



Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment: Briefing



Andrea Gilles, Senior Planner, Area 2 Division, Andrea.Gilles@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4541



Nancy Sturgeon, Master Planner Supervisor, Master Plan Team, Area 2 Division,
Nancy.Sturgeon@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.1308



Glenn Kreger, Chief, Area 2 Division, Glenn.Kreger@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4653

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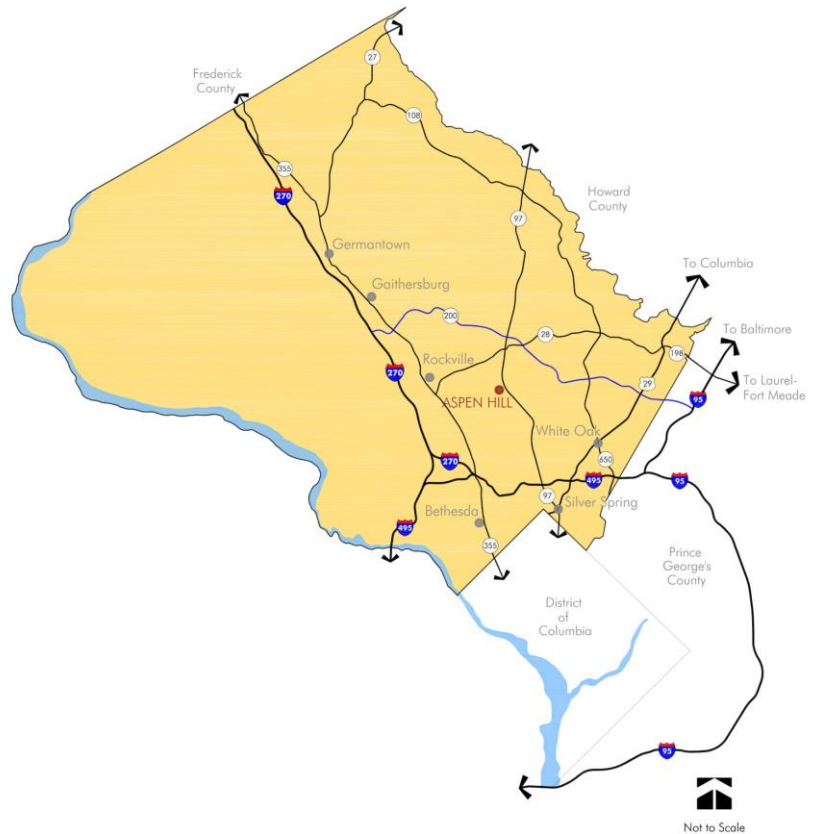
Description

Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan
Amendment Briefing: Update on
additional market analysis and
preliminary Master Plan and zoning
recommendations.

Staff Recommendation: Discussion

Summary

Staff will provide a second briefing and
status report on the Aspen Hill Minor
Master Plan Amendment as a follow-up
to the first briefing on April 24, 2014.
This briefing will highlight additional
market analysis, with focus on mixed-
use development, and outline
preliminary Master Plan and zoning
recommendations.



PROJECT AUTHORIZATION

In April 2013, the Montgomery County Council approved the incorporation of three Minor Master Plan Amendments into the Planning Department's work program: the Bethesda Purple Line Station; Sandy Spring Rural Village; and Aspen Hill. The County Council programmed the Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment to begin in January 2014. On January 23, 2014, Staff presented, and the Planning Board approved, the project Scope of Work which included a project description, outreach plan, and project timeline.

MINOR AMENDMENT PURPOSE

The Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment process addresses approximately 14 acres of land located west of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Aspen Hill Road, the majority of which was recommended for office zoning in the 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan*. (Figure 1) Of the 14 acres, the former Vitro/BAE office building (currently vacant) and associated parking encompass approximately 10 acres of the Subject area. Through the Minor Amendment process, Staff is evaluating additional redevelopment and zoning opportunities for the Subject area. In addition to the vacant office property, the Subject area faces challenges including intersection congestion; efficient vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation; and pedestrian safety.



Figure 1: Minor Amendment Area

ASPEN HILL MINOR MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

Proposal

The minor amendment process provides an opportunity to reassess the Subject area and analyze alternative redevelopment and zoning opportunities. The review considers existing development and reevaluates the area's potential within the context of a changing office market in the County as a whole, the intent and rationale of the 1994 *Aspen Hill Master Plan*, and any impacts to the surrounding land uses and transportation network.

Background

On April 24, 2014, Staff provided a briefing to the Planning Board that included a discussion on project background; planning area challenges and opportunities; market analysis for office, retail, and townhouse land uses; preliminary planning and zoning recommendations; and outreach efforts. At that briefing, the Planning Board requested an additional briefing to explore, in further detail, an analysis of mixed-use development in the Subject area and whether such analysis would impact Staff draft recommendations.

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

At the request of the Planning Board at the initial Staff briefing on April 24, Research and Special Projects Staff has analyzed the feasibility of mixed-use development in the Minor Amendment area. At the June 5 Planning Board meeting, Staff will present its findings in a format that begins by evaluating common characteristics of mixed-use developments, followed by assessing the compatibility of mixed-use development for the Minor Amendment area. Characteristics to be evaluated include:

1. Development as an integrated project
 - Is there physical and functional integration between uses, synergy between land uses, and interconnected pedestrian linkages?
2. Location in an existing mixed-use environment
 - Is the project an extension of an existing mixed-use environment, and does an existing consumer base exist?
3. Strong pedestrian environment
 - Does quality and interconnected pedestrian infrastructure exist, and are there activities and amenities to encourage walking within and between sites?
4. Good transportation access
 - Is the subject area near transit, does it have easy access to freeways and existing travel patterns, and have good visibility and exposure?
5. Sufficient property size
 - Is the subject area large enough to integrate multiple uses, allow higher density development, and create a mixed-use context?
6. Proximate to major tourist generators/attractors
 - Are there other nearby attractors from which to capture and spur additional high volume foot traffic?
7. Located in a jurisdiction friendly to mixed-use
 - Does the jurisdiction allow flexible or mixed-use zoning, and is there public support potential for mixed-use development (public/private partnerships)?

Preliminarily, Staff concludes that it would be challenging to implement mixed-use development for the Minor Amendment area in the short-term, although actions can be taken to foster a more conducive environment for mixed-use development in the long-term. As a component of the upcoming comprehensive Aspen Hill Master Plan Update, future infrastructure improvements, design recommendations, and partnerships will likely be recommended and prioritized to address the viability of a longer-term mixed and multiple use redevelopment strategy for the Connecticut Avenue and Georgia Avenue commercial corridors. The Minor Amendment area is a stepping stone to the comprehensive master planning effort that is scheduled to commence in July 2015. Through this Amendment, Staff is recommending zoning classifications that allow for a greater mix of uses that can evolve with future redevelopment.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff's overall goal is to facilitate the enhancement of Aspen Hill as a suburb where people can live, work, and walk to community amenities. Staff has evaluated different land use and zoning alternatives, design guidelines, and infrastructure improvements for the Subject area that include:

- Rezoning the Subject area to capture the area's retail market potential while allowing for a mix of uses, compatible with surrounding land uses, to develop over time.
- Establishing design guidelines that address future form and function of the Subject area.
- Fine-tuning proposed zoning map conversions for properties in the Subject area to ensure consistency with the Minor Amendment.
- Analyzing and addressing the impacts of added vehicular traffic on Aspen Hill Road and Connecticut Avenue.
- Addressing pedestrian safety; connectivity; and vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation within the Subject area.

A. Land Use and Zoning

Attachments A-C include maps of existing zoning, the proposed zoning conversion, and the preliminary zoning recommendation for the Subject area. Staff's preliminary zoning recommendations include:

- Commercial Residential Town Zone (CRT-1.5, C-0.5, R-1.0, H-60) for the Minor Amendment area north of Aspen Hill Road.
- Commercial Residential Town Zone (CRT-0.5, C-0.5, R-0.25, H-45) for the southwest corner of Aspen Hill Road and Connecticut Avenue. This Zone upholds the conversion zoning with an adjustment to maximum building height from 35 feet to 45 feet.
- Employment Office Zone (EOF-1.5, H-45) for the remaining properties south of Aspen Hill Road. This Zone upholds the conversion zoning with an adjustment to maximum building height from 60 and 75 feet to 45 feet.

At the May 13 community meeting (see Outreach Section below) several community members commented on the possibility of rezoning the portion of the Subject area north of Aspen Hill Road to a Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN) Zone, rather than the recommended CRT Zone. Staff has weighed the pros and cons of the CRN versus the CRT Zone and determined that one of the key differences would be the type and scale of Retail Sales and Service uses allowed in each zone. The table below summarizes the differences:

CRN and CRT: Comparison of Retail Sales and Service Uses

USE OR USE GROUP	ZONE	
	CRN	CRT
RETAIL SALES AND SERVICE		
Combination Retail		C
Retail/Service Establishment		
(Up to 5,000 SF)	P	P
(5,001 - 15,000 SF)	L	P
(15,001 - 50,000 SF)	L	P
(50,001 - 85,000 SF)		L
(85,001 - 120,000 SF)		L
(120,001 SF and Over)		L

Key: P = Permitted Use L = Limited Use C = Conditional Use Blank Cell = Use Not Allowed

Note: Table extracted from Ch. 59 Section 3.1.6 Use Table

A Combination Retail use, defined in Section 3.5.11 of the Zoning Code as “a department or retail store that exceeds 85,000 square feet and that includes a pharmacy and a full line of groceries. Combination Retail does not include a grocery store, or a club membership store that charges a membership or access fee and sells primarily bulk merchandise,” is not permitted in the CRN Zone. Combination Retail is permitted in the CRT Zone as a Conditional Use (formerly Special Exception) and would require approval by the Hearing Examiner. In addition to the Combination Retail difference between the Zones, a Retail Service Establishment larger than 50,000 square feet is not permitted in CRT, whereas it is allowed as a Limited Use (requiring Site Plan approval) under the CRT Zone. The CRN Zone also has no Optional Method and therefore no public benefit requirements, whereas, the CRT Zone has an Optional Method requirement for development with a total maximum density that is the greater of 1.5 FAR or 10,000 square feet of gross floor area.

B. Design

In addition to changes to the zoning districts, Staff also recommends the inclusion of design guidelines with this Minor Master Plan Amendment to ensure quality redevelopment in the Minor Amendment Area. Depending on the type and density of future redevelopment, a site plan may not be required under the CRT or EOF Zones. The addition of design criteria to the Plan provides an additional layer of guidance to the applicant(s) and the applicable regulating body, whether it be the Hearing Examiner, Board of Appeals, Department of Permitting Services, or the Planning Board.

Attachment D highlights the Design Criteria framework for the Minor Amendment area, which includes: affirming the proposed bike path and shared use path along Connecticut Avenue; recommending streetscape improvements along Connecticut Avenue and Aspen Hill Road; recommending shared and enhanced vehicular and pedestrian access points at the drive between the former Vitro/BAE site and the Home Depot; supporting enhanced intersections included as part of the 2011 SHA/MCDOT Pedestrian Road Safety Audit; establishing a build-to-area along Connecticut Avenue and Aspen Hill Road; and protecting the adjacent residential neighborhoods with a no-build area for the property adjacent to single-family residential uses to the north of Aspen Hill Road, and a transition area for the properties adjacent to single-family residential uses to the south of Aspen Hill Road.

C. Transportation

Attachment E describes the traffic impacts of various zoning and development scenarios, assuming two measures intended to push traffic onto Connecticut Avenue (subject to SHA approval) rather than neighborhood streets and reduce impacts from queuing on Aspen Hill Road. It is possible that the Critical Lane Volumes (CLVs) at Connecticut Avenue/Aspen Hill Road could exceed the 1475 CLV standard for the policy area if the maximum density of office or commercial uses allowed by the proposed zone is achieved at full build out; however, maximum build-out is unlikely. Up to 0.39 FAR of commercial development could be built without reaching the CLV standard. If redevelopment does not necessitate a new preliminary plan of subdivision because most of the Vitro/BAE property is already a recorded lot, responsibility for applying the APF test may belong to others.

OUTREACH

Since the briefing to the Planning Board on April 24, Staff held the third and final community meeting at the Aspen Hill Public Library on May 13. Approximately 75 residents, business tenants, property owners, community organization representatives, and other stakeholders were in attendance. Staff presented preliminary planning and zoning recommendations for the community's feedback, transportation impact analysis for various development scenarios, and outlined the next steps in the minor amendment process. A robust question and answer period ensued after the Staff presentation. Four key issues emerged during the discussion:

- The area is challenging for pedestrians;
- Traffic in the area, particularly along Aspen Hill Road, is already excessive and impacts will be greater than what is reflected by Staff's trip generation analysis;
- This area should not be rezoned ahead of the comprehensive master plan update;
- Could a CRN (Commercial Residential Neighborhood) Zone be considered for the amendment properties on which Staff is preliminarily recommending a CRT (Commercial Residential Town) Zone? (see Attachment C)

Staff continues to evaluate the community's concerns and refine our zoning recommendations, which will be proposed formally in the upcoming Staff Draft Plan.

SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative schedule for upcoming activities:

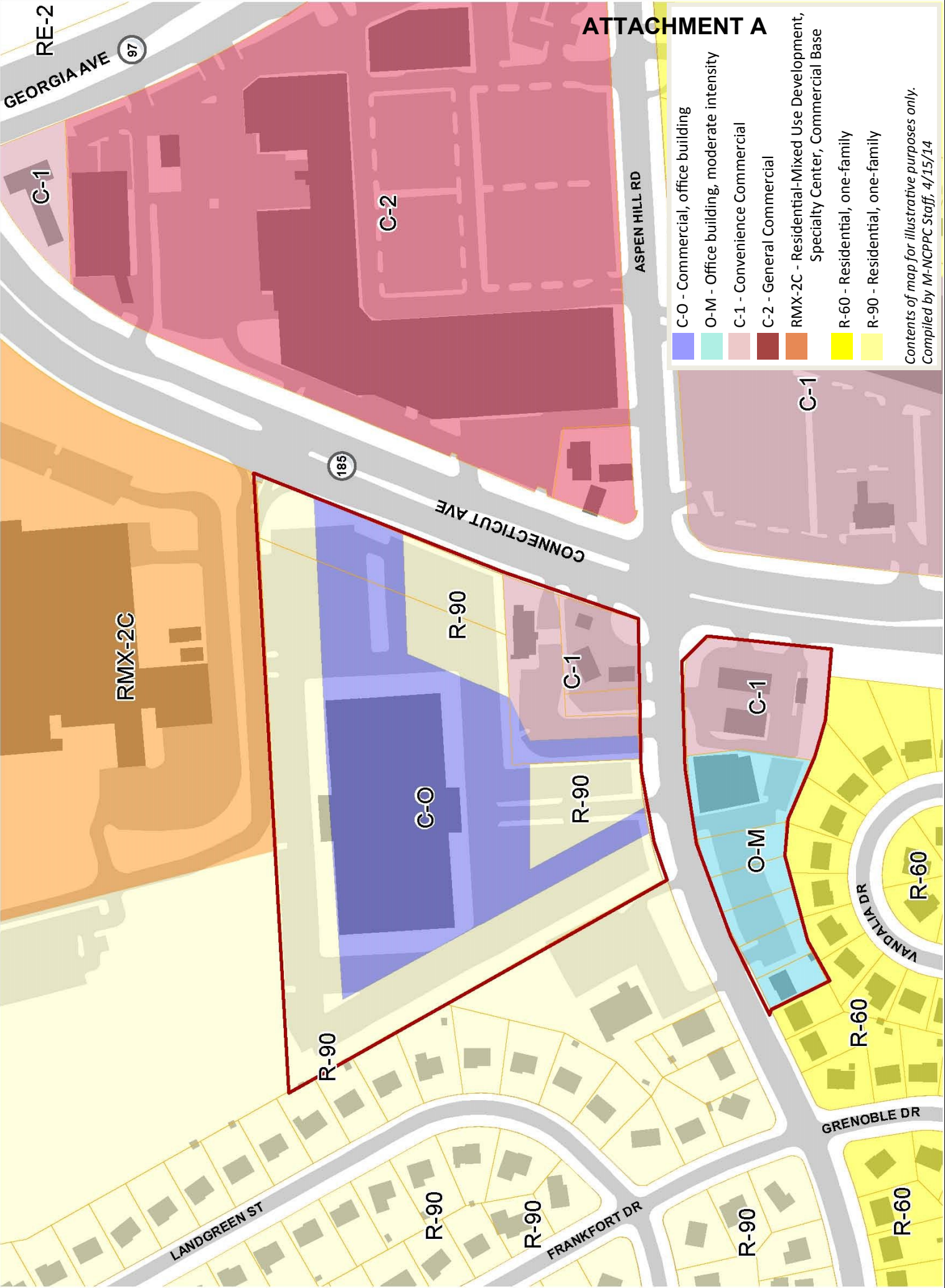
Second Planning Board Briefing	June 5, 2014
Staff Draft Presented to the Planning Board	July 10, 2014
Planning Board Public Hearing	September 11, 2014
Planning Board Worksessions	September, October 2014
Transmit to County Executive and County Council	November 2014

SUMMARY

Following this June briefing and status report, Staff will fine-tune recommendations based on feedback from the Planning Board and from the May 13 community meeting and prepare the Staff Draft for the Planning Board's review in July. The Staff Draft will focus on establishing a zoning program that allows for a mix of uses; improved vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections; and an improved streetscape.

ATTACHMENTS

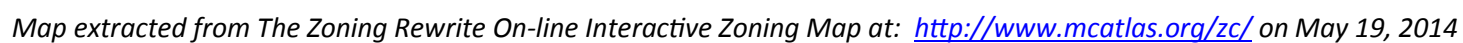
- A. Map of Existing Zoning
- B. Map of Proposed Zoning Conversion
- C. Map of Preliminary Zoning Recommendations
- D. Updated Draft Development Concept
- E. Traffic Impact Analysis

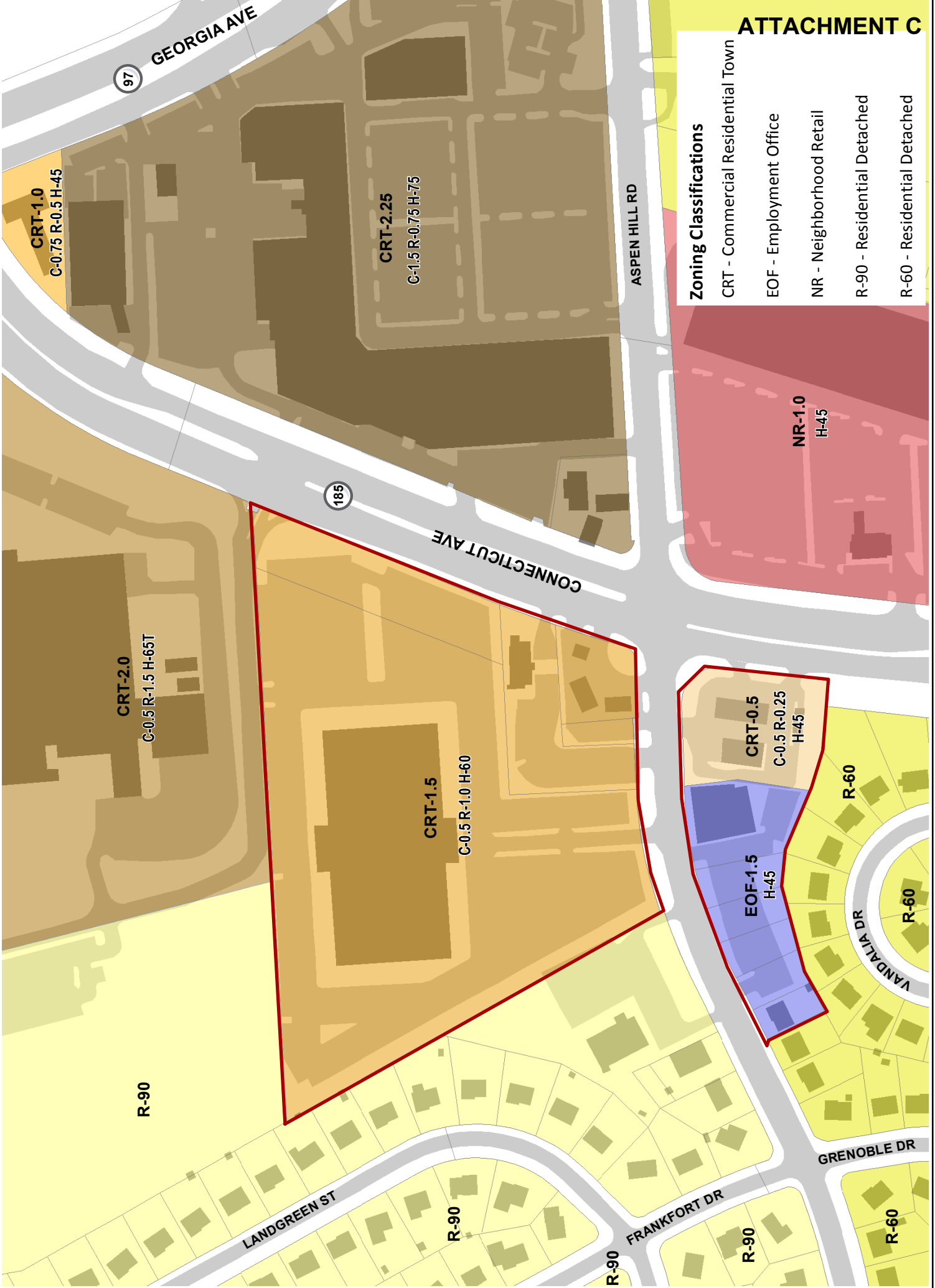


ATTACHMENT A

- C-O - Commercial, office building
- O-M - Office building, moderate intensity
- C-1 - Convenience Commercial
- C-2 - General Commercial
- RMX-2C - Residential-Mixed Use Development, Specialty Center, Commercial Base
- R-60 - Residential, one-family
- R-90 - Residential, one-family

Contents of map for illustrative purposes only.
Compiled by M-NCPPC Staff, 4/15/14





ATTACHMENT C

Zoning Classifications

- CRT - Commercial Residential Town
- EOF - Employment Office
- NR - Neighborhood Retail
- R-90 - Residential Detached
- R-60 - Residential Detached

Minor Amendment Area

Preliminary Zoning Recommendation

Aspen Hill Minor Amendment

DRAFT

DRAFT

Latest revision, 5/8/14

For illustrative purposes only. Compiled by M-NCPPC Staff.

0

125

250

500

Feet

0

125

250

500

Feet

Design Criteria

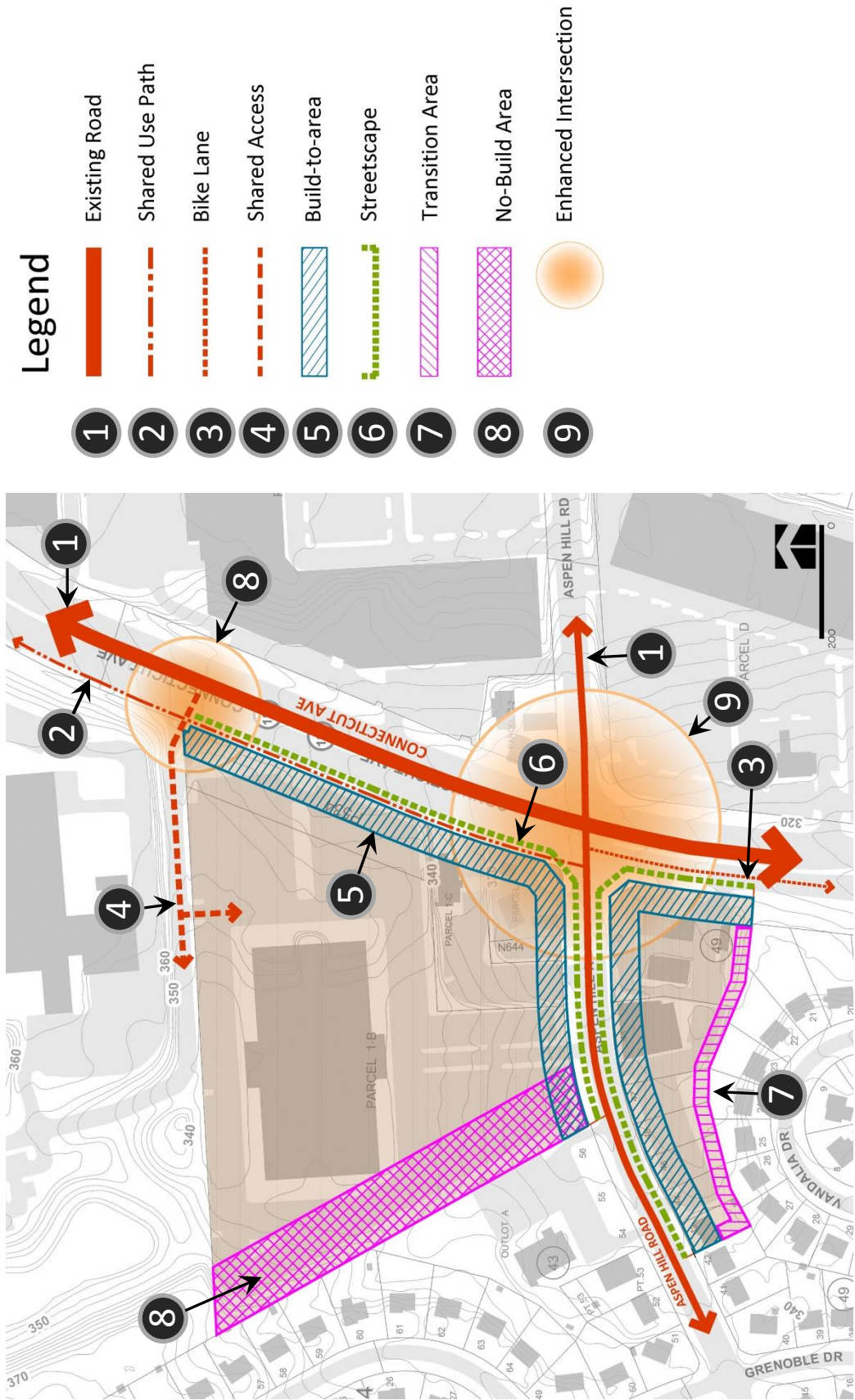


Table A: Trip Generation

Peak Hour	Office *		Residential	Retail ***		
	C-O Reuse Exist. Bldg.	Max EOF Build-out	Max CRT Multi-Fam.	Max CRT Build-out	Proposed Big Box	Max SF w/ Accept. CLVs
	268k SF	320k SF	349 Units	218k SF	120k SF	170k SF
	1.26 FAR	1.5 FAR **	1.0 FAR	0.50 FAR	0.27 FAR	0.39 FAR
AM	450	660	145	305	185	245
PM	405	590	165	1215	740	980

Notes: * Office square footages were calculated based on existing approximately 5-acre C-O/EOF Zoned portion of the properties (see Attachments A and B). Residential and retail sizes were calculated based on the future consolidated 10.3-acre property.

** In the remapped EOF Zoning district on the site, 1.5 FAR is the baseline maximum amount of developable office space with an option to achieve a 3.0 FAR if certain criteria are met.

*** Retail trips include a pass-by reduction rate of 35%, consistent with the ITE recommended methodology, to account for vehicles that are already on the roadway network in the vicinity of the site that choose to enter the proposed development and then exit the site continuing on their original journey.

Existing Vacant Office (Vitro/BAE) Redevelopment Scenarios									
Intersection	Peak Hour	Existing	No Build *	Office **		Residential	Retail		
				EOF Reuse Exist. Bldg.	Max EOF Build-out	Max CRT Multi-Fam.	Max CRT Build-out	Proposed Big Box	Max SF w/ Accept. CLVs
				268k SF 1.26 FAR	320k SF 1.5 FAR ***	349 Units 1.0 FAR	218k SF 0.50 FAR	120k SF 0.27 FAR	170k SF 0.39 FAR
Georgia Ave & Connecticut Ave	AM	980	985	1005	1010	1000	1010	1005	1010
	PM	1095	1100	1140	1155	1105	1205	1165	1185
Connecticut Ave & Aspen Hill Rd	AM	1300	1315	1430	1480	1340	1385	1355	1375
	PM	1120	1130	1245	1300	1175	1540	1380	1470
Georgia Ave & Aspen Hill Rd	AM	935	940	1025	1065	970	1010	980	1010
	PM	1125	1130	1245	1300	1160	1415	1305	1365
Notes: CLV standard is 1475 in the Aspen Hill Policy Area. Cells highlighted in red represent scenarios where at full commercial or office build-out, the CLV standard could be exceeded.									
CLV analysis assumed right-in/out access to Aspen Hill Road and primary access driveway on Connecticut Avenue for all scenarios.									
* Pipeline projects include Home Depot Expansion, Homecrest 2, Layhill Overlook.									
** Office square footages were calculated based on the existing approximately 5-acre C-O/EOF Zoned portion of the properties (see Attachments A and B). Residential and retail sizes were calculated based on the future consolidated 10.3-acre property.									
*** In the remapped EOF zoning district on the site, 1.5 FAR is the baseline maximum amount of developable office space with an option to achieve a 3.0 FAR if certain criteria are met.									