

WOODLEY PARK & CLEVELAND PARK

Public Life Study

September 2022



District of Columbia
Office of Planning





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OVERVIEW

What is Public Life?

Public life is about the everyday activities that people naturally take part in when they spend time with each other outside their homes, workplaces, and cars. Public life thrives when all people can enjoy being in public together. Public life impacts:

- Physical and mental health
- Social benefits
- Identity and sense of place
- Safety
- Sustainable mobility
- Economic Development

A vibrant public life promotes health, makes our cities safer, can lead to more civic engagement, can create economic opportunity and mobility, builds social capital, and connects people to their local communities. Cities that have a vibrant public life are more competitive and attract and retain talent.

Why Study Public Life in Cleveland Park and Woodley Park?

A public life study is a data-driven approach that applies observational, people-centric measures to inform policy, regulations, and public space design. Findings and recommendations from the public life study can inform public space designs, future building redevelopments, as well as public space programming and activation efforts.

The section of Connecticut Avenue between Cleveland Park and Woodley Park was selected because:

- The Office of Planning is undertaking the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines planning study focusing on the Cleveland Park and Woodley Park commercial areas;
- The two commercial districts are experiencing ongoing development, with changes underway;
- Retail in Cleveland Park and Woodley Park is experiencing challenges as the economy changes, particularly with the closure of the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel; and
- DDOT is undertaking two transformative projects along the corridor; the Cleveland Park streetscape and Drainage project and the Connecticut Avenue Multimodal and Safety Improvements project.



Public life is the social activity that takes place in everyday public spaces - on streets, in parks, plazas, and in spaces between buildings --

Gehl Institute



Methodology

The DC Office of Planning (OP) led this public life study with SmithGroup and RHI from the consultant team assisting on the project. Nineteen volunteers, including six community members, were trained in the techniques of public life analysis, and assisted with on-site fieldwork in late June 2022. SmithGroup, RHI, and OP compiled and analyzed the public life data collected and developed this report. The study applied site analysis and fieldwork techniques developed by the Gehl Institute and adapted by OP, consisting of:



Rhythm of Daytime/
Evening Activity



Counting People
Moving



Mapping People
Staying



Surveying People's
Preferences



Façade
Assessment



Land Use
Characteristics

Field Work

Public life field work was performed to document people moving and staying along Connecticut Avenue, between Woodley Park and Cleveland Park, during a 9-hour period on a typical weekday and weekend. Within the defined study area, one count was taken per hour at each of the six pedestrian count locations and three stationary mapping areas. During the field work period, 170 intercept surveys were also performed.

Field Work Dates and Conditions:

- Wednesday, June 8 (11am – 5pm)
 - Partially cloudy, high in mid-80s. 5-8pm, *Shift rescheduled due to thunderstorms*
- Saturday, June 11 (11am-8pm)
 - Mostly cloudy with stray showers, mid 70s
- Wednesday, June 15 (5-8pm) - *makeup shift*



OVERVIEW

Study Area

The study area covers the stretch of Connecticut Ave NW between Calvert St NW and Porter St NW. The area was broken into three zones:

- Zone 1: Woodley Park
- Zone 2: The Zoo
- Zone 3: Cleveland Park

The study area was outlined specifically to understand the contrasting dynamics of public life activity in each zone and how the Smithsonian National Zoo impacts pedestrian circulation and public space usage in each of the Cleveland Park and Woodley Park commercial districts.

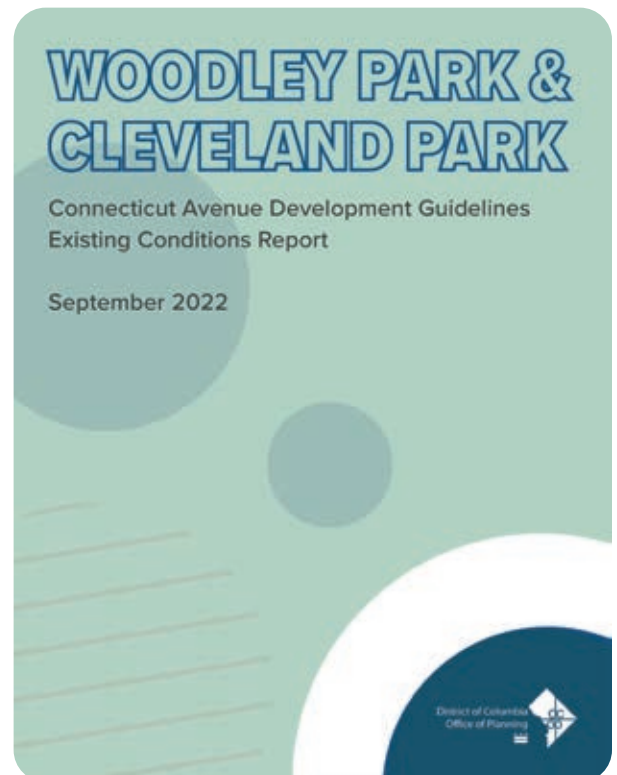
Background and Existing Conditions

This study complements a more in-depth Existing Conditions Report for the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines study. The Existing Conditions Report includes an overview of the history, demographics, land use, and public space conditions in and around the study area.

Findings from this Public Life Study along with the Existing Conditions report will inform development and public space design recommendations for the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines.

Both reports can be viewed on the project website at publicinput.com/rcw-connecticut

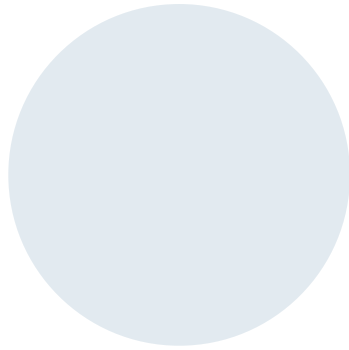
This Public Life Study will inform streetscape design and placemaking recommendations as part of the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines.







FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



PUBLIC REALM & FAÇADES

Public Realm

Connecticut Avenue's public realm constitutes a network of publicly and privately owned spaces accessible to residents and visitors alike. Within the study area, the public realm includes private commercial property, single- and multi-family residences, DC rights-of-way (streets), WMATA rights-of-way, and National Park Service land.

Together, the various ownership distinctions and their respective contributions to the public realm impact the experiences and engagement of the plethora of residents and visitors that utilize the public space.

Façades

Engaging façades lining public spaces are an important contributor to successful public life. Façades are more engaging when they are designed at the human scale and encourage more social interaction and sensory delight. At the ground floor, engaging façades vary in color and texture, include inviting signage, have flowering or edible plants, are articulated with a higher frequency of functioning entrances and windows, and are more transparent. Permanent physical features such as window transparency and door frequency were also analyzed.

Public Realm includes all areas of the urban environment to which the public have access. It is the space between buildings where social interaction takes place among people.

A. **Transparent façade**

Interior of storefront is visible from sidewalk. Window signs are less than or equal to 1/3 of window space; includes display of store-related products or activities.



B. **Potential for better façade transparency**

Visibility blocked by temporary and easily removed items as well as structural elements such as posters, window film, boarded up windows, or backsides of display cases.



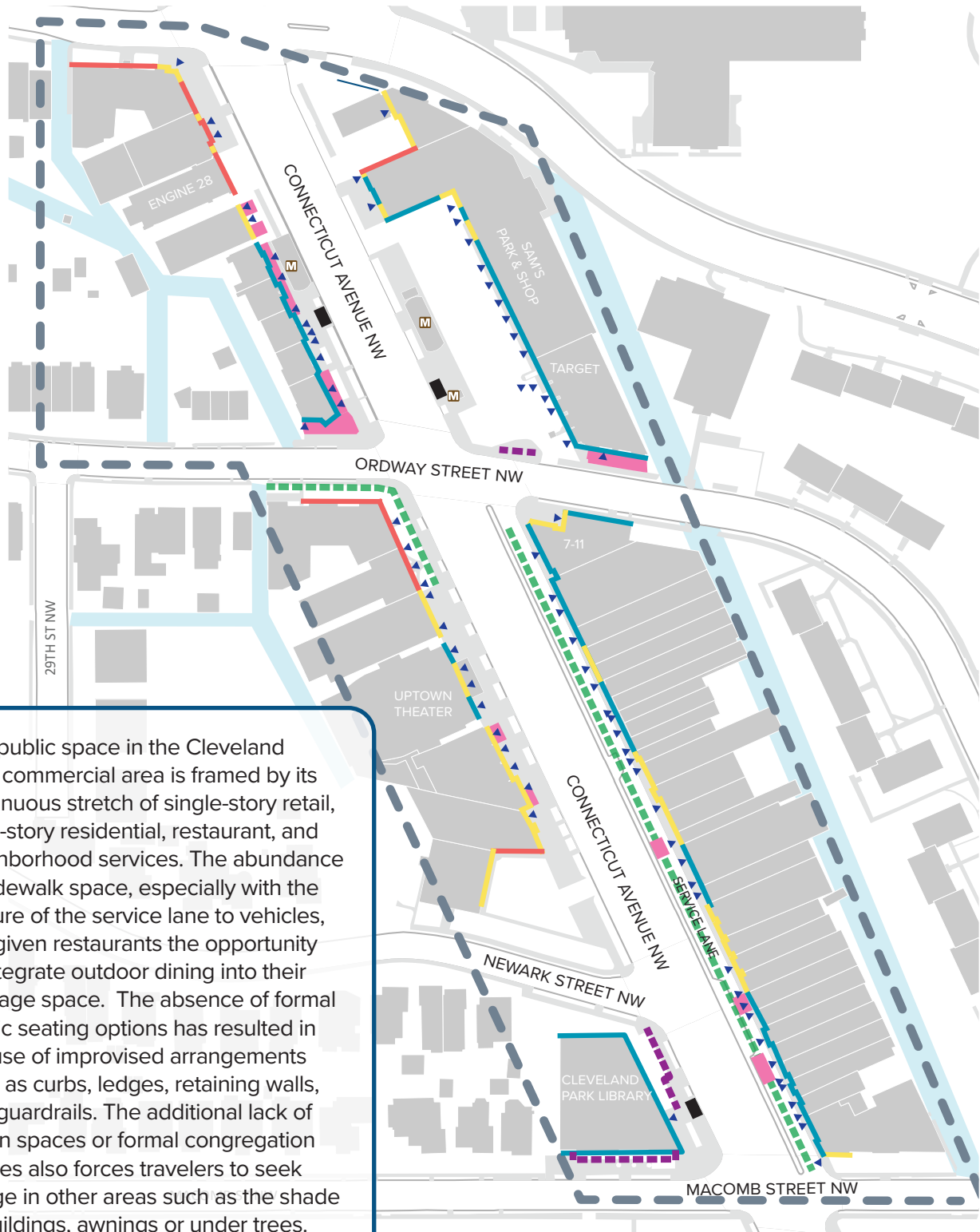
C. **No potential for better façade transparency**

No visibility without structural work. Blank wall. Boarded up or fully blocked storefront.



CLEVELAND PARK

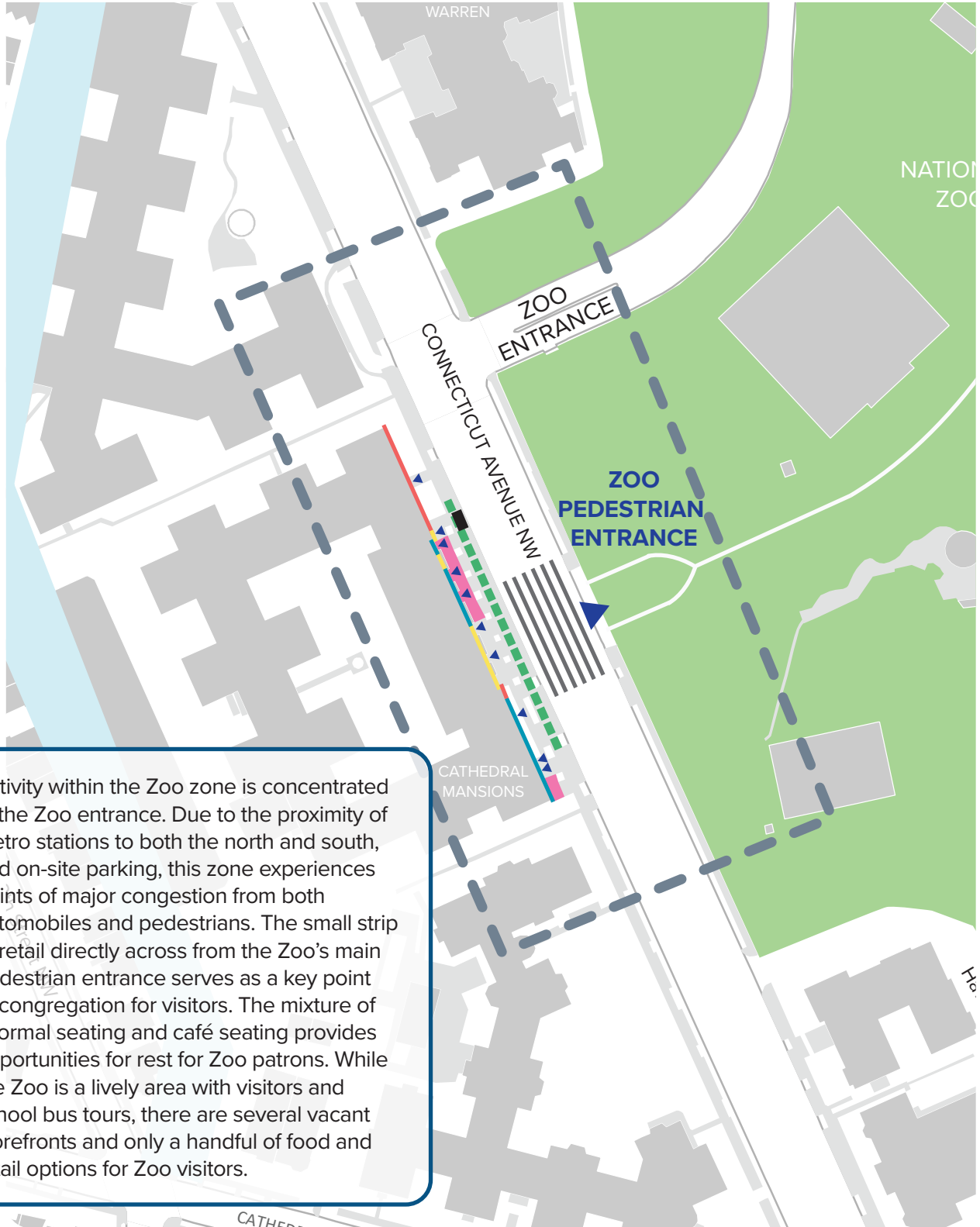
- █ Transparent façade
- █ Potential for better transparency
- █ No potential for better transparency
- M Metro
- Public Life Study Area
- Bus Shelter
- Cafe Seating
- Formal Seating (Benches, etc...)
- ▶ Active Doors
- Informal Seat (curb, etc.)
- Park Land
- Public Alley Network



The public space in the Cleveland Park commercial area is framed by its continuous stretch of single-story retail, multi-story residential, restaurant, and neighborhood services. The abundance of sidewalk space, especially with the closure of the service lane to vehicles, has given restaurants the opportunity to integrate outdoor dining into their frontage space. The absence of formal public seating options has resulted in the use of improvised arrangements such as curbs, ledges, retaining walls, and guardrails. The additional lack of green spaces or formal congregation spaces also forces travelers to seek refuge in other areas such as the shade of buildings, awnings or under trees.

ZOO

- Transparent façade
- Potential for better transparency
- No potential for better transparency
- Metro
- Public Life Study Area
- Bus Shelter
- Cafe Seating
- Formal Seating (Benches, etc...)
- Active Doors
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Activity within the Zoo zone is concentrated at the Zoo entrance. Due to the proximity of Metro stations to both the north and south, and on-site parking, this zone experiences points of major congestion from both automobiles and pedestrians. The small strip of retail directly across from the Zoo's main pedestrian entrance serves as a key point of congregation for visitors. The mixture of informal seating and café seating provides opportunities for rest for Zoo patrons. While the Zoo is a lively area with visitors and school bus tours, there are several vacant storefronts and only a handful of food and retail options for Zoo visitors.

WOODLEY PARK

The Woodley Park commercial area experiences a mixture of activity from its multi-family residential high-rises such as the Wardman Tower and Calvert House Apartments as well as the primary Metro Station for the Zoo. Unlike Cleveland Park, the Woodley Park zone caters primarily to Zoo visitors. The streetscape is populated with restaurants and neighborhood-serving retailers such as the Manhattan Market, CVS, and M&T Bank. The numerous restaurants lining the corridor have taken advantage of the wide sidewalks to expand their outdoor seating with weather protection. Similar to Cleveland Park, there are no formal outdoor green spaces, however, there are two areas that serve as public seating, the seat wall in front of the Stanford University building and the retaining wall along 24th Street, by the Wardman Tower.



- Transparent façade
- Potential for better transparency
- No potential for better transparency
- Metro
- Public Life Study Area
- Bus Shelter
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WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

Intercept Survey

Throughout the 18-hour period of the two-day study, fieldworkers approached hundreds of people in the Cleveland Park and Woodley Park commercial districts with a brief questionnaire. Survey respondents were asked about their relationship to each of the neighborhoods, how often they visited, how they arrived, what they liked about the area and what it lacked.

Fieldworkers had a higher success with intercepting people in Cleveland Park (**115 responses**) compared to Woodley Park (**55 responses**) which could be attributed to a number of factors, chief among them the high volume of visitors in the Woodley Park commercial area, which are typically less willing to stop. With this in mind, the intercept survey responses in Woodley Park may not be fully reflective of the demographic

and social make up of people typically using public space in this area. Information from the surveys should be taken in tandem with data collected from pedestrian screenline counts and stationary mapping activity to get a more accurate picture of public life in Woodley Park.

Despite these challenges, key differences can still be inferred from the data collected. For example, **11%** of respondents in Woodley Park were visiting the Zoo compared to **3%** of those in Cleveland Park. Woodley Park also saw more first time visitors to the area than Cleveland Park, **13%** and **3%** respectively.



Retail strip across from Zoo entrance

IN WOODLEY PARK...

Of the **55** respondents:

- 51%** Female
- 36%** Male
- 13%** Prefer not to say

- 56%** 18-34
- 33%** 35-64
- 6%** Over 65

- 11%** Black or African American
- 55%** White
- 15%** Asian
- 7%** Other
- 13%** Prefer not to say

Most common words respondents used to **describe** Woodley Park

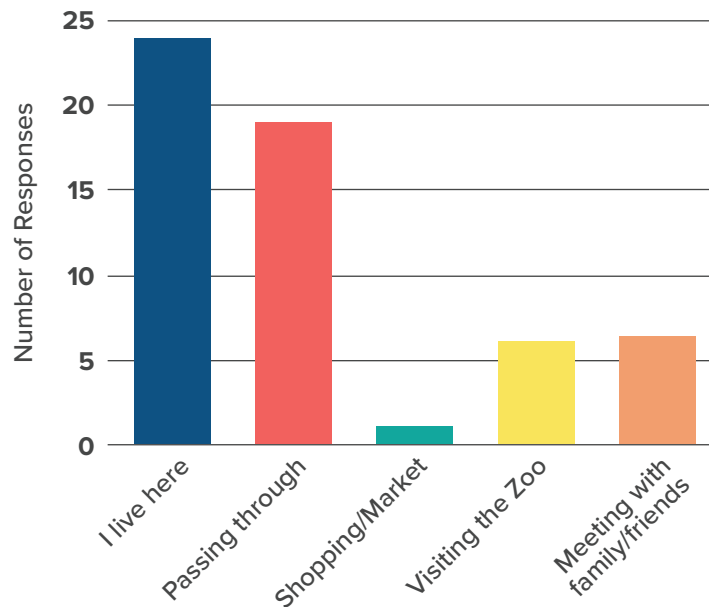


Most common things respondents **wish to** see in Woodley Park

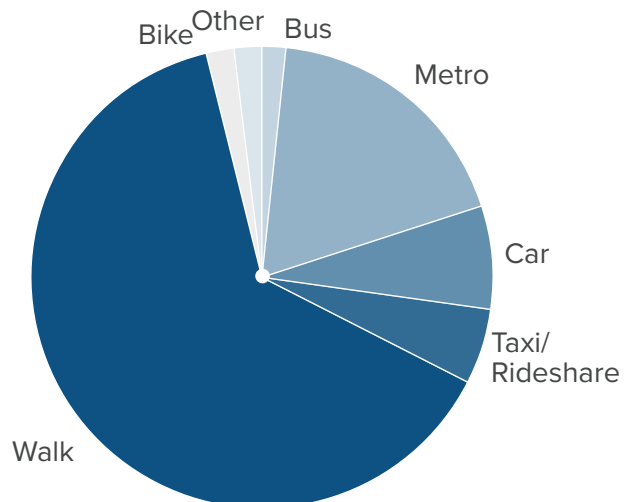


44% of respondents live in the area while **12%** answered that it was their first time in the area.

What brings you to Woodley Park today?



64% of respondents arrived to Woodley Park on foot while **20%** took transit.



IN CLEVELAND PARK...

Of the **115** respondents:

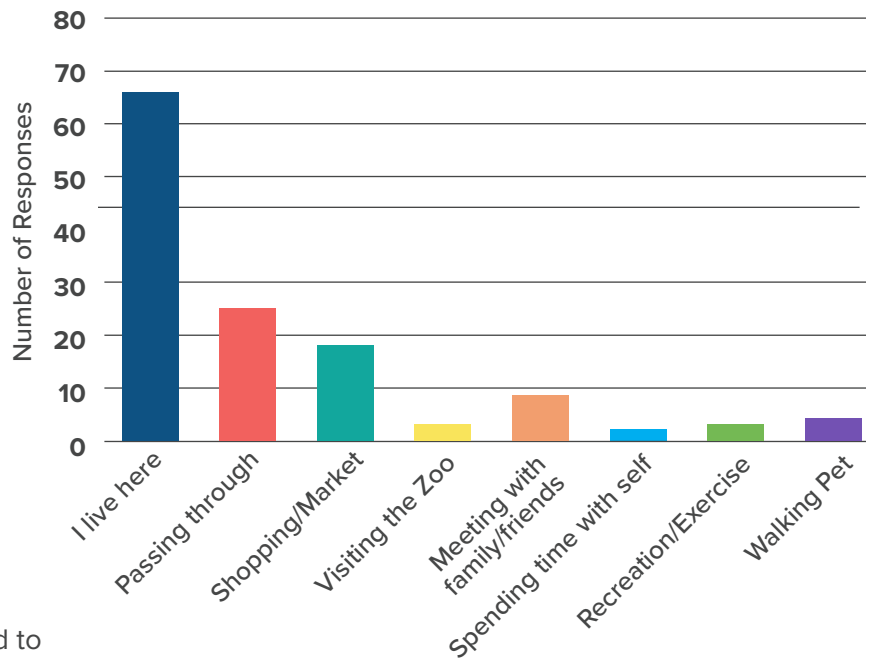
- 43%** Female
- 49%** Male
- 1%** Non-binary
- 6%** Prefer not to say

- 37%** 18-34
- 44%** 35-64
- 15%** Over 65

- 17%** Black or African American
- 56%** White
- 6%** Asian
- 14%** Other

57% of respondents live in the area.

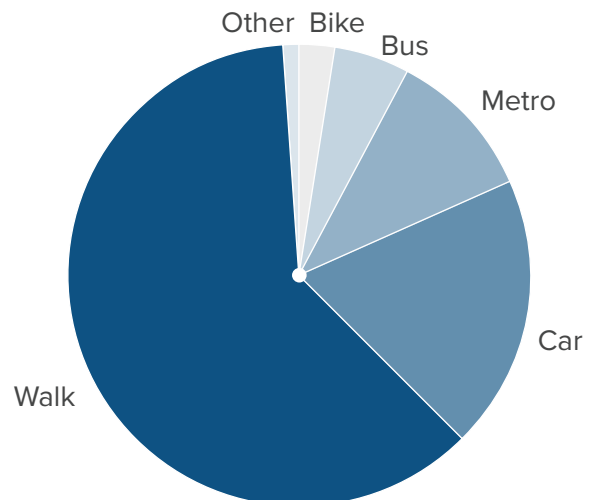
What brings you to Cleveland Park today?



Most common words respondents used to **describe** Cleveland Park



61% of respondents arrived to Cleveland Park on foot while **16%** took transit and **19%** drove.



Most common things respondents **wish to see** in Cleveland Park



HOW ARE PEOPLE MOVING?

Weekday and Weekend Activity

The study was conducted on a weekday and a Saturday. Throughout the 9-hour period of study, between 11am and 8pm, field workers took one sample count per hour at each of six locations (screenlines) along the corridor, shown as orange arrows on the adjacent map. During these 108 unique counts, a full range of data was collected on each of the 4,475 moving individuals observed. The 10-minute sample counts are intended to reflect the full hour on a given weekday or weekend. When multiplied by six to extrapolate a full hour of activity, the data can be understood to reflect 26,850 people moving through the study area.

The intent of the timing and location of the pedestrian screenline was to capture how much of the activity generated by the Zoo impacted each of the Woodley Park and Cleveland Park commercial districts and how the pedestrian movement in the area transitioned during evening hours, following zoo closure and after work activity.



Cyclist on sidewalk heading north on Connecticut Avenue

4,475 Moving People Observed

Perceived Sex

52% Female
48% Male

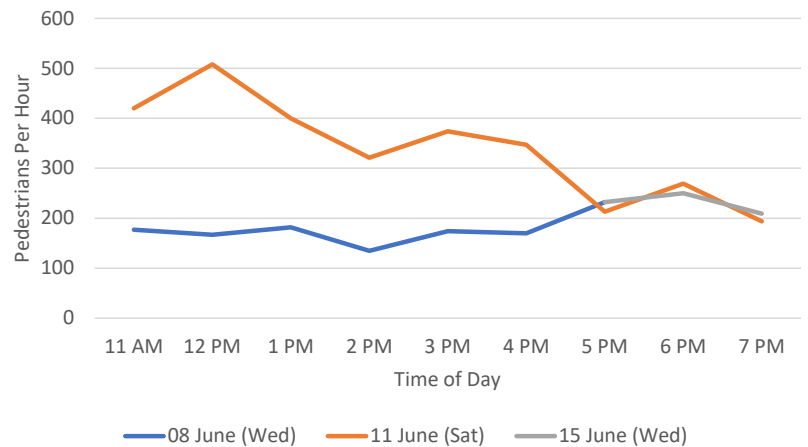
Perceived Age

10% Under 15
30% 20-30
9% Over 65

Modes

3% on bikes
1.2% skateboards/scooters
2% running/jogging
3% with strollers
1.8% with pets

Extrapolated Pedestrian Movements





Cleveland Park
Metro Station

357 **M**
S6 **M**

332

ORDWAY ST NW

CONNECTICUT AVE NW

NEWARK ST NW

339

S5

MACOMB ST NW

317

KLINGLE RD NW

227

S4

248

DEVONSHIRE PL NW

CORTLAND PL NW

NORTH ROAD

National Zoo

HAYTHORNE ST NW

277

S3

355

CATHEDRAL AVE NW

GARFIELD ST NW

463

S2

496

Woodley Park-Zoo / Adams
Morgan Metro Station
(Elevator)

M

WOODLEY RD NW

Woodley Park-Zoo
/ Adams Morgan
Metro Station






M

541

S1

523

CALVERT ST NW

 Screenline Location
 Screenline Count and Direction
 Metro Station
 N
 0' 100' 200' 300'

Between Woodley Park and the Zoo

60% of pedestrian flow was observed between Woodley Park and the Zoo (Screenlines S1, S2, and S3)

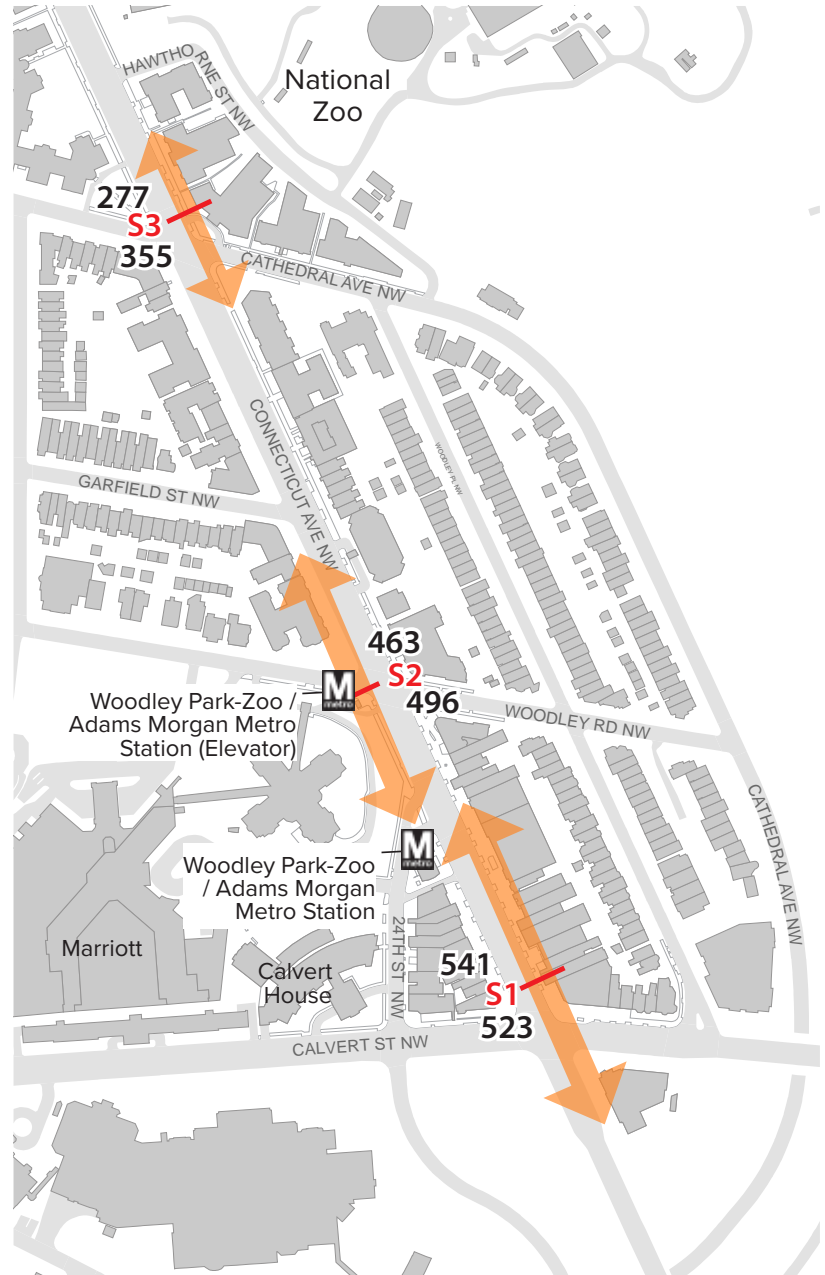
Almost half of people moving were counted at screenlines **S1 and S2**. However, the Woodley Park commercial block seemed to act as a transition area for people who are either heading to Adams Morgan or to the Zoo with many pedestrians rushing by.

Woodley Park saw **63% more** pedestrian movement on the weekend compared to weekday, and **twice** as many children under 15, affirming that the Zoo sees more family visitors on the weekends.

The pulse of pedestrian movement between Woodley Park and the Zoo is heightened during daytime hours, where 70% of people moving were recorded between 11am and 5pm, and significantly wanes in the evening, as the Zoo closes at 6pm.



Between 3pm and 5pm, activity picked up at Woodley Park with people heading back to the Metro Station after Zoo closure.



Between Cleveland Park and the Zoo

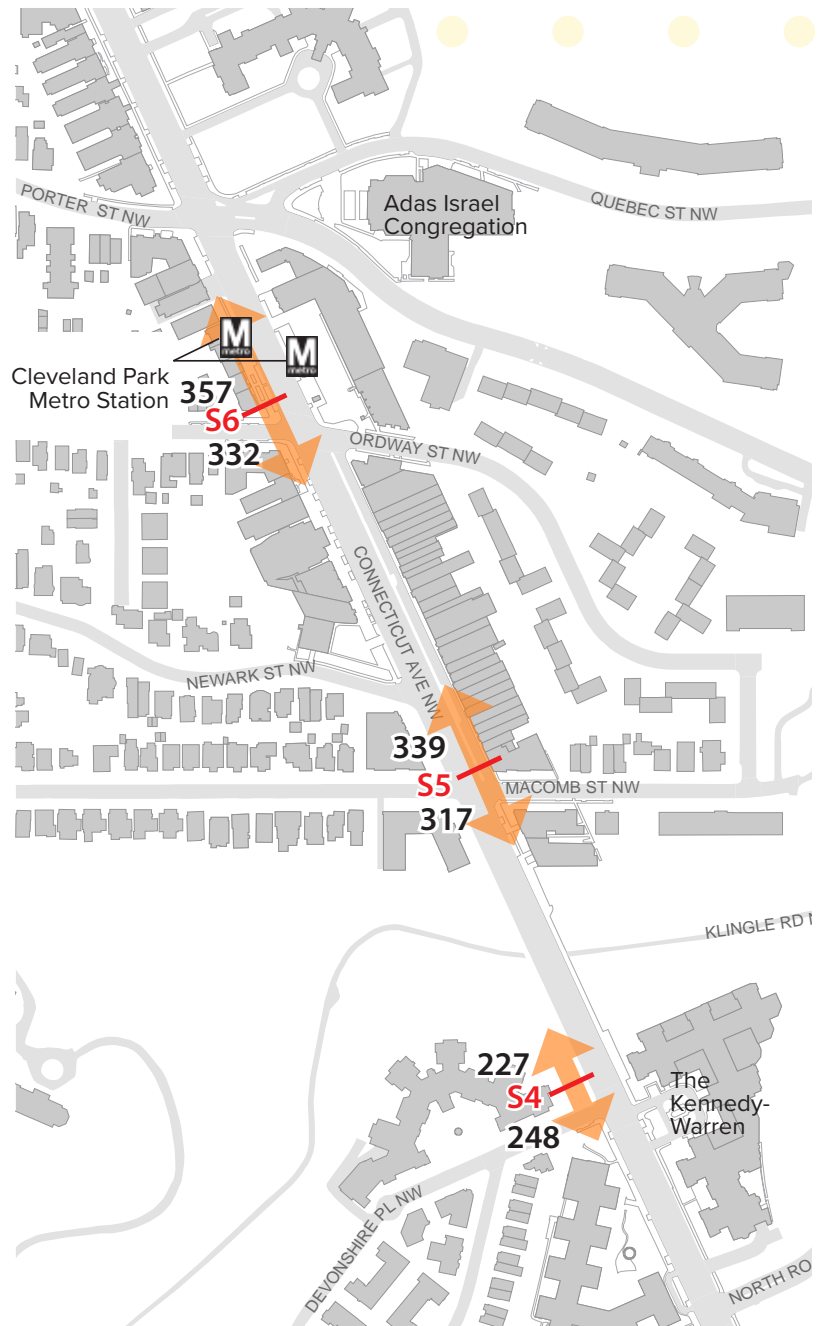
The pulse of pedestrian movement in Cleveland Park was generally more of a steady stream compared to Woodley Park. **50% more** pedestrians were recorded moving in Cleveland Park on **Saturday** compared to a weekday, likely attributed to the presence of the farmers market.



Pedestrian movement between the Zoo and Cleveland Park



Despite service lane being closed to traffic, most people still walked on the sidewalk, likely due to curb delineation.



WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING?

Over the course of 18 hours, field workers took two sample scans per hour at each of the three zones within the study area. During these 36 scans, data was collected on 2,233 individuals engaged in stationary activity.

On the weekday, peak stationary activity occurred around lunch time and after 5pm with dining activity. The most prolonged stationary activities were outdoor dining seating areas, the Zoo entrance and retail strip across the street, and the Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan metro station, particularly between the hours of 4pm and 5pm.



Group observed waiting by the bus stop south of the Zoo entrance



Seat wall in front of Stanford University in Woodley Park is a well used public seating area

2,233 Stationary People Observed

Perceived Sex

51% Female
49% Male

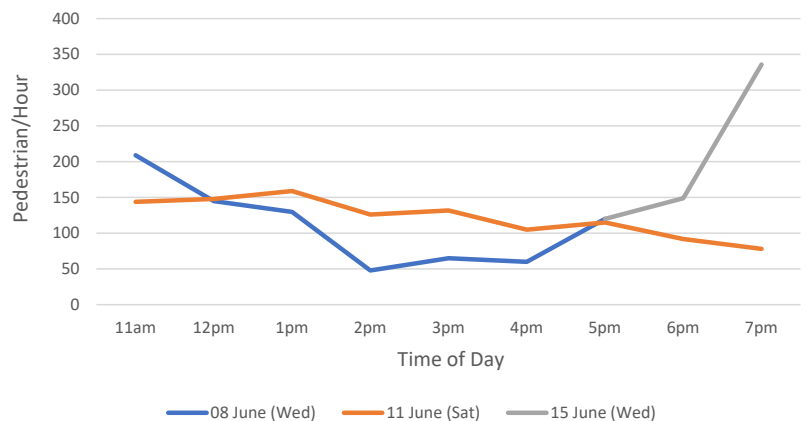
Perceived Age

23% Under 20
12% Over 65

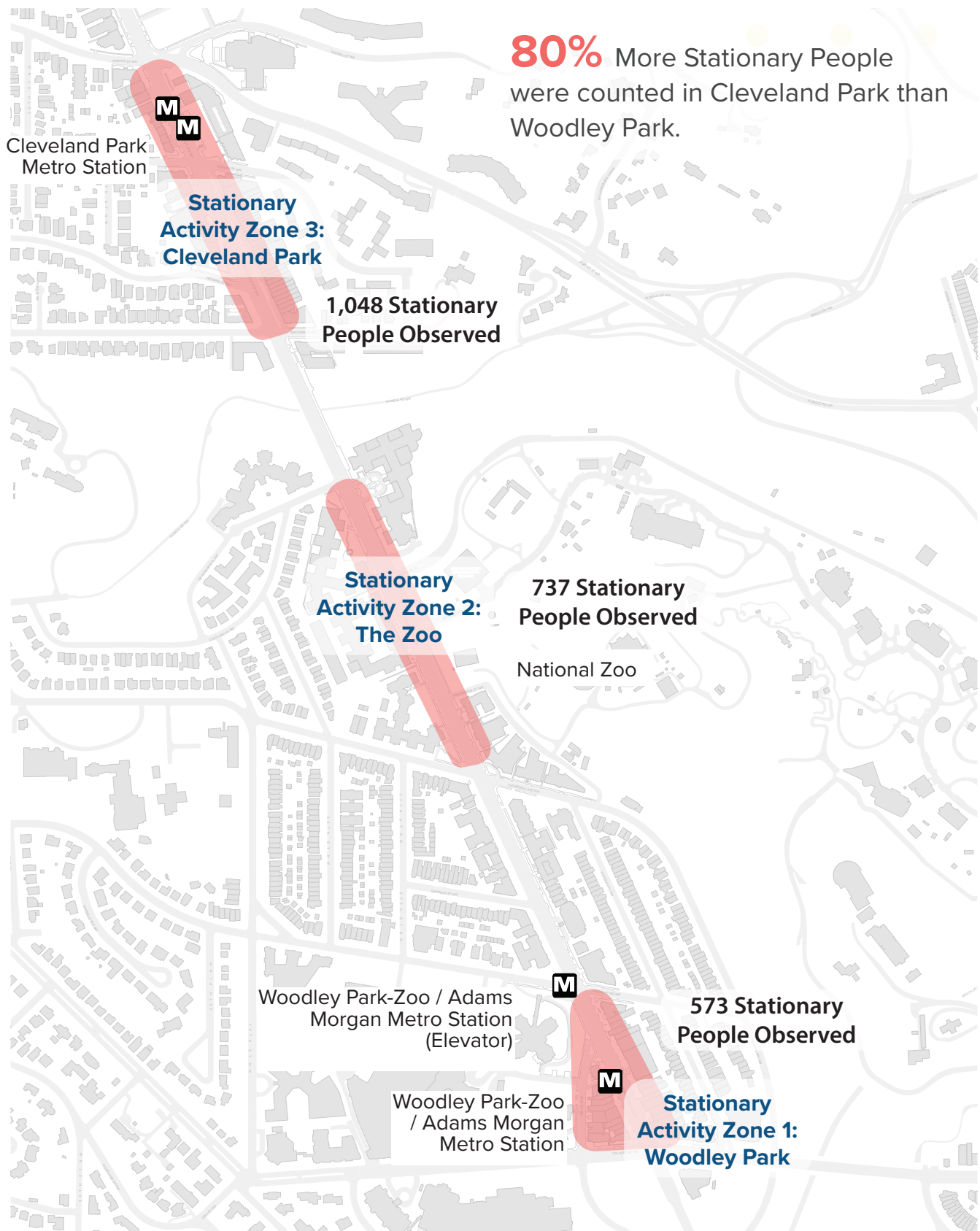
Posture

31% Standing/Leaning
12% Sitting in Public Seating
38% Private Seating (outdoor dining)
5% Sitting Improvised (curb, grass, etc.)

Sample Hourly Stationary Activity



WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING?



In Woodley Park...

The Woodley Park activity zone includes a concentration of activity generators such as outdoor dining, retail frontage, and transit facilities. The seat wall in front of Stanford University was a well used area particularly among individuals and small groups. People were observed at large corner plazas such as

the CVS or Chipotle stopping to look at their phones and orient themselves. People were also observed standing by the wall between the Woodley Park metro escalator entrance and the M&T Bank either talking on their phones or orienting themselves upon exiting the station.

ACTIVITY TYPES

South Connecticut Ave., Cathedral Ave. NW to Calvert St. NW



1 Waiting at the Woodley Park Station elevator



2 Gardening at traffic island



3 Waiting for Metro trains/buses and/or meeting up with others



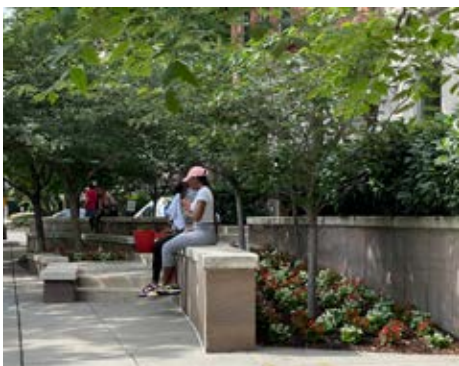
4 Large plaza between M&T Bank and metro station



5 Dining outdoors at restaurants



6 Dining outdoors at restaurants



7 Stanford University seat wall

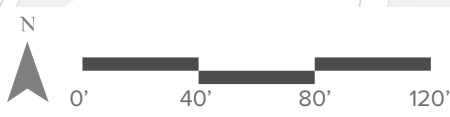







8 Outdoor dining areas



Woodley Park-Zoo / Adams Morgan Metro Station (Elevator)

Woodley Park-Zoo / Adams Morgan Metro Station



-  Metro Station
-  MetroBus Stop
-  Standing/Leaning
-  Sitting (Improvised)
-  Sitting (Public/Private Seating)

By the Zoo...

The Smithsonian's National Zoo is an attraction located at the center of the study area. The Zoo entrance includes an iconic sign that serves as a gateway into the park and a bus drop-off zone that contributes to large crowds boarding and alighting transit.

A retail district is located directly across from the Zoo entrance, which features outdoor dining, public seating areas, and restaurants, which are also pedestrian draws. The absence of dedicated drop-off/pick-up zones creates sidewalk and traffic congestion at the Zoo, particularly with school tour buses, but also with people waiting for their personal rides.

ACTIVITY TYPES

Central Connecticut Ave: Macomb St NW to Cathedral Ave NW



① Outdoor dining across from Zoo entrance



② Well-utilized public seating across the Zoo entrance



③ Gathering at crosswalk / sitting at seatwall planters



④ Waiting at bus drop-off area



⑤ Gathering at Zoo entrance



⑥ Waiting at bus drop-off area



⑦ Improvised seating at Zoo entrance



⑧ Narrow segment of sidewalk by the Zoo



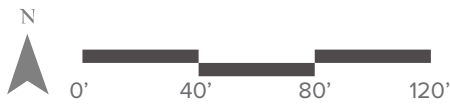
SMITHSONIAN ZOO
ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING

NORTH ROAD

OLMSTED WALK

CONNECTICUT AVE NW

HAWTHORNE ST NW



-  Metro Station
-  MetroBus Stop
-  Standing/Leaning
-  Sitting (Improvised)
-  Sitting (Public/Private Seating)

In Cleveland Park...

The Cleveland Park area along Connecticut Avenue comprises a wide range of uses that contribute to pedestrian activity along the corridor. Typical public realm activity generators include outdoor dining, retail frontage, and transit facilities, including the Cleveland Park metro station.

The survey was conducted during early voting in the District which resulted in a lot of campaigning activity in front of the Cleveland Park Library. After 5pm, the dining scene in Cleveland Park spiked with a lot of people using outdoor seating, especially on the

west side where restaurants were shaded from the afternoon sun, such as at Medium Rare, Dolan, and Siam. On the east side, Spices, Sababa have tents over the outdoor seating which attracted customers as well. Others with outdoor seating exposed to sun had no customers sitting outside (e.g. Nanny O'Brien).

On weekends, parents with strollers were observed grouped together, especially during the farmers market, which strengthens the perception that the Cleveland Park commercial district is more neighborhood-serving.

ACTIVITY TYPES

North Connecticut Ave, Porter St NW to Uptown Theater (Zone 3 North)



① Outdoor seating at restaurants and congregation at fire station



② Waiting at transit station



③ Dining outdoors at restaurants



④ Waiting at transit station



⑤ Formal seating outside of stores



⑥ Utilizing public seating area

North Connecticut Ave, Uptown Theater to Maccomb St NW (Zone 3 South)



7 Temporary pedestrian-only path outside of storefronts



8 Outdoor dining at restaurants



9 Bike parking at the library



10 Waiting at bus stop



11 Voting activity at the Library



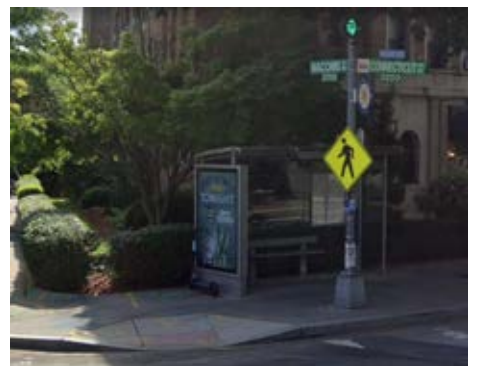
12 Using the shared bike station



13 Standing in the shade of street trees

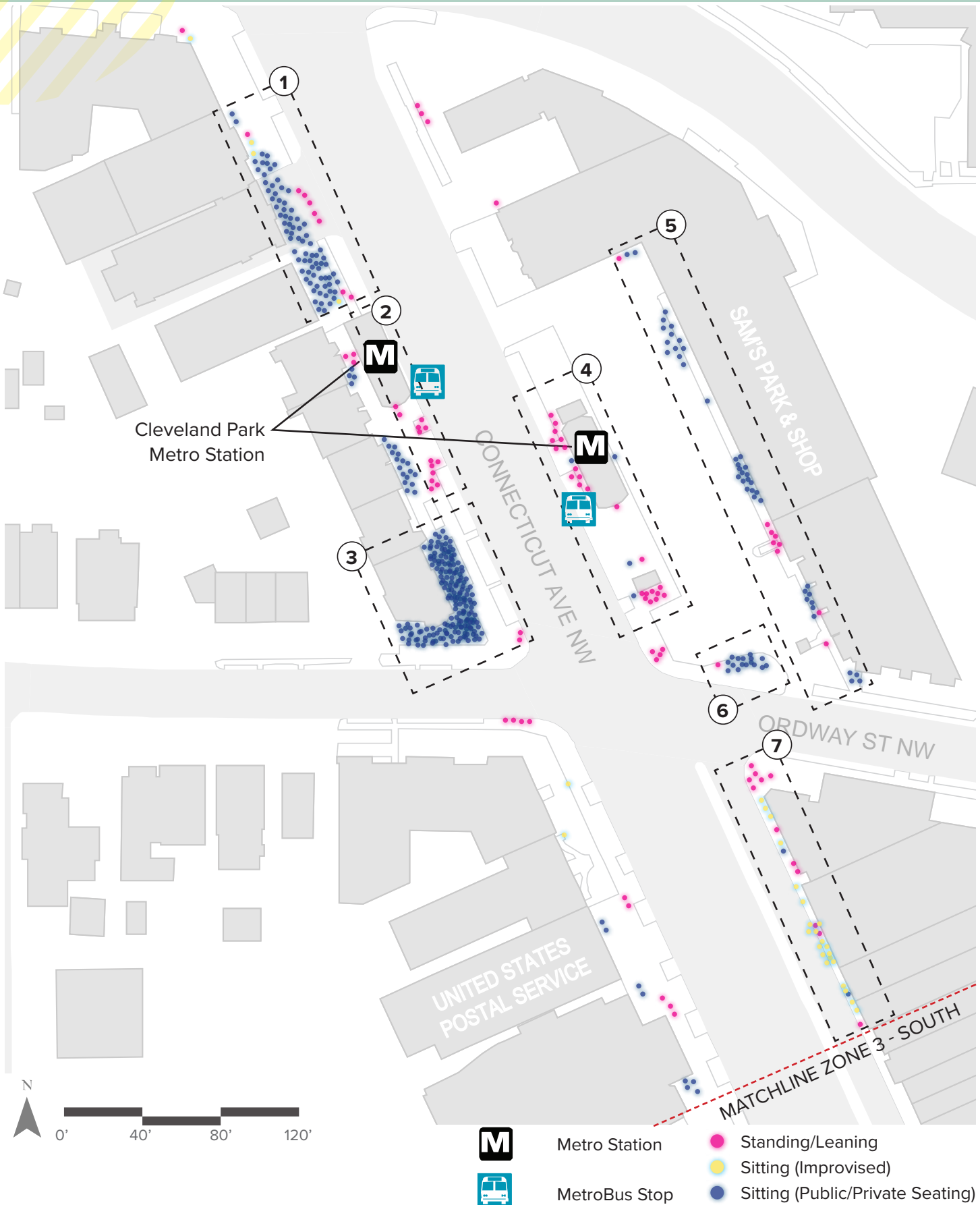


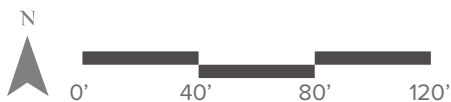
14 Outdoor dining at restaurants



15 Bus stop shelter

In Cleveland Park...





Metro Station



MetroBus Stop

● Standing/Leaning

● Sitting (Improved)

● Sitting (Public/Private Seating)

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Cleveland Park and Woodley Park are two lively neighborhoods with their own unique characteristics. Cleveland Park has a more neighborhood-oriented commercial area with many small business and amenities catering to local residents such as a library, post office, farmers market, and grocery store. The commercial area does not see as much foot traffic to and from the Zoo as Woodley Park, however, the corridor is active with restaurant-goers, particularly on a weeknight after work hours.

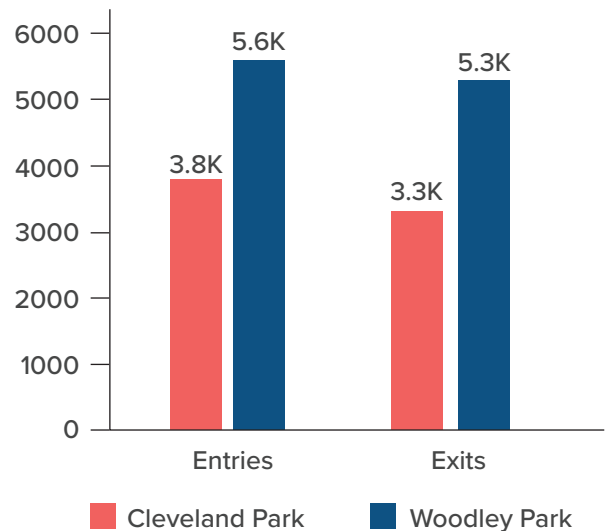
On the other hand, the Woodley Park commercial area is largely affected by its proximity to the Zoo with visitors utilizing the Woodley Park/National Zoo metro station to go to and from the Zoo, particularly on a Saturday, when more families are visiting the Zoo. The Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan metro station also serves Adams Morgan another attracted with many dining and entertainment options.

While Woodley Park saw more pedestrians moving through the area than Cleveland Park, people were more likely to be observed staying and interacting with the public space in Cleveland Park, whether dining outdoors, taking part in civic activities, or mingling with friends and families and the farmers market.

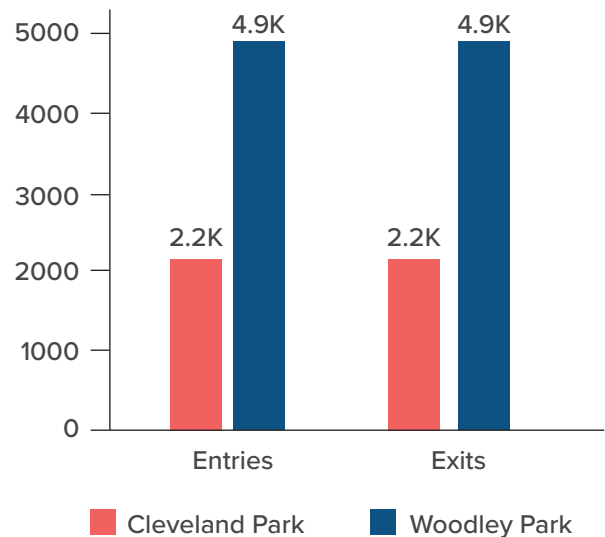


Cleveland Park Metro Station, East Entrance

Average Weekday Ridership (2016-2019)



Average Saturday Ridership (2016-2019)



Source: WMATA

Pre-pandemic, the Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan metro station saw almost **50% more** ridership than Cleveland Park metro station during an average weekday and more than **twice** as many on an average Saturday. This is likely attributed to 1) the large cluster of high-rise apartment and condominium buildings immediately surrounding the Woodley Park metro station, with residents who are more likely to utilize metro during weekdays, and 2) a higher weekend ridership with visitors to the Zoo and Adams Morgan.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Cleveland Park and Woodley Park are two active commercial areas, however, there are opportunities to improve the streetscape and public space in a way that better serves the residents and visitors in the area. Narrow sidewalks, particularly south of the Zoo entrance can be enhanced to alleviate pedestrian pinch points. Restaurant outdoor seating can be expanded and formalized to create a more comfortable environment for both diners and pedestrians. Wayfinding signage and public art can be utilized to signal the presence of the Zoo, direct visitors to local businesses, and represent the historic charm of the neighborhoods.

This public life study focuses on understanding what makes various populations want to linger and traverse through the Cleveland Park and Woodley Park areas. The zoo serves as a major attraction that generates interest from crowds of various ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As the gateways to the zoo, the public realms of Cleveland Park and Woodley Park can further promote accessibility and inclusivity to people of all ages and abilities.

Enlivening the streetscape with public art, creative seating, and engaging storefronts can create a welcoming experience for both visitors and residents alike. The findings of this study can be used to create environments that support public life and create positive reasons to linger.



NEXT STEPS

Findings and public space analysis from this study will inform the development of streetscape design recommendations as part of the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines study undertaken by the Office of Planning in Fiscal Year 2022. These recommendations can ultimately be used by:

- community stewards for programming public spaces;
- property owners considering adjacent redevelopments; and
- government agencies implementing future neighborhood investments or reviewing development applications.

RESOURCES

Public Space Activation and Design:

- [Commemorative Works Program](#)
- [Our City, Our Spaces!](#) (2021)
- [Public Life initiatives](#)
- [Public Realm Design Manual](#) (2019)
- [Public Space Activation & Stewardship Guide](#) (2018)

Transportation:

- [Cleveland Park Streetscape and Drainage Improvement Project](#)
- [Connecticut Avenue Multimodal Safety Improvement Project](#)
- [Bus Priority Plan](#) (2021)
- [moveDC: Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan](#) (2021)

Comprehensive Planning

- [The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: District Elements](#) (2021)

Historic Preservation:

- [Cleveland Park Historic District](#)
- [Woodley Park Historic District](#)
- [HistoryQuest](#) (online map)
- [Ward 3 Heritage Guide](#) (2020)

Parks, Recreation, and Library:

- [DC Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (2020)
- [Next Libris: The DC Public Library's Facilities Master Plan](#) (2020)

For up-to-date information on the Connecticut Avenue Development Guidelines project visit **www.publicinput.com/rcw-connecticut**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Emily Carson, Intern

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Camilla Carpenter, Cleveland Park Historical Society
Ellen Herr, Cleveland Park Smart Growth
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John Goodman, Woodley Park Community Association
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