

HISTORIC
LINCOLN PARK
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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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LINCOLN PARK NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN AMENDMENT

An Amendment to the previously adopted 2007 Lincoln Park
Neighborhood Conservation District Plan

January 27, 2025



CITY OF ROCKVILLE
MARYLAND

LINCOLN PARK NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN AMENDMENT



Mayor and Council of Rockville

Monique Ashton, Mayor
Kate Fulton
Barry Jackson
David Myles
Izola (Zola) Shaw
Marissa Valeri
Adam Van Grack

City of Rockville Planning Commission

Jaime Ivan Espinosa, Chair
Shayan Salahuddin
Eric Fulton
Suzan Pitman
Meng Sun

The 2007 Lincoln Park Community Preservation Committee

Was constituted as an all-volunteer citizen's committee to study and recommend a method to preserve the neighborhood character and history of Lincoln Park

Lucinda Hall, Chair
Hazel Offutt, Vice Chair

2007 Community Committee Participants

Wilma Bell
Ruth Brown
Whitney Coleman
Bessie Corbin
Rev. Rodney Davis, Crusader Church
Louda Eller
Rev. Leon Grant, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church or representative
Fran Hawkins
Maude Kilgo
William Lee
Catina Morris
Beryl McWilliams
Dorothy Prather
Anita Summerour
Mindy Davis Waldron
James Wilburn

2007 Peerless Rockville Representative

Terry Lachin

2007 City of Rockville Staff

Jim Wasilak, Chief of Planning
Judy Christensen, (Former) Preservation Planner
Shelby Spillers, (Former) Preservation Planner

2025 Amendment Advisory Committee Participants

Anita Neal Powell
Alexandra Dace Denito
Omobogie Amadasu
Robin Prather
David Fei
Sergio Diaz
Ruth Ann Davis

2025 City of Rockville Staff

Ricky Barker, AICP, Director of Community Planning and Development Services
Jim Wasilak, AICP, Chief of Zoning
John Foreman, AICP, Development Services Manager
Chris Davis, Senior Planner
Jane Lyons-Raedar, (Former) Principal Planner

1. Purpose, Intent and Goals

The *Lincoln Park Conservation District Plan and Development Standards* (“District Plan”) was adopted in 2007 by the Mayor and Council for the purpose of preserving the existing character of the streetscape and community. The site design of a structure in an area is an essential part of its character. This design includes the streetscape in which the structure is set, setbacks, driveways, walkways, retaining walls and fences, the way a structure sits on its lot in relation to other structures and the street, and other landscaping elements. Certain common characteristics of Lincoln Park and its structures have and continue to define the character of the community. Traditionally, residential structures were sited on lots in a way that emphasized a progression of public to private spaces. Streetscapes led to sidewalks; sidewalks led to yards and front walkways, which led to porches and the private spaces within a house. In some instances, fences were used at the edge of the yard to further define these spaces. Preservation of these progressions is essential to the preservation of the residential character of structures and of Lincoln Park. Street trees and rear yard trees are also part of the neighborhood character. Front lawns with walkways to an entry door, often with a covered porch, define the sites in Lincoln Park. The size, height, massing and location, or setbacks from the property lines, of structures on building lots are also character traits of Lincoln Park.

The intent of this amended plan remains the same to preserve the existing character of the Lincoln Park neighborhood. However, the plan also seeks to balance its preservation goals with the needs of residents to utilize their property and fulfill their living needs. Therefore, this plan amendment maintains certain standards, such as for lots and streets, while amending other standards, namely building footprint and height, to address challenges expressed by property owners and residents when seeking to improve their property.

This plan is an amendment to the City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan, and the policies in this plan supersede any conflicting policies in the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This plan amendment also fully supersedes the 2007 *Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District Plan*.

The specific goals of this plan are to:

1. To conserve and strengthen the unique identity and sense of place that exists among residents in the neighborhood.
2. To promote complementary and context-sensitive development between new and existing structures, while also allowing creative design.
3. To maintain and enhance a walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment.

2. 2025 Plan Amendment

During the creation of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* (“Comprehensive Plan”), adopted in 2021, Lincoln Park residents voiced concerns about how some new homes and additions have impacted the neighborhood, despite the Conservation Plan and associated standards in effect. Since the adoption of

the District Plan standards, residents have also commented on the challenges that such standards have created when attempting to complete property improvements.

It is understood that over time, neighborhoods can experience a stage during which adjacent buildings may evolve at different rates. The physical characteristics of adjacent houses, such as height and massing, might be quite different from one another as trends and the local market ebb and flow. This plan amendment recognizes that neighborhood change is a perfectly normal and expected process, and buildings standards should support and provide flexibility to property owners while continuing to recognize and conserve distinct aspects of the neighborhood.

Residents have expressed that the standards created by the 2007 *Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District Plan* have proven to be outdated and resulted in unintended issues for residents wishing to receive a building permit for their property. As such, the Comprehensive Plan recommends reviewing the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District (LPNCD) standards to determine whether updates or amendments are warranted. The LPNCD was established as a function of two primary components; 1) a conservation district plan and 2) a conservation district overlay zone. After approval of this plan amendment, an associated Zoning Text Amendment should be approved to reflect the plan changes in the conservation district overlay zone. This plan amendment represents a collaborative effort between City leaders, residents, community members and staff to review and address challenges with the existing conservation district standards.

2. Lincoln Park Characteristics¹

Lincoln Park is a well-established, predominately residential neighborhood located in central Rockville, to the east of the WMATA and CSX rail lines, surrounded on three sides by a variety of uses, particularly light industrial. The neighborhood is one of the oldest African American communities in Montgomery County, dating back to the 1850s. Lincoln Park has a strong neighborhood identity, due in large part to long-term residents, some of whom are part of families who have lived in the community for several generations. The past several decades have brought new residents from a variety of backgrounds, creating a racially diverse and multi-cultural community.

Land use in the Lincoln Park planning area is varied, but primarily features detached residential (49 percent) and industrial (26 percent) uses.² Of the 335 total residential units in the planning area, 219 are detached and 57 are attached.³ Most residential lots are narrow yet deep, most often measuring about 10,000 square feet. This configuration is remnant of needs from the late 19th century when property owners depended on wells for water and outhouses or septic drainage fields for toilet and sanitary needs. In addition, most families raised a vegetable garden and kept small livestock and poultry to provide food for the table and for sale. Some owners also had a horse or mule for transportation or labor.

¹ Adapted from the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* and the 2007 *Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District Plan*

² Source: City of Rockville land records and GIS, 2019.

³ Source: City of Rockville land records and GIS, 2019.

Homes in Lincoln Park have historically been modest in size, with an average of 1,200 to 1,500 square feet. Nowadays, homes in Lincoln Park are a variety of ages, sizes, conditions, and architectural styles. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of original homes being torn down and replaced by new houses of a much larger scale.

3. Amended Conservation District Standards

The original 2007 District Plan established the specific standards for new construction and one-story additions. It also provided specified how appeal of the standards would be handled. To address the challenges noted by residents, such standards are updated as noted below:

Standards for New Construction

- 1. The maximum building footprint of the primary dwelling on a lot is 1,800 square feet or the maximum lot coverage of the property's base zone, whichever is less. The 1,800 square foot maximum building footprint does not include an unenclosed porch attached to the primary dwelling and facing a street frontage.**
- 2. The maximum height of a structure is 30 feet from the existing grade to the peak of the roof.**
- 3. The minimum front setback is 25 feet.**

Building Footprint Standard for Additions to Existing One-Story Homes

If an existing one-story house is retained after construction of an addition to a primary dwelling, the addition may increase the maximum building footprint of the primary dwelling to 2,100 square feet or the maximum lot coverage of the property's base zone, whichever is less. The 2,100 square foot maximum building footprint does not include an unenclosed porch attached to the primary dwelling and facing a street frontage. The total of the addition cannot exceed the present total square footage of the house without obtaining a new single-unit dwelling permit.

Future Amendments to Standards

The above standards are highly specific. As observed following the adoption of the standards in 2007 and through the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, updates may be needed to zoning standards from time to time to ensure they are meeting the intent of this plan, which is to ensure both community preservation and some flexibility in design for homeowners constructing new homes or modifying homes within the neighborhood. Accordingly, this plan supports future amendments to the standards for new construction within the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation Zone, as long as the amendments are necessary or desirable to support the intent of this plan. Such amendments would not require further modifications to this plan document.

Alternative Compliance

To provide further flexibility to property owners and residents, this plan amendment also revises the process for appealing the conservation district standards. Whereas the District Plan originally established a variance as the method for seeking relief from the standards, this plan recommends using an “alternative compliance” process rather than the variance to accommodate any appeals to the district standards. Alternative compliance will be an administrative review decided upon by the Chief of Zoning and intended to be a more streamlined review process as compared to a variance which requires a public hearing and decision by the Board of Appeals; the variance also requires applicants to meet stricter criteria as compared to those required by the alternative compliance process, which are stated below:

1. Meets or exceeds the purpose and intent of the standard for which alternative compliance is requested;
2. Provides an equal or better design solution in terms of livability for residents and impacts on neighboring property; and
3. Accomplishes one or more of the following goals:
 - i. Conserves and strengthens the unique identity and sense of place that exists among residents in the neighborhood;
 - ii. Promotes complementary and context-sensitive development between new and existing structures, while also allowing for creative design; and
 - iii. Maintains and enhances a walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment.

Requests for Alternative Compliance may only be granted for restrictions related to the Conservation District and not for standards related to the base zoning district. Standards related to the base zoning can be requested for a variance.

4. Boundaries of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District

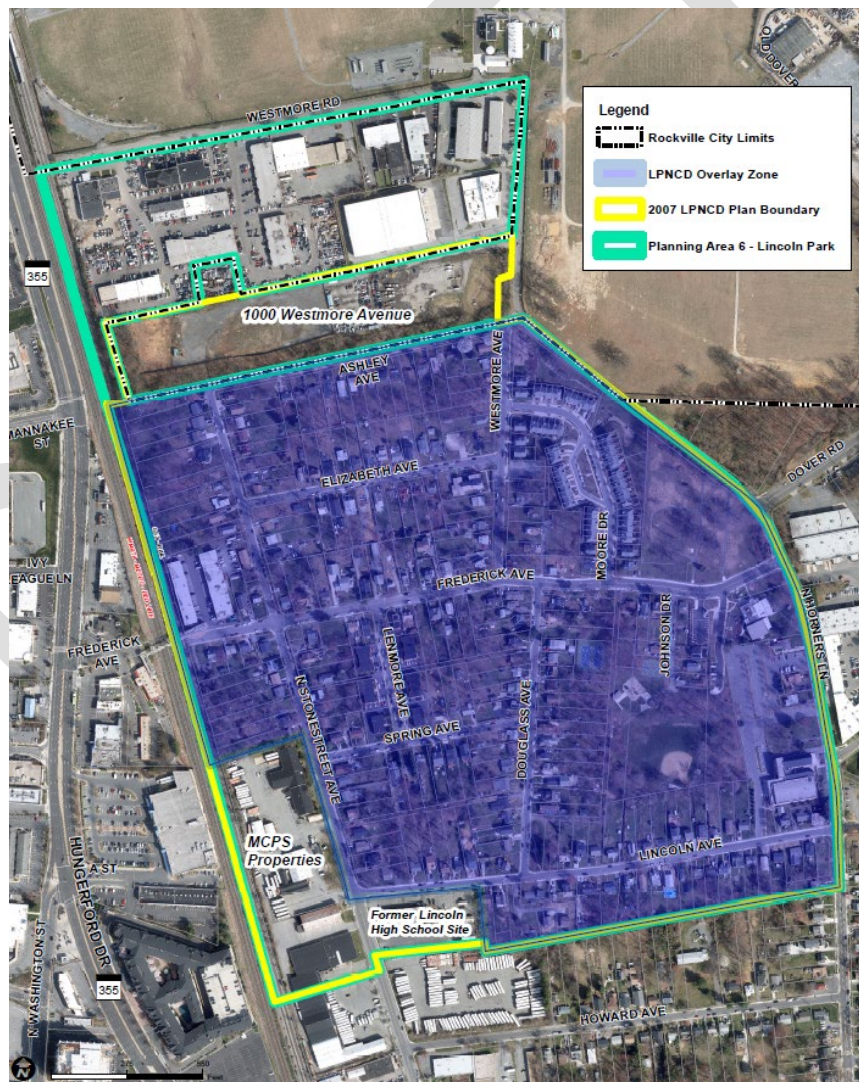
The 2007 plan boundary of the LPNCD largely maps to the Lincoln Park planning area (Planning Area 6) as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, with the notable inclusion of 1000 Westmore Avenue (former WINX site), and exclusion of the properties just south of Westmore Road. No changes are proposed to the 2007 plan boundary with this amended plan.

In addition to the 2007 LPNCD plan boundary, a LPNCD overlay zone boundary also exists which is applicable to the neighborhood. In order to formally implement the residential standards mentioned in the 2007 LPNCD plan, the LPNCD was incorporated into the City’s Zoning Ordinance (“Ordinance”) in the form of an overlay zone during the 2009 comprehensive update of the city’s Ordinance and Zoning Map. An overlay zone provides zoning requirements for a specified area in addition to an area’s base zoning. The “base” or primary zoning for the Lincoln Park neighborhood is R-60 (Single-Family Detached, Residential).

As shown on Map 1 below, a discrepancy exists between the 2007 LPNCD plan boundary and the existing overlay zone boundary. Specifically, the 2007 plan boundary includes the 1000 Westmore

Avenue property currently located outside the city limits, the operational facilities site for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) located on the west side of North Stonestreet Avenue, and the historic Lincoln High School site located at the corner of North Stonestreet Avenue and Lincoln Avenue. However, these sites are not currently included within the LPNCD overlay zone boundary. While it is unclear why such discrepancies exist between the 2007 plan and the overlay zone boundaries, the overlay zone may have excluded the previously mentioned properties due to their long-standing non-residential uses and the focus of the LPNCD towards single-unit detached homes. The Comprehensive Plan further recommends that the LPNCD boundary be amended to remove these properties from the District since the LPNCD includes regulations geared toward single-unit detached development on individual lots rather than large-lot, non-residential parcels. Any changes to the boundaries of the LPNCD overlay zone would come through a separate, future effort.

Map 1: Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District Boundaries



5. Remaining Conservation District Standards

Lots and Streets

The following section related to lots and street design standards was not a part of the review effort for this plan amendment and its associated community outreach and engagement. Thus, this plan carries over the lots and street standards from the 2007 plan. In any future updates to the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District, lots and street standards should be evaluated and possibly updated, with input from the neighborhood.

Lots:

- Assemblage of separate lots for new development is not permitted.
- Resubdivision of existing original lots is not permitted.
- Pipestem lots are not permitted.

Streets:

Streets were platted within the subdivisions as a rough north-south-east-west grid. Lincoln, Frederick, Spring, Elizabeth, and Ashley are east-west aligned. Douglass, Westmore, Stonestreet (Biltmore) and Horners Lane are north-south aligned. Horners Lane varies in direction, but existed prior to the platting of Lincoln Park only to the intersection of Parklawn Drive. Moore Drive was created in the late 1950's on a non-platted parcel to service an apartment complex, Lincoln Terrace. Johnson Drive is a private lane created before the present zoning code was adopted. Lenmore Avenue was created to serve the Lenmore Apartments and is not an original platted street. These existing later streets are grandfathered in, but additional streets should not be added. The original street grid is a character feature of Lincoln Park and should be preserved.

- New streets and private access driveways that function as streets are not permitted within the existing residential platted subdivisions. New streets in character with the community are permitted within redevelopment areas.
- Cul de sacs accessing structures set back from the main roads are not permitted.

Demolition

Demolition of any structure in any part of Rockville is evaluated for historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance by the Historic Preservation staff and the Historic District Commission and may be recommended as eligible for designation as a single site historic district to the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council may hold a separate public hearing and make the final decision. Historic Designation may result in denial of the demolition application.

6. Recommended Actions:

- *Action 1* - Update Sec. 25.14.03 and of the Zoning Ordinance to comply with this plan.

- **Action 2** - In any future updates to the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Conservation District, lots and streets standards should be evaluated and possibly updated, with input from the neighborhood.

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