

Study Area & Purpose

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy focuses on **Connecticut Avenue** between **Van Ness Street NW** and **Albemarle St NW**. The Van Ness Strategy is a framework for reinvigoration of the commercial corridor focused on a retail, public space, sustainability, and commercial opportunities.

Retail

Through an understanding of the market supply and demand, and the retail spaces that exist, the Action Strategy can provide guidance for the attraction and retention of high quality retail tenants. The Action Strategy will provide a series of recommendations focused on transforming the Van Ness corridor into a truly **vibrant street**.

Public Space

By understanding the constraints of the built environment and the opportunities afforded by generous sidewalks and available space, the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy can help further develop the streetscape into an **attractive and memorable pedestrian environment**.

Sustainability

Building on the goals of Sustainable DC and high performance streetscapes, the Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy will provide recommendations for applying Green Infrastructure techniques to improve the **environmental performance** of the corridor. Sustainability can also serve as a foundation around which to build a district identity.

Commercial Opportunities

The Van Ness Commercial District Action Strategy will identify catalytic sites along the corridor to highlight opportunities where **commercial repositioning** can improve the condition of the streetscape, retail quality, and livability of the corridor.



Vision

The Van Ness Commercial District will...

- Be widely recognized as a beautiful and energetic retail corridor known for excellent cafés.
- Provide goods and services that appeal to a wide range of customers including residents, students, and workers.
- Showcase three interconnected retail areas, each serving their own niche working together to create a vibrant community.
- Form connections between a dynamic retail environment and UDC, the International Chancery Center, and Rock Creek Park.



Proposed Recommendations

- Develop and promote a cohesive and appealing retail identity
- Express a unique identity for each retailer
- Extend retail brands horizontally - e.g., outdoor cafes and amenity zones
- Establish a formal Commercial District management organization
- Reposition retail spaces in the UDC Law School building
- Create three connected retail clusters
- Ensure retail spaces have adequate dimensions for contemporary retail tenants
- Develop a coordinated marketing approach highlighting the Van Ness retail identity and strong consumer base
- Support the Van Ness Vision Committee's efforts to enhance the Commercial District
- Market the corridor with periodic retail and arts/cultural events



Create Gathering Places



Convey Retail Brand with Café Seating



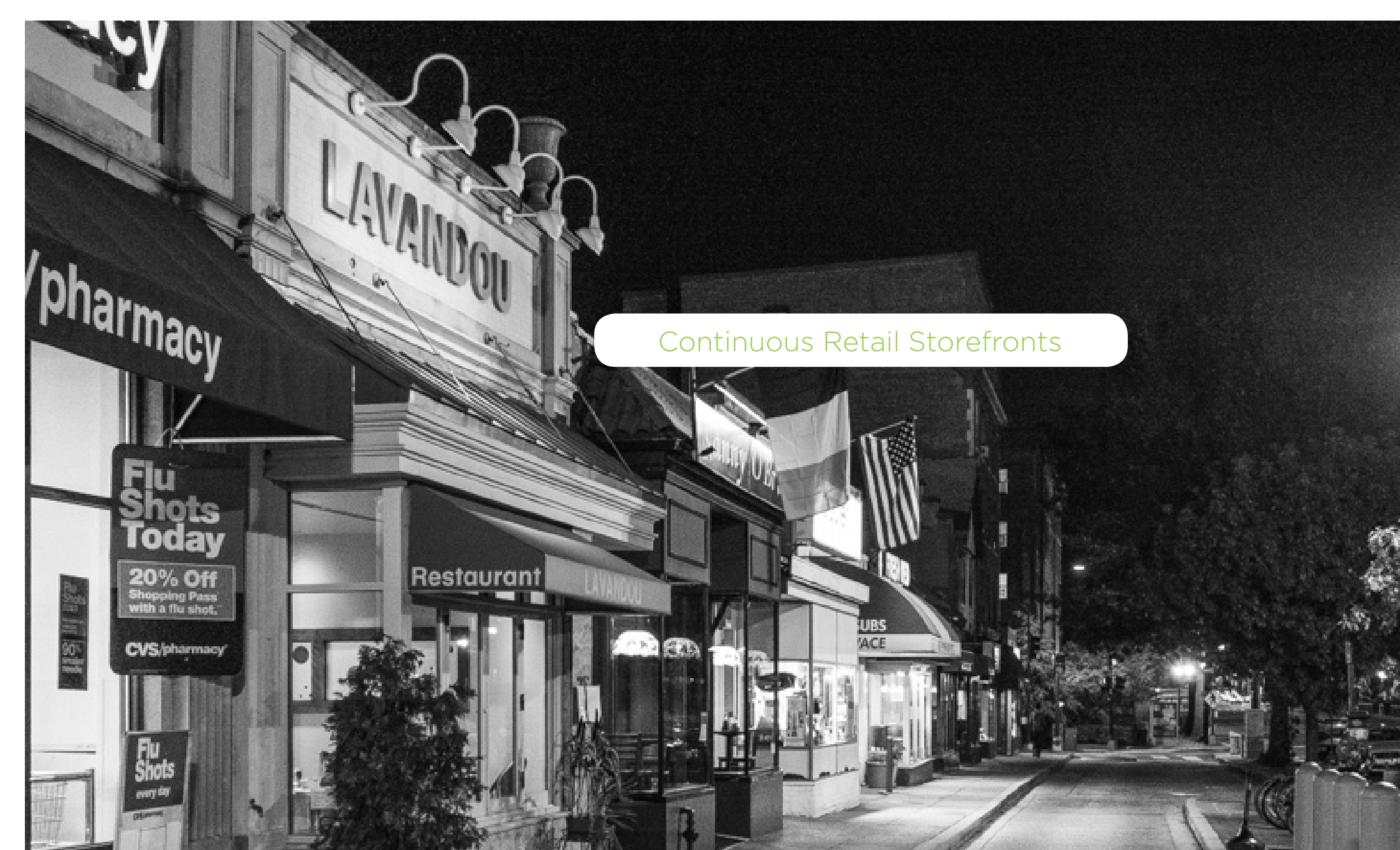
Create Gathering Places

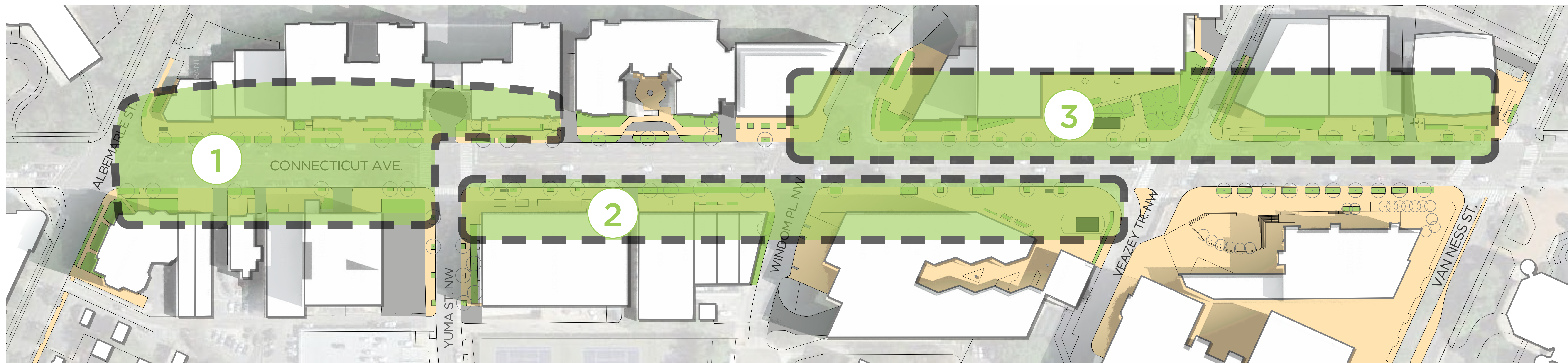


Convey Branding on Awnings



Attractive Urban Design





1 North Cluster

Attributes

This cluster is characterized by mature trees and older pre-1950 buildings that are lower scale. The businesses are typically household-oriented services including dry cleaners, barber shops, and nail salons. Bread Furst is a new anchor for this cluster and provides a place for community interaction.

Opportunities

This cluster can become a place for residents in the surrounding neighborhood to gather.

The Northern Retail Cluster builds on its close proximity to the Forest Hills Playground by concentrating on family-oriented goods and services.

Niche

- Family-oriented
- Neighborhood Services
- Small Town Feel

2 West Metro Cluster

Attributes

This area has wide sidewalks and larger office oriented buildings built after 1960. Retailers in this node are focused on food and beverage.

Opportunities

Additional food and beverage retailers can succeed in this cluster.

Repositioning outdated retail spaces can create a strong retail corridor.

The Metro plaza can incorporate public art and become a strong community anchor.

Niche

- Dining / Food
- Metro Centric
- Gathering Space

3 East Metro Cluster

Attributes

Retailers providing neighborhood goods and services define this cluster. Retailers include Giant Grocery Store, CVS Pharmacy, Walgreen Pharmacy, and Calvert Woodley Fine Wine.

Opportunities

Repositioning retail in the southern half of this cluster can build on the success of anchor retailers to the north.

Niche

- Daily Convenience Shopping
- Gathering Place



Vision

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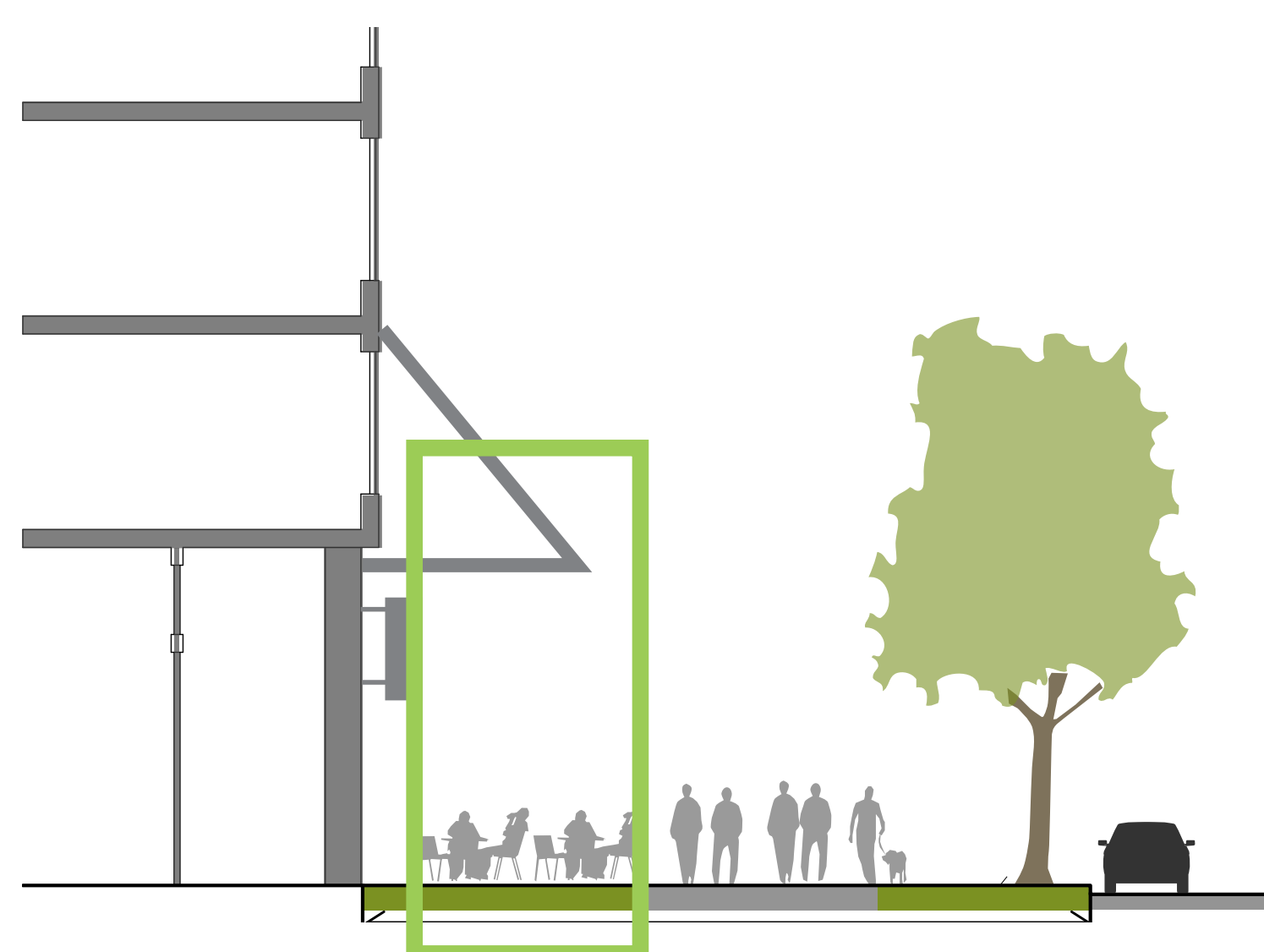
- Demonstrate outstanding public space including landscaping that both softens and defines the corridor and green gathering places that bring people together.
- Improve streetscape to establish an attractive and unified aesthetic.
- Encourage public space that enlivens retail by creating unique opportunities to extend retail beyond the storefront.

Proposed Recommendations

- Create a linear public space that softens and greens the corridor, makes the pedestrian experience more intimate and human-scaled, and better defines retail activity
- Establish urban design guidelines that visually unify Van Ness
- Differentiate public space with three distinct use zones: Building Amenity, Sidewalk, Landscape.
- Replace cobrahead streetlights with twin-twenty or teardrop streetlights
- Create focal points that activate public spaces with in each retail cluster
- Implement a way-finding system
- Incorporate bicycle parking into the streetscape
- Support temporary place-making initiatives
- Work with institutional and community partners to activate Windom Place

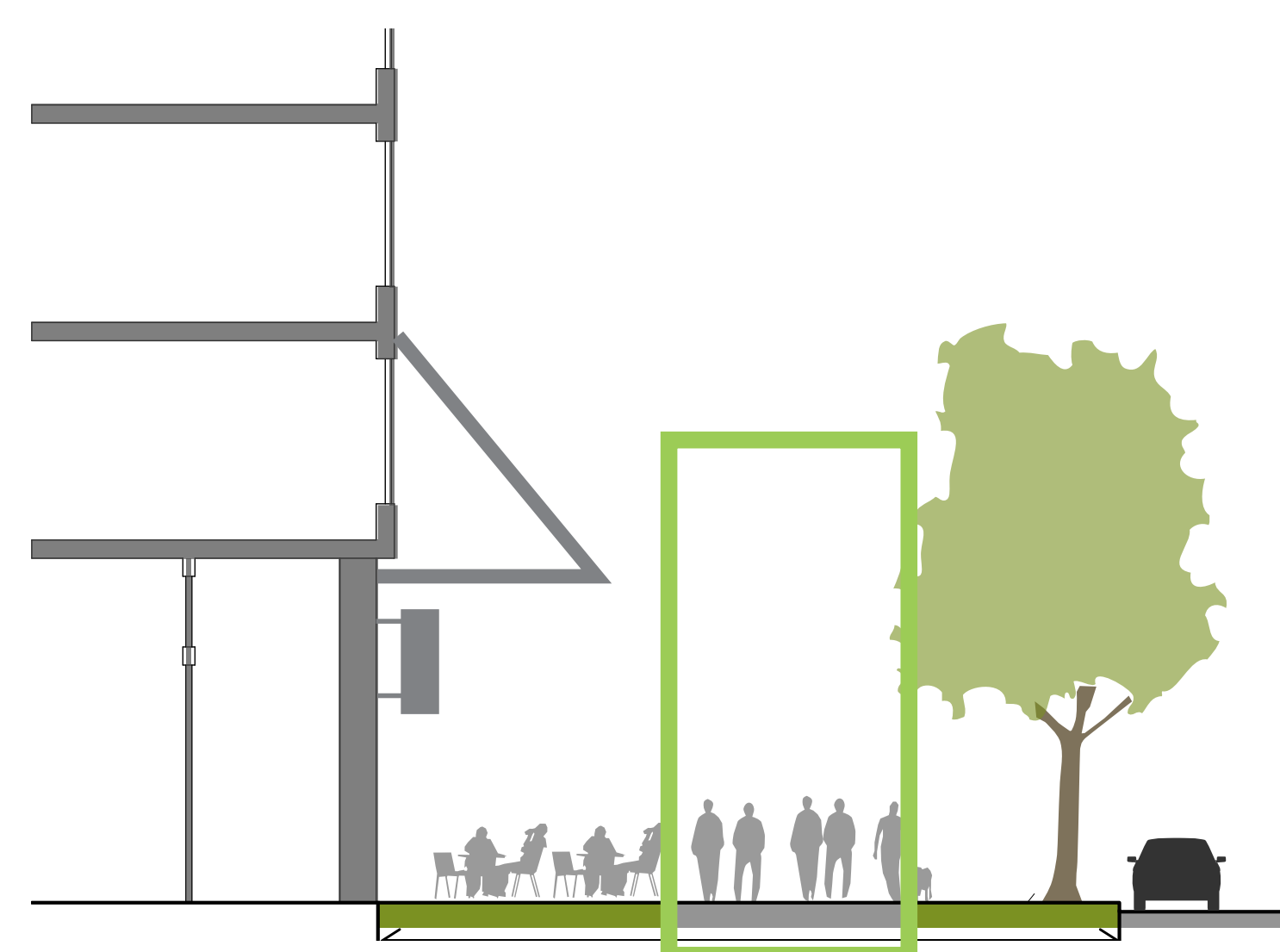


Building Amenity Zone



The **Building Amenity Zone** is public space located in front of building. This space can be used as an extension of the adjoining building through DDOT public space permit. In Van Ness, property owners will be encouraged to use standardized guidelines for furniture and plantings in the building amenity zone to establish a distinctive community character. These areas will provide opportunities for beautified public space offering active and passive uses such as outdoor dining and gardens.

Sidewalk Zone



The **Sidewalk Zone** is the dedicated travel path that pedestrians use to travel through the neighborhood. This path easily connects to the sidewalk on either end of the Commercial District and side streets. Focusing pedestrian travel path will make the sidewalk feel more active while leaving room for additional amenities.

Landscape Amenity Zone



The **Landscape Zone** is a standardized landscaping area that includes trees, plantings, bio-retention, and parking access. This area also includes public seating areas.

Vision

The Van Ness Commercial District will...

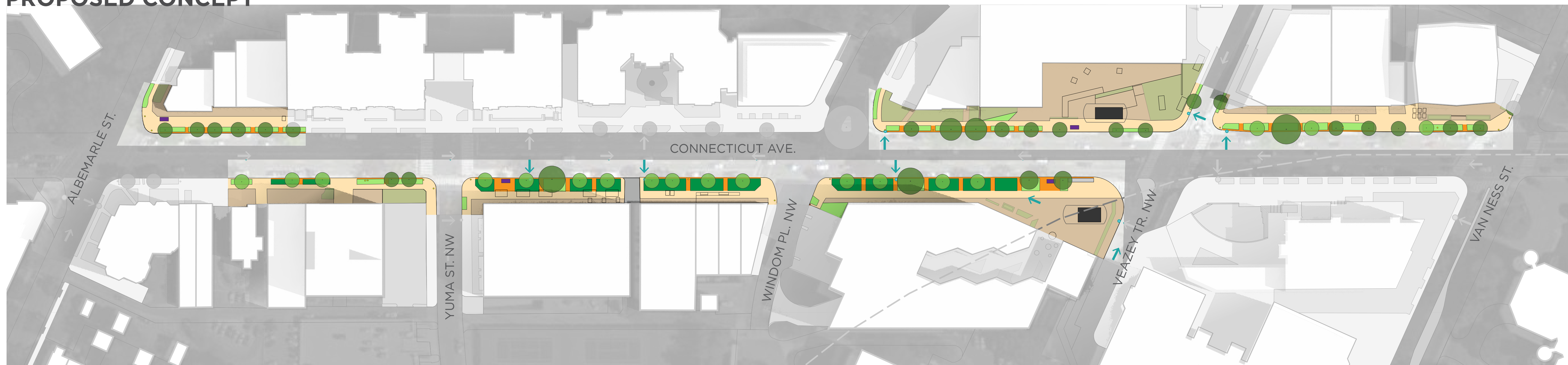
- Support investments to improve social, environmental, and economic sustainability.
- Engage in partnerships with the UDC to produce leading examples of innovative sustainability strategies.
- Public facilities will meet the highest standards for efficiency and sustainability.
- Remove excess pavement where possible to reduce the urban heat effect and stormwater runoff.
- Celebrate innovative building approaches with highly sustainable designs that contribute to the District's sustainability leadership.
- Highlight the proximity of natural amenities and preserve Soapstone Valley.

Proposed Recommendations

- Complete and implement the Van Ness Green Infrastructure Study recommendations to maximize paving removal along the corridor and incorporate green stormwater strategies into the proposed landscape amenity zone
- Leverage the community and local institutions to identify opportunities for collaboration around sustainability in the Commercial District
- Support provisions in Planned Unit Developments that encourage developers to go above and beyond the Green Building Act requirements
- Replace streetlights with new light-emitting-diode (LED) fixtures by working with DDOT
- Encourage residential and commercial property owners to install renewable energy by connecting them with local solar co-ops, renewable energy rebates, or the DC Sustainable Energy Utility
- Partner with the National Park Service to encourage ongoing programming and maintenance of Soapstone Valley
- Work with the Great Streets or DC Main Street program to implement and maintain a public recycling program
- Encourage property owners to install green roofs



PROPOSED CONCEPT From the Van Ness Green Infrastructure Study (Ongoing)



LEGEND

- Pedestrian Zone
- Access Zones [Permeable pavement at feasible locations]
- Bioretention Planter [Adjacent to roadway]
- Tree Space + Planting
- Building Amenity Zone [Not within scope]
- Bus Stand
- Existing Tree
- Potential New Tree
- Lights
- Stormwater Flow Lines
- Stormwater Inlets

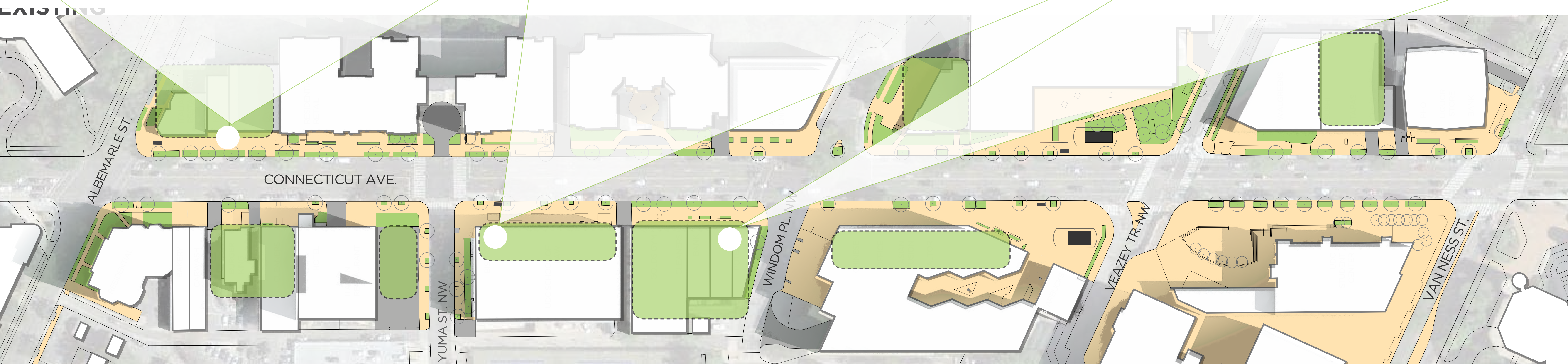
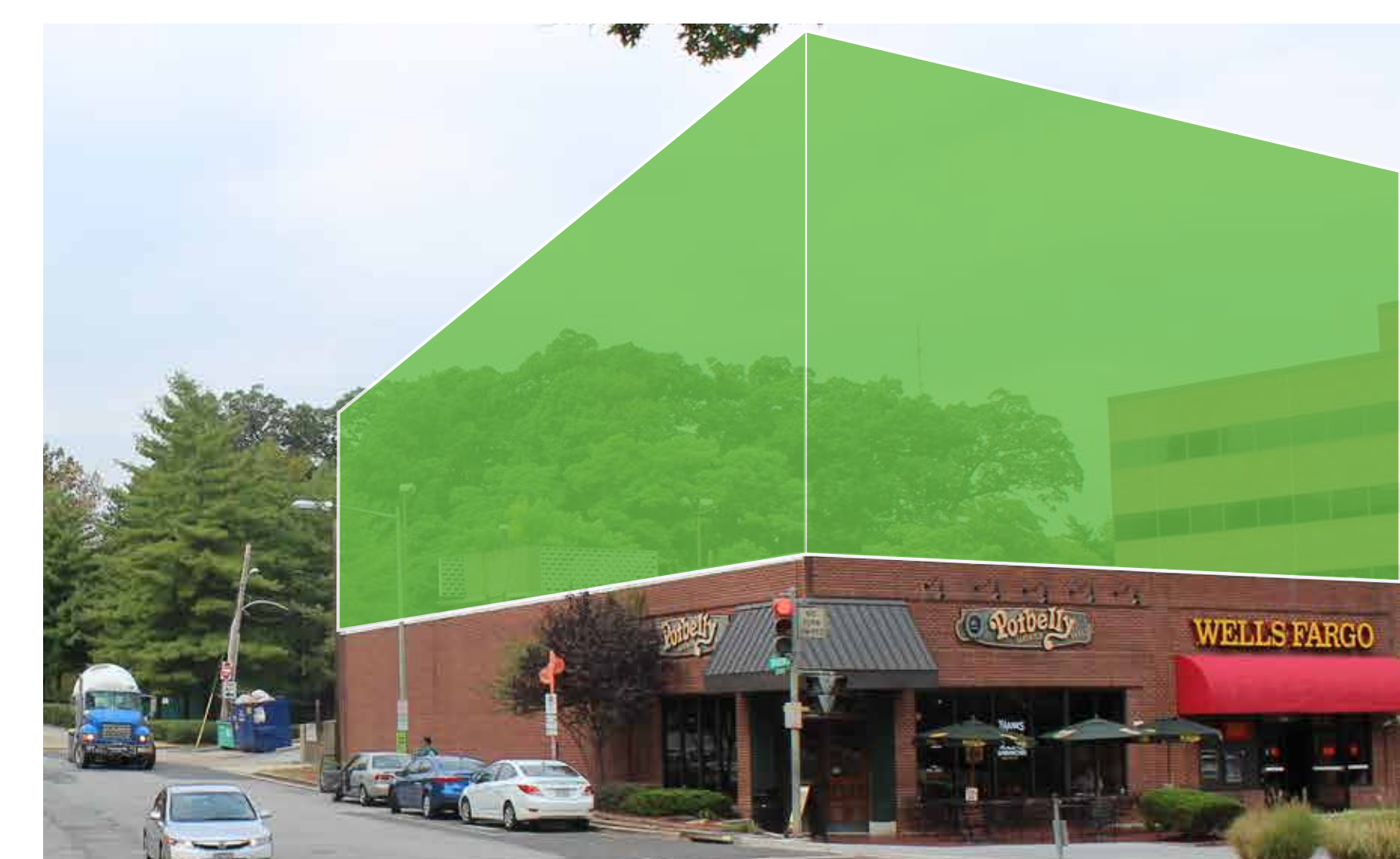
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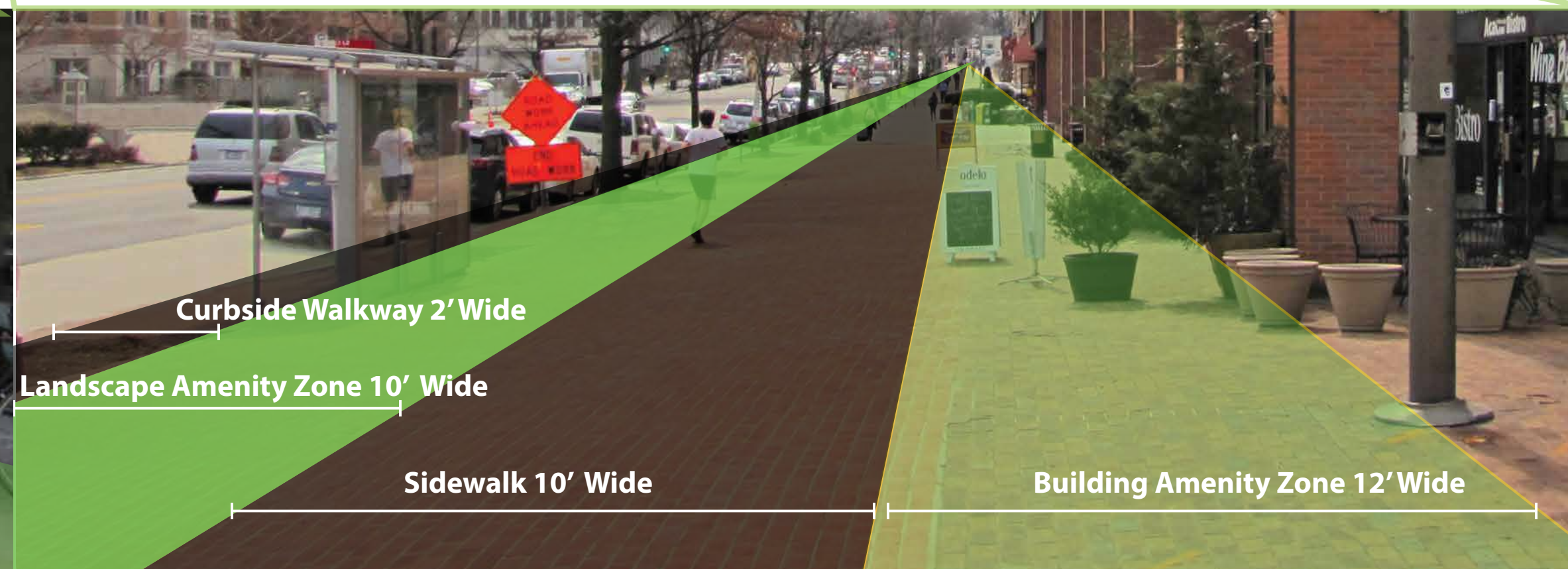
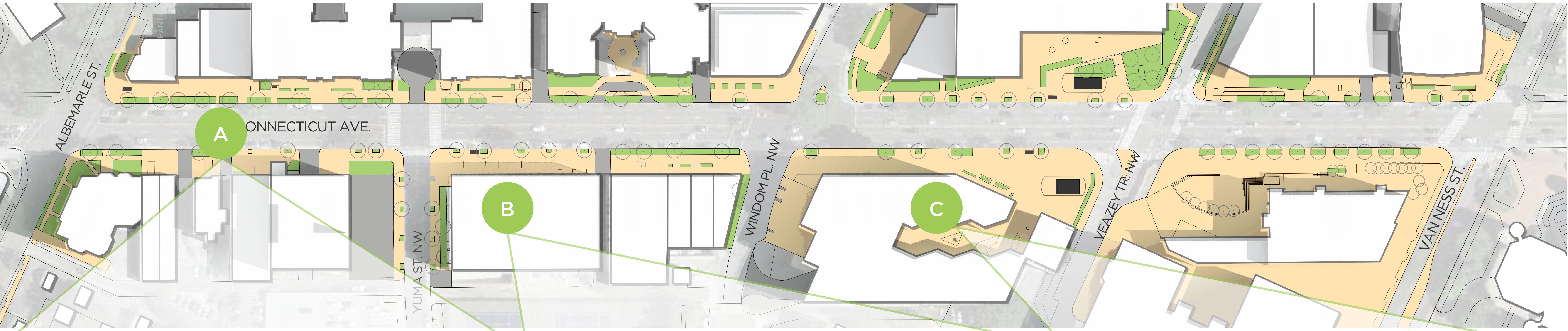
Vision

- Build the identity of the Commercial District through design and programming.
- Support redevelopment and repositioning of underutilized sites, including new mixed use development with ground floor retail and pedestrian-oriented design.
- Be a well-managed commercial district, with support from local developers and property owners in a management organization like a DC Main Street.
- Highlight an “open for business” culture.

Proposed Recommendations

- Foster a continued dialogue between community leaders and commercial property owners
- Reposition retail to enhance the office leasing market
- Prioritize investments to reposition in the Western Metro Cluster
- Support redevelopment of low-scale buildings into mixed use buildings with ground floor retail





Strategies View A

PUBLIC SPACE GOAL

Create vibrancy
Support entertainment and activity near the Metro canopy
Create spaces for pedestrians, diners, students

Coordinate the bus stop accessibility area with the retailer needs

SUSTAINABILITY GOAL

Manage stormwater
Implement green stormwater infrastructure especially along the edge by the curb where tree line is located

RETAIL

Improve Retail Viability
Install vehicular-oriented awnings to raise the perceived height of retail spaces

Support clustered outdoor tables with branded umbrellas to extend retail identity across sidewalk

Install pedestrian-level signage strategy.

Commercial Opportunities

Maximize the retail opportunity at the ground-level, Metro-adjacent spaces to improve office (and residential) leasing pursuits

Strategies View B

PUBLIC SPACE

Create three use zones
Encourage existing retailers to program the space in front of their space as outdoor dining and gathering space.

Focus pedestrian travel in a clearly defined sidewalk

Widen the landscaping near the street to create a buffer from traffic

SUSTAINABILITY

Manage stormwater
Incorporate stormwater retention and management infrastructure into landscaping where possible
Plant trees in the larger landscaped areas to add shading and use stormwater

RETAIL

Create Leasable retail space
Build-out arcade of UDC Building 52
Support retail expression that extends into public space

Encourage retailers to use umbrellas to convey identity

Install higher, vehicular-oriented awnings
Install pedestrian-level signage

COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ensure new and existing developments benefit from improved retail conditions in pursuit of office and residential tenants

Strategies View C

PUBLIC REALM

Encourage Neighborhood Oriented Uses
Create a neighborhood focal point for gathering that utilizes the wide sidewalks at this location

Incorporate a more informal landscape aesthetic

SUSTAINABILITY

Manage stormwater
Incorporate stormwater management infrastructure into landscaping where possible

Plan trees in the larger landscaped areas to add shade and use stormwater

RETAIL

Modernize storefronts
Encourage each retail space to install awnings and signage that:
• Identifies it as a business
• Clearly indicates the purpose of the business
• Engages the pedestrian and enhances the sidewalk experience

COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Build on the Class A retail space being constructed immediately to the south

Capitalize on the influx of new residents adjacent to the properties by improving quality and design of the spaces, quality of inventory (where appropriate), and level of customer service