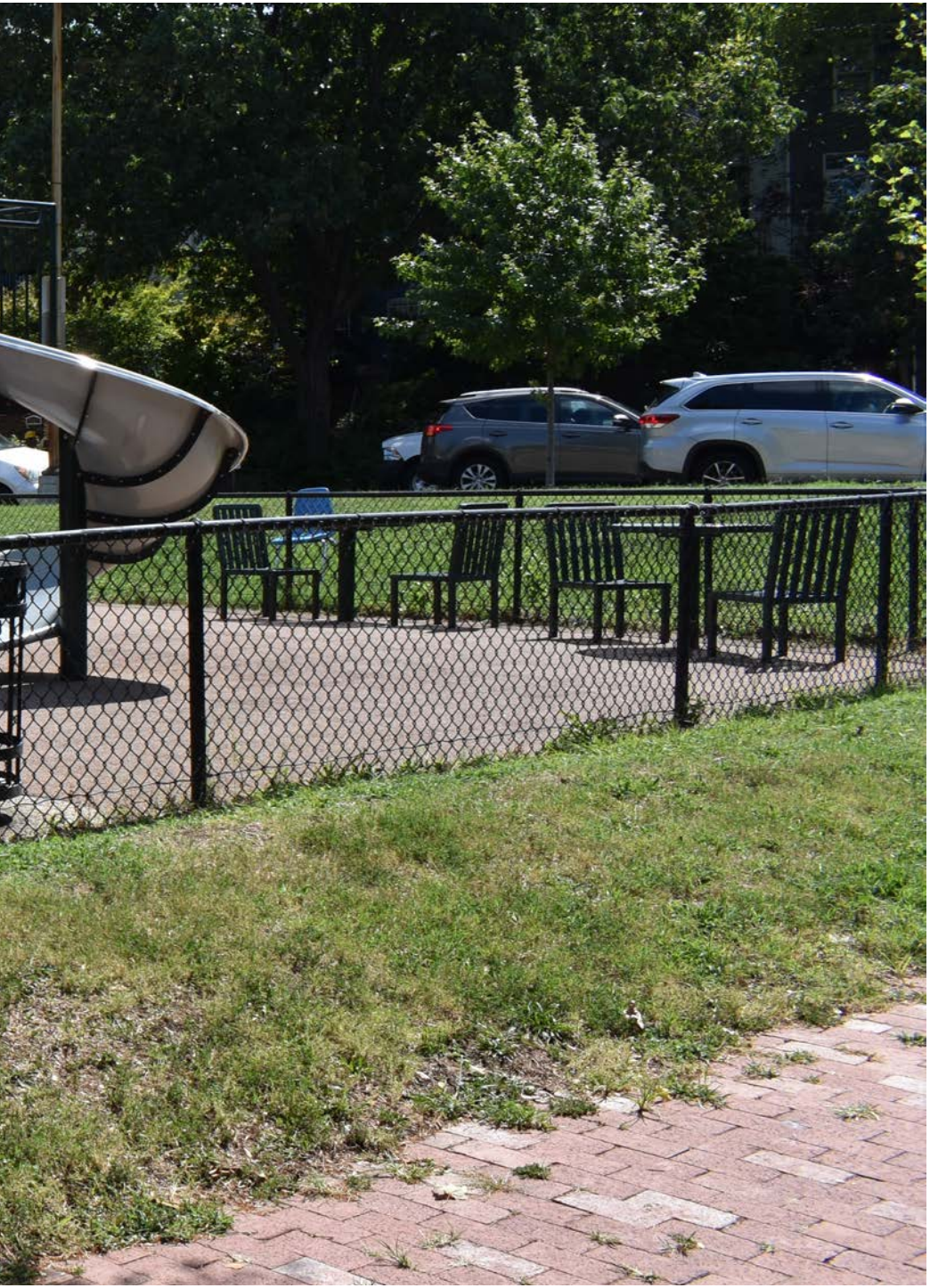
DC Small Parks Project
Maryland Avenue NE
REAP Analysis

Urban Heritage Project
Graduate Program in Historic Preservation
University of Pennsylvania

September 2019

Keep Pets on Leash



Contents

Project Background 4

Summary Observations 6

Methodology 10

Context Mapping 14

Behavioral Mapping 40
- Number of Visitors
- Time Spent in Park
- Demographics of Visitors
- Point of Entry: Stanton Park
- Selected Activities in Park

Interviews 80
- Intercept Interviews
- Transect Walk Interview
- Expert Interviews

Conclusions + Recommendations 90

Appendices 92
- REAP Bibliography
- Behavioral Mapping Data Sheets
- List of Expert Interviews

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1
Project Background

This Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures (REAP) analysis was conducted as part of the Small Parks Cultural Landscape Overview and Ethnographic Assessment (aka DC Small Parks Project), a collaboration between the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania and the National Capital Region office of the National Park Service.

The purpose of the DC Small Parks Project is to help the National Park Service develop a consistent approach to evaluate and manage change at small parks throughout Washington, D.C. This project builds on previous efforts to develop holistic, coordinated management strategies across the small park network, to help fulfill the NPS agenda for urban parks in the 21st century.

In the summer of 2017, the National Park Service began an analysis and evaluation of Washington, D.C.'s network of small parks under its ownership and control. Building on the Small Parks Management Strategies Report, finalized in April 2017, the analysis and evaluation used the Cultural Landscape Inventory model to assess NPS-managed small parks as a whole, and three prototype parks/groups of parks in depth: the Virginia Avenue NW cultural landscape; Bryce Park; and the Maryland Avenue NE cultural landscape. Another intention of the project was combining CLI and REAP methods to produce integrated documentation packages for groups of urban parks. This REAP analysis was conducted for the third prototype park, capturing an ethnographic understanding of the avenue's small parks to complement the objectives and findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Maryland Avenue NE.

In order to understand this REAP analysis in its fullest context, it should be interpreted alongside the project's other reports, all of which were prepared by the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania:

- Small Parks Cultural Landscape Overview
- Virginia Avenue NW Cultural Landscape Inventory
- Bryce Park Cultural Landscape Inventory
- Maryland Avenue NE Cultural Landscape Inventory

The goal of the overall project, and of this REAP analysis specifically, is to provide park managers with data and strategies to help identify, evaluate, and manage change for the nearly 300 small parks within Washington, D.C.

2
Summary Observations

Overall Observations

With the exception of **Stanton Park (Reservation 015)**, these small parks are underutilized. Most people bypass the **Maryland Avenue NE small parks** altogether, walking around them but not spending any time in them. Of those people who do linger (even for just a few minutes), they tend to be dog-walkers.

These use patterns can be attributed to the fact that other than the playgrounds in **Reservations 209 and 210** (and **Stanton Park**), the small parks do not currently offer any notable features or recreational experience to visitors—passive or active. **Seven of the ten small parks** are grassy lots, not designed to perform any function (even the ecological services of green infrastructure).

The National Park Service's role in the stewardship of the **Maryland Avenue NE small parks** is not recognized. Most users interviewed did not know that NPS owned or managed these parks. This observation was less true at **Stanton Park**, but even that park's users were generally unaware (despite the presence of NPS regulatory signage).

The **Maryland Avenue NE small parks** are largely uninterpreted. The only interpretive feature is one panel in **Reservation 212**, installed as part of the Greater H Street Heritage Trail; the small parks' other signage (where it exists) is exclusively regulatory. Without NPS interpretive signage, the public has few opportunities to appreciate the landscape's history, evolution, and significance.

Demographically, the neighborhoods around Maryland Avenue NE have gotten younger, whiter, and wealthier since 2000.

There are opportunities to **collaborate** with DC planning/DOT around the public life of these spaces, as those offices have undertaken similar efforts in recent years to understand how DC-managed small parks are used and perceived.

Spatial Relationships and Context

The **"bowtie" small parks** function as pairs, with consistent uses and users that bridge the intersection. (See map on page 15.)

The **southwest reservations** are included in significant Capitol Hill districts (including the National Register Historic District, the DC Historic District, and the Business Improvement District). The **northeast reservations** are not included in any such designations. These distinctions have implicit and explicit implications for the cultural landscape, separating the southwestern small parks from the northeastern small parks based on the honorifics, benefits, and restrictions of these designations.

There is a distinctive change in context and character from the northeast end of the avenue to the southwest. As one travels down the avenue from **Reservation 213 toward Reservation 205**, the avenue shifts from a commercial context near the starburst intersection, to a residential context for the length of the avenue, to a residential/institutional context closest to **Stanton Park** and **Reservation 205**. The design and features of the small parks could be enhanced to better respond to these changes in context and users.

Historically, **Reservation 205** was spatially linked with Reservations 203 and 204, but as those reservations have been subsumed by the National Mall, Reservation 205 now functions as an island. Located between Stanton Park and the National Mall, it is spatially stranded in a high-traffic area (predominantly for cars). During the hours of observation, there was significant foot traffic traveling from south to north on 3rd Street NE (with people often walking in groups); this foot traffic did not translate to increased use of the small park, however.

These small parks function as a commuting route for hundreds of people every weekday. This includes **Stanton Park**, where people use the diagonal paths to walk, bike, run, and/or scooter through the park along the paths of Maryland Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue. In this way, they experience the small parks as a collective cultural landscape that connects different neighborhoods, but they do not necessarily experience the small parks as spaces to linger.

As the two northeastern-most small parks in the cultural landscape, **Reservations 212 and 213** are isolated from the rest of the Maryland Avenue NE small parks. They function as grassy islands just a short distance from the commercial (and construction) activity of H Street and the starburst intersection where Benning Road, Maryland Avenue, and 14th Street NE meet. As the context around them densifies and commercializes, these particular small parks could be assets, if they were to offer any landscape features to passersby.

Small Park Use and Features

Stanton Park is a strong attractor, drawing significantly more users than the other small parks on Maryland Avenue NE, and offering a wider range of features than the other reservations. The other small parks are used more incidentally, by passers-by or as adjuncts to nearby places.

Users interviewed feel a lot of loyalty to **Stanton Park**, and appreciate it as a neighborhood resource (in proximity to their home and/or work).

However, long-term residents/workers in the area (including young teenagers who used to go to school near Stanton Park) remember that **Stanton Park** previously featured more flower beds and functioning water fountains, and that the more of the small parks used to have benches. According to our interviews with visitors and NPS officials, these changes are attributed to budget shortfalls, shifts in operational responsibility (outsourcing to contractors), and site management decisions to deter certain park uses.

Stanton Park was well used on a September weekend, for exercise, social gatherings, relaxation, etc. This was not true of the **other small parks** at this same time—including the reservations with playgrounds (Reservations 209 and 210).

The library at 7th and D Streets has a significant impact on the number of visitors at **Reservations 206 and 207** compared with the other small parks. However, as with the other small parks that are not Stanton Park, foot traffic generally skirted the edges of the two reservations, with few people staying for any length of time.

According to one Capital Bikeshare employee, the bikeshare dock next to **Reservation 206** is very well-used: on weekdays, employees must refill the docks 2-3 times every morning. Despite this (and the library across the street), foot traffic in **Reservations 206 and 207** was minimal. Most foot traffic still bypassed the parks.

During the hours that we observed activity, the playground at **Reservation 210** saw slightly more visitors and somewhat longer use than the playground at **Reservation 209**. (However, both reservations had relatively few visitors, compared with **Stanton Park** or **Reservations 206/207**.) According to interviews with visitors, this differential seems to be attributed to the fact that there is somewhat more shade coverage at Reservation 210.

PARK
CLOSED
AT
SUNSET

3
Methodology

This analysis began with a research scan of relevant literature about analyzing public space, REAP methodologies, and other National Park Service ethnography projects. In particular, the 2002 REAP of Independence National Historical Park conducted by Dana H. Taplin, Suzanne Scheld, and Setha M. Low offered a useful model for this type of REAP analysis for urban parks (although the Maryland Avenue NE REAP analysis was conducted over a shorter period of time).

In determining the appropriate scope and strategy for this REAP analysis, the project team and NPS officials considered the following methods from the National Park Service's ethnographic research approaches:

- Behavior mapping
- Transect walk(s)
- Intercept interviews
- Expert interviews
- Focus groups
- Historic and archival research

Of those methods, historic/archival research was already underway as part of the Cultural Landscape Inventory for the Maryland Avenue NE small parks, and focus groups were deemed unsuitable for this particular study. The team also decided to add the task of context mapping to understand the demographics, land use, zoning, and other contexts of the Maryland Avenue NE small parks.

Thus, the project team established a REAP methodology based on these methods and objectives:

1. Context mapping to understand the geographic, social, and policy-making context for the small parks;
2. Behavioral mapping to understand how the small parks are used, and by whom;
3. Transect walk(s) to understand community values and neighborhood change, in person and in context;
4. Intercept interviews to understand small parks' cultural values and community use, in person and in context; and
5. Expert interviews to understand the small parks' management challenges and planning context.

Context mapping

In order to understand these small parks within their broader neighborhood context, the project team gathered spatial data related to demographics, land use/management, public transportation, and civic institutions nearby. Sources of the datasets include

- District of Columbia Office of Zoning
- District of Columbia Office of Planning
- DCGIS
- District of Columbia Office of the Chief Technology Officer
- Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer
- Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer
- Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2017 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Behavioral mapping

This method identifies cultural activities on site. Surveyors map the behavioral patterns of the small parks as well as basic demographic statistics about the parks' visitors during a set period of time (e.g. one hour). It is important to note that although the surveyors were all trained in order to establish a consistent approach to the mapping, this method relies on observed demographics (on race and gender, for instance) rather than self-reported data.

The project team conducted a total of 21 hours of behavioral mapping in the Maryland Avenue NE small parks in July/September 2019. This included a combination of weekday mornings, weekday afternoons, one weekday evening, one weekend morning, and one weekend afternoon. As the season, temperature, day of the week, and time of day varied between these hours, they offer a snapshot of the small parks' activity and users.

Reservation 205 and Stanton Park (Reservation 015) were each observed as singular sites, given their location (in the case of Res. 205) and size (in the case of Stanton Park). The remaining small parks were

observed in pairs, in order to understand how they function in relation to each other at each shared intersection.

The same behavioral and demographic factors were tracked across all of the small parks, with two specific variations at Stanton Park:

1. Given Stanton Park's size, it was infeasible to track the number of people who skirted the edges of the park (rather than crossing through some portion of the park). Thus, this statistic was not tracked at Stanton Park, although it was tracked at the other Maryland Avenue NE small parks.
2. Conversely, Stanton Park sees many more visitors than the other small parks, and we were interested in tracking where the enter the park, as a proxy for where they come from and travel to via Stanton Park. Thus, for Stanton Park only, we mapped where each visitor entered the park (the northeast corner, eastern edge, southeast corner, etc.)

Samples of the behavioral mapping data sheets are included in the appendix of this report. The behavioral mapping findings were analyzed in Microsoft Excel and mapped in Adobe Illustrator.

Transect walk

This method builds a community-centered understanding of the site, including its local meaning and the identification of significant places. Members of the project team conducted this walk in July 2019 with Robert (Bob) Sonderman, a resident of the Capitol Hill neighborhood for the past 35 years and a former National Park Service employee. The team interviewers walked with Mr. Sonderman from his home on 8th Street NE to the northeast extent of the avenue (by Reservations 212 and 213) and then walked the full length of the cultural landscape, to Reservation 205. Along the way, Mr. Sonderman offered his observations on the small parks' character, context, and changes over time.

The transect walk findings were mapped in Adobe Illustrator.

Intercept interviews

These interviews gather feedback on community responses and interests in the park. Project team members wore t-shirts with the name of our institution (PennDesign, University of Pennsylvania) to identify ourselves while on site. Team members approached park visitors one-on-one, basing the conversation on our research themes (e.g. perception of the small parks, awareness of NPS role, etc.) rather than a predetermined list of questions. This allowed for more relaxed conversations based on the visitor's own experiences, rather than a fixed set of rigid questions.

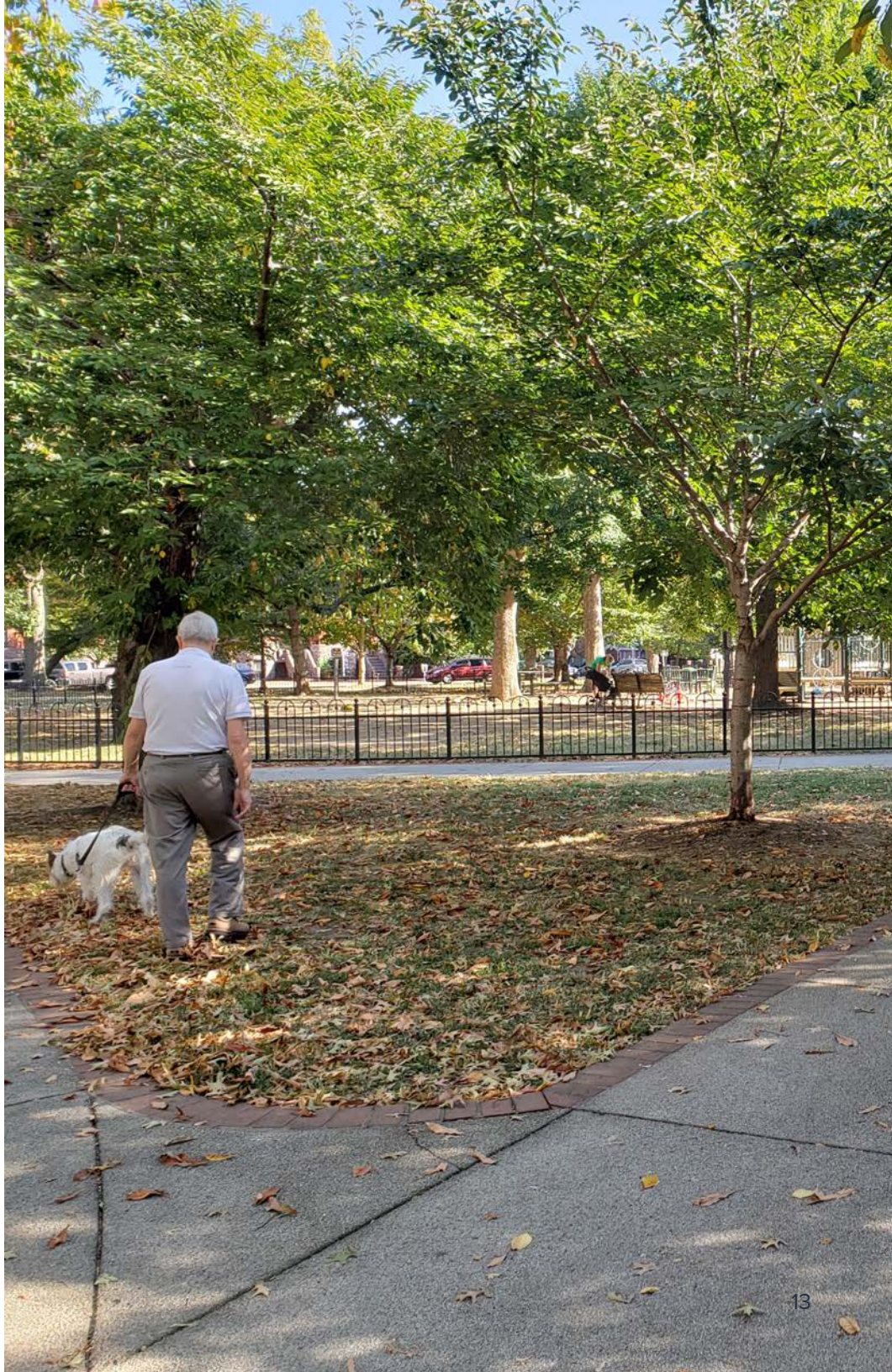
Over the course of 21 hours on site at the small parks in July/September 2019, team members interviewed 21 visitors. Interview rates varied across the small parks based on differences in use and time spent in the park (and willingness to be interviewed). As with the behavioral mapping, it is important to note that although the surveyors were all trained in order to establish a consistent approach to the interview notes, this method relies on observed demographics (on race and gender, for instance) rather than self-reported data.

Expert interviews

This method solicits community leaders' and officials' interest in the park planning process. Team members prepared a shortlist of interviewees based on recommendations from National Park Service officials. The list of desired interviews included NPS staff familiar with on-the-ground conditions at the Maryland Avenue NE small parks, as well as DC Planning/Zoning/Department of Transportation officials who have collaborated with NPS officials in the past and/or have conducted their own studies related to Maryland Avenue NE (e.g. bike lane studies). Expert interviews were conducted by phone or in person July-September 2019. As with the intercept interviews, our expert interviews focused on research themes (including comparative methodologies, where applicable) rather than pre-determined questions;

A list of interviewees is included in the appendices of this report.

Taken in sum, these REAP methods seek to capture an ethnographic snapshot of Maryland Avenue NE. Throughout the data collection and analysis, our inquiry remained focused on the themes of neighborhood change, perception/use of the small parks, circulation, and community ownership of these public spaces.



4
Context Mapping

DC Small Park Features

The Maryland Avenue NE small parks extend from 2nd Street NE to 14th Street NE. There are playgrounds at U.S. Reservations 015 (Stanton Park), 209, and 210.

Site Photographs

Reservation 015 (Stanton Park)

Reservation 015 (Stanton Park)

Reservation 015 (Stanton Park)

Reservation 205

Reservation 206

Reservation 207

Reservation 208

Reservation 209

Reservation 210

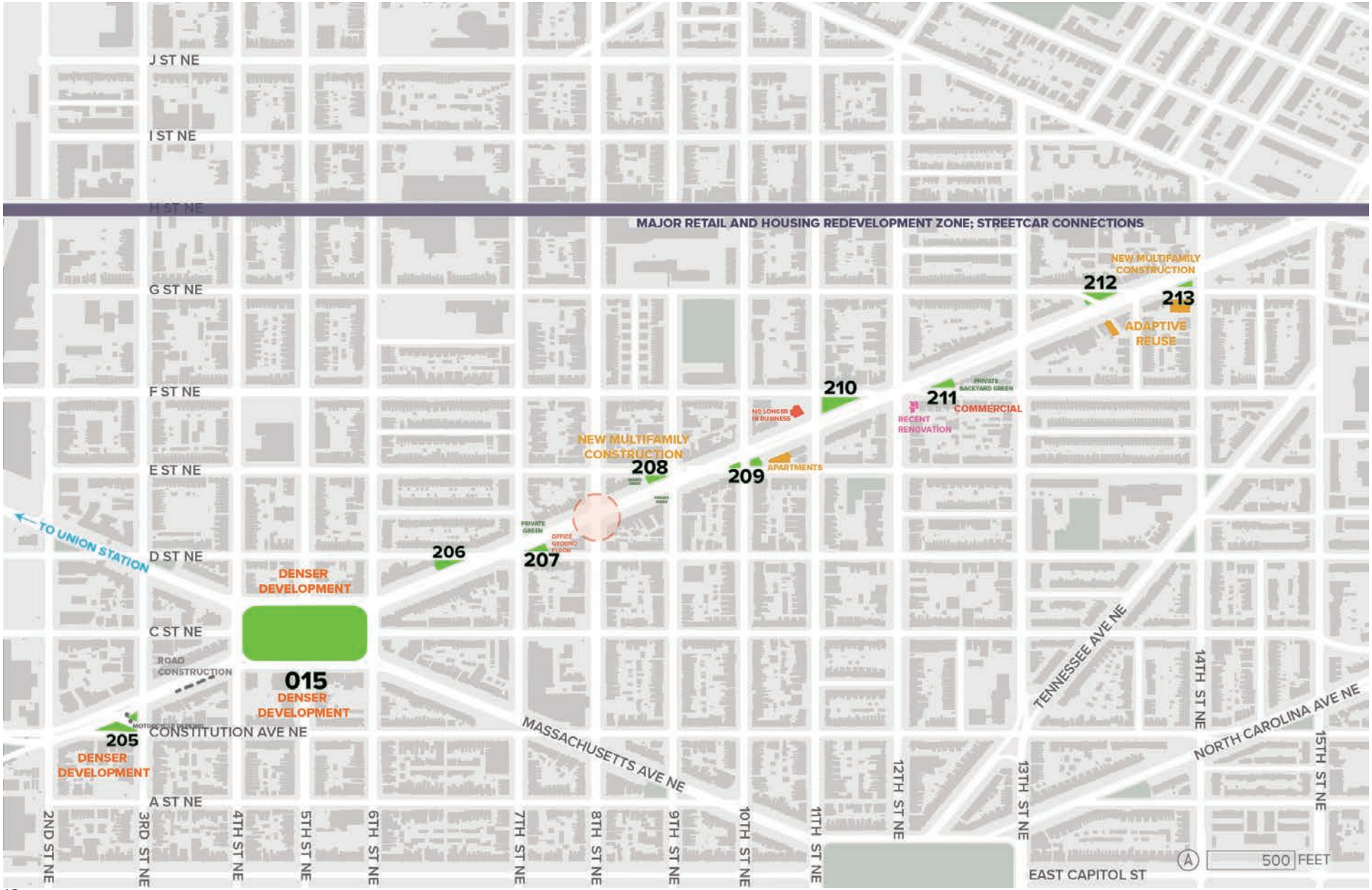
Reservation 211

Reservation 212

Reservation 213

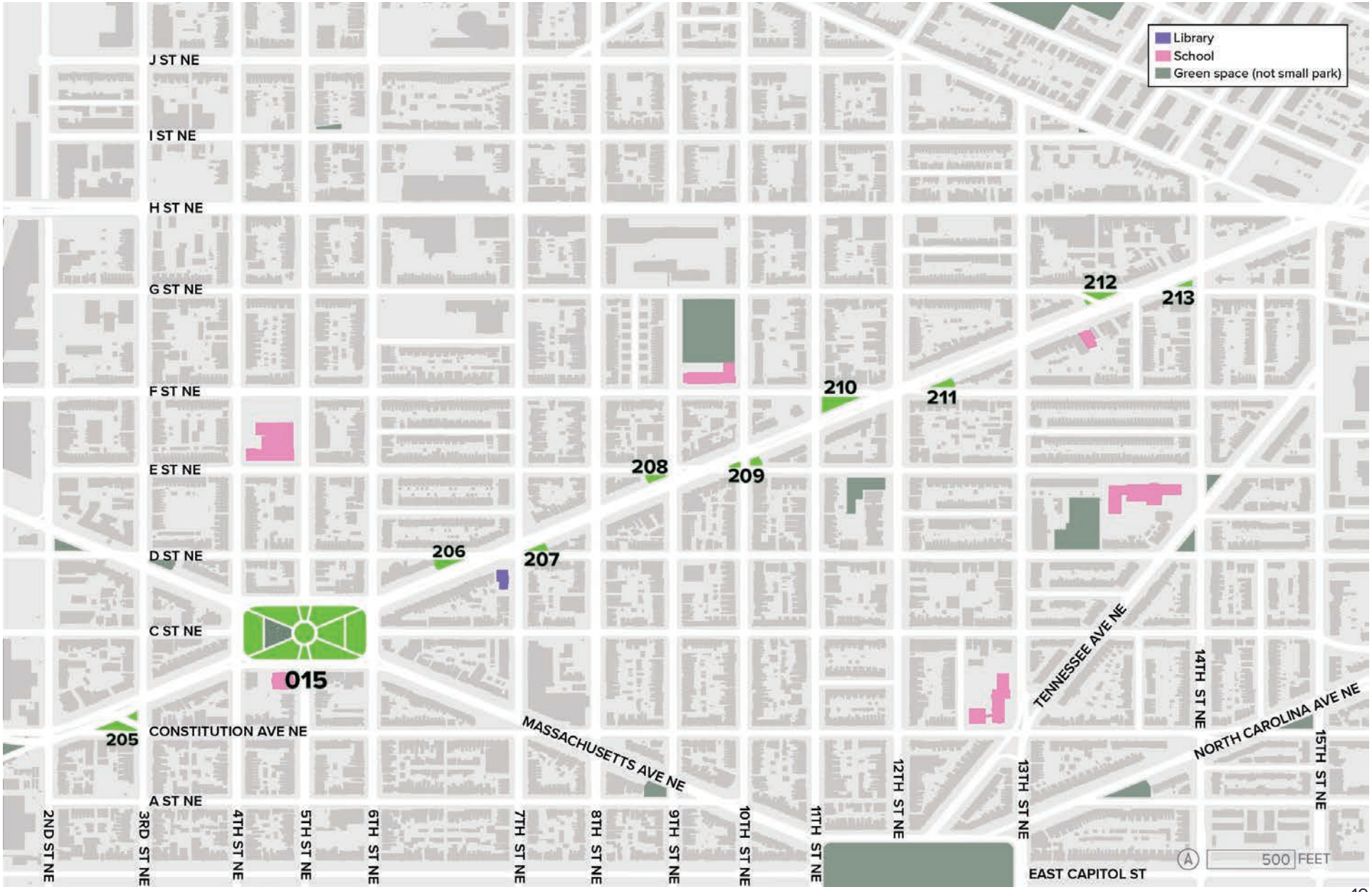
Context Observations

This map represents the project team's preliminary observations about the character, uses, and evolving context of the small parks on Maryland Avenue NE.



Parks, Libraries, and Green Space

There are several schools located within a few blocks of Maryland Avenue NE, and several green spaces. The Northeast Neighborhood Library is located at 7th and D Streets NE. It shares an intersection with U.S. Reservations 206 and 207, and influences the use of those small parks.



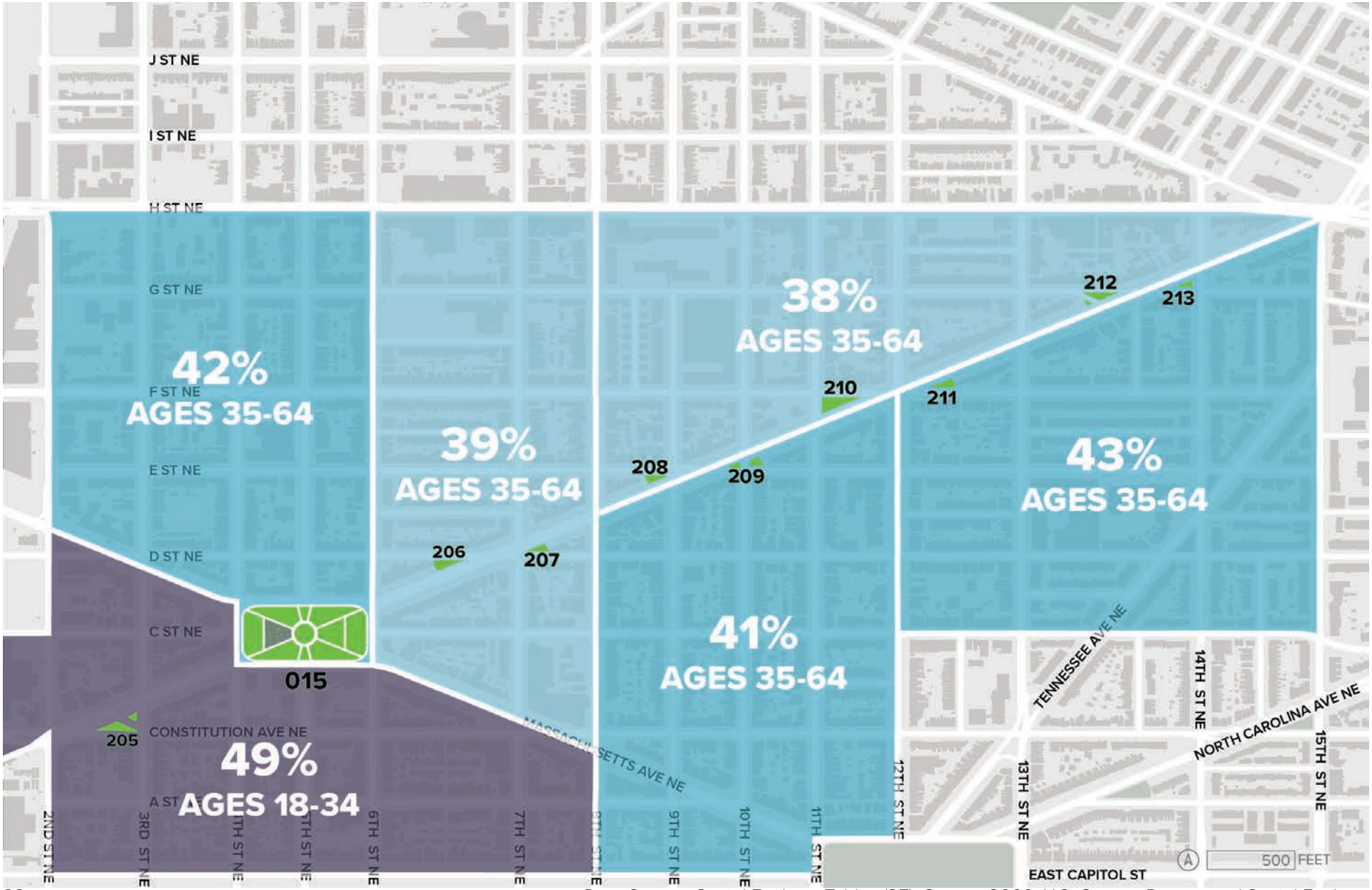
Capital Bikeshare Docks + Bus Stops

H Street NE and 8th Street NE are major corridors for bus stops in the area. There are also several docks for bikeshares. This transportation infrastructure directly influences U.S. Reservations 206 and 209 (which have adjacent bike docks), and U.S. Reservations 212 and 213 (which have bus stops).

STOP
MARYLAND AVE.
TRAFFIC
DOES NOT
STOP
STOP

Age by Census Tract, 2000

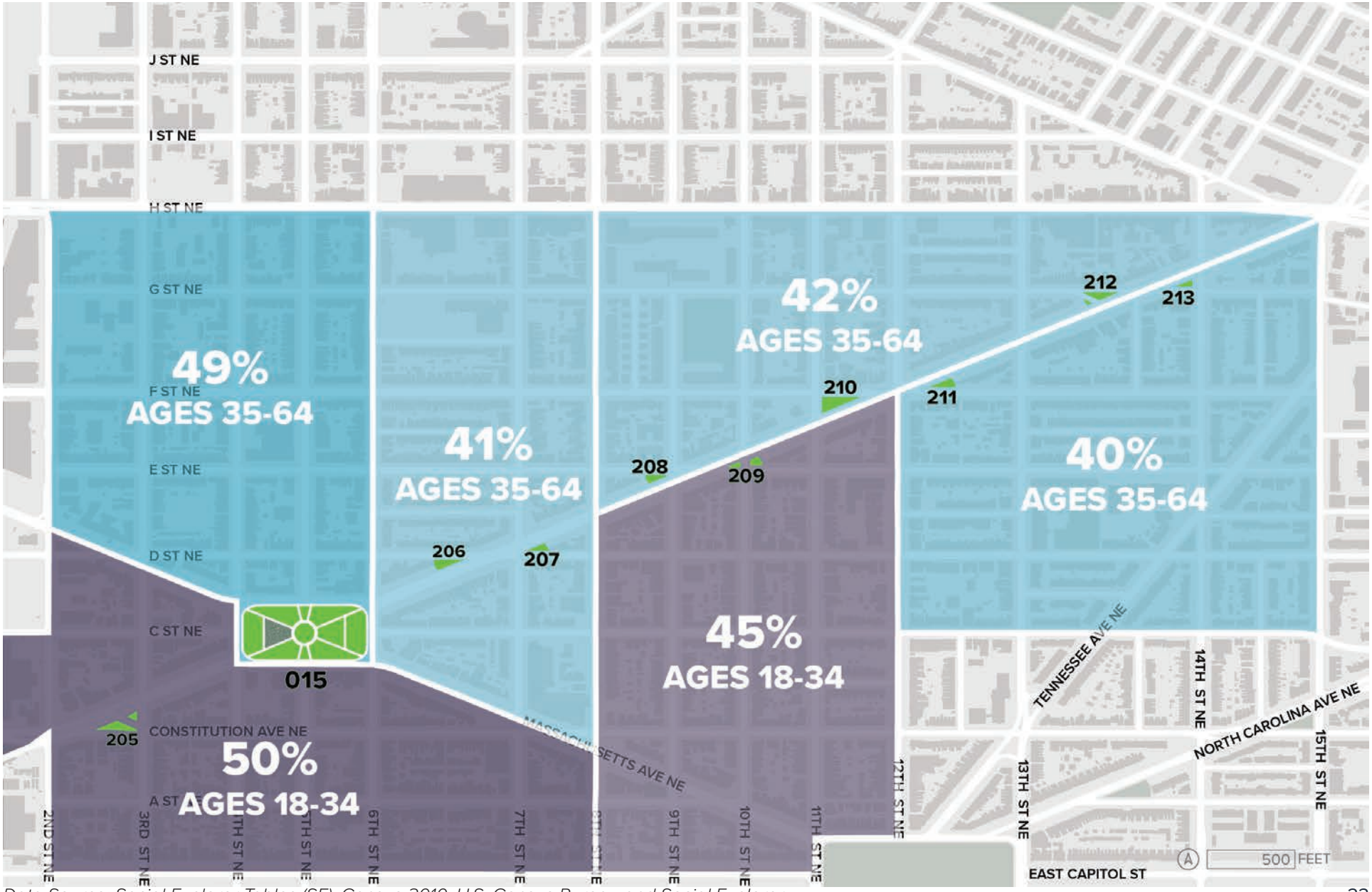
Color distinguishes age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Age by Census Tract, 2010

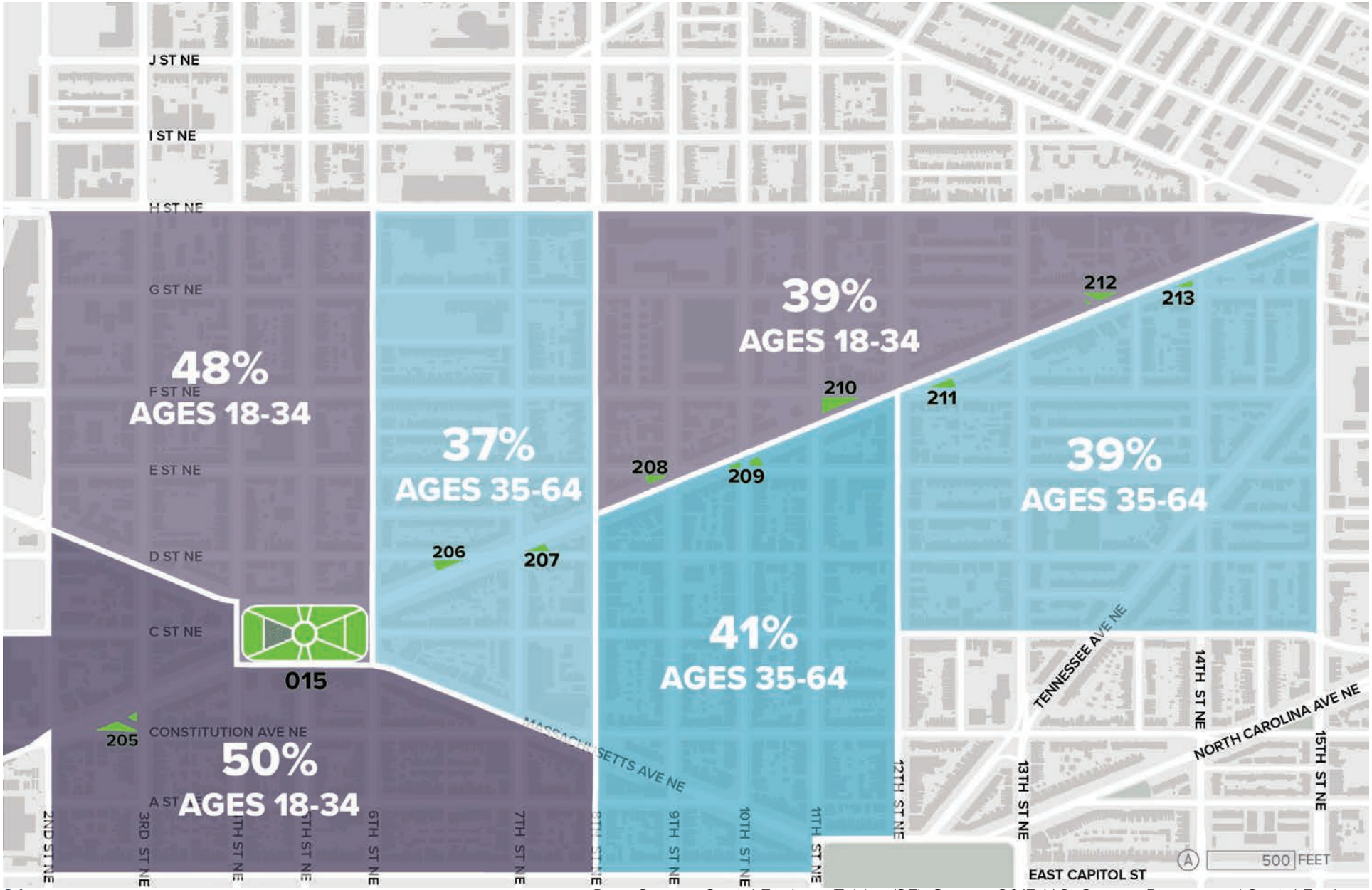
Color distinguishes age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Age by Census Tract, 2017

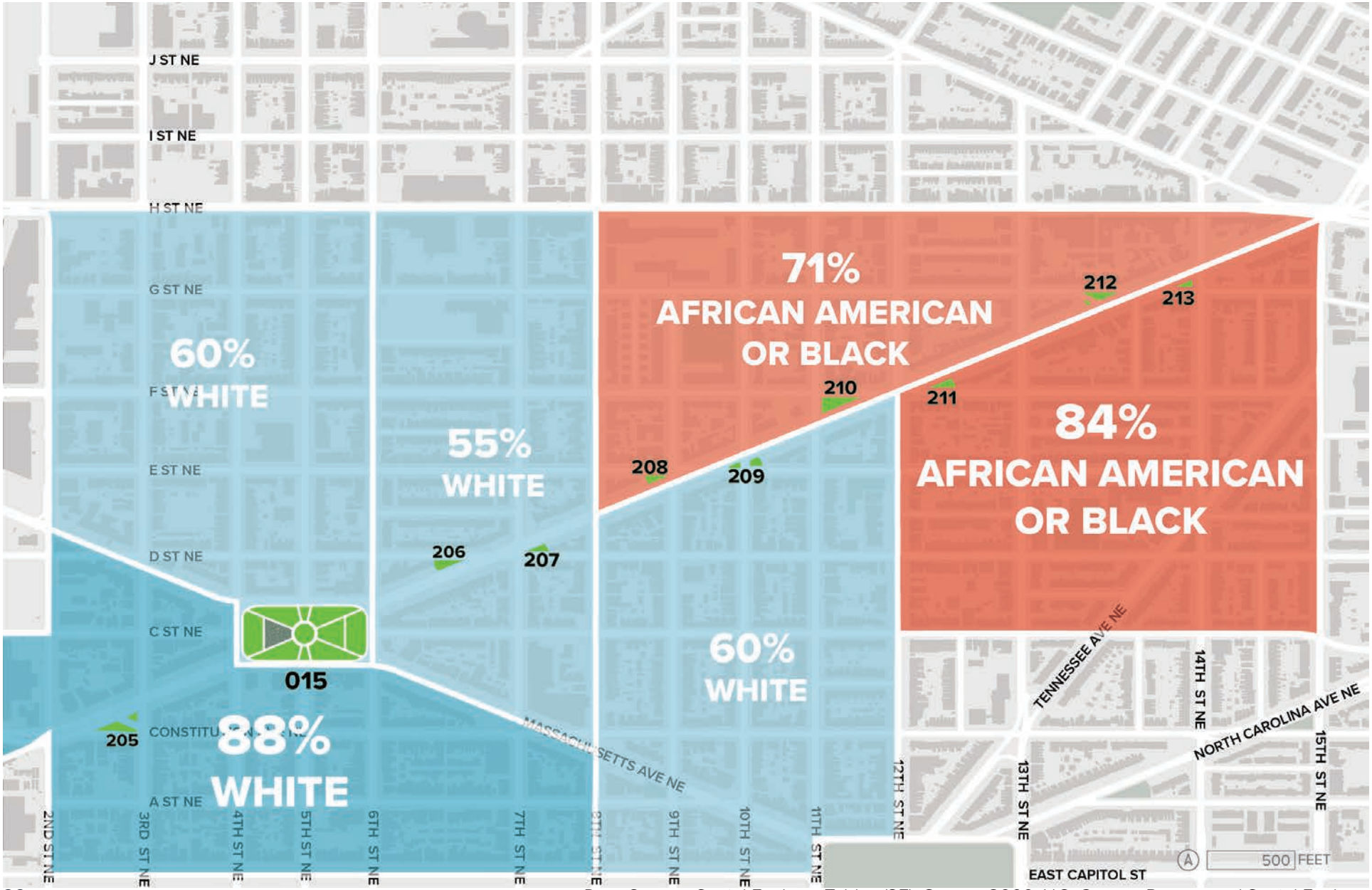
Color distinguishes age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2017, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Race by Census Tract, 2000

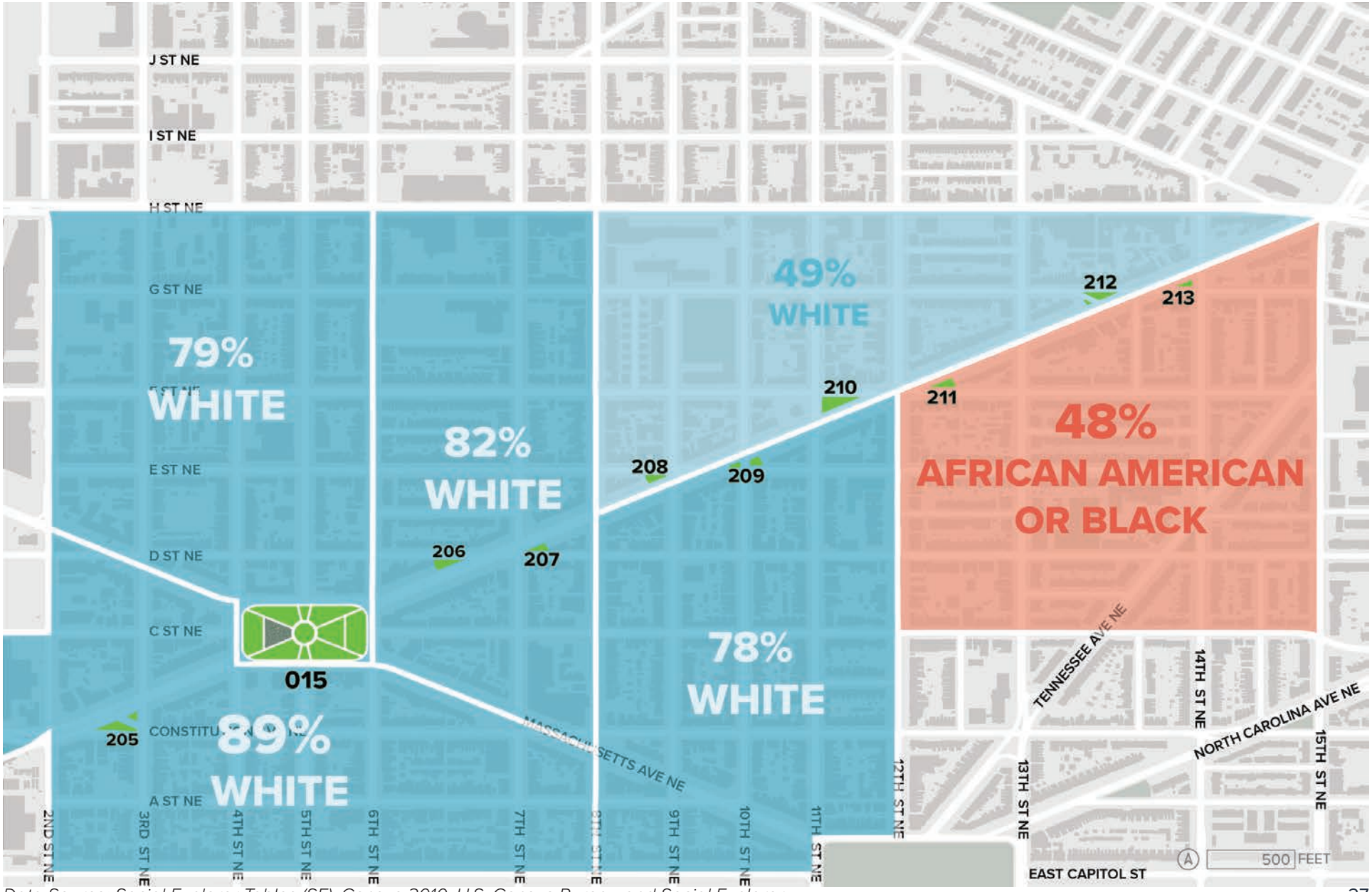
Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Race by Census Tract, 2010

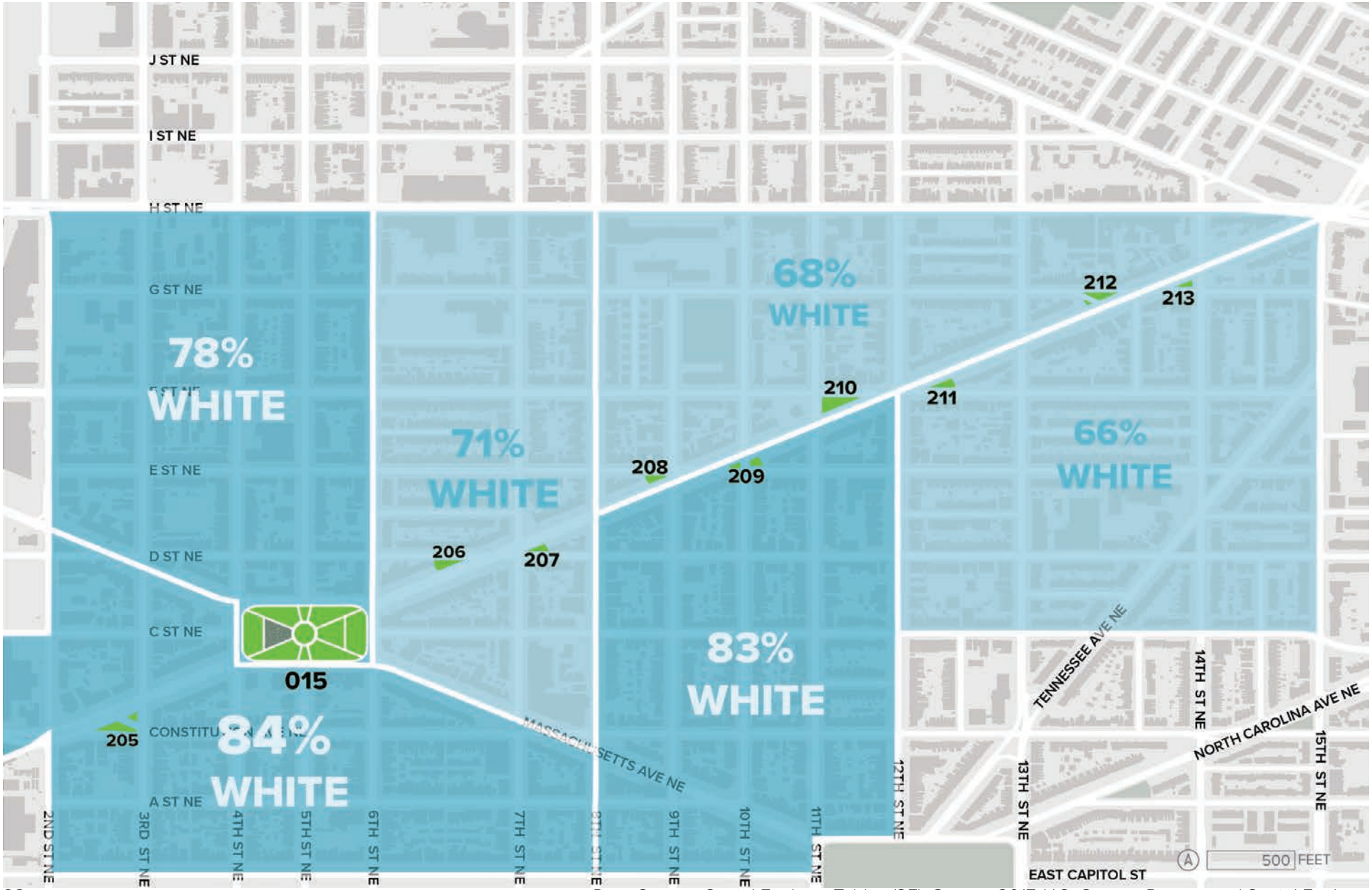
Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Race by Census Tract, 2017

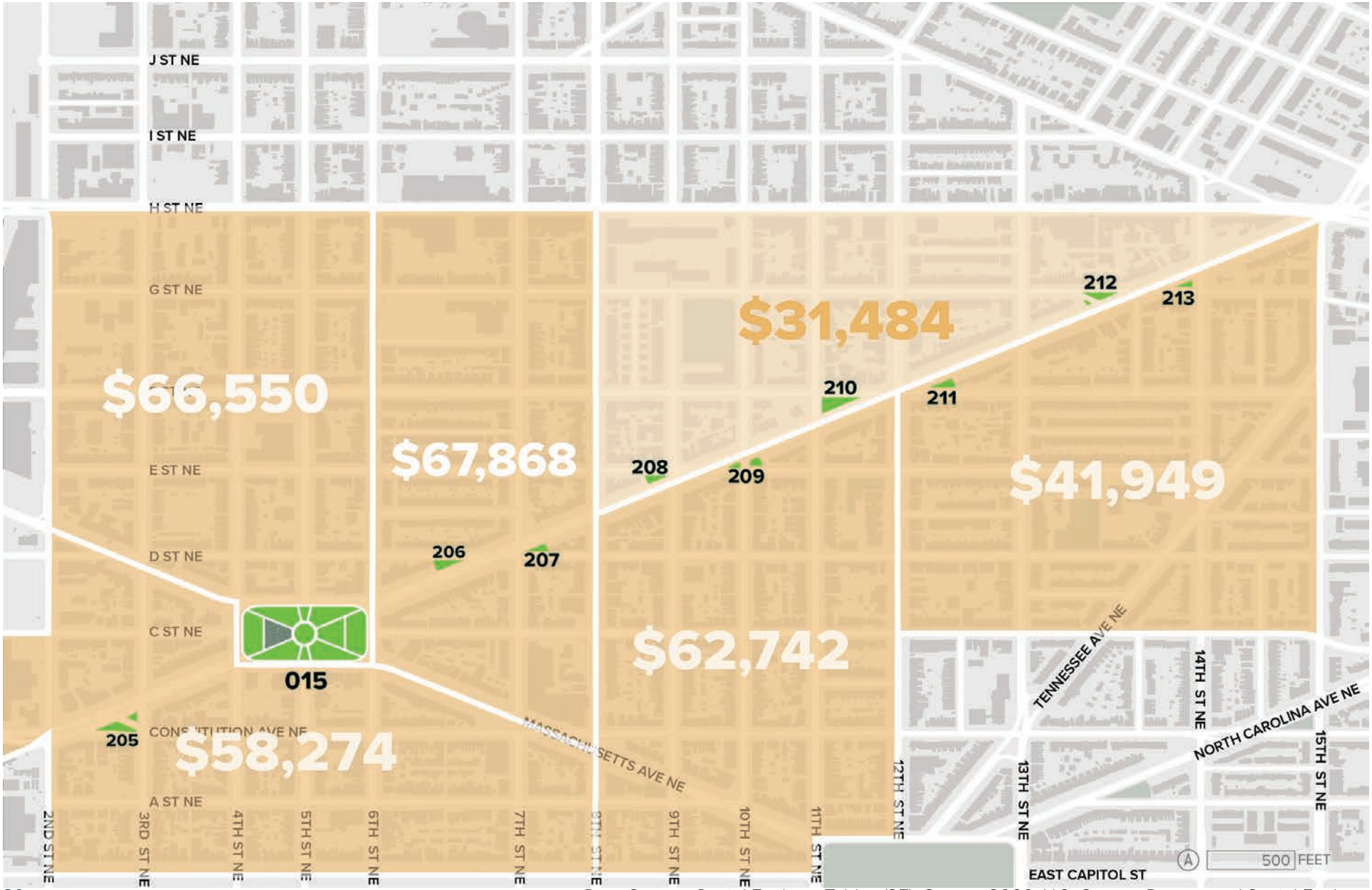
Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2017, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Income by Census Tract, 2000

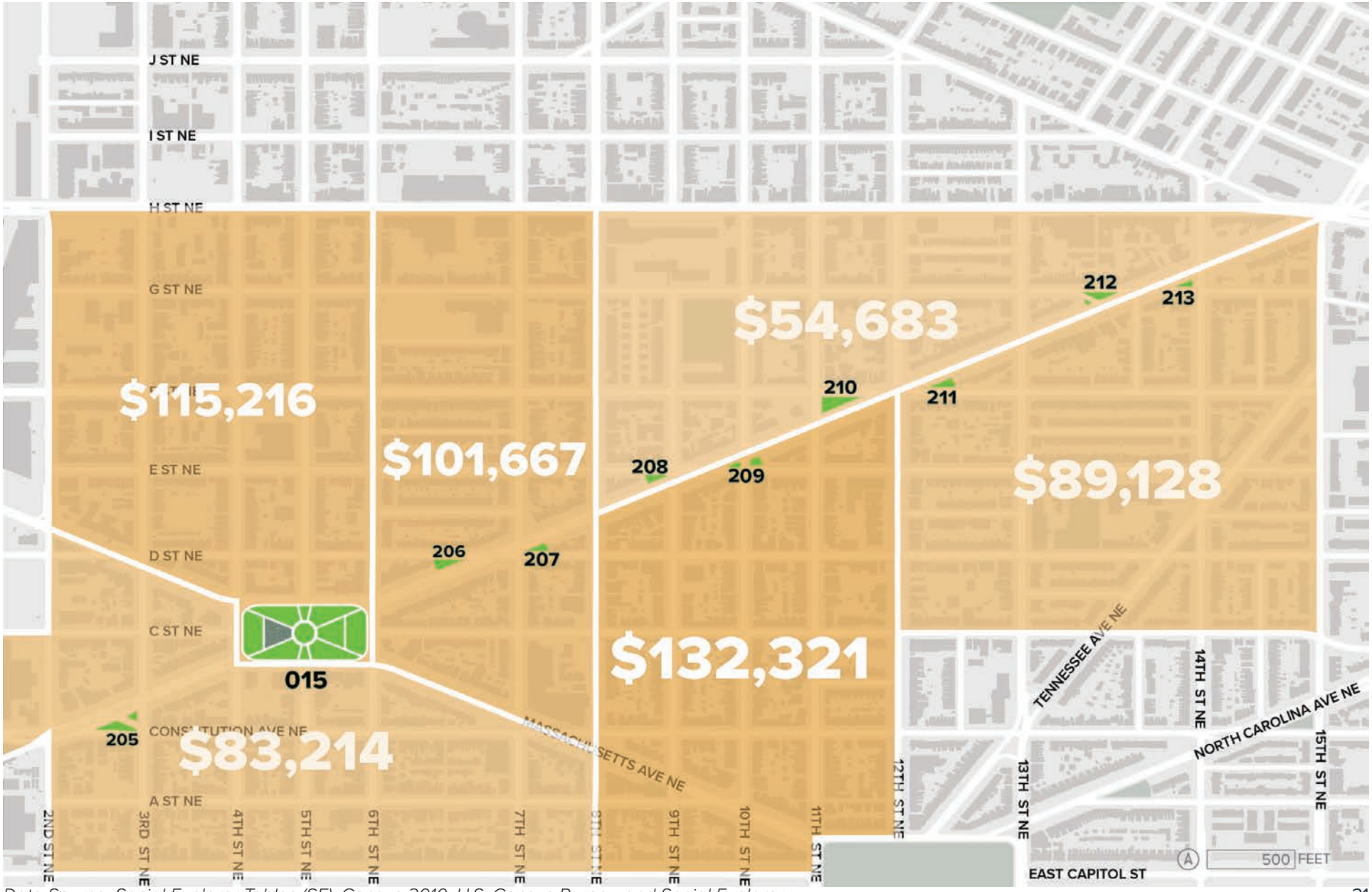
Transparency based on income level.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Income by Census Tract, 2010

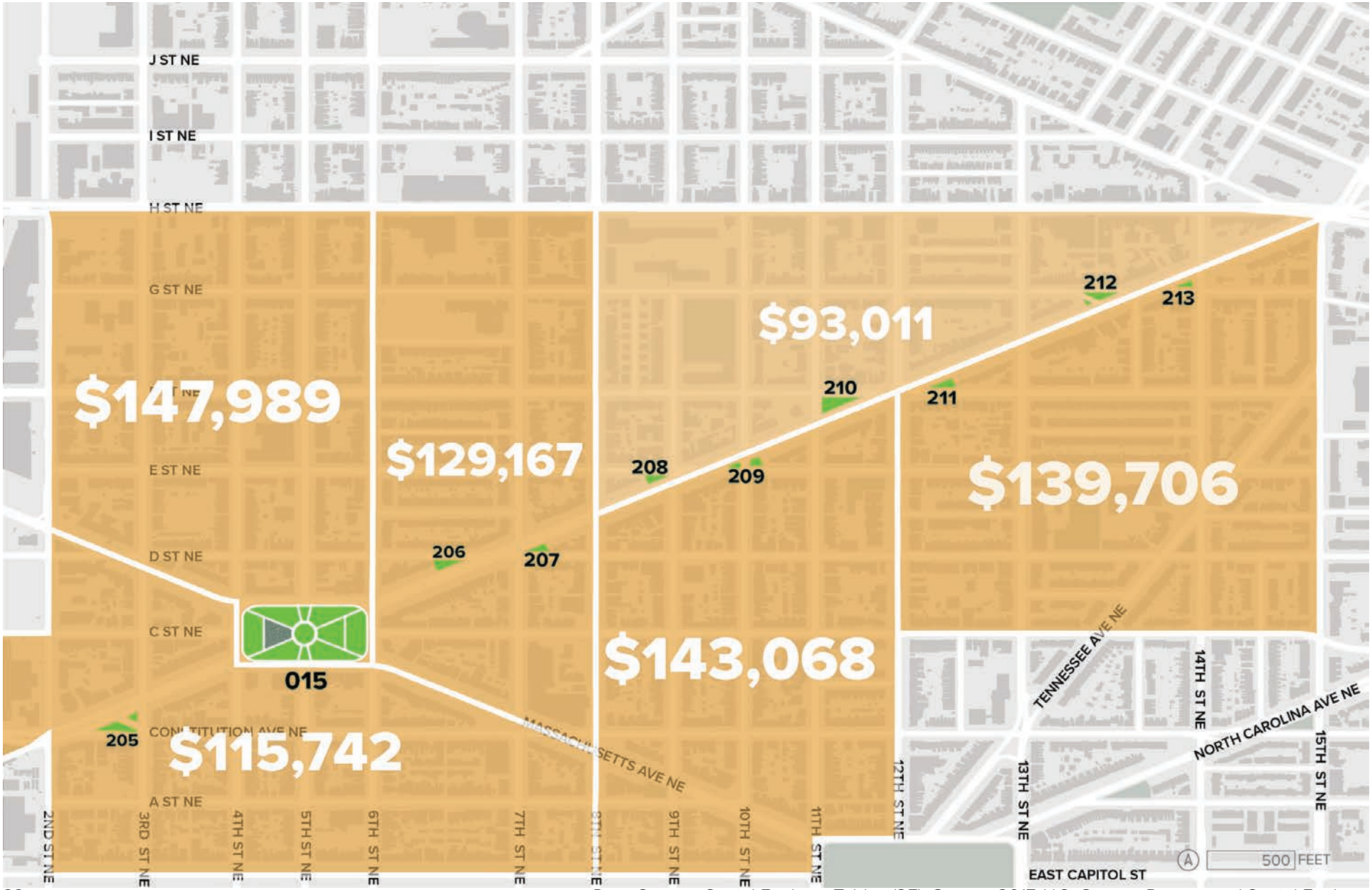
Transparency based on income level.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Income by Census Tract, 2017

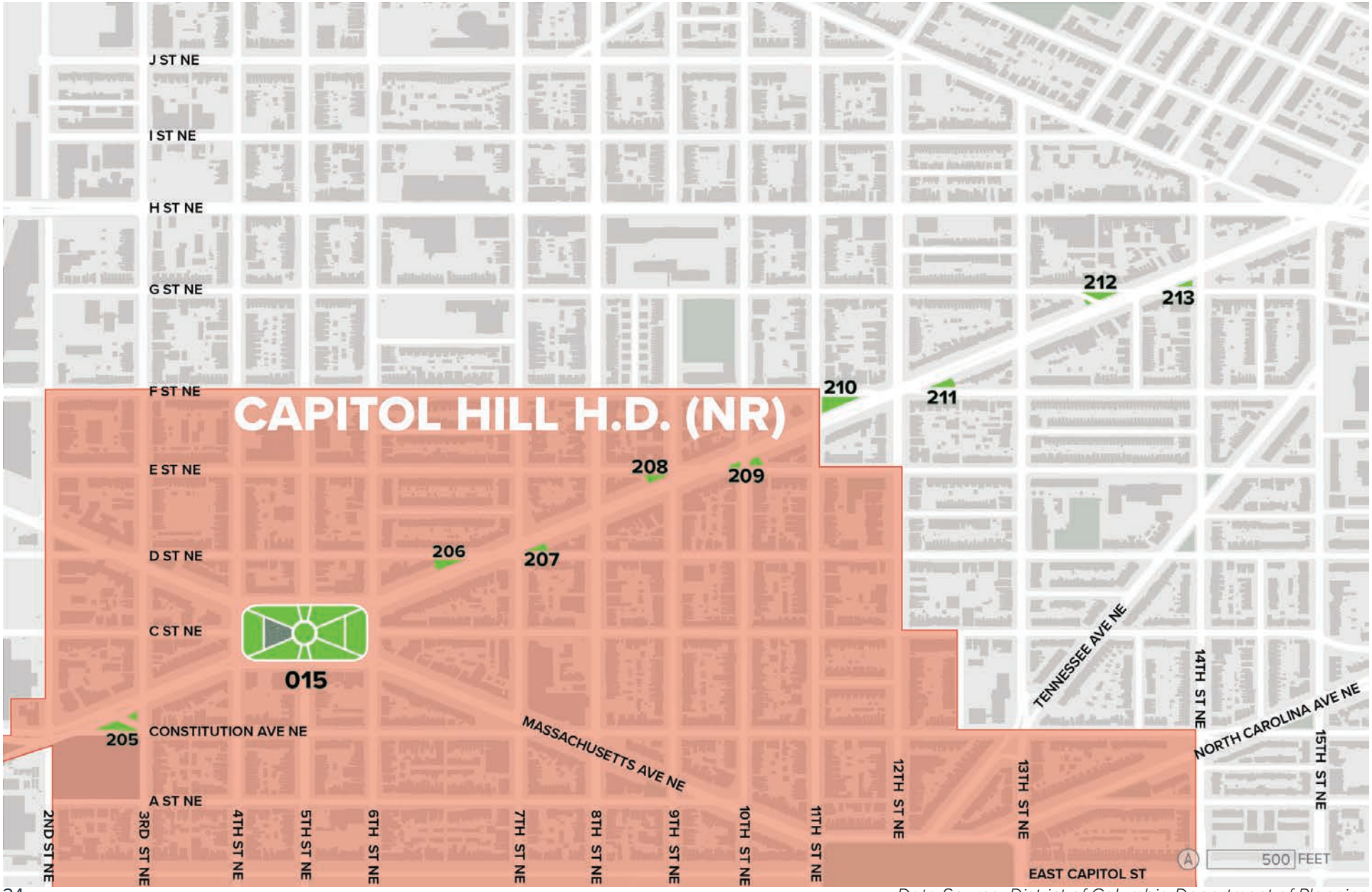
Transparency based on income level.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2017, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Nearby National Register Historic Districts

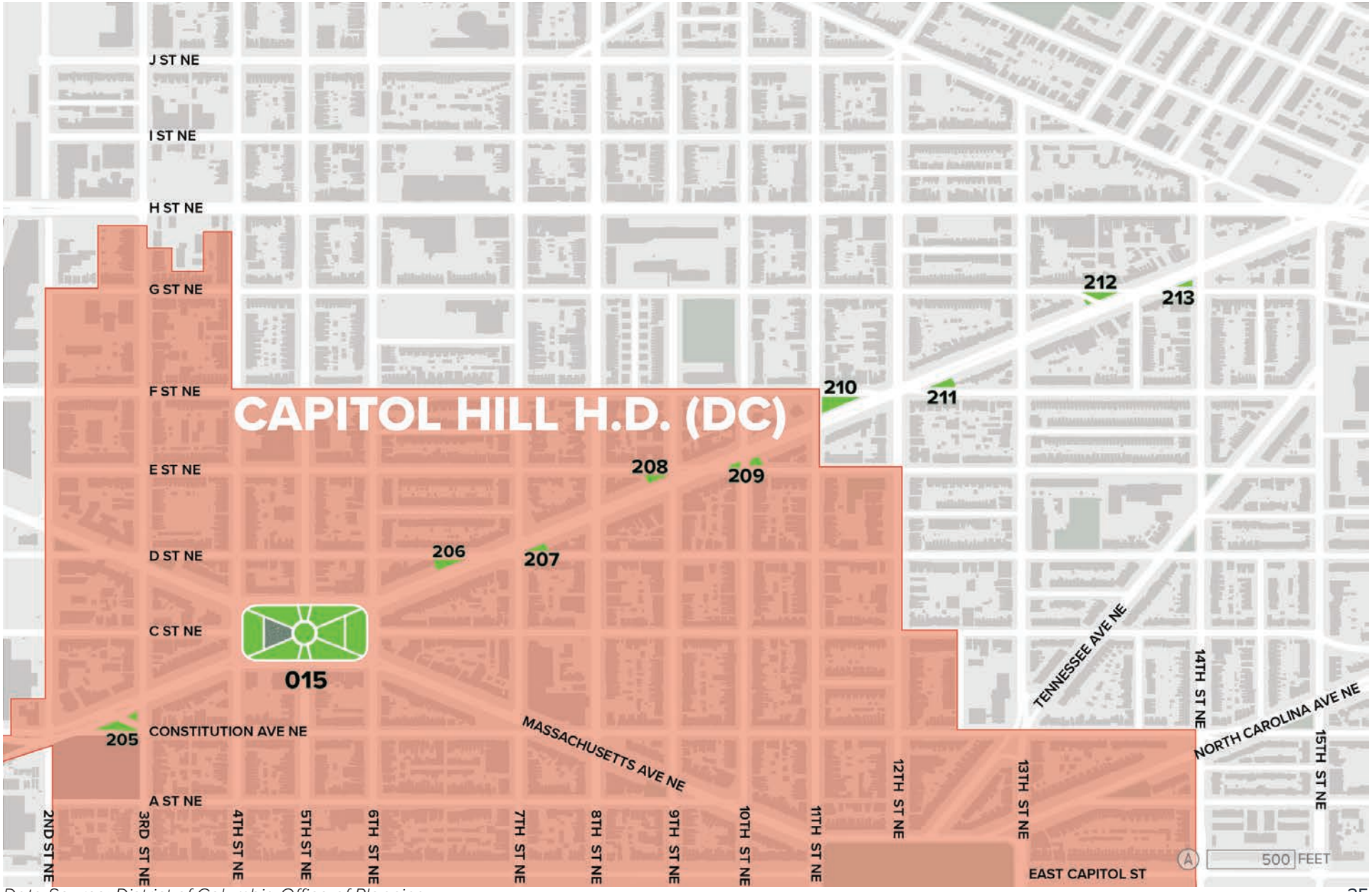
The Capitol Hill Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, with a boundary increase in 2003. This map does not represent the resources associated with the L'Enfant Plan, which was listed on the National Register in 1997.



Data Source: District of Columbia Department of Planning

Nearby DC Historic Districts

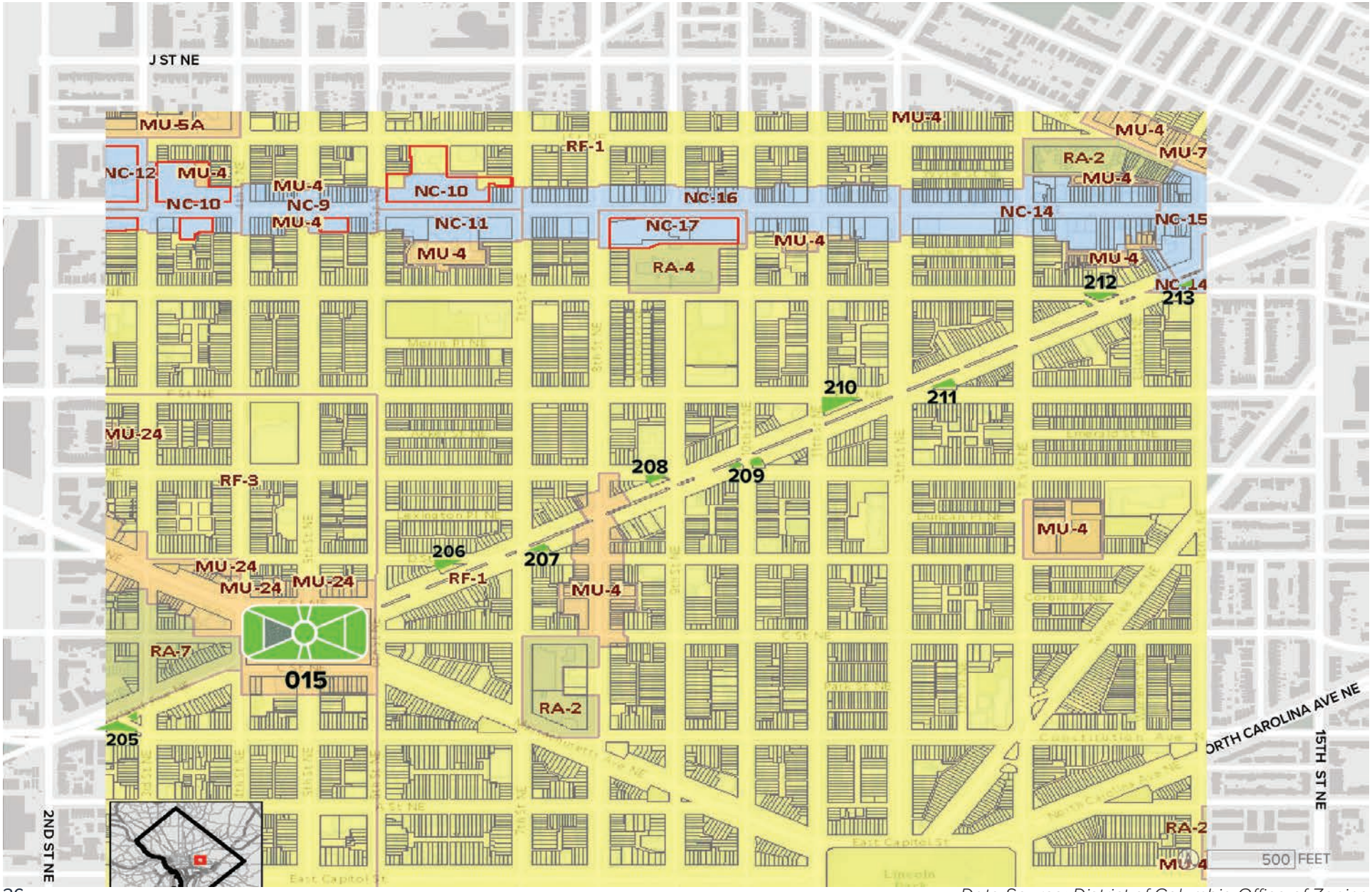
The Capitol Hill Historic District was designated locally in 1973.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Planning

Zoning Context

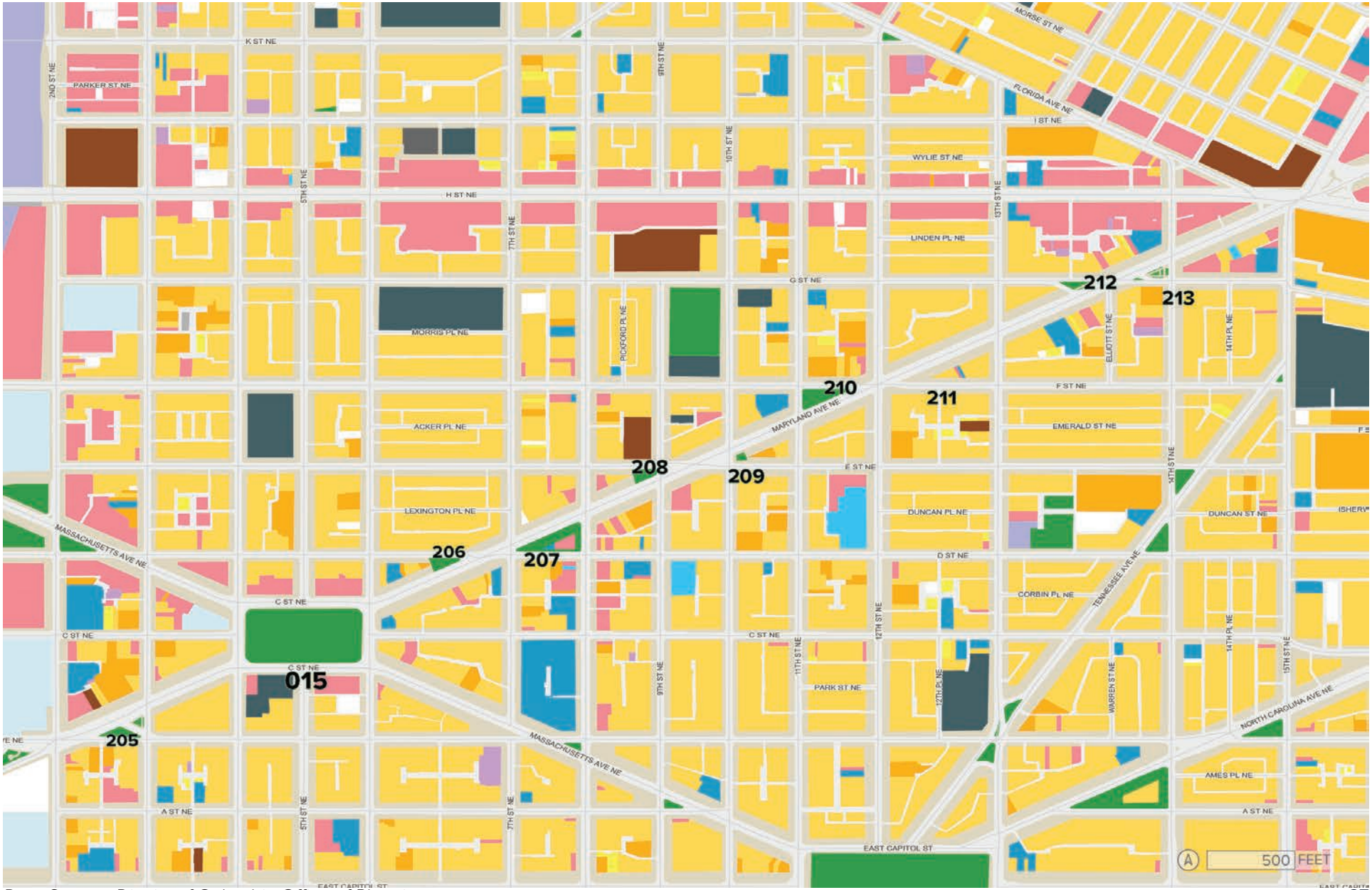
This map's zoning overlay was developed by the DC Office of Zoning.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Zoning

Land Use Context

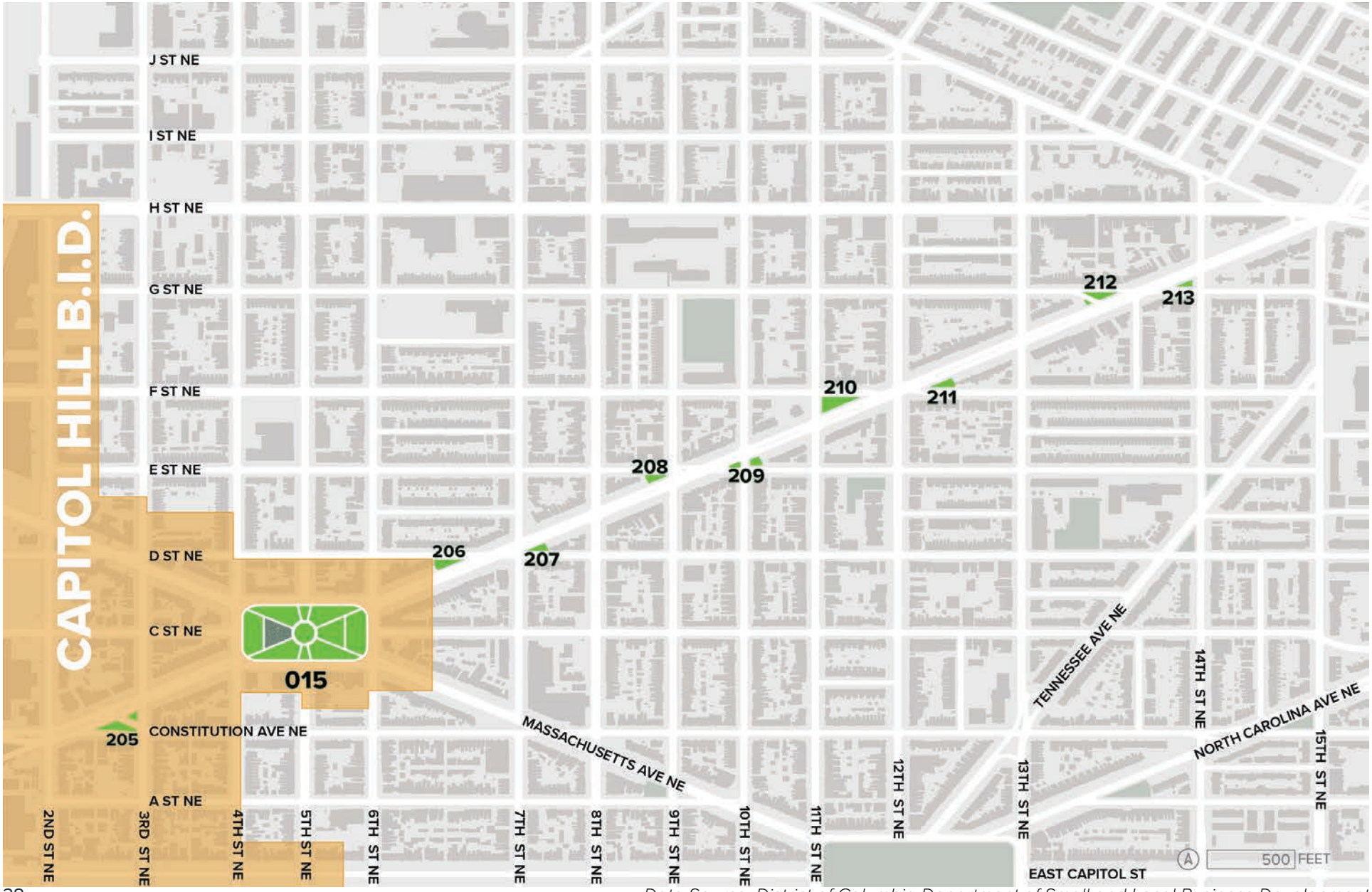
This map's zoning overlay was developed by the DC Office of Planning.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Planning

Nearby Business Improvement Districts

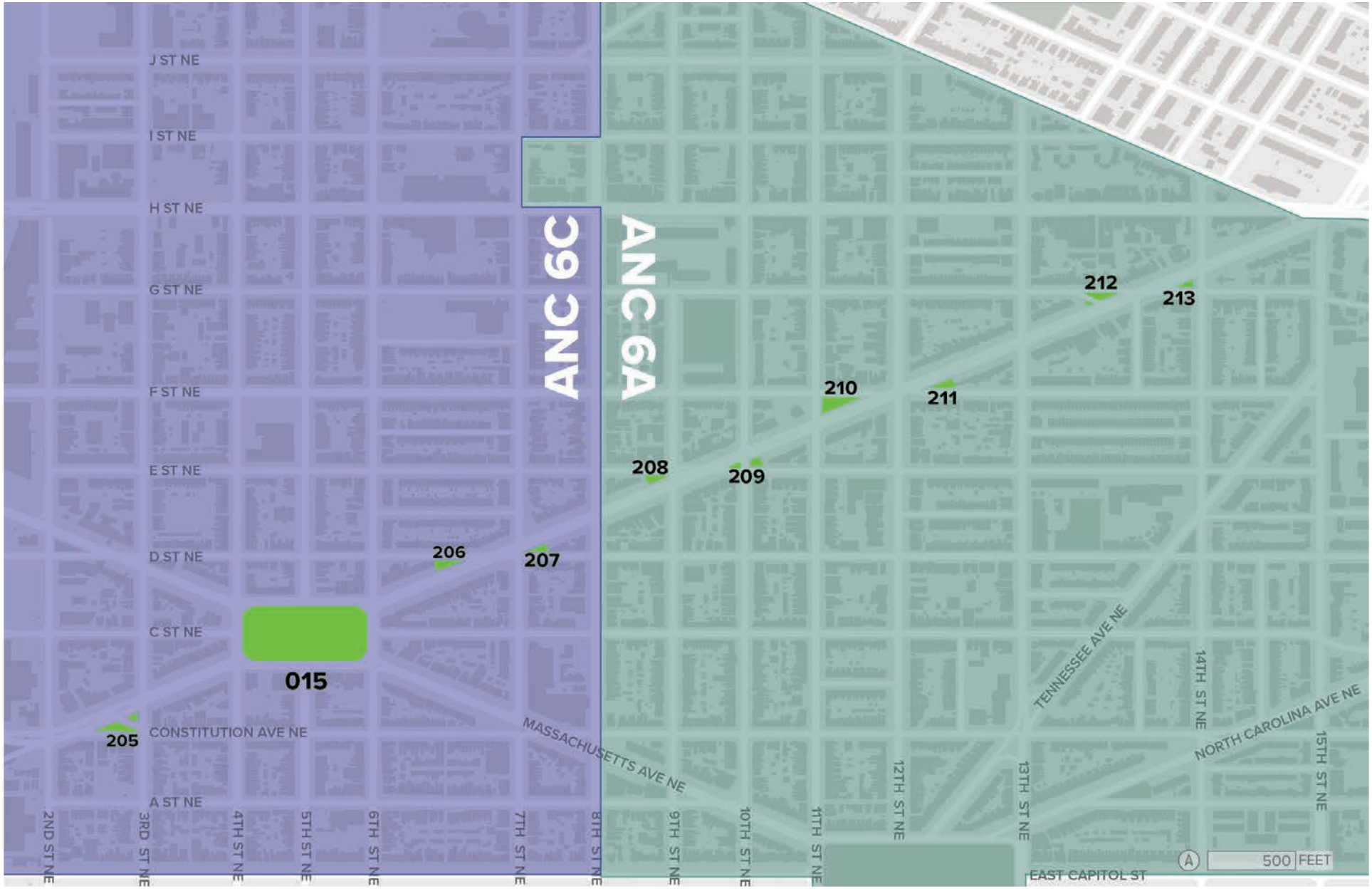
The only business improvement district (B.I.D.) in the area is the Capitol Hill BID, which encompasses the southwest end of Maryland Avenue NE.



Data Source: District of Columbia Department of Small and Local Business Development

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

The Maryland Avenue NE small parks span two different advisory neighborhood commissions (ANCs).

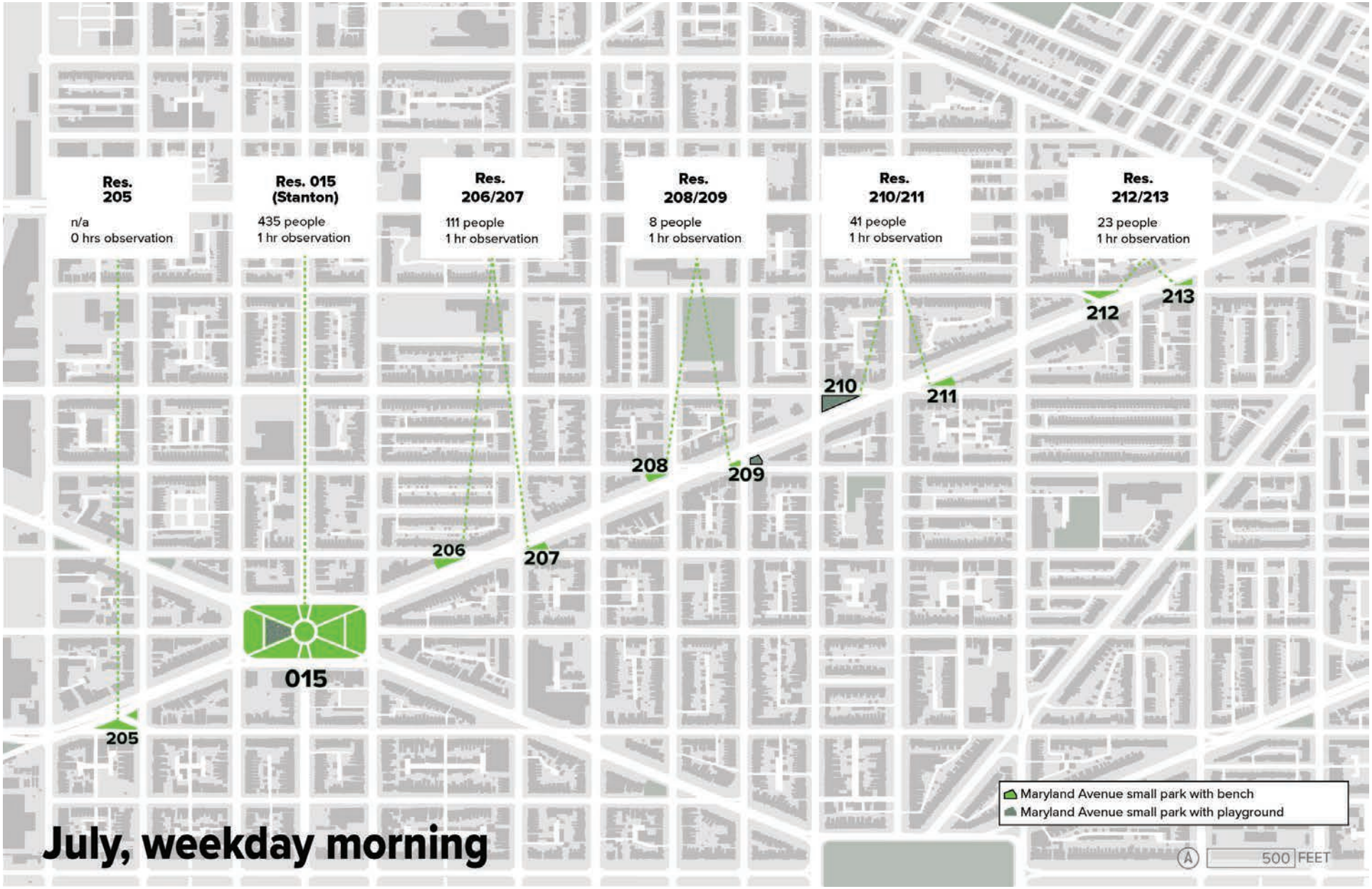


Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

5
Behavioral Mapping
5a. Number of Visitors

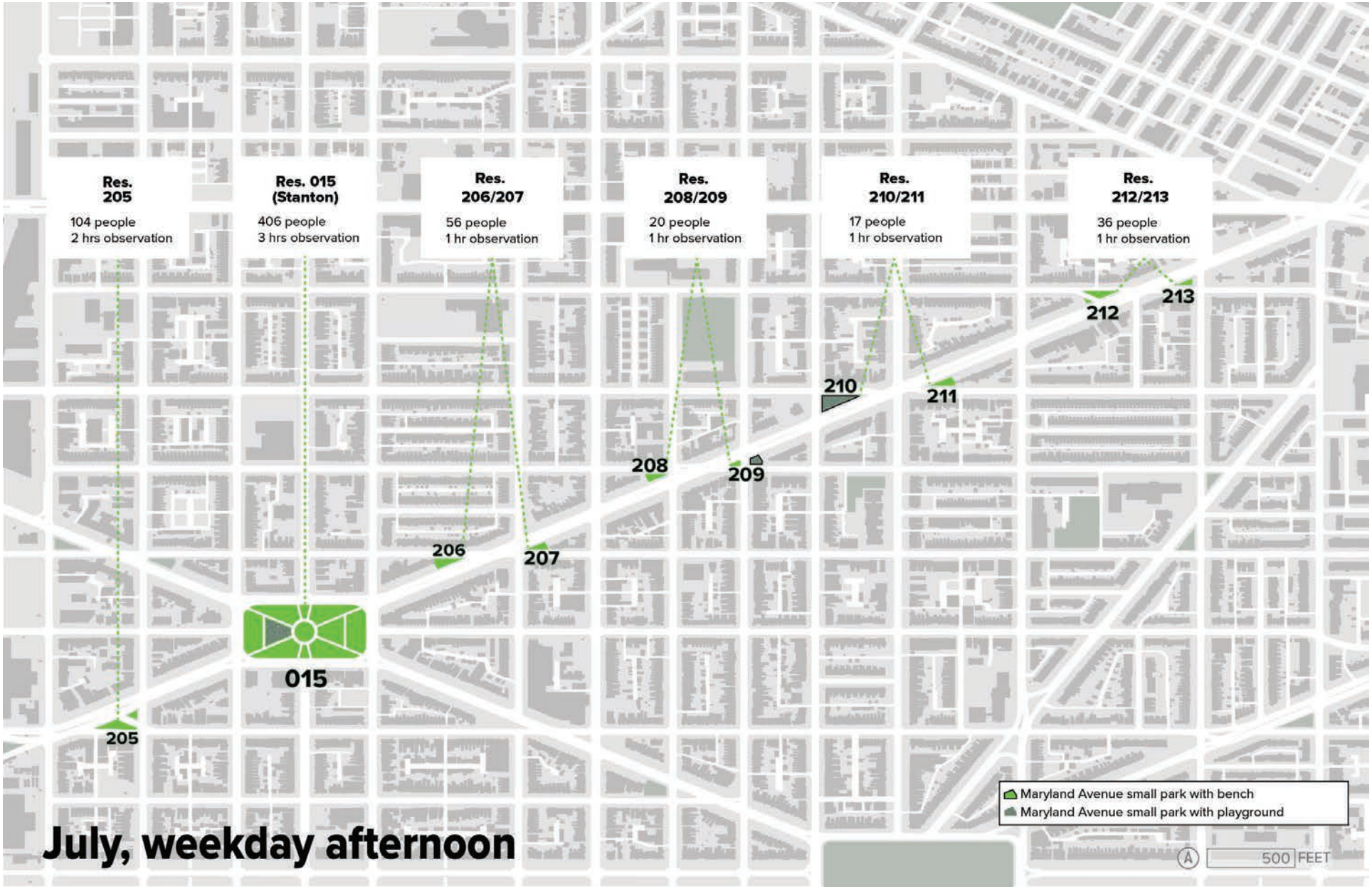
Number of Visitors to Maryland Avenue Small Parks

These visitor rates are based on the combined number of people who skirted the edges of the reservations and those who lingered in the park. To see the breakdown between those groups, see the next set of maps beginning on page 46, which counted visitors based on their time spent in the small parks.

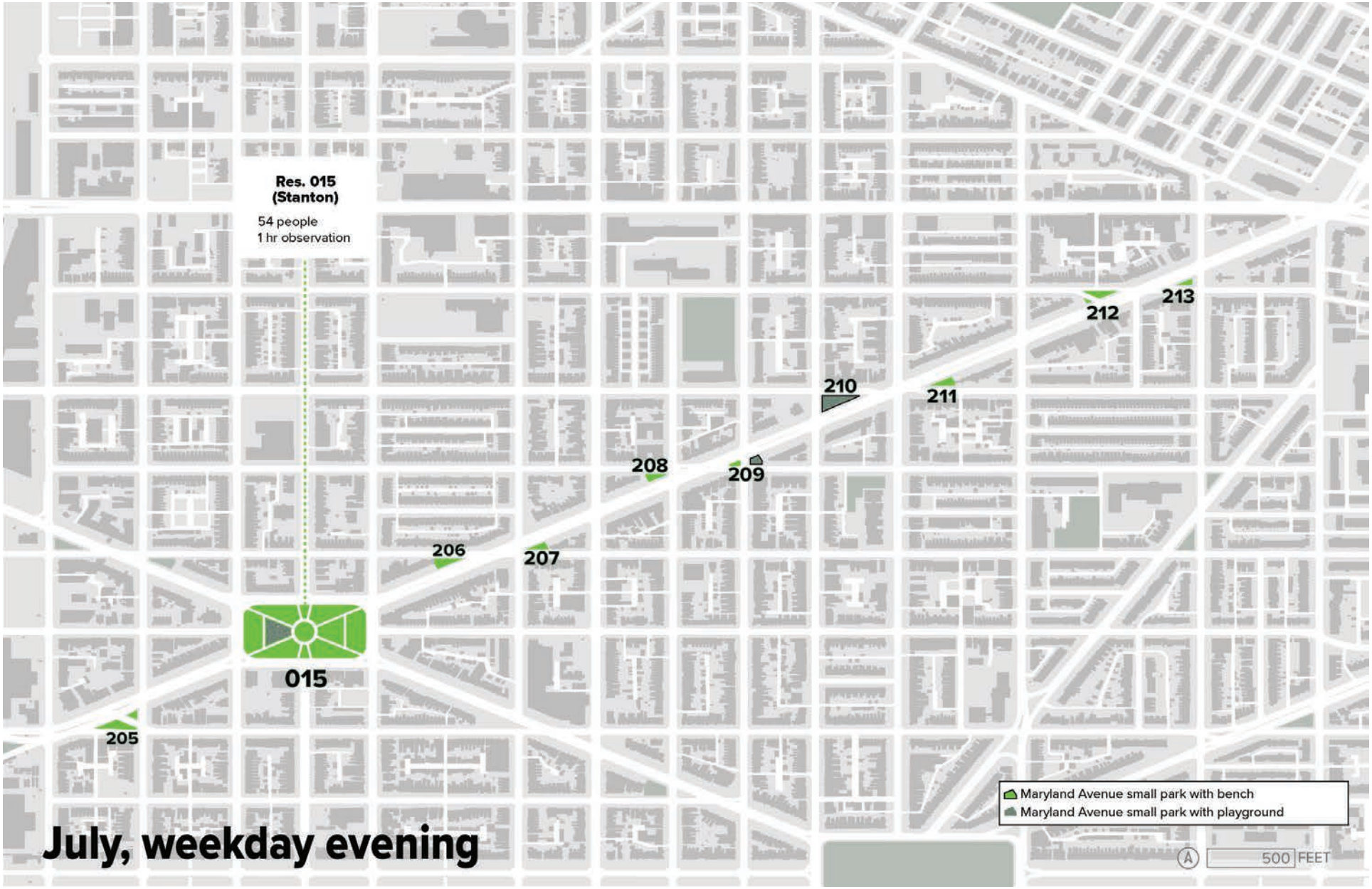


Number of Visitors to Maryland Avenue Small Parks

Other than Stanton Park, Reservations 206 and 207 saw the highest numbers of visitors, based in large part on the presence of the library at that intersection. This was also true during the morning hours of survey.

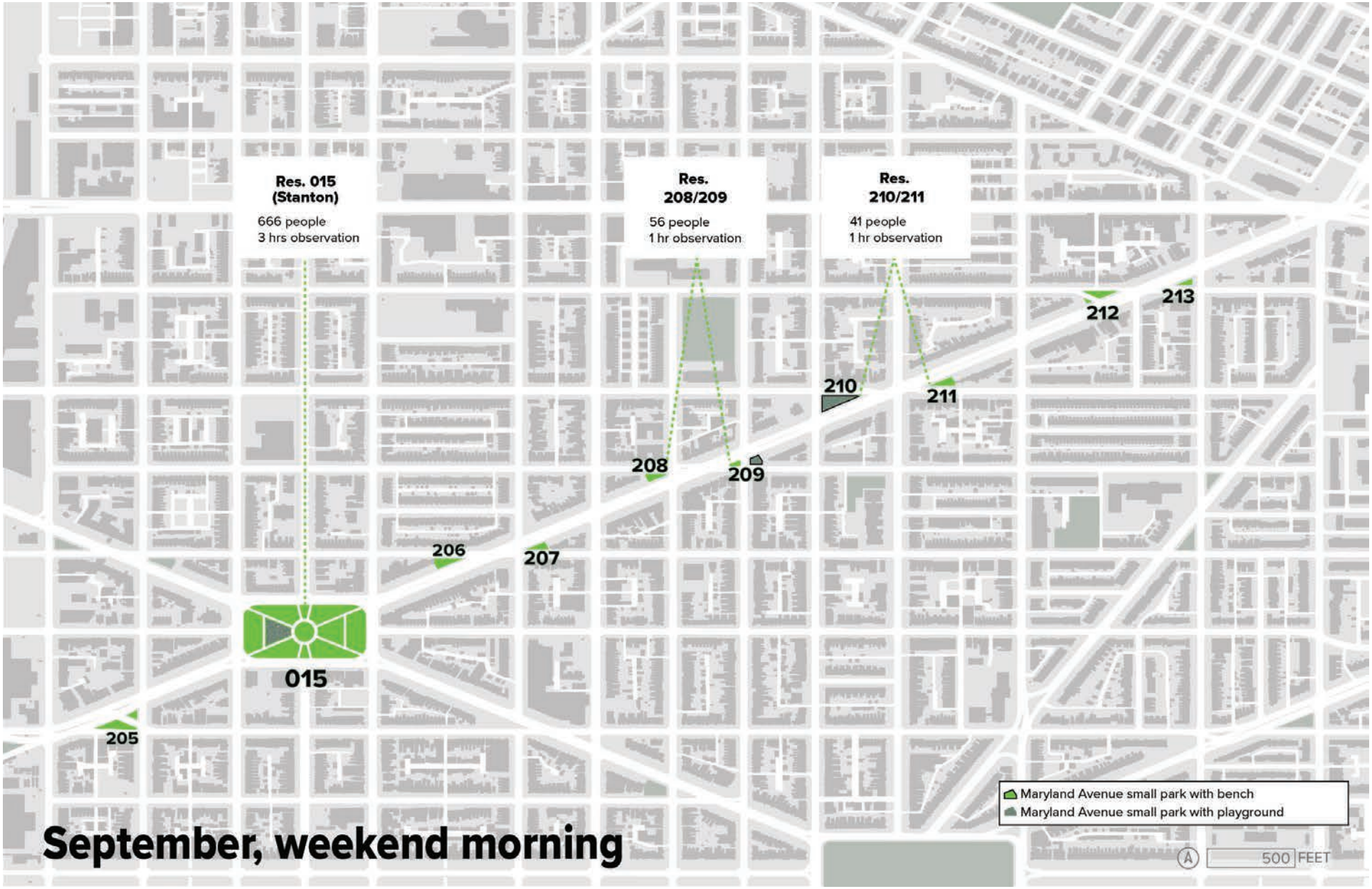


Number of Visitors to Maryland Avenue Small Parks

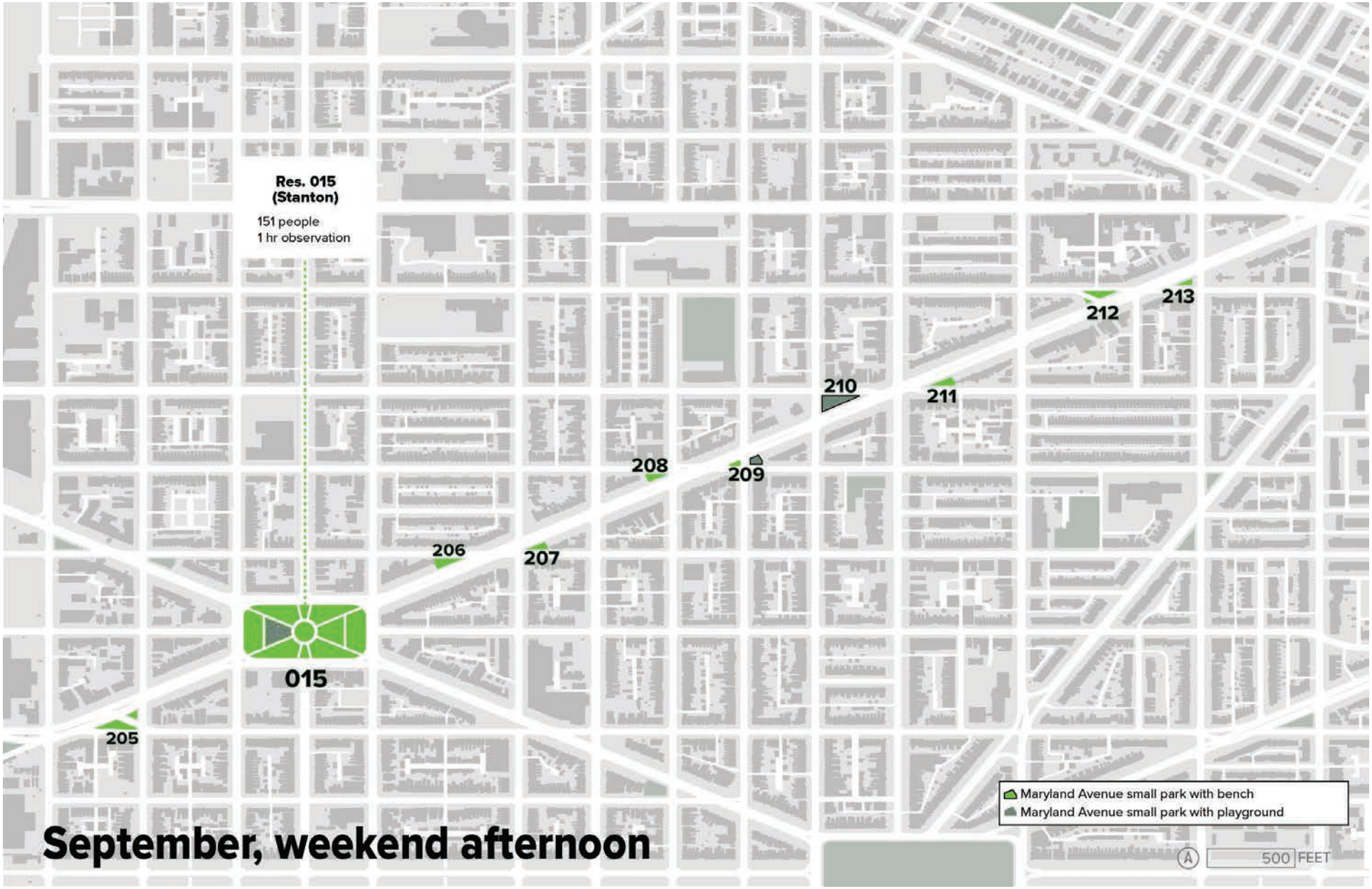


Number of Visitors to Maryland Avenue Small Parks

Compared with the July survey days, which were all on weekdays, the reservations with playgrounds saw more visitors on September, when the survey was conducted on a weekend, the weather was more temperate, and shade coverage was less of an issue.



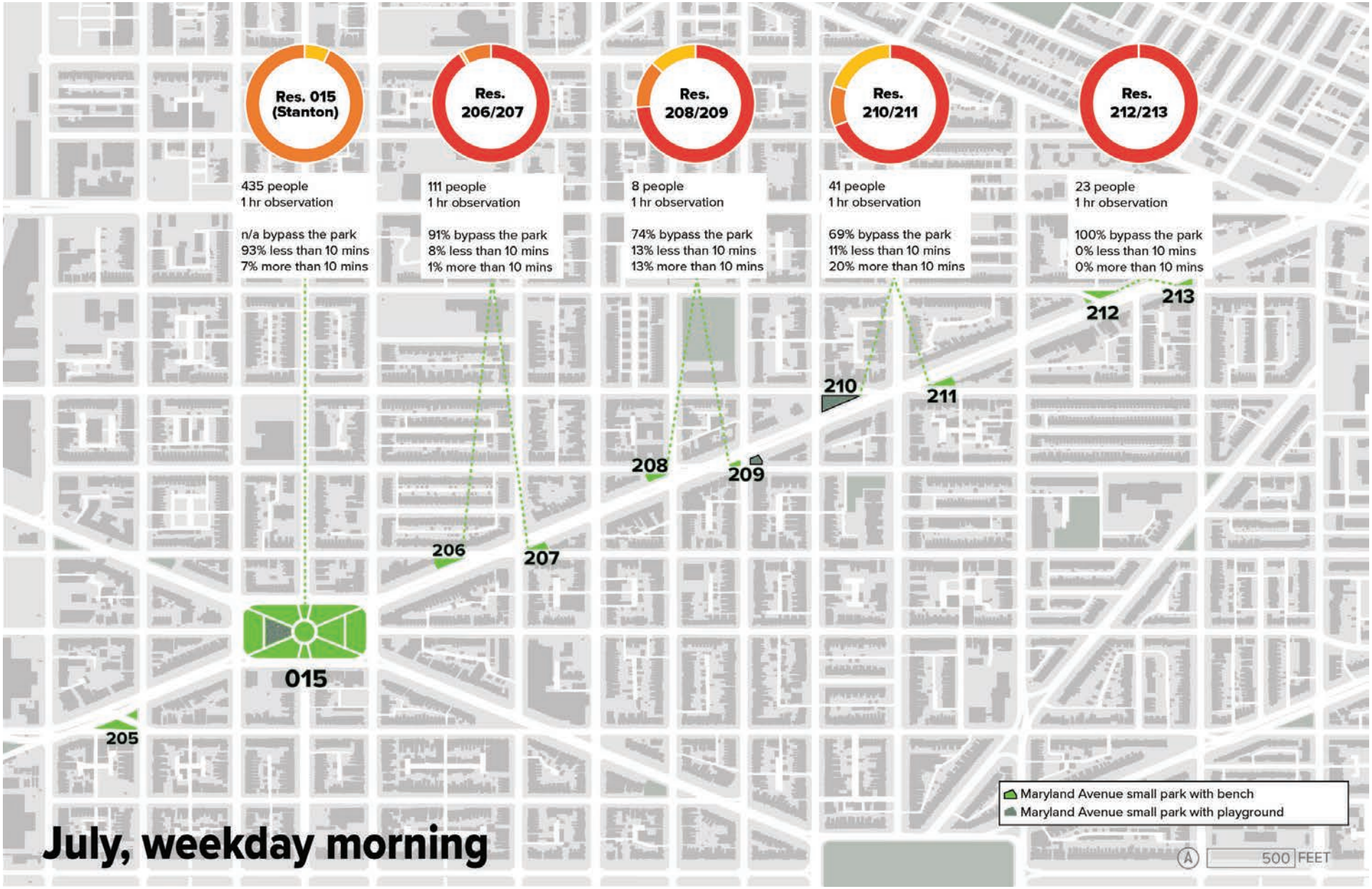
Number of Visitors to Maryland Avenue Small Parks



5b
Time Spent in Small Parks

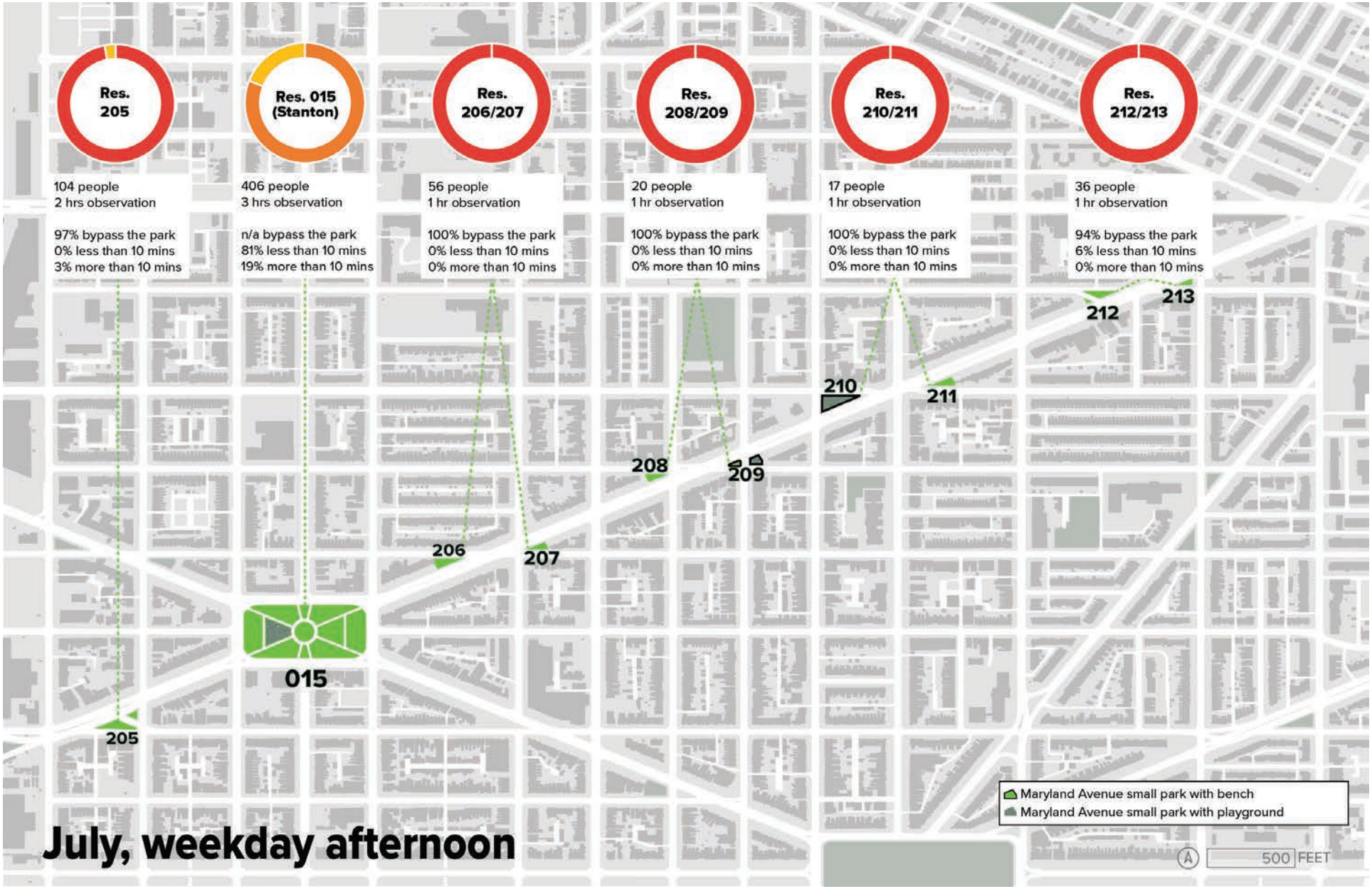
Time Spent in Park

These maps distinguish between the people who actually visited the small parks and spent any time in them, versus those who simply walked alongside the small parks but did not otherwise linger in them. Due to its size, Stanton Park was only surveyed for the length of time people spent in the park; surveyors could not count how many people bypassed the park without entering.



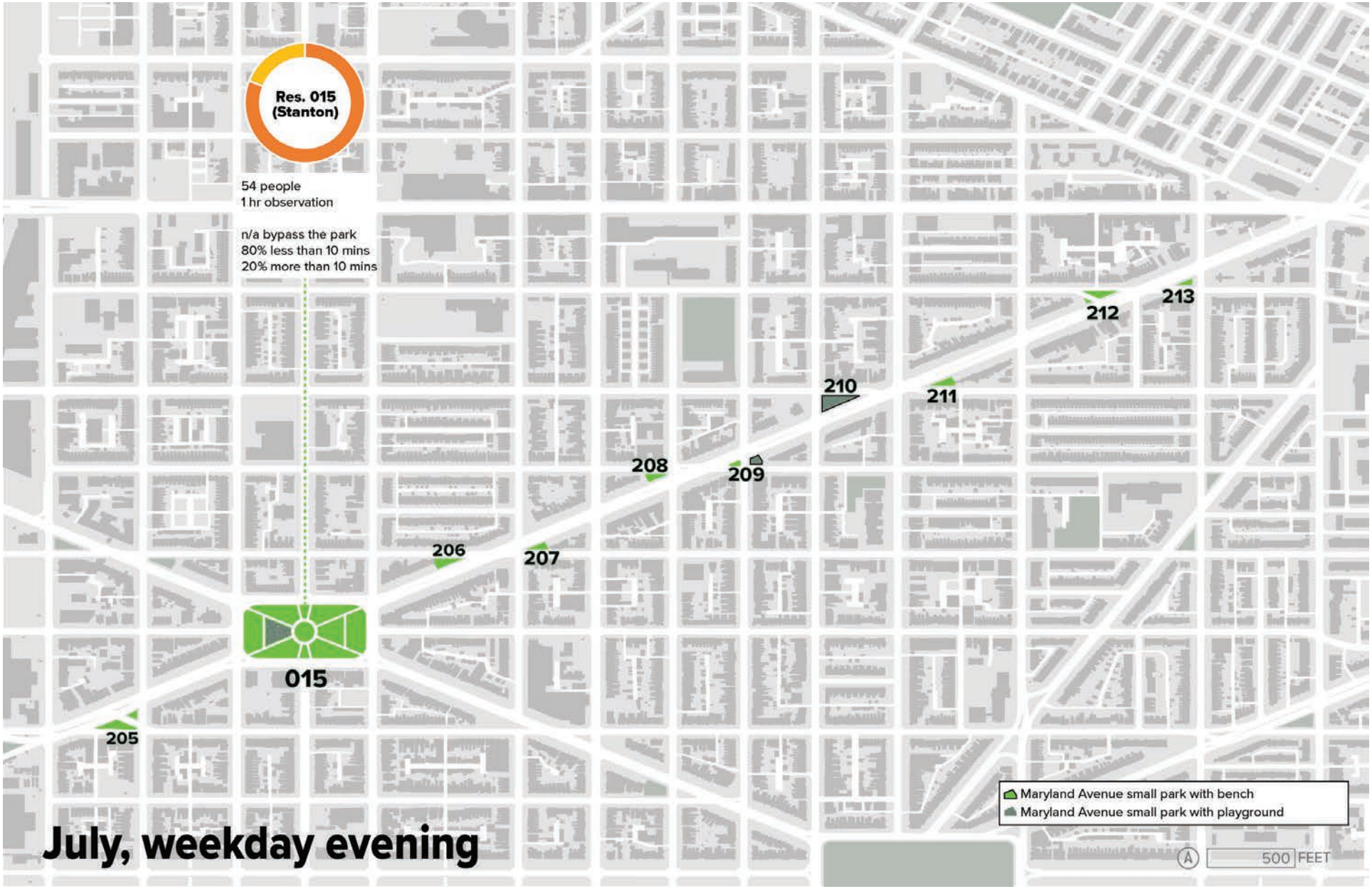
Time Spent in Park

Most of the small parks saw 100% bypass rates during the afternoon survey hours in July, meaning none of the people encountering the small parks (on foot, by bike, etc.) actually spent any time in them.



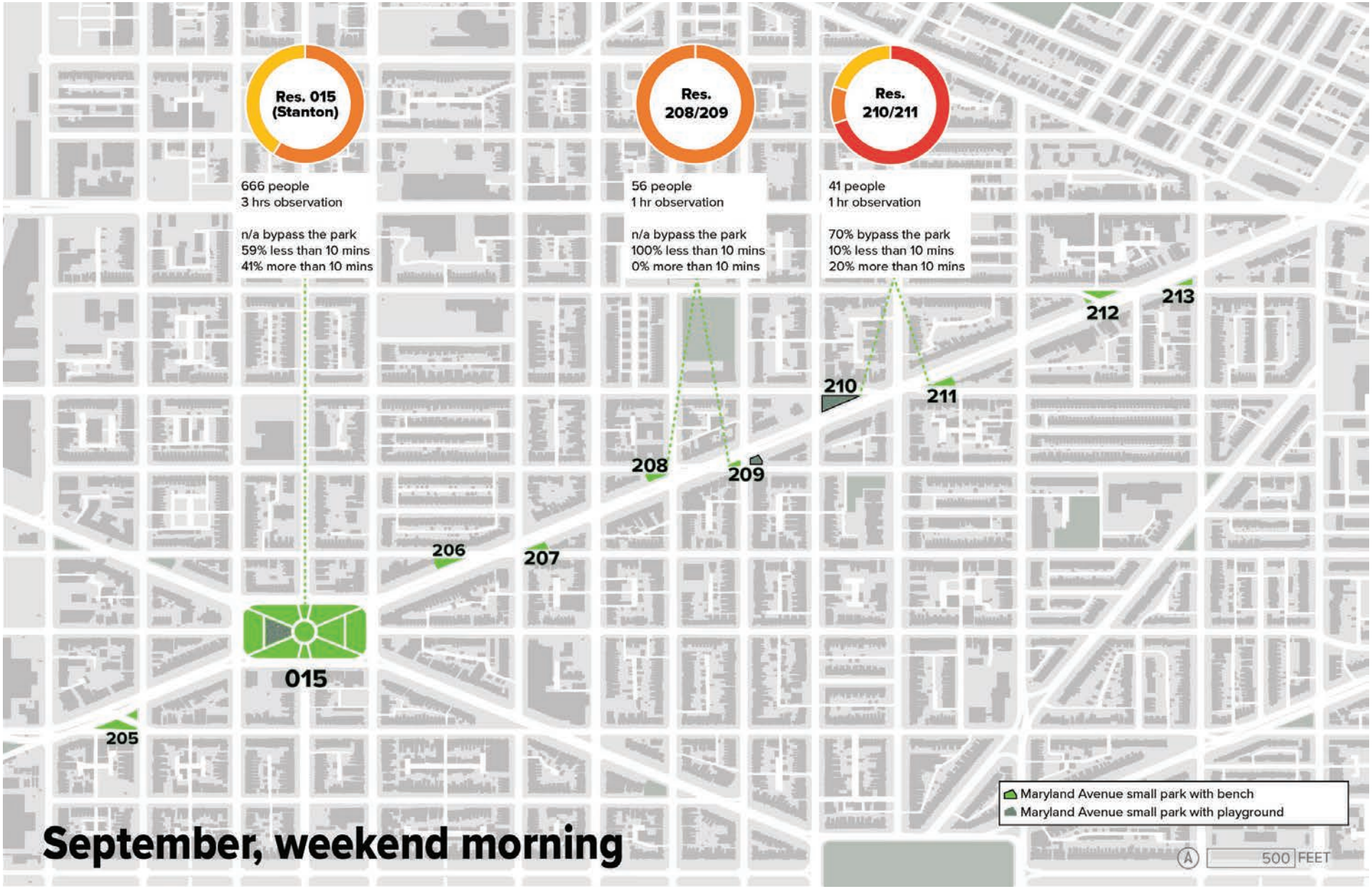
Time Spent in Park

Stanton Park is frequently used as a cut-through for commuters and other visitors traveling along the park's diagonal paths. This is reflected in the July survey hours' findings relative to the amount of time visitors spent in the park.



Time Spent in Park

During the September weekend survey hours, when the weather was more temperate and shade coverage was less of a necessity, the playground reservations saw somewhat better rates of time spent in the park.

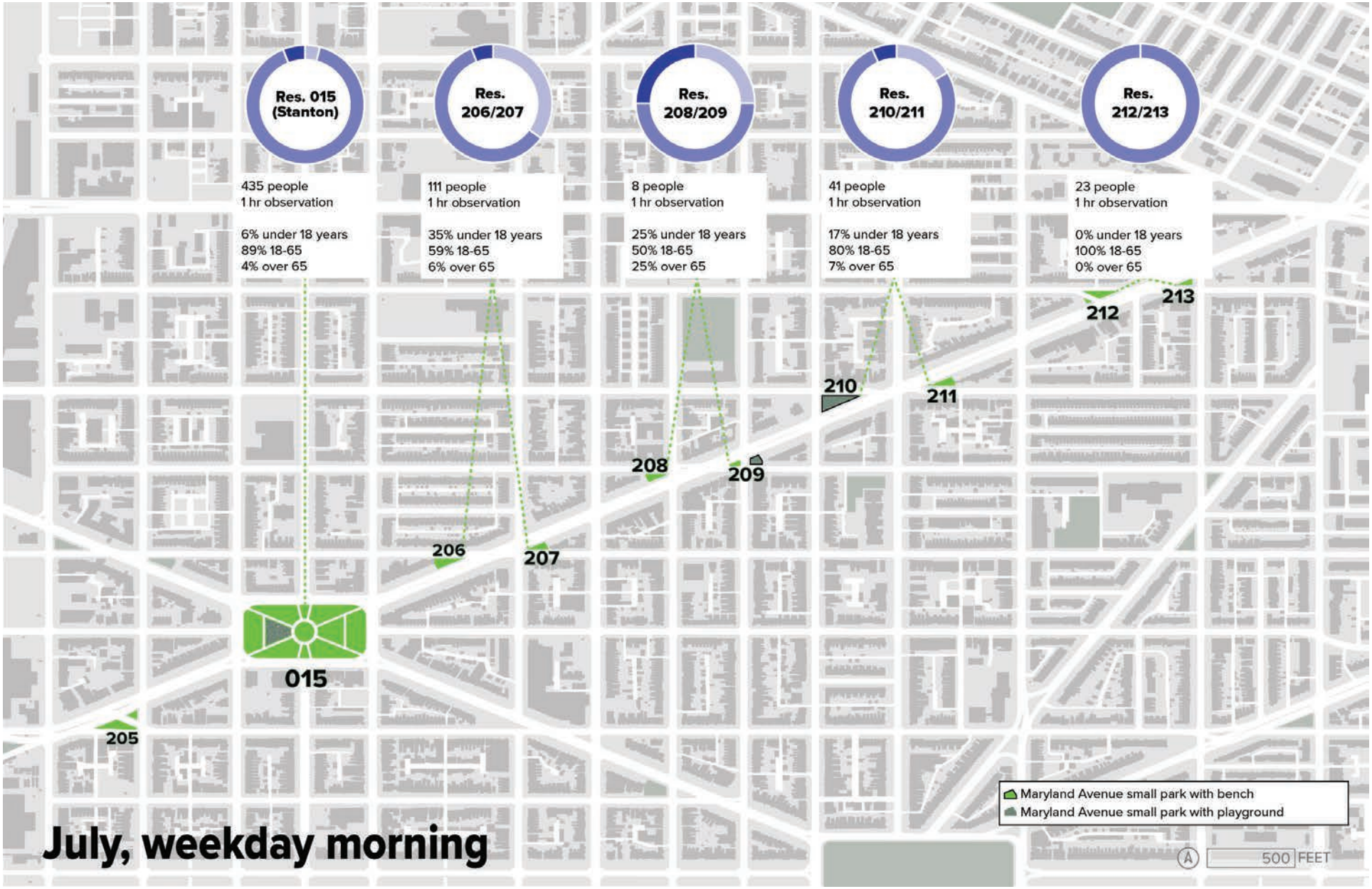


Time Spent in Park

5c
Demographics of Visitors

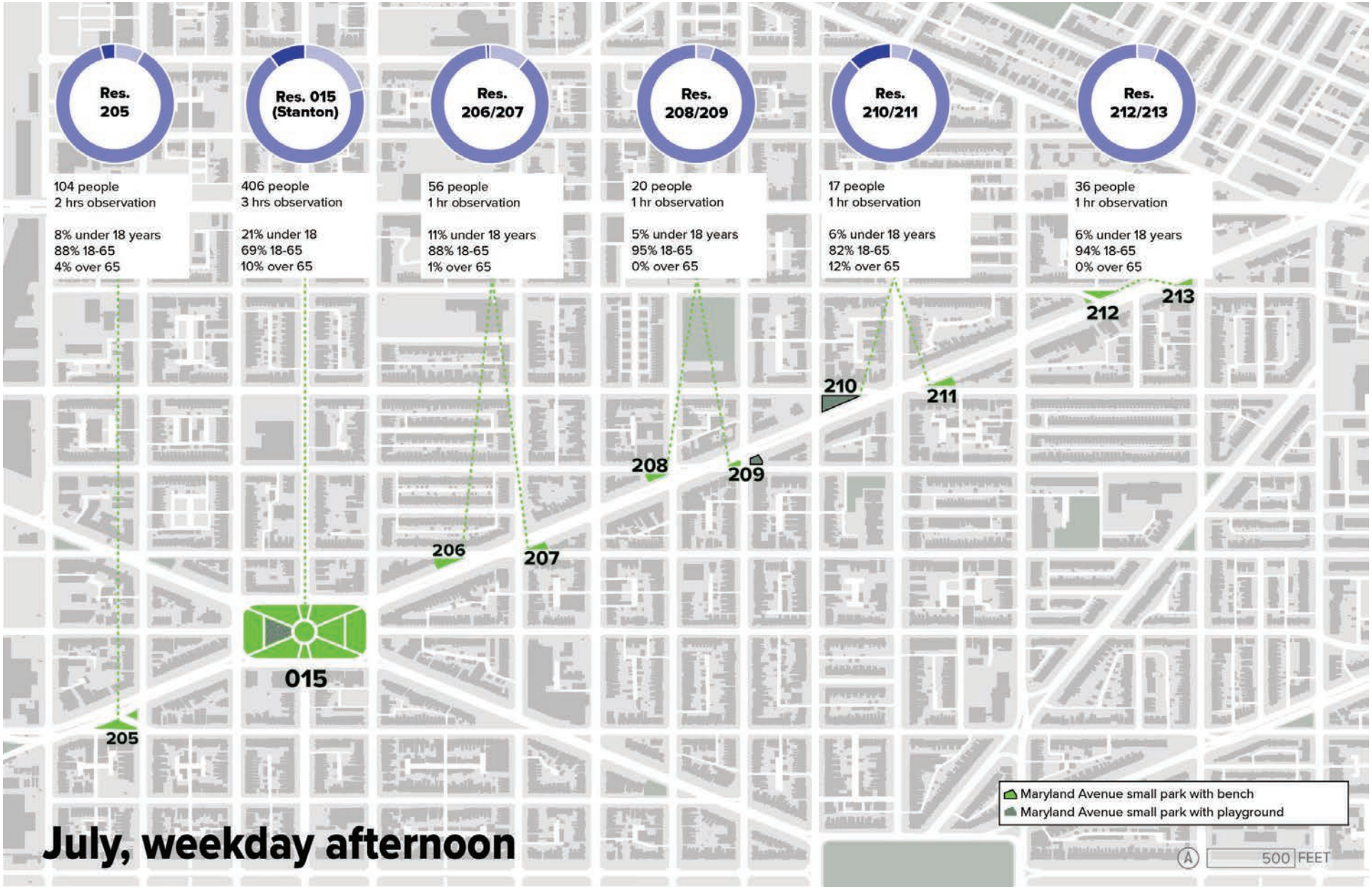
Estimated Age of Visitors to Small Parks

Based on the estimated ages of visitors on the survey days, the small parks seem to be well-traversed by working-age residents, who use Maryland Avenue NE as a commuting and recreational corridor.

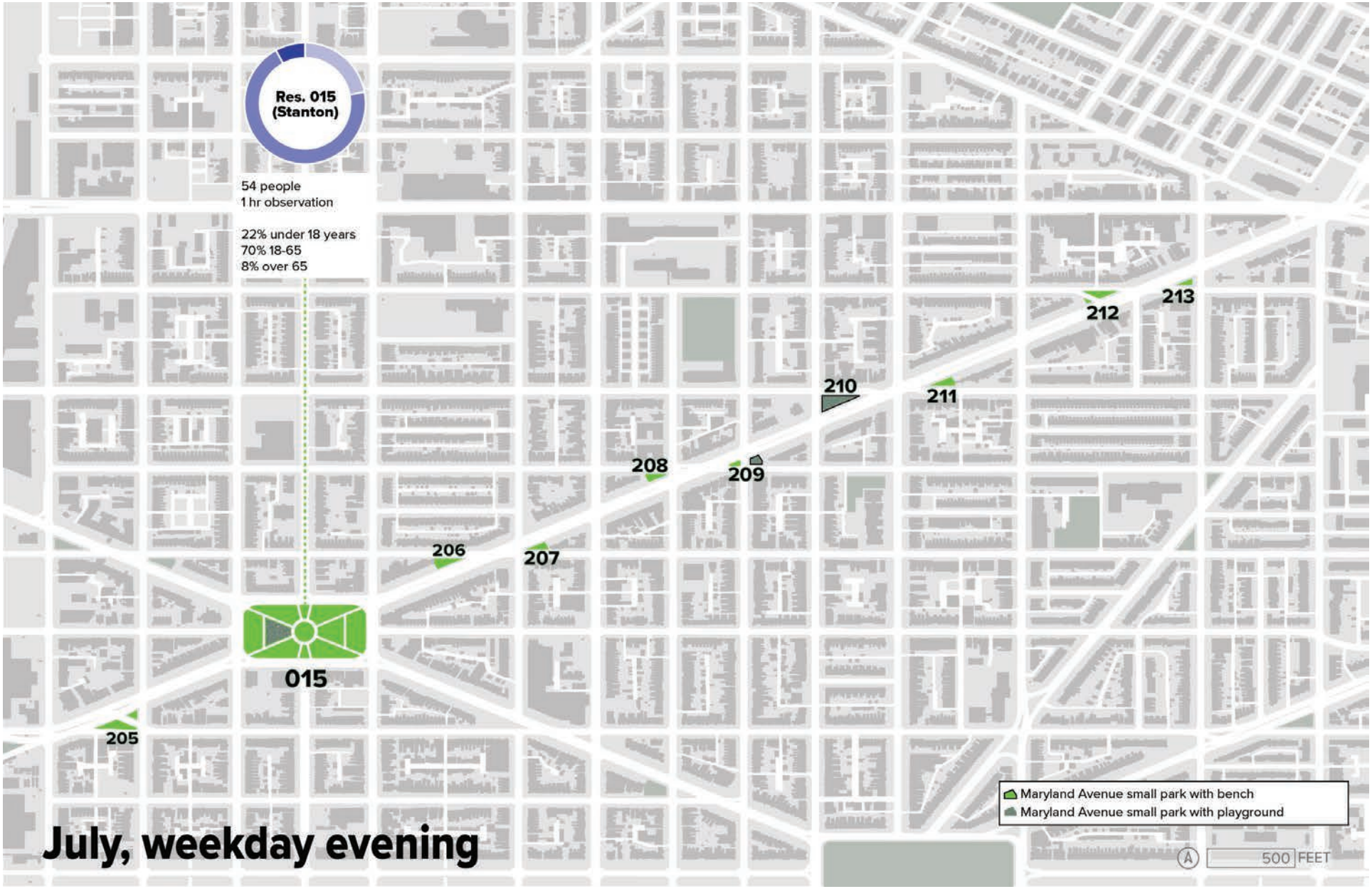


Estimated Age of Visitors to Small Parks

The presence of playgrounds at Reservations 209 and 210 had little impact on the estimated age of visitors during a summer weekday survey. This was less true of Stanton Park and its playground.

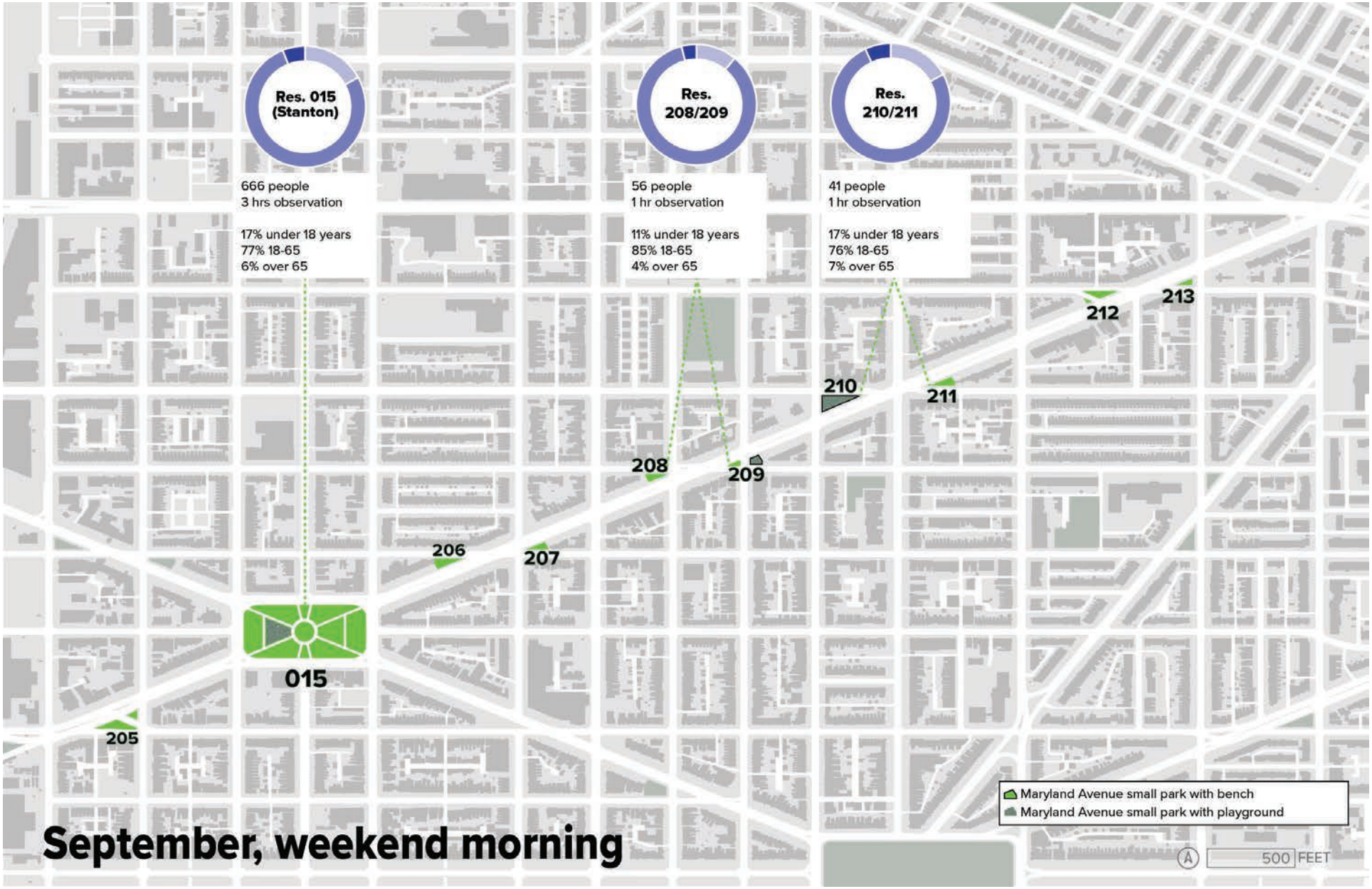


Estimated Age of Visitors to Small Parks



Estimated Age of Visitors to Small Parks

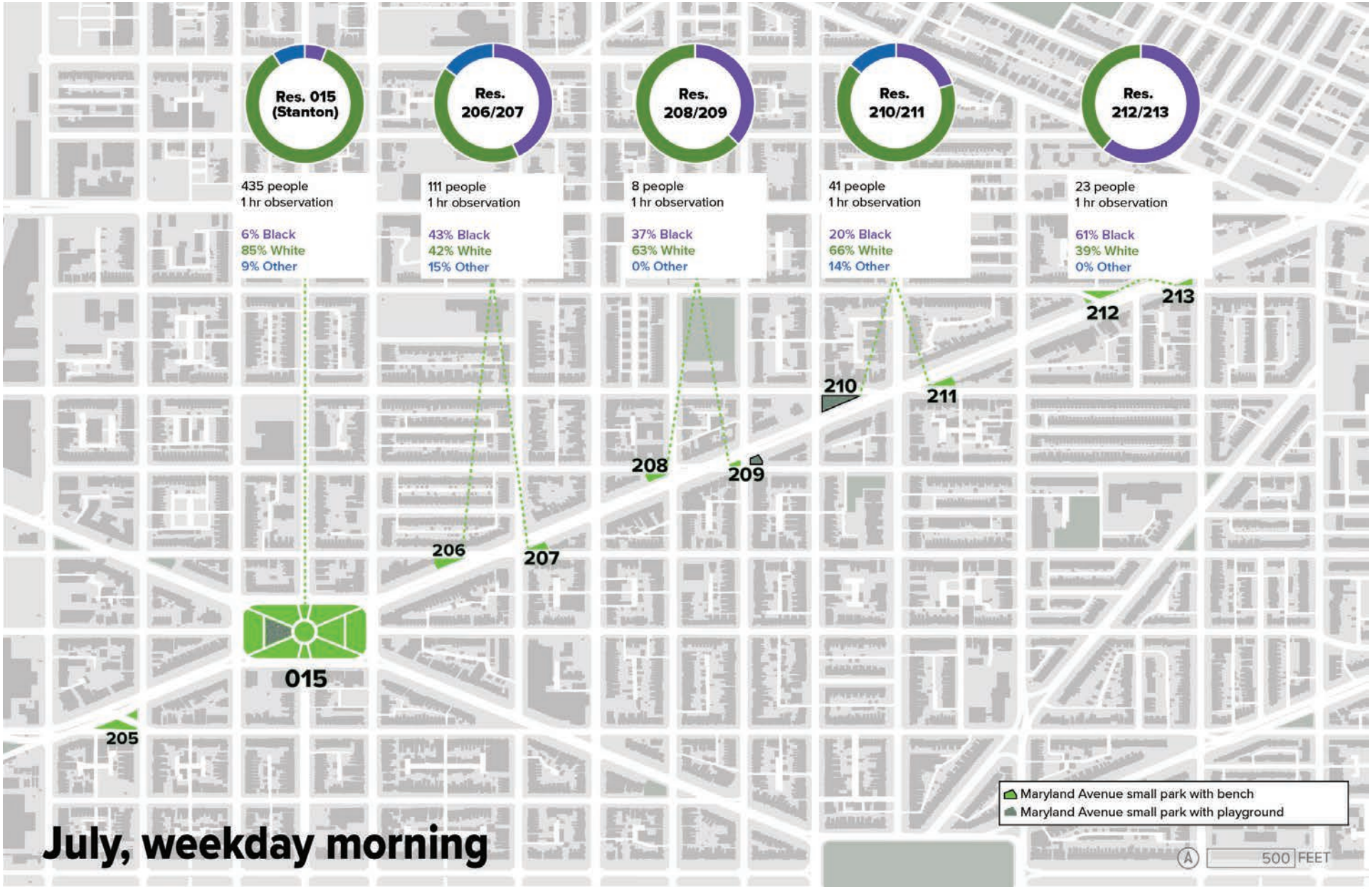
The reservations with playgrounds saw more young visitors during the September weekend surveys than they did during the July weekday surveys.



Estimated Age of Visitors to Small Parks

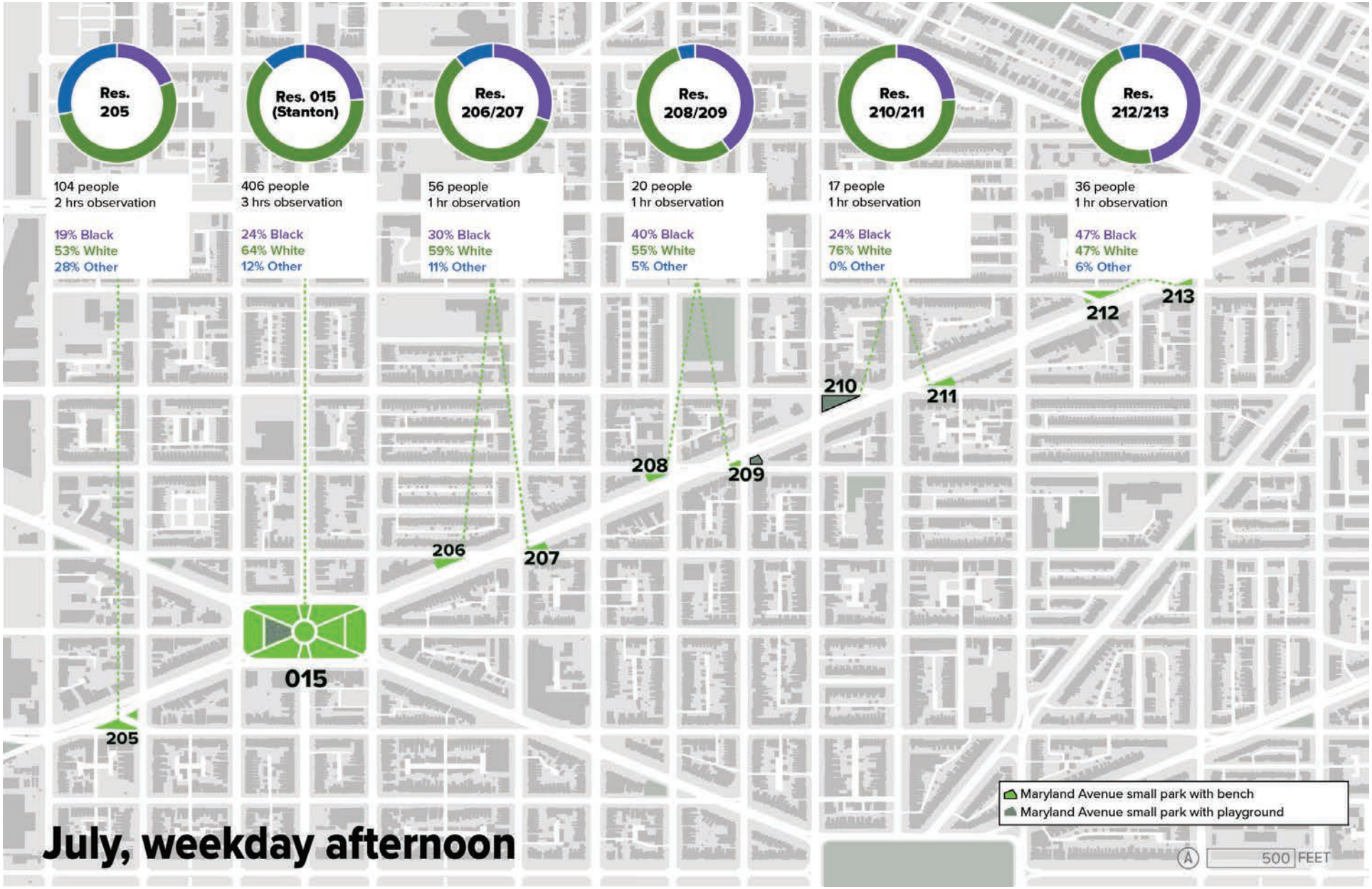
Observed Race of Visitors to Small Parks

The demographics of the small parks' visitors, including the differences across the small parks from northeast to southwest, is generally consistent with the demographic composition and changes of the neighborhood overall. (See pages 26-29.)
NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



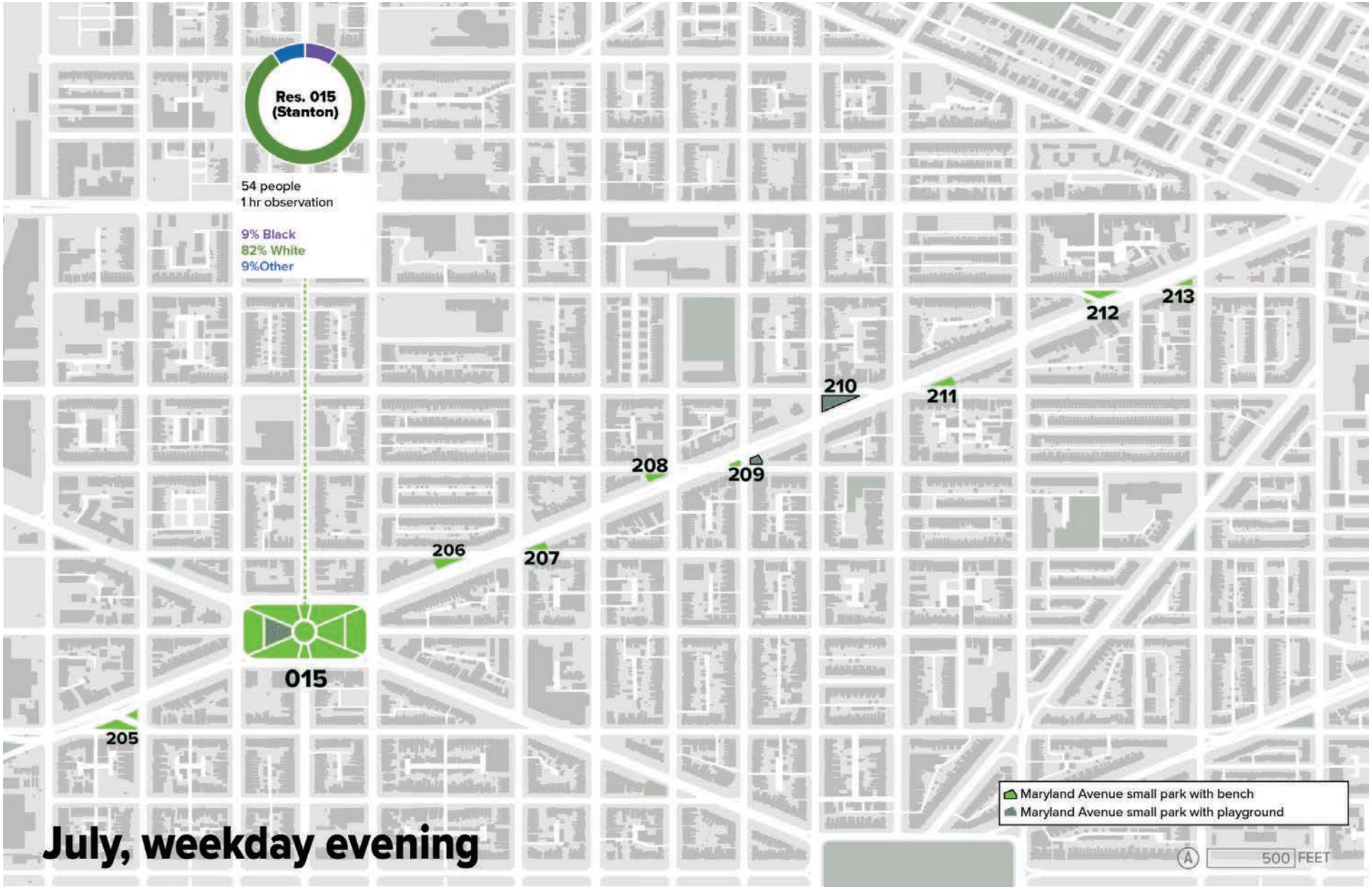
Observed Race of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



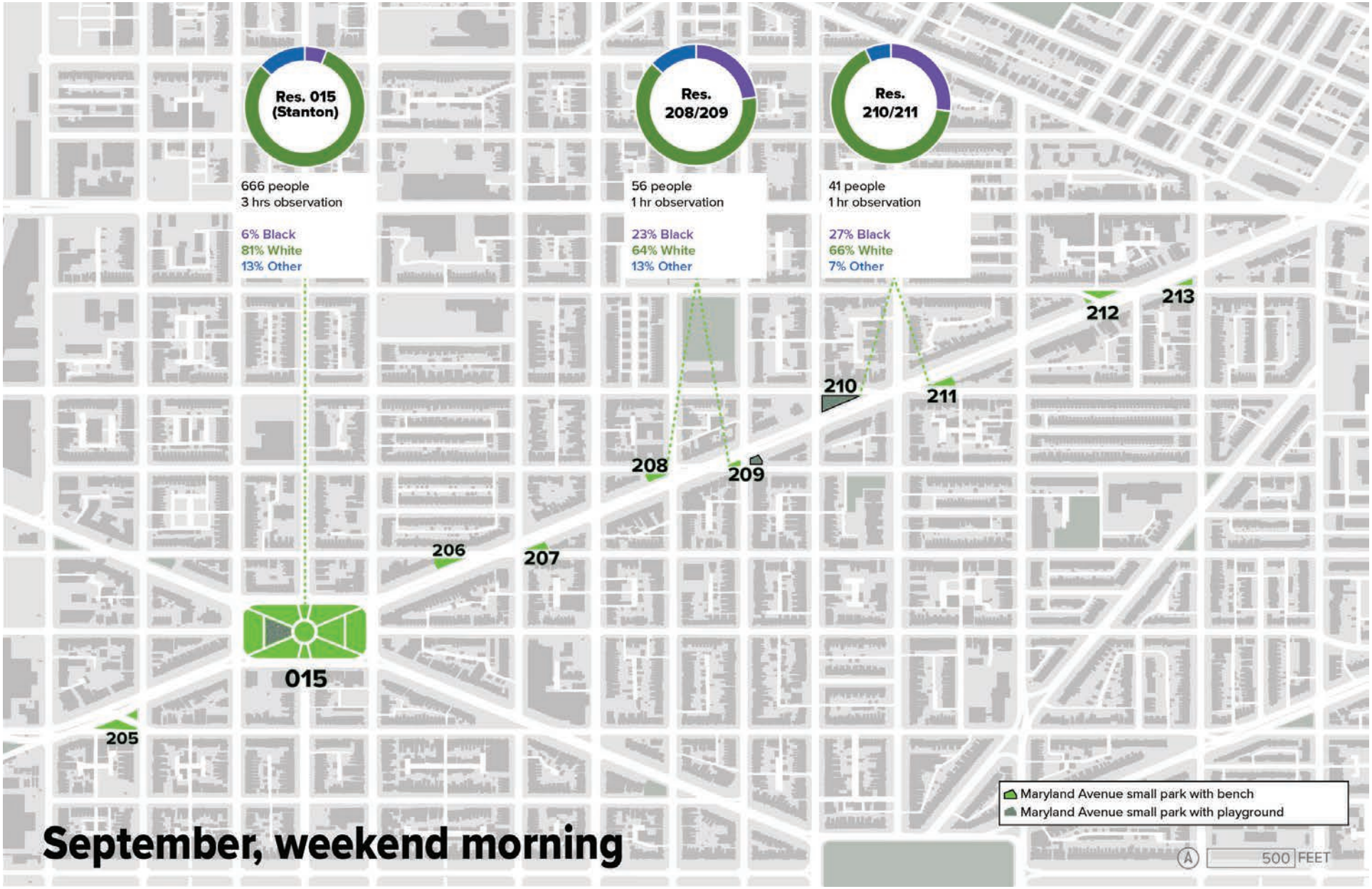
Observed Race of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



Observed Race of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.

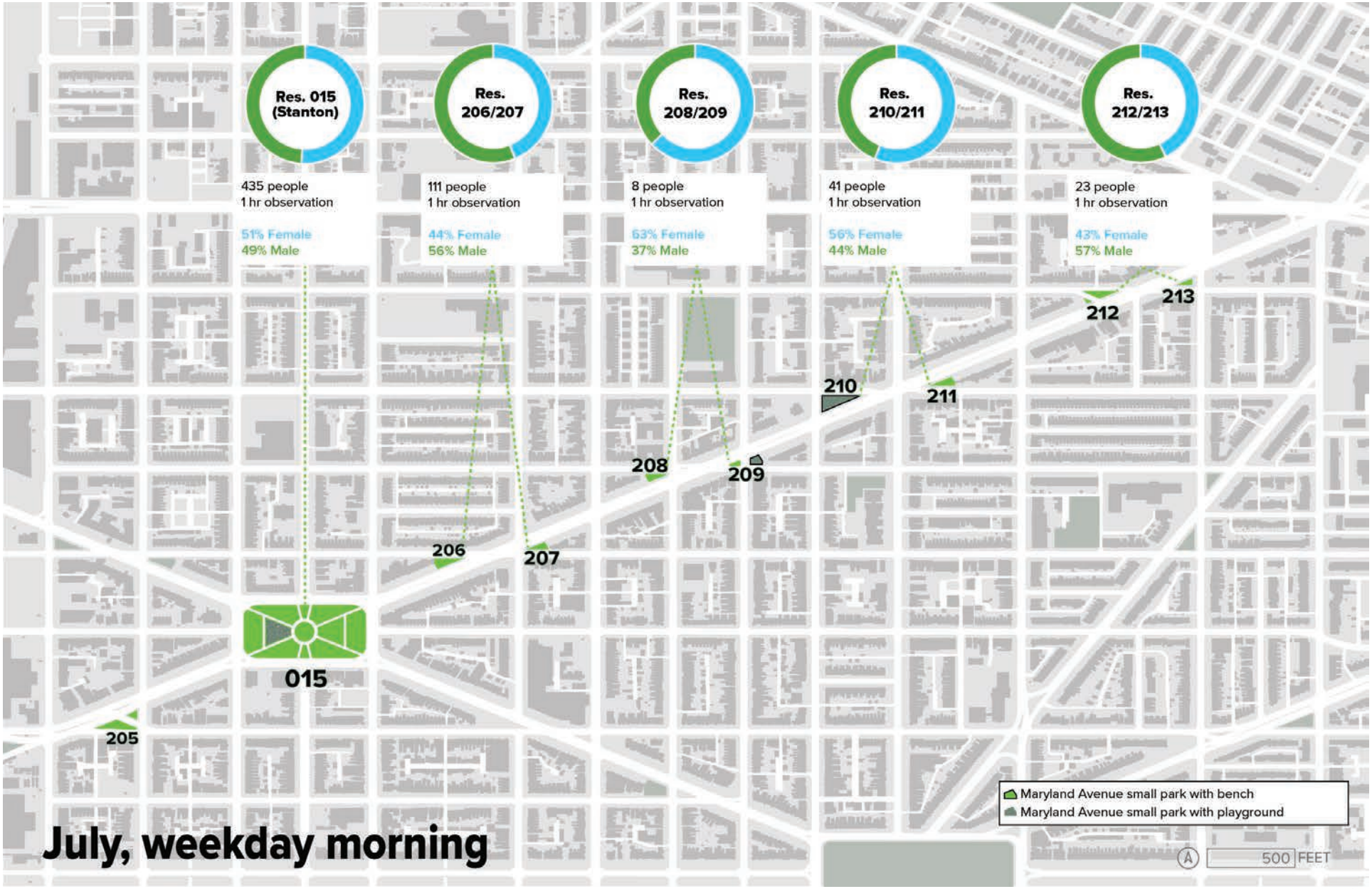


Observed Race of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.

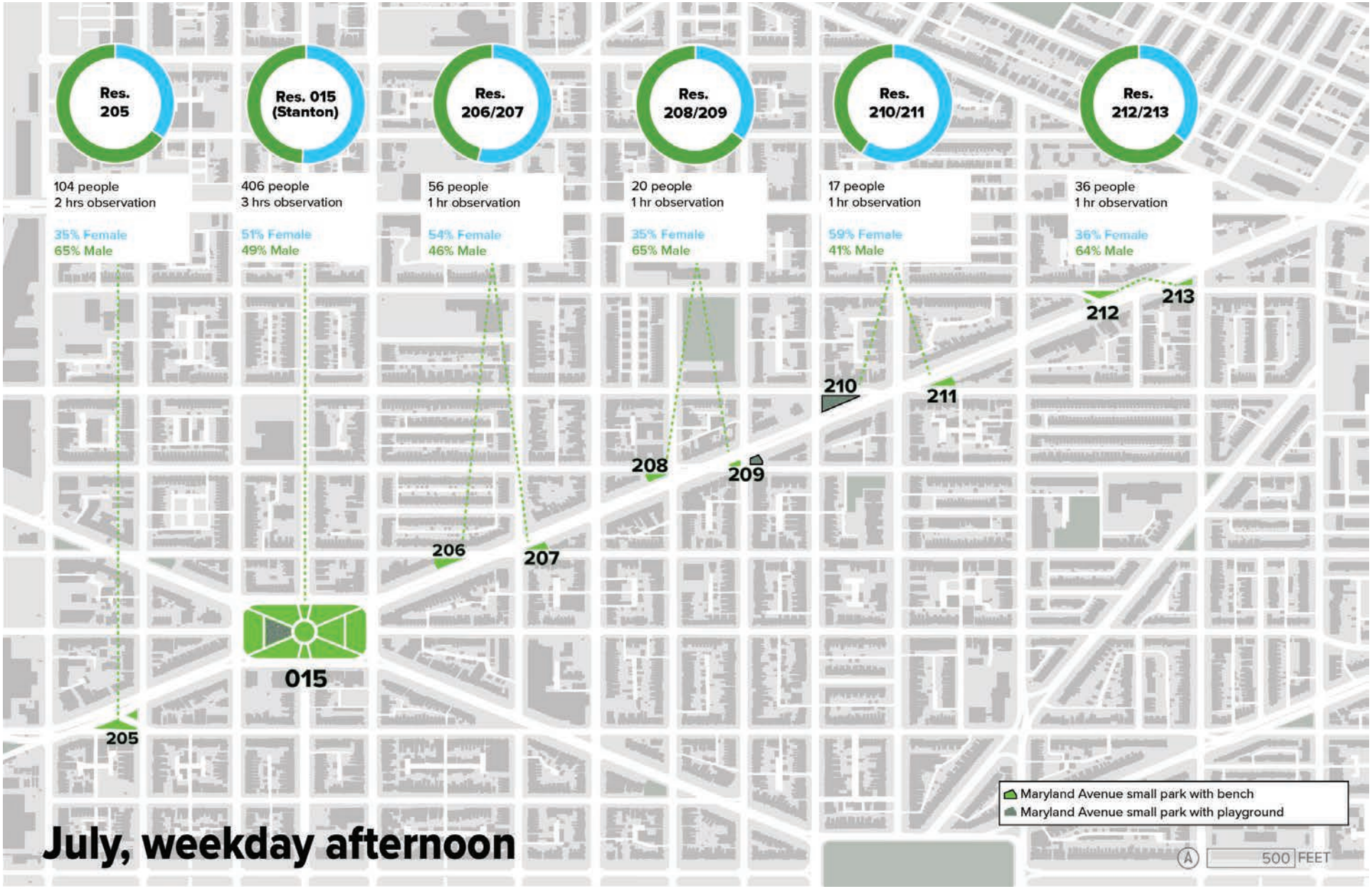
Observed Gender of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data of gender presentation, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



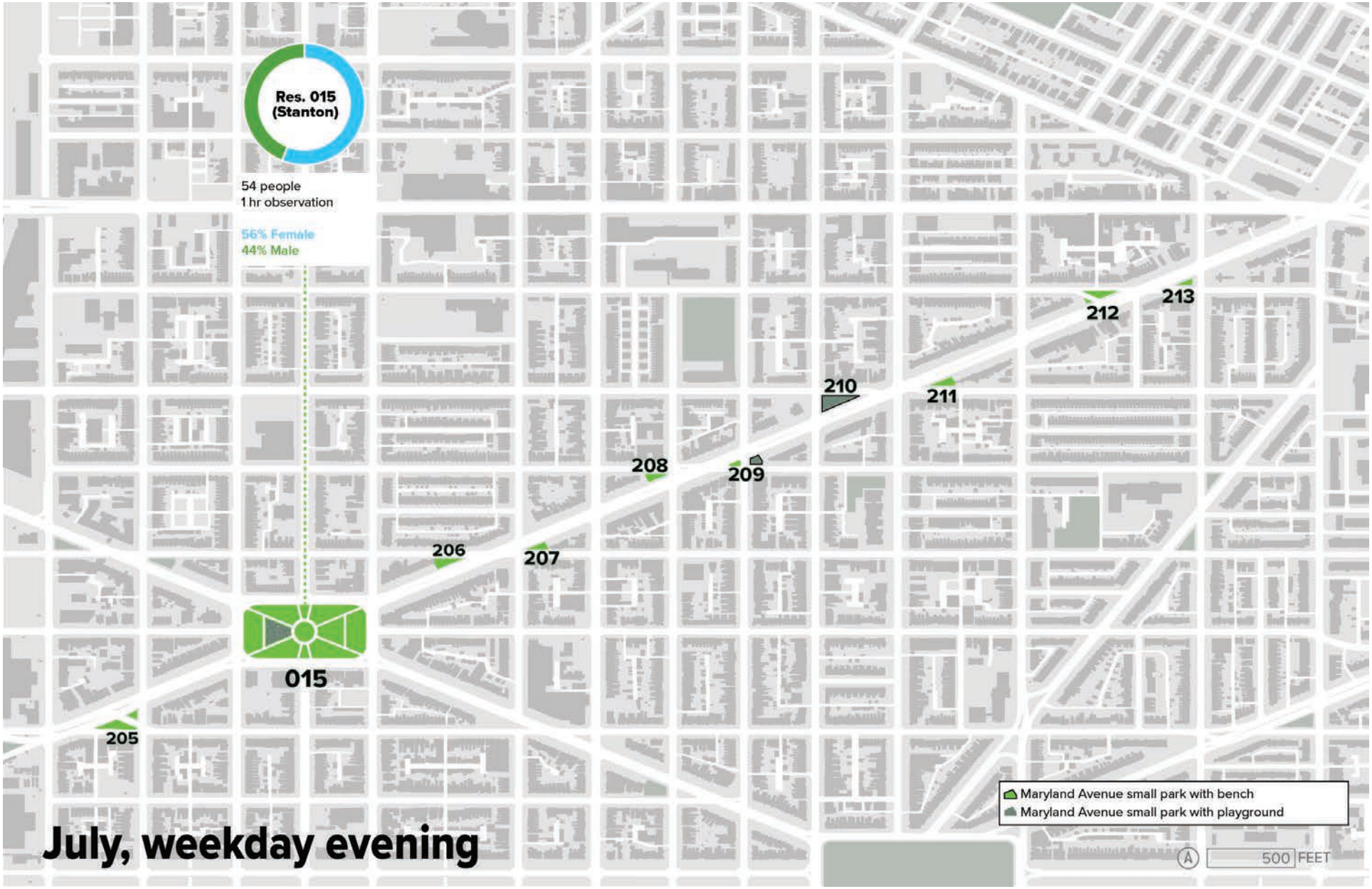
Observed Gender of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data of gender presentation, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



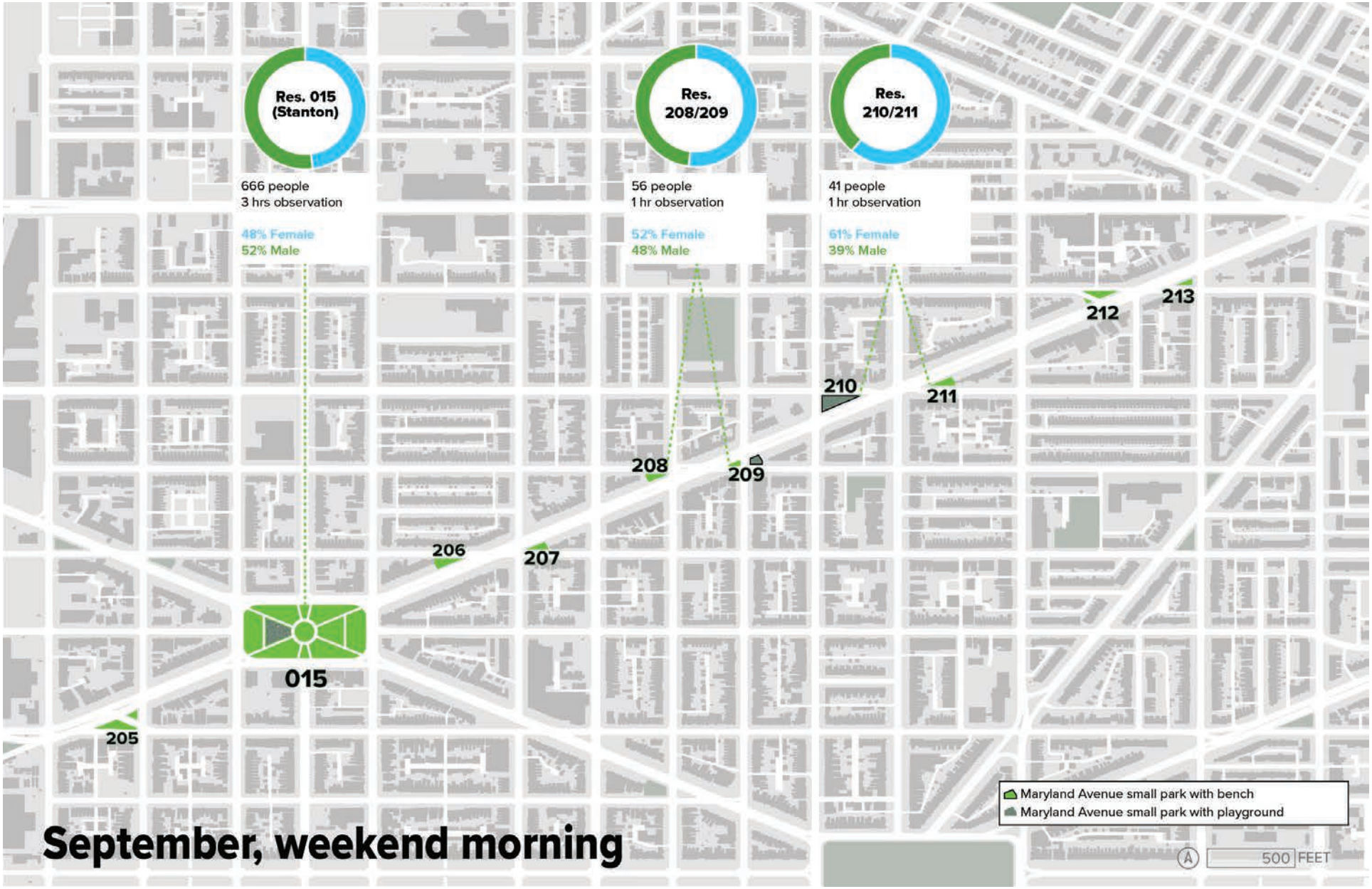
Observed Gender of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data of gender presentation, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



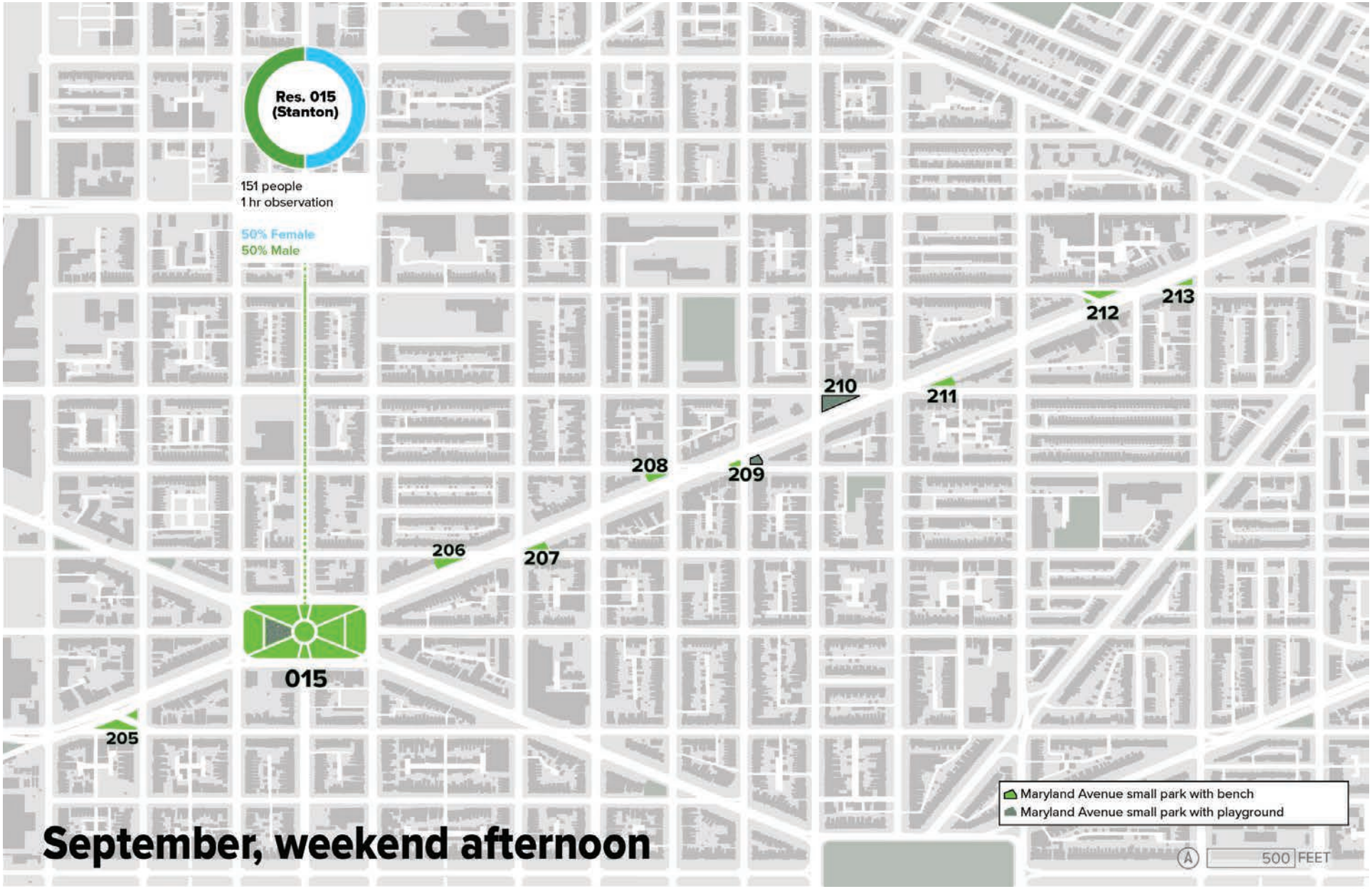
Observed Gender of Visitors to Small Parks

NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data of gender presentation, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



Observed Gender of Visitors to Small Parks

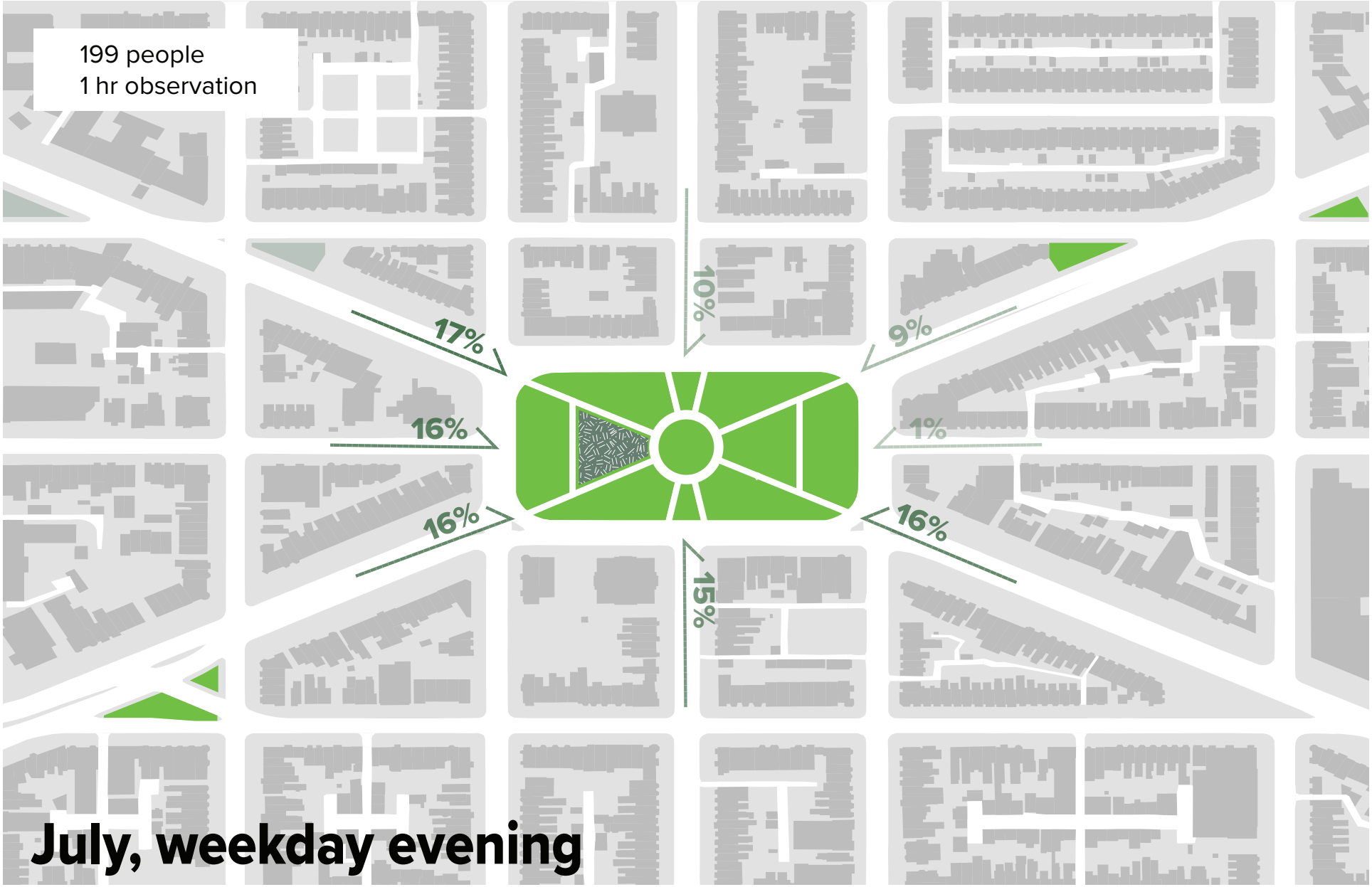
NOTE: These findings reflect the surveyors' observed data of gender presentation, rather than self-reported data from the visitors.



5d
Point of Entry: Stanton Park

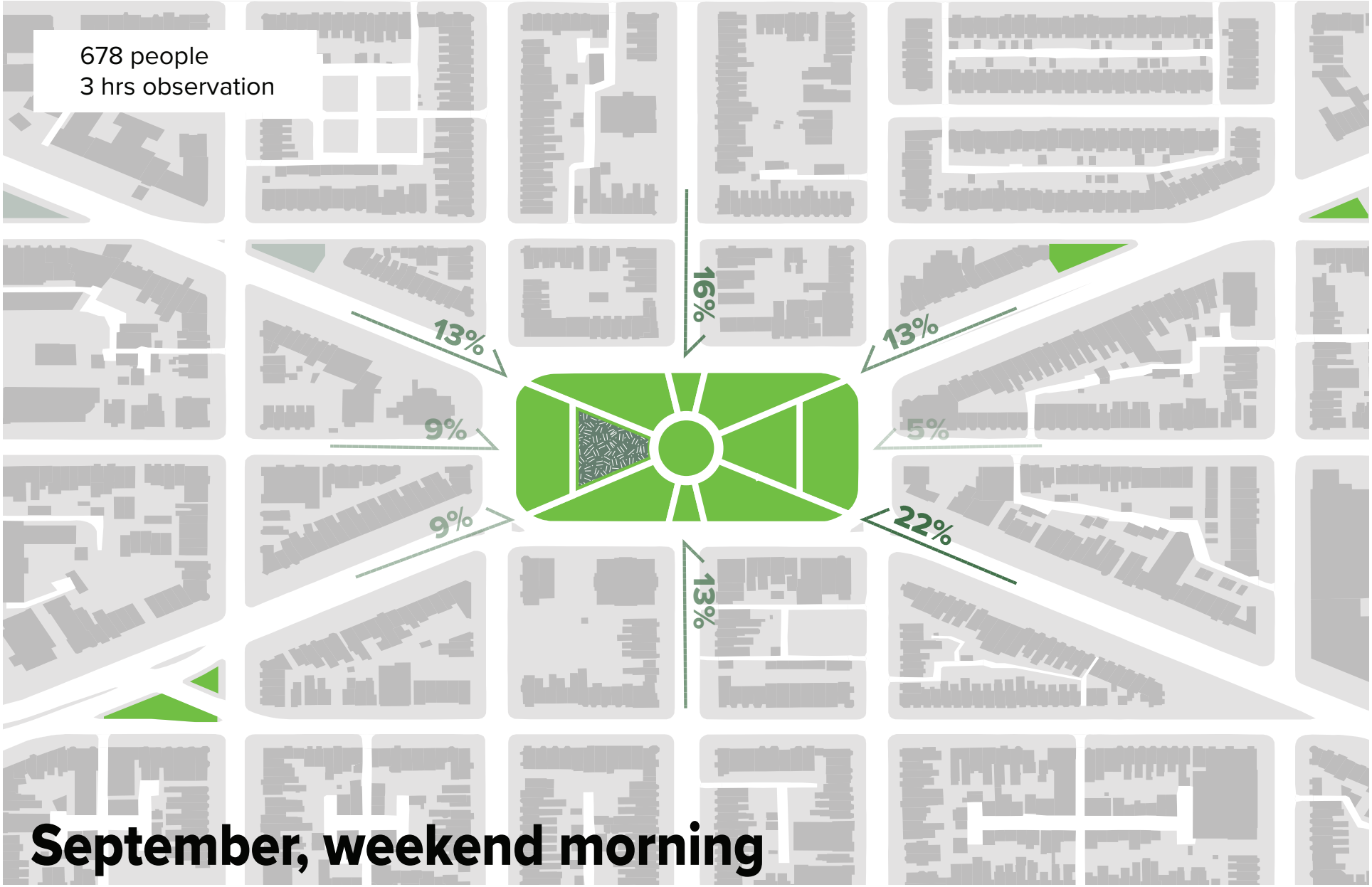
Point of Entry: Stanton Park

Although people entered Stanton Park from all intersecting streets during the July survey time, they tended to do so along the diagonal of Massachusetts Avenue and/or from the streets to the south and west. These findings reflect not only visitors' routes of travel, but also the traffic patterns, urban design, and pedestrian accommodations at the intersections around the park.

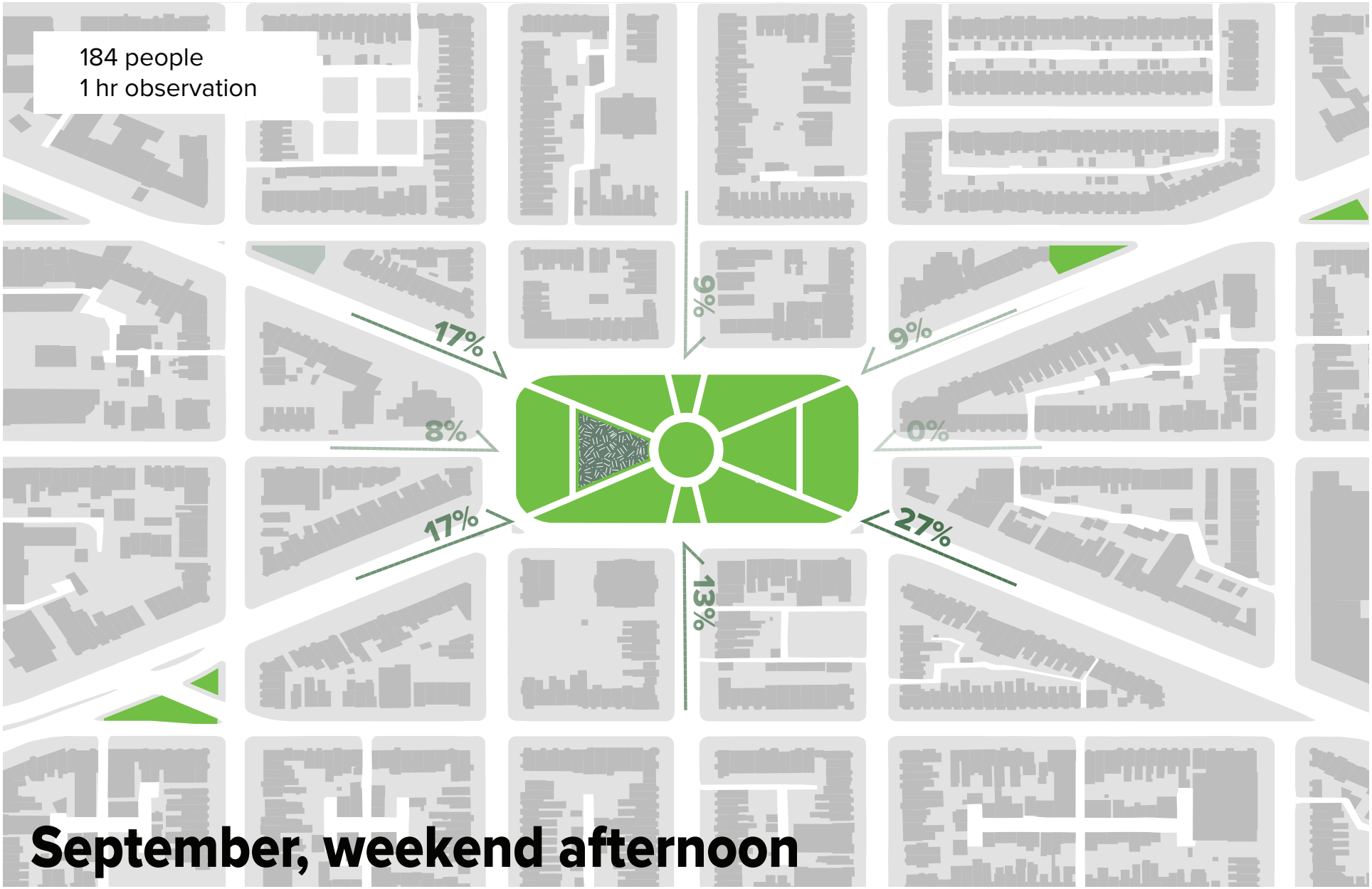


Point of Entry: Stanton Park

The September weekend survey hours saw an uptick in the number of visitors entering the park from the southeast, compared to the other intersections.



Point of Entry: Stanton Park

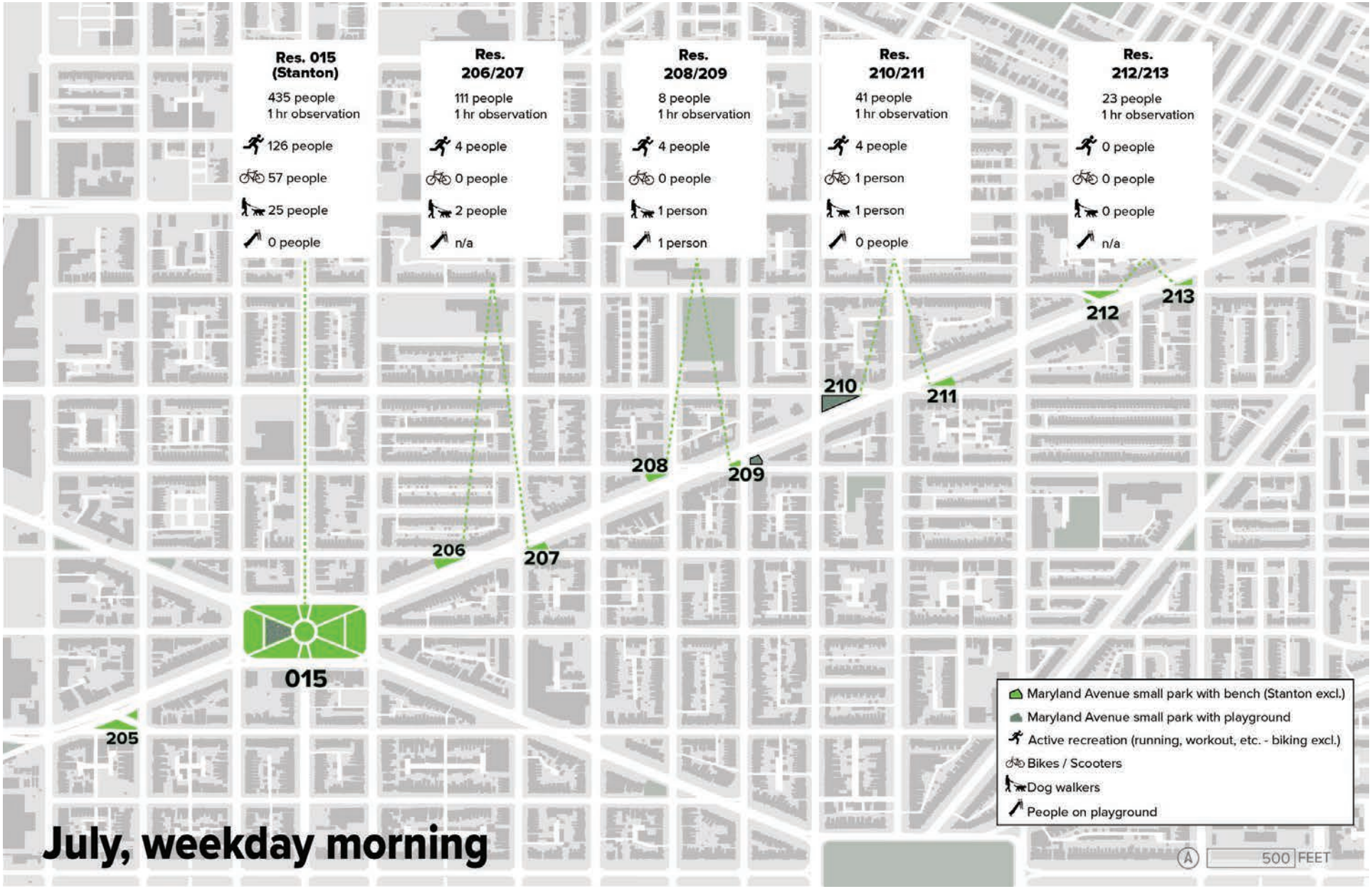


September, weekend afternoon

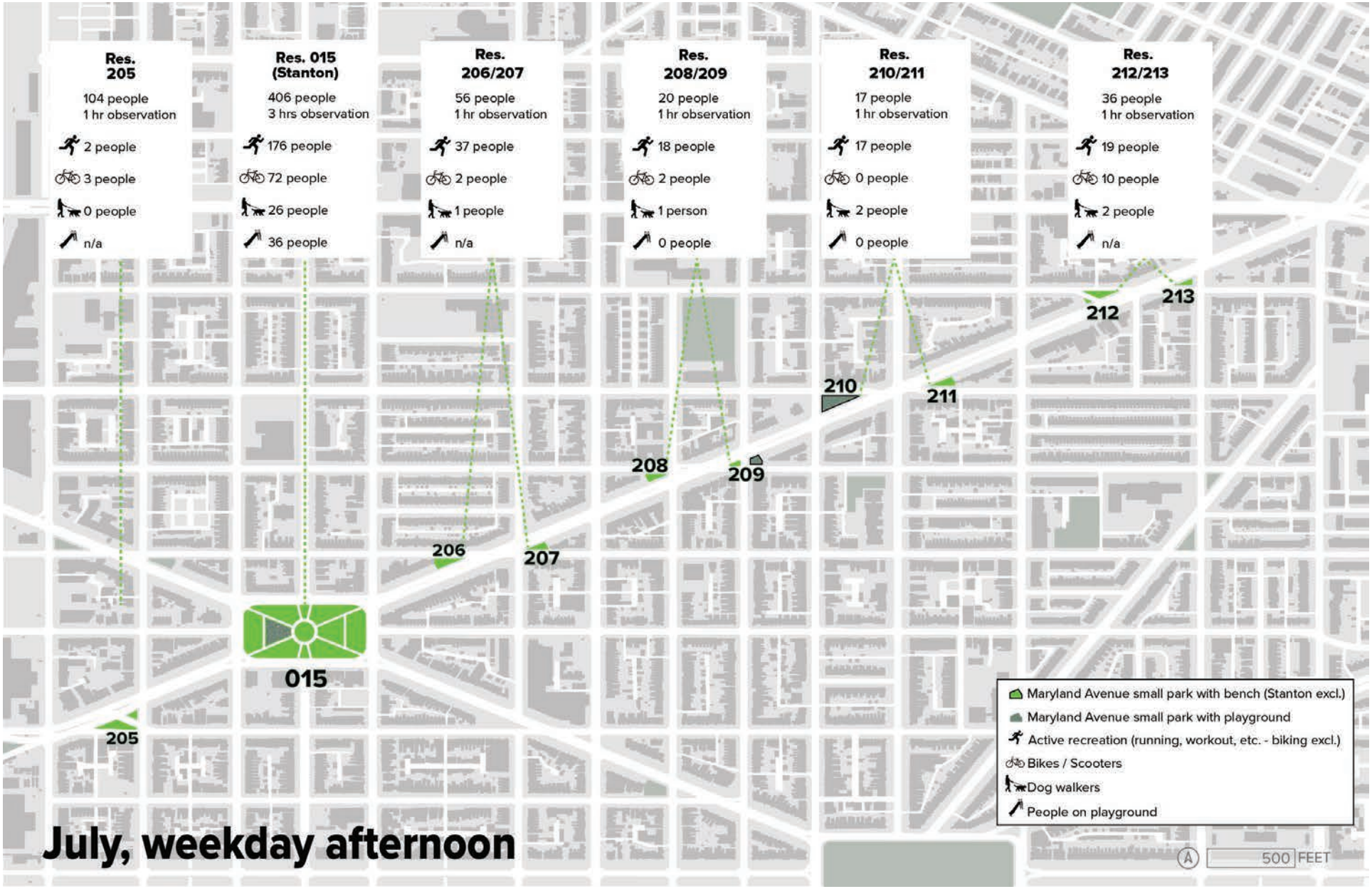
5e
Selected Activities in Small Parks

Selected Activities

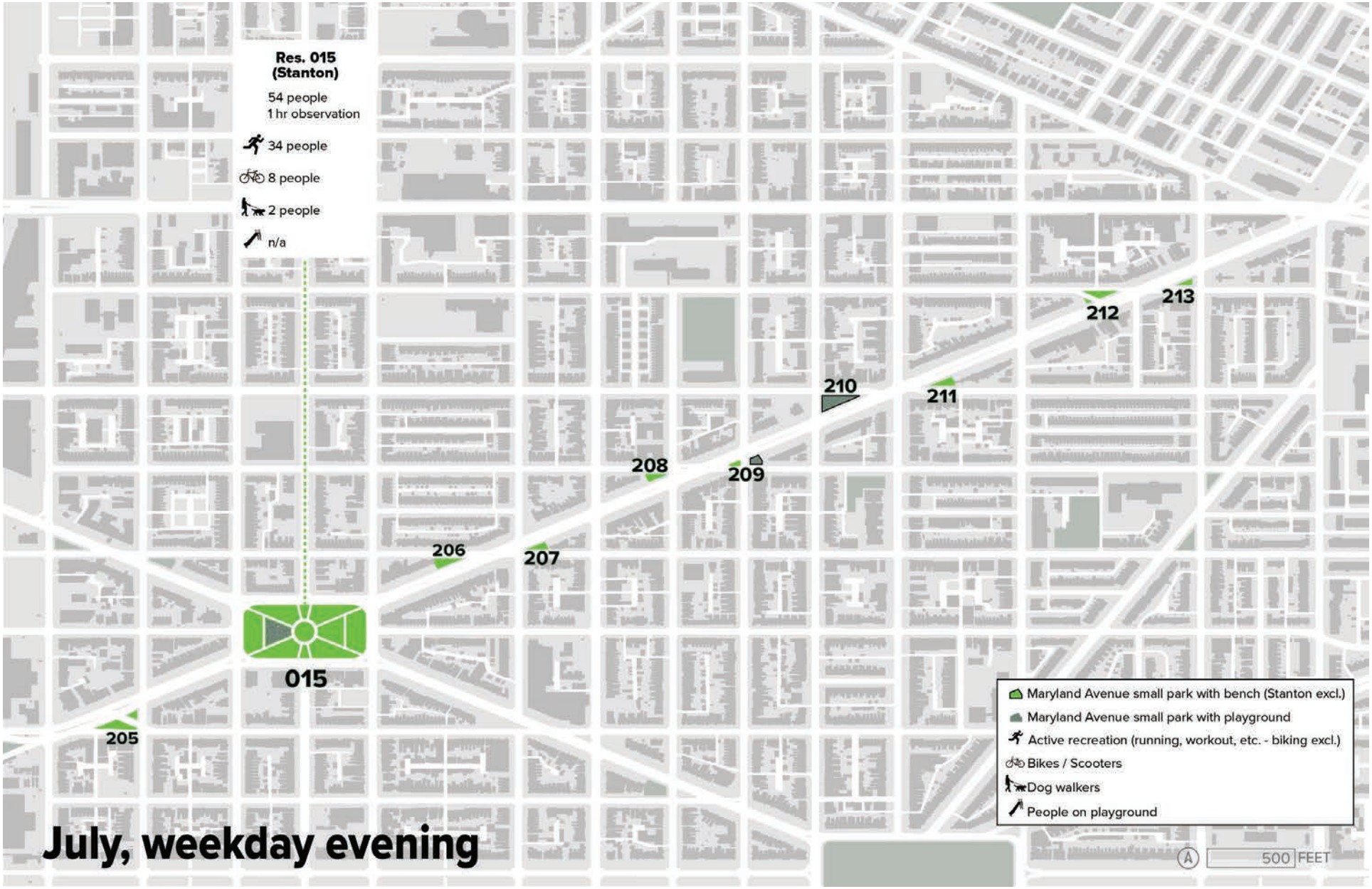
In keeping with the observed data on time spent in the small parks (see pages 47-51), Stanton Park is used for activity at much higher rates than the other small parks. This includes exercise activity such as biking and running, as well as the rates of dog-walking activity.



Selected Activities

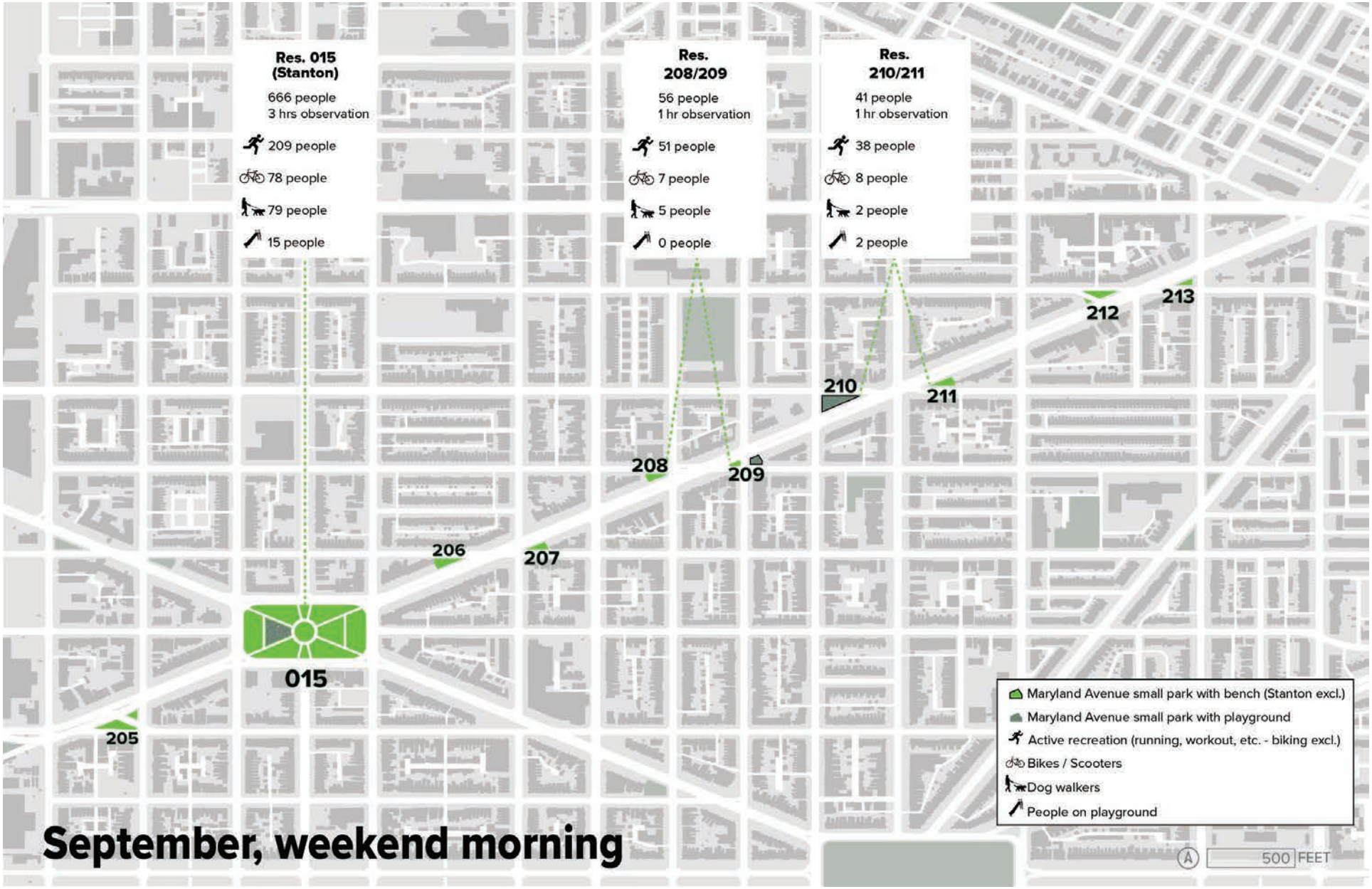


Selected Activities



Selected Activities

Even on a September weekend morning, the playgrounds in Reservations 209 and 210 saw very little activity.



Selected Activities

6
Interviews

6a. Intercept Interviews

While conducting behavioral mapping, project surveyors approached park visitors to ask about their perceptions of the small parks. (Based on the willingness of visitors to participate, and the duration of any resulting conversation, the number of interviews in each reservation represents a fraction of the people included in the behavioral mapping data.) The comments from all participants are included below. Note that in several reservations, there were no visitors available or willing to participate.

Stanton Park (Reservation 015)

White man; 18-34[1]

He was interviewed while walking his dog. He likes to go to Stanton Park because it is well kept and close to his house, and he appreciates the size. He thinks a water fountain (for both people and dogs) would be a good improvement to the park, and he thinks it would be awesome to have an area of the park to let his dog run off-leash. He sees the neighborhood as relatively stable over the past year, and has a sense of ownership in the park. He was not aware that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

White woman; 18-34

She thinks it's nice to have a place in the middle of the city where she can take her baby, but she doesn't like the car lanes around the park. She feels welcome in the park and has a sense of ownership, and has no major maintenance complaints. She doesn't really interact with the other small parks on Maryland Avenue NE, and was not aware that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

White man; 35-65

He used Stanton Park a lot more when his kids were younger, especially because he considers the playground at Stanton Park to be a landmark and a community asset for the neighborhood. Stanton's playground has a lot more shade than the other ones along Maryland Avenue, which is especially useful for all of the neighborhood nannies who bring their charges to the park. He's noticed that there are a lot of birthday parties at Stanton: it seems to function as an informal community space—not programmed, but nevertheless used heavily. He thinks that trash pickup in the park could be improved, but over time, he has noticed that the park has become better maintained. In his experience, the neighborhood has changed (more economically than racially)—it's become more economically homogeneous. He wouldn't let his own dog off-leash, but he understands why people do it. To that point, he thinks it would be nice to have a designated dog area in Stanton Park. He knew that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

Woman, other/unknown race; 18-34

She works near Stanton Park (commuting from 40 minutes away), although she doesn't see her coworkers using the park. (Perhaps if the park had more activities, it would draw more people out.) She likes the park because she feels at home: it's familiar, and it gives her a place to think. She'd love to see some more activated spaces in DC (more trees on the National Mall would be nice). She thinks that there's too much hardscaping at Stanton Park, making it too hot. She's noticed that the neighborhood feels very different from the last time she was there. She thinks there should be more investment in small parks, because they currently feel "monolithic"; instead, she'd like to see them celebrate the vibe of their neighborhood more. Her suggestions for improvement include chalk art (a subtle possibility for intervention), large field games, a participatory design process to draw more people into the parks, and so forth. She was not aware that the National Park Service owned Stanton Park, but suggested that cohesive branding (perhaps even an interactive map?) could help with that kind of identity issue.

Three Black men; 35-65

Stanton Park is a great home away from home for them, partly because the shade is good. But toilets would be a great improvement, and there should be more policing of the off-leash dogs. They didn't have strong feelings about any neighborhood change in the area. They knew that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

1 The identifying information for each interview reflects the surveyor's observed notes, rather than self-reported demographics.

White man; 65+
He thinks it's a classic park, and likes the shady benches in what he considers a lovely neighborhood. In his words, "It's a perfect day, and a great place to live." He has observed significant transformation in the neighborhood since 1964, and considers the area to be pretty stable and unstable now (compared to the late 1960s and 1970s, when he thought it was "semi derelict"). He was not aware that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

White man; 35-65
He loves the park based in part on its benches and design. He thinks it's a great place to take his dog [which was off-leash], and he lives nearby. He's seen the neighborhood change radically: the park used to be unsafe, but now everything feels safe. He visits the other Maryland Avenue NE small parks once in a while to walk his dog, but prefers Stanton Park or Lincoln Park. He says that in general, dogs should be kept on-leash, unless they're under control [like his dog]: dog-designated areas would be great, because some people are afraid of dogs.

White woman; 18-34
She comes to the park to look at the dogs. She works nearby, although her coworkers don't use the park. She lives 40 minutes away, because this neighborhood is not affordable for a student. She likes that the park is clean, and she feels welcome, but she has noticed that there are a few broken benches. She did not know that the National Park Service owned Stanton Park.

Woman, other/unknown race; 18-34
She came to Stanton Park today with her baby (she typically comes 3 days a week), and likes the park because it is child friendly. She also likes the shade and trees, and that dog owners usually clean up after their dogs. She doesn't think it's a problem to let small dogs off leash, and she feels comfortable in the park. She has noticed that there are sometimes people in the park who are homeless, but they are not an issue for her.

White woman; 18-34
She likes Stanton Park, and wishes it were even bigger. She was walking her friend's dog, and thought that it would be nice to have more natural elements. She's happy with the dogs in the park, including the ones that are off-leash; she thinks a designated dog area would be nice. She was not aware that the National Park Service owned Stanton Park.

Three youth, under 18; two white girls and one Black girl
They were having a scavenger hunt for their friend's birthday party. (Three of their friends were elsewhere in the park.) They live in the Georgetown and Capitol Hill neighborhoods today, but met several years ago when they used to go to school together near Stanton Park. They still meet up at the park about once a month to hang out and play (like playing Capture the Flag), and like that it's really close and convenient to get to, and that it has shade. They usually get to the park on foot or by bike. In recent years, they've noticed that there are fewer functioning water fountains. They didn't know that the National Park Service owns Stanton Park.

Reservations 206/207

White woman; 35-65
She lives in the neighborhood, and thinks that there is potential for activation of small park spaces; that said, she doesn't use the small parks much at present. She thinks it would be cool to see the small parks' reservation numbers on signs as branding. (She suggested that the National Park Service make a marketing push about them.) She's concerned about private encroachment on the reservations; in her view, perhaps more "no trespassing" signage would help, or better NPS signage in general. In her time in the neighborhood, she hasn't seen much neighborhood change, but she has heard about it from her neighbors. She wasn't aware that the National Park Service owned the small parks.

Black man; 65+
He doesn't give much thought to the small parks; he doesn't have reason to, beyond their proximity to the library. He didn't know that they are owned by the National Park Service.

Black man; 18-34
He thinks that if anyone is using the small parks, it's children; they're too small for adults to really enjoy. That said, it is a residential area, so park space is limited. He thinks shade and benches would be a big draw if more of the small parks had those amenities.

Several Black youth; under 18
They were waiting for a ride, having just come out of the library. They didn't know anything about the small parks because they're not from the area.

Black woman; 65+
She was on a break from working at the library. She likes the small parks, but only sometimes. She thinks that it would be nice to have more shade trees, and more flowers. She didn't know that the National Park Service owns the small parks.

White woman; 35-65
She's a professor living temporarily in DC, and loves the library at this intersection. She is a newer resident, but has heard from neighbors about neighborhood change along the avenue. She didn't have any immediate thoughts about the small parks, but has noticed that people visit the small parks that have amenities—like the bike share dock. Water access is crucial to her, so she observed that water bottle filling stations would be a nice amenity to have in the parks. She also thinks that public spaces are always nicer with seating. She didn't know that they were owned by the National Park Service.

Black man; 65+
He's been coming to the library for two years, but he doesn't use the small parks because there are no benches or other safe, functional places to sit. He suggests that the small parks should give people a reason to come visit, like a temporary billboard that the community can use to make art, or a memorial garden for civic leaders who have passed, or "naming rights" auctioned off for the small parks, with the money raised going toward maintenance and improvements. He would like to see the community involved in the small parks. He wasn't aware that the National Park Service owns the small parks.

Reservations 208/209

Black man; 18-34
He's lived in the neighborhood all his life. He's observed that there used to be benches in the parks, and that there used to be more trees in the small parks that provided shade (including three along the E Street NE/9th Street corner). According to him, they cut the trees down about 20 years ago. In his experience, people generally use the parks so that their dogs can use the bathroom. Meanwhile, he doesn't think the playgrounds are conducive to children because there's no shade coverage, so people barely use them. He'd like to see something in the small parks that would attract community events, like picnic benches or regular benches or a theater space. He knew that the National Park Service owns the small parks.

White woman; 35-65
She came to the park with her two children [who were about 10 and 14 years old]. She's lived in the neighborhood since 2007. She used the parks (and more specifically, the playgrounds) more when the children were younger, but only the larger reservations. Other than the playgrounds (which "honestly, in this neighborhood, are everything"), she'd like to see benches and a fenced dog area so that the dogs could walk around without leashes. She occasionally sees people using the parks for Frisbee or catch with their dogs, but not often. She wasn't aware that that National Park Service owns the small parks.

White woman; 65+
She was at the park with her dog. She doesn't live in the neighborhood, but works close by. She uses the small park when she brings her dog to work: she brings him to the park during the day. She didn't know that the National Park Service owns the small parks.

Reservation 205

No participants

Reservations 210/211

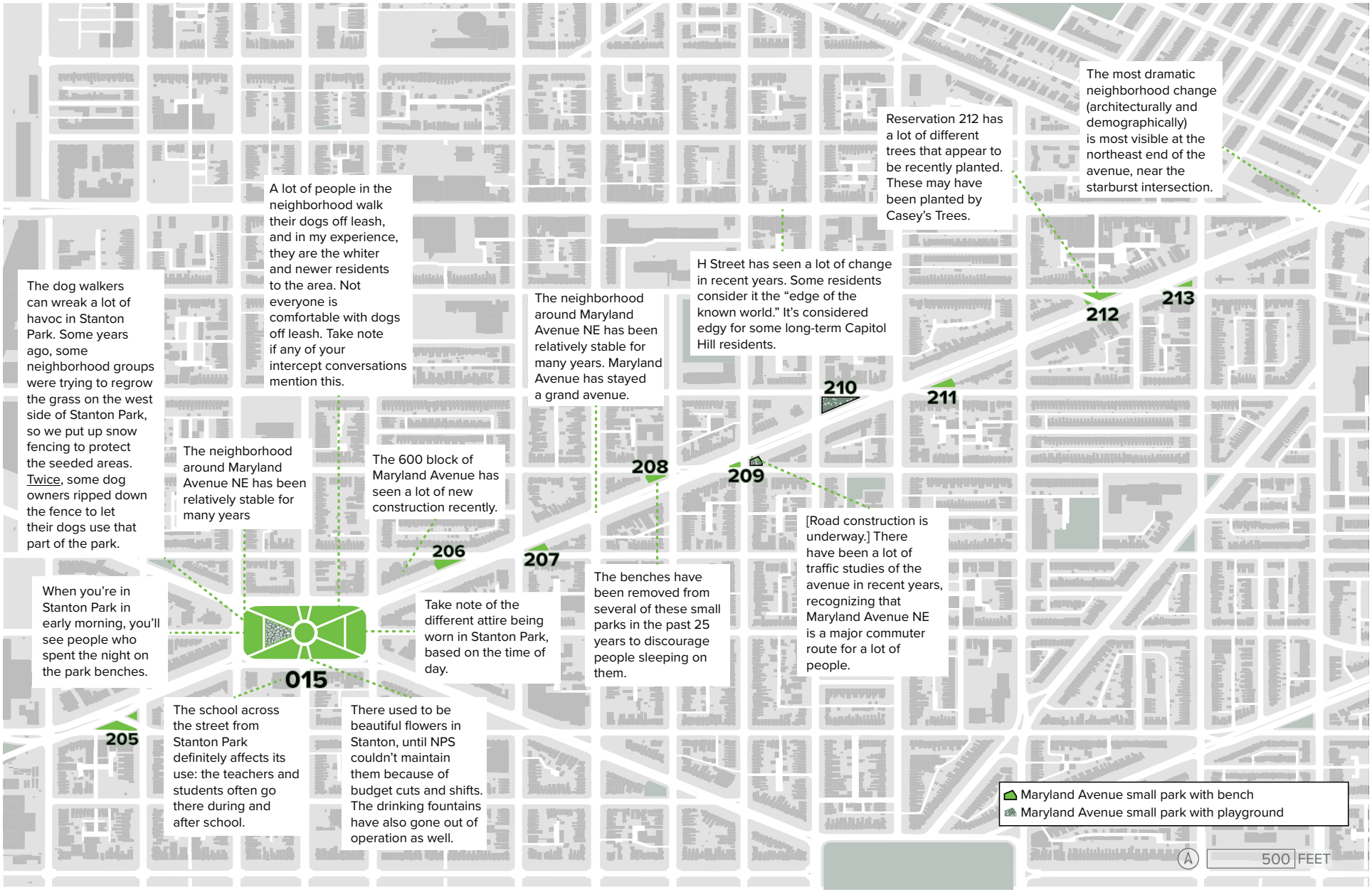
No participants

Reservations 212/213

No participants

6b
Transect Walk Interview

Team members walked the full length of Maryland Avenue NE in July 2019 with Robert Sonderman, a resident of the neighborhood for the past 35 years and a former Regional Curator for the National Park Service. This map reflects his comments and observations.



6c
Expert Interviews

NOTE: For a list of the experts that we interviewed, see the appendix.

We spoke with a National Park Service official responsible for the maintenance and operations of the Maryland Avenue NE small parks. Among her duties, she supervises the project management, planning, and funding for these reservations (as well as other parks under NPS jurisdiction).

As an overarching observation, she stated that **"comparing Stanton Park to the other Maryland Avenue reservations is like comparing apples to oranges."** This experience from an NPS staff member is consistent with our project team observations of the small parks' disparities in use and features.

She thinks that the playgrounds are used by neighborhood residents, but notes that playground equipment was last rehabbed about 20 years ago. **She notes that the small parks without playgrounds do not really offer any amenities to the people using them**, including those visitors waiting for the bus at adjacent bus stops.

She does not see encroachment from neighboring property owners as an issue. (In our time on site, we wondered if some of the small parks had been informally adopted or co-opted by neighboring buildings.) Her primary challenges in managing these small parks are:

- Prickly vegetation;
- Rats and rodents;
- Dog waste;
- Delivery truck damage; and
- People experiencing homelessness who sleep in the parks and may store their belongings in park bushes.

However, with respect to the last point, she was clear to state that **"parks are for everyone."** She emphasized that sometimes, the larger problem is the neighborhood residents who harass these men and women.

Overall, she underscored that **the National Park Service is significantly under-resourced for the level of use that these small parks (and other parks) experience**. When asked about what dreams or visions she has for these spaces, she responded that she was **"too busy to dream."**

Separately, we met with several representatives of the District of Columbia Office of Planning and an official from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). We were interested in their experiences managing similar small parks within the District, and their methodology/ lessons from conducting public life studies of those parks.

As they grapple with the small parks under their jurisdiction (via two different agencies), these officials acknowledged a challenge similar to the problem at the root of this NPS DC Small Parks Project: **the difficulty in building and maintaining a clear inventory of all District-managed small parks.** As they have begun assembling that inventory, they have developed **a framework for categorizing and understanding their small parks** (again, similar to the motivations of this NPS project):

- Small parks created by subdivisions;
- Small parks created by the Highway Plan; and
- Small parks left over when the freeway system was constructed.

With that emerging framework, the District has undertaken public life studies to 1) quantify the social success of the public realm (existing and implemented); and 2) help address existing DDOT challenges related to streetscape projects, Open Streets, Vision Zero, and MoveDC (placemaking and livability). These public life studies specifically **measure people moving, people staying, and people's habits and perceptions**.

Ultimately, they use these studies to **demonstrate how important these small parks are to their communities**. In their words, "The demand for these spaces is increasing, but the supply isn't." They are using these studies to influence Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for the parks, and conducting post-occupancy studies to understand how any implemented projects have affected the public life of these spaces.

They recognize the **District's inherent confusion of jurisdiction**: they field quite a few calls from community members who want to do

something with a local small park (whether District- or NPS-owned), but don't know who manages it or what agency to call. Primarily, this seems to be related to maintenance issues. The **local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions can also be a factor in maintenance and design decisions for small parks**, coming out strongly in favor of or against a proposed intervention.

The **Maryland Avenue NE small parks are also relevant to DDOT's traffic studies and road diet projects** - including several projects underway at the time of our surveys. Current projects focus on pedestrian crossings and median realignment (to construct a full-width median rather than two travel lanes in each direction).

Several of the avenue's parks are also adjacent to or a short distance from a Capital Bikeshare dock, although DDOT noted that this was generally happenstance, rather than intentional. Placement of bike docks tends to be determined based on the distance between docks, the proximity to bike lanes, and the availability of sidewalk/street space - rather than a relationship to other green infrastructure.

Finally, **District officials emphasized their interest in co-learning and collaborating with the National Park Service** around these issues. This includes exploring more cooperative agreements, which they recognize as key to the National Park Service's maintenance prospects.

Help Us Keep Your Park Clean:
Alcohol Prohibited
Camping Prohibited
Pets Must Be Leashed
Cleanup After Pets
Park Closed At Dark
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ONE WAY
ONE WAY

7
Conclusions + Recommendations

Based on this REAP analysis, we can draw the following conclusions about the ethnographic aspects of the Maryland Avenue NE small parks:

They are underutilized. These small parks are embedded in a vibrant neighborhood, surrounded by dense residential fabric and close to major institutions and commercial corridors. Despite those opportunities, the small parks see little use.

They serve few functions. Most of the small parks do not offer any experiences to visitors. Without seating, shade coverage, or both, most of the reservations are not conducive to passive or active recreational use. They also do not offer any interpretation to visitors to enrich the understanding of the small parks or deepen the sense of connection to these public spaces.

People tend to go around the parks without ever entering them. As defined by the sidewalks and (in some cases) curbing, the perimeters of the small parks are clear - and most people do not cross them. Stanton Park is an obvious exception to this trend, but for most of the other small parks, they are simultaneously invisible and impenetrable.

Stanton Park is an anchor. People seek out Stanton Park and spend more time there than in any of the other small parks, thanks to the range of assets it offers as an urban park (playground, grassy lawns, shade coverage, etc.).

The parks' management is unclear. Users tend not to realize that the National Park Service owns and manages these spaces. The jurisdictions of/collaborations between NPS, the District of Columbia, and other actual and potential stakeholders remains unclear on site.

The small parks currently operate as islands, rather than an archipelago. The small parks would have more value if treated as a cohesive system rather than individual units. With new thinking about their wayfinding, interpretation, and cultural resource management, they could be experienced as a connective thread in the urban fabric, rather than isolated pockets of lawn.

They serve a neighborhood undergoing massive change. The neighborhood around the small parks has changed significantly in the last generation, exhibiting demographic changes often associated with gentrification. These changes have implications for the use, perception, and maintenance of the small parks. The next generation of management for the small parks should engage with these neighborhood transitions.

Going forward, we recommend that the National Park Service consider new ways to bolster the small parks as community-facing assets.

Realign the parks with new community-facing uses. Since the publication of the L'Enfant Plan in 1791, these small parks have been set aside as public reservations for recreational use and open space. They should remain intact as such, but there is an opportunity to reimagine how they fulfill those public functions:

...Could they host more bikeshare docks, to encourage more use and recreational activity?

...Could they incorporate new botanical experiments or community gardens, to reinvigorate their function as green infrastructure?

...Could they feature more artwork that serves a public good?

...Could they experiment with new modes of interpretation that re-establishes the links to their surrounding community?

...Could they accommodate more pedestrian amenities, to invite people across the "threshold" of their perimeter?

...Could they encourage more play space to serve all ages?

These opportunities have implications for the management of the small parks, beginning with the opportunity to **treat them like a network rather than a series of distinct parklets.** A reimagined system of wayfinding, for example, could crescendo from the outermost parks toward Stanton Park - acknowledging the hierarchy in size and use between the avenue's small parks, while still unifying the experience of the archipelago.

Lastly, we recognize that these sites are relevant to the work of DCPlanning, DDOT, DC Public Library, and other stakeholders. It is worth considering whether the Maryland Avenue NE small parks might be the **pilot for new management partnerships,** engaging potential partners in a dialogue on the future of these small parks.

8
Appendices
8a. REAP Bibliography

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8b. Behavioral Mapping Data Sheets

OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** ...RESERVATION 205.....

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes

OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

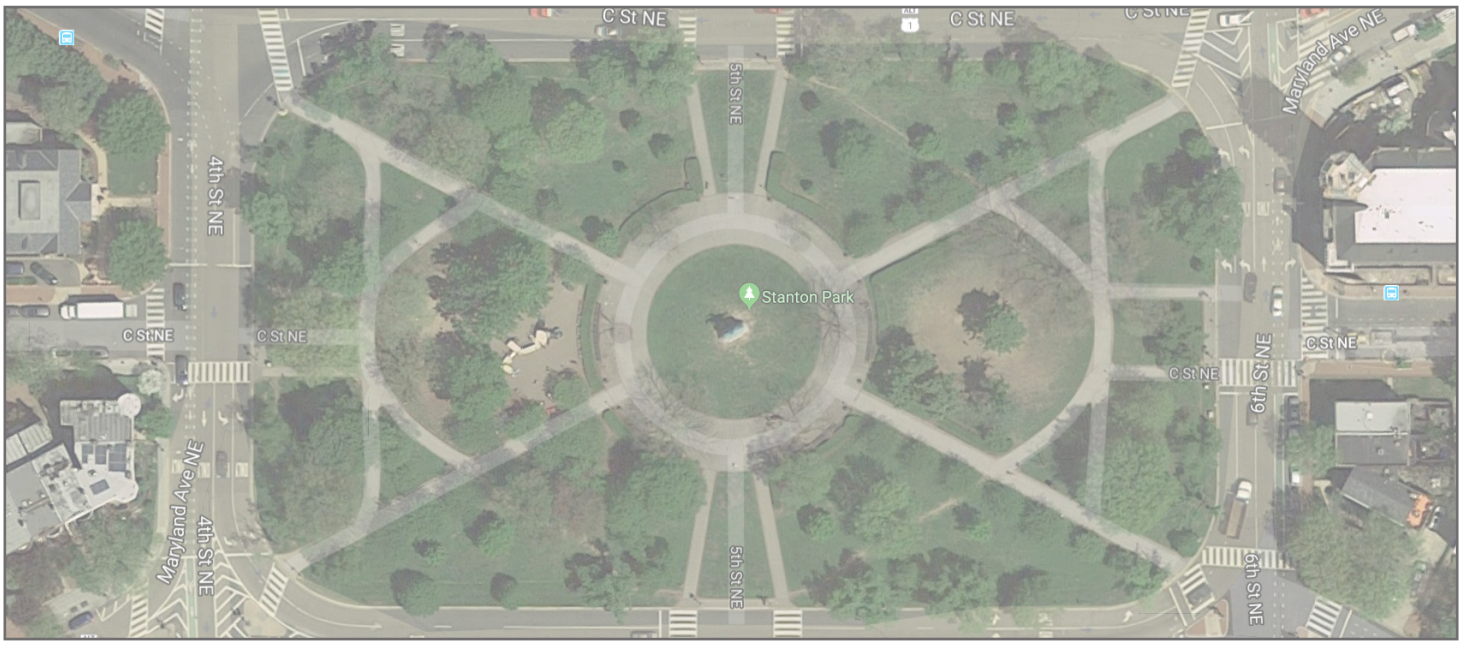
Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** ...STANTON PARK.....

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes



OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** RESERVATION 206 & 207

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes

OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** RESERVATION 208 & 209

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes

OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** RESERVATION 210 & 211

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes

OBSERVATION MAP WORKSHEET

IN OR AROUND
Circle One

Data Collector Name..... **Site Name** RESERVATION 212 & 213

Weather ..... **Temp(approx)** .....

Day ..... **Date** ..... **Start** ..... **End**.....

Instructions: At each assigned time, use a a new worksheet to record a snapshot of who is within the site. Only count people are within the site defined on the map below. Document each person and all of their characteristics with a tick mark in the boxes below at the moment you see them. This is a snapshot: walk through the site just once at each assigned time to record what you see. Do not record workers/staff.

Key Metrics	Active Rec	Race/Ethnicity	Other Metrics
Male	Walking	White	Scooters
	Running	Black	Strollers
Female	Biking	Asian	Dog Walkers
	Age: Under 18:	Hispanic/Latino	Less than 10 minutes
Total	Above 65/Senior	Other/Unknown	More than 10 minutes

POLICE

8c. List of Expert Interviews

Diana Bramble
Chief of Maintenance
National Capital Parks - East
National Park Service

George Branyan
Active Transportation Branch Manager
District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

Andrea Limauro
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District of Columbia Office of Planning

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