Chapter 3
Land Use Element

POLICE

Land Use Element

Overview 300

The Land Use Element is the cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan. It establishes the basic policies guiding the physical form of the city, and provides direction on a range of development, conservation, and land use compatibility issues. The Element describes the balancing of priorities that must take place in order to accommodate a multiplicity of land uses within the boundaries of the District of Columbia. 300.1

The critical land use issues facing the District of Columbia are addressed in this element. These include:

- Promoting neighborhood conservation
- Creating and maintaining successful neighborhoods
- Strengthening Downtown
- Enhancing neighborhood commercial districts and centers
- Balancing competing demands for finite land resources
- Directing growth and new development to achieve economic vitality while minimizing adverse impacts on residential areas and open space
- Siting challenging land uses. 300.2

More than any other part of the Comprehensive Plan, this Element lays out the policies through which the city will accommodate growth and change while conserving and enhancing its neighborhoods, commercial districts, and other areas. Because the Land Use Element integrates the policies and objectives of all the other District Elements, it should be given greater weight than the other elements as competing policies in different elements are balanced. 300.3

Although the District of Columbia was almost fully developed by 1960, the demand for land for housing and jobs has continued to fuel land use change. The changing needs of the federal government, private industry, and the city's institutions still shape the landscape on a daily basis. The city's aging building stock still requires refurbishment and replacement. The renewed popularity of city living generates the need for more housing and new amenities. 300.4

Land use changes have the potential to make the city more vibrant, economically healthy, exciting, and even more environmentally sustainable than it is today. But without proper direction and coordinated public investment, change can also be adverse. The Land Use Element strives for positive outcomes in all parts of the city by setting policies on appropriate uses and densities, and describing how different uses can successfully co-exist. 300.5

7th Street NE rowhouses under construction

The Element is divided into several sections. The first section provides basic data on land use and density in the District of Columbia. Subsequent sections of the element present policies and actions, organized under the following major topic headings:

- Shaping the City
- Creating and Maintaining Successful Neighborhoods
- Balancing Competing Demands for Land. 300.6

The definitions of Land Use categories and description of the Future Land Use Map and Generalized Policies Map may be found in Chapter 2 (Framework Element).

Land Use Profile of the District of Columbia 301

The District of Columbia comprises 69 square miles, including approximately eight square miles of water and 61 square miles of land. Land use patterns, illustrated in Map 3.1, reveal an expansive city "core" of about four square miles centered around the open spaces of the federal city. The core is surrounded by an inner ring of moderate to high density residential and mixed use neighborhoods, extending west to Georgetown, north to Columbia Heights and Petworth, east across Capitol Hill, and south to the Anacostia River and Near Southwest. Beyond the inner ring is an outer ring of less dense development, characterized largely by single family housing and garden apartments. The two rings generally correspond to historic development patterns, with most of the inner ring developed prior to 1910 and the outer ring developed after 1910. 301.1

The impact of the city's transportation network on land use patterns is apparent in Map 3.1. Most of the commercial and higher density development beyond the core of the city hugs radial avenues like Connecticut Avenue NW and Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Most of the District's industrial development follows the railroad corridors running from Union Station east along New York Avenue and north to Silver Spring. The historic connection between transportation and land use continues to shape the city today, with Metrorail station areas emerging as the city's newest activity centers. 301.2

Map 3.1 reveals other distinctive land use patterns. The city's open space networks, particularly those along Rock Creek and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, are apparent. Large institutional uses—including some 2,000 acres of colleges, universities, hospitals, seminaries, and similar uses across the city—are visible. Federal enclaves beyond the core of the city, such as Bolling Air Force Base, the St. Elizabeths Hospital Campus, Walter Reed Hospital, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home, appear prominently. Many of the federal and institutional uses are located in areas that are

Map 3.1:

Existing Land Use 2005 301.3

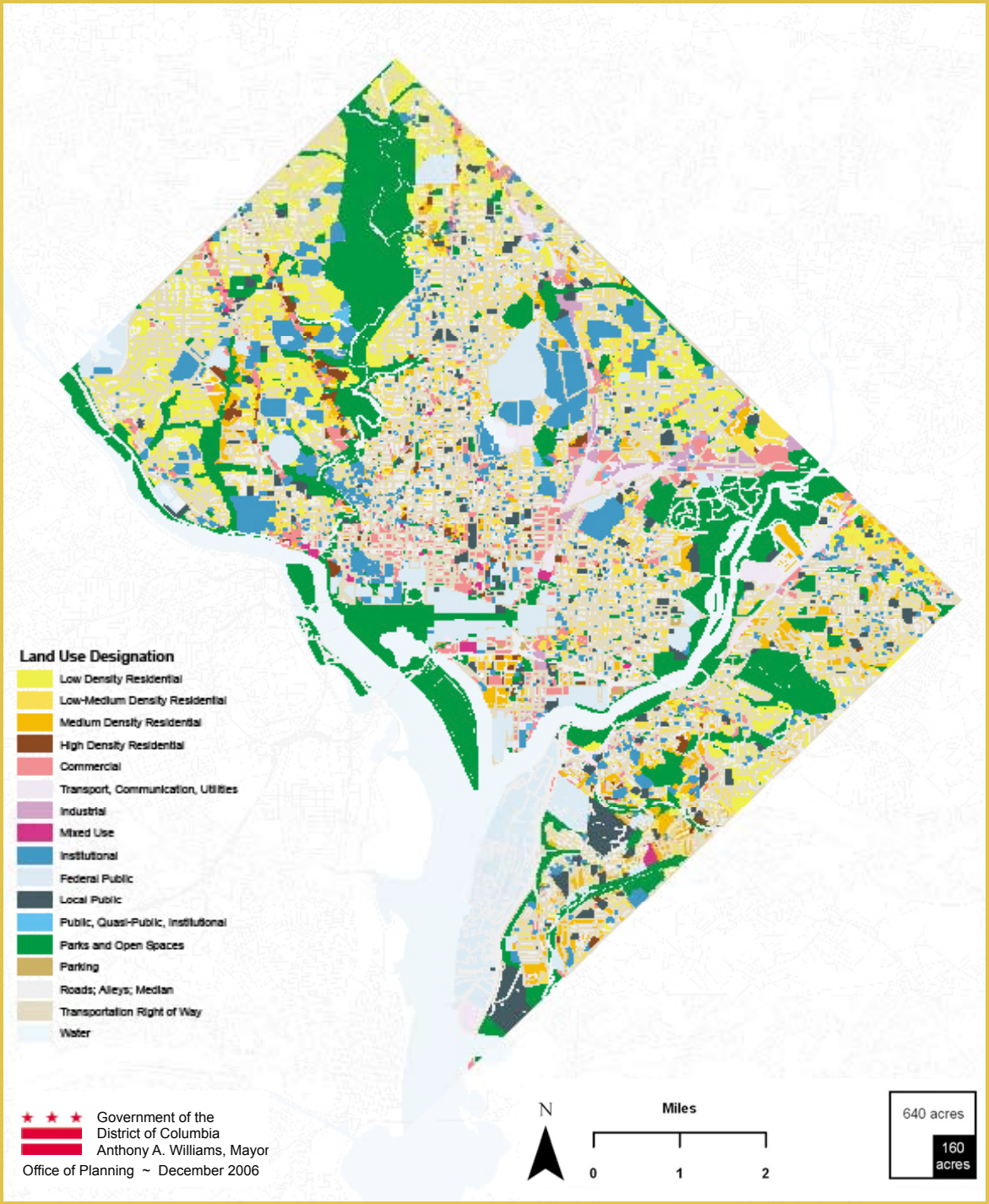

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Table 3.1

Acres of Existing Land Use by Planning Area, 2005 301.4

	Capitol Hill	Central Washington	Far Northeast & Southeast	Far Southeast & Southwest	Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest	Mid City	Near Northwest	Rock Creek East	Rock Creek West	Upper Northeast	Citywide	Percent
Road Rights-of-Way	759.0	898.8	1,337.8	906.1	477.5	628.0	715.9	1,311.0	1,760.5	1,223.1	10,017.7	25.5%
Single Family Detached Homes	6.2	0.1	775.2	163.8	7.3	15.5	83.8	918.9	2,324.4	641.0	4,936.2	12.6%
Single Family Attached Homes/ Row Houses	520.2	9.7	641.2	327.8	30.5	496.8	339.9	606.1	290.0	611.4	3,873.6	9.9%
Low-Rise Apartments	43.1	9.7	435.9	555.2	106.1	136.2	109.7	85.1	185.4	189.3	1,855.7	4.7%
High-Rise Apartments	3.9	25.8	19.9	43.7	25.6	59.5	65.4	24.7	109.2	24.6	402.3	1.0%
Commercial	97.2	447.9	128.9	62.8	122.0	144.0	220.1	106.0	170.1	295.6	1,794.6	4.7%
Industrial	5.2	16.4	12.2	5.5	42.2	20.6	5.7	15.7	0.0	294.9	418.4	1.1%
Local Public Facilities	72.1	47.0	154.0	441.1	46.7	53.8	75.4	131.3	67.5	102.0	1,190.9	3.0%
Federal Facilities (excl. parks)	47.3	480.6	4.4	1,067.3	408.6	1.3	1.1	412.0	282.6	75.8	2,781.0	7.1%
Institutional	42.1	66.6	71.2	117.4	22.4	141.7	248.6	163.3	658.9	729.8	2,262.0	5.8%
Permanent Open Space	295.8	678.5	1,321.5	729.0	532.8	140.9	354.4	877.9	2,011.3	1,038.1	7,980.2	20.3%
Rail, Utilities and Communications	0.7	36.0	223.5	74.5	11.1	96.8	6.3	83.2	3.8	320.9	856.8	2.2%
Vacant	65.6	58.2	178.9	188.2	50.9	36.0	32.6	22.2	111.2	99.0	842.8	2.1%
TOTAL LAND	1,958.4	2,776.4	5,304.6	4,686.8	1,883.7	1,971.1	2,258.9	4,757.4	7,982.2	5,645.5	39,225.0	100.0
Water	117.0	509.2	135.5	1,791.4	1,294.9	45.8	239.4	18.9	313.0	89.1	4,554.2	
TOTAL	**2,075.4**	**3,284.5**	**5,440.1**	**6,473.8**	**3,178.6**	**2,016.9**	**2,498.3**	**4,776.3**	**8,287.7**	**5,734.6**	**43,766.2**	

Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

otherwise residential in character. While this creates the potential for land use conflicts, these uses are also important open space buffers, job centers, community anchors, and resources for the surrounding neighborhoods. 301.5

Table 3.1 indicates the existing acreage in different land uses in each of the city's ten Planning Areas. Figure 3.1 shows the location of these Planning Areas. The table shows both similarities and differences between Areas. Both the "inner ring" and "outer ring" neighborhoods generally contain 30 to 40 percent of their land areas in residential uses. On the other hand, residential uses represent less than two percent of Central Washington and less than 10 percent of the Anacostia Waterfront. About 25 percent of the District consists of road rights-of-way, although only about half of this acreage actually consists of the paved streets themselves. For instance, road rights of way constitute 39 percent of Capitol Hill, but most of this land consists of landscaped or bricked front "yards" along streets with exceptionally wide rights-of-way. 301.6

Figure 3.1:

Planning Areas 301.10

Despite the significant number of jobs in the city, commercial uses represent less than five percent of the city's land area, and industrial uses represent just one percent. Commercial uses represent about 16 percent of the land area in Central Washington, but less than two percent of the land area in Far Southeast/ Southwest. Many of the District's jobs are associated with federal facilities and institutional uses, which together make up about 13 percent of its land area. Institutional lands appear throughout the city, but are especially prevalent in the three Northwest Planning Areas and in Upper Northeast. 301.7

Maps 3.2 and 3.3 show estimated population and employment density in the city and close-in suburbs as of 2005. The data is based on the traffic analysis zones used by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments for transportation modeling. Map 3.2 again illustrates the "ring" of fairly dense neighborhoods around the city center, and the denser residential development along major corridors like Connecticut Avenue NW and 14th Street NW. It also shows areas of fairly dense development east of the Anacostia River, primarily associated with large low-rise garden apartment complexes in Far Southeast. On the other hand, areas like Woodridge, Burrville, and Shepherd Park have low population densities, in some cases even lower than the adjacent neighborhoods in suburban Maryland. 301.8

Map 3.3 shows that employment is highly concentrated in Central Washington. Nearly 60 percent of the city's jobs are located within this area. Beyond the city center, other major employment centers include the universities and federal enclaves, the New York Avenue industrial corridor, the West End, the Georgetown waterfront, and several corridors in Upper Northwest. Large concentrations of employment also appear beyond the city limits, in Downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring, and in Rosslyn, Crystal City, the Pentagon area, and Alexandria. 301.9

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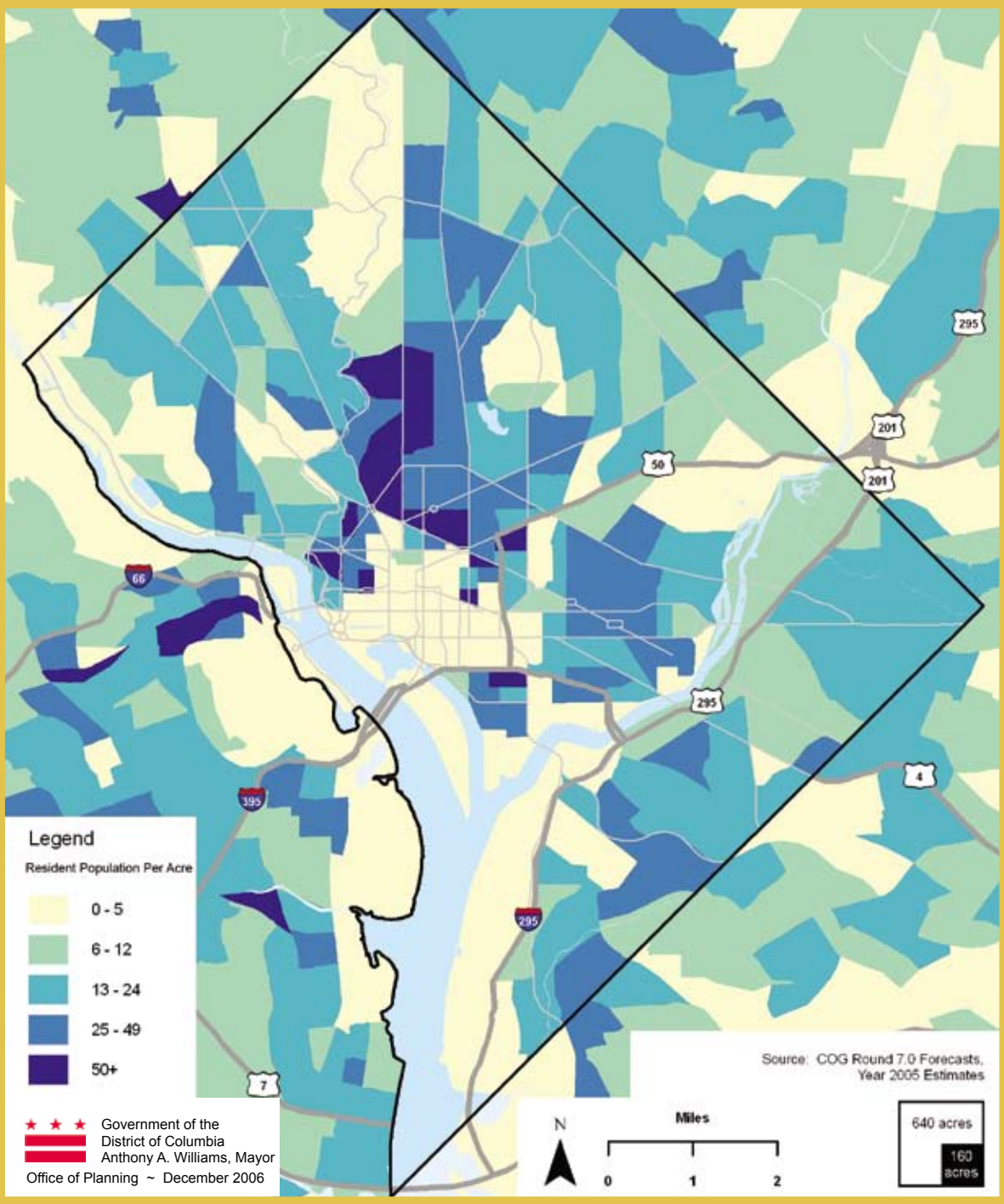
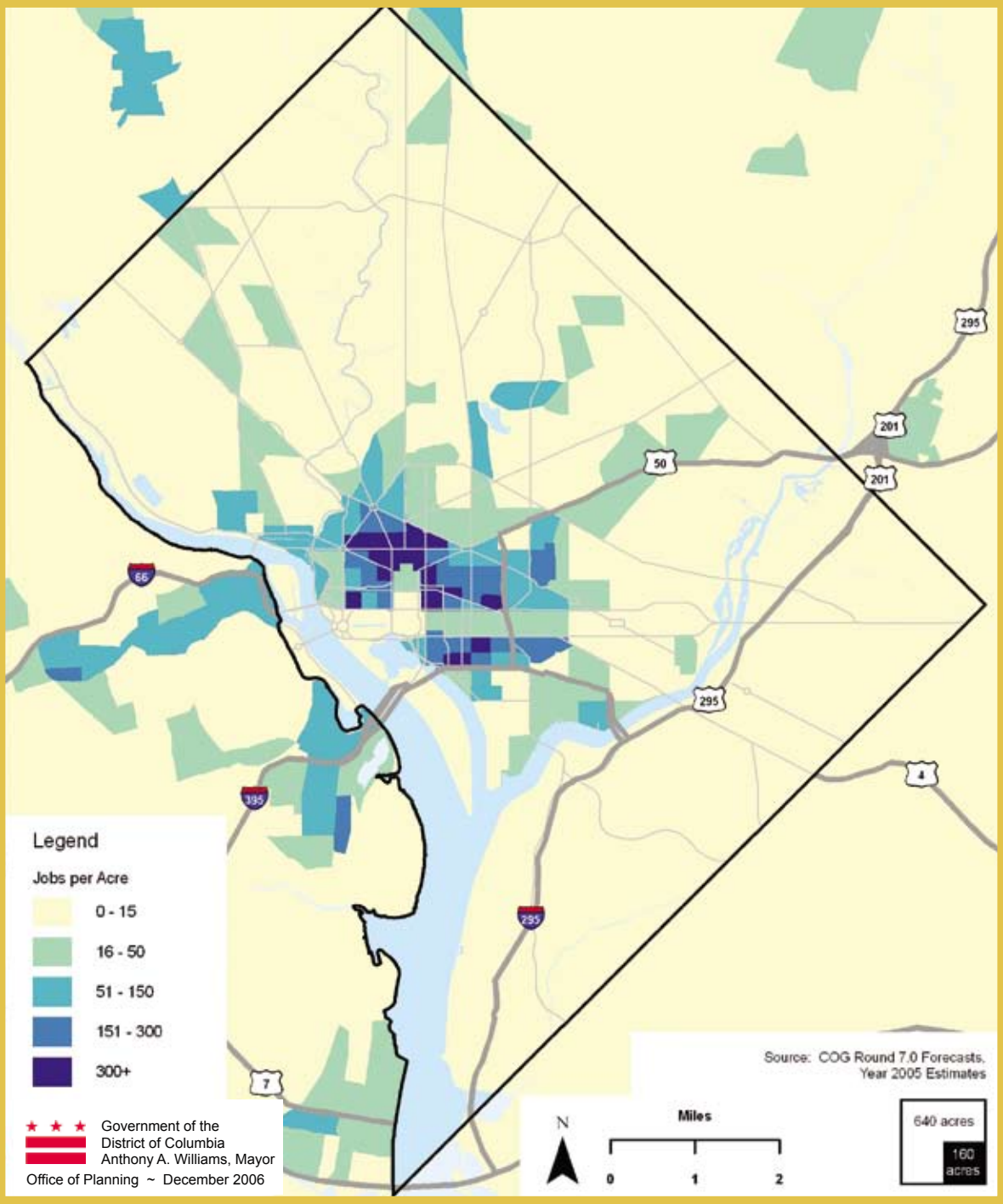
Map 3.2:

Population Density 301.11



Map 3.3:

Employment Density 301.12



The Land Use Goal is:

Ensure the efficient use of land resources to meet long-term neighborhood, citywide, and regional needs; to help foster other District goals; to protect the health, safety, and welfare of District residents and businesses; to sustain, restore, or improve the character and stability of neighborhoods in all parts of the city; and to effectively balance the competing demands for land to support the many activities that take place within District boundaries.

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Policies and Actions

LU-1 Shaping the City 303

This section of the Land Use Element describes the desired pattern of growth and development in the District of Columbia over the next 20 years. Its focus is on the specific areas or types of areas within the city where change is most likely to take place. The section begins with guiding policies for the center of the city. It then turns to the large sites around Washington where future changes are envisioned. This is followed by a discussion of the opportunities for change along the city's corridors and around its transit station areas. Policies for neighborhood infill development also are included. 303.1

LU-1.1 Strengthening the Core 304

Key to the Comprehensive Plan is the transformation of the city's core (generally referred to throughout the Plan as "Central Washington") into a more cohesive urban center. The six or seven distinct commercial districts that make up Central Washington already comprise the third largest central business district in the United States, after New York and Chicago. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, much of the area lacks the dynamic "24/7" character that defines other great world capitals. For more than 35 years, Washington's planners have aspired to create a "living downtown"—a place alive with housing, theaters, department stores, and restaurants as well as the vast expanse of office space that defines the central city today. Recent developments around Gallery Place and the Penn Quarter show that these efforts are finally paying off, but the area's full potential has yet to be realized. 304.1

Between 2005 and 2025, approximately 30 percent of the District of Columbia's future housing growth and 70 percent of its job growth will occur within the urban core of the city and adjacent close-in areas along the Anacostia River. This growth must be accommodated in a way that protects the area's historic texture, including the street and open space frameworks established by the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, the 1910 height limit, and

the vistas and monumental spaces that define the central city. Infill and redevelopment will take place within the established business districts west of 5th Street NW, but a majority of the central city's future growth will be achieved through redevelopment of areas on its east side. 304.2

Two areas, each over 300 acres in size, are already emerging as the new frontiers for central city growth. The first includes land in the triangle bounded by New York Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue NW, and the CSX railroad, along with adjacent lands around the New York Avenue Metro station. The second area includes the South Capitol corridor and Near Southeast, including the site of the Washington Nationals Baseball Park and the adjoining Southeast Federal Center and waterfront area. Whereas much of Central Washington was redeveloped with single-purpose (office) uses during the second half of the 20th century, these two areas are envisioned as mixed use centers, including housing as well as employment. These areas represent the most promising setting in the entire region to accommodate Metropolitan Washington's next generation of urban living. 304.3

As the urban core expands, reinvestment in established business districts such as the Golden Triangle, the Downtown Core, and the Near Southwest also must continue. These areas will be modernized, better connected to one another, and developed with new infill uses and public improvements. Large sites such as the Old Convention Center provide opportunities for spectacular new civic focal points while smaller sites present the opportunity for new retail, housing, and office development. 304.4

Additional discussions of planning issues in these areas may be found in the Central Washington Area Element and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest Area Element. These chapters should be consulted for specific policies and actions. 304.5

Policy LU-1.1.1: Sustaining a Strong City Center

Provide for the continued vitality of Central Washington as a thriving business, government, retail, financial, hospitality, cultural, and residential center. Promote continued reinvestment in central city buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces; continued preservation and restoration of historic resources; and continued efforts to create safe, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly environments. 304.6

Policy LU-1.1.2: "Greater" Downtown

Promote the perception of Downtown Washington as a series of connected business districts, including Metro Center/Retail Core, Golden Triangle/K Street, Federal Triangle, Northwest Rectangle, Gallery Place/Penn Quarter, Downtown East/Judiciary Square, Mount Vernon District, NoMA, Near Southwest/L'Enfant Plaza, South Capitol, and the Southeast Federal Center. The traditional definition of Downtown (roughly bounded by 16th Street, the National Mall, and Massachusetts Avenue) does not fully convey the

The traditional definition of Downtown (roughly bounded by 16th Street, the National Mall, and Massachusetts Avenue) does not fully convey the geographic extent of Washington's Central Business District, or the many unique activities it supports.

The Penn Quater is an example of the District's "Living Downtown."

geographic extent of Washington's Central Business District, or the many unique activities it supports. 304.7

Policy LU-1.1.3: Central Employment Area

Continue the joint federal/District designation of a "Central Employment Area" (CEA) within the District of Columbia. The CEA shall include existing "core" federal facilities such as the US Capitol Building, the White House, and the Supreme Court, and most of the legislative, judicial, and executive administrative headquarters of the United States Government. Additionally, the CEA shall include the greatest concentration of the city's private office development, and higher density mixed land uses, including commercial/retail, hotel, residential, and entertainment uses. Given federally-imposed height limits, the scarcity of vacant land in the core of the city, and the importance of protecting historic resources, the CEA may include additional land necessary to support economic growth and federal expansion. The CEA may be used to guide the District's economic development initiatives, and may be incorporated in its planning and building standards (for example, parking requirements) to reinforce urban character. The CEA is also important because it is part of the "point system" used by the General Services Administration to establish federal leases. The boundaries of the CEA are shown in Figure 3.2. 304.8

Policy LU-1.1.4: Appropriate Uses in the CEA

Ensure that land within the Central Employment Area is used in a manner which reflects the area's national importance, its historic and cultural significance, and its role as the center of the metropolitan region. Federal siting guidelines and District zoning regulations should promote the use of this area with high-value land uses that enhance its image as the seat of the national government and the center of the District of Columbia, and that make the most efficient possible use of its transportation facilities. 304.9

Policy LU-1.1.5: Urban Mixed Use Neighborhoods

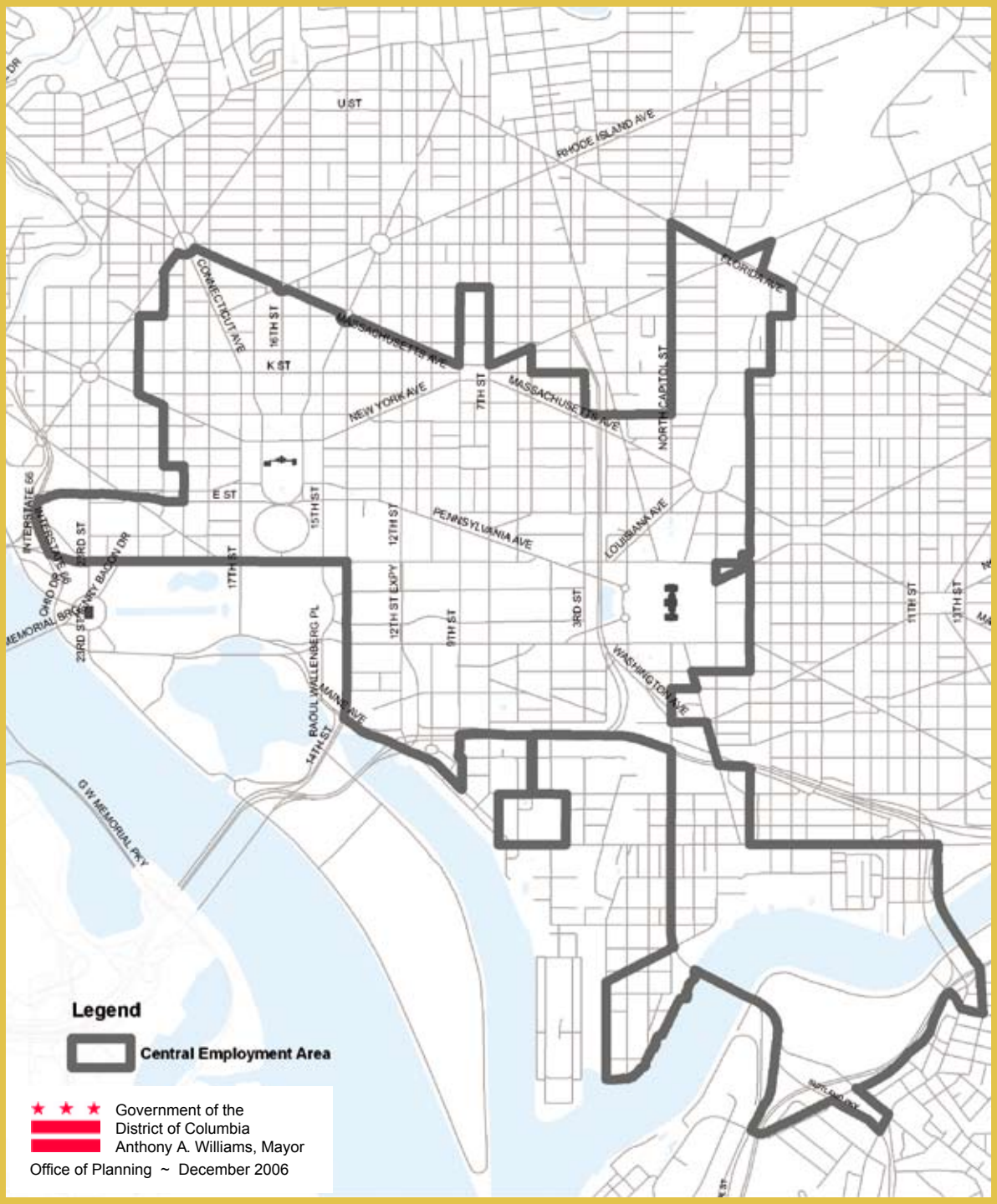
Encourage new central city mixed use neighborhoods combining high-density residential, office, retail, cultural, and open space uses in the following areas:

1. Mt Vernon Triangle
2. North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA)
3. Downtown East
4. South Capitol Street corridor/Stadium area
5. Near Southeast/Navy Yard

The location of these areas is shown in the Central Washington and Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Elements. Land use regulations and design standards for these areas should ensure that they are developed as attractive pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, with high-quality architecture

Figure 3.2:

Central Employment Area 304.10



During the next 20 years, about 15 percent of Washington's housing growth and 10 percent of its job growth will take place on about ten large sites outside of the Central Employment Area. The large sites include properties in federal ownership, District ownership, and private ownership.

and public spaces. Housing, including affordable housing, is particularly encouraged and should be a vital component of the future land use mix. 304.11

Policy LU-1.1.6: Central Employment Area Historic Resources

Preserve the scale and character of the Central Employment Area's historic resources, including the streets, vistas, and public spaces of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans as well as individual historic structures and sites. Future development must be sensitive to the area's historic character and should enhance important reminders of the city's past. 304.12

Please consult the Historic Preservation and Urban Design Elements for related policies.

Policy LU-1.1.7: Central Employment Area Edges

Support the retention of the established residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Central Employment Area. Appropriate building setbacks, lot coverage standards, and a stepping down in land use intensity and building height shall be required along the edges of the CEA to protect the integrity and historic scale of adjacent neighborhoods and to avoid creating sharp visual distinctions between existing and new structures. 304.13

Please refer to the Urban Design Element for additional guidance on the appropriate transition of intensity at the edges of Downtown.

Action LU-1.1.A: Central Employment Area Boundary

Encourage the National Capital Planning Commission to amend the boundary of the CEA depicted in the Federal Elements to match the boundary shown in the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. 304.14

Action LU-1.1.B: Downtown Action Agenda

Update the 2000 Downtown Action Agenda to reflect changing conditions, priorities, and projections (the Agenda is Downtown's strategic plan for future growth, improvement, and conservation). The revised Agenda should define Downtown more broadly to include the multiple business districts that comprise the Central Employment Area. 304.15

More specific policies for this area are contained in the Central Washington Area Element and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element.

LU-1.2 Large Sites and the City Fabric 305

During the next 20 years, about 15 percent of Washington's housing growth and 10 percent of its job growth will take place on ten large sites outside of the Central Employment Area. The large sites include properties in federal ownership, District ownership, and private ownership. The status of each site varies; redevelopment on a few is imminent, but may be over a decade away

on others. Some still contain vital, active uses. Others have been dormant for years. 305.1

Four of the ten sites are owned (at least in part) by the federal government. Consequently, policies in the District Elements for these lands are not binding, and are intended only to express the District's vision for these properties. The District will work collaboratively with the federal government in future planning and development decisions to ensure that development on these sites is compatible with adjacent neighborhoods and furthers the goals and policies of the District Elements. 305.2

The large sites are shown in Map 3.4 and are listed in Table 3.2 below. The Area Elements should be consulted for a profile of each site and specific policies for its future use. The policies in this section focus on broader issues that apply to all sites. As shown on Map 3.4, several of the sites fall within the boundaries of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, an economic revitalization and environmental protection program now being implemented by the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation. 305.3

Table 3.2:

Large Sites* 305.4

Site	Acres	Consult the following Area Element for more detail:
Armed Forces Retirement Home	276	Rock Creek East
DC Village	167	Far SE/SW
Fort Lincoln (remainder)	80	Upper Northeast
Kenilworth-Parkside	60	Far NE/SE
McMillan Sand Filtration Site	25	Mid-City
Poplar Point	60	Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest
Reservation 13	67	Capitol Hill
St. Elizabeths Hospital	336	Far SE/SW
Southwest Waterfront	45	Lower Anacostia Waterfront/ Near Southwest
Walter Reed Army Medical Center	113	Rock Creek East

**The 55-acre Southeast Federal Center does not appear on the list, as it is within the Central Employment Area. Policies for its use are in the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element.*

Policy LU-1.2.1: Reuse of Large Publicly-Owned Sites

Recognize the potential for large, government-owned properties to supply needed community services, create local housing and employment opportunities, remove barriers between neighborhoods, provide large and significant new parks, enhance waterfront access, and improve and stabilize the city's neighborhoods. 305.5

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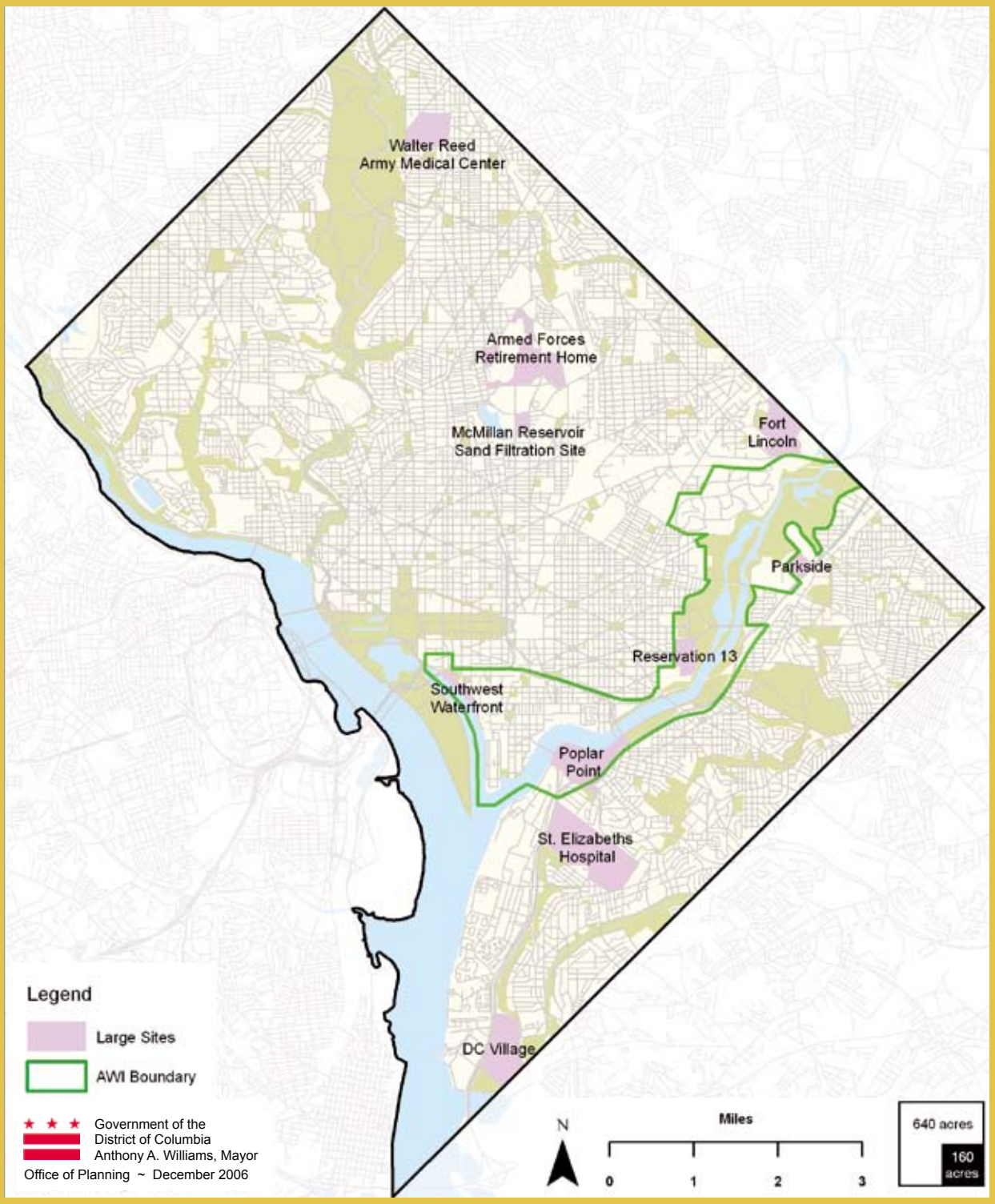
Map 3.4:

Large Sites 305.6



Policy LU-1.2.2: Mix of Uses on Large Sites

Ensure that the mix of new uses on large redeveloped sites is compatible with adjacent uses and provides benefits to surrounding neighborhoods and to the city as a whole. The particular mix of uses on any given site should be generally indicated on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and more fully described in the Comprehensive Plan Area Elements. Zoning on such sites should be compatible with adjacent uses. 305.7

Policy LU-1.2.3: Federal Sites

Work closely with the federal government on re-use planning for those federal lands where a change of use may take place in the future. Even where such properties will remain in federal use, the impacts of new activities on adjacent District neighborhoods should be acknowledged and proactively addressed by federal parties. 305.8

Policy LU-1.2.4: New Methods of Land Regulation

Recognize the opportunity afforded by the District's large sites for innovative land regulation (such as form-based zoning) and the application of sustainable design principles (green building and low impact development) on a large scale. 305.9

Policy LU-1.2.5: Public Benefit Uses on Large Sites

Given the significant leverage the District has in redeveloping properties which it owns, include appropriate public benefit uses on such sites if and when they are reused. Examples of such uses are affordable housing, new parks and open spaces, health care and civic facilities, public educational facilities, and other public facilities. 305.10

Policy LU-1.2.6: New Neighborhoods and the Urban Fabric

On those large sites that are redeveloped as new neighborhoods (such as Reservation 13), integrate new development into the fabric of the city to the greatest extent feasible. Incorporate extensions of the city street grid, public access and circulation improvements, new public open spaces, and building intensities and massing that complement adjacent developed areas. Such sites should not be developed as self-contained communities, isolated or gated from their surroundings. 305.11

Policy LU-1.2.7: Protecting Existing Assets on Large Sites

Identify and protect existing assets such as historic buildings, historic site plan elements, important vistas, and major landscape elements as large sites are redeveloped. 305.12

Policy LU-1.2.8: Large Sites and the Waterfront

Use the redevelopment of large sites to achieve related urban design, open space, environmental, and economic development objectives along the

Sites like Poplar Point offer opportunities for exciting new waterfront development and parks.

Transit system improvements are essential to enhance regional mobility and accessibility, respond to future increases in demand, and provide alternatives to single passenger automobiles.

Anacostia Waterfront. Large waterfront sites should be used for water-focused recreation, housing, commercial, and cultural development, with activities that are accessible to both sides of the river. Large sites should further be used to enhance the physical and environmental quality of the river. 305.13

Action LU-1.2.A: Federal Land Transfer

Continue to work with the federal government to transfer federally-owned waterfront sites and other sites as mutually agreed upon by the federal and District governments to local control to capitalize more fully on unrealized waterfront development and parkland opportunities. 305.14

Policies and actions for large sites are contained in the Comprehensive Plan Area Elements.

LU-1.3 Transit-Oriented and Corridor Development 306

Over the last four decades, the District of Columbia, the federal government, and neighboring jurisdictions have invested billions of dollars in a mass transit system that effectively connects residents in many parts of the city with major employment centers and other destinations. Additional investments in rapid transit, consisting primarily of light rail, streetcars, and busways, are planned along major avenues. These improvements are essential to enhance regional mobility and accessibility, respond to future increases in demand, and provide alternatives to single passenger automobiles. The improvements also create the potential to reinforce one of the signature elements of Washington's urban form—its boulevards. 306.1

Fully capitalizing on the investment made in Metrorail requires better use of the land around transit stations and along transit corridors. While many of the District's 40 Metrorail stations epitomize the concept of a "transit village," with pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development of varying scales, others do not. Some stations continue to be surrounded by large surface parking lots and auto-oriented commercial land uses. The same is true for those corridors where light rail or bus rapid transit service has been proposed. Some pass through fairly dense, walkable neighborhoods. Others consist of long, undifferentiated commercial strips with many vacant storefronts, little or no housing, and few amenities for pedestrians. 306.2

Much of the city's planning during the last five years has focused on making better use of transit station areas. Plans have been developed for Columbia Heights, Takoma, Anacostia, Georgia Avenue/Petworth, and Shaw/Howard University. In each case, the objective was not to apply a "cookie-cutter" model for transit-oriented development, but rather to identify ways to better capitalize on Metrorail and more efficiently use land in the station vicinity. One objective of these initiatives has been to strengthen transit stations as neighborhood centers and attract new investment to struggling business districts. Another important objective has to been to accommodate the

growth of the city in a way that minimizes the number and length of auto trips generated, and to reduce household expenses on transportation by providing options for "car-free" (or one car) living. 306.3

The District's Metrorail stations include 15 stations within the Central Employment Area and 25 "neighborhood" stations (see Map 3.5). Looking forward, certain principles should be applied in the management of land around all of the District's neighborhood stations. These include:

- A preference for mixed residential and commercial uses rather than single purpose uses, particularly a preference for housing above ground floor retail uses;
- A preference for diverse housing types, including both market-rate and affordable units and housing for seniors and others with mobility impairments;
- A priority on attractive, pedestrian-friendly design and a de-emphasis on auto-oriented uses and surface parking;
- Provision of well-designed, well-programmed, and well-maintained public open spaces;
- A "stepping down" of densities with distance away from each station, protecting lower density uses in the vicinity;
- Convenient and comfortable connections to the bus system, thereby expanding access to the stations and increasing Metro's ability to serve all parts of the city; and
- A high level of pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the stations and the neighborhoods around them. 306.4

Beyond these core principles, station area development policies must respond to the unique needs of each community and the unique setting of each station. Some station areas wrestle with concerns over too much development, while others struggle to attract development. Moreover, the District's role in facilitating transit-oriented development must vary from station to station. In some parts of the city, weak demand may require public investment and zoning incentives to catalyze development or achieve the desired mix of uses. In other areas, the strength of the private market provides leverage for the District to require public benefits (such as plazas, parks, and child care facilities) when approval is requested. 306.5

While transit-oriented development is most commonly thought of as a strategy for Metrorail station areas, it is also applicable along premium transit corridors and the city's "Great Streets." Six "Great Streets" were named in 2005 as part of an integrated economic development, transportation, and urban design strategy. The location of these streets is shown in Map 3.5. While not officially designated, four other corridors—Rhode Island Avenue, North/South Capitol Streets, Lower 14th Street, and Bladensburg Road—are also shown on the map to recognize their potential for enhancement. 306.6

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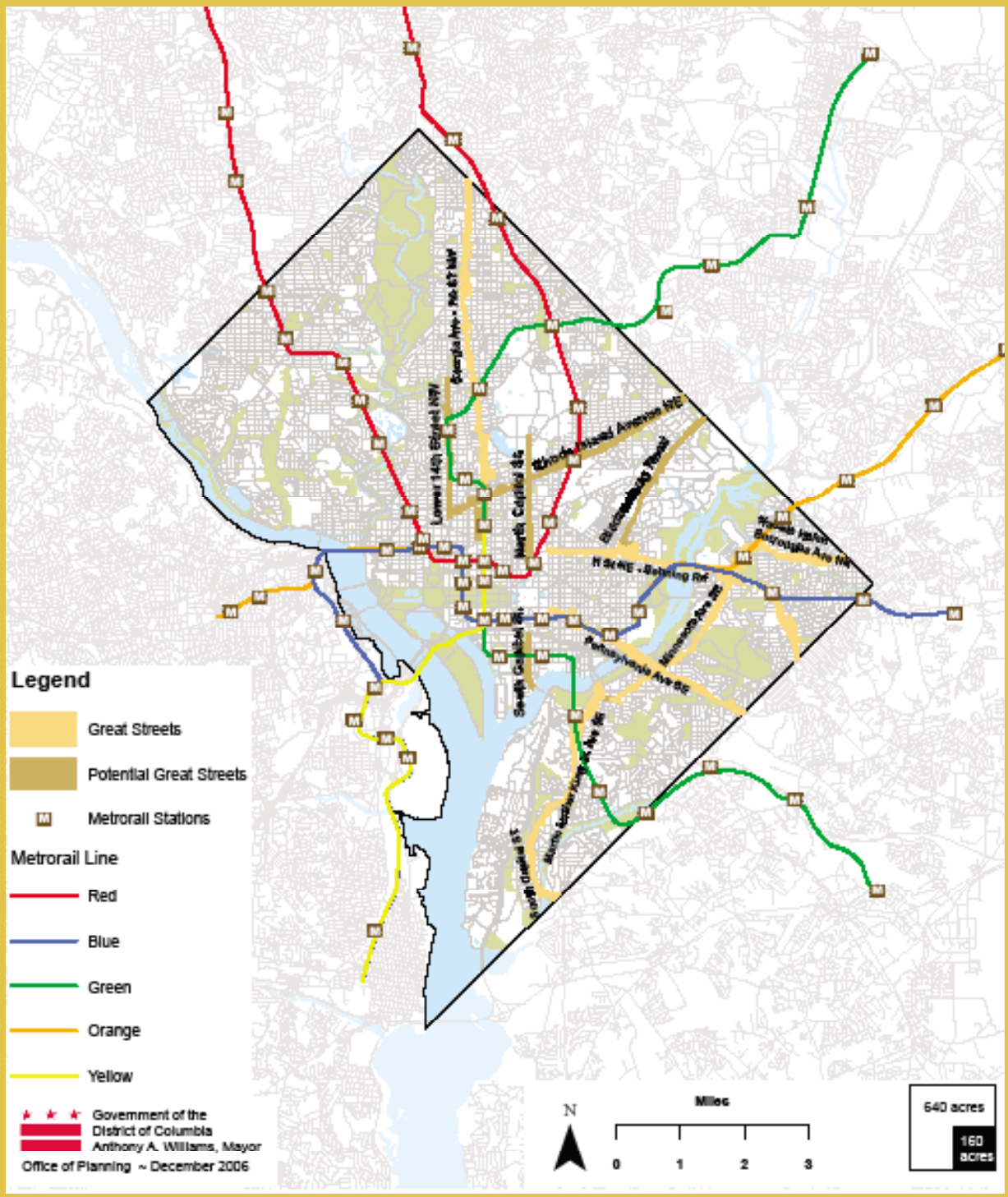
Map 3.5:

Great Streets and Transit Stations 306.7



The "reach" of transit-oriented development around any given station or along a high volume transit corridor should vary depending on neighborhood context. While ¼ to ½ mile is generally used across the country to define the walkable radius around each station, and therefore the area in which higher densities may accommodate growth without increased traffic congestion, applying a uniform radius is not appropriate in the District. The established character and scale of the neighborhood surrounding the station should be considered, as should factors such as topography, demographics, and the station's capacity to support new transit riders. Many stations abut historic or stable low density neighborhoods. Similarly, many of the city's priority transit corridors transition to single family homes or row houses just one-half block or less off the street itself. 306.8

To avoid adverse effects on low and moderate density neighborhoods, most transit-oriented development should be accommodated on commercially zoned land. Possible rezoning of such land in a manner that is consistent with the Future Land Use Map and related corridor plans should be considered. Current zoning already expresses a preference for the use of such land for housing by permitting more density for mixed use projects than for projects with commercial uses alone. At the same time, some of the existing zoning categories were drafted at a time when peak hour transit volumes were lower and regional congestion was less severe. Changes to the regulations may be needed to recognize the widespread desirability of transit use by those within walking distance, taking into consideration station and system wide capacity issues and the other factors listed above. 306.9

Policy LU-1.3.1: Station Areas as Neighborhood Centers

Encourage the development of Metro stations as anchors for economic and civic development in locations that currently lack adequate neighborhood shopping opportunities and employment. The establishment and growth of mixed use centers at Metrorail stations should be supported as a way to reduce automobile congestion, improve air quality, increase jobs, provide a range of retail goods and services, reduce reliance on the automobile, enhance neighborhood stability, create a stronger sense of place, provide civic gathering places, and capitalize on the development and public transportation opportunities which the stations provide. This policy should not be interpreted to outweigh other land use policies which call for neighborhood conservation. Each Metro station area is unique and must be treated as such in planning and development decisions. The Future Land Use Map expresses the desired intensity and mix of uses around each station, and the Area Elements (and in some cases Small Area Plans) provide more detailed direction for each station area. 306.10

Policy LU-1.3.2: Development Around Metrorail Stations

Concentrate redevelopment efforts on those Metrorail station areas which offer the greatest opportunities for infill development and growth,

Eastern Market Metrorail Station

particularly stations in areas with weak market demand, or with large amounts of vacant or poorly utilized land in the vicinity of the station entrance. Ensure that development above and around such stations emphasizes land uses and building forms which minimize the necessity of automobile use and maximize transit ridership while reflecting the design capacity of each station and respecting the character and needs of the surrounding areas. 306.11

Policy LU-1.3.3: Housing Around Metrorail Stations

Recognize the opportunity to build senior housing and more affordable "starter" housing for first-time homebuyers adjacent to Metrorail stations, given the reduced necessity of auto ownership (and related reduction in household expenses) in such locations. 306.12

Policy LU-1.3.4: Design To Encourage Transit Use

Require architectural and site planning improvements around Metrorail stations that support pedestrian and bicycle access to the stations and enhance the safety, comfort and convenience of passengers walking to the station or transferring to and from local buses. These improvements should include lighting, signage, landscaping, and security measures. Discourage the development of station areas with conventional suburban building forms, such as shopping centers surrounded by surface parking lots. 306.13

Policy LU-1.3.5: Edge Conditions Around Transit Stations

Ensure that development adjacent to Metrorail stations is planned and designed to respect the character, scale, and integrity of adjacent neighborhoods. For stations that are located within or close to low density areas, building heights should "step down" as needed to avoid dramatic contrasts in height and scale between the station area and nearby residential streets and yards. 306.14

Policy LU-1.3.6: Parking Near Metro Stations

Encourage the creative management of parking around transit stations, ensuring that automobile needs are balanced with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle travel needs. New parking should generally be set behind or underneath buildings and geared toward short-term users rather than all-day commuters. 306.15

Policy LU-1.3.7: TOD Boundaries

Tailor the reach of transit-oriented development (TOD) policies and associated development regulations to reflect the specific conditions at each Metrorail station and along each transit corridor. The presence of historic districts and conservation areas should be a significant consideration as these policies are applied. 306.16

Policy LU-1.3.8: Public Facilities

Encourage the siting (or retention and modernization) of public facilities such as schools, libraries, and government offices near transit stations and along transit corridors. Such facilities should be a focus for community activities and should enhance neighborhood identity. 306.17

Action LU-1.3.A: Station Area and Corridor Planning

Conduct detailed station area and corridor plans prior to the creation of TOD overlays in an effort to avoid potential conflicts between TOD and neighborhood conservation goals. These plans should be prepared collaboratively with WMATA and local communities and should include detailed surveys of parcel characteristics (including lot depths and widths), existing land uses, structures, street widths, the potential for buffering, and possible development impacts on surrounding areas. Plans should also address joint public-private development opportunities, urban design improvements, traffic and parking management strategies, integrated bus service and required service facilities, capital improvements, and recommended land use and zoning changes. 306.18

Action LU-1.3.B: TOD Overlay Zone

During the forthcoming revision to the zoning regulations, create a TOD overlay district. The overlay should include provisions for mixed land uses, minimum and maximum densities (inclusive of density bonuses), parking maximums, and buffering and design standards that reflect the presence of transit facilities. Work with land owners, the DC Council, local ANCs, community organizations, WMATA, and the Zoning Commission to determine the stations where such a zone should be applied. The emphasis should be on stations that have the capacity to accommodate substantial increases in ridership and the potential to become pedestrian-oriented urban villages. Neighborhoods that meet these criteria and that would welcome a TOD overlay are the highest priority. 306.19

LU-1.4 Neighborhood Infill Development 307

There are hundreds of small vacant lots across the District of Columbia located away from transit stations and off of the major boulevards. Analysis conducted through the Comprehensive Plan revision determined that vacant, residentially-zoned lots totaled more than 400 acres in 2005. Approximately 50 percent of this acreage was zoned for single family homes, 15 percent was zoned for townhomes and rowhomes, and 35 percent was zoned for multi-family development. Most of the sites were less than one acre in size. Some of this land may not be developable to the limits allowed by zoning due to site constraints such as poor access, awkward parcel shapes, and steep topography. 307.1

In residential areas, infill sites present some of the best opportunities in the city for "family" housing and low- to moderate-density development. In commercial areas, infill development can fill gaps in the streetwall and create more cohesive and attractive neighborhood centers.

Infill development on vacant lots is strongly supported in the District of Columbia, provided that such development is compatible in scale with its surroundings and consistent with environmental protection and public safety objectives. In residential areas, infill sites present some of the best opportunities in the city for "family" housing and low- to moderate-density development. In commercial areas, infill development can fill gaps in the streetwall and create more cohesive and attractive neighborhood centers. Vacant lots in such settings may also present opportunities for public uses, such as pocket parks, job training facilities, and child care centers. 307.2

In both residential and commercial settings, infill development must be sensitive to neighborhood context. High quality design standards should be required, the privacy of neighboring structures should be respected, and density and scale should reflect the desired character of the surrounding area. 307.3

Infill development may also include the restoration of vacant and abandoned structures. In 2003, there were an estimated 2,700 vacant and abandoned residential properties in the District. While the number has declined since then, some parts of the city continue to have relatively high concentrations of vacant buildings. As noted in the Housing Element, the city's Home Again Initiative was launched in 2003 to restore such properties to active use. 307.4

Policy LU-1.4.1: Infill Development

Encourage infill development on vacant land within the city, particularly in areas where there are vacant lots that create "gaps" in the urban fabric and detract from the character of a commercial or residential street. Such development should complement the established character of the area and should not create sharp changes in the physical development pattern. 307.5

Policy LU-1.4.2: Long-Term Vacant Sites

Facilitate the reuse of vacant lots that have historically been difficult to develop due to infrastructure or access problems, inadequate lot dimensions, fragmented or absentee ownership, or other constraints. Explore lot consolidation, acquisition, and other measures which would address these constraints. 307.6

Policy LU-1.4.3: Zoning of Infill Sites

Ensure that the zoning of vacant infill sites is compatible with the prevailing development pattern in surrounding neighborhoods. This is particularly important in single family and row house neighborhoods that are currently zoned for multi-family development. 307.7

See the Housing Element for policies on the development of "New Communities" on the sites of aging public housing complexes and a discussion of the city's "Home Again" program for rehabilitating vacant properties.

LU-2 Creating and Maintaining Successful Neighborhoods 308

This section of the Land Use Element focuses on land use issues within the District's neighborhoods. It begins with a set of broad policies which state the city's commitment to sustaining neighborhood diversity and protecting the defining characteristics of each community. This is followed by a discussion of neighborhood appearance, particularly the treatment of abandoned and blighted properties. This section then turns to a discussion of residential land use compatibility issues, followed by a discussion of neighborhood centers and commercial land use compatibility issues. 308.1

LU-2.1 A City of Neighborhoods 309

The same effort given to keep Washington's monumental core a symbol of national pride must be given to the city's neighborhoods. After all, the public image of the city is defined as much by its homes, businesses, streets, and neighborhood spaces as it is by its monuments and federal buildings. For Washington's residents, the neighborhoods are the essence of the city's social and physical environment. Land use policies must ensure that all neighborhoods have adequate access to commercial services, parks, educational and cultural facilities, and sufficient housing opportunities while protecting their rich historic and cultural legacies. 309.1

Washington has no fewer than 130 distinct and identifiable neighborhoods today. They range from high-density urban mixed use communities like the West End and Mount Vernon Square to quiet low-density neighborhoods like Crestwood and Spring Valley, providing a wide range of choices for the District's many different types of households. Just as their physical qualities vary, the social and economic characteristics of the city's neighborhoods also vary. In 2001, the DC Office of Planning used a range of social and economic indicators to classify neighborhoods as "stable", "transitional", "emerging", or "distressed." These indicators included income, home value and sales, school performance, crime rates, poverty rates, educational attainment, and building permit activity, among others. 309.2

Most of the District's recent planning efforts have focused on transitional, emerging, and distressed neighborhoods. Land use strategies for these areas have emphasized the reuse of vacant sites, the refurbishment (or replacement) of abandoned or deteriorating buildings, the removal of illegal land uses, and improvements to the public realm (e.g., streets and public buildings). These strategies have been paired with incentives for the private sector to reinvest in each neighborhood and provide new housing choices and services. A different set of land use strategies has been applied in "stable" neighborhoods, emphasizing neighborhood conservation and appropriate infill. Land use policies in these areas have focused on retaining

neighborhood character, mitigating development impacts on services and infrastructure, preventing demolition in historic districts, and improving the connection between zoning and present and desired land uses. 309.3

During the coming decades, the District will keep striving for increased stability in its transitional, emerging, and distressed neighborhoods. This does not mean that all neighborhoods should become the same, or that a uniform "formula" for stability should be applied to each community. Rather, it means that each neighborhood should have certain basic assets and amenities (see text box below). These assets and amenities should be protected and enhanced where they exist today, and created or restored where they do not. 309.4

Policy LU-2.1.1: Variety of Neighborhood Types

Maintain a variety of residential neighborhood types in the District, ranging from low-density, single family neighborhoods to high-density, multi-family mixed use neighborhoods. The positive elements that create the identity and character of each neighborhood should be preserved and enhanced in the future. 309.5

What Makes a Great Neighborhood? 309.6

In 2004, "A Vision for Growing an Inclusive City" identified essential physical qualities that all neighborhoods should share. These included:

- Transportation options for those without a car, including convenient bus service and safe access for pedestrians;
- Easy access to shops and services meeting day-to-day needs, such as child care, groceries, and sit-down restaurants;
- Housing choices, including homes for renters and for owners, and a range of units that meet the different needs of the community;
- Safe, clean public gathering places, such as parks and plazas—places to meet neighbors, places for children to play, and places to exercise or connect with nature;
- Quality public services, including police and fire protection, safe and modernized schools, and libraries and recreation centers that can be conveniently accessed (though not necessarily located within the neighborhood itself);
- Distinctive character and a "sense of place", defined by neighborhood architecture, visual landmarks and vistas, streets, public spaces, and historic places;
- Evidence of visible public maintenance and investment—proof that the city "cares" about the neighborhood and is responsive to its needs; and
- A healthy natural environment, with street trees and greenery, and easy access to the city's open space system.

A neighborhood's success must be measured by more than the income of its residents or the size of its homes. A successful neighborhood should create a sense of belonging and civic pride, and a collective sense of stewardship and responsibility for the community's future among all residents.

Policy LU-2.1.2: Neighborhood Revitalization

Facilitate orderly neighborhood revitalization and stabilization by focusing District grants, loans, housing rehabilitation efforts, commercial investment programs, capital improvements, and other government actions in those areas that are most in need. Use social, economic, and physical indicators such as the poverty rate, the number of abandoned or substandard buildings, the crime rate, and the unemployment rate as key indicators of need. 309.7

Policy LU-2.1.3: Conserving, Enhancing, and Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Recognize the importance of balancing goals to increase the housing supply and expand neighborhood commerce with parallel goals to protect neighborhood character, preserve historic resources, and restore the environment. The overarching goal to "create successful neighborhoods" in all parts of the city requires an emphasis on conservation in some neighborhoods and revitalization in others. 309.8

Policy LU-2.1.4: Rehabilitation Before Demolition

In redeveloping areas characterized by vacant, abandoned, and underutilized older buildings, generally encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings rather than demolition. 309.9

Policy LU-2.1.5: Conservation of Single Family Neighborhoods

Protect and conserve the District's stable, low density neighborhoods and ensure that their zoning reflects their established low density character. Carefully manage the development of vacant land and the alteration of existing structures in and adjacent to single family neighborhoods in order to protect low density character, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood scale. 309.10

Policy LU-2.1.6: Teardowns

Discourage the replacement of quality homes in good physical condition with new homes that are substantially larger, taller, and bulkier than the prevailing building stock. 309.11

Policy LU-2.1.7: Conservation of Row House Neighborhoods

Protect the character of row house neighborhoods by requiring the height and scale of structures to be consistent with the existing pattern, considering additional row house neighborhoods for "historic district" designation, and regulating the subdivision of row houses into multiple dwellings. Upward and outward extension of row houses which compromise their design and scale should be discouraged. 309.12

The positive elements that create the identity and character of each neighborhood should be preserved and enhanced in the future.

Policy LU-2.1.8: Zoning of Low and Moderate Density Neighborhoods

Discourage the zoning of areas currently developed with single family homes, duplexes, and rowhouses (e.g., R-1 through R-4) for multi-family apartments (e.g., R-5) where such action would likely result in the demolition of housing in good condition and its replacement with structures that are potentially out of character with the existing neighborhood. 309.13

Policy LU-2.1.9: Addition of Floors and Roof Structures to Row Houses and Apartments

Generally discourage increases in residential density resulting from new floors and roof structures (with additional dwelling units) being added to the tops of existing row houses and apartment buildings, particularly where such additions would be out of character with the other structures on the block. Roof structures should only be permitted if they would not harm the architectural character of the building on which they would be added or other buildings nearby. 309.14

Policy LU-2.1.10: Multi-Family Neighborhoods

Maintain the multi-family residential character of the District's Medium- and High-Density residential areas. Limit the encroachment of large scale, incompatible commercial uses into these areas, and make these areas more attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and transit accessible. 309.15

Policy LU-2.1.11: Residential Parking Requirements

Ensure that parking requirements for residential buildings are responsive to the varying levels of demand associated with different unit types, unit sizes, and unit locations (including proximity to transit). Parking should be accommodated in a manner that maintains an attractive environment at the street level and minimizes interference with traffic flow. Reductions in parking may be considered where transportation demand management measures are implemented and a reduction in demand can be clearly demonstrated. 309.16

Please refer to the Transportation Element for additional policies and actions related to parking management.

Policy LU-2.1.12: Reuse of Public Buildings

Rehabilitate vacant or outmoded public and semi-public buildings for continued use. Reuse plans should be compatible with their surroundings, and should limit the introduction of new uses that could adversely affect neighboring communities. 309.17

Policy LU-2.1.13: Flag Lots

Generally discourage the use of "flag lots" (lots with little or no street frontage, accessed by a driveway easement or narrow strip of land and

typically located to the rear of another lot) when subdividing residential property. 309.18

Action LU-2.1.A: Rowhouse Zoning District

Develop a new row house zoning district or divide the existing R-4 district into R-4-A and R-4-B to better recognize the unique nature of row house neighborhoods and conserve their architectural form (including height, mass, setbacks, and design). 309.19

Action LU-2.1.B: Amendment of Exterior Wall Definition

Amend the city's procedures for roof structure review so that the division-on-line wall or party wall of a row house or semi-detached house is treated as an exterior wall for the purposes of applying zoning regulations and height requirements. 309.20

Action LU-2.1.C: Residential Rezoning

Provide a better match between zoning and existing land uses in the city's residential areas, with a particular focus on:

a. Blocks of well-established single family and semi-detached homes that are zoned R-3 or higher;

b. Blocks that consist primarily of row houses that are zoned R-5-B or higher; and

c. Historic districts where the zoning does not match the predominant contributing properties on the block face.

In all three of these instances, pursue rezoning to appropriate densities to protect the predominant architectural character and scale of the neighborhood. 309.21

Action LU-2.1.D: Avoiding "Mansionization"

Consider adjustments to the District's zoning regulations to address the construction of excessively large homes that are out of context with the surrounding neighborhood ("mansionization"). These adjustments might include the use of a sliding scale for maximum lot occupancy (based on lot size), and the application of floor area ratios in single family zone districts to reduce excessive building mass. They could also include creation of a new zoning classification with a larger minimum lot size than the existing R-1-A zone, with standards that more effectively control building expansion and lot division. 309.22

LU-2.2 Maintaining Community Standards 310

"Community standards" encompasses a broad range of topics relating to the physical appearance and quality of the city's neighborhoods. The District maintains planning, building, housing, zoning, environmental and other regulations and codes aimed at protecting public safety and keeping the

Despite dramatic improvements in code enforcement during recent years and a 50 percent drop in the number of vacant properties since 2000, more effective and responsive enforcement remains one of the most frequently raised planning issues in the District today.

city's neighborhoods in excellent physical condition. However, instances of neglected and abandoned properties, illegal uses, unpermitted construction, and code violations are still common in many parts of the city. Despite dramatic improvements in code enforcement during recent years and a 50 percent drop in the number of vacant properties since 2000, more effective and responsive enforcement remains one of the most frequently raised planning issues in the District today. 310.1

Policy LU-2.2.1: Code Enforcement as a Tool for Neighborhood Conservation

Recognize the importance of consistent, effective, and comprehensive code enforcement to the protection of residential neighborhoods. Housing, building, and zoning regulations must be strictly applied and enforced in all neighborhoods of the city to prevent deteriorated, unsafe, and unhealthy conditions; reduce illegal activities; maintain the general level of residential uses, densities, and height; and ensure that health and safety hazards are promptly corrected. 310.2

Policy LU-2.2.2: Appearance of Vacant Lots and Structures

Maintain and enforce District programs (such as "Clean It Or Lien It") which ensure that vacant lots and buildings are kept free of debris, litter, and graffiti. Such sites should be treated in way that eliminates neighborhood blight, improves visual quality, and enhances public safety. 310.3

Policy LU-2.2.3: Restoration or Removal of Vacant and Abandoned Buildings

Reduce the number of vacant and abandoned buildings in the city through renovation, rehabilitation, and where necessary, demolition. Implement programs that encourage the owners of such buildings to sell or renovate them, and apply liens, fines, and other penalties for non-compliant properties. 310.4

Policy LU-2.2.4: Neighborhood Beautification

Encourage projects which improve the visual quality of the District's neighborhoods, including landscaping and tree planting, facade improvement, anti-litter campaigns, graffiti removal, improvement or removal of abandoned buildings, street and sidewalk repair, and park improvements. 310.5

Policy LU-2.2.5: Enforcement of Approval Conditions

Fully enforce conditions of approval for new development. Ensure that such projects are designed, built, and operated consistently with such conditions, and apply appropriate penalties in the event of non-compliance. 310.6

Policy LU-2.2.6: Public Stewardship

Support efforts by local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, citizen/civic associations, garden clubs, homeowner groups, and other organizations to initiate neighborhood improvement and beautification programs. Provide information, guidance, and technical assistance to these groups as appropriate and feasible. 310.7

Policy LU-2.2.7: Alley Closings

Discourage the conversion of alleys to private yards or developable land when the alleys are part of the historic fabric of the neighborhood and would otherwise continue to perform their intended functions, such as access to rear garages and service areas for trash collection. 310.8

Action LU-2.2.A: Vacant Building Inventories

Maintain and continuously update data on vacant and abandoned buildings in the city, and regularly assess the potential for such buildings to support new uses and activities. This should include periodic assessment of the city's vacant building monitoring programs and exploring creative ways to deal with vacant properties and long-term vacant sites. 310.9

Action LU-2.2.B: Education and Outreach on Public Space Maintenance

Develop a public outreach campaign on the District's public space regulations (including the use of such space for announcements, campaign signs, and advertising), and resident/District responsibilities for maintenance of public space, including streets, planting strips, sidewalks, and front yards. 310.10

LU-2.3 Residential Land Use Compatibility 311

Many of Washington's neighborhoods were developed before 1920, when the city adopted its first zoning regulations. As a result, the older neighborhoods tend to have a patchwork pattern of land uses, with business and residential activities sometimes occurring on the same block. While this pattern has created some of the city's most desirable and interesting neighborhoods, it has also introduced the potential for conflict. Certain commercial and industrial uses may generate noise, odor, traffic, litter, and other impacts that affect the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods. Similarly, introducing new residential uses to commercial or industrial areas can make it difficult for established businesses to operate effectively. 311.1

Land use compatibility is addressed through the District's zoning regulations. The regulations list uses that are permitted as a matter-of-right and those that are permitted with a Special Exception (and in some cases, uses that are prohibited) in each zone. Over the years, a variety of "standards for external effects" have been applied to address the impacts of different activities on adjacent uses. However, the Zoning Regulations have not been comprehensively updated in almost 50 years, and do not address land

The older neighborhoods tend to have a patchwork pattern of land uses, with business and residential activities sometimes occurring on the same block. While this pattern has created some of the city's most desirable and interesting neighborhoods, it has also introduced the potential for conflict.

use compatibility issues as effectively as they might. More effective use of performance standards, buffering and screening requirements, management of "problem" land uses, and the examination of appropriate matter of right uses should be pursued as the Zoning Regulations are redrafted. 311.2

Policy LU-2.3.1: Managing Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas

Maintain zoning regulations and development review procedures that: (a) prevent the encroachment of inappropriate commercial uses in residential areas; and (b) limit the scale and extent of non-residential uses that are generally compatible with residential uses, but present the potential for conflicts when they are excessively concentrated or out of scale with the neighborhood. 311.3

Policy LU-2.3.2: Mitigation of Commercial Development Impacts

Manage new commercial development so that it does not result in unreasonable and unexpected traffic, parking, litter, shadow, view obstruction, odor, noise, and vibration impacts on surrounding residential areas. Before commercial development is approved, establish requirements for traffic and noise control, parking and loading management, building design, hours of operation, and other measures as needed to avoid such adverse effects. 311.4

Policy LU-2.3.3: Buffering Requirements

Ensure that new commercial development adjacent to lower density residential areas provides effective physical buffers to avoid adverse effects. Buffers may include larger setbacks, landscaping, fencing, screening, height step downs, and other architectural and site planning measures that avoid potential conflicts. 311.5

Policy LU-2.3.4: Transitional and Buffer Zone Districts

Maintain mixed use zone districts which serve as transitional or buffer areas between residential and commercial districts, and which also may contain institutional, non-profit, embassy/chancery, and office-type uses. Zoning regulations for these areas (which currently include the SP-1 and SP-2 zones) should ensure that development is harmonious with its surroundings, achieves appropriate height and density transitions, and protects neighborhood character. 311.6

Policy LU-2.3.5: Institutional Uses

Recognize the importance of institutional uses, such as private schools, child care facilities, and similar uses, to the economy, character, history, and future of the District of Columbia. Ensure that when such uses are permitted in residential neighborhoods, they are designed and operated in a manner that is sensitive to neighborhood issues and that maintains quality of life. Encourage institutions and neighborhoods to work proactively to

address issues such as traffic and parking, hours of operation, outside use of facilities, and facility expansion. 311.7

Policy LU-2.3.6: Houses of Worship

Recognize churches and other religious institutions as an important part of the fabric of the city's neighborhoods. Work proactively with the faith-based community, residents, ANCs, and neighborhood groups to address issues associated with church transportation needs, operations, and expansion, so that churches may be sustained as neighborhood anchors and a source of spiritual guidance for District residents. 311.8

Churches and other religious institutions are an important part of the fabric of the city's neighborhoods.

Policy LU-2.3.7: Non-Conforming Institutional Uses

Carefully control and monitor institutional uses that do not conform to the underlying zoning to ensure their long-term compatibility. In the event such uses are sold or cease to operate as institutions, encourage conformance with existing zoning and continued compatibility with the neighborhood. 311.9

Policy LU-2.3.8: Non-Conforming Commercial and Industrial Uses

Reduce the number of nonconforming uses in residential areas, particularly those uses that generate noise, truck traffic, odors, air and water pollution, and other adverse effects. Consistent with the zoning regulations, limit the expansion of such uses and fully enforce regulations regarding their operation to avoid harmful impacts on their surroundings. 311.10

Policy LU-2.3.9: Transient Accommodations in Residential Zones

Continue to distinguish between transient uses—such as hotels, bed and breakfasts, and inns—and permanent residential uses such as homes and apartments in the District's Zoning Regulations. The development of new hotels on residentially-zoned land should continue to be prohibited, incentives for hotels (such as the existing Hotel Overlay Zone) should continue to be provided on commercially zoned land, and owner-occupancy should continue to be required for transient accommodations in residential zones. 311.11

Policy LU-2.3.10: Conversion of Housing to Guest Houses and Other Transient Uses

Control the conversion of residences to guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments, clinics, and other non-residential or transient uses. Zoning regulations should continue to allow larger bed and breakfasts and small inns within residential zones through the Special Exception process, with care taken to avoid the proliferation of such uses in any one neighborhood. 311.12

Please refer to Policy 2.4.11 of this Element for additional guidance on hotel uses and the need to address their impacts.

3

Commercial uses and local public facilities are an essential part of the District's neighborhoods. Many of these uses are clustered in well-defined centers that serve as the "heart" of the neighborhood. These areas support diverse business, civic, and social activities.

Policy LU-2.3.11: Home Occupations

Maintain appropriate regulations (including licensing requirements) to address the growing trend toward home occupations, accommodating such uses but ensuring that they do not negatively impact residential neighborhoods. 311.13

Action LU-2.3.A: Zoning Changes to Reduce Land Use Conflicts in Residential Zones

As part of the comprehensive rewrite of the zoning regulations, develop text amendments which:

a. Expand buffering, screening, and landscaping requirements along the edges between residential and commercial and/or industrial zones;

b. More effectively manage the non-residential uses that are permitted as a matter-of-right within commercial and residential zones in order to protect neighborhoods from new uses which generate external impacts;

c. Ensure that the height, density, and bulk requirements for commercial districts balance business needs with the need to protect the scale and character of adjacent residential neighborhoods;

d. Provide for ground-level retail where appropriate while retaining the residential zoning along major corridors; and

e. Ensure that there will not be a proliferation of transient accommodations in any one neighborhood. 311.14

Action LU-2.3.B: Analysis of Non-Conforming Uses

Complete an analysis of non-conforming commercial, industrial, and institutional uses in the District's residential areas. Use the findings to identify the need for appropriate actions, such as zoning text or map amendments and relocation assistance for problem uses. 311.15

LU-2.4 Neighborhood Commercial Districts and Centers 312

Commercial uses and local public facilities are an essential part of the District's neighborhoods. Many of these uses are clustered in well-defined centers that serve as the "heart" of the neighborhood. These areas support diverse business, civic, and social activities. Each center reflects the identity of the neighborhood around it through the shops and establishments it supports and the architecture and scale of its buildings. They are also often connecting points for public transit lines—in fact, many originated around streetcar stops and continue to be important bus transfer points today. 312.1

Many District neighborhoods, particularly those on the east side of the city, lack well-defined centers or have centers that struggle with high vacancies and a limited range of neighborhood-serving businesses. Greater

efforts must be made to attract new retail uses to these areas by improving business conditions, upgrading storefronts and the street environment, and improving parking and pedestrian safety and comfort. The location of new public facilities in such locations, and the development of mixed use projects that include upper story housing, can encourage their revival. 312.2

Even the most successful neighborhood centers in the District must deal with land use conflicts. Excessive concentrations of bars, liquor stores, fast-food outlets, convenience stores, and similar uses are causes of concern in almost every part of the city. Commercial parking demand affects nearby residential streets around many centers. In some locations, commercial and residential rear yards abut one another, causing concerns over rodents, odors, noise, shadows, view obstruction, and other impacts. Effective zoning and buffering requirements are important to address such concerns and protect neighborhood character. Zoning overlays have been adopted in some commercial districts to limit the range of allowable uses and reduce the likelihood of external impacts. 312.3

Of course, not all commercial uses occur in defined centers. Many District thoroughfares are lined with "strip" commercial development, much of it auto-oriented and not particularly focused on residents of the adjacent neighborhoods. Activities such as auto dealerships and repair services, motels, and similar uses, can be important contributors to the District's economy. Again, zoning regulations should establish where these uses are appropriate and should set buffering and screening requirements and other standards which improve the compatibility of such uses with their surroundings. 312.4

Policy LU-2.4.1: Promotion of Commercial Centers

Promote the vitality of the District's commercial centers and provide for the continued growth of commercial land uses to meet the needs of District residents, expand employment opportunities for District residents, and sustain the city's role as the center of the metropolitan area. Commercial centers should be inviting and attractive places, and should support social interaction and ease of access for nearby residents. 312.5

Policy LU-2.4.2: Hierarchy of Commercial Centers

Maintain and reinforce a hierarchy of neighborhood, multi-neighborhood, regional, and main street commercial centers in the District. Activities in each type of center should reflect its intended role and market area, as defined in the Framework Element. Established centers should be expanded in areas where the existing range of goods and services is insufficient to meet community needs. 312.6

Policy LU-2.4.3: Regional Centers

Permit the District's two established regional commercial centers, Georgetown and Friendship Heights, to develop and evolve in ways which

18th Street in Adams Morgan

are compatible with other land use policies, including those for maintaining stable neighborhoods, mitigating negative environmental impacts, managing parking, and minimizing adverse traffic impacts. Likewise, encourage the continued development of the emerging regional centers at Minnesota-Benning and Hechinger Mall in a manner that is consistent with other policies in the Comprehensive Plan. 312.7

Policy LU-2.4.4: Heights and Densities in Regional Centers

Maintain heights and densities in established and proposed regional centers which are appropriate to the scale and function of development in adjoining communities and which step down to adjacent residential areas, and maintain or develop buffer areas for neighborhoods exposed to increased commercial densities. 312.8

Policy LU-2.4.5: Encouraging Nodal Development

Discourage auto-oriented commercial "strip" development and instead encourage pedestrian-oriented "nodes" of commercial development at key locations along major corridors. Zoning and design standards should ensure that the height, mass, and scale of development within nodes respects the integrity and character of surrounding residential areas and does not unreasonably impact them. 312.9

Policy LU-2.4.6: Scale and Design of New Commercial Uses

Ensure that new uses within commercial districts are developed at a height, mass, scale and design that is appropriate and compatible with surrounding areas. 312.10

Policy LU-2.4.7: Location of Night Clubs and Bars

Provide zoning and alcoholic beverage control laws that discourage the excessive concentration and potential negative effects of liquor licensed establishments (e.g., night clubs and bars) in neighborhood commercial districts. New uses that generate late night activity and large crowds should be located away from low and moderate density residential areas and should instead be concentrated Downtown, in designated arts or entertainment districts, and in areas where there is a limited residential population nearby. 312.11

Policy LU-2.4.8: Addressing Commercial Parking Impacts

Ensure that the District's zoning regulations consider the traffic and parking impacts of different commercial activities, and include provisions to mitigate the parking demand and congestion problems that may result as new development occurs, especially as related to loading and goods delivery. 312.12

Please refer to the Transportation Element, Section 3.2 for additional policies and actions related to parking.

Policy LU-2.4.9: High-Impact Commercial Uses

Ensure that the District's zoning regulations limit the location and proliferation of fast food restaurants, sexually-oriented businesses, late night alcoholic beverage establishments, 24-hour mini-marts and convenience stores, and similar high impact commercial establishments that generate excessive late night activity, noise, or otherwise affect the quality of life in nearby residential neighborhoods. 312.13

Policy LU-2.4.10: Use of Public Space within Commercial Centers

Carefully manage the use of sidewalks and other public spaces within commercial districts to avoid pedestrian obstructions and to provide an attractive and accessible environment for shoppers. Where feasible, the development of outdoor sidewalks cafes, flower stands, and similar uses which "animate" the street should be encouraged. Conversely, the enclosure of outdoor sidewalk space with permanent structures should generally be discouraged. 312.14

Policy LU-2.4.11: Hotel Impacts

Manage the impacts of hotels on surrounding areas, particularly in the Near Northwest neighborhoods where large hotels adjoin residential neighborhoods. Provisions to manage truck movement and deliveries, overflow parking, tour bus parking, and other impacts associated with hotel activities should be developed and enforced. 312.15

Please refer to Policies 2.3.9 and 2.3.10 of this Element for additional guidance on hotel uses within residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU-2.4.12: Monitoring of Commercial Impacts

Maintain a range of monitoring, inspection, and enforcement programs for commercial areas to ensure that activities are occurring in accordance with local planning, building, zoning, transportation, health, alcoholic beverage control, and other District rules and regulations. Prompt and effective action should be taken in the event non-compliance with these rules and regulations is observed. 312.16

Policy LU-2.4.13: Commercial Uses Outside Designated Centers

Recognize that not all commercial uses can be appropriately sited within designated neighborhood, multi-neighborhood, and regional centers. For example, automobile sales, nurseries, building supply stores, large night clubs, hotels, and similar uses may require highway-oriented locations. The District should retain and support such uses and accommodate them on appropriately located sites. 312.17

Provisions to manage truck movement and deliveries, overflow parking, tour bus parking, and other impacts associated with hotel activities should be developed and enforced.

Zoning changes may reduce potential conflicts between incompatible land uses.

Action LU-2.4.A: Evaluation of Commercial Zoning

As part of each Small Area Plan, conduct an evaluation of commercially zoned areas to assess the appropriateness of existing zoning designations. This assessment should consider:

a. The heights, densities and uses that could occur under existing zoning; and

b. The suitability of existing zoning given the location and size of each area, the character of adjacent land uses, the relationship to other commercial districts in the vicinity, transportation and parking attributes, proximity to adjacent uses, and the designation on the Future Land Use Map. 312.18

Action LU-2.4.B: Zoning Changes to Reduce Land Use Conflicts in Commercial Zones

As part of the comprehensive rewrite of the zoning regulations, consider text amendments that:

a. More effectively control the uses which are permitted as a matter-of-right in commercial zones;

b. Avoid the excessive concentration of particular uses with the potential for adverse effects, such as convenience stores, fast food establishments, and liquor-licensed establishments; and

c. Consider performance standards to reduce potential conflicts between certain incompatible uses. 312.19

Action LU-2.4.C: Mixed Use District with Housing Emphasis

Develop a new mixed use zoning district, to be applied principally on land that is currently zoned for non-residential uses (or that is now unzoned), which limits commercial development to the ground floor of future uses and requires residential use on any upper stories. Consider the application of this designation to Metrorail stations and corridor streets that may currently have high commercial vacancies or an excess supply of commercial space, including those areas designated as "Main Street Mixed Use Corridors" and commercial centers on the Generalized Policies Map. 312.20

LU-3 Balancing Competing Demands For Land 313

This section of the Land Use Element addresses five specific activities that require a greater level of direction than can be covered in the "Neighborhood" policies listed described above. These activities are an essential part of the District of Columbia and are vital to the city's future. Each of these uses presents a unique set of challenges and land use compatibility issues. They include:

a. Public Works and Industrial Uses, which are essential to government operations and the local economy, but also create external impacts and face displacement from higher value land uses;

b. Institutional Uses, which desire land for expansion but are often hemmed in by adjacent neighborhoods;

c. Foreign Missions, namely the chanceries and embassies of foreign governments, which seek to locate or expand in some of the city's most desirable neighborhoods;

d. Group Homes, Community Based Residential Facilities, and Supportive Housing, which provide for the essential housing and socialization needs of thousands of District residents but may end up concentrated in particular parts of the city; and

e. Federal Facilities, which often operate in immediate proximity to residential neighborhoods, creating the need for sensitive planning as these uses expand, contract, and implement new security measures. 313.1

Approximately 2,000 acres of land in the District of Columbia are zoned for industrial uses. The city's industrial areas support a variety of uses, many of which are essential to the delivery of municipal services or which are part of the business infrastructure that underpins the local economy.

LU-3.1 Public Works and Industrial Land Uses 314

Approximately 2,000 acres of land in the District of Columbia are zoned for industrial uses. The city's industrial areas support a variety of uses, many of which are essential to the delivery of municipal services or which are part of the business infrastructure that underpins the local economy. In 2005, the inventory of private industrial floor space in the city was approximately 13 million square feet. 314.1

Some of the municipal activities housed on the city's industrial land include trash transfer and hauling, bus storage and maintenance, vehicle impoundment, police and fire training, street repair and cleaning equipment storage, and water and sewer construction services. Private activities on industrial lands include food and beverage services, laundries, printers, concrete and asphalt batching plants, distribution centers, telecommunication facilities, construction contractors and suppliers, and auto salvage yards, to name only a few. The contribution and necessity of these uses to the city's economy is discussed in the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan. 314.2

Given the lenient zoning standards within industrial areas (most of which actually favor commercial uses over industrial uses), much of the city's industrial land supply is at risk. While public works and PDR uses may no longer be logical in some areas given their proximity to Metro or residential areas, proactive measures are needed to sustain them elsewhere. 314.3

In 2005, the District of Columbia commissioned an analysis of industrial land supply and demand to provide a framework for new land use policies

(see text box). The recommendations of this study are incorporated in the policies and actions below. 314.4

One of the most important findings of the industrial land use analysis is that there is an immediate unmet need of approximately 70 acres for "municipal-industrial" activities. Facility needs range from an MPD Evidence Warehouse to replacement bus garages for WMATA. Several agencies, including the Architect of the Capitol, indicate that their acreage needs will increase even more in the next ten years. At the same time, there is evidence that efficiencies could be achieved through better site layouts and consolidation of some municipal functions, particularly for vehicle fleet maintenance. The findings provide compelling reasons to protect the limited supply of industrial land, and to organize municipal-industrial activities more efficiently. 314.5

Policy LU-3.1.1: Conservation of Industrial Land

Recognize the importance of industrial land to the economy of the District of Columbia, specifically its ability to support public works functions, and accommodate production, distribution, and repair (PDR) activities. Ensure that zoning regulations and land use decisions protect active and viable PDR land uses, while allowing compatible office and retail uses and development

Taking a Hard Look at DC's Industrial Lands 314.6

The 2005-2006 Industrial Land Use Study classified DC's industrially zoned lands into four categories:

Areas for Retention and Reinforcement have healthy production, distribution, and repair (PDR) uses and have good prospects for hosting such uses in the future.

Areas for Intensification/Evolution will continue to be desirable for PDR activities but show patterns of underutilization and opportunities for intensified uses. Some non-PDR activities may take place in these areas in the long-term future.

Areas for Strategic Public Use are needed to accommodate municipal and utility needs.

Areas for Land Use Change are areas where a move away from PDR uses may be appropriate due to a lack of viable PDR businesses and the desirability of these sites for other uses. In some of these areas, the District may let the market take its course. In others, pro-active measures such as rezoning may be in order.

The District is currently developing criteria for evaluating rezoning requests which reflect these typologies and further consider the land use, transportation, and environmental context of each site, its unique characteristics, and its potential need for future municipal purposes.

under standards established within CM- and M- zoning. Economic development programs should work to retain and permit such uses in the future. 314.7

Policy LU-3.1.2: Redevelopment of Obsolete Industrial Uses

Encourage the redevelopment of outmoded and non-productive industrial sites, such as vacant warehouses and open storage yards, with higher value production, distribution, and repair uses and other activities which support the core sectors of the District economy (federal government, hospitality, higher education, etc.). 314.8

Policy LU-3.1.3: Location of PDR Areas

Accommodate Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR) uses—including municipal public works facilities—in areas that are well buffered from residential uses (and other sensitive uses such as schools), easily accessed from major roads and railroads, and characterized by existing concentrations of PDR and industrial uses. Such areas are generally designated as "PDR" on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map. 314.9

Policy LU-3.1.4: Rezoning of Industrial Areas

Allow the rezoning of industrial land for non-industrial purposes only when the land can no longer viably support industrial or PDR activities or is located such that industry cannot co-exist adequately with adjacent existing uses. Examples include land in the immediate vicinity of Metrorail stations, sites within historic districts, and small sites in the midst of stable residential neighborhoods. In the event such rezoning results in the displacement of active uses, assist these uses in relocating to designated PDR areas. 314.10

Policy LU-3.1.5: Mitigating Industrial Land Use Impacts

Mitigate the adverse impacts created by industrial uses through a variety of measures, including buffering, site planning and design, strict environmental controls, performance standards, and the use of a range of industrial zones that reflect the varying impacts of different kinds of industrial uses. 314.11

Policy LU-3.1.6: Siting Of Industrial-Type Public Works Facilities

Use performance standards (such as noise, odor, and other environmental controls), minimum distance requirements, and other regulatory and design measures to ensure the compatibility of industrial-type public works facilities such as trash transfer stations with surrounding land uses. Improve the physical appearance and screening of such uses and strictly regulate operations to reduce the incidence of land use conflicts, especially with residential uses. 314.12

Policy LU-3.1.7: Cottage Industries

Support low-impact "cottage industries" and "home-grown businesses" in neighborhood commercial districts and on appropriate industrial lands.

Maintain zoning regulations that strictly regulate such uses in residential areas, in order to avoid land use conflicts and business-related impacts. 314.13

Policy LU-3.1.8: Co-Location of Municipal Public Works Functions

Improve the performance of existing industrial areas through zoning regulations and city policies which encourage the more efficient use of land, including the co-location of municipal functions (such as fleet maintenance, record storage, and warehousing) on consolidated sites rather than independently managed scattered sites. 314.14

Policy LU-3.1.9: Central Management of Public Works

Promote the central management of municipal public works activities to avoid the displacement of essential government activities and the inefficiencies and increased costs resulting from more distant locations and future land acquisition needs. Consider "land banking" appropriately located District-owned properties and vacant sites to accommodate future municipal space needs. 314.15

Policy LU-3.1.10: Land Use Efficiency Through Technology

Encourage the more efficient use of PDR land through the application of technologies which reduce acreage requirements for public works. Examples of such applications include the use of diesel-electric hybrid buses (which can be accommodated in multi-level garages), using distributed power generation rather than large centralized facilities, and emphasizing green building technologies to reduce infrastructure needs. 314.16

Action LU-3.1.A: Industrial Zoning Use Changes

Provide a new zoning framework for industrial land, including:

- Prohibiting high impact "heavy" industries in the C-M zones to reduce the possibility of land use conflicts;
- Prohibiting certain civic uses that detract from the industrial character of C-M areas and that could ultimately interfere with business operations;
- Requiring special exceptions for potentially incompatible large retail uses in the C-M zone to provide more control over such uses without reducing height and bulk standards;
- Limiting non-industrial uses in the M zone to avoid encroachment by uses which could impair existing industrial and public works activities (such as trash transfer);
- Creating an IP (industrial park) district with use and bulk regulations that reflect prevailing activities; and
- Creating a Mixed Use district where residential, commercial, and lesser-impact PDR uses are permitted, thereby accommodating live-work space, artisans and studios, and more intensive commercial uses.

Once these changes have been made, pursue the rezoning of selected sites in a manner consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning changes should continue to provide the flexibility to shift the mix of uses within historically industrial areas and should not diminish the economic viability of existing industrial activities or the other compatible activities that now occur in PDR areas. 314.17

Action LU-3.1.B: Industrial Land Use Compatibility

During the revision of the Zoning Regulations, develop performance standards and buffering guidelines to improve edge conditions where industrial uses abut residential uses, and to address areas where residential uses currently exist within industrially zoned areas. 314.18

Action LU-3.1.C: Joint Facility Development

Actively pursue intergovernmental agreements to develop joint facilities for District and federal agencies (such as DPR and NPS); District and transit agencies (DPW and WMATA); and multiple public utilities (Pepco and WASA). 314.19

Action LU-3.1.D: Inventory of Housing In Industrial Areas

Compile an inventory of existing housing units within industrially zoned areas to identify pockets of residential development that should be rezoned (to mixed use or residential) in order to protect the housing stock. 314.20

LU-3.2 Institutional Uses 315

Institutional uses occupy almost 2,300 acres—an area larger than all of the city's retail, office, and hotel uses combined. These uses include colleges and universities, private schools, child care facilities, houses of worship and religious institutions, hospitals, private and non-profit organizations, and similar activities. 315.1

The District is home to about a dozen colleges and universities, enrolling more than 75,000 students. There are also nearly 70 non-local college and university programs that occupy space in the city. The District contains more than a dozen hospitals, some located on the campuses of its universities and others occupying their own campuses or federal enclaves. Hundreds of non-profit and private institutions also operate within the city, ranging from private schools and seminaries to historic home museums and the headquarters of leading international organizations. Major institutional uses are shown on Map 3.6. 315.2

The city's institutions make an important contribution to the District economy and are an integral part of Washington's landscape and history. The colleges and universities alone spend over $1.5 billion dollars annually and employ 21,000 workers. Through partnerships with government and

The city's institutions make an important contribution to the District economy and are an integral part of Washington's landscape and history. The colleges and universities alone spend over $1.5 billion dollars annually and employ 21,000 workers.

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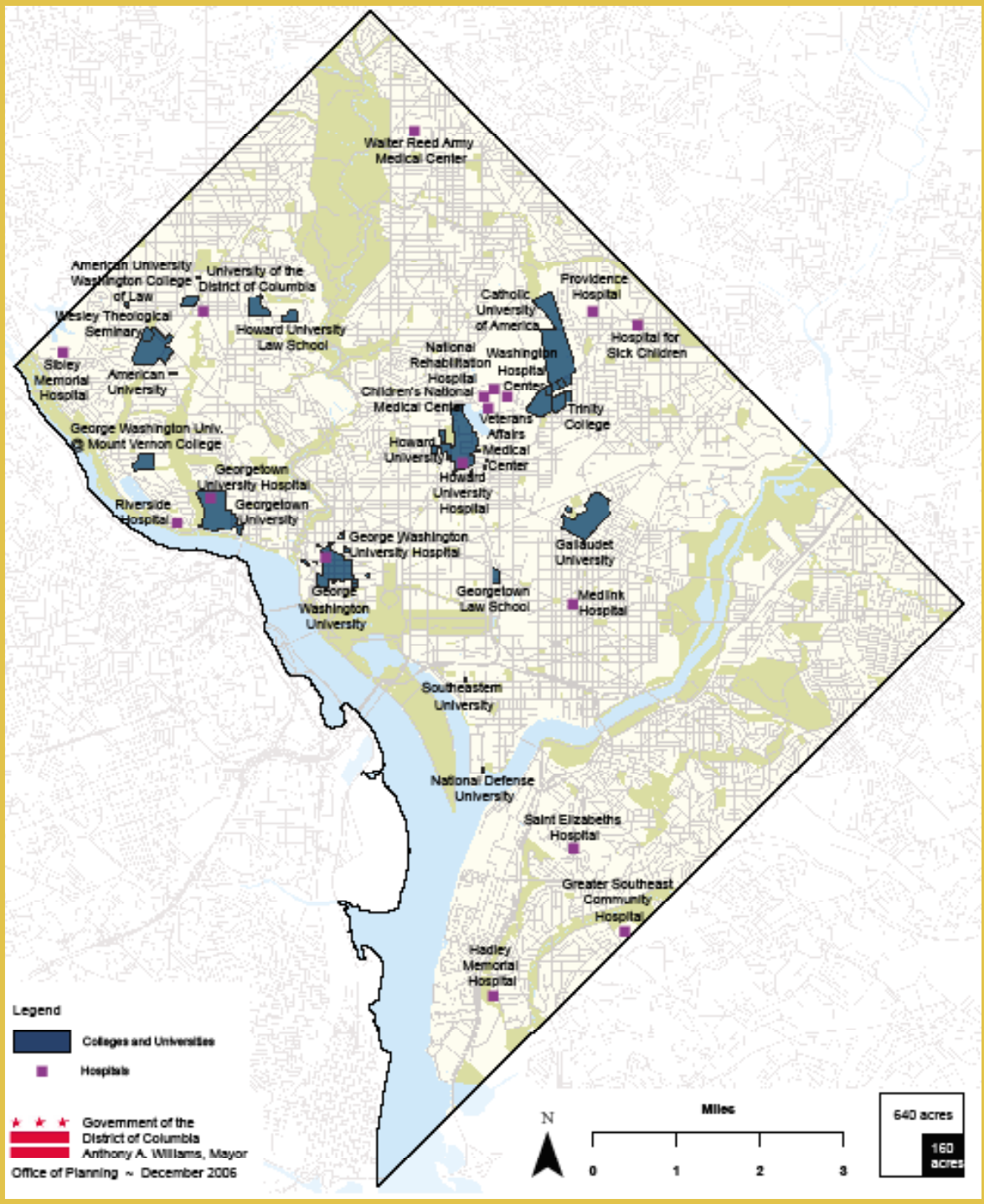
Map 3.6:

Colleges, Universities, and Hospitals 315.3



private industry, the city's museums, higher education, and health care institutions provide services and resources to the community that could not possibly be provided by government alone. 315.4

The growth of private institutions has generated significant concern in many of the city's neighborhoods. These concerns relate both to external impacts such as traffic and parking, and to broader concerns about the character of communities where institutions are concentrated or expanding. 315.5

Please see the Educational Facilities Element for additional policies and actions related to colleges and universities.

Policy LU-3.2.1: Transportation Impacts of Institutional Uses

Support ongoing efforts by District institutions to mitigate their traffic and parking impacts by promoting ridesharing, carpooling, public transportation, shuttle service and bicycling; providing on-site parking; and undertaking other transportation demand management measures. 315.6

Policy LU-3.2.2: Corporate Citizenship

Support continued "corporate citizenship" among the city's large institutions, including its colleges, universities, hospitals, private schools, and non-profits. Given the large land area occupied by these uses and their prominence in the community, the city's institutions (along with the District itself) should be encouraged to be role models for smaller employers in efforts to improve the city's physical environment. This should include a continued commitment to high quality architecture and design on local campuses, expanded use of "green building" methods and low impact development, and the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings. 315.7

Policy LU-3.2.3: Non-Profits, Private Schools, and Service Organizations

Ensure that large non-profits, service organizations, private schools, seminaries, colleges and universities, and other institutional uses that occupy large sites within residential areas are planned, designed, and managed in a way that minimizes objectionable impacts on adjacent communities. The zoning regulations should ensure that the expansion of these uses is not permitted if the quality of life in adjacent residential areas is significantly adversely affected. 315.8

Action LU-3.2.A: Zoning Actions for Institutional Uses

Complete a study of residential zoning requirements for institutional uses other than colleges and universities. Determine if additional review by the Board of Zoning Adjustment or Zoning Commission should be required in the event of a change in use. Also determine if the use should be removed as an allowable or special exception use, or made subject to additional requirements. 315.9

3

Washington's Foreign Missions 316.3

The facilities that house diplomatic functions in Washington are commonly referred to as embassies. To differentiate the functions that occur in buildings occupied by foreign missions, a variety of designations are used:

Chanceries are the principal offices used by a foreign mission.

Chancery annexes are used for diplomatic purposes in support of the mission, such as cultural attaches or consular operations.

Ambassador's residences are the official homes of ambassadors or chiefs of missions.

Many foreign governments occupy chanceries, chancery annexes, and ambassador's residences in more than one location. In 2004, the federal government indicated there were 483 separate facilities in the city serving these functions.

Since 1982, chanceries have been allowed to locate in most of Washington's non-residential zone districts as a matter of right. They are also permitted in the city's higher-density residential and special purpose (SP) zones, and in less dense residential areas covered by a diplomatic overlay district.

Historically, the city's chanceries have concentrated in Northwest Washington, particularly along Massachusetts Avenue ("Embassy Row"), and in the adjacent Sheridan-Kalorama and Dupont Circle neighborhoods. There are also 16 chanceries on a large federal site adjacent to the Van Ness/UDC Metro station, specifically created to meet the demand for foreign missions.

Action LU-3.2.B: Special Exception Requirements for Institutional Housing

Amend the zoning regulations to require a special exception for dormitories, rooming houses, boarding houses, fraternities, sororities, and similar uses in the R-4 zoning district. 315.10

LU-3.3 Foreign Missions 316

There are 169 countries across the globe with foreign missions in the District of Columbia. These missions assist the US government in maintaining positive diplomatic relations with the international community. By international treaty, the US government is obligated to help foreign governments in obtaining suitable facilities for their diplomatic missions. This obligation was reinforced through the Foreign Missions Act of 1982, which established an Office of Foreign Missions within the Department of State and empowered the Secretary of State to set criteria relating to the location of foreign missions in the District. As noted in the text box at left, foreign missions are housed in many different types of buildings, ranging from row houses and mansions to custom-designed office buildings. 316.1

The number of Foreign Missions in the city increased 27 percent between 1983 and 2003, in part fueled by the breakup of the Soviet Union. While an increase of this scale is not expected in the near future, some growth is likely. In addition, some of the existing missions are likely to relocate as they outgrow their facilities, respond to increased security requirements, and move beyond their traditional diplomatic functions. The Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan indicate that sites for as many as 100 new and relocated chanceries may be needed during the next 25 years. The availability of sites that meet the needs of foreign missions within traditional diplomatic areas is limited and the International Chancery Center on Van Ness Avenue has no available sites remaining. Additional areas may be needed for chancery use and it may be necessary for foreign missions to look beyond traditional diplomatic enclaves. 316.2

The Foreign Missions Act of 1982 established procedures and criteria governing the location, replacement, or expansion of chanceries in the District of Columbia. The Act identifies areas where foreign missions may locate without regulatory review ("matter of right" areas), including all areas zoned commercial, industrial, waterfront, or mixed use. These areas are located in all quadrants of the city, and include large areas south of the National Mall and east of the Anacostia River. The 1982 Act also identifies areas where foreign missions may locate subject to disapproval by the District of Columbia Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment (FMBZA). These include areas zoned medium-high and high-density residential, special purpose, and areas within a Diplomatic overlay zone. 316.4

There are 169 countries across the globe with foreign missions in the District of Columbia. These missions assist the US government in maintaining positive diplomatic relations with the international community.

As a result of the analysis accomplished in support of the Foreign Missions Act, a methodology was developed in 1983 to determine the most appropriate areas for foreign missions to locate, subject to FMBZA review. The 1983 methodology allows foreign missions to locate in low and moderate density city blocks ("squares") in which one-third or more of the area is used for office, commercial, or other non-residential uses. In some cases, a consequence of the square-by-square determination has been an unanticipated increase in chanceries. 316.5

In 2003, the National Capital Planning Commission completed a further analysis of chancery siting standards, concluding that zoning regulations and maps could be revised to more compatibly accommodate foreign missions in the future. The Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan suggest that new chanceries be encouraged along South Capitol Street, Massachusetts Avenue (within Reservation 13), and the 16th Street corridor, and that a new foreign mission center be developed on the Armed Forces Retirement Home or along South Capitol Street. Since the time the Federal Elements were adopted, Walter Reed Hospital also has been discussed as a possible site. 316.6

Policy LU-3.3.1: Chancery Encroachment in Low Density Areas

Encourage foreign missions to locate their chancery facilities in areas where adjacent existing and proposed land uses are compatible (e.g., office, commercial, and mixed use), taking special care to protecting the integrity of residential areas. Discourage the location of new chanceries in any area that is essentially a residential use area, to the extent consistent with the Foreign Missions Act. 316.7

Policy LU-3.3.2: Target Areas for New Chanceries

Encourage the development of new chancery facilities in locations where they would support the District's neighborhood revitalization and economic development goals, particularly on federal enclaves and in the portion of the city east of 16th Street NW. Work with the Department of State, the National

Group homes have become increasingly common due to the closure of large institutions and greater recognition of the social benefits of group living arrangements. They can provide a family-like environment, aid in the development of life skills, and foster the integration of persons with special needs into society.

Capital Planning Commission and other organizations to provide incentives for foreign missions to locate in these areas. 316.8

Policy LU-3.3.3: Compatibility of New Chanceries

Promote the design of chanceries in a manner that protects the city's open space and historic resources, mitigates impacts on nearby properties, is compatible with the scale and character of its surroundings, and enhances Washington's international image as a city of great architecture and urban design. 316.9

Action LU-3.3.A: Modifications to the Diplomatic Overlay Zone

Work with the National Capital Planning Commission and Department of State to develop a new methodology to determine appropriate additional chancery development areas; and revise the mapped diplomatic areas, reflecting additional areas where foreign missions may relocate. The methodology and zoning map revisions should avoid concentration of chanceries in low density neighborhoods, to the extent consistent with the Foreign Missions Act. 316.10

Action LU-3.3.B: Foreign Mission Mapping Improvements

Improve the mapping of foreign mission locations in the city, ensuring that they are accurately inventoried and that chanceries, ambassador's residences, and institutional land uses are appropriately distinguished. 316.11

Action LU-3.3.C: New Foreign Missions Center

Support the development of a new foreign missions center on federal land in the District of Columbia. 316.12

LU-3.4 Group Housing 317

Group housing accommodates District residents with a wide variety of special needs, including persons with physical and mental disabilities, terminal illnesses, foster children, parolees, recovering substance abusers, victims of domestic violence, the elderly, and others. Such homes have become increasingly common due to the closure of large institutions and greater recognition of the social benefits of group living arrangements. Group housing can provide a family-like environment, aid in the development of life skills, and foster the integration of persons with special needs into society. Yet such housing is among the most difficult uses in the city to site due to public concerns about neighborhood impacts. 317.1

The District's zoning regulations recognize many types of group housing, including adult rehabilitation homes, community residence facilities, emergency shelters, health care facilities, substance abuser homes, youth rehabilitation homes, and youth and youth residential care homes. Other types of group housing also exist. Their impacts are substantially different depending on their size, location, and the population they serve. 317.2

Recognizing the distinction between the different types of group housing is important because different licensing procedures and zoning requirements apply based on the number and characteristics of residents served. These requirements are guided by the federal Fair Housing Act, particularly 1988 Amendments limiting the degree to which zoning may restrict group home location, placement, and operation. Under federal law, all state and local governments are required to make "reasonable accommodation" to house persons with disabilities. Interpretation of this standard has been the subject of litigation in cities across the country for almost two decades. 317.3

The District's geographic information system (GIS) includes a partial inventory of group housing in the District; this is shown in Map 3.7. While this is not a complete inventory, it clearly illustrates that such housing is more heavily concentrated in some parts of the city than others. This is the result of a number of factors, including land costs, proximity to supportive services, and the density and character of housing in the city. The District's Zoning Regulations permit most categories of group homes with six residents or less as matter-of-right uses in all residential zones. However, some categories of small group homes—including those for recovering substance abusers and adjudicated felons—are subject to Special Exception requirements from the Board of Zoning Adjustment, as well as distance separation standards. Minimum distance standards also apply to youth residential care and community residence facilities with nine to 15 residents. These standards limit the siting of new group homes within 1,000 feet of existing group homes in single-family zones and within 500 feet in moderate and higher density zones. 317.4

The licensing, monitoring, and management of group homes also have been raised as community concerns. Similarly, the need to more effectively involve the community in siting decisions, and to provide better notification of siting requests has been raised. Despite zoning standards, there are still concerns about neighborhoods becoming more institutional in character as group homes are established. There are also concerns about fairness and equity, given the fact that some neighborhoods have many group homes while others have none. Resolving this particular dilemma is complicated by the soaring cost of real estate, which tends to shift demand to the most affordable parts of the city. 317.5

In the coming years, the District will strive to locate group homes in a manner that balances neighborhood concerns while meeting the housing needs of all residents. Additional examination of the District's zoning regulations, improvement of zoning definitions, and clearer siting standards for the different categories of group homes are recommended. Increased coordination between the agencies responsible for licensing and monitoring all community housing facilities should be achieved. Greater community involvement, including advisory committees, good neighbor agreements,

Greater community involvement, including advisory committees, good neighbor agreements, and more rigorous monitoring procedures, should be used to improve group home operations and address land use conflicts.

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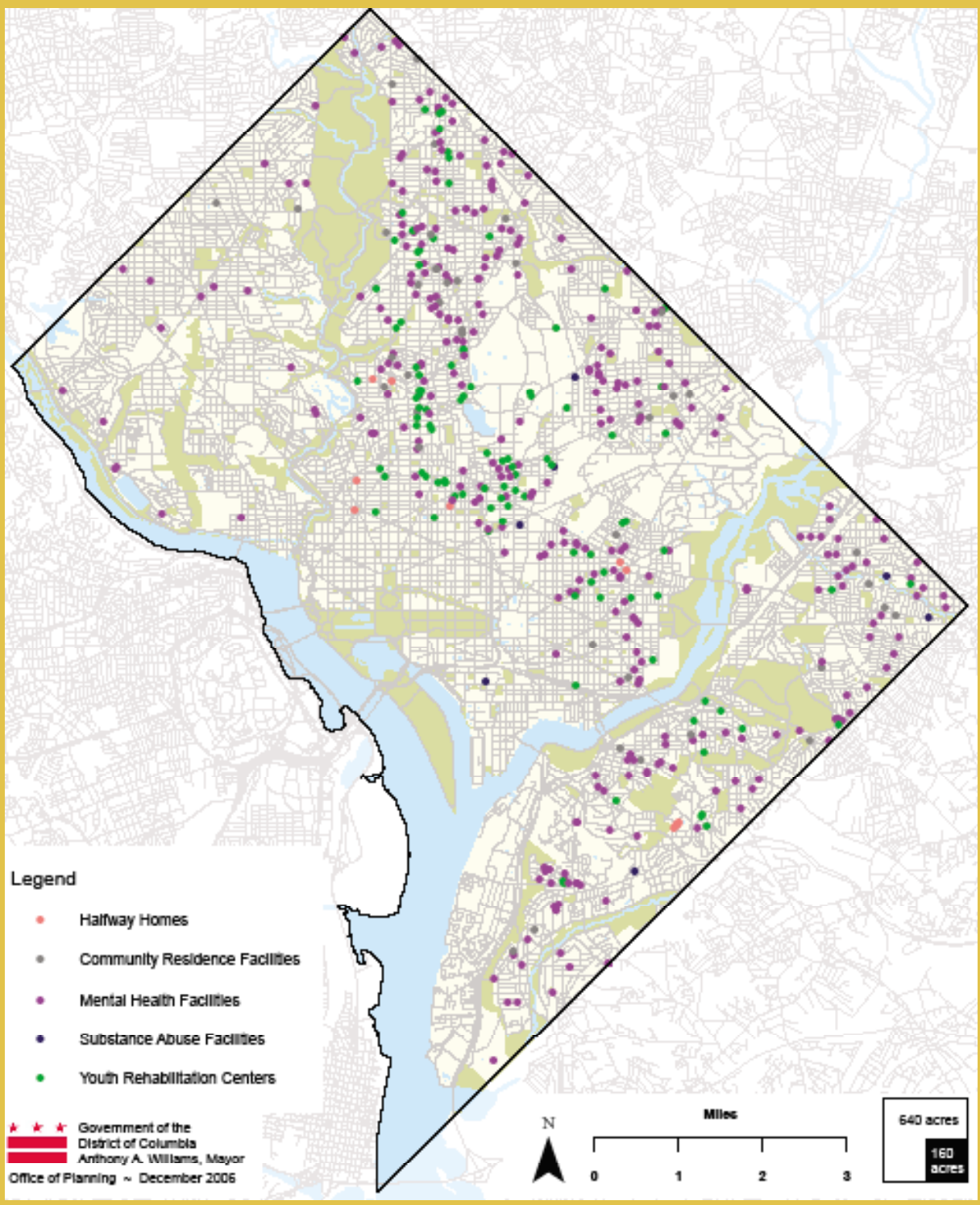
Map 3.7:

Locations of Group Homes 317.6



and more rigorous monitoring procedures, should be used to improve operations and address land use conflicts. 317.7

Policy LU-3.4.1: Reasonable Accommodation of Group Homes

Recognize the importance of group homes to providing a positive, healthy environment for many residents of the District of Columbia. Ensure that the District's planning, zoning, and housing codes make reasonable accommodation for group homes without diminishing the character or fundamental qualities of its residential neighborhoods. 317.8

Policy LU-3.4.2: Promoting More Equitable Distribution

Encourage a more balanced distribution of group housing in the District of Columbia. The concentration of group homes or creation of excessively large group homes in a manner that would threaten the residential character of any one neighborhood should be strictly avoided. Such concentrations are inconsistent with the objective of integrating special needs populations into the larger community. Care should be taken to locate particular special needs populations where they can best receive services and support. 317.9

Policy LU-3.4.3: Small Group Housing for the Disabled

As required by the federal Fair Housing Act, allow group homes with six or fewer residents (excluding staff or caregivers) serving persons with disabilities in all residential zone districts. Zoning requirements for such homes that are more restrictive than those applying to other residential uses are unlawful and shall not be permitted. 317.10

Policy LU-3.4.4: Larger Group Housing and Group Housing Serving Non-Disabled Populations

Permit larger group housing (with seven or more residents) and group homes serving non-disabled persons with special needs (including youth and adult rehabilitation homes) in all residential districts, subject to Board of Zoning Adjustment approval and siting standards that discourage excessive concentration and that comply with federal housing laws. The Special Exception process should be used to ensure public notification and involvement and to establish conditions that improve the compatibility of group homes with surrounding uses. Siting standards for such housing shall be contained in the Zoning Regulations. 317.11

Policy LU-3.4.5: Design Compatibility of Group Homes

Encourage the design and appearance of group homes to be consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and to blend with adjacent residences to the maximum extent possible. 317.12

Policy LU-3.4.6: Communication on Group Home Operations

Increase coordination and communication between the District, group home operators, and area residents in order to improve operations, address

community concerns such as parking and public safety, and more fully integrate group home residents into the community. Consider the use of community advisory boards and task forces to mediate operational and siting issues, including the size of the facility. 317.13

Policy LU-3.4.7: Licensing and Group Home Code Compliance

Ensure that the permitting, licensing, monitoring, and operation of group homes meets all applicable codes and standards. Improve enforcement programs to ensure compliance and take prompt, effective action in the event of violations. 317.14

Policy LU-3.4.8: Public Information On Group Housing Needs

Improve public education and information on the need for group housing in the District, and on issues related to their operation and resident needs. 317.15

Action LU-3.4.A: Clarification of Community Housing Definitions

Clarify the definitions of the various types of community housing in the District, and ensure the consistent use of these definitions in all planning, building, and zoning codes and licensing regulations. 317.16

Action LU-3.4.B: Information on Group Home Location

Provide easily accessible information on location and occupancy for all licensed group home facilities in the District. Such information should be accessible via the Internet and also should be available in mapped format, with appropriate protections for the privacy rights of the disabled. 317.17

Action LU-3.4.C: Analysis of Group Home Siting Standards

Conduct an analysis of the spatial standards currently used to regulate group homes and homeless shelters in the District, and determine if adjustments to these standards are needed to create additional siting opportunities. In addition, consider allowing group homes and homeless shelters in Zone Districts CM-1 and CM-2. 317.18

Action LU-3.4.D: Community Housing Ombudsman

Establish an ombudsman position within the District of Columbia to serve as a resource for residents, neighborhood organizations and other stakeholders, government, and group home operators. The ombudsman would encourage educational efforts, enforcement of Fair Housing Act policy, and dispute resolution related to the siting and operations of group homes within the District. 317.19

LU-3.5 Federal Facilities 318

When streets and highways are subtracted out, about one-third of the land area of the District of Columbia is owned by the federal government. Most of this land is managed by the National Park Service, but a significant

amount—more than 2,700 acres—is comprised of federal installations, offices, military bases, and similar uses. This acreage includes nearly 2,000 buildings, with over 95 million square feet of floor space. Federal uses occupy a range of physical settings, from self-contained enclaves like Bolling Air Force Base to grand office buildings in the heart of Downtown Washington. Federal uses operate in all quadrants of the city, often amidst residential neighborhoods. Since they are largely exempt from zoning, coordination and communication are particularly important to ensure land use compatibility. 318.1

Many of the District's federal uses have unique security requirements and operational needs. This became particularly apparent after 9/11, as streets around the US Capitol were permanently closed and major federal offices and monuments were retrofitted to improve security. Security needs are likely to create further changes to the District's landscape in the future; the recent proposal to relocate thousands of Homeland Security workers to the west campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital is just one example. 318.2

The size of the federal workforce in the District is projected to increase during the next decade, following more than two decades of downsizing. The District supports this increase, as well as continued adherence to a 1968 federal policy to maintain 60 percent of the region's federal employees within the District of Columbia. At the same time, the federal government is in the process of transferring several tracts of land to the District, potentially reducing the land area for their expansion. This suggests the need for even greater coordination on the planning and development front in the future. Several successful joint planning efforts have recently been completed, including plans for the South Capitol Street Corridor, the Southeast Federal Center, and the Anacostia Waterfront. Efforts like these must continue as the future of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the Armed Forces Retirement Home, RFK Stadium, and other large federal sites is resolved. 318.3

The size of the federal workforce in the District is projected to increase during the next decade, following more than two decades of downsizing. The District supports this increase, as well as continued adherence to a 1968 federal policy to maintain 60 percent of the region's federal employees within the District of Columbia.

Major federal activities in the District are shown on Map 3.8. Priorities for the use of these lands are expressed in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The "Federal Workplace" Element of that Plan includes policies to reinforce the preeminence of the monumental core through future siting decisions, give preference to urban and transit-served sites when siting new workplaces, and emphasize the modernization of existing structures before building new structures. The Federal Elements include guidelines on the types of federal functions that are appropriate within the Capitol Complex, the Central Employment Area, federal installations, and other areas within the District of Columbia, as well as elsewhere in the region. 318.4

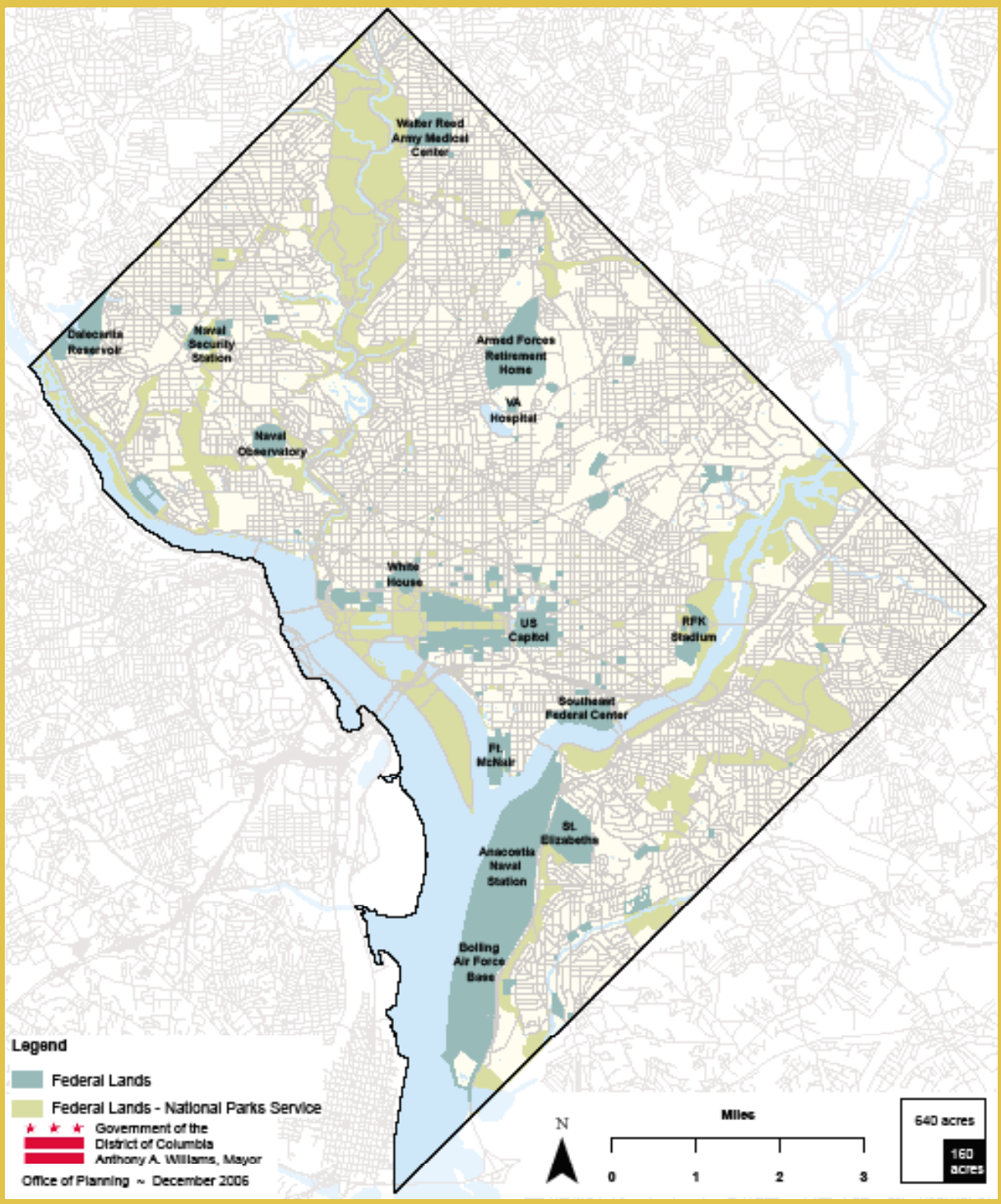
Policy LU-3.5.1: District/Federal Joint Planning

Coordinate with the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the Architect of the

3

Map 3.8:

Federal Lands, 2005 318.5



Capitol, and other federal agencies to address planning issues involving federal lands, including the monumental core, the waterfront, and the park and open space network. Encourage the use of master plans, created through participatory planning processes, to guide the use of large federal sites. 318.6

Federal uses occupy a range of physical settings, from self-contained enclaves like Bolling Air Force Base to grand office buildings in the heart of Downtown Washington.

Policy LU-3.5.2: Federal Sites and Adjacent Neighborhoods

Support expansion of the federal workforce and redevelopment of federal sites in a manner that is consistent with neighborhood revitalization, urban design, economic development, and environmental quality goals. Federal land uses should strive to maintain land use compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods. 318.7

Policy LU-3.5.3: Recognition of Local Planning and Zoning Regulations

Encourage the federal government to abide by local planning and zoning regulations to the maximum extent feasible. 318.8

Policy LU-3.5.4: Federal Workplaces and District Goals

Strongly support the implementation of Federal Element policies for federal workplaces calling for transportation demand management, sustainable design, energy conservation, additional workforce housing, and the creation of job opportunities in economically distressed communities within the District of Columbia. 318.9

Policy LU-3.5.5: Neighborhood Impact of Federal Security Measures

Consistent with the Federal Elements, ensure that federal security measures do not impede the District's commerce and vitality, excessively restrict or impede the use of public space or streets, or impact the health of the existing landscape. Additional street closures are to be avoided to the maximum extent possible. 318.10

Policy LU-3.5.6: Reducing Exposure to Hazardous Materials

Avoid locating and operating federal facilities that produce hazardous waste or that increase the threat of accidental or terrorist-related release of hazardous materials in heavily populated or environmentally sensitive areas. 318.11

Actions relating to federal facility sites may be found in the Comprehensive Plan Area Elements.