

VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

VILLAGE COUNCIL

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February 9, 2026

Montgomery County Planning Board
Attn: Artie Harris, Chair
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Public Comments on Friendship Heights Sector Plan—Preliminary Recommendations

Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Planning Board:

The attached document is submitted as public comment by the Village of Friendship Heights in relation to Item 7 (Friendship Heights Sector Plan Preliminary Recommendations Briefing) on the agenda for the upcoming Planning Board Meeting on Thursday, February 12, 2026.

The document was reviewed and approved unanimously by members of the Friendship Heights Village Council at a regularly scheduled public meeting on February 9th.

The document outlines Village concerns that some of the Planning Department's Preliminary Recommendations represent a major departure from the current Sector Plan and are contrary to our Vision of maintaining and improving the high quality of life in the Village.

We ask that you take the time to review our comments in advance of Thursday's meeting, and we would greatly appreciate your acknowledgment and support for our position.

Thank you,

Roy Schaeffer, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights

Attachment: Village of Friendship Heights: Comments on Friendship Heights Sector Plan Update – Preliminary Recommendations

cc:

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Friendship Heights Village Council Members

Village of Friendship Heights

Comments on Friendship Heights Sector Plan Update – Preliminary Recommendations

The following comments are based on preliminary recommendations presented to members of the Friendship Heights Village Council and Development Committee during a virtual meeting held with Montgomery Council Planning staff on Tuesday January 27, 2026.

Background and Context

The Village of Friendship Heights ranks as one of the most densely populated jurisdictions in the nation with approximately 5,000 residents on 37 acres.

The Village already has an abundance of very high residential and commercial buildings in the 15 to 20 story range. The density helps make the Village economically efficient and environmentally sustainable.

The Village is also something of a rarity – a high-rise neighborhood with a strong sense of collaboration and community involvement, making it a welcoming and attractive place to live, especially for retirees.

The attractiveness of the Village is enhanced by a strong governmental structure with a welcoming Village Center that includes a robust calendar of services and events such as exercises classes, social gatherings and concerts. The Village also provides free and frequent shuttle bus transportation to shopping centers, the Friendship Heights Metro station and other local destinations.

A Vision for the Future

The Villages believes it is essential is to preserve and improve the high quality of life in the Village by:

- Attracting more younger people to move into the Village and surrounding communities
- Enhancing parks and playgrounds
- Preserving green, open space, trees and access to sunlight
- Adding amenities including a Library and Performing Arts Center
- Moderating traffic, improving pedestrian safety and walkability throughout the area

Sector Plan Update - Preliminary Recommendations

Although we believe that, overall, Montgomery Council planning staff have reached out to local residents and developed recommendations that, for the most part, accurately reflect community input, we are concerned that two preliminary recommendations conflict with the current Sector Plan and our goals and Vision for the Future.

Specifically (*see map following page*) planning staff are proposing to designate two parcels within the Village of Friendship Heights (Parcels 4 and 6) as “Opportunity Sites” available for high-rise development of up to 150 ft., or approximately 15 stories.

The Village strongly disagrees with this recommendation as outlined in more detail on the following page. Parcels 4 and 6 are already surrounded by high-rise structures and provide critically important green, open space that we believe is essential to maintain the quality of life within the Village.

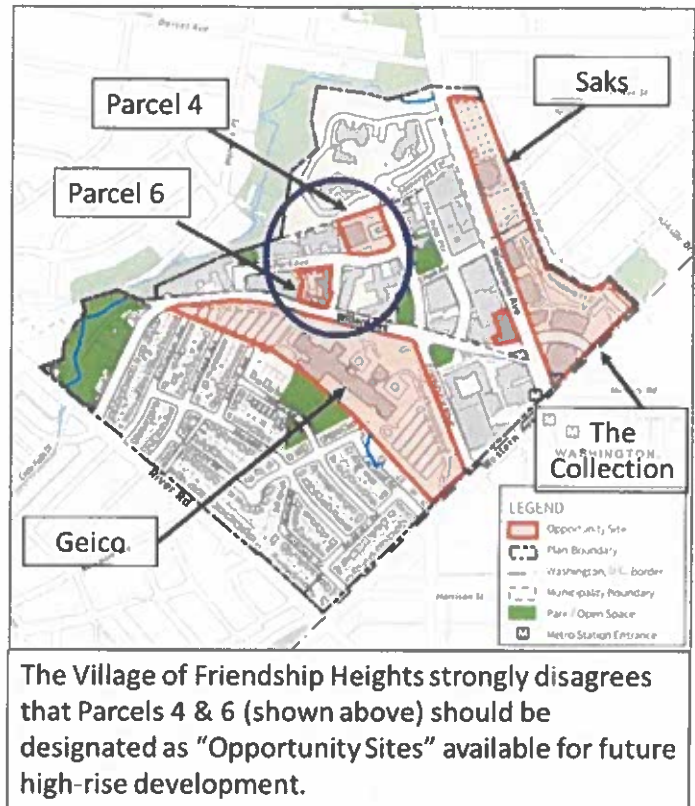
Village Position on Future Development of Parcels 6 and 4

The current Sector Plan (approved in 1998) is clear that one of its major principles is to “Preserve and enhance the environment for residents of high-rise buildings.”

According to the plan¹, this principle can be achieved in several ways by:

- Limiting the height of new buildings close to the high-rise apartments to preserve views,
- Preserving as many existing trees as possible and planting new ones, and
- Adding new open spaces for the enjoyment of residents.

In accordance with the above principles, the current (1998) plan recommends limiting development on Parcels 6 and 4. A summary follows (see also map following page):



On Parcel 6, located on steep hill between North Park and Willard Ave, the current Sector Plan recommends creation of a park on the site to preserve as much as possible of the small-scale character of existing structures, and to maintain “human scale” of any new structures on the site (pages 74-76)

Parcel 4 is currently the site of a five-story medical building with several retail shops located below grade fronting North Park Ave. If the site is redeveloped, the current plan recommends a mid-rise residential structure, potentially with ground floor retail, including “highly visible green open space for public use and enjoyment” along with other public amenities approved as part of any future site plan (pages 76 – 77).

For its part, the Village of Friendship Heights strongly recommends that the updated sector plan under development maintain recommendations for Parcels 6 and 4 in line with the principles and proposals as defined in the current plan².

Although recently presented preliminary recommendations for the updated Sector Plan did suggest that Parcels 4 and 6 include “public spaces with social gathering areas and small play areas” we believe this language, as stated, suggests a much too limited approach to maintaining green, open space when combined with concurrent recommendations for high-rise development on the sites.

To be clear, the Village strongly supports more affordable housing in the Friendship Height area. However, the Village believes that large sites boarding the Village, such as Geico and Saks, offer far more potential to build such housing with less negative impact on the surrounding built environment and more convenient access to public transportation.

Attachment (following page): The proposed Land Use Plan adopted in 1998 (with explanatory notes).

¹ [Friendship Heights Sector Plan](#) (1998), page 31

² [Friendship Heights Sector Plan](#) (1998), pages 74-77

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN

FIGURE 19

