



Station Area Advisory Committees

VISION PLAN

Allendale



INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first phase of the Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC). The SAAC process is part of the Red Line's public involvement program.

What role did the SAACs fulfill?

SAACs are advisory to the MTA. Each SAAC was extremely helpful and provided input about their community and how the proposed station location would "behave" in their community. The SAACs functioned as a focus group. The SAACs have three major responsibilities:

- Vision Planning
- Station Design and Goals
- Sharing Information

This document summarizes the SAAC's activities regarding Vision Planning and Station Location. The Vision Plans for each SAAC summarize the first half of the SAAC efforts. The second half of the effort will focus on Station Design and Goals. The meetings for this effort started in October of 2010 and concluded in early spring of 2011. The documentation of the Station Design and Goals efforts will be an addendum to the Vision Plans.



Light Rail Rendering

During the Vision Planning process, each SAAC decided on their station area's boundaries; examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their areas; and reviewed the connectivity elements for the proposed station locations. The SAACs not only examined what existed, but also thought about the potential for their areas. They also reviewed the station locations in relation to the Vision Plan for their station area. In some of the SAAC areas, it was confirmed that the station location was in keeping with the community goals and in other instances station locations were modified. Each Vision Plan explains the elements of the Visioning Process and the Station Location.

Once the SAACs completed their Vision Plan and confirmed their desired Station Location, Open Houses were held for the general public. These Open Houses were extensively advertised and over 400 citizens attended. There were four Open House sessions; each one focused on a different portion of the Red Line corridor. The areas were West – Baltimore County, Route 40 West, Downtown and the Eastside. At these Open Houses, the draft Vision Plans were discussed with the community and feedback was obtained. After this public feedback, the SAAC members revisited their Vision Plans to ensure, "Did we get it right?" The Vision Plans are the result of this effort.



STATION AREA VISION PLAN

Station Area Defined (analysis):

What do we see? What do we know? What is our Vision Area?

Analysis

a) Physical Boundaries

The Allendale Station is surrounded by urban rowhouse communities. The residential neighborhoods within the half-mile radius of the Allendale Station are traditional two-story rowhomes, many with front porches. These neighborhoods were part of the first wave of suburban living constructed post WWI. The northern community is Edmondson Village, including Edgewood and Lyndhurst neighborhood associations, and a portion of Rognel Heights. The southern community is primarily Allendale, Lower Edmondson Village and a portion of Saint Joseph's community.



Allendale rowhouses

The neighborhoods are bisected by Edmondson Avenue, a major arterial street that carries heavy commuter traffic during the a.m. and p.m. peaks. The Allendale Station section of Edmondson Avenue is primarily residential in character, with churches and corner commercial retail along the corridor.

The planning area boundaries established by the SAAC include the outermost boundaries of the four neighborhoods even beyond the half-mile radius. The boundaries are:

- **North:** Gwynns Falls and Leakin Park;
- **East:** Hilton Parkway and Hilton Street, and the Gwynns Falls Trail and Park;
- **South:** West Baltimore Street; and
- **West:** Woodington Road and Cathedral Cemetery.

The primary physical features of the planning area include Cathedral Cemetery and Gwynns Falls Park. The Gwynns Falls Park and Trail are part of a fourteen-mile hiker/biker trail that runs from the western City boundary to downtown. (See Figure 1: Housing and Figure 2: Station Area.)

b) Existing Conditions/Context

Transportation Network

Edmondson Avenue is the major transportation feature in the area. This arterial street carries significant traffic, especially in the a.m. and p.m. peaks. This roadway acts as a major commuter spine from the western counties through the City to downtown employment. Edmondson Avenue also accommodates major bus routes from the outer areas to the City's center.

The streets in the surrounding neighborhoods are primarily quiet routes which carry local traffic. (See Figure 3: Connectivity.)

Land Use

The primary character of this area is residential; two-story brick rowhouses, many with porches, frame the local streets. There are also several mid-rise and high-rise senior apartment buildings scattered throughout the area. Seniors comprise a significant portion of the planning area's population.



Lyndhurst Elementary School

Historically, the main area of retail activity for the community has been downtown, or small shopping niches along the Edmondson Avenue corridor, including the Edmonson Village Shopping Center to the west. Since this area developed as a residential neighborhood, retail is limited to corner stores at various intersections along Edmondson Avenue (Allendale Street, Edgewood Street and Loudon Avenue). Many of these corner locations are either vacant or do not meet the shopping needs of the community.

It is anticipated that retail activities at the Edmonson Village Shopping Center will continue to service the community. In addition, new mixed-use development is proposed for the West Baltimore MARC Station. The Red Line will provide easy access for the Allendale Station's surrounding neighborhoods.

Lyndhurst and Mary E. Rodman Elementary Schools are the primary schools serving these neighborhoods and are located in the immediate planning area. The secondary schools for these neighborhoods are located outside of the station area.

There are several churches in the neighborhood; on Edmonson Avenue there is Travelers Rest Bible Church, St. Bernardine Roman Catholic Church and Mt. Olive Holy Evangelistic Church.

The major open spaces in the area are the Gwynns Falls Trail and Leakin Park, the northern and eastern boundaries of the planning area. There are also a number of small parks (Harlem & Dennison Park, Gelston Park, Lyndhurst Park, and Kevin & Woodbridge) throughout the planning area. Many are poorly maintained and under-utilized. In general, pedestrian connections to and from the parks need to be improved in some cases, and established in others. SAAC members believe that access to the Gwynns Fall Hiker/Biker Trail is lacking. SAAC members also feel that the smaller neighborhood parks should be improved to enhance the neighborhoods art and culture.

Economic Development

The community has expressed concern over the lack of job opportunities in the immediate area. Most of the available jobs are temporary, not long term prospects. The community desires more stable full-time employment opportunities. The Red Line is viewed as a potential for employment opportunities. The expansion of MTA services (i.e. the Red Line), including the proposed Maintenance Shop and Yard will generate jobs. Construction job opportunities are of keen interest to the neighborhood. It was suggested that the MTA not provide an on-site cafeteria at the Shop and Yard so workers would take advantage of nearby carry-outs and restaurants. It was suggested that training opportunities be provided to enable local residents to acquire the necessary skills.

Safety and Security

To varying degrees, vacant housing and abandoned lots are a problem throughout the planning area. Though vacant houses exist throughout the community, the highest concentration of vacancies exists north of Edmondson Avenue. There is also a problem with vacant storefronts along Edmondson



Avenue. Throughout the planning area street lighting is poor and sidewalks are narrow and in disrepair.

The SAAC would prefer the installation of blue light cameras be stopped. It is perceived that the cameras have had an adverse impact on property values. Resources should be used for improved lighting, pruning trees and widening sidewalks.

Connectivity

Vehicular access in and out of the planning area from Edmondson Avenue is circuitous with many one-way and opposing streets. These have created significant barriers for traffic circulation within the community. Many of these one-way patterns were developed over time, either because some streets are very narrow and had to be one-way to accommodate parking, or over time the City created one-way streets to address neighborhood concerns regarding cut-through traffic. It may be time to re-evaluate the one-way street patterns, especially in conjunction with the new left turn patterns from Edmondson Avenue into the communities.

For the pedestrian, sidewalks are narrow and many are in disrepair. The sidewalks are also close to traffic lanes on Edmondson Avenue. With the congestion and speed of traffic, the pedestrian feels uncomfortable walking along the street. The combination of the aforementioned makes pedestrian access within the community, and to the proposed Red Line station, difficult. Crosswalks are not clearly marked, and often do not provide direct connections across intersections and at bus transfer points.

Better and more direct pedestrian and bicycle access to Gwynns Falls Park is desired.



*Edmondson Village houses,
Wildwood Parkway*

The SAAC has requested wider sidewalks. Traffic calming measures such as increased sidewalk widths, curb extensions at intersections and narrow traffic lanes are desired. The goal is to have streets that provide a comfortable and safe environment for pedestrians. This is especially important because of the number of seniors in the community.

Neighborhood Identity

The planning area includes several neighborhoods. Their stability is being threatened by the growing number of vacant houses and the perceived lack of code enforcement. Many houses that are not vacant appear to be deteriorating. The highest concentration of vacant houses exists in the eastern neighborhoods, both north and south of Edmondson Avenue.

Though there are no formalized historic districts in the community, the idea of historic district designation as a strategy for individual home owners to participate in the revitalization of their community was discussed.

Sustainability

The SAAC is committed to rejuvenating the community, including sustainable “green” design principles as an integral part of that rejuvenation. The primary development within this station area is likely to be infill redevelopment and renovation of existing homes. The City’s new “green building” code will ensure that new development will conform to “green” design.

The SAAC also thinks that designating historic districts would aid in recycling buildings rather than demolishing them. The City’s Transform Baltimore comprehensive rezoning efforts will also ensure that the zoning for this area is appropriate and that any new development would be in keeping with the

existing character of the neighborhoods. The SAAC is also supportive of the development of green industries that will support the community.

c) Stabilization Area vs. Redevelopment Area

The SAAC sees this area as a stabilization area. The stability of the area is currently being threatened by the number of vacant and deteriorating homes. There is also the potential for some neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). This could include strategically located senior housing and convenience retail. (See Figure 4: Opportunity for Change.)

Station Area Vision: What changes? What stays the same? What do we value?

Values

The SAAC reviewed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to their Station Area. The following summarizes their thoughts:



Vaughn Greene Funeral Home

Strengths

- A solid working class affordable community conveniently located close to jobs at Social Security, Bon Secours and St. Agnes Hospitals.
- The area is bordered by open space park land at Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park and buffered by the stable affluent Hunting Ridge community.

Weaknesses

- SAAC members believe their community has been overlooked by the City. For a decade or more the neighborhood has exhibited growing signs of distress, including an increase in crime, sanitation problems and disinvestment.
- Much of the housing stock has been converted into undesirable apartments and/or vacated.

Opportunities

- A complete Master Plan already exists.
- The implementation of this plan coincides with many of the recommended “Opportunity for Change” elements of the SAAC efforts.

Threats

- Continued open air drug activity.
- Houses continue to be vacated and not redeveloped for occupancy.
- Houses are deteriorating and code enforcement is lacking.
- Vacant lots are not maintained.
- Neighborhood streets and alleys need to be improved and maintained, including lighting.



Goals : What are our Vision Area Goals? What do we want to see for the future?

The SAAC envisions more housing options as their most important long term need. More housing options would attract more young families and provide for existing seniors to age within the community.

The desire is for future development to create a senior and family friendly community with improved access to services and more code enforcement. There would be improvements to the existing community recreation centers with staffing to serve both the senior and youth populations. There would be a mix of new and improved public outdoor spaces with new sidewalks, more lighting and landscaping. The community's local heritage should be preserved.



New Covenant Worship Center, UMC

Guiding Principles

Preamble

By focusing not only on where the Red Line will run and where the stations will be located, the success of the Red Line will be defined by what it contributes to the surrounding communities. The desire is for the Red Line investment to contribute to job generation, provide access to more jobs, present economic opportunities, and help make the neighborhood a good place to live because of easy access to transportation, thus helping to decrease housing blight. To goal is also to increase housing choices, while enhancing the urban environmental infrastructure, neighborhoods and historic districts.

Transportation

- Maintain and/or re-establish emergency access to all residential areas.
- Provide new off-street parking in the rear of the Edmondson Avenue residences.

Walkability

- Consider a station location that minimizes pedestrians crossing vehicular traffic.
- Enhance ability for pedestrians to walk to the station.

Economic Development/Redevelopment

- Enhance opportunities to maximize the potential of unused and underutilized properties adjacent to the station.
- Consider the station as the center of the community, the front door.
- Plan facilities (housing & services) for the aging residents, and promote Aging in Place.

Housing

- Provide for a variety of affordable housing types.
- Re-use and or redevelop vacant housing.
- Promote home ownership.

Historic Preservation

- Support the establishment of an Historic Preservation District to help owner occupants finance the restoration of their homes.

Infrastructure, Safety and Security

- Implement standards that provide generous sidewalks, separating the pedestrians from vehicular traffic with landscaping.
- Provide a variety of lighting levels that ensure aesthetics, safety and sustainability.



Mt. Olive Holy Evangelistic Church

The SAAC envisions small and medium development opportunities. The SAAC would like to see many small-scale fabric improvements throughout their planning area. This small-scale development should respect and preserve the existing fabric and character of the community. The SAAC aims to use the integrity of the existing neighborhoods as a foundation upon which to build.

Examples of small scale improvements include block restructuring, new construction in-fill on vacant parcels, individual rowhouse rehabilitation and turning vacant lots into community gardens.

Streetscape improvements could include increasing street trees and creating wider sidewalks with pedestrian scaled lighting, clear, direct crosswalks at intersections, and curb extensions at intersections to slow vehicular traffic.

The SAAC desires the wise use limited resources; low vacancy rates in stable neighborhoods should be addressed first. The Evergreen neighborhood was used as an example of a neighborhood with high ownership rates and a low number of vacancies. Neighborhoods with higher vacancy rates should be stabilized and developed later.

New developments should diversify housing options to attract new residents and allow seniors to age in place.

Vacant lots in rowhouse neighborhoods could be developed into scattered site housing for seniors, but the developments should be coordinated.

New development should create economic opportunities for community residents.

The SAAC views mending edges and improving connectivity as important.

The SAAC aims to use new development to eliminate barriers, mend the edges and create connections between the station and surrounding neighborhood assets. Development and streetscape improvements should create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections, and they should reduce the impact of vehicular traffic. The following improvements need to be made throughout the planning area:

- Sidewalks need to be repaired and widened, especially in areas that serve seniors.
- Neighborhoods need better lighting for streets and parks.
- Trees should be planted along all streets and replaced where they are missing.
- Designated area for dog runs should be established in neighborhood parks.



Vision Statement

The Allendale SAAC envisions the Station Area to be a combination of both the neighborhood TOD and Stabilization area types in terms of land use vision. Lower scale, smaller mixed-use and TOD is desired for the area immediately adjacent to the station, however, stabilization and preservation is desired for the majority of the Vision Area with the station serving as an incentive for additional investment.

The station is envisioned as a Walk-Up Station with an emphasis on enhanced pedestrian and bus connections to the station.

STATION CONCEPT

Station Location

Platform Location/Behavior

According to the locally preferred alternative, the Allendale Station will be located on the median in the center of Edmondson Avenue at Allendale Street.

The SAAC is concerned that the pedestrian and vehicular access to the station will be difficult, particularly for seniors. The design for pedestrian access needs to consider seniors and provide sufficient time for crossing at a safe location. Pedestrian activated control at traffic signal locations should be considered.

Platform Type

SAAC members preferred the split platform design, with platforms east and west of Allendale Street. The split platform would minimize encroachment into private residential property on either side of Edmondson Avenue.



The Allendale, senior housing

Alignment Issues

This section of the alignment has a relatively narrow right-of-way. Discussions regarding the alignment have considered locations of bus stops, left turns, the number of travel lanes and on-street parking.

Station Performance & Station Image – Neighborhood Identity

This document summarized the Vision Plan and Station Location efforts of the SAAC. This concludes the first phase of the SAAC efforts.

The second phase of the efforts begins in October 2011 and is anticipated to run through early spring of 2012. During this second phase, the SAACs will focus on Station Performance and Station Image. The discussions will include elements such as:

- **Urban Design and Site Planning:** This will cover the functional relationship of the station to the neighborhood. The SAAC will review station orientation, accessibility, landscape/hardscape and visual and physical connectivity (pedestrians, bicycles and autos – intermodal).
- **Station Programming:** This will include discussions on system-wide elements and elements that may become “customized” per neighborhood station.
- **Station Image-Neighborhood Identity:** The SAAC will discuss special features, art in transit and recommend station names.



Edmondson Village community sign

The outcome of the second phase of SAAC efforts will be documented as an addendum to the Vision Plan.

Fig. 1

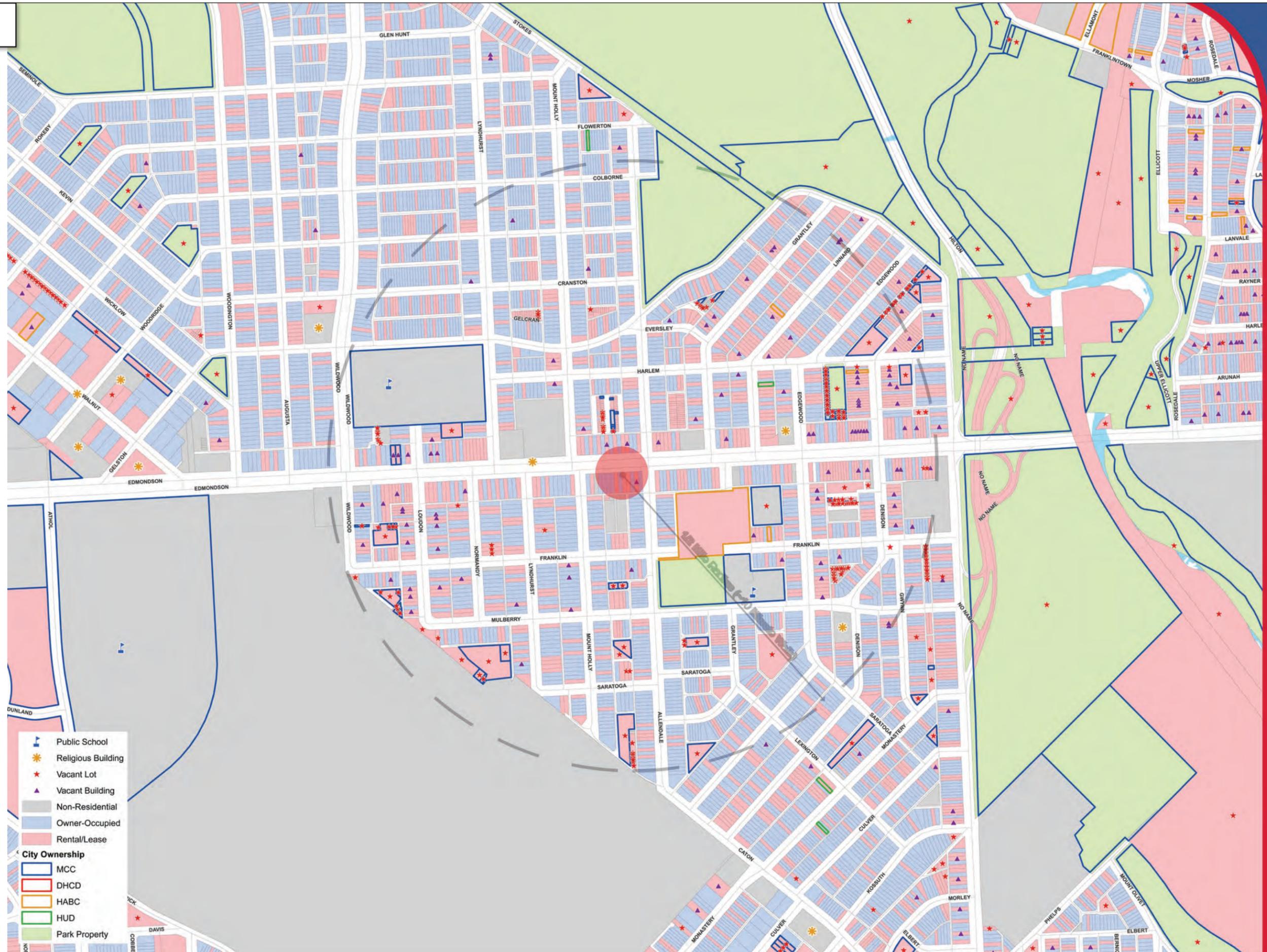


Fig. 2

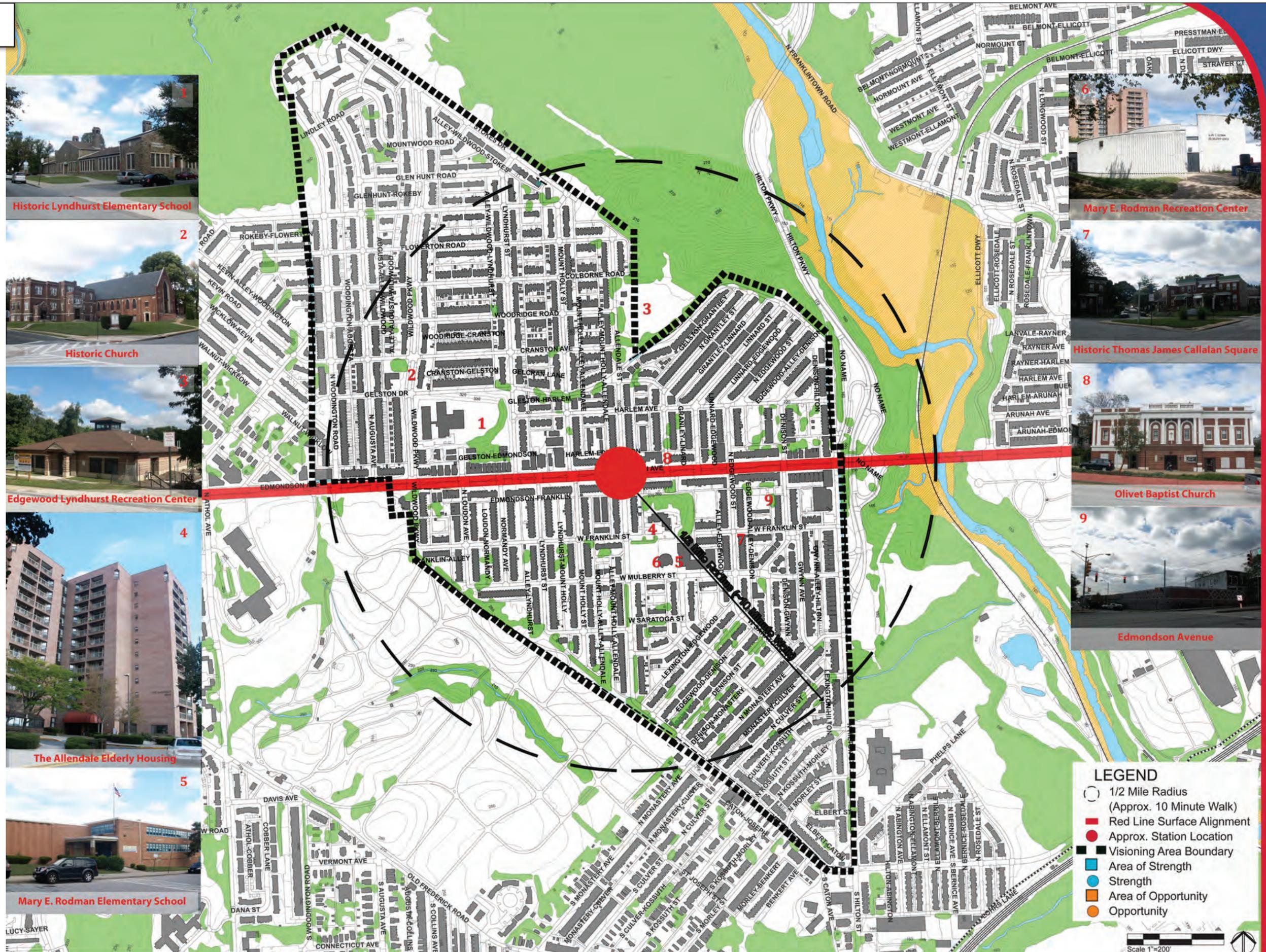


Fig. 3

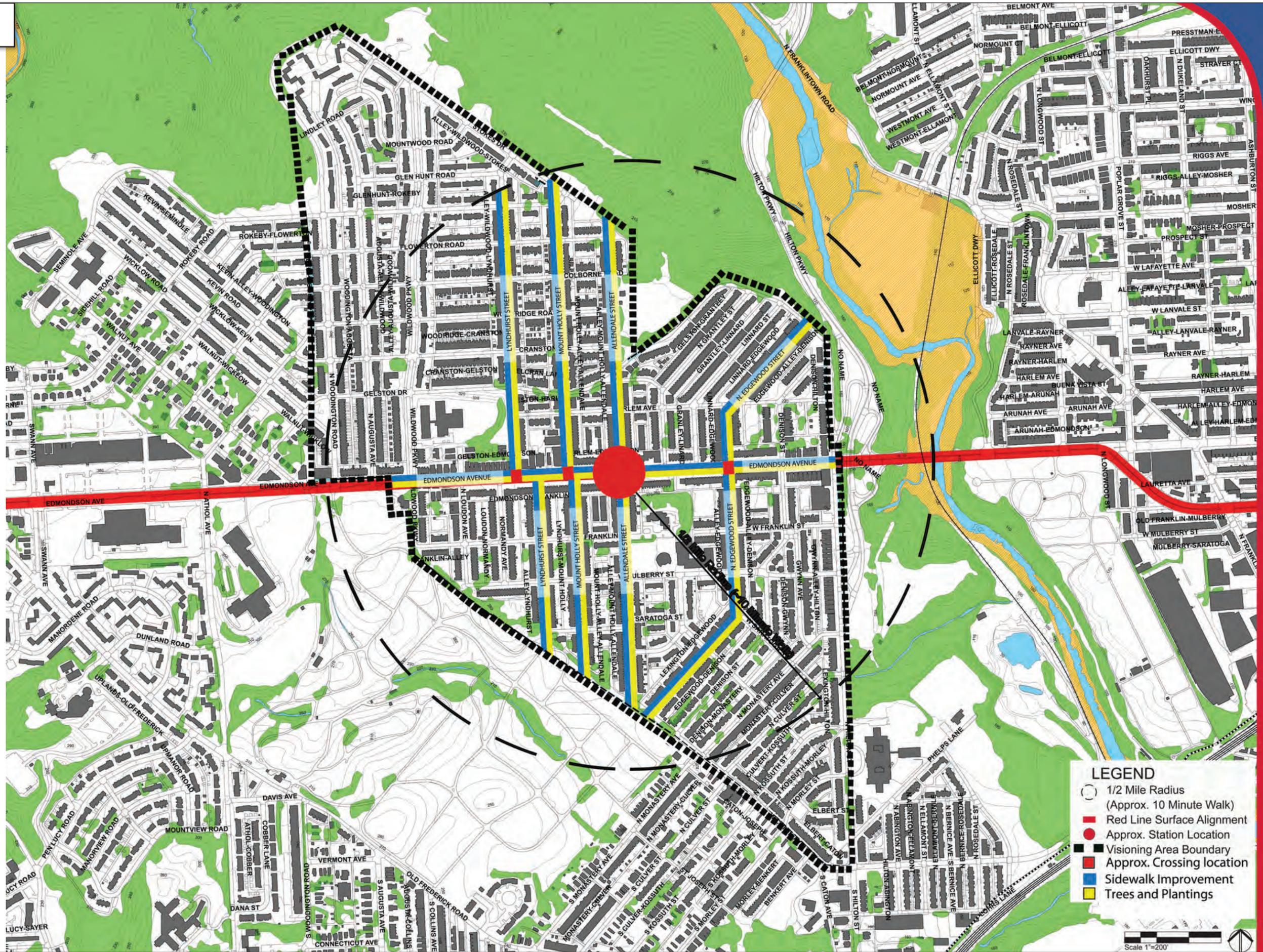


Fig. 4

