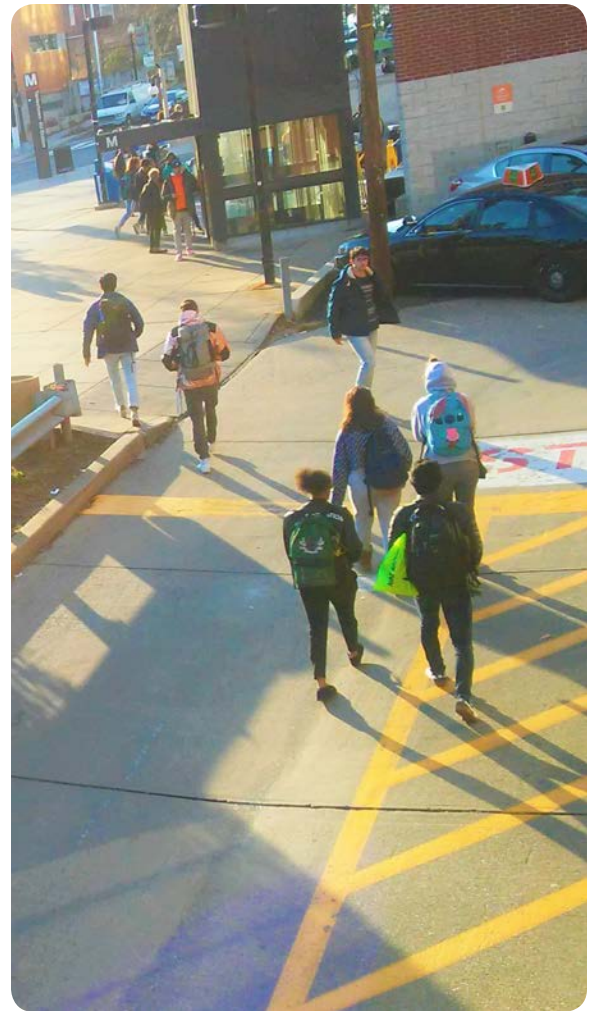


TENLEYTOWN Public Life Study

September 2019



District of Columbia
Office of Planning



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Findings + Strategies	4
Why Tenleytown?	6
What is Public Life?	7
Analysis	8
Tenleytown Today	
History and Future	12
Weekday Activity	14
Public Realm	16
Engaging Façades	18
Perceived Urban Quality	20
The Word on the Street	22
People Moving	24
People Staying	26
A Day in the Public Life	28
Tenleytown Tomorrow	
Make Façades More Engaging	32
Pilot Temporary Activations	34
Enhance Comfortable Movement	36
Design Tenleytown Plaza for People	38
Celebrate Built Features	40
Enhance Alley Network	44
+ Combining the Strategies	46
Acknowledgements	48

Executive Summary

This study focused on life in buildings and between buildings in the Tenleytown area of Northwest DC. The purpose of the study was to answer the question: How is the Tenleytown-AU Metro Station area performing as a **place for people**? Observational field work was conducted in the fall of 2018.

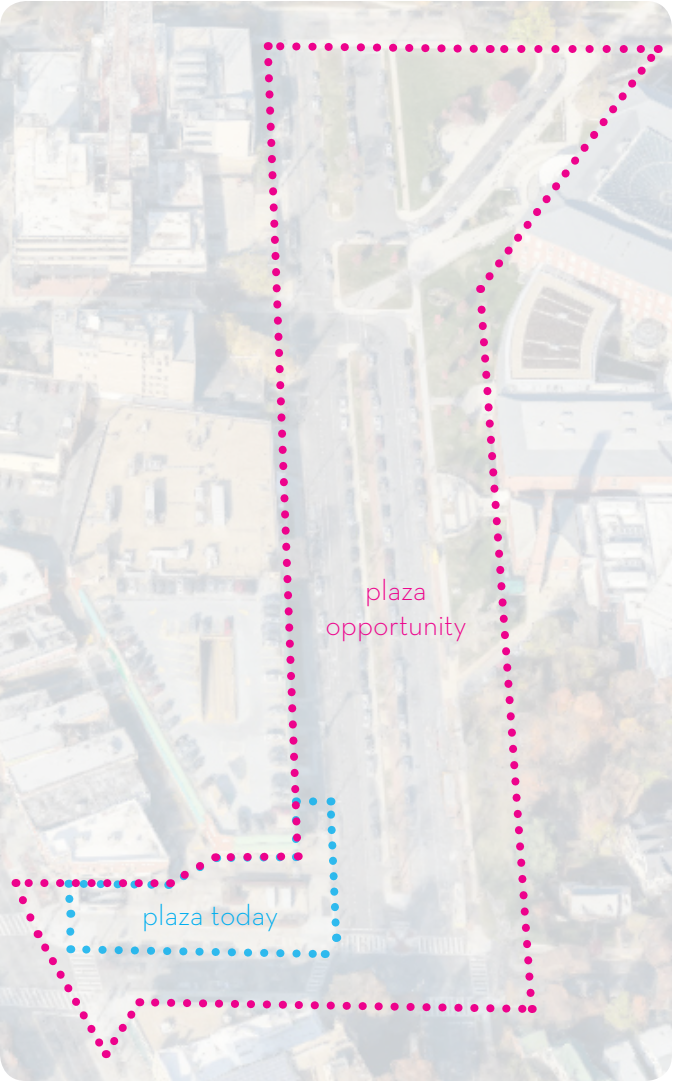
The Tenleytown Public Life Study yielded 10 findings and six strategies to support three goals to improve the public realm of Tenleytown to support enhanced public life.

The Tenleytown-AU Metro station area has many of the key ingredients of a neighborhood center; busy and active civic uses like schools, a library, park, and aquatic center; a retail center anchored by a grocery store; small offices, restaurants, and shops; and transit connecting it to local and regional destinations. Missing from Tenleytown is a **central public space** where the many diverse people passing through or lingering can come together and enjoy the space through social or passive activities.

The **Tenleytown plaza** outside of the east Metro station entrance is part of the Tenleytown-AU Metro Station Access project funded for design. The project offers a unique opportunity to create a true plaza in Tenleytown while improving transit access. Rooted in public life data, the study’s strategies provide design recommendations for public and private improvements to the Tenleytown plaza and the buildings framing its edges. Realizing the opportunity of a larger more people-focused Tenleytown plaza requires **collaboration** of DC agencies, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Administration, National Park Service, private property owners, and community organizations that steward the public realm.

The study’s findings and strategies also address enhancements to the **active alley network**, built and natural features in Tenleytown, building façades, transit access improvements for people walking and biking, and temporary events. Central to the study is the **focus on people**, as the current and future users of the space.

- ### Study’s Three Goals
1. **Support local efforts to improve and activate Tenleytown’s public spaces.**
 2. **Inform a people-centered design process for Tenleytown-AU Metro station access improvements.**
 3. **Identify design opportunities for future redevelopment in Tenleytown that support public life.**



Findings + Strategies

Findings

Tenleytown is busy throughout the day.

The highest rate of observed Metro escalator arrivals is in the morning, with small spikes at the noon hour and 4pm hour.

Tenleytown is a crossroads of people from across DC and the region.

65% of survey respondents came from zip codes outside of Tenleytown. The public schools, nearby institutions like American University, a range of employment, and transit connections bring people to Tenleytown every day.

Tenleytown plaza is a central public space.

Along Albemarle, between Wisconsin Avenue and 40th Street, the plaza has the highest concentration of both pedestrian movements and stationary activity (outside of a café zone).

Tenleytown lacks adequate public seating.

44% of those engaged in stationary activity were standing. 15% of those sitting were in improvised seating. Tenleytown plaza has people sitting along the planter areas in every one of the eight Google Street View images captured between October 2011 and October 2018.

Tenleytown has a social public realm, especially for youth.

26% of survey respondents were visiting friends in Tenleytown. Stationary group activity correlates with higher proportions of younger people (under 20), most notable at 8am hour, 3pm hour, 4pm hour, 6pm hour.

Tenleytown’s alley network is an important feature for pedestrian circulation.

The alley network is most active with people in the late afternoon and early evening, coinciding with school dismissal and commuters heading home.

Biking is a challenge to / through Tenleytown.

There are few bikes compared to overall pedestrian activity. Many people bike on sidewalks, competing for limited space with those walking and sitting. There are few comfortable bicycle routes to Tenleytown.

Tenleytown’s human-scaled spaces have less engaging façades.

Many walls along the alley network, civic buildings, and buildings along open green spaces are less transparent, open, and engaging to passersby.

Tenleytown is a prominent civic center.

With 4,000+ primary and secondary public school students, one of the District’s most-visited neighborhood libraries, and 580 average weekday visitors to the Wilson Aquatic Center (Department of Parks and Recreation’s busiest facility), Tenleytown has a strong civic foundation.

Built and natural landmarks can better contribute to wayfinding and a sense of place in Tenleytown.

The built environment does not use local architectural and topographical features to enhance views, add interest or provide a sense of orientation for people in public space.

Strategies



Make façades more engaging.
Enliven walls along active public areas.



Design Tenleytown plaza for people.
Provide people with opportunities to enjoy Tenleytown together.



Pilot temporary activations.
Activate spaces with temporary installations.



Celebrate built features through design.
Highlight focal points and design in response to context and users.



Enhance comfortable movement.
Augment the experience of people using transit, walking, and biking.



Enhance Alley Network.
Improve pedestrian movement across large sites.

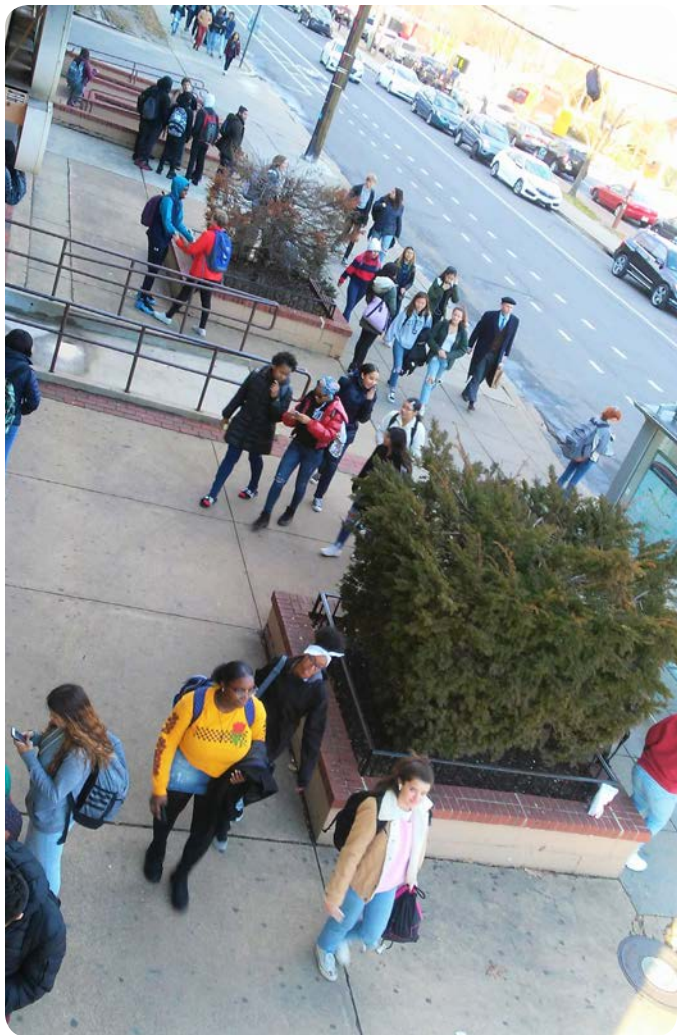
Why Tenleytown?

The Tenleytown public life study seeks to answer the question:

How is the Tenleytown-AU Metro station area performing as a place for people?

Tenleytown was selected as the study area because:

- The Wisconsin Avenue corridor is experiencing ongoing development, with changes underway.
- The concentration of civic uses—public elementary, middle, and high schools, neighborhood library, Wilson Aquatic Center, and Fort Reno Park—will remain for decades to come.
- Retail on established commercial corridors across DC, particularly in Ward 3, is experiencing challenges as the city and economy changes.
- Following the 2016 Tenleytown-AU Metro Station Access Improvement Study, DC has funded design for pedestrian access improvements in the area.
- The Tenleytown Main Street, formed in 2015, is a new steward of the area and champion for public space activation and improvements.



What is Public Life?



Public life is what people create when they connect with each other in public spaces—the streets, plazas, parks, and city spaces between buildings.

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
- Sustainable mobility
- Social benefits
- Identity and sense of place
- Safety
- 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.



Public life needs to be tended to by a) paying attention to how people feel about public spaces and what they do there; b) by designing streets and public spaces that encourage social activity; and c) by changing the policies, processes, and practices of a city to be more people-centered. We study public life through observational, people-centric measures to inform policy, regulations, and temporary or permanent public space design interventions.” - A Mayor’s Guide to Public Life, Gehl Institute (2017).

OP’s public life studies are available online at: planning.dc.gov/page/public-life-studies.

Analysis



Methods

The DC Office of Planning (OP) and graduate architecture and planning students from course ARCH-460 at the University of Maryland-College Park (UMD) collaborated on the Tenleytown Public Life Study in the fall of 2018. OP project managers trained 31 UMD students on the techniques of public life analysis, who conducted field work on site in October and produced conceptual public space design proposals for final projects in December.

The study applied the techniques developed by the Gehl Institute as adapted by OP, consisting of:

- Analysis of the “Twelve Urban Quality Criteria,” that assess protection, comfort, and enjoyment of public space.
- Counts of pedestrian and bicycle movements, to capture direction of travel, perceived age and sex, and group size of people moving through the study area.
- Mapping of stationary activity of the individuals and groups who are staying or lingering in the study area.
- Intercept surveys that captured perceptions and desires of a sampling of people using the space.

OP staff performed additional analysis of the public realm and façades of buildings in the study area.

Field Work

Public life field work was performed to document people moving and staying in Tenleytown during a 12-hour period on a typical weekday. Within the defined study area, one count was taken per hour at each of the 11 pedestrian count locations and seven stationary mapping areas. During the field work period intercept surveys were also performed.

Field Work Conditions:

- Wednesday, October 3 (8am – 12pm)
Sunny, clear, high in mid-80s
- Thursday, October 4 (12pm – 8pm)
Sunny, clear, high in mid-80s.
Sunset ~7pm, light rain began ~7:30pm

Study Area

The Study Area covers the civic and commercial center of Tenleytown around the Tenleytown-AU Metro Station. Bounded by Chesapeake Street, NW, at the north and Albemarle Street, NW, at the south, it includes the Wisconsin Avenue, NW, corridor and roadways of Fort Drive, NW, and 40th Street, NW.

Wisconsin Avenue is a commercial main street defined by retail storefronts, outdoor cafe seating, busy bus stops, and high volumes of vehicle traffic.

In contrast, 40th Street / Fort Drive is characterized on the west by blank walls, on-street parking, with loading and trash services for the Whole Foods grocery store. The east side is characterized by passive green space, and the Woodrow Wilson High School and Wilson Aquatic Center. Meanwhile, the space functions as bus bays and storage for Metrobus, as well as for shuttles to Sibley Hospital and American University.

The study area was outlined specifically to understand the contrasting dynamics of public life activity along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, and the parallel area of 40th Street / Fort Drive. No part of the study area is more than a 5-minute walk from the Metro station.



Tenleytown TODAY

12	History and Future
14	Weekday Activity
16	Public Realm
18	Engaging Façades
20	Perceived Urban Quality
22	The Word on the Street
24	People Moving
26	People Staying
28	A Day in the Public Life



History and Future



Tenleytown Sears, later Best Buy, now Target

Tenleytown’s Growth

The area known as Tenleytown originated in the late 18th century as a rural crossroads community at the juncture of two long-established routes that led from the rural Maryland countryside to the port at Georgetown, now the present-day Wisconsin Avenue and River Road. Initially consisting of a collection of houses, a church, a school, and several businesses, including the tavern and a blacksmith shop, Tenleytown soon grew into a sizeable rural farming community. Nearby Reno City developed as a post-Civil War community of African American and white working-class residents.

As the post-World War I population in Washington expanded, Tenleytown began to lose its village-like character and working-class identity. The build-out of houses in platted subdivisions intended for middle-class white residents, and a corresponding need for schools and services further altered the village-like character. Construction of the Reno Reservoir, Wilson High School, and Deal Middle School engendered the complete destruction of Reno City, resulting in the forced displacement of its residents.

In the 1940s, with the construction of Sears & Roebuck and other stores, Tenleytown became an important city-wide commercial destination, further connected to the city with the completion of the Tenleytown-AU Metro station in 1984.

New Neighbors

DC has been growing rapidly since the turn of the millenium, yet little development has occurred in Tenleytown until recently. Since 2016, 160 new homes have come to Tenleytown, in the new **Tenley View** building at 4600 Wisconsin Avenue, and the **Frequency** residential conversion at 4000 Brandywine Street. Around 185 additional homes have been approved at the **Broadcast** building at 4620-4624 Wisconsin Avenue and **Dancing Crab** building at 4611-15 41st Street. Looking ahead, over 1,500 new homes, along with a hotel, large grocery store, and retail have been approved 1/2-mile south of the study area on Wisconsin Avenue.

Commercial Adaptation

Near-term commercial changes coming to Tenleytown reflect broader trends in office and retail markets. While the Best Buy electronics store was open for business during the public life study, it has since closed and will be replaced by a **Target**. The vacant retail space at the prominent southeast corner of the Whole Foods parking structure is home to a new **WaWa** convenience store. **Two Birds**, a child-care focused coworking space recently opened in vacant office space on Brandywine Street. These commercial changes will have impacts on the use and experience of the Tenleytown’s public realm.

Calls to Intensify

During the 2017 Open Call for amendments to the District’s Comprehensive Plan (the guiding document fo land, social, and economic development), some members of the public proposed to increase the intensity of the residential and commercial land uses around the Tenleytown-AU Metro station.

Stable Civic Uses

Much of the public open space in the area is owned and maintained by the National Park Service. Fort Reno Park and pieces of Tenley Circle are likely to remain green and open, but with limited flexibility for active uses. Schools, the library, and aquatic center will also remain as stable civic anchors at the heart of Tenleytown amongst other short and long term changes.



Weekday Activity

The transit service, transportation network, and mix of uses dictate the weekday activity in Tenleytown. While the locations and intensities of commercial and residential uses may change, civic and institutional uses are more long term and will continue to impact the flow of public life throughout the study area.

WMATA data shows that Tenleytown-AU Metro station has almost an equal number of weekday riders entering and exiting during the AM period (5am to 9:30am) as in the PM period (3pm-7pm). **Tenleytown-AU stands out among stations** on the upper western Red Line in DC, whose ridership is reflective of commuter origin stations. As a result, Tenleytown has an influx of people in the morning, many of whom arrive to attend local schools, work at area businesses, visit the library and pool, or catch buses and shuttles to nearby Sibley Hospital and American University.

Average ratio of weekday Metro station entrances/exits expressed as decimals (8:1 = 8) on upper western Red Line in DC.

	am	pm
Friendship Heights	1.6	0.8
Tenleytown-AU	1.0	0.9
Van Ness-UDC	2.9	0.6
Cleveland Park	8.0	0.3

Tenleytown tends to have fewer midday patrons at restaurants and shops due to a lack of significant employment anchors. School dismissal provides a major influx of pedestrian activity into the area, with the release of over **4,000** elementary, middle, and high school students on weekday afternoons. The evening entails a steady flow of activity from commuters and people running errands, getting food, or attending evening activities (e.g. swimming, martial arts, etc.). By 8pm on most weeknights, activity has slowed and the area is much quieter.

The dynamics of public life change throughout the day by the Metro station escalators at Tenleytown plaza.



9:34am
Tenleytown sees nearly equal numbers of people coming and going during morning commutes.



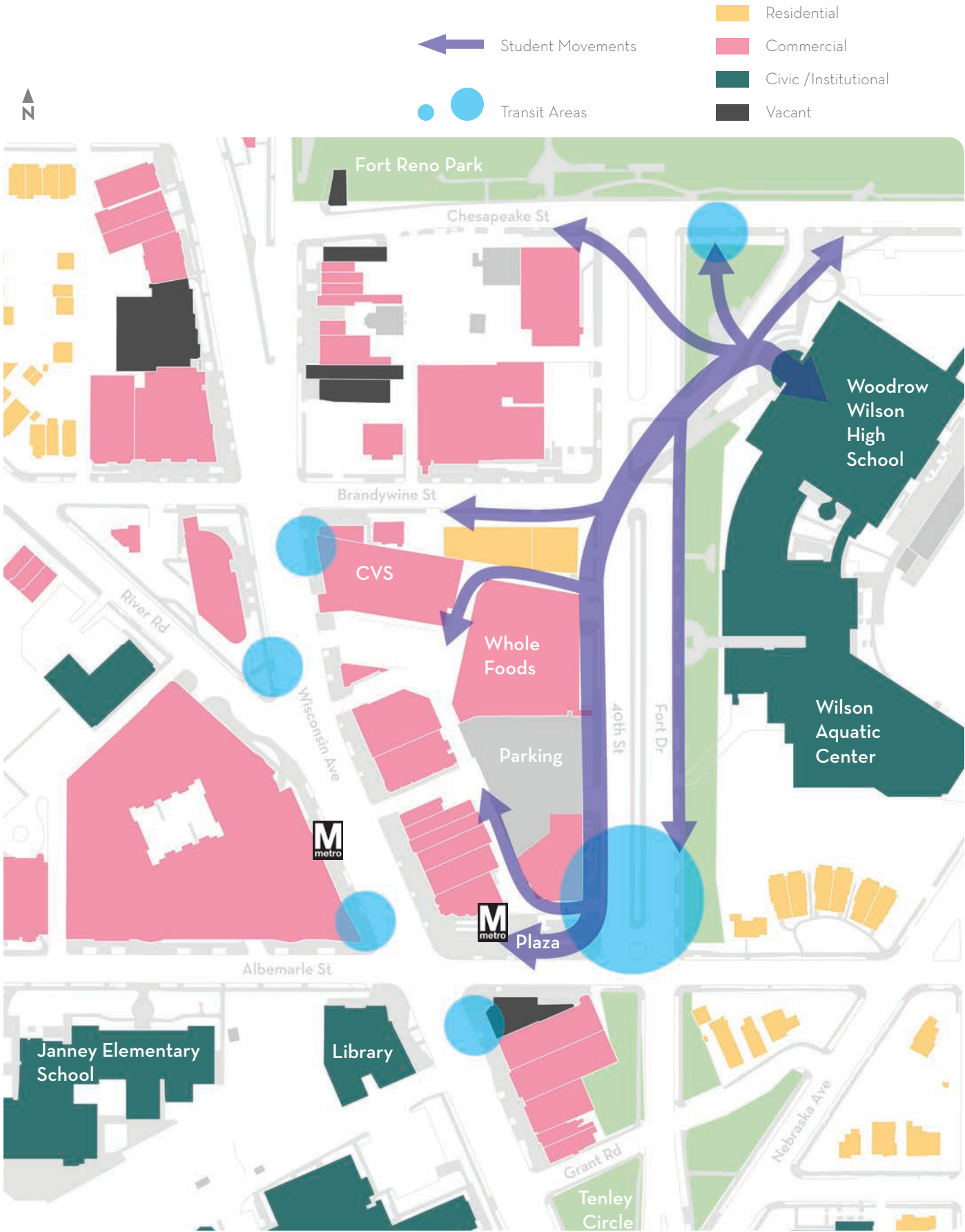
12:18pm
Without major employment anchors, there are lighter midday lunch time crowds in Tenleytown.



3:38pm
School dismissal disperses students into Tenleytown. They head to transit and linger in groups around the area.



8:02pm
The evening food and errand rush winds down by 8pm. Tenleytown Main Street animates the Metro station area with live music.



Public Realm

Tenleytown’s public realm constitutes the network of publicly and privately owned spaces open and accessible to pedestrians. Within the study area, the public realm includes private commercial property, DC rights-of-way (streets), WMATA rights-of-way, and National Park Service land. The thousands of people who travel through and linger in Tenleytown’s public realm on a daily basis are likely unaware of these ownership distinctions, yet their respective nuances impact when and how people can engage in public life in Tenleytown.

As elsewhere in Washington, DC, federally owned National Park Service land is prevalent throughout Tenleytown and provides most of the green space in and around the study area. Playing fields in Fort Reno Park are activated through management by the DC Department of Parks and Recreation. The grassy lands around Tenley Circle connecting north to Fort Reno Park along Fort Drive lack social or recreational facilities.

The internal network of public alleys and private surface parking lots within the central block of Tenleytown functions as a kind of “medieval village” mixing cars, pedestrians, and bikes. This central block sits along the axis of activity between the civic uses and Metro station entrances, while blurring the distinctions between building frontages and back of house activities. With the only entrance to the anchor Whole Foods grocery store within the block itself, shoppers are also brought into the alley network.

In recent years, seating in the right of way has been added through new development, including sidewalk cafés for businesses. Most of this outdoor seating is now privately managed and concentrated along busy Wisconsin Avenue, encroaching on space for walking. There is some public seating in nearby Fort Reno Park, though none exists in the Tenley Circle greenspaces owned and maintained by the National Park Service.

Throughtout Tenleytown, there are curbs, ledges, and walls at a height, depth, and location such that people can sit or lean on them, with varying degrees of comfort. These improvised seating areas highlights the need for more intentionally designed seating.

Tenleytown’s public realm can be designed to better address the needs of its many users and improve the pedestrian experience.



a Sidewalk café seating is increasing along Wisconsin Avenue in existing and new developments.



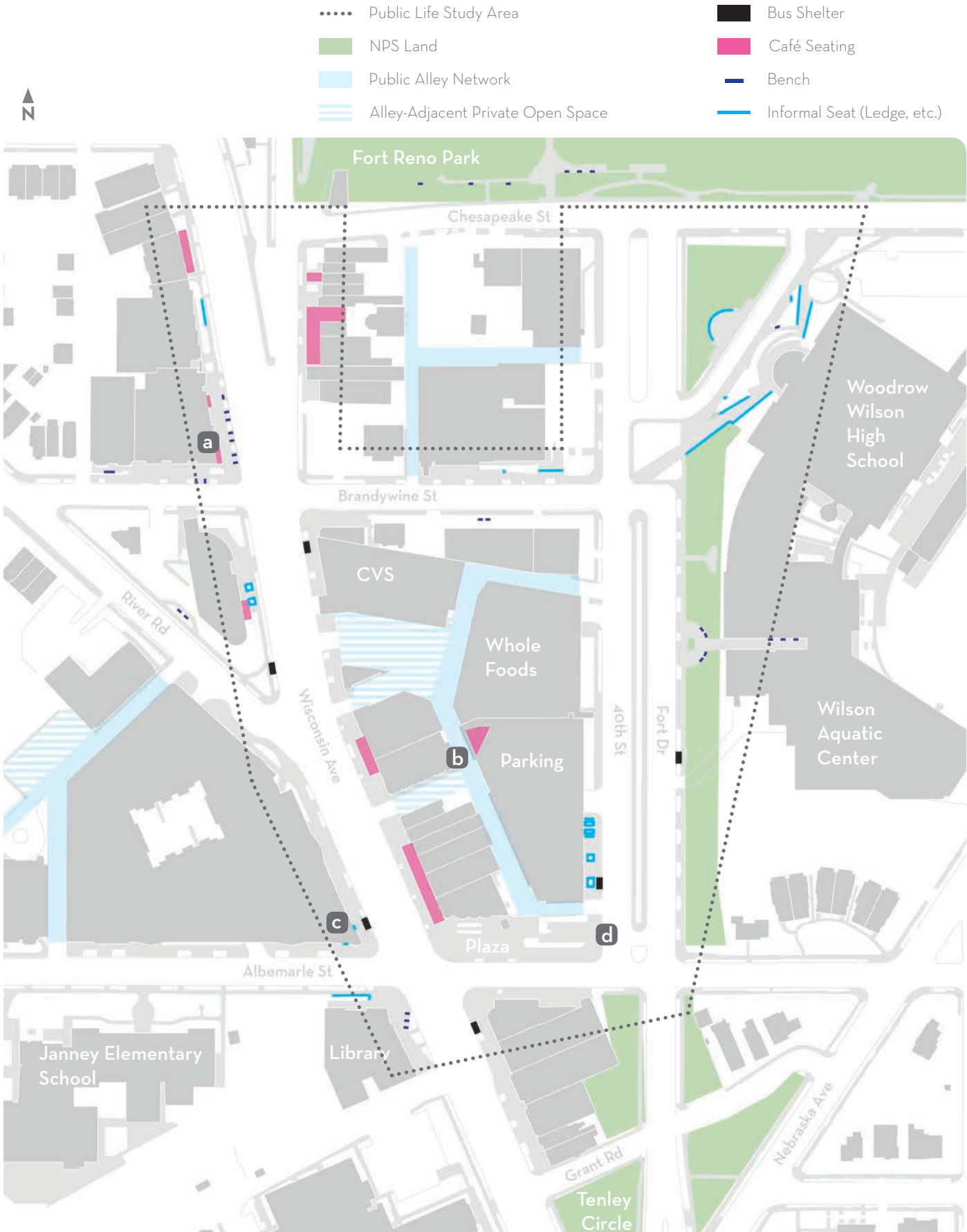
b Cautionary signage and striping for pedestrians and vehicles abounds in the alley network.



c Ledges and curbs are frequently used as improvised seating in Tenleytown.



d Tenleytown plaza is not designed to invite users to enjoy the area’s built, natural, or social features.



Engaging 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. As more permanent physical features, transparency and doors frequency were analysed.

Retail storefronts on Wisconsin Avenue have the **most transparent façades** and highest density of active doorways. This is especially true of narrower spaces with smaller footprints, establishments with café seating, and buildings that have been recently constructed or renovated (e.g. Library).

The larger retail anchors in the study area, including the Whole Foods market, CVS pharmacy, and former Best Buy have notably little to **no transparent façades**. Though an active pedestrian area, all façades in the internal alley network of the central block are **blank walls** without public doorways. Meanwhile, pedestrians must access the Whole Foods via the alley network.

Most façades fronting 40th Street / Fort Drive offer little opportunity to easily increase transparency, highlighting the area’s perception as the back of Tenleytown.



Transparent

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.



Potential for better transparency

Visibility blocked by temporary and easily removed items such as posters, signboards, or window film.



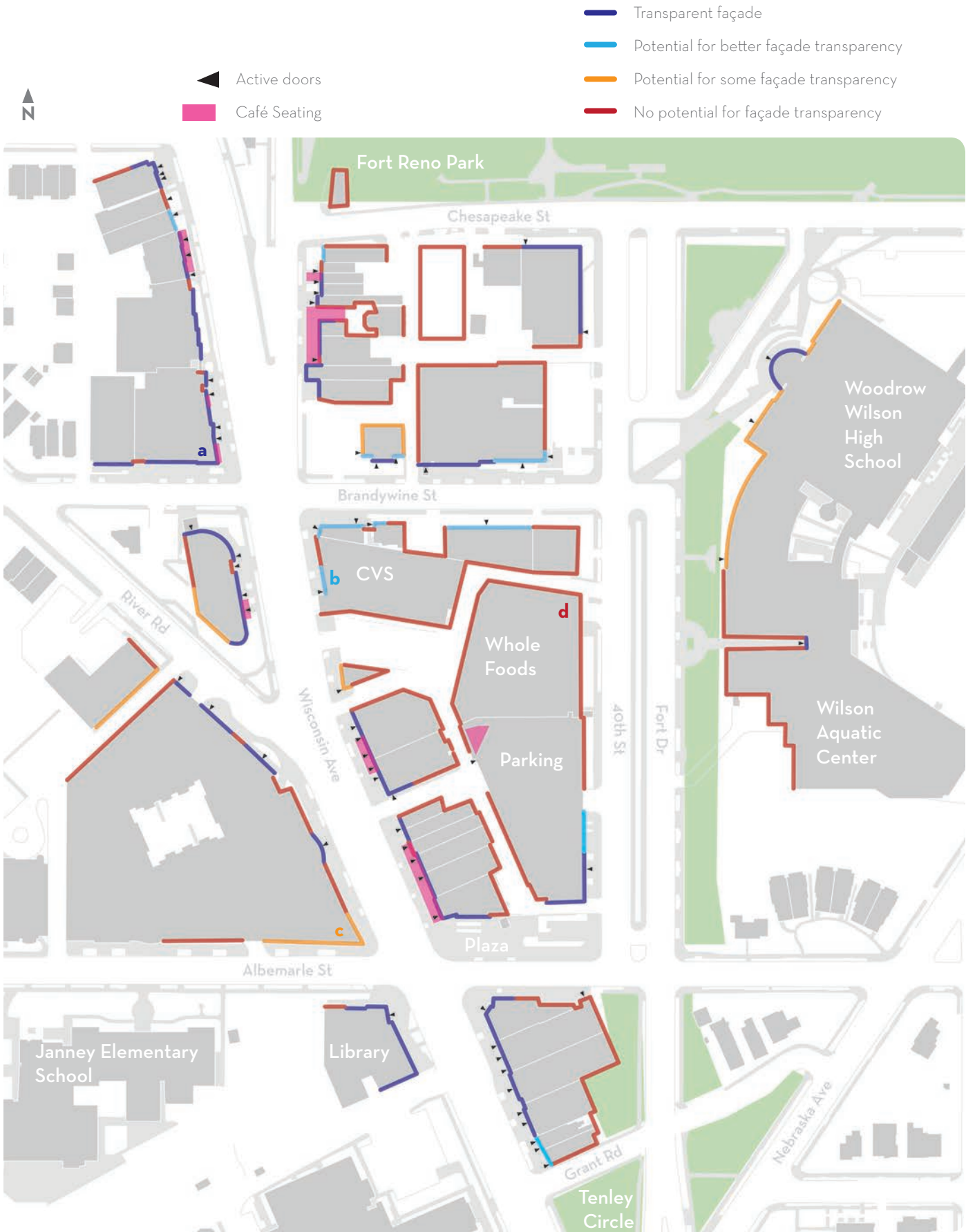
Potential for some transparency

Visibility blocked by structural elements such as boarded up windows, heavy appliances, backsides of display cases, or grilles with less than 75% transparency.



No potential for transparency

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



Perceived Urban Quality

The 12 Urban Quality Criteria, developed by the Gehl Institute, is a scoring criteria used to assess performance of a social space. It measures a hierarchy of needs consisting of three qualitative themes. At a basic level, all spaces need to provide protection from the elements, traffic and crime. Good public spaces are comfortable places to walk, sit, see, and converse. **Great public spaces** invite all people to be active and spend more time in them, making use of their unique microclimate and human-scaled elements.

On September 14, 2018, 20 UMD Architecture and Planning students evaluated the 12 Urban Quality Criteria of the Tenleytown study area using a three point scale. Averaging the student's scores, the overall area was perceived to be well protected from harmful elements, while moderately comfortable and enjoyable.

Scale

- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Protection

- from traffic & crashes – feeling safe
- from crime & violence – feeling secure
- from unpleasant sensory experiences

Comfort

- opportunities to walk/cycle
- opportunities to stand & stay
- opportunities to sit
- opportunities to see
- opportunities to talk & listen
- opportunities for play & exercise

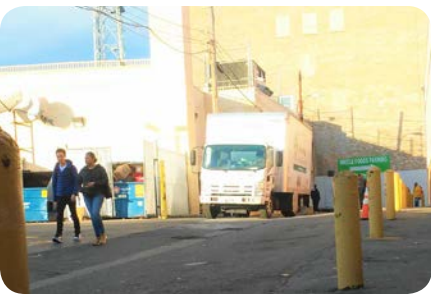
Enjoyment

- dimensioned at human scale
- opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate
- aesthetic qualities & positive sensory experience

Protection

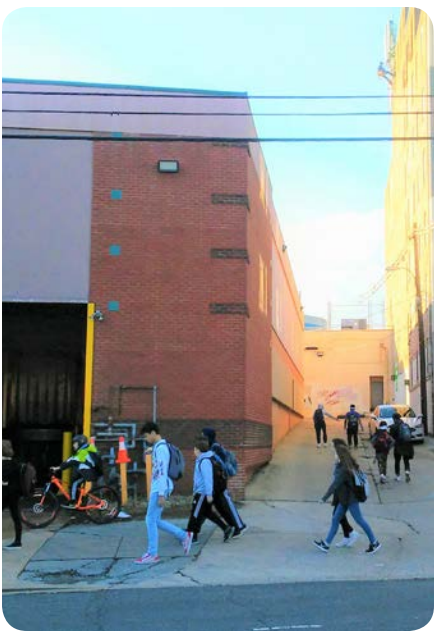


Signalized crosswalks and public safety workers in the area help to provide a sense of safety and security.



A network of active alleys exposes pedestrians to unpleasant sensory experiences associated with local businesses.

Comfort



Tenleytown is an active area, with large volumes of pedestrians occupying the sidewalks and alleys at key points in the day. Students on bikes are more likely to ride on the sidewalk than on the marked lanes on 40th Street / Fort Drive.

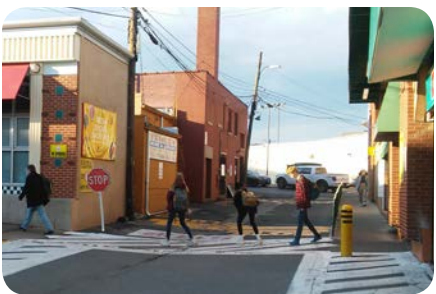


Most outdoor seating in public space is privately managed by businesses. Many people sit or lean on curbs, ledges, and walls.



The east Metro station entrance is an active social hub throughout the day, but offers little opportunity to stay or enjoy the space.

Enjoyment



The active alley network mixes vehicles with pedestrians, but at dimensions and speeds compatible with the pedestrian scale.



Shaded, sunken, café seating, buffered with plantings provides enjoyable space even on busy Wisconsin Avenue.

The Word on the Street



Throughout the 12-hour period of study, UMD student field workers approached 212 people in the Tenleytown study area with a questionnaire. 40 individuals responded, a **19% response rate**. Field workers interviewed active users of Tenleytown’s public spaces and were instructed to not to approach individuals that appeared to be under 18 years old (minors).

Interview respondents were asked about their relationship to Tenleytown (why they were there, how often they visit, how they arrived, etc.) and feelings about what the area was missing.



40 respondents

- 20 morning (8am-noon)
- 11 afternoon (noon-4pm)
- 9 evening (4pm-8pm)

Respondents’ self-identified gender & age

- 50% female
- 43% male
- 3% non-binary
- 8% under 20
- 50% 20-30
- 23% 31-64
- 8% over 65

What words did respondents use to describe Tenleytown?

- 51% were **positive**, highlighting a clean, safe, and enjoyable place.
- 17% described a **busy** place that was lively and growing.
- 10% noted the **exclusivity** of the area, using words like rich and wealthy.
- 5% described the area as **White**, the only demographic characterization shared.

35% of respondents live in the Tenleytown zipcode

Respondents hailed from **nine other zipcodes**, representing several wards in the District and parts of nearby Maryland and Virginia.

Top 5 things that brought people to Tenleytown

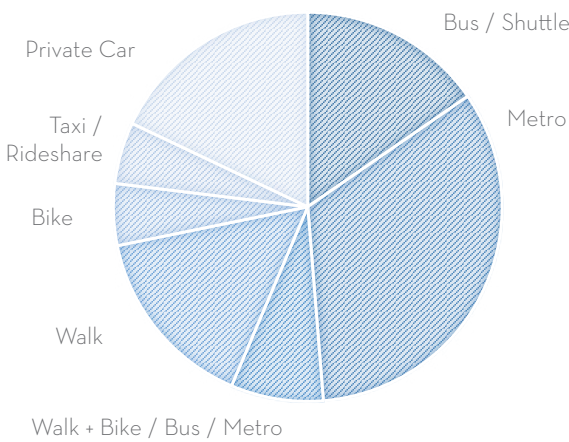
- 29% passing through
- 26% meeting friends
- 20% shopping/market
- 9% work
- 9% recreation

Over half the respondents were not just passing through Tenleytown, but came to work, recreate, shop, and meet friends.



58% visit Tenleytown daily

Respondents arrived to the Tenleytown area by a diversity of modes, with transit accounting for **nearly half** the trips:



Top thing respondents would like to do in Tenleytown that they can’t/don’t do now:



38% recognized someone they knew in Tenleytown

- 48% said no
- 14% didn’t answer

People Moving



Throughout the 12-hour period of study, field workers took one sample count per hour at each of the 10 screenlines in the study area, outlined on the adjacent map. During these 120 unique counts, a full range of data was collected on each of the **5,062** moving individuals observed. The 10-minute sample counts are intended to reflect the full hour. When multiplied by six to extrapolate a full hour of activity over 12 hours, the data can be understood to reflect **30,372** pedestrians moving through the study area.

The pulse of pedestrian movement through Tenleytown over the course of a weekday is punctuated by morning commuters to work and school, lunchtime activity, afternoon school dismissal, and afterwork errands and activities.

Wilson High School dismisses at 3:25pm. The mass of student dispersal following this time is captured by field work counts during the 3pm hour. This significant weekday event impacts the entire study area with thousands of students moving about in a short period of time.

Throughout the day, movements are concentrated around the Metro station entrance along Albemarle. At all times, people walking and on bikes are competing for limited sidewalk space, further constrained at key pinchpoints on Wisconsin Avenue where sidewalk cafés provide the only comfortable seating in the area.

5,062

moving people observed

perceived sex

52%

female

48%

male

perceived age

22%

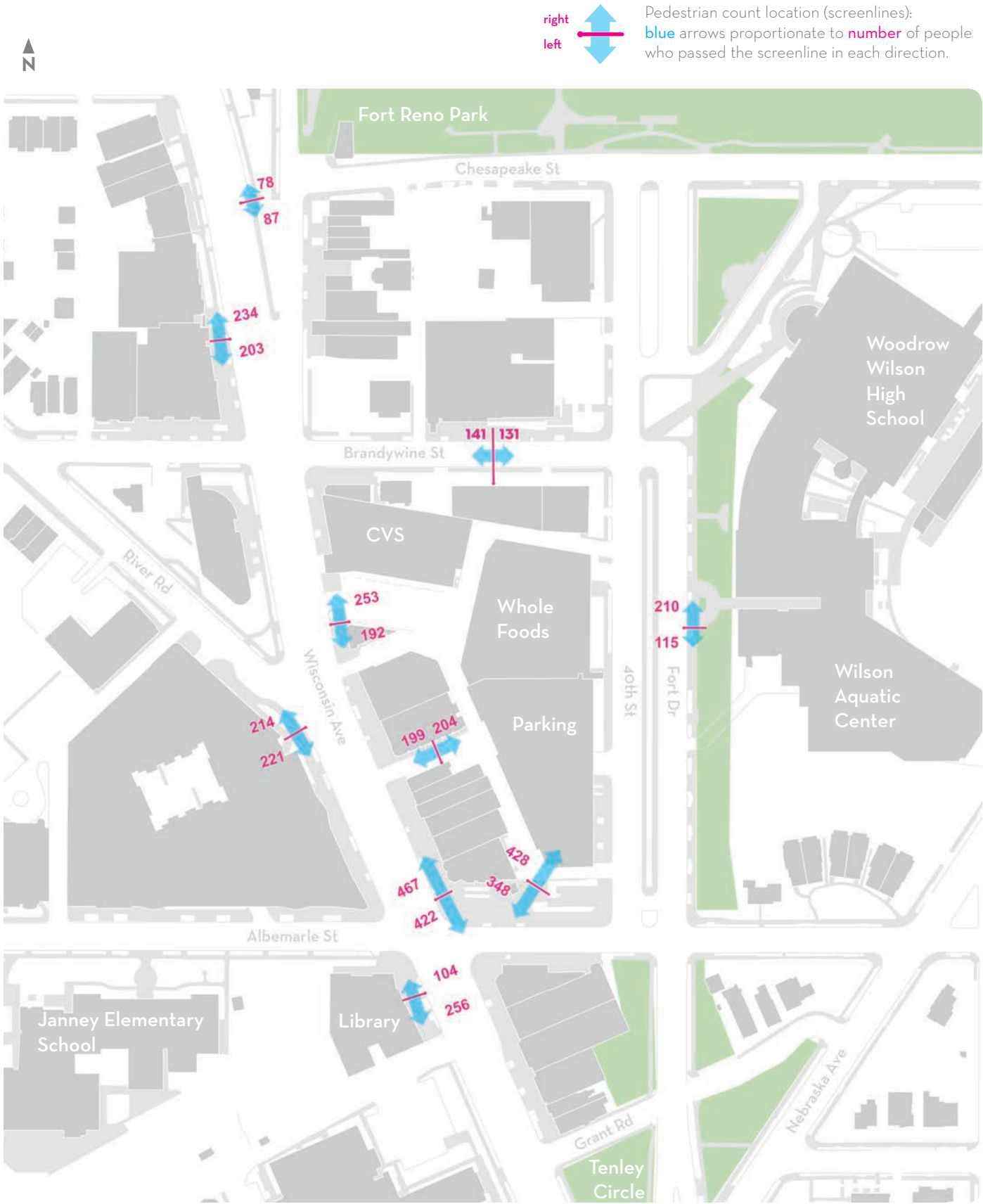
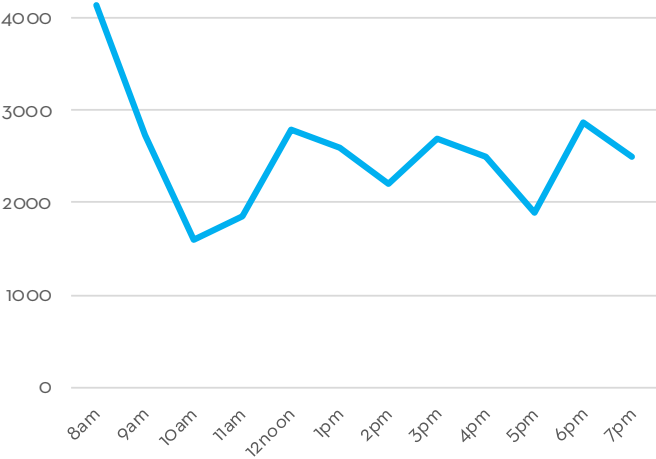
under 20

6%

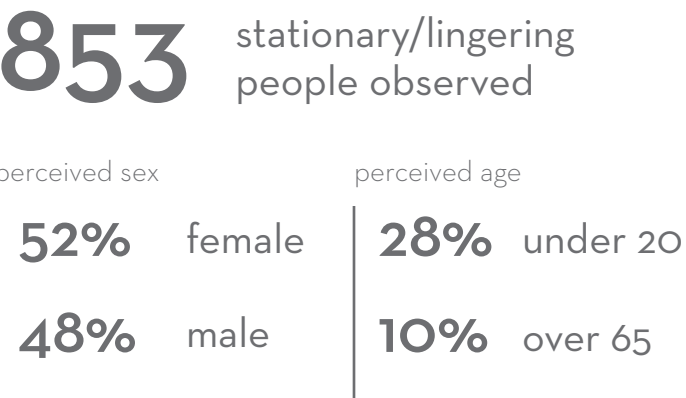
over 65

- wheels + fitness + pets
- 1.5% on bikes
 - 1% with strollers
 - 0.4% skateboards/scooters
 - 1.2% running/jogging
 - 0.6% with pets

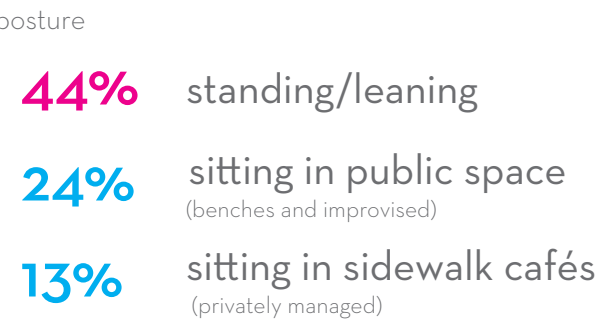
Extrapolated Pedestrian Movements



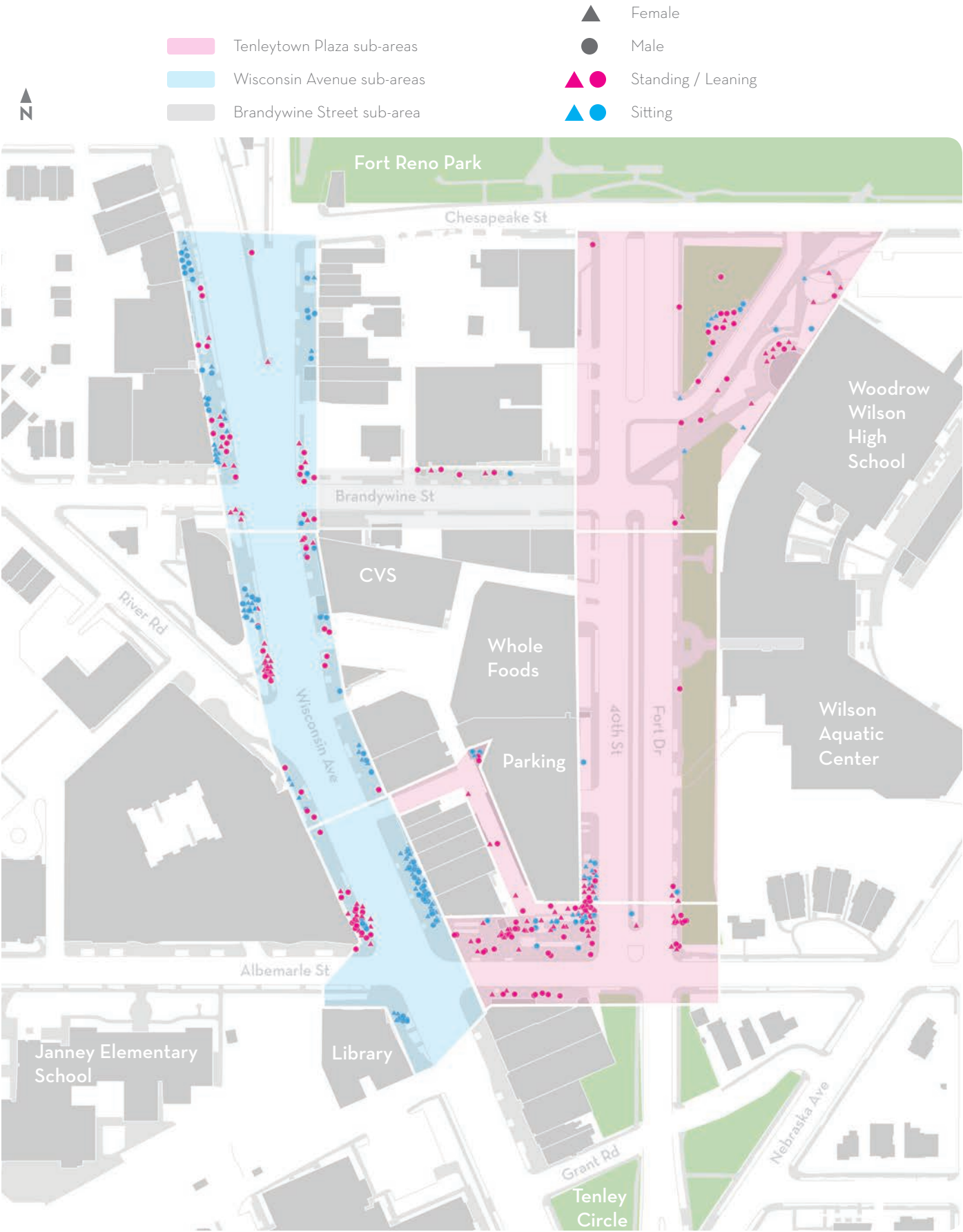
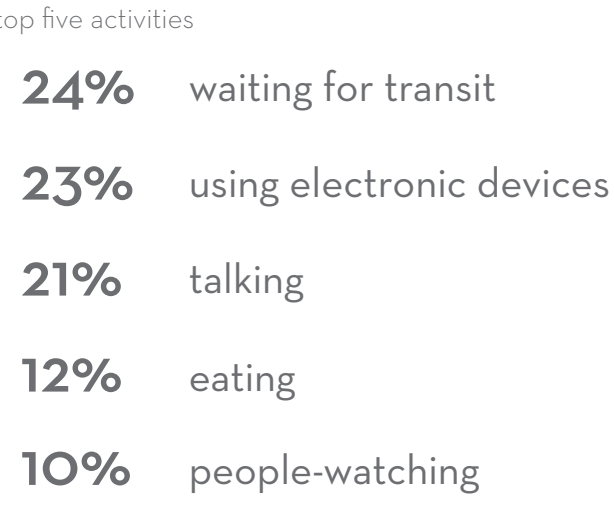
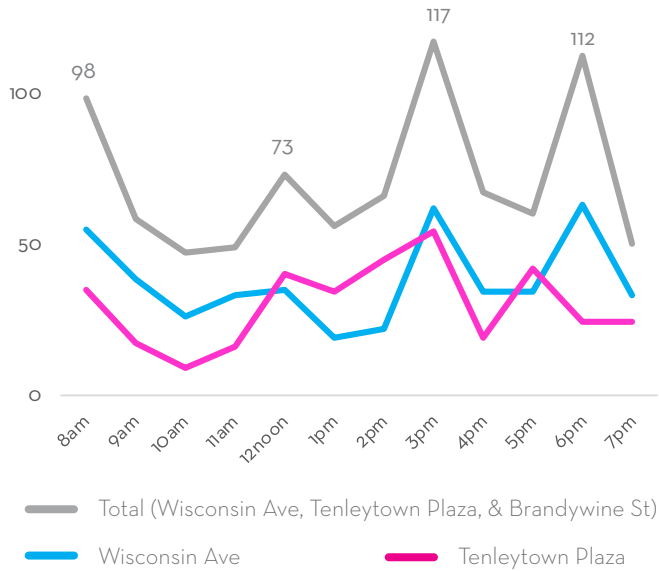
People Staying



Throughout the 12-hour period of study, field workers took one sample scan per hour at each of the seven sub-areas in the study area, outlined on the adjacent map. The sub areas are grouped by color to reflect the **Wisconsin Avenue Corridor** and **Tenleytown Plaza**. During these 84 unique scans, a full range of data was collected on each of the **853** individuals engaged in stationary activity. The 10-minute sample counts reflect activity at any given time during the represented hour.



Sample Hourly Stationary Activity



A Day in the Public Life



Persons perceived to be over 65 constituted 10% of those engaged in stationary activity in Tenleytown, mostly out during the hours of **noon** (32% of hourly activity, 27% of total 12-hr period), and **6pm** (14% of hourly activity, 19% of total 12-hr period).



The two busiest hours of day for stationary activity (**3pm** and **6pm**) both had the highest proportions of women (55% at 3pm, 67% at 6pm) and people perceived to be under 20 (68% at 3pm, 24% at 6pm).



Pairs and groups were most prevalent during the hours before and after school (**8am** and **3pm**).



Less than 2% of people moving were observed on bikes. Most people on bikes were observed to be riding on sidewalks. Only **0.4%** of people moving were noted to be using skateboards or scooters.



The **top two** stationary activities (waiting for transit and using electronic devices) are not about enjoying the social or environmental aspects of the space itself.



Almost half of all people engaged in stationary activity are **standing or leaning**. This proportion is high, especially considering the amount of public seating at cafés and restaurants.



A steady stream of people were moving through the alleys throughout the day, reflecting all perceived ages, with a notable spike during the hours of **6pm** and **7pm**, likely coinciding with evening errands.



Tenleytown Plaza is a very social place, especially at the **3pm hour** after school is dismissed, when the highest proportion of stationary people are talking.

Tenleytown TOMORROW

32	Make Façades More Engaging
34	Pilot Temporary Activations
36	Enhance Comfortable Movement
38	Design Tenleytown Plaza for People
40	Celebrate Built Features
44	Enhance Alley Network
46	Combining the Strategies

“Repurposing the space to become more functional for pedestrians and passers-by would help to build neighborhood identity and create a sense of place.”

- Tenleytown-AU Station Access Study

Make Façades More Engaging

Enliven walls along active public areas.

Enliven the building façades and walls along the alley network, public plaza, and frontage on 40th/Fort Drive with art and public seating in the short term, and redeveloped with more active, transparent, and inviting uses in the long term. Walls can be articulated with building projections, providing architectural variation that engages with the public realm with porches, balconies, show windows, and bay windows.

Increase the visual transparency and physical permeability of ground floor façades with windows and doors. Upper levels of building façades can engage with the public realm below with spacious balconies and operable windows.

Precedent—The Lot at the Liz

This creative placemaking project used a proud, pop-art style mural to celebrate the DC LGBTQ community's contributions to the 14th Street neighborhood and tested how a range of public space concepts could be re-incorporated into future redevelopment of the building. Learn more at planning.dc.gov.



Commercial and retail tenants, especially those at prominent corners, like the new WaWa convenience store, Two Birds cowork space, and Target can enliven their façades to support enhanced public life.

Pro Tip!

The DC Public Realm Design Manual is an overview of the District's public space policies and regulations with guidance on improving façades. It is accessible online at ddot.dc.gov/PublicRealmDesignManual.

Precedent—Painted Pocket Niches

The Yerba Buena Commercial Benefits District sponsored Sites Unseen's implementation of a permanent seating project providing pops of color and areas of social respite along large blank walls in an alley in the San Francisco's downtown. Learn more at sitesunseen.org.



Pilot Temporary Activations

Activate spaces with temporary installations.

The Tenleytown Main Street currently programs the activations public space in the study area with live music. Private parking lots, the public alley network, the public plaza, and green spaces owned by the National Park Service can be activated with temporary seating and placemaking interventions to assess community use of reimagined space. The level of success of these temporary interventions can influence the viability of future permanent capital projects.

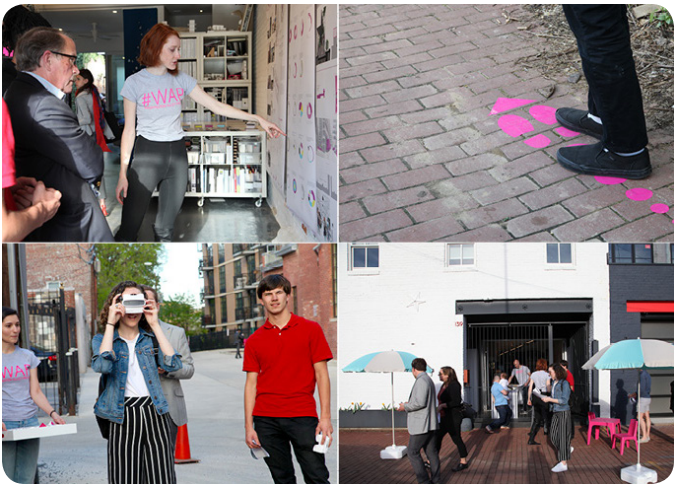
Accessible programming that activates busy public spaces is an ongoing need. The Tenleytown Plaza should be redesigned to accommodate a range of temporary activations and flexible programming in the future.

Pro Tip!

The DC Public Space Activation & Stewardship Guide is a resource to help local stakeholders foster vital public spaces throughout the city. It is accessible online at planning.dc.gov/page/public-life-studies.

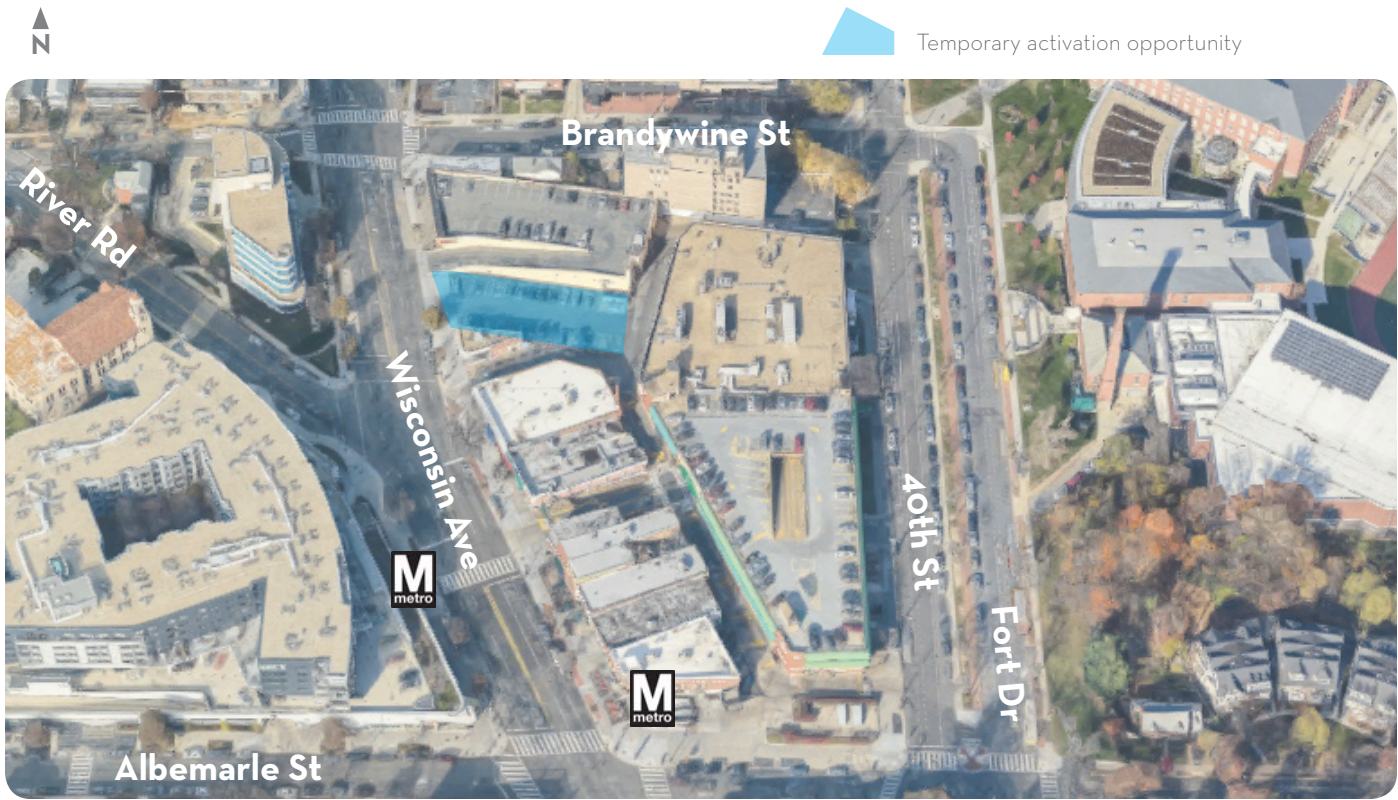
Precedent—Alley Hop

Alley Hop is a series of interactive tours contributing to the Washington Alley Project, an ongoing research, urban design, and advocacy project led by DC architecture firm EL Studio. Temporary wayfinding and placemaking interventions help participants explore opportunities to enliven DC’s alleys. Learn more at elstudioarch.com.



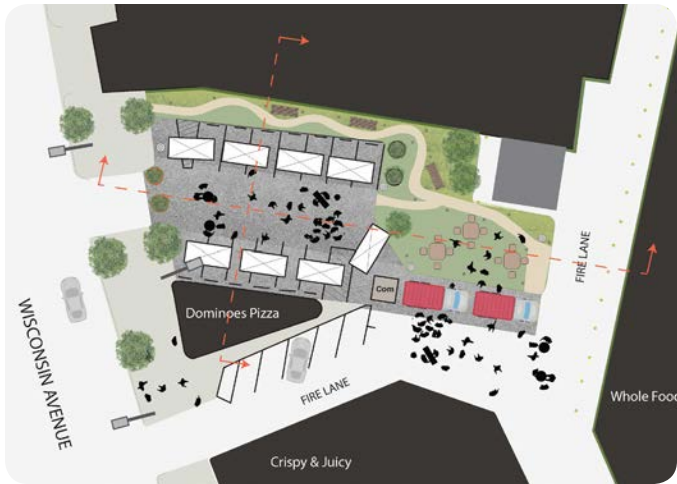
Precedent—OkuPlaza

An underutilized park in DC’s Adams Morgan neighborhood was temporarily recreated as a Latin American city plaza celebrating the community’s Latino heritage. Food, family, and culture were central to the vibrant intervention. Learn more at planning.dc.gov.



UMD Student Proposal

Reimagine the small private parking lot adjacent to CVS to also function as a space for people, with some of the parking spaces repurposed as landscaping and seating. The remaining parking spaces could be used for temporary events. Design by Ava Omidvar, Andrew Mazer, and John Pham (ARCH-460 students).



Enhance Comfortable Movement

Augment the experience of transit users, walkers, and cyclists.

Enhance the experience for the thousands of people who arrive, depart, and pass through Tenleytown every day. Tenleytown’s public realm should be designed to safely and comfortably accommodate the regular and predictable flows of people moving throughout the day—accessing transit, getting to school and work, and running errands.

Celebrate arrival and improve wayfinding with inviting gateways at intersections and metro station exits. Painted cautionary signage on walls and ground surfaces can be redesigned as friendly wayfinding.

Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle connections to Tenleytown from adjacent neighborhoods and provide predictable routes and adequate space for pedestrian and bicycle movements in busy areas. Incorporate more short and long term bike parking to not conflict with transit users and social spaces. Shorten crosswalks where possible.

Increase opportunities for sitting and engaging with the culture and public realm of Tenleytown at bus stops, taking advantage of natural exposure to sun and shade. Use leaning rails to channel pedestrian movements.

Precedent—Ward 7 Superstops

This creative placemaking project temporarily activated the public realm with community-constructed play installations and spaces for broadcasting community stories at a busy transit area in DC’s Ward 7. Learn more at planning.dc.gov.



Precedent—Stratford Original Wayfinding Mural

In the midst of constructing a major mixed-use development in London, the Stratford Original Business Improvement District implemented wayfinding murals to direct visitors to the area’s shops, restaurant and tube station. Learn more at stratfordoriginal.com.



Design Tenleytown Plaza for People

Provide people with opportunities to enjoy Tenleytown together.

Make Tenleytown Plaza an inviting space for everyone, especially youth. Identify and design spaces for gathering, adding new and enhanced seating. The local community, including school students, should participate in the design and programming of Tenleytown Plaza.

Tenleytown’s public realm should appeal to multiple senses, buffering unpleasant noises and smells from spaces for people. Opportunities for experiences that delight senses of touch, sound, smell, and taste can also connect people with the history and culture of Tenleytown. Incorporate elements of fun, play, and whimsy into the plaza design.

Take advantage of the microclimate of Tenleytown, providing areas with access to sunlight in colder months, and shade in warmer months. Tenleytown Plaza’s south facing edge and surface is in the sun most of the day, while the 40th Street transit waiting area is shaded in the afternoon. Recognizing these features as part of a cohesive space provides opportunities for enjoyment at different times of day and year, and for different users of the space.

Expanding the plaza across Albermale (south) and 40th/ Fort (east) requires considering framing edges of the commercial and civic buildings as important for enclosing and activating the space.

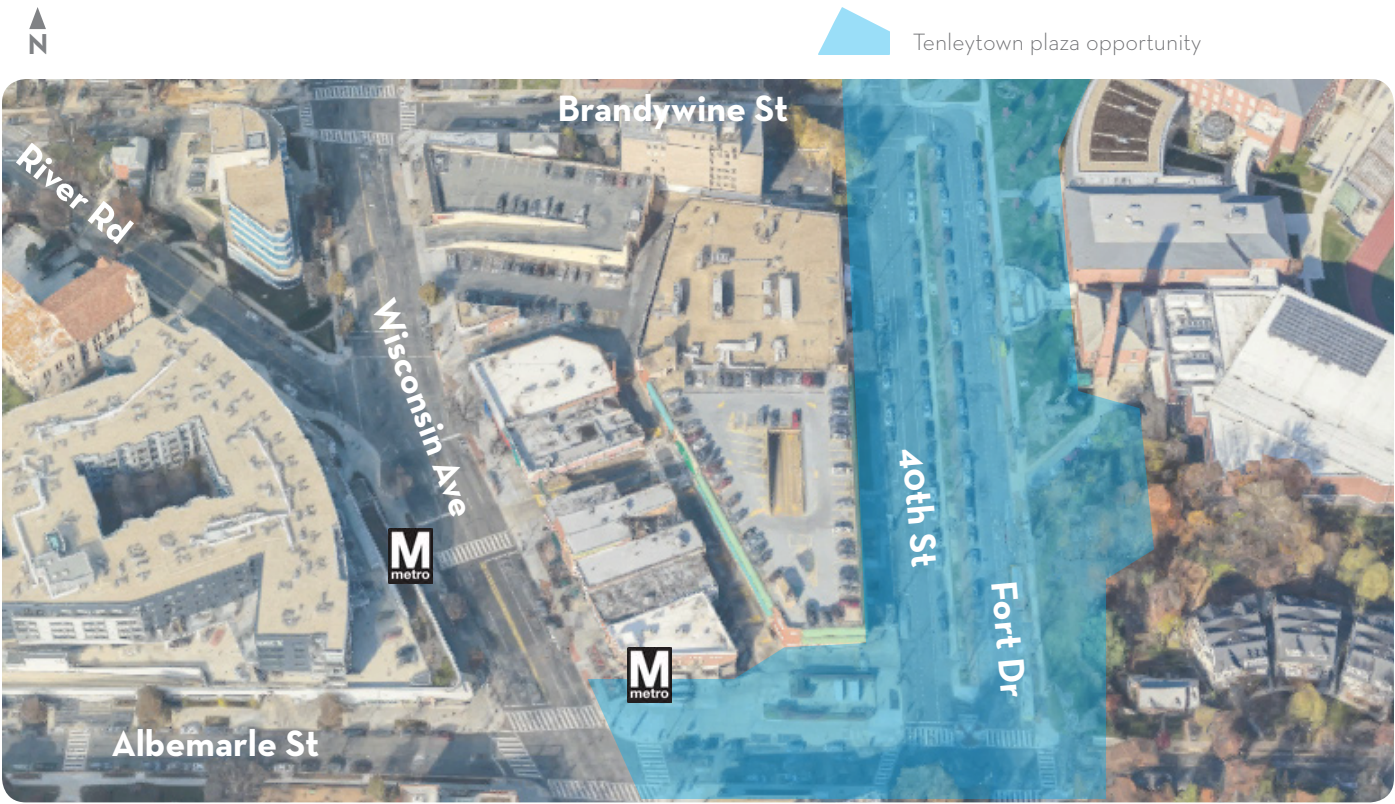
Precedent—Columbia Heights Civic Plaza

In tandem with mixed-use redevelopment, the busy urban streetscape in DC’s Columbia Heights neighborhood was reconstructed with a focus on its many diverse users. Anchored by the civic plaza, the compact area offers space for transit users, pedestrians, socializing, eating, and family play, while hosting seasonal and temporary community events.



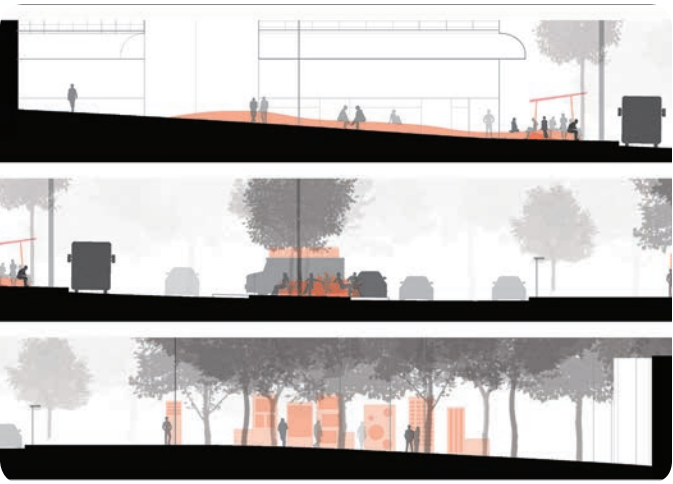
Precedent—The Porch at 30th Street Station

In 2011, The Porch converted a congested parking lane and bland, barren sidewalk outside Philadelphia’s 30th Street Station into an animated public space with greenery, seating, and food options. Learn more at universitycity.org/events/porch.



UMD Student Proposal

Reimagine the Tenleytown plaza as a place for people, connected by a sculptural intervention that encourages active engagement with the built environment. Activated with pockets of seating that promote socialization, the design incorporates the green space to the east of Fort Drive with showcases of local student work and art. Design by Mansoor Ahmed, Hannah Grady, Amber Robbs, Jared Schmitz (ARCH-460 students).



Celebrate Built Features

Highlight focal points.

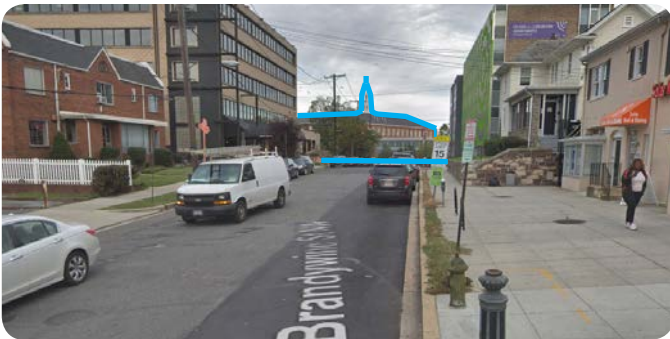
Celebrate Tenleytown’s built features through visual connections. Highlight existing focal points to enhance visual axes, like the historic Wilson High School **cupola** and its power plant chimney **stack**. Enhancing views to these unique architectural features can help orient pedestrians and reinforce a distinct sense of place in Tenleytown. Framing views of these features can be achieved through the design of public space and potential redevelopment of buildings.



2 Brandywine and 40th



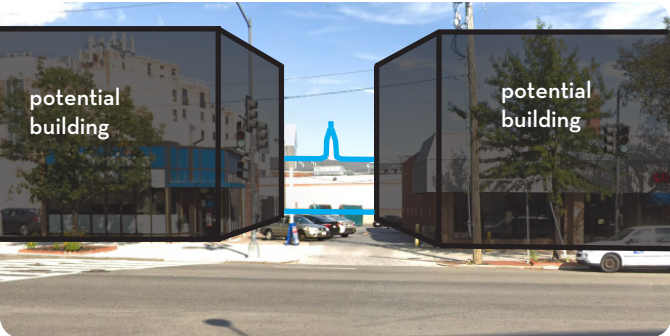
1 Chesapeake and 40th



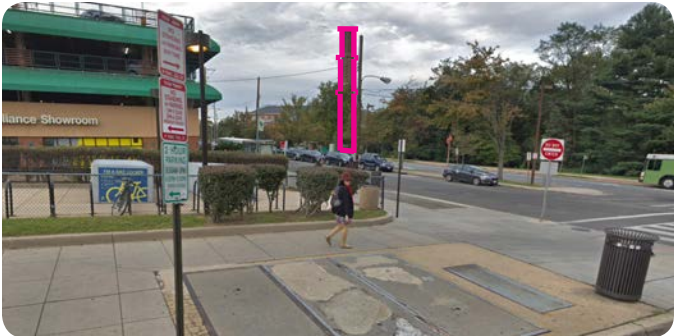
3 Brandywine and Wisconsin



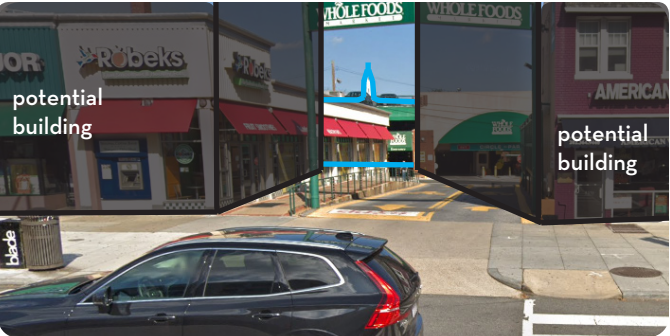
4 River and Wisconsin



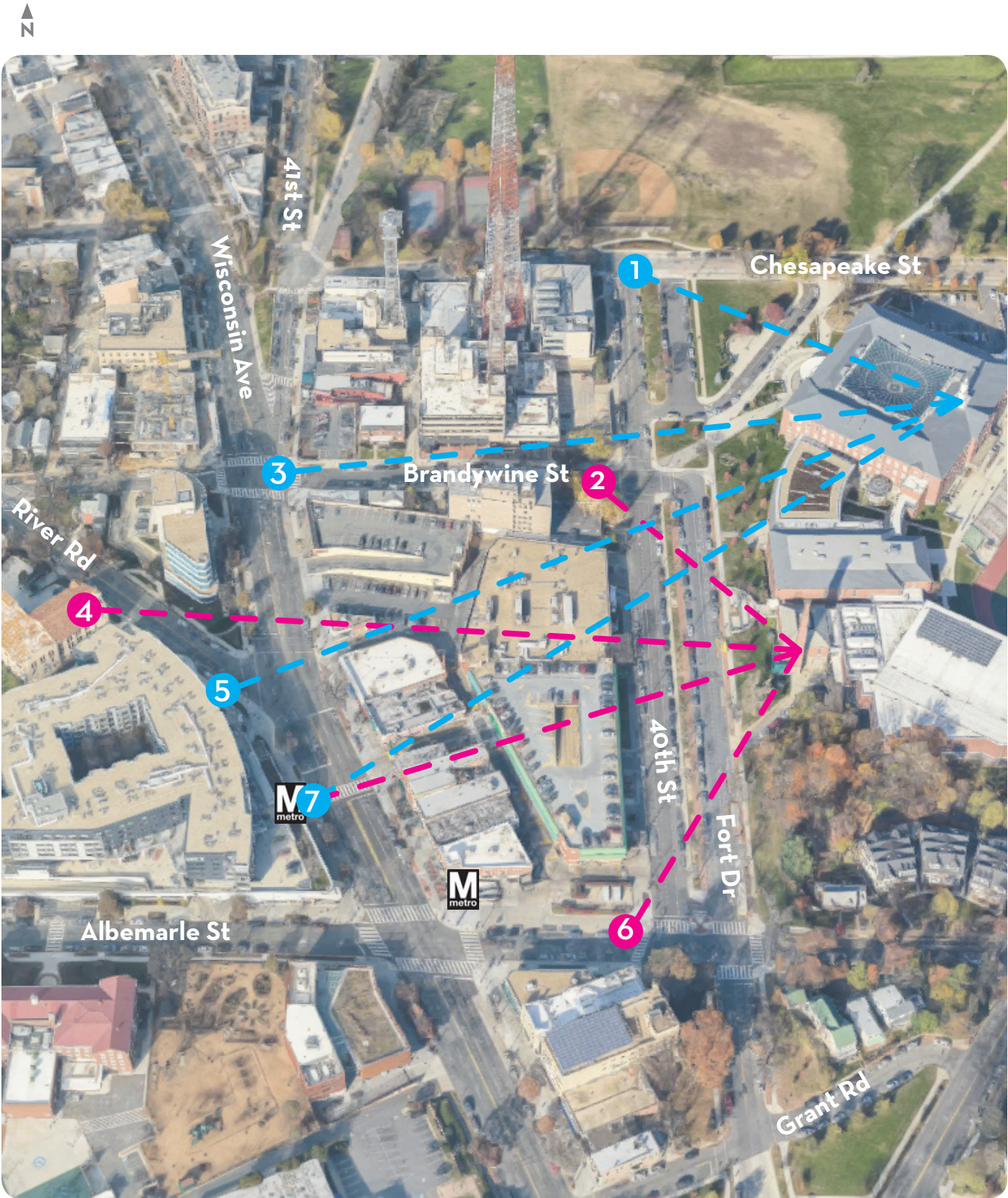
5 River and Wisconsin



6 Albemarle and 40th



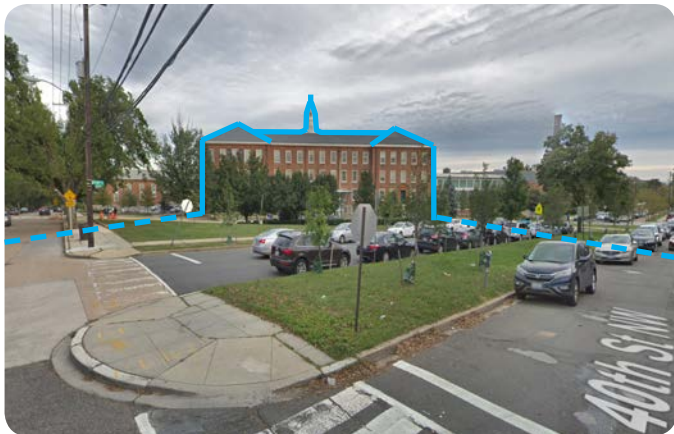
7 Wisconsin at Metro Entrance



Design in response to context and users.

Potential redesign of the triangular public open space in front of Wilson High School can celebrate the building’s angled **orientation**, while accommodating the natural pedestrian circulation of the students as they approach and depart from school. Design should balance the goal of dispersal with opportunities to stay and connect.

Students wait for transit and socialize in the triangular space bounded by Fort Dr. and Chesapeake St. The current design does not accommodate the students’ movement across the space, or invite opportunities to stay. The design of the space could also better leverage natural topography and shade from the trees.



Wilson High School has an angled orientation.



Students linger in the semicircular space. The high ledge is challenging to sit on and obstructs movement across the space.



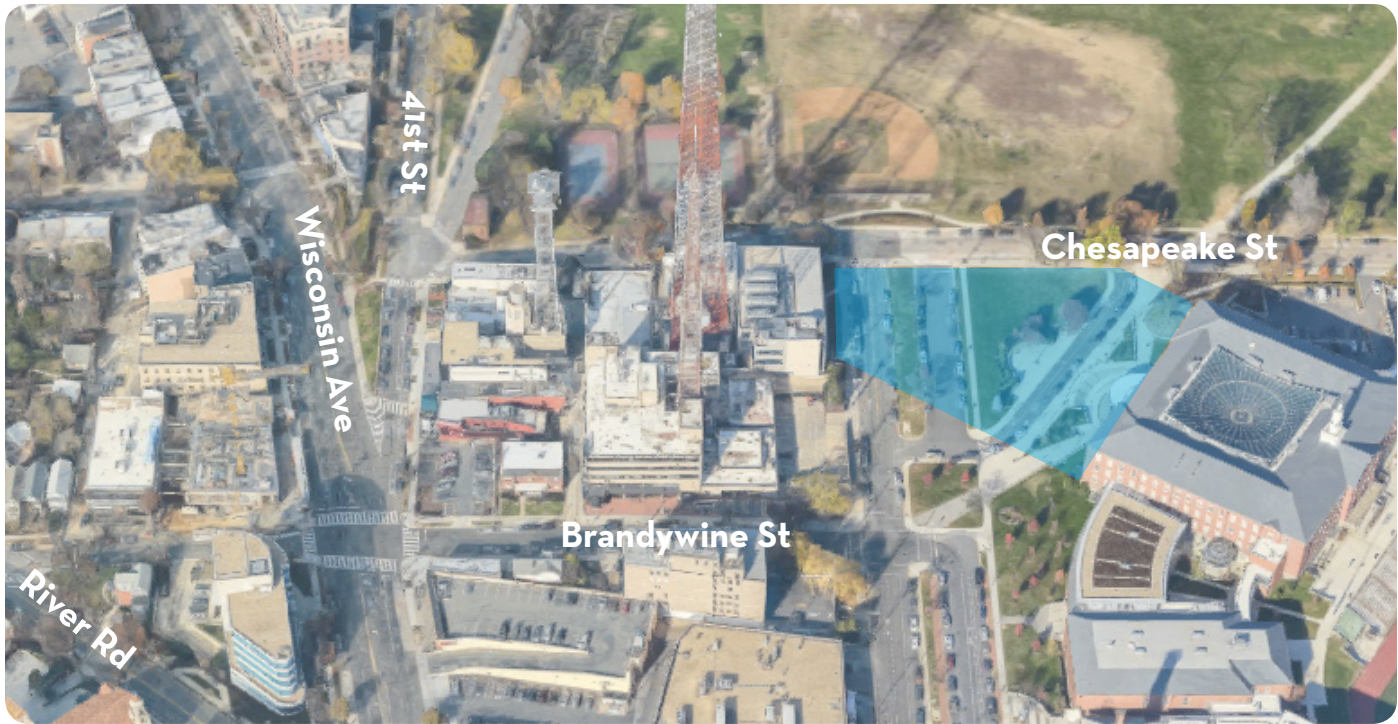
Students sit on curbs and stand waiting for the bus on Chesapeake St. after school.



Students wait for the bus along Chesapeake St. and in the shade of the triangle.

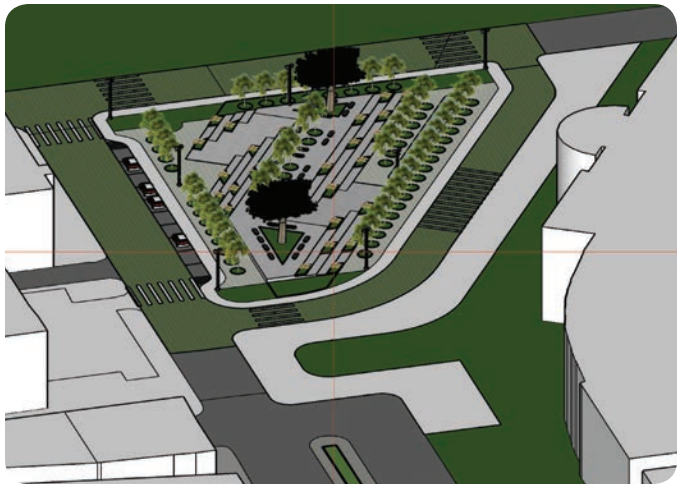


When the bus arrives, students run through the triangle to board.



UMD Student Proposal

Reimagine the grassy triangular space in front of Wilson High School to prioritize pedestrians. Using Vancouver’s Robson Square as a precedent, the design turns the existing grade into a stepped space with accessible ramps, shade trees, and integrated seating, allowing for a range of opportunities to both move through and linger in the space. Design by Antea Jarazi, Maria Farieta, Gabriel Mafra, Andrew Degroff (ARCH-460 students).



Enhance Alley Network

Improve pedestrian movements across large sites.

Retain and enhance the function of the public alley network in the central block in future redevelopment as a human-scaled space to support healthy public life in Tenleytown in the future.

Cady’s Alley in Georgetown and Blagden Alley in Shaw are examples where new uses are activating DC’s historic public alleys. Meanwhile, large site developments in DC often include open walkways through the site, such as Lafayette Centre and CityCenterDC downtown, and The Wharf on the waterfront. These walkways enhance pedestrian wayfinding and circulation while providing invitations to explore and linger.

Precedent—The Wharf

Pedestrian priority streets, like Pearl Street, SW, provide access and viewsheds perpendicular to The Wharf’s linear waterfront. Restaurants take advantage of these prominent corners, while upper level terraces and balconies create social connections to the street below.



Creating smaller, more varied volumes out of large buildings provides more valuable corners for commercial uses at the ground floor and additional access to light and air (windows and balconies) for residential and commercial uses above.

Precedent—CityCenterDC

High-end shops line CityCenterDC’s pedestrian alleys in downtown DC. A manicured and intimate green space anchors the heart of the mixed-use development, with trees, water features, and seating options.



Combining the Strategies

Combining the strategies proposed in this study, Tenleytown’s public life can be supported and enhanced in the short and long term. Balancing movement with lingering, a range fo space types accommodating different activities and pleasant experiences can be provided throughout the study area as it redevelops.



a Pocket Niches on existing buildings and in alleys, adding seating near bus stops.



b Redesign of triangular space oriented to Wilson High School, providing options for sitting and walking, and waiting for transit in the sun or shade.



c Pedestrian cut-through in future redevelopment that highlights the Wilson High School stack, while providing engaging street walls for passing pedestrians.



d Larger plaza designed with social spaces in sun and shade, including more greenery.



e Sculptural seating integrated with vegetative and other elements of the plaza.



f Cultural elements incorporated throughout the Tenleytown area, such as signage or art highlighting the history of Reno City.



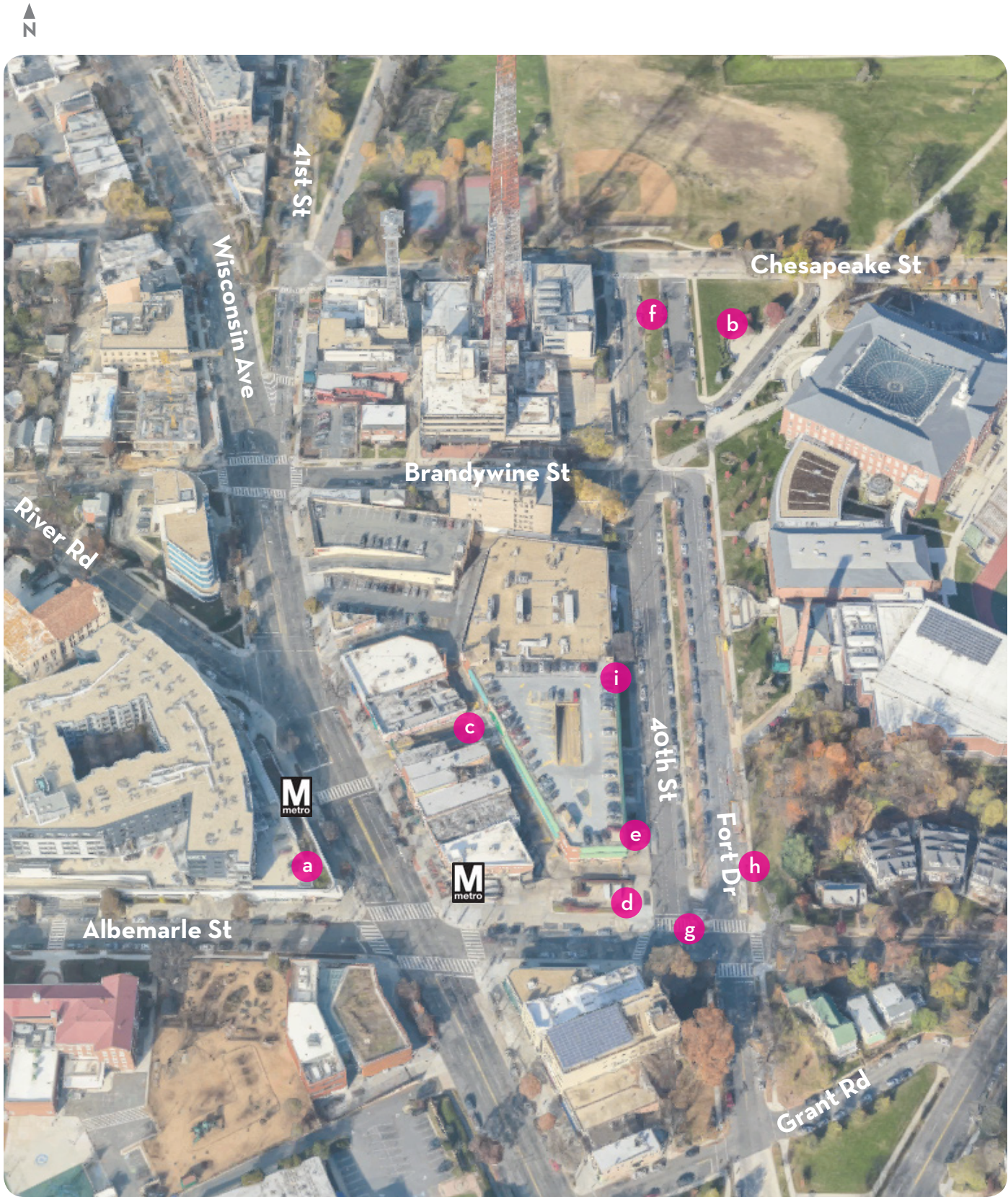
g Vibrant crosswalks and integrated wayfinding.



h Transit stops that encourage interaction and play, with a focus on the area’s prominent youth.



i Redeveloped buildings with active groundfloor edges on the 40th Street frontage and alley corners.



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Tenleytown Main Street

Leigh Catherine Miles, Executive Director

Photo Credits

Many photos used in the this study were contributed by UMD students taken during field work.

Precedent photos on pages 32, 34, 36, and 38 are courtesy of the referenced organization.

The photo on page 8 is courtesy of the Tenleytown Historical Society collection.

Study Notes

Page 7	The Gehl Institute's "A Mayor's Guide to Public Life" is accessible online at: mayorsguide.gehlinstitutione.org .
Page 8	Additional information on the methodology used for this public life study is accessible online at: gehlinstitutione.org/public-life-tools .
Page 14	Station entrance and exit data provided by WMATA. Weekday averages taken from months July through January, 2018.
Page 24	Three of the 120 counts are missing from the dataset.
Page 27	The map of aggregate stationary activity includes 55 of 84 scans. 29 of the scans were not mapped..

