

## PRINCIPLE 2

# Provide walkable neighborhoods that are secure and feel safe

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The Braddock Metro neighborhood can be a community where every resident feels safe and comfortable on foot 24 hours a day. The foundation for a walkable neighborhood has existed since the initial platting of the area in the 19th century. A network of relatively tight, 350 foot by 250 foot blocks separated mostly by two-lane streets promotes walking and is central to creating the neighborhood's prevailing character and sense of place.

Despite increases in automobile traffic in the Post-War years, pedestrian activity has greatly increased since Metro Rail was extended to the area. The walkable street network draws people out into the public realm and helps to build community and will be increasingly the case as the Plan's recommended parks, plazas and retail destinations are gradually implemented in the future.



*View of Fayette walking street from Pendleton looking north.*

The funding strategies discussed in Chapter 10 will play a critical role in unlocking the ability to create a more walkable public realm: paying for extensive tree-planting and other streetscape improvements, new parks and plazas, and the ability to promote neighborhood-oriented retail. During the implementation process the community will continue to play a central role in working with the city to plan the details of greening streets, intersection improvements, and other critical aspects of creating a more walkable neighborhood.

## WALKING STREETS

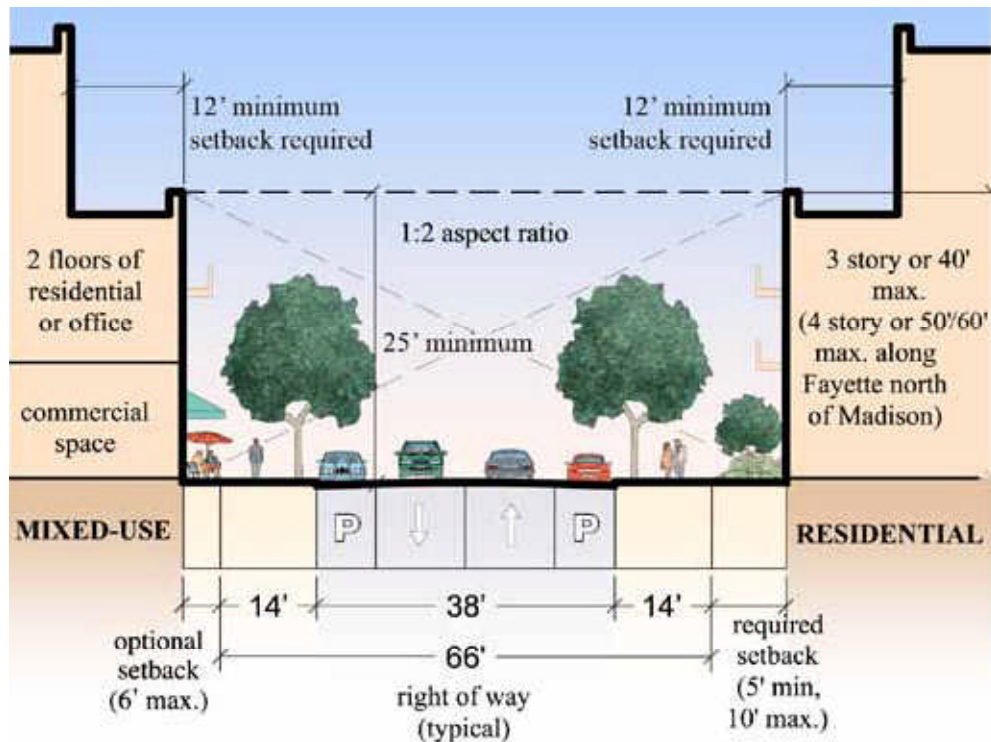
A drawback to Braddock Metro neighborhood grid, however, is the lack of hierarchy for various rights-of-way. The area contains arterials, collectors and local streets but other than the heavy Route 1 traffic imposed by Henry and Patrick Streets, most other streets have been built in a similar way: 38 feet of asphalt curb-to-curb, 14 foot sidewalks on each side, and homes built either to the property line or with small, landscaped setbacks.

The Plan proposes designating clearly defined “walking streets” to establish a sense of hierarchy within the existing grid and communicate to residents and visitors the best way to easily reach parks, new retail nodes and other destinations on foot. In fact, walking streets should be considered part of the larger public realm, along with the existing parks and the new ones proposed in this Plan (see Chapter 5). The Plan recom-



*The visual axis of the Fayette “walking street” is the Washington Monument on the Mall.*

*Recommended setbacks and upper-floor step-backs on designated walking streets*



mends designating the following as walking streets:

- West (between Queen and Madison)
- Fayette (between Queen and Route 1)
- Madison (between West and Washington)
- Wythe (between West and Washington)

Turning this quartet of walking streets—two running north-south and two running east-west—into an optimal walking environment will involve rethinking sidewalk design, landscaping, and the height and character of the buildings that line the streets. Incorporating bicycle improvements on these streets should be considered as well. The design guidelines in this Plan establish requirements for sidewalks and the adjacent building frontages. Generally, these require:

- wide sidewalks separated from the street in residential areas by planting strips or tree wells;
- landscaped setbacks for all new buildings in residential areas;
- regularly-spaced street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting;
- bicycle enhancements through traffic-calming features;
- intersection treatments, including curb bulb-outs and well-marked crosswalks at key intersections with busy cross streets such as Route 1; and
- clearly defined areas for bus shelters.

Just as important as the design of sidewalks along each walking street is the scale of the buildings that line these streets. The walking streets should be defined by multistory buildings (or open space) tall enough to create a sense of

enclosure without being out of scale to pedestrians. As such, the Plan recommends that new buildings along the four walking streets incorporate “shoulders” that are capped at three stories or 40 feet, with new buildings allowed to rise higher after stepping back some distance from the building front. On Fayette Street, north of Madison, shoulders are capped at four stories or 50 to 60 feet. Shoulder heights on the public housing blocks will be determined as part of the Braddock East process.

In general, these shoulder heights will create aspect ratios of at least 1:2, which is a comfortable range in an urban environment and allows each block to feel like an outdoor room. To enhance the appeal of the walking streets, the ground floor of any new or significantly renovated building must provide active uses such as stores or restaurants (where feasible) or residential entrances separated from the sidewalk by landscaping and elevated a few feet above grade. Surface lots, parking garages, and blank walls compromise the quality of the walking street and are prohibited.

## Examples of Shoulder Buildings



## ADDITIONAL WALKING ROUTES

The Plan recommends studying the feasibility of a primary pedestrian connection parallel to Fayette Street connecting the Metro station with the Northern Gateway area through the Braddock Place development. This walking route could substitute for the poor quality



*Potential walking route through Braddock Place*

existing pedestrian route along the service road adjacent to the Metro tracks. The new route will be further enhanced if the ground floors of the Braddock Place office buildings were more active and vibrant. The Plan also recommends that the City work with the community and the property owners to locate community-oriented uses, artist studio spaces and possibly subsidized retail in these currently vacant spaces.

The recommended route takes pedestrians through the Braddock Place plaza area, past the fountain and circular drop-off area, and potentially between the Meridian apartment tower and the northernmost office building. To make this connection, a study must determine if the route could be made ADA-accessible, how pedestrians would move across the flow of drop-off traffic, and whether the property owner would support a public easement through an area that is currently blocked by a fence. Additionally, for this route to serve as a reasonable substitute for an exten-

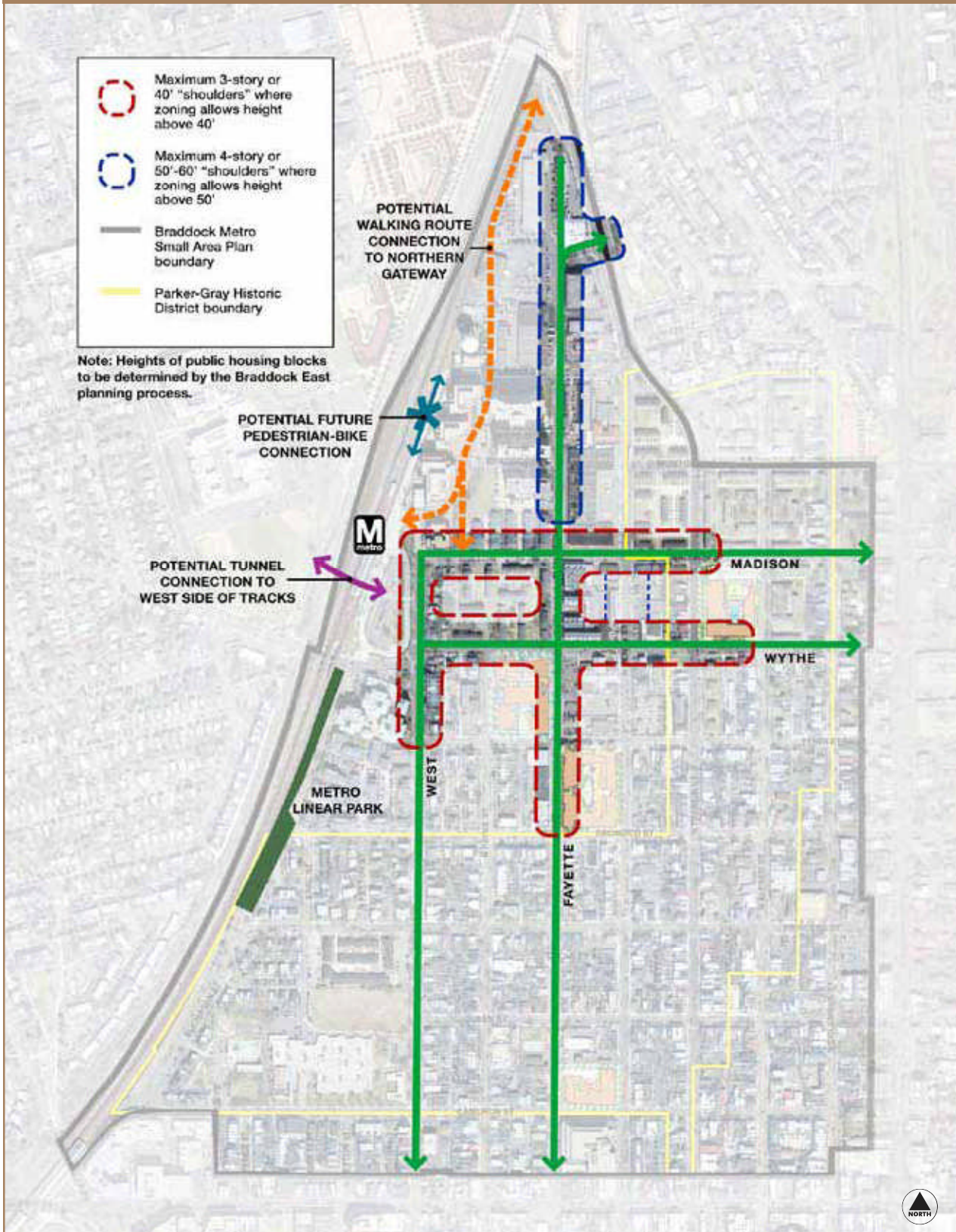
sion of the Metro Linear Park pathway, space for bicycles must be found on the service road behind the Braddock Place office buildings. Cycling on the proposed walking route would likely lead to conflicts with pedestrians and should be discouraged.

Should a study show this route to be infeasible, improvement of the narrow four-foot sidewalk along the Metro embankment is warranted. Narrowing the adjacent service road from approximately 25' to 22' curb-to-curb between the Braddock Metro station and First Street should be studied although the necessary width of the service road will depend on the type of rolling stock used for the proposed Potomac Yard/Crystal City Transit Corridor, described in more detail in Chapter 8. Traffic volume and speed are low enough that the road surface should be a comfortable environment for cyclists. Adding "Share the road with bikes" signs and/or "sharrow" pavement markings will further contribute to a more bike-friendly street.



*Existing "sharrow" pavement markings on Pendleton Street*

# Walking Streets and Routes Diagram





*Existing service road behind Braddock Place looking toward Metro*

As described in more detail in Chapter 8, this service road has been strongly recommended as the alignment for the Crystal City/Potomac Yard transit corridor by the community. The final alignment is contingent on right-of-way access and operational analysis, such as turning radii. If the walking route through Braddock Place proves infeasible, the Plan recommends that the Metro service road be studied to determine if it can be narrowed to accommodate a wider sidewalk, whether or not high-capacity transit is introduced at this location. Many options can be identified for the service road but one possibility is to bring the entire paved area to grade and to separate pedestrians from motorized traffic with bollards.

To enhance connectivity across the tracks and to encourage Metro use by Del Ray and Rosemont residents, the Plan recommends studying the feasibility of building a tunnel connection under the freight rail tracks from the Braddock Road station itself. A tunnel would provide a grand new station entry from the west, saving pedestrians walking time by eliminating the existing need to walk south to the Braddock Road underpass to reach the station. Any new



*A potential Del Ray/Rosemont entry to Braddock Road Metro Station (top) should connect to the area outside of the turnstiles (bottom).*

access route should connect to the area of the station outside the turnstiles so that the tunnel can also accommodate people seeking to visit the Braddock Metro neighborhood and not ride the train. This access point will become especially important if the Metro-owned site in front of the station is redeveloped with businesses, housing, neighborhood-serving retail and/or open space.

## INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Creating a more walkable neighborhood requires addressing pedestrian safety at intersections. Most intersections throughout the Braddock Metro neighborhood offer some level of traffic control—either traffic lights or four-

way stops—that do not detract from the walking environment. Three major intersections create uncomfortable or dangerous conditions for pedestrians trying to cross particular intersections. The Plan recommends a study to evaluate and propose improvements to the Route 1/Fayette Street, Route 1/First Street and the Braddock/Wythe/West intersections.

The Plan’s implementation phase will address the details of redesigning the intersections. Identifying clear goals now can set the stage for effective plans to improve pedestrian crossing conditions at each intersection. The overarching goal for each is to prioritize safety, accessibility, and comfort for pedestrians wishing to cross the street. All three intersections serve as a gateways to important nodes in the neighborhood. Improvements at the intersection of Route 1 and Fayette will help connect the NorthEast and Braddock neighborhoods and provide important pedestrian access for NorthEast residents who use Metro. Enhancements should include a new traffic signal, clearly marked crosswalks and, if space allows, a raised pedestrian refuge island between the two directions of vehicle travel on Route 1.

The Braddock/Wythe/West intersection serves a major pedestrian connection to the Braddock Road station for people walking from the east or the south. The intersection’s offset configuration favors the flow of vehicles at the expense of pedestrians. Free-right-turn lanes to and from Braddock Road create an unnecessarily wide intersection that encourages high-speed turns, forcing pedestrians to cross at unprotected crosswalks. The jog created by the offset street alignment makes crossing both Wythe and West streets on foot quite awkward: pedestrians can never predict where turning vehicles are coming from. To improve pedestrian safety, the Plan recommends that the City and WMATA conduct a thorough study of the intersection focusing on:

- improved pedestrian access and safety
- better traffic management
- enhanced accessibility for all modes

Reconfiguring these intersections will go a long way toward enhancing the walkability of the Braddock Metro neighborhood. In addition to the more dramatic enhancements described above, the City should provide any missing curb ramps, crosswalks or

*Existing conditions at the Braddock/West/Wythe intersection*



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street lights at intersections throughout the neighborhood. Enhanced lighting at intersections and along blocks will dramatically improve residents' sense of safety and comfort for walking after sundown. Likewise, on the multitude of blocks located on streets not designated as "walking streets," funds should be prioritized to provide a minimum level of enhancement including street trees, pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, and bicycle facilities.