Penn Line TOD Study
TOD Opportunity Analysis

Bowie State Station

Preliminary Analysis Findings, January 29, 2024

Gensler

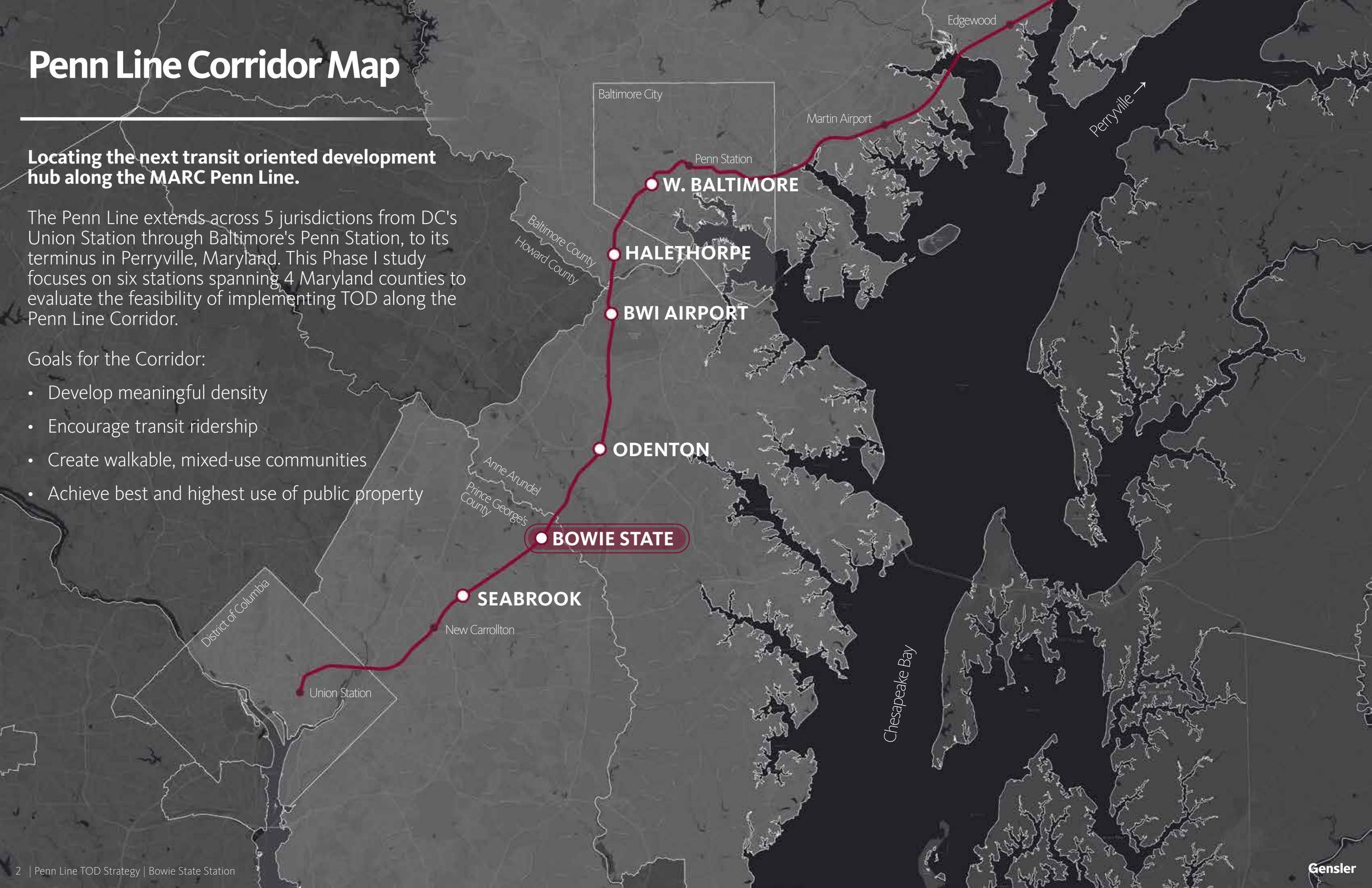
Penn Line Corridor Map

Locating the next transit oriented development hub along the MARC Penn Line.

The Penn Line extends across 5 jurisdictions from DC's Union Station through Baltimore's Penn Station, to its terminus in Perryville, Maryland. This Phase I study focuses on six stations spanning 4 Maryland counties to evaluate the feasibility of implementing TOD along the Penn Line Corridor.

Goals for the Corridor:

- Develop meaningful density
- Encourage transit ridership
- Create walkable, mixed-use communities
- Achieve best and highest use of public property

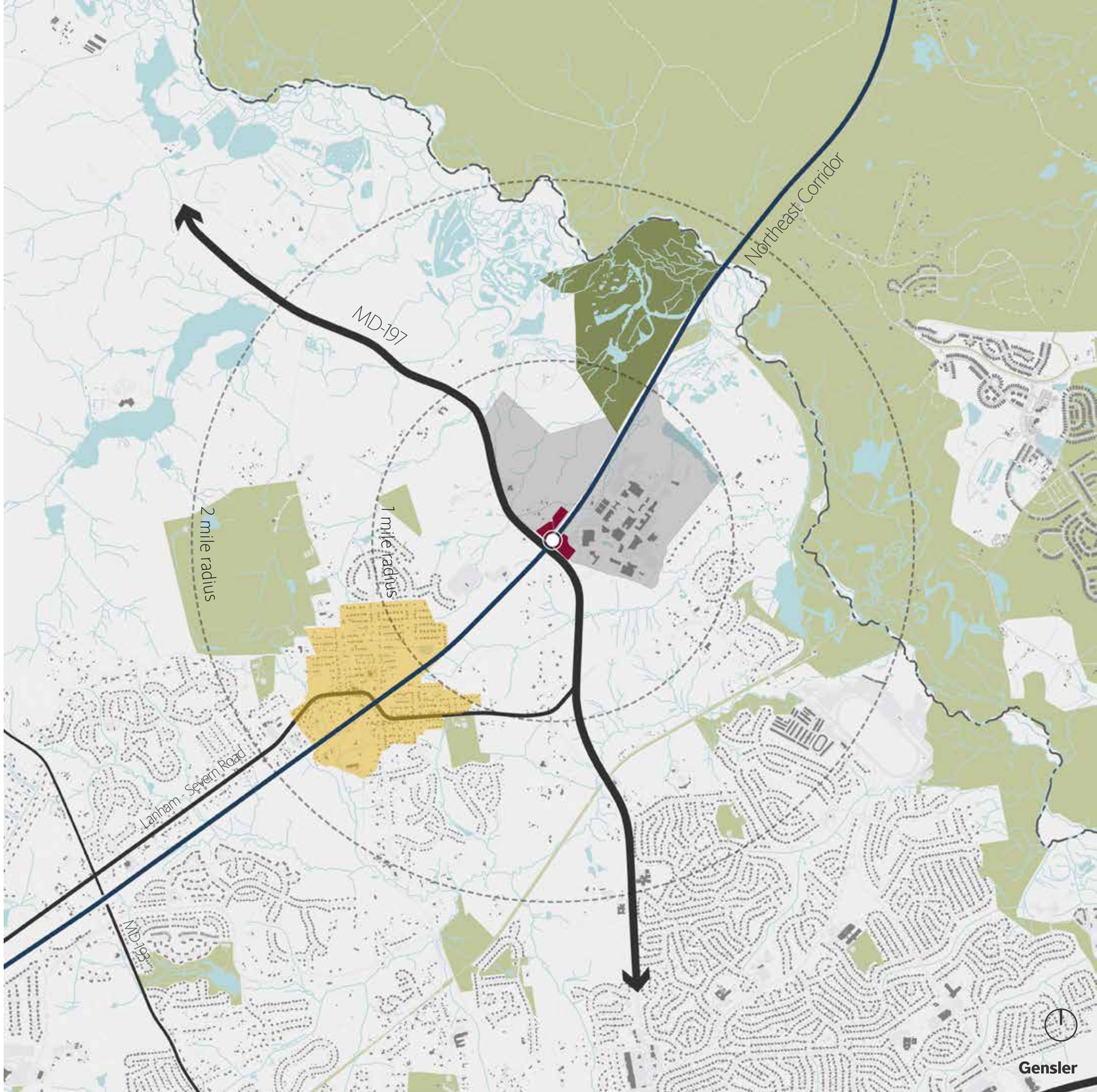


Gensler

Local Context

PLAN 2035 CENTERS

- The study focus area is located at the heart of the BSU MARC Campus Center as delineated in the Bowie-Mitchellville and Vicinity Master Plan
- The Patuxent Research Refuge stretches south towards the Bowie State University campus, providing BSU students, faculty, and staff with environmental and recreational amenities in close proximity
- Old Town Bowie is a fantastic cultural and historic asset for the region, but provides limited community retail spaces that would support the needs and interests of the student population at Bowie State



Bowie State Station Focus Area
BSU MARC Campus Center
Patuxent Research Refuge
Designated parkland
Old Town Bowie

What We Heard

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TAKEAWAYS

GROWTH

- The Thurgood Marshall Library and Academic Commons will be sited on the existing MLK Communications Building site; design will commence later this year (we can be intentional about the connection from the MARC station back towards campus and Henry Circle)
- University **enrollment growth remains steady**; finding additional space on campus for physical expansion is limited; other areas must be considered
- Strong desire to **create an innovation district near campus** to attract corporate partners and government agencies to locate / establish physical presence and university connections and relationships with prospective future employees

CULTURE

- There is a **culture of entrepreneurship** and innovation at Bowie State that can be expanded and supported by new spaces on campus
- Providing affordable student housing options on and/or near campus for upper division and graduate students is a top priority; trying to **move culturally from a commuter campus to a residential campus**
- People coming from the station should have a **clear view of campus on arrival**
- Providing **more retail** spaces for **food and beverage** (especially sit down establishments) and other community services (health, wellness, and beauty) is desired
- Private housing developers could provide a **year-round occupancy** option; this would be particularly attractive for international students

DEVELOPMENT

- Proposed **zoning reforms adjacent to campus** seek to enact a Neighborhood Activity Center to provide "lower-density, small-scale, mixed-use centers that serve local neighborhood needs"
- Adjacent private property owners have been reluctant to sell; they know the worth of their property and have not been re-engaged recently about possible acquisitions
- Aware that an RFP will be released soon by PG County for the parcels adjacent to the BSU MARC Station that seeks to develop a mixed-use village
- Existing **BGE access road** along Laurel-Bowie Rd. limits development potential and university visibility from the road
- **Limited public infrastructure** exists beyond the BSU campus; would need to be extended in coordination with new development
- On site parking for privately developed student housing is cost prohibitive

A Vision for Bowie State Station:

"Gateway to Innovation"

Catalyst for mixed-use development
Campus connector
Supporting university research & student life
Year-round population

Planning Context

PRIOR PLANNING STUDIES AND REPORTS

- Bowie State University, the Bowie State MARC station, and the Prince George's County-owned land adjacent to the university all have had extensive planning efforts over their history with thoughtful energy and time invested
- This analysis seeks to validate these studies within the current context of the site today, current university enrollment trends, MARC ridership trends, and general development climate and market
- Some of the key plans referenced to inform this analysis include the following (listed A to D at right):

  A Bowie State MARC Station Area Concept (2019)

  B Bowie-Mitchellville and Vicinity Master Plan - BSU / MARC Campus Center Area (2023 update)

  C Bowie State University Facilities Master Plan (2020)

  D MARC Station Sector Plan (legacy) 2010

- Other plans such as the Bowie State University Economic Development Plan, Strategic Plan, and the ULI Technical Assistance Panel (2020) were also vital references to provide institutional priorities and values
- Per the Facilities Master Plan, the development of a convocation center is a key program element for west campus

Informing the Vision

BSU MARC Campus Center
(from Bowie-Mitchellville & Vicinity Master Plan)

- Focus expanded office, classroom, retail, and other amenities at the BSU MARC Station in a mixed-use, transit-oriented development.
- **Develop a residential base for students and employees to live near Bowie State University and reduce traffic congestion to, from, and around campus.**
- **Improve pedestrian connectivity to facilitate transit access and reduce automobile dependency.**
- **Promote neighborhood-serving retail to meet students' and employees' needs** and encourage locally owned business development.
- The undeveloped County-owned land northwest of the station and the station parking lots can be leveraged to better serve the needs of the BSU campus community and offer additional amenities and expanded transit access through transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Low connectivity by foot, bicycle, and public transit to the broader plan area.
- Roughly 80% of students live off campus. The campus community presents a promising base for new residential development around the focus area. An increased residential base, improved pedestrian connectivity, and a mix of uses would support the development of a vibrant community

MD 197 Corridor (from BM&V Master Plan)

- MD 197 (Laurel Bowie/Collington Road) serves as an important local connector for residents of the plan area, with Bowie State University and the Bowie State MARC Station on the north end, and Bowie Local Town Center to the south.
- The corridor's residential and scenic character, paired with existing and planned trails and side paths, present an **opportunity to increase safety and connectivity**, while the retail spending gap and certain aging properties present an opportunity to expand its commercial market.
- The MD-197 corridor has few retail and commercial uses
- **Develop new retail and residential options at and near the BSU MARC Campus Center**. With few retail options available at the northern end of the corridor, there is potential for retail development near Bowie State University. University-related uses may also support office development near campus
- Expand existing performance and art groups, including those associated with BSU Theatre
- Developers and utility companies have historically been less inclined to bury utility lines in Prince George's County

BSU Facilities Master Plan Goals

1. Strengthens Henry Circle as a visitor destination, hub of campus activity and node to other campus spaces
2. **Creates an innovative living-learning residential neighborhood between Jericho Park Road, Henry Circle and MARC station**
3. **Improves the arrival experience, spatial definition and pedestrian connections within the existing campus core**
4. Reconfigures the athletics precinct to enhance the experience and strengthen access to sports events
5. **Leverages MARC station to develop convocation center as an anchor for a future mixed-use TOD neighborhood**
6. Protects and enhances sensitive environmental features surrounding the campus

Existing Site

MARC Station Evaluation Criteria

- Our station analyses employ two separate but complementary processes to identify site constraints and opportunities and their accompanying recommendations / target areas for investment.
- GIS and other publicly available planimetric data was used to develop the TOD Readiness Index (detailed at right.) The tool documents existing station conditions under six key categories that characterize successful TODs. The findings from this effort provide our team with the information to:
  1. identify the most suitable sites within a given station area to target for TOD (i.e. viability)
  2. determine each individual parcel's overall readiness for TOD (i.e. near- vs. long-term)
  3. prepare a detailed diagnosis of the current soft spots / areas for improvement at each station that informs initial priorities and recommendations for reinvestment
- In addition, our physical analysis of existing station site conditions helps our team to highlight other important site constraints and opportunities and guides the development of initial planning principles and site organization strategies.

Transit Connectivity & Service

Transit Connectivity *(number of lines)*

Rail Service Frequency

Bus Service Frequency

Passenger Amenities

Walkability

Pedestrian Experience
(sidewalks, ped. crossings, tree cover, lighting)

Bikeability

Bicycle Infrastructure / Routes

Bicycle Amenities

Development Feasibility

Average Allowable FAR

Average Percent Developed

Average Parcel Size

Community Health & Wellbeing

Community Amenities *(Walk Score)*

Park Proximity *(within 5 min walk of station)*

Policies, Plans, and Projects

Station Area Plan In-Place

Coordinated Regional Plan In-Place

Major Institutional Presence

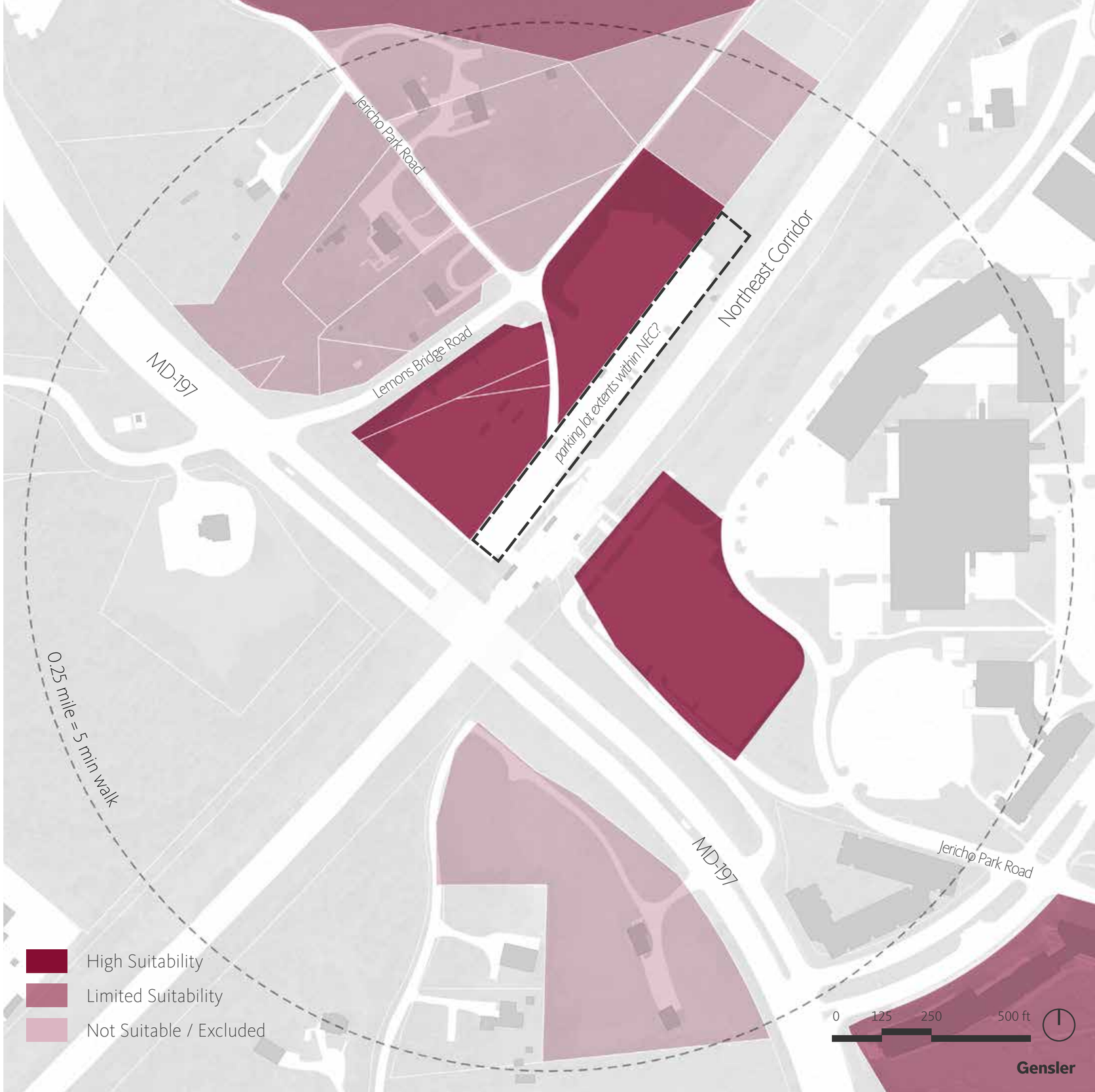
Development Parcel Selection Criteria

DISTANCE TO STATION

- In general, the TOD Study Area is defined by the area within 1/4 mile of each transit station.
- The TOD Study Area Boundary may be extended to include existing station parking areas that are more than 1/4 mile from the station.

EXCLUSIONS

- The TOD Study Area Boundary will exclude areas not suitable for potential development, such as designated nature reserves or conservation areas including wetlands, waterways, and flood hazard areas; federally-owned land and facilities; single-family occupied homes; cemeteries; or other areas outside the jurisdiction of the local planning authorities.

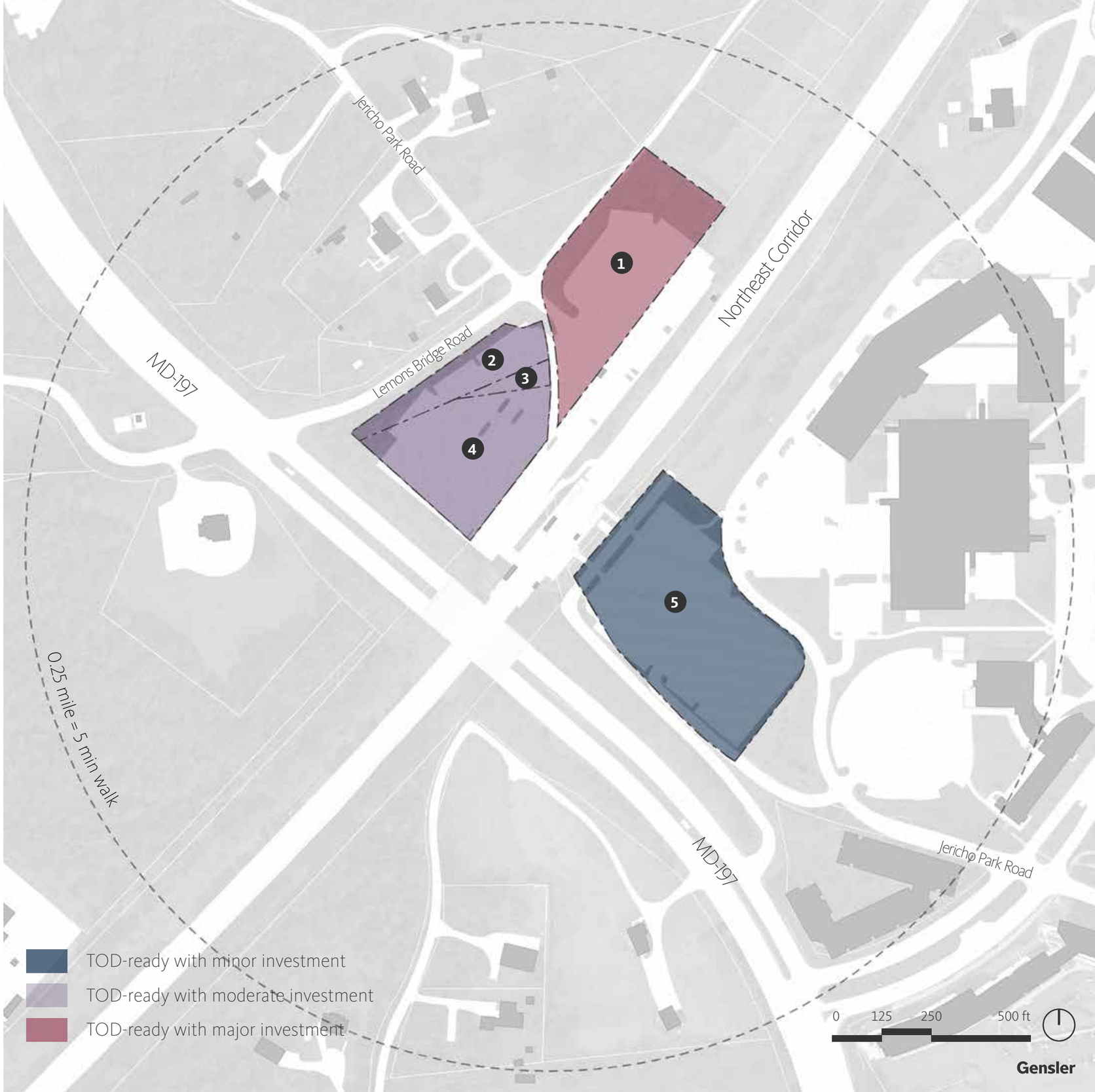


Focus Parcel Selection

OVERALL TOD-READINESS

- Focus area comprised of 5 parcels totaling 7.44 acres
- The west parking lot hosts a number of physical constraints, particularly the presence of significant utility infrastructure and lacks the same degree of physical and visual connectivity to Bowie State as the east lot
- East parking lot is most readily developable due to a combination of its size, station proximity, and potential connectivity to on-going student residential growth and academic expansion towards MD-197

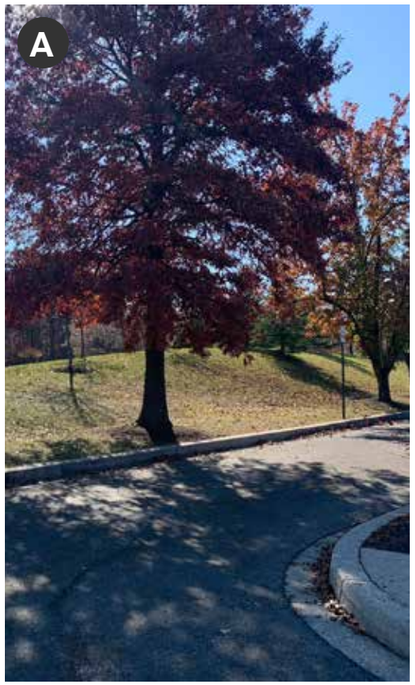
ID	Parcel Description	Parcel (ac)	Ownership
1	West Parking Lot	1.98	MTA
2	West Parking Lot	0.62	Baltimore Gas & Electric
3	West Parking Lot	0.28	Baltimore Gas & Electric
4	East Parking Lot	1.75	MTA
5	East Parking Lot	2.90	MTA-deeded easement
		7.53	



Topographical Conditions

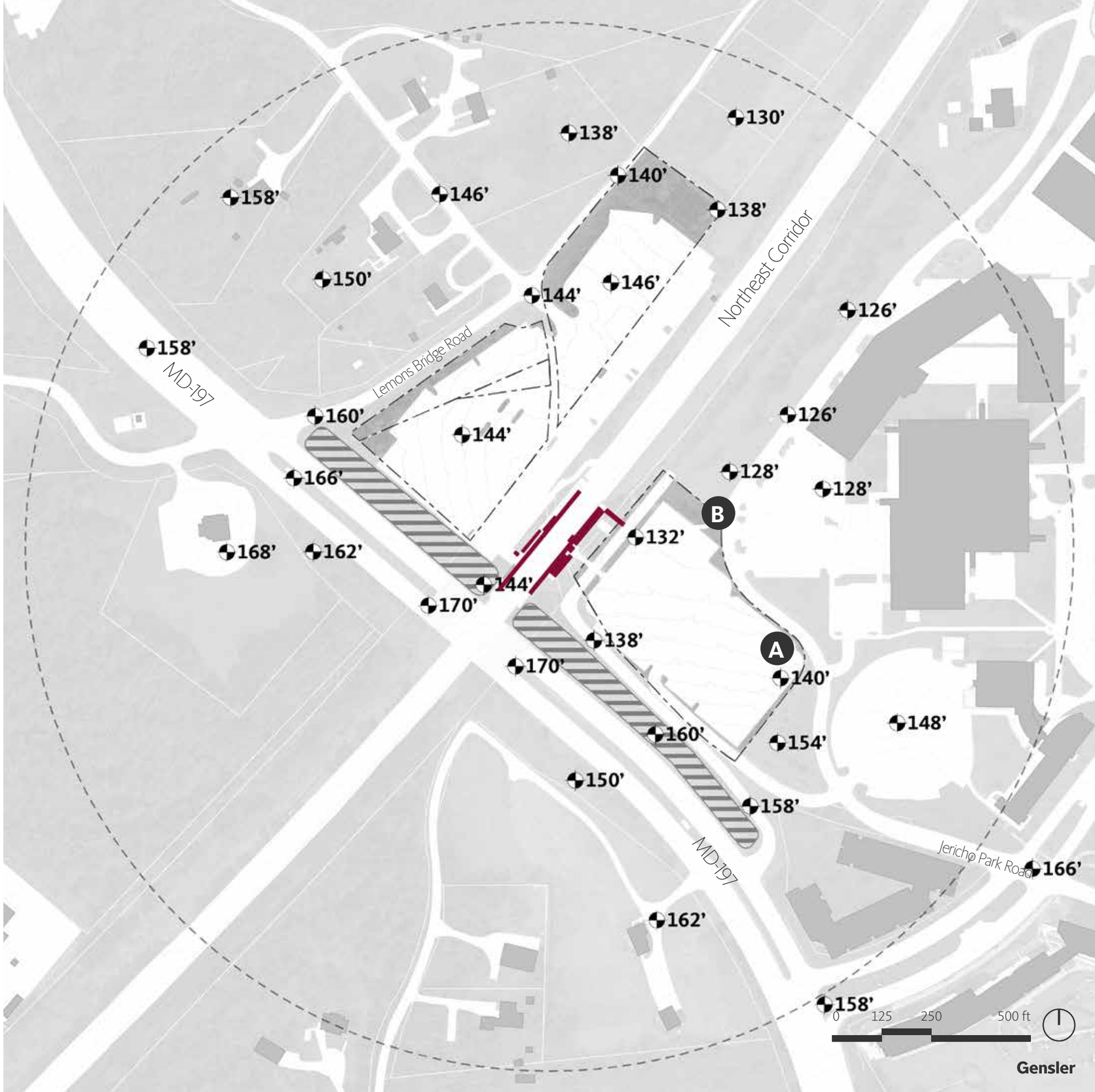
EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY ELEVATIONS

- Gradual slopes downwards from MD-197 towards the north and east along the Northeast Corridor
- 20' grade differential from MD-197 towards Jericho Park Road and the MARC station parking lot
- Relatively flat parking lot areas on both the east and west sides of the rail corridor
- Steep, but abrupt slope at the edge of the existing MARC parking lot easement along the current alignment of the Campus Loop Road



The southern edge of the east lot has a slightly elevated degree of slope compared to the more gradual rise up and away from the platform

An abrupt drop in grade follows the Loop Rd. at the edge of the east lot; no pedestrian connections are currently present on-site



Circulation & Mobility

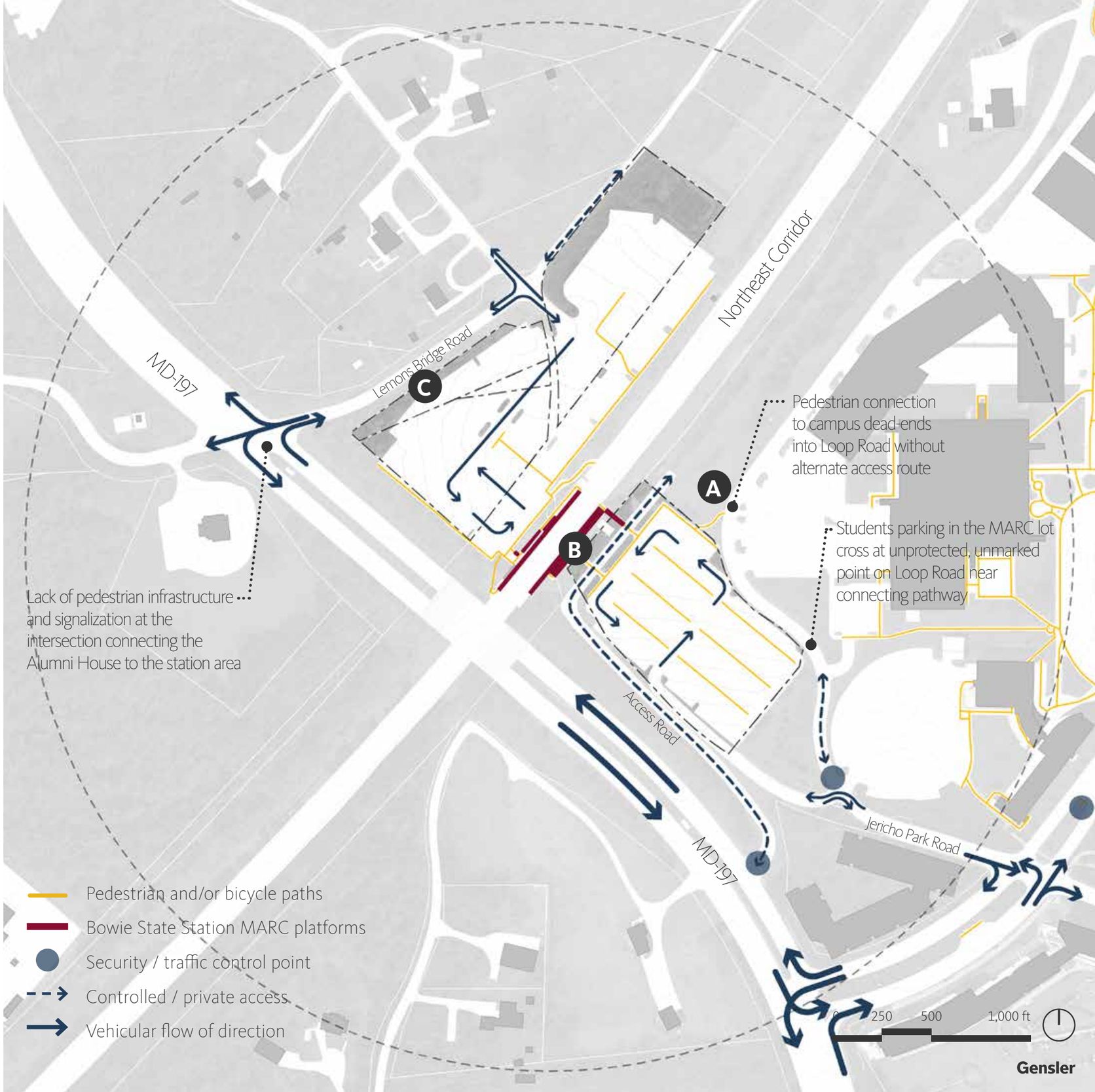
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT

- The MARC station lacks a clear, defined pedestrian access route from the station to campus and requires transit users to cross the Loop Road without controlled crossings
- Utility access road constrains the existing MARC parking lot footprint yet does not provide direct access to parking
- Pedestrian access in the west lot is reserved exclusively to the edge of the parking lot closest to the rail corridor
- WMATA bus service connects to campus via the B21, B22 and B27 routes with a stop located on Henry Circle

The only pedestrian connection from the MARC station to campus ends at the Loop Road without providing clear access beyond

Lemons Bridge Road, the primary access point to the west parking lot lacks shoulders or any pedestrian infrastructure including sidewalks

The existing view from the station platform illustrates the rapid breakdown of pedestrian infrastructure within the parking lot



Site Ecology

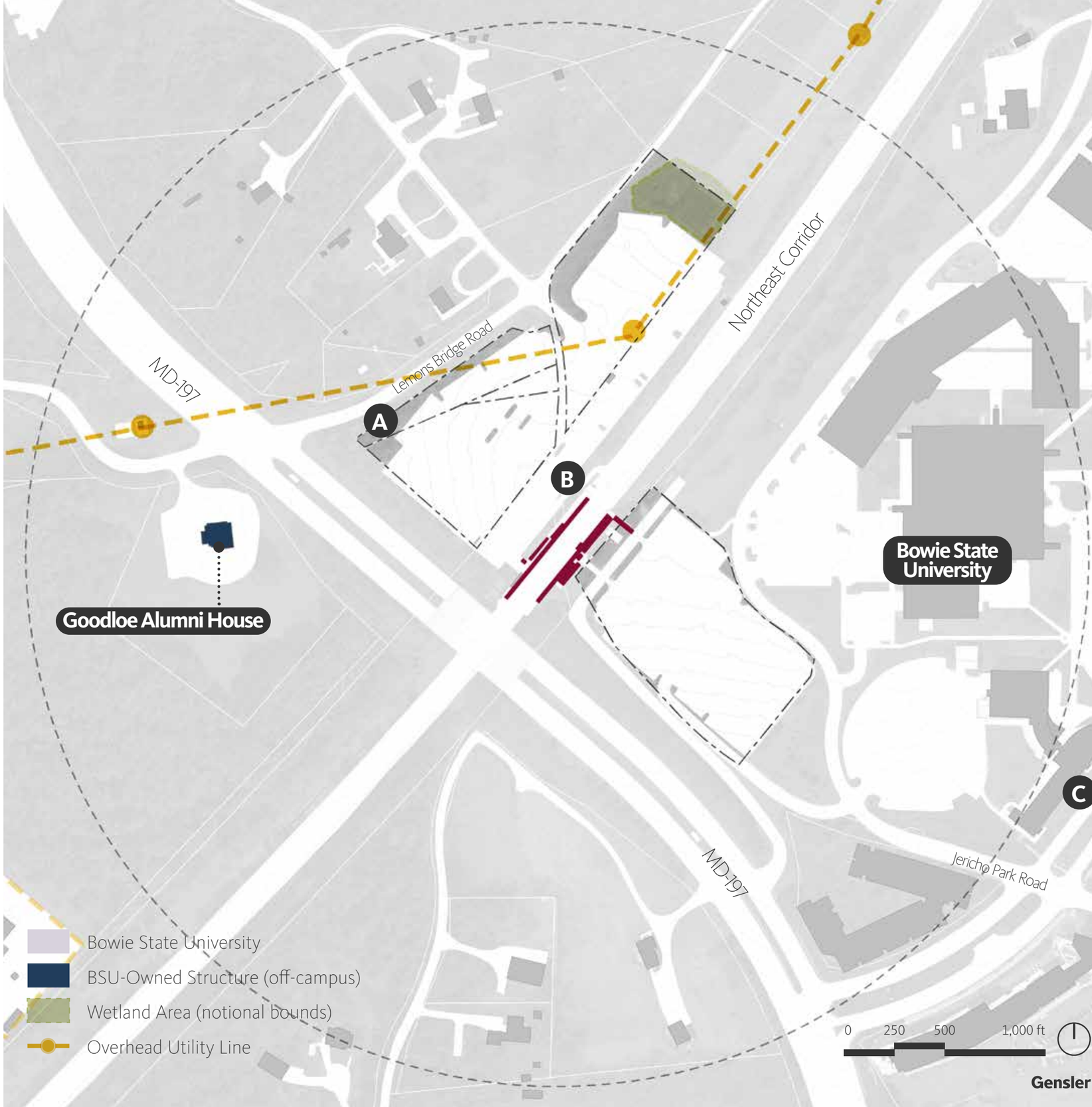
LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

- Largely undeveloped areas dotted with rural homesteads surround the station area and the University campus
- The Patuxent Research Refuge and the Fran Uhler Natural Area are large, protected forested areas located to the north and west of the station area
- A network of small steams runs throughout some of the adjacent sites but no parcels fall within the floodplain
- Jericho Park and several multi-purpose trails provide other nearby publicly accessible recreational amenities

Overhead electric lines can be seen towering high above the agrarian landscape that characterizes Lemons Bridge Road

Large, high voltage transmission lines bisect the site along with a number of smaller telephone poles with overhead utilities

The water retention area at Henry Circle has been incorporated as a natural gateway amenity to the campus

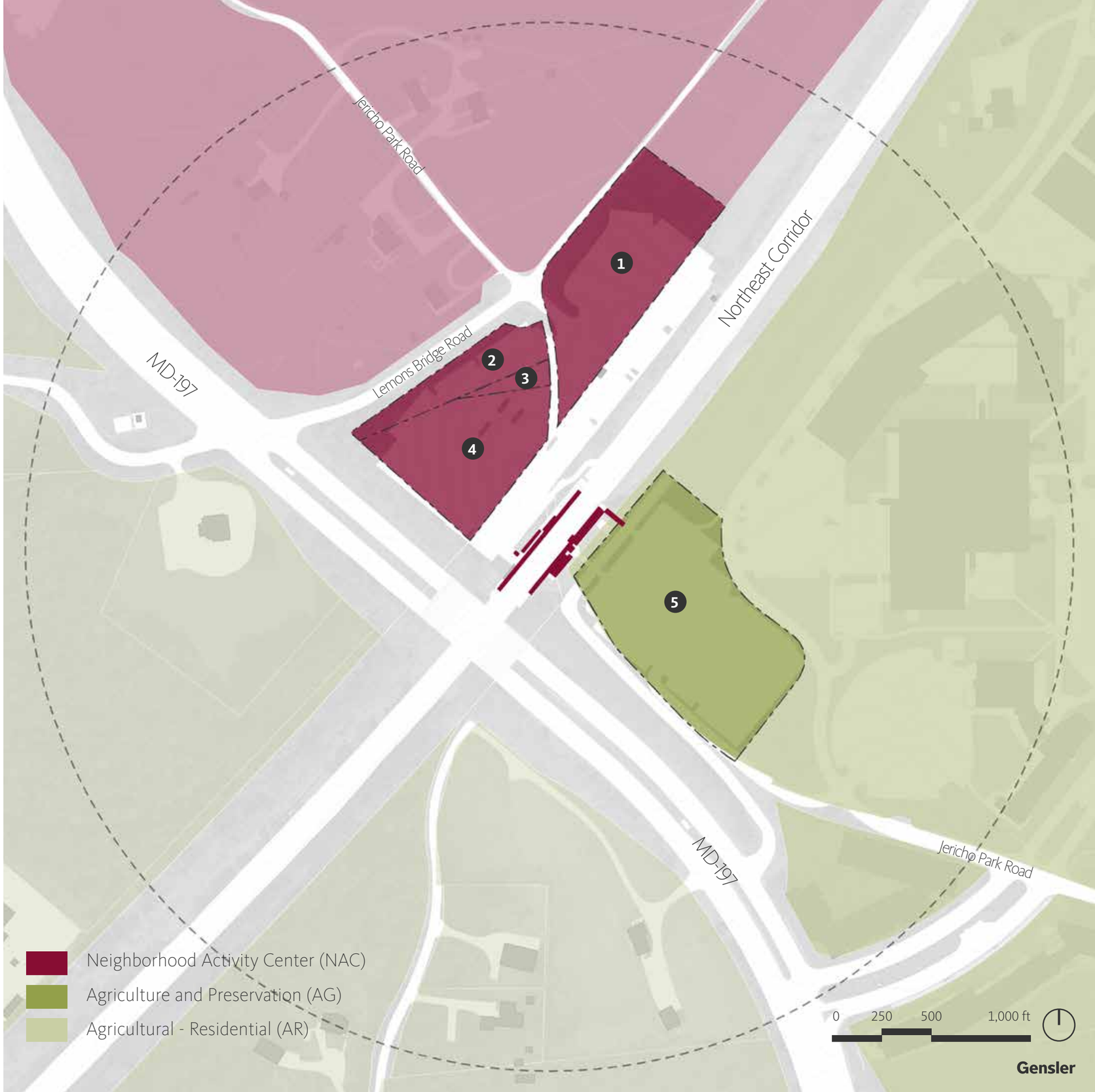


Current Zoning

PERMITTED USES AND DENSITIES

- The rezoning of the west lot from M-X-T (legacy mixed-use designation) to NAC (Neighborhood Activity Center):
  - reduced allowable FAR from 8.0 to 2.0
  - reduced allowable height from 110' to 50'
  - constrains maximum DU/ac to 30
- Patuxent Research Refuge (north of station area) designated as ROS (Reserved Open Space)
- Potential down-zoning case for the County-owned parcels north of Bowie State Station from M-X-T to ROS
- Bowie State University uses are not governed by underlying zoning designations, but rather the State
- All parcels immediately west of MD-197 near the station are zoned as Agricultural-Residential with very limited permissible uses and densities

ID	Parcel Description	Parcel (ac)	Ownership
1	West Parking Lot	1.98	MTA
2	West Parking Lot	0.62	Baltimore Gas & Electric
3	West Parking Lot	0.28	Baltimore Gas & Electric
4	East Parking Lot	1.75	MTA
5	East Parking Lot	2.90	MTA-deeded easement
		7.53	



Building Use

KEY PROGRAMS / FUNCTIONS

- Undergraduate residential and recreation core concentrates towards the north of campus and away from the MARC station
- Severe lack of commercial retail / office space in the area, but University-affiliated and public recreation areas are in abundance
- Academic core and external-facing programs (i.e. performing arts, entrepreneurship space, and visitor's center) are located towards campus entrance at MD-197
- New residential growth targeted towards upper-division students is growing towards the MARC station
- **Future public-facing University programs and other upper-division and graduate housing should continue to build synergies towards the MARC station as a mixed-use cultural and residential hub**

Existing Parking Facilities

CURRENT CAPACITY OVERVIEW

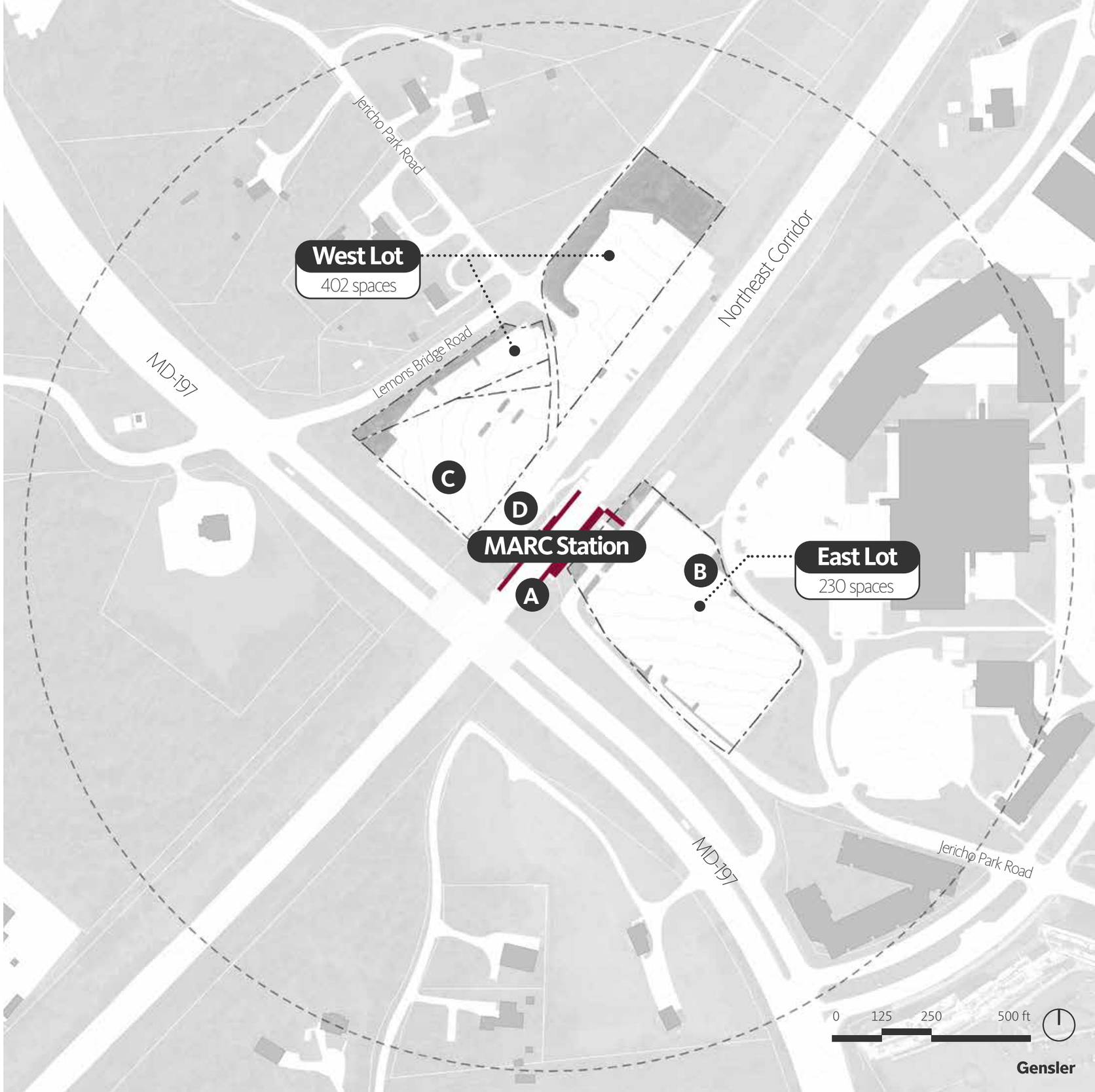
- Total surface parking on site, **632 spaces**
- Total space utilization, approximately 80% according to 2015 study; this figure was markedly lower based on MDOT's visual site survey in May 2023, which was closer to approximately 30% utilization
- Team observed students using commuter lots, which may skew the perceived level of utilization on the east lot
- The west lot appears to have even lower utilization

East parking lot has relatively high utilization attributed largely to student commuters and a moderate, but steady slope

Temporary construction parking and staff and faculty commuters quickly fill other peripheral parking lots off the Loop Road

The west lot is highly underutilized, with most of the area completely empty

A small cluster of commuters park near the southbound platform. Underutilized cycling infrastructure lies adjacent to the platform



Future Parking Considerations

RIDERSHIP TRENDS

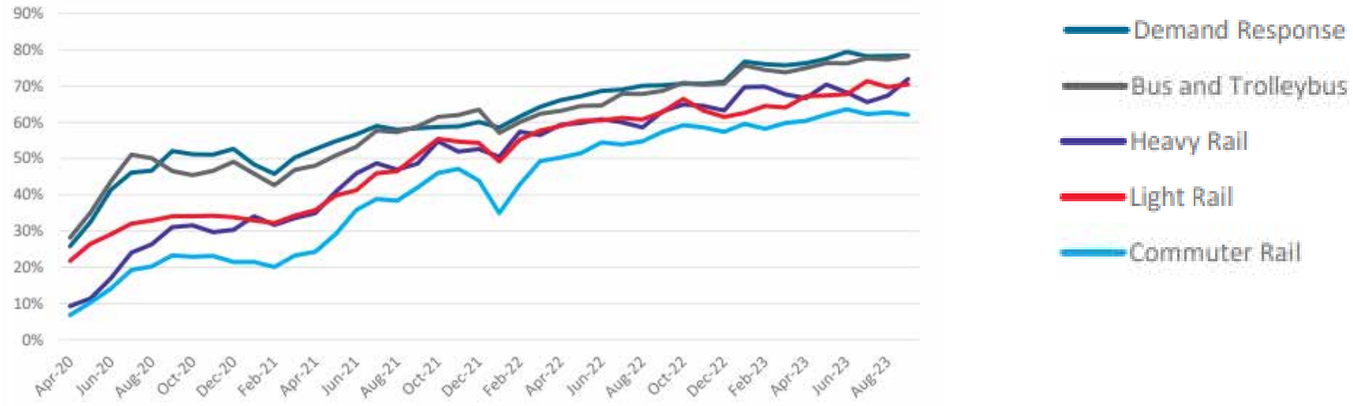
- While transit use has recovered since 2020, changes in commuting patterns continue to impact ridership:
  - **Commuter rail** ridership in 2023 is at **62% of pre-pandemic level**
  - **Penn Line** ridership in 2023 at study area stations averages **50% of pre-pandemic level**
  - **Bowie State** Station ridership in 2023 was at **67% of pre-pandemic ridership level,** but parking utilization was only observed at 30% (per May 2023 MDOT study), suggesting that ridership may consist of more students than park & ride commuters

PARKING REPLACEMENT

- Depending on policy, alternate parking scenarios may be considered:
  - Low (80% of estimated parking demand) - *150 spaces*
  - Medium (100% of estimated parking demand) - *187 spaces*
  - High (120% of estimated parking demand) - *224 spaces*

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION RIDERSHIP

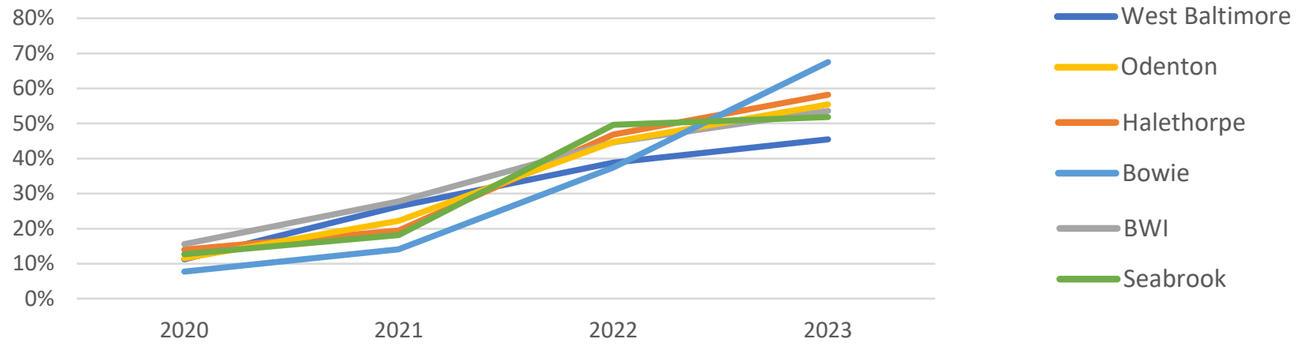
2020-2023, Percent of same month in 2019



Source: APTA Transit Ridership Update, December 2023

PENN LINE RIDERSHIP

2020-2023, Percent of same month in 2019



Station	Available Parking	2015 Parking Study		2023 Observed Parking (per MDOT)		
		Occupied Spaces	Utilization Rate	Ridership*	Occupied Spaces	Utilization Rate
Bowie State	632	503	80%	67%	187	30%

Source: MDOT

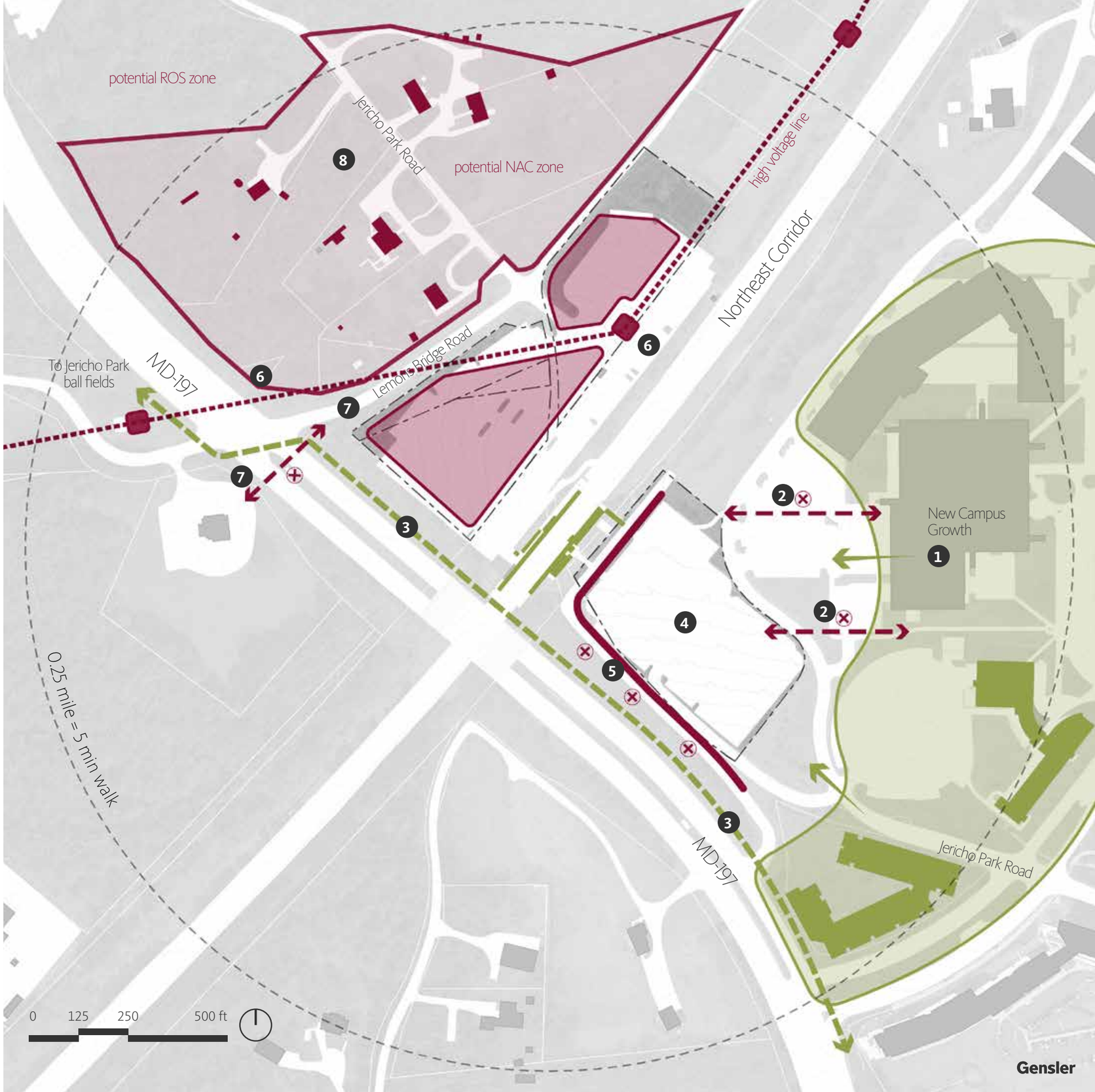
Opportunities & Constraints

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Build upon the development momentum underway at the Gateway parcel and leverage the proximity of programs such as the Graduate College and other cultural amenities near the east lot
2. There are currently no protected or marked pedestrian connections to campus from the BSU MARC station
3. Expand cycling/ped facilities along MD-197 to connect to the existing recreation facilities at Jericho Park
4. Reduced ridership and resulting decrease in parking utilization offers a chance to decrease the number of parking spaces provided on-site and increase potential developable area

CONSTRAINTS

5. As currently configured, the BGE access road constrains the redevelopment potential of the east lot and fails to provide direct vehicular access from MD-197; if redesigned, this could become an opportunity to improve access and visibility of new development
6. High voltage transmission lines and towers, utility easements, and other overhead utilities disrupt the continuity of developable areas in the west lot; consider relocation
7. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure along Lemons Bridge Rd. and the intersection of MD-197 isolates the Alumni House from campus and potential TOD
8. Proximity of private landowners to the west lot complicates potential near-term TOD and/or possible utility re-routing; consider purchase/assemblage

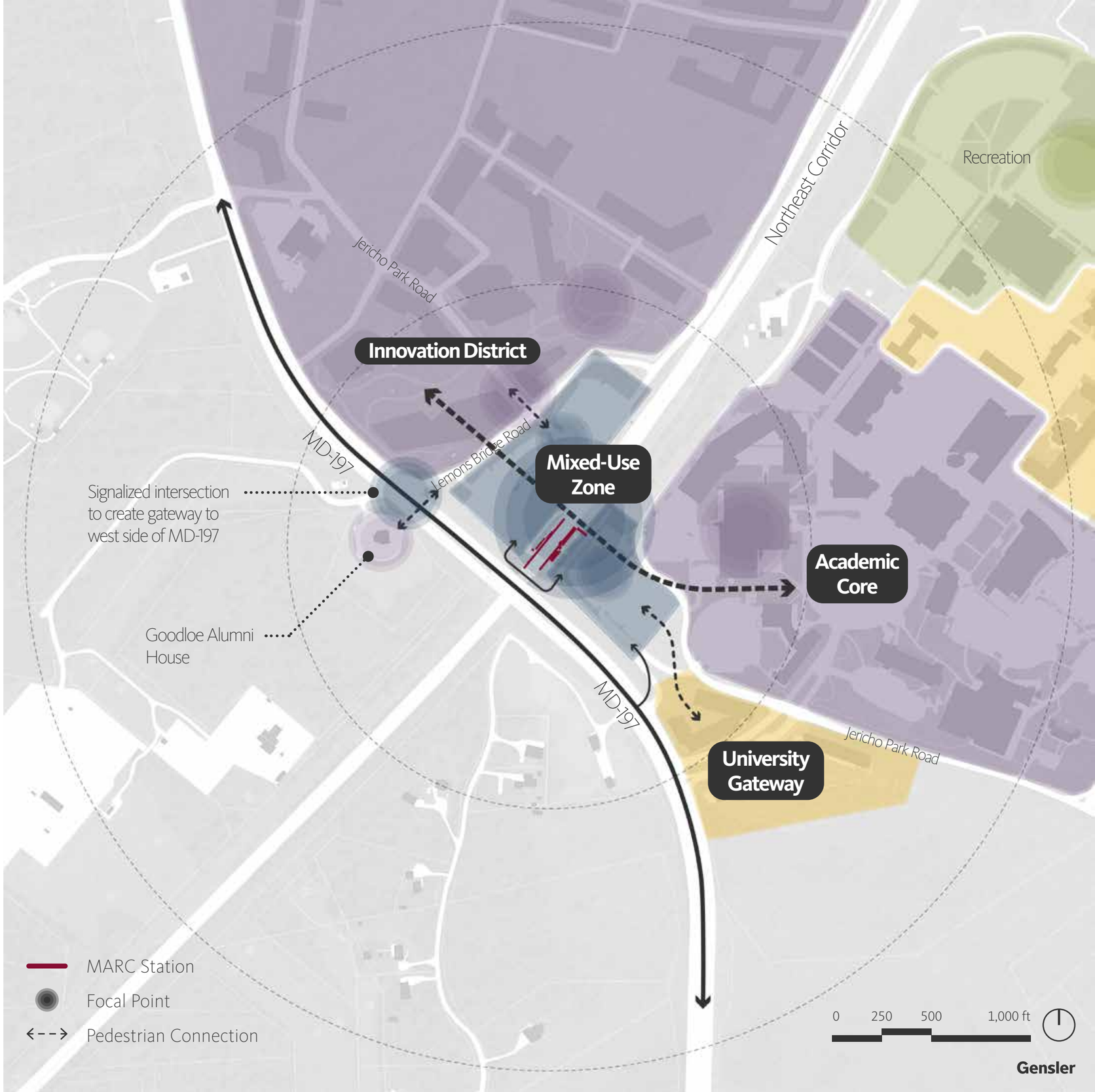


Gensler

Preliminary Planning Principles

KEY STRATEGIES

- Establish a transitional mixed-use zone between the university gateway, academic core, and potential innovation district on county land west of NEC
- Integrate convocation center into new development (confirm footprint)
- Create a clear and direct pedestrian connection from station to campus core
- Improve East-West pedestrian connectivity by improving facilities on the MD-197 bridge
- Manage student and commuter parking needs
- Re-think intersection of MD-197 and Lemons Bridge Road to better integrate the Alumni House into the west Marc Center Expansion, and create a presence on MD-197
- Catalyze development of county-owned property



Bowie State Station Evaluation Criteria

Transit Connectivity & Service	Assessment	Note	Recommendation
Transit Connectivity *(number of lines)*	average	1 train line, 3 bus lines	Improve rail-bus connectivity and consider additional service outside peak commuting hours
Rail Service Frequency	below average	9 total trains (5 SB, 4 NB)	Sustain current level of rail service
Bus Service Frequency	below average	Three bus routes	Expand local bus route frequency and coverage
Passenger Amenities	below average	limited amenities, no digital signage, indoor waiting, restrooms, or staffed kiosk	Invest in standard amenities, digital signage, and an indoor waiting area
Walkability			
Pedestrian Experience *(sidewalks, ped. crossings, tree cover, lighting)*	below average	little to no existing sidewalks off of Bowie State's campus.	Invest in high-visibility crosswalks at MD-197 and Lemons Bridge Rd.; integrate multi-use path along the MD-197 ROW to improve access across the NE Corridor
Bikeability			
Bicycle Infrastructure / Routes	below average	designated routes and trail segments adjacent to station area	Focus on building connections into the existing trail network and incorporate clear route signage
Bicycle Amenities	below average	minimal bicycle amenities present and those provided are in poor condition	Locate new infrastructure along high-visibility routes and new connections to existing trails and paths
Development Feasibility			
Average Allowable FAR	average	zoning permits medium-high density and wide mix of uses	Leverage NAC zoning by concentrating university-affiliated development closest to the MARC
Average Percent Developed	below average	currently underdeveloped - mostly open space	Densify underdeveloped parcels
Average Parcel Size	above average	large, contiguous parcellation	Subdivide large parcels, consolidation could improve redevelopment viability of smaller parcels.
Community Health & Wellbeing			
Community Amenities *(Walk Score)*	below average	lost amenities are exclusive for Bowie State	Expand community retail options to support local residents and to encourage commuters to linger
Park Proximity *(within 5 min walk of station)*	below average	no public park available, limited sports & rec	Consider dedicating part of large open spaces as community parks
Policies, Plans, and Projects			
Station Area Plan In-Place	yes	Existing TOD, EDP, and TAP Plans	Execute vision of mixed-use TOD aligned to BSU growth
Coordinated Regional Plan In-Place	yes	Bowie-Mitchellville & Vicinity Master Plan	Provide retail/employment center adjacent to BSU
Major Institutional Presence	yes	Bowie State University	Provide BSU housing and innovation/research space