Avenue, North Park Avenue and Friendship Boulevard, South Park Avenue and The Hills Plaza, South Park Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue.

Option 4: Buildings (areas around condominiums and apartments)
Village residents live almost entirely in high-rise condominium and apartment buildings that generate continuous flows of people. The buildings have cameras that cover entrances (pedestrian and vehicular entrances, loading docks, parking lots), but these cameras capture at most only swaths of sidewalks and streets beyond the entrances themselves, leaving much of the surrounding area uncovered.

Option 5: Village (Options 1, 2, 3, and 4)
Full coverage by surveillance cameras would include the Village Center, parks, buildings, intersections, and streets between intersections. Streets would include the full lengths of North Park Avenue, South Park Avenue, Friendship Boulevard, and The Hills Plaza pus segments segments of Willard Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

[MATERIAL TO BE ADDED]

PARKS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE
REPORT ON ROADSIDE BENCHES

The Village has four roadside benches: one at the shuttle bus station next to 4620, one on the corner of North Park Avenue and Friendship Boulevard next to the Willoughby, one in the shelter on Friendship Boulevard next to Humphrey Park, and one on South Park Avenue next to the Bank of America.

CONDITION OF BENCHES

Two of these benches are in good condition, while two are usable but badly weathered. All are in frequent use except for the bench next to the Bank of America, which is in an awkward location and seldom used. A synopsis follows:

- 4620: simple metal bench with wooden seat and back; wood is weathered dark gray and strewn with cracks. A large waste container is immediately adjacent to the lefthand arm rest. This bench should be renovated or replaced. If possible, the trash container should be moved away from the bench.

- Willoughby: wooden bench with curved back rest; wood is in good condition and recently sealed; donated by the Rotary Club of Friendship Heights in February 2000; manufactured by Kingsley-Bate, 7200 Gateway Court, Manassas, Virginia. This bench requires no action.

- Humphrey Park: elaborate cast metal bench with composition seat and backrest divided by armrests into three places; donated in memory of Ilse Johanna Hess by family and friends in 2005. This bench requires no action.

- Bank of America: structure and condition identical to the bench next to 4620. This seldom-used bench will be a nuisance when construction begins on the planned apartment building. It should be removed.

REPLACING THE 4620 BENCH

A replacement for the 4620 bench should be approximately the same size (seat 69 3/4' long and 17 1/2 ' wide, backrest 17 1/2' high). Possible choices include:

Teak comparable to the one now located next to the Willoughby on North Park Avenue. Teak is a dense, rot-resistant wood that naturally has a golden brown color. To maintain its original color, teak furniture should be oiled or sealed. Sealing has a longer lasting effect than oiling. Left untreated, teak acquires a silver-gray patina.

Cast aluminum with slats of recycled plastic such as the ones next to the Somerset House in Chevy Chase. Aluminum is extremely resistant to corrosion and has excellent

thermal conductivity, keeping it cooler than iron in the same conditions. Recycled plastic is highly durable and does not require painting or staining.

PARKS AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE
REPORT ON INTERSECTION OF SOUTH PARK AVENUE AND THE HILLS PLAZA

At peak hours, this intersection has heavy traffic that can put pedestrians at risk. The Carr and Donohoe Companies plan to build a large apartment building between the existing Marriott Hotel and South Park Avenue. After construction, residents of this new building will increase pedestrian and vehicular traffic at the intersection. This report suggests new measures to reduce risk.

THE PROBLEM

This intersection with four-way stop is challenging for drivers and pedestrians because right-of-way is not always obvious nor are intentions of participants. Drivers may be in doubt over which vehicle has right-of-way and intentions of other drivers, including whether they will proceed straight or turn in either direction. At the same time, drivers have to clear pedestrians entering from either side of the road. Pedestrians may be in doubt over drivers' intentions. Frequently, pedestrians and drivers resolve ambiguity by signaling with their hands and arms.

Montgomery County has declined to install a traffic light because it would be just a block from the existing light on Wisconsin Avenue and because traffic is usually lower than would justify a light. The County is very unlikely to deploy police around the intersection because it has higher priorities for this limited asset. Montgomery County does not currently use traffic cameras that detect violations of stop signs.

EXISTING MEASURES

County and Village have taken a range of measures to contain risk. The County placed stop signs at each corner and small, easily replaced stop signs / pedestrian crossing signs in the center of the street at each pedestrian crosswalk. The Village built bump outs into the street at pedestrian crosswalks, thus narrowing the traffic to just one lane in each direction. The Village also constructed brick walk-ways for pedestrians, thus channeling their movement.

NEW MEASURES

The Committee will assess the feasibility and desirability of new measures that will require approval from the County. These might include:

Signage: replace existing stop signs with radar-activated signs that have light emitting diodes; add bright yellow pedestrian warning signs below the stop signs.

Raised surfaces: Install removable speed bumps and warning signs; raise the four crosswalks; raise the entire intersection, including all four crosswalks and the area encompassed by them.